



The 11th FIDE World Cup in Composing

Section B – Threemovers

Preliminary award by

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MMXXIII

I thank the tournament organizer for trusting me to judge this 3# section of the 11th World Cup in Composing.

I received from the tournament director in anonymous form 32 problems to judge, of quite various level and quality.

I had great pleasure in studying all these problems in detail. I feel the need to remember that any judgment contains a large part of subjectivity even if there are objective elements which make it possible to rule out several problems.

So I did not retain:

- The problems that contained significant flaws (e.g. unacceptable refutation, bad key, etc.)

- The problems with insufficient content (for example without a main idea, or with an idea without significant interest to my eyes)

- The low level problems relative to the current state of the composition (e.g. lack of originality or presenting an idea shown many times in a better way)

- Finally, I confess, the problems that didn't appeal to me at all, that didn't give me the minimal pleasure that I expect from a chess problem.

Obviously this last point underlines the subjective side of the judgment; I am not saying that these problems which did not really appeal to me are not good: several of them will possibly find a

place later in a competition, perhaps with a better audience than me; two or three had received a commendation in a first version of my judgment, but I finally decided to grant this award only to problems that I really "recommend", that is to say that I like without restriction.

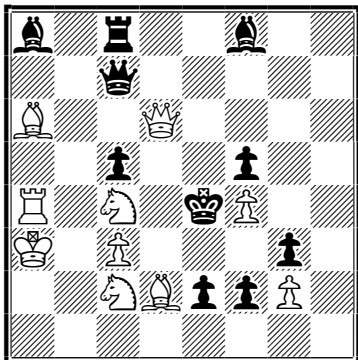
I will not detail here the reasons problem by problem, with 2 exceptions:

- the **B2** (♘d1-♘e3, 10+6) to which I had first granted a commendation is completely anticipated by an identical position by L. Makaronez, Australian Chess, 2009;

- also about the **B4** (♘f7-♘e5, 13+9) which had first received a 3rd or 2nd hm: this good problem shows a Zagoruiko in Visserman manner (as there are many since the 11th WCCT), but exactly the same matrix has been used for an excellent (better in my opinion) 2# by D. Stojnic, 2nd Israel Open Chess Problem Composition Tourney 2015, 2nd Prize: although the number of moves is different, and although the achievement in 3# needs some technical skills, I believe it is justified here to speak of anticipation.

Thus, here is my award, the ranking also reflecting my tastes and convictions:

B29 – 1st Prize



#3

10+10

1. ♖e3! – 2. ♛d5+ ♔xf4 3. ♛xf5#,
 2... ♜xd5 3. ♖d6# (2. ♛d8? ♛xf4! or
 2. ♛b8?? impossible!)

1... ♛h7 2. ♛b8!! – 3. ♖d6#,
 2... ♔d3 3. ♛b1# (2. ♛d8? ♔xf4!)

1... ♛f7 2. ♛d8!! – 3. ♖d6#,
 2... ♔xf4 3. ♛h4#, 2... ♛xc4
 3. ♜xc4# (2. ♛b8? ♛xc4!)

By-play: 1... ♛d7 2. ♛xd7 –
 3. ♖d6#/♛xf5#, 2... ♔xf4 3. ♛xf5#

No doubt many will be surprised that in this era of multiphase problems and changes of functions/recurrence of moves I grant the 1st place to a single-phase problem which presents only 2 thematic variations, without any recurrence of moves (B29)!

Certainly; but what variations! In a magnificent Diagonal/Orthogonal echo we have 2 spectacular (paradoxical) flight-giving withdrawals of the white queen which moves away from its privileged position next to the black king, and which provides a

completely unexpected distant mate on the flight variations! This result alone would be enough to arouse strong interest; but to this is added that these 2 variations are separated with dual-avoidance (*) by 2 black defences of an admirable precision by the Black Queen, who is nevertheless very free, and without any parasitic variation (**): we thus obtain a "mini-duel" between the Queens, and the integration of the formidable white play and this astonishingly precise black play makes this problem, by my subjective standards, a true masterpiece.

The construction is excellent, with an airy, very dynamic position, precise positioning of the pieces and their multiple use; for examples the ♜c8 is used to prevent 2. ♖4~+ c4 3. ♜xc4# after 1... ♛h7, but also to avoid 1... ♛c8! which would refute the solution; ♖g2 controls f3 but also blocks ♖g3 (1...g2 would refute); the positioning of the white king is essential because after 1. ♖4~+?? c4 the white queen is pinned (2. ♛d4??). Everything here evokes both a high-level technique that hides itself to leave room entirely for the artistic impression, and a great maturity in the approach to composition.

One could perhaps criticize the fact that the capture of the white Queen in the diagram is an unprovided strong move; it's a fact, but this kind of defect seems to me

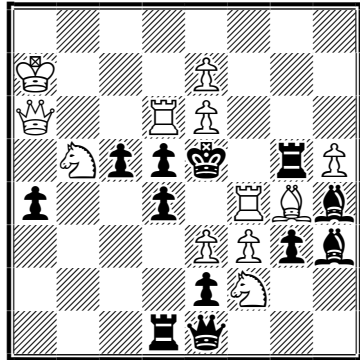
quite secondary in 3# field; on the other hand, I appreciate that the key, interfering with the ♔d2, attaches the white queen to the guard of f4, guard that she hastens to abandon in the good sacrifice threat 2. ♖d5+!

A great success, in the tradition of the best classic 3 movers.

(*) The common harmful effect of the 2 variations by the black Queen is twofold: 1° giving up access to f4 (2... ♖xf4??) and 2° opening the d6-b8 line; these effects are compensated by the Black Queen's gain of access to h4 and c4 respectively. On a theoretical level, we get therefore a reciprocal 2nd degree.

(**) The secondary variation 1... ♗d7 2. ♖xd7 completes the Queens duel but does not add anything significant to the content.

B14 – 2nd Prize



#3

12+12

The next problem (B14, 2nd prize) presents an idea that I really like and that is generally called the “Keller paradox” (White plays to a square that has just been attacked by Black). This problem presupposes a certain effort on the part of the spectator, not only because the compact position is unattractive, but also to be felt as a coherent whole (I say “felt”, because the appreciation of coherence is relatively subjective); but this coherence is indeed there and I will endeavour to make it stand out by writing the solution in the body of this comment.

First we have a first try:

1. ♜d7/d8? (2. ♖d6# (M)) 1... ♖a5!

So the natural correction which is a thematic try:

1. ♜xd5+? (A) Kxd5! 2. ♖d6+ (M) ♘c4!

The other Rook provides an analogous system:

1. ♖f7(f8)? (2.f4# (N)) 1... ♗xf2!
 (x) and at this step if 2. ♖d7(d8)?
 ♗xf3! 3. ♗d6+ (M) ♘e4!

So again, the natural correction
 which is a 2nd thematic try:

1. ♖f5+? (B) ♖xf5! 2.f4+? (N) ♖xf4!

Then we have a try of another
 nature:

1.Sc7? (2. ♖xd5# (A)) 1...dxe3! (a)
 and of course if 2. ♖xd5+?? ♖xd5!
 (2... ♘xf4? 3. ♗xh3#) 3. ♗d6+ (M)
 ♖xd6!

It should be emphasized here
 that the motivation of this move
 1...dxe3 is indeed to give control of
 d5 to the ♖d1, reinforcing the
 paradoxical aspect that we will see
 in the solution:

1.e8♗! – 2. ♖e4+! (C) dxe4 3.f4#
 (N)

This “strong” promotion key
 seems acceptable to me: it allows a
 check to the white King, providing
 a variation which is of formal
 interest: the reappearance of the
 move ♖f5+ (B) as mate on the 3rd
 move:

1... ♖g7+ 2. ♗xg7 – 3. ♖f5# (B),
 2... ♗xg4 3. ♗xg4#

Here are now the 2 main variations
 showing the Keller paradox:

1...dxe3 (a) 2. ♖xd5+!! (A) ♘xd5
 3. ♗d6# (M) (the ♖f4 controls c4),
 2... ♖xd5 3. ♖e4# (C) (d5 is blocked -
 and White controls f6), 2... ♘xf4
 3. ♗xh3#

1... ♗xg4 2. ♖f5+!! (B) ♖xf5
 3. ♗xg4# (g4 is unblocked),

2... ♗xf5 3.f4# (N) (f5 is blocked),
 2... ♘xf5 3. ♖xd5# (A)

The combination in the variation
 1...dxe3 (a) of the Keller paradox
 and of the Dombrovskis paradox is
 excellent. It should also be noted
 that the 3 Rook moves (A), (B), (C)
 appear on the 2nd move and as
 mate on the 3rd move. There is
 also here a little perfume of logic
 school (logic tries
 1. ♖xd5+?/ ♖f5+?). Finally in by-
 play a last variation with also a
 logic perfume and recurrence of the
 defence x (logic try 1. ♖d7?):

1... ♗xf2 (x) 2. ♖d7! – 3. ♗d6# (M)
 (2... ♗a5??)

Therefore, beside the Keller
 theme, there is a correspondence in
 the play of the white Rooks (tries,
 sacrifices, unblockings, etc.), and
 several interesting recurrences of
 white and black moves; but the
 Keller variations don't work in the
 same way (ex: opening of white
 and black lines for dxe3,
 unblocking and direct control for
 ♗xg4): this can be seen as a lack of
 homogeneity that some may judge
 as an imbalance and feel as a
 frustration. For my part, I see first
 a wealth/variety of effects in a set
 that, with some hindsight, I
 consider to be organized in a
 satisfactory way, conferring on the
 problem some modernity.

This impression was confirmed
 by pushing further my analysis of
 the problem which offers
 additional content (that the author
 has not reported); this thematic

feature will be of more interest to analysts because it is very formal:

We can see in the 2 main variations a cycle of functions between the 3 sub-variations on the 2nd move and the mates, according to the following array (*):

B2 (function)	1...dxe3	1...♙xg4
Refutation of thematic try (2...♗xd5/♖xf5)	Unblocked mate on W2, M (X)	Mate by ♖f2 (Y)
Additional "Keller capture": (2...♖xd5/♙xf5)	Mate by Rook sacrificed on W2 in other variation (1...♙xg4) (Z)	Unblocked mate on W2, N (X)
Extra-flight variation (2...♗xf4/♗xf5)	Mate by ♖f2 (Y)	Mate by Rook sacrificed on W2 in other variation (1...dxe3) (Z)

Those who are interested in this kind of somewhat formal properties (like I am) will find a significant element of consistency/coherence here; I'm not sure that the author intended to show this unusual and intellectual cycle; anyway the problem can be appreciated even without highlighting it.

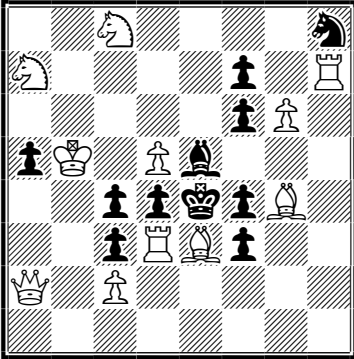
There are many homogeneous achievements of the Keller paradox and I find interesting and probably promising to explore paths mixing various mechanisms – on the essential condition that there are enough binding elements to ensure

an aesthetic coherence to the whole, which is the case here.

Finally, I have to point out the parasitic variation 1...♖xg4 2.♖f5+ ♗xf5 3.♖xd5# which I consider here as a flaw, but which has no impact on my ranking order. One could also regret that the move 2.♖f7 is not a continuation in the solution, completing the by-play, but this seems impossible as it is (maybe that's why the author doesn't point out the try 1.♖f7? However, my opinion is that this try must be mentioned because it highlights the echo-play of the two white Rooks).

(*) There is also a reciprocal change of functions at the 2nd/3rd move between the planned capture (♗xd5/♖xf5) and the newly introduced capture (♖xd5/♙xf5) with respect to the mate unblocked by the Rook on the 2nd white move (M, N) and the “new” mate exploiting the blocking of the flight given on the 2nd move (3.♖e4/3.♙xg4).

B11 – 3rd Prize



#3

11+11

1. ♕f2! –(a4) 2. ♖h5 (P) – 3. ♗xf3# (A), 2... ♗xd5 (x) 3. ♖xd4# (B), 2...cxd3 (y) 3. ♗f5# (M)

1...fxg6 2. ♖e7 – 3. ♖xd4# (B), 2... ♗xd5 (x) 3. ♗xf3# (A), 2...cxd3 (y) 3. ♗d6# (N) (2. ♗xf3+? (A) ♗f5 3. ♖h5+ g5/gxh5!)

1... ♗xd5 (x) 2. ♗xc4+ ♗e4 3. ♗c6#

1...cxd3 (y) 2.cxd3+ ♗xd3 3. ♗f5# (M)

1... ♗xg6 2. ♗xf3+ (A) ♗f5 3. ♖h5# (P)

1... ♗~ 2. ♖xd4+ (B) ♗e5 3. ♗c6#

This 3rd place B11 is also a great problem, very much in the taste of the times, and I'm sure many judges would have given it a 1st or a 2nd place. Here we have a juxtaposition of several very fashionable thematic elements, and the whole is certainly a feat: Le Grand, Visserman, Adabashev, Babouchka. I have not found an achievement with the exact combination of all these elements, but I would not be particularly surprised if there are, and if so,

they are probably very few; in any case it would not have changed my ranking (except of course in the case of a clear anticipation). While the menu is enticing and deserves praise, a few remarks are in order.

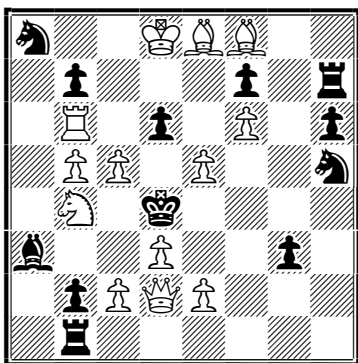
The Le Grand mechanism with change of pinning axis has been well known for a long time; the ♗a7 has no other use than to provide a mate on the variation 1... ♗~, which somewhat detracts from the overall impression (I imagine that the author would have liked a mate like 3. ♖e7#, with reappearance of this move as mate – which obviously is not possible as it is); the key that removes the strong move 1...fxe3 without being bad is not very good (but as I said previously, it is of secondary importance in 3#). On the positive side, I will note a certain richness or variety in the play, for a position that is not very heavy: note the reappearance (transfer) of mate ♗f5# and that of the move ♖h5 on the 2nd and 3rd moves; finally the variation 1... ♗xg6 exploits the distant blocking of g6, and therefore the variation on this same square 1...fxg6 constitutes a correction: 2. ♗xf3+? ♗f5 3. ♖h5+?? g5 or gxh5!

A picturesque detail, the usefulness of the ♗a5: the only function of this pawn is to provide a neutral variation; indeed 1...a4 is the only black move on which the threat appears (which is an integral part of the thematic content); if it is removed, the

problem remains correct, but without this essential sequence.

In my opinion, the value of the problem lies mainly in the virtuoso synthesis of all the thematic elements into a coherent whole. If by chance this combination does not already exist, the problem will also have value as a first achievement.

B21 – 4th Prize



#3

13+12

*1...d5 2.♙d6 – 3.c3#/e3#,
2...♞e1(c1) 3.c3(e3)#

*1...♞xc5 2.♞xd6 – 3.♞c3#,
2...♙b6 3.♞d5#, 2...♙xb4 3.♞e3#

1.♙d7! – 2.♞xd6+ ♞xc5 (x)
3.♞c3#, 2...♞xe5 (y) 3.♞e3#

1...♙xf6 2.c3+ ♞xc5 (x) 3.♞e3#,
2...♞xe5 (y) 3.♙xd6#

1...♙xb6 2.e3+ ♞xc5 (x)
3.♙xd6#, 2...♞xe5 (y) 3.♞c3#

1...♞xc5 (x) 2.♞xd6 – 3.♞c3#,
2...♙b6 3.♞d5#, 2...♙xb4 3.♞e3#

1...♞xe5 (y) 2.♞e3+ ♞xf6 3.♞xd6#
1...d5 2.c3+ ♞xe5 3.♞e3#

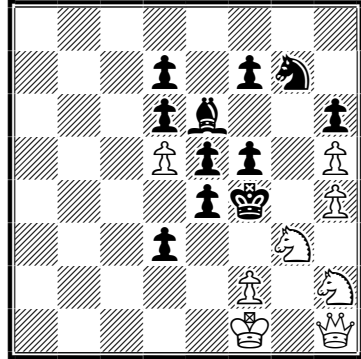
When we read the solution of the B21 (4th Prize), we immediately notice a cyclical Zagoruiko (aka Rice theme in the Cyclone terminology) on the 2nd move, in the Visserman style; there is nothing extraordinary about this result today, especially on flights and in a symmetrical position; indeed, the author does not even mention it in his thematic description: his intention is different: presenting a full cycle of the squares occupied by White between the 2nd move and the 3rd move: when White play on square A at 2nd move, mates take place at the 3rd move on squares B and C; when they play on B, mates are on C and A; and when they play on C mates take place on A and B: this would be the first achievement according to the author. The mechanism is based on controlling or blocking remote flights b6, f6, b4, f4 and access for Black Knights to c4 or e4. The thematic squares of the cycle are d6, c3, e3.

On the other hand the problem shows a set-play, which the author presents as a bonus and to which he seems attached: it allows to show a changed sequence on the by-play variation 1...d5, a reappearance between the solution (after 1...♞xe5) and this set-play (after 1...d5) of the 3 thematic 2nd moves (♞xd6+, c3+, e3+) as mating moves at the 3rd move, and incidentally the flight 1...♞xc5 is provided. It should however be noted that if we overcome the set-

play, it is possible to save at least 3 pieces; I understand the author's choice, although I'm not sure that as a composer I would have done the same, but I appreciate that this set-play adds a bit of fantasy and variety to a solution that is extremely "mechanical".

I reward here the technical achievement, but also the originality of the idea (cycle of squares) which seems to offer good prospects by opening a broader way for the cycles (moves cycles can be seen as a particular case of squares cycles); by now this idea may seem very formal, as move cycles did long ago, but if it finds a certain answer among composers it might fit into the basic culture of the chess problem. However, personally, the present problem is not my cup of tea: subjectively I don't like symmetric matrices (except when they work in a clearly asymmetrical way, or for incredible tasks, which is not the case here); moreover, the mechanical and cold play only excites me moderately; but I recognize the value of the work, which justifies its rank in this award.

B31 – 1st Honorable mention



#3

8+11

(1. ♖xe4? – 2. ♖f3#, 1...fxe4!)

1. ♖g2! zz

1... ♖e8 2. ♖h1 – 3. ♖g3# (A),

2...e3 3. ♖f3# (B)

1... ♗xd5 2. ♖xe4 – 3. ♖f3# (B)

(3. ♖g3??), 2... ♗xe4 3. ♖g3# (A),

2...fxe4 3. ♖g4# (C)

1...f6 2. ♖xf5 – 3. ♖g4# (C)

(3. ♖g3??), 2... ♗xf5 3. ♖g3# (A),

2... ♗xf5 3. ♖g4#

In the B31 (1st h.m.) after the key 1. ♖g2! that sets up a zugzwang, we find the following tries:

2. ♖g~ (♖h1)? – 3. ♖g3# (A),
2...e3 3. ♖f3# (B), 2... ♖xh5!

2. ♖xe4!? (3. ♖f3# (B), 3. ♖g3+? (A) ♗xe4!), 2...fxe4! (3. ♖g4+?? ♗xg4!)

2. ♖xf5!? (3. ♖g4# (C), 3. ♖g3+? (A) ♗xf5!), 2... ♗xf5 3. ♖g3# (A), 2... ♗xf5!

So 2. ♖xe4 and 2. ♖xf5 are threat-corrections of the first attempt (2. ♖h1).

The only 3 variations of the problem introduce these moves: by 1... ♖e8 the Knight loses access to

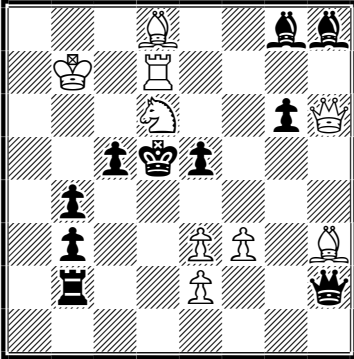
h5, 1...f6 is a far pre-blocking, and 1...♞xd5 quits its ambush behind f5 allowing mate after 2...fxe4; this last variation followed by 2.♞xe4 is particularly interesting because it presents a Keller paradox (additional control of e4), and the new variation of capture on e4 by the black Bishop (2...♞xe4) is followed by the primary mate 3.♔g3# (A), which gives a "complete" aspect to this threat correction that did not exist in the try mentioned above. Then, there is a welcome cyclical pseudo-Le Grand (and also an additional pseudo-Le Grand between the 2 first variations).

The construction seems to me very satisfactory, and the position rather light given the fact that we are in a zugzwang context: the white King has the double function of blocking f1 and avoiding the dual 2.♞e2+ due to the check after 2...dxe2+; the ♠h5 blocks both the ♠h6 and the white Knight; the ♠d5 restricts both the ♠d6 and the black Bishop... Only the Pawns d6 and d7 have the sole function of blocking 1 piece, which is not expensive and quite lucky. We could certainly have preferred a threat-problem (which would probably have allowed a more interesting key, 1.♔g2 setting up a big part of the white play), but this zugzwang form allows a very sober and clear thematic presentation which is also appreciable.

This problem enters an almost unexplored field of the orthodox 3#

which, in my opinion, presents considerable possibilities: the white correction and the threat correction; the correction may be shown on the 2nd move as in the present problem, or on the 1st move as we usually see in 2#: all styles can find a field of expression there (logic, recurrence of moves, formal or strategic echoes, theoretical approaches, tasks, etc.), and I believe that composers of 3# (even others) in search of real novelties should explore this opportunity...

B6 – 2nd Honorable mention



#3

9+10

1. ♖f5! – 2. ♜b5+ ♚c4 3. ♜d3#
 1... ♞d2 2.e4+ ♚d4 3. ♜xd2#
 1... ♜xe2 2. ♜e4+ ♚e6 3. ♜h3#
 1...e4 2.fxe4+ ♚e5 3. ♜xh2#
 1...gxf5 2. ♜e4+ ♚c4 3. ♜a6#

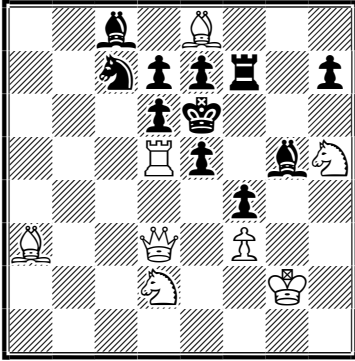
Cook tries:

1. ♜h4? ♜f4!; 1. ♜xg6(f8)? ♜xh3!

In the B6, after a beautiful sacrifice key, 4 accurate black defenses are followed by 4 white moves on the same square (e4), then 4 moves by the black king on different squares, and finally 4 different mates by the white Queen whose amplitude of the play will be appreciated... We could qualify the 3 diagonal mates by the Queen as “echo mates”, even if this echo is very partial, but the impression is there (the mates ♜xh2/♜h3 recall this charming little predator, the chameleon). We thus have a beautiful unity from the 2nd move, and this set is extremely pleasant.

We can probably regret that this unity does not deploy from the first black move with a more developed black strategy... The mates by capture of the Black Queen or the Black Rook are a bit “violent”, but in a certain way they respond to each other...

A small detail: the ♜d8 is only useful to control f6 in 2 variations; for my taste I would have preferred it on e7 (the problem remaining correct), because here 1...c4 is a defense against the threat followed by a short mate (2. ♜e4#), whereas with the Bishop on e7 this is no longer a defense; moreover with ♜e7 I find it pleasant that in the mate 3. ♜h3# f7 is controlled only by the ♜d6 and e7 by the ♞d7; the Bishop is also more discreet there in that his only function of controlling f6 is less immediately visible... But this is only a matter of tastes and in any case does not affect the ranking.



#3

8+11

1. ♖b3! – 2. ♜xe5+ dxe5 3. ♔c5#
 (A), 2... ♝xe5 3. ♞e4# (B) (2. ♞e4?
 (B) – 3. ♗d4#, 2... ♗b5!)

1... ♗b7 2. ♔c5+ (A) dxc5 3. ♗xd7#

1... ♗a6 2. ♞e4 (B) – 3. ♗d4# (C)

1... ♗xd5! 2. ♗d4+ (C) exd4
 3. ♞e4# (B) (2. ♞e4? (B) – 3. ♗d4#,
 2... ♗e3+!)

1... ♗f6 2. ♗xf4+ exf4 3. ♞f5#
 (2. ♞e4? (B) – 3. ♗d4#/ ♗xf4#,
 2... ♞g7+!)

1... ♞f5 2. ♞xd6+ exd6 3. ♞xd6#

The problem B28 (3rd h.m.) is presented by its author as a form of Adabashev synthesis with 2 triplets of variations; the 1st triplet includes the threat and 2 variations in which we find at the 2nd move the 2 mates A/B which intervene in the threat (recurrence / change of function of moves) – as we see quite often today.

The 2nd triplet has, as its unifying element, blockings on the 1st black move; this link is quite

tenuous, but it is acceptable even if it is quite elementary; it should be noted however that the harmful effect of the variation 1... ♗f6 is not only the blocking of f6 but also the loss of control of f4 both by the black Bishop and the ♞f7; and also that the blocking effect is exploited on the 3rd move in 1 variation (1... ♞f5) and on the 2nd in the other 2: this attenuates the impression of unity of the whole triplet, which obviously is rather a defect in this thematic context.

Nevertheless, despite these last remarks, it emerges from the whole of the problem a very pleasant impression which justifies in my eyes its ranking; this feeling comes first from the good use of the white material. In trying to deepen the reasons, it seems simplistic to reduce the problem to this single juxtaposition of Adabashev triplets; there are also several elements that link the 2 triplets: First, all 2nd moves are sacrifices of white pieces (except for the only quiet move 2. ♞e4); then the moves ♗d4 and ♞e4 appear either on the 2nd move, either on the 3rd (with an exchange of the 2nd and 3rd white moves); finally the move 2. ♞e4? is to be considered as a try on the 2nd move after 1... ♗xd5 and 1... ♗f6 which highlights anti-dual effects (checks to the white King 2... ♗e3+ and 2... ♞g7+); we can also say that 1... ♗xd5 corrects the variation 1... ♗a6. The author further points out that in 4 variations the threat 2. ♞xe5 is

refuted by 4 different captures on e5.

One can certainly see there a kind of patchwork, with a lack of thematic unity; each of the elements mentioned is hardly sufficient on its own, but taken together it emanates a certain richness to which I admit to being sensitive (and I am well aware, particularly in this case, of the subjective dimension of this judgment).

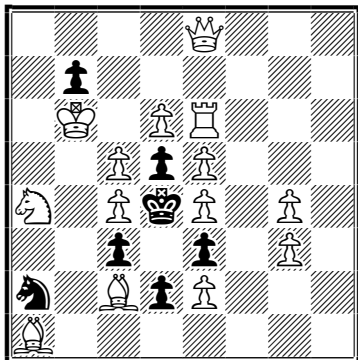
However a weakness of the problem in my opinion is the key played by the ♖d2 which is out of play. I think the author would benefit from reworking this point to present a better key at the possible cost of a little additional material (*). This is obviously only a personal and therefore subjective assessment without impact on the ranking in this case.

(*) Without having worked in depth, here are some possibilities:

- ♖d2→b3, ♜d5→d4, +black ♠c3;
key: 1. ♜d5! (1...exd4 is provided on diagram by 2. ♜e4# (B), and the key sacrifices the Rook for the ♖c7)

- ♖d2→b3, ♜a3→c5, +black ♠c3,
+white ♠a3; key: 1. ♜b4! with the tries 1. ♜c~? ♜f5!

B32 – Special Honorable mention



#3

14+7

*1...dxe4 2. ♜g6 (A) – 3. ♜xe4#,
2... ♜xc4 3. ♜xe4#

*1...dxc4 2.d7 (B) – 3. ♜d6#/d8 ♜/ ♜#,
2... ♜b4 3. ♜xc3#

*1... ♜xc4 2. ♜b5+ ♜d4 3. ♜d3#

*1... ♜~ 2. ♜xc3+ ♜xc4 3. ♜b5#

1. ♜b3? zz

1...dxe4 2.d7 (B) – 3. ♜d6#/d8 ♜/ ♜#,
2... ♜b4 3. ♜xc3#

1...dxc4 2. ♜b5 (C) – 3. ♜xc4#,
2... ♜xe4 3. ♜xc4#, 2...cxb3 3. ♜d3#

1... ♜xe4 2. ♜g6+ ♜d4 3. ♜d3#

1... ♜~ 2. ♜xc3+ ♜xe4 3. ♜g6#

1...d1~!

1. ♜d1! zz

1...dxe4 2. ♜b5 (C) ♜~ 3. ♜xc3# (P)

1...dxc4 2. ♜g6 (A) ♜~ 3. ♜xc3# (P)

1... ♜xc4 2. ♜b5+ ♜d4 3. ♜d3#

1... ♜xe4 2. ♜g6+ ♜d4 3. ♜d3#

1... ♜~ 2. ♜xc3+ (P) ♜xe4 3. ♜g6#
(A), 2... ♜xc4 3. ♜b5# (C)

1.♔d3? zz
 1...dxe4 2.♖g6 (A) – 3.♖xe4#,
 2...exd3 3.♖xd3#
 1...dxc4 2.♖b5 (C) – 3.♖xc4#,
 2...cxd3 3.♖xd3#
 1...d1~!

The B32 posed some difficulties for me as a judge.

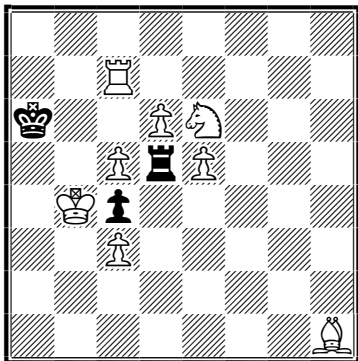
On the positive side it features a cyclical Zagoruiko (aka Rice theme in Cyclone terminology) in a matrix that seems original. This result in principle is significant: it is a difficult theme, for which there are relatively few achievements, and finding something new deserves praise; moreover, achievements with quiet 2nd moves are extremely rare. The author also points out the presence of Adabashev pairs, exchange of White's 2nd and 3rd moves, and the presence of an additional try (1.♔d3?) with reciprocal change: but in my eyes, here, these additional characteristics add very little to the problem, they are certainly present, but somewhat artificial or “mechanical”, and the primary interest of the problem is indeed the cyclical Zagoruiko which focuses attention.

Exclusive lovers of letters games may be satisfied; but the aesthetic expectations that I can have of a chess problem are not really satisfied: the blocus form, with a very limited and strategically quite poor Black play, makes it a very “static” problem, very formal and very “mechanical”... The key of

course gives a flight, but it prevents the only unprovided move that refutes most attempts, including the thematic try (1.♔a3?), and including the additional try (1.♔d3?) which then, having the same refutation, clearly underlines this defect. This refutation is also imprecise (“a random move”): this would be acceptable, but it is an additional flaw even if it is minor. Finally the matrix and the game are very symmetrical, and this, in such a not very dynamic position, generates a certain boredom when reading the solution. Having quickly gone through the 3# cyclical Zagoruiko in the databases, I would say that this one (which is the only blocus in all its phases) is far from being among the best, at least for my taste, even if of course its mechanism and its matrix are interesting.

So I decided to give a “special” reward to this problem; torn between a Prize to reward thematic achievement in a certainly new matrix, and a commendation (or even the elimination) due to the aesthetic inadequacies for my liking, I have opted for the middle ground of a special mention.

B17 – 1st Commendation



#3

8+3

- 1. ♖xd5?? stalemate
- 1. ♖d8? zz ♜xd6!
- 1. ♖d4! zz
- 1... ♜xe5 2. ♖b7+ ♜a7 3. ♖c6#
- 1... ♜xd4 2. ♖c6 – 3. ♖b5#
- (2. ♖b7+? / 2. ♖b5?)
- 1... ♜xd6 2. ♖b5 – 3. ♖b7# / ♜a7#,
- 2... ♜d7 3. ♖b7# (2. ♖b7+? / ♖c6?)
- 1... ♜xc5 2. ♜xc5 ♜a5 3. ♜a7#
- (2. ♖b7+?)

The B17 is a find, a Meredith for which I did not find anticipation - but the risk remains. After a sacrifice key by the white Knight introducing a zugzwang (underlined by the try 1. ♖d8? ♜xd6!) the solution is composed by 4 variations which constitute a black Rook cross.

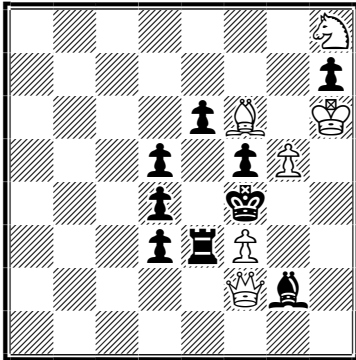
The first 3 variations are particularly interesting because they include:

- A cycle of occupied squares by White: b7, c6, b5 (to be compared to the 4th prize with the same kind of theme)

- 3 model mates
- A set of anti-dual effects (not reported by the author), consisting of a black correction with 3 correcting variations and a dual-avoidance couple:
 - 1... ♜xe5 is a primary variation (which could be written 1... ♜~) with the primary harmful effect, opening h1-b7: 2. ♖b7+ ♜a7 3. ♖c6#
 - The other 3 Rook moves correct this variation by preventing the mate 3. ♖c6 (by capture on the 2nd or 3rd move); 1... ♜xd4 and 1... ♜xd6 share a common secondary harmful effect, the loss of access to c5 on the 2nd move (2... ♜xc5??), allowing 2 continuations: 2. ♖c6 and 2. ♖b5; they are therefore linked by dual avoidance.

This thematic variety is very good for such a light position. To be reprinted in the anthologies...

B19 – 2nd Commendation



#3

6+9

1. ♖xh7? (2. ♖g6#) 1... ♜xf3
 2. ♖g6+ ♜e4 3. ♖xd4#, 2... ♜g4
 3. ♖h4#, 1... ♜xf3!

1.g6! – 2. ♜g5+ ♜e5 3. ♖f7#

1... ♜xf3 2. ♖xd4+ ♜g3 3. ♖h4#

1... ♜xf3 2. ♖h2+ ♜e4 3. ♖e5#,
 2... ♜g4 3. ♖h4#

The B19 shows in the real play 2 beautiful variations in Diagonal/Orthogonal correspondence, with ample movements and nice mating moves by the white Queen. The thematic black moves, by the bishop and the rook, are both Queen line openings, blockings on f3, and, virtually, interferences of the black piece that remained in place: for lovers of labels, we have here a kind of Latvian Novotny (a white piece is already on the critical square before the key) in which the thematic continuations are not threats.

It's certainly a "little thing", but this play is visually pretty and it seems to me that it sticks in the

memory. What surprised me the most here was to find no anticipation (it may have escaped me), and if indeed the position is new, in my opinion it deserves to be recognized.

The whole play is very pleasant and very clean, with a good threat and the black king mated on 4 different squares in the real play (I like also the good use of the White Bishop which protects the Queen in both mates on e5 and h4). The author wished to incorporate a try, surely to meet the understandable need to give a little more consistency to the whole, and also to give more play to the ♖h8 (without this try 1 piece can be saved); this try involves the same 1st black moves, one with a changed continuation, the other as a refutation. This try is a little "away" from the main idea, but it is natural, well done, and in my opinion very welcome.

So ends my judgment, and it is fun to relate the very first problem to the latter, which in a certain way have several elements in common (Diagonal/Orthogonal echo play by the white queen, with long mating moves after the Black King move...): the technical or even artistic level is not the same, but I have my pleasure with both! Things have finally come full circle...

Congratulations to the winners,
and my sincere thanks to all the
participants for the pleasure they
gave me.

Jean-Marc Loustau,
July 20, 2023