CORRESPONDENCE

SYMMETRICAL CHESS

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The Editors have received many responses to the Questions posed in the article *Can Black Force A Win?* by D. L. Dowe (*ICCA Journal*, Vol. 13, No. 3, pp. 165-166). The contents of these letters have been compiled below.

Firstly, we received two additional letters from David L. Dowe with answers on two of his questions.
Question 1 is answered affirmatively by: 1. d4 d5 2. e4 e5 3. f4 f5 4. g4 g5 5. fxg5 fxg4 6. dxe5 dxe4 7. Qd5 g3 8. Qxg8 Qd4 9. Qxh8 Qxg1 10. Qxh7 Qxh1 11. Qxc7 Qxh2 12. Qxb8 Qxc2 13. Qxa8 Qxb1 14. Qxc8+ Ke7 15. Qxf8+ Kxf8 16. g6 Qxa1 17. e6 Qxc1+ 18. Ke2 Qxf1+ 19. Kxf1 e3.
Question 4 is answered affirmatively too as demonstrated in Diagram 1, containing 5 Pawns instead of 6.
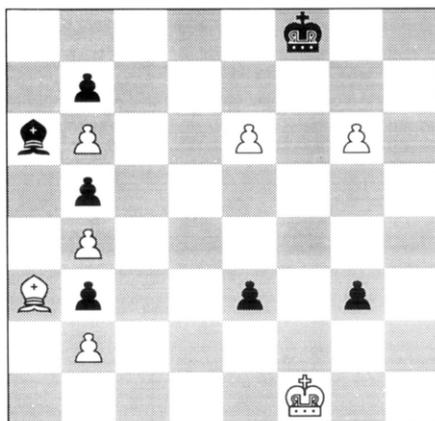

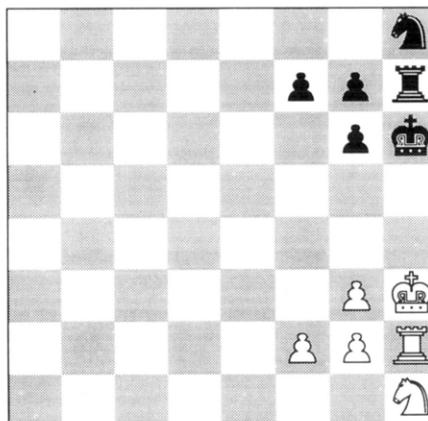**Diagram 1:** White to move.   **Diagram 2:** White to move.

Moreover, we received two responses to Mr. Dowe's **conjecture**, that all symmetrical and legal positions can be obtained with symmetrical play, both clearly denying this conjecture.

Ingo Althöfer responded: "The answer is 'No'. See the position, resulting from the following game: 1. h4 h5 2. Rh3 Rh6 3. Rf3 Re6 4. Rf5 Re4 5. Rg5 Rg4. This position can not be obtained with symmetrical play, as the black Rook can not cope the first white move of the form, Rxn with $x \in \{a, b, c, .., h\}$ and $n \in \{5, 6, 7, 8\}$."

John Roycroft wrote: "This kind of question belongs to the class of 'constructional' posers that abound in the chess magazines over the last 100 years – if one knows were to look. The answer to David Dowe's question is 'no', and the reason is the King's move. [See Diagram 2.] It is White's move, so Black moved last. The only legal move is a bK move, but if this was symmetrical the Ks will have been on adjacent squares, which contravens the Laws."

The reader is encouraged to verify that the position of Diagram 2 indeed can be obtained by (unsymmetrical) legal play. As a second counter-example Roycroft also mentions the position [WKe8; BKe1] being unreachable with symmetrical play since the Kings are unable to pass each other.

Finally, we note that any symmetrical and legal position in which a Rook or the King of each side has moved to the opponent's half is unreachable via symmetrical play for obvious reasons.

Although many questions remain and may yield several new results, we encourage interested readers to correspond directly with Dr. Dowe. For the time being this closes the discussion on this topic in the Journal.