

## 12TH CHERRY BLOSSOM CLASSIC

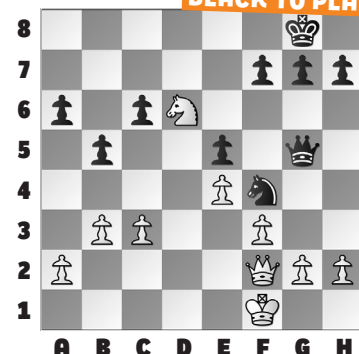
This week's puzzles come from another Memorial Day weekend event: the **12th Cherry Blossom Classic**, held near Washington, D.C.

The early rounds of competitive opens showcase the kinds of tactical mistakes lower-rated players make.

In our **example**, Black uncorked the fantastic **27. ... Nd3** attacking White's queen. White has nothing better than **28. f4** because 28. Qe2 Qc1+ is a nice net, while 28. Qc2 Qe3 shows the power of the queen-and-knight combo. After **28. ... Qh6 29. Nf5 Qxh2** White's queen had to move. But now **30. Qb6 Qh1+ 31. Ke2** Or 31. Qg1 Qh5 also wins,

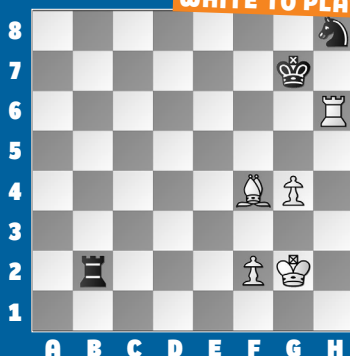
as does **31. ... Nxf4+** when White **resigned** soon in Guo – De Silva.

**BLACK TO PLAY**



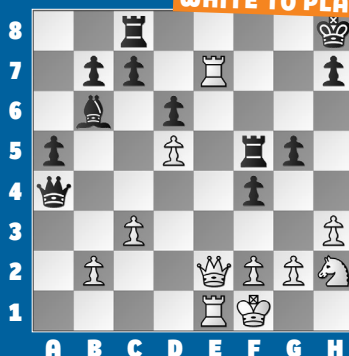
# 1.

**WHITE TO PLAY**



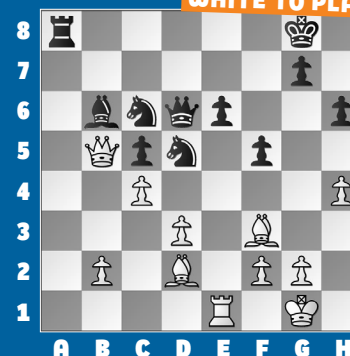
# 2.

**WHITE TO PLAY**



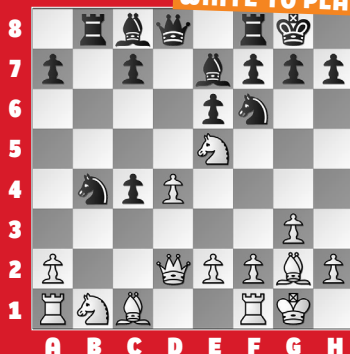
# 3.

**WHITE TO PLAY**



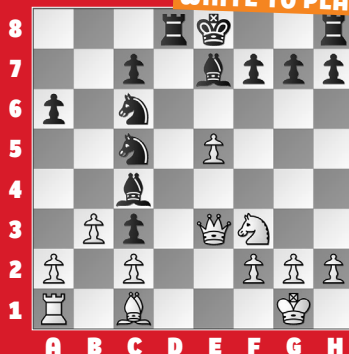
# 4.

**WHITE TO PLAY**



# 5.

**WHITE TO PLAY**



# 6.

**WHITE TO PLAY**



## SOLUTIONS

**1) 43. Rxh8** Simplification tactics are often the fastest way to win a won endgame. **Black resigned**, as **43. ... Kxh8 44. Be5+** wins, and **43. ... Rxf2+** still leaves White with a pawn. (Brady – Shankar, Virginia, 2025) **2) 29. Qh5** Go for the king weaknesses! The mate threats are unstoppable, and **Black resigned**. (Stremavicius – Aravindakshan, Virginia, 2025) **3) 25. Rxe6** Black has too many loose pieces. **25. ... Ra1+**

**26. Re1** Best. Black's remaining pieces still collapse, as the b6-bishop hangs after the d5-knight moves. (De Silva – Mujumdar, Virginia, 2025) **4) 12. a3!** A quiet move, putting Ne5-c6 on the agenda. **12. ... Nbd5 13. Nc6 Qe8 14. Nxb8** Black can win back the Exchange, but no more. (Shah – Guo, Virginia, 2025) **5) 16. Ba3** A powerful *intermezzo*! **16. ... Nxb3** Or 16. ... Ne6 17. Bxe7 Nxe7 18. bxc4 leaves Black with only two

pieces for the queen. **17. axb3 Bxa3 18. bxc4** Best. Instead, 18. Qxc3?? Bb5 19. Rxa3?? Rd1+ 20. Ne1 Nd4 saw Black take over! (Shih – Pang, Virginia, 2025) **6) 36. Qd4!** The rook and bishop help the a-pawn. **36. ... Re1+** A *desperado*. If 36. ... Qxd4+ 37. Rxd4 Rd8 38. a4 Kf8 39. a5 Ke7 40. Ra4, Black is in trouble. **37. Kf2** Not 37. Kg2? when 37. ... Qb7+ leaves hope. **37. ... Ne4+ 38. Kf3 Rf1+** A last *desperado*. **39. Kxe4** The checks run out. (Bora – Diao, Virginia, 2025)