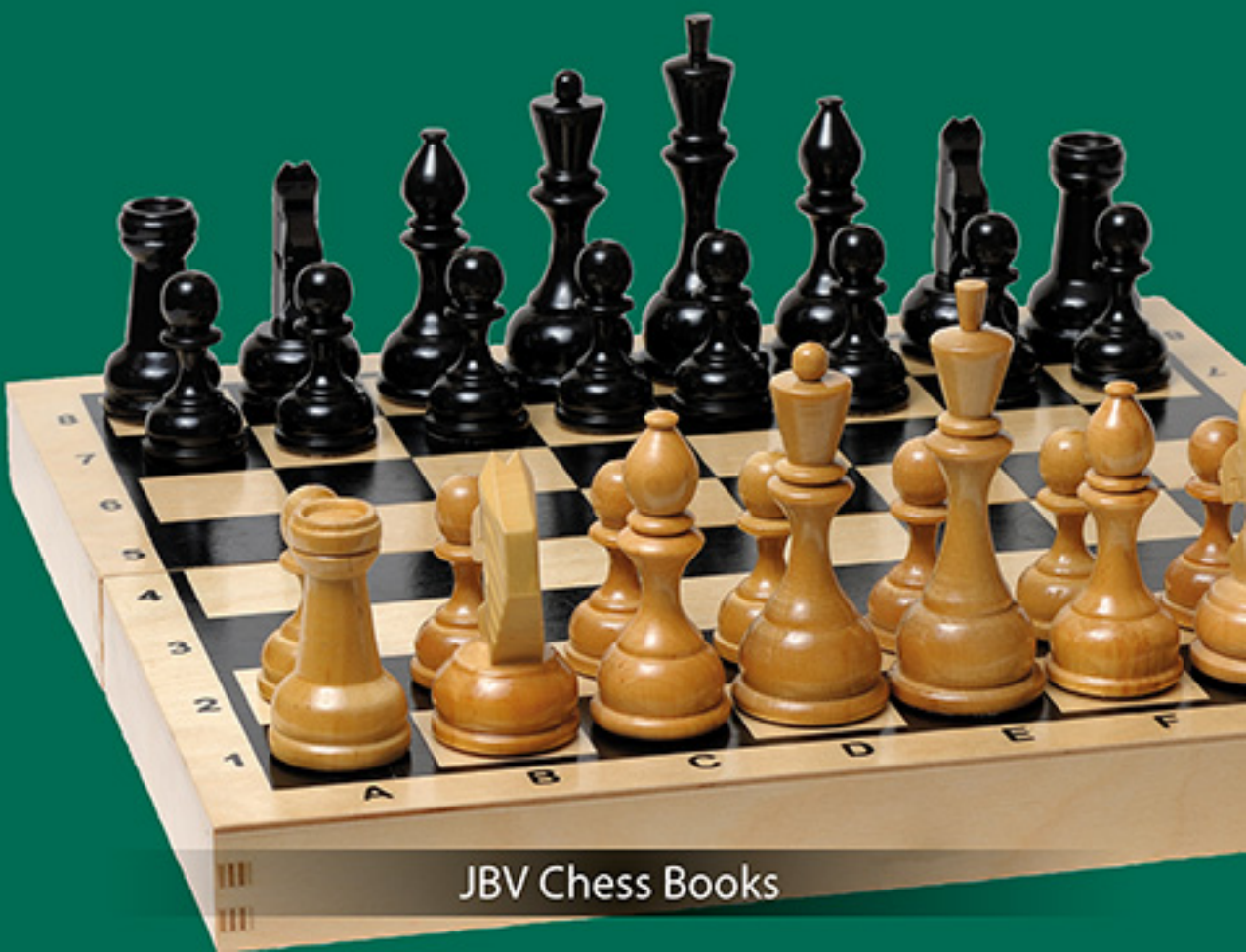


Karsten Müller

Typical French

Effective Middlegame Training



JBV Chess Books

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Preface

If someone decides to learn Spanish (the language, mind you – and not the opening!), he will appropriately acquire textbooks that deal with Spanish – not those that deal with *all* Roman languages or even all *European* languages.

Let's take this comparison a little further: If a dictionary is something like an opening book, then a grammar is something like a textbook for the middlegame. True, one could fill entire libraries with opening books on the subject of Spanish alone, but what about a corresponding 'grammar'?

Of course, in every middlegame textbook there is one or the other position that is clearly recognizable as *Spanish*, but their number is negligible in the context of French, English, Russian, Italian, Dutch and so forth. And so too for all these other European languages – no excuse me – of all these other *openings* whose middlegame treatment the reader doesn't want to learn at all.

For example, isn't dealing with the issues of hanging pawns and minority attack – the author asks with good reason – just as dispensable for an e4 player as it is essential for a d4 player? – Why should a die-hard enthusiast of Indian openings care about the strategic intricacies of positions resulting from all those complicated Queen's Gambit systems? And of course vice versa: what can a player who 'by nature' avoids fianchetto openings do with all these subtleties of Indian positions?

And it is precisely this conspicuous and astounding vacuum in the area of middlegame literature that inspired me to make an appropriate attempt at improvement: If you want to learn *Spanish* (the *opening*, mind you, and not the language!), you will get a textbook and exercise book in which only *Spanish* is 'spoken' or played.

However, this book only deals with the French Defense – more precisely: with positions in which the white pawns on d4 and e5 are opposed by black pawns on d5 and e6 – or those positions that can arise from this basic structure, as shown in detail in the overview following the preface.

And I would like to make one more important point in advance. It is an enormous challenge for every chess author to do justice to a readership with the broadest possible skill level. So it would be absurd in the field of opening and endgame literature to offer, for example, 'Sicilian Defense' or 'Rook Endgames' for players between 1400 and 1600, between 1600 and 1800, between 1800 and 2000 and so on. Accordingly, one only writes one book on the respective topic and tries to explain all important things as precisely and comprehensibly as possible – and then it is up to each individual reader how intensively he is willing to work with the books in order to achieve the greatest possible benefit.

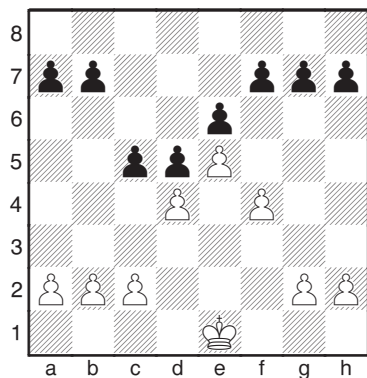
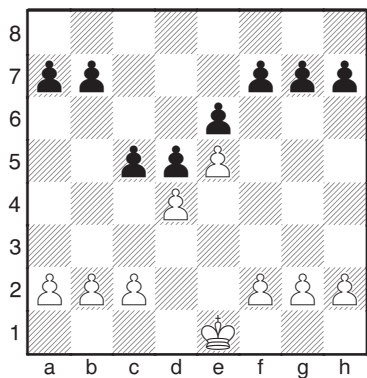
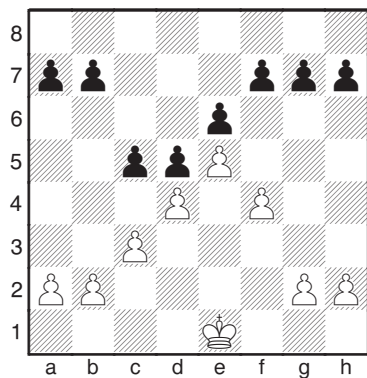
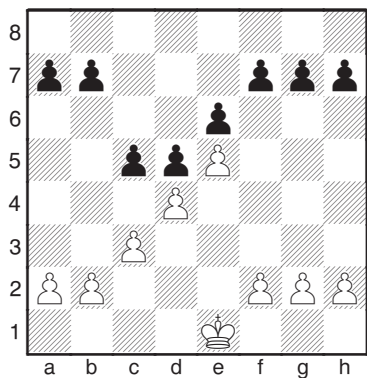
The task becomes much more difficult with a book like this, which consists exclusively of exercises. Because if the author chooses consistently very simple or consistently somewhat more difficult examples, then in the first case more advanced players shy away because they are underchallenged – in the second case less advanced players because they feel overwhelmed.

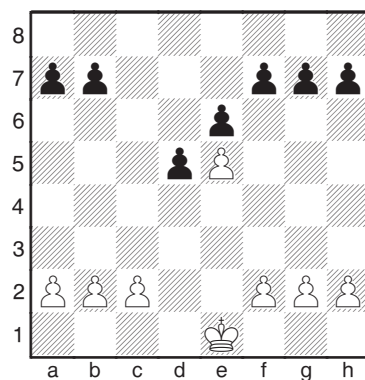
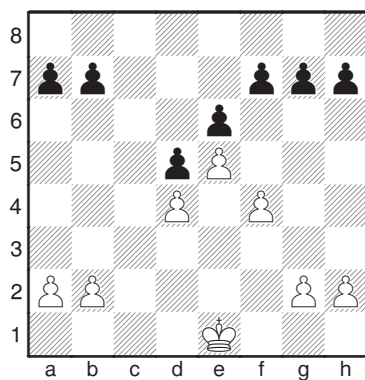
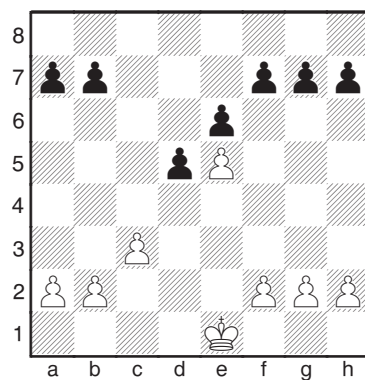
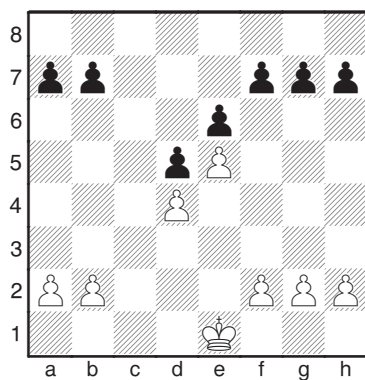
And therefore here's a good advice – regardless of your skill level. Take each task seriously, but don't let it become torture! As soon as you encounter too many obstacles or too much resistance, just take the liberty to open the solution section and turn the test book into a textbook!

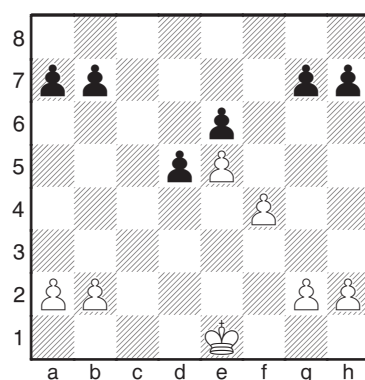
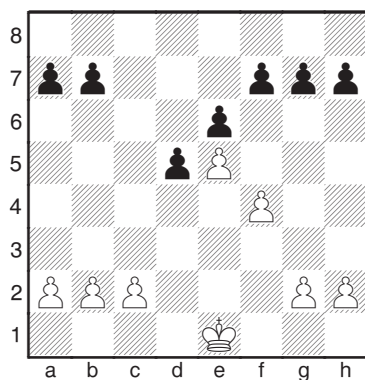
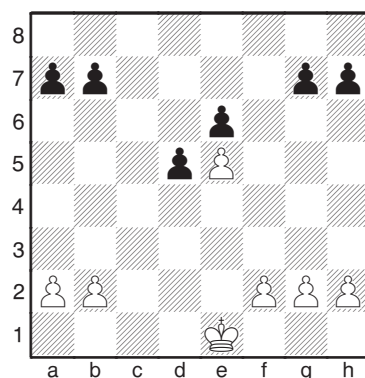
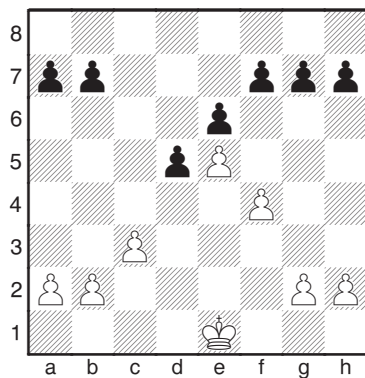
I would like to thank Rainer Woisin and Frederic Friedel from ChessBase for the great idea of working with QR Codes, Thomas Beyer for the very well done layout and – last but not least – the publisher Robert Ullrich for the overall excellent production.

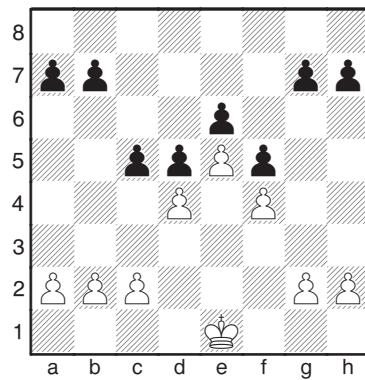
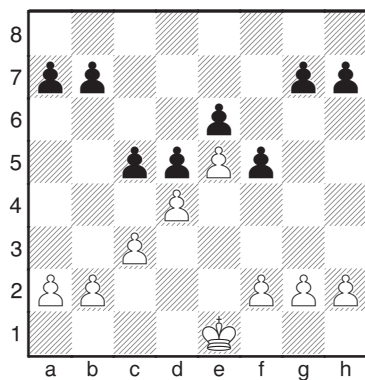
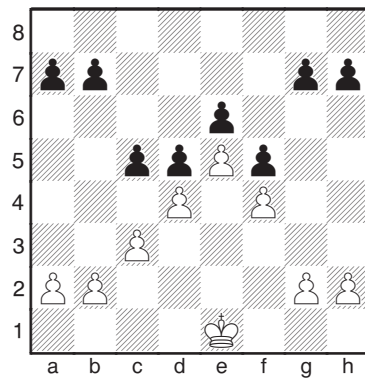
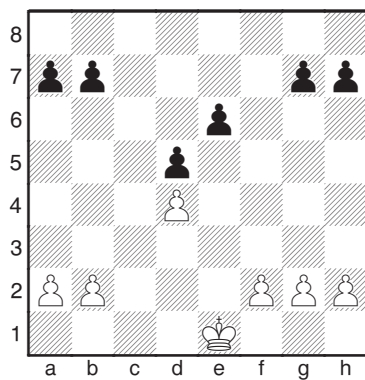
Karsten Müller, Hamburg, February 2024

The following pawn structures are treated







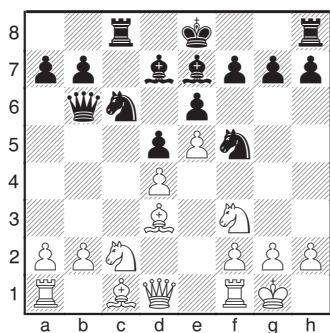


Exercises

Concrete question (solutions starting on page 45)



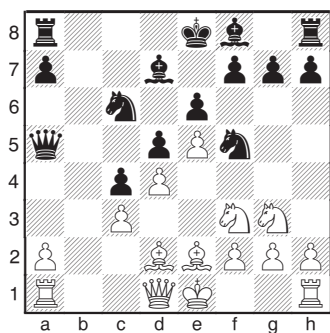
1



Does White's position require a prophylactic move?



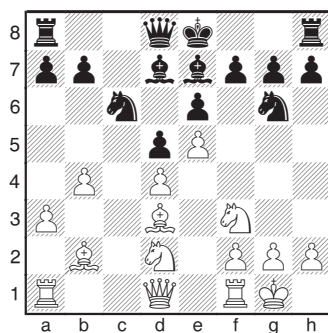
2



Can Black gain an advantage in a tricky way?



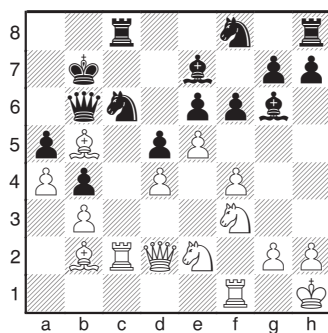
3



How can Black contain White's emerging initiative on the queenside?



4

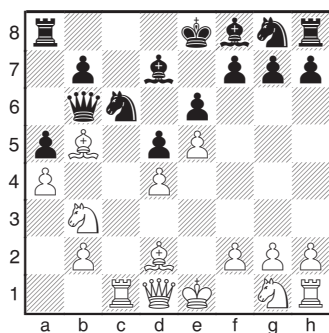


How can the previously committed sin 0-0-0 be punished most vigorously?

What's the taste of ... (solutions starting on page 49)



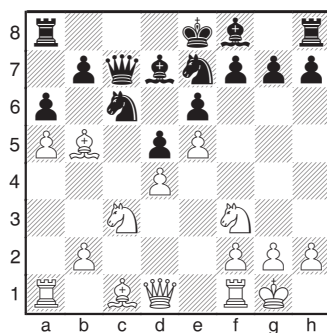
5



... the pawn on d4?



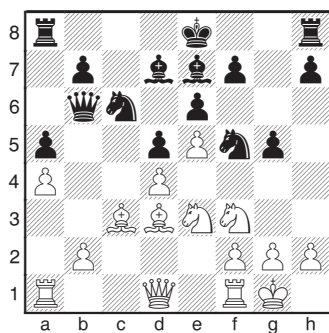
7



... the pawn on e5?



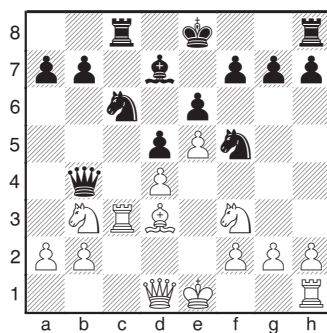
6



... the pawn on d4?



8

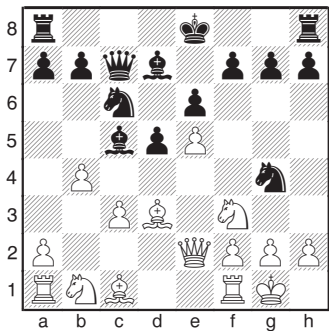


... the pawn on d4?

Pressure increase or concrete action? (solutions starting on page 53)



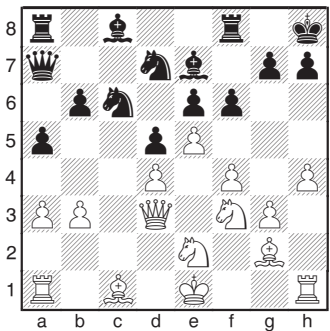
9



Black to move



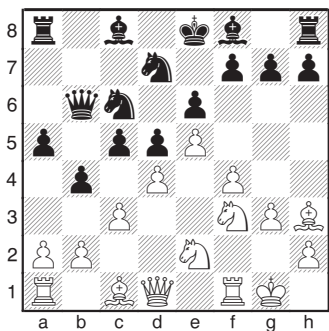
11



White to move



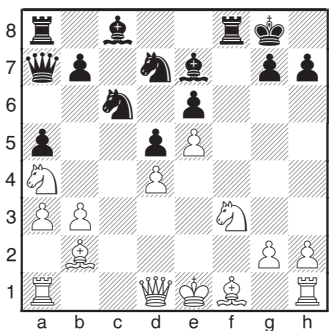
10



White to move



12

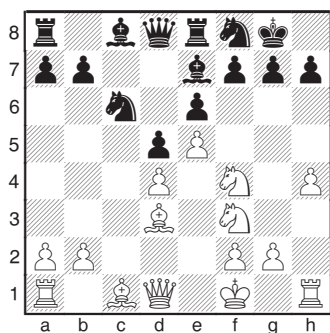


Black to move

Joke articles (solutions starting on page 160)



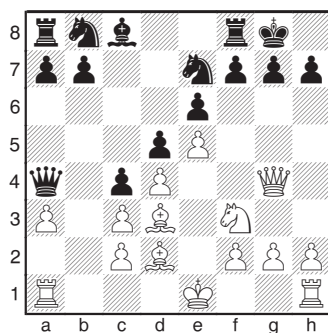
95



After the prophylactic measure
12...♘f8 Black's king is safe – right?



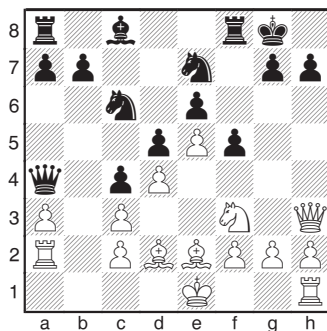
96



Black's last move (10...c4)
was suicidal – right?



97

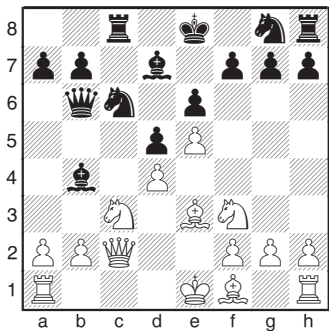


Could the ♖a8 (13 moves after 13.♖a2)
appear on a2, purely theoretically?

Candidates (solutions starting on page 164)



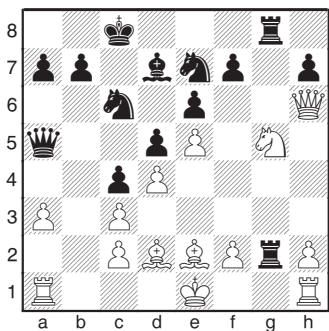
98



Which candidate is not recommended
– 11.♙d3, 11.♙e2 or 11.♖b1?



99

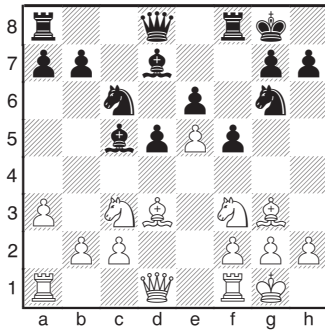


Is the correct consolidating move
15.f4 or 15.h4?

Concrete question (solutions starting on page 167)



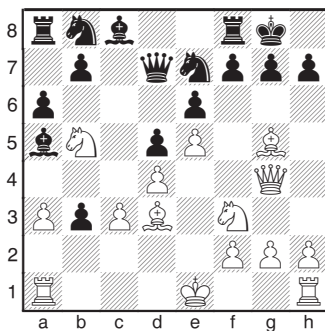
100



Why was the last move
11...f5 a tactical blunder?



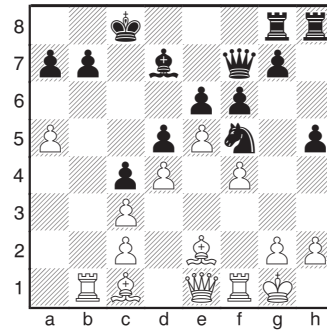
101



Does 12...axb5 lead to an easy win?



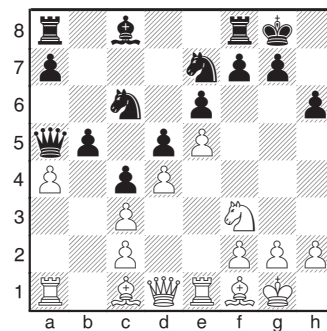
102



How does White gain access to
the opposing king's fortress?



103

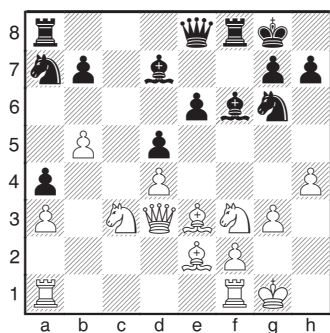


Why was the last move
12...b5 dubious?

Miscellaneous (solutions starting on page 172)



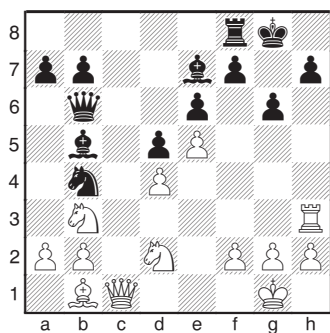
104



Should Black use force or defend prudently?



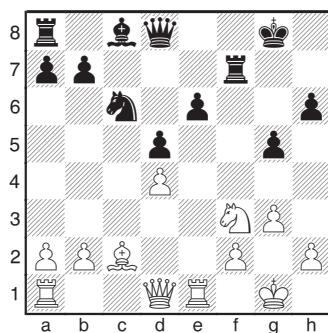
105



Why would ♔g5 be tantamount to a disaster?



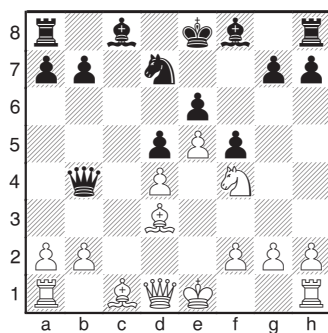
106



Is 18. ♖e5 really the best
White's position has to offer?



107

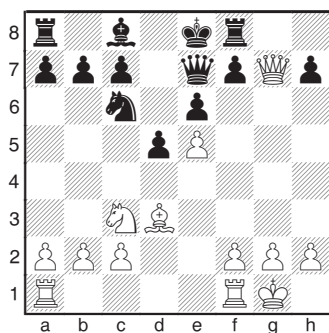


Is one of the moves 12. ♖d2, 12. ♔d2
or 12. ♖f1 clearly stronger than the
others?

Miscellaneous (solutions starting on page 179)



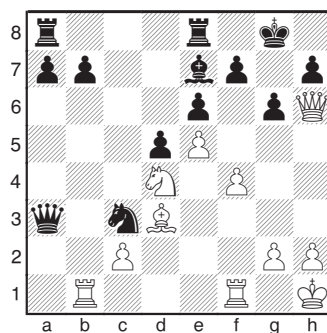
108



What's the taste of the pawn on h7?



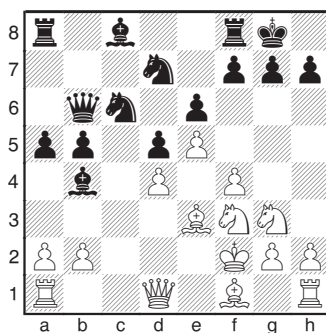
109



Is White ready to strike or is a preparatory move required?



110



Can White already take a concrete action?

Solutions

1

Parkanyi – Bagoly

Miskolc 1998

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5 4.c3 ♘c6 5.♗f3
♙d7 6.♙e2 ♖c8 7.0-0 ♜ge7 8.♜a3 cxd4
9.cxd4 ♜f5 10.♜c2 ♙e7 11.♙d3 ♖b6

The clear answer is 'No!', because since the d4 pawn is taboo, White can even continue with an active pawn push on *both* wings.

In the game, however, it would have been Black who (after the time-wasting sidestep 12.♙h1?!) could have achieved good play with one of the prophylactic moves 12...a5 or 12...h5 (instead of 12...0-0? 13.g4±).

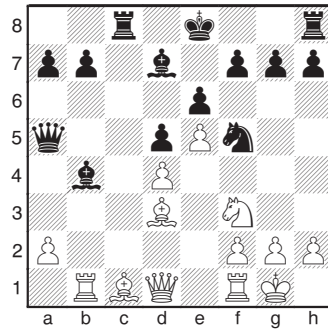
I) The push **12.b4!?** (regardless of the pawn's drastic 'underprotection') is a standard motif in the *Advance Variation* and therefore deserves a closer look at the concrete circumstances.

A) The fact that the d4 pawn is untouchable was already mentioned at the beginning and here are the proof lines:

– 12...♜cxd4?? 13.♜fxd4 ♜xd4
14.e3+-

– 12...♜fxd4? 13.♜fxd4 ♜xe5 14.♙e2±

B) And the following lines deal with the security of the drastically 'underprotected' b-pawn: 12...♜xb4 13.♜xb4 (13.♖b1?? ♙a4-+) 13...♙xb4 (13...♖xb4?! 14.♖b1±) 14.♖b1 ♖a5

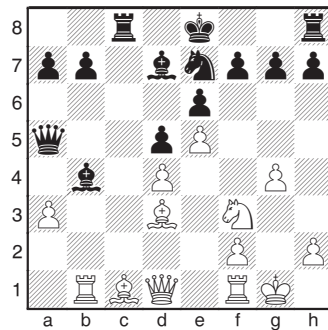


1) 15.♖b3 ♙c3 16.♙xf5 exf5 17.♖xb7
♖a4 18.♖b3±; 18.♖b3

2) 15.g4

a) 15...♜h6 16.a3 (16.♜g5!? ♜h7)
16...♙xa3 17.♖a1 ♙a4 18.♖xa3 ♙xd1
19.♖xa5 ♖xc1± 20.♙b5+ ♜e7 21.♙a4 a6
22.g5 ♜f5 23.♖xd1

b) 15...♜e7 16.a3



– 16...♙xa3?? 17.♙d2+- Δ17...♖a4
(17...♖c7 18.♖b3) 18.♖xa4 ♙xa4
– 19.♖a1 16...♙c3 17.♖xb7± ♜c6
(17...♙c6 18.♖b1) 18.♖b5; 18.♙e3

II) The alternative **12.g4!?** is just as strong and again there's a standard motif of locking up Black's bishop (Line C).

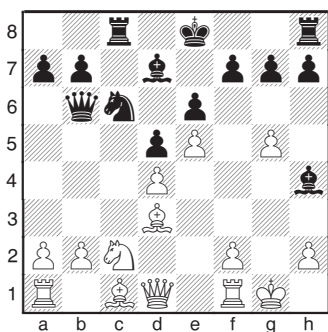
A) 12...♟fxd4? 13.♟fxd4

– 13...♟xd4? 14.♟e3 ♟c5 15.b4+–

– 13...♟xe5 14.♟e2±

B) 12...♟h6?! 13.h3~±

C) ♞12...♟h4 13.♟hxh4 ♟hxh4 14.g5 (♞♟g4)



14...h6 15.gxh6 gxh6 16.♟h1±

2

Barboza – Dienavorian Lacherian

Uruguay 1968

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5 4.♟f3 ♟c6 5.c3 ♟ge7 6.♟e2 ♟d7 7.♟bd2 ♟f5 8.♟b3 c4 9.♟bd2 b5 10.♟f1 b4 11.♟g3 ♟a5 12.♟d2 bxc3 13.bxc3

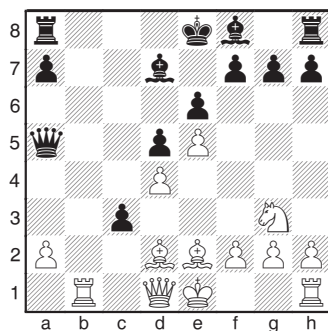
Since Black can hope for initiative on the queenside (among other things, in view of foreseeable actions on the only open file) while White is left empty-handed in terms of counterplay (among other things, due to the lack of pressure on the b1–h7 diagonal), Black should be able to obtain at least a minimal advantage. The only question is what means he should use for this purpose.

1) The trick attempt 13...♟fxd4?! only leads to success after a poor defense.

a) So White would get into big trouble after 14.cxd4? c3+ because here (in

contrast to Line b) the defense with **15.♟b1?** fails to **15...cxd2+ –+** given that the knight on c6 also controls the b4 square.

b) On the other hand, after the correct continuation 14.♟xd4 ♟xd4 15.cxd4 c3 16.♟b1! ...



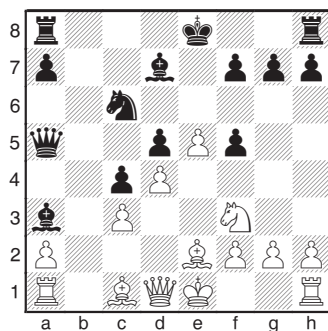
... Black could only torment his opponent with the bishop pair for a while longer; e.g. **16...♟e7 ♞17.♟xc3?**

♞17.♟d3! ♟d8 (♞♟b6) 18.f4

17...♟xc3+ ♞18.♟d2 ♟c8 or 18...♟xd2+ 19.♟xd2 ♟g5+

2) In the game, Black resisted this temptation and instead secured a solid minimal advantage using the ‘conventional’ means 13...♟a3! ♞♟b2 14.♟xf5 exf5 15.♟b1.

In view of the opponent’s positional pressure, White should probably have opted for the trick attempt 15.♟c1!?



This would have led to a draw by repetition of moves after 15...♖xc3+?! 16.♔d2 ♗b2 17.♖b1 ♗xa2 18.♖a1. However, if Black had resisted *this* temptation too, he would have secured a solid minimal advantage again after 15...0-0 or 15...♖b8.

15...0-0 16.0-0 ♖ab8

And here 16...♗e7!? ♕a4 would also have resulted in ♖.

3

German – Basto Lima

Fortaleza 1951

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♗d2 c5 4.♗gf3 ♗f6 5.e5 ♗fd7 6.c3 ♗c6 7.b3 cxd4 8.cxd4 ♗b4 9.♗b2 ♗f8 10.♗d3 ♗d7 11.0-0 ♗g6 12.a3 ♗e7 13.b4

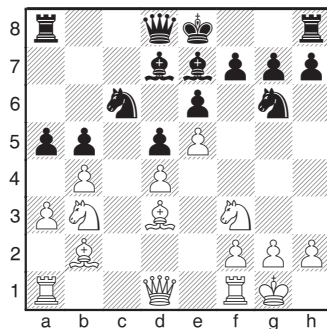
White's play on the queenside in general and on the c-file in particular obviously threatens to be quicker than that of the opponent. Given the solid protection of the d4 pawn, the f7–f6 lever would ultimately only lead to a backward pawn on e6 and make the e5 square available to the opponent's pieces. For this reason, Black has to think about creating sufficient counterplay in a timely manner.

After the careless stereotypical move **13...0-0?**, Black ended up with a considerable and lasting disadvantage.

This was the last opportunity to evade the looming grip on the queenside by fixing the b4 pawn with 13...b5!. And after 14.♗b3 (14.♗xb5?! ♗cxe5∞) it can be attacked with the lever 14...a5!.

(see next diagram)

After the possible continuation 15.bxa5 ♗xa5 16.♗xa5 ♖xa5 ♕a8, 0-0, ♖b8 or similar, enough lines have been opened on the queenside to keep the disadvantage to a minimum after 17.g3 or 17.♗d2.



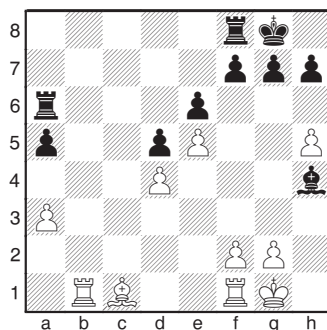
14.♗b3± b6

It's difficult to propose anything better. So 14...b5 would now be answered with 15.♗c3!, and after the a-pawn lever was prevented, the 'looming grip' could no longer be shaken off; e.g. 15...♗f4 16.♗c2; 15...♖c8 16.♗d2; 16.♗c5; 15...a6 16.♖e1; 16.♗d2.

15.♗d2

– Possibly 15.g3!? would be a bit stronger because, in addition to the deployment plan ♗e2 and ♖fc1, White could also fall back on the options b4–b5 or h2–h4 at any time.

– On the other hand, it would be imprecise to immediately carry out the tempting push 15.b5?!, because the resulting doubled pawns after 15...♗a5 16.♗xa5 bxa5 could be easily dissolved; e.g. 17.♗c1 a6! 18.bxa6 ♗c8 19.♗e2 ♗b6 20.♖b1 ♗a7 21.h4 ♗xa6 22.♗xa6 ♗xa6 23.♗xa6 ♖xa6 24.h5 ♗h4 25.♗xh4 ♗xh4.



And since Black would only have to nurse a single weakness and could also occupy an open file, White's advantage would be smaller after 26.♙d2 or 26.a4.

4

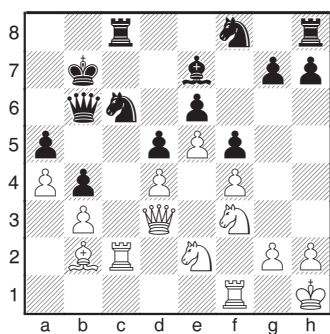
Vasiuhin – Murey

USSR 1967

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘d2 ♘f6 4.e5 ♘fd7
5.f4 c5 6.c3 ♘c6 7.♘df3 ♖b6 8.a3 cxd4
9.cxd4 ♖a5+ 10.♙d2 ♖b6 11.♙c3 a5
12.♙d3 ♙e7 13.♘e2 ♘f8 14.0-0 ♙d7
15.b3 ♖d8 16.♖d2 b5 17.♙b2 ♖b6
18.♙h1 b4 19.a4 0-0-0 20.♖ac1 ♙b7
21.♘g5 ♙e8 22.♙b5 ♖c8 23.♖c2 f6 24.♘f3
♙g6

There is obviously far too much air in Black's castling position, but if White's attack is too slow and the defender could make two or three consolidating moves, he could, for example, swap all the rooks and then breathe a sigh of relief.

I) After the meek retreat 25.♙d3? and the further moves 25...♙xd3 26.♖xd3 f5± ...



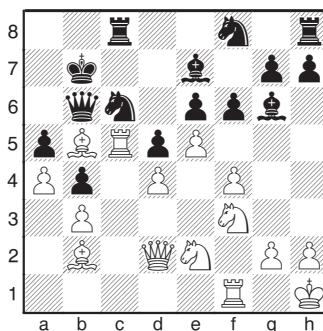
... White was left with pitiful minor pieces and almost empty-handed.

II) Avoiding such closed future prospects with 25.exf6?! gxf6 is already much better, as shown in the lines:

A) 26.♖c5? ♙xc5 27.dxc5 ♖xc5 28.♙xf6 ♖g8 29.♙h4±

B) 26.♙d3 ♙xd3 27.♖xd3± with the positional threat f5.

III) However, White's strongest option is the immediate exchange sacrifice offer 25.♖c5! ...



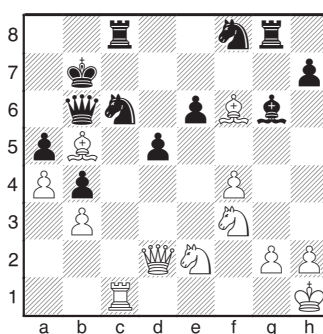
... with the ensuing threat ♙xc6+ and ♖b5 and a more or less clear winning position in all lines; e.g. 25...♙xc6 25...♘a7 26.♖fc1) 26.dxc5 ♖xc5 27.♖c1

A) 27...♖e7 28.f5!

1) 28...exf5? 29.♘f4 ♖d3; 29.♖d3

2) 28...♙xf5 29.♘ed4

B) 27...♖b6 28.exf6 gxf6 29.♙xf6 ♖g8



And after 30.f5! ♙xf5 31.♘ed4 one feels pity for the defender, who is exposed to this gang of berserkers.

1) After 31...♘xd4? 32.♙xd4 ♖xc1+ 33.♖xc1 ♖d6 34.♙e5 ♖b6 and the

'petite combinaison' 35.♙a6+! ♔xa6 36.♙d4, Black cannot parry all threats ♖c8+, ♜c6+ and ♜f1+ at the same time.

2) And also after 31...♘b8 32.♞xc8 ♔xc8 33.♘xf5 exf5 34.♞xd5 ♠34...♞g6 35.♞xf5+ or 34...♞xf6 35.♞xg8 followed by h2-h3, Black's life expectancy is only slightly higher.

5

Achatz – Uhlmann

Leipzig 1951

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5 4.c3 ♜a5 5.♘d2 cxd4 6.♘b3 ♜c7 7.cxd4 a5 8.♙d2 ♘c6 9.♞c1 ♜b6 10.a4 ♙d7 11.♙b5

At the moment, White not only has the secured outpost on b5 and the positional threat ♘c5, but his queen may still be able to move to g4 and his rook can swing to the kingside via c3. If you round off this inventory with the fact that he can also castle much earlier, the opponent actually has no choice but to take on d4 – perhaps true to the motto: If you are under pressure anyway, then at least have the consolation of an extra pawn.

11...♘d4!?

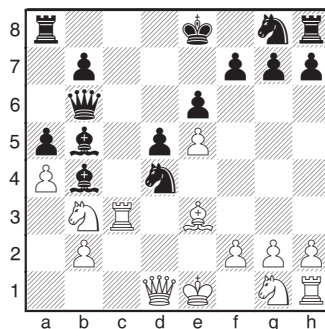
1) In the game, White achieved nothing tangible with the unnecessarily complicated trick attempt 12.♙e3?!. 12.♙xa5?! ♞xa5 13.♞xd4 ♜xd4 14.♘xd4∞; 13...♞xb5!? 14.axb5 ♞xb5=

12...♙b4+ 13.♞c3 ♙xb5

13...♙xc3+ 14.bxc3 ♙xb5 15.axb5

(15.♙xd4? is just another move order.)

15...♞xb5 16.♘xd4 ♜c4∞



14.♙xd4?

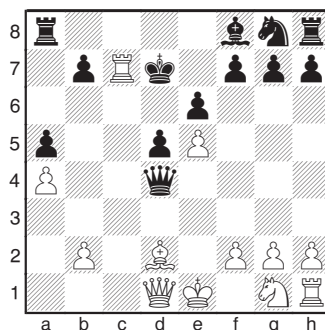
♠14.axb5 ♙xc3+ 15.bxc3 ♜xb5 16.♘xd4 ♜c4∞

14...♞c6?

♠14...♙xc3+ 15.bxc3 ♜c6 16.axb5 ♜xb5=

15.axb5 ♜xb5 16.♘d2 ♙xc3 17.♙xc3 ♘e7

2) After 12.♘xd4 ♜xd4 13.♙xd7+ ♔xd7, the point 14.♞c7+! ...



... 14...♔e8 15.♞xb7 ensures that White regains the pawn with a certain advantage.

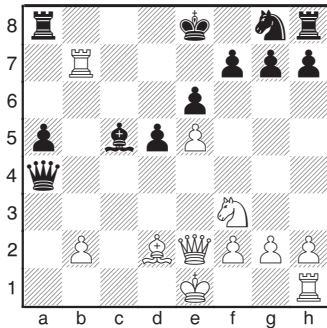
The alternatives 15.♘e2, 15.♘f3 and 15.♞c2 should also be suitable in this regard.

Now Black should try to finish the development as quickly as possible with 15...♙c5!.

After 15...♞xe5+? 16.♘e2 or 15...♞e4+?

16.♔f1 White's advantage would already be out of the minimal range.

The game could then take the following course: 16.♖e2 ♖xa4 17.♘f3



- 17...♖a1+? 18.♖d1 ♖xd1+ 19.♔xd1± Δ19...♙xf2? 20.♔e2 (20.♖f1) 20...♙c5 21.♖a1; ♖c1+-
- 17...♖c6 18.♖b5±; 18.♖b3

6

Kasrashvili – Kantaria

Tbilisi 2002

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5 4.c3 ♘c6 5.♘f3 ♘ge7 6.♘a3 cxd4 7.cxd4 ♖a5+ 8.♙d2 ♖b6 9.♙c3 ♘f5 10.♘c2 ♙e7 11.♙d3 ♙d7 12.0-0 g5 13.a4 a5 14.♘e3 **Variation**

The key motif of the original form of the poisoned pawn on d4 (its kindergarten version, so to speak: 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5 4.c3 ♘c6 5.♘f3 ♖b6 6.♙d3 cxd4 7.cxd4 ♘xd4?? 8.♘xd4 ♖xd4 9.♙b5+) is a discovered attack after a move of White's light-squared bishop. And if, as in the given case, there's no such discovered attack, it must also be checked whether there are no tactical circumstances to make this deadly motif possible.

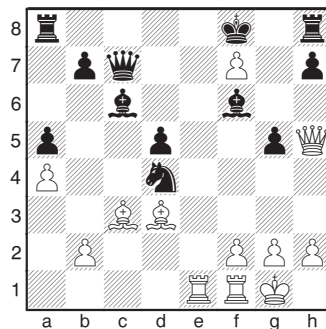
And since this is easily possible here, the pawn robbery 14... ♘fxd4?? would actually be fatal – and White could even win in two different ways.

1) The straightforward continuation is 15.♘xd4 ♘xd4 16.♘xd5! exd5 17.e6+- Of course not 17.♙xd4?? ♖xd4 18.e6 ♙c6-+.

17...♙c6 18.exf7+ ♔f8

After 18...♔d8? 19.♖e1 Δ♖g4; Δ♖h5 the presence of the well-advanced passed pawn would of course make White's task much easier.

19.♖h5 ♙f6 20.♖ae1 ♖c7

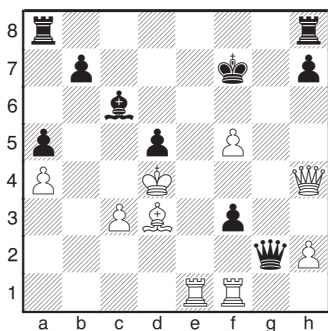


a) Now 21.♖h6+?? would be a terrible blunder, as after 21...♙g7

(21...♔xf7?? 22.f4 g4 23.e5!+-)

22.♖xg5 ♘f3+! 23.gxf3 ♙xc3 24.bxc3 ♖xf7 Black has no reason to complain.

b) The correct continuation of the attack would be 21.f5 g4 22.♖h6+ ♙g7 23.♖g5 ♖xf7 24.f5, after which, apart from the relatively sober win 24...♖f6 25.♖d2 Δ♖e6; 25.♖xg4, there's above all the spectacular alternative 24...♘f3+ 25.gxf3 ♙xc3 26.bxc3 gxf3 27.♔f2! ♖g7 28.♖h4!! ♖g2+ (28...♖e8 29.♖g1) 29.♔e3 ♔f7 30.♔d4!

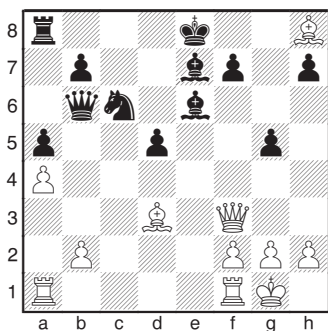


And whether you think it's possible or not: At the moment, regardless of the four opposing long-range attackers, there's hardly a safer place for the king than the center square on d4!

By the way, an appropriate finale would now look like this: 30...♔g7+ 31.f6 ♕xf6+ 32.♕xf6+ ♖xf6 33.♖xf3+ ♖g5 34.♖g1+ ♖h4 35.♕f5 and mate on the next move.

2) The alternative is 15.♔xd5!? ♔xf3+ (15...exd5 16.♔xd4 ♔xd4 17.e6 leads to Line 1 by transposition of moves.)

16.♕xf3 exd5 17.e6 ♔xe6 18.♔xh8



And although White has a winning position here too, overcoming Black's compact defense probably requires a lot more work than in Line 1.

7

Sölter – Becker

Paderborn 1977

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5 4.c3 ♖b6 5.♔f3 ♕d7 6.a4 cxd4 7.cxd4 ♔c6 8.♔c3 ♔ge7 9.♕b5 a6 10.a5 ♖c7 11.0-0

Given Black's blatant underdevelopment (at least three more moves to secure the king!), he should carefully consider whether the standard trick ♔xe5 also works here.

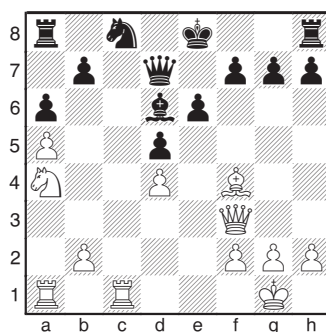
After he had spurned the perfectly edible a5 pawn on the previous move, he could not resist the temptation to eat up the one on e5 with 11...♔xe5??. It probably played a psychological role that he wanted to dispel the magic of his opponent's previous trick with a countertrick.

By the way, the list of equalizing moves is headed by 11...♔f5, after which White can continue with 12.♕xc6 or 12.♕a4.

12.♔xe5+–

Even with the alternative solution 12.♕f4, White achieves a more or less clear winning position in the following lines:

1) 12...♔xf3+ 13.♕xf3 ♖c8 14.♕xd7+ ♖xd7 15.♔a4 with the pointed example line 15...♔c8 16.♖fc1 ♕d6



17.♖xc8+! ♖xc8 18.♔b6 ♖c6 19.♕xd6 ♖c1+ 20.♖d1 ♖xd1+ 21.♖xd1 ♖c6 22.♕c5 etc.

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GM Dr. Karsten Müller was born on November 23rd, 1970 in Hamburg. He studied mathematics and received his doctorate in 2002. From 1988 to 2015 he played for the 'Hamburger SK' in the German 'Bundesliga' and in 1998 he was awarded the title of Grandmaster.

The busy and globally recognized end-game expert was named 'Trainer of the Year' by the German Chess Federation in 2007



He is the author (or co-author) of the following highly esteemed works:

- Secrets of Pawn Endings (with Frank Lamprecht, Everyman/GAMBIT 2000)
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His excellent series of ChessBase-DVDs Chess endgames 1-14 also attracted attention.

Müller's popular column Endgame Corner was published at 'www.ChessCafe.com' from January 2001 until 2015, and his column Endgames is published in Chess-Base Magazine since 2006.

To date, numerous of his books have been published by JBV Chess Books (Joachim Beyer Verlag) – a total of 24 in German and the following titles also in English:

- Magical Endgames (together with Claus Dieter Meyer)
- The Human Factor in Chess (together with Luis Engel)
- The Best Endgames of the World Champions Vol. 1 + 2
- World Chess Championship 2021 (together with Jerzy Konikowski and Uwe Bekemann)
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