

Franco Zaninotto

Learning from the Mistakes of Others



JBV Chess Books

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Preface

Dear readers,

This book is aimed primarily at players who already have solid basic knowledge and who, step by step, want to approach the big and distant goal called *mastery*.

Professor Arpad Elo (a Hungarian physicist who developed the Elo rating system named after him in the mid-20th century) assigned players to certain 'categories' according to their skill level (see below). However, as the author of this textbook, I don't want to do any hair-splitting over whether it's aimed at players of Category 3 (Elo 1400–1600) or, more likely, Category 2 (Elo 1600–1800). Because in this book, there may be exercises, which some players of Category 4 (Elo 1200–1400) may solve almost without effort, while others may even turn out to be hard nuts for a player of Category 1 (Elo 1800–2000). In short, I will simply use the term 'target group' to describe all those who might find this book useful.

When players of this 'target group' are preparing for a more important tournament (e.g. one using Elo ratings), extraneous factors such as lack of self-confidence may play a role. This is especially true for those who have no teacher or trainer and who are therefore on their own during the preparation.

I have written this book with the clear objective of helping learners to build confidence in their own abilities by specific and well-chosen teaching content and corresponding exercises. Since players of this target group do not (or not yet!) think like chess masters, they will quickly realize that master games usually look very different from their own. Furthermore, they will find many incomprehensible moves that raise questions, to which they can find no answer without help.

In order to avoid this overburdening, almost all games in this book have been played by representatives of the target group. Accordingly, the reader will see how these players react in certain critical positions, and how the advantage often shifts more or less from one side to the other, because of mistakes typical for this level. Chapter 8 'Mistakes and Mindsets' can be particularly helpful in reducing the number of such errors significantly.

The endgame is the only independent part of a game in the sense that any knowledge of opening and middle game is not required to master an endgame. On the other hand, in the middle game the knowledge of the endgame is indispensable, since with a certain probability it will come to a situation where you have to decide whether or not to choose a possible endgame. Similarly,

the treatment of the opening depends on the knowledge of the middle game. And that's exactly why the endgame is treated at the beginning of this book – followed by the middle game and only at the very end: the opening.

The aim of this book is to improve your understanding of the game and your practical skills. Many diagrams are linked with an exercise. Try to solve them and to answer the questions. To improve your play, active study is an absolute must. At the end of each part of the book, there are 20 more exercises, where you either have to represent a player of our target group – or fight against one of them.

Of course, this book cannot cover everything that a member of the target group needs to know. However, diligent players can use it very well to check their knowledge and to find possible gaps therein.

I wish you good luck and success!

Franco Zaninotto

Excerpt from *The Rating of Chess Players, Past and Present*; Arpad E. Elo, 1978

Beginners	(Elo below 1200)
Category 4	(1200–1400)
Category 3	(1400–1600)
Category 2	(1600–1800)
Category 1	(1800–2000)
Candidate Master	(2000–2300)
FIDE Master	(2300–2400)
most IM and some GM	(2400–2500)
most GM	(2500–2700)
World Championship Candidates	(2700+)

Part I

The Endgame

Chapter 1

Pawn Endings

The essential difference between pawns and pieces is that pawns can move forward, but not backwards. This means in principle: If you have just played ♖a1–a7, although the correct move was ♖a1–a6, you can still correct this mistake. And since this 'correction' is not possible with pawns, every pawn move must be checked carefully.

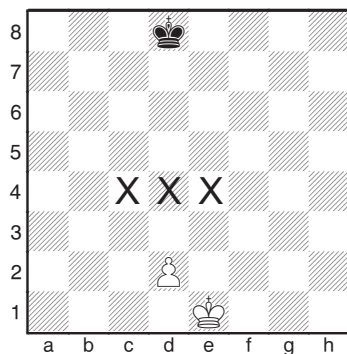
Let's begin with the ending ♔ + ♙ against ♚. There is a rule that allows you to decide at a glance whether a given position is won or not. In Poland it's called 'Przepiórka Line' – named after the Polish master David Przepiórka (winner of the gold medal with the Polish team at the Chess Olympiad 1930). And this rule is connected with the following story.

In January 1940 Warsaw was occupied by the Nazis and, among many other consequences, all sports clubs had been closed. Obeying the need, a chess player transformed his apartment into a kind of 'coffee house', for which he even got a proper license, and which was used by many players for regular meetings. However, during a Gestapo raid, nearly thirty players were arrested and remanded, including David Przepiórka and several other strong masters.

In prison, they were locked up in a large room, and since it was imme-

diately clear that this situation could last for a longer period of time, they asked the prison guards to buy some chess sets. Then they organized a double-round blitz tournament and played more than 800 games to determine the 'Prison Champion'!

One day Przepiórka gave a lesson on pawn endings.

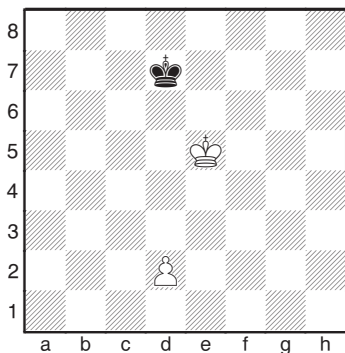


In this position the result depends on whose move it is. If White moves, he wins, but if Black moves, it's a draw. For winning this type of ending (except with rook pawns, as in this case the defending king needs only to reach a square in front of the pawn), the king must occupy one of the three squares that form the drawn line in front of the pawn. This line is two ranks in front of the pawn, but if it has already crossed the fourth rank, the line is directly in front of it. For example, if the pawn is on d2 the line is formed

by the squares on c4–d4–e4. But if the pawn is on d5, the line is formed by the squares on c6–d6–e6.

With the pawn on d2 White wins as follows.

1.♔e2 ♕d7 2.♔e3 ♕d6 3.♔d4 ♕c6
4.♔e5 ♕d7



White to move

5.d3!

After the mistake 5.d4? and the reply 5...♕e7!=, Black controls the crucial line. In pawn endgames it's often very important to have a so-called 'reserve tempo' at your disposal.

The alternative 5.♔d5 is also sufficient; e.g. 5...♕c7 6.♔e6 ♕d8 7.d4 ♕e8 8.d5 ♕d8 9.♔d6! ♕e8 10.♔c7+–.

5...♕c7 6.d4 ♕d7 7.♔d5! ♕e7 8.♔c6 ♕d8 9.d5 ♕c8 10.d6 ♕d8 11.d7 ♕e7 12.♔c7+–

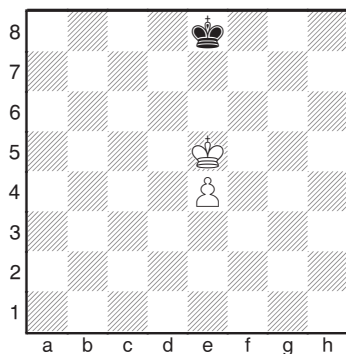
If it's Black to move, the game is a draw after 1...♔e7 (1...♔d7=; 1...♔c7=) 2.♔e2 ♕e6 3.♔e3 (3.♔d3 ♕d5=) 3...♔e5 4.d4+ ♕d5.

Unfortunately, this story ended tragically, because while the non-Jewish players were released after one week, Przepiórka and the other Jewish players were later executed.

But let's get back to Przepiórka's rule. What is its logical reason? The line represents the key squares that the white king must reach to gain the opposition.

In chess, the term '**Opposition**' designates a situation in which the two kings face each other with only one square between them. For the player who is not to move, the chess term is 'he has the opposition'. On the other hand, the player whose turn it is, has to move his king in a way that may give the opponent access to important squares.

In the following diagram there are *two* squares between the kings.



If it's Black's turn, he can take the opposition and draw – if it's White's turn, he can take the opposition and win.

1...♔e7!

Only with this move Black can control the three crucial squares in front of the pawn.

1...♔f7? 2.♔d6 ♕e8

(2...♔f8 3.♔d7 ♔f7 4.e5+-)

3.e5 ♔d8 4.e6 ♕e8 5.e7 ♔f7 6.♔d7+-

2.♔d5 ♔d7 3.e5 ♕e7 4.e6 ♕e8

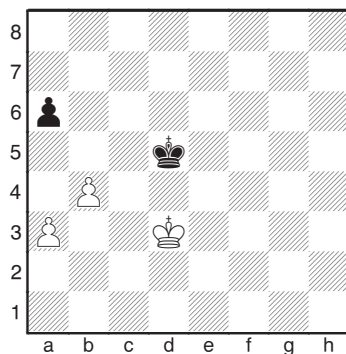
4...♔d8? 5.♔d6 ♕e8 6.e7 ♔f7 7.♔d7+-

5.♔d6 ♔d8 6.e7+ ♕e8 7.♔e6 stalemate

And with White to move, the simplest way to victory is 1.♔e6! ♔d8 2.♔f7 ♔d7 3.e5+- or 1...♔f8 2.♔d7 ♔f7 3.e5+-.

As we have seen, there's a horizontal and a vertical form of 'opposition', which are both called *direct opposition*. If the opposition is in a diagonal, it's called *diagonal opposition*, and if there are three or even five squares between the kings, it's called *distance opposition*.

GM Rustam Kasimdzhanov GM Vladimir Malanyuk Poland 2014



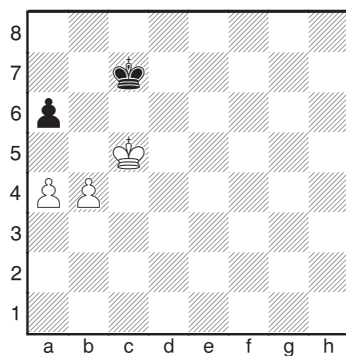
White to move

Black has the opposition, but White has a reserve tempo at his disposal. Let's first take a look at what White *should have played*.

1) 50.a4! ♔e5

50...♔d6 51.♔d4 ♔c6 52.♔e5 ♔d7 53.♔d5 ♔c7 54.♔c5 ♔b7 55.♔d6 ♔b6 56.♔d7 ♔b7 57.a5+-

51.♔c4 ♔d6 52.♔d4 ♔c6 53.♔e5 ♔d7 54.♔d5 ♔c7 55.♔c5

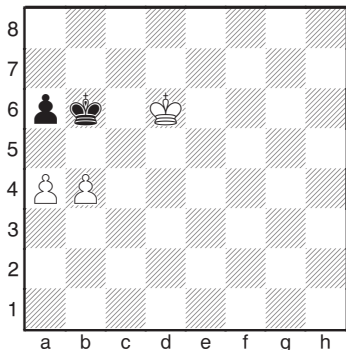


analysis diagram

55...♔b7

55...a5 56.b5! ♔b7 57.♔d5! (diagonal opposition) 57...♔c7 58.♔e6 ♔b7 59.♔d7 ♔b6 60.♔d6 ♔b7 61.♔c5 ♔a7 62.♔c6 ♔b8 63.♔b6+–

56.♔d6 ♔b6



analysis diagram

57.a5+

57.♔d7 ♔b7 58.a5+–

57...♔b7

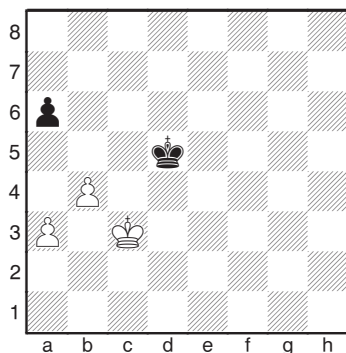
57...♔b5 58.♔c7 ♔xb4 59.♔b6 ♔c4 60.♔xa6 ♔c5 61.♔b7+–

58.♔d7 ♔a7 59.♔c7 ♔a8 60.♔b6+–

Since White missed this chance in the game, a very instructive battle for the 'distant opposition' was about to follow.

2) 50.♔c3?

Try to find Black's best move in the next three diagrams.



Here Black must be aware that White has a reserve tempo. Therefore, he may not take the opposition before White's pawn is already on a4.

50...♔c6!

After the alternatives, White wins the fight for the opposition.

1) 50...♔d6? 51.♔c4 (51.a4? ♔c7!=) 51...♔c6 52.a4 ♔d6 53.♔d4

2) 50...♔e5? 51.♔d3+–; 51.a4 ♔d5 52.♔d3 ♔c6 53.♔c4 ♔d6 54.♔d4+–

51.♔c4

51.a4 ♔c7! 52.♔d4 ♔d6=; 51.♔d4 ♔b5 52.♔c3 a5=

51...♔d6

51...♔b6 52.a4 ♔c6 53.♔d4 ♔d6=

52.a4

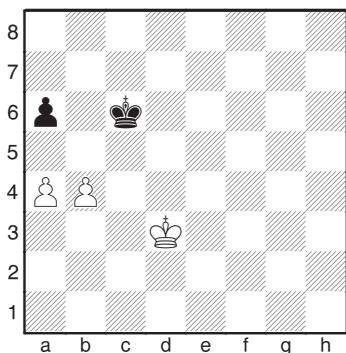
After 52.♔d4 ♔c6 53.♔c4 ♔b6= or 53.♔e5 a5=; 53...♔b5=, Black can exchange his last pawn.

52...♔c6

Now Black has the opposition.

53.♔d3

After 53.a5 ♔d6 54.b5 axb5+ 55.♔xb5 ♔c7=, Black has no problems to draw.



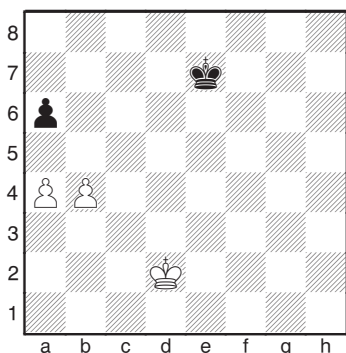
53...♔d7!

53...♔c7? 54.♔e4+-; 53...♔d5? 54.♔c3 ♔e5 55.♔c4 ♔d6 56.♔d4 ♔c6 57.♔e5+-

54.♔e3 ♔e7 55.♔f3 ♔d7!

55...♔f7? 56.b5 axb5 57.a5+-

56.♔f4 ♔d6! 57.♔e4 ♔e6 58.♔e3 ♔e7 59.♔d2



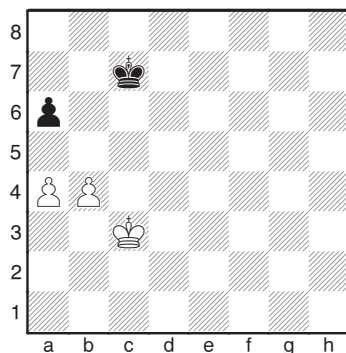
59...♔d7? (59...♔d8=; 59...♔d6=) 60.♔c2?

60.♔d3 ♔c7 61.♔e4 ♔c6 62.♔e5 ♔d7 63.♔d5+-

60...♔c7?

60...♔c8=; 60...♔c6=; 60...♔d6? 61.♔d2+-

61.♔c3!



61...♔c6

61...♔d7 62.♔d3! ♔c7 63.♔e4 ♔c6 64.♔e5+-; 62...♔e7 63.♔c4 ♔d6 64.♔d4+-

62.♔c4 ♔d6 63.♔d4

White could already have obtained the same position after 50.a4! ♔e5 51.♔c4 ♔d6 52.♔d4.

63...♔c6 64.♔e5 ♔d7 65.♔d5 ♔c7 66.♔c5 ♔b7 67.♔d6 ♔b6 68.♔d7

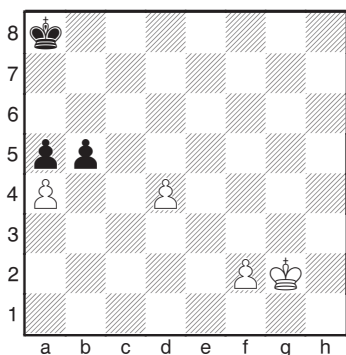
68.a5+ ♔b7 69.♔d7+-; 68...♔b5 69.♔c7+-

68...♔b7 69.a5 1-0

The 'Rule of the Square' is useful for determining whether a pawn can

reach the promotion square without help – or whether the opposing king can intercept it. The rule states: If the opposing king is within the square, the pawn can be intercepted.

Fredrik Aasen 1430
Magnus Magnusson 2005
 Copenhagen 2017



White to move

In this position it's clear that Black threatens to win with 1...bxa4. Imagine a diagonal from the pawn on a5 to the square on e1. This is the diagonal of the square a1–a5–e5–e1. The white king cannot stop the pawn, as even after 1.♔f1 it's still outside the square. Therefore, another solution must be found.

53.f4

This is the only move.

53...♔b8?

The king wants to stop the opposing pawn by entering the crucial square (b4–b8–f8–f4). However, this is no

good idea in the given position. Let's take a look at the correct alternatives.

1) 53...♔b7 54.f5 bxa4!

(54...♔c7? 55.f6 ♔d7 56.f7 ♔e7 57.axb5 a4 58.b6 a3 59.b7 a2 60.b8♖+–; 60.f8♖+ ♔xf8 61.b8♖+ ♔e7 62.♖a7+ +–)

55.f6 a3 56.f7 a2 57.f8♖ a1♖=;

2) 53...bxa4! 54.f5 a3 55.f6 a2 56.f7 a1♖ 57.f8♖+ ♔b7=

54.♔f2??

White makes a similar error, since the king is *still* outside the square!

Instead, he could have won after 54.f5

(54.axb5 a4 55.f5 a3 56.f6 a2 57.f7 a1♖ 58.f8♖+ ♔b7 59.♖e7+ also wins, although less easily than the text move.)

54...♔c7

(After 54...bxa4 55.f6 a3 56.f7 a2, the white pawn promotes with check!)

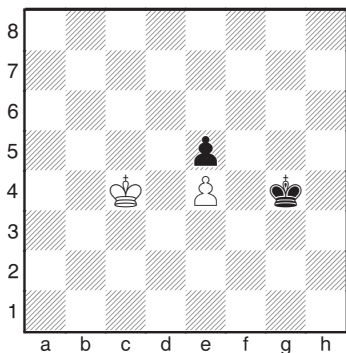
55.f6 ♔d7 56.axb5 a4 57.f7 ♔e7 58.b6 a3 59.b7 a2 60.b8♖+–

54...bxa4 55.f5 ♔c7 56.♔e2 a3 57.f6 ♔d7 58.♔d2 a2 59.f7 ♔e7 60.♔c2 a1♖ 61.f8♖+ ♔xf8 62.d5 ♖d4 0–1

White missed a great chance to defeat a much stronger opponent!

In the following game, White had played very well so far, and now only had to avoid a trap in a perfectly balanced ending.

Valerine Munoz 1521
Trilce Contreras 1917
 Manta 2017



White to move

What would you play?

78.♔c5?

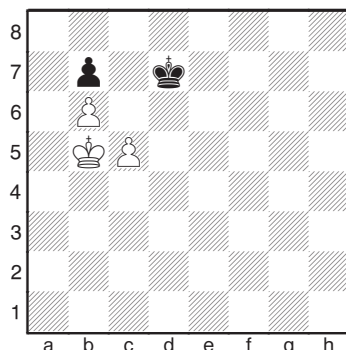
After 78.♔d3 ♕f4 79.♔d2! ♔xe4 80.♕e2=, White has the opposition.

78...♕f3! 79.♕c4

Probably White saw only now that after 79.♔d5 ♕f4 there's some sort of reciprocal *zugzwang*: the side that has to move – loses. 80.♕c4 ♔xe4 81.♕c3 ♕e3+-

79...♔xe4 80.♕c3 ♕e3 81.♕c2 e4 0-1

Oguz Elidolu 1325
Mert Orbay 1510
 Konya 2017



White to move

What should White play?

62.c6+? ♔c8!

62...bxc6+? 63.♕a6+- or 63.♕c5 ♕d8 64.♔d6! ♔c8 65.♕xc6 ♕b8 66.b7+-

63.♕c5 ♕b8!

63...bxc6? 64.♕xc6+-

64.♕b5

64.♔d6 bxc6 65.♕xc6 ♔c8=

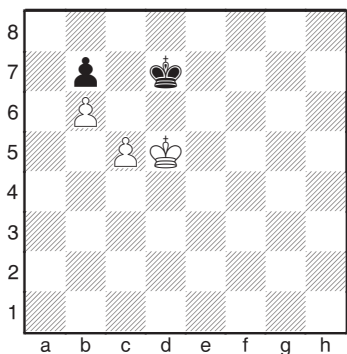
64...bxc6+ 65.♕c4 ♕c8 66.♔d4 ♕b8 1/2-1/2

White could only win by means of the following maneuvers.

62.♕c4 ♕d8 63.♔d5

(63.♔d4 ♕c8 64.♕e5 ♕d7 65.♔d5 ♕e7 66.c6 bxc6+ 67.♕xc6 ♕d8 68.b7+-)

63...♔d7



White has to lose one tempo to reach the opposition. This can be done by a technique that in chess is called '**Triangulation**'. Normally, this is possible if a king can maneuver on three squares that form a triangle, while the opposing king has only *two* squares at his disposal.

In the given case, Black's king has less maneuvering space, and White can create a passed pawn by pushing his c-pawn.

64.♔d4 ♚d8 65.♚e5 ♔d7

(65...♚e7 66.c6!+-)

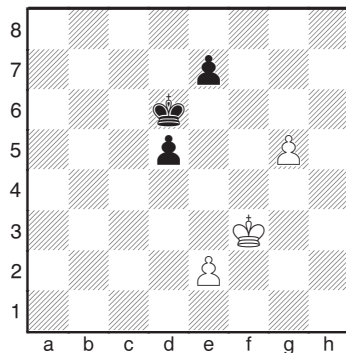
66.♚d5

White has managed to reach the diagram position, but with *Black* to move! The rest is easy.

66...♚d8 67.♚e6 ♔c8 68.♚e7 ♔b8
69.♚d7 ♚a8 70.c6 bxc6 71.♚c7+-

A **passed pawn** is a pawn that can advance to the promotion square without being hindered by opposing pawns. This means that there's neither an opposing pawn in front of it nor in the right and left adjacent lines. A passed pawn is an advantage, as it can only be stopped with pieces.

Dogan Koc 1712
Onur Gocer 1572
Konya 2017



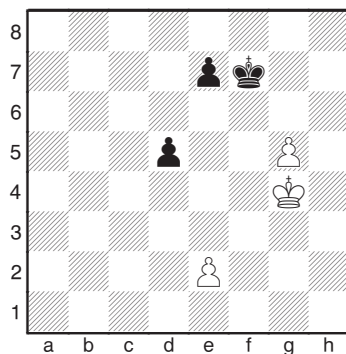
Black to move

Find Black's only move!

45...e5?

As we will see, this pawn will soon become a weakness. It was necessary to prevent the opposing king from advancing.

45...♚e6! 46.♚g4 ♔f7



analysis diagram