



## C O L U M N I S T S

*The Kibitzer*

Tim Harding

## I Have Seen the Future — and It Works!

Playing chess on web servers has been a large growth area in the past two or three years, with the technology improving all the time. Basically, you have the choice of two modes of play: real-time and correspondence style. This article is chiefly concerned with the latter.

Real-time server chess is great for those who have no distractions in their home. You can set aside an hour or a whole evening or weekend afternoon to play a series of blitz games against opponents anywhere in the world. Usually the time rate is 5 minutes each per game but you can play faster, which really gets the adrenalin going, or slower, which frankly tends to be boring unless you have a well-matched opponent. On the other hand, if the telephone suddenly rings, or a child needs help with homework, or your wife wants to talk to you, your concentration can be broken and you might even overstep your time.

Correspondence chess style web server chess is entirely different. The time limit per move is generally 24 hours or more, so if something comes up at home when you are playing, you just log off and go back later.

You play several games simultaneously, often within a tournament structure. When you log on, you see which games are awaiting your move.

If you know what you want to play then you can make your move quickly. If your opponent happens to be online at the same time you may complete several moves in a session. More likely, this does not happen. You go offline and think about the harder moves and next time you log on, you have your moves ready.

If you are a regular correspondence chess player (post or email) or have played CC in the past, then you have a reasonable idea of what to expect in CC web server chess. You make a move, you wait until the reply comes back, then you either answer immediately or analyse a bit and reply later.

Web server CC shares with email CC the advantages over postal that:

- a) You don't have to buy stamps and postcards;
- b) You can play opponents anywhere in the world as easily as people in the

next town;

- c) You just use your computer (or a borrowed one, or one at work or a web café); you don't have to write anything down or keep hard copy records of games if you don't want to.
- d) Clerical errors should not happen — just mind where you click that mouse!

Email correspondence chess has been played by a few people for ten years or more, but it has really taken off in the past five years and especially in the last two. Probably 50% of all CC being played worldwide is now by email, and many people predict that figure will soon rise to more like 90%.

My prediction, however, is that fairly soon after that 90% penetration is reached, i.e. within the current decade, the figure for email chess will be back down to 10% because web server chess will kill it off just as postal chess is being killed off by email.

If you don't see why, then consider all these advantages that web server chess has over email CC:

- 1) No worries about learning/ buying special email chess software (you just use your normal web browser);
- 2) No notation problems, which can arise especially where opponents are from different countries;
- 3) No possibility that a player can try to cheat by changing his move;
- 4) No illegal or ambiguous moves accepted by the server to waste time for the opponents;
- 5) No silly arguments over the time/dates of sending and receiving moves (the web server handles all exceeding of time limits);
- 6) No more disagreements between players about whether the ICCF template or PGN or some other format should be used for transmission of moves by email;
- 7) Web server simplifies reporting by maintaining automatic score tables and archiving the games in PGN;
- 8) Viewing of ongoing games by outsiders (if desired) is facilitated.

Arguments over points 2, 4 and 6, in particular, have wasted a lot of time at recent ICCF Congresses. In the past year or two, hundreds of messages have been posted at The Correspondence Chess Message Board (<http://www.correspondencechess.com/bbs/>) churning over questions like whether the International Correspondence Chess Federation's numeric notation should be replaced by something else.

If ICCF can bring its web server project (launched last October) to fruition in the next two years or so, it will make all such arguments redundant.

Correspondence chess in its traditional forms unfortunately appeals to only a

minority of all active chess players. A properly functioning web server system for CC would eliminate at a stroke the vast majority of the problems that many people have with CC and potentially make our game immensely more popular. The server takes over the “housekeeping” elements, reducing the player’s distractions to a bare minimum (logging on to the site and deciding which game to look at next). It allows players to concentrate on the pure chess aspects: researching the openings and analysing the middle games/endgames.

Of course, the above is an ideal world and it will any organisation entering this area both time and money to program and test its server software before it will be ready to host more than experimental tournaments. Once a server is up and running, it will need a high-bandwidth connection and all the other hardware requirements to process efficiently the large amount of traffic that will be generated. It will need maintenance and there will have to be some mirror or backup server in place to cover hardware downtime.

In the meantime, we don’t have that perfect world but there are some imperfect places where you can play web server CC satisfactorily enough to have a good idea of what we are moving towards. The rest of this article is about one of those places, itsyourturn.com. I will say now that, for all the provisos and problems that I highlight in the course of the text below, the overall experience of playing there is excellent. In the famous words of someone whose name I don’t recall right now, “I have seen the future — and it works!”

## **Introduction to Itsyourturn**

In this column, I shall describe one particular server — probably the most popular at present. It’s the one I am used to as I have been playing games there since February. It’s not perfect, but it’s interesting (and also free if you only want their basic service). I recommend you to give it a try; the address is <http://www.itsyourturn.com>.

Some readers may well have played in a similar fashion on other sites and if so, I would be interested to hear of your experiences and I will try out your recommended sites for myself. However, I have registered for a couple of other sites and never been matched with an opponent.

The proprietors of itsyourturn.com, which has been running since 1998, stress that their server is for “turn-based” games. If you want instant games, find a real-time server instead.

What they do offer is: a very wide choice of board games including chess variants, new tournaments starting weekly, help files and analysis areas, plus other services for members who pay a modest subscription. You can also play friendly games as well as tournaments, by issuing challenges to other users.

For friendlies you can agree your own time limits but the norm for regular tournaments is 48 hours and for “fast” tournaments it is 28 hours. That means, you must move within that number of hours after your opponent’s last move, except on Saturdays, Sundays and American public holidays when an extra 24 hours is added to everyone’s thinking times. Unlike regular correspondence chess, there is no accumulation of unused time, so it is more like the way postal chess used to be played in America in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

There are no entry fees, no prizes and no ratings at [itsyourturn.com](http://itsyourturn.com): the latter may be a disincentive to some people but an attraction for others. Many server sites of the instant variety have fairly meaningless rating systems.

In a few games, such as the Japanese game of Go, there are no tournaments because of the problem of adjudication, but a lot of strong Go players play friendly practice games there.

You can play in tournaments for Chinese chess (xianqi), backgammon, draughts, and several other games, several of which I never heard of. Many users of the server try various games, but apart from regular chess the only other game I have tried is Chinese chess.

If you want to play regular chess, you can choose between three classes: Competitive Chess (which has a wide range of players including some masters), Intermediate and just plain Chess. I played only in the Competitive Chess events.

The normal formula for tournaments is four-player groups, with games as White and Black against each opponent, meaning six games per section. Winners (including ties) go through to the next round. The maximum number of players per section is five, the minimum three (two in the final). The level of entries in Competitive Chess generally means that the Final is Round Five, although sometimes it has been round four. Tournaments in other games than orthodox chess probably progress much quicker.

New tournaments start every Monday, with registration being opening the preceding Wednesday or Thursday. These events used to be open to everyone with “Main” (48 hour) and “Fast” (28 hour) tournaments alternating, but they have now introduced once a month Member tournaments as an additional incentive to pay up. This means that in a normal month with four Mondays there will be a member tournament, two Main tournaments and a Fast tournament. Personally, I prefer the Fast events but there is a greater risk of being timed out if you are away from your base for more

than a day. The new member tournaments will move much faster than non-member tournaments, because there are far fewer participants.

Current membership rates are as follows: Special: \$44.95 for 2 years; \$24.95 for 1 year; \$14.95 for a 6-month membership; \$8.45 for a 3-month membership. (Note: I have no business or financial interest in this server; I am just a player.)

If you qualify for the next round of a tournament, you have to wait until all the other sections are also decided. Then the following round will start (usually) on the next working day. If the section you win is the last to finish, you restart almost at once. It is possible to check on progress in all events by looking at the crosstables.

Non-members can still choose between all the other tournaments, but the number of games you can have in progress is limited to 20 (except where you have qualified from earlier rounds). So there are still three opportunities each month for non-members to play.

Registering as a new player is fairly simple at IYT. The main decision you have to make is whether to use your real name or a “handle” and what password you want. (You can decide later whether to pay for membership and whether you want to edit your user profile where you can optionally tell opponents some facts about yourself.)

The vast majority of players at IYT use a “handle” (nickname) to disguise their identity. This seems to be traditional on the Internet, though I wonder for how much longer will people be able to use any websites without giving their real names.

In these days, where a large number of CC games are being collected in commercial databases, the opening repertoire of a correspondence player is becoming harder to keep secret from future opponents. How do you practice new variations or openings for future use in serious events? By hiding your identity, you can use a server like IYT to do serious research without compromising future results. Several times I managed to get opponents to enter lines I wanted to try but didn’t want to risk first time in an ICCF event. I have also had some pretty weird stuff played against me, as well as a couple of promising innovations.

Moreover, because there are no ratings or titles at IYT, you can have fun by playing crazy lines or gambits if you want and you don’t have to worry about

the results. Of course it is also possible to take it quite seriously and earn kudos by reaching the later rounds of competitions and maybe even getting your name on the Tournament Champions page. If you are a strong player, you find the first rounds of events a bit boring, with several defaults or easy wins, but once you are through to the second and third rounds you will get plenty of challenging tough fights. Or if you are a relative novice or improving server, IYT is probably one of the few places where you can get a game against a master who would otherwise avoid you, and so gain valuable lessons to help you improve.

## **Making your moves**

When you have logged in to IYT, you get your Game Status page that shows which games are in progress. First listed are those where it is your turn, with the number of hours you have left to reply, and below that are the games where your opponents are to move. You can see the boards, review past moves and look at the tournament crosstable any time you want.

You will also receive email notifications sometimes of when it is your turn or if there is a message waiting from you from an opponent or the organisers. If several moves come in close together, you won't get separate notifications for each one, however.

When you select the game where you want to play next, a board appears with the moves played so far listed beside it. If you just want to see what your opponent has played but not reply yet, return to the game status page.

The interface for actually making moves is a bit clunky. A drag-and-drop system (like you get with real-time servers and database programs) would be much better, but would possibly be more confusing for complete beginners. The IYT system works by recognising the hotspots on each square. (On holiday, I once had to play on a touch-screen interface rather than a proper PC, it was extremely difficult to get moves to register.)

You are asked to click the piece you want to move and then the page rebuilds with the selected piece highlighted. Next you must click the square to which you want to move that piece (or the opposing piece you wish to capture). The server won't let you make illegal moves: pretty obvious, you may say, but in my Chinese Chess tournament (where my understanding of some of the rules was hazy) I found that what would be a valid knight move in western chess isn't always allowed in xianqi.

After you have chosen your arrival square, the page builds again showing your completed move and you then have the option to take it back and make another move (not necessarily with the same piece). If you realised when you selected your piece that it was the wrong one, too bad — you still have to make a trial move with it before you can take it back and select another piece.

Clearly, our ideal CC web server needs a much smoother and quicker interface than what IYT currently offers. If they want to survive in the long run, they will have to re-program but I guess they will get away with it for another year or two if necessary.

If you are happy with the move, then you submit it, returning to the game status page or the next game, depending on which button you choose. IYT's slogan "Sixty seconds a day is all you need to CRUSH your opponents" is roughly true, if they mean 60 seconds per game: if you make up your mind quickly and are using a proper computer on a fast connection, you probably can make half a dozen moves (or more) in five minutes.

## **Time-limit problems**

The main drawback to playing at IYT, if you are used to normal correspondence chess, is the fixed time-per-move limit and the fact that there is no leave allowance. The latter is the biggest problem with the site as I find it now; they should at least have provision for an emergency one-week suspension if you are going into hospital or travelling someplace with no Internet connection.

I have had a lot of trouble on some of my overseas trips establishing an Internet connection and finally I was unable to continue my games when in Italy in October the week after the ICCF Congress. This led to me being timed out of four tournaments. There is an option to ask opponents to restore your games, but they don't have to do it and only two of my tournaments were restored. I lost my most advanced events, where I was on the verge of making the Final of two "Fast" tournaments: most frustrating! On earlier occasions, I had to pay quite a lot to get a connection and/or use unsatisfactory hardware.

American readers may find this strange, assuming that everyone has a laptop and every village has a Net café. Not so in Europe! For example, I brought my laptop with me to the seaside in Ireland but the holiday home had no landline telephone socket to which I could connect it; everyone in these places uses mobile phones, but if your cellphone is not WAP (data-enabled) it is no use for this purpose.

One thing that Europeans may find annoying about IYT is the way American holidays can lead to a stalling of play if they fall midweek, as happened with Thanksgiving in 2001. Because the regular time allowed plus the 24 hours for the holiday spilled into the weekend, giving another 48 free hours, one of my opponents at one point had 138 hours to make a move in a totally lost position, and he used almost every one of them.

A corollary to the fact that unused time cannot be accumulated is that most players do not resign in bad positions, hoping that (on the percentages) they

will occasionally win such positions by time default. This in turn puts a premium on trying to find the shortest route to checkmate or a big material plus.

Another thing that makes the IYT experience different from “normal” correspondence chess is that there is no possibility to offer conditional move sequences. If these prove hard to program, they may have to be omitted from ICCF web servers in future, but it can be annoying not to be able to keep the game moving when the opponent has a genuinely forced move.

## Studying opponent's games

It is possible to prepare for opponents by looking up some of their previous games, although this is a rather laborious procedure. Players can choose to hide their games, but you can usually get up their tournament profile and hence access lists of their wins, draws and losses. These lists show the colour played and length of game, but not the opening. Games shorter than 20 moves are rarely worth accessing, because it usually means the opponent lost by defaulting on time.

A player's games can only be called up one by one and if you wish to save the moves in PGN for later study, or incorporation in a database, this again can only be done one at a time. It's not really worth it unless you are going to be meeting this player in an important game.

Nevertheless, over a period of months, I have downloaded quite a lot of games from the server. Although many were rubbish or disappointing, here are three games that I find interesting and which will illustrate the level of play in the Competitive Chess tournaments at IYT.

### ***CHzephyr-GoodKnight* March 2000 Fast #2 rd4 www.itsyourturn.com, 2000**

This game was played in Round Four i.e. the Final. There were five players, one of whom dropped out. This was the decisive game of the whole event.

**1 Nf3 d5 2 d4 Nf6 3 c4 e6 4 Nc3 c6 5 Bg5 dxc4 6 e4 b5 7 e5 h6 8 Bh4 g5 9 Nxg5 hxg5 10 Bxg5 Nbd7 11 exf6 Bb7 12 g3 c5 13 d5 Qb6 14 Bg2 0-0-0 15 0-0 b4 16 Na4 Qc7**

A new move, not mentioned as even a possibility in *The Botvinnik Semi-Slav* by Steffen Pedersen, or *The Complete Semi-Slav* by Peter Wells.





## 17 Rc1

Probably too slow?

17 Bf4 seems obvious and safe:  
if 17...e5 18 Bg5.

17 dxe6 Bxg2 is quite wild but  
possibly slightly better for White  
in both lines:

a) 18 Kxg2 Qc6+ 19 f3 Qxe6 20 Qc2 and

b) 18 e7 Bxf1 19 exd8Q+ Kxd8 20 Kxf1 (not 20 Qxf1!?  
Qc6).

## 17...exd5 18 Re1 Bc6 19 Bxd5 Rg8!

Better than 19...Ne5.

## 20 h4

a) 20 Bf4 Qxf4 21 Bxc6 Ne5 22 Bb7+ Kc7; b) 20 Bxc6  
Qxc6 21 Bd2 (21 Qh5!? Qxa4 22 Bf4) 21...Nxf6 22 Rxc4  
Rxd2 23 Qxd2 Qxa4. 20...Nxf6 21 Bxf6 Rxd5 22 Qf3 Qd7  
23 Rxc4 Rd3 24 Qf4 Qh3 25 Re8+ Bxe8 26 Rc1 Rgxf3+ 27  
fxg3 Rxf3+ 0-1.

The winner of that game, GoodKnight, has been the most successful player on the server with six tournament wins in 2000-2001. I have my theory about who he may be but I could be wrong so I keep my thoughts private.

The most successful player in completed events that started in 2001 is Mike McDonald from Bryan, Texas, who has won three recent Fast tournaments. In one of them, he won a final 1.5-0.5 against GoodKnight. So far I have not had to play either of them.

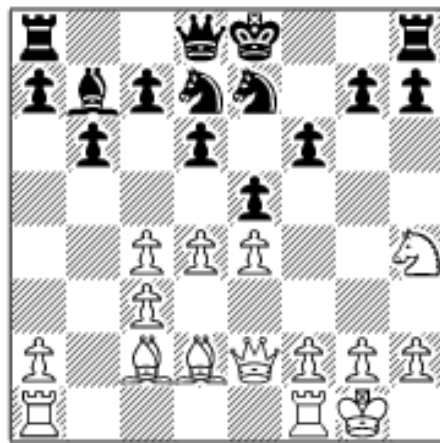
Below is the decisive game between the two champions but first one of my own games that just ended.

***Tim Harding – Danoschek (Germany) February 2001***  
**Main#1 rd3#3 itsyourturn.com, 2001**

**1 c4 b6 2 Nc3 e6 3 e4 Bb7 4 Nf3 Bb4 5 Bd3 Na6 6 Qe2**  
**Nc5 7 Bc2 Bxc3 8 bxc3 d6**

**9 d4 Nd7 10 0-0 e5 11 Bg5 f6 12 Bd2 Ne7 13 Nh4**

With the idea of f2-f4 but Black's sharp reply changes the situation.



**13...c5 14 Qh5+ g6 15 Qh6 Kf7**  
**16 Nf3**

16 f4?? would be very careless:  
 16...Ng8.

I thought that 16 d5, closing the position, could help him. Instead I pursue my idea

of attacking his king and let him try to generate play against c4.

**16...Nc6 17 Be3 Na5 18 Nd2 Ba6 19 Qh3!? h5 20 f4 exd4**  
**21 cxd4 Qe7**

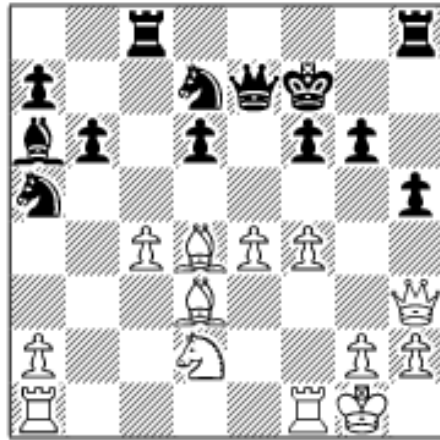
In an earlier game with the same opponent, I spoiled a promising situation

by superficial play so I was taking him very seriously this time.

**22 Bd3 cxd4**

I think this move is impatient, opening lines for my attack. Maybe he got this idea from a computer but I let my over-the-board chess instincts take over here: the more the centre opens up, the worse it must be for Black.

### 23 Bxd4 Rac8



If 23...Nc5 then 24 e5 looks promising with possibilities like 24...Nxd3 (24...dxe5 25 fxe5 f5 26 e6+) 25 exf6.

### 24 e5

24 Rae1 was also tempting, to develop the last piece, but actually the tempo seemed more

important.

### 24...dxe5 25 fxe5 Nxe5 26 Ne4

No way will Black find an escape here!

### 26...Nac6 27 Rxf6+ Qxf6 28 Nxf6 Nxd4 29 Rf1

Developing the unmoved piece makes sense now; I have Q v R + minor piece, but 29 Nd7 was also strong.

### 29...Kg7 30 Nd7 Ng4

Two other very sad lines for Black are:

a) 30...Ndc6 31 Qe6 Rhe8 32 Qf6+ Kh7 33 Qg5 with a winning attack; b) 30...Nxd3 31 Qxd3 Nf5 32 Ne5 Rhd8 33 Qa3 Kf6 34 Qxa6 Kxe5 35 Qxa7. In correspondence chess, it is very easy to find such winning lines once you really get on top. In an email game, Black might well resign.

**31 Qg3 Nf5**

31...Rhe8 32 Qf4 Ne2+ 33 Bxe2 Rxe2 34 Qf7+ Kh6 35 Nf8+-.

**32 Bxf5 gxf5 33 h3 Rhd8 34 hxg4 Bxc4**

34...Rxd7 soon loses to 35 Qe5+.

**35 Qe5+ Kg8 36 Nf6+ Kf7 37 Nd5! Bxf1 38 Qe7+ Kg6 39 Nf4+ Kh6 40 g5 mate.**

***GoodKnight - Mike McDonald January 2001 Fast #1 Final (round 5) www.itsyourturn.com, 2001***

**1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 a6 6 Be3 e6 7 f3 b5 8 Qd2 Nbd7 9 g4 h6 10 0-0-0 Bb7 11 h4 b4 12 Na4 Qa5 13 b3 Nc5 14 a3**

**14...Rc8**

14...Nxa4 had, until recently, almost invariably been played here, for example 15 axb4 Qc7 16 bxa4 e5! Bunk-Melao, EM/M/A123 ICCF Email 2000 (in Informator 80).

**15 Qxb4**

15 axb4 Nxb3+ 16 Nxb3 Qxa4 17 Kb2 d5 was given as unclear by Van Wely in Informator 78. Play could continue: 18 Nc5 (18 c3 dxe4 19 Ra1 might be better.) 18...Qc6 19 Bd3 dxe4 20 Nxe4 Nd5 21 c3 Nxe3 22 Qxe3 Be7 23 Ra1 0-0 24 g5 h5 25 Ra5 Rfd8 26 g6 fxg6 27 Rg1 Rd5 28 Rxc6 Rxa5 29 Qh6 Bf8 30 bxa5 Qa4 ½-½ J.S.Morgado-S.Romanov, ICCF Email Olympiad 2000.

**15...Qc7! 16 Nxc5**

16 Kb1 (Anand) is possibly better: 16...Nfd7 (Khalifman lost in the stem game after retreating the other knight here.)  
 17 Nb2 d5 18 Qd2 (18 Qe1 dxe4 19 Bc4 e5 20 Nf5 g6 21 Ng3 exf3 22 h5 g5 23 Rf1 Bg7 24 Bd5 Bxd5 25 Rxd5 0–0 26 Bxc5 Nxc5 27 Ne4 Ne6 28 Rxf3 Qxc2+ 29 Ka2 Nd4 30 Rd3 Ne2 31 Qd1 Nc1+ 0–1 De la Riva Aguado-Van Wely, Mondariz 2000.) 18...dxe4 19 f4 Nf6 20 Bc4 Nxg4 21 f5 e5 22 Ne2 Nxe3 23 Qxe3 Nd7 24 b4 Nf6 25 Qb3 h5 26 Rh3 Bd6 27 Rc3 Qd7 28 Na4 Qe7 29 Nb6 Rc6 30 Bxf7+ Qxf7 31 Qxf7+ Kxf7 32 Rxc6 Bxc6 33 Rxd6 Bb7 34 Nc4 Rc8 35 Nxe5+ Kg8 36 Re6 Rd8 37 Ng6 Kh7 38 Ne7 Rd1+ 39 Kb2 Rh1 40 Rb6 Bd5 41 Rxf6 gxf6 42 Nxd5 Rxh4 43 c4 Rh2 44 Ndf4 h4 45 b5 axb5 46 cxb5 h3 47 b6 1–0 Movsesian-Kulaots, Istanbul ol 2000.

**16...dxc5 17 Qa4+ Nd7 18 Ne2 c4 19 b4**

19 bxc4?! Bc6 led to a Black win in Tiviakov-van Wely, Rotterdam 2000. 19 Bf4 is the newest idea for White.  
 19...Qc6 20 Qxc6 (20 Kb2!? Qxa4 21 bxa4 g5? 22 hxg5 Bg7+ 23 Kc1 hxg5 24 Rxh8+ Bxh8 25 Bxg5 Nc5 26 a5 Na4 27 Bh4 Bb2+ 28 Kd2 Bxa3 29 Ra1 Rd8+ 30 Bxd8 Bb4+ 31 c3 1–0 L.Cherner-J.Byrnes, IECC Email 2001.) 20...Bxa3+ 21 Kb1 Rxc6 22 Nd4 Rc8 23 Bxc4 e5 24 Nf5 Rxc4 25 Nxg7+ Kd8 26 Bxe5 Rc6 27 Ne6+ Rxe6 28 Bxh8 Ke7 29 g5 h5 30 Rd3 Bd6 31 Rhd1 Bc6 32 Bc3 Bg3 33 Bb4+ Ke8 34 Bd6 Bxd6 (34...Bxh4? 35 Rc3) 35 Rxd6 Ke7 36 Rxe6+ Kxe6 37 Rd4 and White's rook and three pawns proved too strong for Black's bishop and knight in Ernst-Agrest, Orebro 2000. However, Black should now have played 37...Ne5 instead of 37...Ke5.

**19...Bc6 20 Qxa6 Ra8 21 Qxc4 Rxa3**

## 22 Bf4

last year. Fritz-Chess Tiger continued 22...Ne5 23 Qd4 Nxf3 with wild complications: 24 Qb6 Qxb6 25 Bxb6 Ra1+ 26 Nb1 Bxb4 27 Rd8+ Ke7 28 Rxh8 Ba3+ 29 Kd1 Rxb1+ 30 Ke2 Ne5 31 Bd4 Ng6 32 Rg8 Bxe4 33 Rh2 Nf4+ 34 Ke3 Rxf1 35 Kxe4 f5+ 36 gxf5 exf5+ 37 Kxf5 Ne6+ 38 Kg6 Nxd4 39 Rxg7+ Kd6 40 Kxh6 Nf5+ 41 Kg6 Nxg7 42 Kxg7 Bb2+ 43 Kg6 Rf6+ 44 Kg5 Ke6 45 Kg4 Be5 46 Rh3 Draw.

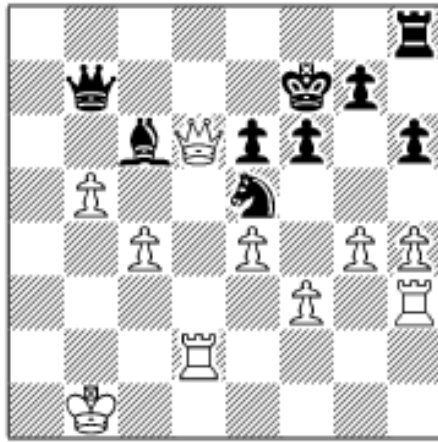
**22...Qb7 23 c3 Bb5 24 Qd4 Ra2 25 Kb1 Rxe2**

The first new move of the game! Black clarifies his advantage. Of course he had plenty of time to find the best move, compared with the rapid GM game he had been following until now: 25...Qa8 26 Nc1 Ra1+ 27 Kc2 Ba4+ 28 Kd2 Bxd1 29 Bb5 Qb7 30 Bxd7+ Qxd7 31 Qxd7+ Kxd7 32 Rxd1 Be7 33 h5 Rc8 ½–½ Anand-Gelfand, Monaco 2000.

**26 Rh3 f6 27 Bxe2 Bxe2 28 Rd2 Bb5 29 Bd6 Bxd6 30 Qxd6 Kf7**

This move, sheltering the king and preparing to develop the rook, is justified by a little tactical trick at move 32.

**31 c4 Bc6 32 b5 Ne5!**



Even better than 32...Rc8; of course the threat of Nxc4+ means that White's plan of space-grabbing has failed.

### 33 Qd4

33 Kc1 can be met by 33...Ra8 34 bxc6 Ra1+ 35 Kc2 Qa8 and White's king is awfully exposed.

**33...Rc8 34 Ra2 Rc7 35 Ka1 Bd7 36 Ra4 Qc8 37 f4 Nxc4 38 Rb3 e5 39 fxe5 Nxe5**

The game is strategically over now. However, the fixed time limits at IYT mean that

players usually play to the bitter end in the hope of winning on time default.

**40 g5 Rc1+ 41 Rb1 Qc2 42 Rab4 Be6 43 Qa7+ Kg6 44 Qa3 Rxb1+ 45 Rxb1 hxg5**

**46 hxg5 Nc4 47 Qb3 Qxe4 48 gxf6 Qe5+ 49 Rb2 Qe1+ 50 Rb1 Qa5+ 51 Qa2 Qc3+ 0-1.**

White had finally seen enough. If 52 Rb2 Nxb2 53 Qxb2 Qa5+ 54 Kb1 Bf5+ and White loses his queen. This was an interesting theory battle, which would not by any means have disgraced the semifinals of the ICCF Email World Championship.

If you have played an interesting game on a CC server, or have had interesting experiences either at IYT or other servers, why not tell me about it?

Finally, I wish all my readers a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year in 2002.

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