

BRINGING HOME THE POINT

Many players struggle with turning a “winning” position into a won game. The secret to “converting” the position often lies in a well-timed

calculation based on trading pieces.

This week’s examples are taken from the first four rounds of the 2023 U.S. Women’s Championship, where trades turned ‘good’ positions into clearly won endgames.

Take this week’s **example**, from Pourkashiyan – Yu, where White has a number of ways to win, but White found the clearest and cleanest. White played **39. Qxb7 Qxb7 40. Rxa5** and Black was powerless to stop White from playing Bd6xc5,

sliding the rook to the b-file, and controlling the back rank.



1. WHITE TO PLAY

2. BLACK TO PLAY

3. BLACK TO PLAY

4. WHITE TO PLAY

5. WHITE TO PLAY

6. WHITE TO PLAY

SOLUTIONS

1) 43. Rxc4 A nice simplification! **Black resigned** here, as after **43. ... Kxc4 44. h4 Kd5 45. h5 Ke5 46. h6 Kf6**, Black’s king can catch the h-pawn, but it cannot rejoin the action fast enough. (Yip – Yu, St. Louis, 2023) **2) 30. ... Rgd8!** Black’s plan is simple: use the back-rank mate threats and control of the d1-square to force trades that clear the path for the e-pawn. **31. Re1 Rd1 32. f3 Rxa1 33. Rxa1 Rd1+**

winning. (Eswaran – Abrahamyan, St. Louis, 2023) **3) 38. ... Rxf3+!** A nice deflection to end the game, but the real point has to do with White’s loose f3-rook after **39. Rxf3 Qxg1+ 40. Kd2 Qg2+ 41. Qe2 Qxf3** when **White resigned**. (Lee – Yip, St. Louis, 2023) **4) 43. Rxf4** A precise in-between move! Note: 43. Rxf4?? was a mistake, as the other rook would still be hanging on e4. **43. ... gxf4 44. bxc5** would put White up a full piece, so **Black**

resigned after White’s 43rd move. (Abrahamyan – Lee, St. Louis, 2023) **5) 79. Bxh4!** An important point: the lone king can **draw** against a rook’s pawn if that rook’s pawn promotes on the opposite-colored square of the bishop. (Krush – Yip, St. Louis, 2023, analysis) **6) 45. Qxe4!** Sometimes, it’s easier to win with one queen and a safe king than two queens and a king on h4! **45. ... Qxe4 46. Kg3 Qg6+ 47. Kf2** winning. (Paikidze – Eswaran, St. Louis, 2023)