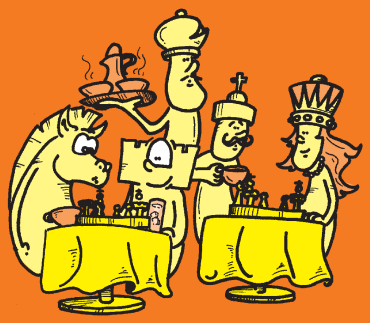


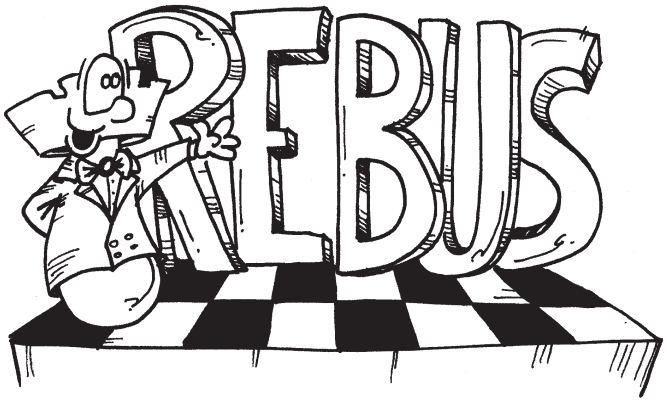
THE PUZZLING SIDE OF CHESS

Jeff Coakley

REBUS PIECES part 4

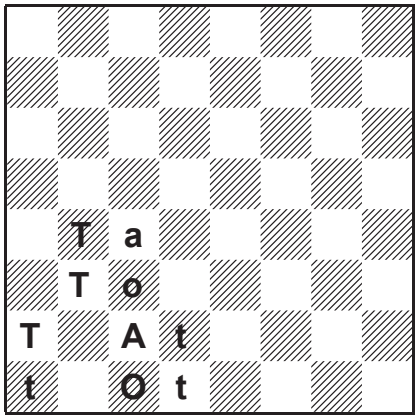
number 248 June 24, 2025

This column is the last in the series about the kind of pieces used in rebuses. It includes the remaining groups of 3 piece-types and all those with 2 piece-types. Many of the problems have been published before. Most are fairly simple, but there are a few tricky ones.



Rebus 129

"*tattoo*"

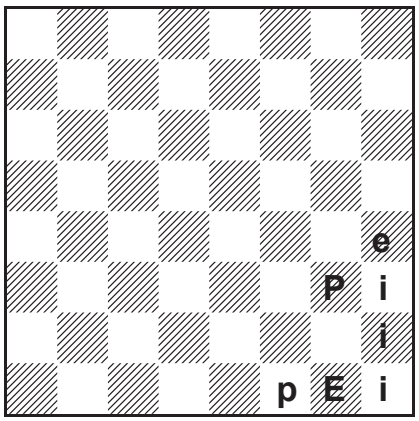


Each letter represents a different type of piece.
Uppercase is one colour, lowercase is the other.
Determine the position and, if possible, the last move.

The five combinations of 3 piece-types covered here are KBN, KRN, KRp, KBp, KNp. Earlier examples of these groupings can be found in columns 150 and 190: rebuses 16 (KRN), 17 (KNp), and 35 (KBP), the latter an exceptionally challenging problem. As usual, all of the chess rebuses are joint compositions with my friend Andriy Frolkin.

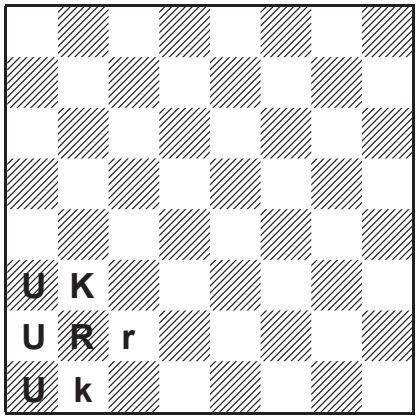
Rebus 130

"*Prince Edward Island*"



Rebus 131

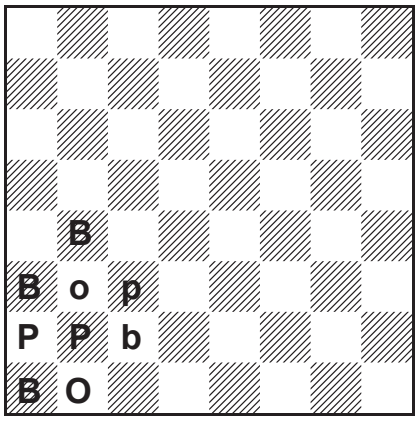
"UKRaine"



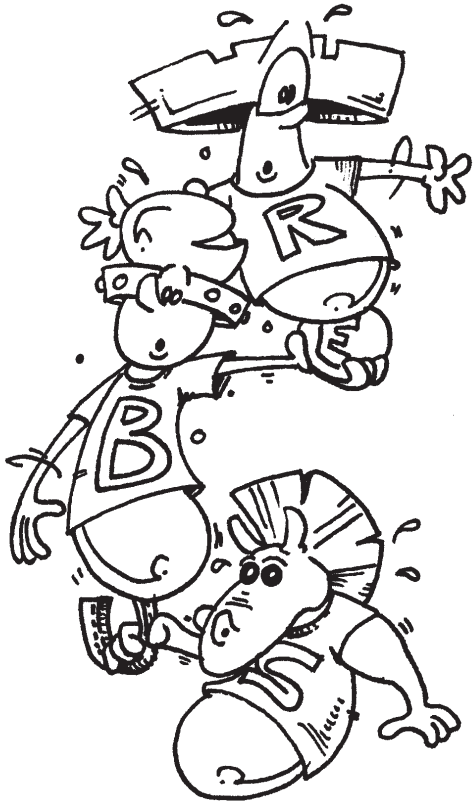
Each letter represents a different type of piece.
Uppercase is one colour, lowercase is the other.
Determine the position and, if possible, the last move.

Rebus 132

"*B-Bop*"

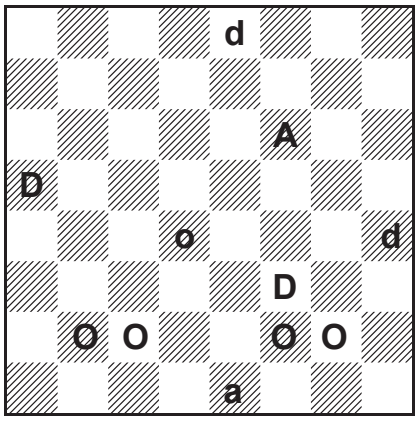


Each letter represents
a different type of piece.
Uppercase is one colour,
lowercase is the other.
Determine the position.



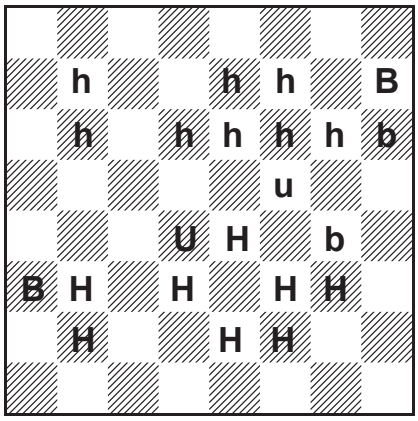
Rebus 133

"*doodad*"



Rebus 134

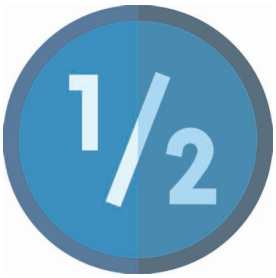
"*hubbub*"

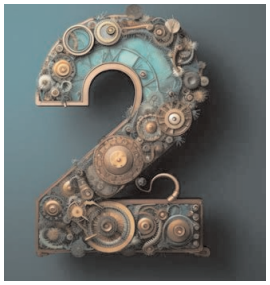


Each letter represents a different type of piece.
Uppercase is one colour, lowercase is the other.
Determine the positions and, in 134, the last two moves.

That completes groupings with three pieces. Before moving on to two pieces, here is the customary riddle and picture rebus.

Riddle: "*What folks say when they miss the big events of the day.*"

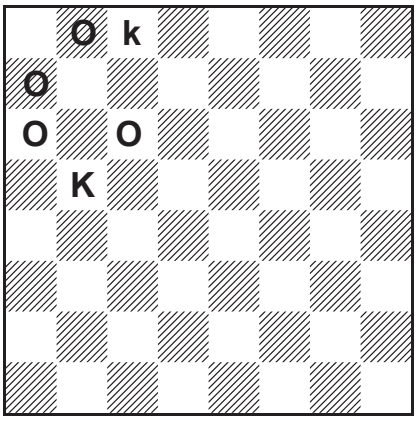




The rest of the problems in this column are from a 2017 article in the *ChessProblems.ca Bulletin* titled Minimalism in Chess Rebuses. The four positions below with two piece-types are all records for fewest pieces in a standard rebus. Welcome to the "OK Corral".

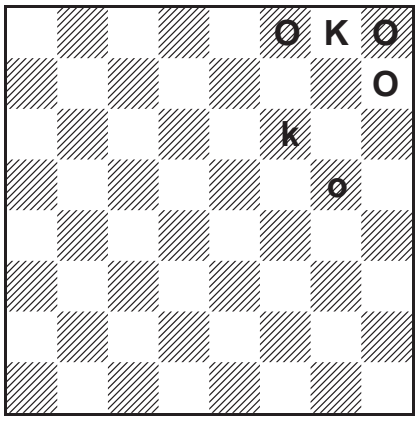
Rebus 135

"*Oklahoma*"



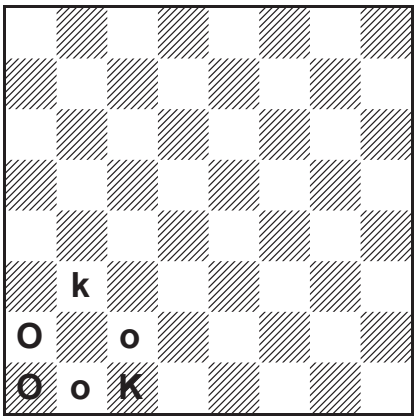
Rebus 136

"*Okey Dokey*"



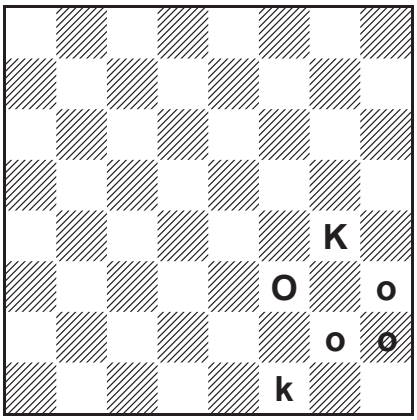
Rebus 137

"*Okapi*"



Rebus 138

"*Okra*"



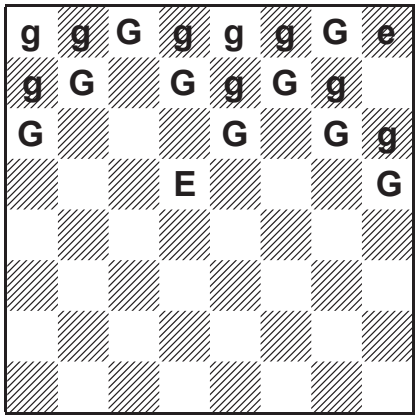
Each letter represents a different type of piece.
Uppercase is one colour, lowercase is the other.
Determine the positions and, if possible, the last move.

If you are looking for more chess rebuses, check out the *rebus index* in the appendix to column 188. It lists numerous articles and over 300 problems, most of which are readily available online.

The previous puzzles covered the piece groups KR, KB, KN, and Kp. Composing a two letter rebus in which the second piece is a queen proved to be a much tougher task. The following dense cluster of pieces was the result. You might be surprised at what you find when you crack this egg.

Rebus 139

"*egg*"

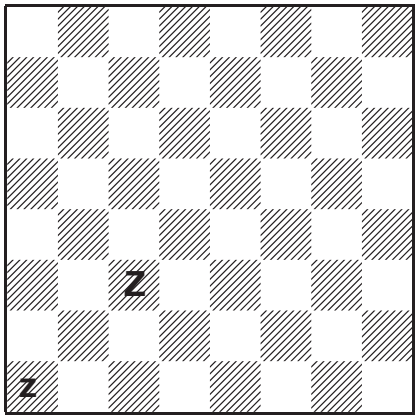


Each letter represents a different type of piece.
Uppercase is one colour, lowercase is the other.
Determine the position and, if possible, the last move.

King and queen was the final two piece grouping, but not the end of the story. It is actually possible to make an interesting rebus with a single piece-type! Though it does require the conditional stipulation that it is White to move.

Rebus 140

"*Zeds*"



WHITE to MOVE

Determine the position and, if possible, the last move.

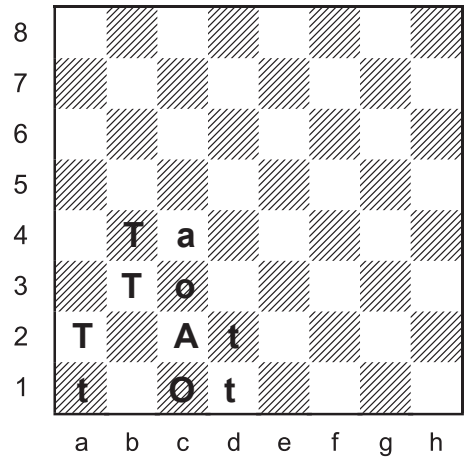
SOLUTIONS

All chess rebuses jointly composed by Andriy Frolkin and Jeff Coakley. Problems 129, 132, 133, 134: *The Puzzling Side of Chess* (2025). The others are from the *ChessProblems.ca Bulletin* (2017), issue 11 except for 130 (issue 12).

PDF hyperlinks. You can advance to the solution of any puzzle by clicking on the underlined title above the diagram. To return to the puzzle, click on the title above the solution diagram.

Archives. Past columns are available in the *Puzzling Side* archives.

Rebus 129



"*tattoo*"

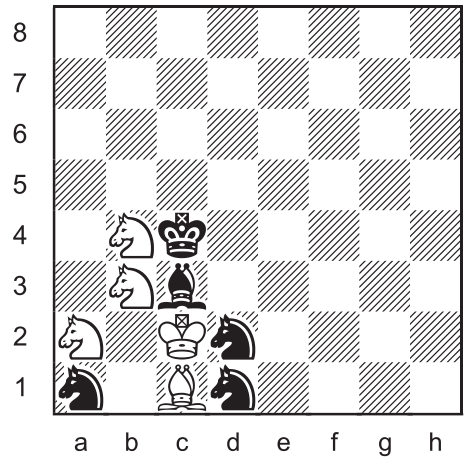
T = knight

A = king

O = bishop

caps = white

last move:
1...bxa1=N+



(5 + 5)

Three piece-types with bishops and knights.

♔ = (AO) Letters with one uppercase, one lowercase.

OT ≠ ♗ On 1st rank.

O ≠ ♔ If O = ♔

- T ≠ ♕♖ Three checks (a1 b3 d1).
- T ≠ ♗ Both kings in check (b4 d2).
- T ≠ ♘ Impossible check (a2).
- T = Ø? No piece can be assigned to letter T.

A = ♔

T = ♘

- T ≠ ♕♖ Both kings in check (b4 d2).
- T ≠ ♗ Both kings in check (b3 d1).

last move: **1...bxa1=N+** The type of piece captured is unknown.

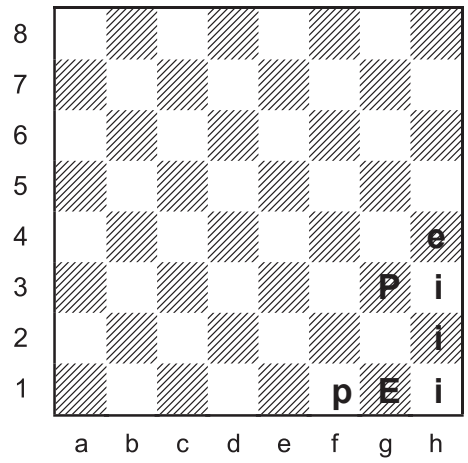
caps = white

O = ♗ O ≠ ♕♖ Impossible double check (c3).

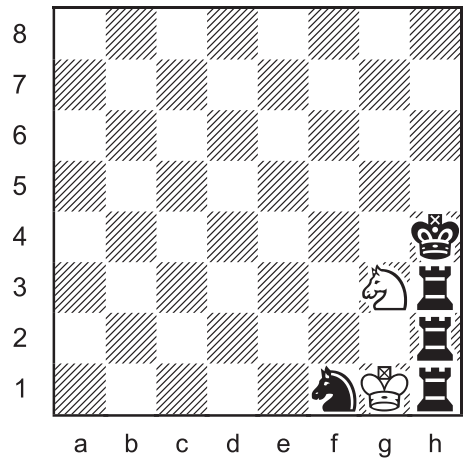
Rebus 130

"*Prince Edward Island*"

ChessProblems.ca Bulletin 2017 issue 12



P = knight
E = king
I = rook
caps = white
last move:
1...gxh1=R+



(2 + 5)

Three piece-types with rooks and knights.

♔ = (EP) Letters with one uppercase, one lowercase.

♙ = Ø All letters on1st rank.

P ≠ ♔ If P = ♔

- I ≠ ♕ Impossible double check (h2 h3).
- I ≠ ♗ Impossible check (h2).
- I ≠ ♖ Impossible check (h3).
- I ≠ ♘ If I = ♘ Check (h1).
  - E ≠ ♕♗ Impossible double check (h4).
  - E ≠ ♖ Both kings in check (g1).
  - E = Ø? No piece can be assigned to E.
- I = Ø? No piece can be assigned to letter I.

E = ♔

I = ♖

- I ≠ ♕ Impossible double check (h1 h2).
- I ≠ ♗ Impossible check (h2).
- I ≠ ♘ If I = ♘ Check (h3).
  - P ≠ ♕♗ Both kings in check (g3).
  - P ≠ ♖ Impossible double check (f1).
  - P = Ø? No piece can be assigned to P.

The king on g1 is in check by the rook on h1.

last move: **1...gxh1=R+** The type of piece captured is unknown.

caps = white

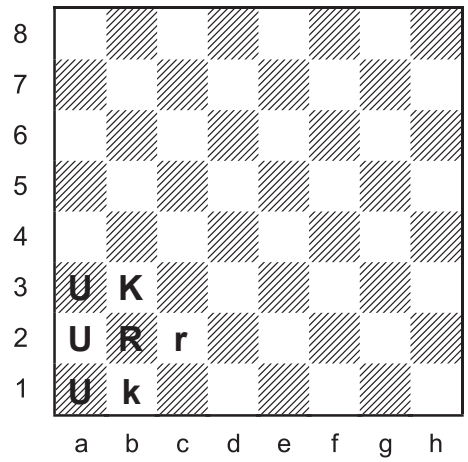
P = ♘ P ≠ ♕♗ Both kings in check (g3).

This problem is the record for both fewest pieces and fewest letters in a rebus with two candidate letters for king assignment.

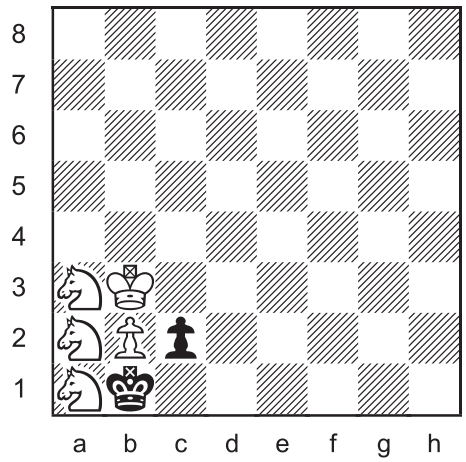
Rebus 131

"*UKRaine*"

ChessProblems.ca Bulletin 2017 issue 11



U = knight
K = king
R = pawn
caps = white
last move:
1.N>a3+



(5 + 2)

Three piece-types with knights and pawns.

K = ♔ Letter with one uppercase, one lowercase.
R ≠ ♔ R/r are adjacent.

U = ♘ U ≠ ♙ On 1st rank.
U ≠ ♕♖ Impossible check (a1).
U ≠ ♗ Impossible check (a2).

The king on b1 is in <u>check</u> by the knight on a3.

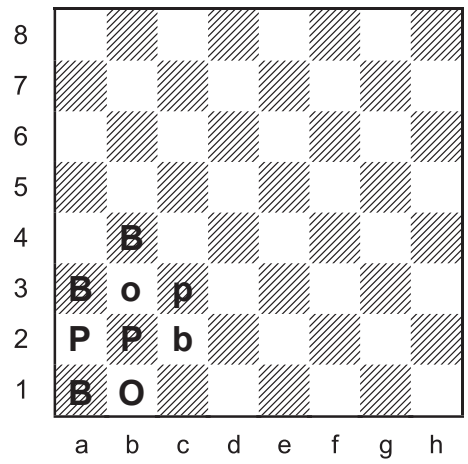
R = ♙ R ≠ ♖ Impossible check (b2).
R ≠ ♕♗ Both kings in check (c2).

caps = white If caps = black
Both kings in check (white pawn f2).

last move: **1.N>a3+** This may or may not have been a capture.

This problem is a rebus record for fewest pieces (7) using 3 letters.

Rebus 132



"B-Bop"

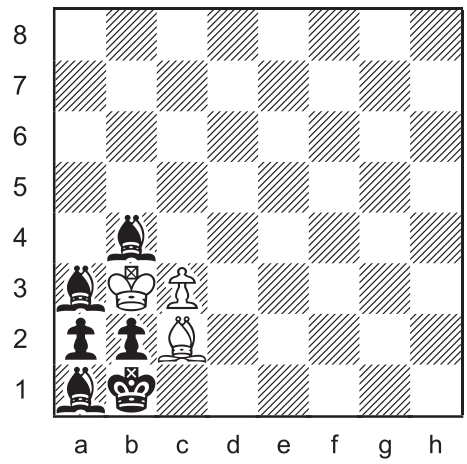
B = bishop

O = king

P = pawn

caps = black

last move:
1.B>c2+



(3 + 8)

Three piece-types with bishops and pawns.

O = ♔ Letter with one uppercase, one lowercase.

B = ♗ B ≠ ♙ On 1st rank.
B ≠ ♕♖ Impossible double check (a3 b4).
B ≠ ♘ Impossible check (a1).

The king on b1 is in <u>check</u> by the bishop on c2.

P = ♙ P ≠ ♕♖ Both kings in check (b2).
P ≠ ♘ Impossible double check (c3).

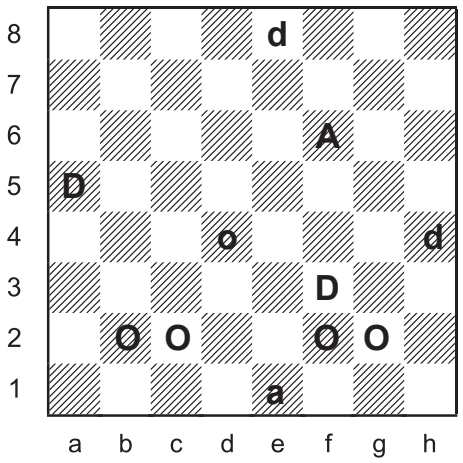
caps = black If caps = white
Both kings in check (white pawn a2).

last move: **1.B>c2+** This may or may not have been a capture.

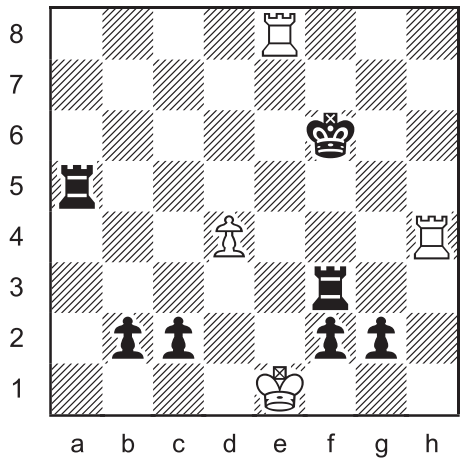
After Hours at the Cafe

Rebus 133

"doodad"



D = rook
O = pawn
A = king
caps = black
last move:
1...gxf2+
or
1...exf2+



(4 + 7)

Three piece-types with rooks and pawns.

A = ♔ Letter with one uppercase, one lowercase.

D = ♖ D ≠ ♙ On 8th rank.
D ≠ ♕♗ Both kings in check (a5 h4).
D ≠ ♘ Both kings in check (e8 f3).

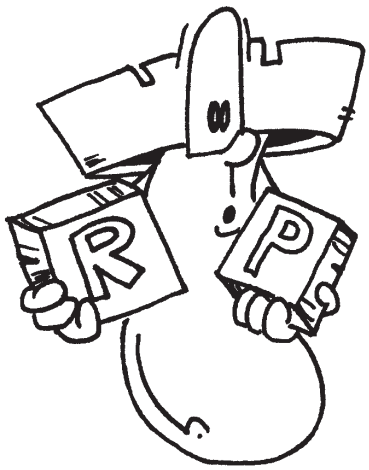
O = ♙ O ≠ ♕♗ Both kings in check (d4 f2).
O ≠ ♘ Impossible double check (c2 g2).

caps = black — If caps = white
The black king cannot be on e1, "inside" the white pawn formation.

The white king is in <u>check</u> by the pawn on f2.

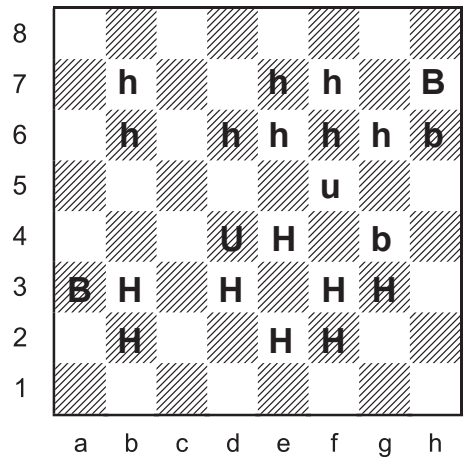
last move: **1...e3xf2+** or **1...g3xf2+**.

A preliminary simpler version of rebus 102 in column 230.



Rebus 134

"*hubbub*"



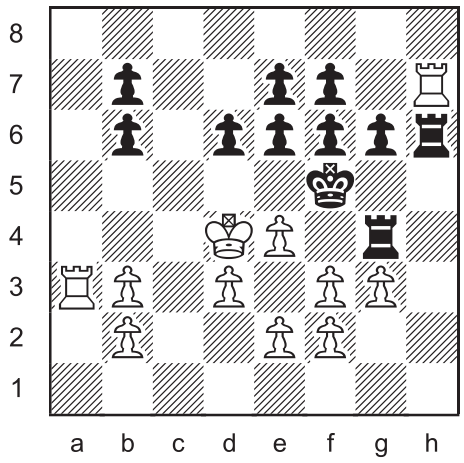
H = pawn

U = king

B = rook

caps = white

last 2 moves:
1...Rg5-g4+
2.e3-e4+



(11 + 11)

Three piece-types with rooks and pawns.

U = ♔ Letter with one uppercase, one lowercase.

H = ♙

H ≠ ♕	Five checks (b6 d6 e4 f3 f6).
H ≠ ♗	Three checks (b6 e4 f6).
H ≠ ♖	Both kings in check (d6 f3).
H ≠ ♘	Both kings in check (e6 g3).

caps = white — If caps = black — Impossible pawn formation. Too many captures required.

last move: e3-e4+ — Check.

The pawn formation requires 10 captures, 5 by each side. That accounts for all 10 missing pieces.

B = ♖

B ≠ ♕	With 16 pawns on the board, there were no promotions. Each side has 2 letter B's.
B ≠ ♗	Impossible bishop on h7.
B ≠ ♘	An examination of the pawn formation shows that no queen, rook, or bishop for either side could escape from their back rank until after a capture by a pawn.Therefore, the initial capture had to be the capture of a knight. So there cannot be four knights on the board.

last two moves: **1...Rg5-g4+ 2.e3-e4+**

Before White played e3-e4+, the white king was in check by the rook on g4. Since all captures were made by pawns, Black's previous move had to be the non-capture ...Rg5-g4+.

For anyone familiar with chess rebuses, puzzles 135 to 138 are quite easy to solve, so only the solution diagrams are given here without analysis or explanation. Hope that's okay.

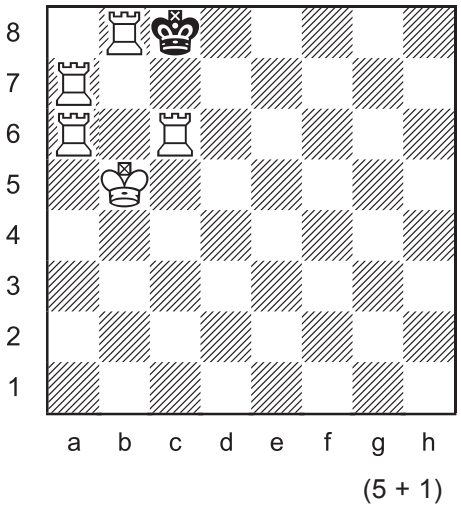
"OK Corral"

ChessProblems.ca Bulletin 2017 issue 11

Rebus 135

"*Oklahoma*"

Land of the Sooners.



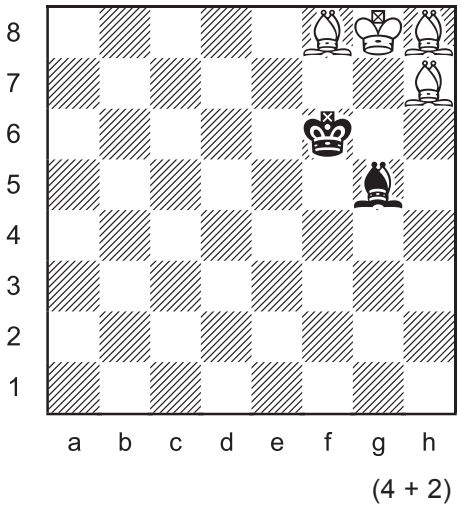
(5 + 1)

last move: c7xb8=R++

Rebus 136

"*Okey Dokey*"

Okay!



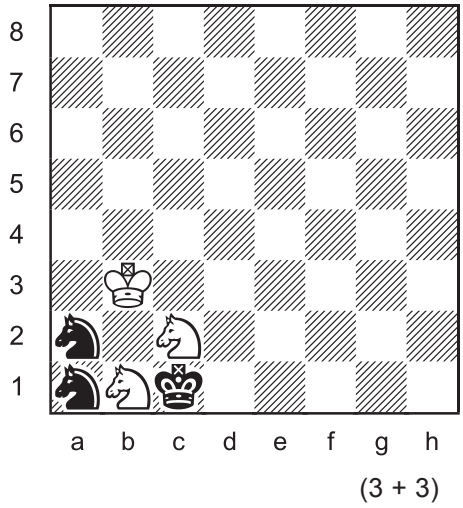
(4 + 2)

last move: g7xh8=B+

Rebus 137

"*Okapi*"

Giraffe-like animal of the Congo.



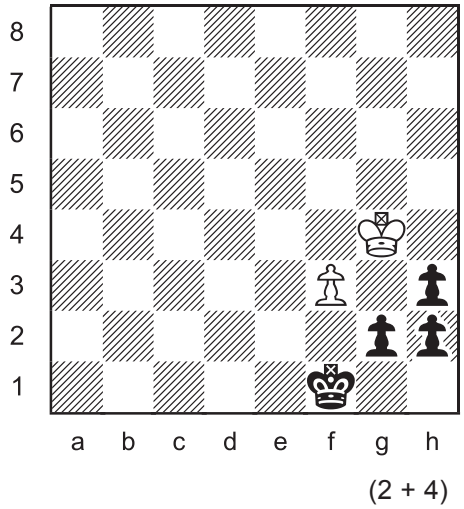
(3 + 3)

last move: ...b2xa1=N+

Rebus 138

"*Okra*"

Vegetable sometimes called gumbo.



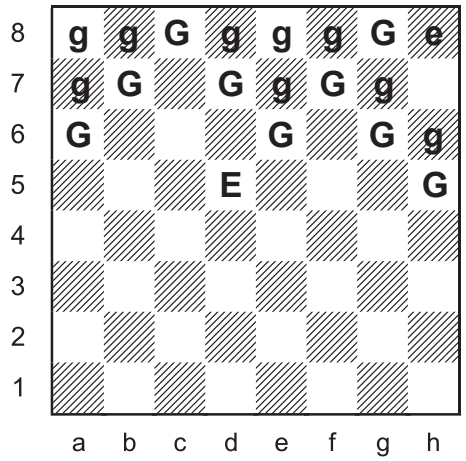
(2 + 4)

Neither king in check.
A rebus rarity.

Rebus 139

"*egg*"

ChessProblems.ca Bulletin 2017 issue 11

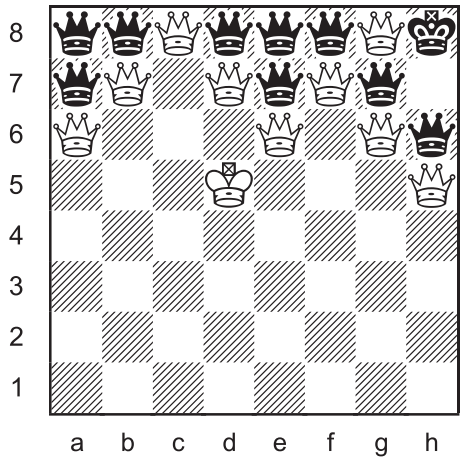


E = king

G = queen

caps = white

last move:
1.h7xg8=Q+



(10 + 10)

Two piece-types with queens.

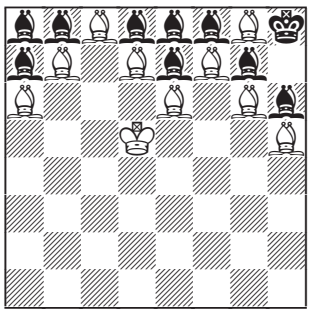
E = ♔ Letter with one uppercase, one lowercase.

G ≠ ♙ On 8th rank.

G ≠ ♘ Three checks (e7 f7 g6).

G ≠ ♖ If G = ♖, the last move was 1.hxg8=R+ by White. But Black would have no move on the previous turn. Their rooks and king would all be blocked. The last move was not ...Nf6-g8, followed by hxg8(N)= R+, because the knight would be checking the white king from f6.

G ≠ ♗ If G = ♗, there are not enough missing pieces to explain all the bishops. White has promoted 8 <u>light-square</u> bishops. Black has promoted 1 <u>light-square</u> and 6 <u>dark-square</u> bishops. The 12 missing pieces (11 officers, 1 pawn) are enough to explain 15 promotions. But for both sides to promote so many bishops on opposite colours requires more captures than promoting to other types of pieces. In this position, with 18 bishops and the given ratio of light/dark promotions, 13 captures are needed. One too many.



G = ♕ <u>Check</u> (g8).

last move: **1.h7xg8+Q+** caps = white

For a more detailed account of *bishop ratio*, see rebus 83 (column 210) or rebus 126 (column 243).

Rebus 140

"*Zeds*"

based on a "whose move?" problem by Andrew Buchanan 2001

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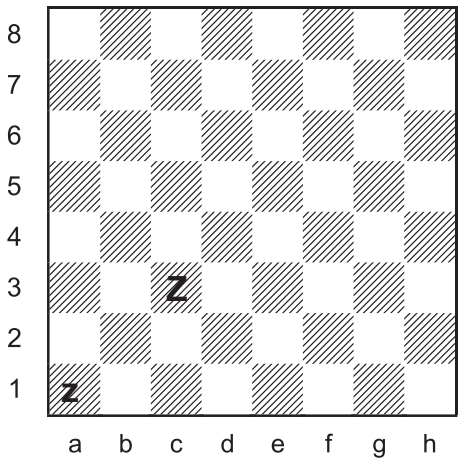
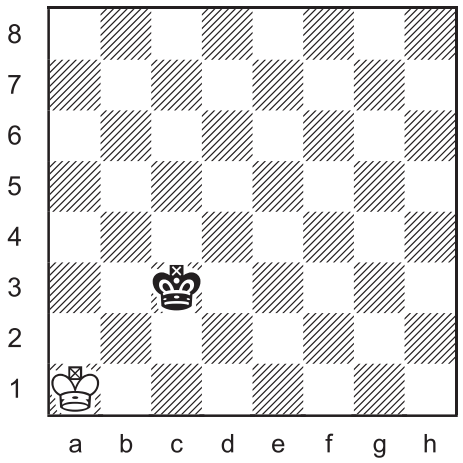
WHITE to MOVE



Z = king

caps = black

last move:
1...Kxc3(QRp)



(1 + 1)

Z = ♔ Of course. But who is white and who is black? And what was the last move?

Colours are determined by *dead reckoning*, applying FIDE rule 5.2.2. "*The game is drawn when a position has arisen in which neither player can checkmate the opponent's king with any series of legal moves. The game is said to end in a 'dead position'. This immediately ends the game.*"

With regard to chess problems, the essential point of dead reckoning is that in any given position, <u>the position before the last move cannot be dead</u>. Because if it were dead, then the game was already over. For more explanation and examples, see columns 127, 145, 149, 176.

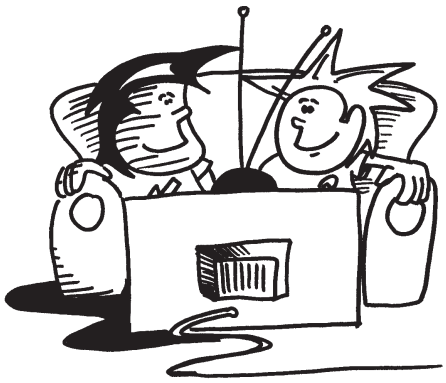
caps = black

If the king on a1 is black, the last move was 1...Ka2>a1 or 1...Kb1>a1. If the move was not a capture, or if a knight or bishop were captured, the position was already dead before Black moved. If a queen or rook were captured, the position was also already dead because there was no choice except to capture. Therefore the <u>king on a1 must be white</u>!

The last move had to be the capture of a queen, rook, or pawn on c3. Before **1...Kxc3(QRp)**, the position was still alive. Long live the king!

REBUS RIDDLE

What folks say when they miss the big events of the day.



"*We'll have to watch tonight's news.*"

wheel-half-2-watch-2-knights-gnus

Until next time!