



COLUMNISTS

Susan Polgar on Chess

Susan Polgar



Breaking Through

by Susan Polgar

Chaos in Elista

In 1993, Garry Kasparov and Nigel Short decided to leave FIDE to hold their world championship match under the auspices of the Professional Chess Association (PCA). This was the beginning of a split world championship, but it was not really an issue since Kasparov continued to be the #1 player in the world. However, in 2000, Kasparov finally lost a match to his then hand-picked challenger, Vladimir Kramnik, and the issue of a disputed world championship loomed larger as Kramnik's rating plummeted because of health problems.

Meanwhile, FIDE produced a series of world champions through a knockout system that failed to impress the chess fans. There was finally some hope in 2005, when Veselin Topalov won the FIDE World Championship tournament in San Luis, Argentina in impressive fashion. He followed that up with many more fantastic results, boosting his rating above 2800, and becoming the #1 player in the world.

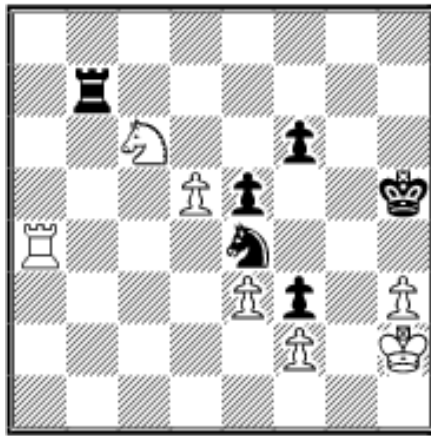
This created the conditions for a Kramnik-Topalov showdown to unify the world championship. It professed to be a colossal match between one of the best attackers versus one of the best defenders in the history of chess. The contrasting styles would make things that much more exciting! The match began on September 21, 2006.

In the first game, Kramnik and Topalov were locked in the Catalan. On several occasions, Topalov could have forced a draw, but he chose to fight for the win. His position was fine until a horrible blunder on move 57.

Kramnik, V (2743) - Topalov, V (2813)

WC Elista RUS (1), 09-23-2006 [E04]

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 d5 4.g3 dxc4 5.Bg2 Bb4+ 6.Bd2 a5 7.Qc2 Bxd2+ 8.Qxd2 c6 9.a4 b5 10.axb5 cxb5 11.Qg5 0-0 12.Qxb5 Ba6 13.Qa4 Qb6 14.0-0 Qxb2 15.Nbd2 Bb5 16.Nxc4 Bxa4 17.Nxb2 Bb5 18.Ne5 Ra7 19.Bf3 Nbd7 20.Nec4 Rb8 21.Rfb1 g5 22.e3 g4 23.Bd1 Bc6 24.Rc1 Be4 25.Na4 Rb4 26.Nd6 Bf3 27.Bxf3 gxf3 28.Nc8 Ra8 29.Ne7+ Kg7 30.Nc6 Rb3 31.Nc5 Rb5 32.h3 Nxc5 33.Rxc5 Rb2 34.Rg5+ Kh6 35.Rgxa5 Rxa5 36.Nxa5 Ne4 37.Rf1 Nd2 38.Rc1 Ne4 39.Rf1 f6 40.Nc6 Nd2 41.Rd1 Ne4 42.Rf1 Kg6 43.Nd8 Rb6 44.Rc1 h5 45.Ra1 h4 46.gxh4 Kh5 47.Ra2 Kxh4 48.Kh2 Kh5 49.Rc2 Kh6 50.Ra2 Kg6 51.Rc2 Kf5 52.Ra2 Rb5 53.Nc6 Rb7 54.Ra5+ Kg6 55.Ra2 Kh5 56.d5 e5 57.Ra4



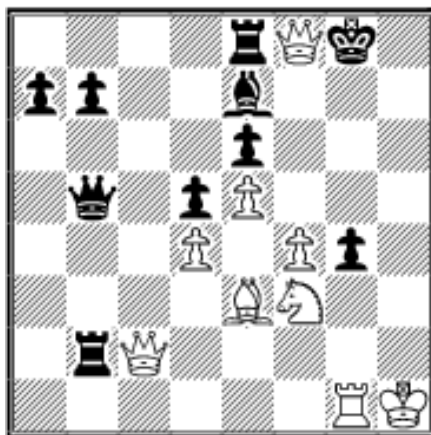
57...f5 58.Nxe5 Rb2 59.Nd3 Rb7 60.Rd4 Rb6 61.d6 Nxd6 62.Kg3 Ne4+ 63.Kxf3 Kg5 64.h4+ Kf6 65.Rd5 Nc3 66.Rd8 Rb1 67.Rf8+ Ke6 68.Nf4+ Ke5 69.Re8+ Kf6 70.Nh5+ Kg6 71.Ng3 Rb2 72.h5+ Kf7 73.Re5 Nd1 74.Ne2 Kf6 75.Rd5 1-0

In game two, Kramnik employed the Slav Defense. This game clearly showed the stark contrast between the two players. Topalov threw the kitchen sink at Kramnik on the kingside, while Kramnik calmly accepted a pawn sacrifice and defended against the dangerous attack. However, Kramnik blundered on move 31, which should have resulted in an immediate loss. But Topalov missed the winning move, made some further inaccuracies, and lost a game that should have been his.

Topalov, V (2813) - Kramnik, V (2743)

WC Elista RUS (2), 09-24-2006 [D19]

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 dxc4 5.a4 Bf5 6.e3 e6 7.Bxc4 Bb4 8.0-0 Nbd7 9.Qe2 Bg6 10.e4 0-0 11.Bd3 Bh5 12.e5 Nd5 13.Nxd5 cxd5 14.Qe3 Bg6 15.Ng5 Re8 16.f4 Bxd3 17.Qxd3 f5 18.Be3 Nf8 19.Kh1 Rc8 20.g4 Qd7 21.Rg1 Be7 22.Nf3 Rc4 23.Rg2 fxg4 24.Rxg4 Rxa4 25.Rag1 g6 26.h4 Rb4 27.h5 Qb5 28.Qc2 Rxb2 29.hxg6 h5 30.g7 hxg4 31.gxf8Q+



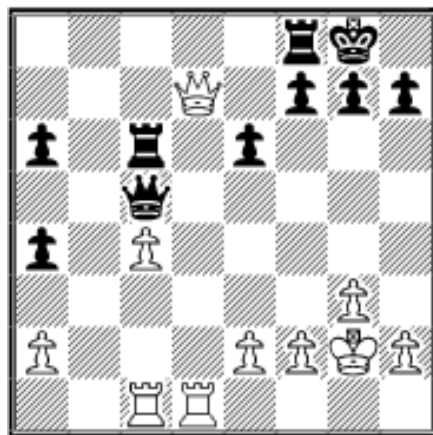
31...Bxf8 32.Qg6+ Bg7 33.f5 Re7 34.f6 Qe2 35.Qxg4 Rf7 36.Rc1 Rc2 37.Rxc2 Qd1+ 38.Kg2 Qxc2+ 39.Kg3 Qe4 40.Bf4 Qf5 41.Qxf5 exf5 42.Bg5 a5 43.Kf4 a4 44.Kxf5 a3 45.Bc1 Bf8 46.e6 Rc7 47.Bxa3 Bxa3 48.Ke5 Rc1 49.Ng5 Rf1 50.e7 Re1+ 51.Kxd5 Bxe7 52.fxe7 Rxe7 53.Kd6 Re1 54.d5 Kf8 55.Ne6+ Ke8 56.Nc7+ Kd8 57.Ne6+ Kc8 58.Ke7 Rh1 59.Ng5 b5 60.d6 Rd1 61.Ne6 b4 62.Nc5 Re1+ 63.Kf6 Re3 0-1

The next two games were fighting draws, until one of the most bizarre incidents in world championship history took place.

Kramnik, V (2743) - Topalov, V (2813)

WC Elista RUS (3), 09-26-2006 [E02]

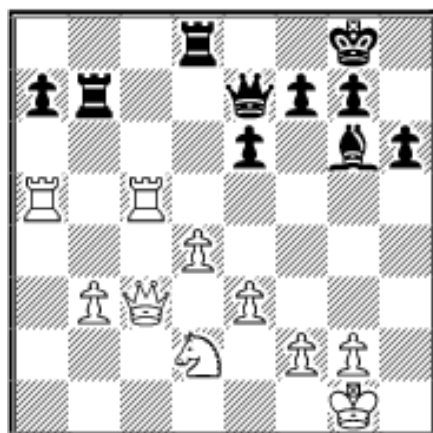
1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 d5 4.g3 dxc4 5.Bg2 Nc6 6.Qa4 Bd7 7.Qxc4 Na5 8.Qd3 c5 9.0-0 Bc6 10.Nc3 cxd4 11.Nxd4 Bc5 12.Rd1 Bxg2 13.Qb5+ Nd7 14.Kxg2 a6 15.Qd3 Rc8 16.Bg5 Be7 17.Bxe7 Qxe7 18.Rac1 Nc4 19.Na4 b5 20.b3 0-0 21.bxc4 bxa4 22.Nc6 Rxc6 23.Qxd7 Qc5



24.Rc3 g6 25.Rb1 h5 26.Rb7 e5 27.e4 Rf6
28.Rc2 Qa3 29.Qd1 Rd6 30.Rd2 Rfd8
31.Rd5 Rxd5 32.cxd5 Qxa2 33.Qf3 Rf8
34.Qd3 a3 35.Rb3 f5 36.Qxa6 Qxb3
37.Qxg6+ Kh8 38.Qh6+ Kg8 1/2-1/2

Topalov, V (2813) - Kramnik, V (2743)
WC Elista RUS (4), 09-27-2006 [D47]

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.e3 e6 5.Nf3
Nbd7 6.Bd3 dxc4 7.Bxc4 b5 8.Bd3 Bb7
9.a3 b4 10.Ne4 Nxe4 11.Bxe4 bxa3 12.0-0
Bd6 13.b3 Nf6 14.Nd2 Qc7 15.Bf3 Bxh2+ 16.Kh1 Bd6 17.Nc4 Be7 18.Bxa3
0-0 19.Bxe7 Qxe7 20.Ra5 Rfd8 21.Kg1 c5 22.Rxc5 Ne4 23.Bxe4 Bxe4
24.Qg4 Bd3 25.Ra1 Rac8 26.Raa5 Rb8 27.Qd1 Be4 28.Qa1 Rb7 29.Nd2
Bg6 30.Qc3 h6



31.Ra6 Kh7 32.Nc4 Be4 33.f3 Bd5 34.Nd2
Rdb8 35.Qd3+ f5 36.Rc3 Qh4 37.Ra1 Qg3
38.Qc2 Rf7 39.Rf1 Qg6 40.Qd3 Qg3
41.Rfc1 Rfb7 42.Qc2 Qg5 43.Ra1 Qf6
44.Qd3 Rd7 45.Ra4 Rbd8 46.Rc5 Kg8
47.Nc4 Bxc4 48.Raxc4 f4 49.Rc6 fxe3
50.Qxe3 Rxd4 51.Rxe6 Qh4 52.Rxd4
Qxd4 53.Re8+ Kh7 54.Qxd4 1/2-1/2

On the rest day following game four,
Topalov's manager Silvio Danailov made
an official protest to the Appeals

Committee, claiming that Kramnik was visiting his private bathroom up to 50
times each game and that this behavior was suspicious.

Here is the official rule in regards to the Appeals Committee that both players
agreed to prior to the match:

3. 17 Appeals Committee.

*3. 17. 1 The President or his Deputy shall be Chairman of the Appeals
Committee. There shall be two (2) other members all from different
Federations. No member of the Appeals Committee can be from the
federation of either player.*

*All protests must be submitted in writing to the Appeals Committee not
more than two (2) hours after the relevant playing session, or the
particular infringement complained against.*

The Committee may decide on the following matters:

- a) an appeal against a decision by an arbiter,*
- b) a protest against a player's behaviour,*
- c) a complaint alleging false interpretation of the regulations,*
- d) a request for the interpretation of specific regulations,*

*e) a protest or complaint against any participant, or
f) all other matters which the Committee considers important.
If possible, the Committee shall reach a decision not more than two (2) hours after the submission of a protest. The appeals process shall include written representations and a written decision.
The Committee shall endeavour to find binding solutions that are within the true spirit of the FIDE motto, Gens Una Sumus. Each protest must be accompanied by a deposit fee of USD 5,000 (five thousand US Dollars) or the equivalent in local currency.
If the protest is accepted as logical and reasonable, the fee shall be returned even if the protest will be rejected. The fees not to be returned due to unreasonable protests shall be forfeited to FIDE.
The written decision of the Appeals Committee arising from any dispute in respect of these regulations shall be final.*

After reviewing the evidence, even though nothing inappropriate was found, the Appeals Committee made the following decision:

*In order that the World Championship can continue running smoothly, the Appeals Committee has decided:
(a) To close both the toilets in the players' rest rooms and to open another toilet that will be available only to the two players.
(b) Not to accept the request of Mr. Danailov, to stop the use of the rest rooms by the players.
(c) The Appeals Committee believes that the publication of the videotapes to the mass media is not within our authority and we consider such action to be against the privacy of the players.
(d) The Appeals Committee will return the fee of USD 5,000 for the appeal to Mr. Danailov.*

Kramnik disputed the decision and refused to play game 5, unless he was given access to his private bathroom as stated in his contract. So his clock was started by the match arbiter and Kramnik was forfeited when he failed to appear at the board one hour later. At the press conference afterwards, Kramnik stated that he was willing to play game 5 the next day (ignoring his forfeit loss), if his conditions were met. Furthermore, he demanded that the Appeals Committee be replaced for bias towards Mr. Topalov.

This is another sad episode for chess. I feel that Topalov had the right to protest, although I did not like the tone and language of the letter from Danailov. It made Topalov look bad, especially with the score being 3-1 in Kramnik's favor. However, FIDE made a mistake by appointing three of its officers to the Appeals Committee. It would have been better and wiser to appoint three people who were *not* directly affiliated with FIDE to avoid any allusion of favoritism.

Nevertheless, the best solution would be to appoint a Chess Commissioner to oversee the professionalism of our sport; someone who is well-respected by the organizers, players and various chess federations. I strongly believe this

incident would not have happened if chess had a professional commissioner. Other sports have commissioners (the NBA, NFL, MLB, etc.), why not chess?

I want to promote chess in a positive way. As someone who competed for the world championship, I know what it is like. No other tournament in the world can compare to a world championship match, and people behave differently when they are faced with extreme pressure.

In the end, the players reached a compromise, with the match resuming at a score of 3-2 in favor of Kramnik. However, he issued an open letter before play in which he stated:

1. I inform that I am ready to proceed playing the match by reserving all my rights. My further participation will be subject to the condition to clarify my rights regarding game five at later stage.

I am glad to see the match resume. Let the best player win on the chess board, not off of it! I hope that we have much more good chess and much less nonsense. Furthermore, I would like to praise Kramnik for playing. I know he does not accept the 3-2 score, but continuing the match is the mark of a true champion. Topalov also deserves credit for continuing the match under extremely difficult circumstances.

Topalov will not surrender without a fight. He will continue to charge forward and press hard to try and break Kramnik. Can Kramnik survive eight more games with this kind of intense attack? This may come down to nerve and experience. Both players have very strong nerves, but Kramnik has more match experience. However, when one player is the aggressor, that player tends to be more volatile. When things go right, spectacular stuff can happen. When things go wrong, the first two games can happen. If Topalov can pull himself together and get moving with a spectacular win, you may see a string of consecutive wins.

I am also glad that the players shook hands before game 6. Thank you Veselin and Vladimir! May the best player win! Here is game 6.

Topalov, V (2813) - Kramnik, V (2743)
WC Elista RUS (6), 10-02-2006 [D17]

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Nc3 dxc4 5.a4 Bf5 6.Ne5 e6 7.f3 c5

Kramnik avoids the sharp complications stemming from 7...Bb4 8.e4 Bxe4 9.fxe4 Nxe4 10.Bd2 Qxd4.

8.e4 Bg6

Again, Kramnik wisely chooses the more solid option. 8...cxd4 9.exf5 Nc6 (9...dxc3? 10.Qxd8+ Kxd8 11.Nxf7++-) 10.Nxc6 bxc6 11.fxe6 fxe6 12.Bxc4 dxc3 13.Qe2 favors White.

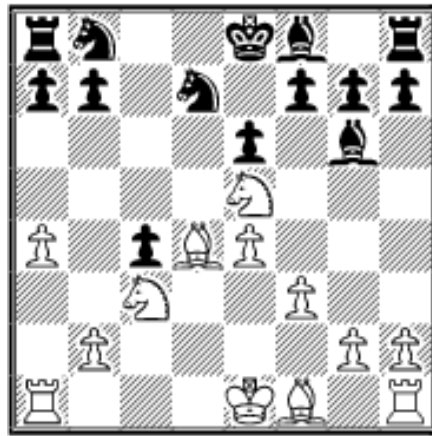
9.Be3

9.d5 worked well in the following recent game: 9...exd5 10.Nxg6 hxg6 11.e5 Nh5 12.Nxd5 Na6 13.Be3 Ng3 14.Bxc4 Be7 (14...Nxb1?? 15.Bb5++-) 15.Qb3 Nxb1 16.0-0-0 Rxb2 17.Qxb7 Rb8 18.Nf6+ gxf6 19.Rxd8+ Kxd8 20.Qd5+ Kc7 21.Qxf7 1-0, Kacheishvili - Rogic / Kusadasi, TUR 2006. However, Black could have improved with 12...Nd7.

9...cxd4 10.Qxd4

Keeping the queens on the board with 10.Bxd4 Bb4 11.Bxc4 0-0 12.0-0 maintains more “life” in the game, but the position would be equal anyway.

10...Qxd4 11.Bxd4 Nfd7



Black just tries trading off White's active pieces.

12.Nxd7

12.Nxc4 Nc6 13.Be3 Bc5 14.Kf2 Ke7 15.h4 f6 16.h5 Bf7 17.Rd1 Bxe3+ 18.Nxe3 Rhd8 19.h6 g5 20.Bb5 Nde5 21.Nc4 Nxc4 22.Bxc4 Rxd1 23.Rxd1 Rd8 24.Rxd8 Nxd8 25.e5 f5 26.Nb5 Nc6 27.Be2 Be8 28.b3 Nxe5 29.Nxa7 Nf7 30.a5 Nxb6 31.b4 Nf7 32.Nc8+ Kd8 33.Nb6 Nd6 34.Nc4 Nxc4

35.Bxc4 Bd7 36.Bd3 e5 37.g4 fxg4 38.Bxh7 gxf3 39.Kxf3 Kc7 40.Bd3 Kd6 41.b5 Kc5 42.a6 bxa6 43.bxa6 Kd4 44.Bf1 e4+ 45.Kg3 ½-½, Nielsen - Hracek, Hamburg, 2006.

12...Nxd7 13.Bxc4 a6

Preventing Nb5 or Bb5. 13...Rc8 14.Ba2 a6 15.Ke2 Nb8 16.Rhd1 Nc6 17.Bb6 Bb4 18.Rd2 Ke7 19.Rad1 Nb8 20.Bf2 f6 21.Bg3 Be8 22.Rd4 a5 23.Bd6+ Bxd6 24.Rxd6 Bd7 25.Ke3 Rc6 26.R6d4 Rbc8 27.R1d2 Be8 28.Nb5 Bf7 29.Na7 e5 30.Nxc6+ bxc6 31.R4d3 Bxa2 32.b3 Na6 33.Rd7+ Ke8 34.Ra7 Nb4 35.Rxa5 Bxb3 36.Rb2 Nc2+ 37.Kd2 Nd4 38.Ra7 c5 39.Rxg7 Ra8 40.Kc3 Rxa4 41.Rxb3 Nxb3 42.Kxb3 Rb4+ 43.Kc3 h5 44.Rh7 Ra4 45.Rxh5 Ra2 46.Rf5 Ke7 47.g4 Rxh2 48.g5 fxg5 49.Rxe5+ Kf6 50.Rxc5 Rh3 51.Rf5+ Ke6 52.Kc4 Rg3 53.Kd4 Rh3 54.Re5+ Kf6 55.Rf5+ Ke6 56.Rxg5 Rxf3 57.Rg6+ Kf7 58.Ra6 Rf1 59.Ke5 Rb1 60.Kf5 Rf1+ ½-½, Pia Cramling - Smyslov, Marbella, 1999.

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14.Ke2

In endgames or queenless middlegames, castling is usually not so important.

14...Rg8

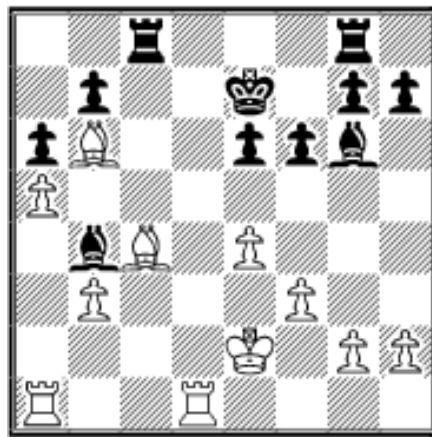
To protect the g7-pawn, so the bishop on f8 can develop.

15.Rhd1 Rc8 16.b3 Bc5= 17.a5 Ke7

17...Bxd4 18.Rxd4 Ne5 19.Na4 Nxc4 20.bxc4 gives White some hope.

18.Na4 Bb4 19.Nb6

19.Nb2 Bd6 20.h4 Be5=; 19.Bb2 Rgd8 (19...Bxa5?! 20.Ba3+ Ke8 21.Rac1 Bc7 (21...b5? 22.Bxb5+-) 22.Bxa6 bxa6 23.Rc6+/-) 20.Bxg7 Bxa5=.

19...Nxb6 20.Bxb6 f6

Finally, Black is ready to solve the problem of the awkwardly placed bishop on g6. 20...Bc5 was also OK: 21.Bxc5+ Rxc5 22.Ra4 (22.h4 f6) 22...Rgc8=.

21.Rd3 Rc6

21...Bc5 22.Rad1 Be8 23.Rd8 with a clear advantage for White.

22.h4

22.Rad1 Rd6 23.Rxd6 Bxd6=.

22...Rgc8 23.g4 Bc5 24.Rad1 Bxb6 25.Rd7+ Kf8 26.axb6 Rxb6 27.R1d6

27.g5 would be over-pushing: 27...Be8 28.R7d6 Rxd6 29.Rxd6 fxg5 30.hxg5 e5.

27...Rxd6 28.Rxd6 Rc6

28...e5 is also fine.

29.Rxc6 bxc6 30.b4 e5 31.Bxa6 ½-½**Chess can still be Fun**

On Saturday, September 30, 2006, I was invited to take part in the 6th Annual Chess-in-the-Parks Rapid Open in Central Park in New York City.



Five hundred local chess players of all ages competed in this event—the largest outdoor chess tournament in the United States. One of the activities was a Live Human Chess Game, played between me and three-time United States Champion grandmaster Lev Alburt.

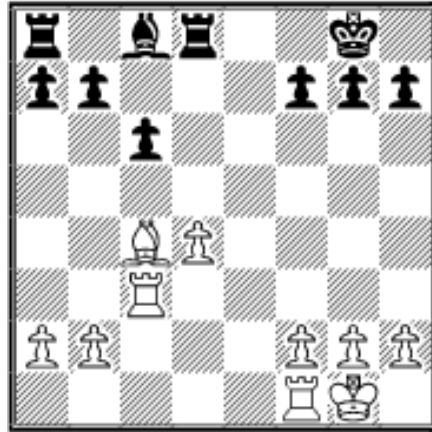
The event was organized by the NY City Department of Parks and Recreation, under the direction of Ed Feldman, with the assistance from Chess in the Schools. I am always amazed at the turnout for this event. It is limited to 500 players, but there were many more than that on the waiting list. Plus, there were thousands of spectators. Events like this certainly helps promote chess in a positive fashion, especially in New York.



Lev Alburt is always super with the fans. He is always kind and polite with everyone. He is also an excellent chess author and teacher. Here is my friendly exhibition game against Lev.

Polgar, S (2597) - Alburt, L (2636)
Central Park, NY 09-30-2006 [D69]

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 d5 4.Nc3 Be7 5.Bg5 Nbd7 6.e3 0-0 7.Rc1 c6 8.Bd3 dxc4 9.Bxc4 Nd5 10.Bxe7 Qxe7 11.0-0 Nxc3 12.Rxc3 e5 13.dxe5 Nxe5 14.Nxe5 Qxe5 15.Qd4 Qxd4 16.exd4 Rd8



17.Re1 Be6 18.Bxe6 fxe6 19.Rxe6 Rxd4 20.g3 Rd1+ 21.Kg2 Rd7 1/2-1/2

More pictures can be found at my [blog](#).

A Chat with David Shenk

A few days ago, I had the chance to chat with David Shenk, author of [The Immortal Game](#). His passion for the game of chess clearly showed during our conversation.

In the book, the author takes the reader through more than 1,500 years of chess history. He discusses how chess affected the world, the appearance of computers in chess, the educational benefits of chess, how the brain of a chess player works and much more. Here are some sample questions that I asked David:

Who is the target audience for your book?

I definitely wrote the book for people who don't know much about chess or only have a casual interest in chess, but hoped that I can bring the serious player along.



Why did you pick the "Immortal Game," Anderssen - Kieseritzky as the frame of the book and eventually the title?

The story behind the game really touched me personally. Nobody expected that game to become the Immortal Game. The idea of it being accidentally great I

found very moving, very attractive. I liked the suspense of that as a writer. Anderssen was not the favorite in that tournament. Not just this game but that whole tournament marked Anderssen's beginning of his ascent, later he did phenomenal things. The phrase the "immortal game" was very striking. I didn't know that would be the book's title at the time, but I found it very powerful.

You also mention in the book that you even visited the historic place where the "Immortal Game" took place. Tell me about that.

Wow! Yes, it is *Simpson's on the Strand* an up-scale pub and restaurant, in London. They have a lot of old association with chess; it is magnificent with lots of chess memorabilia (cartoons, pictures and chess sets) on the walls along the stairwell. Looking down from the very last stair, there was a huge vivid sketch on the wall with all the participants of this great tournament of 1886, among them my great-great grandfather, Samuel Rosenthal. That was the best picture I ever saw of him.

Paul Truong assisted Susan Polgar in the preparation of this column. Susan Polgar is available for chess instruction. For more information, visit the Polgar Chess Center, 103-10 Queens Boulevard, Forest Hills, NY 11375 (Tel: 718-897-4600) or email: PolgarChessInc@aol.com

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