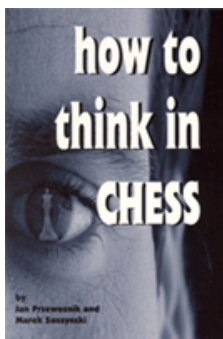




COLUMNISTS

Dutch Treat

Hans Ree



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Better Toss a Coin

During the World Championship match between Anand and Kramnik I was reminded of a story that Vlastimil Hort once told me.

During a weekend tournament in England he had reached the following well-known position as Black.



For many decades chessplayers have tried to find out which is the best move here, the Blumenfeld Variation, 10.e5, or the Reynolds Variation, 10.d5. Despite deep and complicated analyses a definitive verdict has not been reached.

To Hort's consternation at this point his opponent tossed a coin. What to think of such an outrageous gesture? Not being born yesterday – a favorite expression of one of my blitz partners when she makes a clever move – Hort had to suspect that in fact his opponent had made his choice already during his preparations and that the coin was only there to throw him off guard.

On the other hand, to decide between two equivalent possibilities, tossing a coin seems more rational than spending a lot of time on an unsolvable problem.

Though I think that Hort won this game after all, the idea of coin tossing, not only in the opening, but also later in the game, seemed quite attractive, not only because of its psychological impact, but also as a time-saving device. I am sure it is illegal, though.

Gentleman Kramnik did not resort to this trick in the diagrammed position, but as we all know, he would probably have been better off had he done so.

In the latest issue of New in Chess the two match games with this line are annotated by Anand's second Peter Heine Nielsen. One thing we can learn from his analyses is the enormous amount of work that had to be done by the team to prove that Anand's novelty 14...Bb7 was viable.

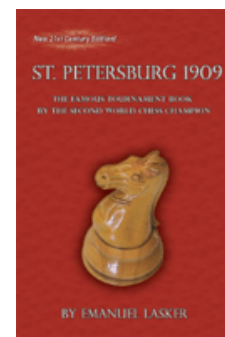
Kramnik, Vladimir (2772) – Anand, Viswanathan (2783)
WCh Bonn GER (3), 17.10.2008 [D49]

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Nc3 e6 5.e3 Nbd7 6.Bd3 dxc4 7.Bxc4 b5 8.
Bd3 a6 9.e4 c5 10.e5 cxd4 11.Nxb5 axb5 12.exf6 gxf6 13.0-0 Qb6 14.
Qe2 Bb7

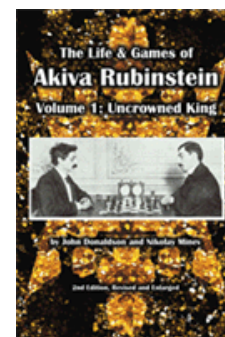
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Formally this is not a novelty, as it had been played before. But as the move had never been taken seriously, the practical effect was that of a real novelty.

15.Bxb5 Bd6

In the fifth game Anand varied with 15...Rg8, which is also quite complicated.



Here Kramnik played 16.Rd1. Nielsen shows us what they had prepared against the move 16.Nxd4, as played in Döppner-Voigt, Germany 1992. His main line goes 16...Qxd4 17.Rd1 Bxh2+ 18.Kxh2 Qh4+ 19.Kg1 Bxg2 20.Bxd7+ Ke7 21.Kxg2 Rhg8+ 22.Kf3 Qh5+ 23.Ke3 Qc5+ 24.Kd2 Rad8 25.Rf1 Rxd7+ 26.Ke1 Rc8 27.Qe3 Qa5+ 28.Bd2 Rxd2 29.Qxd2 Qe5+ 30.Qe2 Qa5+

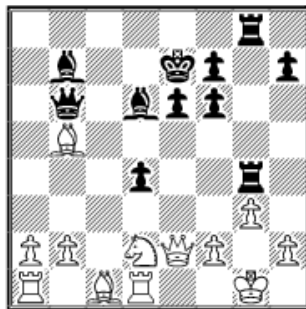
Quite impressive. Nielsen writes: This is the line given by the computers, leading to a draw by perpetual.

I wonder from which starting point the computers calculated this complicated line. I gave my computers the position after 22.Kf3 and even left to their own deliberations for a long time, they did not come up with the perpetual.

No doubt Anand's team had better hardware and better software than I have, but even so I suspect that they had to goad the oracle strongly before it spoke clearly.

After Kramnik's **16.Rd1**, the game went on **16...Rg8 17.g3 Rg4 18.Bf4**

Here an important possibility was 18.Nd2 Ke7 19.Bxd7 Rag8 20.Bb5



Now according to Nielsen 20...Bxg3 is bad, but both 20...d3 and 20...Rxc3 should lead to a draw. The most complicated line that he gives is 20...Rxc3+ 21.hxc3 Rxc3+ 22.Kf1 Bg2+ 23.Ke1 Re3 24.fxe3 Bg3+ 25.Qf2 Bxf2+ 26.Kxf2 dxe3+ 27.Kxg2 Qxb5 "and the computers again say: draw!"

Do they? Mine did, but only after I had fed them the moves 28.Nc4 Qg5+ 29.Kf3 Qh5+ 30.Kxe3 Qxd1 31.b3 and here they declared the position to be a draw by perpetual check.

I think annotators are often too modest when they use expressions like

“the computer says...” They do not want to claim credit for variations that obviously are generated with help of a computer, but they may understate their own contribution to the result.

Anyway, these two impressive lines give us a glimpse of opening preparation on World Championship level. Proposing a move like 14... Bb7 is easy. Backing it up with lines to prove that the move does not lead to a forced loss is extremely difficult. Surely what we have seen is only the tip of an iceberg.

To return to Vlastimil Hort, who was born in the same year as I was, I was happy to see that early this month he had won a tournament.

It was played in the Czech city Mariánské Lázně, a double round Scheveningen-type competition between five old men and five young women. They called it “Snowdrops against Old Hands.”



Vlastimil Hort

The Old Hands were Anatoly Karpov, Wolfgang Uhlmann, Vlastimil Hort and Fridrik Olafsson. The Snowdrops were Anna Ushenina from Ukraine, Viktorija Cmilyte from Lithuania and Jana Jackova and Katerina Nemcova from the Czech Republic.

Though the snowdrops took the lead early, the old hands finally won with the score 17½-14½. Hort had the best personal result with 6½ points out of 8 games.

He deserved it. He was by far not the oldest of the old hands, but he is certainly the one who can make the funniest jokes about the dubious advantages of advancing age.

Whenever I hear Vlastimil sweetly complaining about his age, I think of the film mogul Luis Bunuel, to my mind the greatest film maker of all time, who like Hort had a very special sense of humor.

Apparently during his last years Bunuel had the habit of addressing strangers on the street and point out to them some decrepit old man who happened to pass by, crumpled and bent with age.

“Do you see that poor guy?” Bunuel said then. “That’s the film maker Bunuel.” Isn’t it horrible what he has come to? Last year he was still walking upright...”

I don’t think Vlastimil has gone that far and he wouldn’t have reason for it.

In Mariánské Lázně he played some fine games – the nicest one with black against Ushenina, I think – but the game that made the rounds was the spectacular first round loss of Anatoly Karpov against Jana Jackova.

Later Karpov did his duty and finished with the score of 5½ out of 8.

Jackova, Jana (2360) – Karpov, Anatoly (2651)

Snowdrops vs. Old-hands, Marianske Lazne CZE (1), 29.11.2008 [B43]

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 a6 5.Nc3 Qc7 6.Bd3 Nf6 7.0-0 Bd6

One of many ideas in this variation from Mark Taimanov, who played it in 1959 against Tal. Now Karpov probably does it only to get off the beaten track.

8.f4 Bc5 9.Nce2 Nc6 10.c3 d6 11.Kh1 Bd7 12.Qe1 0-0

Now White gets a very dangerous attack against the king, mainly because Black's Bc5 doesn't help the defence. In Lanka•Wahls, Hamburg 2002, Black played 12...h5, which doesn't look safe either.

13.Qh4 Rfe8

Maybe 13...d5 14.e5 Ne4 was relatively safest.

14.Nf3 e5

Black makes natural moves, but he is already in great danger.

15.b4

To cut off Black's bishop from the defence.

15...Bb6 16.fxe5 dxe5

After 16...Nxe5 17.Nxe5 Rxe5 (or 17...dxe5 18.Rxf6) 18.Rxf6, White's attack is decisive.

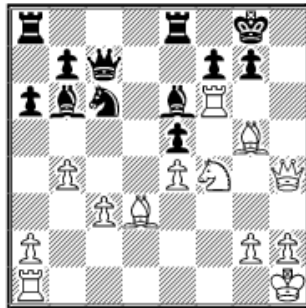
17.Ng5 h6

After 17...Qd6, White would get a strong attack with 18.Bc4 (the direct 18.Rxf6 Qxf6 19.Qxh7+ is not clear at all) 18...Nd8 19.Ng3; for instance, 19...h6 20.Nxf7 Nxf7 21.Bxh6 with a clear advantage.

18.Rxf6 hxg5

His last chance was 18...gxf6. If White wants to play for a win, she would have to play the quiet move 19.Nf3, for after 19.Qxh6 fxg5 there is only a draw by perpetual check.

19.Bxg5 Be6 20.Nf4



After this beautiful move there is no defence for Black.

20...Ne7

After 20...exf4 21.e5, White's Bd3 joins the attack decisively; for

instance, 21...Qxe5 (or 21...Ne7 22.Qh7+ Kf8 and now 23.Bh6 is the most elegant way to win) 22.Rxe6 fxe6 23.Bh7+ Kf8 24.Bg6 and to prevent mate Black has to give the queen with 24...Qxg5.

21.Nd5 Qd7

After 21...Bxd5 22.exd5, Black is helpless also.

22.Rh6 Ng6 1-0

Black resigned because of the crushing 23.Nf6+.

Postscript

After 18...hxg5 in the game Jackova-Karpov, Stefan Bücken kindly informed me that contrary to what I wrote, White would also have a forced win after 18...gxf6. He writes:

The position also appears in Alfred Diel's column "Sie sind am Zuge" for *Kaissiber* #34 (which will come out in February). I checked it and the PC found: 19 Nh7!! Kxh7 20 Qxh6+ Kg8 21 Ng3 Bg4 22 Bc4 and wins; for example, 22...Nd4 23 Qg6+ Kf8 24 Qxf6 Ne6 25 Bh6+ Kg8 26 Bxe6 fxe6 27 Qg6+ Kh8 28 Qxg4 and now one of the nicer continuations is 28...Qh7 29 Qg5 Bd8 30 Bg7+! Qxg7 31 Qh5+ Kg8 32 Qxe8+ Qf8 33 Qxe6+ +-.



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