

GATTI 10th AT

Jubilee Anniversary Chess Composition Tourney

FINAL AWARD

Some introductory words...

When I announced this Jubilee Tourney to celebrate the tenth anniversary of my first published chess problem, I could not imagine how warmly the chess composition community would respond. The number of entries — and, more importantly, the high quality and the spirit behind them — has deeply moved me. Many composers clearly understood the essence of this event: not a competition in the ordinary sense, but a collective act of creative freedom, an invitation to think boldly, playfully, and without fear of the unknown. We live in a world that is mostly unknown: just think about the obscure depths of the oceans. I am sure that the most marvellous things are yet to be discovered.

I chose to mark these ten years not with a book or a retrospective, but with a tournament, because composition, to me, has never been a solitary art. Its beauty lies in the dialogue — between minds, between ideas, between the visible and the invisible logic that binds the sixty-four squares.

*When I began composing in mid-2015, I was not seeking fame or recognition. I was, quite simply, seeking survival. Something to devote myself to, something that helped me escape from something I could not even name. Chess composition offered me something I hadn't found anywhere else in my life: a precise form of meaning. It trained my mind to transform chaos into harmony, pain into geometry, and uncertainty into purpose, step by step, in a relentless growth. **In a very real sense, it saved my life.***

Through these years, I have experienced both triumph and silence, the ecstasy of discovery and the calm of understanding. Now, looking at the works sent to this tournament, I see the same pulse that has guided me all these years: imagination disciplined by logic, emotion translated into form. That is the true celebration — not of my ten years, but of the living art we share.

My heartfelt thanks to everyone who contributed their time, their ideas, and their fragments of wonder. You have made this Jubilee what it was meant to be: a proof that, even after centuries, chess composition remains one of humanity's most delicate ways to speak the language of the infinite.

Thanks again to you all.

*Just one last reflection,
before beginning to delve into the beauty of composed chess.*

Judging a composition tournament properly is not a mechanical operation. It requires time, concentration, analytical rigor, anticipation checking, stylistic sensitivity, and above all a deep respect for the work of every Author involved, whether awarded or not. This emerges especially if, like me and some others, you feel important to comment every non-included composition, to make the Author aware of the motivations that brought at that decision.

In the chess composition world, this enormous amount of work has traditionally been offered freely, almost taken for granted. Perhaps, in the future, our community should begin reflecting more seriously on the actual value of this effort and on the sustainability of expecting increasingly demanding and specialized work without any form of recognition in return, with few and almost insignificant exceptions.

Passion is essential.

But passion alone cannot indefinitely support everything.

Daniele Guglielmo Gatti

FIDE International Judge

Sovramonte, Italy – July 2026



SECTION A

Endgame studies (Theme free)

(A journey through lucid insanity)

I received 52 original endgame studies (one was withdrawn by the Author before the deadline and substituted with another) from a total of 40 Authors for my Anniversary Tourney. Considering that each composer could submit only two studies, including joints, and many composers have submitted only one, this represents an impressive participation. But what impressed me the most were the quality and the variety of the proposed ideas. I had serious difficulty choosing the rankings, especially among those eventually receiving prizes, which often represented completely different and equally memorable ways of exploring the art of study composition. **As a consequence, the percentage of awarded studies turned out to be exceptionally high**, and it could not be otherwise. I do not believe that an award should have a predetermined number of admitted studies, as if it were a bureaucratic process: if I receive dozens of good entries, they all deserve to receive high distinctions; if I receive dozens of weak entries, the award will be almost empty, and perhaps the highest distinction will be an Honorable Mention. The relatively large number of distinctions should not be interpreted as excessive generosity. Here, only a handful of studies failed to reach the artistic level required for an award. Rather than compressing works of clearly different merit into the same category, or even worse, exclude good works simply to avoid an excessively long award, I preferred to differentiate them more precisely, rewarding each according to its individual artistic value.

Furthermore, the distinctions used in this award should not be interpreted merely as successive degrees of technical quality. They primarily reflect different artistic directions and different ways of approaching the aesthetic aims of the tournament. Prize-winning studies are those which, in the opinion of the judge, not only achieve a high artistic standard, but also embody the central spirit of the tourney: the exploration of chess pushed towards the outer limits of feasibility and imagination. Special Prizes and Special Honorable Mentions recognize studies that pursue the same direction with remarkable character, even when some aspects prevent them from fully reaching the highest category. Honorable Mentions are studies that came very close to embodying the spirit of the tourney, sometimes matching the boldness of the prize-winning studies, but without the necessary outstanding quality. Commendations, on the other hand, are a crowded section that reward studies of considerable artistic merit, elegance, richness or entertainment value, but whose artistic ambitions or achievements follow directions that are somewhat more distant from the specific aesthetic focus of the tournament, or explore that same direction to a more limited extent.

For this reason, **the reader should not interpret the award as a simple linear ranking from “best” to “worst”**. Several studies placed in different categories, and often even in the same category, are not directly comparable in conventional terms, representing distinct artistic philosophies and different ways of understanding what an endgame (or a middlegame) study can be. As a consequence, studies placed in different sections should not necessarily be regarded as objectively stronger or weaker than those surrounding them. Several works could have exchanged places across category boundaries without contradicting the artistic philosophy of this award, whose purpose is as much classification as ranking. Almost all the awarded studies have received a numbered ranking, because I like to give the reader an interpretation of my preferences, but the gaps between neighbouring studies have very often been minimal.

In the end, two main points will allow the reader to correctly interpret this award:

- **Bold originality, narrative power and artistic memorability have often prevailed over sheer analytical complexity, and, at times, even over outstanding compositional and technical mastery.** The studies on the podium have succeeded in achieving both goals at the highest levels.
 - **More generally, I have consciously preferred studies that, in my opinion, have the potential to become unforgettable and to stand the test of time.**
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As usual, I am spending first some "quick" words about the studies excluded from the award, with the relative motivations. I am still convinced that every award should always include the full explanations for every exclusion.

Studies excluded from the beginning:

- **Michal Hlinka & Lubos Kekely (h6-f6):** The study (not very interesting in itself, actually) seems to be unsolvable. Diving into the 12. ... Rd5!? variation, it seem possible a win for Black, despite the very hard analytical lines. However, they cannot be ignored even if exploration is possible only with intensive help of engines and tablebases. I am reporting some analysis of the crucial lines. With such an unclear ending, the study has to be revised and, if necessary, corrected before being proposed again. Here I report some of the analysis I made with my best friend Stockfish 17: 12. .. Rd5!? 13. Be3 Be5 14. Rc4 Bf6+ 15. Kg3 Ra5 16. Rb4 (16. Rc6 Kg7 17. Bh6+ Kg6 18. Bd2 Ra3+ 19. Kf4 Ra4+ 20. Kg3 Be8 21. Rc5 Ra3+ 22. Kg2 Bd4 23. Ra5 Rb3 24. Be3 Bc6+ 25. Kg3 Bf6 26. Rc5 Bb7 27. Kh3 Be7 28. Ra5 Bd6 29. Kg4 Rb4+ 30. Kh3 Kf6 31. Bg5+ Kf7 32. Be3 Kg6 33. Bc5 Rb3+ 34. Be3 Bc8+ 35. Kg2 Bb7+ 36. Kh3 Kf6 37. Rh5 Rb1 38.

Rh6+ Ke5 39. f3 Bc7 40. Rh5+ Ke6 41. Rh6+ Kf5 42. Rh5+ Kg6 43. Rh6+ Kg7 44. Kg2 Rb2+ 45. Kf1 Rc2 46. Rh3 Ra2 47. Kg1 Be5 48. Bh6+ Kg6 49. Be3 Bc7 50. Rh6+ Kg7 51. Rh3 Re2 52. Bd4+ Kg6 53. Kf1 Ra2 54. Be3 Bh2 55. Ke1 Bd5 56. Rh6+ Kg7 57. Rb6 Be5 58. f4 Bc3+ 59. Kf1 Kf7 60. Rd6 Bg2+ 61. Kg1 Bb4 62. Rd4 Bc5 63. Rd3 Be4 64. Rc3 Be7 65. Rc4 Bf5 66. Rc7 Ke6 67. Ra7 Rc2 68. Ra6+ Bd6 69. Ra4 Re2 70. Bf2 Rc2 71. Be3 Bg6 72. Ra1 Re2 73. Ba7 Kf5 74. Ra6 Bxf4 TB-WIN for Black) 16. .. Bd5 17. Bb6 Ra3+ 18. Kf4 Kg6 19. Be3 Be7 20. Rb6+ Kf7 21. Rh6 Bf6 22. Rh7+ Kg6 23. Ra7 Rc3 24. Ra5 Rc4+ 25. Kg3 Be4 26. Kh3 Bf3 27. Kg3 Be4 28. Kh3 Rb4 29. Bc5 Rb3+ 30. Kg4 Bb7 31. Bd6 Bd8 32. Ra3 Rb2 33. Bg3 Rb4+ 34. Kh3 Bb6 35. Ra1 Kg5 36. Re1 Bd4 37. Bh4+ Kh5 38. Bg3 Bf3 39. Rg1 Rb5 40. Bh4 Be2 41. Bg3 Rb3 42. Re1 Bf3 43. Rc1 Kg5 44. Rc2 Rb1 45. Bd6 Be4 46. Ra2 Rb6 47. Bc7 Rb3+ 48. Bg3 Bf5+ 49. Kg2 Be4+ 50. Kh3 Bb6 51. Re2 Kf5 52. Rd2 Rb1 53. Rd7 Rh1+ 54. Bh2 Bc5 55. Rd2 Be7 56. f3 Bc6 57. Rd3 Bf6 58. Kg2 Rb1 59. Bg3 Rb2+ 60. Kh1 Bb7 61. Bc7 Rc2 62. Bg3 Be7 63. Bd6 Ba6 64. Rd4 Bf6 65. Rb4 Bc4 66. Kg1 Bd4+ 67. Kh1 Ke6 68. Bf8 Be5 69. Ra4 Bd5 70. Ra3 Bc3 71. Kg1 Bd4+ 72. Kf1 Bf2 73. Ra6+ Kf7 74. Rd6 Bc4+ 75. Kg2 Kxf8 wins)

- **Michal Hlinka & Pavel Arestov (e5-h1):** a complex study with many variations and a good interplay between try and solution. However, in spite of a good logic, I do not see enough artistic or surprising content to justify an inclusion in the award. The main tactical motifs are more routine than a good find.
- **Rainer Staudte & Michael Schlosser (a2/g7).** It's interesting to transpose a tale into a chess study. It's a good way to explore the sides of chess world. Unfortunately, the original material here is too little. The tactics and motifs here are well known and I see nothing particularly distinguishing from many other studies with the same themes.
- **Rainer Staudte & Michael Schlosser (a8/h6).** This was a hard decision. My first temptation was to assign a Special Commendation in the end of the award, for some interesting blows (as 2. Qh5+! - 7. Qh7+! in sideline), and, to be honest, for the effort! I am perfectly aware that, with four Queens in play, is quite hard to have clean sidelines and a clean main line too, but I feel that the play here is simply too scrambled, and the many variations (with few precise moves and too many technical / didactical examples) have an overly confusing effect on the viewer / solver. Also the ending is nothing special. Probably the scheme can be revised maintaining the good finds while creating a more harmonious complex of moves and tactics. I am sure there is margin of improvement, so I am not excluding this study as a "punishment", but as an encouragement to do better for next time. If I am permitted, I could suggest to build something around the stunning final blow 7. Qh7+! [after 3. ... Kg4], which seems to me the best point of the whole study.

- **Per Olin** (c8/e8). The initial position is ugly, but this does not necessarily prevent an award, if the thematic or artistic content is strong. Unfortunately, this does not seem to be the case. Thematic ideas are realized with a high material cost and an excessive number of captures and recaptures, quite unpleasant to follow. The overall feeling is of inadequate construction, massive and violent liquidation of the pieces, which spoil the plausible idea of the underpromotion followed by skewer. This study needs some work of refinement before being able to compete.
- **Peter Gyarmati & Janos Hartly** (f2/e4). A domination net which has been explored many times. The most interesting fact about this study is the Gyarmati's presentation: *"I'm sending you a joint composition. This work is about 20 years old, and my co-Author didn't submit it for a tourney."* Although I was attracted by the idea of re-evaluate an old, previously unpublished study, this miniature offers too little content for a tourney that emphasizes ambition and originality as main points.
- **Michael Pasman** (h6/b7). An intricate technical endgame without particularly distinctive artistic features. Few Authors have managed such an extraordinary contrast between their two entries: one became the Second Prize of the tournament, while the other never seriously entered the competition.
- **Eduard Eliazyan** (f5/e7). The regulations allowed a maximum of two studies per Author, including joints. The composer submitted four studies, two of which form a twin and were therefore considered as a single conceptual work. This still left three eligible studies competing for two available places. Rather than asking the author to withdraw one of them after the closing date, I considered it more appropriate, as judge, to select the two studies that I regarded as the strongest artistic contributions. The remaining study, although perfectly worthy of publication, has therefore not been included in the award and remains available for future tournaments.
- **Jaroslav Polasek** (c5-f5). Black appears to have solved all his problems after reaching a materially balanced ending. The Queen manoeuvre leads to two echo mates depending on the position of the black King, both exploiting the same mating net in slightly different forms. The final effect is elegant, but the preceding play, however, is largely technical and serves mainly to reach the concluding position. Although accurately constructed, the solution develops rather routinely and the thematic climax arrives only after a long sequence of preparatory moves. As a consequence, the attractive final echo alone is not sufficient to award the study.
- **Jaroslav Polasek** (g2-h6). The study contains a zugzwang idea of

corresponding squares, leading to a positional draw, but the thematic content remains rather limited and develops in a relatively static way. In addition, the central mechanism is strongly anticipated: see for example (*Gatti & Micaloni, PDB ID number P1427283, 1^o Prize on 8th edition of FRME, 2022*). This makes it difficult for this version to compete with the stronger entries of the tournament.

- **Aayush Wadwha (g1/g4)**. The brief explanation is that the study is incorrect. The longer explanation follows: this is an original strategic idea based on a Bishop underpromotion followed by two successive offers of the promoted Bishop and an attractive geometrical finale. Unfortunately, the analytical presentation remains incomplete and too much relying on extremely hard sidelines, if not clearly dualistic (7. Bxd7 and 7. Bxh7 are equally winning, for example). But the strongest weakness is that the intended final phase is not uniquely demonstrated and several alternative winning continuations appear to exist (10. g5 with threat gxh6 also wins), preventing the artistic conclusion from being fully forced. Since the thematic climax constitutes the very essence of the study, this lack of analytical precision substantially affects its correctness and prevented its inclusion in the award. The idea, however, is nice: a further technical refinement and polishing of all duals will surely make this study better suited to compete in a future tourney.

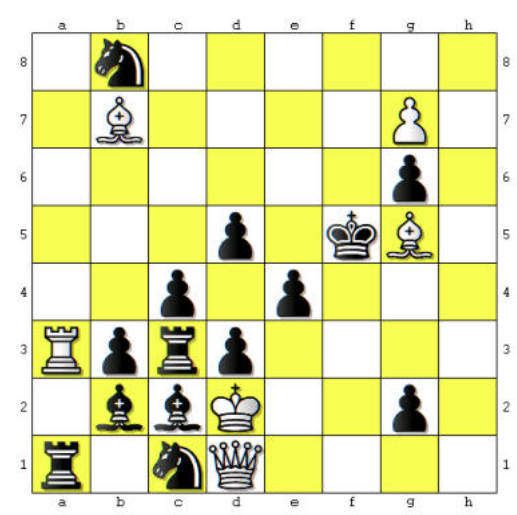
Studies excluded or re-ranked after the publication of the provisional award because of previously unknown anticipations:

- **EXCLUSION: Ilshat Valitov (e1/a8)**. 5th Commendation. Completely anticipated by Jan Timman, source: Magyar Sakkvilág #754 no.12 (12/2022). Nearly identical position and solution. **Consequently, the study is removed from the award and all the lower regular Commendations (from 6th to 15th) are upgraded of 1 position.**
- **EXCLUSION: Eduard Eliazyan (a5/a8)**. 2nd Commendation. Strongly anticipated by Pogosyants E., source (EG#02358); Kommunist no. 65 (15582) 18-3-1973 and, as pointed by the Author, from Kalinin A. (1967) study. The present version was considered an insufficiently original development and has therefore been excluded from the final award. **Consequently, the study is removed from the award and all the lower regular Commendations (from 2nd to 14th, as resultant from the exclusion of Ilshat Valitov), are furtherly upgraded of 1 position.**
- **EXCLUSION: Eduard Eilazyan (c2-e8)**. 1^o Commendation. After further examination of the Author's earlier related studies (Victory 60th AT, 2025; The

Problemist, 2025), including those indicated by the Author himself (Tim Krabbè 60th JT, 2003), the present version was considered an insufficiently original development and has therefore been excluded from the final award. **Consequently, and with reference to previous re-ranking, all the lower regular Commendations (from 2nd to 13th are upgraded of 1 further position.**

- **RE-RANKING: Alexander Stavrietsky (h1-e8). 8th Honorable Mention.** Following the publication of the provisional award, two predecessors were brought to the judge's attention by Peter Gyarmati and Ilham Aliev. After a further comparative examination, I no longer consider the original contribution sufficient to justify the previous ranking of 8th Honorable Mention. The central thematic mechanism had already been established by Pogosyants and subsequently developed by Aliev. Nevertheless, unlike its predecessors, the present study succeeds in presenting the mechanism in a doubled symmetrical form, thus extending rather than merely reproducing the earlier concept. Although this refinement is not substantial enough to preserve its original distinction, it still represents a genuine artistic addition. For this reason, instead of being excluded, the study is reassigned to the section of **Special Commendations**, where its elegant elaboration of an existing idea can be more appropriately appreciated.

Below follows the final ranking:



Vladimir Kuzmichev

White to move and win

>>> 1st Prize <<<

This study emerged very quickly as the leading contender for the highest distinction of the tourney. At first sight, the initial position may appear almost incomprehensible: dense, overloaded, seemingly chaotic, like the creation of a visionary mind unconcerned with conventional harmony. Yet the moment one

understands the splendid key move, the whole position suddenly begins to illuminate itself from within. And that's just the beginning.

The white Queen cannot be captured because of immediate mate. Then comes the astonishing strategic core of the study: the creation of a blockade vortex based on the a2 square, where Queen and Bishop cooperate in a highly unusual mechanism in order to deflect the black Queen toward a7 with forced tempo. Finally, after an enormous concentration of Black material and energy, White concludes with an almost surreal model mate delivered by only two pieces.

This is not "normal" chess aesthetics. It is chess pushed deliberately toward the extreme borders of what seems constructively possible. And that is exactly what I was aiming at, when I organized this tourney, and it's expressed in the best form possible for my taste and for my idea of coherence and chess composition in general. An incredible and unforgettable story.

Some judges may hesitate in front of the unusual initial configuration and the relative lack of naturalness. I understand such reservations. However, I also believe that certain ideas simply cannot exist inside fully conventional forms. Sometimes the price of reaching unexplored artistic territory is accepting positions that look improbable at first glance, but become deeply coherent once their inner logic is revealed.

In this sense, the study reminds me of **artistic expressionism**: works initially perceived as distorted, excessive or even disturbing, before later generations recognized that they were expanding the language of the art itself.

And this is perhaps the main reason for making this entry the absolute winner of the tourney.

Comments on the solution are by the Author.

Solution: 1. Qh5 {!!}

A magnificent and unexpected move! "From the frying pan into the fire"

The white Queen is sacrificed under the attack of the black pawn and gives up control of the g1 square. And the blacks calmly put a new Queen.

(1. Qe1 {?} - the white Queen escapes the attack and retains control over the g1 square, preventing the black Queen from appearing. - but Bd1 {!!} No win for White.)

(1. g8=Q {?} Bxd1 {!} 2. Qxd5+ Kg4 3. Bc8+ Kg3 4. Qe5+ Kf2 {!} 5. Qf4+ Kg1 {!} 6. Qe3+ Kh1 {!} 7. Qh3+ Kg1 {,= =})

1. .. g1=Q

(1. .. gxh5 2. g8=Q {!} e3+ 3. Bxe3 {!})

2. Bc8+

(2. Qxg6+ {?} Kxg6 3. g8=Q+ Kh5 {, = =})

2. .. Ke5 3. Bf6+ {!!} sacrifice Bishop

(3. Bf4+ {?} Kxf4 4. Qh4+ Kf3 {!} 5. Qf6+ Kg2 {!} 6. Qxg6+ Kh1 {! = =} – The black king is saved in the corner again)

3. .. Kxf6 4. g8=N+ {!!} Kg7 5. Qh6+ Knight sacrifice Kf7

(5. .. Kxg8 6. Be6#)

Qh7+ Kf8 7. Qe7+ coercion to accept sacrifice Kxg8 8. Be6+ Kh8

White sent the black king to the opposite corner, but what changes?

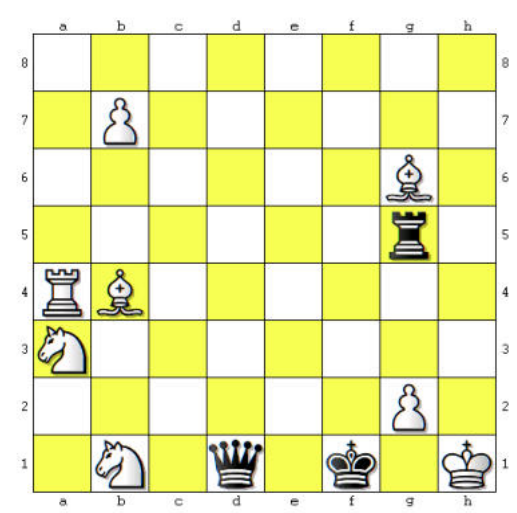
9. Qf8+ Kh7 10. Bg8+ Kh8 11. Bxd5+ Kh7 12. Bg8+ Kh8 13. Bxc4+ Kh7 14. Bg8+ Kh8

15. Bxb3+ Kh7 16. Bg8+ Kh8 17. Ba2+ Kh7 18. Ra7+ {!!} Rook sacrifice Qxa7 19. Bg8+

Kh8 20. Bf7+ – the white Bishop plays on all squares of the diagonal a2-g8 during the

decision process - Kh7 21. Qg8+ Kh6 22. Qxg6# model mate

Not a single black piece was captured in the main variation - only pawns.



Michael Pasman

White to move and draw

>> 2nd Prize <<

A magnificent exercise in deferred realization. White could promote the b-pawn immediately, yet every attempt fails because Black's persistent mating threats leave no time for this seemingly obvious resource. The entire play therefore revolves around a fascinating sequence of postponements, each forcing White

to discover another subtle resource (the threatened counter-checks are wonderful)

before promotion can finally become possible. The artistic highlight is the extraordinary sacrificial march of the white army. One after another, every white piece disappears, all of them being sacrificed on the first rank, until the board is reduced to the lone b-pawn. Only then does the long-awaited promotion finally occur. The repeated thematic tries with premature promotion create a powerful long-foresight effect, while Black's constant threat ...Kf2+ provides remarkable unity throughout the play.

An elegant and highly original conception in which the delayed promotion is not merely a theme, but the inevitable conclusion of a beautifully organized process of complete self-destruction. A memorable achievement.

Solution with comments of the Author:

{Black has mate threats like Kf2+ and Rh5+. So meantime white has no time for promotion of b7 pawn.}

1. Be1!

{Thematic try: (1. b8=Q ? Kf2+ 2. Be1+ Qxe1+)

(1. Bc5 ? Rh5+)

1. .. Qxe1 *(1. .. Kxe1 ?? 2. Rd4 ! Qxd4 3. Nc2+)*

2. Nc2 !

(2. Re4 ? 2. .. Qf2) ({Thematic try: 2. b8=Q ? Kf2+)

(2. Rf4+ ? Ke2+ 3. Kh2 Qg3+)

2. .. Qc1 *{! The threat is still Kf2+ with mate following}*

(2. .. Qxb1 ?? 3. Ra1)

3. Ra2 !

{Thematic try: 3. b8=Q ? Kf2+} 3. .. Rxc2 {White is prepared to meet} (3. .. Kf2+ {with}

4. Ne1+ !) (3. .. Rxc6 4. b8=Q Rh6+ 5. Qh2 Kf2+ 6. Ne1+ Kxe1 7. Rd2 Rxc2+
8. Kxc2 Qxb1 9. Rd7!)

4. Bd3+!

(4. Bh5 ? Rg1+ 5. Kh2 Qf4+) (4. Ne3+ ? Qxe3 5. Rxc2 Qh3+ 6. Rh2 Qf3+)

4. .. Re2!

(4. .. Kf2+ ?? 5. Ne1+)

5. Bxe2+ {White still has no time for promotion} Kf2+! 6. Ne1!

(6. Bd1 ? Qh6+)

6. .. Qxe1+ 7. Bf1+ ! Kxf1 8. Nd2+!

(8. Nc3 ? Qh4+ 9. Rh2 Qg3)

(*{Thematic try: 8. b8=Q ? Qe4+ 9. Kh2 Qh4#}*)

8. ... Kf2+ 9. Nf1+ ! Kxf1 10. Ra1 {! sacrifices the last piece}

{Thematic try: 10. b8=Q ? Qe4+ 11. Kh2 Qh4#}

**10. .. Qxa1 {White sacrificed all of his pieces and now remains just with one pawn. All
the pieces were sacrificed on the first rank.}**

**11. b8=Q {The pawn could be promoted from the first move, but is promoted only
now, while all other white pieces have been sacrificed.}**

11. ... Kf2+ 12. Kh2 Qg1+ 13. Kh3

1/2-1/2

Judge's Appendix: "Don't impress me. Make me remember".

The decision to award this study the Second Prize deserves a brief explanation.

Several studies in this tournament display deeper tactical complexity or more sophisticated analytical content. However, this work possesses a quality that is considerably rarer:

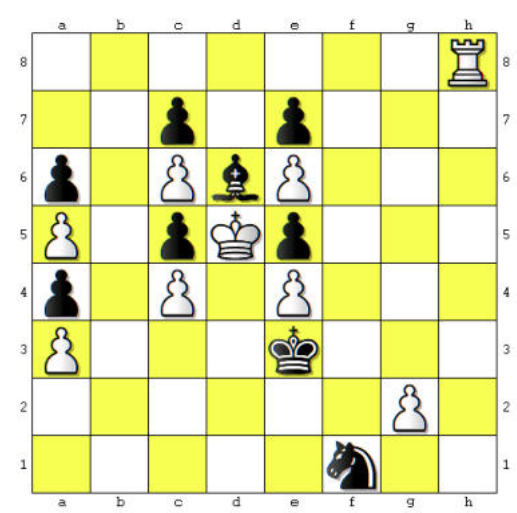
***it tells a story. And not a normal story, but an extraordinary one.** A story whose emotional structure feels surprisingly close to my own way of thinking about chess composition. And only the even more incredible storytelling of the 1st Prize prevented this study to be the winner of the tourney.*

The story is simple and terrific at the same time. From the very first move White already owns the decisive resource, the promotion of the b-pawn. Yet the composer transforms this obvious possibility into a dramatic objective that remains unattainable until the very end. Every time the reader expects the natural promotion, another hidden obstacle appears. An extremely powerful narrative rhythm. The reader is drawn into the solution almost like watching a psychological thriller, where every apparent resolution only opens the door to a new obstacle.

Even more remarkable is the sacrificial architecture. One after another, every single white piece disappears, all of them deliberately sacrificed on the first rank before the lonely pawn is finally allowed to fulfil its destiny. This extraordinary consistency gives the study an almost literary structure: **the promotion is not simply delayed, but earned**. Only after ten moves does the promotion finally become possible. Perhaps this is one reason why the study affected me so strongly. The promotion is earned only after ten moves of endurance, an image that inevitably reminded me of the ten-year journey celebrated by this tourney.

Whether the complete first-rank annihilation of the entire white army before the final promotion is entirely new I cannot state with certainty. Nevertheless, it creates an unforgettable artistic impression and elevates the work well beyond the value of its individual tactical ideas.

For this reason I have preferred this study to several analytically stronger competitors. Analytical consistency is important, but so is the ability to make the solver remember a composition long after its analytical details have faded.



Frank Fiedler & Brigitte Blechschmidt

White to move and win

> 3rd Prize <

This study came as a genuine surprise to the judge. Not only because of its extraordinary content, but also because it was submitted by two names previously unknown to me. Such moments are among the great pleasures of a jubilee tournament: suddenly, from complete obscurity, there appears a work of striking originality and unmistakable artistic ambition.

The initial position already possesses a curious and memorable character. The material balance is highly unusual, and the white King, centralized among scattered pawns and minimal forces, creates an atmosphere of latent paradox even before play begins. Yet the true richness of the study only gradually reveals itself.

The introductory 1.Rh3+! is an excellent key, immediately distinguishing itself from the tempting but insufficient alternatives. The subsequent play is precise and purposeful, leading to the critical phase after 3.Rxe3+ Kxe3, where the entire study suddenly transforms into a deep underpromotion drama.

The climax beginning with the advance of the g-pawn is magnificent. After 7.g8=Q? the game is stalemate, while 7.g8=N+? also fails in a different and highly instructive manner. Thus the only winning continuation is the astonishing 7.g8=B!, a Bishop underpromotion not introduced for mere decorative effect, but fully justified by the logic of the position.

This alone would already constitute a memorable study idea. However, the Authors go considerably further.

The newly created Bishop must then undertake an elegant and unexpectedly long manoeuvre: Bf7-e8-d7-c8-b5, coordinating with the a-pawn while simultaneously avoiding hidden stalemate mechanisms. The geometry of this Bishop journey is exceptionally pleasing. Particularly admirable is the way the Authors incorporate additional sidelines where superficially natural Bishop routes fail and even produce draws, notably the fascinating variation beginning with 8.Bh7?, where the Bishop appears active yet ultimately proves misplaced. These branches are not analytical clutter; they enrich the thematic fabric of the whole conception.

Equally impressive is the careful integration of several distinct stalemate motifs.

The study does not rely on a single trick repeated mechanically, but instead explores an entire family of related paradoxes:

- Queen promotion stalemates,

- Knight-promotion stalemates,
- Bishop manoeuvres that preserve the win,
- Bishop manoeuvres that unexpectedly spoil it,
- and subtle switchback effects echoing earlier play.

The resulting construction feels rich without ever becoming chaotic. The study maintains a clear artistic direction from beginning to end.

What makes this entry especially suitable for the present jubilee tournament is precisely this combination of imagination and technical refinement. The work possesses both modern analytical sophistication and genuine aesthetic personality. One remembers it afterwards, which is perhaps the highest compliment that can be paid to a study.

This is, in my opinion, an outstanding composition and one of the most memorable entries received for the tourney.

Solution as presented by the Authors, with only minimal refinement.

1. Rh3+!

(1. g4 ? Nd2 ! 2. g5 Nxe4
 {! threatens Nc3#} 3. Rh3+ Kf4 4. Rh4+ Kf5 5. Rxe4 Kxg5 6. Re1 Kf4 7. Rf1+
 Ke3 8. Rf8 e4 {draw, e. g.} 9. Rf1 Ke2 10. Rb1 Ke3 {or Kd3 or Kf3} 11. Re1+
 Kf3 12. Rf1+ Ke2 13. Rf7 Kd3 14. Rf3+ e3 15. Rxe3+ Kxe3 {stalemate})
 (1. Rh1 ? Nd2 ! (1. .. Ng3)) (1. Rf8 ? Nd2
 (1. .. Nh2))
 (1. Rd8 ?? Ke2 2. Rxd6 Ne3#)

1. .. Kf2 {or Kd2 or Ke2}

(1. .. Kf4 2. Rf3+! +-)

2. g4 (2. Rf3+ ? Kxg2 {draw})

2. .. Ne3+ (2. .. Kg2 3. Rd3/Rc3+-)

3. Rxe3 Kxe3 4. g5 Kf4

(4. .. Kd2 {or Kd3} 5. g6 Kc3 6. g7 Kb3 {or Kb2} 7. g8=Q! {! e. g.} Kxa3 8. Qc8 Kb2 9.
 Qxa6 a3 10. Qb5+ Ka1 11. a6 a2 12. Qa4 Kb1 13. a7 a1=Q 14. Qxa1+ Kxa1 15. a8=Q+
 Kb2 16. Qd8 Kc3 17. Qxd6 +-)

5. g6 Kg5 6. g7 Kf6 7. g8=B !!

(7. g8=Q {? stalemate})

(7. g8=N+ ? Kg6 ! 8. Nh6 Kxh6 {stalemate})

7. .. **Kg5** (7. .. Kg7 8. Bf7 Kf8 9. Bh5 +-)

8. **Bf7**

(8. Bh7 ? Kf4 9. Bg6 Ke3 10. Bh5 (10. Be8 Kd2 11. Bd7 Kc3 12. Bc8 Kb3 13. Bxa6 Kxa3 14. Bb5 Kb3 15. Bxa4+ Kxa4 16. a6 Ka5 17. a7 Kb6 18. a8=B {draw} (18. a8=Q { stalemate})) (18. a8=N+?? Ka6 {Black wins})) 10. .. Kd2 11. Bg4 Kc3 Bd1 Kb2 13. Bxa4 Kxa3 14. Bb5 Kb4 15. Bxa6 Kxa5 draw)

8. .. **Kf4** 9. **Be8 Ke3** {switchback (cf. move 3)} 10. **Bd7 Kd2** {or Kd3} 11. **Bc8 Kc3** {or Kc2} 12. **Bxa6 Kb3** {or Kb2} 13. **Bb5 Kxa3** 14. **a6** (14. Bxa4 ? Kxa4 15. a6 Ka5 16. a7 Kb6 17. a8=B {draw} (17. a8=Q { stalemate})) (17. a8=N+ ? Ka5 18. Nxc7 Bxc7 19. Kxc5 Bb8! -+))

14. .. **Kb2** 15. **Bxa4** {win; unique move sequence until here, and further, e. g.} (15. a7 ? a3 16. a8=Q a2 !) 15. .. Ka3 16. Bd1 Kb2 17. a7 Kc1 18. Ba4 Kb2 19. a8=Q Kc3 20. Qf8 Kb4 21. Qf2 Ka5 (21. .. Kxa4 22. Qb2 Ka5 23. Qb5#) 22. Qd2+ Kb6 23. Qb2+ Ka6 24. Qb5+ Ka7 25. Qb7# 1-0

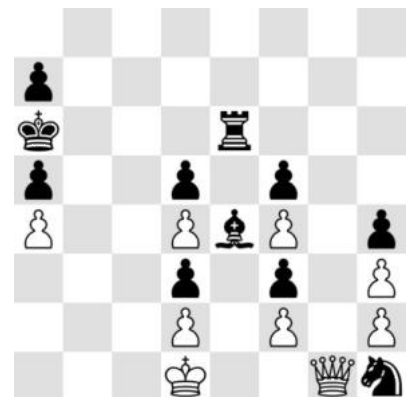
Judge's Appendix: Conceptual Anchoring to a May-Be Predecessor

After completing the assessment of the study by Frank Fiedler and Brigitte Blechschmidt, it is worth mentioning an interesting structural coincidence with another composition created by the judge himself. The composition was born in 2022, but found his place only in 2025, on the magazine *Quartz*.

FEN: 8/p7/k3r3/p2p1p2/P2PbP1p/3p1p1P/3P1P1P/3K2Qn.

White to move and win.

Solution: 1. **Qg8!** {Avoids to capture bNh1} **Rh6** {Rook moves away to avoid double attacks} (1. .. Nxf2+ {Secondary Line} 2. Ke1 Rc6 3. Qb8 Rc1+ 4. Kxf2 Rb1 5. Qc7! Rb2 6. Qc6+ Rb6 7. Qc8+ Rb7 8. Ke3!! {Only waiting move that prevents f3 pawn from being pushed} (8. Qd8? {Too early!} Rb2! 9. Ke3 f2! 10. Kxf2 Rxd2+! {Black Rook is active and allows a draw.}) 8. .. Kb6 9. Qd8+ Kc6 10. Qxh4 {White wins because the black Rook is out of play.})



2. **Qb8!** {Threatening 3. Qb5# (2. Qc8+? {Logical Try} Kb6! 3. Qb8+ Kc6! {No way to make progress or double attack King and Rook.})

2. .. **Rb6** 3. **Qc8+!** **Rb7** 4. **Ke1!** {Royal March begins} **Kb6** 5. **Qc5+ Ka6** 6. **Qc6+ Rb6** 7. **Qc8+ Rb7** 8. **Kf1**

Kb6 9. Qc5+ Ka6 10. Qc6+ Rb6 11. Qc8+ Rb7 12. Kg1 Kb6 13. Qc5+ Ka6 14. Qc6+ Rb6 15. Qc8+ Rb7 16. Kxh1 {At move 16, bNh1 is finally captured} Kb6 17. Qc5+ Ka6 18. Qc6+ Rb6 19. Qc8+ Rb7 20. Kg1 Kb6 21. Qc5+ Ka6 22. Qc6+ Rb6 23. Qc8+ Rb7 24. Kf1 Kb6 25. Qc5+ Ka6 26. Qc6+ Rb6 27. Qc8+ Rb7 28. Ke1 Kb6 29. Qc5+ Ka6 30. Qc6+ Rb6 31. Qc8+ Rb7 32. Kd1 {Royal March with long Switchback ends here} Kb6 33. Qc5+ Ka6 34. Qc6+! (Prematurely 34. Kc1? Rc7! 35. Qxc7 {Stalemate!})

34. .. Rb6 35. Qc8+ Rb7 36. Kc1 {Not possible 36. ... Rc7+ - black Rook is pinned!}

36. ... Kb6 37. Kb2
(37. Kb1? Rg7! Draw)

37. .. Rc7
(37. .. a6 38. Qc5#

38. Qb8+ Rb7
(38. .. Kc6 39. Qb5+ Kd6 40. Qxa5 {White wins for material) (38. .. Ka6 39. Qb5#)

39. Qd6#

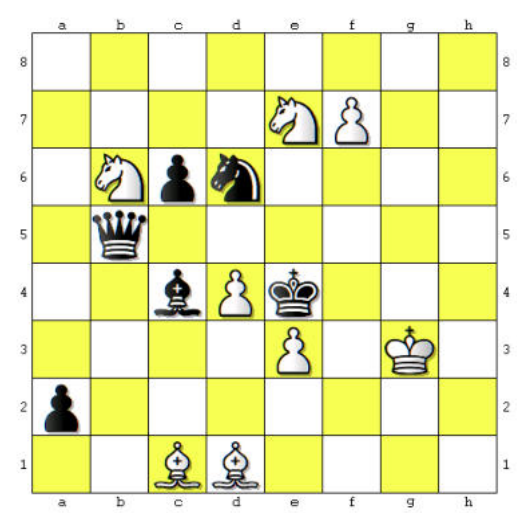
Both works share a similar initial impression: a fragmented material balance, a "tortured" Bishop positioned centrally, and a configuration of pieces that suggests latent long-range forcing mechanisms rather than immediate tactical resolution.

However, the thematic development diverges completely. In the present study, the mechanism is based on a prolonged "Royal March" of the white King, combined with precise control of checking routes and the strategic containment of a trapped black Knight on h1. The resulting play is characterized by repetitive yet instructive triangulation sequences, culminating in a forced mate after extensive manoeuvring.

In contrast, the awarded study explores a different artistic axis: underpromotion to a Bishop as a critical winning resource, coupled with deeply embedded stalemate motifs arising from seemingly natural Queen and Knight promotions.

The coincidence of initial structure is therefore best interpreted not as derivation or influence (although I cannot exclude it), but as convergent aesthetic exploration of a similar positional landscape. The two works illuminate different aspects of the same underlying compositional "terrain": one emphasizes geometric transformation through promotion choice, the other long-range coercion through rhythmic Queen + King activity.

Or, as one might say in more practical terms: they start from the same kitchen, but cook entirely different meals—and neither leaves the stove clean.



Oleg Pervakov

White to move and win

> 4th Prize <

Among the entries received for this tournament, this study immediately stands apart by the unmistakable authority of its conception. It bears the characteristic mark of a composer who no longer seeks merely to astonish, but to construct an internally inevitable artistic mechanism. One has the impression not of an invented analysis, but of a hidden geometric truth, gradually uncovered. I had to work a lot to understand the subtleties of this study, and to fully integrate them into a coherent evaluation for the specific place in which this study was sent for judgement.

The key move 1. Nbd5!! is already highly distinctive. Quiet in appearance, yet extraordinarily dense in content, it simultaneously neutralizes immediate counterplay, prepares mating resources against promotion, and initiates the central strategic mechanism of the study. Black's energetic reply 1...Nf5+! reveals at once that the solution will not be tactical display alone, but a sustained battle of precise coordination.

The study's true artistic core emerges after 5. Qf6+!, a move whose depth may easily escape first inspection. White is not merely checking the King: the move is fundamentally prophylactic and geometric in nature, preventing Black's access to the critical a3-square. Because one must first understand that a3 is a critical square, and this is not so easy. From this moment onward, the entire play acquires remarkable logical cohesion. The subsequent 6. Ba3+! Nxa3 7. Nf5!! introduces the principal thematic idea: an apparently paradoxical Knight maneuver whose full meaning becomes visible only much later.

What follows is one of the most impressive aspects of the composition. The white Knight undertakes a long cyclic journey, eventually returning to its original strategic orbit: b6-d5-c3-a2-c3-d5-b6. This is not a decorative maneuver, but a fully necessary geometrical cycle organically connected with the final mating construction. Simultaneously, the white Queen performs her own cyclical route: f6-d6-c6-d6-f6. The synchronization of these two independent return mechanisms is achieved with exceptional naturalness and without visible strain. Such thematic harmony belongs only to the highest class of endgame study composition.

Equally remarkable is the richness of Black's defensive resources. Numerous plausible tries fail only through highly precise continuations, many involving subtle tactical motifs: skewers, batteries, interference, elimination of key pawns,

and delicate control of diagonals and flight squares.

Particularly striking is 11. Nc3+!, whose true strategic point lies not in the check itself, but in the preparatory elimination of the a2-pawn, indispensable for the eventual mating net (black Queen sacrifice, with re-promotion, must be prevented). This quiet strategic logic hidden beneath forcing play greatly enhances the study's artistic depth.

The work is further enriched by several model mates appearing in different branches of the play. Importantly, these do not feel artificially accumulated for effect, or a result of a mere building-up; rather, they arise naturally from the underlying geometry of the position. The final mating patterns therefore function not as ornaments, but as the inevitable culmination of the preceding strategic architecture.

One may perhaps note that the study demands considerable effort from the solver. Certain variations are long and densely interconnected, and the full thematic unity only becomes apparent after sustained analytical work. However, in a composition of this ambition, such depth is not a defect but an integral part of the artistic experience. Indeed, the gradual revelation of the hidden cyclic structure constitutes one of the study's greatest pleasures.

This is a work of mature mastery. Its richness never descends into chaos. It is difficult to imagine a more characteristic demonstration of world-class study composition.

Solution: **1.Nbd5!!**

[1.f8=Q? Qg5+ 2.Kf2 (2.Bg4 Be2!=) 2...Qh4+ 3.Kg2 Qg5+=]

1...Nf5+!

[1...a1=Q 2.Bc2+ Bd3 3.Nf6#] 2.Kf2 [2.Nxf5? Qb8+-+]

2...Nxe3! [2...Nxe7 3.f8=Q+-]

3.Bc2+!

[3.f8=Q? Nxd1+=] [3.Bf3+? Kd3! 4.Be2+ Kc2! 5.Nxe3+ Kxc1=]

3...Nxc2 4.f8=Q Kxd4!

[4...Bxd5 5.Qf4+ Kd3 6.Qd2+ Kc4 (6...Ke4 7.Nc8!+-) 7.Qxc2+ Kb4 8.Bd2+ Ka3 9.Nxd5! Qxd5 (9...cxd5 10.Bc1+ Kb4 11.Qxa2+-) 10.Qc3+ Ka4 11.Qb4# First model mate] [4...cxd5 5.Qf4+ Kd3 6.Qd2+ Ke4 7.Qxc2+ Kxd4 (7...Bd3 8.Qc7+-) 8.Be3+ Ke5 9.Qf5+ Kd6 10.Nc8+ Kc7 11.Bf4+ Kd8 12.Qf8+ Qe8 13.Bg5+ Kd7 14.Nb6+-+]

5.Qf6+! You must block a3-square

[Logical try: 5.Qf4+? Kc5 6.Nf5!? Qa5! 7.Be3+ (7.Ba3+ Qxa3! 8.Qd6+ Kb5 9.Nd4+ Nxd4 10.Qxa3 cxd5=) 7...Nxe3 8.Qd6+ Kb5 9.Nd4+ Ka4! 10.Qxc6+ Ka3= (10...Bb5=)]

[5.Nf5+? Kd3! 6.Nf4+ Kc3 7.Qf6+ Kb4=]

5...Kc5 6.Ba3+! Nxa3 7.Nf5!! Qa5! Best defense. Otherwise mate or loss of Queen

[7...Kxd5 8.Qd6+ Ke4 9.Ng3# Second model mate] [7...Bxd5 8.Qd4#] [7...cxd5 8.Qd6#] [7...Qb2+!? 8.Qxb2 Nc2 9.Qb6+ Kxd5 10.Ne3+! Nxe3 11.Qd8+! Ke4 12.Qe7+ Kd3 13.Qxe3+ Kc2 14.Qd4 Kb1 15.Qd1+ Kb2 16.Qd2+! Kb1 17.Qb4+ Kc2 18.Qxc4+-] [7...Qb8 8.Qd4+! Kb5 9.Qb2+- Skewer] [7...Qb1 8.Qd4+ Kb5 9.Qb6+ Ka4 10.Nc3#]

8.Qd6+ Kb5 9.Nd4+ Ka4!

[9...Ka6 10.Qxc6+ Ka7 11.Qd7+ Ka6 12.Qc8+! Ka7 13.Nc6#]

10.Qxc6+ Bb5 11.Nc3+! The main plan must be started by first eliminating the pawn a2 [11.Nb6+? Qxb6!=]

11...Kb4 12.Nxa2+ Ka4 13.Nc3+

[13.Qc1? Qa7! Pin 14.Nc3+ Kb4 15.Nd5+ Ka4 16.Qd1+ Ka5 17.Qe1+ Ka6=]

13...Kb4 14.Nd5+

[14.Qe6? Ba4! 15.Na2+ Kc5 16.Qe5+ Kb6 17.Qd6+ Kb7 18.Qxa3 Qd2+ 19.Ne2 Bb5=]

14...Ka4 15.Nb6+ Time. White Knight is back on route b6-d5-c3-a2-c3-d5-b6!

15...Kb4 16.Qd6+ Kc3 17.Qf6! Crucial battery. White Queen also is back on route f6-d6-c6-d6-f6!

17...Kd3 Away from the a1-h8 diagonal!

[17...Kb4 18.Qe7+! Kc3 19.Qe1+- Another skewer

But **18.Qf3+! Kxd4 19.Qe3#** Third model mate **1-0**

Judge's Appendix: On Irresistible Forces

While completing the final ranking of the tourney, I was repeatedly reminded of a famous line from Christopher Nolan's "The Dark Knight":

"This is what happens when an unstoppable force meets an immovable object."

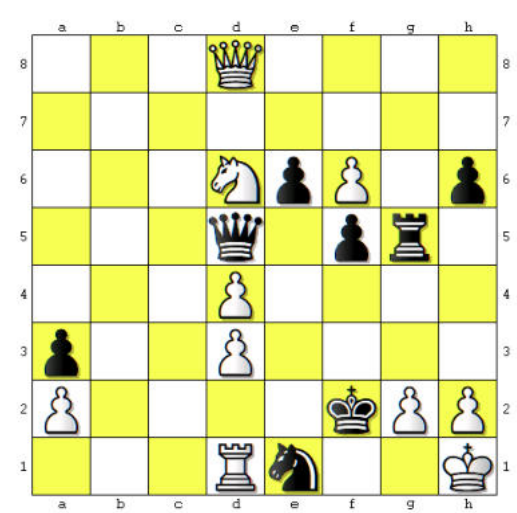
The comparison is, of course, metaphorical. Yet it captures surprisingly well the artistic tension that ultimately shaped the podium of this jubilee tournament.

Certain entries, particularly those awarded the highest distinctions, possessed the character of "irresistible forces": works driven by extreme conceptual ambition, unusual geometries, and the desire to push endgame studies toward regions that almost seem compositionally forbidden. They derive part of their artistic power precisely from their willingness to risk instability, excess, or apparent impossibility in search of something genuinely new or memorable.

The present study by the actual and former World Champion Oleg Pervakov represents, in contrast, something closer to the "immovable object": supreme formal authority, complete

structural control, and thematic maturity of the highest classical order. Nothing here feels accidental, inflated, or unstable. The study stands with the quiet inevitability characteristic only of the greatest masters of the art. In many tournaments, such authority would naturally lead to the highest award. Indeed, few studies received in the present tourney can really compete with this work in terms of pure compositional mastery.

*Yet the special artistic orientation of this jubilee event deliberately sought not only perfection, but also **confrontation with the outer boundaries of what modern studies may attempt**. The final ranking therefore emerged not from a rejection of classical greatness, but from the difficult collision between two different forms of artistic excellence. And perhaps this tension itself became one of the most interesting outcomes of the tourney.*



Steffen Slumstrup Nielsen & Martin Minski

White to move and win

> 5th Prize <

This study radiates the unmistakable atmosphere of “high-level madness” that only a few Authors in the world are capable of creating coherently. At first glance, the position seems almost unstable: Queens hanging everywhere, mating nets constantly appearing and disappearing, mutual tactical explosions at

every move. And yet, beneath this apparent chaos, there is extraordinary precision.

The entire play revolves around an astonishing dance of white and black Queens, both repeatedly exposed, repeatedly “offered”, and repeatedly untouchable.

Almost every natural capture loses immediately. This creates a rare psychological effect: the reader begins to distrust material logic entirely and is forced to navigate the study through geometry, timing, and latent mating threats alone. Human civilization spent centuries teaching chess players “*if you can take the Queen, take the Queen*”, only for studies like this to arrive and politely set the textbook on fire.

Particularly impressive and mesmerizing is the cyclic maneuvering of the white Queen: 3.Qa8!, 4.Qb8!, 5.Qb7!, 6.Qf7!, 7.Qh5!., a sequence that feels less like ordinary study play and more like an orchestral construction. Each move preserves hidden resources while avoiding immediate tactical catastrophes. The precision required is extreme: even a single tempo loss collapses the position.

Equally remarkable is Black’s defensive resistance. The repeated defensive Queen maneuvers (...Qf3, ...Qh3, ...Qg3) create an hypnotic equilibrium where both sides seem permanently one move away from disaster. The study achieves something very difficult: sustained tension without release for nearly the entire solution.

What impresses me most is that the complexity here does not feel artificial. The play never gives the sensation of random engine noise or analytical inflation. Everything seems driven by a coherent internal logic, even when that logic borders on delirium. This is the kind of study that reminds us why certain composers become legendary: they are not merely solving positions, but reshaping the psychological expectations of the solver himself.

A powerful and deeply modern work. Very high distinction is unavoidable. Only one small reservation prevented this study from reaching the absolute tops of the award: despite its extraordinary richness and sustained tension, it somehow misses that final decisive “explosion” capable of sealing the whole work with an unforgettable concluding image.

Solution: 1. Rd2+ Kf1 2. Nc4 ! Qf3 !
(2. .. f4 3. Qxd5 exd5 4. Ne5 Rf5 5. Ng4 h5 6. Rf2#)

3. Qa8 !
(3. gxf3 ?? Rg1#)

3. .. Qh3 !
(3. .. Qf4 4. g3 Rg8 ! 5. f7 ! Rxa8 6. gxf4 +-)
(3. .. Qg3 4. Qe8 Qf4 5. Qxe6 +-)

4. Qb8
(4. Rd1 ? Kf2 5. Rd2+ Kf1 {loss of time}) (4. f7 ?? f4 5. f8=Q
(5. g3 Rxc3 -) 5. .. Qxh2+ 6. Kxh2 Rh5#) (4. g3 ?? Rxc3 -)

4. .. Qf3 ! 5. Qb7 ! Qg3 !
(5. .. Qh3 ! 6. Qc7 Qf3 ! 7. Qc6 {! +-})

6. Qf7
(6. hxc3 ?? 6. .. Rh5#) (6. f7 ?? Rh5 -)

6. .. Qf3 ! 7. Qh5 !!
(7. Qxe6 ?? Nxc2 -)

7. .. Rxc5 8. gxf3 f4 9. Ne5 Rf5 10. Ng4 Nxf3
(10. .. h5 11. Rf2#)

11. Rf2+ Ke1 12. Rxf3 h5 13. Ne5 1-0

Judge's Appendix: On Endings and Artistic Priorities

While working on this award, I found myself repeatedly returning to the study by Nielsen and Minski. Not because of any doubt regarding its quality, but because it raised a question that has accompanied endgame studies for decades: what constitutes a truly satisfying conclusion?

The study contains a rich and highly precise battle in which White must navigate a dense network of threats and defensive resources. Yet, at a certain moment, an alternative possibility appears: 7. ... Qxc5 8. Ne3#!. One may imagine a presentation leading directly to a spectacular mating conclusion, a possibility which, from my own artistic perspective, possesses considerable appeal. As many readers will have noticed throughout this award, I am often attracted by positions where the logic of the play culminates in a striking conclusion, particularly when that conclusion takes the form of a paradoxical mate.

For a brief moment, I was even tempted to contact the Authors and discuss whether such a presentation might better highlight certain aspects of the study. In the end, however, I deliberately chose not to do so.

The reason is simple. The Authors are among the most talented and experienced study composers of our time. The study contains several opportunities to steer the play towards mating conclusions, and yet all of them have been consistently avoided. It would therefore be unreasonable to assume that this was accidental. On the contrary, the submitted version should be regarded as a conscious artistic statement.

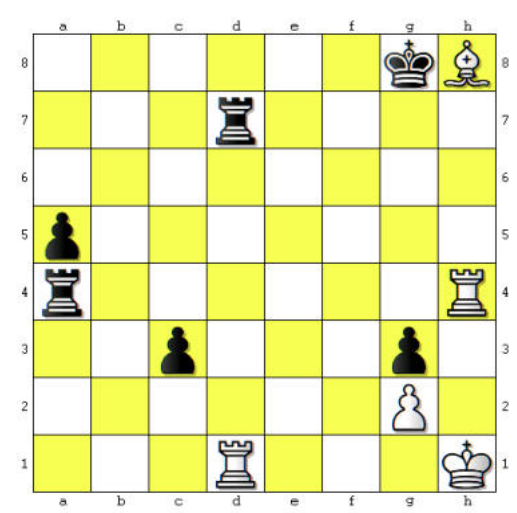
And this leads to a broader observation.

Not every great study needs to end with a brilliant mate. Some composers seek a final picture. Others seek a final process. Some value the shock of an unexpected tactical resolution, while others prefer a longer demonstration in which the study continues to reveal new layers even after its central idea has become apparent.

Neither approach is inherently superior. They simply reflect different conceptions of what an endgame study should ultimately achieve.

My own preferences undoubtedly lean toward memorable final images, perhaps influenced by my long-standing involvement with chess problems of all genres, from directmates to fairies. Yet a judge must be careful not to confuse personal taste with universal truth. For this reason, I chose to evaluate the study exactly as it was submitted, respecting the Authors' artistic intention rather than the version I might personally have preferred.

If this appendix proves anything, it is perhaps that the best studies do not merely provide answers. They continue asking questions long after the solution has been found.



Peter Boll & Sergey Osintsev

White to move and draw

> 6th Prize <

A logical study built entirely without captures, where the battle is fought through manoeuvring, timing and subtle positional transformations. The play revolves around a series of thematic attempts in which White comes tantalizingly close to securing a draw, only to discover that a single lost tempo allows

Black's machinery to function. The recurring motif is the precise placement of the Rooks: seemingly similar positions must be reached under slightly different circumstances, and these small differences completely change the evaluation.

Particularly attractive is the gradual evolution of the defensive setup. The same strategic ideas reappear several times with Black's Rook transferred from one rank to another, creating a chain of related positions linked by delicate move-order nuances. The study thus acquires the character of a logical proof, where every detail matters and every tempo has a purpose.

There are no spectacular sacrifices, promotions or mating finales. Instead, the artistic content lies in the purity of the construction, the economy of the play and the impressive consistency with which the central idea is developed. A fine example of modern logical study composition.

Solution: **1. Bd4!**

(1. Rxa4 ?? Rxd1#)

1. .. c2 2. Rh8+ (2. Rg4+ ?? Kh7 {! -+})

2. .. Kf7 3. Rf1+ Ke6 4. Bb2

(4. Re8+ ?? Kd5 -+)

(4. Re1+ ?? Kd5 -+)

4. .. Rd1

(4. .. Rb4 5. Bc1 Rd1 6. Re8+ Kd7 7. Ree1 Rbd4 8. Kg1 a4 9. Re2 Rh4 10. Ree1 Rhd4 11. Re2 {Positional draw with the black Rook on the fourth rank})

5. Re8+ Kd7 6. Ree1 Rad4 7. Kg1 !! {Thematic try}

(7. Bxd4 {?? counterplay to stalemate} c1=Q 8. Rf7+ Kc6 9. Rf6+ Kb5 !

{And not} (9. .. Kd5 ?? 10. Bg1 Rxe1 11. Rd6+ (11. Rf5+) 11. .. Kxd6 {! stalemate with

the Bishop pin)) 10. Bg1 Qc4!
 {And not} (10. .. Qc7 ?? 11. Rb6+ ! Qxb6 (11. .. Ka4 12. Re4+ {check} Ka3) 12. Re5+ Ka6 13. Rxa5+ ! Kb7 14. Ra7+ Kc6 15. Rc7+ Kb5 16. Rc5+ Qxc5 {stalemate with the Bishop pin} 11. Rb6+ Ka4 12. Re4 {without check} Rxg1+ !
 {And not} (12. .. Qxe4 ?? 13. Rb4+ ! Qxb4 {stalemate with the Bishop pin}) 13. Kxg1 Qxe4 -+)

7. .. Rd6 {main line}
 (7. .. R4d3 8. Re2 ! {loss of tempo} (8. Bc1 ?? a4 9. Re2 Rc3 10. Ree1 Rxe1 11. Rxe1 {Position A1 with bRc3 – there is a move 11...a3} a3 12. Kf1 a2 -+) 8. .. Rc3 ! (8. .. R3d2 9. Rxd2+ Rxd2 10. Re1 Rd1 11. Kf1 Rd2) 9. Ree1 Rcd3 (9. .. Rxe1 10. Rxe1 Rb3 11. Bc1) 10. Re2 {! Positional draw with the black Rook on the third rank})
 ({main line} 7. .. R4d2 8. Bc1 Rd3 9. Re2 {Positional draw with the black Rook on the third rank} Rc3 10. Ree1 (10. Re4) 10. .. Rcd3 11. Re2!)

8. Bc1
 {Thematic try} (8. Re2 ?? 8. .. Re6 ! 9. Rxc2 Ree1 10. Rd2+ Rxd2 11. Rxe1 Rxb2 12. Kf1 Rf2+ ! (12. .. Kc6 ?? 13. Re3 Kc5 14. Rxg3 a4 15. Ke1 Kb4 16. Kd1) 13. Kg1 Ra2 14. Kf1 a4 15. Re3 Ra1+ 16. Ke2 a3 17. Rxg3 a2 18. Ra3 Rg1 19. Rxa2 Rxg2+ {-+ skewer})
 ({Thematic try} 8. Ba3 {?? Loss of tempo.} R6d3 ! 9. Bc1 a4 10. Re2 Rc3 11. Ree1 Rxe1 12. Rxe1 {Position A1 with bRc3 - there is a move 12...a3} a3 13. Kf1 a2 -+)

8. .. a4 9. Re2
 (9. Rf7+ ?? Kc6 {! -+})
9. .. Rc6 10. Ree1 {Position B with wRe1}
 {Thematic try} (10. Re3 ?? Re6 ! 11. Rxg3 Ree1 {Position B1 with bRe1. The black and white Rooks have swapped places!} 12. Rf3 Rxc1 -+)

10. .. Rcd6 11. Re2 Rf6 12. Ree1!
 (12. Rfe1 ?? Rf2 -+)

12. .. Rfd6
 (12. .. Rxe1 13. Rxe1 { Position A with bRf6 - no move 13...a3})

13. Re2 {! Positional draw with the black Rook on the sixth rank. Game without captures!} 1/2- 1/2

Judge's Appendix: Bending the Rules Without Bending Them at All

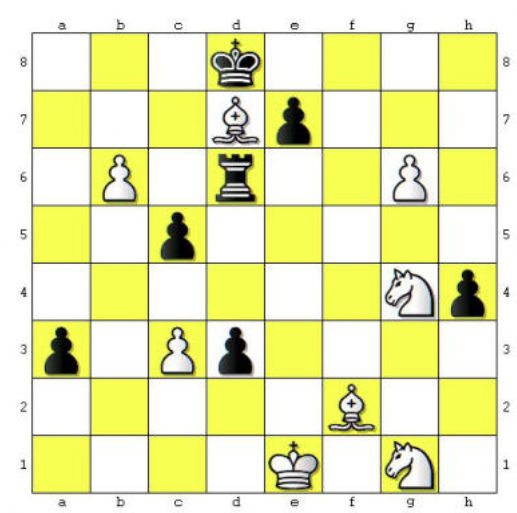
Evaluating the correct placement of this study was not simple. At first sight, it does not seem to belong naturally among the prize winners of a tourney dedicated to pushing the

boundaries of endgame study art. It contains no paradoxical promotions, no spectacular violations of convention, and no attempt to redefine what an endgame study can be. Yet, during the judging process, I found it impossible to ignore the extraordinary precision of the construction. Every manoeuvre, every tempo, every transposition appears to have been calculated with almost mathematical exactness. The study possesses a quiet but undeniable artistic authority: one feels that nothing could be added, removed, or displaced without damaging the whole mechanism.

For this reason I ultimately decided to award it a Prize. If many other awarded studies challenged the rules of chess composition, this one achieves something different:

it bends the rules of the tourney itself.

Perhaps it's the highest compliment I can pay to a study like this. Its beauty emerges not from breaking conventions, but from perfecting them. And this cannot leave the judge indifferent.



Beat Neuenschwander

White to move and win

> 7th Prize <

Watching this study unfold feels a bit like listening to a chess lesson between a father and his little daughter. “Come on,” she says, eyes sparkling, “let’s sacrifice another piece!”

The father hesitates. He looks at the board, at the King, at the growing danger. “Careful,” he replies. “We’re giving up a lot of material already. Let’s not exaggerate.” But the girl insists. And the board seems to agree with her.

White begins innocently enough with 1.g7, pushing the pawn forward with confidence. Black resists, but after 2.Be6!, the sacrifices start to pile up. Each time the father frowns: “Are you sure? That’s another piece gone...” Rook after Rook is taken, Bishops step into fire, Knights jump in to be doomed. With 3.Ne5!, 4.Be3!, 5.Ne2!, White calmly offers everything. The white King, meanwhile, is becoming more and more uncomfortable. Space shrinks, flight squares disappear, and suddenly there is a serious threat of checkmate.

Now the father finally loses his patience. “All right,” he says, “this is enough. You’ve sacrificed too much. Look at our position!” The girl smiles. “Don’t worry. Now watch.”

With perfect timing, the pawn queens: 7.g8=Q+. The tension dissolves instantly. What looked like recklessness is revealed as careful planning. The newly born Queen takes over the board with just a few precise checks, and after 10. b7, the win is beyond doubt.

A charming and instructive study: a cascade of sacrifices that never lose control, guided by a clear final idea. What at first seems like childish enthusiasm, a memory of times when all was simpler, turns out to be deep calculation — and the father, in the end, can only nod in quiet admiration.

Exactly as the judge does, every time he replays this study.

Solution: 1. g7 !

(1. b7? Kc7 2. Bxc5 a2 3. Bxd6+ exd6 4. g7 a1=Q+ 5. Kd2 Qb2+ 6. Kxd3 Qb1+ 7. Kd2 Qb2+ Draw)

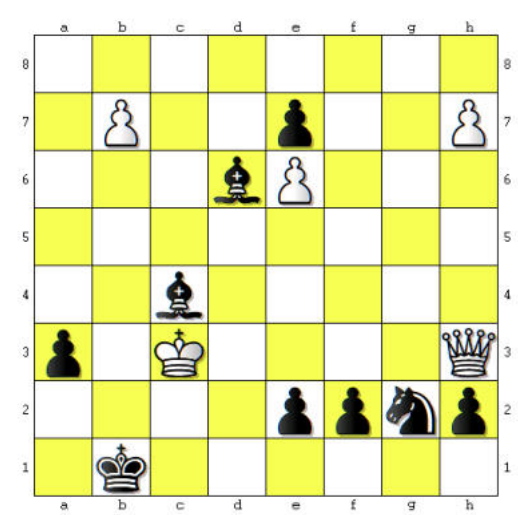
1. .. Rg6 2. Be6 !

(2. g8=Q+ ? Rxg8 3. Be6 Rxg4 4. Bxc5 (4. Ba2 ? Rg2 -) 4. .. Re4+ Draw)

2. .. Rxe6+ 3. Ne5 ! Rxe5+ 4. Be3 ! Rxe3+ 5. Ne2 ! Rxe2+ 6. Kf1 a2

(6. .. Kd7 7. g8=Q Kc6 8. Qd8 +-)

7. g8=Q+ Kd7 8. Qd5+ Ke8 9. Qa8+ Kf7 10. b7 1-0



Mario Micaloni

White to move and draw

> 8th Prize <

This study reveals its full artistic value only after careful examination. At first sight, the play appears to revolve around a series of promotion motifs and drawing mechanisms.

However, a deeper look uncovers a much richer logical structure linking the thematic try and the actual solution.

The natural attempt 1.b8=Q+? follows a path remarkably close to the main line. Yet Black refutes it with the subtle resource 4...Ba7!!, demonstrating that White's plan has been launched too early. Particularly attractive is the unique defensive underpromotion 2...e1=N!!, a resource that would not be achieved by promotion to any other piece.

The correct solution begins with the quiet and unexpected 1.Qf5+!, preparing the important manoeuvre 3. Qd4!!. Only after the Queen reaches its optimal square can White successfully navigate the complications that follow. The contrast between premature action in the try and correct preparation in the solution provides the study with genuine logical content.

Promotion play forms the thematic backbone of the entire work. The remarkable underpromotion 2...h1=R!! appears both in the thematic try and in the solution itself, serving different strategic purposes, while the unique Knight promotion in the refutation enriches the thematic unity. And what about the other, totally different line after 4. b8=Q?, where once again the black's Rook promotion is the winning resource, where the Queen fails for totally different reason? These recurring motifs create a superb and coherent network of ideas rather than isolated tactical effects.

The final draw is achieved through an elegant combination of perpetual check and stalemate-related resources. Nothing particularly spectacular after the storm of promotions and underpromotions, but after all, a moment of soothing peace at the end of the bagarre fits well.

Solution: 1. Qf5+!

(1. b8=Q+ {? Thematic Try} Bxb8 {!} 2. Qf5+ [2. Kxc4 e1=N {!!} Qb3+ Kc1 {!} 4. h8=Q f1=Q+ {! -+}] 2. .. Ka1 {!} 3. h8=Q h1=R {!!} 4. Qd4 Ba7 {!!! -+})

1. .. Ka1

(1. .. Ka2 2. Qc2+ {! Draw})

2. h8=Q h1=R {!!}

(2. .. h1=Q 3. b8=Q {!} Bxb8 4. Kd2+ {!} Qxh8 5. Qb1+ {! Forces stalemate ==})

3. Qd4 {!!}

(3. b8=Q {?} Bxb8 {!} 4. Kd2+ Rxh8 {!} 5. Qb1+? Kxb1 {Not stalemate!-+})

3. .. Rh4

(3. .. Ne3 4. Kd2+ {!} Ka2 5. Qc2+ {!} Nxc2 6. Qxc4+ {!} Ka1 7. Qc3+ {! Draw ==})

4. Qxf2!

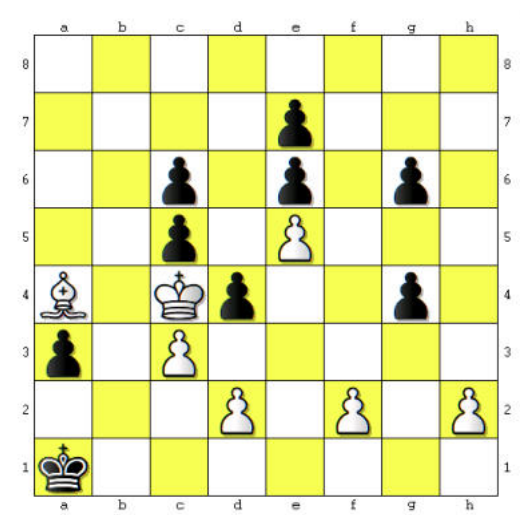
(4. Qdxf2 {?} e1=Q+ {!} 5. Qxe1+ Nxe1 {! -+})

(4. Kxc4+ {?} Rxd4+ {! -+})

(4. b8=Q+ {?} Thematic Try) f1=Q! 5. Qxf1+ exf1=R {!!} [5. ... exf1=Q {?} 6. Qd1+! Qxd1 7. Qb2+!! Forces stalemate) 6. Qd1+ Rxd1 7. Qxb2+ axb2 Not stalemate! -+)

4. .. Rxd4 5. Qxd4 Kb1 6. Qe4+ Ka1 7. Qd4 e1=Q+ 8. Kc2+ Ka2 9. Qxc4+ Ka1

10. Qd4+ Ka2 11. Qc4+ {Perpetual check 1/2 1/2}



Serhiy Didukh

White to move and win

1st Special Prize

The Author presents his study with these words integrated in the PGN file: *"The Pe7 was the last piece added by Daniele Gatti in his study with the Babson Task. The pawn made the solution correct and the position remained legal. Thus an impossible task has been achieved in a study for the first time. The Pe7 is the most dangerous of all black pawns in my study. White has to stop its promotion."*

A charming and highly personal study inspired by a famous detail from the judge's Babson-Task study published in early 2025. The black pawn on e7, originally introduced as the final ingredient that made an apparently impossible construction both correct and legal as if someone pushed a magic button, reappears here as the central protagonist of the play.

The study combines precise calculation with an appealing strategic narrative. Black's early sacrifice 1...g3! forces White to choose the correct capture with an impressive long-range foresight effect, after which a dangerous phalanx of advancing pawns creates a race of remarkable tension. Particularly enjoyable is the sequence of Bishop manoeuvres, whose purpose is not only to harvest Black's pawns but also to avoid unexpected stalemate resources.

Throughout the solution, the e7-pawn remains the most persistent threat, faithfully reflecting the role it played in the study that inspired the composition. The quiet final move 13. d3! provides an elegant conclusion and completes a work that successfully combines artistic content, humour and a genuinely personal tribute.

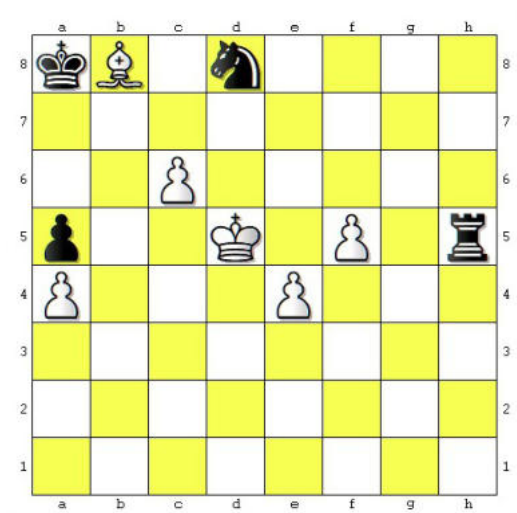
Whether viewed as a study or as a compositional conversation between generations of ideas, it leaves a memorable impression as a demonstration of creative boldness combined with high-class technique.

Solution: 1. **Kb3! g3** {! This early sacrifice makes White calculate 10 moves ahead.}

2. hxg3 !

{Logical try} (2. fxg3 ? a2 3. Kc2 d3+ 4. Kc1 c4 5. Bd1 g5 6. Bg4 c5 7. Bxe6 g4 8. Bxc4 e6 9. Bxd3 c4 10. Bf5 exf5 11. e6 f4 12. e7 f3 ! 13. e8=Q f2 14. Qe2 f1=Q+ {(excelsior)} 15. Qxf1 {stalemate!})

2. .. a2 3. Kc2 d3+ 4. Kc1 c4 {! . Now a funny part of the study - the Bishop's dance to prevent stalemate.} **5. Bd1 g5 6. Bg4 c5 7. Bxe6 g4 8. Bxc4 e6 9. Bxd3** (9. Bd5 ? c4 {! zugzwang}) **9. .. c4 10. Bf5 ! exf5 11. e6 f4 12. e7 f3 13. d3 ! 1-0**



Vladimir Kuzmichev
 White to move and win
2nd Special Prize

I cite the words of the Author to introduce the reader to this impressive achievement:

"If we're talking about ambitious projects, I propose the implementation of such an artistic idea. White has four different promotions, and as a result of different refutations, they lead to different model stalemates. Each promotion has a model stalemate.

This is an ambitious and beautiful idea that has never been realized. I didn't know if it was possible or not. The uniqueness of the implementation lies in the fact that the plot unfolds not along the length of the solution but in a different dimension, represented by the "White Combinations" - the choice of moves for promotion the pawn. The first trial implementation of such ideas took place in a Polish competition in the form of a miniature, but the purity of the idea was not respected there. There was a crude, non- thematic rebuttal to turning into a Knight, and the model stalemate was not a rebuttal, but a side option in the form of an erroneous move by Black. <https://www.yacpdb.org/#668452> In this version, the idea is implemented directly and cleanly."

At first glance, this miniature may appear as a "mere" correction and extension of a previous imperfect idea. In reality, the Author achieves something far more ambitious here: a remarkably pure and technically refined reconstruction of the whole concept. The study revolves around four different White promotions, each answered by a specific Black refutation leading to a different model stalemate. The thematic content is therefore not developed linearly through the length of the solution, but vertically through the successive branching of White's promotion choices. This gives the study an unusual and intellectually satisfying structure. The previous scheme already showed the potential of the idea: this version elevates it considerably. Here the thematic mechanism is clean, more coherent, and artistically much more convincing. The Black refutations are tightly connected to the promoted piece, and the resulting model stalemates arise naturally from the logic of the play rather than feeling artificially attached to it.

Particularly impressive is the economy of material. To obtain an AUW setting with three distinct model stalemates after wrong promotions, while the only winning promotion avoids exactly those static collapses, is an achievement of excellent technical level. The additional thematic tries enrich the content further and show how deeply the position has been explored. One has the feeling that every square and every tempo are working at maximum capacity here. This gives a strong sense of "compression" of the idea in the most pure form possible.

The Author remarks his intents with an additional explanation: *"Initially, I focused on four transformations and, accordingly, four model stalemates. However, I noticed that the content of the study is more extensive. The c7 pawn is the fifth state for a pawn (before it transforms into other pieces), and it also corresponds to a different model stalemate. One additional one goes through the pawn immediately: 1. c7! Sc6 2.K*c6 R*f5 3.ef? And the second main model pat for the pawn goes through a thematic try in the variant: 3.Ba7? Rf6+! 4.Kd7 Rf7+! 5.Kd8 Rf8+ 6.Ke7 Rh8! 7.Bd4 Rh7+! 8.Kd8 R*c7!! 9.K*c7 - model stalemate for Pawn. Accordingly, we can talk about the implementation of a new theme for the pawn - five states, five variants. The analogy reminds us of the movie "The Fifth Element." where the feeling (the pawn) triggers the four elements. (four transformations). Therefore, I propose a name for this theme: Quintel, a compound word of Quint (five) and el (elements). You can also use the Italian version, Quintello. It means "Five Candies."*

The previous scheme inevitably affects the final placement. However, I do not believe that an incomplete or only partially successful realization should automatically reduce the artistic value of a later complete implementation by the same Author. Quite the opposite: when an ambitious concept is finally realized in its intended form, the achievement deserves to be evaluated primarily on its own artistic merits. Otherwise, one would reach the paradoxical conclusion that an imperfect attempt prevents the full realization from ever receiving the recognition that only the complete version actually deserves. This is also the reason why I did not consider this study as self-anticipation. The previous version demonstrated that the idea existed; this study demonstrates that the idea actually works.

Solution: **1. c7! Nc6!!**

(1. Bf4? Nxc6 2. Kxc6 Rh4 3. Bd6 Rxe4 4. f6 Re6 5. f7 Rf6 6. f8=Q Rxf8 7. Bxf8 =)

2. Kxc6 Rxf5!! – Black sacrificed a Knight and now a Rook, playing for stalemates
(3. exf5? – model stalemate) And the artistic performance begins.

A) 3. c8=B? Rf8! 4. Kc7 Rxc8!! 5. Kxc8 - model stalemate for turning into a Bishop
(4. Bc7 Rxc8 5. e5 Re8 6. Kd7 Rxe5 7. Bxe5 =)

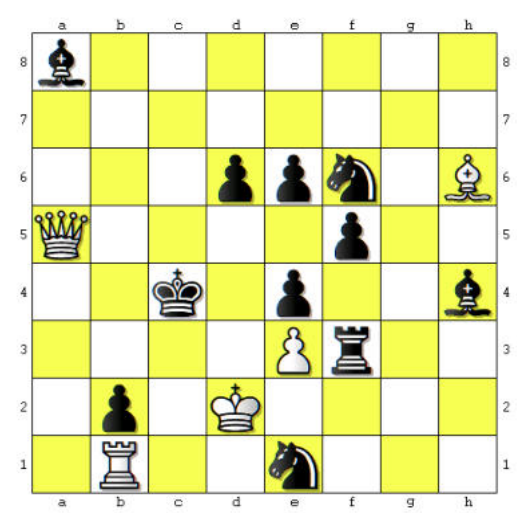
B) 3. c8=N? Rf4!! 4. Bxf4 - model stalemate for turning into a Knight.
(3... Rf7? 4. Bc7? Rxc7+!! 5. Kxc7 – model stalemate

4. Bd6? Rc7+!! 5. Bxc7 - – model stalemate; But: 4. Nd6! Re7 5. Bc7! – win)

C) 3. c8=Q? Rc5+!! 4. Kxc5 - model stalemate for turning into a Queen
(Else 4. Kd7 Rxc8!! 5. Kxd8 - – model stalemate)

D) 3. e5? Rxe5! 4. c8=R Re8!! 5. Rxe8 - model stalemate for turning into a Rook.

3. c8=R! Rf8 4. Rc7!! – White sacrifices the Bishop but gains a winning position with a passed pawn (4.Rxf8? - model stalemate for turning into a Rook).



Sergey Osintsev

White to move and win

3rd Special Prize

A famous idea receives here an unusually harmonious and technically refined realization.

The so-called "Tamerlane cage" is not new in itself, especially in the field of chess problems, where it has been widely explored. The main reference is the known masterpiece by Carl

Friedrich von Jaenisch (a forced mate in 10 moves with the black King suffering a Knight

smothered mate while surrounded by all his pawns, a splendid finale practically impossible to deduct from the initial position). But the theme has been realized also in studies (remember for example Darko Hlebec's 1st Prize on Fide World Cup 2020?

The protagonist, in that case, was a Rook). However, the Author here succeeds in pushing the mechanism toward an **almost absolute and definitive form**: both

Kings participate in the final geometry, three Black pieces cooperate in the self-blockade, and the study culminates in an ideal mate delivered by a **single white pawn**, with the final blow given thanks to the Master of the sacrifices: the Queen sacrifice. Particularly pleasant is the feeling of progressive inevitability: move after move, the black King seems slowly dragged into a perfectly constructed prison from which every square is already predetermined. And all this maintaining the feeling of a "normal" development of a study. Such naturalness is rarely encountered in studies built around a highly artificial geometric climax.

The thematic nucleus is not new, and this inevitably influenced the final ranking.

Yet the precision and aesthetic refinement achieved here elevate the study far beyond a mere reworking of known material. The final ideal pawn mate, with all surrounding squares blocked by Black's own forces, ultimately gives the whole construction a memorable artistic identity. You simply see the final position and are unable to forget it. And that's not a small thing!

Judge's Technical Note

The mere fact that a study contains the first realization of an idea has never been considered, in this award, sufficient by itself for the highest distinction. Originality is only one component of artistic evaluation. Final placements result from the balance between originality, depth of conception, technical quality, economy and artistic memorability. Likewise, the historical comparisons included above are intended exclusively to place the study within a broader artistic and cultural context. They should not be understood as technical predecessors, nor as elements determining the final ranking. Their purpose is to provide historical perspective rather than to influence the evaluation itself.

Solution: **1. Qc7+ !**

(1. Qa2+ ? 1. .. Kc5 2. Qa7+ Kc6 ?!)

(1. Qc3+ ? Kd5 2. Qa5+ Kc6 !! 3. Qxa8+ Kc7 4. Rxb2 Rf2+ 5. Kc3 Nd5+ 6. Kb3 Rxb2+ 7. Kxb2 Nd3+ !)

1. .. Kd5 2. Rxb2

(2. Bf8 ? Rf2+ 3. Kd1 Nc2 4. Qa5+ !) (2. Qa5+ ? Kc6 {!}) 2. .. Rf2+ (2. .. Nd3 3. Rb5+ Nc5 4. Bf8 !)

3. Kc3 Ke5 !

(3. .. Rxb2 4. Qc4+ Ke5 5. Qd4# (5. Bf4#))

4. Rb5+

(4. Rd2 ? Nd3 5. Qa7 !)

4. .. Nd5+ 5. Rxd5+ !

(5. Kb3 ? f4 ! 6. Qh7 fxe3 7. Bxe3 Rf3 8. Qh5+ Kf6 9. Qxh4+ Kf7 10. Qh7+ Kf6 !)

5. .. Bxd5

(5. .. exd5 6. Qf7 ! Rc2+ 7. Kb3 (7. Kb4 ? Nd3+ 8. Kb3 Rg2 9. Qe8+ Kf6 10. Qxa8 !)) (5. .. Kxd5 6. Qc4+ Ke5 7. Qd4#)

6. Qg7+

(6. Bg7+? Bf6 7. Qf7 Rc2+ 8. Kb4 Rb2+ !)

(6. Bf4+ ? Kf6 7. Qd8+ Kf7 8. Qxh4 !)

6. .. Bf6 7. Bf4+ !

(7. Qg3+ ? f4 8. Qxf2 Kf5+ 9. Kd2 !)

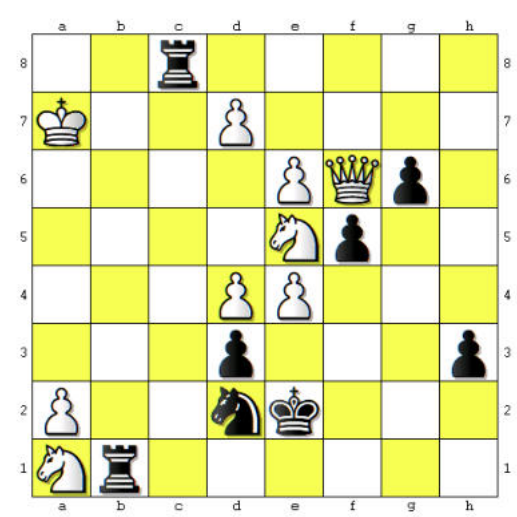
7. .. Rxf4 8. Qa7 ! Nc2 !

(8. .. Be7 9. Qd4#)

9. Qd4+ ! Nxd4 10. exd4# {! A ideal mate with one pawn. All the

squares around the black King are blocked by black pieces. This is a first.

Three black pieces and both Kings have come to their place. [Author]}



Alain Pallier

Black to move – White wins

1st Honorable Mention

A highly imaginative and ambitious study, whose analytical complexity occasionally threatens to overwhelm the construction itself.

Yet despite its excesses, this work comes remarkably close to capturing the central spirit of the tourney: the attempt to push a study beyond conventional boundaries in search of something genuinely new.

The main attraction is the subtle contrast between the tempting but premature 2.Ka6?, refuted after the striking resource 3...Ra7+, and the correct 2.Ka8!, where the same Rook-fork mechanism reappears much later under completely transformed circumstances, this time as a decisive winning device. The delayed realization of this thematic idea creates a powerful sense of unity amidst the apparent disorder and gives the study its distinctive artistic identity.

The play is rich in underpromotions, tactical reversals and mutual counterplay, generating an atmosphere of creative turbulence that often feels close to the edge of control. Not every aspect of the construction reaches the level of refinement one might wish for, and the analytical jungle occasionally obscures the underlying concept. Nevertheless, the originality of the conception, the fighting energy of the play, and the Author's willingness to embrace considerable artistic risk elevate the study above a mere curiosity.

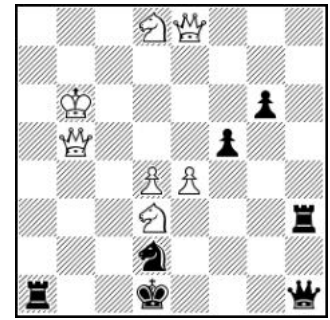
If the prize-winning studies represent successful expeditions beyond the usual frontiers of endgame composition, this work stands as a fascinating near-miss: an explorer reaching the edge of new territory, even if not every step of the journey proves equally secure.

Solution: 1...Rc7+! 2.Ka8!

Logical try: 2.Ka6? Rbb7! (2...Rc3? 3.d8=Q Ra3+ 4.Qa5 Rxa5+ 5.Kxa5 h2 6.e7 h1=Q 7.e8=Q Qc1 8.Qfc6! Qb2 9.a4! Qxd4 10.Ka6! +- or 7...Rxa1 8.a4 Nb3+ 9.Ka6 +-) 3.d8=N (3.e7 h2 4.d8=Q Ra7+ 5.Kb6 Rab7+ 6.Ka5 h1=Q 7.Qxc7 Rxc7 8.e8=Q Qxa1 =) 3...Ra7+ 4.Kb6 h2 5.Qh4 Rh7 6.Qg3 (6.Qxh2+ Rxh2 7.Kxa7 Nxe4 =) 6...Rxa2! (6...h1=Q? 7.Qxd3+ Ke1 8.Nc2+ Kd1 9.Nc4 Qh2 10.e5 +-) 7.Qxd3+ Kd1 8.e7 h1=Q! (8...fxe4? 9.Qc3! h1=Q 10.Nb3! Qh3 and, eg, 11.Qxh3 Rxh3 12.Nxd2 and 13.e8=Q +- ; 8...Rxe7? and, eg, 9.Qh3 fxe4 10.Ndc6 Rb2+ 11.Kc5 Reb7 12.Qh4 +-) 9.e8=Q Rh3! (9...fxe4? 10.Qg3! Rh3 11.Qg4+ Kc1 and, eg, 12.Ndc6 Rxa1 13.d5 +-) 10.Qdb5! Rxa1! (10...Qxe4? 11.Qxg6 Qxd4+ 12. Kc7 Ra7+ 13.Nb7 Rxa1 14.Nc6 Rc1 14.Qbxf5 +-)

11.Nd3 [Diagram, BTM]

Rxd3! (11...fxe4? 12.Qg3! Rh3 13.Qg4+ Kc1 and, eg, 14.Ndc6 Rc3 15.Qexg6 Kb2 16.Qg1 +- or 11...Qf1? 12.Nb2+ Kc2



13.Qxf1 Nxf1 +-) 12.Qxd3 Ra3!! and white Queen has no flight square: 13.Oxa3 is now forced with 13...Nc4+ 14.Kc7 Nxa3 = (15.e5 Qe4 16.e6 f4 17.Qc6 Qe3! 18.Qa4+ Kc1 19.Kd7

f3 20.e7 f2 21.e8=Q Qh3+ 22.Ke7 f1=Q or 15.Qa4 Nc2 16.e5 Qe4 17.e6 f4 18.Qc6 Qxc6+ 19.Nxc6 f3 20.e7 f2 21.e8=Q f1=Q 21.d5 Qc4 22.Qe5 Nb4=)

2...Rbb7 3.d8=N! Rba7+

3...h2 4.Qh4 Rh7 and, eg, 5.Qxh2+ Rxh2 6.Kxb7 Rh8 7.e7 Re8 8.Ndc6 Nxe4 9.Nb3 d2 10.Nxd2 Kxd2 11.Kc7 g5 12.d5 g4 13.d6 +-

4.Kb8 h2 5.Qh4 Rh7 6.Qg3!

6.Qxh2? Rxh2 7.Kxa7 = eg 7...Nxe4 8.Nb3 Rh8 9.e7 d2 10.Nxd2 Kxd2 = or 9.Ndf7 Re8 10.d5 d2 11.Nxd2 Kxd2 =

6...Rxa2 (6...h1=Q 7.Qxd3 Kd1 8.Qc2+ Ke2 9.Nb3 Qxe4 10.Qxd2+ +-)

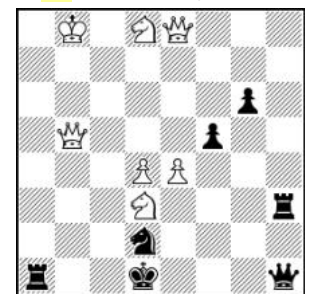
7.Qxd3+ Rd1 8.e7!

a) 8...h1=Q 9.e8D

a1) 9...Rh3 10.Qdb5! Rxa1 11.Nd3! [Diagram, BTM]

11. ... Rxd3 12.Qxd3 and, with wK on b8, there is no fork, foresight effect! - White now wins, eg 12...Rb1+ 13.Nb7.

Instead of **9...Rh3**, Black's defence can be improved with:



a2) 9...fxe4! 10.Qg3!

10.Qe3? Qf1! 11.Qc6 Rxa1 12.Qec3 Rha7 = ; 10.Qc3? Rh3! 11.Qc8 e3 12.Qec6 Rxa1 13.Qc2+ Ke1 14.Q8c6 and, eg, 14...Rb1+ 15.Kc7 Qxc6+ 16.Ndxc6 e2 =

10...e3! 11.Qc6!

(11.Qg4+? e2 12.Qc6 and, eg, 12...Qh3 =)

11... Rb2+ 12.Kc8 Qxc6+ 13.Ndxc6! (13.Nexc6? e2(Nc4) =)

13...Rh8+ 14.Nd8!

loss of time : 14.Kc7?! Rh7+ 15.Kc8! Rh8+ 16.Nd8 +- since 15.Nd7? fails to 15...e2 16.Qa3 and, eg, 16...e1=Q 17.Qxb2 Qg3 18.Ne5 Rh3 =

14...e2 15.Nd3! and White wins - but not 15.Nf3? and, eg, 15...Rh1 =

-b) 8...fxe4 9.Qg3!

9.Qc3? and, eg, 9...h1=Q 10.Nb3 e3 11.Qc1+ Ke2 12.Qxh1 Rxh1 13.e8=Q Rb2 14.Qc6
Rxb3+ 15.Kc8 Rh4 =

9...Rb2+

9...h1=Q 10.Qg4+ Kc1 11.e8=Q Rh8 (or 10.e8=Q Rh8 10.Qg4+ Kc1) 11.Qc6(8)+ +-

10.Kc8 Ra2! (Now 11.e8=Q?? Ra8#)

11.Qg4+! and White wins

but not: -11.Nd7? Ra8+! 12.Nb8 Rxe7 13.Qxh2 Raa7! 14.d5 Re(a)c7+ 15.Qxc7 Rxc7+
16.Kxc7 e3 = or 14.Qg1+ Ke2 15.Qg3 Kd1! = -11.Qg2? h1=Q 12.Qxh1+ Rxh1 13.e8=Q
Rh7 14.Nd7 Ra7 15.Nb7 Ra8+ 16.Nb8 Ra7 = and not 11...Ra8+? 12.Kb7 h1=Q
13.Qxh1+ Rxh1 14.e8=Q Rxa1 15.Ne6 e3 16.Nd3 +- -11.Qxh2? Rxh2 12.e8=Q Rh7!
13.Nd7 Ra7 14.Nb7 Ra8+ 15. Nb8 Ra7 16.Nd6 Rxa1 17.Nxe4 Nxe4 18.Qxe4 Raa7 = or
13.Nef7 Rxa1 14.Qe6 Rc1 15.Kd7 Rc3 16.Qxg6 e3 17.Qg1+ Kc2 18.Qe1 Rd3 =

c) 8...Rh8 9.Nxg6!

9.Nc4? h1=Q 10.Nc2 Qh2+ 11.e5 f4 12.Nb4 Qh4 13.Nxa2 Rxd8+ 14.exd8=Q Qxd8+
15.Kb7 Qd(e)7+ 16.Kb6 Qd8+ 17.Kc6 Qe8+ 18.Kd6 Qf8+ 19.Ke6 Qg8+ 20.Kf6 Qxc4!
21.Qxc4 Nxc4 22.e6 Kd2! 23.e7 f3 24.Nc3 (24.e8=Q f2 25.Qxg6 f1=Q+ =) 23...Nd6!
24.Ke5 f2 25.Kxd6 f1=Q 26.e8=Q Kxc3 =

9... fxe4 10.Qb5 Rxa1 11.Nxh8 h1=Q 12. e8=Q

and White wins, eg, 12...Rb1 13.Qxb1+ Nxb1 13.Qa4+ Kd2 14.Qa2+ Kc1 15.Ng6 Qf1
16.Kc7 Qb5 17.Nc6 Nc3 18.Qa3+ Qb2 19.Qc5 e3 20.Nf4 +-

d) 8...Rxe7 9.Qh3 Rb2+ 10.Kc8 Ra2 11.Nd7!

11.Nec6? Ra8+ 12.Nb8 fxe4 (Raa7) 13.Qxh2 Raa7 (fxe4) =

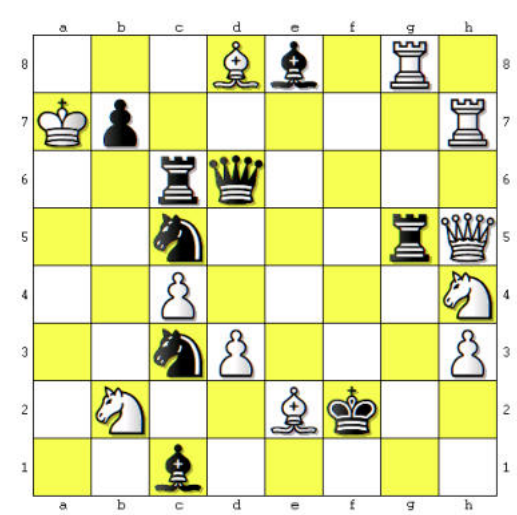
11...Rxa1

11...Nxe4 eg 12.Qf1+ Kd2 13.Qg2+ Ke3 14.Qxa2 Rh7 15.Nf6 h1=Q 16.Na3+ Ke1
17.Nxh7 Qxh7 18.Nc4 or 11...Rxe4 12.Qxh2 Rxa1 13.d5 (Nc6) and White wins +-

12.Nc6!

12.exf5? Re2 13.fxg6 Kc2! 14.g7 Rg1! = or 13.f6 Rc1+! 14.Kb8 Rb1+ 15.Kc7 Rb3 =;
12.Qxh2? Ra7! =

12...Rxe4 13.Qxh2 and White wins.



Thomas Niessen

White to move and win

2nd Honorable Mention

This study is built around an unusual compositional challenge rather than around a single tactical idea. Starting from an almost complete set of pieces, apparently placed randomly, the Author gradually and deliberately transforms the position into an elementary pawn endgame while rigorously

avoiding any consecutive captures in the main line. The so-called "bad captures".

Piece after piece leaves the board until Black sacrifices the very last one, almost humorously announcing that the intended pawn ending has finally been reached.

The study therefore possesses a clear narrative character, with every exchange contributing to the same long-term objective. No sidelines, nothing really complex: all you can find here is a manifest of coherence to a witty idea.

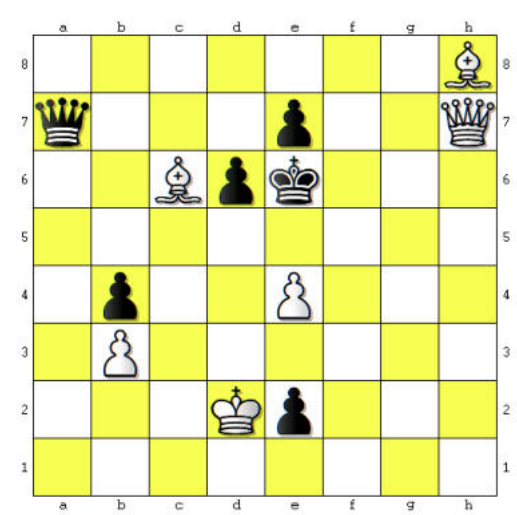
The central play inevitably becomes somewhat mechanical, as the thematic constraint governs much of the construction, and the final pawn endgame is more functional than surprising. Nevertheless, the originality of the underlying concept, together with its remarkably consistent execution, makes the study memorable and gives it an artistic identity of its own.

I'm afraid I smiled a second too long, when watching it. And probably the reason is the explanation the Author gives in his accompanying e-mail:

"Do you remember that you asked on chessstudy.art something like "what is a bad capture?". I read that discussion many times. I even dropped some of my studies, because they contained a bad capture. That old discussion ended with a question by Steffen, how consecutive captures are considered. Are they bad, too? Probably not. Nevertheless I transferred the idea almost one year ago on my website into a fun task: "Compose a study that begins with all pieces (i.e., queen, two rooks, two bishops, and two knights for each side) and a legal number of pawns, and ends with a pawn endgame. [...] The mainline of the solution must not have any consecutive captures."

Here it is!

Solution: 1. Nd1+! Ke1 2. Nf3+ Kxe2 3. Nd4+ Ke1 4. Rxe8+ Be3 5. Rxe3+ Kd2 6. Re2+ Kxd1 7. Re1+ Kxe1 8. Re7+ Qxe7 9. Qh4+ Kd2 10. Nxc6 Qd6 11. Bxg5+ Kc2 12. Qf2+ Kxd3 13. Qd2+ Kxc4 14. Na5+ Kb4 15. Qxd6 Nb5+ 16. Kb6 Nxd6 17. Bd2+ Ka4 18. Kxc5 Ne4+ 19. Kd4 Nxd2 20. Ke3 Nf1+ 21. Kf4 \$1 Kxa5 22. h4 Ng3 !? 23. Kxg3 {and White wins by} b5 24. h5 b4 25. h6 b3 26. h7 b2 27. h8=Q b1=Q 28. Qa8+ Kb4 29. Qb7+ Kc3 30. Qxb1 **1-0**



Branislav Djurasevic
 Black to move – White wins
3rd Honorable Mention

A charming study about one of my favourite themes. The central idea belongs to a well-known family of studies, yet it is presented here in a particularly attractive and convincing form. I cannot deny that this study has a deep effect when the solution gradually develops, and I'm not talking just about foresight effect.

I am talking about the immediate reaction of the hippocampus in your brain when you see the second and the last move and you connect them, as a flash of insight. Something that you understand and remember almost instantly and refuses to be forgotten, even if it appeared so mysterious in the beginning.

Of course, I have to point out also the drawbacks. The implementation of a known idea in a new position and some little defects as Black to move, overgrown variations and the overall limited active role of the white light-squared Bishop, which moves only once in a sideline (although its move is crucial to preserve the win), prevent this work to reach a higher ranking. But the "mystery" has been revealed with competence and elegance.

Solution as presented by the Author, with relative comments and just some refinements:

{White is significantly superior and threatens three checkmates so Black must check the white King and hoping for perpetual checks. Black has objectively only three active moves: 1...Qa2 (the first main line), 1... Qe3+ (the second main line) and additional attempt 1...e1Q+.}

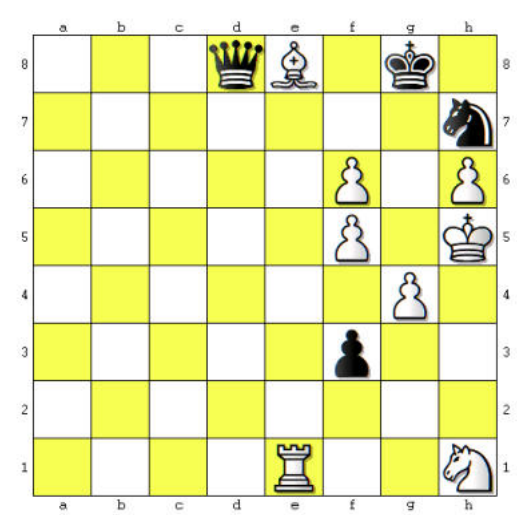
1 ... Qa2+ (1. .. Qe3+ 2. Kc2 {!! One more spectacular move on the very beginning play in another main line.} (2. Kxe3 ? 2. .. e1=Q+ {As it was shown in the thematic try of the first main line 1...Qa2+! white could not escape from the perpetual check on both king and queen sides.} 3. Kd3 (3. Kf3 Qf1+ 4. Kg4 Qg2+) 3. .. Qd1+ ! 4. Kc4 Qc2+) (2. Ke1 ? Qc1+ {!!} (2. .. Qg1+ ? 3. Kxe2 !)) 2. .. Qc5+ (2. .. e1=N+ 3. Kd1 ! (3. Kb1 ? Qxb3+ 4. Bb2 Qd3+ 5. Ka2 Qc4+ 6. Ka1 Qa6+ 7. Kb1 Qd3+) 3. .. Qd3+ 4. Kxe1 Qe3+ 5. Kd1 ! Qd3+ 6. Kc1 Qe3+ 7. Kc2 Qe2+ 8. Kb1 {Position A.} Qf1+ 9. Ka2 Qa6+ 10. Ba4 Qe2+ 11. Bb2 {Both white bishops actively protect the King on the Queen's side.}) (2. .. Qc1+ 3. Kxc1 e1=Q+ 4. Kc2 Qe2+ 5. Kb1 {etc, Position A.}) 3. Kb2 (3. Kd3 Qe3+ {Waste of time}) 3. .. Qg5 !?

4. Qh3+ ! Kf7 5. Qf3+ ! (5. Bd5+ ? Kg6 {!}) 5. .. Kg8 6. Qxe2
 {White Queen plays actively.}) (1. .. e1=Q+ {A less favorable option.} 2. Kxe1 Qe3+ 3.
 Kd1! (3. Kf1? Qc1+ {!}) 3. .. Qd3+ 4. Kc1 Qe3+ 5. Kc2
 Qe2+ 6. Kb1 {etc. Position A.})

2. Bb2 {!! *The mysterious sacrifice, whose effect will only be visible ten moves later, is a typical example of the annihilation theme. This move is the highlight of the study!*}

{Thematic try:} (2. Ke1 ? Qb1+ 3. Kxe2 Qc2+ 4. Kf3 (4. Ke3 Qc1+ ! 5. Kd3 Qd1+ !
 6. Kc4 Qc2+ 7. Kxb4 Qc5+ 8. Ka4 Qa7+ 9. Kb5 Qc5+ {Perpetual check on
 Queen's side.}) 4. .. Qd1+ 5. Kf4 Qd2+ 6. Kg4 Qg2+ 7. Kh5 Qh3+ 8. Kg6 Qg4+
 9. Kh6 Qf4+! (9. .. Qh4+? 10. Kg7 Qf6+ 11. Kg8) 10. Kg7 Qf7+
 11. Kh6 Qf4+ {Perpetual check on King's side. To summarize, in the thematic
 try the white king is not safe and cannot escape from the perpetual check
 on both (Queen's or the King's) sides.})

**2. .. Qxb2+ 3. Ke1 Qc1+ 4. Kxe2 Qc2+ 5. Kf3 Qd1+ 6. Kf4 Qd2+ 7. Kg4 Qg2+ 8. Kh5
 Qh3+ 9. Kg6 Qg4+ 10. Kh6 Qf4+ 11. Kg7 Qf7+ 12. Kh8** {!!! *It is the only place on the
 board where the white king can hide from perpetual check!*} **1-0**



Alexey Popov

White to move and win

4th Honorable Mention

A brilliant tactical construction where every White piece enters the attack at precisely the right moment. The play develops through a succession of sacrifices and forcing continuations, culminating in an elegant pawn mate after a beautifully coordinated sequence of decoy and interference effects. Particularly

attractive is the harmony of the main line, where each move appears to prepare the next almost inevitably. The numerous analytical sidelines are not mere technical necessities but contain independent artistic interest, including further sacrificial motifs and attractive mating ideas. While the study is primarily combinational rather than strategic, it demonstrates excellent craftsmanship and leaves a strong aesthetic impression through the precision and fluency of its execution.

Solution: **1. g5 {!} f2 2. Nxf2 Qa5**

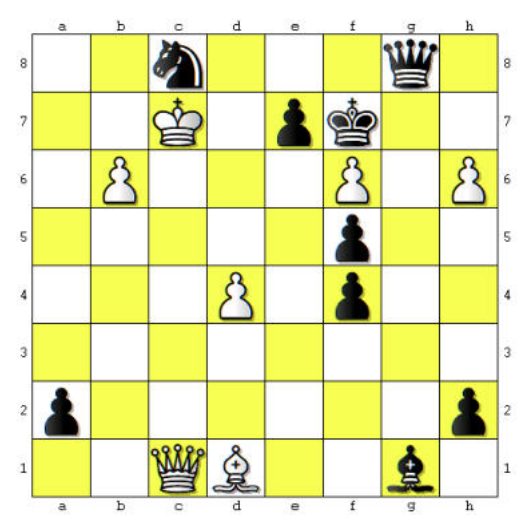
(2. .. Qd5 3. Ng4 {!} Qxf5 4. Re5 {!} Qd3 5. Kh4 {! +-})

(2. .. Qd2 3. Bf7+ {!} Kf8 4. Re8+ {!} Kxf7 5. Re7+ {!} Kg8 6. Rg7+ {!} Kh8 7. Rxh7+ {!} Kxh7 8. f7 {!} Qd8 (8. .. Qe2+ 9. Ng4 {! +-}) 9. g6+ {! +-})

3. Bf7+ Kxf7 4. Re7+ Kg8 5. Ne4 Qxf5

(5. .. Qd5 6. f7+ {!} Kf8 7. Re6 {!} Qxf5 8. Re8+ {!} Kxf7 9. Nd6# {!})

6. f7+ Kh8 7. Re8+ Nf8 8. Rxf8+ Kh7 9. Nf6+ Qxf6 10. Rh8+ Qxh8 11. g6# {!}



Ilham Aliev

White to move and win

5th Honorable Mention

This study is built around a striking sequence of successive Black promotions. The sacrificial opening 2. Bxe6+! initiates a dynamic battle in which Black appears to achieve extraordinary material success, only for each newly created Queen to become a temporary and ultimately vulnerable asset.

The thematic try 5. Qh8+? is a valuable introductory motif, highlighting the precise role of the stronger 5. Qg7+!. Particularly attractive is the central idea that White willingly allows multiple black promotions while maintaining complete control of the tactical narrative.

The finale is both economical and memorable. After the elimination of the first Queen, White proceeds to neutralize the next one and finally captures the third, producing the amusing and aesthetically satisfying effect of defeating three successive Queens in a single coherent scheme.

While the study does not pursue the radical frontiers explored by the prize-winning entries, it presents a clear thematic concept, precise execution and a highly enjoyable finish. These qualities make it a worthy Honorable Mention.

Solution: **1. Bb3+! e6**

(1. .. Kf8 2. b7 +-) **2. Bxe6+ ! Kxe6**

(2. .. Kxf6 3. Bxg8 h1=Q 4. b7 +-)

3. Qc4+ Kxf6 4. Qxg8 a1=Q

(4. .. h1=Q 5. Qg7+ Ke6 6. Qd7+ Kf6 7. b7 Qxb7+ 8. Kxb7 a1=Q 9. Qg7+)

(4. .. Ne7 5. Qg7+ Ke6 6. Qe5+ Kf7 7. Kd7 ! Kg6 8. b7 a1=Q 9. b8=Q +-)

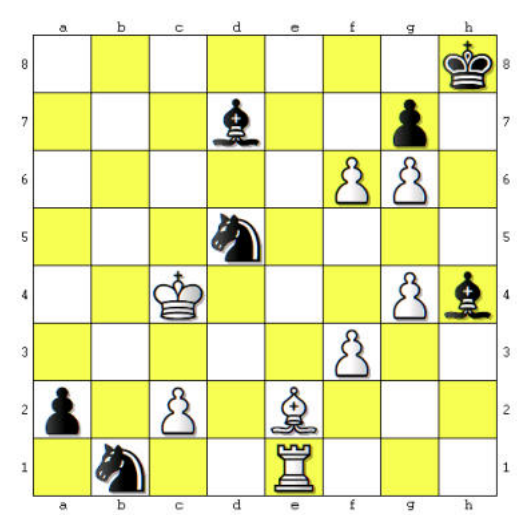
5. Qg7+ ! {Thematic try:}

(5. Qh8+ {? but} Kf7 (5. .. Ke6 6. d5+ {see main line})) **6. Qg7+ Ke8 !)**

5. .. Ke6 6. d5+ Kxd5 7. Qxa1 h1=Q

(7. .. Nxb6 8. Qd1+ Ke5 9. Qe2+ Kf6 10. Qh5)

8. Qa8+ Kc5 9. Qxh1 1-0



Luis Miguel González

White to move and win

6th Honorable Mention

Another study built around the gradual discovery of a seemingly inaccessible refuge for the white King. At first glance the King's journey appears almost arbitrary, yet every step proves to be dictated by precise tactical necessities. The highlight is clearly the impressive manoeuvre in which the King

repeatedly changes direction before finally reaching the unexpected haven on f8. The artistic strength of the study, on the other hand, lies in its sustained foresight effect. Although the underlying idea has appeared before in more ambitious settings, and this realization is not immune to drawbacks (like the poor activity of some pieces or the "obvious" keymove, or maybe the density and length of the analytical lines) this appears as a convincing entry.

Solution: **1. f7 Nb6+! 2. Kc5!**

(2. Kd3 ? Bb5+ ! 3. Ke4 Bc6+ 4. Kf5 Bd7+ {! perpetual check})

2. .. Bf2+ 3. Kd6 Bg3+ 4. Ke7 !

{Thematic try:} (4. f4 ? Bxf4+ 5. Ke7 Bg5+ 6. Kd6 Bf4+ 7. Kc5 Be3+ 8. Kb4 Bd2+ 9. c3 !

Bxc3+ 10. Kb3 ! (10. Kc5 Bd4+ ! 11. Kd6 Be5+ ! 12. Ke7 Bf6+ 13. Kd6 (13. Kf8 {? without f3-pawn!} Bc6 {!!}) 13. .. Be5+ !) 10. .. Be6+ 11. Kc2 Bxe1 ! 12. f8=Q+ Bg8

13. Qd6 Bd2 14. Qh2+ Bh6 15. Kb2 Na4+ 16. Ka1 Nbc3 ! 17. g5 Nc5 ! 18. Bd1 Nxd1 19. gxh6 Nc3 ! 20. hxg7+ Kxg7 21. Qe5+ Kxg6 22. Qg3+ Kf5 ! 23. Qf3+ Kg6 ! 24. Qg3+ Kf5 25. Qxc3 Ne4 26. Qf3+ Ke5 27. Qh5+ Kf4 ! 28. Qh2+ Kf5 {! positional draw})

4. .. Bh4+ 5. g5 ! Bxg5+ 6. Kd6 ! Bf4+ 7. Kc5 Be3+

(7. .. Na4+ 8. Kd5 ! Nbc3+ 9. Kd4 Nxe2+ 10. Kd5 ! Nac3+ (10. .. Nb6+ 11. Kc5 Be3+ 12. Kb4 Nd5+ 13. Kc4 Nb6+ 14. Kd3!) 11. Kc5 Na4+ 12. Kb4 Bd6+ 13. Ka5 a1=Q 14. Rxa1 Ng3 15. Re1 !)

8. Kb4 Bd2+ 9. c3 !

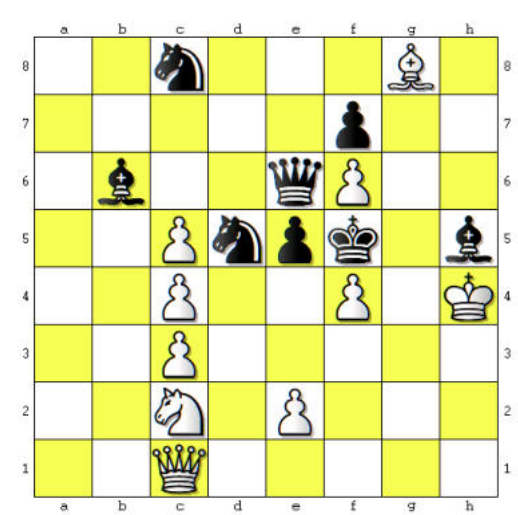
(9. Kb3 ? Be6+ ! 10. c4 Nd7 11. Rh1+ Bh6 12. Kb2 Nf8 !)

9. .. Bxc3+ 10. Kc5 !

(10. Kb3 ? Be6+ 11. Kc2 Bxe1 ! 12. f8=Q+ Bg8 13. Qd6 Bd2 14. Qh2+ Bh6 !)

10. .. Bd4+ ! 11. Kd6 ! Be5+ ! 12. Ke7 ! Bf6+ 13. Kf8 {! with f3-pawn!} Bh3 14. Rh1

Nd7+ 15. Ke8 Bg5 16. Rxh3+ 1-0



Vladislav Tarasiuk

White to move and win

7th Honorable Mention

The whole study is built towards a striking final image. What initially appears to be the obvious winning move, 1. e4+, proves to be wrong. The advance of the central pawn can succeed only after a carefully orchestrated sequence in which Black is gradually forced to block two crucial escape squares with his own pieces. The artistic climax comes with the ideal

mate delivered by four connected white pawns occupying the central squares, an attractive geometrical picture. Particularly pleasing is the delayed realization of the thematic pawn advance: the very move that fails at the beginning becomes the decisive mating move only after the necessary strategic conditions have been patiently created.

The route to this finale is perhaps less convincing than the final image itself. Parts of the play mainly serve to connect the thematic moments, while the crowded position and the rather constructed manoeuvring occasionally give the solution a somewhat artificial flavour. Nevertheless, the originality of the concluding mating picture compensates for these shortcomings and leaves the solver with a satisfying final impression.

Solution with comments by the Author:

1. Bh7+ !

{Try:} (1. e4+ ? Kxe4 ! (1. .. Kxf6 ? 2. f5 ! Qe8 3. Qg5#) 2. Bh7+ Bg6 {draw.})

1. .. Bg6

(1. .. Kxf6 2. f5 {! +-})

2. Bxg6+ fxg6

{! The best move, but the black pawn blocked the square for its King.}

{Loses immediately} (2. .. Kxg6 3. Qg1+ Kh7 4. Qg7#) (2. .. Kxf6 3. cxd5

Qxd5 4. cxb6 fxg6 5. Qe3 +-)

3. cxd5 Qxf6+ 4. Kg3 Bxc5 5. Nd4+ !

{Misses a win} (5. Ne3+ ? Bxe3 6. Qxe3 Nd6 7. c4 e4 -+)

5. .. Bxd4

(5. .. exd4 6. Qb1+ d3 7. Qxd3#)

6. cxd4 Nd6 !

(6. .. Ke4 7. dxe5 {! +-})

7. fxe5 !

{Thematic try:} (7. dxe5 ? Ne4+ 8. Kf3 Qh8 {! draw. Position X with Pf4.

without Pd4 - no 9. Qf4#})

7. .. Ne4+ 8. Kf3 Ng5+ ! {main}

(8. .. Qh8 {Position X without Pf4, with Pd4} 9. Qf4#)

(8. .. Qh4 9. Qc8+ Kg5 10. Qd8+ +-)

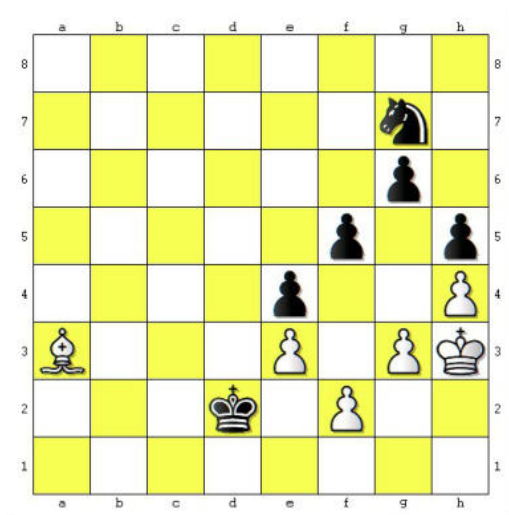
9. Qxg5+ !

(9. Kg3 ?! Ne4+)

9. .. Qxg5 {Blocking of the second square for the black King.}

10. e4# !

{Premature pawn advance is a mistake: the move 1. e4? is just an illusion. The pawn move will become the final mating blow after the center of the board is controlled by the remaining pawns. In the final, an ideal checkmate with four pawns in the center of the board with two active blocked squares.}



Volker Hergert

White to move and draw

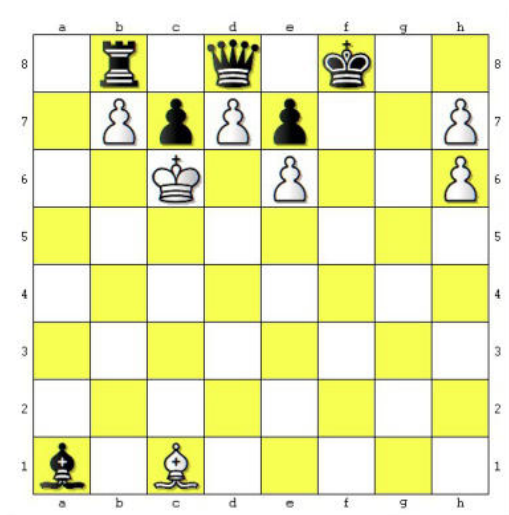
1st Special Honorable Mention

The Author comments in his email: *"It is a study that explores corresponding squares between Bishop and Knight with touching no less than 14 of these square pairs in the main line. I created this example already at the end of 2023 and it has remained unpublished so far as I have always thought that it does not follow the strict formal rules of typical*

formal tournaments - the pawns do not move in the solution, the Kings make just one alibi move each, so it's all about the funny hunting game of Bishop and Knight. I have used this study in the last two years only as a showcase for corresponding squares in my lectures on study composition, but now that you write in your invitation that you appreciate a sense of humour rather than strict formal perfection and adherence to conventions, I feel motivated to make it an entry to your JT. "

Well done! The study is lovely and funny. One must strive a lot to understand why some squares are good and some others not (14 couples of corresponding squares is something very close to a task, something in-between chess composition and chess research), and that's one of the reasons why chess is such a mysterious and fascinating world. But the dance of the minor pieces is the key point, besides everything. And that is a point of remarkable artistic value. I didn't penalize the rigidity of the pawn structure or the poor activity of the Kings because I think that the overall impression of the study easily outscores these little flaws.

Solution: **1. Kg2!** (1. Be7? Ke1! 2. Kg2 Ke2 {-+ mutual zugzwang}) (1. Bb2 ? Ne6 2. Kg2 Ke2 -+) **1. .. Ke2 2. Be7** {! White should not allow the Knight to reach any of the key squares d1, d3 or g4. This is a situation of mutual zugzwang and from here onwards it's all about corresponding squares between Bishop and Knight in ongoing zugzwangs for Black.} **Ne8** (2. .. Ne6 3. Bd6 !0) **3. Bd8 Nd6 4. Bf6 Nc8** (4. .. Nc4 5. Bd4 Na5 (5. .. Nd2 6. Bb2 Nf3 7. Bc3) 6. Bc5 Nc6 (6. .. Nb3 7. Ba3) 7. Bd6) (4. .. Nb5 5. Be5 Na7 6. Bc7 Draw) (4. .. Nf7 5. Bg7 !0) **5. Bd8 Na7 6. Bc7 Nc6 7. Bd6 Na5 8. Bc5 Nb3 9. Ba3 Nd2 10. Bb2 Nf3 11. Bc3** {The solution explores 14 corresponding squares between Bishop and Knight: g7/e7, e6/d6, e8/d8, d6/f6, c8/d8, c4/d4, b5/e5, f7/g7, a5/c5, d2/b2, c6/d6, b3/a3, f3/c3, and a7/c7!} **Ne1+** {Finally breaking the series of zugzwangs and corresponding squares, but the pawns endgame is also a draw.} **12. Bxe1 Kxe1 13. Kg1 Ke2 14. Kg2** Draw 1/2-1/2



Jose A. Garzón

White to move and draw

2nd Special Honorable Mention

I always appreciate those paradoxical and apparently non-sensed moves in position that are a mix between an open landscape and a closed barrel. Curiously, I did not even know José A. Garzón also composes studies, which made this entry an especially pleasant surprise.

The correct move order here is mandatory and the try play is rich, besides of the attractive solution.

A well deserved special recognition.

The solution can be prolonged a little, so I propose to add some final moves.

Solution:

1.B~? Ra8! -+

1.Be3! Bc3!

2.B~ Ra8! -+

2.Bd2! Bh8!

3.B~? Ra8! -+

3.Be3! Ba1! 4.Bf2!!

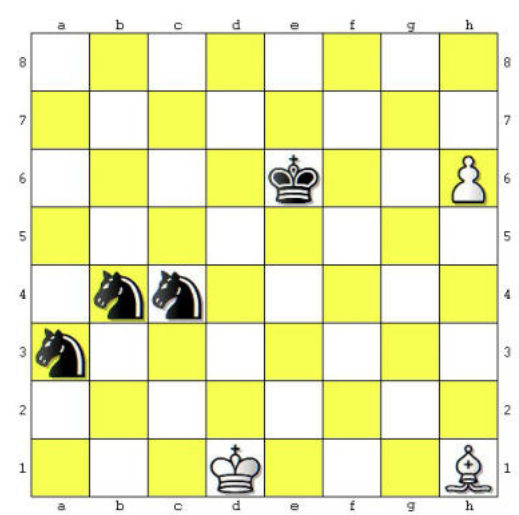
(4. B~? Ra8! -+; 4.Bg1? Bc3 5.Be3 Ra8 6.bxa8=Q Qxa8+ 7.Kc5 Qa5+ 8.Rc4 c5!-+ [8...c6 9.Bb6=]; 5.Bf2 Ra8 6.bxa8=Q Qxa8+ 7.Kc5 Bb2 [7...Qa5+ 8.Kc4 c5 9.Be1!=] 8. Kc4 Qa4+ 9.Kd3 [9.Kd5 c6+ y 10...Qb5#; 9. Kc5 Ba3+ 10.Kd5 c6+ 11.Ke5 Bd6+ 12. Kf5 Qf4+ 13.Kg6 Qg4#] 9...Qd1+ win).

4...Ra8

(4...Rxb7? 5.Kxb7 c5 6.Bg3 Qa5 7.Bc7 Qb5+ 8.Bb6+-)

5.bxa8=Q Qxa8+ 6.Kxc7 Be5+ 7.Kb6 Qd5 8.Ka7! =

Judge Comment: As said above, this is the Author's solution, but it can continue a little more with 8 Qa5+ 9. Kb7 Qc7+ 10. Ka6! Avoids mate in b8 and draws.



Volker Hergert

White to move and win

3rd Special Honorable Mention

Three black Knights already on the board
without a minor promotion in the
introduction?

Oh my God. What am I evaluating?

*"This should be sent into the trash bin.", a voice
says, somewhere in the dusk.*

Yes, it should. But let's take a look deeper.

Come on ... look at the three poor Knights striving to stop a pawn they can't stop,
stumbling in each other's legs like at the beginning of a race. And look at that
hilarious Bishop going corner-to-corner without apparent reason, just to keep the
balance of the position.

Also the final position is amusing. Who will be the first to be taken with a skewer?

Bets are open.

Solution: **1. h7 Nd3** {! Threatens the fork on f2.}

2. Ba8 !!

(2. h8=Q ? Nf2+ 3. Ke2 Nxh1 4. Qxh1 Nb5 5. Qe4+ Ne5 Draw)

(2. Bc6 ? Ne3+ 3. Kd2 Nac4+ (3. .. Ne5 4. Be8 Nac4+ Draw) 4. Kc3 Nde5 Draw)

(2. Ke2 ? Nf4+ 3. Kf2 Ng6 Draw) 2. .. Ne3+ (2. .. Ncb2+ 3. Kd2 Nbc4+ {same position
as main line})

3. Kd2

(3. Ke2 ? Nf4+ 4. Kxe3 Ng6 Draw)

3. .. Nec4+

(3. .. Ne5 4. h8=Q +-) (3. .. Nac4+ 4. Kc3 {! +- and the pawn will promote soon})

4. Kc3 !

(4. Kxd3 ? Ne5+ {Draw as the Knight stops the pawn})

(4. Kd1 Ne3+ 5. Kd2 {waste of time}) **4. .. Nb5+** {! the additional possibility
compared to 3...Nac4+} **5. Kc2 !** (5. Kxd3 ? Ne5+ Draw)

(5. Kxc4 ? Ne5+ {Draw or 5...Nd6+ Draw})

(5. Kb3 Nd4+ 6. Kc3 Nb5+ {waste of time})

5. .. Nba3+

(5. .. Nd4+ 6. Kb1 Nd2+ 7. Ka2 Nc1+ 8. Kb2 Nd3+ 9. Kc3 Ne5 10. h8=Q +-)
(5. .. Nb4+ 6. Kb3 +-)

6. Kb3 ! (6. Kc3 Nb5+ {loss of time})

(6. Kd1 Ne3+ 7. Kd2 Nec4+ 8. Kc3 Nb5+ {loss of time})
(6. Kxd3 ? Ne5+ Draw)

6. .. Nc5+ 7. Kc3

(7. Kb4 7. .. Nd3+ 8. Kb3 {loss of time})
(7. Ka2 Nd3 ! 8. Kb3 {! loss of time})

7. .. Nb5+ ! 8. Kc2 !

(8. Kxc4 ? Nd6+ 9. Kxc5 Nf7 10. Bd5+
Kf6 11. Bxf7 Kg7 Draw)
(8. Kb4 8. .. Nd3+ 9. Kb3 {! waste of time}
(8. h8=Q ? Nc1+ 9. Ka1 Nb3+ 10. Ka2 Nc1+ Draw))

8. .. Nc7

(8. .. Nba3+ 9. Kd1 +-) (8. .. Nd4+ 9. Kb1
+-) (8. .. Nb6 9. Bg2 {+- or 9.Bh1 +-})

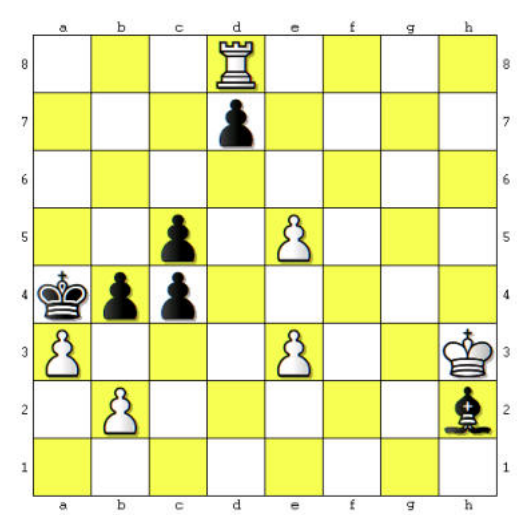
9. Bh1 {!! switchback}

(9. Bc6 ? 9. .. Ne5 10. h8=Q Nxc6 Draw)
(9. Bf3 ? 9. .. Ne5 10. Bh5 (10. h8=Q Nxf3 Draw) 10. .. Nf7 11. Bxf7+ Kxf7 Draw)
(9. Bg2 ? Ne3+ Draw)
(9. Kxb5 ? Nd6+ 10. Ka5 Nf7 Draw)

9. .. Kf7

{Black has no sensible checks anymore, and so, finally, White can promote the pawn
successfully.}

10. h8=Q 1-0



Thomas Niessen

White to move and win

1st Commendation

The study gradually transforms from what appears to be a rather classical Rook versus Bishop ending into a remarkably elegant geometrical struggle. White's passed c-pawn is only the starting point; the real battle concerns the control of the long diagonal, where the Bishop initially seems perfectly placed. The

artistic highlight comes in the subtle zugzwang sequence beginning with 10.Kf4!, followed by the symmetrical manoeuvre 11.Ke4!, in which Black slowly discovers that the supposedly dominant diagonal is, paradoxically, too short to fulfil its defensive task. The repeated rook manoeuvres enrich the play and fit naturally into the strategic concept, while the ending offers a refined treatment of a well-known defensive setup. Although the study develops through a relatively technical middle phase, its geometrical clarity and the elegant exploitation of reciprocal zugzwangs leave a lasting artistic impression.

Solution with comments by the Author:

1. e6 {! Make a future c-pawn a passed pawn.}

(1. Kxh2 ? c3 2. bxc3 bxc3 3. e6 dxe6 4. Rd3 Kb3 5. a4 c4 6. Rxc3+ Kxc3)
(1. axb4 ? Bxe5 2. bxc5 Bxb2 3. Rxd7 c3)

1. .. dxe6 2. axb4 Bg1

(2. .. Be5 3. bxc5 Kb5 4. Rc8 c3 5. bxc3 Bxc3 +-)

3. bxc5 Kb5 4. Re8 !

(4. Rc8 ? Bxe3 5. c6 Kc5 6. Kg4 Bd2 7. Kf3 Ba5 ! 8. Ke4 c3 9. bxc3 Bxc3 { See (X) below.})

4. .. Bxe3 5. c6 ! Kb6 6. Kg4 Bd4

(6. .. Bc1 7. Rc8 Bd2 8. Kf3 c3 9. bxc3 Bxc3 10. Kf4 {see main.})

7. Rc8! Be5 (7. .. c3 8. bxc3 Bxc3 9. Kf4 {see main.})

(7. .. Kc5 8. c7 Be5 (8. .. Kc6 9. Rd8) 9. Kf3 Kc6 10. Ke4 Bxc7 11. Kd4 +-)

8. Kf3 c3

(8. .. Kc5 9. c7 Kc6 (9. .. Bd6 10. Ke3 (10. Ke4 ? e5)10. .. e5 11. Kd2 Kc6 12. Kc3 +-)

e.g.) Kc5 13. Rd8 Bxc7 14. Rc8 Kd6 15. Kxc4) 10. Ke4 Bxc7 11. Kd4 +-)

9. bxc3 Bxc3

{With a passive Rook and a cut-off king, White still has something to prove. Surprisingly, the long diagonal turns out to be too short for the Bishop.}

10. Kf4 {! zugzwang}

(10. Ke4 ? Kc5 { zugzwang (X)} 11. Rd8 Ba5 12. Rc8 Bc3 13. Rg8 Kd6 14. Rd8+ Kc7 15. Re8 Be1 16. Rxe6 Bg3 {*Del Rio's draw setup.*})

10. .. Ba1

(10. .. Kc5 11. Ke4 {zugzwang} Kd6 12. Kd3 {and Kc4-b5 etc})

11. Ke4 Bg7

(11. .. Bc3 12. Re8 Kc7 13. Rxe6 Be1 14. Rg6 +-)

12. Rg8 Ba1

(12. .. Bc3 13. Re8 {see main.})

(12. .. Bf6 13. Re8 Kc7 14. Rxe6 Bh4 15. Rg6 +-)

13. Ra8 {! At least the pawn falls.}

13. ... Bc3 {Best, because Black can still play for Del Rio's draw configuration.} (13. .. Bg7 14. c7 Kxc7 15. Ra7+ +-)

14. Re8 Be1 15. Rxe6 Bg3

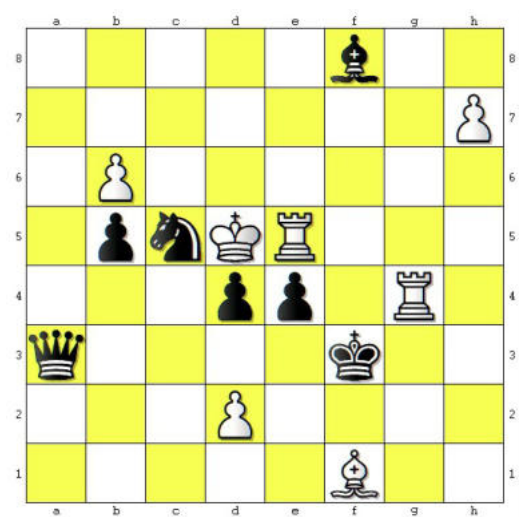
(15. .. Kc7 16. Rg6 +-)

16. Rg6 Bh2 17. Rg2 !

(17. Rh6 Bg3 18. Rh3 Bd6 19. Kd5 {Waste of time.})

17. .. Bd6 {Another diagonal is too short.}

18. Kd5 ! 1-0



Michal Hlinka & Lubos Kekely

White to move and draw

2nd Commendation

Of the two studies sent by the highly prolific couple of Authors, this stands out, due to a rich and skillful play, with many surprising moves and well-mixed ideas. Solid and convincing study.

Solution: 1. Be2+!

(Try 1. Re8 ? Qa2+ {/b3+} 2. Kc6 Qf7 ! 3. Rxf8 Qxf8 4. Rg8 Qh6+ 5. Kxc5 Qxh7 6. Rd8 Qe7+ 7. Rd6 b4 8. Bc4 e3 9. dxe3 dxe3 !-+)

1. .. Kxe2 2. Rgxe4+! (2. h8=Q ? Qa2+ 3. Kc6 Qa8+ 4. Kc7 Qb7+ 5. Kd8 Qb8#)

2. .. Nxe4 (2. .. Kd1 3. Re1+ Kc2 4. h8=Q Qf3+ 5. R1e4 {!})

3. h8=Q {! refutation to capture} (3. Rxe4+ ? Kf3 4. h8=Q Qd6#)

3. .. Qa8+ 4. b7 {! forecasting}
(4. Ke6 ? Kxd2 5. b7 Qe8+ 6. Kf5 Nd6+ 7. Kg4 Qg6+ 8. Kf3 Qf7+ !-+)

4. .. Qxb7+ 5. Kxd4 Bg7 {pin} **6. Qh5+ !**
(Try 6. Qh2+ ? Kd1 7. Ke3 (7. Kd3 Nc5+ ! 8. Rxc5 Qf3#) 7. .. Bxe5 8. Qxe5 Kc2 ! 9. Qxe4+ Qxe4+ 10. Kxe4 b4 !-+)

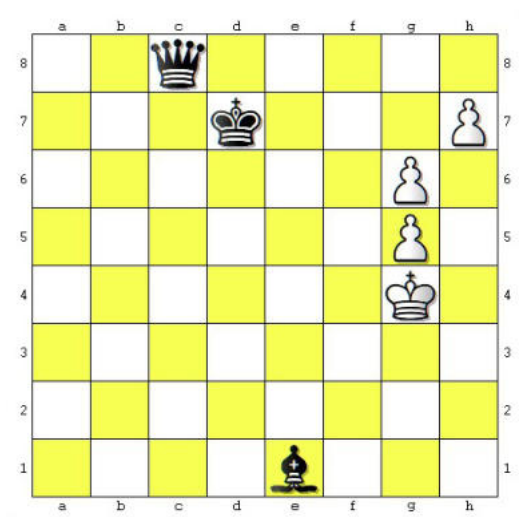
6. .. Kxd2 7. Qe2+ !!
(Try 7. Qh2+ ? Kc1 8. Kd3 (8. Ke3 Bxe5 9. Qxe5 Kc2 !-+) 8. .. Qd7+ ! 9. Kxe4 Qc6+ {!-+ now after 10.Kf4 black wins: 10...Sxe5+ 11.Kxe5 Dc7+ skewer - compare with main, or...} 10. Kd4 (10. Ke3 Qc3+ !-+) 10. .. Qd6+ !-+)

7. .. Kc1 ! (7. .. Kxe2 {stalemate }) **8. Kd3** {! unpin and mate threat} **Qd7+ ! 9. Kxe4 Qc6+** (9. .. Bxe5 10. Qf1+ Kb2 11. Kxe5 !)

10. Kf4 ! (10. Kf5 ? Qf6+ 11. Kg4 Qxe5 !-+)

10. .. Qf6+ (10. .. Bxe5+ 11. Qxe5 Qc4+ 12. Kf5 !)

11. Rf5 Bh6+ 12. Ke4 (12. Kg4 ? Qg6+ !-+) **12. .. Qe6+** (12. .. Qh4+ 13. Kd5 Draw) **13. Re5** 1/2-1/2. {AC: Tries, mates, forecasting, ideal pin stalemate.}



Valery Kalashnikov
 White to move and draw
3rd Commendation

A delightful miniature filled with geometrical motifs, elegant Queen maneuvers and a rich net of little tactical traps.

The final stalemate position itself is known, yet the route leading to it feels fresh, lively and carefully constructed. Particularly attractive are the repeated triangular maneuvers of the black

Queen, creating a sense of rhythm and continuity throughout the play.

White appears completely lost at the beginning, which makes the final saving mechanism emerge with surprising effect.

This is perhaps not a study aiming at revolutionary complexity or conceptual violence. Instead, it succeeds through clarity, charm and neat execution.

In the end, one word summarizes my impression best: pleasant. And sometimes, in art as in chess composition, that is already a very valuable achievement.

Solution: 1. g7 Ke7+ 2. Kh5 Qh3+ 3. Kg6 Qd3+ 4. Kh6 Qd6+ 5. Kh5 Qh2+ 6. Kg6 Qc2+ 7. Kh6 Qc6+ {2 black triangles in execution of a Queen} 8. Kh5 Qh1+ 9. Kg6 Qe4+ 10. Kh6 Bd2 ! 11. h8=Q {! - Choice true} (11. g8=Q ? Qh4+ 12. Kg7 Qxg5+ 13. Kh8 Bc3+ -+)

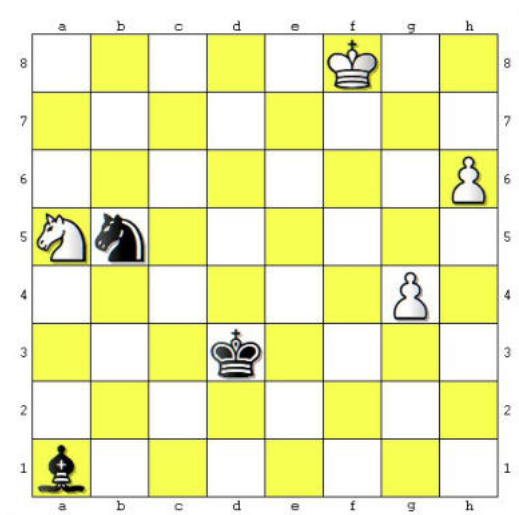
11. .. Qh4+ 12. Kg6 Qxg5+ 13. Kh7 Qf5+ {! - Way for preparation of a trap} {Simply} (13. .. Qh5+ 14. Kg8 Bh6 {(final)}))

14. Kg8 Qd5+ 15. Kh7 Qh1+ 16. Kg8 ! {But not} (16. Kg6 ? Qe4+ 17. Kh5 Qf5+ 18. Kh4 Be1# {model mate})

16. .. Qa8+ !? {Simply} (16. .. Bh6 {(final)}))

17. Kh7 {And once again} Qh1+ 18. Kg8 ! Bh6 19. Qxh6 ! (19. Kh7? Bxg7+ ! 20. Kxg7 Qg2+ -+) (19. Qh7? Qa8#)

19. .. Qxh6 {stalemate} 1/2-1/2



Mario Micaloni

White to move and win

4th Commendation

A vivid miniature with a close fight and an attractive artistic point with the thematic sacrifice in a hyper-controlled square, to open the correct way to the King to escape from perpetual check or undesired fork. The flow appears natural and easy to follow. The play is also unexpectedly dense, for a miniature. A good commendable review is well deserved.

Solution: **1. Nb3 !**

(1. g5 {? Logical Try} Nd4 {!! - in main line is impossible} 2. g6 Nf5 {!} 3. h7 Ke4 {!} 4. Nc4 Kf4 {!!} 5. Nd6 Kg5 {!!} 6. Nxf5 Kxg6 {! and the pawn falls.})

1. .. Bb2 2. g5 {!} Nd6 3. Nc5+ Kd4 4. Ne6+ Kd5
(4. .. Ke5 5. Ng7 {!} Ne4 6. h7 {!} Nxf5 7. h8=Q {! +-})

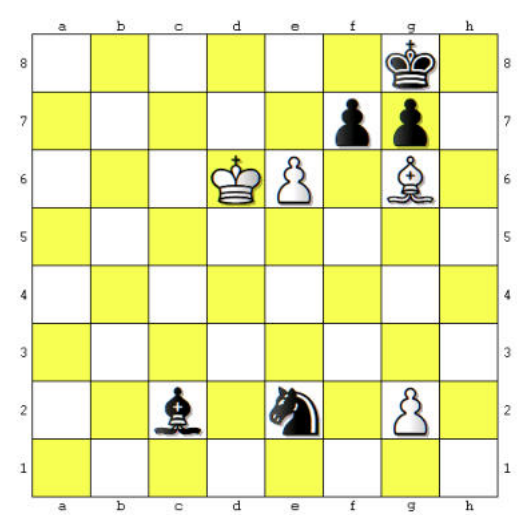
5. Nc7+ Ke5
(5. .. Kc6 6. Ne8 {!} Nxe8 7. Kxe8 {+-})

6. g6 Nf5 7. h7 Kd6 8. Ne8+ Ke6
(8. .. Kd7 9. g7 {!} Nxf5 10. Nxf5 {!} Bxf5+ 11. Kxf5 {! +-})

9. g7 Ba3+ 10. Nd6 {!! triple sacrifice} Bxd6+ 11. Ke8
(11. Kg8 {?} Nh6+ {! perpetual check})

11. .. Nxf5+ 12. Kd8 Be7+ 13. Kc8 {!}
(13. Kc7 {??} attenzione alla trappola Ne8+ {!} 14. Kc6 Bf6 {! +-})

13. .. Bf6 14. h8=Q {and no discovered checks} 1-0



Stanislav Nosek

White to move and win

5th Commendation

At first sight this study appears to be a rather modest promotion ending, but it gradually reveals a surprisingly elegant strategic core.

After the initial splendid keymove, White's play is guided by the quiet manoeuvre 4. Bd3!, which prepares the final mating net while carefully restricting Black's defensive

possibilities. The subsequent play is economical and logical, yet far from obvious. In particular, the subtle distinction between 5. g3 and the premature 5. g4? shows that the position still contains hidden resources.

The final position after 6. Ke6 is especially pleasing. Black is placed in a state of complete paralysis, unable to prevent mate on both wings simultaneously: either Bb5# or Bg6# will follow. The resulting dual mating threat creates an attractive and memorable conclusion.

While the study does not aim for the extreme complexity or originality found elsewhere in this tournament, its clarity, economy and elegant finish make it a worthy addition to the award.

Solution: 1. Bh7+!

(1. e7 1. .. Ba4 {! -+})

(1. exf7+ {?} Kf8 {! = =})

1. .. Kf8

(1. .. Kxh7 2. exf7 {! +-})

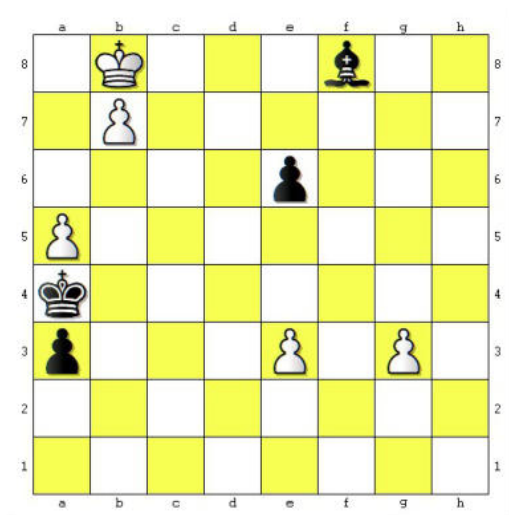
2. e7+ Ke8 3. Bxc2 Nc3 4. Bd3 {!} g6 5. g3 !

5. g4 {?} g5 {!} Draw)

5. .. f5

(5. .. g5 6. g4 {!})

6. Ke6 1-0



Arpad Rusz

White to move and win

6th Commendation

A simple yet tasty idea. I was charmed when I discovered that such an idea was never realized before (I hope no one will be able to contradict me). A quiet capture refusal, but just for a tempo: a scary perpetual check must be avoided. Such an amusing find with such small material is worth a distinction.

Solution: **1. a6!**

(1. Kc7 ? a2 2. b8=Q Bb4 ! 3. Qh8 Bxa5+ 4. Kd6 Kb3 5. Kxe6 Bc3 =)

1. .. Bc5

(1. .. a2 2. a7 Bd6+ 3. Kc8 +-)

2. a7 Bxa7+ 3. Ka8 !!

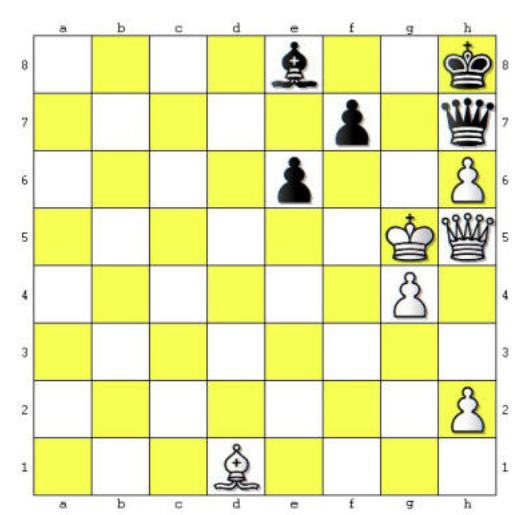
{Thematic try: (3. Kxa7 ? a2 {zz} 4. b8=Q a1=Q {zz} 5. Ka8 (5. Qb7 5. .. Qe5 =)
(5. g4 Qg7+ =) 5. .. Qh1+ 6. Qb7 Qh8+ 7. Qb8 Qh1+
{perpetual check on the empty h-file})

3. .. a2

(3. .. Bb8 4. Kxb8 a2 5. Ka7 +-)

4. Kxa7 {zugzwang} a1=Q 5. b8=Q {zugzwang} Qg7+

6. Ka8 {and a similar perpetual check to that from the thematic try is not possible on the g-file because of Pg3} **1-0**



Martin Minski

White to move and win

7th Commendation

A lovely little example of paradox.

Everything about this study is summarized in the phrase chosen by the Author himself to underline the point of the study:

"The Pawn is better than the Queen!"

Light weight and short solution, but I feel this work has personality and deserves a distinction. And in this specific case, the comment was as important as the study itself, in my evaluation.

A fun fact: 3. Kf4 is apparently winning, so in first instance one could call "major dual!", as I effectively did. But then I told myself: "Wait! Think a moment. You are surely missing something". And then, after a few seconds of reflection, all was clear: that move is only drawish! 3. ... Bxh5 {!} 4. gxh5 and draw because of tripled pawns on H file with the wrong-squared Bishop.

Never trust too much the engines – I will never say this enough times!

Solution: 1. Kf4!

(1. Kh4? Qe4! =) (1. Kf6? Qd3! =)

1. ... Qe4+!

(1. ... Qd3 2. Qe5+! +-)

2. Kxe4 f5+ 3. Qxf5!

(Logical Try 3. gxf5? exf5! [3. ... Bxh5? 4. f6! Bd1 5. f7! +-] 4. Qxf5 Bg6! 5. Qxg6 stalemate!)

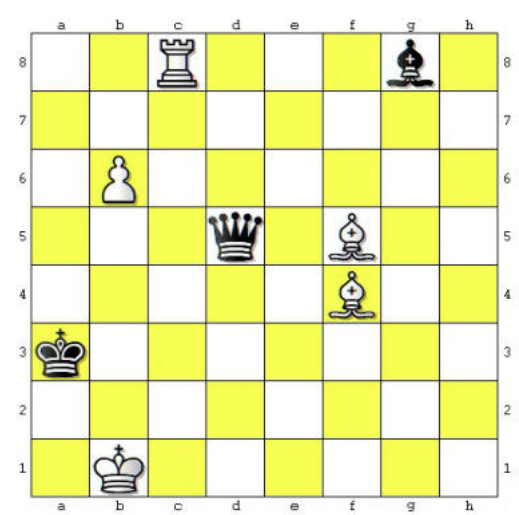
3. ... exf5+ 4. gxf5

(4. Kxf5? Bd7+! 5. Kf6 Bxg4! =)

4. ... Bd7

(4. ... Bg6 5. fxg6! No stalemate +-)

5. f6 1-0



Pavel Arestov & Anatoly Skripnik

White to move and draw

8th Commendation

Few pieces, the most of them in reciprocal tension. Striking coordinations. Unexpected and engaging moves (6. Kb1!! - 9. Bd3!!).

Coherent and double pointed finale.

A nice and energetic study that only asks to be solved with fun and effort together.

Solution: **1. Bc1+**

(1. Kc1 ? Qxf5 2. Bd6+ Ka2 ! 3. Ra8+ Kb3 4. Ra3+ Kc4 5. b7 Qf1+ 6. Kd2 Qg2+ ! -+)

1. .. Kb4 (1. .. Kb3 2. Bc2+ !)

2. Bd2+ ! (2. Rc2 ? Qxf5 3. b7 Qb5 4. Rb2+ Bb3 -+) **2. .. Qxd2** **3. b7 Ba2+ !**

(3. .. Qe1+ 4. Kb2 ! Qe5+ 5. Kc1 Qf4+ 6. Kb2 Qd4+ 7. Kc1 Qg1+ 8. Kd2 ! Qf2+ 9. Kc1 {positional draw.})

4. Ka1 Qd4+ ! **5. Kxa2 Qd5+** **6. Kb1** {!! Pointe}

{Try: 6. Kb2 ? Qxb7 7. Kc1 Qf3 ! 8. Bc2 Ka3 ! 9. Re8 Qf4+ 10. Kd1 Kb2 ! 11. Re2 ?! Qc1#}

6. .. Qxb7 !

(6. .. Qxf5+ 7. Rc2 ! Qf1+ 8. Ka2 ! Draw)

7. Rc2 ! Ka3+ **8. Kc1 Qf3 !**

(8. .. Qh1+ 9. Kd2 Qd5+ 10. Bd3 ! Draw)

(8. .. Qd5 9. Bd3 {! - main line})

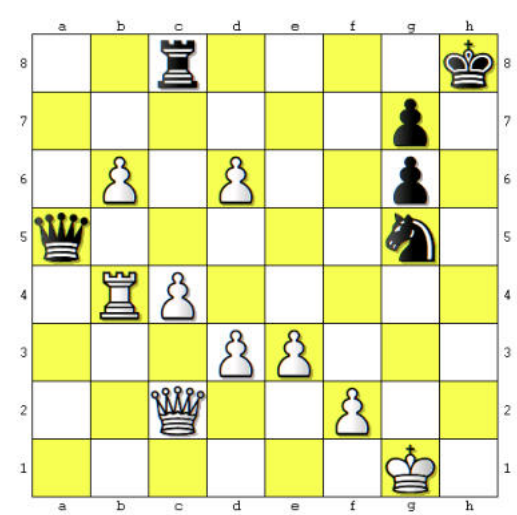
9. Bd3 {!! with 2 lines:

MAIN A

9. ... Qxd3 **10. Ra2+ ! Kb4** (10. .. Kxa2 {stalemate}) **11. Rb2+ Kc3** **12. Rb3+ ! Kxb3** {echo-stalemate.})

MAIN B

9. ... Qe3+ **10. Rd2 Kb3** **11. Kd1 Kc3** **12. Rc2+ ! Kxd3** **13. Rc3+ ! Kxc3** {echo-stalemate.}



Beat Neuenschwander

White to move and win

9th Commendation

A study with natural play and a surprising Rook domination in spite of his large mobility. The Author was inspired by a real game, citing his words: "*The study was inspired by the game Megan Paragua (12 years old!!) vs. Rose Atwell (16 years old!) of round 7 of the US Women's Championship 2025, in which Megan was trying to*

trick Rose in a lost endgame. For more details, see the commentary by Katerina Nemcova, Yasser Seirawan, and Maurice Ashley on the YouTube video (starting at 3:15:10) of the Saint Louis Chess Club." The game-like configuration is well recognizable and very well adapted in study form.

Solution: **1. b7 !**

(1. d7 ? Rf8 =)

(1. Rb1 ? Nf3+ 2. Kg2 Qh5 3. Rh1 Nh4+ 4. Kf1 g5 = 5. Qe2 Qf7 6. Qg4 Rf8 =)

1. .. Rb8

(1. .. Nf3+ 2. Kf1 Rb8 3. Qa4 +-)

2. Rb1

(2. Qb2 ? 2. .. Qf5 {! =})

(2. Qb1 ? Nf3+ 3. Kg2 Qh5 4. c5 Rxb7 ! 5. Rxb7 (5. c6 Rxb4 6. Qxb4 Ng5 =) 5. .. Qg4+ 6. Kf1 Nd2+ 7. Ke1 Nxb1 8. d7 Qg1+ 9. Ke2 Qg4+ =)

2. .. Nf3+

(2. .. Qf5 3. f4 +-)

3. Kg2

(3. Kf1 ? Nd2+ 4. Ke2 Nxb1 =)

3. .. Ne1+

(3. .. Nh4+ 4. Kh3 Qh5 5. Qd1 ! Nf3+ 6. Kg2 Qg4+ 7. Kf1 Nh2+ 8. Ke1 Nf3+ 9. Ke2 +-)
(3. .. Qh5 4. Qd1 +-)

4. Rxe1 Qxe1 5. c5

(5. d7 ? Qb4 6. c5 Qg4+ 7. Kf1 Qxd7 8. c6 Qh3+ 9. Ke2 Rf8 =)

(5. d4 ? Qb4 6. c5 (6. Qe4 Qxc4 7. d7 Qc7 8. Qe8+ Kh7 9. Qc8 Qd6 10. e4 g5 =)

6. .. Qxb7+ 7. c6 Qf7 8. c7

(8. Qe4 Rf8 9. Qf4 Kg8 10. Qxf7+ Kxf7 11. e4 (11. d5 Re8 =) 11. .. Ke6 12. e5 Kd5
13. c7 Ke6 =) 8. .. Rc8 9. Qe4 Kg8 10. Qf3 (10. d5 Re8 =) 10. .. Qd7 =)

5. .. Rxb7 6. d7 !

(6. c6 ? Rb5 7. c7 Rg5+ 8. Kf3 Rf5+ 9. Kg2 Rg5+)

6. .. Rxd7

(6. .. Qa5 7. c6 Qg5+ (7. .. Rxd7 8. cxd7 Qd5+ 9. e4 Qxd7 10. Qd1 +-) 8. Kf1 Ra7 9. Qb2
! Kh7 10. Qd4 Ra8 11. c7 !6)

7. Qa4 {! Traps the Rook!} Rxd3

(7. .. Rb7 {<main>} 8. Qa8+)

(7. .. Rc7 {<main>} 8. Qh4+ Kg8 9. Qd8+)

(7. .. Rd8 {<main>}) 8. Qh4+)

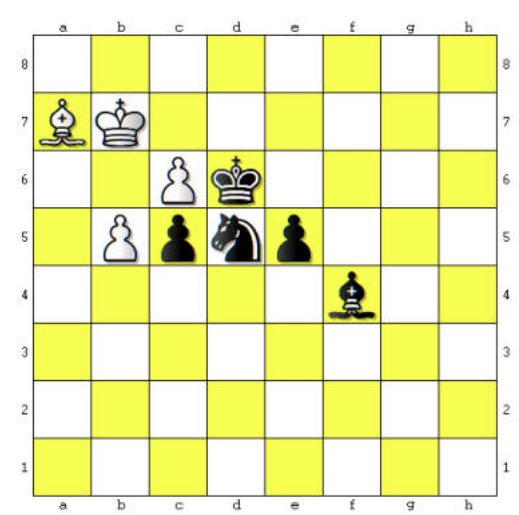
(7. .. Rd5 {<main>} 8. Qa8+)

(7. .. Re7 {<main>} 8. Qh4+)

(7. .. Rf7 {<main>} 8. Qe8+)

(7. .. Qc3 8. Qxd7 Qxc5 {is hopeless, e.g.} 9. Qd8+ Kh7 10. Qh4+ Kg8 11. Qc4+)

8. Qh4+ Kg8 9. Qc4+ 1-0



Volodymyr Samylo

White to move and draw

10th Commendation

A technically interesting study built around the advance of the c-pawn and the subsequent race of the b-pawn. The play contains several precise resources, notably the maneuver beginning with 9.Qb5+! and the final perpetual-check mechanism, where White must choose the Queen squares with great care.

The main attraction is the gradual transformation of the position after the forced promotion sequence. Black appears to obtain dangerous connected threats, yet White succeeds in organizing a delicate defensive setup based on accurate checking geometry and the return of the queen to key squares.

Although the study contains a number of attractive details and requires careful calculation from both sides, the construction feels somewhat overgrown and several variations serve mainly to establish correctness rather than to strengthen the artistic impact. The idea is genuine and competently realized, but in the context of this exceptionally strong tournament it remains closer to a simple Commendation than to the higher award categories.

Solution: 1. c7 !

{try} (1. Bb8+ ? 1. ... Ke6 ! 2. c7 Ne7 3. c8=Q+ Nxc8 4. Kxc8 c4 ! 5. b6 c3 6. b7 c2 7. Bc7 c1=Q 8. b8=Q e4 ! 9. Qb3+ ?! Ke7 {-+ see solution})

({also} 1. b6 ? Ne7 ! 2. c7 Kd7 3. Ka8 e4 4. b7 Bxc7 5. Bxc5 Nc6 ! -+)

1. ... Ne7

(1. ... Nxc7 ?! 2. Bb8 ! Kd7 3. Bxc7 c4 ! 4. Ba5 e4 5. Bc3 ! (5. b6 ? Be5 ! 6. Ka6 c3 ! 7. b7 c2 8. Bd2 Kc6 ! 9. Bc1 Bc7 {! -+} 5. ... Kd6 6. b6 Kd5 7. Ka6 e3 8. Kb5 ! (8. b7 ? Ke4 {! -+}) 8. ... e2 9. b7 Bg3 10. Be1 ! Be5 11. Bc3 ! Bd6 12. Bb4 Bb8 13. Bc3 !! Bg3 14. Be1 {! pos.draw}))

2. c8=Q Nxc8 3. Kxc8 Kd5 ! 4. Bb8 ! c4 5. b6 c3 6. b7 c2 (6. ... Be3 7. Bxe5 {!})

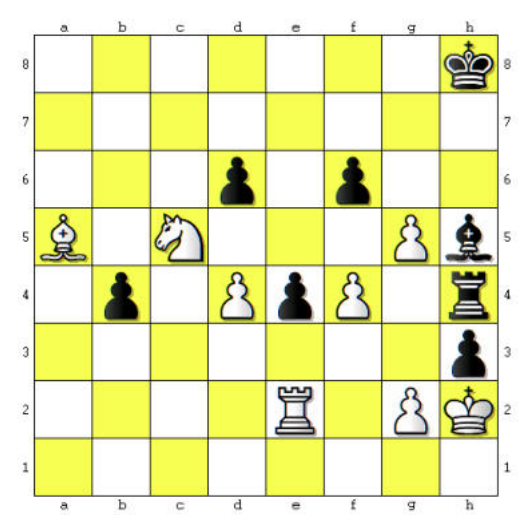
7. Bc7 c1=Q 8. b8=Q e4 ! 9. Qb5+ ! (9. Qb7+ ? Kd4 ! 10. Qb6+ Kd3 !)

9. ... Kd4 10. Qd7+ (10. Qb6+ ? Kd3 {!})

10. ... Ke3 11. Qh3+ Kd2 ! (11. ... Kf2 12. Qh4+ !)

12. Qg2+ Kd3 ! 13. Qh3+ Kd2 14. Qg2+ Ke3 15. Qh3+ {! Two positional draw on capture a pawn c on different squares, return theme.} 1/2 1/2

(15. Qg1+ ?! Qxg1 16. Bb6+ Kf3 ! 17. Bxg1 Be3 {! -+})



Aayush Wadhwa

White to move and win

11th Commendation

The study combines several thematic elements into a coherent whole. An initial Novotny interference not only decides the immediate tactical battle but also determines the strategic course of the entire solution. Particularly attractive is the double Bishop rundlauf: both white and black Bishops complete closed

circuits and eventually return to their original squares, while their journeys are linked by two echo pinning motifs on different lines.

The thematic construction is original and well organized, with the various ideas supporting one another rather than appearing as isolated effects. At the same time, some of the intermediate play inevitably serves the needs of the mechanism, and the final phase merely confirms an advantage that has already become apparent.

Also, minor technical constructional flaws (as the many captures in the introduction) are unpleasant. Despite these minor reservations, the study presents a distinctive thematic conception executed with considerable skill.

Solution: **1. g4!** {Novotny.}

(1. Rxe4? hxg2+ 2. Kxg2 {Black gains equality now due to the Rook's vision being open along the fourth rank.} dxc5 (2. .. Rg4+ {[or]} 3. Kh3 dxc5 4. dxc5 fxg5 {= White cannot recapture due to the pin.}) 3. dxc5 fxg5 {White cannot recapture due to the pin.})

1. .. Bxg4

{First move of the rundlauf of Black's Bishop.}

(1. .. Rxg4 {The attack on the White Rook is blocked, White emerges a piece up.})

2. Rxe4 dxc5 3. gxf6 Kg8 4. f5! {A Pin on the Black Bishop only possible due to White's first move, forcing the Black Bishop to interfere with the Black Rook.}

4. ... Kf7

(4. .. cxd4 5. Rxd4 Kf7 6. Rd7+ Kxf6 7. Bd8+ Kxf5 8. Bxh4 +-)

5. Bd8! {First move of the rundlauf of White's bishop.}

(5. dxc5? Kxf6 6. c6 Kxf5 =)

5. .. cxd4

(5. .. b3 6. Re7+ Kf8 7. Bb6! Rh5 (7. .. Rh6 8. Bxc5 Rxf6 9. Re4+ Kf7 10. Rxc4 b2 11. Rg1 +/-) 8. Bxc5 {or Rg7 first.} Rxf5 9. Rg7+ Rxc5 10. dxc5 Bf3 11. Rd7! b2 12. Rd8+ Kf7 13. Rb8 +/-) (5. .. Rh8 6. Re7+ Kxf6 7. Re8+ Kg7 8. f6+ Kh7 9. f7 +/-)

6. Re7+ Kf8 7. Rg7! Bxf5 {Second move of the rundlauf of Black's Bishop.}

8. Be7+ {Second move of the rundlauf of White's Bishop.} **Ke8 9. Bxb4!** {Third move of the rundlauf of White's Bishop.}

(9. Bc5? Bg6! =)

9. .. Bg6! {Third move of the rundlauf of Black's Bishop.} **10. Re7+!**

(10. Rxc6? Kf7 =)

10. .. Kd8 11. Ba5+! {Final move of the rundlauf of White's Bishop.} **Kc8 12. Rc7+!**

Kb8 13. Rg7! Bh5 {Final move of the rundlauf of Black's Bishop. Both

White and Black bishops have returned to their starting squares after

completing a rundlauf.}

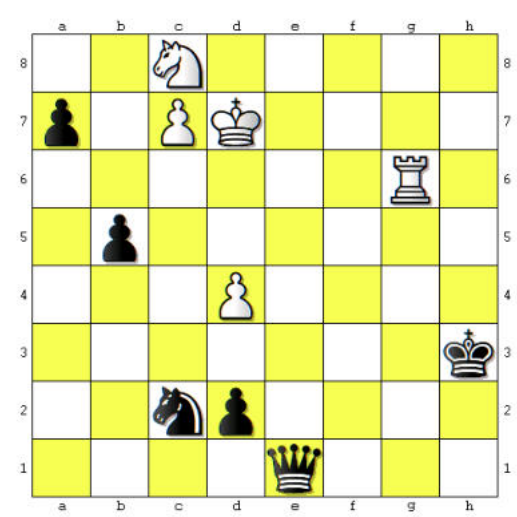
(13. .. Be8 14. Rg8 +/-)

14. Rh7! {Echo-pin; compare to Move 4: the Black Bishop, previously pinned to the Rook on the fourth rank, is now pinned to the rook on the h-file. Black cannot prevent a loss of material.}

14. ... Rf4 15. Bc7+ {+/- The White Bishop makes one more move than its Black counterpart and it proves decisive! Theme: rundlaufs of both

White and Black bishops on "echo-squares" of a5 and h5. The study is also

connected by the echo-pins (Moves 4 and 14).} **1-0**



Alain Pallier

White to move and win

12th Commendation

It is somehow fitting that Pallier appears both at the very top of the regular Honorable Mentions and at the very bottom of the regular Commendations. It could seem, at first sight, to get in touch with two versions of Pallier: the chaotic yet rational one, and the completely wild one.

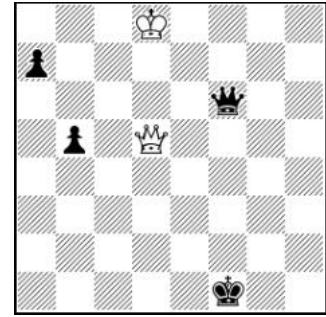
The earlier study rewarded by the judge possessed, despite all its analytical complexity, a clearly recognizable thematic heart: the reader could always feel the gravitational centre of the play, even while navigating through highly chaotic variations. The present work moves in the opposite direction: here, almost all sense of immediate orientation is deliberately sacrificed in favour of an immense and tangled analytical net, filled with hidden pins, precise Queen placements, quiet

King manoeuvres (some moves are astonishing, even if no human could understand why), and elusive drawing mechanisms that often seem to survive by a single tempo. At times, the study borders on opacity; following its logic: it requires unusual concentration even from experienced solvers. And yet, despite this excess, the work retains a strange fascination. One feels throughout the analysis the sincerity of the compositional effort, the refusal to simplify, and the determination to push the position as far as its internal logic would permit. The result is not entirely harmonious, but undeniably alive.

In a tourney explicitly devoted to the outer edges of chess composition, such uncompromising artistic honesty deserved recognition. Unlike in the 1st Honorable Mention, where I made some edits, here I will report the solution *exactly* as the Author has presented it. I am sure this will contribute to enrich the somehow perverse charm that derives from this apparent chess nonsense. Additional honors will be granted to those able to understand what happens here below without computer assistance.

Solution: **1.Ne7!**

1.Nd6? Qh4 (d1Q) 2.c8Q d1Q (Qh4) -+ but not 1...Nxd4? 2.c8Q d1Q 3.Qh8+ Qh4
4.Rh6 Qg4+ =
1...d1Q (Nxd4)
2.c8Q Nxd4 (d1Q)
3.Kc7+
3.Ke8+? Kh4(2) -+
3...Kh4



3...Ne6+ 4.Rxe6 Qg3+ 5.Kb7! (5.Re5+? Qdg4 -+) eg 5...Qgf3+ 6.Nc6 Kg2 7.Qc7 =

4.Qh8+

4.Rh6+? Kg5! 5.Qg8+ Kf4! -+

4...Qh5

5.Qxd4+ Kh3

6.Kc8!

First quiet white K-move (with Ne7 *en prise*). White must avoid a Q-pin with wKc7 and bQd6, leading to a Q-exchange that wins for Black. On d4, white Queen is on its optimal square and must not immediately move.

6.Qd3+? Kh2 7.Nc6 Qh7+! 8.Kd6 Qhh4! 9.Kc7 (9.Qxb5 and, eg, 9...Qd1+ -+) 9...Qef2

10.Qd6+ Qhf4 -+

Other annoying pins occur after 6.Qd7+? Kh2 7.Rd6 and, eg, 7...Qc3+ 8.Nc6 b4 -+ or

7.Re6 and, eg, 7...Qed1 8.Rd6 Qe5 9.Nc6 Qf4 -+

6...Qed1!

6...Qc1+ 7.Kb8 Qe1 and, eg, 8.Kc8=

7.Qf4(6)!

- 7.Qc3+? Qdf3 8.Qg7 and, eg, 8...Qc5+ 9.Rc6+ Qxc6+ 10.Nxc6 Qxc6+ 11.Kb8 a5 -+ or

8.Qd4 Qh4 9.Qd7+ Kh2 10.Nc6 Qfh3 11.Re6 Q4g4 12.Qd6+ Kg1 13.Nd8 b4 -+

- 7.Qe3+? Qdf3! 8.Qe6+ Kh2 9.Qd6+ (9.Rh6? Qf8+ -+) 9...Kh1 10.Kc7 (10.Re6 and, eg,

10...Qhg4 11.Kc7 Qgf4 12.Re5 b4 13.Nd5 Qh4 14.Qxb4 Qxb4 15.Nxb4 a5 -+) 10...Qe3

11.Qc6+ Qhf3! 12.Rh6+ Kg1(2) 13.Rg6+ Kf2 14.Qc2+ and, eg, 14...Ke1 15.Qb1+ Qd1

16.Qb4+ Qdd2 17.Qh4+ Kd1 18.Qh5+ (18.Rd6 Qe5/c5+) 18...Qee2 19.Rg1+ Kc2

20.Qg6+ Qed3 -+

7...Qdf3

7...Qh8+ (if 7.Qf4 played) 8.Rg8 =

8.Qd6!

d6 is another optimal square for white Queen. On other squares, Black quickly wins.

8.Qg7? and, eg, 8...Qc5+ 9.Rc6 Qxc6+ 10.Nxc6 Qxc6+ 11.Kb8 a5 -+

8.Qd4? and, eg, 8...Qh4 9.Qe5 b4 -+

8...Qh8+

8...Qe3!? 9.Nd5! Qf5+ 10.Kd8! Qef3 11.Rh6+ Kg2 12.Rg6+ Kf1 13.Rf6 Q3(5)xd5

14.Qxd5 Qxf6+ with a first 'thematic' Q-ending:

and now only 15.Kd7! draws.

9.Kc7!

Not 9.Kd7? Qb7+ 10.Ke6 Qb6! 11.Nc6 Qe3+ 12.Ne5 b4 -+ nor 9.Rg8? Qhf6! 10.Qd7+ Kh2 11.Qc7+ Kh1 12.Qc1+ Qf1 -+

9...Qe3

9...Qfc3+ 10.Kb7 Qhe5 11.Qd7+! Kh2 and, eg, 12.Nc6 Qf4 13.Qh7+ Qh3 14.Qg7 = 9...Qhc3+ 10.Kb8 Qf8+ 11.Kb7 Qcf3+ 12.Ka6 b4 13.Rh6+ Kg2 14.Qd2+ Qf2 15.Rh6+ =

10.Kd7!!

Second quiet move by white King (possible now that 9...Qe3 has been played).

And not 10.Nd5? Qc1+! 11.Qc6 Qh7+ -+

a) 10...a5

10...Qh4 11.Nf5(d5) Qh7+ 12.Ne7 a6 (a5) 13.Qf6 Qexe7+ 14.Qxe7 Qxg6 and White draws.

11.Qd5! Qa7+

12.Ke6! Qb6+

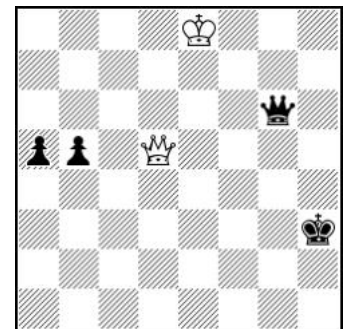
13.Kf7 Qh7+

13...Qf2+ 14.Ke6! Qe3+ 15.Kd7! (15.Kf7? Qh7+ 16.Rg7 Qf2+ -+) 15...Qa7+ (15...Qhd4+ 16.Rg3+/Rh6+ =) or 14...Qe2+ 15.Kd7! (15.Kf7? Qh7+ 16.Rg7 Qf1+ -+) 15...Kh2 16.Re6! Qh3 17.Qd6+! Kg1 18.Qc5+ Kf1 19.Qc1+ Kf2 20.Qc5+ Kg2 (20...Qee3 21.Qxe3+ Qxe3 22.Rxe3 Kxe3 and, eg, 23.Nc6 =) 21.Qc6+ Qef3 22.Qc2+ and White draws.

14.Ke8!

14...Q(~)xg6+

15.Rxg6 Qxg6+



16.Ke7!

16.Kd8? Qb6+ 17.Kc8(Kd7) b4 -+ ;

16.Kd7? Qg4+ and 17...Qc4 -+

16...b4

16...Qg4 (for 17.Qxb5? Qb4+ -+) 17.Qh1+ Kg3 18.Qg1(Qe1)+ = ; 16...Qg7+ and, eg, 17.Kd6 =

17.Qh1+! Kg4

18.Qg1(2)+ Kh5

19.Qh1(2)+ Kg5

20.Qc1(d2)+ and White draws.

b) 10...a6

11.Qd5!

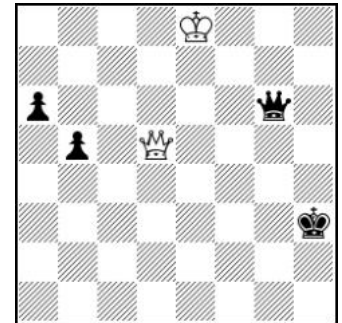
11.Qxa6? and, eg, 11...Qh4 (Qf8) -+

11...Qa7+ 12.Ke6 Qb6+ 13.Kf7 Qh7+

13...Qf2+ 14.Ke6 Qb6+ 15.Kf7 =

14.Ke8 Q(~)xg6+

15.Rxg6 Qxg6+



16.Kd8!

-16.Ke7? Qg7+ 17.Ke8 (17.Kd6/8 Qc3 -+) 17...Qg4! 18.Qh1+ Kg3 19.Qe1+ Kg2!
20.Qd2+ Kf1 21.Qc1+ Kf2! 22.Qc5+ Kg2 23.Qc2+ Kg3 24.Qc7+ Qf4 25.Qc3+ and, eg,
25...Qf3 26.Qe1+ Kf4 27.Qh4+ Ke3 28.Qh6+ Kf2 29.Qh2+ Kf1 and no more check,

Black wins.

-16.Kd7? Qg4+! 17.Kd8 and, eg, 17...Kh4 18.Qh1+ Kg5 19.Qd5+ Qf5 20.Qg2+ Kf6
21.Qc6+ Kf7 22.Qc7+ Kg6 23.Qd6+ Qf6+ 23.Ke8 Kf5! (23...Qxd6 stalemate) 24.Qd3+
Kg4 25.Qe2+ Kg3 26.Qe1+ Kg2 27.Qd2+ Qf2 28.Qg5+ Kf1 and Black wins.

16...Qb6+

17.Kd7! 17.Kc8? b4 -+

and White draws, eg 17...b4 18.Qf3+ etc.

Here the difference with a) is that, some moves later, in position

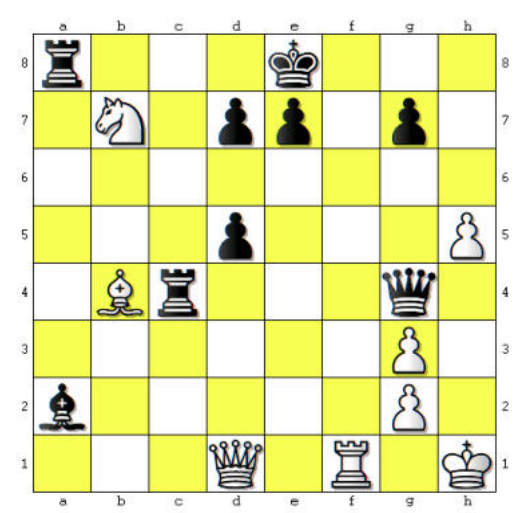
W: Kd7,Qg2/B: Kg7,Qb6,a6,b4, btm,

Black can not interpose ...bQg6 because a-pawn is on a6 (after...Qg6, Qb2+! and Qxb4 draws). With a-pawn on a5, b4 is defended.

Or **16...Qg4**

17.Qh1+! Kg3

18.Qg1(e1)+ and White draws.



Alexander Stavrietsky
 White to move and draw
Special Commendation

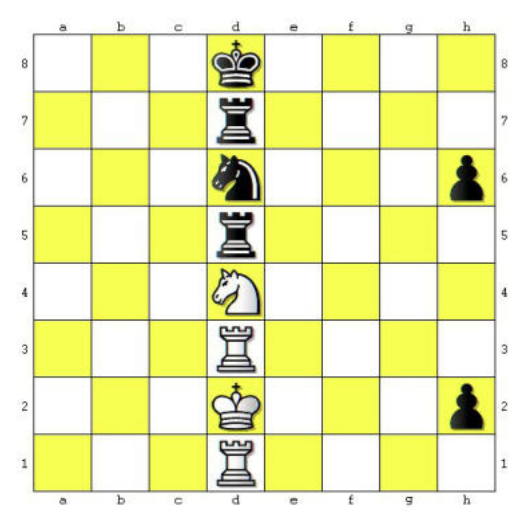
This study offers an elegant elaboration of a previously known thematic mechanism. The energetic introduction beginning with 1.Nd6+! leads to a carefully orchestrated sequence of exchanges in which White deliberately dismantles the position in order to reach a remarkable positional draw. The final oscillation of the Bishop and Rook creates an attractive impression of dynamic equilibrium, while Black's preserved castling right contributes an unusual and memorable feature to the concluding position.

Although the thematic core was anticipated in earlier studies by Pogosyants and later developed by Aliev, Stavrietsky introduces an aesthetically pleasing symmetrical duplication of the mechanism, giving the construction greater structural completeness. This addition does not fundamentally transform the underlying idea, but it enriches its presentation sufficiently to deserve recognition as a refined development of established material. For this reason, already explained in the introduction to the final award, the study is awarded a **Special Commendation** rather than a higher distinction (which was originally the 8th Honorable Mention).

Solution: 1. Nd6+! exd6 2. Qxd5 Qh4+! 3. gxh4 Rxh4+ 4. Kg1 Bxd5 5. Bxd6

{Main A:} 5. ... Bf7 6. Re1+ Be6 7. Rf1 Bf7 8. Re1+ Be6 9. Rf1 {positional draw.}

{Main B:} 5. ... O-O-O 6. Rb1 Bb7 7. Rc1+ Bc6 8. Rb1 {positional draw.}



Evgeni Egorov
White to move and draw
Special Commendation

I once composed an helpmate with such a vertical shape, with four solutions. It was funny to solve, as this study is: a perfect interpretation of the humorous and baroque, yet serious and precise, nature of chess. Breaking symmetry just to restore symmetry: a paradox in the paradox.

Raised more than a smile on my face, especially noticing that the Author has marked with a number every cluster of pieces stacked vertically, also sending me the pictures of every position, like a scrambled work of contemporary art.

Solution: **{8!}** 1. Nc6+ **{! 7!}** (1. Ne6+ ? Ke7 2. Rxd5 Ne4+ 3. Ke3 Rxd5 -+)

1. .. Kc7 **{6!}** 2. Rxd5 **{3+2!}** Nc4+!
(2. .. Ne4+ 3. Ke3 Rxd5 4. Rh1 Ng3 5. Rxh2 Nf1+ 6. Ke4 =)

3. Kc3 Rxd5 4. Rh1 Rc5 **{5!}** 5. Nd4
(5. Nb4 ? Ne5+ 6. Kd4 (6. Kb3 Ng4 -+) 6. .. Kd6 7. Nd3 Rd5+ {-+ **4!}**)

5. .. Ne5+ 6. Kd2 Ra5 (6. .. Rd5 **{2!}** 7. Ke3 Ng4+ 8. Ke4 Nf2+ (8. .. Rh5 9. Kf3 =) (8. .. Rd7 9. Ne6+ =) (8. .. Kd6 **{3!}** 9. Nf5+ =) 9. Kxd5 Nxh1 10. Nf3 =)

7. Ke3 (7. Rxh2 ? Ra2+ 8. Nc2 Nf3+ -+)

7. .. Ra4 8. Nf5 h5 9. Nh6 **{! 2+2!}** (9. Ng3 ? Ra3+ 10. Kf4 Ng6+ -+)

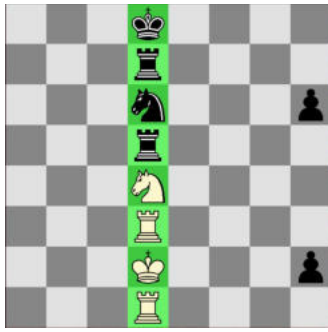
9. .. Ra3+ (9. .. Rh4 10. Kf2 Rf4+ 11. Ke3 (11. Kg3 Rf6 12. Rxh2 Rxh6 -+) 11. .. Rf6 12. Ke4 Nf3 13. Nf5 =) (9. .. Ra2 10. Kf4 =)

10. Kf4! (10. Ke4 ? Nf3 11. Nf5 Nd2+ 12. Ke5 Rh3)

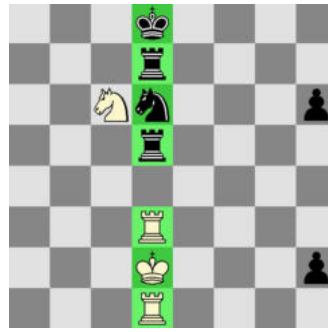
10. .. Nf3 **{2+2+2!}** 11. Nf5 **{! 3+2!}** (11. Kg3 Kd7 **{! -+}**)

11. .. h4 12. Nxh4 Nxh4 (12. .. Ra1 13. Rxa1 Ng1 14. Nf3 =)

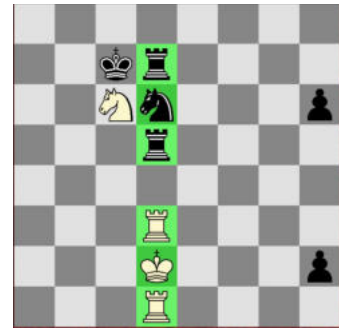
13. Rxh2 **{1!}** Ra8 14. Rxh4 Ra4+ 15. Kg5 Rxh4 16. Kxh4 **{0! Insufficient material}**



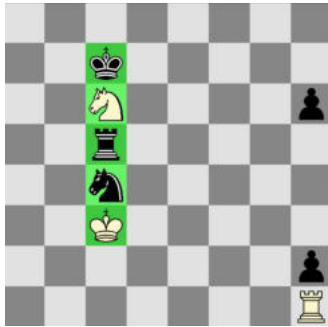
8!



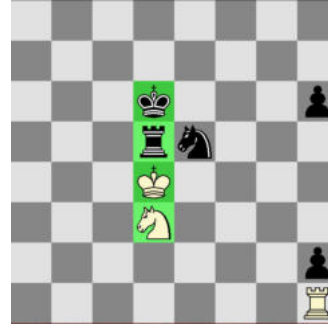
7!



6!



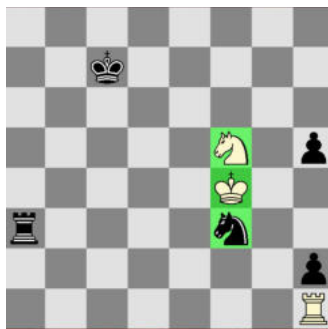
5!



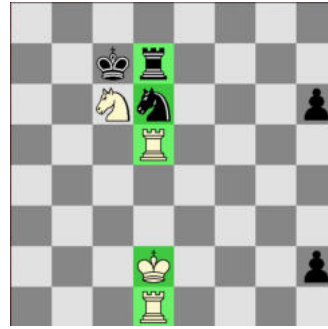
4!



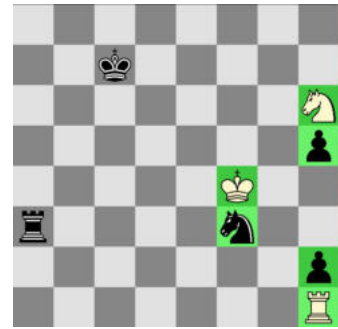
3 + 2!



3!



2+3!



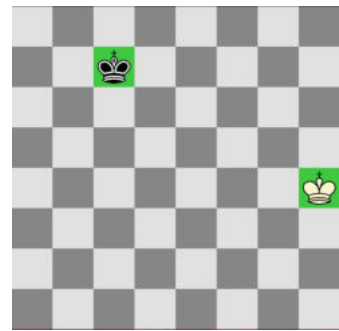
2+2+2!



2+2!

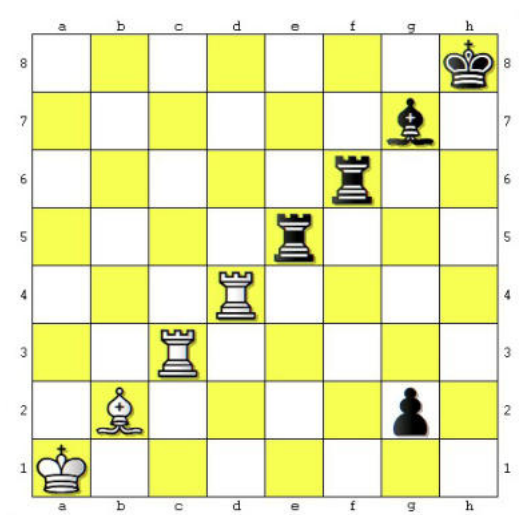


2+1!



0!

The "scrambled work of contemporary art"!



Evgeni Egorov

White to move and draw

Special Commendation

As the other study sent by the Author, we have another funny geometric configuration with an attractive logical plan. All is played on the difference between having the black Rook in c1 or d1. And all this with an almost completely diagonal configuration. The little pawn in g2, as a timid outsider, makes all the difference and permits the struggle: a good life teaching.

Solution: 1. Rh4+ !

(1. Rc8+ ? 1. .. Kh7 2. Rh4+ Rh6 ! +-) ({Logical try} 1. Rh3+ ? Kg8 2. Rd8+ Rf8 3. Rg3 (3. Rxf8+ Kxf8 4. Rg3 Re1+ 5. Ka2 Re2 ! +-) 3. .. Rxd8 4. Bxe5 Rd1+ 5. Kb2 g1=Q ! +- 6. Rxg7+ Qxg7 7. Bxg7 Kxg7 {In the main line the Rook is on c1!}))

1. .. Kg8

(1. .. Rh6 2. Rxh6+ Bxh6 3. Rg3 Draw)

2. Rc8+ Rf8

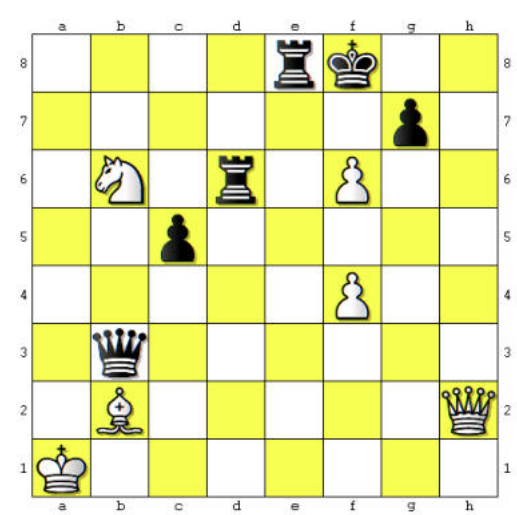
(2. .. Kf7 3. Rc7+ Re7 (3. .. Kf8 4. Rxg7 Re1+ 5. Ka2 Kxg7 6. Rg4+ Draw) 4. Rxe7+ Kxe7 5. Rg4 Rf1+ 6. Ka2 g1=Q 7. Rxg7+ Draw)

3. Rg4 !

(3. Rxf8+ ? Kxf8 4. Rg4 Re1+ 5. Ka2 Re2 6. Rxg7 Rxb2+ 7. Kxb2 Kxg7 ! +-)

3. .. Rxc8 (3. .. Re1+ 4. Ka2 Rxc8 (4. .. g1=Q 5. Rxf8+ Kxf8 6. Bxg7+ Draw) 5. Rxg7+ Kf8 6. Rxg2 Draw)

4. Bxe5 Rc1+ 5. Kb2 g1=Q 6. Rxg7+ ! Qxg7 7. Bxg7 Kxg7 8. Kxc1 {Insufficient material} 1/2-1/2



Antonio Garofalo

White to move and win

Special Commendation

A highly unusual entry, based on a mating sequence reportedly discovered by the Author in practical play and later reshaped into endgame-study form. Particularly noteworthy is the fact that the Author, primarily known for his work in the field of helpmates and with extremely rare appearances in the endgame-

study genre, succeeded in transferring a distinctly problemistic attacking vision into study form. Although the construction remains deliberately close to its tactical source and therefore does not pursue the economy or strategic sophistication typical of the highest-ranked studies, the work retains considerable charm thanks to its energetic forcing play, accessible setting, a secondary mating line with a surprising pawn finale, repeated King-hunting motifs and an elegant final mating picture. The transformation of an over-the-board combination into a coherent study setting gives the composition a somehow distinctive character.

Solution: **1. Qh8+! Qg8**

(1. .. Kf7 2. Qxg7+ {!} Ke6 3. Qg4+ {!} Kf7 4. Qh5+ {!} Kf8
5. Qh6+ {!} Kf7 6. Qh7+ {!} Ke6 7. f5# {!})

2. fxg7+ Ke7 3. Qh4+ Kf7 4. Qh5+ Ke7 5. Qg5+ Kf7 6. Qf5+ Ke7 7. Bf6+ Kf7
(7. .. Rxf6 8. Qd7# {!})

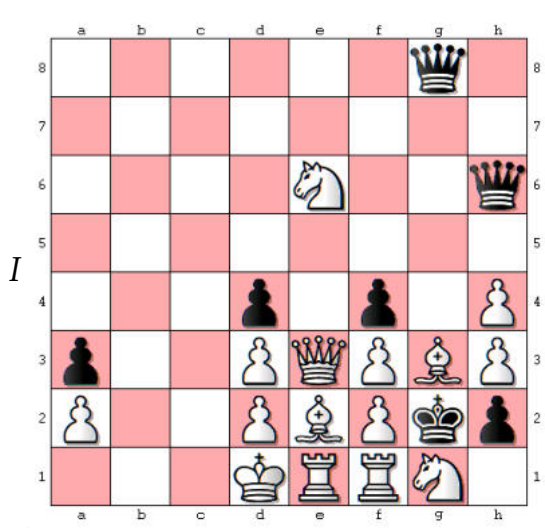
8. Be5+ Ke7 9. Bxd6+ Kxd6 10. Qd7#
[[All minor duals are time wastes]]

Bonus Study: Judge's Participation

The following study is original and, obviously, presented *out of competition*.

I wanted to include it because I believe that it is animated by the same restless search for unexplored forms that has distinguished many studies in this tournament. And I felt it would have been dishonest to celebrate artistic audacity in others without also exposing a fragment of my own (even if, perhaps, those ten years already spoke clearly enough.)

And yes, someone could ask why I insist on searching for new frontiers inside orthodox chess, instead of moving toward fairy conditions and pieces. My answer is simple: for me, the deepest fascination comes precisely from trying to bend the same ancient rules and the same 500-years-old pieces toward territories they were never supposed to reach.



White to move and win
Composed by **Daniele Guglielmo Gatti**



WARNING: Do not try this at home!

I could call this an experiment in controlled chaos. The move 3. Qc7!! is the heart of the composition: a paradoxical calm within madness. The Bishop promotion (h1=B!) is a deliberate act of rebellion against convention, and White's quiet reply Bh2! restores the aesthetic balance.

Grotesque becomes beauty through contradiction.

And yes, it's a legal position.

Yes, it counts two black Queens already on the board.

Yes, the keymove is a capture, and so are the subsequent moves, that's bad. Everyone knows.

Yes, it seems the result of a play between two drunk Grandmasters who made a bet on who can create the most absurd position ever seen.

Yes, it seems an "horror movie" (*cit.*).

And yet, despite all this, every absurdity has a reason. Every imbalance hides a geometrical necessity. The monster is alive, and anatomically coherent.

Solution: 1. Nxf4+ {!} Qxf4

(1. .. Kh1 2. Ne6 {!!} (NOT 2. Nd5 {?} Qb6 {!!} 3. Nc3 Qxa2 {!!} 4. Nxa2 Qb3+ {!} 5. Kc1 Qb2+ {!} 6. Kd1 Qxa2 {!} 7. Qxd4 Qb1# {!!}) 2. .. Qhxe6 3. Qxe6 Qxe6 4. f4 {! +-})

2. Qxf4 Qb8 (2. .. Qxa2 3. Qb8 {!} Qa1+ 4. Kc2 {!} Qa2+ 5. Kc1 {!} Qa1+ 6. Qb1 {! -+})

3. Qc7 {!!} (3. Qxb8 {?} h1=B {!} 4. Qb2 axb2 5. Kc2 b1=Q+ {! Draw})

3. .. Qb1+ 4. Qc1 h1=B 5. Bh2 {!!} 1-0

Editorial note (final version)

Following the claim period, some commentaries (especially in Section A) have been slightly expanded or clarified in order to explain more explicitly the artistic reasoning behind a few borderline evaluations.

In section B, graphics of the diagrams and parts of the introduction have been updated.

These editorial improvements do not affect the final ranking, which remains unchanged, except for where explicitly stated in the apposite sections.