

2025 CAIRNS CUP, PART 1

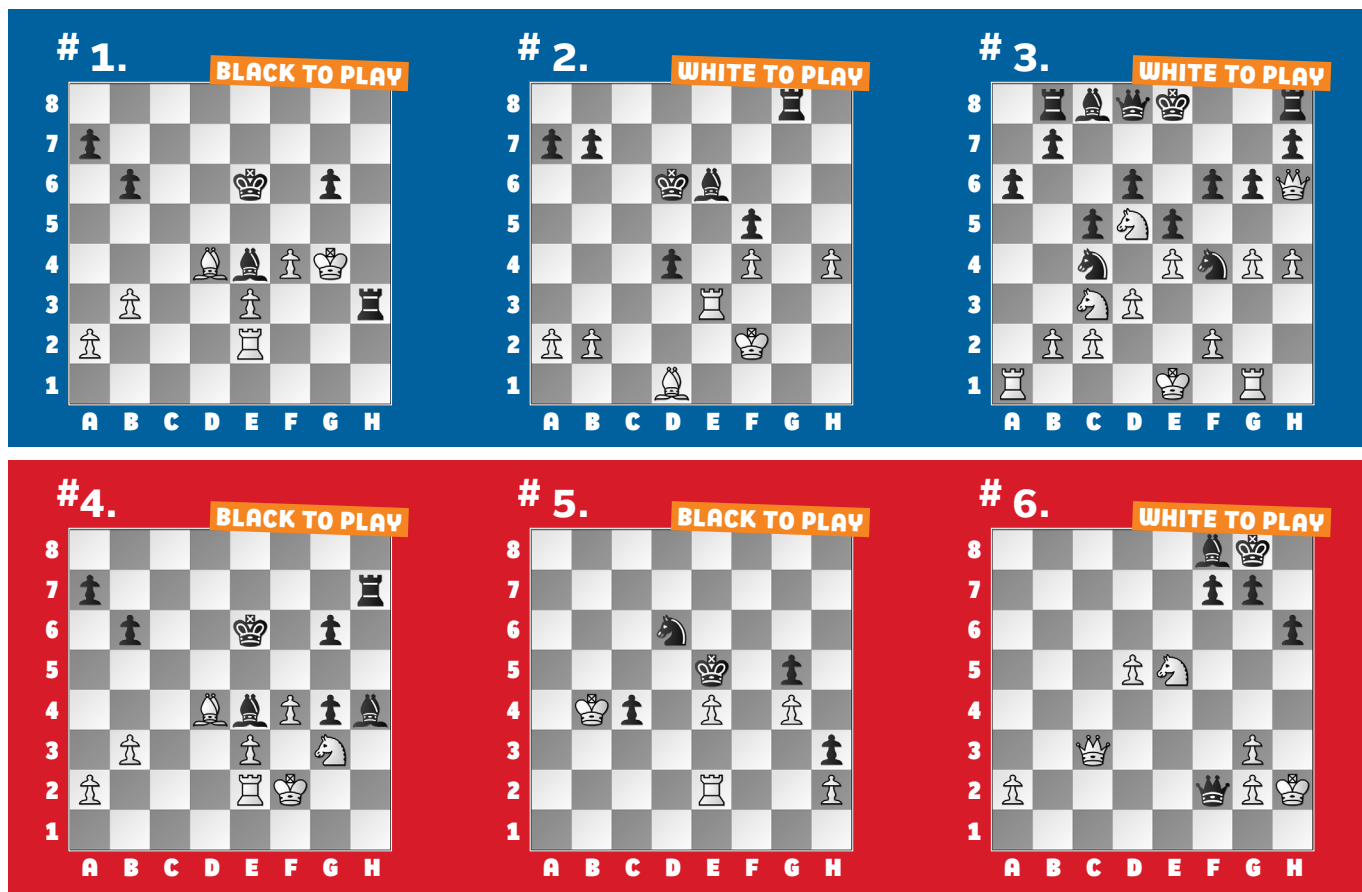
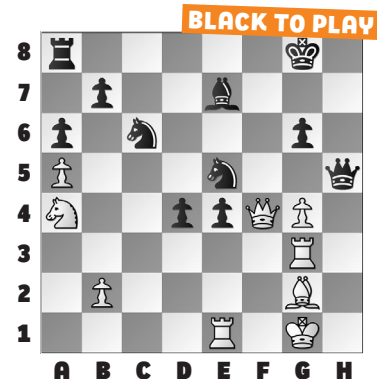
This week's exercises come from the **2025 Cairns Cup**. Ten top women in chess square off in St. Louis, including Olympiad teammates IMs

Alice Lee and Carissa Yip.

In our **example**, Yip took down the defending Cairns champion GM Tan Zhongyi with the classy **36. ... Qh4!** when White's forces are entirely paralyzed. Black threatens both ... Ra8-f8 and ... Be7-g5 to dislodge White's queen from the g3-rook.

What makes this position so interesting is Black would lose any trace of an advantage after a queen trade with 36. ... Qg5? 37. Qxg5 Bxg5. This goes to show

how temperamental materially imbalanced positions can be.



SOLUTIONS

1) 46. ... Bf5+ The conclusion of a variation. **47. Kg5 Rh5** mate. (Dzagnidze – Harika, St. Louis, 2025) **2) 52. Rxe6+** A devastating end to an even battle in the match-up of the two Georgian veterans. **Black resigned**, as **52. ... Kxe6 53. Bb3+** leaves White piece-up thanks to the skewer. (Dzagnidze – Batsiashvili, St. Louis, 2025) **3) 20. Qg7** A strong double attack. **20. ... Bd7** Saving the rook with 20. ... Rf8 loses even

more material after 21. Nc7+ when Black's only legal move is to give up the queen. **21. Qxh8+ Kf7 22. Qxh7+** and **Black resigned** three moves later. (Assaubayeva – Lee, St. Louis, 2025) **4) 44. ... Bxg3+ 45. Kxg3 Rh3+ 46. Kf2** Note that 46. Kxg4 would reach the first puzzle. **46. ... g3+ 47. Ke1** Anything else allows ... Rh3-h1 mate. **47. ... Rh1+** But now Black has a host of winning options, including ... g3-g2 and ... Rh1-h2 after White's 48. Kd2, which is forced.

(Dzagnidze – Harika, St. Louis, 2025) **5) 48. ... Nf7!** Surprising! **49. Kxc4 Nh6** White's e-pawn is frozen and now the g-pawn drops, giving Black chances. (Kashlinskaya – Muzychuk, St. Louis, 2025) **6) 42. Qc8! Qd4** If 42. ... Qc5, 43. Qxc5 Bxc5 44. a4 wins. But 42. ... g6 allows 43. Nd7 when Black has no defense. **43. Nd7 Qxd5** Hoping for a perpetual. **44. Qxf8+ Kh7 45. Qe7! Qh5+ 46. Qh4** This stops the checks! (Dzagnidze – Assaubayeva, St. Louis, 2025)