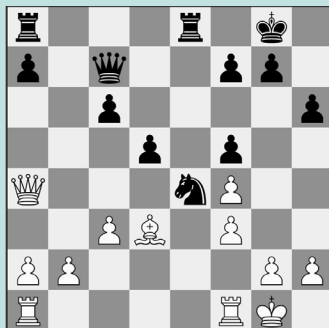


NORTH AMERICAN JUNIORS, PT. 1

WEDNESDAY WORKOUT ■ DECEMBER 17, 2025

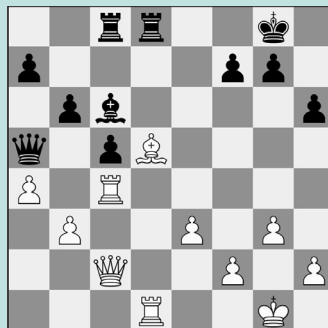
BY JJ LANG

PUZZLE 1.



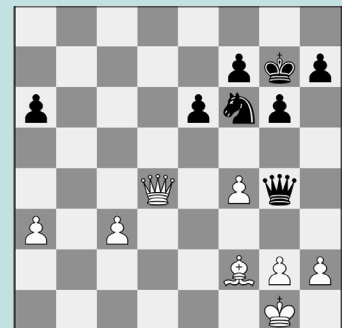
BLACK TO MOVE

PUZZLE 2.



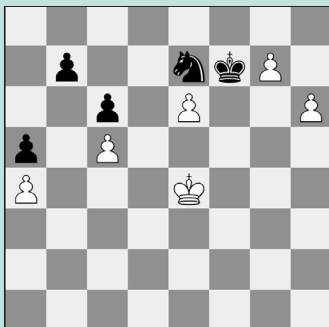
WHITE TO MOVE

PUZZLE 3.



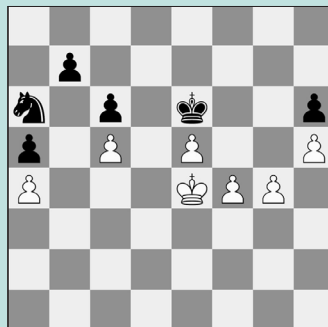
WHITE TO MOVE

PUZZLE 4.



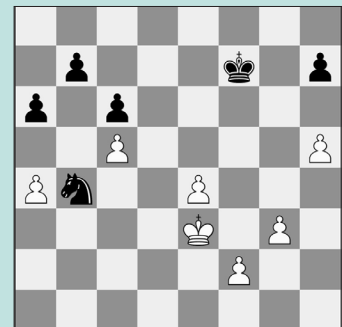
BLACK TO MOVE

PUZZLE 5.



WHITE TO MOVE

PUZZLE 6.



BLACK TO MOVE

SOLUTIONS

PUZZLE 1. 18. ... Qb6+ 19. Qd4 Not 19. Kh1 Nf2+ winning material or reaching a smothered mate. 19. ... c5! 20. Qxd5 c4+! 21. Qd4 Qxd4+ 22. cxd4 cxd3 23. fxe4 The game went 23. Rfd1 Nf6 and Black went on to win. 23. ... fxe4 The connected passers, and White's weak d-pawn, are decisive. (Duarte – Fei, Mexico, 2025) **PUZZLE 2.** 28. Bxc6 Rxd1+ Or else the d8-rook hangs! 29. Qxd1 Rxc6 30. b4! and Black resigned. This was the key move, with b4-b5 threatened after Black's queen retreats to its only safe square. (Hernandez – Yan, Mexico 2025) **PUZZLE 3.** 36. h3 Qf5 37. g4 Qb1+ Even with this check, there's no stopping g4-g5. 38. Kh2 h6 39. g5 hxg5

40. fxg5 and White went on to win. (Zacarias Rodriguez – Guntaka, Mexico, 2025) **PUZZLE 4.** 56. ... Kg6! The only drawing mechanism was going after the h6-pawn. After 56. ... Kf6?? 57. g8=Q, Black resigned, as the thematic h6-h7 leaves Black unable to stop both queening paths. After 57. ... Nxg8 58. h7 Kg7 59. hxg8=Q+ Kxg8 60. Ke5, the e-pawn makes it through. 57. Ke5 Ng8! Not 57. ... Kxh6?? 58. Kf6 Ng8+ 59. Kf7 when White's king is too fast. 58. Kd6 Nxh6 59. Kc7 Ng8 60. Kxb7 Ne7 The point! (Qiu – Castellanos Hernandez, Mexico, 2025, analysis) **PUZZLE 5.** 49. f5+! White drifted with 49. Kd4?? allowing 49. ... Nc7 50. Ke4 Nd5 51. g5 hxg5 52. fxe5 Ne7 53. g6 Nd5 54. h6 Ne7 55. g7 Kf7 56. e6+ reaching

the previous position. 49. ... Kf7 50. g5!! This wins, with the knight too far offside even after: 50. ... Nxc5+ 51. Kd4 Nb3+ 52. Ke3 The pawns can't be stopped. (Ibid.) **PUZZLE 6.** 44. ... a5! The only move that actually wins. While 44. ... Na2? gets the knight on the right circuit, still Black is groveling for a draw after: 45. a5 Nc1 46. Kd4 Nb3+ 47. Kc4 Nd2+! (Note: 47. ... Nxa5+?? 48. Kb4 is why Black likely rejected this variation.) 48. Kd3 Nb3 and Black holds. In the game, 44. ... Kf6? 45. f4 a5 46. g4 h6 47. e5+ Ke6 48. Ke4 Na6?? reached the previous exercise. 45. f4 After 45. Kd4 Na2 the knight is on the right circuit at the right time, as there is no a4-a5 resource. 45. ... Na2 46. Kd4 Nc1 47. g4 Ne2+ 48. Ke3 Nc3 and Black is winning. (Ibid.)