BISHOP ENDINGS AN INNOVATIVE COURSE

by

Efstratios Grivas

Bishop Endings: An Innovative Course

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KEY TO SYMBOLS

!	a good move
?	a weak move
!!	an excellent move
??	a blunder
!?	an interesing move
?!	a dubious move
□	only move
=	equality
∞	unclear position
=∞	with compensation for the sacrificed material
±	White stands slightly better
∓	Black stands slightly better
±	White has a serious advantage
∓	Black has a serious advantage
+-	White has a decisive advantage
-+	Black has a decisive advantage
→	with an attack
↑	with initiative
⇆	with counterplay
Δ	with the idea of
⌒	better is
≤	worse is
N	novelty
+	check
#	mate

FOREWORD

Being the 'Editor in Chief' of TP, I expected nothing less from such an experienced trainer as GM Grivas! Nevertheless, I was really pleased with how complete and well-chosen the games and positions he presents here are. This publication is an almost exhaustive collection of all you can find about bishop endings – it is 'ready knowledge': you will learn hundreds of rules, patterns and key positions. The author guides you through the examples in a highly instructive and easy-to-understand way.

Reading the whole book, you should focus on two important issues. The first, a temporary one; your knowledge of theoretical positions. *Temporary* because this requires refreshment over time, depending on your memory. This is normal - even the best GM's in the world need to recheck many theoretical endgames from time to time.

The second, a *permanent* one; you will gain a general understanding of bishop endings that will give you a considerable head start in reproducing them in your own games, without the extra effort usually required. That is, if you work enough on the issues that you were struggling a bit to understand!

Some of the exercises are also surprising - and I mean in a positive way! Again, I believe they are presented in the most instructive way – so take your time to understand the 'maze' of these bishop endings.

All-in-all, I was delighted to edit this book – and I am looking forward to the author's next epic publication, with new pieces of the chess board being covered. Thank you, Efstratios!

Romain Edouard
17.09.2017

1. BISHOP VS PAWNS

A primitive theme is the one of a single bishop vs pawns. A bishop easily achieves a draw when fighting against a pawn, with a few — very specific — exceptions.

For examining the various cases, we have to draw up some rules:

When pitted against two pawns, provided these have not crossed their 4th rank, the bishop can achieve the draw. Otherwise, the result depends on whether its king can stop one of the pawns.

With two pawns on their 5th rank, the placement of the kings is a decisive factor.

When the pawns are separated by at least two ranks, and are advanced at least up to their 5th rank, the bishop is unable to control their further march.

Example 1 – Henry Otten

Study 1892 ○
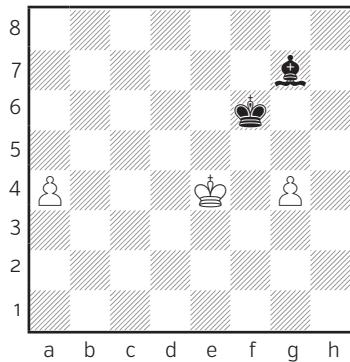
This position is an exceptional one, but clearly shows the 'weakness' of the bishop. Were the black king on any other square, the game would be drawn.
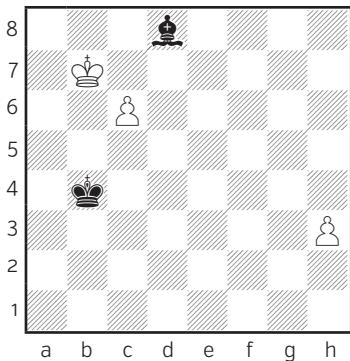
1.a5 ♗f8 2.♔d5 ♗h6 3.g5+! ♗xg5
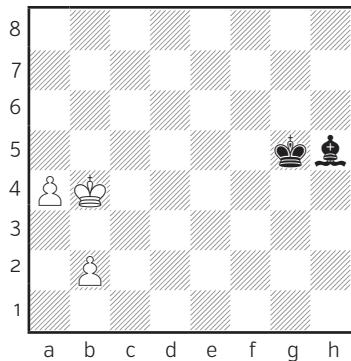
Or 3...♔xg5 4.a6+-.

4.♔e4 ♗h4 5.♔f3!

1-0

▷ **Loek Van Wely**
► **Zoltan Almasi**

Groningen 1995 ○

▷ **Viktor Gavrikov**
► **Yury Chikovani**

Beltsy 1979 ○

54.h4!

Best by test — the bishop is torn in two! 54.c7? ♗xc7 55.♔xc7 ♔c5= or 54.♔c8? ♗a5 55.h4 ♔c5= If a bishop has a vital task on one diagonal, it loses all power on the other diagonal!

1-0

Two connected pawns can generally be immobilised by the bishop, but not when they have already reached their 6ᵗʰ rank.

In positions involving connected pawns, things can get wild... In the game, White tried...

1.♔a5

1.♔c5 ♔f6 2.♔d6 ♗d1 Black employs a standard technique, which M.Dvoretsky calls 'pawns in the crosshairs' — attacking the enemy pawns with the bishop. The idea behind this is to force the white pawns to advance to opposite-coloured squares from the bishop, so it can block them and they can't advance any further without the help of their king. In this way the attacking king is deflected, making room for the defending king to come back and defend. (2...♔f7? 3.b4 ♔e8 4.♔c7 ♗d1 5.b5!+-) 3.a5 ♗e2 4.b4 ♗f1 5.♔c6 ♔e7 6.b5 ♔d8= or 6...♗xb5+=.

1...♔f6 2.b4 ♔e5!

Black is saved by another, also quite widespread, technique: 'the tail-hook' — tying the king to the rearmost pawn from behind, writes M.Dvoretsky.

Wrong is: 2...♔e7 3.b5 ♔d7? (3...♗d1? 4.b6! ♔d7 5.♔a6+-; 3...♔d6!=) 4.♔a6! (but not 4.♔b6? ♗d1! 5.a5 ♔e2= once again, 'pawns in the crosshairs') 4...♔c8 5.♔a7+- Of this scheme of interaction between king and pawns, securing their passage to the queening square, M.Dvoretsky suggested labelling it as "autopilot".

3.b5 ♔d4 4.♔b6

White can no longer stay on autopilot: 4.b6 ♗f3 5.♔a6 (5.♔b5 ♗e2+ 6.♔c6 ♔c4 followed by ...♗f3+) 5...♔c5 6.a5 ♔b4!= the 'tail-hook' (M.Dvoretsky).

4...♗f3

4...♔c4 transposes.

5.a5 ♔c4 6.a6 ♔b4 7.a7

One more thing needs to be done now:

7...♗a8!

And it's a draw due to 8.♔a6 ♔c5 9.b6 ♔c6=; but not 7...♗g2? which fails to 8.♔a6 ♔c5 9.b6 ♗f1+ 10.♔b7 ♗g2+ 11.♔c7+-.

½-½
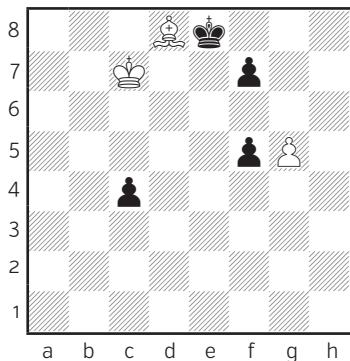
The one-diagonal principle is an important asset. The bishop is optimally placed when it can stop and generally control all the opponent pawns on one diagonal.

This is easier said than done; but fulfilling all functions from a single diagonal is a must!

Example 2 – Mark Dvoretsky

Study 2000

White saves himself with a pawn sacrifice:

1.g6!

The primitive 1.♗f6? f4 2.♔d6 f3 3.♗d4 leads to a loss after 3...c3!-+. A pattern M.Dvoretsky calls "the pants". A nice expression I had never heard of before! The author of the study explains it as follows: "The bishop stops pawns on two different diagonals, but advancing one of the pawns means the bishop must give up its guard over the other. Sometimes,

the bishop is not holding a passed pawn on one of the two diagonals, but defending its own pawn, or some other important point. For all practical purposes, this is the same thing: advancing a pawn pulls the bishop away from fulfilling its other obligation." (M.Dvoretsky).

1...fxg6

Rather than taking the pawn, Black could try 1...f6!? 2.♔d6! (2.♗xf6? f4-+ "The pants", remember?) 2...♔f8 (2... f4? 3.♗e7! f3 4.♔e6 f2 5.g7+-) 3.♔d5= or 3.♔c5= with a draw.

2.♗g5

"The one-diagonal principle! The bishop now fulfils both functions from a single diagonal, c1-h6, which allows White to draw without difficulty," explains M.Dvoretsky.

½-½

Three pawns against a lone bishop win when they have all crossed their 4th rank (there exist a few exceptions, though).

The defence of the side with the bishop consists of the immobilisation of the pawns, but this is hard to achieve when the pawns are far-advanced.

The basic idea of the defence is to immobilise at least two pawns and prevent them from reaching their 7th rank.

Naturally, against four or more pawns the bishop is unable to defend.

Example 3 ●
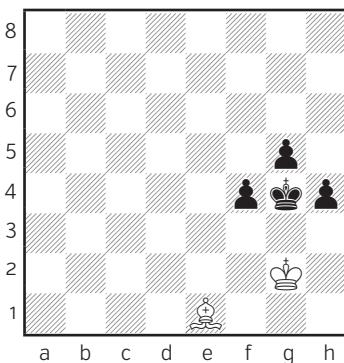
1...♔f5

1...f3+ is an inferior attempt: 2.♔g1!! ♔f5 (2...♔f4 3.♗d2+) 3.♗a5 g4 4.♗d8 h3 5.♗c7 ♔e4 6.♔f2 and Black can make no progress. It is worth noting that if White was to move, then he would be able to draw with 1.♗a5! ♔f5 (1...f3+ 2.♔f2) 2.♗d8! Yes, the bishop is a strong piece!
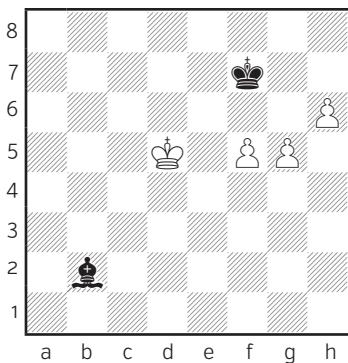
2.♗a5

2.♔h3 ♔e4 3.♔g4 ♔e3! also loses.

2...g4 3.♗d8 h3+ 4.♔h2 ♔e4 5.♗b6 ♔f3 6.♗c7 ♔e3 7.♗b8 f3 8.♔g1 ♔e2 9.♗a7 h2+ 10.♔xh2 f2 11.♗xf2 ♔xf2 12.♔h1 ♔g3!

0-1

▷ Marcin Chmiel
► Arkadiusz Skawinski

Krakow 2014 ●

61...♗c1!

The correct follow-up. 61...♗c3? was played in another game and Black lost after 62.h7! ♔g7 (62...♗b2 63.f6+-) 63.♔e6 ♔xh7 (63...♔h8 64.f6 ♗b2 65.♔f7 ♗c3 66.♔e8! [66.g6? ♗xf6!=] 66...♗b2 [66...♔xh7 67.♔f7!+-] 67.f7 ♗a3 68.f8♕+ ♗xf8 69.♔xf8 ♔xh7 70.♔f7 ♔h8 71.♔g6! ♔g8 72.♔h6+-) 64.♔f7 ♔h8 65.g6 ♗b2 66.f6 1-0 Minev,N-Dukanovic Belgrade 1977.

62.g6+

Or 62.h7 ♔g7 63.g6 ♗b2 (63...♔h8 64.f6 ♗b2 65.f7 ♗a3 66.♔e6 ♔g7=) 64.♔e6 ♔h8! (64...♗c3? 65.f6+! ♗xf6 66.h8♕+ ♔xh8 67.♔xf6+-) 65.f6 ♗xf6 66.♔xf6 stalemate!

62...♔e7

62...♔g8 is fine as well.

63.h7 ♗b2 64.♔e4 ♗g7 65.♔f4 ♔f6 66.♔g4 ♗h8 67.♔h5 ♔xf5 68.♔h6 ♔f6

½-½

▷ Spyridon Skembris
► Antonios Vragoteris

Rhodos 1993 ●
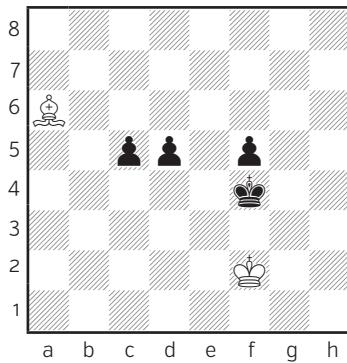
A drawn position.

56...c4 57.♔e2?

57.♗c8! ♔e4 58.♔e2 transposes to the game.

57...♔e4?

Centralisation as principle, but Black could win here with 57...♔g3! 58.♗b7 d4 59.♗d5 c3 60.♗c4 f4 61.♗d3 (61. ♔d3 f3 62.♔xd4 c2-+) 61...f3+ 62.♔f1 f2 63.♗e4 ♔f4-+.

58.♗c8! ♔e5 59.♗d7

Also good is 59.♔f3 d4 (59...c3 60.♔e3 d4+ 61.♔d3 ♔f4 62.♗d7=) 60.♗a6 ♔d5 61.♗c8 d3 62.♗xf5 ♔d4 63.♔f2! c3 64.♔e1 ♔e3 65.♗xd3 (65.♔d1=) 65...♔xd3 66.♔d1=.

59...♔e4 60.♗c8 ♔e5

The alternative try is 60...f4 61.♗g4! d4 62.♗f3+ ♔e5 63.♔d2! ♔d6 64.♔c2 ♔c5 65.♔d2 (65.♗h5 ♔b4 66.♗e2=) 65...♔b4 66.♔c2 d3+ (66...c3 67.♔d3 ♔b3 68.♗d1+ ♔b2 69.♗xd4=) 67.♔d2 ♔b3 68.♗d5 f3 69.♔e3! (69.♗xf3? c3+ 70.♔xd3 c2-+) 69...♔b4 70.♗xf3= but not 70.♔xf3? c3 71.♔e3 ♔a3! 72.♔xd3 ♔b2-+.

61.♗d7 ♔f4

½-½

▷ **Grzegorz Lukasiewicz**
▶ **Dmitry Gurevich**

Geneve 1997 ●
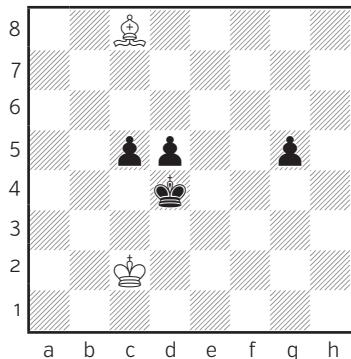
A slightly different position, but here the result is clear — Black wins.

56...♔e3!

And White resigned, as the sample variations can justify: 57.♔c3 (57.♗e6 d4 58.♔b3 ♔f4 59.♔c4 g4 60.♔d3 [60.♔xc5 g3 61.♗d5 d3-+] 60...♔f3!-+) 57...d4+ 58.♔c4 ♔f4 59.♔d3 (59.♔xc5 d3 60.♗a6 d2 61.♗e2 g4-+) 59...g4 60.♔e2 c4 61.♗b7 ♔g3 62.♗c8 c3 63.♗d7 (63.♔d3 ♔f3-+) 63...♔f4 64.♗c8 c2 65.♔d2 d3 66.♗b7 g3 67.♗g2 ♔e5 68.♗b7 ♔d4 69.♗c6 ♔c4 70.♗e4 ♔b3 71.♔c1 ♔c3 72.♗xd3 g2-+.

0-1

Example 4 – Sam Loyd

Study 1868 ○

1.♗d7+ ♔a3 2.♗c6! ♔a2 3.♔c2!

½-½
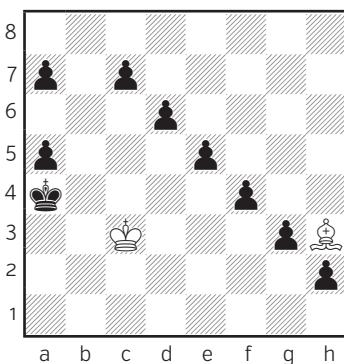
Example 5 – Fortress
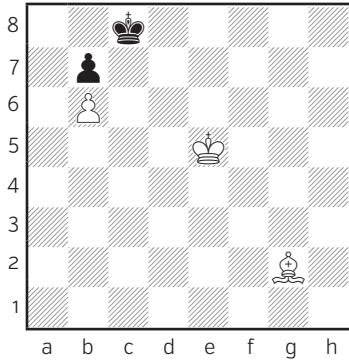
Example 7 – Fortress
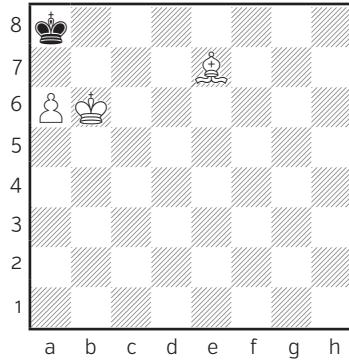
Example 6 – Fortress
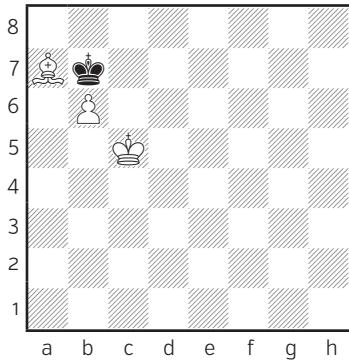
Example 8 – Fortress
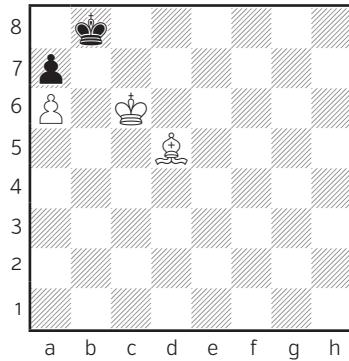
Example 9 – Fortress
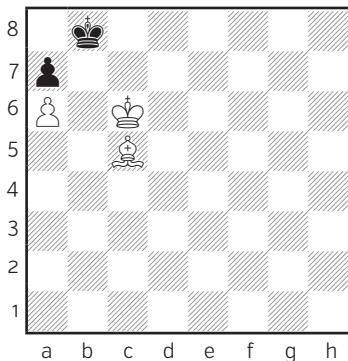
Example 11 – Fortress
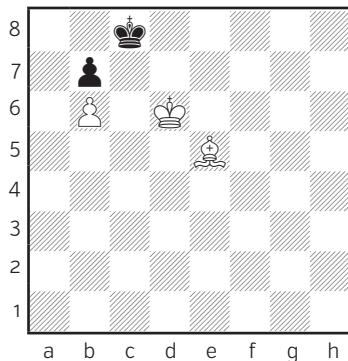
Example 10 – Fortress
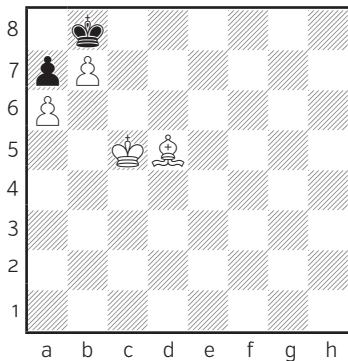
Example 12 – Fortress
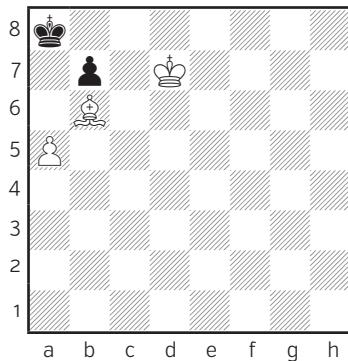
All the above examples (4 to 12) are theoretical draws (fortresses) and must be remembered, but the next example is highly important as well.

Example 13 – Vasily Smyslov

Study 1999 ○
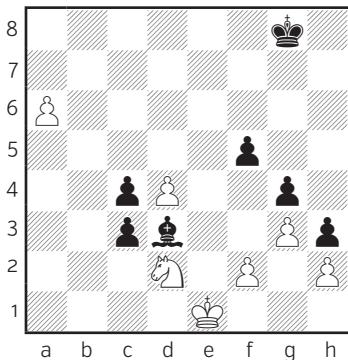
1.♘f1! ♗xf1

1...c2 2.♔d2 ♗xf1 3.f4!! — see the main line.

2.f4!!

The 'usual' stuff, preparing the known fortress! Note that 2.d5? ♗g2 3.d6 ♔f7 loses.
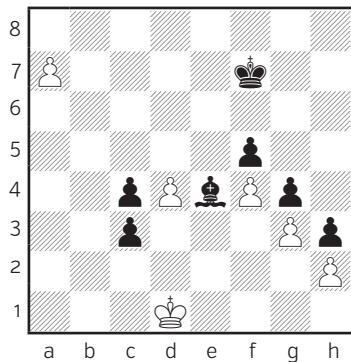
2...♗g2

2...gxf3? 3.a7.

3.♔d1!

3.a7? is erroneous in view of 3...♗f3-+.

3...♗e4 4.a7

Or 4.d5.

4...♔f7

5.d5!

The white king must attack the c-pawns!

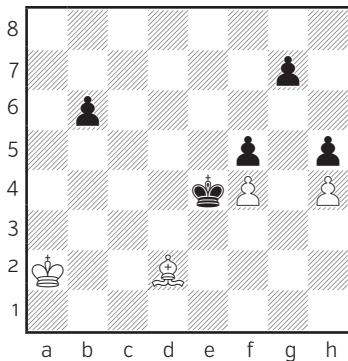**5... ♗xd5 6.♔c2 ♔e6 7.♔xc3 ♔d7 8.a8♕ ♗xa8 9.♔xc4**

White will bring his king to g1 and secure the known-drawn position.

½-½

We will conclude with two very instructive examples, where the pawns prevailed over the bishop.

▷ **Gerald Hertneck**
► **Predrag Nikolic**

Munich 1994 ○

White cannot protect all his pawns (the bishop should be on g5) and he is losing.

54.♔b3 ♔f3 55.♔c4 ♔g4 56.♗e1

56.♔b5 loses to 56...♔xh4 57.♔xb6 ♔g4-+.

56...♔xf4 57.♔d4 b5 58.♗b4

If 58.♔c5 Black wins with 58...♔e3 59.♔xb5 f4 60.♔c5 f3 61.♔d5 f2 62.♗xf2+ ♔xf2 63.♔e5 ♔g3-+.

58...♔g4 59.♗e1

59.♗e7 f4 60.♔e4 f3 61.♔e3 ♔g3-+.

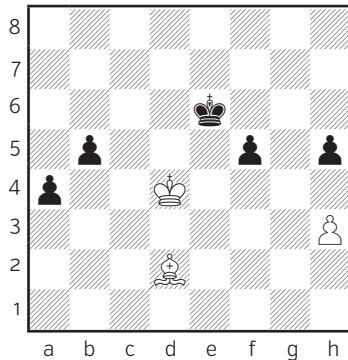**59...♔f4 60.♗d2+ ♔g4 61.♗e1 g5!**

Creating three passed pawns!

62.hxg5 ♔xg5 63.♔e3 ♔g4 64.♔f2

White resigned: 64...h4 65.♗d2 h3 66.♗b4 f4 67.♗c5 f3 68.♔g1 ♔f5 69.♔h2 b4-+.

0-1

▷ **Gata Kamsky**
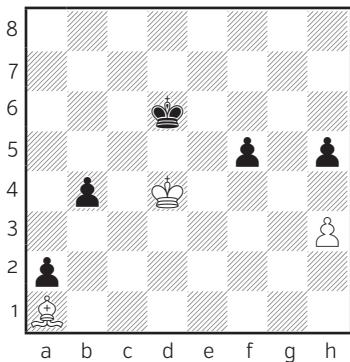► **Paul Van der Sterren**

Wijk aan Zee 1994 ●

Back has three passed pawns but White can hold the draw.

68...a3 69.♗b4 a2 70.♗c3 b4 71.♗a1

Also good was 71.♗b2! ♔d6 (71...♔f6 72.♔e3+ ♔g5 73.♔f3 ♔h4 74.♔g2=) 72.♗a1 b3 (72...h4 73.♔c4 ♔c6 74.♔b3 ♔d5 [74...f4? 75.♔xa2 f3 76.♗d4+-] 75.♔xa2 ♔e4=; 72...♔c6 73.♔e5 ♔c5 74.♔xf5 ♔c4 75.♔e4 h4=) 73.♔c4 f4 74.♔d4 f3 75.♔e3 ♔c5 76.♔xf3 ♔b4 77.♗b2 h4=.

71...♔d6

72.♔c4?

A desicive blunder. White could hold the draw by 72.h4! b3 (72...♔e6 73.♗b2! [73.♔c4? f4 74.♔d4 ♔f5-+] 73...♔d6 74.♗a1=; 72...♔c6? 73.♔e5 ♔c5 74.♔xf5 ♔c4 75.♔e4 ♔b3 76.♔d3+-; 72...f4? 73.♔e4 ♔c5 74.♔xf4 ♔c4 75.♔e3 ♔b3 76.♔d3+-) 73.♔c4 ♔c6 (73...f4? 74.♔d4! [74.♔xb3? f3-+] 74...f3 75.♔e3 ♔d5 76.♔xf3 ♔c4 77.♔e2 ♔b4 78.♔d2 ♔a3 79.♔c3+-) 74.♔xb3 ♔d5=.

72...♔c6! 73.♔b3

White now loses in all variations: 73.♔d4 ♔b5 74.♔d3 ♔a4 75.♔c2 f4-+; or 73.♗d4 f4 74.♔b3 ♔d5-+ or 73.h4 f4 74.♔d3 (74.♔d4 ♔b5 75.♔e4 ♔c4-+) 74...♔d5 75.♗h8 f3 76.♔e3 ♔c4-+; or 73.♔xb4 ♔d5 74.♔c3 (74.♔b3 f4-+) 74...♔e4 75.♔d2 ♔f3 76.♔c2 ♔g2 77.♔b3 f4 78.♔xa2 f3 79.♗d4 f2 80.♗xf2 ♔xf2 81.♔b2 ♔g3 82.♔c2 ♔xh3 83.♔d2 ♔g2-+.

73...♔d5 74.♔xa2 f4 75.♗f6 f3 76.♗h4 ♔d4 77.♔b3 ♔e3 78.♔xb4 f2 79.♗xf2+ ♔xf2

White resigned, as his king cannot reach the saving square f1.

0-1

Conclusion

A draw is a very likely result, however the distant pawns make the bishop's life miserable.