



# THE PUZZLING SIDE OF CHESS

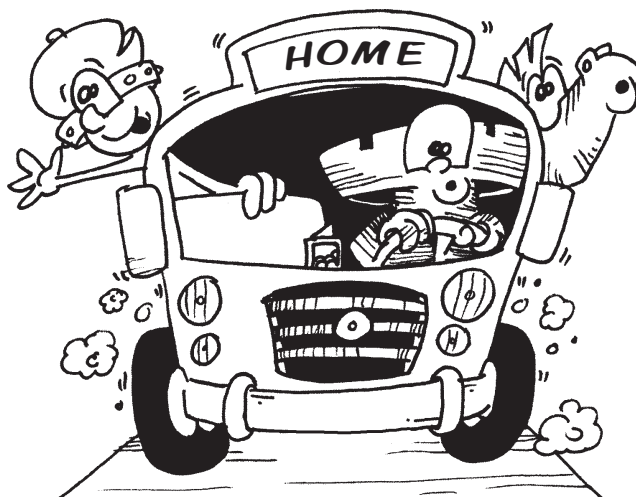
Jeff Coakley

## PROOF GAMES Home Again

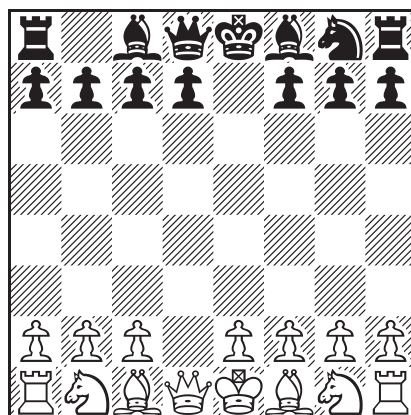
number 257

March 26, 2026

At the end of journeys here and there, we return to a theme of times gone by, back to the place from where we came. As in column 242, this set of problems features eight *homebase* proof games. In these positions, all of the remaining pieces stand on their original squares. Or at least they appear to.



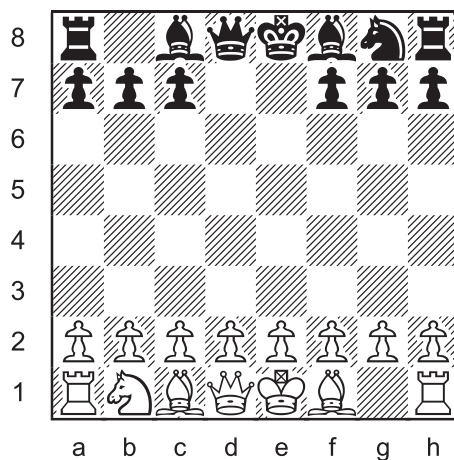
### Longer Proof Game 160 (4.5 moves)



This position was reached after White's fifth turn. What were the moves?

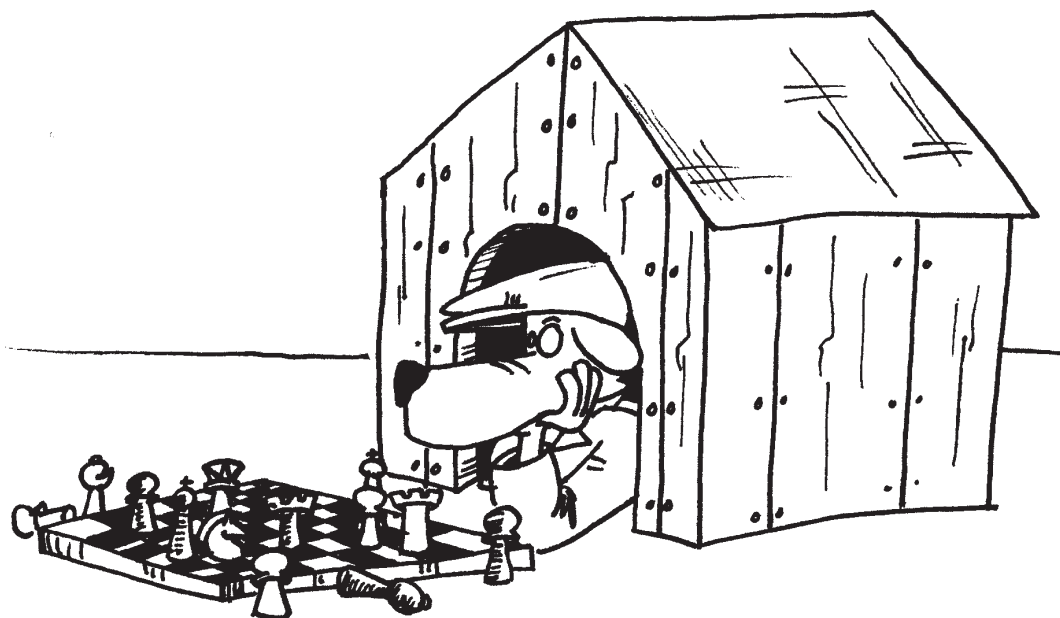
As a reminder for any novice sleuths in the crowd, proof game puzzles have a *move stipulation*. The given position has to be reached in a precise number of turns, no more and no less. The games may be far-fetched, and the strategy far from good, but the moves are legal.

**Longer Proof Game 161** (5.0 moves)



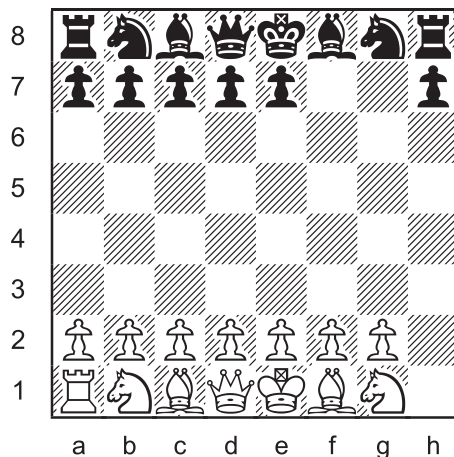
This position was reached after Black's fifth turn. What were the moves?

***The Chess Detective's Handbook***  
by Harmonius Hound

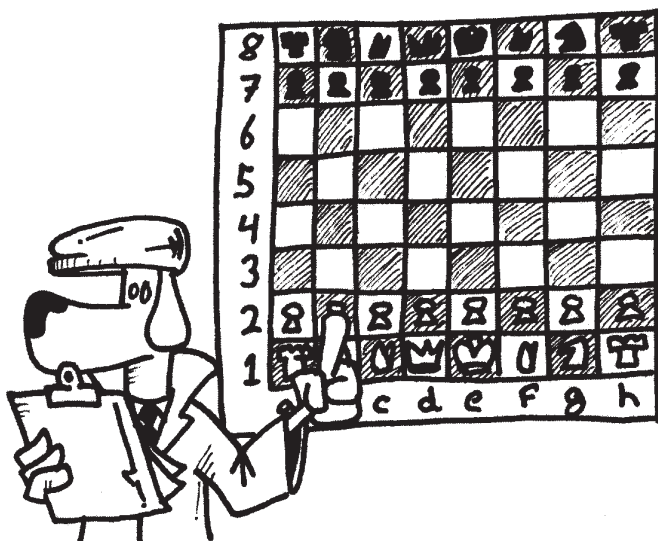


Chapter 1: The Chess Detective Code of Conduct  
*The True Path, No Stone Left Unturned*

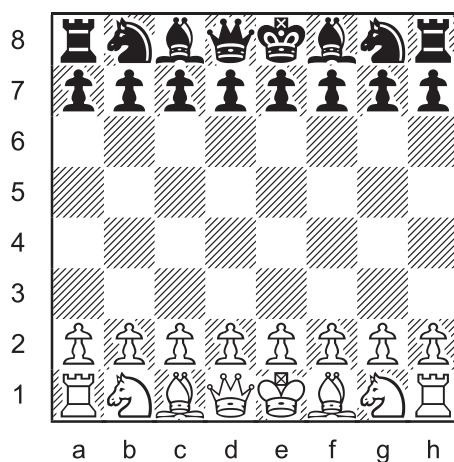
## Longer Proof Game 162 (5.5 moves)



This position was reached after White's sixth turn. What were the moves?

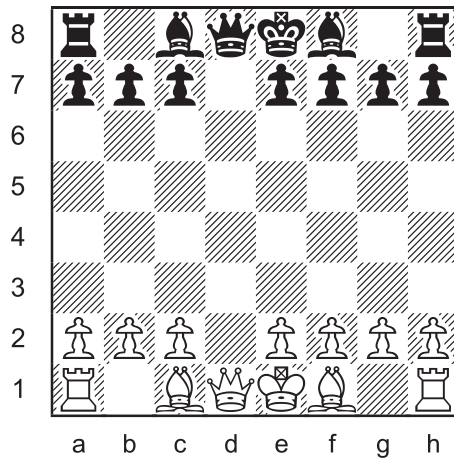


## Synthetic Game 62

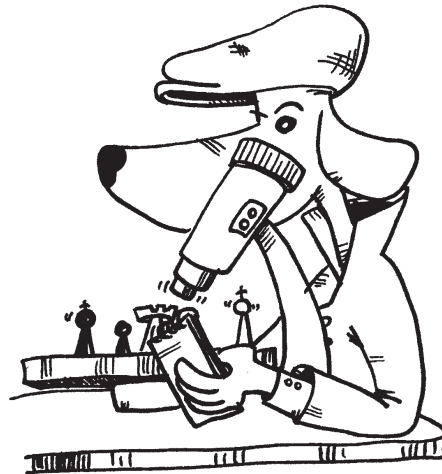


Compose a game that ends with 7.Ka3#.

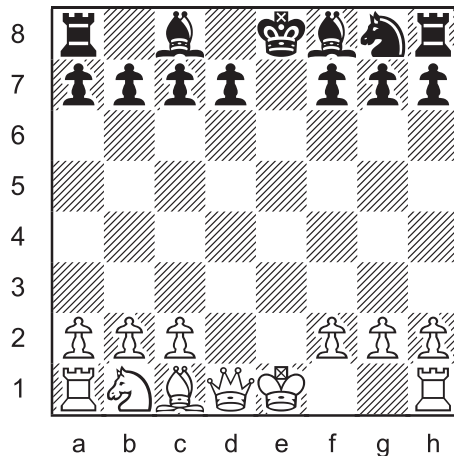
**Longer Proof Game 163** (6.0 moves)



This position was reached after Black's sixth turn. What were the moves?



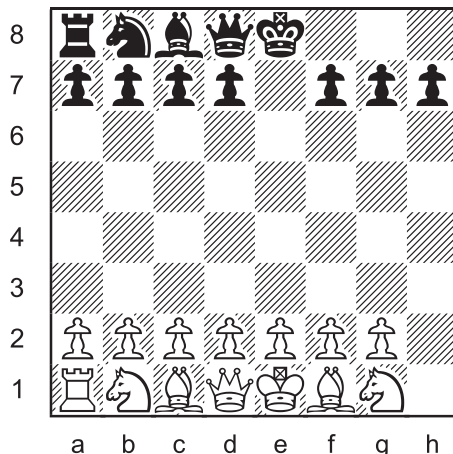
**Longer Proof Game 164** (6.5 moves)



This position was reached after White's seventh turn. What were the moves?

As usual, each proof game so far has been a half step longer than the previous. That generally raises the level of difficulty proportionately, which eventually deters potential solvers from attempting the puzzle. Have we gotten to that point yet?

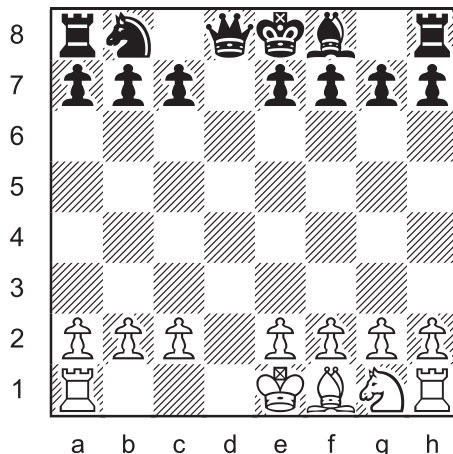
**Longer Proof Game 165** (7.0 moves)



This position was reached after Black's seventh turn. What were the moves?



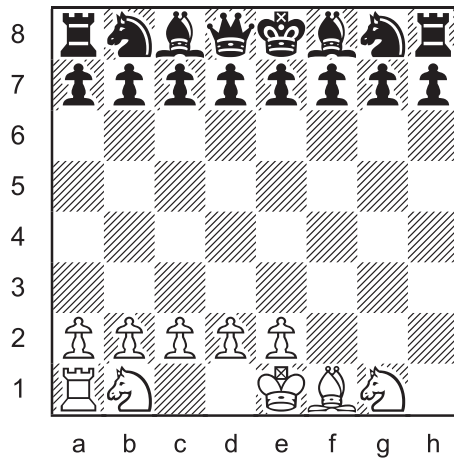
**Longer Proof Game 166** (7.5 moves)



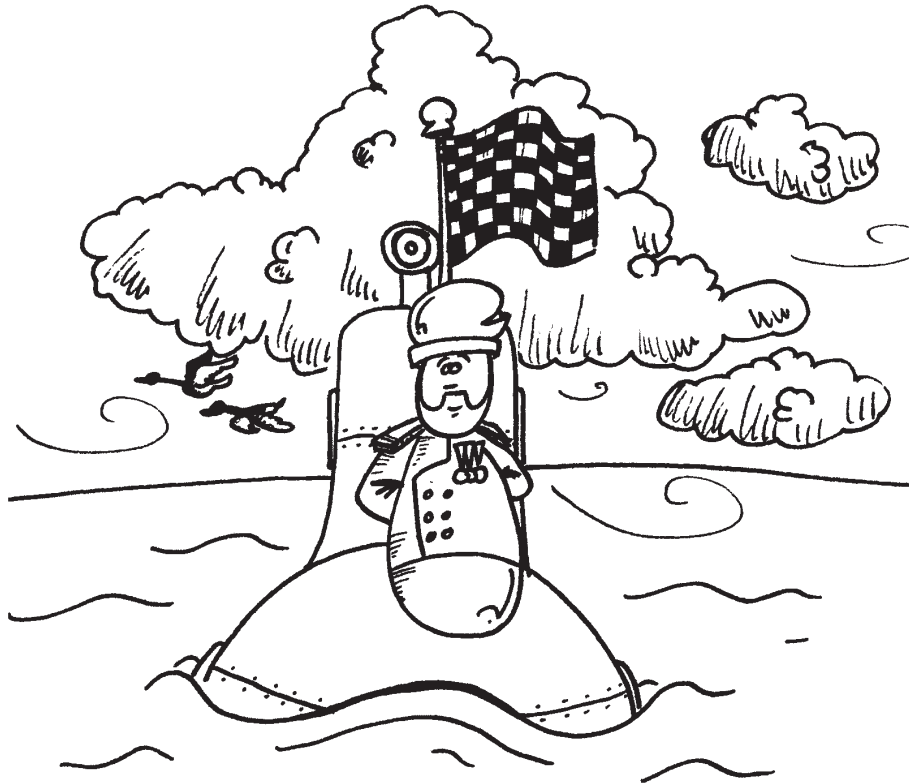
This position was reached after White's eighth turn. What were the moves?

Our final puzzle, by French composer François Perruchaud, features the ultimate homebase position for Black. Everybody stays at home! Six white pieces have been captured in 11 turns, including the bishop on c1 and the queen. Which black knight gets the glory?

**Longer Proof Game 167** (10.5 moves)



This position was reached after White's eleventh turn. What were the moves?



Afloat the Sea of Life  
*"Can we ever really go home again?"*

## SOLUTIONS

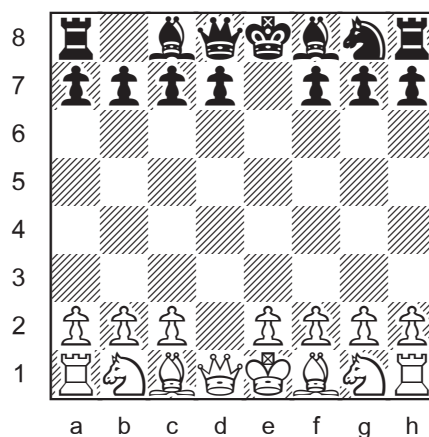
Problems 162, 163, 164, 166 by J. Coakley, *Puzzling Side of Chess* (2026).  
Others as noted above the solution diagrams.

**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.

### Longer Proof Game 160 (4.5 moves)

François Labelle 2004  
*retro mailing list*

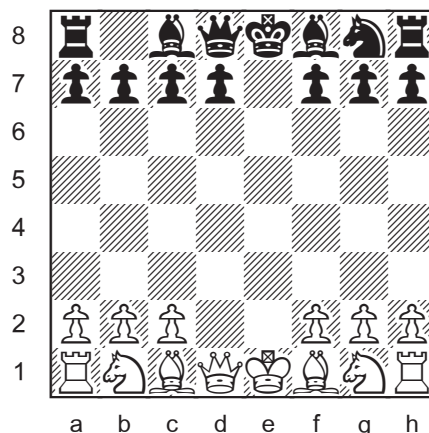


1.d4 Nc6 2.Bg5 Nxd4 3.Bxe7 Nb3 4.Bg5 Nc1 5.Bxc1  
Switchback bishop with *Orbán effect*.

*Orbán effect* occurs when a piece captures on its original square.

Here's a similar problem (Labelle 2004) without a pawn on e2.

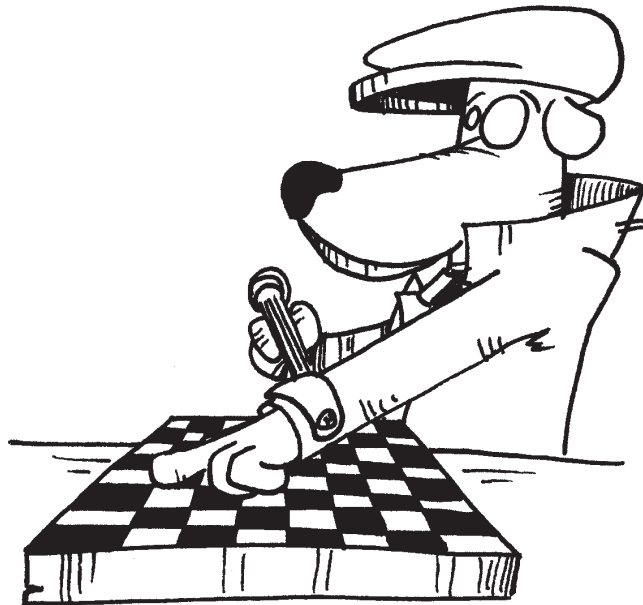
### Longer Proof Game 160b (4.5 moves)



This position was reached after White's fifth turn.

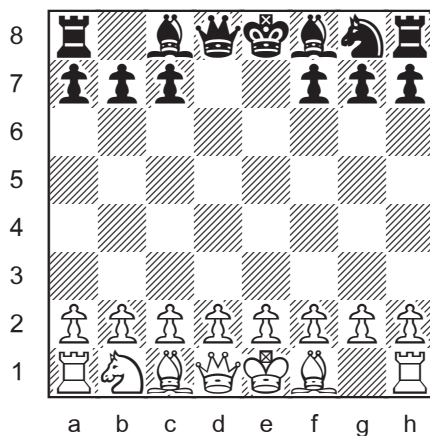
## 160b solution

1.d4 Nc6 2.Bg5 Nxd4 3.Bxe7 Nxe2 4.Bg5 Nc1 5.Bxc1



### Longer Proof Game 161 (5.0 moves)

François Labelle 2004  
*retro mailing list*

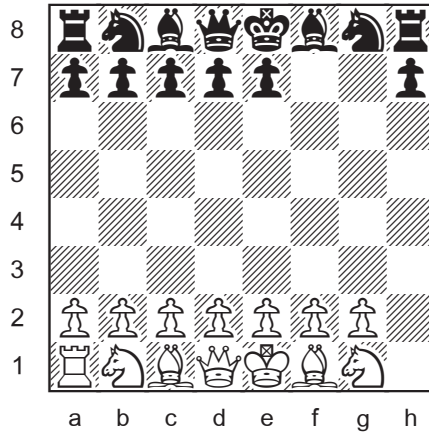


1.Nh3 d6 2.Nf4 d5 3.Nxd5 Nd7 4.Nxe7 Ndf6 5.Nxg8 Nxg8  
Tempo move by black d-pawn and impostor knight on g8.

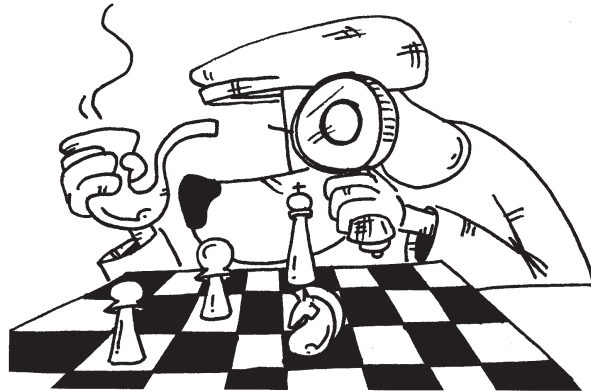
This problem is reminiscent of Mortimer-Frolkin 1991. See column 8, proof game 06b. (4.0 moves with a black knight on b8 instead of g8.)

In 2004, Canadian computer expert François Labelle generated and published lists of all homebase proof games of length 4.0, 4.5, and 5.0 moves. There are 10, 41, and 116 games, respectively.

**Longer Proof Game 162** (5.5 moves)

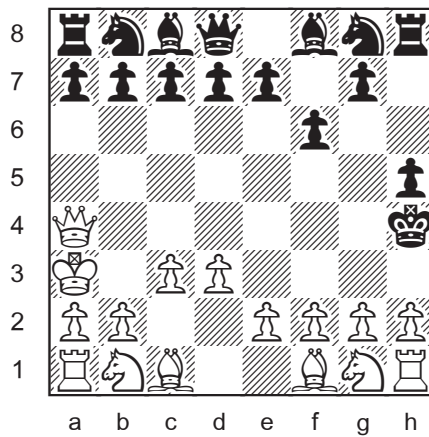


1.h4 g5 2.Rh3 gxh4 3.Rf3 h3 4.Rxf7 Kxf7 5.Nxh3 Ke8 6.Ng1  
Switchbacks by black king and white knight.



**Synthetic Game 62**

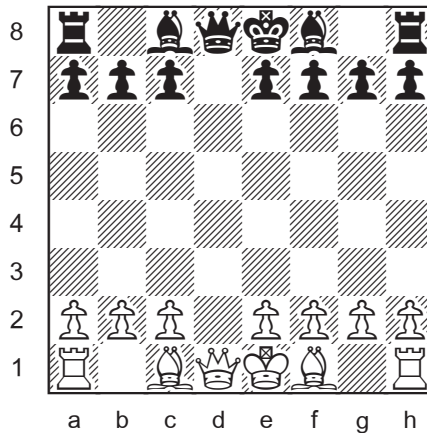
Stuart Rachels 2015



1.d3 f6 2.Kd2 Kf7 3.Kc3 Kg6 4.Kb4 Kh5  
5.c3 Kh4 6.Qa4 h5 7.Ka3#

The solution is unique. 7.Ka5# is also a unique synthetic game.

**Longer Proof Game 163** (6.0 moves)

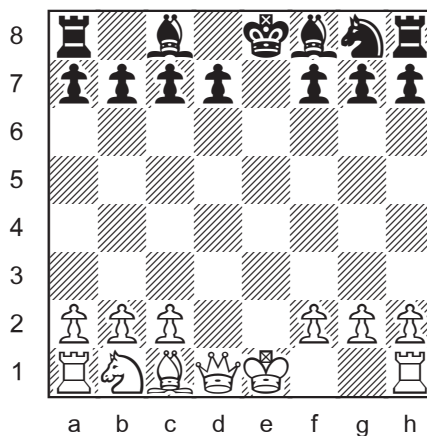


1.Nf3 Nf6 2.Ne5 Ne4 3.Nxd7 Nxd2 4.Nxb8 Nxb1  
5.Rxb1 Rxb8 6.Ra1 Ra8

Symmetrical game ending with two switchbacks by rooks.



**Longer Proof Game 164** (6.5 moves)

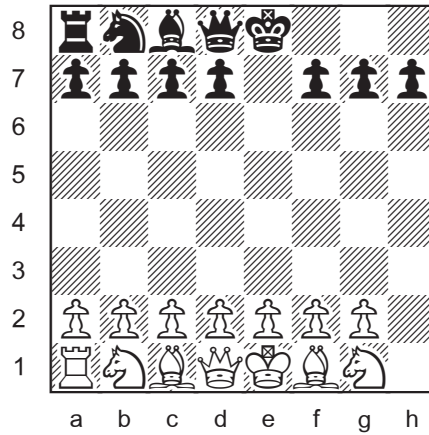


1.d4 Nc6 2.Bg5 Nxd4 3.Bxe7 Nxe2 4.Bxd8 Nxb1  
5.Be2 Nxe2 6.Bg5 Nc1 7.Bxc1

An extended version of problem 160b from earlier in the column, deviating after the third moves, concluding with the same bishop switchback and *Orbán effect*.

**Longer Proof Game 165** (7.0 moves)

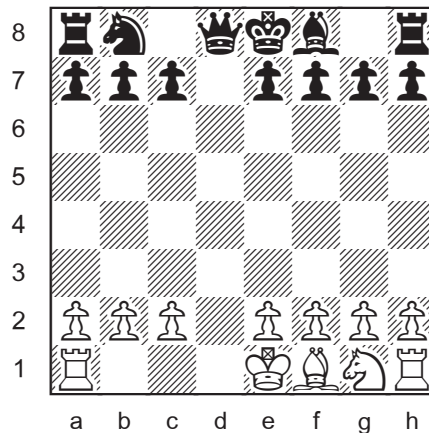
François Labelle 2005  
*retro mailing list*



1.h4 e6 2.h5 Be7 3.h6 Nxh6 4.Rxh6 0-0  
5.Rxe6 Re8 6.Rxe7 Kf8 7.Rxe8+ Kxe8  
Black king uncastling switchback.



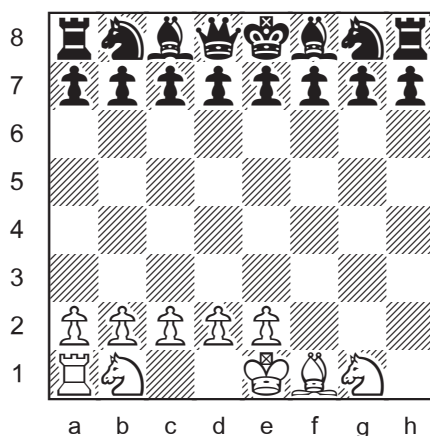
**Longer Proof Game 166** (7.5 moves)



1.d4 Nf6 2.d5 Nxd5 3.Bf4 Nxf4 4.Qxd7+ Bxd7  
5.Nd2 Bh3 6.Nxh3 Nxh3 7.Nf3 Ng1 8.Nxg1  
Very strange knight manoeuvres.

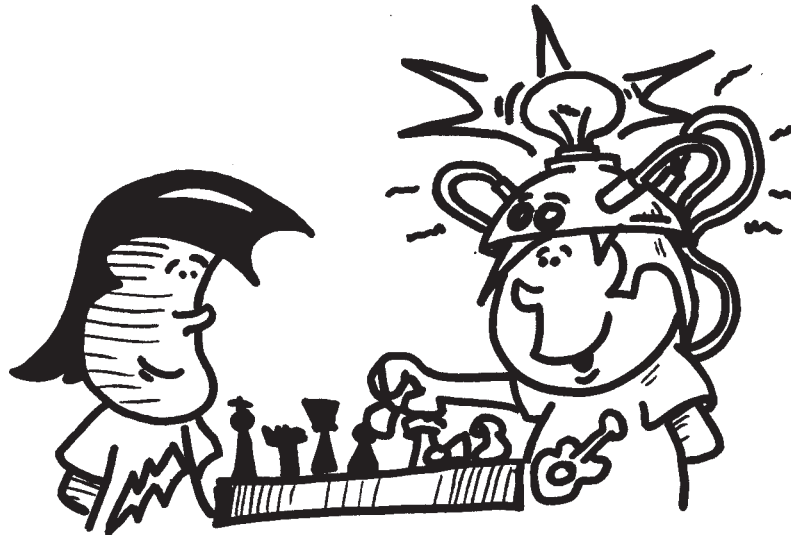
## Longer Proof Game 167 (10.5 moves)

François Perruchaud 2005  
*retro mailing list*



1.h4 Nf6 2.h5 Nxh5 3.f4 Nxf4 4.Kf2 Nd3+ 5.Kf3 Nxc1 6.Qe1 Nd3  
7.Qf2 Nxf2 8.g4 Nxg4 9.Rh6 Nxh6 10.Kf2 Ng8 11.Ke1

The white king's seemingly inexplicable trip to f3 surely makes this proof game unsolvable for human beings, at least for those without digitally enhanced brains.



Newfound Inspiration

*"This may be the best game I ever played."*

Until next time!

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