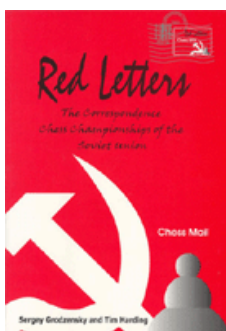




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Farewell to Bent Larsen

Late September and early October saw three significant events in the chess world. The first was the death of grandmaster Bent Larsen, one of the West's two leading players at the height of the Cold War. The second and third were more or less simultaneous: the chess Olympiad, with its surprising outcome, and the FIDE elections. The organisation's controversial president Kirsan Ilyumzhinov succeeded in repulsing the best efforts of the Karpov campaign to keep his hold on power in the world chess federation for another four years.

Bent Larsen (1935-2010) R.I.P.

Grandmaster Larsen died in Buenos Aires on 9 September, aged seventy-five. He was born in Jutland on 4 March 1935 and first came to prominence when he played top board for Denmark at the 1956 Moscow Olympiad. At the peak of his career, from the 1960s to the early 1980s, he and Bobby Fischer presented a major challenge to the Soviet monopoly of top chess. They also had an intense rivalry, partly because both men played almost every game with a passionate desire for victory and Larsen was always willing to play out long endgames in search of the extra half point.



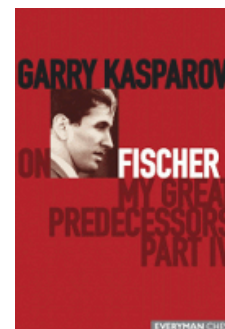
Bent Larsen

In 1970, Larsen insisted on playing top board in the USSR versus the Rest of the World, 'Match of the Century' at Belgrade, in view partly of Fischer's long lay-off from play at that point. He wanted to play the world champion, Boris Spassky, and drew their first game with white. Larsen was often willing to explore long-forgotten opening systems, such as 1 e4 e5 2 Bc4 and Bird's Opening, or to strike out on new paths. In the second game, he chose to surprise Spassky with 1 b3, but went down to a rapid defeat. However, he later had some success with that move, which later became known as Larsen's opening or the Nimzowitsch-Larsen Attack.

Proving his resilience, Larsen bounced back to defeat Spassky with black in the third game of the four-game Belgrade series. The Soviets then decided to rest Spassky for the last round and Larsen won against the reserve, Leonid Stein, who was a dangerous opponent. So Larsen made a plus score on top board for the event.

In their fourteen meetings in top competition, Larsen and Fischer only played one draw. Larsen won twice. The record was distorted by their final encounter, the 1971 Candidates match that Fischer won 6-0. Larsen had gone into that event with great confidence, having won their previous game, at the

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1970 Palma de Mallorca interzonal, which had otherwise been dominated by Fischer, but was broken in the epic first game. Nevertheless, Larsen continued to be a top competitor for several more years.

Robert J. Fischer – Bent Larsen

Palma de Mallorca Interzonal 1970

Sicilian Defence [B89]

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 Nc6 6 Bc4 e6 7 Bb3 Be7 8 Be3 0–0 9 Qe2 a6 10 0–0–0

White's ninth and tenth moves typify the Velimirovic Attack in the Sozin Variation, which was highly topical in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

10...Qc7 11 g4



[FEN "r1b2rk1/1pq1bppp/p1nppn2/8/3NP1P1/1BN1B3/PPP1QP1P/2KR3R b - g3 0 11"]

11...Nd7

This move was the suggestion of Soviet theoretician Nikitin. The main line at this time was 11...Nxd4 12 Rxd4 b5 13 g5 Nd7.

12 h4?!

Fischer had consulted Velimirovic before the game, who apparently recommended 12 Rhg1, but Fischer went his own way and Larsen had probably predicted this move would arrive on the board.

12...Nc5 13 g5 b5



[FEN "r1b2rk1/2q1bppp/p1npp3/1pn3P1/3NP2P/1BN1B3/PPP1QP2/2KR3R w - b6 0 14"]

14 f3?

14 h5! was successful for Albin Planinc in a 1971 game, but Larsen had probably prepared something against it.

14...Bd7

14...b4? 15 Na4 Bd7 16 Nxc6 Bxc6 17 Nxc5 dxc5 18 g6 hxg6 19 h5 with a dangerous attack.

15 Qg2 b4 16 Nce2 Nxb3+

Larsen avoids another dangerous attacking chance for White: 16...a5 17 Nxc6 Qxc6 18 Nd4 Qc7 19 g6!.

17 axb3

17 Nxb3 a5 18 Kb1 a4 19 Nbc1 Ne5 (Larsen).

17...a5 18 g6 fxg6 19 h5 Nxd4 20 Nxd4 g5

Larsen negotiates his way through the complications impressively.

21 Bxg5 Bxg5+ 22 Qxg5 h6! 23 Qg4 Rf7! 24 Rhg1 a4 25 bxa4 e5! 26 Ne6 Qc4!

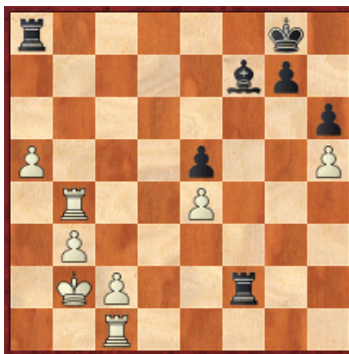


[FEN"r5k1/3b1rp1/3pN2p/4p2P/PpQ1P1Q1/5P2/1PP5/2KR2R1 w - - 0 27"]

Now Black wins a piece and the rest is technique.

27 b3 Qxe6 28 Qxe6 Bxe6 29 Rxd6 Re8 30 Rb6 Rxf3 31 Rxb4 Rc8! 32 Kb2 Rf2 33 Rc1 Bf7 34 a5 Ra8

Black still has to be wary of that queenside pawn phalanx.



[FEN"r5k1/5bp1/7p/P3p2P/1R2P3/1P6/1KP2r2/2R5 w - - 0 35"]

35 Rb5 Bxh5 36 Rxe5 Be2 37 Rc5 h5 38 e5 Bf3 39 Kc3 h4 40 Kd3

Black now drives the white king away from the decisive scene of action.

40...Re2 41 Rf1 Rd8+ 42 Kc3 Be4 43 Kb4 Rb8+ 44 Ka3 h3 45 e6 Bxc2 46 b4 Re3+ 47 Kb2 Bd3 48 Ra1 Ba6 49 Rc6 Rxb4+ 50 Kc2 Bb7 51 Rc3 Re2+ 52 Kd1 Rg2 0-1

In the early 1970s, I met Larsen on several occasions at chess events in England, beginning with the strong grandmaster tournament at Teesside 1972, which he won. He often visited London for minor tournaments as part of the junior squad training system organised by Leonard Barden and financed by Jim Slater, at the Mary Ward centre in Bloomsbury. There I had a couple of discussions with him about the Bishop's Opening, which was the subject of my first book, and featured several of his games. I found him always amiable

and interested, and willing to make constructive suggestions.

In 1989-90 he helped the development of future British masters and grandmasters again by participating in the Watson Farley Williams tournaments, which he won. In the May 1989 event, for example, he exceeded the grandmaster norm of 9/13 by half a point at the age of fifty-four, finishing a point clear of runner-up Danny King. He lost only to Keith Arkell. Here is his win against Nigel Davies in which Larsen employed one of the favourite openings of his youth.

Bent Larsen – Nigel Davies

London WFW 1989

Bishop's Opening [C28]

1 e4 e5 2 Bc4 Nf6 3 d3 Nc6 4 Nc3 Bb4 5 Nf3

This was Larsen's preference over the older 5 Bg5 and 5 Nge2.

5...d6 6 0-0 Bxc3 7 bxc3



[FEN"r1bqk2r/ppp2ppp/2np1n2/4p3/2B1P3/2PP1N2/P1P2PPP/R1BQ1RK1 b kq - 0 7"]

7...Bg4

7...Na5 8 Bb3 Nxb3 9 axb3 0-0 10 c4 in Larsen-Gligoric, Amsterdam izt 1964 (drawn) and Larsen-Lengyel, same event (White won).

8 h3 Bh5 9 Bb3 Nd7 10 Be3 Qe7 11 Rb1 Nd8

Davies intends to use his bishop rather than this knight to swap for the bishop on b3.

12 Kh2 f6 13 Qd2 Bf7 14 Nh4 g6 15 f4 Bxb3 16 axb3 Nf7 17 Nf3 0-0 18 Rf2 a6 19 Rbf1 Kh8 20 Kh1 Rae8 21 Nh2 exf4 22 Bxf4 Nfe5 23 c4

Larsen achieves the diamond formation that was effective in those games from 1964.



[FEN"4rr1k/1ppnq2p/p2p1pp1/4n3/2P1PB2/1P1P3P/2PQ1RPN/5R1K b - - 0 23"]

23...Rf7 24 Qa5 Rc8 25 Nf3 Nc6 26 Qc3 Kg8 27 Nh2 h5 28 Bc1 Qf8 29 Nf3 Qg7 30 b4 Nce5 31 Nd4 Re8 32 c5 dxc5 33 bxc5 c6 34 Nb3

Larsen apparently envisages N-a5-c4-d6 but changes tack after Black's weakening reply.



[FEN"4r1k1/1p1n1rq1/p1p2pp1/2P1n2p/4P3/1NQP3P/2P2RP1/2B2R1K b - - 0 34"]

34...g5 35 Nd4

This involves a pawn sacrifice as will soon be seen.

35...Qf8?!

If Black thought this would force a repetition of moves, he was soon shown the truth.

36 Nf5 Nxc5?

Of course 36...Qxc5 would lose the exchange to 37 Qxc5 Nxc5 38 Nh6+ but now a piece is lost instead

37 Ba3 Ned7 38 Qa1!

A necessary preliminary step, as if 38 d4 Nxe4.

38...b5 39 d4 Rxe4 40 Bxc5 1-0

Chess Olympiad in Khanty-Mansiysk

The Ukraine, as most readers probably heard already, proved surprise victors in the Olympiad. When I played in the Olympiad in 1984, there were fourteen rounds and teams had two reserve players. That has been cut back in recent years to eleven rounds and one reserve, presumably to save money, and to compensate for the fact that teams in the women's olympiad now also have four boards. (Strictly speaking, the main competition is not the Men's but the Open Olympiad and, apart from the Polgars, there have been other cases of women playing along with the men.)

In the old days, it was game points that decided, but nowadays it is match points: two for a win, one for a draw, not following the soccer system. Ukraine won eight matches and drew three, giving them 19 to Russia-1's 18. Game points are not even used as the principal tie-breaker any more.

If the primary scoring had still been by game points, Ukraine would have won even more convincingly, having 31. Russia-2 (the junior team by age and rating) would have been next with 29½, but they lost three matches and were placed much lower with 16 points. Russia-1 took the silver medals thanks to narrow victories, but only had 28 game points, a total also exceeded by bronze medallists Israel (17 match points, 29 game points). Furthermore, some other teams out of the medals exceeded Russia-1's game total. Hungary, who placed fourth, came behind Russia-1 on both indicators but China (16 MP, 29 GP) , Spain (16, 28½), and Poland (15, 29) had better individual results. Even Azerbaijan, placed twelfth, finished with the same number of game points as Russia-1, but it's true that finishing with a heavy win does distort the finishing position, which is probably why the scoring system was altered.



Vasily Ivanchuk

Their first victory in the event came thanks in good measure to a sensational performance on top board by Vasily Ivanchuk. At one point his performance rating for the tournament was over 3000, although ultimately it dipped to 2890 (8/10), the best result on top board. Emil Sutovsky, board two of Israel, topped that with a 2895 performance, though only based on eight games (from which he scored six and a half points). In a four-board team tournament, success requires other good performances by team members. Pavel Eljanov scored 7/10 on board 3 (2737 performance) and fourth board Zahar Efimenko played every round, scoring 9/11 for a 2783 result.

Vassily Ivanchuk – Alexander Beliavsky

Khanty-Mansiysk Olympiad 2010

Caro-Kann Defence [B13]

1 c4 c6 2 e4 d5 3 exd5 cxd5 4 d4 Nf6 5 Nc3 Nc6 6 Bg5 dxc4!?

A risky move but Beliavsky is not the sort of player to aim for a draw with Black. It seems he did not know the theory of this line, however.

7 Bxc4



[FEN"r1bqkb1r/pp2pppp/2n2n2/6B1/2BP4/2N5/PP3PPP/R2QK1NR b KQkq - 0 7"]

An old Alekhine gambit suggestion; I used to play 7 d5 here.

7...Nxd4?!

7...e6 8 Nf3 Be7 is safer, but it's an IQP position where White has perhaps more chances than with the bishop on d3. ; 7...Qxd4?! 8 Qxd4 Nxd4 9 0-0-0 e5 10 f4 is an old trap, hard to defend.

8 Nf3! Nxf3+ 9 Qxf3 Qc7 10 Bb5+ Bd7 11 0-0 Bc6

Black is under severe pressure; this novelty seems the best defence. 11...Bxb5

12 Nxb5 has won for White in several games, and 11...a6 12 Bxd7+ Qxd7 (12...Nxd7 13 Nd5) 13 Bxf6 gxf6 14 Rad1 is worse.

12 Bxf6 gxf6 13 Rad1 e6 14 Nd5 0–0–0 15 Bxc6 exd5 16 Bxd5



[FEN"2kr1b1r/ppq2p1p/5p2/3B4/8/5Q2/PP3PPP/3R1RK1 b - - 0 16"]

16...Kb8 17 Rc1 Qd7 18 Rcd1!?

It is strange that Ivanchuk does not play Rfd1 instead. Despite his obvious initiative, he seems a little unsure whether to play for a win here. In the end, it may not have made any difference which rook he played to d1.

18...Be7

Beliavsky could have repeated moves by 18...Qc7 but no doubt Ivanchuk would then have varied, probably with 19 g3.

19 g3 Qc7 20 Rc1 Qd7 21 Rfd1

White stands clearly better. It is an example of the old rule that opposite-coloured bishops and opposite side castled kings both favour the player with the initiative. Black's next move surprisingly allows a decisive combination but it must have been hard to find anything to play here.

21...Rc8?



[FEN"1kr4r/pp1qbp1p/5p2/3B4/8/5QP1/PP3P1P/2RR2K1 w - - 0 22"]

22 Bxb7! Rxc1

22...Qxb7 23 Qxb7+ Kxb7 24 Rd7+ Kb6 25 Rxc8 Rxc8 26 Rxe7 is a comfortably won rook ending thanks to the extra pawn and Black's many weaknesses.

23 Rxc1 Qxb7 24 Qf4+

The point.

24...Ka8 25 Rc7 1–0

Black resigns, because after, for example, 25...Qxb2 26 Rxe7 Rd8 27 Qf3+

Kb8 28 Rxf7 Black cannot defend both his king and his scattered pawns.

On the dark side, the world top-rated player Magnus Carlsen could only score four and a half from eight games on top board for Norway, losing 15.3 of his 2826 rating points. He lost to Baadur Jobava of Georgia, Michael Adams of England and Sana Sjugirov of Russia-4. All three are grandmasters but only Adams is an experienced opponent of high class who should really have been able to trouble him. Those who touted Carlsen as the "real" champion while the Topalov-Anand match was in progress must think again. Team tournaments, individual tournaments and high-level matches are all different kinds of competition. Nevertheless, Carlsen's time will probably come.

Michael Adams – Magnus Carlsen

Khanty-Mansiysk Olympiad 2010

Modern Defence [B06]

1 e4 g6 2 d4 Nf6 3 e5 Nh5

The so-called North Sea Defence, which has been analysed in Sweden and has been seen in some high-level correspondence games from the 1990s. If now 4 Bc4 d5. However, eccentric positional play is not a good choice against the common-sense Adams.

4 Be2 d6



[FEN"rnbqkb1r/ppp1pp1p/3p2p1/4P2n/3P4/8/PPP1BPPP/RNBQK1NR w KQkq - 0 5"]

5 Nf3

Adams is not tempted to capture on h5.

5...Nc6 6 exd6 exd6

This seems to be a novelty, Black having captured with either the queen or c-pawn in previous games. Now we have a sort of Alekhine Defence with the black knight out on the rim.

7 d5 Ne7 8 c4 Bg7 9 Nc3 0-0 10 0-0 Bg4 11 Re1 Re8 12 h3 Bxf3 13 Bxf3 Nf6 14 Bf4 Nd7 15 Rc1 Ne5 16 b3 a6 17 g3 Nf5 18 Bg2



[FEN"r2qr1k1/1pp2pbp/p2p2p1/3Pnn2/2P2B2/1PN3PP/P4PB1/2RQR1K1 b - - 0 18"]

18...g5

Black takes a further risk, dislodging the active bishop but weakening the kingside.

19 Bxe5 Bxe5 20 Ne4 Ng7 21 Qd2 h6 22 f4 gxf4 23 gxf4 Bf6 24 Kh2 Nh5

Back "home"!

25 Rg1 Kh7 26 Rcf1 Rg8 27 Qe2 Ng7 28 Qd3 Kh8 29 Bf3 b5 30 Bd1 bxc4 31 bxc4 Bh4 32 Bc2



[FEN"r2q2rk/2p2pn1/p2p3p/3P4/2P1NP1b/3Q3P/P1B4K/5RR1 b - - 0 32"]

Threatening Nf6 and Qh7 mate.

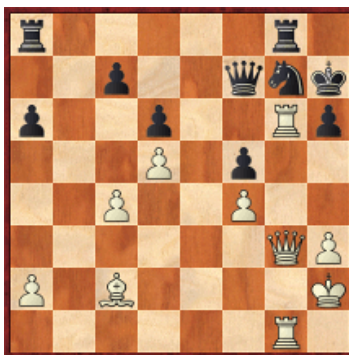
32...f5 33 Rg6 Kh7

Not 33...fxe4 34 Rxf6#.

34 Rfg1 Qe7 35 Ng3 Bxg3+

35...Kxg6? 36 Nxf5+.

36 Qxg3 Qf7?



[FEN"r5r1/2p2qnk/p2p2Rp/3P1p2/2P2P2/6QP/P1B4K/6R1 w - - 0 37"]

This loses immediately. The only hope was put the knight back on h5 again! However, after 36...Nh5 White should still win comfortably; e.g., 37 Qf3 Rxf6 38 Bxf5 Rg8 (38...Ng7 39 Bc2) 39 Rxf6 Rxf6 40 Qxh5 heading for a won king and pawn endgame.

37 Bd1! Rae8

Ending the misery.

38 Rxf6+! 1-0

Mate is eventually forced after 38...Kxf6 39 Qg5+ Kh7 40 Qh4+ Nh5 41 Bxh5, etc.

Topalov also had a bad Olympiad, scoring 5/9 and losing 17½ rating points. Anand did not play. On top board for Russia-1, Kramnik gained two Elo points by scoring seven draws and two wins. It is interesting that apart from missing the first round game against Ireland, he also chose to duck a meeting with the black pieces against Peter Leko. After the experience of their title match a few years ago, the Hungarian would certainly have tried to beat Kramnik and might well have succeeded; instead he had to be satisfied with downing Grischuk. The other games were drawn, although Russia were higher rated on every board, and Hungary deservedly won thanks to Leko's top board victory. This lost match probably cost Russia the Olympiad.

In the last round, Russia still had a chance if they could beat Spain while Ukraine failed to beat Israel. The Russians and Ukrainians both agreed quick draws in two games; Ivanchuk being paired with his old rival Boris Gelfand (formerly of Belarus) was doubtless a factor here.

The two leading teams then tried to win their white games, but Svidler lost to Ivan Salgado Lopez, meaning that a 2-2 result was Russia's best hope and it would leave them short unless Israel won their match. A drawn match was sufficient for the Ukrainians and this was quickly settled although they would probably have won 2½-1½ if the games had been played to a finish. Eventually Kramnik did beat Shirov, which the Israelis had been counting on to secure third place.

Lower down the table, I was following the Irish performances closely because Sam Collins, who recently scored his second grandmaster norm, began with a draw against Alexander Grischuk (the Russians 'rested' Kramnik in round one).

Alexander Grischuk (2760) – Sam Collins (2431)

Khanty-Mansiysk Olympiad 2010

Queen's Gambit, Slav Defence [D15]

1 d4 d5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 c4 c6 4 Nc3 a6

This has become a very reliable way of handling the Slav.

5 c5 Bf5 6 Bf4 Nbd7 7 e3 Nh5 8 Be5 Nhf6 9 Bg3 Ne4 10 Nxe4 Bxe4 11 Nd2 Bg6 12 b4 f6 13 Be2 e5 14 Nb3 Be7 15 a4 0-0 16 0-0 Kh8 17 Qd2 Re8 18 b5 Qc8 19 Qb2 Bd8 20 b6



[FEN"r1qbr2k/1p1n2pp/pPp2pb1/2Ppp3/P2P4/1N2P1B1/1Q2BPPP/R4RK1 b - - 0 20"]

This is an admission that opening the queenside can only be to Black's advantage. the concession will help Black to draw the game, but before he can be confident of that, he must find a way to bring his queen's rook into play.

20...e4 21 Rae1 Nf8 22 Qc3 f5 23 f3

White has to do something to open lines but Black is not afraid to fight.

23...exf3 24 gxf3 Bf6 25 Bd3 Ne6 26 Bd6 Ng5 27 Kh1 Bh5 28 Nd2 Qd7 29 Bc2 Bg6 30 Re2 Re6 31 f4 Ne4 32 Nxe4 fxe4



[FEN"r6k/1p1q2pp/pPpBrbb1/2Pp4/P2PpP2/2Q1P3/2B1R2P/5R1K w - - 0 33"]

If anything, Black may stand slightly better now but, like the Spartans at Thermopylae, is determined to fight on a narrow front, making it very hard for the stronger player to make significant progress.

33 Rg2 Bf5 34 Rfg1 Rg8 35 Bd1 Qf7 36 Be2 Ree8 37 Be5 Bh3

Black must never capture on e5 because that would give White a protected passed pawn.

38 Rg3 Bf5 39 Qb3 Rd8 40 R1g2

White finds a little play on the g-file but Black's position is secure.

40...Rde8 41 Qd1 Re7 42 Bh5

Hoping for the weakening reply ...g7-g6.

42...Qe6 43 Qg1 Rd7 44 a5 Re7 45 h4



[FEN"6rk/1p2r1pp/pPp1qb2/P1PpBb1B/3PpP1P/4P1R1/6R1/6QK b - h3 0 45"]

Of course Black cannot take this pawn because g7 would fall. The h-pawn advance is White's last throw of the dice.

45...Rd7 46 Be2 Re7 47 h5 h6

An important defensive move.

48 Kh2 Qf7 49 Qd1 Qe6

Now it is a matter of care and patience. White cannot make progress with the pieces on the board so will try to simplify and hope his IM opponent cracks.

50 Bg4 Bxg4 51 Rxg4 Qf5 52 Rg6 Rf7 53 Qg4 Qxg4 54 R2xg4 Kh7

The biggest danger for the defender in such positions is seeing ghosts. Black just waits.

55 Kh3

55 Bxf6 gets nowhere, because after 55...Rxf6 56 Rxf6 gxf6 there are no entry points for the king and pawn endgame: 57 Rxc8 Kxc8 58 Kg3 f5=.

55...Rff8 56 Rg2 Rf7 57 Kg4

Thinking about penetrating with the king, but it can only be a feint while there are two pairs of rooks on the board.

57...Rgf8

Because with the g1-rook veiled, Black can meet 58 Bxf6 by ...Rxf6.

58 Rg1 Kh8 59 Kh3 Rg8

Back to guard g7.

60 R1g3 Kh7 61 Rg2 Kh8 62 Kg4 Kh7



[FEN"6r1/1p3rpk/pPp2bRp/P1PpB2P/3PpPK1/4P3/6R1/8 w - - 0 63"]

White will try his last available ploy: advancing the f-pawn.

63 Bd6 Re8 64 Rg1 Rg8 65 f5 Re8 66 Kf4 Ra8 67 Be5 Rc8 68 R1g4 Ra8



[FEN"r7/1p3rpk/pPp2bRp/P1PpBP1P/3PpKR1/4P3/8/8 w - - 0 69"]

69 Rxf6!?

This seems to be a little joke, trying to confuse Black.

69 Bxf6 gxf6 leaves White in total control of the g-file but with no entry points, whatever your computer may think about the position (which will be somewhere between += and +- depending on your program and the time you allow it to shuffle around.)

69...Rxf6

Presumably if 69...gxf6, Grischuk would have continued 70 Bd6 Rg8 71 Rg6 but this should also be a draw, so he was not risking anything. Collins sees no reason to change the situation, which is obviously drawn, so he gives the exchange back.

An instructive example of how to hold your nerve against an opponent who outranks you by 329 Elo points!

For a long time it looked like Collins would make his final norm, but Ireland played several teams that were rather weak, lowering his average. A few more half points scored on the lower boards would have seen Ireland paired with slightly higher-rated opposition and so made Collins's task easier. It is hard to go for a grandmaster norm when in successive rounds you meet opposition rated 2115, 2282, and 2254. Collins had to press for wins in later rounds, and so lost to Sune Berg Hansen of Denmark in round nine. Then in the final round when he needed a draw with Singapore grandmaster Zhang Zhong, he lost. At least he increased his rating by 16 points so is moving closer to the 2500 required to qualify as a grandmaster (in addition to achieving three norms).

Despite this disappointment, Irish men's chess is a definitely getting stronger at the top, and with grandmaster and IM tournaments held in Dublin in August, the opportunities for players are improving somewhat. However, apart from Collins, our only other player to make a plus score was experienced IM Mark Heidenfeld (son of chess writer Wolfgang Heidenfeld) who made five and a half out of nine on board three.

Ireland tends to see-saw between wins against weak teams and losses to strong teams, which could be seen by the fact that board two Alex Astaneh Lopez from Cork, the new Irish champion (who scored 50%), and Colm Daly on board four, only drew one game each. Unlike Heidenfeld, who was able also to draw with some players rated higher than himself, Daly invariably was beaten by them, perhaps because he refused to set himself the draw as a target. As an experienced former champion, he should have done better. The reserve player David Fitzsimons scored 50% from seven games and made a par result for his rating. He and Lopez will benefit from the experience.

Our women's team, however, was arguably much stronger (certainly more experienced) in 1984, and April Cronin, who was on that team, recently regained the Irish ladies' title with a 100% score despite playing very little in recent years. It is hoped that the young team (four of them with no previous FIDE rating) who went to Siberia will benefit from the experience, and they did all at least win two games. The risk was that some of them would be deeply discouraged by the experience, where they scored 17 points from a possible 43 (plus a walkover). Sarah-Jane Hearne finished with straight wins to be the only player on the team with a plus score and a 1573 performance rating. Teenager Emily Alfred achieved a performance rating of 1746, despite "only" scoring 3/9, and she had a win against a 1905 opponent.

Also good news is that the next two Olympiads will be held in places that are likely to be easier to reach and most interesting to see than Siberia. The 2012 event will be staged in Istanbul and now the FIDE Congress voted by 95-47 to go in 2014 to Norway, a country I have long wanted to visit, and in particular to the Arctic city of Tromsø. I am not sure of the dates, maybe not yet settled? The only snag is that alcoholic drink is notoriously very expensive in Norway, which may curb some of the socialising popular among the players on less competitive teams, such as Bermuda.

Ilyumzhinov rides again

The incumbent President of FIDE, Kirsan Ilyumzhinov, in the end comfortably repulsed the challenge of Anatoly Karpov (backed by Garry Kasparov, Nigel Short and most European nations) to change the guard at the world chess federation. Compared with the 2006 election, when he was opposed by a chess organiser and financier (Bessel Kok) rather than an eminent player, Ilyumzhinov was expected by some (including me) to find it much harder to win. As it turned out, he received only one less vote on this occasion and Karpov received one more than Kok had done. The margin was 95-55 with a few abstentions; indeed already the President is claiming on the Web that 102 nations support him.



Kirsan Ilyumzhinov

It is clear now that he cannot be replaced by any normal means. Already in office since 1995, his reign now looks like being extended to 19 years and perhaps far longer. Karpov has been criticised in retrospect for being so negative in his campaigning, and not demonstrating what he stood for, but I very much doubt that this election could have been won by any amount of rational persuasion. Bribery, abuse of proxies (and worse) have been alleged against the FIDE president but that is only hearsay. In this column previously, I advocated that it was time for a change and I still think that, but how it will be brought about, it is hard to see. The quality of the candidate put forward against the current regime is probably irrelevant. The only way they can be replaced is by somehow breaking up the bloc of nations that support the leadership.

I sought in vain a clear roster of which country voted which way. Reports emanating from the FIDE Congress however stated that the African zone (which has 34 members) mostly supported Ilyumzhinov, and that almost all the Asian zone. That zone has 47 members, of which we can perhaps safely assume that Australia and New Zealand, and maybe two or three others where English is a major language may have voted for Karpov.



Anatoly Karpov

FIDE has 170 member nations according to its website. So Africa plus Asia, even if it were solidly voting one way, is not a majority. In fact if Europe and America all vote one way, and Africa-Asia the other way, the former's candidate would narrowly win. Some countries in the Europe zone (54 members) and America zone (34 members) must have supported Ilyumzhinov also, and some must have abstained. It would be very interesting to know which European and American countries did not support Karpov, and why not.

The analysis of zones is complicated by the fact that some former constituents of the Soviet Union are in Europe and others in Asia. The precise composition of the zones is as follows.

Africa zone

1. Algeria; 2. Angola; 3. Botswana; 4. Burundi; 5. Cameroon; 6. Central African Republic; 7. Congo; 8. Egypt; 9. Ethiopia; 10. Gabon; 11. Ghana; 12. Kenya; 13. Libya; 14. Madagascar; 15. Malawi; 16. Mali; 17. Mauritania; 18. Mauritius; 19. Morocco; 20. Mozambique; 21. Namibia; 22. Nigeria; 23. Rwanda; 24. Sao Tome and Principe; 25. Senegal; 26. Seychelles; 27. Sierra Leone; 28. Somalia; 29. South Africa; 30. Sudan; 31. Tunisia; 32. Uganda; 33. Zambia; 34. Zimbabwe

Asia zone

1. Afghanistan; 2. Australia; 3. Bahrain; 4. Bangladesh; 5. Bhutan; 6. Brunei Darussalam; 7. Cambodia; 8. China; 9. Chinese Taipei; 10. Fiji; 11. Hong Kong; 12. India; 13. Indonesia; 14. Iran; 15. Iraq; 16. Japan; 17. Jordan; 18. Kazakhstan; 19. Kuwait; 20. Kyrgyzstan; 21. Laos; 22. Lebanon; 23. Macau; 24. Malaysia; 25. Maldives; 26. Mongolia; 27. Myanmar; 28. Nepal; 29. New Zealand; 30. Pakistan; 31. Palau; 32. Palestine; 33. Papua New Guinea; 34. Philippines; 35. Qatar; 36. Singapore; 37. Solomon Islands; 38. South Korea; 39. Sri Lanka; 40. Syria; 41. Tajikistan; 42. Thailand; 43. Turkmenistan; 44. United Arab Emirates; 45. Uzbekistan; 46. Vietnam; 47. Yemen

Europe zone

1. Albania; 2. Andorra; 3. Armenia; 4. Austria; 5. Azerbaijan; 6. Belarus; 7. Belgium; 8. Bosnia & Herzegovina; 9. Bulgaria; 10. Croatia; 11. Cyprus; 12. Czech Republic; 13. Denmark; 14. England; 15. Estonia; 16. Faroe Islands; 17. Finland; 18. Former YUG Rep of Macedonia; 19. France; 20. Georgia; 21. Germany; 22. Greece; 23. Guernsey; 24. Hungary; 25. Iceland; 26. Ireland; 27. Israel; 28. Italy; 29. Jersey; 30. Latvia; 31. Liechtenstein; 32. Lithuania; 33. Luxembourg; 34. Malta; 35. Moldova; 36. Monaco; 37. Montenegro; 38. Netherlands; 39. Norway; 40. Poland; 41. Portugal; 42. Romania; 43. Russia; 44. San Marino; 45. Scotland; 46. Serbia; 47. Slovakia; 48. Slovenia; 49. Spain; 50. Sweden; 51. Switzerland; 52. Turkey; 53. Ukraine; 54. Wales;

America zone

1. Argentina ; 2. Aruba; 3. Bahamas; 4. Barbados; 5. Belize; 6. Bermuda; 7. Bolivia; 8. Brazil; 9. British Virgin Islands; 10. Canada; 11. Chile; 12. Colombia; 13. Costa Rica; 14. Cuba; 15. Dominican Republic; 16. Ecuador; 17. El Salvador; 18. Guatemala; 19. Guyana; 20. Haiti; 21. Honduras; 22. Jamaica; 23. Mexico; 24. Netherlands Antilles; 25. Nicaragua; 26. Panama; 27. Paraguay; 28. Peru; 29. Puerto Rico; 30. Surinam; 31. Trinidad & Tobago; 32. United States of America; 33. Uruguay; 34. US Virgin Islands; 35. Venezuela.

Certainly there are some very small countries in each zone, so that perhaps balances out. However, it is surely undeniable that chess (at least not the western variety that FIDE governs) is not played by any great number of people in all but a few of the countries in the African and Asian zones. On the other hand, it is evident that the level of chess activity, the number of players and the vast majority of players rated above 2000 are to be found in the European and American zones, with just a few Asian countries (and perhaps none at all in Africa), on a similar level.

I am not calling for the FIDE leadership to be elected by 200+ players or masters or professionals, but there should be some weighting in favour of the principal chess-playing countries. The delegates who voted for Karpov may have been in a clear minority of nations, but (if we disregard Russia, the destination of whose vote is unclear to me), it is probable that they represented of the vast majority of the world's chess players.

Of course if there were not grave suspicions about the character of the present President, just as there were about his predecessor, the situation would be less worrying. The fact that he was somehow recently persuaded not to stand for re-election as president of Kalmykia (the autonomous republic in the Russian Federation where Elista is situated) means he now has even more time to

devote to making mischief in the chess world. He is still only forty-eight-years old and held that position since 1993. Maybe that political change at home may prove in the long run to weaken his hold on the international chess organisation. Only time will tell.

For the record, here is the full ticket that was elected along with him.

- Kirsan Ilyumzhinov (Russia), President.
- Georgios Makropoulos (Greece), Deputy President.
- Lewis Ncube (Zambia), Vice President.
- Beatriz Marinello (Chile/Brazil), Vice President.
- Ignatius Leong (Singapore), General Secretary.
- Nigel Freeman (Bermuda), Treasurer.

For many readers, these political matters may not seem very important. For me, the unsatisfactory state of the world chess federation and its leadership is one major reason why I have not participated in international chess other than by correspondence, for a very long time. Needless to say, perhaps, the International Correspondence Chess Federation has a proper constitution and rules about nominations and voting that FIDE should copy.

It is not possible in ICCF, for example, that two people from the same federation could both stand for election as President because candidates for any position must be nominated by the board of their own federation. If FIDE had that rule, then the issue of whether Karpov or Ilyumzhinov was the candidate of Russia would have had to be resolved in advance of the election. It was the unclarity (virtual non-existence) of rules about this sort of thing that meant Karpov's legal challenge to the international sporting arbitration court failed.

If FIDE cannot be an honestly run institution, as it appears it is not, then it should be dismantled and rebuilt – but how?

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