

CHECKS, CAPTURES & THREATS

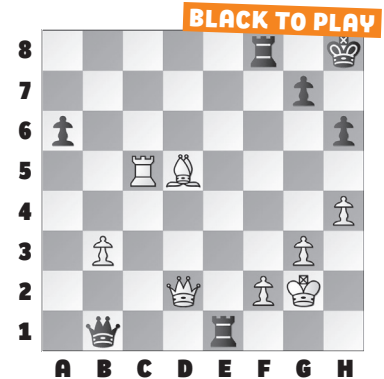
Checks, captures, and threats. We are taught to look for these every turn. Finding checks and captures is easy. But what's a threat: does a

threat on a hanging pawn count?

There's no easy answer, but here's a rule of thumb: threats of mate-in-one or mate-in-two are the most important to look for. This week, each puzzle features a mate threat.

In the **example**, Black begins by clearing out a path for the queen to enter on f1 with **51. ... Rh1!** It was not a check or capture, but the threat of mate forces White to part with a rook. **52. Rc1 Rxc1 53. Kh2** Now, White has guarded against

mate on h1. As a **bonus**, what is the most precise follow-up?



1. BLACK TO PLAY

2. BLACK TO PLAY

3. BLACK TO PLAY

4. BLACK TO PLAY

5. BLACK TO PLAY

6. BLACK TO PLAY

SOLUTIONS

1) 21. ... Rh6 22. Nc6 Qh3+ 23. Kg1 Bxc6 and mate followed shortly. (Tsydypov – Fressinet, Samarkand, 2023) **2) 41. ... Qf1 42. Qf8+ Kxf8 43. Nxf4** Now, ...Qf1-h1+ is not mate. But still, Black won after: **43. ... Qxf2+ 44. Kh3 Qf1+ 45. Kh2 Qh1+ 46. Kg3 Qg1+ 47. Ng2** or **47. Kf4 Qg4** mate. (Vakhidov – Shogdzhev, Samarkand, 2023) **3) 54. ... Rf1!** The point here is to make sure White's

checks run out. **55. g3+ Qxg3 56. Qf6+ Kxh3 57. Qf5+ Qg4 58. Qxg4+ hxg4 59. a6 Rxg1+ 60. Kxg1 e1=Q** mate. (Aydin – Velpula, Samarkand, 2023) **4) 30. ... Nxe3+ 31. Kh3 Rh7** There it is! The h4-square cannot be covered. **32. Qf8+ Kxf8 33. h5 Rxh5+ 34. Bxh5 Qxh5+ 35. Kg3 Qg4+ 36. Kh2 Qg2** mate. (Khadem – Ovod, Samarkand, 2023) **5) 37. ... Qf3+ 38. Rg2 Bf6.** Other bishop moves work. **39. h3 Qxg2** mate. (Naisanga

– Nomin-Erdene, Samarkand, 2023) **6) 37. ... Rg5!!** Now ...Rg5-h5+ followed by ...Qg1-g5 is a threat of mate-in-two. **38. Kh3** Allowing the f4-rook to interpose. **38. ... Rh5+ 39. Rh4 Rxh4+ 40. Kxh4 h5!** Mate can't be stopped. Even Duda missed this last move! (Duda – Chigaev, Samarkand, 2023, analysis) **BONUS) 53. ... Rc2** The threat on f2 wins. After **54. Qe3 Rxf2+ 55. Bg2 Qc2**, Black won shortly. (Ominov – Kasimov, Samarkand, 2023)