

SAINT LOUIS RAPID & BLITZ, PT. 2

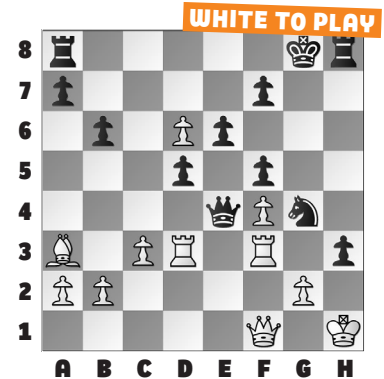
This week's puzzles once again come from the **Saint Louis Rapid & Blitz** tournament. Just like last week, there's a dazzling array of

combinations that win everything from forced mate to a key pawn.

In our **example**, White was faced with a critical case of "this or that?" when choosing how to recapture on the h3-square.

In the game, White blundered with **32. Rxh3??** overlooking **32. ... Qxd3!** when **33. Qxd3** is forced, since the h3-rook is pinned. But now, after **33. ... Rxh3+ 34. Qxh3 Nf2+ 35. Kg1 Nxh3+**, Black had a winning endgame in Vachier-

Lagrange – Abdusattorov. Instead, **32. gxh3** would have kept it equal.



1. BLACK TO PLAY

2. BLACK TO PLAY

3. BLACK TO PLAY

4. WHITE TO PLAY

5. WHITE TO PLAY

6. BLACK TO PLAY

SOLUTIONS

1) 44. ... Rxd6 In a game between two 2700+ players, Black missed this move, opting for 44. ... Qd7, when he eventually lost. The clock is the enemy of us all. (Aronian – Dominguez, St. Louis, 2024) **2) 27. ... Qxf1+! White resigned**, and probably went back to brush up on his checkmate patterns. **28. Kxf1 Re1** mate was the point, while 28. Kh2 would cost an entire rook. (Abdusattorov – Nepomniachtchi,

St. Louis, 2024) **3) 44. ... Qc6+ White resigned**, since Black captures twice on e8 after any move. (Aronian – Abdusattorov, St. Louis, 2024) **4) 25. Qc1** Did Black see the pin coming? Probably, but how is White going to exploit it? **25. ... cxd4 26. Nd1!** That's a funny one! **26. ... dxc3** Or 26. ... Rxa2 27. Qxa3! is another x-ray! 27. ... Rxa3 28. Rxa3 wins as well. **27. Rxc3 Qa4 28. Nxb2** and White went on to win. (Nakamura – Abdusattorov, St. Louis, 2024) **5) 34.**

h5 Rg7 35. Rxe6 Bxh5 Black regains the pawn, but now **36. Reb6** Without ... Be8-c6, this wins. (Abdusattorov – Nakamura, St. Louis, 2024) **6) 31. ... Bf5!** White's queen will be overloaded defending the c2-bishop and h5-knight. **32. Qe2 Bxc2 33. Nxf6+** Did you catch this *intermezzo*? If 33. Qxc2 Nxh5 was the point. **33. ... gxh3** A third minor piece is under fire! **34. Nd7 Bg6** Black remains a piece to the good. (Aronian – Nepomniachtchi, St. Louis, 2024)