

The position 3r4/8/8/8/1N6/8/8/k1K4B_w came to my attention because it was listed by Christoph Wirth (Haworth et al, 2001) as one of 127 White to move maxDTC (Depth to Conversion) KBNKR wins for White. In other words, a change of force or mate is deferred for as many moves as in any KBNKR win for White.

I noticed that Black can force White's moves to capture to be absolutely unique and that the technical requirement of a study – an essentially unique solution – was therefore met. The solution also had some artistic merits. White starts with two quiet moves with no direct threats or captures, and the 6-move solution is a reasonable length, ending in a clear KBNK 'mate in 19' win. There are certainly positions¹ (Conrady, 2003; Haworth, 2013) with absolutely unique wins which may be either an overlong challenge for a solver and/or end in an unclear win.

However, it was also true that I had not *composed* the study in any traditional sense of the word but rather *recognised* it. I was more comfortable with *finder* rather than *author* as a description of my role. As there was some controversy at the time about what methods and tools should be allowable for the process of study composition, I sent the position and solution to John Beasley to illustrate some aspects of the discussion.

With my agreement and despite my reservations, John Beasley (2002a/b) published my find, and later the solution, in his *diagrammes* column of original studies. This automatically entered it in the periodical's informal, biennial tourney, albeit in a so called 'database studies' category segregated from 'conventionally composed' studies and separately evaluated. Jonathan Mestel's (2005) judgement, also published in abridged form in the endgame study magazine *EG* (Mestel, 2006)², gave it a '4th Special Commendation'. This was a pleasant surprise, given that the airing of the position and solution had started as an academic exercise.

With the defined notation³, the solution is (*dtc* = 6 moves) **1. Bc6''' Rd6'' 2. Bb5'''' Rb6'' 3. Nc2+'''' Ka2° 4. Bc4+'''' Rb3° 5. Nd4'''' Ka1' 6. Nxb3'''** (6. Nc2+ Ka2° 7. Nd4'''' returning to position 5b).

Harold van der Heijden (2014-16) laudably champions the idea that a study should have an exposition of its artistic content supported by a separate analysis of its technical correctness. In a similar spirit, I would like to see studies judged both independent of, and with consideration of, their means of composition. To that end, composers could be given more incentives and space to discuss how their studies came about.

References

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¹ e.g., Conrady's #11430 in HHdbV: 8/8/7p/7n/k7/8/2K5/3R4 w. *dtc/m/z* = 27/50/18m but the solution is 23m to KRKP.

² The referenced publications by Beasley and Mestel are also available from Haworth (2016).

³ '''' ≡ absolutely unique value-preserving move; ''' ≡ unique value-preserving move (after ignoring moves that allow a forced repeat of position); '' ≡ unique DTC-optimal move; ' ≡ DTC-optimal move.