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This is an important link in Black's defensive plan. He cannot play the counter-sacrifice yet as 23...♗xc4 24 ♖xc4 ♙xc4 25 ♜xc4 ♜xa2 allows 26 ♜c8+ ♖h7 27 ♜xh8+ ♖xh8 28 ♜b1, and the single-rook ending is winning for White thanks to his passed b-pawn and the rook situated behind it.

24 ♜f3?

This rook-lift threatens 25 ♜a3, reducing Black to complete impotence, but now the counter-sacrifice works and White can probably no longer win in view of the activity of the black rooks and the vulnerability of his own pawns.

White should instead double rooks on the seventh rank. After 24 ♜ff7 the sacrifice is still not playable: 24...♗xc4 25 ♜xg7+ ♖h8 26 ♜a7! ♜b8 (or 26...♗xd6 27 ♜xa8+ ♖xg7 28 exd6 and the d-pawn will cost Black his bishop) 27 ♜gc7! ♗xd6 28 exd6 ♙d3 29 d7 ♜g6 30 ♜c8+ ♜g8 31 ♜ac7 ♙a6 32 ♜xb8 ♜xb8 33 b4! and the further advance of the b-pawn will force the bishop to desert its defence of the c8-square. Instead of sacrificing, Black should defend his g-pawn by 24...♜g6, when White can safeguard his c-pawn by 25 b3. Then the sacrifice 25...♙xc4 26 bxc4 ♜xa2 would cause White some difficulties thanks to the active black rooks, but he should win in the end.

24...♗xc4! 25 ♗xc4 ♙xc4 26 ♜xc4 ♜xa2 27 ♜c8+ ♖h7 28 ♜b8 ♜g6 29 ♜a3 ♜xa3 30 bxa3

If this pawn advances, the black rook will get behind it.

30...♜g5 31 ♜b5 ♜f5 32 ♜a5 ♖g6 33 h3 ♜f4 34 g3 ♜f3 35 ♖g2 ♜c3 36 ♖f2 1/2-1/2

Having stated some rules for White in these endgames, we can also state some rules for Black:

- Try to make the advance of the white pawns difficult. A rook on the a-file is often useful.
- Avoid exchanges, especially of minor pieces, unless there is no option, as the pawns become more powerful as the board empties.
- Try to create counterplay on the kingside, normally by opening lines for a rook. For instance, if White captures a knight on f6, consider recapturing with the g-pawn in order to create play along the g-file. Even if lines cannot be opened for the rooks, g2 can be a

vulnerable square in the white position, exploitable by a knight manoeuvred to f4 and a bishop to f1.

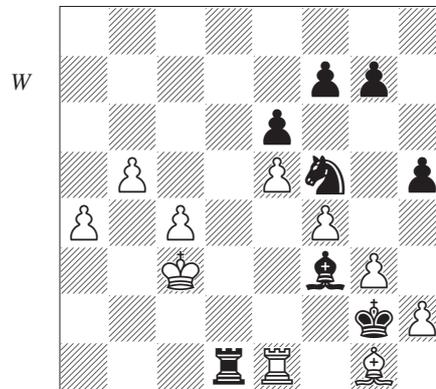
- If possible, position the king in the centre, ready to cross to the queenside when it is safe to do so.

On this final point, we have already seen that a black king that castles and remains on the kingside may leave its pieces helpless against the advance of the queenside passed pawns. Here is an extreme example.

Hall – Baklan

Bundesliga 1998/9

1 e4 c5 2 ♗f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♗xd4 ♗f6 5 ♗c3 ♗c6 6 ♙g5 e6 7 ♜d2 a6 8 0-0-0 h6 9 ♙e3 ♙d7 10 f4 b5 11 ♙d3 ♜c7 12 ♙xb5 axb5 13 ♗dxb5 ♜b8 14 ♗xd6+ ♙xd6 15 ♜xd6 ♜xd6 16 ♜xd6 ♗a5 17 b3 ♜c8 18 ♙d2 ♙c6 19 ♜e1 0-0 20 g3 ♗b7 21 ♜d4 ♗c5 22 e5 ♗d5 23 ♗e4 ♗xe4 24 ♜dx4 ♗e7 25 ♜d4 ♗f5 26 ♜d3 ♜fd8 27 ♜xd8+ ♜xd8 28 ♙b4 ♖h7 29 c4 ♖g6 30 ♙c5 ♖h5 31 ♖c2 ♖g4 32 ♖c3 ♖h3 33 ♙g1 h5 34 b4 ♙f3 35 b5 ♖g2 36 a4 ♜d1 (D)



In this complicated position, the players agreed a draw.

1/2-1/2

Remarkably, White can jettison his bishop and win with his queenside pawns against the two black minor pieces. The game could go 37 ♜xd1 ♙xd1 38 a5! ♖xg1 (the king is about as far away from the queenside as it can be) 39 a6 ♙f3 40 b6 ♗e7 41 b7 ♙xb7 42 axb7 ♗c6 43 c5 ♖xh2 44 ♖c4 ♖xg3 45 ♖b5, and the invasion by the king is instantly decisive.