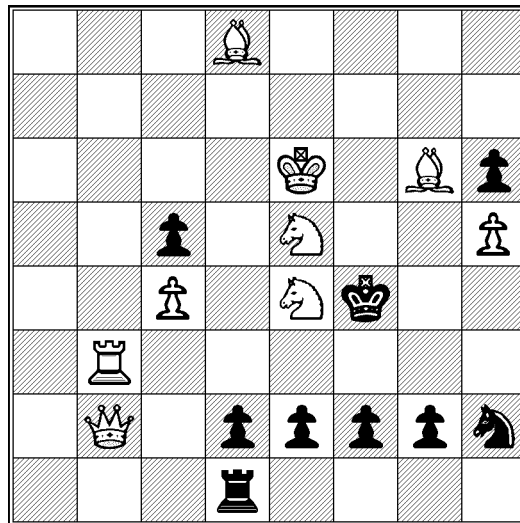


10th YCCC - Section A - #2 Award

The stipulation required that there should be a bP (or pawns) on the 2nd rank in the diagram position. Across various phases of play this pawn (or pawns) should promote and separately block a square (or squares) in the bK field. 17 entries were received.

1st Place 10th YCCC 2026

Stefan-Constantin Harnagea – A8

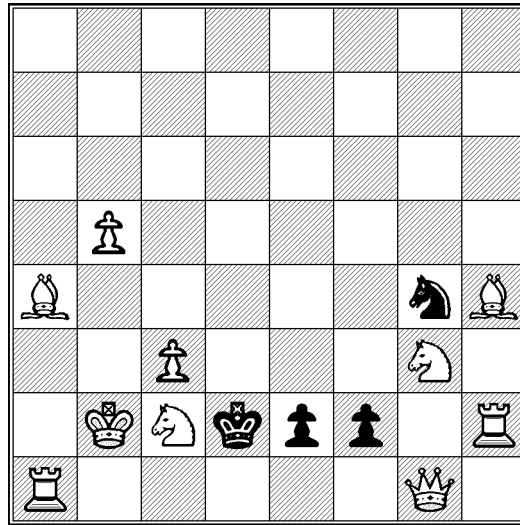


#2

1.Sxc5? (>2.Qd4) 1...Sf3 2.Rxf3 but 1...e1Q! 1.Qc3? (>2.Qg3/2.Qe3) These threats are separated by 1...e1Q 2.Qg3 and 1...g1Q 2.Qe3 but 1...f1S! 1.Rg3? (>2.Sd3) but 1...e1S! 1.Sxf2? (>2.Sh3) but 1...g1S! 1.Bf5? (>2.Sg6) but 1...g1Q! **1.Sc3!!** (>2.Sd5/2.Sxe2) This wonderful key gives two flights and these bK moves serve to separate the threats; 1...Ke3 2.Sd5 and 1...Kg3 2.Sxe2 (2.Sd5+? Sf3). Also 1...Sf3 2.Sxe2 and 1...f1Q (and other defences) forces 2.Sd5. This last variation means that now we have all 6 promotions of the 3 thematic pawns across the full course of the solution! All 3 bPs also essentially block flights in the extended bK field. The composer extended virtual play with a non-thematic try: 1. Sf6? (>2.Sd5) but 1... Sf3! This was the most ambitious and thematically complete entry of the tourney and I most heartily congratulate its composer.

2nd Place 10th YCCC 2026

Anton Nasyrov – A19

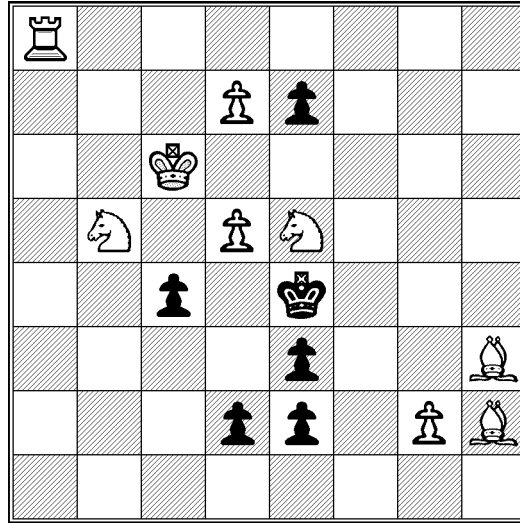


#2

1.Sb4? (>2.Qc1) 1...e1~ 2.Qxe1 but 1...Ke3! Surprisingly the key simply waits thus creating a *Zugzwang* position. **1.Se1!!** (-) 1...f1~ 2.Sxf1-A/ Rxe2-B/ Rd1-C/ Qd4-D and Se4-E. 1...fxg1S 2.Sf1-A, 1...fxg1Q 2.Rxe2-B, 1...fxe1S 2.Rd1-C, 1...fxe1Q 2.Qd4-D. 1...S~ 2.Bg5 and 1...Se3 2.Se4-E. This last variation is very important for here bPe2 *essentially* blocks a square in the bK field. When combined with 1.Sb4? e1~ 2.Qxe1 it is clear that this is indeed a thematic example. In the mates 2.Sf1 and 2.Rd1 the bPe2 is passively pinned and this reveals another function. Finally 1...Ke3 2.Bg5; the key has provided a guard of f3! I had difficulty in ranking this problem. Generally speaking diagonal flights are easier to handle than orthogonal ones and so the give and take W1 openings are not ideal. There is nowhere near the *thematic* intensity of the first placed problem but the sheer imagination involved in attempting the complete separation of quintuple mates and the unusual use of the half-pin together made a huge impression. I had expected nothing like this!

3rd Place 10th YCCC 2026

Renārs Mūzis – A2

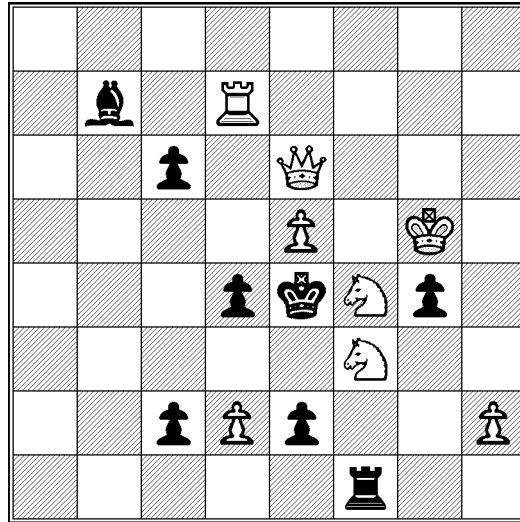


#2

1.Ra4? (>2.Rxc4) but 1...d1Q! 1.Kc5? (>2.Sc3) but 1...d1S! 1.Rh8? (>2.Rh4) but 1...e1Q! 1.g4? (>2.Bg2) but 1...e1S! **1.Sd3!** (>2.Sc5) 1...Kd3 2.Bf5 and 1...cxd3 2.Ra4. (1.Rf8? threat 2.Bf5 but 1...e6!) I just loved how the wBs directed the wR to h8 in order to induce the 1...e1Q! refutation, and also the multi-functionality of bPc4, blocking in the immediate and extended bK fields. Writing of such matters, bPe7 refutes a try *and* prevents a second threat after 1.Kc5? There is a very full use of the board adding to the sense of a fine construction!

4th Place 10th YCCC 2026

Ilija Serafimović – A9

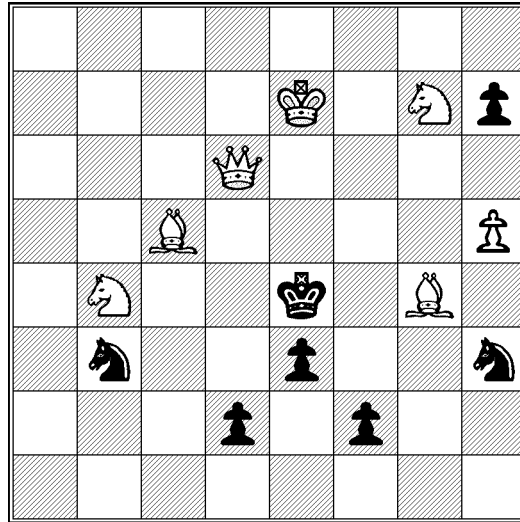


#2

1.Qxg4? (>2.Rxd4) 1...Rxf3 (gxf3) 2.Qf5 but 1...c5! 1.Qc4? (>2.Qd3/2.Qxe2) 1...Rxf3 2.Qxd4, 1...e1S 2.Qe2, 1...e1Q 2.Qd3, 1...Ba6 2.Qxc6, 1...Kxf3 2.Qxe2 but 1...c1S! **1.Sd3!** (>2.Qf5) The generous key grants a second flight! 1...Rxf3 2.Sc5, 1...Kxd3 2.Rxd4 and 1...Kxf3 2.Qxg4. In the first try we witnessed the variation 1...Rxf3 2.Qf5. Post-key 1...Rxf3 defends against the threat of 2.Qf5, the Dombrovskis paradox. 3 distinct mates are arranged for 1...Rxf3 over the course of the solution. In addition to the key, 1.Sh3? also guards f2 in the extended bK field but this is refuted by 1...Rxf3! This fine problem has been composed in the “modern” idiom and for this reason I wanted to place it high in the award. Little details – individually trivial – niggled me. bPg4 is used to shield the bK from check meaning that the first try is not only flight-taking but is also a capturing move. And wPh2 is shown to be a camouflage unit post-key.

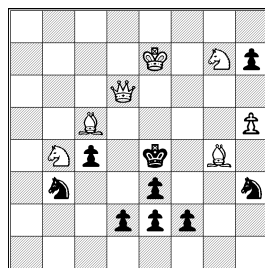
5th Place 10th YCCC 2026

Ural Khasanov – A3



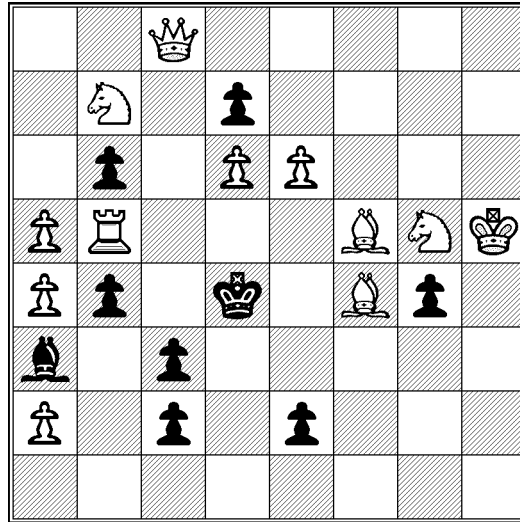
#2

1.Sa2? (>2.Sc3) but 1...d1S! 1.Sf5? (>2.Sg3) but 1...f1S! 1.Se6? (>2.Qd5) but 1...d1Q! 1.Se8? (>2.Sf6) but 1...f1Q! **1.Bxe3!** (>2.Qe6) 1...Kxe3 2.Qe5 – a mate other than the threat is always valuable after the bK takes his flight. 1...Sxc5/Sd4 2.Q(x)d4 and 1...Sg5/Sf4 2.Q(x)f4. This is the same program as we find in the third placed problem. The wSg7, so prominent in the try play, has no function in the solution. However, the composer should be rewarded for his ambition – it is notoriously difficult to handle the orthogonal flight of the bK! Here this requires the use of the wQ and this leads to mildly unfortunate tries with a repeated refutation – 1.Kf6?/1.Qf6? f1Q! I wonder whether the author investigated the possibility of the version diagrammed below?



#2

1.Sd5? 1...d1S/f1Q 2.Sf6/Sc3 (threats) 1...Kd3 2.Bf5 but 1...Sd4! Is it worth adding two extra bPs for this extra content?

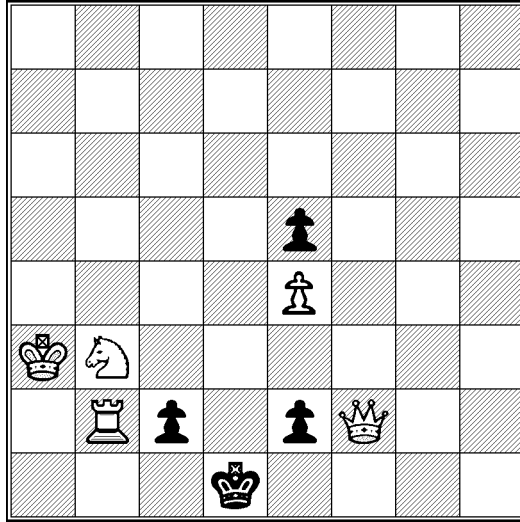


#2

1.Sc5? 1...Kc4/Kd5 2.Sb3 threat and 1...bxc5 2.Qxc5 but 1...c1S 1.Kxg4? (>2.Sf3) but 1...e1S! 1.exd7? (>2.Se6) but 1...e1Q! 1.Rc5? (>2.Qh8) 1...dxe6 2.Sxe6 but 1...e1Q! 1.Be4? (>2.Rd5) but 1...dxe6! **1.Bd3!** (>2.Qc4) 1...Kxd3 2.Rd5. This setting teems with ingenuity. A lot of value has been obtained from the reciprocal captures involving the d7/e6 pawns and I was pleased that wSb7, redundant after the key, serves to prevent cooks by 1.Qa8?/1.Qb7? This was another problem I had initially downgraded because of the rather clumsy position (eg the a/b file arrangement) but now I believe that was again too harsh. The key grants an orthogonal flight and the subsequent mate is nicely introduced by 1.Be4? High endeavour and ambition should be rewarded; greater elegance will come with time.

8th Place 10th YCCC 2026

Anirudh Daga – A14

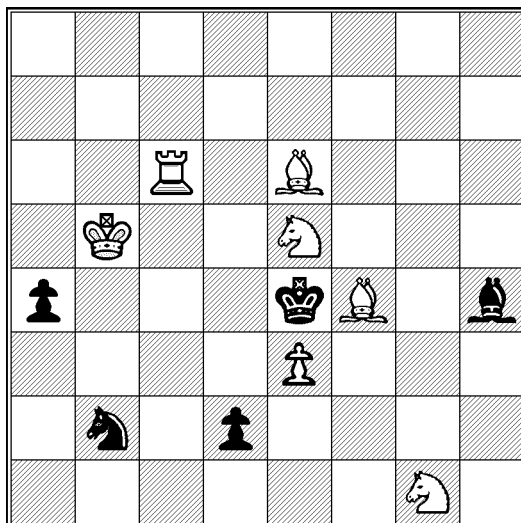


#2

The diagram position is a complete block: 1...e1Q 2.Qxc2, 1...c1S 2.Rd2, 1...e1S 2.Qd2 and 1...c1Q 2.Qxe2. White tries to force the pace with 1.Qe3? (>2.Qd2/2.Qc1) 1...Ke1 2.Qg1 (bPe2 blocks) but 1...e1Q! refutes. So White waits... 1.Qg2?/2.Qh2? but 1...c1S! White corrects: 1.Qc5!? (-) 1...c1~ 2.Qxc1 but 1...e1S! 1.Ra2? (-) 1...c1Q+! 1.Ka2? (-) 1...c1S+! 1.Kb4? (-) 1...e1Q+! Finally **1.Ka4!** (-) when the set play *is* realised in its entirety. The thematic intensity is not high; bPe2 blocks and promotes to Q/S but that is all. bPc2 is *not* thematic although its promotions fit well with the stipulation. This work gains its relatively high position because I regard it as a very original interpretation developed with a very pleasing economy.

9th Place 10th YCCC 2026

Maxim Nyrkov – A18

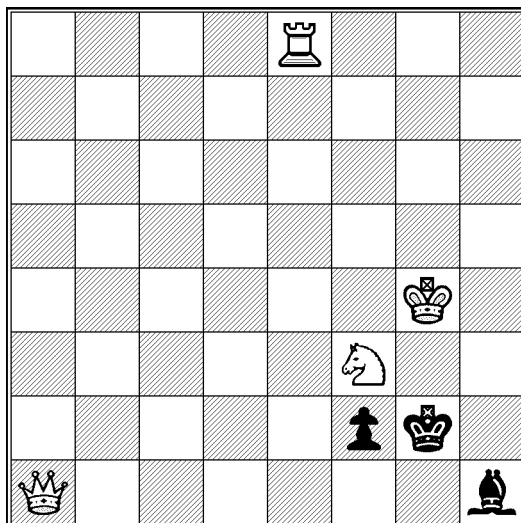


#2

1.Se2? (>2.Sc3) 1...Sd1 2.Rc4 but 1...d1S! 1.Sgf3? (>2.Sxd2) 1...Sc4 2.Rxc4, 1...Be1 2.Sg5 but 1...d1Q! **1.Sd3!** (>2.Sc5) 1...Sxd3 2.Rc4, 1...Be7 2.Sf2 and 1...Kd3 2.Bf5. With only one thematic pawn this is not an intense rendering of the theme but I do love the way the limited force has been put to use. The key gives a flight and wSg1 responsible for the tries essentially guards e2 when the bK flees. The key move corrects 1.Sd7? (>2.Sc5) 1...Be7! Black Sb2 defends in the various phases by moving to all 3 available squares. In this context bPa4 jars a tiny bit; I propose removing it and shifting the wR to c8. (This eliminates 1.Rd6? with a repeated refutation 1...d1Q!) The position can then be shifted one file to the left, to avoid the technical bPa4. I believe this will further improve this very elegant Meredith.

10th Place 10th YCCC 2026

Alexandru Mihalcescu – A4

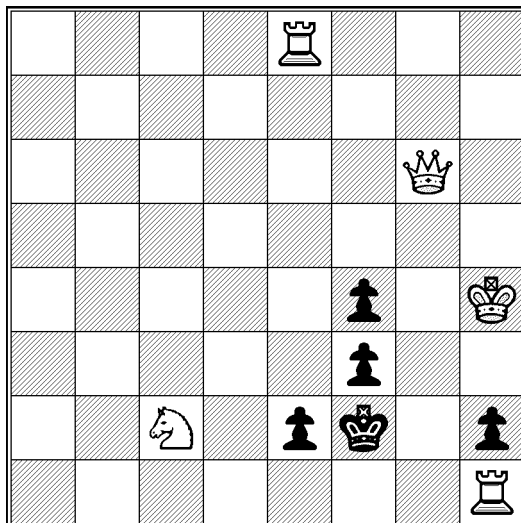


#2

1.Rh8? (>2.Rh2/2.Qxh1) 1...f1Q 2.Rh2 but 1...f1S! **1.Qh8!** (>2.Qh3) 1...Kf1 2.Qxh1 – bPf2 blocks and bBh1 prevents the mate threat. Again thematic intensity is rather limited; in the try the Q promotion separates one of the two threats and the S promotion refutes. However, to show this bare minimum with a sweeping “corner to corner” flight-giving key in exquisite miniature form is a considerable achievement.

11th/12th Place ea 10th YCCC 2026

Ben Smolkin – A6

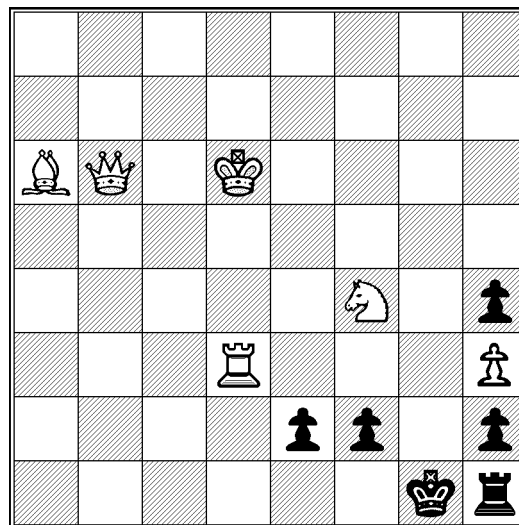


#2

White can operate with threats... 1.Kh3? (>2.Qb6) but 1...e1Q! 1.Se1? (>2.Sd3) but stalemate! 1.Sb4? (>2.Sd3) but 1...e1S! So White waits... 1.Rd8? (-) 1...e1S 2.Rd2 but 1...e1Q! 1.Re1? (-) 1...h1S 2.Qg1 but 1...h1Q+! Although 1.Re1? is crudely defeated by a non thematic bP, the try is well motivated in an attempt to prevent moves of bPe2. **1.Se3!** (-) A very good key! 1...e1Q 2.Rxh2, e1S 2.Sd1 and 1...fxe3 2.Qg3 (bPe2 blocks). A great deal of play has been extracted from a mere 10 units. A small piece of (cosmetic) advice; I think it would be better to centralise the position by moving everything one file to the left.

11th/12th Place ea 10th YCCC 2026

Denys Farkash – A10

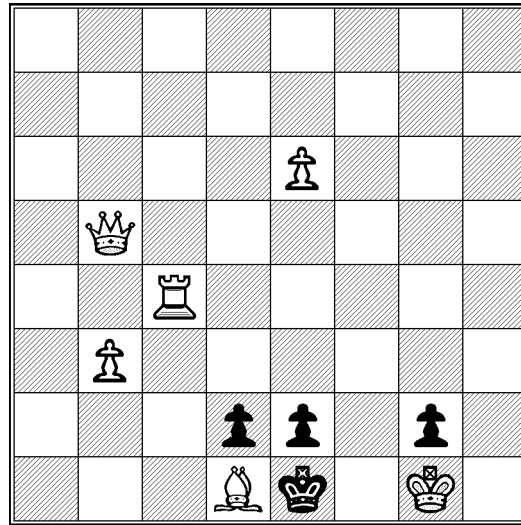


#2

Set 1...Kf1 2.Rd1. 1.Rd5? (-) 1...e1Q 2.Rg5 but 1...e1S! 1.Rd2? (-) 1...e1S 2.Qxf2 but 1...e1Q! **1.Re3!** (-) The excellent key liberates bPf2: 1...f1Q/S 2.Rg3, 1...e1Q/S 2.Rxe1 and 1...Kf1 2.Qb1 (bPf2 essentially blocks the square) I enjoyed this conception in which the wR provides all the options. However, the unwanted 1.Rf3? (>2.Qxf2) is unfortunate.

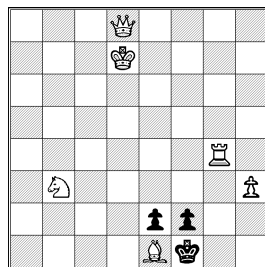
13th/14th/15th Place ea 10th YCCC 2026

Oleksandr Veksler – A1



#2

1.Rc1? (>2.Qxe2) 1...exd1Q/S 2.Qe5 but 1...dxc1S! 1.Qf5? (-) 1...Kxd1 2.Qb1, 1...exd1Q 2.Qf2 but 1...exd1S! **1.Qe5!** (>2.Qxe2) 1...Kxd1 Qa1 when bPs d2/e2 act as blockers. Both pawns promote across the full solution thus enabling the claim of theme doubling. However, 1...dxc1S is an exceptionally powerful refutation that is only made possible by the try itself. It guards the threat square and opens a flight. I would prefer a different use of the matrix.

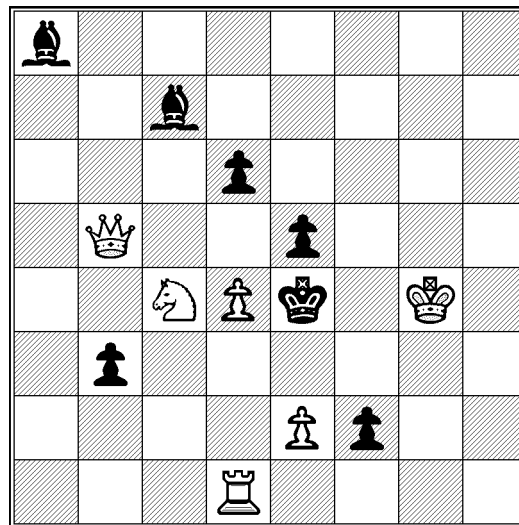


#2

1.Qh4? (>2.Qxf2) 1...Kxe1 2.Rg1, 1...fxe1S 2.Sd2 but 1...fxe1Q! 1.Qa8? (>2.Qh1)
 1...fxe1Q 2.Qg2, 1...Kxe1 2.Qa1 but 1...fxe1S! **1.Qf6!** (>2.Qxf2) 1...Kxe1 2.Qa1.
 (1.Qb6? carries the same threat with 1...f1Q/S 2.Q/Rg1 but 1...Kxe1!)

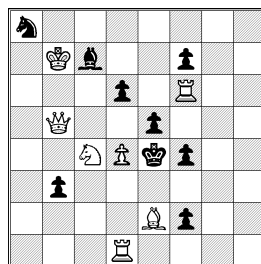
13th/14th/15th Place ea 10th YCCC 2026

Maksym Kryshafor – A5



#2

Set play: 1...exd4 2.Qf5. 1.Rd3? (>2.Sd2) 1...Ba5 2.Sxd6 but 1...f1S! **1.Se3!** Kxe3
 2.Qd3 (threat) and 1...exd4 2.Qe8. Having achieved the main thematic demand
 and a nice change of mates after 1...exd4, the composer stopped. With some
 more pieces on the board the overall content could be enriched:

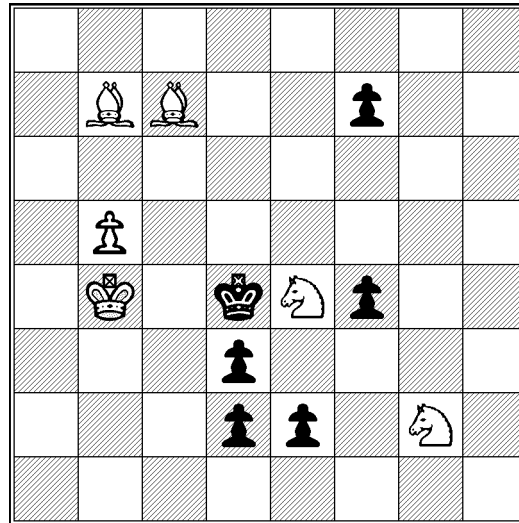


#2

1...exd4 2.Qf5. 1.Rd3? (>2.Sd2) 1...Ba5 2.Sxd6 but 1...f1S! 1.Qxb3? (>2.Qf3/2.Bf3)
1...Kd5 2.Sxd6 but 1...f1Q! **1.Se3!** Kxe3 2.Qd3, 1...exd4 2.Qe8 and 1...fxe3 2.Bf3.

13th/14th/15th Place ea 10th YCCC 2026

Taras Rudenko – A16

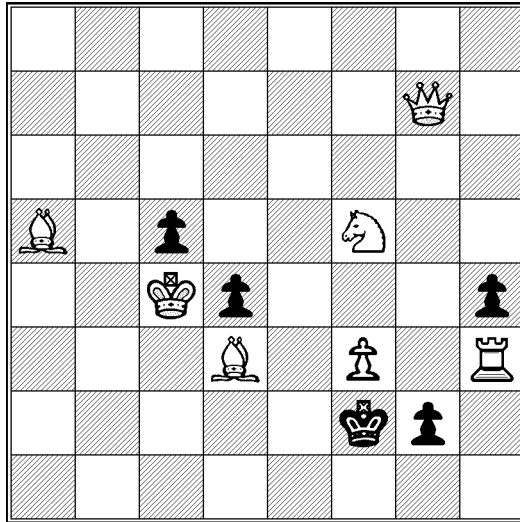


#2

1.Sxd2? (>2.Sf3/2.Sb3) is refuted in style by 1...e1Q! The double threat is separated by two further tries with single threats; the Barnes theme. 1.Sg5? (>2.Sf3 only) but 1...e1S! and 1.Sc5? (>2.Sb3 only) but 1...d1Q! **1.Sh4!** (>2.Sf5) 1...Ke3 2.Bb6. In the first instance I was seduced by the first 3 tries but for 1.Sxd2? e1Q! (pinning) it is necessary for d2 to be both blocked and guarded. Consequently after 1.Sh4! Ke3 2.Bb6 it is clear that bPd2 is not fully thematic. Furthermore, wSe4 has no function at all in the key phase.

16th/17th Place ea 10th YCCC 2026

Arseniy Saga – A7

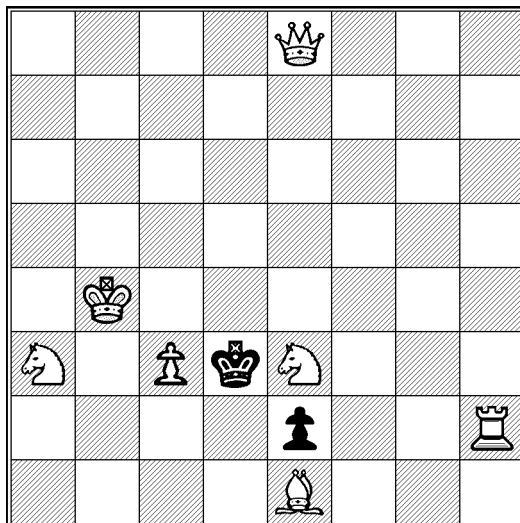


#2

1.Qb7? (-) 1...g1Q 2.Qb2, 1...g1S 2.Rh2 but 1...Kg1! **1.Qe5!** 1...Kg1 2.Qe1 (threat) bPg2 essentially blocks the bK in this variation. 1...g1Q 2.Qe2 and 1...g1S 2.Qh2. The changes are well wrought but sadly the mates are concurrent. I cannot ignore the fact that the refutation of the try is by the bK flight that has no provision in the diagram position. A solver is unlikely to take 1.Qb7? seriously.

16th/17th Place ea 10th YCCC 2026

Lev Galchenko – A11



#2

The bK must be released from its stalemate position, a most imaginative way of introducing the promotions. **1.Sf1!** (>2.Qxe2/2.Qe3/2.Qg6/2.Rh3) 1...exf1S uniquely forces 2.Qe2 but the other 3 threats are not separated. 1...exf1Q defeats all 4 threats but allows 2.Rd2# thanks to the line-opening. However, I cannot detect a situation in which bPe2 blocks and this was a requirement of the tourney. 1.Sd1? adds 2.Sb2/2.Sf2 to the 4 threats indicated above but 1...exd1Q! refutes. We can see that the need to release stalemate was a real constraint. The attempt to economise by removing wSa3 and repositioning the wK on b3 backfires. A cook emerges: 1.Qa4! Kxe3 2.Rh3# when bPe2 is indeed a blocker!

I have enjoyed analysing the 2026 crop of YCCC two-movers. The overall standard was most encouraging and I saw imagination and determination aplenty. I congratulate the medal winners and indeed all who participated. I trust that the less successful composers gained valuable experience from the exercise and, if eligible, will return next year with enhanced expertise! It remains for me to once again thank Udo Degener, Marjan and all the other helpers without whom this enterprise would not be possible.

David Shire

Canterbury, July 2026