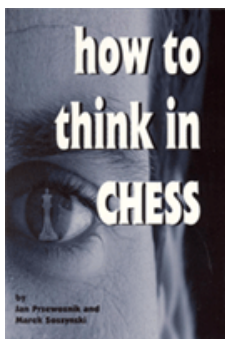




COLUMNISTS

Dutch Treat

Hans Ree



CHESSTHEATRE

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Canary of the Web

I thought that Nigel Short had been playing up a bit too much on his age. During this year's Corus tournament he told us almost every day that for someone of his advanced years the B-group was much more suitable than the A-group with its killer sharks. Then, when in the last round he spoiled a winning position, thereby missing an invitation for next year's A-group, he looked shattered.

A few months later, after winning the Sigeman tournament in Malmö by a big margin, he wrote in [New in Chess](#) that apparently there was still life in the old dog.

Last year I related [here](#) an anecdote about the great film director Luis Buñuel, who, in his final years, used to accost strangers on the street, pointing out to them some random decrepit and shriveled old man and saying: "Do you see that poor fellow? It is the film director Buñuel. Isn't it terrible what has happened to him?"



Nigel Short

If Nigel intended to follow that road, a recent splendid success at the Staunton Memorial tournament in London may have stopped him.

To celebrate the friendship or maybe the eternal rivalry between England and the Netherlands, the annual Howard Staunton Memorial tournament is traditionally an Anglo-Dutch event. This year it was played according to the Scheveningen system, providing an opportunity to the chess world to practice once again the pronunciation of a difficult world.

"Scheveningen System" means that every Dutch player met every English player (twice).

The Dutch team consisted of Van Wely, Ivan Sokolov, L'Ami, Smeets and Werle, the English team of Short, Adams, Howell, MacShane and Jones.

Ivan Sokolov is a Dutch citizen, but he has switched his chess nationality back to his country of origin, Bosnia. The Dutch chess world considers him still one of its own and chief organizer Raymond Keene might have thought his participation indispensable to provide a drinking and talking companion to Jan Timman, who was playing in a second Staunton tournament, an all-play-all.

For the opening ceremony Keene, an advocate of mind-improving methods, had combined some of his hobbies by inviting a nutritionist to give a lecture on this subject. Eat plenty of fish, was his recommendation, that immediately could be put into practice by the players, as both the tournament and the opening festivities were in the famous restaurant Simpson's-on-the-Strand, Keene's second home.

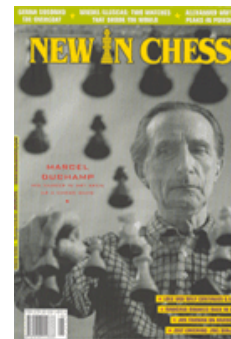
By the way, last week in my hometown Amsterdam the American champion Hikaru Nakamura won a brilliant game against Alexander Beliavsky. Nakamura said that he had been sick and had thrown up twice during the game. So maybe it's rotten fish that really does it for brilliance.

On rating the Dutch and English were almost evenly matched, but the final result was 26½-23½ in favor of England, after a disastrous ninth (and next to last) round.

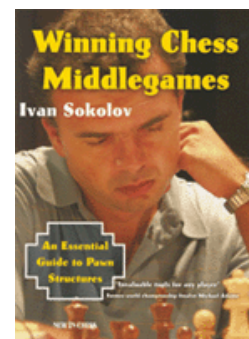
Already a few rounds earlier things had threatened to go the same way.

Then Jan Timman had jokingly said to Nigel Short that it resembled

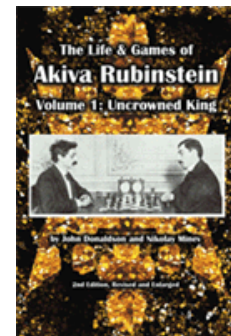
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NIC Magazine, 2009/5



Winning Chess Middlegames by Ivan Sokolov



The Life & Games of Akiva Rubinstein by John Donaldson & Nikolay Mineev

Lucerne 1982, referring to that black day at the Olympiad when our Dutch team, with Timman himself at first board, was beaten 4-0 by England.

I took it lightly. I was soundly beaten by John Nunn, but this day of shame was also the day that a woman I had met a week earlier came to visit me in Lucerne. We are still married.

At the Staunton tournament, Nigel Short had a splendid score of 8 out of 10 against the cream of Dutch chess, where only Sergei Tiviakov was missing. No more coquetry about premature senility, I presume.

The present world champion Anand will turn 40 this year; Ivanchuk, recently back into the top ten, has already reached that age and Gelfand is 41. I am not saying that chess life begins at 40, but there is certainly still life in the middle-aged dogs.

The all-play-all tournament was won by Jan Timman (57), who lost only one game, against Viktor Kortchnoi (78).

Early on during the tournament there had been a heated discussion on the Dutch (English language) website chessvibes.com about the organizers' decision to charge five pounds for the live transmission of the moves. Understandably a foreign contributor wondered if it was a coincidence that this subject was of such great concern to a Dutch website.

“In matters of commerce the fault of the Dutch is giving too little and asking too much.” That's how the English see us. And here is another one, from the English shipping business, where traditionally a “Dutch wife” means a wooden plank with a hole in it.

In general I find nothing wrong in the concept of charging money for web services. Writers can only profit when websites would be a source of income instead of a huge drain of money, as almost all newspaper websites are nowadays.

But if feasible at all, I think that charging money for things that are not under copyright, such as chess moves without commentary, is doomed to failure.

Keene defended the charge as a reasonable contribution to the cost of the live transmission, as a gift to charity and most interestingly as a sign of the times. In his view, now that the media tycoon Rupert Murdoch had announced his intention to let his newspapers charge money for the contents of their websites, the bell tolls for the antiquated providers of free services.

As one of Murdoch's newspapers is *The Times*, which has Raymond Keene as its chess editor. I wondered if Murdoch might have used him as a reconnaissance, just as coal miners used to take a canary with them and hang it in a cage on the ceiling of the pit, so that they could run away in time if the bird dropped dead because of mine gas.

Chess used to be called the fruit fly of Artificial Intelligence, but it might get a second life as the canary of the web economy.

Here is one game from the “Scheveningen” event. Of course as a patriot I picked a Dutch win.

Gawain Jones - Erwin I'Ami
7th Staunton Memorial, London

1.e2-e4 e7-e5 2.Ng1-f3 Nb8-c6 3.d2-d4 e5xd4 4.Nf3xd4 Bf8-b4+ 5.c2-c3 Bb4-c5 6.Bc1-e3 Bc5-b6 7.Nd4-f5 Bb6xe3 8.Nf5xe3 Ng8-f6 9.f2-f3 0-0 10.c3-c4 d7-d6 11.Qd1-d2 Nc6-e5 12.Bf1-e2 Bc8-e6 13.Nb1-c3 Kg8-h8 14.f3-f4 Ne5-g4 15.Ne3-c2 Ng4-h6 16.0-0-0 a7-a6 17.f4-f5 Be6-d7 18.Qd2-f4 Bd7-c6 19.g2-g4 Nf6-d7 20.g4-g5 Nh6-g8 21.h2-h4 Rf8-e8 22.f5-f6

White's preponderance on the kingside is so overwhelming that he could have won by more quiet means.

22...g7xf6 23.Be2-g4 Nd7-e5 24.Bg4-f5 Bc6-d7

Here and later Black might take pawn c4, but considering White's attack it wouldn't make much difference.

25.Nc2-e3 Bd7-e6 26.Kc1-b1 b7-b5 27.c4-c5 b5-b4 28.Nc3-d5 Ra8-b8 29.g5xf6

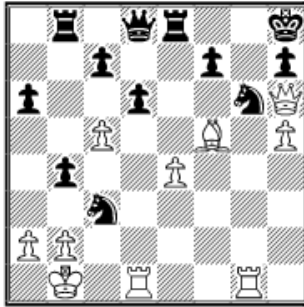
Black was in chains, but White's last move gives him some freedom. A quiet move such as 29.Qg3 would be more pressing.

29...Ng8xf6 30.Qf4-h6 Be6xd5 31.Rh1-g1 Ne5-g6 32.Ne3xd5 Nf6xd5 33.h4-h5

A beautiful move, not touching Black's Nd5 in order to attack the other knight. However, beauty arose from necessity as after 33.Rxd5 there would be the strong answer 33...Qh4 and after 33.exd5 Re2 34.h5 Qf6 35. Bc2 Rxc2 Black would have a draw at least.

33...Nd5-c3+

And here is a beautiful move by Black, though 33...Qh4 might have been better.



34.b2xc3

As the players found during the post mortem, White would still have a winning attack after the cool 34.Ka1.

34...b4xc3+ 35.Kb1-c1 c3-c2 36.Kc1xc2

And here White would still have at least a draw in the line 36.hxg6 cxd1Q + 37.Rxd1 fxg6 38.Rh1 Re7 39.Qxg6 Qg8 40.Qf6+ Rg7 41.Bxh7.

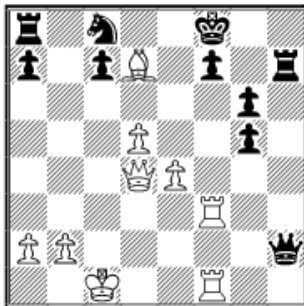
36...Qd8-h4 37.Rd1-d2 Re8xe4

Now Black's pieces will fall all over White's king.

38.Bf5xe4 Qh4xe4+ 39.Rd2-d3 Qe4-c4+ 40.Kc2-d2 Rb8-b2+ 41.Kd2-e3 Qc4-e6+ 0-1

The most beautiful move from the Staunton tournaments was played by the new English champion David Howell.

David Howell - Ivan Sokolov



As a "white to move and win" puzzle this position wouldn't be suitable, as there is an abundance of winning moves, but Howell's is certainly the most striking.

28.Qd4-h8+ Kf8-e7

After 28...Rxf7 29.Rxf7+, Black will be mated.

29.Rxf7+ 1-0

After 29...Rxf7 there is a mate in eight starting with 30.Qe8+, but White might well have settled for the simple win of the queen by 30.Rxf7+ Kxf7 31.Qxh2. Had he done so, computer-aided pedants might accuse him of having committed a "blunder" by missing a mate, but in the heat of battle it is wise to follow the advice of the experienced coach: if you can choose between giving mate or taking the queen, take the queen, for the mate might not be there.

I might add another maxim: never resign when the opponent has the choice between two easy wins, for he might find a third one that doesn't work.

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