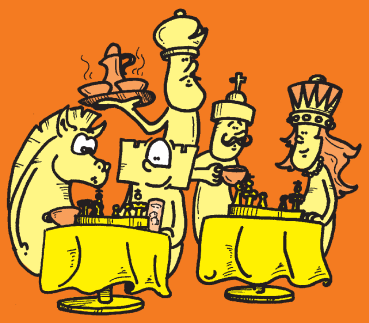


THE PUZZLING SIDE OF CHESS

Jeff Coakley

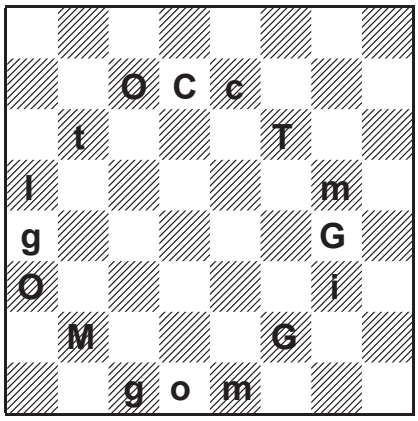
REBUS UPLOAD 09

number 261 July 28, 2026

Attention, passengers. The RE bus is now departing, with direct service to five chess rebuses and a picture riddle. Please find a seat.

Rebus 150

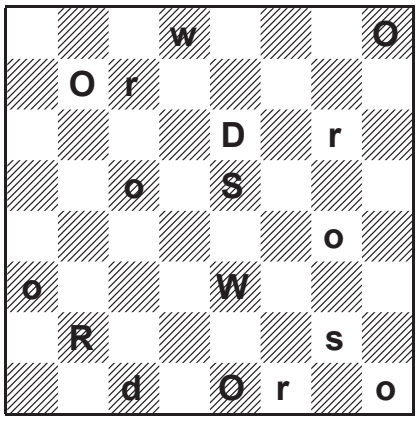
"*octogomi*"



Each letter represents a different type of piece.
Uppercase is one colour, lowercase is the other.
Determine the position and, if possible, the last move.

Rebus 151

"*words*"



Each letter represents a different type of piece.
Uppercase is one colour, lowercase is the other.
Determine the position.

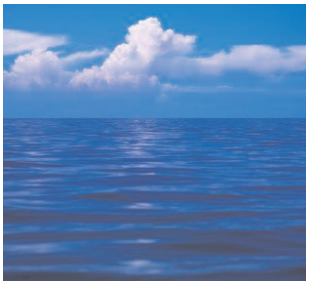
Rebuses are puzzles in which symbols must be deciphered. In chess rebuses, we decode letters on a board into a legal position. In a picture rebus, we decode a row of images into a meaningful sentence.

Riddle: "*Why did the coven of spellcasters all dress exactly the same?*"



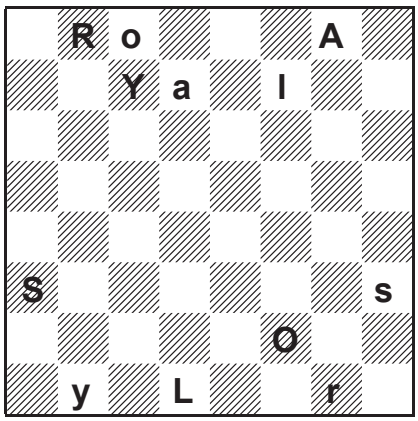




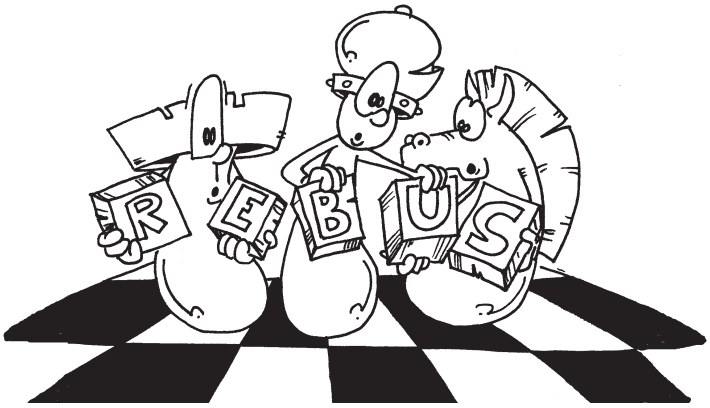

Rebus 152

"*royals*"



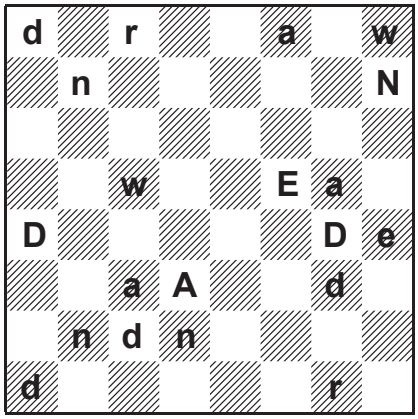
Each letter represents a different type of piece.
Uppercase is one colour, lowercase is the other.
Determine the position and, if possible, the last move.

The letter on f7 is a small L, not a capital i.



Rebus 153

"*dead drawn*"



Each letter represents a different type of piece.
Uppercase is one colour, lowercase is the other.
Determine the position and, if possible, the last move.

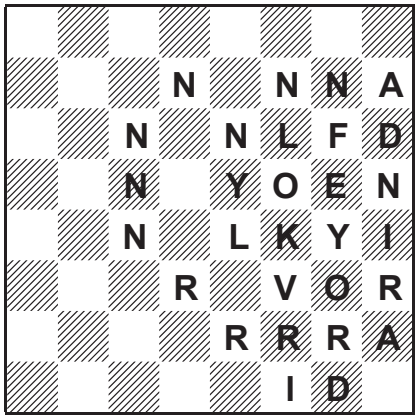
The final stop on today's bus route is an oldie but goldie from 1982. Can you figure out who the composers are?

The problem is a *split-colour rebus*. All letters are uppercase. Each letter is a piece-type of one colour. The white king is one letter. The black king is another.

See column 188 for two more examples with this rebus format.

Rebus 154

"*Who are the composers?*"



Each letter represents a different type of piece of a specific colour. For example, maybe K is a white knight and N is a black knight. Determine the position .

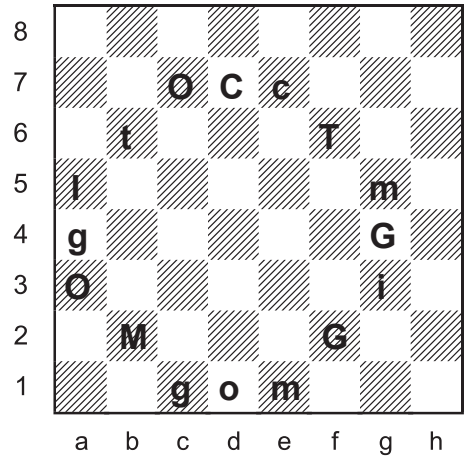
The letters on f1 and h4 are capital i's, not small L's.

SOLUTIONS

All chess rebuses except 154 are joint compositions by Andriy Frolkin and Jeff Coakley, *Puzzling Side of Chess* (2026).

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.

Rebus 150

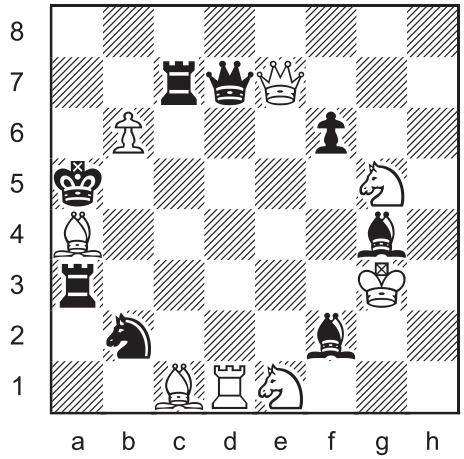


"*octogomi*"

O = rook
C = queen
T = pawn
G = bishop
M = knight
I = king

caps = black

last move:
1...Be3>f2++



(8 + 8)

♔ = (IT) Non-adjacent letters with one uppercase, one lowercase.

I = ♔ If T = ♔
The other 5 letters each attack a king along a diagonal. So there are necessarily <u>diagonal checks</u> by queen and bishop. But no legal double check is possible.

The 4 letters GMOT each attack a king along a diagonal (f2 e1 c7 b6). So there is necessarily a <u>diagonal check</u> by a bishop or queen.

C = (♕♗) A double check on two diagonals is impossible, so letter C must be a non-checking bishop or queen.

T = ♗ GMO ≠ ♗ On 1st rank.

caps = black If caps = white Impossible second check (b6).

O = ♖ G ≠ ♖ Both kings in check (a4 g4).
M ≠ ♖ If M = ♖ <u>Check</u> (g5).
There is no legal double check with rook on g5.

The king on g3 is in <u>check</u> by the rook on a3.

Last move: 1...Be3>f2++ The only legal double check.
This move may or may not be a capture.

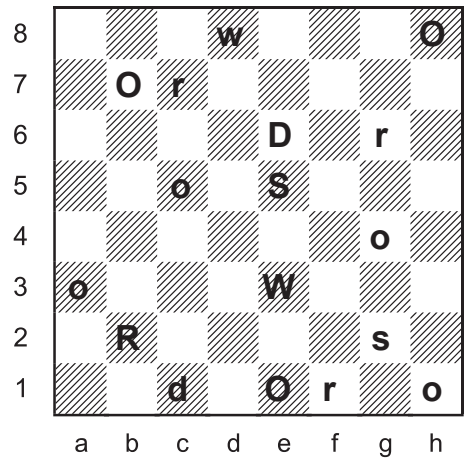
G = ♗

C = ♕

M = ♘

Rebus 151

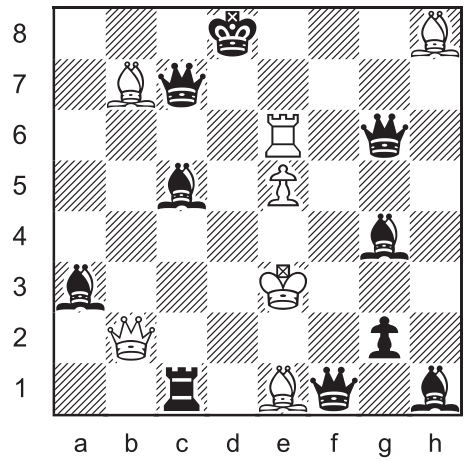
"*words*"



W = king
O = bishop
R = queen
D = rook
S = pawn

caps = white

last move:
1...B>c5+



(7 + 10)

♔ = (DSW) Letters with one uppercase, one lowercase.

WORD ≠ ♙ On 1st or 8th rank.

W = ♔ D ≠ ♔ If D = ♔
Check by letter R (♖g6, ♗b2, ♘c7, or ♕b2/g6)
Check by letter O (♖e1, ♗g4, ♘c5, or ♕e1/g4)
No legal double check.

S ≠ ♔ If S = ♔
Check by letter R (♖b2, ♗c7, ♘g6, or ♕b2/c7)
Check by letter O (♖c5, ♗b7, ♘e1, or ♕c5/b7)
No legal double check.

O = ♗ O ≠ ♕♖ Both kings in check (a3 h8).
O ≠ ♘ Both kings in check (b7 g4).

The king on e3 is in check by the bishop on c5.

D = ♖ D ≠ ♕ Impossible double check (c1).
D ≠ ♘ Both kings in check (e6).

R = ♕ R ≠ ♘ Impossible double check (f1).

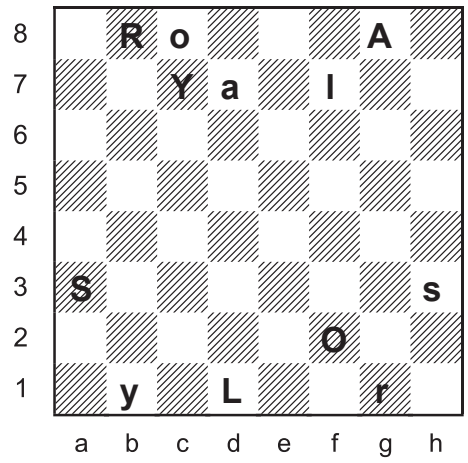
S = ♙ S ≠ ♘ Impossible double check (g2).

caps = white If caps = black
Impossible white bishop h1 with white pawn g2.

Last move: 1...B>c5+ This move may or may not be a capture.

For more chess rebuses, check out the *rebus index* in the appendix to column 188. It lists numerous articles and over 300 problems, most of which are readily available online.

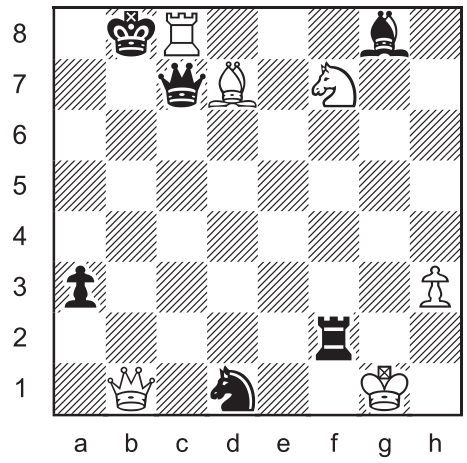
Rebus 152



"royals"
R = king
O = rook
Y = queen
A = bishop
L = knight
S = pawn

caps = black

last move:
1.bxc8=R++



(6 + 6)

♔ = (ROYALS) Six potential king pairs!?
Two of every letter; one uppercase, one lowercase.

S = ♙ Only letter not on 1st or 8th rank.

Each of the letters ROYAL is attacked along a rank or file by each of the other four letters. Regardless of piece assignment, there will necessarily be <u>two checks,</u> one by a queen and one by a rook, both along a rank or file.

A double check by queen and rook, both on a rank or file, can only happen by means of a pawn capture, promoting to rook or queen.

R = ♔ OYAL ≠ ♔ No legal double check.
O = ♖ O ≠ ♕ Impossible third check (f2).
Y = ♕
Last move: 1.bxc8=R++ The type of piece captured is unknown.
caps = black Lowercase promotion on 8th rank.
A = ♗ A ≠ ♘ Triple check (d7).
L = ♘

PICTURE REBUS

page 2

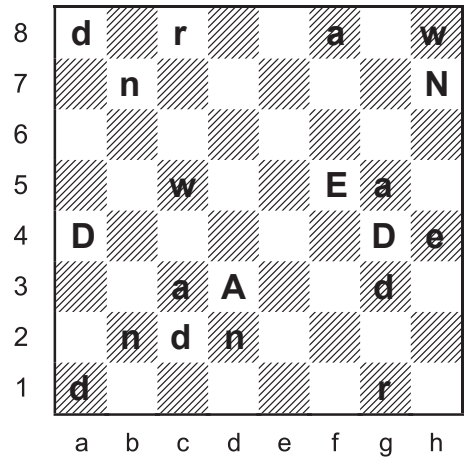
"*Why did the coven of spellcasters all dress exactly the same?*"

"So we'll not be able to see which witch is which."

sew-wheel-knot-bee-a-bull-two-see-witch-witches-witch

Rebus 153

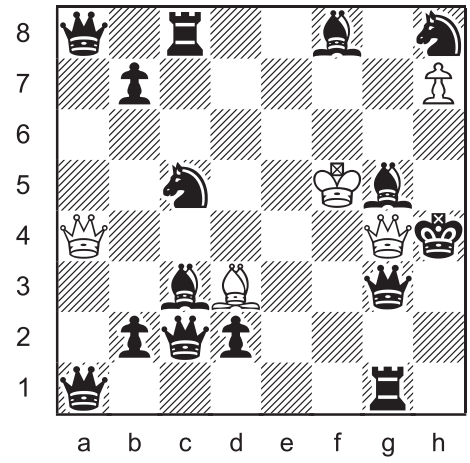
"dead drawn"



D = queen
R = rook
A = bishop
W = knight
N = pawn
E = king

caps= white

last move:
1.QxBg4+



(5 + 15)

E = ♔ Letter with one uppercase, one lowercase.

N = ♙ DRAW ≠ ♙ On 1st or 8th rank.

A ≠ ♕♖ Impossible double check (f8 g5).

(DRW) = ♕ One king is in <u>check</u> by a queen (w/c5, r/c8, or D/g4).

R = ♖ DW ≠ ♖ Impossible second check (g4 or c5).

D = ♕ D ≠ ♘ Impossible second check (g3)
D ≠ ♗ Impossible bishop on a1 or a8 with pawn of same colour on b2 or b7.

The king on h4 is in <u>check</u> by the queen on g4. The last move was the <u>capture</u> Qxg4+ because there is another queen on a4.

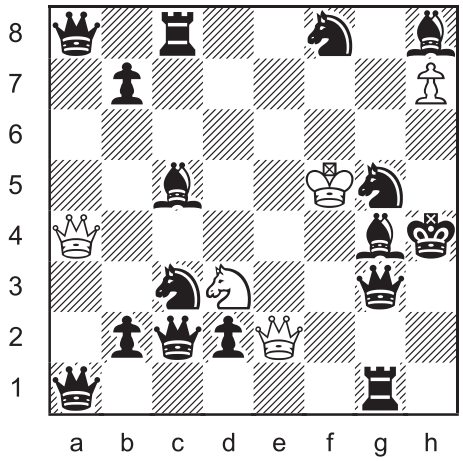
AW = (♗♘) All lowercase A's and W's are on dark squares. There are 15 lowercase pieces. So the one missing lowercase piece is a <u>light-square bishop</u>.

caps = white If caps = black
There are white pawns on b2 d2 and White (lowercase) is missing the original dark-square bishop.

Last move: 1.QxBg4+ The departure square is unknown.

So far the solution is fairly straightforward, but the assignment of bishop and knight is much trickier. It can only be decided by *dead reckoning*. If you are not familiar with this concept of retrograde analysis, see columns 127 and 145.

Rebus 153 *continued*



AW = (♗♘)

If W = ♗

Consider the position before QxBg4+. For argument's sake, let's say that the queen came from e2. Diagram. White to move.

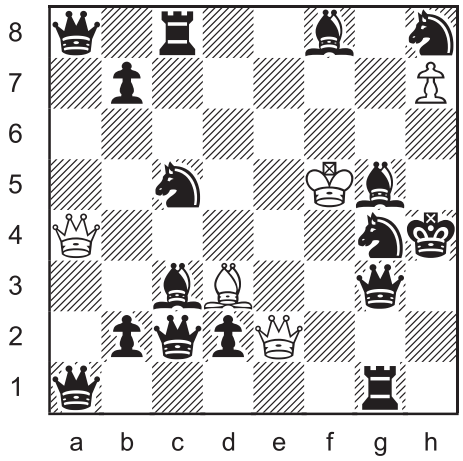
White is in check by the bishop on g4. The only way out of check is to capture on g4 with one of the queens. **1.Qxg4+**. Black's only reply is **1...Qxg4+**, forcing White to capture on g4 with the other queen. **2.Qxg4+**. Then Black must play **2...Rxg4**. Stalemate! The knight on d3 is pinned.

The diagrammed position is dead! All moves necessarily lead to stalemate. The game is over. No additional moves can be made.

Therefore W ≠ ♗

A = ♗

W = ♘ Diagram before last move.



The position is alive. Stalemate is not forced.

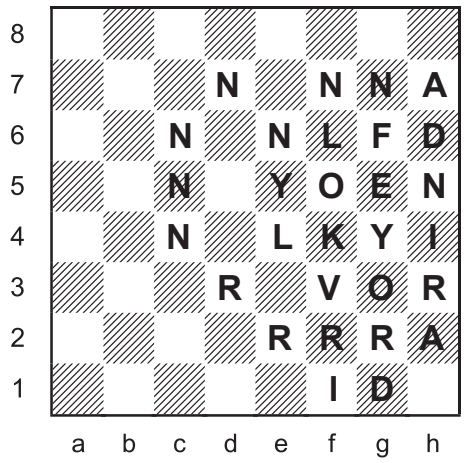
After 1.Qxg4+ Qxg4+ 2.Qxg4+ Rxg4, White can play 3.Bxc2 or 3.Be4.

Rebus 154

"*Who are the composers?*"

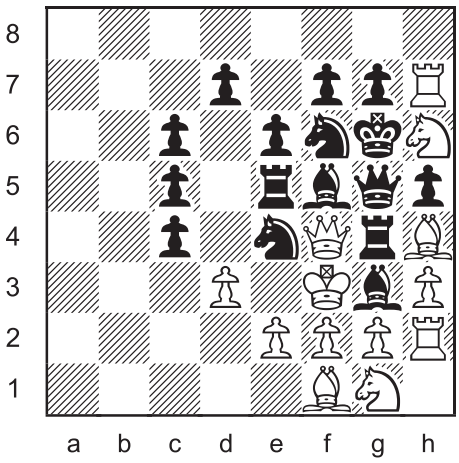
Andrei Kornilov & Andriy Frolkin 1982

feenschach 63



white
V = king
K = queen
A = rook
I = bishop
D = knight
R = pawn

black
F = king
E = queen
Y = rook
O = bishop
L = knight
N = pawn



(13 + 16)

Letter count: 8N 5R 2A 2D 2I 2O 2Y 2L 1E 1F 1K 1V = 29

Three pieces are missing with no pawns on the ab-files. It seems likely that N and R are pawns, and they are, but proving it is not so easy.

N = ♙ If N ≠ ♙

There are 6 promoted N's. This is only possible if that side (black or white) made 3 'pxp' captures. In that case, each capture would necessarily occur in a separate sector. A sector is 2 adjacent files.

The remaining 2 pawns for N's side cannot be passed. Additionally, there must be at least 3 sectors in which the other side (non-N) has either just one pawn or no pawns. Therefore if N ≠ ♙, then R ≠ ♙.

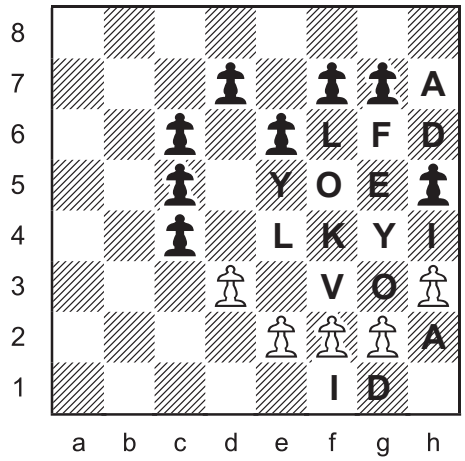
So there is a total of 9 promoted pieces (3 R's of opposite colour) and the remaining 4 pawns, 2 of each colour, cannot be passed. They must stand on the same two files, white below black. No letters fulfill this requirement. So N = ♙.

R = ♙ The c-pawns made all 3 captures. No promotions were made by the N-side. So the 5 R's must be the opposite colour. The R-side made no captures, which means that there cannot be 3 promoted R's. Therefore R = ♙.

N = black ♙

R = white ♙ Otherwise there are too many inverted pawns (white above black on same file).

Rebus 154 *continued*



The black pawns on the c-file made three captures. That accounts for all missing pieces. No other captures were made.

I = white ♗ Unmoved pawns on e2 g2.

♔ = (EFKV) Letters with a single instance.

F ≠ white ♔ Impossible pawn check (f7).

F = black ♔ V ≠ black ♔ Impossible pawn checks (e2 g2).
E ≠ black ♔ Impossible check (h4).
K ≠ black ♔ Adjacent to white king (f3 or g5).

white ♔ = (VK) E ≠ white ♔ Adjacent to black king (g6).

A = white ♖ With white bishop f1 and white pawns e2 g2 h3, the rook from h1 never escaped from behind the pawns.
D ≠ white ♖ Impossible check (h6).

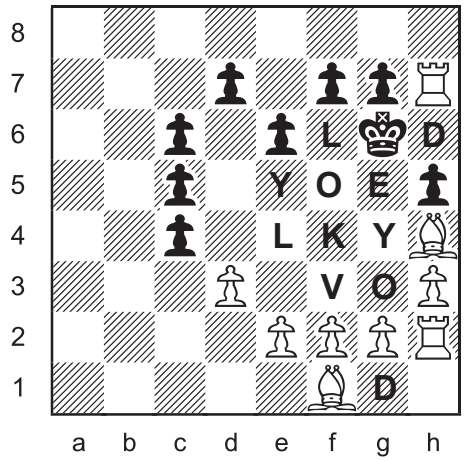
PRO-PASSER THEORY

Pro-passer theory is an analytic tool for determining the legality of a position based on the number of passed pawns, promoted pieces, and missing pieces. A pro-passer is a promoted piece or a passed pawn. In this theory, they count as the same thing.

Missing pieces are divided into two categories: pawns and officers.
'Pawn x officer' captures can create 2 pro-passers (one per side).
'Pawn x pawn' captures can create 3 pro-passers (two for capturing side).

For a position to be legal, there must be a sufficient number of missing officers and pawns to create the required number of pro-passers. If calculation shows insufficient missing pieces, the position is illegal. However, a favourable count, with an apparently sufficient number of missing pieces, does not prove that the number of pro-passers is legal. There are many situations that can still make the position illegal: doubled pawns, inverted pawns, the colour of promotion squares for promoted bishops, or the need for additional captures. In these cases, deeper analysis is required.

Rebus 154 *continued*



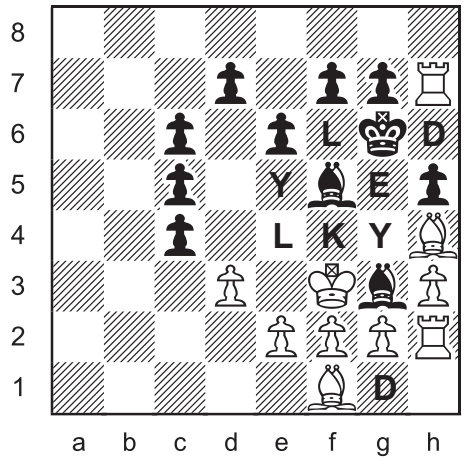
white ♔ = (VK)

All original 16 black pieces are on the board. No black promotions.

black ♕ = (EKV) Remaining letters with a single instance.

V = white ♔ K ≠ white ♔
Impossible check by black queen (f3 or g5).

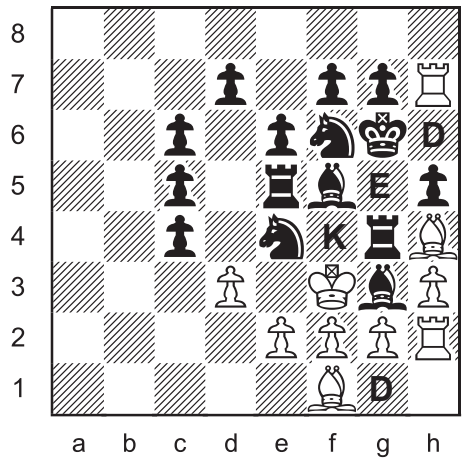
O = black ♗
Y ≠ black ♗ Impossible check (g4).
L ≠ black ♗ Impossible check (e4).
D ≠ black ♗ Both on dark squares.
EK ≠ black ♗ Only one instance. Must be two.



L = black ♘
Y ≠ black ♘ Impossible check (e5).
D ≠ black ♘ Impossible check (g1).
EK ≠ black ♘ Only one instance. Must be two.

Y = black ♖
D ≠ black ♖ Impossible rook (g1).
EK ≠ black ♖ Only one instance. Must be two.

Rebus 154 *continued*

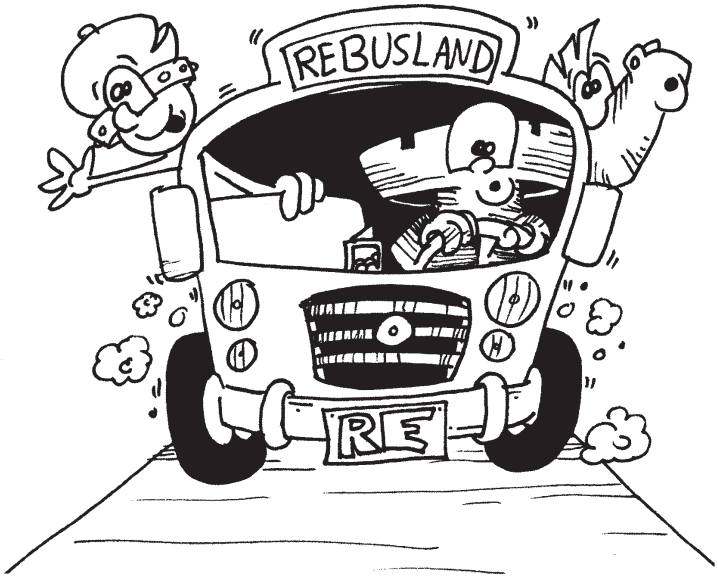


D = white ♘ D ≠ white ♕ Impossible check (h6).
D ≠ black ♕ Two instances. Must be one.

E = black ♛ E ≠ white ♕ Impossible check (g5).

K = white ♕

The lettering for this problem spells Andrei Kornilov and Andriy Frolkin, the original team of composers who developed rebuses as a serious form of chess composition over forty years ago.



Until next time!