



COLUMNISTS

The Kibitzer

Tim Harding

A Golden Jubilee of British Chess

Anyone who has easy access to British television and newspapers, as we do here in Ireland, cannot have failed to notice that a tremendous fuss is being made this month. The occasion is Queen Elizabeth II's Golden Jubilee, the 50th anniversary of her accession to the British throne in 1952.

Since her reign has also coincided with tremendous fluctuations in Britain's role in the chess world, I thought it would be interesting to see what has happened in this context in the past half century. Even if you are not interested in British chess per se, it is a way of turning a spotlight on the chess scene as a whole in the period 1952-2002.

1952 was a significant year in that it saw the first appearance by the USSR in a chess olympiad, held in Helsinki. Their team (Keres, Smyslov, Bronstein, Geller, Boleslavsky and Kotov) won the event. The structure of the Helsinki olympiad was three seeded preliminary groups followed by A, B and C finals depending on where you finished in the first round.

The British team (called 'England' in Arpad Foldeak's history of the olympiads) finished fourth in its preliminary group but in Final B they disappointed and ended up in 16th place overall. The team (in board order) was Harry Golombek (+2 =7 -3), Jonathan Penrose (+6 =5 -2), Stuart Milner-Barry (+2 =7 -3), Leonard Barden (+2 =5 -4), D.Horne (+4 =3 -2) and D.V.Hooper (+1 =3 -3). This was not the strongest possible team because C.H.O'D. Alexander was missing and neither did the team include any of the immigrant chess masters from Europe who lived in Britain, e.g., Klein, König and List (who had escaped the Nazi terror in the 1930s) or Bob Wade, who was a New Zealander. Also missing was the strongest Scottish player, whom I will mention a little later in this article.

At the accession of Queen Elizabeth in 1952, there were no chess grandmasters living in Britain and (if you disregard correspondence and composer titles) that continued to be the case until 1976, whereas now the number is close to 30. (It would actually be over 30 were it not that several now live in various European countries and Tony Miles has died.) In the February issue of *British Chess Magazine*, their "top English" ratings from the January FIDE list has 27 male grandmasters and one WGM; there are also

three Scottish grandmasters. To those 27 you can add Penrose, who has been inactive for a long time, and Gallagher who has ‘defected’ to Switzerland, so at the peak there were 30 British GMs but the peak has been passed. 13 of those listed GMs played no rated games in the last period and several of those are likely to remain inactive. England also have several correspondence grandmasters, most of whom are retired and of whom only about two are actually playing tournaments at present.

Evidently, achieving the grandmaster title is the pinnacle for many players, who then decide they should be doing something more real with their lives than moving little pieces of wood around. Especially as there is more money to be made working for a computer company or a finance house, unless you are one of the very top players. There simply is not room for everyone and while coaching and writing books are options, nobody ever got rich doing that.

In 1952, the situation was very different. Not only were there no GMs — you could count the British international masters on the fingers of one hand. It was really something to be an IM in those days, but the title had only been created in 1950 and no doubt there was a lot of haggling in FIDE over whose past performances were worthy of the title. Anyway, there was Alexander, Golombek, Imre König (who left for America the following year) and Wade. Kottnauer was an IM too but he was still living in Czechoslovakia at this time and only became a British citizen in the 1960s.

So the 1952 team at Helsinki consisted of two members of the pre-war English chess elite who had served at Bletchley Park in the Ultra code-breaking operation (this fact only became generally known in the 1970s), together with the amateur and occasional chess writer Hooper (born 1915) and two rising stars, Barden (then 22) and Penrose (still only 18). I know next to nothing about the sixth member of the team, Horne, except that he was a British Master so I was pleased to get a draw against him in the Worcestershire League when I was a schoolboy in the early 1960s.

Golombek played in the 1952 interzonal tournament, for which he had qualified the previous year — but found the going very tough. I don’t think there was much doubt that in 1952 the strongest British player was the Irish-born Hugh Alexander, although later in the decade he was overtaken by Penrose. At the 1953-54 Hastings tournament, he shared first prize with Bronstein and beat both the Russian grandmasters. The Bronstein win was a 120-move marathon; the other was a quick crush in which the Soviet player was made to look like a patzer.

White: Alexander Tolush Black: C.H.O’D. Alexander Dutch Defence (A80) Hastings 1953-54

1 d4 f5 2 e3

Bronstein played the Staunton Gambit in honour of the early 19th century English master Staunton, who was perhaps the one Englishman in history who could have claimed (for a few brief years, after beating St. Amant) to be the world's strongest player.

2...Nf6 3 Bd3 d6! 4 Ne2 e5

Alexander meets Tolush's rather bizarre build-up by strong centralising play.

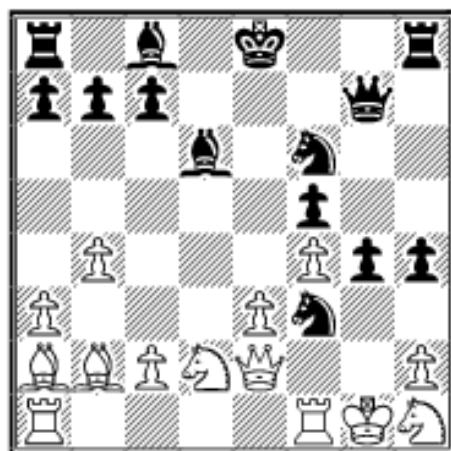
5 dxe5 dxe5 6 0-0 Bc5 7 Ng3 g6 8 Bc4 Qe7

It is important for Black to avoid the queen exchange; he already stands better.

9 Qd3 Nc6 10 a3 e4 11 Qe2 Ne5 12 Ba2 h5! 13 b4 Bd6 14 f4 exf3 15 gxf3 h4 16 Nh1 g5! 17 Nd2 Qg7

17...g4? 18 f4.

18 Bb2 g4 19 f4 Nf3+



20 Kg2 h3+ 21 Kf2 Nxd2 22 Qxd2 Ne4+ 23 Kg1 Qxb2

White could resign.

24 Qd5 Qf6 25 Bb3 c6 26 Qd3 Be6 27 Bxe6 Qxe6 28 Qd4 0-1

White resigned since Black can just castle (on either side).

The next British player to get the I.M. title (in 1953) was the Scottish champion William Fairhurst, who in fact was an Englishman but had moved to Glasgow in 1931 where he proceeded to lay the foundations for a chess boom north of the border. In the 1960s, FIDE was persuaded to grant separate membership to Scotland (and later Wales) so that Fairhurst made his Olympiad debut on top board for Scotland in the 1964 Tel Aviv Olympiad. He was an eminent civil engineer who specialised in bridge building; I have seen at Dundee a bridge that he built across the Tay, replacing the Victorian one that collapsed in a famous disaster celebrated by the poet McGonagall. Eventually Fairhurst was lured to the Antipodes by the challenge of completing a bridge which the Australians (or was it New Zealanders?) could not keep standing. By the time he left, there was a new

generation of Scottish masters to carry on the tradition.

At Tel Aviv, Fairhurst won a nice miniature against the Irish top board. Despite this setback, Keogh (still an active player today) was no weakie; he beat Swedish grandmaster Stahlberg in the same event.

White: William Fairhurst – Black: Eamonn Keogh Queen's Pawn Game (D02) Tel Aviv olympiad, 1964

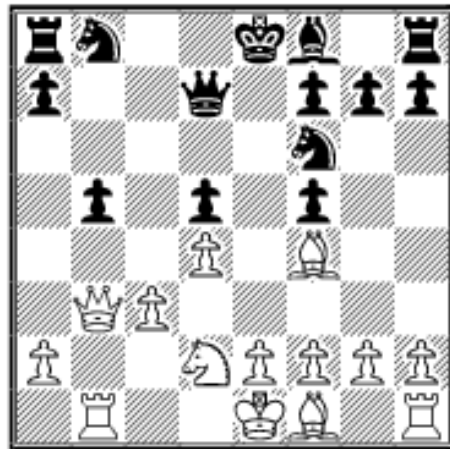
1 d4 d5 2 Bf4 Nf6 3 Nf3 c5 4 c3 c4?

A serious positional mistake that releases central tension and so leaves White a free hand on the other wing. Instead he should play 4...Nc6 with the idea of an eventual ...Nfd7 to challenge e5.

5 Nbd2 Bf5 6 Nh4 e6 7 Nxf5 exf5 8 b3 cxb3?

8...b5 9 a4 b4 is better.

9 Qxb3 Qd7 10 Rb1 b5



11 Bxb8! Rxb8 12 e4! Qe6

Black loses material if he takes the e-pawn, but now his King is caught in the centre.

13 Bxb5+ Kd8 14 e5 Ne4 15 Nxe4 fxe4 16 0-0 f6 17 Rfd1 Rc8 18 Rbc1 g6 19 c4! 1-0

If 19...dxc4 20 Bxc4 Qc6 21 Be6 Qxc1 22 Qd5+ and wins.

There are now several Scottish grandmasters and IMs. Perhaps the best known of these are Paul Motwani, Colin McNab and Jonathan Rowson, who have written several books between them, but there are many other strong players, male and female. It is noteworthy that many of the top Scots players have represented their country at both over-the-board and correspondence chess, holding titles from both FIDE and ICCF. Scotland made a considerable mark in the postal chess sphere when they shared third place in the 11th CC Olympiad in the mid-1990s and the current President of ICCF, Alan Borwell, is — like Fairhurst — a Scotsman by adoption.

This special dispensation under which England, Scotland and Wales have separate national teams — not only in FIDE and ICCF chess, but also in

football and many other sports — continues to puzzle people from other countries. After all, the Olympic movement, like the United Nations, only recognises sovereign states, so how come there is no separate membership of FIDE for (say) Texas and California? Of course, I am making myself unpopular with my Scottish friends by raising these matters. Undoubtedly the Scots have made a success of their chess devolution but (after some initial successes) it has perhaps not been so easy for the Welsh who got separate membership of FIDE at the start of the 1970s, thanks in great measure to the dedication and energy of Howard Williams.

Even for people who live in the country, the fine distinctions between ‘England’ and ‘Britain’ frequently cause confusion. Queen Elizabeth II is Head of State of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (UK for short), the other 26 counties of Ireland having got their independence in the early 1920s. ‘Great Britain’ comprises the mainland of England, Scotland and Wales together with numerous smaller islands including the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands. The latter, for the benefit of those readers who don’t have an atlas to hand, are situated much closer to France than to England; they formed part of the Duke of Normandy’s dominions before he invaded England in 1066. The Channel Islands also had the misfortune to be the only British territory to come under German occupation in World War Two. To compensate them for that misfortune, they now have the privilege of being a tax haven, remaining outside the European Union for fiscal purposes.

To make matters even more confusing for chess players, FIDE also granted separate membership to the Channel Islands in the early 1970s, under the name of Jersey, on the reasonable grounds that they have their own parliament which (at that time) Scotland and Wales did not. In fact Jersey and Guernsey each have their own parliament (or ‘States’) but even FIDE could see that to give both islands separate membership might be going a bit too far. Both islands have organised some very pleasant chess tournaments but I think they have not produced any master players as yet.

The Irish Chess Union was founded in 1910 and the game of chess has continued to be organised on an all-Ireland basis ever since. Several other sports (e.g. cricket and rugby) also continued to have teams representing the whole island, despite the political division. Northern Ireland does have its own membership of FIFA, however, and older readers may remember their fine performance at the 1982 soccer world cup when they beat the host nation, Spain. Probably the strongest chess player from Northern Ireland is Brian Kelly but in my generation the leading player was John Moles, who won the Irish Championship as a student and wrote a fine book on the Winawer French before giving up chess for marriage and an academic career.

The so-called “English chess explosion” really began in 1976 when the late Tony Miles became the first English grandmaster since Joseph Blackburne, but the foundations of this success were really laid in the previous decade.

However, the actual “explosion” would not have occurred without the greater interest in the game created by the 1972 Fischer-Spassky world championship match and the consequent inflows of money to the game.

Between 1952 and the mid-1960s, Britain’s leading players were amateurs with the exception of a few — notably Golombek, Barden and P.H.Clarke — whose income came principally from writing about the game, and Wade, who was a leading coach and probably the only actual professional tournament player in the country at this time. The dominant player in English chess was, however, Jonathan Penrose who became an IM in 1961 and eventually was awarded the grandmaster title retrospectively, when FIDE reviewed past achievements in the light of the Elo ratings. Although the first player to get the GM title was Tony Miles in 1976, Penrose was the first Englishman in the 20th century to beat a reigning world champion.

**White: Jonathan Penrose Black: Mikhail Tal Modern Benoni (A65)
Leipzig Olympiad, 1960**

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 c5 4 d5 exd5 5 cxd5 g6 6 e4 d6 7 Bd3 Bg7 8 Nge2

Penrose surprises the world champion with a formation that packs more venom than is at first apparent.

8...0-0 9 0-0 a6 10 a4 Qc7 11 h3 Nbd7 12 f4 Re8

Both here and next move, ...Rb8 was better.

13 Ng3 c4 14 Bc2 Nc5 15 Qf3 Nfd7 16 Be3 b5 17 axb5 Rb8 18 Qf2! axb5

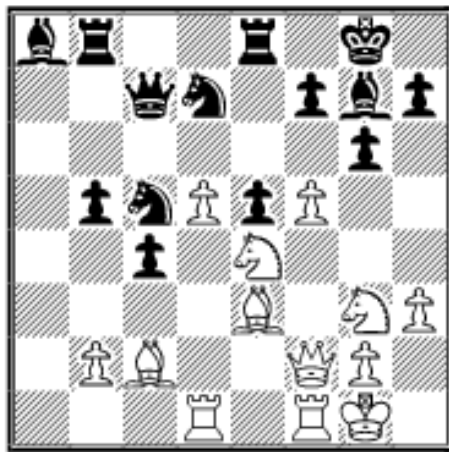


19 e5! dxe5 20 f5!

White's pawn play at move 19-20 is an excellent example of what was called the “sweeper-sealer sacrifice” in Hans Kmoch's book *Pawn Power In Chess*. There are strong threats down the f-file and Black is denied the square e5 as a marshalling yard for his pieces. The point of White's difficult 18th move is now apparent: Black cannot clear the way with ...e4 as it no longer gains a tempo, while

c5 is under pressure. So White gains the blockading square e4 for his own manoeuvres.

20...Bb7 21 Rad1 Ba8 22 Nce4



Maybe there is a defence for Black but his position is very difficult. Here 22...Nxe4 23 Nxe4 f6 24 h6 looks like the main line but probably appeared too passive to Tal.

22...Na4? 23 Bxa4 bxa4 24 fxe6 fxe6 25 Qf7+ Kh8 26 Ne5!

Threatening Ne6 and so winning a piece

26...Qa7 27 Qxd7 Qxd7 28 Nxd7 Rxb2 29 Nb6 Rb3 30 Nxc4 Rd8 31 d6 Rc3 32

Rc1 Rxc1 33 Rxc1 Bd5 34 Nb6 Bb3 35 Ne4 h6 36 d7 Bf8 37 Rc8 Be7 38 Bc5 Bh4 39 g3 1-0

The rise of weekend tournaments, from about 1966, was in my opinion a major factor in making British chess more competitive and exciting. I played in the second Islington Open, organised by Stewart Reuben in north London just before Christmas in 1966. Six tough games in under 48 hours was an attractive prospect for keen young players with relatively few opportunities for competition outside their local leagues. As entries rose for these events, prize money also became quite attractive and a large nationwide circuit of tournaments sprang up; this was boosted in the 1970s by the Grand Prix which was a year-long competition for the most successful players. The peak of weekend tournament activity was the 1970s, and maybe the 1980s, but it came just at the right time for the new generation of young masters.

Money from patrons like Jim Slater made a huge difference in bringing on the first crop of new British IMs and GMs in the mid-1970s: the generation of Miles, Stean, Mestel, Nunn and co, as well as the next wave of younger players who became grandmasters such as Danny King, William Watson and of course Nigel Short. However, the first steps in bringing British chess up to the first division were already begun by a group of players who were about ten years older than Miles and co. The chess clubs at both Oxford and Cambridge universities were important here as they probably provided the keenest competitive environment for chess outside London, together with a "research approach" that players elsewhere in the country did not have. Some of the most influential players did not get FIDE titles, or not for several more years, but they made their contribution. Studying foreign chess literature was important here, as relatively little current material was available in English until the late 1960s.

In Oxford, for example, the Dragon Sicilian was very deeply investigated by Adrian Hollis (later an ICCF grandmaster), Peter Lee (the 1965 British champion) and Andrew Whiteley. In Cambridge, the Londoners Bill Hartston and Ray Keene began a similar renaissance. The first external sign that something was brewing in British chess came at the 1967 Student Olympiad

in Harrachow, Czechoslovakia. The English team won the bronze medal and beat the USSR 3-1. Oxford and Cambridge players provided the majority of the team but a key member was the highly talented and unorthodox Michael Basman who won the decisive game from a dubious position.

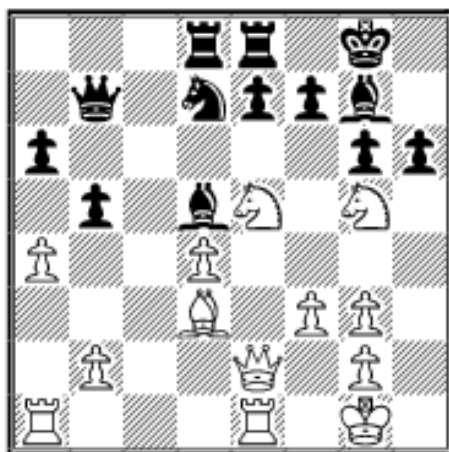
White: Michael Basman – Black: Vladimir Savon King's Indian Defence (A48) Student olympiad Harrachow CZE, 1967

Savon was born in 1940 so was rather old to be on a student team. In 1971 he was surprise winner of the Soviet Championship.

1 d4 Nf6 2 Nf3 g6 3 Bg5 Bg7 4 Nbd2 c5 5 e3 b6 6 c3 Bb7 7 Bd3 0-0 8 0-0 d5 9 Qb1 Nbd7 10 Re1 Re8 11 e4 dxe4 12 Nxe4 Qc7 13 Bh4 Rad8 14 Bg3 Qc8 15 Neg5 cxd4 16 cxd4 Bd5 17 Ne5 Qb7 18 f3 a6 19 Qc2 Nh5 20 Qe2 Nxc3 21 hxg3 b5

21...f6? 22 Bxa6.

22 a4 h6



23 Ngxf7!

The only way to justify his previous play since a retreat would be met by ...Nxe5

23...Qb6

The critical defence, which attacks d4 and covers g6.

23...Bxf7 24 Nxf7 Bxd4+ 25 Kh1 Kxf7 26 Qe6+ Kg7 27 Qxg6+ Kf8 is hardly

attractive for Black.

24 Bxg6!?

24 axb5.

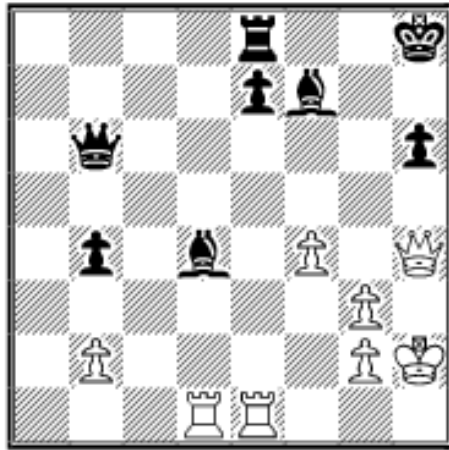
24...Nxe5 25 Nxe5 Bxe5 26 Bxe8

26 Qxe5 Qxg6 would leave Black clearly better, with a Bishop for two pawns.

26...Bxd4+ 27 Kh2 Rxe8 28 axb5 axb5 29 Rad1 White has Rook and Pawn versus Bishop and Knight: surely good for Black? **29...Bf7**

29...e5 here or next move should have been somewhat better for Black. 30 Rxd4 (30 f4 Bf7) 30...Qxd4 31 Qxb5 might give drawing chances in view of Black's exposed King and the likely elimination of pawns. Black has the wrong B for his h-pawn and this may have been the reason he did not want to play ...e5.

30 f4 b4 31 Qg4+ Kh8 32 Qh4



32...Qf6?

Probably in time trouble, Black blunders. 32...e5 still looks right.

33 Rxd4! Qxd4 34 Qxh6+ Kg8 35 Re5 Ba2

To give the King a flight square but his situation is hopeless.

36 Rg5+ Kf7 37 Rf5+

Repeating moves to get nearer to the time control on move 40.

37...Kg8 38 Rg5+ Kf7 39 Qh5+

Now Basman sees the win. Savon must defend his Rook so the reply is forced.

39...Kf8 40 Rf5+ Qf6 41 Rxf6+ exf6 42 Qc5+ 1-0

The b-pawn falls and Black has no hope of creating a fortress so he resigns.

In the 1970s and 1980s, British players made an increasingly important contribution to chess literature, with several important (and many more unimportant) books appearing in print each year. John Nunn, in particular, proved to be a very clear and conscientious writer. Tony Miles concentrated on playing. In 1974 he became Junior World Champion, after a narrow miss the previous year, and in 1976 he scooped Ray Keene (who had been the first to get a grandmaster norm) and so won £5,000 from Jim Slater by becoming the first new English GM. Keene, Stean, Mestel, Nunn and Speelman soon followed — and later Nigel Short and many more.

Up to the early 1980s, Miles remained the leading figure and this perhaps made it hard for him to cope with no longer being the best in later years. One game above all showed his great talent and his fear of no man.

Anatoly Karpov – Tony Miles St. George Defence (B00) European team Championship, Skara 1980

1 e4 a6

Just to dare to play this move against the world champion must have given Tony a great kick. Karpov never recovered from the shock.

2 d4 b5 3 Nf3 Bb7 4 Bd3 Nf6?! 5 Qe2

White should have played 5 e5 Nd5 6 Ng5!? with an attack, so 4...e6 would have been more accurate.

5...e6 6 a4

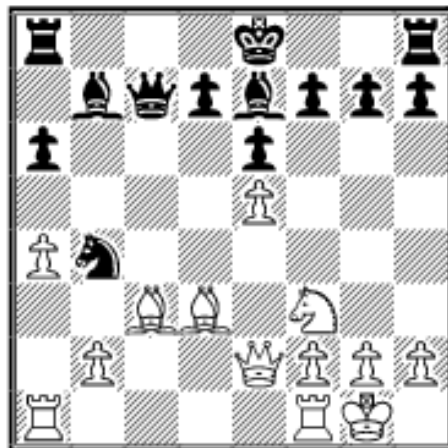
Here 6 Bg5!? or 6 Nbd2 was better according to Miles, while 6 O-O c5 7 c3 leads to the main line of what Basman calls the St.George Defence.

6...c5

6...b4 also came into consideration.

7 dxc5 Bxc5 8 Nbd2 b4 9 e5 Nd5 10 Ne4 Be7 11 0-0 Nc6 12 Bd2 Qc7 13 c4 bxc3 14 Nxc3 Nxc3 15 Bxc3 Nb4!

Black has definitely equalised. Karpov gets into big trouble trying to win.



16 Bxb4 Bxb4 17 Rac1 Qb6 18 Be4

18 Ng5!? was probably better.

18...0-0 19 Ng5

19 Bxh7+ Kxh7 20 Ng5+ does not work after 20...Kg6! 21 Qg4 f5 (21...f6!?) 22 Qg3 Qd4 23 h3? Kh5!.

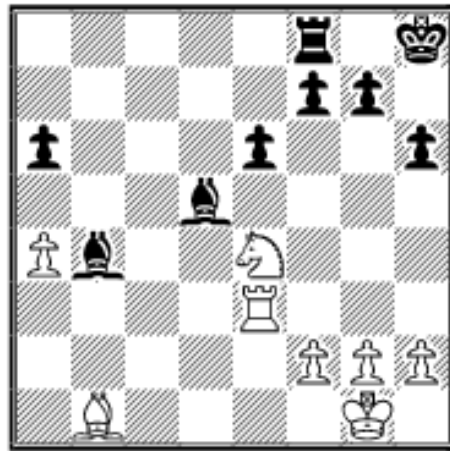
19...h6 20 Bh7+ Kh8 21 Bb1 Be7 22 Ne4 Rac8 23 Qd3 Rxc1 24 Rxc1 Qxb2 25

Re1

If 25 Rc7 g6 followed by ...Rc8.

25...Qxe5 26 Qxd7 Bb4 27 Re3 Qd5! 28 Qxd5 Bxd5

The endgame with an extra pawn and Bishop pair is winning for Black.



**29 Nc3 Rc8 30 Ne2 g5 31 h4 Kg7 32
hxc5 hxc5 33 Bd3 a5 34 Rg3 Kf6 35 Rg4
Bd6 36 Kf1 Be5 37 Ke1 Rh8 38 f4 gxf4
39 Nxf4 Bc6 40 Ne2 Rh1+ 41 Kd2 Rh2
42 g3 Bf3 43 Rg8 Rg2 44 Ke1 Bxe2 45
Bxe2 Rxc3 46 Ra8 Bc7 0-1**

On the field of play, the increasing number of active grandmasters actually made it quite hard to get selected for the national team. They could start to dream of medals at this important team event but

10th place in 1982 was a disappointment. The right hour came in 1984, in Thessaloniki, Greece, which coincided with the marathon unfinished world championship match between Kasparov and Karpov. Nevertheless the USSR still had the highest rating average and duly won the event. England, despite being only 7th seed, came second by two clear points from the USA. The team consisted of Miles, Nunn, Speelman, Chandler (an import from New Zealand), Mestel and Short. Nunn's score of 10/11 including a win against Soviet top board Belyavsky was particularly important.

England took the silver medals again at Dubai in 1986 with virtually the same team, except for Flear as second reserve instead of Mestel, who had retired. They have never quite matched this achievement since. Part of the reason for this is that after the break-up of Yugoslavia and USSR, there were far more strong countries in the Olympiad since all the constituent republics now compete as independent nations. Also, I think there has been a falling off in motivation with the newer generation of British GMs somehow not as committed as the players who were around in the 1970s when success did not come quite as easy.

The focus began to switch to the world championship contests about which English could only dream in earlier years. In 1988 both Speelman and Short qualified for the candidates matches; unfortunately they had to meet in the quarter-finals. Defying some pundits, the older man proved cooler in the crisis and Nigel had to wait for next time for his big chance.

In August 1991, all four candidates quarter-finals were played at the same venue in Brussels. Short began with a loss against Gelfand but hit back in the second game and won his match 5-3 in the end. In the spring of 1992, the semifinals were played in Linares. Nobody except Kasparov had ever beaten Karpov in a match, but Short did it, 6-4 — again after losing the first game. In the final, played in Spain early in the New Year, he was favourite to beat Timman, and did so, but then came his fateful deal with Kasparov to break

away from FIDE and play the 1993 world championship match in London.

Predictably, Short was shot down in flames, especially after he lost the very first game on time just after declining a draw offer. This match, held at the Savoy Theatre in London in September/October 1993, had unprecedented television coverage in Britain but the match ended early. Although he fought very hard with White, Short just could not match Kasparov on the days when he had to play Black.

When Short had White, he attacked the world champion's Najdorf Sicilian ferociously but somehow Garry hung on and did not lose a game until the match victory was virtually assured. Then suddenly, after achieving equality, Kasparov did at last make a fatal error and Short scored a consolation victory in the 16th game.

White: Nigel Short Black: Garry Kasparov Najdorf Sicilian (B87) London Wch-m (16), 1993

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 a6 6 Bc4 e6 7 Bb3 b5 8 0-0 Be7 9 Qf3 Qc7 10 Qg3 Nc6 11 Nxc6 Qxc6 12 Re1 Bb7 13 a3 Rd8 14 f3

Not 14 Qxg7? Rg8.

14...0-0 15 Bh6 Ne8 16 Kh1 Kh8



17 Bg5

This weakens the black d-pawn by exchanging its best defender.

17...Bxg5 18 Qxg5 Nf6 19 Rad1 Rd7 20 Rd3 Rfd8 21 Red1 Qc5 22 Qe3 Kg8 23 Kg1 Kf8

23...Qxe3+ 24 Rxe3 d5 25 exd5 Nxd5 26 Red3 Nf6=.

24 Qf2 Ba8 25 Ne2 g6?

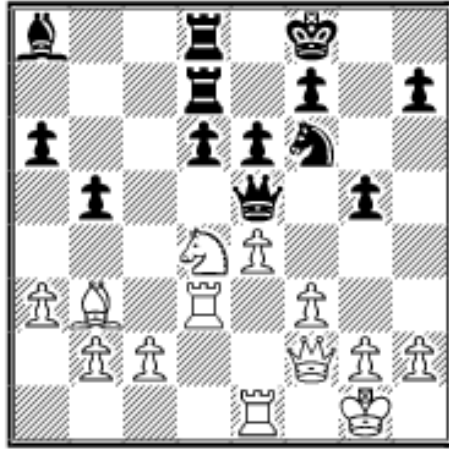
Kasparov refuses the Queen exchange once too often. **25...Qxf2+ 26 Kxf2 Ke7=.**

26 Nd4 Qe5

Now if Black tries for a queen swap by **26...e5 27 Rc3 Qa7 (27...Qb6?? 28**

Ne6+ and wins) he is punished by 28 Nc6 Qxf2+ 29 Kxf2 Rc8 (29...Bxc6 30 Rxc6±) 30 Nxe5!.

27 Re1 g5



Black makes a risky bid for counterplay. 27...Kg8 was better but White will play 28 c3 and Bc2.

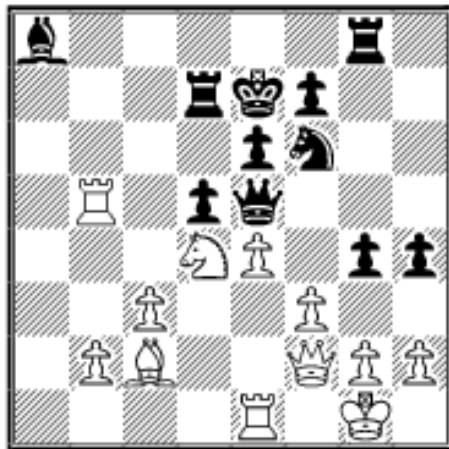
28 c3 Kg7 29 Bc2 Rg8 30 Nb3 Kf8 31 Rd4 Ke7 32 a4! h5 33 axb5 axb5 34 Rb4

34 h4 was also good, to meet 34...gxh4 by 35 f4+-.

34...h4 35 Nd4 g4

35...Rb8 36 Ba4!+-.

36 Rxb5 d5



If 36...Qxh2+ 37 Kxh2 g3+ 38 Kg1 gxf2+ 39 Kxf2±.

37 Qxh4

Threatens 38 Nf5+ and if 38...exf5 39 exf5 pinning Q on K.

37...Qh5

37...gxf3 stops that threat but allows a different finish 38 exd5! (38 Nf5+? exf5

39 exf5 Rxg2+ 40 Kf1 Re2—+) 38...Rxg2+ 39 Kf1 Qxh2 (39...Rxh2 40 Nf5+ Qxf5 41 Qb4+ and wins) 40 Nf5+ Kf8 41 Qxh2 Rxh2 42 Rb8+ Ne8 43 Ba4+-.

38 Nf5+ exf5 39 exf5+ Kf8 40 Qxf6+- 1-0

I met *Guardian* chess correspondent Leonard Barden outside the Savoy after one of these games. “It’s going to take us years to recover from this” he commented with great prescience.

After the 1993 match, chess never again got the same level of publicity in Britain. Television, in particular, lost interest. Many sponsors dropped out,

though some new ones have been found. For several years there was no sponsor for the British Championship. Many top players dropped out of the game, or reduced their active involvement, or emigrated.

If there is one encouraging feature of the current chess scene in Britain, it has been the emergence in the last few years of the Four Nations Chess league (4NCL), even if it's something of a misnomer because travel costs mean that participation is not very attractive to Irish players.

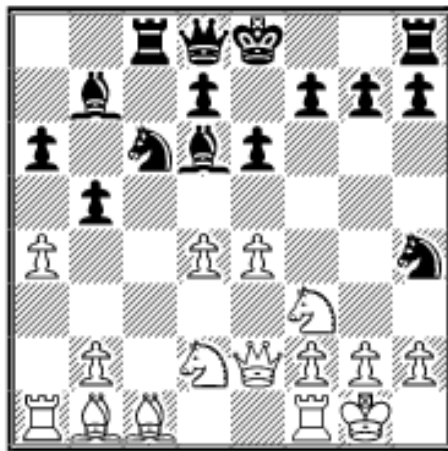
This league — modelled on successful leagues like those in Germany and France — has been a great success story that is likely to continue. Bringing nearly all the top players, plus most of the keen amateurs and some overseas stars to one venue for a weekend of chess several times a year, 4NCL has essentially replaced the old system of Saturday inter-county matches and weekend tournaments as the main focus of activity for young and improving players. So let us hope that the organisers can find a suitable new venue to replace the Birmingham hotel that has now closed.

Of course some new players are appearing and one English grandmaster has continued to compete at close to the highest level. I mean, of course, Michael Adams who is currently 4th in the FIDE ratings with 2742. Let us finish with one of his recent games where he almost effortlessly brushes off an opponent who, a couple of years ago, was being talked about as a serious contender for the world championship.

White: Michael Adams Black: Alexey Shirov Sicilian Defence (B30)

SuperGM Linares, 2002

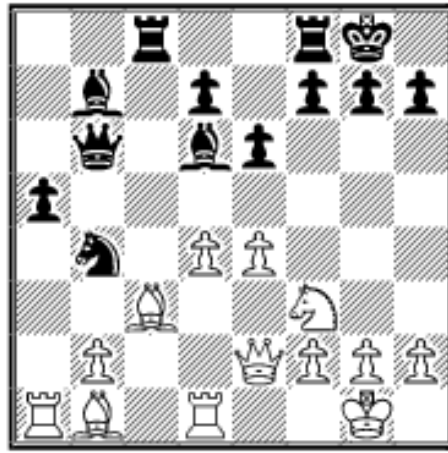
1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 e6 4 0-0 Nge7 5 c3 a6 6 Ba4 b5 7 Bc2 Bb7 8 Qe2 Ng6 9 d4 cxd4 10 cxd4 Nh4 11 Nbd2 Rc8 12 Bb1 Bd6 13 a4



In his notes in *New In Chess* 3/2002, Adams explains that "it seems logical to try and bring the rook into play along the a-file as it will take a long time to clear the back rank". He thought his position was somewhat preferable because of his pawn centre.

13...bxa4 14 Rxa4 Nxf3+ 15 Nxf3 Nb4 16 Bd2 a5 17 Rd1 0-0 18 Bc3 Qb6 19 Ra1

White was worried but his exposed rook.



19...Bf4?

Black rapidly gets a lost position after this. 19...Bc7 was better, as Black can meet 20 Ne5? f6 21 Nxd7? by 21...Qd6 threatening both the N and ...Qxh2+ with mate in 2.

20 Ne5! Qc7 21 Qg4 Bxe5

21...Bxh2+ 22 Kxh2 f6 fails to 23 d5 fxex5 24 dxe6 according to Adams.

22 dxe5 Bc6 23 h4 Kh8 24 Ra3 Rg8 25 h5 h6 26 Qf4 Rcf8 27 Bd4 Bb5 28 Rc3 Nc6 29 Bc5 Be2 30 Rd2 Bxh5 31 Rh3 1-0

Black resigned in view of 31...Bg6 32 Rxh6+ gxh6 33 Qxh6+ Bh7 34 Qf6+ Rg7 35 Bxf8.

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