

PRONKIN REPEATED

Andriy Frolkin, Michel Caillaud (Ukraine – France)

The theme of Section A of the Werner Keym-75 JT (held in 2016-2017) was “Maximum number of moves by a Pronkin piece in a proof game.” A Pronkin piece is a promoted unit that comes to a/the square occupied in the initial game array by a/the piece of the same type and color, provided that the original piece (one of the two original pieces) of this type and color was (were) captured.

The 1st place (1st Prize) in that section went to a PG by Nicolas Dupont (H90, FIDE Album 2016-2018), whose thematic piece (rook) made 17 moves, reaching the Pronkin square (a1) on the 16th move and leaving it on the 17th. In the second place (1st HM) was a problem by the Ukrainian co-author of this article, in which the thematic rook made only 15 moves, but visited the Pronkin square (a8) 8 times (and accordingly, departed from it 7 times).

In Section C of the same tourney (for any retros other than PGs, with more than 15 pieces), the 2nd Prize (H8, FIDE Album 2016-2018) was awarded to a classical-style retro by Crusats and Frolkin in which each of two promoted white rooks visited (once) the two Pronkin squares (a1 and h1).

In the realm of PGs, a Pronkin piece re-visiting the thematic square appeared in a couple of problems by Satoshi Hashimoto (*Die Schwalbe*, 1st Prize, 2000; *Phénix* 2002-2003, 2nd HM), a white Pronkin queen hit the d1-square three times in *Die Schwalbe* 19906 – 2024 (Frolkin – S. I. Tkachenko). There may have been some other examples as well.

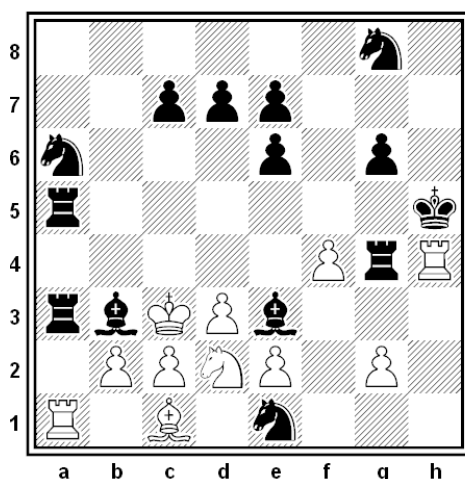
In the field of classical-style retros, Pronkin theme – which is quite popular in PGs – was very little explored.

One day it became clear that “intensified” Pronkin theme could open new horizons. Below, we present our “best products in the series.”

It proved very hard to implement the rather simple-looking idea of two Pronkin pieces re-visiting thematic squares in a PG. Rooks were obviously the best choice for presenting the doubling of the “repeated Pronkin theme”; eventually, we succeeded (problem 1 below).

1. Andriy Frolkin, Michel Caillaud

Phénix 2024



6n1/2ppp3/n3p1p1/r6k/5PrR/rbKPb3/1PPNP1P1/R1B1n3

11+14 SPG 30.5 C+

1. a4 h5 2. Ra3 h4 3. Rg3 hxc3 4. a5 Rh4 5. a6 Rg4 6. axb7 a5 7. h4 a4 8. h5 Ra5 9. h6 Sa6 10. b8=R Bb7 11. h7 Bd5 12. Rb3 Qa8 13. Ra3 Bb3 14. **Ra1** a3 15. Rh6 a2 16. Re6 fxe6 17. h8=R Kf7 18. **Rh1** Kg6

19.Sh3 Kh5 20.d3 g6 21.Kd2 Bh6+ 22.Kc3 Be3 23.f4 Qf3 24.Sd2 Qxf1 25.Rb1 a1=R 26.Rg1 Ra3 27.Sf2 gxf2 28.Qe1 fxe1=S 29.Ra1 Qf2 30.Rh1+ Qh4 31.Rxh4+.

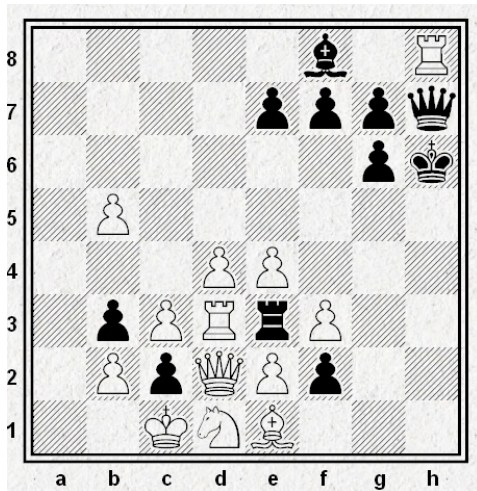
Thematic content:

Repeated Pronkin: two promoted white rooks visit Pronkin squares (a1 and h1) twice. One of the rooks eventually departs from the thematic square (h1) for a second time.

Then we turned to exploring the possibilities provided by the repeated Pronkin theme in classical-style retros. First, we combined it with a related theme: Donati (return of a promoted piece to the promotion square) (2).

2. Andriy Frokin, Michel Caillaud

Original



5b1R/4pppq/6pk/1P6/3PP3/1pPRrP2/1PpQPp2/2KNB3

13+11 Minimum number of switchbacks
(meaning return to the same square)?

White balance: 13 (pieces on the board) + 3 (dxexf, h7xg6) = 16.

Black balance: 11 + 5 (axb, d2xc3, cxd, g2xf3, fxe) = 16.

Promotions: bPa7>a1, wPh2>h8.

Move releasing the cage: g2xf3, to be preceded by the return of the white light-squared bishop to f1. The bishop is to be uncaptured on g6.

Logical try:

Retract -1...Qg8-h7? -2.h7-h8=R+ Kg5-h6 -3.h6-h7 Qh7-g8 -4.h5-h6 Qh6-h7 -5.b4-b5 h7xBg6; but the black kingside rook cannot get back to h8 in the retro play.

Solution:

Both sides can retract the last move (approach often used by Tom Volet); but at any rate, the wR must inevitably make a switchback to h8. For example if Black retracts the last move: -1...Kg5-h6 -2.Rg8-h8! Not -2.b4-b5? As we will see later, the tempo b4-b5 must be used by White when the wR is retracted to b1 for shielding and the bQ to a1 for unpromotion. -2...Qh2-h7 -3.Rh8-g8 (switchback #1) Kf6-g5 -4.Rh5-h8 Qb8-h2 -5.Rc5-h5 Qa8-b8 -6.Rc4-c5 ~ -7.Ra4-c4 ~ -8.Ra1-a4 ~ -9.Rb1-a1 Qa1-a8 -10.b4-b5 (tempo) a2-a1=Q -11.Ra1-b1 (switchback #2) a3-a2 -12.Ra2-a1 a4-a3 -13.Ra3-a2 a5-a4 -14.Ra4-a3 a6-a5 -15.a3xRb4 Rb5-b4 -16.Rb4-a4 Rh5-b5 -17.Rb5-b4 Rh8-h5! -18.Rh5-b5 Rg8-h8 -19.Rh8-h5 (switchback #3) ~ -20.h7-h8=R! (“the main plan” from the logical

try) Rh8-g8 (switchback #4 – it can be performed later of course, but it is inevitable) -21.h6-h7 h7xBg6 -22.Bf5-g6 ~ -23.Bh3-f5 ~ -24.Bf1-h3 ~ -25.g2xQ/B/Sf3 Q/B/S~f3 -26.a2-a3 (h5-h6) R~e3 and the cage is released.

The switchback of the bR cannot be avoided: if -17...Rh4-h5 -18.Rh5-b5 Rg4-h4 -19.Rh8-h5 Rg5-g4 -20.h7-h8=R ~ -21.h6-h7 ~ -22.h5-h6 ~ -23.h4-h5 Rh5-g5 -24.a2-a3 Rh8-h5 -25.h2(h3)-h4 h7xBg6, followed by Bg6>f1, g2xf3, then the white kingside rook will never be able to get back to h1.

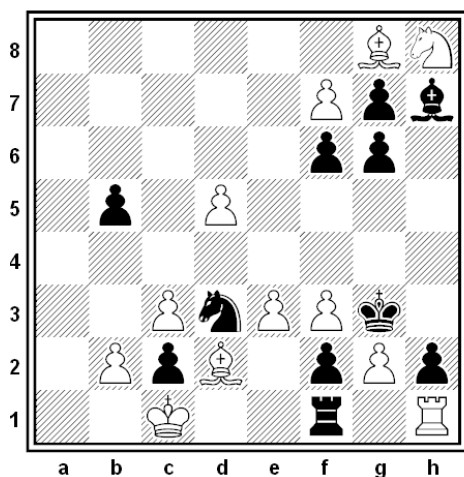
Thematic content:

4 switchbacks, including “repeated Pronkin” on a1; twice Donati theme (return of promoted piece to the promotion square: after promotion in forward play, the wR returns to h8 twice). The term “switchback” is used in the broad sense, as a visit to a previously occupied square. It should be noted that the term “Pronkin” here and in some subsequent problems is also used in the broad sense when referring to rooks. Strict Pronkin requires proof that the relevant original piece of the same type and color is captured. Here, this is not so, because Rd3 could have come from a1 and Rh1 could have been captured instead.

3 involves two Pronkin squares for the same white rook.

3. Andriy Frokin, Michel Caillaud

Original



6BN/5Ppb/5pp1/1p1P4/8/2PnPPk1/1PpB1pPp/2K2r1R

12+11 Release the position

White balance: $12 + 4 (dxe, e3xf2, e7xf6, f7xg6) = 16$.

Black balance: $11 + 4 (cxd, d2xc3, hxgxf) + 1 (axb>b8, \text{ or the black a-pawn was captured on its home file, and } a2>a8) = 16$.

Move releasing the bottom cage: e2-e3, to be preceded by the return of the white Bh7 to f1. This requires the release of the upper cage. The move releasing that cage is e7xf6; it has to be preceded by the return of the black dark-squared bishop to f8. The bishop can only be uncaptured on b6, implying a5xBb6 for White.

White will use his only pawn tempo d4-d5 when his rook is on b1 for shielding at the point when the black rook is on a1 before unpromoting.

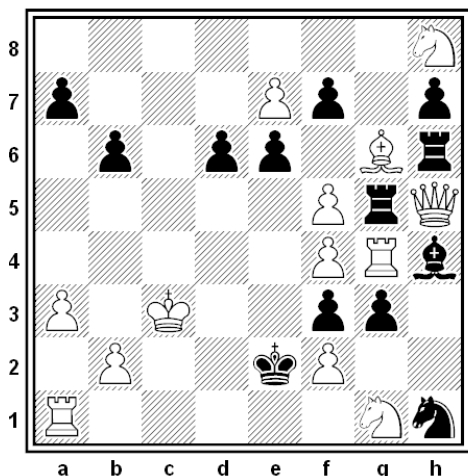
Thematic content:

Double repeated Pronkin for wR (it visits the squares a1 and h1 twice) – strict form of Pronkin here, as none of the original wRs are available in the diagram; Donati for the same wR (b8). The moves -3.Rb7-b8 and -4.Ra7-b7 are mirrored by -15.Rb7-a7 and 16.Rb8-b7.

In 5, the actors on stage are wR and wS.

5. Andriy Frolikin, Michel Caillaud

Original



7N/p3Pp1p/1p1pp1Br/5PrQ/5PRb/P1K2pp1/1P2kP2/R5Nn

13+13 Release the position

White balance: 13 + 3 (cxd, dxg, exf) = 16.

Black balance: 13 + 3 (gxf, hxgxf; not dxg, exf, gxf, for in that case wPh is unaccounted for) = 16.

The cage on the right can only be released through e4xf3, to be preceded by the return of wPe7 to e3(e2); the white dark-squared bishop could only have been captured on d6.

Promotions: c2>c8=R; d2>d8=S. If the white knight was promoted on c8, it could only reach that square via b6 after the retraction of b7-b6; but in that case later, after d7xe6, the black Bc8 would be unaccounted for.

Retract: -1.Sh3-g1+ Kf1-e2 -2.Ra2-a1+ Ke2-d1/e1/f1 -3.Kb3-c3 Kd3-e2 -4.Ra1-a2 ~ -5.Rc1-a1 ~ -6.Rc8-c1 ~ -7.Sg1-h3 ~ -8.Se2-g1 ~ -9.Sd4-e2 ~ -10.Sc6-d4 ~ -11.Sd8-c6 ~ -12.c7-c8=R ~ -13.d7-d8=S ~ -14.c6-c7 c7xBd6 -15.Bc5-d6 ~ -16.d6-d7 d7xR/Se6 -17.R/S~e6 ~ -18.e6-e7 ~ -19.e5-e6 ~ -20.e4-e5 ~ -21.e2-e4 e4xS/Rf3 -22.S/R~f3 ~ -23.f3-f4 and the cage is released.

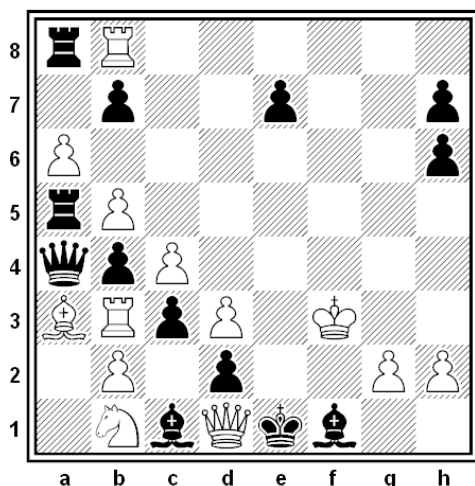
Thematic content:

Double repeated Pronkin by wR (on a1) and wS (on g1). Both cases present the Pronkin theme in the broad sense.

The series is concluded with 6, where the repeated Pronkin trick is done by wQ and bR. The repetition effect is achieved by using mechanisms already seen above: check and tempo departure from the thematic square necessitating switchback.

6. Andriy Frolkin

Original



rR6/lp2p2p/P6p/rP6/qpP5/BRpPIK2/1P1p2PP/1NbQkb2

13+13 Release the position

Black balance: $13 + 3 (e2xd3, d3xc4, c4xb5) = 16$.

White balance: $13 + 3 (axb, g7xh6, fxe>e1, \text{ or the white f-pawn was captured on its home file and } f7>f1) = 16$.

Move releasing the cage: $e2xd3$, to be preceded by the return of the white light-squared bishop (which is yet to be uncaptured) to $f1$ and $wRb8$ to $h1(g1)$.

Retract: -1.Qc2-**d1**+ Ra7-a8 -2.Kg3-f3 Ke2-e1 -3.Rf8-b8 Ke3-e2 -4.~ Be2-f1 -5.Rf1-f8 Bh5-e2 -6.Q**d1**-c2 Kd4-e3 -7.Qf3-d1 Ra**8**-a7 -8.Qf8-f3 Rc8-a8 -9.f7-f8=Q Rc5-c8 -10.f6-f7 Re5-c5 -11.f5-f6 Re1-e5 -12.f4-f5 e2-e1=R -13.f2-f4 f3xBe2 -14.Rh1-f1 ~ -15.Bf1-e2 ~ -16.e2xR/Sd3 and the cage is released.

Thematic content:

Double repeated Pronkin for wQ (which visits d1 twice) and bR (which visits a8 twice). It should be noted that the Pronkin feature for the bR is again non-strict and for the wQ it is conditional: in the mirror-reflected position ($a1=h1$), the wQ would be on e1 and there would be no Pronkin.