Variant Chess

Founded 1990

The magazine to broaden your chess horizons

Contents

Hexagonal Chess - The Seminal Game ?

The *ECV* gives Hexagonia (1864) as 'probably the first chess type game on an hexagonal board'. You won the game by getting your king to the central square.

The other day I came across a beautifully preserved board (but no pieces) together with the rules of a game called Hexagonal Chess and dated 1853. The inventor was Thomas Hanmer Croughton. Croughton appears to have marketed the game himself, and his firm apparently made game boards among other things which probably accounts for the fact that four boards of different quality are quoted. The board is composed of 61 regular hexes, thus five a side. The rows (ranks) are coloured alternately black and white with a white rank facing each player. There are 11 pieces a side: one General, two Colonels, two Captains and six infantry. The general moves like a queen. The colonel also moves like a queen, but two squares only. The captain, of junior rank but with much greater powers, moves like a rook along files (i.e. cell colours alternating) or like a knight. Pawns move one cell forward in either direction with an initial two-cell option. On reaching the end rank, a pawn promotes to what is described as 'a more valuable piece' which must be placed on one of its original squares. The object is to get your general on the cell occupied initially by the rival general. Capture by replacement but no capture can be made backwards. Check must be announced. The general when in check cannot be moved forwards. It can however capture any enemy piece 'on a parallel line' whatever that means. Generals cannot face each other (since presumably this would be mutual check). The starting position has the general at the centre of the first rank flanked by the colonels with the captains on the end cells and the infantry occupying the second rank. I will stick my neck out again and say that this is probably the first chess-type game on an hexagonal board! *(DBP)*

Variant Chess is the journal of the British Chess Variants Society

REVIEWS

by David Pritchard

Chaturanga (CD: Multisell, £19.95)
Shogi (CD: Multisell, £19.95)

These new CDs have plenty to offer, including strong game-playing programmes. Both diskettes contain a formidable amount of information in addition to the actual games, advertising (Multisell offer chaturanga and shogi sets amongst other games-related products) and are well indexed. Even a PC-dunce like myself can find his way around (well, mostly).

One of the most arresting features is the graphics. These are examples of oriental art that vary between the striking and the stunning; I frequently found my eyes wandering from the text. The man behind both CDs (and Multisell) is Steve Nichols, a talented polymath who is a Sanskrit scholar, the inventor of Enochian (Rosicrucian) Chess, a philosopher and (he won't mind my saying so) a mystic.

The Chaturanga CD allows you to play solo against the computer or with sharing-the-screen opponents. The programme took seven years to develop (true: I recall it being worked on at least five years ago). Incredible however is the claim that the game has 30 million (sic) variants (unchecked, due to limited lifespan). Certainly several variants are on offer; the games being internet-playable and also across a local computer network. The disc has an 800-page multimedia encyclopedia which includes the bulk of Duncan Forbes's *History of Chess* (1860). Nichols is a disciple of Forbes and opposed to such heretics as Murray & co.

The shogi games offer alternative sets: Japanese, Westernized (pieces carry a visual representation of their moves), and a weird and colourful design which Nichols hopes will induce those in the West to take up the game. (Frankly, I found these symbols totally confusing which probably contributed in small part to the computer wiping the floor with me. Of course, the answer is to select the piece designs that cause you the least confusion.) The software programme reached the Grand Final of the

Computer Shogi Championships so expect a formidable opponent - I haven't beaten it yet. A simple improvement I would have welcomed would have been some sort of visual indication of the computer's moves such as a flashing or highlighting, particularly as one inevitably lacks the familiarity in shogi positions that one has with chess positions. As it was, I found myself hunting round the board to determine which piece had been moved. Not always successfully, I might add, usually with disastrous consequences. Lots of history etc., but a thoroughly disconcerting habit of the screen freezing with the message 'This program has performed an illegal operation and will be shut down'. Possibly this was due to my running it on Windows 95 whereas Windows 98 is recommended? Shogi variants on the disc include Mini Shogi, Micro Shogi, Judkins Shogi and Tori (Bird) Shogi. In the last-named, the piece designs are both brilliant and exotic but are hardly an aid to concentration. Both CDs are well worth the money and I strongly recommend the games themselves. Scores are recorded move by move so a record of a game is always available for future reference.
Multisell Ltd, 37 Lennox Gardens, London SW1X 0DF
Tel/fax 0207 581 0196

BOOK REVIEW

by David Pritchard

Shall we play Fischerandom Chess?
by Svetozar Gligoric
Batsford - 144 pages - £12.99

The most remarkable feature of this book is that it was ever published in the first place. Given that a few copies will be sold on account of its famous author and a few more to those who drool over the name of Fischer, where is the demand?

Books on single variants are certainly not unknown - *Meta Chess* by John William Brown and *Enochian Chess* by Chris Zalewski both boast well over 300 pages but here one is in the realm of vanity publishing and specialist markets, something different from a book that is obviously intended to appeal to chessplayers.

Was any variant player consulted by Batsford for an opinion? I doubt it. The only feature on baseline chess in *Variant Chess* in the past five years has in fact been on Systematic Fully Randomized Chess. Fischerandom, it seems, is as dead as the proverbial dodo. To refresh your memory, Fischerandom is a randomized initial arrangement of the pieces with the requirement that the king stands between the two rooks. The two sides have like pieces facing each other, as in chess. An artificial form of castling is incorporated. According to Gligoric, Fischer has been 'working for years on this new form of chess' (sic!)

The argument of the book, a reasonable one, is that computers and databases have wreaked havoc with play at professional level (shades of Capablanca's 'draw death'). Fischerandom will force players back on their own resources, and opening preparation will be a thing of the past (960 possible starting positions). Let us be clear on two points: firstly, the initial position of the chessmen, it is generally agreed, is an ideal in terms of balance: all randomized positions are inferior in this respect. Secondly, the average chessplayer is unfazed by the vast volume of opening research available; he has neither the inclination, nor the time, to absorb it. An argument against randomization, according to Gligoric, is that it carries 'the practical disadvantage of requiring some little time and manual work before each game in order to decide on a starting position at the chessboard'! This is however overcome by Fischer's piece shuffler (another touch of Fischer genius), an electronic device that computes the starting position for you. Alas, hardly original: Maxwell Lawrence conducted tournaments using computer-generated positions back in the 1980s.

So what is the book about? Very little, to be honest. A bit of history, most of it covering old ground, and some annotated master games of Fischerandom which, by definition, are of no theoretical value. I leave the last words to Michael Adams: 'only in Mainz can one play Fischerandom Chess'. Anyone for Mainz?

QUEEN AGAINST ROOK ON TWO LARGE BOARDS

by John Beasley

It is fundamental to normal endgame theory that K+Q v K+R is a win. However, what is true of ordinary chess is not necessarily true of other forms of the game, and I have twice wondered in print as to what the result might be on boards of other shapes and sizes. The first was in 1998, in the December issue of *British Endgame Study News*, when Paul Byway and I looked at the "Philidor" position on the 12x8 board of Modern Courier Chess (see below) and failed to find a win.
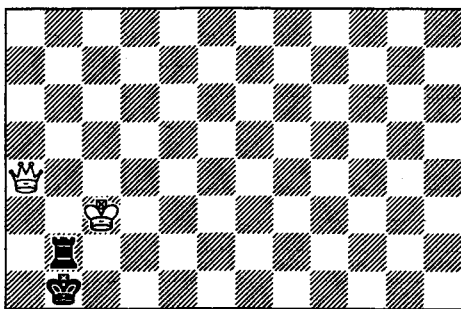

The "Philidor" position is shown above. White to play passes the move to Black, 1.Qe4+ Ka1/Ka2 2.Qa8+ Kb1 3.Qa4, and on the 8x8 board the rook must move away and it soon succumbs to a fork. On the 12x8 board, the rook has four extra squares, but i2 and k2 are easy (White drives the Black king to b1, then forks on f5 or g6). If 3...Rj2, the king can avoid forks by keeping to a2 and b1, but Paul showed a win by 4.Qb5+ Ka2 5.Qa6+ Kb1 6.Qf1+ Ka2 7.Qf7+ (covering j3) 7...Kb1 (best) 8.Kb3 (threatening mate) 8...Rb2+ 9.Ka3 Rd2 (for 9...Rh2 10.Qb3+ see below) 10.Qc4 and now the rook must move: 10...Rd8 11.Qe4+ Kc1 12.Qf4+ Kd1 (12...Rd2 13.Kb3) 13.Qi1+ and a fork, or 10...Rh2 (say) 11.Qb3+ Kc1 12.Qc3+ Kd1 (12...Kb1 13.Kb3 and mates) 13.Qa1+ and a skewer.

But if White tries to meet 3...Rl2 in the same way, 4.Qb5+ Ka2 5.Qa6+ Kb1 6.Qf1+ Ka2, he must play 7.Qb6+ Ka2 8.Qa7+ Kb1 9.Qg1+ Ka2 10.Qg8+ to cover l3 instead of 6.Qf1+ Ka2 7.Qf7+ to cover j3, and after 10...Kb1 11.Kb3 Rb2+ 12.Ka3 Black has 12...Re2. On the 8x8 board, such a position is won by playing to Philidor's position, but here that is where we started.

We were unable to make further progress without help from the computer, and we suspected that the ending might be drawn. Marc Bourzutschky, adapting a program by Eugene Nalimov, has now given us the answer: the position is in fact won, but it appears to require an approach rather different from that which we adopted. "Best play", assuming that Black tries to preserve the rook as long as possible, is 1.Qd4 Ka2 2.Qd1 Rl2 3.Qa4+ Kb1 4.Qb5+ Ka1 5.Qf1+ Ka2 6.Qc4+ Kb1 7.Kb4 Rb2+ 8.Ka3 Rd2 9.Qe4+ Kc1 10.Kb3 Rd3+ 11.Kc4 Rl3 12.Qh7 Ra3 13.Qe7 Kb2 14.Qb4+ Ka2 15.Qd2+ Kb1 16.Kb4 Ra2

17.Qd1+ Kb2 18.Qd5 Kb1 19.Kb3 Rb2+ 20.Ka3 Rc2 21.Qe4 Ka1 22.Qh1+ Rc1 23.Qxc1 (the fact that the final capture turns out to give mate is irrelevant), and it will be noted that White twice withdraws his king from the third rank in the course of the play (see moves 7 and 11).

More generally, the ending does seem to be "generally won" in that the queen wins unless Black can force an immediate mate, stalemate, capture, or perpetual check, but some of the details appear to be horrendous. A specimen longest win starts from the position below:
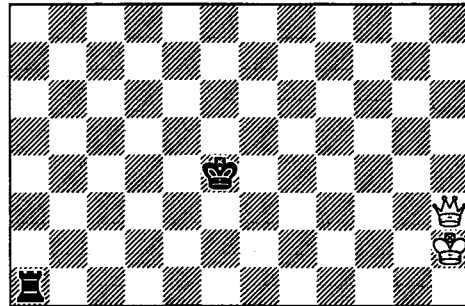

From here, the capture of the rook with Black to play takes no fewer than 73 moves: 1...Ra2+ 2.Kk1 Ra1+ 3.Kk2 Ra2+ 4.Kj1 Ra1+ 5.Ki2 Ra2+ 6.Kh1 Ra1+ 7.Kg2 Ra2+ 8.Kf1 Ra1+ 9.Ke2 Ra2+ 10.Kd1 Ra1+ 11.Kc2 Ra2+ 12.Kb3 Ra6 13.Qk3 Ra5 14.Qi1+ Kg4 15.Qd1+ Kh3 16.Kc4 Rk5 17.Kd4 Rg5 18.Ke3 Kg3 19.Qi1+ Kh4 20. Kf4 Rg4+ 21.Kf3 Rg6 22.Qk1+ Kh5 23.Qk5+ Kh4 24.Qk7+ Kh5 25.Qf7 Kh6 26. Kf4 Ra6 27.Qb3 Rf6+ 28.Kg4 Rg6+ 29.Kh4 Kg7 30.Qc2 Re6 31.Kg4 Rj6 32.Qd2 Kh7 33.Ql2 Re6 34.Qk2 Rc6 35.Qk7+ Kg8 36.Qb7 Rj6 37.Kg5 Rj5+ 38.Kh4 Rj6 39.Qd5+ Kh7 40.Qf7+ Kh8 41.Kh5 Rl6 42.Qf2 Ki8 43.Ki4 Ra6 44.Qf3 Kj8 45. Qb7 Rf6 46.Qc7 Rl6 47.Kj5 Ki8 48.Qe7 Rg6 49.Ki5 Kh8 50.Qf8+ Kh7 51.Qf7+ Rg7 52.Qh5+ Kg8 53.Qe8+ Kh7 54.Qe4+ Ki7 55.Qf5 Ra7 56.Qe5 Kj7 57.Kj5 Rh7 58.Qi5 Ri7 59.Qh5+ Kk7 60.Kk5 Rj7 61.Qi5+ Kl7 62.Qi4+ Kk7 63.Qi8 Ra7 64. Qk6+ Kj8 65.Qj6+ Rj7 66.Ql8+ Ki7 67.Kk6 Rj8 68.Qk7+ Ki8 69.Qd7 Kh8 70. Qe7 Ki8 71.Qg5 Rk8+ 72.Kj6 Kh7 73.Qh5+ Kg8 74.Qxk8+. Lines generated by computer are of course the shortest possible rather than the "most logical" and it is possible that simpler wins exist which the computer disdains because they take a few moves longer, but a winning procedure comprehensible to the human mind is not obvious.

My second query occurred three years later, when I was examining the 1895 book on the 8x8 board ending by "Euclid" (Alfred Crosskill). It seemed to me that some of the winning maneouvres when the defenders were widely separated were rather *ad hoc* and unsystematic, and I speculated in *British Endgame Study News* that perhaps the ending might not be "generally won" on a larger board. Again Marc has given us the answer: it isn't. On boards up to 15x15, the queen wins unless Black can force an immediate mate, stalemate, capture, or perpetual check. On a 16x16 board, the defenders may be able to hold out by continually running away.

There are in fact 21 positions of reciprocal zugzwang, which I list in order of increasing king separation K-k ("d" is the depth to capture with Black to move)

K-k	wK	bK	wQ	bR	d
2,0	h16	f16	c13	e15	125
	f15	f13	m12	p5	83
	f12	d12	e2	g3	14
2,1	f15	d16	f6	o8	129
	f15	h16	c15	a10	25
	c14	d16	e13	f15	27
	d14	e16	f13	g15	74
	e14	c15	d4	o6	97
	e14	c15	e5	n7	87
	e14	d12	n11	k2	84
3,0	f14	f11	j8	o7	80
	e12	h12	k8	l3	103
3,2	d13	g15	b12	a10	69
	e13	h15	c12	b10	81
	f13	i15	d12	c10	81
	g13	e16	l15	n6	105
	g13	e16	m15	o8	118
	h13	j16	d15	b7	22
4,0	e13	a13	l11	d2	99
4,1	e15	i16	c15	a10	23
6,0	h10	b10	l5	g14	17

The 6,0 case is diagrammed below, and when a position so open and characterless turns out to be reciprocal zugzwang it is clear that identifying "won" and "drawn" cases is going to be extremely difficult. I have in fact little doubt that large subsets of this ending are "hard", in the sense that no exposition can be significantly more economical than listing each position and its result individually. The longest wins (wKe1/f1, Qo10, bKg12, Rm1, 155 moves to capture) will be tabulated in the June *British Endgame Study News*, and I can supply copies on request.
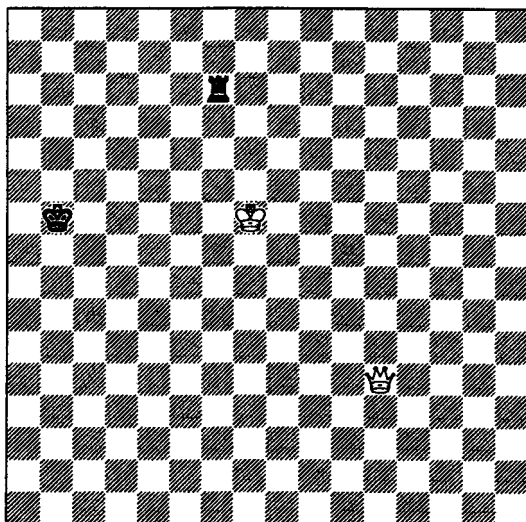

Reciprocal zugzwang!

TWO MCC ENDINGS

by Paul Byway

Against a competent defence it is not possible to mate with knight and fers unless the opposing king is already trapped in the corner accessible to the fers. In the following diagram the Black king is in the 'wrong' corner but, as in the case of NN v P, it is sometimes possible to win. There are several types of position here - against P, F, C, possibly even N. There are, for example, four different courier circuits relative to any particular corner.

Paul Byway (2003)
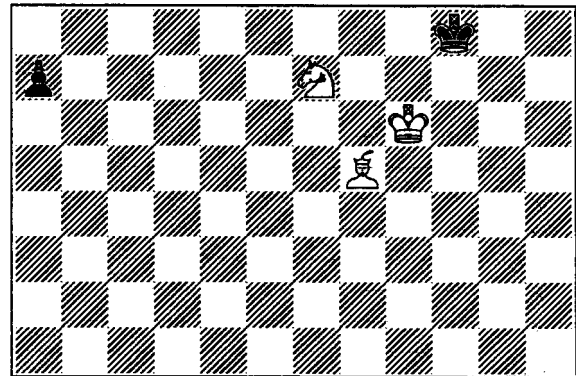
White to play and win

1.Kj6 a5 2.Fi6 Kk8 (a) 3.Fj7+ Kl7 (b) 4.Ni6 a4 (c) 5.Nj8+ Kl6 (d) 6.Fk6 a3 7.Nh7 a2 8.Ni5 a1=Q 9.Nj7 mate

(a) 2...a4 3.Fj7 a3 4.Ni6 mate (b) 3...Kl8 4.Kk6 a4 5.Kl6 a3 6.Nh5(i6) a2 7.Nj4 a1=Q 8.Nk6 mate (c) 4...Kl6 5.Fk6 a4 6.Ni6 a3 7.Nk5 a2 8.Nj7 mate (d) 5...Kl8 6.Kk6 a3 7.Kl6 a2 8.Nk6 mate

Here is a typical endgame with a wrong-colour rook pawn, which cannot be won if the Black king reaches a8. This particular position, however, can be solved as a problem.

Paul Byway (2003)
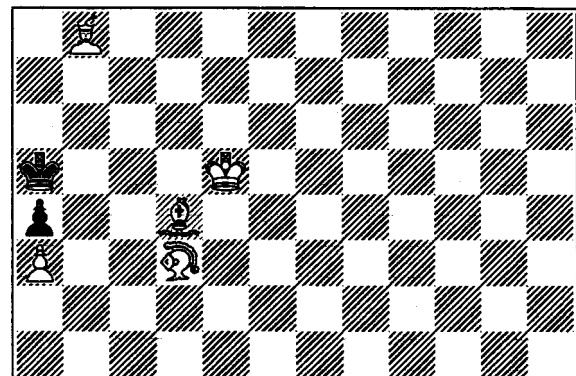
White to play and mate in five moves
(After Théodore Herlin Le Palamède, 1845)

**1.Kd6 Ka6 2.Kc7 Ka5 3.Bf6 Ka6 4.Bd8 Ka5 5.Kb7 mate**

VARIANT PROOF GAMES

by Peter Fayers

When I first thought about doing this regular page of proof games, I set myself a challenge to compose a VPG in each new variant that appears in these pages. This didn't last long - I came unstuck at once last issue with Roger Smook's "Anti-Chess". What is the concept of a 'game' when, in the initial array, both Kings are mated in fifteen-fold check? So I'll restrict myself to the *playable* variants that appear in these pages.

Every time I meet John Leslie (which is once a year at the AGM) he badgers me to compose a Hostage Chess problem. I have always tried to shy away from this, as Hostage Chess does not really lent itself to problems (for the same reasons as Shogi, where problems tend to be sacrificial mating attacks - see article in *VC*42). Also, Hostage proof games are a bit daunting; both sides need to have captured before any special effects can be introduced. Consider 4.
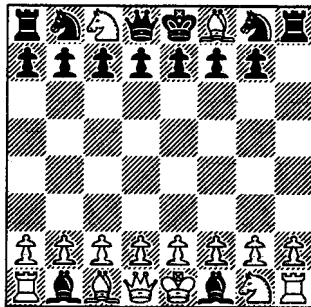
4 - PF (Original)
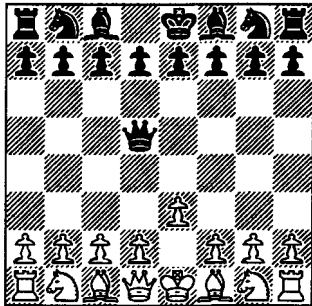
After Black's third. Game score?
Hostage Chess

The position is illegal in orthodox chess, so some hostages have been taken. For this to happen, captures must have been made, so the six half-moves must have been move, move, capture, capture, swap-and-drop, drop. You should be able to work it out from there. (If you can't, you might as well skip the rest of this article.)

Although this seems a very simple exercise, it took me a while to get it sound (honest!). I originally had the wP dropped back on e2, which is a much nicer position with only the illegal queen not on its game-array square. However, I eventually realised this led to ambiguity; the c2 pawn could have been used during play rather than the e2 one. Anyway, after much trial and tribulation I have finally managed to put together something half-way decent, so here for your delight and delectation is the first-ever (and probably the last-ever) Hostage Chess problem. (I won't dignify 4 by calling it a "problem" - it's just an example).

### 5 - PF (Original)
Dedicated to John Leslie

After Black's seventh. Game score?
Hostage Chess (the missing black pawn is in White's PoW camp)

No solving hints for this one - I want John to sweat! But here is a clue. A unit in the enemy camp is either an original unit, or a promoted pawn. Also, such a unit either got there under its own steam, or was captured, exchanged, and dropped. The four such units in the diagram are one each of the four possible combinations of these two options.

And now for a couple of easy ones. These two problems have something in common, in that the solution features a Knight Rundlauf (Rundlauf: a unit makes a round trip, ending back on its square of departure.) With that clue, you should be able to solve them without too much further prompting. In Andernach chess, whenever a unit makes a capture, it changes colour (which goes a long way to explain how a single knight can make a round tour - a minimum of four moves - after only three moves by each side !)
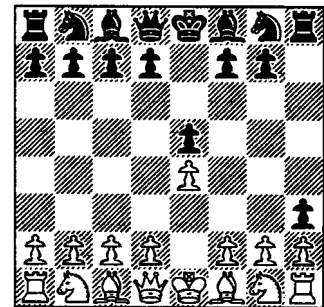
6 - Michel CAILLAUD
Commend, Andernach 1993
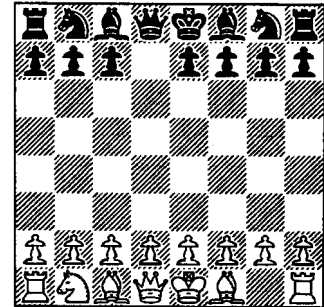
After Black's third. Game score?
Andernach Chess

In Köko, a move is only legal if the unit moved ends up adjacent to another unit. Hence, from the game array, 1.e4? is illegal - the square e4 is isolated. However, after 1.Sf3, 2.e4 can be played, as e4 now has one of its surrounding squares occupied.

7 - Thomas BRAND
ProblemKiste 1990

After Black's fifth. Game score?
Köko

When first solving this one, I wondered why the extra moves e4 and e5 were included - why not just leave it as just the Rundlauf, with the stipulation "after Black's fourth"? The reader may care to work out why the composer added the non-thematic extra move pair.
Comments welcome; solutions next issue.

Solutions to problems in VC43

2. 1.e4 Nf6; 2.Qf3 N*e4>e2; 3.Qf6 N*f6>g8; 4.Kd1 N*g8>e1

3. 1.e4 h6; 2.e5 Rh7; 3.Bc4 f5; 4.Bxg8 d5; 5.Bxh7 f4; 6.Bd3 g5; 7.Bf1

GAME REVIEWS

by David Pritchard

CARD CHESS

Games involving cards to represent the chess pieces are not unknown and this is by no means the first game to be entitled Card Chess. That said, the game has a number of original features. Card Chess is for 2 to 4 players. Play is on a handsome and sturdy 10x10 board with each player having the usual quota of pieces (cards). Here alas the game is part-flawed in that three of the sets are similar in colour (shades of black/brown) although the cards also carry small symbols to assist in identification. Contrasting colours would have overcome the problem.

Players, having shuffled their cards, place them two deep face-down along the eight central squares of the rank nearest to them. A move consists of turning over one of one's own cards (if one has no face-down cards available there is no penalty) and then moving any face-up piece, according to usual chess rules. Face-down cards have no influence on the game; pieces can cross them or land on them at will. Cards covered by pieces cannot be turned over until the square is vacated. The average game between two players lasts on average just ten moves. It tends to be violent, quite exciting, but rather trivial.

Better, for my money, is what is called the memory game. Here the players' cards are all shuffled together and laid out face-down according to a prearranged block pattern which depends of course on the number of players (cards). A turn consists of turning over a card and then moving a piece as in the standard game except that if the exposed card is an opponent's piece you turn it back face down. The owner of the piece will remember (hardly difficult) which card it is and will turn it over on his turn at an appropriate moment. The player whose king is turned over first is usually at a disadvantage for obvious reasons. An interesting feature of the game is that you elect to turn over a card that might favour you; for example, a card that is a knight's

move away from an opponent's queen in the hope that it will prove to be a knight of your colour. As the game progresses, it becomes obvious which pieces still remain unexposed, increasing the scope for skill. In both versions, a pawn only promotes (on the tenth rank) to a captured piece.

Cardchess International, 1228 Gorham Street #2, Newmarket, Ontario, Canada L3Y 7V1
Website: www.cardchess.com
Price unknown

CIRONDO

Cirondo was invented by Angus Wright who developed the game from a 1989 idea. It was launched with considerable flair at the London Toy Fair in January 2003 where it reportedly had an 'overwhelmingly positive response'.

Cirondo is a chess variant for two or four players on an outsize circular board. A central circle, known as the Void, is no-man's-land. Radiating from the Void are 32 files each of eight squares (strictly, cells) chequered alternately black and white in chessboard fashion, thus a total of 256 cells, four times the size of a normal circular chessboard. There are three different types of piece, collectively known as stellars: moons, planets and solar systems. The first thing one notices about the game however is the quality of the components: a firm board that folds out and squat, stable metal pieces with baize bases in a sturdy, attractive box. The sides are distinguished by colour, in the two-player game the colours are gold and silver with blue and red added for the four-player game. In the two-player game each player has 16 moons, 16 planets and four solar systems (moons and planets, but not solar systems, are halved in number for the four-player game).

The initial position (two-player game) has Gold occupying half the perimeter cells with planets with Silver occupying the other half. The moons are placed on the cells immediately in front of their planets so that the opposing forces are at opposite sides of the board but occupying adjacent files at the

extremities. The solar systems are placed together in the Void, effectively out of play.

Now comes the chess bit. The moons behave exactly like pawns except that there is no two-square initial move. The planets are bishops and the solar systems, which are predictably promoted pawns, are queens (so there would be a small problem if you promoted more than four moons). A pawn promotes on reaching the inner circle when it is removed from play and replaced by a solar system. The object of the game is to eliminate the opposition.

A player left with one stellar is deemed to have lost unless his opponent also has one stellar (how can this happen?) when the player with the higher-ranking stellar is the winner; if equal, the game is a draw - not a game, one suspects, likely to suffer from Capablanca's 'draw death'.

The rules could hardly be simpler. The sell line (have you heard this before?) is 'Easy to learn - a lifetime to master'. Presumably the four-player game can be an all-play-all or a partnership game.

The game is, in short, an enlarged and emasculated circular chess. **Cirondo** lacks rooks, knights, and above all a king piece. Also there is no pawn confrontation. Skilful the game undoubtedly is, but after that there is not much more to say except that extermination could prove a rather tedious process and in the two-player game at least quite difficult to achieve (a few solar systems chasing each other round the board). **Cirondo** may be a game for the future, as claimed, but it would appear to lack the interest of Byzantine Chess, its 9th century forbear, and the uncounted number of similar games that have been invented in the twelve centuries since then.

Cirondo is on line at www.cirondo.co.uk where there is a rapidly expanding community of players (try the game: you can play against a computer). **Cirondo** costs £29.95 and is available from 3D Computers of Chippenham and can also be purchased via the web site. Postage is £4.95 in U.K. (rates for Europe and the rest of the world are under negotiation). The company is working to form **Cirondo** clubs in

schools. So far there is reported to have been 'a fantastic response' from pupils in the 12-17 age group. The game is endorsed by IM Chris Baker who is enthusiastic for the game but appears to know little about variant chess.

KŌ SHOGI

If you find Shogi rather trivial, the answer may be Kō Shogi, invented (probably) by Ogi Serai (1666-1728). Peter Blommers has kindly sent me details of this variant-to-end-all-variants. It is played on the 19x19 intersections of a go board with 90 pieces a side. The pieces are go stones, with the black pieces depicted in white on black stones and the white pieces shown in black on white stones. There are similarities with Middle (Chu) Shogi with its mere 46 pieces a side. Almost all the pieces in Kō Shogi can promote. Captured pieces are removed from play (the idea of re-entering captured pieces had not been born, and anyway the contrasting colours wouldn't harmonize). Write to me if you would like the initial layout and Blommer's descriptions of piece movements (incomplete).

NEW CHESS

An article on the above game, which covered no less than six three-quarter length columns appeared in *The Scotsman* on the 1st October 2002 with comment by John Henderson, the paper's chess correspondent. BBC Scotland called me on the same day and asked me to talk about New Chess. What could I say? Briefly, 'never heard of it'.

The game is played on a 91-hex board (i.e., the same board as in Glinski's Hexagonal Chess). There are 22 pieces a side; 1 x king, queen; 2 x rook, bishop; 3 x knight, spy; 10 x pawn. The spies (spies in a perfect-information game strike me as a contradiction?) move one hex in any of a maximum of twelve directions. A move is to an adjacent hex or, via a hex corner, to the nearest hex of the same colour. The game was invented by a Serb, Goran Radovic, who claims, according to Jeanette Oldham, the author of the article, that both

Karpov and Fischer are 'deeply impressed' and 'delighted' with the game with 'up to 20 of the world's top 100 players' trying their hand at it, all of which sounds rather unlikely to say the least. No rules are given alas, but the initial position, which is given, is something of a giveaway. For a start, the layout is asymmetrical with two knights on one side of the board and one on the other. Curiously, too, pawns are initially doubled on the c- and h-files. Stranger still, there are only two bishops (three is the norm for a hexagonal game) and they stand on like hexes which, if they have orthodox hex moves, means that they cover the same cell complex and thus have no access to two-thirds of the board. And this is a game that allegedly has won the admiration of Karpov and Fischer!

Almost inevitably, errors have crept into the article. For example, we are told that 'Capablanca played Maroczy at Capablanca Chess and lost 3-1'. He did not: he played Maroczy at Julian Hayward's Double Chess, a completely different game, and won 3-1. John Henderson concludes: 'I can't quite believe he (Fischer) would so publicly endorse another version (sic) that would compete with his own game (Fischerandom)'. Frankly, I can't see New Chess competing seriously with anything.

QUANTRUNG CHESS

This variant is described on a website (www.vu.vo.org). The author, Vu Vo, a Vietnamese, appears from the text to be the game's inventor. However, I sent the text of an earlier edition to a Vietnamese friend who has recently moved to Hawaii from Hanoi (the current 12th edition is significantly different) and she claims that it is an old game although she could not tell me anything else about it. The only certainties seem to be that the game is derived from xiangqi which has long been popular in Vietnam, and that it is named after an 18th century military hero, the Emperor Quang Trung.

Rules

Board 9x8; central area of 30 squares c2-c6-g6-g2 marked. Each side has 15 pieces: 1 x General; 3 x Horse; 2 x Boat, Cannon, Elephant; 5 x pawn.

Initial set-up (l. to r., back rank to third rank; files a, c, e, g & i only) CEHCE/BHGHB/PPPPP. A curious feature of the game is that each player moves twice in a turn, first a non-capture then a capture. Red starts with a single capture.

Moves

General One square diagonally then one square orthogonally to capture. The General is the only piece able to move twice on a turn. It may not leave the central area.

Horse One square (which must be vacant) diagonally then one square orthogonally.

Boat Moves orthogonally (like a rook). After a capture, it must move to the empty square immediately beyond. If this square is occupied, the capture is illegal.

Cannon Moves as a rook but an odd number of squares only and may leap any occupied even-numbered squares.

Elephant Two squares diagonally or three squares orthogonally. May leap intervening pieces.

Pawn One square diagonally forward provided the square immediately in front of it is not occupied. It may also move backwards one square (it is not stated whether this is diagonally or straight back, or perhaps both?). No promotion apparently.

The aim of the game is to capture or stalemate the opposing general. Repetition is a draw.

<u>Comment</u>

I have not played the game so cannot really comment. However, it strikes me as very artificial and no better or quite possibly worse than its many predecessors. It is not clear whether one's second move is optional or whether it is forfeited if no capture is possible?

QUATTRO-SCHACH

This is a four-handed variant as its name might suggest. Usual 8x8 board with four 8x3 extensions. Usual men (wood) in four colours: black, red, yellow, blue. Men are set up on nearest two ranks of each extension (i.e., same board and set-up as for Verney's four-handed chess). All-play-all four-player chess with a novel feature. In the right-hand corner of each player is an array of 3x3 squares

(completing, if you like, a 14x14 square board), three squares in each of the opponents' colours. In addition, the four central squares of the board are in the four colours corresponding to those of the players' pieces. You win if you are the last surviving player or if your king reaches the central square of its own colour. When all nine corner squares are filled (three of each of your opponents' pieces) all nine men are removed from play and you come into possession of a card with a large '2' on it. This entitles you to move your king two squares at a time in future (you can pass through check). The now-empty corner squares are again used to deposit captured men. This time however you need only collect two of each of your opponents' pieces (extra pieces are irrelevant and are simply removed from play) when you earn a card with a large '3' on it (which replaces the 2 card) permitting your king to move three squares at a time. The advantage of these cards is that they can prove a considerable help if you are aspiring to get your king to the centre!

Meteor Verlags GmbH, Zittauer Strasse 27/Haus 10, 99091 Erfurt, Germany. Price unknown.

ISOLATED PAWNS

by David Pritchard

I have always had a suspicion that the larger a chess variant, the smaller its appeal. This suspicion is not shared by all games manufacturers. At the 2003 Essen Games Fair two new large variants were on display, Chess Empire and Grosses Schach (Large Chess).

Chess Empire

This is a four-player game (no partnerships apparently) on a 386-square board (a central 14x14 area and four extensions of 3x14 squares). Each side has 28 men, 1 x king, queen; 4 x rook, knight; 2 x bishop, spy; 14 x pawn. The spy moves like a knight or two squares like a queen (in other words, like the fairy problemists' squirrel). All the men apart from the spy are orthodox. Pawns always have the two-square move option and castling is permitted. The starting position (left to right) on the first rank of each extension is SRRNNBQKBNNRRS with the pawns occupying the second rank. There is a special rule when the game is reduced to two players. Both players must first bring on any men still on their extensions then they must either mate in five moves 'or capture as many power pieces as possible' with the rider that 'after the fifth move even if your pieces are not all on the main board, you can capture pieces as defense only until your pieces are in the main board'. Clear? I am not clear where the empire comes in or who the spy is spying on. The five-foot high stack of this boxed game had not, as far as I could tell, diminished when I left the fair on the last day.

Empire Chess LLC, 39 Shipman Roar, Binghampton, NY 13903, U.S.A.

Grosses Schach

Board 10x10, 30 men a side; 1 x king, queen; 2 x rook, bishop, knight, unicorn, eagle, minister, cardinal, hammer, arrow; 10 x pawn. Array a1-j1/a10-j10: ECHAMMAHCE; a2-j2/a9-j9: RNUBQKBUNR; pawns on 3rd/8th ranks. Unicorn moves as knight or leaps 3 squares as rook; eagle moves as camel or zebra (fairy pieces), minister moves as rook but captures as bishop, cardinal moves as bishop but captures as rook, the hammer moves as rook but captures on any square adjacent to a square to which it moves, the arrow moves as bishop and captures on any adjacent square to which it moves except a square orthogonally adjacent to its starting square. Clear? Castling normal. No information on pawn moves. The game was expected to be in production early in 2004.

Varioplay Spiele Verlag, Am Schlossbick 13a, Senden, 89250, Germany.

At the other end of the spectrum is a miniature variant by James Wittman, the inventor of Knight Court Chess (see *VC* 43 page 48).

Ambassador Chess

Board 2x3(!). Each side has two pieces, an archbishop that moves like a knight or bishop and is the royal piece, and a changeling that, as its name might suggest, changes its identity after each move. The changeling begins as a thorny rose (that's a new one) which moves like a king but captures like a bishop. It then changes in turn to a rook, a bishop, a queen then back to a thorny rose. When a changeling is captured its original owner may, on any subsequent turn, drop it back on an empty square in the form in which it was captured. Checkmate the archbishop to win. Array: *White* A on a1, C on b1, *Black* A on a3, C on b3. I have tried the game but gave up to protect my sanity.

A Curious Variant

David Clayton has kindly sent me photographs of a curious variant game bought recently in Kazan (Russia). Unfortunately there were no rules with the game nor indication of manufacturer although board and men look very professional which makes it unlikely that it is a 'one off'. Board 10x10, white square left-hand corner. Ten pawns arrayed along 2nd/9th ranks. The standard pieces (white and black) are placed in normal order on the eight central squares of the 1st and 10th ranks. The ranks are numbered 1-10 as usual, but the first file is marked with a triangle (Δ) the remaining files being lettered normally A-I. One obvious question: if the first file has some special significance, why not the last file also (the first and last files having no pieces on them in the starting position)? The mystery does not end there. By the board in the photographs, and included in the set, are 12 extra pieces, six red and six blue. These pieces are king, queen, two rooks, two bishops. What is their significance? Any ideas? The buyer of the set (not David Clayton) could give no information.

# CIRCULAR CHESS WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP 2003

by John Beasley

Last year's Circular Chess World Championship took place in Lincoln on May 18. David Howell was unable to defend his title, having a commitment to play some funny square-board game somewhere on the Continent, and in his absence Francis Bowers returned to his winning ways with another perfect score. Sadly, Paul Byway was again unable to come, but George Jelliss and myself were present from the *VC* team and at least Steve Underhill and Francis himself from among our readers. Ken Whyld looked in during the morning, bright and enthusiastic as ever, with nothing to indicate that this would be the last time I would see him.
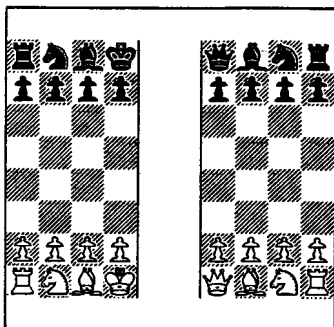
A brief reminder. Board and starting position as above (imagine the a/h files joined to form a 16-square ring, the b/g files joined similarly, and so on); promotion on the eighth rank as usual; no castling, no *en passant*. Note that a1 is *light* and the kings are on d1/d8. The game is akin to Byzantine Chess (see *VC* 42) but with modern queens and bishops, pawn promotion, and no win by bare king.

The tournament threw up a couple of interesting endings. In one, the players agreed a draw with K+Q+B v K+R, and I have yet to prove them wrong (K+Q v K+R is only a draw on a circular board, and the extra bishop appears surprisingly unhelpful). The other came down to something like the position in the next column (I didn't disturb the players by taking notes). Black has many ways to win, but perhaps the most elegant is to attack with B+N+P on the left and rely

on knowing how to play "king against three united passed pawns" on the right. In ordinary chess, this ending is notoriously more common in books than in actual play; I suspect it may arise rather more naturally in Circular.
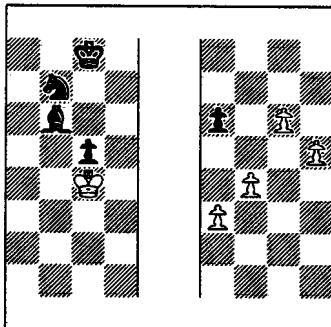
Nobody responded to my appeal for games for the magazine, but perhaps my two-flank attack against Mike Hore will be of interest. I spoilt it by tactical oversights, but the comments on strategy are unaffected. My notes, criticism welcomed. "Round the end" moves and checks are starred.

1.g2-g4 b7-b6 2.f2-f4 Nb8-c6 3.c2-c4 a7-a5 4.Nb1-c3 a5-a4 5.Bf1-b1* Bc8-a6(?) 6.d2-d3 Qe8-b7* 7.Nc3xa4? (I thought I was winning a pawn, but it goes straight back and I should have played something like Bd2 first) **7...Ba6xc4 8.Na4xb6 Qb7xb6 9.d3xc4 Qb6-d4+** (this is what I had overlooked) **10.Bc1-d2 Qd4xc4 11.Ng1-c2* Bf8-b8* 12.Rh1-f1** (starting to exploit the c/f ring, which is open for White on the left) **12...Qa4 13.b2-b3** (aroint thee, witch) **13...Qa4-b5** (arointed):
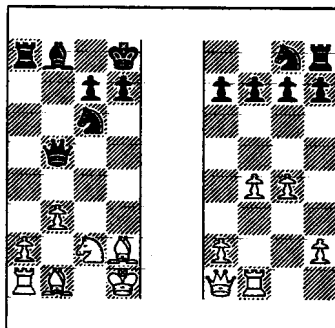
14.h2-h4 (to gain the h3-e3 rank for the a-rook, and also making ready to open a second front should this seem desirable) **14...Bb8-a7 15.Ra1-h3* Ba7-d4 16.h4-h5 Qb5-d5 17.Nc2xd4(?) Qd5xd4** (Black's two knights are probably better than

White's bishops, particularly as wBb1 is tied to the defence of wPa2) **18.Rh3-f3 Ra8-a6 19.Rf1-c3*:**
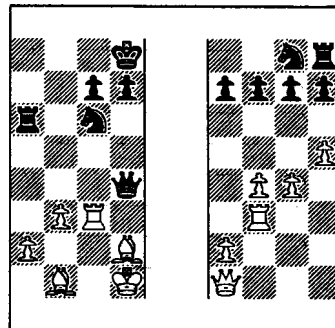
I was feeling quite pleased here. My rooks can operate on either flank, my queen is poised to intervene at h4, and I have possibilities of a pawn storm on the right to break things up. **19...Qd4-b6 20.Rc3-d3 Nc6-b4 21.Bd2xb4 Qb6xb4 22.Rf3-c4* Qb4-a3:**
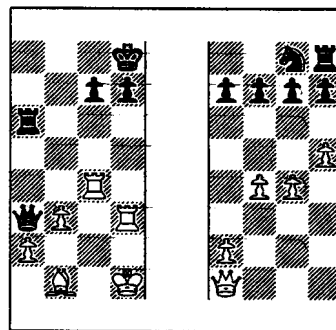
23.Qe1-h4 Qa3-a5 24.Qh4-g5 g7-g6 25.Qg5-e5 g6xh5? (25...f6 appears necessary) **26.Qe5xh5??** (26.Qg7+* was surely better, with 26...Kc8 27.Qxf7+* and 26...Ke8* 27.Rxd7+*) **26...f7-f6 27.Qh5-f7 Qa5-b6 28.g4-g5 Qb6-b8** (releasing the knight) **29.g5xf6 Ng8xf6.** Black now guards everything, so I reluctantly offered a draw with **30.Rd3-c3??** overlooking that the knight's move had cleared the way for **30...Qb8xb1**+.** Oh clang.

Tactical oversights apart, my conclusions from this game were that a would-be attacker should preserve at least one knight (major pieces alone lack the flexibility to break through a well organized defence) and that knight for bishop is not a good swap. In ordinary chess, the knight's greater flexibility is roughly balanced by the bishop's mobility. Here, the knight is somewhat less flexible but the bishop is markedly less mobile, and the balance tilts in favour of the knight.

MODERN COURIER CHESS

by Paul Byway

Here are the games from the first correspondence match-tournament. Each of us played two games, one as White and the other as Black. Particular thanks are due to newcomer Robert Reynolds for his fresh insights into the problem of the opening. I think relative piece values betrayed him here and there. Results: PB(2), RT(1), RR(0).

	White	Robert Reynolds
	Black	Roy Talbot

1.	e2-e4	i7-i6	2. Cc1-e3 Nb8-c6
3.	f2-f4	j7-j5	4. g2-g4 e7-e6
5.	c2-c3	k7-k5	6. d2-d4 Bi8-k6
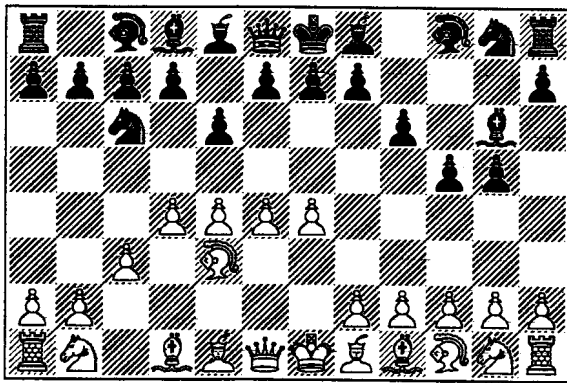
It seems that they have decided to specialise in different areas of the board - possible on the grand scale in MCC. It will be interesting to see how it all turns out.

7.	Nk1-j3	Fh8-j6	8. 12-14 k5-k4
9.	Nj3-k1	Fj6-i5	10. i2-i3 Nk8-j6
11.	Nk1-i2	Nc6-e7	12. Fe1-g3 d7-d5
13.	e4-e5	Cc8-c6	14. h2-h4 Fi5-h6
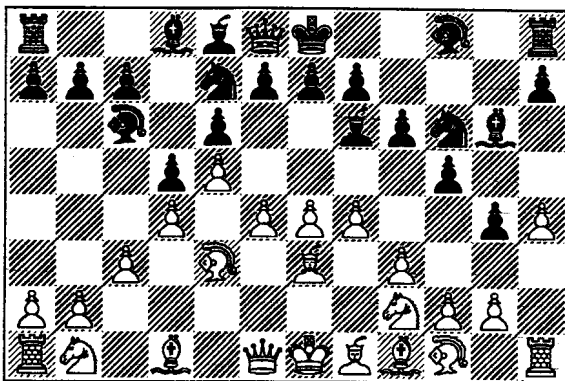
The picture has changed subtly. White dominates the centre while Black seems to be attempting a grand encircling manoevre. I prefer White.

15.	Ni2-j4	Bk6-j7	16. Cj1-h3 Cj8-i6
17.	Nj4-i2	Bj7-k6	18. Nb1-d2 f7-f6
19.	Nd2-f3	Cc6-e4	20. g4-g5 f6-f5

21.	h4-h5	Kg8-i7
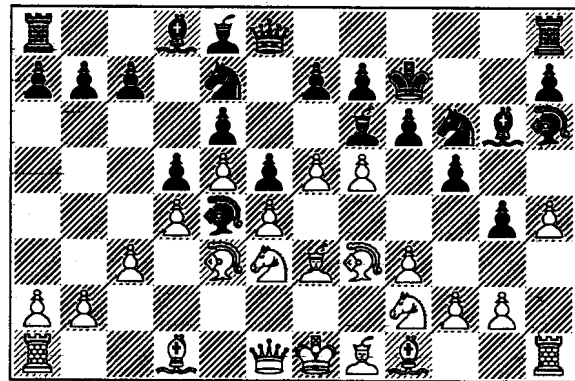
White attempts to weaken i6, quite rightly rejecting the trivial gain of Pg5 x Fh6.

22.	h5xi6	h7xi6	23. Nf3-h4 Ce4-g4
24.	Ni2-k3	Fh6-i5	25. Nh4xj5+ i6xj5
26.	Nk3xj5+	Ki7-i6	27. Nj5xl6 Rl8-h8
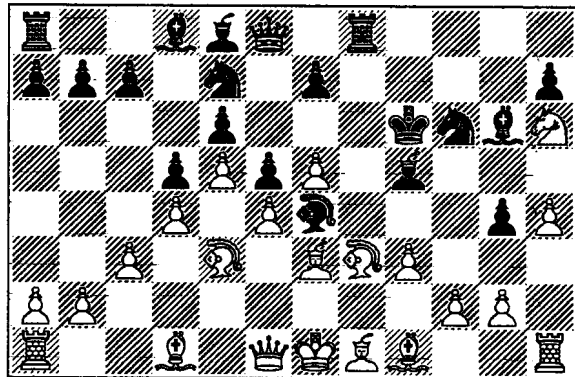
White has CPP for the knight - a significant gain. On the other hand Black has active pieces and a share of the centre.

28.	Fh1-g2	Fe8-g6	29. 14-15 Nj6xl5
30.	Nl6xk4	Fg6-h5	31. Fg3-h4 Fi5xh4
32.	i3xh4	Ne7-g6	33. Bi1-g3 Ki6-j7
34.	Rl1-i1	Kj7-j8	35. Nk4-i5 Ng6xi5
36.	Ri1xi5	Nl5-j4	37. Bd1-f3 Fh5-i4
38.	Kg1-f2	Nj4-i2	
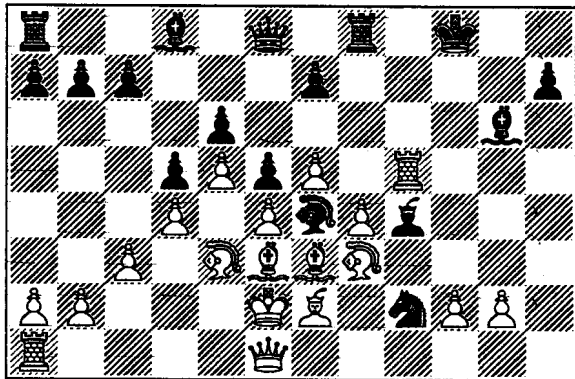
Black has generated pressure on h3 and caused the White king to flee. Why doesn't he capture on h3 instead?

39.	Qf1-11	Rh8-h7	40.	Q11-16+	Kj8-k8
41.	j2-j4	Qf8-j8	42.	Q16xj8+	Kk8xj8
43.	j4-j5	Bk6-j7	44.	Ra1-i1	Ni2xg3
45.	Kf2xg3	Bd8-e7			
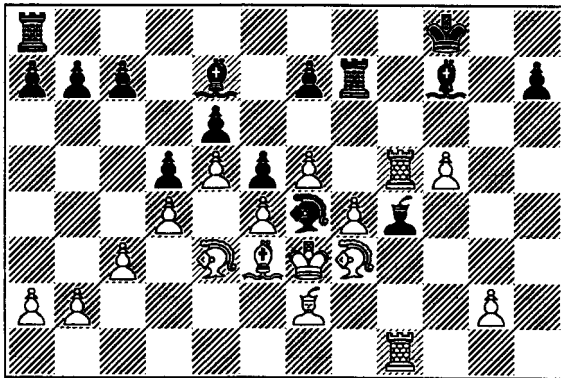
46.	Ce3-c5	Ra8-h8	47.	Cc5xe7	Rh7xh4
48.	Ri1-i3	Cg4xg2	49.	Bf3xg2	Rh4-g4+
50.	Kg3-h2	Fi4xh3			
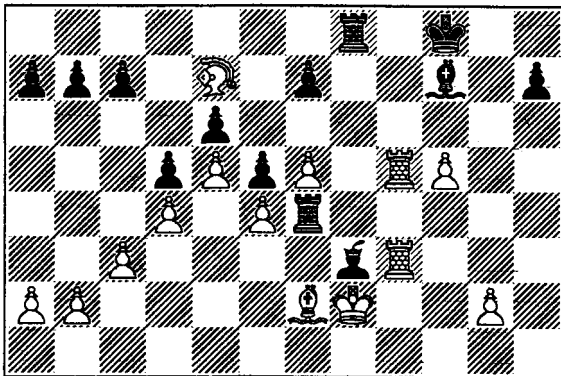
Black's king is in better shape than White's and he continues to chip away at the centre. It was very bold to abandon the bishop to get the rooks working.

51.	Bg2xh3	Rg4xf4	52.	Kh2-i1	Rf4-f3
53.	Bh3-i2	g7-g6	54.	Ri3xf3	Bj7xf3
55.	Ce7xc7	Kj8-j7	56.	Ri5-i3	Bf3-e4
57.	k2-k4	Rh8-h5			
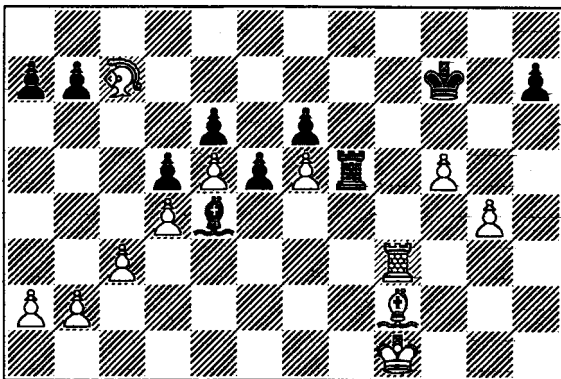
Although White is a courier and pawn ahead Black seems to be well placed. We are reaching that stage of the ending

when a courier can suddenly become so much dead wood. I think White's 58th is a bad mistake (passive rook). Much better would be something like 58.Ce7 Rh7 59.k5!? and immediately White has some play. If this proves to be inadequate White has 59.Cc5 with the idea Ce3.

58.	Ri3-g3	a7-a6	59.	Cc7-c5	Kj7-j6
60.	Cc5-e3	f5-f4	61.	Rg3-i3	f4-f3
62.	Ri3xf3	Be4xf3	63.	Bi2xe6	Kj6-k5
64.	Be6-f7	Bf3-e4	65.	e5-e6	Kk5xk4
66.	e6-e7	Kk4-j3	67.	e7-e8=Q	Rh5-h1
					mate
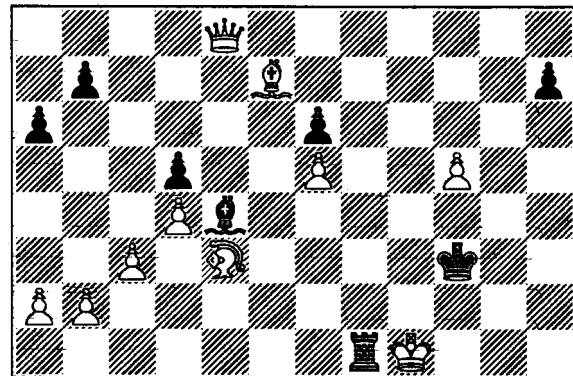
White: Paul Byway

Black: Robert Reynolds

1.	f2-f4	Nk8-j6	2.	g2-g4	h7-h5
3.	g4xh5	Nj6xh5	4.	e2-e4	g7-g6
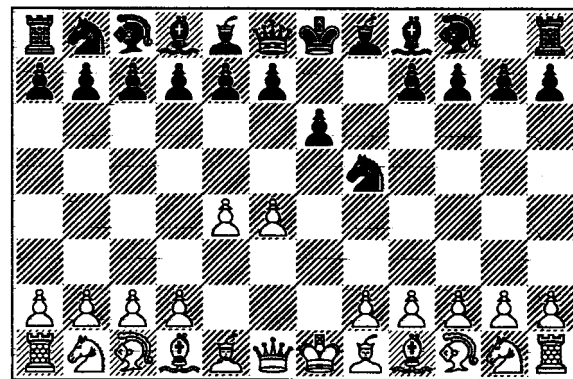
A novel and very interesting opening. I had not realised that Black's first two moves were playable. The centralised knight presses on f4 and the threat of Nh5-j4xk2 is very annoying. On reflection it might have been possible to play 3.g5. Black can then contemplate 3....e5 4.e3 exf4 5.exf4 and Black seems to win a pawn with 5....Bxc2 6.Bxc2 Qc5+ followed by 6....Qxc2. This is getting messy and would obviously require considerable investigation. At his 5th I myself would prefer to put the fers on h6.

5.	i2-i3	Cj8-h6	6.	Fe1-e3	i7-i6
7.	h2-h4	Nb8-c6	8.	Nk1-j3	e7-e6
9.	Fh1-h3	f7-f5	10.	e4-e5	d7-d6

11.	d2-d4	d6xe5	12.	d4xe5	Qf8-b4
13.	Nb1-c3	Nc6-e7	14.	a2-a3	Qb4-b6
15.	b2-b4	c7-c6	16.	Nc3-a4	Qb6-c7

33.	Ce3-g5+	Be7xg5	34.	Ff4xg5	Rd8-d4
35.	Bg3-f4	Ki7-i8	36.	Fg5-h6	Qg7-h7
37.	Qg2-g5	Fe8-f7	38.	Bd1-e2	17-16
39.	Nk5-i4	Bg6xi4	40.	Fh3xi4	Qh7-g6
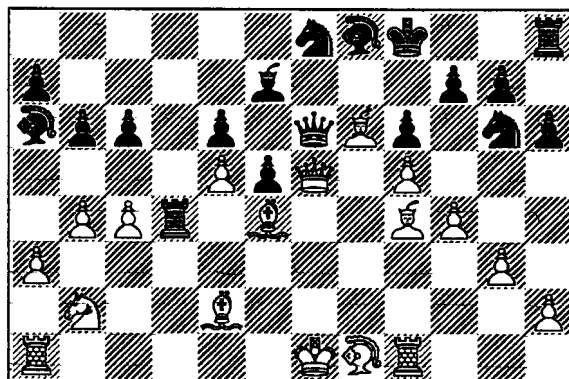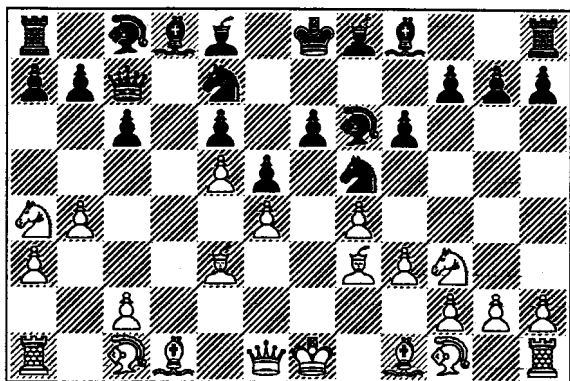
12....Qb4 was not effective and when 13....Ne7 cut off the queen's retreat the sequence was inevitable, ending with White's next which takes d5 from the knight.

| 17. | c2-c4 | b7-b6 | 18. | Cj1-h1 | Ch6-j6 |
| 19. | Cc1-e1 | Fh8-h6 | 20. | Qf1-g2 | Kg8-i7 |

41.	Qg5xg6+	Ff7xg6	42.	Fh6-g5	Nk6-i7
43.	Bf4-e3	Rd4-d7	44.	Ch1-j3	k7-k5
45.	j4-j5	k5-k4	46.	Cj3-h3	Fg6-h7
47.	Ra1-d1	Rd7xd1	48.	Be2xd1	16-15
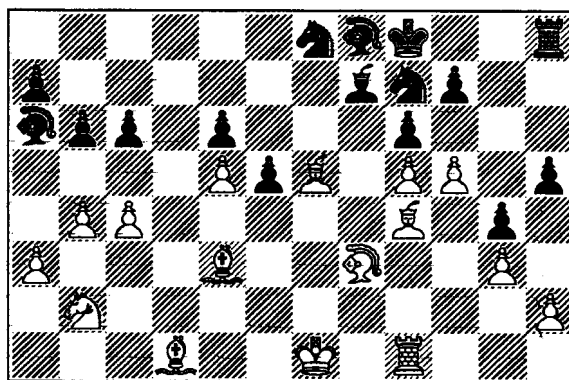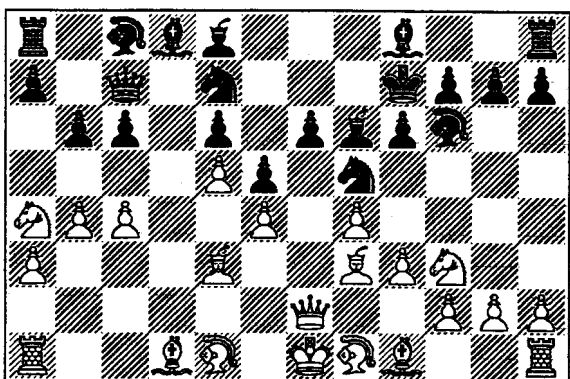
21.	i3-i4	Nh5-j4	22.	k2-k3	Nj4-k6
23.	Bi1-g3	Ne7-g8	24.	i4-i5	Cj6-h8
25.	Nj3-k5	Fh6xi5	26.	h4xi5	Cc8-a6
27.	Na4-b2	g6-g5	28.	f4xg5	Bi8-g6
29.	R11-i1	Qc7-g7	30.	j2-j4	Bd8xg5

49.	b4-b5	c6xb5	50.	c4xb5	Ca6-c8
51.	Nb2-d3	Ni7-g6	52.	Bd1-f3	15-14
53.	Be3-f2	14xk3	54.	12xk3	R18-13
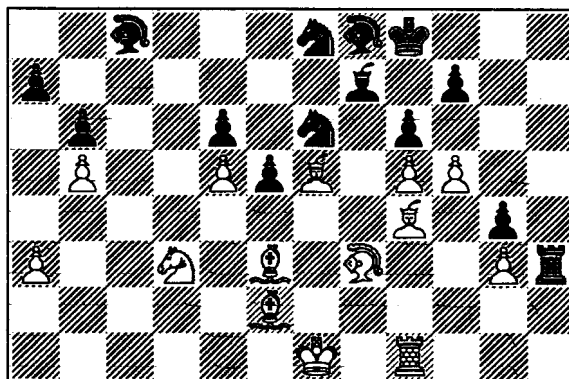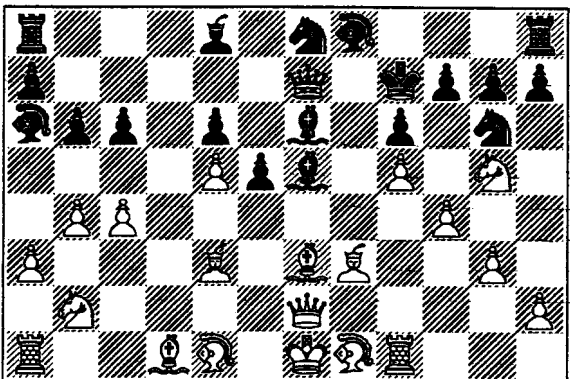
| 31. | Fe3-f4 | Bg5-e7 | 32. | Ce1-e3 | Ra8-d8 |

55.	Ri1-k1	Ng8-e7	56.	Bf3-h1	R13-12
57.	Bh1xk4	Ne7-d5	58.	j5xi6	Fh7xi6
59.	Fi4-h5	Fi6xh5	60.	Ch3xh5	Nd5-c3

```
61. Bk4-h7+  Resigns
```
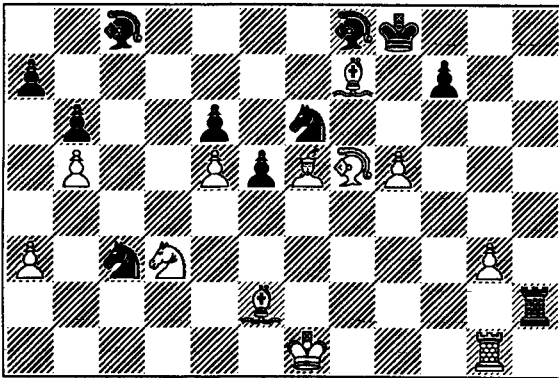

A pity Black overlooked this loss of a knight. His defence
was tough and the counterattack down the l-file very
troublesome. My plan here was to keep him away from the
queens-side pawns and to advance with the k-pawn.
Opening up the position for RBBF should be decisive -
with the added possibility of Cxj7. Nevertheless, White's
trump card has long been the two bishops; without them he
would have little indeed. In MCC no minor piece is a
match for a bishop.

White:	Roy Talbot
Black:	Paul Byway

```
1.  e2-e4    e7-e5    2.  i2-i3    i7-i6
3.  Nb1-c3   Nb8-c6   4.  Fh1-h3   Fh8-h6
5.  Nk1-i2   g7-g6    6.  j2-j3    f7-f5
7.  Bi1-k3   Nk8-j6   8.  Cj1-h1   Fe8-e6
```
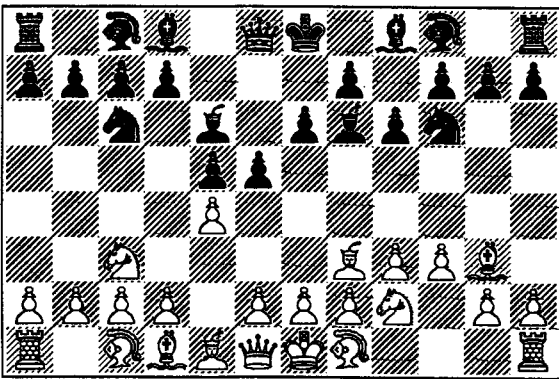

White consistently follows his 'hollow centre' strategy.
Black is an idea-free zone; starting by imitating White and
ending with pawns at g6 and i6 which is very ugly. The
horizontal 'courier shift' is frequently seen and here square
d5 is in contemplation.

```
 9.  Ch1-f3    f5xe4  10.  Cf3-d5    Fe6xd5
11.  Nc3-d5    Cc8-e6 12.  Cc1-e3    Nj6-h5
13.  g2-g3     Nh5-f6 14.  Nd5xf6    Qf8xf6
15.  Ni2-h4    Fh6-g5 16.  Nh4-g2    d7-d6
```

White has given up C+P for F to weaken Black's white
squares - a considerable sacrifice; now Black solidifies his
pawn chain accepting the greater white-square weakness. I

was sure that 17.c3 would be the immediate response.
There is comfort in that White's stalemated fers can't be
freed without giving up hope of regaining the pawn minus.
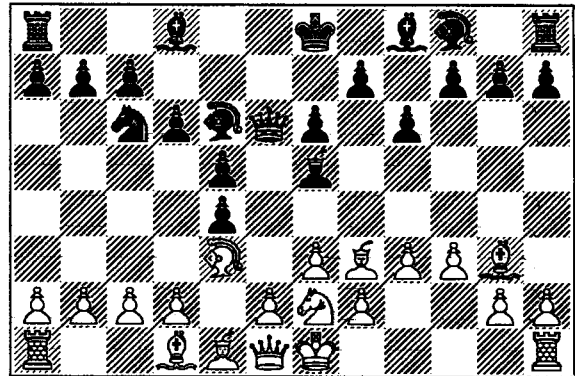

```
17.  c2-c3     Kg8-i7 18.  Kg1-i2    h7-h5
19.  Qf1-b5    Ra8-b8 20.  Rl1-f1    Fg5-f4
21.  g3-g4     h5xg4  22.  Fh3xg4    g6-g5
23.  Ce3-g3    Ce6xg4+24.  Bd1xg4    Bi8-f5
25.  Cg3-i5+   Ki7-i8 26.  h2-h3     Bf5xg4
27.  h3xg4     j7-j6  28.  i3-i4     j6xi5
```
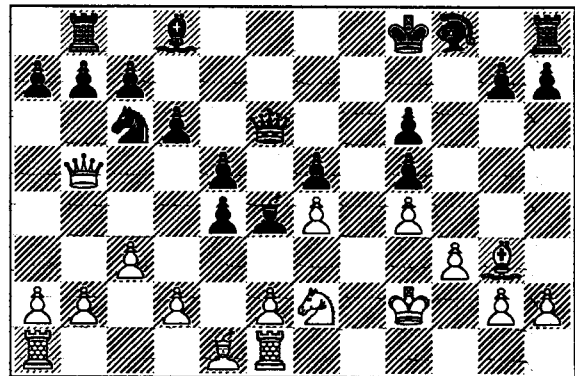


```
29.  Qb5-c4    Qf6-g6 30.  Ng2-i3    Bd8-e7
31.  Ni3-k4    Be7-f8 32.  b2-b4     l7-l5
33.  Nk4xi5    Bf8xi5 34.  Bk3xi5    Cj8-j6
35.  b4-b5     Nc6-e7 36.  Qc4xc7    Qg6-e8
37.  Qc7xd6    Ne7-g6 38.  Ra1-b1    Rb8-d8
39.  Qd6-f6    Rd8-d7 40.  Bi5-k3    Ng6-h4+
41.  resigns
```
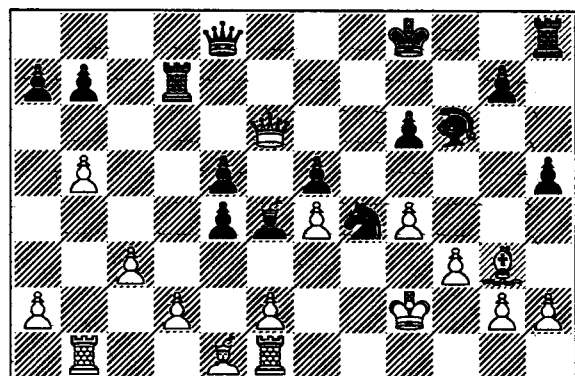

Not easy to see that the queen would be trapped by Cj6-h8 !

LOSING CHESS : WHAT IF ... ?

by John Beasley

Here are some more games from the 2001 "Unofficial Losing Chess World Championship", with analysis by Stan Goldovski's invaluable *Giveaway Wizard*. Answers to questions are on page 67.

From Round 2. White **Johan Snuverink**, Black **Kim Meulenbroek**. **1.e3 b6 2.Ba6 Nxa6** (for 2...Bxa6 see *VC* 42) **3.Qe2** (threat 4.Qxa6 with a forced win) **3...Nb8** (*Wizard* judges everything but 3...b5 as good for White, though there is no forced win within my computer's horizon) **4.h4** (4.Qa6 Nxa6 5.b4 Nxb4 6.a4 Nxc2 7.e4 looks strong, but 7...Nxa1 gets the knight out of harm's way and there is no immediate tactical continuation) **4...Ba6 5.Qxa6 Nxa6 6.Nc3?** and Black missed a forced win:
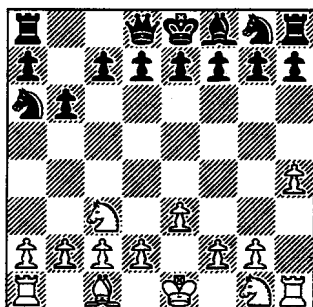
Black won anyway (see *VC* 39), but the computer reports that there were some inaccuracies by both sides, and in particular that Black missed an instructive clincher at move 19:
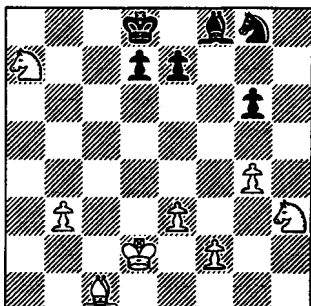
It appears that 19...Kc8 20.Nxc8 will fail because the White knight can give itself away on e7, but Black has a way of defusing this.

The Round 3 game between **Kim Meulenbroek** and **Tim Remmel** was one of several to start with **1.c4**, which seems to be becoming increasingly popular as an alternative to the standard 1.e3. It allows Black to get rid of a bishop at once, 1...b5 2.cxb5 Ba6, but *Wizard* continues 3.bxa6 Nxa6 4.b4 Nxb4 5.Nc3 Nxa2 6.Nxa2 and we have the position below:
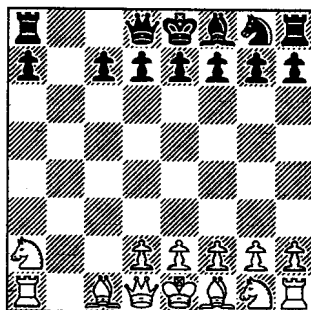
The situation on the a-file is extremely sharp and I personally would not care to risk such a position in practice, but on general principles White has a significant advantage (he commands more space and so we can expect Black to run out of moves first) and I have little doubt that a careful expert will be able to make this advantage tell. We observe, for example, that the freeing move ...e6 is at least temporarily unplayable (6...e6 7.Nb4 Bxb4 8.Rxa7 and Black soon gets a rampant rook or bishop), so his king's side is already cramped whereas White has virtually complete freedom.

In the actual game, Black played **1...c6**, and play continued **2.g3 Nh6 3.b3 g6 4.d3 Qa5 5.Bxh6**:
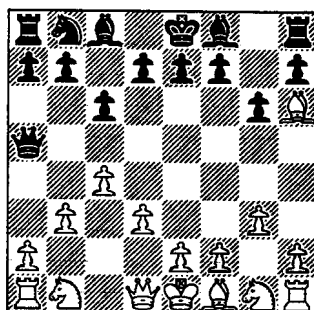
On general principles, Black would now like to play 5...Qxe1 taking off White's king, but after 6.Qxe1 Bxh6 he will have a rampant bishop. Hence **5...Bxh6 6.Nd2** (the sequel suggests that this move is doubtful, but the king

is so useful a piece that attacks on it should normally be parried unless its concession leads to a forced win) **6...Bxd2 7.Qxd2 Qxa2 8.Rxa2** (if 8.Qxa2 then 8...a5 and White gets a rampant rook) **8...g5 9.Qxg5 Kd8 10.Qxe7 Kxe7 11.Rxa7 Rxa7**:
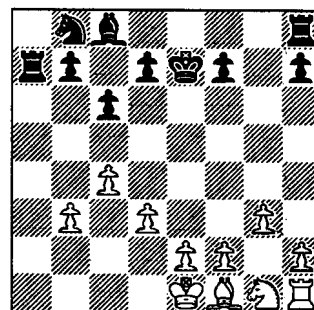
The immediate tactics have worked themselves out, and we see that Black has come out of the opening very much better; he has more material, and he controls far more space. White played **12.Kd2** in an understandable attempt to gain space with the king, but I think he had to try 12.Nf3 while he had the chance; after **12...c5** the option is no longer available to him because 13.Nf3 d5 14.cxd5 Bh3 will leave him with a rampant bishop. His king's side is therefore permanently cramped, and he is bound to run out of moves sooner or later. The actual continuation was **13.b4 cxb4 14.g4 Rf8 15.e3 Nc6 16.Ne2** (getting the knight off the back rank at last, but e2 is no better than f3 because it is the knight's loss of control of h3 that is crucial) **16...h5 17.gxh5 d5 18.cxd5 b6 19.dxc6 Bh3** and White resigned.

Space for a quickie. My Round 2 game against **Johan Bosman** started **1.h3 Nh6** (for 1...e6 see *VC* 42), and **2.e3?** should have lost at once:
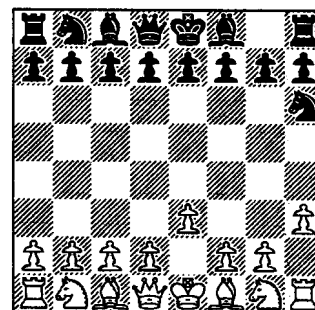
I lost anyway, but not in quite such an anthological fashion.

THE END IS NIGH!

by Paul Byway

I must start by apologising to Fred Galvin - for I overlooked his three correct solutions to competition 18. He was one of those who found the second solution to *#115*. His ladder score will be adjusted accordingly.

SOLUTIONS TO COMPETITION 19

#119   *9. Kf3, Rxd6, Re8, Rxe5, Kf4, Kf5, Nf4, Ng6, Re7 mate*

#120   *9. Nc3, Kf3, f5, Kg4, Kh5, Kh6, Nf3, Ng5, Nd5 mate*

#121   *9. Ke2, Bc6, f4, fxe5, e6, e5, Rg1, Rg8, Re8 mate*

There was a very good response to this, with solutions from Fred Galvin, David Pritchard, John Beasley, Ronald Turnbull, Peter Wood, Cedric Lytton, Ian Richardson and Noam Elkies. It was widely noted that *#119* could be one move shorter (omit Rxe5) and many found the second solution *9. Kf3, Kg4, f4, f5, f6, Kf5, Rxd8, Ng5 mate* which also takes 8 moves; IR and DBP found both. *#119* is of course Italian mate; FG shows that in Scottish Progressive White can echo the mate at move 11 - as follows: *9. Kf3, Kg4, Kf5, Nf4, Ng6, Rxd8, Re8, d4, Re7+ 10. Nxe7+ 11. Kg5, Kh6, Kxh7, g4, g5, d5, d6, dxe7, e8=R, Re7 mate.* In *#120* NE overlooked that f5 is necessary to screen g4 from the Black bishop even though it isn't needed for the mate. For *#121* he suggests (rather unkind, this, I thought) that White play *9. Ke2, Kf2, Kg2, Rxc1, Ra1, Bb7, Rxa7, Ra8, Rxh8* allowing Black to win White's two remaining pieces only to lose the pawn ending!

The current scores

FG 55, IR 55, DP 39, CL 24, RT 19, PW 11, JB 6, NE 2, SB 2.

Fred Galvin asks about the position (W) Qb8, Ke2 v (B) Kg2, Pg3 which can arise in the analysis of *#113*. It seems to me that it must be a draw: Q to h-file gives stalemaate by Kg1, Pg2 and Kf4, Qxg3+ gives stalemate by Kh1. Black is not in check after Kh1 and cannot legally move back into check. That's my understanding

anyway. If I'm wrong I hope someone will put me right!

COMPETITION 20

The common factor in these three positions seems to be Black's failure to gain a sufficient advantage in material; as a result he is mated in nine moves.

#122 Cesaro - Salvadori (1997)
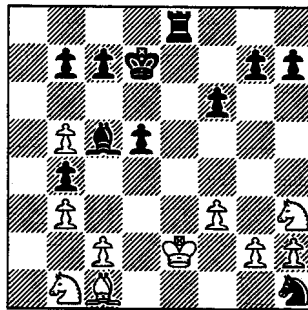
White wins (series 9)

#123 Cassano - Hammarstrom (1994)
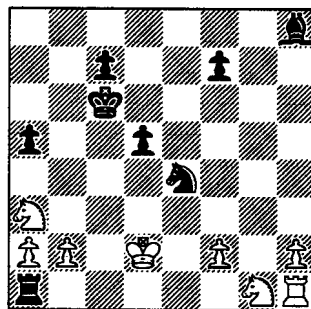
White wins (series 9)

#124 Polikanov - Karmanov (1996)
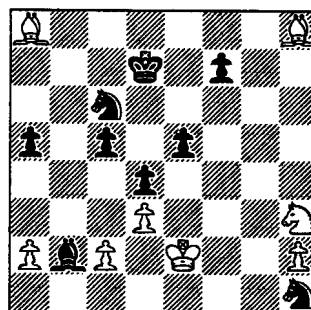
White wins (series 9)

In *VC43* I reported a couple of missed mates from the Progressive Chess Tournament 2002 - found by Fred Galvin. Further investigation has discovered a second solution in each case: *T 2/5 8.Kd7, a5, a4, a3, axb2, b1=Q, Re8, Bg5 mate (Cedric Lytton) T 2/11 8.Ng4, g6, Bh6, Re8, Rxe5,*

Nxf2 mate (Cedric Lytton, Noam Elkies).

#118b was an ending I left for your consideration in the last issue; in due course John Beasley, Noam Elkies and Fred Galvin showed that White was indeed lost. My suggestions were refuted as follows:

(a) *11. Kb2, Kxa1, Kb2, Kc3, Kd4, Kxe4, Kd4, Kc5, Kb5, c5, c6+ 12. Ke6, Kf5, Ke4, Kxe3, Kxf4, Ke3, Kf2, f5, f4, f3, f2, bxc6+* and wins. Even stronger is *12. Ke6, b6, Kf5, Ke4, Kxe3, Kxf4, Ke3, f5, f4, f3, f2, f1=Q+.* Series 11 could end with Kb4 and Pc5, in which case NE gives *12. Ke6, Kf5, Ke4, Kxe3, Kxf4, Ke3, Ke2, f5, f4, f3, b6, bxc5+ 13. Kxc5, Kc6, Kxc7, ...Kg1 14. ...f2+ 15. ...Kf4 16. ...f1=Q+ 17. ...Ke4 18. ...Ke6, Qc4+* and Black wins at series 24!

(b) *11. Kc3, Kd4, Kxe4, Kf5, Kf6, Kxf7, Kf6, Ke5, Kd4, c5 12. b5, b4, b3, b2, b1=Q, Qc2, Ke6, Nb3 mate.*
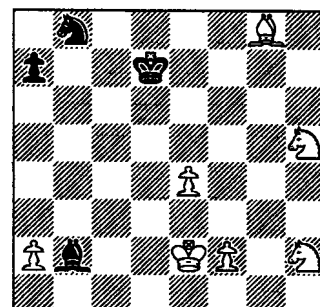
FG considered the construction of a fortress-like position from *#118*. After his line and my suggested response we reach another interesting position. How does Black win this one?

#118c
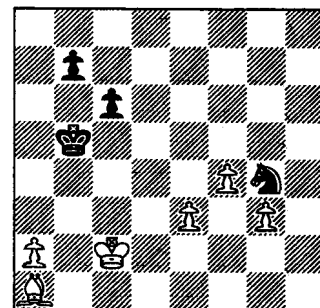
Here is another ending; Black won at series 20. How do you think play should continue from this position?

#125 Muller - Rets (1994)


Black to play series 10

MAGNETIC CHESS AT MESSIGNY

by John Beasley

One of the pleasures of the French problemists' meeting at Messigny is the Sunday quick-play tournament. Last year, at my suggestion, we played Magnetic Chess.

This has attracted interest among problemists, but unlike most problem variants it started as a genuine game. David Pritchard described it in *VC 31*. A man landing on a square behaves as if it were magnetized, attracting the nearest man on the same rank or file if it is the opponent's and repelling it if it is the player's own (unlike poles attract, likes repel). A pawn pushed to the first rank becomes immobile, one pushed to the eighth rank promotes. The king is excluded, it neither magnetizes nor is it pushed or pulled; castling magnetizes the rook.

A simple game will show some of the tactics. White starts **1.e2-e4**, and this pulls Black's pawn from e7 to e5:
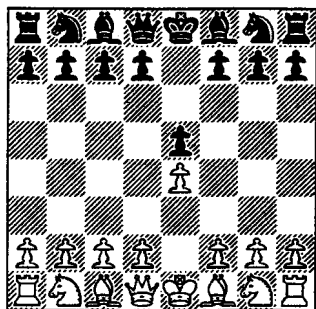
Black replies **1...d7-d5**, pulling White's pawn from d2 to d4 and realising too late that he is also pushing his e-pawn from e5 to h5:
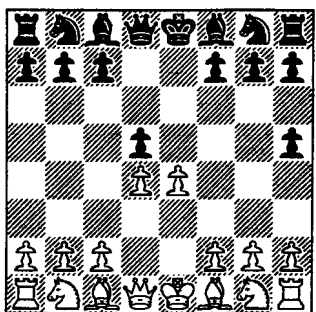
No doubt White could simply take this, but in practice he plays **2.Bc1-g5** with malice aforethought (bPg7 to g6,

bPd5 to f5):
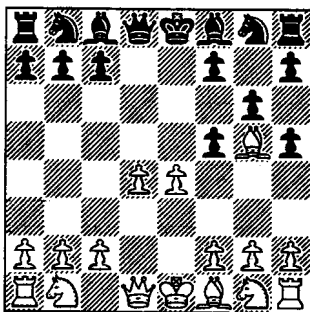
Black buys it, **2...Qd8xg5** (bPg6 to g7, bPf5 to a5, wPg2 to g4),
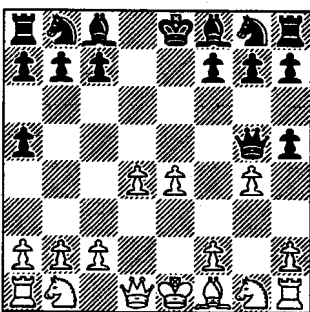
and White plays **3.Qd1-d3** pushing his pawn to d8 and promoting it:
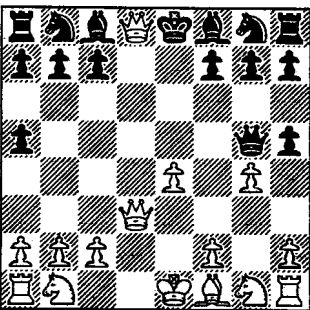
Is this mate? Not quite. 3...Qxd8 is no good because it draws White's other queen up to d7, but Black has **3...Qg5-d5** sucking the checking queen away (d8 to d6, d3 to d4):
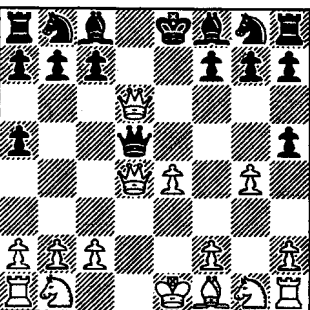
But the respite is only temporary.

White plays **4.Qd4xd5** pushing his front queen straight back again (d6 to d8, also a5 to c5 and h5 to e5), and this time there is no answer.

This example has been contrived so as to reach the crucial point as quickly as possible, but a similar "push to promotion" mate occurred in many of the actual games; I think most of us fell for it at least once. The tournament in fact produced the remarkable quadruple tie 3-3-3-3-2-1, everybody losing at least two games out of his five. But by this time the strong players among us were beginning to get the hang of the game, and they duly imposed themselves in the play-offs; Abdelaziz Onkoud and Sebastian Cossin beat Thierry le Gleuher and myself in the semi-finals, and Sebastian won the final.

A few practicalities. Because there were only six of us, we could play ten minutes per player per game, and this was fortunate; the game might have proved a little too complicated for five-minute play. Errors were frequent (man not moved, like man pulled, unlike man pushed), and we played "friendly" rules: a player presented with an incorrect or incomplete move simply restarted his opponent's clock and waited for him to correct or complete it, indicating what was needed if he looked puzzled. But the game proved to be good fun, providing entertainment and a distinct change from the normal, and I heartily endorse David's recommendation.

MIXED VARIANTS AT HARPENDEN

Our AGM in June was followed by the usual "mixed" tournament (each player chooses the game for one round). The new venue deprived us of David Pritchard's Guildford friends, but David himself was able to come, together with George Jelliss, John Leslie, Rob Price, and myself. We played Two-move (chosen by David), Circular (George), Hostage (John), Modern Courier (Rob), and Magnetic (myself). David won with 4 out of 4, but by his own account he was lucky; he should probably have lost in round 4, and when he met the other 100% scorer in round 5 it was his choice...

INFORMAL PROBLEM TOURNEY AWARD 1999-2003

by Mark Ridley

In previous years these tourneys have been held on a biannual basis, however bearing in mind that only two issues of *Variant Chess* appeared in each of the years 2000-2002, and furthermore the fact that the January 2003 issue was the last to feature originals, we decided that holding one tourney which covered issues 31-41 would be the best policy.

Taking problems which appeared both in articles and in the Problem Pages, the total number to be considered was 118, a massive task. In my opinion, the average standard of the entries was satisfactory, however after some deep consideration, I decided that 27 problems deserved honours.

359 - René MILLOUR
1st Prize *Variant Chess* 1999-2003
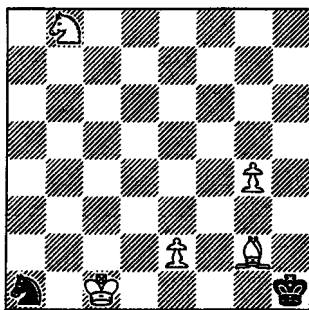
Monochrome Chess
Rooks died where? How?

First Prize : 359 - René Millour. While this example of Monochrome Chess may be "easy" compared with others which have appeared in more specialised problem magazines, it is no less entertaining. The idea of all the Rooks having specific deaths is to my mind quite exciting, and is (according to the composer) achieved for the first time in miniature. The amount of information one can work out from the nearly empty diagram is amazing, and the chain of reasoning very pleasing. The only slight regret is that the departure square of the

bPb7's capture of wRh1 on b3 cannot be completely determined. Summary:

1. White has just checked on g2, and to give Black a previous move this must have been a capture of a piece other than a rook.

2. To get bK to h1, we must have had bKg4 with play wPg2xf3+ bKh3. This would be illegal with original wB still on f1, so present wB is promoted.

3. Black's capture on f1, with e2/g2 unmoved, must have been with a promoted piece X (Q or R).

4. We can now account for 20 captures: 16 by the four promoting pawns (to wB, bX, and the two knights), two by wPg4, one by wBg2, and one on f1. It follows that (a) the knights on b1, b8, and g8 were captured by pawns, and (b) wPb2 died at home and so the man captured on a1 wasn't a bishop.

5. This gives us the following pawn-trajectories:

wPc2-c4, xPd5, xPe6e.p., xPf7, xNg8=B, Bx(X/B)g2.

wPf2-f4, x(B/Q)e5, **xRd6**, x(Q/B)c7, xNb8=N.

wPg2x(B/X)f3, **xRg4**.

bPb7-b5 and then either xPa4, **xRb3**, xQa2/c2, xNb1=X or xQa4/c4, **xRb3**, xPa2, aNb1=X.

bPc7-c5, xPd4, xBc3, xPb2, **xRa1=N**.

So all rooks were captured on specific squares by specific pawns, though in one case the capture-move's start-square is indeterminate.

For a more leisurely exposition, see *VC* 40 page 136.

320 - Torsten LINSS
dedicated to Stephen Emmerson
2nd Prize *Variant Chess* 1999-2003
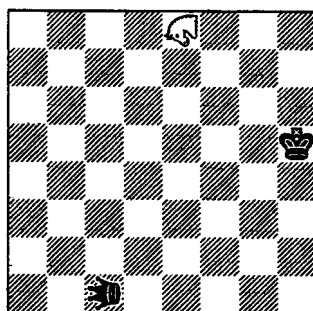
Selfmate in 11, Maxi, with set-play
Checkless Chess
Elephant c1, Royal Zebra e8

Second Prize : 320 - Torsten Linss. A complex problem, containing excellent set play leading to a thematic echo. The two lines over 11 moves are extremely impressive, but the setting is not perfect as the "checkless" stipulation is there to stop duals. However, even when one merely plays through the solution, careful thought is needed on each move.

Set 1...Eh6 2.Zc5! (Ec1,a6 now illegal check so) Ed2 3.Zf7 Ea8 4.Zd4 Eh1 5.Za6 Ec6 mate.

Play 1.Zb6! Ef7 2.Ze4! Ec1 3.Zg7! Ec8 4.Zd5! Ec1 5.Za7 Eh6 6.Zc4! Ef2 7.Za1! Ec8 8.Zd3! Eg4 9.Zb6 Ea1 10.Ze4 Eh8 11.Zc1 Ec3,

while if 6...Ed8 7.Za1! Eg2 8.Zd3 Ea8 9.Zg1 Eh1.

341 - Ian RICHARDSON
3rd Prize *Variant Chess* 1999-2003
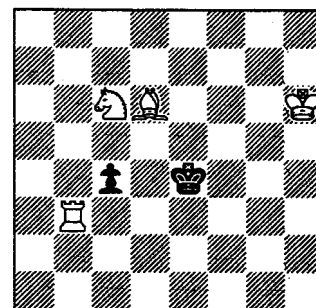
Seriesmate in 18, Magnetic, moving only wN

Third Prize : 341 - Ian Richardson. Magnetic Chess is by now a well known variant in over the board play, but in both problems and endgame studies it is also proving to be fruitful. In this problem, the wN moves around a fine unique path drawing the bP from c4 to f4, then returning to c6 thus repelling wB to g6 giving an attractive mate. An original problem, but would it be possible to achieve the effect without the "moving wN only" limitation? If so it would be a very commendable achievement. 1.Ne7, f5, h4, g2, e1, 6.Nc2(Pc3) e1, 8.Nf3(e3) e5, c4, 11.Na2(Rd3) c2 13.Ne1(Pe2) 14.Ng2(Pf2) 15.h4 16.Nf5(Pf4) e7 18.Nc6(Bg6).

Fourth Prize : 353 - René Millour. This fine and highly original Black

AUW shows the striking idea of selfpins followed by unpin by home-square occupation after promotion captures. The fine thematic key selfpins the three pieces. 1.Kxa2(Ke1)! (2.Nxh3) hgQ(Qd8) / hgR(Rh8) / hgB(Bf8) / hgN(Nb8) 2.Rxg7(Ra1) / Ra2 / Qa1 / cb(b2).

353 - René MILLOUR
4th Prize *Variant Chess* 1999-2003
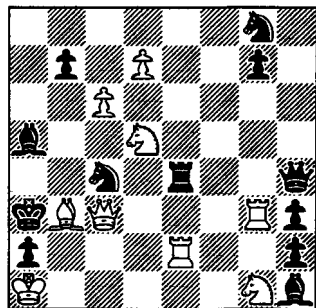
Mate in 2, Anticirce

1st Honourable Mention : 310 - Cedric Lytton, R1K5, 2B2B1n, p1k3p1, 3N2P1, P1p1N3, 1P3P2, b1Pp4, 8, Magnetic, mate in 2. A striking problem which shows a task of five direct mates by one N, including the maximum of four by magnetic repulsion. It is a slight pity the composer was unable to achieve the extreme task of all six by 1...Xe3 2.Se7(Ba7, Bg7). The wRa8 is a cookstopper that can easily be forgiven. 1.b4 (no threat) 1...Nf8 2.Nxd2(Nd8,Pb2) 1...Nf6(Pf5) 2.Nc5. (Ne5) 1...Nxg5 (Nf5) 2.Nxg5 (Na5) 1... c3(Pd3) 2.Bd8 (Nd4) 1...Bb3(Pc3) 2.cxb3(Pb8=N) 1...Bb1(Pb2) 2.Nb4 1...d1(Bd2) 2.Nb3(Pb8=N).

2nd HM : 326 - Cedric Lytton, 16, 3k4, b7, 4P3, 1R6, r1R5, 8, No-capture chess, helpstalemate in 3 (a) as set, 1 sol, (b) bKd4, 2 sols. The composer may have disliked the twinning, but it is a small price to pay for the three perfect bottles of the Black bishop and Black rook. As two solutions is the number expected from experience gained in other settings, the achievement of three is special. As Luigi Vitale said after solving, a problem for the FIDE Album! 1.Bd8 Rb7 2.Ra7 Re7 3.Rd7 Rc7 b) 1.Be1 Rf2 2.Re2 Rb2 3.Ke3 Rd2 and 1.Rb2 Rb6 2.Rb5 Rb2 3.Kc5 Rb4.

3rd HM : 352 - Ronald Turnbull, k7, Q1K1P1P1, 8, 1N6, 16, 4p1pr, qQ5R Mate in 2, Madrasi. While Mutates are a well known theme, it is very unusual to see them in problems featuring Madrasi. In this example, we have an excellent demonstration of the Holst theme, where having promoted a pawn, Black ultimately finds he has promoted to the wrong type of piece. In addition there is other good play, for example the long range shut-off 1...g1R,ghB 2.Ba2. Set 1...e1R/Q 2.e8Q/R and 1...g1R,ghR/g1Q,ghQ 2.g8Q/R. Key 1.g8B! g1Q,B/ghB 2.Bd5/Ba2.

4th HM : 368 - Michael Grushko, 3B4, G1K5, 24, k7, 6(nr)1, 8, Helpstalemate in 4, Circe, 2 sols, Grasshopper + Nightrider. This splendid 5-unit (Tanagra) problem shows the same final stalemate position reached by two contrasting routes. The neat stalemate and very fine construction ensure a place in the award. 1.Kb3 Gd7 2.Nxd8(wBc1) Bb2 3.Nb7 Gxb7(Nb1) 4.Ka2 Gxb1=; 1.Ka2 Ga1 2.Nxd8(wBc1) Gd1 3.Nf4 Gb1 4.Nb2 Bxb2=.

5th HM : 318 - Stephen Emmerson, Ronald Turnbull, k1K5, p7, 1P6, 40, Messigny, Rois Transmutés, Helpmate in 2½, two solutions. I am constantly surprised at the number of originals Stephen Emmerson is producing from the "Vielvater" position, which featured in several originals during the period covered by this award. In this example, I like both the tempo move in the first solution and the switchback swaps in the second. The shifted echo is most attractive. In the first solution, the bK is checked by a wP and under the "Rois Transmutés" rule can only move as a bP. Owing to the fact that a bP on the eighth rank is not possible in ordinary chess, how it moves has yet to be defined, so any attempt by bK to escape is illegal and so he is mated. I prefer this problem to 317 due to the tidier stipulation. 0... K<>K 1.a6 b7+ 2.P<>P ab and 0... Kc7 1.a6 P<>P 2.Ka7 P<>P.

6th HM : 355 - Christopher Jones, 1b1R4, 7p, 2Kpp1kp, 7p, 8, 6r1, 6p1, 7b, Series mate in 16, Single Combat. A comical problem which demonstrates the single combat condition overriding the series

condition. The final mating position may not be difficult to see, but the way wR and wK self-pin each other in turn (the latter due to series play rules) is quite clever. 1.Rf8 3.Rxg2 (R now pinned, so K may move) 9.Kxg3 (now K cannot move without giving check to Black, which is forbidden before the end of the series, so R may move again) 11.Rxd6 (pinned again) 14.Kxe6 (again can't move without checking) 16.Rg8.

7th HM : 287 - Erich Bartel, 8, 7(CG), 8, 1G6, 8, 2k5, 16, Rois Transmutés, Grasshopper, Contra-G, helpmate in 6, 2 sols. This problem features the new fairy piece the Contra-Grasshopper, which moves only when adjacent to another piece. The bK manoeuvres carefully to bring the wKG into play, and walks into an attractive horizontal and vertical echo. The piece deserves further investigation, and can the 'contra' property be extended to other hoppers? 1.Kd3 Ge2 2.Ke4 Ge5 3.Kf5 Gg5 4.Kg6 KGf5 5.Kh6 Ge5 6.Kh5 KGd5 and 1.Kc4 Gd3 2.Kd5 Gd6 3.Ke6 Gf6 4.Kf5 Gf4 5.Kg6 KGf5 6.Kf7 KGf3.

Commended : 296 - Cedric Lytton (*VC*33 page 12). A full use of the Actuated Revolving Centre and fascinating move order which produces a neat and surprising mate. The problem was not easy to solve either, indeed it sent my head spinning! **297 - Erich Bartel** (*VC*33 page 13). Matched promotions of the neutral pawns without twinning. The problem also has good economy and I like the ideal stalemates. Can anyone extend the theme to three promotions, or even four, thus completing the AUW? **303 - Alex Ettinger** (*VC*34 page 28). The Mari theme is a well known theme in the orthodox two-mover. Here, possibly for the first time, we see it in helpmate form. The mates are neat and I enjoyed solving it, but the repeat of 1...d4 is a blemish. **304 - Ronald Turnbull** (*VC*34 page 28). An excellent key leads to three cross checks, with the cross checks being direct rather than using a battery (impossible in orthodox chess). **308 - Ian Richardson** (*VC* 34 page 28). Both this and **309** (by the same composer) showed beautiful echoes. It was difficult to decide between them, and I felt there was not room in the

award for both. 308 might have been the slightly heavier position, but I preferred it due to its greater originality (308 appeared before 309!). **311 - Ian Richardson** (*VC*35 page 46). A perfect reflected echo, which is set economically in Magnetic Chess. Considering this was only in 3 single moves, I found it surprisingly difficult (and only solved it after the closing date for solutions). **319 - Peter Fayers** (*VC*35 page 47). Twins where two fairy rules are employed and their order of priority is crucial is a theme which I always find amusing. This is a particularly comical example, but it is a slight pity that a part (d) "Neither" (K in check swaps with neither K nor N) would produce virtually the same play as (a). Can anyone pull off all four possibilities with either these or a different pair of fairy conditions? **329 - Stephen Emmerson** (*VC*36 page 70). Another fine 'Vielvater' problem, this time with the enemy Sentinels rule. The set play and first solution have unexpected switchbacks, in the set play to give White a vital guard on c6, and a vital tempo (3.c6) in the first solution. A neat mate appears in the second solution. Three lines from a pretty natural position is impressive. Good work by Stephen's computer! **339 - Ian Richardson** (*VC*37 page 83). A neat pair of echoed ideal stalemates. However the poor twinning and repeat of one knight making both White moves in a) are slight blemishes. **342 - John Rice** (*VC*38 page 100). A change of function between the two half battery Rooks takes place. Circe check supplies the rationale for defences by BR, and Circe pawn-captures motivate the correction defences Rc6, Rc7. The plug on c8 is regrettable, as is the slightly brutal pinning key. **344 - Luigi Vitale** (*VC*38 page 100). A tricky miniature. Given that Black can create two selfblocks, and White at most two pawns (plus a pawn move to mate), the tempo move in the BKh8 solution surprises, as do the capture mates. The two mating N-captures provide some unity. **345 and 346 - Stephen Emmerson** (*VC*38 page 100). The composer judged a tourney for two-piece problems (article in *VC* 24, award in *VC* 29). Here we have two problems with the ultimate

economy (one piece only!). In 345, we have an elegant, and most surprising orthogonal to diagonal pin-stalemate transformation, with no extra Sentinels present at the end. In 346, by good use of the Sentinels rule, Black (and White) trap the Neutral Camel on h8, with an unusual reflection echo (on the a1-h8 diagonal) and well matched strategy. 346 was certainly, in my opinion, the more difficult of the two to solve. However, it would be harsh to give preference to one or the other, and so I decided to give them each a commendation. **360 - Alex Ettinger** (*VC*39 page 119). The (reciprocal or cyclic?) Le Grand effect is better known in direct mates than in helpmates. Wertheim's original concept (1 Pr Israel Ring Ty 1967, wKh3, Rd1, Bd3, b8, Sf4, Pc3, 2, f6, bKc5, Pb6, b7, c6, d6, e3, f5, f7, h#2*, b) after key) proved to have duals. However this setting using Chinese Pieces rescues Wertheim's original concept, and together with its good strategy justifies its place in the award. **366 - Ian Richardson** (*VC*41 page 15). An interesting twin in a clean setting. Full use of the Actuated Revolving Centre in part (b). The shift one file to the right of the knights in the mating position is very pleasing. **369 - Michael Grushko** (*VC*41 page 15). Michael Grushko is a new name to me and both this and 368 suggest he has a promising future. The mating positions are beautifully matched, and the way the mating White Knight provides a hurdle for WG to guard one of the squares helps give the problem a pleasing unity. On the down side, the twinning is crude with the large displacement of WK to b), and the outlying pawns on h2, h3 needed to prevent a WK dual. Nevertheless, these are minor quibbles and the problem deserves its award.

This then concludes my award. While I have had great pleasure in carrying out this task, it is a moment of great sadness to mention that this is the last problem award to appear in *Variant Chess*. I thank Ronald Turnbull for giving me the opportunity to judge this tourney. Furthermore thanks are due to him and his predecessors George Jelliss

and Stefanos Pantazis for their work on what has been an excellent column.

LOSING CHESS SOLUTIONS

(from page 62)

First diagram (Snuverink - Meulenbroek, after 6.Nc3). Black has a forced win by 6...b5 7.Nxb5 Rb8. If 8.Nxa7 then 8...Rxb2 and White gets a rampant bishop, and if 8.Nxc7 then 8...Rxb2 9.Bxb2 (9.Nxa6 Rxa2, 9.Nxe8 Rxc2 10.Nxg7 Rxa2) 9...Qxc7 10.Bxg7 Qxc2 11.Bxf8/Bxh8 Qxa2 and in each case White gets a rampant rook.

Second diagram (same game, Black to play move 19). He can indeed play 19...Kc8 20.Nxc8, because 20...Nf6/Nh6 gives him an alternative capture. Willy nilly, White must continue 21.Nxe7, and after 21...Nxg4 22.Nxg6 Nxe3 it's easy.

Final diagram (Beasley - Bosman, after 2.e3). 2...b5 3.Bxb5 Bb7! (this "old defence" is now a proven loss after 1.e3 b5 2.Bxb5, but the slightest change in the position is often sufficient to convert it into a win) 4.Bxd7 Bxg2 5.Bxe8 Qxd2 (5...Bxh3 also wins) 6.Bxd2 (other moves also lose) 6...Bxh3 7.Rxh3 (7.Nxh3 h5 etc) 7...Ng8 8.Bxf7 (8.Rxh7 Rxh7 9.Bxf7 is clearly hopeless) g5 9.Bxg8 Rxg8 10.Rxh7 Bh6 and White gets a rampant rook. There are several alternatives to be considered at move 6, which is doubtless why my opponent did not play this over the board, but in fact there is a forced win in all lines.

INDEX TO VOLUME 6