

Prizewinners explained

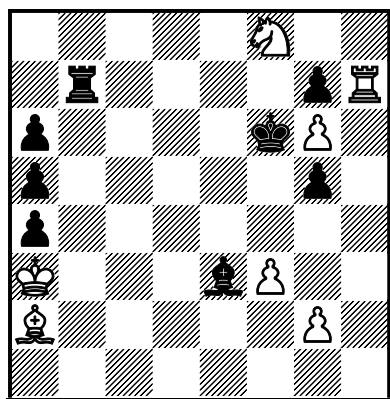
THE OLYMPIC SPIRIT

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Last year I was invited to act as the judge in the special composing tourney organized on the occasion of the chess Olympiad in Dresden, Germany. This leading event is usually a great opportunity to promote our art among general chess enthusiasts. However it seems that time and time again we fail to exploit such opportunities in full and at the end of the day the minimal response of the chess community to such a magnificent demonstration of chess spirit is rather disappointing.

41 composers from 17 countries took part in this tourney. Even the analytical standard was rather unusual since just a handful of the entries were found to be unsound. The refreshing phenomenon which seemed to dominate the final award was the tremendous success of local composers. German study composition has made considerable progress over the last decade highlighted by its extraordinary performance in the recent WCCT. We therefore chose this time to salute its achievements with two of the most interesting prizewinners in the Olympic tourney.

A.1 Wieland Bruch & Martin Minski 1st Prize Olympic Tourney Dresden 2008



a3f6 0441.35 7/8 Win

One of the engines behind this success is the rising star **Martin Minski**, who combines an impressive composing career with various activities as a busy editor, organizer and judge. **Wieland Bruch**, his co-author for this Olympic victory, has been a renowned two-mover composer who seems to have found even better possibilities to channel his versatile skills in the study world.

Their co-production is “an astounding and daring concept displaying an exceptional pivot role of the white king in creating a series of zugzwang positions aimed to set his tied up pieces free...”

The very first step on the long road to victory is to meet the immediate black threat to create a deadly battery (as indeed occurs already after his third move). White’s best chance to guard his entire property is to concentrate his forces at the upper right corner where the pieces can protect each other.

1.Rh8!

The only way: 1.Bd5? Bc1+! and 2.Ka2 Rb2+ 3.Ka1 Rxc2, or 2.Kxa4 Rb4+ 3.Kxa5 Rb5+ 4.Kxa6 Rxd5 draw.

1...Bc1+

Ke7 2.Sh7 Rb4 3.Rc8, or Rb4 2.Rh1 Bc5 3.Sd7+ wins.

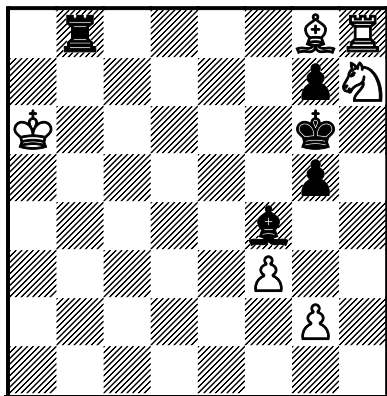
2.Kxa4 Rb4+ 3.Kxa5 Bd2! 4.Sh7+ Kxg6

4...Kf5 e.g. 5.g4+!, and Rxc4+ 6.Kb6! Rb4+ 7.Kc5 a5 8.Bc4 a4 9.Kd5 a3 10.Ra8 Kxc6 11.Bd3+ Kh6 12.Rxa3 wins, or Kxc6 6.Sf8+ Kf6 7.Rh2! Rb2+ 8.Ka4 Rxa2+ 9.Kb3 Ra1 10.Rxd2 wins.

5.Bg8! Rb8+ 6.Kxa6

Idea 7.Bf7+.

6...Bf4!



The first mission has been successfully accomplished as all white officers have been brought to safety but at what a price: A monstrous black battery has turned into a paralyzing black pin! The only active white piece left is therefore his majesty who tries to release the embarrassing stalemate of his army with the assistance of the zugzwang weapon. Some other alternative king moves along the main line might also prove efficient, however they would just prolong the solution for no use, loss of time duals.

7.g4!

7.Ka7? g4! 8.fxf4 Bg3 or 8.Bf7+ Kxf7 9.Rxb8 Bxb8+ 10.Kxb8 Kg6! draws.

7...Bc7!

7...Bd6 8.Ka7 Re8 9.Kb6 (Kb7) Rb8+ 10.Kc6 Bg3 11.Kc5! Bc7 12.Kd5 Bg3 13.Kc6 zz.

8.Ka7

Idea 9.Lf7+!

8...Re8!

8...Rd8 9.Kb7 Ba5 10.Kc6! zz.

9.Kb7 Ba5!

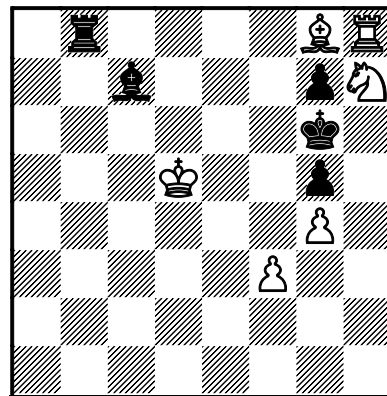
9...Bg3 10.Kb6! (Kc6? Rb8;) Rb8+ 11.Kc6! zz, or Be5 10.Kc6 (Kb6) Bf6 11.Kc7! zz Rxg8 12.Rxg8 wins.

10.Kc6! Rd8 11.Kb5 Bc7 12.Kc5! zz Rb8!?

12...Ba5 13.Kc6! zz Re8 14.Kd7 Rxg8 15.Rxg8 wins.

13.Kd5!

Idea 14.Ke6.



The sting of this ingenious double-edged structure is that while white seems totally tied up he might himself release at any moment one of his potentially harmful batteries: either against the Rook on the eighth rank or along the “h” file had the black bishop been forced to h2. A sort of “passive activity” which leaves black with only two Bishop moves:

Main line A:

13...Bg3 14.Kc6! zz Bh2

Bf4 15.Sxg5! see main line B after 17.Sxg5! This last move by Black enables White to open a second battery.

15.Kd7!!

Not immediately 15.Sf8+? Rxf8 16.Bh7+ Kf7 17.Bg6+ Ke7! 18.Rxh2 Rf6+! draws.

15...Rb7+ 16.Ke6 Rb6+ 17.Kd5! Rb8 18.Sf8+! Rxf8 19.Bh7+ Kf7 20.Bg6+! Kxg6 21.Rxf8 wins.

Main line B:

13...Bf4!? 14.Ke6!!

Not immediately 14.Sxg5? Rb5+! 15.Ke4 Bxg5 draws.

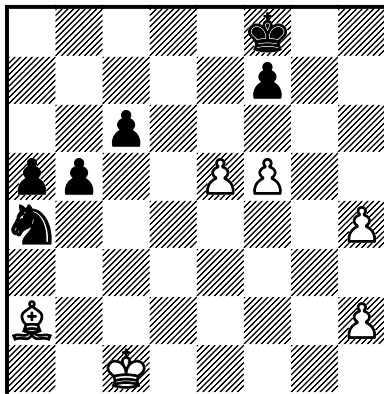
14...Rb6+ 15.Kd7 Rb7+ 16.Kc6! Rb8 17.Sxg5! Kxg5 18.Rh5+ Kf6 19.Rf5+ Ke7 20.Rf7+ Ke6 21.Rxg7+ Kf6 22.Rf7+ Kg5 23.Rf5+ Kh4 24.Rxf4 wins.

It is worthwhile making the effort to dive into the depth of this masterpiece and grasp its magic zugzwang mechanism in full. No doubt one of the most original concepts I have ever seen.

More and more otb grandmasters have made a serious try to create an endgame study of their own. **Michael Prusikin**, a German GM of Russian origin, last month shared first place in the national championship together with the young GM Arik Brown (who has himself been captivated by the charm of studies partly thanks to yours truly in various training sessions). Michael entered the olympic tourney with three studies of which I was especially impressed by the following one:

A.2 Michael Prusikin

Special prize Olympic Tourney Dresden 2008



c1f8 0013.44 6/6 Win

Actually we are witnessing here a drama with two acts. A lovely (though not really unexpected) sacrificial key triggers a breathtaking race of a knight against speedy passed pawns.

1.Bxf7! Kxf7

1...Sc5 2.e6 a4 3.Kb1 b4 4.h5 Se4 5.h6 Sf6 6.Bg6 c5 7.h7 Sxh7 8.Bxh7 Ke7 9.h4 and wins.

2.e6+ Kf6 3.h5 Sc3 4.h6 Sd5 5.e7!! Sxe7 6.h7 Sg6

Black is finally forced to return the piece since 6...Kg7 is met by 7.f6+! Kxf6 (Kxh7; fxe7) 8.h8Q+. That in fact points to the second phase- an independent pawn ending.

7.fxg6 Kg7 8.Kb2! c5

Or 8...a4 9.Ka3! (h3? b4;) c5 10.h3! Kh8 11.h4 Kg7 12.h5 c4 13.Kb4 wins.

9.h3!!

The Festina Lente theme: 9.h4? Kh8 10. h5 Kg7 draws. Also 9.Kb3? Kh8 and now 10.h3 a4+ 11.Ka3 c4 12.Kb4 Kg7 13.h4 Kh8 14.h5 Kg7 or here 10.h4 Kg7 11.h5 b4! 12.h6+ Kh8 13.Kb2 a4 draws.

9...Kh8 10.h4 Kg7 11.h5 Kh8 12.h6 b4

Likewise 12...c4 13.Kc3 a4 14. Kb4 or 12...a4 13. Ka3 c4 14. Kb4 and Black will run out of useful moves.

13.Kb3 c4+ 14.Kxc4

wins, e.g. 14...b3 15.Kxb3 a4+ 16.Ka2 a3 17.g7+ Kxh7 18.Kxa3.

The main drawback of this otherwise perfect concept is that the pawn ending has already been shown before (Guy c2f8 1995) which prevented the study from being awarded a “normal” prize. “However the introductory play still turns it into an exemplary multi-phase masterpiece which every chess player would love to solve or at least to play through the solution”.

One noticeable characteristic of several successful German entries in the Olympic tourney of last year is their highly daring approach introducing an eventful plot of broad scope with more than one phase. This might suggest another possible trend for those who still seek new horizons in a well trodden genre that never ceases to surprise.