

7TH THEMATIC TOURNEY OF THE MACEDONIAN PROBLEMIST 2023:

List of participants

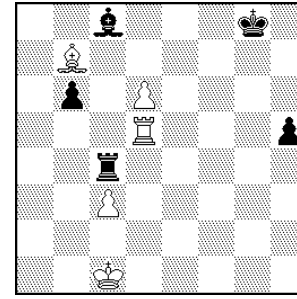
Jakob Aagaard – 1; Pavel Arestov & Daniel Keith – 2, 3; Serhiy Didukh – 4; Serhiy Didukh & Lewis Stiller – 5; Steffen Slumstrup Nielsen & Martin Minski – 6; 'uboš Kekely – 7; Oleg Pervakov – 8; Michael Pasma – 9, 10, 11; Yochanan Afek – 12; Luis Miguel Gonzales – 13; David Navara, Jaroslav Polásek & Emil Vlasák – 14; Jan Sprenger – 15

AWARD by John Nunn

15 studies were entered for this tourney, which was perhaps a slightly disappointing number, but in compensation several of the studies were of high quality. They were anonymised so I was not aware of the identities of the composers. After careful consideration, I have included 8 in the award.

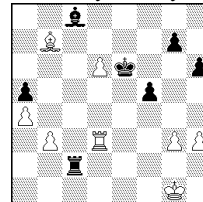
1st Prize: № 8, Oleg Pervakov

An outstanding study with a game-like starting position. The 1st move closely resembles the game Haik Martirosyan – Chopra Aryan, 6th Sharjah Masters, UAE 2023 (<https://www.chessbase.in/news/6th-Sharjah-Masters-2023-Round-7-report>), but there's a great deal more to the study. The tactic 1. ♔a6! is echoed by the switchback 3. ♕b7!, but the main point is the excellent logical try on move 2. The incorrect 2. ♖b2? forces White to capture Black's b-pawn on move 8, and this leads to a stalemate far in the future. By choosing the correct route for the king via d2-d3 Black is obliged to play ... ♖c1 rather than ...b5 and this allows White to avoid the capture of the b-pawn, foiling Black's attempts to stalemate himself on h1. It's an excellent example of the foresight theme. Curiously, one very appealing line wasn't mentioned by the composer. In the thematic try 2. ♖b2? ♖c6 3. ♕b7 ♖c4 4. ♖b3 b5 5. ♕:c8 ♖:c8 6.d7 ♖d8 7. ♖b4 ♖f7, an obvious question is why White can't avoid taking the b-pawn by 8. ♖c5, which would again prevent the stalemate. The answer is the cunning manoeuvre 8... ♖e6 9. ♖c6 h4 (the composer stopped here) 10. ♖d4 h3 11. ♖e4+ ♖f5! 12. ♖h4 ♖e5! 13. ♖h5+ ♖e4!, a Réti-type idea in which the king can support either pawn according to White's reply; for example, 14. ♖:h3 ♖d4! heads for the b-pawn, while 14. ♖:b5 ♖f3 goes the other way.



+ 5+5

Martirosyan – Aryan



47. ♔a6! ♖c1+ 48. ♖f2! ♖c2+
49. ♖e1 ♖c5 50. ♕c4+ ♖d7
51. ♕b5+ ♖d8 52.d7 ♕b7 53. ♖d6
53... ♖e5+ 54. ♖f2 ♖d5 55. ♖g6 1-0

1. ♔a6! As 47. ♔a6! (Martirosyan). [Too early 1. ♕:c8? ♖:c3+ 2. ♖d2 ♖:c8= White must win a tempo; 1. ♖g5+? ♖h8! 2. ♕:c8 2... ♖:c3+ 3. ♖d2 ♖:c8=; 1. ♖d2? ♕d7 2. ♖e5 (2. ♖:h5 ♖g7 3. ♖e5 3... ♖f6 4. ♖e7 ♕f5=) 2... ♖f8 3. ♕d5 ♖g4 4. ♖:h5 ♖g7 5. ♖e5 5... ♖f6 6. ♖e7 ♖g7 7. ♖:g7 ♖:g7=]

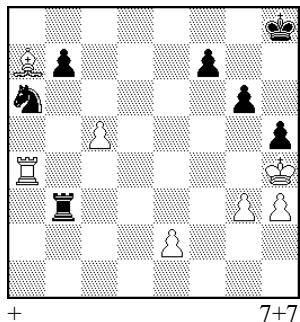
1... ♖:c3+ [1...b5 2. ♖c2! (2. ♖d2? ♕d7 3. ♕:b5 ♕:b5 4. ♖:b5 ♖f7! 5. ♖:h5 ♖e6 6. ♖h6+ ♖d7=; 2. ♖b2? ♕d7 3. ♖:h5 ♖c6! 4. ♕:b5 4... ♖b6! 5.c4 ♕e6 6. ♖c3 ♖:d6=) 2... ♕d7 3. ♖:h5 ♖c6 4. ♕:b5 4... ♖:d6 5. ♕:d7 ♖:d7 6. ♖f5 +-; 1... ♕:a6 2.d7 ♖:c3+ 3. ♖d2 3... ♖c8 4.d:c8 ♖+ ♕:c8 5. ♖d8+ +-]

2. ♖d2! [Logical try 2. ♖b2? ♖c6 3. ♕b7!? ♖c4 4. ♖b3 b5! 5. ♕:c8 (5. ♖:b5 ♖d4=) 5... ♖:c8 6.d7 ♖d8 7. ♖b4 ♖f7! 8. ♖:b5 (8. ♖c5 ♖e6 9. ♖c6 h4 (b4)=) 8... ♖e6 9. ♖c6 h4 10. ♖d4 ♖:d7 11. ♖:d7 ♖f5 12. ♖h7 ♖g4 13. ♖d5 h3 14. ♖e4 ♖g3 15. ♖e3 15... ♖g2! 16. ♖g7+ ♖f1 17. ♖h7 ♖g2 18. ♖e2 h2 19. ♖g7+ 19... ♖h1! = with stalemate – no black “b”-pawn] 2... ♖c6

3. ♕b7! (Switchback) 3... ♖c4 [3... ♖:d6 4. ♖:d6 ♕:b7 5. ♖d8+ 5... ♖f7 6. ♖d7+ +-; 3... ♖c5 4. ♖:c5 b:c5 5. ♕:c8+; 3... ♕:b7 4.d7 +-] 4. ♖d3 ♖c1! [4...b5 5. ♖:b5! ♖c1 6. ♖d2 Domination. 6... ♖c4 7. ♕d5+ +-] 5. ♕:c8 (in time!) 5... ♖:c8 6.d7 ♖d8! 7. ♖c4 ♖f7 8. ♖b5 ♖e6 9. ♖c6 h4 [9...b5 10. ♖:h5+ -] 10. ♖d4! 10...h3 [10... ♖:d7 11. ♖:d7+ - with b6-pawn no stalemate in the h1-corner!] 11. ♖e4+! (11. ♖h4? ♖:d7=) 11... ♖f5 12. ♖h4 1-0

2nd Prize: № 15, Jan Sprenger

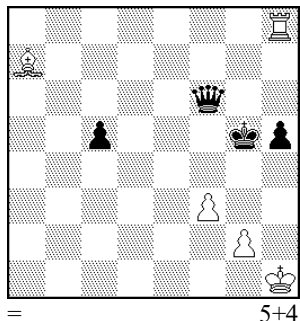
An excellent study for solving, starting from a very natural position. White foils Black's dangerous counterplay by sacrificing first his bishop and then his queen to drive the black king onto the back rank, exactly the position it occupied in the initial position. Studies with active play by both sides always create a favourable impression and until one sees the queen sacrifice it seems impossible to cope with Black's mating threats. The connection with the otb games quoted (Nigel Short – Jan Timman, 15th Interpolis, Tilburg (NL) 21.10.1991, <https://www.chessgames.com/perl/chessgame?gid=1124533> and Richard Rapport – Jan Sprenger, Schachbundes liga (GER) 17.9.2020 <https://www.365chess.com/game.php?gid=4270496>) is rather weak, but the study is undoubtedly appealing.



1.c6! ♖c7 **2.♙b8** [2...♙d4+ ♚h7 3.♙e5 f6 (3...♚h6 should also draw) 4.♙:f6 ♜d5 5.♙a8 ♜:f6 6.c7 ♖b5! transposes into the try 4.♙a8] **2...♜d5** [2...♜e6 3.♙e5+ ♚h7 4.♙a8! (4.c7? ♚h6 5.♙g7+?? ♜:g7! 6.c8 ♖g5#) 4...♙b4+ 5.g4 g5+ 6.♚:h5 +- and avoiding checkmate will cost Black all his pawns] **3.♙e5+** [3.e4 b:c6 4.♙a8 f6 5.♙d6+ ♚g7 6.♙a7+ ♚g8 7.e:d5 c:d5 wins a piece, but analysis reveals the endgame to be drawn. White needs to play g3-g4 to free his king, but cannot make further progress.] **3...♚h7** [3...f6 4.c7 ♜:c7 +-] **4.c7** [try 4.♙a8? f6 5.♙:f6 5...♜:f6 6.c7 ♖b5! 7.g4 g5+ 8.♚g3 ♜e4+ 9.♚f3 ♜d6 will eventually lead to a drawn rook endgame, e.g. 10.♙d8 h:g4+ 11.h:g4 ♙c5 12.♙d7+ ♚g8 13.♙:d6 ♖:c7] **4...♚h6 5.♙g7!** (first decoy sacrifice) **5...♚:g7 6.c8♙ ♜e3!** Planning ♜g2+, followed by ♖b5+ or f6+. **7.♚g5!** ♜g2 **8.♖h8+!!** second decoy sacrifice [try 8.♖d7? ♖b5+! Black decoy sacrifice 8...♙:g3+ 9.♙g4! h:g4 10.♖d4+ +-] **9.♖:b5 f6# model mate!** **8...♚:h8 9.♚h6 ♖e3 10.♙a8+ 1-0**

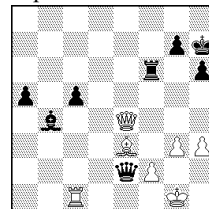
3rd Prize: № 4, Serhiy Didukh

This is another attractive study for solving since the variations are all clear-cut. The key idea is the unexpected self-pin of ♖ on move 6, echoing Ding Liren's 46...♖g6 in the final tie-break game of his 2023 FIDE World championship match against Ian Nepomniachtchi (<https://www.365chess.com/game.php?gid=4410716>, see the diagram on the right side). The lightweight setting (diagrammed below) presents the idea without any unnecessary frills or introductory play, which I think was the right decision. This is the type of study which appeals to otb players.



1.♙g8+! ♚h6! [1...♚f4 2.♙:c5 ♖h4+ 3.♚g1 ♖e1+ 4.♚h2 draw because ♖e5 is not a check [1...♚f5 2.♙:c5 ♖h4+ 3.♚g1 ♖e1+ 4.♚h2 ♖e5+ 5.f4! ♖:f4+ 6.♚h3!]] **2.♙:c5 ♖h4+ 3.♚g1 ♖e1+ 4.♚h2 ♖e5+ 5.f4!** [5.♚h1? ♖:c5 -] **5...♖:f4+ [5...♖:c5 6.♙g3+]**, fortress, the ♖ moves on f3 and h3] **6.♙g3!** [An attempt to build a fortress 6.♚h1? ♖h4+ 7.♚g1 ♖c1+ 8.♚h2 ♖e5+ 9.♚h1 ♖:c5 10.♙g3 ♖c1+! 11.♚h2 ♖c7 -; 6.♚h3? ♖f5+ -] **6...h4 7.♙e3 h:g3+ 8.♚h1 ♖:e3 stalemate, 1/2-1/2.**

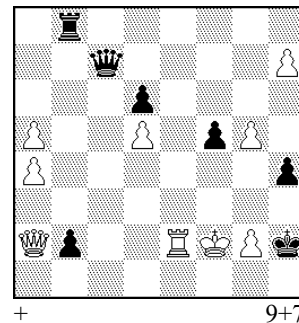
Nepomniachtchi – Liren



46...♖g6 47.♖f5 c4 48.h4 ♖d3 49.♖f3 ♖f6 50.♖g4 c3 51.♙d1 ♖g6 52.♖c8 ♖c6 53.♖a8 ♖d6 54.♙:d6 ♖:d6 55.♖e4+ 55...♖g6 56.♖c4 ♖b1+ 57.♚h2 a4 58.♙d4 a3 59.♖c7 ♖g6 60.♖c4 c2 61.♙e3 ♙d6 62.♚g2 h5 63.♚f1 ♙e5 64.g4 h:g4 65.h5 ♖f5 66.♖d5 g3 67.f4 a2 68.♖:a2 ♙:f4 0-1

4th Prize: № 6, Steffen Slumstrup Nielsen & Martin Minski

Like the 3rd Prize study, this features a self-pinning rook. There's a lot of exciting tactical play and a logical try, but the study suffers from a heavy and rather unnatural starting position (two pawns on the seventh rank, black king on h2). There are several immobile pawns and unfortunately they are all necessary; for example, the a4-pawn is there to prevent White escaping from a perpetual check by running his king to the queenside. Despite this, the study deserves a prize for its thrilling tactics.

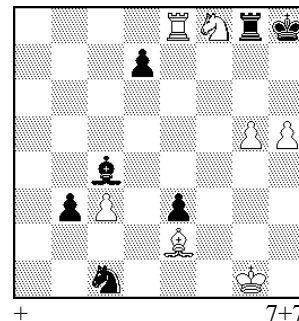


1.h8♙! White must first deal with the b2-pawn. **1...♖:h8 2.♖:b2 ♖c5+**, otherwise White wins trivially [2...♖a7+ 3.♖b6] **2.♚f3** foreseeing a black stalemate trap. White must allow the d6-pawn to move in the future. [Logical try: 3.♙e3! The premature Ding-pin 3...f4 4.g4! ♙b8! 5.♖a2! ♖d4! 6.♚f3+ ♖b2 7.♙e2+ 7...♚h3! 8.♖:b2 ♖:b2 9.♙:b2 stalemate] **3...♖:d5+ 4.♚f2** [4.♚f4? ♖c4+ 5.♚:f5 ♖d5+ 6.♚g4 ♖c4+ 7.♚f5 ♖d5+=] **4...♖c5+** [4...♖:g2+ 5.♚e1 ♖e8 6.♙:e8 (6.♙d2+-) 6...♖:b2 6...♖:b2 7.♙e2+; 4...♖c8 5.♖d2 (5.♖a3+-) 4...♖c5+ 6.♖e3+-] **5.♙e3!** The correct Ding-pin [5.♚f3 ♖c6+ (5...♖d5+) 6.♚f2 6...♖c5+ 7.♙e3 waste of time] **5...f4** [5...♙e8 6.♖c1!+- (6.♖c3+-); 5...♙b8 (♙c8) 6.♖c1+-] **6.g4!** [6.g3? ♖:e3+ 7.♚f1+ ♚h3 8.♖g2+ ♚g4] **6...♙b8!** [6...f:e3+ 7.♚f3+ ♚h3 8.♖g2#; 6...♖:e3+ 7.♚f1+ ♚h3 8.♖g2#; 6...h:g3+ 7.♚f3+ ♚h3 8.♖:h8#; 6...f:g3+ 7.♚f3+ ♚h3 8.♖g2#] **7.♖a2! ♖d4** [7...♖c1 [8.♚f3+ ♖b2 9.♙e2+ ♚h3 10.♖:b2 (10.♖a3)] **8.♚f3+** [Try 8.♚f1+? ♖b2 9.♙e2+ ♚h1 10.♙:b2 ♖d1+= with a perpetual (10...♖g1+=)] **8...♙b2 9.♙e2+ ♚h3 10.♖:b2** [10.♙:b2? ♖e3#] **10...♖:b2 11.♙:b2 +- no stalemate.**

Cf: the final tie-break game of the FIDE World championship 2023 Ding Liren – Ian Nepomniachtchi <https://www.365chess.com/game.php?gid=4410716>

1st Honourable Mention: № 5, Serhiy Didukh & Lewis Stiller

This is another study based on a game from the Ding Liren - Nepomniachtchi world championship match, this time game 6. The idea is a preparatory pawn move to set up a mating continuation with rook and knight. The model mate is artistic, and the follow-my-leader play of the bishops is a positive feature, but once White sets up his mating threat there's nothing Black can do about it, which creates a one-sided impression.

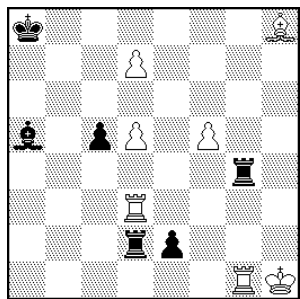


1.♚g6+! ♚h7 2.♙e7+ ♙f7! [2...♖g7 3.♙:c4 ♖:e7 (3...b2 4.♙e8 4...♙f7 5.♙h8+! ♚g7 6.h6+ ♚:g6 7.♙:f7+ ♖:f7 8.♙b8+=) 4.♙:e7 4...b2 5.♚f5! ♜e2+ 6.♚h2 b1 ♖g6+ ♚h8 8.g7+ ♚h7 9.g8♖#] **3.♙c4!** [3.♙:f7+? ♖g7 4.♙:g7+ ♚g7 5.♙f3 e2 6.♚f2 ♜d3+ 7.♚:e2 b2=] **3...♖g7 4.♙:f7 b2 5.c4!** Ding's theme. The pawn's move prepares a model mate. [Logical try 5.♙g8+! ♚g8 6.♙e8+ 6...♚f7 7.♙f8+ ♚e6 8.♙f6+ ♚d5+-; 5.h6? ♚e2+! 6.♚g2 ♙:f7 7.♙:f7+ ♚:g6 8.♙f6+ ♚h7! 9.♙b6 ♜:c3=] **5...♙e2+ [5...d6 6.h6! b1 ♖g7 7.♚f8+ ♚h8 8.h:g7+ ♚g7 9.♙g6+ +-] 6.♚h2!** [6.♚g2? ♜f4+! 7.♚:f4 ♙:g5+ 8.♚f3 ♚h6! 9.♙g6 ♙:g6=] **6...b1 ♖g7 7.♙g8+ ♚g8 8.♙e8+ ♚f7 9.♙f8+ ♚e6 10.♙f6# 1-0**

Compare with the game 6 of the FIDE World championship 2023 Ding Liren – Ian Nepomniachtchi <https://www.365chess.com/game.php?gid=4408121>

2nd Honourable Mention: № 9, Michael Pasman

This study is based on the tactical point at move 12, which closely resembles the finish of the game Baskaram Adhiban – Sergio Minero Pineda, Baku Olympiad 2016. The starting position is not very natural, with several pieces under attack and two pawns already on the seventh rank, but there's quite a bit of interesting play before we get to the finale. The move 12.♙f6! is not a Novotny because the reply 12...♖:f6 doesn't involve any interference with the bishop on d8; instead, the black rook is simply decoyed onto a bad square.



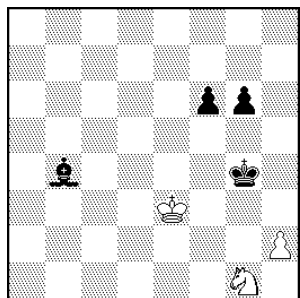
+ 7+6

Cf. Baskaran Adhiban – Sergio Minera Pineda, Chess Olympiad Baku (Azerbaijan), 03.09.2016 <https://www.365chess.com/game.php?gid=4408121>

1.d8♙+! ♙:d8 2.♖a1+ ♖a4! [2...♙b7 3.♖:d2; 2...♙a5 3.♖:d2 3...e1 ♙+ 4.♖:e1 ♙:d2 5.♖e8+ ♙b7 6.f6 ♖f4 7.♖e7+ ♙b6 8.f7] 3.♖:a4+ ♙b7 4.♖b3+! [Logical try: 4.♖e3 ♖d1+ 5.♙g2 e1 ♙ 5.♙g2 e1 ♙ 6.♖:e1 ♖:e1 Black king on b7 instead of c8 in the main line is draw] 4...♙c8 [4...♙b6 5.♖e4 ♖d1+ 6.♙g2 e1 ♙ 7.♖:e1 ♖:e1 8.f6] 5.♖e3! [Logical try: 5.♖e4 ♖d1+ 6.♙g2 6...e1 ♙ 7.♖:e1 ♖:e1! White rook on b3 instead of a4 in the main line is draw] 5...♖d1+ 6.♙g2 e1 ♙ 7.♖:e1 ♖:e1 8.f6 ♖e5 [8...♖e2+ 9.♙f3 ♖e1 10.♙g4; 8...♙:f6 9.♙:f6 ♖d1 10.♖a8+ 10...♙b7 11.♖d8] 9.f7 ♖f5 [9...♖g5+ 10.♙f3 ♖f5+ 11.♖f4] 10.♖a8+ ♙d7 11.♖a7+ ♙d6 12.♙f6! A move similar to this one appeared in the chess game Adhiban – Minera Pineda, 2016 [12.♙g7 ♙e7] 12...♖:f6 [12...♙:f6 13.f8♙+] 13.♖a6+ 1-0

1st Commendation: № 3, Pavel Arestov & Daniel Keith

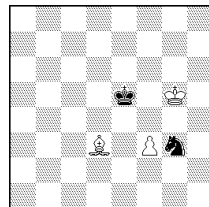
It's certainly surprising that the only way to draw involves playing the knight to h8 and the unexpected move 5.♙d3 is a bonus. One always worries about an anticipation for five-man positions, but I couldn't identify any specific precursor to № 3 (diagrammed below). There's a good connection to the over the board game example Jan Plachetka – Michael Schlosser, Austrian Team Championship 1990 (see the diagram on the right side).



+ 4+3

1.h3+! [1.♙f2? ♙c5+ 2.♙g2? ♙:g1 +] 1...♙g3! [1...♙h4 2.♙f3 ♙c5 3.♙e2! 3...♙:h3 4.♙f4 +] 2.♙e2+! ♙:h3 3.♙f4+ ♙g4 4.♙:g6 ♙c5+! [4...♙g5 4...♙c5+! [4...♙g5 5.♙h8! f5 6.♙f7+]=] 5.♙d3!! [Try: 5.♙e4? ♙d6! 6.♙d5 (see the otb game Jan Plachetka – Michael Schlosser (1990)) 7.♙h8 f5 8.♙f7 ♙c7! 9.♙d4 ♙g6 10.♙e5+ 10...♙:e5+ 11.♙:e5 ♙g5 +] 5...♙d6 6.♙h8! f5 7.♙f7 ♙c7 8.♙h6+ 1/2-1/2

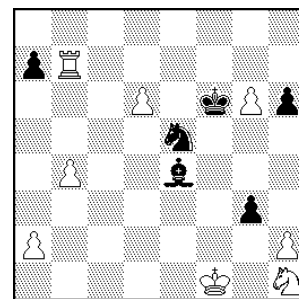
Plachetka – Schlosser



61...♙d4 62.♙g4? [62.♙h4! ♙h1 63.f4+] 62...♙h1! 63.♙a6 [63.f4? ♙:d3 =] 63...♙c3 64.♙b7 64...♙f2+ 65.♙f5 65...♙d3 66.♙g4 66...♙f4 1/2-1/2

2nd Commendation: № 14, David Navara, Jaroslav Poláček & Emil Vlasák

The reciprocal zugzwang comes out of the blue, but the significant problem is that the variations underlying it are extremely long and hard to understand.



= 8+6

Solution and comments by the authors: 1.♖f7+! [after the normal move 1.♙:g3? ♙:b7 White has three pawns for a piece, but ♙d6 and ♙g6 fall quickly and Black has a technical win 2.♙f2 ♙:g6 3.b5 ♙f6 4.a4 ♙e6 +] 1...♙:f7 [after 1...♙:g6 White didn't help himself much, and instead of 2.♙:g3?, White is saved by the surprising move 2.♙f2! guarding d3 (2...♙:f7 3.♙:e4 g:h2 4.♙g2 ♙f5 5.♙g3+ ♙e6 6.d7 ♙:d7 7.♙:h2 ♙c6 8.♙f5 h5 9.♙g3 ♙d6 10.♙:d6 ♙:d6 11.♙h4 11...♙d5 12.♙:h5 ♙c4 13.a3 ♙b3 14.♙g4 ♙:a3 15.b5 ♙b4 16.♙f4 16...♙:b5 17.♙e3 ♙b4 18.♙d2 ♙b3 19.♙c1); 2...♙c6 3.♖:a7 g2+ (3...g:h2 4.d7! ♙:d7 (4...♙:d7 5.♙g2) 5.♖a6) 4.♙g1 ♙f3+ 5.♙:g2) 3.♖e7!), 2...♙d3+! and Black wins again] 2.g:f7 g2+ 3.♙f2 [3.♙e2? ♙:f7] 3...g:h1 ♙+ [3...g:h1 ♙ 4.f8♙+] 4.♙c3 ♙:f7 5.♙:e4 ♙c6 6.♙e3!! We will see the meaning of the following manoeuvres below [6.d7? ♙:d7 7.♙f5 ♙f2 8.♙g6 ♙e6 9.h4 ♙d3 10.a3 ♙f4+ 11.♙:h6 ♙f6 12.a4 ♙d5 13.b5 ♙c3] 6...♙d7!? 7.♙e2! ♙c6 8.♙e3!! ♙:d6 9.♙f3!! A mutual zugzwang. It's difficult to imagine how the move 9...♙d5 could weaken Black's position, but it really does so (compare with Suat Atalik – Toni Miles, Iraklion (GR), 1993 (<https://www.chessgames.com/perl/chessgame?gid=1098358>), with a nice *Excelsior*) 9...♙d5 [9... White to move loses: 10.b5! - the best white move (The pawn endgame is lost: 10.♙g2? ♙d5 11.♙:h1 ♙c4 12.♙g2 ♙:b4 13.♙h3 ♙a3 14.♙h4 ♙a2 15.♙h5 a5 16.♙:h6 16...a4 17.h4 a3 18.h5 ♙b1 19.♙g6 a2 20.h6 a1 ♙; 10.♙g4? ♙f2+ 11.♙h5 ♙e5 12.h4 (12.♙:h6 ♙g4+) 12...♙f6 13.♙:h6 ♙d3 14.b5 (14.a3? ♙f4! 15.h5 (15.b5? ♙d5 16.h5 ♙c3 17.♙h7 ♙f7 18.♙h6 ♙:b5 19.a4 ♙c3 20.a5 ♙e4) 15...a6 16.a4 ♙d5 17.b5 a5) 14...♙c5! 15.h5 (15.a3? ♙e4) 15...♙a4 16.♙h7 ♙f7 17.h6 ♙c3 18.♙h8 ♙:b5 19.a4 ♙c7 20.a5 ♙e6 21.♙h7 ♙f8+ 22.♙h8 a6), 10...h5! the only move 11.♙f4 (11.a3 ♙c5! 12.♙f4 ♙f2! 13.♙g5 ♙g4 14.h4 (14.h3 ♙b5) 14...♙e5 15.♙h5 ♙f3 16.a4 ♙b4 17.♙g4 ♙:h4 18.♙:h4 ♙:a4 19.♙g3 ♙:b5 20.♙f2 ♙c4 21.♙e1 ♙b3 22.♙d1 ♙b2) 11...♙f2 12.♙g5 ♙c4+ 13.♙:h5 ♙c3 14.♙g6 Black has the ♙e7 option. This explains why the ♙'s move to d5 weakens Black. 14...♙e7! (14...♙:a2 15.h4 ♙e7!) 15.h4 (15.♙g7 ♙:a2 16.h4 ♙c3 17.h5 ♙:b5 18.h6 ♙d6 19.h7 ♙f7) 15...♙a2! 16.h5 (16.♙g7 ♙c3 17.h5 ♙:b5 18.h6 ♙d6 19.h7 ♙f7) 16...♙f8!; 9...h5 10.♙f4 (10.♙g2 ♙d5 11.♙f3! ♙d6 12.♙f4) 10...♙f2 11.♙g5 ♙e6 12.♙:h5 ♙f3 13.h4 13...♙c4 14.a3!; 9...♙d7 10.b5 ♙d6 11.♙g4 ♙f2+ 12.♙h5 ♙c5 13.h4] 10.b5! The only move [10.♙g4? ♙f2+ 11.♙h5 ♙e5 (11...♙e6) 12.h4 (12.a4 ♙e4 13.♙:h6 ♙f6 14.h4 ♙c3 15.a5 a6 16.h5 ♙d5) 12...♙d3 13.a3 (13.b5 ♙c5 14.♙:h6 ♙f6 15.h5) 13...♙f4+ 14.♙:h6 ♙f6] 10...♙d6 [10...♙c5 11.♙g4 ♙:b5 12.♙h5=, for example 12...♙f2 13.h4 ♙e4 14.♙:h6 ♙a4 15.♙g6 ♙g3 15.♙g6 ♙g3 16.♙g5 ♙a3 17.♙g4 ♙c4 18.♙f5 and Black fails to give a knight for a pawn; 10...h5 A key line explaining the mutual zugzwang. 11.♙f4 ♙f2 12.♙g5 ♙e4+ 13.♙:h5 ♙e6 14.♙g6! ♙c3 15.h4 ♙:a2 16.h5 and Black lack the ♙e7-f8 option. Similar to Reti motive of control of both sides.] 11.♙g4! ♙f2+ 12.♙h5! ♙e6! 13.a4! [13.h4? ♙c4 14.♙:h6 ♙f6 15.h5 ♙c3] 13...♙c4 14.a5! ♙d6 15.b6 a6 16.♙:h6 draw. Black can prolong the play by 16...♙f6 17.♙h5! ♙b7 [17...♙f5 18.♙h6 ♙b7 19.♙g7! ♙:a5 20.h4! ♙g4 21.♙f6! (21.♙f7? ♙c4 22.b7 ♙d6+) 21...♙:h4 22.♙e6 ♙g5 and the rest as in the previous line. 23.♙d6 23...♙f5 24.♙c7 ♙e5 25.♙b8 ♙c6+ 26.♙b7] 18.♙g4 draws, 18...♙:a5 19.♙f3 ♙g5 20.♙e2 and the action on the Q-side is fast enough. There are another mined squares e3, e4, e5, f5, for example [20.♙e4? ♙c4 21.b7 ♙d6+] 20...♙h4 21.♙d3 ♙h3 22.♙d4 ♙:h2 23.♙c5 ♙g3 24.♙d6! ♙f4 25.♙c7 ♙e5 26.♙b8 ♙c6+ 27.♙b7 ♙b4 28.♙a7 [28.♙c7 a5 29.b7] 28...a5 29.b7 ♙c6+ 30.♙b6 (30.♙a6) 30...♙d5 31.b8♙ ♙:b8 32.♙:a5 1/2-1/2

Thanks to John for his prompt and expert award, which will remain open until 20.05.2024. Please send your claims (if any) to zoran.gavrilovski@gmail.com (Ed.)

7TH THEMATIC TOURNEY OF THE MACEDONIAN PROBLEMIST 2023:

List of participants

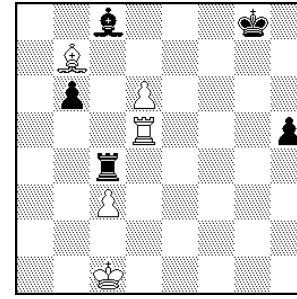
Jakob Aagaard – 1; Pavel Arestov & Daniel Keith – 2, 3; Serhiy Didukh – 4; Serhiy Didukh & Lewis Stiller – 5; Steffen Slumstrup Nielsen & Martin Minski – 6; 'uboš Kekely – 7; Oleg Pervakov – 8; Michael Pasma – 9, 10, 11; Yochanan Afek – 12; Luis Miguel Gonzales – 13; David Navara, Jaroslav Polásek & Emil Vlasák – 14; Jan Sprenger – 15

AWARD by John Nunn

15 studies were entered for this tourney, which was perhaps a slightly disappointing number, but in compensation several of the studies were of high quality. They were anonymised so I was not aware of the identities of the composers. After careful consideration, I have included 8 in the award.

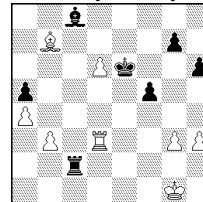
1st Prize: № 8, Oleg Pervakov

An outstanding study with a game-like starting position. The 1st move closely resembles the game Haik Martirosyan – Chopra Aryan, 6th Sharjah Masters, UAE 2023 (<https://www.chessbase.in/news/6th-Sharjah-Masters-2023-Round-7-report>), but there's a great deal more to the study. The tactic 1. ♔a6! is echoed by the switchback 3. ♕b7!, but the main point is the excellent logical try on move 2. The incorrect 2. ♖b2? forces White to capture Black's b-pawn on move 8, and this leads to a stalemate far in the future. By choosing the correct route for the king via d2-d3 Black is obliged to play ... ♜c1 rather than ...b5 and this allows White to avoid the capture of the b-pawn, foiling Black's attempts to stalemate himself on h1. It's an excellent example of the foresight theme. Curiously, one very appealing line wasn't mentioned by the composer. In the thematic try 2. ♖b2? ♜c6 3. ♕b7 ♜c4 4. ♖b3 b5 5. ♔:c8 ♜:c8 6.d7 ♜d8 7. ♖b4 ♖f7, an obvious question is why White can't avoid taking the b-pawn by 8. ♖c5, which would again prevent the stalemate. The answer is the cunning manoeuvre 8... ♖e6 9. ♖c6 h4 (the composer stopped here) 10. ♜d4 h3 11. ♜e4+ ♖f5! 12. ♜h4 ♖e5! 13. ♜h5+ ♖e4!, a Réti-type idea in which the king can support either pawn according to White's reply; for example, 14. ♜:h3 ♖d4! heads for the b-pawn, while 14. ♜:b5 ♖f3 goes the other way.



+ 5+5

Martirosyan – Aryan



47. ♔a6! ♜c1+ 48. ♖f2! ♜c2+
49. ♖e1 ♜c5 50. ♔c4+ ♖d7
51. ♔b5+ ♖d8 52.d7 ♕b7 53. ♜d6
53... ♜e5+ 54. ♖f2 ♜d5 55. ♜g6 1-0

1. ♔a6! As 47. ♔a6! (Martirosyan). [Too early 1. ♔:c8? ♜:c3+ 2. ♖d2 ♜:c8= White must win a tempo; 1. ♜g5+? ♖h8! 2. ♔:c8 2... ♜:c3+ 3. ♖d2 ♜:c8=; 1. ♖d2? ♕d7 2. ♜e5 (2. ♜:h5 ♖g7 3. ♜e5 3... ♖f6 4. ♜e7 ♕f5=) 2... ♖f8 3. ♕d5 ♜g4 4. ♜:h5 ♖g7 5. ♜e5 5... ♖f6 6. ♜e7 ♜g7 7. ♜:g7 ♖:g7=]

1... ♜:c3+ [1...b5 2. ♖c2! (2. ♖d2? ♕d7 3. ♔:b5 ♕:b5 4. ♜:b5 ♖f7! 5. ♜:h5 ♖e6 6. ♜h6+ ♖d7=; 2. ♖b2? ♕d7 3. ♜:h5 ♜c6! 4. ♔:b5 4... ♜b6! 5.c4 ♕e6 6. ♖c3 ♜:d6=) 2... ♕d7 3. ♜:h5 ♜c6 4. ♔:b5 4... ♜:d6 5. ♕d7 ♜:d7 6. ♜f5 +-; 1... ♔:a6 2.d7 ♜:c3+ 3. ♖d2 3... ♜c8 4.d:c8 ♖+ ♕:c8 5. ♜d8+ +-]

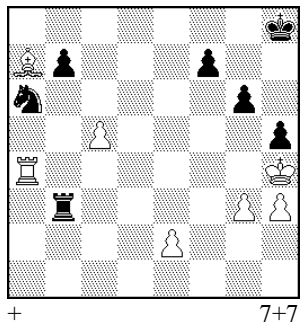
2. ♖d2! [Logical try 2. ♖b2? ♜c6 3. ♕b7!? ♜c4 4. ♖b3 b5! 5. ♔:c8 (5. ♜:b5 ♜d4=) 5... ♜:c8 6.d7 ♜d8 7. ♖b4 ♖f7! 8. ♖:b5 (8. ♖c5 ♖e6 9. ♖c6 h4 (b4)=) 8... ♖e6 9. ♖c6 h4 10. ♜d4 ♜:d7 11. ♜:d7 ♖f5 12. ♜h7 ♖g4 13. ♖d5 h3 14. ♖e4 ♖g3 15. ♖e3 15... ♖g2! 16. ♜g7+ ♖f1 17. ♜h7 ♖g2 18. ♖e2 h2 19. ♖g7+ 19... ♖h1! = with stalemate – no black “b”-pawn] 2... ♜c6

3. ♕b7! (Switchback) 3... ♜c4 [3... ♜:d6 4. ♜:d6 ♕:b7 5. ♜d8+ 5... ♖f7 6. ♜d7+ +-; 3... ♜c5 4. ♜:c5 b:c5 5. ♔:c8+; 3... ♔:b7 4.d7 +-] 4. ♖d3 ♜c1! [4...b5 5. ♜:b5! ♜c1 6. ♖d2 Domination. 6... ♜c4 7. ♕d5+ +-] 5. ♔:c8 (in time!) 5... ♜:c8 6.d7 ♜d8!

7. ♖c4 ♖f7 8. ♖b5 ♖e6 9. ♖c6 h4 [9...b5 10. ♜:h5+ -] 10. ♜d4! 10...h3 [10... ♜:d7 11. ♜:d7+ - with b6-pawn no stalemate in the h1-corner!] 11. ♜e4+! (11. ♜h4? ♜:d7=) 11... ♖f5 12. ♜h4 1-0

2nd Prize: № 15, Jan Sprenger

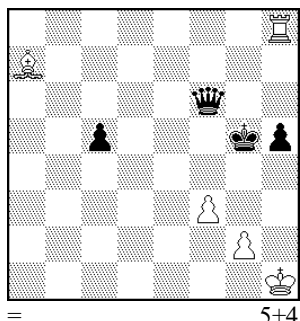
An excellent study for solving, starting from a very natural position. White foils Black's dangerous counterplay by sacrificing first his bishop and then his queen to drive the black king onto the back rank, exactly the position it occupied in the initial position. Studies with active play by both sides always create a favourable impression and until one sees the queen sacrifice it seems impossible to cope with Black's mating threats. The connection with the otb games quoted (Nigel Short – Jan Timman, 15th Interpolis, Tilburg (NL) 21.10.1991, <https://www.chessgames.com/perl/chessgame?gid=1124533> and Richard Rapport – Jan Sprenger, Schachbundes liga (GER) 17.9.2020 <https://www.365chess.com/game.php?gid=4270496>) is rather weak, but the study is undoubtedly appealing.



1.c6! ♖c7 **2.♙b8** [2...♙d4+ ♚h7 3.♙e5 f6 (3...♚h6 should also draw) 4.♙:f6 ♜d5 5.♙a8 ♜:f6 6.c7 ♖b5! transposes into the try 4.♙a8] **2...♜d5** [2...♜e6 3.♙e5+ ♚h7 4.♙a8! (4.c7? ♚h6 5.♙g7+?? ♜:g7! 6.c8 ♖g5#) 4...♙b4+ 5.g4 g5+ 6.♚:h5 +- and avoiding checkmate will cost Black all his pawns] **3.♙e5+** [3.e4 b:c6 4.♙a8 f6 5.♙d6+ ♚g7 6.♙a7+ ♚g8 7.e:d5 c:d5 wins a piece, but analysis reveals the endgame to be drawn. White needs to play g3-g4 to free his king, but cannot make further progress.] **3...♚h7** [3...f6 4.c7 ♜:c7 +-] **4.c7** [try 4.♙a8? f6 5.♙:f6 5...♜:f6 6.c7 ♖b5! 7.g4 g5+ 8.♚g3 ♜e4+ 9.♚f3 ♜d6 will eventually lead to a drawn rook endgame, e.g. 10.♙d8 h:g4+ 11.h:g4 ♙c5 12.♙d7+ ♚g8 13.♙:d6 ♖:c7] **4...♚h6 5.♙g7!** (first decoy sacrifice) **5...♚:g7 6.c8♙ ♜e3!** Planning ♜g2+, followed by ♖b5+ or f6+. **7.♚g5!** ♜g2 **8.♖h8+!!** second decoy sacrifice [try 8.♖d7? ♖b5+! Black decoy sacrifice 8...♙:g3+ 9.♙g4! h:g4 10.♖d4+-] **9.♖:b5 f6# model mate]** **8...♚:h8 9.♚h6 ♖e3 10.♙a8+ 1-0**

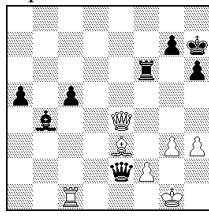
3rd Prize: № 4, Serhiy Didukh

This is another attractive study for solving since the variations are all clear-cut. The key idea is the unexpected self-pin of ♖ on move 6, echoing Ding Liren's 46...♖g6 in the final tie-break game of his 2023 FIDE World championship match against Ian Nepomniachtchi (<https://www.365chess.com/game.php?gid=4410716>, see the diagram on the right side). The lightweight setting (diagrammed below) presents the idea without any unnecessary frills or introductory play, which I think was the right decision. This is the type of study which appeals to otb players.



1.♖g8+! ♚h6! [1...♚f4 2.♙:c5 ♖h4+ 3.♚g1 ♖e1+ 4.♚h2 draw because ♖e5 is not a check [1...♚f5 2.♙:c5 ♖h4+ 3.♚g1 ♖e1+ 4.♚h2 ♖e5+ 5.f4! ♖:f4+ 6.♚h3!]] **2.♙:c5 ♖h4+ 3.♚g1 ♖e1+ 4.♚h2 ♖e5+ 5.f4!** [5.♚h1? ♖:c5 -] **5...♖:f4+ [5...♖:c5 6.♙g3+]**, fortress, the ♖ moves on f3 and h3] **6.♙g3!** [An attempt to build a fortress 6.♚h1? ♖h4+ 7.♚g1 ♖e1+ 8.♚h2 ♖e5+ 9.♚h1 ♖:c5 10.♙g3 ♖c1+! 11.♚h2 ♖c7 -; 6.♚h3? ♖f5+-] **6...h4 7.♙e3 h:g3+ 8.♚h1 ♖:e3 stalemate, 1/2-1/2.**

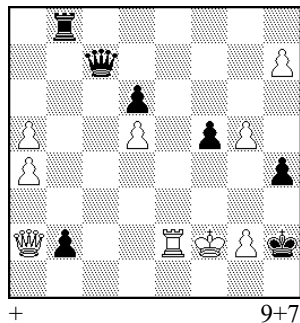
Nepomniachtchi – Liren



46...♖g6 47.♖f5 c4 48.h4 ♖d3 49.♖f3 ♖f6 50.♖g4 c3 51.♙d1 ♖g6 52.♖c8 ♖c6 53.♖a8 ♖d6 54.♙:d6 ♖:d6 55.♖e4+ 55...♖g6 56.♖c4 ♖b1+ 57.♚h2 a4 58.♙d4 a3 59.♖c7 ♖g6 60.♖c4 c2 61.♙e3 ♙d6 62.♚g2 h5 63.♚f1 ♙e5 64.g4 h:g4 65.h5 ♖f5 66.♖d5 g3 67.f4 a2 68.♖:a2 ♙:f4 0-1

4th Prize: № 6, Steffen Slumstrup Nielsen & Martin Minski

Like the 3rd Prize study, this features a self-pinning rook. There's a lot of exciting tactical play and a logical try, but the study suffers from a heavy and rather unnatural starting position (two pawns on the seventh rank, black king on h2). There are several immobile pawns and unfortunately they are all necessary; for example, the a4-pawn is there to prevent White escaping from a perpetual check by running his king to the queenside. Despite this, the study deserves a prize for its thrilling tactics.

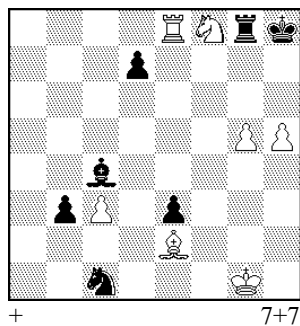


1.h8♙! White must first deal with the b2-pawn. **1...♖:h8 2.♖:b2 ♖c5+**, otherwise White wins trivially [2...♖a7+ 3.♖b6] **2.♚f3** foreseeing a black stalemate trap. White must allow the d6-pawn to move in the future. [Logical try: 3.♙e3! The premature Ding-pin 3...f4 4.g4! ♙b8! 5.♖a2! ♖d4! 6.♚f3+ ♖b2 7.♙e2+ 7...♚h3! 8.♖:b2 ♖:b2 9.♙:b2 stalemate] **3...♖:d5+ 4.♚f2** [4.♚f4? ♖c4+ 5.♚:f5 ♖d5+ 6.♚g4 ♖c4+ 7.♚f5 ♖d5+=] **4...♖c5+** [4...♖:g2+ 5.♚e1 ♖e8 6.♙:e8 (6.♙d2+-) 6...♖:b2 6...♖:b2 7.♙e2+; 4...♖c8 5.♖d2 (5.♖a3+-) 4...♖c5+ 6.♖e3+-] **5.♙e3!** The correct Ding-pin [5.♚f3 ♖c6+ (5...♖d5+) 6.♚f2 6...♖c5+ 7.♙e3 waste of time] **5...f4** [5...♙e8 6.♖c1!+- (6.♖c3+-); 5...♙b8 (♙c8) 6.♖c1+-] **6.g4!** [6.g3? ♖:e3+ 7.♚f1+ ♚h3 8.♖g2+ ♚g4] **6...♙b8!** [6...f:e3+ 7.♚f3+ ♚h3 8.♖g2#; 6...♖:e3+ 7.♚f1+ ♚h3 8.♖g2#; 6...h:g3+ 7.♚f3+ ♚h3 8.♖:h8#; 6...f:g3+ 7.♚f3+ ♚h3 8.♖g2#] **7.♖a2! ♖d4** [7...♖c1 [8.♚f3+ ♖b2 9.♙e2+ ♚h3 10.♖:b2 (10.♖a3)] **8.♚f3+** [Try 8.♚f1+? ♖b2 9.♙e2+ ♚h1 10.♙:b2 ♖d1+= with a perpetual (10...♖g1+=)] **8...♙b2 9.♙e2+ ♚h3 10.♖:b2** [10.♙:b2? ♖e3#] **10...♖:b2 11.♙:b2 +- no stalemate.**

Cf: the final tie-break game of the FIDE World championship 2023 Ding Liren – Ian Nepomniachtchi <https://www.365chess.com/game.php?gid=4410716>

1st Honourable Mention: № 5, Serhiy Didukh & Lewis Stiller

This is another study based on a game from the Ding Liren - Nepomniachtchi world championship match, this time game 6. The idea is a preparatory pawn move to set up a mating continuation with rook and knight. The model mate is artistic, and the follow-my-leader play of the bishops is a positive feature, but once White sets up his mating threat there's nothing Black can do about it, which creates a one-sided impression.

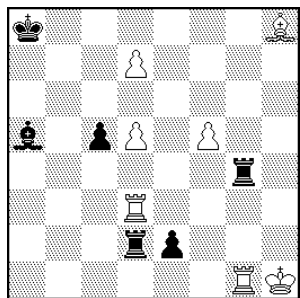


1.♚g6+! ♚h7 2.♙e7+ ♙f7! [2...♖g7 3.♙:c4 ♖:e7 (3...b2 4.♙e8 4...♙f7 5.♙h8+! ♚g7 6.h6+ ♚:g6 7.♙:f7+ ♚:f7 8.♙b8+=) 4.♙:e7 4...b2 5.♚f5! ♜e2+ 6.♚h2 b1 ♖g6+ ♚h8 8.g7+ ♚h7 9.g8♖#] **3.♙c4!** [3.♙:f7+? ♚g7 4.♙:g7+ ♚:g7 5.♙f3 e2 6.♚f2 ♜d3+ 7.♚:e2 b2=] **3...♖g7 4.♙:f7 b2 5.c4!** Ding's theme. The pawn's move prepares a model mate. [Logical try 5.♙g8+! ♚:g8 6.♙e8+ 6...♚f7 7.♙f8+ ♚e6 8.♙f6+ ♚d5+-; 5.h6? ♚e2+! 6.♚g2 ♙:f7 7.♙:f7+ ♚:g6 8.♙f6+ ♚h7! 9.♙b6 ♜:c3=] **5...♙e2+** [5...d6 6.h6! b1 ♖g7 7.♚f8+ ♚h8 8.h:g7+ ♚:g7 9.♙g6+-] **6.♚h2!** [6.♚g2? ♜f4+! 7.♚:f4 ♙:g5+ 8.♚f3 ♚h6! 9.♙g6 ♖:g6=] **6...b1 ♖g7 7.♙g8+ ♚:g8 8.♙e8+ ♚f7 9.♙f8+ ♚e6 10.♙f6# 1-0**

Compare with the game 6 of the FIDE World championship 2023 Ding Liren – Ian Nepomniachtchi <https://www.365chess.com/game.php?gid=4408121>

2nd Honourable Mention: № 9, Michael Pasman

This study is based on the tactical point at move 12, which closely resembles the finish of the game Baskaram Adhiban – Sergio Minero Pineda, Baku Olympiad 2016. The starting position is not very natural, with several pieces under attack and two pawns already on the seventh rank, but there's quite a bit of interesting play before we get to the finale. The move 12.♙f6! is not a Novotny because the reply 12...♖:f6 doesn't involve any interference with the bishop on d8; instead, the black rook is simply decoyed onto a bad square.



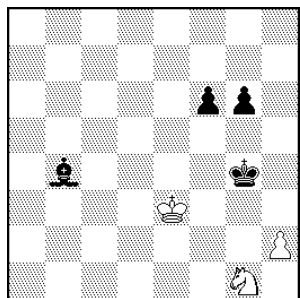
+ 7+6

Cf. Baskaran Adhiban – Sergio Minera Pineda, Chess Olympiad Baku (Azerbaijan), 03.09.2016 <https://www.365chess.com/game.php?gid=4408121>

1.d8♙+! ♙:d8 2.♖a1+ ♖a4! [2...♙b7 3.♖:d2; 2...♙a5 3.♖:d2 3...e1 ♙+ 4.♖:e1 ♙:d2 5.♖e8+ ♙b7 6.f6 ♖f4 7.♖e7+ ♙b6 8.f7] 3.♖:a4+ ♙b7 4.♖b3+! [Logical try: 4.♖e3 ♖d1+ 5.♙g2 e1 ♙ 5.♙g2 e1 ♙ 6.♖:e1 ♖:e1 Black king on b7 instead of c8 in the main line is draw] 4...♙c8 [4...♙b6 5.♖e4 ♖d1+ 6.♙g2 e1 ♙ 7.♖:e1 ♖:e1 8.f6] 5.♖e3! [Logical try: 5.♖e4 ♖d1+ 6.♙g2 6...e1 ♙ 7.♖:e1 ♖:e1! White rook on b3 instead of a4 in the main line is draw] 5...♖d1+ 6.♙g2 e1 ♙ 7.♖:e1 ♖:e1 8.f6 ♖e5 [8...♖e2+ 9.♙f3 ♖e1 10.♙g4; 8...♙:f6 9.♙:f6 ♖d1 10.♖a8+ 10...♙b7 11.♖d8] 9.f7 ♖f5 [9...♖g5+ 10.♙f3 ♖f5+ 11.♖f4] 10.♖a8+ ♙d7 11.♖a7+ ♙d6 12.♙f6! A move similar to this one appeared in the chess game Adhiban – Minera Pineda, 2016 [12.♙g7 ♙e7] 12...♖:f6 [12...♙:f6 13.f8♙+] 13.♖a6+ 1-0

1st Commendation: № 3, Pavel Arestov & Daniel Keith

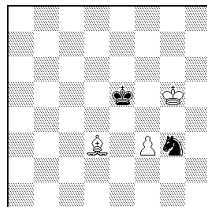
It's certainly surprising that the only way to draw involves playing the knight to h8 and the unexpected move 5.♙d3 is a bonus. One always worries about an anticipation for five-man positions, but I couldn't identify any specific precursor to № 3 (diagrammed below). There's a good connection to the over the board game example Jan Plachetka – Michael Schlosser, Austrian Team Championship 1990 (see the diagram on the right side).



+ 4+3

1.h3+! [1.♙f2? ♙c5+ 2.♙g2? ♙:g1 -+] 1...♙g3! [1...♙h4 2.♙f3 ♙c5 3.♙e2! 3...♙:h3 4.♙f4 +] 2.♙e2+! ♙:h3 3.♙f4+ ♙g4 4.♙:g6 ♙c5+! [4...♙g5 4...♙c5+! [4...♙g5 5.♙h8! f5 6.♙f7+]=] 5.♙d3!! [Try: 5.♙e4? ♙d6! 6.♙d5 (see the otb game Jan Plachetka – Michael Schlosser (1990)) 7.♙h8 f5 8.♙f7 ♙c7! 9.♙d4 ♙g6 10.♙e5+ 10...♙:e5+ 11.♙:e5 ♙g5 -+] 5...♙d6 6.♙h8! f5 7.♙f7 ♙c7 8.♙h6+ 1/2-1/2

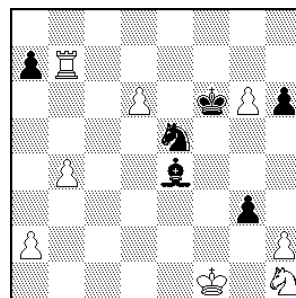
Plachetka – Schlosser



61...♙d4 62.♙g4? [62.♙h4! ♙h1 63.f4+ -] 62...♙h1! 63.♙a6 [63.f4? ♙:d3 =] 63...♙c3 64.♙b7 64...♙f2+ 65.♙f5 65...♙d3 66.♙g4 66...♙f4 1/2-1/2

2nd Commendation: № 14, David Navara, Jaroslav Poláček & Emil Vlasák

The reciprocal zugzwang comes out of the blue, but the significant problem is that the variations underlying it are extremely long and hard to understand.



= 8+6

Solution and comments by the authors: 1.♖f7+! [after the normal move 1.♙:g3? ♙:b7 White has three pawns for a piece, but ♙d6 and ♙g6 fall quickly and Black has a technical win 2.♙f2 ♙:g6 3.b5 ♙f6 4.a4 ♙e6 -+] 1...♙:f7 [after 1...♙:g6 White didn't help himself much, and instead of 2.♙:g3?, White is saved by the surprising move 2.♙f2! guarding d3 (2...♙:f7 3.♙:e4 g:h2 4.♙g2 ♙f5 5.♙g3+ ♙e6 6.d7 ♙:d7 7.♙:h2 ♙c6 8.♙f5 h5 9.♙g3 ♙d6 10.♙:d6 ♙:d6 11.♙h4 11...♙d5 12.♙:h5 ♙c4 13.a3 ♙b3 14.♙g4 ♙:a3 15.b5 ♙b4 16.♙f4 16...♙:b5 17.♙e3 ♙b4 18.♙d2 ♙b3 19.♙c1); 2...♙c6 3.♖:a7 g2+ (3...g:h2 4.d7! ♙:d7 (4...♙:d7 5.♙g2) 5.♖a6) 4.♙g1 ♙f3+ 5.♙:g2) 3.♖e7!), 2...♙d3+! and Black wins again] 2.g:f7 g2+ 3.♙f2 [3.♙e2? ♙:f7] 3...g:h1 ♙+ [3...g:h1 ♙ 4.f8♙+] 4.♙c3 ♙:f7 5.♙:e4 ♙c6 6.♙e3!! We will see the meaning of the following manoeuvres below [6.d7? ♙:d7 7.♙f5 ♙f2 8.♙g6 ♙e6 9.h4 ♙d3 10.a3 ♙f4+ 11.♙:h6 ♙f6 12.a4 ♙d5 13.b5 ♙c3] 6...♙d7!? 7.♙e2! ♙c6 8.♙e3!! ♙:d6 9.♙f3!! A mutual zugzwang. It's difficult to imagine how the move 9...♙d5 could weaken Black's position, but it really does so (compare with Suat Atalik – Toni Miles, Iraklion (GR), 1993 (<https://www.chessgames.com/perl/chessgame?gid=1098358>), with a nice *Excelsior*) 9...♙d5 [9... White to move loses: 10.b5! - the best white move (The pawn endgame is lost: 10.♙g2? ♙d5 11.♙:h1 ♙c4 12.♙g2 ♙:b4 13.♙h3 ♙a3 14.♙h4 ♙a2 15.♙h5 a5 16.♙:h6 16...a4 17.h4 a3 18.h5 ♙b1 19.♙g6 a2 20.h6 a1 ♙; 10.♙g4? ♙f2+ 11.♙h5 ♙e5 12.h4 (12.♙:h6 ♙g4+) 12...♙f6 13.♙:h6 ♙d3 14.b5 (14.a3? ♙f4! 15.h5 (15.b5? ♙d5 16.h5 ♙c3 17.♙h7 ♙f7 18.♙h6 ♙:b5 19.a4 ♙c3 20.a5 ♙e4) 15...a6 16.a4 ♙d5 17.b5 a5) 14...♙c5! 15.h5 (15.a3? ♙e4) 15...♙a4 16.♙h7 ♙f7 17.h6 ♙c3 18.♙h8 ♙:b5 19.a4 ♙c7 20.a5 ♙e6 21.♙h7 ♙f8+ 22.♙h8 a6), 10...h5! the only move 11.♙f4 (11.a3 ♙c5! 12.♙f4 ♙f2! 13.♙g5 ♙g4 14.h4 (14.h3 ♙b5) 14...♙e5 15.♙h5 ♙f3 16.a4 ♙b4 17.♙g4 ♙:h4 18.♙:h4 ♙:a4 19.♙g3 ♙:b5 20.♙f2 ♙c4 21.♙e1 ♙b3 22.♙d1 ♙b2) 11...♙f2 12.♙g5 ♙c4+ 13.♙:h5 ♙c3 14.♙g6 Black has the ♙e7 option. This explains why the ♙'s move to d5 weakens Black. 14...♙e7! (14...♙:a2 15.h4 ♙e7!) 15.h4 (15.♙g7 ♙:a2 16.h4 ♙c3 17.h5 ♙:b5 18.h6 ♙d6 19.h7 ♙f7) 15...♙a2! 16.h5 (16.♙g7 ♙c3 17.h5 ♙:b5 18.h6 ♙d6 19.h7 ♙f7) 16...♙f8!; 9...h5 10.♙f4 (10.♙g2 ♙d5 11.♙f3! ♙d6 12.♙f4) 10...♙f2 11.♙g5 ♙e6 12.♙:h5 ♙f3 13.h4 13...♙c4 14.a3!; 9...♙d7 10.b5 ♙d6 11.♙g4 ♙f2+ 12.♙h5 ♙c5 13.h4] 10.b5! The only move [10.♙g4? ♙f2+ 11.♙h5 ♙e5 (11...♙e6) 12.h4 (12.a4 ♙e4 13.♙:h6 ♙f6 14.h4 ♙c3 15.a5 a6 16.h5 ♙d5) 12...♙d3 13.a3 (13.b5 ♙c5 14.♙:h6 ♙f6 15.h5) 13...♙f4+ 14.♙:h6 ♙f6] 10...♙d6 [10...♙c5 11.♙g4 ♙:b5 12.♙h5=, for example 12...♙f2 13.h4 ♙c4 14.♙:h6 ♙a4 15.♙g6 ♙g3 15.♙g6 ♙g3 16.♙g5 ♙a3 17.♙g4 ♙c4 18.♙f5 and Black fails to give a knight for a pawn; 10...h5 A key line explaining the mutual zugzwang. 11.♙f4 ♙f2 12.♙g5 ♙e4+ 13.♙:h5 ♙e6 14.♙g6! ♙c3 15.h4 ♙:a2 16.h5 and Black lack the ♙e7-f8 option. Similar to Reti motive of control of both sides.] 11.♙g4! ♙f2+ 12.♙h5! ♙e6! 13.a4! [13.h4? ♙c4 14.♙:h6 ♙f6 15.h5 ♙c3] 13...♙c4 14.a5! ♙d6 15.b6 a6 16.♙:h6 draw. Black can prolong the play by 16...♙f6 17.♙h5! ♙b7 [17...♙f5 18.♙h6 ♙b7 19.♙g7! ♙:a5 20.h4! ♙g4 21.♙f6! (21.♙f7? ♙c4 22.b7 ♙d6+) 21...♙:h4 22.♙e6 ♙g5 and the rest as in the previous line. 23.♙d6 23...♙f5 24.♙c7 ♙e5 25.♙b8 ♙c6+ 26.♙b7] 18.♙g4 draws, 18...♙:a5 19.♙f3 ♙g5 20.♙e2 and the action on the Q-side is fast enough. There are another mined squares e3, e4, e5, f5, for example [20.♙e4? ♙c4 21.b7 ♙d6+] 20...♙h4 21.♙d3 ♙h3 22.♙d4 ♙:h2 23.♙c5 ♙g3 24.♙d6! ♙f4 25.♙c7 ♙e5 26.♙b8 ♙c6+ 27.♙b7 ♙b4 28.♙a7 [28.♙c7 a5 29.b7] 28...a5 29.b7 ♙c6+ 30.♙b6 (30.♙a6) 30...♙d5 31.b8♙ ♙:b8 32.♙:a5 1/2-1/2

Thanks to John for his prompt and expert award, which will remain open until 20.05.2024. Please send your claims (if any) to zoran.gavrilovski@gmail.com (Ed.)