

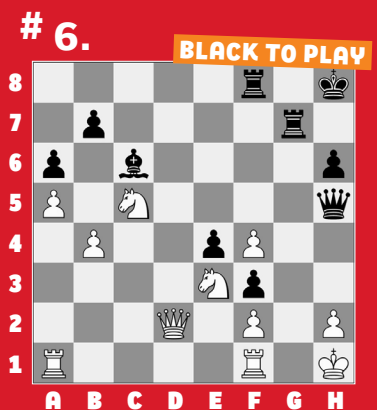
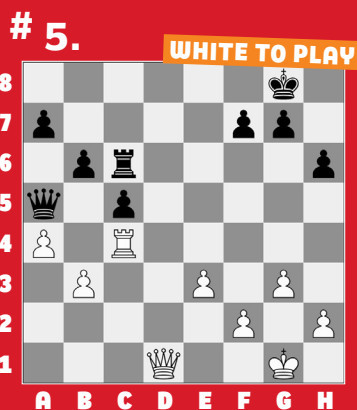
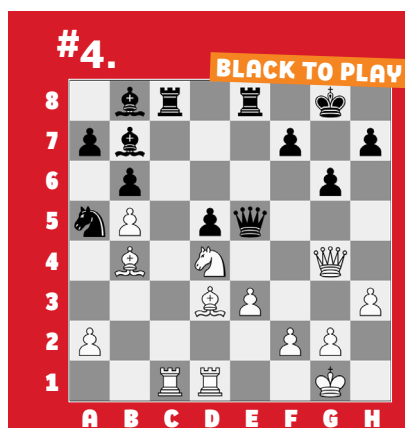
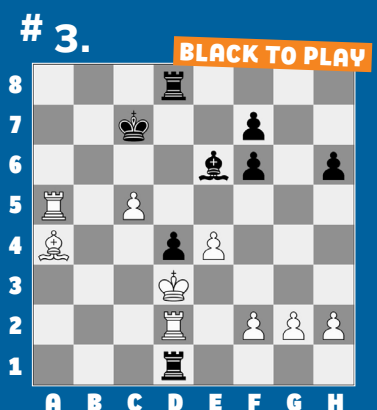
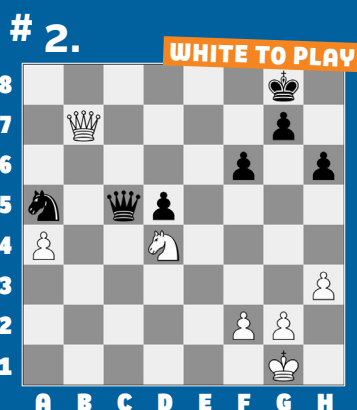
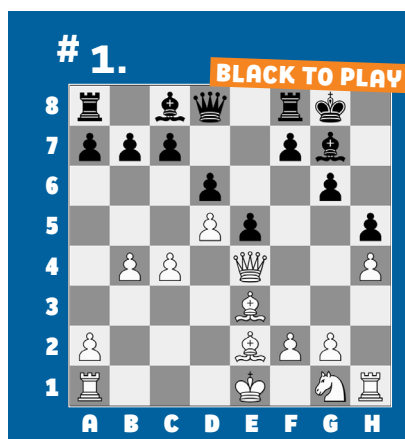
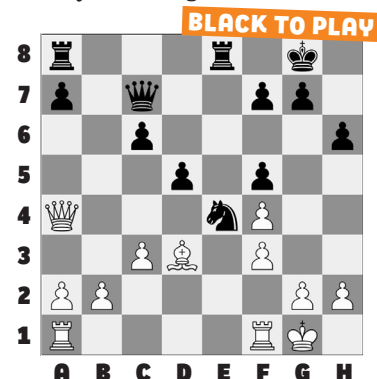
NORTH AMERICAN JUNIORS, PT. 2

This week's puzzle continues our series on the **2025 North American Junior Championships**, held last month in Mexico.

In our **example**, Black used a familiar theme of smothered mate to force a superior endgame after **18. ... Qb6+ 19. Qd4 c5! 20. Qxd5 c4+! 21. Qd4 Qxd4+ 22. cxd4 cxd3** when White played **23. Rfd1** as 23. fxe4 fxe4, with the connected passers, would be decisive, but after **23. ... Nf6** Black went on to win in Duarte Cramer – Fei.

If **19. Kh1 Nf2+** then White is forced to play **20. Rxf2** as 20. Kg1 Nh3+ 21. Kh1 Qg1+ 22. Rxd1 Nf2 is

mate, but **20. ... Qxf2** puts Black up a healthy Exchange.



SOLUTIONS

1) 12. ... Bf5 The queen is almost trapped, and its one escape square is grim. **13. Qf3 e4** And now Black wins a full rook on a1! (Venkatesh – Campos Gorgonio, Mexico, 2025, variation) **2) 34. Qxg7+** Winning a pawn and simplifying to a won endgame. **34. ... Kxg7 35. Ne6+ Kf7 36. Nxc5** and White won in 33 more moves. (Yan – Fei, Mexico, 2025) **3) 37. ... Bc4+!** Instead, Black erred with 37. ... Ra1 allowing 38.

Rb2! when the second rook breaks through. **38. Kc2** Or 38. Kxc4 Rxd2 is even better for Black. **38. ... Ra1** Only now, with White's d-rook cut off from the queenside! A very subtle and clever in-between move that makes the difference between a loss and a draw. (Barrera Garcia – Danduprolu, Mexico, 2025, analysis) **4) 25. ... Rxc1** Move order doesn't matter: 25. ... Qh2+ 26. Kf1 Rxc1 works too. **26. Rxc1 Qh2+ 27. Kf1 Qh1+ 28. Ke2 Qxc1**

and **White resigned** five moves later. (Venkatesh – Johnson, Mexico, 2025) **5) 30. b4!** and **Black resigned**. The point is 30. ... Qa6 31. b5 wins the rook, while 30. ... cxb4 also drops the rook. (Hernandez Diaz – Yan, Mexico, 2025) **6) 42. ... Rg2!** Going for mate on h2! **43. Nxd2 fxd2+ 44. Kg1** Or 44. Kxg2 e3+! wins the queen. **44. ... gxf1=Q+** and **White resigned** shortly due to the tremendous pressure. (Johnson – Montes Orozco, Mexico, 2025)