

Prizewinners explained

The Corus chess tournament in Wijk aan Zee (the Netherlands) is probably the world's most famous event which will celebrate its 73rd edition next month. In recent years this mega festival has added a couple of composition contests to its program. The daily two-mover challenge attracts hundreds of entries and a special composing tourney commemorated the 70th edition of the event some three years ago. Last year the first studies solving day was successfully held, introducing a surprising victory by the young Dutchman Twan Burg ahead of an impressive field of leading solvers. The nine studies that were presented to the participants were originals and most have been published subsequently in *The Problemist* to take part in its strong biennial composing tourney. Two of them even won the top honours and we are glad to show them here.

In the introduction to his highly instructive award, the judge GM John Nunn counts three important factors in addition to the well-known criteria of contents, economy and originality.

“1. Comprehensibility. Unfortunately, the influence of the computer has caused an undesirable trend towards incomprehensible studies; I can't see the point of a study in which the moves in the main line of the solution are impossible for a human to understand.

2. Focus. A study should make its point with the minimum of extraneous detail, and therefore complex and distracting sidelines are a minus. Moreover, a series of accurate moves doesn't necessarily make a good study if the study lacks a clear point.

Game-Like Positions

YOCHANAN AFEK

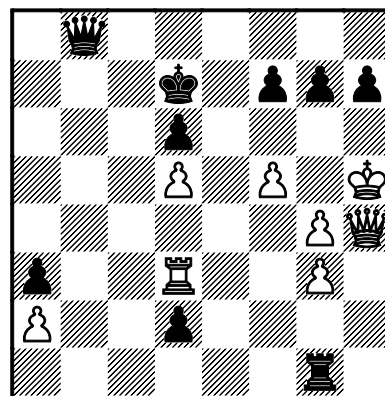
3. 'Solver pleasure'. A subjective factor perhaps, but so are many of the other criteria applied to studies. In a way it includes the first two factors, but goes beyond them; for example, a study which rises to a satisfying climax is better than one which tails off limply”.

These words should be carefully read and adopted by all those composers who sometimes tend to forget that our business is a fine art and as such should be first and foremost accessible to human beings in an attempt to evoke their emotions. What kind of art is it when even the composer is losing his way under piles of incomprehensible lengthy variations (often computer output) and can hardly explain the essence of his own creation even to... himself?

Based on these guidelines Nunn has granted the two first prizes to players' friendly settings:

A.1. Gady Costeff

1st prize *The Problemist* 2008-2009



h5d7 4400.56 8/8 Draw

In fact both prize-winners need little commentary as the moves speak for themselves, clearly and loudly.

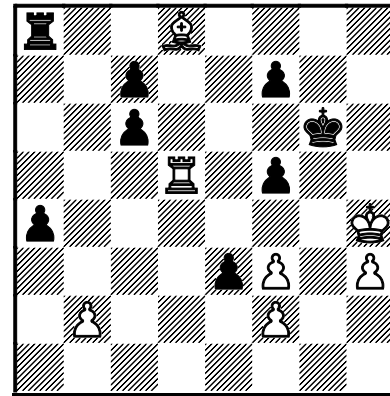
1.g5 (1.Rxd2? Qe8 2.f6 g5 3.Kxg5 Qg8+ 4.Kf4 Rf1+ 5.Ke3 Qe8+ 6.Kd3 Rf3+) **1...d1Q+ 2.Rxd1 g6+! 3.Kh6** (3.fxg6? hxg6+ 4.Kg4 Rxd1) **3...Rxd1 4.Qa4+ Ke7 5.Qxd1 Kf8! 6.Qd4!** (6.fxg6 hxg6) **6...Qb2 7.Qh8+!! Qxh8 8.f6! Ke8 9.g4 Qf8+ 10.Kxh7** and the stalemate is amazingly unavoidable but at the price of the extra queen!

“A practically ideal study with plenty of solver appeal. With the exception of wKh5, the position is quite game-like. After some introductory play, White sacrifices his queen to reach an original position in which he draws despite being a queen down and having only pawns left. There are no sidelines at all and the study makes its point with absolute clarity. The only real flaw is that once White has found the queen sacrifice he cannot go wrong, as all his moves are forced.”

1.Rd1 a3! 2.bxa3 Ra4+ 3.f4!! The meaning of this sacrifice will be apparent only after the eighth move (3.Kg3? Rd4! 4.Rg1 Rxd8 5.fxe3 Ra8) **3...Rxf4+ 4.Kg3 Rd4! 5.Rxd4 e2 6.Rd6+! Kh7 (Kh5)** (cxd6; Bb6) **7.Rh6+! Kxh6** (Kg8; Bf6) **8.Bg5+! Kxg5** Or else 9.Bd2. **9.f4+** That's it! On the third move the way was paved. **9...Kh5 10.Kf2** to conclude

A.2. Jan Timman

2nd prize *The Problemist* 2008-09



h4g6 0410.46 7/8 Win

the heroic battle against Black's promotion. A titanic battle over the dark squares.

[HH: on my website www.hhdbiv.com/multimedia you can find a link to a Dutch spoken video presentation of this study by GM Jan Timman on YouTube].

“A game-like position leads to some spectacular play in which all three pieces are sacrificed. The preliminary 3.f4! is a delightful finesse clearing the way for the second f-pawn to advance later”.

These two studies and their like would certainly help to deepen the linkage between the realm of otb chess and the world of chess composition.