

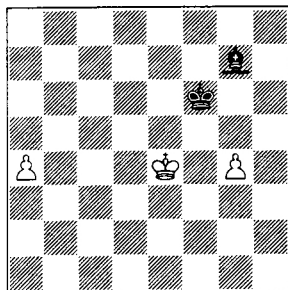
Is it allowed to pick flowers in Nalimov's Graveyard?

by Harrie Grondijs

From the ARVES-website (mastered by Peter Boll with so much competence), I followed the link to "EGTB" which features web-queries to the Nalimov Endgame Tablebases.

It was a real surprise to me that nowadays not only 6-men endings may be looked up but the ending may also hold up to three pawns¹. This allows us to finally ascertain proof of the correctness of a number of classic studies. For a good reason² I first ascertained that the Otten study is correct:

H. Otten
New York World 1891



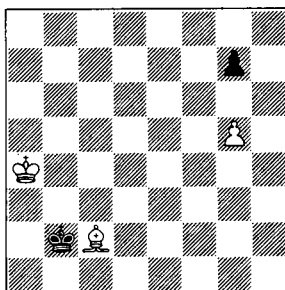
1) Win

Solution: 1.a5 {20} ♟f8 2.♔d5 {19} ♟h6 3.g5+ {18} ♟xg5 4.♚e4 {17} ♟h3 5.♟f3 {16} and wins.

Between the curly brackets I indicate the number of moves until conversion (of the pawn) as given on the website.

Then I looked up the Weenink.

H. Weenink
6e prijs Kagan's Neueste Schachnachrichten 1920-2



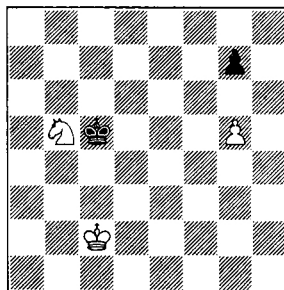
2) Win

Solution: 1.♟b1 {24} (but certainly not 1.g6?? ♟xc2 {26} -1) 1...♟xb1 2.♟b3 {23} ♟c1 3.♟c3 {22} ♟d1 4.♟d3 {21} ♟e1 5.♟e3 {20} ♟f1 6.♟f3 {19} and wins.

And luckily that one was correct as well, be it that after 6...♟g1 both 7.♟g4 and 7.g6 win in 18 more moves.

After some shifting around of the kings and the knight I arrived at the following Knight-version of the Weenink.

H. Grondijs
original



3) Win

Solution: The only road to victory here is 1.♟d3 {26} (PASSIVE GRAVITY as compared to the ACTIVE GRAVITY of the Weenink) 1...♟d5 2.♟d4 {25} ♟e5 3.♟c4 {24} g6 4.♟c5 {23} - a nice example of RELATIVE ZUGZWANG: if White would be allowed to skip the move he would have won in 22 moves (4. pass ♟f4 5.♟e6 {22}), as it stands he requires 23 moves. 4...♟f4 5.♟e6 {22} and wins.

It would seem quite obvious that I hardly deserve to be called the author of this position (all I did was shift the white knight and the kings around the board for a while). But the question can be asked whether then in retrospect the authorship of the Otten, Weenink, Saavedra and many

- 1 In 6-men endings: 4 against 2: all available; 3 against 3 without pawns: all available; furthermore a limited list of 3 against 3 endings with pawns are available.
- 2 For my booklet *De weg terug naar "H. Otten, New York"*

other miniature gems of the game must be taken away from their presumed composers and considered standard positions? Perhaps the publication date plays a role: Otten and Weenink did not know about computer truths and Grondijs does, - at

least is presumed to know. But then where do we draw the line, perhaps the date the Nalimov Tablebase was released for public usage, but when was that exactly? And what if I live somewhere without the chance to consult the Tablebases?

Solution: Pick your flower from a bed of poppies and take it along to offer it to a friend. I am certain the Gardener steps aside and he will smile at you; he might even be waving at you when you finally leave the burial grounds.