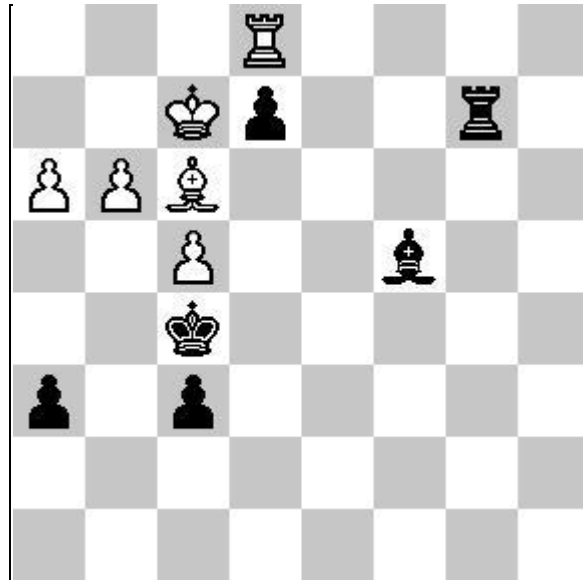


The power of the Pin.

Gabor Bolkeny (Balbriggan) v Pat Fitzsimons (Elm Mount) – Kilkenny Chess Congress 2010.

This position occurred in the final round of the Majors Section of the above tournament. It is white to move. What should he do ?



The plan for white is to capture the black passed pawn on e2 and then try to win the endgame with his extra pawn. Note that white has 3 pieces attacking the black pawn on e2 (king, rook and bishop), while black is only defending the pawn with 2 pieces, rook and bishop.

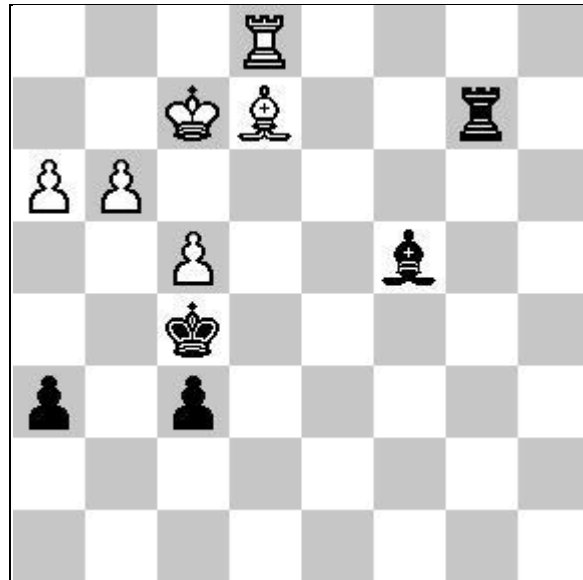
As the attackers (3 pieces) outnumber the defenders (2 pieces) white decided it was safe to take the pawn which he duly did by playing Bxe2.

What should black's response be ? If he takes the bishop with his rook this will result in the rooks and bishops being exchanged with white then attempting to win the end game with his 3 pawns against Black's 2 pawns. Provided black plays accurately, the game should be drawn. If Black takes the bishop on e2 with his bishop and white recaptures with his rook, black does not have to swap rooks. If he chooses to keep the rook, again the game should be drawn with accurate play by black.

But does black have anything better than just swapping pieces and ending up in an endgame where his best hope is to hold out for a draw ?

The answer is a definite **“Yes”**. Why ?

Look at the position below closely after the white bishop has just taken the pawn on e2.



You will note that the white bishop is now pinned to the king on f2 by the rook on b2. (Remember a piece is pinned when it is shielding another piece or pawn from attack. In this case as the king is the piece that is being protected, the bishop cannot move as to do so would leave the king in check which is not allowed under the rules of chess). If the white king moves away from the white bishop, then it will be defended only once (by the rook on e1) while it will be attacked twice (by the black rook and bishop).

So how should black take advantage of the pinned white bishop ?

The answer is to move the king to e4 !!! Can you see why ?

The point is that the black king is now just one move away from attacking the white bishop.

White played Kf1 to break the pin on the bishop. What should black's response be ?

Now that the bishop is no longer pinned by the rook, White threatens Bxc4 with a discovered check on the black king. Lucky for Black it is his move !

Having seen white break out of one pin, black decided to create another by playing Rxe2 ! White captured the rook on e2 with his rook also checking the black king on e4.

Now black played Kf3 which is the winning move! Note that the white rook cannot move from e2 because it is pinned to the king on f1 by the white bishop on c4. Also it is now attacked a second time by the black king on f3 while it is defended just once by the white king.

White moved his pawn to g4 and black replied by taking the white rook with his bishop emerging a piece up with an easily won endgame thanks to the power of the two pins against the White king !