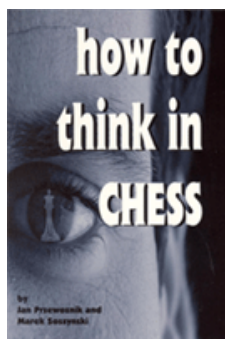




## COLUMNISTS

### *Dutch Treat*

Hans Ree



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## Unconventional Ivanchuk

Vasily Ivanchuk is not only loved by the chess world for his creativity at the board, but also because he doesn't conform to the kind of behaviour that is nowadays expected from top players. They all know how to speak to the press after their game, with a few empty but well formulated sentences – often involving the fact that they haven't consulted Fritz yet and cannot give a definite judgement – and just a little technical variation that can be picked up by the chess experts among the journalists.

That's how Ivan Cheparinov did it after he had lost his game against Ivanchuk in the fourth round of the M-Tel tournament in Sofia. He must have been disappointed, but at the press conference he put up a professional performance.

Ivanchuk did it quite differently. While massaging his nose, as is his habit, he spouted a mass of complicated variations which must have been very hard to follow even for the chess experts among the journalists who understood Russian.



Vasily Ivanchuk  
Photo: [US Chess Trust.org](#)

There is a video of this press conference, produced by the webmasters of the tournament site and available on YouTube. Next to Ivanchuk sits a Bulgarian man who has the difficult task of translating his remarks into English. At first you see him head-shaking and smiling, obviously wondering where this is going to lead. Then he makes a gesture trying to stop Ivanchuk, but Ivanchuk, in top form, cannot be stopped.

The translator resigns, smiling helplessly to all sides. I can't stop this man, says his body language.

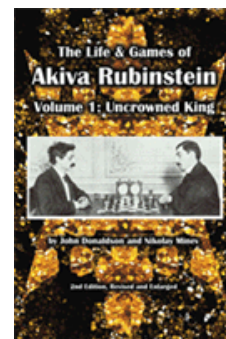
Finally he manages to translate the gist of Ivanchuk's argument into English, and under the circumstances he does this quite well. As I understand only a few Russian chess words, much of what had been said was unintelligible to me, but still it was a fascinating video.

With his win against Cheparinov, Ivanchuk brought his score to 4 out of 4. The next day saw another victory, so that he rounded off the first half of the M-Tel tournament with a perfect score.

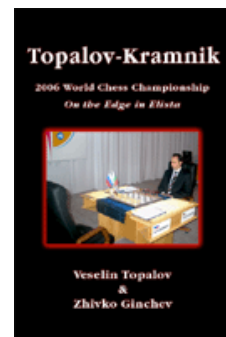
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The game against Cheparinov, very interesting in itself, intrigued me also because it evoked memories of the period around 1980, when Ivanchuk's line against the King's Indian had been very much in fashion. Among Dutch players, the Great Helmsman of this field of study had been Genna Sosonko, but I myself have also spent many days trying to work out the line to a forced win for White, unsuccessfully of course.

After 22 moves, Ivanchuk had a position that had also occurred in a game he had played in a match against Jan Timman in 1991, and one commentator remarked that without doubt Ivanchuk had remembered that game as if it had been played the day before. I believed him, for in the past I have witnessed many instances of the almost incredible chess memory that some top chess players – not all of them – possess. Humbly one realises how differently human brains can work.

The present game can explain how attractive this variation of the King's Indian could be in the past. The lines are extremely sharp. Good preparation would pay rich dividends. On the other hand it makes it also understandable that after some time many White players switched over to the bayonet attack 9.b4, which at least for some time provided more possibilities to play normal chess, without home preparation through move 30.

#### ***Vasily Ivanchuk – Ivan Cheparinov***

M-Tel Masters, Sofia

King's Indian [E99]

**1.d2-d4 Ng8-f6 2.c2-c4 g7-g6 3.Nb1-c3 Bf8-g7 4.e2-e4 d7-d6 5.Ng1-f3 0-0 6.Bf1-e2 e7-e5 7.0-0 Nb8-c6 8.d4-d5 Nc6-e7 9.Nf3-e1 Nf6-d7 10. Ne1-d3 f7-f5 11.Bc1-d2 Nd7-f6 12.f2-f3 f5-f4**

From now on both players will restrict themselves to their own side of the board and only near the finish of the race will they come into close contact. The race is exciting, but not to everyone's taste.

**13.c4-c5 g6-g5 14.Ra1-c1**



In the 70s, Sosonko developed a slightly different system. It starts with 14.cxd6 cxd6 15.Nf2 and proceeds with the moves Qc2, Rfc1 (the other rook), a4 and Ra3. That last move is a multi-purpose move. White can triple on the c-file, but the rook also has another and more important function. After Black has played g5-g4 and White has taken twice on g4 with his f- and h-pawns, he can bring his rook to h3 for the defence

or even a counter attack against Black's king. And then there is still another small advantage in having the king's rook on c1 instead of the other one. Sometimes, if things go wrong for White, his king has to run, and it can be advantageous that the f1-square is already free.

Sosonko's system was a model of logic and I eagerly adopted it. However, it turned out that even Sosonko's iron logic could not deprive Black of his counter chances.

**14...Ne7-g6 15.c5xd6 c7xd6 16.Nc3-b5 Rf8-f7 17.Qd1-c2 Nf6-e8 18. Nd3-f2 h7-h5 19.a2-a4 Bg7-f8 20.h2-h3 Rf7-g7 21.Qc2-b3 Ng6-h4 22. Rc1-c2**

The same position was reached by Ivanchuk in 1991 in a match against Jan Timman, organised by KRO, a Dutch broadcasting company. Timman played 22...a6 and after an epic struggle a draw was reached at

move 103.

**22...g5-g4 23.f3xg4 Ne8-f6 24.Bd2-e1 h5xg4 25.h3xg4 Nf6-h5**

Sharp and ambitious, as to be expected from Cheparinov. After 25... Nxd4 26.Nxd4 Bxd4 27.Bxd4 Rxd4 28.Qh3 Qg5 29.Nc7 Rc8 30.Bxh4, the endgame would be somewhat better for White.

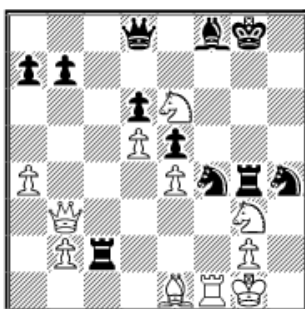
**26.Nf2-h1 f4-f3**

Again the sharpest way to continue the attack.

**27.Be2xf3 Nh5-f4 28.Nh1-g3**

After 28.Bxh4 Qxh4 29.g3 Nh3+ 30.Kg2 Nf4+, White would have a choice between a draw by repetition or an unclear position after 31.Kf2 Nh3+ 32.Ke1, which would be a dangerous walk.

**28...Bc8xg4 29.Bf3xg4 Rg7xg4 30.Nb5-c7 Ra8-c8 31.Nc7-e6 Rc8xc2**



Now White cannot take the queen because after 32.Nxd8 Rxd8+ 33.Kh1 Nf3, he would be mated.

**32.Qb3xc2 Qd8-b6+**

In this very difficult game Black makes the first clear mistake. After 32...Qe8, it would still be an open fight.

**33.Kg1-h1**

Maybe Black had counted on 33.Bf2 Nf3+ 34.gxf3 Rxd3+ with a draw.

**33...Nh4xg2**

33...Nf3 would threaten mate, but then comes 34.Nxf4 Nxe1 35.Qc8 Rxf4 36.Rxf4 exf4 37.Nf5 and suddenly it's White who has a winning attack. Relatively best, but absolutely miserable would be the humble retreat 33...Nhg6.

**34.Ng3-f5 Qb6-a6**

Black cannot reinforce his attack, which means that his pieces on the king's side are now misplaced.

**35.Rf1-g1 Qa6-d3 36.Qc2xd3 Nf4xd3 37.Be1-h4**

White is winning a piece.

**37...Rg4xe4 38.Rg1xg2+ Kg8-f7 39.Nf5xd6+ Bf8xd6 40.Ne6-g5+ 1-0**

After his perfect score in the first half of the tournament, Ivanchuk relaxed with four draws and then won his game of the last round, finishing with 8 out of 10, 1½ points ahead of Veselin Topalov. At the final press conference he showed once again that he is different from most of his colleagues.

Most professional chess players are shrewd calculators. During a tournament they calculate how many rating points they have won or lost, they know about their TPR and often they even calculate the performance of their rivals who are playing in another tournament, to see if they have virtually surpassed them on a national or international list. It is a form of career planning, part and parcel of the life of a chess professional.

At the final press conference (as shown on one of the video's made by the French magazine *Europe Echecs*) Ivanchuk seemed oblivious to career planning. As most chess watchers know, the M-Tel tournament was part of a Grand Prix system in which also the tournaments of Wijk aan Zee, Linares/Morelia and Dortmund participate. The winners of these tournaments (and some other players) will meet in September in Bilbao.

To everybody's surprise it turned out that Ivanchuk had never heard of the tournament in Bilbao for which he had just qualified by winning M-Tel. "When will it be?", he asked the journalists. They told him that it would start on September 4. In that case, he would probably be able to participate, said Ivanchuk, though there might be something with the Spanish club competition...

"What kind of a tournament is it, a rapid tournament?", he asked the journalists. They informed him that it was a serious tournament with a classical time schedule. Pleasantly surprised, Ivanchuk said: "Ah, in that case I have to prepare well."

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