

SCHACH-AKTIV 2009 HELPMATES AWARD

First of all I thank Wilfried Seehofer and Klaus Wenda for inviting me to act as judge.

The tourney attracted 36 problems (10 H#2, 15 H#>2,5-3 and 11 H#>3) of good quality. Before the ranking, some remarks only on some interesting problems which have not been awarded for various reasons (a few others not mentioned here were excluded because of weak content): no.3497: for a better and more complex presentation compare to PDB P1070422 which shows essentially the same TF idea; no.3498: a nice dual avoidance but the problem shows nothing else; no.3499: the idea is interesting but the twinning mechanism is not (the following nearly contemporary problem shows the same combination without twinning: A.Semenenko&V.Semenenko&N.Kolesnik&V.Vinokurov 2nd HM 10th JT *Orbit* 2009 White Kh1 Rh4 Rd8 Bh7 pf4; Black Kc4 Rg5 Rh5 Be5 Sd6 Sf5 pb7 f7 a6 f6 c3 e3 e2 H#3 2 sols.); no.3509 anticipated by PDB P0508459; no. 3523: substantially anticipated by PDB P1080984; no.3525: dual avoidance at B3 and exchange of place between the wSb4 and a white pawn which vacates the mating square but, besides the unbalanced motivations of the B2 and the limited possibilities for the white play, the strategy is rather pale; no.3537: I would have preferred to present only the most interesting solution (1...Bc2) since the other is not homogeneous and shows essentially the same mate; no.3561: although this elegant problem shows two marches by both Kings and the Indian theme, the strategy seems routine; no.3571: all the thematic elements are very well-known and for a better and more complex presentation of this combination compare to PDB P1071709 where the second pinned black piece is very active and not entirely static as in the present problem; no.3585: it breaks the principle of economy of time since the idea can be shown more economically only in three moves (White: Ka8 Rf2 Bb3; Black: Ke4 Qf7 Re1 Rf1 Bf4 Ba2 pc6 d6 c5 d5 g4 g3 e2 H#3 2 sols.) and on the other hand the W1 moves do not add anything interesting; no.3596: one pair of solutions in this TF problem is much more interesting and clearly superior than the other and some repetitions detract; no.3597: compare to PDB P0508473 which shows the same strategy in a much more economical position, without twinning and with the nice feature of selfblocks on the same square; no.3609: the bQ can be replaced by a bB and the logic of the pin after 1...Sxd4 is not convincing since the wSb5 has to reach the mating square through d4 in any case thus making the pin merely fortuitous (in fact the wRa4 and bQe4 can be removed by moving the bRb6 to c6 as pointed out in the solution section)—for a similar idea compare to PDB P0538772 which is superior; no.3610: it shows a typical combination of the h#2 (among many others see PDB P0548498 or even a contemporary problem by the same author: *Springaren* 2009 White Ke6 Rc1 Rb2 Be1 Bb5 pb4; Black: Kb6 Qd3 Rh5 Ra3 pa5 c5 h#2 B) -wBb5), thus breaking the principle of economy of time; no.3611: it must have been difficult to solve it but the play is not homogeneous.

1st Prize no.3549 G.Sobrecases: All the play is centred around the square f3, the focal point of the manoeuvre, and it has first to be crossed by the wBd1 and afterwards occupied by the wK. The main black actor is the pg4 which has to promote to Queen in order to block the square f6 and therefore the wK has to allow the pawn's march and after going away he comes back near the bK, just on f3, after the anti-critical move by wBd1 (3...Bh5!). The nice wK manoeuvre resembles a Rundlauf and is one of the most attractive feature of the problem. There are other interesting strategic points as well, as the mate on the square vacated by the bPg4; the same can be said about the move 1.Sc4 which is a surprising tempo move, although merely technical as the presence of the bSa4, both providing soundness (a good example of how turning a difficulty in an opportunity to show additional strategy). A truly elegant problem.

2nd Prize no.3548 C. Jones: The expected exchange of functions between the two masked white batteries leads to a well engineered and homogeneous manoeuvre based on interchanged roles also of the black pieces which occupy the battery lines; in fact, the piece which remains stationary in one phase is captured at W1 by the rear piece of the white battery in order to control the bK's field and

the other performs a selfblock at B3 and *vice versa* in the other solution. But what is more interesting is the play of opening of a black and white line at the B1 moves, followed by the sacrifice of a black piece in order to activate the white battery; the W2 moves (2...Tc4! and 2..Bg6!), played along the battery line with an accessory FML effect, are particularly nice and their aim is to avoid the black control on the rear piece of the white battery. Strategically perfect.

3rd Prize no. 3613 P.A.Petkov : Another very interesting strategic problem whose elements make what seems an original combination. The capture of one of the two halfpinned black pawns in turn leads to pin mates and this strategy is beautifully associated with the active unpins of the wQ. The line openings by the two black pieces in turn are visually attractive but it is a pity that this thematic motif does not lead to the dual avoidance (based on the fact that the wrong line is not opened---the bQ is not able to block b7 similarly to the bR which instead can block also the square b6) but this seems unavoidable. A rich and nice problem as a whole.

1st HM no.3572 M.McDowell: In a Meredith position, the author has achieved what seems hopefully a novel combination of known thematic motifs. The most interesting feature is the prospective anticipatory selfpin of the bQ, visible only at the very end of the solutions, and leading to the exchange of functions between the thematic white pieces. The one-two steps of the wPe2 is a visually attractive, and economic too, device for the control of the bK's field, which fits well with the preceding play; the model mates, naturally resulting from this idea, are a nice addition.

2nd HM no. 3547 F.Simoni: The initial unpinnings are followed by ambushes in such a way that the wQ and wB interchange their functions (pinning the Qc4 or guarding the bK's field); all that leads to an excellent dual avoidance (1.Sd7 Qe4? and 1.Be5 Bxc6?) based on the control of the mating square at B1. The combination is well-known, and already shown also by the author (compare to his 2nd Pr. *StrateGems* 2008 White Ka6 Qa5 Rb5 Sc6 Sf7 pf3 g3; Black Kf5 Qh4 Rd5 Ra2 Bc5 Bf1 Se6 Sf2 h#2 2 sols.), but what seems novel in this context is the fact that the white pieces hide themselves behind two different white ones placed on two different lines (here two Knights which by the way exchange their functions too). The construction is good and the only blemish is the rather static pin (which the predecessor has cleverly avoided) but compensated by the complex strategy.

3rd HM no.3511 R.Fiebig: The merit of this problem is its strategy shown in miniature. The white Rundlauf, though a very well explored theme, is the most interesting motif, associated here with the nice feature of the wRc6 visiting two times the square c1 (at W1 and at the mating move); from the constructional point of view, one of the secrets of this very economic position is the bQg6, whose capture, though rather violent, is an acceptable price to pay. The other interesting motif is the Kniest theme which is often associated with the Rundlauf (in this regard another clever constructional device is the bBa1).

1st Commendation no.3559 F.Abdurahmanovic (after Garai): A highly strategic problem with many interesting motifs. The remote blocks at B1 allow white line opening and critical white moves; the latter motif is the basis of the anticipatory selfpins performed by one of the thematic black Knights in turn, showing nice Follow-My-Leader effects as well; the exchange of functions of all the thematic pieces is perfect. This combination is very attractive but also difficult to achieve in an ideal rendering and, although the present problem is slightly better in comparison to its predecessor (PDB P1080836), it still shows unbalanced motivation for the W1 moves, otherwise it could have been ranked higher.

2nd Commendation no. 3612 R.Fiebig: Another interesting wR Rundlauf. The motivation of the wR's route is not only to allow the bK can reach the square e8 but also to capture a black piece in

order to open the line for a blocking black piece; this latter manoeuvre is interestingly fixed by the potential alternative route for the bRh1 (Rh7?) which fails because of the black selfblocks on f7. This strategy is very well-known but what is much rarer in this context is the interesting and visually attractive tempo move 4...Td1! (note that the bQ controls a2 from f7, thus assuring the uniqueness of the tempo move).

3rd Commendation no.3584 Ž.Janevski: The anticipatory selfpins performed by the bQ are followed by wPc2's one-two steps which enhance this solid and homogeneous presentation. The mates occur on the same square which has been vacated by Black at B1 (the so-called delayed Follow-My-Leader effect), thus leading to the exchange of function between the wRf2 and wBh6. All the thematic motifs and even their combination are well-known (as far as I know, the Letzform is PDB P0537824) and moreover the bRg2 can be replaced by a black pawn.

4th Commendation no.3485 E.Schulze: Except for the first white move, which is undoubtedly very crude, the rest of the play is attractive and based on black and white switchbacks: the one by the WB is motivated by the need to allow the BBg1 can block the square d5 and in order to do so Black must parry a check by the BR's short switchback (3.Rd5! and 5.Rc5).

5th Commendation no. 3486 S.Baier & M.Degenkolbe: An interesting example of a new type of Indian theme, called by the authors "floating Indian" (see their article in *Orbit* July 2009) and based on castling and here combined with a very spectacular switchback by the mating piece. There is also additional good play, especially the fact that the wK has to make a detour to reach d4 because of a check and thus a tempo move (4...Kf4!) emerges; it is also interesting 4.Kd7? which fails because the Ra8 guards the mating square. This problem would have been placed much higher but all the thematic elements of the Indian and even the selfblocks by the black Rook and Bishop are identical to S.Baier & M.Degenkolbe *Phénix* 2008 (White Kf1 Bd8; Black Ke8 Qh6 Ra8 Rg2 Bb8 Sb1 Sc1 pa7 b7 c6 d6 d4 f3 g3 f2 h#7,5); on the other hand the thematic motif of distinction is the detour of the wK which is worth a place in the award. From the constructional point of view, the B1 move is unthematic although it shows a good choice for the bS's moves (compare to no.6 of the aforementioned article which shows the same strategy in 6,5 moves); moreover I would have preferred to move the BSb1 to a2 in order to have a pure route for the BR (here the Rg2 has to pass from g5 in any case).

6th Commendation no.3524 A.Onkoud: A rather symmetric but neat interpretation of the Zilahi with annihilations but what is more interesting are the mutual captures between the thematic black and white pieces and the Follow-My-Leader effects on the squares vacated by the mating Knights in turn.

7th Commendation no.3595 M.Nieroba: Although the white play (switchbacks and exchange of function between the wR and wB and the relevant bK's flights) is well-known (compare to P0583059 or P1003556), the novel feature seems in this context the opening of a black line for the bQ which sacrifices herself on the mating square.

Mario Parrinello
International Judge of the FIDE
for chess composition
June 2010