



C O L U M N I S T S

*From the
Archives*

Hosted by
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From the Archives...

Since it came online many years ago, **ChessCafe.com** has presented literally thousands of articles, reviews, columns and the like for the enjoyment of its worldwide readership. The good news is that almost all of this high quality material remains available in the [Archives](#). The bad news is that this great collection of chess literature is now so large and extensive – and growing each week – that it is becoming increasingly difficult to navigate it effectively. We decided that the occasional selection from the archives posted publicly online might be a welcomed addition to the regular fare.

Watch for an item to be posted online periodically throughout each month. We will update the **ChessCafe** home page whenever there has been a “new” item posted here. We hope you enjoy *From the Archives*...

The Kibitzer by Tim Harding

The Two Worlds of Correspondence Chess

The growth of the Internet has benefited chess and chess players in numerous ways: newsgroups, information sites on the Web like the **ChessCafe** and The Week In Chess, databases of chess games and servers where real-time chess can be played against distant opponents. Perhaps the greatest benefit, however, is the opportunity to play correspondence games by e-mail.

At present there are two worlds of correspondence chess: firstly, the traditional “postal” system with its established network of national and international competitions, titles and ratings and secondly the new but burgeoning e-mail chess community. There is only a small overlap between these two worlds at present, but the links are constantly being strengthened.

Undoubtedly one of the reasons for the huge popularity that playing e-mail chess has already attained is that it puts you in direct contact with real human beings elsewhere on the planet as an antidote to endless interaction with computer programs!

Correspondence chess (usually called “CC”) has a history going back more than 150 years, with moves normally sent by postcard or letter and sometimes by

telegraphic means. The telephone, however, never proved suitable as a means of transmission although fax tournaments are now becoming popular among players who do not have e-mail accounts. CC players generally make a distinction between their kind of game (where time is measured in days) and real-time play through chess servers, which are governed by the clock with about an hour being the normal duration of a game.

The present organizational structures of CC developed early in the 20th century and became well-established in the late 1940s with the foundation of the International Correspondence Chess Federation (ICCF), which is the rule-making and governing body for all forms of CC worldwide. Most chess-playing nations are affiliated to ICCF. But in those countries (like the USA and England) where there is a multiplicity of CC organizations, umbrella groups have been formed to represent them internationally.

The ICCF organizes World Championships and international team events for men and women, as well as a wide range of graded events for master-strength players down to average and weak club player standard. Play by fax or e-mail is permissible in these events if your opponent agrees; ICCF also organizes special fax-only and e-mail-only events. They also, like most CC organizations, hold “thematic” openings tournaments for players who prefer to play for fun or to test new ideas, usually in sharp tactical openings of the kind rarely seen in over-the-board master play. Newcomers, however strong at over-the-board play, do better to start with one of their national CC clubs and gain experience with the mechanics of CC before trying international play.

Here is an example of postal chess played at the highest level. The winner, Britain’s Jonathan Penrose, was one of the few players to defeat the late Mikhail Tal, when he was world champion and at the height of his powers. In the 1970s, Penrose began to play postal chess and was until recently the top player on the ICCF rating list. He is now second (on 2710) behind Gert Jan Timmerman of the Netherlands (2725). Penrose was one of the runners-up in the 13th World Championship Final, won by M.M. Umansky of Russia.

Penrose-Richard Goldenberg [France]

13th Correspondence World Ch 1989-91

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 Nf6 3.d4 Nxd5 4.Nf3 Bg4 5.c4 Nb6 6.Be2

Goldenberg won a game in this championship against the Russian player Korelov, who played 6.c5 here, but Penrose chooses the calmer continuation, preferring to complete his development before undertaking active operations.

6...Nc6 7.0-0 e6 8.Nc3 Be7 9.d5 exd5 10.cxd5 Nb4 11.Qd4 Bxf3 12.Qxg7!?

After the present game had ended, Jansa-Gipslis, Ostrava 1992, went 12.Bxf3 0-0 13.Qe4! Re8?! (better 13.c6 14.dxc6 bxc6 15.Rd1 N4d5 restricting White’s advantage) 14.Rd1 Bf8 15.Qg4 and White went on to win.

12...Bf6 13.Bb5+ c6 14.Re1+ Kd7 15.dxc6+

Informator 55 gave the unclear line 15.Qxf7+ Kc8 16.Qe6+ Nd7 17.gxf3 cxb5 18.Nxb5 Qg8+ 19.Kf1 Qxe6 (or 19...Nxd5 20.Nd6+ Kc7 21.Nf7 with compensation) 20.dxe6 Nc2! 21.exd7+ Kxd7 22.Rd1+ Kc6 23.a4.

15...bxc6 16.Qg3!

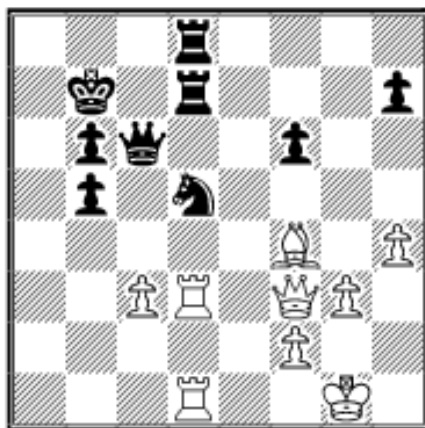


Typically forceful play by Penrose, giving up a piece to keep the black king insecure, whereas the obvious 16.Qxf7+ (tried in some CC games) seems to lead nowhere.

16.Bxc3 17.bxc3 cxb5 18.Bg5 f6 19.Qxf3 N4d5 20.Be3 Kc7 21.Rad1 Re8 22.a4!

This ensures the recovery of the piece (if 21.bxa4 22.c4) and leaves Black with permanent problems because of his king position and weakened pawn structure.

22...Qd6 23.a5 Red8 24.axb6+ axb6 25.g3 Qc6 26.Bf4+ Kb7 27.Rd3 Rd7 28.Red1 Rad8 29.h4



29...h5

White's strategy from here is based on a siege of this pawn until it can be safely taken. Black would have liked to simplify by 29.Nc7, but it leads to a lost king and pawn ending: 30.Qxc6+ Kxc6 31.Rxd7 Rxd7 32.Rxd7 Kxd7 33.Bxc7 Kxc7 34.g4 Kd6 35.f4 Kd5 36.Kf2 Kc4 37.g5 fxg5 38.fxg5 Kxc3 39.h5 b4 40.g6 hxg6 41.h6 and White queens with check. In correspondence chess, it is much easier to

analyze such positions to the limit and confirm that an ending is won or drawn, whereas over-the-board grandmasters, playing against a pressing time limit and without the freedom to move the pieces around before making their decision, may sometimes settle for second best.

30.Qe4 Kc8 31.Rd4 Kb7 32.Kh2 Qc5 33.Qf5 Qc6 34.R4d2 Qc4 35.Qxh5 Qe4 36.Qg4 f5 37.Qg6 Nxf4 38.Rxd7+ Rxd7 39.Rxd7+ Kc8

Black threatens mate in one and all White's pieces, but Penrose has seen the final coup: 40.Rd8+! Kxd8 41.Qd6+ Kc8 42.Qxf4 Whether or not Black exchanges queens, the white h-pawn will decide the game.

42.Qe6 43.h5 Black resigned.

For the traditional postal player, there are two big advantages of moving to e-mail transmission of the moves. The first is the much reduced expense, since a move (sometimes several moves) can be sent for just the cost of a local phone call – and in some countries such calls are free. Of course, buying the computer and modem and a subscription to get connected amounts to a major expense beyond many personal and family budgets, but more and more people have access to the Internet through their work or college, or can justify the purchase of a personal computer for work done at home or to help with their children's education. For them, the additional expenses involved in using it to play chess are very small, compared with the cost of postage stamps.

Secondly, many players are frustrated by the slow pace of postal games with opponents in distant countries with unreliable postal services; the duration of a game that might have lasted anything from eighteen months to five years can be cut by a factor of four or five. Fax is also available to speed up play, but it works out more expensive than postal chess to overseas destinations.

Organized e-mail play began a few years ago and there are now several bodies catering to the demand. For example, CompuServe's Chess Forum offers e-mail as well as real-time play, and American members can compete in United States Chess Federation tournaments through the service. Another national body offering e-mail tournaments is the well-established American Postal Chess Tournaments (APCT). Internationally, there have been two principal organizations offering competition: IECG (International E-mail Chess Group) and IECC (International E-mail Chess Club), but reorganisation may be under way and the best place to get up-to-date information is the newsgroup rec.chess.play-by-e-mail. There you can get started and find an opponent, particularly if you prefer unrated play.

One of my opponents told me he had no difficulty in finding opponents from a great number of countries without joining any organization. The snag is that you may find opposition obtained that way can be much weaker or stronger than you, whereas the organizations try to match players of roughly equal strengths.

One of the strongest postal players turning to e-mail is ICCF international master Alan Ludgate, who is currently competing in IECG's informal E-mail World Championship. Here is one of his wins from an earlier event, with some of his comments.

Ludgate [Ireland]-Pietro Cimmino [Italy]
IECG M004, 1996

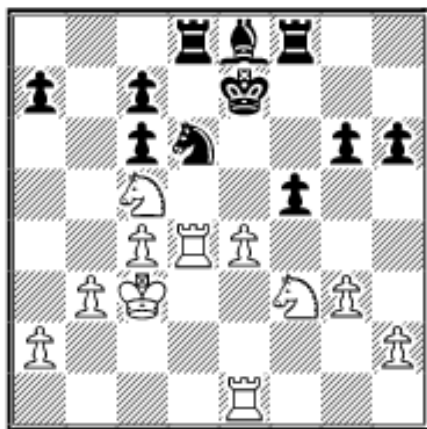
1.c4 e5 2.Nc3 d6 3.g3 g6 4.Bg2 Bg7 5.e3 f5 6.d4 Nc6? 7.dxe5 dxe5 8.Bxc6+ bxc6 9.Qxd8+ Kxd8 10.b3 e4 11.Bb2 Nf6 12.Na4 Ne8

Exchanging bishops leaves Black with the bad bishop and the white king can advance on the dark squares later.

13.0-0-0+ Ke7 14.Ne2 Bxb2+ 15.Kxb2 Rb8 16.Nd4 Bd7 17.Nc5 Nd6 18.Kc3

At first sight 18.Nxd7 looks good but 18...Kxd7 19.c5 Nc4+ 20.Kc3 Ne5 is unclear.

18...Be8 19.f3 exf3 20.Nxf3 Rd8 21.Rd4 h6 22.Re1 Rf8 23.e4!



A combination to simplify into a winning ending.

23...fxe4 24.Rdxe4+ Nxe4+ 25.Rxe4+ Kf7

If 25...Kd6 26.Kd4 Bf7 27.Ne5 wins material.

26.Rf4+ Ke7 27.Rxf8 Kxf8 28.Ne6+ Ke7 29.Nxd8 Kxd8

After 29...c5! 30.Nb7 Bc6 31.Nxc5 Bxf3

White should still win, but it's much harder.

30.Kd4! g5

If 30...Ke7 31.Kc5 Kf6 32.Nd4 Kg5 33.Nxc6 and White wins.

31.Kc5 Kc8 32.Ne5 Kb7 33.b4 a6

A last trap was 33...h5 hoping for 34.h4 gxh4 35.gxh4 Ka6 36.Nxc6 Bxc6 37.Kxc6 but 34.Nf3 prevents any stalemate.

34.a3 h5 35.Nf3 g4 36.Ne5 a5 37.bxa5 Black resigned.

When I look into my crystal ball to foresee the future of CC, I expect that e-mail play will grow in the next two decades until it represents perhaps 60-80% of all CC played, but there will always be some players who do not like computers or who prefer the more meditative pace of the postal game. There are interesting years up ahead for correspondence players; the game is very far from being dead!



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