

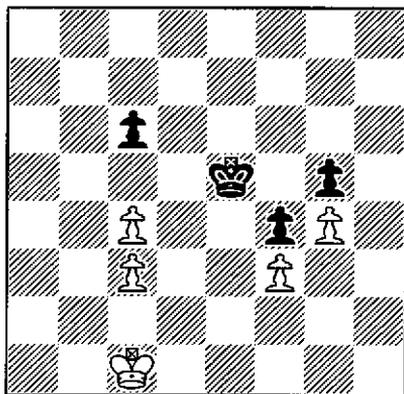
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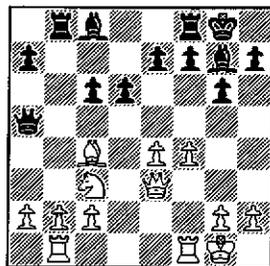
Some studies by Wallace Ellison



White to play and win

Some studies by Wallace Ellison

The *Yorkshire Post* for Monday 25 March 1935 carried a report of the previous Saturday's Lancashire-Yorkshire chess match, including the game on board 4 between D. Joseph for Lancashire and W. D. Ellison. The game itself is likely to be of interest only to patriotic Yorkshiremen, since White (Joseph) blundered at move 14 and Black duly took advantage: 1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 d6 6 Be3 Ng4 7 Nxc6 bxc6 8 Qe2 Nxe3 9 Qxe3 g6 10 Be2 Bg7 11 0-0 0-0 12 f4 Rb8 13 Rab1 Qa5 14 Bc4? (see diagram) **Rb4!** and if the bishop moves the queen is lost

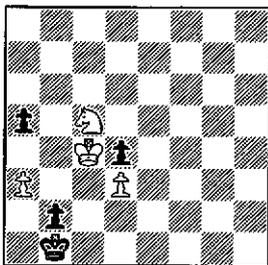


Black to play

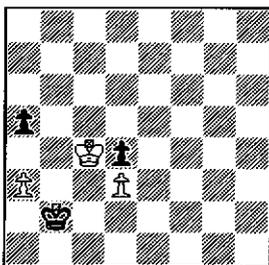
(the actual continuation was 15 b3 Rxc4 16 bxc4 Qxc3 with two pieces for the rook). But what was not obvious at the time was that this was a game between two study composers. Such things were common enough in Central Europe, where study composers were much thicker on the ground and most major city clubs had one or two among their ranks, but in England they were something of a rarity. David Joseph was of course already known on account of his famous stalemate-avoidance queen study (after an introduction, the board contains wKd8, Ph7/b6, bKb8, Pb7/a2, with play 1 h8Q a1Q! 2 Qg8! Qa2! 3 Qe8! Qa4! 4 Qe5+ Ka8 5 Qh8). Wallace Ellison had still to publish his first study and he was not to do so for over thirty years, but if none of his compositions had quite the once-in-a-lifetime panache of the Joseph study he probably produced a larger amount of good work overall.

Although born as far back as 1911, Wallace seems to have published no studies until 1969. He had taken a first-class degree in mathematics at Cambridge, and had then become a teacher. Nowadays, anyone of similar ability is snapped up by a computing or financial organization, but those options were not available in Wallace's day and a large number of first-class mathematicians went back into teaching (to the great benefit of my own generation). Chess was a lifetime hobby and he played on high boards both for his native Yorkshire and for Leicestershire, but composition seems to have been restricted to three short periods of his life: 1931-41 (problems only), 1969-72, and 1994-96. His studies totalled a little short of thirty, not an outstanding number, but it is the quality of the best that matters. Walter Veitch, recalling a joint attempt in 1969 to rescue a sparkling but unsound study by Lazard, wrote a brief personal note for *EG* 135 in which he speaks highly of Wallace's intelligence and energy, and he reinforces the point in a recent letter to myself: "... note the crispness of Ellison's comments, these from no doubt off-the-cuff letters, with not a single correction." I myself met Wallace only once, when he was nearly 85, but even at that age his mind was impressive; he knew exactly what he wanted to say, and I was fully stretched trying to keep up.

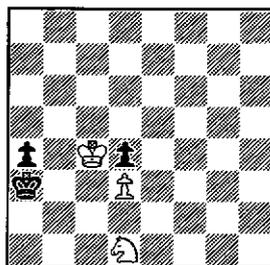
Although Wallace's first study did not appear until 1969, he then published several in quick succession, and I suspect he had been building them up over a period. Play in 1 (*EG* 1969) starts 1 Na4 Ka2 2 Nxb2, and after 2...Kxb2 we have the first trap



1 - win



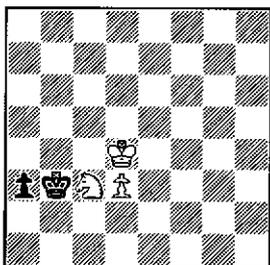
1a - after 2...Kxb2



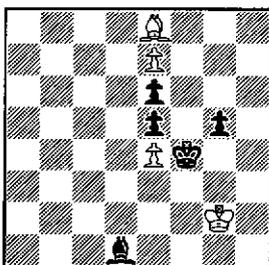
1b - 2...Kxa3, after 3...a4

(see 1a): the obvious capture 3 Kxd4 only draws (3...Kxa3 4 Kc3 a4 5 d4 Ka2 6 d5 a3 7 d6 Kb1 8-9 d8Q a1Q+). White must play 3 a4, manoeuvring the Black king to a less favourable square, and now the Q v Q ending can be won (3...Ka3 4 Kxd4 Kb4 5 Kd5 Kxa4 6 Kc4 Ka3 7 d4 a4 8 d5 Kb2 9-11 d8Q a1Q 12 Qd2+ etc).

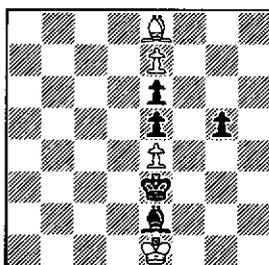
However, the main line move is 2...Kxa3, and after 3 Nd1 a4 White must again decline the obvious capture (see 1b): after 4 Kxd4 Kb3 5 Nc3 a3 we have 1c with White to move, and there is no win (6 Ne2 Kb2 7 Nc3 Kb3). The right move is 4 Kc5! There follows 4...Kb3 (if 4...Ka2 then 5 Kb4 and the a-pawn will fall) 5 Kxd4 a3 6 Nc3 and we have 1c with Black to move, and White will win in all lines (for example, 6...Kb4 7 Na2+ Kb3 8 Nc1+ Kb2 9 Kc4 Kxc1 10 Kb3, or 8...Kb4 9 Kd5! Kc3 10 d4 Kb2 11 Kc4).



1c - reciprocal zugzwang



2 - win

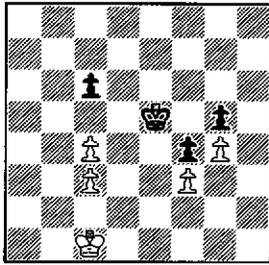


2a - reciprocal zugzwang

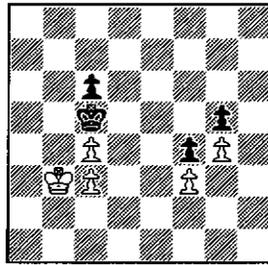
The key pieces in 2 (*The Problemist* 1969) are the bishops. If the White bishop moves, it will relinquish control of one of the diagonals bearing on e8, and the Black bishop will seize this and draw with ease (for example, 1 Bc6 Bh5); but Black can keep these options open only from d1 or e2.

So it may seem that White has only to chase the Black bishop away, but it isn't quite so easy. Try 1 Kf2, threatening 2 Ke1; no, Black has 1...g4 (2 Ke1 g3), and if 2 Bc6 then 2...g3+ and 3...Bh5. All right, try 1 Kf1, avoiding the check from the g-pawn; no, after 1...Ke3 2 Ke1 Be2 we have 2a, and White has no good move.

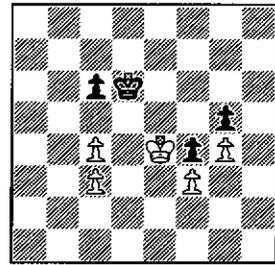
But 2a is a position of reciprocal zugzwang, which tells us the answer: 1 Kg1! Now Black is helpless: 1...Ke3 (nothing else is better) 2 Kf1 Be2+ (2...Kd2 allows say 3 Bc6 Bh5 4 e8Q) 3 Ke1 and we have 2a with Black to move.



3 - win



3a - reciprocal zugzwang



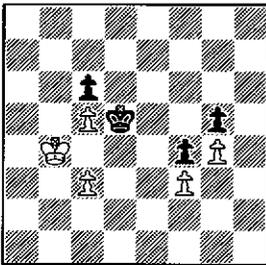
3b - after 6 Ke4

Our front cover study 3 (*EG* 1969) was quoted in my December obituary, but it really needs a little more space than I could give it there. We may note that without the K-side pawns White would have no chance of winning, while without the c-pawns he would have to play carefully even to hold the draw. However, the presence of both sets of pawns allows him to direct his attack first against one and then against the other, and eventually Black is unable to keep up.

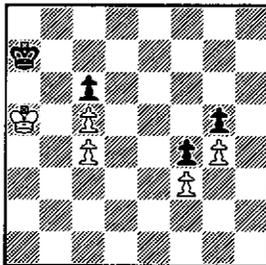
White starts by advancing on the Q-side, **1 Kb2 Kd6**, but now **2 Kb3** would allow **2...Kc5** and it is Black who will win (see **3a**). White must proceed indirectly: **2 Ka3!** Black must still play **2...Kc5** to prevent a further advance, and now **3 Kb3** gives **3a** with Black to play. If **3...Kd6** then **4 Kb4** and the Black c-pawn will soon fall, hence **3...Kb6**, and White will get no further on the Q-side (**4 Kb4 c5+**).

But by pushing Black back to b6, White has gained room to advance in the centre: **4 Kc2 Kc5 5 Kd3 Kd6 6 Ke4** (see **3b**). Can Black ignore the threat to his g-pawn and play **6...Kc5**? No, he will be one move too late (**7 Kf5 Kxc4 8 Kxg5 Kxc3 9 Kxf4 K-- 10-12 g7 c3 13 g8Q**).

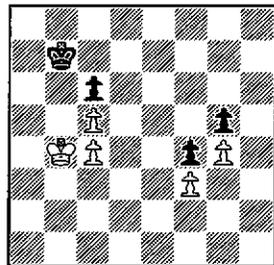
So Black must play **6...Ke6**, and White can advance his leading c-pawn: **7 c5**. The Black g-pawn is still threatened, hence **7...Kf6**, and now White goes back to the Q-side: **8 Kd4 Ke6 9 Kc4**. If Black now tries **9...Ke5**, hoping for **10 Kb4 Kd5** with the reciprocal zugzwang shown in **3c**, there will follow **10 Kb3! Kd5 11 Kb4** (or **10...Ke6 11 Ka4**) and White will soon turn Black's position. To keep him out, Black must play **9...Kd7**, and after **10 Kb4 Kc7 11 Ka5 Kb7 12 c4 Ka7** we have **3d**.



3c - reciprocal zugzwang



3d - after 12...Ka7

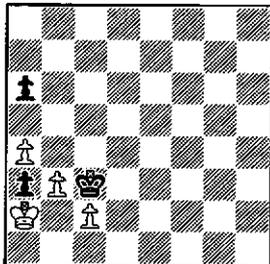


3e - after 16...Kb7

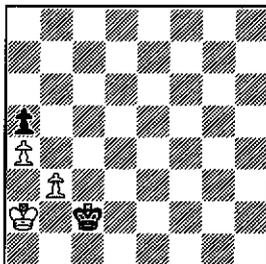
Now it seems that the Black g-pawn is doomed, **13-16 Ke5** etc, but after **13 Kb4**

Ka6! 14 Kc3 Ka5 Black has one last throw: the immediate advance **15 Kd4** allows the counterattack **15...Kb4 16 Ke5 Kxc5 17 Kf5 Kd4!** **18 Kxg5 Ke3 19 K-- Kxf3 20 g5 Ke3 21-23 g8Q f1Q** and both sides have promoted. White must make yet another Q-side probe to gain a tempo, **15 Kb3! Ka6 16 Kb4! Kb7** (see **3e**), and at last Black is left without resource: **17-19 Ke5** etc.

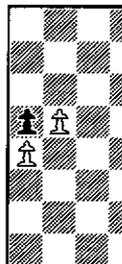
There are minor alternatives for White at various points (7 Kd4 Kd6 8 c5+ instead of 7 c5, 8 Kd3 instead of 8 Kd4, 13 Ka4 and 14 Kb3 instead of 13 Kb4 and 14 Kc3), but in a strategic ending of this kind such duals are unimportant. It is a splendid example of king manoeuvring, which should be in all the textbooks.



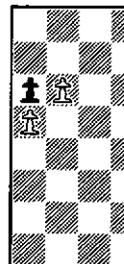
4 - win



4a - reciprocal zugzwang



4b - win



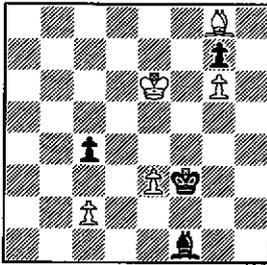
4c - draw

4 (*The Problemist* 1969) is another fine pawn study, more spectacular in its play if less natural in its starting position. It is based on the position of reciprocal zugzwang shown in **4a**, and important roles are also played by the pawn positions **4b** (a standard winning configuration for White) and **4c** (a curious exceptional position, which is apparently even stronger but where White cannot win because his eventual advance will lead to stalemate).

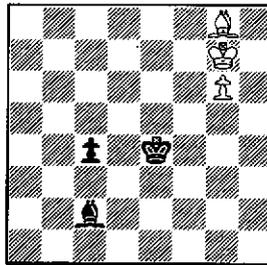
The obvious capture **1 Kxa3** fails (**1...a5 2 Ka2 Kxc2** and we have **4a** with White to move), and so do **1 Kb1** (**1...a5** and either **2 Ka2 Kxc2** or **2 Ka1 a2 3 Kxa2 Kxc2**) and **1 a5** (**1...Kxc2 2 b4 Kc3 3 b5 axb5 4 a6 b4 5 a7 b3+ 6 Kxa3 b2** etc, or **2 Kxa3 Kc3 3 b4 Kc4 4 Ka4 Kd5 5 b5 Kc5! 6 b6 Kc6** and by refusing to capture the b-pawn Black has reached the drawing position **4c**). This leaves only the retreat into the corner: **1 Ka1!**

Now **1...Kxc2** allows **2 b4** and the White pawns will race down the field like rugby three-quarters, and other king moves release the c-pawn and allow White to play **2 c4** with a straightforward win. Not is **1...a2** any better (**2 Kxa2 a5 3 Ka3** and Black has no good move). This leaves only **1...a5**, and after **2 Kb1** Black has nothing better than **2...a2+** conceding his advanced pawn.

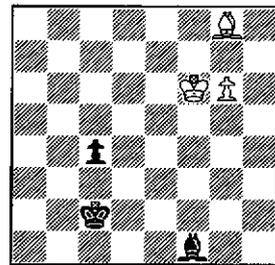
But once again the bait is poisoned (**3 Kxa2 Kxc2** and as before) and White must leave it very firmly alone: **3 Ka1!!** The White king seems strangely attracted to this dark corner; is he hiding a mistress down there, or has he got a secret wine cellar, or what? But be this as it may, **3...Kxc2 4 Kxa2** leads to **4a** with Black to move, and White now wins: **4...Kc3 5 Ka3 Kd4 6 b4 Kc4 7 b5** and we have reached the winning position **4b**, or **6...axb4+ 7 Kxb4** and the king will shepherd his last pawn to the eighth rank.



5 - win

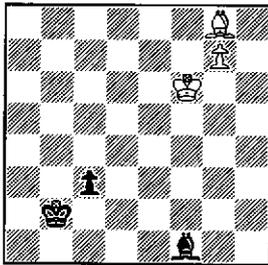


5a - 1...Be2, after 4...Bxc2

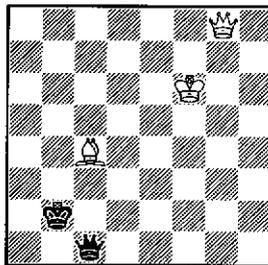


5b - main line, 4 Kf6

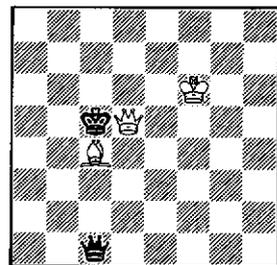
5 (2 Pr, Halberstadt Memorial Ty 1970) was one of Wallace's favourite studies, and seems to have remained so even after he discovered that the final manoeuvre had been anticipated by C. C. W. Mann. The introduction is complex: **1 Ke7** (1 e4/Kf7 Bd3) **Kxe3** (1...Be2 2 e4 {but not 2 Kf8 Bd1 with 3 e4 Bxc2 4 Bd5 Bxe4 or 3 Bxc4 Bxc2} Kxe4 {or 2...Bd1 3 Bxc4 Bxc2 4 Bd5} 3 Kf8 Bd1 4 Kxg7 Bxc2 {see 5a} 5 Kh8 {to command g8 and h7, see move 8} Kd4 6 g7 c3 7 Bf7 Bh7 8 Bb3 and wins) **2 Kf8 Kd2 3 Kxg7 Kxc2 4 Kf6** (see 5b) c3 (4...Bd3 5 g7 Kb3/Kc3 {5...c3 6 Bb3+} 6 Be6 Bh7 7 Kf7 Kb4 8 Bf5) **5 g7 Kb2** (5...Kd2 6 Bb3 leads to a similar finish, but the play after 5...Kb2 is sharper) and we have 5c.



5c - after 5...Kb2

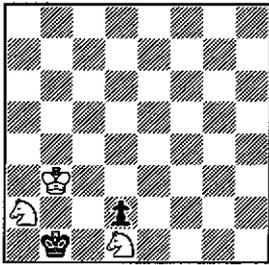


5d - after 8...c1Q

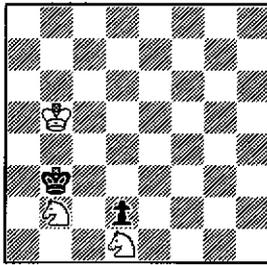


5e - after 14 Qd5+

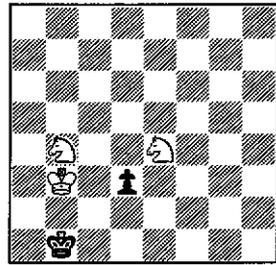
Now comes **6 Bb3! Bc4!** (6...Kxb3 7 g8Q+ Bc4 8 Qb8+ and White wins) **7 Bxc4 c2 8 g8Q c1Q** (see 5d) and we have finally come down to a Q + B v Q ending. This requires continuous checks, like many of its kind, but the play involves an interesting finesse: **9 Qb8+ Ka1** (9...Kc3 10 Qb3+ shortens the solution) **10 Qa7+/Qa8+ Kb2 11 Qa2+/Qb6+ Kc3 12 Qb3+ Kd4 13 Qd3+ Kc5 14 Qd5+** (see 5e) **Kb4** (14...Kb6 15 Qb5+ Ka7/Kc7 16 Qc5+ Kb8 17 Qb6+ and mates) **15 Qb7+!** (the only way to win - the roundabout must be made to go round the other way) **Kc3 16 Qf3+ Kd4 17 Qd5+ Kc3 18 Qd3+ Kb4 19 Qb3+ Kc5 20 Qb5+** and either the Black king or queen will fall (20...Kd4 21 Qe5+ Kxc4 22 Qc7+). Mann (*Tijdschrift v.d. KNSB* 1913) had wKc4, Qe5, Bg4, bKh7, Qh6, Ra1, Pb6/b4, play 1 Bf5+ Kg8 2 Be6+ Kh7 3 Qe4+ Kh8 4 Qd4+ Kh7 5 Qd3+ Kg7 6 Qd7+ Kf6 7 Qf7+ Ke5 8 Qf5+ Kd6 9 Qd5+ Ke7 10 Qb7+ with the same reversal of the roundabout, but Wallace's Black decoy sacrifice to bring the bishop to the key square c4 is a very worthwhile development.



6 - win (by J. Kling)



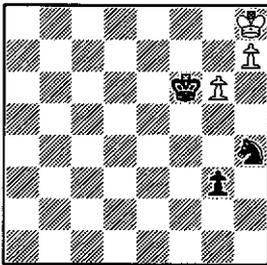
6a - after 7...Kb3



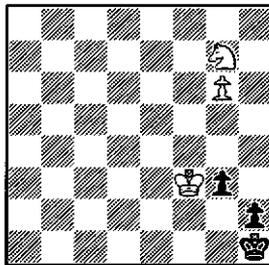
7 - win

The next study also develops an existing one, but this time the development was conscious. The widely quoted 6 first appeared in George Walker's 1846 book *The art of chessplaying*. Kling's solution took 22 moves, but Ken Thompson's computer shortened it to 17: 1 Nac3+ Kc1 2 Kc4! Kc2 3 Ne3+ Kb2 4 Ncd1+ Ka3 5 Kb5 (5 Kc5 is as good) Kb3 6 Ne4 Kc2 7 Ncb2 Kb3 (see 6a) 8 Kc5 Ka3 9 Kc4 Ka2 10 Kb4 Kb1 11 Ka3! (11 Kb3 is slower) Kc2 12 Ka2 Kc1 13 Kb3 Kb1 14-15 Nb4 Kb1 16 Ne3+ and mate next move. Moves 1-4 and 7 are the only ones to win, and all the others except 5 Kb5 are the moves which win most quickly.

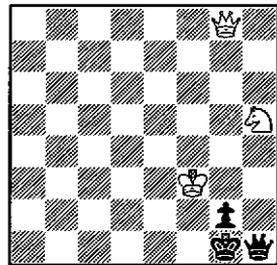
Wallace extended this to give 7 (*BCM* 1996). It is natural to play 1 Nd2+ to block the Black pawn on d3, but this fails to win and it is necessary not just to let the pawn reach d2 but to force it there: 1 Na2 d2/Ka1 2 Nec3(+) Ka1/d2 3 Nd1 Kb1. Only three moves have been added, but they provide a true touch of additional character.



8 - "draw" (by K. Szcala)



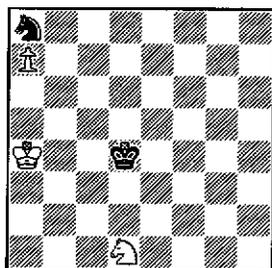
9 - win



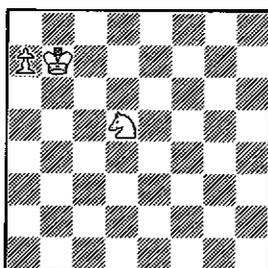
9a - after 3...h1Q

Wallace was a shrewd analyst who took little for granted (the *Yorkshire Post* for 20 April 1974 reports a bust by him of a position in Nimzovitch's *My system*) and the next example comes from when he was contributing to "Spotlight" in *EG*. 8 (2 HM, *Komsomolskaya iskra* 1963-65) was intended as a draw by stalemate: 1 g7 g2 2 Kg8 (2 g8Q Ng6+ wins) g1Q 3 h8Q Qg5 4 Qh7 Ng6 5 Qh6! Qd5+ 6 Kh7 Qf7 7 Qg5+! Kxg5. Wallace found a bust which was sufficiently striking to justify resetting the position as a win (9, *EG* 1970): 1 Nh5 g2 2 g7 Kg1 (2...g1Q 3 Ng3+ as before) 3 g8Q h1Q (see 9a) 4 Nf4! (instead of Qg4) Qh2 5 Qd5!! Kh1 (5...Qh4 6 Ne2+ etc) 6 Kg4!! Qg1 7 Ne2 and soon mates. Four non-checking moves in a row - some bust! White can play Nf4 before g8Q, but this can be avoided by starting from 9a.

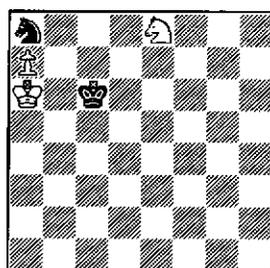
Those who have John Roycroft's book *Test tube chess* will know three more of Wallace's studies, but after reflection I have decided not to include them here. They were derived from a position reached in master play and were included in the book to show how a skilled analyst can refine an over-the-board position into a study, but while they contain some subtle moves they are studies to draw and not to win, and the material is such that there is no real climax to reward the solver for his labour. They are excellent illustrations of the point that John is making and they fully justify their place in the book, but they don't quite have the sparkle of Wallace's best work.



10 - win



10a - White's objective



10b - after 7 Ne8

Instead, I am going to finish with **10** (*diagrammes* 1995). Ken Thompson's definitive N + P v N database was available by 1995, but Wallace did not have access to it and the study provides an excellent example of can be achieved unaided. There are only two minor duals, each leading back to the main line after a brief diversion, and those of my *diagrammes* solvers who succeeded were generous in their praise.

White would like to reach **10a**, with a quick win in all cases (for example, bNa8, bKd6/xd5, play Kxa8; bKd7, play Nb6+; bKd8, play Kc6). Play unfolds **1 Kb4!** (1 Kb5 Kd5 is drawn) **Kd5** (1...Nc7 2 Nc3 Na8 3 Kb5 etc) **2 Kb5 Kd6** (2...Nc7+ 3 Kb6 Kd6 4 Nc3 Kd7 5 Kb7 etc) **3 Nc3** (3 Ne3 Kc7 4 Ka6 Kc6 is drawn, 5 Nb5 not being available) **Kd7** (3...Kc7 4 Ka6 Kc6 5 Nb5 Nb6 6 Nd4+ as below, see move 10) **4 Nd5** (4 Ka6 Kc7 5 Nb5+ Kc6 6 Nd4+ Kc7 7 Ne6+ Kc6 is drawn) **Kd6** (4...Kc8/Kd8 5 Kc6 etc) **5 Nf6 Kc7** **6 Ka6 Kc6** (else 7 Kb7 or 7 Nd5) **7 Ne8** and we have **10b**. Best is now **7...Nb6** (7...Kd7 8 Kb7, 7...Kc5 8 Kb7 Nb6 9 Nc7), and there follows **8 Ng7** (or **8 Nd6 Na8 9 Nb5 Na8** (or 8...Kc7 9 Ne6+)) **9 Ne6 Nb6** **10 Nd4+ Kc7** **11 Nf5** (or **11 Ne2 Na8 12 Nb4 Na8** (11...Kc6 12 Ne7+ Kc7 13 Nd5+)) **12 Ne7 Kd6** **13 Kb7** with Nd5 next. 1 Kb4, 2 Kb5, 3 Nc3, 4 Nd5, 6 Ka6, 7 Ne8, and 13 Kb7 are the only moves to win, and 5 Nf6, 9 Ne6, 10 Nd4, and 12 Ne7 are the moves which win most quickly. More importantly, the positions after 2 Kb5, 3 Nc3, 5 Nf6, 6 Ka6, 7 Ne8, 8 Ng7, 9 Ne6, 11 Nf5, and 12 Ne7 form a chain of reciprocal zugzwangs, and White must not let Black get on to the chain with the move in his favour.

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