

TOP-SECRET, INVITE-ONLY!

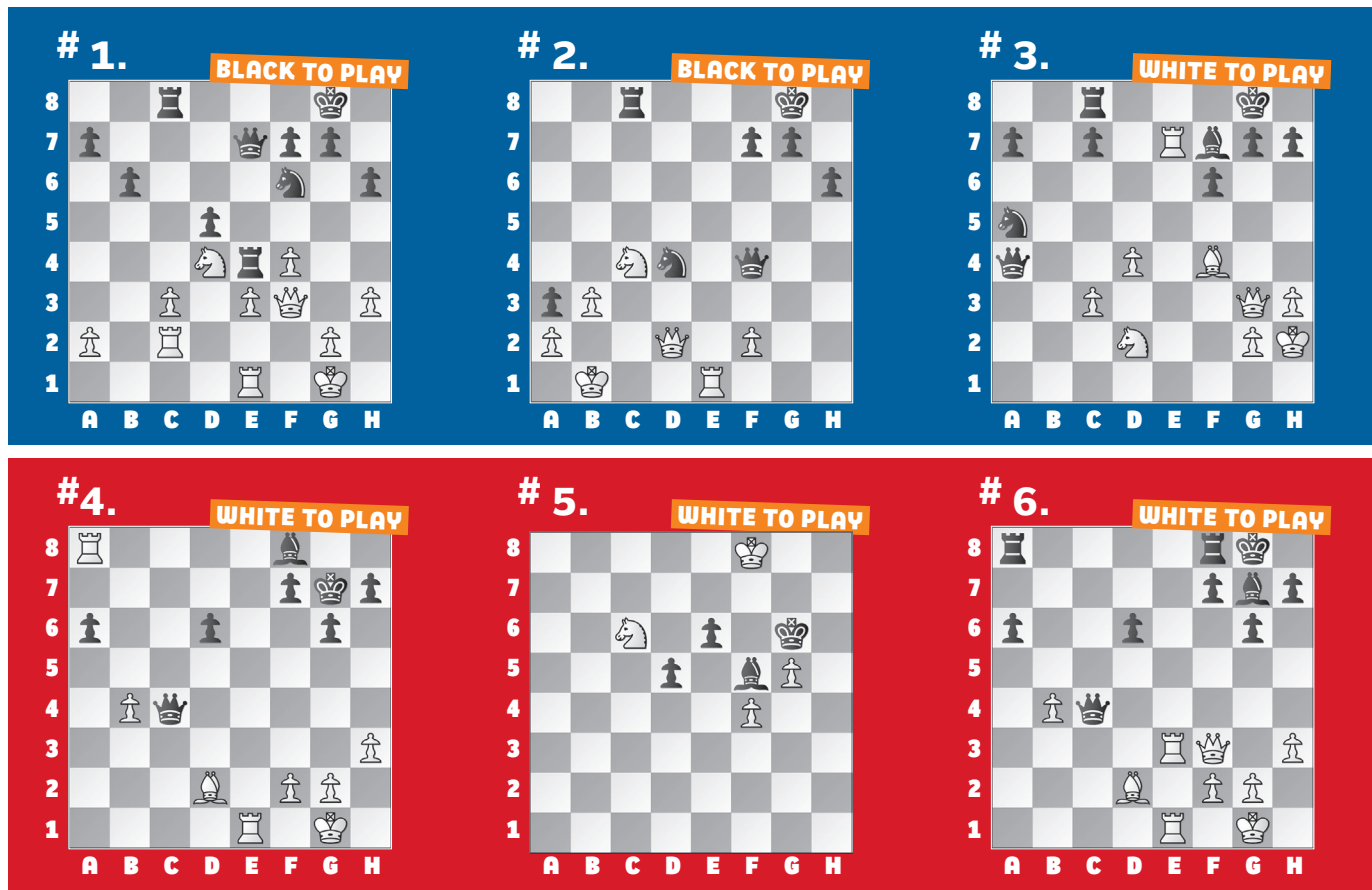
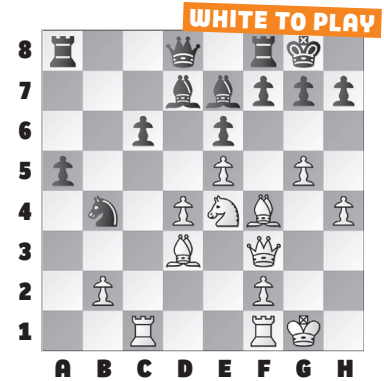
Every year, the U.S. Open hosts four invitationals for state scholastic champions of different grad levels (as well as one for each state's best

female player, and another one for seniors age 50 or older!).

As a chess teacher, I study the missed tactics in scholastic games. If a state champion missed it, my students should study it. Scholastic chess also provides opportunities for classic attacks, such as this masterpiece from Jou – Matus.

White uncorked a mating net with **22. Nf6+! Bxf6 23. Bxh7+! Kxh7 24. Qh5+ Kg8 25. gxf6** when Black has nothing better than **25. ... gxf6**.

As a **bonus**, can you find a way for White to end the game?!



SOLUTIONS

1) 36. ... Rxd4! This is a counterintuitive move, as the piece was defended twice by pawns. But pins are pins! **37. cxd4 Rxc2** and Black went on to win. (Ramesh – Ram, Grand Rapids, 2023) **2) 41. ... Qf5+** Black wanted to play ... Nd4-f3, but their queen was *en prise*. Problem solved. **42. Kc1 Nf3** winning. (Tao – Feng, Grand Rapids, 2023) **3) 28. Bh6 g5** Or 28. ... g6 29. Qf4! with the same idea. **29. Qf3!**

With forced mate. (Deng – Ren, Grand Rapids, 2023) **4) 29. Rxf8! Kxf8 30. Bh6+ Kg8 31. Re8** mate was the win after 28. ... Kg7 in puzzle six below. (Yan – Zhou, Grand Rapids, 2023, analysis) **5) 85. Ne7+! Kh5** The king is misplaced here, but 85. ... Kh7 86. Nxf5 exf5 87. Kf7 d4 88. g6+ is also hopeless. **86. Nxf5** The pawn endgame is winning, but you must see the line through to the end to see why: **86. ... exf5 87. Kf7 d4 88. g6 d3 89. g7 d2 90. g8=Q d1=Q 91.**

Qg5 mate. (Zhao – Malireddy, Grand Rapids, 2023) **6) 26. Qxa8!** White sees a mating net! **26. ... Rxa8 27. Re8+ Bf8 28. Rxa8 Qd5** See puzzle four for the refutation of 28. ... Kg7. **29. Rxf8+ Kg7 30. Be3** with more than enough material for the queen. (Yan – Zhou, Grand Rapids, 2023) **Bonus) 26. Kh1!** was played, but 26. Kh2 and even 26. Rc3 also won. Play continued **26. ... Re8 27. Rg1+ Kf8 28. Qh6+ Ke7 29. exf6** with mate. (Jou – Matus, Grand Rapids 2023)