

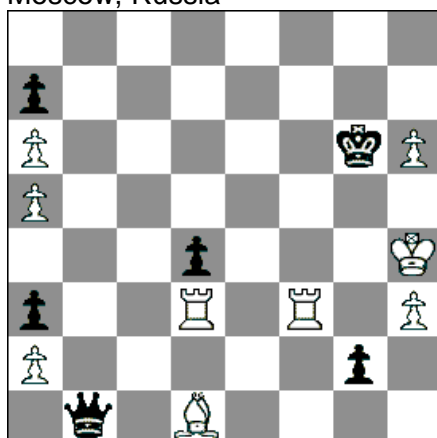
Preliminary award of
20th Birnov MT
 (The studies section)
 2010

I thank Oleg Efrosinin for entrusting me with the task of judging the studies section of the 20th Birnov MT. From Oleg I received 36 studies with solutions. I eliminated a few studies for lack of originality. Then a few more were eliminated for lack of polish. And yet a few more were eliminated for an apparent lack of theme. The remaining 13 studies were of satisfactory quality. I tested these 13 for soundness and found mistakes in only three. Here are the 10 awarded studies.

1st Prize

Oleg Pervakov

Moscow, Russia



Win

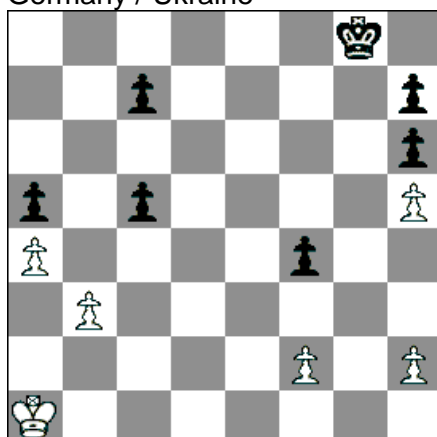
1.Rg3+ Kh7! 2.Rg7+!! [The thematic try is 2.Rxg2? Qxd3 3.Bc2 Kxh6! zz 4.Rg6+ Qxg6 5.Bxg6 Kxg6 6.Kg4 d3! 7.Kf3 Kg5 8.Ke3 Kh4 9.Kxd3 Kxh3 10.Kc4 Kg4 11.Kb5 Kf5 12.Kc6 Ke6 13.Kb7 Kd7 14.Kxa7 Kc7 =. 2.Rxd4? Qf5! 3.Rdg4 Qf6+ 4.Rg5 Qf4+ 5.R3g4 Qf2+ 6.Kh5 Qf7+ with perpetual check.] **2...Kxh6** [2...Kh8 3.Rxd4 Qb8 4.Rxg2 +-] **3.Rxg2 Qxd3 4.Bc2 zz Qxa6 5.Rg6+ Qxg6 6.Bxg6 Kxg6 7.Kg4 d3 8.Kf3 Kg5 9.Ke3 Kh4 10.Kxd3 Kxh3 11.Kc4 Kg4 12.Kb5 Kf5 13.Ka6 Ke6 14.Kxa7 +-.**

The winning study exhibits a cleverly constructed zugzwang position in which, with Black to play, an obstrusive wPa6 is captured. The thematic try is identical to the solution except that the wPa6 remains on board. The importance of the pawn's capture is revealed only after several moves. A fine example of the modern thematic try (or "look ahead") study.

2nd Prize

Siegfried Hornecker & Sergey Didukh

Germany / Ukraine



Win

1.Kb2 Kf7 2.Kc3 Ke6 3.Kc4 Kd6 4.f3! Necessary now to provide a wQ check from e4 later. [Not 4.Kb5? Kd5 5.Kxa5 c4 6.Kb4 c5+ 7.Kc3 cxb3 8.Kxb3 Kd4 9.a5 Kd3 10.a6 c4+ 11.Kb4 c3 12.a7 c2 13.a8Q c1Q = and not 4.h3? f3 5.Kb5 Kd5 6.Kxa5 c4 7.Kb4 c5+ 8.Kc3 cxb3 9.Kxb3 Kd4 10.a5

Kd3 11.a6 c4+ 12.Kb4 c3 13.a7 c2 14.a8Q c1Q 15.Qxf3+ Kd4 =] **4...Kc6 5.h3!** [5.h4? Kd6 6.Kb5 Kd5 7.Kxa5 c4 8.Kb4 cxb3 9.Kxb3 Kd4 10.a5 Kc5 =] **5...Kd6 6.Kb5 Kd5 7.Kxa5 c4 8.Kb4 c5+**

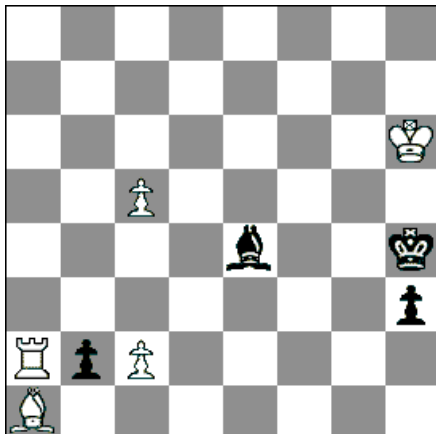
[8...cxb3 9.Kxb3 Kd4 10.a5 Kc5 11.Ka4 c6 12.h4! zz] **9.Kc3 cxb3 10.Kxb3 Kd4 11.a5 Kd3 12.a6 c4+ 13.Kb4 c3 14.a7 c2 15.a8Q c1Q 16.Qe4+! Kd2 17.Qxf4+ +-.**

This fine pawn study combines two thematic threads. The first is the "look ahead" effect of 4.f3! The second is the tempo conserving effect of 5.h3!, which allows White to place Black in a fatal zugzwang should Black choose to play 8...cxb3.

3rd Prize

Harold van der Heijden

Netherlands



Win

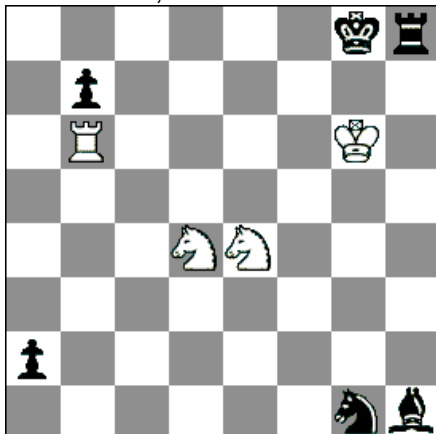
1.Rxb2! [Thematic try 1.Bxb2? h2 2.Ra1 Kg4 3.Kg7 h1Q 4.Rxh1 Bxh1 5.Kf6 Be4 6.c3 Kf4 7.Ke6 Ke3 8.Kd6 Kd3 9.c6 Kc2 10.Ba1 Kb1 11.c7 Bf5 12.Ke7 Kxa1 13.Kd8 Kb2 =] **1...h2 2.Rb1 h1Q** [2...Kg4 3.Kg7 h1Q 4.Rxh1 Bxh1 5.Kf6 Be4 6.c3 Kf4 7.Ke6 Ke3 8.Kd6(Kd7) Kd3 9.c6 +-]. We see the reason for keeping the wB in the corner.] **3.Rxh1+ Bxh1 4.Bh8!!** The only good square for the wB now is the opposite corner! **4...Kg4 5.Kg7! Be4 6.c3 Kf5 7.Kf7 Bd5+ 8.Ke7 +-.**

The capture key may be forgiven as it provides a mechanism for creating the thematic try. After 1.Bxb2? the wB will be within the range of the bK, a fact not at all obvious from the initial diagram. The move 4.Bh8! followed by 5.Kg7 is visually stunning.

1st Honorable Mention

Juri Bazlov

Vladivostok, Russia



Draw

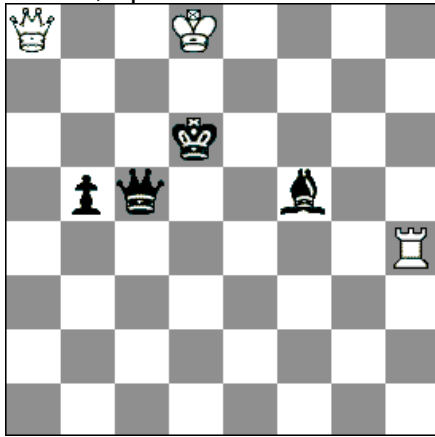
1.Nf6+ Kf8 2.Re6 Bc6 [2...Rg8+ 3.Nxg8 a1Q 4.Nf6 Qb1+ 5.Nf5 Bc6 6.Nh7+ =] **3.Nxc6** [3.Re1? Rh2 4.Nxc6 Rg2+ 5.Kh7 bxc6 6.Nd7+ Kf7 7.Ne5+ Kf6 8.Nxc6 Nh3! 9.Rf1+ Rf2 10.Ra1 Ng5+ 11.Kg8 Re2 12.Kf8 Ne6+ -+] **3...Rg8+ 4.Nxg8 a1Q 5.Rf6+! Ke8 6.Rf1! Qxf1 7.Nf6+ Kf8 8.Nh7+ (Nd7+) Kg8 9.Nf6+ Kh8 10.Ne5 Qg2+ 11.Kf7 Qg7+ 12.Ke6 Qg2 13.Kf7 Qa2+ 14.Kf8!** [14.Kg6? Qc2+ 15.Kf7 Qc7+ -+] **14...Qa3+ 15.Kf7 Qb3+ 16.Kf8 Qb4+ 17.Kf7 =.**

A fine tribute to Birnov, who used a similar positional draw in one of his own studies (2nd Prize, Lelo 1951). The play here is sparkling, especially the vacating move 6.Rf1! threatening 7.Nf6.

2nd Honorable Mention

Luis Miguel Gonzalez

Madrid, Spain



Win

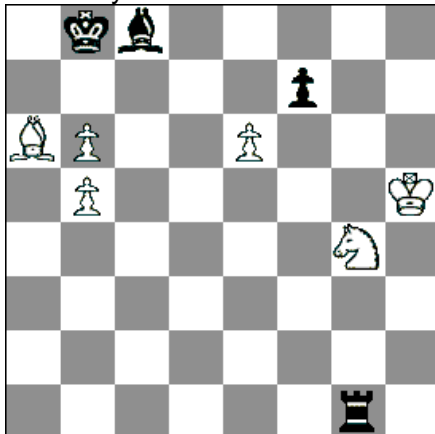
1.Qa6+! [Not 1.Qb8+? Ke6 = and not 1.Rh6+ Ke5 2.Qb8+ Kd5(Ke4) =] **1...Ke5 2.Qa1+ Kd5 3.Qa2+ Kd6 4.Rh6+ Ke5 5.Qh2+ Ke4 6.Qg2+** [6.Rh4+? Kd3 7.Qg3+ Qe3 8.Qd6+ Ke2 9.Rh2+ Kf3 =] **6...Kf4 7.Rh4+ Ke5 8.Qg7+ Ke6 9.Rh6+ Kd5 10.Qg2+ Ke5 11.Qg3+ Ke4 12.Rh4+ Kd5 13.Qf3+ Ke6 14.Rh6+ Ke5 15.Qxf5+! Kxf5 16.Rh5+ -+.**

A delightful and unpretentious miniature. Systematic maneuvering brings the wQ into position to sacrifice herself for the bBf5.

3rd Honorable Mention

Siegfried Hornecker & Martin Minski

Germany



Win

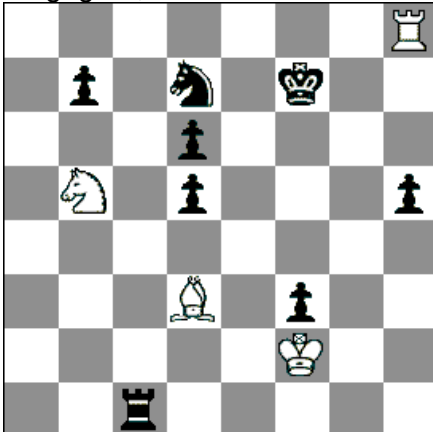
1.Ne5 [1.Bxc8? Kxc8 2.exf7 Rf1 3.Kg6 Rxf7 4.Kxf7 Kb7 =] **1...Rh1+ 2.Kg5 f6+ 3.Kxf6 Rh6+ 4.Kf7 Rxe6** [4...Bxe6+ 5.Kg7 Rh5 6.Nc6+ Ka8 7.b7 mate] **5.b7 Bxb7 6.Nd7+ Ka7 7.Bxb7 Rc6! 8.Ba8!** [8.Bxc6 and bxc6 are stalemate] **8...Rc7 9.Bc6 +-.**

The play flows nicely with both sides leaving pieces en prise. Black's final rook offer 7...Rc6! would lead to model stalemates, but White sidesteps with 8.Ba8! followed by the Umnov 9.Bc6. The mate after 4...Bxe6 is no surprise, but we would be disappointed had the composers not worked it into the study.

4th Honorable Mention

V. Maksaev

Volgograd, Russia



Win

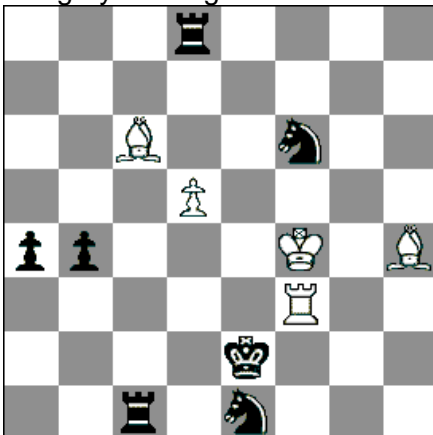
1.Rh7+ Ke6 [1...Ke8 2.Nxd6+ Kd8 3.Nf7+ Ke8 4.Bb5 +-] **2.Nd4+ Ke5** [2...Kf6 3.Rxd7 Rd1 4.Ke3 f2 5.Rxd6+ Kf7 6.Bg6+ Kg8 7.Nf5 +-] **3.Nxf3+ Ke6** **4.Nd4+ Ke5** **5.Ke3** [5...Ne2? Rd1 =] **5...Nb6** [5...Nf6 6.Rd7 mate!] **6.Rf7!** [6.Rh6? Nc4+ 7.Bxc4 dxc4 =] **6...Re1+** [6...Nc4+ 7.Bxc4 dxc4 8.Rf5 mate] **7.Be2 Nc4+ 8.Kd3 Nb2+ 9.Kc3 Na4+ 10.Kd2 Rg1 11.Ke3 Rg3+ 12.Bf3 Rg5 13.Bd1 Rg3+ 14.Rf3 Rxf3+ 15.Nxf3+ +-.**

From the simple knight pendulum to remove bPf3, to the more subtle shifting of the wB from e2 to d1, this combinational study leaves a pleasant impression.

Commendation

Janos Mikitovics & Iuri Akobia

Hungary / Georgia



Draw

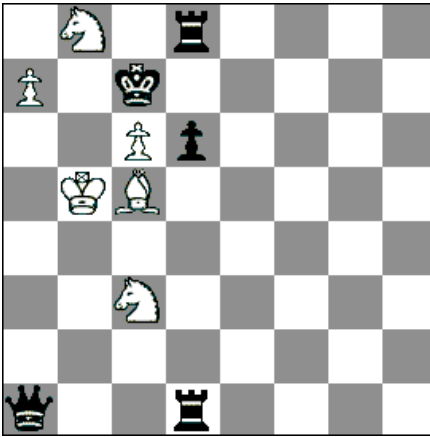
1.Bb5+ Kd1 2.Bxa4+ Kd2 3.Rf2+ Kd3 4.Bb5+ Rc4+ 5.Bxc4+ Kxc4 6.Kf5 Rxd5+ 7.Kxf6 Rd4 8.Bg5 b3 9.Kf7! The first thematic move. [Not 9.Ke6? Nd3 10.Rf1 b2 11.Bf6 Nc1 12.Bg5 Re4+! 13.Kf5 Re3! +-] **9...Nd3 10.Rf1 b2 11.Bf6 Nc1 12.Bg5 Na2 13.Bf6 Nc1 14.Bg5 Nd3 15.Bf6 Nc1 16.Bg5 Ne2 17.Bf6 =.**

The final positional draw is nice enough, but the long introduction with many checks bears no relationship at all to the rest of the study.

Commendation

Michal Hlinka & Lubos Kekely

Slovakia



Draw

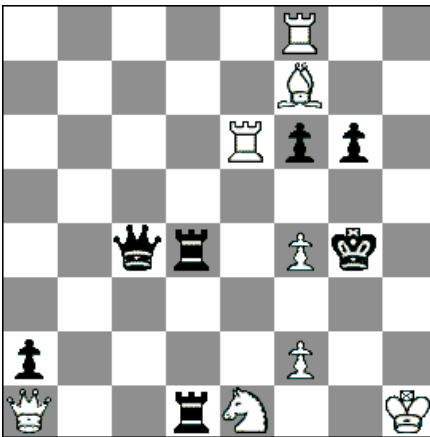
1.Bb6+ [1.Na6? Qxa6+ -+] 1...Kc8 2.Na6 Qb2+ [2...Rb1+ 3.Nxb1 Qxb1+ 4.Ka5 =] 3.Nb4 Ra1 4.Ba5 Rxa5+ 5.Kxa5 Qa3+ [5...Qa1+ 6.Kb6 Rh8 7.Nb5(Nbd5) =] 6.Na4 Kc7 7.Na6+ Kxc6 8.a8Q+! Rxa8 stalemate.

The struggle over the dangerous wPa7 ends in a side-board model stalemate with two pinned knights. The play is a bit less forced than what we often see in multi-pin stalemate studies.

Commendation

Amatzia Avni

Israel



Win

1.Kg2! [1.Kh2? Rxa1 2.f3+ Kf5(Kxf4) -+] 1...Rxa1 [1...R4d2 2.Qxd1+ Rxd1 3.f3+(Rxf6) +-] 2.Rxf6 Qf1+! 3.Kxf1 Rxe1+ 4.Kg2 Rg1+ 5.Kxg1 Rd1+ [5...a1Q+ 6.Kg2 Rxf4 7.Be6+ Kh5 8.Rxf4 +-] 6.Kg2 Rg1+ 7.Kxg1 [7.Kh2? Rh1+ 8.Kxh1 a1Q+ 9.Kg2 is loss of time.] 7...a1Q+ 8.Kg2 Qxf6 9.Be6+ Qxe6 10.f3+ Kh5 11.Rh8 mate.

The forced play is intentionally so. The many sacrifices and deflections form the theme of the study. After the dust settles we find the bK is mated by the only remaining white officer.

Richard Becker

Oregon City, USA

March, 2010