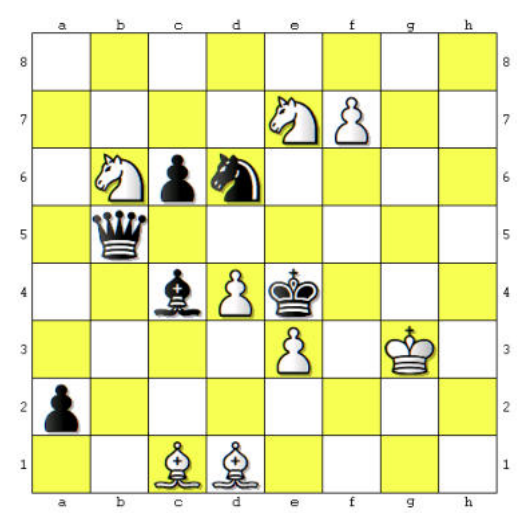




Oleg Pervakov

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.*