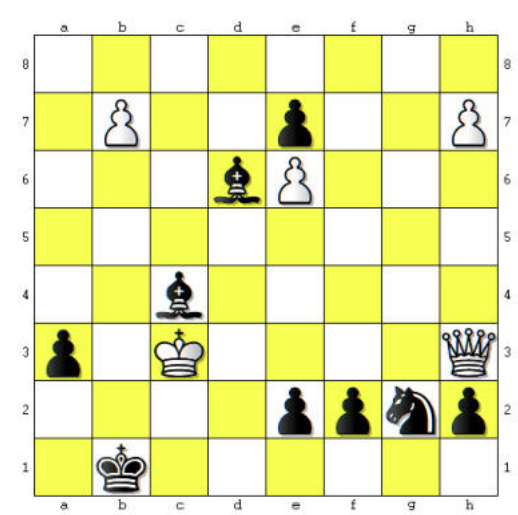




Mario Micaloni

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}