

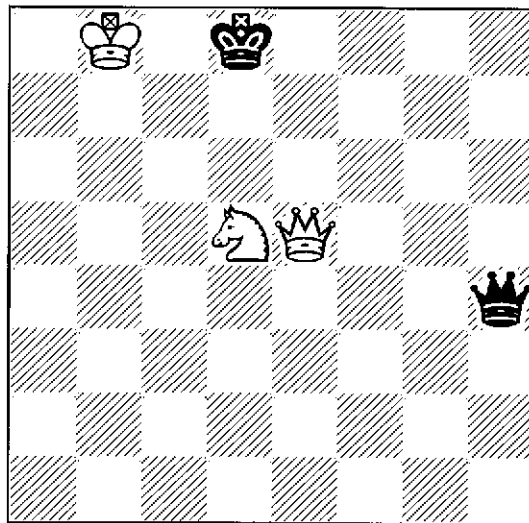
British Endgame Study News

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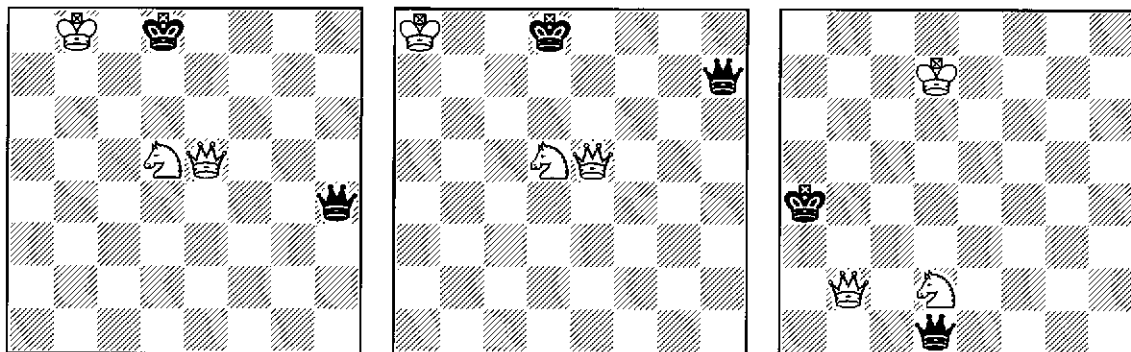
Some British Studies from 1990-91



White to play wins by triangulation!

Some British studies from 1990-91

Looking back, the most striking study event of 1990-91 was the publication by John Nunn of some database-derived studies with Q + N v Q and other material. Their principal effect was to create controversy over whether such discoveries should be allowed to compete in tourneys, a sad illustration of the false sense of priorities which appears to rule in some sections of the study world. What actually matters is that some fascinating positions were discovered and published which could hardly have been found by any other means.



1 - win

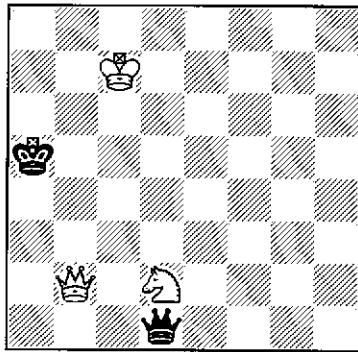
1a - after 2 Ka8

2 - win

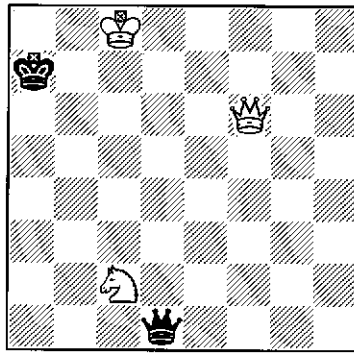
Take **1** (*Československý šach*, 1991). Black is short of good moves here (1...Qh7 allows 2 Qg5+ and a fork, 1...Kd7 allows 2 Nf6+ and mate in a few), but unfortunately it is White to play. The waiting move 1 Ka8 relaxes the pressure (after 1...Qh7, 2 Qg5+ can now be met by 2...Kc8) and 1 Kb7 exposes wK to check. However, 1...Qh7+ can be met by 2 Ka8 (see 1a), and Black is still short of moves (2...Qd7 3 Qg5+ and a fork, 2...Qf7 3 Qd6+ Qd7 4 Qb6+). He can only play 2...Qh4, after which 3 Kb8 gives the original position with Black to play. Studies with Q + N v Q tend to be forcing and sometimes unsubtle affairs in which White must keep checking in order to maintain the initiative; who would have expected there to be a position in which White can win only by a king triangulation?

White again has no good immediate check in 2 (*Die Schwalbe*, 1990), and his natural move is 1 Kc7 to unpin wN. This appears very strong, since any bQ move will allow 2 Qb3+ Ka5 3 Nc4+ etc, but Black can play 1...Qg4, after which White's eventual 3 Nc4+ can be met by 3...Qxc4 since 4 Qxc4 will be stalemate. The winning move is 1 Kd8, leaving wN pinned for the moment. Black will not help himself by unpinning it, so 1...Ka5 is his natural move, and only now does White play 2 Kc7 (see 2a). The threat of check on c4 is unpleasant and 2...Ka4 can be met by 3 Ne4 with a quick win, so Black's only real hope is 2...Qg4; but even this fails, because White has 3 Nb3+ Kb4/Kb5 (3...Ka4/Ka6 4 Nc5+ and mate) 4 Nd4+ and mate or win of bQ will soon follow.

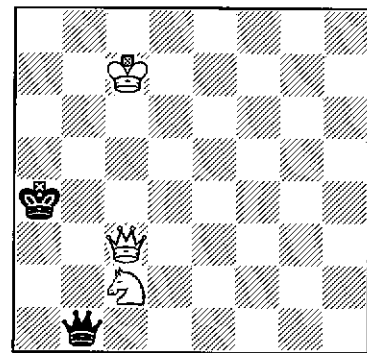
Why not 1 Kd6, intending 1...Ka5 2 Kc7 with the same position? Because Black can play 1...Qg1, guarding b6, and now 2 Qb3+ Ka5 3 Nc4+ leads nowhere. After 1 Kd8, 1...Qg1 can be met by 2 Qb3+ Ka5 3 Nc4+ Ka6 4 Qa4+ Kb7 5 Nd6+.



2a - after 2 Kc7



3 - win



3a - see text

3 (*Sakkélet*, 1991) took second prize in the magazine's annual informal tourney - on this occasion database-derived compositions were apparently taken into competition on equal terms with other works - and although the composer can point both to this result and to current fashion, I do question whether the opening moves **1 Qf2+ Ka6** serve any useful purpose. They seem to me merely to increase the length of the solution without adding anything of interest. However, this is my only point of criticism, and interesting play starts immediately afterwards with the quiet move **2 Kc7**. This neatly hides wK and threatens mate on b6, and if 2...Kb5 then 3 Qb5+ Kc4 4 Ne3+ and bQ goes.

Black must try **2...Qb1**, therefore, and now it turns out that the only way to win is to get wQ to c3. White must do it with check, however; if he merely plays say 3 Qe2+ Ka5 4 Qd2+ Ka4 5 Qc3, we have **3a** with Black to move, and Black can hold the draw by the startling move 5...Qb6+. The correct manoeuvre is **3 Qf6+ Ka5** (if 3...Ka7 then 4 Qd4+ forces mate) **4 Qc3+ Ka4** (if 4...Ka6 then 5 Qc6+ Ka5 6 Qa8+ and soon wins bQ). Now we have **3a** with White to move, and the delightful move **5 Kc8** puts Black in zugzwang. His best move is 5...Qb6, but even this does not hold out for long: 6 Qa3+ Kb5 7 Qb4+ Ka6 (if 7...Kc6 then 8 Nd4+ wins bQ) 8 Qa4+ Qa5 9 Nb4+ Kc6 10 Qc6+ and mate next move. I particularly like the way in which wK advances to the attack at move 2 only to retreat again at move 5.

The position after 5 Kc8 is in fact reciprocal zugzwang (Black to play loses, White to play could not win) but here White has reached it by a gain-a-move manoeuvre. It is natural to wonder if a study cannot be composed in which the same position is reached by a lose-a-move manoeuvre, there being a simple line of attack in which White reaches it with himself to play, thus only drawing, and a more subtle line in which he loses a move and reaches it with Black to play. I suspect that the answer is No, on the grounds that if such a study existed John would have found it in the course of his researches, but it is the sort of possibility to which composers looking for ideas are always alert.

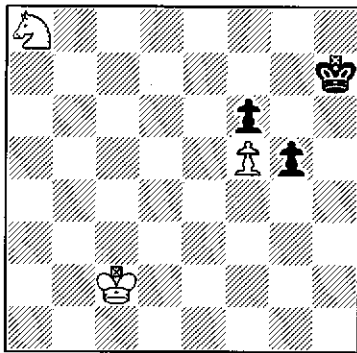
I am personally quite unconcerned whether a piquant position arises fortuitously in a game, or is the product of deliberate human investigation, or is discovered by computer. What matters is that it exists. If computers bring beautiful positions to our attention which would not have been discovered otherwise, we should not spend time arguing about the implications for tourney competition, we should build more computers.

In conventional composition, the most notable event in Britain was the emergence of David Blundell. His first compositions went to Mike Bent's Jubilee Tourney, and included the first of the deep N + P v 2P studies which have become his hallmark.

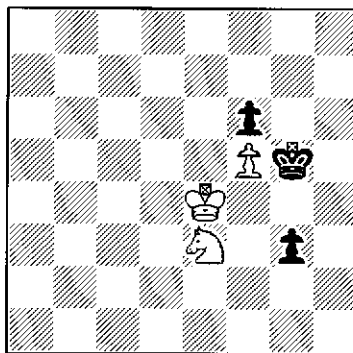
The detailed analysis of 4 is daunting (the solution in *EG* runs to 45 variations), but the strategic principles are simple. White must bring wN down to e3, where it holds the g-pawn and keeps bK from g4, but if it goes via d5 it blocks wK and allows Black a defence based on positions of reciprocal zugzwang. The most striking of these positions is shown in 4a. Here, wN has finally got to e3, but to no avail; if he tries 1 Kf3, Black plays 1...g2! and after 2 Kxg2 Kf4 he can hold wK at bay.

So the knight must go via c4, and the main line is **1 Nb6 g4 2 Nc4 Kh6 3 Kd3 Kh5 4 Kd4 Kh4/Kh6 5 Kd5** (this is why d5 must be free) **Kh5 6 Ne3 g3 7 Ke6 Kg5 8 Ng2 Kg4 9 Ne1** (9 Kxf6 is met by 9...Kf3 drawing) **Kg5 10 Nf3+ Kf4/Kg4 11 Ng1 Kg5 12 Ne2 g2 13 Ng1 Kf4/Kg4** and now **14 Kxf6** does lead to a win.

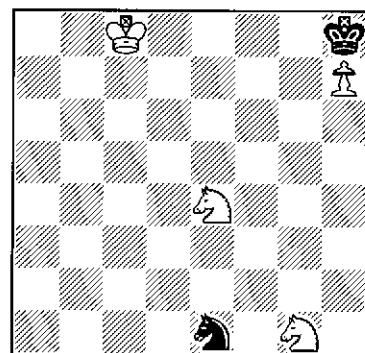
David was to exploit the same idea with greater piquancy in the beautiful 1 Nal study which graced the front page of our first issue, but I think those interested in how studies evolve will like to see the earlier version as well.



4 - win



4a - reciprocal zugzwang

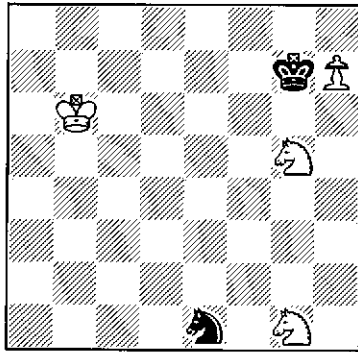


5 - win

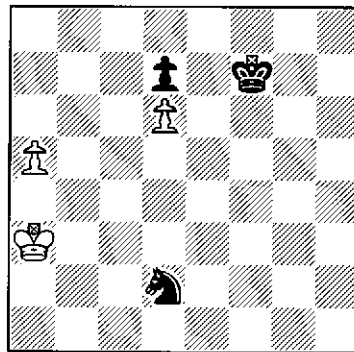
5 obtained 1st Honourable Mention in the tourney to celebrate 80 years of *L'Italia Scacchistica* (1911-91). We'll look at 1 Nf6 in a moment, but the move that works is **1 Ng5**. White would now like to bring wNg1 to f7 or g6, Black to attack wP or wNg5, and neither knight can afford to move first (apart from a possible ...Nd3 by Black immediately answered by N1f3 by White). So bK will oscillate between h8 and g7, starting **1...Kg7**, while White tries to bring wK down to attack bN.

This is tricky, because White cannot allow bN to gain a tempo by giving check. If **2 Kb7/Kd7**, we have **2...Nd3 3 N1f3 Nc5+** and **4...Ne4**; if **2 Kc7/Kd8**, **2...Nd3 3 N1f3 Nc5 4 Ne5 Ne6+**. So the first step is **2 Kb8**, and after **2...Kh8** wK must aim for b6 (because a6 will be subject to a check from c5). The natural sequence is **3 Ka7 Kg7 4 Kb6**, giving **5a**, but now Black can play **4...Nd3 5 N1f3 Nf4 6 Ne5 Nd5+ 7 K--Nf6** and White's **8 Nef7** is too late. However, if bK stood on h8 White's move to f7 would give check, and White would win. Hence **3 Ka8! Kg7 4 Ka7 Kh8 5 Kb6**, after which we do have **5a** with bK on h8 and the rest is easy (**5...Kg7 6 Kb5 Kh8 7 Kc4 Kg7 8 Kc3 Kh8 9 Kd2 Ng2 10 N1f3 Kg7 11 Ne5 Nh4 12 Nef7** etc).

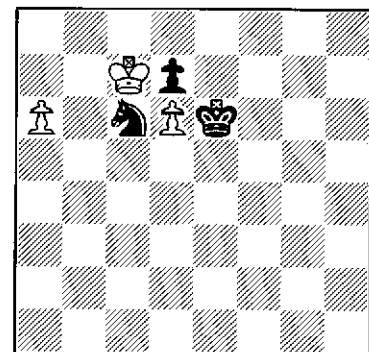
Why not 1 Nf6? Because when wK is on b6, Black will be able to play ...Nd3, ...Nf4, and ...Nd5+ forking wK and wN.



5a - after 3 Ka7 Kg7 4 Kb6



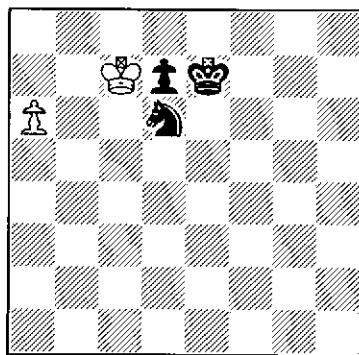
6 - draw



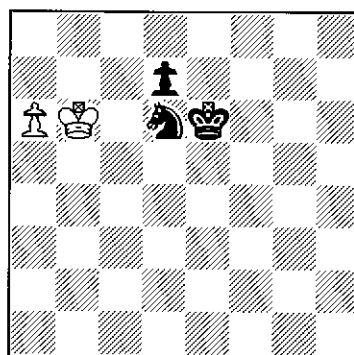
6a - reciprocal zugzwang

6 (*Chess Life and Review* 1991) reverts to David's favourite material. This study depends on 6a, 6b, and 6c, each of which is reciprocal zugzwang (White to play loses, Black to play cannot win), and the main line runs **1 Kb4** (to deny c4 to bN) **Nf3** (aiming at c6 instead) **2 Kc5 Ne5 3 Kb6 Kf6** (3...Nc6 4 Kc7 Ke6 5 a6 gives 6a and 3...Ke6 4 a6 will lead to the same thing, so Black temporises) **4 Kb7** (4 Kc7 Ke6 5 a6 Nc6 gives 6a with White to move) **Nc4** (4...Nc6 5 Kc7 Ke6 6 a6 again produces 6a, so Black gives up the attempt to reach c6) **5 Kc7** (if 5 a6 then 5...Nxd6+ 6 Kc7 Ke7 and we have 6b with White to move, so White must provoke ...Ke6 before advancing the pawn) **Ke6 6 a6 Nxd6 7 Kb6**.

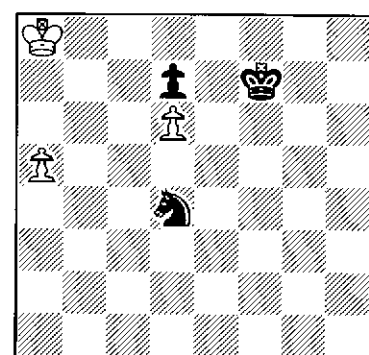
Now we have 6c with Black to move, and Black is unable to make progress; the composer gives **7...Nc8+ 8 Kb7** (if 8 Kc7 then 8...Na7 and 9...Nc6) **Nd6+ 9 Kb6** (back to 6c, so try something else) **Ke7 10 Kc7** (now we have 6b) **Nb5+ 11 Kb6** (attacking bN and giving Black no time for ...Kd8) **Nd6 12 Kc7** (back to 6b) **Ne8+** (last try) **13 Kc8** (again stopping ...Kd8) **Kd6** (nothing better, because bN prevents ...Ke8) and either **14 a7** or **14 Kb7**.



6b - reciprocal zugzwang



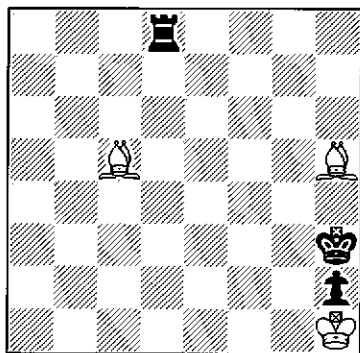
6c - reciprocal zugzwang



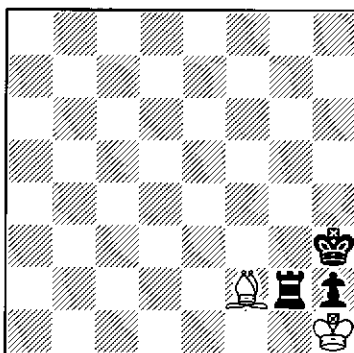
7 - draw

This study was published with 7, based on the same set of reciprocal zugzwangs, where the natural moves 1 a6 and 1 Kb7 allow Black to win and **1 Kb8** is the only move to hold the draw (the main line is **1...Nb5 2 a6 Kf6 3 Kc8 Ke6 4 Kb7 Nxd6+ 5 Kb6** and once again we have reached 6c). Together, they gained a well deserved 2nd HM in the magazine's tourney for 1991-3. This description has concentrated on strategic principles rather than analytic detail, but those who like to see a full analysis will find one in issue 112 of *EG*.

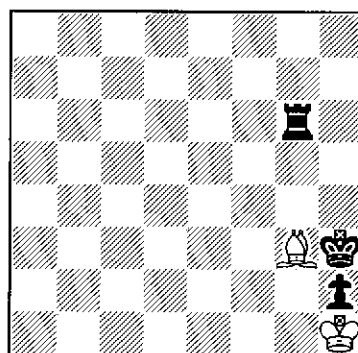
Two other British names to appear for the first time during this period were those of Stuart Rachels and Neil McEwan. Neither was previously known to me.



8 - draw (Black to move)

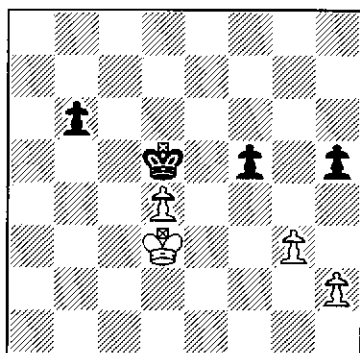


8a - after 4 Bf2

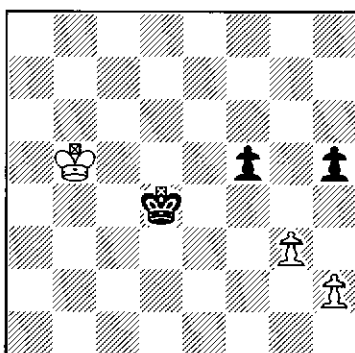


8b - after 5 Bg3

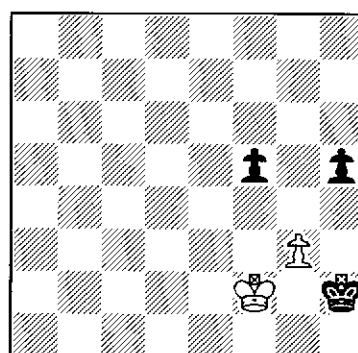
Stuart's name appeared above 8, which was quoted in *EG* 112 as one of four unhonoured studies following the 1991-93 award of *Chess Life*. White has enough material to draw in comfort, but he needs to avoid being mated. The main line is **1...Rd2** (White threatened Bg4+ and Kxh2) **2 Bf3 Rc2** (allowing White's next move, but nothing else is better) **3 Bg2+ Rxc2** **4 Bf2** (the manoeuvre picturesquely known to problemists as the "mousetrap", see 8a) **Rg6** **5 Bg3** (see 8b), and Black must either give stalemate or allow 6 Bxh2 with a book draw. Other Black first moves are no better: 1...Rc8 2 Bg4+ Kxg4 3 Bd6, or 1...Rd5 2 Bb6 Rxc5 3 Bc7.



9 - draw



9a - after 3 Kxb5

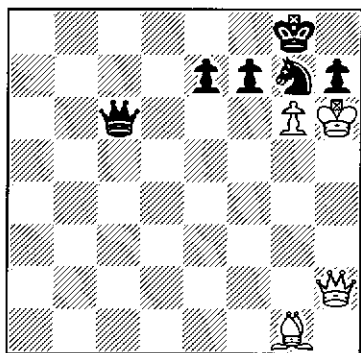


9b - 3-6...Kxh2 7 Kf2

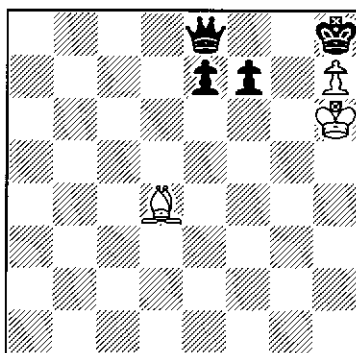
Neil McEwan's 9 was published in Adam Sobey's column in *The Problemist* in July 1990. It's the old story: having captured the b-pawn, can wK get back in time to deal with his counterpart's rape and pillage on the other wing? This time he can, just. Given is **1 Kc3 b5** (normally Black should leave his outside passed pawn alone and let wK come and get it, but if 1...Ke4 then 2 Kc4 and bK has no good move) **2 Kb4 Kxd4** **3 Kxb5** (see 9a) **h4** (a desperate throw, but if bK goes for the h-pawn by 3-6...Kxh2 then 7 Kf2 will hold the draw, see 9b) **4 Kc6** (White sees the check from f1 and is not to be tempted) **hxg3** (if 4...h3 then 5 Kb5, and again wK will get back to f2 in time) **5 hxg3** and Black's capture of wPg3 will be echoed by White's of bPf4.

If any reader is in touch with either of these gentlemen, please will he or she be so kind as to let me know.

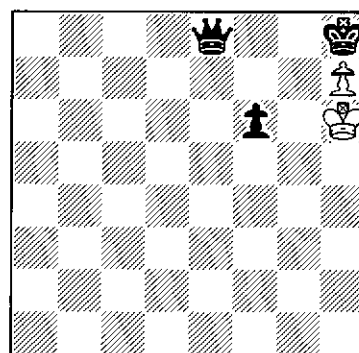
The pleasure of seeing new faces should not blind us to the works of our stalwarts, and in our case this means in particular Mike Bent. Mike's favourite themes might be described as mate, stalemate, domination, perpetual attack, and just plain fun, and if any should be given precedence it is probably the last. All featured in his work during this period.



10 - draw

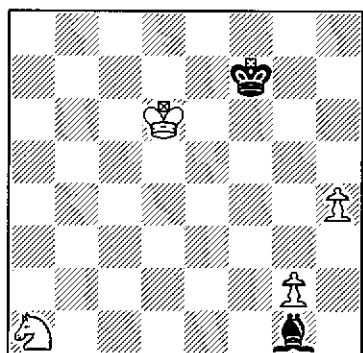


10a - after 4 Bd4+

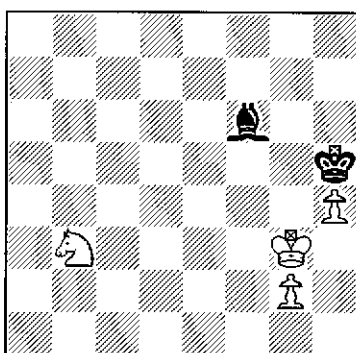


10a - 4...f6, 5...exf6

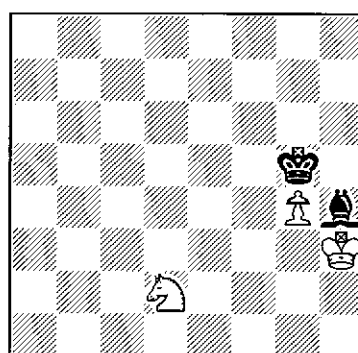
10 appeared in *The Problemist* in March 1991. Play starts 1 Qb8+ Ne8 2 Qxe8+ Qxe8 3 gxh7+ Kh8 4 Bd4+, and we have 10a. This check doesn't look very serious, but then we see that 4...e5 5 Bxe5+ Qxe5 gives stalemate and that 4...f6 5 Bxf6+ exf6 also gives stalemate. The latter line, with its guarding of h5 by discovery, is particularly attractive (see 10b).



11 - win



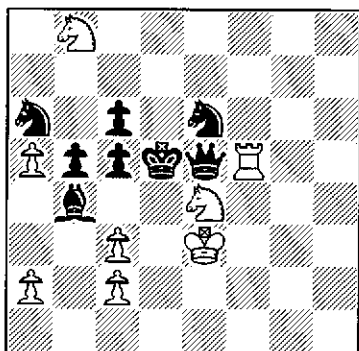
11a - after 4...Bf6



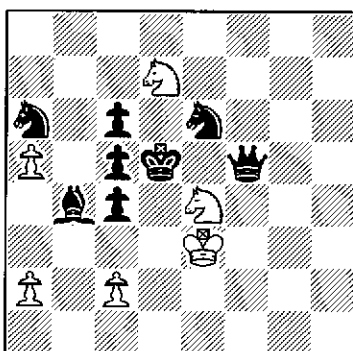
11b - after 7 Nd2

11 was published in *The Problemist* in January 1991. White's material advantage would normally be sufficient to win, but his knight is out of play and his pawns are open to attack, and it eventually becomes clear that his king must come across to defend them: 1 Ke5 Kg6 2 Kf4 Kh5. Now 3 g3 will allow 3...Bd4 4 N-- Bf6 and Black will draw by sacrificing his bishop for the pawns, so White must play 3 Kg3 even though it awkwardly blocks wPg2. Play continues 3...Bd4 4 Nb3 Bf6, and wPh4 must fall (see 11a).

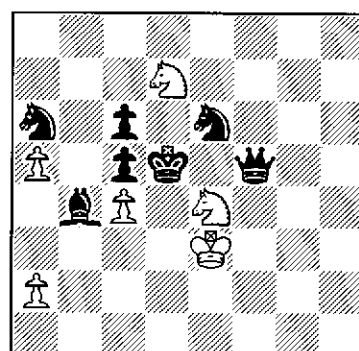
However, there is inevitably a catch. After 5 Kh3 Bxh4 6 g4+, Black must play 6...Kg5 if he is not to lose his bishop at once, and now 7 Nd2 leaves him neatly dominated (see 11b). His only superficially safe moves are ...Bf2 and ...Be1, and each loses to a fork.



12 - win

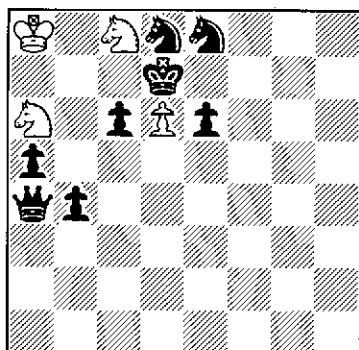


12a - after 2...bxc4

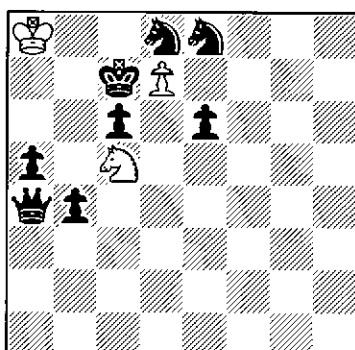


12b - after 7 c4+

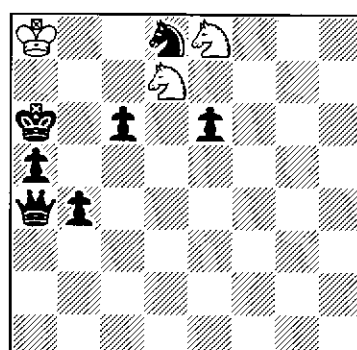
Not many British composers published originals in the famous Russian magazine *Shakhmaty v SSSR*, but Mike placed quite a few there over the years. 12 won a commendation in 1990. Play starts **1 Nd7 Qxf5** (if I am becoming a minimalist in the matter of introductory play, Mike remains very much a maximalist) **2 c4 bxc4** (2...Kxc4 allows mate on the move) and we have 12a. Now comes a typical Mike Bent run-around, **3 Nb6+ Ke5 4 Nxc4+ Kd5 5 Nb6+ Ke5 6 Nd7+ Kd5**, bringing us back to 12a without bPc4 and paving the way for a second P-sacrifice on this square: **7 c4+** (see 12b). This time **7...Kxc4** is forced, and we have a mating finish: **8 Nb6+ Kb5 9 Nd6+ Kxa5 10 Ndc4+ Kb5 11 a4 mate**.



13 - draw



13a - after 2...Kc7



13b - after 8 Ne8

13, from the May 1991 issue of *The Problemist*, is somewhat similar in spirit if quite different in effect. The opening flourish **1 Nc5+ Kxc8 2 d7+ Kc7** produces 13a, and naturally we take another knight: **3 dxe8N+**. Now **3...Kc8 4 Nd6+ Kc7 5 Ne8+** repeats the position, but Black can vary with **5...Kb6**. This is met by **6 Nd7+**, forcing **6...Kb5** since **6...Ka6** would allow mate in one, and now we have **7 Nd6+ Ke6 8 Ne8!** (see 13b). This threatens mate by **9 Nc7**, and we have a draw not by perpetual check but by alternating check and mate threat: **8..Kb5 9 Nd6+ Ka6 10 Ne8** etc.

My thanks to Harold van der Heijden for sending me several of the studies featured here. Our next special number of this kind is planned for September 1998, and will cover British studies from 1987-89. As usual, please will composers and their friends draw my attention to works they would like me to include, and also to anything from 1990-95 which should have appeared in the series but has been overlooked.