

Efstratios Grivas

MONSTER

YOUR ENDGAME

PLANNING

VOLUME 1



Chess
Evolution

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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

The 'Rule of the Three Weaknesses'
can be helpful to evaluate nearly any endgame:

1. One weakness = slightly better (\pm).
2. Two weaknesses = clearly better (\pm).
3. Three weaknesses = winning (+-).

Remember this important rule;
it will help you to make the correct decisions,
even when you are still in the middlegame — in the endgame for sure!

FOREWORD

The MYEP series offer training on a vital subject, the choice of the ‘best’ available endgame plan. As is commonly accepted, 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.

The today Author has at his disposal powerful databases, tablebases, analysed material, books and by adding his knowledge, you will get what you are looking for!

The endgame is the phase of the game that it has been extensively analysed and formed to concrete conclusions, although in nearly all the books I do know, very little space is dedicated to forming plans.

I think this is because of space limitations and because it’s a difficult theme that doesn’t look too interesting for the readers. But a modern chess player cannot really choose what he likes or prefers — this has nothing to do with openings!

Today we have shorter time-controls and there isn’t really enough time to dig on the subtleties of each ending.

You have to know and to repeat knowledge; don’t be carried away by the usual myth of the ‘chess talent’. As I repeatedly wrote and proved ‘talent is the excuse of the failed’.

‘Unfortunately’, the modern chess player is entitled and forced to work more than his predecessors. The modern chess trainer as well needs to prepare more delicate themes, understand them and teach them as well to his students. So, there is plenty of room for everything and for everybody who is thirsty for knowledge.

Knowledge is the key word. And knowledge is absorbed sub-consciously; it is impossible to remember everything you study. So, it is highly important to work with good material and good trainers in order to improve and get higher in the Chess Olympus Mountain.

Nowadays the help of the Silicon Monster (chess analysis engines) is quite valuable, as it can save an author countless hours of analysis and checking. But still the role of the qualified

trainer remains important; he knows where the truth is — he knows what to keep and what to throw away...

I do not like to claim that everything I wrote is perfect and completely sound; I always think of the surprise factor; I just try to present my thoughts honestly and with responsibility.

HOW TO DEAL WITH THE BOOK

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. In 2019 I published a two-volume series called ‘Monster Your Middlegame Planning’ and now it was time to do the same on the Endgame! All four books are published by ‘Chess Evolution’.

The format is the same as in MYMP, with 13 thematic chapters, where in each of them 6 tests are included (in each volume). 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 at the end of the day!

With this book-series 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 books 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 avail-

able 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
0–1199	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!

Sharjah, 2019
Efstratios Grivas

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I would like to thank Mr. Manolis Kotsifis for being the first tester and proofer of the book, advising me with some important thoughts and suggestions.

DEDICATION

This series is dedicated to my parents, Father Georgios Grivas, who died on 2010 and Mother Katina Griva-Bouli, who died on 2015. Finally I understood what means to be an orphan...

THE ENDGAME

150 years ago the quality of played end games was quite low, as chess-players were reaching it quite rarely!

As strategy and manoeuvres were starting to overcome tactics, more and more endgames were suddenly seen. So, a need for endgame material was essential.

'Basic Chess Endings' (abbreviated BCE) is a book on endgames which was written by Grandmaster Reuben Fine and originally published on October 27, 1941.

It is considered the first systematic book in English on the endgame phase of the game of chess. It is the best-known endgame book in English and is a classic piece of chess endgame literature.

The book is dedicated to World Champion Emanuel Lasker, who died in 1941 (the year the book was published). It was revised in 2003 by Pal Benko.

'Basic Chess Endings' was written by Reuben Fine in only four months and was published in 1941 by McK-

ay (a division of Random House) in hardback. The book used the now obsolete descriptive chess notation and used the old system of using the abbreviation 'Kt' to stand for knight instead of the more modern 'N'.

In a 1984 interview, Fine said that it took him three months to write the book. He said that organising the material gave him no trouble, but it was hard work coming up with example positions. He created many of the examples.

There was a Hardback Limited Edition of 500 signed by Ruben Fine sold by USCF in the 1940s. The hardback edition was reprinted at least as late as 1960. The copyright was renewed in 1969 as the book went through many paperback impressions. It went through ten printings in paperback by 1981.

The original book contains 573 pages and 607 diagrams of positions. Many other positions were given by listing the location of the pieces rather than showing a diagram. The 2003 revision contains 587 pages with 1330 positions, most with diagrams.

Of course many other good books followed, mainly those of Yuri Averbakh, Vasily Smyslov and Paul Keres. But all of them had some analysis flaws as well — it was rather difficult to be accurate...

COMPUTER EVOLUTION

The computers' evolution changed everything in the way we learn and analyse endgames today, at least in some important degree.

Nowadays chess players have access to many good and accurate endgame books, mainly because of the tablebases, which changed our endgame vision.

These tablebases contain the game-theoretical value (win, loss, or draw) of each possible move in each possible position, and how many moves it would take to achieve that result with perfect play.

Thus, the tablebases act as an oracle, always providing the optimal moves. Typically, the database records each possible position with certain pieces remaining on the board, and the best moves with White to move and with Black to move.

Tablebases are generated by retrograde analysis, working backwards

from a checkmated position. By 2005, all chess positions with up to six pieces (including the two kings) had been solved — this is what we call today the Nalimov Tablebases.

The tablebases of all endgames with up to six pieces are available for free download, and may also be queried using web interfaces. They require more than one terabyte of storage space.

By August 2012, tablebases had solved chess for every position with up to seven pieces (the positions with a lone king versus a king and five pieces were omitted because they were considered to be 'rather obvious') — this is what we call today the Lomonosov Tablebases. The size of all tablebases up to seven-man is about 140 TB.

The solutions have profoundly advanced the chess community's understanding of endgame theory.

Some positions which humans had analysed as draws were proven to be winnable; the tablebase analysis could find a mate in more than five hundred moves, far beyond the horizon of humans, and even beyond the capability of a computer during play.

For this reason, they have also called into question the 50-move rule since many positions are now seen to exist that are a win for one side but would be drawn because of the 50-move rule.

Tablebases have enhanced competitive play and facilitated composition of endgame studies. They provide a powerful analytical tool.

Of course we can expect the 8-pieces version but I feel that it will be a bit delayed!

Chess players tend to think that theory only applies to openings. This is a very wrong attitude, as logic and practice have proven that theory counts for every part of a game.

ENDGAME THINKING

‘To learn and to play endgames well the chessplayer must love endgames’ — Lev Psakhis.

Different kinds of endgames have specific characteristics and rules. Every serious player must know many typical positions and main principles of all types of endings.

That knowledge should help us during the game, but it is not enough to be a good player, not yet. There just too many different endings, some of them with two or more pieces, some very complex.

To be comfortable and play well those complex endings requires specific knowledge and specific ways of thinking. We will call it ‘endgame thinking’.

First of all we will separate endgames into two categories:

SOS Tip 1 — Endgame Categories

1. Tactical — Tactical complex endgames must be treated as a middle-game.
2. Strategic — Pure Endgames.

As in the middlegame our thoughts are busy with calculation based on the specific characteristics of the position.

But more often in our games, as practice proves, we have so-called strategic endgames; the endgames where even computers have difficulties to find the best move. These are the endgames that do not rely on calculation.

It is known from the time of Jose Raul Capablanca that in strategic, positional endgames we have to think by plans, schemes. Variations and calculation plays a secondary role.

First we have to understand where to put our pieces; to find an idea for improving position. After, we start to form a plan. This is what we call ‘endgame thinking’.

Thinking correctly, in the right order, will significantly simplify the process of calculation...

SOS Tip 2 — Endgame Thinking

1. Piece placement.

2. Plan forming.

3. Do not rush!

So, how to approach ‘endgame thinking’, how to switch the right button in our brain. The Russian master Sergei Belavenets, great chess thinker, gives the following great advice:

‘After tactical complications, when our brains have been busy with calculation of beautiful variations, the exchange of pieces might follow, and some kind of prosaic endgame arises...

Every player has to spend a few minutes, if the clock allows, just to relax, and to calm down your emotions in order to look differently at the position. This investment of time will pay back later in the game.

I am well aware that this advice was given before World War II, when they had very different time controls.

So do not waste your time, just switch on the button in your brains, just remember that positional endgames require ‘endgame thinking’ by schemes, by plans.

And do not forget to respect your opponent’s ideas. The art of endgame play is how to achieve your plan and subdue the opponent at the same time. And this series is here to help understand it!

THE GOLDEN RULES OF THE ENDGAME

The endgame is the moment of truth. It is the phase of the game where we will try to reap the seeds of our effort, regardless of whether that is the full point of victory or the half point of the draw.

In the endgame the significance of errors increases, as the opportunities for correcting them are few.

The following rules are considered to be the Golden Rules of the Endgame. They were recorded by GMs **Reuben Fine** and **Pal Benko**, two of the world's greatest experts in this field:

1. Start thinking about the endgame in the middlegame.
2. Somebody usually gets the better deal in every exchange.
3. The king is a strong piece: Use it!
4. If you are one or two pawns ahead, exchange pieces but not pawns.
5. If you are one or two pawns behind, exchange pawns but not pieces.
6. If you have an advantage, do not leave all the pawns on one side.
7. A distant passed pawn is half the victory.
8. Passed pawns should be advanced as rapidly as possible.
9. Doubled, isolated and blockaded pawns are weak: Avoid them!
10. The easiest endings to win are pure pawn endings.
11. Passed pawns should be blockaded by the king, the only piece that is not harmed by watching a pawn is the knight.
12. Two bishops vs bishop and knight constitute a tangible advantage.
13. Bishops are better than knights in all except blocked pawn positions.
14. Do not place your pawns on the colour of your bishop.
15. The easiest endings to draw are those with bishops of opposite colours.
16. Rooks belong behind passed pawns.
17. A rook on the seventh rank is sufficient compensation for a pawn.
18. Not all rook endings are drawn!
19. Perpetual check looms in all queen endings.
20. Every move in the endgame is of the utmost importance because you are closer to the moment of truth.

Of course there are plenty of other guidelines for dealing with the end-game. One of them goes as:

1. Activate you king.
2. If you have more pawns than your opponent, exchange pieces not pawns.
3. If you have fewer pawns than you opponent exchange pawns not pieces.
4. Try to create a passed pawn.
5. Protected passed pawns are very strong.
6. Outside protected passed pawns are usually decisive.
7. Try to promote a passed pawn.
8. If your opponent has a passed pawn, try to blockade that pawn.
9. Bishops are generally stronger than knights.
10. Bishops of opposite colour increase the chances of a draw.
11. Be aggressive with your rooks; if you choice is between defence and counter-attack, always counter-attack.
12. Rooks belong behind passed pawns.
13. Know the basics.

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 the 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 goal: 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 opening 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.

PAWN ENDINGS

PAWN POWER

Pawn endings are fundamental to the education of an aspiring chess player.

The reason is obvious: no matter which other type of ending we encounter, there will always be moments when the possibility of a transition (through exchanges) to a pawn ending will force us to properly evaluate its positive or negative properties and accordingly make our decision.

Many games never reach the endgame. However, every good chess player, even in the heat of the battle, must consider the endings that can possibly arise in the course of the game.

Our opening moves must take into account the consequences they may impose on a future ending.

Doubled, isolated, immobilised or passed pawns, strong and weak squares (in general, all the positional elements, positive or negative), must be considered and evaluated.

Anticipation of a favourable ending or fear of an inferior one will often influence our decisions in the middle-

game, in the sense of selecting or rejecting certain continuations.

When dissatisfied with a prospective ending we will often opt for unclear complications or serious material or positional concessions. In the end, our evaluation of the endings that may arise will affect the entire course of the battle.

In comparison with other types of endings, very few games actually reach a pawn ending. Based on this fact, many chess players tend to underestimate its rich content and significance.

It would be wrong to assume that perfect knowledge of its technical side is easy to master and that, consequently, its study is 'unimportant'.

The pawn ending lurks behind every position and its proper knowledge and evaluation can prove very useful to our decision-making process.

Pawn endings have their own specifics, which set them apart from other types of endings. Their main characteristic is the significant role of the

king, which transforms himself from a subject of protection by the other pieces to the most useful piece in combat.

As a rule, the active participation of the king in the proceedings decides the outcome of a pawn ending. Also, the worth of pawns is greatly increased, thanks to their unique ability to promote to any other piece.

Consequently, the basic aim in a pawn ending is to create a passed pawn and promote it.

The ‘transformation’ of the pawn can be considered as an original way of gaining material! Such a drastic change in the material balance between the opponents is usually sufficient to cease further resistance.

The threat of promotion, or even that of creating a passed pawn, is a powerful weapon in itself.

In pawn endings the king is the main motivating power, guiding and coordinating the advance of the pawns. As a rule, the king heads for the centre, from where, as the position dictates,

he can be directed to either flank, usually to attack enemy pawns.

The king also executes complex manoeuvres, aiming to occupy or defend critical squares, or to force the opponent to move himself, i.e. to create a zugzwang position.

Behind the ‘simplicity veil’ that covers pawn endings, quite often one can discover true gems and fantastic opportunities!

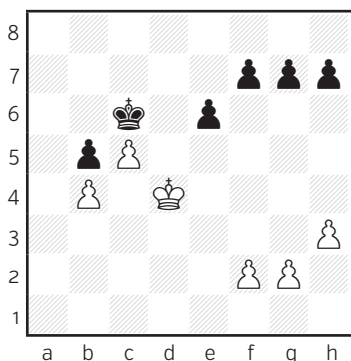
The main elements of pawn endings education can be classified as follows:

SOS Tip 1 — Pawn Endings Elements
1. Opposition: Close Opposition — Distant Opposition — Knight Opposition.
2. Rules: Promotion Square — Promotion Count — Advance of Separated Passed Pawns.
3. Squares: Critical Squares — Corresponding Squares.
4. Technique: Triangulation — Breakthrough — Passed Pawn — Outside Passed Pawn — Protected Passed Pawn.

EXERCISE 1

▷ **Kanmazalp Ogulcan**▶ **Darini Pouria****B22** Ankara 2011

35...♔c6



EVALUATION

This endgame looks like a draw to me, as there is hardly any entrance for my king on the kingside, so there is little hope to benefit from the protected passed c-pawn... As in similar cases the protected passed pawn is 'operating' as a decoy (it hardly queens!) and I am obliged to find the desired and accurate breakthrough on the kingside.

PLAN – EXECUTION

PLAN A

Obviously I must create weaknesses on the kingside and then penetrate

with my king to attack them. Black cannot defend them, as my passed & protected c-pawn deprives him. I feel that in general I should leave my h-pawn on h3, allowing my king to enter the h-file in an appropriate moment (after some pawns exchanges) and attack the black h-pawn. So, good seems to be **36.f4 f6 37.g4 ♔c7 38.g5** and so on.

PLAN B

As in Plan C, I think that good is **36.g4 f6**, but now I should go for **37.h4 ♔d7 38.g5**, when I should prevail, as my king would be able to attack the kingside opponent pawns, 'helped' by the c5-pawn.

PLAN C

With the use of the g-pawn I will create the desired breakthrough and potential entrance for my king. So, I should start with **36.g4 f6 (36... ♔d7, loses to 37.g5 ♔c6 38.♔e5 ♔d7 39.h4 ♔e7 40.h5 ♔d7 41.f3)** and now I should go directly for **37.g5**, when I should be on the right track.

Choose Your Plan

Choose Your Plan		
A	B	C

EXERCISE 2

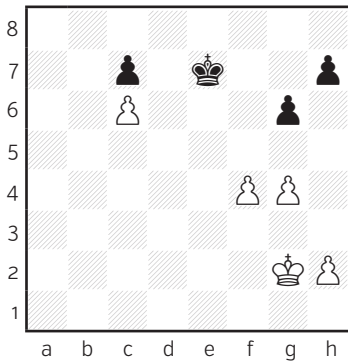
PLAN – EXECUTION

▷ Shirov Alexei

▶ Timman Jan

C80 Wijk aan Zee 1996

48...♔xe7



EVALUATION

As according to my calculations this ending is lost for my opponent and I just have to play the final touch, which I have prepared long ago. It is true that I will lose my c6-pawn, but this will not affect the outcome of the game, as my kingside pawns are pretty quick.

PLAN A

I have prepared the obvious **49.g5** and I should of course go for it. After **49...♔d6 50.h4 ♕xc6 51.f5 ♔d6 (51...gxf5 52.h5 ♔d6 53.g6 hxg6 54.h6+-)**, I can play **52.f6**. This is considered to be won for me due to my passed and protected f-pawn. My king will then travel to the queenside to collect the black c-pawn and the rest should be easy, as to pawn endings principles.

PLAN B

I think that I cannot win with **49.g5**, which is not good and instead I would have to go for the 'quick race' by **49.h4 ♔d6 50.f5 (50...♕xc6 51.fxg6 hxg6 52.h5+-) 50...gxf5 51.g5**, when this should be the end of the game.

PLAN C

As in Plan B, I think that **49.g5**, can't win but I can win by playing the natural **49.♕f3 ♔d6 50.♕e4 ♕xc6 51.♕e5 ♔d7 52.♕f6 c6 53.h3 c5 54.♕e5 ♔c6 55.h4 c4 56.♔d4**, when I do not see a defence for my opponent.

Choose Your Plan

Choose Your Plan		
A	B	C