

# DRAW!

The Art of the Half-Point in Chess



**LEONID VERKHOVSKY**

Foreword by Mikhail Tal

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by Leonid Verkhovsky

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# Draw!

## Foreword

Draws and draws... Countless draws in chess competitions. They often arise from the nature of our game, when two strong chess masters come to an armistice on the chessboard. More often than not, they are the result of a tense struggle. But those who love the game hate to see bloodless draws, when grandmasters avoid conflicts over the chessboard and, after the first 15 or 20 moves, they conclude peace after having exchanged most of the pieces, or even with many pieces and pawns still on the board. These so-called encounters are unlikely to make any contribution to the wealth of chess history and culture.

Chess fans are demanding and bloodthirsty. They expect to see games full of imagination and risk. They award their favorites with applause when they see beautiful games. Quite often it happens that they applaud draws; but these draws are special draws, when grandmasters exhaust limits of their chess enterprise and bestow on the spectators gems of chess brilliance and prowess. Actually, these are games in which both players are winners because their names intertwine with the beauty of the game. These are games in which you see everything: tactical blows, profound strategic plans and unusual traps involving the combinative talents of the players. In my life I have played quite a few games that were awarded brilliancy prizes for my victories. I am proud of such games. But I am no less proud of those rare games that ended up draws and for which I shared brilliancy prizes with my opponents, or as I call them, my chess colleagues (in other words, those players who created this chess beauty together with me). For instance, I always remember my game with Lev Aronin in the 1957 USSR Championship, that memorable tournament where I won the title of Soviet Champion for the first time in my life.

In this book, my lifelong friend and chess journalist Leonid Verkhovsky considers two kinds of draws. The first one is when combinations, threats, and inexhaustible imagination in defense and attack counterbalance each other. The chess prowess of one player is basically in equilibrium with the mastery of his opponent. Both are playing for a win, both send their chess armies into close combat, and peace sets in on the chessboard when it practically becomes empty after a long and fierce battle. The second type of the draw is what I call a draw "from the position of weakness." In this case one side wants to win, and the other, although in a difficult position, finds all possible (and impossible!) resources to make a draw. Verkhovsky cites numerous examples of defense in difficult positions. They are drawn from the praxis of world champions and outstanding grandmasters, as well as from the games of lesser-known players. Of special interest is the research made by the author regarding stalemate, that special exception in the rules.

The book is crowned with an interesting chapter in which the author addresses the drawn games of the world's top players.

I am sure that all those who love and cherish our ancient game will appreciate this wonderful book.

Mikhail Tal  
Riga 1972

## II. Fortune Favors the Brave!

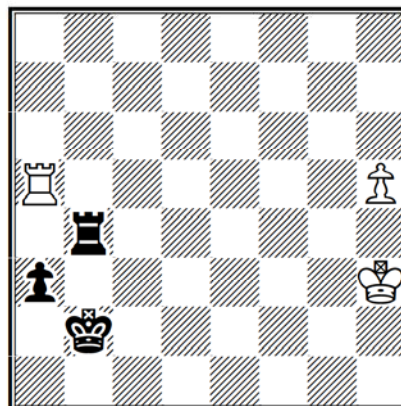
Chess is a game of brave and courageous people. If you want to win, you must have the courage to fight to the bitter end; you must be willing to sacrifice your pawns and pieces; you must use all the resources of your chess army; and above all you must use all your moral and intellectual potential. As Boris Spassky once noted, the worst thing for a chessplayer is the fear of himself! He must also be fully aware of his opponent who is ready to resist his plans, his strategic ideas and his tactical traps. At some moment during the game, we get impatient to win, and our opponent uses all the tricks of his imagination to frustrate our plans. Drawing the game is then the defender's reward for his courage, patience, and his defensive skills!

### It is never too late to resign!

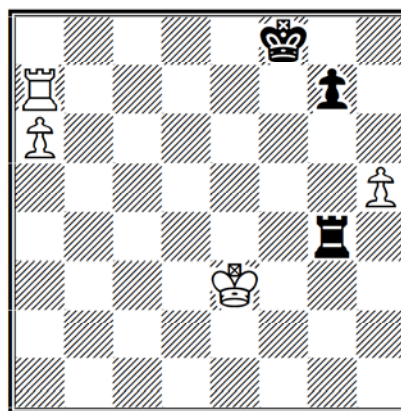
It often happens that the chessplayer breaks down, so to say, morally, and resigns in what appears to be a hopeless position. But afterwards it turns out that his resignation was premature; he finds the draw! This is true of amateurs and professionals alike. Grandmasters have resigned in drawish positions many times in chess history.

#### (27) Tarrasch – Blumich Breslau 1925 (D)

Tarrasch resigned here instead of forcing a draw after 82.h6! ♖b6 83.♖h5 a2 84.h7 ♖b8 85.♖b5+ ♖x b5 86.h8♖+.



#### (28) Polugaevsky – Parma Belgrade 1965 (D)

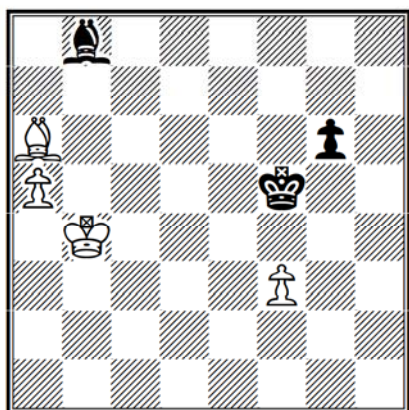


#### (29) Najdorf – Camarra Mard-del-Plata 1961 (D)

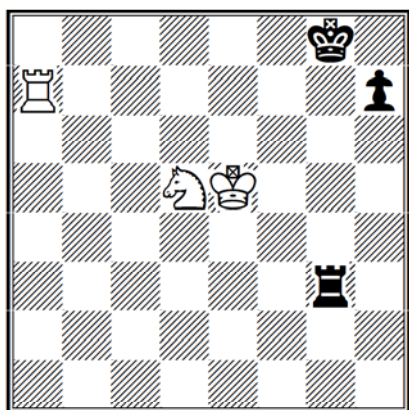
Having examined the following line, 60...♖a4 61.♖a8+ ♕f7 62.a7 ♖a1, the Yugoslav grandmaster decided that the breakthrough 63.h6 leads to a white win; so he resigned. Polugaevsky was really surprised, because he saw that after 63...♕g6, the draw was inevitable!

Black resigned here, believing that he would have to give up his bishop for the a-pawn. However, he could draw with 36...♕f4 37.♕e2 ♕e3 38.♕d1 ♕d2 39.♕b3 ♕e2 40.♕d5 ♕e3, followed by 41...♕f4, 42...g5 and 43...g4!

Draw!

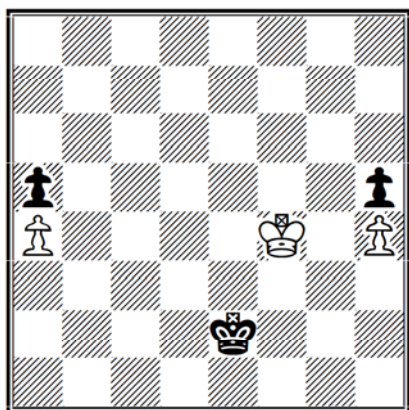


(30) Yudovich, Jr. – Bebhuk  
Moscow 1964 (D)



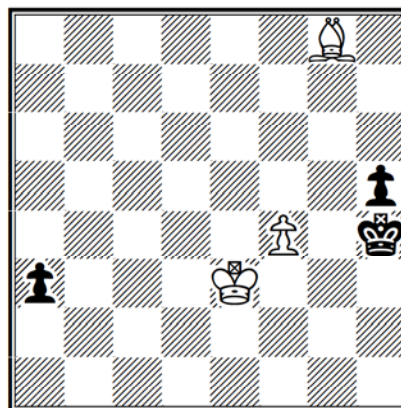
After 47.♖e6 Black suddenly resigned without noticing 47...♖f8! 48.♞f7+ ♖e8 49.♞xh7 ♞g6+ 50.♜f6+ ♖d8. All other lines lose as White's knight reaches f6 with check.

(31) Colle – Grünfeld  
Carlsbad 1929 (D)



Grünfeld resigned. But by playing 77...♖d3 78.♖g5 ♖e4 79.♖xh5 ♖f5 80.♖h6 ♖f6 81.h5 ♖f7 82.♖g5 ♖g7 83.♖f5 ♖h6 84.♖e5 ♖xh5 85.♖d5 ♖g6 86.♖c5 ♖f7 87.♖b5 ♖e8 88.♖xa5 ♖d7 89.♖b6 ♖c8, Black draws.

(32) Vuković – Ivčević  
Belgrade 1947 (D)



Black resigned because he had examined the variations involving the advance of his pawns, for example, 77...♖g3 78.f5 h4 79.f6 h3 80.f7 h2 81.f8♖ h1♖ 82.♖f4+.

But why waste time advancing the h-pawn? The game could be salvaged by an ingenious king maneuver:

77...♖g3 78.f5 ♖g4!! 79.f6 ♖g5! 80.f7 a2 81.f8♖ a1♖ with a draw.

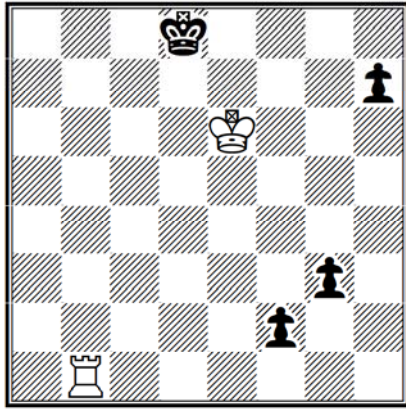
(33) Arulaid – Gurgeniđze  
Lugansk 1955 (D)

White resigned here, fearing the black pawn armada. However, he could draw the game because of the bad position of the black king:

72.♖d6 ♖c8 73.♞c1+ ♖b7 74.♞b1+ ♖a6 75.♖c6 ♖a5 76.♖c5 ♖a4 77.♖c4 ♖a3 78.♖c3 ♖a2 79.♞f1! h5 80.♖d3.

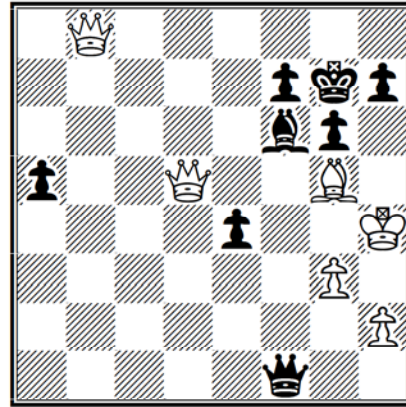


## Fortune Favors the Brave!

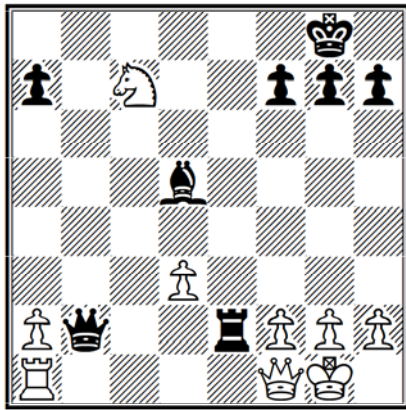


(34) **Strekalovsky – Rudenko**,  
Moscow 1961 (D)

30.♖d5 e4 31.♜b7 ♖f3+ 32.♜h3  
♜x f2! 33.♜b8 ♜ ♖f1+ 34.♜h4  
♜f6+ 35.♜g5 (D)



Black resigned in this position. However, despite White's enormous material advantage, he draws by playing **35...h6!!**, and White cannot avoid perpetual check.

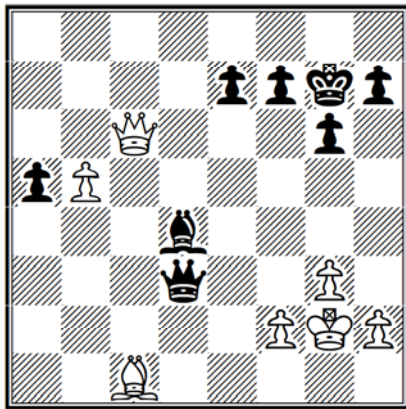


White played **31.♜b1** (if instead 31.♜xd5, then 31...♜xf2! 32.♜e1 ♜e2! draws), and Black resigned thinking that he was losing the queen. But he could still draw after 31...♜xa2! 32.♜xb2 ♜xb2 followed by 33...♜b1.

(35) **Spiridonov – Neikirkh**  
Zinnovitsi 1967 (D)

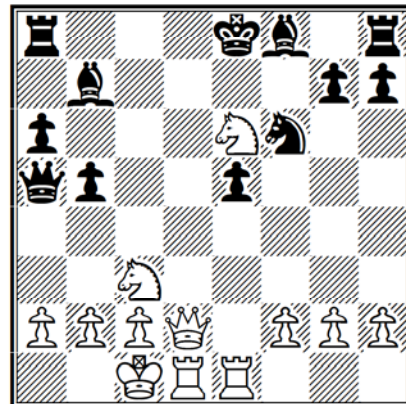
### Draws instead of Wins

In chess, it often happens that in a hard-fought slugfest the player who is about to win suddenly offers a draw. Consequently, he loses a half-point that likely affects his total result in the tournament. It is hard to say which is more painful – to resign in a drawn position, or to propose a draw in a winning position. Here are some examples.



The game continued: **29.b6 e5**

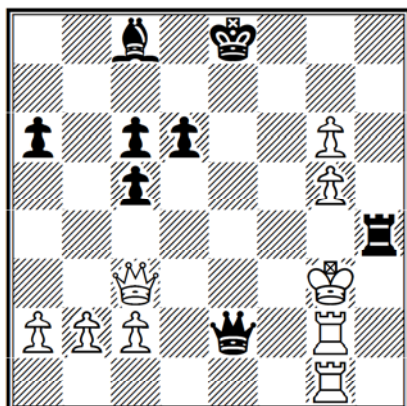
(36) **Ivkov – Petrosian**  
Bled 1961 (D)



Draw!

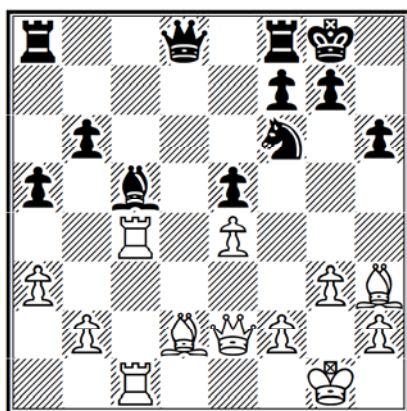
Here a draw was agreed. But White wins after 17.♖xe5! ♕f7 18.♜e3! h6 19.♘xf8 ♖hxf8 20.♖e7+ ♕g8 21.♖xb7, etc.

(37) Stoltz – Pilnik  
Saltzobaden 1952 (D)



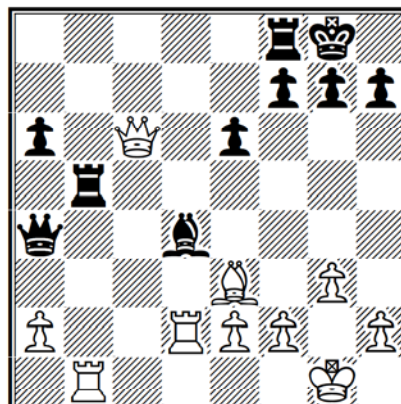
Black accepted the draw believing that he had only a perpetual check after 41...♖g4+ 42. ♕h2 ♖h4+. Actually, he wins after 41...♖h3+! 42.♕f4 ♖f3+! 43.♕xf3 ♖e5#!.

(38) Gheorghiu – Larsen  
Riga 1979 (D)



The grandmasters agreed to a draw. However, White has a sufficient positional advantage to play for a win, for example, 24.♕g2! ♖e8 25.♖1c2! and Black is in a sort of *zugzwang*: 25...♖a7 26.♖e3! ♖xe3 27.♕xe3 ♖b7 28.♖f5 ♕e7 29.♖c6 ♖b5 30.♖2c5, etc.

(39) Kasparov – Ribli  
Skelleftea 1989 (D)



In this position the world champion played 26.♖xb5 and offered a draw. However, he could win beautifully using the weakness of the eighth rank:

26...♖xe3 27.♖d8!!

This is quite a remarkable *zwischenzug*!

27...♕xb5

Or 27...♖xd8 28.♖d5!.

28.♕d6 ♖xf2+ 29.♕xf2 ♕f5+, and White's king escapes from the numerous checks.

(40) Alekhine – Maróczy  
London 1922 (D)

