

Phenix 2019- Studies provisional award

I received 26 entries on anonymous diagrams from the editor Daniel Capron and that was the way they were judged. For checking soundness and originality I consulted Gady Costeff. I thank them both as well as to all participants for their creative efforts. All candidate entries passed the soundness test intact however two of them had to be excluded due to serious anticipations. The winning mechanism in No. 8519 (Tarasiuk) was already shown more than once (4 examples are enclosed). No.8615 (Melnichenko) is entirely anticipated by N. Kralin, 2nd Pr. Shachmatnaya Moskva 1968 (enclosed). I am very pleased with the level of the 13 entries that have made it to the provisional award.

1st- 2nd Prize: No. 8617 (M. Pasma) An amazing interpretation of the Phoenix theme honours the title of this magazine. The sacrificed Knight is reborn to win the game by a hair. The alternative underpromotion to a Bishop is a strong try leading just to a positional draw as Black is well in time to build up a fortress.

1st- 2nd Prize: No. 8610 (S. Nielsen & M. Minski) In a seemingly hopeless position White manages to coordinate his scattered pieces and dismantle the lethal threats of the enemy queen. On the way to the saving stalemate a range of tactical devices are cleverly used, highlighted by the quiet sacrificial deflections 13.Rd4!! and 14. Rd6!! One of the most powerful demonstrations I have seen of harmonious collaboration between a Rook and a Knight.

3rd Prize: No. 8613 (V. Tarasiuk & A. Khandurin) The knight is sacrificed twice on h1, first for a winning Rook ending and then for a surprising Zugzwang. The underpromotion of a black knight after 7...Kg4 on the very same thematic square h1 adds a touch of humour to the main theme.

4th Prize: No. 8611 (J. Henning Ulrichsen) A coast to coast journey of a knight is usually an attractive vision even if its very final stage here is not new.

Special prize: No. 8526 (J. Mikitovics) A highly original and very special pawn play with an amazing reciprocal Zugzwang display highlighted by the stunning 11.d4+!! If I am the composer I would seriously consider starting the solution on the sixth move and give up this fairly known knight foreplay that has nothing much to do with the delicious main dish.

1st Hon. Mention: No.8521 (M. Pasma) A fierce but precise struggle to secure promotion with quiet sacrifices of all white pieces but one.

2nd Hon Mention: No.8520 (P. Kyriakov) A lovely miniature with fluent and natural play employing a variety of tactical motives by both sides.

3rd Hon Mention: No. 8518 (Arestov & D. Keith) A clever Bishop manoeuvre is followed by a subtle King choice to result in a familiar victorious pawn ending.

4th Hon Mention: No.8612 (J. Mikitovics) Precise defensive play with an appealing mutual switch back ending up in perpetual check.

1st Commendation No. 8609 (P. Kiryakov & P. Arestov) A paradoxical retreat of the Knight to the middle of nowhere ends up in a surprising repetition.

2nd Commendation: No. 8417 (P. Arestov & A. Zhukov) There is nothing much new about the systematic movement however postponing the immediate promotion just like its refutation, are surprising.

3rd Commendation No. 8419 (P. Krug) Following a middlegame like king- hunt the black monarch seems to reach a safe haven when the surprising Qxe7! shatters this illusion.

Special Commendation: No. 8415 (A. Avni & M. Minski) 3 model stalemates are glittering in otherwise a lukewarm pawn / queen ending.