

# THE PUZZLING SIDE OF CHESS

Jeff Coakley

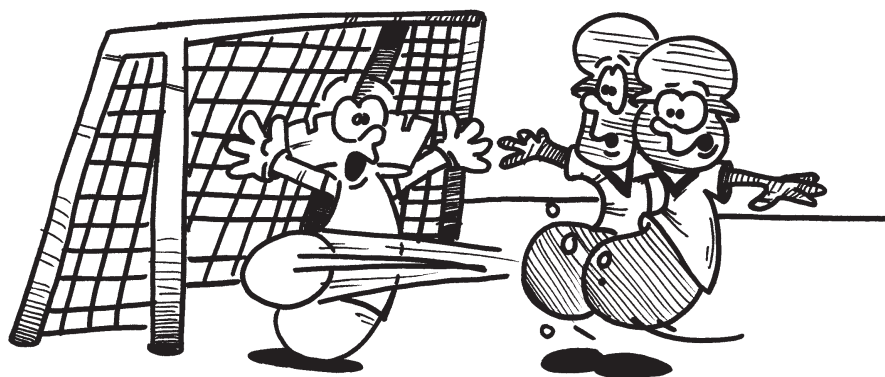
## **SERIES-MATES: Alternative Takes**

number 260

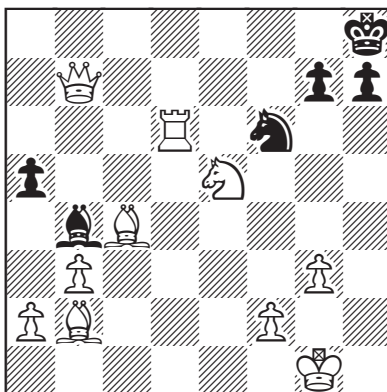
June 28, 2026

It's summertime in Canada, perfect weather for football. Soccer that is, with Toronto and Vancouver hosting many of the international matches this month. With that in mind, we begin the column with a riddle, or perhaps it is more of a trivia question.

*Why is chess like the World Cup of soccer?*



### Double Whammy 82



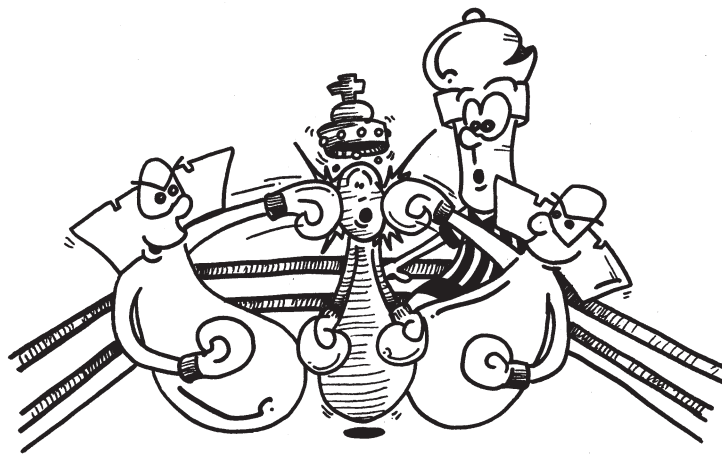
White plays two moves in a row to mate Black.

*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.*

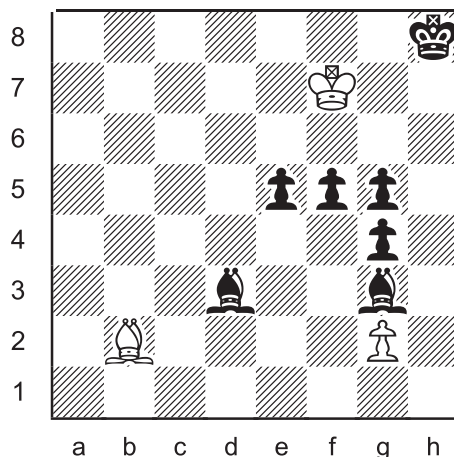
Sports announcers love to describe the strategy in their games as a chess match. Usually this just means that each side is adjusting their plans based on what the opponent is doing. There is no actual direct comparison to any specific action on a chessboard.

But the strategy in many sports can be explained in more detail with chess metaphors. Soccer, for example. Players are positioned on the field like pieces on a board, placed to counter or take advantage of the opponent's formation. Each individual is assigned duties to defend or attack specific elements of the overall position.

The opposite is true as well. Chess can be described in sports terms. Could we say that a series-mate is like a one-two punch in boxing?



### Multi-Wham 116



series-mate in 17

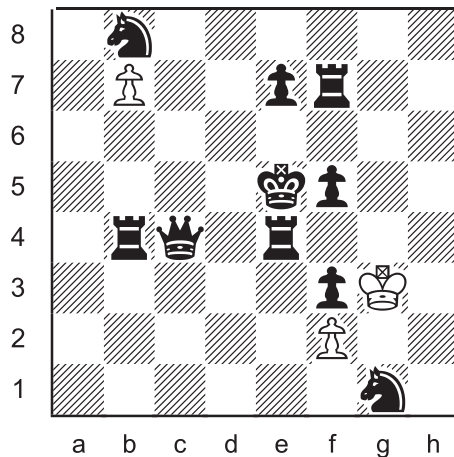
White plays seventeen moves in a row to mate Black.

*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.*

### Multi-Wham 117



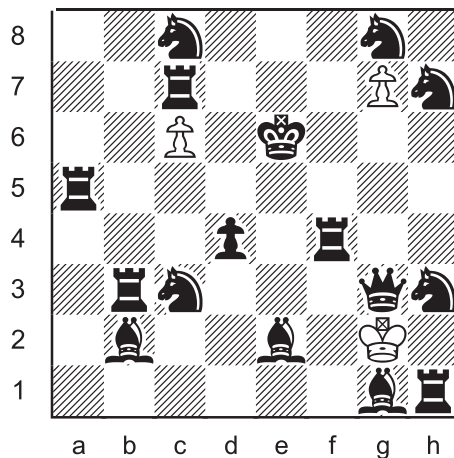
series-mate in 22

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

In the remaining two problems, Black has a full 16 piece army. That's sometimes a compositional goal when making these puzzles. In the grand finale, the black forces are "supercharged". Every pawn has promoted to queen.

Like multi-wham 116, shorter alternative versions of 118 and 119 are included on the solution pages. Often it is difficult to decide which version to present, the stripped down pure setting or the overworked grotesque monstrosity. This time you get both.

### Multi-Wham 118

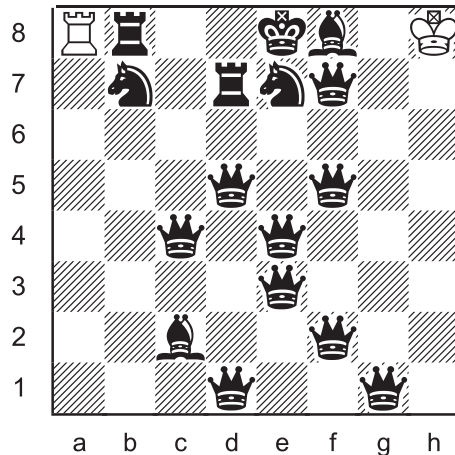


series-mate in 40

White plays forty moves in a row to mate Black.

This puzzle, with an amusing gauntlet of black queens, is an exercise in rook efficiency. Can you meet the challenge?

### **Multi-Wham 119**



series-mate in 26

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

Sports can be analysed using chess metaphors. Chess can be discussed with sports terminology. So why not combine the games into a single competition? Something crazy like chess boxing!

### **CHESS BOXING**

Chess boxing is real. It's a well-organised *hybrid sport* played around the world for over 20 years. Wikipedia has a full history.

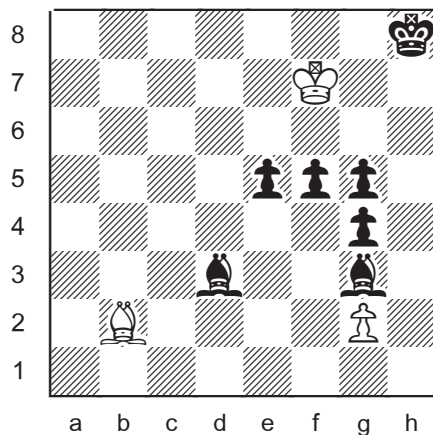
In a chess boxing match, play alternates between 3 minutes of chess and 3 minutes of boxing. Victory is achieved with a checkmate or a knockout. A single chess game continues throughout the match, played on a board and table that are brought into the boxing ring for each round of chess.





## Multi-Wham 116

J. Coakley 2026  
*Puzzling Side of Chess*  
(after Ivo Tominic 1978)



series-mate in 17

To free the pawn on g2, the white king will have to capture the black pawns on f5 and g4. Once free, the white pawn cannot leave the g-file or promote. Mate by pawn to g7 is impossible. So mate must be achieved by a bishop check with the white pawn on g6 and the white king on f7 or f8.

The pawn on f5 is guarded by the bishop on d3. The quickest way for the white king to get there is through e5 and d4.

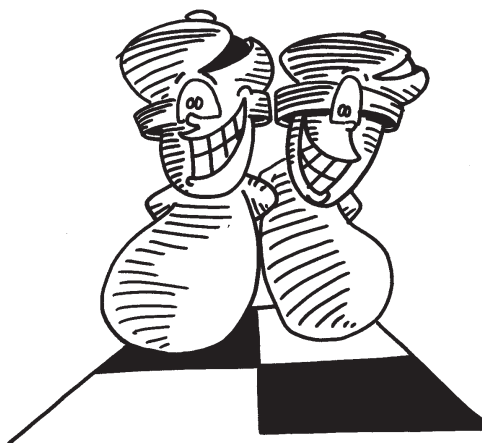
1.Kf6

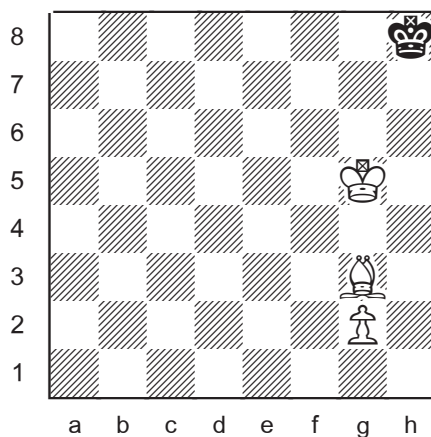
The king goes to f6 so that the bishop can take on e5 without giving check.

2.Bxe5 3.Bxg3

Removing the black bishop that defends e5 and clearing a path for the white king. Now the white king captures the remaining black pieces.

4.Ke5 5.Kd4 6.Kxd3 7.Kd4 8.Ke5 9.Kxf5 10.Kxg4 11.Kxg5





12.Kf6 For the second time, the king goes to f6 so that the bishop can come to e5 without giving check.

13.Be5 14.g4 15.g5 16.g6 17.Kf7#

A discovered checkmate by the white king, returning to the square where he started.

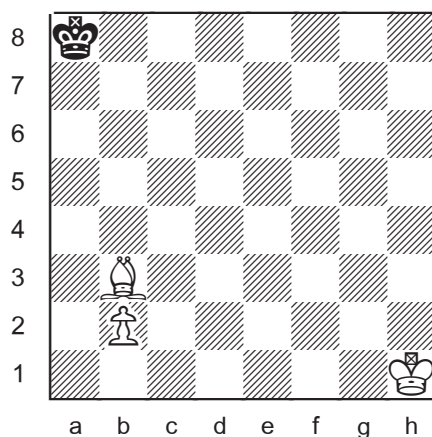
The basic initial idea for this problem was the following series-mate by Croatian composer Ivo Tominic. A little gem from nearly 50 years.

His problem was previously presented and expanded on three times in column 235 (May 2024). A very fruitful concept.

### **Multi-Wham 116b**

Ivo Tominic 1978

*Mat (Belgrade)*



series-mate in 10

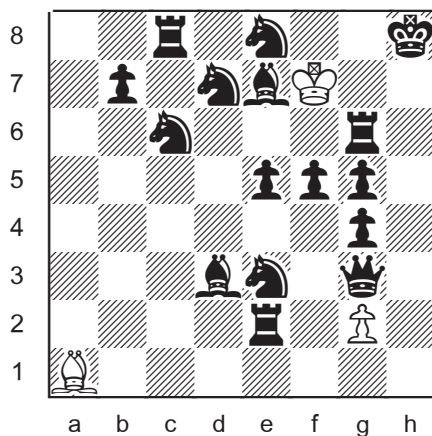
1.Kg2 2.Kf3 3.Ke4 4.Kd5 5.Kc6 6.Bd5 7.b4 8.b5 9.b6 10.Kc7#

Besides adding more moves, the “expanded version” of this problem incorporates several attractive features: the king’s round trip to the mating square, the double occurrence of the king shielding a bishop check, and the bishop not initially blocking the pawn.

The new version can also be expanded, as shown on the next page.

Sometimes the goal of extending a series-mate is simply to maximize the number of moves and the number of functional defending pieces. Ideally, Black still has all 16 pieces on the board, as is the case here.

### Multi-Wham 116c



series-mate in 29

This time, to reach f6, the white king must first capture all of the black pieces on the last three ranks.

1.Kxg6 2.Kf7 3.Ke6 4.Kxd7 5.Kxc8 6.Kxb7 7.Kxc6 8.Kd7 9.Kxe8  
10.Kxe7 11.Kf6

Like before, the bishop now clears e5 and the king proceeds to capture the bishop on d3.

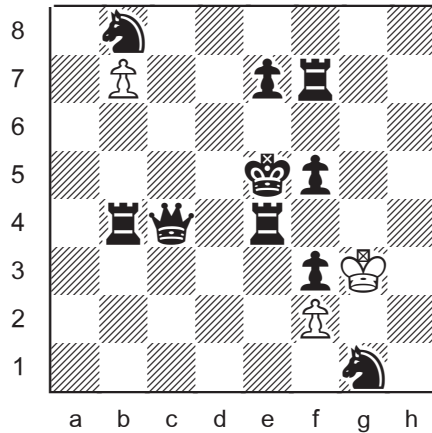
12.Bxe5 13.Bxg3 14.Ke5 15.Kd4 16.Kxd3 17.Kxe2 18.Kxe3 19.Kd4  
Arriving at the same position as in 116.

20.Ke5 21.Kxf5 22.Kxg4 23.Kxg5 24.Kf6 25.Be5 26.g4 27.g5  
28.g6 29.Kf7#

For anyone who's interested, the white bishop must be on a1 in this version. If it were on b2, there are many other solutions in 29 moves beginning with 1.Ba3 2.Bxe7 3.Bxg5 4.Bd8.



## Multi-Wham 117



series-mate in 22

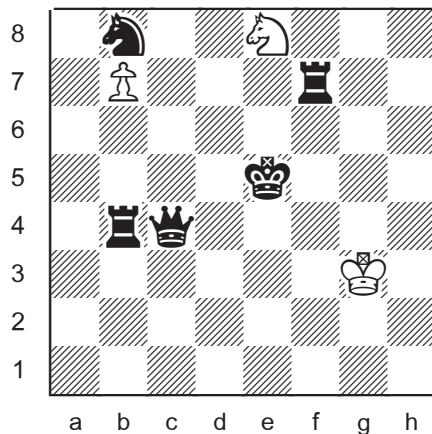
The first few moves are obvious and forced.

1.Kh2 2.Kxg1 3.Kh2 4.Kg3 5.Kxf3 6.Kg3

The king stands on g3 for the third time and stays there until the end.

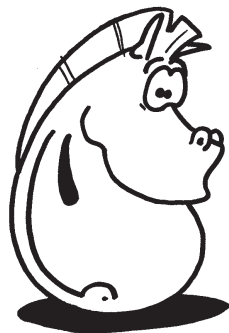
7.f3 8.fxe4 9.exf5 10.f6 11.fxe7 12.e8=N

A queen or rook would give check. A bishop would take forever.



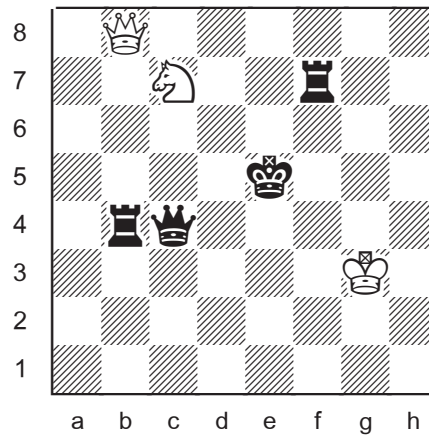
13.Nc7 14.Na6 15.Nxb8 16.Na6 17.Nc7

The knight blocks the diagonal to e5 so that the b-pawn can promote to queen without checking.

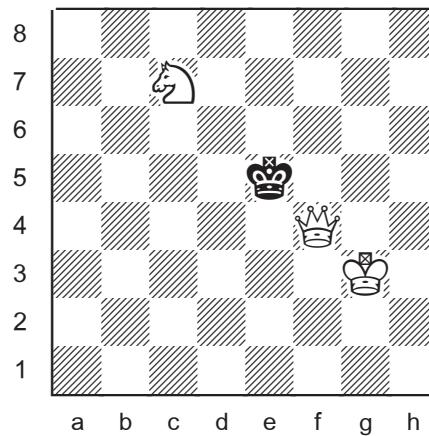


18.b8=Q

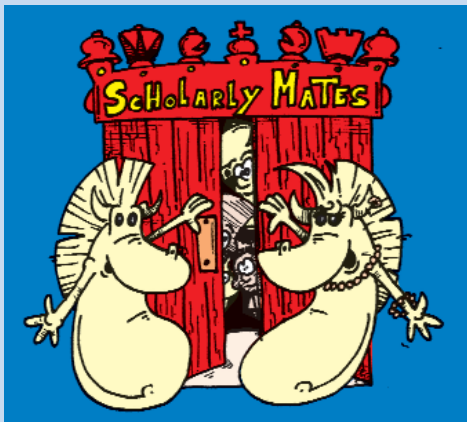
It's mate in 4 from here.



19.Qxb4 20.Qxc4 21.Qxf7 22.Qf4#



A model mate by queen, knight, and king.



## **SCHOLARLY MATES**

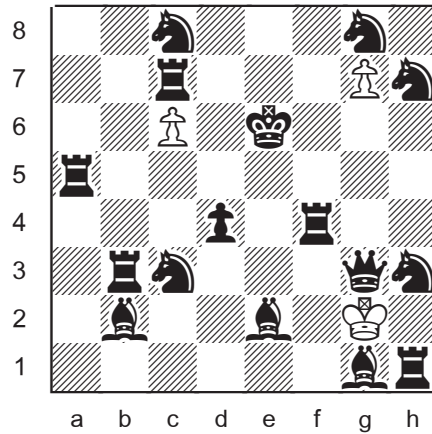
**Winning Chess Magazine For Kids**

This new magazine is published every two months by *Mooserider Productions*. Lessons, puzzles, stories, cartoons, and more. Great for children aged 6 to 13 who are looking to enjoy and improve at chess. The next issue will be posted in mid-July. Check it out!

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## Multi-Wham 118



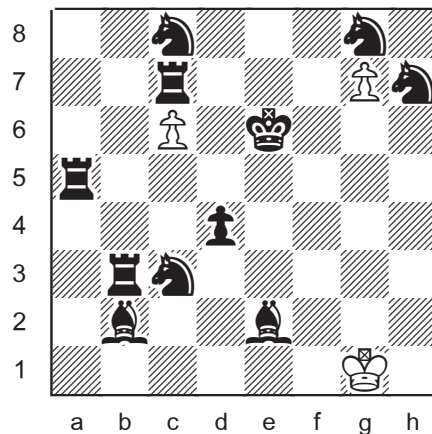
series-mate in 40

The knight on c8 prevents the white king from directly approaching the rook on c7. So the white king must free the g-pawn. To reach g8 through g6, he must first capture all the black pieces on the ranks 1-5. His path of destruction offers few diversions.

1.Kxg3 2.Kg2 3.Kxh1 4.Kg2 5.Kxh3 6.Kg3 7.Kxf4

Taking the rook on f4 before the bishop on g1 saves two moves.

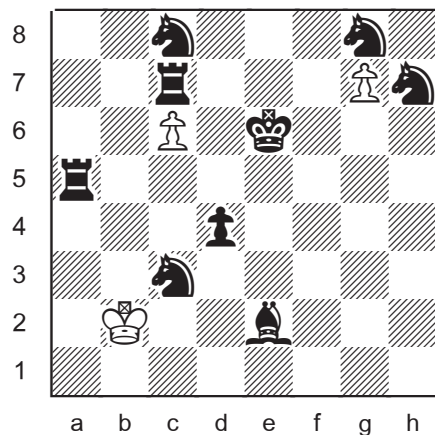
8.Kg3 9.Kg2 10.Kxg1



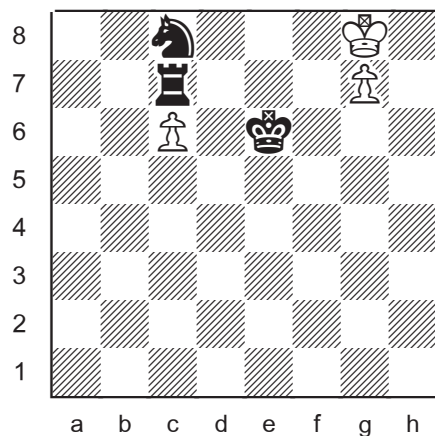
11.Kf2 12.Ke1 13.Kd2 14.Kc2 15.Kxb3 16.Kxb2

Taking the bishop on b2 before the rook on a5 saves two moves.





17.Kb3 18.Kb4 19.Kxa5 20.Kb4 21.Kc5 22.Kxd4 23.Kxc3  
 24.Kd2 25.Kxe2 26.Kf3 27.Kg4 28.Kh5 29.Kg6 30.Kxh7 31.Kxg8



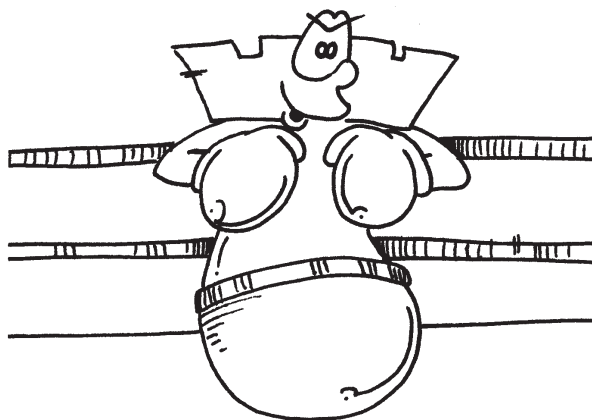
In a sense, this is where the real problem starts because the moves become far less obvious.

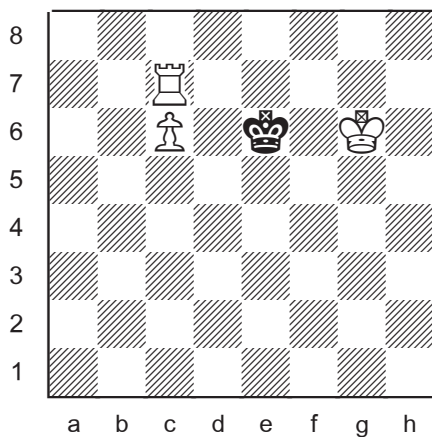
32.Kh7 Perhaps the first surprise. Lines with 32.Kf8? are slower:

33.Ke8 34.Kd8 35.Kxc7 36.Kxc8 mates in 43.

33.g8=R 34.Rg7 35.Rxc7 36.Rxc8 mates in 42.

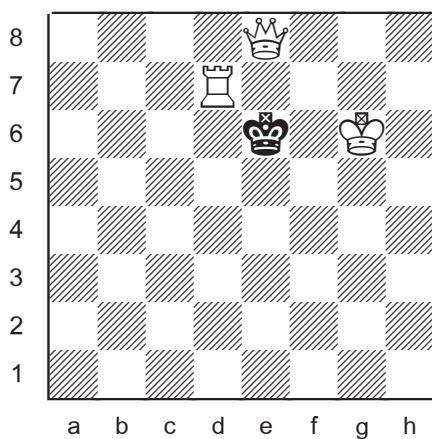
33.Kg6 34.g8=R 35.Rxc8 36.Rxc7 Series-mate in 4 from here.





37.Rd7      Shielding the king from check by a promoted queen on c8.

38.c7 39.c8=Q 40.Qe8#

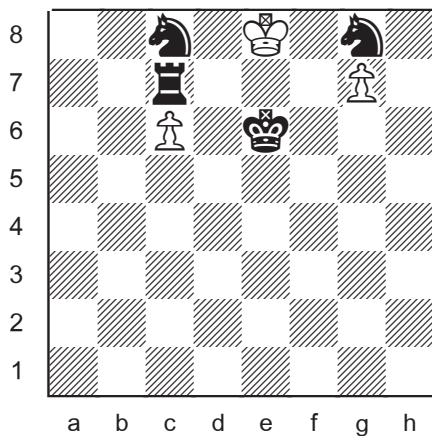


This puzzle is an expanded version of the following superior problem.

**Multi-Wham 118b**

J. Coakley 2025

*Chess Life Kids*

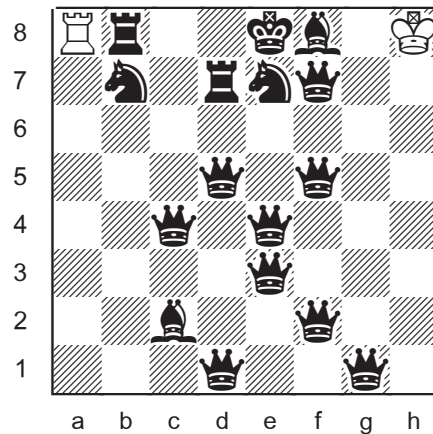


series-mate in 11

1.Kf8 2.Kxg8 3.Kh7 4.Kg6 et cetera

The try 1.Kd8? 2.Kxc7 takes just one move longer.

## Multi-Wham 119

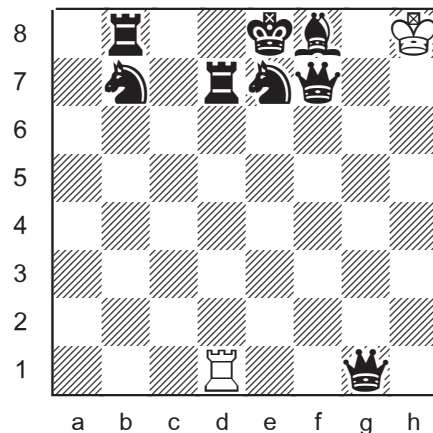


series-mate in 26

With just a king and rook, White will not be able to take the knight on e7 or the bishop on f8. Unless that capture is mate, which is not possible. With those two black pieces necessarily remaining on the board, the only way to mate is by  $Rd8\#$  with the white king on c7. Getting the king to the queenside requires considerable help from the rook. Eventually the rook will go to g7 to let the king escape the h8 corner, but first, all of the defenders on ranks 1 through 5 must be eliminated. There is one sequence of captures that gets the rook to g7 in 11 moves. Others are at least one move slower.

1.Ra3      From here, the rook can take a piece on each of the next nine turns before going to g7.

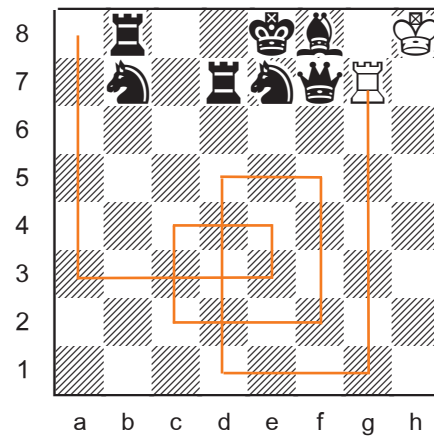
2.Rxe3 3.Rxe4 4.Rxc4 5.Rxc2 6.Rxf2 7.Rxf5 8.Rxd5 9.Rxd1



A shorter version of the problem, a series-mate in 17, is this position with the queen on g1 removed. The first move is nevertheless  $1.Rg1$  and not the tempting  $1.Rxd7?$  which takes one move more.

10.Rxg1 11.Rg7

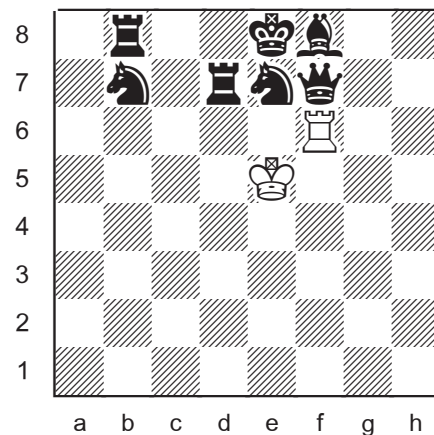
The rook “builds a bridge” for the king across squares h7 and h6.



12.Kh7 13.Kh6 14.Kg5 15.Rg6 16.Rf6

A second bridge is constructed across the f-file.

17.Kf4 18.Ke5



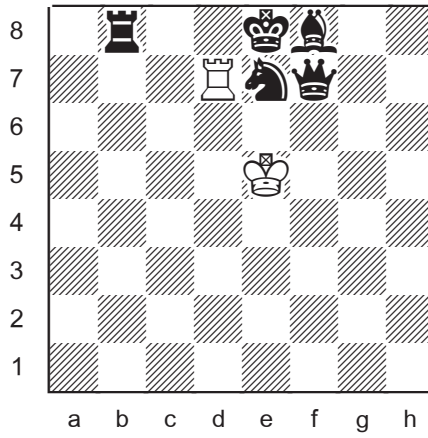
19.Rb6

19.Rd6? 20.Rxd7 21.Rxb7 takes an extra move as the rook must return later to the d-file.

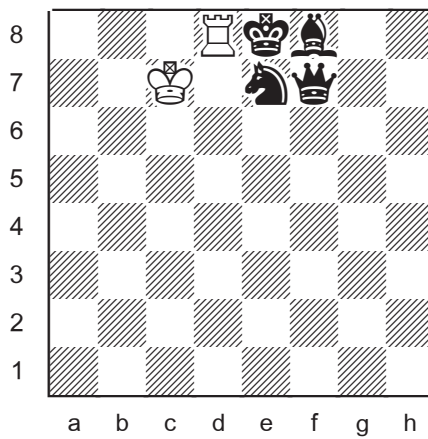
20.Rxb7 21.Rxd7

Five to go.





22.Kd6 23.Kc7 24.Kxb8 25.Kc7 26.Rd8#



Happy Canada Day! (July 1)

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