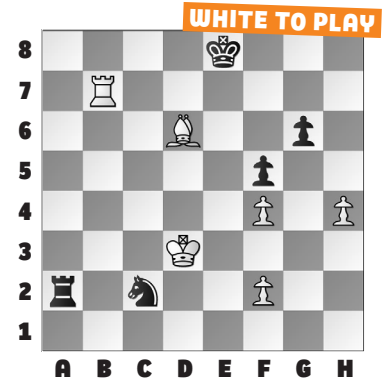


greatest players in the world still make blunders that remind us they are still mortal.

In our **example**, Black's c2-knight is short on squares. White went with **58. Re7+ Kd8 59. Re2** using the check on Black's king to re-route the rook to the e-file. After **59. ... Kd7** White had to be careful not to give back the b4-square! Similarly, 59. ... Ra6 is met by 60. Bc5 when 60. ... Rc6 61. Rxc2 covers the bishop! **60. Bc5** Black played **60. ... Ne1+ 61.**

**Rxe1** and White was a piece ahead in Firouzja – Nepomniachtchi.



### SAINT LOUIS RAPID & BLITZ, PT. 1

This week's puzzles come from the **2024 Saint Louis Rapid & Blitz**, won by GM Alireza Firouzja. With only seconds to make critical moves, the

**# 1. WHITE TO PLAY**

**# 2. BLACK TO PLAY**

**# 3. WHITE TO PLAY**

**# 4. BLACK TO PLAY**

**# 5. BLACK TO PLAY**

**# 6. WHITE TO PLAY**

### SOLUTIONS

**1) 38. Rb5** White wins an important pawn, destroying Black's kingside. **38. ... Qc3 39. Rxc3 40. Qg6** White is crushing. (Abdusattorov – Pragganandhaa, St. Louis, 2024) **2) 20. ... Ba4** A nice skewer, picking up at least an Exchange. **21. Qc3** Don't forget to calculate all captures: if 21. dxe5 Bxc2 22. exf6 Bxd1 23. Rxc6 still leaves Black up. **21. ... Bxd1 22. Rxd1** If 22. Qxc6 Qxc6 23. Rxc6 Bxf3 24. gxf3 exd4 was no better. So,

Black comes out ahead. (Aronian – Caruana, St. Louis, 2024) **3) 45. Rc8+** While 45. Rc7 might keep some advantage, it's not easy: 45. Rc7 leaves a lot of chess to be played. But here, **Black resigned**, as **45. ... Nxc8 46. d7+** led to promotion. (Aronian – Caruana, St. Louis, 2024) **4) 68. ... Qxc4+** If a GM blunders a pawn, take it! **69. Qxc4 Ne3+ 70. Ke2 Nxc4** with a won endgame. (Abdusattorov – Firouzja, St. Louis, 2024) **5) 23. ... Ne5** Crafty! White's

rook has plenty of safe moves. Well, two. But both **24. Rf4** and **24. Rf2** fall to 24. ... Nd3 with a fork. **24. ... Nd3 25. Qg2 Qxc2+ 26. Kxg2 Nxf4+** Black is ahead. (Nakamura – Caruana, St. Louis, 2024) **6) 28. Nh5** White threatens Rb7xg7+. **28. ... Qxb1** Best, but now White has an *intermezzo*! If 28. ... Rg8, 29. Nf6+ Kh8 30. Qxg6 wins. **29. Rxc7+ Kh8 30. Rxb1** With an extra piece for good luck. (Pragganandhaa – Nepomniachtchi, St. Louis, 2024)