

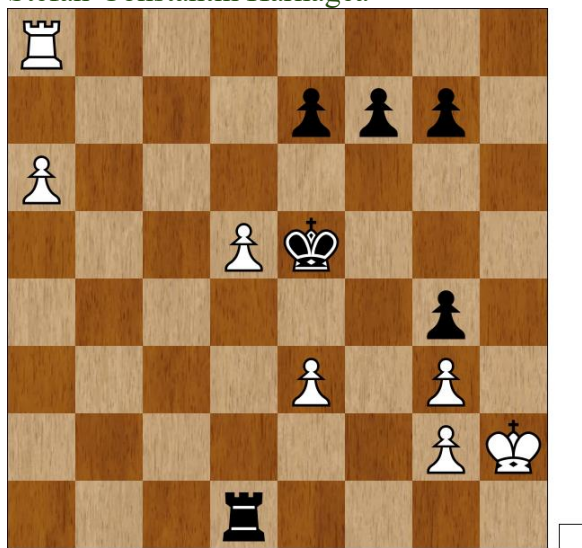
## 2025 YCCC Endgame Studies award

by Steffen Slumstrup Nielsen and Gady Costeff

Twenty-one studies took part in the tourney, the youngest composer was 10 and the oldest, per the regulations, 23. The general level has improved compared to previous years and the first four studies are excellent. Five studies were disqualified on account of analytical errors.

1st place (B2)

Stefan-Constantin Harnagea



Win

**1.a7!** 1.Re8? Ra1 2.Rxe7+ Kxd5 3.Rxf7 Rxa6 4.Rxg7 Ra4 **1...Ra1 2.d6! Ke6** 2...Kxd6?! 3.Rd8+ or 2...exd6?! 3.Re8+ **3.e4!** 3.dxe7? Kxe7 4.e4 Kf6! 5.e5+ Kg5= **3...Kd7 4.dxe7** Logical try 4.e5? Ke6! 5.dxe7 Kxe7 This reaches the same reciprocal zugzwang as in the solution, but with White to move, which enables Black to draw 6.e6 Kf6= **4...Kxe7 5.e5!**

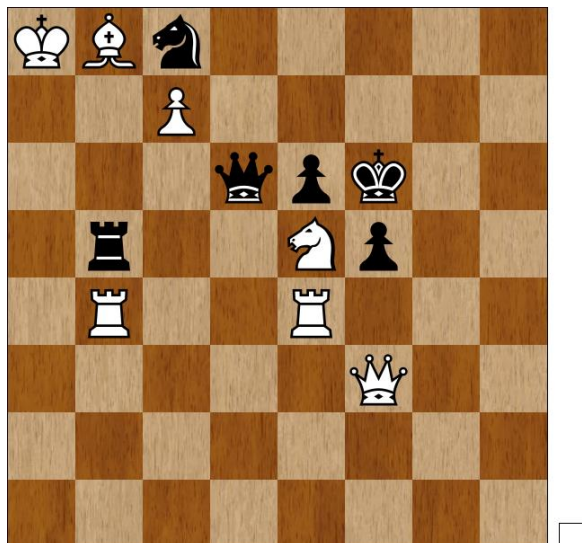
This is a position of reciprocal zugzwang, but, unlike the 4.e5? variation, Black is to move! His rook can neither leave the first rank, because White's king would join with a decisive effect, neither the a-file, because the pawn would promote. So, Black is forced to weaken his seventh rank.

**5...g6 5...Ra3 6.Kg1+- 5...Kd7 6.Rf8+- 6.e6! Kf6 7.exf7 Kxf7 8.Rh8! Rxa7 9.Rh7+ Ke6 10.Rxa7+-**

This is an original and profound elaboration on one of the oldest tricks in practical endgame theory: Ra8–h8 followed by Rh7+ and Rxa7. The composer has discovered a fascinating mutual zugzwang position. But not only that—the study also features the repeated tactic 2. d6! and 6. e6! (though the motivations behind these moves differ slightly), which is exceptionally difficult to achieve and gives the study harmony and unity. All the lines are clear and easy to follow. (GC 4 SN 4 = 8 points).

2nd-3rd place (B6)

Ural Khasanov

**Draw**

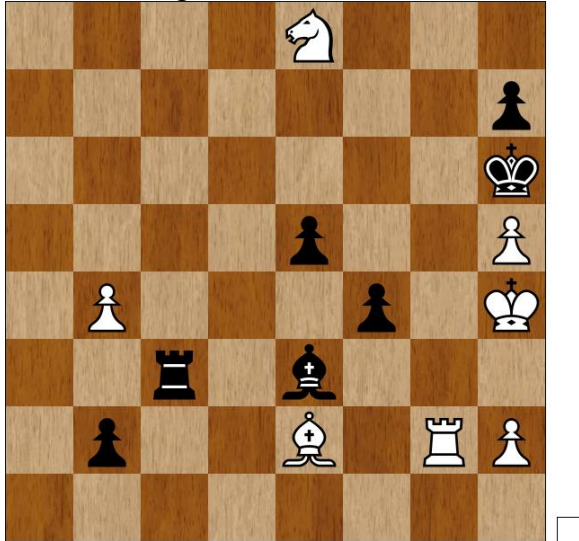
**1.Nd7+ Ke7 2.Rxe6+ Qxe6 3.Nc5 Rxc5 4.Rb7 Nb6+ 5.Rxb6 Qxb6 6.Qe3+ Kf7 7.Qe7+ Kxe7 8.c8N+ Kd7 9.Nxb6+ Kc6 10.Nc8 Ra5+ 11.Na7+ Kb6 12.Bc7+ Kxc7**

The play after 4. Rb7 is exceptional: a beautiful tactical finale with a queen sacrifice, knight promotion, and a final stalemate. This is the kind of clear-cut finish we all seek. The first three moves add the rook and knight sacrifices, completing the full set of piece types. The cost is that the starting position becomes somewhat cluttered.

(GC 4 SN 3.5 = 7.5 points).

2nd-3rd place (B8)

Lim Bin Yang



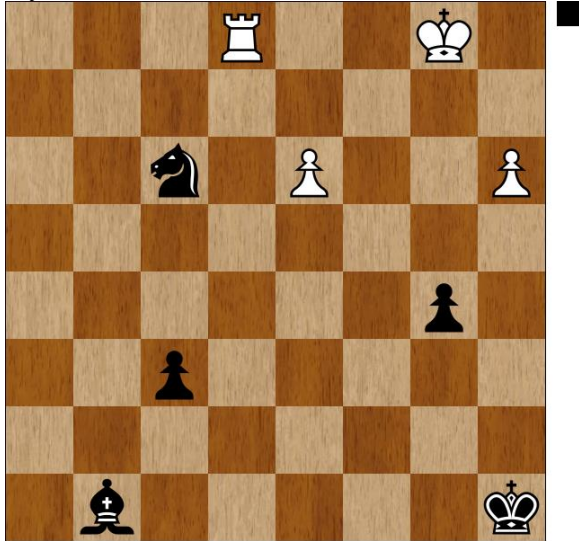
Win

**1.Bd3 Rxd3 1...f3 2.Nd6 fxg2 3.Nf5# 2.Rc2 Bc5 2...Bf2+ 3.Kg4+- 3.Rxc5 Rd6 3...Rh3+ 4.Kg4+- 4.Nxd6 b1Q 4...Kg7 5.Rc7+ Kf8 6.Kg5 b1Q 7.Kf6 5.Rc1 Qd3 6.Rd1 Qc2 7.Rd2 Qb1 8.Rg2** Rook travels back to its original starting square (g2-c2-c5-c1-d1-d2-g2) **8...Qe1+ 9.Rg3 fxg3 10.Nf5#**

A tour de force with an enviable storyline. There is not a single moment where one loses interest. Rather, after each move, one asks: "How will Black defend now?" or "How will White find new attacking resources?" The long rundlauf to g2—rightly noted by the composer—is amusing, but even without it, the spectator or solver should be pleased by the rhythmic unfolding of the events on the board. Both kings remain static throughout the solution, but somehow the dynamic battle between the three remaining pieces—after the echo sacrifices of the bishops—more than compensates. Did you notice the purpose of Black's 2...Bc5!? It allows the black queen access to f5. Excellent!

(GC 3.5 SN 4 = 7.5 points).

4th place (B5)  
Dylan Shenker



Draw B→

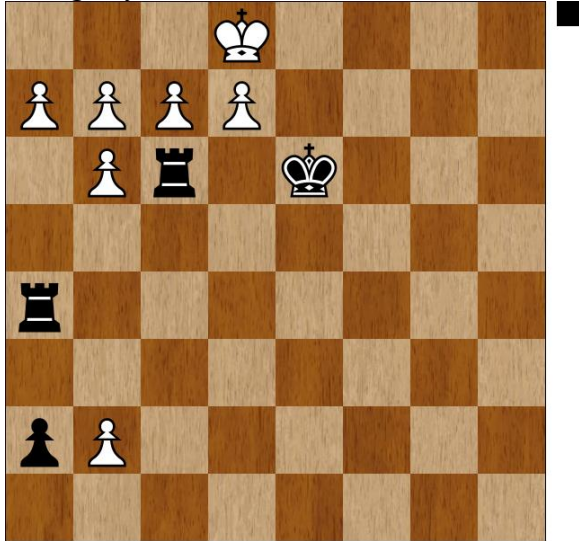
**1...Bh7+ 2.Kxh7 c2 3.e7 Nxe7 4.Ra8 c1R 5.Ra5 g3 6.Kg7 Rc7 7.Rh5+ Kg2 8.h7 Nd5+ 9.Kf8 Nf4 10.Rh6 Ng6+ 11.Kg8 Ne7+ 12.Kf8 Ng6+ 13.Kg8 Rc8+ 14.Kg7** White has formed a fortress. Once it has advanced to g2, the pawn can be stopped by giving checks on the fifth rank. When the Black king arrives on g4, White can sacrifice the rook on g5 with check, and the rook cannot be captured due to stalemate. For example: **14...Nh8 15.Rh5 Ra8 16.Rf5 Kh3 17.Rh5+ Kg4 18.Rc5 g2 19.Rg5+**

Adding meaningful play after an underpromotion is typically difficult. The composer has done an excellent job here: 15 (!) good moves after 4...c1=R. Of course, it is unfortunate that the final stalemate can only be shown in a "sample line", but we believe nothing more can be done in this regard. Similarly, having Black to move is always a bit of a shame, but we can offer no improvement here either.

(GC 3.5 SN 3.5 = 7 points).

5th place (B10)

Shang Riye



Draw

**1...a1Q 2.Kc8! Rxa7! 3.d8N+! Kd6 4.Nxc6 4.Nf7+ Ke7! 5.bxa7 Rxc7+! 6.Kxc7 Qxa7 7.Nd8 Qa5+ 4...Kxc6 5.bxa7 Qa5! 5...Qxa7 6.b8Q; 5...Qxb2 6.b8N+! Kd6 7.a8Q Qh8+ 8.Kb7 6.a8N! 6.b8Q Qf5+; 6.b8N+ Kd6 7.a8N Qxa8 6...Qa6 7.Kd8! 7.b4 Qxb7+ 8.Kd8 Kd6! 9.c8N+ Ke5! 10.Nc7 Qxb4 7...Qd3+ 8.Kc8 Qb5 8...Qb3 9.b8N+! Kd6 10.Nd7! Qe6 11.Kb8! 9.b8N+! Kd6 10.Kd8! Qg5+ 10...Qa5 11.b4! Qd5 12.c8N+! Ke6+ 13.Kc7; 10...Qd5 11.c8N+! Ke6+ 12.Kc7; 10...Qxb2 11.c8N+! 11.Kc8 Qd5 12.Nb6 Qc5 13.Na8 Qa7 14.Kd8 Qxa8 15.c8N+! 15.c8Q Qa5+ 16.Ke8 Qh5+ 17.Kf8 Qh8+ 18.Kf7 Qxc8 15...Kc5! 15...Ke6 16.Kc7! 16.b4+!! Kb5! 17.Kc7! Kxb4 18.Nd7! Kb5 19.Nd6+**

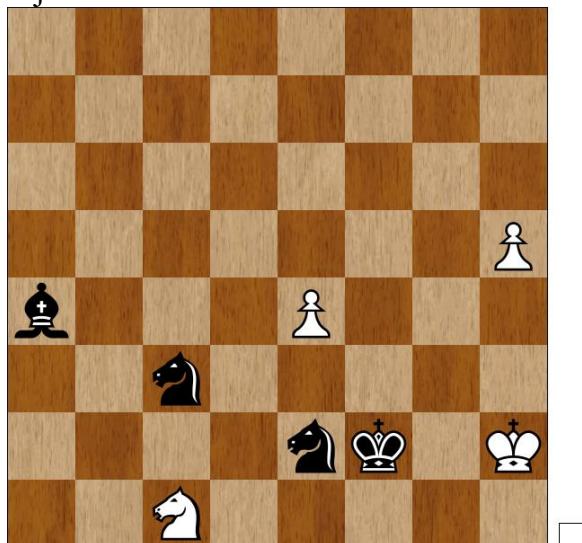
This is an ambitious task. Achieving four knight promotions is no small feat. The composer deserves praise for managing a minimalist finish with only the necessary material remaining. Considering the packed starting position, this is truly remarkable. Still, the cluttered and unnatural starting setup works against the composer, especially the mass of pawns already near promotion (necessitating seven captures in the retro-play). Starting with 5.a8=N would have been more elegant, but then we have a significant predecessor with 3 knight promotions and similar play by Becker – see below. The additional play and fourth knight promotion make the study original. (GC 3 SN 3 = 6 points).

R. Becker Sp. Prize  
Chess Star 2010

**1.e7 Qa1+ 2.Kb8 Qe5+ 3.c7 Kc6 4.d8=N+! Kb6 5.e8=N! Qxe8 6.c8=N+! Kc5 7.d4+! Kd5 8.Kc7 Kxd4 9.Nb7 Qf7+ 10.Kc6 Qe6+ 11.Kc7 Kd5 12.Nb6+ Kd4 13.Nc8 Qc4+ 14.Kd7 Qb5+ 15.Kc7 Kd5 16.Nb6+ Kd4 17.Nc8 Qc4+ 18.Kd7 Qd5+ 19.Kc7 Qf7+ 20.Kc6 Qe8+ 21.Kc7 Kd5 22.Nb6+**

6th-7th place (B4)

Ilija Serafimović



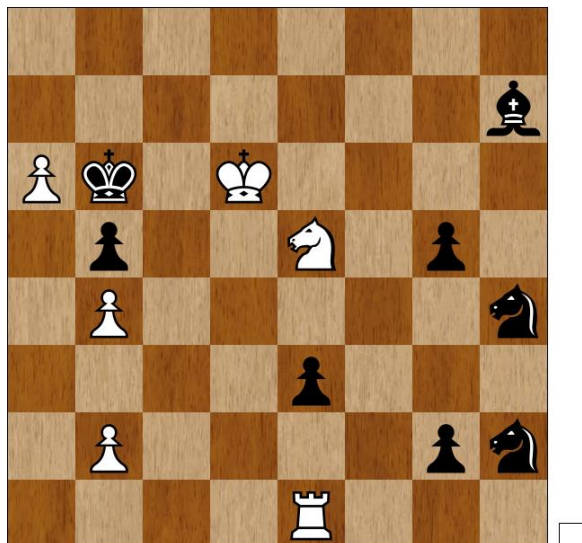
Draw

**1.h6 1.Nd3+ Kf1 2.h6 Nxe4 3.h7 Ng5 4.h8Q Nf3+ 5.Kh3 (5.Kh1 Ng3#) 5...Bd7# 1...Nf4 2.Nd3+ Nxd3 3.h7 Ne1 3...Ne5 4.h8Q Nf3+ continues the same 4.h8Q Nf3+ 5.Kh1 Ne2 6.Qb2 Bb3! 7.e5 Bd5 8.Qb6+ Kg3 9.Qc5! 9.Qb5 Nf4 10.e6 Nh3! 9...Be4 9...Ba8 10.Qa7! Bc6 11.Qe3! Bd5 12.Qc5 Nf4 13.e6 Nd2+ 14.Qxd5 Nxd5 15.e7! 10.Qe3 Bc6 11.Qb3! 11.Qa3 Kh3! 11...Be4 11...Kh3 12.Qe6+ 12.Qe3 Bd5 13.Qc5 Nf4 14.e6 Nd2+ 14...Nh2+ 15.Qxd5 Nxd5 continues the same 15.Qxd5 Nxd5 16.e7! Good, long flow with plenty of quiet moves (such as 11. Qb3!). The surprise is perhaps not that White draws (after all, there is a queen), but rather that there is only this one narrow route to a draw. We perhaps miss a bit of action and surprise.**

(GC 3 SN 2.5 = 5.5 points).

6th-7th place (B7)

Ben Smolkin



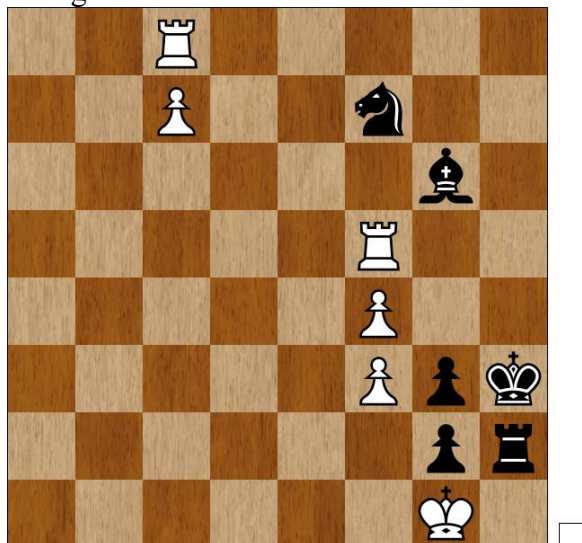
Win

**1.a7 Be4 2.Nd7+ Kxa7 3.Kc7 Bc2 4.Ra1+ Ba4 5.b3 e2 6.bxa4 g1Q 7.Rxg1 Nf1 8.axb5 e1Q 9.b6+ Ka6 10.Rxg5 Qc1+ 11.Rc5 Qf4+ 12.Re5 Qc4+ 13.Nc5+ Kb5 14.b7 Qg8 15.Na6+ Kxa6 16.Ra5#**

Good flow, progressing smoothly from one phase to the next. 15. Na6+! is also a strong and elegant way to conclude. The difficulty of a couple of sidelines dampens the enthusiasm somewhat. For instance, White does not win after 15. b8=Q, because R+N vs N+N is drawn in this case. Similarly, 15.Nd3 comes very close to winning, but it too is drawn—this time because Q vs N+N is drawn. (GC 2.5 SN 3 = 5.5 points).

8<sup>th</sup> Place (B18)

Georgie Eruslanov



Win

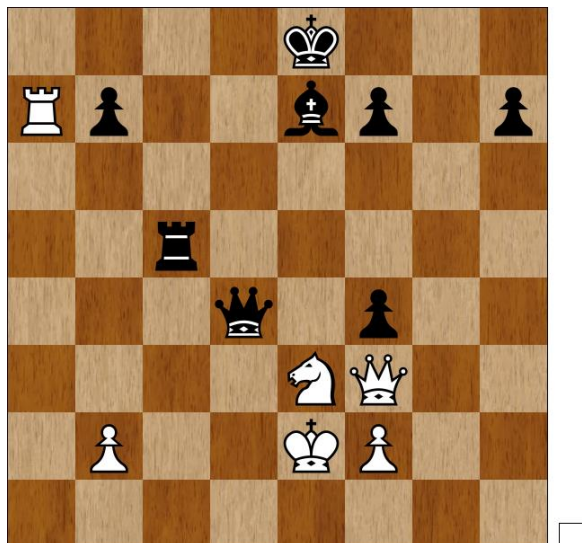
**1.Rh8+ Nxh8 2.Rh5+ Bxh5 3.c8Q+ Kh4 4.Qd8+ Kh3 5.Qd7+ Kh4 6.Qe7+ Kh3 7.Qe6+ Kh4 8.Qf6+ Kh3 9.Qf5+ Kh4 10.Qg5+ Kh3 11.Qxh5#**

Two sacrifices and a queen staircase ending in mate. The main issue here is the locked nature of the piece configuration in the lower-right corner of the board. Having some of these pieces move into position during the solution would clearly enhance the study's value. In addition, every white move is check, which leaves a one-sided impression.

(GC 2 SN 2.5 = 4.5 points).

9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> Place (B11)

Taras Rudenko



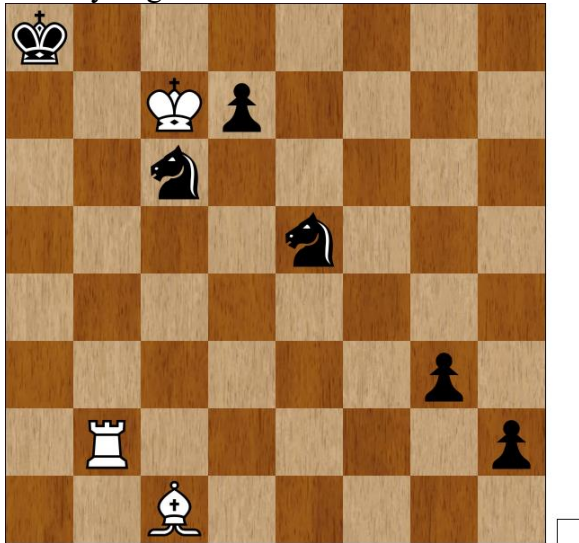
Draw

**1.Qxb7 Re5 2.Qc6+ Kf8 3.Ra4 Bb4 4.Ra8+ Kg7 5.Qc8 fxe3 6.Qh8+ Kg6 7.Rg8+ Kf5 8.Rg5+ Kxg5 9.Qg7+ Kf4 10.Qf6+ Kg4 11.Qg7+ Kh4 12.Qf6+ Kh5 13.Qxf7+ Kh6 14.Qf6+ Kh5 15.Qf7+**

This is a game-like middlegame position. The study includes some nice play in the first half but would benefit by a more spectacular finish than perpetual check.  
(GC 2 SN 2 = 4 points).

9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> Place (B19)

Arseniy Saga

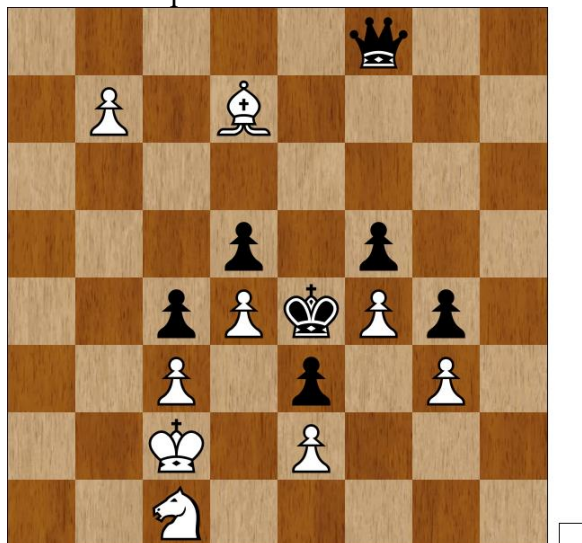
**Draw**

**1.Ra2+ Na7 2.Be3 Nec6 3.Bxa7 Nxa7 4.Rb2 Nc6 5.Ra2+ Na7 6.Rb2**

The perpetual dance of the knight and rook is amusing but the introduction lacks surprise and with the kings not moving, the effect is rather static. Perhaps another setup is possible, where Black continues the winning attempt with Nb5+ (GC 1.5 SN 2.5 = 4 points).

11th-13th place (B12)

Yaroslav Ship



Win

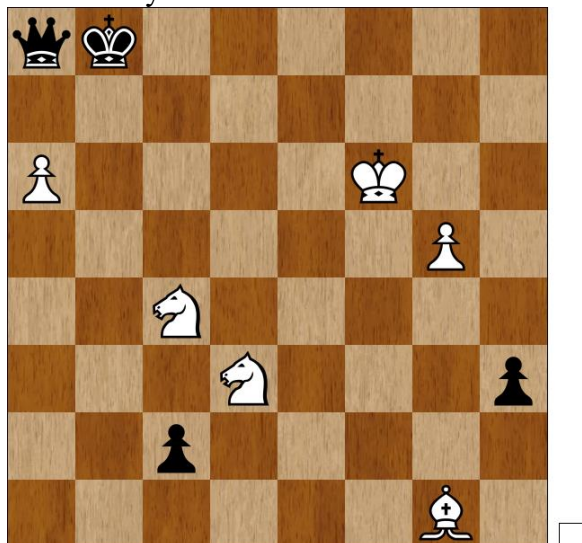
**1.Nb3** 1.Na2 Qb8 2.Nb4 Qxb7 3.Be6 Qa8 4.Bxd5+ Qxd5 5.Nxd5 Kxd5 6.Kb2 Ke4 7.Ka3 Kd5 8.Kb4 Ke4 9.Kxc4 **1...cxb3+ 2.Kb2 Qe8 3.Bc6 Qa8 3...Qb8 4.Bb5 4.Bxd5+**

A good sacrificial key and the final sequence is quite unusual and even humorous. However, it relies heavily on the locked position of the black king, which feels like too high a price to pay for the queen's dance with the bishop.

(GC 2 SN 1.5 = 3.5 points).

11th-13th place (B13)

Anton Nasyrov

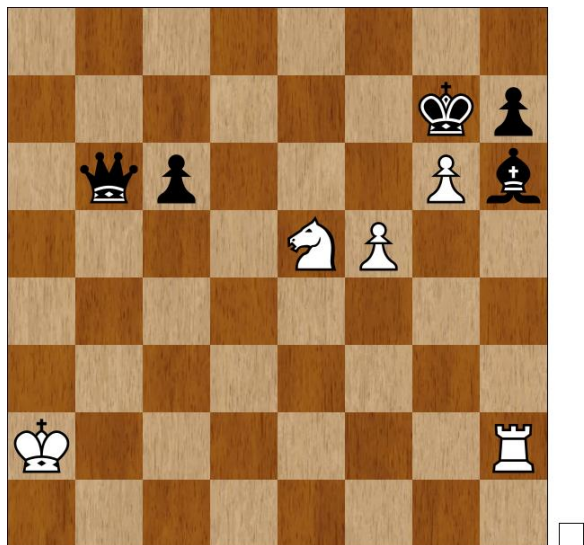
**Draw**

**1.a7+ Kc7 2.Nb6 Qc6+ 3.Kf7 h2 4.a8Q hxg1Q 5.Qa7+ Qb7 6.Nd5+ Kc8+ 7.Ne7+ Qxe7+ 8.Qxe7 Qf1+ 9.Kg7 Qxd3 10.Qc5+ Kd7 11.g6**

There is some nice and unusual play—especially the white knights’ transfer to e7—but the drawing finish feels a little prosaic.  
(GC 1.5 SN 2 = 3.5 points).

11th-13th place (B16)

Mihails Šalašovs



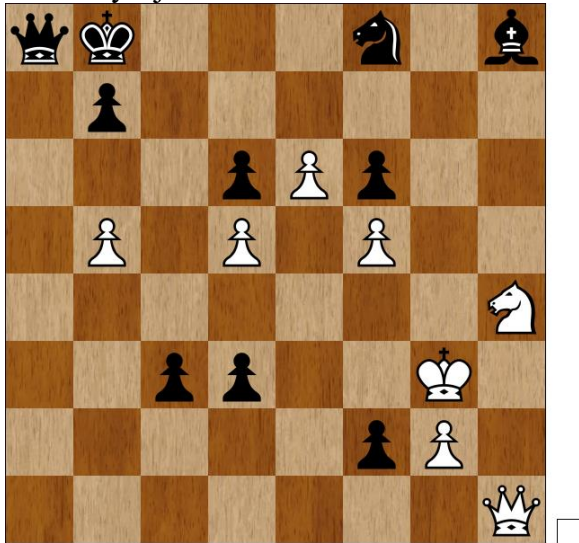
Win

**1.f6+ Kg8 2.f7+ Kh8 3.g7+ Bxg7 3...Kxg7 4.f8Q+ Kxf8 5.Nd7+4.Ng6#**

The pretty finish has a fresh and appealing quality. However, it needs some kind of introduction, as the black queen and the white king serve only as spectators and every white move is check.  
(GC 1.5 SN 2 = 3.5 points).

14th-15th place (B9)

Anton Lysojvan



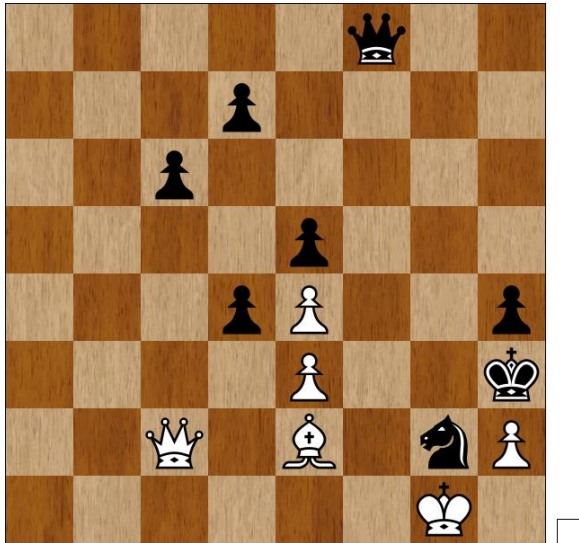
Win

**1.b6 Nxe6 2.fxe6 f5 3.Ng6 3.Nf3 f1N+3...f4+ 4.Nxf4 Bd4 5.e7 Qa4 6.Qa1 f1N+ 7.Kh4 Bf2+ 8.Kg5 Qe8 9.Qa7+**

This study utilizes the entire board and ends with a surprising corner attack on the black queen (and king). However, the position feels too heavy for the content.  
(GC 1.5 SN 1 = 2.5 points).

14th-15th place (B15)

Idan David

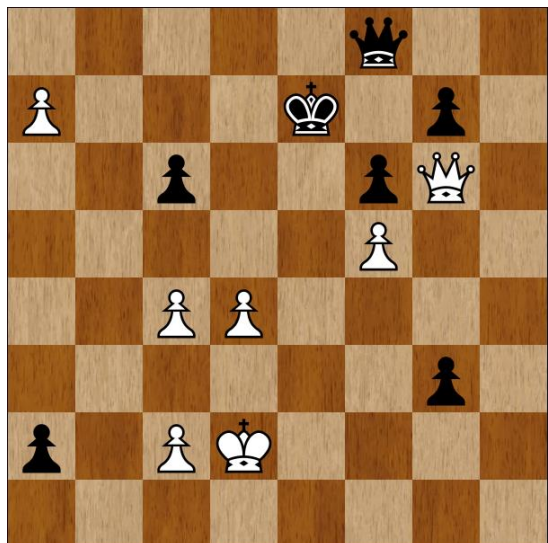
**Draw**

**1.Qd1 1.Bf1 Qxf1+1...Nxe3 2.Bg4+ Nxg4 3.Qf3+ Qxf3 stalemate.**

A good stalemating finish, but too many pieces are used for such a small content.  
(GC 1.5 SN 1 = 2.5 points).

16th place (B14)

Cauã Leite



**1.a8Q 1.a8R1...Qxa8 2.Qxg7+ Kd6 3.c5+ Kd5 4.Qg8+ Qxg8 5.Kd3 with mate.**

A crowd-pleasing study with an unavoidable mate at the end. However, there is an anticipation – see below.

(GC 1 SN 1 = 2 points).

L. Kubbel  
1<sup>st</sup> Prize 64  
1925



**1.Rg6! Nf6! 2.Qh6+ Kf7 3.Rxf6+! exf6 4.Qh7+ Ke6 5.f5+ Kd6 6.c5+ Kd5 7.Qg8+! Qxg8 8.Kd3! with the unavoidable 9.c4#**