

MY FAVORITE KING AND PAWN ENDINGS FOR STUDENTS

by Pete Tamburro

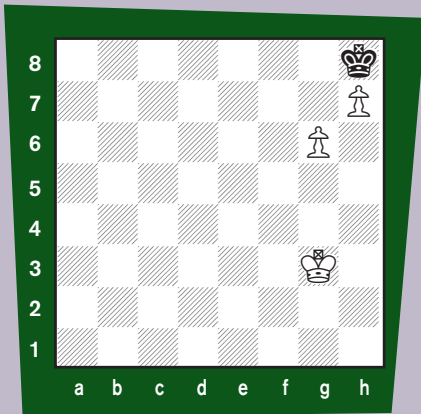


Last time out we saw that no matter how easy a king and pawn ending may be, you always have to be careful and remember your basics.



Take, for example, this obvious looking win in our first diagram. When I've asked some of my students what their plan for winning is, they often say, "I march my king down to h6 and mate him with g7!" And they are quite pleased with themselves because they get to mate with a pawn.

Then I ask, "What will Black's move be after you go Kh6 if Black is on h8?" Ooops! That pesky stalemate thing again. If you go to f6, it's still a stalemate. How would you win this and avoid stalemating the black king?



Ponziani as far back as 1769 thought enough of this question to show how it's done:

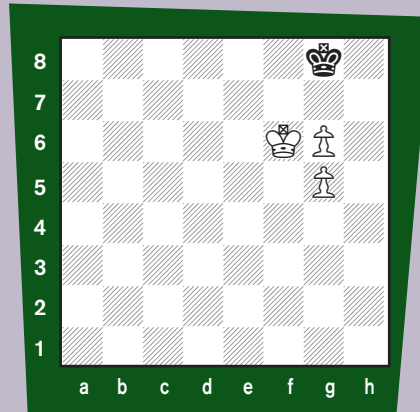
1.Kg4 Kg7 2.Kg5 Kh8 3.Kf5 Kg7

And now you have to go back to your basics about opposition:

4.h8=Q+! Kxh8 5.Kf6 Kg8 6.g7

And because it's not a check when you move the pawn to the seventh, you win!

So, often, you have to create the opposition. Here's one more example, same idea:



Here, if you play 1.g7 Kh7 2.Kf7, it's stalemate yet again! And if you try 1.g7 Kh7 2.g6+ Kg8 3.Kf5 Kxg7 4.Kg5 Kg8! (remember if you're ever down a pawn, you need to know this move) 5.Kf6 Kf8 is a draw because Black keeps the opposition.

What do you do? Remember the first diagram? Is there a way to give up a pawn to get the opposition? Yes, there is!

1.g7 Kh7 2.g8=Q+!

Exactly!

2. ... Kxg7 3.Kg6

And you have the opposition and an easy mate:

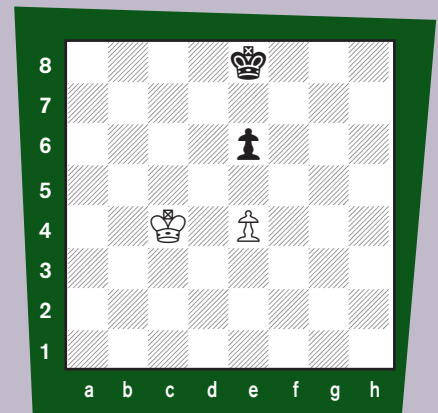
3. ... Kh8 4.Kf7 Kh7 5.g6+ Kh8 6.g7+ Kh7 7.g8=Q+ Kh6 8.Qg6#

If you have understood what we've just gone over, then you should be feeling pretty good. As with everything in chess, it's okay to feel good about what you know as long as you realize that there's always something just a little harder to learn.

After over fifty years of playing chess, I still work at learning chess, and when I work really hard and finally understand something I didn't

understand before, it still feels great!

Here's a challenge for you to work at. It would be best if you took a chess set out. You'll see why. White should win here, but it's tricky and gaining the opposition is a bit different, too. Not only that, but you have to pay attention to pawn moves, and you can even lose this game!



White has to play a move that limits the Black king's choice, so here is an idea worth remembering:

1.e5

White is then going to swing around on the queenside and force the black king away from the defense of his pawn. Once the black pawn is captured—**AND THIS IS VERY IMPORTANT**—Black does get the opposition, but because the king is on the 6th rank, and when the pawn, being where it is, advances to the 7th rank, **IT WON'T BE A CHECK!!**

When your chess teachers tell you to count it out, to imagine the play right to the end, you have to do that. See how it ends! Thinking about what we've just covered, play this line out:

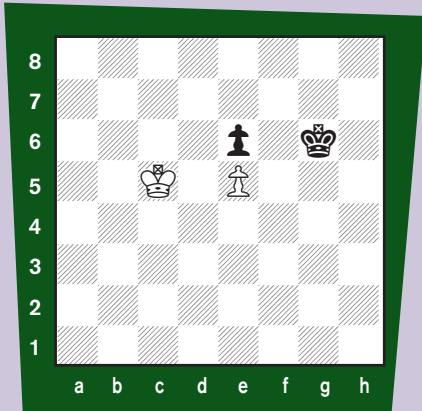
**1. ... Kd7 2.Kb5 Kc7 3.Kc5 Kd7
4.Kb6 Kd8 5.Kc6 Kc8 6.Kd6 Kd8
7.Kxe6 Ke8 8.Kd6 Kd8 9.e6**

If Black tries to hold on to the pawn:

**1.e5 Kd7 2.Kb5 Kc7 3.Kc5 Kd7
4.Kb6 Ke7 5.Kc7 Kf7 6.Kd6 Ke8
7.Kxe6 and wins.**

It can still get tricky, though. For example, what if Black played like this in answer to your **1.e5** move?

1...Kf7 2.Kc5 Kg6



It's easy to get over-excited here and play 3.Kd6. Then you would turn a win into a loss! See how?

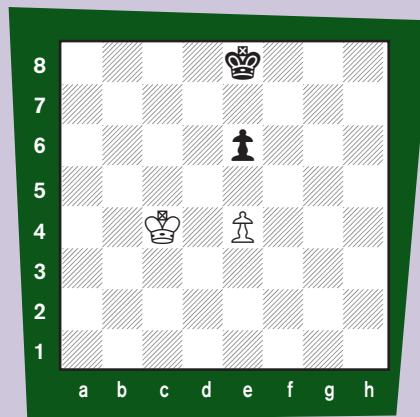
Yes, all Black has to do is play 3. ... Kf5, and suddenly you're the one with one pawn less and no way to stop Black from promoting the pawn.

You must, instead, gain the opposition—the distant opposition. In-

stead of one square apart, you are three squares apart (or in some cases, five!). Remember—it's an odd number.

**3.Kc6 Kf7 4.Kd7 Kf8 5.Kxe6 Ke8
6.Kd6 Kd8 7.e6 Ke8 8.e7 and
you win.**

There is another way you could let the win get away. Let's see what happens if you don't push the pawn on the first move:



1.Kb5 is the same idea as above, but without the pawn push. Now, though, Black can play 1. ... e5!

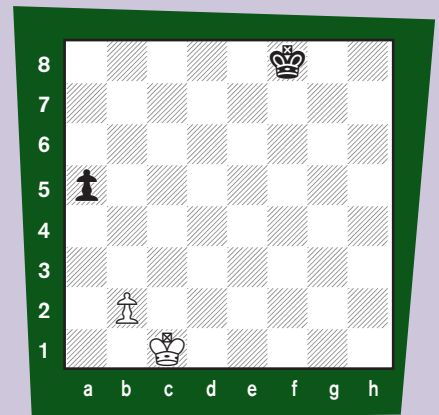
And now, after 2.Kc6 Ke7 3.Kd5 Kf6 4.Kd6 Kf7 5.Kxe5 Ke7, you will see that Black has gained the opposition similar to what happened above, **BUT THE BIG DIFFERENCE IS THAT BECAUSE THE KING IS ONLY ON THE 5TH RANK IN-**

STEAD OF THE 6TH, BLACK CAN NOW DRAW BECAUSE HE HAS ROOM TO MOVE TO KEEP THE OPPOSITION.

You have to remember this when you're losing as well as winning. Play out the drawing series of moves so it sticks in your memory:

**6.Kd5 Kd7 7.e5 Ke7 8.e6 Ke8
9.Ke4 Ke7 10.Ke5 Ke8**

We're going to close with one of my favorite endings of all time because of the impression it made on me when I first saw it. *White to Play and Win*. It's really all about the opposition. We'll put the answer elsewhere. See if you can figure it out. When you see the answer, ask yourself what moves you didn't think about and why...



Answer on page 31 >>>>

The Back Rank Problem continued from page 6

The hardest move in this entire combination. After the direct 21.Qxb7? Black would use the same "trick" on White with 21. ... Qxe2! 22.Rxe2 (or 22.Qxc8 Qxe1+ 23.Nxe1 Rxc8) 22. ... Rc1+ 23.Ne1 Rxe1+ 24.Rxe1 Rxe1 checkmate.

21. ... Qxa4

If 21. ... Qxe2 22.Rxe2 Rxc7 23.Rxe8 checkmate.

22.Re4!

Threatening with Qxc8, and winning a piece.

22. ... Qb5

If 22. ... h6 23.Qxc8! Rxc8 24.Rxa4.

23.Qxb7!

And Black resigned as Black's queen has no more safe squares to guard the rook on e8. Black cannot avoid checkmate or a major loss of material.

I hope you have learned the valuable lesson of back rank checkmate. For more daily puzzles and chess tips, you can check out my chess blog at www.SusanPolgar.blogspot.com or www.SPICE.ttu.edu.



A Historic Event! 2008 SPICE Cup Festival Lubbock, TX

September 19-28

Come watch the highest rated
10-player International round-robin

Grandmaster Tournament
in U.S. History

or participate in the Open
and Scholastic events.

www.SPICE.ttu.edu

See TLA section for details.