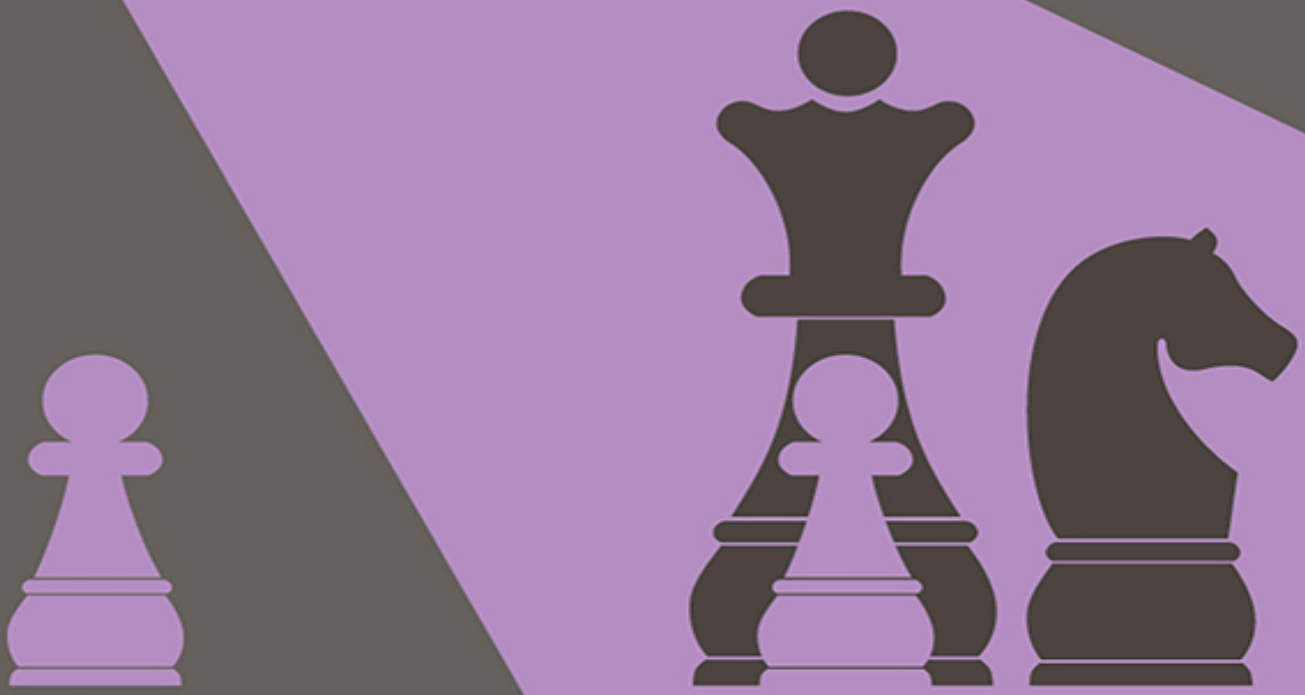
BATSFORD CHESS

HOW TO SWINDLE IN CHESS

Andrew Soltis



BATSFORD CHESS

HOW TO SWINDLE IN CHESS

Andrew Soltis

How to Swindle in Chess

Andrew Soltis

Contents

Chapter One	Outrageous Fortune
Chapter Two	Swindle-Think
Chapter Three	Traps
Chapter Four	Make Yourself Lucky
Chapter Five	The Swindlee
Chapter Six	False Narrative/Bluffing
Chapter Seven	Panic Worthy
Chapter Eight	The Swindling Process
Chapter Nine	Swindler Versus Swindlee
Chapter Ten	Royal Swindles
Chapter Eleven	The Very Lucky
Quiz Answers	

Chapter One:
Outrageous Fortune

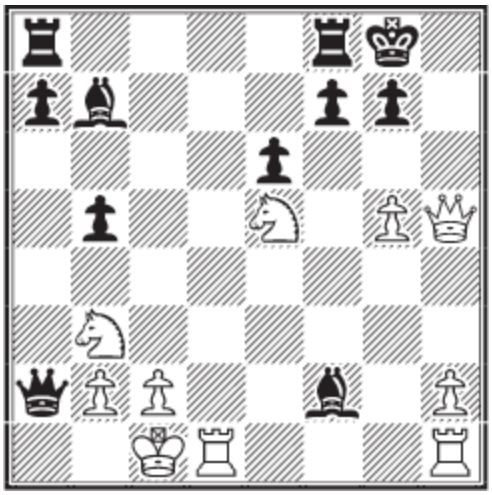
Victories show how well you play. Defeats show how unlucky you are.

This is how we often feel when we lose after achieving a promising position: It was an accident. You were on your way to a well-deserved victory. But suddenly something – *something unfair* – spoiled it.

But if luck is random and accidental, why are some players luckier than others?

Anand – Ivanchuk

London 1994



White to play

Black's threats of 23...♘xh1 and 23...♘e3+ must win material. White could have prepared to defend. Instead, he prepared to be lucky, with **23 ♖d3!**.

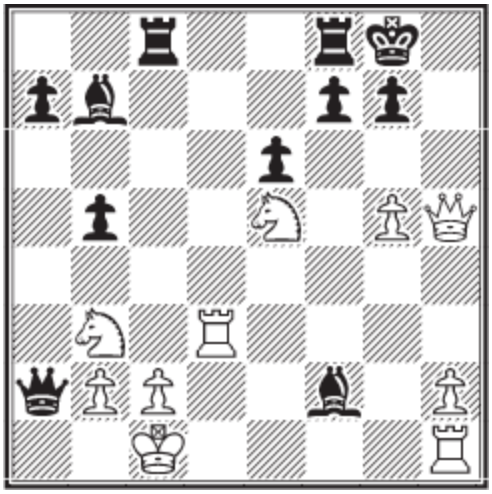
This stops ...♘e3+ but also threatens to mate with 24 ♖h3 and 25 ♕h8. Experienced players – especially experienced swindlers – try to find moves that not only defend but give them a chance to win.

This was a speed game but Black had time to look at 23...♘xh1. Of course. he saw that on the expected 24 ♖h3 there would be only one good reply, 24...♘e3+!.

That looks strong because 25 ♘d2 allows 25...♕a1 mate and 25 ♔d1 invites a series of powerful checks (25...♕b1+ 26 ♔e2 ♕xc2+ 27 ♔xe3 ♕e4+! 28 ♔d2 ♖fd8+ or 28 ♔f2 ♕f5+ 29 ♔g1 ♕b1+ etc.).

Therefore the normal course of the game was 23...♘xh1 24 ♖h3 ♘e3+ 25 ♖xe3 and the outcome would be highly uncertain.

Instead, Black shot back **23...♖ac8!!**.



White to play

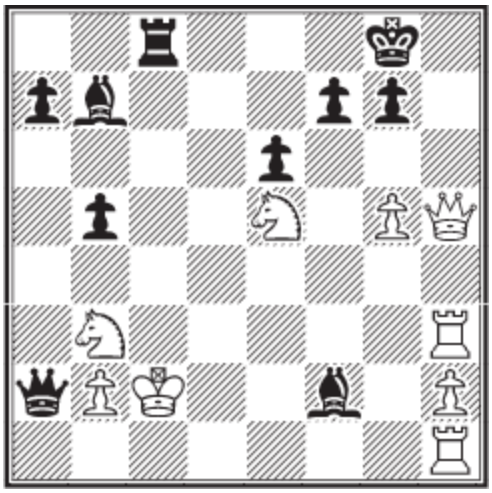
This is stronger than 23...♘xh1 for the same reason White chose 23 ♖d3: It gives him a chance to force a win. If White followed his plan, 24 ♖h3, then 24...♖xc2+! 25 ♔xc2 ♖c8+ hands Black a strong attack.

Black's move did something else, perhaps unintended. It made it much more difficult for either player to calculate accurately. The tactics have become sharper.

That increases the luck factor: White could see how 24 g6 fxg6 25 ♘xg6 threatens 26 ♘e7 mate.

But only if he had plenty of time could he foresee what might happen after 25...♖xc2+ 26 ♔xc2 ♖c8+. (A perpetual check is likely: 27 ♔d1 ♕b1+ 28 ♔e2 ♘xh1 29 ♘e7+.)

Instead, luck intruded. He played **24 ♖h3?** and the position became chaotic, **24...♖xc2+! 25 ♔xc2 ♖c8+**. As the players got closer to forfeiting on time, the luck factor was soaring.



White to play

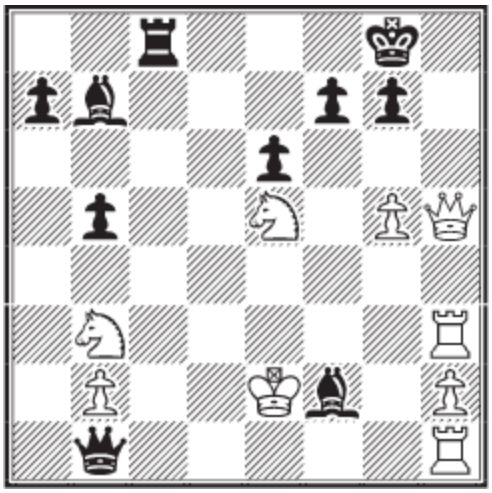
White could safeguard his king with 26 ♖c3!. But that gives up hope of ♕h8 mate. The initiative would be Black's and he would have all the winning chances after 26...♘e4+!.

White went for broke with **26 ♔d1??** and kept his ♕h8 mate plan alive.

After **26...♕b1+! 27 ♔e2** he would win in case of 27...♕c2+?? 28 ♘d2!.

Then Black would only have a few checks left, such as 28...♘f3+ 29 ♔xf3! ♕f5+. He could safely resign following 30 ♔g2.

But only when the game is over can you be sure about tactical shots like these. That is when you know which player was the lucky one. Or, rather, the luckier one.



Black to play

With **27...♕e4+!** it seemed certain that Black was the luckier. He could now force checkmate in, at most, five moves.

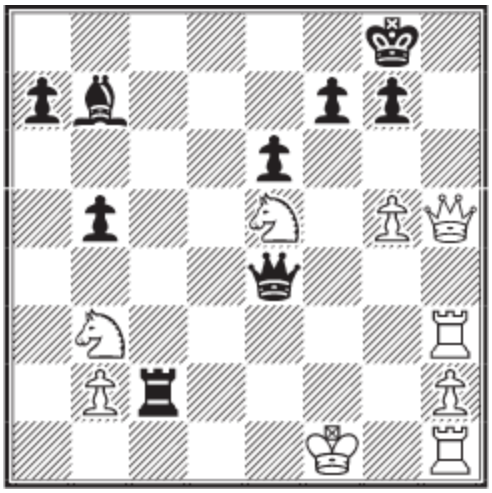
It would be faster after 28 ♔d1 ♕c2 mate and 28 ♔f1 ♕e1 mate.

White kept the game going with **28 ♔xf2 ♖c2+ 29 ♔f1**. The game should have ended with 29...♕xh1 mate.

Had that happened, White could have honestly said it was an unfair result. After all, he had found a great move in 23 ♖d3!, when it seemed his only options were dismal – such as 23 ♕e2? ♘xh1 that only prolong a losing game.

Besides that, he would probably have drawn if he had had the time to calculate 24 g6!.

But he didn't have to complain about bad luck that day.



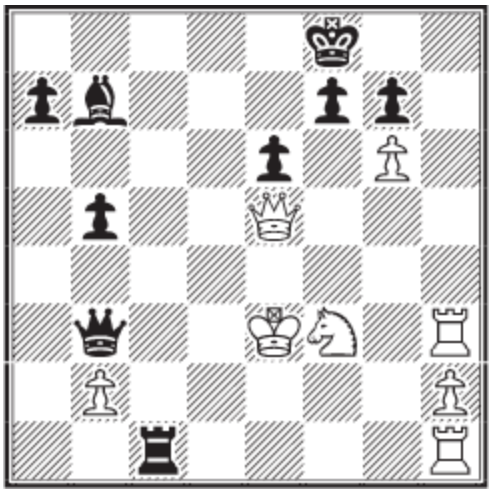
Black to play

Incredibly, Black overlooked 29...♕xh1 mate. He played **29...♕f4+???.**

This should have turned certain victory into probable defeat following **30 ♘f3!.** White had renewed the threat of 31 ♕h8 mate, while holding an extra rook and a piece. Black would run out of checks soon after 30...♖c1+ 31 ♘xc1 ♕xc1+ 32 ♔g2.

But White only had slightly more time than Black. After **30...♔f8** he passed up the routine and easily winning 31 ♕h8+ and 32 ♕xg7.

Instead, this strange game continued strangely, **31 g6?? ♕c4+ 32 ♔g1 ♕xb3 33 ♕e5 ♖c1+ 34 ♔f2 ♕c2+ 35 ♔e3 ♕b3+ 36 ♔e2? ♕c4+?** (36...♘xf3+) **37 ♔f2 ♕c2+ 38 ♔e3 ♕b3+!**.



White to play

White avoided perpetual check with **39 ♔f4??.** He was lost, **39...♖c4+! 40 ♘d4 ♕xh3 41 ♕b8+ ♖c8 42 ♕d6+.**

But as Black played **42...♔g8!** his flag fell. And these were two of the very best players in the world.

One-player luck

What can we make of this? Clearly, the outcome was extremely lucky. That is, unexpected. But was it just horribly played by both players?

To say that we have to look only at the ghastly moves and ignore the splendid ones (23 ♖d3!, 23...♖ac8!!, 24...♖xc2+!, 27...♕e4+!, 30 ♘f3!, 38...♕b3+!, 39...♖c4+!).

White played more of the bad moves and Black found more of the good ones. But they both chose to increase the likelihood of a lucky result. Both players wanted to be the lucky one.

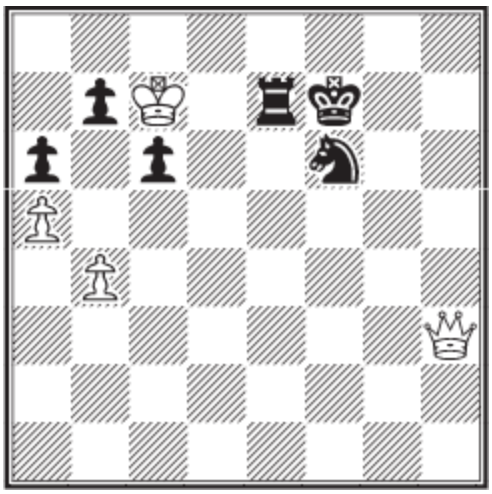
As much as we ascribe success in chess to other factors, luck abounds. It happens at the amateur level and among super-GMs. “We have a lucky champion,” Vladimir Kramnik said when then-world champion Garry Kasparov had once again escaped from a bad position against him.

Yuri Averbakh was a promising scientist when he considered switching careers and becoming a professional chessplayer. A friend who was a strong master told him he was “out of his mind.” It is crazy to get into a line of work, the friend said, “where so much depends on luck.”

Lucky results are by nature unfair, sometimes outrageously so. A player who did nothing but try to avoid losing gets a full point. His opponent commits suicide. We can call these cases of one-player luck:

Bu – Nakamura

Gibraltar 2008



White to play

Black had constructed an impregnable fortress earlier. White's queen cannot win unassisted. He managed to send his king on a voyage from c5 to a7, then c8 and d8, and finally c7. But there was no progress to be made.

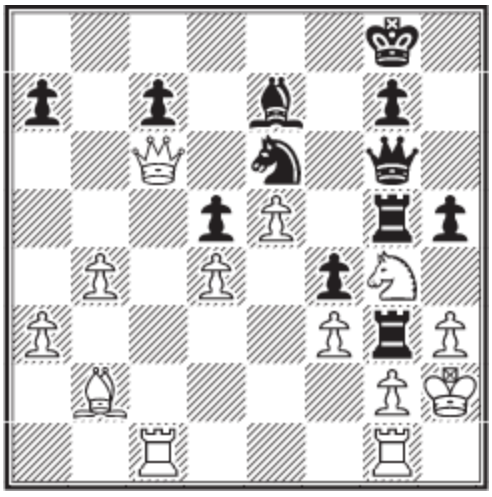
Yet there was a decisive result. White played **68 ♕d6??** and permitted **68...♘e4 mate.**

Black was lucky. But the finish wasn't a true swindle. Black resisted. But he did nothing to provoke 68 ♕d6.

A swindle is something else. The would-be swindler chooses moves that do more than just resist. He defends actively, often by setting traps. The more primitive the trap, the more an unexpected result seems lucky. Here's an example from the very first international tournament.

Staunton – Anderssen

London 1851



White to play

Black is winning. The white knight is attacked and pinned because 29 ♘f2 loses to 29...♖xg2+.

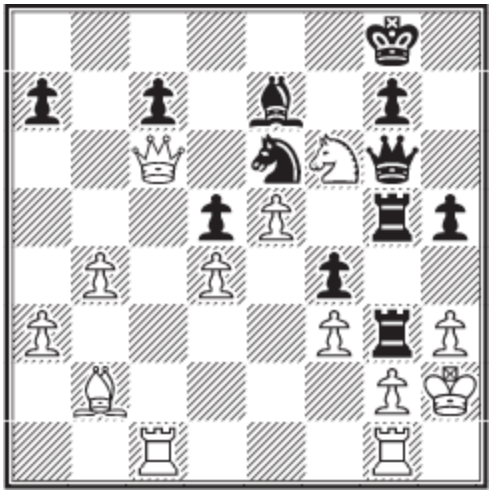
White could try 29 ♕xd5 hxg4 30 hxg4, thinking he would have two pawns as compensation for the knight.

But that allows an immediate mate by a queen check at h6 or h7.

Only slightly better is 30 fxg4 in view of 30...♖5xg4! (since 31 hxg4 allows another mating queen check).

White played the desperate **29 ♘f6+!.**

It was confusing to Black, if only because he had six legal responses.



Black to play

The first was the most natural, 29...gxf6. But after 30 ♕xe6+ Black's win is gone:

White can take the bishop with check after 30...♔h7? or 30...♔g7?.

He can meet 30...♔h8 with 31 ♕xe7 because 31...♖xg2+ 32 ♖xg2 ♖xg2+ 33 ♔h1 ends Black's mating attack.

Then Black has to find 33...♖h2+! 34 ♔xh2 ♕g3+ to draw by perpetual check.

There was more for Black to look at. He must have seen that he could meet 29 ♘f6+ with 29...♔h8.

But once again he would have nothing much after 30 ♕xe6 ♖xg2+ 31 ♖xg2 ♖xg2+ 32 ♔h1 or just 30 ♕e8+ ♕xe8 31 ♘xe8.

So, Black played the only move that discouraged ♕xe6. The game ended with **29...♔f7?? 30 ♕e8 mate.**

That swindle required the efforts of both players. It was, of course, an unfair result. Black could have won with 29...♙xf6! 30 ♕xe6+ ♔h7! because of 31 exf6 ♖xg2+ 32 ♖xg2 ♖xg2+ 33 ♔h1 ♕g3!.

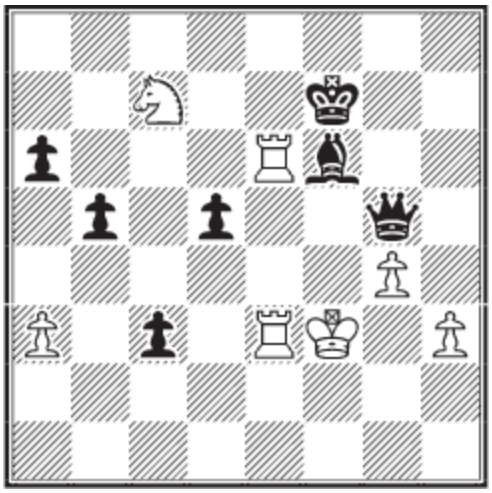
Nevertheless, 29 ♘f6+ was the pragmatic move because it had the greatest chance of saving the game.

Practical versus "computer-best"

Chess has gotten a lot more sophisticated since 1851. We defend much better today. But we are also much better at swindling.

Topalov – Glavina

San Cugat 1992



White to play

White has barely survived since he blundered away his queen earlier. Black's last move, 49...c3, prepared to queen a pawn and end resistance.

A passive defense such as 50 ♖e2 would lose in various ways. One is 50...d4 and ...d3. Another is 50...c2 51 ♖xc2 ♘e5 followed by either 52...♕f4+ or 52...♘xc7 53 ♖xc7+ ♔xe6.

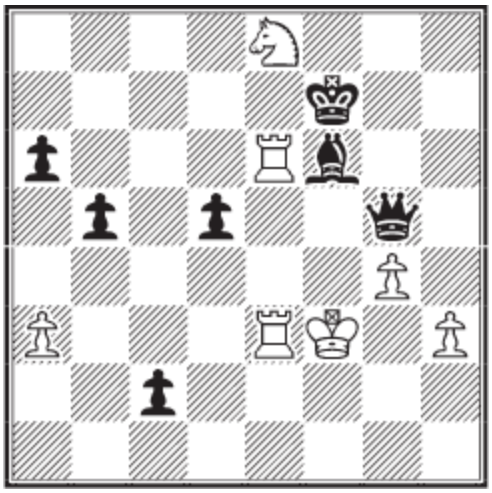
White kept hope alive with **50 ♘e8!**, attacking the f6-bishop.

It is not just the move with the best chance of avoiding a loss. It is the move with the best chance of winning: 50...♘d4?? 51 ♘d6+ ♔g8 52 ♖e8+ ♔h7 53 ♖2e7+.

Then 53...♔h6 54 ♘f7+ or 53...♘g7 54 ♖h8+! ♔xh8 55 ♘f7+.

Only slightly better is 50...♘d8? in view of 51 ♘d6+ ♔g8 52 ♘f5 c2 53 ♖c6 and White has turned the game around.

But he was lost after **50...c2!**.



White to play

White's 50 ♘e8! was objectively the best move available. The swindle begins now: The "computer-best" move – the one recommended by engines – is a bad choice.

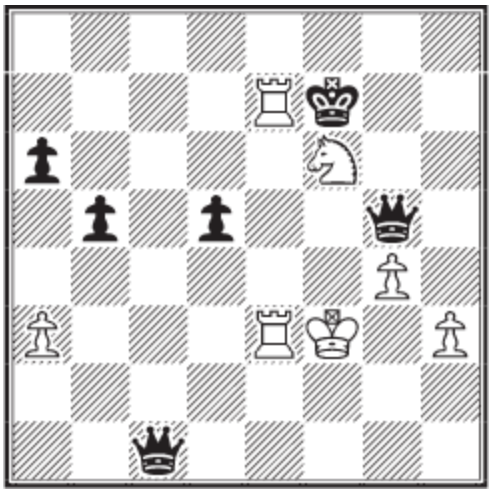
Computers recommend 51 ♖xf6+. Black has nothing better than 51...♕xf6 52 ♘xf6 c1(♕) with a long ♕-vs-♖+♘ endgame ahead.

White might draw if he could play 53 ♘xd5. But that loses to 53...♕h1+ and ...♕xd5.

So he would have to play another knight move and try to defend after, say, 53...d4. Computers say White might hold on for 30 moves before he gets mated.

But White realized he had greater practical chances with **51 ♘xf6**. Then 51...♕xf6?? loses because 52 ♖xf6 is check and White has time for 53 ♖c3.

So play went **51...c1(♕)! 52 ♖e7+**.



Black to play

This is a true swindle attempt because:

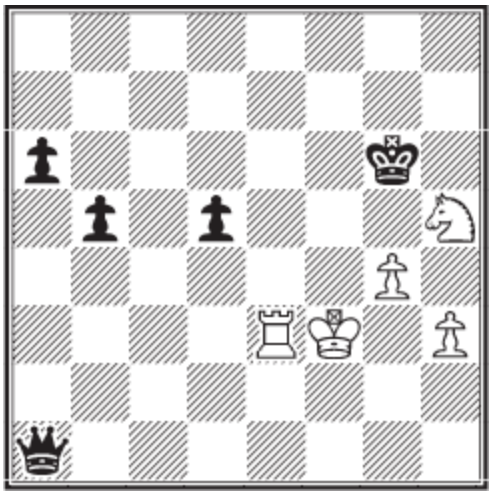
(a) With proper play, Black would win more quickly than if White had played the computer-best 51 ♖xf6+, and

(b) White is setting traps. So far they are simple ones – 52...♔xf6?? 53 ♖3e6 mate and 52...♔f8?? 53 ♘h7+.

Black is playing well and **52...♔g6!** should have won. White had one trick left, **53 ♘h5**!. It threatened to win with 54 ♖3e6+.

It is surprising to see that even with two queens, Black would achieve nothing from checks (53...♕h1+ 54 ♔g3 ♕g1+ 55 ♔f3 ♕d1+ 56 ♔g3).

But when you have two queens you have the luxury of giving one away: **53...♕xe7! 54 ♖xe7 ♕xa3+ 55 ♖e3 ♕a1**.



White to play

This ♕-vs.-♖+♘ ending is much easier to win than the one that might have arisen after 51 ♖xf6+ ♕xf6. Black doesn't have to create a passed queenside pawn now. They already exist. He can just push one to the eighth rank.

White can do little to stop that. He would lose soon after 56 ♘f4+ ♔f7 57 ♘xd5? ♕h1+ and ...♕xd5.

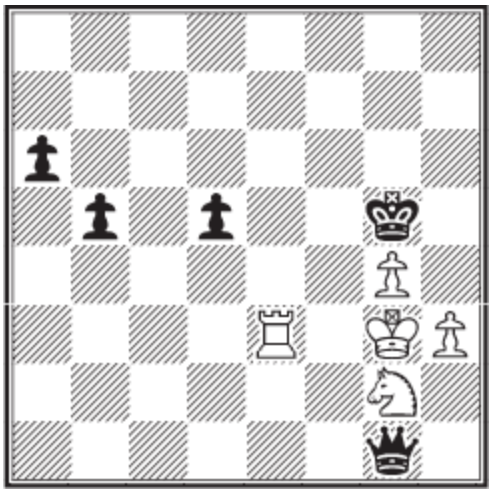
A better try is 57 g5 and 58 g6+. This looked dangerous. Looks help create swindles.

But this look is a bluff. After 57...b4 58 g6+ ♔f8 White can safely resign (59 ♘e6+ ♔g8 or 59 h4 b3 60 ♖xb3? ♕d1+).

But Black correctly saw that on **56 ♘f4+** he can restrain the white pawns with **56...♔g5** and also threaten to win the knight (57...♕f1+!).

If White safeguarded the knight with 57 ♘e2, Black wins by pushing (57...b4 or 57...a5 and 58...a4).

So White defended against ...♕f1+ with **57 ♔g3** and then **57...♕g1+! 58 ♘g2**.



Black to play

White's knight has become a pinned, inactive piece. Black had no reason to fear 59 ♖e5+ ♔g6 60 ♖xd5 because his remaining pawns are too strong (60...b4).

He must have noticed that 59 h4+ was possible. But the king could safely retreat to f6 or g6.

Since there was apparently no threat, Black played **58...a5??**.

But he resigned after **59 ♖e6!**. There was no way to stop 60 h4 mate.

Championship Swindling

Why do some great players become world champion and others don't? Paul Keres – one of those in the "don't" category – had an answer: Champions are lucky. The others aren't.

Keres cited the 1959 Candidates tournament. He scored an impressive three wins out of four games against Mikhail Tal. But Tal won the tournament and became world champion the next year.

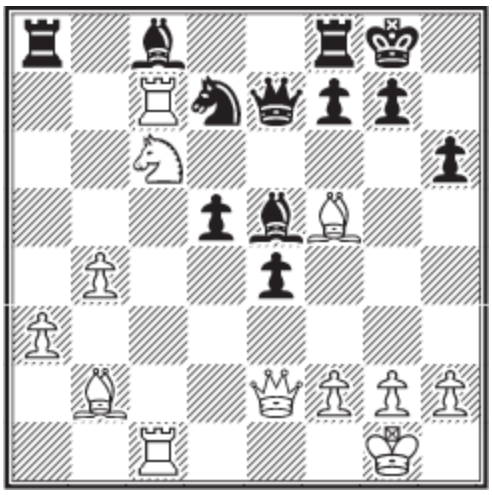
Keres particularly remembered one game, which Tal drew from a dead lost position. ‘You cannot fight against such luck,” Keres told fellow GM Bent Larsen. Games like that convinced Keres that “fate was against him,” Larsen recalled.

Tal’s luck, like that of all great swindlers, was a collaboration. But it was not a collaboration of him and some mysterious force of destiny. It required the unintended cooperation by his opponent, who had been world champion just one year before.

Smyslov – Tal

Candidates tournament 1959

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 a6 5 ♗d3 ♘c6 6 ♘xc6 bxc6 7 0-0 d5 8 ♘d2 ♘f6 9 ♕e2 ♗e7 10 ♖e1 0-0 11 b3 a5 12 ♗b2 a4 13 a3 axb3 14 cxb3 ♕b6 15 exd5 cxd5 16 b4 ♘d7 17 ♘b3 e5 18 ♗f5 e4 19 ♖ec1 ♕d6 20 ♘d4 ♗f6 21 ♖c6 ♕e7 22 ♖ac1 h6 23 ♖c7! ♗e5 24 ♘c6!



Black to play

Tal would lose material if his attacked queen goes to e8 (25 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 26 ♖xc8).

The computer-best 24...♕f6 would also lose after 25 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 26 ♘e7+ and ♘xc8.

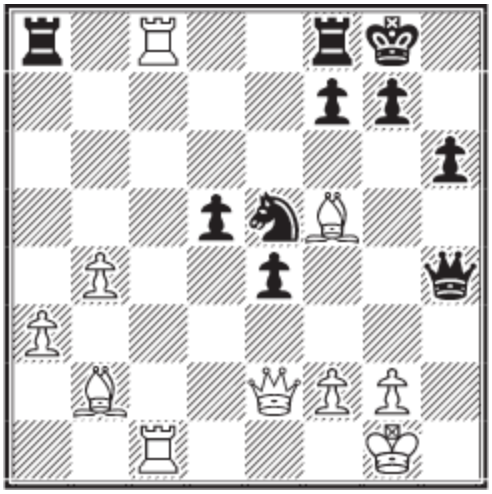
Moreover, Tal had spent so much time trying to conjure up counterplay earlier that he only had two or three minutes to reach the time control at move 40.

"I had nothing to lose," Tal admitted afterward. "I attempted only to complicate my opponent's task in any way possible."

He seized his slim chance for kingside play with **24...♕g5**.

This could lose faster than 24...♕f6. The reason is **25 h4!** since 25...♕xf5?? 26 ♘e7+ hangs the queen.

So play went **25...♕xh4 26 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 27 ♖xc8**.



Black to play

White has won a piece for a pawn. Computers will tell you Black's best options are 27...♘d3 and 27...♕f4. But they admit that those

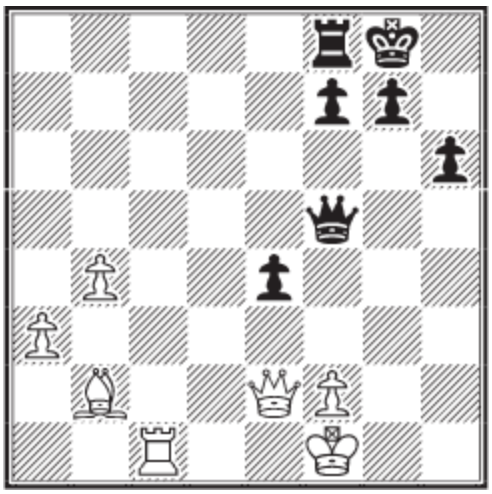
moves offer almost no survival chances after 28 ♖xa8 ♖xa8 29 ♖c8+ ♖xc8 30 ♘xc8.

Tal's instinct told him to search for tactics, any tactics that offered hope. He found **27...♘f3+ 28 gxf3 ♕g5+**.

Then 29 ♘g4 ♖fxc8 wins back material and 29 ♔h1 ♕h5+ 30 ♔g1 ♕g5+ repeats the position.

White was playing the best moves and that continued **29 ♔f1! ♕xf5 30 ♖xf8+ ♖xf8 31 fxe4 dxe4**.

Tal was not playing "best" moves and that is why White's advantage has grown substantially since 24...♕g5. His opponent assumed Tal was playing badly because he now had only seconds left.



White to play

But Tal had created tactical opportunities on White's weakened light squares that White's extra piece – a dark-squared bishop – cannot deal easily with.

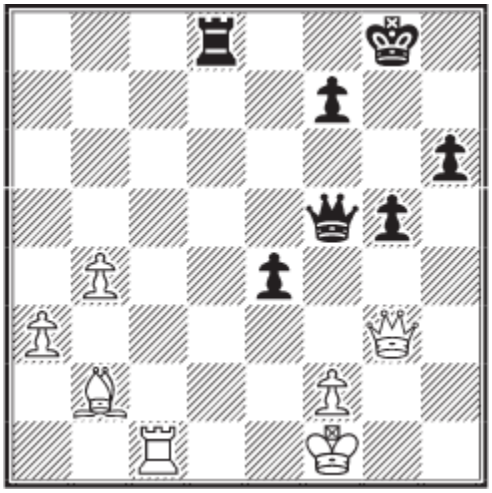
Instead, White can use his heavy pieces to defend the kingside. Both 32 ♖c3 or 32 ♕e3 are useful.

White preferred **32 ♕e3** so his queen could go to g3, where it would threaten ♕xg7 mate. That threat would either prompt a losing queen trade (...♕g5) or a weakening of Black's own kingside (...f6 or ...g5).

Computers say Tal's **32...♖d8** made matters even worse for him. But for the first time in several moves he was making a real threat (33...♖d3! 34 ♕c5 ♕h3+ or 34 ♕e2 e3).

White answered with the move he had planned, **33 ♕g3**, so that 33...f6? 34 ♖c7.

Tal replied **33...g5**



White to play

This is the first point in the game when we can say White erred. With 34 ♕c3! f6 35 ♕b3+! he would edge closer to victory.

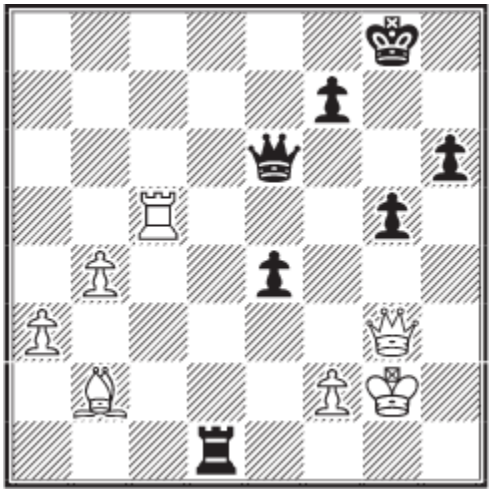
For example, 35...♔g7 36 ♖c7+ ♔g6? 37 ♕f7 is mate. On 35...♔h8 he has 36 ♖c6 followed by a capture on f6 or even 36 ♖c5! ♕f4 37 ♖c6!.

But when you have as great an advantage as White, you don't feel that a lot of calculating is necessary. Vasily Smyslov saw something

that looked simpler and stronger, **34 ♖c5**.

Then 34...♕e6 allows 35 ♖xg5+! (35...hxg5 36 ♕xg5+ ♕g6 37 ♕xd8+).

Tal used his best tactical resource, **34...♖d1+**. Once again, White avoided calculating long lines (like 35 ♔e2 ♕d7 36 ♕b8+). He chose the more natural **35 ♔g2** and after **35...♕e6**:



White to play

Black is threatening ...nothing. But he keeps creating situations in which his opponent has not-so-simple choices.

Here it looks like there must be a forced mate after 36 ♕b8+ ♔h7 37 ♕h8+ ♔g6 38 ♕g8+ ♔h5. But there is no mate, just an eventual win after 39 ♕c8!.

Rather than calculate lines like that, White assumed he could win with his pawns, **36 b5**.

Then **36...♔h7!** eliminated a check with ♕b8. That doesn't seem like much – until you see that Black now has a threat, 37...♖d3!.

After **50 ♘h4??** Black played **50...♕c7** and White failed to play 51 ♕xc7 and 52 ♘xg6 but he swindled Black later.

21. Both 45...♕e1 and 45...♕e2 would draw after 46 ♘xb7 ♕xf2+ 47 ♔h1 ♕f3+.

But **45...♕e2**, unlike the other move, did not threaten ...♕h1 mate. That induced White's second blunder, **46 ♕f8??**. He wanted to win with 47 ♕f7.

But he allowed 44...♘f3!. There was no perpetual check, so to avoid ...♕xf2 mate, White played **47 ♕f7+ ♔b8 48 ♕g8+ ♔c7 49 ♘e8+ ♔c6 50 ♕g6+ ♔b5 51 ♕b1+**.

After **51...♔a4 52 ♔g1 ♕xe8 53 ♕a2+ ♔b5 54 c4+ ♔c6 55 ♕a4+ b5** he eventually had to resign. The first blunder cost White $2,500 but the second one cost him more than $8,000.

22. (a) 34...♖d5 comes close, e.g. 35 ♘xd5 ♖d2 threatens 36...♘f4+ and mates. White has the edge if he gives his queen up, 36 ♕c4 ♘f4+ 37 ♕xf4 exf4+ 38 ♔xf4 ♘xd5 39 b7 ♘xb7 40 ♖xb7+. Better was 36...♘xd5.

(b) 35...♖dd2 fails to 36 ♕xe5+! ♔xe5 37 b8(♕)+. But 35...♖fd2! saves Black after 36 b8(♕) ♖xb8 37 ♕xb8 ♘f2+ 38 ♔g2 ♘a7+.

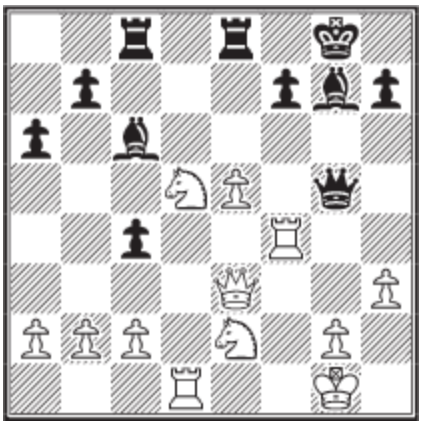
(c) Black wins after 36...g5!.

23. 21...g5~. White would still be in control after 22 ♘d4 and 22...gxf4 23 ♖xf4 because 23...♘h6 24 ♖df1! is a strong sacrifice.

Black would be lost after 24...♘xf4 25 ♖xf4 ♕d8 26 ♖g4+ ♔h8 27 ♕h6 or 25...♕h5 26 ♖f5. He would be close to it after 25...♕e7 26 ♘f5 ♕f8 27 ♕g3+ ♔h8 28 ♘d6.

Better is 23...♕g5 and 24 ♕f2 ♕xe5 25 ♖xf7 with survival chances.

But Black guessed right that one mistake (21 ♕e3?) would lead to others. White's advantage was gone after **22 ♘d5? gxf4 23 ♖xf4 ♕g5** because the e-pawn is falling. *(diagram)*



Play went **24 ♘f6+ ♔h8 "25 ♕f2 ♖xe5 26 ♘d4? ♗xf6 27 ♖xf6 ♗xg2** and Black fell apart, **28 ♔h2 ♖e3 29 ♕xg2 ♕xf6 30 ♕xb7 ♕f4+ White resigns.**

White's last chance for equality was 26 ♘g3. Kasparov said this was the last time he cried over a chess game.

24. 22...♖d1+! 23 ♖xd1 ♕a7 ended the attack and kept an extra knight.

25. 29 ♘xe6~ only works in two variations but it was the best try in a lost position.

Black saw one of them, 29...fxe6?? 30 ♕xg6+ and mates. He believed it was the only point of White's move. But that was a false narrative. He played **29...♕xe2??** and the game ended with **30 ♕xg6+! fxg6 31 f7+ ♔h7 32 ♖h3+ ♗h6 33 ♘g5+ ♔g7 34 ♘e6+ ♔h7 35 ♘g5+ draw**.

26. (a) No, **54...♖xg3+!** and **55 ♔xg3 ♕e5+!** since 56 ♕xe5 is stalemate.

(b) It is perpetual check after 55...♖xg3+ 56 ♔xg3 ♕g1+ 57 ♔f4 ♕c1+ and a book draw after 57 ♔h3 ♕e3+ 58 ♔g2 ♕xc5.

27. 55...♖xh5! because 56 ♖a5+ ♔b4 57 ♖xh5 is stalemate.

28. White threatens 38 ♖h8+ ♔e7 39 ♖h7 and 40 ♖xg7+ Then Black should draw with 39...♔f8 40 ♖h8+ ♔e7 41 ♖h7 ♔f8.

With **37...♖b4** he could meet 38 ♖h8+ ♔e7 39 ♖h7 with 39...♖xd4! 40 ♖xg7+ ♔d8.

But 37...♖b4 allowed **38 ♖h8+ ♔e7 39 ♘xf6+!** and draws after 39...gxf6 40 ♖h7+ ♔d8 41 ♖d7+ ♔c8 42 ♖e7+ ♔d8. Black tried **39...♔xf6 40 ♖xe8 ♖xb2** but agreed to a draw soon after **41 ♖f8+ ♔e5 42 ♖f7**.

29. 19...♕e6~ *(diagram)*

Then 20 ♘c7? ♕g4! is about equal and so is 20 ♖f5 ♕xd5.

This requires White to work a bit to win after 20 h3 g6 21 ♘c7 ♕xa2 28 ♘xa8 ♘f5.

Best, but harder to find, is 20 ♕h4 (threat of 21 ♕g5 g6 22 ♕h6) ♖e8 and then 21 h3!.

In the game, **20 ♖f3 ♖e8!** (not 20...♘d7 21 ♖h3) would have won after 21 h3.

But the game turned around with **21 ♖h3 ♕f5! 22 ♘e7+ ♖xe7 23 fxe7 ♗d7 24 ♕xb7 ♖e8 25 ♖f3 ♕e6 26 ♕xa6 f5 27 ♗f2? e4!** and Black eventually won.