SELECTED CHESS COMPOSITIONS

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If you done it, it ain’t bragging.
Baseball great “Dizzy” Dean

1. Introduction

This is the cover of the magazine Magyar Sakkélet (Hungarian Chesslife), the official organ of the Hungarian Chess Federation, from May 1954. It records the last chess game I played in a tournament. (I am the youngster on the right side of the picture.)
This is how the story starts about my chess compositions. I am a mathematician, and as such I am not used to writing in the first person singular. But if I want the story told, I have to tell it myself. Almost everybody in this story is dead, most long dead.

When my picture appeared in the chess magazine, I was about to graduate from grade 12. The team I played for, Tipográfía (Typography), just won the Budapest championship. The leader of our team was asked to write an article for the magazine about our team, so he asked us to look over the games we played in this tournament, and look for positions in which we were clever, so he can write them up.

It was a big chore to look over the thirty or so games. The result was extremely disappointing. Even though I rated 85%, every win was due to an error of the opponents. I decided that the time I spend on chess would be more satisfying if I created chess problems—these are absolute and not illusory, not dependent on your opponents ignorance and psychology.

Dr. Jenő Bán (1919–1979), one of the chess masters at the chess club, introduced us to chess compositions, especially endgames (white plays and wins or draws). I figured that if I compose endgames, and I state that white wins (or draws), these ought to be absolute, and not dependent on mistakes by the opponent. I started studying endgames; you have to be familiar with thousands of them to create original ones.

My second mentor was György Páros (1910–1975). Unquestionably the world leading chess composer in helpmates. He taught me how to aim at uncluttered positions, few pieces, and elegant ideas.

Páros told me the story of one of his most famous compositions; how he struggled with the idea for years, and how he woke up one morning and set up the position on his chess board. And that is why I quit after about two years. The subconscious work necessary for success in chess compositions competed against the same for mathematical research, and I had to give one of them up.

I look back at this period, 1954–56, with great satisfaction. For this time period, my endgame #11 was officially placed the second best in Hungary—which is not bad because I was so young and just starting. And the one placed first proved to be defective!

**Acknowledgement.** Having moved in the last 50 years to two new countries, it is not surprising that I have no record of my chess compositions. Mária Halmos did all the work to find them, and I do believe that she found most of them.

János Mikitovics (JM)—the author of the splendid Website: Hungarian Chess Composers: [http://www.magyarsakkszerzok.com/index.html](http://www.magyarsakkszerzok.com/index.html)—went through my compositions and sent me a long document, analyzing them. He also took the time to educate me about the technical advances that have happened, especially, Fritz (I now have version 11) and the Knowledge4IT Website. Another huge advance is the Nalimov endgame databases, now complete up to 5 pieces (consider that my Composition #1 had only 5 pieces), and covering all the 6 piece positions without pawns.

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1In a **helpmate** both sides are cooperating to checkmate black. The first move is made by black. So in a “helpmate in two”, black moves, then white moves, then black moves again, and finally white checkmates black.
2. Picking favorites

I agree with MJ. If you want to see only three chess compositions of mine, pick the endgames No. 1b, No. 11 and the helpmate No. 13.
3. Chronological listing

1a. 1954 Hungarian National Endgame Competition
Sixth place
Magyar Sakkélet 1954, issue 11/12, p. 285 (revised)

White draws

This was my first endgame composition; I was 18. It was published in 1954 in Magyar Sakkélet, so it participated in the 1954 Hungarian National Endgame Competition, placing sixth.
Solution (Magyar Sakkélet 1954, issue 11/12, p. 285):
1. Kg6! (1. g4? d5 2. g5 d4 3. g6 d3 4. g7 Bc4 — black wins) 1. –, d5
8. Nf2+ — draw.
— draw
1b. OTSB Nyeviczkey Memorial Competition
First prize (revised)
*Magyar Sakkélet* 1956, issue 11/12

Two years later, I composed this endgame. This leads to the opening position of 1a, when in move 6 black appears to capture the white knight with Bb5.
Solution (*Magyar Sakkélet* 1956, issue 11/12):

1. b7 Rh4+ 2. Kg7 Rg4+ 3. Kh8: Rg8+ 4. Kh7 Bc4 5. b8Q Rb8: 6. Nb8: Bb5 —now continue as in #1, white draws.
2a. OTSB 1954 Hungarian National Endgame Competition (revised)
   Second HM
   *Magyar Sakkélet* 1954, issue 12, #82

![Chess Diagram]

White wins

2b.

![Chess Diagram]

White wins
Solution 2a (Magyar Sakkélet 1955, issue 3):
1. Bh4:+!! (1. Bc7+? d6!! 2. Rg8 Kf2 3. Rf8 Ke1 4. Rg8 c2 5. Ba5 Kd1 or
1. Rb8 c2 2. Ba5 h3 —white cannot win;) 1. –, Kh4: 2. Rh6+, Kg3 3. Rh1,
Rg1!, Kf2 15. Rb1!, Kf3. 16. Re1, d3 17. Kd3:, Kf2 18. Kd2, Kf3
19. Rg1, Kf2 20. Rb1, Kf3 21. Re1 —and so on, white wins.

Solution 2b Same as that of 2a, starting with move 2.
3. *Magyar Sakkélet* 1955, issue 1, #90

White wins
Solution (Magyar Sakkélet 1955, issue 4):
1. cb6:, Rb6: 2. Qd8+, Ka7 3. Qd4!, g5 4. Kg2!, g4! 5. Kg1!, f3
6. Kf2, h3 7. Kg3—and so on, white wins.
4. *Magyar Sakkélet* 1955, issue 4, #1863

Helpmate in 3 (version)

a. The diagram

b. Move white pawn from b3 to g5
Solution (Magyar Sakkélet 1955, issue 6):

a. 1. Nb4:, g8N 2.Nc6, b4! 3. Nd8, Ne7 — checkmate.

b. 1. Bc1, g8B 2. Bg5:, Bf7! 3. Bd8, Be6 — checkmate.
5a. *Magyar Sakkélet* 1955, issue 5, #105 (revised)

White wins

5b. *Magyar Sakkélet* 1955, issue 5, #106 (revised)

BTSB 1956 International Endgame Competition
Fourth prize

*Magyar Sakkélet* 1956, issue 11/12, #106

White wins
Solution 5a (Magyar Sakkélet 1955, issue 8):
1. a6 h3 2. Nf3! (2. a7? Bd5: 3. Kd5: h2 4. a8Q h1Q+ 5. f3 Qe1:
12. g5 Kf3: — draw.) 2. – Kf3: 3. a7 Bd5 4. Kd5: h2 5. Ke5:!! Kg5:
6. a8B!: —white wins. (6. a8Q? h1Q 7. Ke5: Kg4: 8. Qh1: —stalemate.)

Solution 5b:
6. h8Q a1Q+ 7. f3 —easy draw) 1. –, Kc3 2. h7, Bd4 3. Bb6: Bh8 4. Bc7!
6. With P. Bauer
BTSB 1956 International Endgame Competition
Nineth place
*Magyar Sakkolet* 1955, issue 6, # 116

White wins
Solution (Magyar Sakkélet 1955, issue 9):
7. Ra7 Re1 (7. – Kb6 8. Kd5 Re1 9. Rd7 —wins) 8. b5+ Kb5:


7. *Magyar Sakkélet* 1955, issue 7, #1933

Mate in 45
Solution (Magyar Sakkélet 1955, issue 10):
1. Na3+ Ka1 2. Nb1! Kb1: 3. Qd3+ Ka1 4. Qd4 Kb1 5. Qe4+ Ka1
6. Qe5 Kb1 7. Qf5+ Ka1 8. Qf6 Kb1 9. Qg6+ Ka1 10. Qg7 Kb1 11.
Qh7+ Ka1 12. Qh8 Ka1 13. Qg7 Kb1 14. Qh7+ Ka1 15. Qh8 a6
16. Qg7 Kb1 17. Qh7+ Ka1 18. Qh8 a5
19. Qg7 Kb1 20. Qh7+ Ka1 21. Qh8 a4
22. Qg7 Kb1 23. Qh7+ Ka1 24. Qh8 a3
25. Qg7 Kb1 26. Qh7+ Ka1 27. Qh8 b5
28. Qg7 Kb1 29. Qh7+ Ka1 30. Qh8 b4
31. Qg7 Kb1 32. Qh7 Ka1 33. Qh8 e1Q+ 34. Ke1: Kb1
35. Qh7+ Kc1 36. Qh6+ Kb1 37. Qg6+ Kc1 38. Qg5+ Kb1
39. Qf5+ Kc1 40. Qf4+ Kb1 41. Qe4+ Kc1 42. Qe3+ Kb1
43. Qd3+ Ka1 44. Kd4 Kb1 45. Qd1+ — checkmate.

Mate in 4
Solution (*Magyar Sakkélet* 1956, issue 1):
1. g7! threats: 2. Qg6 checkmate and 2. gh8Q checkmate.
1. – Rhe8: 2. g8N+ Rg8: 3. Nf6 — checkmate in the next move.
1. – Rce8: 2. gh:Q+ Rh8: 3. Ng7 — checkmate in the next move.
9. *Magyar Sakkélet* 1955, issue 11, #2037

On October 6, 1955, Gyula Neukomm organized a “composition with a theme” quick tournament. Time limit for creating the composition: 2 hours; time limit for judging: 1 hour. The theme: Helpmate in 2, and in the first move, the black queen takes the white queen.

If the white queen (on e7) is removed or replaced by another piece, the composition is incorrect; least obvious is the replacement with a rook, in which case, the unintended solution is 1. Kd5: Bf3+ 2. Kd6: Bb4 —checkmate.
Solution (Magyar Sakkélet 1955, issue 11):
1. Qe7: Kg2 2. Nd3 Bf3 — checkmate.
10. 1955 Competition of the Finnish Federation of Chess Composers
   Sixth place
   *Magyar Sakkélet* 1956, issue 3, #189

White wins
Solution (*Magyar Sakkélet* 1956, issue 3):

1. \textbf{c4! Bc4:} (1. – Rd1 or f1 2. Ne3+ — white wins. 1. – Ra5 2. f7 Rf5
(4. – Rf1 or a6 5. Be2+ — white wins. 4. – Rb1 or a2 5. Be2+ and 6. f7 wins.)
5. \textbf{Bg4} — white wins.
11. 1955 Népszava
First prize
*Magyar Sakkélet* 1956, issue 3, #186
Fourth Hungarian National Competition
Second prize
*Magyar Sakkélet* 1957, issue 8/9, #242

White draws
Solution (Magyar Sakkélet 1956, issue 3):

1. Na4+ Kb4 or b5 (1. – Kd5 2. Nb6+ Ke5 3. Nd7+ and so on perpetual check or return to the main variant)

2. Rb6+ Ka4: 3. Bd7+ Nc6


5. Rb5+!


12. OTSB 1956

Second prize

Magyar Sakkélet 1956, issue 7, #2155

Helpmate in 3

Solution:
13. *Magyar Sakkélet* 1957, issue 5, #236

White draws

Solution (*Magyar Sakkélet* 1957, issue 10):

1. e7! (1. b3? a3 2. e7. Rg3:+! 3. Kg3: Bg6: —black wins. 1. g7? Rd8 —black wins.) 1. – Re3 2. g7 Ba2 3. b3! Bb3: 4. e4! Be4: 5. Ne6! Be6:!

6. e8Q Bg4: 7. Kh4! Re8: 8. g8Q Rg8: —stalemate.
14. *Magyar Sakkélet* 1957, issue 6, #242

**Solution** (*Magyar Sakkélet* 1957, issue 10):
1. b5+! Kb5:
2. de: (2. Be2+? Kc5 3. de: Rh3+ and 4. – Re3 — draw.)
(1. de:? Ne7: 2. Be2+ Kb7! 3. Ne7: Rh3+ and 4. – Re3 — draw.
1. Ne7:? Ne5! 2. Be2+ Kb6 3. Ka4 Rh1 — draw.)
15. *Magyar Sakkélet* 1957, issue 12, #257

White wins

Solution (*Magyar Sakkélet* 1958, issue 1):

1. Re4! (1. Ng1? Bh4: —draw.)
   1. – Nf3:! (1. – Nh3: 2. Re1:+ Ka2
2. Ng1! Ng1: 3. Re1:+ Ka2
4. Re3! (4. Rg1:? —stalemate)
   4. – Ka1 5. Bc3:! (5. Kc3:? Kb1 —draw.)
5. – Ka2 (5. – a2 6. Re3! —white wins.)
6. Re3 c3! 7. Kc3!: Kbl
4. COOKS AND COMMENTS

1a. This endgame was published without the white pawn on g2.
This position, of course, today is part of the Nalimov database. JM observed that placing a white pawn on g2 eliminates the Cook.

1b. Because of the Cook for 1a, this also had to be revised. Just placing a white pawn on g2 introduces a Cook. There are many ways to go around it, I show two.

2. Originally, this was published in the form:

![Chess Diagram]

White wins


Easiest correction: drop the first move, see 2b. Alternatively, block the rook’s access to the g file, as is done in 2a. This solution has the added advantage that in 2a the check on c7 seems very attractive.

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2A *Cook* or *Cook solution* is an alternative way of achieving the goal, demonstrating that the composition is flawed.
This endgame shows some limitations of even the best chess programs. Look at this position in this endgame:

White wins

Even with unlimited time, Fritz 11 does not find the winning move: Rb1. Nor does Sigma Chess with HIARCS 12.1 MP. Apparently, this type of zugzwang\(^3\) is difficult for a computer program to analyze.

\(^3\)A situation in a chess game in which a player is forced to make an undesirable or disadvantageous move.
5. Originally, 5a was published without the c2 pawn.


5b is derived from its published form:

White draws

**Solution** (*Magyar Sakkélet* 1955, issue 8):


(1. h6? Nf6 2. Kf6: a2 3. Bd4 Kd4: 4. h7 a1Q 5. h8Q Ke4:
6. Kg5: Qe5+! —black wins.)

10. Cooks:
1. Ra4, Bd2 2. Rd4, Nc3 — checkmate
1. Ng5, Nxf6+ 2. Kf4 Qxe5 — checkmate
Lucky for me, these were not discovered in the one hour Mr. Neukomm had to find cooks.

11. My #11 received the second prize in the Fourth Hungarian National Competition. The first prize winner was A. Korányi’s endgame:

![Chess Diagram](Image)

White wins

Solution (*Magyar Sakkélet* 1957, issue 8/9, p. 139):
1. c6 Nb3 2. Bc5+ Nc5: 3. c7 Rb1+  4. Ke2 Rb2+ 5. Kf1 Rb1+
The final position is

an interesting zugzwang. Of course, it is not this position that makes Korányi’s work so remarkable, but the 22 interesting moves that lead up to it.

It is difficult to use Fritz 11 or Hiarcs 12.1 MP to find a Cook in this composition. To look ahead 22 moves is a horizon too far. However, we can observe that in move 12. Kf6: reduces the number of pieces to 6:

so we can use the Knowledge4IT Website. Obviously, black moves Nf7+, and here is the surprise: 13. Ke6 wins in 19 moves and 13. Kf5 also wins in 19 moves. 13. Ke6 is the intended solution (see above); 13. Kf5 is a Cook:


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4A situation in a chess game in which a player is forced to make an undesirable or disadvantageous move.
5. From the ashes...

From the defective compositions of old, we are trying to resurrect some with János Mikitovics.

16. George Grätzer & János Mikitovics
MatPlus, May 2009

Solution: 1. Kb7! i Ne8 2. a7?! ii Nc7 3. Nb3! Kd6/iii=main

   ii) 2.Nb3? Nd6+=
   iii) main 3. ...Na8 4. Nc5+ Kd6 (4. ...Kd8 5. Ne4! f5 6. Ng5 Kd7 7. Nxe6+-)


