



COLUMNISTS

Dutch Treat

Hans Ree



Fun in Prague

The beautiful Zofin Palace, venue of the Eurotel Trophy tournament, is built in the heart of Prague on a small island in the River Vltava. From the terrace behind the room for privileged guests I see small boats floating by in which people are having an idyllic picnic. We chess journalists are not starving either. I go inside again for some smoked halibut, caviar, a glass of champagne and to listen to Lubosh Kavalek and Genna Sosonko, who are explaining the games at a demonstration board.

It's good to be present again at a tournament organised by Bessel Kok. Dutch by birth and Belgian by choice he came into the chess world around 1980, when he held his yearly SWIFT tournaments in Brussels. Then after 1986 he was a driving force behind the short-lived Grandmasters Association. This GMA experienced a painful split in 1990 and expired in 1993. Kok, who had already left the GMA, moved from his company SWIFT to Belgian Telecom, which didn't allow him to lavishly spend company money on chess.

Now he is back in the chess world and he hasn't lost his touch. Two hours before the tournament starts I hear him giving his last orders by



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telephone. Lubosh, have a last check at the commentary hall, Genna, go to the VIP-room and see if everything is alright. Even so, after arriving at the playing venue he still finds something wrong. The chess sets in the café for the spectators are still in boxes. Wrong, the pieces should be invitingly placed on the boards. It's corrected. A lot of money combined with attention to small details make for a well-organised tournament.

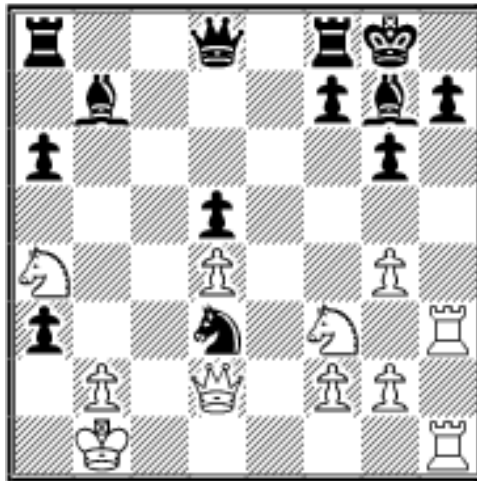
There were three Dutch players in this tournament, Timman, Van Wely and Piket, but they were all eliminated in the first round. For Piket this was his last tournament for a long time to come, for he is going to prepare himself for a different career, though he doesn't know yet in what field. "Has he gone crazy? Does he need a good psychiatrist?" asked one of the players. No need to worry, I think.

As a chauvinistic reporter I had to put my hopes on a semi-Dutchman, Ivan Sokolov, who now has both Dutch and Bosnian nationality and will represent the Netherlands in the future. He has learned a few more Dutch words than the two that were forced on him very soon after he settled in the Netherlands: "blue envelope". An ominous expression to everyone living there, for this is the envelope sent by the taxman.

Sokolov was eliminated in the third round by Anand after a hard fight, but before that he did quite well, beating Leko and Adams.

White: Sokolov Black: Adams, Eurotel second round, first game

1. d2-d4 Ng8-f6 2. c2-c4 e7-e6 3. Ng1-f3 b7-b6 4. Bc1-f4 An almost forgotten variation, played successfully by Miles in the seventies. 4...Bf8-b4+ 5. Nf3-d2 Nf6-h5 6. Bf4-g3 Bc8-b7 7. a2-a3 Nh5xg3 8. h2xg3 Bb4-f8 9. Nb1-c3 g7-g6 10. Qd1-c2 Bf8-g7 11. e2-e3 0-0 12. g3-g4 d7-d5 13. c4xd5 e6xd5 14. Nd2-f3 c7-c5 15. 0-0-0 c5xd4 16. e3xd4 Nb8-c6 17. Kc1-b1 a7-a6 18. Bf1-d3 b6-b5 Both sides have started a sharp kingside attack and it's quite unclear who will come first. 19. Rh1-h3 b5-b4 20. Nc3-a4 b4xa3 21. Rd1-h1 Nc6-b4 22. Qc2-d2 Nb4xd3



23. Rh3xh7

Threatening 24. Rh8+ Bxh8 25. Qh6 and mate. 23...Qd8-f6 24. Qd2xd3 Bb7-c6 25. Na4-c5 Rf8-b8 26. Qd3xa3 Rb8-b5 27. Nf3-e5 Ra8-b8 28. Kb1-a1 Bc6-e8 After 28...Rxb2 White has

29. Rxg7+ Qxg7 (or 29...Kxg7 30. Qe3) 30. Nxc6. 29. Nc5-d3 Rb5-b3 Until now Black had played well and 29...Qb6 would have given him the advantage. 30. Qa3-c5 Be8-b5 31. g4-g5 31. Nc1 would win material, as 31...Rxb2 32. Kxb2 Qxf2+ 33. Ka1 wouldn't give Black enough. 31...Qf6-d8 After 31...Qb6 things would be still unclear, e.g., 32. Qxb6 Rxb6 33. Nc5 Rb4 34. Ncd7 Bxd7 35. Bxd7 Rd6 36. Nf6+ Rxf6 37. gxf6 Bxf6 and Black has good compensation for the Exchange. 32. Rh7-h8+ But now White's attack decides quickly.

32...Bg7xh8 33. Rh1xh8+ Kg8xh8 34. Ne5xf7+ Kh8-g8 35. Nf7xd8 Rb8xd8 36. Nd3-e5 Bb5-e8 37. Qc5-e7 Rd8-b8 38. Ne5-g4 Black resigned.

This was one of the better games of the tournament. In general these rapid games are fun to watch, but when you play them over later, they are thin gruel. Still, these top players often impressed by what they could do in just seconds.

I was reminded of the story about the Japanese artist who specialised in drawing roosters with ink on paper. A rich man wanted to buy one and the artist drew a rooster for him in one minute and charged a very high price. “So much for one minute's work?” asked the rich man indignantly. “No, not for this one, but for the 20,000 roosters I had to draw before I could do it in a minute,” said the artist.

The rapid games and especially the tie-breaking blitz games can be seen in this way. A life of serious study of chess, concentrated in a five-minutes-game. But this view would be too charitable. The quality of the rooster was higher.

Maybe a completely new theory of chess will have to be developed for rapid games. Rook and Bishop versus Rook is not a theoretical draw anymore but winning, for the defender will always make a mistake. “The Sveshnikov is good for Black in rapid games,” said Vlastimil Hort. This because it is not really a defense, but a counter attack. Defense in general is not recommended in rapid chess. In the new theory of chess, the concept of

truth is given up in favor of practicality.

Rapid chess puts a premium on what I would call ‘hooligan chess’, attack at all cost. In a way it was a good thing that Karpov did so well in this tournament. He played his normal chess without a trace of hooliganism.

Anand won the tournament, but this was no big surprise. That he met Karpov in the finals was surprising to many.

From the start Karpov had been pugnacious on and off the board. He didn't like the pairings that put him against Short in the first round and against Kramnik in the second round. The word “conspiracy” seems to have escaped from the hedge of his teeth. But when his protests were to no avail, he proved himself up to the task.

White: *Karpov* Black: *Short*, first round, first game

1. d2-d4 Ng8-f6 2. c2-c4 e7-e6 3. Nb1-c3 Bf8-b4 4. Qd1-c2 d7-d5 5. c4xd5 e6xd5 6. Bc1-g5 h7-h6 7. Bg5-h4 c7-c5 8. d4xc5 g7-g5 9. Bh4-g3 Nf6-e4 10. e2-e3 Qd8-a5 11. Ng1-e2 Bc8-f5 12. Bg3-e5 Ne4xc3 13. Qc2xf5 Nc3-e4+ 14. Ne2-c3 Until now Short had moved instantly, but here he went into a big think, understandably because his position is quite bad. What had happened? He had played this line in his 1993 match against Kasparov and should know everything about it. And so should Kavalek, who was Short's second in 1993 and now commentator in the VIP-room. “In 1993 we knew everything about this variation, but

since then things have happened which I haven't followed so well," he said. In fact both he and Short had forgotten what they knew well in 1993: that 12...0-0 was the right move and 12...Nxc3 a bad mistake. **14...0-0** After 14...Nxc3 White wins with 15. Qc8+ **15. Bf1-d3 Nb8-c6 16. 0-0**



16...Rf8-e8 This loses quickly. A better chance would be 16...Nxe5 17. Nxd5 Nxd3 18. Qxe4 Nxc5 **17. Nc3xe4 d5xe4 18. Bd3xe4 Re8xe5 19. Qf5-h7+ Kg8-f8 20. Qh7xh6+** Black resigned.

Despite this victory in the opening, Karpov didn't seem to have an opening repertoire suitable to compete at the highest level. As Black he was always in trouble with his Petrov defense. As White he only reached an opening advantage by accident.

Such an accident happened in the next round, when Kramnik, who had equalized comfortably, made a careless move after which Karpov got some advantage that he pressed home with impeccable technique.

Kramnik, born in the year that Karpov became world champion for the first time, must have felt as if he were hit by pre-historic man.

Then followed some Houdini-like escape acts by Karpov, first against Morozevich and then against Shirov.

Karpov with a miserable position on the board and only seconds left on the clock, his opponents with ample time. The swiftness of his moves in itself was amazing enough, even more so the quality of his defense.

After Karpov had eliminated Morozevich he was enjoying himself watching the tie-break games between Kasparov and Ivanchuk. "Such bad play. Whole series of moves without any sense. Coffee house play of a low order."

Eventually Kasparov was to lose the sudden-death blitz game where as white, a draw would have been equivalent to a loss.

By the way, I think this was the day that Gelfand told us that while walking in Prague he had overheard a conversation between two Russians, one of them saying: "But you can't just shoot anybody."

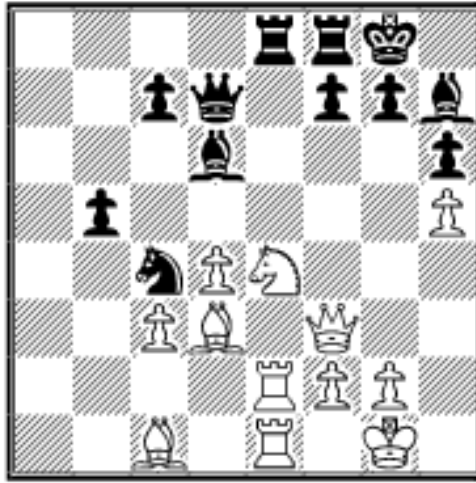
Many thought that Kasparov, after being eliminated from the tournament, would be busy for some days in the woods around Prague, eradicating trees with bare hands to calm himself, but no, the next day he showed himself in the commentary room, making friendly jokes with everyone and taking the lead in the communal analysis of Karpov's first blitz game against Shirov.

Had Shirov missed a win? At one point Kasparov indicated a line that seemed winning for Shirov, but then came 15-year old Radjabov from Azerbaidzjan who said: “Hey, hey, wait a minute” and showed that it wasn't so clear at all. Bravo! said Kasparov.

We all enjoyed the show; only Timman seemed aggrieved by Kasparov's Nike baseball cap. “Coming to the VIP-room with a baseball cap on, no sense of decorum at all,” Timman said sternly. Three days later a high-profile Dutch politician was murdered by an animal rights activist who wore a baseball cap when firing his shots. “Now you see,” said Timman.

White: *Shirov* Black: *Karpov*, fourth round, first blitz game

**1. e2-e4 e7-e5 2. Ng1-f3 Ng8-f6 3. Nf3xe5 d7-d6
4. Ne5-f3 Nf6xe4 5. d2-d4 d6-d5 6. Bf1-d3 Bf8-e7
7. O-O Nb8-c6 8. c2-c4 Nc6-b4 9. Bd3-e2 0-0 10.
Nb1-c3 Bc8-f5 11. a2-a3 Ne4xc3 12. b2xc3 Nb4-
c6 13. Rf1-e1 d5xc4 14. Be2xc4 Be7-d6 15. Ra1-
a2 Qd8-d7 16. Nf3-g5 Nc6-a5 17. Bc4-d3 b7-b5
18. Qd1-f3 Bf5-g6 19. Ra2-e2 Na5-c4 20. a3-a4
a7-a6 21. h2-h4 h7-h6 22. Ng5-e4 Ra8-e8 23. h4-
h5 Bg6-h7 24. a4xb5 a6xb5**



25. Ne4-f6+ A very strange move. Analysis concentrated on 25. Bxh6. After 25...Rxe4 26. Rxe4 f5 it's still unclear. **25...g7xf6 26. Bc1xh6 Re8xe2 27. Re1xe2 Bh7xd3 28. Qf3xd3** Could White have missed the simple

28. Qxf6 Qg4? 28...Rf8-e8 29. g2-g3 Re8xe2 30. Qd3xe2 Qd7-e6 31. Qe2-f3 Kg8-h7 32. Bh6-f4 f6-f5 33. Bf4xd6 Nc4xd6 34. Qf3-d1 Qe6-e4 35. Qd1-d2 f5-f4 36. g3xf4 Nd6-f5 37. Qd2-a2 Kh7-g7 38. Qa2-a6 Nf5-h4 39. Kg1-f1 Qe4-d3+ 40. Kf1-g1 Qd3-f3 White resigned.

Like a cat with nine lives, Karpov had survived his battles with Morozevich and Shirov, but in the finals, two games at the classical time control, he was solidly beaten by Anand, who had floated unassailably through the tournament.

“My advantage over Kasparov and Kramnik was that I had come to Prague just to play chess, while their cell phones were always ringing as soon as they had left the stage of the playing hall” said Anand. Indeed, political talks on the eve of the Prague reunification conference must have distracted both Kasparov and Kramnik heavily. But that's another story, well treated on the internet.

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