

SAINT LOUIS RAPID & BLITZ, PT. 2

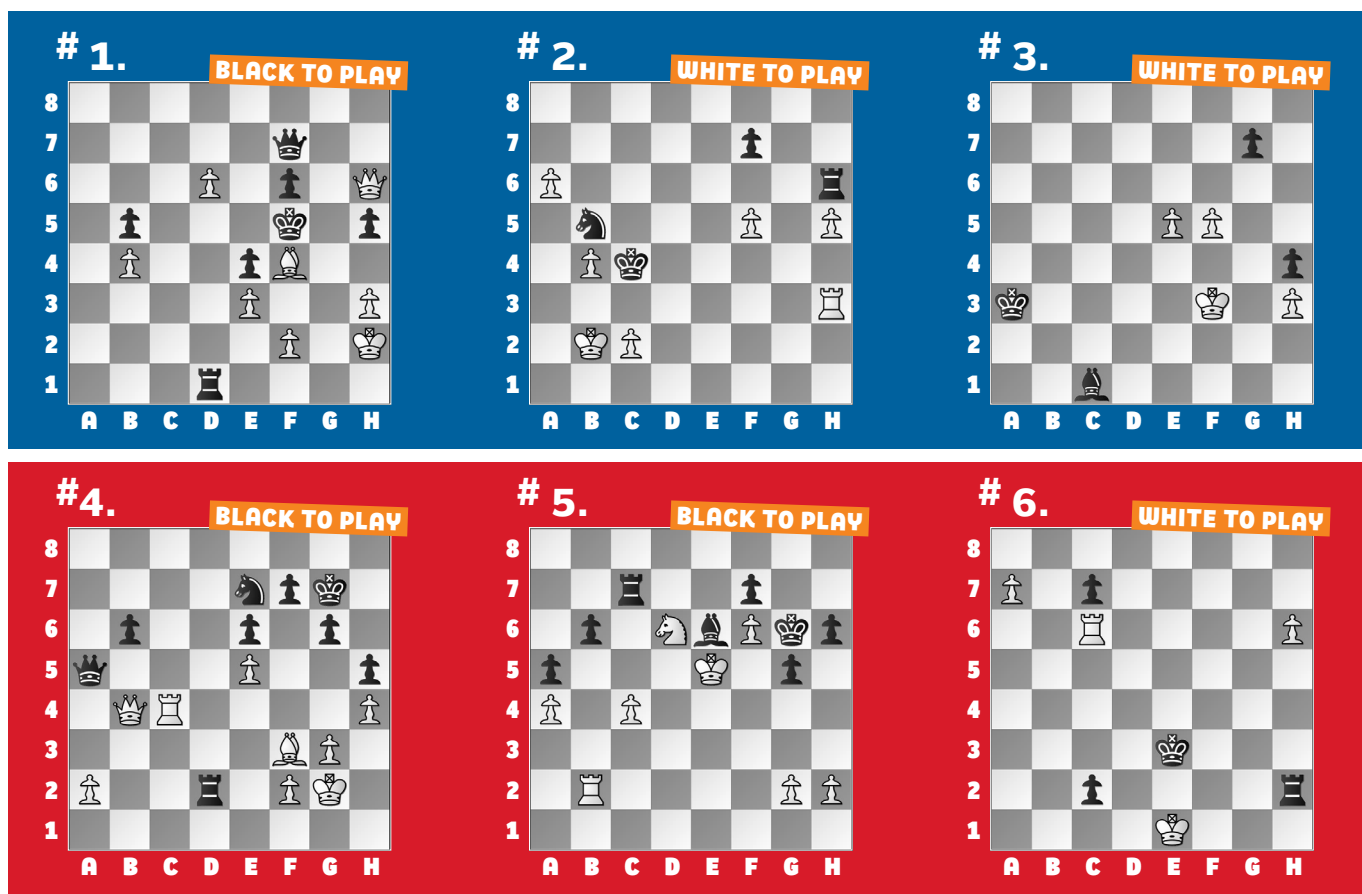
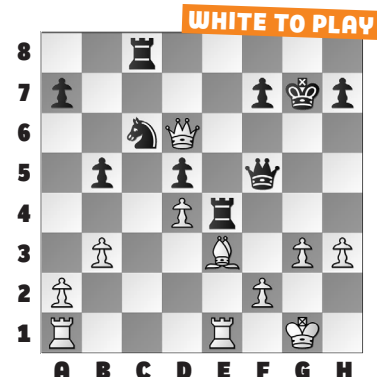
Today's puzzles again come from the **2025 Saint Louis Rapid & Blitz Championship**, where GM Levon Aronian won the marathon 27-game

five-day tournament.

With so many games decided in time scrambles, there are plenty of opportunities to sharpen up our tactics. Note that, even at this elite level, many of these positions involve the building blocks of loose pieces, pins, exposed kings, and dangerous passed pawns.

In our **example**, White won with **25. Bh6+ Kg8 26. Rxe4!** removing counterplay before pinning the knight, and now **26. ... Qxe4 27.**

Rc1 Qe6 set up a knockout blow for White. As a **bonus**, can you find it?



SOLUTIONS

1) 49. ... Qg6! A simplification tactic! (Shankland – Le, St. Louis, 2025) **2) 44. Rh4+** Winning back the knight. White missed the trick, playing 44. f6? and going on to draw. **44. ... Kd5** Or 44. ... Nd4 45. c3 wins. **45. c4+** White wins back the piece and is up too many pawns. (Dominguez – Caruana, St. Louis, 2025, analysis) **3) 49. f6** Running interference! In the time scramble, White played 49. Kg4 and only

managed a draw. **49. ... gxf6 50. e6** The bishop can't reach the e7-square! (Shankland – Gukesh, St. Louis, 2025, analysis) **4) 43. ... Qxa2** The knight hangs, but it's hardly a sac. **44. Qxe7 Rxf2+ 45. Kg1 Rxf3** Regaining the piece, covering f6, and threatening mate. (Gukesh – Dominguez, St. Louis, 2025) **5) 41. ... Rc5+** Subtle! The immediate 41. ... Bxc4 allows 42. Rxb6 with counterplay. **42. Kd4 Rc6** Defending the b6-pawn while attacking the

knight. **43. Ke5 Bxc4** Only now! With a rook on c4, the a-pawn also falls. (Abdusattorov – Caruana, St. Louis, 2025) **6) 57. Rc3+** Disrupting the mating net. Not 57. Rxc2?? Rh1 mate **57. ... Kd4 58. Rxc2** Now, the decoy wins. (Dominguez – Le, St. Louis, 2025) **Bonus) 28. Rxc6!** and **Black resigned**, as mate is forced after either **28. ... Rxc6 29. Qd8+ Qe8 30. Qxe8** mate, or **28. ... Qxd6 29. Rxc8+ Qf8 30. Rxf8** mate. (Gukesh – Shankland, St. Louis, 2025)