

Internet Composing Tourney 67th WCCC Alba Iulia 2025

Award by Hans Gruber (Germany), International Judge of the FIDE

The tourney requested direct mates or selfmates in three moves featuring the Schiffmann theme. It was announced June 6th, 2025, and submission deadline was July 7th, 2025. Tourney Director Mihail Croitor quickly provided neutral diagrams without author names.

Israel Abraham Schiffmann was one of the greatest Romanian composers, in his short life (1903-1930) he published an outstanding oeuvre of thematical dense, extraordinarily elegant and highly innovative chess problems. Odette Vollenweider, the long-standing Swiss delegate at the WCCC meetings, published in 1963 a collection of Schiffmann's compositions in her book *Faszinierendes Schachproblem*, using the pseudonym Gabriel Baumgartner.

I applaud the Romanian Chess Federation for the decision to celebrate its centenary jubilee 2025 by announcing this tournament as part of the activities of the 67th WCCC. Israel Abraham Schiffmann investigated the theme later named after him and published a number of excellent two-movers in the years 1927 and 1928. The theme is sophisticated: There is a white threat (in the original two-move version this is a discovered check), and the thematic black defence self-pins a black piece. The defence is effective, because White would unpin that piece indirectly if the threat would be played. Instead, White plays a different continuation that uses this pin. A number of different forms were defined, either direct self-pin by capturing the front piece of a battery, or a Pelle move of an already pinned piece along the pin line, or a move by the black king that self-pins a piece.

In the three-mover several patterns are possible, self-pin in the first black move with immediate use of the pin in White's second move, or with use of the pin only in White's third move, or self-pin in the second black move, or combinations. The three-move Schiffmann theme has only rarely been investigated, and the collection of problems in the announcement showed that some of the greatest masters in our field had to express their expertise to present the theme. Thus, it was a challenging idea by the organisers to set this theme in a short-term tourney.

We did not expect a large number of entries but hoped for some exciting problems. I consider the tourney as quite successful, both in terms of quantity (eleven submissions, seven #3 and four S#3) and in terms of quality. I awarded six problems and hope that no anticipation will be found. It was quite an achievement to compose sound entries within one month, so it was challenging to add contents to the Schiffmann theme and/or to aim for the elegance that is so characteristic of Israel Abraham Schiffmann's compositions.

No. 1 (#3, 13+11, Ka8/Kf4) showed an Adabashev synthesis, but the pairs of variations are rather bland, including the Schiffmann variations. No. 2 (#3, 12+6, Kg7/Kd6) is not thematic, because after the defence, the threat cannot be played any longer, and thus there is no thematic unpin if the threat is played. No. 5 (#3, 9+11, Ka7/Kd4) is not thematic, because after the defences, the threat does not need the unpin effect, because Black defends by 2.- Rd3! No. 8 (S#3, 12+7, Kf1/Ke3) shows rather simple Schiffmann variations, and the scheme is not selfmate specific, but uses only orthodox (direct-mate) effects. No. 10 (S#3, 7+11, Ke1/Kc5) suffers from the double refutation after the dual avoidance in one variation: 1.- Rxd5 2.Qc7+? Kd4 3.Sf5+ exf5! and Rxf5!

List of participants (provided by the Tourney Director after completion of the award)

Aleksandr Feoktivistov (No. 1), Stefan Harnagea (No. 2), Srećko Radović (No. 3, No. 4, No. 5), Ralf Krätschmer (No. 6), Zoran Gavrilovski (No. 7, No. 8, No. 11), Mark Erenburg (No. 9), Andrey Selivanov & Abdelaziz Onkoud (No. 10).

1st Prize: No. 11 (Zoran Gavrilovski)

1.Bg3! [2.Be5 3.Bd4+ Sxd4#]

1.- cxd5 2.Rxe6! (2.Be5? d4+ 3.Bxd4#??) 3.Qb4+ Sxb4#

1.- exd5 2.Re4! (2.Be5? d4+ 3.Bxd4#??) 3.Rc4+ Sxc4#

The most innovative combination of the Schiffmann theme: The defences are effective, because Black can force White to mate if the threat is played! The author calls this a selfmate modification of the Berlin

theme, but I disagree, because an essential part of the Berlin theme is that in a logical structure the „wrong“ mates are downgraded to harmless checks, and such a downgrading is not present here. But the idea to force White to mate is splendid nevertheless, and it is very remarkable that all second white moves are quiet. These strengths help to accept the remote key piece, and the problem is the clear tourney winner.

2nd Prize: No. 7 (Zoran Gavrilovski)

1.Sf×e4! [2.Sd6+ Re4,Se4 3.S×f5#]

1.– Q×d5 2.S×c3+ Re4,Se4 3.Sb5#

1.– B×d5,Rf7,Be6 2.Sg5+ Re4,Se4 3.S(×)e6#

1.– S×d5 2.Sf2+ Re4 3.e3#

1.– R×e4 2.S×f3+ S×f3 3.B×c3#

1.– S×e4 2.Bf7+ Qd5 3.R×d5#

A quite complex problem, that gains considerable depth through the two additional variations with extra self-pins (although no Schiffmann defences), initiated by the second black moves from the Schiffmann variations. They are not differentiated there, but the variations differ. Unfortunately, the self-pin of the black queen is not used, and I deplore that two unthematic defences (1.– Rf7, 1.– Be6) provoke the same continuation as the thematic 1.– B×d5. This does not affect soundness, but thematic clarity.

3rd Prize: No. 4 (Srećko Radović)

1.Qc5! [2.Se3+ Kf4 3.Sg2#]

1.– Q×e4,Q×h2,Qh3,Qe7 2.S(×)e7+ Kf4 3.Sg6#

1.– B×e4 2.Sb4+ Kf4 3.Sd3#

1.– S3×e4 2.Sc3+ Kf4 3.Se2#

1.– S5×e4 2.Sc7+ Kf4 3.S×e6#

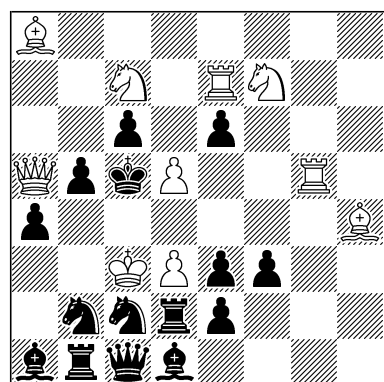
1.– e×d5 2.Q×d5+ Kf4 3.Qd6#

1.– f5 2.Qd4+ Kd6 3.e5#

1.– Qd7 2.Se7+ Kf4,Qd5 3.Sg6#

Four Schiffmann defences on the same square and very rich Siers-type style variations by the white battery. It is impressive that new pins emerge in the queen and bishop variations (but not in the knight variations). Again I deplore that three unthematic defences (1.– Q×h2, 1.– Qh3, 1.– Qe7) provoke the same continuation as the thematic 1.– Q×e4. The by-play is excellent, and the setting is light.

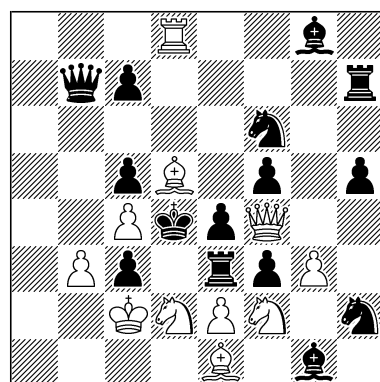
1st Prize: No. 11 Zoran Gavrilovski



S#3

C+ 10+15

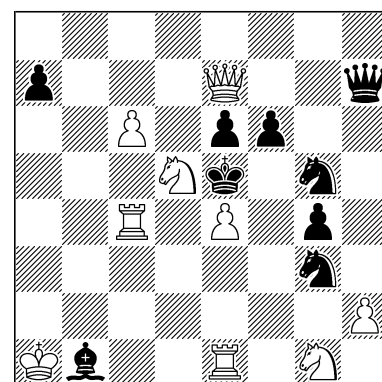
2nd Prize: No. 7 Zoran Gavrilovski



#3

C+ 11+15

3rd Prize: No. 4 Srećko Radović



#3

C+ 9+9

Honourable Mention: No. 9 (Mark Erenburg)

1.Rb8! [2.S×d5+ Kd3 3.Q×f3+ B×f3#]

1.– S3×d4 2.Bc2 3.Se2+ f×e2#

1.– S5×d4 2.Qf5 3.Se2+ f×e2#

A presentation that may be interpreted as a selfmate specific extension of the Schiffmann theme: In the

thematic variations, when the threat is tried, the unpins result from Black's second moves, not from the white moves. The spirit of the theme „Black self-pins in expectation of an unpin when the threat is played“ is clearly met! It is selfmate-specific that the damage of the black defences is that they *guard* a potential flight square of the white king. The variations are quite simple, and some white pieces are idle in some variations (e.g. Rb8, Ba4), but the concept is original.

1st Commendation: No. 3 (Srećko Radović)

1.Ra4? [2.Re4#] Sd2 2.c4+ Rc3 3.Bxc3#, but 1.– Re3!

1.Ra7? [2.Re7#] Bh4!

1.Bc6! [2.Sd4+ Kxd6 3.Sgf5#]

1.– Sxc3 2.Sa7+ Kxd6 3.Ba3#

1.– Bxc3 2.Ra7 3.Re7#

1.– Rxc3 2.Ra4 [3.Re4#] Sd2/f5 3.Bxc3/Re6#

1.– Sa3 2.Bxa3 [3.Sa7,Sc7,Sd4#] Bf2/Bxc3/Rxc3/Rd3 3.Sd4/Sxc3/Sxc3/Sd4#

Three traditional Schiffmann defences with fine logical tries that make use of two of the three self-pins and are successful when played as second white moves. The setup is extremely economical which is an achievement on its own with the difficult theme.

2nd Commendation: No. 6 (Ralf Krätschmer)

1.Ra8? [2.Ra4#] Qxa8!

1.Qe3? [2.Qd3#] Rxh3!

1.Qf4! [2.d5+ Kc5 3.Qb4#]

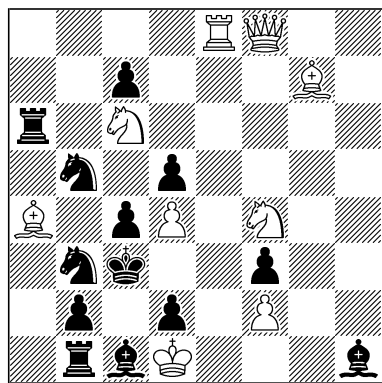
1.– Rcxe6 2.Rxc7+ Qc6 3.Rxc6#

1.– Rhxe6 2.Qe3 3.Qd3#

1.– Qxe6 2.Ra8 3.Ra4#

The same theme as in the 1st Commendation (three thematic variations, two logical tries), but the play is rather bland, and the refutation 1.– Qxa8! of the first try is very coarse.

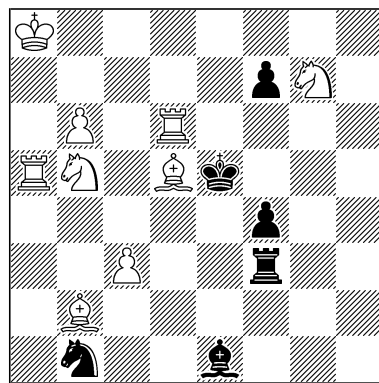
Honourable Mention: No. 9 Mark Erenburg



S#3

C+ 9+13

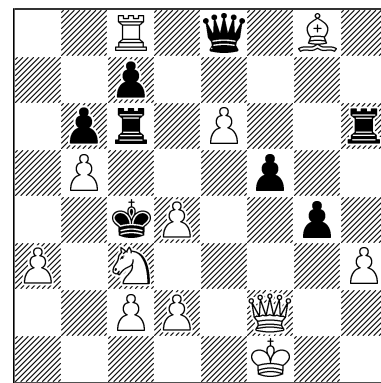
1st Commendation: No. 3 Srećko Radović



#3

C+ 9+6

2nd Commendation: No. 6 Ralf Krätschmer



#3

C+ 12+8