

Efstratios Grivas

MONSTER

YOUR MIDDLEGAME

PLANNING

VOLUME 2



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KEY TO SYMBOLS

=	Equality or equal chances
±	White has a slight advantage
∓	Black has a slight advantage
±	White is better
∓	Black is better
+-	White has a decisive advantage
-+	Black has a decisive advantage
∞	unclear
∞	with compensation
↔	with counterplay
↑	with initiative
→	with an attack
Δ	with the idea
□	only move
N	novelty
!	a good move
!!	an excellent move
?	a weak move
??	a blunder
!?	an interesting move
?!	a dubious move
+	check
#	mate

FOREWORD

I would like to thank Mr. Vasilis Andronis, Mr. Antonis Vragoteris and Mr. Manolis Kotsifis for being the first testers of the book, advising me with some important thoughts and suggestions.

The MYMP offers training on a vital subject, the choice of the ‘best’ available plan. As is commonly accepted in the chess world, a correct Evaluation of the position, a strong Plan and an accurate Execution are the three important factors that separate ‘the expert from the amateur’. In a way, efficient training on the three above mentioned concepts can help a chess player mature and lead him to new successful paths.

Back in 2007 I published my first English language book on planning (Modern Chess Planning — Gambit), which was later translated and published in the Greek, Spanish and Iranian languages, making it a best-seller. I took seriously the various recommendations and notes of the readers and so in that respect I improved the writing and the presentation of the tests aiming to fulfil your expectations.

Now, as said, the format changed, with 13 thematic chapters, where in each of them 6 tests are included. Each theme is analysed by modern concepts and tips, which will drive the reader to the right path. For me solving the tests is not the most important feature. Understanding them and learning how to do the job in an over-the-board game is far more important and what counts in the end of the day!

With this book I have sought to provide a training guide that will be helpful mostly to players in the 1500–2200 range — corresponding to a lower club level up to those with aspirations for a FIDE title.

Of course, the book may well also be useful for players weaker than 1500, or for those stronger than 2200, but this is a decision these players should make for themselves!

In this book there are 78 tests, each based around a game. In each of these tests, the starting point is the first diagram. There is an evaluation of the diagrammed position, which helps the reader to understand some important facts about the position itself.

A presentation of three possible plans follows. Then the reader must decide which is the most valuable/best plan. The best plan receives a maximum of 50 points. The other, less good, bad or indifferent plans normally receive some points or none at all, depending on their actual value and correctness. Some of the plans receive no points at all; they are just bad!

After completing the work on each test, the reader must take a look at the solution, where he can find the answers. In the solutions, the game is analysed until its end, so the reader can better understand why the rewarded plan was the ‘best’ in the position and how it worked out. There are a few examples where the best available plan was overlooked, but these are exceptions and the games are nevertheless quite interesting.

By this point, you will have received some very good training. But then, it will do no harm to measure your ‘strength’ on this subject. The maximum score is 3,900 points and you should divide your total score by 1.5:

Total Points	Planning Strength
2400–2500	Grandmaster
2300–2399	International Master
2200–2299	FIDE Master
2000–2199	Candidate Master
1800–1999	National Master
1600–1799	National A’ Category
1400–1699	National B’ Category
1200–1399	National C’ Category
835–1199	Should try harder!

As one might notice from the score-table, expectations are a little higher than usual for the categories listed, as in this book the evaluation of the position is given by the author beforehand, and this is a great help for the reader. A correct evaluation of any position is one of the most significant factors in chess, but that could be the subject for another book.

It is now time for you to work and train on that important chess concept, the plan. Have fun and train well!

Athens, 2019
Efstratios Grivas

EVALUATION – PLAN – EXECUTION

The most important element in modern chess practice is probably correct planning. The plan is associated with evaluation and execution, three valuable concepts that cannot be separated and which most of the time determine the fate of our positions.

During my training sessions I do ask from my trainees the famous EPE procedure, as below:

SOS Tip 1 — EPE
1. Evaluation (strategical & tactical)
2. Plan (ours and our opponent's)
3. Execution (calculation & move)

That's the right order, although many trainers/authors do not really follow it — they prefer to teach first to move and then to think. With this way they have some success but they will never have a GM or a player near such strength.

Chess is a mind game — it asks you to think to find solutions, even if these solutions are more or less obvious.

In every position you must know where you are (evaluation), where you want to go (plan) and how you will go there (execution). So simple, but we tend to forget this procedure in the heat of battle.

Nowadays, chess games between decent players are full of small plans of different types and ideas, based on purely strategic and tactical motives. The one who will evaluate, plan and execute better than the opponent earns the first option to win the game.

A closer examination of games played between strong players will prove that there is some harmony among their moves, some central idea that guides the movements of their forces. This is what we call a plan. A good chess player refuses to act without any plan, even if this plan sometimes turns out to be mistaken in the long run.

First of all, it is important to identify the most important strategic and tactical elements of each particular position. According to the needs of that certain position, we should create our plan and stick to it. Games where only one plan is used are rarely seen these

days. We are usually obliged to create several small plans, which of course are just parts of our main design: winning!

Many weak players are not able to construct an acceptable plan. This has nothing to do with intelligence, but just with basic chess education. Nowadays, with so many books, electronic help and trainers available, anything can be learned and, by constant practice, it can be understood and assimilated. Without basic chess education and knowledge we can't go very far. So, the first step is to understand the basic strategic and tactical elements that govern our game.

Plans are necessary and can be found in every phase of a chess game. From the early opening till the late endgame, chess players create the necessary plans, derived from such varied factors as the occupation of an important square to an aggressive attack.

More common are the plans we draw right after the end of the opening phase, but this is of course not the rule. Nowadays, with the open-

ing theory having gone very far, the choice of a certain opening very much depends on a plan we would like to use!

Some general advice could be presented to the reader as follows:

SOS Tip 2 — Planning
1. Notice and understand the main merits and disadvantages of each side.
2. Notice the immediate threats of both sides, but especially of your opponent!
3. Determine what is (are) the main, most significant target(s) and how the plan should be executed.
4. Examine what will be the opponent's reaction to your plan.
5. Examine what your opponent's possible main plan is (can be) and how you should react to it.
6. If you can choose among two or more good plans, opt for the one that you think can bring most benefits.
7. Follow your plan. Do not change it without a really good reason.

CHAPTER 1.

INITIATIVE CONCEPTS

BURIED PIECE

A not too often met strategic theme is the one of the ‘buried bishop’ or the ‘buried piece’ in general.

The meaning is quite simple: a piece is unable to participate in the battle, due to difficulties created mostly by its own pawns, which restrain it even from the slightest mobility.

Of course, some ‘help’ is also necessary from the opponent’s pawns, which will harmoniously cooperate to bury the piece for ever!

There are certain mechanisms that can help create this kind of advantage.

What is the purpose of burying a piece or, to put it straighter, how we can benefit from it? Well, usually we can convert our advantage in the endgame but in many cases in the midgame, with a direct attack.

Exchanging most of the rest of our pieces (all, if we can penetrate in the

opponent’s camp, but no pawns!) we will simply play the game with a piece up.

There is no point in counting the quantity; as always, quality is more important. We are going to have a piece that operates and produces threats against an immobilised one that can only sit back and wait.

SOS Tip 1 — Procedures
1. Bury the piece.
2. Make sure that it will not come back to life without some huge ‘compensation’.
3. Open up other parts of the board than the one that the piece is located.
4. Exchange pieces but not too many pawns.
5. Penetrate into the opponent’s camp.

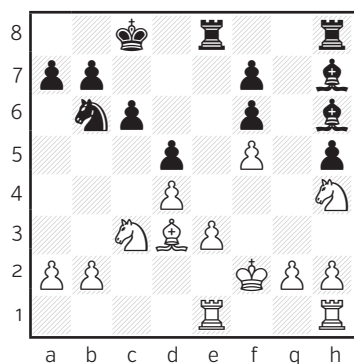
EXERCISE 1

▷ Wagner Dennis

▶ Sokolov Ivan

D35 Isle of Man 2017

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.cxd5
 exd5 5.♙g5 c6 6.e3 h6 7.♙h4 ♙f5
 8.♚f3 ♙g6 9.♙xf6 ♚xf6 10.♚xf6
 gxf6 11.♘f3 ♘d7 12.♘h4 o-o-o
 13.f4 ♚e8 14.f5 ♙h7 15.♚f2 h5 16.♙d3
 ♙h6 17.♚ae1 ♘b6



EVALUATION

My opponent's lightsquared bishop is a buried piece, which cannot come back into the game without my 'help'! So, I have a clear advantage, as technically I play with a piece up! In such cases it will be useful to make sure that it will not come back and I will use my extra piece to create activity in the other parts of the board, other than kingside.

PLAN – EXECUTION

PLAN A

I should concern on how to bury this bishop for ever and a good way to do is to go for **18.h3**, and then g4.

PLAN B

I do not need to take any measures for my opponent's buried piece for the time being. I should try to open the position and benefit by my 'extra' piece, so I should prepare the e4 advance. For this, good looks **18.♚e2**, followed by the doubling of the rooks and e4 eventually. As **18...♘c4** **19.♙xc4 dxc4** **20.e4**, looks great, I cannot see any good way for Black than to wait for my procedures...

PLAN C

No need to give the slightest chances to my opponent, as I am almost playing 'without' him! **18.b3**, looks like the best, not allowing any thoughts of **...♘c4**, as I overprotect my only vulnerable spot — the e3-pawn. Then I will go for h3 and g4 and open the centre.

Choose Your Plan

Choose Your Plan		
A	B	C

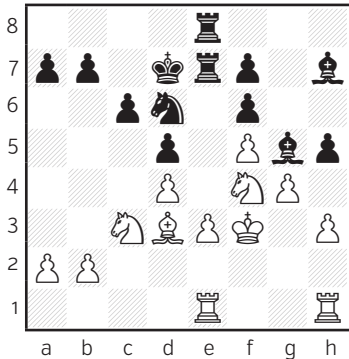
EXERCISE 2

▷ Bluebaum Matthias

▶ Naiditsch Arkadij

D35 Minsk 2017

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 d5 4.cxd5
 exd5 5.♙g5 c6 6.e3 ♙f5 7.♚f3 ♙g6
 8.♙xf6 ♚xf6 9.♚xf6 gxf6 10.♘f3
 ♘d7 11.♘h4 ♘b6 12.f4 h5 13.♙f2
 ♘c8 14.f5 ♙h7 15.h3 ♘d6 16.g4 ♙d7
 17.♙d3 ♙h6 18.♘g2 ♚ae8 19.♙f3
 ♚e7 20.♘f4 ♙g5 21.♚ae1 ♚he8



EVALUATION

I have succeeded to bury my opponent's lightsquared bishop and now I have to plan on how I will open the centre, exchange some pieces and dominate on the centre and the queenside. I have only to be careful with some tactics that can be beneficiary for my opponent.

PLAN – EXECUTION

PLAN A

I think it is too early to take any radical decision, so I will try to create some more weaknesses in Black's camp and what suits me here is **22.b4**, intending b5. I am not 'afraid' of **22... b5** **23.a4 a6**, when I will open the a-file (when I am ready) and invade from there. In this way I will open the queenside, invading from there. Later I can even go for **e4**, as well.

PLAN B

I think that I can go on for a nice combination here, namely **22.♘cxd5 cxd5** **23.♘xd5 ♚e4** **24.♙xe4 ♘xe4** **25.♚e2**, which looks quite good for me.

PLAN C

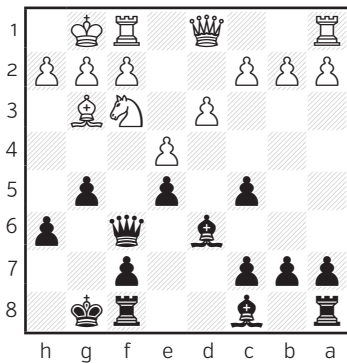
As I have all under control, I think that it is time to open the centre by the natural **22.e4**, which I have prepared for a long time. After the central exchanges, I will be able to benefit from my 'extra' piece.

Choose Your Plan		
A	B	C

EXERCISE 3

- ▷ Winter William
 ▶ Capablanca Jose Raul
 C49 Hastings 1919

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♙b5
 ♙b4 5.o-o o-o 6.♙xc6 dxc6 7.d3
 ♙d6 8.♙g5 h6 9.♙h4 c5 10.♘d5 g5
 11.♘xf6+ ♚xf6 12.♙g3



EVALUATION

My opponent didn't handle well the opening, allowing me to get the bishop pair and in general very easy play. But the centre is closed, so my bishops are not quite significant here for the time being.

PLAN – EXECUTION

PLAN A

I should gain more space and control over the central and the queenside squares, completing my development at the same time. So, good looks 12... ♙e6 13.♘d2 b5, when I have everything under control and I can slowly prepare the opening of the centre or/ and the queenside.

PLAN B

The bishop pair is a good asset, but transforming my A advantage to a B one, is part of the great masters education! I can opt for 12... ♙g4 13.h3 ♙xf3 14.♚xf3 ♚xf3 15.gxf3, when the g3-bishop is a miserable piece. I can proceed then by opening and penetrate via the queenside.

PLAN C

I will base my play on the bishop pair but I am not sure where I should place my c8-bishop yet. So, I will keep it flexible, starting with advancing my queenside pawns by 12...a5 13.♘d2 b5, gaining more space and try to break on the queenside.

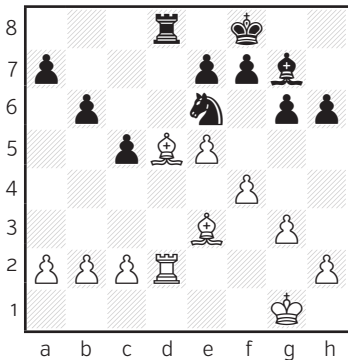
Choose Your Plan

A	B	C

EXERCISE 4

- ▷ **Van der Weide Piet**
- ▶ **Olthof Rene**
- Bo7** Den Bosch 2009

1.d4 ♘f6 2.g3 g6 3.♙g2 ♙g7 4.e4
 d6 5.♘c3 o-o 6.♗ge2 c5 7.dxc5 dxc5
 8.♔xd8 ♖xd8 9.e5 ♘e8 10.f4 ♘a6
 11.♙e3 ♗ec7 12.o-o ♖b8 13.♗ad1
 ♖xd1 14.♖xd1 ♙e6 15.♖d2 ♔f8
 16.♗e4 b6 17.♗g5 h6 18.♗xe6+
 ♘xe6 19.♗c3 ♗ac7 20.♗d5 ♗xd5
 21.♙xd5 ♖d8



EVALUATION

By now my strategy has been a success, as I have gained the bishop pair, putting my opponent into a passive defence. The main question is how to continue from now on; to go for a typical bishop pair endgame or to transform my advantage into something else?

PLAN – EXECUTION

PLAN A

As quite often is the case, I should transform my advantage from the bishop pair to the more active piece! So, I can opt for **22.♙xe6 ♖xd2 23.♙xd2 fxe6 24.♔f2**, achieving a great endgame, where my opponent’s bishop is a buried one. Then a break on the queenside will follow, allowing my king to penetrate into Black’s camp.

PLAN B

The bishop pair is a valuable asset in nearly every endgame, so I should calmly go for the natural follow up with **22.♔f2 ♘c7 23.♙e4 ♖xd2+ 24.♙xd2**. This should give me a stable and secure endgame advantage.

PLAN C

I should proceed as in Plan B, but I should be quick in creating more open files and diagonals for my bishop pair. I should opt for a quick break with something like **22.c3 ♗c7 23.♙e4 ♖xd2 24.♙xd2 e6 25.b4**, when I will be ready to create favourable positions for my asset.

Choose Your Plan		
A	B	C

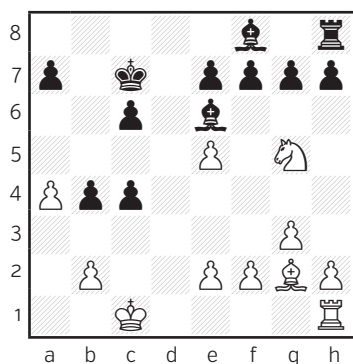
EXERCISE 5

▷ Miles Anthony

▷ Smyslov Vassily

D15 Dortmund 1986

1. ♖f3 ♗f6 2. c4 c6 3. ♘c3 d5 4. d4
 dxc4 5. ♗e5 b5 6. g3 ♗g4 7. ♕f4 ♗xe5
 8. ♕xe5 ♗d7 9. ♕g2 ♗xe5 10. dxe5
 ♕d7 11. a4 b4 12. ♗e4 ♖c7 13. ♖d4
 ♗d8 14. o-o-o ♕e6 15. ♖xd8+ ♖xd8
 16. ♗xd8+ ♖xd8 17. ♗g5 ♖c7



EVALUATION

For the time being I am pawn down, which I will recover sooner or later, so this shouldn't be a problem. The question is how to do it and how to get an advantage, based on my superior development; how to get a permanent plus.

PLAN – EXECUTION

PLAN A

A nice way to go on is by the natural 18. ♗d1, preparing 19. ♗d4, or even 19. ♗xe6+ fxe6 20. ♕h3. In both cases material will be restored, while the ending with the passive and buried black bishop suits me.

PLAN B

Any ending with an opponent buried bishop suits me and I can prepare the ideal environment by 18. e4 g6 19. f4 ♕h6 20. ♗xe6+ fxe6 21. h4. The black bishop is buried and I will play with an extra piece for the rest of the game.

PLAN C

Going for the direct 18. ♗xe6+ fxe6, looks like the best solution. After 19. h4! g6 20. f4h6 21. ♖d2 ♕g7 22. ♗c1 ♗d8+ 23. ♖e3, I have gained all the trumps that promise me a successful outcome. Things should be hard in an opposite-coloured bishop ending, but here I am just a bishop-up!

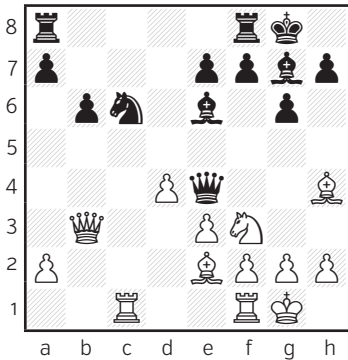
Choose Your Plan

Choose Your Plan		
A	B	C

EXERCISE 6

- ▷ **Sargissian Gabriel**
 ▶ **Areshchenko Alexander**
D91 Germany 2005

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.♙g5
 ♞e4 5.♙h4 ♞xc3 6.bxc3 ♙g7 7.e3
 c5 8.cxd5 ♚xd5 9.♘f3 ♘c6 10.♙e2
 cxd4 11.cxd4 o-o 12.o-o b6 13.♚b3
 ♙e6 14.♖ac1 ♚e4



EVALUATION

My pieces are more coordinated and harmoniously placed, compared to the black ones, who seem to be un-coordinated and a bit loose. But of course this is not a permanent plus and I should right away take advantage of this fact — turn my plus in something permanent and serious.

PLAN – EXECUTION

PLAN A

I would be satisfied to obtain a ‘buried bishop’ position and this can be done by 15. ♙d3 ♚xh4 (15... ♚xf3 16.gxf3 ♙xb3 17.axb3±) 16. ♚xe6! fxe6 17. ♘xh4, when Black’s g7-bishop will have to suffer.

PLAN B

The ‘buried bishop’ theme is a plus for me and I can obtain it by 15. ♚b5 ♖ac8 (15... ♙d7?! 16. ♙d3 ♚e6 17.d5+-) 16. ♘g5 ♚xh4 17. ♘xe6 fxe6 18. ♖xc6, Compared to Plan A, the presence of the queens on board suits me better, as I can create even an attack on the black king in the near future.

PLAN C

As the black queen is ‘uncomfortable’ at the moment, I should calmly opt for 15. ♚a3 ♘xd4! (there is nothing better and actually this saves Black from immediate disaster) 16. ♘xd4 ♚xh4 17. ♘xe6 fxe6 and then penetrate on the 7th rank by 18. ♖c7. I will get my pawn back, while Black will remain with a lot of weaknesses.

Choose Your Plan		
A	B	C

SOLUTION 1

Plan A is good and natural.

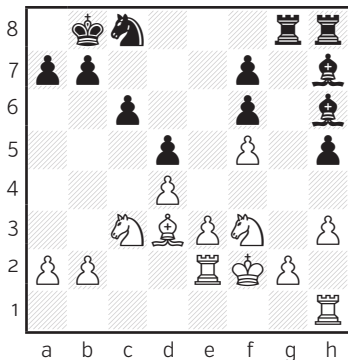
Plan B is probably best — see the game.

Plan C is valid and quite good as well.

White's position is so pleasant that nearly anything is good, at least for the time being.

Marks for Plans		
A	B	C
45	50	40

18. ♖e2! ♔b8 19. ♗f3 ♘c8 20. h3 ♜eg8



21. g4!

Black's 'parked' pieces on the h-file allow this thematic move. Now the unfortunate black lightsquared bishop has been buried...

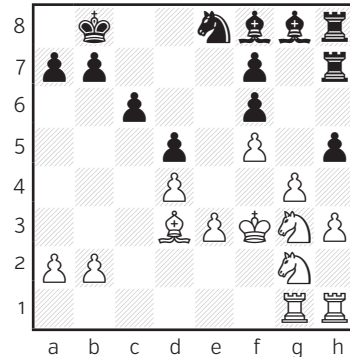
21... ♞d6 22. ♜ee1 ♙f8 23. ♜eg1 ♜g7
24. ♗e2 ♙g8 25. ♗g3 ♜gh7

Black decided to sac the exchange, as 25...hxg4 26.hxg4 ♜xh1 27.♗xh1, wasn't looking good in the long-run...

26. ♗e1

Well, White could take the exchange, as 26.♗xh5 ♜xh5 27.gxh5 ♙h7 28.♗h4 ♙h6 29.♜g4 ♙g5 30.♜f1 ♙xh4+ 31.♜xh4 ♙xf5 32.♙e2 should be winning as well. But he preferred to play it 'safe' — the bad bishop is a great asset for him anyway.

26... ♜g7 27. ♙f3 ♜gh7 28. ♗g2 ♞e8



29. ♗f4

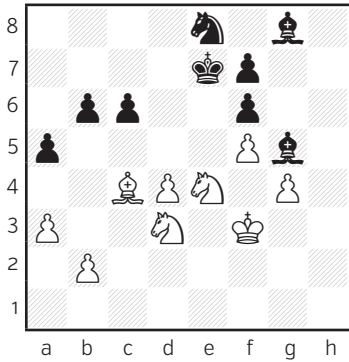
White wants to force the exchange of the rooks and Black insists in sacrificing the exchange...

29... ♗g7 30. ♜e1 ♙c7

Time to open up the centre, seeking piece exchanges. White dreams to get a position with two/three pieces for

each side, when the black unfortunate bishop will decide...

31.e4! dx e4+ 32. ♖xe4 hxg4+ 33.hxg4 ♖xh1 34. ♖xh1 ♖xh1 35. ♗xh1 ♗e8 36. ♗g3 ♖h6 37. ♖d3 ♗d6 38. ♗e4+ ♗e7 39. ♖c4 ♗c7 40. ♗d3 a5 41.a3 ♖g5 42. ♗ec5 b6 43. ♗e4 ♗e8?!



43... ♖h6, was a better way to fight.

44.d5

44. ♗xg5 fxg5 45. ♗e5, looks like winning a pawn on the spot, as even the try to get rid of the bad piece with 45... f6?, loses to 46. ♗g6+.

44...cxd5 45. ♖xd5 ♖h7 46. ♗c3 ♗d6 47. ♖e4 ♗c4 48.a4 ♗d6 49. ♖d5 ♗d2+ 50. ♗e2 ♖g8?!

50... ♗b1! was the only way to continue the fight: 51. ♖xf7 ♗xc3+ 52.bxc3±.

51. ♖a2 ♗c6 52. ♗f2 ♗c5 53. ♗d3 ♗b4 54. ♗fe4?!

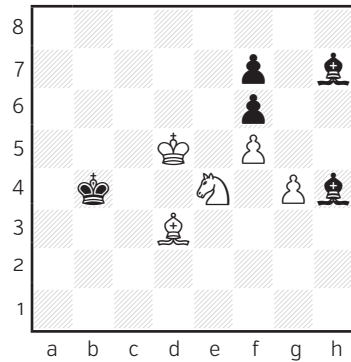
More or less simpler was 54. ♗h3! ♖h6 (54... ♗f3 55. ♗xg5 fxg5 56. ♗d5+

♗xa4 57. ♗f6+-) 55. ♗d5+ ♗xa4 56. ♗xf6+-.

54... ♗xe4 55. ♗xe4 b5 56.axb5 ♗xb5 57. ♖d5 ♖h4 58. ♗d4 ♗b4 59. ♖a2 a4

What else? Black is trying to exchange all queenside pawns, hoping for one of these positions without pawns, where a piece-up wouldn't be enough...

60. ♗d5 a3 61.bxa3+ ♗xa3 62. ♖c4 ♗b4 63. ♖d3 ♖h7



The position has considerably simplified, but this only helps White, who finally has found an entrance to capture the unfortunate g8-bishop...

64. ♗d6 ♗a5 65. ♗e7 ♖g6 66. ♗xf6

66.fxg6 f5+ 67. ♗xf7 fxe4 68. ♖xe4+-.

66... ♗b4 67.fxg6 fxg6 68. ♖xg6 ♗c5 69. ♗e6 ♗d4 70. ♗e4 ♗e3 71. ♗f5 ♗f3 72. ♖f7 ♗e3 73.g5 ♖xg5 74. ♗xg5 ♗d4 75. ♖e6 ♗e3 76. ♗e5 ♗d3 77. ♖d5 ♗c3 78. ♗e4 ♗d2 79. ♗d4 ♗c2 80. ♗e4 ♗b2 81. ♗d2 ♗c2 82. ♗f1 ♗b2 83. ♗e3 ♗c1