

## Efstratios Grivas :

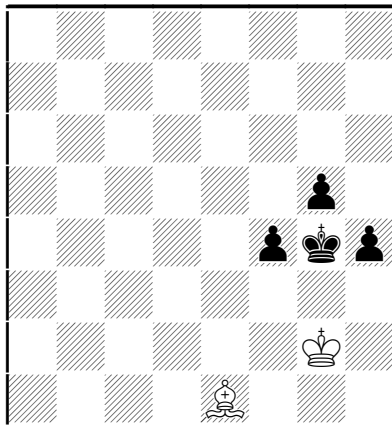
Short : Adianto  
Tallinn/Parnu1998

### The Pawn Phalanx

#### Concept

Imbalances of forces is a rather often met theme over the board. In this survey we will examine the case of a bishop vs three pawns. Three pawns against a lone bishop win when they have all crossed their 4th rank (there do exist a few exceptions, though). The defence of the side with the bishop consists on the immobilization of the pawns, but this is hard to achieve when the pawns are far advanced. The basic idea of the defence is to immobilize at least two pawns and prevent them from reaching their 7th rank.

#### Example 1



#### 1...Kf5

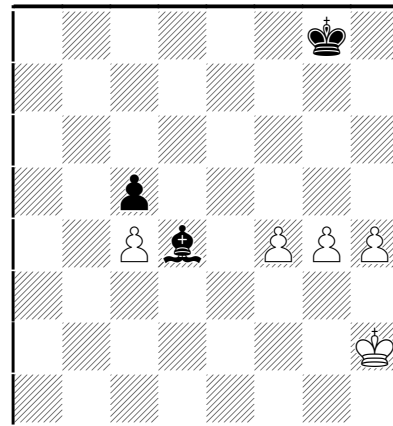
1...f3 is an inferior attempt: 2.Kg1!! Kf5 (2...Kf4 3.Ld2) 3.La5 g4 4.Ld8 h3 5.Lc7 Ke4 6.Kf2 and Black can make no progress.

It is worth noting that if White was to move, then he would be able to draw with 2.La5! Kf5 (2...f3 3.Kf2) 3.Ld8!. Yes, the bishop is a strong piece!

#### 2.La5

2.Kh3 Ke4 3.Kg4 Ke3! also loses.

2...g4 3.Ld8 h3 4.Kh2 Ke4 5.Lb6 Kf3 6.Lc7 Ke3 7.Lb8 f3 8.Kg1 Ke2 9.La7 h2 10.Kh2 f2 11.Lf2 Kf2 12.Kh1 Kg3! 0:1.



Although none of the kingside pawns have passed its 4th rank, this is a winning endgame. The extra c-pawns are helping White as he can emerge in a pawn-ending with an extra c-pawn.

#### 53...Kg7 54.Kg3

Threatening 55.g5 and 56.Kg4.

#### 54...Kg6 55.Kf3?

The correct way was 55.f5! Kh6 56.g5! Kh5 57.f6 Le5 and now 58.Kf3! (58.Kh3? Ld6=) 58...Kh4 59.Ke4 Lc3 60.Kf5 Kh5 61.g6 Kh6 62.g7 Kh7 63.Ke6 Kg8 (if not for the c-pawns, Black could draw with 63...Lf6 64.Kf6 Kg8) 64.f7 Kg7 65.Ke7.

#### 55...Lc3!

Now Black places his bishop on the right diagonal e1-h4 and succeeds to defend.

#### 56.Ke4 Le1 57.h5

Nothing changes with 57.Kd5 Lf2= or 57.f5 Kf6 58.g5 Ke7 59.h5 Ld2 60.g6 Kf6 61.Kd5 Le3=.

#### 57...Kh6 58.Kd5 Lf2!

This is the right diagonal for the bishop. 58...Lb4? would lose to 59.Kd6 La3 60.f5 Kg5 61.h6.

#### 59.Ke6 Ld4 60.Ke7 Lg7 61.Ke6 Ld4

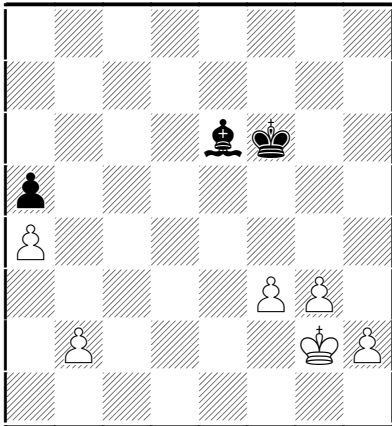
#### 62.Ke7 Lg7

62...Lc3 was OK as well: 63.f5 Kg5 64.h6 Ld4 65.h7 Lc3 and White can undertake nothing.

#### 63.Kd6 Ld4 64.Ke6 Lc3 ½.



**Movsesian : Sadvakasov**  
Calvia 2004

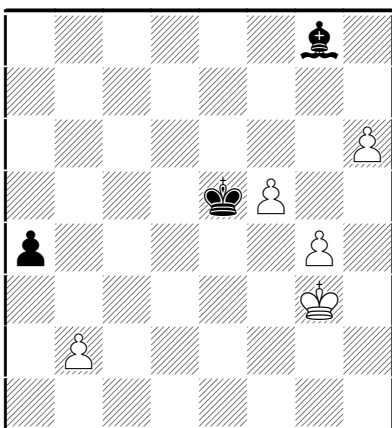


White has for the moment four pawns for the piece which will be converted into just three pawns after a4 falls. Black's bishop is well known to be able to hold the three pawns, since he can sacrifice himself for them. Yet the presence of the b- and a-pawns will make a huge difference, since if timed right White can transpose into a winning pawn endgame.

**41.g4 Lb3 42.h4 La4 43.f4 Ld1 44.Kg3 a4!**

This move might be important on a resulting pawn endgame, as Black has always now the ...a3 option.

**45.f5 Ke5 46.h5 Lb3 47.h6 Lg8**



**48.Kh3!**

Creating a zugzwang! Black is forced with his bishop to h7, now or on the next move, so he won't be able to avoid White's king to settle on h5.

**48...Lh7**

Or 48...Kf6 49.Kh4 and 49...Lh7 is forced.

**49.Kh4 Kf6 50.Kh5 Lg8 51.g5 Kf5 52.g6 Kf6 53.h7 Lh7 54.gh7 Kg7 55.Kg5**

And of course White, as his king is much, much faster to the kingside, is winning.

**55...Kh7 56.Kf6 Kg8 57.Ke7!**

White's king doesn't allow Black's to follow him closely; anything else is of course drawn: 57.Ke6? Kf8 58.Kd6 Ke8 59.Kc6 Kd8 60.Kb5 a3! =.

**57...Kg7 58.Kd6 Kf6 59.Kc6?**

White throws his many work hours away with this awful blunder. 59.Kc5 was quite simply winning, since then Black's king doesn't reach c8: 59...a3 (59...Ke7 60.Kb4 a3 61.Ka3+— as any endgame book will tell you that if White's king can get into b4, the endgame is winning) 60.ba3 Ke7 61.Kc6 Kd8 62.Kb7+—.

**59...Ke6 60.Kb5 a3!**

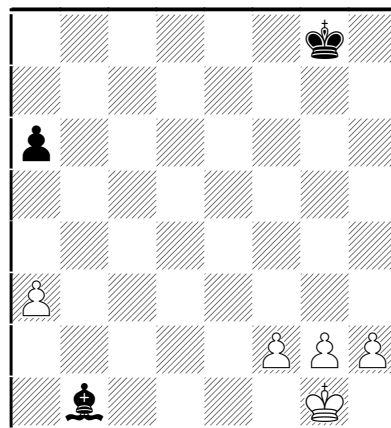
Now White of course must take the pawn and transform his own into the most useless type of pawn in a king's endgame: the rook file's pawn.

**61.ba3 Kd7 62.Kb6 Kc8**

Black's king reaches his goal, and stops the a-pawn. 1/2.

**Matsuura : Molina**

Sao Paulo 1999



Here we have another nearly 'similar' case but the white a-pawn is not helpful ...

**35...Kf7 36.g4 Ke6 37.Kg2 a5!**

Black should be ready to place his pawn on a4, echoing the previous game. He must also not allow the white king to come to f4.

**38.f4 a4 39.h4 Kd5 40.h5 Ke6**

Black should avoid 40...Kc4? 41.f5+–, but 40...Lh7 was good as well: 41.Kf3 (41.g5 Lf5) 41...Ke6 42.Ke3 Kd5 43.f5 (43.g5 Lf5 44.g6 Ke6 45.g7 Lh7 46.Kd4 Kf6=) 43...Ke5 44.h6 Lg8 45.Kf3 (45.Kd2 Kf6= (45...Kf4? 46.f6+–) ) 45...Lh7 46.Kg3 Lg8 47.Kh3 Lh7 48.Kh4 Kf6 49.Kh5 Lg8 50.g5 Kf5 51.g6 Kf6 52.h7 Lh7 53.g7 Kg7=.

**41.Kf3**

41.f5 doesn't work due to 41...Lf5! 42.gf5 Kf5 43.Kf3 Kg5 44.Ke3 Kh5 45.Kd4 Kg5 46.Kc5 Kf6 47.Kb4 Ke7 48.Ka4 Kd7=.

**41...Lc2 42.h6 Ld1?**

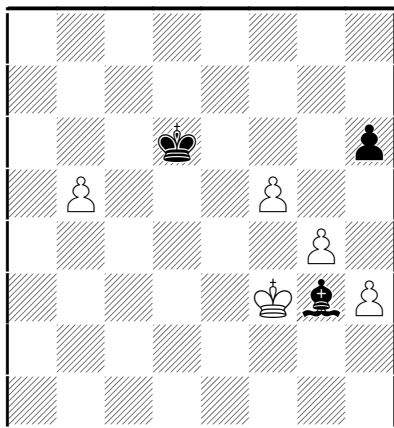
A blunder. The well-known 42...Lh7 would hold: 43.f5 Ke5 (43...Lf5? 44.gf5 Kf5 45.h7+–) 44.Ke3 Lg8=.

**43.Kg3 Kf7**

43...Lc2 44.f5 Kf7 (44...Lf5 45.gf5 Kf5 46.h7+–) 45.Kf4+–.

**44.f5! Kg8 45.Kf4 Kh7 46.g5 Lb3 47.Ke5 La2 48.Kf6 Lb3 49.Ke7 Lg8 50.f6 1:0.**  
50...Kg6 51.h7! Kh7 52.f7 Lf7 53.Kf7+–.

**Ribli : Smyslov**  
Las Palmas 1982

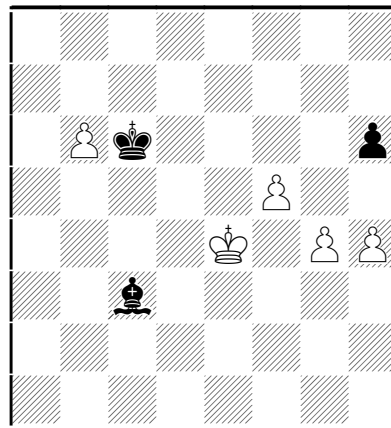


Zoltan Ribli was the proud winner of the one of the two FIDE Interzonals (preliminary stages of the FIDE World Championship) that were held in 1982. He won the Las Palmas Interzonal half-point ahead of the runner-up Vasily Smyslov -

both of them qualified for the final-8 group of players, from which the winner (Gary Kasparov was!) would face the then FIDE World Champion Anatoly Karpov in the final. Ribli and Smyslov faced each other in the quarter-finals, where Smyslov qualified winning on the casino tie-break!!

**62...Lh2?**

The decisive mistake after a long fight. Bad as well was 62...Lh4? 63.b6 Kc6 64.Ke4 Kb6 65.Ke5 Kc7 66.Ke6 Kd8 67.Kf7 Kd7 68.f6 Kd6 69.Kg7 Ke5 70.f7 Le7 71.h4 Kf4 72.Kh6 Kg4 73.h5+–, but Black could have saved himself if he could find the correct set-up: 62...Le5! 63.b6 Kc6 64.Ke4 Lc3! 65.h4!



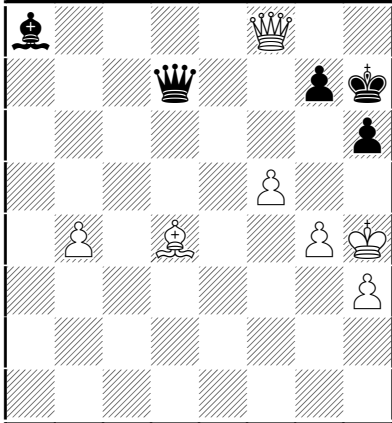
(65.b7?! would be easier for Black:

65...Kb7 66.Kd5 Kc7 67.Ke6 Kd8 68.Kf7 Kd7 69.f6 Kd6 70.h4 Ke5! 71.Kg7 Ke6=) 65...Lf6! (The only move. 65...Kb6? was losing to 66.Kd5 Kc7 67.Ke6 Kd8 68.Kf7 Kd7 69.g5 hg5 70.hg5 Kd6 71.g6+–.) 66.h5 Lh8! (Black must win this important tempo, as the white king shouldn't attack the bishop when he will enter e6.) 67.b7 Kb7 68.Kd5 Kc7 69.Ke6 Kd8 70.Kf7 Kd7! (70...Lc3? 71.g5 hg5 72.f6+–) 71.Kg6 (71.f6 Kd8!) 71...Ke7 72.Kh6 Lc3! 73.g5 Ld2! 74.Kg6 Kf8 75.h6 Kg8 76.f6 Lc1 and White cannot improve his position.

**63.b6 Kd5 64.b7 Lb8 65.h4 Ke5 66.h5! 1:0.**

66...Kf6 67.Ke4 Ke7 68.Kd5 Kf6 69.Kc6 Ke7 70.g5! hg5 71.h6 Kf6 72.Kd7 g4 73.h7 Kg7 74.f6 Kh7 75.f7 Kg7 76.Ke8 Ld6 77.b8D.

**Riazantsev : Macieja**  
Plovdiv 2012



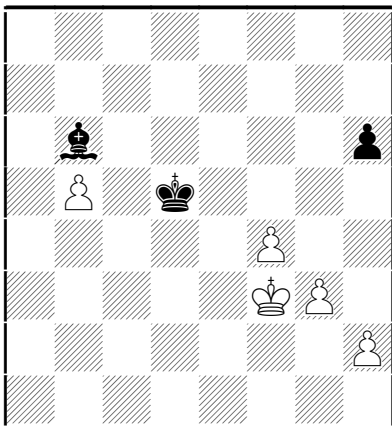
White is two pawn-up for the good but the opposite-coloured bishops do not help him. He found a nice idea, to transpose to an alternative ending.

**62.Dg7 Dg7 63.Lg7 Kg7**

And this is heaven for White!

**64.b5 Kf6 65.Kh5 Kg7 66.b6 Ld5 67.g5!  
hg5 68.Kg5 Kf7 69.h4 Lb7 70.h5 Lh1  
71.h6 Lg2 72.f6 1:0.**

**Benderev : Dzhogov**  
Sofia 1943



White has an ideal position - he only has to find the right plan.

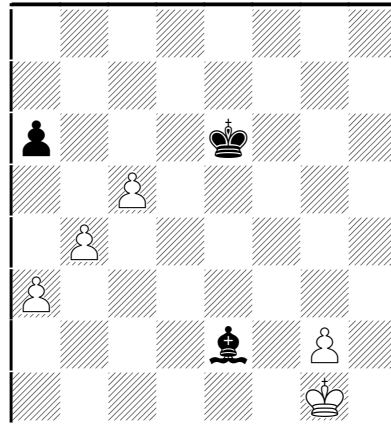
**48.g4?**

Here is the bad one! 48.Kg4! was calling for - the king should be activated: 48...Lg1 49.h3 Lf2 50.f5 Ke5 51.Kh5! Kf5 (51...Lg3 52.Kg6+-) 52.g4 Kf6 53.Kh6+-.  
**48...Kc4?**

Wrong activity. The calm 48...Ld8 49.h3 Kd4 should hold.

**49.Ke4 Kb5 50.g5 hg5 51.fg5 Kc4 52.h4  
Ld8 53.Kf5 La5 54.h5 Kd5 55.h6 Lc3  
56.g6 1:0.**

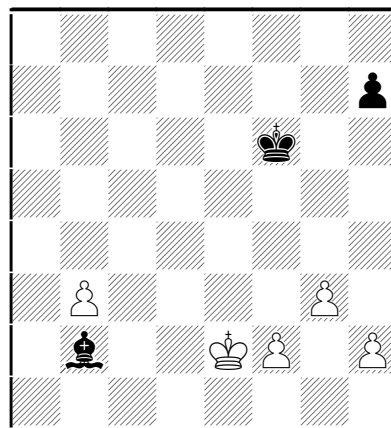
**Svidler : Jakovenko**  
Krasnoyarsk 2003



Here also the white queenside pawns are blocked, so Black can hold the draw.

**63.Kf2 Ld1 64.Ke3 Ke5 65.g3 Lg4 ½.  
65...Lg4** White cannot improve: 66.a4 Ld7.

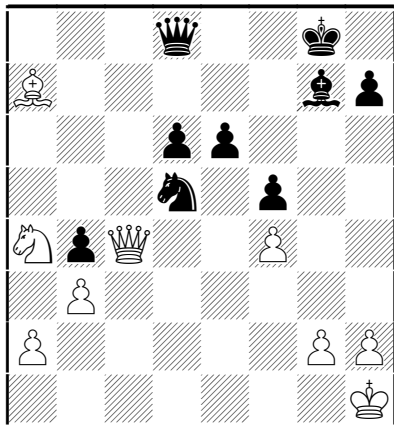
**Feofanov : Kharchenko**  
Kemerovo 2014



**43...Ld4 44.f4 Kf5 45.Kf3 h5 46.h3 Lc5  
47.g4 hg4 48.hg4 Kf6 49.Ke4 Kg6  
50.Kd5 Lb4 51.Ke6  
51.Kc4 Ld6 52.f5 Kg5=.**  
**51...Lc5 52.Kd5 Lb4 53.Kc4 Ld6 54.f5  
Kg5 55.Kd5 Lb4 56.Kc4 Ld6 57.b4 Kg4  
58.f6 Kf5 59.f7 Kf6 60.Kd5 Lb4 ½.**

## Papaioannou : Grivas

Athens 1997



This game was played in the 8th round of the round-robin (10 players) Greek Men Championship of 1997. After the 7th round I was on the lead with 5/7, while Papaioannou was the runner-up with 4½/7. A draw would have nearly guarantee the title for me (I was the best in tie-breaks), while Papaioannou had to think also for the GM-norm which was on 6½/9. So, it is understandable that I was playing for two results, while Papaioannou for one...

### 31.Sb6!

The only way to continue the fight! White is risking nothing but Black should be safe as well ...

### 31...Sb6 32.De6 Kf8

32...Kh8? 33.Lb6 Db6 34.De8 Lf8 35.Df8# was, of course, out of the question!

### 33.Df5 Kg8 34.Da5

White is obliged to continue the fight, as mentioned above.

### 34...Ld4 35.Db4 Lc5 36.De4?

»Logical« but wrong. White had to go for 36.De1 Dc7 37.b4 Lb4 38.Lb6 Db6 39.De8 with a draw.

### 36...Dc7?

Time-trouble talks! 36...Df6! was strong and would put White under pressure: 37.De8 Kg7 38.De1 Df4 39.a4 Sd5 40.Lc5 dc5.

### 37.Lb6 Lb6

Very risky. Comfortably equal would be the other capture with 37...Db6.

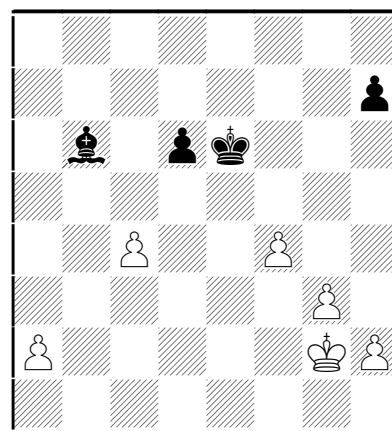
### 38.Dc4! Dc4?!

The desire to 'destroy' the white pawn phalanx in the queenside is understandable, but still Black had to think on his counterplay, the d-pawn. So, he had to settle for 38...Df7, when a draw should be the logical outcome. A sample line could go as 39.Df7 (39.g3 d5) 39...Kf7 40.b4 d5 41.a4 d4 42.Kg1 d3 43.Kf1 Le3 44.g3 Ke6 45.b5 Kd5 46.Ke1 Kc4 47.f5 Kb3 48.Kd1 Ka4 49.b6 Lb6 50.Kd2 Kb4 51.Kd3 Kc5=.

### 39.bc4 Kf7 40.g3!

40.g4? Le3 41.f5 Kf6=.

### 40...Ke6 41.Kg2



Time-trouble was over and I start thinking on how to escape. I was a bit angry with myself for my missed chances but there was nothing that I could do about it!

### 41...Kd7!

After 41...d5? 42.cd5 Kd5 43.Kf3 we would have a version of the ending in Ribli : Smyslov, but with a decisive difference - the passed queenside white pawn would be on the a-file and not on the b and the black king would be pushed further away from the kingside. With the text move Black goes for the correct defensive plan: his king would guard the white queenside pawns and his bishop would try to block the white kingside pawns.

### 42.Kf3 Kc6 43.Ke2

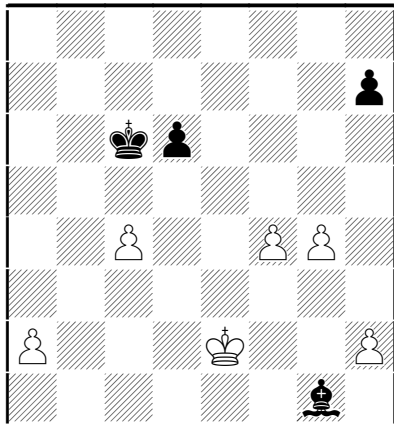
After the early 43.f5 Ld8 44.Ke4 Kc5 45.Kd3 Black can go for 45...d5! 46.cd5 Kd5, with a draw - for example: 47.Ke3 Ke5 48.g4 Lc7 49.a4 Ld8 50.Kd3 h5 51.h3 hg4 52.hg4 Kf4. White must achieve a pawn on g5 in order to create winning

positions.

### 43...Ld4?

A bad mistake. Black had to try to force matters and block the white pawns. This could have been done with 43...Lg1! 44.f5 (44.h3 Kc5 45.Kd3 Lh2) 44...d5! (44...Lh2? 45.f6 Kd7 46.Kf2!+-) 45.cd5 Kd5=.

### 44.g4! Lg1



A move too late! There is no salvation anymore, even with the »known« 44...d5 45.cd5 Kd5 46.Kf3! Lb6 47.g5!+-.

### 45.h3?

Here White missed his path as well. Pawns should be pushed forward: 45.h4! d5 (45...Kc5 46.Kd3 Lh2 47.f5 d5 48.cd5 Kd5 49.g5 Ke5 50.g6 hg6 51.fg6 Kf6 52.h5+-) 46.cd5 (46.Kd3 wins as well) 46...Kd5 47.Kf3 Ke6 48.Ke4 h6 (48...Lc5 49.f5 Kf7 50.a4+-) 49.h5 Kf6 50.a4 Lb6 51.Kd5 Le3 52.f5+-.

### 45...Lh2?

Returning the favour! Black could have again achieve the draw with 45...Kc5! 46.Kd3 (46.f5 d5!) 46...Lh2 47.f5 d5! 48.cd5 Kd5 49.g5 Ke5 50.f6 (50.g6 hg6 51.fg6 Kf6= - the difference between 45.h3 and 45.h4, as White cannot play 52.h5) 50...Ke6 51.a4 Lc7 52.Ke4 (52.Kc4 h6! 53.h4 hg5 54.hg5 Lf4=) 52...La5 53.h4 Le1 (53...h5! is good as well) 54.Kf4 Lh4 55.Kg4 Le1 56.Kh5 Kf7 57.Kh6 Kg8.

### 46.f5 Lf4?!

Black is objectively lost but he should put more problems to his opponent. Obviously, 46...d5 47.cd5 Kd5 48.Kf3 Ke5 (48...Lc7

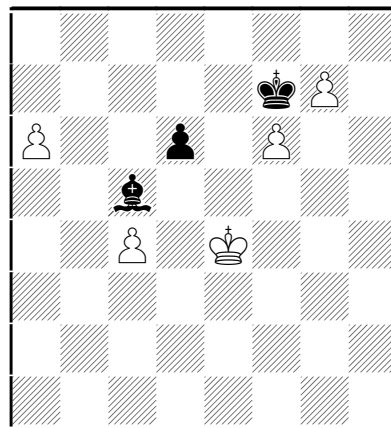
49.g5+-) 49.a4 Lg1 50.a5 La7 51.a6 Ld4 52.Kg3 La7 53.Kh4+- was an easy line, but more testing was 46...Kc5, where White would have to find some »difficult« moves: 47.g5! (47.Kd3 d5 48.cd5 Kd5) 47...Kc4 48.f6 d5 (48...Le5 49.h4 h5 50.a4 Kb4 51.Kd3 d5 52.f7 Lg7 53.f8D Lf8 54.Kd4+-) 49.f7 Ld6 50.a4 Lf8 51.h4 Lg7 52.h5 h6 (52...Lf8 53.h6!) 53.g6 Kb4 54.Kd3 Ka4 55.f8D Lf8 56.Kd4+-.

### 47.a4!

Now the white pawns are rolling and cashing the point!

47...h6 48.a5 Lg5 49.Kd3 Ld8 50.a6 Lb6 50...Kb6 51.Ke4 Ka6 52.Kd5+-.

51.Ke4 Kd7 52.h4 Lf2 53.g5! hg5 54.hg5 Lc5 55.g6 Ke7 56.g7 Kf7 57.f6



And Black resigned as he can do nothing to prevent the white king coming to b7 and win the bishop. Papaioannou won his last game as well, achieving both the title and the GM-norm. I had to settle for the 2nd position ... **1:0**.

### Conclusion

Everything is about knowing what and how to do it! But in general, the defending king should be focused on the one side and the bishop on the other. Combining their forces can block the pawns.