Losing Chess in proof games

Fascinated by the myriad possibilities of expression through Losing Chess, I decided to write an article about this topic. I then asked Bernd Gräfrath to read it. The consequence was that it was added another part (Part A) to the existing two (B and C). The three jointed parts form the finished article below, which we are proud to present to you.

A) Some basic themes

by Bernd Gräfrath

I discovered the beauty of Losing Chess retros when I studied Ralf Binnewirtz's book Schlagabtausch im Rauberschach (Dresden: Maedler, 2000). This book discusses all LC problems and studies which were published up to that point. The retro section featured great problems by Wolfgang Dittmann; and for some time, the interest in LC problems declined. But I had the impression that there were still many mysterious landscapes to be explored in that area, and the published collection helped to avoid anticipations. At first, I composed LC problems with retroanalysis in the traditional sense; later on, I concentrated on LC proof games. When I received Popeye 4.51, I began to compose complex themes in LC proof games which I would not have dared to publish without computer-checking. The following twelve problems give a selective survey of themes in LC proof games, with some hints at unrealized challenges.

Recently, there was a thematic construction tourney of Die Schwalbe, and it asked for the Pronkin-theme in LC. Although the Pronkin-theme can be shown in orthodox proof games, it is nevertheless an interesting challenge. (For the results, see Die Schwalbe of October 2008, p. 576) There are specific difficulties which have to be overcome, so that the promoted piece is not caught up in captures. Problem A3 shows a Pronkin-S in its purest form: Since the Pronkin-theme is an extension of the Phoenix-theme, it is to be wished that promoted piece only appears after the relevant original piece has already been captured. Solution: 1.g4 d5 2. g5 Qd6 3. g6 Qxh2 4. gxf7 Qxg1 5. fxe8S Qxf1 6. Sxc7 Qxe1 7. Rxe1 e5 8.Sxd5 e4 9. Sf4 Sd7 10. Sh3 Se5 11. Sg1.

The following problems show combinations of the Pronkin-theme with other themes. Problem A4 has 2 solutions, one with a Pronkin-Rook, and one with a roundtrip of the original Rook. (The problem was originally misprinted as a “shortest” proof game; but the term “exactly” is necessary.) Solutions: 1. h4 Sf6 2.Rh3 e6 3. Rg3 Be7 4. Rfxg7 Sf5 5.Rxh7 Bxh4 6. Rxf8 Bxf2 7. Rxf5 Bxg1 8. Rh1; 1. h3 Sh6 2. h4 e6 3. h5 Sg4 4. h6 Sxf2 5. hxg7 Sxh1 6.gxh8R Be5 7. Rxh7 Bxg1 8. Rxh1.

In Problem A5, a Pronkin-Rook is combined with the Donati-50-theme (a promoted piece returns to its promotion square) and the Ceriani-Frolkin-theme. Solution: 1.h4 b6 2. h5 Bb7 3. h6 Bxg2 4. hxg7 Bxh1 5. gxh8R Qc8 6. Rxf7 Kd8 7. Rxh1 Bg7 8. Rh8 Bxh8.

A3) B. GRAFRÄTH
Die Schwalbe 2008

A4) B. GRAFRÄTH
Sachova Skladba 2009

A5) B. GRAFRÄTH
Variant Chess 2009
Problem A6 combines themes which may be very hard to combine in an orthodox proof game. In any case, LC allows to show the following themes in very few moves: Pronkin-Rook with Ceriani-Frolkin-theme, plus Anti-Pronkin-Rook. Solution: 1. a4 e6 2. a5 Qf6 3. a6 Qxb2 4. axb7 Qxc2 5. bxa8R Qxb1 6. R8xa7 Qxa1 7. Rxal g6 8. h4 Bg7 9. Rh3 Bxa1 10. Ra3 Bd4 11. Ra8.

Problem A7 shows an Anti-Pronkin-Queen which is captured after visiting the thematic promotion square. Solution: 1. g4 c5 2. g5 Qe7 3. g6 Qxh2 4. gxf7 Qxh1 5. fxe8Q Qxg1 6. Qxe7 Qxf2 7. Qxc5 Qxe2 8. Qxe2 Bxc5 9. Qe8! d5 10. Qxg8 Rxg8.

A Schnoebelen-Queen cannot be shown in orthodox proof games, and if I am not mistaken, this also holds for LC proof games. But the Schnoebelen-theme can be shown with other pieces.

Problem A8 combines a Schnoebelen-S with an Anti-Pronkin-S which is even captured in the end. Solution: 1. c4 g6 2. c5 Bg7 3. c6 Bxb2 4. cxb7 Bxa1 5. bxal8S c5 6. Sa3 Sc6 7. Sc4 Bb7 8. S4b6 Qxa8 9. Sxa8 Bxa8.
