

Hobart International Junior Chess Club



NEWSLETTER

Issue 5

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This week we are going to look at **ROOK ENDGAMES**. Most Players feel helpless when they enter a Rook endgame. This is quite unfortunate since Rook endgames occur often – in fact, they are more common than any other kind of endgame. We will begin our Rook endgame education with two must know positions: The **Lucena Position** and the **Philidor Position**. They are reasonably easy to understand and learn and will help you to handle all other, far more complex Rook endgames.

The Lucena position, first published in 1634 by Salvio (for some reason it wasn't in an earlier book by Lucena), is a simplified position where one side has a Rook and a non rook pawn on the 7th rank with the king in front of the pawn while the other side has just a Rook.



White wins no matter who has the move, though we'll give white the move for simplicity. The key feature of the Lucena is the extra pawn on the 7th rank. Clearly white needs to do two things if he wants to win.

- Move his King off d8 so he can push his pawn
- Promote the pawn to a Queen.

Sounds easy, doesn't it? The problem is that the white King is blocking his own pawn and the black King and Rook are preventing it from getting out of the way.

Since the black rook can't be budged white must make the Black King move away



Many players try

1. Re7+ However this does not get the job done as black can play 1... Kf8 (and not 1...Kf6?? 2. Ke8 followed by 3. d8=Q with an instant win)
2. Re8+ Kf7
3. Re7+ Kf8.

And white is getting nowhere fast.

Since this fails white should play



1. Rf2+!

This is more like it! Since 1. ...Ke6?? allows 2. Ke8 followed by 3. d8=Q, Black has to step to the side and allow the white King room to wander.

- ... Kg7

Now comes a key moment. Which of the following moves is correct?

- 2. Ke8
- 2. Ke7
- 2. Rg2+
- 2. Rf4

Let's take a look at each choice.

Wrong

2. Ke8? Threatening to promote the pawn.
2.Re1+ 3. Kd8 Rc1 and White hasn't made any progress.

Wrong

2. Ke7? This is the move nearly everyone tries!
2. ... Re1+ 3. Kd6. It seems that the White King is free to roam. This is true but it cannot support its pawn in the face of continuous checks from the Black Rook.

Wrong

2. Rg2+ This move just helps Black by allowing Black's King to move back to f7, once again preventing the White King from moving



Therefore the **right** move is

2. Rf4!

This certainly looks odd. However using the Rook to shelter the King from upcoming checks certainly makes sense. This maneuver is called **Building a Bridge**.

Let's see how it works.



2. ... Rc2

Black can't improve his position so he plays a waiting move.

3. Ke7

Only now should the White king leave the cover of the pawn. Since White is threatening to promote his pawn, Black has to go into checking mode.



3. ... Re2+

4. Kd6 Rd2+

5. Ke6 (diagram)

Don't throw the win out the window with

5. Ke5?? Rxd7 draw



5. ... Re2+

6. Kd5 Rd2+

7. Rd4! (diagram)

The Bridge has been built and the pawn's promotion to a Queen can no longer be prevented. Black resigns.

Again, this position is VERY IMPORTANT. Make sure you KNOW, REMEMBER and UNDERSTAND it.

To sum up the winning ideas in the Lucena Position.

- Force the Black King away from the action
- Prepare to use your rook as a check blocking (bridge building) agent by moving it to the 4th Rank.
- Move your King away from the front of the pawn
- Block the opponent's desperate checks with the Rook, which effectively ends the game.



OK now we will look at something that's almost as important: **the Philidor Position.**

In the diagram, White is a pawn up, enjoys a superior King position and has the more active Rook. Though these are 3 good plusses for White, this position is a dead draw. However many players often lose this position so you **must** know what you're doing.

Fortunately, the drawing idea is very simple and once you know it you will be able to draw against any Grandmaster with ease!



We'll return to the original position soon, but first let's take a look at some things that can go wrong for the defender.

Passive Rook

Though a Philidor Position should be drawn, things can turn ugly if the defender's Rook becomes passively placed, allowing the stronger side to do whatever he wishes to do.

In diagram 131, White wins because black's Rook is stuck on his 1st rank (moving the Rook off the 1st rank allows Rh8+ with mate to follow). Since black's Rook is a bystander and can't bother the white King, the first player can calmly play **1.Ra7!** when 2.Ra8+ can't be stopped. Black would then have to resign.



The idea of swinging the Rook over to the other side is worth remembering since you'll be able to make use of it again and again during the course of your chess career.

Let's glance at another, equally hopeless, passive Rook position.

Different pawn, but Black's still dead

White scores the point by using that same "swing the Rook to the other side" technique:

1.Ra7 Kb8 (Not a happy choice, but 2.Ra8 mate had to be stopped. If 1...Kd8 2.Ra8+ picks up black's Rook.) **2.c7+ Kc8 3.Ra8+ Kd7 4.Rxg8** and Black might as well resign.



Sometimes, though, you can play horribly and still manage a draw. In this diagram, Black has allowed his Rook to become passive, but it doesn't matter because White can't win if he's left with a knight-pawn or rook-pawn.

If only White could swing his Rook over to the file left of the a-file! Sadly, such a file doesn't exist. Because of this, White can't force a catastrophic back rank check (as occurred in the previous 2 examples) and, as a result, can't win the game:

1.Rb7+ Ka8 2.Ra7+ Kb8 and no progress can be made since 3.b7?? Rg6+ wins for Black!



Having taken a look at the key passive Rook positions, let's return to our original position and study a basic Philidor Position.

Remember how I promised that you would be able to draw any grandmaster with ease from this position? I wasn't joking! The big idea here is to take away the whole 6th rank from the white King:

1. ... Rh6! (diagram)

Believe it or not, this simple move guarantees the draw.



But why didn't Black play for the active Rook by 1...Rh1 (threatening to check on d1)?

Because after 2.Rg7+ Ke8 White has the strong 3.Kd6! (diagram)

Suddenly Black can't maintain a cascade of checks since 3...Rh6+ runs into 4.e6 (using the pawn to block the check and threatening Rg8 mate)

4... Rh8 then leads to the lost passive Rook positions already discussed.

Also note that 3...Rd1+ fails to 4.Ke6 when the checks are over and Rg8 mate is once again threatened.



2. Rg7+ Ke8

3. Ra7 Rg6

The idea behind the Philidor defence (also known as the 3rd rank defence) is now clear. Black will continue to shuffle his Rook along the 3rd rank preventing the White King from advancing.



If white wants to make any headway he will eventually have to advance his pawn.

4. e6

Now White threatens the strong Kd6 followed by Ra8 mate.

How can Black save the game?



4...Rg1!

Only now does this active move work. Since white's King can't hide behind his pawn any longer, the upcoming avalanche of checks makes the draw obvious.

In our previous example White was able to use his pawn as cover. Here he cannot. Compare the two positions!

HELPFUL HINTS

The defender's drawing plan in the Philidor Position is to use his Rook on the 3rd rank to block the stronger side's King from stepping onto the rank in front of the pawn. Go back and forth with the Rook until the pawn is pushed (destroying the enemy King's pawn cover). Then leap to the back rank (putting maximum distance between the defending Rook and enemy King) and begin checking like crazy.

Other News....

The first event of the Tasmanian Rapid Series in 2010 was held at Princes Street Primary School on Saturday and despite the short organizational timeframe and the start of the winter school sport program, the tournament attracted an encouraging 22 players with many juniors taking part. The only disappointing note was that no players from the North or North West made it down for the event.

The overall winner was Kevin Bonham with a score of 4.5 out of 5. Jamie Briant won the U18 division with 3/5 with Nick Hunn and Dale Short in equal second on 2/5. In the U/12 division Mason Carter played very well in scoring 4/5 and taking out 1st place, with Harry Briant and Bill Chen coming equal second on 3/5. Congratulations to all winners. It was pleasing to see so many of the HIJCC members taking part and doing so well. Keep your eyes peeled for more rapid tournaments later in the year!

No	Name	Loc	Total	1	2	3	4	5
1	Bonham, Kevin	2050	4.5	9:W	7:W	14:W	2:W	3:D
2	Small, David H	1931	4	8:W	5:W	4:W	1:L	6:W
3	Carter, Mason	1236	4	12:W	6:W	13:D	7:W	1:D
4	Steward, Julian	1885	4	21:W	10:W	2:L	14:W	5:W
5	Briant, James	1412	3	20:W	2:L	9:W	10:W	4:L
6	Frame, Nigel	1791	3	11:W	3:L	8:W	15:W	2:L
7	Ivkovic, Milutin	1509	3	19:W	1:L	16:W	3:L	15:W
8	Briant, Harrison	672	3	2:L	20:W	6:L	12:W	14:W
9	Chen, Bill	716	3	1:L	15:W	5:L	19:W	16:W
10	Sturges, Tony (Thelston)	1317	3	22:W	4:L	19:W	5:L	11:W
11	Gillkum, Anurag	248	2.5	6:L	12:D	17:W	13:W	10:L
12	Robertson, Don		2.5	3:L	11:D	20:W	8:L	18:W
13	George, Ross	1687	2.5	17:W	14:L	3:D	11:L	21:W
14	Carter, Adam	1166	2	16:W	13:W	1:L	4:L	8:L
15	Hunn, Nick	842	2	18:W	9:L	21:W	6:L	7:L
16	Short, Dale		2	14:L	17:W	7:L	21:W	9:L
17	Gregory, Lachlan		2	13:L	16:L	11:L	22:W	19:W
18	Zamykal, Blake		1.5	15:L	19:L	22:D	20:W	12:L
19	Herath, Harshika		1	7:L	18:W	10:L	9:L	17:L
20	Herath, Harindra		1	5:L	8:L	12:L	18:L	22:W
21	Lawrence, Cormac	312	1	4:L	22:W	15:L	16:L	13:L
22	Law, Raman		.5	10:L	21:L	18:D	17:L	20:L

Mate Problems



25. Black to Move: Mate in Two

1. _____

2. _____ _____



26. Black to Move: Mate in Two

1. _____

2. _____ _____



27. White to Move: Mate in Two

1. _____ _____

2. _____



28. White to Move: Mate in Two

1. _____

2. _____



29. White to Move: Mate in Two

1. _____

2. _____



30. Black to Move: Mate in Two

1. _____

2. _____