

Variant Chess

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Volume Six

With this issue of *Variant Chess* we start Volume 6. But with a new beginning we also have an ending. I'm sorry to say that Ronald Turnbull has decided to give up the Problem Pages and turn to other things. He deserves our thanks for all the work he has put into his column, and the uniformly high standards he maintained. He even coaxed, cajoled and tutored me into producing a fairy problem. Remarkable!

The question then arose as to whether we should seek to appoint a successor. I had no objection to this, despite my own limited experience of, and interest in, this genre; I don't see it as my function to impose my own tastes on our readers, a number of whom are problemists. Nevertheless, in view of the difficulty in finding a suitable replacement, and the existence of other outlets for fairy problems, it was decided not to continue with the Problem Pages. After some discussion the general view was that we should concentrate on the variant game - an area that is not otherwise well served.

I know at least one subscriber will be disappointed by this decision, and it seems to me that it would be perverse to deny our subscribers the opportunity to publish in *Variant Chess* if they wanted to. But, having little knowledge of the field, I can only operate as a faithful copyist.

Ivan Dirmeik sent me a copy of an e-mail from Alessandro Castelli. It seems that AISE stopped all activities in 2000 and Eteroscacco ceased publication. This demise was caused by the rise of real-time Internet play at the expense of Postal Chess. Still, *The Chess Variant Pages* and *Abstract Games* flourish.

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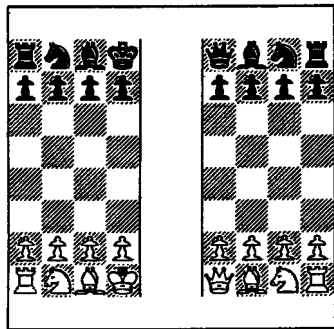
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CIRCULAR CHESS WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP 2002

by John Beasley

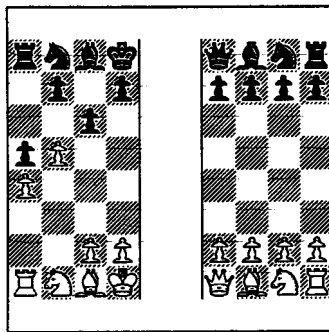
The most recent Circular Chess World Championship at Lincoln saw a new sponsor in the Duke William Hotel, and a new champion in young square-board master David Howell. David scored a perfect 5 out of 5, half a point ahead of 2000 champion Herman Kok with last year's winner Francis Bowers a little further back. Sadly, neither Paul Byway nor myself could be present, but Rob Stevens has sent us a couple of games for VC.



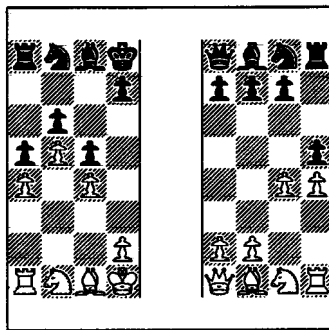
A brief reminder of the rules. The board consists of four concentric rings as shown diagrammatically above (imagine the a/h files joined end to end to form a 16-square ring, the b/g files joined similarly, and so on); promotion is on the eighth rank as usual; no castling, no *en passant*. Note that a1 is *light* and that the kings start on d1/d8. For the convenience of readers playing through the games on an ordinary square board, "round the end" moves and checks are starred ("*" is a move round the end, "+*" a check round the end). If you don't have an ancient board that has split into two halves, set up an ordinary board at right angles to the normal direction, and put a screen down the middle. Better still, get one of the proper wooden boards, which are rather nice.

Game 1 was between Rob Stevens (White) and Eamonn Hunt. Both normally come in the upper half of the field, and Rob actually won the event in its first year. Notes by myself, criticism welcomed.

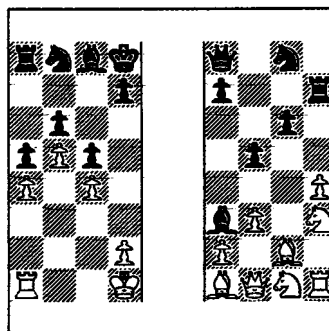
1.b2-b4 c7-c6 2.a2-a4 a7-a5 3.b4-b5:



3...c6-c5. I find this curious. I would automatically have played 3...c6xb5 4.a4xb5 b7-b6, when I have a protected passed pawn for the ending and my half-open c/f ring will surely be of more use than his solidly blocked a/h ring. 4.c2-c4 b7-b6 5.g2-g4 h7-h6 6.h2-h4 h6-h5:



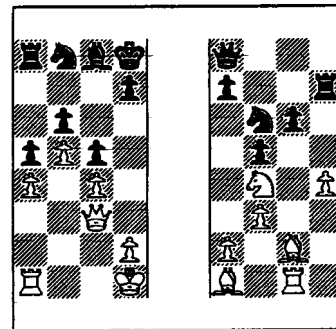
7.g4xh5. Another move I find curious. It seems to leave White with a very weak h-pawn, and no obvious compensation. 7...Rh8xh5 8.f2-f3 f7-f5. And this is surely wrong. Black's natural play is to set a block of granite on the b/g ring by g7-g6, and then to try and exploit the isolated h-pawn. 9.Nb1-f2* Rh5-h7 10.Bf1-g2 g7-g6 11.Qe1-f1 Bf8-h6 12.Bc1-e1* Bh6-e3 13.Nf2-h3:



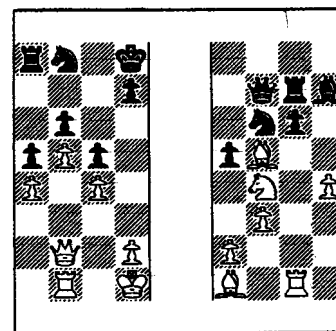
13...Be3xg1.

One of the issues still unresolved in this game is whether B for N is usually a good swap or a bad one. Both pieces

are appreciably weaker than in normal chess, whereas the rook is appreciably stronger, but how they continue to relate to each other is less clear. This said, during a pre-tournament practice session with David Howell, I offered him two pieces for a rook with an appropriate warning; he accepted them, and proceeded to win handsomely. 14.Rh1xg1 Nb8-f7* 15.Nh3-f4 Nf7-b8* 16.Qf1-c3* Ng8-f6:



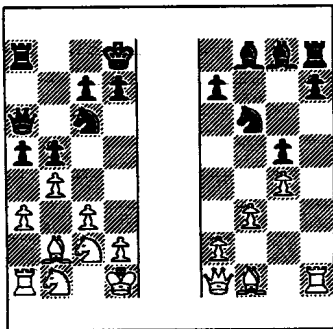
17.Bg2-h3. White unmask his artillery on the b/g ring, and Black's men are so poorly placed that he breaks right through. 17...Rh7-g7 18.Ra1-b1. Bh3xf5 at once would seem to be playable; what have I missed? 18...Bc8-h7* 19.Qc3-b2 Qe8-f7. Black lets it happen anyway. 20.Bh3xf5 e7-e5:



21.Bf5xg6 Bh7xg6 22.Rg1xg6 Rg7xg6 23.Nf4xg6. White is two pawns ahead with full command of the b/g ring and the rest is routine. 23...Qf7-e6 24.f3-f4 Qe6-h3+* 25.Kd1-c2 Qh3-h2+* 26.Be1-c1* Qh2xe2 27.Ng6xe5 Qe2-f1 28.Rb1xb8+ Ra8xb8 29.Qb2xb8+ Kd8-e8* 30.Qb8-g6+ Ke8-d8* 31.Qg6xf6 Qf1-h1+* (a last hope, but perpetual check there isn't) 32.Kc2-c3 Qh1-a1+* 33 Bc1-b2 Qa1-f2+* 34.Kc3-b3 d7-d5 35.Ne5-f7+* Kd8-d7 36.Qf6-e7+* Kd7-c7 37.Qe7-b8+* Kc7-d7 38.Qb8-d8 mate.

Game 2 featured Rob with Black against John Kidals. Notes in quotation marks are by Rob, slightly edited to fit the present context, and the question marks by some moves are also Rob's. "Neither player is in the superstar class but can be quite solid. Rob tends to thrash around tactically before spotting some obscure sneaky trick, sometimes legal, to save the day and John is learning frighteningly quickly."

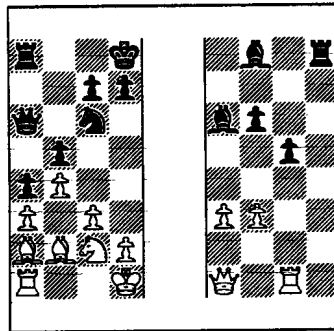
1.g2-g4 g7-g5 2.f2-f3 b7-b5. "A standard sort of opening between these players. g2-g4 to be followed by h2-h4 is a common aggressive start especially for a player who prefers a one sided contest. Rob likes to open both sides and can sometimes get an early release of the queen to back up an attack on the other flank." 3.h2-h4 f7-f6 4.h4xg5 f6xg5 5.b2-b4 Nb8-c6 6.c2-c3 a7-a5 7.a2-a3 Ng8-f6 8.Ng1-c2* Bc8-g8* 9.Bc1-b2 Qe8-a6*:



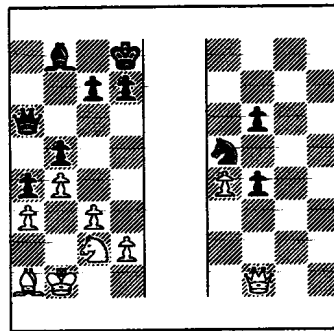
"Perhaps preparing for an a-pawn advance? The mobilisation of the queen to the 'other side' as backup is often missed, players trapped into looking at single sides of the board." Indeed so, and the experts think that our presentation of diagrams in side-by-side halves adds to the problem, but the production complications of inserting graphics showing "proper" circular boards have so far deterred us. And there are arguments both ways, because in some positions the straightened-out presentation in two halves seems easier to follow.

10.Nb1-f2* h7-h5 11.Bf1-a2*. "John resists the temptation to take, further advance can be blocked and perhaps a foray onto d5 with a pinned knight (often favoured over bishops) an option. Has he missed the purpose of the queen move?" 11...h5xg4 12.Rh1-g1 a5-a4? 13.Nf2xg4 Bg8-e6

14.Ng4xf6 e7xf6 15.e2-e3?

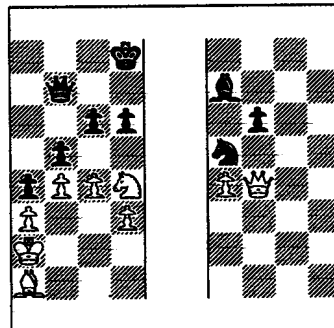


15...Rh8xa1+ 16.Bb2xa1 Be6-h3+ 17.Ba2-f1* Bh3xf1+ 18.Kd1xf1* Nc6-b8. "With no way through on the king flank a possible long range gallop could yield results. A tempting fork on g3 sparking this thought." The "king flank" is on the left as seen by White, the opposite side from normal chess. 19.e3-e4 Nb8-f7* 20.Kf1-b1* Nf7-e5 21.Qe1-f1 Ra8-b8 22.f3-f4 g5xf4 23 Rg1xb8+ Bf8xb8*:



"Looks like Rob has done his normal transformation of position from promising to poor by neglecting the pawns."

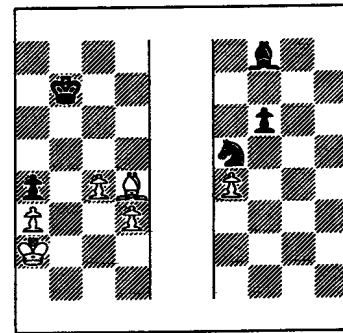
24.Qf1xf4 Bb8-e7* 25.Nc2-d4 c7-c6 26.d2-d3 d7-d6 27.c3-c4 Qa6-b7+* 28.Kb1-a2??



"Rob breaks into a cold sweat. If it were not for the knight on d4 it is checkmate next go. Has John noticed?" 28...c6-c5 29.b4xc5 d6xc5 30.Qf4-h6+* Be7-f8 31.Qh6-a5*+.

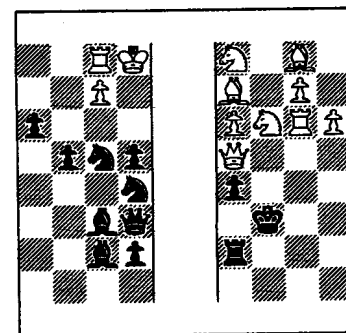
"No." 31...Kd8-c8 32.Nd4xb5 Qb7-b3* mate.

I mock not, because I have made worse mistakes, but if I had spotted the imminent mate I might have tried 32.Qa5xb5. White loses a knight, but he gets two pawns for it, and 32...c5xd4 33.Qb5xb7+ Kc8xb7 34.Ba1xd4 gives the position below:



Black may be a piece up, but his victory is by no means assured. He has only two pawns left, and if White can capture or exchange one of them he can afford to sacrifice his bishop for the other, king, bishop, and knight cannot force mate against a bare king on a circular board.

Imitation is *not* the sincerest form of flattery; plagiarism is. The Lincoln group produces a magazine/newsletter called "Chessnuts", and the most recent issue gives the following:



No source is quoted, but I suspect that this is either a game position or a modification of one. At any rate, the stipulation is "Black to move and wreak unstoppable havoc and decimate the board without riposte", which seems an eminently reasonable demand. Answer on page 13.

Next year's event is scheduled for Sunday 18 May 2003. Details from chessnuttr@aol.com, or from the chief organizational person at 210 Burton Road, Lincoln LN1 3TX.

ENDINGS WITH GRASSHOPPERS, LIONS, AND "CHINESE" PIECES

Work by Václav Kotesovec, reported by John Beasley

25 years ago, Václav Kotesovec wrote an article in *feenschach* in which he examined some endings involving grasshoppers. He recently returned to the attack with a modern computer, and he reported his results in the September issue of the Bratislava chess composition journal *Pat a mat* (issue 38, pages 206-8) and on his web site (<http://web.telecom.cz/vaclav.kotesovec>). He has kindly given us permission to report some of them in *VC*.

Grasshoppers

The grasshopper moves on queen lines, but only when the line is obstructed; it travels along the line until it meets an obstruction, hops over it, and lands on the square beyond. Suppose grasshoppers for queens in the normal game array; then 1.Gd1-b3/d3/f3 are all possible, and Gd1-f3 threatens Gxa8 and Gxf8. Better for actual play is Boyer's layout (*Encyclopedia of Chess Variants*, page 130), where the pawns are placed on row 3 (no double-step initial move) and there is a line of grasshoppers across row 2. The grasshopper is a weak piece which gets weaker as the game goes on, and no harm is done by having several of them.

As regards the ending, Václav's results are as follows.

- Against a bare king, the minimum numbers of pieces needed to force mate are K+4G, K+N+2G, K+B+2G, K+2N+G, and K+2B+G (same-square bishops). Weaker forces may be able to give mate (mating positions can be constructed with K+3G, K+N+G, and K+B+G), but they cannot force mate against an unwilling opponent.
- Against king and grasshopper, K+2N can force mate, and so can the conventional winning forces against a bare king (K+Q, K+R, K+2B with unlike bishops, K+B+N).
- Against king and two grasshoppers, K+Q can force mate, but K+R cannot.
- K+Q can also force mate against king, knight, and grasshopper and against king, bishop, and grasshopper, but the ending of K+Q against king, rook, and grasshopper is not easily characterized.

All these results are for the 8x8 board.

Václav showed K+4G v K to be won in 1977 (the key is that a tight square of grasshoppers is self-defending, because the enemy king cannot approach), and the hardest case against a bare king is K+N+2G. He gives an example.

Ka1 Nb1 Ga2 Gb2 - Kd4: 1.Gc2 Kd3 2.Na3 Kd4 3.Ka2 Kc3 4.Gc4 Kb4 5.Gb5 Kc3 6.Gc2 Kb4 7.Kb2 Ka4 8.Gb1 Kb4 9.Gd3 Kc5 10.Kc3 Kd5 11.Nb5 Kc5 12.Nd4 Kd6 13.Kc4 Ke5 14.Gc5 Kd6 15.Gc3 Ke7 16.Kd5 Kf6 17.Ge3 Kg5 18.Ke5 Kg6 19.Gc3 Kf7 20.Nf5 Ke8 21.Ke6 Kd8 22.Nd4 Kc7 23.Ge5 Kd8 24.Nb5 Kc8 25.Ke7 Kb7 26.Kd6 Kb8 27.Gd7 Kc8 28.Gc7 Kd8 29.Nd4 Ke8 30.Ge7 Kf8 31.Nf5 Kg8 32.Ke5 Kf8 33.Ke6 Ke8 34.Ng7+ Kd8 35.Kd6 Kc8 36.Kc6 Kb8 37.Ne6 Ka7 38.Nc5 Kb8 39.Nb7

Ka8 40.Gc7 Kb8 41.Nd6 Ka7 42.Kb5 Kb8 43.Ge5 Ka7-44.Ga4 Kb8 45.Gc6 Ka7 46.Ka5 Ka8 47.Ka6 Kb8 48.Kb6 Ka8 49.Ne8 Kb8 50.Nc7 mate.

Lions

The lion is like the grasshopper except that it can carry on beyond the hurdle; it is not forced to stop on the square immediately beyond.

- Against a bare king, the minimal combination that can force mate is K+3L.
- If lions and grasshoppers are mixed, K+L+2G suffice. Václav gives examples of both, though the win with K+L+2G is clearly harder than that with K+3L.

Kb2 Ga1 Gb1 Lion a2 - Kc4: 1.Gc3 Kd5 2.Kb3+ Kc6 3.Gb4 Kc5 4.Gb2 Kd6 5.Kc4 Ke5 6.Gd4+ Kd6 7.Ld5+ Ke6 8.Gc5 Kd7 9.Lb3 Kc6 10.Gb4 Kd7 11.Kd5 Ke7 12.Le6 Kf6 13.Lc4 Kg5 14.Gd4 Kf6 15.Ge5+ Kf5 16.Kd6 Kg6 17.Ke6 Kg5 18.Gc3 Kg6 19.Gc5 Kg5 20.Ge3 Kg6 21.Lf4 Kh5 22.Kf5 Kh4 23.Gg5 Kg3 24.Lf6 Kh2 25.Kf4 Kg1 26.Gg4 Kg2 27.Gg3+ Kg1 28.Kf3 Kh2 29.Lf2 Kh3 30.Kf4 Kh2 31.Lf5 Kh1 32.Ke3 Kg1 33.Kf3 Kh2 34.Kf2 Kh1 35.Ge6 Kh2 36.Ld7 Kh1 37.Lg4 Kh2 38.Kf3 Kh1 39.Ke2 Kh2 40.Kf2 Kh1 41.Gh3 Kh2 42.Gf3 Kh1 43.Ld1 Kh2 44.Lh5 Kh1 45.Gh3 mate.

"Chinese" pieces

These are analogues of the XiangQi cannon. The Pao is exactly the same as the cannon (it moves along rook lines, but captures only if there is one man between it and its target), and the Vao and Leo are the equivalents on bishop and queen lines.

- Against a bare king, K+2Le and K+3Pa can force mate, but K+4Va cannot.
- With mixed forces, K+Le+Pa, K+Le+Va, K+2Pa+Va, and K+Pa+2Va all suffice, the last case even if the Vaos run on squares of the same colour.

The hardest cases appear to be K+Le+Va and K+Pa+2Va (same colour).

Kb1 Leo a1 Vao a2 - Kb3: 1.Lb2 Ka3 2.Vc4 Kb4 3.Vf1 Kc3 4.Kc1 Kb3 5.Le5 Kc4 6.Kd2 Kd5 7.Lh5 Ke4 8.Ld1 Kf4 9.Kd3 Ke5 10.Ke3 Kd5 11.Ve2 Ke6 12.Ke4 Kd6 13.Ld2 Ke7 14.Ke5 Kd7 15.Ld1 Kc6 16.Kd4 Kb5 17.Kc3 Kc6 18.Vd3 Kc7 19.Kc4 Kc6 20.Ld2 Kb7 21.Kb5 Kc7 22.Kc5 Kb7 23.Lc3 Ka6 24.Kb4 Kb7 25.Vc4 Kb6 26.Lc2 Ka7 27.Ka5 Kb7 28.Kb5 Ka7 29.Lb3 Ka8 30.Ka6 Kb8 31.Lc2 Ka8 32.Kb6 Kb8 33.Lc3 Ka8 34.Lh8 Kb8 35.Vg8 mate.

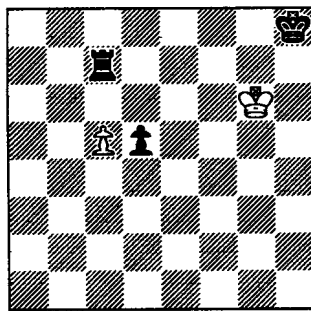
Kb1 Pao a2 Vao a1 Vao b2 - Ka4: 1.Vb2-c3 Kb3 2.Pb2 Kc4 3.Kc2 Kd4 4.Pb3+ Ke4 5.Kd2 Kd5 6.Kd3 Ke6 7.Kc4 Kf5 8.Vc3-d4 Kf4 9.Va1-c3 Ke4 10.Kc5 Kf5 11.Kd5 Kg4 12.Ke5 Kg5 13.Pb4 Kg6 14.Ke6 Kg5 15.Pc4 Kg6 16.Vd4-e5 Kh5 17.Vc3-d4 Kg5 18.Pb4 Kh6 19.Kf5 Kh7 20.Kf6 Kg8 21.Vd4-e3 Kh7 22.Kf7 Kh6 23.Pb5 Kh7 24.Ve5-f4 Kh8 25.Vf4-h6 Kh7 26.Pg5 Kh8 27.Ph5 mate.

Václav's web site gives a great deal more, including numerical tables and further specimen wins.

A FEW PROBLEMS BY RONALD TURNBULL

by John Beasley

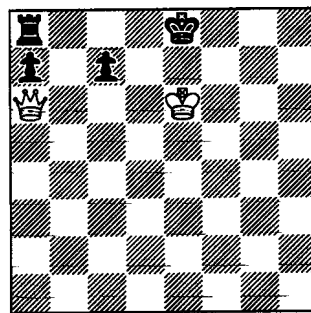
Although *VC* will in future be leaving the problem field to the specialist magazines, we should not go away without paying a brief tribute to Ronald. To compose a run-of-the-mill chess problem is not vastly difficult; to compose a genuinely good one, witty, paradoxical, and entertaining, is a very different matter, and Ronald has succeeded more frequently than most. Several of his problems have already appeared in *VC*, as originals or in quotation (readers will remember the Alice retro masterpiece I quoted in *VC* 32); here are six more.



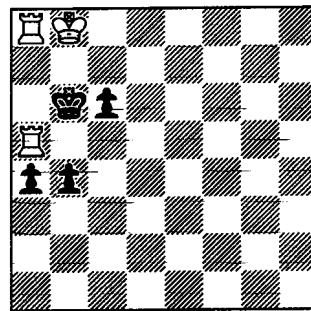
1 - Maxi, mate in 3, b) wKh6

In 1 (*The Problemist* 1996), Black must always play his longest legal move. Part a) is easy: 1.c6 Rh7 2.c7 Rh1 3.c8Q. This doesn't work in b), but a retro trick comes to our aid: Black's last move must have been ...d7-d5, else he would have had a longer alternative, so 1.c5xd6 is available (1...Rc1 2.c7 Rc8 3.dc8Q). Why not this in a)? Because Black might have played ...Kg8xQ/Rh8 to get out of check; not so in b), when ...Kf7 would have been longer.

2 was shown at a BCPS meeting in 1996. Part a) is a famous two-mover by Sam Loyd. Black's last move must have been with K or R, so 1...0-0 is illegal and 1.Qa1 forces mate in 2. In Kamikaze, captor and victim both vanish, so Black's last move might have been a capture. Yes, but wait: the rule doesn't apply to kings, and Black must have made two king captures to unbalance the forces. So he *still* can't castle, and 1.Qa1 still solves.

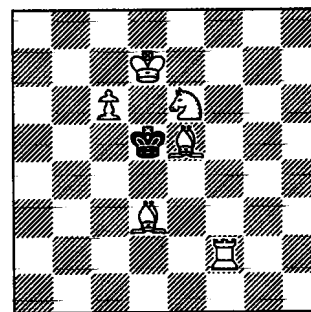


2 - Mate in 2, b) Kamikaze



3 - Kōko, mate in 3

A move in *Kölnische Kontakt* is legal only if it places a man next to an occupied square. So in 3 (*The Problemist* 1999) the obvious 1.R8a6 is *not* mate because Black simply replies 1...Kxa6 (2.Rxa6 is illegal). So what can we do instead? Answers from here forward are on page 15.

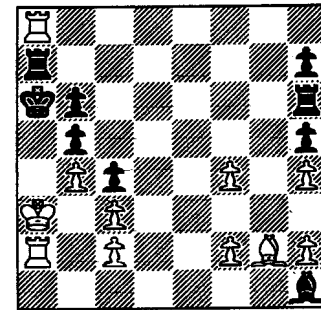


4 - Antipodean Circe, mate in 2 b) - d) all one square S/SW/W

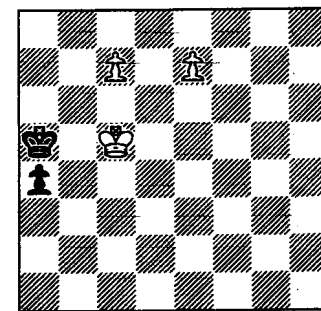
In Antipodean Circe, a captured man reappears on the (4,4) square. Thus in 4 (*Comm The Problemist* 1995), 1...Kxe5 is at present illegal because the bishop reappears on a1.

The examples so far show Ronald's impish humour in lightweight vein. The remaining two are heavier metal. With Sentinels, a move from a square

on the 2nd to 7th ranks leaves a pawn of its own colour behind it, unless all eight are already on the board. So in 5 (3 Pr *Problemist Supplement Theme Ty* 1999), 1.Kb2 is not mate because it leaves a White pawn on a3. White can try 1.f5 (+wPf4), when 2.Kb2 is indeed mate because all eight White pawns are now on the board, but 1...Bxg2 leaves b7 undefended. All right, 1.Bf3/e4/d5 (+wPg2), and the new pawn shields wB; but Black has 1...Bxg2 taking it off again...



5 - Sentinels, mate in 6



6 - Isardam, selfmate in 5

In Isardam, a move which would leave two like men (not kings) attacking each other is illegal. Thus in 6 (with Stephen Emmerson, *phénix* 1999), 1.c8Q a3 2.e8Q a2 3.Qa8+ is *not* mate because Black has 3...a1Q; now 4.Qxa5 is illegal, because it would leave the two queens attacking each other. Play on from here.

Ronald has now joined the ranks of those, dating back at least to Auguste d'Orville in the 1840s, who composed chess problems of the highest quality for a number of years and then directed their talents elsewhere. We wish him well, and should he ever return to chess we shall be delighted to welcome him back.

XIANGQI

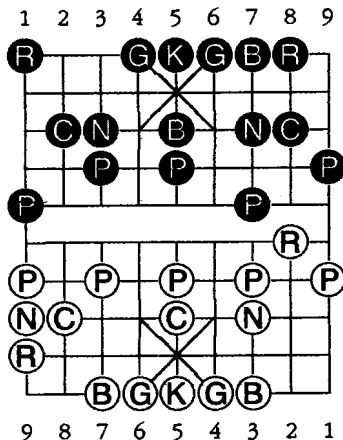
by C. K. Lai

The year 2002 UK XiangQi Championship was held on Sunday 11th of August in London, the venue being the same as last year. The tournament was highly competitive and, as usual, of the highest standard. It consisted of 5 rounds and the rate of play was 60 minutes per player per game.

I was pleased to secure some few games from that day, to reflect some of the atmosphere of the Championship. It was a pity that most of the games went unrecorded. Here is my second round game with my old friend Peter Wood. I played Black.

Red P.Wood Black C.K.Lai

- | | | |
|----|------|------|
| 1. | C2=5 | N8+7 |
| 2. | N2+3 | R9=8 |
| 3. | R1=2 | N2+3 |
| 4. | N8+9 | P1+1 |
| 5. | R2+4 | P7+1 |
| 6. | R9+1 | B3+5 |

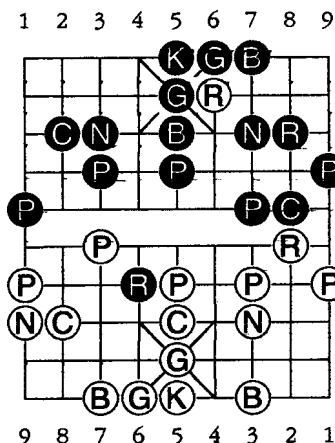


Black has a strong central defence, with both knights giving the centre pawn solid support. On the other hand both of the Red knights are unable to move forward, and this looks like a long term problem. After six moves Black has achieved at least equality.

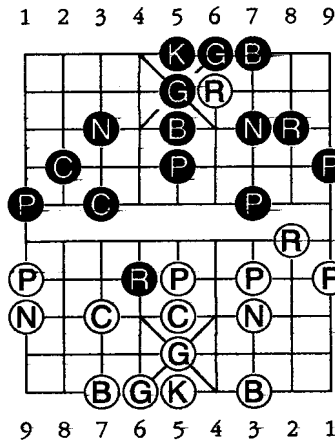
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|-----|------|------|
| 7. | R9=4 | C8+2 |
| 8. | R4+6 | R8+2 |
| 9. | P7+1 | G4+5 |
| 10. | R4+1 | R1=4 |
| 11. | G4+5 | R4+6 |

Black threatens the edge pawn, increasing the pressure on Red's left hand side, with the isolated back rank

bishop as a major target.



- | | | |
|-----|------|------|
| 12. | C8=7 | C2-1 |
| 13. | R4-2 | C2+2 |
| 14. | R4+2 | P3+1 |
| 15. | P7+1 | C8=3 |



- | | | |
|-----|------|------|
| 16. | C7+5 | R8+3 |
|-----|------|------|

The situation was very complicated. Red may have missed this trick which loses the 2nd file rook by force. From now on Red is unable to stop the oncoming flood which rushes headlong with great destruction.

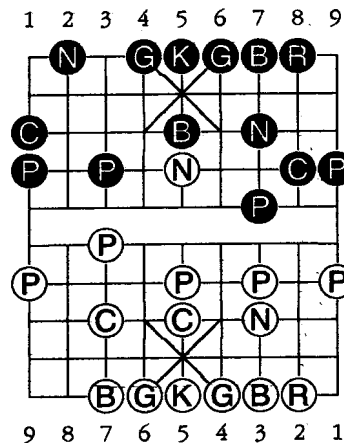
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|-----|------|------------|
| 17. | C7=3 | R4=3 |
| 18. | K5=4 | C3+5 |
| 19. | K4+1 | R8+3 |
| 20. | K4+1 | C2+4 |
| 21. | C5+4 | C3-2 (0-1) |

In the 7th round my opponent was Richard Quan who is well acquainted with me, for we used to play practice games in London from time to time.

Red R. Quan Black C.K.Lai

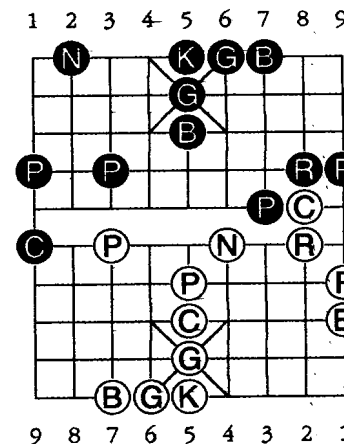
- | | | |
|----|------|------|
| 1. | C2=5 | N8+7 |
| 2. | N2+3 | R9=8 |
| 3. | R1=2 | P7+1 |

- | | | |
|-----|------|------|
| 4. | P7+1 | N2+3 |
| 5. | N8+7 | C8+2 |
| 6. | N7+6 | B3+5 |
| 7. | C8=7 | C8-1 |
| 8. | R9=8 | R1=2 |
| 9. | R8+6 | C2=1 |
| 10. | R8+3 | N3-2 |
| 11. | N6+5 | |



With the text move Red wins the central pawn. Now the natural move 11. ...N7+5 exchanging knights should be played, but for some unexplained reason Black chooses a losing move!

- | | | |
|-----|------|-------|
| 11. | .. | G4+5? |
| 12. | N5+3 | C1=7 |
| 13. | R2+4 | C7+4 |
| 14. | B3+1 | C7=1 |
| 15. | C7-1 | C1-2 |
| 16. | C7=2 | C8+1 |
| 17. | N3+4 | R8+3 |
| 18. | C2+4 | C1+1 |
| 19. | G4+5 | P3+1? |



This move was played under the impression that the Red knight cannot escape capture! But Red proves the thinking to be wrong.

- | | | |
|-----|------|------|
| 20. | P5+1 | P3+1 |
| 21. | N4+5 | P3=4 |

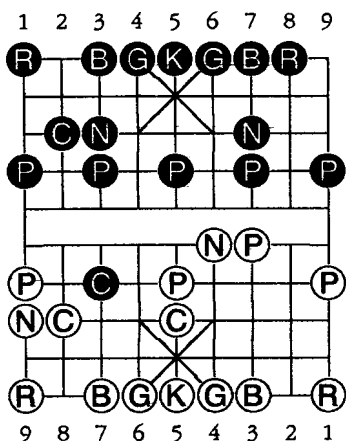
- 22. N5+3 C1=5
- 23. K5=4 N2+4
- 24. C5=2 R8=7
- 25. C-=3 R7=8

Some dozen more moves were played. Red won in the end as Black was a whole piece down.

Here is an interesting game from round 3, well conducted by Frank Pisani until he choked up when victory was in sight!

Red Huang Xin Black F. Pisani

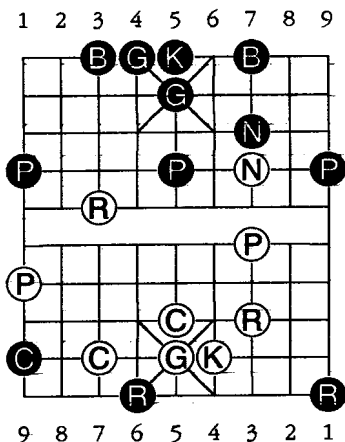
- 1. C2=5 N2+3
- 2. N2+3 N8+7
- 3. P3+1 R9=8
- 4. N8+9 C8+4
- 5. N3+4 C8=3



- 6. N4+3 R8+3
- 7. C5=3 R8+3
- 8. C8=6 R8=5
- 9. B3+5 C3-1
- 10. R9=8 R1=2
- 11. R8+6 C3=5
- 12. G4+5 P3+1
- 13. R8=7 C2+5
- 14. R7+1 C2=5
- 15. B7+5 C5+2
- 16. K5=4 R5=6
- 17. C3=4 C5=1
- 18. K4+1 C1+1
- 19. C6-1 R2+7
- 20. R1+2 R2-2
- 21. R1=3 R6=9
- 22. R7-2 R2=4
- 23. C6=7 R9+2
- 24. K4-1 R9+1
- 25. K4+1 R4+4
- 26. C4=5 G6+5?

Black's 26th move destroyed all the previous good work, for not only was

26. ... R9=6 checkmate, but now the 3rd file back rank bishop is in danger (checkmate in one!).



- 27. K4+1 C1-1

From here on Frank lost his way in trying to press home for the full point, and Huang in the end won the game due to material advantage.

The Championship of 2002 was won in the end by Guo Shulong with 4½/5 closely followed by David Young (4/5) and Chen Fazuo (4/5). Twenty one competed.

I also have from Mr. Lai the results of the Kingston Cup Masters (1st December 2002) in which, to my regret, I was unable to take part. The total of thirty two entries suggests a thoroughly successful event. There were prizes for the top eight competitors, for ladies and for non-Chinese, as follows:

(1) Guo Shulong 6½, (2) Chen Fazuo 5½, (3) Wang Shunqi 5½, (4) David Young 5, (5) Quan Tran 5, (6) Linus Lee 5, (7) K.D.Dam 4½, (8) Henry Ip 4½. Ladies: Wu Caifang 2½, Hu Qingmei 2, Deborah Chen 1½. Non Chinese: Rudi Reinders 4, Aron Cohen 4, Andrew Havery 3.

18th European XiangQi Team Championship

by Paul Byway

This was held in Paris on the 21st and 22nd of September 2002. Each team contained three players and for the non-asiatic competition, which is

where our interest lies, one Chinese player per team was allowed by the rules. The England team was lucky to have perhaps our strongest player - Chen Fazuo - on board one. I played on board two and on board three Peter Wood generously gave way to Chris Hann (returning after long absence) and played in a mixed team. He had a good tournament and with 4/7 scored almost half his team's total. We were lucky that the Germans couldn't make it (elections I think), except for Claus Tempelmann, but even so the result was a triumph. England were a class above the non-Asian competition and were 6th (of 14) overall:-

- (1) England 8/14, (2) France II 5/14,
- (3) France / Germany 5/14, (4) France III 4/14, (5) France I 4/14, (6) Finland 3/14.

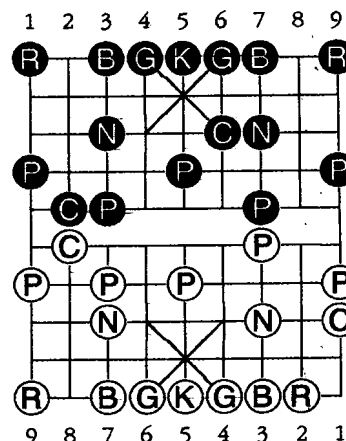
Here is a game from Chris Hann, rusty and sharp at the same time, after a long lay-off. It was played in Round 3

Red: Chris Hann (England)
Black: Christophe Chea (France I)

- 1. N2+3 N2+3
- 2. C2=1 C8=6
- 3. R1=2 N8+7

I intended to play the 3-Step Tiger on the right hand side in all games of this tournament regardless of colour as I had no opening theory and needed to side step my opponents' pet lines.

- 4. N8+7 P3+1
- 5. P3+1 C2+2
- 6. C8+2 P7+1



I would normally take the pawn off

continued on page 13

LOSING CHESS BURNING THE CANDLE AT BOTH ENDS

by John Beasley

Computer investigation of Losing Chess continues apace, and I am sure readers of *Variant Chess* will welcome an update. As with the grasshopper endings described elsewhere in *VC* 41, I am merely the reporter; all the actual work has been done by others.

The ending

The work of "Angrim" (Ben Nye) on four-man endgames was reported in my survey of published Losing Chess endgame material up to the end of 1999 (recently reprinted, and available from myself without charge). His build notes are now available on the web site of Lenny Taelman, <http://lenthedp.dyndys.org:8080/>, together with a "submit query" facility allowing the user to submit a position with up to four men and obtain the result. My testing while writing these notes showed that the interface was not wholly satisfactory (the "piece list" example worked, the given FEN string did not), but the subsequent display was excellent and I imagine the glitch is only temporary.

"Angrim" has now computed a complete set of five-man endgame tables, computed under the FICS stalemate rule, and although he is still checking the last of them he has given me permission to report here. Even compressed, they amount to almost 57 Gb, and neither he nor I can see any practical way to make them generally available although a web page allowing lookup of individual results "is likely at some point". The Nalimov 5-man tablebases for ordinary chess are available on a set of 12 CD-ROMs, but these occupy less than 8 Gb; the absence of a restriction to one king each means that there are more than twenty times as many tables in Losing Chess, though many of them are very simple. He tells me that the longest win found (counting to conversion to a simpler won ending) was "4K3/8/2p5/8/4k3/8/2P2R2/8 w - - 0 1" (Ke8, Rf2, Pc2 against Ke4, Pc6, WTM), with a winning conversion in 78 turns. The second longest was in the KNBP v K endgame, with a conversion in 68 turns. "Both of these are likely draws under the 50 turn rule. No other table contains a win longer than 57 turns till conversion. Inspection of the few tables with wins between 50 and 57 turns long suggests that only the KKN vs KR table is affected by the 50 turn rule, as the others in that group include a pawn, and the longest win always has the pawn on its starting square."

The opening

Lenny Taelman's site offers a selection of proofs that various moves are bound to fail against best play (look at <http://lenthedp.dyndys.org:8080/suicide/proofs/>). These are accompanied by a qualifying note that they are under the FICS rules and by a technical note which I content myself with transcribing as it stands. "All those proofs are computed by the pn² algorithm (with transpositions and

endgame tablebases) as implemented by syzygy in Sjaak. Note that these are not complete proofs: they end at nodes that Sjaak considers trivial. These positions are usually easy for humans too, but can be very complicated in some cases." "Sjaak" is a program, "syzygy" is the FICS account name of someone whom I have not identified (asking Google gave me everything from "Internet solutions companies" to journals of alternative religion, but nothing so mundane as a real person), and I suspect that a "trivial" node may be one where the side to play can give away all its remaining men on successive moves.

The proofs available at time of writing are as follows.

- Losing initial moves: 1.Nc3, 1.Nf3, 1.e4, 1.f4, 1.h4.
- Losing replies to 1.b3: 1...f5.
- Losing replies to 1.c4: 1...d5.
- Losing replies to 1.e3: 1...Na6, 1...Nf6, 1...a5, 1...a6, 1...e5, 1...f5, 1...f6, 1...g6, 1...h5, 1...h6.
- Losing replies to 1.g3: 1...Nc6.
- Losing continuations after 1.b3 e6: 2.a3, 2.c3.
- Losing continuations after 1.c4 c5: 2.d4.
- Losing continuations after 1.e3 e6: 2.Bb5, 2.d3, 2.h4.
- Losing Black 2nd moves after 1.e3 Nh6 2.Ba6: 2...Nxa6.
- Losing Black 2nd moves after 1.e3 b5 2.Bxb5: 2...Bb7, 2...Nf6, 2...a5, 2...c5, 2...c6, 2...e5, 2...f5, 2...f6, 2...g5, 2...g6, 2...h5, 2...h6.
- Losing Black 2nd moves after 1.e3 b6 2.Qh5: 2...Nh6.
- Losing Black 2nd moves after 1.e3 b6 2.b3: 2...e5.
- Losing Black 2nd moves after 1.e3 c5 2.Bd3: 2...Qc7.
- Losing Black 2nd moves after 1.e3 c5 2.Bd3: 2...b6.
- Losing Black 2nd moves after 1.e3 e6 2.b3: 2...Qg5.

There are also a number of partial proofs relating to various openings. For example, in the opening 1.e3 b5 2.Bxb5 Nh6 3.Bxd7, the cases 3...B/K/Qxd7 are analysed to completion, but in the case 3...Nxd7 only the line 4.Qh5 Rb8 is considered; other White 4th moves are not, nor are other Black replies to 4.Qh5.

All these proofs are presented as downloadable text files, whose size varied from a presumably nominal 1 Kb to 1.4 Mb. There is also a "compressed" version which I have not investigated.

Others are also active, and "Angrim" tells me that his computer has just finished proving that 1. b4 loses. "This is the first opening proof to have benefited significantly from 5 piece endgame tables. The last line solved in the proof was one which I had spent roughly a week of cpu time on before I had the 5 piece tables, and which took just under a day to solve with all 5 piece tables present."

I really *must* get my abacus upgraded.

Sources of further information

Web site names go out of date extremely quickly, but Guy Haworth tells me that the ICGA web site www.icga.org is attempting to address the problem and that LC will soon be among the games detailed there. In the meantime, Lenny Taelman's <http://lenthedp.dyndys.org:8080/> appears to be the place to go, while Fabrice Liardet's site www.pion.ch remains an excellent general source.

REVIEWS

by David Pritchard

Superchess by Dr. H. van Haeringen.

Dr. van Haeringen published the rules of his game *Superchess* and a related game, *Monarch*, in English back in 1993. In 1999 he published what is probably the handsomest book ever on a chess variant. The large-format hardback *Schaak en Superschaak* (in Dutch) has 176 double-column pages with big, clear 4"x 4" diagrams. The text is an enlarged version of the English booklet which was confined to the rules of the games. The new book includes annotated games, positions and problems as well as rules of play.

Superchess is not strictly a game at all. This is chess free-style, with players agreeing on what pieces to play with and the initial setup. So on the standard 8x8 board players would normally have a total of eight pieces and eight pawns as usual. *Superchess* offers a breathtaking fifty new pieces and a choice of boards. A few of the pieces will be familiar but inevitably they are assigned new names. For example, the squirrel is here a baron, a promoted shogi bishop is a counsellor and a giraffe is a different piece from the one usually known by that name. The moves of all fifty pieces are fully described and in addition are conveniently illustrated on a double-sided card included with the book. There are four annotated games of which the first three involve the Princess (B+N) and the Amazon (Q+N). Game 3 runs to just ten moves when the author offers two variations running to 32 and 19 moves respectively. This game covers no less than nine double-column pages, nearly all analysis. In game 4 two new pieces are introduced, the Elephant and the Herald. The Elephant moves as a queen up to two squares but can also capture on the first square of a two-square move so two men can be captured in the one turn. The Herald moves one or two squares diagonally, leaping if necessary, and when reaching the end rank can also move one square horizontally thus changing square colour. This game runs to just 13 moves with a single move of the Herald. I would have preferred to see the considerable space taken up by these games used to demonstrate the interaction of some of the other pieces in typical game situations.

Anyone can of course invent new chess pieces. But it is not as easy as that. Arguably, certain combinations of pieces harmonise whilst others do not; one reason that chess is such a good game is because of the interaction of its pieces. But here the reader is left to discover which pieces work well together. What Van Haeringen has accomplished is to design and produce many new pieces in wood that sit comfortably with Staunton pattern chessmen. A selection of these pieces, which can be purchased through the author, is illustrated on the book's cover.

My initial reaction to *Superchess* was to be totally overwhelmed by all the new pieces. However, it must be

borne in mind that you are not expected to digest them all before playing a game. The idea, as I have indicated, is to agree perhaps one or two new pieces in place of existing pieces when first playing, and to absorb new pieces gradually as you play more. *Monarch* I find a perplexing footnote as the game seems to me to be just another version of *Superchess* played on a 10x8 or 10x10 board.

The author's ambitious aim is to improve chess which he thinks is an imperfect game (I have to agree) and he is hopeful that *Superchess* will take off and a consensus of chess masters and strong players will eventually 'after years of practice' agree the 'perfect' game. I am afraid I do not share van Haeringen's optimism - but I can recommend this extraordinary menagerie as a wonderland for problemists. An almost infinite number of new themes must surely await creation here?

Crown by Lev Kisiuk

This novel variant is illustrated on the inventor's website (www.geocities.com/kisslook/eng/crowneng.html). Usual setup but the queen moves exactly like a king (so can also castle). In castling, a K or Q precedes the usual symbol in notation to indicate which piece is moving.

Before the game, both players write down secretly which of the two royal pieces, king or queen, they wish to 'crown'. The loss of the crowned piece loses the game: there is no checking. When a royal piece is captured the owner must reveal whether or not it is the crowned piece. If it is, the game is over; if not, play continues. There is an additional rule. A pawn may promote to a (real) queen, here called a generalissimo (G in notation) or, as normal, to any other piece including an uncrowned royal piece. *Crown* is not a game of perfect information like chess and most variants, so there is opportunity for bluff and perhaps a bit of mind-reading. The variant seems to play well - the rooks being the dominant pieces. Kisiuk proposes that the king is called the lion and the queen is called the unicorn, which seems not a bad idea as it is less confusing. Here is a sample game from the website; not a very good one but it is only an example. White's king is crowned; Black's queen is crowned.

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Be2 Nf6 4.d3 Bc5 5.K0-0 K0-0
6.Nc3 Nd4 7.Nxd4 Bxd4 8.Bg5 h6 9.Bxf6 gxf6 10.Q0-0
d6 11.Nd5 Kg7 12.c3 Bb6 13.Nxb6 cxb6 14.f4 Be6
15.Rf2 Q0-0 16.Rcf1 f5 17.exf5 Bxf5 18.fxe5 Be6
19.exd6 Rcd8 20.a3 Rxd6 21.Qc2 Qc7 22.Bh5 Rd5 23.g4
f5 24.gxf5 Bxf5 25.Bf3 Bxd3 26.Bxd5 Bxc2 27.Rxf8
Kxf8 28.Rxf8 resigns.

Kisiuk writes, rather confusingly, 'Stalemate is defeat: there is no difference in *Crown* between checkmate and stalemate'. There is no checkmate according to the rules, and I have been unable to set up a legal stalemate position - given that the crowned piece must be totally surrounded by immobile friendly pieces for stalemate to occur!

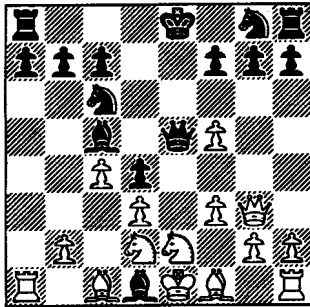
DYNAMO CHESS (PART IV)

by George Jelliss

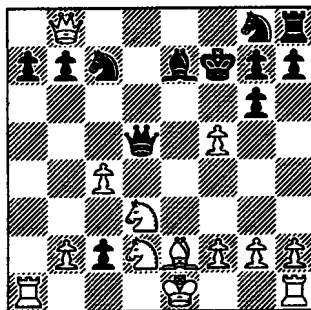
Here is the last part of George's long article on this variant, which features his struggles with Paul Yearout. More examples, and a description of the game, will be found in VC 36, VC 37 and VC40.

AISE GRAND PRIX 97

- | Paul Yearout | George Jelliss |
|------------------|----------------|
| 1. Qd1-d3/d2-d6 | Bc8-e6/d7-f5 |
| 2. Qd3-b5/e2-d3+ | Ng8/e7-c6 |
| 3. Qb5-c5/f5E | Be6-b3/a2E |
| 4. c2-c4/ | Nb8-c6/c6-d4 |
| 5. Ng1-e2/ | Qd8-d6/d6-d5 |
| 6. Qc5-e5/d5-f5+ | Qd6-e5/Qe5-g3 |
| 7. Nb1-d2/ | Bb3-d1/ |
| 8. f2-f3/ | Bf8-c5/ |

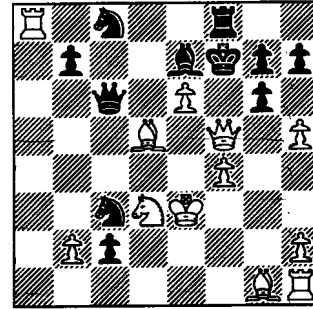


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|-----------------------|---------------|
| 9. Qg3-e5/Qe5-d6+ | Qd6-f4/Qe5-g3 |
| 10. Bc1-d2/Nd2-e3 | Qf4-f3/f3-f2 |
| 11. Qg3-e5/c7E+ | Bc5-e7/ |
| 12. Qe5-d4/d4-c3 | Nc6-e5/ |
| 13. Qd4-d8/d3-d7+ (?) | Ne5/d7E |
| 14. Qd8-b8/Ra8E+ | Ke8-f7/f7-g6 |
| 15. Qb8/Ne5-c7 | Qf3-d5/ |
| 16. Ne3-d1/Bd1E | c3-c2/ |
| 17. Bf1-e2/Ne2-d3 | c2/Nd1E |

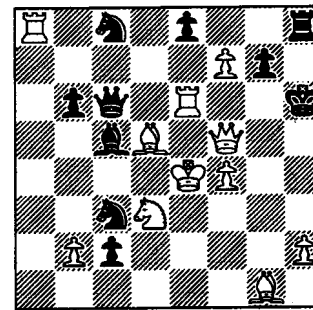


- | | |
|--------------------|----------------|
| 18. Qb8-e5/Nc7-f4? | Nf4-g2/g2E+ |
| 19. Ke1-d2/Bd2-c3 | Qd5-c6/Ng2-e4+ |
| 20. Kd2-e3/ | Be7-g5+/ |
| 21. f2-f4/ | Ne4-c3/Bc3-a2 |
| 22. Ba2-d5/c4-e6 | Bg5-e7/ |

- | | |
|-------------------|---------------|
| 23. Ra1-a8/a7E | Nc3/Be2-g1 |
| 24. Qe5-f5/f5-h5+ | Rh8-f8/Ng8-c8 |

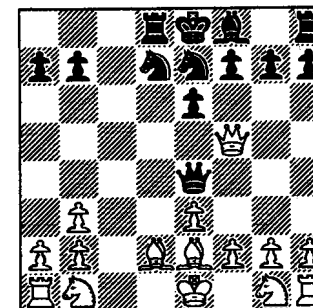


- | | |
|---------------------|---------------|
| 25. e6-f7/Kf7-g8+ | Kg8-h7/h7E |
| <i>Self-capture</i> | |
| 26. Bd5/f7-g8Q+ | Rf8-h8/Qg8E |
| 27. Bd5/Rh1-e4 | Be7-c5+/ |
| 28. Re4-e6/Ke3-e4 | b7-b6/ |
| 29. h5-g6/g6-f7+ | Kh7-h6/ |
| 30. g6-f7/f7-e8+ | Black resigns |



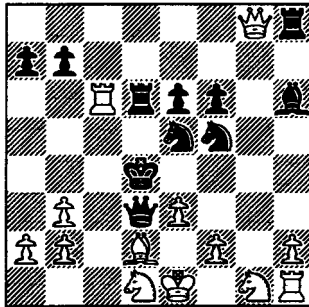
30...Kg7/g7-e8 31.Qg6 Kf8? or 30...e8/f7-g6 31.Qg6/g6-h7 Kg5? look decisive for white.

- | George Jelliss | Paul Yearout |
|------------------|--------------|
| 1. Bf1-e2/e2-c4 | Qd8-d4/d7-d3 |
| 2. c4-c5/ | Qd4-e5/ |
| 3. Be2/d3E | Qe5-d5/c5E |
| 4. Qd1-c2/c2-b3 | Bc8-f5/ |
| 5. Qc2-c6/c7E+ | Nb8-d7/ |
| 6. Qc6-d5/Qd5-e4 | Ra8-d8/ |
| 7. Qd5-f5/Bf5E | e7-e6/ |
| 8. Bc1-d2/d2-e3 | Ng8-e7/ |



- | | |
|--------------|---------------|
| 9. Qf5/f7-f6 | Ke8-f7/ |
| 10. Be2-d3/ | Ne7-f5/Qf5-g3 |

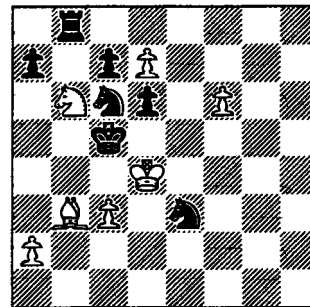
- 11. Qg3-g6/g7E+ Kf7-e7/
- 12. Qg6/h7E Nd7-e5/
- 13. Ra1-c1/Nb1-d1 Qe4-d3/Bd3E
- 14. Rc1-c7+/ Ke7-d6/
- 15. Rc7-c6+/ Rd8-d6/Kd6-d4 (!)
- 16. Qg6-g8/g2-g7 Bf8-h6/g7E



- 31. Bc1-e3/e3-g5+ Kd4-d5/
- 32. g5/Bh6E b7-b6/
- 33. Kc3-d4/b2-c3 Rg8-b8/
- 34. Nc5-b3/ Ng4/h2E
- 35. Kd4-d3/Kd5-d4+ Ng4-e3/Be3-c2
- 36. Bc2-b3/Nb3-a4 Nc4-e5/
- 37. Kd3-d4/Kd4-d5+ Kd5-c5/
- 38. Na4-b6/b6-c8

Threat d7-d8Q

- 38. c8-c7/
- 39. Kd4/Ne5-f6 Ne3/g2E
- 40. g5-f6/Nf6-e7 Ne7-c6/

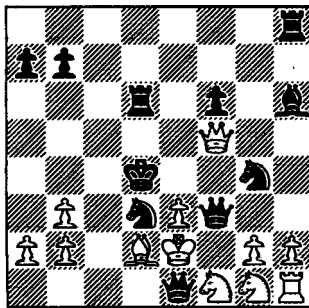


- 17. Qg8-e6/e6-c4
- Trying to save the Rc6

- 17. Qd3-e2/c4-d3+
- 18. Ng1/Qe2-c3 Qc3-c6/Rc6E
- 19. f2-f3/ Ne5-d3/d3-c1Q+
- 20. Ke1-e2/ Qc6-f3/f3-g2+
- 21. Qe6-f5/Nf5-g4

Saving Q and K

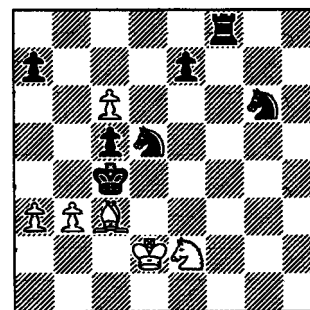
- 21. Qc1-e1/Nd1-f1++



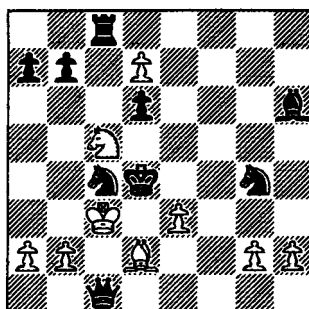
- 41. Kd4-c3/c3-b2

Releasing the pieces on the b-file

- 41. Nc6-e5/
- 42. b2-b3/Bb3-b4+ c7-c5/Kc5-c4
- 43. b3/Bb4-b5+ Kc4-d4/
- 44. Bb5-a4/d7-c6 Rb8-f8/
- 45. Nb6-c4/ Rf8/f6E
- 46. Nc4/d6-e8 Ne3-d5/
- 47. a2-a3/Ba4-a5 e8-e7/
- 48. Nc4-e5/Ne5-g6 Ng6/Ne5-c4
- 49. Ba5-c3/Kc3-d2+ Kd4-c4/Nc4-b4
- 50. Nb4-d3/ Kc4/Nd3-e2



- 22. Ng1/Ke2-c3! Rd6-c6/f6-d6+
- 23. Qf5-c5/ Rc6E/Qc5E
- 24. Bd2/Qe1E Qf3-f2/Nf1E
- 25. Rh1-d1/Ng1-a1 Rh8-c8+/
- 26. Na1-b3/b3-c5 Qf2-e2/
- 27. Nb3-c5/c5-d7 Qe2-c4/Nd3-b5+
- 28. Rd1-c1/ Qc4-d3/Nb5-c4+
- 29. Nc5/Qd3-e1 Qe1-c1/Rc1E+



- 51. Ne2-g1/Bc3-e2+ Kc4-d4/
- 52. Ng1-e2/Be2-c3+ Kd4-d3/
- 53. Kd2-d3/Kd3-d4+ Nd5-c3/Bc3-b1
- 54. Ne2/Nc3-a4 Na4-c5/c5-e6
- 55. Kd3-c4/ Ng6-f4/
- 56. Kc4-d4/Kd4-e4+ Ke4-d5/
- 57. Ne2/Nf4-g6 PY: chuckle!
- 57. Ng6-e7/e7-c8
- 58. c6-c7/ Kd5-d4/Kd4-d3
- 59. Kd3-c4/Ne2-d3

- 30. Bd2-c1/Qc1E Rc8-g8/

I reckon we've fought each other to a standstill here - this could go on for another 60 moves, or for ever!

THE END IS NIGH!

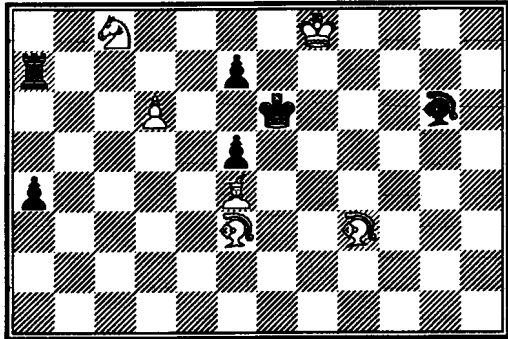
by Paul Byway

It gives me great pleasure to start this column with three *subtleties* in Modern Courier Chess. The more so because they are not mine. The solutions will be found at the end of this article.

COMPETITION 17

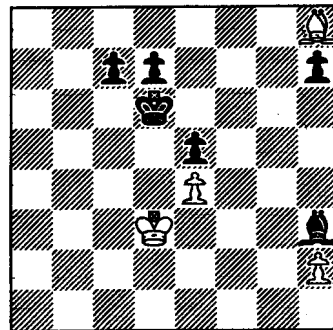
Here again we have a little light-hearted work out in the form of some *Italian Progressive Chess* positions to exercise the 'little grey cells' on. I think you will find these a little easier than the last lot. No tricks - and they all end in mate.

#109 Roy Talbot (2002)



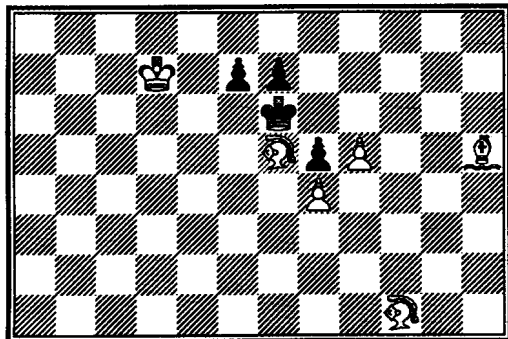
White to play and win

#112 Palmieri - Braca (1981)
(colours reversed)



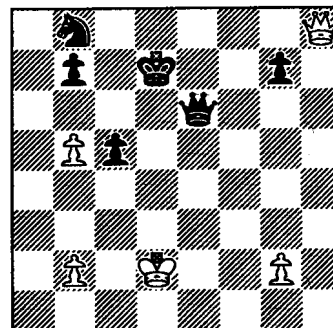
Black Win (series 8)

"Forward the Light Brigade"
#110 Roy Talbot (2002)



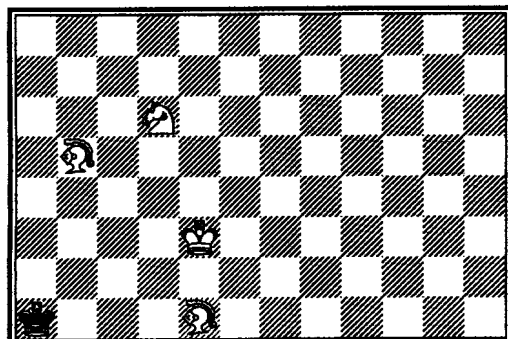
Mate in Four

#113 Cassano - Dipilato (1986)
(colours reversed)



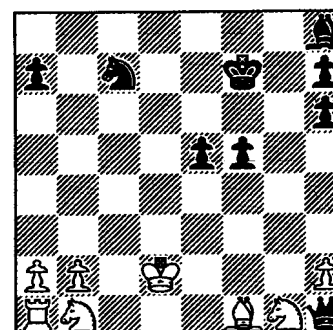
White Win (series 9)

#111 Ian Richardson (1999)



Mate in 8

#114 Leoncini - Bonavoglia (1979)



White Win (series 9)

CRAZY KNIGHTS

Cedric Lytton has sent us a solution to the puzzle "Crazy Knights" which featured on the front page of VC40. The board is easily seen to consist of a single path from d3 to b3, with a spur from c3 to a2. Cedric writes as follows:

" Crazy Knights on the front page is easily proved to have minimum 40 moves. The board is isomorphic to a railway line from d3 to b3 with a spur junction at c3 and siding there to a2. The solution is far from unique, but moving each man as far as needed before the next starts we have: 4.Wa4-c2, 8.Bb2-a3, 12.Bd3-b1, 16.Wa2-d3, 19.Bb1-b2, 22.Ba3-a4, 26.Wc2-a2, 29.Ba4-a3, 32.Bb2-b1, 35.Wa2-b2, 37.Bb1-a4, 40.Ba3-a2".

SOLUTIONS TO COMPETITION 16

#106

9. f4, f5, fxe6, exd7, Nf3, Ng5, Rf1, Rxf7, Ne6 mate

Fred Galvin has a different solution:

9. Nh3, Nf4, Nxd5, Nb6, d5, dxe6, exf7, Rd1, Rxd7 mate

#107

9. Ba6, e4, e5, Nc3, Nxd5, Ra3, Rxf3, Rxf8, Bc8 mate

Ian Richardson finds a mirror solution:

9. Bd3, Bg6, e4, e5, Nc3, Nxd5, Rb1, Rb8, Be8 mate

David Pritchard and Fred Galvin find a third, very pretty, solution:

9. Nd2, Nxf3, Nd2(xg5), f4, f5, f6, fxf7, gxf8=Q, Rxa7 mate

#108

9. gxh6(e.p.), h7, h8=R, h4, h5, hxg6, g7, g8=Q, Rh7 mate

No one managed to solve this. Didn't Sherlock Holmes have something to say here? " When you have eliminated the impossible..." I even gave you a clue with my " this time rest assured...". It's true that Black had to be spectacularly dumb to play ...h5 as the last move of his series!

The updated scores are:- IR 47; FG 46; DP 31; CL 17; RT 13; PW 3; JB 3; SB 2.

Modern Courier Chess Solutions

#109 1.Fg5 a3 2.Ne7+ Rxe7 3.dxe7 a2 4.e8=C mate.

#110 1.Bi8+ Kf6 2.Ch3 g6 3.Ce7 g5 4.hxg5 mate

#111 1.Cd3 Kb2 2.Nb5 Kc2 3.Ke2 Kb2 4.Kd2 Ka1

5.Kc1 Ka2 6.Kc2 Ka1 7.Cc1+ Ka2 8.Nc3 mate.

Circular Chess Solution

Solution to puzzle on page 3. Again I quote Rob Stevens, converting to our notation. "To block is to lose. When with horse, bound forth. Nd4-c6+ starts the little spree. Follow with Ne5-b7+* and the tape is up. Then h8*, g6, e5, and why stop there: g6, h8, c8*. No doubt the superstars will spot even better moves but I'd settle for that. Surprisingly enough this sort of event is not uncommon. When the cavalry gets in amidst the foot soldiers, they can be quite devastating."

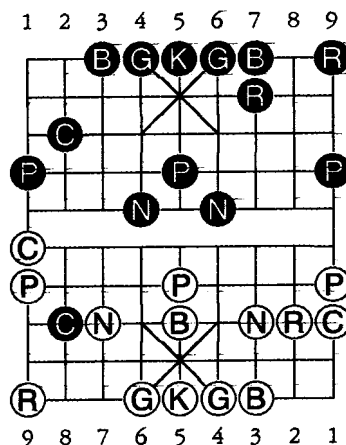
XiangQi (continued from page 7)

without hesitation, but the next move is intended to stop the cannons and knights from invading Red's position.

- 7. B7+5 P7+1
- 8. B5+3 R1+1
- 9. B+-5 N7+6
- 10. P7+1 P3+1
- 11. B5+7 N3+4
- 12. C8=9 R1=7

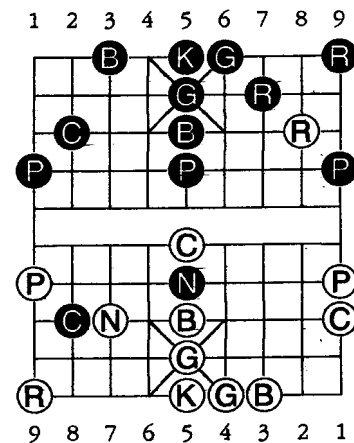
All Black's pieces are now focussed on the centre and I am reduced to trying to hold the central pawn tactically.

- 13. R2+2 C2+3
- 14. B7-5 C6=2



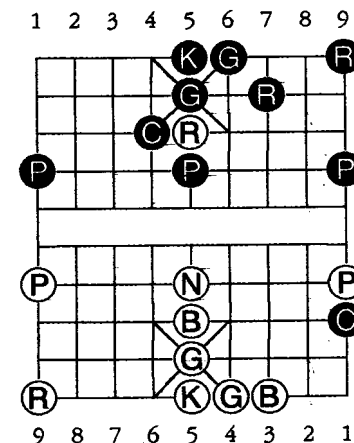
This move considerably releases the tension. It stops the development of Red's left hand rook and threatens to trap the 9-file cannon; but the rule in Western Chess is that once you have the optimum position you must attack immediately. I guess this applies to XiangQi as well.

- 15. C9=5 G4+5
- 16. G6+5 N6+5
- 17. N3+5 N4+5
- 18. R2+5! B7+5



I think my opponent had analysed the combination to here and assumed that with a rook and a knight en-prise something must go. However there is another Western Chess adage: never overlook a check!

- 19. C5+3 B3+5
- 20. R2=5 C--4
- 21. N7+5 C2=9



Red ignores the cannon and goes straight for the throat.

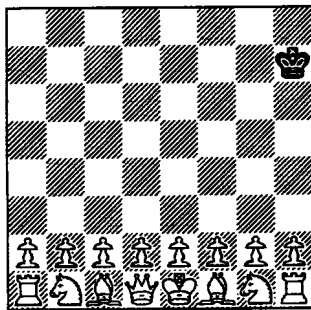
- 22. R9=8 C9+2
- 23. R8+9 C4-2
- 24. K5=6 Resigns

PROBLEM PAGES

by Ronald Turnbull

Due to a decline in my interest in chess problems, I had planned to lay aside this column at the end of Volume 5 of *Variant Chess*. So today's page is, as it were, the final stutter of the engine after the ignition has been switched off. However, it does give me the chance to publish some of the outstanding, or amusing, problems still in my in-pile; and to pay tribute to some of our regular contributors.

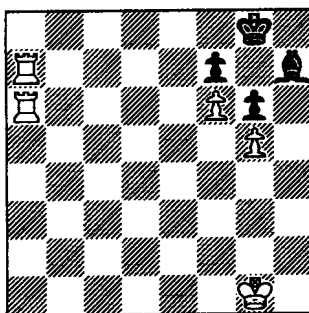
361 - L. VITALE



Series mate in 4 (C+)

A rare treat from Luigi Vitale is a problem that's actually fairly easy. I don't think he's ever before occupied the 'straightforward solve' spot at the top of the column. In 361, Black doesn't move at all, while White makes 4 moves. The first three may not give check, and the final one gives mate. "C+" = "computer-tested".

362 - G. BRONER

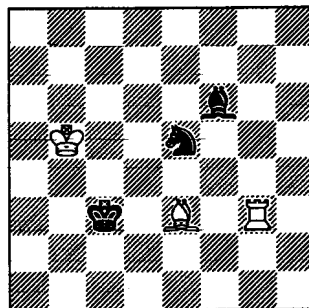


Mate in 3, Messigny (C+)

The first shall be last: and my final Problem Pages look to the future

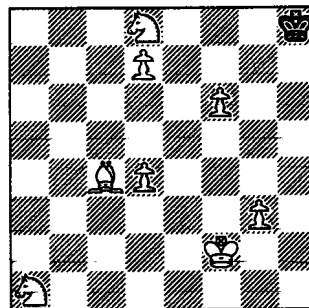
with the first composition of Gal-on Broner. We wish him a long and entertaining future. 362 shows a lightness of touch that may not win any prizes but will certainly endear him to solvers. In Messigny Chess, instead of an ordinary move a player may exchange two like units of opposite colour. The opponent may not immediately unswap either of the two units just used. So if White tries 1.f6<>f7+, Black may not escape by 1...f6<>f7 or g6<>f7; but 1...K<>K does the trick.

363 - L. VITALE



Helpstalemate in 3, b) bKe1 (C+)

364 - L. VITALE

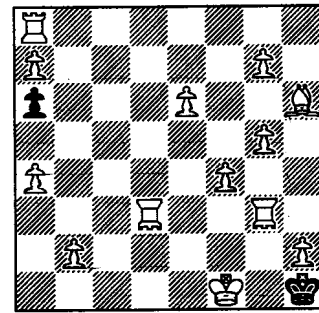


Serieshelpmate in 18, Circe

363 is a typical Vitale teaser. With Black starting, the sides collaborate to achieve stalemate (not mate) on White's 3rd. But 364 is more of a flight of fancy. Black must find 18 moves (White not moving) so that after the 18th White may give mate. This is Circe, where a captured unit is reborn on its game-array square. So if Black captures g3, the pawn reappears on g2; while if he captures f6, this pawn disappears as f2 is occupied.

365 is a collaboration between two much-appreciated contributors. It's a

365 - A. ETTINGER + C. LYTTON



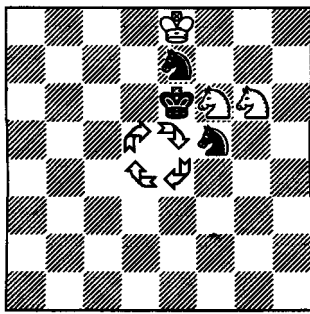
Helpstalemate in 1½, Circe Parrain Equihoppers d3, g3

rather surprising combination of Dr Lytton's fantastic imagination with Mr Ettinger's disciplined taste for formal tasks. This helpmate has Circe Parrain, where the rebirth takes place after the subsequent half-move, and translated from the capture square to match that half-move. So if Black were to play 1.Kxh2, and White to then play Ke1 (1-sq west), wP would reappear on g2, 1-sq west of h2. An intervening unit between capture square and rebirth square is irrelevant. If the rebirth square is off the board or occupied, the captured piece is gone for good.

White moves first, Black assisting, to reach stalemate. The Equihoppers would normally be taken as having arisen by promotion, but all 8 wPs are on the board, and anyway an E can't reach the 3-rank from the 8-rank. So these ones must be taken as having replaced other white pieces in the game array. Golly, I haven't explained the equihoppers... An E moves beyond some hurdle to the square directly opposite. So Eg3 can move to a3 (over d3) or e5 (over g4). It could also move to c9 if there were such a square. The failure of an obvious sequence with wR leads to a 5-fold task, depending. Depending on what? Well, that's the problem...

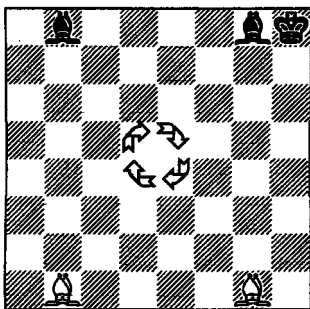
Ian Richardson has explored various topics close to this column's heart, and here he returns to Actuated Revolving Centre. Whenever a unit arrives on, or departs from, the four centre squares, those squares rotate a quarter-turn clockwise. So if Black plays Nd4, that knight is immediately transported round to d5. In 366 Part a)

366 - I. RICHARDSON



Helpmate in 2, a) orthodox, b) Actuated Revolving Centre

367 - I. RICHARDSON

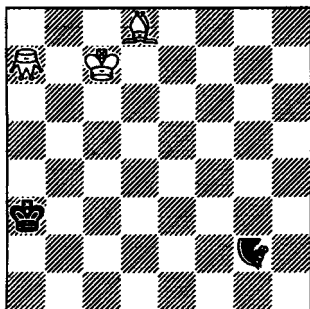


Helpmate in 2, ARC; b) bBb8>a8

is orthodox non-revolving chess; in 367 the centre revolves (once actuated) in both parts.

Classic chess is provided by Mr Grushko from Israel. The Grasshopper moves queenlike, but only to the square immediately beyond some other unit, the 'hurdle'. So wG in 368 can move only to a2 or d7. The Nightrider extends the knight-move along a line, so that Ng2 could move to e3 but also to c4 or a5.

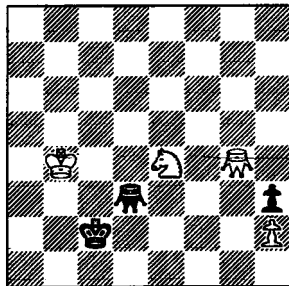
368 - M. GRUSHKO



Helpstalemate in 4, Circe, 2 sols Grasshopper + Nightrider (C+)

If captured, these fairy pieces are reborn on the appropriate promotion square. Ignoring Black king, possible is 1. Nxd8(wBc1) Kxd8(bNd1).

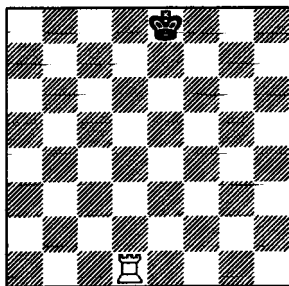
369 - M. GRUSHKO



Helpmate in 3, Grasshoppers b) wKf1, c) wKe1 (C+)

Note that stalemate is the aim in 368, while 369, without Circe, aims for mate.

370 - I. RICHARDSON



Helpmate in 2, Fissile Rook

A fissile piece (here, rook) before moving divides into two, with each making a different move of equal length. The resultant rooks are also fissile. The diagram looks back - to our successful tourney for 2-piece diagrams - but also forward. I am preparing a short article on these pieces for submission to Variant Chess, and will be glad to see any piquant, perfectly-constructed diagrams from readers. Before that, I hope to conclude the tourney for 7-7 leapers with some additional diagrams with 7-n leapers (-1 < n < 8) - anything amusing there, anyone?

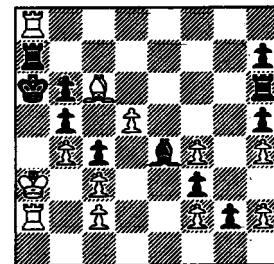
Paul Raican corrects his proof game 321 in Zvolen Chess: r4bk1; pb1p3p; n4Kp1; 24; P1PnP1P; RNBQ2NR - position after Black's 20th - game so far? In case anyone wants to tackle this, solution in VC42.

That's it, then. The future (or otherwise) of the Problem Pages is in the hands of the magazine editor, in consultation with the other officers of the BCVS. My thanks to them for allowing me this platform for my chess problem prejudices, and warm thanks to the contributors who have entertained and sometimes distracted me with their diagrams as well as you, the responsive readers.

Ronald Turnbull solutions (see page 5). 1-2 in text 3 1.R8a6+ may not be mate in one, but it is still the way to start; 1...Kxa6 can be met by 2.Ka7+ (2...Kxa7 illegal) Kxa5 3.Ka6.

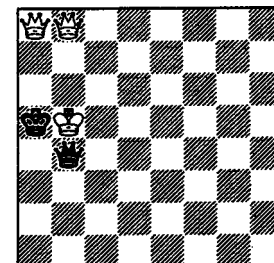
4 As set, 1.Rb2! Kxe5 (wBa1) 2.Rb5; b) 1.c6 Kxe4 (wBa8) 2.Rf4; c) 1.Re5 Kxd4 (wBh8) 2.Re4; d) 1.Re4 Kxd5 (wBh1) 2.Re5. In each case, White releases the stalemate by moving a man to a square where it will prevent the bishop's rebirth from giving check. This stalemate-release idea is well known in orthodox problems, but there it demands three moves (bishop retreat, interposition releasing stalemate, mate); with Circe, we can realise it in two.

5 There is one further exploratory try, which I refrained from mentioning in the introductory text and which plays an important role in the solution. 1.Bc6 (+wPg2) Bxg2 2.Bb7 (+wPc6) appears to be mate in 2 because the new wPc6 guards wBb7, but it is an illusion because bRa7 is not pinned; 2...Rxb7 drops a Black pawn on a7. We must get all the Black pawns on to the board as well as all the White. 1.Bf3 (+wPg2) Bxg2 2.Be4 (+wPf3) Bxf3 (+bPg2) and so on up to 4.Bc6 (+wPd5):



Now 4...Bxd5 (+bPe4) 5.Bb7 (+wPc6) is indeed mate because Black no longer has a pawn to drop on a7. Many composers would have left it there as a mate in five, but Ronald adds a little more: 4...Rxc6 (+bPh6) 5.Kb2+ Kb7 6.R2xa7.

6 We had got as far as 1.c8Q a3 2.e8Q a2 3.Qa8+ a1Q. Play continues 4.Kb5+ (legal because 4...Kxb5 would leave the queens attacking each other) Qa4! (the only defence, pinning wK against wQe8) 5.Qeb8+ (unpinning wK and so reinstating the check) Qb4 (again the only defence, but this time it unpins Black's own king and gives mate). The final position:



The threat is ...Ka5xb5; Kb6 and Kxb4 don't help; K moves off the file aren't legal because they leave two queens attacking each other, Qa8xa5 isn't legal for the same reason.

LETTERS

from Harry Tiggelovend
The Netherlands

"As I do not recall seeing the accompanying information in *Variant Chess*, I have taken the liberty to bring it to your attention.

Coulomb Enterprises sells a Staunton compatible set of six variant pieces that are perfectly suitable to play many Chess variants with.

The set is sold under the name of 'Superchess', with or without a matching Staunton Chess set. They also sell a book (in an English and in a Dutch version) describing 'Superchess', which is a collection of Chess variants in which up to 44 variant Chess pieces can be used.

Please let me assure you that I am not affiliated with this company in any way whatsoever. Having bought a set I find them of excellent quality and think they deserve to be mentioned in *Variant Chess* magazine."

Harry enclosed with his letter a leaflet from which I quote:-

"In July 2001 the first set of new superchessmen came available: **Exchess® set 1.**"

"Exchess® is played by the Laws of Superchess®."

"The Laws of Superchess® are described in 'Super Chess and Monarch, The Laws', by H. van Haeringen. For ordering this booklet and/or the pieces Exchess® set 1, and for more information, see www.superchess.nl"

In this issue you can also find David Pritchard's review of Superchess.

from John Leslie, Canada

John writes to clarify a point of notation in *Hostage Chess*. I quote:

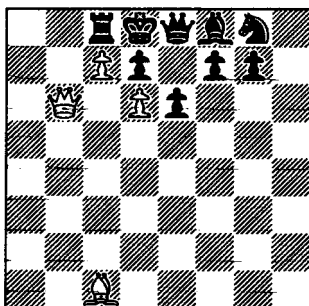
"...Please note, though, that Peter's (*Coast's*) notation is not in line with the one given in David Pritchard's chapter on Hostage in his *'Popular Chess Variants'*, and the other articles which have appeared in *Variant Chess* and *Abstract Games*Peter gives, for

example, (N-Q)*e2 where Pritchard and Leslie and Smook and others all would use (Q-N)N*e2. We mention first the hostage surrendered by putting it in the opponent's airfield, then the piece rescued through the surrender, and then (redundantly, but usefully for beginners, Pritchard argued) the rescued piece again as a piece which is dropped. This can all of it be important as when, for instance, one can surrender either a bishop or a knight in order to rescue either a bishop or a knight...."

Well, I guess the editor is much at fault there, for not paying close enough attention to consistency.

from a letter to George Jelliss
from Paul Yearout

"Out of our (*Hostage Chess. Ed.*) game I dreamed up the partial position in the diagram.



With White to move and no Black prisoners, Black is not in check; but that makes White's bishop invulnerable. After Bg5+ any interposition can be captured without fear of retaliation. Black's only hope is ...Qe7 and ...Ke8 which is pretty bleak. I feel that to be a serious flaw in Hostage. Beyond that, Hostage shares with Chessgi the difficulty of too many powerful pieces on too small a board...."

It sounds to me as if *Modern Courier Chess* would be right up your street!

from Ken Whyld, England

(The following may interest lovers of *Circular Chess*. A picture of the board was beyond my competence, alas. Twiss (1747-1821) travelled 27000 miles, recording his observations.)

Twiss volume 2, 1789 p. 9-11.

At the end [Cotton. Cleop. B ix I] is a drawing of a round Chess-board, which is represented in the plate of this book: on it are the directions for placing the men, which are called, Rei, Fierce, Alfin, Chivalir, Roc, & Poun.

The figures on this board (in the plate) show the march of the Knight in order to cover the sixty-four squares in as many moves. This I found after four or five hours trial on a slate at different times; it probably has never been done before, and will be found much more regular than any of the like marches on the square board. To return to the round game (of which there is no account), I caused a board to be made to try its effect. Supposing the Black King to be placed in the square marked 48, then the Queen is to be placed in 17. The Bishops 33 and 2. The Knights 18 and 47. The Castles 3 and 50. And the Pawns 19, 4, 49, 64, and 46. 51, 32, 1. The White King will then stand in 25. The Queen in 40. and the other pieces in the same order. It will be found in playing, that the power of the Castle is the double of that in the common game, and that of the Bishop only the half, the first having sixteen squares to range in, and the last only four. That the King can only Castle one way, and that it appears to be very difficult to bring the game to a conclusion. Perhaps it was not intended that the Pawns should be metamorphosed in this game. Other peculiarities may possibly be discovered by such as are curious enough to try it, and thus much may suffice as a clew.

Bibl. reg. 13 A. xviii Plut. xx. c.

This is likewise in verse, and in the French language, written on thirteen folio pages of vellum, and, like the other with 57 Chess-boards, one of which has the march of the Knight, which I have inserted in the plate, and underneath, the four Arabic numerals, which differ from those which are used at present. It will be observed that the Knight begins his march from the white square, which consequently remains uncovered, as it appears that the player knew not how to bring him back again. The four first lines of this MS. are the same as the four first already quoted from the other.