BEFORE DATABASES

David Levy (DL) *Harry Nefkens (HN)*

London, UK Rotterdam, The Netherlands

1. TOURNAMENT PLAY (David Levy)

One of the most enjoyable tournaments of my chess-playing career was my first appearance in the Capablanca Memorial in Cuba, played in the resort of Cienfuegos in 1972. In an early round, I faced the Hungarian Grandmaster Levante Lengyel who kindly blundered a Pawn against me, allowing me to adjourn the game in a very promising-looking position. I analysed the adjourned position for many hours. It was quite clear that the game would soon come down to Queen and Knight versus Queen, but I could not find a forced win. The other Grandmasters in the tournament were eager to help me in order to reduce the chances of one of their Grandmaster colleagues, and hence enhance their own prospects of a high place. Donner, Platonov and Lein all tried to find a win in the KQNKQ ending but without success.

When the game resumed we duly reached KQNKQ, but soon Lengyel made a move which I had considered, during the adjournment analysis, to be non-optimal. Sure enough I managed to win the game.

But all this was long before Ken Thompson *et al.*, so I am now submitting this endgame to the scrutiny of the Thompson (1991) database so that we can find out whether the ICCA President-to-be (DL) and his Grandmaster opponent played as well as the database.

The game

For interested readers, we provide the first 66 moves of the game resulting in the position of Diagram 1.

Lengyel - Levy NiCKey HD 1.4
Cienfuegos, 1972
1.Nf3 f5 2.d4 e6 3.g3 Nf6 4.Bg2 Be7 5.O-O O-O 6.c4 d6 7.Nc3 a5 8.b3 Ne4 9.Bb2 Bf6 10.Qc2 Nc3 11.Bc3 Nc6 12.e4 fe4 13.Qe4 Qe8 14.Rae1 Qh5 15.Re3 Bd7 16.a3 Rae8 17.Qd3 b6 18.Rfe1 Ne7 19.h4 Nf5 20.Re4 Qg6 21.Rf4 Nh4 22.Qg6 Ng6 23.Rfe4 Re7 24.Bh3 Rfe8 25.Nh2 h5 26.f4 h4 27.Ng4 hg3 28.Nf6+ gf6 29.f5 ef5 30.Re7 Re7 31.Re7 Ne7 32.Kg2 Kf7 33.Kg3 f4+ 34.Kh2 Bh3 35.Kh3 f5 36.Kh4 Kg6 37.d5 c6 38.dc6 Nc6 39.Bd2 Nd4 40.Bf4 Nb3. Adjourned. 41.Bd6 Nd2 42.c5 Ne4 43.Bc7 bc5 44.Ba5 c4 45.Bb6 c3 46.Be3 Nd2 47.a4 Nb3 48.Bf4 Kf6 49.Kh5 Na5 50.Bc7 Nc4 51.Bf4 Na5 52.Bc7 Nc4 53.Bf4 c2 54.Kh4 Ne5 55.Bc1 Nc4 56.Bf4 Ne5 57.Bc1 Nd3 58.Ba3 Ke5 59.a5 Nc5 60.Kg3 Ke4 61.Bc1 Kd4 62.Kf4 Nd3+ 63.Kf5 Nc1 64.a6 Nd3 65.a7 c1Q 66.a8Q

The endgame

Diagram 1 contains the position in which the KQNKQ endgame starts. We first give the continuation as played in the game: 66. ... Qf4+ 67.Ke6 Qh6+ 68.Kd7 Qg7+ 69.Kc8 Qf8+ 70.Kb7 Nc5+ 71.Ka7 Qe7+ 72.Kb6 Nd7+ 73.Kc7 Ne5+ 74.Kb8 Qd8+ 75.Kb7 Qd7+ 76.Kb6 Nc4+ 77.Ka6 Qd6+ 78.Kb7 Qd7+ 79.Kb8 Qd8+ 80.Kb7 Nd6+ 81.Ka7 Qa5+ 82.Kb8 Qb6+ **0-1**

For comment, I must needs switch to my co-author, HN.

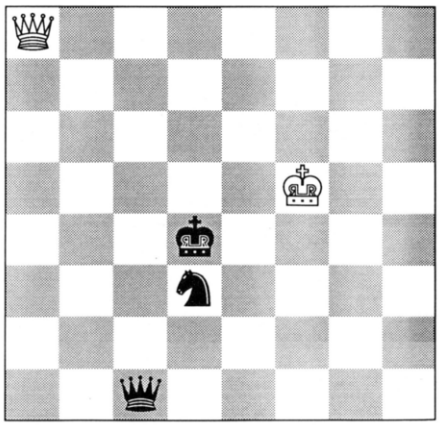


Diagram 1: Position after 66. a8Q.

2. ANNOTATIONS (Harry Nefkens)

It is only due to having Ken Thompson's (1991) CD-ROM available that I am able to comment upon the KQNKQ endgame sequence by DL as actually played.

Informed Comment

The simplest form of my comment is that starting from the position of Diagram 1, both contestants were far from optimality. As a reference, we pick up the position as continued from 66. a8Q. The omniscient database states that the position is won for Black with 14 moves to conversion. Our annotations take the form of stating the move played (the + for check being understood), followed by the distance to conversion in parentheses where applicable. This distance is computed as referred to what emerges after the move actually played.
When the comment in parentheses states 'draws!', it indicates that Black, the designated winner has allowed to degenerate his prospects of the theoretical value of the game to a mere draw. Move(s) after the semicolon in parentheses is/are optimal moves when the text move is not, and equi-optimal moves when the text move is optimal but one among several. As a rough indication of adhering to optimality the reader may be guided by a monotonous decrease (be it White's or Black's) of the number of moves to conversion: whenever this decreases by more than unity, the weaker side has given away moves; whenever this increases by whatever amount the stronger side is similarly at fault. The moves in square brackets are not played in the game.

66. ... Qf4 (13) **67. Ke6** (12) **Qh6??** (draws!; Nc5) **68. Kd7??** (8; Ke7) **Qg7??** (draws!; Nc5) **69. Kc8??** (5; Ke6) **Qf8?** (11; Qg8) **70. Kb7** (10) **Nc5** (10) **71. Ka7** (9) **Qe7?** (16; Qf7) **72. Kb6** (15) **Nd7** (15) **73. Kc7?** (13; Kb7) **Ne5** (13) **74. Kb8** (12) **Qd8?** (13; Qe8) **75. Kb7** (12) **Qd7** (12) **76. Kb6?** (8; Ka6) **Nc4** (8) **77. Ka6** (7) **Qd6** (7) **78. Kb7** (6) **Qd7?** (8; Qb4, Qb6) **79. Kb8?** (4; Ka6) **Qd8** (4) **80. Kb7** (3) **Nd6** (3) **81. Ka7** (2) **Qa5** (2) 82. **Kb8** (1) **Qb6** (1) [**83. Qb7** (0) **Qxb7** (0)]

With the database in hand, we may state that, of the 17 black and 16 white moves played, only 11 were optimal by both players. More specifically, it has been shown that Black (DL) blunderingly had relinguished its assumed win twice on moves 67 and 68. Black was saved by White's abandoning his potential draw by a compensating blunder, immediately restoring the winning potential to Black.

A truly optimal line

Acting on the information from the database, one can present an optimal, shorter line for Black to win, equi-optimal moves being within parentheses. 66. ... Qf4+ 67. Ke6 Nc5+ 68. Ke7 Qh4+ 69. Kf7 Qh7+ 70. Kf6 Ne4+ 71. Ke6 Qg6+ 72. Ke7 Qf6+ 73. Kd7 Qf7+ 74. Kc8 Qg8+ 75. Kb7 Nc5+ 76. Ka7 Qa2+ 77. Kb8 Qh2+ 78. Ka7(c8) Qc7+ 79. Qb7 Qxb7 mate.

Encyclopaedia of Chess Endings' Reporting

It is a rough indication of the near-impossibility of unconsisted human analysis, that this Lengyel-Levy endgame was published in the *Encyclopaedia of Chess Endings* (Matanović, 1989) with appropriate comment on the theoretical value of the position, but with *four* non-optimal moves. Below we give the *Encyclopaedia*'s main variation.

66. ... Qf4 67. Ke6 Nc5! 68. Ke7 Qh4! 69. Kf7 Qh7 70. Kf6 Ne4 71. Ke6 Qg6 72. Kd7 Qf7 73. Kc8 Nd6 74. Kb8 Qe8 75. Ka7 Nb5 76. Kb7 Qe4 77. Kb8 Qe5 78. Kb7 Qd5 79. Kb8 Qd8 80. Kb7 Nd6 81. Ka7 Qa5 82. Kb8 Qb6

According to the database, only four moves out of the 33 decisions turned out to be non-optimal moves. These were

72. Kd7? (optimal is 72. Ke7; from a win-in-8 to a win-in-7)

73. ... Nd6? (optimal is 73. ... Qg8+; from a win-in-6 to a win-in-8)

76. ... Qe4? (optimal is 76. ... Qe7+; from a win-in-5 to a win-in-7)

78. ... Qd5? (optimal is 78. ... Qe7+; from a win-in-5 to a win-in-6).

A personal view

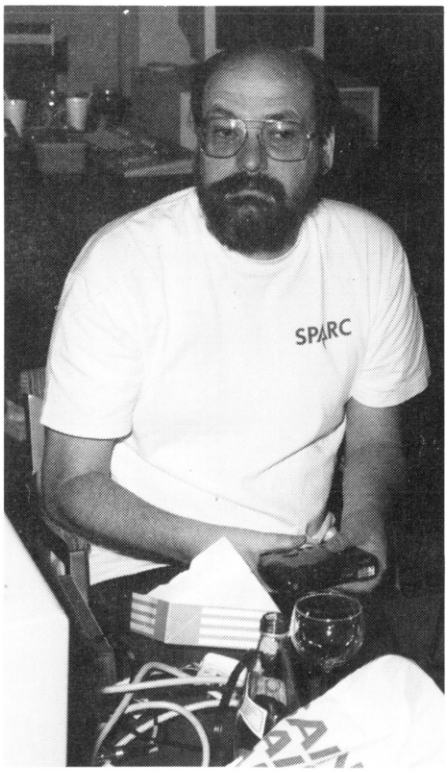
Injecting a personal note, I feel that both players performed poorly. I can substantiate this by having proved their blundering twice each. In mitigation, it may be stated that the *Encyclopaedia*, which could comment *a tête reposée*, deviated as often from optimality as the contestants blundered in the heat of the game.

3. REFERENCES

Nefkens, H.J.J. (1991). How to Win with a Knight Ahead. *ICCA Journal*, Vol. 4, No. 4, pp. 201-203.

Thompson, K. (1991). Chess Endgames Vol. 1. *ICCA Journal*, Vol. 14, No. 1, p. 22.

Matanović, A. (1989). *Enciklopedija Šahovskih završnica* (*Encyclopaedia of Chess Endings*), Study 1403. Šahovski Informator, Beograd.

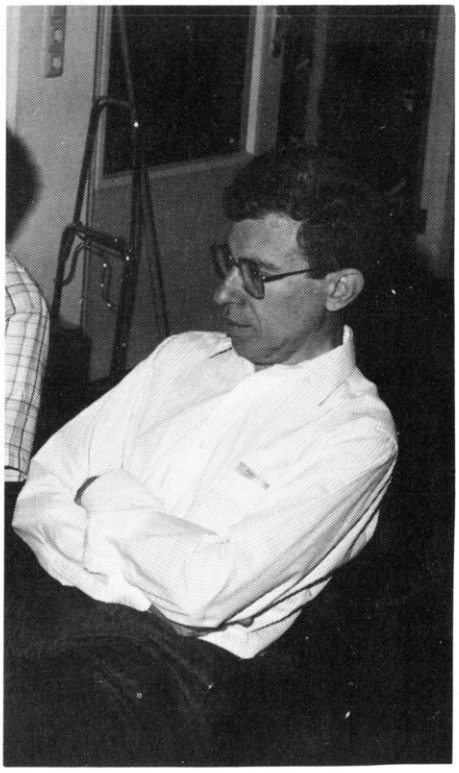


KEN THOMPSON,

the Bell Captain of the

CD-ROM endgame databases.

Photos by Jos Uiterwijk.



DAVID LEVY

corrected by Thompson's

omniscient CD-ROM.