

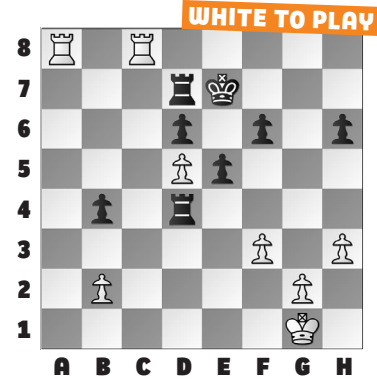
MIDDLE SCHOOL HIGHLIGHTS

This week's examples come from the **National Middle School Championship** held earlier this month in Atlanta. Enjoy a number

of deflections, decoys and double attacks.

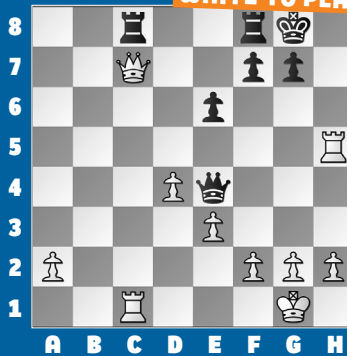
In our **example**, let's appreciate how White's rooks zig-zag around the board to win the weak d7-piece, with a little help from Black's pawns. **41. Rh8! Rxd5** The only other way to avoid mate is 41. ... f5 **42. Rh7+ Kf6** 43. Rxd7 winning the rook. **42. Rh7+ Ke6** The rook is still defended, but just barely! I like how Black's own pawns turn out to be their king's worst enemy. **43. Re8+**

Kf5 44. Rxd7 and White went on to win in Wen – Chen.



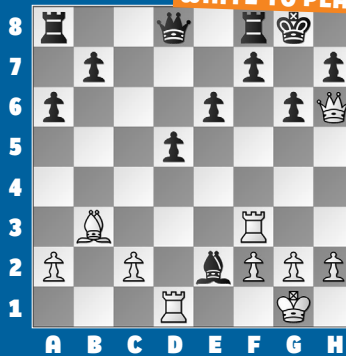
1.

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. Qxc8 Black does not have a pawn on h7, but still has to watch for back rank threats! **26. ... Rxc8 27. Rxc8** mate. (Live – Hoyos, Atlanta, 2024) **2) 24. Rh3** White might not force mate, but the initiative is crushing. **24. ... Re8** However, 24. ... Bh5 does lead to mate: 25. Rxh5 gxh5 26. Rd3 with Rd3-g3 incoming. **25. Qxh7+ Kf8 26. Re1** when Black is helpless. (Ramireddy – Lopez Ibarra, Atlanta,

2024) **3) Great deflection of Black's queen away from the d5-pawn. 21. Bf4 Qf6 22. Qxd5+** with control of the center. (Ismayilova – You, Atlanta, 2024) **4) A smart double-attack. White's bishop is under attack, but the a8-rook makes up for it. 12. Qf3! hxg5 13. Qxc6+ Nd7 14. Qxa8** and White is winning. (Moorhouse – Kannan, Atlanta, 2024) **5) 18. Nxf7** White crashes through. Black did not capture, and lost, but the capture loses by

force, for instance after **18. ... Kxf7 19. Qxf5+ Ke7 20. Qf6+ Ke8 21. Qxg6+ Ke7 22. Qf6+ Kd7 23. 0-0-0+** winning the queen. (Liu – Rao, Atlanta, 2024, analysis) **6) Black uses some amazing geometry on the dark squares. 29. ... Rxe3!** Or 29. ... Bxc5 is also strong, but the text leaves more of a dazzling visual impression. **30. Qxa3 Rxa3 31. Rxa3 Bxc5+ 32. Re3 Bxe3+ 33. Kxe3 d5** with an easily won endgame for Black. (Lee – Paragua, Atlanta, 2024)