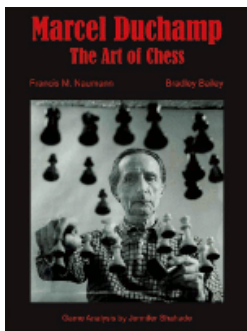




## COLUMNISTS

## Dutch Treat

Hans Ree



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## The Worst Luck in the World

I could hardly believe my eyes when I saw the photograph in the October issue of the German magazine *Schach*. It showed Levon Aronian, winner of the Grand Slam final in Bilbao, together with his second, the Australian Alex Wohl.

Alex Wohl, could that be? A strong player surely, but as a second for Aronian? Visitors of our café will know him from a fine article by Tony Miles, originally published by [ChessCafe.com](http://ChessCafe.com) in January 2000 and recently resurrected from the archives.

The title of that article was "[The Holey Wohly](#)"? and its subject the opening system that starts with 1...Na6, one of the bizarre openings investigated by Wohl. Because of my limited knowledge of English I thought originally that "holey" was an alternate spelling of "holy," just as you have whisky and whiskey. I couldn't understand the holiness of 1...Na6, but later I learned that holey means "full of holes."

"When will Aronian play 1...Na6?" *Schach* wondered in its photo caption. Aronian is a man inclined to irony, but I think that even for him taking up the Wohly against the world's top players would be driving irony to an unseemly extreme.

In their crystal balls, chess watchers tend to see a future match for the world championship between Aronian and Magnus Carlsen. What to expect of the battle of the seconds? Would the collected knowledge of Garry Kasparov be deployed against the Holey Wohly and similar aberrations? Surely not.

As *Schach*'s reporter Dirk Poldauf notes, Aronian tends to replace his seconds often, not because he is dissatisfied with their work, but to be confronted with different styles and insights. With such variety, when it would really come to a match with Carlsen, he might hire Vladimir Kramnik, which in a way would give Kasparov and Kramnik the opportunity to repeat their match of 2000, this time as puppet players.

Of course speaking about puppet players is unfair and insulting. Recently Carlsen spoke about his relation with Kasparov on a Norwegian TV show. He said that Kasparov had much to offer, but as their styles were very different, Kasparov could also learn something from him. In their blitz games, the score was about even. "Neither of us – he especially – likes to lose the games."

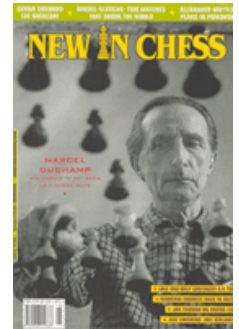
Surely no puppet, this self-assured Magnus and of course the same goes for Aronian.

In Bilbao, Aronian won one of his two games against Alexander Grischuk by means of a startling opening novelty – a piece sacrifice – on move ten. Grischuk told Poldauf that after that sacrifice he had considered to resign straightaway, as it was obvious that Aronian would have analysed all ramifications of his sacrifice.

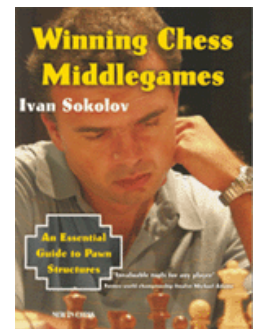
Here, I think, spoke the professional poker player Alexander Grischuk, who must be used to folding his hand when confronted with a spectacular bet that cannot be based on bluffing.

After ten or fifteen minutes of agony the chess player in Grischuk prevailed, he didn't resign, but put up a fine defense that brought him near to saving the game.

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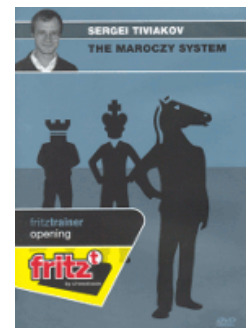


*NIC Magazine, 2009/5*



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Grischuk went on complaining to Poldauf about his bad luck, meeting deadly prepared variations not only against Aronian, but also against Karjakin. In this respect he considered himself “the unluckiest chess player in the world,” and he concluded his lament with the dramatic words: “I am the new Van Wely.”

Poldauf, with special greetings to his Dutch friends, commented tongue-in-cheek that this was indeed terrible, an uncomparable tragedy...

Of course, it isn't really. Recently on a Dutch website I saw a photo which showed Loek van Wely, helping his girlfriend into the saddle of a horse that he had just given away to a horse-loving society. As long as you're in a position to give away horses, your life is not too bad.

The other game between Aronian and Grischuk in Bilbao was a sharp anti-Moscow gambit, won by Grischuk as white.

A few weeks ago Aronian had his revenge in the same variation. This game was played in the European Club Cup tournament in the Macedonian city Ohrid. As the complete Armenian team that had won the Dresden Olympiad was playing for MIKA from Yerevan, this club may have been considered a strong favourite, but eventually MIKA finished second behind Economist from Saratov.

**Grischuk,A (2733) - Aronian,L (2773)**

25th ECC Ohrid MKD (6), 09.10.2009

Semi-Slav [D43]

**1.d2-d4 d7-d5 2.Ng1-f3 Ng8-f6 3.c2-c4 c7-c6 4.Nb1-c3 e7-e6 5.Bc1-g5 h7-h6 6.Bg5-h4 d5xc4 7.e2-e4 g7-g5 8.Bh4-g3 b7-b5**

They had had this position already twice in 2009 and both times Grischuk had been victorious as white.

**9.Nf3-e5 Bc8-b7 10.h2-h4 g5-g4 11.Bf1-e2 Nb8-d7 12.Ne5xd7**

In Bilbao the game went interestingly: 12.Bxg4 Rg8 13.Nxd7 Qxd7 14.Bf3 0-0 15.Qd2 Rxc3.

**12...Qd8xd7 13.Bg3-e5 Qd7-e7 14.0-0 Rh8-g8 15.b2-b3 Nf6-d7 16.Be5-g3 b5-b4 17.Nc3-a4 c4-c3 18.Qd1-d3**

This also had been played before by Grischuk, against Gelfand in the rapid tournament in Odessa 2007. After 18...e5 19.Rad1 Bg7 20.d5, White obtained an advantage.

**18...h6-h5 19.a2-a3 a7-a5 20.a3xb4 a5xb4 21.Na4-c5**

After many complications this will lead to a position where White has to fight for the draw, something that was quite difficult to see at this stage. Maybe White could have tried 21.Ra2, intending to double his rooks.

**21...Ra8xa1**

Now after 22.Rxa1 Black would defend himself by 22...Nxc5 23.dxc5 e5, intending to meet 24.Ra7 by f6 and Rg7. But White has something else in mind, which at first sight looks quite strong.

**22.Nc5xb7**



Now what?

**22...Nd7-e5**

A fine rejoinder. Black couldn't insert 22...Rxf1+ 23.Bxf1 and then play 23...Ne5, for then 24.Qa6 would give White a tremendous attack.

**23.Rf1xa1 Ne5xd3 24.Ra1-a8+**

The endgame a pawn down after 24.Nd6+ Qxd6 25.Bxd6 Bxd6 might be defensible, but it would be highly unpleasant for White.

**24...Ke8-d7 25.Be2xd3**

White has only two pieces for his queen, but he is attacking, so it is still an open fight.

**25...Qe7-f6 26.Bg3-e5**



But this will be nicely refuted. There were several ways for White to reach an endgame with two pieces against a rook, but these positions would be good for Black because of his powerful queenside pawns. White's best would have been 26.e5 Qh6 27.Ra7, when Black cannot prevent perpetual check.

**26...Bf8-d6**

An unexpected and spectacular move, leading to a winning endgame.

**27.Be5xf6 Rg8xa8 28.Kg1-f1**

A bit more resilient would have been 28.Nxd6.

**28...Ra8-a1+ 29.Kf1-e2 Ra1-a2+ 0-1**

White resigned, the c-pawn will cost him a piece.

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