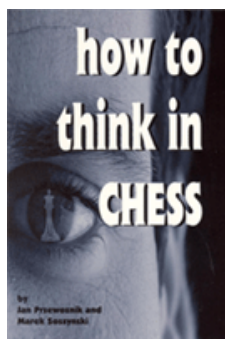




COLUMNISTS

Dutch Treat

Hans Ree



CHESS THEATRE

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Piet Zwart, A Democratic Director

Piet Zwart, who died on July 28 at the age of 83, had been director of the Hoogovens tournament – nowadays known as Corus tournament – for thirty years, but to me it seemed as if he had been there always, so much had he been fused with the event, an incarnation of what it has always stood for: love of chess and human friendliness.

It's not quite true that he had joined the crew from the start, but almost. In Lex Jongsma and Alexander Munninghoff's book about the history of the tournament, which appeared in 1998 when its 60-year jubilee was celebrated, I found out that in 1979 Piet received the golden buckle for 25 years of service. You might say that, in different capacities, he had been with the tournament as long as human memory stretched – at least my memory. After 1999, the year when he passed on the leader's baton to Jeroen van den Berg, he was a visitor to almost every tournament round, only occasionally prevented from attending by health problems.



Piet Zwart

Photo: [ChessBase](#)

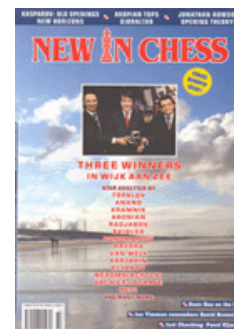
Nowadays his tournament appears as such a monumental institution, as venerable and solid as our Royal House, that we tend to forget that there were times of severe troubles. Around 1975 a bad period started for the steel industry, which caused the sponsoring Hoogovens steel company to economise. The tournament was reduced in strength and range and it was even feared that it would be closed down forever.

There were years when the Soviet boycott of tournaments with Viktor Kortchnoi among the participants caused problems. Many tournaments gave in to the pressure, themselves boycotting Viktor, but the Hoogovens kept an upright spine.

Then came problems with FIDE, which had scheduled all its candidates matches to coincide with the tournament, and there also was a fortunately brief period of self-inflicted problems, when, in a misguided love for modish innovation, the tournament was arranged as a knock-out event, which turned out to be unpopular with both spectators and media.

All these threats and problems were duly overcome and in 1999, the last year of Piet Zwart's directorship, the tournament was stronger and, thanks in large part to Garry Kasparov's brilliant performance, more spectacular

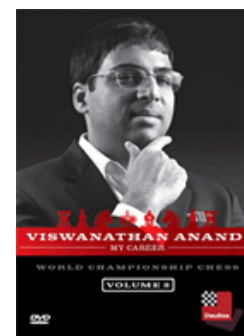
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than it had ever been.

Piet was an extraordinarily nice person. In 1979 I was on crutches, which wasn't too much of a problem, except when the road from our hotel Hoge Duin (High Dune, a well-chosen name) down to the tournament hall in the village Wijk aan Zee, had become so icy and slippery that I couldn't walk there anymore.

Cars couldn't go there either and so on my way to the tournament hall I was supported by Piet Zwart and his good friend Hans Bakker, chief of public relations of the tournament. Once again this showed that, apart from being an event for the world's top players, it was also a friendly and democratic tournament. Of course elsewhere participants would be helped too, but the daunting task of supporting me on an icy road would probably be left to underlings.

The road was really very slippery. Piet fell and later I was told that he had broken a rib. I felt guilty. My leg had been broken during the Olympiad in Buenos Aires in 1978, due only to my own foolishness. Now I had made another victim and I feared that I might have set a domino effect into motion by which the injured Piet somehow would bowl over another stone. As far as I know this did not happen and of course Piet never blamed me for his mishap; he was much too nice for that.

Soon after his departure as director the tournament got another name, that of Corus. It remained what it had become during Piet's time: with its combination of top class chess and chess for many hundreds of amateurs, the finest tournament in the world.

From all the beautiful memories connected with the period of his reign, here is one. I still vividly remember my blissful bewilderment when I saw Vassily Ivanchuk's 21st move pop up on the screen.

Vassily Ivanchuk – Alexei Shirov

Hoogovens Wijk aan Zee 1996

Semi-Slav [D44]

1.d2-d4 d7-d5 2.c2-c4 c7-c6 3.Nb1-c3 Ng8-f6 4.Ng1-f3 e7-e6 5.Bc1-g5 d5xc4 6.e2-e4 b7-b5 7.e4-e5 h7-h6 8.Bg5-h4 g7-g5 9.Nf3xg5 h6xg5 10.Bh4xg5 Nb8-d7 11.e5xf6 Bc8-b7 12.g2-g3 c6-c5 13.d4-d5 Qd8-b6 14.Bf1-g2 0-0-0 15.0-0 b5-b4 16.Nc3-a4 Qb6-b5 17.a2-a3 e6xd5 18.a3xb4 c5xb4 19.Bg5-e3 Nd7-c5 20.Qd1-g4+ Rd8-d7

A well-known position in which previously everyone had played 21. Nxc5. But, as Ivanchuk later wrote in his annotations to this game in *New in Chess*, chess is truly inexhaustible. His next move is engraved in the collective memory of the chessworld.

21.Qg4-g7



When a chessplayer says '23...Qc3-g3' another one will tune in with 'Levitsky-Marshall, Breslau 1912' and a third will remark that the story of the golden coins connected with that move, is probably apocryphal. Likewise it is with '21.Qg4-g7'. 'Ivanchuk-Shirov 1996' we will cry immediately, and someone will relate the stories about Ivanchuk's often strange but always impressive performances when he demonstrated his

wins in the pressroom of Hoogovens.

21...Bf8xg7 22.f6xg7 Rh8-g8 23.Na4xc5 d5-d4

Seven years later Shirov improved on this move by playing 23...Rxg7 in

Ponomarev-Shirov, Corus 2003. After 24.Nxd7 Qxd7 25.Rxa7 Rg6,
Black went on to win after a hard fight.

24.Bg2xb7+ Rd7xb7 25.Nc5xb7 Qb5-b6

After 25...Kxb7 26.Bxd4, White's mighty pawn on g7 would stay alive.

26.Be3xd4 Qb6xd4 27.Rf1-d1

But also here White has a clear advantage because Black's king is in trouble.

27...Qd4xb2 28.Nb7-d6+ Kc8-b8 29.Rd1-b1 Qb2xg7 30.Rb1xb4+ Kb8-c7 31.Ra1-a6 Rg8-b8 32.Ra6xa7+ Kc7xd6 33.Rb4xb8 Qg7-g4 34.Rb8-d8+ Kd6-c6 35.Ra7-a1 1-0

Black resigned, as White will win the c-pawn and then his own pawns will decide.



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