

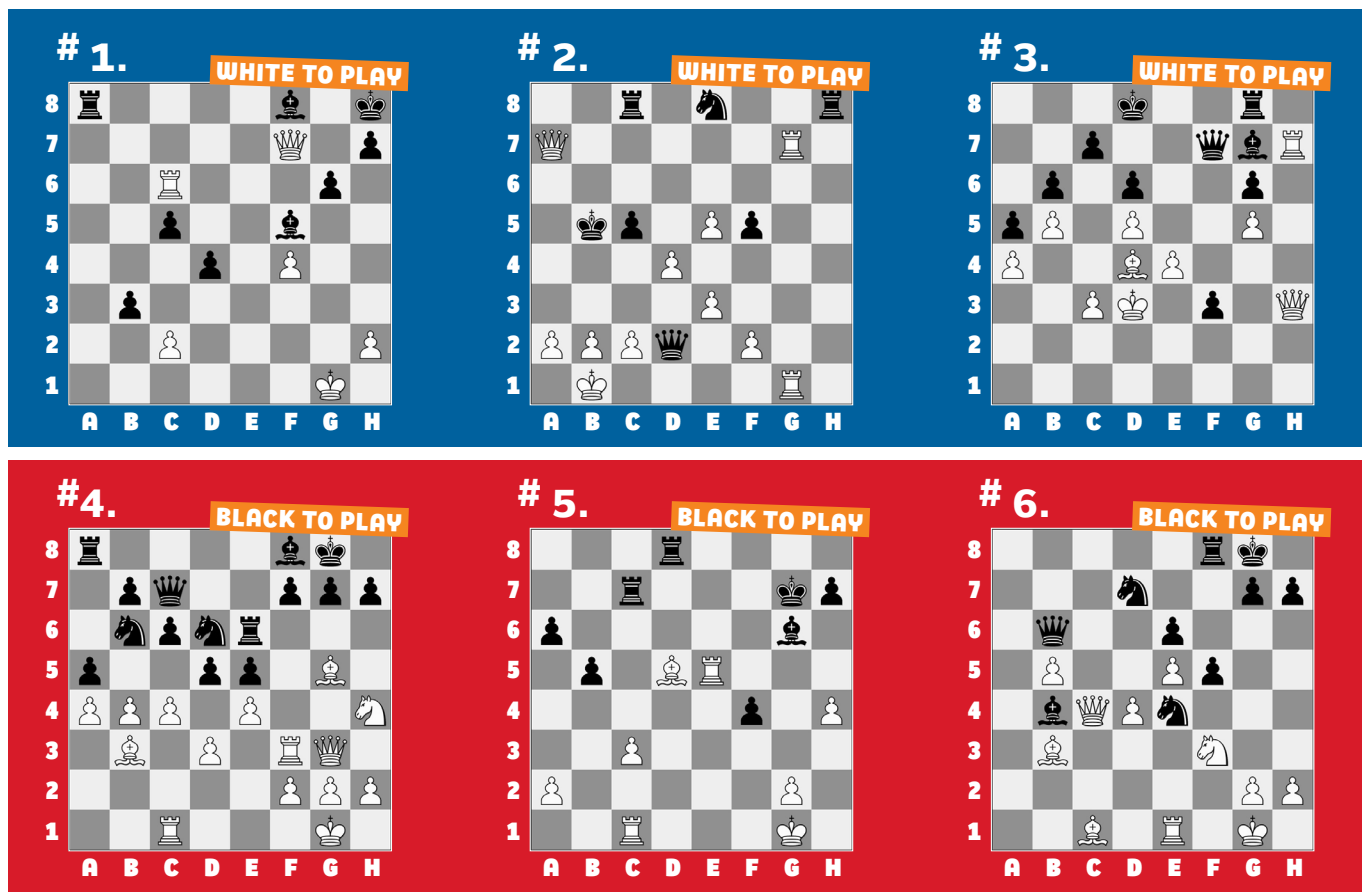
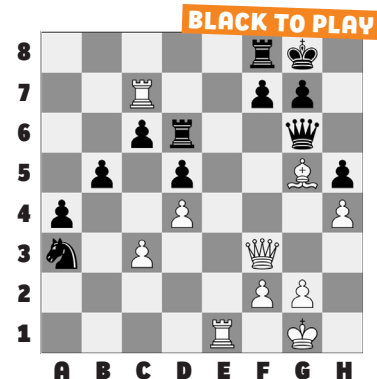
U.S. SENIOR WOMEN'S CHAMPS

Today's exercises come from the just concluded **2025 U.S. Senior Women's Championship**, held in Murray, Utah. Reigning champion

WFM Natalya Tsodikova defeated 2023 champion WGM Anjelina Belakovskaia in an Armageddon playoff game for the title, and the entire weekend was full of fighting, instructive chess.

In our **example**, Black played **28. ... Nc4** because, even though she saw the threat of White's next move, she reasoned that, with White's e1-rook hanging, she should be able to untangle from the skewer in time after **29. Be7 Re8 30. Re2 Re6** when

she remains up two pawns and went on to win in Cabrera – Airapetian.



SOLUTIONS

1) 54. Rc7 g5 Nothing else defends h7. **55. Qf6+** Or 55. Qxf5 was even faster. **55. ... Kg8 56. Qxf5 Bg7 57. Qf7+ Kh8 58. Qxg7** mate. (Airapetian – Skidmore Smith, Murray, 2025)
2) 35. a4+ Kc4 Or 35. ... Kb4 36. Qb6+ Kxa4 (if 36. ... Kc4 37. Qb3 mate) 37. Qb3+ Ka5 38. Ra7 mate. **36. Qf7+** and **Black resigned** due to **36. ... Kb4 37. Qb3+ Ka5 38. Qb5** mate. (Belakovskaia – Tsodikova, Murray, 2025) **3) 47. Bf6+** and

Black resigned, as **47. ... Bxf6** was forced, due to **47. ... Ke8 48. Qc8** mate. But now **48. Rxf7** wins the queen. (Sagalchik – Christiansen, Murray, 2025) **4) 27. ... dxc4!** The right capture. Note: 27. ... dxe4?! 28. c5 would be murkier. **28. dxc4 Nxe4** White has lost an important pawn and the bishop pair. (Kuhner – Skidmore Smith, Murray, 2025) **5) 33. ... Rc5** Black missed the chance to win a piece here. After 33. ... h6 the game remained level, though

Black later won. **34. c4** Or 34. Rd1 Bf7 is similar. **34. ... bxc4 35. Rxc4 Rcx d5** Winning the pinned piece. (Cabrera – Sagalchik, Murray, 2025, analysis) **6) 30. ... Bxe1!** The rook is safe to capture! **31. Qxe6+ Kh8 32. Qxb6** Or 32. Qxd7 Bf2+ 33. Kf1 Qa5! is very strong, with mate threats against White's king soon. **32. ... Bf2+!** This *intermezzo* keeps Black materially ahead. **33. Kf1 Nxb6** and Black is better. (Tsodikova – Sagalchik, Murray, 2025)