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The Changes I Have Seen

For several months I have been wondering about the topic and title of my 100th column for **ChessCafe.com**. For a while, 'Fifty Years A Patzer' was the front-runner, but I had already written '40 Years A Kibitzer' as the 50th column in July 2000. Maybe one day I'll write '60 Years A Patzer' instead, if I live that long.

COLUMNISTS

The Kibitzer

Tim Harding

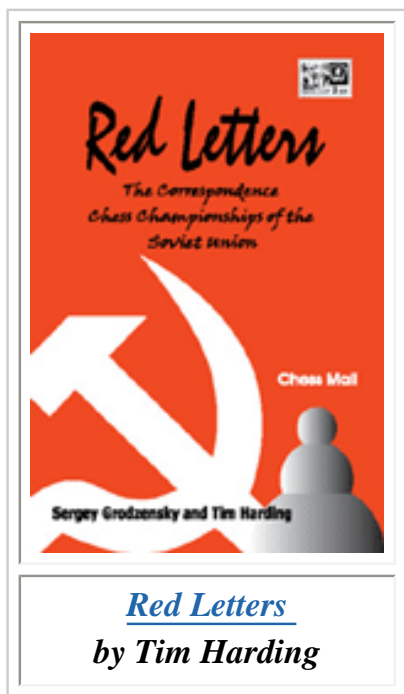
Then Hanon Russell at **ChessCafe** suggested we do an audio interview for the Skittles Room. If you have not heard the interview yet, you might like to do so, as it covers some areas that I might otherwise have included in this article. The interview is in MP3 format and lasts about half an hour.

I think the chat with Hanon went quite well, though the thirty minutes seemed to fly by and we didn't cover all the points I anticipated. For example, I did not get a chance to mention my recent book, *50 Golden Chess Games*, which is a collection of annotated correspondence masterpieces. You can read an independent review of the book by Carsten Hansen in the **ChessCafe Archives**, and it is available from **USCFsales.com** and from my own site www.chessmail.com, as well as from many good chess book dealers.

About 'The Kibitzer'

The format of The Kibitzer column has always been free-floating. Maybe that is why it has lasted so long. I chose the name 'The Kibitzer' because it is a vague and all-encompassing title. A kibitzer is basically a person who watches and makes comments – welcome or otherwise, apposite or otherwise, intelligent or otherwise.

I looked back at the first column and saw that I never stated what areas of chess experience would be covered. I just dived straight in with the first topic: the Frankenstein-Dracula Variation of the Vienna Game, which is posted in the From The Archives section. Other openings topics followed but I have also looked at chess history, chess politics, some personalities in the game and almost anything that occurred to me might be of interest. I am grateful to Hanon Russell for inviting me to do this column and it's amazing that it has now been published for more than eight years. Probably most readers were not on the internet eight years ago, but the columns are still



available in the [ChessCafe Archives](#).

Of course there was no such thing as the internet when I started playing serious chess in the 1960s. There were computers in the military, big business and universities but not in private ownership. They were very big, very slow (by today's standards) and very expensive. To communicate with somebody in another country, you wrote a letter. If you could afford it, or the matter was important enough, you might go to the trouble and expense of an international telephone call, which involved going through an operator because you couldn't just dial the other side of the world.

In the far-off days of the early 1960s, we had the early years of the Space Race and in 1962 there was the Cuban Missile Crisis. Man was dangerous enough to threaten to destroy his own planet with nuclear weapons, but chess was still almost always played using wooden chess pieces and a wooden or folding cardboard board.

Tal had briefly shaken up the top of the chess world in the late 1950s, but after the 1960 world championship match he was stuffed back into his box and the world championship matches were back in the hands of the positional maestros again. Botvinnik, Smyslov, Botvinnik again, Petrosian; they weren't look-alikes but they played a kind of rarefied chess that the man in the local club found hard to understand; they didn't have Tal's magical mass-appeal. However, chess was not a mass-appeal game anyway, except maybe in the USSR where people queued outside Moscow's Hall of Columns in the hope of seeing a famous grandmaster.

Somehow the world survived that crisis and soon we were playing school and club matches with plastic chessmen on crinkly plastic boards. Don't tell me that's progress.

Summer holidays for the family in the late 1950s and early 1960s involved driving most of the day to the seaside through England's windy 'A' roads that went straight through the centre of every market town on the way. Although there was far less traffic in those days, you had to allow several hours for such a journey, especially on an August Saturday when everybody else seemed to have the same idea. I recall that in 1960 we still didn't have a television in our house but at the time of the Rome Olympic Games we were staying in a small hotel in Devon. After an afternoon on the beach, the hotel guests crowded around the black-and-white television to see live Olympic athletics for the first time; a milestone! (The 1956 games were in Melbourne. And to see the climax of the events, you had to view cinema newsreels days after they took place.)

The 1963 world championship match was the first one that I "kibitzed" intensively. I supported Petrosian, not because I understood his play but

because Botvinnik had had enough time on the throne and kept refusing to relinquish it. Of course I couldn't go to Moscow but the moves were in the paper each morning and I would play through the games, study any adjourned positions, and go through the games after lessons with other players on the school team. B.H. Wood's magazine *Chess* arrived every two weeks with deeper analysis of the games and then when the match was over, Bob Wade wrote an excellent book that I must have begged my parents to purchase for me.

Pachman's books started to be published in English around this time as well: *Indian Systems*, *Modern Chess Strategy*, *Queen's Gambit and other Closed Games*. I studied them repeatedly, beginning to get some understanding about what constituted real chess. Actual playing results were still erratic, but I was beginning to acquire some "chess culture." On Sunday afternoons the BBC radio sometimes aired a chess programme but it was usually impossible for me to listen to it.

By 1964, although the Olympics were held in Tokyo, everyone took it for granted that the races would be live on television. For the family holiday we went to Whitby on the North Sea coast in Yorkshire so that I could play in the British Under-16 Championship. It was a long way but now motorways and a faster family car made this a feasible one day's journey from the Thames Valley. The car had six cylinders and could do 80 miles an hour easily on the motorways; now the speed limit is lower.

On the last leg of the journey across the Yorkshire Moors, sinister crystal balls sat on the top of a hillside. This was Fylingdales: part of NATO's early warning system designed to give notice that Russian nukes were about to arrive. The film *Dr Strangelove* spoke to my generation. Chess was just something you did to pass the time until the world ended. In case it didn't end, you had to do your school work, too.

University years were a time of intensive chess (and bridge) playing and also some kibitzing. I went to Hastings once during the Christmas holidays and another time I helped Bob Wade run a chess stand at a New Year exhibition in London's Olympia; I think this must have been for the Chess Education Society or some other arm of the British Chess Federation. There was a continuous replacement simul running all day, for up to 12 opponents, though you might start in the morning with only 6 or 8. When the chairs were full, people waited and as soon as a game ended, somebody else took their place. When your simul stint of 2 hours or so ended, somebody else took over and you were free for a few hours and probably did another hour later in the day. Also in my student years, I went to Monaco 1968, as I described in Kibitzer #50.

In 1971 I went to a chess tournament in Holland for the first time and stayed

with a local family – as was the rule if you entered one of the amateur sections at Hoogovens. Unlike events I had attended before, they didn't let many people into the room where the masters and GMs were actually playing, but in the main hotel restaurant they had screens (so you could watch Walter Browne in time trouble) and demonstration boards with a master discussing games with his audience. Lex Jongsma was the man running this show.

Hoogovens was much better run than most English tournaments. You played your game, watched the end of the GM games if yours finished early, had a meal with friends and then back to the family. I learned to play draughts (checkers) continental style on a 100-square board. I tried to drink real Dutch gin (oude genever?).

The TV was on: speed skating, British comedy shows with Dutch subtitles and – what was this? – a programme about chess? Chess was never on television in England in 1971, but here was some film of the Wijk aan Zee masters in action, the results, maybe a discussion about what was going to happen in an adjourned game. This was a glimpse of an ideal world, a whole new dimension to kibitzing!

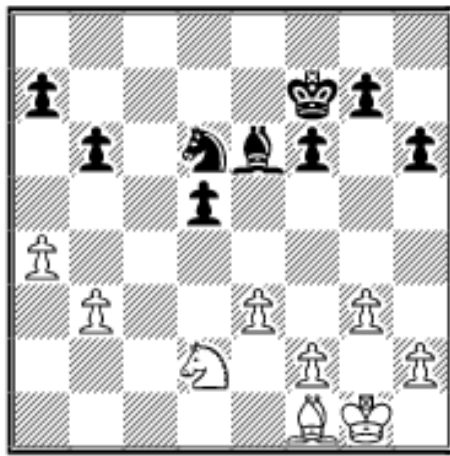
It seemed that normal ordinary Dutch people really would switch on their TV to see how Timman or Donner were getting on, just as they might do to see the goals in that night's game between Ajax and Feyernoord.

I was present at both Wijk aan Zee 1971 and, at the end of the same year, at Hastings 1971-72 which were won by Viktor Korchnoi (the latter in a tie with the young and anorexic-looking Anatoly Karpov). A strange thing happened to the tournament winner on both occasions when he sat down to play a modest young Swede. Can it be true (as I was told that day) that after the following game he really remarked; "How can I lose twice to this patzer Andersson, and with White?" Ulf Andersson of course was soon to prove he was no patzer and apart from continuously holding a FIDE rating above 2500 for more than 30 years, he also became the top-rated correspondence player in the world for quite some time.

Here is the endgame of the first encounter:

V. Korchnoi – U. Andersson

Hoogovens, Wijk aan Zee, January 1971



Queens have just been exchanged on d2. Andersson now eliminated his isolated pawn and enhanced his bishop's scope with:

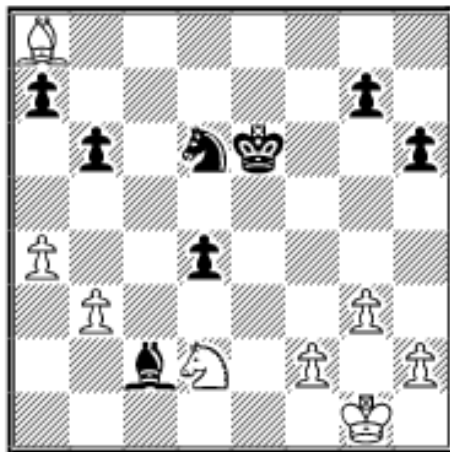
44...d4!

Now if 45 exd4 then Black has 45...Nf5 regaining the pawn, but a draw would be likely. Korchnoi, whose opponent was rated 2480 at the time, underestimates him and tries to complicate.

45 e4?

Now Black has a passed pawn whereas it will hard for White to create one. Moreover White's queenside pawns are vulnerable.

45...f5 46 exf5 Bxf5 47 Bg2 Ke6 48 Ba8 Bc2



49 Nf3?!

A fatal second finesse; White stands worse but 49 Kf1 should keep his chances alive. In later years, no grandmaster would take such risks against Andersson in an endgame.

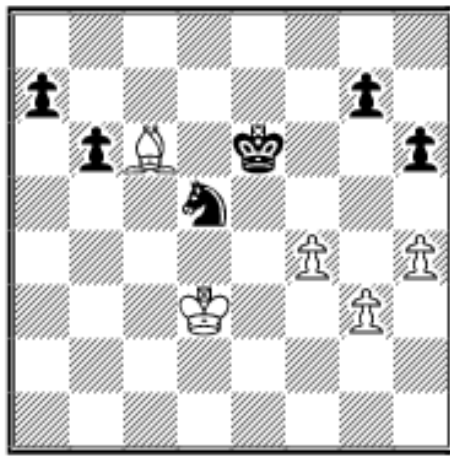
49...d3 50 Kf1 Bd1 51 Nd4+ Ke5 52 Nc6+ Kf6

Now the threat is ...d2 so White loses the b-pawn and ultimately the game. Korchnoi's pieces are treading on each other's toes; his bishop is comically out of the game on a8.

53 Ke1 Bxb3 54 Nb4

In *Informator 11* Ivkov wrote that 54 Kd2 would be met by 54...Ne4+, but I am not sure if he got that from Andersson or Korchnoi. Also 54...a5 and 54...Bxa4 come into consideration.

54...Bxa4 55 Nxd3 Bc2 56 Kd2 Bxd3 57 Kxd3 Ne8 58 Bc6 Nc7 59 f4 Ke6 60 h4 Nd5



Of course White would lose any king and pawn ending. Soon Black has the kingside blockaded and can win the game with his connected passed pawns.

61 Ba4 Nf6 62 Bd1 Kf5 63 Ke3 b5 64 Kf3 h5 65 Be2 b4 66 Ba6 Ke6 67 Bc4+ Kd6 68 Ke3 Kc5 69 Bb3 a5 70 Kd3 Kb5 71 Kd4 a4 72 Bc4+ Ka5 73 Bd3 a3 0-1.

Here is how he ambushed Korchnoi at Hastings.

Viktor Korchnoi - Ulf Andersson
Hastings 7172 Hastings (1), 1971

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nf3

In the earlier game, Korchnoi had played 3 g3. Andersson's rating had gone up to 2510 in the meantime, but Korchnoi wants revenge.

3..Bb4+ 4 Bd2 Qe7 5 g3 0-0 6 Bg2 Bxd2+ 7 Nbx d2 d6 8 Nf1!? Nbd7 9 Ne3 Ne4 10 0-0 f5 11 Ne1 Ndf6 12 f3 Ng5 13 Qd2 h6 14 Rc1 c5

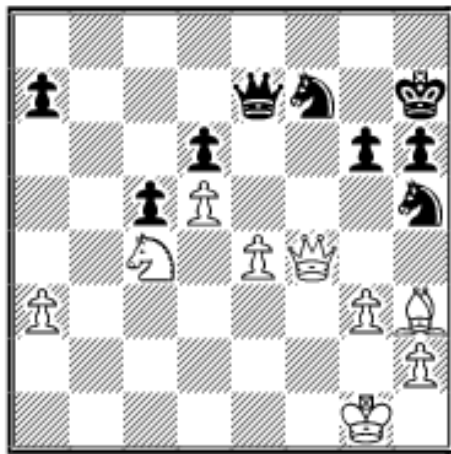


Black has more or less equalized now. White has a problem with his bishop, which he never really solves. If he ever plays f3-f4 then the black knights grab the e4-square.

15 N1c2 b6 16 Rfd1 Bb7 17 b4 Rad8 18 d5 g6 19 dxe6 Nxe6 20 Rb1 Kh7 21 Nd5 Bxd5 22 cxd5 Nc7 23 e4 fxe4 24 fxe4 Na6 25 a3 Rde8 26 Rf1!?

The game seemed about equal. Korchnoi sets a trap (26...Nxe4? 27 Qd3!) but Black is not tempted to take the e-pawn.

26...Nd7 27 Bh3 Ne5 28 Qe2 Nc7 29 Ne3 Rxf1+ 30 Rxf1 Rf8 31 Rf4 Ne8 32 Ng2 Ng7 33 Qf1 Rf7 34 bxc5 bxc5 35 Ne3 Nh5 36 Rxf7+ Nxf7 37 Nc4 Ng7 38 Qf4 Nh5



Imperceptibly, the great Korchnoi has been outplayed. Andersson indicated White's lack of good options in *Informator 13*. If now 39 Qf1 Nf6 40 Qf4 Ng5 41 Be6 (or 41 Bg2) then 41...Ngxe4 while if 39 Qg4 Qf6!.

39 Qh4 39 ..Nf6 40 Bg2 Ne5 41 Ne3 Kg7

The white queen is achieving nothing and while she is out of play, Black threatens to penetrate via ...Qb7. Korchnoi gives up

a pawn but he is soon quite lost.

42 g4 Nxd5 43 g5 Nxe3 44 gxh6+ Kf8 45 Qf4+ Kg8 46 Qxe3 Kh7 47 Qf4 c4 48 Qd2 Qc7 49 Qc3 Qb6+ 50 Kf1 Qb3 0-1.

1972: Year of Chess Fame

1972 was the year of Fischer-Spassky. The whole world kibitzed. A lot of things changed after that.

In Britain, one or two television series were filmed to give basic chess instruction. Then the BBC decided to have a chess tournament. This wasn't live coverage of a real event as with the Dutch, who actually wanted to show games from beginning to end.

As with other events that they staged in other sports, e.g. 'Pot Black' for snooker, they got a group of masters together for a knock-out tournament over a few days and swore them all to secrecy. Players such as Karpov, Miles and other leading young English masters were filmed as they played and then afterwards had to do voice-overs to reconstruct what they were thinking at crucial moments. Everything was edited down and the games were shown weeks or even months later one at a time in half-hour programmes. This format ran for a few years and a book was produced, but then the series died. Chess isn't a natural for television.

In 1993 Britain's Channel Four got the contract for televising Kasparov v Short and brought in a high-profile high-IQ presenter, Carol Vorderman, to host the show. The first program would be in the afternoon to get the opening moves and then they would return later to get the result and analysis. However, master chess at normal time limits has huge longueurs, preceded and succeeded (sometimes) by a few minutes where each player makes several moves very fast.

There is also the general problem that broadcast television, being a mass medium, generally involves a good deal of "dumbing-down." So if you were

one of the few thousand keen players who actually tuned into a Channel Four broadcast, you might get a few minutes of intelligent comment on Nigel's latest innovation in the Najdorf poisoned pawn. Unfortunately you were more likely to have to endure lots of simple explanations on the level of "Now Gary's queen is able to capture Nigel's b-pawn" which is just stating the obvious to 90% of the audience, just in case the other 10% don't have a clue what's going on unless there are lots of flashing arrows and highlighted squares on the demo board.

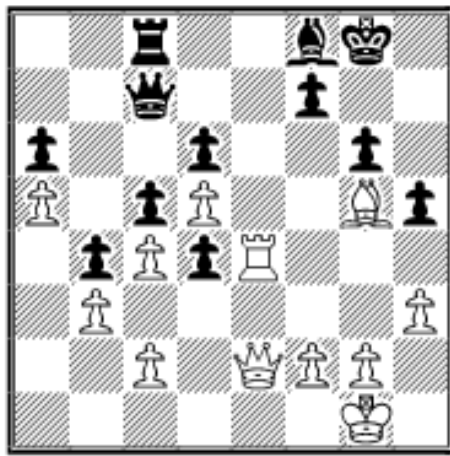
When David Beckham kicks a soccer penalty into the stand behind the goal, even a 1200-rated soccer kibitzer can tell that the master has blundered, but the man in the street that only follows chess occasionally does need some help. Even in Russia, where the level of chess comprehension is probably much higher, this can perhaps be overestimated. They tell me it's the long moves that get the most applause; so maybe Russia's TV chess commentators also have to do some dumbing-down.

If you actually attended the match at the Savoy Theatre, you will know that earphone commentary was available for spectators. A team of analysts in the projection booth discussed aspects of the game and managed to keep some interest going as players had 20- and 30-minute thinks. They could just make jokes or analyse potential lines of play that spectators could follow on their pocket sets. At least for the reasonably well-informed player who can follow these discussions, this kind of commentary is probably the best way to present chess.

Everyone is bored by the slow bits but when the fast bits do occur – unless the TV production is excellent and the chess knowledge of the viewer is quite high – the essence of what has happened is not grasped. In the first game, Short was losing with Black until Kasparov made a few mistakes. Short refused a draw offer and lost on time; if he could have made 40 moves, he might have won the game in a second session. This was all potentially dramatic, but the decisive moments went by in a flash.

Kasparov – Short

PCA-World Championship London (1), 07.09.1993



32 g4! hxd4 33 Bf6?

White should probably have attacked differently by 33 hxf4 Qxa5 34 Bf6 etc.

33...gxh3 34 Qg4 Ra8

Short could have established a fortress by giving up his queen: 34...Bg7 35 Re7 Bxf6 36 Rxc7 Rxc7. Instead he moved his rook away from the white queen's attack in order to threaten ...Qxa5, but this

is objectively too slow.

35 Qxh3?

After 35 Qg5! Bg7 (also if 35...Qxa5 36 Rh4) 36 Rh4 it is not looking good for Black, e.g. 36...Qd7 37 Bxg7 Kxg7 38 Qh6+ Kf6 39 Rf4+ and White wins.

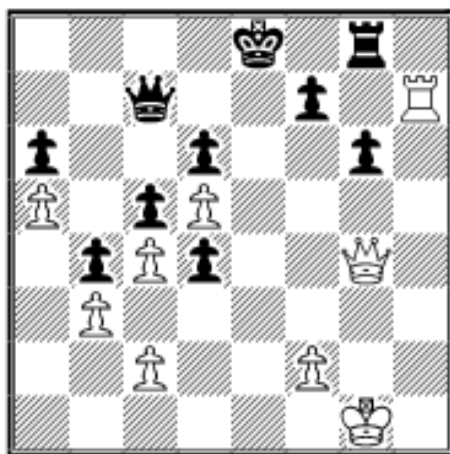
35...Bg7 36 Bxg7?

Kasparov misses another opportunity, since after 36 Re7! Qxa5 37 Rxf7! White forces checkmate in a few moves, while after 36...Qc8 37 Qxc8+ Rxc8 38 Bxg7 Kxg7 39 Rd7 Re8 40 Kf1 Rh8 41 Rxd6 the win of the d-pawn should eventually prove decisive.

36...Kxg7 37 Rh4 Rg8 38 Rh7+ Kf8 39 Qg4?!

White has other moves, but now the game should probably end in a draw.

39...Ke8! 1-0 (time)



Short played the best move, but his flag fell. After 40 Qe6+ fxe6 41 Rxc7 exd5 42 cxd5 Rf8 the black rook will counter-attack down the f-file and it is up to White rather than Black to demonstrate whether he can draw.

Of course Short couldn't afford to throw away such a good chance against the odds-on favourite. Even more, the TV station and its commentary crew regretted the sensational ratings they could have

established if the British underdog had taken the lead in the match. Since

Short played quite well with White in this match, the result of some excellent openings preparation, there could have been a real contest if he had won this game.

Instead, as the local hero lost more and more games, the TV station was saddled with a white elephant and eventually the players had to complete the 20-game contract with some meaningless exhibition games. When the subsequent Kasparov-Anand match, also featured on British TV, yielded mostly dull draws, this was more or less the end for chess on television in my part of the world.

The very nature of kibitzing is changing once more. The internet offers a better medium than television for presenting global sporting events that have a significant worldwide audience, but no concentrated audience in any particular country or locality.

Many major chess events are now presented “live” (sort of) on the internet, so that you can tune into a website and see the moves being played and listen to an audio commentary by experts. Four years ago it was possible to do that for the Kramnik-Kasparov “Braingames” match in London, and I am hoping that it will be possible to do the same for the upcoming Kramnik-Leko match.

Millions of chess fans around the world will be disappointed if the arrangements for online spectators are not excellent. Yet in 1986, when Kasparov and Karpov played the first half of their title match in London (the second half was in Leningrad), it was amazing just to be able to follow the moves on teletext (of course with no commentary).

The chess board on which the moves were actually played was linked to screens around the hotel venue in Piccadilly where the match was held, so from various public rooms in the hotel you could see the board being updated. The link was fed to the BBC so that if you had a teletext TV anywhere in Britain or Ireland that could receive BBC, and you tuned to the right channel and page, you could get updates on the games almost in real time.

It was a bit like watching paint dry, except at the very beginning of games and in time trouble (moves came fairly fast at the beginning and end of sessions), but this was still a major improvement on waiting for tomorrow’s newspaper. Kibitzing had entered the modern age, and the internet was just a few years around the corner.

Maybe chess, from the point of view of its enthusiasts like us, has found a good natural home. The only snag is that there is now less likelihood that the game will attract new recruits through mainstream news media. Chess now

only makes the headlines when something bad happens: like Bobby Fischer getting arrested in Japan. Then the publicity tends to be negative.

What chess needs now is a photogenic superstar with a positive image, a 64-squares version of Wimbledon winner Maria Sharapova perhaps. Of course if she were American or British or Irish, so much the better. I have nothing against all the Russians, Czechs and Bulgarians who are excellent at chess (and tennis), but the western public gets confused with all these names ending –ov and –ova. And is it too much to ask that the next world chess superstar has a name that doesn't begin with the letter K?

K is for king and for knight. K is for Karpov, Kamsky, Kasparov, Keres, Khalifman, Korchnoi and Kramnik and, of course, it's K for kibitzer!

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