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2 Rook and Pawn Endings (Pawns on One Side of the Board)

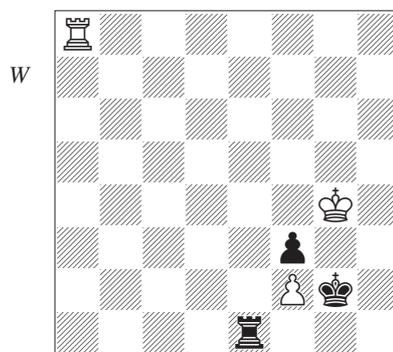
Now we have looked at the most important fundamental rook endings, we can broaden our study to include examples where both players have pawns. In this chapter we will be dealing with situations where pawns are on one side of the board only, whereas the next chapter deals with pawns on both sides of the board.

This chapter, more than any, would be the one that most supports Tartakower's aphorism that "all rook endings are drawn". It's true to say that trying to exploit a one-pawn advantage when all the pawns are on one side of the board is most difficult in rook endings. That said, however, there's never any harm in trying! What I'm hoping to give in this chapter is enough attacking and defensive weapons for the survivor to be confident when reaching these positions.

Rook and Pawn vs Rook and Pawn

Despite a number of dead drawn positions, there are still occasions that can produce decisive results, the obvious

one being when both pawns are passed, and one is much nearer to promotion than the other (for more on this see the next chapter). There are also some important positions involving blocked pawns, which we shall look at here. These are of particular interest as they often arise from a 2 vs 1 situation, where the attacking side sacrifices a pawn.



Neimanis – Agzamov
USSR 1970

Black can win the f-pawn, but this is not enough to win the game.

1 ♖a3! ♜e4+ 2 ♕f5 ♜e2

2...♖b4 makes no progress after 3 ♖a2.

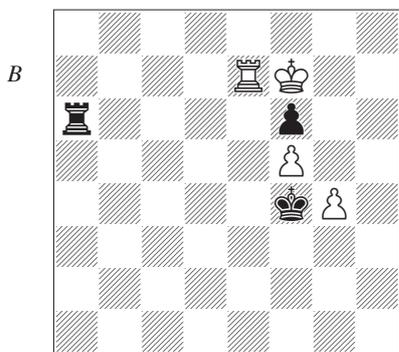
3 ♖g4 ♖xf2 4 ♖b3!

Simply keeping up the pressure on the f3-pawn.

4...♖f1 5 ♖a3 ♖b1

The point to White's defence is seen after 5...f2 6 ♖g3+! ♖h2 7 ♖h3+, when Black cannot escape perpetual check.

6 ♖xf3 1/2-1/2



Csom – Gaprindashvili

Olot 1973

1...♖xg4?

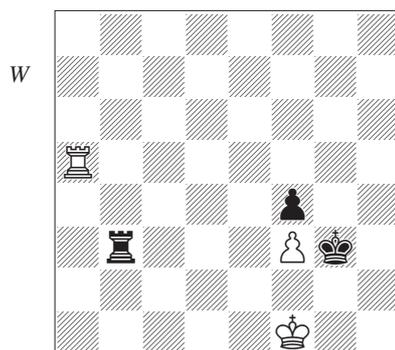
This transposes into a lost 1 vs 1 position. Black could have drawn with 1...♖g5!; for example, 2 ♖g7 ♖a4! 3 ♖e6 ♖xg4 4 ♖xf6 ♖f4.

2 ♖g6 ♖f4 3 ♖e6 ♖a1 4 ♖b6!

Accurately played. White throws away the win after either 4 ♖xf6? ♖a5 or 4 ♖xf6 ♖g1+ 5 ♖f7 ♖a1 6 ♖g7 ♖g5 7 ♖f7 ♖a5 8 ♖f6 ♖a6 9 ♖f8 ♖b6 (compare with the last example).

4...♖a5 5 ♖xf6 ♖g4 6 ♖f8 ♖b5 7 ♖6 1-0

When compared to the last example, being an extra file back makes all the difference. White wins after 7...♖g5+ 8 ♖f7 ♖f5 9 ♖a8.



Barle – Shipov

Ljubljana 1992

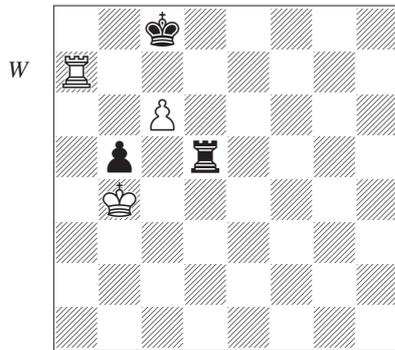
This is another type of position that produces a common error on the defensive side. White to play can draw with 1 ♖a8! (or 1 ♖f5!) 1...♖xf3 (after 1...♖xf3+ 2 ♖g1 ♖b3 3 ♖g8+ ♖f3 4 ♖f8 the white king is on the short side, while 1...♖b1+ 2 ♖e2 ♖g2 allows 3 ♖g8+, cutting off the black king) 2 ♖g1! (using the short-side defence) 2...♖e2 3 ♖a2+ ♖e3 4 ♖g2 ♖c3 5 ♖b2. Instead the game continued:

1 ♖a2? ♖b1+ 2 ♖e2 ♖g2! 3 ♖a3

Now after 3 ♖a8 ♖b2+ 4 ♖e1 ♖xf3 the white king has been forced to the long side and Black is winning; for example, 5 ♖f8 ♖b1+ 6 ♖d2 ♖f1 7 ♖f7 ♖g2 8 ♖f8 ♖f3 9 ♖g8+ ♖f2.

3...♖b8 4 ♖c3 ♖e8+ 5 ♖d1 ♖f2 0-1

It's all over. White's king is cut off and there's no defence to 6...♖e3.



Vydeslaver – Gershon
Rishon le Zion 1995

On certain occasions having a pawn can actually hinder the defending side. Without the b5-pawn this would be a simple draw. With the pawn, White wins easily by using it to shelter his king from checks. In fact, after **1 ♔a5!** Black resigned immediately (**1-0**), as there is no defence to **2 ♖b6**.

Rook and 2 Pawns vs Rook and Pawn

A) The attacking side has no passed pawn

First of all it has to be said that in general these endgames have a drawish tendency. Normally the further up the board the two pawns are, the greater the practical and theoretical winning chances. We shall take a look at the most common 2 vs 1 structures, bearing in mind which ones can be obtained from both 3 vs 2 structures and 4 vs 3 structures.

h- & g-pawns vs g-pawn

This 2 vs 1 endgame offers the attacking side only very small practical winning chances. Indeed in my database the attacking side could only win 17% of the games with g5- and h5- pawns vs a g7-pawn (or any mirror image for White and Black). In most of these cases it was simply because the defender's king had been cut off from the action.

When the king isn't cut off, the defender's task is relatively easy as a pawn exchange will result in the attacking side being left with either a g-pawn or an h-pawn. As we have seen already, the defending side has a few ways to deal with this eventuality. Another important factor is that the attacking side has no space to the right of the pawns. Consequently, there is no shelter from rook checks from the side.

As I mentioned before, practical winning chances and chances for tricks increase, the further up the board the two pawns are, so we shall be concentrating on these examples. When the pawns are further back, real winning chances only exist if there are other favourable factors, e.g., if the defending king is cut off.

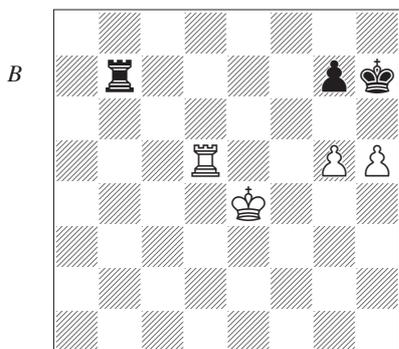
The diagram overleaf is a typical position for this type of endgame. Black can draw quite comfortably.

1... ♜b1 2 ♔f5 ♜f1+ 3 ♔e6 ♜h1

At this point I actually agreed a draw, but in fact White has one more trick that should at least be tried.

4 ♜d8!? ♜e1+!

Black must avoid the obvious move **4... ♜xh5?**, which loses after **5 ♔f5!**



Emms – Jolles
Ostend 1992

g6+ 6 ♖f6 ♜h1 7 ♜d7+ ♔g8 8 ♖xg6 ♖f8 9 ♜f7+ ♔g8 10 ♜a7 ♖f8 11 ♜a8+ ♖e7 12 ♔g7 ♜g1 13 g6 ♜g2 14 ♜a1 ♜e2 15 ♜f1 and White achieves a Lucena Position.

5 ♖f5 ♜f1+ 6 ♖e6 ♜e1+ 7 ♔d7 ♜d1+

The checks just keep coming. The white king is lacking shelter.

8 ♔c7 ♜h1

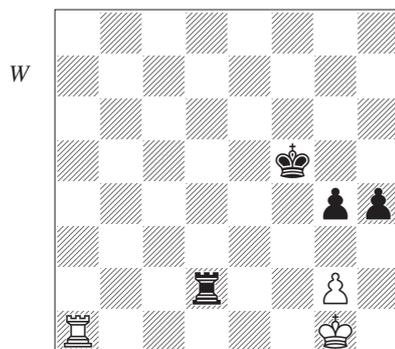
Black could keep checking, but the text-move leads immediately to a drawn position.

9 g6+ ♔h6 10 ♜h8+ ♔g5 and Black draws.

In the next diagram, White simply defends on the back rank, which is also sufficient for a draw.

1 ♜f1+ ♔e4 2 ♜e1+ ♔f4 3 ♜a1 ♖e3 4 ♜b1

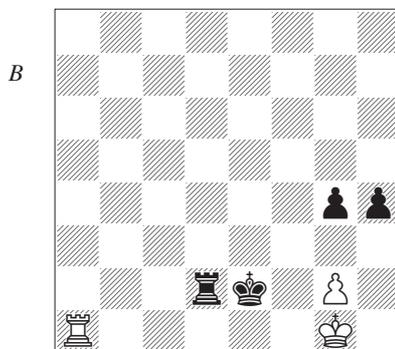
Sticking to the back-rank strategy. 4 ♜a8?! makes the defence more difficult, although White still draws after 4...♜d1+ 5 ♔h2 g3+ 6 ♔h3 ♜h1+ 7



McShane – Emms
Bundesliga 1996/7

♔g4 ♖f2 8 ♜a2+ ♔g1 9 ♜b2 ♖h2 10 ♖xh4 ♜f1 11 ♔g4 ♜f2 12 ♜b3 ♜xg2 13 ♖h4 ♜g1 14 ♜a3.

4...♖e2 5 ♜a1 (D)



After this Black has the opportunity to exchange rooks, but the resulting king and pawn endgame is drawn. Even so, there is no other way to try to make progress.

5...♜d1+ 6 ♜xd1 ♖xd1 7 ♖f1 ♔d2 8 ♖f2