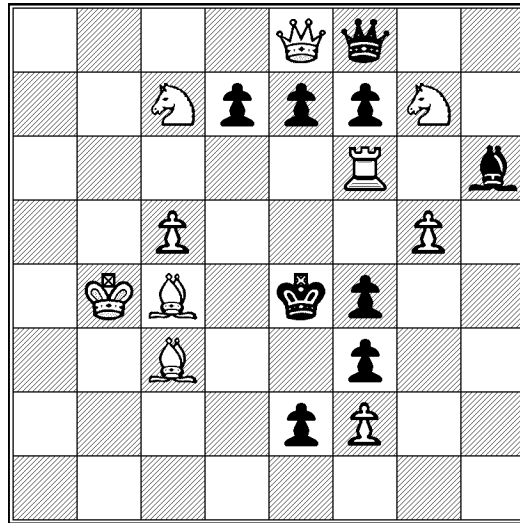


## 8<sup>th</sup> YCCC – Section A - #2 Award

The stipulation for this tourney required that there be 3 adjacent black pawns on the same rank with the black king positioned at least 3 ranks below the black pawns. In the solution each thematic pawn makes at least one move, each such move resulting in a different mate. I received 19 entries; a number showed the minimum requirement but fortunately others built on these basics to create problems of real interest. Sadly I must reject two entries: (i) No.4 has 5 thematic variations but these are *identical* to those found in the Agapov #2 provided as a demonstration example and (ii) No.17 is an illegal position.

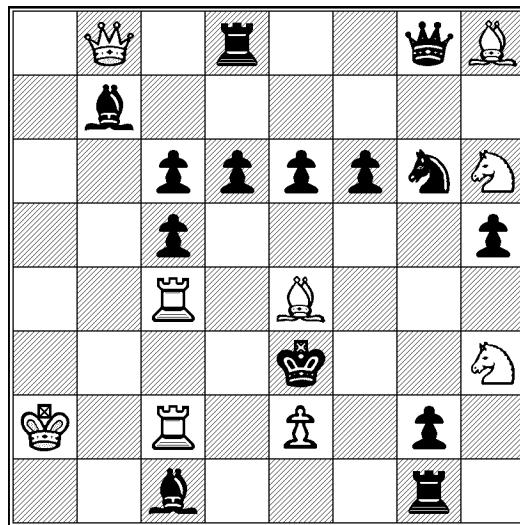
### 1<sup>st</sup> Place No.30 Benjamin Defromont



**1.Sc6!** (>2.Rxf4) 1...fxe6 2.Qg6, 1...dxe6 2.Qc6 and 1...exf6 2.Sxf8. Also 1...Bxg5 2.Sxg5. Importantly the key *makes possible* all 3 thematic defences which in turn open lines for the wQ to mate! What makes this work so outstanding is that there are 3 tries to the same e6 square each of which is defeated by a different thematic defence! 1.Re6+? fxe6! (2.Qg6? Qf5!) 1.Be6? (>2.Bf5) dxe6! (2.Qc6?

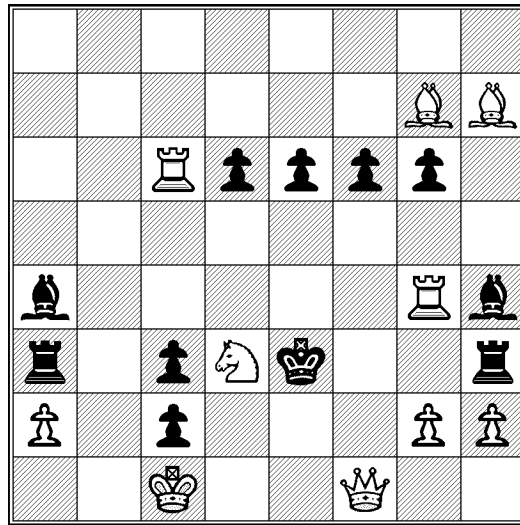
Kd3!) and 1.Sge6? (>2.Rxf4) exf6! (2.Sxf8? Kf5!). I admired the several functions of the bQ and the dual purpose of bPe2; not only does it block a square in the extended bK field after 1.Be6? Kd3 but it is also prevents a potential cook; 1.Rd6? (>2.Bd3) e1S! A rather more drastic cook is neutralised with 1.Qxd7? Qb8+! utilising a wK placement that also provides a guard of c3. Such details are indicators of a truly refined construction. I hope that in time this masterpiece will find a home in the appropriate FIDE Album.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Place No.29 Ilija Serafimović**



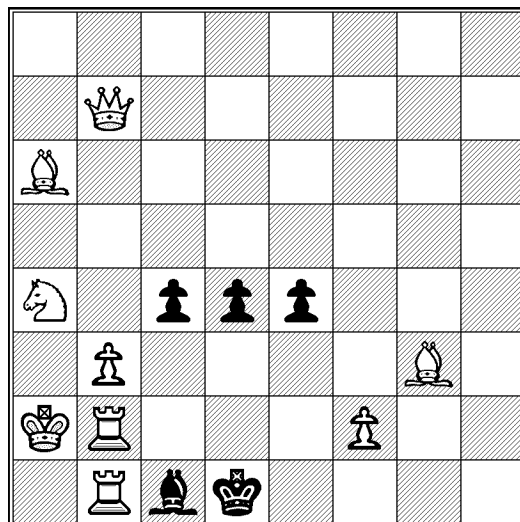
**1.Bxc6!** (>2.Re4) 1...f5 2.Rc3, 1...e5 (pinning) 2.Sf5, 1...d5 2.Qg3 and 1...Bxc6 2.Qb3. Alternative moves of wBe4 also threaten 2.Re4 and the variation play above will clarify how these tries are defeated. 1.Bd3? f5! (2.Rc3?) 1.Bf5? e5! (2.Sf5??) 1.Bf3? d5! (2.Qg3?) These tries are self obstructing and complete the same task as **No.30** but without the same intensity. i.e. the thematic post-key defences also refute tries. 1.Bd5? cxd5! completes a quartet of tries that define the wB "star".

### 3<sup>rd</sup> Place No.15 Ural Khasanov



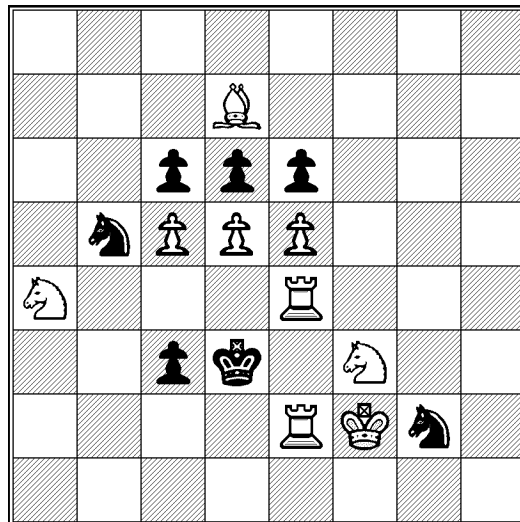
Here the composer tries to expand the concept by incorporating 4 adjacent bPs on the same rank. **1.Sb4!** (-) 1...d5 2.Rxe6, 1...e5 2.Sd5, 1...f5 2.Bd4 and 1...g5 2.Re4. This is embellished by two Grimshaws at opposite edges of the board: 1...Ra~ 2.Rxc3, 1...Rb3 2.Sxc2, 1...Ba~ 2.Sxc2, 1...Bb3 2.Rxc3 and 1...Rh~ 2.Qf3, 1...Rg3 2.Qe1, 1...Bh~ 2.Qe1, 1...Bg3 2.Qf3. Finally the self-block 1...Bf2 2.Qd3 provides a little added spice. A block on this scale came as a real surprise and the mirror image arrangement of bRs and bBs is optically very attractive!

### 4<sup>th</sup> Place No.28 Joachim Hambros



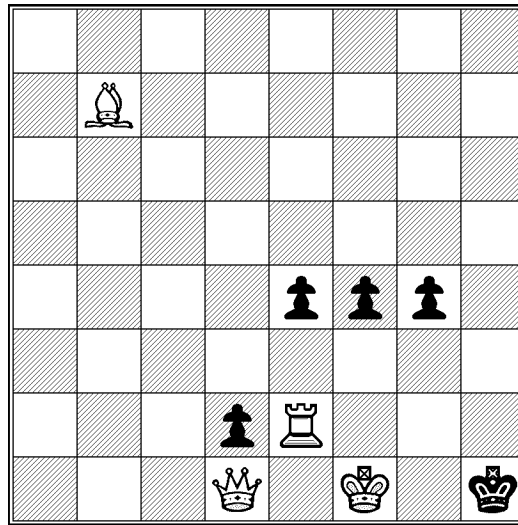
**1.f4!** (-) 1...cxb3+ 2.Qxb3, 1...c3 2.Be2, 1...d3 2.Sc3, 1...e3 2.Qh1 (2.Qf3? e2!) and 1...exf3 ep 2.Qxf3. (1.f3? e3! 2.Qh1??) Placing this problem proved to be difficult! On the one hand there is a flight-taking key and, in the initial position, an unprovided check. In normal circumstances these are considered to be serious defects... and here they also serve to prevent cooks. However, the bK flight is set with mate (2.Rxc1#) and the peculiarities of the *en passant* effect allow a subtle differentiation between try and key. Above all this diagram is the only one to demonstrate 5 distinct variations from the 3 thematic bPs in totally independent fashion and I congratulate the composer on his ambition.

**5<sup>th</sup> Place No.23 Iancu-Ioan Sandea**



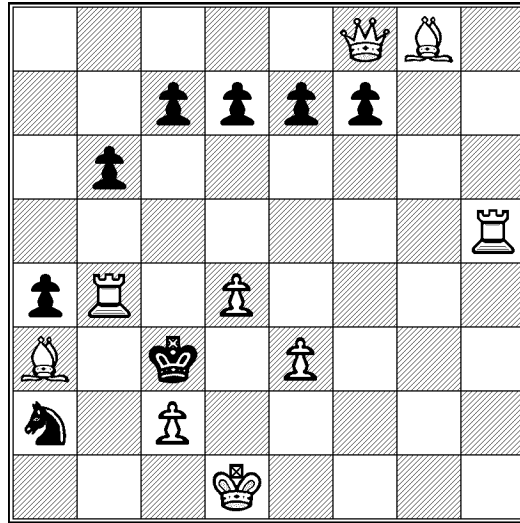
1.Bxc6? (>2.Bxb5) 1...Sb~ 2.Rd4, 1...dxc5 2.Sxc5 but 1...Se3! 1.cxd6? (>2.Sc5) 1...Sd4 2.Rxd4 but 1...c2! 1.exd6? (>2.Se5) 1...Se3! **1.Rb4!** (-) 1...cxd5 2.Bxb5, 1...dxc5 2.Sxc5, 1...dxe5 2.Sxe5 and 1...exd5 2.Bf5. Also 1...Sb~ 2.Rd4, 1...Sg~ 2.Se1 and 1...c2 2.Rd2. {1.Rg4? (-) Sf4!}. A block with 4 thematic variations in which virtual threats become actual mates. I am fully sympathetic with such an enterprise made possible by the simple expedient of reciprocal pawn captures. However, the symmetry and repeated refutation detract somewhat.

## 6<sup>th</sup> Place No.24 Dylan Schenker



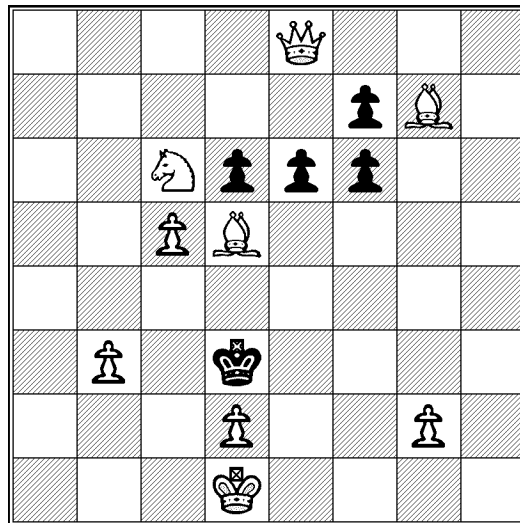
I just love this problem because it demonstrates an innate understanding of problem chess. The key is an absolute delight since it opens a passage for both the wK and the wQ whilst unpinning bPe4: **1.Rg2!** (>2.Kf2) 1...e3 2.Ke2! (the B+R battery does not fire!) and 1...g3 2.Qh5. Now things become controversial; 1...f3 does not defeat the threat but it is the *only* Black move that permits 2.Kf2 to be played. It passes scrutiny though perhaps not with flying colours and it should be appreciated that the move is essential in order to refute the try 1.Rf2? (>2.Ke2) f3! (Incidentally it also prevents mate in one!) Furthermore the supreme economy and elegance of the composition demand a high placement.

### 7<sup>th</sup> Place No.5 Itay Richardson



Set play includes 1...e5/e6 2.Bb2, 1...f5/f6 2.Rc4 but 1...Sxb4 is very strong and so forces the solver to consider 1.Qxe7? (>2.Bb2) 1...d6 2.Qxc7, 1...Sxb4 2.Qxb4 but 1...c5! **1.Rxb6!** (>2.Rc5) 1...cxb6 2.Qc8, 1...d5/d6 2.Rc6, 1...e5 2.Qc5 and 1...f5 2.Bb2 – the virtual threat becomes an actual mate. (1...Kc4 2.Rc5) A considerable amount of change and transfer occurs across the phases and I enjoyed this so very much! It is also the only entry with a flight giving key.

### 8<sup>th</sup> Place No.34 Andrii Sergienko

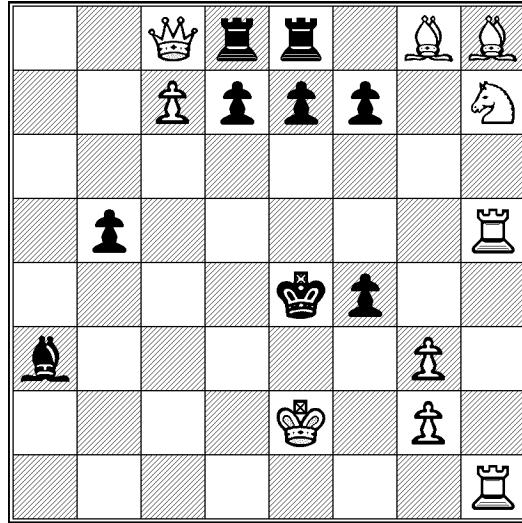


**1.Qd7!** (-) 1...dxc5 2.Bf3, 1...exd5 2.Qf5 (set 2.Qe2/Qe3), 1...e5 2.Qh3 and 1...f5 2.Sb4 with 4 thematic mates. However, the composer lays claim

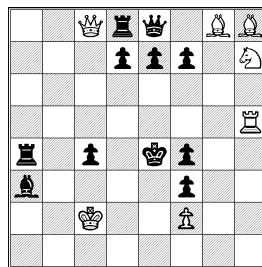


2.Be5, 1...d5 2.Qa4, 1...e5 2.Qxe5 and 1...f5 2.Sc2. The force is spread around the edges of the board in this lovely open construction. With economy and a sense of space the author has effortlessly incorporated valuable virtual play. Well done!

**10<sup>th</sup> Place No.2 Ivan Belonozhko**



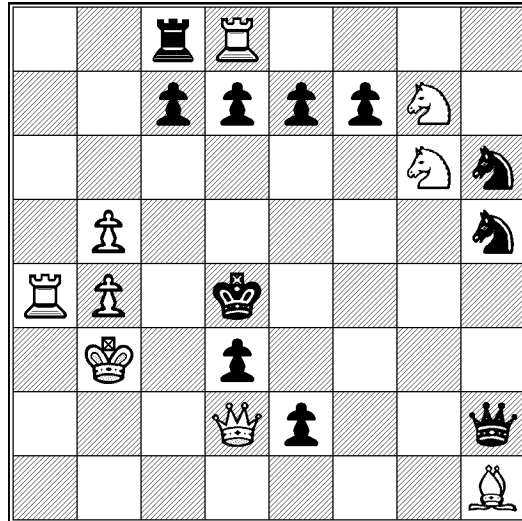
**1.Bc3!** (>2.Re5) 1...d6 2.Qf5, 1...e5 2.Sf6, 1...f6 2.Bd5 and 1...f5 2.Sg5. Also 1...f3+ 2.gxf3, 1...fxg3 2.R1h4 and 1...Bd6 2.Qb7. Here we have 4 thematic variations including two mates by wSh7 and I also appreciated 1...Bd6 2.Qb7! (2...d5??). As the composer gains experience he will try to avoid devices such as wPc7 that restrict the wQ. By-play could then be developed by utilising the wQ more fully rather than by adding wRh1. (I am not convinced that 1.Rd1? adds very much.)



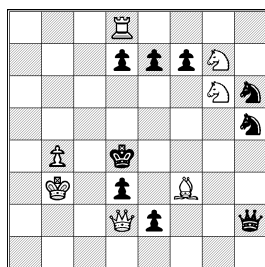
1.Bc3! Ra5 2.Qxc4



## 11<sup>th</sup> Place No.27 Anton Nasyrov

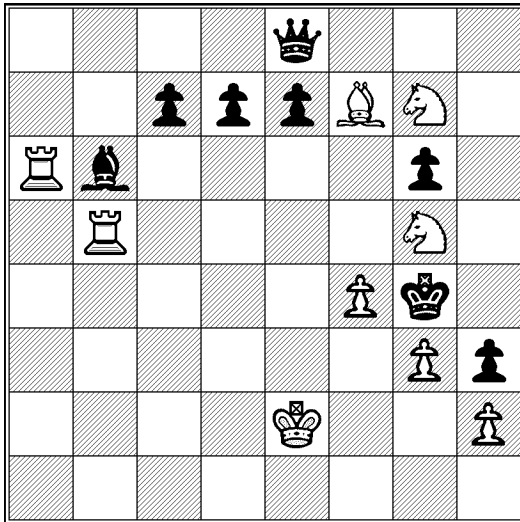


**1.Qg5!** (>2.Qc5) 1...c5 2.bxc5, 1...d5 2.Rxd5, 1...e5 2.Rxd7 and 1...f5 2.Se6. Also 1...Qd6 2.Qg1, 1...Qe5 (Qxh1/Qg2) 2.Q(x)e5 and 1...Sf5 2.Sxf5. I enjoyed this problem but, thanks to the strong set defence 1...Qxh1, it was easy to solve. As craft evolves the composer will without doubt reset wBh1 on f3 next time. I have another suggestion; the mates generated by bPd7, bPe7 and bPf7 all involve wRd8 in various capacities. This is excellent for in addition to extracting maximum value from this unit it also confers a sense of *unity* to the thematic variations. By contrast the variation generated by bPc7 has required much extra force. I would prefer to adopt a little restraint and remove this material.



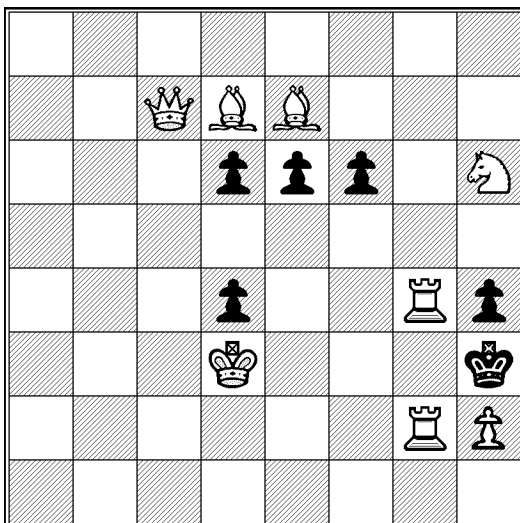
1.Qc1? Qe5!

12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> Place ea No.3 Taras Rudenko



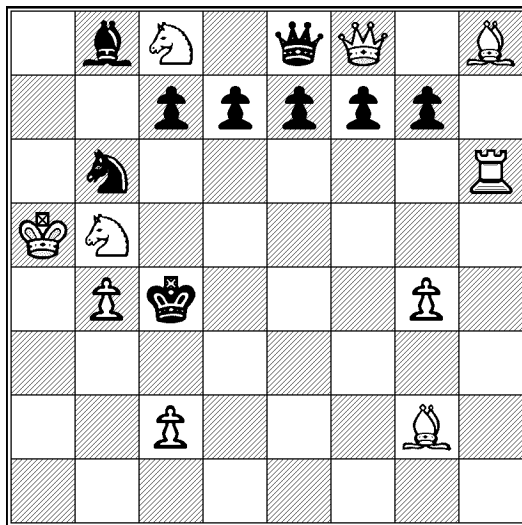
**1.Se4!** (>2.Rg5) 1...c5 2.Sf2, 1...d5 2.Be6, 1...e5 2.Sf6 and 1...Bc5 2.Rxg6. There are also a couple of tries defeated by thematic defences: 1.Sh7? (>2.Rg5) e5 2.Sf6 but 1...c5! and 1.Sf3? (>2.Rg5/2.Se5) 1...e5!

12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> Place ea No.22 Mikhail Shalashovs



Moves of bPf6 and bPd6 are not provided with mates so 1.Sf7? (-) 1...f5 2.Sg5 is logical but 1...d5! refutes. Therefore **1.Rf2!** (-) 1...f5 2.Rxh4, 1...d5 2.Rf3 and 1...e5 2.Rg3. This is how I would like to see the content presented. The composer mentions 1.Kxd4? (>2.Qc3) 1...e5+! and 1.Qxd6? (-) 1...f5! so that all 3 thematic defences defeat tries. This is true but 1.Ra2-e2? Qb7? Qc6? Qc2? Bxf6? are also defeated by 1...d5! Similarly 1.Bxd6? Bxe6? are both refuted by 1...f5! In this confusion of tries the composer's idea is likely to be lost.

**14<sup>th</sup> Place No.18 Danila Moiseev**

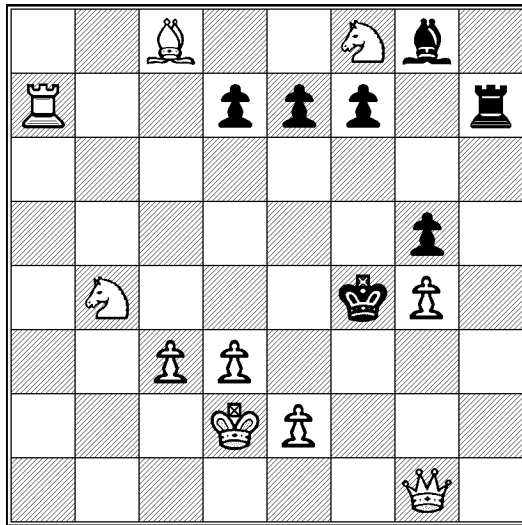


A problem where 5 adjacent pawns contribute variations cannot be overlooked. However, although this is a “single box of chessmen” diagram, two promoted bishops are decidedly unfortunate so I cannot give this a higher placement.

**1.Rh4!** (>2.g5) 1...c5 2.Sxb6, 1...d5 (Sd5) 2.Bf1, 1...e5 2.Qc5, 1...f5 2.gxf5 and 1...g5 2.Sa3.

The final 3 entries all demonstrate the 3 required variations with no frills; I see no need to separate them.

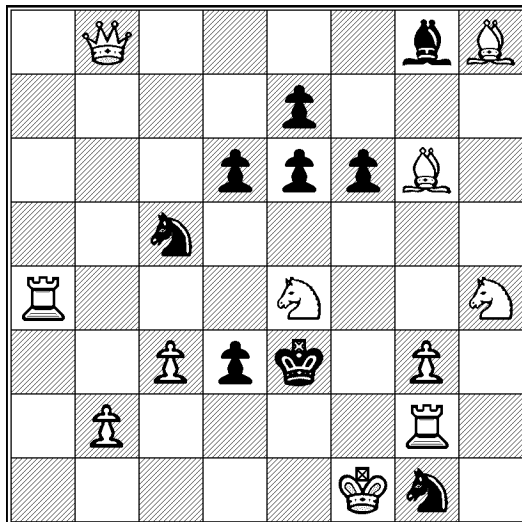
15<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> Place ea No.8 Alexandru Mihălcescu



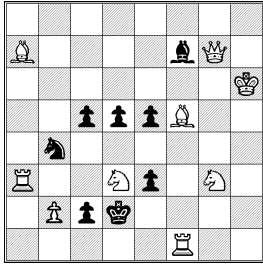
**1.Ra4!** (>2.Sc6) 1...d5 2.Qe3, 1...e5 2.Sd5, 1...f6/f5 2.Sg6 (1...Ke5 2.Qd4 as set)

Note the cook-try 1.Sd5+? Ke5 2.Qd4? Kd6!

15<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> Place ea No.21 Martin Popardovský

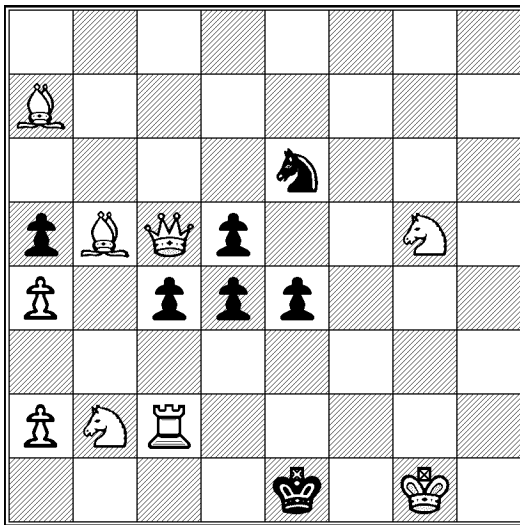


**1.Sd2!** (>2.Sc4) 1...d5 2.Qf4, 1...e5 2.Sf5 and 1...f5 (Theme A) 2.Bd4. With the wQ contributing only one mate it is worthwhile seeing if she can be given further employment:



1.Qg4? (>2.Qe2) 1...c1S 2.Qd1 but 1...Bh5!

### 15<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> Place ea No.37 Tytus Witucki



1.Qa3! (>2.Qg3) 1...c3 2.Re2, 1...d3 2.Bf2 and 1...e3 2.Sf3.

It has been a pleasure to study the work of our young composers once again – I thank you all! The theme proved difficult; certainly it was possible to produce something but it was not easy to create a truly exciting diagram. Nonetheless, the most able succeeded in their endeavour and I am pleased for them. For those who struggled, I hope that the experience proves to be valuable and that your participation in 2025 will demonstrate that you are on an upward curve! It remains only for me to thank Udo Degener for checking your problems for anticipation (fortunately there were none!) and also those mentors who have

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