

## NATO Chess 2014 Round 7 Highlights

Jan Cheung, 20 June 2015

The last round! The end of a long week with chess and cultural exchanges was in sight. Some players were satisfied with a quick draw. Happily for this article, there were adequate games with a lot of exciting chess.

There was a lot of fight in the following game because both teams were medal candidates.



Position after 49.Rb7xb6.

After a long fight the famous endgame Rook and pawn versus Rook has arrived. The time control in the tournament was 40 moves for 2 hours and 30 minutes for the rest of the game. Both players had short time and white had less time than black. In this theoretical end game black can endlessly try to improve the position and simultaneous trying to win at time. In such situation a time control with move increment was better. After the moves

**49...Ra2+ 50.Kd1 d4 51.Rb8 Kc3 52.Rc8+ Kd3**

we arrive at the first exercise.

### Position 1.



Position after 52...Kc3-d3. White to play. You have 30 seconds. Choose between A) 53.Kc1, B) 53.Ke1 and C) 53.Rc1.

The game continued as follows.

**53.Kc1 Ra6 54.Rh8 Ra1+ 55.Kb2 Re1 56.Rh3+ Re3 57.Rh4 Re2+**

### Position 2.



Position after 57...Re3-e2+. White to move. You have 30 seconds. Choose between A) 58.Kc1 and B) 58.Kb3.

The game continued as follows.

58...Ke3 59.Rh3+ Ke4 60.Rh4+ Kd3 61.Rg4 Re7

### Position 3.



Position after 61...Re2-e7. White to move. You have 30 seconds.

The game continued as follows.

62.Kb2 Rc7 63.Rh4 Rb7+ 64.Kc1 Kc3

### Position 4.



Position after 64...Kd3-c3. White to move. You have 30 seconds.

The game continued as follows.

**65.Rh3+ d3**

**Position 5.**



Position after 65...d4-d3. White to move. You have 30 seconds.

The game continued as follows.

**66.Rg3**

### Position 6.



Position after 66.Rh3-g3. Black to move. You have 30 seconds.

After a few more moves this game ended in a victory for black. I am sure that if white had more time, the game had ended in a draw. A conclusion we can put for this game, is that end games are not automatically boring. Nowadays, with quick playing finish time controls, knowing the end game is essential for each player.

We continue this article with exercises from other games of round 7.

### Position 7.



Position after 43.h4-h5. Black to move. Choose between A) 43...Qxc4 and B) 43...Kh6.

Position 8.



Position after 17...Qb4xb6. White to move. Choose between A) 18.Nf2 and B) 18.b4.

Position 9.



Position after 19.Nd4-c2. Black to move.

Position 10.



Position after 32.f4xe5. Black to move.

Position 11.



Position after 39...Ke7-e8. White to move. The last move of the time control! You have 30 seconds.

**Position 12.**



Position after 26...Ke2-d3. White to move. Choose between A) 27.b5 and B) other move.

**Position 13.**



Position after 36...Rb6-b8. White to move.



### Position 14.



Position after 42...e6-e5. White to move.

### Position 15.



Position after 13...Ra8-b8. White to move.

### Solutions

**Position 1 is the game Kedzierski – Hater (7.14).**

If you don't know what to play, ask yourself the following question: "What does my opponent threaten?". Black's threat is 53...Ra2-a1#. 53.Rc1 fails after 53...Rh2 54.Ke1 Rh1+ winning the rook. Now there are only two answers left, 54.Kc1 and 54.Ke1. A thumb rule in this end game is that the

defending king should head to the short flank so that the defending king can safely give horizontal checks from the long flank. Translated in this position, it means that the white king should head to the queen side and that the white rook should go to h8. If we violate this thumb rule with 53.Ke1, then black wins with 53...Ra1+ 54.Kf2 Kd2. After the correct move 54.Kc1 white has prevented a direct loss and the struggle for a draw can continue.

**Position 2 is the same game Kedzierski – Hater (7.14).**

After 58.Kc1 Kc3! the white rook is at a wrong square to give an effective check. Whites king cannot defend the promotion square anymore and loses: 59.Kd1 Ra2 followed by Ra2-a1+ and d4-d3+. After the correct move 58.Kb3 white has prevented a direct loss and the struggle for a draw can continue.

**Position 3 is the same game Kedzierski – Hater (7.14).**

Blacks main threat is Re7-b7+. The white king should defend the promotion square. 62.Kb2 is a save move. 62.Rg3 is also playable, but it unnecessary complicates the position after 62...Re3.

**Position 4 is the same game Kedzierski – Hater (7.14).**

Blacks main threat is d4-d3. To prevent this threat, white should improve the position of his rook with the save move 65.Rh8. In the game white played 65.Rh3+. this move is also playable, but it unnecessary complicates the position.

**Position 5 is the same game Kedzierski – Hater (7.14).**

Blacks main threat is Rb7-h7-h1+. It looks like white cannot prevent this threat, but here a stalemate situation will help white. 66.Rg2! with threat Rg2-c2+ is the only playable defence.

**Position 6 is the same game Kedzierski – Hater (7.14).**

66...Rh7 is a winning move. After 67.Rg1 blacks wins after Rh2 68.Kb1 (68.Rf1 Ra2 69.Kb1 Rb2+) 68...Rb2+ (69.Ka1 Rb8) 69.Kc1 d2+70.Kd1 Rb1+.

**Position 7 is the game Bacus – Bohn (7.06).**

Black has structural advantage because his pieces are better than whites pieces. According to Steinitz elements of chess, black should first improve his pieces before playing a pawn move or exchanging material. After 43...Kh6! (improving the king position) white will lose a pawn with no counter play, for example 44.Kf1 Qxe3 45.Rxe3 Rxb2.

In the game black played the inaccurate move 43...Qxc4. After 44.Rc3! Rxc3 45.Bxc4 Rxe3 46.Kxe3. This end game is drawn because black cannot improve his position due to the passed pawn at h5.

**Position 8 is the game Hansen – Nill (7.07).**

It looks like black has pressure along the b file. The question for white is, how to relieve it. If white can succeed this task, his position will be better because he also has the centre. First we analyze the tactical way with 18.b4, the move played in the game. After 18...Qxb4 19.Rfb1 the combination has not ended yet.



Black has the counter blow 19...Nc4! After 20.Qc1 Nxe3 21.Rxb4 cxb4 black has created many threats and soon won the game.

This leaves room for a structural approach to find a solution. In the position after 17...Qxb6, white has not activated all his pieces. The knight at h1 is the worst piece and should be brought as soon as possible. After 18.Nf2 black best plan is now to put the bishop at d7 to b5, to challenge square c4. Playing 18...Bb5 is not possible yet because of 19.b4. A better move is 18...Qb7. Here is a possible continuation. 19.Ra3 Reb8 (19...Bb5? 20.Rb3) 20.b3 Qb4 21.Qc1



White has successfully defended against the pressure at the b file and has the better chances. For example: 21...Qb7 22.Rd1 Bb5 23.f4!

**Position 9 is the game Szczsniak – Tucker (7.18).**

Black has three pawn islands (a6-b7, d6-e7 and g6-h7) and white has two pawn islands (b4-c4 and e4-f3-g3-h2). According to Steinitz elements of chess, whites pawn structure is better than blacks pawn structure. The reason is that it is better that a pawn is defended by another pawn instead of a piece. It is better that your pieces are attacking instead of defending your own pawns, isn't it? Looking in the position, white also has more space. The only thing white has not done yet, is castling. If white has castled, his position will be turned into structural advantage. So black has no time to loose. We have to look for a move that fights against structural advantage. This means, moves that can open the position. A requirement to open the position, is that the pieces are put at the best squares. Looking at the black pieces, they cannot be improved. This means that it is time for a pawn move: 19...e6! After 20.Nf4 Bc3+ white has two options.

1. 21.Bd2? Bxd2+ 22.Qxd2 Nde5 23.Ne3 Qb6 and the pawn at b4 is lost.
2. 21.Kf2.



Black now has many options. Taking at b4 is not a good moment because the black bishop is temporary out of play after 21...Nxb4 22.Nxb4 Bxb4 23.Nd3 Ba5 24.Rhd1. Safe options are 21...Nde5 and 21...Qe7, both with better chances for black.

**Position 10 is the same game Szczsniak – Tucker (7.18).**

Square f1 is vulnerable. After 32...Nxd5! white has no defence because 33.Qxd5 will be answered by 33...Rf1+! 34.Bxf1 Qxd5. A better try is 33.Rc8, but after 33...Bf2+ 34.Kd1 Ne3+ 35.Bxe3 Bxe3 36.Qxe7+ Rf7 whites king is too vulnerable.

**Position 11 is the same game Szczsniak – Tucker (7.18).**

Despite less material, white has some practical counter play because of the passed pawns. It is important to protect them. After 40.Bf3! Bxd2+ 41.Kxd2 Qxb4+ 42.Ke3 black has a hard time to improve his position. In the game white grabbed a pawn with 40.Rxh7? After 40...Bxd2+ 41.Kxd2 Qd4+! 42.Bd3 Qxd5 black has eliminated whites main threat, resulting in a better position.

**Position 12 is the game Deneyer – Demjen (7.24).**

White has a weak bishop because the pawns at the queen side are put on the same colour of the bishop. The white squares around these pawns are weak, but this is compensated by the pressure at the a file. At the moment black's only method of counter play is Bf6 followed by e6-e5. Can white prevent this? Honestly, no. It can be prevented by f2-f4, but this move should only be played if white has control of the surrounding squares. According to Steinitz elements of chess, a pawn move should only be played if the pieces are put at their optimal squares. Unlike black the white king has not been brought into play. A sensible move would be **27.g3** followed by Kg1-g2. Here is an example of a possible continuation: **27...Bf6** (preparing e6-e5). **28.Kg2** (Not 28.f4? Rxc3! with easy play for black because the white pawns at the queen side are weak and white has not activated his king). White threat is now f2-f4, preventing any counter play of black.



Blacks best option is now to play e6-e5, before it cannot be played anymore. 28...e5! White now has two options.

1. 29.b5 exd4 30.cxd4 Rac8 31.R6a4 with better chances for white.
2. 29.c4!? with a double edged position with chances for white, for example 29...exd4 30. R6a3+ Ke4 31.Re2+ Kf5 32.c5.

In the game white played 27.b5 with the threat b5-b6. This move only helps black because the pawn at b5 is as weak as the pawn at a7. After 27...Rb8 28.Rxa7 Rxa7 29.Rxa7 black now can play 29...Bg5 attacking the weak pawn c3, with equal chances.

**Position 13 is the same game Deneyer – Demjen (7.24).**

Blacks threats are Rb8-g8 and Kd4-c5. Despite being a piece down, white has practical chances because of the passed pawns. To have a good reply at blacks plans, white has to play a multifunctional move. The passed pawn at g6 can be supported with the passed pawn at the h row, with the result that the white rook is free to have other tasks. With 37.h4! white can still fight. Here is an example for a continuation. 37...Ke4 38.Kg2 d4 (38...Kf5 39.h5 Be5 40.b6 Rxb6 41.Rf7+ Kg5 42.f4+ with an equal position) 39.b6 d3



White now has to stop the d pawn. 40.Rd7! Kd5 41.Kf3 Kc6 42.Ra7 Be5 43.Ra2 Rd8 44.Rd2 Bc3 45.Rd1 d2 46.h5 Rh8 47.Kg4 Kxb6 48.f4 Kc5 49.Kg5 Ra8 50.g7 Bxg7 51.Rxd2 Rg8 52.Rc2+ Kd6 53.h6 Be5+ 54.Kh5 Bxf4 55.h7 Rh8 56.Kg6 and white has practical chances to play for a draw.

In the game white played 37.b6, which was not accurate because the black king can pick up the b pawn after 37...Rg8! 38.g7 Kc5 39.b7 Kc6 40.h4 Kxb7. After 41.h5 Bf4 42.Kg2 black should now move the king to the centre with for example 42...Kc6, to secure a winning position.

**Position 14 is the same game Deneyer – Demjen (7.24).**

Black last move was a mistake. After 43.h6! Bxh6 44.Rxh6 Rxg7+ 45.Kf1 white is one pawn down, but the rook ending gives him drawing chances because the black king is cut off from the black pawns.

**Position 15 is the game Bigras – Van den Heuvel (7.27).**

White is a pawn down, but he has a temporary advantage in the form of better development. Temporary means: don't slow down! If you keep playing quiet moves then your temporary advantage will automatically disappear.

With 14.c4! white has increased his influence in the centre and he has activated the bishop at b2.