



SKITTLES ROOM

From the Archives

Hosted by
Mark Donlan



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.com home page whenever there has been a “new” item posted here. We hope you enjoy *From the Archives*...

The Kibitzer by Tim Harding

Kilkenny Open

I rarely play over-the-board games at present, my local club having closed down after the death of its principal organiser; I keep busy with correspondence play. However, I paid a visit to the small but ancient Irish town of Kilkenny the last Sunday in November to promote my new magazine [Chess Mail](#) and to do, as it were, some hands-on kibitzing. I was rewarded by seeing a very nice game played by English super-GM Michael Adams.

The annual Kilkenny Open, sponsored by leading-edge Irish software company Iona Technologies, always attracts the top Irish players as well as a contingent of masters and GMs from the neighbouring island. It's a busy weekend at the top: travel on the Friday with a game starting at 8 PM; all your moves in the game in 105 minutes. After the game, a drink – or several drinks. Saturday morning, 9:30 AM, the first of three rounds in the day. If your game goes down to the wire, the break between rounds is just ninety minutes. Round two at 2:30 PM, round three at 7:30 PM. Then two games on the Sunday, starting at 9 AM and only an hour for lunch because most people have to travel.



GM Michael Adams

The Iona International Masters event was supported by two other tournaments for medium and lower-rated players and the whole event takes over the Club House Hotel for a weekend. Every room seems to have a few chessboards tucked away in it, including (of course) the bar.

In all there were seven GMs in the field this year, six from England and the seventh (Russian-born Alexander Baburin) was Ireland's top board in the Yerevan Olympiad. Also visiting was twelve-year-old prodigy Luke McShane (soon to be an IM), who finished joint third despite feeling unwell, and from Austria came Mark Heidenfeld (also on Ireland's team

at Yerevan) who is a son of the late Wolfgang Heidenfeld, a noted writer on the game. Also playing was Dr. John Nunn's German-born bride of a few months, Petra.

The competition in the top group was very tough and four points from six rounds proved good enough for a (small) prize. When I arrived, round five was well under way and I found grandmasters John Nunn and Michael Adams going over their game which had just ended in a draw. Nunn had dropped an earlier half-point, so Adams was set to enter the final round a half point clear of him and a point ahead of most of the field.

I gave Adams a complimentary copy of my new *Chess Mail* magazine to read over lunch. I cannot be sure, but I think he may have glanced at it because there was definitely a touch of Ulf Andersson about the way he handled the last round game. (The principal article in the January issue of my magazine features the Swedish GM and his brilliant debut in a top correspondence tournament.)

William Watson – Michael Adams
Kilkenny Open (6), 1996
Vienna Opening [C26]

1 e4 e5 2 Nc3

The Vienna, good coffee-house chess.

2 Nf6 3 g3

But with a modern twist.

3...Nc6 4 Bg2 Bc5 5 d3 d6 6 Na4 Bg4 7 f3 Be6 8 f4?!



White is unprepared for this; 8 Ne2 is normal. I took a look at the top boards after a few moves; nothing much was happening and I went to eat lunch. There I meet several players out of contention who have agreed a quick draw in the last round, although I tell some of them they have missed an opportunity to collect a scalp. Strong players lacking last-round motivation after a poor tournament can be beaten in such events; it was in such circumstances that I once beat Nigel Short in the days before he got his first FIDE title, and Willie Watson too, when he was a teenage star.

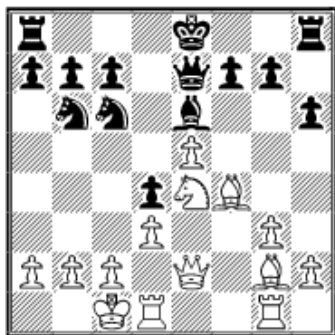
8...Bxg1 9 Rxb1 exf4 10 Bxf4

This bishop never finds a role in the game, especially after White's next move.

10...d5 11 e5 Nd7 12 Qe2 Qe7 13 0-0-0 Nb6 14 Nc3

White doesn't want to open the a-file by Nxb6, so he offers a hot pawn instead.

14...d4 15 Ne4 h6



Adams would be first with a draw from this game, so he prefers to secure his king before starting to erode White's queenside. Perhaps if he had been the one half a point behind he might have ventured 15...Bxa2!?, which under the present circumstances must have looked too risky to Adams although it's not clear. A possible continuation is 16 Qg4 (16 b3? Qa3+; 16 Bg5 Qxe5) 16...0-0? 17 Nf6+ Kh8 and now 18 Be4 with a very strong attack is superior to the unclear 18 Bh6 Rg8 19 Nxc3 Rxc3. However, 16...Kf8 could be playable, but the rook out of play on h8 would not be Adams' style.

16 c4 dxc3 17 Nxc3 Nb4! 18 Bxb7

Otherwise (e.g. 18 a3 N4d5) White has no material compensation for his misery.

18...Rb8 19 Qe4 0-0 20 a3 c5! 21 Bc6

If 21 axb4 cxb4 (but not 21...Rxb7? 22 bxc5), regains the piece and opens lines.

21...Nxc6 22 Qxc6 Rfc8 23 Qe4 Rd8 24 g4

This was the position the second time I saw this game. When I returned, Dr. Nunn and Chris Ward (the 1996 British Champion) had agreed a draw after their 2 c3 d5 Sicilian petered out; the draw meant they were sure of joint second place whatever happened to Adams. Then McShane offered a draw on board three, as this guaranteed him a small prize. This cleared space for kibitzers around the top board. I could tell that many of the club players watching thought White held the advantage because of his extra pawn, but I told Mark Heidenfeld that his four-point finish would probably be in the money as Adams was going to win.

24...Rd4 25 Qf3

Black has excellent compensation for the pawn because of the quantity of weak squares around the white king and White's absence of threats. I was pleased that I predicted Black's next moves.

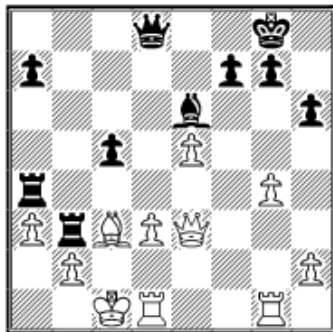
25...Na4!

To get rid of the defender and open the b-file, after which it is hard for White to prevent a combination occurring on the dark squares. The exchange of a pair of pieces doesn't bother Black, as the opposite-coloured bishops (in the presence of heavy pieces) strongly favor the attacker.

26 Nxa4 Rxa4 27 Bd2

27 g5 would seem more plausible, especially as White needed to win this game. 27...h5 28 Rdf1 c4 gives Black a strong attack 29 d4 c3.

27...Qd8 28 Bc3 Rb3 29 Qe3



Probably underestimating the reply; 29 Kc2 looks better, although I would still rather be Black.

29...Rxa3! 30 bxa3 Rxc3+ 31 Kd2 Rxa3

I watched from here to the finish (almost) but not without considerable difficulty, although I am over six feet tall. There were already two banks of kibitzers seated and standing around the board where the Ward-Nunn game had ended. If you lost your place it was very hard to get back to a position where you could see the game.

Imagine two dozen spectators on tiptoe (if not standing on chairs) and craning their necks for a sight of the board and clock. This was no large playing hall with the GMs on an inaccessible stage; the flavour of the Irish tournament is very much masters cheek-by-jowl with the rank and file of woodpushers. It was also very hot and stuffy after two hours play. Except that there was no smoke in the air, it could have been the Café de la Regence, Paris, 170 years earlier, with Adams cast as Deschappelles dismissing the challenge of a pawn-and-move upstart in a late-night odds game.

32 Ke2 c4 33 Kf2 Qh4+

The decisive blows will come on the queenside, but this diversionary check draws the white queen to an inferior square.

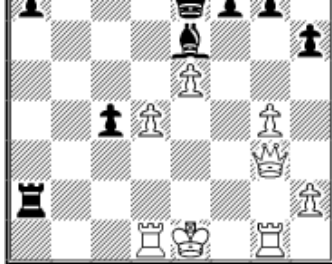
34 Qg3 Ra2+ 35 Ke1 Qe7

After this neat switchback everyone could see who stood better. Besides, Adams had half an hour left on his clock; Watson was down to two or three minutes to complete the whole game.

36 d4



Time trouble. "He should have played 36 Rg2," I heard Dr. Nunn whisper to his wife. True, but there could follow 36...Qb4+ 37 Kf1 Qb3 38 Ke1 (38 Rxa2 Qxd1+) 38...Qc3+ 39 Kf1 Ra1 and Black



stands much better, e.g. 40 Rxa1 (40 Rgd2 Qxd2 41 Rxa1 c3!) 40...Qxa1+ 41 Ke2 Qc1 (or 41...c3!?).

36...Qb4+ 37 Kf1 c3

Now the pawn is heading for a queen and the c4-square is cleared for the bishop. Adams spent a few minutes on the key moves, not attempting to blitz Watson. The tension accumulated.

38 Rg2 c2 39 Rcl Qxd4 40 Qf2 Qxe5

Instead, 40...Qd1+ gets nowhere after 41 Qe1.

41 Qd2 Bd5 42 Rf2 Qe4 43 Qf4 Qd3+ 44 Kg1 Rb2 45 Rd2 Qb3 46 Kf2 Qb6+ 47 Kf1 Qc6 48 Qd4?

A blunder in a lost position; White loses control over c1. 48 Kf2 was relatively best, but without long-term prospects, especially with White's hanging flag. If 48 Qf5 Rb1 49 Rxb1 c1Q+ 50 Rxc1 Qxc1+ 51 Ke2 Bc4+ 52 Ke3 Qe1+ or 48 Kg1 Rb1 or 48 Rd4? Rb1, threatening ...Qb5+.

48...Rb1 0-1

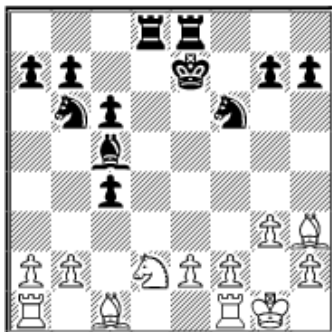
The evening before I arrived, Adams had destroyed the challenge of another of his English GM colleagues as follows. A typical Saturday night game in a weekend tournament in which White hardly looks like a GM.

Danny King – Michael Adams

Kilkenny Open (4), 1996

English Opening [A20]

1 g3 e5 2 c4 Nf6 3 Bg2 c6 4 d4 exd4 5 Qxd4 d5 6 Nf3 Be6 7 0-0 dxc4 8 Qxd8+ Kxd8 9 Ng5 Nbd7 10 Rd1 Ke8 11 Nd2 Nb6 12 Nxe6 fxe6 13 Bh3 Rd8 14 Bxe6 Bc5 15 Rf1 Ke7 16 Bh3 Rhe8



17 Nf3 h6 18 b3 Kf7 19 e3 c3 20 a3 a5 21 Ra2 Nbd5 22 Re2 Ne4 23 Ne1 Ndf6 24 Nf3 g5 25 Bg2 b5 26 Nd4 Bxd4 27 exd4 Rxd4 28 Be3 Rd3 29 b4 axb4 30 axb4 Nd5 31 Rb1 Nd2 0-1

The final scores were: Adams 5½/6; Nunn and Ward 5; McShane, Watson and Heidenfeld 4 ahead of Baburin and others on 3½ which was par for masters in this tough event.

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