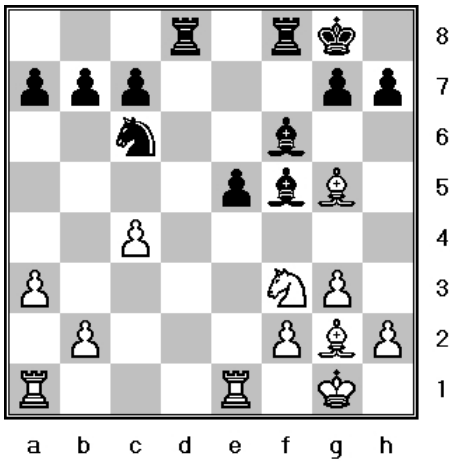


And In The End by Dana Muller



This month we look at the consequences of choosing the wrong plan: an exchange of bishops is followed by passive play which leads from a fairly even queenless middle game to an inferior endgame.

Peter Yu – Dana Muller
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The queenless middle game is fairly balanced; Black has weakness in the shape of an isolated e-pawn, but has the more active pieces and control (for the moment) of the d-file. Within ten moves the game becomes a Rook plus Bishop vs. Rook plus same color Bishop endgame which strongly favors Black. The starting position is critical in the sense that White has to tread carefully in trying to neutralize Black's more active pieces. In particular, the bishop on g5 is exposed.

18. Bxf6

This is a highly committal decision, but likely best. Although Black's most obvious weakness is eliminated, there don't seem to be any outstanding alternatives. Moving the Bg5 to a safe square (such as 18. Be3) allows Black active play starting with 18...e4.

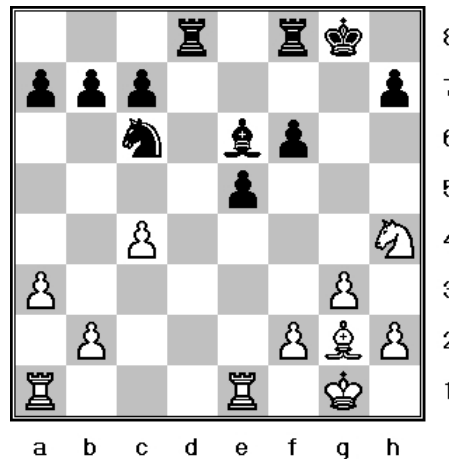
18. ...gxf6 19. Nh4

The correct continuation. There are two plans white has in mind: dominate e4 and f5 with the minor pieces or continue with f4 further weakening black's pawns. Challeng-

ing the d-file with Rad1 or Red1 is less sharp but clearly playable.

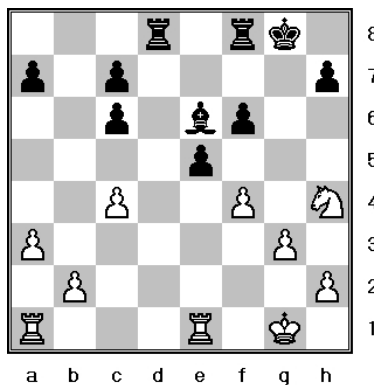
19. ...Be6(?)

During the game I thought I was attacking c4 and gaining a tempo for d-file play. After the game I realized I made a major mistake. 19. ...Bd3 is better; during the game I thought the bishop would interfere with d-file play.

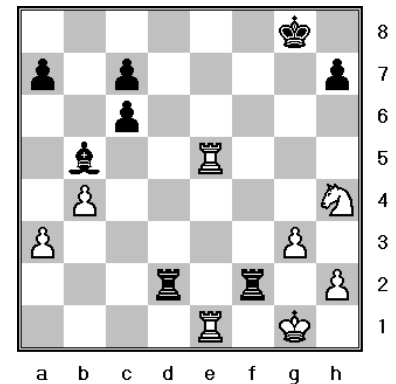


20. b3 (?)

Missing a golden opportunity: 20. Bxc6 bxc6 21. f4! is hard to meet.



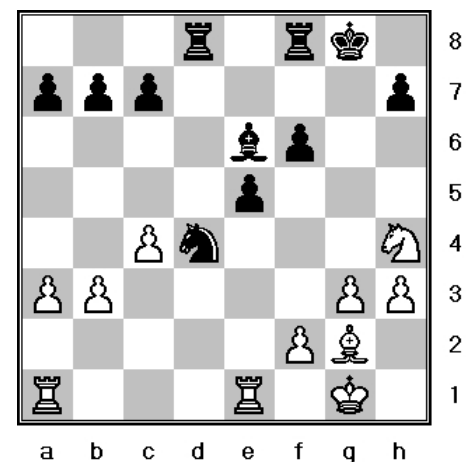
21. ..Bxc4 22. Rac1Bb5 (22. ... Bd5 blocks the d-file) 23. fxe5 fxe5 23. Rxe5 Rd2 24. b4 Rff2 25. Rce1 looks good for White (the idea is Re5-e7xc7 etc.)



Passive continuations as 20. Rac1 / Rfc1 allows 20. ...Nd4 (idea 21. ... Ne2) winning time for 21. ... c6 (controls d5 and eliminates bishop threats against b7) and 20 c5 Bb3 with the idea of Rd2 both look good for Black. The game continuation has it's drawbacks as well.

20. ...Nd4

The Knight, having been spared, becomes a thorn in the side for white.



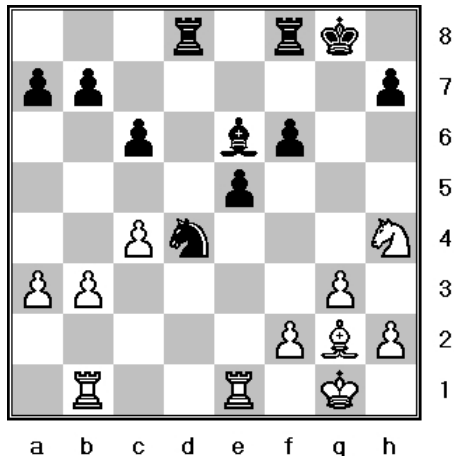
21. Rab1

Looks passive, but 21. Bxb7 Nxb3 wins the c4 pawn. 21. Reb1 c6 followed by dou-

bling on the d-file is similar to the game.

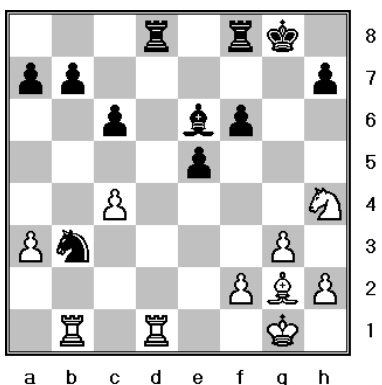
21. ...c6

Both guards the b7 pawn and eliminates potential White tricks of contesting the d-file by placing a piece on d5. It does give White a tempo to try to neutralize Black's pieces.

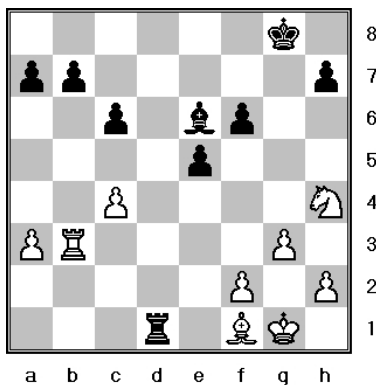


22. Nf3

Understandable. Occupying f5 doesn't seem likely or threaten anything much, and otherwise the Knight looks silly sitting on h4. Although this seems like a time loss, the alternatives are not wonderful-looking either. 22. Red1 suffers from the tactical shot 22. ...Nxb3 e.g.



23. Rxd8 Rxd8 24. Rxb3 Rd1+ 25. Bf1

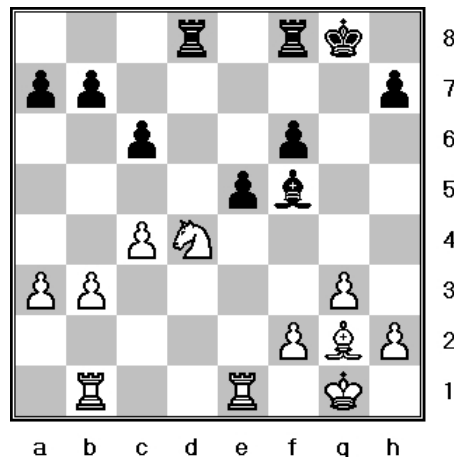


25. ...Bxc4 (or 25. ...Rxf1+) 26. Rxb7 Bxf1 27. Rb8+ Kf7 28. f3 Bh3+ 29. Kf2 Be6 30. Rb7 Rd7 Black is a solid pawn ahead. Perhaps 22. Re3 is best, although doubling rooks with Rd7, Rfd8 should keep Black's edge.

22. ...Bf5

Moving the bishop to greener pastures.

23. Nxd4



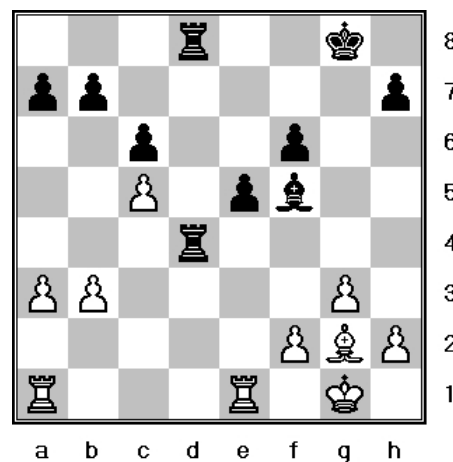
23. ...Rxd4

During the game I thought 23. ...Bxb1 24. Ne6 Bc2 25. b4 (25. Re3 Rd1) Rd3 26. Nxf8 Kxf8 allows White to make the queenside pawns safe. ...Rxd4 keeps the pressure on.

24. Ra1

24. Rb2 Rfd8 looks bad for White. 24. Rbc1 is possible; I was planning ...Rfd8 as in the game.

24. ...Rfd8 25. c5



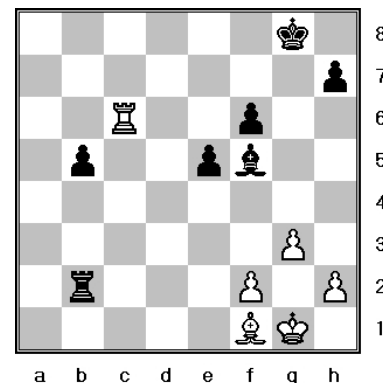
Committal, but the alternatives are passive. 25. Bf3 attempting to contest the d-file may be best, though Black can usually meet Rad1 with ...Bc2, so his control of the d-file is fairly secure, and there is time to bring up the king. With 25. c5 White is trying to secure the queenside with b4. If White can then contest the d-file and exchange all of the rooks he will suddenly have the better endgame. Naturally, Black doesn't have to go along with this.

25. ...a5

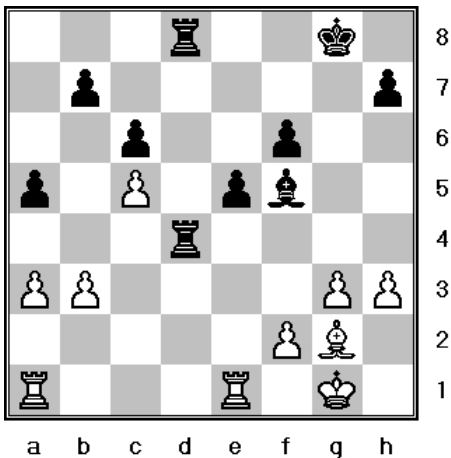
Stopping b4 and trying to prove that the c5 pawn will be a weakness.

26. h3

I'm not sure what White intended. Does he want to continue with g4 driving the bishop from f5, or simply take away the g4 square from the bishop? 26. Rac1 seems more to the point (stops Bc2, guards the c5 pawn). But it still may not be good enough: 26. ... Rd2 27. Bf1 Ra2 28. Red1 Rdd2 29. Rxd2 Rxd2 30. b4 axb4 31. axb4 Rb2 looks pretty strong, since 32. b5 cxb5 33. c6 bxc6 34. Rxc6



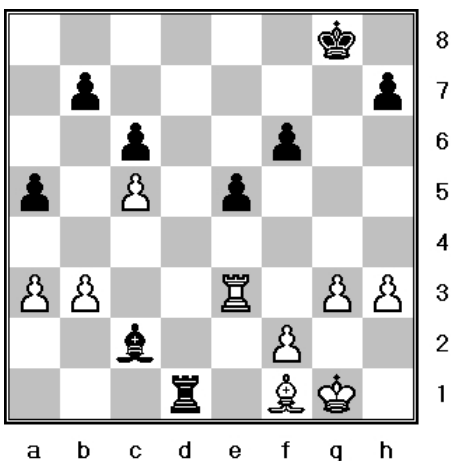
34. ...Rb1! neatly snares a piece with threats of ...Bh3 or ...Bd3, and meeting Kg2 with ...Be4+.



26. ...Bc2

Attacking the queenside. Black seems to win a pawn by force.

27. Re3 Rd1 28.Rxd1 Rxd1+ 29. Bf1



29. ...Bf5

I remember being worried about tricks like 29. ...Rb1 30. Rc3 Bb3 31. Rxb3 Rxb3 32. Bc4+. The game continuation relocates the bishop to e6. This stops some of the tactical tricks White may try in addition to leaving the black rook free to attack the queenside pawns from behind. White's next move is forced.

30. g4 Be6 31. Kg2

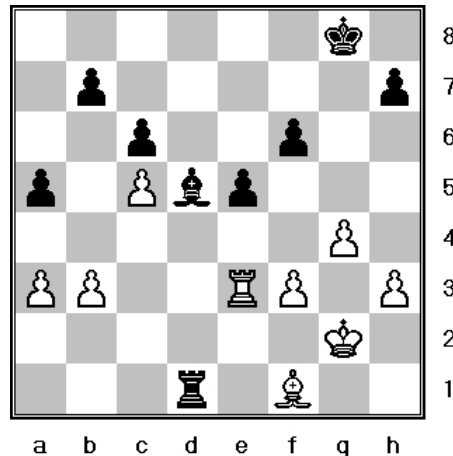
Getting out of the pin; is there anything better?

31. ...Bd5+

Forcing the next move (32. Kg1 walks

back into the pin)

32. f3

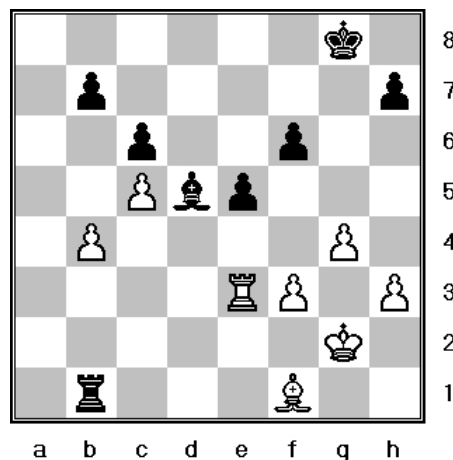


I was quite amused at the sight of a white square bishop with the pawn formation of f3/g4/h3

32. ...Ra1

Finally winning a pawn.

33. b4 axb4 34. axb4 Rb1



35. Rc3

35. b5 Rc1 wins the c-pawn

35. ...Rxb4

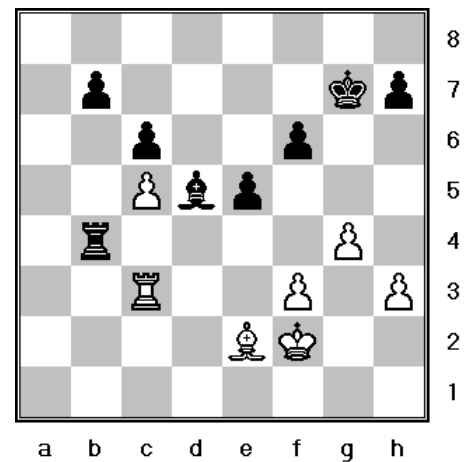
With an extra pawn, a weak white pawn on c5 and the more active pieces Black should win from here.

36. Be2 Kg7

Preparing to advance on the kingside.

37. Kf2

Preparing to centralize with Ke3; 37. Kg3 is a better way to stop Black's kingside intentions.



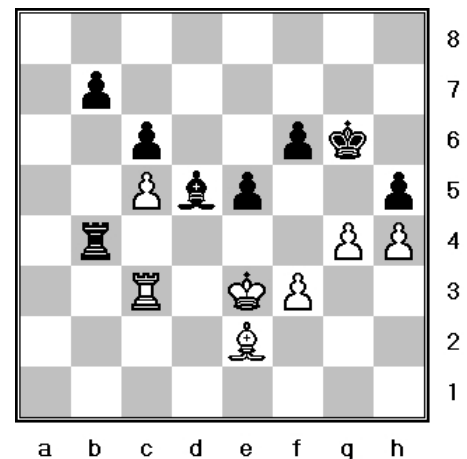
37. ...Kg6 38. h4

Making Black's task easier. 38. Kg3 is more stubborn.

38. ...h5

To expose the g4 and h4 pawns

39. Ke3

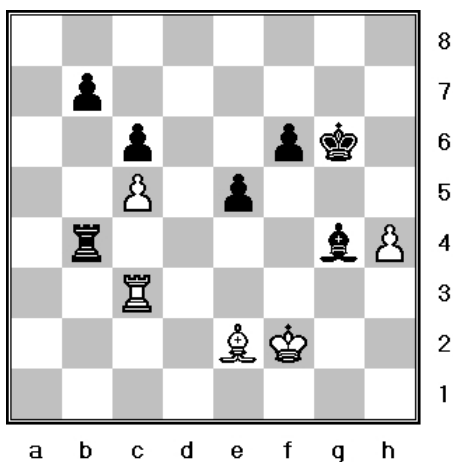


Simply dropping a second pawn, once again Kg3 is better.

39. ...hxg4 40. fxg4 Be6 41. Kf2 Bxg4

At first White's next move may seem a strange choice, since it simplifies into a bishop endgame, whereas 42. Bxg4 simplifies into a rook endgame.

Usually rook endgames are trickier to play, and offer good material-down drawing chances. However in this case it very simple: 42. Bxg4 Rxg4 43. Rb3 Rxh4 44. Rxb7 Rc4 is all too clear.

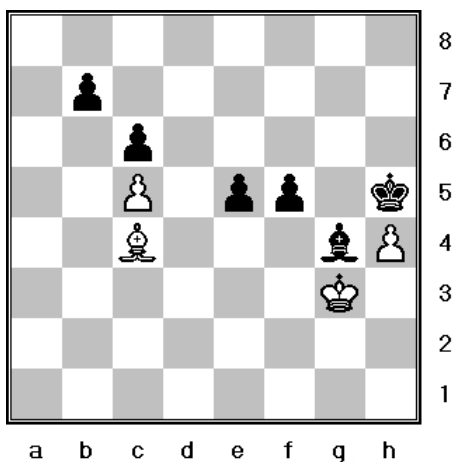


42. Rc4

By going into a bishop endgame White is hoping Black makes a mistake and allows the white bishop to penetrate and attack the b7/c6 structure. Since White is completely lost this may be the best practical chance.

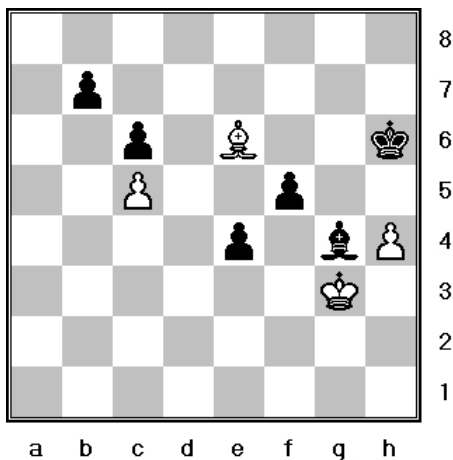
42. ...Rxc4 43. Bxc4 Kh5 44. Kg3 f5

This leads to a tactical finish that is winning for Black. There is an equally good (and a lot less calculation required) alternative in 44. ...Bd7. The white bishop does not penetrate the black queenside (as in the game). Black calmly arranges his pieces to advance the connected passed pawns, and there is no way for white to interfere with this plan. For example 45. Bd3 Kg6 46. Bd1 f5 47. Be2 f4+ 48. Kf3 Bf5 49. Kf2 (otherwise 49. ... Kh5 winning the h4 pawn) 49. ...e4 followed by ...Kf6-e5. There are other lines, but with a modicum of care Black easily advances the passed pawns. That being said, the game continuation is quicker and does win by force.



45. Bf7+ Kh6 46. Be6 e4

White goes after the black queenside pawns, while Black advances his pawns based on specific tactics.



47. Bc8

If 47. Kf4 then 44. ...e3 45. Kxe3 f4+

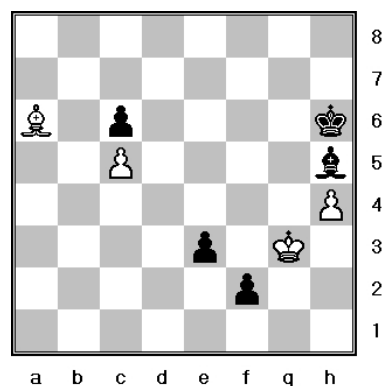
picks up the bishop.

47. ...e3 48. Bxb7 f4+

Another tactic. If 49. Kxf4 or 49. Kxg4 then 49. ... e2 queens. 49. Kh2 e2 also queens; that leaves the game continuation.

49. Kg2 f3+

If now 50. Kh2/Kh1 e2 queens. 50. Kg3 puts up the most resistance. 50.Kg3 f2 51.Ba6 (forced 51. Kg2 Bh3+) Bh5! holding the h4 pawn.



Black swings his king over to e5 and further invades via d4 or f4.

50. Kf1 Bh3+ 0-1

Conclusions:

1. Correctly evaluating a static weakness versus active play is never easy. There are times when a creative plan must be found: in the current game the idea of Bg2xc6 (giving up a bishop in an open position) followed by f4 was atypical and strong.
2. As seen previously in this column there are practical problems in defending a passive position. Giving the defender a series of choices can wear them down.
3. Tactical finishes are fun and they can save time. If there is a simple maneuvering solution that achieves the same aim (albeit more slowly), it may be prudent to forego the spectacular for the mundane.

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