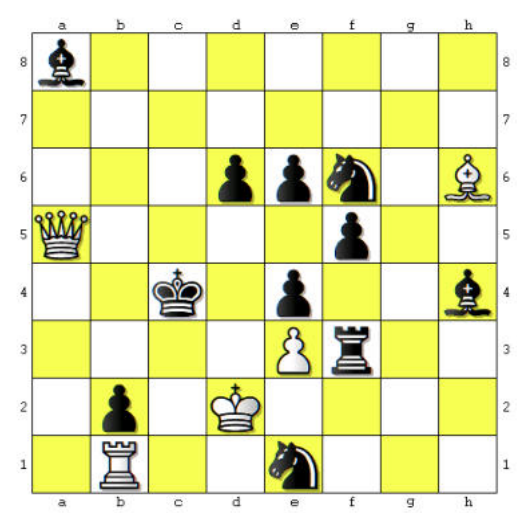




**Sergey Osintsev**

White to move and win

**3<sup>rd</sup> 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 1<sup>st</sup> 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]}*