PAWN

POWER

ANGUS DUNNINGTON

POPULAR
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Symbols

Apart from standard algebraic notation, very few symbols are used in this book. The following are the essential ones:

!  Good move
?  Bad move
!! Brilliant move
?? Blunder
!? Interesting move
?! Dubious move
0-0 Castles kingside
0-0-0 Castles queenside
Ch Championship
Wch World Championship
Corr Postal game
(16) The current position is shown in Diagram 16

When a game is mentioned, the players' names are given in bold, with the player with the white pieces given first, before the hyphen. The place and in some cases the type of event is given in italic.

Chess problems are indicated by a box containing 'P' and the problem number.

Solutions to chess problems are indicated by a box containing 'S' and the problem number.
Introduction

Before discussing the many properties and uses of pawns, let us first remind ourselves of a couple of important and unfortunate differences between these faithful servants and the other pieces.

A pawn's most obvious weakness is its severely limited range of movement. The queen, rook and bishop can all travel from one side of the board to another in a single move; knights can also make the same journey, albeit more laboriously. But the pawn has no choice but to face the music and keep to its predetermined path down the file on which it stands, the only opportunity to change course coming when a capture is possible. Therefore it is imperative that we look after our pawns, and the fact that we start each game with eight of them facilitates this task considerably!

Another very important failing of the pawn which seems to be seriously unappreciated even by some experienced players is its inability to move backwards. The significance of this rule cannot be overestimated, and we should not forget that every pawn move creates a weakness. For example, if White starts a game with 1 e4, the result of this innocent-looking and popular - thrust is the slight but irrevocable weakening of the squares d4 and f4. This in itself is an infinitesimal positional problem, but if for some reason White subsequently - at any stage - pushed with c2-c4 or g2-g4, the situation would take a severe turn for the worse, as White would then have to defend d4 or f4 with pieces.

Perhaps this is a rather obvious and simplistic example with which to highlight the consequences of pawn moves, but a master could look at a seemingly solid, cautious pawn advance and still recognize similar but more subtle defects. Just because the positional concession(s) may not be immediately catastrophic, it is nevertheless quite likely that the true extent of the damage will emerge later.

Rather like the futile practice of papering over cracks in a wall and pretending the problem has disappeared, it is no use ignoring a structural weakness or hoping that it will fix itself. Unless short-term compensatory factors are so good that the game is decided favourably before the faults can be pounced on by the opponent, it is necessary to do something about these unattractive features of your position. The best approach of all,
of course, is to tread carefully from the very first move!

Note that ‘pawn moves’ also refers to captures with a pawn, since the acceptance of doubled, split or backward pawns is no less significant than the creation of holes. Each may well be punished as the game progresses.

The following diagram illustrates a few general features which occur frequently:

![Diagram](image)

I have removed all the pieces in order to highlight the problems of Black’s pawns. Adding pieces (including kings) to the diagram position would distract our attention away from the plight of the black pawns. Using the cracks and wallpaper example again, we know that eventually the paper wears away to reveal the cracks, and in chess each exchange makes the structural faults more and more visible.

Here it is evident that Black’s six pawns are being held at bay by only half as many white ones! If White needs only these three pawns to paralyse the enemy, then think what could be done if the material imbalance were to be restored and three more white pawns appeared.

The black b-pawn is backward: it has been left behind by its colleagues and consequently has no support with which to aid its advance. White has reacted in the best way, guarding the square directly in front of it with the a-pawn.

The split d- and f-pawns are both isolated: neither has a partner on an adjacent file. Consequently the proximity of the white e-pawn means that neither can safely advance.

The miserable-looking doubled h-pawns are also without a friendly neighbour. The front one will be captured by White’s g-pawn if it ventures forward, and the other cannot move.

Now that we have considered the positional shortcomings of Black’s pawn islands, we can appreciate the effect of these handicaps in another context. In a late-opening or middlegame situation Black would still have problems freeing the bind because each piece posted to support an advance could be countered by a white piece (e.g. white \( \text{Qe}4 \) v black \( \text{Le}7 \)). Remember, too, that White has a deficit of three pawns.

Nonetheless, we must make some pawn moves (or captures) in
order to allow the other pieces into
the game, so the secret lies in put-
ting a pawn to such good use that
the advantages of its advance by
far outweigh the disadvantages
(every cloud has a silver lining!).
This is why the opening moves 1 e4 and 1 d4 are so popular. Apart
from opening lines, they also keep
watch over the central arena. The
move 1 a4, on the other hand, has
little to justify it.

In general the best policy is to
avoid making unnecessary pawn
moves (attacking a piece just for
the sake of it is a common mis-
take). Each one requires careful
deliberation!

We should remember the two
main deficiencies of the pawn:
1) it is not as agile as the other
pieces;
2) it cannot move backwards
(unlike the other pieces).

Versatility

In every game of chess the evalu-
ation of a particular position is ar-
ived at by taking several factors
into account. If both sides are said
to have equal chances, this does
not necessarily mean that the re-
spective plans available to them
are of the same kind. For example,
White may be preparing to fight
for the initiative with a dangerous
kingside attack, but in turn Black
could be ready with an equally ef-
fective counter on the other flank
or in the centre, or perhaps the of-
fensive could be controlled even
by more sober means.

With this in mind, it is essential
to make the most of the pawns,
because it is their versatility which
often maintains the balance. The
other pieces may be more mobile
but – apart from the queen – they
do not share the chameleon-like
characteristics of the pawn. The
knight is useless in long-range op-
erations and has no control whatso-
ever over the eight squares which
surround it. A bishop moves on
either light or dark squares, leaving
a massive 50% of the board perma-
nently inaccessible!

A healthy troop of pawns, on the
other hand, is entirely capable of
carrying out many different as-
signments – erecting a defensive
barrier, watching over critical
squares, holding back enemy
pieces and pawns, opening lines,
advancing in attack, etc.

If one player’s resources are in-
sufficient to deal with the threats of
the other, trouble begins, and treat-
ing and using pawns without the
utmost respect they deserve is a
sure-fire way of severely restrict-
ing vital options, whether they be
defensive, offensive or positional.

Finally, the following fascinat-
ing example of the almost magical
properties of pawns should serve
as a taste of things to come. Pre-
pare to enter the Twilight Zone ...
Although the authenticity of this game has been questioned, Sanz's phenomenal combination nevertheless deserves a place in the chess world's Hall of Fame.

**Ortueta-Sanz**

*Madrid 1934*

At first glance neither side appears to have an advantage. Indeed, with the material equal and Black's bishop acting only as baby-sitter to a couple of pawns, the pawn majority White enjoys on the kingside seems to swing the scales in White's favour.

This is, in fact, almost true; but history is about to be made by Black's ostensibly crippled queenside pawns.

1 ... **\( \text{H}xb2!! \)**

One of the many sacrifices in honour of the pawn which are to be found throughout this book.

2 **\( \text{Q}xb2 \)** **c3**

Now the only square from which the knight can prevent the promotion of Black's c3-pawn is d3, but after 3 **\( \text{Q}d3 \)** the hitherto passive bishop gives a decisive discovered check with 3...c4+, when 4 **\( \text{H}xb6 \)** cxd3! leaves the rook defenceless against the united pawns.

Consequently White has to be more imaginative in his attempts to hold back the tide.

3 **\( \text{Q}xb6 \)** **c4!!**

Black correctly ignores the attacked enemy pieces – 3...axb6?? 4 **\( \text{Q}d3 \)** covers the c1-square and thus wins for White.

Thanks to the latest advance, the threat to capture the rook becomes a genuine concern for White, as **\( \text{Q}d3 \)** is no longer possible.

Now after 4 **\( \text{Q}xc4 \)** c2 Black queens because the ungainly knight stands on the c-file where it obstructs the rook, and 4 **\( \text{Q}d1 \)** and 4 **\( \text{Q}a4 \)** both meet with 4...c2. Nor is 4 **\( \text{Q}e6 \)** sufficient: 4...cxb2 5 **\( \text{Q}e1 \)** c3, etc.

4 **\( \text{Q}b4! \)**

The only move (4 **\( \text{Q}b7 \)** c2), after which White threatens to clear up with 5 **\( \text{Q}a4 \)** followed by **\( \text{Q}xc4 \)**.
A rook and knight down, and with the c-pawns tamed, many players could be forgiven for resigning here. However, the pawns have a final trick up their sleeve:

4 ... a5!!

Super-human chess. A rook and knight up, yet with the black queenside pawns suddenly calling the shots, White can resign!

The point of Black’s move is seen after the intended 5 \( \text{xc}4 \), as then 5...\text{xb}2 wins because the rook cannot return to b4.

5 \( \text{a}4 \)

Or 5 \( \text{d}1 \) c2.

5 ... axb4

White resigns. The heroic pawns are finally united, and both the knight and the king are too far away from the queening square (c1).
There is more to chess than merely attacking the opponent's forces and trying to deliver checkmate. Even the brutal sport of boxing, in which the two protagonists try to punch each other to the floor, requires skilful defence. In fact, in most competitive sports, defence and the prevention or control of an opponent's aggression are factors which are no less important than attack.

Chess is no exception. It just so happens that publishable games have to be appealing to the readers, and victorious, sacrificial attacks tend to be the most spectacular (Kasparov's so-called Tal-like onslaughts receive more publicity than Karpov's cool defensive play).

Fair enough - given a choice of football highlights I would prefer to see a great 35-yard goal rather than a match-saving tackle any day, but a good team could not survive without a solid defence!

Even if you would like to try to emulate the great tacticians in your own games, you may not get the chance to shine if you carelessly pepper the home front with holes and in turn allow the opponent a decisive attack or counter-attack. Recognizing a few standard features of pawn patterns is also helpful in detecting the vulnerable points in the enemy camp which form the most rewarding targets.

Pawns are reliable defenders, with an added ability to change effortlessly in and out of defensive and offensive roles as they move up the board and as the situation dictates. The other pieces can perform similar chores, too, but their greater range makes them more suitable for various other purposes.

Because there are so many pawns, the defensive services they provide come in several forms and, according to their posting, some foot-soldiers enjoy more freedom than others to engage in active operations with the rest of the forces. For instance, centre pawns, if not exchanged during the opening phase, play a crucial part in every game because they stand on, or help control, the sector of the board which is the heart of the battleground.

The future of the queenside pawns is usually determined by the opening, but most of the time the kingside pawns (f, g and h) have little say in the matter: the defence of the realm is a top priority.

Fortunately they are excellent bodyguards for the king, and now
we shall look at the pros and cons of several f-g-h pawn formations in the case of kingside castling.

In the vast majority of games one or both sides choose this method of placing the king in relative safety, so it is imperative that we understand which pawn configurations make solid (or fragile) walls of defence. Note that after queenside castling the king will often move to the b1/b8-square in order to defend the a-pawn, thus producing the same king and three pawn combination but on the other side of the board.

(For the sake of simplicity I have chosen to speak from White’s point of view, but of course the same comments apply to Black – g3 could be g6, ... lbg4 from Black could be lbg5 from White etc. I have also left the king and rook where they stand immediately after kingside castling, even though the rook is not tied to fl, nor is the king obliged to rest on g1.)

The examples – presented in descending order of importance – are discussed in general terms, and the comments pertain mainly to the opening and middlegame stages. A weak square in front of the king becomes less vulnerable each time a piece is exchanged.

Not surprisingly the most reliable set-up consists of three pawns standing side by side, none of them having moved yet.

Four crucial squares directly in front of the king (e3, f3, g3, h3) are protected, and if the need arises for White to move one of the pawns, we will arrive at one of the positions which follow.

Remember that it is not absolutely necessary to maintain this traditionally solid structure – it would be disastrous (and embarrassing) stubbornly to resist ‘spoiling’ the formation only to fall foul of a back rank mate later on!

Although the h-pawn seems susceptible to attack, often a knight will be posted on f3 to bolster this potential weakness. Another advantage of keeping the pawns on their original squares is their maximum distance from the enemy pawns. Black’s pawns will have to advance further to initiate hand-to-hand combat than they would if there were a pawn to target on, for example, g3 or h3.

The formation in Diagram 3 (below) is seen frequently in many openings and defences.
Occasionally, when the queen has not yet vacated the d1-h5 diagonal and a knight stands on f3, White will nudge the h-pawn one square to avoid an inconvenient pin by Black with ...\(\text{g}4\). Black is also denied the use of \(g4\) for his other pieces.

As I mentioned earlier, even the slight difference from Diagram 2 created by the h2-h3 advance may prove dangerous for White if there is no safe way to meet the violent thrust \(g7-g5-g4\) etc. Normally such a plan is unsound, or both players castle on the same side and the main struggle will therefore take place in another sector, but we must not forget these possibilities.

This is a particularly aggressive formation, and it is even stronger with a knight on \(f3\). White exerts considerable pressure on \(e5\) (and on the less critical \(g5\)), and Black must constantly worry about the potential push \(f4-f5-f6\).

The obvious drawback of the move \(f2-f4\) is the opening of the g1-a7 diagonal. White can answer or anticipate a check by \(h1\), after which the idea of \(g4-f2+\) must be addressed (\(e3\) may also be a target). Defending with h2-h3 leaves a hole on g3. Remember: all pawn moves create weaknesses...

Unless White is supporting the e4-square, the slight vulnerability of the e3-square will probably be compensated for by pushing the f-pawn to the fourth rank (reaching Diagram 4).

Diagram 6 is not an attractive position. By stepping forward one square, the g-pawn has caused irreparable damage to the king's protective shield. The squares \(f3\)
and h3 are chronically weak, and the more pieces Black has remaining in the game, the more demanding White’s defensive task. The black queen, both knights, queen’s bishop and (don’t forget) pawns would all be happy to install themselves in the white king’s quarters.

The situation changes very much for the better with a white bishop on g2. In fact this would give us an effective pattern of kingside development which occurs in a number of openings, with the bishop defending h3 while simultaneously bearing down on Black’s queenside.

On a walk around a tournament hall anywhere in the world one would see one of these five pawn formations in front of a castled king on almost every board. Other f-g-h combinations are less desirable (e.g. f2-g3-h4 or f2-g4-h3).

As for the pawns’ other defensive roles (i.e. when not providing the king with some sort of protective shield), the general principle is the same: try not to leave squares – or pawns – so badly in need of support that the opponent steals them.

Again three or four pawns standing abreast are strong, making an incursion by enemy pieces on any of the squares in front of them almost impossible.

If one of the pawns is attacked it may simply advance one square, where it will be supported by its neighbour(s). Alternatively, if White has a row of pawns from a2 to c2 for example, and the b2-pawn is under attack by a queen or bishop on the long diagonal, there are two ways to parry the threat: play b2-b3, or block with c2-c3. The merits of the respective choices would depend on a host of positional factors, but at least a proud wall of pawns often offers such options.

As long as it does not neglect one or more key squares, a formation of united pawns should be sufficiently effective in defence to enable other officers to concentrate on their respective duties.

A chain of pawns can also act as a defensive barrier (and defend several squares of the same colour) while simultaneously creating space in which to manoeuvre. It is logical that a pawn chain is stronger if its apex is in the centre, as a chain which extends outwards from the centre influences a less important area of the board (the
Illustrative Game Tarrasch-Marco deals with pawn chains.

If pawns are skilful in dealing with threats to their comrades or in erecting secure barricades against invasion without straying from their initial posts, they are also adept in advancing so far that enemy forces cannot even leave home ranks in safety. In fact, holding back opposing pieces and pawns is an easy matter for a pawn.

Sometimes, as Diagram 7 illustrates, a few impudent pawns succeed in shutting a piece out of the game altogether.

**Dunnington-Georges**

*France 1993*

![Diagram 7](image)

Black’s passivity, doubled c-pawns and potential weakness on g6 (hence ...\(\text{h7}\) and ...\(\text{g8}\)) leave him with serious difficulties. But rather than the intended plan of exerting pressure on the b1-h7 diagonal, White played:

1 \(\text{Ax}a8\) \(\text{Ax}a8\)
2 \(\text{f6!}\) \(\text{f8}\)

On h8 the bishop will be entombed for eternity.

3 \(\text{c5!}\) (8)

**Black resigned.** On both sides of the board White’s pawns enjoy absolute domination over Black’s pieces. The c-pawn locks in the cornered knight while simultaneously teaming up with the kingside pawns to deny the \(\text{f8}\) an escape route. The black rook and king are consequently forced to share cramped prison quarters, leaving the \(\text{c8}\) fending for itself against all the white pieces!

This successful example of the pawns’ ‘preventative’ roles actually winning a game leads us into a discussion of their more active skills, and of the relative advantages in this respect of various central pawn formations.
The centre of the chess board can be compared with the midfield area of a football pitch. Without sufficient influence and stability in the centre, an attack down the wing could backfire disastrously. A few strong midfield players form the foundation on which active operations in other areas are based.

Indeed in chess, like football, it is the situation in the centre which determines the character of the game. The efficacy of the various plans available to either side depends on the central pawn formation.

A strong player will cut his way through the forest of opportunities to find perhaps the only one which is truly appropriate to the specific pawn position in the centre. Factors such as where, when and how to begin an attack (or even defend against one) and which pieces and pawns should be used must be considered within the context of the central pawn structure.

Most of us get the greatest enjoyment from throwing our pawns forward in search of the enemy king or in an effort to squeeze the life out of the opponent’s forces. It is always nice to see pieces diving out of the way to avoid the march of even a single pawn. It is similar to the myth of mighty elephants becoming panic-stricken upon seeing a mouse, except that in chess the fear of capture is fully justified.

Using pawns as an attacking force is an integral part of the game, and being able to recognize the most suitable circumstances in which to launch any kind of pawn offensive is vitally important.

We shall look at the four main types of pawn centre:

1) *Closed* – all the pawns in the centre are locked together, preventing any advance and limiting the range of several pieces.

2) *Fixed* – each side may have, for example, only one pawn, but for some reason neither can move.

3) *Mobile* – one side has at least two united pawns in the centre which are not blockaded or fixed.

4) *Dynamic* – the future of the pawns has not yet been decided because there are still various options available.

### Closed Centre

A closed centre restricts the freedom of every piece, particularly the long-range rooks and bishops which need open files and diago-
nals on which to operate. Therefore the only solution is to generate activity on the flanks by pushing pawns and opening lines.

In fact, a closed centre is the best central set-up to complement a pawn attack on the wing because there is no question of a central counter-thrust.

The player who enjoys the most advantages (space, piece coordination, fewer weak squares, etc) is better placed to embark on a flank assault, advancing pawns until they have forced decisive positional concessions from the defender and until enough open lines and holes have been created to facilitate the next phase of the attack.

Watching an avalanche of pawns come crashing towards you can be very intimidating and it is not to everyone’s taste to sit back and wait and then calmly defend when the strike finally comes. Occasionally a good form of defence is counter-attack, perhaps looking to the other wing in search of a pawn storm which will distract the attentions of the opponent and maybe even force him onto the defensive.

Another possibility which often goes unnoticed is a piece sacrifice in the centre to wipe away the enemy pawns and clear the path for our own (see the Illustrative Game Arencibia-Akopian).

Diagram 9 features a type of blocked centre which is quite common.

Not one of the six central pawns can move, and because the centre is closed both players must look to the wings for an active plan. Black’s slightly cramped position makes manoeuvres that little bit more difficult, the squares c6, d6 and e6 being inaccessible. White, on the other hand, can use the corresponding squares c3, d3, and e3, and this extra space facilitates the preparation of aggressive play (indeed in most openings White uses the advantage of the first move to gain more space, and this is one reason why White finds attack easier). Black’s backward d-pawn is a potential weakness, but here this concerns us only when White helps to undermine it with pawn challenges against the c- and e-pawns.

White has two rather obvious plans at his disposal. The first is to pressure the queenside with the b2-b4 thrust. This should be prefaced by a2-a3, so that after ...cxb4 White can recapture with a pawn and prepare the advance c4-c5.
with the aim of pushing Black back or clearing the way for the d5-pawn. All this seems like a very attractive prospect for White, but as a last resort Black can always meet b2-b4 with ...b7-b6, bolstering his c-pawn.

Much more promising (and entertaining!) for the first player is a kingside offensive. Black’s king normally resides on the kingside, making the mirror-images of measures which fit in so well on the queenside, such as ...a7-a5 and/or ...b7-b6, very risky on this flank because they would weaken the king’s defensive shield.

With a similar idea in mind to the queenside thrust, White can try f2-f4. Here, too, a preparatory g2-g3 is possible, but not absolutely necessary. If White still has a bishop on the c1-h6 diagonal, ...exf4 could be well met by ...xf4, when the subsequent new posting on the h2-b8 diagonal adds pressure to Black’s backward d-pawn (10).

Now there is a new positional threat of e4-e5 to challenge Black’s d-pawn and, after either exd6 or ...dxe5, create a passed d-pawn. Preventing this advance with ...f7-f6 leaves a hole on e6.

Should Black reply to the initial f2-f4 with the solid ...f7-f6, White can maintain the tension or continue with f4-f5, intending to profit from the now increased territorial advantage by throwing forward the g- and h-pawns. In the Illustrative Game Vyzhmanavin-Beliavsky White successfully employs the very same plan.

Another option is to leave the f-pawn at home or push it just one square to support the e-pawn, leaving one or both of the remaining kingside pawns to charge down the board. This strategy is designed to open a file to Black’s castled king, or to restrain Black while White regroups in readiness for an offensive at a later stage of the game.

It is clear that the black forces’ more limited scope reduces the options in Diagram 9. There are two desirable pawn breaks.

Queenside expansion is a worthy candidate. Indeed the plan of ...a7-a6 and ...b7-b5 is totally natural with this and similar pawn structures. If White ignores the thrust Black will either maintain the tension, open the b-file with ...bxc4 or even close the queenside with ...b5-b4.

Capturing away from the centre with cxb5 achieves less than nothing for White after ...axb5 (11).
White’s game is no longer so easy to keep together because he has two pawn islands against Black’s one (a large mass of pawns can look after itself very well!). Moreover the a- and b-pawns are quite weak (the former could come under fire on the a-file), whereas the b5- and c5-pawns are dangerously mobile.

Sometimes Black can do without ...a7-a6, opting instead for the immediate sacrificial possibility of ...b7-b5 with the idea of answering cxb5 with ...a7-a6, clearing the two queenside files to use the major pieces to pressure White’s pawns. If we remove the black b-pawn from Diagram 11 it is clear that rooks on a8 and b8 could well be worth the investment of a pawn.

On the other side of the board ...f7-f5 suggests itself, perhaps after first playing ...g7-g6 so that Black can always recapture on f5 with a pawn (12).

Note that without a black pawn on f5 White could use the e4-square as an influential central outpost for his pieces.

A knight, for example, would attack the d6-pawn, pressure the c5-pawn to aid in a possible b2-b4 charge, eye the g5-square and even defend f2 and g3 should they come under pressure later!

The e5- and f5-pawns have the potential to damage White’s kingside with ...f5-f4-f3 or ...e5-e4, ...f5-f4 and ...e4-e3 etc. To cut across this vigorous plan White has a standard pawn move in Diagram 12, namely f2-f4. Ignoring the challenge invites fxe5 dxe5 when White’s d-pawn is free to run, and exchanging pawns with ...exf4 may leave the f5-pawn weak. We are left with the response ...e5-e4 (13).
This particular pawn structure is frequently seen in the King's Indian Defence. White usually blockades the e4-pawn with a bishop or knight and attempts to follow with h2-h3 and g2-g4, utilizing the kingside pawn majority. Even if the game is balanced, this possible pawn break makes White’s game slightly more comfortable.

Finally, if Black can achieve both the ...b7-b5 and ...f7-f5 pawn breaks the initiative would be in danger of slipping from White’s hands. Combine Diagrams 11 and 12 and we see that White’s d-pawn is without support and the black pawns attack several key squares.

**Summary:** avoid passivity in positions with a closed centre, as this may be punished by a vicious pawn storm on one or even both wings. Of course the closed nature of the game provides extra time for manoeuvres, but these must be aimed at eventually beginning a flank attack.

**Fixed Centre**

A centre in which each side has a pawn, and the pawns stand face to face (e.g. white d4-pawn v black d5-pawn) is a typical example of a fixed centre. Often the pieces play a starring role and the play revolves around the centre, each player using one of the squares protected by the central pawn as an outpost.

However, because there are no central pawn breaks, the player with the better developed forces (or a lead in development) can sometimes profit from the stability in the centre with a carefully controlled pawn storm on the flank. This does not have to be an all-out mating attack, just enough to undermine the opponent’s grip on the central squares and/or the defence of the centre pawn. If a couple of weaknesses in the enemy camp can be created, a more vicious assault may be possible later.

The position in Diagram 14 arose in the game Kasparov-Yurtsev, Moscow 1981:

![Diagram 14](image)

The pawns are symmetrical and Black intends to bring his knight out to c6, putting pressure on White’s d-pawn. White must act quickly if he is to avoid a dull draw. His pieces are already well-placed, but not so well that they could conjure up an advantage all by themselves. Many players in this position would shuffle a few
pieces around and then acquiesce to sharing the point. However, a real gladiator of the chess board knows how to get the most from his forces, and even as a youngster in 1981, the 'Boy from Baku' had an astonishingly powerful will to win.

1 g4!
This pawn thrust eliminates Black's hopes of an early peace offering.

1 ...  \textit{\texttt{d6}}
2 \textit{\texttt{h1}!}
A useful safety precaution. If 2 \textit{\texttt{fxd5}} \textit{\texttt{xd5}} 3 \textit{\texttt{xd5}} Black has 3...\textit{\texttt{xh2+}} 4 \textit{\texttt{xh2}} \textit{\texttt{xd5}} with a balanced game.

3 ...  \textit{\texttt{e8}}
4 g5  \textit{\texttt{xf4}}
Forced, otherwise Black loses the d-pawn.

5 \textit{\texttt{xf4}}  \textit{\texttt{h5}}
6 \textit{\texttt{xb8}}
In several ways this may seem like a strange move. Having provoked Black into giving up his precious dark-squared bishop White voluntarily surrenders his own - and for a piece which is still to leave base! Yet there is method to this madness; the free movement of White's f-pawn is of paramount importance.

6 ...  \textit{\texttt{xb8}}
7 f4  g6
Not a move Black wants to play, but the only one to defend the misplaced knight.

8 \textit{\texttt{f3}}  b6 (15)

Of course White cannot grab the d-pawn now: 9 \textit{\texttt{xd5}?} (even worse is 9 \textit{\texttt{xd5??}} \textit{\texttt{b7}}) 9...\textit{\texttt{b7}} and suddenly White has big problems on the long light-square diagonal. Utmost care is necessary when we move the pawns which normally provide protection to the castled king - it would be a pity to be distracted from the job in hand only to fall into a hole we dug ourselves!

9 f5!
Consistent with White's general plan of storming the enemy king position. Black's next is aimed at covering the weak f7-pawn, which would fall in the event of 9...\textit{\texttt{xd5}} 10 fxg6. This line also highlights the advantage of tucking the king in the corner with 2 \textit{\texttt{h1}} - White can leave his g-pawn undefended without having to worry about it being taken with a troublesome check.

9 ...  \textit{\texttt{b7}}
Black defends f7.

10 f6!
Cutting off the knight's retreat while simultaneously depriving the black king of priceless oxygen.

10 ... \textit{\textbf{\textcolor{blue}{\textit{x}e6}}}

Black sets up a barricade of sorts on the kingside in readiness for a queenside counter.

11 \textit{\textbf{\textcolor{blue}{\textit{xe5}}}} \textbf{\textcolor{blue}{\textit{\textit{d8}}}}
13 \textbf{\textcolor{blue}{\textit{we3}}} \textbf{\textcolor{blue}{\textit{b5}}}

Black plans an invasion down the b-file, so with impeccable timing Kasparov increases the pressure.

14 \textit{\textbf{\textcolor{blue}{\textit{xe2}}}}!

Intending to break open the black king's pawn cover by capturing the stranded knight.

14 ... \textbf{\textit{b4}}
15 axb4 \textbf{\textit{xb4}}
16 \textbf{\textcolor{blue}{\textit{xe6}}} \textbf{\textit{gxh5}} \textbf{\textit{(16)}}

The way Kasparov finishes off his opponent is a fitting conclusion to a game which looked level until White's kingside pawns began to breathe fire.

17 g6! \textbf{\textit{hxg6}}

Black cannot ignore this arrogant intruder.

18 \textbf{\textcolor{blue}{\textit{xe6}}}! \textbf{\textit{fxe6}}
18 ... \textbf{\textit{xe6}} 19 \textbf{\textit{h6}} with the deadly threat of \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textit{g7}} mate.}

19 \textbf{\textit{h6}} \textbf{\textit{\textit{b7}}}

Or 19 ... \textbf{\textit{f8}} 20 \textbf{\textit{xe6}}+ \textbf{\textit{h8}} 21 \textbf{\textit{xe6}}+ \textbf{\textit{g8}} 22 \textbf{\textit{g1}}+ etc.

After 19 ... \textbf{\textit{b7}} Black resigned rather than wait for 20 \textbf{\textit{xe6}}+ \textbf{\textit{f8}} 21 f7, or 20 ... \textbf{\textit{h8}} 21 f7.

\textbf{Minority Attack}

When the centre is fixed it is possible to launch a minority attack. This is so called because a minority of two pawns, for example, will charge bravely forward to confront three opposing pawns. Diagram 17 shows an appropriate pawn formation:
Although the centre pawns are not literally fixed, the respective pawn thrusts c3-c4 and ...e6-e5 are not desirable to either side. Neither player has a reason to voluntarily accept an isolated d-pawn.

Black begins the minority attack with ...b7-b5, when there is already the immediate positional threat of pushing the pawn one square further to b4. Should White allow this advance and subsequently capture on b4, both the b2-pawn and the newly forsaken, permanently weak d4-pawn will come under fire. If White waits for ...bxc3, bxc3 the new c3-pawn becomes a target which has to be defended by pieces.

Prevention of ...b5-b4 is therefore logical, but after a2-a3 Black replies ...a7-a5, renewing the threat.

The final option is for White to put a pawn on b4, yet this leaves the c3-pawn terribly weak and vulnerable to attack on the c-file, not forgetting, of course, the gaping hole on c4 which Black could use as an outpost.

It may seem that the typical minority attack guarantees an advantage. In fact it is true that it is an effective weapon when employed in the right circumstances, especially if the 'defending' side cannot create enough counterplay to offset the eventual queenside weaknesses.

However, I have chosen to leave just the rooks on the board because they cooperate well with the pawns in this kind of attack, lining up on the b- and/or c-files. With each extra piece which rejoins the position in Diagram 17, White benefits in two ways. First, it is easier to defend the queenside. More worrying for Black is the second service – the support of an offensive on the other flank. The more pieces we add, the more factors such as White’s kingside territorial superiority, control of the half-open e-file (\texttt{e1-e3-g3/h3} is a worthy idea) and the thrust f2-f4-f5 become menacing realities.

In conclusion, the above pawn formation should normally produce a balanced game.

Another kind of fixed centre occurs when one player has an isolated pawn (e.g. white d4-pawn v black e6-pawn) which cannot safely advance.

The treatment of isolated pawns requires a great deal of care and attention from the player in possession of one, and without the help of other pieces and the activity created by them, the pawn could prove to be no more than a liability.

However, while sufficient forces remain on the board, the power of an isolated pawn lies, ironically, in its ability to keep the enemy occupied with arresting its progression.
The general features of the position in Diagram 18 are to be found in most middlegames with such a pawn structure.

If playing with an isolated pawn is a demanding exercise, facing one is not exactly an easy ride, either. The problem for the defending side is in deciding just how much energy to devote to neutralizing the pawn by overprotecting the square directly in front of it (in this case d5).

We are anyway not interested in the advance d4-d5 and the subsequent exchange with the e6-pawn. This may sometimes give White a better game and sometimes fizzle out to equality, but the resulting total clearance of pawns in the centre leads to piece play (often with a completely symmetrical, dull pawn structure). We are concerned with pawns.

In our example the d4-pawn is indeed well and truly blockaded, but in his endeavours to erect this barrier Black has done nothing to challenge the white pieces which have taken up active posts, especially the \( \mathcal{D}e5 \) which is supported by the pawn in question.

Black’s pieces are all dressed up with nowhere to go, and once again White is well placed to launch a pawn attack, thanks to the fixed, stable central pawn situation.

1 f4! \( \mathcal{H}c8 \)

Black trusts in the position’s apparent solidity, underestimating the power of the approaching f-pawn’s mission.

The attempt to hold back the tide with 1...g6 demands a consistent follow-up from White – 2 \( \mathcal{H}h6 \) \( \mathcal{H}e8 \) 3 g4! and Black’s kingside fortress is about to be over-run. Notice that Black’s enthusiastic execution of the blockade has done nothing to dent White’s aggressive kingside ambitions.

2 f5 \( \text{exf5} \)
3 \( \mathcal{H}xf5 \) (19)

The point of the f2-f4-f5 thrust is now clear. White’s unchallenged
The Centre

b3 bears down heavily on the a2-f7 diagonal. The other forces are also looking menacing, and meanwhile, the d4-pawn is like a pivot, offering invaluable support. In the game Black succumbed to the pressure and was soon knocked out by the crushing blow \( \text{Qxf7} \).

Remember: White reached this commanding position by throwing forward a single pawn to undermine Black’s e6-pawn.

Mobile Centre

A central and united pawn majority which is not completely blockaded becomes gradually more formidable with each safe move forward. The player with the mobile pawn centre is constantly on the lookout for an imprecision from the opponent which permits one of the pawns to favourably advance.

Ideally the ‘defender’ would like to restrain or even blockade the opposing centre pawns with a view to picking them off later, but this is only possible if the advanced pawns are insufficiently supported. He must nonetheless try to undermine them.

Assuming that both sides have the same number of pawns, the player on the defending side of a 2 v 1 centre, for example, will usually have a pawn majority in another sector of the board (for the sake of argument we will also assume that there are no doubled or tripled pawns in strange places). All other things being equal, the balance can be maintained by putting this majority to good use and carrying out an advance on the wing to add pressure to the centre.

If this form of counterplay is not available, the second player is tied to a policy of passive defence, which in turn is made difficult by the fact that the centre pawns attack key squares. If and when the breakthrough does take place, the pawn’s arrival will prove uncomfortable to meet.

Here we join a game in which White has a 2 v 1 majority in the centre. This is frequently seen (it can result from a pawn trade in a 3 v 2 majority), and the struggle is critical because one more pawn exchange could leave a powerful, protected passed pawn.

Van Wely-C.Hansen
Ter Apel 1993
At first glance the game seems to be only slightly better for White. He is in possession of the mobile pawn centre and therefore has more space, but Black's forces are well placed. However, White actually has a comfortable advantage thanks to an important positional feature on the queenside – namely the backward b-pawn.

If the black a-pawn stood on a6 rather than a5 the picture would tell another story, as the effective plan of ...b6-b5 and ...b6 would be possible, making a territorial gain and keeping White's centre under close watch.

Unfortunately for Black this standard counter is not an option here because on a4 the white bishop is the only piece to control the critical b5-square. Consequently White has valuable extra time with which to concentrate on creating a passed pawn.

1 d5!  

The only move. After 1...c6 White simply marches on with 2 d6! and Black already has problems, for example 2...xe7 3 dxe7  

A typical case of the destructive power of rampaging pawns. Their relatively low value means that enemy pieces must flee from their path, enabling protected, united passed pawns to take part in an audacious procession all the way to glory.

Black cannot allow such an invasion; he must defend.

3 ...  

White's queen has no escape route, but here we see another idea behind 3 g5.

5 xe6!  

Not 5...xe7? 6 xc5 when Black loses material.

6 g5  

7 xe6+ f7 (22)
In return for his piece White has two pawns and is about to capture a third. In addition both black rooks share the same diagonal as White’s bishop; one of them must fall (notice 8 \( \text{a}\text{x}d7?? \) lifts the pin on the knight – 8...\( \text{d}\text{x}g5 \)).

No less significant is the removal of Black’s e- and f-pawns, leaving their counterparts unchallenged and forcing Black to remain on the defensive with a futile effort to construct a successful blockade.

8 \( \text{w}\text{x}b5! \)

Renewing the threat to the \( \text{d}\text{d}7 \).

8 ... \( \text{c}\text{c}6 \)

8...\( \text{w}\text{c}6 9 \text{a}\text{x}d7! \).

9 \( \text{w}\text{b}3! \) \( \text{w}\text{x}b3 \)

10 \( \text{a}\text{x}b3 \) \( \text{f}8 \)

Escaping the pin and approaching the centre. The preponderance of white pawns will anyway bring about a win for White.

11 e5

White follows the consistent course, continuing with the central theme he set in motion with 1 d5.

Also good is 11 \( \text{c}\text{c}1! \) which simplifies into an easy ending in which White has two extra pawns after 11...\( \text{d}\text{x}d6 12 \text{c}\text{x}c6 \text{c}\text{x}c6 13 \text{a}\text{x}d7 \).

11 ... \( \text{e}8 \)

12 \( \text{a}\text{x}d7 \) \( \text{a}\text{x}d7 \)

13 \( \text{a}\text{d}5! \) (23)

Cruel play! As Black is tied down to the supervision of the invading pawns, White takes time off to hit the meaningless a-pawn.

13 ... \( \text{d}\text{d}8 \)

14 \( \text{a}\text{x}a5 \) \( \text{c}\text{c}6 \)

15 \( \text{c}\text{c}5 \) \( \text{f}7 \)

16 f4! \( \text{g}6 \)

Preventing the threatened 17 f5. White’s pawns will not be denied.

17 g4!

Black is defenceless against the united army.

17 ... \( \text{d}\text{d}4 \)

18 \( \text{a}\text{e}4 \) \( \text{f}3+ \)

19 \( \text{g}2 \) \( \text{x}g4 \)

20 \( \text{g}3 \) (24)
This is what normally happens when the defending side’s resources are not quite up to the task. Just when a blockade of the most advanced pawns has been set up and it seems that the storm is over, other selfless enemy pawns appear from nowhere, undefended. They offer decisive support, and their capture serves to leave the defending forces awkwardly placed. The game ended:

20 ...  
21 e7+  
22 d4  
23 d3

Black resigns. Either the knight or the bishop must leave the stage.

In this game White’s persistence and tactical awareness interfered with Black’s efforts to defend, allowing the d- and e-pawns to take centre stage.

Other positions with a mobile centre could follow another course, with the pawns driving away enemy pieces from key defensive posts in preparation for a flank attack. There should be time for such a change of plan and transfer of forces because the defending pieces are still too busy dealing with the centre pawn(s).

Different positions have different features, but the eventual creation of a mobile centre from an initial majority is generally a sign of hope for one player and a sign of danger for the other. Tread carefully.

**Dynamic Centre**

Now we move on to look at the type of pawn centre which is not closed—where the pawns face each other ‘from a distance’ and both sides can still make pawn moves or captures which may dramatically alter the character of the game.

The dynamic centre requires constant attention because the number and type of possible pawn moves is forever changing. Both players should strive to seize the advantage by breaking open the heart of the position, achieving a dangerous mobile majority or by creating extra space behind an eventually closed central structure (as in Diagram 9).

Apart from being a somewhat startling example of a convincing central pawn breakthrough, the following surprisingly quick finish to one of the great Alexander Alekhine’s games also gives me an excellent and timely opportunity to mention one of the many Golden Rules of Chess: *an attack on the*
flank is best answered by a counter-thrust in the centre.

It has already been said that a closed centre is the perfect foundation for an attack using pawns. If you still have any doubts about this, Alekhine’s brutal yet clinical treatment of his opponent’s rash kingside charge should persuade you to heed the above advice!

Incidentally, in defence of Maroczy and the rest of us humans, it must be said that with the initial layout of the pawns covering all eight files it is easy to be guilty once in a while of concentrating one’s efforts on certain areas of the board while more or less ignoring others. When analysing a potential pawn attack, particularly against the king, this fault may combine with the misconception that the opponent has no choice but to defend. Such carelessness (or overconfidence) is not exactly rare. The secret is to keep it to a minimum.

A constant problem with Black’s traditional Dutch ‘stone-wall’ pawn structure (c6-d5-e6-f5) is the hole on e5, and with the exchange of dark-squared bishops this weakness has been accentuated. In compensation Black has a fair share of space and a grip on e4, with the extra possibility of a kingside offensive at some point should the opportunity present itself.

1 ... g5?

And now is most definitely not the right time, for White can react to Black’s crude challenge in the time-honoured way: hitting out in the centre. Perhaps Black, if he considered it at all, dismissed this plan as irrelevant.

Whatever the reason, White’s appreciation of the destructive potential of the dynamic centre certainly shows Black the error of his ways.

2 Qd2! Qf7
3 f3! e5

Black carries on regardless, judging that his hostile group of pawns will guarantee an initiative.

4 cxd5 cxd5
5 e4! (26)

Suddenly five pawns stand ready for hand-to-hand combat. Whichever way Black continues it is too late. Remember: reckless pawn advances create serious weaknesses.
The smoke has cleared and the opening of the centre has left Black’s position in tatters. The whole strategy of a kingside attack has backfired. In boxing parlance, Black is on the ropes.

7 ... exd4

A humiliating change of tune. Now he hopes for 8 ♞xd4 ♞c5, but after White’s next the game is over.

8 ♞c7!!

Total paralysis! Defenceless, Black soon resigned.

Dynamic pawn centres vary greatly from one to another. Choose ten of them, and each one could turn out differently.

If both sides have roughly the same possibilities of expansion, the player who makes the most of his chances will emerge with an advantage.

If a player’s pawn structure is superior to his opponent’s, he has the luxury of deciding to which, if any, of the other three pawn centres to transpose.

It is important to remember that not only the dynamic centre is capable of changing form to another kind.

Here we see the eight centre pawns in a random opening formation. Black, to move, has a choice of what to do with this dynamic centre.

After the exchange 1...cxd4 2 cxd4 Black could leave the remaining pawns where they are and seek play on the c-file, or challenge with 2...e5. The ball is then in White’s court. Symmetry would result from 3 dxe5 dxe5, so White should either opt for a slight space advantage by closing the centre with 3 d5, or maintain the tension in the centre and prepare the aggressive f2-f4, again with more territory (...exd4 leaves Black with a vulnerable d-pawn).

Alternatively Black can contest White’s central grip with 1...e5.
The hole on d5 after 2 dxe5/dxc5 could be problematic for Black, but the compensation comes in extra space. If White does nothing in reply to 1...e5 Black may follow with 2...exd4, granting White an albeit temporary (mobile) central majority. 2 d5 brings about a closed centre etc.

Chess is a game so rich in possibilities, and a whole chapter could be devoted solely to the myriad of pawn formations which could materialize from the position in Diagram 27.

I recommend you explore the others for yourself...
As a game progresses and the number of pieces on the board gradually diminishes, it follows that the pawns which have survived the battle thus far take on a greater importance. With the approach of the final phase of the game, thoughts of creating or supporting passed pawns come to the forefront of the mind, taking over from ideas of attack, mate and material gain etc. The new campaign is dedicated to promotion, seizing any available opportunity to tip the scales in our favour by crowning a new queen.

Very rarely is it possible to emerge from a series of exchanges and then be able simply to push a passed pawn all the way to the eighth rank without encountering a single problem. Equally few and far between (unfortunately!) are opponents who do absolutely nothing to arrest the advance.

Success requires effort, not only to optimize winning chances by giving the pawn maximum support, but also to single out as early as possible the pawns which have the most potential. Even those which are not yet passed are worthy of investigation.

Not forgetting that the standard ‘values’ of the pieces exist only as an approximate guide, it is logical that these change according to circumstances, and as we shall see, certain peculiarities of positions with one or more passed pawns can fuse to elevate a lowly pawn to VIP status. A pawn sacrifice may yield a positional or tactical advantage in the earlier stages, but in the ending it is the other pieces which must be prepared to give themselves up to help pawns.

This role-reversal is the key to all types of passed pawn situations, and the failure to appreciate it leaves us analysing only those possibilities which do not involve giving away any material! If a queen sacrifice in a mating attack is considered to be an impressive but quite normal means to an end, then similar sacrifices in the ending are equally logical. Moreover, with less pieces still in the game there will obviously be less threats with which to trouble the opponent, consequently making life easier for the defending side. All the more reason not to give up the search for unexpected sacrifices which clear a pawn’s path of obstacles or obstruct the opponent’s defensive lines.

Before looking at some examples from practical play, here is an
entertaining opening trap involving the promotion of a rampant pawn. In fact Black manages to carry out a winning under-promotion as early as the seventh move!

1 d4 d5
2 c4 e5

The tricky Albin Counter-Gambit.

3 dxe5 d4
4 e3?

White’s attempt to deal with the unwelcome intruder is about to backfire. The alternative 4 \( \text{d}f3 \) is a vast improvement.

4 ... \( \text{d}b4+ \)
5 \( \text{d}d2? \)

The lesser evil is 5 \( \text{d}d2 \).

5 ... \( \text{d}xe3! \)
6 \( \text{x}b4? \)

Whoops. The last chance to deprive Black’s pawn of glory is to capture it with 6 fxe3.

6 ... \( \text{e}xf2+! (28) \)

A well-known example of creating a passed pawn can be seen in the following diagram.

White can profit from his far-advanced pawns, making a new queen with the help of a standard breakthrough:

1 g6! \( \text{f}xg6 \)

Or 1...hxg6 2 f6! with the same idea.

2 h6! \( \text{g}xh6 \)
3 f6

The runaway pawn cannot be stopped.
A passed pawn is worth keeping an eye on. A passed pawn on the seventh rank merits our full attention! In the above position Black won by using a decoy trick which is by no means uncommon in these situations.

1 ... \( \text{e}1+ \)
2 \( \text{xe}1 \) \( \text{d}4+! \)

The point. Black deflects the enemy queen away from the defence of the \( \text{e}1 \)-square.

3 \( \text{xd}4 \)

Or 3 \( \text{f}1 \) \( \text{xb}4 \) with an easy win for Black.

3 ... \( \text{dx}1 \text{w} \) mate

An idea which is well worth remembering.

When a queen has been given the unenviable task of blockading our ambitious passed pawn there will often be a way of unseating Her Majesty, thus clearing the way for the crowning of a new, rival monarch.

White must act quickly here because Black threatens to round up the passed a-pawn with 1...\( \text{d}7 \). But with the e4 bishop sitting menacingly on the same diagonal as Black’s queen, the winning idea suggests itself. White played:

1 \( \text{xe}5! \) \( \text{xe}5 \)
2 \( \text{d}6! \) \( \text{xd}6 \)

If 2...\( \text{c}8 \) White simply queens with 3 \( \text{a}8 \text{w} \).

3 \( \text{a}4 \)

Black resigned. He must either lose his own queen or allow White to create a second.

White’s f-pawn is the key to victory because Black, by blockading it, has been forced to put his pieces on awkward squares. The f8 rook stands in front of the pawn, but it also defends the d8 rook, which
The Passed Pawn and Promotion

defends the knight, which covers the promotion square...

Without an appreciation of pawn power White would not think of sacrificing a couple of valuable pieces to allow his passed pawn to realize its potential and win the game.

1 \( \text{W}x\text{d8!} \) \( \text{W}x\text{d8} \)
2 \( \text{W}x\text{d7+!} \) \( \text{W}x\text{d7} \)
3 \( f8\text{W} \)
and White wins.

Rubtsova-Milovanović  
*Corr 1969-71*

Again the defending side’s most powerful piece is holding back a passed pawn. Although the pawn has advanced only as far as the sixth rank and is still two moves from stardom, this is a mere inconvenience compared with Black’s overloaded forces – his queen is defending the b7 rook and the other rook is covering the fragile back rank.

It is time to give centre-stage to White’s e-pawn:

1 \( \text{W}x\text{d6!} \) \( \text{W}x\text{d6} \)
2 \( \text{W}x\text{b7!} \) \( \text{W}x\text{b7} \)
3 \( e7 \)

White has made a considerable material investment in order to reach this position. Yet the power of the hitherto humble pawn in the heart of the Black camp is so great that the second player has no choice but to pay back the loan with interest.

3 ... \( \text{W}x\text{e7} \)

Black gets mated after 3...\( \text{W}d8 \) 4 \( e8\text{W}+ \).

4 \( \text{W}x\text{e7} \)

And White, a clear exchange up, won.

Sometimes a far advanced but insufficiently supported passed pawn finds its journey about to be ended prematurely by an effective blockade or an enemy piece which threatens to cover the queening square. Never give up! There may be a way to prevent such possibilities by cutting off the opponent’s main line(s) of defence.

Here is a typical example from a rook ending.
Both sides have passed pawns, but the black rook is attacked and 1...f2 2 a1 achieves nothing for the second player. However, there is an immediate win here:

1 ... b1!

Black wins. After 2 xb1 f2 the king’s embarrassing presence on the back rank hinders the rook. The monarch can only watch the queening from a distance. The try 2 a3 f2 3 f3 f1 4 xf1 xf1 5 b6 does not work because Black has 5 ... h1 followed by ... h8.

Ironically, if the black king stood instead on g8, for example, there would then be no way for his own rook to stop the pawn after 5 b6.

Often in endings the king sends the forces which remain out into battle, consequently being left alone to guard against possible pawn advances. Although the success or failure of such a policy depends on the circumstances, one must be very careful not to leave the king with too big a burden.

White’s only prospect is to use his g-pawn to counterbalance the force of the two black passed pawns. Thanks to the rather too active position of White’s rook on c7 – it may be attacking the c-pawn but, as we shall see, a7 is a better square – Black can use his pawns to great effect.

1 ... e3+
2 f3

The alternative 2 g2 loses quickly: 2 ... xd4! 3 cxd4 h3+!! (36).

Once again, with each move (and sacrifice!) Black’s pawns be-
come increasingly powerful. If now 4 \( \text{Qe}xh3 \text{e}2 5 \text{Qc}5 \text{e}1\text{W} 6 \text{Qe}5+ \text{Wxe}5 7 \text{dxe}5 \text{c}3; \) or 4 \( \text{Qg}1 \text{f}3 \) followed by \( \ldots \text{f}2+. \) Notice that with the white rook on a7 (or b7) instead of c7, White could take the proffered bishop and defend with \( \text{Qa}1. \)

In the game, after 2 \( \text{Qf}3 \) Black continued by removing the useful d4 bishop with an exchange sacrifice.

2 \( \ldots \) \( \text{Qxd}4! \)

This also frees the c-pawn.

3 \( \text{cxd}4 \) \( \text{Qg}4+! \)

The king is helpless against the invading army.

4 \( \text{Qxf}4 \)

There is no defence. 4 \( \text{Qg}2 \text{f}3+ 5 \text{Qg}3 \text{f}2 \text{etc}; \) or 4 \( \text{Qx}g4 \text{e}2 5 \text{Qc}5 \text{e}1\text{W} 6 \text{Qe}5+ \text{Wxe}5 7 \text{dxe}5 \text{c}3. \)

4 \( \ldots \) \( \text{e}2 \)

White resigned. He can stop the c-pawn after 5 \( \text{Qc}5 \text{e}1\text{W} 6 \text{Qe}5+ \text{Wxe}5 7 \text{dxe}5 \text{c}3 8 \text{Qe}3, \) but Black still has one last pawn with which to make a queen!

**The outside passed pawn**

We have already seen the destructive power of an outside passed pawn in the endgame. The fewer pieces there are on the board, the more difficult the defensive task.

Now we shall look at some examples in which one side wins by utilising these structural advantages. An attack or a seemingly dangerous initiative may fizzle out, but a superior, versatile pawn formation could survive many a storm, emerging victorious to win the game!

Never underestimate an outside passed pawn. Much of the battle in chess takes place in or around the central arena, and it is all too easy to ignore a modest-looking rook’s pawn while we are busy concentrating on another sector of the board or exchanging pieces.

**Everz-Kiffermeyer**

*West Germany 1964*

![Chess Diagram]

Black has more material, a central bishop and an active king; White has an outside passed pawn. The first move which comes to mind is the immediate 1 \( \text{h}6, \) but Black would then reply by calmly pushing the leader of the tripled f-pawns with \( 1\ldots\text{f}4!, \) so that after 2 \( \text{h}7 \) the next f-pawn follows \( -2\ldots\text{f}5 \) and now the a1-h8 diagonal is open and White’s queening square is covered by the bishop on d4.
However, (passed) pawns are worthy of heavy investment, and White has a logical and somewhat cheeky sacrifice to guarantee the pawn a safe journey.

1 \( \text{f4!} \) \( \text{xf4} \)

Suddenly Black's pieces are made to look ridiculous.

2 \( \text{h6} \)

The h-pawn cannot be caught.

**Matulović-Vilela**

*Sombor 1978*

For the moment Black has the b-pawn under control, and with his last move \(- \ldots \text{c3} \)- he is ready to take charge of the long a1-h8 diagonal just in case White frees his impatient h-pawn with the sacrifice 1 \( \text{xg6} \) \( \text{hxg6} \) 2 \( \text{h7} \) (when 2...\( \text{xe5} \) spoils the party).

Because there are so few pieces and pawns left in the game, the idea of \( \text{xg6} \) is indeed White's only winning chance, so the first step is to try to prevent the opening of the long dark-square diagonal.

1 \( \text{f4!} \) \( \text{dxe5} \)

Or 1...\( \text{xe5} \) 2 \( \text{xe5} \) \( \text{dxe5} \) 3 \( \text{xg6!} \) and Black can resign (3...\( \text{hxg6} \) 4 \( \text{h7} \) queens).

2 \( \text{d2!} \)

If Black now acquiesces to the bishop exchange he will succumb to the latent power of White's wing pawns, even if his knight manages to defend \( \text{h7} \). For example:

2...\( \text{xd2} \) 3 \( \text{xd2} \) \( \text{d7} \) 4 \( \text{xg6!} \) \( \text{f8} \) 5 \( \text{xh7!} \) \( \text{xh7} \) 6 \( \text{g6} \) (39).

One of White's pawns is sure to queen \(- \ldots \text{f8} \) (6...\( \text{f6/g5} \) 7 \( \text{h7} \) 7 \( \text{g7} \) \( \text{f7} \) 8 \text{gxf8}\text{#} \text{xf8} \) 9 \( \text{b6} \) etc.

Also possible - after 2...\( \text{xd2} \) 3 \( \text{xd2} \) - is 3...\( \text{f7} \) to reinforce the g6-pawn, but White continues with 4 \( \text{e3} \) followed by \( \text{e4} \), after which Black can do nothing.

Back to the game. Having calculated the variations above, Black elected to retain his bishop.

2...\( \text{d4} \)

3 \( \text{xg6!} \)

Whether or not Black saw that this stubborn move is still possible is another question.
3 ... hxg6
What else? White threatens to take the h7-pawn anyway.
4 h7 e4
Forced.
5 \textit{b}4! (40)

The game is over. White’s pawns are too far apart: 5...d6 (the threat was 6 xc5+) 6 b6 c6 7 xc5! g7 8 e7! and f6.

\textbf{Lombardy-Fischer}
\textit{USA Ch 1960/1}

This example is somewhat different from the previous two because in the diagram position the only player with a (protected) passed pawn is White, yet Black’s a-pawn will be victorious. Watch how Fischer, one of the strongest players in the history of the game, trades in his slight material advantage for a decisive positional one, thanks to a far-sighted plan designed to create an outside passed pawn.

1 ... xc3+!
2 bxc3 xe5+!
3 d2 xe1
4 xe1 (42)

The features of the position have changed, and we are left with a pawn ending which is winning for Black because of the possibility of making an outside passed pawn on the queenside. First Black activates his king.

4 ... d5
5 d2 c4
6 h5
White can only wait.
6 ... b6!
Preparing to set the a-pawn rolling with ...a5.
There is no rush. Remember that the strength of an outside passed pawn — unless, of course, it can reach the eighth rank! — lies in its ability to divert enemy pieces from key defensive posts. In this particular case we have a pawn ending, so White’s king must stay on the queenside to keep an eye on the a-pawn. Hence Black’s advances on the other wing, as it is this side of the board which will eventually be invaded by Black’s king.

8 h6 f4
9 g4
9 gxf4 gxf4 makes no difference to the final outcome; the f3-pawn is Black’s target.

9 ... a5!
The kingside pawns have travelled as far as they can go, so the time is right to let loose the a-pawn.

10 bxa5 bxa5
11 b2 a4 (43)

The diagram position arose after White’s e7-c5, guarding the attacked e3-pawn. A natural enough reaction from White, of course —
answer ...\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{\textsf{\textbf{f}}}}\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{f}}}}3 with \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{\textsf{\textbf{c}}}}\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{c}}}}5, and ...	extit{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{\textsf{\textbf{g}}}}\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{g}}}}4 with \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{\textsf{\textbf{e}}}}\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{e}}}}7. If Black’s pawns dare to move they will be captured immediately, and the b-pawn, while being only two moves from greatness, cannot be supported by Black’s king. A draw, surely? No.

Even so-called ‘dull’ endings are rich with possibilities just waiting to be discovered. All we have to do is look for them, and the search requires much less effort if we arrive at the board armed with a reasonable understanding of the various qualities of pieces and pawns. It is true that World Champions such as Fischer and Botvinnik seem to have some kind of magical ability to conjure up something from nothing, but in reality they are merely obtaining the most from their forces. Indeed, with this in mind, Botvinnik’s incredible finish to the game (forcing resignation after only a handful of moves) is, in fact, quite logical!

\textbf{1 ... g5!!}

A strange way to begin a winning sequence. Black sacrifices a pawn while simultaneously allowing his opponent a passed pawn! But this is a Pyrrhic victory for White, because without any support from his king – the dark-squared bishop is incapable of helping – the g-pawn is no threat.

\textbf{2 fxg5}

Forced. Now the d8-h4 diagonal has an extra lodger, obstructing White’s bishop so it can no longer protect the h4-pawn by returning to e7.

\textbf{2 ... d4+!!}

All part of the plan. Black’s wing pawns are high priority, the other two were expendable – the g-pawn made the ultimate sacrifice to undermine the defence of h4, and now the d-pawn selflessly jumps across the enemy lines so that Black’s b-pawn is covered by his bishop.

White has problems whichever way he accepts the second offer. Black queens after 3 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{\textsf{\textbf{\textbf{c}}}}\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{c}}}}\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{d}}}4 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{\textsf{\textbf{b}}}}\textit{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{b}}}}2, while 3 \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{\textsf{\textbf{c}}}}\textit{\textbf{c}}4 \textit{\textbf{g}}4 \textit{\textbf{g}}6 \textit{\textbf{\textsf{\textbf{g}}}}\textit{\textbf{h}}4 etc is final.

\textbf{3 exd4 (45)}

Even experienced players could well have agreed a draw in Diagram 44. Two moves later, and the picture tells an entirely different story which, as far as White is concerned, does not have a happy ending. Notice that White’s pawns are not going anywhere in a hurry.

\textbf{3 ... \textit{\textcolor{red}{\textbf{\textsf{\textbf{g}}}}\textit{\textbf{g}}3!}
Botvinnik must be careful not to spoil his masterpiece. 3...\text{g}4 would allow White to force an immediate draw with 4 d5! \text{x}d5 5 \text{f}2.

4 \text{a}3

Releasing the king, but the distance between Black’s pawns is too great.

4 ... \text{x}h4

5 \text{d}3

5 g6 is equally futile; Black will eventually win the bishop for the h-pawn, and the b-pawn will still be there. Meanwhile White’s pawns are unfortunately placed.

5 ... \text{x}g5

6 \text{e}4 h4

7 \text{f}3

Or 7 d5 \text{x}d5+ 8 \text{x}d5 h3 9 \text{d}6 b2.

7 ... \text{d}5+(46)

White’s king has journeyed all the way over to the kingside in a race to beat the h-pawn to h2, only to realize that Black’s king is about saunter to the queenside. For example 8 \text{f}2 \text{f}4 9 \text{g}1 h3 10 \text{h}2 \text{e}6 11 d5 \text{d}7 followed by ...\text{e}4-d3-c2.

\textbf{White resigns}

An outside passed pawn (especially a rook’s pawn) can be sufficiently deadly to force resignation even during the middlegame stage! The position in Diagram 47 arose in the game \textit{Morphy-Fuller, New York 1859}. The great Morphy — like several other top players of that era — often gave his opponents odds, and he started this game without his queen’s rook!

\begin{center}
\textbf{Diagram 47}
\end{center}

He has managed to win back some material and generate some kind of attack on the king, but his own king is rather exposed, and with his knight still at home and his \text{f}4 pinned he seems to have come to a standstill. No prizes for guessing that White’s front h-pawn will save the day! But how?

1 \text{g}6!!

We must consider every possible means of clearing the way for the
pawn, including the sacrifice of White's only rook.

1 ... $\text{Wxg6}$

If Black turns down the offer with 1...$\text{Wf5}$ White plays 2 $\text{Qd2}$ threatening 3 $\text{hxg7+}$ (2...$\text{gxh6}$ 3 $\text{Qg8}$ mate). 1...$\text{hxg6}$ meets with 2 $\text{h7}$.

2 $\text{Wxg6}$ $\text{hxg6}$
3 $\text{h7}$

White has achieved his aim. Black now tries one last saving resource, returning one rook in order to clear the back rank for the other.

3 ... $\text{He1+}$
4 $\text{Qxe1}$ $\text{He7}$ (48)

5 $\text{Qg8!}$

Black resigns. The h-pawn is ready for the coronation ceremony.

Underpromotion

When beginners are presented with the opportunity to push a pawn all the way to the eighth rank, they tend to automatically choose a queen as a replacement for the heroic soldier because it is by far the strongest piece.

Much more often than not this is the best option, but there are times when the queen's power could also prove to be her downfall, covering so many squares that an easy win could turn into a draw by stalemate (the great Tartakower called stalemate the tragi-comedy of chess!).

The following example is by no means unusual (49):

Because Black no longer has any pieces to accompany his/her king, White may be forgiven for assuming that the struggle is effectively over; but there still remains a possibility for White to go wrong!

1 $\text{c8W??}$

Stalemate! The black king has no legal moves.

Instead of queening White could force mate in two with an underpromotion: 1 $\text{c8Q!}$ $\text{a6}$ 2 $\text{a8Q}$ mate. It is also possible to promote to a queen by 1 $\text{Qd7}$ followed by 2 $\text{c8Q}$, but if White is exceptionally short of time on the clock then every second counts, and the accurate underpromotion ends the game almost immediately.
Many players would have resigned well before the diagram position. Yet I have seen masters and grandmasters continue in related positions – especially when their opponents have very little time in which to complete a certain number of moves or even the game. In these circumstances one must be fully aware of the dangers of overconfidence.

The underpromotion theme is the key to an endgame study by Saavedra (50):

```
1 c7 ♔d6+
This is Black’s only feasible continuation as there is no way to cover the c8-square.
2 ♔b5!
The only move to assure victory. After 2 ♔b7? Black pins the pawn and draws with 2...♔d7, and 2 ♔c5? runs into 2...♔d1! followed by 3...♔c1.
2...
2...
3 ♔b4
Again there is nothing better and, after all, Black does actually have a plan.
3 ♔b4
Coming to the c-file is still not possible: 3 ♔c4? ♔d1 and 4...♔c1.
3...
3...
4 ♔b3
4 ♔c3 ♔d1 5 ♔c2 ♔d4 transposes.
4...
5 ♔c2 ♔d4! (51)

```

Normally in these endings the player with the pawn can hope for no more than a draw at best because as a last resort the rook can give itself up to leave only the two kings on the board. However, in the Saavedra position the unfortunate rook stands too close to the enemy king and pawn and is consequently unable to prevent promotion.

Even a tricky attempt at stalemate is not enough to save Black. White wins as follows:

```
51

Just when it seems like Black can prolong the battle no longer, here comes a chance to salvage a half-point. If White now plays the routine 6 c8♕?, then 6...♔c4+! 7
\textit{\$\text{ex}c4$}$ may leave \text{White} with an unchallenged queen, but \text{Black} has no moves – stalemate! A possibility worth remembering.

Nevertheless ...

\textbf{6} \textit{c8}$\text{\textordtop{Q}}$!!

\text{White} has a win by promoting to a rook instead of a queen, producing one of those rare rook v rook endings which is not drawn.

Of course the stalemate ‘trap’ \textit{6...$\text{xc}4+$} fails here because after \textit{7 $\text{xc}4$ $\text{x}a2$} is legal. In fact \text{Black} still has no choice, as \text{White} threatens to mate with $\text{a8}$+.

\textbf{6 ... $\text{xa}4$}

\textbf{7 $\text{b}3$!}

\text{White} wins because \text{Black} cannot simultaneously save his rook and prevent $\text{c1}$ mate.

Remember that a player does not have to be left with just a king to be stalemated – in theory stalemate can occur even before a single capture has been made. Therefore we should be constantly alert in endings which involve passed pawns (52):

\text{Black’s} knight is attacking both the rook and the c5-pawn. \textit{1 $\text{d}7$} loses immediately to \textit{1...$\text{xc}5+$} and \textit{2...$\text{xd}7$}, so it seems that \text{White’s} winning chances are about to disappear altogether after \textit{...$\text{xc}5$}, when \text{Black} has a couple of connected passed pawns.

Parting with a pawn – a potential game-winner – in the endgame is a serious matter, and before bidding farewell it is usually a good idea to check whether or not there is a way to keep it in the game. \text{The nearer} a pawn is to the eighth rank, the more important it is to examine what options are available.

In this case \text{White’s} ostensibly doomed c-pawn has a remarkably healthy future!

\textbf{1 $\text{cx}d6$} $\text{\text{xd}8}$

The alternatives promise \text{Black} less than nothing – \textit{1...$\text{cx}d6$} 2 $\text{xd}6+$, or \textit{1...$\text{c}5+$} 2 $\text{b}4$ $\text{cxd}6$ 3 $\text{xd}6+$ and 4 $\text{xc}5$.

\textbf{2 $\text{dx}c7$} (53)
A pawn on the seventh rank can make a defending knight look very clumsy (e.g. white $\text{a7} \, \text{v black } \text{b7}$, Black's knight is useless). Black would be better off without the embarrassing knight ($2...\text{b7}$ would then draw); instead White's c-pawn now has not one but two potential promotion squares – $c8$ and $d8$.

$2...\text{f7}, \, 2...\text{e6}$ and $2...\text{c6}$ all meet with $3 \text{c8\text{w}}$ mate, leading us to either $2...\text{b7}$ or $2...\text{Resigns}$. The former choice at least has the advantage of offering an albeit faint ray of hope.

$2...\text{b7}(!)$

The exclamation mark is for optimism. How many players would now play $3 \text{c8\text{w}}$ – threatening a couple of mates on $c6$ and $c4$ – only to realize once it is too late that Black is stalemated? Too many!

How many, I wonder, would be patient and mindful enough to examine the situation for the extra few seconds it would take to discover the stalemate? These players would no doubt find White's next.

$3 \text{c8\text{w}}!$

White wins because the knight is not pinned this time, and wherever it goes it will be captured ($3...\text{d6} \, 4 \text{c6+ etc}$).

This particular example is called a Phoenix Promotion – White sacrificed a rook to deflect attention from his c-pawn, and then brought it back to life once the pawn reached the eighth rank!

Occasionally neither a queen nor a rook is the correct piece to promote to. In the game Gulko-Grigorian, Vilnius 1971, White found a very attractive underpromotion ($54$):
White’s advantage is clear, but with the help of a trick which is far from obvious White is able to bring the struggle to an end in just a couple of moves.

1 $\text{c8+!} \text{ xc8}$
2 $\text{a7+!!} \text{ xa7}$

If 2...$\text{c7} 3 \text{bxc8}$+ etc.

3 $\text{bxc8}$+!
4 $\text{xe7}$

White wins.
The Pawn Mass

A mass of pawns is capable of burning straight through enemy ranks like a fireball. Even if a piece has been sacrificed to acquire a pawn mass, the material investment could well generate an eventual profit as the rolling mass grinds forward.

Not surprisingly a pawn mass is also very effective defensively. Here are some examples.

**Fischer-Hamann**
*Israel 1968*

Black has just pushed in the centre with ...d5 in an effort to open up the position for his pieces. 1 cxd5 \(\text{Wxc2}\) leaves White passive and with a weak b-pawn, so Fischer decides instead to capture the other way, intending to sacrifice an exchange in return for a mighty pawn mass.

\[
\begin{array}{c}
1 \text{ exd5!} & e4 \\
2 \text{ Wg3!} & e4 \\
2 \text{ Wxe4?} \text{ runs into problems on the e-file.} \\
2 \ldots & \text{Wxg3+} \\
3 \text{ Qxg3} & \text{Qxa1} \\
4 \text{ Qxa1} (57)
\end{array}
\]

After just a few moves and exchanges the character of the game has changed considerably. Black has a slight material edge, but White has a decisive advantage thanks to his army of pawns. With no immediate entry points for his rooks and a severely limited bishop, Black’s only hope is to throw forward his a-pawn while simultaneously trying to hamper the advance of White’s queenside pawns.

\[
\begin{array}{c}
4 \ldots & f6 \\
5 \text{ Qf2} & \text{Qf8} \\
6 \text{ Qd1}
\end{array}
\]
Supporting the d-pawn.

6 ... a5

Black, too, puts his faith in a pawn.

7 c5 ced8
8 c4 a4
9 b4!

It is true that Black now has a passed pawn of his own, but White has four!

9 ... a3
10 b5 a2
11 a1 a4
12 c6 c8
13 b6 (58)

Black resigned. 13...d6 14 c7 picks up the rook, and 13...e8/f8 allows White to win material with d6-d7 etc.

Csom-Yusupov
Lucerne OL 1982

(See diagram 59 next column)

Black threatens to restore material equality by capturing on d6, after which his supported passed d-pawn will be as important as White’s f-pawn. Consequently White seizes an opportunity to unite his d-, e- and f-pawns by way of an albeit temporary rook sacrifice.

1 cxd4! exd4
2 e5 g7
3 e6 f6

Black hopes to return the rook in the most favourable circumstances possible; White wants to emerge with a useful passed pawn still on the board.

4 e7! d3

After 4...e8 5 e1 Black cannot defend against the threatened d6-d7.

5 exd8+ xxd8
6 d1 e8
7 xxd3 e5
8 d2!

White should be careful not to be too eager to continue with the theme of passed pawns: 8 d7? xxd7! 9 xxd7 g3+ with a draw by perpetual check.

8 ... f8

8...d7 9 d5+ leaves White with two extra passed pawns in the rook ending.
Only now is White ready to play his final trump card.

11 ...  
12  
Black resigned.

Euwe-Alekhine  
Netherlands Wch (26) 1935

This position was reached in one of the most interesting games of the 1935 world championship match, and indeed a decisive one, since it gave Euwe a one game lead, which Alekhine never managed to claw back. Because of the rather closed nature of the position there are very few ideas available to either side. Black would like to make a pawn-break with ...b6-b5 at some stage, but White’s plan of g3-g4 does not look dangerous.

Consequently, in search of an initiative, Euwe embarks on a long-term positional plan involving the trade of a piece for three central pawns and a subsequent infantry advance.

1  
2  
3  
4  (61)

Although it is not too difficult — especially at grandmaster level — to calculate as far as 4 d2 and judge correctly that the three pawns (d-, e- and f-) will pressure Black into passivity, the fact that Euwe came up with the ‘sacrifice’ at all is nevertheless quite impressive. How many players would study Diagram 60 and conclude that White’s best hope of generating winning chances lies in the blocked and ostensibly prospectless e-pawn?

Now Euwe threatens to simply march the e-pawn up the board and build up his forces behind the wall of pawns. Black must attempt to put his extra piece to good use.

4  
5  
White should not be distracted from his goal. Both 5 fxg5? and 5
f5? would be positional blunders, surrendering the e5-square and with it the force of the pawn mass.

5 ... gxf4
6 gxf4 d4
7 e5 e8
8 e6 g8!
9 f3?!

Of course not 9 exd7 e2! and White can resign. Activating the queen with 9 h3 is a more precise way of keeping up the pressure. Euwe’s choice is somewhat risky, but very instructive and consistent with the theme of pawn power!

9 ... g6
10 h1!

10 h4 g4 is terrible for White.

10 ... xg1
11 xg1 f6?! (62)

Better is 11 ... f5 12 exd7 xg1+ 13 xg1 xd7 14 f2 with approximate equality.

12 g5!

White’s influential group of pawns both covers an important area of the board and keeps the enemy queen at bay. This in turn enables him to tie Black down further with a deadly threat before recouping some of the invested material.

12 ... g7

The threat was f7+. Putting the question to the knight results only in receiving an unpleasant answer from White’s determined pawns: 12 ... h6 13 f7+ h7 14 d3+ g6 15 e5! xe5 16 xe5 g7 (16 ... xe5 17 xg6+) 17 d6! and Black can do nothing to halt the pawn-roller.

Note how White’s central pawns have collectively played a leading role in the battle ever since they were liberated by the initial piece sacrifice.

13 exd7 xd7

After 13 ... xf4 14 c3! d4 15 xd4 cxd4 16 e6! xd7 17 xd4 White has a comfortable advantage due to the dangerously mobile queenside pawn majority.

14 e3 e7
15 e6 f8 (63)

15 ... xb2 16 d6 helps White.
16 \textit{We5!} \textit{Wxe5}
17 \textit{fxe5}

White’s passed pawns are now united and consequently even more powerful.

17 ... \textit{He5}

Although returning the exchange with 17...\textit{axe6} 18 \textit{dxe6} \textit{Hf5} 19 \textit{He1} \textit{Wg8} deals with the immediate problem of White’s two centre pawns, after 20 \textit{He3!} \textit{Wf8} 21 \textit{He1} White finds new pastures. However, this variation, despite looking gloomy, is perhaps the lesser evil for the second player.

18 \textit{He1}

A natural but slightly inaccurate reaction, allowing Black to prolong the battle by transposing to the previous note with 18...\textit{axe6}. An improvement is 18 \textit{Hg5!}, defending the e-pawn in a less obvious manner. If 18...\textit{xg5} 19 \textit{Hxg5} and the passed pawns are too strong – 19...\textit{axe5} fails to 20 \textit{Hf7+} and 21 \textit{xe5}. Fortunately for White his opponent underestimates the potential of the d- and e-pawns.

18 ... \textit{h6}
19 \textit{He8}

Making way for the e-pawn.
19 ... \textit{Hf2}
20 \textit{e6} \textit{Hd2}

Black tries to hold back the runaway pawns. 20...\textit{xb2} allows 21 \textit{d6}.

21 \textit{Hc6} \textit{He8}
22 \textit{e7} (64)

The e-pawn is just one step from promotion. White’s winning strategy is to simply attack the piece which stands in the way.

22 ... \textit{b5}

This rather late pawn break can be ignored.

23 \textit{Hd8}

With the immediate threat of 24 \textit{Hf7+} and \textit{He6}. Hence Black’s next.

23 ... \textit{Wg7}
24 \textit{Hb7}!

Now the helpful knight is heading for d6. Most of the time passed pawns are blockaded in one way or another, so it is imperative that we learn how to use our pieces to flush out the blockaders.

24 ... \textit{Wf6}
25 \textit{He6+}

Not 25 \textit{He6??} \textit{xe7} and White loses his vital pawn.

25 ... \textit{Wg5}

Both 25...\textit{f5} and 25...\textit{Wf7} meet with 26 \textit{He6+} and 27 \textit{xe8}.

26 \textit{He6} \textit{He7}
27 \textit{He4+!}

Black resigned.
Black is an exchange down and White is defending the weak points at f2 and h2. However, in his favour Black has two f-pawns and two g-pawns (!), and the front pair have journeyed well into White’s half of the board. The obvious plan of action is to break open the kingside for the f3-pawn with ...f7-f5, ...g6-g5 and ...f5-f4, but because of the location of the white king over on the queenside, Black has another possibility at his disposal which accentuates the impact of the pawn mass.

1 ... \text{	exttt{\&xf2!}}

Removing the most troublesome obstacle.

2 \text{	exttt{\&xf2}} \text{	exttt{\&xg3!}}

White now has an extra rook, and after the calm 3 \text{	exttt{c2}} it is difficult to see how Black will follow up the sacrifice.

As the reader will no doubt be realizing from the examples in this book, thanks to the possibility of promotion, the potential value of a lowly pawn can be equal even to that of the game’s most powerful piece. With this in mind we are able to find the sacrificial yet logical continuation (after 3 \text{	exttt{c2}})

3 ...\text{	exttt{\&xh2!!}} 4 \text{	exttt{\&xh2}} \text{	exttt{\&xh2}} 5 \text{	exttt{\&xh2}} \text{	exttt{g3}} (66)

White’s rook and bishop will soon be outgunned by a new enemy queen.

Back to the game. Instead of 3 \text{	exttt{c2}} White tried:

3 \text{	exttt{hxg3}} \text{	exttt{\&xh1}}
4 \text{	exttt{\&c3}}

In anticipation of the fall of his g-pawn White prepares to send his feeble bishop over to the kingside.

4 ... \text{	exttt{\&g1!}}

Not 4...\text{	exttt{\&h3?}} 5 \text{	exttt{\&e1}}. The game choice forces White to make an ineffectual move.

5 \text{	exttt{\&a3}} \text{	exttt{\&xg3}}

The floodgates are ready to open.

6 \text{	exttt{\&b4}} \text{	exttt{\&h3!}} (67)
In answer to 8 \( \text{xf3} \) Black has 8...g2! followed by queening; the ending after 9 \( \text{xf3} \) g1\( \text{w} \) is easily winning for Black.

8 ... g2  
This advance is even stronger than 8...f2.

9 \( \text{g1} \) g5!  
Here comes another one!

10 \( \text{f2} \) g4  
11 e4  
White offers a pawn in return for an extra square for his bishop. Now 11...dxe4 would look nice, with five black passed pawns, but this would offer White an albeit slim chance of a swindle by pushing the d-pawn. Moreover Black has a quicker route to victory.

11 ... g3  
12 \( \text{e3} \) (68) \( \text{h1}! \)  
Despite having three runaway pawns Black cannot afford to be careless – he may lose all of them! The obvious 12...f2? allows White to take advantage of the black king’s post on the g-file with 13 \( \text{xf2}! \) gxf2 14 \( \text{g2}+ \) and \( \text{xf2}. \)

13 exd5 \( \text{g1} \)  
14 \( \text{g1} \) f2  
White resigned.

Alekhine-Capablanca
Buenos Aires Wch (32) 1927

White’s extra pawn is about to fall – if 1 \( \text{h3} \) \( \text{c3} \) and White can no longer defend the e-pawn, and 1 \( \text{f2}? \) \( \text{c2} \) loses a piece – so he decides to surrender it under more favourable circumstances.
1 h5!

While it may seem strange that White willingly allows his opponent to create a passed pawn on the h-file, the effect is to free White’s remaining two passed pawns by eliminating the possibility of an exchange on f5 (after f4-f5). Consequently White is able to advance much quicker because of the pawns’ mutual support.

1 ... gxh5
2  ♘f3

White brings his king to the aid of his pawns so that the rook is free to come to the h-file whence it can simultaneously watch over the black pawn and give a troublesome check when the time is right.

2 ... h4
3  ♗h5  ♗c3+
4  ♗g4  ♗c4
5  ♗f5 (70)

Black’s pawn has reached the fifth rank but has little prospect of running much further. On the other hand White’s well supported e-pawn (maybe the f-pawn, too) will have no problems marching forward. Faced with the somewhat futile task of halting the procession, Black comes up with a clever bid to loosen White’s grip on the position.

5 ...  ♘xa5
6  ♗h7+!

Not 6 ♘xa5? ♗c5+ 7 ♗g4 ♘xh5 8 ♘xh5 h3 when Black queens first!

6 ... ♗c6
7  ♘xa5!

7 ♗c7+ ♗b5 8 ♗xc4 (note that 8 ♘xa5 loses to 8...♗xc7! 9 ♗xc7 h3 when White cannot catch the runaway h-pawn) 8...♗xb6 is less accurate than Alekhine’s idea. Despite giving up both wing pawns White still has the two able companions in the centre.

7 ... ♗c5+
8  ♗e6  ♘xa5
9 f5  ♗a3
10 f6!

Passed pawns should be pushed! Taking with 10 ♗xh4 prolongs the battle unnecessarily after 10...♗f3 11 f6 b5.

10 ... ♗f3
11 f7  b5
12 ♗h5! (71)

It is useful to see how the great players make the most of their passed pawns. White concludes the game with a pleasant combination.
12 ... h3
After 12...\(\text{xf7} \) 13 \(\text{xf7} \) White’s final pawn will take up the mantle and race to promotion.

13 \(\text{xf5!} \) \(\text{xf5} \)
14 exf5
Black resigned as after 14...h2 15 f8\(\text{w} \) h1\(\text{w} \) 16 \(\text{a8+w} \) picks up the short-lived queen.

Although it is true that doubled pawns often prove to be very weak and susceptible to attack, two neighbouring pairs of doubled pawns can work together to form a powerful unit. In certain situations the advantage over a row of four pawns such as e-, f-, g- and h-pawns is their ability to concentrate on a specific sector of two or three squares.

The following example shows another benefit of a ‘box’ of four pawns. The front two are used as part of the offensive, while the back two provide cover for the king, safeguarding against troublesome checks from behind.

The Pawn Mass 57

Edinburgh-London
Corr 1824-26

Each side has a pawn majority, 3-1 for Black on the queenside and 4-2 for White on the other wing. This seems irrelevant when we consider White’s immediate problem which, as you may have already noticed, is the imminent capture of the \(\text{h2} \). Black even threatens to take with mate!

Nevertheless the combination of a couple of ‘heavy’ pieces and a compact, mobile band of pawns in front of the enemy king position is sufficient to generate serious threats. In this case White’s active rooks and kingside pawns form compensation for the coming material deficit. Note also that Black’s extra bishop is somewhat out of the action on the edge of the board, with only the a5-e1 diagonal to work on at the moment.

White’s first move in the diagram position is forced and strong.

1 g5
An extremely rare dual-purpose move. White makes an escape square for the king while simultaneously threatening a one-move mate with 2 g6!

1 ... \( \texttt{H}h\texttt{xh}2+ \)

Reconstructing the mating net by once again denying White’s king the use of the g4-square backfires on Black: 1...h5?? 2 g6+ \( \texttt{H}h6 \) 3 \( \texttt{H}h8 \) mate! Anyway, a piece is a piece.

2 \( \texttt{g}4 \) h5+

Evicting White’s king is the only defensive resource. White still threatens mate, and 2...g6 runs into 3 \( \texttt{e}7 \) mate.

3 \( \texttt{f}3 \) \( \texttt{H}h2+ \)
4 \( \texttt{e}4 \) g6
5 \( \texttt{c}7+ \) \( \texttt{g}8 \) (73)

6 \( \texttt{e}5! \)

White strives to make the most of the remaining forces. There are enough white kingside pawns without having to play 6 fxg6.

6 ... \( \texttt{c}5+ \)

After 6...\( \texttt{c}3+ \) 7 \( \texttt{xc}3! \) \( \texttt{xc}3 \) 8 \( \texttt{f}6 \) the front two pawns spell the end for Black. The threat is 9 \( \texttt{c}8+ \) \( \texttt{h}7 \) 10 \( \texttt{fg}6 \) mate, and 8...\( \texttt{gx}f5 \) 9 \( \texttt{g}6 \) leaves Black defenceless against \( \texttt{c}8 \) mate.

With the text Black plans to transfer a rook to the vulnerable back rank.

7 \( \texttt{f}6 \) \( \texttt{xf}5+ \)
8 \( \texttt{x}g6 \) \( \texttt{f}8 \)
9 \( \texttt{g}7+ \) \( \texttt{h}8 \) (74)

White could take a draw by perpetual check here with \( \texttt{h}7+ \) and \( \texttt{g}7+ \) etc. With the kingside pawns providing excellent cover and several more possibilities still available there is no reason why White should share the point.

The most obvious winning attempt is 10 \( \texttt{ee}7 \) with the idea 11 \( \texttt{h}7+ \) \( \texttt{g}8 \) 12 \( \texttt{eg}7 \) mate. The reply 10...\( \texttt{gs}8? \) loses to 11 \( \texttt{xg}8+ \) \( \texttt{xg}8 \) 12 \( \texttt{e}8 \) mate, but Black does have a defence in 10...\( \texttt{c}3! \), putting a stop to \( \texttt{g}7+ \) and bringing the extra piece into play.

Rather than concentrate on a seventh rank strike, White has another option which avoids using the g7-square.
10 ♞h6!

White’s pieces are cooperating very well. The g6-square is vacated for the ♞e3 or the front g-pawn (or both!), depending on the circumstances.

10 ... ♞b4

Something has to be done about the idle bishop. Incidentally, 10...♗g8? allows 11 ♞h7 mate.

11 ♞e6!

Threatening 12 ♞h7+ ♗g8 13 ♞g6 mate. Notice that throughout this example Black cannot cut through the barrier created by White’s kingside pawns. There is nothing to do but deal with each new threat and wait to see if anything can be made of the extra material.

11 ... ♞f5
12 ♞h7+ ♗g8
13 ♞g6+ ♘f8
14 ♞xc6 (75)

Netting a pawn and setting up yet another mate (♞c8).

If Black now tries 14...♗g8, intending to block the back rank check with ...♗f8, the g5-pawn joins the party. For example (14...♗g8) 15 g6! h4 16 ♞g7+ ♘h8 17 ♞xa7 hxg3 18 g7+ ♘g8 19 ♞c8+! ♗f8 20 gxf8♕+ ♘xf8+ 21 ♞g7+!! ♘h8 22 ♞xf8 mate.

14 ... ♞c5
15 ♞f6+ ♘e8

Again Black has no choice: 15...♗g8 16 ♞g7+ ♘h8 17 ♞f8 mate.

16 g6

No more holding back. The pawn is ready to strike the final blow.

16 ... ♞c3
17 g4!

Highlighting an important strength of doubled pawns in these situations. One advances, the other endeavours to obstruct the defender’s lines of access. Now 17...hxg4 18 g7 and Black’s army can only watch the decisive promotion from a distance.

Instead Black meekly offers to trade in the remaining bishop for the runaway pawn.

17 ... ♘f8+ (76)

Diagram 76
18 $xf8+!

By now the reader should find such 'sacrifices' familiar.

18 ... $xf8
19 $7+ $f7
20 $h8 $c6+
21 $h7

Black resigns (21...$g6 22 $f8+ $e7 23 $xg6 followed by queening).

Throughout this example White’s chameleon-like kingside pawns did whatever task was necessary. First mate was threatened and the enemy king position opened, then the pawns looked after their own king until the best outpost was reached, and finally the front g-pawn was set free on the short journey to promotion while the other helped keep hostile pieces at a distance.

Gufeld-Smyslov
Riga 1975

A passed pawn in an ending is a valuable asset. Two can cause our opponents serious worry, and three are generally deadly. Three connected passed pawns are a veritable luxury!

For this reason White, in the above position, does not mind parting with a bishop for Black’s only passed pawn.

1 $xg2 $xg2
2 $e7+ $f6
3 a5

Simpler than 3 $xa7 $e4+, when Black’s extra knight may prove to be dangerous. Now the struggle revolves around White’s passed pawns.

3 ... $f4
4 c5!

4 $b6 $xb6 5 $xb6 $e4+ allows Black to keep an eye on the pawns. With 4 c5 White has an interesting idea ready for his hitherto unsuspecting opponent.

4 ... $e4+
5 $xe4!

The progress and safety of White’s pawn mass is of paramount importance. Consequently White is fully justified to give up his rook.

5 ... $xe4 (78)
With his three pawns standing abreast on the fifth rank White is firmly in the driving seat despite the material imbalance. For the moment Black’s knight is in the worst corner of the board as far as catching up with the pawns is concerned. As time is such an important factor, White pushes a pawn rather than unnecessarily capturing one.

6 b6! \( \text{He8} \)

If 6...axb6 White should play 7 cxb6, capturing away from the centre (we are no longer in the opening stage!) so as to maintain the distance from Black’s pieces. After 7...\( \text{Ce3} \) 8 b7 \( \text{He8} \) 9 a6 (not 9 b8W? as 9...\( \text{Xb8} \) 10 \( \text{Xb8} \) \( \text{Cc4+} \) picks up the last pawn) 9...\( \text{Cc4+} \) 10 \( \text{Cd3} \) \( \text{Cd6} \) 11 b8W \( \text{Xb8} \) 12 \( \text{Xb8} \) White wins by advancing his king and driving the knight away.

7 \( \text{Cxa7} \)

Very illogical would be 7 bxa7? which merely splits the pawns. Black is forced to reply 7...\( \text{Ca8} \) (otherwise \( \text{Cb8} \) queens) with a draw. Also inadequate is 7 b7 \( \text{Ce6} \) 8 b8W \( \text{Xb8} \) 9 \( \text{Xb8} \) \( \text{Cd5} \) 10 c6 \( \text{Cd6} \) followed by ...\( \text{Cc7} \).

7... \( \text{Ce3} \)

Black rushes his knight over to the queenside. There is even less time to use the king: 7...\( \text{Ce6} \) 8 b7 \( \text{Cd7} \) 9 a6 \( \text{Cc7} \) 10 \( \text{Cb5+} \) \( \text{Cc6} \) 11 \( \text{Cd6} \) \( \text{Cd8} \) 12 a7 etc.

8 a6 \( \text{Cc4+} \)

In reply to the tricky 8...\( \text{Ce6} \) White should not play 9 \( \text{Cxe3} \) allowing 9...\( \text{Cd5+} \) but the logical, albeit far from obvious, 9 \( \text{Cc8!} \) \( \text{Xc8} \) 10 b7 when there is no stopping the pawns.

9 \( \text{Cc3} \) \( \text{Cc5} \)

10 b7 \( \text{Cc6} \)

11 c6 \( \text{Cd5} \)

Or 11...\( \text{Cd6} \) 12 \( \text{Cc8+} \) \( \text{Cc7} \) 13 a7.

12 c7 (79)

Black resigns. The Space Invaders are about to land.
5 Mate

The pawn can be a helpful aid even in mating attacks and combinations. Many a winning chance is overlooked by players of all levels because of a lack of appreciation of the pawn’s versatility. Knowing when a pawn has a role to play in a king hunt is not easy and it comes with experience, but being aware of the different services which this willing servant can provide will help us find the right way forward when the opportunity arises.

Of course a supported passed pawn which is nearby — or blockaded by — the opponent’s king is worth its weight in gold, and in such cases the winning idea is almost crying out to be played. The following example shows a simple but very important two-mover which we should always be looking out for when a pawn has entered the enemy royal quarters uninvited.

Lungwitz-Lohsse
Volklingen 1970

(See diagram 80 next column)

Black can finish the game immediately with:

1 ... \( \text{wb2+!} \)
2 \( \text{xb2} \) \( a1w \) mate

Since the king tends to stay on the back rank (often tucked away in a corner after castling) until the arrival of the endgame phase, it is hardly surprising that the occurrence of promoting while simultaneously delivering mate is quite common.

A.N.Other-Guimard
Bordeaux 1966
In this position, with White’s king on h1 instead of f1, Black would have 1...\textcolor{red}{\textbullet}\textcolor{blue}{\textsc{e}1+} and mate next move. However, on f1 the king has more breathing space and also adds extra cover to the potential queening square e1. Indeed Black seems to be the one with back rank problems, and his precious d-pawn looks doomed.

Yet Black has at his disposal another standard idea designed to enforce a deadly promotion.

1 ... \textcolor{red}{\textbullet}\textcolor{blue}{\textsc{e}1+!}  
2 \textcolor{red}{\textsc{x}e1} \textcolor{blue}{\textsc{g}1+!!}  
3 \textcolor{red}{\textsc{x}g1}  
Or 3 \textcolor{red}{\textsc{e}2} \textcolor{blue}{\textsc{x}e1+} 4 \textcolor{red}{\textsc{d}3} \textcolor{blue}{d1\#+} and 5...\textcolor{blue}{\textsc{w}xd7}.  
3 ... \textcolor{blue}{\textsc{d}xe1\#} mate

Once we become familiar with the motif of Diagram 81, more complex variations of the same theme will be easier to find when they arise and (equally important) easier to consider and prepare for, even before the pawn has reached the seventh rank.

\textbf{Fernandez-Lommer}  
\textit{Venice 1967}

Here Black’s understanding of promotion/mate tricks allowed him to conduct his own mating attack in the knowledge that a pawn on the seventh rank would create decisive possibilities. Despite being a piece down and threatened with \textcolor{red}{\textsc{w}xh7} mate, Black can convert the menacing post of the d-pawn into a forced mating sequence.

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
\end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
\end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

1 ... \textcolor{blue}{\textsc{f}6+}  
2 \textcolor{red}{\textsc{b}1} \textcolor{blue}{\textsc{c}1+!!}  
3 \textcolor{red}{\textsc{x}c1} \textcolor{blue}{\textsc{a}1+!!}  

The same decoying sacrifice we saw in the previous example. This time, with the defending king in the corner, even White’s extra material cannot help.

4 \textcolor{red}{\textsc{x}a1}  
Or 4 \textcolor{red}{\textsc{c}2} \textcolor{blue}{\textsc{d}xc1\#} mate.  
4 ... \textcolor{blue}{\textsc{d}xc1\#}  
5 \textcolor{red}{\textsc{b}1} \textcolor{blue}{\textsc{c}3} mate

Obviously there are other ways for a pawn to checkmate as well as queening. Whenever we have a pawn which is so close to the opponent’s king that it could give check in just one move (by advancing directly forward or capturing, remember), it is worth searching for the possibility of turning that check into mate.
Fuller-Steedman  
*Chester 1979*

![Chess Diagram](image1)

White can win back the exchange and have good winning chances with 1 \( \text{Q}xg8 \), or he can finish the game in two moves!

1 \( \text{W}g7+! \) \( \text{H}xg7 \)
2 \( \text{fxg7} \) mate

Sherzer-Mathe  
*Budapest 1989*

![Chess Diagram](image2)

A remarkable final position! White’s block of pawns has completely paralysed the black king.

The use of a pawn in a mating attack or combination is not necessarily to deliver mate. There are several other forms of assistance which are more common: deny the hunted king an escape route, lure a key defensive piece away from its post, cut across the defender’s lines of communication, support the chief attacking pieces etc.

Sometimes a defensive pawn mass in front of the king may take on a bloodthirsty character. Here Black has a dangerous looking 2 \( \text{v} \) 1 queenside pawn majority as well as the threat of splitting the point by taking perpetual check with \( ...\text{Wh}1+ \) and \( ...\text{Wd}1+ \) etc. But White’s kingside pawns are to have the final say:

1 \( \text{W}g5+!! \) \( \text{H}xg5 \)
2 \( \text{hxg5}+ \) \( \text{D}xh5 \)
3 \( \text{g4} \) mate (85)
White has invested a whole rook in a mating attack and his e-pawn is right in the heart of the Black position. Ironically this factor is Black’s last chance of survival, for after 1 \( \text{Wh7} + \text{f8} \) 2 \( \text{Wh8} + \text{e7} \) 3 \( \text{Wxg7} + \text{d8} \) the king has slipped from White’s grasp (4 \( \text{f7} + \text{xf7}! \)).

For White to successfully conclude the king hunt he must block the escape route:

1 \( \text{Wh7} + \text{f8} \)
2 \( \text{e7} + ! \)

A decisive obstruction. Now the king will be closed in by his own pieces.

2 ... \( \text{Exe7} \)
3 \( \text{Wh8} \) mate

Piket-Martinović
Groningen 1989

This time White uses his pawn as a decoy:

1 \( \text{d8} + ! \) \( \text{xd8} \)
2 \( \text{xf7} \) mate

Occasionally the mere presence of a hostile pawn in the defender’s kingside can be enough to bring about an end.

Sher-Smagin
Hastings 1990

This position is actually a variation from the game. A piece down and faced with \( \text{Wxe6} + \) etc, Black can still win thanks to the f-pawn.

1 ... \( \text{h1} + ! \)
2 \( \text{gxf1} \) \( \text{Wxf3} + \)
3 \( \text{g1} \) \( \text{g2} \) mate
At first sight the game appears to be almost over. White has a considerable lead in material – a bishop for a single pawn – and Black is passive and has no compensation whatsoever. Once White has managed to exchange queens his king will be able to march unchallenged into the heart of Black’s position.

If only chess were that straightforward! In fact the win is quite problematic. White’s queen can operate only on the light squares (it has to be supported by the bishop) and the black queen has half of the board to escape to, so White must think of another strategy with which to convert his material advantage.

This is where the white pawns come into play, as the queen and bishop cannot do enough damage alone. The obvious continuation is f2-f3 and g3-g4, but after a subsequent exchange on g4 White will find himself without a constructive follow-up. This is because the eventual push h4-h5 (there is nothing else) would, ironically, create an absolutely useless passed pawn – the ending of king, bishop and rook’s pawn against a lone king is winning only when the bishop resides on the same colour as the queening square (90).

Black’s king is firmly entrenched in the corner. A positional draw regardless of who is to move or where the white pieces are.

So, if White cannot make a potentially game-winning passed pawn, then how can he avoid a draw?

Even though this is an ending with very few pieces, the solution to this puzzle is to be found in the paradoxical roles of the pawns.

During the course of a game, the pawns’ responsibilities and value vary greatly, and normally, by the time the final phase has been reached, the survivors grow in importance to such an extent that we
look after them zealously, asking nothing of them which would in any way jeopardize chances of promotion. Of course this is the best way to approach the vast majority of endings, but we certainly do not want to become stereotyped in the way we think about pawns. These devoted workers deserve the utmost respect!

In Diagram 89, as we have already seen, White has no means of conventionally profiting from his pawns. If we were to add many pieces to the queenside to form a middlegame position, then White would no doubt consider the logical plan of storming Black’s king by throwing his pawns forward. It is imperative that we remember these possibilities still exist in endings with several pieces or a queen. It is by keeping an open mind that White found:

1 g4! (91)

White’s versatile pawns are in a self-sacrificing, attacking mode, rather than selfishly refusing to move until the coast is clear.

1 ... hxg4

Escaping the pin immediately with 1...g8 (1...h6? 2 gxh5 hxh5?? 3 g5 mate) loses to 2 gxh5 gxh5 3 g5+ and 4 xh5. Note that White still has his f-pawn in this variation.

2 h5 h6
3 hxg6 fxg6

The pawn storm has served to open up Black’s king position. Now White brings his own king into battle.

3 g3 h7
4 xg4 h6
4 f4!

White’s remaining pawn is no less important than its colleagues. In fact, the win is not possible without it.

4 ... h7
5 g5 b5+ (92)

6 f5! exf5

6...gx5 leads to the same finish.

7 f7+ h8
8 h6
Black resigned as mate is unavoidable. Notice that the bishop never even moved! Instead it helped to tie Black down while the pawns did the real work of breaking down the defensive barrier. Not a typical ending, perhaps, but one which illustrates that pawns have more than one purpose even in the very late stages of the game.
Illustrative Games

In the first game White takes advantage of a closed centre, launching a vicious pawn storm on the kingside.

Vyzhmanavin-Beliavsky
Soviet Union 1984

1 d4  \(\text{\textcopyright}f6\)
2 c4  e6
3  \(\text{\textcopyrightc3}\)  \(\text{\textcopyrightb4}\)
4 a3

The Sämisc Variation. White intends to get full use from his preponderance of central pawns, hoping to build up a space advantage and follow up with a pawn storm in the middle game.

4 ...  \(\text{\textcopyrightxc3+}\)
5 bxc3 (93)

Hence Black’s next move, fixing White’s weakness on c4.

5 ...  c5
6 e3

Of course not 6 dxc5? with a drastic change in the pawn structure which would greatly benefit the second player. White’s trebled, isolated pawns would be – for however long they could survive – terrible long-term weaknesses, susceptible to attack from several directions. Moreover, with the departure from the main arena of the useful d-pawn, a kingside pawn advance would be much more problematic to organize.

With 6 e3 White plans to develop his forces before going on the offensive.

6 ...  \(\text{\textcopyrightc6}\)
7  \(\text{\textcopyrightd3}\)  e5

Establishing a stronghold on e5 in readiness for White’s bid for spatial superiority.

8  \(\text{\textcopyrighte2}\)  d6
9 0-0 0-0
10 e4 (94) b6

After 10...cx\(d4\) 11 cxd4 exd4 White can eventually mop up the front d-pawn and use his unchallenged queen’s bishop to attack the other. Another option is to cramp Black with 12 f4.

11 d5
Closing the centre and providing room for manoeuvre. Black concentrates his forces on attacking the c4-pawn.

11 ... a5
12 g3 b8

Black plans a timely queenside pawn break with ...b5. Hence White’s next.

13 a4 e8
14 h3 d7
15 f5 f8
16 g4 g6
17 g5 f6
18 e3 b7
19 g3! (95)

White puts the second mass pawn advance into operation, this time the f-pawn will have the honour of leading the forces into battle.

19 ... f7
20 h2!

The point of this calm preparatory move will become evident later.

20 ... h8
21 h5 f8
22 ae1

Thanks to the closed nature of the position White is free to improve his remaining piece before putting his plan into action.

22 ... e7
23 xe7 xe7
24 f4! (96)

White’s space advantage is indisputable and it seems like he will convert it into a kingside attack without much difficulty. Black’s only hope lies in counterplay on the other wing.

24 ... e8
25 \textit{We}2

White is not interested in defending his a-pawn, as ...\textit{Wxa}4 would leave Black’s strongest piece out on a limb on a4, away from the action. Realizing this, Black decides to capture with his bishop instead.

25 ... \textit{Hef}7
26 \textit{f}5

Charging forward with our pawns like this is easy, particularly when the centre is closed. White’s moves come naturally.

26 ... \textit{d}d7
27 \textit{h}4 \textit{xa}4
28 \textit{g}4 \textit{b}5
What else?

29 \textit{exb}5 \textit{c}4
30 \textit{xb}1

Not 30 \textit{xc}4? \textit{xc}4 31 \textit{xc}4 \textit{xb}5 and Black wins material.

30 ... \textit{xb}5 (97)

Notice the harmony of White’s pawns. Black can do nothing to halt their march, and any diversionary tactics on the queenside are too slow to cause problems.

31 \textit{g}5 \textit{Hb}7

After 31...\textit{fxg}5 32 \textit{hxg}5 the two aggressive pawns would enjoy maximum mobility and Black would fall foul of an attack down the h-file. His best chance of survival lies in a blockade, but White has so much room in which to reorganize his army that a decisive breakthrough is inevitable.

32 \textit{Hh}5 \textit{We}8
33 \textit{g}6 \textit{h}6
34 \textit{Hg}1!

Now we see why White opted to put his king on h2 as long ago as the twentieth move! He foresaw that the pawn avalanche would probably generate an opportunity to pressure Black down the g-file, and consequently took the time out during the build-up to facilitate the eventual doubling of rooks.

Note that Black’s rook on b7 has an important defensive role – for instance it prevents 34 \textit{hxh}6 \textit{gxh}6 35 \textit{Wxh}6+ \textit{g}8 36 \textit{Wh}7 mate. Therefore it would make little sense for Black to give a meaningless check here with 34...\textit{b}2+ because this would only accentuate the power of a future \textit{h}xh6.

34 ... \textit{g}8
35 \textit{He}2 \textit{b}3

The knight makes a rather tardy run for the centre.

36 \textit{Heg}2 \textit{c}5 (98)
White’s fighting pawns are eager to stride yet further, so having lined up the big guns on the g-file, White crashes through the barricades with a bishop ‘sacrifice’.

\[37 \text{hxh6} \quad \text{gxh6} \]
\[38 \text{wxh6} \quad \text{g7} \]

The threat was 39 g7 etc.

\[39 \text{h5!} \]
So begins the victory procession.

\[39 \ldots \quad \text{wb5} \]
\[40 \text{we3} \quad \text{b8} \]
\[41 \text{h6} (99) \]

\[42 \text{hxg7} \]

**Black resigned.** Apart from the material deficit for which he has no compensation, Black also has to reckon with White’s far advanced, protected passed pawn and a subsequent rook raid on h7.

Throughout this game one can see that not all eight of White’s pawns performed the same kind of task. Going from left to right – the a-pawn aided in holding up Black’s counterplay on the queenside; the next four served to close up the centre in order to deprive Black of sufficient space and (semi-) open lines; last but by no means least come the three kingside pawns, which simply stormed the enemy fortress and subsequently won the game. The pawn has numerous attributes!

In the next game White is faced with the solid Petroff Defence. Using his army of pawns to great effect White gradually builds a decisive territorial advantage which stretches across the whole board in the shape of two pawn chains.

**Tarrasch-Marco**

*Vienna 1898*

1 e4 e5
2 \(\text{Qf3} \quad \text{Qf6} \)
3 \(\text{Qxe5} \quad \text{d6} \)
4 \(\text{Qf3} \quad \text{Qxe4} \)
5 d4 \(\text{Qe7} \)
It is also possible for Black to push his d-pawn two squares to maintain his knight on e4, albeit temporarily.

6  

7 0-0 0-0

8 h3

If White is planning to keep his opponent restricted by expanding in the centre then it makes sense to prevent the potentially troublesome ...g4.

8 ... e6 (100)

Normal piece play from White with 9 c3 promises nothing particularly concrete, so Tarrasch, probably prompted by Black’s somewhat unambitious opening play, first makes an aggressive central pawn advance.

9 c4!? c6

Black answers the claim for the d5-square by eyeing it with his own c-pawn.

Evidently not satisfied with the extra space on one side of the board, White now prepares a similar territorial claim on the other.

10 g5 a6

Heading for c7, whence the knight will bolster both e6 and d5. The knee-jerk 10...h6 leaves Black with a couple of weaknesses on e6 and g6 after 11 xe6.

11 c3

The immediate 11 f4 invites 11...b4, while 11 xe6 fxe6 12 e2 c7 is very solid for Black compared with the last note.

11 ...

12 f4! (101)

White’s f-pawn wants to join in the fun, too! Keep an eye on this warrior. Tarrasch is beginning to squeeze the life out of Black’s closely confined forces.

12 ...

13 f3

White prefers to keep his knight rather than exchange it for the bishop. This is because the game looks very much like it will take on a closed character sooner or later, with hardly any lines for the black bishops (and to a lesser extent the rooks). In these situations knights are fearsome specialists in close-
quarter combat, able to manoeuvre – on squares of either colour – to the critical squares.

13 ... \textit{\textbf{c}8}

Hoping for the consistent but premature 14 g4, which permits the speculative sacrifice 14...\texttt{g}x\texttt{g}4!? 15 hxg4 \textit{\textbf{g}x\texttt{g}4+}. Whether Black would have enough compensation for the piece is irrelevant – one of the benefits of White’s spatial superiority is the extra room for operation which in turn gives him the initiative, so there is no reason to give Black an attack if an advantage is in any case guaranteed.

14 \textit{\textbf{c}2}!

White finds a much better way to force the f-pawn one square forward and in so doing claim yet more territory.

Black, meanwhile, is very cramped and severely lacking in counterplay. His next prepares a belated queenside pawn break.

14 ... \texttt{b}8
15 f5 \texttt{d}7
16 \texttt{f}4 (102)

All White’s forces are now developed. Black must do something active.

16 ... \texttt{b}5

Not since the very first move has a black pawn ventured as far as the fourth rank!

17 b3
17 cxb5? relinquishes control of d5 – a perfect outpost for a black knight.

17 ... \texttt{c}5

At last Black is making his presence felt, although White’s next is hardly a concession and his pawn structure is superior.

18 d5 \texttt{b}4
19 \texttt{e}2 \texttt{a}5

A logical follow-up from Black, aiming to undermine the a2-b3-c4-d5 pawn chain behind which White has so much freedom.

With ...a5-a4 now a genuine positional threat, White focuses his attention on the kingside, where he first began hostile operations on the tenth move.

20 g4! (103)
Thanks to the luxury of space, White’s pieces have easy access to the kingside, whereas Black’s have no convenient route due to the close proximity of the pawns on d5 and f5.

It is interesting to compare the two queenside pawn chains. The present game is a typical example of the merits – particularly in the middlegame – of a structure such as White’s.

20 ... \( \text{h7} \)

Black endeavours to hold up White’s progress by lining up on the d8-h4 diagonal to control the g5-square.

21 h4 \( \text{w}d8 \)

22 \( \text{\#g}3 \)

That the g4-g5 push has been prevented is not exactly terrible news for White, as other plans will no doubt present themselves in due course.

22 ... a4

23 \( \text{\#h}1 \)

There is no hurry. White may need to attack down the g-file later.

23 ... \( \text{a}a8 \)

24 \( \text{\#ae}1 \) \( \text{\#e}8 \)

Intending to deploy the bishop on the a1-h8 diagonal, thus requiring Black to defend the d-pawn. Preferable is 24...\( \text{\#e}8 \) with the idea of ...\( \text{\#f}8 \), although White could then switch back to his plan of g4-g5.

25 \( \text{\#f}4 \) \( \text{\#f}6 \) (104)

26 \( \text{\#e}6! \)

With White’s pawns in extremely dominating positions such a pseudo-sacrifice was inevitable. If now 26...\text{fxe6} White continues 27 \text{fxe6} \text{axb3} 28 \text{axb3} \text{\#c}8 29 \text{\#xh7+} \text{\#h8} 30 \text{g5!}, and with the omnipotent pawn newly en­­sconced on e6, Black’s defensive task is impossible.

Black has better chances of survival if he gives up the exchange.

26 ... \text{axb3}

27 \text{axb3} \text{\textit{b}6}

28 \( \text{\#xf}8 \) \text{\#xf8}

Despite the lost material, Black does seem to have reasonable prospects compared with the cramped position he had earlier.

However the white kingside pawns, which until now have helped their partners on the other wing suffocate Black, are still hovering menacingly. It is time to move up a gear.

29 \text{g5!}

White breaks through the defensive barrier with what by now should be a familiar idea.
29 ... hxg5
30 hxg5 hxg5
31 Wh2!
Threatening 32 Wh8 mate.
31 ... Kg8 (105)

32 Qxg5! hxg5
33 f6!
I told you to watch out for this determined pawn! Its latest service is to open the b1-h7 diagonal, decisively renewing the mate threat (34 Wh7+ Kf8 35 Wh8 mate).
33 ... g6
Or 33...Qxf6 34 Qxf6! and Wh7+.
34 Qxg6!
Black resigns. After 34...fxg6 (otherwise Wh7+ etc) the f-pawn will realize the ultimate ambition: 35 f7+ Kg7 (35...Kf8 36 Wh8 mate) 36 f8W mate.

Arencibia-Akopian
Biel Interzonal 1993
1 e4 c5
2 d3
The main line runs 2 g3 followed by 3 d4 cxd4 4 Qxd4, after which White enjoys a space advantage but in turn must deal with the famous Sicilian counterplay. The pawns play an important role, too, with White often throwing his kingside pawns forward (even after castling on that wing) and Black combining pressure on the c-file with an advance of the queenside pawns.

Arencibia prefers to give the game a closed character, developing his pieces behind a wall of pawns in the centre.
2 ... Qc6
3 f4 d6
According to Akopian this is the first time that this entirely logical pawn move has ever been played at international level! I'm sure we would find earlier examples if we looked hard enough, but the mere rarity of the move does at least answer the critics who say that modern chess is too theoretical and suffering from a serious lack of new ideas.

Incidentally, many ‘theoretical novelties’ are discovered because someone has made investigations into long-term structural weaknesses and pawn breaks rather than tactics and sacrificial attacks. Having an understanding of the many middlegame (and endgame!) positional aspects of a particular opening – which are usually so well hidden during the early stage – is much more important than remembering two-move traps which may
succeed only every dozen or so games.

The ‘normal’ move is the immediate challenge 3...d5. Instead Akopian anticipates having play on the a1-h8 diagonal, so he keeps the squares e5 and d4 under surveillance.

4 \( \mathcal{D}f3 \) g6
5 c3?! (106)

Already, after only five moves, a definite structural picture has appeared. 5 g3 is a better alternative, although it is a natural reaction to do something about restricting the range of Black’s dark-squared bishop. White also adds protection to the d4-square, often used by Black as a knight outpost, and his queen’s knight is ready to come via a3 to c2, further bolstering d4 and intending a timely \( \mathcal{D}e3 \).

The downside to White’s strategy is the c3-pawn’s susceptibility to attack by the black b-pawn. Each time we move a pawn we must weigh up the pros and cons; in this case the unfortunate fact that c3 presents Black with a target is probably more important than taking pressure off b2.

5 ... \( \mathcal{D}g7 \)
6 \( \mathcal{D}e2 \) \( \mathcal{D}f6 \)
7 \( \mathcal{D}a3 \)

7 e5 would be a mistake. After 7...dxe5 8 fxe5 \( \mathcal{D}d5 \) 9 d4 Black has the better game thanks to the excellently placed knight on d5 and White’s blockaded and vulnerable centre pawns.

7 ... 0-0
8 0-0 \( \mathcal{Ab}8 \! \)!

Preparing the thematic ...b5-b4. In fact Black’s game seems to play itself.

9 \( \mathcal{We}1 \)?!

White shows his queen the h4-square in readiness for a future kingside attack; support is also added to the c-pawn. The consistent 9 \( \mathcal{D}c2 \) is preferable, intending to meet 9...b5 with 10 a3, holding back the ...b4 thrust and consequently resulting in approximate equality.

9 ... b5
10 \( \mathcal{D}c2 \) b4 (107)
Now we see the problem caused by White’s fifth move; a difficult question has been put to the unassuming c-pawn. Note that Black has not had to damage the attractive h7-g6-f7-e7-d6-c5 ‘dragon’ pawn formation. Instead, the willing and able b-pawn has done the work, and whichever way White responds he will have to make some kind of positional concession.

Not good is 11 cxb4? (in general one should avoid exchanging a central pawn for a wing pawn unless there is a legitimate reason) 11...cxb4 12 cxb4 – Black has more pawns in the centre and pressure on the long dark-square diagonal and on the b-file.

The lesser evil is probably 11 c4 which, despite doing nothing about the struggle for d4, does keep the position closed. Alas, chess players (most of them) are human, and rather than suffer a little embarrassment by moving the c-pawn a second time with no apparent gain, White opts to address the problem on the queenside by developing his final piece.

11 d2 bxc3

Black continues in a logical manner.

12 xc3

12 bxc3 replaces one weak c-pawn with another. White would have problems shaking off his opponent’s grip on the b-file, and the newly neglected a-pawn may prove to be another target for Black’s forces.

12 d5!

Now that the b-pawn has served its purpose by forcing White to compromise his position, the time has come for its colleagues to leave their posts and leap into action.

Once again White is left with only unpleasant choices. Exchanging dark-squared bishops with 13 exd5 d5 14 xg7 xg7 is clearly advantageous for the second player. With no white pawns on the c- or e-files, the d5 will remain unmolested, attacking the f4-pawn and the e3-square. Black can also concentrate on the d- and b-pawns (b2-b3 from White creates another hole on c3). Notice how White’s rather unjustified pawn moves are being punished.

13 e5 h5!

Black retains the initiative by forcing White to defend his f-pawn.

14 c1

14 h4 e6! steps up the pressure on the f- and b-pawns (Black has the threat ...d4 and ...xb2 hanging in the air), and after 14 g5 another black pawn comes to life with 14...f6!.

14 f6! (108)

The initially eager but now rather helpless White pawns are under direct attack from Black’s more patient foot soldiers.
Just like he exchanged his b-pawn for White’s c-pawn, Black now brings about another confrontation aimed at dismantling White’s centre.

15 exf6 \textit{xf6} 16 \textit{e5} \textit{xf4!} is clearly in Black’s favour (17 \textit{xf4} \textit{xe5}, or 17 \textit{xc6} \textit{xe2+} etc), so White attempts to consolidate his grip on e5.

15 d4 \textit{xf4!}

Two of White’s centre pawns have left the board, and this knight sacrifice will lead to the disappearance of the remaining two. White has no choice but to fall in with his opponent’s plan.

16 \textit{xf4} \textit{xe5}
17 \textit{h4} \textit{exd4}
18 \textit{d2} \textit{e5!} (109)

Three pawns for a piece is normally a reasonable trade, even in the opening or early middlegame. Here Akopian has a decisive advantage because of his speedy band of pawns in the centre, an area of the battlefield which is impossible for White to defend adequately as he no longer has any pawns there himself. As the black pawns roll forward in search of promotion they will demolish anything in their path. Even if Black wins his piece back for two pawns, he will still have another two in the centre, and he will still be a pawn up!

With 18...\textit{e5} Black is happy to exchange queens. Indeed White’s queen is his last hope of salvation. For example if Black were greedily to add to his pawn collection with 18...\textit{xb2?}, White could put his queen to good use and drum up counterplay on the kingside with 19 \textit{h6!} followed by \textit{g5} and \textit{gxg7} etc. In situations like this where a player has a few pawns and a commanding position for a piece it is all too easy to become overconfident and consequently give the opponent an opportunity to start a dangerous attack with a sacrifice. Be warned.

19 \textit{g5}

White cannot survive, but he is not yet ready to throw in the towel, either – if we all resigned in lost
positions we would never learn and our opponents would not have to keep working for the full point!

Obviously 19 \( \text{Qxd8} \) is not the way to go down fighting. Black simply lets his pawns do the work (try to hinder their advance without losing too much material).

19 \( \text{Qg5} \) h6 20 \( \text{Qxf8+} \) \( \text{Qxf8} \) 21 \( \text{Qf1} \) \( \text{Qf5} \) 22 \( \text{Qe6} \) \( \text{Qe7} \)! also forces White to exchange queens.

19 ... \( \text{Qc7} \)

20 \( \text{Qd2} \) \( \text{Qf5} \)

21 \( \text{Qe1} \)

White resigns.

26 \( \text{Qh1} \) (26 \( \text{Qf2} \) e3 etc) 26...e3 wins a piece.

21 ... \( \text{Qxe4!} \)

A pawn mass like this is unstoppable.

22 \( \text{Qf4} \) \( \text{Qe5} \)

23 \( \text{Qxe5} \) \( \text{Qxe5} \)

With no danger of a kingside attack from White, ...\( \text{Qxb2} \) is a real threat. This would then give Black a cluster of four protected, very mobile passed pawns – an effect similar to using a steamroller to crack a walnut.

24 b3 d3 threatens the \( \text{Qe2} \) and the \( \text{Qa1} \), and 24 \( \text{Qb3} \) runs into 24...c4. So White defends and awaits the inevitable.

24 \( \text{Qb1} \) d3

25 \( \text{Qg4} \)

25 \( \text{Qd1} \) meets with the same reply. Sacrificing a piece nets only one of Black’s three extra pawns.

\[ \text{Yusupov-Kamsky} \]

\[ \text{Tilburg 1992} \]

1 d4 \( \text{Qf6} \)

2 c4 g6

3 \( \text{Qc3} \) d5

4 cxd5 \( \text{Qxd5} \)

5 e4

The Exchange Variation. White builds up a formidable pawn centre which Black must subsequently endeavour to undermine.

5 ... \( \text{Qxc3} \)

6 bxc3 \( \text{g7} \)

7 \( \text{Qc4} \) c5 (111)
Of course this pawn cannot be captured: 7 dxc5? $x3+$ and Black wins material; 7 d5 also leaves the c3-pawn undefended. Instead White provides defence for the d4-pawn until he is well enough developed to roll his central pawns forward.

8 \texttt{e}2 \texttt{c}c6
9 \texttt{e}3 0-0
10 0-0 \texttt{c}7

Black’s queen vacates the d-file to make room for the king’s rook.

11 \texttt{e}1

White replies by placing his own rook on the same file as his opponent’s queen, but the main purpose of this move is to add support to the c-pawn whilst simultaneously escaping the attention of Black’s bishop on the long diagonal.

11 \ldots \texttt{d}8
12 \texttt{f}4 \texttt{d}7
13 d5

White is ready to make territorial claims. The d5-pawn effectively forces Black to operate within rather confined quarters.

13 \ldots \texttt{a}5
14 \texttt{d}3 e5 (112)

Black judges that giving his opponent a passed pawn so early in the game is a price worth paying if he is to avoid being steam-rollered. His plan is to blockade the d-pawn with ...b7-b6 and ...$e$7-d6, hoping to follow up with an eventual advance of his queenside pawn majority or perhaps a kingside attack with ...f7-f5. White should not allow this, and he must cut across Black’s plan by actively using his space advantage.

Note that 15 dxe6?? loses to 15...\texttt{x}d3.

15 \texttt{e}3 \texttt{e}7

Maybe the immediate 15...b6 is better.

16 \texttt{d}2 b6
17 f4!

White evicts the e5-pawn – Black cannot maintain a pawn stronghold on e5 because 17...f6 18 fxe5 fxe5 allows White to win an exchange with 19 \texttt{g}5 – so that after a preliminary c4 to defend d5, his e-pawn will subsequently be free to move (after the necessary preparations).

Black now reacts by preventing a link-up of the white c- and d-pawns, occupying c4 with his own.

17 \ldots c4

Throughout this book there are examples of a pawn covering a key square in order to keep (more valuable) enemy pieces from using it as an outpost. In this game Black had not one, but two pawns (c5 and e5) guarding the potentially helpful d4
square, yet in just two moves he relinquishes his control over it completely. This will have serious consequences.

18 ♘c2 exf4
19 ♘xf4 ♘c6
20 ♙d4

Not 20 dxc6 ♖xd2. Having acquired the d4 square White does not hesitate to use it. Black has no choice but to remove this mighty horse.

20 ...
21 cxd4 (113)

A very interesting position has arisen. Material is equal and both sides have the same amalgamation of forces, but the respective pawn structures create a definite imbalance which tips the scales in White's favour.

If we were to remove all the pieces from the board and leave only the twelve pawns, then Black would win thanks to his c-pawn. Even with White to move, Black would be the one with winning chances because his pawn majority is furthest from the opponent's king. Black's king need make just two moves to halt the progress of White's central pawn mass, whereas the white monarch has a longer journey to the queenside. And a subsequent thrust ...f7-f5 would either leave White's front d-pawn undefended after exf5 or, after e5, grant Black a second deadly 3 v 2 kingside pawn majority. So how does White have a better game in the diagram position?

Chess is a game of innumerable factors which contribute in varying degrees to the evaluation of a specific position. The pawn ending may be uncomfortable for White, but return the queens, rooks and bishops to the battlefield and the picture tells a different story! Although Black does set out to help the queenside pawns make their presence felt, White's pressure on the other wing produces an initiative which offers his pawns attacking roles.

21 ...
22 ♙f3 ♙ac8
23 ♙h6 ♙h8
24 ♙f2 ♙g7

Now that the white queen no longer has immediate access to the h6 square Black challenges the irksome bishop.

25 ♙xg7 ♙xg7
26 ♙f1

It is always a nice feeling to triple our major pieces on one file! During the next few moves White
simply increases the power of his pieces before putting his pawns to work.

26 ... \( \text{Cc7} \)
27 \( \text{Wg3} \) \( \text{Cb7} \)
28 \( \text{Hf6!} \) \( \text{Hcd7} \)
29 \( \text{Wh4!} \) b5 (114)

At first glance it seems that it is Black who has made the most progress. His bishop has found a new station on the long diagonal, the rooks are doubled on the d-file, and a queenside pawn offensive has also been launched.

But the ending has not yet arrived, and White’s pawns are about to take over the whole operation:

30 d6! \( \text{We8} \)
Not 30...\( \text{Xxd6?} \) 31 \( \text{Xxf7+} \) and Black can resign.

31 h4!
Another pawn jumps into the brawl.

31 ... \( \text{b4} \)
Black continues with the diversionary tactics. The alternative is 31...h5, after which White can pressure the newly weakened g6-

pawn by pushing e4-e5 (to threaten e5-e6), further opening the b1-h7 diagonal. Also possible after 31...h5 is 32 g4 hxg4 33 h5 etc.

In the game Black strives to maintain the ‘solidity’ of his kingside pawns.

32 h5! a5
Of course 32...gxh5 only helps White.

33 d5!
The whole of Black’s army is being totally dominated by white pawns!

33 ... c3
As far as a constructive plan goes Black has nothing better than pushing his queenside pawns.

34 \( \text{Ha4} \) \( \text{Ha6} \)
35 \( \text{Hf2} \) \( \text{Cc4} \)
Black both pressures the a2-pawn and discourages White from playing e4-e5 by keeping an eye on the d5-pawn.

36 \( \text{Hh2} \)
Once again we see a precautionary – albeit not entirely necessary – king move designed to deny Black any chances once the final phase of the attack is set into action. There is no hurry to win material with \( \text{Xxd7} \). Moreover, White’s decisive advantage is purely positional.

36 ... \( \text{Gg8} \)
Black’s king takes a step back into his shelter.

37 h6
They’re closing in ...

37 ... \( \text{Wf8} \)
Removing the pin, but White is ready to add the finishing touches to a well-played game.

38 \( \text{dxd7} \) \( \text{xd7} \) (115)

If Black does have any compensation for the exchange it comes in the form of his mobile queenside pawns, which are indeed threatening to come close to promotion with \( \ldots a5-a4, \ldots b4-b3-b2 \) etc.

Thus far, however, the game has been dictated by White’s foot soldiers, and it is they who will have the last word.

39 e5! \( \text{xd5} \)
40 e6! \( \text{xe6} \)

If 40...\( \text{xd6} \) 41 exf7+, picking up the remaining black rook. Another possibility is 40...\( \text{b7} \) 41 e7 \( \text{e8} \) 42 \( \text{xg6+! hxg6} \) 43 \( \text{f6} \) and \( \text{g7+} \) mate, or 42...f\( \text{e6} \) 43 \( \text{f8+} \) etc.

41 \( \text{xe6!} \) a4
41...f\( \text{xe6} \) 42 \( \text{xf8} \) mate. An option here is ‘Resigns’. Black’s pawns want value for money.

42 \( \text{e3} \) \( \text{d8} \)
43 d7! \( \text{b3} \)

44 \( \text{e8} \)

Black resigns.

Chandler-Adams
Hastings 1990/91

1 \text{e4} \text{d5}
2 \text{exd5} \text{c6}

The Scandinavian Defence (recapturing with 2...\( \text{xd5} \) brings about the Centre Counter Defence). Rather like the Alekhine Defence (1 \text{e4} \text{c6}) Black is happy to lure White’s centre pawns forward (after a subsequent \( \ldots \text{xd5} \)) to d4 and c4 in the hope of undermining them at a later stage with \( \ldots \text{e7-e5} \) or \( \ldots \text{c7-c5} \).

His opponent has other ideas.

3 \text{c4!}\!

White chooses to take the game down a different path, opting to turn his temporary material lead into a permanent one, netting a pawn in return for tardy development. Another alternative to the popular 3 d4 is the tricky 3 \( \text{b5+} \).

3 ... \text{c6}

Black can also gambit his pawn with 3...\text{e6}.

4 \text{dxc6}

4 \text{f3} or 4 d4 transpose to the Panov-Botvinnik variation of the Caro-Kann Defence after 4...\text{xd5}.

Such transpositional possibilities during the first few moves are not unusual in a game of chess!

4 ... \text{xc6}
5 \text{f3} \text{e5}
6 \text{d3} (116)
With a lead in development, more space and a grip on the centre Black could also continue with the logical 6...\textit{f5} or 6...\textit{c5}, posting his pieces on natural squares and building up an initiative.

Too many players fail to appreciate that it is still possible to play in the same aggressive fashion with the queens off the board. Indeed, sometimes it is easier to utilize our advantages and exploit our opponent's weaknesses without a caretaker queen successfully holding everything together. Moreover, if a pawn has been sacrificed for the initiative then it is all the more important to eliminate a key defender. Hence Adams' choice.

\textit{7 dxe4}

White puts his faith in his extra pawn. After 7 \textit{\textbackslash g5 \textit{b4+} 8 \textit{c3 \textit{g4} White is very passive and Black is only a couple of moves from developing all his forces.}

\textit{6 ... e4!}

Defending the f2-pawn while simultaneously bringing out a piece is obviously better than 9 \textit{e1.}

\textit{9 ... \textit{f5}}

A calm alternative to the more forcing 9...\textit{g4. Adams has a wonderful positional understanding; he is not seeking a quick knockout blow, instead he is content to play a normal game. White is too busy thinking about where his pieces will go - and how fast they can get there - to be able to make use of his extra pawn.}

In fact it is Black's activity which will eventually decide the respective pawn formations (notice that at the moment, apart from the c4-pawn, the rest mirror each other, and have not yet moved!).

\textit{10 \textit{h4 0-0-0+ (117)}}

\textit{11 \textit{c1}}

Not 11 \textit{e1 \textit{b4+} and White must play 12 \textit{e2.}
11 ... \( \text{\textit{e6}} \)
12 \( \text{\textit{c3!?!}} \)

White accepts doubled, isolated c-pawns in order to deny his opponent the use of the squares d4 and b4. Of course this is a luxury which would not be available to White if he were not a pawn up.

12 ... \( \text{\textit{xc3}} \)
13 \( \text{\textit{bxc3}} \) \( \text{\textit{b6}} \)

Already Black’s compensation has begun to take on a more long-term, structural form than the earlier lead in development. As we know by now a good way to highlight the defect of doubled (and isolated) pawns is to control the square directly in front of them—in this case c5.

14 \( \text{\textit{f3}} \)

Chandler brings his knight back into the game, also preventing \( \text{\textit{e5}} \) which, thanks to Black’s last move, he can no longer meet by advancing his front c-pawn.

14 ... \( \text{\textit{c5!?!}} \)

Consistent. Black judges that he will benefit more from the coming exchange. If White declines the trade he will be left with a feeble isolated e-pawn after 15 ... \( \text{\textit{xe3+}} \) 16 \( \text{\textit{fxe3}} \). Meanwhile he is still lagging behind in development.

15 \( \text{\textit{xc5}} \) \( \text{\textit{bxc5}} \) (118)

Thus far we have seen a significant change in the pawn structure every five moves, even though very few pawn moves have actually been played! There is no doubting the precarious placing of the white c-pawns, which are now fixed in position by only one of Black’s (Adams must also be careful because the c5-pawn is a potential target).

As we will see, White will have to make more compromises if he is finally to liberate his forces:

16 \( \text{\textit{b1}} \) \( \text{\textit{he8}} \)

Threatening 17 ... \( \text{\textit{g4}} \) and an invasion down the e-file.

17 \( \text{\textit{e2}} \) \( \text{\textit{h3!?!}} \)

Suddenly White is faced with another disruption of his pawns.

18 \( \text{\textit{gxh3}} \)

The ugly retreat 18 \( \text{\textit{f1}} \) deservedly runs into trouble after 18 ... \( \text{\textit{g4}} \).

18 ... \( \text{\textit{xe2}} \)
19 \( \text{\textit{b2}} \)

Forced. White cannot let the enemy rook run riot on his second rank.

19 ... \( \text{\textit{xb2}} \)
20 \( \text{\textit{xb2}} \) \( \text{\textit{d3!}} \) (119)
The initiative which Black was given on the fourth move still exists on the twentieth. And the point I made after the previous diagram is still valid — another five moves and we see yet another crucial difference in White’s pawn formation! White now has four pawn islands made up of two sets of doubled, isolated pawns and the f- and a-pawns. Not surprisingly only a few of these pawns will survive, so White must go pawn-hunting himself.

21 g5 d2+
22 a3 xf2
23 d1 h6
24 e4

White has chosen to go for the c5-pawn to free his own c-pawns and hopefully use his queenside majority. Otherwise only Black will have the chance to make an all-important passed pawn.

24 ... hxh2
25 g1 e2
26 xc5 g6
27 g3 e5

A quick pawn count reveals material equality, and both sides’ forces are reasonably well placed; White’s king even stands alongside his c-pawns. However, the black king is ready to defend against — or perhaps attack if the opportunity arises — the front c-pawn, while on the other side of the board Black’s undamaged pawn majority is looking far more dangerous.

The immediate problem for White is one which has dogged him throughout the game: finding suitable outposts for his pieces. The piece in question here is the knight; he must find a route over to the kingside to confront the enemy pawns. Unfortunately for White this may mean giving up his front c-pawn.

29 a6+ b6
30 b4 e4
31 g1

White wants to bring his rook to the d-file.
Chandler’s knight has indeed experienced some kind of rejuvenation over the last few moves and it is now able to make the progress of the kingside pawns a little more problematic than Black would like. White has lost a pawn in the process, but he is striving to draw, anyway.

Nevertheless, it takes more than a rook and a few spite checks to successfully arrest a three to one pawn majority. White makes the most of his chances, but there are so many options available to his opponent that there is no holding back the tide.

34 \( \text{d}f6 \)  \( \text{H}f4 \)
35 \( \text{d}d7+ \)  \( \text{c}6 \)
36 a4  g5

Here we go.

37 \( \text{b}8+ \)  \( \text{c}7 \)
38 \( \text{d}7 \)  \( \text{d}6 \)
39 \( \text{e}5 \)  \( \text{H}f5 \)

40 \( \text{g}4 \)  h5
Black edges forward slowly but surely.

41 \( \text{e}3 \)  \( \text{f}3 \)
42 \( \text{d}5+ \)  \( \text{c}6 \)
43 h4
White was about to lose his remaining kingside pawn anyway, so at least this way the three black pawns will be split up.

43 ...  \( \text{gxh}4 \)
44 \( \text{e}7+ \)  \( \text{d}7 \) (122)

45 \( \text{c}8 \)
White’s knight has had a good crack at the whip. Time to look for a final drawing chance in a rook and pawn ending.

45 ...  \( \text{x}c8 \)
46 \( \text{x}d6 \)  h3
Remember: a passed pawn should be pushed!

47 \( \text{d}4 \)  h2
48 \( \text{h}4 \)  \( \text{f}2 \)
49 \( \text{x}h5 \)  f5

And don’t forget: other passed pawns should not be left at home if they can safely move. The more the merrier.
50  ♖c4  ♗d2!

Black's f-pawn is safe from capture because 51  ♗xf5 allows the other pawn to queen. Black takes advantage of this to cut off White's king.

51  ♗c5

What else?
51  ..  f4
52  ♗c6  ♗d8

The threat was 53  ♗h8+! ♗d8 54  ♗xh2.

53  c4  f3
54  c5  ♗g2!

A major inconvenience would be 54...f2 55  ♗xh2  ♘f1 56  ♗xd2+.

Now Black plans to put his second pawn on the seventh rank.
55  ♗b6  ♗b2+!
56  ♗c6  f2! (123)

The following game is a rarity—White sacrifices every one of his pieces purely for the safe passage of two pawns!

Serper-I.Nikolaidis
Saint Petersburg 1993

1  c4  g6
2  e4  ♘g7
3  d4

White gives himself extra space by setting up a broad pawn centre.

3  ..  d6
4  ♗c3  ♗f6
5  ♘ge2  ♗bd7
6  ♘g3  c6

As we will see Black opts for a plan of playing around his opponent's centre, advancing with pawns on both wings. White, meanwhile, concentrates on strengthening his pawn wall.

7  ♗e2  a6

Preparing the ...b7-b5 thrust.
8  ♗e3  h5 (124)

After a long but not particularly exhausting journey Black's kingside pawns find their way to paradise. White resigns. He even loses his rook after 57  ♗xh2  ♘f1 58  ♗xb2  ♘f6+ and 59...♗xb2.
9 f3!

Very solid. It is imperative that the first player does not underestimate the potential of Black’s creeping pawn moves. If he is not careful White could find his impressive central pawn armada coming under fire from a swift flank attack. Hence the over-protection of the e-pawn in case Black hits out with ...h5-h4 and ...b5-b4 to dislodge both white knights.

9 ... b5

Black continues the pincer offensive, seeking to undermine White’s command of central territory.

Of course it would be unwise to capture away from the centre now with 10 cxb5?!, especially since White has thus far gone to considerable lengths to avoid such concessions. The natural 10 a3?! is also inaccurate, allowing Black to adopt an active stance with yet more pawn moves after 10...bxc4! 11 hxg4 d5! (intending 12 exd5 c6b6!, when White’s centre looks far from healthy).

Serper’s choice is both consistent and strong.

10 c5! dxc5
11 dxc5 wc7
12 0-0 h4

Black is in no hurry to castle because his king is quite safe. White must anyway address the problem of the misplaced knight and the ensuing struggle over the b8-h2 diagonal – particularly the f4-square.

13 h1 h5
14 wd2!

Black was threatening to dominate important dark squares on the kingside with 14...e5!, hitting the h2-pawn. This try would now be rendered harmless by 15 f4, so Black reacts by finally bringing his e-pawn into the game.

14 ... e5
15 f2!

There is no good reason to embark on any plan without first improving the position of White’s worst placed piece.

15 ... f8?! (125)

After an interesting example of the use of pawn advances on both flanks to eventually challenge the enemy centre and help in the fight for key squares, Black makes an ambitious move which will leave him facing central pawns far more menacing than the original centre he succeeded in neutralizing.
Black’s plan is ...\( \mathcal{Q}f8-e6-d4 \), but better is the immediate occupation of the f4-square with 15...\( \mathcal{Q}f4 \), when after 16 \( \mathcal{Q}d3 \) \( \mathcal{h}h6 \) 17 a4 White maintains a slight edge thanks to the pressure on Black’s queenside and the troublesome c5-pawn.

Now the same a2-a4 thrust contains more sting.

16 a4! b4

The passive 16...\( \mathcal{B}b7 \) may run into serious trouble after 17 axb5 and a subsequent piece sacrifice on b5. With Black’s forces on the other wing it would not be easy to cope with White’s attack as well the two very dangerously mobile well-supported passed pawns.

16...\( bxa4 \) leaves Black with weak a6- and c6-pawns and no way of keeping White out of b6.

17 \( \mathcal{Q}d5! \)

So many players become irritated several times during the course of a game because they discover attractive possibilities which only nearly work, and they consequently have to search for other, less crucial continuations. Yet it is often the characteristics of the pawn structures which dictate whether or not a powerful sacrifice or an unexpected blow are actually possible. In this game, for example, White lures Black’s b-pawn one square forward in order to force Black to take the knight (after 16 \( \mathcal{Q}d5 \) Black could simply move his queen). One pawn move and the situation changes considerably!

17 ... cxd5
18 exd5 (126)

Despite being a piece down White has two united passed pawns which are by no means easy to keep under control and blockade (life is even more difficult for Black because his queen happens to be right in the path of the hostile pawns). Black has a serious shortage of pieces on the queenside; in contrast the white forces are ideally situated to productively share the division of labour. Whatever chances Black may have on the kingside can be handled by the necessary pieces, and the rest are free to concentrate on the task in hand – the parade of White’s giant centre pawns.

18 ... f5

A dual purpose move. Black denies his opponent the use of the e4-square as a hopping stone for the knight (\( \mathcal{Q}f2-e4-d6+ \) would
leave the second player in dire straits), and at the same time he seeks counterplay in the area of the board where most of his pieces are located, hoping that the extra piece will make its presence felt (in practical terms, of course, White's c- and d-pawns are potential game-winners and worth their weight in gold).

Notice that Black, too, is continuing to make full use of his pawns.

19 d6!

An obvious move, perhaps, but one which requires accurate defence from Black. If now 19...\(\text{\textit{d}}\)d7, intending to blockade with the bishop rather than the queen after ...\(\text{\textit{b}}\)b7-c6, White simply soldiers on with 20 c6! \(\text{\textit{w}}\)xc6 21 \(\text{\textit{h}}\)fc1! followed by \(\text{\textit{c}}\)c7, when the surviving half of the pawn duo will act as overseer in the destruction of Black's position.

Consequently the black queen must suffer the indignity of blocking the c-pawn.

19 ... \(\text{\textit{w}}\)c6

20 \(\text{\textit{h}}\)b5!!

By now you will be familiar with this recurring theme of clearing the path of one or more key pawns by rather unexpected means. In countless games - like this one - the best winning chance may come in the form of a couple of pawns; the main problem is not how to help their safe passage up the board, but in noticing the effectiveness of such an operation in the first place (how many players virtually ignore the pawns and look only to the other pieces in search of a plan?).

If we are already armed with a good understanding of pawn power, it then becomes much easier to find moves which enable us to get the most out of the versatile infantry. In this case Serper's keen eye falls upon a knight sacrifice which unites two pawns, and from that point on the game revolves around them.

Back to the struggle.

20 ... \(\text{\textit{a}}\)xb5

21 axb5 \(\text{\textit{w}}\)xb5

Forced. If Black tries to hang on to the extra material with 21...\(\text{\textit{w}}\)b7 White continues 22 c6 \(\text{\textit{w}}\)b8 (22...\(\text{\textit{w}}\)xb5 23 d7+ wins for White) 23 b6! with a position which is obviously completely hopeless for Black as the proud pawns cannot be contained (127).

![Diagram](image)

By giving up the rook Black at least limits the number of danger-
inous white pawns and consequently avoids the embarrassing resignation which would soon follow the position in Diagram 127. Remember that White had already invested a couple of pieces in order to maintain the pressure, so Black is not compelled to defend his rook.

22 $\text{Nxa8} \quad \text{Wc6}$

Again Black is obliged to use his queen for defensive purposes, and he still has no time to distract White with an active strategy of his own.

23 $\text{Qf1!}$

White continues the queenside operation, not slowing down for an instant in case Black successfully blockades the pawns and mounts an attack with his remaining pieces.

As for Black, a pawn thrust on the other wing offers the only opportunity to unsettle his opponent.

23 ... $\text{f4}$

24 $\text{Qxa7!} \ (128)$

Serper is able to turn the screw even further thanks to a fantastic sacrificial idea which would be possible after 24...$\text{fxe3?}: 25 \text{Wd5!! exf2+ 26 Qxf2 Wxd5 27 Qxc8 mate.}$

24 ...

25 $\text{Qxc8+!}$

White correctly follows a consistent course, eliminating defenders to make Black's defensive task (blockading the pawns) as difficult as possible. Of course, if we adhere too closely to the general 'value' of different pieces we will deny ourselves the opportunity of carrying out useful sacrifices which may indeed be the only constructive way to continue.

25 ...

26 $\text{Wd5!} \quad \text{fxe3}$

Black's other option is to come to the aid of the ailing queenside:

26 ... $\text{Qh6} \ 27 \text{We6+ Qf8} \ (27 ... \text{Qd8 28 Wf7 mate}) \ 28 \text{Qe4! We8} \ (28...$\text{fxe3 29 Qg5 We8 30 Qa8! and Black has no defence against Wf7 mate}) \ 29 \text{We8+! Qxe8} \ (29...$\text{Qxe8 is met by 30 Qa8+, when 30...Qf7 31 Qg5+ is mate}) \ 30 \text{Qxd7 fxe3 31 c6! and (surprise, surprise!)}$ White's efforts to push through his centre pawns have reaped the ultimate reward.

27 $\text{We6+ Qf8}$

28 $\text{Qxd7!} \quad \text{exf2+}$

29 $\text{Qf1!} \ (129)$
29 \( \text{cxd5?} \) \( \text{cxd5} \) must be avoided.

\[ \text{29 ...} \quad \text{cxd5} \]

There are also a couple of interesting attempts to wrest the initiative from White by employing the extra material, but both eventually succumb to White's determined pawns:

1) 29 ... \( \text{c6} \) 30 \( \text{b6} \) \( \text{cxb6} \) 31 \( \text{cxb6} \) \( \text{cxb6} \) 32 \( \text{cxb6} \) \( \text{cxb6} \) 33 \( \text{cxb6} \) \( \text{cxb6} \) 34 \( \text{cxb6} \) and the pawns will have the last laugh.

2) After 29 ... \( \text{cxd5} \) 30 \( \text{cxd5} \) \( \text{cxd5} \) \( \text{cxd5} \) \( \text{cxd5} \) Black threatens to crown his f-pawn with 32 ... \( \text{b6} \) + and 33 ... \( \text{c6} \) \( \text{c6} \) \( \text{c6} \), but White has the move and can strike the first blow by 32 \( \text{c8} \) + \( \text{c8} \) 33 \( \text{c8} \) + \( \text{c8} \) 34 \( \text{c8} \) + \( \text{c8} \) 35 \( \text{c8} \) + \( \text{c8} \), when White's passed pawns have survived to save the day) 34 \( \text{d7} \) !.

Black's less exotic game choice issues a direct challenge to the white queen and seems to bring White's initiative to a halt. For example after 30 \( \text{c8} \) + ? (30 \( \text{c8} \) \( \text{c8} \) + \( \text{c8} \) \( \text{c8} \), etc) 30 ... \( \text{c8} \) 31 \( \text{c8} \) + \( \text{c8} \) 32 \( \text{c8} \) + \( \text{c8} \) 33 \( \text{c8} \) + \( \text{c8} \) followed by ... \( \text{c8} \) + wins for Black, and 33 \( \text{c8} \) ? \( \text{c8} \) + \( \text{c8} \) leaves White's pieces awkwardly placed.

\[ \text{30 ...} \quad \text{c8} \]

Brilliant! Serper is intent on seeing his pawns leading the victory procession. Throughout the game he has managed to find the best continuation at every turn, never losing momentum. The next few moves are forced.

\[ \text{30 ...} \quad \text{c8} + \]

\[ \text{31} \quad \text{c8} + \]

\[ \text{32} \quad \text{d7} ! \]

Payback time.

\[ \text{32 ...} \quad \text{c8} + \]

\[ \text{33} \quad \text{c8} + \]

\[ \text{34} \quad \text{c8} + \]

King moves meet with the same reply.

\[ \text{35} \quad \text{c6} ! \]

Normally a rook, bishop and knight can comfortably cope with a queen, but White’s rampant c-pawn tips the scales in his favour.
However, the path to victory rarely offers a smooth ride! Black has a dangerous-looking pawn of his own on f2, so he reacts by pushing his e-pawn.

35 ... e4!
35 ... $\textit{xb7}$? 36 cxb7 and White queens.

36 c7!
Not 36 $\textit{xf2}$?? or 36 $\textit{xe4}$??, both of which lose on the spot to 36...$\textit{xb7}$ 37 cxb7 $\textit{e5}$! when Black covers the promotion square and is two pieces to the good. It would be terrible to spoil such an excellently controlled game.

36 ... e3
Suddenly, after toiling from the opening to counter and contain White's pawn-pushing ambitions, Black is threatening to queen and deliver mate. For example 37 c8$\textit{w}$ e2+ 38 $\textit{xf2}$ e1$\textit{w}$ mate.

With only a few minutes with which to reach the time control at move forty, White must not only deal with the deadly threat, but also stay on course for a win.

37 $\textit{d5}$+! $\textit{f6}$
37...$\textit{e6}$ 38 $\textit{xe6}$+! $\textit{xe6}$ 39 c8$\textit{w}$+.

38 $\textit{d6}$+ $\textit{f7}$
39 $\textit{d5}$+ $\textit{d8}$
White repeats for a couple of moves.

39 ... $\textit{f6}$
40 $\textit{d6}$+ $\textit{f7}$ (131)

41 $\textit{xe7}$+! $\textit{xe7}$
42 c8$\textit{w}$
All of White's pieces have been sacrificed for the sake of the advanced pawns, but once the smoke has cleared he has emerged with a material advantage! Now the third white queen to enter the arena is responsible for adding the (technical) finishing touches to a very entertaining game. This is done by gradually picking off Black's pawns.

42 ...

43 $\textit{c5}$+ $\textit{e8}$
Or 43...$\textit{f7}$ 44 $\textit{c4}$+ and $\textit{hx4}$. White would like to capture the h-pawn and follow with g2-g3 and f3-f4 to sever the e3-pawn's line of defence.

44 $\textit{b5}$+ $\textit{d8}$
44...$\textit{f7}$ transposes to the last note, and Black does not want to
lose his b-pawn with check. However, it is really not important as White is winning in any case because – unlike Black’s – his pawns are safe from capture. When the coast is clear their advance will be too much for Black, hence the second player’s coming tactical try.

45 \( \text{W} \text{b} 6 + \text{d} 7 \)

46 \( \text{W} \text{x} \text{g} 6 \text{e} 2 + \)

47 \( \text{Q} \text{x} \text{f} 2 ! \)

47 \( \text{Q} \text{x} \text{e} 2 ?? \text{Q} \text{f} 4 + \text{and } \ldots \text{Q} \text{x} g 6 . \)

47 ... \( \text{Q} \text{e} 3 + \)

48 \( \text{Q} \text{e} 1 ! \)

\textbf{Black resigned.} 48 ... \( \text{Q} \text{f} 4 \text{f} 4 \text{g} 7 + \text{and g} 2 \text{-g} 3 \text{will see the disappearance of the e-pawn and the subsequent decisive launch of the white kingside pawns.} \)
7 Problems

**P1** Opočensky-Hromadka  
*Kožice 1931*

How did White snare his opponent’s king?

**P2** Stezik-Khrobust  
*USSR 1977*

Black’s bishop seems to be keeping the position together, but White won in just a few moves.

**P3** Koch-Kogan  
*Singapore 1990*

No prizes for guessing that White won with his passed b-pawn. The question is: how?

**P4** Paglilla-Carbone  
*Argentina 1985*

Unfortunately for White 1 fxe7?? loses to 1...hxd1 mate. However, White does have a clever way of giving his ambitious f-pawn life (White to play and win).
White has an active king, but Black is about to make a new queen...

Black’s forces appear to be overloaded. How did White decisively demonstrate this?

White to play and win.

White to play and mate in two moves, against any defence.
P9 Georgadze-Kuindzhi  
_Tbilisi 1973_

Both kings have had to run to the edge of the board. Black found a fantastic finish to win the game.

P10 Bone-Zuidema  
_Zurich 1962_

This game ended in a draw after 1 \_\_b5 \_\_f4! 2 \_\_g1 \_\_e3+. With a little bit more appreciation of pawn power, White could have avoided sharing the point. How can White win?

P11 Böök-Koponen  
_Helsinki 1961_

Is the white e-pawn a humble servant, or is it destined for glory?

P12 Gaprindashvili-Verőci  
_Belgrade 1974_

Another missed opportunity! White took a draw by perpetual check with 1 \_\_g4+ \_\_h6 2 \_\_g7+ etc. What incredible forced win did she miss?
White is easily winning. Why and how?

Never give up hope on a passed pawn until it is clear no more progress can be made. How did the great Tal force his h-pawn home?

Black has an advanced outside passed pawn, but what can he do with it?

Black played 1...c5? and after 2 Qxg4! the game was drawn because the bishop cannot protect the queening square. What is Black’s amusing forced win?
Black’s path to victory is not as smooth as it may first seem. What is the correct continuation?

How does Black win?

1 fxe7 meets with 1...fxe6, and 1 f7 with 1...f6. White must find another way through.

A strange position! Black has an extra rook, but White’s connected passed pawns look set to win the game. How did Black turn the tables to emerge with a won game?
Sometimes a pawn which is right in the heart of the enemy king’s quarters is enough to decisively tip the scales. Black to play and win.

White to play and win. Careful ...

Here White’s winning plan is simple but not necessarily easy to discover.

Speculate to accumulate.
White to play and win. PAWN POWER!

Uhlmann-Darga
Hastings 1958/9

Black's queen is uncomfortably placed in front of the e6-pawn, but White's stands on the receiving end of a pin. The first phase of Uhlmann's winning strategy is not too difficult to find, but the key move in one of the variations is far from obvious.

Elwekkawi-Frank
Lagos 1976

Black to play and win.

Vodopianov-Kaptsin
Rostov 1974

White has two extra bishops, Black a confident f-pawn. Black to play and win.
Again White has a material advantage, but again it is Black who can win.

Which of Black’s pawns will deliver the knockout blow?
Solutions

S1 1 \( \text{Rx}d5 + ! \) cxd5 2 \( \text{Q}d3 + ! ! \) (a wonderful dual-purpose move; the knight frees the f4-square and simultaneously forces Black’s pawn from e4) 2...exd3 3 f4 mate! Had White essayed 2 \( \text{Q}xg6 + \text{hx}g6 \) 3 f4+ instead, Black would now be able to take the f-pawn \textit{en passant}.

S2 1 b5! axb5 (after 1...\( \text{Q}d7 \) 2 b6 Black can resign) 2 a6 b4 (2...\( \text{Q}g2 \) 3 \( \text{Q}xb5 \) wins easily for White) 3 \( \text{Q}d5 + ! \) exd5 4 a7 and the pawn cannot be caught.

S3 White played 1 \( \text{R}x8 + ! \) \( \text{Q}x8 \) (1...\( \text{R}x8 \) 2 \( \text{R}x8 \) 3 \( \text{Q}c8 + ! \) \( \text{g}7 \) 3 \( \text{Q}xb7 \) \( \text{R}x8 \) 4 \( \text{Cc}7 + \) \( \text{Q}c7 \) 5 bxc7 and White’s new queen will clear up.

S4 White found 1 \( \text{wa}8 + ! \) 1-0. For example 1...\( \text{R}x8 \) 2 fxe7 and 3 \( \text{Cc}8 + (+) \).

S5 Black breaks through with 1...f4! 2 exf4 (or 2 gxf4 h4-h3 etc.) 2...h4! 3 gh4 g3 4 fxg3 e3.

S6 Black’s pieces are under too much strain: 1 \( \text{R}xe4 ! \) \( \text{R}xe4 \) 2 \( \text{R}x6 + ! \) \( \text{xf}6 \) 3 f8\( \text{Q} \) mate.

S7 White simply creates an outside passed pawn by 1 f5! gxf5 2 h5 f4 3 h6 f3 4 \( \text{Ce}1 ! \).

S8 The key to this mate in two problem is 1 d4!! with mate next move regardless of Black’s reply. Neither of the \textit{en passant} captures help Black!

S9 Black has an entertaining mate: 1...\( \text{R}f2 + ! \) 2 \( \text{R}x2 \) \( \text{Rh}5 + ! \) 3 \( \text{Rh}5 \) g5 mate! Remarkable! Three moves ago White was threatening \( \text{R}xg5 + \).

S10 White missed 1 \( \text{R}f3 + ! ! \) \( \text{R}xf3 \) (1...\( \text{R}xf1 + \) 2 \( \text{R}xf1 \) and \( f6 - f7 \) 2 gxf3 \( \text{R}xf1 + \) 3 \( \text{Q}g2 \) \( \text{Cc}1 \) 4 \( f7 \) \( \text{Cc}8 \) 5 e6 and White queens.

S11 1 exf6! \( \text{R}xe2 \) 2 f7+ \( \text{Rh}8 \) 3 \( \text{Rxg}7 + ! ! \text{K}xg7 \) 4 fxe8\( \text{R} + \) 1-0. It takes more than a pin to hold back a mighty pawn!

S12 I think Gaprindashvili could be forgiven for failing to spot the fantastic 1 \( \text{R}xe5 + ! ! \) fxe5 2 g4+ \( \text{Q}h4 \) 3 \( \text{R}e7 + ! ! \) \( \text{Q}g5 \) 4 g3 mate.

S13 The outside passed pawn is enough. 1
a3+ (or 1 c2) 1...a4 2 c3 xa3 3 xc4 b2 4 d4 c2 5 e4 d2 6 f5 e2 7 xg5 f2 8 xf4 xg2 9 g4.

If 1...h2 2 b1, so Black played 1...c4+ 2 d2 c1! 3 xc1 (3 xc1 makes no difference) 3...h2 and queens.

Tal found 1...xf3+ 2 xf3 e3!, when White cannot reach Black’s h-pawn before it becomes a queen.

Black could have won with 1...g3! 2 f3+ h5! 3 xd4 h2+! 4 g2 gxf2 and one of the pawns will queen.

1...c2+ 2 xc2 a2+ 3 b2 bxc2 4 xa2 c1! (not 4...c1 stalemate!) 0-1.

White succeeded in promoting a pawn with the help of a sacrifice: 1 h5!! xh5 2 xe7.

It is imperative that all the options are considered in these situations. 1...xa2! 2 xa2 xe4+! 3 xe4 b3 and the rook is defenceless (e.g. 4 a1 b2 5 b1 c2 etc).

This position looks more like a study than a real game. Even Black’s winning move is bizarre: 1...c6!! 2 xc6 (or 2 a7 c7!) 2...g5! 3 a7 f5 4 c7 f4! 5 h4 g4! (taking the h-pawn brings about stalemate) 6 h5 h6! 0-1.

Black’s f-pawn is an unwelcome guest. 1...xh2+! 2 xh2 h5+ 3 g1 h1+ 4 xh1 h3+ 5 g1 g2 mate.

1 xe6! xe6 2 c5!! (this pawn move closes a crucial pathway and forces the black king to take a much longer route) 2...d7 3 f3 c7 4 e3 b7 5 d3 a6 6 c4 and the b4-pawn is lost.

1 h8!! is the only move which wins, as 1 h8?? a1! 2 xa1 is stalemate. Now, after the under-promotion, White will simply queen his other pawn.

1...xa4! 2 bxa4 b3 3 g4 e1+! 4 xe1 b2 and queens.

This is more complicated than 3 v 3. White must be careful to queen the correct pawn (or on the correct square), otherwise he will be mated! 1 h5! (the only move) 1...gxh5 (1...g5 2 e5! fxe5 3 f5!) 2 e5! fxe5 3 f5 and White will queen with check.
S26 Black finished the game with 1...\texttt{h}4+ 2 gxh4 g4 mate.

S27 White’s powerful e6-pawn allows him to ignore the pin: 1 \texttt{xd}6! \texttt{xd}6 (or 1...\texttt{xe}2 2 \texttt{xd}8+ \texttt{xd}8 3 \texttt{xd}8+! \texttt{xd}8 4 e7+) 2 \texttt{xd}6! 1-0. After 2...\texttt{xe}2 White continues with the theme of flushing out the blocking queen with 3 \texttt{f}6!!, answering 3...\texttt{xf}6 (3...\texttt{xd}6 4 e7+) 4 e7+ \texttt{g}7 with 5 e8\texttt{+} etc.

S28 1...\texttt{g}1+!! 2 \texttt{xg}1 \texttt{f}2+ 3 \texttt{h}1 \texttt{fxe}1\texttt{w} 4 \texttt{xe}1 \texttt{xf}1 mate.

S29 1...c4! 2 \texttt{xc}4 \texttt{xc}4 3 \texttt{xc}4 b3! 0-1. Black’s pawn advances have left White defenceless against either 4...\texttt{a}2 mate or 4...\texttt{e}1+ (also mating).

S30 1...\texttt{a}1+! 2 \texttt{g}2 \texttt{g}1+ 3 \texttt{h}3 \texttt{h}4+!! 4 gxh4 g4 mate.

Notice that P9, P26 and P30 all end in the same way, suggesting that, rather than being an imaginative and rare way to earn a full point, this particular pawn mate is in fact quite a standard idea. Now it is also a part of your armoury!
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