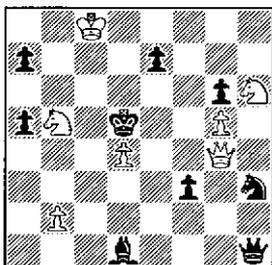
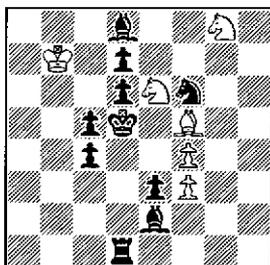


Recently published British originals

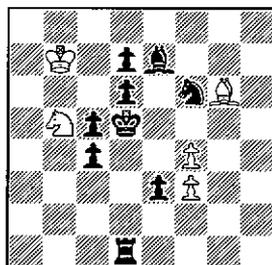
Mike Bent's 1 and 2 appeared recently in *Correspondence Chess*. Both are good old-fashioned exercises in blood and thunder, but they are none the worse for that; the positions may not be particularly game-like in themselves, but they provide excellent practice for the sort of sacrificial attack that is needed to demolish an opponent who has unwarily left his king with one defender too few.



1 - win



2 - win



2a - after 8 Bg6

1 should be soluble from the diagram even without prior knowledge of the composer's name and style. The point is that Black has more than enough material to draw or better, so White must do something drastic, and as a first step he must stop his opponent from playing 1...Kc4 and finding safety in the bottom left-hand corner. The first move 1 **Qe6+** is therefore almost automatic, and the sequel 1...Kxe6 2 **Nc7+ Kd6** 3 **Nf7+ Kc6** 4 **Ne5+ Kb6/Kd6** 5 **Nc4+ Kc6** does not take too long to find. Black's king is now confined to c6, but d5+ will allow him to escape to c5 and a preliminary b4 to guard this square will be met by a capture... Ah! 6 **Nxa5+ Kb6/Kd6** 7 **Nc4+ Kc6** 8 **b4** and one pawn or the other will mate next move. Knowing the composer's name, we are not surprised that there is a non-checking move at the climax.

My attempts to do the same with 2 were less successful. It seems clear that we must start with Ne7+ or Nxf6+ to draw the upper bishop away from its guard of c7, and since this is a composition we naturally start with 1 **Ne7+** as the more attractive move of the two. Black must capture, 1...Bxe7, and 2 **Nc7+ Kd4** 3 **Nb5+ Kd5** 4 **Nc3+ Kd4** 5 **Nxe2+** to remove the bishop on e2 is obvious enough, but what has this gained us? True, it has left the rook on d1 without defence, but 5...Kd5 6 **Nc3+ Kd4** 7 **Nxd1** will hand the initiative to Black and this hardly seems the way to win.

I scratched my head over this for a while, even considering the possibility of 1 **Nxf6+** (cries of "Shame!") and then gave up and looked at the answer. We must bring the knight back to b5, 5...Kd5 6 **Nc3+ Kd4** 7 **Nb5+ Kd5**, and then play the quiet move 8 **Bg6!!** (see 2a). This threatens 9 **Bf7** mate, and if 8...Ke6 then 9 **Nc7** mate; and the point is that if the bishop were still on e2, Black could play 8...Bxf3 and spoil things.

Well done, Mike.

John Nunn's endgame challenge

John Nunn has recently added to the study literature by producing *Endgame challenge* (Gambit, ISBN 1-901983-83-8, £17.99 in the shops). This presents his selection of "the 250 greatest endgame studies of all time", and to encourage the reader to solve them for himself the diagrams are presented first, without even the name of the author to give a clue, and the solutions are withheld until later.

If the reader detects a certain reservation in my putting of "the 250 greatest" into quotation marks, I am afraid he is quite right. The selection has a marked bias towards length, complexity, and recent date. The median number of men on the board is nine; the median number of moves in the main line is ten; the median year of publication is 1971, and there are more studies from the 1980s alone than from the whole of the period of Troitzky, Kubbel, and Grigoriev. Classics there certainly are, including some modern ones (I was delighted to see the beautiful N+P v 2P study by David Blundell which took pride of place on the front page of our first issue), but a lot of the examples are in what might be called the contemporary hyper-romantic style, their effects often achieved at the cost of complex and unnatural starting positions which deter the reader instead of tempting him to try his hand.

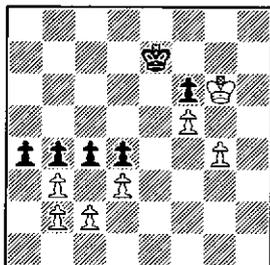
The result is presented as a solving challenge, and it is an immensely demanding one. As a spare-time exercise during the 1970s, I solved my way through Klett's 1878 problem collection (112 problems, median length four moves). It took me two years, and in those days I was not too far off county standard. There are more than twice as many compositions here, and an anonymous study whose solution unfolds over ten moves or so is a very much harder nut to crack than a four-move problem by a known composer (the problem may have more men on the board, but the need to give mate within a given time limits White's options, and a knowledge of the composer's style suggests short cuts and provides confirmation when the solver is on the right track). To expect the reader to try and solve 250 such studies seems to me to be living in dreamland; I cannot imagine that a normal enthusiast with a living to earn will have time to attempt more than a small fraction of them.

Enough of the reservations. The book's strength lies in its analysis, and here no reservation is necessary. John has analysed with computer assistance far more powerful than was available when Timothy Whitworth and I were writing *Endgame magic*, and he presents the results in detail; the text of a typical solution would occupy more than a page of *BESN*. He admits the possibility of error, but I have spotted only one (on page 131, he dismisses a sideline as giving "the winning material balance of 2B v N" without mentioning that Black can delay the capture of the knight for more than 50 moves - under strict over-the-board rules, the position is not in fact a win). In many cases, I imagine his version of the solution will become the definitive one, even taking precedence over what we have inherited as the composer's own (which as published may well have been savagely condensed to save space).

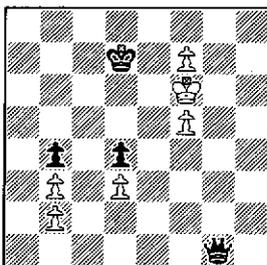
In short, a book of exemplary analysis, applied to a selection of studies very different from that which I would have made myself; but tastes differ, and there is plenty of room for both of us.

Creating a study from a game position

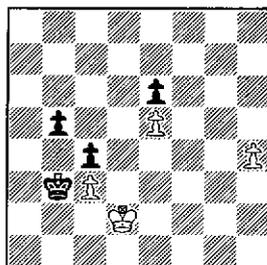
I wrote in March that I would welcome more articles in which composers talked about the creation of one of their works, but nobody has come forward and so you will have to put up with a little story of my own.



1 - Black to play



1a - after 7 Kf6

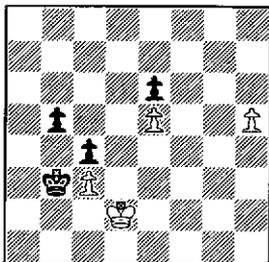


2 - win by 1 Kc1 only

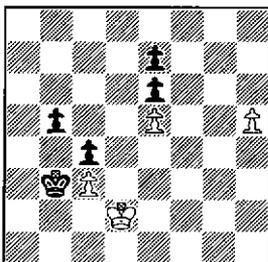
In February, Hew Dundas sent me 1 from Leonard Barden's *Financial Times* column. It was from a game Tischbierek-Vorotnikov, Leipzig 1999, with play **1...cxb3 2 cxb3 a3 3 Kg7! a2 4 g5 a1Q 5 gxf6+ Kd7 6 f7 Qg1+ 7 Kf6!** (see 1a) and White may even be winning despite his initial disadvantage. Leonard asked what better first move or moves Black could have played. The answer given by the computer was that 1...axb3 and 1...Kf8 both appeared to win, but 1...Kf8 was clearly the move that he had in mind. It therefore occurred to me to try and create a study in which this move was necessary in order to win.

The first step was to set up 2. **1 Kc1** clearly won; **1 h5** equally clearly didn't. But the refutation of **1 h5** didn't include the move ...Kc3, and if we started the pawn on h5 to reinstate it (see 3, intention **1 h6 Kb2! 2 h7 b4 3 h8Q bxc3+ 4 Ke2 c2 5 Qb8+ Kc3!**) the computer said that **1 h6** won anyway. However, it occurred to me that this was because of lines like **4 Ke3 c2 5 Qh1 c1Q+** (**5...c3 6 Qb7+** etc) **6 Qxc1+ Kxc1 7 Kd4 Kd2 8 Kxc4** and **9-11 Kxe6** (this was in fact nonsense, but I am telling it as it happened), and that if we added a pawn on e7 to slow White down then **1 h6** would fail. This gave 4, with which the computer was happy. This was the sheerest good luck, because the reason **1 h6** had worked in 3 had nothing to do with the line given above (Black can play **8...Ke3**, and if **9 Kc5** then **9...Ke4 10 Kd6 Kf5** and it is Black who wins); the line the computer had actually unearthed was **5 Qh2 Kb1 6 Qh7 Kb2 7 Qb7+ Kc3 8 Qh1 Kb2 9 Qg2 Kb1 10 Qb7+**, and the addition of the pawn on e7 killed this quite fortuitously by blocking the seventh rank. I subsequently moved the pawn to f7, giving 5, and wondered why I had not put it there to start with.

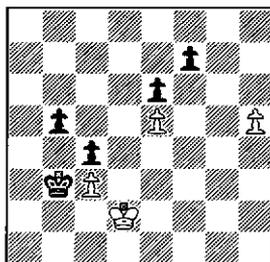
5 seemed to me to have distilled the essentials of Tischbierek-Vorotnikov. The key moves were all there (**1 h6 Kb2 2 h7 b4 3 h8Q bxc3+** and if **4 Ke2** then **4...c2 5 Qb8+ Kc3** and draws at least, **1 Kc1** and wins), and the position, unusually for a study derived from a game, was actually simpler and more natural than the original. But of course it would be better to have some play after **1 Kc1**, so I worked on.



3 - 1 h6 also works

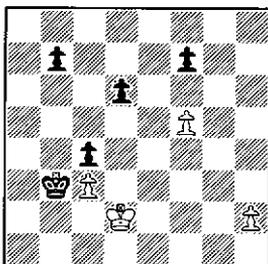


4 - 1 Kc1 only

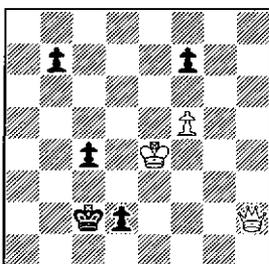


5 - 1 Kc1 only

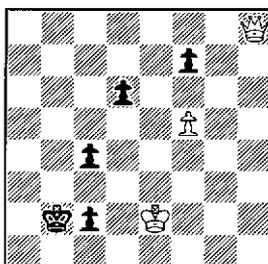
My ambitious idea was to start the h-pawn back at h2, to make the Black king run into a zugzwang trap with bKf6/bPf7 against wPf5/h6 (no e-pawns), and then on the Q-side to exploit the known win with a White king against three united passed pawns. I say "ambitious" because a composer who specifies so much detail in the play leaves himself little scope for constructional finesse; all he can do is try the few available settings in turn, and hope one will prove sound. In the event, I struck lucky with 6, but there are lines in the analysis which are definitely the computer's and not mine.



6 - win



6a - 1 h4, 2...d5, 8 Qh2

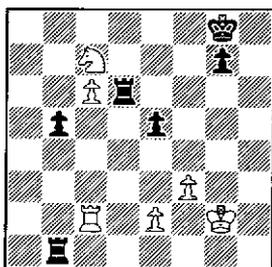


6b - 2...b5, 6 h8Q+

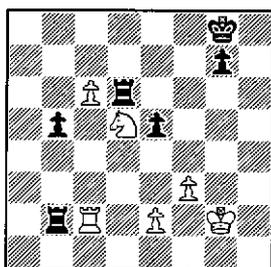
The actual solution is easy to follow. **1 Kc1! Kxc3 2-4 h6 Kf6** and now it's book: **5 Kb2!./Kd2 d5 6 Kc3** (else 6...d4) **b5** (best) **7 Kc2** (7 Kb2/Kd2 also win) **b4 8 Kb2** (or Kd2) **d4** (8...b3 9 Kc3, 8...c3+ 9 Kb3) **9 Kc1!** and Black's moves soon run out. If instead **1 h4** then **1...Kb2! 2 h5**, and Black must be careful: 2...d5 allows 3 Ke3! Kxc3 4 h6 d4+ 5 Ke4 d3 6 h7 d2 7 h8Q+ Kc2 8 Qh2 (see 6a) and the computer finds a win in all lines. Hence **2...b5**, leading to **3 h6 b4 4 h7 bxc3+ 5 Ke2** (Ke1/Ke3 are no better) **c2 6 h8Q+** (see 6b). Moves by bK now lose, as does 6...c3, but **6...f6!** holds the draw. **7 Qxf6+ c3** is easy, and **7 Qb8+** is met by **7...Kc3!** as before. As in 5, the moves **1...Kb2**, **7...Kc3**, and **1 Kc1** are all involved, and we have 6...f6 as a bonus.

Leonard disclaimed all credit (he said that ...Kf8 was probably found in the game post-mortem), and 6 appeared in *Correspondence Chess* as by "JDB after Tischbierok-Vorotnikov". It's no masterpiece and many people hit on the right first move straight away, but I think it has its points. I sent the various versions to Hew as I found them, and he said it was fascinating to watch the study grow; I hope readers also will have found the story of interest.

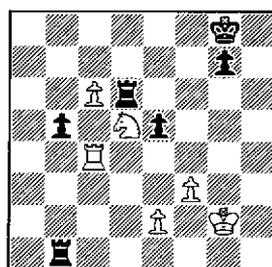
From the world at large



1 - win



1a - after 1...Rb2



1b - after 4 Rc4

The column "Selected studies" in *The Problemist* is now in the hands of Paul Valois, and Harri Hurme's **1** appeared in it in July. The genial Harri is known to several of us as a regular member of the Finnish problem solving team, and **1** took 3rd Prize for studies for 1999-2000 in the Finnish composition magazine *Suomen Tehtävänkietat*.

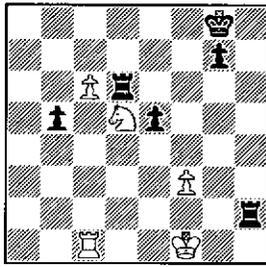
1 Nd5 threatens **2 c7** etc, and Black's only hope is **1...Rb2!** giving **1a**; if now **2 Rxb2** then **2...Rxd5** with a draw. White continues with **2 Rc3**, and **2...Rxe2+ 3 Kf1** will lead to a comfortable win (White's c-pawn will cost Black a rook, giving White R+N+P against R+3P, and Black will have no way of exchanging off White's last pawn whereas Black's own pawns will fall one by one). So Black must play the same trick again, **2...Rb3**, and the dance continues: **3 Rc1 Rb1 4 Rc4!** (see **1b**) and Black cannot continue to oppose rooks since **4...Rb4** will be met by **5 Nx4 bxc4 6 c7**. He can of course play **4...bxc4**, but now we see why White has lured the rook to b1: **5 c7** (threat **6 c8Q** giving Q+N+2P against 2R+3P, and although the pawnless ending Q+N v 2R is currently the subject of controversy Black's position is here so loose that White will soon win pawns) **Rxd5** (**5...Rc6 6 Ne7+**) **6 c8Q+ Kf7/Kh7 7 Qf5+** and **8 Qxb1**.

An elegant dance indeed, but why is it all necessary? We have seen why White must lure the Black rook to b1 before playing Rc4, but why can he not play Rc1 in position **1a**?

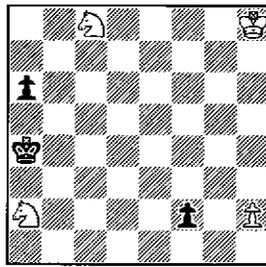
The answer is that **2...Rxe2+ 3 Kf1** no longer leads to a win, because Black has **3...Rh2** threatening a spear check on the first rank (see **1c**). White must spend a move dealing with this, and Black has time to get back and defend himself. White can still win a rook in the resulting dogfight, but now he finds that it costs him a knight as well as the c-pawn (for example, **4 Rc5 Kf7 5 c7 Rh8 6 Rxb5 Ke6 7 Rb8 Rh1+ 8 Ke2 Rc1 9 c8Q+ Rxc8 10 Rxc8 K/Rxd5**) and it is Black who finishes up ahead on material. So White must first play Rc3 to lure the Black rook off the second rank, then Rc1 to lure it to b1, and only then Rc4 to clinch matters.

David Friedgood and I were very impressed with this, and I think other readers will be also.

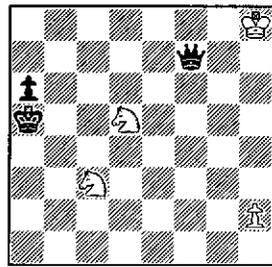
2, by Alexander Grin and Oleg Pervakov (2 Pr *Ural Problemist* 1995) recently appeared in Jan van Reek's column in *Schaak*. **1 Ne3+** forces **1...Ka5** (other moves



1c - 2 Rc1, after 3...Rh2



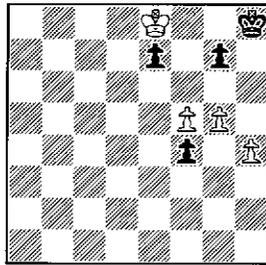
2 - draw



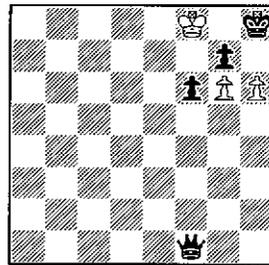
2a - after 3...Qf7

allow the knights to catch the pawns), and 2 **Ne7 f1Q 3 Ned5** bottles up the Black king. But 3...**Qf7** returns the compliment (see 2a); who will give way first?

If White plays 4 h4, he loses: 4...**Qg6 5 h5 Qf7! 6 h6 Qg6 7 h7 Qf7** and a knight must move. So it's a pawn-one: 4 **h3! Qg6 5 h4 Qf7 6 h5** and the square g6 is unavailable. Black can try and maintain some pressure by 6...**Qf8+ 7 Kh7 Qf7+**, hoping for 8 **Kh6 Qg8**, but the simple 8 **Kh8** holds the draw.



3 - win



3a - after 5 h6

EG 146 (October 2002) included the award of *Vecherny Leningrad* 1971-72, and it was very definitely a case of "better late than never". The award included Leopold Mitrofanov's 3, and its appearance lets us correct a garbled version which had got into the literature from Mitrofanov's posthumous papers.

Try the obvious 1 **Kxe7**: no, 1...**f3 2 f6 gxf6 3 gxf6 f2** and draws, or 3 **g6 Kg7**. All right, try 1 **Kf7** with a view to **g6, h5, h6**, and a mate: still no, 1...**f3 2 g6 f2 3 h5 f1Q 4 h6 Qxf5+**, and a preliminary 2 **f6 exf6** to block the file doesn't help because Black also has ...**Qc4+**.

The move that works is 1 **Kf8**, after which we have 1...**f3 2 f6** (we still need to block the file) **exf6 3 g6 f2 4 h5 f1Q 5 h6** with one of those delightful positions where two pawns win against a queen even though the queen has the move (see 3a). If instead 1...**Kh7** then 2 **h5 f3 3 h6 g6 4 Kf7** and wins.

Is there a flaw? I can't see one. The version in Mitrofanov's posthumous papers (EG 120 p 797) had added pawns on e2 and e4, in which form the study is definitely cooked (Black no longer has ...**Qc4+** to refute 1 **Kf7**), but the simpler version without them appears perfectly clean.

News and notices

Meetings. The next *EG* readers' meeting will be at 17 New Way Road, London NW9 6PL, on **Friday January 10** at 6.00 pm; non-subscribers welcome, but please bring £5 towards the buffet (except on a first visit). Bring the latest *EG* with you!

Naturalness of study positions (September, pages 212-3). David Friedgood suggests that the paradox, that the starting position of a study featuring introductory play must be either (a) unnatural or (b) reachable only by a blunder or of a sequence of exchanges, may be more apparent than real. As he says, there surely can't be anything more natural than a sequence of exchanges or a blunder!

Noam Elkies also comments pertinently, pointing out that a composer may forego further extension of the introductory play because the length and complexity of the analysis would distract attention from the main point of the study. He also points out that a natural position may be reachable by play that is optimal but not uniquely optimal, and in this case extension of the solution is of course impossible.

Progress on six-man endings. A considerable amount of effort is currently going into the calculation of six-man endgame tables. The situation changes almost daily, but here are some contact points known to me. I am sure there are others.

- <ftp://ftp.cis.uab.edu/pub/hyatt/TB/six> (Rob Hyatt) offers a selection of Nalimov tablebases for two-against-two pawnless endings. They are downloadable, though only if you have a faster line than mine (a typical file size is 1Gb).
- ChessBits@gmx.net (Helmut Conrady, Marcus Kästner) offers a 100Gb hard disc for sale with 40Gb of two-against-two pawnless tablebases (249 euros). The list of contents appears broadly similar to the Hyatt list, but I haven't collated in detail.
- <http://chess.jaet.org/endings> and <http://chess.jaet.org/cgi-bin/mzugs> (John Tamplin) contain much useful information, including lists of known reciprocal zugzwangs.
- <http://web.quick.cz/EVCOMP/evcnews.htm> (Emil Vlasák, bilingual in Czech and English) contains news of various recent developments, including the generation of a tablebase for R+2P v R by Marc Bourzutschky (msbky@msn.com).

My thanks to Guy Haworth for much of this.

World Chess Composition Tournament (see March page 200, June page 208, September page 216). David Sedgwick would like to thank the three composers who have submitted compositions. He would be pleased to receive further submissions, which should reach him by December 20 at the latest: 23 Tierney Court, Canning Road, Croydon, Surrey CR0 6QA. This will be the last of these notices, as the final chance to consider submissions will be at the meeting on January 10 (see above).

Anybody wishing to give notice in BESN of any event, product, or service should contact the Editor. There is no charge and no account is taken of whether the activity is being pursued for commercial profit, but notices are printed only if they seem likely to be of particular interest to study enthusiasts. Readers are asked to note that the Editor relies wholly on the representations of the notice giver (except where he makes a personal endorsement) and that no personal liability is accepted either by him or by any other person involved in the production and distribution of this magazine.