



ECSC INTERNET COMPOSING TOURNEY SKOPJE 2026

ANNOUNCEMENT

On the occasion of the 19th European Chess Solving Championship (ECSC), organised by the chess club "Gambit" ASSECO-SEE with the support of the Chess Federation of Macedonia, in the State's capital Skopje from 8 to 10 May 2026, an Internet composing tourney was announced for mates in 3 moves (#3) and helpmates in 2.5 or 3 moves (h#2.5 or h#3). The tourney judge Zoran Gavrilovski set the following theme:

Shift of at least 2 white moves and/or 2 black moves, which appear in different stages of at least 2 variations (including a threat) of #3 or 2-n solutions (not twins) of h#2.5 or h#3 (in the announcement at <https://ecsc2026.wfcc.ch/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/Announcement-of-the-ECSC-Internet-composing-tourney-2026.pdf> there were 8 examples of the set theme).

INTRODUCTION

The overall quality of the received 34 problems by 19 authors from 11 countries was quite good, which justified their separation into the sections of mates in 3 moves (in spite of the small number of these orthodox problems) and helpmates in 2.5 and 3 moves.

MATES IN 3 MOVES (SECTION A)

PARTICIPANTS

Valery Shavyrin – 1; Anatoly Vasylenko – 2; Leonid Ljubashevsky & Leonid Makaronez – 3; Srećko Radović – 4; Vlaicu Crişan & Eric Huber – 5.

FINAL AWARD

by Zoran Gavrilovski, International Judge of the FIDE for chess compositions

The small number of the participating entries in this section could be explained by the relatively short 1-month period for chess composing for the Internet tourney, as well as by potential participants' engagements with important obligations, such as helping their national team in the ongoing WCCT.

N# 45 is anticipated by Vyacheslav Pichenko, *Thèmes-64* 1986 (the diagram and solution of the older #3 are available at <https://www.yacpdb.org/#359482>). The only difference between the two virtually identical renderings of the *Jacobs* theme's white-move cycle and 3 *Umnov* moves by Black on the same square is the try 1. ♘d3? e5! in N# 45, but this try has an unfortunate dual after 1... ♘f8 2. ♘ab2+ & ♘db2+ which could have been avoided by moving the ♘ from g7 to h8, thereby making the try random 1. ♘c-?(=1. ♘d3?!/♘a6?) as an introduction to the option key.

1st Prize

N# A1 – Valery Shavyrin



#3 * 9+10

* 1...d:c3 2. ♘:c3#
1. ♘c1! (2. ♘b2! A ~/d3 x/d:c3 y 3.c:d4# C/c4# B/♘:c3#)
1... ♘a4 2.c4 B ~/d3 x 3. ♘d3# D/♘b2# A
1... ♘c4 2.c:d4+ C ♘:d4 3. ♘b2# [3... ♘c4??]
1... ♘:d5 2. ♘d3+ D ♘e6 3. ♘g4# [2./3... ♘d5??]
1...d3 x 2. ♘:e3 ~ 3. ♘d4#
1...d:c3 y 2. ♘:e3+ ♘d4/♘:f4 3. ♘e4#/♘e2#

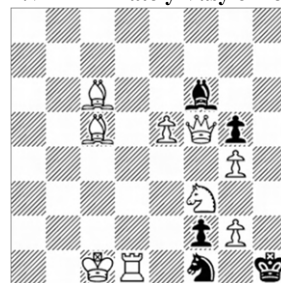
The author labelled this *Adabashev* synthesis "unusual" and, indeed, it exceeds the usual quantity (i.e. the minimum requirement of showing 2 groups of variations with matched play within each group and difference of play between the groups). The three pairs (with 2+2+2 lines of play) are listed below:

- I) Exchange of the white 2nd and 3rd moves (1...~ 2.A x 3.B# & 1... ♘a4 2.B x 3.A#) with *Visserman* change after 2...x/y (defences which reappear as 1st moves of Black in pair III), and 3rd moves of White in threats 3.C#/D# (which re-appear as 2nd moves of White in pair II);
- II) Shift of C & D which are now 2nd moves of White after self-blocking by ♘b3 on a square distant from the ♘ [1... ♘c4 ... 3... ♘c4??] or adjacent to the ♘ [1... ♘:d5 ... 2./3... ♘d5??];
- III) Shift of x & y (defences by ♘d4) which are now 1st moves of Black, followed by play on the same square (e3) on the 2nd move of White (W2) and mate by the white piece which played W2.

Triple presentation of the Internet tourney theme (twice with white moves, once with black moves) is achieved in a reasonably light and excellently constructed setting, after a very good key by ♘d2 which abandons the position from which it copes with the strong set play defence 1...d:c3. This perfect combination of "algebraic" pattern and harmonious strategic play fully deserves its top place in the award and I believe that it will also be included in the FIDE Album 2025–2027!

2nd Prize

N# A2 – Anatoly Vasylenko



#3 v 9+5

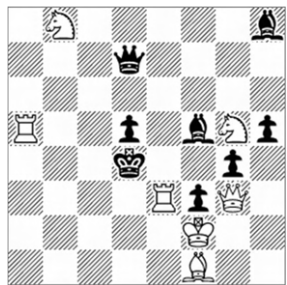
1. ♘:f2? A (2. ♘d3! ~ 3. ♘:f1# B)
1... ♘:e5 2. ♘:e5 ~ 3. ♘h7# C
[1... ♘:g2 2. ♘~(g5/h2/g1)+ ♘h2 3. ♘h7#]
1... ♘e7!
1. ♘g1! (2.g3+D ♘h2 x/♘:g1 y 3. ♘:f2# E; 2. ♘h7+? C ♘:g1! b)
1... ♘h2 x 2. ♘:f2! E ~/♘e3, ♘g3 3.g3# D/♘f3#
1... ♘:g1 y 2. ♘:f2+ A [2. ♘:f2+? E ♘h2! a] ♘h1(2) 3. ♘h7# C
1... ♘h2 2. ♘e2+ [2. ♘h7? C f1 ♘, ♘!] ♘f1/f1 ♘ 3. ♘h7# C/♘g3#
1...f:g1 ♘ 2. ♘h7+ C [2. ♘:f1? B ♘h2! a] 2... ♘h3 3. ♘:h3#
1... ♘g3 2. ♘h7+ C ♘h5 3. ♘:h5#

Four thematic moves of White (D and E are exchanged, C is shifted from W3 to W2, A is W1 in the try and W2 in the solution) and two thematic moves of Black (a & b are shifted from B2 to B1).

The author also invoked the move by the ♘ on f1 (labelled by him as B), but it can hardly qualify as thematic because in the solution it is merely a virtual move. The value of the otherwise good try with a quiet threat is diminished by a dual W2 after 1... ♘:g2, but this virtual phase adds difficulty to the actual phase which starts by surprising unpin of ♘f1, continues with direct or indirect white battery play and ends in 3 pin-mates (after 1... ♘:g1/♘h2/f:g1 ♘). This threemover is less harmonious than N# A1, but its good strategic content within the interesting solution still justifies the high ranking.

Special Honourable Mention

Nº A4 – Srećko Radović



#3

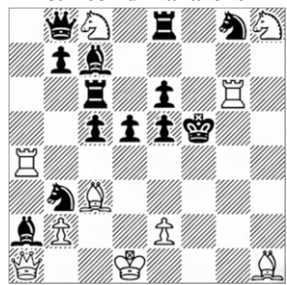
7+8

1. ♖a6! (2. ♘e6+ A ♙:e6 ♜:e6 3. ♜f4# B/♗a4# C)
 1... ♜c7 2. ♜f4+ B ♜:f4/ ♙e4 3. ♗a4# C/♘e6# A
 1... ♙c2 2. ♗a4+ C ♙:a4/ ♜:a4 3. ♜f4# B/♘e6# A
 [1... ♙d3 2. ♗:d3+ ♜c4 3. ♗c5#
 1... ♜d6 2. ♗a4+ ♜b4 3. ♗:b4#]

Jacobs and Keller themes in a familiar scheme. Compare with N° I) in the Appendix, where the black thematic pieces are the same and the white material differs, there are 3 pairs of sacrifice in the threat and 2 thematic variations (in N° A4 no third pair of sacrifices takes place because, after 1... ♜c7 2. ♜f4+, 2... ♙e4 does not capture the ♜) and the economy is better than N° A4.

Commendation

Nº A3 – Leonid Ljubashevsky & Leonid Makaronez



#3

10+13

1. ♗g4! (2. e4+ d:e4 3. ♙:e4#)
 1... ♜d6 2. ♗6g5+ A ♜f6 3. ♙:e5#
 1... ♙b1 2. ♜:b1+ e4 3. ♗6g5# A
 1... ♙d2 2. ♗4g5+ B ♜f4 3. ♙:d2#
 1... ♜d8 2. e3! ~ 3. ♗4g5# B

Shift of two thematic moves on the same square in 4 variations is a good achievement, but inferior in comparison with a number of #3s showing the *Hartong* theme's mates in 3 variations and the shift thereof on W2. Regrettably, there are too many pieces on the chessboard and ♜a1 is poorly used, only for playing the 2nd move after 1... ♙b1 with ugly capture of the black bishop.

HELPMATES IN 2½-3 MOVES (SECTION B)

PARTICIPANTS

Emanuel Navon – 1, 2*, 3, 10, 21; Menachem Witztum – 2*, 4, 5, 25*, 26*, 27*; Yuri Bilokin – 6*; Evgeny Gavryliv – 6*, 7; Mario Parrinello – 8, 9, 11, 12; Nikola Stolev – 13; Ingemar Lind – 14, 15, 16, 17, 18; Velko Aleksandrov – 19, 20; Oleksandr Semenenko – 22; Bruno Garcia Perez – 23*; Ricardo de Mattos Vieira – 23*, 24, 25*, 26*, 27*; Predrag Žuvić – 28; Vlaicu Crișan & Eric Huber – 29.

FINAL AWARD

by Zoran Gavrilovski, International Judge of the FIDE for chess compositions

The good quantity of the received entries in this section was accompanied by an even higher quality. In ranking the helpmates, I gave advantage to those showing double or multiple rendering of the set theme with strong and/or matched strategy, which in a thematic tourney are superior in comparison with the entries with a lesser thematic content. The latter group includes:

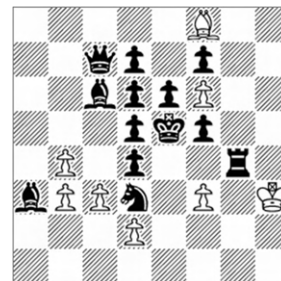
a) helpmates which are not included in the award on account of being surpassed by other entries in this tourney (such as incomplete cycles in two solutions N°s A14-16 & A28 whose lack of a third solution is not compensated by particularly strong strategy and/or original play); and b) helpmates with only two thematic moves in 2 or 4 solutions which are either not honoured or are not placed at a higher place in the award which they might have occupied in a hypothetical event of judging an informal tourney with the same entries. Specific reasons for not including particular problems in the award are given below.

N° 29 combines *Indian* theme, *Grimshaw* and gate opening by ♙s in two solutions, which is the main difference in comparison with the gate opening by ♗ or ♙ in the helpmates in three moves by Toma Garai, 2nd Pr. *Rex Multiplex* 1984 (<https://www.yacpdb.org/#88789>); and Martin Hoffmann, *Schweizerische Schachzeitung* 1987 (<https://www.yacpdb.org/#442285>). The h#3 by Andrey Zhuravlev, *Problemblad* 1996 (<https://www.yacpdb.org/#368387>) is more different (because of its gate opening by a single piece (♜) on B1 and a distant self-block by it on the black 2nd move), but in turn it is more attractive than N° 29.

N° 18 has a complete cycle of white moves by ♘ and two ♙s with familiar play by black pieces, starting with moves by the black king (the determination of which is ensured by means of the necessity of opening a line to a white piece or vacating a square for arrival of a white piece) and continuing with a two-move manoeuvre by a black piece which in the end self-blocks a square adjacent to the black king. In this respect, one should not overlook the more economical renderings (Meredith, with 3 units fewer) by Viktor Syzonenko, 1st Pr. *Problemblad* 1997 with ♗, ♘ & ♙ (<https://www.yacpdb.org/#303996>); Dieter Müller, *Sinfonie Schachsticke* 1986 with ♗, ♘ & ♙ (<https://www.yacpdb.org/#532205>) and Harald Grubert, *Springaren* 1987 with ♘, ♙ & ♙ (<https://pdb.dieschwalbe.de/search.jsp?expression=k+%3D+%27cycle%27+and+stip+%3D+%27h%233%27+and+s+%3D+%27springaren%27+and+a+%3D+%27grubert%27>). Having said the above, N° 17 with its 7+13 pieces did not stand a chance in this composing tourney.

1st Prize

Nº B26 – Ricardo de Mattos Vieira & Menachem Witztum



H#2½ 4 solutions 8+13

- 1... ♙:d6+ A 2. ♜:d6 c4 B 3. ♙e5 c5# C
 1... c4 B 2. ♜d8 c5 C 3. ♜:f6 ♙:d6# A
 1... c:d4+ D 2. ♜:d4 ♙h6 E 3. e5 ♙e3# F
 1... ♙h6 E 2. ♗g6 ♙e3 F 3. ♗:f6 c:d4# D

Six thematic moves with incomplete cycles of white moves AB-BC-CA and DE-EF-FD matches the algebraic formula of my h#2½ from TMP 2026 in the tourney announcement, but with a different strategy in this “Helpmate of the Future” (HoTF) – a term similar to the *Adabashev* synthesis in the #3-genre: I) active *Zilahi*, *Kniest* & self-block on e5 after 1... ♙:d6+c:d4+; II) self-block on f6 after 1... c4 & 1... ♙h6 with another exchange of functions of ♙ c3/♙f8 (guard of the mating square/mating).

This content suffices to place the problem of the top of the award of this thematic tourney, although its overall merits might be considered lower in comparison with the tourney entries in which the theme is shown less intensively. In spite of the straightforward pattern and matched play of both sides, the position seems crowded and static owing to the high number of pawns. However, there is no apparent flaw, even though one would have wished to see a more elegant diagram position.

2nd Prize

N^o B8 – Mario Parrinello



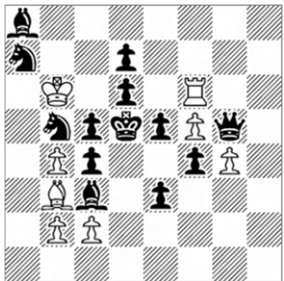
H#2½ 2 solutions 8+12

1...d4 2. ♖g3 x ♗:c6 A 3. ♕h3 y ♘:g6# B
 1...c:b4 2. ♕h3 y ♘:g6 B 3. ♖g3 x ♗:c6# A

The theme is doubled by means of indirect unpins of ♗c7 and ♕h7 in each phase. The unpinning black pieces ♕f1 and ♖g1 exchange their functions (unpin of a white pinned piece on the 2nd or 3rd move and *vice versa*) and open the h1-b1 line, while the unpinned pieces ♗c7 and ♕h7 also exchange their functions (control of a square/mating and *vice versa*). This idea and its realisation with orthogonal-diagonal correspondence of play is charming and it seems too tempting to be left unexplored by the helpmate experts, but – apart from *déjà vu* – I was not able to find anticipation.

3rd Prize

N^o B21 – Menachem Witztum



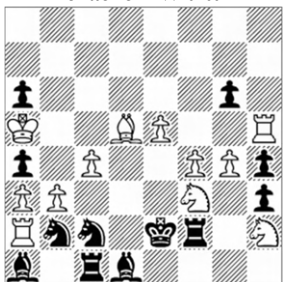
H#2½ 4 solutions 8+13

1...♕:c4+ A 2. ♖:c4 ♗:d6 B 3.c:b4 b3#
 1...♗:d6+ B 2. ♖:d6 ♕:c4 A 3. ♖e7 b:c5#
 1...♗g6 2. ♖:g4 ♗:g4 3.f3 ♕:c4# A
 1...♕a4 2. ♖a3 ♕c6+ 3. ♖d4 ♗:d6# B

Two thematic moves in all stages of two pairs of solutions: I) Exchange of 2nd & 3rd moves of White and the *Kniest* theme; and II) reappearance of the white moves as mates after ambush of ♕b3 or ♗f6 behind ♖b5 or ♖f4. This thematically strong problem suffers from the lack of harmony in the pair II, involving play by the black king after 1...♕a4 and a sacrifice by the black queen after 1...♗g6. This lack of harmony is unpleasant, even though it probably increases the difficulty of the solutions of the pair II.

4th Prize

N^o B2 – Emanuel Navon & Menachem Witztum



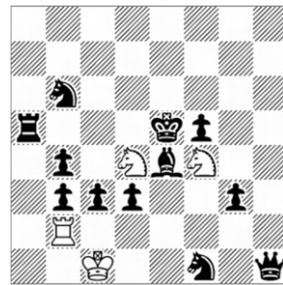
H#2½ 2 solutions 12+12

1...c5 2. ♖d3 ♕c4 A 3. ♕:e5 ♗:e5# B
 1...e6 2. ♖e3 ♗e5 B 3. ♗:c4 ♕:c4# A

In spite of showing the theme with only two thematic moves, and their different character (arrival on a free vacated square on W2 and mating by capture of a sacrificed black line piece), this problem combines the Internet tourney theme with an excellent strategy, involving gate opening, self-pin and half-pin, ending in two double pin-mates. Three pairs of units exchange functions: ♖b2/♖c2 (self-pinned/indirectly pinned and *vice versa*), ♕c4/♕e5 (square vacation/captured and *vice versa*), and ♕d5/♗h5 (pinning/mating and *vice versa*). The heavy setting was the price which was paid for making this idea sound.

5th Prize

N^o B22 – Oleksandr Semenenko



H#3 2 solutions 4+12

1. ♖d5 x ♗h2 2. ♖:f4 ♗h6 3. ♗d5 y ♕c6#
 1. ♗d5 y ♗a2 2. ♗:d4 ♗a6 3. ♖d5 x ♕g6#

The author claimed that this problem shows the “first-ever presentation of interchange on the same square of 1st and 3rd moves of Black in synthesis with *Zilahi*”, as well as model mates. There is inevitable symmetry of the white 2nd and 3rd moves, which must be excused. On the other hand, one might dislike the additional anticipatory gate opening effect of 1. ♗d5 and the additional line opening + interfering effect of 3. ♖d5, which slightly detract from the overall impression.

Special Prize

N^o B9 – Mario Parrinello



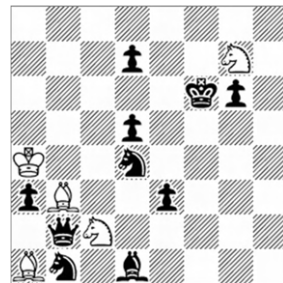
H#2½ 3 solutions 6+13

1...f:g3 A 2. ♖e3 ♕e5 B 3. ♖ce4 [♗e4?/♖fe4?] ♕f5# C
 1...♕e5 B 2. ♖f4 ♕f5 C 3. ♖e4 [♖fe4?/♖ce4?] f:g3# A
 1...♕f5 C 2. ♖f3 f:g3 A 3. ♖fe4 [♖ce4?/♖e4?] ♕e5# B

Cycle of white moves **ABC-BCA-CAB** with cyclic change of functions of ♕f2/♕g6/♕h4 (flight giving/square control/mate) and self-blocks on the same vacated square (Follow-my-leader) resembles earlier problems such as Syzonenko’s h#3 (see N^o II in the Appendix), but N^o B9 is the first example of cyclic triple avoidance which is homogeneously motivated in all solutions by means of control of mating squares. Therefore, notwithstanding that the earlier problems have a better economy of material, the pure triple avoidance of N^o B9 elevates it to the prize rank.

1st Honourable Mention

N^o B11 – Mario Parrinello



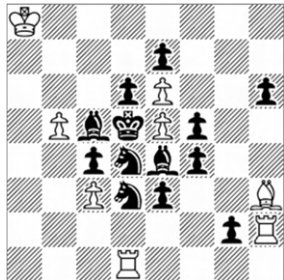
H#3 2 solutions 5+10

1. ♖a2 ♕e6 [♕f5?] 2. ♖f5 ♕:d5 A 3. ♖b3 ♕:e3# B
 1. ♖c1 ♕f5 [♕e6?] 2. ♖e6 ♕:c3 B 3. ♖c2 ♕:d5# A

The thematic exchanged moves are made by white half-pinned pieces. The content is enriched by double opening of the a1-f6 line: 1) by the black queen which turns the half-pin into pin, thereby necessitating the black knight’s unpin by the black king on B2; and 2) by the black knight whose *Umnov* move on the square that has been vacated by a white piece unpins the remaining white piece from the initial half-pin. Owing to the black queen’s guard of d5 from a2 (masked after B1) or of e3 from c1, an anti-dual choice of W1 is required. In addition to the exchange of functions of ♕b3/♕c2 (square control/mating), there is exchange of squares of arrivals on W1 and B2.

2nd Honourable Mention

N^o B27 – Ricardo de Mattos
Vieira & Menachem Witztum



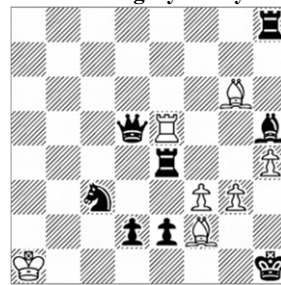
H#3 2 solutions 8+13

1. ♖:e5 A ♘:g2 2. ♜:d3 ♚:h5 3. ♞:e6 B ♚:f5#
1. ♜:e6 B ♘:f5 2. ♞:d4 ♚:h6 3. ♞:e5 A ♘:e6#

A good rendering of the set theme with two thematic moves, achieved with interesting strategic motifs. The black half-pin is activated by means of annihilation of a white pawn on e5 or e6 by one of the half-pinned black knights and its switchback on B2 in order to unpin the other black knight which eventually self-blocks a square adjacent to the black king. Although one of the final positions involves pin of the returned black knight, while in the other one both a black knight and ♘e4 is also pinned, but this variety can be excused in light of the constructional necessity of employing the white pieces with a varied tactical motivation.

Commendation

N^o B7 – Evgeny Gavryliv



H#3 2 solutions 7+8

1. ♘:f3 ♘:e4 A [♚h5?] 2. ♚:h4 [♘g2?] ♚:h5 B 3. ♘:g2 ♚:h4#
1. ♚:h4 ♚:h5 B [♘e4?] 2. ♞:f3 [♚h2?] ♘:e4 A 3. ♚:h2 ♘:f3#

This helpmate involves a careful choice of the order of moves: a) of the white pieces (*Umnov* 1st moves by ♚e5 on h5 or ♘g6 on e4 fail because White would interfere with a line of a black piece which has to sacrifice on h4 or f3, respectively); or b) of the black pieces (♚h8 or ♞d5 must make immediate use of the opened gate). The exchange of functions of ♚e4/♘h5 (passively captured on W1/*Pelle* move on B3 and *vice versa*) and of ♘g6/♚e5 (pinning with capture on W1/mating with capture and *vice versa*) and model pin-mates naturally fit in this ostensibly familiar set-up.

I thank the ECSC Skopje 2026 organisers for announcing the ECSC Internet composing tourney. I also thank the participants and I congratulate the authors of the honoured problems. My gratitude is extended to Predrag Žuvić for his proof-reading of the brochure with the tourney awards.

Anticipation or other claims could have been sent to the tourney judge until 02.06.2026. No claims of any kind were received, so the tourney results are **final**.

In Skopje on 9 May 2026 (the Victory Day),

Zoran Gavrilovski, International Judge and Grandmaster of the FIDE for chess compositions

3rd Honourable Menton

N^o B20 – Velko Aleksandrov



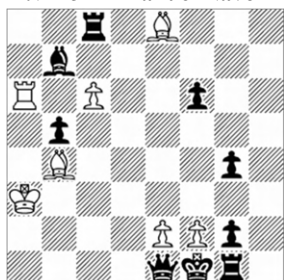
H#2½ 4 solutions 6+10

- 1... ♘:g6 2. ♘:d3 ♚:f5 3. ♞:e4 f3# A
1... ♚:g5 2. ♘:d5 ♘:f5 3. ♞:e5 f4# B
1... ♚:a4 2. ♞:d5 f3 A 3. ♞:e5 ♘:c4#
1... ♘:f1 2. ♞:e4 f4 B 3. ♘:d3 ♘:g2#

Another HotF in which a ♞ makes the thematic shift with: I) indirect pawn-battery mates after white *Grimshaw* on g6; and II) the white pawn's line opening on the 2nd move which allows White to control squares adjacent to the black king. The repetition of the black king's arrival on e4 in different moves is non-thematic and the additional capturing effect of the critical move 1...♚:g5 is unfortunate, but these slight flaws do not detract much from the overall impression.

Special Honourable Mention

N^o B3 – Emanuel Navon



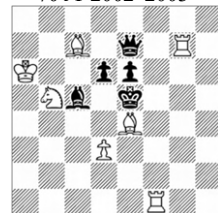
H#2½ 2 solutions 7+9

- 1...c7 2. ♞:e2 x [♞:f2?] ♚:f6 A 3. ♞:f2 y ♘:b5# B
1...c:b7 2. ♞:f2 y [♞:e2?] ♘:b5 B 3. ♞:e2 x ♚:f6# A

Exchange of the 2nd and 3rd moves of Black x and y (which are played from different departure squares) with annihilation of ♞e2 or ♞f2 by the ♞ and her hideaway-motivated self-pin by means of capturing ♞f2 or ♞e2, exchange of the 2nd and 3rd moves of White with exchanged functions of ♚a6/♘e8 (pinning/mating and *vice versa*), and model pin-mates. The wrong choice of B2 fails because the 1st move of White had opened a line of ♘b7 or ♚c8, thus guarding the mating line f6-f1 or b5-f1 by Black. The last 4 half-moves were shown in h#2s (see N^{os} III) and IV) in the Appendix), but the added reciprocal dual avoidance justifies a special distinction.

APPENDIX FOR SECTIONS A & B

I) L. Gombosurengijn
1st Pr. S. Chimedtseren –
70 JT 2002–2003



#3 7+5

1. ♘:c6! (2. ♘:d6+ A
2... ♞:d6 3. ♚:g5# B
2... ♘:d6 3. d4# C)
1... ♘:e3 2. ♚:g5+ B
2... ♞:g5 3. d4# C
2... ♞:g5 3. ♘:d6# A
1... ♞:h4 2. d4+ C
2... ♘:d4 3. ♘:d6# A
2... ♞:d4 3. ♚:g5+ B
[1... ♘:f2 2. ♚:f2~3. d4#]

II) V. Syzonenko
2nd Pr. M. Manolescu –
60 JT 1998–1999



H#2½ 3 solutions 4+11

- 1... ♘:f5 A 2. ♞:e6
2... ♞:b6 B 3. ♚:e5
3... ♘:d7# C
1... ♞:b6 B 2. ♞:d6
2... ♘:d7 C 3. ♘:e5
3... ♞:f5# A
1... ♘:d7 C 2. ♞:d5
2... ♞:f5 A 3. ♞:e5
3... ♞:b6# B

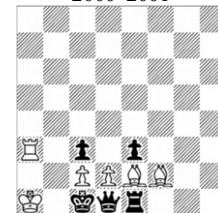
III) G. Nedeianu
Comm. V. Nestorescu –
65 JT 1995–1996



H#2 2 solutions 6+4

1. ♞:d2 x ♚:e7 A
2. ♞:e2 y ♘:b4# B
1. ♞:e2 y ♘:b4 B
2. ♞:d2 x ♚:e7# A

IV) M. Nieroba
Comm. *Rochade Europe*
2000–2001



H#2 2 solutions 6+5

1. ♞:d2 x ♚:c3 A
2. ♞:c2 y ♘:e3# B
1. ♞:c2 y ♘:e3 B
2. ♞:d2 x ♚:c3# A