

Award of the 7th YCCC, Section B: Studies

In section B (studies) of the 7th YCCC the thematic condition was as follows:

Middlegame study: We ask for studies with themes known from the middlegame. Please follow these requirements: A. Besides the king, in the starting position each side must have queen and a minimum of 2 other pieces (rook, bishop or knight), also at least 1 pawn. B. In the starting position, the white king must be positioned on a1, a2, b1, b2, c1, c2, f1, f2, g1, g2, h1 or h2. Likewise, in the starting position, the black king must be positioned on a8, a7, b8, b7, c8, c7, f8, f7, g8, g7, h8 or h7.

The judge will put emphasis on:

- *A natural (game-like) starting position*
- *The presence of tactics and maneuvers typical of the middlegame such as sacrifices, attack on the king(s) and winning material.*
- *All or most pieces moving during the solution*

To me the middlegame study will be a major battleground of future studies, as new ideas with few pieces are becoming increasingly difficult to develop (but not impossible).

I realize the theme I chose for this version of the YCCC is also very difficult, since creating interesting, unique winning lines with 10 or 15 pieces is much more difficult than doing the same in simpler positions. Especially if you want to make every piece to take part in the action.

Also in some cases it is very difficult to determine if sidelines are cooks. These difficulties are in fact evident in more than half of the submitted studies.

On the other hand, in middlegame studies the sky is very much the limit and with good and ambitious ideas it is possible to create real art with a substantial appeal to regular chess players who love to solve positions who resemble a real game but still reveals something unique.

I received 11 studies in anonymous form from Julia Vysotska.

Study no 2, with interesting play, is almost surely cooked by 2. c7 Bf8 3. Rd1 Rd6 4. Rxd6 Bxd6 5. Bh6 Bxc7 6. Qc6 Qd8 7. Kc2 g5 8. Bxg5 Qxg5 9. Qxc7 Qe3 10. Qb8+ Kg7 11. Qxe5+ Kf8 12. Qd6+ Kg7 13. c5 bxc5 14. bxc5. This is a typical example of the difficulty of middlegame studies. Even if the study proved to be correct this (and other difficult sidelines) would be really harmful to my overall evaluation. Therefore I've decided to keep the study out of the award, hoping the composer will find an improvement and publish it elsewhere.

Before I go on to the placed studies, I would like to thank every single composer for having tried to tackle a difficult theme.

The notation is by the composers, at times in a slightly edited form.

Study no 1 - Ural Khasanov**1st place****7th YCCC, 2023**

1.Bh6 [A great technical performance showing the exact same trick by both White and Black. Amusingly, I have been playing unsuccessfully with this idea as well in the past. Making both tricks work is one thing, but here the action continues beautifully and pointedly all the way end with the surprising knight route via g4. Well done!]

1...Nf6 [1...Kxh6 2.Qh8#]

2.Qxf6 Bh3 3.Qe7+ [3.Kxh3 Qh1+ 4.Kg4 Qh5#]

3...Qxe7 4.dxe7 Bd7 5.Nc5 e2 [5...Be8 6.Bg5 e2 7.Nd3+–]

6.Nxd7 e1Q 7.e8Q [7.Nf6+ Kxh6 8.e8Q Qf2+ 9.Kh3 Qf1+ 10.Kg4 Qd1+=]

7...Qxe8 8.Nf6+ Kxh6 9.Nxe8 a4 10.Nf6 a3 11.Ng4+ Kg7 [11...Kh5 12.Ne3]

12.Ne3 a2 13.Nc2+– 1–0

Study no 5 - Sergiienko Andrii**2nd place****7th YCCC, 2023**

[While the first place study stood out for me, I had great difficulty choosing between the second and third places, which in turn were well ahead of 4th place. For second place, I decided on a good focused study with a clear idea. The starting position is very natural, though the position of the Black queen is somewhat weird (but these things happen in games). I miss some counterplay against White's king (the Rook-b7 plays no role).]

1.f6+ [1..Rc5? Rb5]

1...Nxf6 [1...Kxf6 2.Qg3 gxh5 3.Qe5+ Kg6 4.Ke2+–]

2.d5 Qg8 [2...Qh8 3.Bxf6+! (3.Qd4 Kh7) 3...Kxf6 4.Qd4+]

3.Qd4 [3.Bxf6+ Kh7 4.Bb2 gxh5 5.Qf2 f6=; 3.Qf2 Qd8 4.d6 Rb8 5.Re1 Kg8 6.Bxf6 Qa5=]

3...Qd8 4.Rc8 Qe7 [4...Qb6 5.Qe5 Qb5+ 6.Kf2 (6.Kg1) 6...Rb6 7.Qe8 gxh5 8.Qg8#]

5.Re8 Qd6 6.Re6 dxe6 7.Qxf6+ Kf8 8.Qh8+ Ke7 9.Bf6+ Kd7 10.Qd8# 1–0

Study no 4 - Ben Smolkin3rd place7th YCCC, 2023

[2. Nh8!! is surely the move of the tournament and it is especially great that the knight afterwards jumps back into play preparing for a queen sacrifice. A good technical performance (notice how 2... Ng5 is bad due to 2... hxc5 with check, so the White king is used a little too) sparking a bit of excitement as well. 4. Qd4 almost wins. The composer was given the benefit of the doubt about this line but essentially I have no way of knowing if future engine progress will prove the study unsound.]

1.Qf2 Kg8 2.Nh8! [2.Bxc7? Rxc7 3.Nxc6+ Kh7 4.Nf5 Rg4 5.Qe2 Qb4=]

2...Nd8 [2...Bxh8 3.Qf8#; 2...Kxh8 3.Qf8#; 2...Rxc7 3.Qf7+]

3.Ng6 Qb4 4.Qb6! [4.Qd4 Rf3 5.Qxd5+ Rf7 6.Qxd8+ Bf8 7.Qd5 Qb7 8.Qc4 Rhg7 9.Bxc7 Bxc7=]

4...Rh3+ [4...Qxb6 5.Ne7+ Kh8 6.Rf8#]

5.gxh3 Qe4+ 6.Kg1 Bxe5 7.Ne7+ Rxe7 [7...Kg7 8.Nf5+]

8.Qxd8+ Kh7 9.Qxe7+ 1-0

Study no 8 - Nikita Ushakov4th place7th YCCC, 2023

[This looks like something that might well have been inspired by a concrete game. Technically the composer did very well in making the first couple of moves unique, interesting and without captures. The final point of the study is of course well known from many games, so the main quality lies in the natural flow of the moves leading up to it. 4... Qxe7 5. Bxe7 Nac7 6. Qf3+ is most likely a win, but very difficult to evaluate. I again give the composer the benefit of the doubt.]

1.Nd5 [1.Nc6? Rxc6 2.Nd5 Nc8+ (2...Rfc8)]

1...Rfe8 2.Nc6 [2.Ne7+ Kf8= (2...Rxe7 3.Bxe7 Nb4=)]

2...Rxc6 3.Rxe8+ [3.Re7? Rxe7 4.Nxe7+ Kf8 5.Nxc6 Qb7 6.Be7+ Kg8= and without the knight on e8 it is a draw.]

3...Nxe8 4.Ne7+ Kf8 [4...Qxe7 5.Bxe7 Nac7 6.Qf3+]

5.Nxc6 Qb7 6.Be7+ Kg8 7.Qxf7+ Kxf7 8.Ba2+ 1-0

Study no 11 - Ilija Serafimović5th place7th YCCC, 2023

[The capture on the first move is unfortunate. 1. Bh4! without capture would be an substantial improvement, but 1. Bc3 would be a likely cook in that case. Maybe there is some way to improve on this?7. Kb1 Qxc6 8. Ke2 is probably only a draw but difficult to evaluate. All in all, the play is good, but without any major surprises. The composer deserves praise for bringing both kings into play.]

1.Bxh4 Qxh4 [1...Ne3 2.Bxf6 Nxc4 3.bxc4 Rf8 4.Nd8+ Kc8 5.Bh4+–]

2.c6+ Ka7 3.Qa4+ Kb8 4.Qa6 Re1+ 5.Ka2 Ra1+ 6.Kxa1 Qf6+ 7.Ne5 [7.Kb1 Qxc6 8.Qe2=]

7...Qxe5+ 8.Kb1 [8.Ka2 Qa5++–]

8...Qe1+ 9.Kb2 Qe5+ 10.c3 1–0

Study no 9 - Anirudh Daga6th place7th YCCC, 2023

[A fascinating, natural starting position and the excitement is confirmed by the first moves. Still, I believe this study suffers from a lack of focus. The composer should have found one move/tactic/trick that was interesting and built the study around it, for instance 2. Re8 Qxe8 3. Qf6, which is now hidden away in a sideline. Or 5. Qa1 Qxg2! The last part of the study seems a bit random and is not as interesting as the first. It is more about precision in the execution. The minor dual with 5. Qe1 is not so important, I think.]

1.Bh6 [1.Rg4 Qc6]

1...Qc6 2.Bxg7 [2.Re8? Nc4! (2...Qxe8 3.Qf6!!)]

2...Kxg7 3.Re6 fxe6 4.Rg4+ Kh6 5.Qe2 [or 5.Qe1; 5.Qa1? Qxg2+!–+]

5...Bc1 6.Qe5 Qd7 7.Rh4+ [7.Bxe6 Qe7 8.Rh4+ Qxh4]

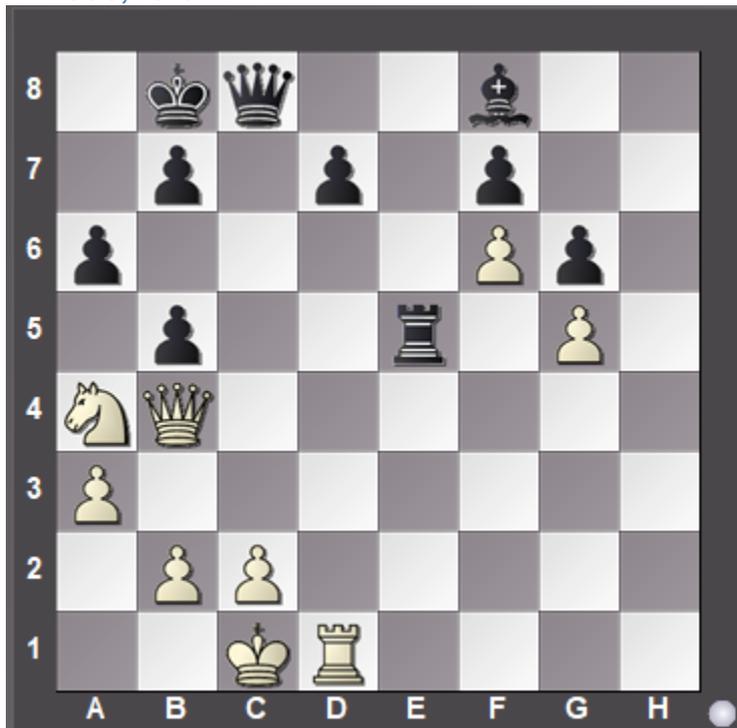
7...Kg6 8.Bxe6 Qd2 [8...h6 9.Qe4+ Kg7 10.Bxd7]

9.Qe4+ Kf6 10.Rxh7 [10.Rf4+ Qxf4] **10...Qg5 11.Bg4 Qe5 12.Qc6+ Qd6 13.Qc3+ Qe5 14.Qxc1+– 1–0**

Study no 7 - Denisa Andreea Bucur

7th place

7th YCCC, 2023



[The Bishop-f8 will be doomed after a flourish of tactical moves. An easy understandable study. On the downside, the bishop on f8 is already in its prison in the starting position. Forcing it to go there somehow (1. f6 Bf8), would have substantially improved the study.]

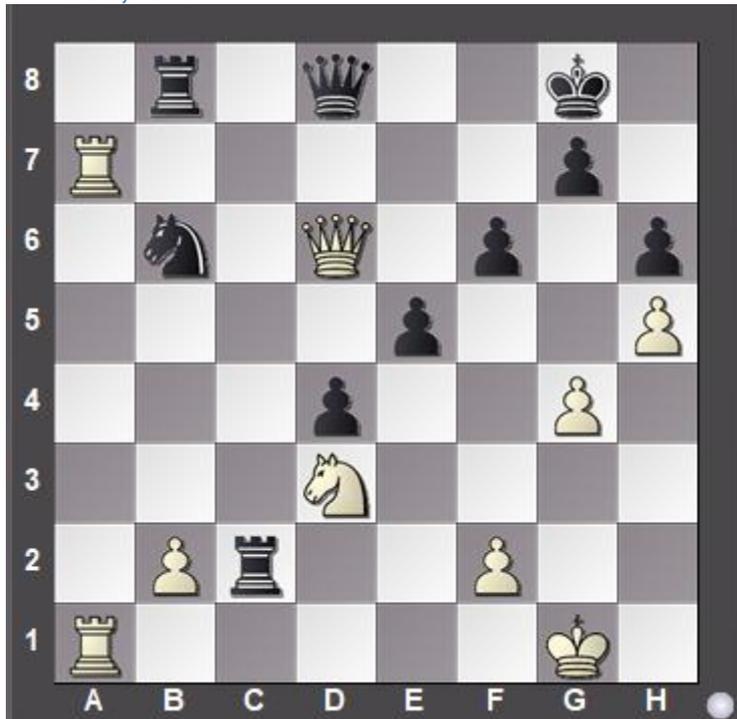
1.Qf4 d6 [1...Qc7 2.Nb6]

**2.Nb6 Rf5 3.Nxc8 Rxf4 4.Nb6 Rh4
5.Nd7+ Kc7 6.Nxf8 Rh8 7.Nxg6+ 1-0**

Study no 3 - Costachi Mihnea

8th place

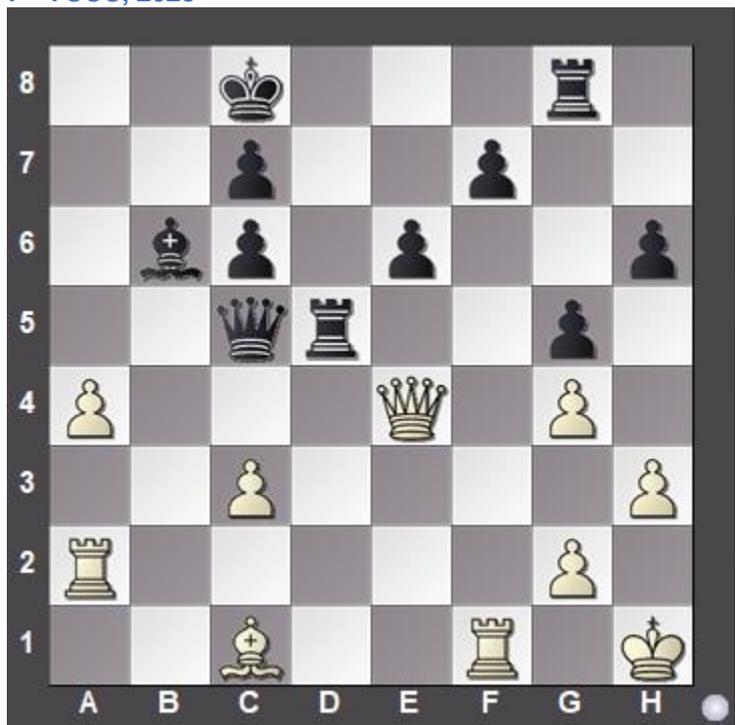
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[A perfectly natural position. White needs to play the attacking moves in a specific order. Making this order unique shows good composing skills. On the other hand, the study is essentially one long combination and Black is left without counterplay (the White king plays no role).]

**1.Qe6+ Kh8 2.Nxe5 fxe5 3.Rxg7 Kxg7
4.Ra7+ Rc7 5.Qxe5+ Kf7 6.Rxc7+ Nd7
7.Qd6 Ke8 8.Rxd7 Qxd7 9.Qxb8+ 1-0**

Study no 10 - Danila Pavlov

9th place7th YCCC, 2023

[Again a good game position, but apart from 7. Be3 there are not really any surprise elements. This looks like most of all like a solid attacking performance.]

1.a5 Ba7 [1...Bxa5 2.Qe2 Qxc3 3.Qa6+ Kd7 4.Rxf7+- (4.Ba3+-)]

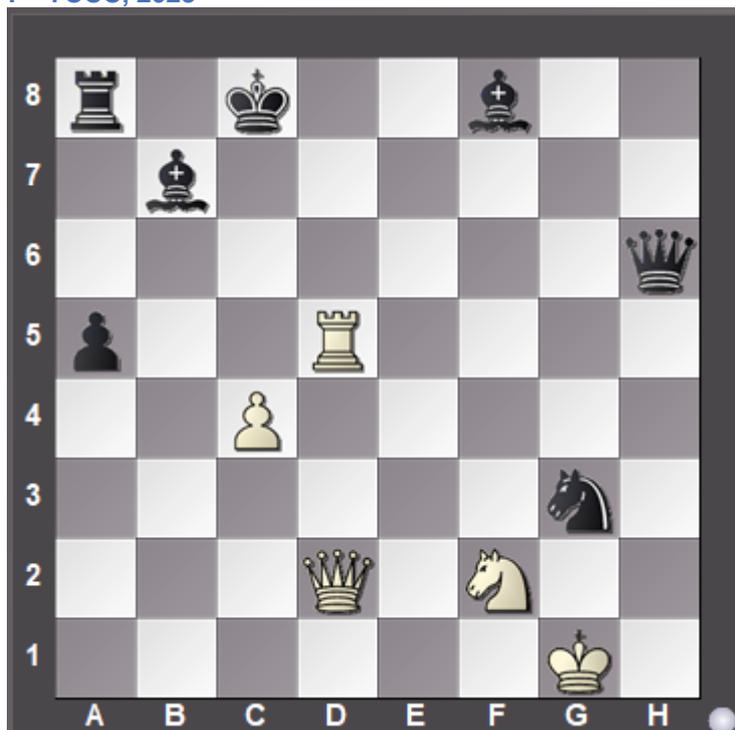
2.Qe2 Qxc3 3.Qa6+ Kb8 4.Rb2+ Rb5 5.Rxb5+ cxb5 6.Qxb5+ Ka8 [6...Kc8 7.Qa6+ Kb8 8.Be3 Qxe3 9.Rb1+-]

7.Be3 Qxe3 8.Qc6+ [8.Rb1 Qe4]

8...Kb8 9.Rb1+ Kc8 [9...Bb6 10.a6 (10.axb6)]

10.Qa8+ Kd7 11.Qxg8 [11.Rd1+-] **1-0**

Study no 6 - Dylan Schenker

10th place7th YCCC, 2023

[Precise play to force a simplification. The only really surprising move is 1. Rc5+! I wonder if 4. Qd3 is a draw as well? It is not easy to reach a conclusion, but I give the composer the benefit of the doubt.]

1.Rc5+! Qc6 [1...Bxc5 2.Qd8+ Kxd8; 1...Bc6 2.Qxh6 Bxh6 3.Rxc6+ Kb7 4.Rxh6=]

2.Rxc6+ Bxc6 3.Qg5 [3.Qd3? a4 4.Qxg3 a3 5.Qg6 Bd7+- (?)]

3...Bd6 4.Qg6 Kc7 5.c5 Bxc5 6.Qxg3+ Kb6 7.Qb3+- ½-½

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