

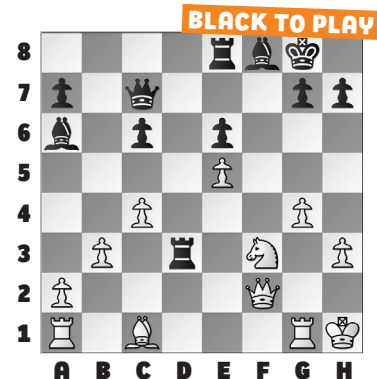
BALTIMORE HIGHLIGHTS, PT. 2

We return to Baltimore for more highlights from the **2024 National High School Championship**. This week's puzzles feature a number

of weak kings, so always look for checks and follow-up checks.

In our **example**, from Date – Usallan, Black spies a rather open long diagonal on the light squares and starts the winning plan with **26. ... c5!**. Although White tries to block the d3-rook with **27. Be3**, Black powers through: **Bb7 28. Rad1 Red8 29. Rxd3 Rxd3** and now the problem is clear: the e5-pawn falls and White's king remains in danger. After **30. Qe2 Qxe5**, Black went on

to win, since **31. Qxd3 Bxf3+ 32. Rg2 Qg3** would be game over.



1. BLACK TO PLAY

2. WHITE TO PLAY

3. BLACK TO PLAY

4. BLACK TO PLAY

5. WHITE TO PLAY

6. BLACK TO PLAY

SOLUTIONS

1) Black wins by looking for follow-up checks after the sac. **24. ... Qxg2+!** **25. Kxg2 Ne3+** A royal fork! **26. Kf3 Nxc2** and Black is a piece ahead. (Wright – Underwood, Baltimore, 2024) **2)** Plenty of moves win, but White can construct a mating net with **53. Rd5! Bf5 54. h4** and g2-g3 with mate to follow. In the game, 54. d7 Bxd7 55. g3 mate also worked. (Wu – Wilson, Baltimore, 2024) **3)** Black is so close to a mate

on the d2-square. **27. ... Rd2!** and **White resigned**. Even **28. Qxd2 exd2** does not stop an eventual mate. (Liu – Huston, Baltimore, 2024) **4)** Black is about to get mated, or are they? **28. ... Qc1+!** **29. Kg2 Qg5+ 30. Kf1 Qc1+** **31. Ke2 Qxc4+** and White had to find **32. Kd2** to hold. Instead, after 32. Kd1?? Qa4+ 33. Ke1 Qxd7, White resigned 12 moves later. (Weis – Trickey, Baltimore, 2024) **5)** White uses calculation to force their pawn through: **52. Qc3+! Kh7**

Alternatives all lose: 52. ... Kf8?? 53. Qh8 mate; 52. ... Kg8 53. Qc8+ Kg7 54. d8=Q wins; 52. ... Kg6 53. Qd3+ is similar; 52. ... Kh6 53. Qh8+ Kg6 54. d8=Q also wins. **53. Qd3+ Kg7 54. d8=Q Qb7+** **55. Q8d5** and **Black resigned**. (Lu – Peterson, Baltimore, 2024) **6)** Black says “what if I take the knight anyways?” **26. ... dxc3 27. Rxd5 cxb2 28. Rxb5 c3 29. Rb3** and Black went on to win. Best was **29. ... Nd4 30. Rxc3 Ne2+** with a fork. (Milch – Brush, Baltimore, 2024)