



# THE PUZZLING SIDE OF CHESS

Jeff Coakley

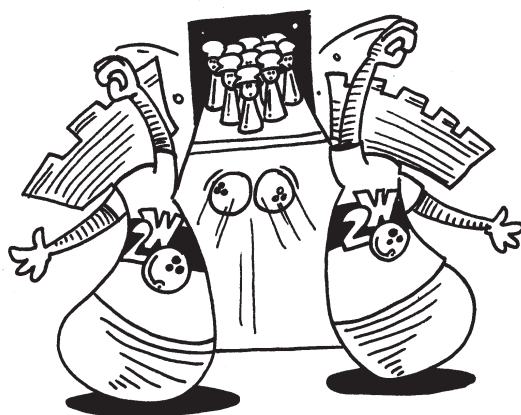
## **SERIES-MATES: Why So Serious?**

number 221

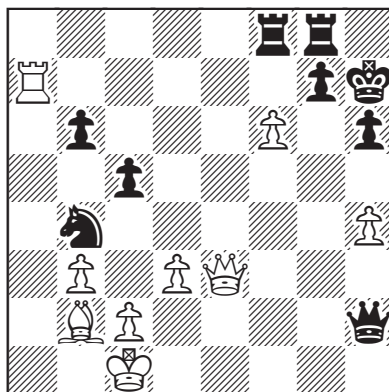
March 24, 2023

Chess can be quite serious. Sometimes that distracts from the fun. Hopefully that won't happen today.

This column continues our series on series-mates with five original problems and a classic from years ago. As usual, we begin with the shortest form of series-mate, the double whammy.



### Double Whammy 70



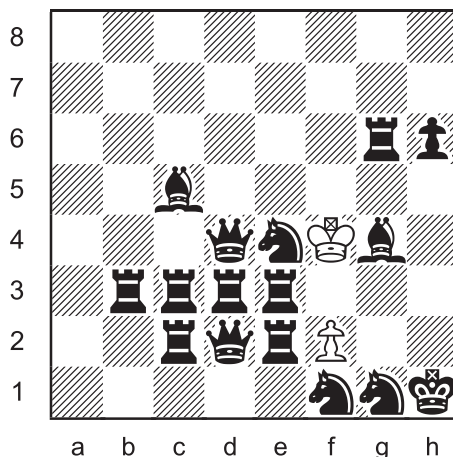
White plays two moves in a row to mate Black.

*The first move may not be check. Either move may be a capture. Both moves may be with the same piece. Black does not get a turn.*

Being on the receiving end of a double whammy is rarely a pleasant experience. For that reason, in the best interest of your general health, extra precaution should be taken when faced with multiple whams. With that warning in mind, welcome to the Whammy Machine!



### Multi-Wham 65

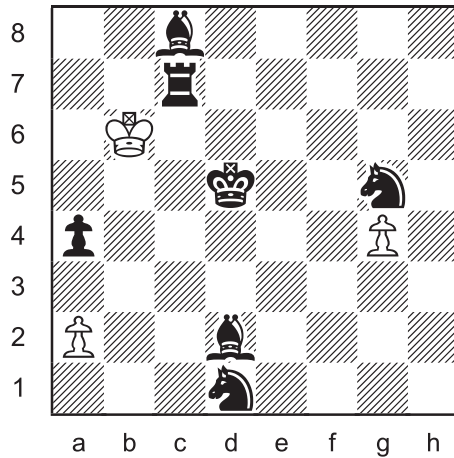


series-mate in 21

White plays twenty-one moves in a row to mate Black.  
*Only the final move may give check. Captures are allowed.  
 Black does not get a turn. White may not place their own king in check,  
 even if they get out of check on a subsequent turn.*

The rules for a series-mate give White a serious advantage. There is no limit to the size of a material deficit that can be overcome. But there is a limit to the number of moves. So precision and efficiency are still as important as ever.

### Multi-Wham 66



series-mate in 22

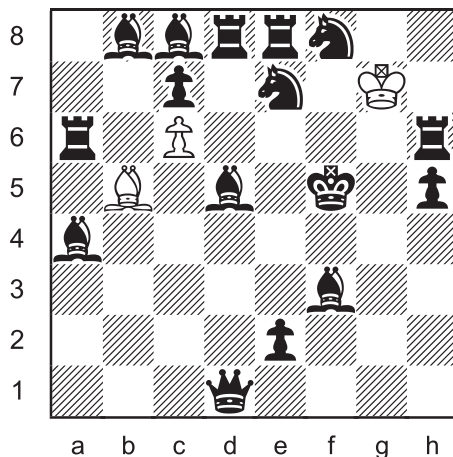
White plays twenty-two moves in a row to mate Black.



*Batman vs Joker*

*Pow! Wham!*

### Multi-Wham 67

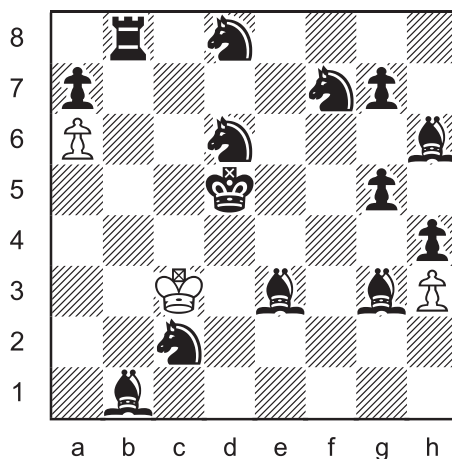


series-mate in 20

White plays twenty moves in a row to mate Black.



### Multi-Wham 68



series-mate in 55

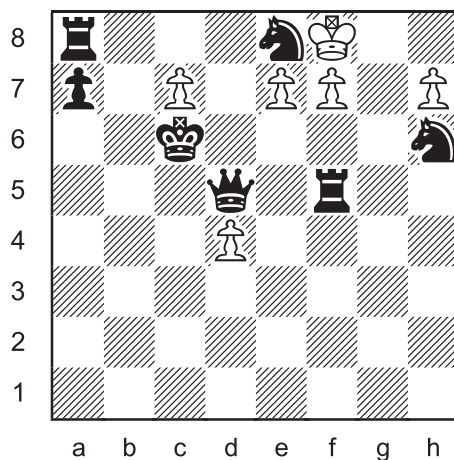
White plays fifty-five moves in a row to mate Black.

Our final puzzle is another serious gem by American composer George Sphicas, the “king of series-movers”. Six moves is all you get.

### **Multi-Wham 69**

George P. Sphicas 1989

*The Problemist*



series-mate in 6

White plays six moves in a row to mate Black.



Heath Ledger, the actor who portrayed the Joker in *The Dark Knight*, was a keen chess player. At the time of his death in 2008, work had begun on his directorial debut, an adaptation of *The Queen's Gambit* by Walter Tevis. The novel later became the basis of the successful Netflix series of the same name.

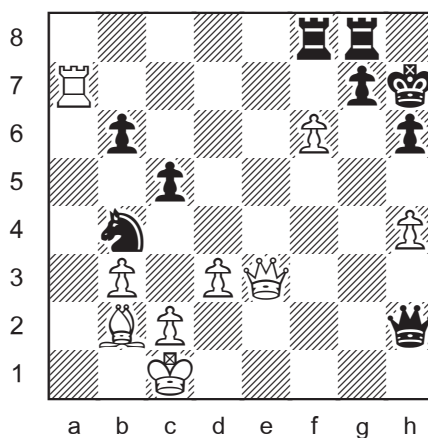
## SOLUTIONS

All problems except multi-whammy 69 are by J. Coakley. Whammy 70 is from *Winning Chess Puzzles Volume 2* (2010). The others are *Puzzling Side of Chess* (2023).

**PDF hyperlinks.** You can advance to the solution of any puzzle by clicking on the underlined title above the diagram. To return to the puzzle, click on the title above the solution diagram.

**Archives.** Past columns are available in the *Puzzling Side* archives.

### Double Whammy 70

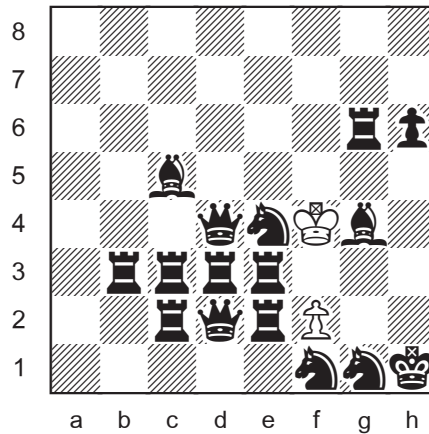


1.fxg7 2.gxf8=N#

Mate by underpromotion and double check.  
Two captures clear the long diagonal to control h8.



## Multi-Wham 65



The white king has no moves, so the pawn must take the lead.

1.f3 2.fxg4 Capturing by 2.fxe4? is stalemate!

3.g5 4.gxh6 5.h7 6.h8=N Queen or rook would check.  
Bishop could never check.

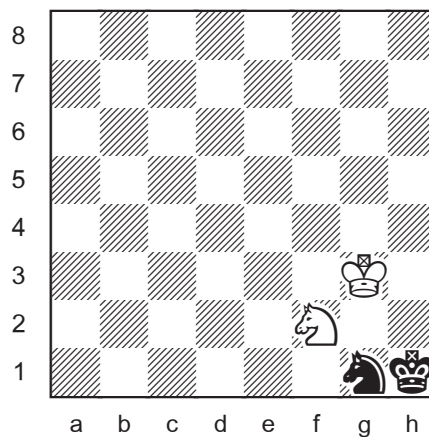
It's not too early to envision the mate. The white king comes to g3 and the knight goes to f2. For that to work, all black pieces must be captured except the knight on g1.

7.Nxg6 8.Ne5 9.Nxd3 The first of eleven captures in a row.

10.Nxc5 11.Nxb3 If 11.Nxe4?, the knight is pinned.

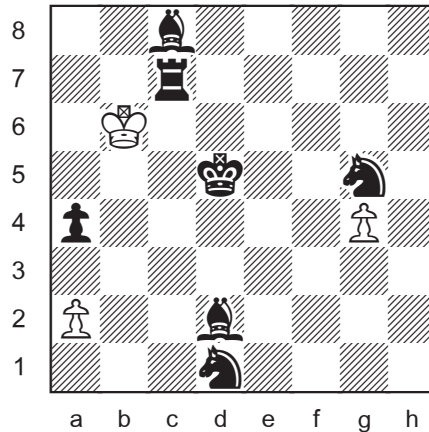
12.Nxd2 13.Nxf1 14.Nxe3 15.Nxc2 16.Nxd4 17.Nxe2 18.Nxc3

19.Nxe4 20.Kg3 21.Nf2#



*Classic knight vs. knight mate.*

## Multi-Wham 66



1.Kb5      The king plays to free the a-pawn as quickly as possible. Taking the rook first by 1.Kxc7? is one move slower. Following it with 2.Kxc8? would add another two moves. It is faster to let the promoted a-pawn capture those pieces.

2.Kxa4 3.Kb3 4.a4 5.a5 6.a6 7.a7

8.a8=R      A queen or bishop would check. A knight could not move without checking.

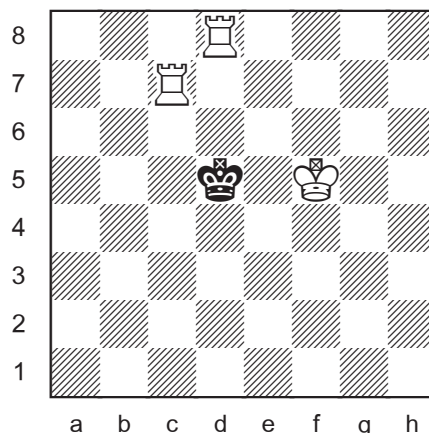
9.Rxc8 10.Rxc7      Now the king can cross the c-file to capture the bishop that guards the knight on g5 that blocks the white g-pawn.

11.Kc2 12.Kxd1      The white king gets to g5 one move sooner by capturing the knight first.

13.Kxd2 14.Ke3 15.Kf4 16.Kxg5

17.Kf5      Taking his station for the coming mate.

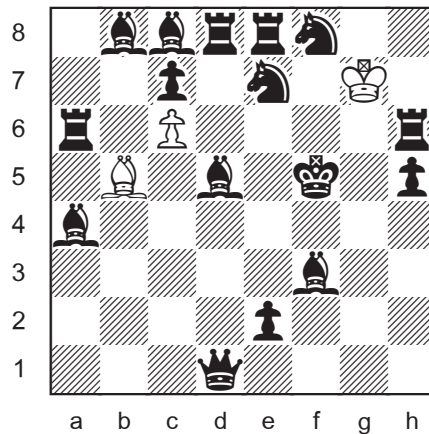
18.g5 19.g6 20.g7 21.g8=R 22.Rd8#



*The ever popular two rook mate.*



## Multi-Wham 67

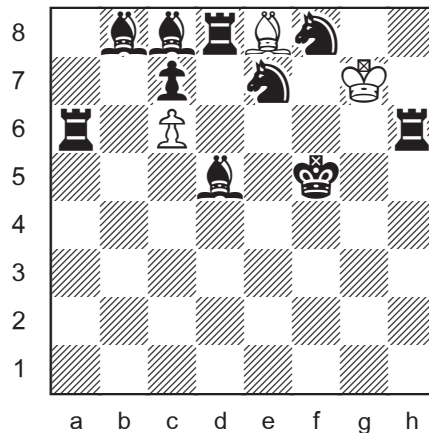


In order to promote the c-pawn, the white king will have to capture the black pawn on c7. Numerous obstacles stand in his way.

1.Bxa4 The white bishop will eventually capture the rook on e8 so that the king can get to c7 along the 7th and 8th ranks. But on its way to e8, the bishop eliminates defenders on a4, d1, and f3. This allows the white king to go to d7 and d5 later. Hard to foresee.

Capturing 1.Kxh6? mates one move too late. A tempo is saved by letting the promoted pawn take the rook.

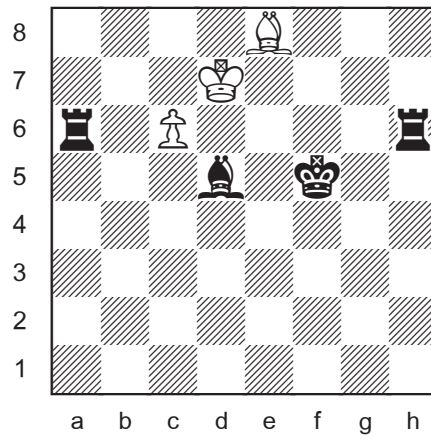
2.Bxd1 3.Bxe2 4.Bxf3 5.Bxh5 6.Bxe8



Now it's the king's turn.

7.Kxf8 8.Kxe7 9.Kxd8 10.Kxc8 11.Kxb8 12.Kxc7 13.Kd7

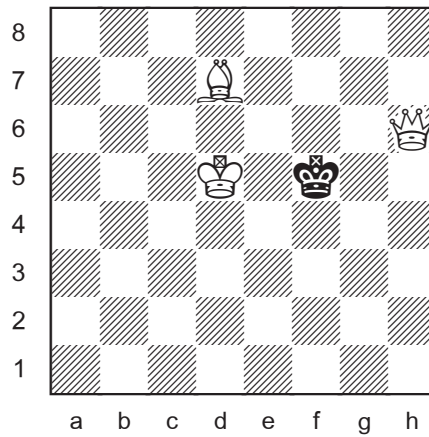
His majesty blocks d7 so that the pawn can promote to queen.



14.c7 15.c8=Q

At this point there are many mates in 6 moves. But only one in five.

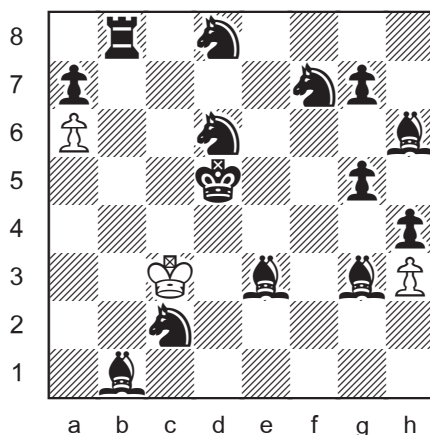
16.Qxa6 17.Qxh6 18.Kd6 19.Kxd5 20.Bd7#



*Queen Bee mate.*

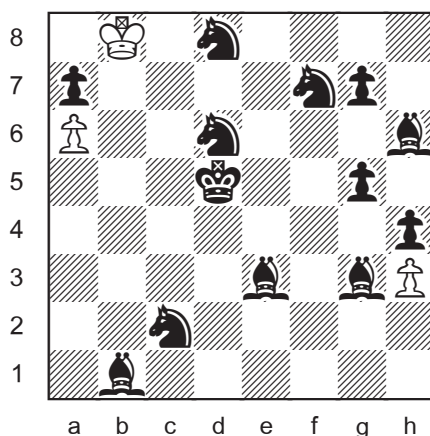


## Multi-Wham 68



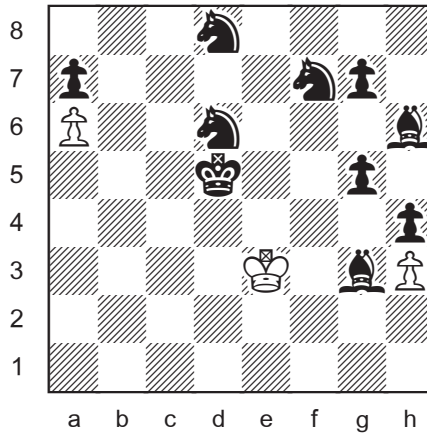
The white king cannot free the pawn on h3 by capturing on h4 because the black bishop on g3 and pawn on h4 protect each other. So White must promote the a-pawn first by capturing the black pawn on a7. The chain of defenders that guard a7 is Be3, Nc2, Bb1, Rb8. The white king must take two long roundabout trips to eliminate them. Luckily, the path is narrow and easy to follow.

1.Kd3 2.Ke2 3.Kf3 4.Kg4 5.Kh5 6.Kg6 7.Kh7 8.Kg8 9.Kf8 10.Ke7  
11.Kd7 12.Kc7 13.Kxb8

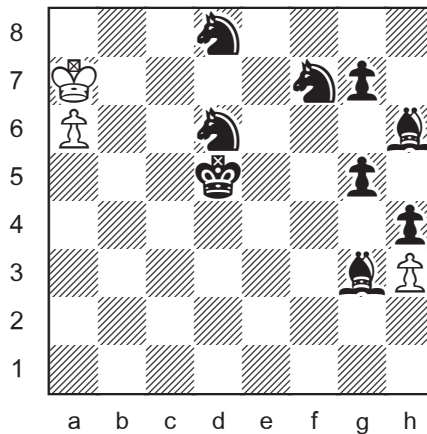


14.Kc7 15.Kd7 16.Ke7 17.Kf8 18.Kg8 19.Kh7 20.Kg6 21.Kh5  
22.Kg4 23.Kf3 24.Ke2 25.Kd3 26.Kc3 27.Kb2 28.Kxb1 29.Kxc2  
30.Kd3 31.Kxe3

The pawn on a7 is unguarded. The white king makes another long trip to get there. Diagram next page.



32.Kf3 33.Kg4 34.Kh5 35.Kg6 36.Kh7 37.Kg8 38.Kf8 39.Ke7  
40.Kd7 41.Kc7 42.Kb8 43.Kxa7



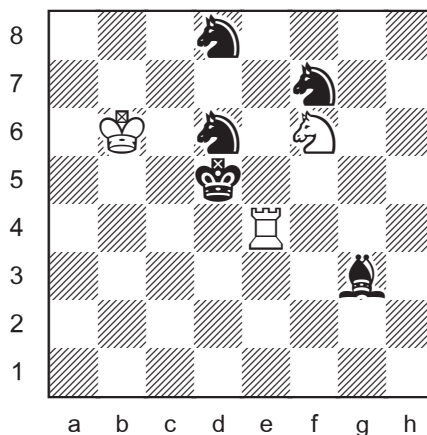
44.Kb6 45.a7 46.a8=R

A queen or bishop would check. A knight could not move without checking.

47.Ra4 48.Rxh4 49.Re4

To find this move, the mating position with rook and knight must be foreseen. Mate with queen and rook is one tempo slower. For example, 49.Ra4? 50.h4 51.hxg5 52.g6 53.gxf7 54.f8=Q 55.Qf6 56.Rd4#.

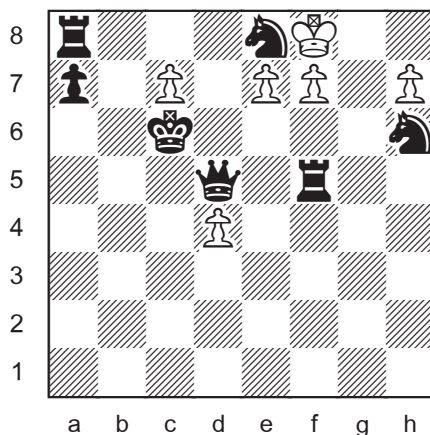
50.h4 51.hxg5 52.gxh6 53.hxg7 54.g8=N 55.Nf6#



## Multi-Wham 69

George P. Sphicas 1989

*The Problemist*

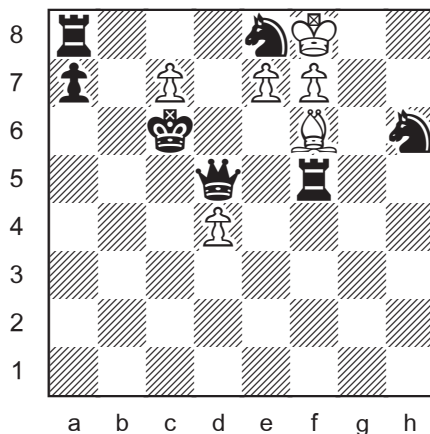


The amazing solution requires four promotions, each one to a different type of piece: bishop, rook, knight, queen. This theme is known as *allumwandlung*, German for “all promote”. A marvelous achievement.

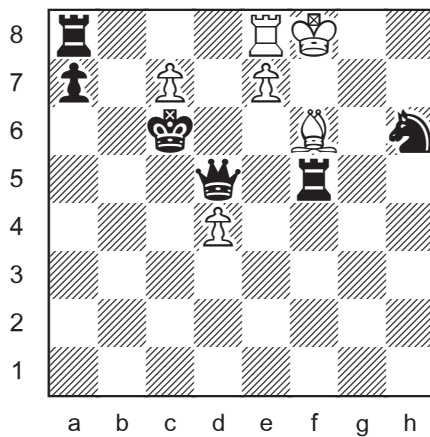
1.h8=B! There are many solutions in 7 moves with 1.h8=Q? For example, 2.Qg8 3.Qg1 4.Qb1 5.Qb8 6.Kxe8 7.c8=R#.

White promotes to bishop so that the pawn on f7 can be unpinned by bringing the bishop to f6. A queen on f6 would give check.

2.Bf6



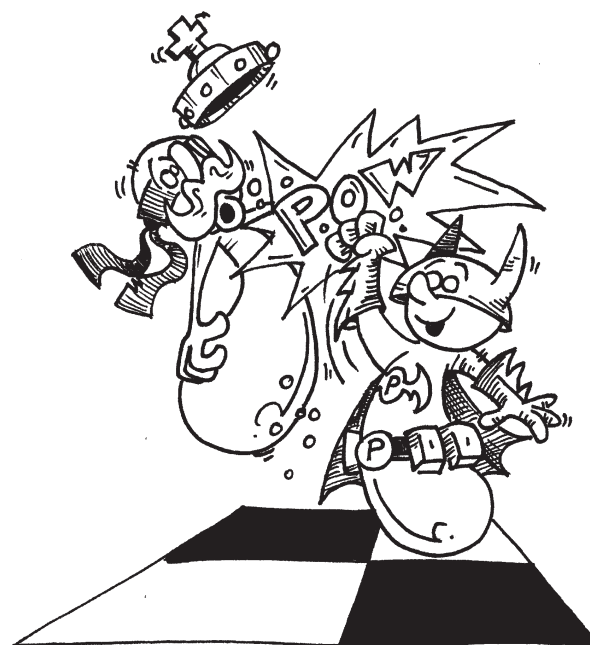
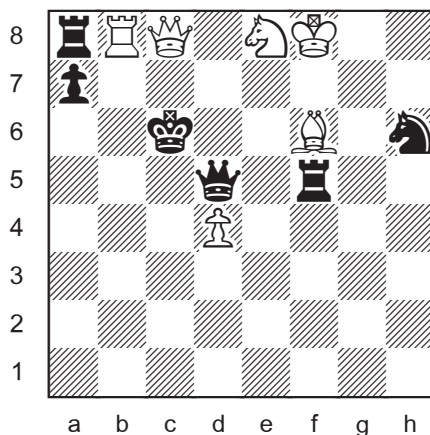
3.fxe8=R Queen or bishop would check. A knight promotion could mate in 8 by 3.fxe8=N? 4.c8=N 5.Nd6 6.Ke8 7.Kd8 8.e8=B#.



4.Rb8 The rook takes control of b6 and b5.

5.e8=N The knight takes control of d6. Promoting to rook is one move slower. 5.e8=R? 6.Red8 7.c8=R#.

6.c8=Q#



Until next time.

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