



Six-time Champion

Why were there two consecutive free days at the Dutch championship, on Saturday and Sunday, just when spectators would like to pay a visit? Such a strange schedule I knew only from the tournaments in Lone Pine, California. There the free days had been on Friday and Saturday, when Fischer wouldn't play. The organisers didn't really expect him to take part, but as one can never be sure, they had made arrangements to please him anyway, in the way pious Jews keep an empty chair at the table in case the Messiah might show up and join for dinner. In Lone Pine the chess Messiah did not arrive.

For a moment I thought that the Dutch Chess Federation had made a similar arrangement hoping that Fischer would turn up at the last moment and ask for a wild-card. The official in charge of top Dutch chess is a weird guy, who in 2000 invited the computer Fritz to take part in our national championship. But waiting for Bobby Fischer would be too weird even for him.

When I found that during the weekend the Basque club Gros Xake Taldea would have to play two important matches in the Spanish league I thought this was the solution of the riddle of the two free days. Loek van Wely plays for this club and it would be quite in character for him to take two days off from the national championship to play a team match in Spain. He had done something similar during the Olympiad in Bled in 2002, when he took a few days off to attend the wedding of his sister in the Netherlands.

“But Loek, that was bad enough already, but you can't expect us to change the whole schedule of our championship just to let you play in Spain?” “You can't really? You are already missing Ivan Sokolov because of a conflict over his appearance fee. Jan Timman isn't playing in the championship because he broke his hand. If you want to do without me also, just let me know.”

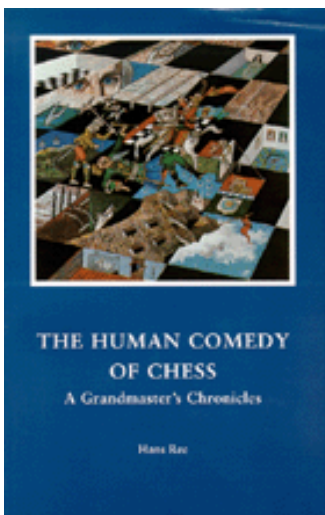
But this imaginary conversation did not really take place, as I realised when I saw the results of the Spanish league, without Van Wely's participation.

Then I noticed that the hotel in the Frisian capital Leeuwarden where the players were staying was run by trainees of a hotel school and closed on Sundays. So that must be the reason. The Dutch Chess Federation had booked a cheap packet that implied that the players would be kicked out of the hotel during the weekend. I was reminded of our former national coach Hans Bouwmeester, a man without illusions who in his travels with Dutch chess teams used to sigh: “Of course you must realise that we are here on a reduced rate,” meaning that complaints about the hotel

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Dutch Treat Hans Ree

The Human Comedy of Chess



by Hans Ree

service would be useless.

But again I was wrong. My riddle was solved when I learned that the big church which served as the playing hall had to be cleared by the chess players to make room for lovers of old architecture, as the weekend had been declared 'open monuments days' nationwide. More or less as the playing hall of the tournament in Mannheim in 1914 at the outbreak of World War I had to be cleared for a German infantry regiment.

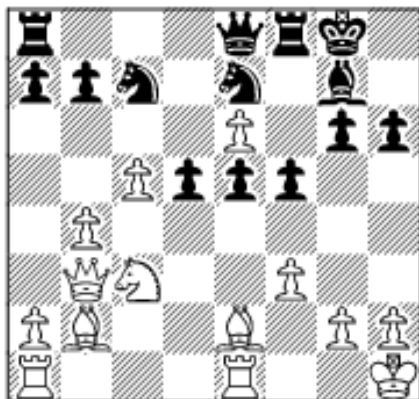
All this made me realise once again how rich our chess history is. Everything has a historical precedent, not only real events, but also the phantoms of my imagination.

In the absence of Sokolov and Timman, a race was expected between Van Wely, who had won the championship for the last five years, and Sergei Tiviakov, who had already won three international tournaments in 2005 and had surpassed Van Wely on the FIDE rating list. During the first half of the tournament Van Wely had done well; with 4 out of 5 he was a point ahead of his nearest rival Tiviakov. Then he made two draws, which didn't really hurt him, but in the 8th round he lost a spectacular game against the young Dutch grandmaster Daniel Stellwagen.

Writing about that game just after it had been finished, I excused myself to the readers for not analysing this difficult game, but I did exult the fine attacking style of the 18-years-old Stellwagen. The next morning, when I had a more sober look at the game, I found that this praise had been exaggerated, as in fact Van Wely had been winning for a long time. Nevertheless it remains a game worth seeing.

Loek van Wely • Daniel Stellwagen

1. d2•d4 Ng8•f6 2. c2•c4 g7•g6 3. Nb1•c3 Bf8•g7 4. e2•e4 d7•d6 5. Ng1•f3 0•0 6. Bf1•e2 e7•e5 7. 0•0 Nb8•c6 8. d4•d5 Nc6•e7 9. b2•b4 Nf6•h5 10. Rf1•e1 f7•f5 11. Nf3•g5 Nh5•f6 12. f2•f3 c7•c6 13. Kg1•h1 h7•h6 14. Ng5•e6 Bc8xe6 15. d5xe6 Nf6•e8 16. Qd1•b3 Ne8•c7 17. c4•c5 d6•d5 18. e4xd5 c6xd5 19. Bc1•b2 Qd8•e8



After the tournament Van Wely expressed his surprise that several youngsters had chosen to fight him in highly analysed theoretical variations. "They are committing themselves to an armaments race that they can only lose." Until here everything was as in Van Wely-Kotronias, European team championship Gotenburg 2005. There Van Wely sacrificed immediately with 20. Nxd5. After an exciting fight Black won.

20. a2•a4 a7•a6 21. Ra1•d1 Ra8•d8 22. Nc3xd5 Rd8xd5 23. Be2•c4 Rd5xd1 24. Re1xd1 Qe8•b8 25. Rd1•d7 Bg7•f6 26.

f3•f4 b7•b5 27. c5xb6 Qb8xb6 28. f4xe5 Qb6•f2 To escape from White's tremendous pressure Black decides to return his extra piece.

29. Qb3•d1 Bf6•g5 30. Bb2•d4 Qf2•h4 31. Rd7xc7 Rf8•d8 32. Rc7•d7 Rd8•c8 33. Bc4•f1 Rc8•c1 34. Qd1•e2 Qh4•e4 Black has worked up some threats, but White can still keep things under control and win by 35. Qxa6. Afterwards Van Wely said he had panicked, being afraid of 35...f4, but then 36. Bg1 f3 37. Qb6 would defend everything.



35. Bd4•g1 Qe4•b1 36. Qe2xa6 Rc1xf1 Now Black is a piece up and this, combined with his attacking chances, is more important than White's free pawns.

37. Qa6•b6 Kg8•h8 38. a4•a5 Rf1•e1 39. Qb6•c5 Re1•c1 40. Qc5•b6 Rc1•e1 41. Rd7•d8+ Kh8•g7 42. Rd8•e8 h6•h5 43. Qb6•c5 Re1•c1 44. Qc5•d4 Qb1•e4 45. Qd4•a7 Qe4xb4 46. a5•a6 f5•f4 47. Qa7•f2 Qb4•b5 48. Re8•a8 Rc1•f1 49. Qf2•d4 f4•f3 50. g2xf3 Qb5•e2 White resigned.

At the start of the final round Van Wely was still a half-point ahead of Tiviakov, whom he had to meet with Black. Theoretically there was a third contender for the title: Jan Werle, the last-minute replacement for Jan Timman, shared second place with Tiviakov.

Already at an early stage it became clear that Werle would not win his game against Stellwagen; Van Wely and Tiviakov were on their own to decide the championship. After a hard fight Van Wely, a pawn ahead, made a draw offer that Tiviakov could not refuse.

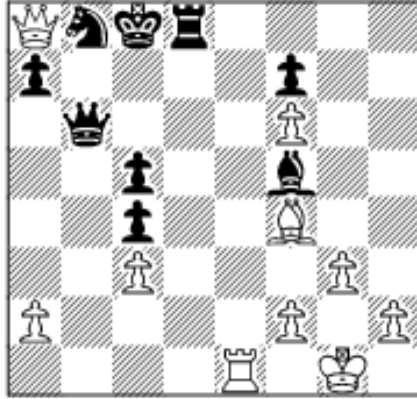
By winning the title six times in a row Van Wely has equalled one of the records of Max Euwe, who still holds another record that seems difficult to beat: between 1921 and 1952 Euwe won all the Dutch championships in which he took part, altogether twelve times.

Here is another instance of what Van Wely called the armaments race. In a theoretical variation he comes with a crushing novelty at move 26, originally intended to beat Alexei Shirov with.

Loek van Wely • Jan Smeets

1. d2•d4 d7•d5 2. c2•c4 c7•c6 3. Nb1•c3 Ng8•f6 4. Ng1•f3 e7•e6 5. Bc1•g5 d5xc4 6. e2•e4 b7•b5 7. e4•e5 h7•h6 8. Bg5•h4 g7•g5 9. Nf3xg5 h6xg5 10. Bh4xg5 Nb8•d7 11. e5xf6 Bc8•b7 12. g2•g3 c6•c5 13. d4•d5 Qd8•b6 14. Bf1•g2 0•0•0 15. 0•0 b5•b4 16. Ra1•b1 Qb6•a6 17. d5xe6 Bb7xg2 18. e6•e7 Bg2xf1

**19. Qd1•d5 Bf8•h6 20. Bg5xh6 Bf1•d3 21. Qd5•a8+ Nd7•b8
22. e7xd8Q+ Rh8xd8 23. Rb1•e1 b4xc3 24. Bh6•f4 Qa6•b6
25. b2xc3 Bd3•f5** The preceding moves have appeared in many games. Usually White played 26. h4 here.



26. f2•f3 Bf5•e6 After the game van Wely showed one variation he had looked at during his preparation: 26...Qb7 27. Qxb7 Kxb7 28. Re7+ Rd7 29. Bxb8 Kxb8 30. g4 Le6 31. Rxe6 (flashy but not strictly necessary) fxe6 32. g5 Rd5 33. h4 Rf5 34. Kf2 Kc7 35. g6 Rxf6 36. h5 and White wins.

27. g3•g4 Be6•d5 28. Qa8xb8+ Qb6xb8 29. Bf4xb8 Kc8xb8 30. Kg1•f2 Kb8•c7 31. h2•h4 Rd8•d6 32. Re1•e7+ Rd6•d7 33. h4•h5 Black resigned.

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