

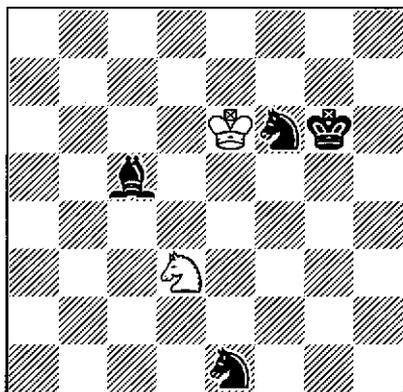
British Endgame Study News

Special number 15

June 1999

Edited and published by John Beasley, 7 St James Road, Harpenden, Herts AL5 4NX
ISSN 1363-0318

Some British studies from 1984-86



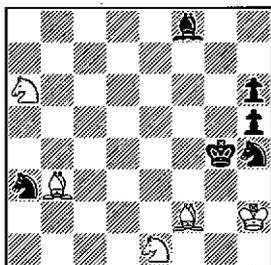
A fork with a difference

Some British studies from 1984-86

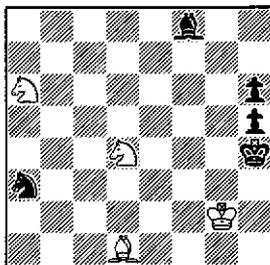
As so often in recent years, the flag of British study composition during 1984-86 was largely carried by Mike Bent, and had it not been for his efforts there would have been little to report. His *BCM* column for October 1984 contained an article entitled "Some considerations of options" in which he described what went through his mind when composing, and I think it will be interesting to reproduce this. I have inserted our usual intermediate diagrams, and have converted to our standard notation.

"Within the broad framework of a composition the composer sometimes finds, if he is lucky, considerable scope for the starting positions of his pieces. When such freedom occurs he should take the opportunity to make the most of the alternatives to exploit every element that goes into the making of a study. These objectives, disguise, naturalness and difficulty, will no doubt conflict; placing white pieces near to the bottom of the board and black ones to the top may add to the solver's options while reducing the difficulty. A balance must be struck. A further element in the equation is length. An introduction must be found, but length for length's sake, prolonged and unadorned, should be resisted. A look at these considerations may cast light on what has gone on, unsuspected perhaps, in the composer's mind in the continual search for refinement.

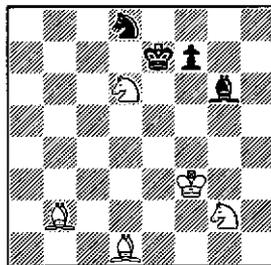
"Since one can only surmise what goes on in the minds of others, a suitable case for examination is a recent search of my own for a position of domination using minor pieces only. All too often in this situation there is just one square which White is unable to control. Sure enough, this was the case and I had to block off the offending square by adding two relatively harmless pawns whose function at the dénouement is to deny h6 to bB. If you wish, try solving 1 before we consider the pros and cons of the starting position."



1 - win



1a - after 5 K g2



2 - win

"In case you didn't find it, this is the solution to 1: 1 B d1+ K g5 2 B xh4+ K xh4 3 N f3+ K g4 4 N d4+ K h4 5 K g2 wins (see 1a). So our domination turns out to be zugzwang after all! Typical of what can happen. Let's look at the final position after 5 K g2. What is the best last move to reach this position? Do your thoughts match mine? This is how I see it. First take wNa6. Not good to have moved from an en prise position on b4 or c5. Impossible for it to have moved from c7 because from

there the better move would be Ne6 with mate next move. The remaining possibility, from b8, allows Nd7, which is a near try that rather gives the game away.

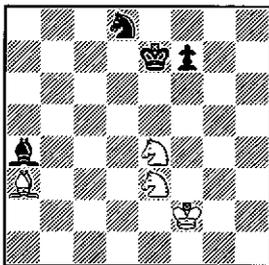
"Next the wB. It could perfectly well have moved down from e2, but not from f3 because then Be2 would serve equally well and be a dual. Starting the wB on g4 has everything against it, while B from a4 allows a dual by Bd7 as well as being too strong by removing a flight square.

"Now the wNd4. Any move to this square would either be too strong through its approach to the king or, if from e2, by removal of a flight square.

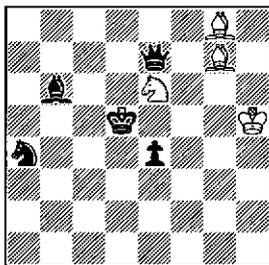
"Finally the wK. A waiting move from h2 would be nice. It would be obligatory because the other possible waiter, B from e2, fails because of the check from d6.

"All these points should be weighed in conjunction with the earlier play. Here are my thoughts during the course of the moves: starting with 1 Bd1+ allows an alternative B-check which fails. The text move 2 Bxh4+ is perhaps something of a surprise. By having the wN on e1 and the square g2 vacant another choice of check can now be offered on move 3. The correct fourth move must now be found and the quiet 5 Kg2 does not set the trap too obviously because bN is at first sight free. But 5...Nb1 or 5...Nc4 6 Nf3+ and 7 Nd2+ wins. Note here that by having wBd1 instead of e2 bN gets a choice of two moves, not just one, and its ultimate demise is made to appear more natural. Finally the whole setting is more natural."

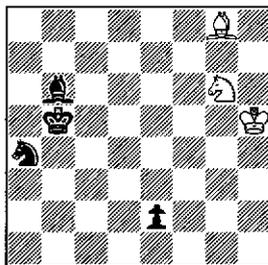
Mike continued by leading into 2 and 3. "On all excursions new by-roads are discovered. The spin-off from the above shows the domination of a bishop in conjunction with a new element that adds a little weight to a theme already much exploited. The solution to 2 is 1 Ba3, not 1 Nc8+? Kd7 2 Nb6+ Kc6 draws. 1...Bh5+ 2 Kf2 Bxd1 3 Ne3, not 3 Ne4+? Ke6 draws. 3...Ba4 or Bb3. If 3...Bh5 4 Nd5+ Kf8 5 Nf5+ K any 6 Nf6+ wins. 4 Ne4+ wins (see 2a)."



2a - after 3...Ba4 4 Ne4+



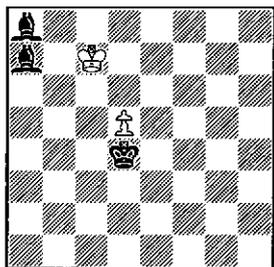
3 - draw



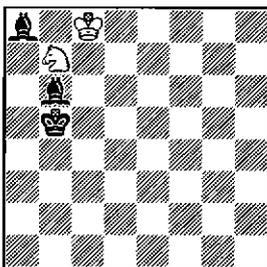
3a - after 5...e2

"That's not difficult. In the companion piece 3 White is able to demolish one queen without much trouble, but it is not so easy to get rid of the second. Solution: 1 Nd4+, not 1 Nd8+? Kd6 wins. 1...Kc5. If 1...Kd6 2 Nf5+ draws. 2. Bf8 Qxf8 3 Ne6+ and White's skill will not be tested unless Black finds the best move. If 3...Kc6/Kd6 4 Nxf8 e3 5 Bc4 draws. If 3...Kc4/Kd5 4 Nxf8+ draws. If 3...Kb4 4 Nxf8 e3 5 Ng6 e2 6 Nf4 e1Q 7 Nd3+ draws, so 3...Kb5 4 Nxf8 e3 5 Ng6, not 5 Nd7 Bd4 wins. 5...e2 (see 3a) and one could be excused for thinking Black should have no cause to fear mate! 6 Ne5 e1Q 7 Bc4+ draws."

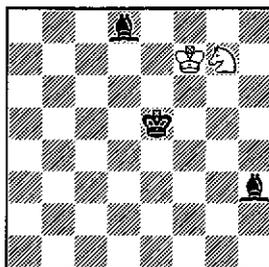
In 1983 there had occurred the first of the modern computer discoveries in endgame theory, the demonstrations by Ken Thompson and Ofer Comay, working independently, that K+2B could force a win against K+N if the 50-move rule did not intervene. Needless to say, these discoveries soon prompted compositions which exploited them. One such was John Roycroft's **4** (*feenschach* 1984), and although this was apparently composed in the hope of influencing decisions about the rules of the game it does feature one or two neat touches in the play.



4 - what result?



4a - after 5 Nb7



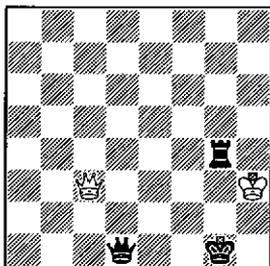
4b - Kling and Horwitz 1851

Play starts **1 d6 Kc5 2 d7 Bb6+ 3 Kc8 Kc6**, and now **4 d8Q** is met by **4...Bb7+** etc. But White has **4 d8N+**, and after **4...Kb5** he has the pleasant move **5 Nb7** threatening to capture bBa8 (see **4a**). Black can of course prevent this by playing **5...Ba7** and after **6 Kc7 Ka6** wN will have to quit b7 and so release bBa8, but White cannot now be prevented from reaching the famous Kling and Horwitz position which was for long believed drawn (see **4b**). In fact the computer has shown **4b** to be won for the bishops, but it takes time, and the win from **4 d8N+** takes more than 50 moves. Hence the question: is **4** a loss for White, or a draw?

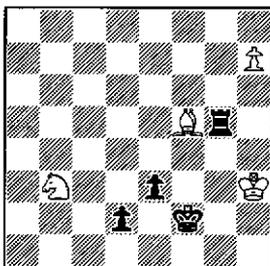
Well, it depends on what the rules say, and under the rules in force since 1 July 1997 the position is drawn. Faced with ever more recondite computer discoveries, culminating in wins with K+R+B v K+2N and K+R+N v K+2N which took 223 and 243 moves respectively before the first capture, those responsible made the pragmatic decision to impose a clear and simple 50-move rule without exceptions, accepting that this would occasionally leave a player unable to force the win which would be his if play were allowed to continue indefinitely. For the purposes of theoretical analysis this is less satisfactory, not least because fundamental databases become dependent on an arbitrary number which has been changed in the past and may yet be changed again, and the equally pragmatic decision of endgame analysts and study composers has been to ignore the 50-move rule altogether. Fortunately the cases where these pragmatic decisions come into conflict are few.

As regards *BESN*, the position is simple. The stipulation "White to win" normally means that White can force a win under the rules in force at the time of writing, and if the win is possible only if the 50-move rule is suspended we shall say so. However, the stipulation "White to draw" means that White can prevent Black from winning even if he is allowed to play on indefinitely, and an alternative solution which relies on invoking the 50-move rule will not be regarded as invalidating the study.

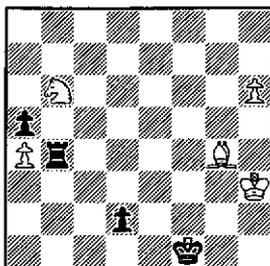
Less controversy has been aroused by studies which exploit computer-discovered positions of reciprocal zugzwang. Among the first to receive attention was **5**, which is the unique position of reciprocal zugzwang with K+Q+R v K+Q (if the weaker side is to play it loses, if the stronger side is to play it cannot win). Two studies based on this position appeared in the *BCM* in June 1986.



5 - reciprocal zugzwang



6 - draw



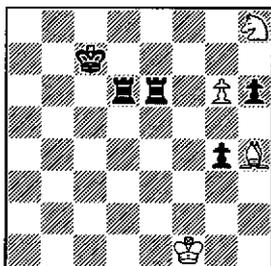
7 - draw

Play in Timothy Whitworth's **6** starts **1 Bg4** (1 h8Q Rg3+ 2 Kh4 d1Q 3 Qb2+ e2 4 Bg4 Qh1+ 5 Kg5 Qf3 is a win for Black, as is 1 Nxd2 Rh5+ 2 Kg4 exd2 3 Kxh5 d1Q+ 4 Kg6 Qd4) **Rxg4 2 Nxd2** (2 h8Q d1Q 3 Qb2+ Kg1) **exd2** (2...Rg1 3 Ne4+ Kf3 4 Ng5+ Kf4 5 Kh2 is a draw, as are 2...Rg3+ 3 Kh2 and either 3...exd2 4 h8Q d1Q 5 Qb2+ Kf3 6 Qf2+, or 3...Rg2+ 4 Kh3 exd2 5 h8Q d1Q 6 Qd4+, or 3...e2 4 h8Q e1Q 5 Ne4+ Qxe4 6 Qb2+ Kf3 7 Qf2+) **3 h8Q d1Q 4 Qb2+ Kf1 5 Qf6+** (5 Qb5+ Kg1 6 Qb7 Rg5 7 Qb6+ Kh1) **Kg1 6 Qc3** (6 Qc6 Kf2/Rg5) and we have duly reached **5**. Most Black moves now allow White to gain material, but we may note stalemate lines such as **6...Rd4** (say) **7 Qe1+** and **6...Kh1 7 Qc6+ Kg1 8 Qh1+** and the repetition line **6...Kf1 7 Qf6+**.

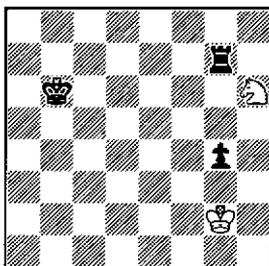
7, by Jonathan Speelman and Paul Lamford, has additional pawns on a4/a5. **1 h7 Rxc4 2 h8Q d1Q** is won for Black, as is **1 Nd5 Rxc4 2 h7** (or **2 Ne3+ Ke2**) **Kg1!** **3 Ne3 Re4**, and play starts **1 Ne4** to prepare the later stalemates. There follows **1...Rxc4 2 h7 Rxc4 3 h8Q d1Q 4 Qf6+ Kg1** (4...Ke1/Ke2 5 Qe6+) **5 Qc3**, and the presence of the a-pawns makes no difference to the subsequent play.

David Hooper commented in *EG* that **6** was "easily better" than **7**, but neither is really satisfactory because there is no "thematic try" (an apparently more natural and direct line which fails because the crucial position is reached with White to move). In fact the presence of two queens and a rook would appear to make the incorporation of such a try impossible without a capture if it is possible at all, and the conclusion must be that this particular position does not lend itself to study composition. In my experience, this is all too common. The computer may have made a large number of previously unknown positions of reciprocal zugzwang available to us - something over a hundred thousand at the last count, around ten thousand of which have been published in *EG* - but composing studies to exploit them is no easier than composing studies based on any other climactic position. Indeed, it may be harder, because every detail of the final position must be correct; move even one man to another square, and the result will be affected.

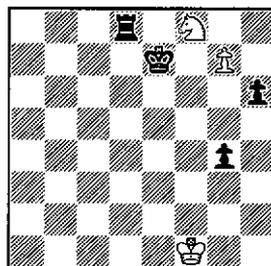
1984 saw the four-hundredth anniversary of the foundation of the schools at Oakham and Uppingham, and as part of the celebrations a competition was held for the best analysis of 8. Although Oakham was the more prominent school for chess, this study was the work of John Finch, who taught at Uppingham. Sadly, there were no entries, and I cannot help feeling that this illustrates two points often overlooked: firstly, the stipulation "win" is more likely to attract attention than "draw"; secondly, in his desire to conceal his climax by prefacing it with an introduction, the composer can easily succeed to the point where the solver never gets to the heart of the matter at all. However, we don't have to solve here, we can simply sit back and enjoy.



8 - draw



8a - 1...Kb6, after 6 Kg2



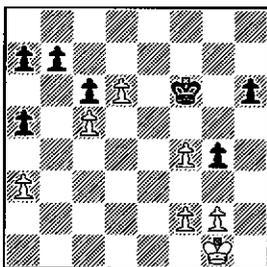
8b - main line, 5...Ke7

White's first task is to reduce the deficit to one exchange, and if he can then remove both bPs he will draw. An immediate 1 g7 fails against 1...Rg6 2 Nxg6 Rxg6, but the pin by 1 Bg3 offers more possibilities. Where should bK go to release it? Try 1...Kb6, avoiding all checks from wN. Play continues 2 Bxd6 Rxd6 3 g7 Rd8 4 Nf7 Rg8 5 Nxh6 Rxg7 6 Kg2, and bP will fall (see 8a); if Black tries 6...Rg6 7 Nf5 Kc5 8 Kg3 Kd5, hoping for 9 Ne3+ Ke4 10 Nxg4 Kf5 winning wN, White has 9 Ne7+.

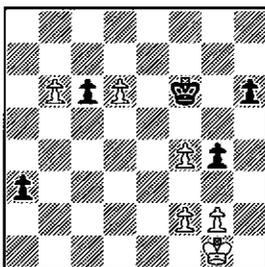
So bK must come across to support his pawn. On the d-file he will obstruct bR (1...Kd7 2 Bxd6 Rxd6? 3 g7 and wins, or 2...Kxd6 3 g7 Re8 4 Nf7+ and 5 Nxh6), so he must stay on the c-file, and 1...Kc6 is the main line (the play after 1...Kc8 is similar). There follows 2 Bxd6 Rxd6 (2...Kxd6 3 g7 as above) 3 g7 Rd8 4 Ng6 (now 4 Nf7 loses because bK is one square nearer) Kd6/Kd7 (4...Rg8 allows 5 Ne7+ whether bK is on c6 or c8) 5 Nf8(+) Ke7 and we are at the crux of the study (see 8b). 6 g8Q loses to 6...Rxf8+, but White has 6 g8N+ Kxf8 7 Nxh6 Rd4 8 Kg2 and once again bK cannot come to the aid of bP: if he tries 8...Kg7, White has 9 Nf5+.

John Finch (1939-1991) was a contemporary of mine at school; we used to exchange chess problems under the desk during Latin, and I have often felt that one reason why this country now produces so few problem composers is that Latin is no longer taught in our schools. He was a larger-than-life character in every sense of the word, affectionately described by a former colleague as "permanently auditioning for the part of Falstaff", and an author of no mean talent. He and two friends used to spend the summer watching cricket, and this generated two books (*Game in season*, privately published, 1981, and *Three men at the match*, Queen Anne Press, 1984) which are minor literature of the best kind: the work of a man fluent with words, writing about one of his enthusiasms.

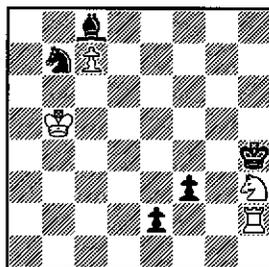
Adam Sobey's column in *The Problemist* continued to be a good friend to British composition, and R. Heasman's pawn study 9 appeared in November 1985. There is nothing particularly new here, but it is instructive. 1 a4 (given is "1 Kf1? b5/a4! 1 f5?" with no reply to the latter, but I think 1...b5 draws) b5 (1...Ke6 2 f5+/Kh2) 2 axb5 a4 (2...cxb5 3 c6 Ke6 4 f5+ Kxd6 5 f6 etc) 3 b6 axb6 4 cxb6 a3 gives 9a and it looks as if both sides will promote, but a familiar decoy manoeuvre gains a tempo: 5 d7 Ke7 6 b7 a2 7 d8Q+ Kxd8 8 b8Q+.



9 - win

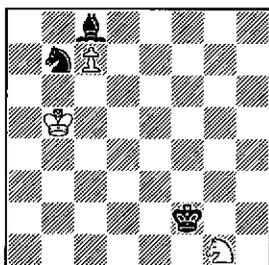


9a - after 4...a3

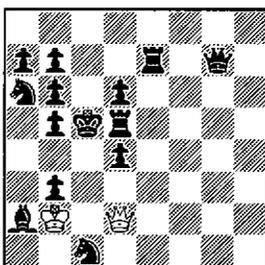


10 - draw

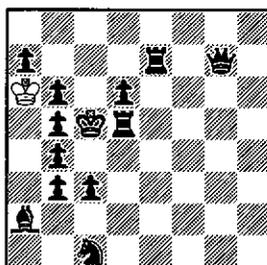
J. P. C. Stanton's 10 appeared in *The Problemist* in November 1986. 1 Ng1+ (1 Nf4+ Kg3 2 Rxe2 Kxf4 3 Rd2 is a draw as required, but Black can win by interpolating 2...Nd6+) Kg3 2 Rxe2 f2 3 Rxf2 Kxf2 leaves wN doomed (see 10a), and it seems as if wK has no way of getting at the Black men in reply (if he tries 4-6 Kb8, Black can hold everything by 6...Nd6). However, with its dying breath wN can divert bB, and the sacrifice of wP as well opens the way for a counterattack: 4 Nh3+ Bxb3 5 c8N (5 c8Q Nd6+) Bxc8 6 Kb6 and 7 Kc7.



10a - after 3...Kxf2

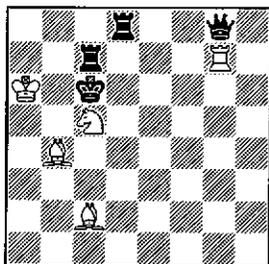


11 - draw

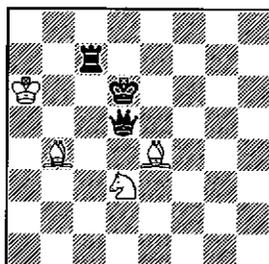


11a - after 5 Kxa6

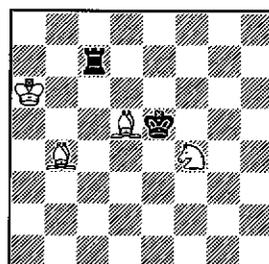
Jeremy Morse's 11 appeared in August 1984 as one of *EG*'s rare originals. Jeremy is primarily a composer of task problems, and in a recent letter he tells me that this was "composed to show a far-fetched draw by self-stalemate". After 1 Qc3+ dxc3+ we have a position in which wK stalemates himself four times in succession: 2 Ka3 b4+ 3 Ka4 b5+ 4 Ka5 b6+ 5 Kxa6 (see 11a). Black has been able to release three stalemates, but he cannot release the fourth and the game is drawn. After 1...dxc3+, we have a length record for a self-stalemate with a bare wK.



12 - win

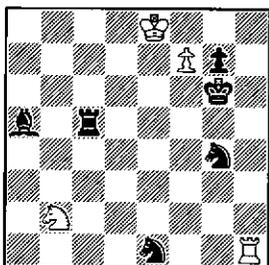


12a - after 4 Nd3+

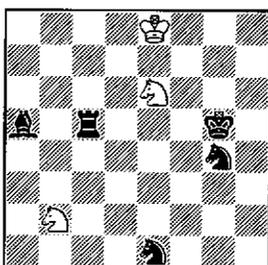


12b - after 6 Bxd5

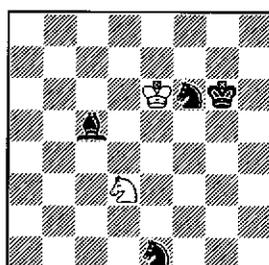
John Roycroft sent 12 to the 1986 "Golden Fleece" tourney in Tbilisi (Colchis, land of the ancient Golden Fleece, is in western Georgia), and took fourth prize in some exalted company. Play starts **1 Be4+ Qd5** (best) **2 Rg6+ Rd6 3 Rxd6+ Kxd6 4 Nd3+** (see 12a), and 4...Kc6 allows the pin-mate **5 Ne5** which was the original point of the composition. Other moves lose bQ, and **K+2B+N v K+R** is a certain if lengthy win if White can consolidate (it may be necessary to suspend the 50-move rule, see *EG* 124 pp 114-5). Can Black regain material? The only line offering hope is **4...Ke6 5 Nf4+ Ke5 6 Bxd5**, giving 12b, but **6...Kxf4** clearly fails and nothing else is better (given as main line is **6...Rh7 7 Bg8 Rh6+ 8 Kb5** (say) **Kxf4 9 Bd2+** and **10 Bxh6**).



13 - draw



13a - after 4 Ne6+



13b - after 8 Nd3

Let us return to Mike Bent. I have quoted little of his work here because it is conveniently accessible in *The best of Bent*, but we should not neglect it entirely. 13 corrects a study from *Schweizerische Schachzeitung* 1984. **1 f8N+ Kf5 2 Rh5+ g5 3 Rxf5+ Kxf5 4 Ne6+** wins bR (see 13a), and Black must gain a knight in return if he is to win. Hence **4...Kg6 5 Nxc5 Nf6+ 6 Ke7 Bb4**, and the knight is duly won (**7 Kd6 Ne4+**). But White has the devastating **7 Ke6 Bxc5 8 Nd3** killing Black's hopes (see 13b): if he plays **8...Nxd3** to avoid losing a piece, he gives stalemate. This only received a commendation, but many prizewinners give less pleasure.

Our next special number of this kind is scheduled for March 2000, and will cover studies from 1980-83. As usual, please will composers and their friends draw my attention to studies that they would like to see included, and also to any from 1984-95 which should have appeared in the series but have been overlooked. - JDB