

THE PUZZLING SIDE OF CHESS

Jeff Coakley

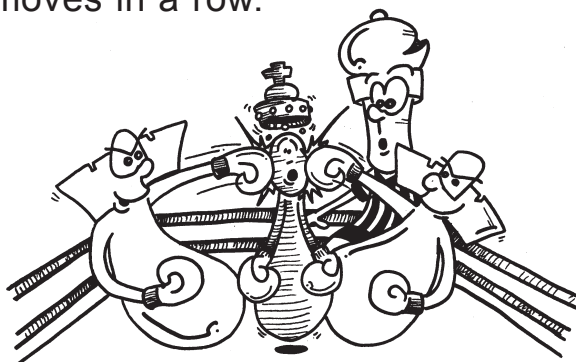
SERIES-MATES: Serious Predicaments

number 249

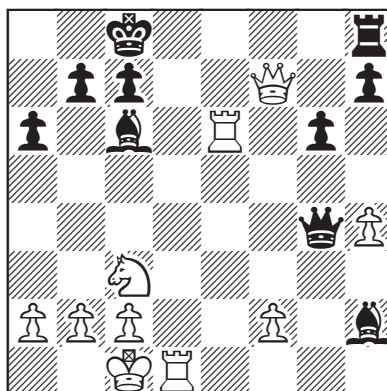
June 26, 2025

By definition, a predicament is a difficult, unpleasant, or dangerous situation. In the real world, we usually do our best to avoid them. But chessboard predicaments are different. The challenge to solve them can be a welcome distraction.

The white forces in a series-mate are often greatly outnumbered, a serious predicament in a normal game. But not in a puzzle where you can make multiple moves in a row.



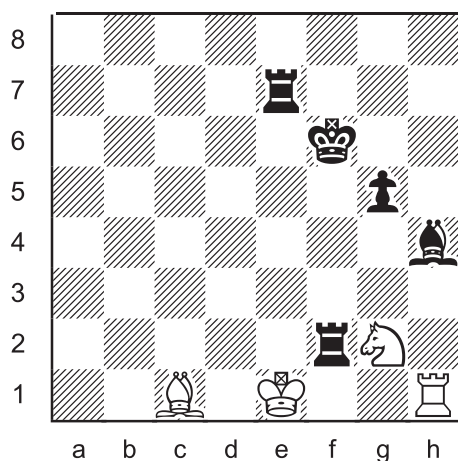
Double Whammy 76



White plays two moves in a row to mate Black.

The first move may not be check. Either move may be a capture. Both moves may be with the same piece. Black does not get a turn.

Multi-Wham 103



series-mate in 7

White plays seven moves in a row to mate Black.

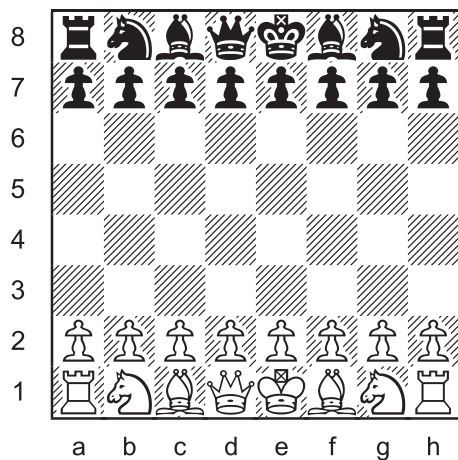
Only the final move may give check.

Captures are allowed. Black does not get a turn.

White may not place their own king in check, even if they get out of check on a subsequent turn.

The next series-mate is unusual for two reasons. Only the white knights may move and the solution is not unique. But hopefully it will still be fun!

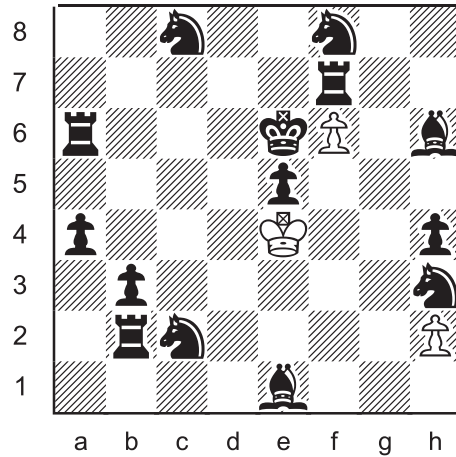
Multi-Wham 104



series-mate in 8

White plays eight knight moves in a row to mate Black.

Multi-Wham 105

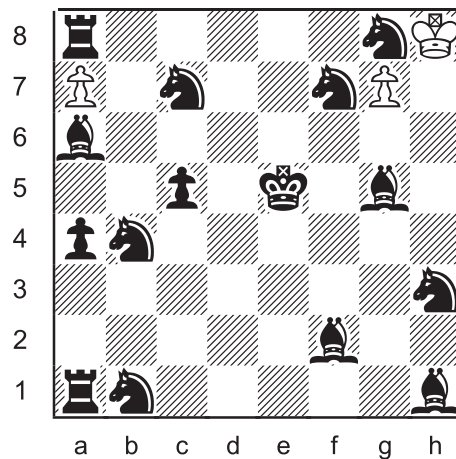


series-mate in 39

White plays thirty-nine moves in a row to mate Black.



Multi-Wham 106

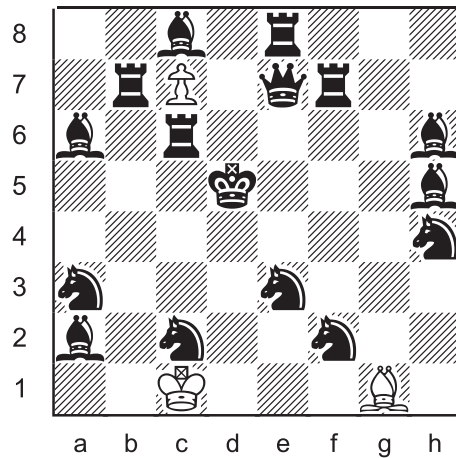


series-mate in 40

White plays forty moves in a row to mate Black.

Series-mates on the Puzzling Side are generally of two types. Most involve a long trek by the king to capture defenders followed by the promotion of one or two pawns. The other kind includes the building of bridges by a second piece to assist the king's mobility. Our final problem is that second type.

Multi-Wham 107



series-mate in 37

White plays thirty-seven moves in a row to mate Black.



SERIOUS PREDICAMENT OF THE YEAR

3rd Prize

Predicament for some. Amusement for others.

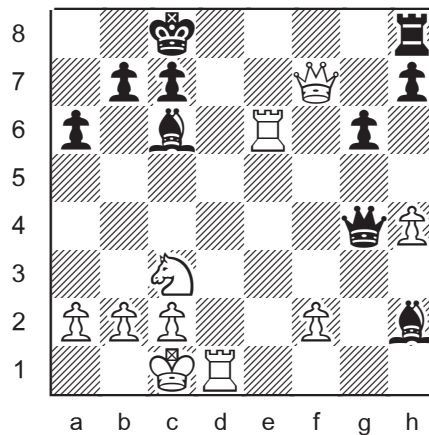
SOLUTIONS

All problems by J. Coakley, *Puzzling Side of Chess* (2025).

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.

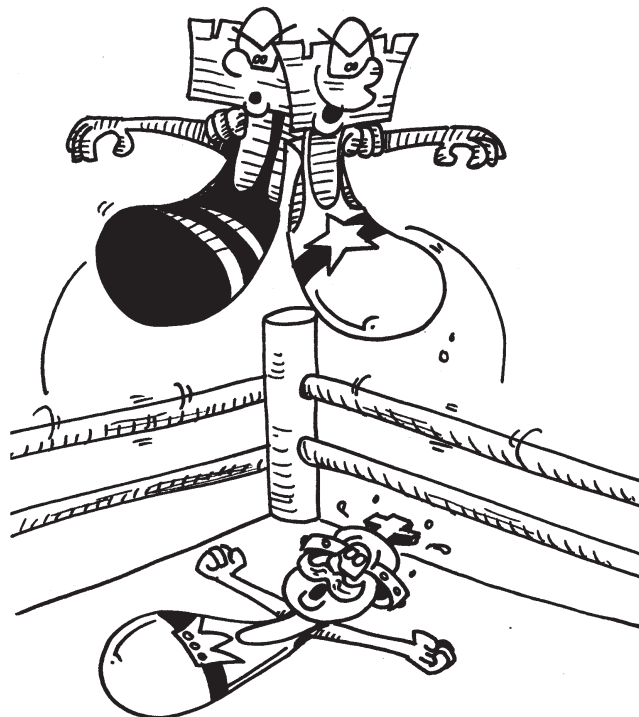
Archives. Past columns are available in the *Puzzling Side* archives.

Double Whammy 76

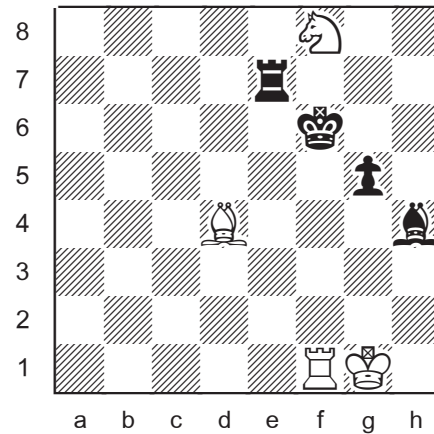
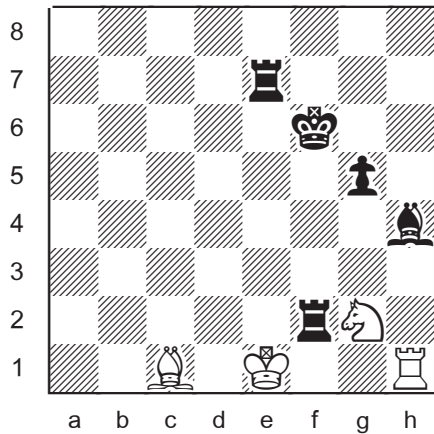


1.Qf5 2.Re8#

The power of double check..



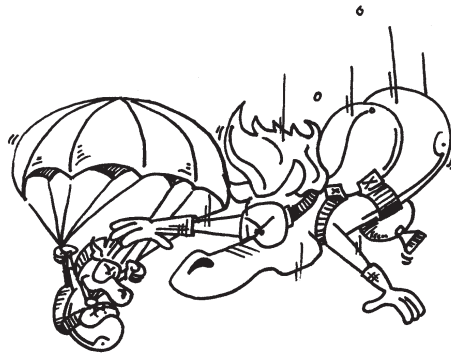
Multi-Wham 103



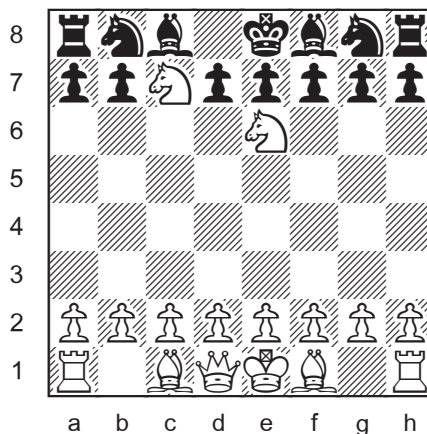
series-mate in 7

1.Be3 2.Nf4 3.Ne6 4.Bxf2 5.0-0 6.Nf8 7.Bd4#

Unpinning, castling, double check and mate.



Multi-Wham 104

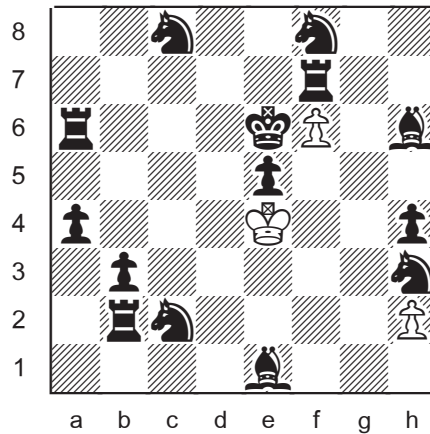


series-mate in 8 with only knight moves

1.Nf3 2.Nd4 3.Ne6 4.Nxd8 5.Ne6 6.Nc3 7.Nd5 8.Nxc7#

There are many solutions but only the one mating idea. The knights can take various routes to d8 and c7. After capturing the queen, the king knight could also move to c6 or capture on b7.

Multi-Wham 105



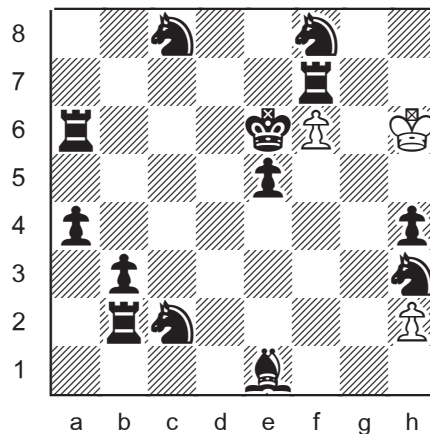
series-mate in 39

The white king cannot capture the rook on f7 to free the f-pawn because it is protected by the black king. So White must promote the h-pawn first. That requires capturing the black pawn on h4 which is guarded by the bishop on e1 which is guarded by the knight on c2. The chain of defence continues further back to the rook on a6.

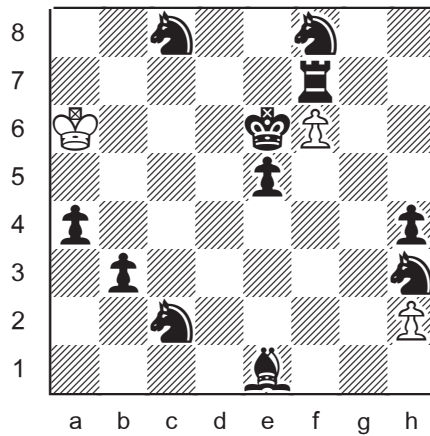
1.Kf3 Going directly for the rook on a6 with *1.Kd3?* *2.Kc4* *3.Kb5* *4.Kxa6* fails since there is then no way to reach the rook on b2 because of the bishop on h6 which guards c1. So that bishop must be eliminated.

2.Kg4 3.Kh5 4.Kxh6

Now the king can get to b2 and a6 and capture the other defenders of the pawn on h4.

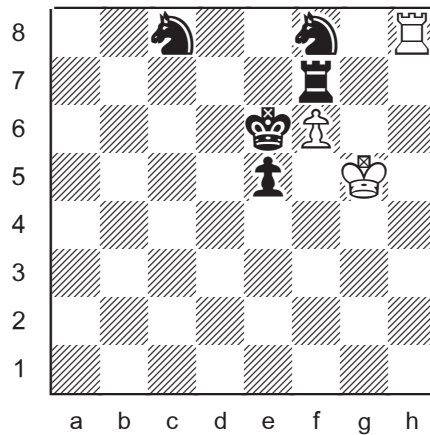


5.Kh5 6.Kg4 7.Kf3 8.Ke2 9.Kd1 10.Kc1 11.Kxb2 12.Kc1 13.Kd1
14.Ke2 15.Kd3 16.Kc4 17.Kb5 18.Kxa6



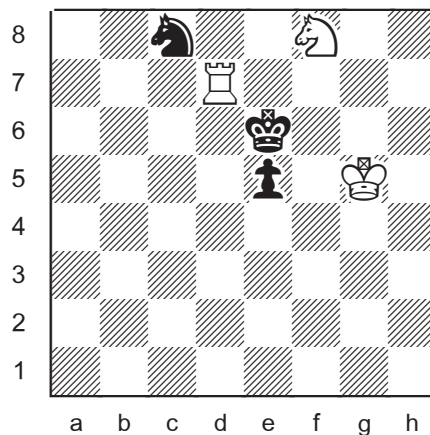
19.Kb5 20.Kxa4 21.Kxb3 22.Kxc2 23.Kd1 24.Kxe1 25.Kf1 26.Kg2
27.Kxh3 28.Kxh4 29.Kg5 30.h4 31.h5 32.h6 33.h7 34.h8=R

Promoting to queen would give check. Knighting the pawn is five moves too slow.



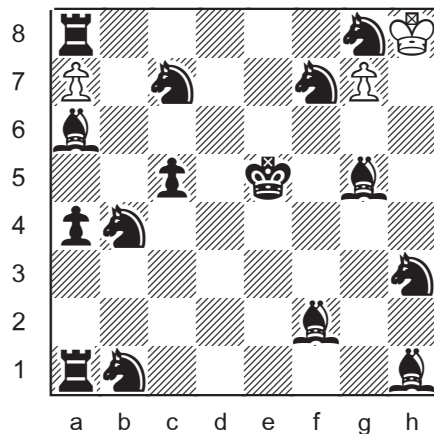
Mate in 5 from here.

35.Rxf8 36.Rxf7 37.Rd7 38.f7 39.f8=N#



Without a knight on c8, 34.h8=Q 35.Qh1 36.Qc6# would be possible.

Multi-Wham 106

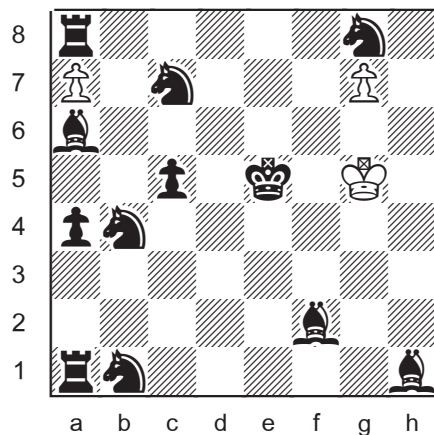


series-mate in 40

The white pawn on g7 is blocked by the black knight on g8 which is guarded by the rook on a8. So the white king's task is to free the a-pawn by capturing the rook. That requires a trip around the board, clearing away all obstacles. In the end, the white king will have been to each of the four corners!

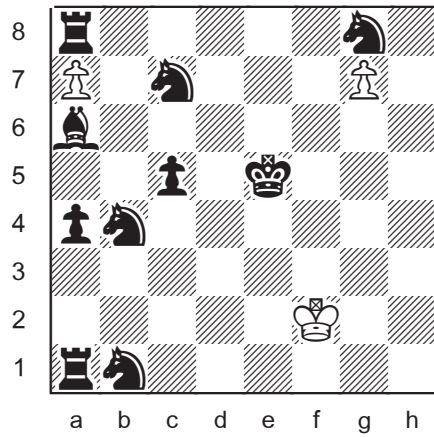
1.Kf2 2.Kg6 3.Kxf7 The knight on f7 must be captured because it protects the bishop on g5. That bishop must be taken to allow the king to cross the d-file.

4.Kg6 5.Kh5 6.Kg4 7.Kxh3 8.Kg4 9.Kxg5



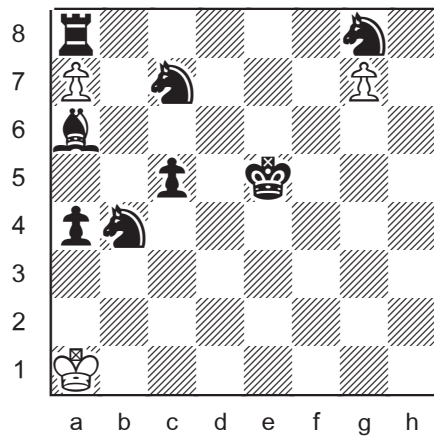
From here, the only way to reach the queenside is to capture the bishops on h1 and f2.

10.Kg4 11.Kh3 12.Kh2 13.Kxh1 14.Kg2 15.Kxf2



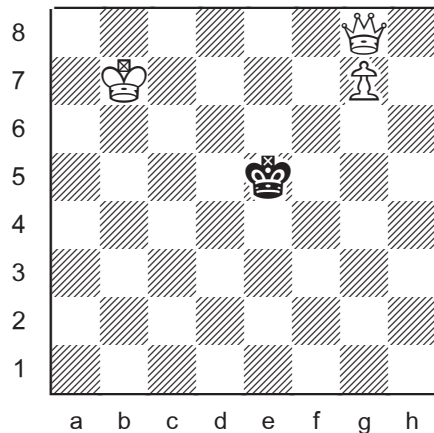
The next targets are the rook and knight on a1 and b1.

16.Ke1 17.Kd1 18.Kc1 19.Kb2 20.Kxa1 21.Kxb1



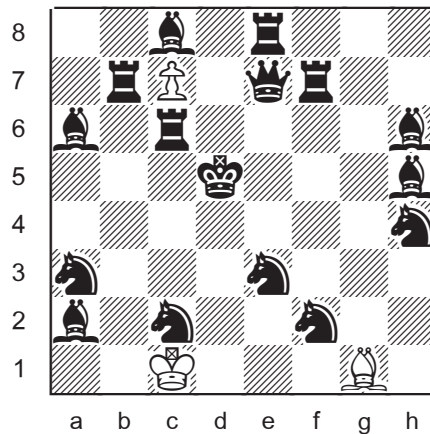
Now the path to a8 is more or less straightforward.

22.Kb2 23.Ka3 24.Kxa4 25.Ka5 26.Kb6 27.Kxc7 28.Kb6
 29.Kxc5 30.Kxb4 31.Ka5 32.Kxa6 33.Kb7 34.Kxa8
 35.Kb7 36.a8=Q 37.Qxg8 Mate in three from here.



38.Qc4 39.g8=Q 40.Qge6#

Multi-Wham 107



series-mate in 37

Obviously, the white king needs to free the c-pawn by capturing the bishop on c8. But there are four black rooks and a queen guarding its approach, with a lot of other pieces in the way too. To get by the heavy pieces, the white bishop will need to block six lines of defence.

The bishop on c8 defends the rook on b7, so the king will have to take the bishop from d8. To get across the e-file, the black knight on c2 must be captured. It is protected by the knights on a3 and e3. The white bishop will have to take them.

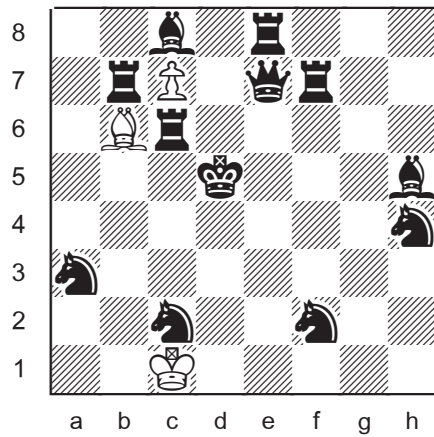
- | | |
|--------------|--|
| 1.Bh2 | It's hard to foresee at this point, but after <i>1.Bxf2?</i> it will be impossible for the king to cross the f-file. |
| 2.Bf4 3.Bxh6 | The bishop on h6 must be taken. If <i>3.Bxe3</i> first, then the white bishop is pinned and cannot move to b6. |
| 4.Bxe3 5.Bb6 | The first bridge is built. The white king has to cross the b-file to capture the bishop on a6. That bishop attacks f1, a square where the white king must eventually take shelter. |

The white bishop also blocks the 6th rank, removing the defence of the bishop on a6 by the black rook.

6.Kb2 7.Kxa2 8.Kb3 9.Ka4 10.Ka5 11.Kxa6

Now the king returns to c1, recrossing the b-file before the bishop moves again.

12.Ka5 13.Ka4 14.Kb3 15.Kb2 16.Kc1



17.Bc5 18.Bxa3 19.Bc5

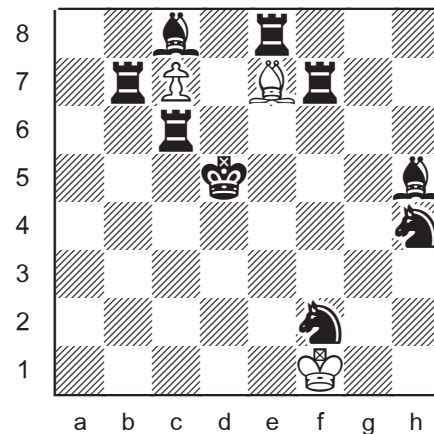
Blocking the c-file so that the knight on c2 can be captured.

20.Kxc2 21.Kd2 22.Bxe7

Taking the queen, and blocking the rook on d8, lets the king cross the e-file.

23.Ke1 24.Kf1

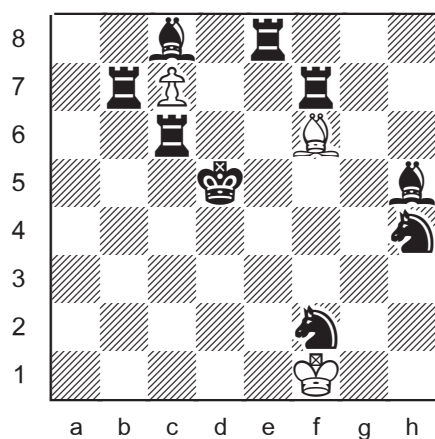
Hiding for the moment until the white bishop blocks the f-file to undefend the knight on f2. Capturing that knight shortens the king's route to h4.



25.Bf6

The bishop makes its final move, blocking both the 6th rank and f-file.

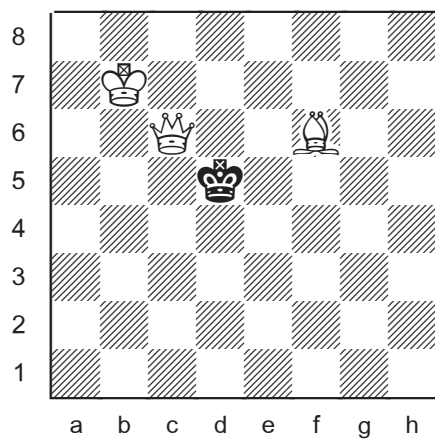




The king's road to c8 is now clear.

26.Kxf2 27.Kg3 28.Kxh4 29.Kxh5 30.Kg6 31.Kxf7 32.Kxe8

33.Kd8 34.Kxc8 35.Kxb7 36.c8=Q 37.Qxc6#



Until next time!

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