

Elementary School Championship in Columbus, Ohio. This week's theme is checkmates and would-be mates.

In our **example**, White had to make a high-stakes choice about how to recapture the f3-bishop. White chose correctly with **20. Nxf3!** and White's position is not great, but he went on to win the game and the K-6 Championship in Khanbutaev - Muneeppeerakul. Instead, **20. Qxf3??** is tempting, but would lose to **20. ... Nxd4 21. Qxh3**

Ne2+ 22. Kxg2 Nxf4+ 23. Kg3 Nxh3 putting Black up two pieces!



NES MATE THREATS AND MORE

We continue our series of puzzles from the spring scholastic championships with the first of two installments from the **National**

1. WHITE TO PLAY

2. WHITE TO PLAY

3. BLACK TO PLAY

4. BLACK TO PLAY

5. BLACK TO PLAY

6. BLACK TO PLAY

SOLUTIONS

1) We are only 12 moves in the game, and yet White had a funny mate-in-two featuring a promotion with **12. c7+ Bd7 13. cxb8=Q** mate. (Kelsch – Gupta, Columbus, 2024) **2)** Another mate-in-two: **23. Nf6+ Kh8 24. Nf7** mate. (Smith – Santhosh, Columbus, 2024) **3)** This one isn't a forced mate-in-two, but White loses material otherwise: **42. ... fxg3+! 43. Kxg3** Anything else hangs the h2-rook. **43. ... Bh4** mate. (Shin – Wang,

Columbus, 2024) **4)** Mate will take a bit longer than two moves here, but Black is much closer to breaking through than it might seem. Remember, queens make terrible blockaders, so the f3-pawn is very much a player here. Black wins with **27. ... Rxd2! 28. Qxd2 f2+** winning significant material. (Qiao – Kim, Columbus, 2024) **5)** Black isn't the only side with loose pieces. **7. ... Qc6!** Black begins pressuring the c4-bishop. After **8. Nxe5** Other moves

still hang the g2-pawn. **8. ... Qxg2 9. Bf7+ Kd8 10. Rf1** White may have thought they were in the clear, but there's a well-known opening trap here that Black found: **10. ... Qe4+ 11. Qe2 Qxe2** mate. (Kobichev – Deutsch, Columbus, 2024) **6)** Finally, a puzzle that isn't about checkmate! Black missed an endgame win with: **37. ... c4! 38. bxc4 bxa4 39. Nb1 Nc2** and Black's outside passed pawn gets through. (Tjeng – Yang, Columbus, 2024, analysis)