Bavarian Impressions

It’s now going on ten years since I was invited to Munich for a few sessions with the members of Team “Bavaria” – in those days, the leading club in Germany. The team was stocked with high-class grandmasters, such as Artur Yusupov and Robert Hübner; and with young masters like Michael Bezold, Christian Gabriel, and Markus Stangl, who would soon become grandmasters.

Working with highly qualified players is usually a mutually beneficial experience. Through discussions with strong opponents, the trainer sharpens and enriches the perceptions they offer, while correcting his own instructional examples and exercises. When analyzing students’ games, sometimes curious situations appear, which the trainer may employ later on; and sometimes, the students themselves show the trainer some fragments of clarity they have played.

GM Stefan Kindermann showed me two episodes taken from his own games – wholly different in nature, both equally interesting and instructive.

**Lyrberg - Kindermann**
Gausdal 1994

It’s Black’s move, and he has a tough decision to make.

Black’s position is dangerous; the f7-pawn is a serious hindrance, and the two white bishops can become very powerful. Careless play will inevitably lead to catastrophe, for example: 22...Rd8? 23. f4! Nf6 24. Be6 g6 25. c4 Kg7 26. Bb2 Rd6 27. Ba3 (but not 27. Bxf6+? Kf8, nor 27. Bd5? Rxd5) 27...Rd8 28. Be7 Rb8 29. Kf3, when Black is helpless.

This was the course of a later training game, played between two strong grandmasters.

Instead of 26...Rd6, Black could have tried 26...Rf8 27. Kf3 Rxf7 28. Bxf7 Kxf7 29. Bxf6 Kxf6. I am not sure that the pawn ending is necessarily lost and suggest that readers check this for themselves. But the position after 27. f5! gf 28. Kf3 Kg6 (here 28...Rxf7 is altogether bad: 29. Kf4! Rf8 30. Kxf5, and zugzwang will soon cost Black his knight) 29. Kf4 Nh5+ 30. Ke5 is most probably lost.

Black would like to remove the f7-pawn as quickly as possible, but how?

As I recall, when Stefan offered me this position to consider, I found the strongest move – and the one he actually chose in the game – rather quickly.

22...Nd7-c5!!

And now – turn the board around, and play White. Of course, your task is easier, as long as you have guessed the point of Black’s move; but even then, making the optimal decision for White is not all that easy.

In the game, White continued 23. Bd5 Nd3 (threatening 24...Nf4+, and suddenly Kindermann’s opponent saw that the natural 24. Kg3? is met by 24...Ne5 25. Bb2 Nxf7 26. Ba3 Nd6! 27. Bxd6 Rd8, and now it’s Black who’s winning. The “tempo-losing” Nd7-c5-d3-e5 decoyed the enemy bishop to d5, which in turn allowed Black to snatch the f7-pawn with impunity.

Having figured out what his opponent was up to, White replied 24. Bb3! Nc5 (24...b5? is a mistake, in view of 25. f4! Nxf4+ 26. Kg3 Nd3 27. f4, with advantage to White) 25. Bd5 Nd3 26. Bb3 Nc5 27. Bd5 Draw.

So, was the draw that occurred in the game the proper answer to your second task? No. As it happens, White can still try for the win.

23. Bb3-c4!


23...b6-b5

After 23...g5 24. Bd5 Kg7 25. c4+ Kg6 26. Be5 or 26. f4?! Black’s position is difficult.

24. Bc4-d5 Nc5-d3 25. Kg2-g3! Nd3-e5 26. c3-c4!

Here’s the point: thanks to the insertion of his 23rd move, White attacks, not only the knight, but also the b5-pawn.

26...Ne5xf7


27. c4xb5 Nf7-d6 28. a2-a4

Or 28. Bc6. White follows up with f3-f4 and Be5, etc. White’s position isn’t necessarily won; but with two pawns for the exchange plus the powerful pair of bishops, he risks nothing, and has solid winning chances.
Among the themes of our work in Germany were the development of prophylactic thinking, and the perfecting of our technique in converting the advantage. Later, Stefan showed me how he had used the valuable lessons he had learned in practice.

**Hirndl - Kindermann**  
Austrian League, 1996

Black’s positional advantage is indisputable: his powerful knight clearly outclasses White’s “bad” bishop. White has no counterplay, so one would expect 28...Kg7, improving the king’s position – in strict accordance with the chief principle of endgame play.

Kindermann took a deeper look at the position. He used prophylactic thinking, asking himself: “How is my opponent going to defend?” He decided that White was going to put his bishop back on e2, his king on f1, and probably push his pawn to f3. Of course, Black would still enjoy a pleasant and trouble-free life then as well; but breaking down the enemy defenses would be very difficult: the bishop, after all, impedes the knight’s mobility, and prevents it from participating in the attack. And the White rook can, in some lines, attack the pawns at d6 or f7.

So Black’s first priority is to keep the bishop from retreating to e2.

28...Ra6-a4!

28...Ra2, with the same idea, is weaker because of 29. Kf1 (preparing 30. Be2 after all) 29...Nc4?! (29...Ra4!) 30. Rb4!?, or 30. Ke1!? Kg7 31. Be2 Nd2 32. Rb4 Kf6 33. f3.

29. Bg4-f5

Of course, Black had to consider that White could attack the d6-pawn; it’s the only weak link in Black’s position. But in that case, the White king would come under fire. Here’s a sample line: 29. Rb6 Nc4 30. Rc6?! Ra1+ 31. Kh2 Nd2 32. g3 f3 33. Rxd6 h5! 34. Bxh5 Nf1+ 35. Kg1 Nxf3+ 36. Kh2 Nhx5, and wins.

29...h7-h5 30. f2-f3 Kg8-g7

As the game went, White could probably have defended better, but his position would have been hopeless, nonetheless. His problem is that now Black’s knight can always join in an attack on the kingside by way of d3 or c4; and it’s scarcely possible for him to withstand the concerted assault of all Black’s pieces.

31. Rc1 Kf6 32. Rc3 Nc4 33. Bd7 Ra1+ 34. Kf2 Ra2+ 35. Kg1 Ne3 36. g4 h4!
37. Rc7 Rg2+ 38. Kh1 Rg3 39. Be8 Rhx3+ 40. Kg1 Rxf3 41. Rxf7+ Ke5 42. Re7+ Kd4 43. e5 Rg3+ 44. Kh1 f3 White resigned.

Now I’ll show you one more episode, which went into my notebook after our joint analysis of one of Markus Stangl’s games. Later, this example would be included in Dvoretsky’s Endgame Manual.

**Stangl - Schneider**  
Berlin 1992

8 White must choose between 58. Ng7, snapping up the h5-pawn, or winning the bishop for his c-pawn with 58. c5.

Markus gave the second plan practically no consideration. And in fact, pushing the pawn looks terribly risky; it’s quite likely that it would lose quickly. But the alternative is quite joyless; so I suggested looking at winning the bishop anyway, to see where it might lead. In desperate situations, it’s too late to be afraid. You must examine every chance, explore every hope – forcing variations first among them, as they can sharply alter the course of the game.

Let’s see what kind of absorbing line I managed to find.

58. c4-c5! Bh4-g3 59. e5-c6 h5-h4 60. c6-c7 Bg3xc7 61. Ne6xc7 h4-h3 62. Nc7-d5+

Good news: the h-pawn apparently won’t queen after all. On 62...Ke4, White plays 63. Nf6+ Kf5 64. Nh5, with equality; and if 62...Kd4, then we find 63. Ne7! But what if Black’s king heads for the queenside, aiming to make the a5-pawn passed?

62...Ke3-d4 63. Nd5-e7! h3-h2

63...Ke4 is useless, in view of 64. Kg1! =.

64. Ne7-f5+ Kd4-c4 65. Nf5-g3 Kc4-b4 66. Kf1-f2 Kb4xa4 67. Kf2xf3 Ka4-b3 68. Kf3-g2 a5-a4 69. Ng3-e2 Kb3-b2

If 69...a3 70 Nc1+. But now, we have reached a position which forms the closing tableau of one of Nikolai Dmitriyevich Grigoriev’s lovely miniatures (WK: a6, N: a2; BK: e3, p: h6; 1. Nb4! h5 2. Nc6! Ke4! 3. Na5!! h4 4. Nc4, etc.):
70. Ne2-f4! Kb2-c3!? 71. Nf4-d5+

But not 71. Ne2+? Kd2! 72. Nd4 a3, and the pawn gets to a2. Now the knight wants to go to b4, in order to stop the pawn, and to meet 71...Kc4 with the forking 72. Nb6+.

71...Kc3-b3 72. Nd5-f4! a4-a3 73. Nf4-d3

And the knight stops the pawn from c1.

Nhx5, when 59...Bd4! stopped the c-pawn and took away the f2-square from White’s king. Now there appears to be no way to prevent Black’s king from getting to the queenside pawns.

60. c5 Bxc5

61. Nf6?!
