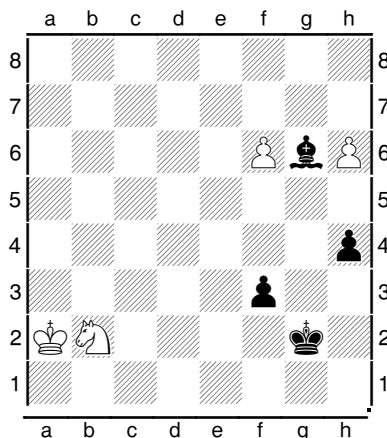


Voia studies 2023, final award

Judge: Amatzia Avni

Radu Voia (1922 - 2006) was a prominent Romanian study-composer, member of the editorial staff of „*Revista Romana de Sah*” and an expert journalist covering tennis matches.

R. Voia, *Revista de Romana de Sah*, 1983



(4+4) white to play and win

Voia's preference and forte were in economical settings.

1.h7! [1.Nd1? h3 2.Ne3+ Kg1=]

1...Bxh7 [1...f2 2.Nd1]

2.f7 f2 3.Nd1! [3.Nc4? Bd3]

3...f1Q 4.Ne3+ Kh3! 5.Nxf1 Bg8! 6.fxg8B! [6.fxg8Q?] **1-0**

To mix the two sport passions of Voia, the organizers put forward in his memory the following theme: "*An endgame in which the number of white pieces versus the number of black pieces are representing the final score of a usual tennis set: 6/2, 6/3, 6/4, 7/5, 7/6 or vice versa.*"

I received 26 anonymous entries from the ty director, Dinu-Ioan Nicula. In some works, I felt that pieces were artificially added to the introduction just to meet the required balance of force.

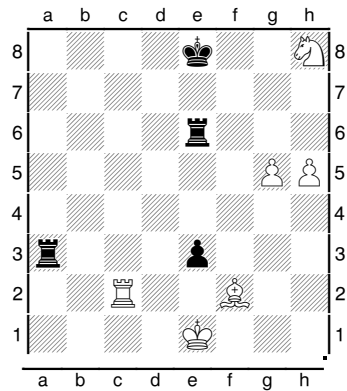
Among the entries which were left outside the award, N. 1 (Kf7/Kf4) just made a different introduction to Kf7/Ke5 of Hlebec & Tarasiuk 2018; and N. 15 (Kb6/Ke8) revolves around a fight between three connected pawns vs. knight, one of many versions we have seen lately.

- In the preliminary award, a study by I. Bondar & M. Khramtsevich took a shared 2nd-3rd prize. However, it transpired that the study was published a year ago in another tourney (*chess study art* 2022). The composers assumed naively that since the study didn't figure in an award, it was eligible to compete in another contest, but of course this is not so. Therefore, this fine study was disqualified and some changes in the final award were made.

I thank the organizers for their efficient work and Gady Costeff, for his anticipation check.

9 pieces of fine quality were selected to the award. Here is the ranking:

1st Prize (n. 9) – V. Tarasiuk



(6+4) white to play and win

1.Bh4! [1.Bg3? e2 2.Rxe2 Rxe2+ 3.Kxe2 Rxc3=]

1...Ra1+ [1...Re4 2.Ng6+–]

2.Ke2 Rh1 3.g6! Rh2+! [3...Kf8 4.Rc8+ Kg7 5.Be1! Rxh5 6.Bc3+ Kh6 7.g7+–; 3...Rxc4 4.g7 Rg4 5.Rc8+ Kd7 6.Ng6+–]

4.Kf3! [4.Kd3? Rd6+! 5.Kxe3 Rxc2=]

4...Rh3+ 5.Kg4 Rxh4+! 6.Kxh4 e2 7.Rxe2! [Thematic try: 7.Rc1? e1Q+ 8.Rxe1 Rxe1 9.g7 Rg1 10.h6 Rg2 11.Kh3 Rg1! (11...Rg5? 12.Kh2!+– see main line) 12.Kh2 Rg5! zz wtm 13.Kh1 Rg3! 14.Kh2 Rg5! positional draw]

7...Rxe2 8.g7 Rg2 9.h6 Rg1 10.Kh3! [10.Kh5? Rg3! 11.Kh4 Rg2!= see thematic try]

10...Rg5 11.Kh2!! [zz btm] [Try: 11.Ng6? Kf7! 12.h7 Rh5+–]

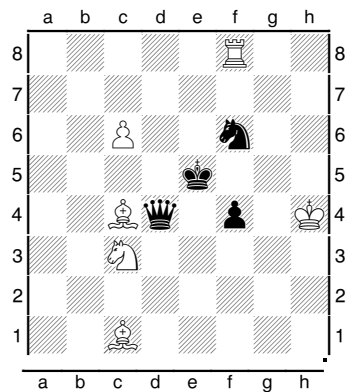
11...Rg4 [11...Ke7 12.h7 Rxc7 13.Ng6+! Rxc6 14.h8Q+–]

12.Ng6! [12.Kh1? Rg3! 13.Kh2 Rg5! 14.Kh3 Rg1=]

12...Kf7 [12...Rxc6 13.h7 Rxc7 14.h8Q++–] **13.Ne5+ 1–0**

Where should the white rook give itself for black's advanced pawn? The answer decides the fate of the battle. In the instructive critical position, the turn to move decides the issue.

2nd Prize (n. 17) – M. Pasman



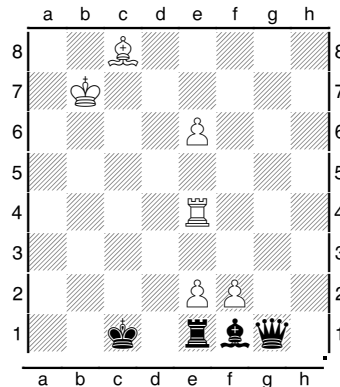
(6+4) white to play and draw

1.Ne4!! [allowing capture on e4 by three pieces; 1.c7 Qf2+ with mate]

1...Kxe4 [1...Nxe4 2.Bxf4#; 1...Qxe4 2.Bb2+] **2.c7 Qe5!** [2...Qf2+ 3.Kg5 Qc5+ 4.K:f6 Q:f8+ 5.Ke6=]
3.Bd5+!! [again - allowing capture by three pieces; 3.c8Q Qh5#]
3...Kxd5 [3...Qxd5 4.Rxf6=; 3...Nxd5?? 4.c8Q-+] **4.Rd8+** [4.c8Q? Qh5#]
4...Ke4 5.Rd4+!! [allowing capture by 2 pieces, but none is good]
5...Kf3! [5...Kxd4 6.Bb2+; 5...Qxd4 6.c8Q Qf2+ [6...f3 7.Qe6+ Kd3+ 8.Kg3 Ne4+ (8...Qgl+ 9.Kxf3) 9.Kxf3 Qf2+ 10.Kg4] 7.Kg5=]
6.Rxf4+ Kg2 7.Rg4+! [7.c8Q Qh5#]
7...Kf2 [7...Nxc4 8.c8Q; 7...Kh1 8.c8Q Qh5+ 9.Kg3 Qh2+ 10.Kf3; 7...Kf3 8.Rf4+]
8.Rf4+ Kg1 [8...Kg2 9.Rg4+ Nxc4 10.c8Q Qh2+ 11.Kg5! Qh6+ 12.Kf5!; 8...Ke2?? 9.c8Q
9.Rg4+! [9.c8Q? Qh5+ 10.Kg3 Qh2+ 11.Kf3 Qf2#]
9...Nxc4 10.c8Q Nf6! [renewing the mate threats]
11.Qc5+! [11.Qc6 Qh5+ 12.Kg3 Qg4#; 11.Qh3 Qh5+ 12.Kg3 Ne4+ 13.Kf4 Qxh3]
11...Qxc5 12.Be3+! Qxe3 stalemate 1/2

Splendid sacrificial introduction prevents black's mating threats and leads to the final stalemate.

3rd Prize (n. 5) – M. Minski

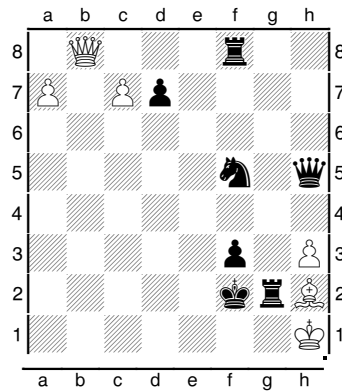


(6+4) white to play and draw

1.e7 Bg2 [1...Qg7 2.Kb8 Qb2+ 3.Bb7 Bg2 4.e8Q Bxe4 5.Qxe4=]
2.e8Q Rxe2 3.Qc6+! [3.Bf5? Qd1! 4.Qc6+ Qc2 5.Qh6+ Kb1-+]
3...Rc2 4.Qh6+ Kb1 5.Bf5 Qe1! [5...Qxf2 6.Kb8! Bxe4 7.Bxe4 Qg3+ 8.Ka8! Qa3+ 9.Kb8 Qg3+ 10.Ka8 Qg8+ 11.Ka7 Qf7+ 12.Bb7 Ra2+ 13.Kb8 Qe8+ 14.Kc7 Qe7+ 15.Kc8 Qe8+ 16.Kc7=]
6.f3! [in order to decoy the black Bishop to a worse square; [6.Qc6? Qxf2 7.Qd5 (7.Qd6 Rc4 8.Qd3+ Qc2 9.Qxc2+ Kxc2-+; 7.Qe6 e.g. 7...Qc5 8.Ka6 Bf1-+-) 7...Kc1! 8.Bd7 Rc5! 9.Qe6 Qb2+ 10.Ka6 Bf1!-+]
6...Bxf3 7.Qc6!! [switchback; 7.Qb6+? Rb2 8.Ka7 Bxe4-+; 7.Kb8? Bxe4 8.Bxe4 Qxe4-+]
7...Qa5! [7...Qf2 8.Qd5 (or 8.Qd6 Rc4 9.Qd3+ Qc2 10.Qxf3=; or 8.Qe6 Qc5 9.Ka6=) 8...Kc1 9.Bd7 Rc5 (9...Rb2+ 10.Kc8=) 10.Qe6! Qb2+ 11.Ka6 Be2+ 12.Rxe2 Qa3+ 13.Kb7 Qb4+ 14.Qb6 Qxb6+ 15.Kxb6=; 7...Rxc6 8.Rxe1+=; 7...Qd2 8.Rc4 /Qb5+=]
8.Kb8! [8.Qb6+? Rb2-+]
8...Qd8+ 9.Ka7 [9.Kb7? Rxc6 10.Rd4+ Rc2-+]
9...Qa5+ 10.Kb8 [10.Qa6? Qc7-+]
10...Rxc6 [10...Rb2+ 11.Rb4+=]
11.Re5+ Kb2 12.Rxa5= 1/2

Pins and self-pins; the move 6.f3! is clever. The mutual threats of both sides naturalize each other. The quiet 8.Kb8! is impressive.

1st HM (n. 16) – L. M. Gonzalez



(6+7) white to play and win

1.a8Q! [1.c8Q? Rxc8!–+]

1...Ng3+ 2.Bxg3+ Kxg3 3.c8Q+ Kxh3 [Battery. Threat 4...Kg4+]

4.Qxd7+ Kh4! [Battery 2.] **5.Qbb5!!** [with 2 main lines: main A]

[5.Qdb5? Rg1+! 6.Kxg1 Qg4+ 7.Kf2 Qd4+! 8.Kf1 Qd1+=; 5.Qbe8? Rxe8! 6.Qdxe8 Qxe8 7.Qxe8 Kg4=; 5.Qad5? Rxb8! 6.Qh3+ Kxh3 7.Qxh5+ Kg3 8.Qe5+ Kg4 9.Qxb8 Kf5= positional draw]

5...Qh8! [Battery]

[main B 5...Rxa8 6.Qd4+! (6.Qxh5+? Kxh5 7.Qd5+ Kh4 8.Qxa8 Kg4= positional draw) 6...Qg4! 7.Qf6+ Kh3! 8.Qh6+ Qh4 Battery 9.Qf5+! Kg3+ 10.Qxh4+ Kxh4 11.Qf4+ Rg4 (11...Kh5 12.Qxf3+ Rg4 13.Qxa8+–) 12.Qh6+ Kg3 13.Qh2#; 5...Rg5 6.Qf1! Kg3+ 7.Qfh3+ Qxh3+ 8.Qxh3+ Kxh3 9.Qxf8+–; 5...Qxb5 6.Qe4+!+–]

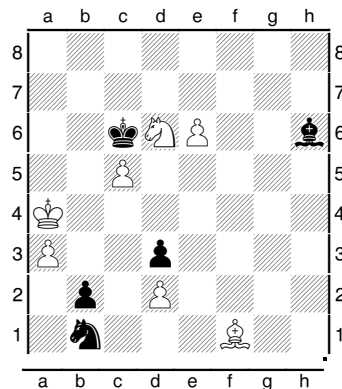
6.Qaa7! [6.Qxf3? Rxf3 7.Kxg2 Rg3+ 8.Kh2 Rb3!! 9.Qxb3 Qe5+ 10.Kg2 Qe2+= perpetual check; 6.Qe4+? Kg3+ 7.Qdh7 Rh2+! 8.Kg1 Rg2+ 9.Kf1 Rf2+ 10.Kg1 Rg2+=]

6...Kg3+ 7.Qh7 Rh2+! 8.Kg1 Qxh7 9.Qg5+! [9.Qxh7? f2+! 10.Kf1 Rxb7 11.Qd3+ Rf3! 12.Qxh7 Kf4= positional draw]

9...Kh3 10.Qxh7#

Three white queens appear on the board early in the solution. The theme of batteries and the precise choice of moves by the white queens are noteworthy, but play is short of artistic beauty, no "wow" effect.

2nd HM (n. 2) – D. Hlebec

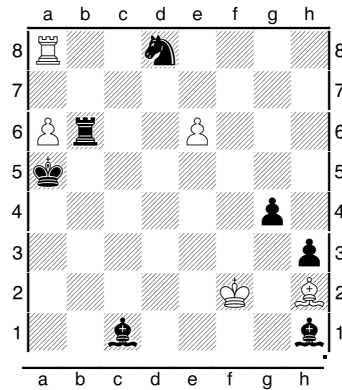


(7+5) black to play, white draws

1...Nc3+! 2.dxc3 d2 [2...b1Q 3.e7 Qc2+ 4.Kb4 Qb2+ 5.Ka4=]
3.Bb5+ Kd5 4.Bc4+ Kxc5 5.Ne4+! Kxc4 6.Nxd2+! Bxd2 7.e7 b1N! [phoenix]
 [7...b1Q 8.e8Q=] **8.e8N!** [phoenix]
 [8.Ka5 Nxc3 9.Ka6 Nd5 10.e8N=]
8...Nxc3+ 9.Ka5 Nd5+ 10.Ka6= [10.Ka4? Nb6#1] **1/2**

Pleasant study, presenting mutual knight promotions with two phoenix effects.

3rd HM (n. 7) – E. Eilazyan

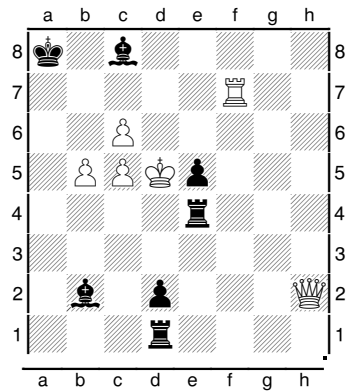


(5+7) white to play and draw

1.e7 Rb2+ 2.Kg3! [2.Kg1? Be3+ 3.Kxh1 Rb1+ 4.Bg1 Rxg1+ 5.Kh2 Ne6 6.e8Q Rg2+ 7.Kh1 g3–+]
2...Ne6 3.e8Q Rg2+ 4.Kh4 Bg5+ 5.Kh5 Ng7+ 6.Kxg5 Nxe8 7.Be5! [7.Rxe8? g3! 8.Bxg3 Rxg3+ 9.Kh4 Ra3!–+]
7...Ng7 [7...Re2 8.Rxe8! Kxa6 9.Kxg4 Bg2 10.Re6+! Kb5 11.Re8! Ka6 (11...Ka4 12.Re7!) 12.Re6+ Kb5 13.Re8= Positional draw]
8.Bxg7! [8.Rh8? Ne6+! (8...Re2? 9.Bxg7 h2 10.Be5 Rxe5+ 11.Kxg4 Re2 12.Kg3 Rg2+ 13.Kh3 Ra2 14.Kg3 Rg2+ 15.Kh3= Positional draw) 9.Kf5 Kxa6! 10.Rh6 Rf2+! 11.Kxg4 (11.Kxe6 Kb5–+) 11...Bd5 12.Kxh3–+]
8...Ra2 [8...Re2 9.Rh8! h2 10.Be5 Rxe5+ 11.Kxg4 Re2 12.Kg3 (12.Rh5+ Kxa6=) 12...Rg2+ 13.Kh3 Ra2 14.Kg3 Rg2+ 15.Kh3 Ra2= Positional draw]
9.Rb8! [9.Bc3+? Kb5! 10.Rb8+ Kc4! 11.Rc8+ Kd3 12.Kxg4 h2 13.Rh8 Bd5 14.Be5 h1Q–+]
9...Kxa6 10.Rb2! Ra5+ 11.Kh4! [11.Kxg4? Bg2 12.Bd4 Ra4 13.Rb6+ Ka5–+]
11...Bg2 12.Bd4 h2 [12...Ra4 13.Be5 Bf3 14.Kg3 Re4 15.Bf4=]
13.Rb6+ Ka7 14.Rb5+ Ka6 15.Rb6+ Ka7 16.Rb5+= 1/2

Precise play by white neutralizes the powerful pair of black pawns.

4th HM (n. 18) – M. Pasman



(6+7) white to play and win

1.Kd6! Ra1 [1...Rd4+ 2.Kc7]

2.Qxd2 Rd4+ 3.Kc7! [3.Qxd4 Bxd4 4.Rf8 Kb8 5.c7+ Kb7 6.c6+ Kb6 7.Rxc8 Bc5+=]

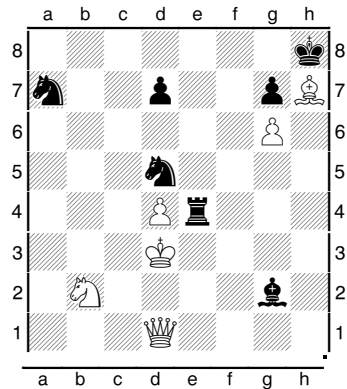
3...Rxd2 4.b6 [Main A:] **Rd8**

[Main B: 4...Ra7+ 5.Kxc8 Rd8+! 6.Kxd8 Rxf7 7.c7 Rf8+ 8.Ke7 Kb7 (8...Rh8 9.c6) 9.Kxf8 Ba3 10.Ke7 (10.Ke8? Kc8) 10...Kc8 (10...Bxc5+ 11.Kd7) 11.Kd6]

5.Kxd8 Kb8 6.Rb7+! Bxb7 7.c7+ Ka8 8.c8Q+ Bxc8 9.Kxc8 Ra7 10.c6! 1-0

With a considerable material disadvantage in the final of two lines, white achieves a draw by proving the power of his pawns.

1st comm. (n. 20) – J. Timman



(6+7) white to play and win

1.Qa4! [1.Qa1 Nc8 2.Nc4 d6 3.Qa5 Re8=] **1...Re3+ 2.Kd2** [2.Kc2 Be4+=]

2...Re2+! 3.Kxe2! [White has to take the rook, as after 3.Kc1 Be4! 4.Qa3 d6 black survives=]

3...Nc3+ 4.Ke3! Nxa4 5.Nc4! [On the way to f7]

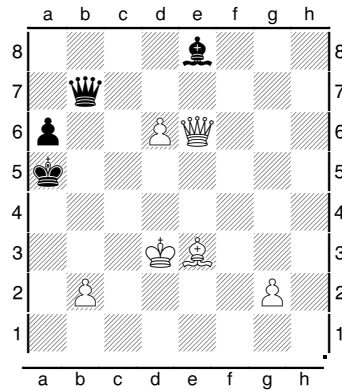
5...Be4! [5...Nc8 6.Ne5 Nd6 7.Nf7+ Nxf7 8.gxf7 Kxh7 9.f8Q Nb6 10.Qd8! Nd5+ 11.Kf2 Be4 12.Qh4+-]

6.Kxe4 d5+! 7.Kxd5 Nb6+! 8.Nxb6 Nc8 9.Na8! [9.N:c8? stalemate]

9...Nb6+ 10.Kc6 Nxa8 11.Bg8! [Stalemate avoidance: 11.d5 Nb6 (11...Nc7=) 12.d6 Nc4 13.d7 Ne5+=] **11...Kxg8 12.Kb7 1-0**

Amusing play where black chases the white pieces to force stalemate while white runs away – 9.Na8! being a remarkable point. The first four moves are redundant.

2nd comm. (n. 22) – D. Hlebec



(6+4) black to play, white wins

**1...Bb5+ 2.Kc3 Qc6+ 3.Kb3 Qd5+! 4.Ka3! [4.Qxd5?=stalemate]
 4...Qd3+ [4...Qxe6 5.b4#]
 5.b3 Bc4! 6.Bb6+! [6.Qxc4? Qxb3+ 7.Qxb3=stalemate]
 6...Kxb6 7.Qxc4 Qxd6+ 8.Qb4+- 1-0**

Light, yet enjoyable; like several other entries in this competition, the theme of stalemate and anti-stalemate is the focus.