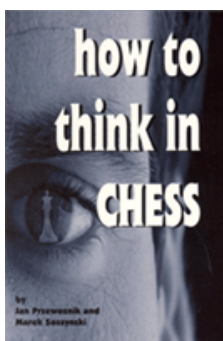




COLUMNISTS

Dutch Treat

Hans Ree



CHESSTHEATRE

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Walking Down Planinc's Path

During the first week of the Corus tournament I had a walk on the beach of Wijk aan Zee. It was a rare opportunity. On previous days it had rained and the Corus flagpoles had groaned in an icy wind.

Only the Dutch IM Jan van de Mortel liked the weather. He is a chess teacher who lives in Chicago, but every year he comes over to The Netherlands to assist the Corus tournament press office. In Chicago it had been -24 degrees Celsius and feeling like -40. He said that when he had stepped out of Amsterdam Airport, he had felt as if he had arrived on the French Riviera. The rest of us felt quite differently. But then, one day the sun appeared briefly and the rain had stopped.

On my way to the beach I met Jana Bellin, Chairman of FIDE's Medical Commission, and Jonathan Speelman. Obviously they had come to Wijk aan Zee to deal with the case of Vassily Ivanchuk, who during the last Olympiad in Dresden had evaded – deliberately or not, that was the question – a doping test.

“I suppose the tournament hall is somewhere in that direction?” Speelman asked. I was surprised. “Can't you remember?” He said that it had been ages since he had been there, in fact it had been in 1983, “When I lost every game and only won against you.” How time flies.

“It is for a sad reason that you have returned,” I said. Jonathan smiled and answered: “Sad indeed, but fortunately it won't be too sad.”

Later that day I sent an article to my newspaper, telling that the Medical Commission would be lenient. A good journalist brings you the news before it actually happens. In fact, the Commission proved to be even more lenient than I had expected, for while I had predicted a stiff warning, it acquitted Ivanchuk completely, because it had conveniently found some procedural mistakes that had been made in Dresden.



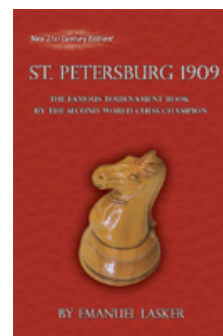
Albin Planinc, Amsterdam 1973

I went onto the beach, which is almost deserted and quite beautiful on a sunny winter's day. After a while I returned to the village along the small path that is known to Dutch chessplayers as Planinc's Path.

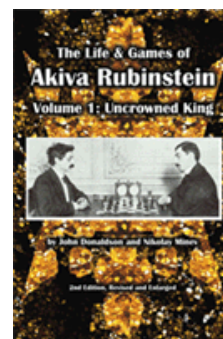
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Recently Gert Ligterink has explained the origin of the name on the tournament's website.

To understand the explanation one should know that the Dutch words *pad* (=path) and *pat* (=stalemate) have exactly the same pronunciation.

The path leads from the Hotel Hoge Duin, where in the past the top players used to stay, almost directly down to the tournament hall. One day in 1974, when arbiter Constant Orbaan and press officer Cora van der Zanden were walking along the path, as they had done hundreds of times, Orbaan asked Cora if she knew Planinc's path, at least that's what she thought he was asking.

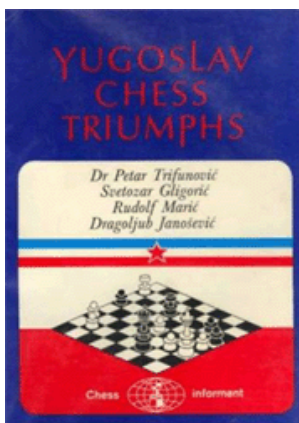
"Of course I know this path, but I didn't know that it has that name," she answered. In fact Orbaan had been talking about a stalemate that had just occurred in a game between Walter Browne and Albin Planinc. But since then, the path is known as Planinc's Path.

As Planinc (or Planinec, as his name is usually written nowadays, after the collapse of Yugoslavia) died in December last year, walking down his path I wondered if some chessplayer might have placed a memorial stone or a fake street sign, but there was none.

"Shouldn't there be one?" I later asked Tom Bottema, chief of the tournament's press service. "It would be nice if we could make it official," Tom said, and as he is an energetic fellow, he immediately phoned the town hall to request if the path could be officially named after Planinc.

As it seems to have been officially nameless until this day, there is no serious obstacle and the public servants of the town hall found it an excellent idea. The final decision is up to the mayor, but there is a good chance that this path in Wijk aan Zee will really be named after Albin Planinc.

It would be a small homage to great service to chess, as Albin Planinc, born in Slovenia in 1944, was during his brief chess career a brilliant and highly original player.



In the book *Yugoslav Chess Triumphs*, published in 1976, he is introduced with an anecdote about the Yugoslav championship in Novi Sad in 1975. In his game against Velimirovic, Planinc was offered a draw and after some hesitation he apparently answered: "No, I can't accept a draw, Drasko, for my position is lost." He played on and duly lost the game.

In that book he is called a Don Quixote who takes on giants, forgetting about lesser opponents: "When inspiration fails, he can likewise lose one game after another to virtually unknown opponents."

His greatest success came in the IBM tournament in Amsterdam in 1973,

which he won together with Petrosian, ahead of great players such as Kavalek, Spassky and Szabo.

After his death I checked how I had done myself against Planinc. It is no wonder that I had no exact recollection of the score, for it turned out that I had made only one draw in four games. Obviously he had been too brilliant for me and his moves too unpredictable.

After 1979 Planinc didn't play chess anymore. He was suffering from severe depressions and had to be nursed in a mental institution. During the brief period that his star was shining, he played a number of unforgettable games, such as this one.

Dragoljub Minic – Albin Planinc, Rovinj/Zagreb 1975

1.e2-e4 e7-e5 2.Ng1-f3 Nb8-c6 3.Bf1-b5 a7-a6 4.Bb5-a4 Ng8-f6 5.0-0 b7-b5 6.Ba4-b3 Bc8-b7

A sharp variation, in accordance with his style. Often Black will follow up with Bc5, when both his bishops will be aimed at White's king.

7.d2-d4 Nc6xd4 8.Nf3xd4 e5xd4 9.e4-e5 Nf6-e4 10.c2-c3 d4-d3 11.Qd1-f3 Qd8-e7 12.Nb1-d2 0-0-0

A piece sacrifice, entirely voluntarily, as 12...Nc5 13.Bd5 Bxd5 14.Qxd5 c6 would be quite satisfactory for Black.

13.Nd2xe4 Qe7xe5 14.Rf1-e1 f7-f5 15.Qf3-g3

The only way to keep the piece.

15...Qe5-e8 16.Ne4-d6+ Bf8xd6 17.Re1xe8 Rh8xe8

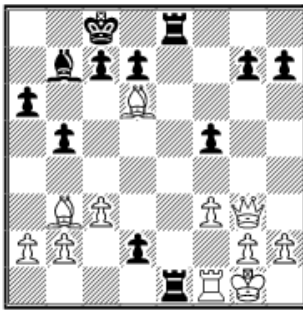


So that was Black's intention. For the sacrificed queen he has a rook and a formidable free pawn.

18.Bc1-f4

In his notes to this game Minic indicated that he would have been winning after the the complicated variation 18.f4 Bc5+ 19.Kf1 Re2 20. Bd1 Bxg2+ 21.Qxg2 Rxg2 22.Kxg2 Re8 23.Bd2. This might be true, but it isn't quite clear, as Black would have three – admittedly not very threatening – pawns for the piece and a slight initiative.

18...d3-d2 19.Ra1-f1 Re8-e1 20.Bf4xd6 Rd8-e8 21.f2-f3



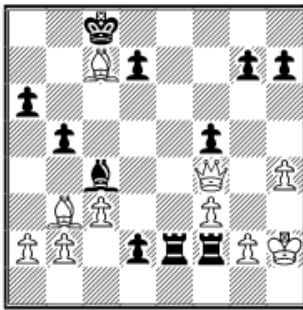
21..Bb7-d5

Another beautiful move. Instead of taking a bishop, which would lose after 21...cxd6 22.Qxd6, Black puts a bishop en prise.

22.Qg3-f4

Better was 22.Bf4, when Black would be wise to take a draw with 22...Rxf1+ 23.Kxf1 Bc4+ 24. Kf2 Re2+.

22...Bd5-c4 23.h2-h4 Re1xf1+ 24.Kg1-h2 Re8-e2 25.Bd6xc7 Rf1-f2



Be careful! After 25...Bxb3, White would turn the tables with 26.Bb6, winning. However, it might seem that Black would be winning by force with 25...Rg1, but the computer shows an unlikely way out for White: 26. Kxg1 Bxb3 27.Ba5 d1Q+ 28.Kh2 and if Black doesn't give a perpetual with 28...Rxc2+, White will do it after 28...d6 29.Qxf5+.

26.Qf4-d6

A grave mistake in time pressure, quite understandable in a game like this. He could have saved the game by 26.Bd1 Rxc2+ 27.Kh1 and though Black could go for an ending with opposite coloured bishops and two pawns up with 27...Bd5 28.Bb6 Rh2+ 29.Qxh2 Bxf3+ 30.Kg1 Rxc2 31. Kxc2 Bxd1 32.Be3 Bb3, it seems to be a draw.

26...Rf2xc2+

Now Black is winning.

27.Kh2-h3 Rg2-h2+ 28.Kh3-g3 Re2-g2+ 29.Kg3-f4 Rh2xc4+ 30. Kf4xf5 Rh4-h6 0-1

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