

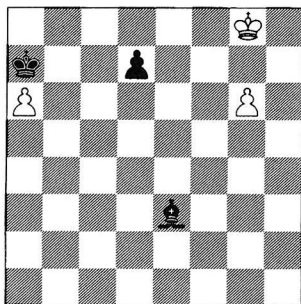
## PAWN'S TASK

Some constructive remarks concerning a study by Henk Mesman  
by Harrie Grondijs

The strategic function of a threat is to impede the opponent's freedom of choice. Either **directly**: threatening to gain material or to mate, or **derivative**: the threat to gain time by threatening material gain or mate. It would not be difficult to find concrete examples in politics or warfare.

In endgame studies this fact can be put to use as a constructive element for shaping choice type combinations.

### S01. H.Mesman, 1959



Draw

3/3

Diagram S01 shows a well-known logical study by the Dutch composer Henk Mesman. You find it on page 149 in EG 106 Part 2, and on page 84 of HISTORY OF COMPOSING IN THE NETHERLANDS AND FLANDERS. (Cf. Timothy Whitworth review elsewhere in this issue) It is as if 2.Kg8 gives up two tempi and that indeed is the case, but White can afford this loss of time. First of all, Black requires three moves to guard the d-pawn (Kxa6/b7/c8), and secondly, Black's alternative, to advance the d-pawn, loses two tempi in turn. Via the cascaded attack against the bishop, a tempo is gained because an extra move is needed by the black

bishop to occupy the long diagonal, and the black d-pawn can't advance further as it would block the bishop's line of action. The net effect is that the king can now launch a successful attack on the d-pawn without it being able to escape. After 2.Kg8 Black might try 2... Kxa6 because White has lost two moves, but now 3.Kh7/4.Kg8/5.Kf7 wins a move back, because Black must stop the g-pawn from the diagonal.

The beauty of this study lies in the balancing act of the white king's first move, forcing Black to be the first to commit to a plan.

What is the a-pawn doing? Is it really necessary or can it be made redundant? Well, it keeps the black king away from guarding the d-pawn. Without it, after 1.Kf7 Bh6 2.Kg8 Kb7 3.Kh7 Bf8 4.Kg8 Bb4 5.Kf7 Bc3 6.Ke7 Kc6/7 Black wins. What is more, the black king must not be too remote from the scene of the battle as it must reach e8 or c5 in time after 2.Kf6?. Note that the king cannot be placed on a3 either, although it prevents the dual, Black would win, because after 1.Kf7 Bh6 2.Kg8 Kb4 3.Kh7 Bf8 4.Kg8 Ba3 5.Kf7 Bb2 6.Ke7 d5 7.Ke6 Kc4 covers the d-pawn just in time.

But although it is there for good reasons, the pawn's presence is disturbing. It is a 'Night watchman', put onto the

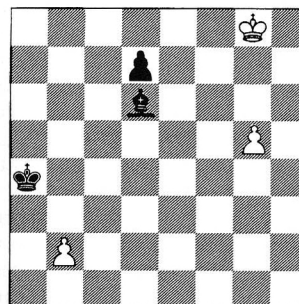
board to prevent a dual and incorrectness, without taking part in the complex of lines that form the solution.

Also, I was struck by the placement of the black bishop in the diagram. It might just as well be placed on f4, adding a variation. If: 1.Kf7, Be5 2.Ke7, d5 3.Ke6 the double attack performs the task that in the main line is taken up by the interference on the long diagonal.

After some experimenting I arrived at a version that preserves all the blossoming beauty of Mesman's invention, and brings the pawn alive (S02).

The solution to S01: 1.Kf7 Bh6 2.Kg8 d5 3.Kh7 Bf8 4.Kg8 Ba3 5.Kf7 Bb2 6.Ke6 =; if 1... Bd4 2.Ke7 d5 3.Ke6

### S02. H.Grondijs, 1992



Draw

3/3

The solution to S02: 1.Kf7 I] Bf4 2.g6 Bh6 3.Kg8 a] d5 4.Kh7 Bf8 5.Kg8 Bc5

6.Kf7 Bd4 7.Ke6 =; if b] 3... Kb4 4.Kh7 Bf8 5.Kg8 Bc5 6.Kf7 Bd4 7.Ke7 d5 8.Ke6 Kc4 9.b3† Kc5 10.b4† Kc4 11.b5 =; if c] 3... Kb5 4.Kh7 Bf8 5.Kg8 Bc5 6.Kf7 Bd4 7.Ke7 Kc6 8.b4 Bh8 9.b5† Kc7 10.b6† Kc8 11.b7† Kc7 12. b8Q† (Excelsior) =; if 1...II] Be5 2.Ke7 d5 3.Ke6 d4 4.Kxe5 d3 5.g6 d2 6.g7 d1Q g8Q =.

In the main variation it would be wrong for White to play 3.Kf6? Kb6 4.Ke5 Kc6 5.b4 Bg7† 6.Ke4 d5† and 6.d4 -+.

If White plays 1.g6? Black wins: 1... Be5 2.Kf7 Bh8 wins: White has failed to force d5 in time, with the threat play starting with 1.Kf7.

If 1.b3†? then 1... Kb5 2.Kf7 Bf4 3.g6 Bh6 4.Kg8 Kc6 5.Kh7 Bf8 6.Kg8 Bb4 7.Kf7 Bc3 8.Ke7 Bh8 -+.

Lastly, 1.b4? Be5 2.Kf7 Bh8 -+.

A final remark about logic's occasional long-windedness. We saw that after 1... Be5 White has 2.Ke7 preparing a double attack with 3.Ke6. In the main line (I), we may let Black play 5... Bd6 and let White respond 6.Kf7 and 7.Ke6 reaching the same position by different means (a king's detour). Thus we achieve reversed logic effects: in I] the pawn moves voluntarily to d5 and the bishop is forced to its spot on e5, in II] the bishop moves voluntarily to e5 in which case it's the pawn that is chased forward.