

British Endgame Study News

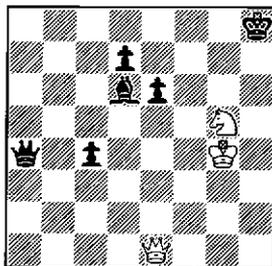
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by Mike Bent
White to play and win

This issue. A welcome visiting contribution this time: Alain Pallier has offered a special number on capture refusal in pawn studies. Alain is taking over from Adam Sobey as study editor of *The Problemist*, and on this evidence the column will be in good hands.

Also with this issue, instead of the normal index for the year, is the promised **composite index for 1996-2000**. If any reader would like back numbers to complete a set, they are available at 75p per single issue or £5 per year, UK postage included.

Mike Bent's study above gave pleasure when I set it for solution in *diagrammes* earlier in the year. Spend a few minutes on it before looking inside.

I am sorry there is no "variants" special number this year. Some material is to hand and I hope to present it in March, but this has to be a hope and not a promise.

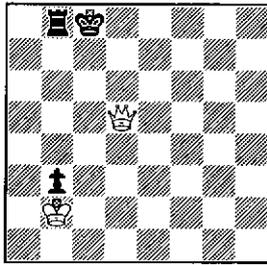
Spotlight. Alex Ettinger draws attention to a nice point in John Roycroft's study **10** in special number 21. If Black plays 8...Kd3 instead of 8...Kf3, White can draw by either 9 Bg5 or 9 Rf5. With bKf3, White has only 9 Bg5; if he tries 9 Rf5, Black has 9...Kg4 10 Rg5+ Kh3, and the newborn bQ will have a check at c4.

Harold van der Heijden has taken up my challenge to bust the Korolkov-Loshinsky extension of **11b** of study **11**. Using Fritz 6 on an 800MHz Pentium III, he finds **1 Rd2** (a move not considered in *Test tube chess*), with wins after 1...Bxh7 2 Kd4+ b4/Kb3 3 Kxe3 and 1...b4/Kb3 2 Nf6. *Test tube chess* considers 1 Rh2, meeting it by 1...b4 2 Nf6 c3 with a draw, but with wR on d2 Black cannot play ...c3 without first rescuing bB and the extra tempo appears to be crucial.

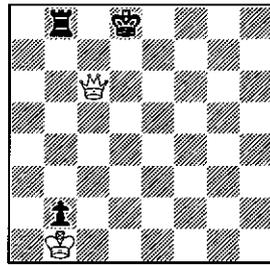
At this point I reran my own analysis, and found that Hiarc 7.32 on my 450MHz PIII had also identified **1 Rd2** as being one of White's two best moves, but without showing such a strong superiority for White as to cause me to examine it further. This is not the first time that my judgement in such matters has been at fault.

My dating of the beautiful Dolgov study which appeared on our front page last December was also wrong. The study was published in 1966, not 1968.

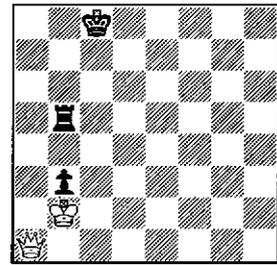
Fritz 6 and Hiarc 7.32. An update to my notes of December 1999 and March 2000 will be found on the back page. Also on the back page are this year's **accounts**.



3 - win



3a - reciprocal zugzwang



3b - see text

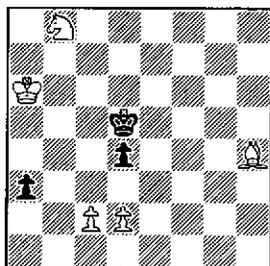
My own 3, from the April-June 1999 *diagrammes*, is not dissimilar in spirit, since it too depends on an unexpected quiet move. This is another of my pot-boilers based on a computer-discovered position of reciprocal zugzwang. The obvious **1 Qc6+** drives bK away from bR, **1...Kd8**, but further moves with the queen lead nowhere and the solution is a waiting move with the king: **2 Ka1!** There follows **2...b2+** **3 Kb1** and Black has no good move (see 3a). If instead **2 Kb1** then **2...b2** gives 3a with White to move and there is no win; if **2 Kc1** then **2...Rc8** and the queen is pinned. The study is hardly a masterpiece, but I have a weakness for “king to the corner” moves and it was nice to be able to generate one.

Trifling though it may be, this composition illustrates two points which may be of technical interest, and perhaps readers will excuse a brief digression. Firstly, which do we need from a computer analysis: depth to capture, or depth to mate? I found 3a in the supplement to *EG 124*, where the reciprocal zugzwangs with Q v R + P are listed with depth to *capture*, and there can be little doubt that this is the form more useful to a composer. We usually want a quick and clean win once the key position has been reached, and “depth 2 to capture” immediately suggested that this was a position worth examining. Had the figure been “depth 27”, which it would have been in a “depth to mate” list, I doubt if I would have given the position a second look.

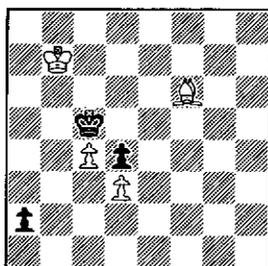
Secondly, please do *not* write in to suggest that the solution can be lengthened without adding extra material. I know it can, as for example in 3b (**1 Qa6+ Rb7 2 Qd6 Rb8 3 Qc6+** etc). But so what? I deliberately chose not to present the study in this extended form, considering it quite difficult enough as it was, and my experience when showing it to groups has confirmed my belief that this was the right decision. 3 is soluble but pleasantly hard, and the group usually attempts attacking manoeuvres with the White queen for at least five minutes before it occurs to somebody to try a waiting move with the king. The longer 3b, besides offering a less natural starting position, merely increases the risk that the solver will give up before he gets to the heart of the matter. The object of chess composition is not to show how clever the composer is but to entertain his friends, and content and length must balance; length for its own sake is *not* a virtue.

I trawl the most obvious sources for this column, but I do not see everything that appears in print and I am always grateful when composers or their friends bring relevant material to my attention. - JDB

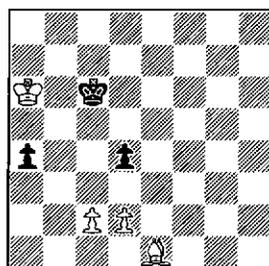
choice of 1...Kb8 to set up the stalemate), it is rather out of keeping with what follows, and the study is now usually quoted in pawn-only form starting either from **4a** or from the anonymous **5** (*Československá republika* 1923): **1 b6+ Kb8 2-5 h7 a2** and so on. Once more, the setting now thought best was not the one which was first published.



6 - win



6a - after 5 Kb7



7 - win

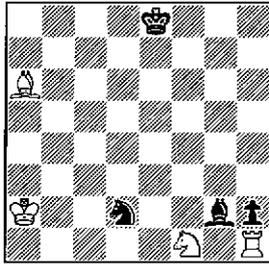
But not all new versions are as successful. **6** (*Shakhmatny listok* 1922) is a widely quoted study by K. A. L. Kubbel: **1 Nc6 Kxc6 2 Bf6 Kd5 3 d3 a2 4 c4+ Kc5 5 Kb7!** (see **6a**) and if **5...a1Q** then **6 Be7 mate**. However, the knight is on the board only to be sacrificed, and V. Vlasenko has suggested **7** (*Shakhmatnoe obozrenie* 1981) which achieves the same length of solution without it (**1 Bh4 a3 2 Bf6** etc). Yet is the knight sacrifice really bad? Timothy Whitworth, believing that Kubbel must have considered and rejected similar settings, considers **7** as *lèse majesté* (*EG* 69 pp 69-70), and I am inclined to agree. Certainly, if I had been offered a choice between **6** and **7** as an editor of originals to be set for solution, it is **6** that I would have chosen.

All these examples have genuinely occurred. What conclusions should we draw?

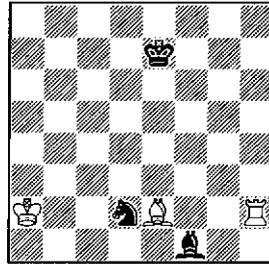
1. The ultimate objective of composition is to achieve the best possible realizations of the manoeuvres possible within the game. I imagine nobody would disagree?
2. It follows that the improvement of already published work is entirely legitimate and indeed desirable. A composer is obviously entitled to improve his own work; conversely, if he publishes a less than perfect setting and fails to improve it himself he is not entitled to object if somebody else takes up the baton and does better.
3. However, "improvement" of other people's work must be done with proper respect. This means not just by acknowledging that the previous composer may have considered the "improved" version himself and rejected it, but also by not trying to claim an undue share of the credit. The attribution "X, version" is always correct and "X, version by Y" is reasonable when the improvement is significant, but I dislike seeing it when Y's contribution has only been minor.

There is a further point which is sometimes overlooked. It is generally agreed that "versions" should not normally be eligible for fresh tourney honours. But how often does a first prizewinner genuinely represent the optimal setting of its theme? In my experience, surprisingly rarely. Usually, the ideas that it embodies are worked on further, by the composer or by someone else, and a better setting subsequently appears in a non-competitive context; and it follows that those whose horizons are limited by the magic words "First Prize" are in reality missing much of the best.

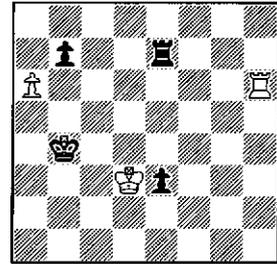
From the world at large



1 - win



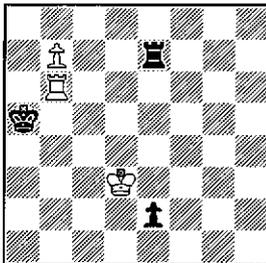
1a - reciprocal zugzwang



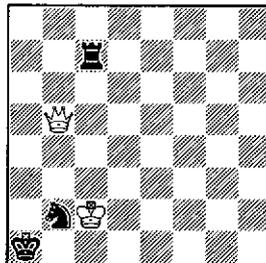
2 - win

Pietro Rossi has sent me a charming original study based on the Thompson/Elkies position of reciprocal zugzwang which appeared on our front page in September. White's natural move is 1 Rxh2, but there follows 1...Bxf1 2 Be2 Ke7! and White has no good continuation (see 1a). He must interpolate 1 Bb5+! Black has only 1...Ke7 (1...Kf7/Kf8 2 Rxh2 Bxf1 3 Rf2+, 1...Kd8 2 Rxh2 Bxf1 3 Rxd2+ and 4 Bxf1), and now 2 Rxh2 Bxf1 3 Be2 gives 1a with Black to move (3...Kf7 4 Bh5+ and 5 Rxd2, 3...Kd7/Ke6 4 Bg4+ similarly, 3...Kd8/Kd6 4 Bd3! Bxd3 5 Rxd2 and bB is pinned).

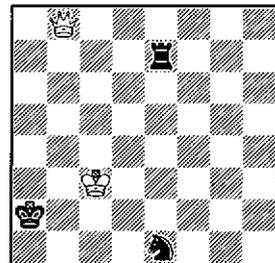
I do not normally publish originals in *BESN* (existing outlets are crying out for material, and as long as composers can achieve speedy publication elsewhere I do not think I should set up in competition), but I make exceptions in two cases: where an original study forms an integral part of an article, or where, as here, it has been developed from a position which has already appeared in *BESN*. The present study is a simple but delightful little piece which I am very happy to have been sent.



2a - after 2...e2



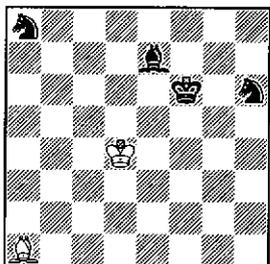
2b - 8...Ka1, after 12...Rc7+



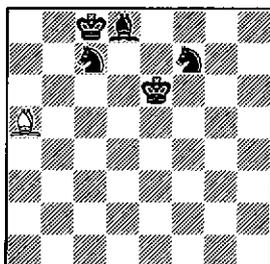
2c - 8...Ka2, after 10 Kc3

Mario Matouš's 2 shared 4th-5th prizes in the recent Foguelman-Caputto-Carlsson 75th birthday tourney. 1 Rb6+ Ka5! 2 axb7 e2 gives 2a, and if bK stood elsewhere 3 b8Q would win quickly. As it is, White must be more clever: 3 Rb5+! 3...Kxb5 allows 4 b8Q+ and 3...Ka6 4 b8Q is worse, hence 3...Ka4, and down we go: 4 Rb4+! Ka3 5 Rb3+ Ka2 6 Rb2+ Ka1 7 Rb1+. Now 7...Kxb1 is forced, and after 8 b8Q+ we have two lines: 8...Ka1 9 Kc2 e1N+ (R + N v Q draws if Black can consolidate)

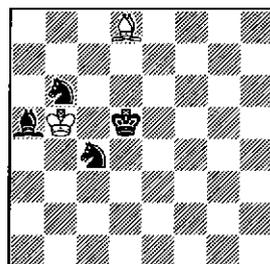
10 Kd1! (10 Kc3? Re2 is drawn) **Nd3 11 Qb5 Nb2+** (11...Re3 12 Kd2 Rg3 13 Qb8 Rh3 14 Qc8) **12 Kc2 Re7+** (see 2b) **13 Kb3**, and **8...Ka2 9 Kc2 e1N+** **10 Kc3!** (see 2c) **Re3+** (now 10...Re2 is met by 11 Qb3+) **11 Kd2** and wins (if 11...Re7 I think 12 Qa8+ and 13 Qd5 is simplest). Put bKa2 in **2b** or bKa1 in **2c**, and Black draws.



3 - draw



3a - 3 Bc3, after 6 Ba5



3b - main line, after 10 Bd8

One of the magazines I receive in exchange for *BESN* is the Belgian *Horizon*. This has given me **3** by Roger Missiaen and Ignace Vandecasteele, which gained 2nd HM in *Die Schwalbe* in 1997-98. B + 2N v B normally win, so White must go for bNa8. **1 Kd5+ Kf5** (to hold e5 - 1...Kf7 2 Kc6 Bd8 3 Be5 with Kb7 and Bc7 soon to follow) **2 Kc6 Bd8** and now 3 Bc3 leads to a gorgeous try: 3...Ke6 4 Kb7 Nc7 5 Kc8 Nf7 6 Ba5 (see **3a**) hoping for 6...Kd6 7 Bb6! Kc6 8 Bxc7 Bxc7 stalemate, but 6...Na6!! 7 Bxd8 Nd6 mate! Instead, **3 Bd4** (for Ba7 and Bb8, reaching c7 by another route) **Ke6 4 Ba7 Nf7/Nf5 5 Bb8 Ba5 6 Kb7 Nb6 7 Bc7 Nd6+** (is Black consolidating?) **8 Kc6 Ndc4 9 Kb5 Kd5 10 Bd8!** and it's drawn: bK is tied to the defence of bNc4, no other Black piece can move, and wB will simply tempo between d8 and c7.

EG 138 includes three so-called "studies of the year" for 1995/6/7 which chess journalists are being urged to reprint in the hope of gaining new adherents. If readers detect a slight edge in the words "so-called", I am afraid they are quite right, because in truth these are no more than the selections of a committee whose tastes appear to be rather different from my own. No doubt they will receive exposure elsewhere, but I shall not be reproducing them here. I doubt if there is genuinely such a thing as a "study of the year", and if there is it will be decided by overwhelming popular acclaim (the Olmutsky and Mitrofanov classics of 1963 and 1967, both in *Endgame magic*, would have been strong candidates) and not by the dictat of a committee.

Much more to the point is the distribution with *EG* 138 of a disc containing more than 16,000 positions of reciprocal zugzwang (Black to play loses, White to play cannot win) from the new Thompson six-man databases. *EG* has already published more than 10,000 such positions from the five-man databases, but these were distributed in printed form whereas the new material is provided on disc. *EG* is a little defensive about this, but personally I think the editors were right. Most composers now have computers, and in many respects the disc form is more convenient; for example, it is a fairly simple matter to feed the file into Word and to write a macro to print selected positions in diagram form. I shall be writing such a macro for my own use, and if any reader would like a copy I shall be very happy to send one.

News and notices

Meetings. The next *EG* readers' meeting will be at 17 New Way Road, London NW9 6PL, on **Friday January 12** at 6.00 pm; non-subscribers welcome, but please bring £5 towards the buffet (except on a first visit). Bring the latest *EG* with you!

Fritz 6 and Hiarc 7.32. Harold van der Heijden tells me that a "selectivity" parameter in Fritz 6 can be set to zero (pull down Tools, select Engine, select Fritz 6, click on Engine parameters, change Selectivity), and that this avoids all the problems I reported last December (page 123). I have tried it, and it does. He also points out that the Help function explicitly recommends this for use with endgame studies, and again it does though the relevant paragraph takes some finding (pull down Help, click on Help, Reference, Computer chess, Engine parameters).

However, the "help" paragraph also states that the effect of this change is considerably to reduce the program's normal performance, and this reduction appears to be severe. Having verified that the three studies which I reported as defeating Fritz 5.32 were now analysed correctly, I tried the Ellison-Beasley study (March 1997, page 37) which first alerted me to the problems, and after more than ten hours Fritz was still at depth 24/49 (exhaustive search to 24 ply, forcing lines searched to 49 ply) and had not found a Black win in reply to 1 Bf3. I then went back to Hiarc 7.32, which reached depth 25/31 after fifteen minutes and reported a forced Black mate.

Fritz 6 gives a more useful display than Hiarc once a position in the five-man Nalimov tablebases has been reached, because it lists all the available moves whereas Hiarc only gives the one which wins most quickly. In these important circumstances, I now switch over to Fritz (each program can access positions saved by the other). But for all other analysis I continue to use Hiarc.

I do *not* claim to be an authority on chess-playing programs, and the remarks above do not attempt to be more than a fair and honest report on what has happened in the course of day-to-day analysis on my own machine. If any reader or other interested person thinks that I have not been using a particular program to best advantage and cares to suggest what I might do to improve matters, I shall be very happy to try it out and to report accordingly.

2000 accounts. My costs have again been unchanged and there was a 50p credit to every reader as a result of the Ellison book auction, so UK readers have been charged only **£5.50** for the year (£6.50 to the rest of Europe, £8.50 elsewhere). If your subscription has run out, you will have received a reminder letter either in September or now; otherwise, please assume that you remain in credit until I tell you otherwise.

Anybody wishing to give notice here of any event, product, or service should contact the Editor. There is no charge and no account is taken of whether the activity is being pursued for commercial profit, but notices are printed only if they seem likely to be of particular interest to study enthusiasts. Readers are asked to note that the Editor relies wholly on the representations of the notice giver (except where he makes a personal endorsement) and that no personal liability is accepted either by him or by any other person involved in the production and distribution of this magazine.