

British Endgame Study News

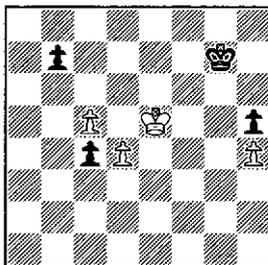
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Another British World Champion. The World Chess Solving Championship is only marginally an endgame study affair, but it is still a pleasure to record John Nunn's success this year. This was only John's fifth attempt at the title, but he had come a close second in 1978 and in 1994 he won the preliminary "Open" competition only to fall back in the event itself; this time, everything worked out. Britain came second in the team event.

This issue. Sad to say, we start with an obituary for Walter Veitch, who gave us valuable support for so many years. The special number covers British studies from 1920-36, and there is the usual annual index.

Recent British originals have been very few, but my little trifle above (from *diagrammes*) seems to have given pleasure to solvers. Try it before looking inside.

6-man lookup service. One door closes, another opens. John Tamplin's site <http://chess.jaet.org/endings/>

now offers a position-by-position enquiry service which provides everything that Ken Thompson's site used to do, and a lot more besides. More next time.

Bennó and Benkő (see September, page 278-9). John Rice passes on confirmation by Zoltán Laborczy that Pál Bennó is indeed a different composer from Pál Benkő. As regards the accents, my impression is that Benkő drops them in English but retains them in Hungarian (they appear to be absent from his recent autobiography except when he is quoting Hungarian material). Many Americans of Central and Eastern European descent appear to do the same.

Spotlight. No analytic blunders in September (at least none yet reported), but a most unfortunate repeated howler: "les cases conjuguées" must have its second "u".

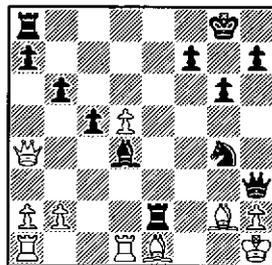
Accounts for 2004. My costs, constant since 1999, have at last increased. UK readers are being charged £6.50 for the current year (£7.50 to mainland Europe, £9.50 elsewhere), and I expect the charges for next year to be £7 UK (£8 Europe, £10 elsewhere). There is a reminder letter with this issue if your subscription has run out; otherwise, please assume that you remain in credit until I tell you otherwise.

Walter Veitch

Walter Veitch (1923-2004) died on July 30. He had been quietly closing in on himself for some time.

Walter had a Scottish father and a Swiss-German mother, was brought up in the canton of Zürich, and attended university in Genève. He then settled in Britain, where he rose to a senior position in a leading insurance company. His background had given him fluency in three languages (he once told me that he was sent on holidays to the Suisse Romande, which he hated, for the sake of his French), and over the years he acquired at least a useful working knowledge of several others. He never married, and his only close relatives at the time of his death appear to have been an elder sister and a nephew in Switzerland and another nephew in Scotland. John Roycroft, who attended his cremation, told me that the only others present were these two nephews and his gardener/handyman.

Walter never played chess other than as an amateur, but he was good enough to finish equal 7th-9th in the 1950 British Championship and the October 1950 *BCM* gave his win with Black against Golombek: 1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 g3 d5 4 cxd5 Nxd5 5 e4 Nb6 6 Bg2 Bg7 7 Ne2 c5 8 d5 0-0 9 0-0 e6 10 Nbc3 exd5 11 exd5 Nc4 12 Nf4 Nd6 13 Ne4 Nxe4 14 Bxe4 Nd7 15 Qc2 Nf6 16 Bg2 b6 Rd1 Bf5 18 Qc4 Re8 19 f3 Nd7 20 g4 Ne5 21 Qa4 Qh4 22 Bd2 Bxg4 23 fxg4 Nxg4 24 Nh3 Bd4+ 25 Kh1 Re2 26 Be1 Qxh3! (diagram) and White gave up. The *BCM* has no note beyond "A delightful finish",



After 26...Qxh3

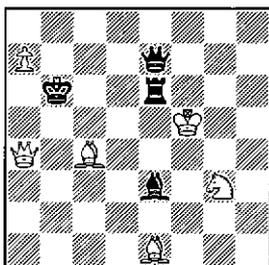
but I presume that the reply to 22 gxf5 would have been 22...Ng4 with intention 23 fxg4 Re1+ 24 Rxe1 (24 Bf1 Qxg4+ etc) Qxe1+ 25 Bf1 Bd4+ 26 Kg2 Qf2+ 27 Kh3 Qxf1+ and the king hunt eventually mates or nets the queen; my computer regards the immediate queen-conceding lines 26 Qxd4 cxd4 and 23 Qc2 Bd4+ 24 Rxd4 Re1+ 25 Bf1 Nhx2 26 Qxh2 Rxf1+ as "unclear", but White's pieces are disorganized and in a practical game with a clock I think most of us would prefer to be Black.

Walter gave up composing very early, discouraged by the difficulty in those days of finding out what had already been done, but to our generation he was *the* analyst, fearsome and missing very little. John Roycroft's book *Test tube chess* gives several examples, and readers of *BESN* (and *EG*, which reprinted it) will not have forgotten his elegant and systematic demonstration of the win with 2R+N v Q in June 1998. He stood for intellectual rigour, and tolerated nothing less; he wrote in *EG* 15 of his disgust at overhearing a piece of blatantly dishonest error suppression by a journalist, and of his belief that a number of composers deliberately avoided thorough research into their positions in case it might reveal a fault that would prevent publication. But while he had as sharp a pen as I have known, he was never malicious. He would look at a position, and if an apparently strong move was not analysed he would sit down and work out what would happen; if the result was to vindicate the study, he would be pleased rather than otherwise. And for all his austerity and rigour, he could

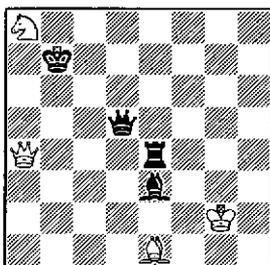
Progress, or decadence?

The “*FIDE Album 1995-97*” appeared earlier this year. I have long been unconvinced by these albums, and this latest is no exception. Like its predecessors, it is primarily a collection of artificial and introverted problems in contemporary style, but even if we ignore these and just look at the studies there is little to enthuse over.

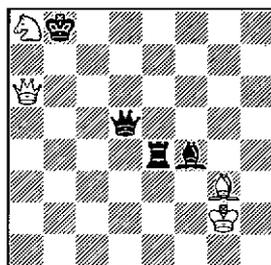
The hallmarks of an ideal endgame study are *piquancy* and *clarity*. The studies presented here appear to have been chosen primarily for their length and complexity. The shortest has a main line 7 moves long, that of the median is 12, of the longest 29; one study uses only five men and half a dozen use only six, but the median is 10 and the maximum no less than 24. These are not “endgame studies” as we have come to know and love them. Yes, there are piquant moments, but most are buried so deep among moves which are mundane or obscure, and achieved at the cost of starting positions so characterless and artificial, that their impact is greatly reduced.



1 - BTM, White to draw



1a - after 7...Kb7



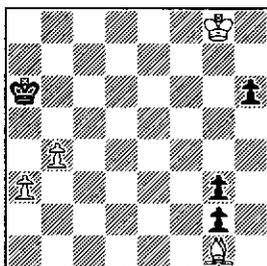
1b - after 9...Bf4

The studies were marked by three judges, and 1 (E. Dobrescu, 1 Pr Nestorescu-65 1995) was one of the three ranked highest. Yet the position is charmless, and the introductory play routine: 1...Rf6+ 2 Kg4 Rf4+ 3 Kh3 Rh4+ 4 Kg2 Qb7+ 5 Bd5 (5 Kf1 Qf3+ and mate next move) Qxd5 6 Ne4 Rxe4 (threat 7...Rg4+ etc) 7 a8N+ (Black has forced two sacrifices and an underpromotion, but White still has a draw on material) Kb7 (7...Kc5 8 Qa5+ with perpetual check) and we have 1a. Now 8 Qa6+ and 8...Kxa6 9 Nc7+ is drawn, hence 8...Kb8, with sequel 9 Bg3+ Bf4 (1b) 10 Qc8+ Ka7 (10...Kxc8 11 Nb6+) 11 Bf2+ Be3 (1b reflected) 12 Qa6+ etc. All right, there is an echo, but to call this one of the three best studies of 1995-97 is ludicrous. Yet one judge gave it the highest possible mark, and the others were only half a point short.

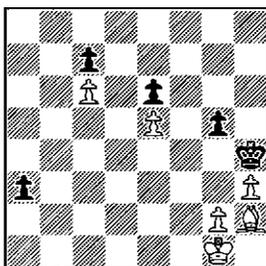
Something has gone wrong. I looked through *La récolte de dix années*, described in September, for the same years, and immediately I noticed three five-man gems which were not in the album: the Ulrichsen study which graced our front cover in June 2002, and two posthumous Krikheli studies from special number 34. Any lazy journalist who uses this album as his source for the period will be selling his readers very short indeed. Of course there are better studies in it than that above, which I single out only because others have done so, but in general I am sadly unimpressed. This is a record not of progress, but of overblown fashionable decadence.

Kubbel Mark 2

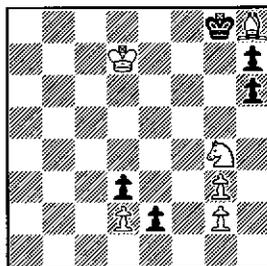
I briefly mentioned the revised edition of Timothy Whitworth's *Leonid Kubbel's chess endgame studies* in September, but it merits a full review. The original 1984 edition contained all but two of the studies from Kubbel's *250 selected studies* of 1938, plus other selections to a total of 300 (with a further 28 as notes). The new edition has 444 studies plus 20 as notes, and contains every study by Kubbel that Timothy could find.



1 - win



2 - draw



3 - win

The 1984 edition tried to present the best of Kubbel, so how valuable are the additions? Much more valuable than I thought they would be. 1 (*Niva* 1909) anticipated the Réti manoeuvre: **1 Kf7 h5 2 Ke6 h4 3 Kd5** and either **3...h3 4 Kc6 h2 5 Bb6** and **6 b5 mate** or **3...Kb5 4 Ke4 h3 5 Kf3** and the pawns are caught. This may lack the sublime elegance of the Réti study, but the basic idea is there.

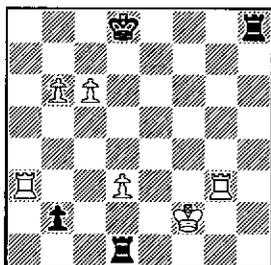
2 (*Smena* 1916) is in the 1984 edition as a note, but now has its own diagram. **1 g4** (threat **2 Kg2** and **3 Bg3 mate**) **Kxh3 2 Kh1 a2** (else **3 Bg1** and **4 Bd4**) **3 Bg1** (anyway) and **3...a1Q/R** gives stalemate at once while **3...a1B 4 Bd4 Bxd4** gives it a move later. And **3...a1N**? No stalemate now, but a sparkling alternative in **4 Bb6!**

3 (*Deutsches Wochenschach* 1925) yields to **1 Ke8!** (we shall see why not **1 Ke7**) **e1Q+** (**1...Kxh8 2 Kf8 e1Q 3 Nxh6 Qf2+ 4 Nf7+** and White wins the pawn ending) **2 Be5** (threat **3 Nh6 mate**) **Qh1** (**2...Qxd2 3 Nf6+ Kg7 4 Ne4+**) and thanks to White's first move he can now play **3 Ke7** putting Black in zugzwang (**3...Qh5 4 Nf6+**). Had White played **1 Ke7** he would have only **3 Ke8**, and **3...Qh5** would be check.

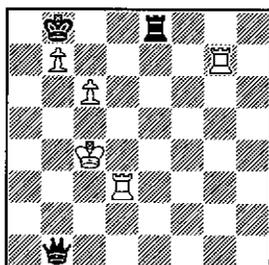
So the extra studies are very well worth having. I started at the front of the book, and these are numbers 17/20/29; I needed to go less than a tenth of the way through before I had a trio of examples worth quoting. As for the editing, this is scrupulous as always with Timothy, and particularly so in his notes on sources; these not only give the usual details of original publication, they also cite the source he actually used if he could not consult the original. Be it added that printing and paper are first rate.

I do have two regrets: that the personal notes in Herbstman's introduction to the original edition were not carried over, and that the studies are arranged according to a numerical code which produces a curious and unsatisfactory material sequence. But these are details. This is a thoroughly first-class piece of work: an essential reference book for the specialist, and very highly recommended to the general reader.

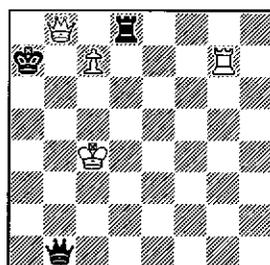
From the world at large



1 - win



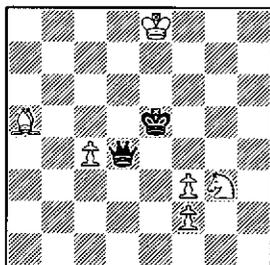
1a - after 6...Kb8



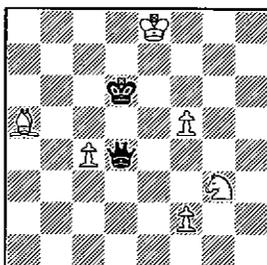
1b - after 9 b8Q+

Mario Matouš's very enjoyable **1** appeared in *Československý šach* in 2000, and took 5th Prize in the 2000-01 tourney. **1 Rg7** threatens mate, and if **1...Ra1** then **2 Ra8+ Rxa8 3 b7** leads to a quick win. More promising is **1...Rf1+**, but White escapes by **2 Ke3** (Black can only force a knight promotion, **2...Rh3+/Re1+ 3 Kd4 Rh4+ 4 Kc3 b1N+**, and **5 Kb3** stops further progress). The most troublesome move is **1...Rf8+**, with sequel **2 Ke3** (**2 Ke2 Re8+ 3 Kf2 Rf1+** etc) **Re8+ 3 Kd4 Rxd3+**. White must now play **4 Rxd3** withdrawing the mate threat, and Black has time for **4...b1Q**. Even so, **5 Kc4+** maintains the pressure, and after **5...Kc8 6 b7+ Kb8** we have **1a**.

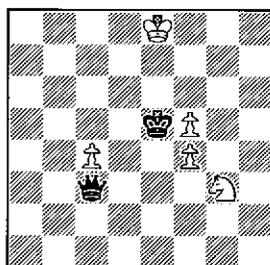
An immediate **7 c7+** leads nowhere, but **7 Rd8+ Rxd8 8 c7+** is more dangerous. **8...Kxb7 9 cxd8Q+** is hopeless, hence **8...Ka7**, and **9 b8Q+** gives **1b**. If **9...Qxb8** then **10 c8Q+** and **10 exd8Q+** both win quickly, but if **9...Rxb8** then **10 c8Q+** is only a draw: ah, **10 c8N+ Ka8/Ka6 11 Ra7** mate, and we see why the White king chose **c4** rather than **c3** at move 5.



2 - win

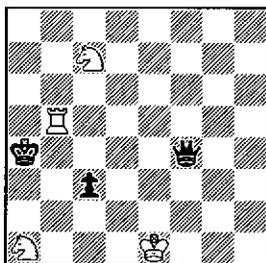


2a - 1 f4+, after 2...Kd6

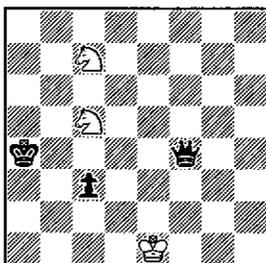


2b - main line, 4 f4+

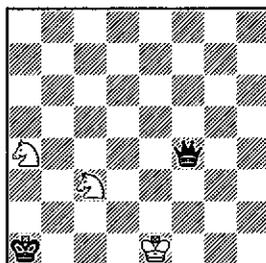
EG 152 gave a selection of studies by the Indian composer Niharendu Sikdar. **2** appeared in *The Guardian* in 1963. Try **1 f4+**, with forks and skewers and pins all round (**1...Kf6 2 Bc3 Qxc3 3 Ne4+**): no, **1...Ke6 2 f5+ Kd6** and the pawn on **f5** prevents the knight from forking on this square (see **2a**). The pin must come first, **1 Bc3**, and after **1...Qxc3** the forks are on different squares and **2 f4+ Ke6 3 f5+ Ke5 4 f4+** leaves Black without resource (see **2a**).



3 - draw

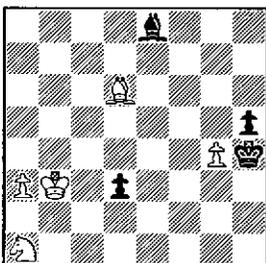


3a - after 3 Nc5+

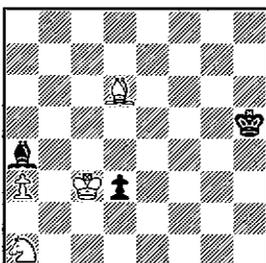


3b - after 6 N5a4

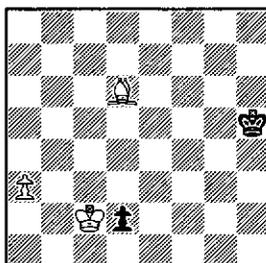
The commentary to 3 (*Sunday Standard* 1977) refers to "one magical move" which transforms a "hopeless" position into one where the knights can hold the queen. White must lose a knight at least, and while rook and knight may be able to hold out against queen and pawn once they are well organized they will certainly not be able to do so here. The move that transforms things is **1 Ra5+**! Black only has **1...Kxa5** (a move to the b-file allows a fork), and we have **2 Nb3+ Ka4 3 Nc5+ (see 3a) Ka3 (3...Ka5 4 Nb3+ repeating) 4 Nb5+ Ka2 5 Nxc3+ Ka1 6 N5a4** with a well-known blockade (see 3b). I wonder whether the computer has discovered any positions with K+R+2N against K+Q alone where a similar sacrifice is needed to hold the draw.



4 - win



4a - after 2...Kxh5



4b - after 5 Kc2

4 (*Sunday Standard* 1979) starts **1 gxh5**, and the given main line is **1...Ba4+** (if instead **1...Bxh5/Kxh5** then again **2 Kc3** and **3 Nb3**, with much the same play). To capture would let the d-pawn promote, hence **2 Kc3**, and **2...Kxh5** gives 4a.

Cannot White now play **3 Kxd3** followed by **4-5 Kb4** and **6 a4**? No, because Black won't take the a-pawn; he will meet **5 Kb4** by **5...Bd1** and **6 a4** by **6...Ke6**, using his bishop to keep the knight shut in and his king to stop the pawn. Instead, White must play **3 Nb3**, after which we have **3...Bxb3** (Black cannot afford to let the knight get into play) **4 Kxb3 d2 (4...Kg5 5 Bb4 Kf5 6 Kc4 and the White king will reach a7) 5 Kc2 (see 4b) Kg4** (the a-pawn is now out of reach, but Black tries to save himself by a Réti manoeuvre) **6 a4 (6 Kxd2 loses a tempo, and 6...Kf5 gets back to the corner) Kf3** (threatening **7...Ke2**, and now White does have to spend a tempo) **7 Bb4!** (but this turns out to kill two birds with one stone) **Ke4** (back within the square of the a-pawn, but...) **8 a5 Kd5 9 a6 Kc6 10 Ba5** and the last word is White's.

News and notices

EG subscriptions. *EG*'s costs, like those of *BESN*, have increased, and readers wishing to subscribe by paying sterling to myself should note that the subscription for 2005 will be ****£17****. Subscriptions already received at this year's rate will of course be honoured without further payment: the advantage of having paid for two years at once!

Meetings. The next *EG* readers' meeting will be at 17 New Way Road, London NW9 6PL, on **Friday January 7** 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.

John Nunn's 50th birthday tourney. *EG* is hosting a study tourney to mark John Nunn's 50th birthday, the eighth in its series of jubilee and memorial tourneys. Entries to Brian Stephenson, 9 Roydfield Drive, Waterthorpe, Sheffield S20 7ND, bstephen@freeuk.com, by **30 October 2005**. No set theme; judgement by John himself; magazine subscription prizes.

Artur Mandler. Several people have commented on the paucity of biographical detail in *Depth and Beauty*, my English-language edition of Artur Mandler's book *Studie*. The short answer is that I didn't know anything; there is nothing in *Studie* and only his bare birth and death dates appear in the Czech *Malá encyklopedie šachu*, and my enquiries prior to publication bore no fruit. However, Jean Mennerat has now told me that he was born at Humpolec, in the highlands between Bohemia and Moravia and just off the modern motorway from Praha to Brno. There is a small half-tone photograph on page 210 of *Malá encyklopedie šachu*, but it would not have reproduced well and I did not seek permission to use it.

Krikkheli and Gurgenzidze. When compiling my March list of books for sale, I omitted David Gurgenzidze's "Iosif Krikkheli : Endgames" and the two books "Best studies" and "Best studies 2" containing selections of his own studies. Each of these excellent books is available from me at £5 including UK postage (usual 10% extra to mainland Europe, 20% elsewhere).

Back numbers. I have recently had extra copies made of all back numbers of *BESN*, and these will remain available as long as the magazine is being published. All incompletely filled orders should have been made good by the time this appears in print; if for any reason any hasn't, please tell me.

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