

Kostas Prentos 60 Jubilee Tourney, 2026

Award by Kostas Prentos

List of Participants: S. K. Balasubramanian (India): P15*, P19* - Kevin J. Begley (USA): F3 - Dirk Borst (Netherlands): P32 - Stephan Dietrich (Germany): F1, F2 - Gianni Donati (USA): P1, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P10, P12, P13, P17, P20, P21, P22, P25, P26, P27, P28, P29 - Christoph Fieberg (Germany): P30 - Andriy Frokin (Ukraine): R1, R2, R3 - Theodoros Giakatis (Greece): F4, F5, F6, F8, F9 - Ioannis Kalkavouras (Greece): P16 - Mark Kirtley (USA): P18, P24 - Panagiotis Konidaris (Greece): P2, P9, P11, P14 - Joost Michielsen (Netherlands): P23, P31 - Per Olin (Finland): P33 - Paul Răican (Romania): F10, F11 - Jochen Schröder (Germany): F7 - Velmurugan Nallusamy (India): P15*, P19*

Theme: Any type of retro problem (orthodox or fairy PG, classical retro, retractor, etc.) in which an original officer **A** (not a promoted piece) is captured by another officer **B** (not by a pawn); later, a pawn of the same side as the captured piece **A** promotes to a piece of the same type as **A**. There are no restrictions on the whereabouts of the thematic piece **A** before its capture (it may, or may not have moved, or captured). For problems in which the complete history is unknown (e.g., classical retros, retractors) an officer is considered to be original, if the contrary cannot be proved.

In one of the very first proof game tournaments I judged, a problem by Reto Aschwenden came to win the 1st Prize: <https://pdb.dieschwalbe.de/P1013034>. I still remember the strong impression it made on me. Two black pieces play on vacant squares and they are captured by officers, making room for their Phoenix successors to replace them at home. Why would the black pawns not promote and sacrifice afterwards, instead of this “convoluted” strategy? Justifying this mechanism is very paradoxical, and very difficult to achieve. Proof game masterwork! In 2020, the Champagne tourney required problems, in which an original piece was captured on a vacant square by an officer, without the need for a subsequent Phoenix. There were certain additional restrictions, like the requirement that the thematic officer had moved and played non-capturing move(s) before its capture, and at the time of the capture it did not give check, nor was pinned.

When considering possible ideas for my 60th Jubilee tourney, I thought the selected theme had the potential for good problems, even as a subsection of the rather unimpressive Phoenix theme. The requirement “officer captures officer” would hopefully provide interesting justification. In addition, I refrained from restricting the thematic capture, like in Champagne 2020. Of course, not all presentations of the theme are equal. The composers were given flexibility to exercise their imagination and I would evaluate the various methods they used during judging. It is generally more paradoxical when the captured officer has played non-capturing move(s) than having captured, or being captured without having moved at all. It also matters what the Phoenix piece does after its promotion. It is not ideal when this piece is an obvious promotee. When the promoted piece is captured, or returns home, it improves the general appeal of the composition.

In general, the intensity of the thematic content, while significant, was not the only consideration. Sometimes, even showing the theme twice did not guarantee a place in the award. In contrast, showing the theme only once was adequate, when the quality of the thematic moves or the supporting play made up for the lack of intensity. In retrospect, I am convinced that not limiting the parameters of the theme was a good idea. I was surprised to see that several proof games showed the theme 3 or 4 times. Also, numerous entries achieved the theme less intensively, but in a highly artistic way. Both types of problems are represented in the award, although I have to say that it was difficult comparing and ranking them. When in doubt, I gave priority to the more intensive entries.

The director Harry Fougiaxis sent me in anonymous form a total of 47 entries (11 fairy PGs including a version, 33 orthodox PGs, including one in A→B form, and 3 orthodox classical retros). To disguise the identity of the composers even further, the problems were in ascending order, according to the number of moves. He deserves my compliments for a job well done.

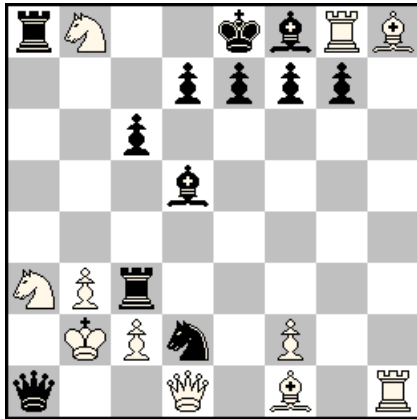
The tourney was open to all applicable types of retro problems, besides orthodox and fairy proof games, but I received only three orthodox classical retros. Although proof games are the most popular sub-genre of retros these days, I must admit that my expectations for the number of non-PG entries were not met. A possible explanation is that this theme is more suitable for proof games.

Before presenting the awarded problems, here are some brief comments about certain entries that missed the award, in some cases just barely.

- **F2** (Dietrich - PG 7.0, Circe Parrain): One time the theme: The undead Bishop is captured 4 times. This oddity, facilitated by the fairy condition, did not manage to impress me.
- **F11** (Răican - PG 20.5, Masand): Cooked by Jacobi in demolition mode, by testing the 14.5 moves, from move 2.5 to 17.0, e.g., 1.e4 e5 2.Ke2 Qe7 3.Kd3 Qa3 [a7,f8=w][a2,b2=b]+ 4.Sxa3 b1=B 5.Qf3 Bxc2+ 6.Kxc2 d6 7.Kd1 Kxf8 8.Qxf7 [a2,c7,g7,g8=w][f2=b]++ Kxf7 9.Sf3 b6 10.Se7 Kf6 11.Sd5 [b6=w][c7=b]+ Kf7 12.Sxc7 Ba6 13.Bxa6 Ke7 14.Scb5 f1=S 15.Rb1 Sxa6 16.Rb3 Se3 [g2=b]+ 17.Rxe3 Sb8 etc
- Several entries like **P1** (Donati - PG 8.0), **P2** (Konidaris - PG 8.0), **P4** (Donati - PG 9.0), **P5** (Donati - PG 9.0), **P8** (Donati - PG 10.0) show the theme once, combined with a Phoenix/Pronkin Bishop or Queen (either captured, or not): Compare with <https://pdb.dieschwalbe.de/P1067949> (for Bishop), or example **A** from the announcement (for Queen). **P33** (Olin - A→B, PG 8.5+8.5) shows this idea in each part, but this barely distinguishes it from the aforementioned examples. In the same group, **P9** (Konidaris - PG 11.0) manages to squeeze the theme twice in just 11 moves: The Phoenix Bishop makes a pit stop to capture its counterpart, before returning home. Unfortunately, the fact that the second Phoenix piece is an obvious promotee cancels out the positive impression.
- A few more entries show the theme once, combined with a Phoenix/Pronkin Knight, which is nicer and harder to achieve. **P7** (Donati - PG 10.0) is the fastest among them, but without additional content. **P22** (Donati - PG 16.5) sets up a second, non-thematic Phoenix. **P25** (Donati - PG 18.0) sacrifices the original Knight quickly to help free Black's position. All of them were close calls, but I decided to keep in the award only the best among them (**P23**).
- **P3** (Donati - PG 9.0): Two solutions, but only one is thematic. It may do better in a non-thematic tourney.
- **P10** (Donati - PG 11.0) & **P13** (Donati - PG 13.0): Both of these massacre PGs have unappealing play.
- **P11** (Konidaris - PG 12.0): Shows the theme once, with a Schnoebelen piece. Compare with example **B** from the announcement.
- **P14** (Konidaris - PG 13.5): The first thematic case is done nicely, but the second one, with the original Rook captured at home and the Phoenix Rook being an obvious promoted piece, ruins the good impression.
- **P16** (Kalkavouras - PG 14.5): Anticipated and surpassed by example **C** from the announcement.
- **P18** (Kirtley - PG 14.5): Passive sacrifice of the original Bishop, followed by two Schnoebelen promotions. It has similarities with <https://pdb.dieschwalbe.de/P1067959>, except for the initial capture. The decision to exclude it from the award was difficult, but the passive sacrifice felt like an artificial method to make this content thematic.
- **P20** (Donati - PG 15.5): Has some interesting non-thematic content, like the bBf8 maneuver, but the thematic part is inadequate.

- **P26** (Donati - PG 18.0): It is positive that the initial sacrifice is a tempo move, but overall this problem lacks thematic density, and the obvious promotee giving check is markedly anticlimactic.

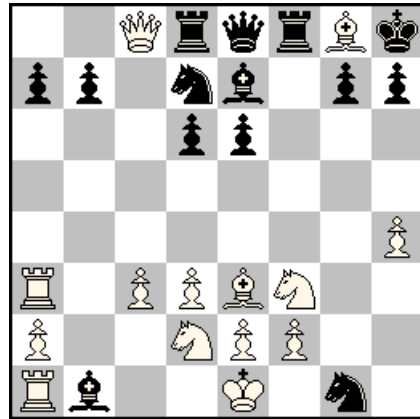
P30 - Christoph Fieberg
1st Prize



PG 20.0

(11+12) C+

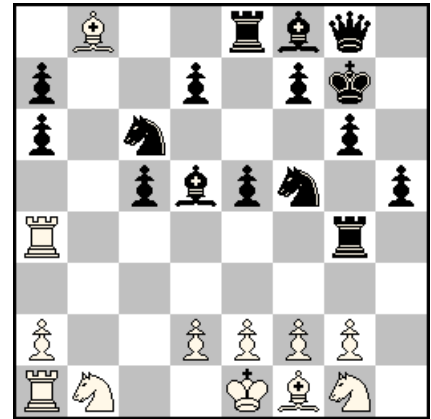
P24 - Mark Kirtley
2nd Prize



PG 18.0

(14+14) C+

P29 - Gianni Donati
3rd Prize



PG 19.5

(12+16) C+

1st Prize: P30 - Christoph Fieberg (Germany)

1.a4 Sc6 2.a5 Sd4 3.a6 Sxe2 4.axb7 Sxg1 5.b8=S Bb7 6.g4 Bd5 7.g5 c6 8.g6 Qa5 9.gxh7 Qxa1 10.hxg8=R Rh3 11.b3 Rc3 12.h4 a5 13.h5 a4 14.h6 a3 15.h7 a2 16.Sa3 Qxc1 17.h8=B Qxd2+ 18.Kxd2 Sf3+ 19.Kc1 Sd2 20.Kb2 a1=Q+

A formidable task that shows the theme four times with AUW (SRBq) in an orthodox PG. Granted, the presentation is not elegant: The thematic pieces Ra1, Bc1 and Sg1 are captured on their homes squares, while Qd8 plays almost exclusively capturing moves before she is captured. Two promoted pieces are clearly promoted (Qa1, Bh8) and one likely promoted (Rg8). On the other hand, it is nice that each thematic case is completed before the next one begins, and the white Phoenix promotions take place immediately after the sacrifices of the original pieces.

2nd Prize: P24 - Mark Kirtley (USA)

1.h4 c5 2.Rh3 c4 3.Ra3 c3 4.d3 cxb2 5.c3 f5 6.Qb3 f4 7.Qxg8 f3 8.Qc4 fxg2 9.Sf3 g1=S 10.Bh3 d6 11.Bxc8 e6 12.Be3 Be7 13.Sbd2 O-O 14.Bd7 Kh8 15.Be8 Sd7 16.Bf7 Qe8 17.Bg8 Rd8 18.Qc8 b1=B

A highly original concept: Two black officers are captured at home by white officers that will later be found standing at each other's crime scene (QxSg8→c8 & BxBc8→g8). The author gives a creative name to these pieces: "Capturer-Impostors". In addition, two black pawns promote to the same type of pieces as the victims.

There are a few questions in need of an answer: Why did not the original black officers move to the squares b1 and g1? A few tries show that the missing wPb2, wPg2 and bPc7 cause a half-move delay for either side. As is often the case with missing pawns of opposite colors on adjacent files, the easiest way to get rid of them is by PxP. Both black pieces on the first rank are promoted. This accounts for all black moves on the diagram, i.e. Bc8 and Sg8 have not moved and were captured at home. Why did not the Queen capture on c8 and the Bishop on g8? In fact, this is a bad strategy. The wB has to move out of g8 to allow Black's castling; this takes way too many moves. In that case, why not capture both black officers with the Queen? This attempt (first Qxg8, then Qxc8) comes close, but the wQ must move away from c8 and back to let the Rook pass, failing just barely. It is faster for the wB to capture on c8 and then head to g8 via d7-e8-f7-g8.

Satisfying the thematic requirement is just a vehicle for something greater in this problem. With this in mind, it is easy to forgive what is probably the least interesting way to sacrifice an officer: passively at home! Although I did not attempt to solve this puzzle, I have a hunch that the solvers would enjoy it.

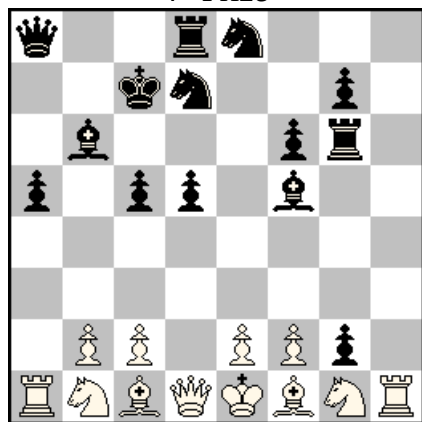
3rd Prize: P29 - Gianni Donati (USA)

1.c4 e5 2.c5 Bxc5 3.Qa4 Kf8 4.Qa6 bxa6 5.h4 Bb7 6.h5 Bd5 7.h6 Sxh6 8.Rh4 Sf5 9.Ra4 h5 10.b4 Rh6 11.Bb2 Rg6 12.Bd4 Rg4 13.Be3 g6 14.Bg5 Kg7 15.Be7 Qg8 16.Bf8+ Bxf8 17.b5 c5 18.b6 Sc6 19.b7 Re8 20.b8=B

This PG shows the theme only once: The thematic Bc1 plays six capture-free moves, before it is captured on f8. Later the wPb2 promotes on b8. It looks pretty straightforward. But why is the Bb8 a promoted piece? White is missing Pb2, Pc2, Ph2 and the Qd1 that was captured on a6. All moves by Black are visible on the diagram, including exactly two moves by Bf8. This Bishop could not have captured both Pb2 and Pc2. The position of bPc5 and bSc6 means the white c-pawn has to be captured on c5 by Bf8. The Pb2 must have promoted on b8, but only after c7-c5 and Sb8-c6 were played. The sequence of black moves is also visible on the diagram: Sg8xPh6-f5, then h7-h5, then Rh8→g4, then g7-g6, Ke8→g7, Qd8-g8, Bc5-f8 and only now c7-c5. The move Bc8→d5 occurred before Sb8-c6, leaving only the move Ra8-e8 to be played right after Sb8-c6. Therefore, White has no time for b7-b8=Q-e8 to be captured by the bR. The Bb8 is promoted. This leaves one last detail: Where was the original Bc1 captured? The only non-capturing moves on dark squares are Rh8-h6 and Ke8-f8-g7, but the wB cannot reach any of those squares at the right time. It was captured on f8 by the Bc5, having played six consecutive moves via b2-d4-e3-g5-e7.

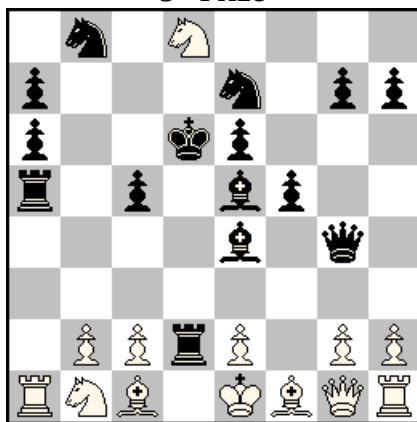
Arguably this PG does not show the theme very intensively, in terms of how many thematic Phoenix instances have occurred, although six capture-free moves by the captured Bishop can be considered rather powerful. In any case, it has crystal-clear logic and is enjoyable to solve.

P31 - Joost Michielsen
4th Prize



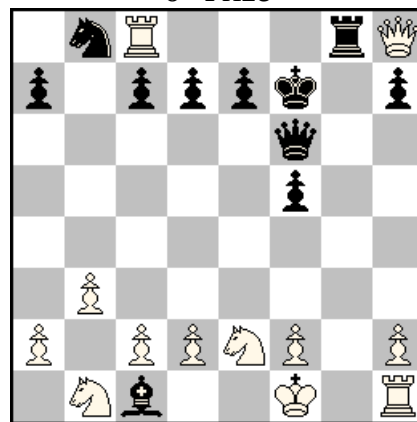
PG 20.0 (12+14) C+

P32 - Dirk Borst
5th Prize



PG 20.5 (13+15) C+

F7 - Jochen Schröder
6th Prize



PG 9.5 (12+11) C+

Make & Take

4th Prize: P31 - Joost Michielsen (Netherlands)

1.a4 h5 2.a5 h4 3.a6 h3 4.axb7 a5 5.d4 Ra6 6.d5 Rg6 7.d6 hxg2 8.dxe7 d5 9.h4 Kd7 10.e8=R Bc5 11.h5 Bb6 12.h6 c5 13.Rh5 Kc7 14.Rf5 Bxf5 15.h7 Sd7 16.b8=R Sgf6 17.Ra8 Qxa8 18.Rd8 Rxd8 19.h8=R Se8 20.Rh1 f6

All black moves are visible on the diagram. The position of the bQa8 rules out black castling or that the Rd8 came from a8. So Rg6 has come from a8, and Rd8 from h8. The missing black pawns b7 and e7 were captured at home by white pawns a2 and d2 that also promoted. Even if each promoted white pawn played an additional move before it was captured, this still leaves 8 moves for White to get rid of the wPh2. Since the pawn cannot be captured on the h-file, it must promote. However, the black Rook occupies the promotion square h8, and cannot evacuate h8 until every other black move has been played (including Rg6 that preceded Bb6), except for Sf6-e8 and f7-f6. There is no time for 19.h8=Q(or R) and 20.Qe8, because Sf6-e8 will have been played by move 19 at the latest. The only possible explanation is that Rh1 was captured and the pawn promoted to a Rook and returned to h1.

The author highlights the echo maneuvers of the two Prentos pieces (17.Rb8-a8 Qxa8 & 18.Re8-d8 Rxd8) and points out he preferred these matching moves over a Schnoebelen promotion for one of the Rooks (17...Rxe8 18.h8=R Qxa8 19.Rh1, etc). I agree and praise his bold choice. He also offers a comparison problem that shows a similar thematic complex with Bishops (WID 922809: Reto Aschwanden, Probleemblad, 2024: 1.a4 g5 2.a5 g4 3.a6 g3 4.axb7 a5 5.d4 Ra6 6.Bh6 Rxh6 7.d5 Rxh2 8.d6 h5 9.dxc7 d5 10.c4 Qd7 11.c5 Qh3 12.c6 Bg4 13.c8=B h4 14.Bd7+ Sxd7 15.c7 Sdf6 16.c8=B Sh5 17.Bf5 Sgf6 18.Bh7 Sxh7 19.b8=B f6 20.Bf4 e5 21.Bc1).

Another PG that shows the theme only once, but in such an accomplished way that it outranked entries with more intensive thematic content. The original Rook plays two capture-free moves to reach f5, where it is captured by Bc8. Later, two white pawns promote to Rooks (Phoenix). One is captured (Prentos), the other returns to the Rook's home square (Pronkin). Additionally, another pawn promoted to a Rook, before the original Rook was captured (Prenix). This promoted Rook is also captured by an officer (Prentos theme). Thematically speaking, it would have been ideal, if all three Rook promotions had followed the sacrifice of the original Rook, to add another Phoenix to the assets column, but this detail did not diminish the overall appeal of the problem.

5th Prize: P32 - Dirk Borst (Netherlands)

1.Sf3 c5 2.Se5 Sc6 3.Sxd7 Qxd7 4.f4 Qg4 5.f5 Bxf5 6.d4 e6 7.d5 Bd6 8.Qd4 Be5 9.d6 Be4 10.d7+ Ke7 11.d8=S f5 12.Sf7 Rd8 13.Qg1 Rd2 14.Sg5 Kd6 15.a4 Sge7 16.a5 Rb8 17.a6 bxa6 18.Sf3 Rb5 19.Sd4 Sb8 20.Sc6 Ra5 21.Sd8

All 20 black moves are visible on the diagram (including two moves by Sb8 to let the Ra8 out). The missing bPd7 was captured at home. Due to the position of Kd6 and Se7, the Rh8 is unable to reach d2 in two moves. The whereabouts of the black Rooks are Ra8-d8-d2 and Rh8-b8-b5-a5. This means that after 1.Sf3 c5 2.Se5 Sc6 3.Sxd7, Black has run out of useful moves (3...Ra8-b8?), and must capture the Knight. The wPf2 is captured by Bc8 on f5, the wPd2 promotes on d8 and the wPa2 is captured by Pb7 on a6. But this is not the end of the story. The Pd2 must promote to a Knight and move out of the Rook's way. As soon as the Rook moves to d2, the move Ke7-d6 comes next, followed by Sg8-e7 and Rh8-b8. The white Knight cannot return to d8 before Rh8-b8, and the square f7 is no longer available to the wS, due to check. Fast forward to the final position, the wSd8 must have come from c6, so it remains to find the best path for the Knight to go from f7 to c6. It takes exactly 6 capture-free moves for the promoted Knight to return to the promotion square (Sd8-f7-g5-f3-d4-c6-d8).

The circuit by a promoted Knight reminded me of the 1st Prize from Gianni Donati 50 JT, 2003 in which the promoted Knight was used as a shield from check, and later it was captured on the promotion square. See: <https://pdb.dieschwalbe.de/P1011884>.

Although the thematic officer captures a pawn, before it is captured, and the promoted piece is found on the promotion square, this PG made a strong impression on me. It takes laborious analysis to understand why the solution works. Of course, the highlight is the 6-move capture-free circuit of the

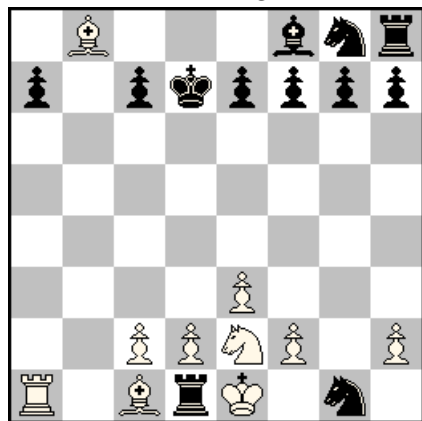
Phoenix Knight, but the supporting content is up to par: The sacrifice of the original officer is adequately complex and paradoxical, despite being motivated by a capture, in order to release Black's army.

6th Prize: F7 - Jochen Schröder (Germany)

1.b3 f5 2.R-f6xf8 g7-b2xc1=B 3.R-g6xg8+ K-f8xg8 4.g3 b7-g2xf1=S+ 5.K-g2xf1 Qf8 6.e4 Qf6 7.e4-b7xc8=R+ Kf7 8.Qg4+ R-e4xg4 9.Se2 Rgg8 10.g3-g7xh8=Q+

Four times the theme with AUW (QRbs). The fairy condition allows easy long-range captures and quick promotions. By move 3.0, three officers were already captured. Arranging the capture of the fourth officer was more to the spirit of the tourney. On the part of the Phoenix pieces, three of them can be seen on the diagram (although they could easily have been the original pieces moving to those squares), while the fourth was a Schnoebelen Knight (the only type of piece that lets the wK capture it and the white play to continue). A technically ambitious realization of the theme, in a highly concentrated fairy PG.

F6 - Theodoros Giakatis
7th Prize

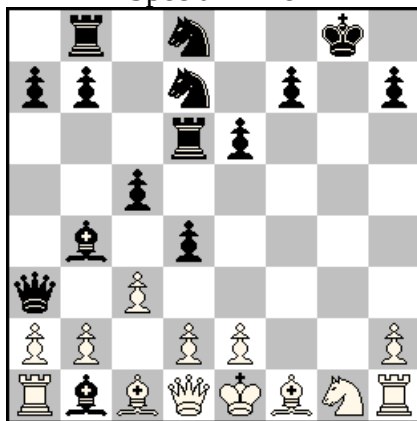


PG 9.0

(10+12) C?

Take & Make

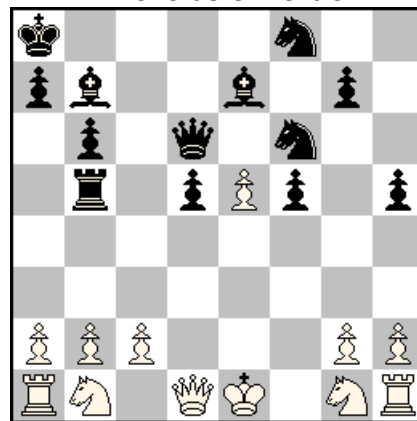
P23 - Joost Michielsen
Special Prize



PG 17.0

(13+15) C+

P21 - Gianni Donati
1st Honorable Mention



PG 16.0

(12+13) C+

7th Prize: F6 - Theodoros Giakatis (Greece)

1.e3 d5 2.Qg4 Bxg4-h3 3.gxh3-c8=Q d4 4.Qxb8-c6+ bxc6-g2 5.Se2 gxh1-g1=S 6.Bg2 Kd7 7.Bxa8-c8+ Qxc8-b7 8.Sbc3 Qxb2-b3 9.axb3-b8=B dxc3-d1=R+

Four times the theme with AUW (QBrS). Similar to the 6th Prize, this fairy condition is conducive to achieving the theme. The opening phase is attractive, starring the striking sacrifice 2.Qg4!! that evacuates d1 in advance for the Make part of the last promotion. Two black officers are captured at home. Only one of the Phoenix pieces is captured (Ceriani/Frolkin); the other three can be seen on the diagram and are likely, but not definitive promotees, as they could have been the original pieces that reached their diagram positions by Take & Make specific moves. The same argument can be made for Bb8, a Phoenix dark-squared Bishop replacing the light-squared Bishop that was captured. A good technical realization of a demanding multiplication of the theme that is achieved very fast and efficiently.

Special Prize: P23 - Joost Michielsen (Netherlands)

1.f4 d5 2.f5 d4 3.f6 Bf5 4.fxg7 Sf6 5.g8=S e6 6.Se7 Qxe7 7.Sa3 Qxa3 8.g4 Bb4 9.g5 c5 10.g6 Sc6 11.g7 Rd8 12.g8=S Rd6 13.Se7 Sd7 14.Sd5 O-O 15.Sc3 Rb8 16.Sb1 Sd8 17.c3 Bxb1

This PG shows in chronological order: The capture of a promoted Knight and the original Knight by the black Queen, followed by the capture of a Phoenix/Pronkin Knight. The tourney theme is shown once. The author kindly provides a similar PG with different matrix for comparison: WID 917464 (Reto Aschwanden & Michel Caillaud, Problem Paradise 2024: 1.b4 f5 2.b5 f4 3.b6 f3 4.bxa7 b5 5.Sc3 Bb7 6.Sd5 Bxd5 7.h4 Sc6 8.h5 Qb8 9.h6 Qb6 10.hxg7 O-O-O 11.gxh8=S Bg7 12.Sf7 Rf8 13.Sd8 Sxd8 14.a8=S c6 15.Sc7 Bxa2 16.Sd5 Bxa1 17.Sc3 h5 18.Sb1 Bxb1). The predecessor is more accomplished with respect to the theme of this tourney, with two Phoenix pieces and the original Knight playing two moves before it is captured.

However, P23 is more economical, with fewer technical captures and moves. The wPg2 must somehow disappear. It can promote to a Knight on g8, and later find a square to sacrifice. This will be the home square b1 - the only square it can reach on time. This explains why the wSb1 must sacrifice early: To make room for the promoted Knight! But what happens if the original Knight stays put on b1 and the promoted Knight uses the additional move to find a different square to sacrifice? For example, (instead of 7.Sa3) 7.g4 Qa3 8.g5 Bb4 9.g6 c5 10.g7 Sc6 11.g8=S Rd8 12.Se7 Rd6 13.Sd5 O-O 14.Sb6 Rb8 15.Sd7 Sxd7 16.c3 Sd8 17.?? Bxb1. It turns out that even with an extra tempo the promoted Knight is unable to sacrifice a move earlier or later!

In an earlier version of the award, this problem was severely underrated. Upon careful reevaluation, I realized I had missed a few subtleties, and eventually restored it to its true value: a prize. In order to not disrupt the order of the other prizes, and not because of the predecessor, I decided to award it a special prize, instead of a regular one.

1st Honorable Mention: P21 - Gianni Donati (USA)

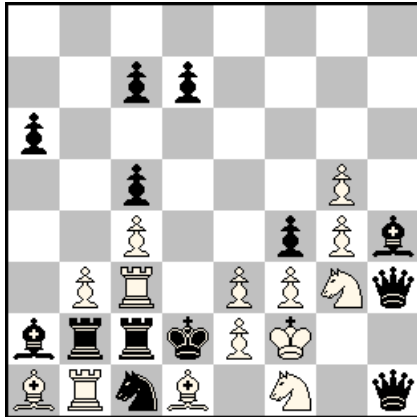
1.d4 h5 2.Bh6 Rxh6 3.e4 Rb6 4.Bb5 Rxb5 5.d5 b6 6.d6 Bb7 7.dxc7 d5 8.c8=B Qd6 9.Bd7+ Sxd7 10.f4 O-O-O 11.f5 Kb8 12.f6 Ka8 13.fxe7 f5 14.exd8=B Sgf6 15.Be7 Bxe7 16.e5 Sf8

All black moves are visible on the diagram, including 3 moves for the bK, possible only if the King has castled. The missing black pieces were all captured at home (Rd8, Pc7, Pe7). White is missing the two Bishops and pawns d2 and f2. The most plausible scenario is Pd2-d6xc7, Pf2-f6xe7 and one of them captured the Rook on d8. The Pc7 preceded castling and it must have promoted, or castling would have been impossible. The promoted piece on c8 must have played at least one move, as it could not have been captured on c8. The Pf2 captured on e7 after castling, and promoted presumably by capturing the Rd8, then played one more move to sacrifice. This adds up to 12 moves; together with 2 moves by wPe5, it leaves just two moves for the white Bishops to sacrifice. Each Bishop must have moved only once, so the squares they could have been captured are h6 and b5. The promoted pieces were Phoenix Bishops that sacrificed on d7 and e7.

Of all the entries in which two original officers are actively sacrificed, I prefer this one, because they do it by playing capture-free moves. In addition, the Phoenix Bishops also play capture-free moves, before they are captured by officers, although the capture of Rd8 before promotion is very forcible. It is better than one of my own PGs (WID 813649: Kostas Prentos, Champagne TT, 2020-21, 3rd Commendation, 1.h4 d5 2.Sh3 Bxh3 3.h5 Sd7 4.h6 Rc8 5.hxg7 Sh6 6.g8=S Sf5 7.Sxe7 Qxe7 8.Sa3 Qxa3 9.c4 Bd6 10.c5 O-O 11.c6 Kh8 12.cxd7 c6 13.d8=S Bb8 14.Sxf7+ Rxf7 15.g3 Rfc7 16.Bg2 Bxg2 17.bxa3) that showed the theme with capturing moves by the Phoenix Knights.

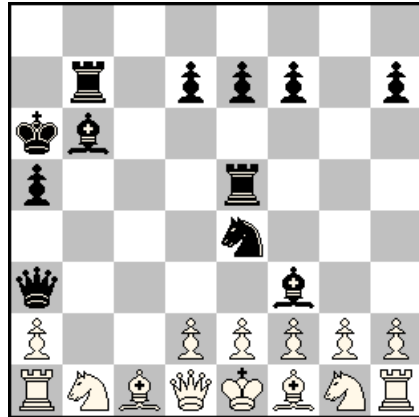
There is one more thing worth mentioning: Trying to understand why the composer did not end the solution after 15...Bxe7, I replaced the moves e2-e4-e5 with the tempo e2-e3-e4. Surprisingly, the position before 16...Sf8 is sound as a PG in exactly 15.5 moves, even with an extra tempo for White! But adding the tail move Sd7-f8 (or in fact, any other move), to make it also sound as a shortest PG, leads to cooks.

R2 – Andriy Frolkin
2nd Honorable Mention



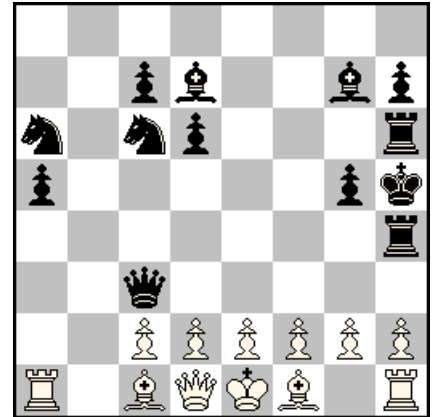
Release the position! (14+13)

P28 - Gianni Donati
3rd Honorable Mention



PG 18.5 (14+12) C+

P27 - Gianni Donati
4th Honorable Mention



PG 18.0 (12+13) C+

2nd Honorable Mention: R2 - Andriy Frolkin (Ukraine)

Retractions such as d3xc4, g2xf3, g2xh1=Q lead to overbalance. The retrocage can only be released by way of retracting Kf1-f2; this necessitates the installation of a shielding piece on g1. Kf1xBf2 preceded by Bg1-f2+ also results in overbalance. The shielding piece cannot come from outside the cage after being uncaptured by a pawn. Therefore, the total balance of the position is closed: 27 (14+13 pieces on the board) +2 (d2xe3, wPhxg) +1 (bPbxc) +1 (wPaxb>b8, or wPa was captured on its home file) +1 (shield to be placed on g1) = 32. One more fact about the position: bPh7>h1=Q.

Retract: -1.Sh2-f1+ b6xQc5! -2.Qf8-c5 (the last 3 single moves are strictly determined) **a7-a6 -3.Qb8-f8 f5-f4 -4.b7-b8=Q f6-f5 -5.a6xSb7 Sd6-b7** [An attempt to uncapture wQ on g2 for future shielding fails on account of retrostalemate for White: -5...Sc5-b7 -6.a5-a6 Se6-c5 -7.a4-a5 Sf4-e6 -8.a3-a4 Sg2-f4 -9.?? So the shielding Queen is uncaptured on the pin-line!] **-6.a5-a6 Sf5-d6 -7.Sh5-g3 Sg3-f5+ -8.Sf4-h5 S~xQg3! -9.Qg1-g3! Sg3~+ -10.Sg2-f4 f7-f6! -11.Kf1-f2 S~g3+** and the cage is released.

The thematic content in forward order: The original wQ is captured by a bS, a white pawn promotes to Queen, the promoted Queen is also captured (Ceriani/Frolkin).

Of the three classical retros that were composed for this tourney, I like this one the most, because the Phoenix promotion is not obvious and forced. The missing wQ must be uncaptured right away. The wQ cannot enter the SE cage, so it must unpromote and uncapture the missing Knight, before Black runs out of pawn moves. The bS enters the cage and uncaptures the original wQ that acts as a shield to release the position. There is also a try to uncapture the wQ on a different square inside the cage, but it fails due to retrostalemate. Not groundbreaking, but a well arranged example of “release the position” retroanalysis style.

3rd Honorable Mention: P28 - Gianni Donati (USA)

1.c4 Sf6 2.Qb3 Rg8 3.Qxb7 Bxb7 4.b4 Bf3 5.Bb2 Se4 6.Bxg7 Bxg7 7.b5 Bd4 8.b6 Rg5 9.bxc7 Re5 10.cxb8=B Qa5 11.Bd6 O-O-O 12.Ba3 Kb7 13.Bc1 Qa3 14.c5 a5 15.c6+ Ka6 16.c7 Rb8 17.c8=Q+ Rb7 18.Qc2 Bb6 19.Qd1

All 18 black moves are visible on the diagram. The bPb7, c7, g7 and bSb8 were all captured at home. The Knight may move to e4 only after the Bc8 has reached f3. White has to free the Bc8 as soon as possible. So the moves 3.Qxb7 Bxb7 are forced. The next moves (6.Bxg7 Bxg7) are also forced, to prevent Black from running out of fuel. The rest is simple: The white pawns b2 and c2 must promote to the sacrificed pieces and return home. A decent attempt to recreate example C from the announcement

with a different matrix, featuring two thematic Phoenix/Pronkin pieces. Both original officers capture black pawns, before they are captured by black officers; this waters down the paradoxical nature of the theme. Still an enjoyable problem!

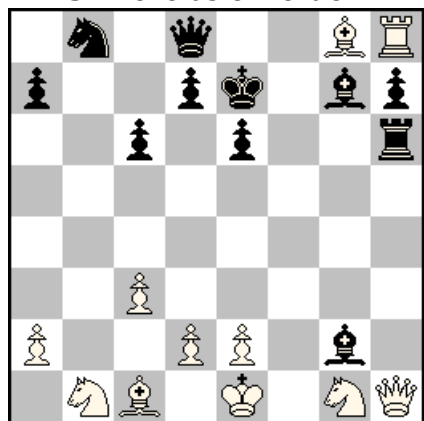
4th Honorable Mention: P27 - Gianni Donati (USA)

1.Sf3 g5 2.Se5 Bg7 3.Sxf7 Kxf7 4.Sc3 Kg6 5.Sd5 Kh5 6.Sxe7 Sxe7 7.a4 Rf8 8.a5 Rf4 9.a6 Rh4 10.axb7 a5 11.b4 Ra6 12.b5 Rh6 13.b6 Sa6 14.b8=S d6 15.Sc6 Sxc6 16.b7 Qf6 17.b8=S Qc3 18.Sd7 Bxd7

All 18 black moves are visible on the diagram. The Pb7, e7, f7 were captured at home. The wPa2 cannot be captured on the a-file, so it must have promoted after capturing on b7. The moves d7-d6 and Se7-c6 must wait for Ra6-h6. The two original Knights sacrifice on e7 and f7 quickly, otherwise Black runs out of moves. The order is first Sxf7, and then Sxe7, because after SxPe7 SxSe7, the Rh8 cannot use the f-file to head to h4. Then, the wPa2 and b2 promote on b8 and have one move each to sacrifice. Only Knight promotions can do the trick.

Twice the theme with white homebase. The two original Knights capture black pawns, before they are captured by black officers. The Phoenix Knights play one move each and are captured by officers (Prentos). Compared to the 1st Honorable Mention (and also WID 813649, quoted in the comment), the pawn captures by the white Knights, even after playing two capture-free moves each, make the effect less paradoxical and explains the lower placement.

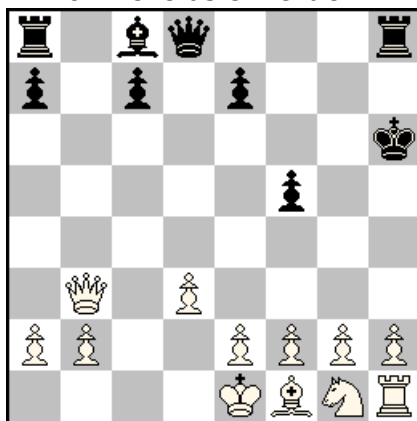
P19 - Velmurugan Nallusamy &
S. K. Balasubramanian (India)
5th Honorable Mention



PG 15.5

(11+11) C+

F4 - Theodoros Giakatis
6th Honorable Mention

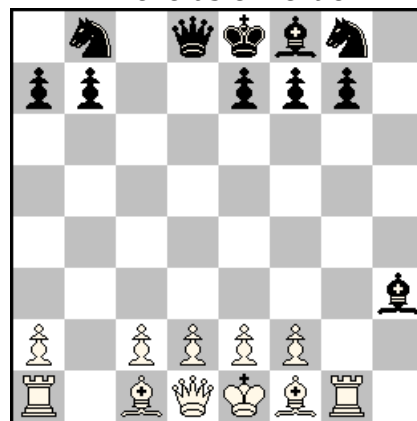


PG 8.5

(12+9) C+

Take & Make

F3 - Kevin J. Begley
7th Honorable Mention



PG 8.5

(11+11) C?

Breton Adverse

5th Honorable Mention: P19 - Velmurugan Nallusamy (India) & S. K. Balasubramanian (India)

1.h4 e6 2.h5 Ba3 3.h6 Bxb2 4.hxg7 Bxa1 5.gxh8=R Bg7 6.c3 f5 7.Qb3 f4 8.Qxb7 f3 9.Qxa8 fxc2 10.f4 gxf1=R 11.f5 Rh6 12.Qh1 Bb7 13.Bg2 Bxc2 14.f6 c6 15.f7+ Ke7 16.fxc8=B

Showing three times the theme in an orthodox PG would normally guarantee a prize, but in this case, the realization is not ideal: Two of the original officers (Ra1, Ra8) are passively captured on their home squares. The pawns also capture, at least once, on their path to promotion. In contrast, the third thematic officer plays a capture-free move (Bf1-g2), following attractive square and line clearances.

6th Honorable Mention: F4 - Theodoros Giakatis (Greece)

1.d3 Sh6 2.Bxh6-g8 f5 3.Bxh7-h6 gxh6-c1=S 4.Sd2 Bh6 5.Rxc1-b3 Kf8 6.Rxb7-b5 Bxd2-b3 7.cxb3-g8=S Kxg8-h6 8.Rxb8-c6+ dxc6-c1=S 9.Qxc1-b3

A Knight is captured by an officer; then a pawn of the same side promotes to a Phoenix Knight that will be captured without moving (Schnoebelen). This is repeated three times. There are similarities with WID 914727 (Theodoros Giakatis & Kostas Prentos, Vlaicu Crişan 50 JT, 2023-2024, 2nd Honorable Mention: 1.c4 d5 2.c5 Bh3 3.gxh3-c8=S Qxc8-d6 4.cxd6-d8=S Sd7 5.Qb3 Rxd8-e6 6.Kd1 Rxe2-e3 7.dxe3-e5 Sgf6 8.exf6-g8=S Rxc8-h6 9.Bxh6-g6 e6 10.Sd2 fxg6-b1=S 11.Rxb1-a3 Bxa3-a6), but the requirement “officer takes officer” leads the solution to an adequately different direction. Take & Make is a helpful, yet hard to control fairy condition. It certainly takes technical skill to show this content.

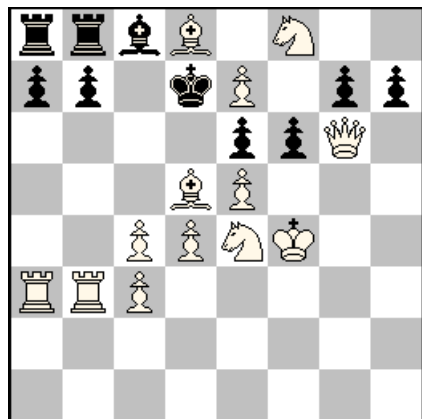
7th Honorable Mention: F3 - Kevin J Begley (USA)

1.b4 h5 2.b5 h4 3.b6 h3 4.bxc7 [-d7] hxg2 [-h2] 5.Sh3 Bxh3 [-b1] 6.c8=S Bxc8 7.Rxh8 [-a8] g1=R 8.Rh1 Bh3 9.Rxg1

Breton Adverse is an interesting fairy condition for retros. Counting the number of pawns on the diagram can by itself provide useful information: Both White and Black have an odd number of pawns on the board (5+5). We can deduce that one pawn was captured for each side, removing a second pawn, and a third pawn was captured after promotion. From the type and number of officers on the diagram, we can deduce the type of promotion. White is missing both Knights, so one original Knight was captured, thus removing the other Knight. The type of white promotion was to a Knight that was also captured. The corresponding pieces for Black are Rooks.

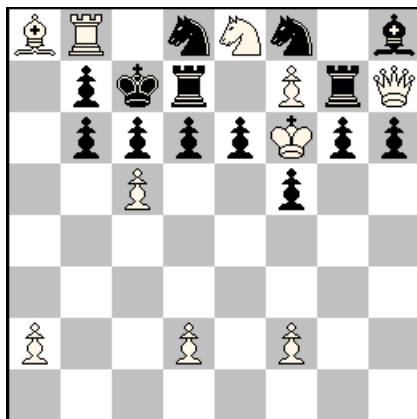
This problem shows the theme once for each side, combined with Schnoebelen promotions. In addition, the piece that captures the original officer also captures the Phoenix piece, with Switchback. A smart choice of fairy condition for a PG with inherent logical content.

R1 - Andriy Frolkin
8th Honorable Mention



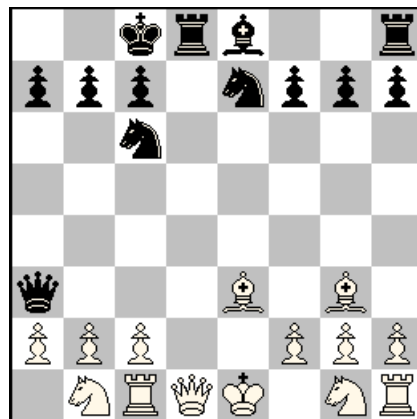
Last 12 single moves (13+10)
without repetition of position?

R3 - Andriy Frolkin
1st Commendation



Last 9 single moves? (10+14)

F9 - Theodoros Giakatis
2nd Commendation



PG 10.0 (14+13) C?

Circé
Point Reflection

8th Honorable Mention: R1 - Andriy Frolkin (Ukraine)

Retract: -1.f7-f8=S# Kc7-d7 -2.d7-d8=B+. [Time to count the black balance: 10 (pieces on the board) + 6 (axbxc, bxc, cxd, f6xe7, g6xf7) = 16. The white h-pawn was captured on its home file without making any captures. The black balance is closed, while Black can still uncapture White's Knight and Bishop] Kb6xSc7! [-2...Kd8-c7? -3.d6xe7+ would require too many captures] -3.Sb5-c7+ Ka6xBb6 [-3...Kc7-b6 -4.Sd6-b5+ Kb6-c7 -5.Sb5-d6+ repetition] -4.Ba5-b6+ Kb6-a6 -5.Bb4-a5+ Kc7-b6 [-5...Ka6-b6 -6.Ba5-b4+ repetition] -6.Sd6-b5+ Kb6-c7 and the position is released.

The thematic content in forward order: The original wB and wS are captured by the black King; then two white pawns promote to a Bishop and a Knight. Both Bishops are dark-squared.

This is an easy to follow classical retro. Two Phoenix pieces are established by unpromotions due to checks; then, the black King reaches safety by capturing the two original officers that serve as shields. It shows the theme of the tourney twice, but the forcible nature of the play prevented a higher place in the award.

1st Commendation: R3 - Andriy Frolkin (Ukraine)

Retract: -1.e7-e8=S+ Rg8xSg7 -2.Sh5-g7 Rg7-g8+ -3.a7-a8=B Rg8xSg7! (Rg8xRg7? Rg8xBg7?) -4.a6-a7 a7xRb6! (a7xBb6?) -5.b5xQa6! (b5xBa6?). After the bK gets away from c7, follows wSe8-g7 bRg7-g8+ wQg8-h7 bPh7-h6 wKg5-f6; and eventually, wPg6xBf7 and bPd7xBc6 & bPe7xBd6.

Two original Knights are used as shields on g7 and are both captured by the bR. In the end, White promotes a Phoenix Knight.

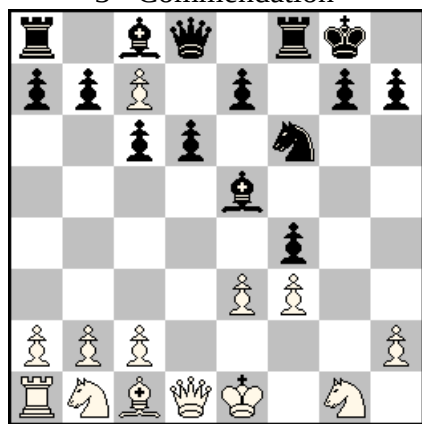
This entry features two original pieces captured by the same black officer, and one Phoenix piece. Releasing the position requires some precise uncaptures. It would probably do better in a non-thematic tourney, but I find the Phoenix promotion too forcible, pertaining to the criteria for this award.

2nd Commendation: F9 - Theodoros Giakatis (Greece)

1.Sc3 Sc6 2.Sd5 Rb8 3.Sxe7 Qxe7 4.dxd7+ Kd8 5.dxc8=S+ Rd7 6.Bg3 Kxc8 [+wSb1] 7.Sa3 Qxa3 8.e8=S+ Rd8 9.Be3 Sge7 10.Rc1 Bxe8 [+wSb1]

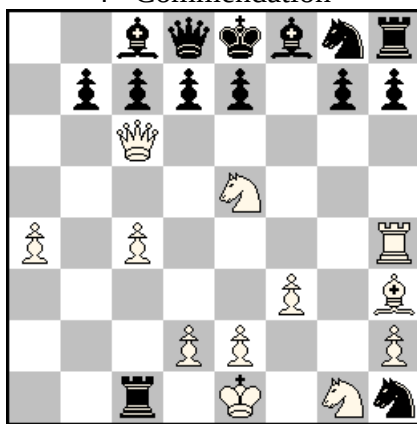
A clear presentation of a creative idea: White sacrifices a Knight, then promotes to a Knight that is captured and reborn as a new original piece. The new Knight is captured again and another pawn promotes to a new Knight that is captured and reborn again. Two times the theme, with good use of both fairy conditions. The composer submitted an almost identical, fully tested version, but this version is better, because of the apparent fake castling.

F10 - Paul Răican
3rd Commendation



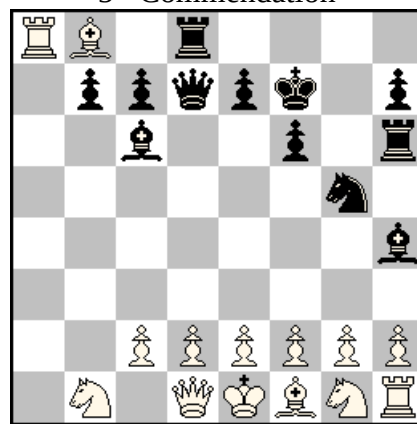
PG 14.0 (13+15) C?
Sentinels

P12 - Gianni Donati
4th Commendation



PG 12.0 (12+14) C+

P17 - Gianni Donati
5th Commendation



PG 14.5 (14+12) C+

3rd Commendation: F10 - Paul Răican (Romania)

1.e3 f5 2.Qg4 f4 3.Qxg7 Bxg7 4.d4 Be5 [+bPg7] 5.d5 Sf6 6.d6 O-O 7.dxc7 d6 8.cxb8=Q Bh3 9.Qc7 Bxg2 [+bPh3] 10.Bxg2 hxg2 11.Qd7 [+wPc7] gxh1=B 12.Qg4 [+wPd7] Bc6 13.Qd1 Bxd7 [+bPc6] 14.f3 Bc8

Two times the theme: One original officer from each side captures a pawn before it is captured by an officer. The Phoenix pawns return home (Pronkin). The Sentinels are rather unruly, but here they are kept in order, resulting in an almost natural position.

4th Commendation: P12 - Gianni Donati (USA)

1.Sa3 a5 2.Sc4 a4 3.Se5 a3 4.c4 Ra4 5.Qxa4 Sc6 6.Qxc6 axb2 7.a4 f5 8.Ra3 f4 9.Rh3 f3 10.Rh4 fxg2 11.f3 gxh1=S 12.Bh3 bxc1=R#

All white moves are visible on the diagram. It takes one black move too many for the bRa8 to capture on b2 & c1 and the wQ to capture the bPa4. So the bPa7, f7 promoted and the Ra8 & Sb8 were captured after playing one capture-free move each. Twice the theme, in an extremely fast PG.

5th Commendation: P17 - Gianni Donati (USA)

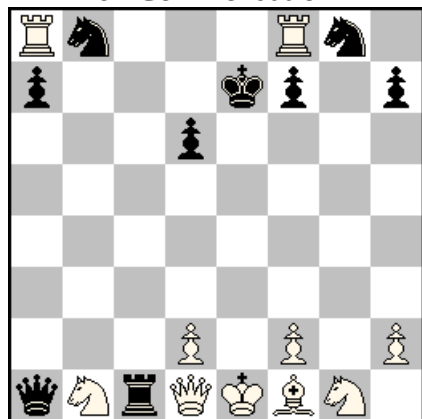
1.b4 Sf6 2.Bb2 Se4 3.Bxg7 Bxg7 4.b5 Bf6 5.b6 Bh4 6.bxa7 Sg5 7.axb8=B Ra6 8.a4 Rh6 9.Ra3 f6 10.Rd3 Kf7 11.Rxd7 Bxd7 12.a5 Bc6 13.a6 Qd7 14.a7 Rd8 15.a8=R

All black moves are visible on the diagram, with the Rh6 coming from a8. The bPa7, d7, g7 and the Sb8 were captured at home. White sacrificed the Bishop on g7 and the Rook on d7, then promoted to the same pieces on b8, a8. Similar content to the 4th Commendation, but the captures by the thematic white officers tipped the scale in favor of the other problem.

P15 - Velmurugan Nallusamy &

S. K. Balasubramanian

6th Commendation

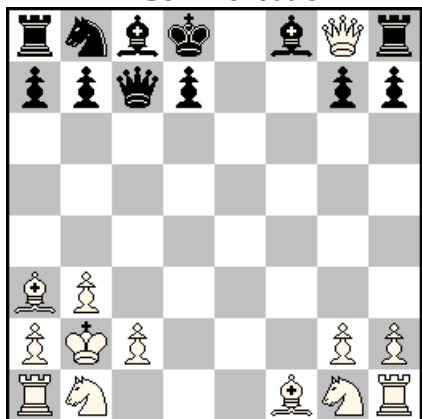


PG 14.0

(10+9) C+

F5 - Theodoros Giakatis

7th Commendation



PG 8.5

(13+12) C+

Point Reflection

6th Commendation: P15 - Velmurugan Nallusamy (India) & S. K. Balasubramanian (India)

1.a4 c5 2.a5 Qb6 3.a6 Qxb2 4.axb7 Qxa1 5.bxa8=R Bb7 6.Bb2 Bxg2 7.Bxg7 Bxh1 8.Bxh8 Bd5 9.Bd4 cxd4 10.e4 d3 11.exd5 dxc2 12.d6 c1=R 13.dxe7 d6 14.exf8=R+ Ke7

Three times the theme in a near massacre orthodox PG: wRa1, wRh1 & bRh8 are passively captured on their home squares and the promoted Rooks can all be seen on the diagram, having infiltrated the opposite camps. As it must be evident from my comments throughout this award, I find passive sacrifices to be the least interesting way to show this theme. Despite tripling the theme, I could not give this problem a better distinction.

7th Commendation: F5 - Theodoros Giakatis (Greece)

1.b3 Sh6 2.Ba3 Sxd2+ 3.Qxd2 exe2 4.Kc1 e1=S+ 5.Kb2 Se7 6.Qc4 Sg8 7.Qxc7 Qxc7 8.fxf7+ Kd8 9.fxg8=Q

Two times the theme, once for each side: Black sacrifices an original Knight after capturing on d2 and promotes to a Pronkin Knight. White sacrifices the original Queen after capturing on c7, then captures the Pronkin Knight with a pawn and promotes to a Queen, linking the two thematic cases. Good use of the fairy condition, for a pleasant finale to this award.



FAIRY DEFINITIONS

Breton Adverse: When a piece is captured, another piece of the same type and color as the captured piece (if any) must be removed from the board. The capturing side chooses which piece to remove, if there is more than one.

Circé: When captured, a piece is reborn on its game-array square. Rooks, Bishops and Knights are reborn on the square of the same color as the square of the capture, Pawns on the file of the capture, Fairy pieces on the promotion square on the file of the capture. If the rebirth square is occupied, the captured piece disappears.

Make & Take: Before any unit captures another unit, it must first imitate a non-capturing move of the captured unit, and then complete the capture moving normally. E.g., a wRa4 captures a bSd6 by moving like a Knight to b6 and then capturing the Knight with a Rook move. Pawns may not go to the 1st or 8th rank before capturing. An officer cannot move to the 1st or 8th rank and then capture a pawn.

Point Reflection: When two pieces of any color stand on the squares which are symmetrical with respect to the central point of the chessboard (e.g., b3-g6), they exchange their roles (power of movement). A Pawn (or a Pawn-reflected piece) on the first rank cannot move by itself.

Sentinels: When a piece (not a pawn) moves, a pawn of the same color appears on the departure square, unless that square is on the first or eighth ranks, or there are already 8 pawns of that color on the board.

Take & Make: Having captured, a piece must immediately, as part of its move, play a non-capturing move in imitation of the captured unit from the capture square. If no such move is available, the capture is illegal. A pawn can promote when it reaches the last rank on the Make part of its move.