

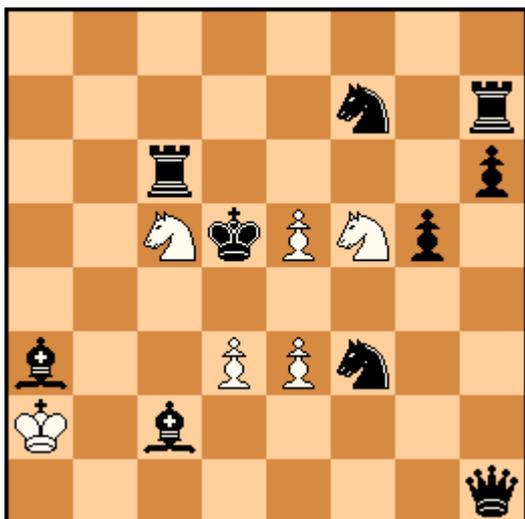


Award "Problemiste"
2014 – Helpmates Section
by Kjell Widlert – International Judge

There were 55 entries in this tourney, and I was quite happy with the quality. As is often the case, there were many candidates for a commendation, so I had to leave several problems out that another judge might have included in the award.

I am well aware that some of the top problems were likely found in a database rather than composed by hand. This does not influence the placing directly: the award is based on the result, not on the method of producing it. But on the other hand, the publication of many problems of this type in later years makes a judge less impressed by them than he would have been ten or twenty years ago.

**1st Prize – No 388 by Michal Dragoun,
Ladislav Salai jr & Emil Klemanić**



h#2 (6+10) C+
2.1.1.1

This may not look very spectacular, but it is in fact most intelligently built. It shows connected white and black dual avoidance, based on four black lines that must remain closed.

The mates will occur on e7 or e4. The mate determines which white piece shall guard c5+e5, and which black piece shall block the flight-square left by that piece. White must not open the guard-line from Ba3 (by playing 1... Sd7?) or Bc2 (by playing 1... d4?), respectively. Black must not open the guard-line from Rh7 (by moving Sf7) or Qh1 (by moving Sf3), respectively, so in each solution, only one knight is right.

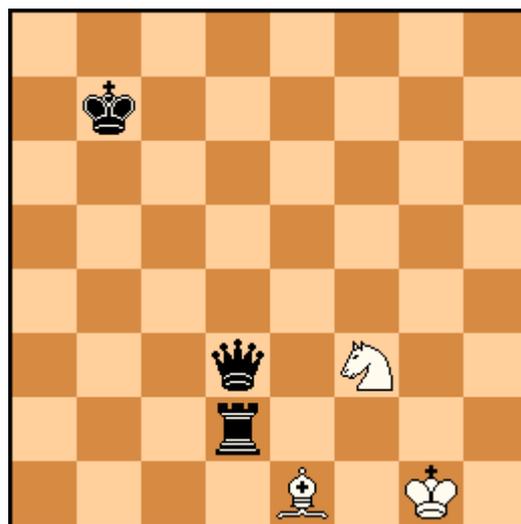
Very successful construction: almost all pieces on the board are involved in the thematic play.

Solution:

1.Sd2 d4 (Sd7?) 2.Sc4 Se7 (f4?) # (1.Sd6?)

1.Sd8 Sd7 (d4?) 2.Se6 e4 (Se7?) # (1.Sd4?)

2nd Prize – No 359 by Mechislovas Rimkus



h#5,5 (3+3) C+
b) ♖b7→c8 c) ♗f3→e2

There are three long lines ending in echo-like mates (but not quite echoes). What impresses me enough to put the problem near the top is not the mates, but rather the play: all three parts have some subtle points.

* In a), the only route Sf3>c3 in three moves passes over b1, as the other pieces stop all alternative routes. And the S walk can only be played at the end.

* In b), Black must play Qd3>d7 but must do so in two moves via b5. 1.Qd7? would save one move so the bK could take three moves to reach e6 – but the wB stops the route via d8, and the bR the one via c7. Q-h7-d7 is impossible because e4 must be unguarded for W5, and Q-d8-d7 is impossible because of W2.

* In c), the wS can reach c3 in a single move or in three moves in many ways – but still, the a) solution is impossible. Black must play Qd3-c6 in two moves, and this is only possible via d7 as the Q must be shut off from d3 for W5 and d6 must be available for the bR.

Only Kf2, Ke3 and Rd6 are repeated, which is not much among 33 single moves.

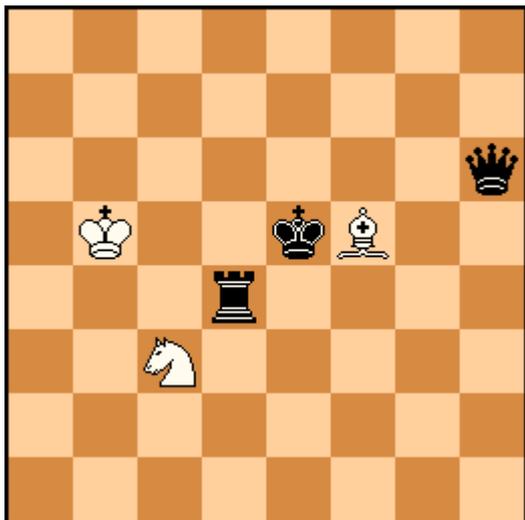
Solution:

a) 1...Bg3 2.Qf5 Kf1 3.Rd4 Ke2 4.Kc6 Sd2 5.Kd5 Sb1 6.Ke4 Sc3#

b) 1...Bh4 2.Qb5 Bd8 3.Rd6 Kf2 4.Kd7 Ke3 5.Ke6 Ke4 6.Qd7 Sg5#

c) 1...Kf2 2.Qd7 Ke3 3.Rd6 Bc3 4.Kc6 Bd4 5.Kd5 Kd3 6.Qc6 Sf4#

2nd Honourable Mention – No 387 by Mechislovas Rimkus



b) ♖d4→e6 2.1.1.1

This is the sort of problem that would have impressed much more in pre-computer ages. In fact, two ideal-mate echo pairs with just one twinning change and very little repetition in the play (Kc5 and Sd5) is a remarkable find. The unique 3-move route c3-c6 in the first solution provides some extra interest.

Solution:

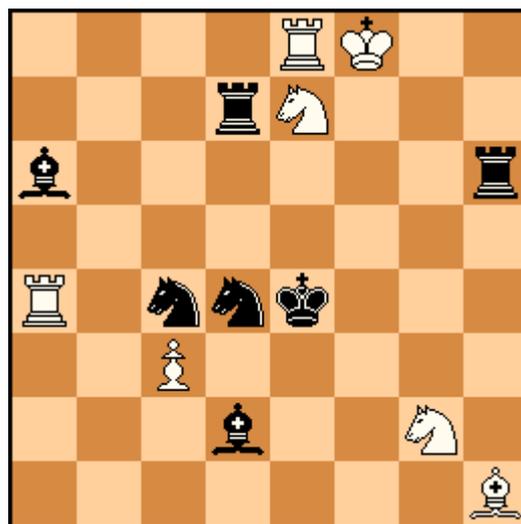
a) 1...Sd5 2.Qe3 Se7 3.Rd5+ Kb4 4.Kd4 Sc6 #

1...Kc5 2.Rg4 Be4 3.Kf4 Kd4 4.Qg5 Se2 #

b) 1...Kc5 2.Rg6 Be6 3.Kf6 Kd6 4.Qg7 Se4 #

1...Bg6 2.Kd6 Kb6 3.Ke7+ Kc7 4.Qf8 Sd5 #

3rd Honourable Mention – No 348 by Rodolfo Riva



h#2 (7+7) C+
2.1.1.1

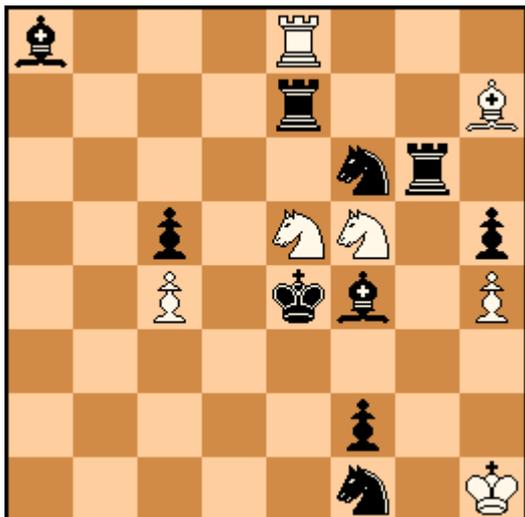
Two white batteries, one mating and the other turning into a pin, together with a black halfpin. All is fairly complex and very harmonious; note that Rh6 stops both Sd5# and Se3#. This would have had a prize without the thematic forerunner by Goumondy (348b), which has the same combination in a similar but not identical matrix (the angle between the two wR lines and the wB line is different). But Riva's setting is considerably better, with no twinning and perfectly analogous motivations for the timing of Black's moves, so it definitely deserves to stay in the award – it must be the Letztform of the combination.

Solution:

1.Sf3 Se3 2.Rd3 Sg6 #

1.Se5 Sd5 2.Bd3 Sh4 #

4th Honourable Mention – No 449 by Vitaly Medintsev



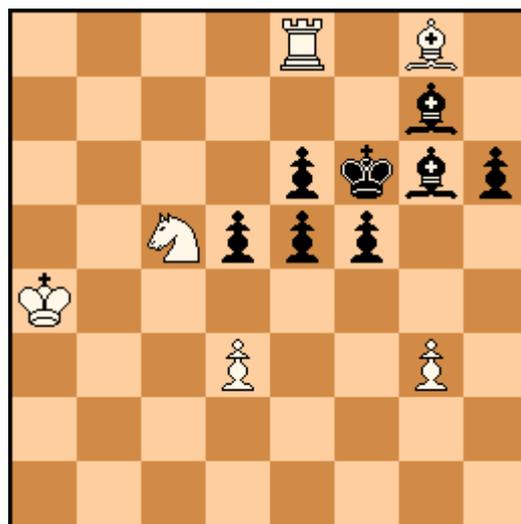
h#2 (7+10) C+
2.1.1.1

One of the black rooks must close the line from Ba8 and also open a white line towards e5 or f5, after which the only white tempo-move is a follow-my-leader (Umnov) move. The fact that White plays the same moves in reverse order in the other solution seems to me a simple consequence of the matrix, rather than a thematical effect. And speaking of the matrix – it is so natural that one would have expected it to have been found before, but fortunately there is no anticipation in WinChloe.

Solution:

- 1.Rg2 Bg6 2.Kxe5 Rxe7 #
- 1.Rb7 Re7 2.Kxf5 Bxg6 #

5th Honourable Mention – No 422 by Živko Janevski



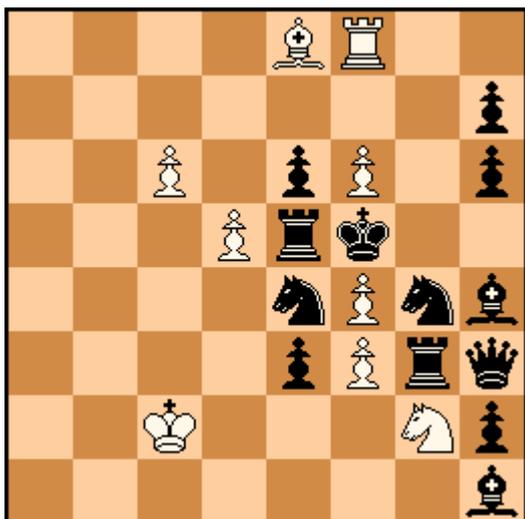
h#2 (6+8) C+
3.1.1.1

A harmonious combination of unblocks for the bK with three different mates on the same square e6. From a strict thematical standpoint, one unblock is impure in that Bh8 is also necessary as a block of h8 (the other two unblocks are pure). But if this is to be regarded as a flaw at all, it is a very small flaw.

Solution:

- 1.e4 Sb3 2.Ke5 Rxe6#
- 1.Bh8 Rf8+ 2.Kg7 Sxe6#
- 1.f4 Se4+ 2.Kf5 Bxe6#

6th Honourable Mention – No 428 by Abdelaziz Onkoud



h#2 (9+13) C+

b) ♖e3↔♜g3 c) ♜e8→c1

This does not earn its place in the award from its beauty, but from its strategy. All three solutions have a black move from the future mating square, with the resulting guard of that square being eliminated by self-pin (the other common methods are a further move by the thematic piece, and interference with or capture of that piece). That alone does not justify the heavy position here. The really interesting part is the motivation for the move from the mating-square: in all three cases, the reason is that another black piece cannot give up its guard of the mating-square in any other way than by sacrificing itself on that square, not even in two moves. That is the real and convincing reason for the compact position.

The crowded position together with the weak twinning prevent me from placing the problem higher.

Solution:

- a) 1.Sexf6 Kd3 2.Re4 fxe4 #
- b) 1.Sgxf6 Bh5 2.Qg4 fxg4 #
- c) 1.Bxf6 Bxe3 2.Qh4 Sxh4 #

7th Honourable Mention – No 372 by Alexei Ivunin, Alexandr Pankratiev & Jacques Rotenberg



h#3 (6+11) C+

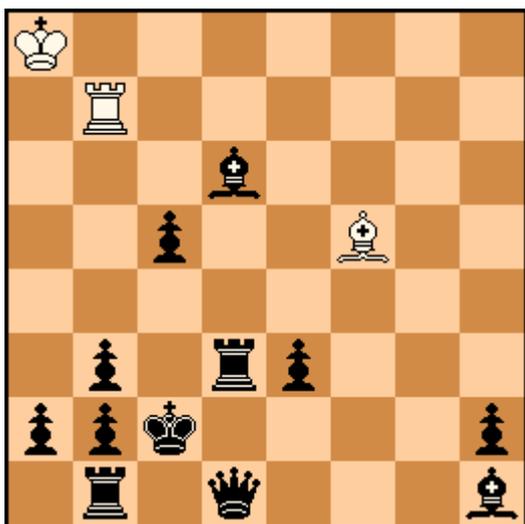
2.1.1.1

A clear improvement of 362 by the two first-mentioned composers. This setting adds black ambush moves before the active white sacrifices to allow black Ps to open lines for a blocking piece. This is not just any introductory black move; it is exactly the introduction that the main theme needs. It requires the bQ to have no route in three moves to the blocking squares c4/c5, which was achieved with only a slightly compact position.

Solution:

- 1.Qa2 Rxc2 2.bxc2 Sc5 3.Qc4 Se6 #
- 1.Qa3 Sxc3 2.bxc3 Re1 3.Qc5 Re4 #

8th Honourable Mention – No 395 by Živko Janevski



h#3 (3+12) C+

b) - ♖b1

I'm not totally happy with calling this a Würzburg-Plachutta. That theme involves interference between like-moving pieces, and much of the interest in the theme is in the paradox how two pieces that move the same way can interfere each other (as everyone knows, there are ways to do that). But here the two thematic pieces are of different colours, so there is no paradox at all in them interfering each other. Be that as it may – the important thing here is that the interferences are pure, which they are: the only reason the bishops go to e4 is to interfere the other one.

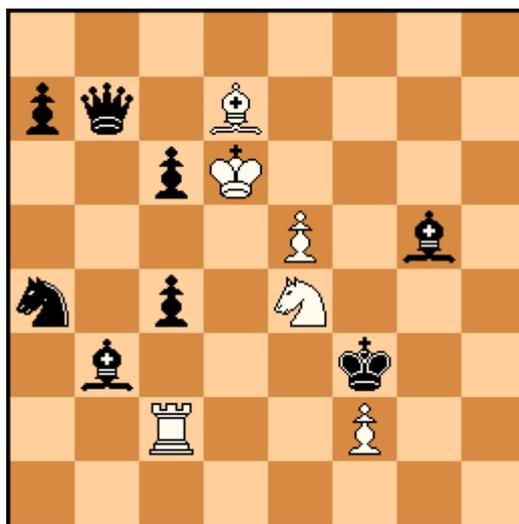
The combination with replacement pinning (or transferred pin, as the author says) on the wB diagonal adds some further unity between the solutions. That is sorely needed, for the solutions are otherwise quite dissimilar. So this is an interesting thematical exercise rather than a homogenous problem.

Solution:

a) 1.Be4 Ka7 2.Rd2 Rb4 3.Bd3 Rc4 #

b) 1.Kb1 Be4 2.Qc2 Rf7 3.Rc3 Rf1 #

1st Commendation – No 347 by Vitaly Medintsev



h#2 (6+8) C+

2.1.1.1

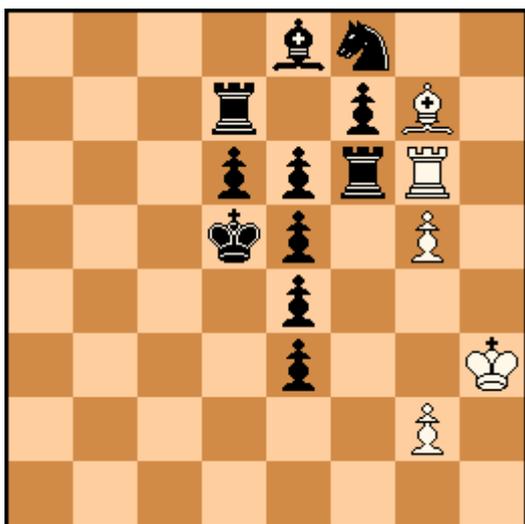
Hideaways in B2 after line-opening in W1, implying that Qb7/Bb3 attach the wB/wR both before and after those pieces move in W1. B1 is non-analogous as the bK has to move to another square; I would have preferred Bg5 on h6 in the diagram and twinning with bKf3>f4. Apart from that, the solutions are analogous, but unbalanced as the bQ has many potential hiding-places but the bB only two. Luckily, both bQ and bB have at least one hideaway that fails only because it guards the mating-line.

Solution:

1.Bf4 Bxc6 2.Qg7 Sf6 #

1.Kf4 Rxc4 2.Bd1 Sd2 #

2nd Commendation – No 441 by Abdelaziz Onkoud



h#3,5 (5+11) C+

2.1.1.1

Black moves from the mating-square, as in the same composer's 428, but with the paradox solved completely differently. The guards that result from the thematic moves are simply eliminated by capture of the black piece, and the reason why the thematic moves are played is simply to allow those captures, as they are made by Ps. Instead of subtle motivations, the composer has combined the theme with white sacrifices to make way for the black K, forming a Zilahi.

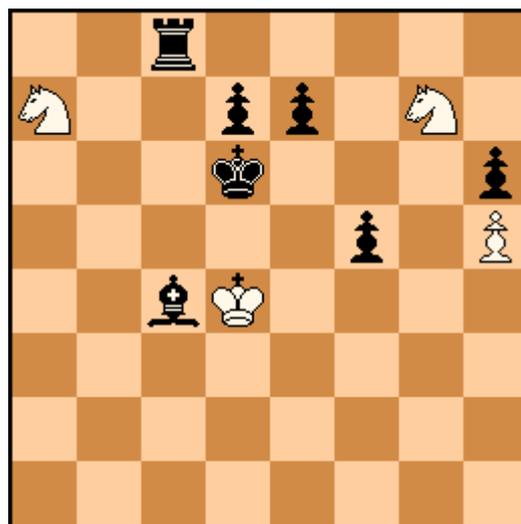
A disadvantage of the matrix is that the four black pieces on rows 7 and 8 are superfluous in the Rf6# solution.

Solution:

1...g3 2.Rf4 Bxe5 3.Kxe5 gxf4+ 4.Kf5 Rf6 #

1...g4 2.Rf5 Rxe6 3.Kxe6 gxf5+ 4.Ke7 Bf6 #

3rd Commendation – No 429 by Luis Miguel Martin



h#2* (4+7) C+

2.1.1.1

The problem may look simple, but it actually shows a fairly subtle tempo idea with active sacrifices: 1.B~ ? 2.Rc6 Sb5# fails to the lack of a white tempo move, so the bB must switch in another mate Se8# which actually allows the tempo 1. - Sc6! Completely analogously, 1.R~ ? 2.Be6 Se8# fails, so the bR must switch in Sb5# which allows the tempo 1. – Se6! Note also that the black moves cannot be reversed: 1.Rc6 Sxc6? and 1.Be6 Sxe6? don't work.

Solution:

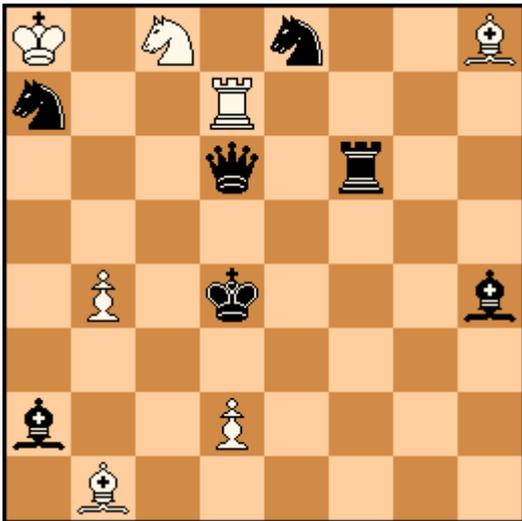
1.B ~ ?? 2.Rc6 Se8 #

1.Be6 Sc6 2.Rxc6 Se8 #

1.R ~ ?? 2.Be6 Sb5 #

1.Rc6 Se6 2.Bxe6 Sb5 #

4th Commendation – No 398b by Zoltán Labai



h#2 (7+7) C+

3.1.1.1

Two black pieces are pinned. In one solution, the bK moves on one pin-line so the other black piece is unpinned and can move to open a white line and block, followed by a pin-mate. In another solution, the functions of the pin-lines are exchanged. That alone does not suffice for a distinction nowadays, but there is a third solution where the bK remains and one of the pinned pieces moves on the pin-line, with a double-pin-mate following. That too is not new, but the setting 398b is very neat. (The original setting 398 with 6 pieces more for the same content would not have made the award.)

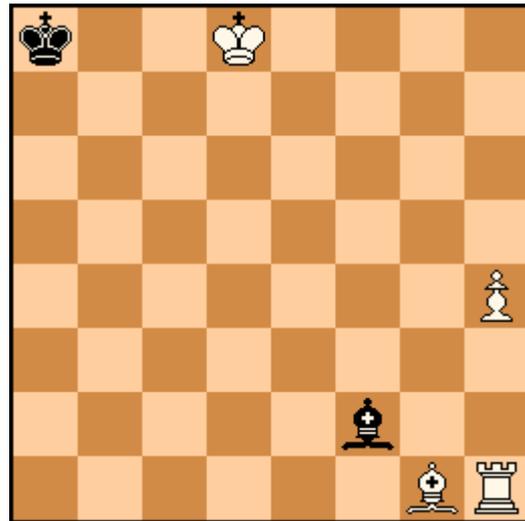
Solution:

1.Ke5 Se7 2.Qe6 Sg6#

1.Kd5 Kb7 2.Re6 Sb6#

1.Bc4 Sxa7 2.Qd5+ Sc6#

5th Commendation – No 436 by Alexei Oganesyan



h#2 (4+2) C+

2.1.1.1

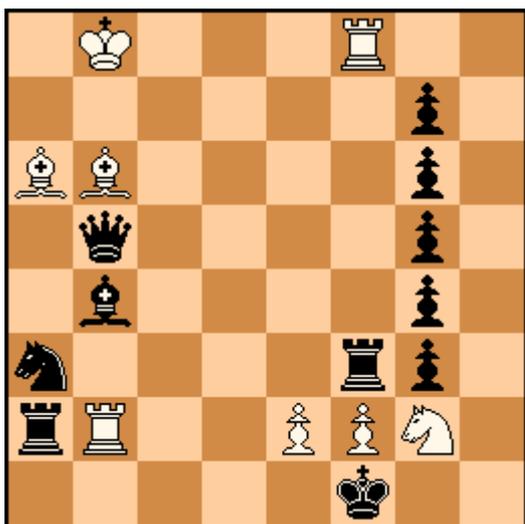
Very economical double annihilation of an obstructing white piece. The icing on the cake – which brings the problem into the award – is the elegant separation of the two possible white king moves. The reason 1.Bxg1 Kc7? does not work is particularly neat: White must anticipate that Black's only hideaway is h2.

Solution:

1.Bxh4+ Kc7 (Kc8?) 2.Be1 Rh8 #

1.Bxg1 Kc8 (Kc7?) 2.Bh2 Ra1 #

6th Commendation – No 416 by Vitaly Medintsev



h#2 (8+11) C+

2.1.1.1

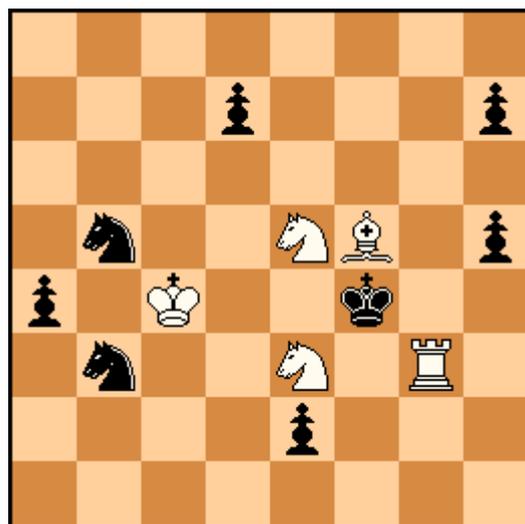
Play on two masked pin-lines: one becomes a direct mating-line after two black moves on the line, the other becomes a pin after a white move off the line. The mates by capture are inherent in the matrix, but are still somewhat brutal.

Solution:

1.Qxe2 fxg3 2.Qd3 Bxd3 #

1.Rxf2 e4 2.Rf7 Rxf7 #

7th Commendation – No 380 by Dmitry Grinchenko



h#2 (5+8) C+

b) ♖g3→g1 c) ♗e3→e8 d) ♗e3→g8

It is no secret that I like strategic problems best, i.e. problems where the reasons for the moves is central. But problems can have other features to compensate for a lack of strategy, and this is such a case. All solutions start with the bK capturing one of the white pieces, and all end with a pretty model. If the result had been a cyclic Zilahi, the problem would have been placed higher – but there are no mates by Se3 or Bf5. Also, the twinning is uneven.

Solution:

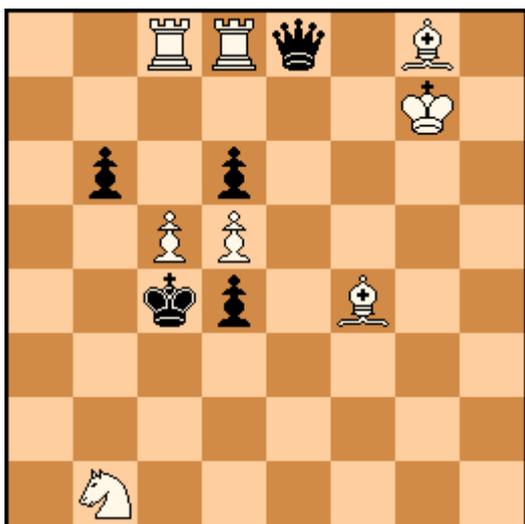
a) 1.Kxg3 Sf1+ 2.Kh4 Sf3 #

b) 1.Kxe3 Kb4 2.Kd2 Sc4 #

c) 1.Kxe5 Bg6 2.Ke6 Re3 #

d) 1.Kxf5 Sg4 2.Kg6 S4h6 #

8th Commendation – No 343 by Živko Janevski



h#2 (8+5) C+

2.1.1.1

It is surprising that this setting of anticipatory self-pins in a familiar-looking matrix can still be original, but the composer is a specialist in ASP so he must know. The two mates on the same square is the effect that earns this a place in the award.

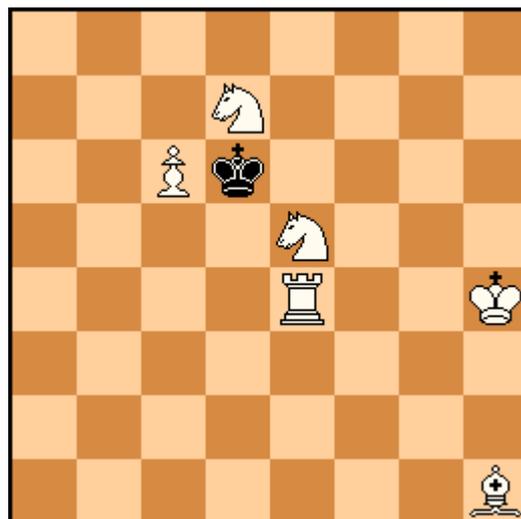
Solution:

1.Qc6 Sa3+ 2.Kxc5 Bxd6 #

1.Qe6 Sd2+ 2.Kxd5 Rxd6 #

This award will be final after the three-month period

9th Commendation – No 361 by Vito Rallo & Alberto Armeni



h#2 (6+1) C+

2.1.1.1

The play is very simple, but the three last moves actually show two Siers batteries with different rear pieces. The theme is set very economically; the only technical piece Pc6 stops a dual by Sc6 instead of Sg6.

Solution:

1.Kd5 Re3+ 2.Kd4 Rd3 #

1.Ke6 Sg6+ 2.Kf5 Se7 #

Stockholm, October 2016

Kjell Widlert

International Judge