

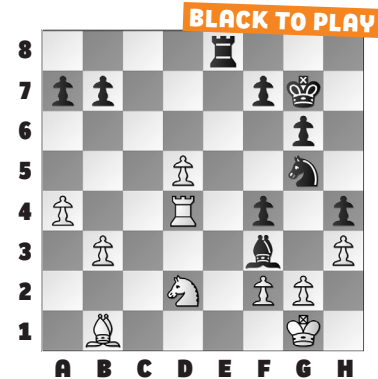
TOURNAMENTS OF CHAMPIONS

This week's puzzles come from the 2024 tournaments of state champions, held alongside the **U.S. Open** in Norfolk, Virginia. These

events feature players of all ages, with this week featuring the Haring (girls), Denker (high school), and Irwin (senior).

In our **example**, Black blundered with **31. ... Nxh3+?? 32. Kh2!** Black likely forgot that White did not have to capture, since **32. gxh3?? Re1+ 33. Nf1** (worse is **33. Kh2?? Rh1** mate) **33. ... Be2** is strong. But now Black loses a piece, as both her knight and bishop hang. **32. ... Nxf2 33. Nxf3** and White went on to win in Su –

Kilari, Norfolk, 2024. Remember: they don't always have to recapture!



1. BLACK TO PLAY

2. WHITE TO PLAY

3. WHITE TO PLAY

4. BLACK TO PLAY

5. WHITE TO PLAY

6. WHITE TO PLAY

SOLUTIONS

1) 63. ... Ra4 Simplification! **64. Re4** Not **64. Rxa4?** **bxa4** and White's king is outside the "box." **64. ... Rxe4+** **65. Kxe4 Kg5** and Black uses the b-pawn as a decoy. (Verma – Paragua, Norfolk, 2024) **2) 38. Rxf7+** Attraction! **38. ... Kxf7** Black instead played **38. ... Kg8** which avoided mate, but after **39. Qc4 Qxd2+** **40. Kg1 Qd1+** **41. Kg2 Qd5+** **42. Qxd5 cxd5** **43. Rxf6**, Black resigned. Capturing lost due to **39. Qd7+**

Kg8 40. Qxe8+ Kg7 41. Qf8 mate. (Burnett – Rubsamen, Norfolk, 2024) **3) 24. Rh3** Always look for checks, captures, and threats. But which threats are the most important? Threats of checkmate! **4) 19. ... cxd3** Discovery! **20. c3** Or **20. cxd3 Nc2** still wins an Exchange. **20. ... Nc2** and Black went on to win. (Elliott – Khmelnsky, Norfolk, 2024) **5) 19. Ndxh5!** Discovery into a fork! White missed this idea, opting for the less-forcing **19. Nb3**.

19. ... axb5 20. Rxd7 White regains the piece up an important pawn. (Huston – Deviprasath, Norfolk, 2024, analysis) **6) There are many captures. Which is best? 20. Nxc4!** Not **20. hxg4?? hxg4+** **21. Bh3 Rxh3+** wins; not **20. Bxa8? Bxf1** and Black is better. **20. ... bxc4** Forced, as **20. ... Qxc4** **21. Qd6+ Ke8** **22. Qxb6** wins. **21. Bxa8** Only now! **21. ... Rxa8 22. Qd6+! Qxd6 23. exd6+ Kxd6 24. hxg4** and White went on to win. (Deviprasath – Drippe, Norfolk, 2024)