

Sant' Ambrogio Quick Tourney for helpmates with contrahoppers

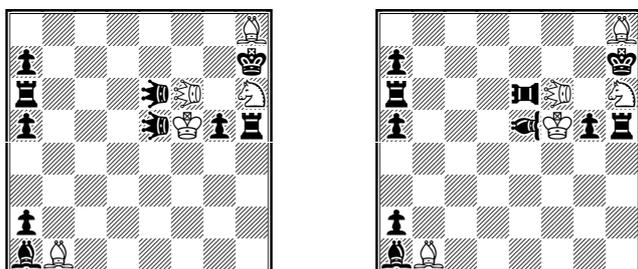
For this quick tourney Marco Bonavoglia sent me 21 anonymous problems in a very convenient uniform presentation. I am writing this award less than a day later. Therefore I apologise in advance for any errors resulting from the necessary haste in combination with my ever-slowng brain functions. Despite those two negative factors the task of judging was, as last year, a most enjoyable one.

The choice of contrahoppers was made so as to minimise anticipation searches in view of the short time available. My thanks once again to Geoff Foster for providing useful information in this respect. Only two problems used the contrarookhopper and contrabishopper. Because of Popeye's failure to include these pieces, the rule in this tourney was that it was acceptable to use the contragrasshopper even where a contrarookhopper or contrabishopper would be sufficient and that no problem would be downgraded for that reason. Where the contrarookhopper and/or contrabishopper could have been used in problems featuring in this award I have presented both the composer's version and an alternative using the lesser pieces; I want to make it clear that in these cases the award goes to whichever of these diagrammed settings the composer now prefers.

The overall quality of the tourney was good, especially in view of the composing time constraint, though perhaps not quite as good as in last year's gnu tourney. It is true that hoppers are harder to work with than leapers, so that is not surprising. A few problems omitted from the award nevertheless deserve a mention: The ideas of **A** (Ke8/Ke5) and especially **U** (Kd5/Kc3) deserved better settings, which will have been hard to achieve in the time allowed. I decided to give the composers of these problems a chance to perfect their interesting conceptions, which should then stand a good chance of distinction in another tourney. Problem **D** (Ke7/Ke5) should be presented with a rookhopper on f5 and a bishopper on d5, since contrahoppers are not needed there; in that form this problem is eminently publishable. Problem **G** (Kh5/Kb3) is superficially attractive but there is no black/white interplay and the idea can be set without twinning. Perhaps here too the composer can introduce some improvement?

And now the award. For greater clarity I have given all the contrahopper moves in full algebraic notation.

1st Prize: Mario Parrinello



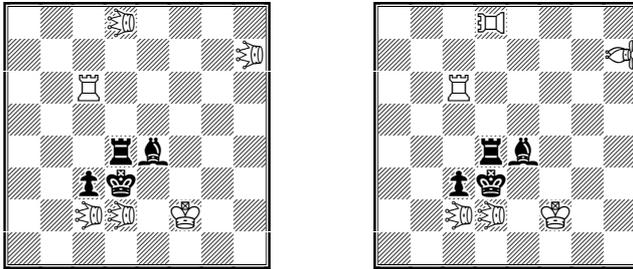
h#2 2 solutions

1.Kxh8 CGf6-d4+ 2.CG(CB)e5-b2 Ke5# & 1.Kxh6 CGf6-d6+ 2.CG(CR)e6-b6 Ke6#

Concentrated play on the thematic lines, using contrahoppers of both colours and with both kings moving. Although it is a pity that the cookstoppers on the left-hand side of the board

are needed, the construction appears faultless. This is the most impressive thematic combination in the tourney.

2nd Prize: Mario Parrinello

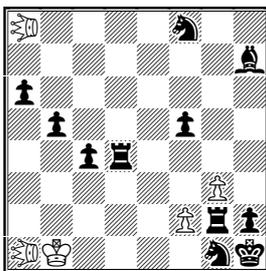


h#2 2 solutions

1.Rd6 CGc2-c4 2.Rg6 CGd2-d7# & 1.Bf5 CGd2-b4 2.Bd7 CGc2-g6#

The second and third prizes are both rather short on interplay, but their use of pinmates is a strongly positive factor. Indeed I had hoped for more pinning play in the tourney, since contrahoppers offer very interesting possibilities in this respect. In this case the simple pins of the pieces standing next to the black king are ideally complemented by the potential checks which prevent the retraction of black's second moves – a characteristic hopper effect. This problem is perfect in its light setting and in the elegance of its diagonal/orthogonal correspondence: just the thing to attract adherents of the orthodox helpmate into the more exciting field of fairy problems!

3rd Prize: Mario Parrinello



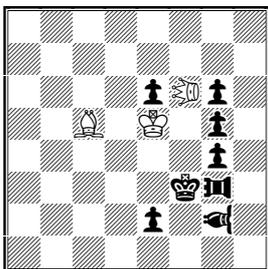
h#2.5 b) Kb1>b7

a) 1...CGa1xg1 2.Rd7 CGg1-a7 3.Rb7 CGa1#

b) 1...CGa8xg2 2.Rd1 CGg2-g8 3.Rb1 CGa8#

This problem cleverly exploits the contragrasshopper's ability to perform a triangular round trip, and combines it with pinmates. The twinning is thematic and the construction generally good, although one black pawn on b4 could replace the present b- and c-pawns. The idea is harder to show than the composer has made it appear; he was right to go for the maximum size of triangle, even though it also maximises the danger of cooks from closer range. The contrahopping, and indeed most of the thematic interest, is restricted to the white play, but that is natural enough in this theme; in this connection the choice of length is the best one. A most enjoyable work.

Honourable Mention: Valerio Agostini & Gabriele Brunori

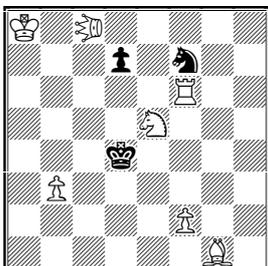


h#2 2 solutions

- 1.CBg2-d5 CGf6-c6+ 2.CBd5-b7 CGc6-a8#
1.CRg3-d3 CGf6-c3+ 2.CRd3-b3 CGc3-a3#

Line-movement away from the black king is a familiar motif with various hoppers, but it is here set very neatly and its visual attractiveness is enhanced by the tempo element for Black. The contrarookhopper and contrabishopper here were the composer's own choices; he tested with WinChloe. This is the only problem in the tourney in which all the moves are made by contrahoppers!

1st Commendation: Valerio Agostini

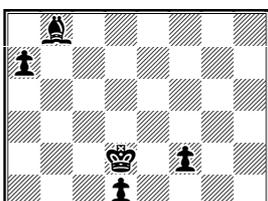


h#2 b) CGc8>c6

- a) 1.Ke4 CGc8-g4 2.d5 f4# b) 1.Kd5 CGc6-g2 2.Sxe5 f3#

The battery idea is ingenious and makes good use of the material, excepting the useless white king. However it would be much better if twinning could have been avoided, especially since it involves movement of the thematic piece. Also, Black's second moves are rather weak: the capture of the Se5 may be surprising, but it is not matched in the other phase.

2nd Commendation: Michel Caillaud



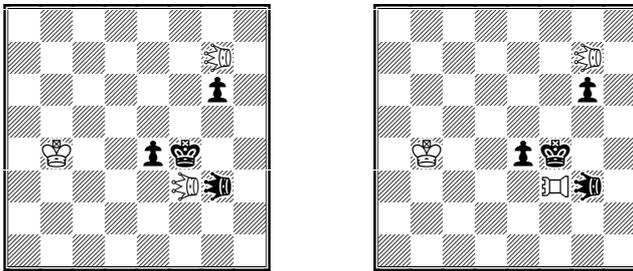


h#4 2 solutions

1.Kc5 Kg2 2.Kb6 CGe4 3.Kb7 Kf3 4.Ka8 CGe4-g2# &
 1.Kc3 Kg1 2.Kd2 CGh1-e1 3.Kd1 Kf1 4.d2 CGe1-g1#

This is the longest problem in the tourney. Its idea is not strongly contrahopperish (there are many K-moves!) and inevitably there is unused black material in each line, but it makes its point simply and clearly: a commendable achievement at this length when composing time is short.

3rd Commendation: Valerio Agostini

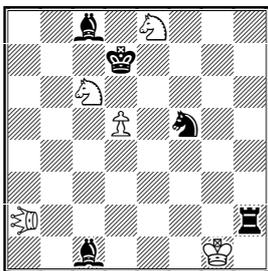


h#3 2 solutions

1.CGg3-c3 Kc4 2.CGc3-c5 Kd4 3.CGc5-f2 CG(CR)f3-f1# &
 1.CGg3-d3 CG(CR)f3-f6 2.Ke3 Kc3 3.CGd3-f5 CGg7-e5 #

Although there is no precise echo, there are interesting echo-like manoeuvres, and the problem is enjoyable to solve. The best miniature in the tourney.

4th Commendation: Francesco Simoni

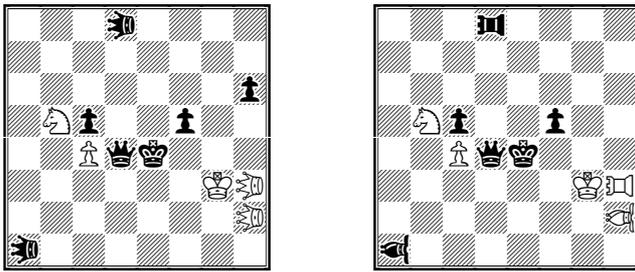


h#2 b) Pd5>c7

a) 1.Rb2 CGa2-h2 2.Sg3 Sf6# b) 1.Bb2 CGa2-e2 2.Se3 Sb8#

Not strongly contrahopperish, but a tidy setting with good use of the material, except for the useless white king. A pity that twinning is needed, however.

5th Commendation: Mario Parrinello

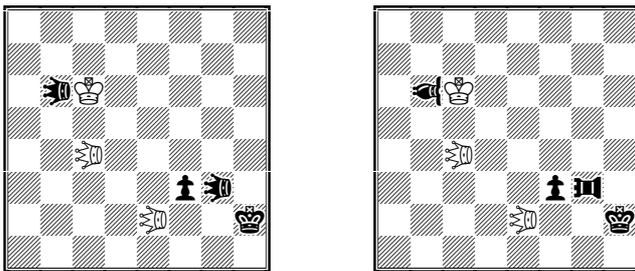


h#2 2 solutions

1.Qb2 CG(CB)h2-c7 2.CG(CB)a1-d4 Sd6# & 1.Qd7 CG(CR)h3-b3 2.CG(CR)d8-d4 Sc3#

Contrahopper play by both sides in a neat setting with diagonal/orthogonal correspondences and line effects but unfortunately without black/white interplay. The use of the lesser contrahoppers saves a black pawn.

6th Commendation: Vito Rallo



h#3 b) CGc4>c5

a) 1.Kh1 Kc5 2.CG(CB)b6-g1 CGc4-c6 3.f2+ Kd5#

b) 1.CG(CB)b6-g1 CGc5-c7 2.CG(CR)g3-e3 CGe2-e4 3.CG(CR)e3-h3 Kd6#

Nice line-effects, but little unity apart from the final king-mates, and an unfortunate repeated move. Nevertheless an amusing miniature.

Finally my congratulations to the successful composers, my apologies to the unsuccessful ones and my best thanks to the organisers of what I am sure has been a very enjoyable meeting.

Chris Feather, Stamford, 9/12/2012 (by E-mail)