



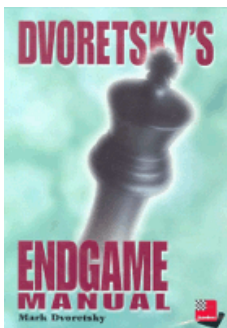
COLUMNISTS

The Instructor

Mark Dvoretsky



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Strategy Lessons

After browsing the Chesspro website (October 2011) with the superb article "Opening Dialectics" by Evgeny Gleizerov, I remembered an old game played with the same French Defense, Wedberg – Gleizerov, that I have already been using for many years in my work with strong players. In its time it was published in *New in Chess Magazine* 2002/1 with notes by the winner – Tom Wedberg. Besides the high quality of the play and commentary, I was impressed by the deep and absolutely non-obvious strategic solution of the opening problem that the Swedish grandmaster found.

In analytical testing, and also in the process of working with my students, as usual I managed to clarify a number of important details and add new polish to the picture of the battle. When I was preparing the material for publication I included in the text some thoughts on various topics that are as important for practical players as for coaches, and I also added a few examples that illustrate the chess problems discussed in the article (you'll find them at the end, in the "appendices").

The outcome of the opening duel that was won by White had a significant influence on the result of the game we're going to look at. Although I've played the French Defense as Black all my life, albeit completely different variations, I'm in no way a connoisseur of the opening and I don't follow the development of modern theory. So I thought that for an objective insight into the process of the battle it would be useful to get an expert's opinion. Fortunately, grandmaster Gleizerov acceded to my request and, after looking at my comments on the game, gave his views on several important moments. Wedberg's notes, which are the basis of this article, are in italics, and Gleizerov's notes are in italics enclosed by square brackets.

Wedberg – Gleizerov
Stockholm, 2001

1.e2-e4 e7-e6 2.d2-d4 d7-d5 3.Nb1-c3 Ng8-f6 4.Bc1-g5 Bf8-e7 5.e4-e5 Nf6-d7 6.Bg5xe7 Qd8xe7 7.f2-f4 0-0 8.Ng1-f3 c7-c5 9.Qd1-d2 Nb8-c6 10.d4xc5 f7-f6 11.e5xf6 Qe7xf6 12.g2-g3 Nd7xc5 13.0-0-0 Rf8-d8

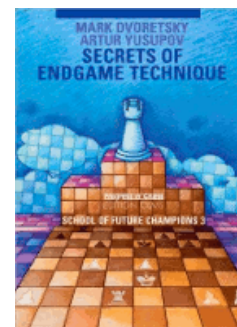


[FEN "r1br2k1/pp4pp/2n1pq2/2np4/5P2/2N2NP1/PPPQ3P/2KR1B1R w - - 0 14"]

1.?

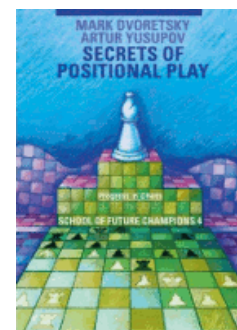
This line is considered to be solid but slightly passive for Black, a drawing line at best. A look at Gleizerov's play and results from this position conveys a dramatically different picture. After the game he told me he had a clean 9-0 result in this line as Black. Somehow he always manages to bring the supposedly bad black bishop into decisive action.

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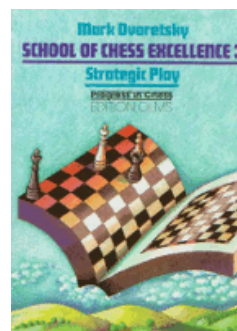
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The problem of the "bad" French bishop is too interesting and important to be limited to a short note on this subject. It's examined in more detail in the first appendix to this article.

His play looked so impressive that I wasn't sure whether I really wanted to play this against him. But some old advice from Lars Karlsson came to mind: While preparing, look for lines where your opponent has good results but the opening itself doesn't look all that impressive. That's where he is most vulnerable!

The next question was: What to play here? The ideal formation for White must be something like Qe3, Bb5 and Rhe1. 14.Qe3? at once loses to 14...d4, while 14.Bb5 can be met by 14...Ne4, and White will have to play with doubled c-pawns.

Gleizerov's opinion is as follows:

[In fact, specifically 14.Bb5! is the strongest. After 14...Ne4 15.Qe3 Nxc3 16.Qxc3 Qxc3 17.bc, Black doesn't succeed in preventing the destructive c3-c4. And if 14..Bd7 15.Qe3!, then by comparison with the move chosen in the game White wins a tempo. It's precisely because of this that I stopped using the plan with f7-f6 against queenside castling!]



[FEN "r1br2k1/pp4pp/2n1p3/1B1p4/5P2/2P2NP1/P1P4P/2KR3R b - - 0 17"]

I really wanted to prove that the damaged pawn structure on the queenside (well, if not doubled pawns – the undermining c3-c4 is inevitable, but at least isolated ones) significantly reduces White's chances of success. But analysis of the positions that arise after 18...Bd7 (on 18...Ne7 the same reply follows) 19.Rhe1 h6 (in the case of 19...Rac8 the thrust 20.Ng5 is unpleasant) 20.c4 (20.Bxc6 bc is also in White's favor) 20...Na5 21.Bxd7 Rxd7 22.cd ed 23.Ne5 confirmed that the grandmaster was right. The d5 pawn will most likely be lose, and Black is faced with a difficult defense. For example, 23...Rdd6 24. Re4! +/- or 23...Rdd6 24.Ng6! Kf7 25.Ne7 +/-.

In a couple of recent games White has entered complications with 14.Qf2 d4!? 15.Nb5 e5 16.Ng5 (16.Nc7 is bad because of the decisive 16...Qf7! 17. Nxa8 Qxa2, and the white king is in deadly danger), but simply 16...Rf8! guards f7 and creates an unclear situation in which Black is active.

Moves like 14.Bd3 and 14.Bg2 are playable, but fail to hit Nc6, the guardian of the important central squares d4 and e5. For example, on 14.Bd3 it's possible to play 14...Bd7 15.Rhe1 Be8 16.Ne5 Rac8 (16...Nxe5 17.Rxe5 Rac8= Grechkin – Estrin, correspondence 1960) 17.Kb1 Nxe5 18.Rxe5 Nd7 19.Ree1 Bh5 20.Be2 Bg6= Fercec – Ulibin, Croatian League, Pula, 2000.

Keres and Euwe recommended 14.Nd4 Ne4 15.Qe3 +/- . But Black can play 14...Bd7!?

During my preparation I couldn't decide what to play and left the decision to later. Over the board I finally saw the solution to the puzzle.

14.Qd2-e1!

I will point out that 14.Qe2 is less precise because of 14...b6! (the queen has cut off the bishop's route to b5) 15.Bh3 (15.Nb5!?) 15...Ba6 unclear.

14...Bc8-d7

If 14...a6 [*in my view – the strongest*], then 15.Bg2 b5 16.Qe3!, and 16...d4? 17.Nxd4 is bad.

Gleizerov adds the following:

[Here it seems to me you have to play 15...b6!, defending the knight in advance. Depending on circumstances the bishop can go via the route d7-e8-f7 or come out to b7, from where it will fire on e4 by "X-ray." As soon as the white knight sets off on the march c3-e2-d4, its black opponent, supported by the bishop, will jump to e4.]



[FEN "r1br2k1/6pp/ppn1pq2/2np4/5P2/2N2NP1/PPP3BP/2KRQ2R w - - 0 16"]

This probably is the best defense in fact, but still I think White's position deserves preference here. He can continue, for example, 16.Qe3 Bb7 (16...d4? 17.Nxd4) 17.Nd4 Rac8 18.Kb1+/- . Another path: 16.Ne2 Ne4 (16...Bd7 17.Ned4 Rac8 18.Qe3+/-) 17.Ned4 Nxd4 18.Nxd4 Bb7 19.Kb1 Rac8 20.Rf1 with a subsequent Qe3. No counterplay is evident for Black, and he constantly has to reckon on an exchange on e4, and also the kingside actions g3-g4-g5 or f4-f5.

15.Qe1-e3!

By sacrificing a move White gets his pieces to the right squares. Bartosz Socko tried 15.Bb5 Rac8 16.Bxc6 Bxc6 17.Nd4 Be8! 18.Qe5 Qxe5 19.fe against Gleizerov in the 1999 Rilton Cup, but after 19...Kf7! Black had no problems and went on to win on move 86.

15...b7-b6



[FEN "r2r2k1/p2b2pp/1pn1pq2/2np4/5P2/2N1QNP1/PPP4P/2KR1B1R w - - 0 16"]

16.Bf1-b5

At the 2003 Russian Championship in Krasnoyarsk the same variation was played in the duel **Inarkiev – Riazantsev**. Before that I had managed to show Ernesto Inarkiev the Wedberg – Gleizerov game (true, not during opening preparations, but while working on improving his positional skills), and so he made the strongest fourteenth and fifteenth moves fairly quickly. But he didn't remember the move 16.Bb5, and rejected it, being unsure of the evaluation of

the position that arises with 16...Ne7. Then again, the continuation Ernesto chose also preserved better chances for White. The game developed as follows:

16.Bg2 Be8 17.Nd4 Nxd4

[A slight inaccuracy. An immediate 17...Rac8 would have been better, and if White wants to exchange knights he has to lose a tempo. Then again, it isn't all that important. The bishop is very well positioned on g2, and the destructive f4-f5 is always hanging in the air (after g3-g4, of course). Black has to keep his bishop on f7 and conduct a fairly passive defense. Basically the key to positions of this type is in the principle "Don't block the center, destroy it!" The knight on c3 is positioned badly for a blockade, while its pressure on d5 is very suitable for an assault.]

18.Rxd4 Rac8 19.Re1 b5 (19...Bg6 20.g4)



[FEN "2rrb1k1/p5pp/4pq2/1pnp4/3R1P2/2N1Q1P1/PPP3BP/2K1R3 w - - 0 20"]

1.?

20.Bh3!

White is preparing an exchange operation that will give him a rook and two pawns for two minor pieces. No other active options are evident.

20...b4 21.Nxd5! (21.Rxb4? d4) 21...ed 22.Bxc8 Rxc8 23.Rxd5 Na4 24.Qd4

Inarkiev correctly decided that exchanges of major pieces were favorable to him (the queens and a pair of rooks). In a middlegame Black can create reciprocal threats to the white king, while in an endgame on a half-empty board the rook's chances of invading his opponent's camp with a decisive impact increase.

24...Qc6 25.Qd2



[FEN "2r1b1k1/p5pp/2q5/3R4/np3P2/6P1/PPPQ3P/2K1R3 b - - 0 25"]

25...Qf6?

Black gives up another pawn, after which he is left with no hope of saving himself.

26.Qxb4 Qc6 27.Qd2 Qb6 28.Qd4 Qc7 29.Rxe8+ Rxe8 30.Rd7 Re1+ 31.Kd2 Re2+ 32.Kxe2 Qxc2+ 33.Kf3 Black resigned.

In the position in the last diagram I looked at the more stubborn 25...Qc7; for example, 26.Rde5 Bf7 27.Re7 Qc6 (intending 27...Nc5 or even 27...b3) 28.Rd7 h6, and White's advantage is insignificant.

Discussing the game with Ernesto, he immediately suggested the right path, based on the same strategy of exchanging off the major pieces: 26.Rd1! Nb6 27.Rd8 Rxd8 28.Qxd8 Qxd8 29.Rxd8 Kf7 30.Rd4 a5 31.Rd6 Nc4 32.Rd5 with a big advantage.

As a coach I was glad that my student had confidently used ideas in practice that we had previously discussed (see Appendix Two). But you, of course, are right to wonder: why didn't I myself, knowing these ideas, find the strongest continuation?

Well, firstly, **knowledge in no way guarantees that you'll find the right moves, it only increases your chances of success. One of the main purposes of the training I do with my students is precisely to develop the ability to use the knowledge they have acquired in different concrete situations.**

And secondly, in my analysis I had a subconscious desire to prove that after not playing the best way on the 16th move, Inarkiev had lost his advantage, or at least most of it. So I was mainly looking for a defense for his opponent, paying less attention to resources for White. This often happens: **too much emotional investment in analysis leads to a loss of objectivity and a distorted perception of the position.**

And now it's time to go back to the game.

16...Ra8-c8

Black could go for 16...Ne7 17.Bxd7 Rxd7 18.Nd4 Nf5 19.Nxf5 Qxf5, but after 20.Rhe1 White is clearly better. The secret of this line is that Black must hang on to his 'bad' bishop. It holds the position together and can provide effective counterplay later on, when White has exchanged his bishop for a knight.

Here I recommend that you turn to appendix three.

17.Rh1-e1 Bd7-e8 18.Bb5xc6!

This is the right moment to exchange – before Black has time for Bg6 and Ne4.

18...Rc8xc6 19.Nf3-d4 Rc6-d6



[FEN "3rb1k1/p5pp/1p1rpq2/2np4/3N1P2/2N1Q1P1/PPP4P/2KRR3 w - - 0 20"]

White's opening strategy has been completely justified – there's a big positional advantage on his side. Gleizerov's fair comments after Black's thirteenth and fourteenth moves slightly weaken the aesthetic impression of Wedberg's play, alas – so I also wanted to doubt them. As objective correctness and only solutions are significant criteria for beauty in chess, along with those like efficiency, non-obviousness, originality... But still, I

think that any grandmaster would be proud to find such a non-trivial plan at the board: a pure loss of a tempo in the opening, which in testing turns out to be appropriate and very strong.

20.g3-g4!

With the black central pawns firmly blocked, the next step is to attack them with f4-f5. When the e6 pawn is exchanged, the d5 pawn becomes vulnerable. At this point 20...Bg6 is unplayable due to 21.Ncb5 R6d7 22.Nxe6. In the post-mortem 20...Ne4 was tried, but the position after 21.Nxe4 de 22.c3 e5 23.fe Qxe5 24.Rd2 is nice for White.

Gleizerov mentions a different, no less dangerous continuation for his opponent.

[An immediate 20.Qe5! also deserved attention, and the tempting 20...Ne4? doesn't work due to 21.Qxf6 gf 22.Nxe6 (or 22.Nxe4 de 23.Nxe6!) 22...Rxe6 23.Rxe4. In any case, White is on the right path. All his pieces are positioned ideally for an assault, it's enough to bring in the pawns, and Black's position should collapse. I'll point out that with kingside castling by White the resource with g4 and f5 becomes inaccessible! Precisely for that reason, in my current opinion, the setup with Qf6 and Nc5 is perfectly good against the plan with kingside castling, but is insufficient against queenside castling – assuming the white bishop hasn't come out to d3 at an early stage. In that case Black is also fine after queenside castling by his opponent, as the bishop on d3, cutting off the all-important d-file and not putting pressure on d5 and e6, is positioned very poorly in this structure.]

20...a7-a6 21.Qe3-e5 Be8-f7

Black cannot exchange: 21...Qxe5 22.fe R6d7 23.b4, and Black loses the vital e6 pawn. The endgame after 21...Bg6 22.Qxf6 gf 23.f5! ef 24.gf is pleasant for White – Black is passive.

22.f4-f5 e6xf5?!

Since 22...Qxe5 23.Rxe5 Nd7?! 24.Ree1 e5 25.Ne6! is very awkward for Black, he must be more cautious. One alternative, indicated by Gleizerov after the game, was 23...g6!? in order to prevent a knight alighting on f5. But after the simple 24.fe Nxe6 25.Nxe6 Bxe6 26.Rd4 Black is condemned to passivity.

23.Nd4xf5

The check on e7 is an important weapon now. Black cannot exchange queens without losing d5.

23...Qf6-g5+ 24.Kc1-b1 Rd6-e6 25.Qe5-d4 Re6xe1 26.Rd1xe1 Bf7-e6



[FEN "3r2k1/6pp/pp2b3/2np1Nq1/3Q2P1/2N5/PPP4P/1K2R3 w - - 0 27"]

1.?

27.b2-b4!

The black position is under great strain, with weak pawns everywhere.

27...Nc5-e4 28.Nc3xe4 d5xe4

White wins a pawn. The process of making good on his advantage wasn't subjected to critical analysis by Wedberg, but meanwhile, in my view, not everything is clear here – as he had to make a non-obvious choice a few times.

29.Qd4xe4

This capture looks sounder and safer by comparison with 29.Qxb6! Bxf5 30. gf Re8.



[FEN "4r1k1/6pp/pQ6/5Pq1/1P2p3/8/P1P4P/1K2R3 w - - 0 31"]

The f5-pawn is under attack and the passed "e"-pawn is threatening to advance. But a closer look at the position shows that after 31.Qxa6 Black has no satisfactory defense:

31...e3 32.Qc4+ Kf8 (on 32...Kh8 the response 33.Qf7+- is very strong) 33.b5 +-, and good advice is hard for Black to come by;

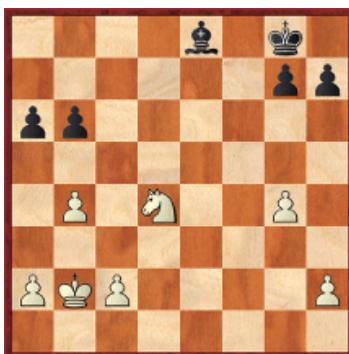
31...Qxf5 32.Qc4+ (32.Qc6!?) 32...Kh8 33.Qd4+- – the "e"-pawn has been stopped, while the white pawns are gradually advancing.

Here and later Wedberg chooses the "comfortable" path, not associated with risk and not requiring accurate calculations. In many cases this approach is completely justified. But sometimes the opposite picture can be observed: by refusing to go deeply into specific variations, the player misses the shortest paths to his goal and as a result complicates his task, sometimes even letting victory slip from his grasp altogether.

29...Rd8-e8 30.Kb1-b2!

Walking out of the discovered check on a2 and setting up a little trap: 30... Bf7? 31.Qxe8+! Bxe8 32.Rxe8+ Kf7 33.Nd6+ Kg6 (33...Kf6 34.Ne4+) 34.Re6 +, winning the queen back with interest.

30...Qg5-f6+ 31.Qe4-d4 Qf6xd4+ 32.Nf5xd4 Be6-d7 33.Re1xe8+ Bd7xe8



[FEN "4b1k1/6pp/pp6/8/1P1N2P1/8/PKP4P/8 w - - 0 34"]

The outcome of the battle in the endgame isn't completely obvious, as Black has counterplay associated with an attack by his king and bishop on the kingside pawns.

34.Kb2-c3!

Wedberg's exclamation mark. I'm not sure that the king move deserves it.

34.c4!? Kf7 35.Kc3 looked more natural. Let's figure out (without striving for absolutely precise evaluations) how the battle might have continued.

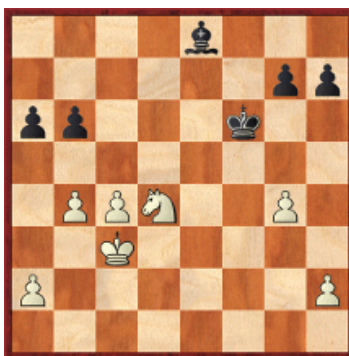
A) 35...Bd7



[FEN "8/3b1kpp/pp6/8/1PPN2P1/2K5/P6P/8 w - - 0 36"]

The consequences of 36.g5 Kg6 37.c5 bc 38.bc Kxg5 39.c6 Bc8 or 36.c5 bc 37.bc Bxg4 38.Kb4 Kf6 39.Ka5 Ke5 40.Nc6+ Kd5 41.Kb6 h5 aren't completely obvious. I would recommend 36.Nf5!? Kf6 37.Kd4 or 36...h5 37.Ne3 hg 38.Kd4.

B) 35...Kf6



[FEN "4b3/6pp/pp3k2/8/1PPN2P1/2K5/P6P/8 w - - 0 36"]

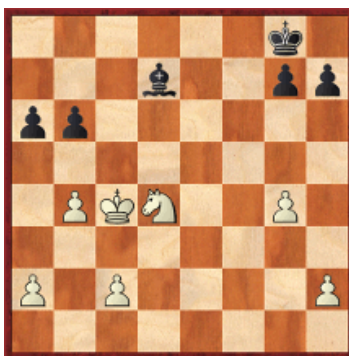
The computer rates 36.Nf3!? Bd7 37.g5+ highly. After 37...Kf5 38.Kd4 a position arises that could have come about in the game too (see notes to Black's thirty-sixth move) – we'll come back to it again. Another path: 36.Nf5! g6 37.Ne3 Ke5 38.Nd5 b5 39.Nc7 Bf7 40.cb ab 41.a3+-. or 36...h5 37.Nd6 Bd7 38.gh Ke5 39.Nf7+ Kf6 40.Nh8! Bg4 41.Ng6 Bxh5 42.Nf4+-.

Players rarely go into these kinds of computer variations at the board. It's very difficult, for example, to find and evaluate the worth of the at first glance strange knight thrust to f5. Wedberg's efforts to centralize his king as quickly as possible were completely justified from a practical point of view.

But it would have been more accurate to start his planned setup with 34.Nf3! The reality is that with 34...Bd7 35.Ne5 the f7 square is taken from the black king. And 34...Kf7 35.Kc3 Kf6 36.Kd4 led to a position that was more comfortable for White than the one that arose in the game.

34...Be8-d7 35.g4-g5

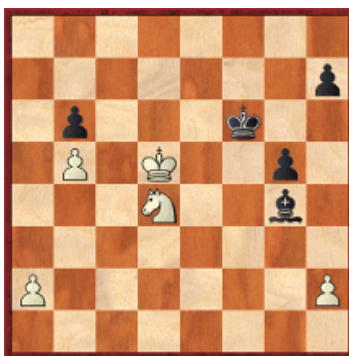
A pawn sacrifice for the sake of the fastest activation of his king deserved serious attention: 35.Kc4!



[FEN "6k1/3b2pp/pp6/8/1PKN2P1/8/P1P4P/8 b - - 0 35"]

A) 35...Bxg4 36.Kd5 b5 (36...Bd7 37.Kd6 Ba4 38.c4+-) 37.Kc6 g5 38.Kb7 h5 39.Kxa6 Bd7 40.Nxb5 Bxb5+ (40...g4 41.Nd4 h4 42.b5+-) 41.Kxb5 g4 42.Ka6 h4 43.b5 with White two pawns up in the queen endgame that arises.

B) 35...Kf7 36.Kd5 Kf6 37.c4 Bxg4 38.b5! (38.Kc6 Ke5 is weaker) 38...ab 39.cb g5



[FEN "8/7p/1p3k2/1P1K2p1/3N2b1/8/P6P/8 w - - 0 40"]

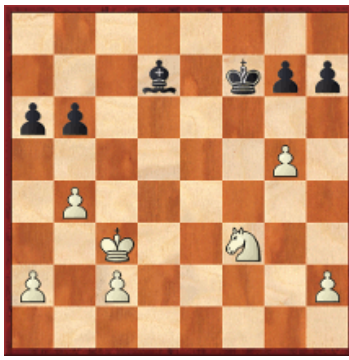
1.?

Initially I analyzed 40.Kc6 Ke5 41.Nb3 Bf3+ 42.Kxb6 g4 43.Ka7 h5 44.b6 h4 45.Nd2! Kd4 46.a4 Kc3 47.Nf1 Kb4 48.b7 Bxb7 49.Kxb7 Kxa4 50.Kc6 g3 51.Nxg3+- . Then I saw that with 46...Ke3! 47.Nxf3 gf 48.b7 f2 49.b8Q f1Q a queen endgame arises in which a win for White is by no means guaranteed. An attempt to improve the variation with 46.Nf1 (instead of 46.a4) 46...Kd3 47.a4 Ke2 48.Ng3+! hg 49.hg leads after 49...Kf2 50.a5 Kxg3 51.a6 Kf2 52.b7 g3 53.b8Q g2 to a position in which White's huge material advantage (queen against bishop) isn't enough for a win!

In the end a precise path to the goal was found: 40.a4! h5 (40...Ke7 41.Kc6 Bd1 42.a5 ba 43.b6+-) 41.Kd6! (41.Kc6? Ke5) 41...h4 42.a5! ba 43.Kc7! Bh3 44.b6 Bg2 45.Nc6+- . If instead of 41...h4 Black plays 41...Bh3, then 42.a5? ba 43.Kc7 Bf1 44.b6 Ba6 no longer works, but the simple 42.Kc7 is strong.

Obviously we are dealing with computer recommendations again that are almost impossible to follow in a practical game. After White missed the strongest continuation on his 29th move and allowed an inaccuracy on his 34th, his task seemed to have become considerably more complicated.

35...Kg8-f7 36.Nd4-f3



[FEN "8/3b1kpp/pp6/6P1/1P6/2K2N2/P1P4P/8 b - - 0 36"]

1...?

36...Bd7-f5?!

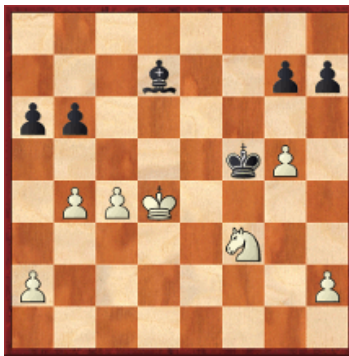
Black prevents the move Kd4, but now his king can't attack the g5 pawn. [I agree that this was the decisive mistake.]

36...Ke6! 37.Kd4 Kf5 is much more stubborn.

[38.h4!? is interesting, with the idea 38...Kf4 39.Ne5 Bf5 40.c4 Kg3 41.Ke3! Kxh4 42.Kf4, and White wins. But 38...b5! is essential. I don't know how to evaluate this, I've never seriously analyzed the endgame that arises.]

Moves like 38...b5!, weakening the dark squares, are anti-positional in a maneuvering game. But in a very complicated situation, when both players are trying to create and advance passed pawns as quickly as possible, slowing down the white pawns on the queenside is highly appropriate.

I analyzed 38.c4!



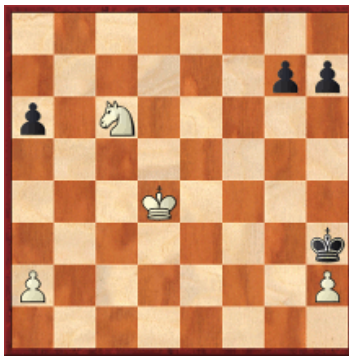
[FEN "8/3b2pp/pp6/5kP1/1PPK4/5N2/P6P/8 b - - 0 38"]

We've already had this position – in one of the branches from the notes to White's thirty-fourth move.

For a long time the consequences of 38...Be6 39.a4 Kf4 or 39...Kg4, and 38...Be8 weren't clear to me. I'll show you my analysis of the second continuation.

In the case of 39.c5 bc+ 40.bc Ke6 it isn't clear how White can make progress. He should probably sacrifice a pawn: 39.Ne5!

With a pawn on c4 the cautious 39...Ke6 no longer promises him real chances of saving himself: 40.h4 Kd6 41.Ng4 Bd7 42.Ne3 and 43.Nd5. I placed my hopes in the variation 39...Kxg5 40.c5 bc+ 41.bc Kh4 (41...Kf5 42.c6 Ke6 43.c7 Bd7 44.Nc4! g5 45.Nb6+-) 42.c6 Bxc6 43.Nxc6 Kh3.



[FEN "8/6pp/p1N5/8/3K4/7k/P6P/8 w - - 0 44"]

This kind of position could have been drawn, but subsequent computer testing allowed me to find a path to White's goal anyway:

44.Nb8! a5 45.a4! (or 44.Nb4 a5 45.a4!!) 45...Kxh2 46.Nc6 g5 47.Nxa5 g4 48.Nc4 g3 49.Ne3 (the knight made it right on time) 49...h5 50.a5 h4 51.a6 h3 52.Nf1+! "Chess is a tragedy of a single tempo!"

We can draw the conclusion that White hasn't let go of the win, although he has complicated his task considerably.

37.Nf3-e5+! Kd7-e6 38.Ne5-c4

Now it's clear that White will win. After 38...b5 39.Ne3 (threat Kd4) 39...Ke5 40.Nxf5 Kxf5 41.h4 Kg4 42.Kd4 Kxh4 43.c4 bc 44.a4 it's easy.

It still isn't worth giving up a pawn. Since the pawn endgame after 39...Ke5 is lost, the bishop has to retreat: 39...Bg6 40.Kd4 Bh5 or 40...Kd6. Then again, his chances of survival are objectively low here too.

38...Bf5-h3 39.Nc4xb6 Ke6-f5 40.Kc3-d4 Kf5xg5 41.a2-a4 Kg5-f5 42.Nb6-d5 g7-g5 43.c2-c4 h7-h5 44.a4-a5 Kf5-e6 45.b4-b5 Ke6-d7 46.Nd5-f6+

Here Gleizerov resigned. He did it in the most gracious possible way, complimenting me on an excellent game. I was overwhelmed, but also felt a bit conscience-stricken thinking of all the times I didn't resign in such exemplary manner.

Appendix One

"Good" and "Bad" Bishops

One of the leitmotifs of Gleizerov's article "Opening Dialectics" happens to be the problem of the "bad" French bishop for Black. He writes:

[Black doesn't rush, but brings his most important piece into play – his light-squared bishop. Yes, yes, I didn't misspeak! I'm deeply convinced that this bishop is the best, most important piece in the French Defense, exactly like the g7 bishop in the King's Indian. And don't be upset that it starts out behind a solid fence of its own pawns, as even behind it the "French" bishop is fulfilling some very important defensive functions. And when it breaks out to freedom...]

I admit that as an active player I held to the opposite point of view and tried to exchange off my "bad" bishop at the first convenient opportunity. Thanks to that, for example, after 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 I sometimes chose such dubious systems as 3...c5 4.c3 Qb6 5.Nf3 Bd7 with a subsequent 6...Bb5, or even 3...b6, intending 4...Ba6. I understood that pursuing a narrow strategic goal at the price of losing time and giving up space was objectively unfavorable to me and led to difficult positions, but I felt more confident in them than in "normal" ones, and I often outplayed my opponents.

When I became a coach I never suggested that my students should follow the same strategy. **There is nothing more harmful than – by exploiting your superior knowledge and rating – imposing your own mistakes on others,**

and not only your mistakes, but your general approach to the game, your tastes, your opening repertoire... Each of us has our own personality, our preferences, our set of strengths and weaknesses, and what is perfect for one player may be completely inappropriate for another.

Of course I understood that the presence of a "bad" bishop was just one of the factors influencing the evaluation of the position: other factors sometimes turn out to be far more significant. In my book [*School of Future Champions 4: Secrets of Positional Play*](#), in the chapter "Whose Strategy will triumph?," I investigate the situation that arose in the game **Kimelfeld – Dvoretsky** (Moscow, 1972) after the following moves:

1.e4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.e5 Nfd7 5.d4 c5 6.dc Nc6 7.Bf4 Bxc5 8.Bd3 f6 9.ef Qxf6 (another reason to recall Gleizerov's article – there too in a well-known position, instead of the usual capture with the knight, Black took on f6 with his queen) **10.Bg3 0-0 11.0-0 Nd4 12.Nxd4 Bxd4 13.Qe2 Nc5 14.Rae1 Nxd3 15.cd Bd7 16.Be5 Bxe5 17.Qxe5 Qxe5 18.Rxe5**



[FEN "r4rk1/pp1b2pp/4p3/pR3/8/2NP4/PP3PPP/5RK1 b - - 0 18"]

I'll reproduce my own notes from my book.

At first glance White has succeeded by seizing the e5 square and being left with a knight against the "bad" French bishop. Indeed, imagine if he plays f2-f4 and transfers his knight to d4 – my position immediately becomes strategically hopeless. But my opponent had no time for that, and my bishop in fact isn't really as bad as it seems at the moment. Black has dynamic resources at his disposal, associated with the move d5-d4 and play on the open c-file. To be honest I don't even see a sure path to equality for White.

18...Rac8 19.f4

The following variation is typical (although by no means forced): 19.d4 Rc4 (an immediate 19...b5! is more precise) 20.Rd1 b5 21.Rd2 b4 22.Ne2 Rfc8 23.Kf1 Rc2 24.Ke1 Kf7 (intending 25...Bb5) 25.Kd1? (25.Nf4 is better) 25...Ba4! 26.b3?! (26.Rxc2 Bxc2+ 27.Ke1 is necessary, although after 27...Bf5 the initiative is with Black) 26...Rxa2! There's the bad bishop for you!

Almost thirty years later the position in the diagram arose in a blitz game that I played against the Cuban grandmaster Becerra-Rivero (Miami, 2000). My opponent chose the cautious 19.Re2, but he couldn't extinguish Black's initiative either: 19...b5 20.Rfe1 b4 21.Nd1 Rc1 22.f3 (White is hoping to transfer his knight via f2 or e3 to g4 and then to e5) 22...Rfc8 23.Ne3?! Bb5 24.Ng4 Bxd3 25.Rxe6 Bf5 26.Re8+ Rxe8 27.Rxc1 Bxg4 28.fg Re2 29.Rc7 a5 30.Ra7 d4 31.h4 (31.Rxa5 Rxb2 32.Rd5 Rxa2 33.Rxd4 b3) 31...Rxb2 32.Rxa5 d3 33.Rd5 d2 34.Kf1 Rxa2 White resigned.

19...d4! 20.Ne2 Rc2 21.f5?!

The simple 21.Nxd4 Rxb2 22.Nxe6 is preferable, and I have to switch to a sharp four-rook ending, as 22...Bc6 23.Rf2 or 22...Rc8 23.Nc5 with a subsequent Rf2 are useless.

21...ef 22.Nxd4 Rxb2

If now 23.Re7, then 23...Rf7 24.Nxf5 Bxf5 (24...Kf8!? 25.Rxf7+ Kxf7 also deserves attention) 25.Re8+ Rf8 26.Rxf8+ Kxf8 27.Rxf5+ Ke7 with a better rook endgame for Black.

23.Rc1 g6!, and there's noticeable advantage on my side.

Subsequently (no longer restricting myself to the boundaries of the French Defense) I investigated situations with a violation of the general principle of "good" and "bad" bishops – cases when "against the rules" it makes sense to put pawns on squares the color of your own bishop or to exchange off your opponent's "bad" bishop. A long article on this subject was published on ChessCafe.com in (it's easy to find my [July 2002](#) and [October 2002](#) columns in the archive).

In my files I've preserved an excellent article by Boris Gulko that, alas, is inaccessible to almost everyone, "The Mystery of Bad Bishops," which was published in 1993 in the second issue of the short-lived *American Chess Journal*. After examining a number of interesting games – in some of them the bishop really was "bad," and in others, on the contrary, it played an important role in attacking actions – the grandmaster came to an ironic conclusion:

So what we can conclude from these games? There appears to be only one common thread: Perhaps the solution to the mystery of bad bishops is that bishops keep the qualities of their owners, so stronger players have better bishops than weaker players. But even this cannot always be true.

In 1989 I gave a lecture at the Harvard Chess Club, where I discussed the game I won against Bent Larsen at Hastings 1988-89 (see Informant 47, game 609). In that game my bad bishop played an important role in my attack. One listener told me afterwards, "Before your lecture I thought I understood one element of chess strategy – good and bad bishops. Now I realize that I don't understand anything." I was proud to have raised at least one player's understanding of chess strategy to a higher level.

This would be exactly the right time to talk about the complete absence of any absolute rules in chess, the dialectic of rules and the exceptions to them (incidentally, you can find a deep discussion on this topic in Isaak Lipnitsky's wonderful book [Questions of Modern Chess Theory](#)). But my article can't stretch that far.

Appendix Two

Clearing the Playing Space

Simplifying the position with the aim of invading the enemy camp with your rook is a standard method in a battle of rook against two pieces, and also in positions where you're the exchange up.

So that these statements aren't just words, but turn into useful tools that a player can wield in tournament clashes, we have to track their effects in successfully-chosen practical examples. For many years a substantial part of my day-to-day work on refining chess problems and developing effective methods of decision-making has been the search for meaningful examples on the topics I'm studying.

In my book [School of Chess Excellence 4: Opening Developments](#), in the chapter "Advanced technique," the game **Bareev – Shirov** (Linares, 1994) is investigated in detail. In the diagram is the position that arose after Black's twenty-third move.



[FEN "5rk1/p4pp1/4p2p/3n3Q/1p6/3q4/PP3PPP/R4RK1 w - - 0 24"]

1.?

Grandmaster Evgeny Bareev gives these comments on the situation that was created:

Nominally White's advantage amounts to only half a pawn, and one may gain the impression that Black's impregnable knight at d5 guarantees him a quiet life. But the centralisation of the queen at e5 (one of Capablanca's favourite techniques) shows that this is not altogether so. In the position there is an open file, and in view of the fact that an exchange of rooks is unfavourable for Black, White can develop his initiative.

On the move played in the game, **24.Qe5!** (24.Qd1 Qc4! is less precise), Alexei Shirov reacted incoherently: **24...Rc8 25.Rfc1 Rd8**. If he was avoiding a battle for the c-file, then why put his rook on c8? But since he'd put it there it was worth studying 25...Rc4 and 25...Rc2. Specifically in connection with the mentioned thrusts we can try and understand why White went to c1 with his king's rook and not his queen's rook, and whether the choice he made was right. All these are rather deep and interesting questions – there's a reason why the chapter is called "Advanced technique"! Their discussion occupies a great deal of space, and so I won't reproduce my analysis here – look at the book if you want to see it. Instead I'll show you an exercise from the same chapter on the same topic.

Ivkov – Korchnoi
Baden-Baden, 1981



[FEN "4r1k1/1pp2ppp/4b3/p1B5/5Pn1/P7/1P1K2PP/R3R3 w - - 0 22"]

1.?

In the game there followed 22.Kc3? g6 23.Bg1 Nf6 24.Rad1 Ra8! (Black correctly avoids exchanging) 25.Re5 c6 26.Rd4 Nd5+ 27.Kd2 a4, and a drawing outcome has become almost inevitable.

It made sense to prevent the knight's transfer to the central square d5 with 22. Bd4! (the variations that arise are investigated in the book). But a more precise path to victory is Victor Korchnoi's suggested positional pawn sacrifice, forcing White's desired exchange of rooks.

22.f5!! Rd8+ 23.Kc3 Bxf5 24.Rad1 Rc8 25.Be7!+- with a subsequent 26.Rd8

+ Rxd8 27.Bxd8, and Black's queenside becomes defenseless.

I'll point out too **that going for simplifications also makes sense when the queen is fighting against pieces that aren't as strong as it. The logic is this: to expand the playing space for our chief fighting unit.**

Liberzon – Murey
Beersheba, 1982



[FEN "3r1bk1/1p3p1p/p2r2p1/3b2Q1/8/
P2B4/1PP3PP/1K1R4 w - - 0 26"]

1.?

At this point the queen is of little use – all the invasion squares are controlled by black pieces. Transferring his bishop to f3 allowed White to simplify the position and thus sharply increase the possibilities for his queen.

26.Be2! Bg7 27.Bf3 Bf6 28.Qf4 Kg7 29.Bxd5 Rxd5 30.Rxd5 Rxd5 31.Qc7 Rd1+ 32.Ka2 Rd2 33.g4! Re2 34.Kb3 Re7 35.Qb6 h6 36.c3+/-, and White won.

Appendix Three

More on the Benefit of "Bad" Bishops

The article on this topic that I mentioned above starts by listing exceptions to the general rule, which in turn can also be considered rules, but more limited, specific ones.

More often than not a "bad bishop" is a serious drawback for a position. But there are also exceptions:

Having the initiative often outweighs the presence of a bad bishop, and that bishop sometimes takes an active part in attacking actions.

In defense, as grandmaster Mihai Suba pointed out, sometimes "a bad bishop defends good pawns" (it would be more accurate to say "important" or "necessary") and so it is a valuable piece that the stronger side has to exchange off in order to penetrate the opponent's defense.

Situations in which the player with the bad bishop has the initiative are examined in Appendix One and in Gleizerov's article. But in Wedberg's notes to Black's sixteenth move this happens to be the second case (he points out that an exchange of light-squared bishops weakens Black's central pawns).

Then again, this episode doesn't illustrate the topic all that convincingly: Black's position remains serious both with the exchange of bishops and if he turns it down, so it's difficult to decide which is the lesser evil. The following example is much more effective.

Ivanchuk – Anand
Linares, 1992, first match game



[FEN "1r2k2r/4bp2/p2pbp2/1p2p3/4P1P1/P3B3/1PPR3P/1K3BR1 b k - 0 20"]

1...?

Here's how Viswanathan Anand comments on the brilliant positional move **20...Bc4!!** that he made:

Just in time to stop White setting up some sort of fortress on the kingside by h3 and Rg3. Black's bad e7-bishop will protect his pawns while he forces pawn exchanges eventually leading to connected central passed pawns.

21.b3 Bxf1 22.Rxf1 Rh3! (22...Kd7?! is inaccurate because of 23.g5! Ke6 24. gf Bxf6 25.Rxd6+! Kxd6 26.Rxf6+ Ke7 27.Bg5 and 28.h4)

And again I'll give Anand a word:

Black appears to have committed a whole list of positional sins: allowing doubled f-pawns, giving White an outside passed h-pawn and exchanging his 'good' bishop with ...Bc4; yet he is better.

Paradoxical? Yes, but this does not mean that the old positional rules have been suspended for the course of this game. Black's play depends on two things.

First of all, his long-term aim is to exchange his d-pawn for White's e-pawn by ...d5 and to exchange his f6-pawn for White's g-pawn (either by ...f5 or by forcing White to play g5). Then he will be left with two connected central passed pawns, supported by his king, whereas White will have pawns on c2 and h2 that aren't going anywhere.

Secondly, he can only put his plan into action because he has the initiative, and especially as the rook on h3 disrupts White's whole position and leaves both g- and h-pawns vulnerable to attack. Had Black wasted even one move, White would have fortified his kingside and the old positional values would have reasserted themselves.

I'll give a few more moves.

23.Re2 Kd7 (threatening 24...Rbh8) **24.g5 Ke6 25.gf Bxf6 26.Bd2 Be7! 27. Be1 f6 28.Bg3 d5!** (28...Rd8 is less precise because of 29.c4!) **29.ed+ Kxd5**



[FEN "1r6/4b3/p4p2/1p1kp3/8/PP4Br/2P1R2P/1K3R2 w - - 0 30"]

Black has implemented his planned pawn exchanges. All that's left is to put his king on e6, and his position will be strategically winning.

Short notes to one fragment from a battle don't of course give you the full impression of this game, which was one of the Indian grandmaster's most vivid strategic masterpieces. I recommend that you familiarize yourself with it either through my old article or through Anand's book *My Best Games*.

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