

Colin Crouch 1956 - 2015

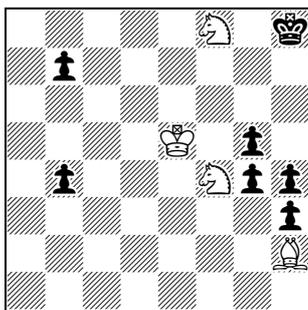
Colin Crouch died earlier this year. A stroke some years ago had taken away much of his sight and left him in poor shape, and I understand that a further brain haemorrhage provided the last straw.

Colin was a player of master strength, and has attracted obituaries in the mainstream press. He took part in one Hastings Premier, having won the previous year's Challengers, and although he found himself a little out of his depth most of us would not have got there in the first place. He also wrote books, and I have heard that he suffered more than most from the deplorable Batsford collapse. But our concern here is with him as an endgame analyst and occasional composer of studies.

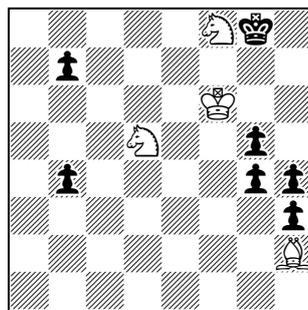
EG 90 contains an extensive article by him on an endgame with rook against three united passed pawns, and the introduction remarks that he had started composing studies in 1985 but "the dozen studies so far completed" still awaited publication (this was in 1987). Three subsequently appeared in the awards of the Assiac and Harman Memorial Tourneys, but of the rest we know nothing (Harold van der Heijden's "Endgame study database IV" contains only these three plus a position with K+R v K+3P which is merely a refutation of a wrong Black move in the *EG 90* analysis). I don't know who has inherited his chess papers nor what instructions he may have given in respect of them, but if anyone has been given the task of going through them I hope that he or she will keep a look-out for these nine or more unpublished studies, and, if the new owner of the papers is in agreement, pass them to a suitable editor. I am not in favour of the blind posthumous publication of work which an author has not sought to publish himself, but Colin always struck me as a somewhat unworldly character, and I find it quite possible to believe that he produced things which were well worthy of publication without ever getting round to the business of sending them off for publication himself.

The article on K+R v K+3P in *EG 90*, inspired by a position from one of his games, strikes me as first rate. White, with the rook, is trying to win, but Black can just hold on by accurate play. It occupies six pages of *EG* and I do not think it can realistically be summarized, but *EG 90* can be downloaded from www.gadycosteff.com, and if we play through the main line, and check it against the definitive results now available on Eiko Bleicher's web site www.k4it.de, we find that Black has drawing alternatives only at move 10, where ...Kf6 and ...Kh6 also work (noted by Colin), at move 11, where ...Kh7 also works (again noted), and at move 13, where ...Kh6 is not noted. There is a minor oversight at move 18, where Colin is so delighted at the White rook's having finally penetrated to "the critical square h8" that he overlooks that Black's drawing reply ...Kg6 can be improved on and that Rh8 is now a losing move, but this oversight does not affect the value of the analysis as a whole.

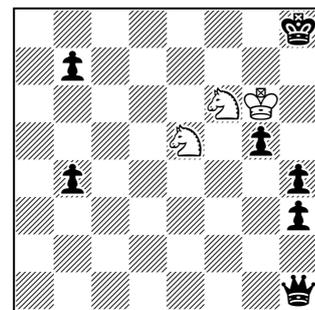
I have to say that none of his three tourney studies seems to me to be of this class, though they are well above normal "first composition" standard. All can be found in special number 12 of *British Endgame Study News*, downloadable from this site, and with more immediate authority in issues 99 and 100 of *EG*. Perhaps the most interesting, although not the most highly honoured, was **1** below, which received 5HM in the Assiac Memorial.



1 - White to play and win



1a - after 2 Nd5



1b - after 6 Ne5

White starts **1 Kf6**, preventing 1...Kg7 and threatening 2 Kf7 and 3 N4g6 mate, and if 1...gxf4 then 2 Kf7 g3 3 Bg1 and again mate. **1...Kg8**, therefore, and now the move is **2 Nd5** giving **1a** (there is analysis of the alternatives in *EG 99*). The natural move might now seem to be 2...Kxf8, but there follows 3 Bd6+ Ke8 (3...Kg8 4 Kg6 and soon mates) 4 Ke6 Kd8 5 Bc7+ Ke8 (5...Kc8 6 Kd6 b6 7 Kc6 and mates) 6 Nf6+ Kf8 7 Bd6+ (given in *EG*, though I think an immediate Nxg4 also wins) Kg7 8 Nxg4 and with a little care White will mop up.

So the main line is **2...g3**, and 3 Bg1 h2 is soon seen to be hopeless. Correct is **3 Nd7**, and **3...gxh2** reduces White to two knights. No matter; **4 Kg6** threatens mate in three, and even after **4...h1Q 5 N5f6+ Kh8 6 Ne5** (see **1b**) Black can avoid mate only by sacrificing his queen: **6...Qb1+ 7 Kh6 Qh7+**. There follows **8 Nxh7 Kg8 9 Kg6 h2 10 Nd7 h1Q 11 Nhf6+ Kh8 12 Ne5** (**1b** without bPh3) **Qb1+ 13 Kh6 Qh7+ 14 Nxh7 Kg8 15 Kg6 b3 16 Nd7 b2 17 Nhf6+ Kh8 18 Ne5** (**1b** yet again, this time without bPh3/bQh1 and with bPb4 on b2) **b1Q+ 19 Kh6 Qh7+ 20 Nxh7 Kg8 21 Kg6 h3 22 Nd7 h2 23 Nhf6+ Kh8 24 Ne5** and now mate is unavoidable. The judges regretted the need for the ugly setting, which is fair comment, but the repeated six-move cycle is fun.

Let us hope that the other nine come to light.