

The Problemist 2023

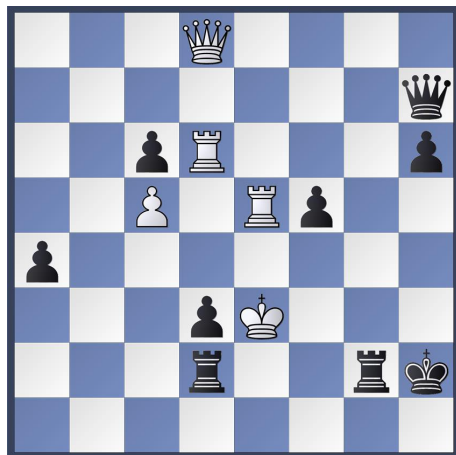
Study Tourney Preliminary Award

by Árpád Ruzs

*During the year 2023, in the The Problemist magazine, 37 original studies have been published by 31 authors (including 7 co-productions). The general level was not very high but the prizes went to some exceptional studies.
I have awarded the following 12 studies:*

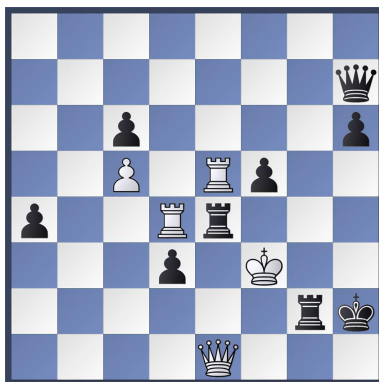
Steffen Nielsen

1st Prize



White wins

1.Qh4+ Kg1 2.Qe1+ Kh2 3.Rd4! Rde2+ 4.Kf3 Re4! The queen cannot be captured: 4...Rxe1 5.Rh4+ Kg1 6.Rxe1#
echo checkmate



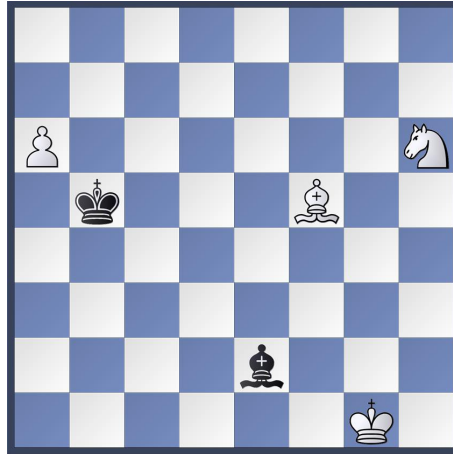
5.Qh4+!

5... Kg1 6.Rb4! Thematic try: 6.Rxa4? Qa7! 7.Qe1+ Kh2 8.Re6 Qg7 9.Qh4+ Kg1 10.Ra1+?? Qxa1 -+ 6...Qb7 7.Qe1+ Kh2 7...Rxe1 8.Rxe1+ Kh2 9.Rh4# echo checkmate. 8.Re6! h5 8...Qg7 9.Qh4+ Kg1 10.Rb1+ Here we can see why it was better to have the rook on the b-file. 9.Qh4+ Thematic try: 9.Rg6? Rxc6 10.Qf2+ Kh3! The king will be safe here. 11.Rxb7 Rgg4 12.Qf1+ Kh4 13.Qh1+ Kg5 14.Rg7+ Kf6 15.Qa1+ Ke6 -+ 9...Kg1 10.Rg6 Rxc6 10...Rxc4 11.Rxc2+ +- 11.Qf2+ Kh1 12.Rxb7 The black king is too exposed on h1, so Rgg4 doesn't help here. White wins.

Another typical masterpiece by its author with multiple major pieces hanging but all being taboo to be captured. The diagonal symmetry in the position enhances the artistic effect.

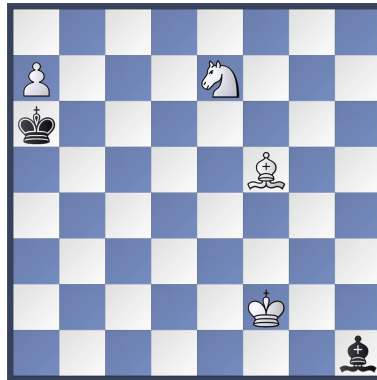
Serhiy Didukh

2nd Prize



White wins

1.Kf2! Bc4 2.a7 Bd5 3.Ng8 Ka6 4.Ne7 Bh1



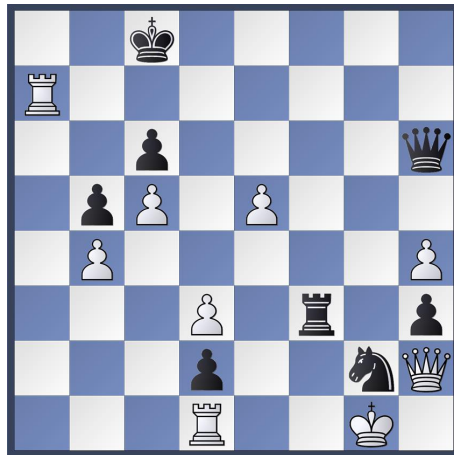
5.Kg1!!

The idea behind this waste of two moves is to make the other side waste three moves and thus gain a tempo for the king's walk to b6. Black has to delay his plan Kb7-a8 because his bishop gets decoyed to bad squares. 5.Nc8? Kb7 6.Ke3 Ka8 7.Kd4 Bb7 8.Kc5 Bxc8 = 5...Bf3 6.Bg4! Be4 7.Nc8 Bc6 7...Kb7 8.Nd6+ +- 8.Bd7! Bf3 9.Kf2 Bh1 10.Ke3 Kb7 11.Kd4 Ka8 12.Kc5 Bb7 13.Kb6 Bxc8 14.Bc6+ Bb7 15.Bxb7#

The white king could hurry towards its pawn by moving to e3 but that is one tempo short. Instead, the right way to approach the pawn is via g1! This paradoxical retreat of the white king losing two tempi but later winning back three is a magnificent idea.

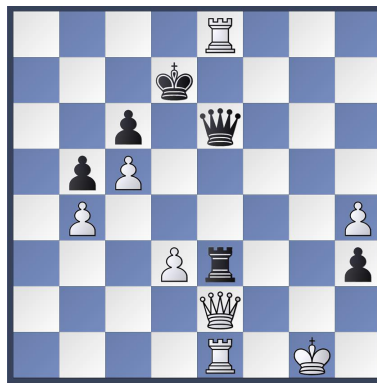
Sarah Hornecker, Martin Minski & Jan Sprenger

3rd Prize



White wins

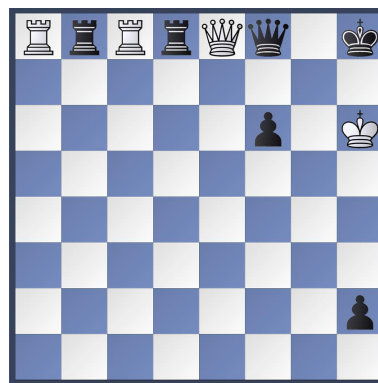
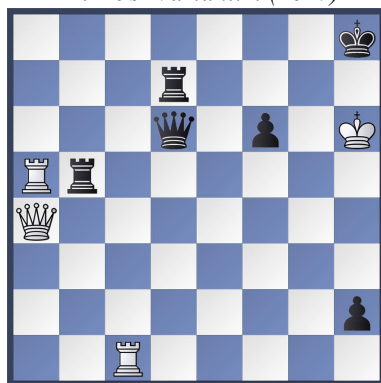
1.e6! threatens Qc7# **1...Nf4** [1...Qe3+ loses to 2.Kh1 Nf4 3.Qg1 Wins.] **2.Qxd2 Qxe6** [2...Rxd3 allows 3.e7 Qg6+ 4.Kh1 Qg2+ (4...Rxd2 5.Rxd2 Qe4+ 6.Kh2 Nd5 7.e8Q+ Qxe8 8.Ra8+ Wins.) 5.Qxg2 hxg2+ 6.Kh2 g1Q+!? 7.Kxg1 Rxd1+ 8.Kf2 Winning.] **3.Re1** [3.Rda1? h2+! 4.Kh1 Qd5 5.Ra8+ Kd7 Is just a draw.] **3...Ne2+!** **4.Qxe2** [4.Rxe2?? Is refuted by 4...Qg4+ 5.Kh1 Rf1+ 6.Kh2 Qg1+ 7.Kxh3 Rf3#] **4...Re3!** **5.Ra8+** [thematic try 5.Re7? Qg6+ /Qg8+ with transposition 6.Kh1 Rxe7! 7.Qxe7 no check 7...Qg2#; 5.Qxe3?? fails to 5...Qg4+ 6.Kf2 Qg2# model mate with two active self-blocks] **5...Kd7** [5...Kb7 6.Rea1! Rxe2 7.R1a7#] **6.Re8!!**



The Problemist: „The Domino formation initially introduced by our current judge (...)” **6...Qg6+** **7.Kh1 Rxe8** [7...Rxe2 is met by 8.R1xe2 followed by R2e7+] **8.Qxe8+!** By now it's a Check! White wins.

Well, I think this is something else, and not a Domino. Maybe closer to the Grip Theme. Anyway, it is a study I liked regardless.

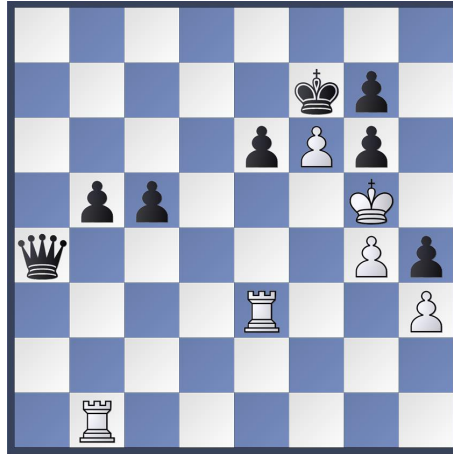
A. Ruzs Variantim (2017)



1.Ra8+! Rb8 2.Rc8+! Rd8 3.Qe8+! Qf8+ 4.Qxf8+ Rxf8 5.Rxf8+ Rxf8 6.Rxf8# (*Domino Theme*)

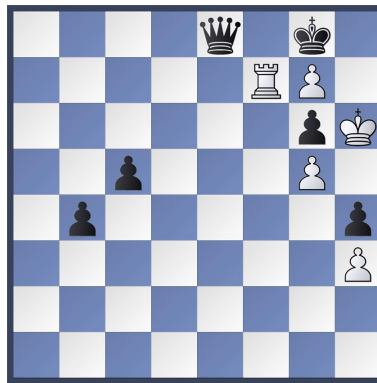
John Nunn

1st HM



Draw

1.Rxe6! The first rook sacrifice on e6. **1... Kxe6 2.fxc7 Kf7 3.Kh6 Qa8 4.Rf1+ Kg8 5.g5 Qe8 6.Rf7! 6.Ra1? Qe4 7.Ra7 (7.Ra6 Qb7 -+) 7...Qf3 8.Kxg6 Qc6+ -+]** **6...b4 6... Kxf7 7.g8Q+ Kxg8/Qxg8 stalemate**



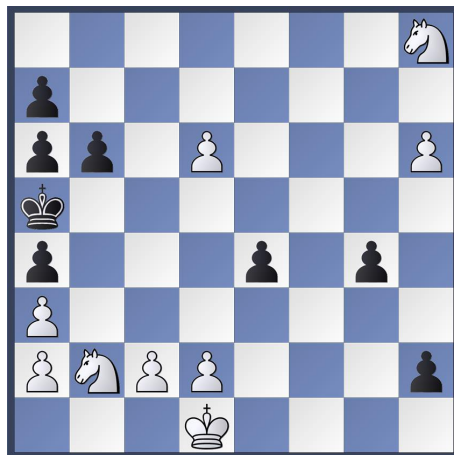
7.Ra7!

7.Rb7? b3 8.Rxb3 c4 9.Rb6 Qe5 10.Rf6 Qe7 11.Rf8+ Qxf8 12.gxf8Q+ Kxf8 13.Kxg6 Kg8 -+ 7...b3 8.Ra6! b2 9.Re6!
The second rook sacrifice on e6. **9... Qd7 9... Qxe6 stalemate 10.Re8+ Qxe8 stalemate**

On move 7, the white rook starts a mysterious manoeuvre to visit e6, the square where the first rook was also sacrificed.

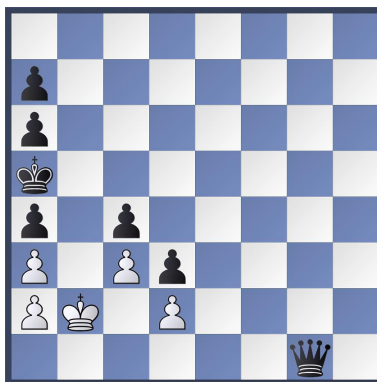
Vladislav Tarasiuk

2nd HM

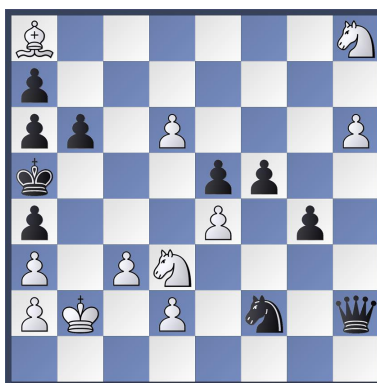


Draw

1.c3 1.Nc4+? Kb5 2.c3 h1Q+ 3.Kc2 Qxh6 4.Nf7 Qf6(8) 5.Nce5 a5 6.c4+ Ka6 7.d7 g3 8.d8Q Qxd8 9.Nxd8 g2-+ 1...h1Q+ 2.Kc2 Qxh6 2...e3 3.Nc4+ Kb5 4.d7 Qe4+ 5.Kb2 Qd5 6.Nf7! Kxc4 7.Ne5+ Qxe5 8.d8Q= 3.Nf7 Qe6 4.Ne5! b5 5.d7 Qxd7! Queen sacrifice 6.Nxd7 g3 7.Nd3! exd3+ 8.Kb2! g2 9.Ne5 g1Q 10.Nc4+! bxc4 stalemate



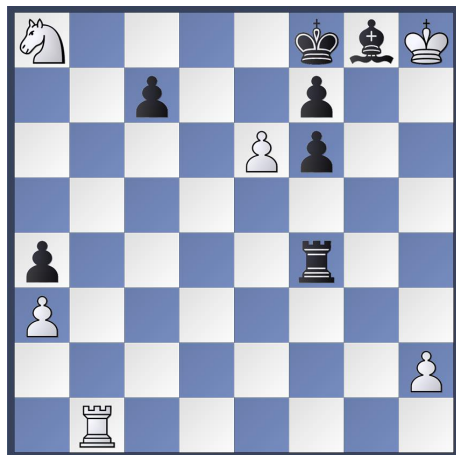
When all seems lost, White finds a surprising resource to save the game: a stalemate after the sacrifice of the two knights. The author published a second version of the study in the magazine which I don't really like because of the extra material and the fact that the white king starts on the square where it is going to be stalemated. And yes, I know it is going to move before that and will do a Switchback.



1.Kc2! 1.d7? Qxh6! 2.d8Q Qxd2+ 3.Kb1 Qd1+ 4.Nc1 Qxd8-+ 1...Nxe4 1...Nxd3 2.d7 Qe2 3.d8Q Ne1+ 4.Kb2 (c1) 4...Nd3+ 5.Kc2 positional draw 2.Bxe4 fxe4 3.Nb2! 3.Nb4? e3 4.d7 Qxd2-+ 3...Qxh6 4.Nf7 4.Nc4+? Kb5 5.Nf7 Qf6! 6.Nxe5 a5! 7.c4+ Ka6-+ 4...Qe6 5.Nxe5 b5! 5...Qxe5 6.Nc4+- 6.d7 Qxd7! 6...Qg8 7.Nd1!= 7.Nxd7 g3 8.Nd3!! Switchback 8.Nd1? G2-+ 8...exd3+ 9.Kb2!! Switchback 9.Kxd3? g2-+ 9...g2 10.Ne5 g1Q 10...Kb6 11.Nf3= 11.Nc4+! bxc4 stalemate.

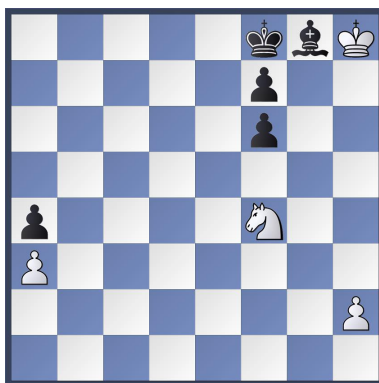
Yehuda Hoch

3rd HM



White wins

1.Rb8+ Ke7 2.Re8+!! Kxe8 3.Nxc7+ Kf8 4.e7+ Kxe7 5.Nd5+ Ke8! Triangulation 6.Nxf4 Kf8



7.h3! Festina lente!

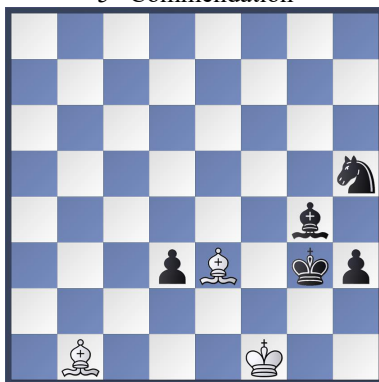
Thematic try: 7.h4? f5 8.h5 f6 9.Ng6+ Kf7= zz 7...f5 8.h4 f6 9.Ng6+ Kf7 10.h5 zz 10...f4 11.Nxf4 Kf8 12.Ng6+ Kf7 13.Ne7! f5 13...Kxe7 14.Kxg8 f5 15.h6 f4 16.h7+- 14.Ng6! 14.Nxg8? f4 15.Kh7 Ke6 16.Nh6 Kf6!= 14...f4 15.Nxf4 Kf8 16.Ng6+ Kf7 17.Ne7 Kxe7 18.Kxg8 +-

Let me show you here one of my studies which features a similarly trapped bishop:

A. Ruz

Mat Plus (2008)

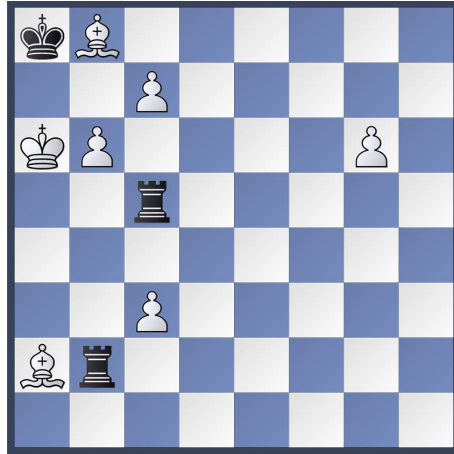
5th Commendation



Draw

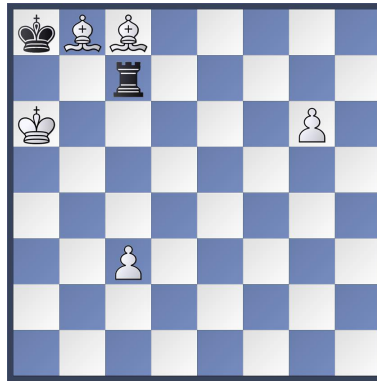
1.Bf2+ Kh2! 2.Bg1+ Kh1! 3.Bxd3 Be2+! 4.Bxe2! 4.Kxe2? Kxg1 5.Ke3 Nf6 6.Be2 Nd5+ 7.Kf3 h2 -+ 4...Ng3+ 5.Ke1! Triangulation. 5.Kf2? Nxe2 zz -+ 5...Nxe2 6.Kf2! zz 6.Bb6? Kg2 7.Bc7 Ng3 -+ 6...Nxg1 7.Kg3 zz h2 8.Kf2 zz Nf3 9.Kf1 zz Nd2+ 10.Kf2 positional draw

Guus Rol
1st Commendation



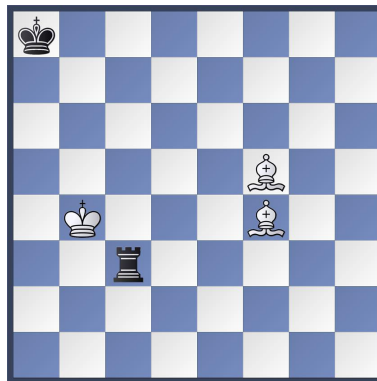
White wins

1.Be6 Rb1 2.b7+ Rxb7 3.c8R!! 3.c8Q? Ra5+! 4.Kxa5 Rb5+! 5.Ka4 (5...Kxb5 stalemate) 5...Rb4+ 6.Ka3 Rb3+ 7.Ka2 Rb2+ 8.Ka1 Rb1+= 3...Rxc8 4.Bxc8 Rc7!



5.g7!

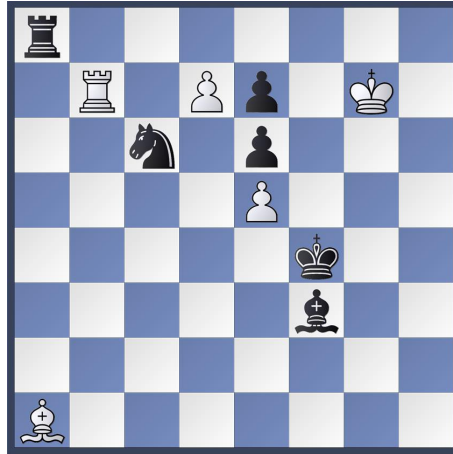
5.Bxc7? stalemate 5...Rxc7 6.Bf4! 6.Be5? Rg6+ 7.Kb5 Rg5= 6...Rc7! 7.Bf5! Rc6+ 7...Rxc3 8.Be4+- 8.Kb5 Rxc3 9.Kb4! +-



domination

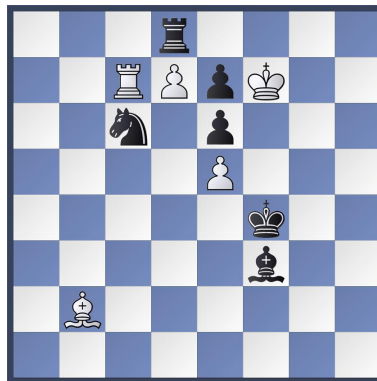
Although this domination is well-known, the play leading to it was pleasing.

Alexey Gasparyan
2nd Commendation



Draw

1.Rc7 Rd8 1...Rxa1 2.Rxc6!= 2.Kf7 Bh5+ 3.Kg7! 3.Kxe6? Bg4+ 4.Kf7 Bxd7-+ 3...Bf3 3...Nxe5 4.Rc5= 4.Kf7 Kg5 5.Bb2! 5.Bc3? Kf5 zz 6.Bb2 Bh5+ 7.Kg7 Nb4-+ 5...Kf4

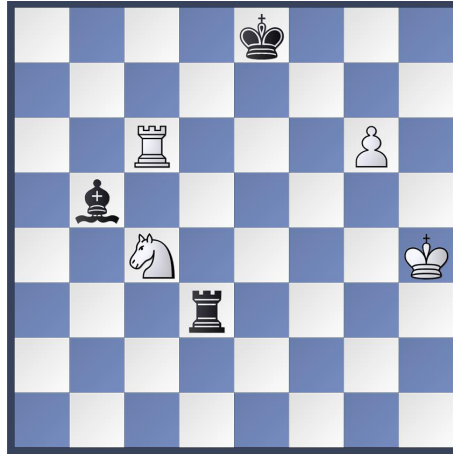


6.Ba1!!

6... Kf5 7.Bc3 zz 7...Bh5+ 8.Kg7 Nxe5 9.Rc5 =

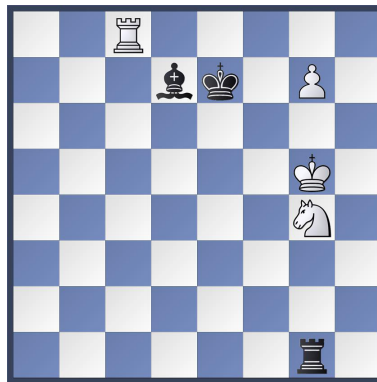
The bishop moves into the corner in order to avoid a multi-piece mutual zugzwang. The play is unfortunately quite static.

Martin Minski
3rd Commendation



White wins

1.Rc8+ Ke7 2.Ne5 Rd4+ 3.Kg5 Rd1 4.g7 Rg1+ 5.Ng4 Bd7

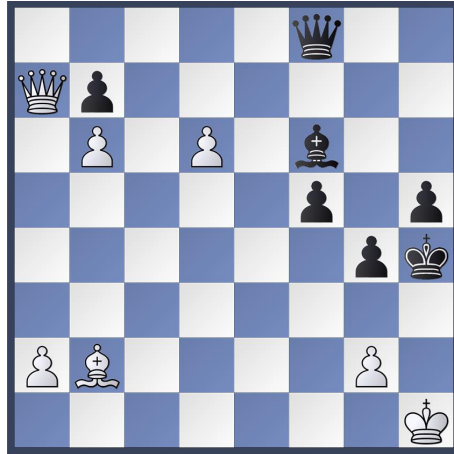


6.Re8+!!

6... Kd6 7.Re4 +-

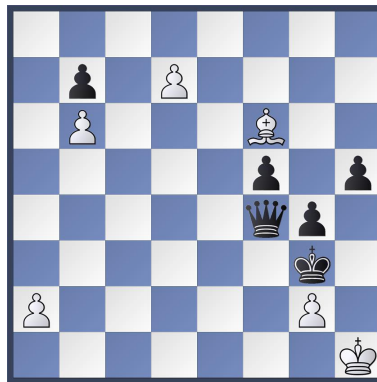
Nice rook sacrifice on a double-protected square.

Beat Neuschwander
4th Commendation



White wins

1.Qb8! Qxb8 2.Bxf6+ Kg3 3.d7 Qf4



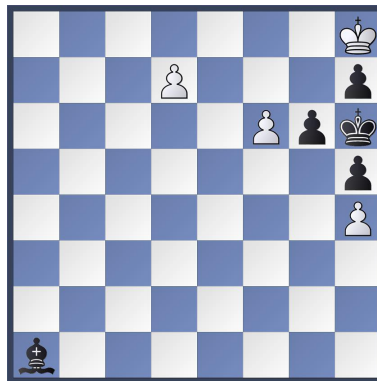
4.Bh4+!

4... Kxh4 5.d8B+!! 5.d8Q+? Kg3 6.Qc7 Kh4 7.Qxf4 stalemate 5...Kg3 6.Bc7 h4 7.Kg1! +- 7.a4? Kf2 8.Bxf4 g3-+

Bishop Phoenix to avoid a stalemate with a pinned pawn.

I. Bondar

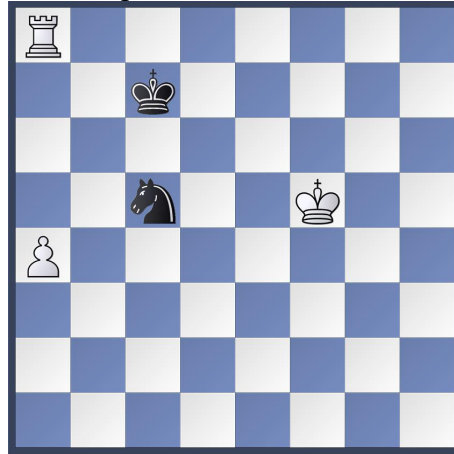
Belarussia Team Championships (2013)
4th Place



White wins

1.d8B! 1.d8Q? Bxf6+ 2.Qxf6 stalemate 1...g5 2.Kg8 Bxf6! 3.Bxf6 gxh4 4.Kf7 h3 5.Bh4 h2 6.Kf6 h1Q 7.Bg5#

Alain Villeneuve
1st Special Commendation

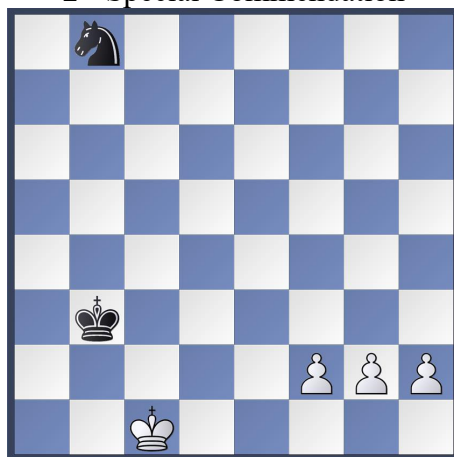


White wins

1.Kf6!! 1.Ke5? Kb7 2.Ra5 Kb6 3.Rb5+ Kc6 4.Rb4 Nd3+=; 1.Ra5? Kc6! 2.Ra7 Kb6 3.Ra8 Kb7 4.Ra5 Kc6! positional draw **1...Kc6** 1...Kb7 2.Ra5 Kc6 (2...Kb6 3.Rb5+ Kc6 4.Rb4+-) 3.Ke7+- zz **2.Kf7!** 2.Ke7? Kb7 3.Ra5 Kc6 zz 4.Ke8 Kd5 5.Ra8 Kc4 6.Kd8 Kb4= **2...Kc7 3.Ke8** Not the unique winning move, but longer is for example 3.Ra5 Kd6 4.Ra7 Kc6 5.Ke8 Kb6 6.Ra8 Kc7 7.Ra5 reaching a position from the main line. **3...Nb7 4.Ra6** As the 3.Ra5 variation shows, moving to a6 is not necessary for the win. So the sentence "The rook is obliged to visit all 4 squares on the a-file!" from the magazine (The Problemist, May 2023, page 102) is not completely accurate. **4...Nc5 5.Ra5 Kd6 6.Ra7! Kc6 7.Kd8 Kb6 8.Ra8 Kb7 9.Ra5 Ne4 10.Kd(e)7 10.Rd5** is also a highly disguised time-wasting dual: 10...Nc3 11.Rd4 Ka6 12.Rc4 Nd1 13.Rc8 Nb2 14.Ra8+ Kb7 15.Ra5 Nd1 16.Kd(e)7 16...Nc3 17.Kd6 and we are back to the main line. **10...Nc3 11.Kd6 Kb6 12.Ra8 Kb7 13.Rh8** [or 13.Rg8; 13.Rf8? Ne4+! 14.Ke5 Nc5 15.Rf4 (15.Kd6 Ne4+!)=) 15...Nd3+=] **13...Nxa4 14.Rh4 Nc3** [14...Nb6 15.Rb4 Ka7 16.Kc6 Nc8 17.Kc7+-] **15.Kc5 Ka6 16.Rc4** e.g. **16...Ne2 17.Rc2 Nf4 18.Kc6 Ka5 19.Rd2** +-

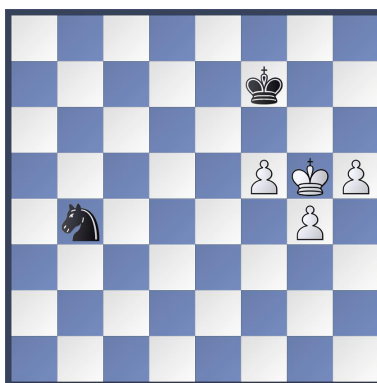
Long fight in an endgame with just 5 pieces (a „baby”). White's first two moves, which avoid an „invisible” fork and a mutual zugzwang, are quite surprising.

Peter Krug
2nd Special Commendation



White wins

1.Kd2 Kc4 2.Ke3 Kd5 3.Kf4 Ke6 4.Kg5 Kf7 5.f4! 5.h4? Kg7 6.f4 Nc6 7.g4 Nd4 = 5...Nc6 6.h3!! 6.h4? Kg7 7.g4 Nd4 8.f5 Nf3+= 6...Kg7 7.g4! zz 7...Nb4 7...Nd4 8.f5 Nf3+ 9.Kf4+- 8.Kf5 Nc2 9.h4 9.Ke4? Ne1 10.f5 Ng2 = 9...Ne3+ 10.Kg5 Nd5 11.f5 Kf7 12.h5 Nb4



13.Kf4!

Thematic try: 13.Kh4? Kf6!= 13...Nd5+ 14.Kg3 Nf6 15.Kh4! The white king moves to h4 only after the knight blocks the f6 square from its king. 15...Nd5 16.h6 Kg8 17.Kh5 17.g5 is a minor dual 17...Kh7 18.g5 Nf4+ 19.Kg4 Nd5 20.Kf3 Nc3 21.Kf4 Nb5 21...Nd5+ 22.Ke4 Nb4 23.Ke5 Nc6+ 24.Kf6 Nd8 25.Ke7 Nc6+ 26.Kd7 Ne5+ 27.Ke8 zz 27...Nf3 28.g6+! Kxh6 29.f6! Kxg6 30.f7 +- 22.Ke5 Nc3 23.Kd4! Nb5+ 24.Kd5 Nc3+ 25.Ke5 Nb5 26.f6 Kg6 27.Ke6 Nd4+ 28.Ke7 Nc6+ 29.Kf8 Ne5 30.Kg8 +-

A very long fight of three pawns against a knight with some interesting moments from which I've highlighted that from move 13.