

will represent their states in the National Invitational Tournaments held alongside the U.S. Open this summer.

In our **EXAMPLE**, from the North Carolina High School Championship, Black forced mate with **23. ... Rxg2+!** **24. Kxg2 Nh4+** **25. Kh2** when White appears safe, as Black's only checks allow White to trade. But Black calculated far enough to see that after **25. ... Qc2+** **26. Qxc2 Rxc2+** **27. Kg1**, there's a

pretty finish with **27. ... Rg2+** **28. Kh1 Ng3** mate. Happy solving!



SOUTHEAST STATE CHAMPS

This week's puzzles come from K-12 scholastic state championships held across the southeast, where top boards were broadcast. The winners

1. WHITE TO PLAY

2. WHITE TO PLAY

3. WHITE TO PLAY

4. WHITE TO PLAY

5. WHITE TO PLAY

6. BLACK TO PLAY

SOLUTIONS

1) 26. Qe8+ A back-rank mate with a twist! **26. ... Rxe8 27. Rxe8+ Kg7 28. h6** mate. (Ram – Johnson, North Carolina, 2024) **2) 53. d8=Q!** White is able to salvage a half-point from a lost position thanks to a little fork trick. **53. ... Qxd8 54. Ne6+ Kf3 55. Nxd8 Kxf2** draw. (Ngo – Stone, Florida, 2024) **3) 56. Rg8!** One of the most important endgame tactical patterns to recognize. When a rook is trying to get out from in front of

its own pawn, sometimes it's better for the enemy king to be further away from the pawn rather than "caught in the center" like this. **56. ... Kf7 57. a8=Q Rxa8 58. Rxa8** when White is winning (Wang – Namalpu, South Carolina, 2024) **4) 15. Bxc4** Loose pieces drop off. So, White uses the fact that Black's knight is overloaded to deflect it away from the key-a4 square. **15. ... Nxc4** Note that **15. ... Bxc3 16. Qxc3** allows White to save the bishop. **16. Qa4+**

b5 17. Qxb4 a5 18. Qc5 and White won by checkmate ten moves later. (Ngo – Donnersmarck, Florida, 2024) **5) 38. Ne7+! Kg7 39. Be5+ Kf8 40. Nd5 Nxe6** If **40. ... Ba7 41. Bd6+ Ke8 42. Nc7+ Kd8 43. e7+** was the point. **41. Nxb6** and Black resigned 23 moves later. (Vinod – Vaibhav, Virginia, 2024) **6) 34. ... Be4!** It's not a forcing move, but it's unstoppable nevertheless. **35. Nxe3 Qxe3 36. a6 Qf2 37. Rg1 d4** and Black won shortly. (Webb – Jani, Florida, 2024)