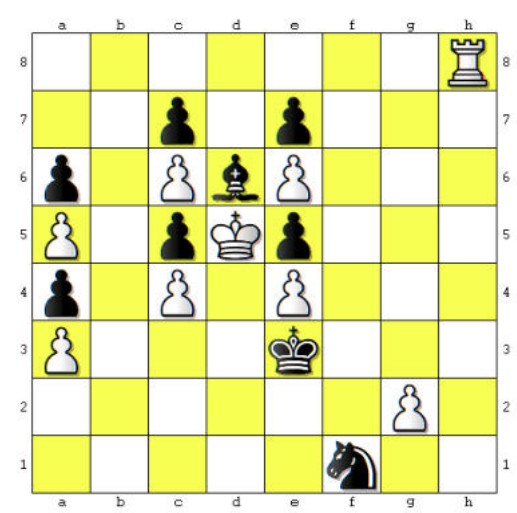




Frank Fiedler & Brigitte Blechschmidt

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.