

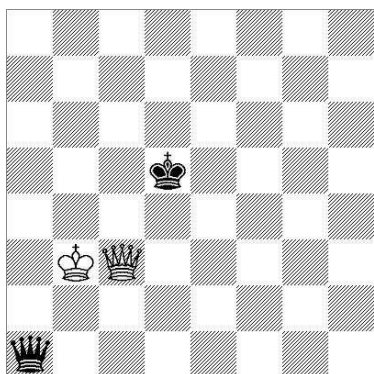
***East Anglian Daily Times* – Kevin O’Connell – chess columns 2000**

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I have put together this set of columns from my (incomplete) archive of diagrams and texts as sent to the newspaper. There is, therefore, no guarantee that they correspond exactly with what was published. This is especially true for the year 2000, which saw a change, during the summer, from what had been two columns a week (on Tuesdays and Saturdays) to a single Saturday column. That is, I believe, the explanation for the apparent duplication of columns during July, where I had (I think) prepared Tuesday columns which were no longer required and which I therefore transferred to the Saturdays, but without deleting them from what became my archive. Anyway, I have simply followed my archive.

There are, therefore, 81 columns in this file.

Saturday 1 January 2000
By Kevin O'Connell



This is a very famous position yet one you may well not have seen before. White to play. Solution difficult. Yes, it really is very difficult. Read on before attempting to solve it.

Whether or not you agree that a new millennium starts today there is something special about the change from 1999 to 2000. There have been lots of competitions to name the sportsman of the century but chess could provide a sportsman of the millennium. The world's favourite sport (soccer) is much less than 200 years old, as are most other sports. While chess may not be able to claim to be as old as some sports, such as running or javelin throwing, it is still one of the very few that was played not only during the millennium just ended but in the one before that as well.

The Baghdad player as-Suli, active about 900-940, would be sure to collect the accolade of chess sportsman of the first millennium. Chess had then still to reach Europe but today's position was already well-

known, although the correct outcome was unknown. Until, that is, the world's best player of the first half of the first millennium, as-Suli, pointed out that White wins. He was proud of his achievement, stating that "there is no one on earth who has solved it unless he was taught by me." However, his solution was not recorded and it was not until more than 1,000 years later that Yuri Averbakh first published the answer (in 1986) which has since been verified by computer analysis.

Chess has such a long history that there have inevitably been rule changes, although nothing major in the past 500 years. However, when this position was in vogue there were no queens. The pieces that look like queens are "Firzans", which moved only one square at a time, and only diagonally. So, in the diagram the kings mutually bar each other from the c4 square, the white king may not move to b2 and the d4 square is out of bounds to the black king (because those squares are under fire from the enemy queens).

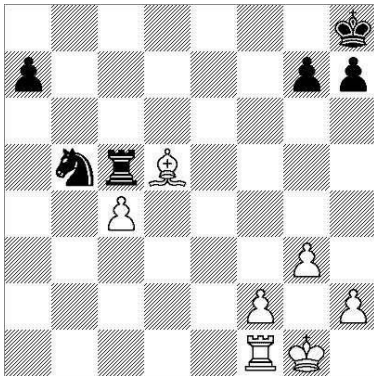
The only other piece of information you need is that King and piece (even the humble Firzan) against lone king was a win for the side with the extra material (known as win by "bare king"). The basis of the solution is that Black tries to defend by maintaining the same relationship between the Kings' positions as that between the positions of the Firzans, while White must drive the black king towards one of the far edges of the board, when the geometry of the edge of the board will prevent Black from maintaining the balance.

Oh yes, chess sportsman of the second millennium. The prime candidates are Ruy Lopez, Philidor, Staunton, Morphy, Capablanca, Fischer and Kasparov. Who would you vote for?

CHESS SOLUTION

1 Kb3-b4 Kd5-d6 2 Kb4-c4 Kd6-e6 3 Kc4-d4 Ke6-f6 (or 3...Ke6-f5 4 Fc3-b4 Kf5-e6 5 Kd4-d3 Ke6-e5 6 Kd3-c4 Ke5-d6 7 Kc4-c3 Kd6-d5 8 Kc3-c2 Kd5-c4 9 Fb4-a3 Kc4-b5 10 Kc2-b1 Kb5-a4 11 Kb1-a2 and 12 Ka2xa1) 4 Kd4-d5 Kf6-f7 5 Kd5-e5 Kf7-g7 6 Ke5-e6 Kg7-f8 (6...Kg7-g8 7 Ke6-f6 Kg8-h8 was ninth century theory!! Abu 'L-Fath had shown that White wins by Kg6 or Kf7, e.g. 8 Kf6-g6 Kh8-g8 9 Fc3-d2 Kg8-f8 10 Fd2-c1 Kf8-e7 and now Kg6-f5-e4-d3-c2-b1xa1) 7 Ke6-d6 Kf8-e8 8 Kd6-c6 Ke8-d8 9 Kc6-b6 Kd8-c8 (9...Kd8-e8 or e7 10 Kb6-a5 Ke8-d7 11 Ka5-b5 transposes to the main line) 10 Kb6-c5 Kc8-d7 11 Kc5-b5 Kd7-c7 (11...Kd7-e7 or e6 12 Kb5-a4 Ke7-d6 13 Ka4-b4 is another transposition) 12 Kb5-c4 Kc7-d6 13 Kc4-b4 Kd6-e5 (13...Kd6-c6 14 Fc3-d2 Kc6-d5 15 Kb4-c3 Kd5-e4 16 Kc3-b3 and 16...Ke4-d3 17 Fd2-c1 is zugzwang, 16...Ke4-d4 17 Kb3-c2 or 16...Ke4-f3 17 Kb3-a2) 14 Kb4-a3 Ke5-d5 15 Ka3-b3 (reaching the diagram position again but now it is Black who must move) 15...Kd5-c5 16 Kb3-c2 K-any 17 Fc3-d2 K-any 18 Fd2-c1 K-any 19 Kc2-b1 K-any (note that 19...Ke3-d2 would not be legal) 20 Kb1xa1.

Tuesday 4 January 2000
By Kevin O'Connell



The diagram position comes from an "instantaneous" game (both sides must play their moves immediately without pause for reflection) Kevin O'Connell-David Levy, London 1986.

In my last column I looked back to the first millennium. Now I look forward through the third millennium. Chess is probably the only sport where it is possible to do this. It is incredibly difficult to predict the future but not so hard to project the present. Therefore for the future of chess in the new millennium, I will endeavour to project the present.

The future of top-level play is in the balance. Super computers have, within little more than a generation, established themselves, making the grade from "idiot savants" to being sufficiently capable of selecting moves in chess positions that they regularly defeat even the best human player. I have myself walked through a tournament room (as a spectator I hasten to add) with a computer in my pocket and in that computer a chess playing program that would never dent the ego of any of the players in that room but which could easily defeat more than 99% of all the 600 million or so humans who play chess. Not only that, it also had inside it a chess database program containing all the important games played by all the important players of the past 150 years.

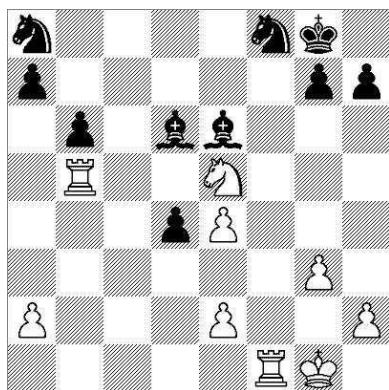
It is likely that in little more than another generation there will be pocket computers which, at normal tournament time-limits, will be able to defeat any human almost every time. Therefore, the speeding-up of time-limits that has been so noticeable in chess in the past decade will continue. I think it is highly likely that within another decade almost all competitive chess will be played at "blitz" speed (5 minutes per player per game) or faster, at least at amateur and ordinary international level. It will only be for events such as world championships that the extremely expensive "Faraday Cages", excluding computers and radio waves alike, can be made available.

This will be a great innovation. It will greatly improve the "sociability" of chess, especially for the amateur player. Instead of local league matches consisting of teams of four or six or ten playing one single game against their opposite number, they will become more enjoyable and more relaxing events in which every player plays one or two games against each and every member of the opposing team.

CHESS SOLUTION

Your chess computer will probably still say you should play 1 Rf1-a1 but that goes into a line where the rooks stay on the board. Much better is 1 Rf1-b1, as I played. The rest is forced, unless Black wants to resign, so 1...Nb5-d6 2 Rb1-b8+ Rc5-c8 3 Rb8xc8+ with a very easy win now that the rooks have gone. Of course, it will not be long before computers understand such things. How do I come to have a record of an "instantaneous" game? It was, of course, played on a computerised board which David and I were waiting to demonstrate to someone who was late for their appointment.

Saturday 8 January 2000
By Kevin O'Connell



This position is from the game Goldenboog-Nicholas Pert, Hastings Challengers 1994/5. Black to play. Solution easy.

As I write, Nicholas Pert of Ipswich leads the Challengers tournament in Hastings. With two rounds to go, he has four wins (including one Grandmaster) and three draws (all Grandmasters) to his credit. He now needs one point from his remaining two games (GM James Plaskett in the penultimate round and no doubt another title holder in the last round) to achieve his first Grandmaster result.

CHESS SOLUTION

1...a7-a6, as played, or the even better 1...Na8-c7 win comfortably. They both leave Black with the huge advantage of four pieces against two rooks. That was his first appearance at Hastings, as a thirteen year old, when he finished with 4.5/9.

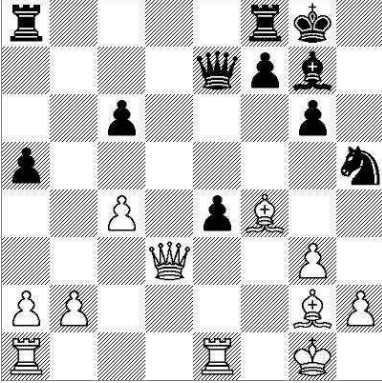
Following the Christmas and Millennium interlude, I shall soon resume my look at individual openings. However, before I do so, I want to spend a little time looking at opening choices in general. And first of all, I want to consider the case of someone who reads here that their choice of opening repertoire is entirely inappropriate. What should they do? Should they change everything, some things or nothing? Well, it depends.

You are not a professional player, therefore you are merely playing for "fun". As such you do not need to change anything because there is no compulsion to maximize your performance. In just the same way as you are free (unless you are a junior) to paint all your rooms in an interesting combination of purple and green, so you can play any openings you like. However, if you want to sell your house quickly for a good price, you probably do not need a house doctor nor even your estate agent to tell you that it might be a rather good idea to redecorate in some less striking colours. Likewise, if you want to get a good rate of return on the openings you play, you would certainly do better to steer clear of the purple ones, not least because most people equate "fun" in chess with "winning".

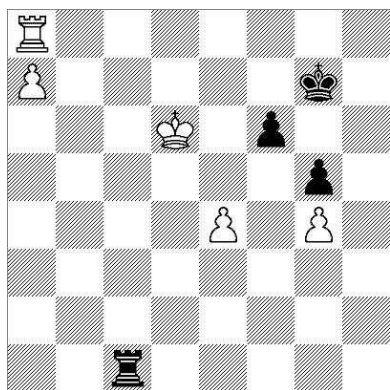
It is likely that your best course of action will be something of a compromise, retaining some of your openings while ditching others in favour of some of my more restrained "colour combinations". But how should you set about working out such a compromise? Probably the best place to start is with a couple of questions, one personal and the other relating to your opponents.

The personal question is "how can I maximize the return on what I play?" The simplest way to increase the value of your openings is to "double up". Just as energy providers will now reduce your bills if you buy both electricity and gas from them, so using the same set-up with both black and white will give you a discount on the effort you must put in to learning how to play the relevant positions. Some examples would be: you insist on continuing with the Sicilian (1 e2-e4 c7-c5), so play it with White as well (1 c2-c4, known as The English); you love the King's Indian Defence (1 d2-d4 Ng8-f6 2 c2-c4 g7-g6 3 Nb1-c3 Bf8-g7 4 e2-e4 d7-d6) and refuse to give it up, so why not use the reverse set-up with White (the King's Indian Attack can usually be achieved by starting with Ng1-f3, g2-g3, e2-e4 or even d2-d3 on the first move).

The other question is "what does my opponent want?" Having answered that question it is wiser to give your opponent what they do not want rather than what they are striving for. Thus, typically, it is much more sensible to decline to take the material offered in opening gambits than to accept them. Your opponent may be perfectly happy with the resulting position but at least you have deprived him/her of what he/she really wanted.

<p>Tuesday 11 January 2000 By Kevin O'Connell</p>	<p>???</p>
<p>Saturday 15 January 2000 By Kevin O'Connell</p>  <p>This position is from a blitz game (5-minutes per player for the game) R. Lee-Kevin O'Connell, Exeter 1970. White thought he had found a clever combination, based on the pin of the black e-pawn, to regain some material that he had lost. What had he overlooked? Solution moderate.</p>	<p>Chess can be played in an extraordinary number of ways and places, even contests between earth and orbiting spacecraft have been held (try playing a football match like that!). Not only that but there are also a large number of variations on the game.</p> <p>As a general rule I do not much like these variants and I tend to ignore them. However, a new Batsford book <i>Popular Chess Variants</i> by D.B. Pritchard has made me reconsider.</p> <p>The book contains quite detailed information on 20 chess variants, from siblings and close cousins like randomized chess or progressive chess to quite distant relatives such as Chinese Chess and Shogi (Japanese Chess). I think it represents good value at £14.99 and will provide a lot of fun for players who do not take their chess too seriously or who are looking for new games to play without needing to learn many new rules.</p> <p>My own favourite, and it is useful for improving your tactical vision and attacking ability in normal chess, is Progressive Chess. White starts as usual but Black replies with two moves, then White gets three and so on. A couple of rules to note before playing over the following game are that check ends a player's turn, even if you have moves in hand, and you must get out of check immediately on your turn. Also you may never expose your king to check. Here is a game won by a British Champion, Hugh Alexander: 1 e2-e4; 2 d7-d5, d5xe4; 3 Bf1-c4, Qd1-h5, Qh5xf7+; 4 Ke8-d7, Ng8-h6, Nh6xf7, Nf7-h6?; 5 b2-b3, Bc1-a3, Bc4-f7, Ng1-f3, Nf3-e5 mate.</p> <p>If you really get hooked and find that this book is not enough for you then you can go on to <i>The Encyclopaedia of Chess Variants</i> (1400 of them) or even join the quaintly named British Chess Variant Society, although you might not want to admit that even to your friends!</p> <p>CHESS SOLUTION 1...Nh5xf4 2 g3xf4 Qe7-c5+ 3 Qd3-e3 Bg7-d4 and White resigned. Congratulations if you also spotted 1...Qe7-a7+ which is also good enough to win, although not as good as the knight move.</p>

Tuesday 18 January 2000
By Kevin O'Connell



The diagram position is from a game Pal Benko-Erno Gereben, Budapest 1951. Black, to play, can draw. Should he play 1...Rc1-a1 or 1...Rc1-d1+ and only then 2...Rd1-a1 or does it not make any difference?

The Benko Gambit (1 d2-d4 Ng8-f6 2 c2-c4 c7-c5 3 d4-d5 b7-b5) has become really quite popular over the past 30 or 40 years. Although not much favoured at the very highest level, its popularity has been fairly evenly distributed between masters and amateurs. It is particularly suited to club and county players because in most cases it is quite clear where Black's pieces should be deployed and what Black should be trying to do.

The Benko Gambit by Byron Jacobs and Andrew Kinsman is a new Batsford book priced at £14.99. In the ten page Introduction the authors do a decent job of outlining the basic set-up, ideas, plans and tactics, sufficient for anyone to examine the following 140 pages and emerge with a good understanding of what the opening is all about. Indeed, those first ten pages are enough for anyone who would like to give the Benko a whirl in friendly or blitz (5 minutes total per player) games.

Of course, if your opponent has his/her brain in gear, then they are likely to play 2 Ng1-f3 and leave you wondering how to play your gambit then. But most opponents operate in neutral and so you are quite likely to get into your chosen variation.

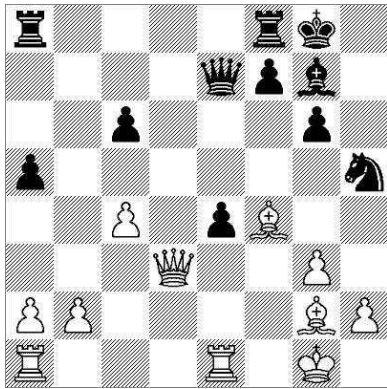
I recommend both the book and the opening. The Benko Gambit is one of those lines which can help players learn how to play chess properly. The pawn that is given away so early on is rarely regained within the first 20 or 30 moves, so Black has to get on with playing real chess (making the pieces work) rather than worrying about how to get back the sacrificed material. Because of the central pawn structure, which is usually quite firmly fixed, it is comparatively straightforward for Black to adopt, and keep to an appropriate plan.

If you only learn one thing from the whole book, then please let it be the page and a bit describing Black's "better endgame". The authors, with a little help from Andrew Martin, show that it is often favourable for Black to exchange off pieces and go into the endgame, with good winning chances despite being a pawn down.

CHESS SOLUTION

It makes a big difference. Black played 1...Rc1-a1? losing to 2 Ra8-c8 Ra1xa7 3 Rc8-c7+! Ra7xc7 4 Kd6xc7 and White has the "opposition" and will win the f-pawn. Black continued 4...Kg7-h7 but resigned after 5 Kc7-d7 since the end is nigh, for example 5...Kh7-g7 6 Kd7-e7 Kg7-g6 7 Ke7-f8 when Black is unable to prevent 8 Kf8-f7 with capture of the f-pawn to follow. The right way was 1...Rc1-d1+ 2 Kd6-e6 Rd1-a1 3 Ra8-d8 Ra1xa7 4 Rd8-d7+ Ra7xd7 5 Ke6xd7 Kg7-h7 drawing, e.g. 6 Kd7-e6 Kh7-g6 or 6 Kd7-e7 Kh7-g7 and Black can match the white king and so defend his position.

Saturday 22 January 2000
By Kevin O'Connell



This position is from a blitz game (5-minutes per player for the game) R. Lee-Kevin O'Connell, Exeter 1970. White thought he had found a clever combination, based on the pin of the black e-pawn, to regain some material that he had lost. What had he overlooked? Solution moderate.

Nicholas Pert of Ipswich was successful in attaining his first Grandmaster result, the first ever achieved by a player from Suffolk, thanks to a last round victory over the Russian master Alexander Chernaiev. Nicholas shared third place in the tournament.

Chess can be played in an extraordinary number of ways and places, even contests between earth and orbiting spacecraft have been held (try playing a football match like that!). Not only that but there are also a large number of variations on the game.

As a general rule I do not much like these variants and I tend to ignore them. However, a new Batsford book *Popular Chess Variants* by D.B. Pritchard has made me reconsider.

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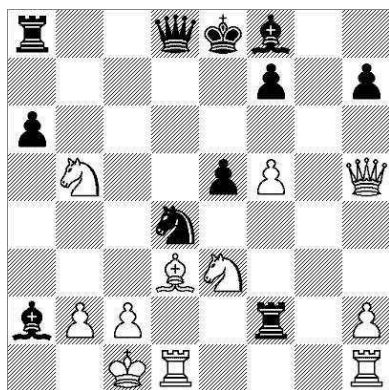
My own favourite, and it is useful for improving your tactical vision and attacking ability in normal chess, is Progressive Chess. White starts as usual but Black replies with two moves, then White gets three and so on. A couple of rules to note before playing over the following game are that check ends a player's turn, even if you have moves in hand, and you must get out of check immediately on your turn. Also you may never expose your king to check. Here is a game won by a British Champion, Hugh Alexander: 1 e2-e4; 2 d7-d5, d5xe4; 3 Bf1-c4, Qd1-h5, Qh5xf7+; 4 Ke8-d7, Ng8-h6, Nh6xf7, Nf7-h6?; 5 b2-b3, Bc1-a3, Bc4-f7, Ng1-f3, Nf3-e5 mate.

If you really get hooked and find that this book is not enough for you then you can go on to *The Encyclopaedia of Chess Variants* (1400 of them) or even join the quaintly named British Chess Variant Society, although you might not want to admit that even to your friends!

CHESS SOLUTION

1...Nh5xf4 2 g3xf4 Qe7-c5+ 3 Qd3-e3 Bg7-d4 and White resigned. Congratulations if you also spotted 1...Qe7-a7+ which is also good enough to win, although not as good as the knight move.

Tuesday 25 January 2000
By Kevin O'Connell



This position is from a Sveshnikov Sicilian game Brodsky-Vladimir Kramnik, Kherson 1991. Black to play. Solution very difficult.

The Sveshnikov variation of the Sicilian is very popular at master level and above, strongly supported by players of the calibre of Kramnik and Adams. It also, more surprisingly, has a considerable following at club and county level. At any rate I find this surprising for the Sveshnikov is highly theoretical.

The Sveshnikov evolved comparatively recently and only emerges well down the tree of the Open Sicilian. Just to complicate matters, it has two important move-orders, both quite different, which nonetheless reach an identical position albeit after a different number of moves. Confused? Well the moves themselves should clarify matters. It is easiest to follow this if you have two boards and sets in front of you (often a good idea when practicing) 1 e2-e4 c7-c5 2 Ng1-f3 and now either 2...Nb8-c6 3 d2-d4 c5xd4 4 Nf3xd4 Ng8-f6 5 Nb1-c3 e7-e5 6 Nd4-b5 d7-d6 7 Bc1-g5 a7-a6 8 Nb5-a3 b7-b5 or 2...e7-e6 3 d2-d4 c5xd4 4 Nf3xd4 Ng8-f6 5 Nb1-c3 Nb8-c6 6 Nd4-b5 d7-d6 7 Bc1-f4 e6-e5 8 Bf4-g5 a7-a6 9 Nb5-a3 b7-b5.

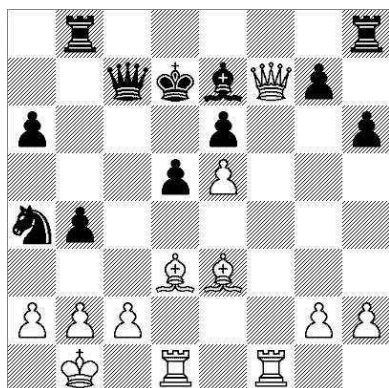
At master level it is more practical to predict what your opponents will play against you, so a line like the Sveshnikov can be wheeled out quite often. Against club and county players who you may know nothing about and who, in any case, frequently change their openings, it is much less likely that you will be able to get that position on the board in front of you. White has a lot of other choices, especially on moves two and three.

If you do have the time and energy to learn this sharp line and insist on trying to play it then you definitely need to get Neil McDonald's new Batsford Book *The Sveshnikov Sicilian* priced at £14.99. It is a fine book and the variation itself leads to more decisive results than most because the resultant positions are so unbalanced that although chances are considered to be about even it is not in the sense that a draw is a likely outcome, simply that White and Black are equally likely to win (or lose).

CHESS SOLUTION

Black's unopposed dark-square bishop is frequently decisive in the Sveshnikov Sicilian, as it was here: 1...Bf8-h6! Now 2 Qh5xh6 fails to 2...Rf2xc2+! and 3...Nd4-e2 or 3...Nd4-b3 mate according to whether White recaptures on c2 with bishop or knight. The game continued 2 Rh1-e1 a6xb5 3 Bd3xb5+ (now 3 Qh5xh6 does not allow mate, because the e1 rook covers the e2 square, but 3...Ba2-c4, threatening mate on a1, gives Black a decisive attack) 3...Ke8-e7 4 Qh5-h4+ f7-f6 5 Qh4xf2 Ba2-f7 and although White has a material advantage Black's pieces rake the board and the end came after 6 Bb5-d3 Qd8-b6 7 Bd3-e4 Ra8-a2 8 c2-c4 Bf7xc4 9 Kc1-b1 Qb6-a5 10 Ne3-d5+ Bc4xd5 11 Qf2xd4 Ra2-a1+ 12 Kb1-c2 Ra1xd1 13 Qd4xd1 Qa5-a4+ 14 Kc2-c3 and White resigned before Black finished off with 14...Qa4-c4 mate.

Saturday 29 January 2000
By Kevin O'Connell



This position is from Michael Adams-Robert Bellin, Kilkenny 1999. White to play. Solution difficult.

Norfolk cleaned up at the Suffolk Championships in Stowmarket last Sunday. Had it not been for some players from Essex, they would have made a clean sweep of the 12 tournament sections which contained a total of 152 players. The only ray of light for Suffolk was former county champion Stephen Orton's victory in the top section of the Open but he emigrated to Norfolk some years ago. And all this hard on the heels of four county junior matches, all of which went Norfolk's way, Suffolk losing respectively 8-28 at under14, 23.5-24.5 at under11, 12.5-23.5 at girls under11 and 19-29 at under9.

The Open A was won by Stephen Orton, Norfolk 5/6, followed by Gordon Maton and Shaun Munson, both Ipswich, 4.5. In the Open B it was Keith Osborne of Norfolk who took the first prize with 5.5/6 ahead of Stephen Lewis, Stowmarket 5 and David Goodchild of Ipswich sharing third place with Peter Sonnenburg of Sudbury on 4.

The combined under13/14/15 section was won by John Sneesby, Basildon with 5.5/6, ahead of two other Essex players, Alan Hawrami, Ilford 5 and Ezra Lutton, Basildon 4.5. The Suffolk Championship titles went to Luke Nightingale, Ipswich (u15), Sophie Payne, Ipswich (u14) and James Copping, Newmarket (u13), scoring 3.5, 3 and 3.5 respectively.

The under12 was a Norfolk clean sweep: 1 Henry Duncanson 5.5/6, 2= Charles Heppell and Harry Fischl 4.5. Kathryn Barnes, Ipswich, took the Suffolk title, sharing 4th place.

The next three sections were all won by Norfolk players with maximum scores. In the under11 it was Chris Russell 6/6 ahead of Dana Hawrami, Ilford 5 and 3= Chris Maynard, Ipswich, taking the Suffolk title with 4 points. In the under10 it was Tom Robinson 6/6 ahead of Norfolk colleague Ben Derrett 5 and Newmarket's Matthew Buxton, sharing third place and taking the Suffolk title with 4 points. In the under9 Ashley Raghu did the trick with 6/6 ahead of David Donaghy, Ipswich (Suffolk champion) 5 and Nathaniel Lutton, Basildon 4.

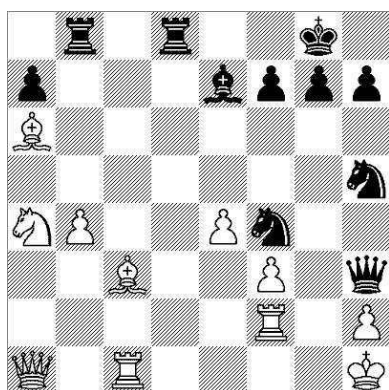
The combined under7/8 age group was won by Subin Sen (u7) Woodford Green 6/6 ahead of Adam Wicks (u8) Colchester 5. Third place was shared by Daniel Taylor and Timothy Yung, both Ipswich, on 4 points. Taylor took the Suffolk u8 title on tie-break. There were no Suffolk under7s in the tournament.

Finally the Novices was won by Jason Scott, Norfolk 5.5/6, ahead of Anthony Fay, Ipswich 5 and Alex Baynham, Norfolk 4.5.

CHESS SOLUTION

1 Bd3-f5! wins. If 1...Qc7-c6 2 Bf5xe6+ Qc6xe6 3 Rd1xd5+, therefore 1...Na4-c3+ 2 b2xc3 b4xc3+ 3 Kb1-a1 and White wins comfortably.

Tuesday 1 February 2000
By Kevin O'Connell



This position is from the game Colm Daly-Yuri Rochev, Bunratty Masters 1999. Black to play. Solution easy/moderate.

Do you feel in need of a break? Well, today's chess column has turned into something of a travel feature! If you would like to spend a tremendously enjoyable week-end in Ireland, playing in a chess tournament, then this year's Bunratty Chess Challenge, from Friday 11th to Sunday 13th of this month, is for you.

Bunratty, famous for its castle, banquets and folk village, is situated on the estuary of the Shannon, almost equidistant between Shannon airport and the big city of Limerick. Thus any non-players in the party can spend the week-end enjoying the folk village, castle and big city sights of Limerick, the setting for most of Frank McCourt's "Angela's Ashes".

Meanwhile, players can enjoy a feast of chess washed down, if you wish, with plenty of liquid refreshment. There are only four sections but they really do cater for players of all levels. There is the Masters for players over 2000 (BCF 175), the Challengers for players rated 1600-1999 (BCF 125-174), the Major for those who are in the range 1200-1599 (BCF 75-124) and finally the Minor for ungraded players or rated below 1199 (BCF 74). They are all six-round events. There will also be a more leisurely schedule of five rounds for the Bunratty Veterans (over 55s). On the Sunday evening there will be a blitz tournament for those not returning home (perhaps not even going to bed) until the Monday.

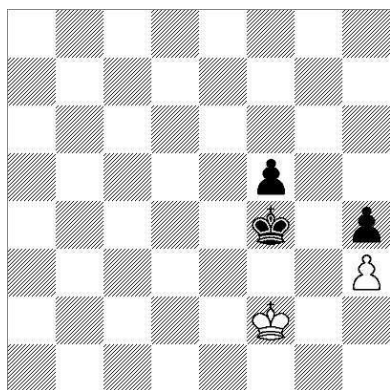
The tournament is one of Ireland's two biggest and if you turn up on the day you will be turned away - not because of any lack of hospitality, that's for sure, but the venue is always completely full (216 played last year), so make sure you book your place in the tournament before booking your cheap flight to Shannon. You can call the venue, Fitzpatrick Bunratty Shamrock Hotel on +353-61-361177 (a nice hotel, with a special rate of IRP29.50 about £25 Sterling per person sharing, but there is plenty of cheaper accommodation as well), the Tournament Director, Paul Carey, on 353-87-6820105 or e-mail bunrattychess@aol.com.

If a whole week-end is too much then, much nearer to home, is the North Essex Chess League Rapidplay Championships in Colchester on Sunday the 13th. No Grandmasters or Guinness here but sections for Open (any age, any strength), under 1600 (BCF 125) and three age-limited sections for under11, under9 and under11 novices for those who have not played tournament chess. Contact Roger Sharman on 01206 231025.

CHES SOLUTION

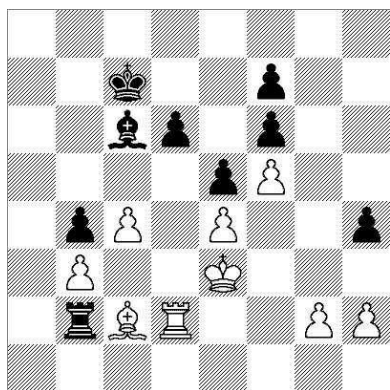
The game was played in the fifth round, on the Sunday morning, a traditional time for some strange things to happen. Black played 1...Be7-h4? and White resigned. The resignation was fair enough, since White is, indeed, lost but Black's choice of move was very poor. He should have played 1...Nh5-g3+ 2 Kh1-g1 Qh3-g2+ 3 Rf2xg2 Nf4-h3 with a rare double knight mate.

Saturday 5 February 2000
By Kevin O'Connell



???

Tuesday 8 February 2000
By Kevin O'Connell



This position is from the game Jan Timman-Valery Salov, Amsterdam 1991. Can White win by creating a passed pawn with 1 g2-g3 h4xg3 2 h2-h4? Solution difficult.

The statistics for this year's British Land UK Chess Challenge reveal some very interesting things about junior chess in this country. Started by Mike Basman and now in its 5th year, the Challenge has at least 1,082 schools and 36,111 individuals taking part. With an event of this size, the "late entries" can amount to more than the total entry for the average competition. Rather than just list the numbers involved from each county, the statistics are ranked by the percentage of population taking part.

Thus tiny Rutland, with just three schools and 90 players, takes top spot with a whopping 0.26% of the population, after all most of the population is comprised of adults who are not eligible, ahead of Surrey's 126 schools and 4,589 players, but a mere 0.17% of population.

Looking at our local counties proves the point that Cambridge is now dominant. Here they take third place with 26 schools, 525 players and 0.14%. In 15th place, Essex, with 60 schools and 2,010 players, is only fractionally ahead of 17th placed Suffolk's 15 schools and 480 players, both representing 0.07% of the population. Norfolk, in 26th place, bring up the local rear with 12 schools, 435 players and 0.05% but they have improved from 30th place (of 44) last year.

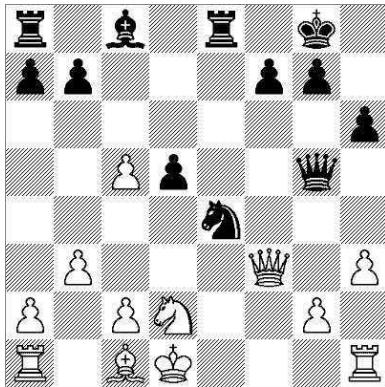
There might, however, still be a chance to "fiddle" the figures by getting in some late entries. In particular, if another Suffolk school were to enter, that might be just enough to edge ahead of Essex. Try telephoning Mike Basman on 07715 041320 and he may be able to squeeze in a group from your school, after all he also wants to see the numbers continue to rise, as they have done every year so far.

Kevin O'Connell

CHESS SOLUTION

No, because of the amazing line 2...Bc6-a4! and White cannot take the bishop because of ...b4-b3 winning by deflecting White's king away from the path of the g-pawn which then promotes. If 3 h4-h5 Ba4xb3 4 h5-h6 Bb3xc2 5 h6-h7 Rb2-b3+ 6 Ke3-e2 g3-g2 and Black wins (e.g. 7 Ke2-f2 Rb3-b1 8 Kf2xg2 Bc2xe4+ 9 Kg2-g3 Rb1-g1+ etc.), so the game continued 3 Rd2-e2 Ba4xb3 4 Bc2-d3 Rb2xe2+ 5 Ke3xe2 Bb3-d1+!! and White resigned.

Saturday 12 February 2000
By Kevin O'Connell



This position is from a game Ivan Turgenev-Ignaz Kolisch, played about 1870. Black to play. Solution easy. The player with White was the famous Russian writer. Ignaz Kolisch was one of the world's leading players in the 1860s but he gave up chess to become a millionaire and a Baron. He achieved both objectives in the world of banking.

Playing chess has an enormous amount in common with activities in the world of finance and investment. I am thinking especially of such well-known phrases as "you have to speculate to accumulate" and "the value of shares can go down as well as up." Many players already bear such ideas in mind when at the chessboard but they are nonetheless in a minority. Therefore, this week I am advocating the introduction of a government health warning to be printed on all new chessboards.

What form should this warning take? There are plenty of candidates, not least among them TRIM (Think, wRite, Inspect, Move), "Checks and Captures," "make the pieces work together" and so on. They are certainly succinct but I want to include several of them and that simply is not practical otherwise we might end up with a little motto or proverb on every square of the board. No, as on a packet of cigarettes, the warning must appear prominently but not all over the place.

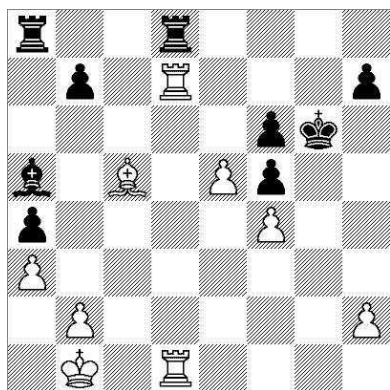
All things considered, and bearing in mind that it really is the responsibility of players and coaches to ensure that those useful sayings, the seatbelts, airbags and anti-lock brakes of the chessboard, are understood, memorized and above all used, I am going to revert to the financial analogy, especially that of investment in stocks and shares or their unit and investment trust derivatives.

"The value of pieces can go down as well as up" is the single most useful general proverb for helping people to exhibit a higher level of driving skill on the chessboard. Anyone who plays as a mere bean-counter, with fixed values for the pieces, will never become a good chess player. How can I be so certain? That is easy, because such people are not actually playing chess. Their activities on the chessboard are akin to the "investments" made each week on the National Lottery. Playing chess properly is more like studying the growth prospects of smaller companies. Finding an undervalued piece or pawn that can grow rapidly into a game winning giant can be just as satisfying, though rarely as financially rewarding, as spotting a company like the UK's new chart topper (Vodafone) when only a fledgling.

CHESS SOLUTION

1...Qg5xg2! and White could have resigned. 2 Qf3xg2 allows 3 Ne4-c3 mate. White played 2 Rh1-f1 but then 2...Qg2xf1+ forced mate. 1...Qg5-e5 is a more boring way to win but unlikely to be rewarded with a baronetcy.

Tuesday 15 February 2000
By Kevin O'Connell



The diagram position is from the game Lev Polugaevsky-Georgy Szilagy, Moscow 1960. White to play. Solution difficult. A beautiful horticultural finish.

When I told my wife that my last column was about chess and finance and asked what I should write about this time, she said "gardening," so now you know who to blame. Of course, I have written about gardening before in this column but always about how it compares with chess coaching. This week it is about how following in the footsteps of the average gardener can help your chess.

I take the average gardener to be someone like myself. I enjoy looking out of the window at our garden, especially if our gardener (my wife) has been working on it recently. I quite enjoy walking round other people's gardens. I don't even object to my wife watching gardening programmes on TV, sometimes I even join her. However, I do draw the line at actually doing any real work in that area.

The garden largely seems to take care of itself, especially with a little bit of work done on it by someone who really knows what they are doing. Playing chess is exactly the same. The pieces will largely take care of themselves in most positions, especially if they are left to get on with it, or if they are given a guiding hand by a real expert.

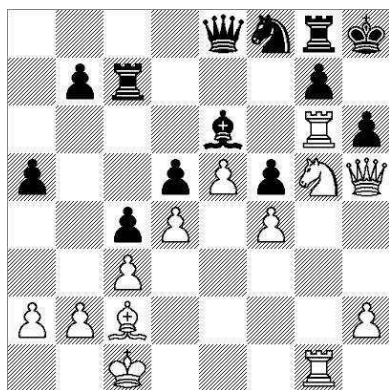
The problems we encounter on the chessboard are largely, if not entirely of our own making, after all our opponents are never clever enough to bother us, are they? No it is when we start meddling with the position, weeding out weaknesses or re-shaping the pawn structure that things start to go wrong.

Best to let nature take its course. Next time I play I will be leaving the hard work to the pieces. Unless you are an Alan Titchmarsh of the chess world, I suggest you do the same - sit back, stop interfering with your pieces and enjoy the view.

CHESS SOLUTION

1 Rd1-g1+ is the winning move. 1...Kg6-h5 loses immediately to 2 Rd7xh7 mate. The game went on 1...Kg6-h6 2 Bc5-f8+! Rd8xf8 3 Rd7-d3! and Black resigned since there is nothing to be done about the threat of Rd3-h3 mate. Using the two rooks on adjacent files (here g1 and h3) to effect a mate is known as a "lawnmower" but it is not often that the grass is mown in such a pretty pattern as in this game.

Saturday 19 February 2000
By Kevin O'Connell



This position is from the game Colin Roberts-Kevin Greenacre, North Essex League Rapidplay Open, Colchester 2000. White to play. Solution moderate. Remember, this is a rapidplay game and there is not much time left on the clock, so if there is more than one way to win, make sure you choose a fairly quick way so that you won't run out of time.

The Open section of the North Essex League Rapidplay, played last Sunday in Colchester, was won by the veteran US International Master, James Sherwin, now living in Bradford on Avon. He was one of the 'other' Americans who played in the 1958 World Championship Interzonal tournament in Yugoslavia where Bobby Fischer burst upon the international scene. Here he scored a perfect 6/6 and was followed by 2 Ezra Lutton, Basildon 4.5, 3 Jim Howson, Kent 4, 4= Stephen Payne, Colchester, Robin Slade, Chelmsford, Julian Winkworth, Wanstead, Kevin Greenacre, Ipswich, Ivor Smith, Writtle and Josiah Lutton, Basildon, all 3.5.

The Major and Minor sections (BCF U125/U160) were merged together and produced joint first prize winners in Charles Hepple, Norwich and Kyle Bennett, Basildon 5.5/6. Graham Walker, Southend, finished third with 5.

There were three junior events. Under11: 1 Sam Wass, Saffron Walden 5.5/6, 2 Lee Wicks, Colchester 5, 3= Hester Klimach, Ilford, David Smith, Saffron Walden 4.5. Under9: 1 Subin Sen, Woodford Green 6/6, 2 Ranita Klimach, Ilford 5, 3 Matthew Porter, Colchester 4.5. Novices: 1= Heather Mulrenan, Saffron Walden, Meyrick Hockley, Colchester and Luke Cheveralls, Southend 5/6.

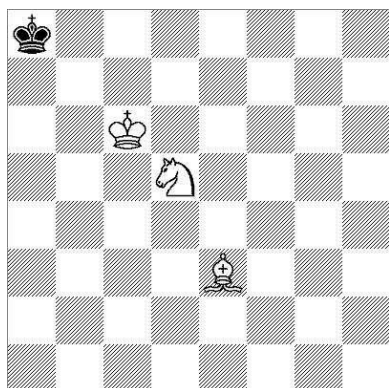
In all 158 players took part. Robin Slade, Chelmsford, gained the title of North Essex League Champion and the junior title went to Alistair Hung, Writtle, who finished 4= in the Major/Minor.

CHESS SOLUTION

1 Rg6xh6+, as played in the game, is good enough to win. The game continued 1...g7xh6 2 Qh5xe8 h6xg5 3 Rg1xg5 and a draw was agreed. White is clearly winning but such things happen in games when players are very short of time. However, 1 Ng5xe6! is the best since 1...Nf8xg6 2 Ne6xc7 wins very easily and 1...Nf8xe6 2 Bc2xf5 (threatening simply 3 Rg6xh6+ g7xh6 4 Qh5xh6+ and Qh6xh7 mate) should be easy enough to win even with very little time left on the clock, e.g. 2...Ne6-f8 3 Rg6xh6+ g7xh6 4 Rg1xg8+ Kh8xg8 5 Qh5xe8 since White's big material advantage, strong attack and huge connected passed pawns will lead to mate in just a few moves. The problem with the game continuation was that it left the position too complex to be able to win it quickly.

<p>Tuesday 22 Febuary 2000 By Kevin O'Connell</p> <p>???</p> <p>This is a typical kind of position that can arise from the Old Indian. It is a game Marathee-Ribaud, France 1993. Black to play. Solution moderate.</p>	<p>Back to the beginning again today, and another opening. This time I am looking at a somewhat unusual approach for Black to take against 1 d2-d4. The defence in question is the Old Indian.</p> <p>The most common position of the Old Indian can arise after many different move-orders, one common example being 1 d2-d4 Ng8-f6 2 c2-c4 d7-d6 3 Nb1-c3 Nb8-d7 (3...e7-e5 is fine but some players like to ensure they keep the queens on the board) 4 e2-e4 e7-e5. The set-up looks rather like the King's Indian Defence at the moment. Indeed, it is possible to switch into the King's Indian by playing ...g7-g6 and ...Bf8-g7 but Black has in mind the placement of the bishop on e7.</p> <p>Although it is nowhere near as fashionable as the King's Indian, the Old Indian has several benefits for the club and county player. First of all, it is perfectly sound - it leaves no gaping holes in Black's position. Secondly, there is a simple developmental plan of where to place the pieces - pawns d6+e5, knights d7+f6, bishop e7, castle king-side, put some pressure on White's e-pawn (Rf8-e8 and Be7-f8) to fix the pawn structure (White normally plays d4-d5) and then advance on the queen-side.</p> <p>Another big advantage of the Old Indian is that because it is unfashionable (and never has been) there is not a great deal of 'theory'. Chess theory is simply the collection of all the material that has been written about the openings, together with all the games that have ever been played. A shortage of 'theory' means less work for a player - there is simply a lot less to learn. Combine that with a pawn structure that is usually very stable and a simple plan and you have an ideal opening for anyone who is short of time for developing their chess.</p> <p>CHESS SOLUTION In the game both players got it wrong. Black played 1...Qc7-a7 2 Qe3-d3 Qa7xc5+ and White resigned two moves later. 2 Rd1-d8 would have made Black's task very much harder and, although Black should still lose, there would have been some chance of recovery. Black should have played 1...Qc7-b6 when White could have resigned with a clear conscience.</p>
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Saturday 26 February 2000
By Kevin O'Connell



Can you mate with knight and bishop? I can. The process begins with the 'drive' followed by a 'lock' and then mate. White to play. Solution difficult unless you know how.

Car travel, despite the terrible annual loss of life in road accidents, is fairly safe. Much safer on a statistical basis than, for example, sitting in your kitchen. It is relatively safe thanks to the enormous amount of time, effort and money that has gone into the development of better and safer roads, tyres and cars. Seat belts and airbags help to protect the occupants of the car in the event of a crash. Clearly many lessons have been learned here.

Just as well, then, that chessplayers have not been in charge of road safety. Most players, when they sit down at the chessboard, are doing the equivalent of driving a rusty old wreck with bald tyres, dodgy brakes and no sign of airbags or seat belts. Even the very basics of the Highway Code tend to be ignored in the heat and excitement of the chess battle. Players either do not look where they are going or, at best, look only as far as the car (move) directly in front of them and they certainly do not adhere to the "green cross code" when crossing junctions (i.e. making moves), so it should not be surprising so that so many players crash or get run over at the board.

That is such a waste. A complete raft of safety measures is available at no cost, save that of a little effort.

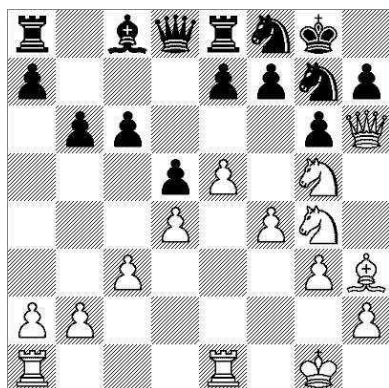
TRIM (Think, wRite, Inspect, Move) provides seat belt and airbag. 'Checks and captures,' done for the opponent's possible moves as well as your own, will reveal the approach of large lorries and should see anyone safely across the road. If you ensure that your pieces work together in the position, you will be looking where you are going sufficiently well that you should easily avoid driving into any major obstacle.

Act now and incorporate these safety measures into your play. Don't wait until the government introduces a compulsory 'chess driving test' which would be sure to contain an especially difficult element about openings (the 'theory test'). Perhaps I am being a bit silly in the previous sentence but everything else is spot on - 'clunk click every game' - you know it makes sense.

CHESS SOLUTION

1 Nd5-c7+ Ka8-b8 2 Be3-b6 Kb8-c8 3 Bb6-a7 (driving the black king across towards the mating corner) 3...Kc8-d8 4 Nc7-d5 Kd8-e8 5 Kc6-d6 Ke8-f7 6 Nd5-e7 Kf7-f6 7 Ba7-e3! (locking the black king into the mating corner) 7...Kf6-f7 8 Be3-g5 Kf7-e8 9 Ne7-g6 Ke8-f7 10 Ng6-e5+ Kf7-e8 11 Kd6-c7 Ke8-f8 12 Kc7-d7 Kf8-g7 13 Kd7-e7 Kg7-g8 14 Bg5-h6 Kg8-h7 15 Bh6-f8 Kh7-g8 16 Ne5-g4 Kg8-h7 17 Ke7-f7 Kh7-h8 18 Bf8-g7+ Kh8-h7 19 Ng4-f6 mate.

Saturday 4 March 2000
By Kevin O'Connell



This position is from a recent Suffolk League game Ed Kirkham-Ken Lunn. Black has a nasty threat. Can you spot it? White to play. Solution easy/moderate.

I am indebted to the latest issue of the *Suffolk Chess Journal* for this position. The latest 48-page issue contains a wealth of material, all of it relating to chess locally, including the neighbouring counties of Cambridgeshire, Essex and Norfolk. There are plenty of games and features. It is not by any means a mere results sheet, although you will find up-to-date standings of the local Leagues, together with results of county matches and local tournaments.

Most local magazines tend to be very dry and lacking in interest. Perhaps the Suffolk Journal used to fall in line with that tendency but, if so, then no longer. The current issue benefits greatly from Mike Cook's regular column (featuring a well-annotated game each time) and Mike Spalding's "Q&A" column which is now firmly established and provides a nice blend of fact, fiction and whimsy. However, you do not have to be called Mike in order to feature in the Journal and there are a good few games annotated by several leading local players (and some not so leading ones as well).

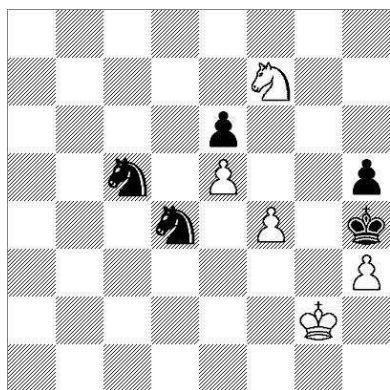
I enjoyed reading this issue, not least the letter relating to an incident in a recent league match when all those present had to admit to not knowing the rules. That reminds me of a county match game years ago in which I salvaged a draw from a hopeless position solely by dint of knowing the rules and on that occasion I was the only person among the couple of dozen present who did. Instead of wasting time learning a chunk of opening theory, read and learn the basic rules of the game; you will gain a lot more points that way.

The *Suffolk Chess Journal* is an essential for all local club and county players, even those who live in Essex and Cambridgeshire since the Clacton and Manningtree clubs compete in the Suffolk League while Cambridge City and Ely Bishops currently head the Bury Area League. The Journal costs £14 for six bimonthly issues. To subscribe, contact the editor: Steve Lawer, 9 Acacia Close, Purdis Farm, Ipswich IP3 8XB. Cheques should be made payable to the "Suffolk County Chess Association."

CHESS SOLUTION

Black's threat is 1...Ng7-f5, winning the white queen. White spotted the threat and saved his queen with 1 Qh6-h4?? Ng7-f5 2 Ng4-h6+ Nf5xh6 3 Qh4xh6 but the position was then about level. White should have played 1 Qh6xh7+ Nf8xh7 2 Ng4-h6+ with a rare all-knight mate made especially pleasing by the involvement of all four knights and the dual mate 2...Kg8-f8 Ng5xh7 or 2...Kg8-h8 Ng5xf7.

Tuesday 7 March 2000
By Kevin O'Connell



One of the most important aspects of investing or playing chess is not to panic and not to give up. The position is from a game Shereshevsky-Buslaev, 1973. White to play. Solution easy.

Style in chess is a curious thing. It exists and yet it doesn't exist in the way that most people think it does. You will often hear club and county players talking about both themselves and others as having "attacking" or "positional" styles. This is absolute nonsense and yet our individual personalities are very much in evidence when we play chess. Indeed, it is this very factor which enables a coach properly to assess a player's ability and likelihood of success.

Now it is true that certain openings and particular varieties of position are better suited to some players than to others, so how can you produce a sensible self-assessment? That is always harder to do than to assess someone else. However, there is a way, at least for adults to do this.

We all have to make investment decisions, however large or small they may be. I am not talking here about people investing thousands on the stock market but about important decisions we all have to make. When and how will we start a pension, or will we rely on state provision for our old age. We almost all have some disposable income, however little, some of which could be saved. Do we save some, what sort of percentage and where do we put it?

In answering those questions we can find perhaps four main categories of individual. There is the happy-go-lucky type who does not bother about saving or pensions at all and he or she should simply seek excitement on the chessboard, especially from unusual and even unsound openings, with as many tactical complications as possible. At the other extreme there is the ultra-cautious type who plans savings and pensions but seeks to avoid all apparent risk (there are still real risks, such as inflation but these will be ignored). Such a player will be afraid of tactical complications, even if quite good at resolving them and so should spend most of their practice time examining tactical positions, while restricting their opening repertoires to openings with simple themes.

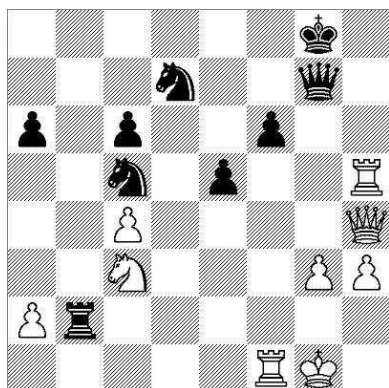
In between the two extremes stands the majority, taking a responsible view of their future needs and doing something about it. Such players can afford to play main line openings. Those who like to assume greater responsibility for their own investments and who choose 'riskier' stock-market linked savings would be well-advised to go for the so-called "aggressive" lines such as the Sicilian and King's Indian and to learn comparatively large amounts of opening theory. The rest should stick to the more thematic main lines such as the French and Queen's Gambit.

It's a difficult topic to cover in a few hundred words but arguing about it on the way to or from a league or county game will help to while away the journey time and stop you worrying about the forthcoming game or about how badly you just played.

CHESS SOLUTION

In the game White played 1 Nf7-g5? and lost badly after 1...Nc5-d3. White should have played the unlikely-looking 1 Nf7-h8 (Did anyone ever tell you never to put your knights in the corners? Silly, weren't they?) with an unstoppable mate by Nh8-g6.

Saturday 11 March 2000
By Kevin O'Connell



This position is from a recent game Nicholas Pert-John Littlewood, Four Nations Chess League 2000. White to play. Solution difficult.

The last Four Nations Chess League weekend, where this game was played, was unusual in that only one Suffolk player took part and he played only on Saturday, missing the Sunday round. Normally both Nicholas and Richard Pert would be present as well as, occasionally, Karl Bowden or Edmund Player. However, Suffolk's strongest ever player certainly made his presence felt.

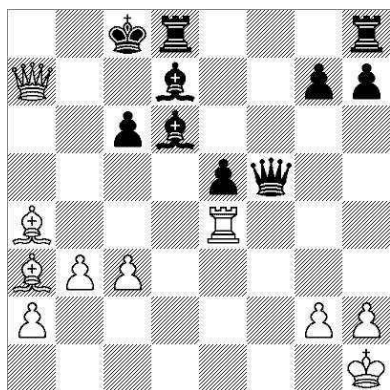
I remember talking to John Littlewood about the development of the most promising juniors. My contention was that the very best, those with real chances of progressing to grandmaster level, were wasting their time playing large numbers of games against their peer group. That procedure was, then as now, the principal plank in the national chess federation's junior development plan. My argument was that the cream should enjoy special coaching and that they should be steered away from competing against their peer group, at least within this country, and instead get on with learning how to play chess properly; something which can only be achieved by playing against good experienced players. The conversation took place at Oakham School about a decade ago, just after John had taken over as Director of Junior Chess for the national federation.

I had hoped that, as an experienced international player himself, the new Director would agree with me, but he did not. Certainly Nicholas and Richard Pert, and also Karl Mah of Essex, played less against their peer group and more against strong, experienced players, especially in events overseas. They also got more than the average amount of specialised coaching; a great deal more than the federation could have provided directly. I think it is no coincidence that these three players have established themselves head and shoulders above the rest of their peer group, quite a few of whom were regarded more highly by the international selectors when they were much younger and played in all their peer group events; but then those players failed to develop.

CHESS SOLUTION

1 Nc3-d1 (1 Rf1xf6 Nd7xf6 2 Rh5-g5 is also good enough to win but it is less simple, less certain and less elegant than the route chosen.) 1...Rb2-e2 2 Nd1-f2 Re2xa2 (Other tries would not work out any better, e.g. 2...Re2-d2 3 Nf2-g4 Rd2-d4 4 Ng4-h6+ Kg8-f8 5 g3-g4 Rd4-f4 6 Rf1xf4 e5xf4 7 Nh6-f5 Nd7-e5 8 Qh4-f2 Nc5-e4 9 Qf2-b6 Ne5-f3+ 10 Kg1-h1 Ne4-g3+ 11 Nf5xg3 f4xg3 12 Qb6-d8+ Kf8-f7 13 Rh5-h8 and the threat of mate on e8 is decisive - Black has to give up the queen; or 2...Nc5-e6 3 Nf2-g4 Ne6-d4 4 Ng4-h6+ Kg8-f8 5 Rh5-g5 Qg7-h7 6 Rg5-g8+ Kf8-e7 7 Nh6-f5+ Qh7xf5 8 Rf1xf5 Nd4xf5 9 Qh4-h7+ Ke7-e6 and now Rg8-d8 is even stronger than Rg8-e8+; arguably the 'best' move to prolong the game is to take the knight.) 3 Nf2-g4 Nc5-e4 4 Ng4-h6+ Kg8-f8 5 Nh6-f5 and Black resigned since the continuation 5...Qg7-g6 6 Rh5-h8+ Kf8-f7 7 Qh4xe4 offers absolutely no hope whatsoever.

Tuesday 14 March 2000
By Kevin O'Connell



I am not sure where the scintillating finish in this 1974 game was played. I would like to think that the venue matched it for class and style. Anyway, Ljubomir Ljubojevic, who played as a junior for one of the big Belgrade teams (football, that is), had white against Joaquim Dura0. White to play. Solution difficult.

England still ranks second in the world league table - not at football and at cricket only in an inverted table but at chess. In spite of that achievement the venues in which most chess events are played in this country, not to mention those where chess clubs meet, leave much to be desired.

Of course, to play chess all you need is a board, set and a clock, although a reasonable amount of light is considered by some also to be a requirement. That, however, is in the same way that football and cricket merely require a field, a ball and a few bits of wood. I remember going to top football matches in some quite dilapidated stadia in the 1970s and even the 1980s but that has all changed now.

I remember both playing and watching chess in some miserable, cold and ill-lit venues in the past. Regrettably that still seems to be par for the course. I had a meeting a few years ago with the head of one of the big insurance companies which had set up in Ipswich. He was a great chess fan and had been quick to go along to a local chess club. As soon as he saw the conditions inside he was equally quick to turn on his heels, leave and never go back.

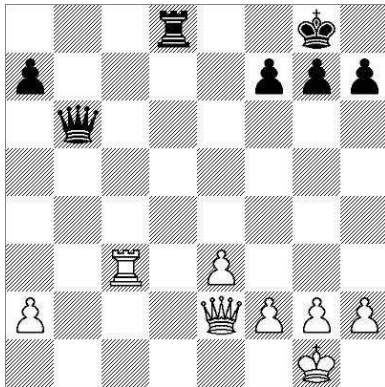
It is not just local clubs and small events either. I have recently been involved in discussions about setting up live internet coverage for chess events in the U.K. It is difficult to achieve this because so many of the events are held in what might politely be called "under-specified" venues where you are lucky to find a single old-fashioned telephone line. The sole English Championship was played in a school classroom.

I look around at the facilities now enjoyed by spectators at football and cricket matches and look forward to the day when the same can be said for the spectators (not to mention the players) at chess events. At least the Hastings Premier and the Four Nations Chess League are showing what can be done. If the cost were to be that of seeing English chess dropping down the world rankings to a level similar to that of football and cricket today, it would be a price well worth paying.

CHESS SOLUTION

Black was threatening mate on f1 but after 1 Ba4-b5! he resigned. Three quarters of white's pieces are 'en prise' (can be taken - but they can't!) 1...Qf5xe4 fails to 2 Bb5-a6 mate. 1...c6xb5 2 Qa7-a6+ and 3 Ba3xd6 is another quick mate. The best defence, albeit hopeless, is 1...Rd8-f8 2 Qa7-a8+ Bd6-b8 (not 2...Kc8-c7 3 Qa8-a5+ Kc7-b7 4 Bb5-a6+ Kb7-a7 5 Ba6-c8+ Ka7-b8 6 Ba3xd6+ Kb8xc8 7 Qa5-a8 mate) 3 Bb5-a6+ Kc8-c7 4 Qa8-b7+ Kc7-d8 5 Qb7xb8+ Bd7-c8 and White wins easily, e.g. 6 Ba3-c5 Rf8-f7 7 Bc5-b6+ Kd8-e8 8 Re4xe5+ (8...Qf5xe5 9 Qb8xe5+ Rf7-e7 10 Qe5-b8 etc.).

Saturday 18 March 2000
By Kevin O'Connell



This position is from the end of a very famous game, Osip Bernstein-Jose Capablanca, Moscow 1914. Black to play. Solution moderate/difficult. "Checks and captures" will not do the business here. Instead it is necessary to know a particular "pattern". Once seen, never forgotten and the solution becomes easy.

Today I want to discuss "pattern recognition". It is significant in many areas of scientific research relating to human development and understanding and it is of immense importance in chess. One of the first indications that a player has moved on from the stage of being a beginner to that of a novice is that he/she begins to recognize some basic patterns on the chessboard. These might be in the form of opening formations, such as a fianchetto formation (e.g. 1 g2-g3 g7-g6 2 Bf1-g2 Bf8-g7 etc.), pawn structures, endgame ideas or tactical themes.

The easiest of all these for any player to pick up are the standard tactical themes. It is quite likely that these are also the most useful. I always recommend my students, at least all those above beginner level, to examine an absolute minimum of one tactical position per day. That will just about keep a player in good condition. However, what if you are "tactically unfit"?

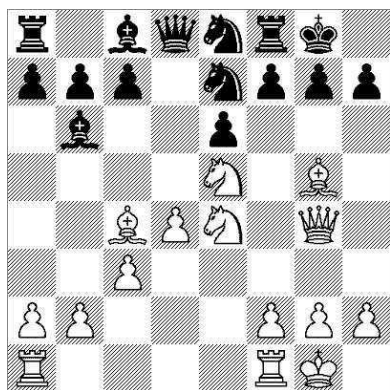
The tactically flabby player needs to devote more time and attention to acquiring a good tool-chest of tactical patterns. Always start at the beginning (with books like *Simple Checkmates* and *Simple Tactics*, both by Tony Gillam). Then progress with any one of a good handful of books which present all the basic themes. The very best of these, regrettably out of print for some while, is *Tal's Winning Chess Combinations* by Mikhail Tal and Victor Khenkin.

The patterns you pick up from these books will colonize a small part of your brain. The patterns will then begin to develop a life of their own. Before long they will be breeding and providing you with new and unexpected ideas when you are at the chessboard. This is especially true if you give them the helping hand of always examining "checks and captures".

CHESS SOLUTION

1...Qb6-b2! and White resigned - at the very least he loses a rook, e.g. 2 Qe2-e1 Qb2xc3 3 Qe1xc3 Rd8-d1+ mating, or 2 Rc3-c2 Qb2-b1+ and captures the rook. Finally there is the tricky 2 Qe2-d3 which must not be answered by 2...Rd8xd2?? 3 Rc3-c8+ and White would win, but by 2...Qb2-a1+.

Tuesday 21 March 2000
By Kevin O'Connell



This position is a might-have-been from a junior (under-9) county match. Ipswich's Timothy Yung might have won one of the games of the year. White to play. Solution difficult (and there is a lot of it).

At last I have results of the poorly publicized Spectrum Congress, played at the Ipswich Novotel in February. Only 52 players took part, so the Open and Major sections were combined.

Open/Major (18 players): 1st= Nigel Blades, Gerrards Cross, Shaun Munson, Ipswich and Roy Hughes, Norwich (Major Group trophy winner) 4/5 (£50 each), 4th Darren Harris, Ipswich 3.5 (second in Major). Grading Prize U140: Michael Bridger (Hadleigh) 2.5.

Minor (16 players): 1st 12-year-old Lee Gold, Hampstead 4.5/5 (£110), 2nd Richard Dowling, Corstorphine 4. Grading Prize U114BCF: Colin Gardiner, Reading 3.5.

Challengers (18 players): 1st Trevor Adams, Chelmsford 5/5 (£80), 2nd= Kevin Allsop and Robert Walker, both Brandon 4. Grading Prize U78BCF: Hazel Welch, Halesowen 2.5.

These Spectrum events are very friendly, invariably with pleasant conditions in good venues but tend to be let down by poor publicity. Even though this was the sixth year the congress has been held in Ipswich, I only heard about it a week or so before it took place, when one of the competitors happened to mention it to me. I neglected to ask him at the time, but next time I see him I will ask him how he found out about it!

CHESS SOLUTION

1 Ne4-f6+ wins (checks and captures!). Black has three possible replies:

(A) 1...g7xf6 2 Bg5xf6+ Ne7-g6 3 Bf6xd8 and White wins easily.

(B) 1...Kg8-h8 2 Nf6xh7! Now if Black takes the knight then White checks on h4, captures on e7 and wins the black queen which has nowhere to go. Moving the rook from f8 to g8 would be suicidal since after taking on f7 with check, White would not make the mistake of taking the queen but would put his own queen on h5 - mate. That leaves 2...Ne8-d6 3 Nh7-f6! Ne7-f5 4 Qg4-h5+ Nf5-h6 5 Bg5xh6 with two lines:

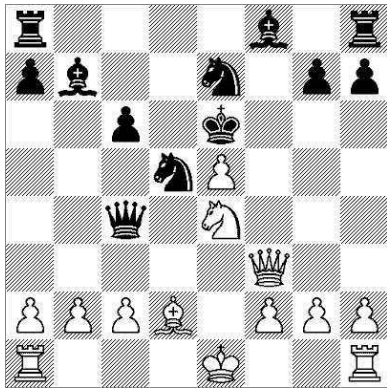
(B1) 5...g7xf6 6 Bh6xf8+ Kh8-g8 7 Bf8xd6 f6xe5 (taking the bishop allows mate in two) 8 Bd6xe5 and White is winning easily - mate should not be far away;

(B2) 5...Qd8xf6 6 Bh6-g5+ Kh8-g8 7 Bg5xf6 g7xf6 8 Ra1-e1! will eventually force mate (8 Ne5-g4 is also good but I am not sure it is forcing mate).

(C) 1...Ne8xf6 2 Bg5xf6 g7-g6 3 Qg4-g5 Rf8-e8 4 Ne5-g4! (make the pieces work!) c7-c6 (Black has nothing useful to do) 5 Ng4-h6+ Kg8-f8 6 Qg5-e5! (threatening mate on g7) Ne7-f5 7 Bf6xd8 and again White is winning easily.

Now that really was quite complicated and I certainly would not expect an eight-year-old who has not been playing chess for very long to find it during a game. However, it does, once again, show the power of 'checks and captures' and, when they do run out of steam, 'making the pieces work' (3 Nh7-f6!, 8 Ra1-e1!, and 4 Ne5-g4! with 6 Qg5-e5! are all excellent examples and it is worth noting that they all *threaten* decisive checks).

Saturday 25 March 2000
By Kevin O'Connell



This position is from a game Von der Lasa-Mayet, Berlin 1839. White to play. Solution moderate/difficult (it is quite long).

CHESS SOLUTION

1 Qf3-g4+ Ke6xe5, otherwise a knight check allows White to pick up the unprotected black queen. 2 f2-f4+ and now the two main variations are:
2...Nd5xf4 3 Bd2xf4+ Ke5xe4 4 Bf4-d6+ Ke4-d5 5 0-0-0+ Qc4-d4 6 Rd1xd4 mate or 2...Ke5-d4 3 c2-c3+ Nd5xc3 4 Bd2xc3+ Kd4xe4 5 0-0-0 Ne7-d5 6 f4-f5+ Nd5-f4 7 Rh1-e1+ Qe4-e2 8 Re1xe2 mate. The game opened with the Fegatello but I am unable to tell you about the players' eating habits.

Food is a subject that we all have some interest in. It is also something that is closely connected with chess. From the simplest of tactics, a fork, through the many problems that are "cooked" to raw ingredients such as liver. Liver? Yes, liver. The Fegatello variation (1 e2-e4 e7-e5 2 Ng1-f3 Nb8-c6 3 Bf1-c4 Ng8-f6 4 Nf3-g5 d7-d5 5 e4xd5 Nf6xd5 6 Ng5xf7), discovered when chess was developing in Italy a few hundred years ago, was probably named after the raw liver that would be placed in a trap as bait. Strangely, in modern English usage, it has become the "Fried Liver".

Food science may be even more important to players today. We now know that several foodstuffs apparently enhance the work of the brain. Fish, especially oily fish and, above all, caviar have been claimed to improve mental prowess. There have been enough scientific studies carried out to demonstrate that there is at least some truth in these claims. There is little doubt that eating more fish, especially on the day of a match, will improve your chess. What I am unable to do is quantify the degree of improvement. From my own experience, however, I would hazard a guess that it is quite significant, perhaps 20-30 rating points.

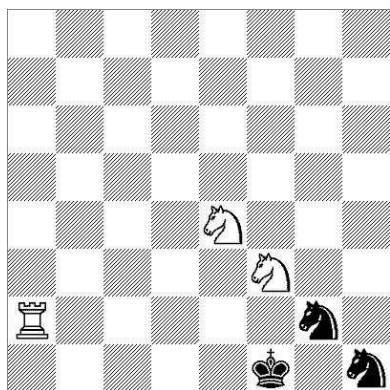
What about during a game? What should you eat if you are feeling peckish around move 30 or so? Well bananas are excellent. The natural sugars in them are quickly released into the bloodstream for energy and they also help to control blood pressure, which can be important as the time control approaches. Many sportsmen use them. If you watch tennis you are sure to have seen Greg Rusedski chomping on them.

What if you are an excessive worrier? Lots of players spoil their fine play by worrying unduly about what the opponent may be able to do. There is a very enjoyable way (for most people) to counteract this problem. You need to boost your "feel-good factor" by increasing the brain's serotonin and endorphin levels. This can be done by eating chocolate. Some years ago Kasparov always used to insist that the players' rest area be well stocked with bars of Toblerone. Many other grandmasters can be seen tucking into bars of chocolate, especially as time pressure approaches.

It may be impossible for you to "Play Like a Grandmaster" and exceptionally difficult to "Think Like a Grandmaster" (both titles of well-known books) but you can definitely "Eat Like a Grandmaster" (I haven't written it yet, but I'll be sure to let you know as soon as it's published!).

<p>Tuesday 28 March 2000</p> <p>By Kevin O'Connell</p> <p>???</p>	<p>The French Defence has nothing to do with illegally parking large lorries in such a way that they prevent all traffic flow but refers instead to the moves 1 e2-e4 e7-e6. It is one of the oldest, best and most popular lines that Black can choose to use against White's king pawn opening.</p> <p>The usual continuation is 2 d2-d4 d7-d5, after which White has a whole host of options available.</p> <p>The Exchange Variation 3 e4xd5 e6xd5 is nowhere near as quiet nor as boring as its reputation. I have seen many, many games that have been won very quickly, with overwhelming attacks, by Black as well as White.</p> <p>The Advance Variation 3 e4-e5 is very popular at club and county level. The fixed central pawn structure makes it comparatively straightforward for both players to work out where their pieces should be placed and what they should be trying to do.</p> <p>At higher levels, it is the Winawer (3 Nb1-c3 Bf8-b4) and the Tarrasch (3 Nb1-d2) that are the most dominant lines. They are also the most interesting and the most exciting.</p> <p>CHESS SOLUTION</p> <p>???</p>
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Saturday 1 April 2000
By Kevin O'Connell



I wanted to find something a bit special for today, and here it is. White to play. Solution below!

Mikhail Tal was one of the greatest world champions and a wonderful person. He also loved jokes. This is one of his. He set the scene in a medieval Eastern bazaar where, in the midst of shopkeepers, hawking their wares, dusty dervishes, cunning rogues and thieves, a man with a chessboard sits on a dirty, threadbare rug.

"Well, true believers, who would like to separate me from my silver? Who can find the right move? I will wager no one will be able!" Someone steps out of the crowd to take up the challenge and the diagram position is set up on the board.

"Tell me, can the black king be mated in two moves?"

"You lose, wise one!" exclaims the player. "I see the mate in two!" (see solution 1).

"Oh my! What a forgetful jackal I am!," exclaims the loser, "I forgot to put the white king on the board!" He puts the white king on g4.

"Nothing has changed, my friend," smiles the great player, quite satisfied with himself. "You still lose the same way!"

"But the problem has not been solved. On 1 Ra2-f2+ I take your rook with check."

The crowd laughs. The embarrassed great player pays his money.

"But you can win it back," continues the other, and puts the white king on h3, instead of g4.

"Tell me, can the black king be mated in two moves?" he asks again.

"Do you take me for an idiot?" answers the great player, beginning to get excited. "Of course it's impossible; the rook is taken with check."

"You missed it again: I play ... and I mate with ... after any move (see solution 2). But you win everything back if you can tell me whether the black king can be mated now in two moves." And he adds a small pawn (put a black pawn on c4).

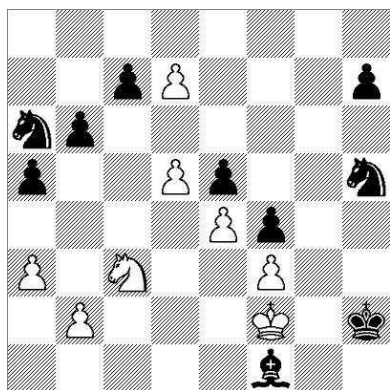
Now agitated, the great player does not see the meaning of the modest pawn and automatically plays 1 Ra2xg2, but after 1...c4-c3! there is no mate. He pays his three pieces of silver and quickly retires from the derisive glares of the onlookers. The crafty con man sets up a new position and once again offers the crowd "easy money."

CHESS SOLUTION

(1) 1 Ra2-f2+ Nh1xf2 2 Ne4-g3 mate.

(2) 1 Ra2xg2 and 2 Ne4-g3 mate.

Tuesday 4 April 2000
By Kevin O'Connell



I was originally going to use this position on Saturday but then I found something even more appropriate for All Fools' Day. This position is from a 1957 game Turoverov-Asumanian. Black seems to have a lot of extra pieces but White has sacrificed to create that monstrous pawn on d7. Black to play. Solution moderate.

I am glad to be able to use this material today instead because there is nothing foolish about the French Defence. It also has nothing to do with illegally parking large lorries in such a way that they prevent all traffic flow but refers instead to the moves 1 e2-e4 e7-e6. It is one of the oldest, best and most popular lines that Black can choose to use against White's king pawn opening.

The usual continuation is 2 d2-d4 d7-d5, after which White has a whole host of options available.

The Exchange Variation 3 e4xd5 e6xd5 is nowhere near as quiet nor as boring as its reputation. I have seen many, many games that have been won very quickly, with overwhelming attacks, by Black as well as White.

The Advance Variation 3 e4-e5 is very popular at club and county level. The fixed central pawn structure makes it comparatively straightforward for both players to work out where their pieces should be placed and what they should be trying to do.

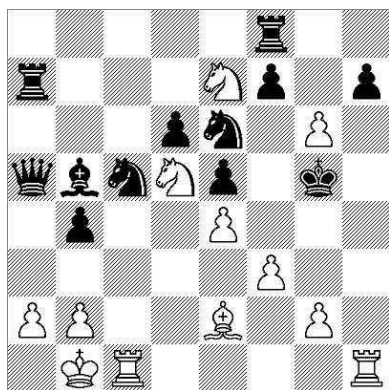
At higher levels, it is the Winawer (3 Nb1-c3 Bf8-b4) and the Tarrasch (3 Nb1-d2) that are the most dominant lines. They are also the most interesting and the most exciting.

For novices, one great advantage of the French is that it negates early mating attacks against the f7 square. However, it does have its drawbacks as players continue their development. In particular, players have to discover how to handle their king and finding ways of getting castled, on the king-side, without getting mated on h7. There is a problem because the f6 square is frequently not available to a black knight because of a white pawn on e5. However, get past that problem and you should be well on your way to having a viable defence against 1 e2-e4.

CHESSE SOLUTION

Of course the d-pawn can't be stopped but what does it matter? 1...Na6-c5! and White resigned. 2 d7-d8=Q gains a queen but loses the king to 2...Nc5-d3+ 3 Kf2xf1 Nh5-g3 mate. Therefore 2 Kf2xf1 (you may play Kf2-e1 if you want to be foolish) is forced but then 2...Nc5xd7 leaves Black with a very easily won endgame, thanks to the extra piece.

Saturday 8 April 2000
By Kevin O'Connell



Do you like musicals? I suppose that many people have a sneaking admiration for the works of Rogers and Hammerstein, even if they can't stand listening to them. But whether or not you like them, there are quite a few with a real chess connection. Where to start? There are two obvious points, so I'll start with the least obvious one.

Philidor was not only the greatest chessplayer in the world during the late eighteenth century, he was also one of the world's leading composers. His popularity has certainly declined since then but it is possible to find several recordings of his works. His popularity two centuries ago was for his comic opera works (roughly equivalent to Rogers & Hammerstein I suppose) but now you are more likely to find recordings of his instrumental works.

In the middle of the century just ended, Sir Arthur Bliss wrote the music for the chess ballet Checkmate. However, by far the best known chess work must be the musical "Chess". Benny Andersson and Bjorn Ulvaeus (of Abba fame) wrote the music, with Sir Tim Rice responsible for the lyrics. Two out of the three of them are (or were) avid players (Benny Andersson being the exception). The two pieces are also linked in an unusual way since Alekhine (world champion 1927-1935 and 1937-1946) had two cats named "chess" and "checkmate".

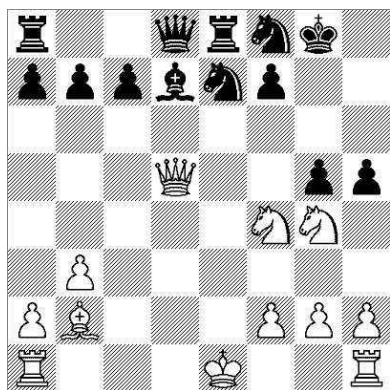
I have had the good fortune to see "Chess" not only in London but also the very special Swedish premiere in Skelleftea in 1989 as part of the closing ceremony of the wonderful grandmaster tournament there. That was a real collection of stars, not only Kasparov, Karpov, Tal and many other leading grandmasters but also the composers and several members of the original cast. That brings me back round to today's position, the decisive position in the deciding game in the match Sergievsky-Viigand, from the musical. White to play. Solution "artistic"!

You really ought to get hold of the original recording of "Chess", which is still available, if you have never heard it or seen it. Then you can be ready with a suitable air to hum or whistle during your games. World Champion Steinitz used to hum airs from Wagner's Tannhaeuser while Bobby Fischer, a model of correctness at the chessboard, would nevertheless whistle (during friendly games) the Colonel Bogey march (made famous by the film "Bridge on the River Kwai") when he had a winning position.

CHESS SOLUTION

1 Rh1-h5+ Kg5xh5 2 f3-f4+ Bb5xe2 3 Nd5-f6+ Kh5-h6 4 Rc1-h1+ Kh6-g7 (I suppose 4...Be2-h5 5 Rh1xh5+ should have been played to delay the mate by one move) 5 Nf6-e8+ Rf8xe8 7 Rh1xh7+ Kg7-f6 8 Rh7xf7 mate.

Tuesday 11 April 2000
By Kevin O'Connell



The diagram position is from *The Mammoth Book of Chess*. White to play. Solutions easy and moderate but make sure you find the best.

What is the best value chess book currently on the market? I can think of two obvious answers. The first one is "the book which will most improve your play" but since that depends on you, what level you are at, what age you are at and, above all, what kind of person you are, there is no one book that will be appropriate in all cases. That leaves the second answer, which is "Graham Burgess's *The Mammoth Book of Chess*".

Published by Constable, this is a new edition of *The Mammoth Book of Chess* which was first published three years ago and which won that year's Book of the Year award from the British Chess Federation. The new edition has been fully revised and includes new chapters on computer chess and "online" chess, that is to say how to get the most out of using computers and the internet.

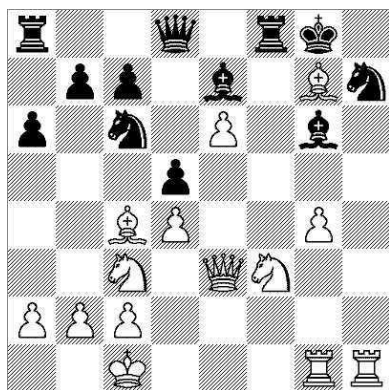
Why is it the best value? That's easy. It is a good book and you get no less than 567 pages for just £7.99. To photocopy an entire book is usually against the law but no doubt some people are tempted to break the law when the per page price of the book is substantially more than the cost of photocopies. Congratulations to the publishers for helping to keep readers law-abiding citizens; only the most foolish person would break the law here since it is far cheaper to buy the book than pay for paper and copying.

Kevin O'Connell

CHESS SOLUTION

1 Ng4-h6+ Kg8-h7 2 Qd5xf7+ Kh7xh6 3 Qf7xh5 mate is easy and achieves the desired result but you ought to have spotted the better 1 Qd5xf7+ Kg8xf7 2 Ng4-h6 mate. When it comes to forcing checkmate quicker is always better. Just imagine that there is an asteroid hurtling towards earth and that all humanity is about to be wiped out, you might as well have the pleasure of actually winning your last game (with mate in 2) rather than suffer the double disaster of failing to win (by not having time to make the third move) as well as being annihilated.

Saturday 15 April 2000
By Kevin O'Connell



This position is from a game played in last week's Norfolk Open, Colin Roberts-David Owen. White to play. Solution not very difficult but complicated.

Did you use "checks and captures" when trying to decide what to play in that position? If not, you should have and not only because the position, being selected to appear before you in a newspaper column, is likely to be of above average interest and to contain something possibly spectacular. No, "checks and captures" should be incorporated into your basic chess thinking.

It really is as simple as that. You look at a position, any position. It may be in a newspaper, it may be on the board in front of you in a game you are playing. Many, if not most players stop and count up the material. That is not necessarily a good idea. It is, however, a good idea to look at all the checks and captures.

You should do this not just for your pieces but make a point of doing it for both sides whenever you first see any position.

So what's wrong with counting material? Two things. It only gives you a historical view of what has happened in reaching that position - it tells you nothing about what is actually happening at the moment and even the historical picture is only one possible version. It also tends to lead players to approach positions in a prejudiced way - "White is a piece up, therefore White is winning". If White is a piece up, White may be winning, or drawing, or losing. It all depends upon what is happening in the position.

Having a fixed way of thinking is the flexible approach. Sounds odd doesn't it? But it is true nonetheless. Remember, using the Highway Code, the Green Cross Code, "Belt up" or "clunk, click, every trip" are fixed ways of thinking which also never did anyone any harm and saved many lives on the roads. Make sure you save some of your lives on the chessboard by using "checks and captures every move".

CHESS SOLUTION

Checks and captures! No checks but five captures and all the captures win (except for Bc4xa6 and even that may be good enough for a draw!).

White played 1 Bc4xd5 and after 1...Kg8xg7 (1...Rf8xf3 2 Qe3xf3 Kg8xg7 3 Bd5xc6 Nh7-g5 4 Qf3-g2 b7xc6 5 Qg2-h2 Ng5xe6 6 Qh2-e5+ Kg7-f7 7 Rg1-f1+ wins easily) 2 Qe3-h6+ Black resigned. The grisly end would have been 2...Kg7-h8 (2...Kg7-g8 3 Qh6xg6+ Kg8-h8 4 Rh1xh7 mate) 3 Qh6xg6 Be7-h4 (the only move to stave off mate for a couple of extra moves but it is quite ridiculous and Black soon runs out of pieces to put in the way!) 4 Bd5-e4 Rf8-f5 5 g4xf5 Qd8-g8 6 Rh1xh4 Qg8xg6 7 f5xg6 Kh8-g7 8 Rh4xh7+ Kg7-f6 9 Rh7-f7+ Kf6xe6 10 Be4-f5+ Ke6-d6 11 Rf7-d7 mate.

The other winning lines are:

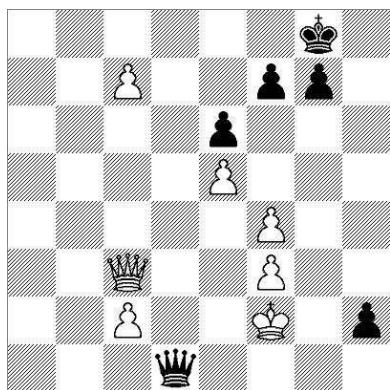
1 Bg7xf8 d5xc4 2 Bf8xe7 Nc6xe7 3 Nf3-h4+- Nh7-f8 4 Nh4-f5 which is absolutely crushing;

1 Rh1xh7 Bg6xh7 2 Bg7xf8 d5xc4 3 Bf8xe7 Qd8xe7 4 Nc3-d5 winning comfortably;

1 Nc3xd5 Rf8xf3 2 Qe3xf3 Be7-g5+ 3 Kc1-b1 Kg8xg7 4 Rh1xh7+ Kg7xh7 5 Bc4-d3 and White is clearly winning, since 5...Qd8-f8 6 Bd3xg6+ Kh7xg6 7 Qf3-d3+ Kg6-g7 8 Rg1-h1 Qf8-g8 9 Qd3-f5 Bg5-e7 10 Nd5-f4 forces mate, e.g. 10...Be7-d6 11 Nf4-h5+ Kg7-h6 12 Qf5-f6+ Qg8-g6 13 Nh5-f4 mate.

Which one did you choose? Which one is best. Well, it is difficult to say that any of them is clearly better than any other but I prefer 1 Bg7xf8 because there are lots of really grim variations for Black, such as 1...Qd8xf8 2 Nc3xd5 Ra8-d8 3 Nd5xe7+ Nc6xe7 4 Nf3-h4 Bg6-e8 5 Rg1-f1 and Black will surely ask for an end to the torture.

Tuesday 18 April 2000
By Kevin O'Connell



The diagram position is from the game Irina Krush-Nicholas Pert, Oakham 2000. Black to play. Solution moderate.

Here is a quick round-up of local junior news.

Still technically a junior, Nicholas Pert of Ipswich is on target for a difficult second Grandmaster result in the Oakham grandmaster tournament. After six rounds he has "plus 3" (three wins and three draws) and has played all but one of the strongest opponents. He stands second behind GM Chris Ward, who has 5/6, and requires two wins and a draw from his remaining three games. Nicholas was a pupil at Ipswich School and Oakham School before commencing a maths degree at Warwick University.

In the national Under-18 Team Championships in Nuneaton, Essex made the early running but Warwickshire came through to win with 8/12, Cheshire & North Wales taking an unexpected second place with 6.5 while Essex and Kent shared third place on 6. Cambridgeshire made up the field, scoring 3.5. The Minor Counties Final had only two teams. In a straight 12-board match Suffolk overpowered Herts 9-3.

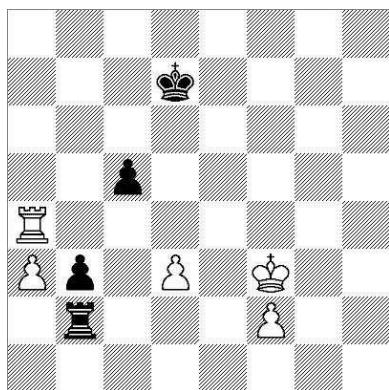
Chris Russell of Norfolk will be the only East Anglian in this year's England Under-11 team. He scored 4/6 in the trial tournament. 3.5/6 was a qualifying score for some but not for Henry Kingston of Cambridge. David Donaghy, Suffolk, scored 3. Most surprising of all, perhaps, was that there was not a single player from Essex in the trial.

Things have not been going so well in the younger age groups. Essex finished 7th/9 in their Under-11 Team Championship qualifier, scoring 23.5/60, while Suffolk were 8th/10 in theirs with 25/60. A much better performance by Essex in the Under-9 Team Championship qualifier saw them into the finals, 2nd=8, scoring 22/36 in their group just half a point behind the winners. Suffolk Under-9s scored 14/36 to finish 5th/7 in their qualifier.

CHESS SOLUTION

1...h2-h1Q would allow White to escape with 2 c7-c8Q+ Kg8-h7 3 Qc3-d3+ but keeping all the queens on the board with 1...Qd1-g1+! ensures a win for Black since the white king is so exposed: 2 Kf2-e2 h2-h1Q 3 c7-c8Q+ Kg8-h7 4 Ke2-d3 Qg1-f1+ and White resigned - she can't avoid mate, e.g. 5 Kd3-e4 Qf1-e2+ 6 Qc3-e3 Qh1xf3+ 7 Ke4-d4 Qf3xe3 mate or 5 Kd3-d4 Qh1-g1+ 6 Qc3-e3 Qf1-d1+ and 7 Kd4-e4 Qd1-d5 mate or 7 Kd4-c4 Qg1xe3 with mate following quickly.

Saturday 22 April 2000
By Kevin O'Connell



The diagram position is from the game Colin McNab-Nicholas Pert, Millenium Masters, Oakham 2000. Black to play. Solution easy.

Congratulations to Nicholas Pert of Ipswich. He has become the first Suffolk player ever to win an International Grandmaster tournament. He took outright first place in the Millenium Masters event which was held at Oakham School, the final round being played on Wednesday.

Exceptional though the result was, Nicholas, unbeaten in the tournament, was less than entirely happy. The reason being that he is chasing the Grandmaster title. Three "Grandmaster results" are usually needed to gain the coveted Grandmaster title. In this particular tournament the "Grandmaster result" level was set at the extremely high score of 7/9, otherwise known as "plus five" (five more wins than losses). Nicholas succeeded in defeating four players without loss but that fifth "plus" just eluded him. The final round draw against McDonald might perhaps have been won.

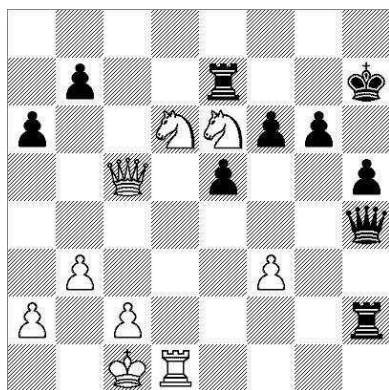
It is, however, surely just a matter of time before the ex-Oakham School pupil, now studying mathematics at Warwick University, achieves the Grandmaster title. Nicholas, World Champion in the Under-18 category in 1998, has his next excellent chance of a Grandmaster result in the final few rounds of the Four Nations Chess league.

Results of the tournament were: 1 Pert, Nicholas m ENG 6.5; 2 Gormally, Daniel m ENG 6.0; 3 Krush, Irina wm USA 5.5; 4 Ward, Christopher g ENG 5.5; 5 McDonald, Neil R g ENG 4.5; 6 Aagaard, Jacob m Denmark 4.0; 7 Afek, Yochanan m Israel 4.0; 8 Hummel, Patrick USA 3.5; 9 McNab, Colin g SCO 3.5; 10 Norris, Alan f SCO 2.0 (The standard international tournament abbreviations have been used here: g=grandmaster, m=international master, wm=woman international master, f=FIDE master)..

CHESS SOLUTION

1...Rb2xf2+ 2 Kf3xf2 b3-b2 3 Ra4-c4 b2-b1Q wins easily at this level, where players know how to win with queen against rook and even if they don't, know that is, they are strong enough to be able to work it out. The game ended 4 Kf2-e2 Qb1-b2+ 5 Ke2-d1 Qb2xa3 6 Kd1-d2 Kd7-d6 7 Kd2-c2 Qa3-a1 8 Kc2-d2 Kd6-d5 9 Rc4-e4 Qa1-b2+ 10 Kd2-d1 Qb2-c3 11 Kd1-e2 Qc3-c2+ 12 Ke2-e3 Qc2-d1 13 Re4-c4 Qd1-e1+ 14 Ke3-f3 Qe1-d2 and White resigned.

Tuesday 25 April 2000
By Kevin O'Connell



Black has a nominal material advantage in this position from Kim Nygren-Richard Pert, Norwegian Open Junior Championship, Porsgrunn 2000. However, Black's pieces are not well placed and the two knights have more power (and more tentacles) than a couple of giant squid. White to play. Solution easy.

Ipswich's Richard Pert, England's representative in this strong tournament, had a tough time in Norway. He lost two games, this one and his game against the tournament victor Ketil Lie (who scored 6/7). That left Richard in 8th place, out of 36 competitors, scoring 4/7, which was disappointing for the third seed. That is always the danger when a player over-presses, trying too hard to win.

Essex chess is enjoying something of a renaissance. When I was active there in the early-mid 1970s, Essex, with Dr Jonathan Penrose on top board, was one of very few counties to provide the Cambridge (University) team with any real opposition. The Essex junior scene and Ilford Chess Club had both flourished in the late 1960s, when Chief National Coach Bob Wade resided in Ilford. Also at that time the Ilford Congress, which ran from 1950 until 1977, was one of the biggest, most successful and most enjoyable congresses in the country.

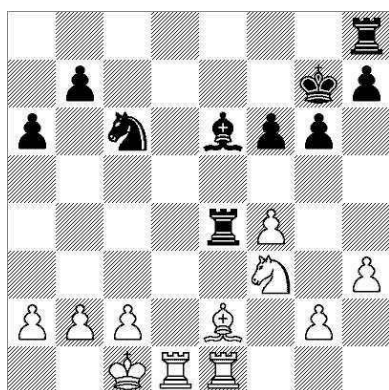
The Ilford Congress, launched in 1950 to celebrate Ilford Chess Club's 50th anniversary, is being revived this year. Now marking the centenary of the club, the congress is back in its old home of Valentines High School (Ilford County High School for Girls as it was) at Gants Hill. It is a prestigious and fine venue and, therefore, a costly one, so a large entry is important if there is to be a chance of it continuing.

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CHESS SOLUTION

1 Nd6-f5! is crushing. The threat to Black's queen is minor. The really big threat is of 2 Qc5xe7+ and 3 Qe7-g7 mate or, after 1...Re7xe6 both 2 Qc5-c7+ and 2 Rd1-d7+ force mate. If 1...Re7-f7 then 2 Ne6-f8+ Kh7-h8 (if 2...Rf7xf8 3 Qc5-e7+ forces mate) 3 Nf8xg6+ Kh8-h7 4 Ng6xh4 is even better than immediately taking the queen. The game ended 1...Rh2xc2+ 2 Kc1xc2 and Black lost on time.

Saturday 29 April 2000
By Kevin O'Connell



This position is from the game Richard Pert-C. Fitzmaurice, Glorney Cup, Oakham 1997. White is a pawn up but Black is attacking both the a-pawn and the f-pawn. White to play. Solution easy.

1997 was the first year that any local players have been involved in the Glorney Cup since the 1940s. In 1997 both Nicholas and Richard Pert of Ipswich played for England. In 1948 and 1949 Jonathan Penrose, then of Colchester, played for England.

The Glorney Cup, an international team tournament for juniors under the age of 18, has a long history. It was started thanks to sponsorship from Dublin businessman C. Parker Glorney. The very first event, played in Dublin in 1948, consisted of a double-round match between Ireland and England in which England dropped only a single half point - by Jonathan Penrose on second board.

The competition gradually increased in size with first Wales and then Scotland joining in. It was always Parker Glorney's intention to widen the international scope but funding proved a problem. After the establishment of a Glorney Trust Fund, the 1964 event in London was the first to include teams from France and the Netherlands.

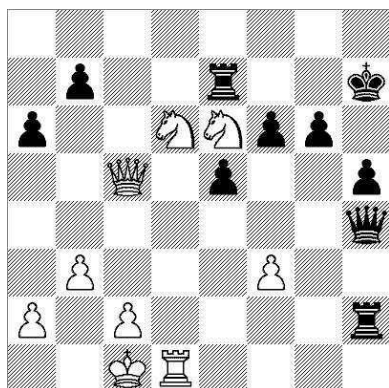
It is a long time since I had a direct involvement in the competition - I produced the tournament bulletin for the event in London in 1972 - so I am really looking forward to the 53rd and millennium event in Dublin later this year, at which I will be present as the Chief Arbiter. The tournament will be held at Dublin City University 23-28 July. Aside from the usual four countries, plus France and the Netherlands, Belgium and the Czech Republic will also be playing.

Much closer to home, the Suffolk Leagues are coming to a conclusion. The first division has been won by Ipswich B with 23.5/32, followed by Clacton 18.5 and, in third place, either Ipswich A 17 or Bury Canons 14.5 plus points scored in their match against Ipswich D. Division Two has been won by Ipswich E with 23/32 ahead of 2 BT Laboratories 21 and 3 Manningtree 19.

CHESS SOLUTION

White played 1 Be4xa6! After 1...Re4xe1 2 Rd1xe1 Be6-c8 3 Ba6-b5 White had two extra pawns in the better position and won quickly and easily thereafter.

Tuesday 2 May 2000
By Kevin O'Connell



Black has a nominal material advantage in this position from Kim Nygren-Richard Pert, Norwegian Open Junior Championship, Porsgrunn 2000. However, Black's pieces are not well placed and the two knights have more power (and more tentacles) than a couple of giant squid. White to play. Solution easy.

Ipswich's Richard Pert, England's representative in this strong tournament, had a tough time in Norway. He lost two games, this one and his game against the tournament victor Ketil Lie (who scored 6/7). That left Richard in 8th place, out of 36 competitors, scoring 4/7, which was disappointing for the third seed. That is always the danger when a player over-presses, trying too hard to win.

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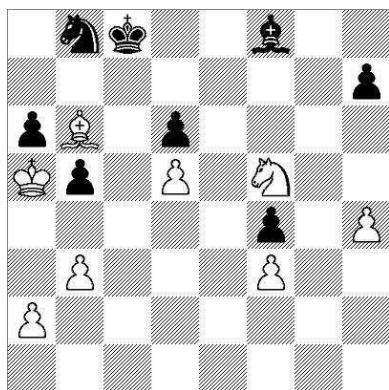
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CHESS SOLUTION

1 Nd6-f5! is crushing. The threat to Black's queen is minor. The really big threat is of 2 Qc5xe7+ and 3 Qe7-g7 mate or, after 1...Re7xe6 both 2 Qc5-c7+ and 2 Rd1-d7+ force mate. If 1...Re7-f7 then 2 Ne6-f8+ Kh7-h8 (if 2...Rf7xf8 3 Qc5-e7+ forces mate) 3 Nf8xg6+ Kh8-h7 4 Ng6xh4 is even better than immediately taking the queen. The game ended 1...Rh2xc2+ 2 Kc1xc2 and Black lost on time.

Saturday 6 May 2000
By Kevin O'Connell



The diagram shows a position from the game Terence Chapman-Paul Williams, Glorney Cup, London 1972. White to play. Solution sadistic and easy.

It has been a good couple of weeks for Ipswich's Nicholas Pert. Following on from his victory in the Oakham Millennium grandmaster tournament, it was announced last week that he will be the first recipient of the Terence Chapman Gold Award which is worth £1,000. He celebrated that news by securing his second grandmaster result at the final weekend of the 4NCL (Four Nations Chess league). One more grandmaster result will be enough, coupled with a rating in excess of 2500 (238 BCF), for the title of Grandmaster.

The Terence Chapman featured in today's position is now the head of the Terence Chapman Group plc, which turned over more than £30 million last year in the field of IT consultancy to financial services institutions. It is his company that has instituted these new awards to junior players. Each year there will be one Gold award of £1,000 and six silver awards of £500. The Silver awardees are WIM Jovanka Houska, 19 from Slough, Adam Hunt, 19 from Oxford, WIM Ruth Sheldon, 19 from Manchester, Craig Hanley, 16 from Lancaster, Ameet Ghazi, 13 from Birmingham and Gawain Jones, 12 from York.

Here are a couple of Nick's wins from the 4NCL this year.

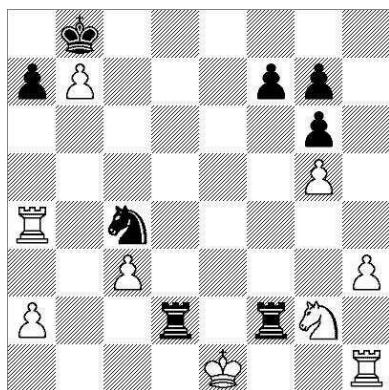
Michael Hennigan-Nicholas Pert: 1g2-g3 f7-f5 2c2-c4 Ng8-f6 3Bf1-g2 d7-d6 4Nb1-c3 g7-g6 5d2-d3 Bf8-g7 6e2-e4 Nb8-c6 7Ng1-e2 0-0 80-0 e7-e5 9Nc3-d5 Nc6-e7 10Nd5xf6+ Bg7xf6 11Bc1-h6 Rf8-f7 12Qd1-d2 c7-c6 13d3-d4 f5xe4 14Bg2xe4 Ne7-f5 15d4xe5 d6xe5 16Qd2xd8+ Bf6xd8 17Bh6-d2 Nf5-d6 18Be4-d3 Rf7-f3 19Bd2-e3 Bd8-b6 20Kg1-g2 e5-e4 21Be3xb6 Rf3xd3 22Bb6-c7 Nd6xc4 23b2-b3 Nc4-d2 24Ne2-f4 Nd2xf1 25Nf4xd3 e4xd3 26Ra1xf1 Bc8-f5 27f2-f3 Ra8-e8 28g3-g4 Re8-e2+ 29Rf1-f2 d3-d2 0-1.

Nicholas Pert-Jonathan Levitt: 1d2-d4 Ng8-f6 2Ng1-f3 e7-e6 3c2-c4 b7-b6 4g2-g3 Bc8-b7 5Bf1-g2 Bf8-e7 60-0 0-0 7d4-d5 e6xd5 8Nf3-h4 c7-c6 9c4xd5 Nf6xd5 10Nh4-f5 Nd5-c7 11e2-e4 d7-d5 12Rf1-e1 Be7-f6 13Nb1-c3 Nb8-a6 14Bc1-f4 Na6-c5 15Bf4-d6 Nc5xe4 16Nc3xe4 d5xe4 17Bd6xf8 Qd8xf8 18Qd1-d6 Nc7-e6 19Ra1-b1 c6-c5 20Qd6xf8+ Ra8xf8 21Nf5-d6 Bb7-a8 22Bg2xe4 Ba8xe4 23Nd6xe4 Bf6-d4 24Ne4-c3 g7-g6 25Kg1-g2 h7-h5 26Re1-d1 Rf8-d8 27Nc3-b5 Kg8-g7 28Rd1-d3 a7-a6 29Nb5xd4 c5xd4 30b2-b4 Rd8-c8 31Rd3-a3 Rc8-a8 32Rb1-e1 a6-a5 33Kg2-f3 Kg7-f6 34Kf3-e4 Ra8-d8 35b4xa5 b6xa5 36Ra3xa5 Ne6-g5+ 37Ke4-d3 Ng5-f3 38Re1-c1 Kf6-g7 39Rc1-c5 Nf3xh2 40Rc5-d5 Rd8-b8 41Rd5xd4 Rb8-b2 42Rd4-f4 f7-f5 43Kd3-c3 Rb2-e2 44Kc3-d3 Re2-b2 45Kd3-c3 Rb2-e2 46a2-a4 Nh2-g4 47f2-f3 Ng4-f6 48Ra5-b5 Re2-e3+ 49Kc3-b4 Re3-d3 50Kb4-c4 Rd3-a3 51a4-a5 h5-h4 52Kc4-b4 Ra3-d3 53Rb5-b7+ Kg7-g8 54Rf4xh4 Rd3xf3 55Rh4-d4 1-0.

CHESS SOLUTION

1 Bb6-a7 and Black resigned. Black is losing the a-pawn and then the ending is hopeless for him. The most tenacious line would be 1...Nb8-d7 2 Ka5xa6 b5-b4 which could allow Black some tricks but 3 Ba7-d4 Nd7-e5 4 Bd4xe5 d6xe5 5 Ka6-b5 is comfortable enough, one possible conclusion being 5...e5-e4 6 f3xe4 f4-f3 7 Kb5-c4 f3-f2 8 Nf5-e3 h7-h5 9 e4-e5 Kc8-d7 10 Kc4-d3 Bf8-c5 11 Ne3-f1 Bc5-e7 12 Kd3-e2 Be7xh4 13 Nf1-e3 Bh4-g3 14 e5-e6+ Kd7-c7 15 Ne3-f5 h5-h4 16 d5-d6+ and it is all over: 16...Bg3xd6 17 e6-e7 or 16...Kd7-c6 17 e6-e7 Kc6-d7 18 Nf5-g7.

Tuesday 9 May 2000
By Kevin O'Connell



This position is from the game Richard Pert-Danny Gormally, 4NCL 2000. Black to play. Solution easy. That was from the eighth round. In the eleventh and final round, Gormally achieved an unlikely double - he defeated Richard's brother Nicholas as well.

Final standings in the top division of the 4NCL were: 1 Slough 21/22 (63.5); 2 Wood Green I 18 (56); 3 Bigwood 17 (55); 4 Barbican 13 (47.5); 5 Index IT 13 (44); 6 Guildford ADC 11 (49) ; 7 Silvine White Rose 9 (41.5); 8 Richmond 9 (38); 9 The AD's 6 (35.5); 10 Bristol 6 (35); 11 North West Eagles 5 (31.5); 12 Wood Green II 4 (31.5) - figures in brackets indicate game points.

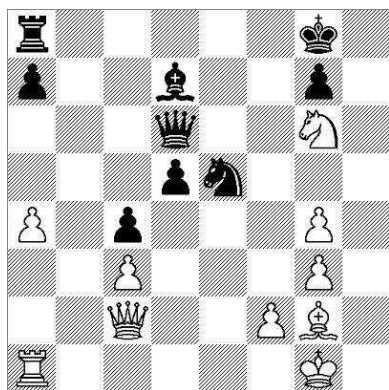
The remarkable strength of some of the teams can be judged from the final round drawn match between Slough and Wood Green: GM Almasi, Hungary 0-1 GM Morozevich, Russia; GM Gurevich, Belgium draw GM Short; GM Miles draw GM Speelman; GM Ftacnik, Czech draw GM Emms; GM Wells 1-0 GM Baburin, Ireland; GM McNab, Scotland draw GM Ward; IM Turner 1-0 IM P. Littlewood; WGM Lalic 0-1 WGM Arakhamia-Grant, Georgia (players from England unless otherwise stated).

The Southend Open was won by IM Mark Ferguson, London 6.5/7. Second place was shared by IM Andrew Ledger, Bedford and IM Simon Williams, Richmond scoring 6. Fourth place was tied by David Ledger, Bedford and IM Nicholas Pert, Ipswich on 5.5/7. Sharing sixth place, with 5/7, were juniors Edmund Player, Stowmarket and Tim Hebbes, Ilford, the latter taking the title of Southern Counties Under-18 Champion, which did not involve a tie-break since Suffolk players, being in the EACU (East Anglian Counties Union), are not eligible.

CHESS SOLUTION

Black chose the less than ideal 1...Rd2-e2+ 2 Ke1-d1 Nc4-b2+ (at which point White resigned) 3 Kd1-c1 Re2-c2+ 4 Kc1-b1 Nb2xa4 5 Rh1-e1 Na4xc3+ 6 Kb1-a1 Rc2xa2 mate, instead of the ideal 1...Nc4-e5 followed by mate with a knight check on d3 or f3 as appropriate.

Saturday 13 May 2000
By Kevin O'Connell



The diagram position is from the 1998 final of the Norfolk & Suffolk cup. Steve Gregory-Paul Smith. White to play. Solution easy.

Two of the biggest tournaments in the region are coming up in the next few weeks. First there is Ilford and then the East Anglian Chess Union qualifier for the British Championship. Both tournaments, notwithstanding the latter's rather grand sounding title, are appropriate for players of almost all ages and standards - they would be rather daunting for young juniors and even for adults if they had not previously played any competitive chess.

The Ilford Congress, launched in 1950 to celebrate Ilford Chess Club's 50th anniversary, is being revived this year. Now marking the centenary of the club, the congress is back in its old home of Valentines High School (Ilford County High School for Girls as it was) at Gants Hill. It is a prestigious and fine venue and, therefore, a costly one, so a large entry is important if there is to be a chance of it continuing.

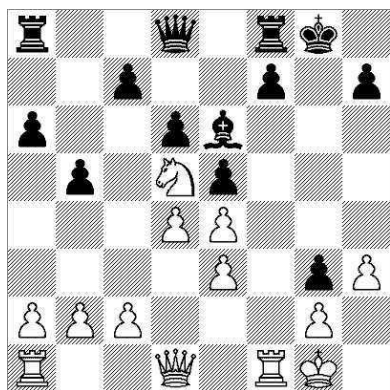
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The East Anglian Chess Union qualifier for the British Championship will be played at the Turner Hall in Newmarket on 10 and 11 June. The highest placed EACU player will qualify for a place in the Smith & Williamson British Championship 2000, which will be held at Millfield School in Somerset. Entries are due in by 3 June. For more details contact John Shaw on 01525 632919 or Patrick Ribbands on 01223 842197.

CHESS SOLUTION

1 Bg2xd5+ Bd7-e6 2 Bd5xa8 and Black resigned. 1...Qd6xd5 permits the fork 2 Ng6-e7+ and 1...Kg8-h7 is even worse: 2 Ng6-f8+ Kh7-h6 (the king has to move - it is double check - don't forget the queen on c2) 3 Qc2-h7+ Kh6-g5 4 Qh7-h4 mate.

Tuesday 16 May 2000
By Kevin O'Connell



This position is from a game Kimberlee Boshier-a.n.other. White to play. What should White do and how should Black defend? Solution easy/moderate.

The British Land UK Chess Challenge 2000, the world's largest chess tournament, is well under way. 39,500 children from 1200 schools have now been whittled down to 4,000 who compete in 19 county and area Megafinals throughout the country, some of which have taken place and the rest will be played later this month.

The latest press release concerning the tournament features Suffolk Junior Chess and its star Kimberlee Boshier of Finborough School near Stowmarket. Kimberlee took part last year in the Under-15 Girls section of the Nottingham Gigafinal. However, she still has a way to go to match Suffolk's top female junior star of the 90s, Louisa Orton who represented England in the World Under-16 Championship.

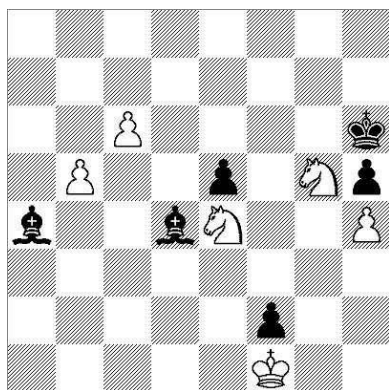
Back in the early 1990s Suffolk possessed a formidable Primary Schools team, which brought it English Primary Schools championship victories in 1990 and 1992 (under 9s) and 1992 and 1993 (Girls Under 11s), not to mention 2nd, 3rd and 2nd places in 1990-1992 (under 11s). As the release says "nowadays, the Viking invaders appear to have settled down to a more peaceful way of life." Nonetheless Suffolk entered 15 schools in this year's challenge, comfortably establishing itself in the top 20 of the County League Table. Last year the most successful player was David Goodchild, of Westbourne High, Ipswich, who scored 3.5/6 in the Gigafinal of the boys under 13s. Can someone do better still this year?

CHESS SOLUTION

White should, as she did, play 1 Nd5-f6+. Black then played the very weak 1...Kg8-h8? allowing 2 Qd1-h5 and forcing 2...Qd8xf6 (to prevent the immediate mate on h7) 3 Rf1xf6 and White went on to win. The most likely finishes are 3...Kh8-g7 4 Ra1-f1 Ra8-e8 5 Rf6-h6 Rf8-h8 6 Rh6xe6 Re8xe6 7 Qh5xf7+ Kg7-h6 8 Qf7xe6+ Kh6-g7 9 Rf1-f7+ Kg7-g8 10 Qe6-e8 mate and 3...Rf8-g8 4 d4-d5 Be6-c8 5 Rf6xf7 Rg8-g7 6 Rf7-f8+ Rg7-g8 7 Qh5-f7 with mate to follow.

Black should have defended with 1...Kg8-g7 which would have left White still with some problems to solve, although she would win after 2 Qd1-h5 Qd8xf6 (2...h7-h6 is even worse: 3 d4-d5 Be6-d7 4 Rf1-f3 Rf8-h8 5 Ra1-f1 with a crushing position and a quick mate to follow, for example 5...Qd8-e7 6 Rf3xg3+ Kg7-f8 7 Qh5xh6+ Rh8xh6 8 Rg3-g8.) 3 Rf1xf6 Kg7xf6 when 4 Qh5-h4+ Kf6-g7 5 d4xe5 is a straightforward technical win (for a master) but not so simple for a teenager.

Saturday 20 May 2000
By Kevin O'Connell



The diagram position is from the game Zaw Win Lay-Jaan Ehlvest, Bali 2000. White to play. Solution difficult.

It has certainly been a big week or two for Suffolk and not just on the football pitch either. In addition to the Wembley triumph of Earl Soham and the possible Wembley triumph of Ipswich Town, Suffolk also made the headlines at the FIDE Presidential Board meeting in London.

The fitting venue for the World Chess Federation's quarterly get-together was the basement meeting room at Simpson's-in-the-Strand. Why so fitting? Because that is the only remaining location where all the great nineteenth century chess masters met when in London. The restaurant still retains some of the boards and pieces that were used. There is something inspirational about having a chess meeting in a room where a display case

holds a board and set that was probably used by Morphy, Staunton, Steinitz and Lasker.

One of the problems that needed to be resolved at the meeting was the question of what to do about the ratings of the players from Myanmar. Now Myanmar, formerly known as Burma, has no great chess tradition but a very active federation has in the brief span of six years or so done an enormous amount to foster the development of chess there. One strand of development has been the staging of many rating tournaments. However, frequent tournaments involving just a local group of players will often lead to distortion of the ratings. That has certainly happened in the case of Myanmar for, by the beginning of this year, they had more grandmaster level (2500) players than former European gold medallists and several time world silver medallists England. Not only that but those 2500+ players added up to almost twice as many as China, which has had a large and very active federation for nearly thirty years.

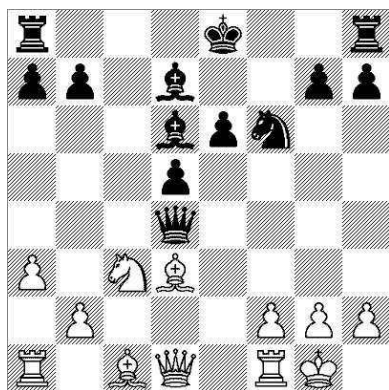
How did Suffolk help? Well, my solution (as Chairman of the Titles and Ratings Committee) to the problem was to adjust the ratings of the entire group of Myanmar players in accordance with the performances of their players in international tournaments outside Myanmar. Each player will have his rating reduced by 100 points on the next list, thus reducing their grandmaster-level players from 23 to a more realistic three. I was able to cite the experience of the group of Suffolk players being adjusted against the rest of those from England a decade ago; admittedly that was an upward adjustment for the Suffolk players but the important point, for a politically sensitive decision, was to have an appropriate precedent.

If you want to find out more about FIDE or chess in general then head for www.fide.com on the internet.

CHESS SOLUTION

At first sight it looks as though Black is winning and I am sure he thought he was for he greatly favours bishops against knights. If White simply defends the b5 pawn then he loses: 1 Ne4-d6 Ba4-c2 2 Nd6-f7+ Kh6-g6 3 Nf7xe5+ Bd4xe5 4 Kf1xf2 is the best he can do but it is hopeless. Myanmar's top player found the answer: 1 Ng5-f7+ Kh6-g6 2 Nf7-d6 and now Black is lost, the game ending 2...Bd4-b6 3 Ne4xf2 Kg6-f6 4 c6-c7! Bb6xc7 5 Nd6-e8+ Kf6-e7 6 Ne8xc7 Ke7-d7 7 b5-b6 Kd7-c6 8 Nc7-d5 Ba4-b3 9 Nf2-d3 - rubbing salt in the wound - Black resigned in view of 9...Bb3xd5 10 Nd3-b4+ Kc6xb6 11 Nb4xd5+ Kb6-c5 12 Nd5-f6 with a trivially easy win.

Tuesday 23 May 2000
By Kevin O'Connell



The diagram shows a position from the game J.McDonnell-Player, Southend Open 2000. White to play. Solution easy.

The Essex Under-9 team achieved an excellent victory in the national championship finals in Basingstoke. Essex scored 28.5/36 to win comfortably ahead of 2 N.W. London 25, 3 Richmond 21, 4 Hampshire 20.5, 5-6 Nottinghamshire, Wey Valley 19.5. Cambridgeshire took 10th place among the sixteen finalists with 17.5 points.

Individual results in board order, starting at the top, all scores out of three: Dana Hawrami, Ilford 2.5, Alex O'Toole, Southend 3, Subin Sen, Woodford 2, Ricky Martin, Saffron Walden 2.5, Joseph Bloomfield 2, Matthew Porter, St Teresa's, Colchester 3, Simon Payne, Ilford 2, George O'Toole (age 6), Southend 3, Ranita Klimach, Newbury Park 2.5, Nathaniel Lutton, Basildon 1, James Lacon, Saffron Walden 2, Michel Baumgart, Warley 3.

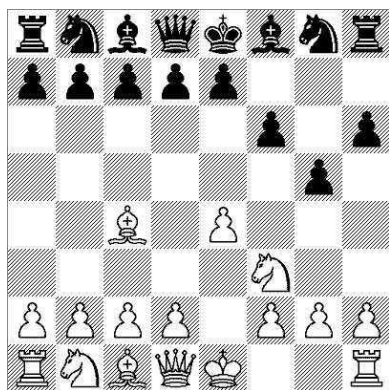
There seems to be something special about playing on second board in the English Primary School competitions. I mention this because I heard that Alex O'Toole's play was exceptionally good. Nigel Short used to play on second board for Lancashire. More recently, Nicholas Pert was on second board when Suffolk's under-9 team won the competition a decade ago.

Exceptional players may, however, be found on any board for any team in this competition. Today's diagram position is selected as an example. The game was not played in the primary schools competition but the winner, Edmund Player, now Suffolk's top junior and occasionally top board for the Suffolk county (adult) team, played on board eleven of the twelve in Suffolk's under-9 championship team.

CHESSE SOLUTION

Well, it ought to be easy enough to avoid 1 Bd3-g6+?? h7xg6 2 Qd1xd4, winning the black queen, temporarily, but losing to 2...Bd6xh2+ (White resigned at this point) 3 Kg1-h1 Bh2-e5+ 4 Kh1-g1 Be5xd4 with a position where the bishop pair and central pawns really count for something! White should have played 1 Nc3-b5 when White may, or may not, have enough for the sacrificed pawn.

Saturday 27 May 2000
By Kevin O'Connell



This crazy position is from a recent on-line game of mine, Kevin O'Connell-A.N. Other, internet 2000. White to play. Solution easy.

Now is not a good time to be launching a "dot.com" business. With share prices of these companies tumbling many are in imminent danger of going into liquidation. However, www.fide.com is somewhat different. Whatever may happen on the commercial front, this site has the World Chess Federation behind it. So, even if the commercial arm fails, the underlying organization will remain.

If you are looking for anything on chess, this really is the place to start. To begin at the beginning, you will find the FIDE Handbook which contains all of the laws of chess. Not just the basic rules but all of the regulations that govern top-level competition, titles and ratings. There is information on all FIDE-rated players, at the very least their latest rating, results of the latest tournaments and much, much more.

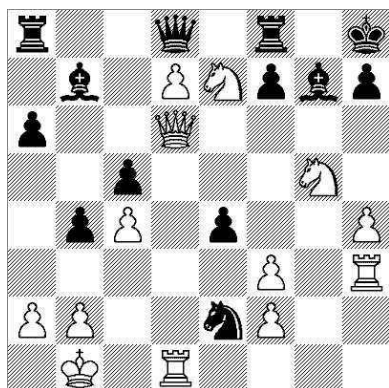
Among the most interesting items of the 'much more' are the Game Zone and the Mailbox. You can sign up for a free e-mail address of yourname@worldfide.com and in the Game Zone you can play on-line. Because it is a new service, there are not very many players using the Game Zone yet but you should still find someone there to play against. You may even find yourself playing against me - I played half-a-dozen games there a couple of days last week and will probably be there again in the coming week.

For many players the most exciting aspect of the Game Zone will be the acquisition of a FIDE rating. It is not an entirely authentic rating but nonetheless, start playing on the Game Zone and you will have your own rating, right from the very first game. As a player new to the system you will start out with a rating of 1600 (BCF 125) which will be adjusted each time you play a game on the site.

CHESS SOLUTION

1 Nf3-e5! guarantees White victory, although it does not need to be quite so rapid as occurred in the game: 1...f6xe5?? 2 Qd1-h5 mate. Black could have tried 1...e7-e6 2 Qd1-h5+ Ke8-e7 although chances of long-term survival are negligible, especially after 3 Qh5-f7+ (you could just take the rook after 3 Ne5-g6+) but I think it is more enjoyably sadistic to force the black king out in front of its pawns even though there is no obvious mate, after all Black can barely move a thing.

Tuesday 30 May 2000
By Kevin O'Connell



This position is from the game Alexei Shirov-Veselin Topalov, Sarajevo 2000. White has just sacrificed a bishop on e2, thus luring the black knight away from d4. White to play. Solution difficult.

Sarajevo is a remarkable city which has had a very tough time. Its chess heritage is a proud one and many excellent tournaments have been hosted there. None, however, can compare with that which concludes today. ...

Sarajevo 2000 is the strongest tournament to have been played there and it is also one of the most intriguing. Ever since 1993, when Kasparov made his break with FIDE and tried to set up a rival World Championship both sides have had problems. However, the World Chess Championship has continued to be successfully organized by FIDE. Kasparov's version has a much more chequered history. He played Nigel Short in London in 1993 and Viswanathan Anand in New York in 1995 did not play Alexei Shirov (who had qualified as challenger) and recently announced a match against Kramnik in London later this year. During these seven years Kasparov has been involved with the PCA (Professional Chess Association), the WCC (World Chess Council) and BGN (Brain Games Network) which have been responsible for the organization of, respectively, the first two matches, the abortive Shirov match and the Kramnik match.

Throughout the period 1993-2000 Kasparov has maintained his position as the pre-eminent player of our times, almost invariably winning the tournaments he has played in. However, Sarajevo 2000, with three rounds to be played as I write, looks much less clear. There are four undefeated players: Shirov leads with 6/8, Kasparov, Alexander Morozevich and Michael Adams sharing second place on 5.5. Shirov has the slightly easier run-in. It will certainly be fascinating to see what happens. Currently in 10th place among the 12 players is Nigel Short. Michael Adams' final three games are arguably even easier, except that he must still play his compatriot, which is sure to be a hard game.

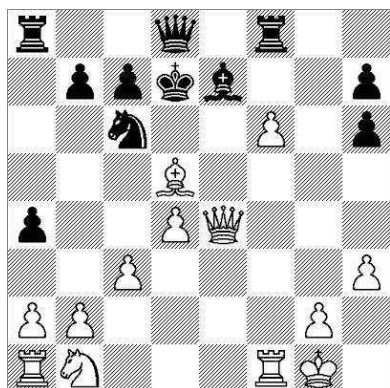
CHESS SOLUTION

1 Qd6xc5 wins. The game ended 1...Ne2-f4 2 Qc5-f5 Nf4-g6 3 h4-h5 Qd8xe7 4 h5xg6 and Black resigned. All roads lead to mate, for example 4...h7-h6 5 g6xf7 Qe7xg5 6 Qf5xg5 Rf8xf7 7 d7-d8Q+ Ra8xd8 8 Rd1xd8+ Rf7-f8 9 Rd8-d7! etc., or 4...Ra8-d8 5 g6xf7 etc., or 4...f7-f6 5 Rh3xh7+ Kh8-g8 6 Rd1-h1 followed by Qf5-h3 etc.

There are no better defences, for example 1...f7-f5 will also end up with Black being mated: 2 Ng5-e6 Qd8-b8 3 Ne6xg7 Kh8xg7 4 Ne7xf5+ and 4...Kg7-g6 5 Rd1-d6+ Rf8-f6 6 h4-h5+ Kg6-g5 7 Rh3-g3+ Ne2xg3 8 Qc5-e3+ Kg5xf5 9 Qe3-c5+ Kf5-f4 10 Rd6xf6+ Ng3-f5 11 Rf6xf5 mate, or 4...Rf8xf5 5 Qc5xf5 Qb8-c7 6 h4-h5 h7-h6 7 Qf5-g6+ Kg7-h8 8 Rh3-h4 e4xf3 9 Qg6xh6+ Kh8-g8 10 Rh4-g4+ Kg8-f7 11 Rg4-g7+ Kf7-f8 12 Qh6-h8 mate.

You may wonder why Black does not try other moves in these sequences - have some fun working out the answers - in all cases you should be able to find a mate for yourself. Alexei Shirov is the most creative player of our time and, arguably, of any time.

Saturday 3 June 2000
By Kevin O'Connell



The diagram position is from a game I played a few days ago, Kevin O'Connell-P. Coussoulis, Internet blitz, 2000. White to play. I blitzed out a neat mate in six but what did I miss? Solution moderate.

Kasparov finally managed to come through to yet another outright victory in the Sarajevo tournament. He scored a perfect 3/3 in the final rounds and overtook Shirov, who tried too hard in the penultimate round to conjure something from a level position against Movsesian and lost.

Michael Adams had a brilliant result, perhaps the best of his career. Adams and Kasparov were the only unbeaten players. Michael's last round win against world number five Alexander Morozevich was a fine, controlled performance. The gap of two whole points from third to fourth place was a very big one, especially for a tournament of this strength.

Final scores: 1 Kasparov g Russia 2851 8.5; 2-3 Michael Adams g England 2715, Alexei Shirov g Spain 2751 8.0; 4-6 Alexander Morozevich g Russia 2748, Veselin Topalov g Bulgaria 2702, Evgenny Bareev g Russia 2709 6.0; 7 Ivan Sokolov g Bosnia 2637 4.5; 8-11 Sergei Movsesian g Czech Rep. 2668, Nigel Short g England 2683, Kiril Georgiev g Bulgaria 2677, Mikhail Gurevich g Belgium 2694 4.0; 12 Etienne Bacrot g France 2594 3.0.

The Newmarket tournament next weekend will not be in the same class but, then again, you could not have played in Sarajevo. You can play in Newmarket. All players will play five games, three on Saturday and two on Sunday. Enquiries and entries to John Shaw on 01525 632919 or Patrick Ribbands on 01223 842197.

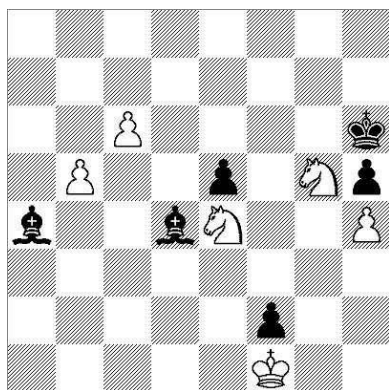
CHESS SOLUTION

1 Qe4-e6+ Kd7-e8 2 f6-f7+ Rf8xf7 3 Qe6xf7+ Ke8-d7 4 Qf7-e6+ Kd7-e8 5 Rf1-f8+! Ke8xf8 6 Qe6-g8 mate. The Rf1-f8 idea is an important one - the chance quite often arises to drag a king to a mating square like this.

1 Qe4-f5+ Kd7-e8 2 f6-f7+ is another move order to achieve the same mate in six (2 Qf5-h5+ also works).

What I missed at the time was 1 Qe4-g4+ Kd7-e8 2 f6-f7+ Rf8xf7 3 Bd5xf7+ Ke8-f8 4 Qg4-g8 mate.

Tuesday 6 June 2000
By Kevin O'Connell



I sincerely hope that today's diagram position is from the game Zaw Win Lay-Jaan Ehlvest, Bali 2000. White to play. Solution difficult.

My apologies to readers for the gremlins that have recently caused some diagrams to get mismatched to the relevant text. *[that applied to the print edition]* Meanwhile, "anything he can do, she can do better." You may recall Kasparov narrowly defeating the World in a game played over the internet. Women's World Champion Xie Jun, playing White, is not just beating the World, she is trouncing it:

1 e2-e4 e7-e5 2 Ng1-f3 Nb8-c6 3 Bf1-b5 a7-a6 4 Bb5-a4 Ng8-f6 5 0-0 Bf8-e7 6 Rf1-e1 b7-b5 7 Ba4-b3 d7-d6 8 c2-c3 0-0 9 h2-h3 Nc6-a5 10 Bb3-c2 c7-c5 11 d2-d4 Qd8-c7 12 Nb1-d2 c5xd4 13 c3xd4 Bc8-b7 14 d4-d5 Ra8-c8 15 Bc2-d3 Nf6-d7 16 Nd2-f1 f7-f5 17 Bc1-g5 Nd7-c5 18 e4xf5 Na5-c4 19 Bd3xc4 b5xc4 20 Bg5xe7 Qc7xe7 21 Nf1-e3 Nc5-d3 22 Re1-e2 Rc8-c5 23 b2-b3 Nd3-f4 24 b3xc4 Nf4xe2+ 25 Qd1xe2 Bb7-c8 26 g2-g4 Bc8-d7 27 Nf3-d2 Rc5-c8 28 Nd2-e4 Rc8-b8 29 Qe2-d2 Rb8-b6 30 c4-c5 d6xc5 31 d5-d6 Qe7-e8 32 Ne4xc5 Kg8-h8 33 Ra1-c1 Rb6-c6 34 Qd2-d5 Qe8-f7 35 Rc1-d1 Qf7xd5 36 Rd1xd5 Rf8-d8 37 Ne3-c4 Bd7-e8 38 d6-d7 Rd8xd7 39 Nc5xd7 Rc6xc4 40 Nd7xe5.

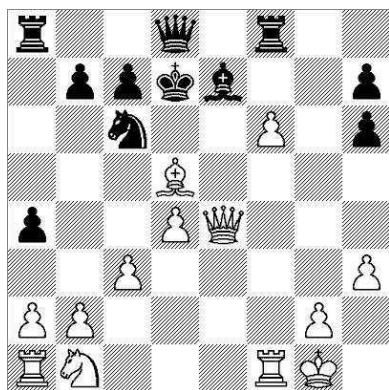
It really is about time for the World to resign. However, if you want to check on how things are going, it is at http://chess.lotof.com/index_e.asp in Chinese and English.

CHESS SOLUTION

At first sight it looks as though Black is winning and I am sure he thought he was for he greatly favours bishops against knights. If White simply defends the b5 pawn then he loses: 1 Ne4-d6 Ba4-c2 2 Nd6-f7+ Kh6-g6 3 Nf7xe5+ Bd4xe5 4 Kf1xf2 is the best he can do but it is hopeless. Myanmar's top player found the answer: 1 Ng5-f7+ Kh6-g6 2 Nf7-d6 and now Black is lost, the game ending 2...Bd4-b6 3 Ne4xf2 Kg6-f6 4 c6-c7! Bb6xc7 5 Nd6-e8+ Kf6-e7 6 Ne8xc7 Ke7-d7 7 b5-b6 Kd7-c6 8 Nc7-d5 Ba4-b3 9 Nf2-d3 - rubbing salt in the wound - Black resigned in view of 9...Bb3xd5 10 Nd3-b4+ Kc6xb6 11 Nb4xd5+ Kb6-c5 12 Nd5-f6 with a trivially easy win.

Saturday 10 June 2000

By Kevin O'Connell



The diagram position is from a game I played just over a week ago, Kevin O'Connell-P. Coussoulis, Internet blitz, 2000. White to play. I blitzed out a neat mate in six but what did I miss? (Apart from not making sure you got the correct diagram position last week!) Solution moderate.

[Hmmm ... eating humble pie ... again ... and again! I think I "reused" it because it was one of the ones struck by the print gremlins]

It is nice to be able to report that the British Chess Federation has at last got a good web-site up and running. It really is very good indeed and if you do not have the possibility of accessing it from home (or work?!) then you really ought to pop into your local library and take a look at it on one of their machines. The address of the site is <http://www.bcf.ndirect.co.uk/index.html> but the really exciting bit, at least at the moment, is to be found at <http://www.bcf.ndirect.co.uk/chessmoves/2000-06.htm> for that gives you the federation's "Chess Moves" magazine.

The paper-based version of the magazine has proved itself useful but could never have been called exciting. The online version is extremely useful and very exciting. The June edition not only has lots of news, views and colour photographs, there are also nearly 1900 games.

The selection of games is tremendous, including all those played in both divisions of the 4NCL and complete tournaments such as the Oakham Millennium Masters (won by Nicholas Pert of Ipswich), Southend (including the Open) and many, many more.

The editorial part of the magazine is written largely by Grandmaster John Emms who is also responsible for the annotated games.

The British Chess Federation comes in for a lot of (frequently just) criticism, so it is nice to be able to report that it has got one thing at least absolutely right. Don't miss "Chess Moves Online."

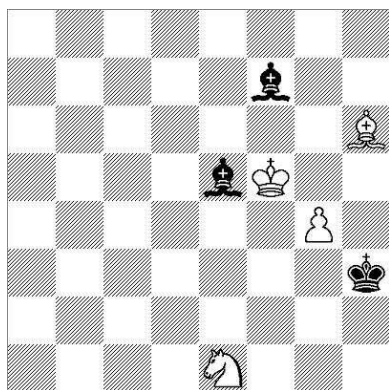
CHESS SOLUTION

1 Qe4-e6+ Kd7-e8 2 f6-f7+ Rf8xf7 3 Qe6xf7+ Ke8-d7 4 Qf7-e6+ Kd7-e8 5 Rf1-f8+! Ke8xf8 6 Qe6-g8 mate. The Rf1-f8 idea is an important one - the chance quite often arises to drag a king to a mating square like this.

1 Qe4-f5+ Kd7-e8 2 f6-f7+ is another move order to achieve the same mate in six (2 Qf5-h5+ also works).

What I missed at the time was 1 Qe4-g4+ Kd7-e8 2 f6-f7+ Rf8xf7 3 Bd5xf7+ Ke8-f8 4 Qg4-g8 mate.

Tuesday 13 June 2000
By Kevin O'Connell



The diagram position is a study by Attila Koranyi which won a prize in the Tipografia JT competition of 1984. White to play. Solution below.

Studies often reveal the beauties of chess and sometimes also, as here, they can have a hint of humour. This one was among those used for the final of the 1999/2000 British Chess Problem Solving Competition which was held at Oakham School. The event was won, once again, by the remarkably talented Jonathan Mestel with the excellent score of 55/60. Oakham's resident chess master, Graham Lee, ran Mestel close, scoring 54. Third place went to David Friedgood with 46 points.

A complete solution to today's position was worth a total of eleven points to the finalists and all three of the players mentioned scored that maximum. I hope you do too, even though we are appear to be slipping. In past years the East Anglian Daily Times has had entrants successfully reach the final of the competition and we have regularly been the top regional paper. This time round we did not have a single successful entrant - even The Sun had one! Perhaps I had better include more problems and studies since it seems that you need the practice.

138 played in the 50th Essex Congress at Ilford. The Open was won by Aaron Summerscale, Slough with 5.5/6 a full point ahead of 2= Charles Tippleston, Northampton and Lawrence Trent, Barking.

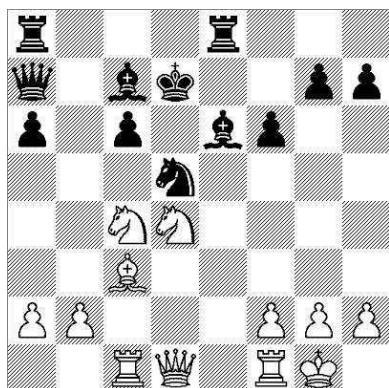
Eric Key, York, won the Ilford Major also with 5.5/6. He was followed by 2= Christopher Fegan, Chelmsford and Donny Muter, Fulham on 5.

The Minor section was won by Andrew Costeloe of Muswell Hill, again with 5.5/6. Jonathan Burrows, Norwich and Alan Hawrami, Ilford shared second place with 5.

CHESS SOLUTION

1 Ne1-f3 Bf7-e6+ [1...Bf7-g6+ 2 Kf5xg6 Be5-f4 3 g4-g5 (3 Bh6xf4? Kh3xg4 draws) 3...Kh3-g4 4 Nf3-d4 wins easily, provided you know how to force mate with knight and bishop against bare king] 2 Kf5xe6 Be5-f4 3 g4-g5 [3 Bh6xf4? Kh3xg4=] 3...Kh3-g4 4 Nf3-e5+ Kg4-h5 5 Ne5-f7 [5 Ke6-f6? Bf4xg5+! 6 Bh6xg5 stalemate; 5 Ke6-f5? Bf4xg5=] 5...Kh5-g6 6 Nf7-h8+ Kg6-h7 [or 6...Kg6-h5 7 Ke6-f6 Bf4-e3 8 Nh8-f7 Be3-d4+ 9 Kf6-f5 winning easily] 7 g5-g6+ Kh7xh6 8 Ke6-f6 Bf4-c1 [moving the bishop to e3 or d2 is effectively the same, while 8...Bf4-e5+ 9 Kf6xe5 Kh6-g7 10 Ke5-e6 Kg7xh8 11 Ke6-f6 is a simple king and pawn win] 9 Nh8-f7+ Kh6-h5 10 g6-g7 Bc1-b2+ 11 Nf7-e5 and Black can now resign. A lovely piece of work.

Saturday 17 June 2000
By Kevin O'Connell



The diagram position is from the game Garry Kasparov-Margeir Petursson, Chess@Iceland rapidplay 2000. White to play. Solution moderate.

"Every move you make ..." is supposedly to take on a new meaning according to KasparovChess Online. They report that Sting and his band members Dominic Miller, Jason Rebello and Chris Botti will face Garry Kasparov in a simultaneous display in New York on 29 June. The exhibition is being staged to mark the completion of the first-ever World School Chess Championships, an unofficial competition which is currently underway on Kasparov's new web site, KasparovChess.com.

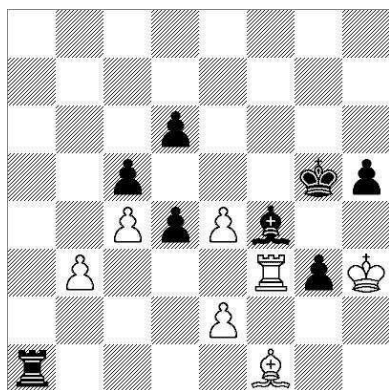
The "World School Chess Championship" was the first special event to take place via KasparovChess.com. More than 600 schools from 24 countries representing all five continents around the world have been competing in a tournament via the Internet since March 1. The tournament will culminate in finals set to take place in New York on June 27 and 28. The six finalists include "Nottingham School" from England plus two from the USA, one each from Australia and Norway and the winner of a play-off between teams from Israel and the Netherlands. The final winners will get to play Kasparov, so good luck to Nottingham. You will be able to follow progress at www.kasparovchess.com which has details of how and when to tune in.

There seem to have been almost as many Kasparov web sites as there have been Kasparov chess organizations. I was hunting for information about the BrainGames Network Kasparov-Kramnik match, announced for London in October-November, and innocently went back to www.Kasparov.com where I found all kinds of allegations about lack of payment, intrigue and hacking. It is unfortunate that such a great player as Kasparov has been involved with so many different commercial organizations for it seems that each change of direction results in problems which tend to reflect badly on the public face of Kasparov himself. In the end I could find nothing about the match either there or on Kasparov's new site, nor did a search reveal anything of the BrainGames Network except for the fact that the 'domain name' (the internet address) has been registered with Easynet. Oh well, back to the keyboard.

CHESS SOLUTION

1 Nd4xc6 Kd7xc6 2 Bc3-d4 Qa7-b8 3 Qd1-a4+ and Black resigned since 3...Qb8-b5 4 Nc4-a3+ followed by 5 Na3xb5 etc. was just too horrible to contemplate. 1...Qa7-b7 might have prolonged the game but White is winning easily after either 2 Nc6-b4 or 2 Nc4-a5.

Tuesday 20 June 2000
By Kevin O'Connell



The diagram position is from the game Viswanathan Anand-Fritz, Computer Exhibition match, Frankfurt 2000. Black to play. Solution easy.

That game was one of eight played over the weekend in the humans-computer exhibition match in Frankfurt prior to the Classic which starts later this week.

The match pitted the world numbers two, three, five and six against Fritz running on a very powerful Fujitsu-Siemens computer. So big and powerful that it had to be wheeled on to the stage. Weighing in at 250kg, the computer was not that far from outweighing three of its human opponents combined.

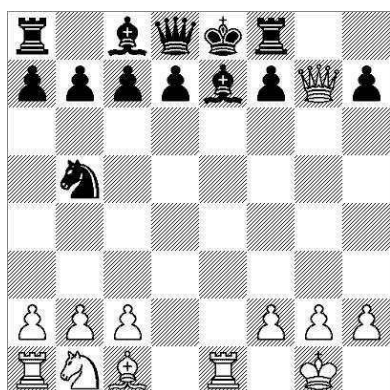
After Saturday's play Fritz was in the lead, thanks to the win over Anand, the other three games being drawn. On Sunday the humans fought back to level the exhibition match, Vladimir Kramnik winning, Anand drawing, Alexander Morozevich losing and Peter Leko winning the final game.

I find it ironic that only in the past year or so have computer firms and tournament organizers got together to include computers in their top competitions. I was Chairman of the World Chess Federation's Computer Chess Committee from 1982 until 1990. Throughout that time I worked to persuade organizers to permit computers to play. Only in 1992 did I succeed. Then it turned out to be a problem to persuade the computer manufacturers that it was worth their while to compete. That also took the best part of a decade. Now, however, the inclusion of chess in the Olympic movement has overtaken events and computers are to be banned from all competitions, at least those that might count for ratings or titles and that means all of the important ones. Of course, exhibitions such as the Frankfurt one will still be permitted.

CHESS SOLUTION

White resigned after the vicious 1...Ra1-e1. As far as I know this is the first case of a computer ending up on the right side of a zugzwang position against a human. Zugzwang is the term used to mean that a player to move will get a worse result than if it was the other player's turn to move. Often, as here, the player to move would like to be able to "pass". White must give up material or allow the black king to g4 followed by the terminating advance of the h-pawn.

Saturday 24 June 2000
By Kevin O'Connell



The diagram shows a position from a game played in Downing Street (No. 11) in the 1920s. Andrew Bonar Law-Brian Harley. White to play. Solution easy.

The game was played before Bonar Law became Prime Minister, an office he held for a mere seven months in 1922-1923 before ill health forced him to resign (he died later the same year). He was not a great Prime Minister but he had at least one claim to fame - he broke off diplomatic relations with France.

Today's theme of politicians was sparked off by a thought that struck me during the FIDE Presidential Board meeting in London recently. For years there had been great efforts made to keep politics out of chess but now there was a strong possibility of injecting chess into politics because several members of the board are leading politicians.

FIDE President Kirsan Ilyumzhinov is President of Kalmykia. FIDE Vice President Emrehan Halici is the leader of Turkey's Democratic Left Party. FIDE Honorary Vice President Andrei Selivanov was elected Mayor of St. Petersburg this year. FIDE Continental President for the Americas, Dr Pedro Barrera sits in the parliament of El Salvador for Arena (National Republican Alliance), the governing party.

Returning to the field of British politics, there are no really good players around today although the MP for Wallasey, Angela Eagle, was good enough to achieve the title of British Girls Under-18 Champion in 1976. However, go back a few years and there were several outstanding talents. Edmund Dell, London Under-18 Champion in 1937 went on to become Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. Julius Silverman, one-time MP for Birmingham, played successfully in international tournaments in the 1930s, even beating a grandmaster a two. Go all the way back to the 1850s and you find the MP for Richmond, Yorkshire, Marmaduke Wyvill, finishing second to Adolf Anderssen (the world's top player at the time) and he beat him in a couple of games.

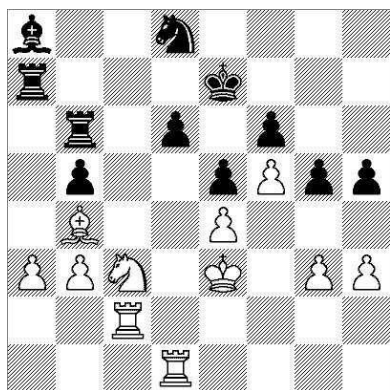
In the Palace of Westminster, though, things have gone downhill. In 1987 The Times reported that "because of the diminishing number of MPs with the time or inclination for chess" the chess room was to be open for games of chance "from mah-jong to poker."

On the international stage there have been many famous politicians who were players. Boris Yeltsin founded a chess club in Sverdlovsk. At least half a dozen US Presidents were players, the most recent being Jimmy Carter. Lenin, Che Guevara and Marshall Tito (founder of Yugoslavia) were all good players.

CHESS SOLUTION

1 Bc1-h6 wins comfortably. The game ended 1...d7-d5 2 Qg7xf8+ Ke8-d7 3 Qf8xf7 Kd7-d6 4 Re1xe7! and Black resigned because of 4...Qd8xe7 5 Bh6-f8. Brian Harley was the chess editor of *The Observer*.

Tuesday 27 June 2000
By Kevin O'Connell



The diagram position is from the game Michael Adams-Loek van Wely, Fujitsu-Siemens Masters, Frankfurt 2000. White to play. Solution easy.

Michael Adams and Garry Kasparov enjoyed mixed fortunes in Frankfurt last week. The tournaments finished on Sunday. England number one Adams was well-pleased with his victory in the Masters tournament, which gives him a place in next year's Giants event. Last year he scored -7, this year +7 to finish a full point ahead.

Final results of the Masters: 1 Adams 10.5/14; 2 Vassily Ivanchuk, Ukraine 9.5; 3 Evgenny Bareev, Russia 8; 4-5 Sergei Rublevsky, Russia and Veselin Topalov, Bulgaria 6.5; 6-7 Artur Jusupow, Germany and Loek van Wely, Netherlands 5.5; 8 Robert Rabiega, Germany 4.

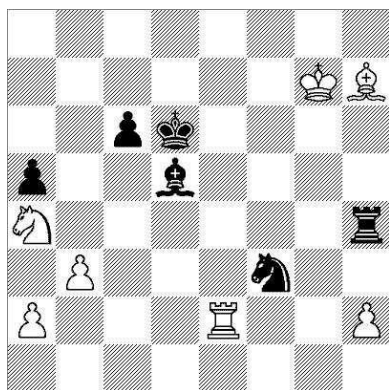
In the Fujitsu-Siemens Giants things went badly wrong for Kasparov. Viswanathan Anand stormed ahead and Kasparov was unable to match him. In trying to keep up, Kasparov tried too hard to win against Leko and he paid the price of a loss. That left Anand miles ahead at the finish. Final scores: 1 Anand, India 7.5/10; 2 Kasparov, Russia 6; 3 Vladimir Kramnik, Russia 5; 4 Alexei Shirov, Spain 4.5; 5-6 Peter Leko, Hungary and Alexander Morozevich, Russia 3.5.

I will give the decisive games in my column on Saturday. Last week I reported on the results of Fritz against the Giants players, except for Kasparov, who declined to play against it. Alexei Shirov also did not play against Fritz at the time because he was still playing in another tournament. His two games against the beast were played last week, somehow squeezed into his Giants schedule. Alexei won the first game but Fritz came back in the second to finally level the overall score at 5-5.

CHESS SOLUTION

1 Rd1xd6 Rb6xd6 2 Bb4xd6+ Ke7-d7 (2...Ke7xd6 3 Nc3xb5 check is even worse) 3 Nc3xb5 Ra7-b7 4 Rc2-c7+ Rb7xc7 5 Bd6xc7 Nd8-b7 6 b3-b4 and Black resigned his hopeless position - 6...Kd7-c6 is simply met by 7 a3-a4.

Saturday 1 July 2000
By Kevin O'Connell



The diagram position is from today's Kasparov-Leko game. Black to play. Black eventually won the game but it is not every day you get a chance to defeat Kasparov really convincingly and that chance was missed here. Can you do better? Solution difficult.

I promised to give the decisive games from Frankfurt today. However, I have room only for one, so today I give the game that brought an end to Kasparov's astonishing run of first places. That run, precarious in places, extended back to June 1998. Kasparov-Leko, Fujitsu-Siemens Giants Frankfurt.

1 d2-d4 Ng8-f6 2 Ng1-f3 g7-g6 3 c2-c4 Bf8-g7 4 Nb1-c3 d7-d5 5 Qd1-b3 d5xc4 6 Qb3xc4 0-0 7 e2-e4 a7-a6 8 Qc4-b3 c7-c5 9 d4xc5 Qd8-a5 10 Qb3-b6 Qa5xb6 11 c5xb6 Nb8-d7 12 Bf1-e2 Nd7xb6 13 Bc1-e3 Nb6-d7 14 Nf3-d4 Nd7-c5 15 f2-f3 e7-e5 16 Nd4-c6 b7xc6 17 Be3xc5 Rf8-d8 18 Ke1-f2 Bc8-e6 19 Rh1-d1 Nf6-d7 20 Bc5-e3 Bg7-f8 21 Rd1-d2 f7-f5 22 Ra1-d1 Bf8-e7 (White is a little better but it was at about this point that Kasparov saw Anand walk off stage having annihilated Morozevich. Garry now had to win at all costs.) 23 g2-g3 Kg8-f7 24 b2-b3 a6-a5 25 Rd2-c2 Nd7-f6 26 Rd1xd8 Ra8xd8 27 e4xf5 g6xf5 28 Nc3-a4 Be6-d5 29 Be3-b6 Rd8-a8 30 Bb6-c5 Nf6-d7 31 Bc5xe7 Kf7xe7 32 Kf2-e3 Ke7-d6 33 Be2-d3 f5-f4+ 34 g3xf4 e5xf4+ 35 Ke3xf4 Ra8-f8+ 36 Kf4-g5 Nd7-e5 37 Bd3xh7 Ne5xf3+ 38 Kg5-h6 Rf8-f4 39 Rc2-e2 Rf4-h4+ 40 Kh6-g7 (reaching the diagram position) 40...Nf3xh2 41 Na4-c3 Nh2-f3 42 Nc3-e4+ Kd6-c7 43 Ne4-f6 Nf3-d4 44 Nf6xd5+ c6xd5 45 Re2-d2 Kc7-d6 46 Bh7-d3 Nd4-e6+ 47 Kg7-f6 Rh4-f4+ 0-1. White resigned because Black's last move drives the white king away so that 48...Rf4-d4 wins a piece by 49...Ne6-f5+ or 49...Ne6-c5 and 48 Bd3-f5 Ne6-d4 49 Rd2xd4 Rf4xd4 is also utterly hopeless.

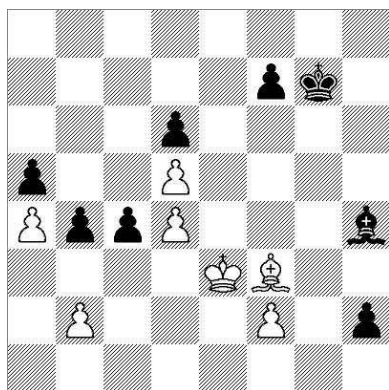
At the final press conference, Kasparov revealed that he had had a fever and had to get medical attention prior to the game as he was running a temperature of 102. Such statements always bring to mind Tartakower's famous dictum that he had never in his long career beaten an opponent who was in good health.

The tournament for Kasparov, and his camp, was something of an unmitigated disaster. Kasparov had to change hotels - the first one provided him with no internet connection, no electricity and no sleep. Add to that the fever, which sapped his energy throughout the tournament, and the annoyance of losing first place to Anand and you can see what a bad time he had. His camp? Owen Williams, Kasparov's manager, managed to get himself locked in a toilet cubicle from which he was ultimately rescued (after an hour or so). At least, that's the official story. Personally, I can't help suspecting that he did it deliberately to avoid his boss's wrath!

CHESS SOLUTION

1...Nf3-d4 2 Re2-d2 (pinning the bishop is as good as there is) 2...Nd4-e6+ and Black picks off the white bishop after 3 Kg7-h8 4 Ne6-g5 or 3...Kg7-g6 4 Ne6-f8+. Not really all that difficult but how can I call it anything less than that in a game between two players of this calibre?

Tuesday 4 July 2000
By Kevin O'Connell



The diagram position is from the game Robert Rabiega-Michael Adams, Fujitsu-Siemens Masters, Frankfurt 2000 Black to play Solution moderate (plus a difficult bit).

Michael Adams wonderful victory in Frankfurt was largely down to excellent endgame play. It was smooth endgame expertise that allowed him to dominate the field. He 'doubled' Rabiega and Topalov and scored '+1' (one win, one draw) against Ivanchuk, Bareev, Jussupow and Van Wely, his sole 'failure' being against Rublevsky (-1 in the form of one draw and one loss). That domination left him a full point clear of his nearest rival, Vassily Ivanchuk of the Ukraine. Here is their decisive encounter.

Ivanchuk-Adams: 1 e2-e4 e7-e5 2 Ng1-f3 Nb8-c6 3 d2-d4 e5xd4 4 Nf3xd4 Ng8-f6 5 Nd4xc6 b7xc6 6 e4-e5 Qd8-e7 7 Qd1-e2 Nf6-d5 8 c2-c4 Nd5-b6 9 Nb1-d2 Bc8-b7 10 b2-b3 g7-g6 11 Bc1-b2 Bf8-g7 12 0-0-0 0-0-0 13 f2-f4 c6-c5 14 Nd2-e4 d7-d6 15 Qe2-g4+ Kc8-b8 16 Qg4-g5 Qe7-f8 17 Ne4-f6 d6xe5 18 Bf1-e2 Rd8-d6 19 Bb2xe5 h7-h6 20 Qg5-h4 Kb8-a8 21 Nf6-d5 Nb6xd5 22 c4xd5 g6-g5 23 Qh4-g3 Rh8-g8 24 f4-f5 Bg7xe5 25 Qg3xe5 Qf8-e8 26 Qe5xe8+ Rg8xe8 27 Be2-h5 Re8-e5 28 Bh5xf7 Re5xf5 29 Rh1-f1 Rf5xf1 30 Rd1xf1 Bb7xd5 31 Bf7xd5+ Rd6xd5 32 Rf1-f6 h6-h5 33 g2-g3 g5-g4 34 Rf6-f4 Ka8-b7 35 h2-h3 Rd5-d4 36 Rf4-f2 h5-h4 37 h3xg4 h4xg3 38 Rf2-g2 Rd4xg4 39 Kc1-d2 Kb7-c6 40 Kd2-e3 Kc6-b5 41 Ke3-f3 Rg4-g8 42 a2-a3 a7-a5 43 Kf3-f4 a5-a4 44 b3xa4+ Kb5xa4 0-1.

CHESS SOLUTION

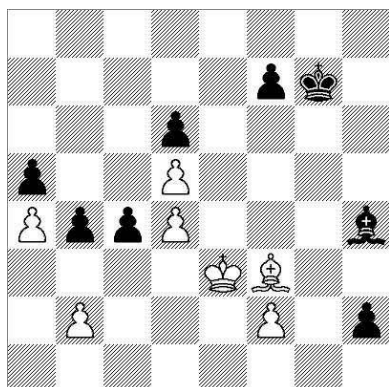
1...Bh4-g5+ and White resigned. White's situation is utterly hopeless, for example 2 Ke3-e2 b4-b3! 3 Ke2-d1 Bg5-f6 and the point is that White can do nothing at all since the bishop has to watch the h-pawn and the king has to guard against a b-pawn queening, so 4 Kd1-c1 Bf6xd4 5 Bf3-g2 Bd4xf2 6 Kc1-d2 and now 6...Bf2-e1+ is the most enjoyable way of demonstrating the hopelessness of White's position, leaving a choice between 7 Kd2xe1 c4-c3 and a pawn queens or 7 Kd2-d1 when Black can leisurely advance his king and perhaps the f-pawn as well.

Note that 1...Bh4xf2+ 2 Ke3xf2 c4-c3 succeeds in overworking the white bishop but appears to fail miserably to the simple 3 Kf2-e2. However, after 3...Kg7-f6 4 Ke2-d3 Kf6-f5 5 Kd3xc3 Kf5-f4 6 Bf3-h1 Kf4-e3 it is clearly not over yet and after the further 7 Kc3-c4 f7-f5 8 Kc4-b5 f5-f4 9 Kb5-c6 f4-f3 10 Kc6xd6 f3-f2 11 Bh1-g2 h2-h1Q 12 Bg2xh1 f2-f1Q 13 Kd6-c7 Qf1xh1 14 d5-d6 Qh1-h2 it finally becomes obvious that Black wins this way as well.

Bearing in mind the important 'kiss' principle ("Keep It Simple Stupid"), it is obvious that 1...Bh4-g5+ is the best move since it minimizes the chances of making a mistake in your calculations.

Saturday 8 July 2000
By Kevin O'Connell

DUPLICATE OF TUESDAY 4?



The diagram position is from the game Robert Rabiega-Michael Adams, Fujitsu-Siemens Masters, Frankfurt 2000 Black to play Solution moderate (plus a difficult bit).

Michael Adams wonderful victory in Frankfurt was largely down to excellent endgame play. It was smooth endgame expertise that allowed him to dominate the field. He 'doubled' Rabiega and Topalov and scored '+1' (one win, one draw) against Ivanchuk, Bareev, Jussupow and Van Wely, his sole 'failure' being against Rublevsky (-1 in the form of one draw and one loss). That domination left him a full point clear of his nearest rival, Vassily Ivanchuk of the Ukraine. Here is their decisive encounter.

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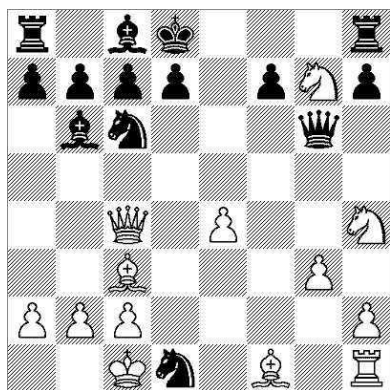
CHESS SOLUTION

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Tuesday 11 July 2000
By Kevin O'Connell



The diagram position is from the game David Bryand-Adam Harvey, Surrey-Suffolk, Counties Championship U125 quarter-final. Black to play. Solution moderate.

This year's National Counties Championship was something of a strange affair. Richard Pert of Ipswich was part of the winning team, although Suffolk got nowhere near the final of the overall competition. In the Minor Counties Competition Hertfordshire defeated Norfolk 9-7 in the final but Suffolk did better. Confused? Good, then read on for explanations.

The Open section of the National Counties Championship saw Yorkshire defeat Essex by 9.5-6.5. Richard Pert is at University in Yorkshire and was on second board for them, drawing his final game. As usual most of the Essex players were from the metropolitan end of the county, above all from the Ilford Club.

Now that Minor Counties Championship conundrum. Norfolk, with several times Suffolk Champion and long-time Ipswich resident Stephen Orton on board three, reached the final after beating Derbyshire 12-4 in the quarter-finals and then Oxfordshire 8-8 (on a tie-break) in the semis. So, how did Suffolk do better? Well, they met Hertfordshire in the quarter-finals and drew with them 8-8, going out only "on penalties."

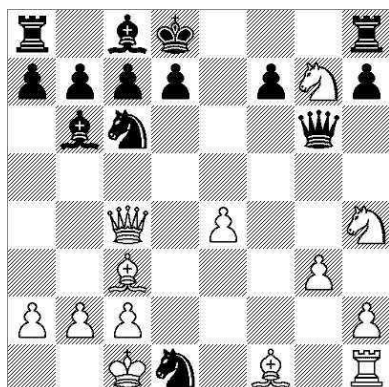
Essex beat Devon 9.5-6.5 to win the section for players rated below BCF150 (1800). In the Under-125 (1600 rating) section Cambridge, who overcame Suffolk in the semi-final, took the title by beating Hampshire 9-7. Finally, in the Under-100 (1400 rating) section, Surrey gradually worked their way North and emerged as tie-break victors following a 6-6 score against Merseyside in the final after wins against Suffolk in the quarter-finals and South Staffordshire in the semis.

CHESS SOLUTION

1...Nd1xc3 wins comfortably. The game ended with the gruesome 2 Nh4xg6?? Bb6-e3 mate. The 'better' 2 Qc4xc3 is no great improvement since after 2...Qg6-g5+ 3 Kc1-b1 Bb6-d4 Black is rather obviously winning. The immediate 1...Qg6-g5+ 2 Kc1xd1 Nc6-e5 would leave Black with only a small material advantage and a very badly placed king.

Saturday 15 July 2000
By Kevin O'Connell

ANOTHER DUPLICATION???



The diagram position is from the game David Bryand-Adam Harvey, Surrey-Suffolk, Counties Championship U125 quarter-final. Black to play. Solution moderate.

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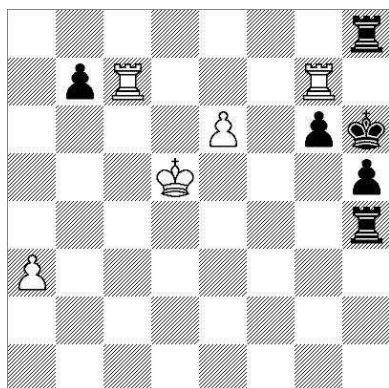
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<p>Tuesday 18 July 2000 By Kevin O'Connell</p> <p>???</p>	<p>The summer season of chess events is now upon us and quite a few local players will be involved in high-powered tournaments.</p> <p>The Smith & Williamson Young Masters runs through this week at King Edward's School in Godalming, Surrey. This is the tenth and probably final year of this event. Entry is by invitation only and Ipswich has the Pert twins, Nicholas and Richard, playing in the Masters event. Woodbridge, meanwhile, has the Waller twins, Jack and Laurie, playing in the FIDE-rated section.</p> <p>After a few days break it is then on to the British Championships at Millfield School in Somerset. Aside from the British Championship tournament itself, there are literally dozens of other sections that cater for players of all ages and all standards, including some one day tournaments that provide an excellent opportunity to visit the event, soak up the atmosphere and play a bit of chess even if you cannot devote a week or two to the more important tournaments. There is still time to enter so if you want to find out more, call the British Chess Federation on 01424 442500.</p> <p>Straight after the British Nicholas Pert is England's representative in the European Junior Championship in Spain. When he comes back from that he may play in the Golombek Memorial in Paignton or he may devote the time to preparing for a six-game match against GM Murray Chandler that will be played in mid-September.</p> <p>The Golombek Memorial is part of the Paignton Golden Jubilee at which the Devon County Chess Association will be celebrating its 50th annual congress. Played 3-9 September in the beautiful Oldway Mansion in Paignton there are, again, sections to cater for all abilities and the timetable is a leisurely one to enable players to combine chess with holidaymaking. Enquiries to Mrs Crickmore on 01395 268293.</p>
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Saturday 22 July 2000
By Kevin O'Connell



No Irishman has ever beaten a reigning world chess champion. The diagram position shows a "might have been" from this year's German Bundesliga, Baburin-Khalifman. White to play. Solution easy.

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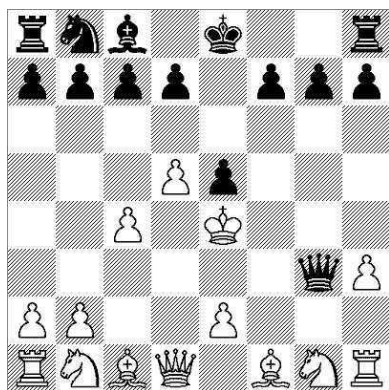
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CHESS SOLUTION

1 Rg7-h7+ Rh8xh7 2 Rc7xh7+ Kh6xh7 3 e6-e7 is the simple win at the end here. Baburin would have seen that of course, he missed the winning line a little earlier on. In the end Alexander got the whole point - one half for Alexander Baburin and the other half for Alexander Khalifman. Finally, of course, some might say that Baburin is not an Irishman while Khalifman is not a real world champion.

Tuesday 25 July 2000
By Kevin O'Connell



The diagram position was reached in the game Paul Graul-Bruno Boehmfeldt, Dortmund 1974. Black to play. Solution moderate.

Last week I chaired a special FIDE meeting in Dortmund. The matters under discussion were the future of the rating system and its application. Many important recommendations emerged from that meeting. They will not be confirmed until the full FIDE Congress during the Olympiad in Istanbul in November but it is normal for the Congress simply to rubber-stamp such technical items.

It seems that you will probably only have a BCF grade for another year or two. Starting in the second half of next year all players rated over 1000 (BCF50) will be included in the world list. Initially it is likely that your BCF grade will simply be converted into a FIDE rating. If that is the case, you can predict your rating by using the simple formula of multiplying your BCF grade by 8 and then adding 600. Thereafter it is expected that the BCF Grading List will simply disappear.

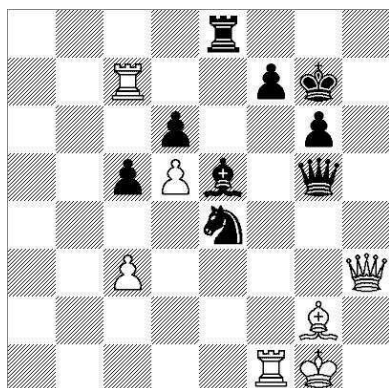
Suffolk Junior Chess has subsided throughout the past decade but nonetheless had a huge impact in Dortmund. FIDE's rapid rating list (for games played at 30 minutes per player per game or faster) will be extended down to the 500 rating level (below even the 600 level we used for the Suffolk list) and all junior events will be rated free of charge. So, if you are a Suffolk junior player, you do not have to worry that the Suffolk Junior Rating List has died because you will soon be able to acquire an official FIDE rating which really will put you on the same ladder as Nigel Short, Michael Adams, Viswanathan Anand, Vladimir Kramnik and Garry Kasparov.

Another idea which was first tried in Suffolk Junior Chess, that of the Junior Master title is also to be introduced by FIDE. Juniors who achieve a rating of 1600 on the Rapid list (and probably soon to follow on the main list) will get the title of Junior Rapidplay Master.

CHES SOLUTION

1...f7-f5+ 2 Ke4xf5 d7-d6+ 3 Kf5-e4 Bc8-f5+ 4 Ke4xf5 Qg3-g6+ is really rather an easy forced mate. However, most people find "backward" moves, such as the final queen move here, difficult to spot.

Saturday 29 July 2000
By Kevin O'Connell



White, to move, resigned in the diagram position of Kveinis-De Firmian, Reykjavik Open 1994, at least that's what my database says. What do you think? Solution easy.

It sometimes seems that everything goes in cycles. It is certainly true that chess openings cycle into and out of fashion on a regular basis. Perhaps the same is true of chess opening books. Of course, most of them date rapidly and are soon discarded for even though the material may still be perfectly good the flares and bell-bottoms have gone out of fashion. One chess opening book, however, seems destined to go on for ever.

Modern Chess Openings was first published, by the British Chess Magazine in 1911. From that small slim (less than 200 pages) volume the title grew and grew, in all senses. It also became more and more American in content style and production. In the late 1930s American editors came to the fore and they have included Fine, Korn, Evans and De Firmian. A generation later the publication moved lock stock and barrel to the United States. A generation later still it has begun to swing back across the Atlantic.

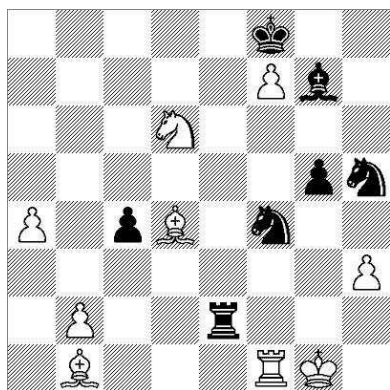
Batsford's Modern Chess Openings is the 14th of the illustrious series and opens the new Millennium with publication again restored to England. All of the content, however, remains the work of American authors. I find it curious that the peaks of English chess opening research and publication (1980 plus or minus a decade) and of English chess performance (1990 plus or minus a decade) were achieved during the period of full Americanization of the book.

This 14th edition, edited by Grandmaster Nick De Firmian, occupies 708 pages and is, by volume, about six times the size of the 1911 original. What, apart from history, makes this book stand out? There is absolutely no doubt in my mind - words. Anyone who has picked up a recent openings compendium and looked inside will have found themselves hard pressed to find more than the occasional word. MCO14, as it will inevitably be known, stands out in this respect. Not only does each opening or opening group have a descriptive introduction but a huge percentage of the notes include useful comments. A picture may be worth a thousand words but sometimes a single word is worth a thousand moves. Recommended for all serious players irrespective of rating because every player needs to have such a reference book.

CHESS SOLUTION

GIGO is the standard "computerese" answer. It stands for Garbage In, Garbage Out. In view of the continuation 1 R(either)xf7+ Kg7-g8 2 Qh3-h7 mate it seems likely either that Black resigned or, perhaps, that this was not the position on the board at the time. The moral? Don't believe every game you see in a database.

Saturday 5 August 2000
By Kevin O'Connell



The diagram position was reached in a "Candid Camera" game Lev Polugaevsky-Eduard Gufeld from the 1966/7 Soviet Championship. White to play. Bearing in mind that both players were desperately short of time, would you choose (a) 1 Bd4-c5, (b) 1 Bd4xg7+ followed by 2 Bb1-f5 or (c) something else?

I was reminded of this well-known finish by Eddy Gufeld's latest book. *The Art of the King's Indian* has just been published by Batsford, priced at £14.99. The book, with 221 pages, is good value for money today and not only for players who use the King's Indian.

Eddy Gufeld is a genuine character among Grandmasters. He has a huge sense of humour which more than matches his girth. His favourite saying seems to be "my English better your Russian" and he loves anecdotes. More than anecdotes, though, he loves the King's Indian Defence and chess as an art form. The title of his latest book is thus remarkably apt.

I recommend it even for players who have no interest in the King's Indian for two reasons. Gufeld's selection of complete games is based as much on artistic grounds as importance for opening theory and so you will find some truly splendid games here. Then there are the anecdotes. Apparently, the end of this Polugaevsky-Gufeld game was caught on a "candid camera" hidden behind a curtain in the playing hall. Gufeld relates that the film showed Polugaevsky's hair practically standing on end.

Do try to read this book. You are sure to enjoy it.

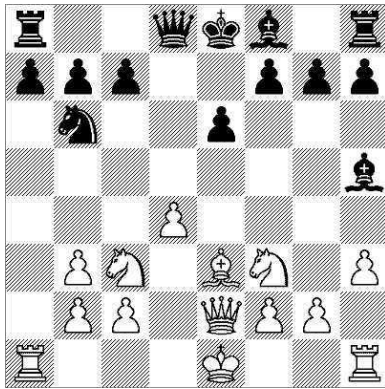
CHESS SOLUTION

Polugaevsky played 1 Bd4-c5?? allowing mate. Gufeld played 1...Re2-g2+ 2 Kg1-h1 Nh5-g3 mate but regretted it and subsequently wished that he had played 1...Nf4xh3+ 2 Kg1-h1 Nh5-g3 mate instead.

In his book, Gufeld says "He should have brought up another defensive resource by 1 Bd4xg7+ Kf8xg7 2 Bb1-f5." That unfortunately overlooks that the same mate as played in the game is still available.

The counter-intuitive 1 Bd4xg7+ Kf8xg7 2 f7-f8Q+ would have saved White since after 2...Kg7xf8 3 Rf1-f2 Black gets nowhere with 3...Re2-e1+ 4 Rf2-f1 while 3...Nf4xh3+ is now illegal because the knight is pinned.

Saturday 12 August 2000
By Kevin O'Connell



This position is from the game
Andrew Walden Jones-
Matthew Broomfield, Glorney
Cup, Dublin 2000. Black to play.
Solution simple.

How do you set about choosing a move here or in any position come to that? For me, at least, and for those I coach, the answer is incredibly simple. You don't. You look at "checks and captures" - both yours and those of your opponent. That is a simple, quick procedure which almost always reveals both any dangers lurking in the position and also the most likely moves for you. Simple and effective though it is, this procedure is still not widespread.

I was recently in Dublin as chief arbiter of the Glorney Cup competition. This gathers most of the best 16-year-olds in the UK, Ireland, France, Netherlands, Belgium and, for the past couple of years, the Czech Republic. These are the players who will achieve master titles in just a few years time. In fact the last time I was present throughout a Glorney competition the likes of Speelman, Nunn and Mestel were all playing. However, few of these players have the simplest and most basic of techniques.

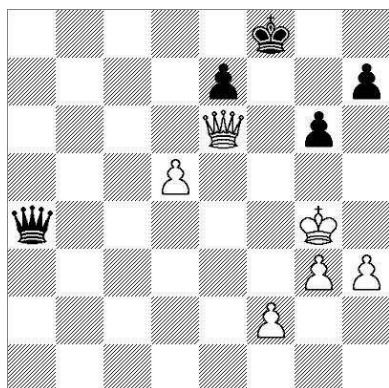
They are strong players, of course, despite that. Matthew Broomfield went directly on to the British Championship at Millfield School, where he was on a 50% score after three rounds. However, a strong player who has the technique to avoid the chess equivalent of stepping out into the road without looking and being run over by a bus will do much better than the same player who has not mastered the simplest aspects of chess road safety.

Can you spot the bus in this position, how you could get run over and the sensible safe step?

CHESS SOLUTION

There are only two Checks and Captures. Black MUST take a quick look at 1 Ra1xa7 Ra8xa7, which is nothing, and 1 Qe2-b5+ Qd8-d7 when even the most cursory examination reveals 2 Qb5xh5. Black, however, rapidly played 1...Bf8-d6. After 2 Qe2-b5+ he resigned and beat a hasty and embarrassed exit from the tournament hall. That quick glance at the opponent's checks and captures would have rapidly suggested 1...c7-c6 which is probably the best move in the position.

Saturday 19 August 2000
By Kevin O'Connell



The diagram position was reached in the game Stephen Casement-Jack Waller, Smith & Williamson, Guildford 2000. White, to play, has a choice of three moves here (Qe6-e4 obviously does not count as a fourth). What would you choose here? Solution easy.

Nicholas and Richard Pert of Ipswich enjoyed great success at this year's British Championships. The championships were played at Millfield School, Street, Somerset.

Nicholas Pert shares the title of British Under-21 Champion with Brian Kelly. The Championship was won by Grandmaster Julian Hodgson who scored 8.5/11 and justified his pre-tournament purchase of an executive chair to use instead of the standard chairs at the school. Pert and Kelly scored 7 and shared seventh place with Grandmasters Miles, Summerscale, Wells and Australian IM Wohl.

Richard Pert chose to try and win the Major Open Championship rather than play in the Championship section proper. He achieved his objective and won outright with an undefeated 8.5/11.

The Championship proper also witnessed an excellent performance by another Ipswich player, David Spence. Although ranked only 54th of the 68 players, Spence achieved a 50% score and a share of 29th place. He also had the pleasure of playing Hodgson.

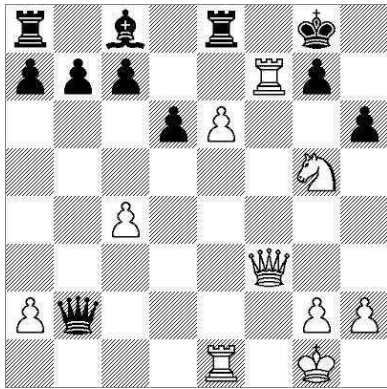
Essex's Ivor Smith performed well in the British Seniors Championship but not quite well enough to retain his title. He lost to the eventual winner, John Toothill, and shared second place with Stewart Reuben on 5/7, half a point behind the new title-holder.

Prior to the British, sponsored by Smith & Williamson, the Perts were not so successful in the Smith & Williamson Young Masters at Guildford, sharing 11th place with a disappointing 4.5/9, the tournament being won by Andrew Webster and Richard Bates with 6.5. The Guildford Smith & Williamson was, however, a success for Laurie Waller of Woodbridge. In the FIDE-Rated section he had the second best score by an unrated player (6/11) and will now join his twin brother Jack, who scored 4.5, on the FIDE rating list. The next list is expected to be the last 'exclusive' one (minimum rating 2000) before it is opened up to all competitive players (minimum rating 1000) in the second half of next year.

CHESS SOLUTION

1 Kg4-g5 looks dangerous but is perfectly adequate, as is 1 Kg4-f3, getting the king to safety, but White played the "obvious" 1 f2-f4??, allowing 1...Qa4-d1+, and then resigned since Qd1-h5 mate is inevitable.

Saturday 26 August 2000
By Kevin O'Connell



What would you play as White in this nineteenth century position from a game Johann Berger-Prof. Streissler? Solution moderate.

Players at club level tend to take a break from chess over the summer. It used to be that they would return, rustily, to chess at the start of the football season. Nowadays, the football season barely pauses, professional chess never does but it will still be a month or so before the local chess leagues start up again. So, how best can you overcome the problem of rustiness?

As in football, match fitness is extremely important but that comes only after general fitness has been achieved. If you haven't played a serious game of chess for a few months then the best place to start is in the gym with some gentle workouts. After a week or so it will be time to do some chess specific work but without stopping work in the gym.

What chess specific work should you do? Well, the two things which are the first to decay with lack of match practice are speed of thought and also the ability simply to 'see' the board; to spot threats, tactics and so on. You can most easily tackle the second of these problems. Do so by looking at a lot of positions, especially the likes of those that I publish in this column. You probably have your own favourite book of chess tactics - flick through that. If you do not have your own, your local bookshop or library is sure to be able to help.

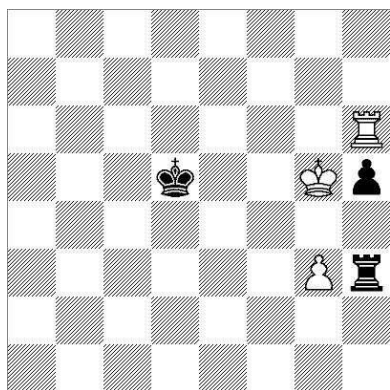
After a week or so of looking at tactical positions then, if possible, play some blitz games. 'Blitz' means the classic 5-minute per player per game variety but can loosely be applied to any form of speed chess. You can practice this by playing either on the Internet or against a chess computer, most likely a chess program running on your personal computer. That will help you regain speed of thought. Of course, if you have no computer then you will probably just have to wait until your local chess club re-opens after its summer break.

Whatever you do, do not delay the start of your pre-season training.

CHESS SOLUTION

1 Rf7-f8+ Re8xf8 2 Qf3-f7+ Rf8xf7 3 e6xf7+ Kg8-h8 4 Re1-e8 mate.

Saturday 2 September 2000
By Kevin O'Connell



Lorin D'Costa-Chris Dorrington,
British Land UK Chess Challenge
Tera-Final, London 2000. White
to play. Solution easy.

Nick Pert's assault on the European Junior Championship was derailed by Yugoslavia's Nikola Sedlak. The young Ipswich player was moving along nicely, alternately sharing the lead and shadowing the outright leader, until a loss to Sedlak put him out of contention.

Final scores in Europeo 2000, played in Aviles, Spain, were: 1 Adam Horvath Hungary 8.5/11; 2 Francisco Vallejo, Spain 8; 3 Florian Jenni, Switzerland 8; 4 Pawel Blehm, Poland 8; ... 9= Nick Pert 7; 11= Nikola Sedlak, Yugoslavia; Adam Hunt, England, etc. 6.5; 20= Karl Mah, England 6; ... 68 played.

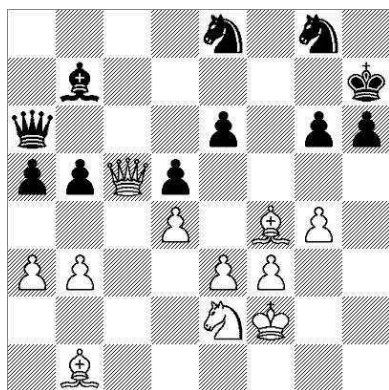
Richard Pert, meanwhile captured the silver medal in the Open Blitz Championship at the 4th Mind Sports Olympiad. This year the Olympiad moved from Olympia to the delightful setting of London's Alexandra Palace, which is already booked for the next two Olympiads. Richard scored 13.5/18 to finish just ahead of GM Keith Arkell but IM Matthew Turner was in excellent form and romped home with the huge score of 16.5/18.

The Tera-Final of the British Land UK Chess Challenge was held as part of the MSO Olympiad. It was not a great success for local players. Essex had three representatives but they only captured 21st, 23rd and 24th places out of 24 finalists. However, Cambridgeshire's Henry Kingston shared 8th place. Today's diagram position determined first place, which went to Lorin D'Costa of Herts on tie-break from Chris Dorrington of Lincs. Black's last move (1...Rh1-h3) was the critical error. 1...Rh1-g1 2 Rh6xh5 Kd5-e6 would have held the draw.

CHESS SOLUTION

1 Rh6xh5 Rh3xg3+ 2 Kg5-f4+ and Black resigned. Of course 1...Rh3xh5+ is equally hopeless since White's g-pawn would romp through to queen.

Saturday 9 September 2000
By Kevin O'Connell



I could not wish for a better example of the difference between one manager having his team work together and the other side showing all the control of lame elephants rather than their manager's famous footballing namesakes. Charles Szentmihalyi-R. Keane, East Anglian British Championship qualifier 2000. White to play. Solution easy/moderate.

I trust that your pre-season training has been going well for the games will now come thick and fast.

You can kick off with the North Essex Congress next weekend at the Braintree Leisure Centre. A popular two day event, Saturday morning to late Sunday afternoon, in a good venue. Contact Roger Sharman on 01206 231025.

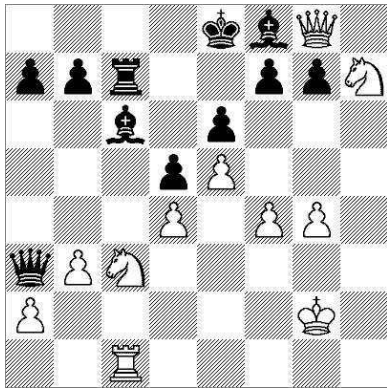
The following weekend it is Town against the Gunners at Portman Road on the Saturday but there is an interesting chess event in an unusual venue on Sunday the 24th. The RAF Lakenheath Liberty Club Rapidplay. You won't get in if you are rated over 2200, because there is a maximum rating restriction and you won't get in as a late entry because the tournament is being played in a restricted area. Although they are not likely to gun you down, you will not be allowed into the base unless your entry has been received in good time so that your name appears on the list at the guard post. Unusually, you also need to take your passport or other proof of identity in order to get in. It all sounds like good fun to me. Contact Robert Walker on 01638 510338 (evenings 9.30-11 pm) or on 07931984175 (9 am to 11 pm).

Two of the most important local junior tournaments will be held during the first half of October. The Essex Junior Open Rapidplay is in Colchester on Sunday 1 October. Contact Roger Sharman on 01206 231025. A fortnight later, on Sunday 15 October, it is the turn of the Ipswich Junior Open. Contact Stephen Donaghy on 01473 785723 or sdonag@hotmail.com if you prefer email.

CHESS SOLUTION

1 Qc5-f8 is easy enough to find but did you see that it forces mate? Black resigned rather than investigate any of the mates, of which this is one: 1...Ne8-f6 2 Bb1xg6+ Kh7xg6 3 Bf4-e5 Qa6-a8 4 Ne2-f4+ Kg6-g5 5 Qf8-g7+ Kg5-h4 6 Be5xf6+ Ng8xf6 and now take your choice of Qg7xf6 and Qg7xh6.

Saturday 16 September 2000
By Kevin O'Connell



The diagram position comes from the game Bruce Birchall-Edmund Player, Ron Banwell Memorial, Mind Sports Olympiad, London 2000. White to play. Solution moderate.

It is widely believed that there is no luck involved in chess. Even many players hold this mistaken view. The game from which today's position is taken provides clear evidence, if it is needed, that luck is a very important part of chess. It also demonstrates that you can make your own luck, even in the most desperate circumstances.

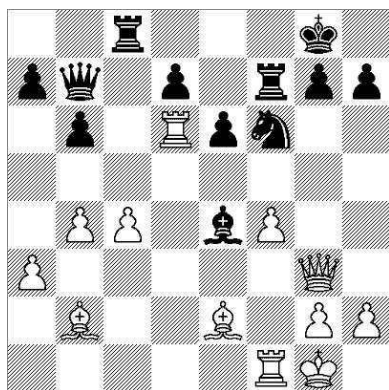
Black has just played Qa5-a3, defending f8 and "attacking" the rook on c1. I put "attacking" in quotation marks because, of course, games are decided primarily by attacks against the king, not by the bean-counter's approach of capturing material. However, most players struggle to rid themselves of the faulty thinking thrust upon them by well-meaning teachers and coaches who place far too much emphasis on pointing out that a move attacks something and that, therefore, the attacked something should be defended or moved. This game is an excellent example of that because Bruce Birchall fell victim to this very trait and that despite being a Grandmaster of Creative Thinking.

That leads me on to how you can make your own luck. Bear in mind that your opponent will normally react defensively to any move that attacks something and take advantage of that fact whenever you can. At the same time, keep working on trying to eliminate simplistic automatic reactions from your play. If you just concentrate on making your pieces work as hard as they can and always look at checks and captures (for the opponent as well), you won't go far wrong. You get the best of all worlds if you can succeed in combining all of that advice. It certainly provides the answer here.

CHESS SOLUTION

Both 1 Nh7xf8 and 1 Qg8xf8+ lead to a rook and pawn endgame with an extra pawn for White. You should, however, have spotted 1 Nc3-b5! which forks queen and rook and is absolutely crushing, e.g. 1...Bc6xb5 2 Rc1xc7 Qa3xa2+ 3 Kg2-g3 Qa2xb3+ 4 Kg3-h4 with an easy win. White played the poor 1 Rc1-c2, subsequently missed another clear win and went on actually to lose the game.

Saturday 23 September 2000
By Kevin O'Connell



The diagram position arose after 21 moves of today's game, the 3rd game of the match Nicholas Pert-Murray Chandler, Stewart Reuben's living room 2000. White to play. Solution difficult.

Please have a go at deciding what to play here before playing through the game. Alternatively, if you want to cheat, go immediately to White's 22nd move below. The "Checks and captures" routine not only provides the solution when there is something clear cut in a position, it can often assist in finding excellent moves that help to bring about those positions. This is a more sophisticated level of its implication. In order to reach this level, it is essential to look at the way pieces work dynamically.

As an example of what I mean by that, take a look at the white rook on d6. What is the most important thing it is attacking? You are likely to answer by selecting one of the pawns on b6, d7 and e6. However, my answer is the knight on f6. I know there's a pawn in the way on e6 but that doesn't matter, because positions change dynamically all the time. If you think about this position as though it were set in stone, not seeing the rook as attacking the knight, then you would never succeed in finding the essential move.

1 d2-d4 Ng8-f6 2 Ng1-f3 e7-e6 3 c2-c4 b7-b6 4 a2-a3 Bc8-a6 5 Qd1-c2 Ba6-b7 6 Nb1-c3 c7-c5 7 e2-e4 c5xd4 8 Nf3xd4 Nb8-c6 9 Nd4xc6 Bb7xc6 10 Bf1-e2 Qd8-c7 11 f2-f4 Bf8-c5 12 b2-b4 Bc5-d4 13 e4-e5 Bd4xc3+ 14 Qc2xc3 Nf6-e4 15 Qc3-e3 0-0 16 0-0 f7-f6 17 e5xf6 Ne4xf6 18 Bc1-b2 Qc7-b7 19 Qe3-g3 Bc6-e4 20 Ra1-d1 Ra8-c8 21 Rd1-d6 Rf8-f7 (see diagram) 22 f4-f5! Rc8-f8 [if 22...Be4xf5 23 Rf1xf5 e6xf5 24 Rd6xf6 Rf7xf6 (or 24...Rc8-f8 25 Be2-f3) 25 Bb2xf6 g7-g6 26 Be2-f3 Qb7-b8 27 Bf3-d5+ Kg8-f8 28 Bf6-e5 shows the power of the dynamics and ends with both the black king and queen trapped] 23 f5xe6 d7xe6 24 Bb2xf6 Rf7xf6 25 Rf1xf6 Rf8xf6 26 Qg3-e5 Qb7-e7 [26...Be4xg2 fails to 27 Rd6-d8+ Kg8-f7 28 Qe5-d6 Bg2-c6 29 Be2-h5+ with an easy win thanks to the hopelessly exposed position of the black king] 27 Be2-g4 Kg8-f7 28 c4-c5 b6xc5 29 b4xc5 Be4-b7 30 c5-c6 Bb7-c8 31 h2-h3 g7-g6 32 Rd6-d3 h7-h5 33 Bg4-f3 Rf6-f5 34 Qe5-h8 Qe7-c5+ 35 Kg1-h1 Rf5-e5 36 Rd3-d1 Qc5-a5 37 Qh8xc8 Re5-e1+ 38 Rd1xe1 Qa5xe1+ 39 Kh1-h2 Qe1-e5+ 40 g2-g3 h5-h4 41 Qc8-d7+ 1-0. Black resigned because a check on d8 picks off Black's last hope, the pawn on h4.

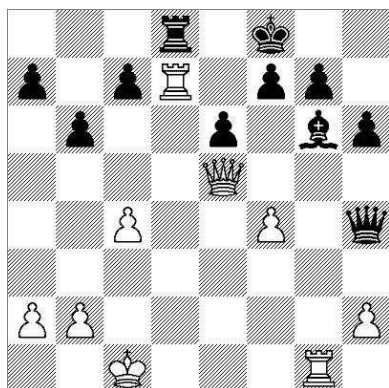
Nicholas Pert leveled the scores in the match with this finely controlled win. The first game was drawn and Chandler won the second. There are three games remaining to be played.

Kevin O'Connell

CHESSE SOLUTION

22 f4-f5! as in the game continuation.

Saturday 30 September 2000
By Kevin O'Connell



The diagram position is from the game Murray Chandler-Lev Psakhis, Moscow 1990. White to play. Solution moderate.

Nicholas Pert, Ipswich and Suffolk number one, drew his six-game match against Grandmaster Murray Chandler. This match was part of the Terence Chapman gold award that Nicholas won this year.

I have often criticised the quality of venues in the past. The venue for this match certainly passed the quality test but perhaps failed on the grounds of public accessibility. The match was played in the living room of Stewart Reuben's flat in a gated residential complex overlooking the Thames at Richmond. Very nice but very private. Still, the wonders of the electronic age mean that the games were available to all soon after they finished.

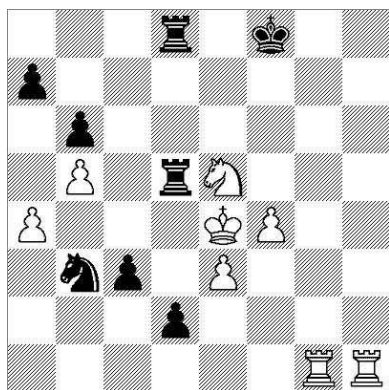
Another part of the Terence Chapman prize was openings coaching from Grandmaster Bogdan Lalic. That clearly played its part in the match. Nicholas was also given advice to ensure that he got off to a sound and secure start in the match, all the more important since he encountered Murray Chandler in this year's British Championship and lost that game, leaving their record at one win each. He certainly took the advice and the first match game was a fairly quiet draw. Thereafter Nick won both of his other games with White. The third game appeared last Saturday. Here is the fifth game which, with a draw in the sixth game, levelled the match.

1 d2-d4 Ng8-f6 2 Ng1-f3 e7-e6 3 c2-c4 b7-b6 4 a2-a3 Bc8-a6 5 Qd1-c2 Ba6-b7 6 Nb1-c3 c7-c5 7 e2-e4 c5xd4 8 Nf3xd4 Nb8-c6 9 Nd4xc6 Bb7xc6 10 e4-e5 Nf6-g4 11 Qc2-e2 f7-f5 12 h2-h3 Qd8-h4 13 g2-g3 Qh4-h5 14 Rh1-g1 Bf8-c5 15 Bc1-e3 [15 h3xg4 Qh5-h2] 15 g7-g6 16 h3xg4 f5xg4 [16 Qh5-h2 17 f2-f4] 17 Be3xc5 b6xc5 18 Bf1-g2 Bc6xg2 19 Rg1xg2 0-0 20 0-0-0 Rf8-f3 21 Rg2-g1 Qh5-f5 22 Qe2-c2 Rf3xf2 23 Qc2xf5 g6xf5 24 Rd1xd7 Ra8-b8 25 Nc3-d1 Rf2-h2 26 Rd7-d2 Rh2xd2 27 Kc1xd2 Rb8-b3 28 Kd2-c2 Rb3-f3 29 b2-b4 Rf3xa3 30 b4xc5 Ra3-a5 31 Kc2-c3 Ra5xc5 32 Kc3-d4 Rc5-c8 33 c4-c5 h7-h5 34 Nd1-b2 f5-f4 35 g3xf4 Kg8-g7 36 Nb2-c4 Kg7-g6 37 Nc4-d6 Rc8-c6 38 Rg1-e1 g4-g3 39 f4-f5+ Kg6-g5 40 f5-f6 Kg5-g6 41 f6-f7 Kg6-g7 42 Re1-e3 h5-h4 43 Re3-e4 1-0.

CHESS SOLUTION

1 Rg1-g4! wins neatly. Everything is now hopeless for Black although both 1...Rd8xd7 and 1...Qh4-f6 would have held out marginally longer than the game continuation of 1...Qh4xg4 2 Rd7xd8+ Kf8-e7 3 Qe5xc7+ Ke7-f6 4 Qc7-e5+ Kf6-e7 5 Qe5-d6+ Ke7-f6 6 Qd6-d4+ Kf6-e7 7 Rd8-b8 and Black resigned since the white queen now has access to the d8 square.

Saturday 7 October 2000
By Kevin O'Connell



The diagram position arose in Alex Wohl-John Emms from the first weekend of the new expanded 4NCL, the national league now expanded to 40 teams. Black to play. Solution difficult.

The Kasparov-Karpov match will take centre stage for the next few weeks. Sponsored by Brain Games Net, the match is being played at Riverside Studios in Hammersmith, West London. Tickets are £20 and it is well worth while seeing such an event first hand, especially if you missed the Kasparov-Short match in London seven years ago. Of course, if you can't get there, you may be able to follow the games on the internet - details at www.braingames.net - with the first game tomorrow. Play starts at 3 p.m. and the 16-game schedule follows the sequence Sunday, Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday until the final game on Saturday 4th November.

Nick Pert drew his six-game match against Grandmaster Murray Chandler. The players therefore shared equally the £1,500 prize fund put up by the Terence Chapman Group. The first and last games were drawn, all intervening games being won by the player with the white pieces. This was an excellent performance by the Ipswich youngster against a very experienced Grandmaster who beat Kasparov before Nick was even born.

If you are looking for a tournament to play in, then there is the Ipswich Junior Open coming up on Sunday 15th October. Contact Stephen Donaghy on 01473 785723 or Kevin Marrable on 01473 211940. That is one of the events which provided Nick Pert with some of his earliest tournament experience.

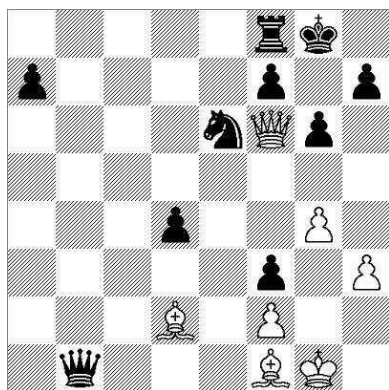
The big event, especially for adults, is the 18th Bury Congress over the weekend of 4-5 November. This is part of the Terence Chapman Grand Prix and it also incorporates the East Anglian Championship, although there are sections for all playing levels. Contact Bob Jones on 01284 811555.

CHESS SOLUTION

Grandmaster Emms got it wrong. He played 1...d2-d1Q? and the game ended in a draw by perpetual after 2 Rh1-h8+ Kf8-e7 3 Ne5-c6+ Ke7-e6 4 f4-f5+ Ke6-f7 5 Rh8-h7+ Kf7-f8 6 Rh7-h8+ Kf8-f7 7 Rh8-h7+ Kf7-f8 8 Rh7-h8+.

Jon Speelman pointed out the way to win. It consists simply of making ALL Black's pieces work in the position: 1...Kf8-e7! 2 Ne5-c6+ Ke7-d6 3 Nc6xd8 Kd6-c5 and Black is winning comfortably (the material balance is not what matters but the quality of the pieces). It is completely clear after the further 4 Nd8-e6+ Kc5-c4 5 Ne6-d4 Nb3xd4 6 e3xd4 Rd5xd4+ 7 Ke4-e3 c3-c2 8 Rg1-d1 Kc4-c3 9 f4-f5 c2xd1Q 10 Rh1xd1 Kc3-c2.

Saturday 14 October 2000
By Kevin O'Connell



The diagram position shows a top grandmaster succumbing to a spot of "chess blindness". Gilberto Garcia-Boris Ivkov, Havana 1965. Black to play.

Chess "blindness" is a remarkable thing. The term is widely used when describing the most appalling errors. Even if this is the first time you have heard the expression, you are sure to have experienced it in practice. If you have ever laughed at someone else's move or cringed, embarrassed at a move you don't believe you can have made, then that is sure to be the outcome of an instance of chess blindness.

"Chess blindness" does not apply solely to chess. The same sort of mysterious error syndrome can, and does occur in every area of daily life. For example, you surely must have heard someone say something nonsensical in conversation. Then, when challenged, that person will categorically deny having said such a thing, stating that they actually said something quite different. It is not a case of forgetfulness, for such cases normally span a matter of only a few seconds. Nor, as a general rule, is it the case that the accused is lying. No, in such cases, the accused generally firmly believes that they have said "black" when everyone else present clearly heard "white".

A good example occurred in my column last week, where I referred to the "Kasparov-Karpov" match. Of course I know that the current match is between Kasparov and Kramnik, not Karpov, so how could I make the mistake? Quite simply a case of "chess blindness" and the reason why proof-reading one's own writing is extra difficult. When I typed Karpov, I was thinking Kramnik. When I proof-read the article, I saw **what I expected to see**.

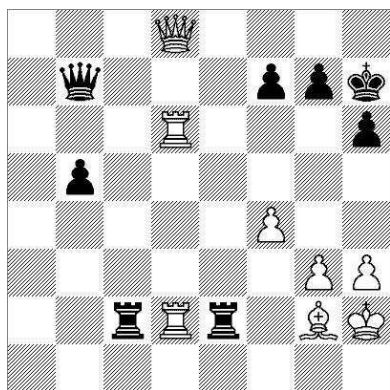
The mechanics of this process within the brain are not well understood. However, on the chessboard at least, we can do something to combat the problem. We can be inoculated with TRIM. It is a kind of miracle preventive measure. After Thinking about a move, wRite it down. Ideally the move should be written in the long form (e2-e4) used in this column rather than the short form (e4) often used elsewhere. Writing the moves in long form makes it easier to Inspect them properly before making a Move on the board. The inspection takes the form of looking at the square something is moving from (what is it doing there at the moment?, is it blocking anything or protecting something?) and then looking at the square it will be moving to (is that under attack?) and the most obvious consequences of such a move (checks and captures).

The inoculation technique works, provided it really is "in the blood", by *breaking* your concentration, or at least diverting it, so that you are better able to see what is blindingly obvious and staring you in the face. There is no equivalent technique, as far as I know, when it comes to proof-reading, which is why writers usually try to get someone else to check over what they have written. This is not because writers are lazy but because it is so difficult to avoid, spot and correct your own mistakes of this kind.

CHESS SOLUTION

Black was winning easily but, after 1...d4-d3?? 2 Bd2-c3, had to resign immediately since the threat of Qf6-h8 mate proved too difficult to deal with. Now what was that pawn doing on d4? Ah yes, it was blocking the long dark-square diagonal and it was even attacking the c3 square as well. Oops.

Saturday 21 October 2000
By Kevin O'Connell



The diagram position is from a Hedgehog (see today's article) Rafael Vaganian-Johan Hjartarson, German League 1991. White to play. White's extra piece looks to be discounted by Black's mate threat. Solution moderate.

Sometimes chess can seem boring. Of course, it isn't really but our appetite for the game becomes jaded. At such times there is little to compare with an inspirational book. It is rare for a book on an opening to be in this category. However, *The Hedgehog* by Mihai Suba is just such a book.

What is the hedgehog? I am inclined to think of it in terms of the famous Terry Gilliam cartoon from Monty Python. A car is trundling along the road when suddenly a giant hedgehog emerges from the roadside and squashes the car flat. The opening can emerge either for White or for Black. Hedgehogs have been known to start with (at least) 1 b2-b3, 1 c2-c4, 1 d2-d4, 1 e2-e4, 1 Ng1-f3 and 1 g2-g3.

I firmly believe that anyone who reads this book, however jaded their chess palate, will emerge with rekindled enthusiasm, a better understanding of how to play chess in general and also a complete mini opening repertoire.

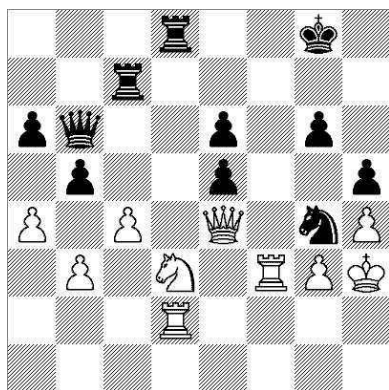
To sum up, stealing a couple of comments from the book, "give your good moves a better chance of success" by getting *The Hedgehog*, a book which succeeds in being "easy to read and hard to forget."

The Hedgehog is published by Batsford and is priced at £14.99. I have only two criticisms. Books of this quality ought to be available in hardback as well as paperback and they really should have an index.

CHESS SOLUTION

1 Rd6xh6+ and Black resigned. If 1...g7xh6 2 Qd8-d3+ wins easily, while 1...Kh7xh6 leads straight to mate after 2 Qd8-g5+ Kh6-h7 3 Qg5-h5+ Kh7-g8 4 Rd2-d8. Also good enough is 1 Rd2xe2 Rc2xe2 and then 2 Rd6xh6+ although it is even more difficult then to spot the relevant queen manoeuvre: 2...Kh7xh6 3 Qd8-h4+ Kh6-g6 4 Qh4-g4+. Anyway, that's why "checks" comes first in "checks and captures."

Saturday 28 October 2000
By Kevin O'Connell



The diagram shows a position from the game Viktor Korchnoi-Johann Hjartarson, Reykjavik 1988. There were four moves to the time control and Black was desperately short of time. White to play. Solution difficult.

Have you tried any of the possibilities of chess on the internet yet? The range of possibilities is now practically endless. There is certainly no excuse not to have taken a look. You do not even need a computer or an internet connection; your local Suffolk library has those and you can use them free of charge.

Whether you have dabbled before or are going to take a look for the first time, where is the best place to start? That used to be a near impossible question to answer. However, this year the answer has become clear. The best place to start is at the home of worldwide chess - www.fide.com - all the latest news and links to the world's top chess sites. Gathered together under FIDE's roof you will find a place to play chess online (there are 10,000 players already registered there), all the latest news, the Laws of Chess, details of ratings, a game database, links to top chess sites around the world and even a free e-mail service. You may not be a strong enough player to get a full FIDE rating but you can have an e-mail address of yourname@fide.org!

But suppose you want to find out the latest about the Kasparov-Kramnik match, privately sponsored and 'unofficial'? No problem, it is an important event in the chess world and is featured prominently on the front page of FIDE's site.

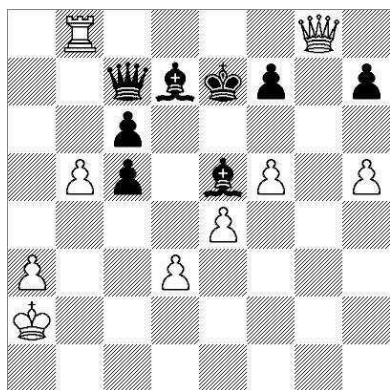
An excellent recent addition to the FIDE site is the "Top 100 Chess Sites." Unlike most such "top" listings there is nothing arbitrary about this one. Any chess page can link in to the system and FIDE's powerful computers keep track of the number of people who read those pages and then ranks them in order of popularity. With such a dynamically updated list the figures are constantly on the change (they are re-calculated every half-hour) but I am pleased to be able to say that my own chess pages ranked 32nd on the list when I wrote this piece. Take a look for yourself at www.users.totalise.co.uk/~chess and if you do not have that funny little character (~) on your keyboard, you can get at it by holding down the 'alt' key on your keyboard while you type 126 on your keypad. Then again, maybe the best way is simply to type www.fide.com then click on Top Chess Sites and look for the link to my site. Happy 'surfing' and, if you decide to play online, then 'may your mouse never slip' and 'may your PC never lock up.'

CHESS SOLUTION

I hope you did not slip, as the great Viktor did, with 1 Qe4xg6+??, since after 1...Rc7-g7 2 c4-c5 (otherwise 2...Qb6-g1 wins) 2...Qb6-c6 and White resigned (3 Nd3xe5 Rd8xd2 wins easily for Black).

The right answer is 1 Nd3xe5! although it may do no more than draw. 1...Rd8xd2 2 Qe4xg6+ Rc7-g7 3 Qg6-e8+ Kg8-h7 4 Qe8xh5+ Ng4-h6 (it seems that Korchnoi did not play the right move because this forced sequence would have made it too easy for Black to reach the time control) 5 Ne5-f7! e6-e5! 6 Nf7-g5+ when life gets complicated again and Black must play 6...Rg7xg5 to survive, although after 7 h4xg5 Black will be treading a tightrope to reach the safe haven of a draw.

Saturday 4 November 2000
By Kevin O'Connell



The diagram position is from the game Stephen Gregory-Lawrence Trent, North Essex Open 2000. White to play. Solution moderate.

How many world chess champions are there? Surely, there can be only one, at least at any given time. I am writing this before the Kasparov-Kramnik match concludes today but it looks a fair bet that Kramnik will win the match and be claiming the title. However, he is not the only one.

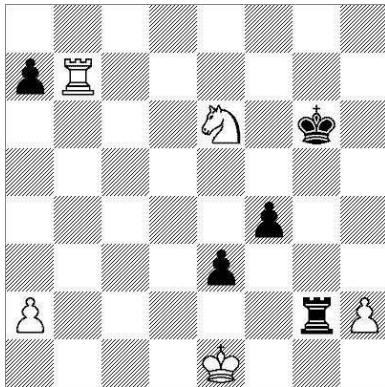
In order of acquisition, we have Fischer, Karpov and Khalifman. Fischer remains an undefeated champion. Karpov is trying to get "his" title back through court action, while Alexander Khalifman actually won the last World Championship contest. It begins to look as though the only one with no claim to the title any more is likely to be Kasparov and, notwithstanding what looks like a lost match against Kramnik, he is arguably still the world's number one.

Confused? Well, don't worry. This year's World Championship commences in Delhi on November 25th, with the final to be played in Teheran in December. Let us hope that Vladimir Kramnik takes part and wins, thus becoming the Lennox Lewis of the chess world, uniting most if not all of the rival claims, although I don't suppose Vlad will ever represent Great Britain. Then again, the quickest way for Kasparov to become World Champion would be to play in Delhi, and he could (although I don't suppose he will) because he is pre-qualified by rating!

CHESS SOLUTION

Essex's Lawrence Trent is one of very few English juniors who could perhaps follow in the footsteps of Ipswich's Nicholas Pert and win a world age-group championship. However, it was Ipswich's Steve Gregory who took his chance in this game. 1 Qg8-f8+ Ke7-f6 2 Qf8-h6+ draws but 1 Rb8-f8 wins. After the further 1...Qc7-b6 2 Rf8xf7+ Ke7-d6 3 Qf8-e7 (3 Qf8-e8 is just as good), Black resigned.

Saturday 11 November 2000
By Kevin O'Connell



The diagram position comes from the game Robert Keough-Michael Clapham, North Essex Open 2000. Black to play. Solution moderate.

Stress and information overload are big problems today. The best solution to problems of stress is to win, whether you are playing chess, football or business in general. But what about information overload?

It seems to me that information overload is potentially the biggest problem of all. How so? Well, there are now hundreds of magazines, thousands of books and a myriad web-sites, not to mention well-meaning parents and chess coaches, which will tell you that you should do this or do that. For example, in the endgame you should centralize your king, you should keep your forces defended, group your forces together, and so on.

Such bits of advice do not just apply to chess, nor to this country alone. It is a worldwide phenomenon and it is not very helpful at all. Why? Simply because for each piece of such "useful" advice I can show you a position where the precise opposite applies.

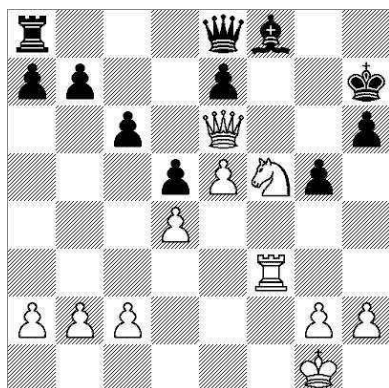
So, what can be done? Surprisingly enough, the answer is to use general principles. The trick is to discover which "general principles" are, indeed, general, and which, supposedly "general" merely apply in many cases. Can I give you an example? Of course.

Make your pieces work as hard as possible, together, in a position. Now you can't get pieces working harder together than threatening mate. That does not mean that you should automatically play a move which threatens mate, but you must carefully examine such a move.

CHESS SOLUTION

Black played 1...Kg6-f5?? and after 2 Ne6xf4?? the game petered out to a draw (the end came after 2...Kf5xf4 3 Rb7xa7 Rg2xh2 4 a2-a4 Rh2-a2 5 a4-a5 Kf4-e5 6 a5-a6 with the draw being agreed because neither side can make any progress). White should really have played 2 Ne6-d4+ and after 2...Kf5-e5 the counter-intuitive 3 Nd4-e2! with some slight winning chances since 3...f4-f3 fails to 4 Rb7-e7+ when White has genuine winning chances. Black could have made it nice and easy by playing 1...f4-f3 for example 2 Ne6-f4+ Kg6-h6 3 Nf4xg2 f3xg2 and Black wins or 2 Ne6-f8+ Kg6-f6 3 Nf8-h7+ Kf6-e6 4 Nh7-f8+ Ke6-d5 and White has only helped to improve the position of the black pieces.

Saturday 18 November 2000
By Kevin O'Connell



The diagram position is from the game Mark Gray-Stewart Trent, North Essex Open 2000. White to play. Solution easy.

While I was in Istanbul at the Chess Olympiad and FIDE Congress, my chess collection was being auctioned in London. More than four thousand kilograms (that's four tons in old money) of books, magazines, autographs, posters and memorabilia of all kinds relating to chess and amassed over 35 years were included in the sale.

This was the biggest chess collection in the world to come on the market for 13 years. The sale, in Phillips' auction room in Bayswater was also live on the internet. I do like firsts in chess and have claimed quite a few over the years. This is the first time that a chess auction has been held simultaneously in an auction room and on the internet. Indeed, it is only the second of the kind that Phillips have organized (football memorabilia kicked off in this field).

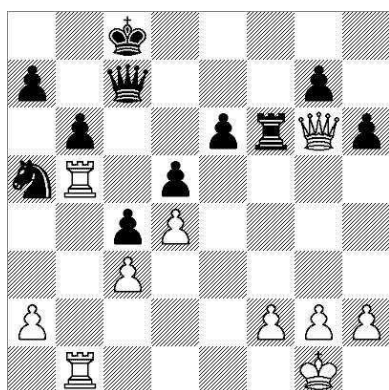
As a first it hardly compares with being Ireland's number one, which I was in the first half of 1993 prior to the arrival of GM Baburin. Nonetheless, like that achievement, it is most unlikely to be repeated and I will add it to my collection. After all, having sold my chess collection, I have to start collecting something else!

You can find out more details, both about the content of the collection and, in due course, about my inside view of the Olympiad and FIDE Congress from www.btinternet.com/~kevinocconnell/ - my web site [*Long since gone - ko, 2012*].

CHESS SOLUTION

1 Nf5xe7 and Black resigned. His position falls apart and Rf3-f7 wins easily against everything except the two king moves, in which case 2 Qe6-g8 mate should be preferred. Unfortunately, most players would never spot a move like Nf5xe7 because they are taught that if something (the pawn on e7) is attacked twice and defended twice then you should not make the capture (unless you can start the sequence with something like pawn takes queen). This is why "checks and captures" is so important - you must look at them, forcing yourself to go beyond the "can't do that, he just takes it" stage and assess the position *after* your opponent's recapture.

Saturday 25 November 2000
By Kevin O'Connell



The diagram position is from the game Ryan Child-O.Winfridsson, Bury Area Chess League 2000. White to play. Solution easy.

I recently returned from Istanbul, site of the 34th Olympiad and 71st FIDE Congress. Many important decisions affecting the worldwide development of chess are made at these annual gatherings of the governing body of world chess. This year the biggest single item has been the agreement between FIDE and FIDE Commerce.

FIDE Commerce is a commercial organization which has been granted the rights to hold and promote the World Chess Championships for the next 17 years. The arrangement begins after this year's Championship which has just begun in New Delhi.

This finally completes the process of putting the promotion of these events, and chess in general, on a proper footing. The result, aside from a guaranteed annual income to FIDE, should be the proper exploitation of these events in the media, thus helping the further development of chess worldwide.

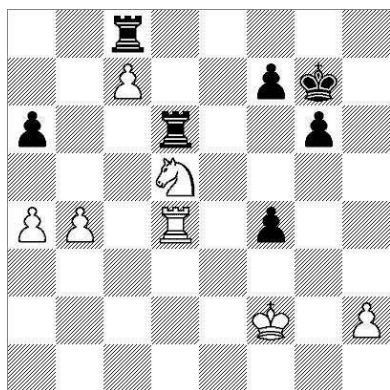
Another very important development is the introduction of FIDE's anti-doping rules. These are a necessary addition to the Laws of Chess following the acceptance of chess by the International Olympic Committee. All international competitions and all national championships will have to comply. What this means in practice is that even a small event, such as a ten-player national championship, the Hastings Challengers and maybe even the Southend Open will have to test the first four prize-winners and a random ten per cent sample of the other competitors. As in other sports, players who break the rules or refuse to be tested will be banned from competition.

Testing is a very expensive business and will add at least £1,000 to the organizational cost of a small event up to many tens of thousands for a large event. Fortunately these costs are invariably met by the National Olympic Committee in the country concerned. Unfortunately the National Olympic Committees of the UK and of Ireland do not yet include chess, so these costs may have a big impact on our sport in these islands.

CHESS SOLUTION

1 Qg6-e8+ Qc7-d8 2 Rb5-c5+! and Black resigned. 1...b6xc5 fails to 2 Rb1-b8+ Kc8xb8 3 Qe8xd8+ Kb8-b7 4 Qd8xa5. 1...Kc8-b7 2 Rb5xa5 is obviously not a great improvement.

Saturday 2 December 2000
By Kevin O'Connell



The diagram position is from the game Silvino Garcia-Florin Gheorghiu, Bucharest 1971. White to play. Solution difficult.

When I became the Irish delegate to FIDE in 1977 it was very rare for a master level player to act in such a capacity. Now it is commonplace. The reason for the change is clear. When Kirsan Ilyumzhinov became President of FIDE he inaugurated a blitz (5 minutes per player per game) tournament during the annual FIDE Congress. Only the delegate of each country could play in the tournament which Kirsan sponsored with more than £6,000 of prize money. The very next year several countries had a change of delegate, from a comparatively weak player to a strong Grandmaster. The trend has continued and this year in Istanbul there were about ten Grandmasters playing in the Delegates blitz tournament.

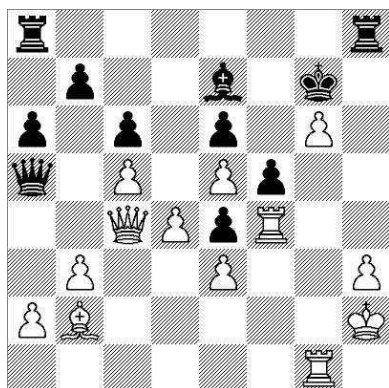
My own performance this year was rather poor. However, the lack of success over the board was almost made up for when Grandmaster Silvino Garcia came up to me after the event and told me that he had done some 'homework' and prepared an opening line especially in case he was paired against me. In the blitz tournament in Elista two years ago I had crushed him with a favourite line of mine against the King's Indian Defence.

If you think it strange that someone should prepare specially for a blitz game then permit me to enlighten you by sharing with you something Grandmaster Anand told me. We were discussing opening preparation in general and, more specifically, when was the best time to employ a new idea. Anand had no doubt that since you would only get the chance to use it once because almost all games are now available within hours, it should be played in a rapid game, where it would probably be most profitable, not least because the opponent would be short of time to solve the new problems posed. By extension, a blitz game might be an even better opportunity to use a novelty, especially since such games are rarely recorded and so there might well be the chance to re-use the surprise idea.

CHESS SOLUTION

1 Nd5-e7 and Black resigned. The end comes boringly after 1...Rc8xc7 2 Rd4xd6 Rc7xe7 3 Rd6xa6 and the connected passed pawns are crushing or amusingly after 1...Rd6xd4 2 Ne7xc8 Rd4-c4 3 Nc8-d6 Rc4xc7 4 Nd6-e8+.

Saturday 9 December 2000
By Kevin O'Connell



The diagram position is from the game Alexei Dreev-Veselin Topalov, World Championship, New Delhi 2000. White to play. Solution difficult.

The World Championship is beginning to hot up. The favourites, India's Anand, Spain's Shirov and Russia's Khalifman, the defending champion, all have excellent chances, as I write, of making it through to the quarter-finals. Michael Adams will reach that stage if he can overcome Russia's Peter Svidler.

The quarter-finals begin today in New Delhi. If you have internet access, you can follow the games at the wccc2000.fide.com web site. The semi-finals begin December 12th and the final, which will be played in Teheran, Iran starts on December 20th with play all through Christmas, concluding on December 27th.

So you can follow the final stages of the Championship at home before, perhaps, going down to Hastings. This year's Hastings Congress commences on December 28th. There is the usual choice of nine day, five day or weekend events to play in. New, at long last, is a fine playing venue. All of the events, including the Premier, will be played in the newly opened Horntye Park Sports Complex. It is absolutely appropriate that this event, which began in 1895 and which has throughout been played in nineteenth century venues should enter the new millennium in the latest of late twentieth century surroundings.

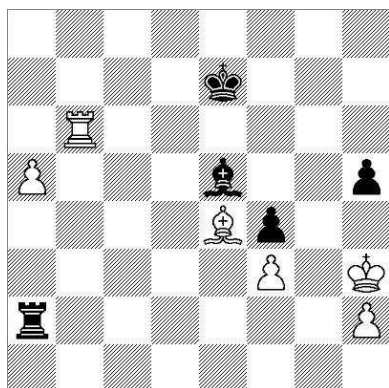
You can find out more about Hastings and how to enter from Paul Buswell on 01424 444321 or Con Power on 01424 431970, alternatively by e-mail to power@hicc.demon.co.uk.

CHESS SOLUTION

White would like to capture the pawn on e6 when Black's king would be defenceless. 1 Qc4xe6 is no good, however, since White would then be mated after 1...Qa5-d2+ 2 Rg1-g2 Rh8xh3+! etc., for example 3 Kh2xh3 Ra8-h8+ 4 Rf4-h4 Rh8xh4+ 5 Kh3-g3 Qd2xe3 mate or 3 Kh2-g1 Qd2-e1+ 4 Rf4-f1 Rh3-h1+ 5 Kg1xh1 Qe1xf1+ 6 Kh1-h2 Ra8-h8+ 7 Kh2-g3 Qf1-f3 mate.

After White played 1 Rf4-f2 Black immediately resigned since the e6 and f5 pawns are both immediately doomed and although Black can avoid being mated in the short run, in the long run he is doomed by his exposed king (not to mention the pawn imbalance of four against eight).

Saturday 16 December 2000
By Kevin O'Connell



The diagram position is from the second game of the Kasparov-Kramnik match, London 2000. Kramnik, White, to play. Solution easy/moderate.

The World Championships are now, as I write, critically poised. In the men's championship, Viswanathan Anand, playing on home soil in New Delhi, leads Michael Adams 2-1 in their semi-final. Alexei Shirov is also 2-1 in the lead against Alexander Grischuk. Unless Adams and Grischuk won yesterday, in which case the tie-break games will be played today, then Anand and Shirov will be the ones heading off to Teheran, Iran for the six-game final which will commence on December 20.

In the women's championship, which has already reached the final, reigning champion Xie Jun of China leads 2-1 against her compatriot Qin Kanying. The games and all the latest news and views are available at wcc2000.fide.com on the internet.

The Kasparov-Kramnik match, played in London a couple of months ago, was not officially a world championship match. Nonetheless it did see the two highest-rated players in the world fighting it out head-to-head over sixteen games and therefore had the cachet of an old-style world championship match. The head-to-head format had become the norm by the beginning of the last century and certainly had its kudos in presenting chess as a "heavyweight championship of the mind".

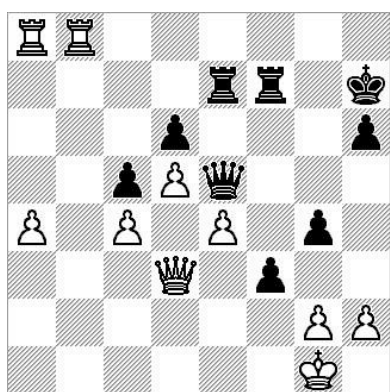
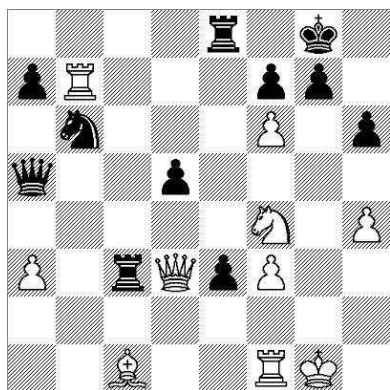
It is only fitting, therefore, that there should be a book to provide a fitting record of the event. *Kasparov-Kramnik, London 2000* by Nigel Davies and Andrew Martin, published by Batsford and priced at £9.99, provides just such a record.

There is a distinct problem about keeping the attention of the world's media on a chess match which lasts something between one and three months. That may have been fine for the nineteenth and even the twentieth centuries but there can be little doubt that the standard knock-out format, played at a faster time limit, is more in tune with the twenty first century and also with the theme of chess as sport.

CHESS SOLUTION

After 1 Be4-d5 Kasparov resigned. That was a sign of how the match was to finish. The end would come here after 1...Ra2xa5 2 Rb6-e6_ Ke7-d7 3 Re6xe5 Kd7-d6 4 Re5xh5 Ra5xd5 5 Rh5xd5+ Kd6xd5 6 Kh3-g4 with a trivially easy win.

Saturday 23 December 2000
By Kevin O'Connell



Since it is Christmas and the season for giving I thought I would give you a little present; therefore you get an extra diagram today. But I personally find that one present is never enough, so as an extra gift and to leave you more time to complete any last minute shopping, I will just leave you to unwrap the diagrams. Happy Christmas.

The first diagram, from the game David Bronstein-Efim Geller, USSR Championship Moscow 1961, shows White, to play, a piece up for Black's potentially dangerous central pawn pair. Solution moderate.

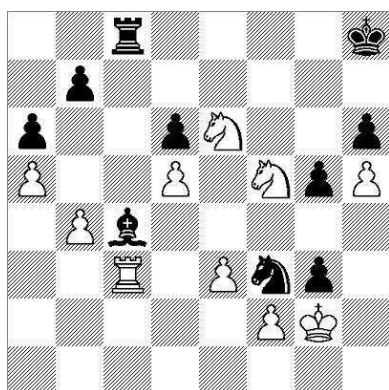
The extra diagram, the one without any knights (or should that be reindeer?) on the board, shows Santa (appropriately enough playing White) delivering a present to Al Handrani in the Moscow Olympiad of 1994. White resigned without playing any further. What should Black play to unwrap his present? Solution moderate/difficult.

CHESS SOLUTIONS

Bronstein ended the game with 1 Qd3-g6! and Black resigned. The only way to stop 2 Qg6xg7 mate is by playing 1...f7xg6 and that allows 2 Rb7xg7+ followed by 3 Nf4xg6 mate.

Santa's present is unwrapped by 1...f3-f2+ 2 Kg1-f1 and then slowly with 2...Qe5xe4 or by ripping the paper off with 2...Re7-e8! when the threat of Qe5xh2 forces 3 g2-g3 Kh7-g6 (to avoid checks and so free the f7 rook for action) 4 Qd3-c2 Rf7-f8 winning easily since taking the e8 rook at any point allows Qe5-a1+ with mate to follow. However, it was still possible to be very naughty and have the present snatched away following the premature 2...Qe5xh2?? when 3 e4-e5+ forces mate.

Saturday 30 December 2000
By Kevin O'Connell



The diagram position is from the game Ruban-Anand, Palma de Mallorca 1989. It is unusual in that it features the Knights that say "Ni" (apologies if you have not seen the Monty Python films since this will be meaningless to you ... but it's your loss). Black to play, solution moderate.

Now that Viswanathan Anand has won the world championship I can safely state that we have a world champion with a well-developed sense of humour. That has been a long time coming.

I am not suggesting that previous world champions have been entirely devoid of humour, even though one or two may have given that impression! I recall Anatoly Karpov, for instance, reducing a dinner table to tears with a joke about Moscow's Sheremetyevo airport. That's tears of laughter, of course, and, needless to say, it was the dinner guests seated around the table rather than the inanimate object doing the weeping. However, the other champions, at least of the past 30 years, have not been noted humourists.

Vishy Anand is quite different. He has a noticeably quick wit and always seems to be on the lookout for a good joke. He is also a real aficionado of the modern greats of humour such as Yes Minister, the Python programmes and films and, above all, Fawlty Towers. His perfect memory allows him to quote verbatim from all of these.

There is even an element of humour in his name. It is rendered more correctly in West European style as Mr A. Viswanathan. However, during his early trips here almost everyone got it wrong, referring to him as Mr V. Anand. The name has stuck. I recall his parents being slightly bemused when introduced by a tournament organizer as Mr and Mrs Anand.

CHESS SOLUTION

Surprise, surprise ... "checks and captures" works here. 1...Nf3-e1+ gets nowhere and not 1...Bc4-f1+ 2 Kg2xf3 Rc8xc3 3 Kf3xg3 when White's well coordinated forces give him the advantage but 1...Nf3-h4+, forking the knight on f5! I can just imagine Vishy saying "Ni" under his breath as he made the move. White is left with a hopeless ending after 2 Nf5xh4 Be4xd5+ 3 f2-f3 Rc8xc3 4 Nh4-g6+ Kh8-h7 or, as in the game, 2 Kg2xg3 Nh4xf5+ 3 Kg3-h2 Nf5-e7 4 e3-e4 Bc4-e2 and White soon resigned.