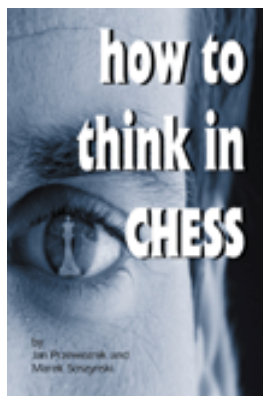




C O L U M N I S T S

## The Instructor

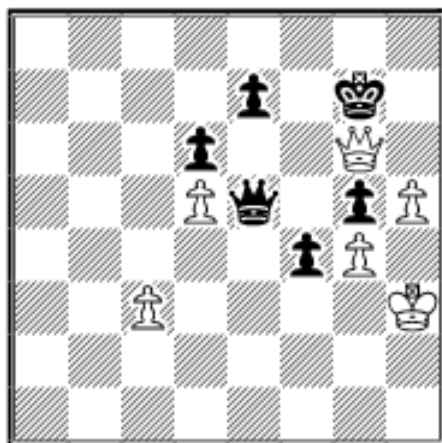
Mark Dvoretsky



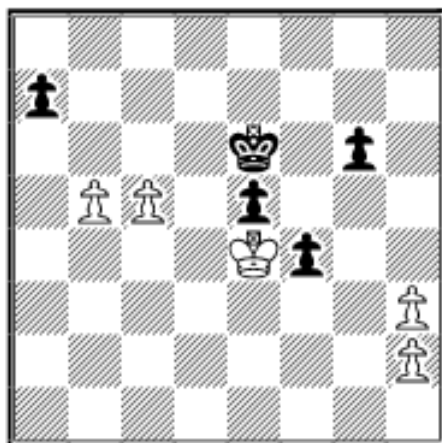
## Tragicomedies in Pawn Endgames

*“Pawn endgames are rare birds in practice. Players avoid them, because they do not like them, because they do not understand them. It’s certainly no secret that pawn endings are ‘terra incognita’ - even for many masters, right up to the level of grandmasters and world champions.” N. Grigoriev*

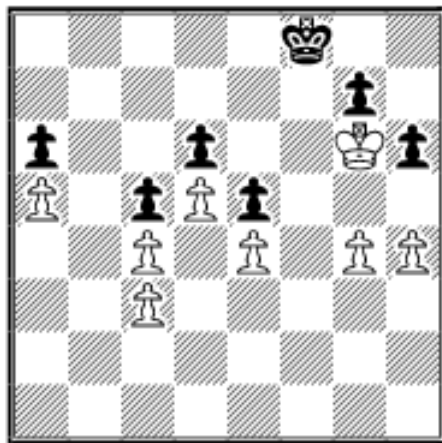
Herewith, I offer proof that these words, spoken by a famous expert on pawn endings, are true. Without commentary, I give below the final moves of some actual games, and offer the readers the chance to comment on them, to uncover all the mistakes committed by both players. The endgames you will be dealing with here are not all that difficult; but still, the players on both sides have provided you with plenty of opportunities for critical commentary.



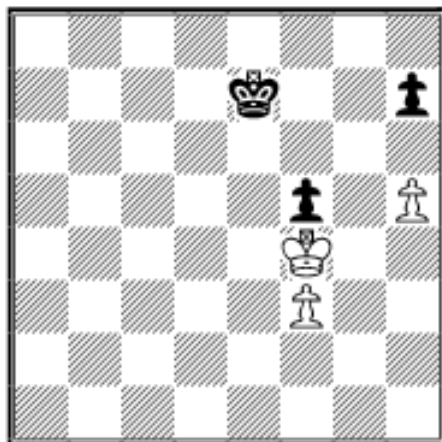
1...Kf8 2. Qf5+ Qxf5 3. gf Kg7 4. c4 f3 5. h6+ Kxh6 6. c5 dc 7. f6 Kg6  
White resigned.



1...g5 2. Kf3 Kd5 3. c6 Kd6 4. Ke4 a6 5. ba Kxc6 6. Kf3 Kb6 7. h4 gh 8. Kg4 Kxa6 9. Kxh4 Kb6 10. Kg4 Kc6 11. h4 Kd6. White resigned.



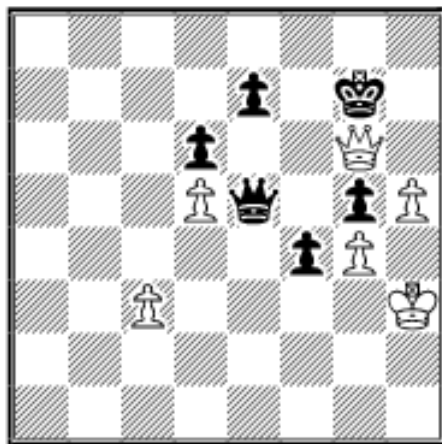
1. Kh7 Kf7 2. Kh8 Kf8 3. g5. Black resigned.



1. Kg5 Kf8 2. Kxf5 Kf7 3. Kg4 Kf6 4. Kf4 Kf7 5. Kf5 Ke7 6. Ke5 Kf7 7. Kd6 Kf6 8. Kd7 Kf7 9. h6 Kg6 10. f4 Kf7 11. f5 Kf6 Drawn

### Gazic - Petursson European Junior Championship, Groningen 1978/79

The draw is obvious after 1...Kh8! Black mistakenly allowed the trade of queens.



1...Kf8?? 2. Qf5+! Qxf5 3. gf Kg7 4. c4

White ought to win this, with a powerful *pawn break* at his disposal. Nevertheless, it was simpler to play 4. Kg4 Kh6 (4...Kf6 5. h6+-) 5. c4 f3 (or 5...Kg7 6. Kf3 - zugzwang) 6. Kxf3 Kxh5 7. f6 (7. Kg3 is also good) 7...Kg6 (7...ef 8. c5+-) 8. fe Kf7 9. Kg4 Kxe7 10.

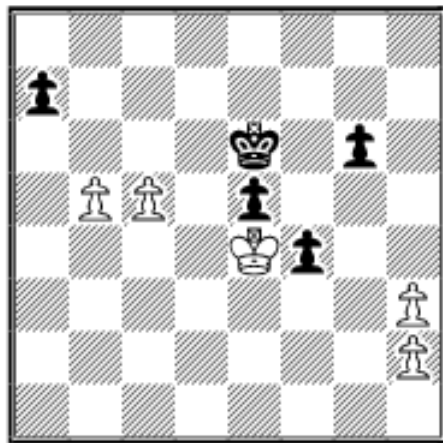
Kxg5+-.

4...f3 5. h6+??

In response, a blunder: White's in too much of a hurry with his pawn break. He would win after 5. Kg3 g4 6. Kf2! (Black's in zugzwang) 6...Kh6 (6...Kf6 7. h6) 7. c5 (or 7. f6 ef 8. c5) 7...dc 8. f6 ef 9. d6.

5...Kxh6 6. c5 dc 7. f6 Kg6! White resigned.

### 2. Sulypa - Grischak Lvov, 1995



### 1...g5??

This move does not improve, but rather significantly worsens, Black's position, by giving his opponent the opportunity to exchange a pair of kingside pawns, and to create a passed h-pawn.

Black can win by *undermining* the enemy queenside pawns.

1...Kd7! 2. Kf3 Kc7 (2...Ke7 3. Ke4 Ke6 4. Kf3 Kd5 5. c6 Kd6 6. Ke4 a6+ is also good; or 4. h4 Kd7! 5. Kf3 Ke7

6. Ke4 Ke6, working the same triangulation maneuver again and again, until his opponent runs out of pawn moves) 3. h4 Kc8 (but not 3...Kb7 4. Ke4 a6? at once, in view of 5. ba+ Kxa6 6. c6! Kb6 7. Kxe5 f3 8. Kd6 f2 9. c7=) 4. Ke4 Kb7 5. h3 Kc8 6. Kf3 Kc7 7. Ke4 Kb7 (zugzwang) 8. Kf3 a6!-+.

### 2. Kf3??

A mistake in move order. After 2. h4! gh 3. Kf3 Kd5 4. c6 Kd6 5. Kg4 a6 6. ba Kxc6 7. Kxh4 Kb6 8. Kg4 Kxa6 9. h4, it's White who wins.

### 2...Kd5 3. c6 Kd6??

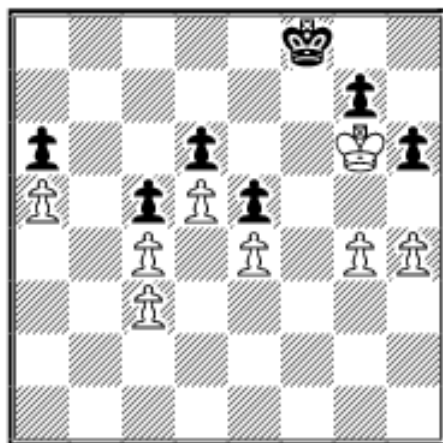
3...e4+! 4. Kg4 Kd6-+ was necessary. It is curious that both players' errors on the 2nd and 3rd moves have not been discovered in any commentaries I know of - for example, in Belyavsky and Mikhalchishin's book, *Winning Endgame Strategy*.

### 4. Ke4??

For the fourth time, the evaluation of the position changes by 180 degrees. White would win by 4. h4! gh 5. Kg4.

4...a6 5. ba Kxc6 6. Kf3 Kb6 7. h4 (too late!) 7...gh 8. Kg4 Kxa6 9. Kxh4 Kb6 10. Kg4 Kc6 11. h4 Kd6 White resigned

### Horowitz - Denker Philadelphia, 1936



M. Zinar, the well-known pawn-endgame specialist, has shown that, from here on in, every move by both players was wrong, except the very last. His analysis follows:

1) White should not have stuck his king in the corner. The right plan for realizing his advantage was that of *expanding the base of operations*. This is what we call the technique of exchanging pawns, in order to secure a route for the king to the opposite wing.

1. g5! hg 2. Kxg5 Kf7 3. h5 Ke7 4. Kg6 Kf8 5. h6! Kg8! 6. Kh5! gh 7. Kxh6 Kf7 8. Kh7 (White has the *opposition*) 8.. Kf6 9. Kg8 (*end run*) 9...Kg5 10. Kf7 Kf4 11. Ke6 Kxe4 12. Kxd6 Kf4 13. Kxc5 e4 14. d6 e3 15. d7 e2 16. d8Q e1Q 17. Qf6+, with an easily won queen endgame.

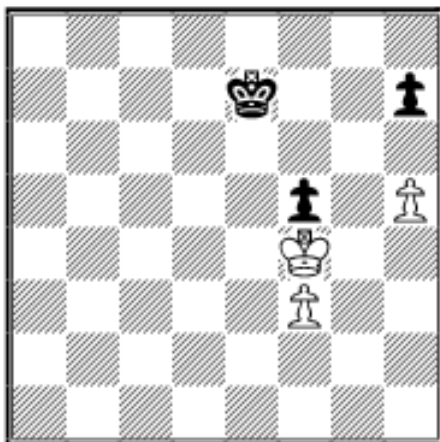
2) After 1. **Kh7??**, Black attains the draw with 1...h5! (instead of 1...**Kf7?**) 2. g5 Kf7 3. Kh8 Kg6! 4. Kg8 - stalemate; or 2. gh Kf7 3. h6 g6! (since Black now has the opposition, White's end-run is no longer possible) 6. Kh8 Kf8=.

3) 2. **Kh8?** lets the win slip once again. Nor does 2. g5? work this time, because of 2...h5! 3. g6+ (3. Kh8 Kg6!) 3...Kf6 4. Kg8 Kxg6 5. Kf8 Kf6 6. Ke8 g5 7. hg+ Kxg5 10. Ke7 h4 11. Kxd6 h3 12. Kc7 h2 13. d6 h1Q 14. d7 Qh7 15. Kc8 Qh3=.

The proper move is 2. h5! Kf6 (we already know what happens on 2...Kf8 3. Kg6 Kg8 4. Kf5 Kf7 5. g5 hg 6. Kxg5) 3. Kg8 g6 (3...g5 4. Kh7) 4. Kf8! gh 5. gh Kg5 6. Ke7 Kxh5 7. Kxd6 Kg4 8. Kxe5+-.

4) The king's retreat by 2...**Kf8??** was the final blunder. A draw results from 2...h5! 3. g5 Kg6! or 3. gh Kf8 4. h6 g6!

### *Azmaiparashvili - Eolian USSR, 1979*



One cannot penetrate the secrets of this endgame without knowing about the position that arises after 1. Kxf5! Kf7 2. f4 Ke7 3. Ke5 (zugzwang) 3...Kf7! As Maizelis demonstrated in 1955, White wins here with an unexpected endrun: 4. Kd6!! Kf6 5. h6! (zugzwang). For example, 5...Kf5 6. Ke7 Kxf4 7. Kf6!+- (*shoulder-block*); or 5...Kg6 6. Ke6 (or e7) Kxh6 7. f5+-; or 5...Kf7 6. Kd7! Kf6 (6...Kf8 7. Ke6 Ke8 8. Kf6 Kf8 9. f5 Kg8 10. Ke7+-) 7. Ke8 Ke6 8. Kf8 Kf6 9. Kg8 Kg6 10. f5+ Kf6 11. Kxh7

Kf7 12. f6+-.

The position reached after 3. Ke5 is not just zugzwang, but a mutual zugzwang - that is, if White were on move, then there would be no win. 4. h6 Kf7 5. Kd6 Kf6! 6. Kd7 Kf7! would be useless, as Black would control the opposition. And after 4. f5, then 5...Kf7 6. f6 Ke8! (the king must choose its retreat square, depending on the position of the White h-pawn: with the pawn at h4, he must play 6...Kf8!. It is only with the pawn at h2 that this position would be won for White, since he would have the choice of advancing his h-pawn either one or two squares.) 7. Ke6 Kf8 8. f7 h6=.

Thus armed with knowledge of Maizelis' position (which in fact was seen earlier, in a 1949 study by Valles), we can proceed to examine the ending between these two young players.

**1. Kg5?? Kf8 2. Kxf5 Kf7??**

Black draws with 2...Ke7! 3. f4 Kf7, reaching the Maizelis position with White to move.

### 3. Kg4??

The comedy of errors continues! Of course, 3. f4 or 3. Ke5 was correct.

### 3...Kf6 4. Kf4 Kf7??

Once again, instead of the saving move (4...Ke6! 5. Kg5 Kf7=), Black makes a losing one.

### 5. Kf5??

And again White misses his opportunity: 5. Ke5! Ke7 6. f4, and Black is in zugzwang.

### 5...Ke7 6. Ke5 Kf7 7. Kd6 Kf6 8. Kd7 Kf7!

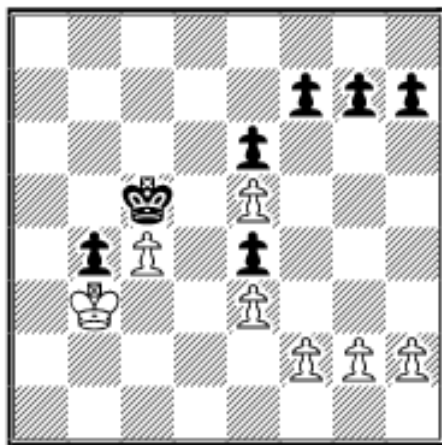
Near the finish, Black defends accurately. 8...Kg5? would be a mistake, in view of 9. Ke6+-.

**9. h6** (9. f4 Kf6 10. Ke8 Kf5 11. Kf7 Kxf4 12. Kg7 Kf5 13. Kxh7 Kf6=) **9...Kg6!** **10. f4** (10. Ke6 Kxh6 11. f4 Kg7 12. Ke7 Kg6! =) **10. ...Kf7!** (of course not 10...Kxh6? 11. f5+- - but now, White's in zugzwang) **11. f5 Kf6** Draw.

This example demonstrates how both players' moves can sometimes seem senseless, when they are unacquainted with the ideas of the position.

In conclusion, I would like to show my readers a rather recently played endgame which gave me a great deal of pleasure. True, both players operated on about the same level as the players in our preceding examples; but the solution demonstrated by F. Lindgren in *Chess Informant* is instructive and quite pretty.

### *Laveryd - Wikstrom Umea, 1997*



Black to move

What should be this game's proper outcome? On the queenside, the position is one of mutual zugzwang: it looks as though whichever side runs out of pawn moves first will lose (and we would expect that to be Black). So the correct answer - that the position is drawn - appears paradoxical.

The first question is: How does Black avoid immediate loss, since 1...f6? (or 1...f5) is completely hopeless, due to 2.

ef gf 3. g4!

### 1...h5!

It turns out that the natural 2. h4? would not place Black in zugzwang, but

White, after 2...g5! 3. hg h4.

The game continuation was 1...h6?? 2. h3?? (White wins after 2. g4! g6 3. h4 or 2...f5 3. ef gf 4. h4) 2...h5!-+ 3. h4 g5! 4. g3 g4, and White resigned.

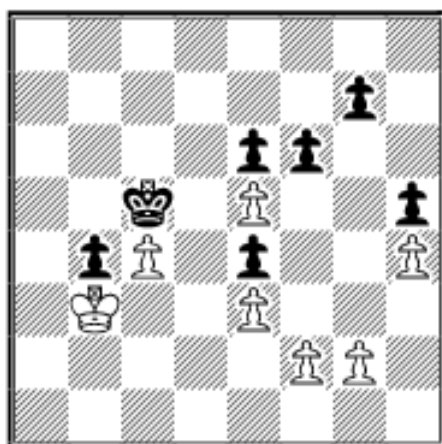
## 2. h3!

The only move! As we have already seen, 2. h4? doesn't work; 2. f4? ef 3. gf h4 4. h3 f6 (or 4...f5) is bad; and 2. g3? f6 (2...f5) also loses. But now, Black again faces a perplexing riddle.

2...g5? loses at once to 3. g3, and 2...f5? to 3. h4. No better is 2...h4 3. g3! hg (3...g5 4. g4) 4. fg f5 5. ef gf 6. h4. And 2...g6? is elegantly refuted by 3. g4! (but not 3. h4? g5!) 3...hg 4. h4! That leaves just one move:

## 2...f6! 3. h4!

Of course not 3. ef? gf, and it's easy to see that it will be White who slips into zugzwang here. But now what does Black do?



3...fe is met by 4. g4!; and if 3...f5, then 4. f4! ef 5. gf g5 (5...f4 6. ef g6 7. f5) 6. hg h4 7. g6 h3 8. g7 h2 9. g8Q h1Q 10. Qf8+ Kc6 11. Qd6+, with an easily won queen and pawn ending.

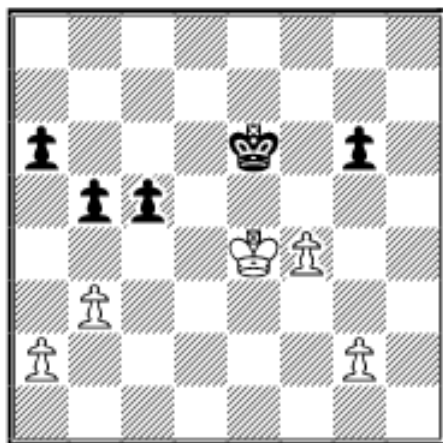
It requires an extraordinary imagination (or knowledge of several Grigoriev studies) to find the idea of a midboard stalemate haven!

**3...fe! 4. g4! g6! (4...hg? 5. h5+-) 5. g5 Kb6! (5...Kd6!) 6. Kxb4 Kc6 7. c5 Kd5! 8. Kb5 - stalemate**

## Addendum

After the preceding had been written, my attention was drawn to the ending of another of Fischer's games, as given in the aforementioned book by Belyavsky and Mikhalchishin.

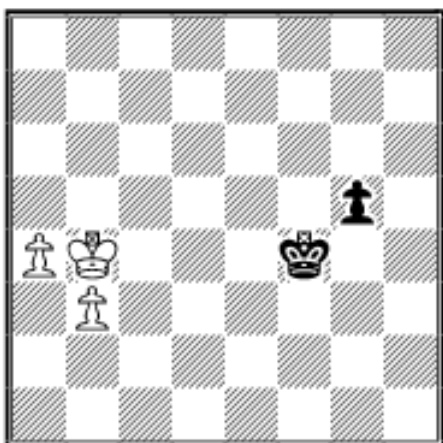
## Fischer - Letelier Mar del Plata 1959

**47. a4?**

A purposeful move (in some lines, it is useful to advance this pawn to a5), but badly timed. As Belyavsky shows, White wins after 47. g4! However, his analysis does contain one serious inaccuracy.

47...a5 (White's task would be simpler after 47...Kd6 48. f5 gf+ 49. Kxf5 c4 50. bc+ bc 51. Ke4, or 48...g5 49. a4! Kc6 50. ab+ ab 51. Ke5) 48. a4 b4 49. Kd3! Kd5 50. g5! (zugzwang) 50...Ke6 51. Kc4 Kf5 52. Kxc5 Kxf4 53. Kb5

Kxg5 54. Kxa5 Kf4 55. Kxb4 g5



Here, the grandmaster continues with 56. a5 g4, "...and White reaches a queen ending with a b-pawn - and every chance of a win." In fact, the practical winning chances in such endgames are quite high: the defensive task is a difficult one.

Nevertheless, according to objective authority - the endgame "Database" - the position is drawn. Besides, White has an easy win with 56. Kc3(c4)! g4 57. Kd3! Kf3 (57...g3 58. Ke2) 58. a5, when the White pawn queens with check, after which Black cannot avoid the exchange

of queens.

**47...Kd6 48. f5?? gf+ 49. Kxf5 Kd5??**

Belyavsky and Mikhalchishin point out that 49...c4! wins immediately, and wonder - quite rightly - why Mednis' book, *How To Beat Bobby Fischer* gives Black's last move an exclamation mark.

**50. g4 Kd4! 51. g5**

Here or on the preceding move, it would have been simpler to have exchanged pawns at b5. Still, a question mark on White's last move would be unjustified, since it too leads to an elementary draw.

**51...c4 52. bc b4 53. c5??**

Of course, he had to play 53. g6 b3 54. g7 b2 55. g8Q b1Q+ 56. Kf6(e6)=.

**53...b3**, and White soon resigned.

Well, after reading the article, we shouldn't be surprised at the extremely low level of play exhibited by both sides in this pawn endgame - but this example seems a bit much to me. In fact, it turns out that half of the errors we have noted are more likely due to a misprinted text of the game.

According to a computer database, the game actually went differently:

**47. a4? Kd6 48. a5**

The logical continuation of the plan begun on the preceding move.

**48...Ke6 49. g3**

49. g4 Kd6 50. f5 suggests itself, and if 50...gf+, then 51. Kxf5 wins. However, 50...g5! would leave White in zugzwang, with a drawn position.

**49...Kd6 50. f5 gf+ 51. Kxf5 Kd5 52. g4 Kd4!** (Black's only saving move) **53. g5 c4 54. bc b4! 55. c5??**

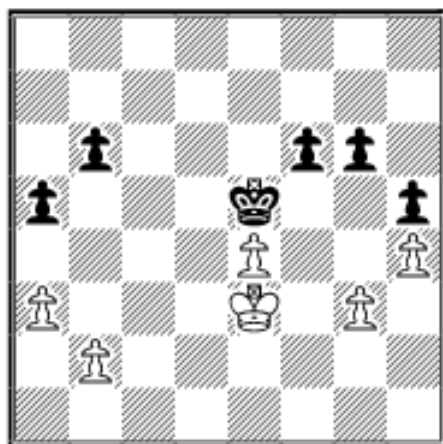
Fischer persisted so long in trying to find winning chances where they no longer exist, that he lost his sense of danger, and committed a fatal error.

**55...b3 56. c6 b2 57. c7 b1Q+ 58. Ke6 Qb7 59. Kd7 Kd5 60. g6 Qc6+ 61. Kd8 Qd6+** White resigned.

Belyavsky and Mikhalchishin evidently followed the text of the game as given in the Mednis book - which, in turn, probably was taken from the game collection of Wade and O'Connell. I am no historian, and I cannot prove which version of the text actually occurred; but the computer version of the game looks far more likely to me.

A similar story occurred in a game from Belyavsky and Mikhalchishin's previous book, *Winning Endgame Technique*.

### Ree - Ftacnik Kiev 1978



*“Black stands better, but with no obvious way of winning he decides to play a logical -looking move:”*

**56...g5**

*“But this was met by a terrific reply:”*

**57. g4!!**

A standard breakthrough, which has been seen in practice numerous times. The game continued: 57...hg 58. h5 Ke6 59. Kf2 Kf7 60. Kg3 Kg7 61. Kxg4 Kh6

62. Kf5 Kxh5 63. Kxf6 g4 64. e5, etc. (White trades queens and wins, since his king will be the first to reach the queenside pawns.)

Upon first glance, the diagram made me wonder: Why doesn't Black have an obvious win? The obvious move is 56...a4! 57. Kd3(f3), and only then 57...g5 - now the 58. g4 breakthrough doesn't work; and if 58. Ke3, then 58...gh 59. gh f5 60. ef Kxf5 61. Kf3 b5, and White's in zugzwang.

This would be an excellent question to pose to the book's authors. However, if I had asked it of Lubomir Ftacnik, who actually played Black, he would have replied that such a position never existed in the game. In fact, the Black pawn was already on a4. After 56...b5 57. Kd3 g5 58. Ke3! gh (58...g4 59. Kd3) 59. gh f5 60. gf Kxf5 61. Kf3, it's a draw, since Black doesn't have the vital



extra tempo he needs to secure the opposition. Which, of course, does not give him the excuse to lose the game with 56...g5??

Inasmuch as I have referred several times to Belyavsky and Mikhalchishin's endgame booklets, I think this would be a good time to give a short impression of these works. While they contain many interesting examples - some well known, some taken from recent events - unfortunately, they fall short in execution, with generally superficial commentaries. Here's an example of the authors' (and Batsford's editors) carelessness in preparation of these books: curiously, the two examples which lead off the chapter of *Winning Endgame Strategy* that deals with pawn endgames: Kuzmin - Petrosian and Cruz - Seirawan (page 19) are later presented again as exercises, on pages 30 and 33. And the version of the latter game presented here in fact differs from what happened in the actual game. The endgame Klován - Elištrátov is presented as a pawn endgame exercise twice! (Nos. 7 and 25). True, the h-pawn is in a different location in each case; but this affects neither the play in this game. nor the actual result.

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Translated by Jim Marfia

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