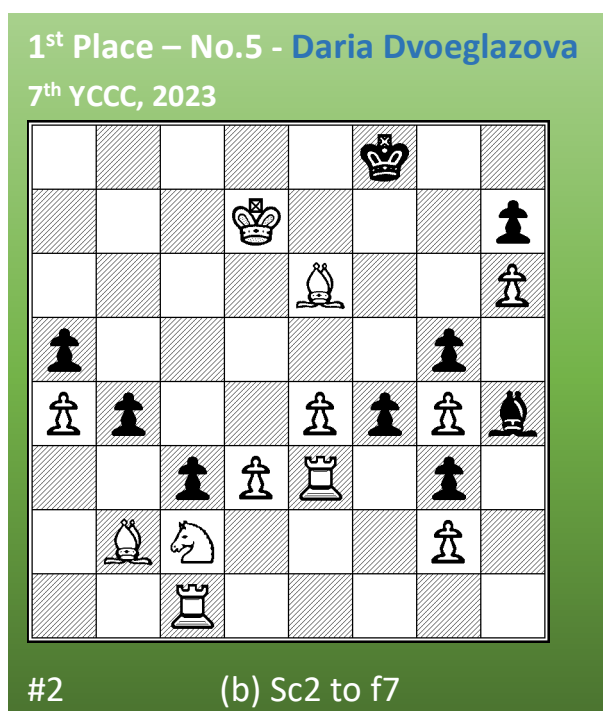


Award of the 7th YCCC – Section A

Composers were invited to submit two-movers with a “knight to a corner square” key. This requirement is a severe constructional constraint; it was intended to be a challenge! I started to have misgivings; might the task prove too daunting for some of our more recent recruits? My fears were unfounded and some truly excellent problems were forthcoming. Two diagrams used the device of twinning to devise more than one thematic key – an entirely legitimate strategy. This approach was highly successful as we shall see...



(a) All Black's defences are set with mate except 1...cxb2. Clearly wSc2 must move. 1.Se1? (-) but 1...fxe3! 1.Sd4? (-) but 1...c2! 1.Sa3? (-) 1...bxa3 2.Bxa3 but 1...b3! **1.Sa1!** (-) 1...fxe3 2.Rf1, 1...c2 2.Bg7, 1...b3 2.Ba3, 1...cxb2 2.Rc8 and 1...f3 2.Rxf3.

(b) Here it is clear that wSf7 must clear the f line in order for the wRs to mate on that file. 1.Sd6? (-) but 1...b3! 1.Se5? (-) but 1...c2! 1.Sd8? (-) but 1...cxb2! **1.Sh8!** (-) and mates identical to (a). How I love this composition! Unity is served by Black's defences *all* being pawn moves. This is further enhanced by the passive and active functions of both wRe3 and wBb2. Furthermore wBb2 and wRc1 each mate along two different lines. The three self-obstructing tries in each phase

are the stuff of dreams. The weakness of one try in (a) is square blocking whereas in (b) the errors of the tries are all line closures. We return to unity again – I appreciate the fact that the best wine has been served last. A faultless problem!

2nd Place – No.17 - Danila Moiseev
7th YCCC, 2023

#2 (b) wSg3 to f7 (c) wSg3 to c2

(a) All Black’s moves are set with mate; the position is a *complete block*. White must maintain this state of affairs but not by 1.Sg5? (-) 1...B3~! **1.Sh1!** (-) 1...B3~ 2.Qf8, 1...c3 2.Rxc3, 1...cxb3 2.Qc1, 1...bxa3 2.Rxb5, 1...Sc~ 2.R(x)c6. In passing we should appreciate the block-threat try, 1.Rd6? (>2.Se6) but 1...Bg4! (2.Qf8?) This small detail was for me a highlight!

(b) Here it is evident that the wS must clear the f line but 1.Sd6? closes f8-d6 and so **1.Sh8!** (-) with play as before.

(c) Now the wS must clear the c line but not by 1.Se1? as this closes f1 to c1 and so **1.Sa1!** (-) again with unchanged play.

It is a great pity that inevitably this diagram will be compared with the first placed problem since **No.5** is

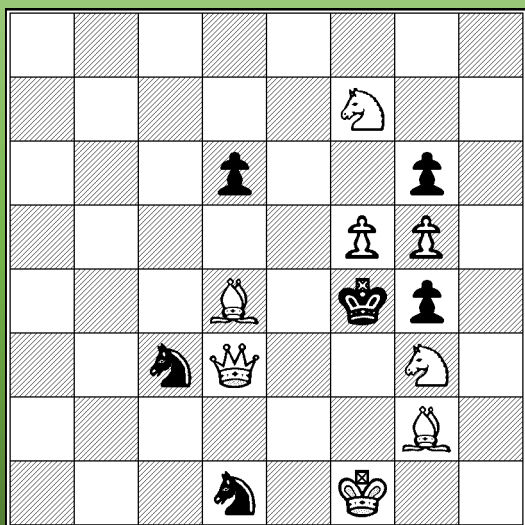
both more intensive and more aesthetically pleasing. However, I give this position second spot since it achieves three (!) thematic keys, the only problem in the tourney to do so – Bravo!

3rd Place – No.14 - Sergiienko Andrii
7th YCCC, 2023

#2

1.S3~? (>2.Rxh2) 1...Rf1 (self-block) 2.Qxh2, 1...Rh1 (self-block) 2.Rg3, 1...Sf3 2.Qxf3 and 1...Kh1+ 2.S4g3! This last mate is a stellar variation! White’s opening has granted a flight to the bK and opened the g line for a discovered check. White replies with a cross-check in which the stable mate of wSg3 reoccupies the square that its companion has vacated, a so called “replacement mate”. However, 1...h1Q! refutes. 1.Sf5!? arranges 1...h1Q 2.Sh4 but 1...exf5+! defeats. Finally the wS is guided to the corner spot: **1.Sh1!** with those four variations we have already seen. The refutation of the white correction try is necessarily crude but this is a beautifully economical setting composed in the style of the *Good Companions* a century ago!

4th Place – No.21 - Ilija Serafimović
7th YCCC, 2023

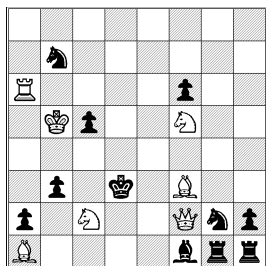


#2

And this problem might have been composed 150 years ago! (I trust this was not the case!) Set play: 1...d5 2.Be5, 1...gxf5 2.Sh5, 1...Sd~ 2.Qe3 and 1...Sc~ 2.Se2. Apparently White has only to wait but there is 1...Se4! 2.Se2? Kxf5! In order to avoid this submarine reef a sea change is required. **1.Sh1!** (-) 1...gxf5 (self-block) 2.Qg3, 1...Sd~ 2.Be3, 1...Sc~ 2.Qe4 – three good changes and an added 1...g3 2.Qf3. Such old-fashioned works remain evergreen; this work was a refreshing find! Udo Degener has provided a number of earlier problems in order to make comparisons with the current entries. I offer the diagram below for scrutiny

Stefan Parzuch

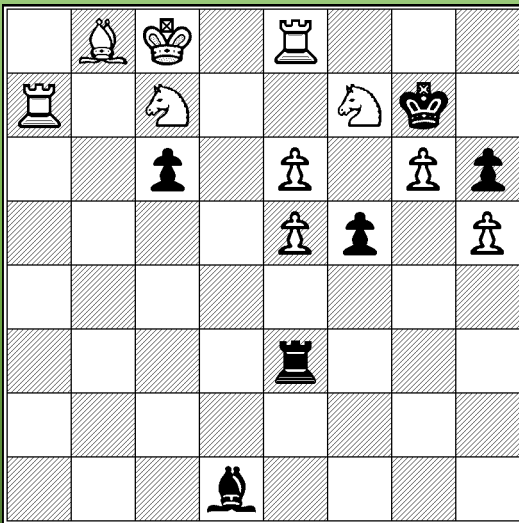
Polski Związek Szachowy 2015



#2

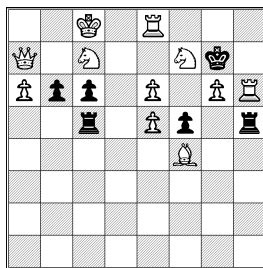
Set: 1...Sg~/c4/b2(bxc2) 2.Se1/Sb4/Ra3. **1.Sa3!** (-) 1...Sg~/c4/b2 2.Qe3/Qd4/Qc2 and 1...Sb~/Be2 2.Rd6/Qxe2. Here we find similar changes with the difference that *all* Black's defences are set with mate; such a work is known as a *mutate*. In **No.21** the subtle set defence 1...Sxe4! is not provided with mate and this makes the determination of key move a simpler matter. However, in every other respect **No.21** is a superior construction. It employs four fewer units, avoids the ugly south-east cluster, has fuller use of the wQ and has an added mate (not forgetting the desired key!)

5th Place – No.18 - Nikita Ushakov
7th YCCC, 2023



#2

1.Sa8? (>2.Sf~) 1...Rxe5 2.Bxe5, 1...Bxh5 2.Sh8, 1...Rd3 2.Sd6 but 1...Rb3! Ra3! 1.Sa6? Rb3! 1.Sb5? Ra3! 1.Sf~? (>2.Sc~) but 1...Bxh5! **1.Sh8!** 1...Rxe5 2.Sd5, 1...Rd3 2.Sd5, 1...Rb3 2.Sb5, 1...Ra3 2.Sa6. The author's conception is very fine; a R+S+S half-battery with two W1 moves to the corners. It is also composed in the modern idiom with tries becoming mates in the actual play. I must confess I found it very hard to place this problem for there is one serious defect; wBb8 is a "camouflage" unit having no role in the actual play. I thought the answer might be to remove bPh6 and reposition wBb8 on f4 thus giving this unit guard duty over h6. The strong set defence 1...Rxe5 giving a flight to the bK would then be met by 2.Bxe5. However, in the setting below I feel that something has been lost.

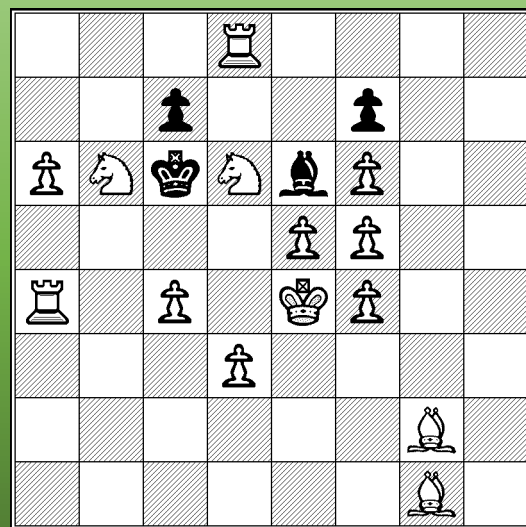


#2

1.Sa8? 1...Rxe5 2.Bxe5, 1...Rd5 2.Sd6, 1...Rxh6 2.Sh8 but 1...Rg5!
1.Sh8! 1...Rxe5 2.Sd5, 1...Rd5 2.Sxd5 and 1...Rg5 2.Rh7.

1.Sa8! (-) 1...Bd7/Bc8 2.Kd4, 1...Bxf5+ 2.Kxf5, 1...Bxd5+ 2.cxd5, 1...Bxc4 2.Rxc4 and 1...cxd6 2.Rxd6. The set captures of both wSs are very strong for they provide the bK with a bolt hole on c7. So it is logical to investigate two tries that provide a guard for that square: 1.Sb5? (>2.Sa7) 1...cxb6 2.Rd6 but 1...Bd5+! (2.cxd5? Kxb5! and 1.Sd5? (>2.Sb4/2.Se7) but 1...Bxf5+! (2.Kxf5? when the battery is blocked) This adds the extra dimension that this problem needs – a very clear presentation. Concerning **No.10**, Udo sent the diagram below; I will explain why.

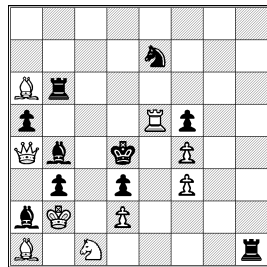
6th Place – No.10 - Mikhail Shalashov
7th YCCC, 2023



#2

Willy May

Pr *Dortmunder Zeitung* 1936 (v)



#2

1.Qxb3! (>2.Qxd3) when moves of bBb4 pin the wQ. 1...Bc5/Bd6 2.Kxa2, 1...Bc3+ 2.dxc3, 1...Ba3+2.Kxa3 and 1...Bxd2 2.Qxb6 (1...Bb1 2.Qc4, 1...Bxb3 2.Sxb3, 1...Sd5 2.Rxd5) When the main focus of a problem is the play of a particular black piece, it is good (where possible) for the key to unpin the initially immobile black unit. This is a tip for *future* composition; such strategy is clearly impossible with a “knight to the corner” key!

7th Place – No.8 – **Fedor Polovkov**
7th YCCC, 2023

#2

1.Sd5? (>2.Qc7/2.Sxe7) 1...Bd6 (self-block) 2.Qa8 but 1...Bd8! 1.Sc4? (>2.Qc8) 1...Bd8 2.Rc5, 1...bxc4 2.b5 but 1...Bd6! **1.Sa8!** (>2.Qc7) 1...Bd6 (self-block) 2.Qxb5 and 1...Bd8 2.Rc5. How I warm to this unpretentious problem! The emphasis throughout is on 1...Bd6 as a refutation and as a defence giving rise to a changed mate. This is achieved by 1.Sd5? cutting f5-b5 and the key move blocking a8. Simple elements brought together in a very light setting. {Another self-block occurs after 1.Kxe7? (2.Rf6/2.Rc5) cxb6 2.Qc8 but 1...Rxb4! (This transfer of 2.Qc8 from threat to variation mate is very worthwhile but 1.Kxe7? is too strong) Many keys in this award are of the “white safety play” variety; I enjoyed a key with such different effects!

8th Place – No.22 - **Idan David**
7th YCCC, 2023

#2

1.Sge7? (>2.Bf7) but 1...Sxh6! 1.Se5? (>2.Bf7) but 1...Be8! **1.Sh8!** (>2.Bf7) 1...Sxh6 2.Re7, 1...Be8 2.Re4 and 1...Rgx7+ 2.Sxg7. Again we see the now familiar safety play with the key wS avoiding error. The relatively high position in the award should be understood in terms of the difficulties, successfully overcome, that this matrix has presented. The potential for the key S to mate on f8 and f4 should not be underestimated. A small saving could be made:

#2

1.Sh8! Qxf5+ 2.gxf5. After 1...Be8 2.Rxe4# wPg4 holds f5 whereas after 1...Qxf5+ 2.gxf5# wRf4 holds f5. This trivial addition ensures that wPg4 and wRf4 both share guarding and mating functions; a welcome feature.

9th Place – No.2 - **Artem Rybalka**
7th YCCC, 2023

#2

1.Sa1! (>2.Qd1) The key takes a diagonal flight but grants two orthogonal flights. Black defends against the threats by unpinning bRd3. 1...Ka1 2.Sxd3 and 1...Kc1 2.Qc2. A simple idea well presented in near Meredith (a position using 8-12 units) The wK is used well to prevent the cook 1.Sd2+. The essential bPa2 and bBa6 have a variety of functions including the defeat of tries: 1.Qxa6? a1S! and 1.Rc8? Bc4!

10th Place – No.20 - Itay Richardson
 7th YCCC, 2023

#2

1.S6~? (>2.Rxe6) but 1...Bf6! **1.Sh8!** 1...Bf6 2.Sf7, 1....Rf6 2.e5, 1...Ke5 2.Bc7 (1...Bxh6 2.e5) Another near Meredith in which the wS is directed to the corner square by simple means when Grimshaw interferences ensue. Light settings with flight-giving such as this always please but a true Meredith is possible:

#2 1.Sh8!

Once again, Udo has sent a diagram with the same matrix:

Gustav Adolf Ekestubbe
Tidskrift för Schack 1959

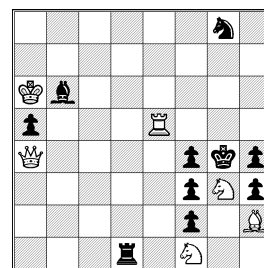
#2

1.Se5! (>2.Qd3) 1...Bf4 2.Sf5, 1...Rf4 2.Qd2 (1...Ke3 2.Bc5, 1...Rf3 2.Rxe4 and 1...Qe3 2.Sc6) With the stipulated key, the author was unable to develop the idea in this way – this is *not* an anticipation! I show it to demonstrate how the thematic Grimshaw defences now have more strategic interest; unpinning bPe4 in this instance.

11th Place – No.19 - Anirudh Daga
7th YCCC, 2023

#2

1.Sxh5?/1.Se2? (>2.Qxf4) but 1...Rd4! **1.Sh1!**
1...Rd4 2.Sxf2, 1...Bd4 2.Qd7 and 1...Be3 2.Sxe3.
Another Grimshaw unfolds! 1.Se4!? (>2.Rg5)
corrects the threat but 1...Rd5! wPf6 is mildly
irritating for white pawns used in this way restrict
the mobility of the pieces. I would prefer:



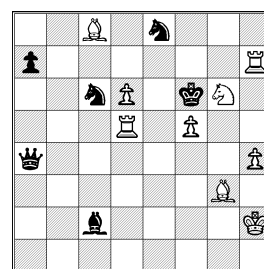
#2

1.Se4!? Be7 2.Sxf2.

12th Place – No.4 - Erik Ammer
7th YCCC, 2023

#2

1.Se7? (>2.Sg8) 1...Qa8 2.Bxe5, 1...g4 2.Bh4 but
1...dxe4! (2.Sg8? Kxf5!) 1.Sxe5? (>2.Rf7) 1...Qxe5+
2.Bxe5, 1...Be8 2.Sxd5 but 1...Qa7! **1.Sh8!** (>2.Rf7)
1...Qa7 2.Bxe5, 1...Be8 2.Sxd5 and 1...g4 2.Bh4. A
pleasant setting with clear options for wSg6.
However, the remote wSb4 worried me and I
wondered if some potential might have been
missed.



#2

1.Se5? (>2.Sd7/2.Rf7) 1...Qxh4+ 2.Bxh4, 1...Sxe5 2.Bxe5, 1...Sg7 2.Rh6 but 1...Sd8! 1.Sf8? (2.Sd7
only) 1...Bxf5 2.Rxf5 but 1...Sg7! **1.Sh8!** (>2.Rf7 only) 1...Qxh4+ 2.Bxh4, 1...Se5/Sd8 2.B(x)e5, 1...Sg7
2.Rh6 and 1...Sxd6 2.Rxd6. The threat pattern of tries and key defines the Barnes theme.

13th Place – No.16 - Dylan Schenker
 7th YCCC, 2023

#2

Evidently wSc2 must move to initiate a threat of 2.Ra2. However, the bent line b1-g1-a7 must remain open to retain an answer to 1...Rg1+; an extremely efficient way of determining the key! **1.Sa1!** 1...Rg1+ 2.Qxg1 and 1...Rg2/Rg5 etc 2.Sc8 - the bR focuses c8 and g1. It is clear that White cannot create a *Zugzwang* so I think it best to omit wPe7. We have a truly beautiful work with the force spread around the edges of the board operating at long distance. In such an apparently piece perfect position an unnecessary wP is an unfortunate blemish. This delightfully open setting is most meritorious but it is a little less ambitious than some other entries.

The next three problems in the award are all *star-flight* problems..

14th Place – No.23 - Mihnea Costachi
 7th YCCC, 2023

#2

The bK has two flights; f6 and h6. If 1...Kf6 2.Be5? Kf5! and so 1.Rh5? (-) is logical but 1...a5+! defeats. 1.Bf2?/1.Be1? Kf6 2.Bd4/Bc3 does not cater for 1...Kh6! The double flight-giving key is excellent: **1.Sh8!** (-) wSg6 has also ceded control of e7 so 1...Kf6 2.Bh4. Also 1...Kxf8 2.Bd6, 1...Kxh8 2.Be5 and 1...Kh6 2.Bf4. The solution indicates why 1.Sh4? Kf6! and 1.Se7? Kxf8! are insufficient. This was the best of these three related problems; one deserving of a higher place. However, it transpires that wSf8 is unnecessary as the setting below proves:

P.Hoy
Die Schwalbe 1940

#2

1.Rh5? Kf6 2.Be5 (threat) is maintained but 1...Kxg6! defeats. Here there is a different try by wBg3; 1.Bf4? Kh7 2.Ra7 but 1...Kf6! defeats. **1.Sf8!** (-) with identical play. The key is less satisfactory being of the “give and take” variety but the improved economy is astonishing. In view of this I have slightly lowered the position of **No.23** in the award.

15th place – No.1 - Wojtek Sutryk
7th YCCC, 2023

#2

The composer has arranged genuine tries with unique refutations. 1.Sxc4? Kd7 2.Se5 but 1...Kd5! (2.Sb4? Kxc4!) 1.Sd5? Kb7! (2.Be4?) 1.Sc8? Kd7! (2.Be8? Kxc8!) **1.Sc8!** (-) 1...Kd7 2.Sb8, 1...Kd5 2.Sb4, 1...Kb7 2.Be4 and 1...Kb5 2.Be8. Two bright features here were the changed mate after 1...Kd7 and the manner in which the refutations were engineered.

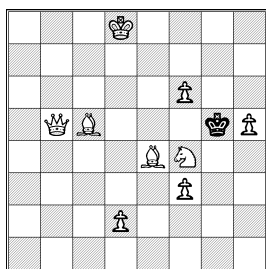
16th Place – No.7 - Łukasz Brzyski
7th YCCC, 2023

#2

Again the *star-flight* theme with the identical key to the preceding diagram; two diagonal flights are given and one orthogonal flight taken. The author lists tries by wSg3 with repeated and double refutations. This is a near miniature (a problem with 7 units or less) and is a most attractive aristocratic setting with bK solus. **1.Sh1!** (-) 1...Kh3 2.Bf1, 1...Kxf3 2.Bd5, 1...Kh5 2.Bf7 and 1...Kf5 2.Bd3. The composer should *not* be disappointed by this placement; it reflects that the fact that it is difficult to discover real originality in a well-worked field. As an example of this Udo sent the twin below:

Jean Morice

1 Pr *Thèmes 64* 1978



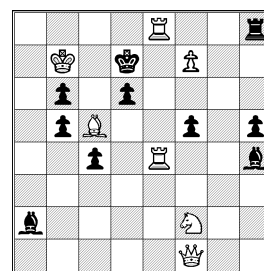
#2 (b) wPd2 to h2

- (a) **1.Ke8!** (-) 1...Kxf4/Kxf6/Kh4/Kh6 2.Bd6/Bd4/Bf2/Bf8 – the same four wB mates as **No.7**.
- (b) **1.Qd7!** (-) 1...Kxf4/Kxf6/Kh4/Kh6 2.Qf5/Qe7/Qg4/Qg7 – and now we have four wQ mates! By such means the composer tries to introduce novelty into the star-flight theme.

17th Place – No.9 - **Toshimasa Fujiwara**
7th YCCC, 2023

#2

1.Sg4/Sh3? (>2.Qxf5) but 1...f4! 1.Sd1? (>2.Qxf5) but 1...dxc5! **1.Sh1!** and now 1...f4 2.Qh3, 1...dxc5 2.Qd1, 1...c3 2.Qb5, 1...Bf2 2.R3e7, 1...Rh6 2.f8S and 1...Rxe8+ 2.fxe8Q. wSf2 interferes with the wQ and her majesty mates along three lines. The idea is good and the diagram might have been placed higher had the construction been tidier:



#2 (play as before)

18th Place – No.13 - Alexandru Mihalcescu
 7th YCCC, 2023

#2

The bK has two flights – how do we bring the wQ into action? The “give and take” key **1.Sh1!** threatens 2.Qc1. 1...Kxh1 2.Be4 (2.Qc1? Bg1! – the bK has unpinned bBd4) 1...Kf1 2.Bd3 and 1...Be3 2.Rd1. This final variation is interesting. Consider 1.Qd2? taking the f2 flight and threatening 2.Qe1. 1...Bc3! defeats since 2.Rd1?? is illegal! This interference by the wQ on the wR adds a little spice. Originally I had placed this diagram higher in the award but the predecessor below has come to light.

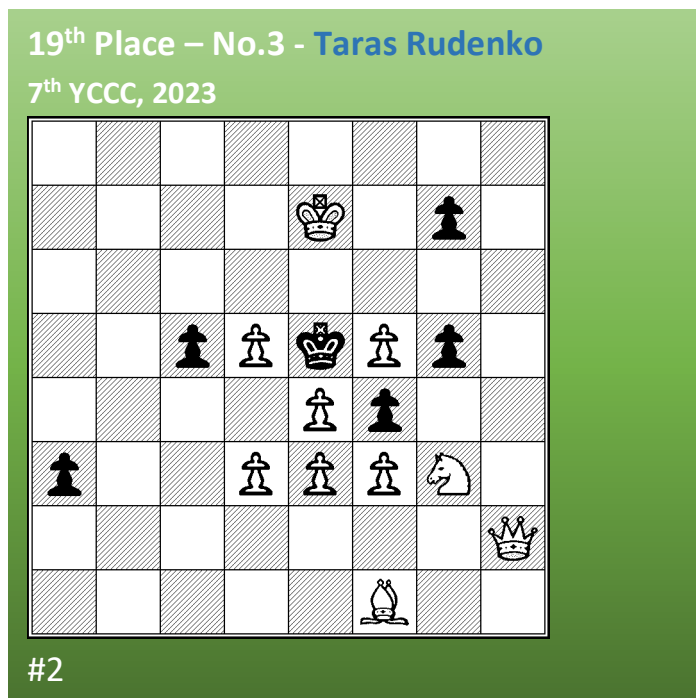
Gustav Markus
Arbeiter Zeitung 1922

#2

1.Qg7! (-) 1...Kf1 2.Bd3, 1...Kh1 2.Be4, 1...Rxa1 2.Qxa1, 1...Rc1 2.Rxc1, 1...Rd1 2.Rxd1, 1...Re1 2.Rxe1 and 1...Rf1 2.Be4. (1.Qe5? 1...Kh1/Rf1 2.Qh2 but 1...Kf1!) Why does this matter? Above all Markus valued *economy*. He might easily have arranged a “knight to the corner” key, granting the two thematic flights, by adding two extra pawns:

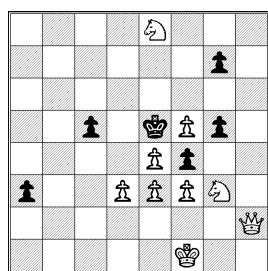
#2

Set 1...Rf1 2.Rxf1. **1.Sh1!** (-) This is indeed an anticipation; I have no doubt that Markus had this position on his board but he desired a Meredith setting. With considerable reluctance I have demoted **No.13** a little.



Set play: 1...fxg3 2.Qxg3 and 1...fxe3 2.Se2. Both these mates involve wSg3 and this is a truly excellent feature because it draws attention away from the key. (OK, we know the key from the stipulation for this tourney but the observation is still valid.) Black's remaining defences except 1...g4 are provided so wSg3 *must* nonetheless move. 1.Sh5? (-) but 1...g6! 1.Se2? (-) but 1...a2! **1.Sh1!** (-) 1...g4 2.Qxf4, 1...g6 2.Qh8, 1...a2 2.Qb2 and 1...c4 2.d4. The interferences by the wS on the long lines of the wQ are not original but they work well in this context and the unity provided with bP defences throughout is commendable. I am confident that this position is partially anticipated but

I am equally confident that this is entirely the composer's own work! How else can wBf1 be explained? With further study the conventions of our art will become clear; one of these is that we try to avoid using a white piece for the sole purpose of blocking a square. The wK is better suited to this role because he *must* be on the board. (Consider wKf1 in **No.21**) For that reason I prefer the position below.



#2

The e6 square is guarded once rather than thrice; economy of means is important. The composer should *not* be disappointed with this placement – his work shows genuine talent!

20th Place – No.6 - Ural Khasanov
 7th YCCC, 2023

#2

1.Sh1? (>2.Sg3) 1...Rxf5 2.Qxf5, 1...Qe1 etc
 2.Qf3 but 1...Qg4! **1.Sh8!** (>2.Bg6) 1...Rxf5
 2.Rxf5 and 1...Qg4/Qd6 2.B(x)g4. I
 thoroughly commend the composer for
 attempting to demonstrate both “wS to the
 corner” try and key with the emphasis on
 the control of g4 and g6. I like the fact that
 both wQ and wR take turns in mating after
 the capture of wBf5. However, this has been
 achieved at a cost and so I will try to explain
 some generally agreed composing criteria.
 In the try wRf8 and wSf7 are spectators.
 Equally after the key the only function of
 the wQ is to prevent 1...Qg1! from defeating
 the intention. The most powerful piece on
 the board should have a more positive role.

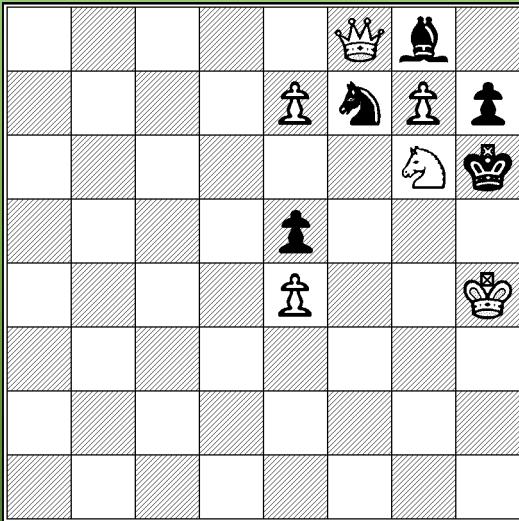
These things matter because the impression given is that there are two distinct problems on the board. Ideally they should be integrated by ensuring that as far as possible all the powerful forces should be working in both try and key. Once these conventions are accepted the skill in weaving together the different phases *will* develop. Practice will make perfect!

21st Place – No.12 – Ivan Belonozshko
 7th YCCC, 2023

#2

1.Sh8! (>2.d8Q) 1...Kxh8/Kf8 2.d8Q. The key
 takes the f7 flight but two flights are given.
 Unfortunately the bK flights do not defeat the
 threat. The key suggests that 1.Se5 is
 potentially a second solution (or cook) but why
 has wPe5 been preferred over bPf6? 1.e6?
 (>2.d8Q) – stalemate! I enjoyed the joke!
 Humour is welcome and so is economy. An
 entry with a mere 5 units was not even on my
 horizon!

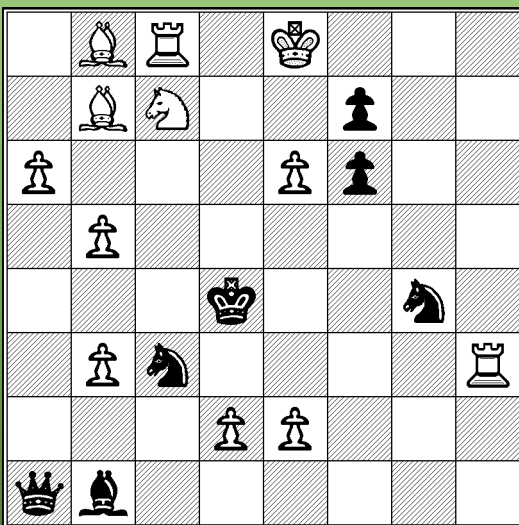
22nd Place – No.15 - **Gautam R. Jain**
7th YCCC, 2023



#2

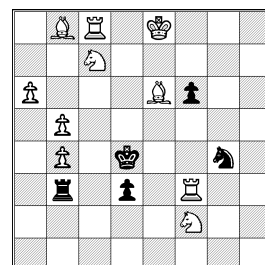
1.Sh8! (-) 1...S~ 2.Qf6 and 1...Sxh8 2.gxh8S. The composer demonstrates a cute idea. The key sacrifices the wS which is captured but then re-born! This is the Phoenix theme. The key takes a flight away from the bK and 1...hxg6 is a strong set defence gaining the h7 flight for the bK. Such features tend to make life easy for the solver and with experience of our conventions the composer will learn to avoid such key indicators.

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#2

1.Sa8! (2.Rc4) 1...Se5 2.Ba7, 1...Se3 2.dxe3, 1...Bd3 2.Rxd3 and 1...Qa4 2.dxc3. It is good that the composer has managed to generate four defences to the threat. The best variation is 1...Se5 2.Ba7 - a self-block. It is a sensible idea to develop defences with the same weakness. Using the identical matrix it is possible to create two more self-blocks:



#2

1.Sa8! Se5 2.Ba7 and 1...Se3 2.Rf4, 1...Rc3 2.Rd8 and 1...Rxb4 2.Rxd3.

As the composer gains more experience, keys will suggest themselves that do not take away flights from the bK. Remember, you are setting a *problem*. A key that obviously strengthens White's position will be clear to the solver.

I thank all our young composers for their contributions – I have enjoyed studying them! The leading entries are extremely fine and many more lowly placed problems show distinct promise. I particularly thank the newcomers, absolute novices I suspect, for their participation. I hope the struggle to bring your ideas to life (and reading this report) will be useful experience. Onward and upward – I hope to see your continuing development in the 2024 YCCC! On behalf of all the competitors I thank your mentor, Paz Einat, and also Udo Degener for his diligent search of the database. Finally a special thanks to Julia Vysotska and Marjan Kovačević for promoting this important enterprise once again.

David Shire, Canterbury, August 2023