We would like to make a few comments on the endgame summary in the previous issue of the Journal (Herschberg and Van den Herik, 1985). Firstly, both of us have constructed a KPK data base and therefore we compared the published q-value for KPK to the value following from our own work. In doing so we discovered a minor discrepancy from Clarke's results (Clarke, 1977). Clarke gives the following statistics (WTM only):

Won : 62,479 positions
Drawn : 19,185 positions (including stalemate)
Illegal: 16,640 positions

Our data bases, however, give: 62,480 won positions and 19,184 draws. We believe our figures to be correct because we developed our data bases independently from each other. In addition we mention that Van der Storm's data base locates the discrepancy at depth zero, where he finds 12,750 wins as against Clarke's 12,749. So it seems that in Clarke's construction an initialization error occurred. Of course, it would be very interesting to know whether other KPK data bases agree with us.

Secondly, we have a remark about the worst-case mating distance for endgames that are won by conversion into KQK, e.g., KQKR and KPK. We have proved that White (assumed to be the stronger side) can always avoid conversion into the worst-case KQK position. The proof follows almost immediately from the fact that (apart from symmetry) there is only one worst-case KQK position, viz. White Kh8 Qg7, Black Kd3. In every other position at most nine moves are
needed to mate. In the worst-case position as given above, it is clear that
White's previous move cannot have been a promotion, so this position cannot
have resulted from a KPK endgame while in other cases White's previous move
must have been a capture either on g7 or h8. In either case, however, that
capture could also be made by the other white piece, avoiding the worst-case
KQK position.

Hence, in a derived KQK endgame, nine moves at most are needed. For KPK this
maximum is achieved indeed, as shown recently (Van Bergen, 1985). For KQKR
we can now sharpen the upper bound for the worst-case mating distance from
41 to 40. As chess-players, we feel, however, that this sharpened upper
bound is still too high.

REFERENCES
University Press, Edinburgh.

DO THE DUTCH DESIGN THE THRIFTIEST
DATA BASES?
Harry J. Nefkens, pawn-proud before
his thesis-present painting.