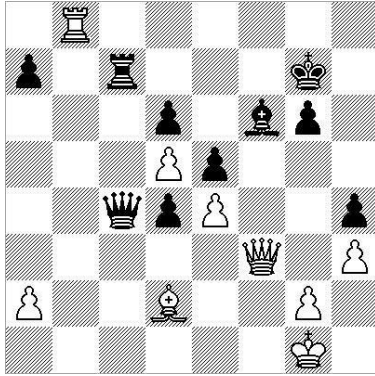


East Anglian Daily Times – columns July-December 2010

Saturday 3 July 2010
By Kevin O'Connell



The diagram position is from the game Maia Chiburdanidze (GM, 2514) - Martha Fierro (IM, 2363), FIDE Grand Prix, Jermuk 2010. White to play. Solution difficult.

Good news, bad news and disappointing news about the County Championships.

The good news is that two teams are through to the final. In the Under 160 (u1880) Suffolk thrashed Leicestershire 10-6 in the semi-final and will meet Yorkshire. In the U100 (u1400), Essex beat Lancashire 7.5-4.5 and will play either Yorkshire or Warwickshire in the final.

The bad news is that four teams lost their quarter-final matches. Essex were particularly unlucky, missing out twice on board count tie-break. In the Open Essex lost 7-9 to Lancashire. Essex drew 8-8 against Nottinghamshire in the U180 (u2040) group and against Yorkshire in the U160 but went out on the chess equivalent of penalties. The Suffolk team attempting to defend their U140 (u1720) title sank 6.5-9.5 to Hampshire.

The disappointing news was Essex's failure to progress in the U160 event, the tie-break decision depriving us of an Essex-Suffolk final.

Congratulations to all the members of the two victorious teams, and good luck to them all for the finals in Leicester next Saturday. Perhaps the Suffolk players, who beat Leicestershire to get there, should take special care on the day.

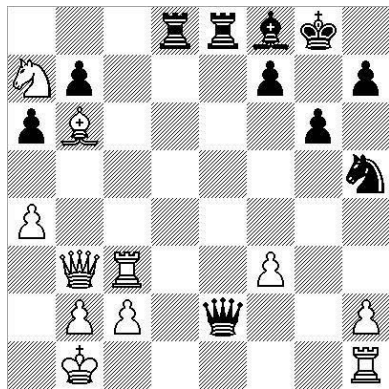
CHESS SOLUTION

Naturally, we start with "checks and captures." 1 Qf3xf6+ Kg7xf6 is an easy position to assess, but that leaves two other checks. 1 Bd2-h6+ is interesting but fails after 1...Kg7xh6 2 Qf3xf6 Qc4-c1+ (although it does work after 2...Qc4xa2?? 3 Qf6xh4+ Kh6-g7 4 Qh4-h8+ Kg7-f7 5 Qh8-f8 mate) 3 Kg1-h2 Qc1-f4+ when Black has real winning chances; 1 Rb8-g8+ draws after 1...Kg7xg8 2 Qf3xf6 Rc7-g7 3 Qf6-d8+ Kg8-h7 4 Qd8xh4+.

Since "checks and captures" does not succeed here, we need to find something else and that means looking at moves which make the pieces work together. Mate threats are a good place to start. 1 Rb8-f8 (threatening mate in two) must be worth a look: 1...Kg7xf8 2 Qf3xf6+ Kf8-g8 (not 2...Kf8-e8? 3 Qf6-h8+ Ke8-d7 4 Bd2-g5 when White forces mate, for example 4...Rc7-c8 5 Qh8-h7+ Kd7-e8 6 Qh7-e7 mate, so Black would have to give up the queen on c1 to avoid that; or 2...Rc7-f7? 3 Qf6-h8+ Kf8-e7 4 Bd2-g5+ Rf7-f6 5 Qh8xf6+ Ke7-d7 6 Qf6-d8 mate) 3 Qf6xg6+ Rc7-g7 4 Qg6-e8+ and again it's drawn.

1 Bd2-g5 also threatens mate in two and does it well enough that Black resigned. If 1...Rc7-f7 (or 1...Bf6xg5 2 Qf3-f8+ Kg7-h7 3 Qf8-h8 mate) 2 Bg5xf6+ Rf7xf6 3 Rb8-b7+ and the rest will be easy.

Saturday 10 July 2010
By Kevin O'Connell



The diagram position is from Liviu Dieter Nisipeanu (GM, 2672) - Magnus Carlsen (GM, 2813), Medias, Romania 2010. Black to play. Solution moderate/difficult.

Magnus Carlsen won the King's Tournament in Medias by a mile. His undefeated 7.5/10 was followed by 2-3 Radjabov (2740) and Gelfand (2741; the only one to avoid losing to Carlsen) 5.5; 4-5 Ponomarev (2733) and Nisipeanu (2672) 4; 6 Wang Yue (2752) 3. That immense 2918 performance gained Carlsen 13 rating points to extend his lead at the head of FIDE's July rating list. Carlsen is 2826 ahead of Topalov (2803), Anand (2800), Kramnik (2790).

Chess and tennis have a lot in common. Being individual sports, the pressure mounts and there is nobody to help since coaches are not allowed to intervene. I find it fascinating to watch Wimbledon, not just because I like tennis, but to feel the pressure building and to see the effect that has on the players. They tense up and start to miss shots, especially when on the verge of winning.

I recently got myself into a terrible mess in an internet blitz game. I clawed my way back to the following (still completely lost) position. White: Kc1, Rc3, Bf6, pawns c5, e5, f4, h3; Black: Kg8, Qe2, Nd4, pawns a7, g6, h7. Black to play. Solution easy.

CHESS SOLUTION

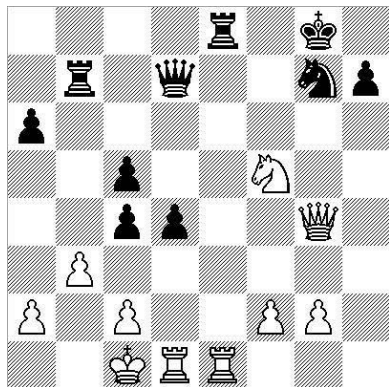
Nisipeanu-Carlsen:

1...Rd8-d1+ and White resigned. 2 Rh1xd1 Qe2xd1+ 3 Kb1-a2 Re8-e1 is crushing: 4 Qb3-c4 Qd1-a1+ 5 Ka2-b3 Re1-b1 and White gets mated; one example is 6 Qc4-c8 Rb1xb2+ 7 Kb3-c4 Rb2-b4+ (almost everything wins here, even 7...Rb2xb6 grabbing material) 8 Kc4-d5 Nh5-f4+ 9 Kd5-e5 Qa1-e1+ 10 Rc3-e3 f7-f6+ 11 Ke5xf6 Qe1-h4+ 12 Kf6-e5 Qh4-e7+ 13 Qc8-e6+ Qe7xe6 mate.

O'Connell-A.N.Other:

1...Qe2-e1+ 2 Kc1-b2 Qe1-d2+ is a simple win and easy to see when calm. However, the pressure was piling up on my lower-rated opponent. He played 1...Nd4-e6? (this is still winning comfortably but shows the pressure) 2 c5-c6 Ne6xf4? (grabbing material, even if still winning, is far from best - putting the knight back on d4) 3 c6-c7 Nf4-d3+?? (probably the result of blind panic) 4 Rc3xd3 Qe2xd3?? (There was still a comfortable draw after 4...Qe2-e1+ 5 Kc1-c2 Qe1-f2+! and Black checks on the f2-b6 diagonal, but not 4...Qe1-e2+? when White's king walks up the c-file 5 Kc2-c3 Qe2-e1+ 6 Kc3-c4 Qe1-e4+ 7 Kc4-c5! to victory: 7...Qe4xd3 8 c7-c8Q+ Kg8-f7 9 Qc8-c7+ Kf7-e6 10 Qc7-d6+) 5 c7-c8Q+ and Black ran out of time, which was helpful since it is far from clear that White can force a win, although Black is likely to lose in practical play.

Saturday 17 July 2010
By Kevin O'Connell



The diagram position is from the World Blitz Championship game Magnus Carlsen - Anatoly Karpov, Moscow 2007. White to play, solution easy.

World Number One, Magnus Carlsen has recently been on a photo shoot with actress Liv Tyler, who achieved international star status as the Elf maiden Arwen Undomiel in The Lord of the Rings films. What do you think they were doing?

It was for this year's autumn and winter collection from Dutch based international clothing company G-Star. Their RAW range is, apparently, "stylish urban clothing" made from unwashed, untreated denim. Perhaps Carlsen will be on the catwalk in September during the New York Fashion Week. He will definitely be there taking on the "world" in an internet game on the Friday, 10 September. GMs Maxime Vachier-Lagrave, Hikaru Nakamura and Judit Polgar will be helping keep the "world" on the straight and narrow.

Chess, despite its hundreds of millions of players worldwide, still has a low profile. Every little helps to raise it, even Viktor Korchnoi's appearance with a Swiss cow to promote milk. There are some signs, such as its adoption by the Asian Games and the African Games, that we may be approaching a breakthrough.

The phalanx of attractive young female Grandmasters will also have a part to play, not least Russia's Alexandra Kosteniuk, 12th and reigning Women's World Champion. What a contrast with the early Soviet champions, who would not have looked out of place in a shot-put competition.

Alexandra Kosteniuk (then IM, 2457) - Semen Dvoiris (GM, 2555), Biel 2003. White: Kh1, Qe4, Ra1, Rf1, Be2, Nd5, pawns a2, f4, g2, h2; Black: Ke8, Qd6, Ra8, Rh8, Bd7, Bf8, Ne7, pawns a6, c4, f6, f7, h4. White to play. What has she got for the sacrificed piece? Solution easy.

December is a long way off but the 2nd London Chess Classic should definitely go in your diary right away. December 8-15 Carlsen, Anand, Kramnik and Nakamura will be in town, fighting it out in the Olympia Conference Centre against Michael Adams, Nigel Short, Luke McShane and David Howell. You can watch and listen to the commentary or take part in the events running alongside.

CHESS SOLUTION

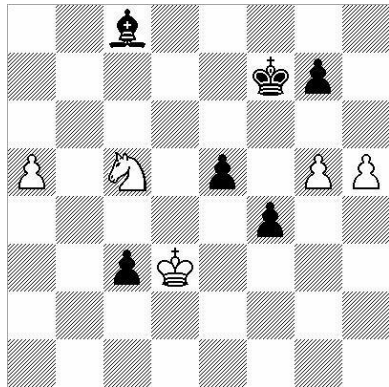
Carlsen-Karpov:

1 Qg4xg7+ Qd7xg7 2 Re1xe8+ Qg7-f8 (otherwise Nf5xg7) 3 Re8xf8+ Kg8xf8 and Black resigned after 4 b3xc4 Rb7-f7 5 g2-g4 h7-h5 6 Rd1-h1.

Kosteniuk-Dvoiris:

Answer - a win. She played 1 Nd5xe7 and Black resigned. If 1...Qd6xe7 2 Qe4xa8+ Qe7-d8 3 Qa8-e4+ Qd8-e7 4 Qe4xc4 is easy at GM level. 1...Ra8-d8 is even worse: 2 Ne7-g6+ Bd7-e6 3 Ng6xh8 and so on. But not 1 Nd5xf6+? Qd6xf6 2 Qe4xa8+ Bd7-c8 3 Be2xc4 Bf8-g7 4 Ra1-d1 0-0 and Black is clearly better.

Saturday 24 July 2010
By Kevin O'Connell



The diagram position is from an internet blitz game A.N.Other - Kevin O'Connell. Black to play. What should the result be? What is your analysis?

Great local success in the County Championship finals.

In the Under 160 (u1880) Suffolk defeated Yorkshire, who were defending the trophy, by 9.5-6.5. Individual results against opposition rated on average 33 points higher: Conrad Simons 0.5, Luke Hill 0, Richard Lamont 1, Edward Venmore-Rowland 1, Stuart Tate 1, David Brown 1, John Wheatley 0.5, Martin Fogg 1, Yury Tsischanka 0, Robert Stephens 0, Philip Revell 0.5, Colin Roberts 0, Bob Jones 1, Ed Kirkham 0.5, Jakob Tulic 1, Mark Bettley 0.5.

In the U100 (u1400), Essex crushed Warwickshire 8.5-3.5. Dean Ellis 0.5, George Horan 1, David Wilson 1, Russell Fisher 1, Hugh Tanton 1, John Ellis 1, Jody Gorham 1, Steve Haggerty 1, Adam Taylor 1, Dan Ball 0, Jonathan Newby 0, John Chapman 0.

Alex Lopez (FM, 2367) - Ryan-Rhys Griffiths (2249), Irish Championship 2010: White: Kb7, pawns d5, e6, g5, g6; Black: Kd6, Be5. White to play.

CHESS SOLUTION

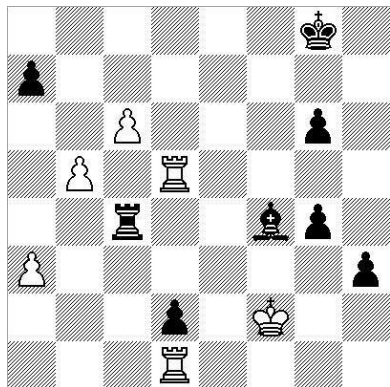
Other-O'Connell:

The variation is long, but the idea is short - White will run out of useful moves and end up being mated: 1...f4-f3 2 Kd3-e3 c3-c2 3 Nc5-b3 e5-e4 4 Nb3-c1 Bc8-a6 5 Nc1-b3 Ba6-c4 6 Nb3-c1 Kf7-e6 7 a5-a6 (if 7 Ke3-f2 Ke6-f5-+ 8 h5-h6 Kf5-f4! 9 h6-h7 e4-e3+ 10 Kf2-g1 Kf4-g3 11 h7-h8Q f3-f2+ 12 Kg1-h1 Bc4-d5 mate) 7...Bc4xa6 8 Nc1-b3 Ke6-e5 9 h5-h6 Ba6-c4 10 Nb3-c1 (or 10 h6-h7 Bc4xb3 11 h7-h8Q c2-c1Q+ 12 Ke3-f2 Qc1-d2+ 13 Kf2-g3 Qd2-g2+ 14 Kg3-h4 Qg2-h2+ 15 Kh4-g4 Bb3-e6 mate) 10...g7xh6 11 g5xh6 Bc4-g8 12 h6-h7 Bg8xh7 13 Nc1-b3 Bh7-g8 14 Nb3-c1 Bg8-c4. Black resigned after 1...f4-f3 - he simply thought that one of my pawns would queen. In a blitz game there is little time for calculation; I had seen as far as 3...e5-e4 and assumed that something would turn up and that I would find it.

Lopez-Griffiths:

1 Kb7-a7 This and the next two moves are 'triangulation' 1...Be5-g7 2 Ka7-b8 Bg7-e5 3 Kb8-b7 the same position but with the big difference that it is Black to move and that means he will lose: 3...Be5-g7 (or 3...Kd6-e7 4 Kb7-c6) 4 Kb7-c8 Kd6-e7 5 Kc8-c7 Bg7-c3 6 Kc7-c6 Bc3-e5 7 d5-d6+ Ke7-d8 (if 7...Be5xd6 8 g6-g7, or 7...Ke7xe6 8 d6-d7) 8 Kc6-b7 (I prefer 8 e6-e7+ Kd8-e8 9 Kc6-d5 and, faced with the threat of Ke6 and d7 mate, Black must give up the bishop) 8...Be5-c3 9 g6-g7 Bc3xg7 10 e6-e7+ and Black resigned. The result is obvious after 10...Kd8-d7 11 e7-e8Q+ Kd7xe8 12 Kb7-c8.

Saturday 31 July 2010
By Kevin O'Connell



The diagram position is from Stephen Brady (FM, 2376) - Gerard O'Connell (2136), Irish Championship, Dublin 2010. Black to play. Solution moderate/difficult.

The Irish was won by the young FIDE Master Alex Lopez of Cork. Lopez (2367) - Ryan-Rhys Griffiths (2249), Irish Championship 2010. White: Kb7, pawns d5, e6, g5, g6; Black: Kd6, Be5. White to play.

Endgame understanding often makes the difference between success and failure and there are few better endgame players than GM Mickey Adams, hot favourite to win the British Championship, currently under way in Canterbury. He is rated 155 points ahead of second seed GM Nick Pert (2551). IM Richard Pert (2460) is seeded 9th, IM Adam Hunt (2408) of Woodbridge 15th and David Spence (2244) of Ipswich 45th of the 78 competitors.

CHESS SOLUTION

Brady-O'Connell (no relation):

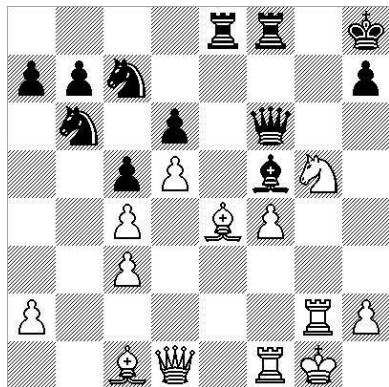
Bean count is about equal, but Black is winning. The quickest and most principled route to victory is 1...g4-g3+ 2 Kf2-f3 g3-g2 3 Kf3-f2 (if 3 Rd5-d7 Rc4-c3+ 4 Kf3xf4 h3-h2 is easy) 3...Bf4-e3+ 4 Kf2-f3 (or 4 Kf2xe3 h3-h2) when lots of moves win, but I like 4...Rc4-f4+ 5 Kf3xe3 Rf4-f1 and the rest is trivial.

Black chose 1...Rc2-c3, which does no harm. After 2 Kf2-e2 g4-g3 (2...Rc3-e3+ is even better) 3 Rd5xd2, he should have pushed one of the pawns or played Rc3-e3+ (for example 3...Rc3-e3+ 4 Ke2-f1 Re3-f3+ 5 Kf1-e1 h3-h2 6 Rd2xh2 g3xh2 7 Ke1-e2 Rf3-g3 and it's all over), but instead he stumbled with 3...Bf4xd2 (still winning, but it's getting harder and harder) 4 Ke2xd2 Rc3-c5 5 Kd2-e3 Rc5xb5? (it is instructive to note how Black's errors 'win' material, but lose advantage; 5...Kg8-f7 works). After 6 Rd1-c1 Rb5-b8 7 Ke3-f3 g3-g2 8 Kf3-g3 Rb8-c8 9 Kg3xh3 Rc8xc6 10 Rc1-d1 (10 Rc1xc6 g2-g1Q) 10...Kg8-f7 was the final wrong turn (10...Rc6-c3+! 11 Kh3xg2 Rc3xa3 is still winning; computer 'tablebases' prove that, with best play, it's mate in 46!) and after 11 Kh3xg2 Kf7-f6 12 Rd1-d4 Rc6-c3 13 Rd4-a4 Rc3-c7 14 Ra4-a5 Kf6-g7 15 Kg2-g3 Kg7-h6 16 Kg3-g4 the draw was obvious.

Lopez-Griffiths:

1 Kb7-a7 (triangulation, passing the move to the opponent) 1...Be5-g7 2 Ka7-b8 Bg7-e5 3 Kb8-b7 Be5-g7 (3...Kd6-e7 4 Kb7-c6) 4 Kb7-c8 Kd6-e7 5 Kc8-c7 Bg7-c3 6 Kc7-c6 Bc3-e5 7 d5-d6+ Ke7-d8 (7...Be5xd6 8 g6-g7; 7...Ke7xe6 8 d6-d7) 8 Kc6-b7 (or 8 e6-e7+ Kd8-e8 9 Kc6-d5 and, faced with the threat of Ke6 and d6-d7 mate, Black must give up the bishop) 8...Be5-c3 9 g6-g7 Bc3xg7 (now the black bishop will not be able to cover the d8 queening square) 10 e6-e7+ and Black resigned since 10...Kd8-d7 11 e7-e8Q+ Kd7xe8 12 Kb7-c8 is clear.

Saturday 7 August 2010
By Kevin O'Connell



The diagram position is from the game Jack Rudd (IM, 2236) - Andrew Greet (IM, 2451), British Championship, Canterbury 2010. White to play, Solution difficult.

If that one is too hard for you, then here is a nice easy one. David Haydon (2187) - Nick Pert (GM, 2551), British Championship 2010 - White: Kd4, pawns a4, b3, d5, g3; Black: Kd6, pawns a5, b6, f5, g5. Black to play. There's not much here in the way of checks and captures. The importance of studying endgames (more than openings), is not so much to be able to win such easy positions, but to gain the understanding necessary to create them.

Finally, a moderate one to complete the set. Adam Hunt (IM, 2408) - Peter Wells (GM, 2488), British Championship 2010. White: Kb1, Rg6, Rh6, Bd3, pawns a3, b2, c2, f3, g4; Black: Kf8, Rc7, Rd8, Bb7, Ne7, pawns a6, c3, d5. White to play.

CHESS SOLUTION

Rudd-Greet:

"Checks and captures" - just the three moves to take a quick glance at, only one of which looks really interesting, after all it rips away the last shred of cover for the black king. 1 Ng5xh7! Bf5xh7 2 Be4xh7 Kh8xh7 3 Qd1-d3+ (3 Qd1-h5+ mates a little quicker) 3...Qf6-f5 (checks and captures have got us this far, now you just need to spot a couple of mate threats) 4 Qd3-g3 Qf5-f6 5 f4-f5 Re8-e4 6 Bc1-f4 - simply blocking Black's coverage of h4; now it's absolutely all over. There is no sensible reply to the threat of Qg3-h3+ other than the one that Black employed - he resigned.

Haydon-Pert:

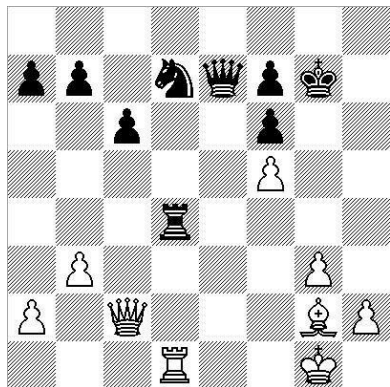
Black's two pawns against one on the kingside can easily be turned into a new queen, but not by 1...f5-f4, when 2 g3xf4 g5xf4 3 Kd4-e4 f4-f3 4 Ke4xf3 Kd6xd5 5 Kf3-e3 Kd5-c5 6 Ke3-d3 Kc5-b4 7 Kd3-c2 draws easily.

Of course Nick played 1...g5-g4 and the game ended 2 Kd4-c4 (if 2 Kd4-e3 Kd6xd5 3 Ke3-f4 Kd5-e6 4 Kf4-e3 Ke6-e5 is easy) 2...f5-f4 and White resigned, it being rather obvious now that Black will soon have a queen again.

Hunt-Wells:

1 Rh6-h8+ Kf8-f7 2 Rh8-h7+ (2 Rh8xd8 Ne7xg6 is good for Black) 2...Kf7-f8 3 Rg6-f6+ Kf8-e8? (3...Kf8-g8 4 Rf6-f7 d5-d4 5 Rf7xe7 Rc7xe7 6 Rh7xe7 Bb7xf3 7 g4-g5 and White should win without too many problems, but at least he would have to work a bit.) 4 Bd3-g6+ and Black resigned since after 4...Ne7xg6 (4...Ke8-d7 5 Bg6-f5+ Kd7-e8 6 Rh7-h8+ is even worse) 5 Rh7xc7 Black is unable to save both bishop and knight. The whole of that line having been solved by checks and captures.

Saturday 14 August 2010
By Kevin O'Connell



The diagram position is from the game Stephen Gordon (GM, 2534) - Michael Adams (GM, 2706), British Championship 2010. Black to play. Solution difficult.

This is one of the most instructive positions I have seen for a long time. Difficult, yes but not necessarily that difficult. It depends partly on your playing level, but more on how you look at chess, and above all on how you learned the game.

You may have immediately spotted the solution, you may have gradually worked your way there, or you may have given up, simply 'not seeing it.'

I struggled with it, because, having learned by watching others play, my own abilities were steadily diminished by such 'helpful' advice as "don't go there, it'll just be taken" or "make sure you don't lose material." Invariably such 'advice' was given in the form of negatives (don't, can't) and not in terms of what one should do.

GM Adams won the British Championship with 9.5/11. GM Nick Pert (2551) was second with 8 and IMs Adam Hunt (2408) and Richard Pert (2460) were among the six players sharing third place with 7.5. Hunt, from Woodbridge, achieved a Grandmaster norm.

CHESS SOLUTION

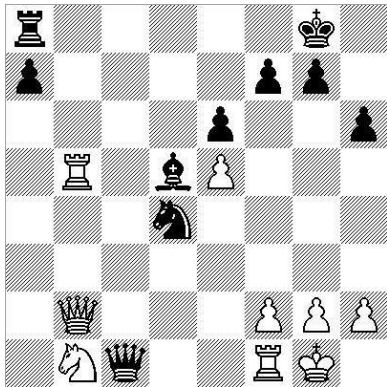
1...Qe7-c5 and White resigned. It's easy enough to see 2 Qc2xc5 Rd4xd1+, the tricky bit is 2 Rd1xd4 Qc5xc2 3 Rd4xd7 Qc2-c5+ 4 Kg1-f1 (if 4 Kg1-h1 Qc5-c1+) 4...Qc5xf5+. The biggest obstacle to playing well is the "I can't" syndrome - I can't play there, s/he just takes it. Here it is a step beyond that, because obviously the knight supports c5, but after an exchange on c5, Black's rook would be hanging.

"Checks and captures" does not initially work here, since none of 1...Rd4xd1+, 1...Qe7-e3+ nor 1...Qe7-e1+ get anywhere for Black. So how can it be easy for Black to look at the winning move?

There is only one move that allows the strongest piece simultaneously to attack both the enemy queen and king. I always coach even the rawest of beginners to consider that pieces attack every square along the lines they stand on, including those that are "blocked," because chess is dynamic, not static.

My advice is that, having glanced at "checks and captures," one should move on to "making the pieces work." Nothing works as hard as 1...Qe7-c5. So what's the problem? It is the mental block that most players have. That block stems from "can't" and I am absolutely certain that it, in turn, arises from those numbers, etched in stone, of 1-3-3-5-9 and the counter-productive advice (arguably the most counter-productive) of "don't go there, s/he just takes it."

Saturday 21 August 2010
By Kevin O'Connell



The diagram position is from the game Das Debashis (IM, 2411) - S.P. Sethuraman (IM, 2513), World Junior Championship, Chotowa, Poland 2010. Black to play, Solution difficult. (White has just played Qe2xb2, capturing a pawn, in case you were wondering how this position could possibly have arisen.)

President Obama's campaign cry of "Yes, we can" should have a place on the lips of every chess player, replacing the miserable "I can't." Here is an example of why that is the case: Mikhail Kobalia (GM, 2648) - Loek van Wely (GM, 2677), Arctic Chess Challenge, Tromso 2010. White: Kh1, Qh4, Rh3, Rf6, Be4, pawns a3, b2, c2, d5, g2, h2; Black: Kg8, Qb7, Ra8, Rf8, Be7, pawns a5, b5, e5, f7, g6, h5. White to play. Solution easy/moderate.

And another, resulting in a major car crash. Eggenberger-Schumacher, 1989. White: Kg1, Qd1, Re1, Bc4, Ne5, Nf5, pawns b2, d4, f3, g2, h2; Black: Kg8, Qb4, Rd8, Ba8, Nf4, Nf8, pawns b6, e6, g7, h7. White to play. Yes, you can!

Why was White continuing to play the following 'simple' rook endgame? Romain Edouard (GM, 2620) - Matthieu Cornette (GM, 2543), French Championship, Belfort 2010. White: Kf8, Ra7, pawn f7; Black: Kd7, Rg4, pawn a4. Black to play. Solution easy (when you know how).

CHESS SOLUTION

Debashis-Sethuraman:

Did you look at "checks and captures?" Perhaps you give up after 1...Nd4-f3+ 2 g2xf3. White gave up as soon as Black plonked the knight down on f3 since 2 g2xf3 Qc1-g5+ 3 Kg1-h1 Bd5xf3 is mate.

Kobalia-Van Wely:

1 Qh4xh5 and Black resigned. He can't avoid mate - 1...g6xh5 2 Rh3xg3+ Kg8-h8 3 Rf6-h6.

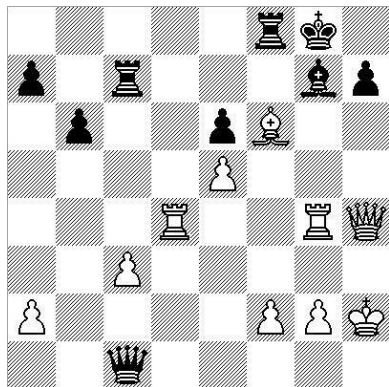
Eggenberger-Schumacher:

1 Qd1-d2! and Black hit a wall: 1...Qb4xd2 2 Nf5-e7+ Kg8-h8 3 Ne5-f7 mate. If I showed you the position after Black captures on d2, you would see the finish in a trice, so why is it so hard to spot White's first move? I can't see why!

Edouard-Cornette:

Simple enough to keep the draw in hand with 1...Kd7-d6! 2 Kf8-e8 Rg4-e4+ 3 Ke8-d8 Re4-f4 and White is unable to make progress. White got his reward when Black blundered with 1...Kd7-d8? allowing 2 Ra7-a5 (2 Ra7-a8+ Kd8-d7 3 Ra8-a6 amounts to the same thing, and is easier to understand) 2...Kd8-d7 3 Ra5-a6! (better than torturing yourself squeezing out the win after 3 Ra5-d5+ Kd7-c6 4 Kf8-e7 Kc6xd5 5 f7-f8Q) 3...Kd7-d8 4 Ra6-d6+ Kd8-c7 5 Kf8-e7 and resigned since White is now queening the pawn. You should make sure that you fully understand White's winning idea after 2...Rg4-f4 (instead of 2...Kd8-d7 above) 3 Kf8-g7 Rf4-g4+ 4 Kg7-f6 Rg4-f4+ 5 Kf6-e6 Rf4-e4+ 6 Ke6-f5.

Saturday 28 August 2010
By Kevin O'Connell



The diagram position is from the game Almira Skripchenko (WGM, IM, 2458) - Pauline Guichard (WIM, 2320), French Women's Championship 2010. White to play. Solution easy/moderate.

The French Championships have just ended in Belfort. Laurent Fressinet (GM, 2697) won the main Championship and Almira Skripchenko the Women's Championship. What's special about that? Skripchenko is the maiden name of Madame Fressinet!

The following position is from Laurent Fressinet-Emmanuel Bricard (GM, 2478). White: Kg1, Qa8, Re1, pawns f2, g3, h4; Black: Kf7, Qc3, Rb5, pawns e5, g7, h6. White to play. Solution difficult (and long), but hopefully you can find the basic idea.

CHESS SOLUTION

Skripchenko-Guichard:

Black resigned after the first move of the forcing sequence 1 Bf6xg7 R7c7xg7 2 Rg4xg7+ Kg8xg7 (that's the easy part, the moderate part is finding the best path among several winning moves) 3 Rd4-d7+ Kg7-g6 (if 3...Rf8-f7 4 Qh4-f6+ Kg7-g8 5 Rd7-d8+ Rf7-f8 6 Rd8xf8 mate) 4 Qh4xh7+ Kg6-g5 5 Rd7-g7+ Kg5-f4 6 Qh7-h4+ Kf4-f5 7 Qh4-g4+ Kf5xe5 8 Qg4-d4+ Ke5-f5 9 g2-g4 mate.

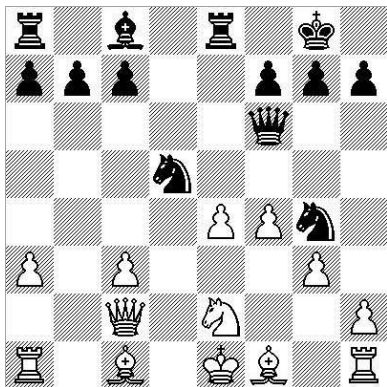
Fressinet-Bricard:

The basic idea is checkmate! The long march begins with a single step: 1 Re1-e3 Qc3-c1+ 2 Kg1-g2 Qc1-b1 (see below for what happens if Black threatens mate with 2...Rb5-b1) 3 Re3-f3+ Kf7-e6 (if 3...Kf7-e7 4 Qa8-f8+ Ke7-e6 5 Qf8-g8+ Ke6-d6 6 Rf3-d3+ Qb1xd3 7 Qg8-d8+; or 3...Kf7-g6 4 Qa8-e8+ Kg6-h7 5 Rf3-f8 Qb1-e4+ 6 Kg2-h2 and Rf8-h8 mate) 4 Qa8-c6+ Ke6-e7 5 Qc6-c7+ Ke7-e6 6 Qc7xg7 good enough (Black resigned at this point), for example 6...Ke6-d5 (6...Qb1-c1 7 Qg7-f7+ Ke6-d6 8 Rf3-f6+ Kd6-c5 9 Qf7-c7+) 7 Qg7-d7+ Kd5-c4 8 Qd7-e6+ Kc4-d4 9 Qe6xh6.

But 6 Rf3-f7 Qb1-e4+ 7 f2-f3 Qe4-e2+ 8 Kg2-h3 Qe2-f1+ 9 Kh3-g4 Rb5-b4+ 10 Kg4-h5 g7-g6+ (or 10...Qf1-b5 11 Rf7-e7+ Ke6-d5 12 Re7xe5+ Kd5-d4 13 Qc7-d6+ Kd4-c3 14 Re5xb5 Rb4xb5+ 15 Kh5-g6) 11 Kh5xh6 Qf1-b5 12 Rf7-e7+ Ke6-d5 13 Qc7xe5+ Kd5-c4 14 Re7-c7+ Kc4-b3 15 Qe5-c3+ Kb3-a2 (if 15...Kb3-a4 16 Qc3-a1+ Ka4-b3 17 Rc7-c3 mate) 16 Rc7-a7+ Rb4-a4 17 Qc3-c2+ Ka2-a3 18 Qc2xa4+ Qb5xa4 19 Ra7xa4+ Ka3xa4 20 Kh6xg6 might have been a more fitting end.

Now, let's go back to 1 Re1-e3 Qc3-c1+ 2 Kg1-g2 and try 2...Rb5-b1 3 Re3-f3+ Kf7-e6 4 Qa8-a2+ Ke6-d6 (or 4...Ke6-e7 5 Qa2-f7+ Ke7-d6 6 Rf3-d3+ Kd6-c5 7 Rd3-d5+ Kc5-b6 8 Rd5-d6+ Kb6-b5 9 Qf7-b7+ Kb5-c4 10 Qb7-c7+ Kc4-b3 11 Rd6-b6+ Kb3-a2 12 Qc7-f7+! Ka2-a3 13 Qf7-a7 mate) 5 Rf3-d3+ Kd6-c5 6 Rd3-d5+ Kc5-c6 7 Qa2-a8+ Rb1-b7 8 Rd5-d8 Qc1-e1 Now the white queen does a pretty little dance: (8...Kc6-b6 9 Rd8-d6+ is clear and rather boring) 9 Qa8-a6+ Rb7-b6 10 Qa6-c4+ Kc6-b7 11 Qc4-c8+ Kb7-a7 12 Qc8-a8 mate.

Saturday 4 September 2010
By Kevin O'Connell



The diagram position is from a top board 1974 Essex League game Pat Taylor-Kevin O'Connell. Black to play. Solution difficult.

My elder son is getting married today, and I am celebrating my 40th wedding anniversary tomorrow. Hence my indulgence in some family positions.

Now for Mark O'Connell-D. Taylor, English Counties u18 Team Championship, Nuneaton 1996. White to play. Solution difficult. White: Kg1, Rd1, Rg6, Bc1, Nf5, pawns a2, b3, c4, e4, f2, g2, h3; Black: Kh7, Qf3, Rd8, Re8, Be6, Nb6, pawns a7, c5, d6, e5, f6.

CHESS SOLUTION

K.O'Connell-P.Taylor:

I could not see through to the end, but I was convinced that with all my pieces working, and the white king caught in heavy cross-fire, there would be a happy ending, at least for me. 1...Bc8-f5! 2 e4xf5 Qf6-b6 3 Qc2-d3 Qb6-f2+ 4 Ke1-d2 Ra8-d8 5 h2-h3 Nd5-e3 6 h3xg4 Ne3xf1+ and White resigned. Mate is unavoidable: 7 Kd2-c2 (if 7 Rh1xf1 Qf2xe2 mate, or 7 Kd2-d1 Qf2xe2 mate) 7...Re8xe2+ 8 Kc2-b3 Rd8xd3 9 Ra1-b1 Qf2-b6+ 10 Kb3-a4 Qb6-a6+ 11 Ka4-b4 c7-c5+ 12 Kb4xc5 Re2-e4 and the queen mates on c4, c6 or d6 as appropriate. An immensely satisfying game. I get an extra kick from seeing that the strongest chess engines find nothing to criticize in my play and barely quibble over White's moves.

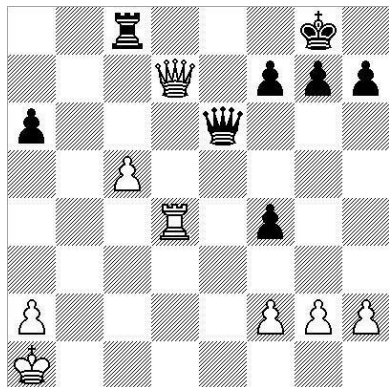
M.O'Connell-D.Taylor:

Not 1 Rg6-g7+? Kh7-h8 2 g2xf3 Be6xf5 and the advantage swings Black's way. White found the right path: 1 Rg6-h6+ Kh7-g8 2 g2xf3 Nb6-c8 3 Kg1-h2 and the game ended 3...a7-a5 4 Rd1-g1+ Black resigns, a result which helped Suffolk to their first ever victory in this event. It is mate after 4...Kg8-f8 (if 4...Kg8-f7 5 Rg1-g7+ Kf7-f8 and it's mate in two, kicking off with either Rh6xf6+ or Rh6-h8+) 5 Rh6xf6+ Be6-f7 6 Bc1-h6.

Black could have put up somewhat stiffer resistance with 3...Be6xf5, but it is no miracle cure: 4 e4xf5 Kg8-f7 5 f3-f4 and: (A) 5...Nc8-e7 6 f4xe5 f6xe5 (or 6...d6xe5 7 Rh6-h7+ Kf7-g8 8 Rd1xd8) 7 Bc1-g5 and the win is fairly obvious (one example is 7...Rd8-d7 8 Rh6-f6+ Kf7-g7 9 Rf6-e6 Kg7-f7 10 Re6xe5 Ne7-c6 11 Re5xe8 Kf7xe8 12 Kh2-g3 and Black can only sit and wait for a pawn advance: 12...Nc6-b4 13 Rd1-d2 Nb4-c6 14 Bg5-e3 Ke8-d8 15 f5-f6 Kd8-c7 16 Kg3-g4 Rd7-h7 17 Kg4-f5 Rh7xh3 18 f6-f7 Rh3-h8 19 Be3-h6.

(B) 5...e5xf4 6 Bc1xf4 Re8-e2 7 Rd1-g1! Re2xf2+ 8 Kh2-g3 Rf2xa2 9 Kg3-f3 Rd8-f8 (9...Rd8-e8? 10 Rh6-h7+ Kf7-f8 11 Bf4-h6 mate) 10 Rh6-h7+ Kf7-e8 11 Bf4-h6 Nc8-e7 12 Rg1-g7 Ne7xf5 13 Rg7-b7 Nf5-d4+ 14 Kf3-e3 Ra2-e2+ 15 Ke3-d3 and 15...Nd4-c6 only delays the inevitable mate.

Saturday 11 September 2010
By Kevin O'Connell



The diagram shows a position from Pierre Bailet (FM, 2425) - Eric Prié (GM, 2529), French Championship, Belfort 2010. White to play. Solution easy.

There is a common misconception that the end of a game is the easy bit. Yes, if you have built up some understanding, but even then positions like the Silaev one below can be extraordinarily difficult.

It is a pity that so many players work at chess back to front. They spend lots of time on the openings and comparatively little (or none) on endgames. I often hear the 'justification' "but I'm bound to have an opening and I probably won't need to play an endgame." This is a specious argument and they should concentrate on looking at endgames. Only in that way is it possible to gain a real understanding of how the pieces can work together.

Emanuel Berg (GM, 2612) - Magnus Carlhammar (FM, 2311), Manhem 2010. White: Kg6, Bd3, pawns a5, c2, g5; Black: Kf8, Nc5, pawns b7, c6, g7. White to play. Solution easy.

Long time World Champion Anatoly Karpov had two words of advice when asked what players should do in order to improve: "study endgames!" I like the variation "study endgame studies!"

Here is an endgame study by L. Silaev, published in the chess magazine "Shakhmaty vSSSR" in 1984. White: Ke1, Nf2, pawn g4; Black: Kg5, pawn g7. White to move.

CHESS SOLUTION

Bailet-Prié:

1 Qd7-d8+ Qe6-e8 (if 1...Rc8xd8 2 Rd4xd8+ and mate next move)
2 Qd8xe8+ Rc8xe8 3 c5-c6 and Black resigned. The pawn is invincible: 3...Re8-c8 4 c6-c7 and invulnerable (4...Rc8xc7 5 Rd4-d8 mate) and so White's rook will land on d8 next move, no matter what.

Berg-Carlhammar:

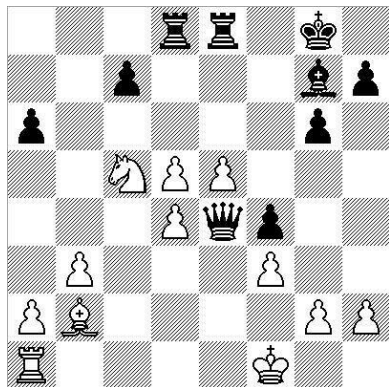
Black has just moved the attacked knight from e4. He should have put it on d6. He resigned after 1 Bd3-f5, the bitter end would have come after 1...Nc5-a6 2 Bf5-c8 Na6-c5 3 Bc8xb7 Nc5xb7 4 a5-a6 - another unstoppable pawn.

L. Silaev:

There are two main tries. The more obvious one fails to win: 1 Ke1-e2 Kg5-f4 2 Ke2-f1 Kf4-f3 3 Kf1-g1 Kf3-g3 4 g4-g5 Kg3-f4 5 Nf2-h3+ Kf4-g3 6 Nh3-f2 Kg3-f4 and Black holds the position for a draw.

1 Ke1-f1 is the only way to win. 1...Kg5-h4 (if 1...Kg5-f4 2 Kf1-g2 g7-g5 3 Kg2-h3 frees the knight to go hunting) 2 Kf1-e2 (but not 2 Kf1-g2 g7-g5 3 Kg2-f1 Kh4-g3 4 Kf1-e2 Kg3-f4 and White will not make any progress) 2...Kh4-g3 3 Ke2-e3 g7-g5 (after 3...g7-g6 there is only one move to win: 4 g4-g5) 4 Ke3-e4! (not 4 Ke3-e2 Kg3-f4) 4...Kg3xf2 5 Ke4-f5 and the rest really is easy.

Saturday 18 September 2010
By Kevin O'Connell



The position is from David Howell (GM, 2616) - Peter Heine Nielsen (GM, 2700), Rising Stars v. Experience, Amsterdam 2010. White to play. Solution easy (first move) and moderate (subsequent ideas).

Pictures at an Exhibition is a famous piece of music inspired by an art exhibition. I think that some of the sights in today's positions would grace any art gallery.

Vasily Smyslov-Mikhail Botvinnik, Soviet 'Absolute' Championship 1941. White: Kh1, Rg1, Rg6, pawns a6, e4, f5, f3; Black: Kh7, Rc7, pawns b2, c3, d2, h4, h5. Black, to move, has the extra passed pawn!

The following position arises after five moves of a 1983 study composed by L. Silaev, Black having just promoted on g1. White: Kh8, Qe8, Rb1, pawn g4; Black: Kh6, Qg1, Rh3, Rf6, pawn g5. White to play. It may look easy, but appearances can be deceptive.

Some ideas have been around for a long time. White: Kg8, Re1, Rg1, Ng3, pawn f4; Black: Kf6, Rd7, Rh7, Ng6, pawn f5. White to play. This study was composed more than a thousand years ago by al-Adli ar-Rumi about the year 840.

CHESS SOLUTION

Howell-Nielsen:
1 f3xe4! and Black resigned. A pretty picture, which gives new meaning to the well-known chess phrase "being within the square of the pawn." A masochist might continue with 1...Bg7-f8 2 Nc5-e6 Rd8-d7 3 Ra1-c1 Re8-c8 4 d5-d6 c7-c6 5 d4-d5 c6-c5 6 Ne6xc5 Rd7-d8 7 Nc5-e6 Rc8xc1+ 8 Bb2xc1 Rd8-c8 9 Bc1-a3 and it's obviously all over, for example 9...a6-a5 10 d6-d7 Rc8-b8 11 Ne6xf8 a5-a4 12 e5-e6.

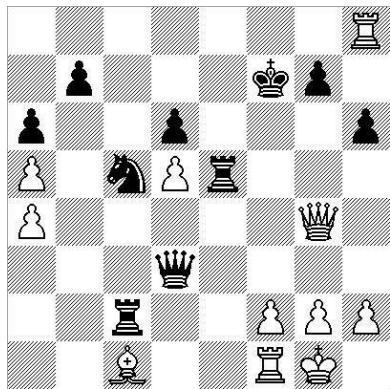
Smyslov-Botvinnik:
Botvinnik played 1...d2-d1Q and White resigned - it's mate in 16 (as it is after 1...d2-d1R). Interestingly 1...d2-d1R is better (mate in 12), but best of all is 1...b2-b1Q, which mates in 11, but the win is obvious after 2 Rg1xb1 c3-c2 3 Rb1-f1 c2-c1Q 4 Rg6-g1 Qc1xf1 5 Rg1xf1 Rc7-c1.

L. Silaev:
Did you fall for the stalemate theme? 1 Rb1xg1 Rf6-f8+ 2 Qe8xf8+ Kh6-g6+ 3 Kh8-g8 Rh3-h8+ 4 Kg8xh8 stalemate.

The winning line is 1 Rb1-b7 Rf6-f8+ 2 Qe8xf8+ Kh6-g6+ 3 Kh8-g8 Rh3-h8+ 4 Kg8xh8 Qg1-h1+. What a denouement - three legal moves, three different results: 5 Rb7-h7 Qh1xh7 mate, 5 Kh8-g8 Qh1-h8+ 6 Kg8xh8 stalemate, saving the best until last with 5 Qf8-h6+ Qh1xh6+ 6 Kh8-g8 and Black can resign! If 6...Kg6-f6 (or 6...Qh6-h1 7 Rb7-b6+ Qh1-c6 8 Rb6xc6 mate) 7 Rb7-b6+ Kf6-e5 8 Rb6xh6 and from here to mate is much less than eternity.

al-Adli ar-Rumi:
1 Kg3-h3+ Rh7xh5 2 Rg1xg6+ Kf6xg6 3 Re1-e6 mate. I wonder how long "checks and captures" has been around, oh, and where have I seen that mate idea before (or since)?

Saturday 25 September 2010
By Kevin O'Connell



The diagram position is from the game Andrei Istratescu (GM, 2631) - Geert van der Stricht (IM, 2392), Antwerp 2010. White to play. Solution moderate to difficult.

It seems to me like an age since I last wrote about "checks and captures" and "making the pieces work" which are the themes for today. If you find the diagram too hard, how about an easy one?

Steven Gonzalez (1831) - Miguel Senlle (2235), Spanish Championship 2010. White: Kg1, Qh5, Ra1, Rf1, Bc1, Bc4, Ng5, pawns a3, b2, c2, f2, g2, h2; Black: Kh8, Qd8, Ra8, Rf8, Bc8, Nc6, Nf6, pawns a7, b7, d4, f5, g7, h7. White to play.

Another, even easier one: Leif Johannessen (GM, 2539) - Anthony Ker (IM, 2321), Queenstown 2009. White: Kc1, Qc2, Rd1, Rh1, Bf1, Be3, Ne4, pawns a2, b2, f2, f3, g4; Black: Ke8, Qd7, Ra8, Rh8, Bg7, Nd6, Nf8, pawns a7, b7, c7, e5, h5, h7. White to play.

CHESS SOLUTION

Istratescu-van der Stricht:

1 Bc1xh6! Is that really such a surprise? Isn't it working much harder now than it was on c1? Black has three logical tries: (1) He can take the bishop. Then we get 1...g7xh6 2 Qg4-g8+ Kf7-f6 (if 2...Kf7-e7 3 Qg8-g7 mate) 3 Qg8-f8+ Kf6-g5 4 Rh8-g8+ Kg5-h5 (or 4...Qd3-g6 5 h2-h4+ Kg5-h5 6 Qf8-f3+ Kh5xh4 7 Rg8xg6 and mate next move) 5 Qf8-f7+ Kh5-h4 6 Qf7-f4+ Kh4-h5 7 Qf4-g4 mate.

(2) He can defend g7 with 1...Qd3-g6 but then 2 Qg4-c8, with a big threat on f8, or the easier to calculate 2 Rh8-f8+ Kf7xf8 3 Qg4xg6 g7xh6 4 Qg6xd6+ Re5-e7 5 Qd6-f6+ Kf8-e8 6 Qf6-g6+ Ke8-d8 7 Qg6xc2, which is very clear.

(3) In the game he tried to cover g7 with 1...g7-g5, but it did not help: 2 Qg4-h5+ Kf7-e7 (if 2...Qd3-g6 3 Rh8-f8+ Kf7-e7 4 Qh5xg6 and Black is getting mated: 4...Ke7-d7 5 Bh6xg5 Kd7-c7 [or 5...Re5xg5 6 Qg6-f7 mate] 6 Rf8-c8+ Kc7xc8 7 Qg6-g8+ Kc8-d7 8 Qg8-d8 mate) 3 Qh5-e8+ and Black resigned - it's mate after 3...Ke7-f6 4 Rh8-f8.

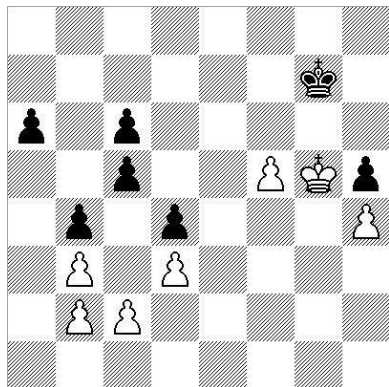
Gonzalez-Senlle:

My advice is always to look at checks and captures, not necessarily to play them. Here 1 Qh5-h4 would have kept a nice clear advantage for White, but the game went 1 Ng5-f7+? Rf8xf7 2 Qh5xf7 Nc6-e5! and White could happily (or unhappily) resign here, although he played another two moves before doing so.

Johannessen-Ker:

White's position is so overwhelming that many moves will win, but best (and most obvious) is 1 Rd1xd6! and Black resigned in view of 1...c7xd6 2 Bf1-b5 Qd7xb5 3 Ne4xd6+ Ke8-d7 4 Nd6xb5 and if 4...Ra8-c8 5 Rh1-d1+.

Saturday 2 October 2010
By Kevin O'Connell



The diagram position is from Jeffrey Alfred (945) - Eibhia Ni Mhuireagain (804), Dun Laoghaire 2010. Black to play. Solution difficult.

You can't expect good endgame technique from ten-year-olds, but you might assume it of internationals.

Sandra Djukic (2198) - Alisa Melekhina (WIM, 2273), World University Championship, Zurich 2010. White: Ka5, Rh7, pawn a6; Black: Kc6, Ra8. White to play. Solution easy.

Alisa Melekhina (WIM, 2273) - Guliskhan Nakhbayeva (WIM, 2216), World University Championship, Zurich 2010. White: Kh6, Rb1, pawn g6; Black: Kh4, Rb5, pawn b2. Solution moderate to difficult.

CHESS SOLUTION

Alfred-Ni Mhuireagain:

It looks very bad for Black, but endgame knowledge prompts 1...a6-a5! Black draws after both 2 f5-f6+ Kg7-f7 and 2 Kg5-f4 Kg7-f6 3 Kf4-e4 Kf6-e7 4 Ke4-e5 Ke7-f8 unless White stumbles into 5 Ke5-f6? c5-c4!, when Black wins. If White is greedy with 2 Kg5xh5, then he loses to 2...c5-c4! 3 d3xc4 (or 3 Kh5-g4 c4-c3 4 b2xc3 d4xc3 5 Kg4-f4 a5-a4 6 b3xa4 b4-b3 and so on) 3...a5-a4! 4 b3xa4 b4-b3 5 c2xb3 d4-d3 and Black's new queen will mop up.

Black played 1...Kg7-f8 and lost after 2 Kg5xh5. Now the pawn break is too slow: 2...a6-a5 3 Kh5-g6 c5-c4 (if 3...a5-a4 4 b3xa4 c5-c4 5 b2-b3) 4 h4-h5 c4-c3 5 b2xc3 d4xc3 6 f5-f6 a5-a4 7 h5-h6 a4xb3 8 h6-h7 and Black gets mated.

Djukic-Melekhina:

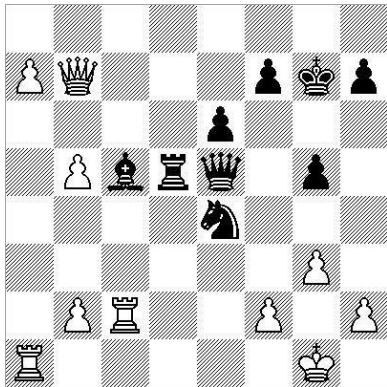
Simply 1 a6-a7 Ra8-g8 2 Ka5-a6 Rg8-f8 3 Rh7-h1 Rf8-g8 4 Rh1-b1 and the rook goes to b8. Instead White played a move, still winning, which must have raised her opponent's hopes: 1 Rh7-h6+. Black was not disappointed, because there followed 1...Kc6-c7 2 Ka5-b5? (2 Rh6-h7+ Kc7-c6 3 a6-a7 still works) 2...Ra8-g8 and the black king reaches the corner. The draw was agreed after 3 Rh6-h7+ Kc7-b8.

Melekhina-Nakhbayeva:

1...Rb5-h5+? 2 Kh6-g7 Rh5-b5 3 Kg7-h7 Rb5-h5+ 4 Kh7-g8 Kh4-g5 5 g6-g7 Rh5-h2 (if the b-pawn falls, it is easy for White; if 5...Kg5-f6 6 Rb1xb2 Rh5-a5 7 Rb2-b6+ - the most accurate - 7...Kf6-g5 8 Rb6-e6 and it is clear the pawn will promote) 6 Kg8-f7 Rh2-f2+ 7 Kf7-e7 Rf2-e2+ 8 Ke7-d7 Re2-d2+ 9 Kd7-c7 and the white king will 'hide' on b7, so Black resigned.

She could have saved the game with 1...Rb5-b6! 2 Kh6-h7 Kh4-g5 3 g6-g7 (or 3 Rb1-g1+ Kg5-f5 4 g6-g7 b2-b1Q 5 Rg1xb1 Rb6xb1 6 g7-g8Q Rb1-h1+ 7 Kh7-g7 Rh1-g1+ 8 Kg7-f8 Rg1xg8+ 9 Kf8xg8 and the draw really is obvious) 3...Rb6-h6+ 4 Kh7-g8 Rh6-b6 5 Rb1-g1+ Kg5-f5 6 Kg8-h7 Rb6-b7 7 Kh7-h8 b2-b1Q 8 Rg1xb1 Rb7xb1 9 g7-g8Q Rb1-h1+ 10 Kh8-g7 Rh1-g1+ 11 Kg7-f8 Rg1xg8+ 12 Kf8xg8 and here we are again.

Saturday 9 October 2010
By Kevin O'Connell



The diagram position is from the game Ante Brkic (GM, 2564) - Sergei Movsesian (GM, 2723), Croatian Team Championship 2010. Black to play. Solution difficult.

White has the advantage of rook and two pawns against bishop and knight, making a grand total of '25' against Black's '24,' and expects to add substantially to that score with an almost inevitable pawn promotion. However, I think it is rather obvious that material should not be the focus here (or anywhere really), instead let the position flow.

Flow is an important concept, very similar to intuition and the idea of allowing the pieces to take control and do their thing.

Do you have a feel for Black's first move? I'm sure that many of you do. In such cases, the difficult thing is to accept your intuition (not to mention the practical impossibility of calculating through to the end). Sometimes, you may have to rely on your feel for position, and have faith in your ability to find all the calculations later on. Go with the flow, and may The Force be with you.

CHESS SOLUTION

Black played 1...Ne4xf2! Intuition tells me this is winning, but there are four main continuations to consider.

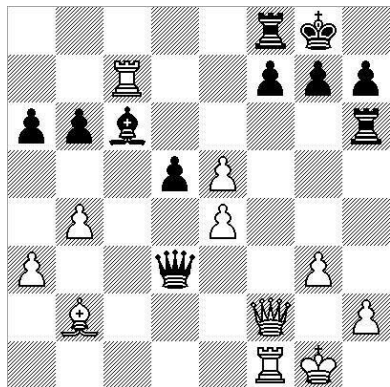
(1) 2 a7-a8Q Nf2-d1+ 3 Kg1-g2 Qe5-e4+ 4 Kg2-h3 Qe4-f5+ 5 Kh3-g2 Qf5xc2+ 6 Kg2-h3 Qc2-f5+ 7 Kh3-g2 Qf5-e4+ 8 Kg2-h3 (or 8 Kg2-f1 Rd5-f5 mate) 8...Nd1-f2 mate.

(2) 2 Rc2xf2 Bc5xf2+ 3 Kg1-f1 (or 3 Kg1xf2 Rd5-d2+ 4 Kf2-g1 Qe5-e3+ 5 Kg1-h1 Qe3-f2 with unavoidable mate) 3...Rd5-d2 4 Qb7-f3 (if 4 a7-a8Q Qe5-e2+ 5 Kf1-g2 Bf2-a7+ and mate on h2) 4...Qe5xb5+ 5 Kf1-g2 and there are many ways to mate, one being 5...Bf2xg3+ 6 Kg2-h1 Rd2xh2+ 7 Kh1-g1 Qb5-c5+ 8 Kg1-f1 Rh2-f2+ and the end is very nigh.

(3) 2 Rc2xc5 Nf2-h3+ 3 Kg1-g2 Qe5-e2+ 4 Kg2xh3 g5-g4+ (yes, I know Qe2-h5+ is one move quicker, but I rather like this) 5 Kh3-h4 Qe2xh2+ 6 Kh4xg4 h7-h5+ 7 Kg4-f3 Rd5-d3+ 8 Kf3-f4 (or 8 Kf3-e4 Qh2-e2+ 9 Ke4-f4 Qe2-e3 mate) 8...Qh2xg3+ 9 Kf4-e4 Qg3-e3 mate.

(4) The game continuation was 2 Qb7xd5 Nf2-h3+ (taking on d5, preferably with the pawn, also wins) 3 Kg1-f1 e6xd5 (taking with the queen is at least as good) 4 Rc2xc5 (if 4 a7-a8Q Qe5-f5+ 5 Kf1-e1 Qf5xc2 6 Qa8-a5 Qc2-e4+ 7 Ke1-d1 Nh3-f2+ 8 Kd1-c1 Bc5-e3+ 9 Qa5-d2 Qe4-d3!) 4...Qe5xb2! (threatening mate on f2) and White resigned. After 5 Kf1-e1 Qb2xa1+ 6 Ke1-e2 Qa1-e5+ 7 Ke2-d3 Nh3-f2+ 8 Kd3-c2 Qe5-e4+ 9 Kc2-c3 Qe4-e3+ 10 Kc3-b4 Qe3-d4+ 11 Kb4-a5 Qd4xc5 12 a7-a8Q (or 12 Ka5-a6 Qc5-c8+) 12...Qc5-a3+ it really is all over.

Saturday 16 October 2010
By Kevin O'Connell



The diagram position is from the famous book by Renaud and Kahn "L'Art de faire mat" (The Art of Checkmate), where it is attributed to "Sir George Thomas - Frank Marshall, Hamburg Olympiad 1930" but they did not play each other there and I have yet to discover who the real players were. White to play. Solution moderate.

What should the average club player, who wants to improve a little, spend his time on? 'His' because I did say 'average' and, regrettably, there is only a tiny percentage of 'her' playing chess in the UK, other than in the primary schools. Endgames and tactics is the correct answer. What does the average club player spend most of his time on? Opening books.

When building up your knowledge, it is best to look at several positions of the same tactical theme, to fix the ideas. Once mastered, then test yourself on positions in random order.

Let's start with perhaps the easiest of all: White: Kg1, Qe2, Re1, pawns f2, g2, h2; Black: Kg8, Qd4, Rd8, pawns f7, g7, h7. White to play. Very easy.

Sir George really did win this one, against Vera Menchik, Karlsbad 1929. White: Kg1, Qf5, Rc1, Rf1, Bd3, pawns a3, b4, e3, f2, g2, h3; Black: Kg8, Qb6, Rc6, Rc8, Nf6, pawns a7, b7, d5, f7, g7, h7. White to play.

Here is C. Loye - F. Beamish, Cheltenham 1913. White: Kg1, Qd5, Ra1, Re4, Bc4, pawns: a2, b2, f2, g2, h2; Black: Kg8, Qg5, Ra8, Rf8, Bc8, Nf5, pawns a7, b7, d6, f7, g7, h7. White to play.

A more difficult one from a famous tournament, Richard Reti - Efim Bogoljubow, New York 1924. White: Kg1, Qf5, Rf1, Bh5, pawns a2, b3, c5, g3, h2; Black: Kg8, Qc7, Rd8, Be8, pawns: a7, b7, c6, g7, h7. White to play.

Now one featuring two all-time greats, Paul Keres-Alexander Alekhine, Margate 1937. White: Kc1, Qd3, Rd1, Re1, Nf3, pawns a2, b2, c4, f2, g2, h2; Black: Kc8, Qb4, Rd8, Rf6, Bd7, pawns a6, b7, c7, f4, h7. White to play.

CHESS SOLUTION

"Thomas-Marshall":

1 Qf2xf7+ Rf8xf7 2 Rc7-c8+ Bc6-e8 3 Rc8xe8+ Rf7-f8 4 either rook takes on f8, mate. This type of mate is usually referred to as a "corridor" mate.

easiest:

1 Qe2-e8+ Rd8xe8 2 Re1xe8 mate.

Thomas-Menchik:

1 Qf5xc8+ Rc6xc8 2 Rc1xc8+ Qb6-d8 3 Rc8xd8+ Nf6-e8 4 Rd8xe8 mate.

Loye-Beamish:

1 Qd5xf7+ Rf8xf7 2 Re4-e8 mate.

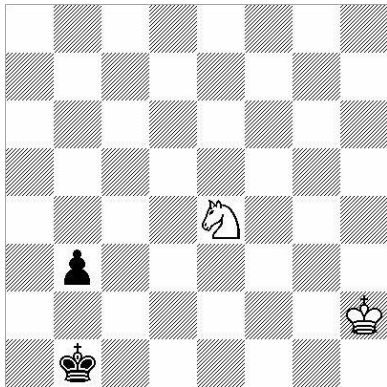
Reti-Bogoljubow:

1 Bh5-f7+ Kg8-h8 2 Bf7-e8! and Black resigned. White's queen goes to f8 and mate is forced.

Keres-Alekhine:

1 Qd3xd7+ and Black resigned. If 1...Rd8xd7 2 Re1xe8+ Rd7-d8 3 either rook takes on d8, mate.

Saturday 23 October 2010
By Kevin O'Connell



What could be simpler than this position? Black to play.

Today we have only the very simplest positions, with almost nothing left on the board. Can you solve them all?

Second. White: Ka6, Na5; Black: Kh2, pawn h3. White to move. What result? How and why?

Third. White: Ka6, Nh4; Black: Kh2, pawn h3. What result? How and why?

I hope you are finding this easy. Just in case you are not, here are some guiding principles:

1. Try to get in front of the pawn. White: Ka7, Nb2; Black: Kb3, pawn d2. White to move.

2. Defend from the side. White: Kh2, Nf4; Black: Kc1, pawn c2. White to play.

and a little trick you must know about: White: Kc2, Ne2; Black: Ka1, pawn a3. White to move.

CHESS SOLUTION

(First) diagram:

1...b3-b2! 2 Ne4-d2+ (there's an important idea in 2 Ne4-c3+ Kb1-c2 3 Nc3-b5 Kc2-b3 4 Nb5-d4+ Kb3-c3 5 Nd4-b5+ Kc3-b4, winning) 2...Kb1-c1! 3 Nd2-b3+ Kc1-d1 and Black wins because the square White wants for the knight (to the left of a2) does not exist!

1...Kb1-c2? is logical enough, but 2 Ne4-d6! Kc2-c3 (if 2...b3-b2 3 Nd6-c4; or 2...Kc2-d3 3 Nd6-b5 b3-b2 4 Nb5-a3 draws) 3 Nd6-e4+ Kc3-d4 4 Ne4-d2 b3-b2 5 Nd2-b1 Kd4-d3 6 Kh2-g2 Kd3-c2 7 Nb1-a3+ Kc2-b3 8 Na3-b1 and the draw is clear.

Second: 1 Na5-c4 draws. Let's see what happens after 1...Kh2-g1 2 Nc4-e5 (or 2 Nc4-e3 h3-h2) 2...Kg1-g2 (if 2...h3-h2 3 Ne5-f3+) 3 Ne5-g4 and the pawn will not escape the knight, which is intent on sacrificing itself to save the day. After 1...Kh2-g2 2 Nc4-e3+ Kg2-f2 3 Ne3-g4+ Kf2-g3 4 Ng4-e3 h3-h2 5 Ne3-f1+ the pawn will disappear, and with it all Black's hopes.

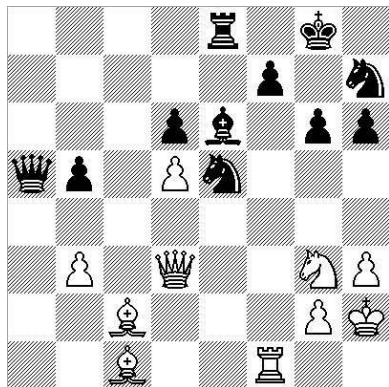
Third: Black wins unless he is careless, for example 1 Nh4-f5 Kh2-g1 (if 1...Kh2-g2?? 2 Nf5-e3+ draws) 2 Ka6-b5 h3-h2 3 Nf5-g3 Kg1-g2, and everything is clear, or 1 Nh4-f3+ Kh2-g2 2 Nf3-e1+ Kg2-g3 and the win is clear.

1. Get in front of the pawn: 1 Nb2-d1 Kb3-c2 2 Nd1-f2! (Nd1-e3+ also draws) 2...Kc2-c3 (now the knight is miles away) 3 Ka7-a6 (many moves draw) 3...Kc3-d4 4 Ka6-b5 Kd4-e3 5 Nf2-d1+ Ke3-e2 6 Nd1-b2!

2. Defend from the side: 1 Nf4-e2+ In front of the pawn was great and next best is to the side. 1...Kc1-d2 (or 1...Kc1-d1 2 Ne2-c3+ Kd1-d2 3 Nc3-a2 drawing) 2 Ne2-d4! c2-c1Q 3 Nd4-b3+ and it's under control, but not 1 Nf4-d3+?? Kc1-d2 2 Nd3-c5 Kd2-c3 and Black wins, not falling for 2...c2-c1Q?? 3 Nc5-b3+.

Trick: 1 Ne2-c1! a3-a2 2 Nc1-b3 mate.

Saturday 30 October 2010
By Kevin O'Connell



The diagram position is from the game Magnus Carlsen (GM, 2826) - Veselin Topalov (GM, 2803), Nanjing 2010. White to play. Solution difficult.

Beginners soon learn to watch out for the queen. They become adept at noticing when she is attacked, and (usually) move her to safety or, perhaps, exchange her. The next step is to use an attack on the queen to gain time for your pieces to get to work.

Djordje Arsic (1856) - Murali Karthikeyan (2059), World Youth u12 Championship, Porto Carras, Greece 2010. White: Ke1, Qf3, Ra1, Rh1, Bd2, Bf1, Na8, pawns a2, b2, c2, f2, g2, h2; Black: Kf8, Qf6, Rh8, Bb4, Bc8, Nc3, Nd4, pawns a7, b7, d7, e6, f7, g7, h7. Black has just played Nc6-d4, attacking the Qf3. Solution moderate with a difficult twist.

Nils Grandelius (GM, 2500) - Amirreza Pourramezanali (FM, 2342), World Youth u18 Championship, Porto Carras 2010. White: Kc1, Qg5, Rd1, Re4, Ne5, pawns a2, b2, c4, f2, h2; Black: Kg8, Qd6, Ra8, Rf8, pawns a7, b6, d4, e6, f6, g7. Black has just played f7-f6, forking queen and knight, to regain his piece. Easy, but again with a hidden twist.

CHESS SOLUTION

Carlsen-Topalov:

1 d5xe6! and Black resigned. If 1...Ne5xd3 2 e6xf7+ Kg8-f8 (otherwise it's mate) 3 Bc1xh6+ Kf8-e7 4 f7xe8+ Ke7xe8 5 Bc2xd3 and not just the g6 pawn drops off, but the Nh7 as well. 1...Re8xe6 is relatively best, but Black has no compensation for the material (and bishop pair).

Arsic-Karthikeyan:

White exchanged on f6 and the game ended 1...Nd4xc2 mate. White is in some difficulty after 1 Qf3-d3 Qf6-e5+ 2 Bf1-e2 Nd4xc2+ 3 Ke1-f1 Nc3-e4 4 Bd2xb4+ Nc2xb4 5 Qd3-a3 Qe5-d4 6 Qa3-e3 Qd4xe3 7 f2xe3 Nb4-c2 8 Ra1-c1 Nc2xe3+, the marauding knights proving a constant thorn in White's flesh.

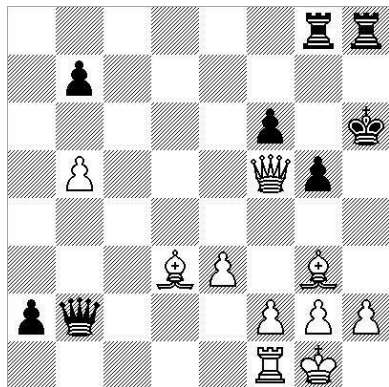
Grandelius-Pourramezanali:

Where should White move the queen? The easy answer is 1 Qg5xg7+! Black played 1...Kg8xg7 and resigned (2 Rd1-g1+ Kg7-h6 3 Re4-h4 mate).

There is also a much more complicated way to win, which demonstrates an important principle - chess is dynamic - lines may open and 'non-attacks' can become fearsome. White starts with a 'non-attack' or, more accurately, a double 'non-attack' (since the black king remains 'not attacked.' White wins easily after 1 Qg5-g2 f6xe5 2 Re4-g4 Qd6-e7 3 Rd1-g1 Rf8-f7 (if 3...Kg8-h8 4 Rg4xg7 Qe7-h4 5 Rg7-g3 Qh4-h6+ 6 f2-f4 Qh6xf4+ 7 Kc1-d1 - the rook's going to h3) 4 Qg2xa8+.

Other squares for the queen are no good, for instance there's another 'non-attack' (on the Qd6) in the form of 1 Qg5-g3 but 1...f6xe5 2 Re4-g4 Qd6-e7 3 Rd1-g1 Rf8-f7 holds very comfortably since the Ra8 is not attacked.

Saturday 6 November 2010
By Kevin O'Connell



This position is a might-have (should-have) been from Katerina Lahno (GM, 2539) - Tatiana Kosintseva (GM, 2573), Cap d'Agde 2010. White to play. Solution moderate/difficult.

John Nunn wins World Chess Solving Championship for the fourth time in 2013. No, I can't be sure, but it's a fair bet. He's just won the title for the third time, his other victories being in 2004 and 2007, so you can understand my reasoning.

Leading results of the Championship, played in Hersonissos, Crete last month (71 competitors, scores out of 90): 1 John Nunn 71, 2 five time winner Piotr Murdzia (Poland) 69½, 3 Michael Pfannkuche (Germany) 64, 4 Georgy Evseev (Russia) 63.5. Other British scores: 17 Jonathan Mestel 54½, 29 David Friedgood 44½, 44 Colin McNab 36.

Top placings in the Team Championship (20 teams, scores out of 180): 1 Poland 130, 2 Russia 129½, 3 Germany 128½, 4 Great Britain 126½, 5 Serbia 118. Unlike in most chess events, there is no separate representation for England, Scotland and Wales.

Another position from Cap d'Agde. Sophie Milliet (WGM, 2388) - Ngoc Truong Son Nguyen (GM, 2633). White: Kg1, Rb1, Bd4, pawns a4, f3, g2, g4; Black: Kf7, Ra2, Bf8, pawns a6, b2, g7, h7. Black to play. Solution difficult.

CHESS SOLUTION

Lahno-Kosintseva:

1 Qf5-h3+ draws after 1...Kh6-g7 2 Qh3-d7+ Kg7-h6 3 Qd7-h3+, but there is a complicated win with 3 Qd7-f5 a2-a1Q 4 Rf1xa1 Qb2xa1+ 5 Bd3-b1 Qa1-c3 6 h2-h4, for example 6...Qc3-c8 7 Qf5xf6+ Kh6-h5 8 Qf6-f7+ Kh5-h6 9 h4xg5+ Rg8xg5 10 Qf7-f6+ Kh6-h5 11 Bb1-g6+ Kh5-h6 12 Bg3-f4 Qc8-g4 13 Bg6-b1+ Kh6-h5 14 Qf6xh8 mate.

1 h2-h4 also wins in much the same way: 1...a2-a1Q 2 Rf1xa1 Qb2xa1+ 3 Kg1-h2 Qa1-c3 4 Bd3-e4 (preserving the bishop from capture by the queen!) 4...Qc3-c4 5 Qf5xf6+ Kh6-h5 6 Be4-f3+ (there's no forced mate now that Black covers the f7 square) 6...g5-g4 7 Qf6-f5+ Kh5-h6 8 Bg3-f4+ Kh6-g7 9 Qf5-g5+ Kg7-f8 10 Bf4-d6+ Kf8-f7 11 Bf3-d5+ is crushing.

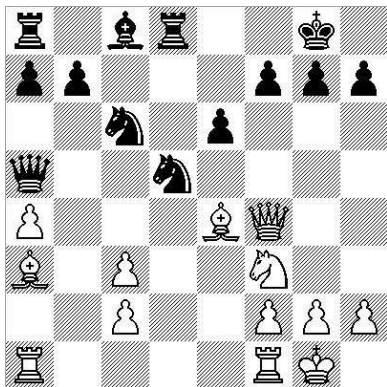
Even 1 h2-h3 wins: 1...Rg8-g7 2 Bg3-d6 a2-a1Q 3 Rf1xa1 Qb2xa1+ 4 Kg1-h2 Qa1-c3 5 f2-f4 Rh8-g8 6 f4xg5+ f6xg5 7 h3-h4 and Black has nothing better than taking on d3 (if 7...Rg7-g6 8 h4xg5+ Kh6-h7 9 Bd6-e5).

However, you only get full marks if you spotted 1 Bg3-d6! forcing mate in four moves or less, for example 1...a2-a1Q 2 Bd6-f8+ Rg8xf8 3 Qf5-g6.

Milliet-Nguyen:

1...Bf8-c5! and White resigned. After 2 Bd4xc5 Ra2-a1 3 Bc5-d4 does not even come close to saving White, because of 3...Ra1xb1+ 4 Kg1-f2 Rb1-f1+. The queen against bishop ending is a piece of cake, Black immediately snaffling the a-pawn.

Saturday 13 November 2010
By Kevin O'Connell



The diagram position is from the game Eduardo Fernando Palacios (2106) - Daniel Oliveros Alvarez (1988), team championship of Asturias, Spain 2010. White to play. Solution difficult, because it's very long, but you surely know what's needed.

Faced with this position in a game, would you have the nerve to start the winning line when you can't see the end? Sometimes you should go with the flow.

CHESS SOLUTION

1 Be4xh7+ Kg8xh7

[if 1...Kg8-h8 2 Qf4-h4 Nd5-f6 3 Nf3-g5 wins, for example 3...Qa5-c7 4 Bh7-g6+ (there are lots of good moves) 4...Kh8-g8 5 Bg6xf7+ Qc7xf7 6 Ng5xf7 Kg8xf7 and White should cruise to victory]

2 Nf3-g5+ Kh7-h6

[or 2...Kh7-g6 3 Qf4xf7+ Kg6-h6 (if 3...Kg6xg5 4 Ba3-c1+ Kg5-h4 5 g2-g3+ Kh4-g4 6 h2-h3+ Kg4xh3 7 Qf7-h5 mate) 4 Ba3-c1 is crushing; one example: 4...Rd8-d7 5 Ng5xe6+ Kh6-h7 6 Qf7-h5+ Kh7-g8 7 Qh5-e8+ Kg8-h7 8 Ne6-f8+ and mate is on the horizon]

3 Qf4-h4+ Kh6-g6 4 Qh4-h7+ Kg6xg5

[alternatively 4...Kg6-f6 5 Ng5-e4+ Kf6-e5 6 f2-f4+ Nd5xf4 7 Qh7xg7+ and

(A) 7...Ke5xe4 8 Rf1xf4+ Ke4xf4 9 Qg7-g3+ Kf4-f5 (9...Kf4-e4 10 Qg3-f3+ Ke4-e5 11 Ra1-e1 mate) 10 Ra1-f1+ Kf5-e4 11 Qg3-f3+ Ke4-e5 12 Rf1-e1 mate, or

(B) 7...f7-f6 8 Qg7xf6+ Ke5-d5 (8...Ke5xe4 9 Qf6xf4+ Ke4-d5 10 c3-c4 mate) 9 Ra1-d1+ Nc6-d4 10 Qf6xd4+ Kd5-c6 11 Qd4-c4+ Kc6-b6 12 Rd1-b1+ Qa5-b4 13 Rb1xb4+ Kb6-a5 14 Qc4-b5 mate]

5 Qh7xg7+ Kg5-f5 6 g2-g4+ Kf5-f4

[or 6...Kf5-e4 7 f2-f3+ Ke4-f4 8 Qg7-h6+ Kf4-e5 9 Ra1-e1+ Nd5-e3 10 Qh6xe3+ Ke5-f6 (10...Ke5-d5 11 Qe3-e4 mate) 11 Qe3-h6 mate]

7 Qg7xf7+

[The most accurate, but it's easy to win now. The game had a splendid finish: 7 Ba3-c1+ Kf4-f3 (if 7...Nd5-e3 8 f2xe3+ Kf4-e4 9 c3-c4! neatly threatening Rf1-f4 mate) 8 Qg7xf7+ Kf3-e2 9 Rf1-e1+ Ke2xe1 10 Qf7-f3 Nd5xc3 11 Bc1-h6+ Rd8-d1 12 Ra1xd1+ Nc3xd1 13 Qf3-e4+ Nd1-e3 14 Qe4xe3+ Ke1-d1 15 Qe3-d3+ Kd1-e1 16 Qd3-f1 mate]

7...Kf4xg4

[7...Kf4-g5 is no better: 8 Ba3-c1+ Nd5-f4 9 Bc1xf4+ Kg5-h4 10 Bf4-g3+ Kh4xg4 11 f2-f3+ Kg4-g5 12 h2-h4+ Kg5-h6 13 Bg3-f4+ Qa5-g5+ 14 h4xg5 mate, nor is 7...Kf4-e4 8 f2-f3+ Ke4-e5 9 Qf7-g7+ Ke5-f4 10 Qg7-h6+ Kf4-e5 11 Qh6-g5 mate]

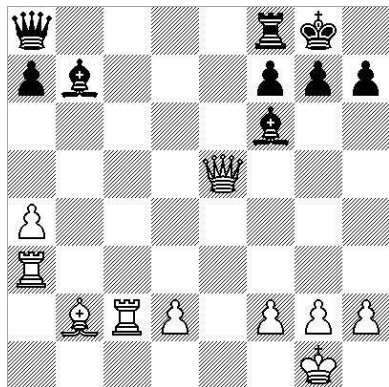
8 f2-f3+ Kg4-h4

[if 8...Kg4-h3 9 Qf7-h5 mate, or 8...Kg4-g5 9 Ba3-c1+ Nd5-f4 10 h2-h4+ Kg5xh4 11 Qf7xf4+ Kh4-h5 12 Qf4-h6 mate]

9 Qf7-h7+ Kh4-g5 10 Kg1-h1!

and Black has no good answer to the threat of Rf1-g1: 10...Kg5-f6 11 Rf1-g1 starts a mate in three (at most), for example 11...Rd8-d7 12 Qh7-h6+ Kf6-f7 13 Qh6-f8 mate.

Saturday 20 November 2010
By Kevin O'Connell



The diagram position is from the game Joaquim Durao (IM) - Lodewijk Prins (IM), Malaga 1954. White to play. Solution easy.

The next position is from the game Claude Landenbergue (IM, 2410) - Viktor Gavrikov (GM, 2560), Bern 1992. White: Kg2, Qd3, Rh4, pawns c2, f2, g3; Black: Kg5, Qb4, Be5, pawns a5, c6, f4, g6. White to play. Solution moderate.

And now Carsten Hoi (IM, 2340) - Boris Gulko (GM, 2590), Thessaloniki Olympiad 1988. White: Kh1, Qd3, Rg1, Bc2, pawns a2, b3, c3, d4, f2, f3; Black: Kh6, Qd6, Ra8, Rd8, Nf8, Nh5, pawns a7, b5, e6, f4, h4. A rook and a piece down, against a strong Grandmaster, it must be time to resign, unless ... White to play. Solution moderate.

Another easy one, from before the days of titles and ratings. Jacques Mieses - Curt von Bardeleben, Leipzig 1888. White: Kh2, Qd2, Rf2, Rg1, Bg2, pawns a2, b3, c2, d3, d5, h4; Black: Kh8, Qg7, Rg3, Rg8, Nf4, pawns a7, b7, c7, d6, e5, h7. Black to play.

Finally, Sanan Sjugirov (GM, 2627) - Kastriot Memeti (2210), European Club Cup 2010. White: Kg1, Qe2, Rf1, Rh3, Bc4, Bd2, Nb3, Nf4, pawns a4, b2, e5, f2, g2, h2; Black: Kh8, Qb6, Rc8, Rg8, Bb7, Be7, Nb4, Nf8, pawns a5, c5, e6, f5, g7, h7. Black to play. Given a choice of g7-g5, attacking, but exposing the king, and Rc8-d8, mobilizing, which would you choose? Solution moderate.

CHESS SOLUTION

Durao-Prins:

I suppose that 1 Qe5-g3 is a technical win, but you would be kicking yourself if you had missed: 1 Qe5xf6. Black resigned: 1...g7xf6 2 Ra3-g3+ Kg8-h8 3 Bb2xf6 mate. Happy eightieth birthday to Joaquim. "Captures and checks" is possible, but the checks should be looked at first.

Landenbergue-Gavrikov:

1 Rh4-g4+ and Black resigned - whether he takes the rook or moves his king away, 2 Qd3xg6 is mate.

Hoi-Gulko:

Three checks in this position. 1 Qd3-g6+ simply loses, but did you find the moderate win with 1 Rg1-g6+ Kh6-h7 2 Rg6xe6+ and then 3 Re6xd6, or perhaps you spotted 1 Qd3-h7+ Nf8xh7 2 Rg1-g6 mate? I know which one I prefer.

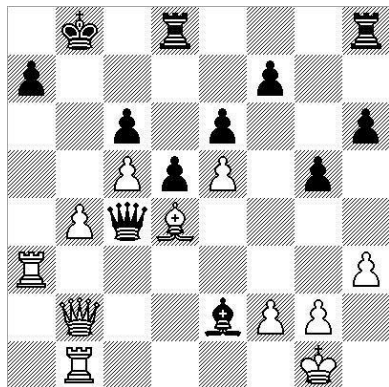
Mieses-von Bardeleben:

Just the two checks this time. 1...Rg3xg2+ is only equal, but 1...Rg3-h3+ and White resigned. 2 Bg2xh3 Qg7xg1 is mate. 1...Qg7-g4 is the best of several other moves that win more slowly.

Sjugirov-Memeti:

Don't forget to look at "checks and captures" for the opponent. After 1 Rc8-d8?? 2 Rh3xh7+ the sleepwalker awoke and resigned. 2...Nf8xh7 is met by 3 Nf4-g6 mate, and 2...Kh8xh7 by 3 Qe2-h5 mate. 1...g7-g5 would ensure an interesting and balanced struggle, although Black's pawn weaknesses might bite him in the end.

Saturday 27 November 2010
By Kevin O'Connell



The diagram position shows Richard Lobo (1920) - Adrian Gonzalez Laso (2050), EU Youth Championship u18, Fermo, Italy 2009. White to play. Solution moderate.

Did you know that the English Chess Federation and IM Andrew Martin, the ECF's Manager of Coaching, have been hard at work creating all manner of useful things to help junior chess development?

The initiatives include the swish web site - www.ecfcoaching.org.uk - with lots of goodies and useful links. However, one of the goodies is threatened by the ECF's straightened financial circumstances, having had its government grant cut to zero. *The Right Move* was a free monthly magazine, edited by Andrew Martin, and distributed online. The withdrawal of funding means that it now needs paying subscribers to keep going.

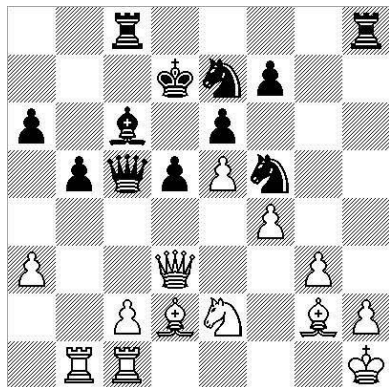
The September issue's Game of the Month was Richard Pert (IM, 2460)-Thomas Rendle (IM, 2391), adjudged the best game played in the 2010 British Championship. I have abridged the comments: 1 e2-e4 e7-e6 2 d2-d4 d7-d5 3 Nb1-d2 Bf8-e7 4 Bf1-d3 c7-c5 5 d4xc5 Ng8-f6 6 Qd1-e2 Nb8-c6 7 Ng1-f3 Nc6-b4 8 0-0 Nb4xd3 9 c2xd3 Be7xc5 10 Nd2-b3 Bc5-e7 11 Bc1-g5 Qd8-b6 (It is hard to believe that this is a mistake, but from now on Pert develops an enduring initiative. It appears that Black must force a decision with 11...h6, preempting e4-e5.) 12 e4-e5! Nf6-g8 13 Bg5-e3 Qb6-b4 14 Nf3-d4 (The biggest danger to Black now is the pawn lever f4-f5. Rendle tries to stop it.) 14...Ng8-h6 15 Ra1-c1 Nh6-f5 (15...0-0 leaves Black with the same predicament after 16 Rc7!) 16 Nd4xf5 e6xf5 17 Rc1-c7! Be7-d8 18 Rc7-c3 b7-b6 19 Nb3-d4 0-0 20 a2-a3 Qb4-a4 21 Qe2-f3 Qa4-d7 22 Rf1-c1 (Flawless play by White over the past ten moves. Black has been driven passive and cannot free himself.) 22...Rf8-e8 23 Qf3-g3 Bc8-b7 24 e5-e6! Re8xe6 (24...f7xe6 25 Rc3-c7; 24...Qd7-e7 25 Nd4xf5) 25 Nd4xe6 Qd7xe6 26 Be3-d4 (winning) 26...g7-g6 27 Qg3-e5 Qe6xe5 28 Bd4xe5 f7-f6 29 Be5-c7 Bb7-a6 (29...Bd8-e7 30 Bc7xb6 a7xb6 31 Rc3-c7) 30 Bc7xd8 Ra8xd8 31 d3-d4 Rd8-e8 32 Rc3-e3! Re8-e4 33 Re3xe4 f5xe4 34 Rc1-c7 f6-f5 35 Rc7xa7 Ba6-c4 36 Ra7-b7 b6-b5 37 b2-b3 Bc4xb3 38 Rb7xb5 Bb3-c4 39 Rb5-b7 1-0. A superb game by White.

The Right Move has clocked up 43 issues since its inception in March 2007. You can download them all, for free. Join the band of subscribers, help keep it going - 12 issues for only £9 per year. Email a.martin2007@yahoo.co.uk for payment details.

CHESS SOLUTION

1 b4-b5! c6xb5 (if 1...Qc4xb5 2 Ra3-b3) 2 Rb1-c1 and Black had to give up the queen.

Saturday 4 December 2010
By Kevin O'Connell



The diagram position is from the game David Spence (1905) - Nick Pert (2065), Ipswich Open Quickplay 1993. Black to play. Solution easy/moderate.

Chess, like life, tends to be a bit of a roller-coaster ... things go up (or down), but then they go in the other direction.

Kudos, then, to Bob Jones, of Bury St Edmunds, who has, since 1987, ridden the coaster up to a time when Suffolk juniors were top of the pile, back down again, and now back up.

Bury Knights Junior Club (Bob Jones coach, Tournament Director, and guiding light) is accredited by the ECF (English Chess Federation) as a Centre of Excellence.

His stewardship of the annual Bury St Edmunds chess congress, now in its 28th year, has gone from strength to strength. Astonishingly, economic problems or no, this year's event established a new record of 173 entrants. The previous record (160) was set back in the halcyon days of 1993.

ECF President C.J. de Mooi, of Eggheads fame, presented the prizes this year. I think it very fitting that two of the top three prizes went to players who were among the leading lights of their age groups twenty years ago in Ipswich (their then age group, and rating then-now, in brackets): 1 GM Nick Pert (u10, 1770-2561) & GM Matt Turner 4.5/5; 3 David Spence (u13, 1550-2225).

The following game shows Bob making his pieces work against a significantly higher-rated player. Szymanski, M (1856) - Jones, B (1600) Suffolk 2002. 1 e2-e4 e7-e6 2 d2-d4 d7-d5 3 e4-e5 c7-c5 4 f2-f4 c5xd4 5 Qd1xd4 Nb8-c6 6 Qd4-a4 Bc8-d7 7 Bf1-b5 Qd8-b6 8 Bb5xc6 Bd7xc6 9 Qa4-b3 Bf8-c5 10 Qb3xb6 Bc5xb6 11 Ng1-f3 Ng8-h6 12 h2-h3? Nh6-f5 13 g2-g4 d5-d4 14 g4xf5 Bc6xf3 15 Rh1-g1 d4-d3?! 16 Rg1xg7?! (16 Rg1-g3 Bf3-e4 17 c2xd3 Be4xf5 18 Nb1-c3 would have limited Black's advantage) 16...d3xc2 17 Nb1-d2 Bf3-d5 18 f5xe6?! (18 f5-f6) 18...f7xe6 19 Nd2-f1 0-0-0 20 Bc1-e3? (20 Bc1-d2 was not great, but surviving) 20...Bd5-f3 21 Be3-d2 (if 21 Ke1-f2 Rd8-d1) 21...Rh8-g8 22 Rg7xg8 Rd8xg8 23 Ra1-c1 Rg8-g2 (it's all over) 24 Rc1xc2+ Kc8-d7 25 Rc2-c1 Bb6-f2 mate.

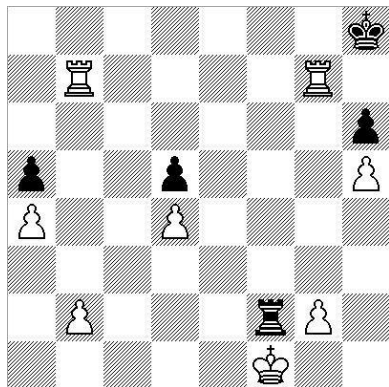
There's more about the Bury club here:

<http://www.bsechess.org.uk/> and the Bury Knights junior club here: <http://www.buryknightschess.org.uk/> and from this link - <http://www.buryleaguechess.org.uk/congress2010/> - you can get this year's detailed results. In brief, the other sections were won by: Major: 1= Somton Ukken (1872, Bury St Edmunds), David Brady (1880, Chingford) 4/5; Intermediate: Jeffrey MacWain (1736, Brentwood) 4.5/5; Minor: Peter Housden (1440, Bedford) 4.5/5.

CHES SOLUTION

1...Rh8xh2+ 2 Kh1xh2 Rc8-h8+ and White resigned. Mate is forced after 3 Bg2-h3 Qc5-f2+ 4 Kh2-h1 Rh8xh3.

Saturday 11 December 2010
By Kevin O'Connell



The diagram position is from the game Erwin L'Ami (GM, 2626) - Loek van Wely (GM, 2666), Wolvega, Netherlands 2010. White to play. Solution difficult.

Does luck exist in chess? I love GM Donner's comment: "Chess is as much a game of chance as blackjack; or tossing cards into a top hat." I'm not sure I would want to go that far, but there is no shortage of evidence in favour of his assertion.

How about the finish of one of my quickplay games? I played a move giving mate; the move was illegal, but neither I, nor my opponent, nor the onlookers noticed, so I gained a free point. When something so hugely improbable benefits you, there's no other word to use but luck!

Vladimir Minko (2038) - Ronan Magee (1859), World Youth Championship u12, Porto Carras, Greece 2010. White: Kg5, Rb7, pawns h4, g4, f4; Black: Kg7, Ra1, pawns g6, f7. Black to play. These endings of 3-2 all on the same side, with rooks, are notoriously hard to play, and mostly drawn.

CHESS SOLUTION

Ami-van Wely:

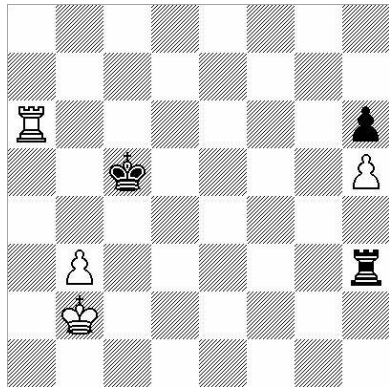
1 Kf1xf2 is stalemate, so the king must move sideways. However, 1 Kf1-g1? would lose the vital pawn g2, allowing Black to achieve his objective: 1...Rf2xg2+ 2 Kg1-f1 (or 2 Kg1-h1 Rg2-g1+ 3 Kh1-h2 Rg1-g2+) 2...Rg2-f2+ 3 Kf1-e1 Rf2-e2+ 4 Ke1-d1 Re2-d2+ 5 Kd1-c1 Rd2-c2+ 6 Kc1-b1 Rc2-c1+ 7 Kb1-a2 Rc1-a1+ 8 Ka2-b3 Ra1-a3+ 9 Kb3-c2 Ra3-c3+ and White's king does not get past the second rank.

Had White planned what follows, or was he lucky? 1 Kf1-e1! Rf2-e2+ 2 Ke1-d1 Re2-d2+ 3 Kd1-c1 Rd2-c2+ (if 3...Rd2-d1+ 4 Kc1-c2 Rd1-d2+ 5 Kc2-b1 etc.) 4 Kc1-b1 Rc2-c1+ 5 Kb1-a2 (a slalom to the left) 5...Rc1-a1+ 6 Ka2-b3 Ra1-a3+ 7 Kb3-c2 Ra3-c3+ 8 Kc2-d2 Rc3-d3+ (or 8...Rc3-c2+ 9 Kd2-e3 Rc2-e2+ 10 Ke3-f4 Re2-e4+ 11 Kf4-f5 Re4-e5+ 12 d4xe5 and Black's d-pawn must keep going until mate) 9 Kd2-e2 Rd3-e3+ 10 Ke2-f2 Re3-f3+ 11 Kf2-g1! Rf3-f1+ 12 Kg1-h2 (a swerve to the right) 12...Rf1-h1+ 13 Kh2-g3 (now White's king can head for b5, when Black will be left without any sensible checks) 13...Rh1-h3+ 14 Kg3-f4 Rh3-f3+ 15 Kf4-e5 Rf3-f5+ 16 Ke5-d6 Rf5-f6+ 17 Kd6-c5 Rf6-c6+ 18 Kc5-b5 and Black resigned - after 18...Rc6-c5+ 19 d4xc5 or 18....Rc6-b6+ 19 Rb7xb6 the stalemate is lifted. A magnificent endgame, but I think that Lady Luck was Ami's friend in that game.

Minko-Magee:

Black correctly played 1...Ra1-b1 which simply draws, the black rook constantly pulling faces at its white counterpart. Unless something strange happens. In this case White played 2 Rb7xb1?? and Black flashed out 2...f7-f6 mate.

Saturday 18 December 2010
By Kevin O'Connell



The diagram position is from the game Alexei Shirov (GM, 2722) - Alexander Morozevich (GM, 2749), Astana 2001. White has just blundered with Kc3-b2? (instead of Kc3-c2! - you will see the difference later). Black to play. Solution moderate/difficult.

Most of my older readers will be familiar with the saying "every Russian schoolboy knows ..." So, let's see how you get on with the following positions - they come from a little book by Natalia Petrushina of Ten Lessons for children in infant school.

From Lesson 1: White: Kf1, pawns a2, d4; Black: Kf3, pawns e6, f7. White to play.

Too easy? Try a position from Lesson 2. White: Kd7, pawn a4; Black: Kc5, pawn a7. White to play.

Dare we jump to one from Lesson 4? White: Ka1, pawn a3; Black: Kb3, pawn b5. White to play.

I will skip Lessons 5-8 and spare you 10, but have a go at this one from Lesson 9. White: Kf7, pawns g4, h3; Black: Kh7, pawns g5, h5. White to play.

Finally, a question from me. What's the shortest route from e1 to e8? It is good enough to use in a home-made Christmas cracker.

CHESS SOLUTION

Shirov-Morozevich is not really hard, but it did prove to be too difficult for both these super GMs. Black returned the compliment with 1...Kc5-b4? and lost after 2 Ra6-b6+ Kb4-c5 3 Rb6xh6. Instead, 1...Rh3xh5! draws - 2 Ra6-a5+ Kc5-b4 3 Ra5xh5 is stalemate. There's no stalemate with the white king on c2.

Lesson 1: 1 a2-a4 fails to 1...Kf3-e4 and the king is in time, so White plays 1 d4-d5! and wins because the king can't get back.

Lesson 2: The 'natural' 1 Kd7-c7 loses to 1...a7-a5 2 Kc7-d7 Kc5-b4 3 Kd7-c6 Kb5xa4 4 Kc6-c5 Ka4-b3.

Lesson 4: 1 Ka1-b1? loses after 1...Kb3xa3 2 Kb1-a1 Ka3-b3 3 Ka1-b1 b5-b4. However, 1 a3-a4! draws since the king is in the corner against the rook pawn (1...b5xa4) and 1...Kb4xa4 2 Ka1-a2 Ka4-b4 Ka2-b2 is easy.

Lesson 9: You must avoid 1 Kf7-f6? h5xg4 2 h3xg4 Kh7-h6 3 Kf6-f5 Kh6-h7 4 Kf5xg5 Kh7-g7 with a draw. The right path is 1 h3-h4! Kh7-h6 (if 1...g5xh4 2 g4-g5 h4-h3 3 g5-g6+ Kh7-h6 4 g6-g7 h3-h2 5 g7-g8Q h2-h1Q 6 Qg8-g6 mate) 2 Kf7-f6 g5xh4 3 g4-g5+ Kh6-h7 4 Kf6-f7 h4-h3 5 g5-g6+ and wins as in the last note.

e1-f2-g3-h4-h5-g6-f7-e8, along with many other seven step alternatives, is just as quick as the obvious e1-e2-e3-e4-e5-e6-e7-e8. That straight line is, however, the shortest ... if you measure it with a ruler! Season's greetings and see you next year.

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