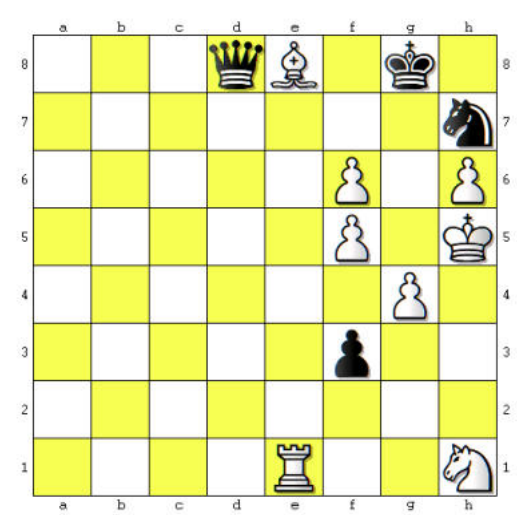




**Alexey Popov**

White to move and win

**4<sup>th</sup> 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# {!}**