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Fundamental Excellence

Carsten Hansen

Fundamental Chess Endings by Karsten Müller and Frank Lamprecht, 2001 Gambit Publications, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Paperback, 416 pp., \$29.95

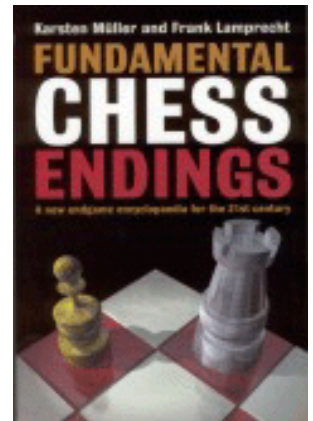
It happens from time to time that I pick up a chess book that I will enjoy for many years to come.

That was the feeling I got when I for the first time took

Fundamental Chess Endings down from the shelf in my local bookstore several months ago. I

subsequently found a

comfortable chair and for the next couple of hours, I was entranced, browsing through the book, page by page, as if I was able to absorb everything from the pages that evening.



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It was back in 1988 when I first became acquainted with one of the two co-authors, Karsten Müller. It was the first round of the Danish Junior Open Championship, the strongest tournament I had ever played in. However, after barely having made 20 moves it was game over, no endgame that day. Several years went by, and while I saw his name mentioned on occasion, when I looked through the



results from the German Bundesliga, I didn't really take much notice of his results.

However, then in the beginning of 2000, I received a review copy of *Secrets of Pawn Endings* (Everyman 2000) that he had co-written with compatriot Frank Lamprecht. The book was (and of course still is) absolutely phenomenal and I so informed readers in my review on the Danish Chess Federation's website (for those that feel confident they can understand Danish well enough, the link is www.dsu.dk/anmeldelser). If you want to know about or even attempt to understand pawn endings fully, this is *the* work you will have to study.

Shortly after having reviewed *Secrets of Pawn Endings*, I started as a columnist on ChessCafe. Who was the first one to correct an analytical error in my very first column? Yes, you guessed it, Karsten Müller!

He has since become a columnist here at ChessCafe.com, and in all honesty, his column is one of my favorites. The knowledge I acquired from an article he wrote about opposite coloured bishops saved me a draw in a very critical endgame shortly after the article had been published. Yes, dear reader, studying the endgame does reap benefits; maybe not as promptly as it did for me in this case, but in the long run, it always will.

Therefore when asked if I was interested in reviewing the present book, I obviously jumped to it.

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To receive this *free* weekly update, type in your email address and click Subscribe. That's all there is to it! And, we do not make this list available to anyone else.



So what is *Fundamental Chess Endings*? In the preface the authors tell us the following: “*Fundamental Chess Endings* is primarily conceived as a textbook and is divided into 12 chapters with exercises. We start with the basic mates and continue with chapters on all endings where each side has at most one piece, plus sections on some of the more important endings with additional pieces. The statistics were only a rough guideline for the space we assigned to particular endings. For instance, we devoted a kit of space to rook endings as they occur most often in practice, and to pawn endings as they are fundamental for all other endings. Some endings with more pieces, such as double-rook endings or queen against two rooks, are also covered, and in Chapter 11 some general endgame principles are explained using endings with more material. At the end of each chapter or section, rules and principles for the specific ending are given. Study them carefully - you should know them by heart! A list of selected reference works is also given in the same place.”

The material is divided up as follows (and I will only give the chapter headings, as the contents listing cover no less than five pages in beginning of the book, and also doubles as a very detailed Index):

Statistics (2 pages)

Nunn Convention (1 page)

1. The Basic Mates (5 pages)
2. Pawn Endings (37 pages)

3. Knight Endings (35 pages)
4. Bishop Endings (39 pages)
5. Bishop vs Knight (29 pages)
6. Rook Endings (95 pages)
7. Rook vs Minor Piece(s) (39 pages)
8. Rook and Minor Piece vs Rook (and Minor Piece) (18 pages)
9. Queen Endings (17 pages)
10. Further Queen Endings (23 pages)
11. Endgame Strategy (6 pages)
12. Further Exercises (7 pages)
13. Solution to Exercises (34 pages)
14. Table of Computer Database Results (7 pages)

Each chapter is divided into sub-chapters, which again is broken down into smaller sections, such as for example is done with knight endings (chapter 3). After a short introduction, the authors split that material up as follows:

- | | | |
|------|------------------|----|
| 3.1: | Knight vs Pawns | 58 |
| 3.2: | Knight vs Knight | 76 |

Then immediately they move on to Knight vs Pawns, and promptly divide the material into:

- | | | |
|----|------------------------------|----|
| A: | Knight vs Pawn | 58 |
| B: | Knight vs Two or Three Pawns | 61 |
| C: | Knight and Pawn vs King | 63 |
| D: | Knight and Pawns vs Pawns | 65 |

Then if it is necessary, the break it down even further, such as it is the case under D:

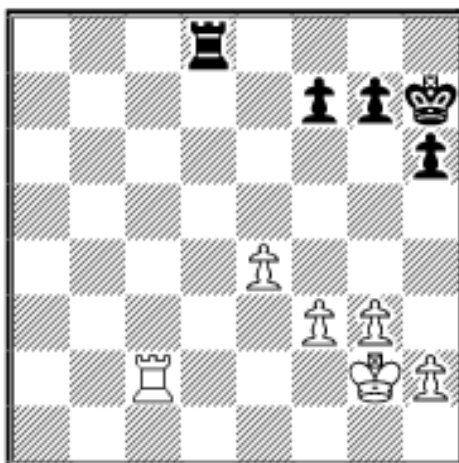
- D1: No Passed Pawns
65
- D2: Both Side Have Passed Pawns
66
- D3: Both Sides Have Several Pawns
67

The numbers are the page numbers in the book. This is another feature I truly appreciate in this book, as it makes it very easy to navigate.

The coverage of the material is similarly thorough with plenty of examples, good annotations, thorough analysis and general comments about what to look out for, such as common mistakes, useful ideas, frequently occurring positions, things that can be easy to miss at the board, etc.

Here is an example taken from chapter 6:

"The difficulty of these endings is emphasized by the following loss by Garry Kasparov:



**1...h5 2 f4 g6 3 e5
Rd3 4 Kh3!**

Advancing with the king like this is a dangerous plan forcing the defender to play very accurately.

4...Re3 5 Kh4 Kg7 6

Kg5 Re1?

Staying behind the e-pawn is wrong as White can break through with e6 anyway. It was necessary to play 6...Ra3 7 Rc7 Ra6! 8 Re7 Ra5, when White can't break through, e.g., 9 h3 (9 f5 gxf5 10 e6 f4+ 11 Kxf4 Kf6 12 Rxf7+ Kxe6 = Emms) 9...Ra3 10 g4 hxg4 11 hxg4 Ra5 12 f5 Rxe5! =.

7 Rc7 Re2 8 Re7! Ra2

Now it is too late to improve the position of the rook. However, Black was lost in any case:

- a) 8...h4 9 e6 hxg3 10 Rxf7+ Kg8 11 hxg3 Rxe6 12 Rf6 +/-.
- b) 8...Re4 9 e6! Rxe6 10 Rxe6 fxe6 11 h3 Kf7 12 Kh6 Kf6 13 g4 h4 (13...hxg4 14 hxg4 Kf7 15 g5 +/-) 14 g5+ Kf5 15 Kg7 Kxf4 16 Kxg6 e5 17 Kh5 e4 18 g6 e3 19 g7 e2 20 g8Q e1Q 21 Qg5+ Kf3 22 Qg4+ Ke3 23 Qe6+ +/- (Ribli in *ChessBase Magazine* 76).

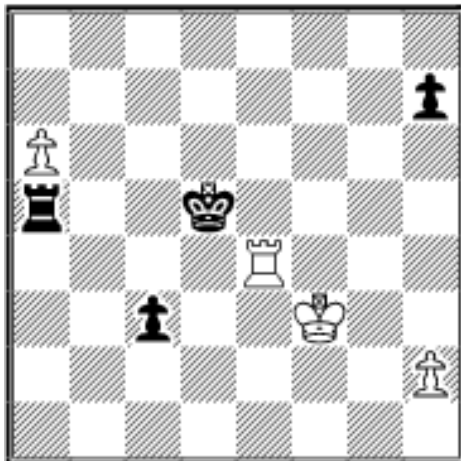
9 f5! gxf5 10 e6 h4

10...Rxb2 11 Rxf7+ Kg8 12 Kf6 Ra2 13 Rg7+ Kh8 14 e7 Ra6+ 15 Kf7 Ra7 16 Rg5 +/-.

11 Rxf7+ Kg8 12 Kf6 1-0."

These all make for an absolutely excellent book. But it doesn't end there. In addition, you can find brief summaries throughout the book at the end of sub-chapters. The authors also list the reference works they have made use of for that particular section. Then, to top it all off, there are numerous

exercises throughout, some in each chapter. The exercises usually have a short comment attached to it, as in this example:



"White played **1 Re3?**
c2 2 Rc3. How did
Black refute this idea?
And what should White
have done instead?"

The solution can be
found at the end of the
book, where all the
solutions have been

gathered together. The answer to the first question is reasonably easy, but the second question, is more difficult to find the right solution.

The authors give the following answers:

V. Topalov - G. Kasparov Las Palmas 1996

1 Re3?

After 1 Re7! White can save the position (using the old aphorism by Tarrasch: "rook endings are always drawn"): 1...Rxa6 (1...Kd6 2 Re3 c2 3 Re1 Rxa6 4 Rc1 Rc6 5 Ke4 Ke6 6 Kd3 Kf5 7 Rxc2 =) 2 Ke2, and then:

a) 2...Rc6 3 Kd1 h6 4 Kc2 =.

b) 2...Rh6 3 Kd3 Rh3+ 4 Kc2 Kd4 (4...h5 5 Rc7 Kd4 6 Kb3 =) 5 Rd7+ Ke4 6 Rc7 Kf4 7 Rxc3 =.

c) 2...Kc4 3 Rxh7 Rd6 (3...Kb3 4 h4 c2 5 Rb7+ Kc3 6 Rc7+ Kb2 7 Rb7+ Kc1 8 h5 Ke6+ 9 Kf3 Rh6 10 Kg4 Rc6 11 Rf7 =) 4 Rc7+ Kb3 5 h4 c2 6 Ke3 Rf6 7 h5 Kb2 8 Rb7+ Kc1 9 Rc7 Rh6 10 Kd3

Rd6+ 11 Ke4 Rf6 12 Ke3 =.

1...c2 2 Rc3

This was met with a very nice refutation:

2...Rc5!

Nunn's suggestion 2...Ra3 also wins, but is much more complicated; e.g. 3 Rxa3 c1Q 4 Ra5+ Ke6 5 Ra2 Qc6+ 6 Kf2 Qc5+ 7 Kf1 Qc4+ 8 Re2+ Kf5 9 a7 Qa6 -+. **0-1**

This book is absolutely phenomenal and it is a book that you, if you don't already have it, should get; you will not regret it. The material is comprehensive and the presentation easy to follow, while at the same time very instructive.

Had it not been for the fact that it was published towards the very end of last year, when only few people knew about it, I would think that it could easily have run away with the book of the year award, it is that good! In my opinion this book will go on to become a classic, much like Reuben Fine's *Basic Chess Endings* is. Just like Fine's book, which covered much more than just the basics, the present book covers much more than what is just fundamental. My only regret regarding this book is that I would have liked to see it hardcover, but that of course would have made the book considerably more expensive.

[Order](#) *Fundamental Chess Endings*
by Karsten Müller & Frank Lamprecht



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