



COLUMNISTS

Dutch Treat

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The End of Chess?

RUSSIA, AFTER SOME INITIAL TROUBLES, took its rightful first place, Germany's team of golden oldies surprised everyone and itself with a splendid performance, winning silver medals, and Ukraine ousted Hungary from its expected third place by a hairbreadth. The Istanbul Olympiad was well-organized and a true feast, as the Olympiads always are, even when badly organized.

Then came in the chess politicians for the 71st FIDE Congress. Reports about these congresses have been sad tales indeed for the last six years, but this congress was exceptionally dismal, though it went largely unnoticed in the reports I saw. President Ilyumzhinov was given unprecedented powers and used them immediately to announce the end of serious chess. More about this later; let me first discuss some real chess, to brighten my mood.

There was a curious incident at an early stage of the Olympiad and of course it was Robert Hübner who took the principled stand. It was at the start of the second round. Not many moves had been made yet, but nevertheless, it was an unwelcome breach of the players' concentration when they were suddenly told to stop the clocks and wait till the computers were ready to transmit the moves to the screens and to the internet.

All obeyed except Hübner, for he is of the opinion that man should not let himself be bullied by the computer. As this is happening all the time, Hübner has written that there is no place in the world anymore for people like him, but apparently he is still prepared to fight for his crumbling piece of ground.

An angry arbiter tried to change his mind, but in vain. Unperturbably Hübner played on. I wish that among the delegates to the 71st FIDE Congress there would have been a few inspired by his principled stubbornness, but again, we'll come to that later.

Except for Hübner and his opponent, the players had to wait for about half an hour until computers and personnel were ready.

Ready for clownery that is. Those who at that time tried to play over the games from the first two rounds saw pieces moving on the board

like drunken sailors oblivious to the rules of chess, taking their own men if it suited them and sometimes suddenly disappearing into thin air.

During later rounds the staff of FIDE Commerce, responsible for the bulletins and the electronic transmission of the games, did a better job. And all in all, according to most reports this Olympiad was quite well-organized. Turkey is a candidate for the Olympic games in 2008 and was eager to present this chess Olympiad as a showcase of its organisational competence.

I suppose **Chess Café** visitors will be well informed about the struggle for the medals, so I will concentrate on what I followed most intensely during the Olympiad: the performances of the Dutch teams.

No medal winners alas, though for a long time the Dutch women seemed likely to gain at least third place. This is no credit to the Dutch school of chess, but more a credit to the ability of Dutch men to lure strong women chess players to our country; from the team of four players only Linda Yap Tjoen San is native Dutch. In the end they reached a creditable sixth place.

The Dutch men ended on a horrible 32nd place, much worse then they deserved.

They went to Istanbul without Jan Timman, who had personal reasons to stay at home and may also have been disgruntled at being placed on third board behind Loek van Wely and Jeroen Piket.

"Van Wely should take note: I won't play on a lower board than he anymore," Timman had said in a recent interview for the Dutch magazine *Schaaknieuws*. Not in our club team, Timman had meant, and he denied categorically that his consignment to third board at the Olympiad had influenced his decision to stay at home.

The Dutch went to Istanbul with five players. Young Dennis de Vreugt, who was to accompany the team not as a player but as a trainee, was registered as the sixth, but he was only supposed to play in case of emergency. Before it came to that, he had to return home because of illness.

The next to go was Sergei Tiviakov who suffered stomach bleeding and had to stay several days in an Istanbul hospital before he went back to the Netherlands by way of his native Russia.

That left four; Van Wely, Piket, Van der Sterren and Nijboer, who now had to play each day and made a good job of it until they finally collapsed in the last two rounds.

Here is a game in which Alexei Shirov and Loek van Wely continued a theoretical discussion that appeared to have been settled by Shirov with a thundering blow in August in Polanica Zdroj. But Van Wely is a stubborn man.

White: Shirov (Spain) Black: Van Wely (Netherlands)

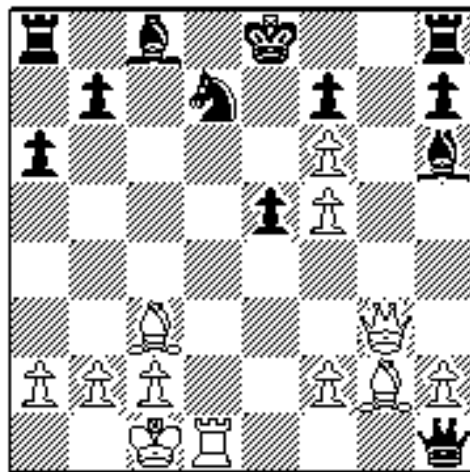
1. e2-e4 c7-c5 2. Ng1-f3 d7-d6 3. d2-d4 c5xd4 4. Nf3xd4 Ng8-f6 5. Nb1-c3 a7-a6 6. Bc1-e3 e7-e6 7. g2-g4 e6-e5 8. Nd4-f5 g7-g6 9. g4-g5 g6xf5 10. e4xf5 d6-d5 11. Qd1-f3 d5-d4 12. 0-0-0 Nb8-d7 13. Be3-d2 Qd8-c7 14. g5xf6 d4xc3 15. Bd2xc3 Qc7-c6 16. Qf3-g3

Having sacrificed a piece, Shirov now adds a Rook, just as he did in their game in Polanica Zdroj. Then Van Wely didn't dare to accept the Rook sacrifice, as it was obviously based on home preparation by Shirov, who went on to win that game in brilliant style:

16...Bf8-h6+ 17. Kc1-b1 Bh6-f4 18. Qg3-d3 0-0 19. Rh1-g1+ Kg8-h8 20. Bc3-b4 Rf8-g8 21. Rg1xg8+ Kh8xg8 22. Bb4-e7 h7-h6 23. Bf1-e2 Nd7xf6 24. Qd3-d8+ Kg8-h7 25. Qd8-f8 Bc8-e6 26. Qf8xa8 Be6xf5 27. Kbl-a1 Nf6-d5 28. Qa8-f8 Qc6-e6 29. Be7-c5 Bf5xc2 30. Rd1-g1 Bc2-g6 31. h2-h4 Bf4-h2 32. Rg1-d1 Nd5-f4 33. Rd1-d8 and Black resigned.

That game had posed many difficult questions to analysts, and a tentative conclusion was reached that after acceptance of the rook sacrifice with 17...Qxh1, a draw should result after best play.

Van Wely, having done some homework of his own, decides to take the Rook this time. **16...Qc6xh1** But the way to do it was supposed to be 16...Bh6+ 17. Kbl and only now 17...Qxh1. We may see this happen in a future Shirov-Van Wely game. **17. Bf1-g2 Bf8-h6+ (See Diagram)**



18. Bc3-d2 Had Van Wely forgotten about this possibility, indicated by many analysts after their Polanica Zdroj game? Now White wins the Queen.

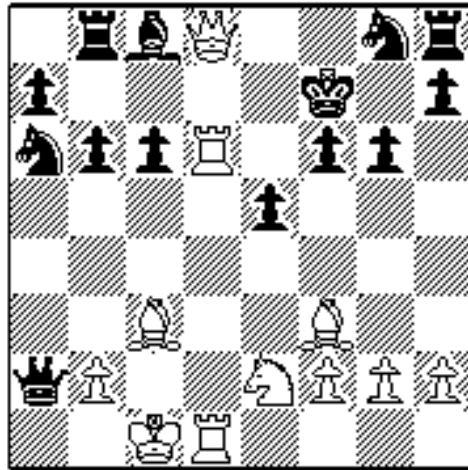
18...Bh6xd2+ 19. Kc1xd2 Qh1xg2 A strange move. Can this Bishop really be more valuable than the Rook? After 19...Qxd1+ Black would have a considerable material advantage, but he would be tied up, though not more so than in the actual

game. Shirov's opinion on the position after 19...Qxd1 was said to be "at least a draw for White". **20. Qg3xg2 a6-a5 21. f2-f4 e5xf4 22. Qg2-g7 Rh8-f8 23. Rd1-e1+ Ke8-d8 24. Re1-e7 Kd8-c7** Black was lost anyway. **25. Qg7xf8** Black resigned.

Here is another example of Van Wely's razor-sharp opening preparation, this time rewarded with success.

White: Van Wely (Netherlands) Black: Krasenkow (Poland), 11th round

1. d2-d4 d7-d5 2. c2-c4 e7-e6 3. Nb1-c3 c7-c6 4. e2-e4 d5xe4 5. Nc3xe4 Bf8-b4+ 6. Bc1-d2 Qd8xd4 7. Bd2xb4 Qd4xe4+ 8. Bf1-e2 Nb8-a6 9. Bb4-a5 f7-f6 10. Qd1-d8+ Ke8-f7 11. 0-0-0 b7-b6 12. Ba5-c3 e6-e5 13. Be2-h5+ g7-g6 14. Bh5-f3 Qe4-f4+ 15. Rd1-d2 Qf4xc4 16. Ng1-e2 Qc4xa2 17. Rd2-d6 Having sacrificed a few Pawns he now offers a Rook, but it can hardly be taken: **17...Qa1+ 18. Kd2 Qxh1 19. Bxc6** and both **20. Bxa8** and **20. Bd5+ Kg7 21. Bxg8** are threatened. **17...Ra8-b8 18. Rh1-d1** (*See Diagram*)



18...Bc8-e6 Here Black had a much better defence. After **18...Kg7** it is not easy for White to continue his attack. He might try **19. Bxe5** but then the annoying check **19...Qc4+** will eventually lead to an endgame where it is not clear if White has enough for his sacrificed pawns. **19. Rd6-d7+** Now White is winning. **19...Be6xd7 20. Rd1xd7+ Kf7-e6 21. Rd7-d6+ Ke6-f7 22. Rd6-d7+ Kf7-e6 23.**

Bf3-g4+ f6-f5 24. Rd7-d6+ The modern school. White repeats moves, not to win time but to give, sadistically, false hope for a draw to the opponent, as a painful lesson for the next game. **24...Ke6-f7 25. Rd6-d7+ Kf7-e6 26. Ne2-f4+ e5xf4 27. Rd7-d6+ Ke6-f7 28. Rd6-d7+ Kf7-e6 29. Rd7-d6+ Ke6-f7 30. Qd8-d7+ Ng8-e7 31. Rd6-f6+ Kf7-g7 32. Qd7xe7+ Kg7-h6 33. Rf6xg6+** Black resigned.

But now let's return to the FIDE congress. Distasteful as the task may be, it has to be done.

According to the Dutch federation's report, the congress was badly prepared and chaotic, handled nervously by vice-president Makropoulos while Ilyumzhinov smiled and sat quiet as if it was no concern of his. Many times FIDE's own statutes were blatantly violated, but this is hardly a surprise anymore.

Also no surprise, but still almost incredible when you really think about it, was the transfer of all commercial rights to the FIDE World Championship to the private firm FIDE Commerce, owned by Ilyumzhinov (70%) and the Russian businessman Artyom Tarasov

(30%). These rights were given to FIDE Commerce until the year 2017, with an option for the company to renew it till 2027.

It means that FIDE's delegates have given up all pretense that they represent a democratic organisation that can choose its own leader. FIDE was already sickly hooked to the lifeline of Ilyumzhinov's money. But now it is not even formally possible to get rid of him by democratic elections. Whatever happens, he will still have the rights to organise and exploit the World Championship. FIDE and Ilyumzhinov will be in tight embrace till 2027, if Ilyumzhinov wishes so.

Only the Netherlands and Portugal voted against this proposal. Why not more countries? We see here an educational example of successful rogue politics. About a year ago the FIDE Board announced plans that went much further. All rated players would have to buy a credit card from FIDE Commerce for a considerable price. All rated tournaments would have to deposit the prize money in an account of FIDE Commerce, which then would see to its fair distribution. An official FIDE journalist would be appointed in all countries. Journalists in general would be forbidden to use the expression "FIDE World Champion" instead of just "World Champion".

These demands were obviously unenforceable and therefore ludicrous. I think they were meant to be so from the start. Many federations bravely protested against these ludicrous proposals. I knew what would happen. The most ridiculous proposals, never meant seriously anyway, were cancelled and now the federations accepted the hard kernel of Ilyumzhinov's proposal. They might not have done so without these silly fringe ideas that allowed them to beat their breast with a mock principled opposition, at least for a while.

Not only is FIDE now effectively privatised, what also counts is: privatised for whom? Ilyumzhinov we know. The new man Tarasov is sometimes euphemistically described as a shadowy businessman. In fact he has been very much in the limelight in Russia, seeking political offices that would grant him immunity from criminal prosecution by the Russian authorities.

Tarasov has sued Western journalists who tried to explain why such criminal prosecution would not be without reason. I have no intention to make trouble for The Chess Café and I'll restrict myself to saying that to my mind respectable organisations should avoid him.

And now for the big one: a truly revolutionary proposal by Ilyumzhinov. After the congress he gave an interview to journalists

Stefan Loeffler (for the German *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*) and Leontxo Garcia (for the Spanish *El Pais*). He spoke about the money he had given to FIDE and the money he earned on oil, which was interesting, but shocking was the way he immediately used his newly won powers to announce a truly breathtaking measure. On the demand of a sport's television company that was interested in chess, in the future, games would no longer last six hours, but only two hours. "From the World Championship and the Olympiads to all local tournaments," Ilyumzhinov said.

He would use the next FIDE Championship in New Delhi to collect the opinion of the players and if they agreed, the new sport's television time-limit would be law.

Here one cannot but think of Stalin's maxim: "It's not important who will vote, important is who will count." We know who will count and so I think we know how the vote in New Delhi will turn out. It will truly mean the end of serious chess.

I never liked the confusing situation where we had two World Champions. I wished for integration of the two championships. But it is hopeless.

It may already be too much to ask from Kramnik. He has done a truly magnificent thing, beating Kasparov in a serious match. Should he integrate his championship with FIDE's version of Trivial Pursuit? Now the question becomes even more pertinent: should he integrate his title with a silly rapid tournament?

Note again the element of rogue politics. There is no way that Ilyumzhinov can force local tournaments to follow him on his road to trivialisation of chess, and as he is an intelligent man, he knows this. Again national federations will protest, showing their independence of mind. They will get their bone to chew on and then will accept the scandal.

I wrote that this would be the end of serious chess, but of course this was too pessimistic. Chess has been around for about 1500 years and I think it will survive FIDE. The end of serious chess within FIDE, that might be.

We have seen many scandals in FIDE, but we thought that we could not do without this organisation and that it might be reformable. It is not, it is a lost case. Now that FIDE is really on its way to kill chess, decent national federations should walk out, as quickly as possible.

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