

# British Endgame Study News

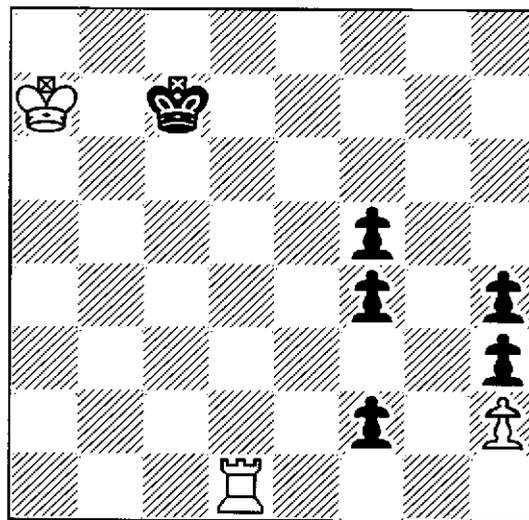
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## Study Awards Explained

*by Jonathan Levitt*



White wins only by 3 Ka8!

## Study awards explained

*Editorial introduction. One of my reasons for supplementing the normal issues of British Endgame Study News with special numbers has been to provide a vehicle for study enthusiasts to write articles on special themes. I was therefore particularly pleased when Jonathan Levitt offered me the present text. I think we have had no published description in English of the thoughts of a tourney judge since that by John Roycroft in Test Tube Chess, and another is long overdue. It is particularly interesting in that Jonathan, with David Friedgood, has developed an aesthetic framework for the appreciation and criticism of studies and other chess creations, and the influence of that framework will become clear in what follows. The actual studies in the award are perhaps no more than middling in quality; the tourney was unlucky in that the originally selected first prizewinner had to be downgraded on account of anticipation, and it is noticeable that Jonathan did not think it appropriate to move up one of the Honourable Mentions to fill the gap. Restore this original first prize, with its unexpected stalemate following moves by every man on the board, and the award would become much more impressive. However, this does nothing to detract from the interest of the judging procedure itself - JDB.*

Most players do not know a great deal about the intricacies of study competitions. The introduction to this article should help to explain what a study award is all about - why there are such things, what the judges are looking for, the difference between an honourable mention and a commend and so on. After that comes an actual award, judged by myself and appearing courtesy of *The Problemist* - the official magazine of the British Chess Problem Society (see the March issue of *BESN*, page 8). Although the BCPS and *The Problemist* focus on problems, there is also space for a study column.

Let us imagine you have created the most amazing chess conception (problem or study) ever to have seen the light of day. What can you do with it? Sure, you can show it to the regulars down at the club - some of them might even appreciate it - but what if it deserves a wider audience? The answer is to submit it to a chess magazine (or other publication) which publishes original compositions. Around the world there are hundreds of composers, creating thousands of problems every year, doing just that. What causes these people to spend enormous amounts of their (not always) spare time in pursuit of this artistic urge remains unclear. There are few rewards beyond the pleasure of creation. Prizes and awards have come into being as a means of encouraging the chess artists of the world to persevere. In the case of composition, the prizes are very, very small. As Hermann Albrecht put it, 'It is not the composer but the problem which receives the award.' I suppose problems do not have mortgages, but even so, it would be nice if the financial rewards became a bit more realistic. In an ideal world, with its rich and generous sponsor, the prizes could easily be 1000 times greater without being in the least out of proportion.

Still, there is the matter of prestige. Even composers have egos, though usually not on the grand scale exhibited by players. Another function of awards is the recognition

of good work. Composers know that their work is more likely to be noticed (and quoted) if it is being judged. The magical term '1st prize' can work wonders for a study. Many times, faced by a page full of studies and the constraints of an occasionally demanding schedule, have I only looked at the prize-winners. This is why judges (who work hard and are never paid, groan) have an important responsibility to get it right.

The judge must carefully examine all the entries. In the case of the award below, this amounted to some 60+ studies submitted over a period of two years. After creating a short-list of potential award winners (based primarily on aesthetic judgement), tests for soundness and 'anticipation' (is the idea original?) must be done. Finally, the studies must be ordered. The judge may give as many prizes as he feels appropriate. 1st, 2nd, 3rd prize etc. Then come the 'Honourable Mentions'. These are sometimes given to exceptional or quirky studies, which for some reason do not get a main prize. Some of the most entertaining work gets honourably mentioned. Finally come the 'commends' which are not good enough for prizes or mentions, but are good enough to be distinguished from the also-rans. Another question the judge should consider is 'how good is the overall standard of the entries?'. If they are really bad, he does not need to award a first prize. Maybe just a commend or two would be appropriate, since there is a historical context to first prize-winners which should not be distorted. In other words, the award should not just be relative to that competition alone, but to the whole culture of studies generally.

Different judges have different tastes, but real aesthetic content and originality are always sought after. The award that follows is as it appears in *The Problemist*, except for some details about studies excluded from the roll of honour because of anticipation or unsoundness (and for a change made necessary when the study originally awarded First Prize proved to be seriously anticipated and had to be downgraded). There is usually a substantial time-lag between the appearance of positions and their ultimate judgement (the law's delay), which enables unsoundness to be exposed and anticipations to be discovered; this is why positions that first appeared in 1992-93 were only being judged in 1995.

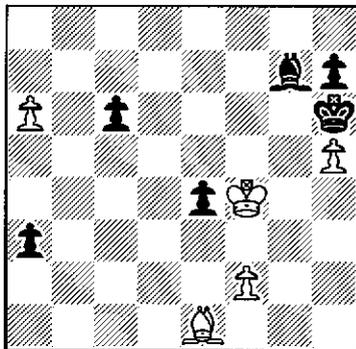
## ***The Problemist: 1992-93 study award***

(as confirmed)

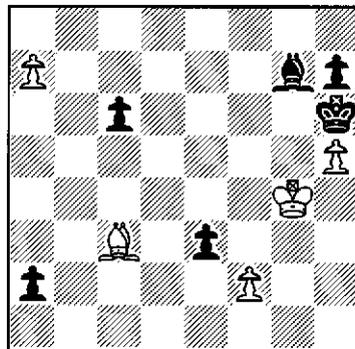
Firstly, some general comments. Judging endgame studies is not the objective, dispassionate affair some may imagine it to be. Even judges have prejudices. I have tried not to be too influenced by those I am aware of, but it is difficult - and probably not desirable - to avoid emotional response entirely. In fact, in this award I have been looking for studies which excited me in some way or caused some kind of stir.

I believe judging should not be done 'behind closed doors' but there are so many factors involved in a final decision that it is not possible to articulate them fully here. Indeed it would be difficult to do it anywhere. All I will say is that I have made use of the paradox / depth / geometry / flow theory expounded in *Secrets of Spectacular Chess* and readers (or annoyed composers) can find details of my general method there.

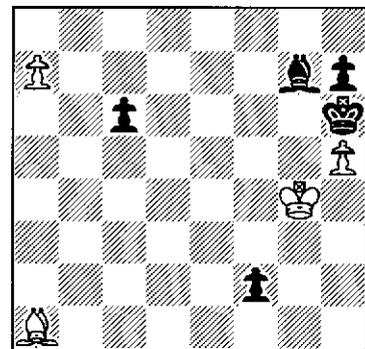
Now the particulars. There were plenty of good studies but true masterpieces were in short supply. The prize-winner and honourable mentions are all very different, which only made their final ordering harder to decide.



**1** - win

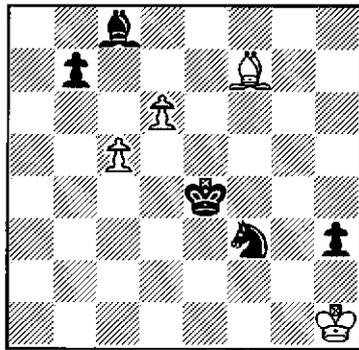


**1a** - after 3 Bc3

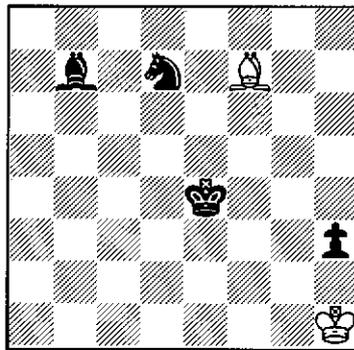


**1b** - after 4...exf2

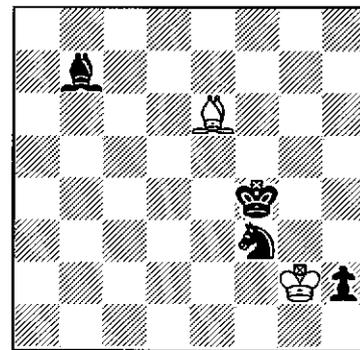
Prize, **1** (Marek Kwiatkowski, *The Problemist*, May 1992). **1 a7**. 1 Kg4? Bd4; 1 Bd2? Kxh5. The move order is well controlled. **1...a2 2 Kg4**. 2 Bd2? Kxh5; 2 a8Q? a1Q 3 Qxc6+ Qf6+ draws. **2...e3**. Not 2...a1Q? 3 Bd2+. **3 Bc3!** (see **1a**) **a1Q**. 3...Bxc3 4 a8Q a1Q 5 Qf8+ Bg7 6 Qf4#. **4 Bxa1 exf2** (see **1b**). The switch to a new danger pawn has been very elegant. Now comes the strongly paradoxical **5 Bf6!!** avoiding 5 a8Q f1Q 6 Qxc6+ Bf6 7 Qxf6+ Qxf6 8 Bxf6 stalemate. The geometrical point of 5 Bf6 will only become clear three moves later, so the move also has a little depth to it. **5...Bxf6**. 5...f1Q? 6 Bg5#. **6 a8Q f1Q 7 Qf8+ Bg7 8 Qxf1** winning. The solution has featured fine turbulent flow combined with paradox; very fresh.



2 - draw



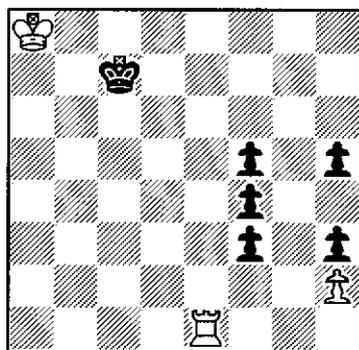
2a - after 3...Bxb7



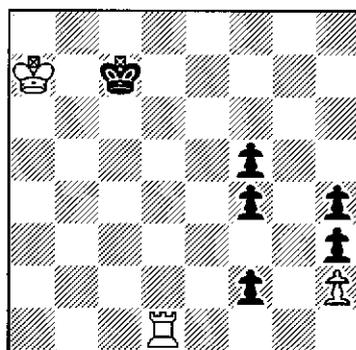
2b - after 7...Kf4

1st Honourable Mention, 2 (Genrikh Kasparyan, *The Problemist*, November 1992).  
**1 c6.** 1 d7? Bxd7 2 c6 bxc6 3 Bd5+ Kf4 4 Bxc6 Bg4. **1...Ne5!** 1...bxc6 2 Be6 Bxe6  
 3 d7. **2 d7 Nxd7!** 2...Bxd7 3 cxb7 Nc6 4 Kh2 is drawn since Black cannot make  
 progress without first rounding up the b-pawn, but then the h-pawn will drop. **3 cxb7**  
**Bxb7** (see 2a) **4 Kh2.** 4 Be6? Ke5+! - just one of several tricks that keep the  
 introduction flowing beautifully. **4...Ne5 5 Be6 Nf3+!** **6 Kg3!** 6 Kxh3? Ng5+. **6...h2**  
**7 Kg2 Kf4** (see 2b) **8 Ba2.** 8 Bg8 also works. White must oscillate between a2 and  
 g8 with 'long' bishop moves. **8...Be4 9 Bg8 Bc6 10 Ba2 Ke3 11 Bg8** drawn.

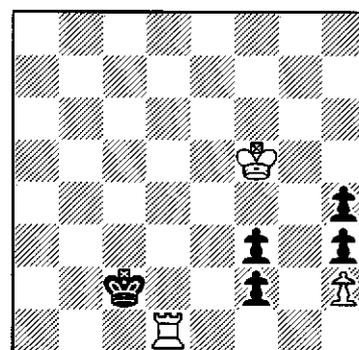
A world class introduction (moves one to seven) by the great study genius, but the  
 finish is only quite good.



3 - win

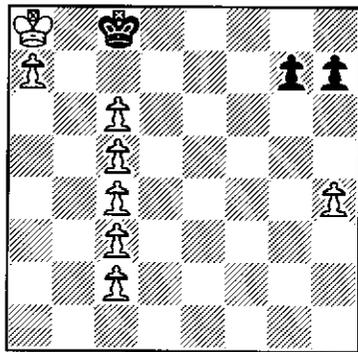


3a - after 2...h4

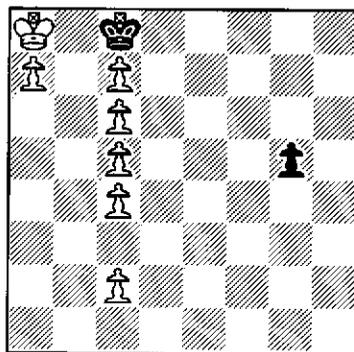


3b - after 8...Kc2

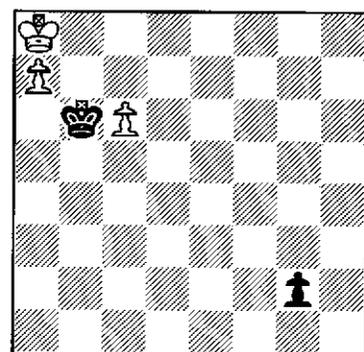
2nd Honourable Mention, 3 (Harrie Grondijs, *The Problemist*, November 1993).  
**1 Rd1.** Threatens 2 Rd4. If 1 Rf1? then 1...Kd6 2 Rxf3 Ke5 3 Rxh3 Ke4 draw. **1...f2**  
**2 Ka7 h4** (see 3a). It is best to wait since 2...f3 3 Rf1 Kd6 4 Rxf2 Ke5 5 Rxf3 is a  
 win. **3 Ka8!!** The best single move of this award! Deep and paradoxical - the sort of  
 move that will always thrill the spectators. The paradox is explained when you realize  
 that 3 Ka6? Kc6 only helps Black and that the rook has no good move. **3...Kc6.**  
 3...Kc8 takes the king too far away: 4 Rf1 Kd7 5 Rxf2 Ke6 6 Rxf4 and wins. **4 Kb8**  
**f3 5 Kc8 Kc5 6 Kd7 Kc4 7 Ke6 Kc3 8 Kxf5 Kc2** (see 3b) **9 Ra1!** Another pleasing  
 choice - 9 Rf1? Kd3 10 Rxf2 Ke3 draw. **9...Kd3 10 Kf4 Ke2 11 Ra2+ Ke1 12 Ke3**  
**f1N+ 13 Kxf3** and wins. The complexity does not help the crispness and flow of this  
 study. Also the pawn structure is not natural, but the striking paradox and exceptional  
 depth are very impressive.



4 - draw

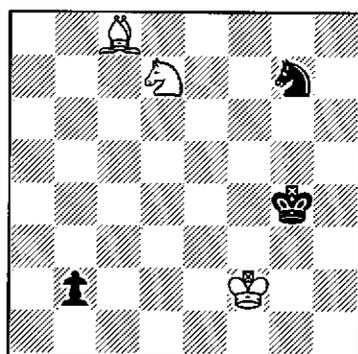


4a - after 5 c4

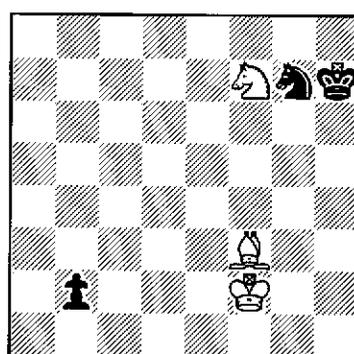


4b - after 15...Kb6

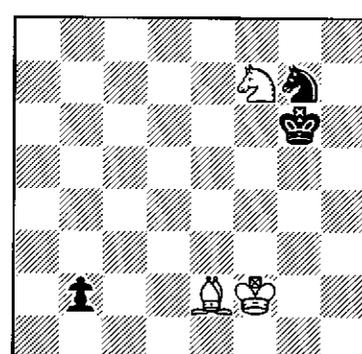
3rd Honourable Mention, 4 (Vitaly Kovalenko, *The Problemist*, May 1993). OK so it's not the most natural starting position with just the five c-pawns, but the humour and flow of this unusual study make it stand out. In the sequence that follows, White has to make no less than 23 'only' moves in a row in order to draw - an impressive achievement! 1 c7. Not 1 h5? g5 2 hxg6 hxg6 3 c7 g5 4 c6 g4 5 c5 g3 6 c4 Kxc7! 7 c3 Kc8! 1...g6 2 c6 h6 3 c5 g5 4 hxg5 hxg5 5 c4 (see 4a) Kxc7! By taking the front c-pawn and then returning, Black gains time. To test White fully, Black has not done this too early. Now White cannot play c2-c4 in one move. 6 c3 Kc8 7 c7 g4 8 c6 g3 9 c5 Kxc7! 9...g2? 10 c4 g1Q is an immediate draw. 10 c4 Kc8 11 c7 g2 12 c6 Kxc7. 12...g1Q 13 c5 and Black has nothing. 13 c5 Kc8 14 c7 Kxc7. 14...g1Q 15 c6. 15 c6 Kb6! (see 4b) 16 c7 g1Q 17 c8Q Qg2+ 18 Kb8 Qg3+ 19 Ka8 Qf3+ 20 Kb8 Qf4+ 21 Ka8 Qe4+ 22 Kb8 Qe7 23 a8N+! The final trick, without which White would have been lost. Excellent flow with a baby sting in the tail.



5 - draw



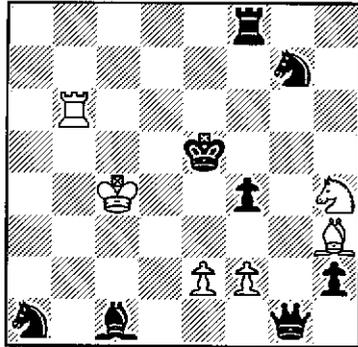
5a - after 3...Kh7 4 Bf3



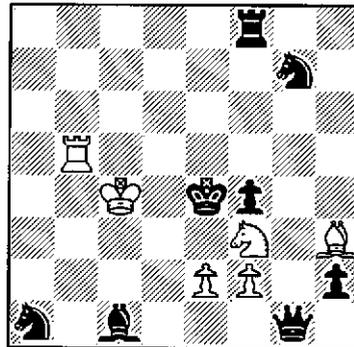
5b - after 3...Kg6 4 Be2

4th Honourable Mention, 5 (Ronald Turnbull, *The Problemist Supplement*, November 1993). This elegant sub-miniature involves a pure and precise tactic. Can you see how to stop the b-pawn? 1 Ne5+! Kh5! 1...Kf4 2 Nd3+; 1...Kh4 2 Nf3+ Kh5 3 Nd2. 2 Bg4+ Kh6! 2...Kh4 or 2...Kg5 allow a draw with 3 Nf3+ Kxg4 4 Nd2. 3 Nf7+ Kh7. For 3...Kg6 see below. 4 Bf3!! (see 5a). 4 Ng5+? Kh8! 5 Nf7+ Kg8 6 Nh6+ Kf8. 4...b1Q 5 Be4+ Qxe4 6 Ng5+ drawn. The alternative variation is equally important: 3...Kg6 4 Be2!! (see 5b). 4 Ne5+? Kf6! 4...b1Q 5 Bd3+ Qxd3 6 Ne5+. Very neat. Paradox, geometry in the similarity of the two variations, a touch of depth and a little flow - all with just six pieces.

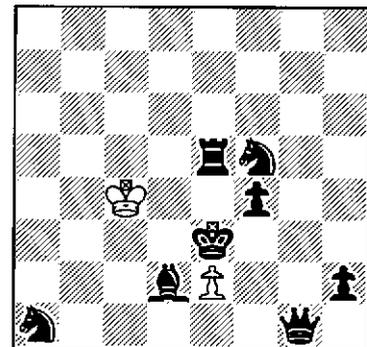
Finally we move on to the commendations, which are not ordered. The Bent is good fun with a spectacular finish but none too sophisticated. Montanari provides a thematic, problem like study where the Bf3 is neatly unpinned in two variations. The Kolesnikov was given First Prize in the provisional award, hence the extended commentary, but it is seriously anticipated by the same composer's 4th Prize in 64 in 1990 and has had to be downgraded. The Zhuravlev/Egorov would also have done much better but for the fact the final stalemate is anticipated (Selesniev, 35 *Endspielstudien*, 1919). Still, the excelsior is cleverly incorporated into this powerful piece of work - a fine achievement.



6 - draw

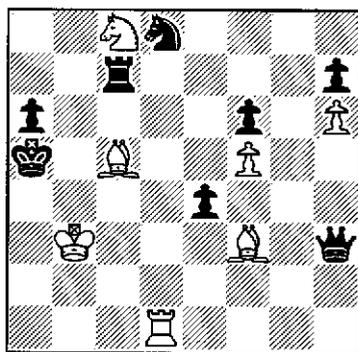


6a - after 2 Rb5

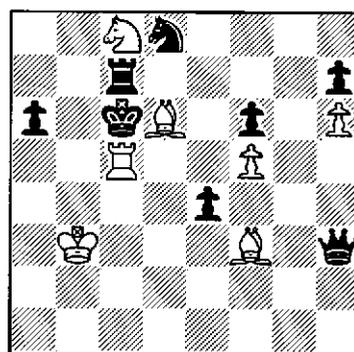


6b - 6...Ke3 stalemate

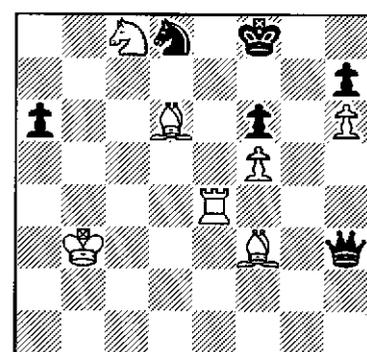
Commended, 6 (Mike Bent, *The Problemist*, November 1992). 1 Nf3+ Ke4 2 Rb5! Re8. 2...Bb2 3 Nd2#. 3 Bf5+ Nxf5 4 Re5+ Rxe5 5 Nd2+ Bxd2 6 f3+ Ke3 stalemate.



7 - win

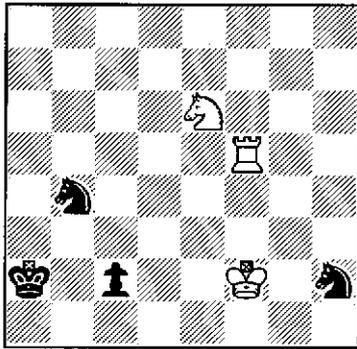


7a - after 3 Rc5+

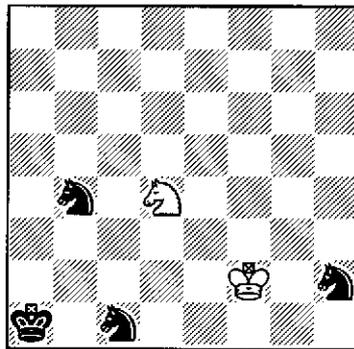


7b - after 6 Rxe4+

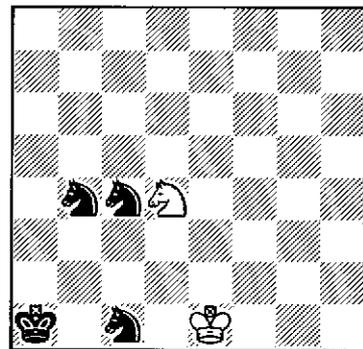
Commended, 7 (Marcello Montanari, *The Problemist*, November 1993). 1 Rd5! Kb5. 1...Qxf3+ 2 Be3+. 2 Bd6+ Kc6 3 Rc5+ (see 7a) with two lines: 3...Kd7 4 Rxc7+ Ke8 5 Re7+ Kf8 6 Rxe4+ (see 7b) Kf7 (6...Kg8 7 Re8+ Kf7 9 Rf8#) 7 Re7+ Kf8 8 Re3+ Kf7 9 Bd5+ and 3...Kb7 4 Rxc7+ Kb8 5 Rc3+ Ka8 6 Bxe4+.



8 - draw

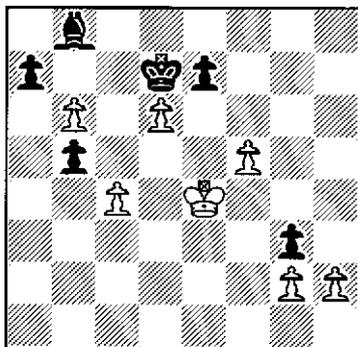


8a - after 3...c1N

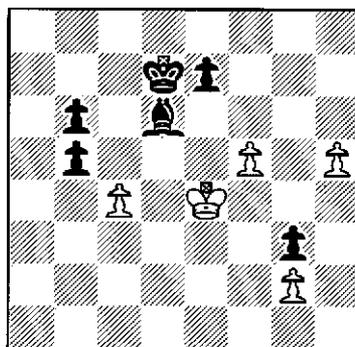


8b - after 6...Nc4

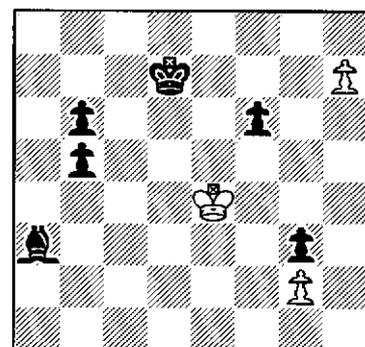
Commended, **8** (Evgeny Kolesnikov, *The Problemist*, September 1993). There is a great deal of life in this miniature. How does White stop the c-pawn? **1 Ra5+ Kb2!** Best since 1...Kb1 allows 2 Nd4 c1Q 3 Ra1+ Kxa1 4 Nb3+. **2 Ra1! Kxa1 3 Nd4 c1N!** (see **8a**). Any other promotion allows White to reach the standard draw of K+2N v K. As you may have forgotten, K+3N v K+N is, in general, a win. Black cannot exchange knights and is quite quickly forced back and mated. Here something special happens... **4 Kg3 Nf1+ 5 Kf2 Nd2**. The only way to make progress. **6 Ke1 Nc4** (see **8b**). The alternatives 6...Ne4 and 6...Nb1 lead, essentially, to the same finish. **7 Nc2+!! Nxc2+ 8 Kd1 Kb1** stalemate. Black cannot afford to lose either knight and 8...Kb2 is also stalemate. There is plenty of paradox in this study; from the almost gratuitous 2 Ra1! to the surprising stalemate finish. Moving away from the action with 4 Kg3 adds class. Black's choice on move six just makes it harder to solve and is in no way a weakness. It is not without depth and also has very good flow.



9 - draw



9a - after 2...Bxd6



9b - after 6 h7

Commended, **9** (A. Zhuravlev and G. Egorov, *The Problemist*, January 1993). **1 h4! axb6**. 1...exd6 2 h5 d5+ 3 Kxd5 b4 4 h6. **2 h5 Bxd6** (see **9a**) **3 c5!** 3 h6? Ba3 4 f6 exf6 5 h7 f5+ 6 Kxf5 Bb2. **3...Bxc5 4 h6 Ba3 5 f6 exf6 6 h7** (see **9b**) **f5+**. After 6...Bb2? 7 Kf5 White wins. **7 Kd5! Bb2 8 h8Q Bxh8** stalemate.