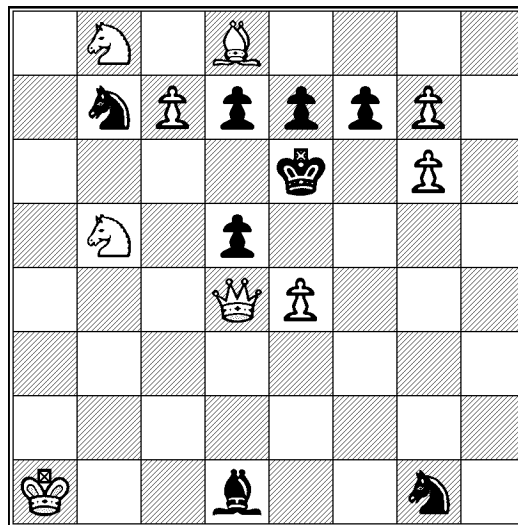


9th YCCC – Section A – #2 Award

The stipulation for this tourney required that there be a wP on the 7th rank in the diagram position. In one phase of play (try or solution) the thematic wP guards bK flight(s) on the 8th rank. In a second phase (try or solution) the same wP promotes to a wS on the 1st move or on the mating move. The content could be extended to cover promotion to wQ. It was further stated that the use of *two* thematic pawns would seriously test the skill of participants. In the award that follows I hope to reward such ambition! In all I received 16 entries.

1st Place (A3) Ural Khasanov



#2

1.c8Q? (>2.Qxd7) 1...fxg6 2.g8Q but 1...Sc5!

1.c8S? (>2.Sc7) 1...fxg6 2.g8Q but 1...dxe4!

1.g8Q? (>2.Qxf7) 1...Sxd8 2.cxd8S! but 1...Sd6!

1.g8S? (>2.Qxd5) 1...dxe4 2.Qxe4 but 1...Bb3!

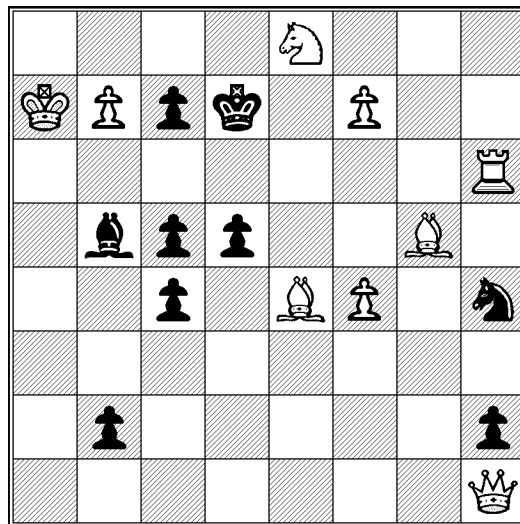
1.Bxe7! (>2.Qf6) 1...Kxe7 2.Qe5 (the thematic pawns hold d8/f8) and 1...dxe4 2.Qxe4)

(Also 1.Sc6? (>2.Qe5) 1...d~ 2.c8Q, 1...fxg6 2.g8Q but 1...Sf3!. The only blemish in this grandiose problem is the unavoidable dual, 1.Sc6? f6 2.g8Q/Qxd5.)

I heartily congratulate the composer on this undertaking; the scale of ambition is breathtaking! The 5 different promotions and 5 unique refutations are testament to this. With the bK in this relationship to the wPs, the essential symmetry of the

diagram can readily be transferred to an undesirable symmetry of play. In this context the two S promotion tries were a delight. The only function of the wBd8 is to make the key. However, this has a flight-giving nature and provides the problem with a suitable climax.

2nd Place (A7) Joachim Hambros



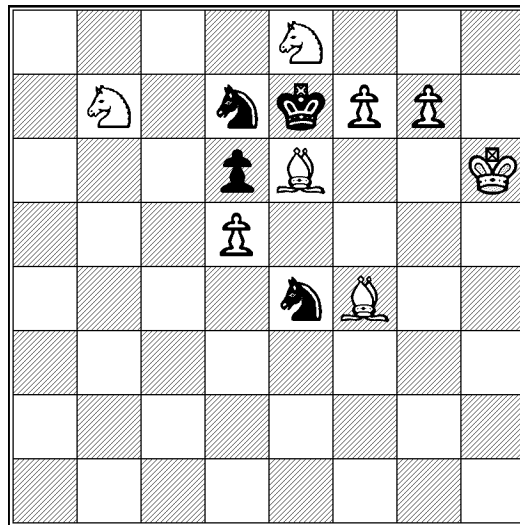
#2

Set play: 1...dxe4 2.Qd1.

1.Be~? (>2.Qxd5) 1...c6 2.Rd6, 1...Sf3/Sg2/Sf5 2.Bf5 but 1...Bc6!

1.Bg6! (>2.Qxd5) 1...Bc6 2.f8S (wBg6 holds e8!) 1...Ke6 2.f8S, 1...c6 2.f8S (change) 1...Kc6 2.b8S and 1...Sf3/Sg2/Sf5 2.Bf5.

A *random* move by wBe4 along the diagonal b1-h7 is refuted by 1...Bc6! The *particular* move to g6 grants two(!) flights and prepares 1...Bc6 2.f8S. This strategy is known as *White Correction* and I certainly was not anticipating such an example in this tourney! The mate 1.Be~? c6 2.Rd6 is extremely valuable; the solver surely will not suspect a key shutting off wRh6. The thematic wPs and the bK are at the same aspect as in the first placed problem – I really enjoyed seeing the imagination of the participants at work in producing such radically different effects from the same starting point.

3rd Place (A2) Ben Smolkin

#2

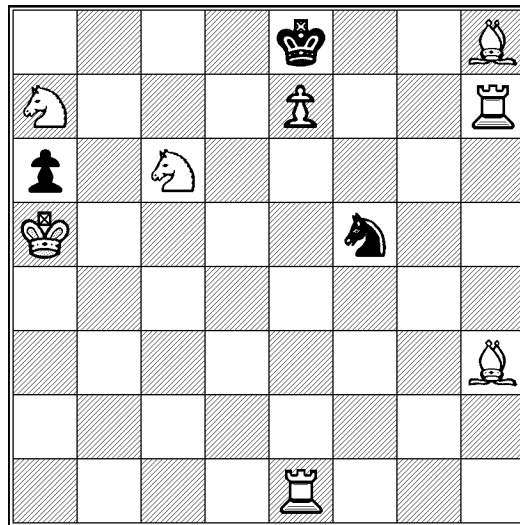
A2 is a Meredith, a position using 8-12 units. Such problems may not carry the complexity of heavier works, but this one has a perfect aesthetic. The diagram is a *block* – every black move is set with mate.

1...Sd~ 2.f8Q, 1...Sf8!? 2.g8S and 1...Se~ 2.Bxd6.

White can try to hold the block with “neutral” moves – 1.Bh2? (-) Sg3! is unsuccessful and moves of the wK are met by checking moves of the bSs. Furthermore, 1.g8Q? (-) is refuted by 1...Sf8! (2.g8S??); a sequence that encapsulates our theme. White must resort to forcing strategy...

1.Sf6! (>2.Sg8) 1...Kxf6 2.g8S, 1...Sexf6 2.Bxd6 and 1...Sdxf6 2.f8Q. Note how wBf4 guards e5 after the bK takes his flight. This type of problem is known as a *block-threat* and successful examples are rare. Many go through contortions of construction in order to eliminate white moves that simply maintain the block. The finesse and economy of this rendering are rare indeed – and a welcome unity arises from the repeated use of the g8 square.

A famous composer of two-movers once wrote that a successful #2 *requires* a good opening. It was no surprise when I realised that my top three selections all had flight-giving keys.

4th Place (A4) Dylan Schenker

#2

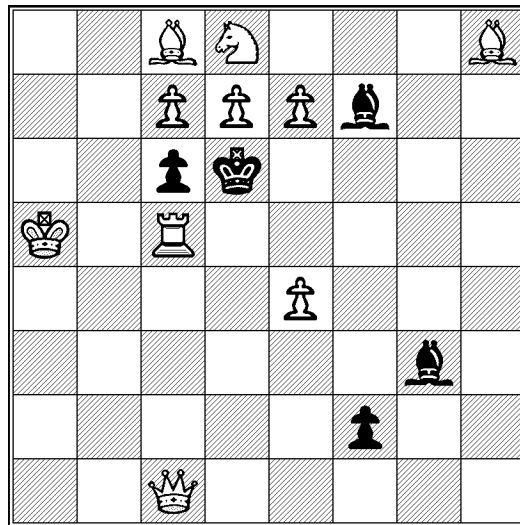
The random move of bSf5 has no set mate but, importantly, 1...Kd7 2.e8S is provided. The solver's task is thus to arrange a mate for 1...S~.

1.Rf1? (-) 1...S~ 2.Rf8, 1...Sxe7 2.Rxe7 but now 1...Kd7! refutes.

1.Sc8? (-) 1...Kd7 2.e8Q, 1...S~ 2.Sd6 but 1...Sxe7!

1.Rf7! (-) 1...Kd7 2.e8S, 1...Kxf7 2.e8Q, 1...S~ 2.Rf8 and 1...Sxe7 2.Rxe7.

How I loved the try 1.Sc8? exchanging the control of c6/c8 for control of d6 – squares in the extended bK field. In addition to admiring the change of mate following 1...Kd7 we also detect changes after 1...Sxe7 and 1...S~. wBh8 guards f6 when the bK flees to the f7 after the flight-giving key and also prevents the dual 1.Rf1? S~ 2.Rf8/Rh8. All these details combine to make this Meredith a great construction.

5th Place (A13) Ilija Serafimović

#2

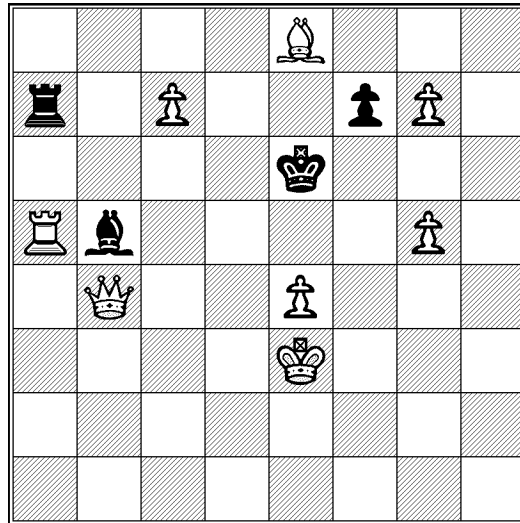
Here the thematic pawns are wPd7 and wPe7 – the only example where such pawns were found on adjacent squares. The variety of presentations was a joy to me. The two flights of the bK lack provision; no bad thing because the solver is directed to the choice he has to make.

1.Sxc6? (>2.d8Q) 1...Be6 2.e8S, 1...Be8 2.dxe8S but 1...Bc4! This try takes the e7 flight but gives in exchange the e6 flight. The threat works successfully after the bK flees but do note that after 1... Ke6 2.Qd8# bBf7 blocks a square in the extended bK field. Also after 1...Kxc7 2.d8Q# wSc6 holds b8!

1.Qa3! (>2.Rxc6) 1...Kxe7 2.Re5 and 1...Kxc7 2.Qxg3. Again it is noteworthy how the reach of the wQ in these mates extends to f8 and b8.

It is evident that a great degree of skill has been displayed here! The composer further records two more flight-taking tries. 1.Bf6? (>2.Rxc6) 1...Bd5 2.e8S but 1...Kxc7! and 1.Qg5? (>2.Rxc6) 1...Kxc7 2.Qxg3 but 1...Bd5! My observation is that these only serve to highlight the quality of the two main phases.

The next two problems I wish to award both have their distinctive merits and I do not wish to separate them.

6th-7th Place (A12) Anton Lysojvan

#2

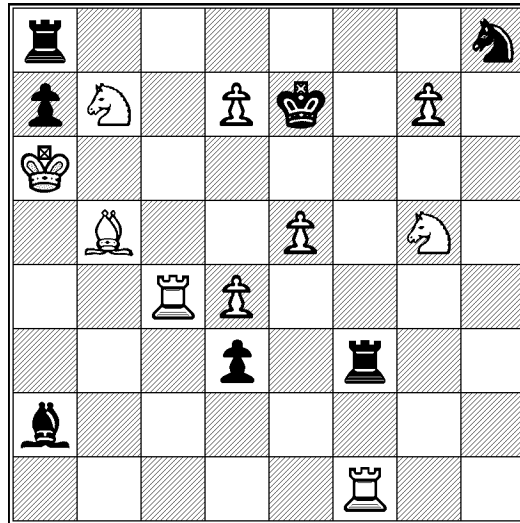
Set-play: 1...Ke5 2.Qe7.

1.c8S? (>2.Qd6) 1...Ra6 2.Qe7 but 1...Rd7!

1.g8S? (>2.Qe7) but 1...Rxc7!

1.Qd4! (>2.Qf6) 1...Ke7 2.Qe5 and 1...Bxe8 2.Re5.

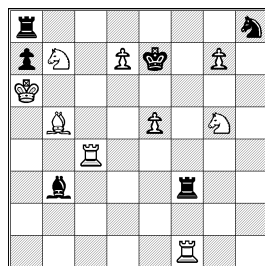
The final mate indicated above superficially has the appearance of a fringe variation. This is not so; without bBb5 there is the dual 1.Qd4! Ke7 2.Qe5/Qd7 and the necessity for bBb5 requires the presence of wRa5. In addition wRa5 prevents an unwanted check to the wK, a piece pulling its full weight on e3. The feature I truly appreciated was the alternate use of the bK and wQ of the e5/e7 squares. Meredith!

6th-7th Place (A14) Shang Riye

#2

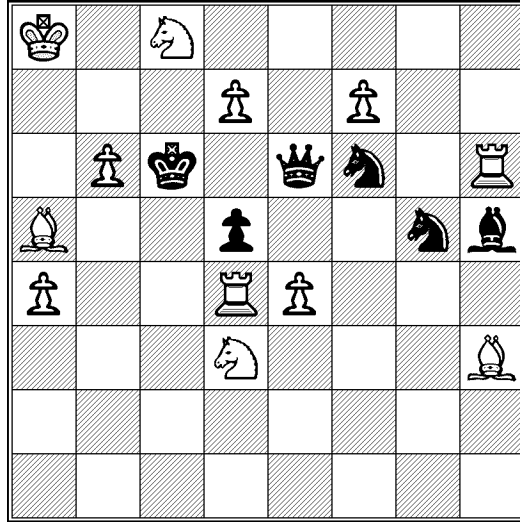
1.Rc7? (>2.d8~) 1...Rf6+ 2.exf6 but 1...Rd8!

1.Rc8! (>2.d8Q) 1...Rf8 2.gxf8Q, 1...Rxc8 2.dxc8S and 1...Sf7 (interference) 2.g8S! The opening and closing of black lines that leads to this thematic mate is a sheer delight. The author also gives 1.d5? (>2.d6) but 1...Sf7! Was the intention to introduce the solver to the possibility of a 1...Sf7 defence? Personally I prefer not to have this addition, instead opting for a lighter setting.



#2

8th Place (A15) Anton Nasyrov



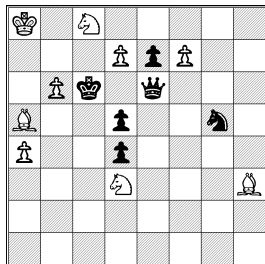
#2

The try takes the d7 flight away from the bK.

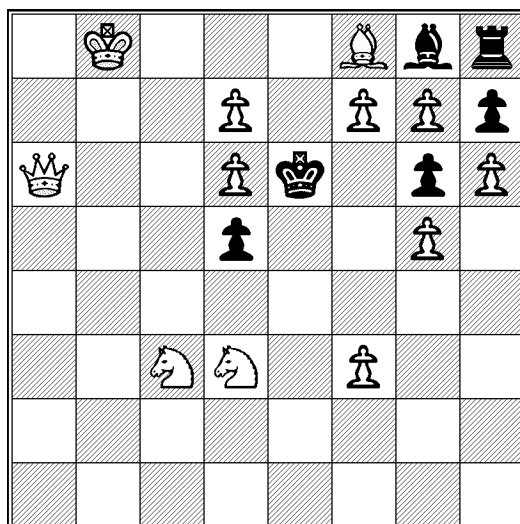
1.f8S? (>2.d8S) 1...Qxd7 2.Bxd7, 1...Qd6 2.Sa7, 1...Qe8/Qe7/Sxd7 2.exd5 but 1...Sf7!

1.b7! (>2.b8S) 1...Kxd7 2.Se5, 1...Qe5 2.d8S, 1...Qd6 2.Sa7 and 1...Sxd7 2.exd5.

It was a great pleasure to determine the several functions of wBh3 in this problem. The composer has incorporated an extra degree of complexity by the use of a black half-pin line to give the mate 2.exd5 with either the bSf6 or the bQe6 necessarily pinned. However, this has required a substantial amount of extra material and on balance I do not believe this to be a worthwhile trade.



#2

9th Place (A16) Idan David

#2

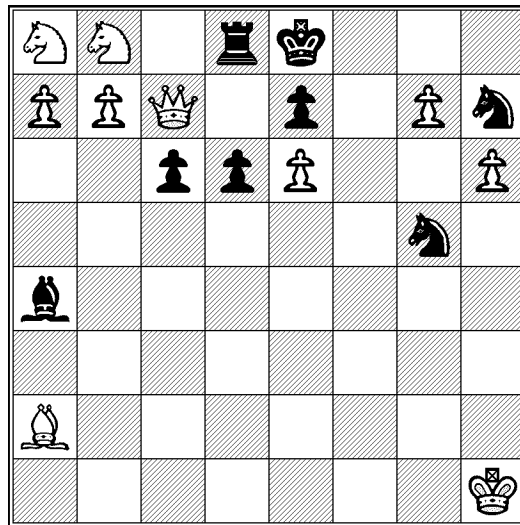
Set play: 1...Kxd7 2. Qc8.

1.Qa4? (-) 1...Kxf7 2.d8S, 1...Kf5 2.Qg4, 1...Bxf7 2.Qg4 but 1...d4!

1.Qb5? (-) 1...Kxf7 2.d8S/Qxd5, 1...Kf5 2.Qxd5, 1...d4 2.d8S but 1... Bxf7!

1.Qc8! (>2.d8S) 1...Kxf7 2.Qe8 and 1...Kf5 2.d8Q.

The three changed mates for 1...Kxf5 are good value although the dual following 1.Qb5? Kxf7 is unfortunate. I cannot ignore the fact that tries and key all take the d7 flight (mitigated to some extent by the set mate). Also wPf3 is redundant in the actual play and the position with 7 wPs is rather un-aesthetic.

10th Place (A1) Stefan-Constantin Harnagea

#2

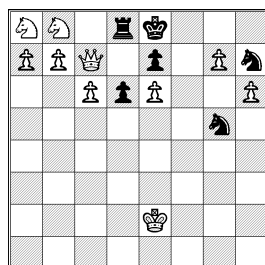
Set 1...Sf7 2.exf7. However, 1...Sxe6 is an un-provided defence acquiring a flight square for the bK and thus the first try suggests itself.

1.g8S? (>2.Qxe7) 1...Kf8 2.Qxd8 but 1...Rd7! (2.exd7?)

1.g8Q+? 1...Sf8!

1.Qa5! (>2.Sc7) 1...Sxe6 2.Qh5, 1...Rd7 2.exd7, 1...Rc8 2.bxc8 and 1...Rxb8 2.axb8Q.

It is excellent that the *pure* motivation for 1...Rxb8 is unblock alone (2.Sc7? Kd8!) Square vacations by the wQ to threaten mate by the wS are difficult to handle and the composer has done well. However, this must have been a frustrating experience because the diagram below must have been “on the board”.

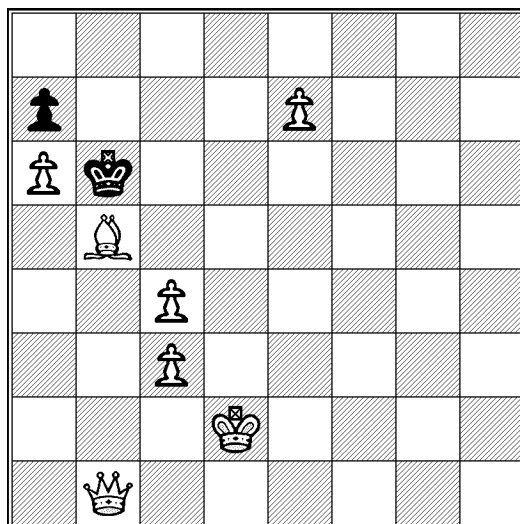


#2 1...Rd7 2.cxd7

This saves two units but now wSb8 apparently has no function. OK, let us remove it and with delight we notice 1.Qa5! Rxa8 2.bxa8Q... but now we discover the cook

1.Qxd8+ Kxd8 2.b8#. I commiserate with the author; all composers have these chastening experiences from time to time.

11th Place (A11) Egor Malanin



#2

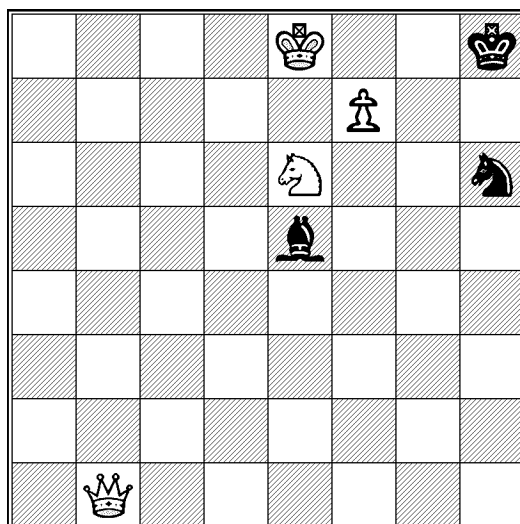
1.e8Q? (-) 1...Ka5 2.Qd8, 1...Kc5 2.Qc6 but 1...Kc7!

1.e8S? (-) 1...Kc5 2.Qg1 but 1...Ka5!

1.Qd3! (-) 1...Ka5/Kc7 2.Qd8 (a different Q mates on d8!) and 1...Kc5 2.Qd4.

I do commend the three distinct mates after 1...Kc5 but it is unfortunate that wQb1 has no role in the first try.

The next two diagrams are both miniatures, problems using 7 units or less. With limited play some may think they are over-valued but is always worthwhile trying to demonstrate given themes with the greatest possible economy.

12th Place (A5) Maksym Kryshafor

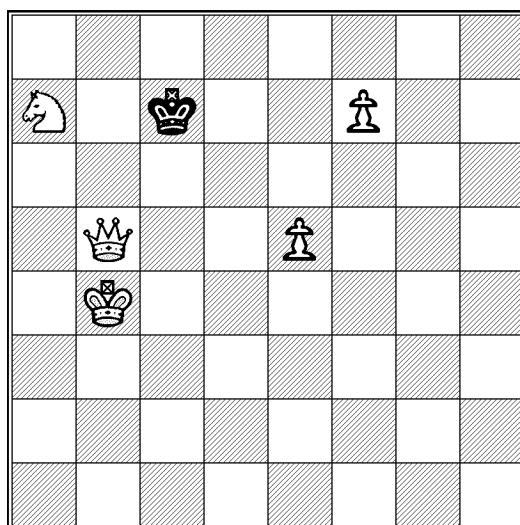
#2

1.f8S? (>2.Qh7) 1...Kg8 2.Qh7 but 1...Sf5!

(1.f8Q+? but 1...Sg8!)

1.Sg5! (>2.Qh7) 1...Sf5/Kg7 2.f8Q.

The major try and key are both flight-giving! Soundness is achieved through the clever use of bBe5.

13th Place (A8) Yaroslav Ship

#2

1.Qa6? (-) 1...Kd8/Kd7 2.Qd6 but 1...Kb8!

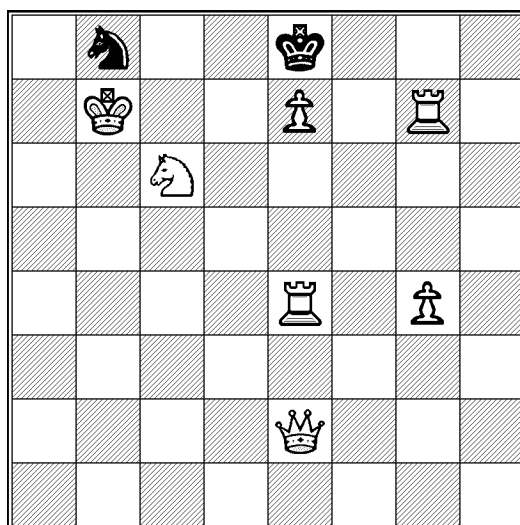
1.f8Q/R? Stalemate!

1.f8B? (-) but 1...Kd8!

1.f8S! (-) 1...Kd8 2.Qd7.

This problem features a mirrored bK, a position where all 8 squares around the king are vacant.

14th Place (A6) Daniel Dumitrescu

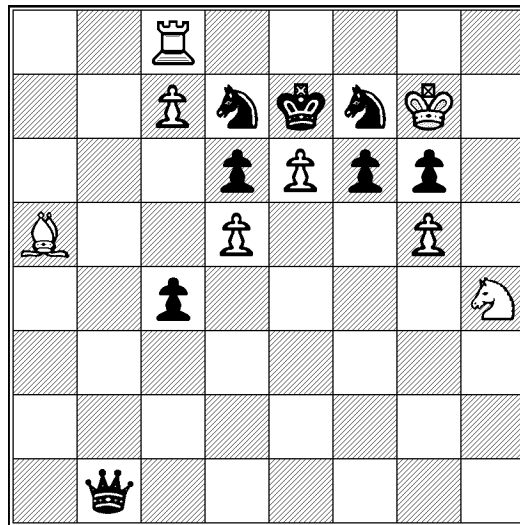


#2

1.Qc4? (-) 1...Sxc6 2.Qxc6, 1...Sd7 2.Qf7, 1...Kd7 2.e8S but 1...Sa6!

1.Qb5! (>2.Sxb8) 1...Sxc6 2.Qxc6, 1...Sd7 2.Qh5 and 1...Kd7 2.e8S.

The play of the two phases is almost identical, the only difference being the changed mate after 1...Kd7. 2.Qf7/2.Qh5 are described as concurrent mates and, being on the same diagonal to the bK, they are not particularly pointed. 1.Kxb8? Kd7! (2.e8S? Kxc6!) and 1.Sxd7? stalemate! are nice touches.

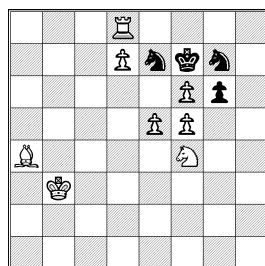
15th Place (A9) Taras Rudenko

#2

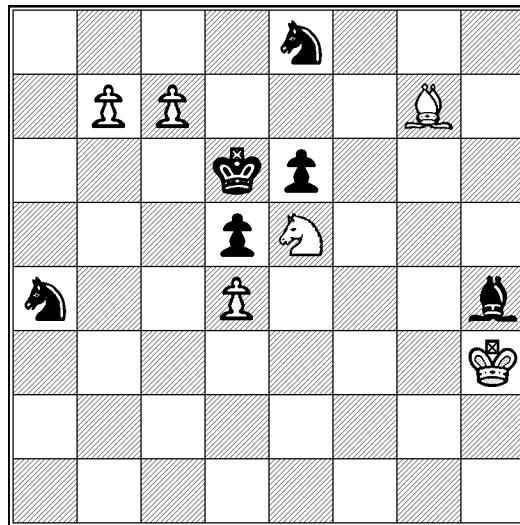
1.Rg8? (>2.c8S) 1...Qb8/Qb7 2.Sxg6, 1...Sb6 2.gxf6 but 1...Sf8!

1.Rd8! (>2.c8S) 1...Qb8/Qb7/Qb6 2.Sxg6, 1...Sb6 2.gxf6 and 1...Sxd8 2.cxd8Q.

Again the two phases of play are virtually identical the only difference being that wPc7 holds d8 after 1.Rd8! Sxd8 2.cxd8Q. The following comment does nothing to alleviate that state of affairs but addresses a small point concerning construction. With the bSs in their relative positions it would be desirable to make 1...Sd6 a valid defence so that both steeds work in tandem:



#2 (Meredith)

16th Place (A10) Oleksandr Veksler

#2

1.b8Q? (>2.c8S) 1...Ke7 2.Qd8 but 1...Sxc7!

1.c8Q! (>2.Qd7) 1...Ke7 2.Qd7, 1...Sc5/Sb6 2.Q(x)c5 and 1...Sf6 2.Bf8.

In the try wPc7 promotes to S *and* guards d8 after 1...Ke7. Thus both the stipulated effects occur only in the *same* phase. Consequently I do not see this as a truly thematic example. Also both try and key are very strong; not only are they promotions to Q but they also deny c7 to the bK. I expect the composer is a relative novice who should be encouraged to pursue this hobby further. The manner in which both the bK and the bSf6 interfere with bBh4 shows definite talent. One small tip: the c7 flight would be less objectionable if wKh3 were relocated on a7 for 1...Kxc7 2.b8Q#. This will help to overcome another possible criticism that the wPb7 *only* serves to provide the try.

I regret that the stipulation may have proved too difficult for some novice composers. If this indeed was the case I would say to those who struggled to produce an entry that the experience will only be a benefit in the longer term. You will learn much from studying the top problems in this award which I am glad to report were of the same fine standard that we have come to expect! I trust that all those who are eligible will return for the 10th YCCC in 2026. Finally, all competitors will wish to join me in thanking Marjan Kovačević for the immense effort he puts into administering this annual event.

David Shire, Canterbury, May 2025