

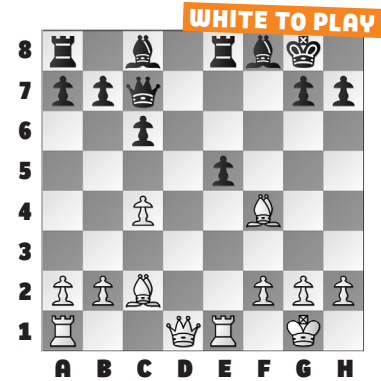
NATIONAL K-12 GRADES, PT. 1

Today's puzzles come from last month's **National K-12 Grade Championships**. Enjoy a number of mating attacks, deflections, and

overloads from the top boards of the annual tournament that crowns the champion in each grade.

In our **example**, White plays against Black's loose pieces and also uses his lead in development. After **17. Bxh7+ Kxh7 18. Qh5+ Kg8 19. Qxe8** White has won the e8-rook, but the second bishop falls with **19. ... exf4** and only one move wins. White found **20. Rad1!** when there is no stopping Ra1-d8 in Diao – Rana. A nice example of bringing

all the pieces to the party, rather than just counting material.



1. WHITE TO PLAY

2. WHITE TO PLAY

3. WHITE TO PLAY

4. WHITE TO PLAY

5. BLACK TO PLAY

6. BLACK TO PLAY

SOLUTIONS

1) After playing 35. ... Re8, Black resigned before White could deliver mate-in-three with: **36. Rg6+ Kh8 37. Nf7+ Kh7 38. Rg7** mate. (Vinod – Levine, Maryland, 2024) **2) 14. Bf4** White rejects the offer of queen trades, and has a response to Black's clever follow-up, too!. **14. ... Nh5** A nice resource! Black defends mate while attacking White's queen, forcing a trade of material. **15. Nxe7+** Not necessary, but fine to

include. **15. ... Rxe7 16. Bxc7 Nxc3 17. Bxg3** Black got their trade, but White emerges piece-up. (Wang – Kaye, Maryland, 2024) **3) 21. Be4+** The only discovery that doesn't hang the queen. **21. ... Kg8 22. Rh3!** White uses the extra tempo to set up mate. **22. ... Nh5 23. Qxh5 Qxg5 24. Qh8** mate. (Williams – Mcroy, Maryland, 2024) **4) 24. Rxd8+** White removes the defender! **24. ... Qxd8 25. Bxe5** White is piece-up after exploiting the overloaded queen.

(Paragua – Nazimowitz, Maryland, 2024) **5) 26. ... f3** Black shows why queens make bad defenders. **27. gxf3 exf3 28. Bxf3 Bxc2!** An overload! (Sussman – Cherukuri, Maryland, 2024) **6) 27. ... Qf5** A pin-and-win! Importantly, 27. ... Ne2+?? does not win material because after 28. Rxe2 Qd1+ 29. Kh2 Qxe2 White wins with 30. Ne8!, hence the need to pin the f6-knight. **28. Qxa7 Qxf6** Piece-up, Black went on to win. (Pathange – Lin, Maryland, 2024)