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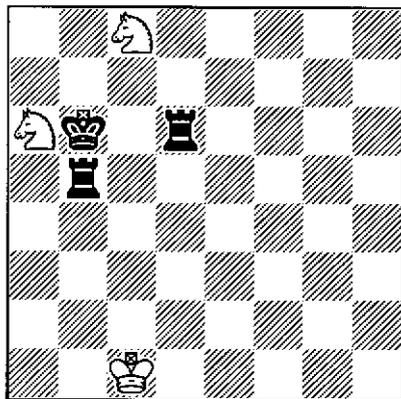
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Some studies by

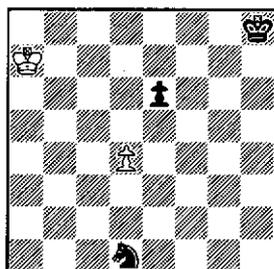
Jindřich Fritz



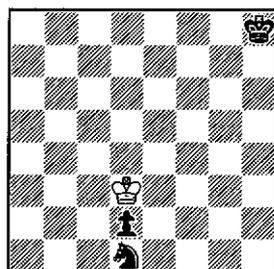
A draw by perpetual knight fork

Some studies by Jindřich Fritz

Jindřich Fritz (1912-1984) has always been one of my favourite composers, and it was with some surprise that I recently noticed that we have only had one of his studies in *BESN*, and that merely an example cited to illustrate a technical point (March 1999 pages 100-1, June 1999 page 108). Let me use the last of our "non-British" special numbers to remedy the matter.

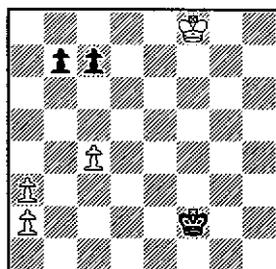


1 - draw

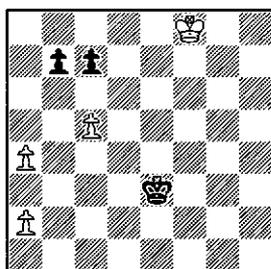


1a - after 5 Kd3

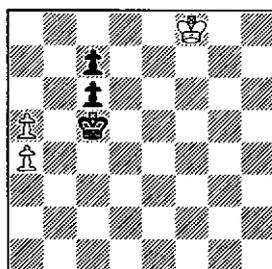
1 (*České slovo* 1939) makes an elegant trifle with which to start. 1 Kb6 Ne3 2-3 Kd6 Kf6 is an easy win for Black, but what else is there? **1 d5!** 1...e5 will lose, hence 1...exd5, and now Black's pawn is blocked by his knight and White can catch it: **2 Kb6 d4 3 Kc5 d3 4 Kd4 d2 5 Kd3** (see 1a).



2 - win

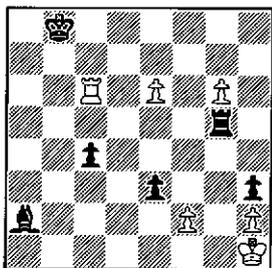


2a - after 2 a4

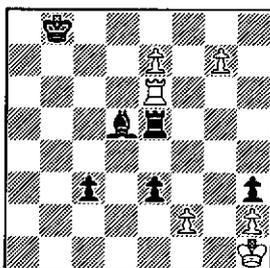


2b - after 5 a4

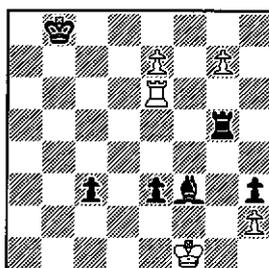
2 (*Večerní Praha* 1956) is Fritz's version of a well-known pawn finish. Try the obvious 1 Ke7 Ke3 2 Kf7 Kd4 3 Kxc7: no, 3...Kxc4, and not even 4 Kb6 gives White a win. The move is **1 c5**, and after 1...Ke3 do we continue with 2 c6? No, 2...bxc6 3 a4 c5 and both sides will promote. The a-pawn must advance first, **2 a4** (see 2a), and only after 2...Kd4 does White play **3 c6**. Black might as well capture, 3...bxc6 (both 3...b6 4 Ke7 and 3...b5 4 axb5 are easy wins for White), but now we have a finale which dates back at least to Kling and Horwitz: **4 a5 Kc5 5 a4** (see 2b). If Black tries to avoid this by playing 2...c6 at 2a then 3 Ke7 Kd4 4 Kd6 Kc4 5 a3 (or 5 a5) and White will win easily enough.



3 - win

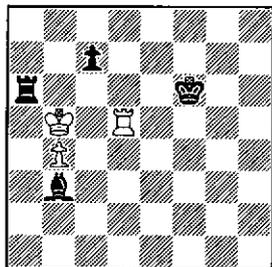


3a - after 3...Bd5+

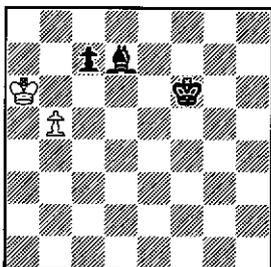


3b - after 6 Kf1

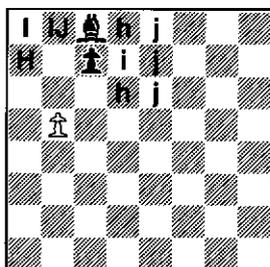
3, which took first prize in *Lidová demokracie* in 1950, shows more of the rook and bishop crossing-point sacrifices which we featured in December 2007. **1 e7 Re5 2 g7 c3 3 Re6** gives the first sacrifice, but Black has **3...Bd5+** (see **3a**), and **4 Kg1** will allow mate in three by **4...Rg5+ 5 Kf1 Bc4+**. Hence **4 f3!** luring the bishop forward, and after **4...Bxf3+ 5 Kgl Rg5+ 6 Kf1** it has no useful check (see **3b**). This leaves Black nothing better than **6...Bh5**, and **7 Rg6** echoes the first sacrifice. A later version of this took first place in a 1951 match between Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, and Romania, but I prefer the simple clarity of the present setting.



4 - draw



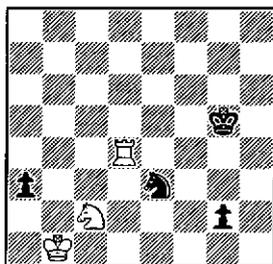
4a - after 3 b5



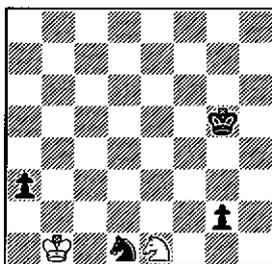
4b - where wK must go

4 appeared in *Norsk Sjakkblad* in 1952. I don't greatly care for the introduction **1 Rd7 Ba4+ 2 Kxa6 Bxd7**, but once this is out of the way we have an interesting draw with a bishop down. White plays **3 b5** giving **4a** (Black threatened **3...c6**), and if **3...Ke7** then **4 b6** draws quickly (**4...Bc8+ 5 Kb5**). Hence **3...Bc8+ 4 Ka7**, and after **4...Ke7** the move is **5 Kb8** to attack both the Black men (if instead **5 Ka8** then any of **5...Bd7/.../Bh3** will win). Black must now play to d7 or d8, and given is **5...Kd7 6 Ka8 Kd8 7 Ka7 Ke8 8 Kb8 Kd8 9 Ka7 Bd7 10 b6**.

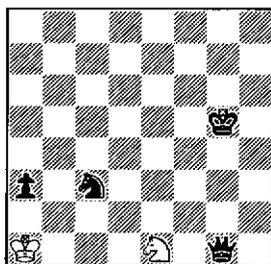
The point behind all this is that if the White king is on a7, Black cannot afford to withdraw his bishop from its awkward position, because b6 will force the draw. Conversely, if the White king is on a8 or b8, the pawn advance is not a threat. Hence White can play to a8 only if the Black king is on d7, blocking his bishop's retreat, and to b8 only if Black is on d7 or the e-file. The matter is summarized in **4b**, which shows where White must go for each position of the Black king. The positions with the kings on a7/d8 and a7/d6 are reciprocal zugzwang.



5 - draw

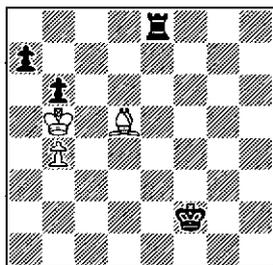


5a - after 2 Ne1

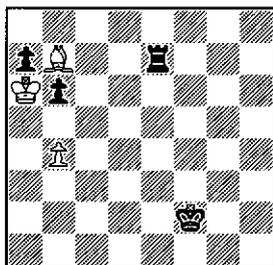


5b - 3...g1Q stalemate

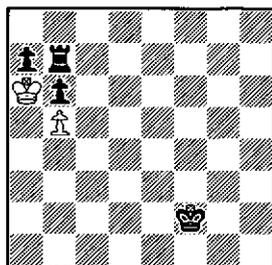
Fritz, like most composers of his period, composed a lot of studies ending in stalemate. Most of the stalemates he used had already been exploited by others, but that in 5 (*Skakbladet* 1933) appears to have been new. 1 Nxe3 g1Q+ and 2...Qxe3, 1 Ne1 g1Q and the knight is pinned. 1 Rd1 Nxd1 2 Ne1 is better (see 5a), because the knight is no longer pinned and 2...g1Q will allow 3 Nf3+, while 2...g1N will leave the a-pawn to its fate. But Black has 2...Nc3+, which will reinstate the pin, and if 3 Kc2 to get the king off the back rank then 3...a2 and a pawn will promote (4 Kb2 won't help, because after 4...a1Q+ 5 Kxa1 g1Q the knight on e1 will again be pinned). Hence 3 Ka1, and if Black now promotes by 3...g1Q he will give stalemate (see 5b); and 3...g1B/N are soon seen not to win either.



6 - draw



6a - after 2 Bb7

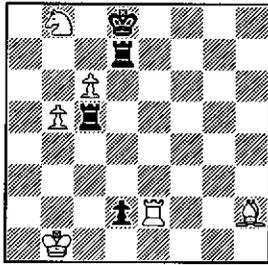


6b - after 3 b5

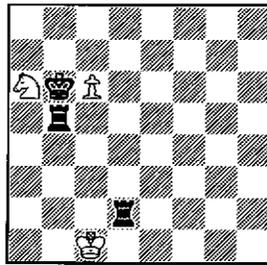
The final stalemate is only part of the story in 6 (*Československý šach* 1965). 1 Ka6 attacks the a-pawn and effectively forces 1...Re7 (if instead 1...Re5 then 2 Bc6 and now ...Re7 is indeed forced). There follows the shut-off move 2 Bb7 (see 6a), and let us look first at 2...Ke3 bringing the Black king up.

White obviously takes the a-pawn, 3 Kxa7, and after 3...Re6 can he not play 4 b5 and 5 Bc6 winning the b-pawn? No, Black will have 4-5...Kc5 defending it, and he will win. White must bring his king round to b5, 4 Ka6 and 5 Kb5, and now Black's king is kept at bay and the second shut-off move 6 Bc6 will win the pawn.

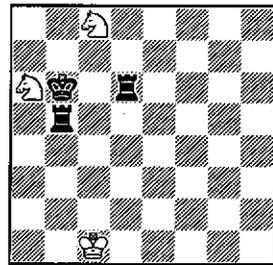
But the main line move is 2...Rxb7, since 3 Kxb7 will allow 3...a5 etc. Never mind: 3 b5! (see 6b). A move such as 3...Rh7 will be stalemate, and if instead 3...Rb8 then 4 Kxa7 Rh8 (say) 5 Kxb6, drawing with pawn against rook because Black's king is just too far away.



7 - draw



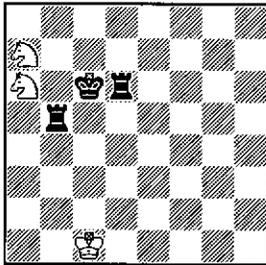
7a - after 4...Rxd2



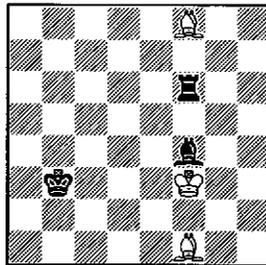
7b - after 6 c8N+

7 took second prize in *Revista Română de Șah* 1974. 1 Rxd2 Rxd2 is soon seen to give a win for Black, and how else can White deal with the pawn on d2? 1 Bc7+ Kxc7 2 Na6+ attacks the rook on c5, and if 2...Kd8 then 3 Rxd2 Rxd2 4 Nxc5 (or 3...Rxb5+ 4 Kc1) and White has his draw. But Black can also play 2...Kb6, after which the line 3 Rxd2 Rxb5+ 4 Kc1 Rxd2 looks strong for him because the knight is under attack (see 7a). White's answer is of course 5 c7 threatening to promote, but Black can reply 5...Rd6 and 6 c8Q will be met by 6...Rc6+ (7 Qxc6+ Kxc6 and the knight will soon fall). White must therefore play 6 c8N+ forking and rook (see 7b), but after 6...Kc6 he cannot play the natural 7 Nxd6 because after 7...Kxd6 his other knight will fall.

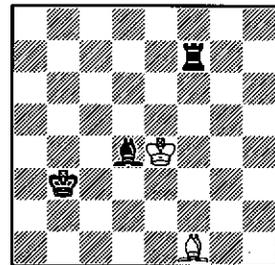
All right, 7 Na7+ with another fork (see 7c below), but after 7...Kb6 we have the same again: White cannot capture the rook because the recapture will leave his remaining knight helpless. Never mind, 8 Nc8+ with perpetual check; White may not be able to capture one of the rooks, but he has a draw by perpetual knight fork.



7c - after 7 Na7+

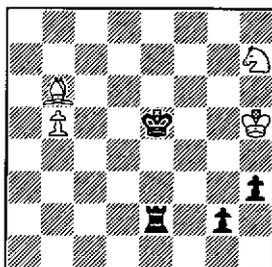


8 - draw

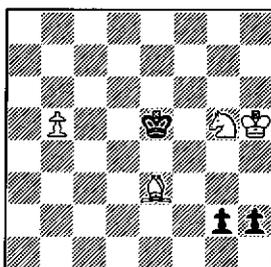


8a - after 3...Bxd4

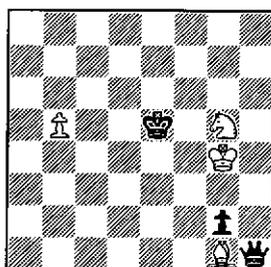
The stalemate in 8 (*Svobodné slovo* 1962) has been seen many times, but Fritz reaches it from a pawnless starting position with every man on the board moving at least once. The draw with 2B v R + B is one of those which computer analysis has confirmed, so Black needs to win material whereas White will be content to consolidate. 1 Be7 Rf7 2 Bh4 Bg5+ is soon seen to be bad for White (3 Kg4 Bxh4 4 Kxh4 Rxf1), so why is 1 Bg7 Rf7 2 Bd4 better? Ah, because after 2...Be5+ 3 Ke4 Bxd4 he needn't take the bishop (see 8a); he can fork king and rook by 4 Bc4+, and 4...Kxc4 will be stalemate.



9 - draw

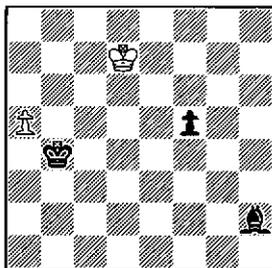


9a - after 2...h2

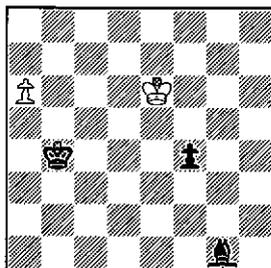


9b - after 4 Kg4

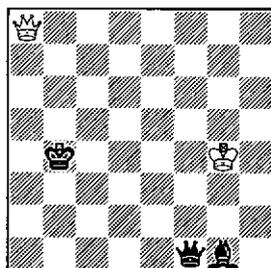
9 (HM, *Práce* 1952) will feature good play by both sides. 1 Ng5 threatens 2 Nxh3 taking one pawn and putting a second guard on g1, and 1...h2 is met by 2 Bc7+. But Black has 1...Re3! decoying the bishop, 2 Bxe3, and now 2...h2 forces a pawn through (see 9a). Never mind: 3 Bg1! restricts Black's options to 3...h1Q+, since 3...hxg1Q will be met by a knight fork and promotions to knight won't give Black enough material to win, and 4 Kg4 leaves the new queen without a good move (see 9b). White will now play 5 Nh3 sealing in the queen and then mark time with his king on g4/h4/g3, and Black cannot bring his king across because White's pawn will then run. The final tableau with the blocked-in queen had been seen before, but Fritz's lead-in play was much better; there is nothing at all in the initial position to hint at what will follow.



10 - draw

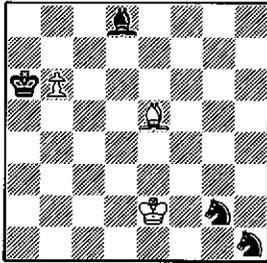


10a - after 2...Bg1

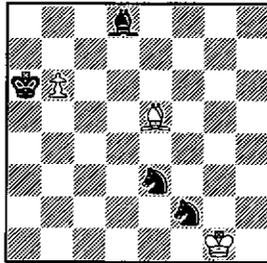


10b - after 6 a8Q

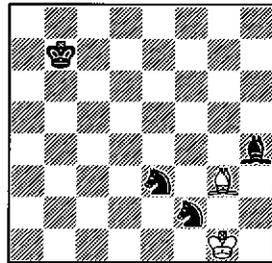
In 1979, Fritz published a book *Vybrané šachové problémy* containing 50 of his problems and no fewer than 252 endgame studies. (The title of the book is perhaps best translated as "Selected chess enigmas", using Troitzky's term, since Fritz uses the separate word "úlohy" for the problems.) 10 is the last item in this book, and is described as a new variation on the Réti theme. Try 1 a6: no, 1 Bb8, with 2 Kc8 Ba7 3 Kb7 Be3 (given in the text and good enough, though 3...Bc5 is simpler) or 2 Kc6 f4 3 Kb7 Kb5. White must play 1 Ke6 first, and after 1...f4 the bishop's line to b8 is blocked and 2 a6 forces 2...Bg1 (see 10a). Now 3 Kf5 f3 4 Kg4 forces the pawn to block the bishop's line a second time, 4...f2, and 5 a7 f1Q 6 a8Q secures the draw (see 10b). We may note that the White king must come right across to g4; on e4 Black would have 6...Qg2+, and on f4 Black's 5...f1Q would have given check.



11 - draw

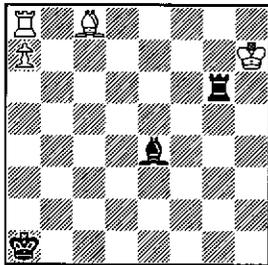


11a - after 2...Nf2

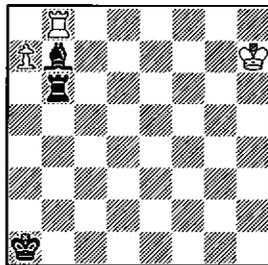


11b - after 5 Bg3

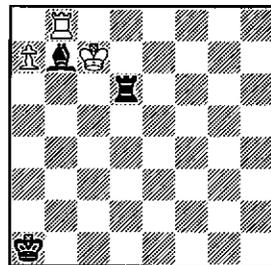
In 11 (*Revista Română de Șah* 1938), White must gain a piece before Black can consolidate, hence **1 Kf1**. If **1...Nh4** then **2 Bc7 B~ 3 Kg1** wins the knight in the corner, hence **1...Ne3+**, but after **2 Kg1 Nf2** White cannot capture on f2 because of a fork (see 11a). **3 Bc7** avoids the fork, but **3...Bh4** defends the knight; what next? **4 b7 Kxb7 5 Bg3** (see 11b), and **5...Bxg3** will give stalemate; every man has moved. Herbstman had attempted this stalemate in 64 a few years previously, in a more ambitious form with a second stalemate in another line, but his setting was unsound.



12 - win



12a - after 2...Rb6

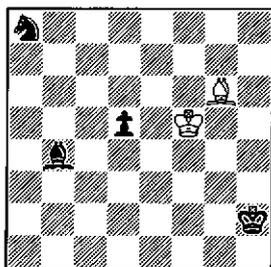


12b - after 8 Kc7

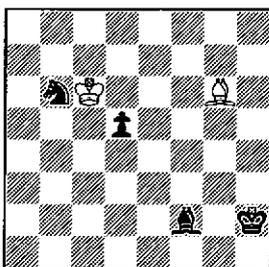
12 appeared in *Šach* in 1939. **1 Bb7**, and if say **1...Bf5** then White has time for **2 Kh8** followed by **Rb8** and **a8Q**. Try **1...Re6+** or **1...Rg4+** guarding the bishop: no, **2 Bxe4 Rxe4 3 Rg8** with a standard win (**3...Re7+ 4 Rg7 Re8 5 Kg6 Ka2 6 Rb7 Ra8 7-9 Kd6 Ka5 10 Kc7 Ka6 11 Rb1 Rxa7+ 12 Kc6**). This leaves the shut-off move **1...Rc6+**, at which we'll look in a moment, and **1...Bxb7**.

The natural continuation is **2 Rb8**, and if **2...Be4** then **3 a8Q+ Bxa8 4 Rxa8+** and the rook will go as well. Hence **2...Rb6**, and we have 12a. White must bring his king across, but **3 Kg8** will allow **3...Bd5+** and **4...Ra6**. **3 Kg7**, perhaps? No, **3...Rb2** intending say **4...Be4**, and **4 Rxb7** won't help because the recapture on b7 will be check. The only move is **3 Kh8!** avoiding both the light square g8 and the seventh rank. Now **4 Rxb7** is a threat, hence **3...Rh6+**, and White will zigzag in along the dark squares: **4 Kg7** (**4 Kg8? Bd5+** and **5...Ra6**) **Rb6** (what else?) **5 Kf8! Rf6+ 6 Ke7 Rb6 7 Kd8 Rd6+ 8 Kc7** and Black has run out of moves (see 12b).

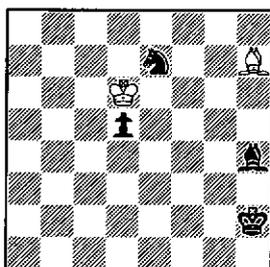
And if **1...Rc6+** then **2 Kg8 Bd5+ 3 Kh8!** (**3 Kf8 Rf6+ 4 Ke7 Rf7+ and 5...Rxb7**) **Rh6+ 4 Kg7 Bxb7 5 Rb8**, and we are back in the previous line.



13 - draw



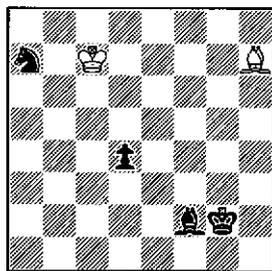
13a - after 4 Kc6



13b - after 6...Bh4

To finish, a remarkable if uncharacteristic study which gained First Prize in *Thèmes-64* in 1980. Exclamation and question marks are in the original, and quotations are in my translation. "The situation is clear: we need to win something" (B + N + P will win against a lone bishop if they can consolidate). **1 Ke5 Nb6 2 Kd4 Be1 3 Kc5 Bf2+ 4 Kc6** (see 13a) **Nc8 5 Bh7!!** ("the first of a series of very precise moves to force a perpetual") **Ne7+ 6 Kd6 Bh4** (see 13b) **7 Bb1!! d4 8 Bh7!! Kg2 9 Ke5 Bf2 10 Kd6**. Now 10...Bh4 will allow 11 Ke5 repeating, so Black must try **10...Nc8+**, but there follows **11 Kc7 Na7** (see 13c below) **12 Bd3 Kf3 13 Kb7 Ke3 14 Bc4 d3 15 Kxa7 d2 16 Bb3** "and the Black pawn fails to reach port after having believed himself to have escaped all the perpetual whirlings. Of course, variations and tries abound : 1 Ke6? Nb6 2 Ke5 Bc3+ 3 K- d4 and Black wins. 4...d4 5 Kxb6 d3+ 6 Kb5 d2 7 Bc2=. 5 Bb1? d4 6 Bh7 Na7+ 7 Kb7 Nb5 etc. 7 Ke6? Kg3 8 Ke5 Kf3 9 Bb1 Ke3 etc. 9 Kc5? Bf6 10 Kd6 Kf3 11 Ke6 Bh4 12 Ke5 Ke3 etc. A masterpiece."

A masterpiece indeed, but what the magazine's solvers made of it I dread to think; I imagine that few of them got anywhere near it. When I was presenting original studies in *diagrammes*, I was fortunate in having a column for commentary as well as one for solving, and if I thought a study would not yield its secrets to a solver I presented it in the column for commentary with a suitable exposition. I have checked the solution of 13 against the definitive analysis now available on Eiko Bleicher's web site <www.k4it.de>, and only at 13c is there even the most minor of inaccuracies: White can interpolate 12 Bc4+, and still be able to play Bd3 next move. Everywhere else, he must make the exact move given.



13c - after 11...Na7

A study like this, without a sparkling climax but with depth, difficulty, and precision in abundance, is never going to have the popular appeal of Fritz's more typical work, but it is an instructive example of what a top-rank composer could achieve even in pre-computer days.

My usual thanks to Harold van der Heijden's invaluable "Endgame study database III" and to the BCPS Library. - JDB