By Lubomir Kavalek Monday, January 2, 2006; C10

The year 2005 ended and what a year it was!

Three Kings

Three world chess champions made the news away from the chessboard. Bobby Fischer flew from Japan to Reykjavik, where he became an Icelandic citizen, and a quiet one, leaving eruptions to local volcanoes. Having second thoughts about bringing Kirsan Ilyumzhinov to FIDE in 1995, Anatoly Karpov decided to run for the FIDE presidency to dethrone him. Garry Kasparov retired from professional chess to enter Russian politics. Ironically, he was soon greeted by a chessboard, smashed over his head by a political opponent.

New Emperor

Veselin Topalov's rise to the top was the main achievement of the year 2005. He conquered the world with fascinating play and great fighting spirit. In March the Bulgarian grandmaster shared first place with Kasparov in Linares, Spain. In May he scored an amazing victory at the M-Tel Masters double-round elite tournament in his home capital, Sofia, despite being last after the first half. The greatest success of his career came in October at the FIDE world championship where he outpaced the competition and became the new world champion.

New FIDE Ratings

Kasparov has resided on top of the FIDE rating list for the last 20 years. This incredible feat is coming to an end. He is still first on the January 2006 list, but his rating of 2812 will be retired in April. Topalov leads the active players with 2801, followed by Vishy Anand, 2792; Peter Svidler, 2765; Levon Aronian, 2752; Vladimir Kramnik, 2741; Peter Leko, 2740; Vassily Ivanchuk, 2729; Boris Gelfand and Ruslan Ponomariov, 2723; and Alexander Morozevich 2721. The winner of last year's World Cup, Aronian, made a significant leap ahead of Kramnik.

Incredible Machines

Computers were not particularly nice to humans last year. In June, the remarkable machine Hydra smashed the top English grandmaster, Michael Adams, allowing one draw and winning five games. In November, Hydra teamed up with the computer programs Fritz and Junior and defeated three former FIDE world champions, Ponomariov, Alexander Khalifman and Rustam Kasimdzhanov, 8-4.

Books of the Year

Igor Khmelnitsky's "Chess Exam and Training Guide" won the 2005 Cramer award. "Garry Kasparov on Fischer: My Great Predecessors, Part IV" won the 2005 British Chess Federation award.

Russian Championship

Sergei Rublevsky performed superbly at the Russian Superfinal and won the event convincingly last week. He scored 7 1/2 points in 11 games, finishing a full point ahead of Morozevich and Dmitry Jakovenko. It was the best result of Rublevsky's career. Kramnik, the classical world champion, ended with only 50 percent.

UMBC at the Top

The University of Maryland Baltimore County (UMBC) dominated U.S. collegiate chess in 2005. In April, the UMBC team won the President's Cup, the Final Four of chess. Last Friday the school triumphed at the Pan-American Intercollegiate Team Championship in Miami. Led by GM Alexander Onischuk, the winning team drew one and won five matches, finishing ahead of its rivals, two teams from the University of Texas at Dallas. Some of the UMBC students also competed for the Baltimore Kingfishers, a team that won the 2005 U.S. Chess League competition played over the Internet.

Eastern Open

GM Alexander Ivanov won the 32nd Eastern Open, played Dec. 27-30 at the Wyndham Washington hotel. He overwhelmed the field, scoring 7 1/2 points in eight games. Carlos Tovar-Diaz and Alexander Ivanov and Robert Walker won the U2200 section with 6 1/2 points. Yakov Shlapentokh-Rothman clinched the U1900 section with 7 points. The U1600 section went to William Martin with 6 1/2 points. Henri Moon prevailed in the U1300 group with 7 points. The local Swiss event attracted 185 players.

A Personal Note

Washington chess life will not be the same without the writings of Joseph McLellan, a former music critic and chess writer for the Washington Post, who died last Monday at the age of 76. He loved chess passionately and was always amazed by its beauty and amused by those who played it. He was a keen observer, reporting on important chess tournaments and matches with grace and elegance. Creating powerful images and poetic metaphors, McLellan made chess accessible even to those who did not play it. He was a wonderful writer, editor and friend, always encouraging, kind and gentle. As a romantic chess player, he loved games where spirit prevailed over matter. He will be missed.

Solutions to today's problem by S. Loyd (White: Kg3,Rc2,Rg7,Bb1,Bh8; Black: Kd4,P:d5,d6,g4):1.Rb2 Ke3 2.Re7 mate; or 1 . . . Kc4 2.Rc7 mate; or 1 . . . Ke5 2.Re7 mate.

By Lubomir Kavalek Monday, January 9, 2006; C10

Vladimir Kramnik's withdrawal from the upcoming elite Corus tournament in the Dutch town of Wijk aan Zee is not encouraging news. He suffers from a rare form of arthritis and needs treatment that may last several months. It is a big blow to a brilliant career because Kramnik may not return to the heights he once enjoyed. In 2000 he defeated Garry Kasparov in London and became the world champion. Kramnik defended his title against Peter Leko in 2004 with a 12-12 tie. It was difficult for him to replace a match strategy, where it is more important not to lose, with the bold play needed to win tournaments. He tried very hard last year to make the transition, but his results were mediocre.

Coming Back

In the 1990s, FIDE began experimenting with a Wimbledon-style knockout world championship, turning serious chess into a lottery with plenty of blitz games. In 2002, at the age of 18, Ruslan Ponomariov of Ukraine became the youngest world champion under this format. His victory was followed by a few lean years. He began playing well again last year, earning the No. 10 spot in the world on the FIDE rating list.

At the end of December, Ponomariov won the traditional tournament in Pamplona, Spain, scoring five points in seven games and ending a half point ahead of former world junior champion Pentala Harikrishna of India and Ivan Cheparinov of Bulgaria. A great example of Ponomariov's matured active positional style is his victory over Zviad Izoria of Georgia. With the help of a pawn sacrifice, Ponomariov dismantled the solid Caro-Kann defense and left black with a shattered pawn structure.

Ponomariov-Izoria

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 dxe4 4.Nxe4 Bf5 (The classical variation of the Caro-Kann is popular among other Georgian players.) 5.Ng3 Bg6 6.h4 h6 7.Nf3 Nd7 8.h5 Bh7 9.Bd3 Bxd3 (The strategically desired exchange of the bishops may turn into a tactical nightmare on the weak light squares. Black has to watch for a central pawn break d4-d5 and piece sacrifices on the squares e6 or f7.) 10.Qxd3 e6 11.Bf4 Qa5+ 12.Bd2 Bb4 (This variation has become popular in recent years.) 13.c3 Be7 14.c4 Qa4?! (The most solid retreat here is 14...Qc7, moving the queen closer to the action. Staying on the a-file is dangerous. In the game Leko-Bareev, Dortmund 2002, black chose 14...Qa6?!, preventing long castling and the break d4-d5. It continued 15.0-0 Ngf6 16.Rfe1 0-0 17.Nf5 Rfe8, and now instead of 18.Nxe7+, Leko could have performed an astonishing combination, sacrificing three pieces in a row: 18.Nxg7! Kxg7 19.Rxe6! fxe6?! 20.Bxh6+! Kh8 21.Bg7+! Kxg7 22.Qg6+, followed by 23.Ng5 and white mates. White may even switch the move order with 18.Rxe6! fxe6 19.Nxg7! as played last October in the Belgian team championship in the game Decoster-Tiggelman.

The defense 14...Bb4 is not adequate. After 15.Ne4! Ngf6 16.Nd6+ Ke7 17.c5, the white knight on d6 is annoying. The game Jakovenko-Antonio, Montreal 2005, concluded with fireworks: 17...b6 18.0-0 bxc5 19.Ne5!! Nxe5 20.dxe5 Bxd2 21.exf6+ gxf6 22.Rad1 Bf4 23.Nxf7! Kxf7 24.Qg6+ and black resigned, since 24...Kf8 25.Rd7 ends it.)

15...cxd5 16.cxd5 Nc5 17.Qe2 exd5 18.0-0 Ne6 19.Nf5! (Ponomariov sends his cavalry forward. The strength of this advance is demonstrated in the following variation that ends in a smothered mate: 19...Qg4? 20.Qb5+ Kf8 21.Ne5! Qxf5 22.Nd7+ Ke8 23.Nf6+ Kf8 24.Qe8+! Rxe8 25.Nd7 mate.) 19...Qa6 (Hoping to slow down white's attack by exchanging the queens, but white has enough active pieces to cause problems for the black king in the middle.) 20.Qxa6 bxa6 21.Rac1 Bf6 (Developing with 21...Nf6 is met by 22.Nxe7 Kxe7 23.Bb4+ Ke8 24.Rfe1, threatening 25.Rc7.)

22.Bb4! (The threat 23.Nd6+ is unpleasant and white does not have to protect his b-pawn.) 22...Ne7 (After 22...Bxb2 23.Nd6+ Kd7 24.Rc2 a5 25.Nxf7 axb4 26.Rxb2! Rh7 27.Rxb4, white has a powerful attack. And after 22...Rb8 23.Nd6+ Kf8 24.Rc8+ Rxc8 25.Nxc8+ Be7 26.Nxe7 Nxe7 27.Rd1, white has tremendous pressure and black's a-pawns are vulnerable.) 23.Nd6+ Kf8 24.Nf5 (White prevented black from castling short. Black can't connect his rooks and the rook on h8 is out of play.) 24...a5 25.Ba3 g6? (Black's position falls apart after this move, but even the better 25...Ke8 does not save him, for example 26.Bxe7 Bxe7 27.Rfe1 Rd8 28.N3d4! Nxd4 29.Rxe7+ Kf8 30.Rd7! and white wins.) 26.hxg6 fxg6 27.Bxe7+ Bxe7 (White's next move ends black's hopes.)

28.Rfe1! gxf5 29.Rxe6 (The scattered black pawns are ripe to be picked up.) 29...Bd8 30.Rc5 Kf7 31.Rec6 Bb6 32.Rxd5 Rhc8 33.Ne5+ Ke8 34.Re6+ Kf8 35.Rxh6 (The pawn cleanup only begins and after 35...Rc1+ 36.Kh2 Bxf2 37.Rd7! Kg8 38.Rhh7, black gets mated soon.) Black resigned.

Solution to today's composition by Enrico Paoli (White: Kf1,Bb2,P:b4,b6,c4,d6; Black: Kc6,Ra4,P:c5):1.b5+! Kxb6! (On 1...Kxd6 2.Be5+! wins.) 2.Bf6 (Threatening 3.d7.) 2...Ra7 3.Bd8+ Kb7 4.d7 Kb8 5.Bc7+! Kxc7 6.b6+! wins. The Italian grandmaster Paoli was a well-known organizer of 47 traditional tournaments in Reggio Emillia. He died last December, one month short of his 98th birthday.

By Lubomir Kavalek Monday, January 16, 2006; C10

Sergei Karjakin became grandmaster at the age of 12 years 7 months, the youngest ever. At 15, the Ukrainian prodigy is playing at the prestigious Corus tournament, underway in the Dutch coastal town of Wijk aan Zee. Karjakin's countryman Vassily Ivanchuk won two games and is the sole leader after yesterday's second round.

Karjakin's arrival among the world's elite did not go smoothly. On Saturday he lost to the Indian superstar Vishy Anand, who used home preparation to fool the youngster in the Najdorf Sicilian. Not even strong computer programs predicted Anand's astonishing combination.

Karjakin-Anand

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.Be3 e5 7.Nb3 Be6 8.f3 Be7 9.Qd2 0-0 10.0-0-0 Nbd7 11.g4 b5 12.g5 b4 13.Ne2 Ne8 14.f4 a5 15.f5 a4! 16.Nbd4!? (16.fxe6 axb3 17.cxb3 fxe6 18.Kb1 Qa5 19.Nc1 Nc7 gives black control of the center.) 16 . . . exd4 17.Nxd4 b3! 18.Kb1 bxc2+19.Nxc2 Bb3 20.axb3 axb3 21.Na3 Ne5 (After the first fireworks the material is equal, but the white king is more vulnerable.) 22.h4 Ra5! (When this position occurred in the game Leko-Vallejo Pons last year in Monte Carlo, white played 23.Qe2, allowing 23 . . . d5. Karjakin follows a computer suggestion.) 23.Qc3!? Qa8! 24.Bg2 (It seems that black's pieces are stuck on the kingside, but Anand waves a magic wand.)

24... Nc7!! (An amazing two-piece sacrifice, giving black an irresistible attack. Even computer programs were reluctant to endorse it. One of them came up with a different knight sacrifice, 24... Nf6!? 25.gxf6 Bxf6, with some dangerous threats.) 25.Qxc7 (Accepting the knight is forced because of the threat 25... Nb5.) 25... Rc8!! 26.Qxe7 Nc4! (All black pieces are aimed at the white king.)

27.g6!? (Karjakin hopes to divert black's pieces from the queenside attack. After the passive 27.Bc1 black plays 27 . . . Qc6! and the white king is under mating attack, for example 28.Nxc4 Qxc4 29.Rd2 Qc2+! 30.Rxc2 bxc2 mate; or 28.Rd2 Nxd2+ 29.Bxd2 Qc2+! 30.Nxc2 bxc2+ 31.Kc1 Ra1 mate.) 27 . . . hxg6! (Making the square h7 available to his king.) 28.fxg6 Nxa3+ (It wins, but sacrificing the exchange 28 . . . Rxa3! was also good, e.g. 29.Qxf7+ Kh8 30.bxa3 Nxa3+ 31.Kb2 Nc4+ 32.Kc3 Ne5+ winning the queen.) 29.bxa3 Rxa3 30.gxf7+ Kh7 31.f8N+ Rxf8 32.Qxf8 Ra1+ (The most precise way to win, although after 32 . . . Qxf8 33.Rd2 Ra4! black plans the deadly 34...Qa8 and at the same time prevents 34.Bd4? because of 34...Rxd4! 35.Rxd4 Qf2 and black mates.) 33.Kb2 Ra2+ 34.Kc3 (After 34.Kb1 black simply plays 34...Qxf8, attacking the bishop on g2 and after 35.Rd2 Qa8 36.e5 Ra1+ 37.Kb2 Qa3+ 38.Kc3 b2+ wins.) 34...Qa5+! (Anand sees mates.) 35.Kd3 (After 35.Kxb3 Qa4+ 36.Kc3 Rc2+ 37.Kd3 Qc4 mates.) 35...Qb5+ 36.Kd4 Ra4+ 37.Kc3 Qc4+ (After 38.Kd2 Ra2+ 39.Ke1 Qe2 mates.) White resigned.

New Young Star

Parimarjan Negi, a 12-year-old Indian prodigy, follows Karjakin's example in trying to become another preteen grandmaster. He made his first grandmaster norm at the traditional Hastings Congress this month, and his victory over the experienced English grandmaster Mark Hebden in the Spanish shows that his future could be bright.

Negi-Hebden

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 Be7 6.Re1 b5 7.Bb3 0-0 8.d4 (Avoiding the Marshall Attack 8.c3 d5 that Hebden likes to play.) 8...d6 9.c3 Bg4 10.d5 Na5 11.Bc2 Qc8 12.Nbd2!?

(Chasing the bishop from g4 with 12.h3 has been played frequently, but there is no need for it.) 12...c6 13.b4 Nb7 14.dxc6 Qxc6 15.Bb2 Nd7?! (Black wants to control both squares, c4 and d5, by transferring the knight to the square b6. Bringing the other knight into play with 15...Nd8 was better.)

16.Bb3 Bxf3? (Surrendering the light bishop leads to trouble. The immediate16...Nb6? fails to 17.Nxe5!, but opposing the Spanish bishop on b3 with 16...Be6 was better.) 17.Qxf3 Bg5 18.Nf1 Nb6 19.Qg4 Bf4 20.g3 Bh6 21.Bc1! Qc8 (After 21...Bxc1 22.Raxc1 Nc4 23.Ne3 Nxe3 24.Rxe3 the dominance of the bishop over the black knight is evident.) 22.Qf3 Bxc1 23.Raxc1 Ra7 24.Ne3 (Negi wins the strategic battle. He controls the central squares and can pressure the backward d-pawn.) 24...Nd8 25.Red1 Rd7 26.Qg4 (Preventing 26...Ne6 and threatening 27.Nf5. Black is clearly outplayed.) 26...Nc6 (After 26...Qc7 comes 27.c4!)

27.c4! (Giving up the square d4, but opening the c-file leads to an unpleasant pin.) 27...bxc4 28.Nxc4 Nxc4 29.Rxc4 h5? (Desperation, but after 29...Qb7 30.Ba4 Rc8 31.Rdc1 Rdc7 32.Bxc6 Rxc6 33.Qxc8+! wins.) 30.Qxh5 Qb7 31.Ba4 Rc7 32.Rxd6 Nxb4 33.Rxc7 Qxc7 34.Rd7! (White is aiming for the pawn on f7.) 34...Qc1+ 35.Kg2 Qc4 36.Bb3! Qxe4+ 37.f3 Qh7 (After 37...Qe2+ 38.Kh3 Qf1+ 39.Kh4 black can't protect the pawn on f7 anymore.) 38.Qxf7+! (A pretty finish. After 38...Rxf7 39.Rd8 mates.) Black resigned.

Solution to today's problem -- mate in three -- by J. Hane (White: Ka5,Ra1,Ra8; Black: Kb7): 1.Rd1! Kc7 2.Ka6 Kc6 3.Rc8 mate; or 1...Kc6 2.Ra7 Kc5 3.Rc7 mate; or 1...Kxa8 2.Kb6 Kb8 3.Rd8 mate.

By Lubomir Kavalek Monday, January 23, 2006; C10

world champion Veselin Topalov of Bulgaria and the Indian superstar Vishy Anand were expected to do well at the 14-grandmaster Corus tournament in the Dutch town of Wijk aan Zee. After yesterday's eighth round, the world's top two players share the lead with 5 1/2 points. Surprisingly, the third spot belongs to the 15-year-old Sergei Karjakin. The Ukrainian prodigy lost in the first round to Anand but did not despair and collected five tough points in the next seven games. The only American in the field, Gata Kamsky, shares the last place with Etienne Bacrot of France with 2 1/2 points. The tournament concludes Sunday.

Sailing to Victory

The Zaitsev variation of the Spanish is a difficult and complex opening. It baffled even Garry Kasparov and Anatoly Karpov during their world championship matches. Amazingly, Karjakin did not shy away from using it against Bacrot, who is considered one of the experts on this line. But the Frenchman looked confused and could only watch how Karjakin skillfully navigated the attack.

Karjakin-Bacrot

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 Be7 6.Re1 b5 7.Bb3 d6 8.c3 0-0 9.h3 Bb7 10.d4 Re8 11.Nbd2 Bf8 12.a4 h6 13.Bc2 exd4 14.cxd4 Nb4 15.Bb1 c5 16.d5 Nd7 (The idea to undermine the white pawn on d5 with 17...f5 appeared at the 1985 Soviet championship.) 17.Ra3!? (Lifting the rook for a kingside action. After 17.Nf1 the stroke 17...f5 works well.) 17...f5!? (Starting a fascinating battle on the diagonal b1-h7. Black encourages 18.exf5 because the pawn on f5 blocks the bishop on b1, blunting white's attack, as Kasparov found out against Karpov during the 1990 world championship match. White, on the other hand, would like to force black to capture f5xe4 because it opens the diagonal b1-h7 and extends the reach of the light bishop from b1 to h7.)

18.Nh2! (Freeing the third rank for the rook on a3. Interestingly, Kasparov's recommendation from 1986 was 18.e5 Nxe5 19.Nxe5 Rxe5 20.Rxe5 dxe5 21.Bxf5, "and white has excellent attacking chances on the kingside." For example, the 1993 Norwegian game Sammalvuo-Fyllingen ended quickly after 21...Bxd5 22.Rg3 Qf6 23.Qh5 Qc6 24.Nf3 Bxf3 25.gxf3 Rd8 26.Bxh6 Rd1+ 27.Kh2 Nd5 28.Bh7+ Kh8 29.Qf7 and black resigned. However, Kasparov never followed his own advice.) 18...Nf6 19.Rf3!? fxe4?! (White succeeded with his plan. Perhaps Bacrot did not like the position after 19...Re5 20.Rxf5 Rxf5 21.exf5 Bxd5 22.Ng4!, seeing that Zoltan Almasi's recent suggestion 22...bxa4?! was crushed in the game Harikrishna-Vescovi from last year's World Cup. It finished 23.Ne4 Be7 24.Nexf6+ Bxf6 25.Bd2 Bb3 26.Qf3 Rb8 27.Bxh6! Qf8 28.Qg3 Bxb2 29.Bxg7! Bxg7 30.f6 Nd5 31.f7+! and black resigned.) 20.Nxe4 Nbxd5 21.Ng4! (After 21.Qc2 Kh8!, black threatens 22...Nb4. And 21.Bxh6 can be met by 21...Rxe4 22.Bxe4 Nxe4 23.Rxe4 Nc3 24.bxc3 Bxe4 25.Re3 d5 with black's advantage.) 21...Kh8 (Better than 21...Nxg4 22.hxg4 Qd7 23.g5 hxg5 24.Bxg5 Rac8 25.Rh3 with dangerous threats to the black king.)

22.Bd2!? (Only this quiet developing move is new. It prevents a combination that Bacrot decides to play anyway. The aggressive 22.Bxh6 was tried in a 1995 correspondence game Andersen-Lumley, but after 22...Nxe4 23.Rxe4 Rxe4 24.Bxe4 Nc3! 25.bxc3 Bxe4, black equalized.) 22...Nxe4 23.Rxe4 Rxe4 24.Bxe4 Nc3? (This exchanging combination backfires, because white gets his dark bishop on the long diagonal a1-h8. White has a strong pressure after 24...Qe7 25.Bb1! b4 26.Qc2, for example 26...g5 27.Bxg5! hxg5 28.Qg6 Qg7 29.Qh5+ Kg8 30.Bg6 and white wins.) 25.Bxc3 Bxe4 26.Rf4 Bg6 (White is just on time with his attack after 26...d5 27.Nxh6 Bg6 28.Qg4 Kh7 29.Qe6!!, for example 29...Kxh6 30.Rg4 Kh7 31.Qxg6+ Kg8 32.Qe6+ Kh7 [On 32...Kh8 33.Qh6+ Kg8 34.Rxg7+ Bxg7 35.Qxg7 mates.] 33.Bxg7 wins; or 29...Qe7 30.Qg8+ Kxh6 31.Bd2 and black does not have a good

defense against 32.Rh4 mate; and after 29...Be7 30.Nf7 Qe8 31.Nd6 Qd8 32.Ba5! Qxd6 33.Rh4+ Bxh4 34.Qxd6, white's material advantage is decisive.) 27.Nxh6 Qg5 (27...d5 28.Qg4 is covered in the last note.)

28.Qf3! Qxh6 29.Bd2! (An unusual triple attack on the rook on a8, the bishop on f8 and indirectly on the queen on h6.) 29...Qxf4 (Black is forced to give up the queen because after 29...Be7 30.Qxa8+ Kh7 31.Rf8! Bxf8 32.Bxh6 wins; and after 29...Qh5 30.Qxa8 Qd1+ 31.Kh2 Qxd2 32.Rxf8+ Kh7 33.Rh8 mates.) 30.Bxf4 Re8 31.axb5 axb5 32.Qc6! (The queen can easily contain black's pawns.) 32...Kh7 (After 32...b4 33.Bxd6 Re6 34.Qc8 wins.) 33.Qxb5 d5 34.Qd7 d4 35.h4 Re4 36.Bg3 Be7 (Black brings the bishop out to help the passed d-pawn, but his pieces are not well coordinated and Karjakin strikes.)

37.h5!? Bxh5? (White now wins a piece and the game. But even after 37...Re1+ 38.Kh2, white is in charge, for example 38...Bxh5 39.Qh3 g6 40.Bf4 threatening g2-g4; or 38...Bb1 39.Bd6 Bxd6 40.Qxd6 d3 41.Qg6+ Kh8 42.h6 and white wins.) 38.f3 Re2 39.Kf1 Rxb2 (After 39...Re3 40.Bf4 the black rook cannot protect the bishop on e7 anymore.) 40.Qxe7 Rb1+ 41.Kf2 Black resigned.

Solution to today's composition by E. Paoli (White: Kd8,Nf2,P:c5,e5; Black: Kd4,Bd5):1.Nd3!! Kxd3 2.Kd7 Kd4 3.Kd6 Bg2 (or 3...Bb3 4.c6!) 4.e6 white wins.

By Lubomir Kavalek Monday, January 30, 2006; C10

With magnificent and dominant performances, the world champion Veselin Topalov of Bulgaria and Vishy Anand of India won the elite Corus tournament in the Dutch coastal town of Wijk aan Zee yesterday, both scoring 9 points in 13 games. The other grandmasters finished as follows: Michael Adams (England) and Vassily Ivanchuk (Ukraine), 7 1/2 points; Boris Gelfand (Israel) and Sergei Karjakin (Ukraine), 7 points; Peter Leko (Hungary), Levon Aronian (Armenia) and Sergei Tiviakov (Netherlands), 6 1/2 points; Loek Van Wely (Netherlands), 6 points; Etienne Bacrot (France), 5 1/2 points; Gata Kamsky (U.S.) and Shakhriyar Mamedyarov (Azerbaijan), 4 1/2 points; Ivan Sokolov (Netherlands), 4 points.

Shedding the Rooks

The talk of the tournament was Topalov's double-exchange sacrifice against the last World Cup winner, Aronian, in the Queen's Indian defense. Interestingly, sacrificing both rooks for two light pieces is featured twice in the top seven games in Andrew Soltis's "The 100 Best Chess Games of the 20th Century, Ranked." In all those games the winners gained a few passed pawns for their rooks. The light pieces controlled the squares around the pawns, advancing them almost at will. Topalov's first exchange sacrifice has a human touch, making it difficult for computer programs to find it. It was prepared by the Bulgarian grandmaster for the FIDE world championship in San Luis, Argentina, last year, but Topalov was not able to use it there.

Topalov-Aronian

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 b6 4.g3 Ba6 5.b3 Bb4+ 6.Bd2 Be7 7.Bg2 c6 8.Bc3 d5 9.Ne5 Nfd7 10.Nxd7 Nxd7 11.Nd2 0-0 12.0-0 Nf6 (In San Luis, Anand tried to clear the center with 12...Rc8 13.e4 c5 14.exd5 exd5 15.dxc5 dxc4 16.c6 cxb3 17.Re1 b2 18.Bxb2 Nc5 19.Nc4 Bxc4 20.Qg4 Bg5 21.Qxc4 Nd3, but Topalov's improvement, 22.Ba3! Nxe1 23.Rxe1 Re8 24.Rxe8+ Qxe8 25.Bd5!, left white with a strong pressure for the exchange. The game was eventually drawn, but not until Topalov tortured his opponent for 97 moves, missing a couple of wins on the way.) 13.e4 b5 14.exd5 exd5 15.Re1 Rb8 16.c5 Bc8 17.Nf3 Ne4 (In Dortmund in 2004, Vladimir Kramnik twice tried 18.Ne5 Nxc3 19.Qd3 against Leko, but after 19...Qc7! 20.Qxc3 both games were soon drawn.)

18.Rxe4!? (The key to this fascinating and intuitive exchange sacrifice is to win the weak black pawn on c6, attacking it with the knight and possibly with the light bishop from g2. Once the c6 pawn is gone, white's two passed pawns become dangerous. Somehow the computer programs could not pick it up and Topalov had to force them to analyze it.) 18...dxe4 19.Ne5 Qd5 20.Qe1! (It is important to protect the bishop on c3. For example, after 20.Qe2 f5 21.f3? black has 21...Bxc5! 22.dxc5 Qxc5+ 23.Kh1 Qxc3 and wins.) 20...Bf5 (After 20...f5 white breaks through with 21.f3!)

21...b4 22.gxf5 bxc3 23.Qxe4 Qxe4 24.Bxe4 Bf6 25.Nxc6, the pinning combination 25...Bxd4? 26.Nxd4 Rb4 27.Rd1 Rd8 is refuted by 28.c6! and white wins.) 22.f3 b4 23.fxe4 (White has a strong center and a pawn for the exchange.) 23...Qe6 24.Bb2 Bf6? (Black would like to get rid of the annoying knight, but it plays into Topalov's hands. Also 24...f6? is wrong because it weakens the diagonal a2-g8 and after 25.Nxg6 hxg6 26.Qg3 Rbd8 27.Bf1!, the threat 28.Bc4 is hard to meet. A waiting move, such as 24...Rfe8, was better.)

25.Nxc6! (A little combination, creating two potential pawn monsters.) 25...Qxc6 26.e5 Qa6 27.exf6 Rfe8 (The strong passed pawns allow Topalov to exchange the queens, as is clear in the line 27...Qxf6 28.Qf2 Qg5 29.d5 Qxg4 30.Qd4 Bf5 31.Qxg4 Bxg4 32.c6! and white should win.) 28.Qf1

Qe2 29.Qf2! (White needs to set his passed pawns into motion. Other pawns are less important.) 29...Qxg4 30.h3! (Driving the queen from the square e2.) 30...Qg5 31.Bc1! (The bishop will support the advancing pawns better from the diagonal h2-b8.) 31...Qh5 (After 31...Qxf6 32.Qxf6 gxf6 33.Bf4 Rbd8 34.d5 Be4 35.d6 the pawns are too far to be stopped.) 32.Bf4 Rbd8 33.c6! Be4 (After 33...Re2 34.c7! Rde8 35.Qg3 Rc2 36.Re1 white wins.) 34.c7 Rc8 35.Re1 Qg6?! (Exchanging 35...Bxg2 36.Rxe8+ Rxe8 37.Qxg2 and now 37...Qd1+ was better, although after 38.Kh2 g6 39.Qe4! Rc8 40.d5 white should prevail.)

36.Rxe4! (Icing on the cake! The light bishop is a better supporter of the passed pawns than the rook.) 36...Rxe4 37.d5 (Finally, white's passed pawns are rolling.) 37...Rce8 (After 37...Ree8 38.d6 Qf5 39.Bc6! decides.) 38.d6 Re1+ 39.Kh2 Qf5 (Preventing 40.d7, but not for long.) 40.Qg3 g6 41.Qg5! (Forcing the queen exchange is preferable to 41.Qg4 Qc5.) 41...Qxg5 (After 41...Qe6 42.d7 Qxd7 43.Qh6 white mates.) 42.Bxg5 Rd1 43.Bc6 Re2+ 44.Kg3 Black resigned.

In the Corus B-group, the 15-year-old Magnus Carlsen of Norway shared first place with Alexander Motylev of Russia, scoring 9 points in 13 games. Both should be invited to the top group next year.

Solution to today's two-mover by J. Pospisil (White: Kg2,Qf3,Re4,Nd7,P:b5; Black: Kd5,Bf2,Nc5,Nh8,P:a7,d4,d6):1.Qc3! dxc3 (or 1...d3) 2.Nf6 mate; 1...Kxe4 2.Qf3 mate; 1...Nxe4 2.Qb3 mate; 1...Nxd7 2.Qc6 mate; 1...Bh4 2.Qxd4 mate.

By Lubomir Kavalek Monday, February 6, 2006; C10

The Bulgarians are conquering the chess world. They have three world champions: Veselin Topalov, Antoaneta Stefanova among women and Liuben Spassov among seniors. Last week, another Bulgarian grandmaster, Kiril Georgiev, overpowered a strong field of 125 players and won the Gibtelecom Masters in Gibraltar. His winning score was 8 1/2 points in 10 games, a full point ahead of England's Nigel Short and Emil Sutovsky of Israel.

A Gem From Gibraltar

The Best Game award went to the Spanish grandmaster Julen Arizmendi Martinez for his inspiring play against the Ukrainian grandmaster Zahar Efimenko in the English opening. The game was not played the best way, but Arizmendi Martinez's brilliant sacrifices, hurling two pawns into white's position like two heavy boulders and giving up a rook later on, were astonishing and refreshing.

Efimenko-Arizmendi Martinez

1.c4 e5 2.Nc3 Nf6 3.Nf3 Nc6 4.d4 e4!? (The Bradley Beach variation, named after a 1929 tournament where the formidable world champion Alexander Alekhine played it against Horace Ransom Bigelow. The game continued: 5.Ne5 Bb4! 6.Bg5 h6 7.Bxf6 Qxf6 8.Nxc6 and obstructing white's development with 8...e3!, gave black a better game. Interestingly, after 5.Ne5 black cannot catch the knight on e5 with 5...Ne7?, threatening 6...d6, because of 6.Bg5! d6 7.Bxf6 gxf6 8.Nxe4 fxe5? 9.Nf6 mate.)

5.Ng5?! (Botvinnik's 5.Nd2 is the most solid choice, while 5.d5 did not fare well in Apsenieks-Tartakower, Folkestone 1933, where after 5.d5 exf3 6.dxc6 fxg2 7.cxd7+ Qxd7 8.Qxd7+ Bxd7 9.Bxg2 c6 10.Bg5 Be6 11.b3 Bb4 12.Rc1 h6 13.Bd2 0-0-0 black was much better.) 5...h6!? (This move should refute white's previous move, but 5...Bb4 is also playable.) 6.d5?! (This ill-advised advance gives black excellent chances. After 6.Ngxe4 Nxe4 7.Nxe4 Qh4! 8.Qd3 d5 9.cxd5 Nb4 10.Qb1 Bf5 11.Nd6+ black has a choice. The old theory gives 11...cxd6 12.Qxf5 g6 13.Qb1? Rc8 and black wins. However, Ilya Smirin's 13.Qf4! Nc2+ 14.Kd1 Qxf4 15.Bxf4 Nxa1 16.e3 a6 17.Bd3 gives white plenty of compensation for the exchange, playing next Kd1-d2 and winning the knight on a1. Instead of 11...cxd6, black should play 11...Bxd6!? 12.Qxf5 g6 13.Qb1 Qxd4 with a lead in development.) 6...hxg5 7.dxc6 g4?! (The brilliant performance begins. The natural developing move 7 . . . Bc5! played already in the game Kostic-Opocensky at the 1931 olympiad in Prague, is better. It indirectly protects the pawn on g5, since 8.Bxg5? is met by 8...Bxf2+! 9.Kxf2 Ng4+ and black has a clear advantage.) 8.cxb7 Bxb7 9.Bf4 (Preparing 8.e3, but black has another idea.)

9...e3!? (Are black's advancing pawns running amok or is Arizmendi Martinez just slowing down white's development as Alekhine did before him?) 10.Bxe3 g3!? (The second pawn sacrifice makes the square g4 available to the black knight.) 11.fxg3 Ng4 12.Qd4 (After 12.Bg1 Bd6 black threatens 13...Bxg3+.) 12...Nxe3 13.Qxe3+ Be7 (The pawn sacrifices gave black command of the dark squares. With the bishop on f1 locked in, white has to spend a lot of time bringing his pieces out.) 14.Qd3 Rb8 (Trying to scare white from castling long.) 15.e4 Bc6 16.Be2? (White wants to hide his king on the kingside but drops an important pawn. After 16.0-0-0 Bf6 17.Re1 Be5! black dominates the dark squares.) 16...Rxb2 17.0-0 Bc5+ 18.Kh1 Qg5! (Starting a mating attack, threatening 19...Rxh2+ 20.Kxh2 Qh6+ 21.Bh5 Qxh5 mate.)

19.Rf4? (One mistake often breeds another, as is the case here. Exchanging the queens with 19.Rf5 Qe3 20.Qxe3 Bxe3 is better, although after 21.Bg4 Bd4 black's pressure is too strong.) 19...Bd6 20.Rg4? (White is allowing a pretty rook sacrifice that finishes the game, but he is in dire straits

anyway.) 20...Rxh2+! 21.Kg1 Qc5+! (Forcing white to take the rook: 22.Kxh2 Qh5+ 23.Kg1 Bc5+ 24.Kf1 Qh1 mate.) White resigned.

Spassky's Birthday

The legendary world champion Boris Spassky celebrated his 69th birthday last Monday in the Czech Republic. He was invited by the Prague Chess Society to give a lecture in Prague and a simultaneous exhibition in Karlovy Vary (Carlsbad). In the only loss, Spassky came under Vlastimil Chladek's vicious attack in the Nimzovich defense. Connoisseurs of this opening will enjoy this amazing win. The triumphant march of the h-pawn was inspired by Spassky's own smashing victory over Bent Larsen in Belgrade in 1970.

Spassky-Chladek

1.e4 Nc6 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 dxe4 4.d5 Ne5 5.Bf4 Ng6 6.Bg3 a6 7.f3?! e5! (Pursuing a dark square strategy.) 8.fxe4 Nf6 [8...Bc5] 9.Bd3 Bc5! 10.Nf3 Nh5 11.Bf2 Bxf2+ 12.Kxf2 Qe7 13.Qd2 Nhf4 14.Rhe1 Bg4 15.g3 Nh3+ 16.Kg2 h5! (Black will pry open the h-file for a decisive attack.) 17.Ng1 h4! 18.Be2 (After18.Nxh3 Bxh3+ 19.Kxh3 hxg3+ 20.Kxg3 Qh4+ 21.Kf3 Qh5+ 22.Ke3 Qg5+ black wins.) 18...hxg3! 19.hxg3 (After19.Bxg4 Nf2 20.hxg3 Nxg4 black is clearly better.) 19...Ngf4+ 20.Kf1 (After 20.gxf4 Qh4 wins.) 20...Qc5! (Threatening 21...Qxg1 mate. After 21.Nxh3 Bxh3 mates.) White resigned.

Solution to today's study by A. Kakovin (White: Kc8,Ba1,P:a6,c7,d5; Black: Ka7,Rd1): 1.Kd7 Rxd5+ 2.Kc6 Rd2 3.Bd4+ Rxd4 4.Kb5 Rd8! (After 4...Rd5+ 5.Kb4 Rd4+ 6.Kb3 Rd3+ 7.Kc2 wins.) 5.cxd8N! wins. (Both 5.cxd8Q and 5.cxd8R are stalemates. And 5.cxd8B is a theoretical draw.)

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CHESS Lubomir Kavalek

By Lubomir Kavalek Monday, February 13, 2006; C08

A combination of youthful energy and experience from elite tournaments helped former FIDE world champion Ruslan Ponomariov of Ukraine, 22, and the Spanish grandmaster Francisco Vallejo Pons, 23, to win the Young Masters tournament in Cuernavaca, Mexico, on Saturday. They scored 6 1/2 points in nine games.

U.S. champion Hikaru Nakamura, 18, fought valiantly and ended third, a half-point behind the winners. The other players finished as follows: Leinier Dominguez (Cuba) 5 1/2, Lazaro Bruzon (Cuba) 5, Andrei Volokitin (Ukraine) 4 1/2, Ivan Cheparinov (Bulgaria) 4, Sergei Karjakin (Ukraine) 3 1/2, Manuel Leon (Mexico) 2, Ruben Felgaer (Argentina) 1 1/2 points.

Working Like a Charm

Vallejo Pons as black defeated Karjakin, 16, in a mysterious variation of the Open Spanish. It originated at the 1923 tournament in the Czech spa Carlsbad. The American Oscar Chajes, playing it with the white pieces, lost two games against Siegbert Tarrasch of Germany and the British champion, Sir George Thomas, despite having a clear opening advantage. Ever since, the variation haunted white players and did not spare even the great ones.

Karjakin-Vallejo Pons

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 Nxe4 6.d4 b5 7.Bb3 d5 8.dxe5 Be6 9.Nbd2 Be7 10.c3 0-0 11.Bc2 f5 12.Nb3 Qd7 13.Nbd4 Nxd4 14.Nxd4 c5 15.Nxe6 Qxe6 16.f3 Ng5 (White is slightly better, but the position has its pitfalls. Even the world champions Boris Spassky, Anatoly Karpov and Garry Kasparov stumbled with the white pieces and lost.)

17.a4! (Chajes's improvement on his game against Tarrasch. White is trying to open the game for his bishop pair and seize the a-file. The Chajes-Tarrasch game set the tone for future games: White attacks on the kingside, black brakes through in the center. It went 17.Bxg5 Bxg5 18.f4 Bd8 19.Qf3 Bb6 20.Rad1 Rad8 21.Kh1 Rd7 22.h3 c4 23.g4 g6 24.gxf5 gxf5 25.Rd2 d4 26.cxd4 Rxd4 27.Rg2+ and white was slightly better, but managed to lose.) 17...Rad8 (Black is giving up the a-file for a break in the center. Viktor Korchnoi as black blundered a pawn against Florin Gheorghiu in a team match in Romania in 1968 with 17...c4? 18.axb5 axb5 19.Rxa8 Rxa8 20.Bxg5 Bxg5 21.f4 Be7 22.Bxf5!, but the black magic worked and Korchnoi was still able to make a draw.

Fortifying the pawn on f5 with 17 . . . g6 was played in the Chajes-Thomas game. It went 18.Re1 Qc6 19.Be3 Ne6 20.f4 Rfd8 21.Qf3 c4 22.g4 fxg4 23.Qxg4 Ng7 24.f5 gxf5 25.Bxf5 Kh8 26.axb5 axb5 27.Rxa8 Rxa8 28.Bd7 Qc7 29.Bd4 Bc5 and after 30.e6! Chajes had a winning advantage, but misplayed it and lost. In the game Huebner-Korchnoi, Cologne 1989, white tried to break black's kingside blockade quickly with18.Bxg5 Bxg5 19.f4 Be7 20.axb5 axb5 21.Rxa8 Rxa8 22.g4!?, but black was able to defend with 22 . . . fxg4 23.f5 gxf5 24.Rxf5 Ra6! and a draw was soon agreed. Last month at Wijk aan Zee, Karjakin played the more subtle 18.Kh1 against Ivan Sokolov, and after

18...c4 19.b4! a5 20.bxa5 Rxa5 21.Bxg5 Bxg5 22.f4 Be7 23.axb5 Rxb5 24.Ba4 Rb2?! 25.Qd4 Rc8 26.Rfd1 Rc5 27.Rab1! seized the initiative and won in 50 moves.)

18.axb5 axb5 19.Kh1 f4! (Isolating the pawn on e5 and limiting white's dark bishop, Vallejo Pons improves on previously played 19 . . . Rd7 and 19 . . . d4.) 20.Bd2 c4 (Preparing to slide his bishop on the diagonal a7-g1 and keeping the game closed.) 21.Ra5 Qc6 22.Qa1 (Karjakin overestimates his chances along the a-file. The play goes through the center.) 22 . . . Bc5 23.Ra6 Qb7 24.Qa5? (Jamming the heavy pieces on the a-file and going nowhere. White should have tried to open up his light bishop with 24.b3.)

24... Rde8!? (Black takes over the game with three solid strokes, but white's position would have collapsed more quickly after an astonishing line-clearing knight sacrifice: 24... Ne4!! 25.fxe4 [On 25.Be1 Ra8! wins.] 25...dxe4 and black should win either after 26.Be1 f3! 27.gxf3 exf3 28.Bf2 Rd2! and now after 29.Bxc5? f2+ black mates; or after 26.Bxf4 Ra8! 27.Rxa8 Rxa8 the white queen is in trouble, and after 28.Bxe4 Qxe4 29.Qxb5 black takes advantage of the weak first rank with 29...Qxf4!) 25.Re1 Bf2! 26.Rf1 (A sad retreat. After 26.Re2? Ra8! white is again burned on the first rank.)

26...Be3! 27.Bxe3 (Creating a dangerous passed pawn for black, but white did not have many choices.) 27...fxe3 28.Qb6 (Karjakin hopes to ease his problems with a queen exchange, but it is too late.)

28...Qxb6 29.Rxb6 Rxe5 30.Rxb5 e2 31.Re1 Rxf3!! (A wonderful little combination that cuts through white's defensive wall.) 32.gxf3 Nxf3 33.Rxd5? (Karjakin walks into a mating net. He should have tried 33.Ra1 g6! 34.Ba4 e1Q+ 35.Rxe1 Nxe1 36.Rb8+, forcing black to show some technical skills to win the game.) 33...Rxd5 34.Rxe2 Rg5! (Threatening 35...Rg1 mate, nets black a piece after 35.Rg2 Rxg2 36.Kxg2 Ne1+ and 37...Nxc2.) White resigned.

Virginia Open

Scoring 4 1/2 points in five games, IM Larry Kaufman won the traditional open tournament on Jan. 29 in Springfield. In the amateur section, Ted Udelson defended his title with 4 1/2 points.

Solution to today's problem -- mate in four -- by H. Grasemann (White: Ke1,Qd1,Nh5,P:e2; Black: Kh1, Nf1,P:h2): 1.Qd5+ Kg1 2.Qh1+!! Kxh1 3.Kf2! Ñ 4.Ng3 mate.

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CHESS Lubomir Kavalek

By Lubomir Kavalek Monday, February 20, 2006; C10

The Aeroflot Open, one of the year's premier open tournaments, ended Thursday in Moscow in a fourway tie among grandmasters Baadur Jobava of Georgia, Viktor Bologan of Moldova, Krishan Sasikiran of India and Shakhryar Mamedyarov of Azerbaijan. They scored 6 1/2 points in 9 games, but Jobava, 22, had the best tiebreak and was declared the winner.

Alexandra Kosteniuk, a Russian woman's

grandmaster, has an attractive attacking style, supported by a sharp opening repertoire that often gives her male opponents fits. Having scored five points, she tried to win her last-round game against Tigran Petrosian with the help of the rarely tested exchange sacrifice in the Meran defense. But the Armenian grandmaster, not to be mistaken for the late world champion of the same name, found a way to blunt black's aggressive attempts. He sacrificed the exchange back and prevailed in the counterattack.

Petrosian-Kosteniuk

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 c6 4.e3 Nf6 5.Nf3 Nbd7 6.Bd3 dxc4 7.Bxc4 b5 8.Bd3 Bb7 (Robert Wade's system of the Meran defense.) 9.e4 b4 10.Na4 c5 11.e5 Nd5 12.0-0 cxd4 13.Re1 g6 (Bent Larsen's way to tackle this variation, concentrating his forces on white's pawn on e5.) 14.Bg5 Qa5 15.Nd2 (With an unpleasant threat Nd2-c4, the knight move is also aimed against 15...Bc6? 16.Nc4 Qxa4?, since 17.b3! Qb5 18.Nd6+ wins the black queen.) 15...Rc8!? (Black is ready to sacrifice the exchange, but the idea was not well tested in tournaments. For some time, the main variation was 15...Ba6 16.Nc4 Bxc4 17.Bxc4 Bg7 and in the game Gligoric-Ljubojevic, Krk 1976, white solved the problem with his knight on the edge by simply sacrificing it with 18.Qxd4. After the forced 18...Qxa4 19.Bxd5 exd5 20.Qxd5 Nb6, Gligoric played 21.Qc5?! and won in 30 moves after Ljubojevic did not defend well. But Gligoric's idea was improved with 21.Qd6! Qd7 22.Qxb4 Bf8 23.Qh4!?, threatening 24.Rad1, with a powerful pressure against the black king in the middle.)

16.Nc4 (Picking up the challenge. After16.Ne4 black can take the pawn with 16...Nxe5.) 16...Rxc4!? (A positional exchange sacrifice, giving black a substantial control in the center.) 17.Bxc4 Bg7 18.Rc1 (Looking to bring the misplaced knight from a4 into the game at the first opportunity.) 18...0-0?! (Black wants to hide her king as soon as possible, but the aggressive 18...Nxe5!? seems better. For example, after 19.Bf1, 19...Nd7 keeps the white knight on a4 out of play. In addition, after 19.Bb3?!, black has an astonishing combination with 19...Nc3!? 20.bxc3 Nf3+! 21.gxf3 Qxg5+22.Kf1 [On 22.Kh1 Qh5 23.Re4 Be5! wins.] 22...Qf5!, threatening 23...Bxf3 and keeping the white king uncomfortable.) 19.Bb3 Bxe5 (After 19...Nxe5?! 20.Nc5 the knight is alive.)

20.Rxe5! (Sacrificing the exchange back gives white plenty of play on the dark squares.) 20...Nxe5 21.Nc5 Bc8 (After 21...Qb6 22.Nxb7 Qxb7 23.Qxd4 white is better.) 22.Qxd4 Nc6 23.Qh4 f6 (Black's problem with the weak dark squares around his king comes out clearly after 23...Nc3?! 24.Bf6! and now either after 24...Ne2+ 25.Kh1 Nxc1 26.Qh6; or after 24...Qxc5 25.Rxc3! bxc3 [On 25...Qf5 26.Bc2! wins.] 26.Qh6 white mates.) 24.Bh6 g5 (After 24...Rd8 25.Bxd5 white wins either after 25...exd5 26.Qxf6 Qc7 27.Ne6!; or after 25...g5 26.Qh5! exd5 27.Re1!, threatening 28.Re8+. The defense 25...Rf7 fails to 26.Nxe6 Bxe6 27.Rxc6 Re7 28.Qe4! and white's multiple crosspins

decide. After 24...Qd8 25.Bxf8 Qxf8 26.Nxe6 Bxe6 27.Rxc6 white should win.) 25.Qe4 f5 (Fatally weakening her king, but after 25...Rd8 26.Nxe6 wins easily.) 26.Qe1 Rd8 (After 26...Rf6 27.Bxg5 Rg6 28.Bxd5 wins.)

27.Nb7! (A pretty deflection, although the prosaic 27.Nxe6 wins too, e.g. 27...Rd6 28.Nd4 Rxh6 29.Nxc6 etc.) 27...Bxb7 (After 27...Qb6 28.Nxd8 white is a rook up.) 28.Qxe6+ Kh8 29.Bxd5 (After 29...Qxd5 30.Qf6+ Kg8 31.Qg7 mates.) Black resigned.

Reflecting on History

Two important books dealing with chess history were published recently. Gino Di Felice, an Italian author, continues his exhaustive historical work with another volume. His "Chess Results, 1901-1920: A Comprehensive Record with 860 Tournament Crosstables and 375 Match Scores" was issued by McFarland (http://www.mcfarlandpub.com). Di Felice plans to reach the year 1940 in the next three volumes. His work is indispensable to chess historians, writers and all those who are curious about the glorious chess past.

Dirk Jan ten Geuzendam's "The Day Kasparov Quit and Other Chess Interviews," issued by the Dutch publisher New in Chess, is a wonderful historical document of our time. The Dutch author is a master interviewer, able to make some of the best players open up and reveal their innermost thoughts. The talks with Garry Kasparov and Vladimir Kramnik are central to the book, but other grandmasters, such as Miguel Najdorf, Vishy Anand and Vassily Ivanchuk, give the work additional flair. It is fascinating reading, highly recommended.

Solution to study by F.M. Teed (White: Ke6,P:g4,h3; Black: Kh7,P:g5,h6): 1.Kf7! h5! 2.h4!! (Not 2.Kf6? hxg4 3.hxg4 Kh6 4.Kf5 Kh7! 5.Kxg5 Kg7 and black draws.) 2...Kh6 3.Kf6! gxh4 4.g5+ Kh7 5.Kf7! h3 6.g6+ wins; or 2...gxh4 3.g5 h3 4.g6+ Kh6 5.g7 h2 6.g8Q h1Q 7.Qg6 mate.

By Lubomir Kavalek Monday, February 27, 2006; C08

The fabulous Linares tournament, often called the Wimbledon of chess, has turned into a flying circus. For the first seven rounds of this traditional double round-robin event, the organizers flew eight elite grandmasters, mostly Europeans, to the Mexican city of Morelia. They will be flown to Spain today for the next seven rounds. The victim of the double jet-lag competition is world champion Veselin Topalov. Saturday, after six rounds, the Bulgarian grandmaster shared the last place with Etienne Bacrot of France with two points. The super-solid Hungarian Peter Leko was leading with 4 1/2 points, a full point ahead of Russia's Peter Svidler and Armenia's Levon Aronian.

The Ukrainian Enigma

Vassily Ivanchuk, the moody genius from Ukraine, is at 36 the oldest participant. On any given day he is capable of defeating the world's best players or losing inexplicably. It was not his day against Leko's positional squeeze in the Anti-Marshall Spanish.

Leko-Ivanchuk

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 Be7 6.Re1 b5 7.Bb3 0-0 8.a4 Bb7 9.d3 d6 10.Nbd2 Na5 11.Ba2 c5 12.Nf1 Bc8 (Aiming to oppose white's light bishop from the square e6.)

13.c3!? (This new move gives white control of the center and prepares a space grab on the queenside with b2-b4.) 13...Bd7 (After13...Be6 14.Bxe6 fxe6 15.b4 white gets his queen to b3 with advantage.) 14.Ne3 Qc7 15.axb5 axb5 16.b4 Nb7 (A sad necessity. After 16...cxb4 17.cxb4 Nc6 white has a little combination, snatching a pawn with 18.Bxf7+!, for example 18...Kxf7 19.Qb3+ and now after 19...Kg6 20.Nh4+ Kg5 [20...Kh5 21.Qd1+!] 21.Nef5+ Kh5 22.Qd1+ Ng4 23.Qxg4+! Kxg4 24.f3+ Kh5 25.g4 mate; and after19...d5 20.Nxd5 Nxd5 21.Rxa8 Rxa8 22.exd5, threatening 22.d6+, white is a healthy pawn up.) 17.Bd2 Nd8 18.Bb3 Rxa1 19.Qxa1 Re8?! (Black should have tried 19...cxb4 20.cxb4 Be6, although after 21.Rc1 Qd7 22.Qc3 white's better-coordinated forces dictate the play.)

20.bxc5! (The right moment to separate and isolate the black pawn on b5.) 20...Qxc5 (Black is forced to take with the queen, since after 20...dxc5 21.c4! white has strong pressure against the pawn on e5.) 21.Qa2 (Creating a strong bishop-queen battery on the diagonal a2-g8. Black can't oppose it with 21...Be6, because he needs his light bishop to defend his b-pawn.) 21...h6 22.h3 Ne6 23.Nd5 Nxd5 24.Bxd5 Qc8 25.d4! (Increasing the tension in the center.) 25...Bf6 26.Qb3 Bc6 (The weakness on f7 does not allow black to take the pawn on d4.)

27.Qb4! (Black now has a problem of how to defend his weak pawns. After 27.Bxc6 Qxc6 28.d5 black escapes with 28...Nc5.) 27...exd4 28.cxd4 Bxd5 29.exd5 Ng5 30.Rxe8+ Qxe8 31.Bxg5 hxg5 32.Qxd6 Qe2 33.Qc5?! (Safety first, but Leko is giving black a new life. After 33.Qb8+ Kh7 34.d6 Qe6 35.Qxb5 Qxd6 white is a pawn up, but the win is not easy, as shown in a similar position reached in the 1927 world championship match between Capablanca and Alekhine.) 33...Qc4? (Losing. Black's only chance was to support his passed b-pawn with 33...Qb2! For example after 34.d6 b4 35.Qc8+ Kh7 36.Kh2 b3 37.Qf5+ Kg8 38.d7 Qc1 39.Qxf6 gxf6 40.d8Q+ Kg7 41.Qa5 Qf4+ 42.Kg1 b2 43.Nd2 Qxd4 black draws.) 34.Qxc4 bxc4 35.Kf1 Kf8 36.d6 Ke8 37.Ne5 (Preventing the black king from entering the game.) 37...Bxe5 38.dxe5 Kd7 39.g3 (After 39...f6 40.f4 white has two supported passers and wins.) Black resigned.

Ivanchuk redeemed himself with a win over the four-time Russian champion, Svidler, turning a dull variation of the Grunfeld defense into an astonishing tactical slugfest. The win gave Ivanchuk three points.

Ivanchuk-Svidler

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 d5 4.Bg5 Ne4 5.Bh4 Nxc3 6.bxc3 dxc4 7.e3 Be6 8.Qb1 c5?!

(Svidler is giving back the pawn, activating his pieces, but it is risky.) 9.Qxb7 Bd5 10.Qb5+ Nd7 11.Nf3 Rb8 12.Qa4 (The siege of the pawn on c4 begins.) 12...cxd4 13.cxd4 Qc8 14.Rc1 e6 (Black is unable to hold the c-pawn.)

15.Bxc4! (A well-calculated capture. Ivanchuk has to find a few accurate moves to keep the pawn.) 15...Rb4 16.Qa6! Bb7 (After 16...Qc7 comes 17.Ne5.) 17.Qa5! (Indirectly protecting the bishop on c4, since after 17...Rxc4 18.Rxc4 Qxc4 19.Qd8 mates.) 17...f6 18.Nd2! Bxg2 19.Rg1! (More precise than 19.Bxf6 Bxh1 20.Bxh8 Qc6 and black is still breathing.) 19...Qc6 (A double-rook sacrifice 19...Bd5 20.Bxf6 Rg8 21.Bxd5!! Qxc1+ 22.Ke2 Qxg1 leads to a mate after 23.Qd8+ Kf7 24.Qxd7+ Kxf6 25.Ne4+ Kf5 26.Qxe6 mate.)

20.Rxg2! (A splendid exchange sacrifice, leaving the black king vulnerable.) 20...Qxg2 21.Bxe6 Bd6 (Svidler could not find anything better. The retreat 21...Qb7 is met by 22.Rc7!; and after 21...Rb6 22.Bxd7+ Kxd7 23.Qa4+! Rc6 24.Rc4 Bd6 25.e4 Rhc8 26.d5 wins.) 22.Rc8+ Ke7 23.Rxh8 Kxe6 24.Qd8 Qg1+ (Ivanchuk deserved to win the game brilliantly with a magnificent king's hunt after 24...Qh1+ 25.Ke2 Qc6 26.Qg8+ Kf5 27.e4+ Kg4 28.Qxg6+!! hxg6 29.h3+ Kxh3 30.Bg3+ Kg2 31.Rh2+ Kg1 32.Nf3 mate.) 25.Ke2 (After 25...Qg4+ 26.f3 Qxh4 [After 26...Qg2+ 27.Kd3 or 27.Bf2 wins.] 27.Re8+ Kd5 [27...Kf5 28.Qxd7+ wins.] 28.Qa8+ and white mates.) Black resigned.

Solution to today's problem by A. Grunenwald (White: Ke7,Qg6,Nh7; Black:Kg8,Qh8,Ne8,P:g7):1.Kd7! Nc7 (Or 1...Nd6 2.Kxd6 Qxh7 3.Qe8 mate.) 2.Kxc7 Qxh7 3.Qe8 mate.

On Korchnoi and Karpov

By Lubomir Kavalek Monday, March 6, 2006; C12

Two major chess events clash this week: the elite tournament in Linares, Spain, and the U.S. championship in San Diego. Both competitions conclude next Sunday.

In Linares, world champion Veselin Topalov coped well with jet lag, winning the first three games of the second half, after the players arrived from Mexico. Peter Leko was still in the lead after yesterday's round with 6 1/2 points in 10 games, a point ahead of Topalov, Levon Aronian and Teimur Radjabov.

The \$250,000 U.S. championship has a new format this year. The America's Foundation for Chess, organizing the event, has split 64 players into two groups, creating de facto two U.S. championships. Both groups play a nine-round Swiss system. The winners of each group will play two rapid games for the overall title. But before that happens, the best woman from each group will play two rapid games for the U.S. women's title. If the score is tied after the rapid games, a blitz play decides the championship.

It could get confusing. For example, a woman player could win one group and proceed to lose the U.S. women's title match. But she still has to play the winner of the other group. If she wins that match, she becomes the overall U.S. champion.

You can watch the real story unfold on the U.S. championship's excellent Web site: http://www.uschesschampionship.com/. The games start at 1 p.m. in San Diego and can be followed live. The defending U.S. champion, Hikaru Nakamura, has a lot of catching up to do. He lost to Joshua Friedel of New Hampshire in the first round and drew with Jake Kleiman of Tennessee in the second round.

On Korchnoi and Karpov

Garry Kasparov's "On My Great Predecessors, Part V," recently issued by Everyman Chess, deals with two grandmasters that influenced his career the most. Viktor Korchnoi allowed him to reenter the Candidates matches in 1983 after Kasparov was forfeited and out of the world championship cycle. This noble gesture speeded up Kasparov's ascent to the world crown. Anatoly Karpov's career is examined in the second part of the book. Kasparov engaged several former Soviet coaches to prepare this remarkable volume.

To present all Karpov's important games is not easy, and some are missing. For example, Kasparov covers Karpov's phenomenal triumph in Linares in 1994 with only one game: Karpov's win against the 18-year-old Vladimir Kramnik. The brilliant victory against Topalov should have been included as well. Did Karpov's double-exchange sacrifice inspire Topalov to do the same against Aronian last January in Wijk aan Zee?

Karpov-Topalov

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 c5 3.Nf3 cxd4 4.Nxd4 e6 5.g3 Nc6 6.Bg2 Bc5 7.Nb3 Be7 8.Nc3 0-0 9.0-0 d6 10.Bf4 Nh5 11.e3!? Nxf4 12.exf4 Bd7 13.Qd2 Qb8 14.Rfe1 g6 15.h4 a6 16.h5 b5?! 17.hxg6 hxg6 18.Nc5! dxc5 (After 18...Be8 the Hungarian GM Zoltan Ribli suggested the spectacular19.Nxe6! fxe6 20.Rxe6 Bf7 21.Rae1! and white has a decisive pressure.) 19.Qxd7 Rc8 (Topalov is prepared to meet 20.Bxc6 with 20...Ra7, but Karpov begins to have fun.)

20.Rxe6!! (An astonishing rook sacrifice, allowing white to dance on the light squares.) 20...Ra7

(After 20...fxe6 21.Qxe6+ Kg7 22.Bxc6 Ra7 23.Be4 Bf6 24.Qg4 g5 25.Qf5! white wins.) 21.Rxg6+! fxg6 (After 21...Kf8 22.Qh3 fxg6 23.Qh8+ Kf7 24.Bd5 mates. After 21...Kh7, white does not have to show off with 22.Rg4!? because black can make it more difficult with 22...Rxd7 23.Be4+ Kh8! 24.Kg2 Bg5!. Instead, 22.Qh3+! leads to a mating attack, for example 22...Kxg6 23.Be4+ f5! 24.Qxf5+ Kg7 25.Qh7+ Kf8 26.Qh8+! Kf7 27.Bd5+ Kg6 28.f5+ Kxf5 29.Qh7+ Ke5 30.Qh6 Kf5 31.g4+ Kxg4 32.Be6+ Kf3 33.Qe3 mate.) 22.Qe6+ Kg7 23.Bxc6 (White has enough material for the exchange and dominates on the light squares.) 23...Rd8 24.cxb5 Bf6 25.Ne4 Bd4 26.bxa6! (After 26.Rd1 axb5 27.b4 Qc8 28.Nxc5 Bxc5 29.Qe5+ Kh7 30.Rxd8 black counters with 30...Bxf2+!) 26...Qb6 27.Rd1 Qxa6 (After 27...Rxa6 28.Qe7+ Kh8 29.Rxd4! cxd4 30.Qf6+ Kg8 31.Qxg6+ Kf8 32.Qf5+! Kg7 33.Ng5 Ra7 34.Qh7+ Kf6 [34...Kf8 35.Ne6 mate.] 35.Ne4+ Ke6 36.f5+ Ke5 37.f4 mates.)

28.Rxd4!! (With the second exchange sacrifice Karpov eliminates the defender of the dark squares.) 28...Rxd4 29.Qf6+ Kg8 (Neither 29...Kh6 30.f5 Rd1+ 31.Kh2; nor 29...Kh7 30.Ng5+ Kg8 31.Qxg6+ Kf8 32.Qe8+ Kg7 33.Ne6+ Kf6 34.Nxd4 is better for black.) 30.Qxg6+ Kf8 31.Qe8+?! (Karpov misses a faster ending, 31.Qh6+ Kg8 32.Nf6+ Kf7 33.Nh5!, winning outright.) 31...Kg7 32.Qe5+ Kg8 33.Nf6+ Kf7 34.Be8+ Kf8 35.Qxc5+ Qd6 36.Qxa7 (Black is left without pawns.) 36...Qxf6 37.Bh5 Rd2 38.b3 Rb2 39.Kg2 Black resigned.

Book of the Year

Romanian grandmaster Mihail Marin won the prestigious Chess Cafe.com Book of the Year Award for his work "Learn From the Legends: Chess Champions at Their Best." In addition to the contributions of several world champions and Korchnoi, Marin also presents Akiba Rubinstein's crafty rook endgames.

Solution to today's problem -- mate in three -- by L. Borgstom (White: Kd6,Qh8,P:f2,f3,h3; Black: Kf4,Qh5,P:f5,g6): 1.Qc3! Kg5 (or 1...Qxf3 2.Qc1+!) 2.f4+! Kh6 3.Qh8 mate; or 2...Kxf4 3.Qe3 mate; or 2...Kh4 3.Qg3 mate.

Monday, March 13, 2006; C12

The United States Championship finished yesterday in San Diego with rapid playoffs. Anna Zatonskih won the women's title, defeating Rusudan Goletiani, 1 1/2 - 1/2. Alexander Onischuk became the overall U.S. champion, beating Yuri Shulman, 1 1/2 - 1/2. Shulman qualified for the final match by a better tiebreaker over Gata Kamsky and Larry Christiansen, all scoring 6 1/2 points in nine games in their preliminary group. Onischuk, the top board of the University of Maryland Baltimore County's powerful team, won his group alone with seven points. Onischuk's victory over Dmitry Schneider in the Noteboom-Abrahams line of the Semi-Slav defense is theoretically important.

Onischuk-Schneider

1.c4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 c6 4.Nf3 dxc4 5.e3 b5 6.a4 Bb4 7.Bd2 a5 8.axb5 Bxc3 9.Bxc3 cxb5 10.b3 Bb7 11.bxc4 b4 (The Englishman Gerald Abrahams reached this position in 1925, the Dutchman Daniel Noteboom in 1930. They share the credit for this sharp variation.) 12.Bb2 Nf6 13.Bd3 Nbd7 14.0-0 0-0 15.Re1!? (Preparing the pawn advance 16.e4, the rook move was hard to find in opening manuals 10 years ago. White tried to accomplish the same with 15.Qc2.) 15...Ne4 (Blocking the pawn advance, but not for long.) 16.Nd2! (The fight for the square e4 continues.) 16...Nxd2 (After 16...f5 17.f3 Nxd2 18.Qxd2, black can't prevent e3-e4 and only weakens his position on the kingside. But 16...Ndc5 is a playable alternative.) 17.Qxd2 Qc7 (After 17...e5 18.f4! establishes white's passers in the center.)

18.c5 Rfb8!? (A novelty. Black ignores the center and supports his own passing pawns. After 18...e5 19.Qc2 h6, white can apply shades of the King's gambit with 20.f4 exf4 21.e4!, creating a powerful center. But 18...f5 seems playable.) 19.Rac1 Qc6?! (The advance 19...a4!? is more to the point: After 20.c6 Bxc6 21.Be4 Ra6 22.Bxh7+ Kf8! black survives.) 20.e4 a4? (Black had to play 20...Nf6 and after 21.Qg5 h6!, but not 21...a4?! because of 22.d5! exd5 23.exd5 Qxd5 24.Bxf6.) 21.Qxb4! Ba6 (It looks dangerous, but Onischuk calculates well.)

22.d5! (A splendid deflection, refuting black's combination. After 22.Qc3 Rxb2 23.Qxb2 Bxd3 black succeeds.) 22...exd5 (After 22...Qxc5 23.Qxc5 Nxc5 24.Bxa6 Nxa6 25.Ba3 Rb3, the weak last rank allows 26.d6!, e.g. 26...Rxa3 27.d7, threatening 28.Rc8+; or 26...Rd8 27.d7 Rd3 28.Be7 winning the exchange.) 23.exd5 Qh6 (The difference is clear after 23...Qxd5 24.Qc3 Rxb2. White wins with a zwischenzug 25.Be4!) 24.Qxa4 (Black's once proud queenside pawns disappeared.) 24...Bb5 (After 24...Nxc5 25.Rxc5 Bxd3 26.Qd4 Bf5 27.d6, the strong d-pawn ties up black's heavy pieces and white should win.) 25.Qg4! (The simple way, but 25.Qxb5 Rxb5 26.Bxb5 also wins.) 25...Nxc5 26.Bxb5 Rxb5 27.Qe2! (The double threat 28.Qe8+! and 28.Qxb5 wins a piece after 27...Rbb8 28.Rxc5.) Black resigned.

Leko's Collapse

The Armenian grandmaster Levon Aronian won the elite tournament in Linares, Spain, on Saturday, after Hungary's Peter Leko faltered and lost the last two games. Here is the final clincher.

Leko-Aronian

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 Be7 6.Re1 b5 7.Bb3 0-0 8.a4 b4 9.d3 d6 10.a5 (Both players were familiar with this Anti-Marshall variation of the Spanish. The clampdown on the queenside and the control of the light squares used to give white better prospects.) 10...Be6 11.Nbd2 Qc8 12.Nc4 Rb8 13.Bg5 (All this was played before, but now Aronian finds a new way to strike against white's center.)

13...Kh8!? (Black is preparing f7-f5.) 14.h3 (After 14.d4 Nxd4 15.Nxd4 exd4 16.Qxd4 Rd8 17.Ne3 c5 18.Qd3 d5, black equalizes.) 14...Ng8 15.c3 bxc3 16.bxc3 f5! 17.Ba4?! (The transaction that follows is in black's favor. Leko should have played 17.exf5 Rxf5 18.Be3, to counter 18...d5?! with 19.Ba4!) 17...fxe4 18.Bxc6 exf3 19.Bxe7 Nxe7 20.Bxf3 Ng6 21.Bg4 Nf4! (Dark clouds are surrounding white's king.) 22.Ra2 (Leko covers the second rank because black can strike there quickly, for example 22.Ne3 Bxg4 23.hxg4 Rb2 24.d4 Nxg2!! 25.Nxg2 Rfxf2 26.Ne3 Qf8 27.Nf5 g6 and black wins. But preventing a direct attack on the kingside makes Leko's pawns on the queenside vulnerable. Aronian finds a decisive queen's maneuver.) 22...Qb7! 23.Bf3 (Black should win after 23.f3 Bd5! [threatening 25...h5] 24.g3 h5! 25.gxf4 hxg4 26.hxg4 Bxf3 27.Rh2+ Kg8 28.Qc2 Rxf4.) 23...Qb3! (Black wins a pawn, and the game is basically over.) 24.Rc2 Nxd3!? (The simple 24...Bxc4 25.dxc4 Qxc4 was also possible.) 25.Qxd3 Qxc4 26.Qxc4 Bxc4 27.Bc6 Rb3 28.g3 g5! (Preventing any counter-play with f2-f4.) 29.Re3 Ra3 30.Be4 Rxa5 (White is two pawns down and can resign.) 31.g4 Bd5 32.f3 Bxe4 33.fxe4 Ra1+ 34.Kg2 Rff1 35.Ree2 Rg1+ 36.Kh2 Rh1+ 37.Kg3 Rag1+ 38.Rg2 Re1 39.Rgf2 Re3+ 40.Kg2 Rexh3 White resigned.

Final standings in Linares: Aronian 8 1/2 points in 14 games, Veselin Topalov and Teimur Radjabov 8 points, Leko 7 1/2 points, Peter Svidler and Vassily Ivanchuk 6 1/2 points, Etienne Bacrot 6 points, Francisco Vallejo Pons 5 points.

Solution to today's two-mover by K. Gavrilov (White: Kd1,Qc1,Rd6,Ne3,Nh3; Black: Kh5,P:e7): 1.Qc7! exd6 (or 1...e5 or 1...e6) 2.Qh7 mate; or 1...Kh4 2.Rh6 mate.

By Lubomir Kavalek Monday, March 20, 2006; C10

Somebody is jinxing the prize distribution at the U.S. championships. Last year the America's Foundation for Chess overpaid the players \$20,000. This year, most of the players in San Diego were charged 11 percent of the announced prizes. Since taking over the championship in 2000, the AF4C did a marvelous job in improving the playing conditions and the prize fund that now reaches more than \$250,000. Perhaps next year they will get it right.

The AF4C may even consider giving the championship more prestige and slowing it down. The current format is turning the championship match between two group winners into an extravaganza of rapid play that can sometimes end with a blitzing circus. It is like asking athletes after they finish their marathon run to compete in a 100-meter dash to decide the winner.

Storming Magician

Larry Christiansen, at 49 one of the oldest participants at the U.S. championship, played well in his group in San Diego, sharing first place with Yuri Shulman and Gata Kamsky. All three players scored 6 1/2 points in nine games. But the Boston grandmaster was a victim of another strange rule that called for the distribution of prizes according to tiebreaks. The best tiebreak took Shulman to the championship final, where he earned \$17,000 after losing to Alexander Onischuk. Kamsky's tiebreak got him \$10,300. For basically the same effort Christiansen collected only \$6,000.

Christiansen, a marvelous attacker, was able to show his craft against Maryland grandmaster Aleks Wojtkiewicz in the Fischer-Sozin variation of the Najdorf Sicilian. Defending against Christiansen's stream of sacrifices was not easy, and at the end the black king could not escape.

Christiansen-Wojtkiewicz

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.Bc4 e6 7.Bb3 b5 8.Qf3 (The game Kobese-Gelfand from last year's World Cup is a good example of how the seemingly good sacrifice on e6 backfired. It went 8.Be3 Bb7 9.f4 Nbd7 10.0-0 Be7 11.Bxe6 fxe6 12.Nxe6 Qc8 13.Nxg7+ Kf7 14.Nf5 Bf8, and now white saw that after 15.Nxd6+ Bxd6 16.Qxd6 Nxe4 17.Nxe4 Bxe4 18.f5 Qc6! black beats the attack. He tried to open the position with 15.e5?!, but fell on his own sword: 15...Rg8! 16.Ng3 Qc6! 17.Qe2 Re8! 18.Rad1 [after 18.exf6 Rxe3! 19.Qh5+ Rg6 20.Qxh7+ Bg7 21.Rf2 Nxf6 black should win] 18...dxe5 19.fxe5 Rxe5 20.Qf2 Rxe3 21.Rxd7+ Qxd7 22.Qxe3 Qc6 23.Nge4 Rg6 24.Qh3 Kg8 25.Qf5 Be7 and white resigned.) 8...Qc7 9.Bg5 Nbd7 10.0-0-0 Be7 (Black can play this move because the bishop sacrifice 11.Bxe6 is met by 11...Ne5.)

11.e5!? (A nice prelude to the bishop sacrifice, diverting black's light bishop from the square e6. The pawn sacrifice is also opening the e-file for the rooks.) 11...Bb7 12.Qg3 Nxe5 (It is possible that 12...dxe5!? is a better alternative. The only grandmaster game, Stocek-Dydyshko, Pilsen 2002, finished with an exciting draw after 13.Bxe6 fxe6 14.Nxe6 Qc6 15.Nxg7+ Kf7 16.Nf5 Rag8 17.Nxe7 Kxe7 18.f4 h6 19.fxe5 Rxg5 20.exf6+ Kf7 21.Qf4 Re8 22.Rd6 Qc8 23.Rhd1 Nf8 24.g3 Bc6 25.Qh4 Rg6 26.Qd4 Qb7 27.Rxc6 Qxc6 28.Qa7+ Ke6 29.Re1+ Kd6 30.Rd1+ Ke6 31.Re1+ Kd6 32.Rd1+ with a repetition of moves.) 13.Bxe6 fxe6 (White's next move was suggested before but never played.)

14.f4!? (Christiansen analyzed this "zwischenzug" at home. Mikhail Golubev, an expert on the Fischer-Sozin variation, gives credit for it to Alexander Bangiev, but does not think much of it. It was also suggested shortly after the game Lahno-Novikov, Montreal 2004, which continued 14.Nxe6 Qc8 [Christiansen believes that 14...Qd7!? 15.Nxg7+ Kf7 is even better.] 15.Nxg7+ Kf7 and here

instead of 16.Bxf6?!, white should have tried 16.f4!? to meet either 16...Nc4 or 16...Ng6 with 17.Rhe1!, threatening to continue the attack with a rook sacrifice 18.Rxe7+!) *14...Ng6* (Protecting the king seems logical. Black does not have time to create his own attacking chances. For example, after 14...Nc4 15.Nxe6 Qa5 [Staying closer to home with 15...Qd7!? seems better.] 16.Nxg7+ Kf7 17.Rhe1! and now 17...Qb4? is met by 18.Rxe7+! Kxe7 19.Bxf6+ Kxf6 20.Nh5+ Ke6 21.Qg4+ Ke7 22.Qg7+ wins; and after 17...Bd8 18.Ne6 Qb4 white has 19.Na4!, e.g. 19...bxa4 20.Nxd8+ Rhxd8 21.Bxf6+ and white wins.) *15.Nxe6 Qd7 16.Rhe1* (White directs most of his pieces against the black king.) *16...Kf7*? (Black should have tried 16...b4!?, for example 17.Bxf6 gxf6 18.Nd5 Bxd5 19.Rxd5 Rc8 and it is not clear how white can continue his attack. But now it flows smoothly.) *17.f5 Nf8 18.Bxf6 Bxf6 19.Rxd6 Qc8 20.Ng5+! Kg8* (After 20...Bxg5+ 21.Qxg5 Qc7 Christiansen prepared a nice finish: 22.f6! Ng6 23.Re7+! and white wins.) *21.Rxf6 gxf6 22.Nge4*+ (White has more winning choices, for example 22.Re7!? Qxf5 23.Ne6+ Qg5+ 24.Qxg5+ fxg5 25.Rg7 mate; or 22...Ng6 when both 23.fxg6 and 23.Ne6 win.) *22...Ng6 23.fxg6* (After 23...Bxe4 24.Nxe4 Qc6 25.g7 wins easily.) *Black resigned*.

Alexander Hildebrand's intended solution to his study (White: Ka8,Ng6,P:b6,e5; Black: Kc6,Rg4,P:c7,e6) was: 1.b7 Ra4+ 2.Kb8 Rb4 3.Ka8! Rxb7 4.Ne7+ Kb6 5.Nc6!! Ka6 6.Nb4+ Kb6? 7.Nc6 Kxc6 stalemate. Unfortunately, black can play 6...Kb5! 7.Kxb7 Kxb4 8.Kxc7 Kc5! and win.

By Lubomir Kavalek Monday, March 27, 2006; C10

Xu Yuhua, 29, is the new women's world champion. On Saturday, she defeated Alisa Galiamova 2 1/2 - 1/2 in the women's world championship final in Ekaterinburg, Russia. Xu did not lose a single game in the 64-player event.

She is the third Chinese woman to win the world title since FIDE introduced the brutal knockout format in 2000. Xu is coached by the top Chinese grandmaster Ye Jiangchuan, who has another talent waiting in line.

Her name is Hou Yifan, an ambitious 12-year-old prodigy with wild dreams: She wants to beat the best woman in chess history, Judit Polgar, and buy a house in Paris.

A Blindfold Masterpiece

The 15th Amber Rapid and Blindfold tournament, featuring some of the top players in the world, is underway in Monaco. After yesterday's eighth round, Vishy Anand of India led the rapid event with 6 points; Russia's Alexander Morozevich dominated the blindfold competition with 6 1/2 points. The tournament concludes Thursday.

Sometimes you wonder how much the players see when they are not allowed to look at the pieces. It is a pure joy to watch the Ukrainian veteran grandmaster Vassily Ivanchuk conduct his attack against the Dutch champion Loek Van Wely.

It is simple, effective and elegant. It is also a primer on how to strike with the English Attack against the Sicilian defense.

Ivanchuk-Van Wely

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.Be3 e6 7.f3 Be7 8.Qd2 Nc6 9.0-0-0 0-0 10.g4 (The English Attack in a nutshell. Both sides are sending their pawns toward the enemy kings, but the white pawns seem to have more speed.) 10...Nxd4 11.Bxd4 b5 12.g5 Nd7 13.h4 Bb7 (In the game Abrahamyan-Milman from this year's U.S. championship, black did well with the flexible 13...Qc7. It continued 14.Kb1 b4 15.Ne2 Ne5 16.f4 Nc4 17.Qd3 a5 18.g6 e5 19.gxh7+ Kh8 20.fxe5 dxe5 21.Nf4 Ba6 22.Nd5 Qd6 23.Qf3 exd4 24.Rg1 Qe5 25.Bxc4 Bxc4 26.Nxe7 Qxe7 27.Rg4 f5 and white resigned. On the other hand, after 13...b4 14.Na4 Bb7, Bobby Fischer's idea 15.Nb6! works, for example 15...Nxb6 16.Qxb4 Rb8 17.Bxb6 d5 18.Bc5 Bxc5 19.Qxc5 Qd7 20.Qd4 Rfc8 21.Rh2 a5 22.Qe5 and in the game Najer-Ehlvest, Minneapolis 2005, black did not have sufficient compensation for a pawn.)

14.a3! (Slowing black on the queenside is the best move. The turbo-charged attack 14.g6!?, with the intention 14...hxg6 15.h5, leads to a fascinating draw after 14...b4! 15.gxh7+ Kh8 16.Nd5! exd5 17.Bxg7+! Kxg7 18.Rg1+ Kxh7 19.Bh3 f5 20.Qf4 Rf6 21.Bxf5+ Kh8 22.Rg7!! Kxg7 23.Qg4+ Kf7 24.Qh5+ Kf8 25.Qh8+ Kf7 and white does not have anything better than a perpetual check.) 14...Rc8 15.Rg1 (White is ready to roll his kingside pawns further.) 15...Ne5 (The complications after 15...d5?! 16.exd5 e5 17.d6! exd4 18.Qxd4 Bxf3 19.Rd3! are in white's favor.) 16.Qe3 Nc4 17.Bxc4 Rxc4 18.h5! (Ivanchuk is not wasting time on prophylactic measures like 18.Rg2 or 18.Kb1, played previously. He wants to establish his attack first and put his opponent on the defensive.) 18...Re8 (Instead of freeing the square f8 for his bishop to defend against white's assault along the g-file, he should have looked the other way and opened the b-file with 18...b4 19.axb4 Rxb4.) 19.Kb1 Qc7? (Limiting the range of his rook on c4 and leaving the rook on e8 unprotected, black is vulnerable to

an astonishing combination. For better or worse, he should have tried 19...b4 20.axb4 Rxb4.) 20.b3! *Rc6* (After he forced the black rook to retreat to a bad square, Ivanchuk leaps into a powerful attack.)

21.Nd5!! (The knight sacrifice works because both black's rooks are misplaced and white can open the g-file at will.) 21...exd5 (After 21...Qc8 or 21...Qd8 white wins with 22.Nf6+!) 22.exd5 (Black does not have a good defense against 23.g6!) 22...Rxc2 (After 22...Rc5 white knocks the black king down with a decisive punch 23.g6!, for example 23...hxg6 24.hxg6 Rf8 25.gxf7+ Rxf7 26.Rxg7+! Rxg7 27.Qe6+ Rf7 28.Rh1! with mate on h8; or 23...fxg6 24.hxg6 h6 25.Qe6+ Kh8 26.Rh1 with the threat 27.Rxh6 mate; or 23...f6 24.Qe6+ Kh8 25.Bxf6!, exploiting the pin on the e-file and threatening 26.Bxg7+!)

23.g6! (The pin along the e-file freezes black's dark bishop, and Van Wely can't properly defend the square g7.) 23...hxg6 (After 23...fxg6 24.hxg6, black is defenseless against either 25.gxh7+ or 25.Qe6+ Kh8 26.Bxg7+ Kxg7 27.Qf7+ Kh6 28.Qxh7 mate. After 23...f6 24.Qe6+ Kh8 25.h6! hxg6 26.hxg7+ Kxg7 27.Rxg6+! Kxg6 28.Rg1+ Kh7 29.Qh3 mates.) 24.hxg6 Rf8 25.gxf7+ (White can also finish the game with 25.Rh1!, for example 25...fxg6 26.Qe6+ Rf7 27.Qxg6; or 25...Bxd5 26.Rh8+ Kxh8 27.Qh6+ Kg8 28.Qxg7 mate; or 25...Bf6 26.Bxf6 fxg6 [26...gxf6 27.Rh8+! mates soon.] 27.Bxg7! Qxg7 28.Kxc2 winning.) 25...Rxf7 (After 25...Kxf7 26.Rxg7+ Ke8 27.Re1 Rf7 28.Rxf7 Kxf7 29.Qe6+ Ke8 30.Rh1 or 30.Rg1 decides.) 26.Bxg7! (Another way to go was 26.Rxg7+! Rxg7 27.Qe6+! Rf7 28.Qh6! Bf6 29.Bxf6 Rxf6 30.Rg1+ and white mates soon.) 26...Rxg7 27.Qe6+ Kh8 28.Rxg7 Kxg7 (After 28...Rb2+ 29.Kxb2 Bf6+ 30.Kb1! Kxg7 31.Rg1+ and white mates.) 29.Rg1+ (After 29...Kh7 30.Qh3+ Bh4 31.Qxh4 mates.) Black resigned.

Solution to today's two-mover by P. Markkola (White: Kf4,Qa6,Bf8,P:b2,g6; Black: Kd5,P:c4,c6): 1.Qa4! Kd4 2.Qd1 mate; or 1...c5 2.Qd7 mate; or 1...Ke6 2.Qxc6 mate; 1...c3 2.Qe4 mate.

By Lubomir Kavalek Monday, April 3, 2006; C10

The king is gone, long live the king!

Garry Kasparov disappeared from this month's FIDE rating list, and the world champion Veselin Topalov became the top-rated player. But barely. The Bulgarian grandmaster has 2,804 points, just one rating point more than the Indian superstar Vishy Anand.

Last Thursday, Anand shared first place with Russia's Alexander Morozevich at the 15th Amber Blindfold and Rapid tournament in Monaco.

They scored 14 1/2 points in 22 games. Morozevich won the blindfold event with 9 1/2 points in 11 games; Anand excelled in the rapid play with eight points in 11 games.

In Rubinstein's Spirit

Alexei Shirov rebounded from a terrible slide at the beginning of this year and won the Seventh Karpov Poikovsky tournament in Russian Siberia last week. The Spanish grandmaster scored six points in nine games, a clear point ahead of his four nearest rivals, Ukraine's Ruslan Ponomariov and Russia's Evgeny Bareev, Alexei Dreev and Vadim Zviagintsev. The new U.S. champion, Alexander Onischuk, managed only seven draws and two losses. He finished next to last, a point ahead of Moldova's Viktor Bologan, who with six losses resembled a punching bag.

Shirov's most creative effort came during a tough victory against Russia's Evgeny Najer in the Four Knights Game. Two years ago against Russia's Alexander Motylev, Shirov as black followed a fabulous two-pawn sacrifice, played by the great Akiba Rubinstein in 1912. But Motylev unveiled an intriguing queen sacrifice for two knights and a couple of pawns that forced black's backpedaling. It was Shirov's turn to improve.

Najer-Shirov

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.Nc3 Nc6 4.Bb5 Nd4!? (Akiba Rubinstein's annoying knight move.) 5.Bc4!? (Rubinstein considered this aggressive move, controlling the central square d5 and eyeing the pawn on f7, better than 5.Ba4.) 5...Bc5 6.Nxe5 Qe7 7.Nf3 (Rubinstein as black won a spectacular miniature against Zdzislaw Belsitzman at the 1917 Warsaw championship after 7.Nd3 d5! 8.Nxd5 Qxe4+ 9.Ne3 Bd6 10.0-0 b5! 11.Bb3 Bb7 12.Ne1 Qh4! 13.g3 Qh3 14.c3 h5 15.cxd4 h4 16.Qe2? [Losing blunder. After 16.Nf3! hxg3 17.fxg3 Bxf3 18.Rxf3 Qxh2+ 19.Kf1 0-0-0 20.Rf2!, white beats the attack.] 16...Qxh2+!! 17.Kxh2 hxg3+ 18.Kg1 Rh1 mate.) 7...d5! (This brilliant sacrifice of a second pawn is based on a powerful pin of the knight on f3.) 8.Bxd5 Bg4 9.d3 Nd7!? (Shirov's prepared novelty, leaving the sixth rank unobstructed for the black queen and covering the square d6 with the pawn on c7. In the game Bernstein-Rubinstein, Vilnius 1912, black played first 9...c6 10.Bb3 and only now 10...Nd7, threatening to reinforce the pin with 11...Ne5. The idea was revisited in a rapid game Motylev-Shirov, Bastia 2004, where white introduced a spectacular queen sacrifice after 11.Be3! Ne5 12.Nxd4! Bxd1 13.Nf5 Qf8 [After 13...Qf6 14.Bxc5 Bg4 15.Nd6+ and 16.d4 white's initiative is too strong.] 14.Bxc5 Qxc5 15.d4 with powerful pressure.)

10.Be3! (White has to challenge the knight on d4. After 10.Bxb7 Bxf3 11.gxf3 Qh4! 12.Bxa8 Ne5, the black knights handcuff white's position.) 10...Ne5 11.Nxd4 Bxd1 12.Rxd1 (More or less forced. Motylev's 12.Nf5 is met by 12...Qf6!; for example 13.Bxc5 Bxc2!; or 13.Rxd1 Bxe3 14.Nxe3 0-0-0!; or 13.d4 Bg4! 14.dxe5 Qb6 15.Bxc5 Qxc5 16.Nxg7+ Kf8 17.h3 Kxg7 18.hxg4 c6 19.Bb3 h5 are clearly in black's favor.) 12...Qf6 13.Nf5 Bxe3 14.Nxe3 0-0-0 15.0-0 (Can white's two light pieces

and his pawn mass stop the black queen?) *15...h5 16.Bb3 Ng4 17.h3 Qf4!*? (Playing Shirov is not easy. Just as you think you put out one fire, he starts another one somewhere else. Most of the time, however, he is looking toward the enemy king.) *18.g3* (White can't accept the knight sacrifice. After 18.hxg4 hxg4 19.Rfe1 Rh1+!! 20.Kxh1 Qxf2 21.Nxg4 Rh8+ 22.Nh2 Qg3 23.Kg1 Rxh2 24.Re2 Qh4! black mates soon.) *18...Qf6?!* (Was Shirov trying to lure his opponent to take the knight? The more direct 18...Qf3!? seems better, for example 19.Ng2 h4! 20.Ne1 Qf6 21.hxg4 hxg3 22.Ng2 gxf2+ 23.Rxf2 Rh1+ 24.Kxh1 Qxf2 and black wins.)

19.Ncd5!? (After 19.hxg4?! Qf3! 20.g5 [or 20.Ng2 hxg4 21.Nh4 Rxh4 22.gxh4 Rh8 wins] 20...h4 21.g4 h3 22.Kh2 Rh4, threatening 23...Rxg4 and black wins.) 19...Qh6 (Now after19...Qf3 20.Nf5 Nxf2 21.Nde3 Nxh3+ 22.Kh2 Nf2 23.Kg1 white draws.) 20.Nf5 Qh7 21.Kg2 Nh6 (Black is driven back and has to find new ways to invade white's position.) 22.Nfe3 Rhe8 23.Rde1 Qg6 24.f4 Qd6 25.Nc4 Qc5 26.Nde3 g5 27.f5 h4 28.g4 b5 29.Nd2 Qe5 (A double-attack that wins a pawn.) 30.Rf3 Qxb2 31.Re2 c6 32.Nd1 Qa1 (Shirov ties up white's pieces, threatening to march with his a-pawn.) 33.Rf1 a5 34.a4 bxa4 35.Bc4 a3 (It was time to come back with 35...Qe5 celebrating the gains on the queenside and preparing to use the open b-file.) 36.Nf3?! (Closing the exit for the black queen with 36.c3 was preferable.) 36...Kc7 37.Ne3 Qb2 38.Bb3 a2 39.Ree1 Rxd3! (White's position collapses.) 40.Nc4 Qc3 41.cxd3 Qxb3 42.Rc1 Qxd3 43.Nxa5 Rxe4 44.Rxc6+ Kb8 White resigned.

Solution to today's composition by Y. Afek (White: Kb2,Rb6,Bf1,Nc4,P:a3,g4; Black: Kc5,Rf8,Bf3,P:a5,b5,g5): 1.Rxb5+! Kxb5 2.Ne5+ Ka4 3.Nd7 Be2! 4.Bxe2 Rb8+ 5.Bb5+!! (5.Nxb8 stalemates and 5.Ka2 Rb2+! draws.) 5...Rxb5+ 6.Ka2 and black has to lose the rook. Astonishing finale!

By Lubomir Kavalek Monday, April 10, 2006; C12

Earlier this month, the University of Maryland Baltimore County (UMBC) won the President's Cup, the chess version of the Final Four. The defending champions scored nine points in 12 games, a full point ahead of their chief rival and the event host, University of Texas at Dallas (UTD). Miami-Dade College finished third with five points. Duke University was last with two points. The UMBC team achieved this success without its usual top board, the new U.S. champion Alexander Onischuk, who was playing in Russia. The team's new leader, Pawel Blehm, a grandmaster from Poland, performed excellently with two wins and one draw. Other UMBC players were IM Pascal Charbonneau, Bruci Lopez, Katerina Rohonyan and Beenish Bhatia.

The Polish Magician

The ultimate chess magician was the late world champion Mikhail Tal. Blehm did a nice imitation of Tal's wizardry against Renier Gonzalez, the 33-year-old Cuban-born International Master playing for Miami-Dade. In the Scandinavian defense, black lost a lot of time moving his rampaging queen, allowing the white pieces to swing freely.

Blehm-Gonzalez

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 Qxd5 3.Nc3 Qa5 4.d4 Nf6 5.Bc4 c6 6.Bd2 Qb6 7.Nf3! Qxb2?! (Black takes the "poisoned" pawn and is willing to suffer.) 8.Ne5 e6 9.Rb1 Qa3 10.0-0 Qd6 (Black wasted six moves with his queen, giving white a clear edge in development.) 11.Re1!? (Another way to develop was 11.Bf4 Qd8 12.Qf3 because 12...Qxd4 is met by a dangerous knight sacrifice 13.Nb5!, for example 13...cxb5 14.Bxb5+ Nbd7 15.Nxd7 Bxd7 16.Rfd1 Qc5 17.Rxd7! Nxd7 18.Bxd7+ Kxd7 [18...Ke7 19.Rxb7!] 19.Qxb7+ Ke8 20.Qxa8+ and white should win.) 11...Be7 (After 11...Qxd4 comes 12.Qe2.)

12.Ne4!? Qxd4 (White has most of his pieces in play and black has to be careful. For example, the game Degraeve-Tomczak, Cappelle la Grande 2006, ended quickly after 12...Nxe4 13.Rxe4 0-0 14.Qh5 b5 15.Rb3 f6 16.Rg4 fxe5 17.Rxg7+! Kxg7 18.Rg3+ Kh8 19.Bd3 black resigned. After 12...Qd8 white breaks through with 13.Ng5 0-0 14.Nexf7 Rxf7 15.Rxe6!) 13.Ng5 0-0 14.Qe2 b5 15.Bb3 Nd5 16.Nef3 Qc5 17.c4! (Creating more space to include his rook on b1 in the onslaught.) 17...bxc4 18.Bxc4 h6 19.Ne4 Qa3 (The black queen cannot find peace and has to watch white's kingside attack from a distance.)

20.Bxh6!? (A dangerous sacrifice in Tal's style.) 20...gxh6 21.Rb3 Qa5 22.Ne5 Nf6?! (At first glance, black can try 22...Nf4 23.Rg3+ Bg5, but white can save himself with a queen sacrifice 24.Nxg5!? Nxe2+ 25.Rxe2 that leads to a draw after 25...hxg5 26.Rxg5+ Kh7 27.Re3 Kh6 28.f4 Qb6 29.Ng4+ Kh7 30.Rh5+ with a perpetual check.) 23.Rg3+ Kh8 24.Nc3 Nbd7 25.Qd2! Ng8 26.Nxc6 Qc5 27.Nxe7 Qxe7 28.Nd5 Qc5

29.Qc3+! (Another winning attempt was 29.Qf4, threatening 30.Qg4.) 29...f6 (After 29...e5 30.Rxe5! white has a decisive attack either after 30...Nxe5 31.Qxe5+ f6 32.Rxg8+! Rxg8 33.Qxf6+ Rg7 34.Qxh6+ Kg8 35.Nf6+; or after 30...Qxc4 31.Qxc4 Nxe5 32.Qf4 f6 33.Ne7!, threatening 34.Rxg8+ Rxg8 35.Qxh6 mate.) 30.Nf4 Ba6? (Losing quickly, but even after 30...Re8!? 31.Rxe6 Rxe6 32.Nxe6 Qe5 33.Nf8! Nxf8 34.Qxe5 fxe5 35.Rxg8+ Kh7 36.Rxf8, white should win. Also after 30...Ne5 31.Rxe5! fxe5 32.Ng6+ Kh7 [32...Kg7 33.Nxe5+ Kf6 34.Nd7+] 33.Nxf8+ Qxf8 34.Bd3+ Kh8 35.Qxe5+ Nf6 36.Rg6, white's attack prevails.) 31.Ng6+ Kh7 32.Qd3!? (An elegant way, but 32.Nxf8+ Qxf8 [or 32...Rxf8 33.Qd3+! wins] 33.Bxe6 Ne7 34.Bxd7 also wins material.) 32...Rf7 33.Ne5+ f5 34.Nxf7 (After 34...Bxc4 35.Qxd7 Qe7 36.Qd4 Qf6 [or 36...Nf6 37.Nxh6!

wins.] 37.Qxc4 Qxf7 38.Qxe6 white wins.) Black resigned.

Blehm's win over UTD's Magesh Chandran Panchanathan was important for the final victory in the event. The Indian International Master with plenty of grandmaster norms chose a passive line in the Petroff defense. Blehm generated a powerful attack with a piece sacrifice.

Blehm-Panchanathan

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.Nxe5 d6 4.Nf3 Nxe4 5.Nc3 Nf6 (This passive retreat, conceding space to white, is also a specialty of India's top woman, Humpy Koneru.) 6.d4 Be7 7.Bg5 0-0 8.Qd2 c6 9.Bd3 a5 (A new attempt. In Wijk aan Zee this year, Koneru played 9...Na6, but lost to Alexander Motylev and Zoltan Almasi.) 10.0-0-0 Na6 11.a3 b5 12.Bxf6 Bxf6 13.Ne4 Nc7 (White has a small edge after 13...d5 14.Nxf6+ Qxf6 15.Rde1.)

14.h4!? (Preparing a knight landing on g5.) 14...Be7 15.Rde1 h6 16.Neg5! hxg5?! (Giving white too much play. Better was 16...b4, for example 17.Bh7+ Kh8 18.Qd3? Ba6 19.Qe4 Nd5! and black beats the attack.) 17.hxg5 g6? (Loses. Black should have tried 17...f5!? with complications. After 17...Ne6 18.Bh7+ Kh8 19.Rh5! g6 20.Bxg6+ Kg7 21.Be4 white has a powerful attack, e.g. 21...d5? 22.Reh1 dxe4 23.Rh7+ Kg8 24.Rh8+ Kg7 25.R1h7+ Kg6 26.Nh4 mate.) 18.Qf4! (White's heavy pieces are ready to deliver the final blow along the h-file.) 18...Kg7 (After 18...Ne6 19.Rxe6! fxe6 20.Qh4 Kf7 21.Bxg6+ Kxg6 22.Qh7 mates.) 19.Rxe7! Nd5 (19...Qxe7 allows 20.Qh4 and white mates.) 20.Rh7+ Kxh7 21.Qh4+ (After 21...Kg8 22.Bxg6! the white queen gets to h7 one way or another.) Black resigned.

Solution to study by L. Prokes (White: Kf3,Rb3,Bb8,Bg2; Black: Ka8,Qa6,Bd7,P:a7): 1.Kg3+(1.Bc7 Bc6+2.Kg3 transposes) 1...Bc6 2.Bc7 Bb7 3.Be4! Bxe4 4.Rb8 mate.

Monday, April 17, 2006; C12

Will the chess world have finally only one world champion?

Last Friday FIDE President Kirsan Ilyumzhinov announced a world championship match, between Veselin Topalov and Vladimir Kramnik, that would finally unite the two titles in international chess that have existed since 1993. The winner of the 12-game match, to be held Sept. 21 to Oct. 13 in Elista, Russia, will be recognized as world champion, though the players will split the \$1 million prize fund equally. The winner will participate in the 2007 double round-robin world championship tournament, envisioned for Mexico City, while the loser will have to wait to join the world championship cycle after 2007.

Ilyumzhinov is facing a strong challenge for the next FIDE presidency by the Dutch businessman Bessel Kok. The elections will take place in June during the chess olympiad in Turin, Italy. With this announcement, Ilyumzhinov clearly wants to tip the scales in his favor. But how serious is it? In the past, Ilyumzhinov declared matches that never took place. For example, Garry Kasparov and Ruslan Ponomariov went from Argentina to Yalta and to nowhere in their match three years ago. Ilyumzhinov announced, but never organized, another Kasparov match against Rustam Kasimjanov. When in the fall of 2004 Ali Nihat Yazici, who runs on the Right Move ticket with Kok, proposed to save that match, FIDE squashed his efforts.

So far neither Kramnik nor Topalov spoke about the prospective match publicly. Topalov recently won 3-1 against the 2005 European champion and the top Romanian grandmaster Liviu-Dieter Nisipeanu in Bucharest. Because of a collision of dates, Nisipeanu was unable to defend his title at the European championship in Kusadasi, Turkey. That event, organized by Yazici, finished Saturday with a victory by the Croatian grandmaster Zdenko Kozul. He scored 8 1/2 points in 11 games, a half-point ahead of Vassily Ivanchuk of Ukraine. Ekaterina Atalik of Turkey won the European women's title with 8 1/2 points in 11 games.

A Jolt at the Bundesliga

Many grandmasters make a living by playing in team events, mostly in Europe. For several decades, the German Bundesliga was regarded as the strongest national team competition in the world. Its 2005-06 season ended this month with a victory by the OSC Baden-Baden team, with world class players such as Vishy Anand, Peter Svidler, Alexei Shirov, Etienne Bacrot and Robert Huebner in the lineup. Defending champion Werder Bremen finished second. The third place was shared between SG Cologne Porz and SG Alekhine Solingen, but Porz won the bronze with a better tiebreak. Sergei Movsesian, the top Slovakian grandmaster playing for the winning team, likes sharp and unusual variations. A good example is his game against the German International Master Martin Borriss. In the Petroff defense, Movsesian got a vigorous attack in a line resurrected in the 1980s by the Hungarian grandmaster Gyula Sax.

Movsesian-Borriss

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.d4 (These days approaching the Petroff defense with this central advance lies in the shadow of 3.Nxe5.) 3... Nxe4 4.Bd3 d5 5.Nxe5 Nd7 6.Nc3 (A challenging knight move, tailored by Sax. It is a welcome change of pace from the overanalyzed 6.Nxd7.)

6... Nxe5 7.dxe5 Bb4 (The pin looks natural. After 7... Nxc3 8.bxc3 Be7 9.Qh5! Be6 10.f4 white has a slight pull, according to Sax.)

8.0-0! (A sound pawn sacrifice, leaving white with plenty of play. Grabbing the pawn is risky.) 8...

Nxc3 (The other way to take the pawn is 8 . . . Bxc3, but after 9.bxc3 Nxc3 10.Qe1 d4 11.f4 g6 12.Bb2 Na4 13.Ba3 Sax believed that the bishop pair gives white better game.) 9.bxc3 Bxc3 10.Rb1 Be6 (The game Sax-Nunn, Brussels 1985, continued 10 . . . Qe7 11.Rb3 and after the blunder 11 . . . Bxe5? [11...Bb4 is better] the punishment was swift: 12.Re1! 0-0 13.Qh5! f5 14.Bf4 and black resigned.) 11.Rxb7 Bxe5 (Swapping the pawns is in white's favor. Black runs into several unpleasant hits.) 12.0h5! (White creates a new threat with every move.) 12... Bf6?! (After 12... Bd4 13.Ba3! black can't castle.) 13.Re1! (Threatening 14.Rxe6+. The black king is vulnerable in the middle, but black would still be under great pressure.) 13...g6 (Weakening the dark squares. Moving away the king immediately with 13...Kf8 was better.) 14.Qh6 (Threatening 15.Bb5+.) 14...a6 15.Bf4 (Targeting the pawn on c7.) 15...Bc3? (A blunder, helping white shatter black's defensive wall. Black can protect his light bishop on e6 with 15...Qe7, but white has the simple 16.Rxc7 Qb4 17.Kf1!, or he can choose a surprising way to attack the black king from the diagonal a4-e8: 16.c4! dxc4 17.Bc2! with a decisive attack either after 17...0-0-0 18.Reb1 Rd5 19.Rb8+ Kd7 20.Ba4+ Rb5 21.R1xb5! axb5 22.Bxb5+ c6 23.Rb7+; or after 17...Bc3 18.Ba4+ Kd8 19.Rd1+ Kc8 20.Rxc7+ and white wins.) 16.Rxe6+! fxe6 17.Bxg6+ hxg6 (After 17...Kd7 18.Bf7 Kc6 19.Rxc7+ Qxc7 20.Qxe6+ Kb7 21.Bxc7 Kxc7 22.Qxd5 white should win.) 18.Qxg6+ Kf8 (On 18...Kd7 comes 19.Rxc7+ Qxc7 20.Qf7+ and white wins.) 19.Bxc7 (After 19...Qe7 20.Bd6 white mates soon.) Black resigned.

Solution to today's composition by O. Duras and L. Prokes (White: Kf1,Qe3,P:d5,f2,f3 Black: Kh3,Qf7,P:d3,d7,e5,e7,g6,g7): 1.f4+ Kg4 2.Qg3+ Kf5 3.Qg5+ Ke4 4.Qxe5+ Kf3 5.Qe3+ Kg4 6.Qg3+ Kf5 7.f3! Qxd5 8.Qg5+ Ke6 9.Qxg6 mate.

By Lubomir Kavalek Monday, April 24, 2006; C12

The Foxwoods Open, one of America's premier open tournaments, finished in a three-way tie among grandmaster Loek Van Wely of the Netherlands, GM Ilya Smirin of Israel and International Master Eugene Perelshteyn of Massachusetts. They scored seven points in nine games, but Van Wely won the title in a blitz playoff.

Staged April 12-16 in Ledyard, Conn., the tournament attracted more than 500 players. Perelshteyn made his final grandmaster norm and should get the GM title at the FIDE Congress in Turin in June. He also qualified for the next U.S. championship along with grandmasters Alex Stripunsky, Alexander Ivanov and Alexander Shabalov.

Reckless Warrior

The Dutch champion Van Wely loves fast cars. He also crashes them. Miraculously, he always walks away from the wreckage relatively unharmed. His driving style is reflected on the chessboard, where he often treats his pieces recklessly, choosing sharp and risky variations and grabbing material others would not dare touch. It worked for him in Foxwoods in the game against international master Ali Frhat of Egypt. Van Wely had to overcome a dangerous fury of sacrifices that Frhat introduced with a thematic pawn sacrifice in the Kan Sicilian. Pawn sacrifices in the opening work in mysterious ways. For example, the sacrifice (1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 a6 5.Nc3 Qc7 6.Bd3 Nf6 7.Be3 b5 8.e5!?) was played in the 1960s. But a slightly modified version (1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 a6 5.Nc3 Qc7 6.Bd3 Nf6 7.0-0 b5 8.e5!?), used by Frhat, came to light some 30 years later. Why such a big time span?

Frhat-Van Wely

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 a6 5.Nc3 b5 6.Bd3 Qc7 7.0-0 (After 7.Be3 Nf6 8.e5!? we would reach the game Kavalek-Khodos, Sinaia, Romania, 1965, that continued 8...Qxe5 9.Qf3 d5 10.0-0-0 Bd6? 11.g4! Bb7 12.Qh3 Be7 13.f4 Qc7 14.g5 Ne4 15.Bxe4 dxe4 16.g6! and the black position collapsed.) 7...Nf6 8.e5!? (Frhat played previously the lame 8.a3. Obviously he did his homework, finding games from 1996-97. In comparison with my game against Khodos, his sacrifice is more difficult to play because white is also forced to give up his knight to keep the attack going.) 8...Qxe5 9.Qf3 (Taking away the diagonal a8-h1.) 9...d5 (After 9...Bd6 10.g3 Ra7 11.Nf5! is strong, e.g. 11...exf5?! 12.Bf4 Qc5 13.Bxd6 Qxd6 14.Qe3+ and 15.Qxa7.)

10.Nf5!? (The knight sacrifice is hardly surprising. It accelerates white's attack by opening the e-file against the black king. White threatens to win the black queen with 12.Bf4.) 10...exf5! (Accepting white's gifts is the only way to refute white's play. After 10...Qc7 11.Re1! white's attack gains momentum for a mere pawn, for example 11...Bb7 12.Bf4 Qd8 13.Bxb5+! axb5 14.Nxb5 with powerful threats; or 11...Qc6 12.Bh6! gxh6 13.Nd4 Qb7 14.Qxf6 Rg8 15.Nxd5! and white should prevail either after 15...Qxd5 16.Be4 or after 15...Bg7 16.Nxe6! Bxf6 17.Bxb5+ axb5 18.Nxf6+ Ke7 19.Nxg8+ Kd6 20.Rad1+ winning the black queen by force.) 11.Bf4 Qd4! (Playing for the win, since staying on the e-file is worse, for example: 11...Qe6? 12.Rfe1 Ne4 13.Nxe4 fxe4 14.Bxe4! dxe4 15.Rxe4 wins the queen; or 11...Qe7 12.Nxd5 Nxd5 13.Qxd5 Bb7 14.Qxf5 and black does not have a good defense against the white rooks attacking on both central files, e.g. 14...Qd8 15.Be4! Nc6 16.Rfe1 Be7 17.Rad1 Qc8 18.Qxc8+ Rxc8 19.Bd6!; or 14...Qd7 15.Rfe1+ Be7 16.Qxd7+! Kxd7 17.Rad1 and white wins.)

12.Rad1?! (A sigh of relief for Van Wely. The dangerous 12.Rfe1+! would make it difficult for black, for example 12...Be6! [12...Be7 13.Be5! is worse for black.] 13.Bxf5 and since 13...Be7?

14.Bxe6 fxe6 15.Rxe6 Kf7 16.Be5 Qc5 17.b4 Qa7 18.Re1! loses, black has to play 13...Nbd7 and after 14.Rad1! he comes to a perilous crossroads: A) 14...Qc5? gives white a tremendous attack after 15.Nxd5 Rc8 16.Bg5! and resembles Gioacchino Greco's 17th-century work after 16...Nxd5 17.Rxe6+ Ne7 [or 17...fxe6 18.Qh5+ g6 19.Qxg6+ hxg6 20.Bxg6 mate.] 18.Rxd7! fxe6 19.Bxe6 and white wins. B) The correct way is 14...Qc4! 15.Nxd5 Nxd5 16.Rxd5 Qc6! 17.Bxe6 fxe6 18.Bd6 Nf6! forcing a draw by perpetual check after 19.Rxe6+ Kf7 20.Rxf6+ gxf6 21.Qh5+ Kg8 22.Qg4+ Kf7 23.Qh5+ etc.) *12...Qc5 13.Rfe1+ Be7!* (But not 13...Be6 14.Bxf5 Qc6 15.Nxd5 Nxd5 16.Be4! with white's advantage.)

14.Qg3 (Threatening 15.Bd6, 15.Bxb8 and 15.Qxg7, but black has an adequate reply.) 14...0-0! 15. Bxb8 Rxb8 16.Rxe7 (Black gets a powerful attack after 16.Qxb8 Bd6 17.Qa8 Bxh2+!, for example 18.Kxh2 Ng4+ 19.Kh1 Nxf2+ 20.Kh2 Ng4+ 21.Kh1 Qd6 and wins.) 16...Be6 (The rook on e7 is in trouble and black should win. But diverting the white queen with 16...f4 is more precise, for example 17.Qxf4 Qxe7 18.Qxb8 Bg4 wins; or 17.Qh4 Be6! [Not 17...Qxe7 18.Nxd5!] 18.Re1 h6! and the rook on e7 is trapped.) 17.Rc7 Qb6 18.b4 (After 18.Ne2 comes 18...d4, threatening 19...Nd5.) 18...d4 19.Ne2 Nd5 20.Rc5 Nxb4 21.Qe5 Rfe8 22.Qxd4 Nxd3 23.cxd3 Bxa2 24.Nf4 Rbd8 25.Qb4 Re4! (The weakness of the first rank decides. After 26.Nd5 Rxb4 27.Nxb6 Be6 28.Kf1 a5 black wins easily.) White resigned.

Solution to today's three-mover by K. Laue (White: Kf1,Ra8,Bb8; Black: Kh1): 1.Bh2 Kxh2 2.Ra3 Kh1 3.Rh3 mate.

By Lubomir Kavalek Monday, May 1, 2006; C10

When the top grandmasters talk about openings, players should listen.

In his 1994 book, "Grandmaster Achievement," the late Soviet grandmaster Lev Polugaevsky revealed secrets about his opening preparation, mostly in the Sicilian defense. His candid work became an instant classic. Recently, other prominent grandmasters followed in his footsteps and recorded their opening experiences on DVDs. The former world champion Garry Kasparov tackled the Queen's gambit and the Najdorf Sicilian. Alexei Shirov presented his own games in his favorite openings: the Spanish, the Sicilian and specifically the Najdorf Sicilian. Their extraordinary lectures, issued by ChessBase, serve as historical documents of our time and are well worth watching.

Krushing the Grunfeld

In the late 1980s, Polugaevsky came up with a new, powerful idea that frustrated defenders of the Grunfeld defense. It impressed the young Shirov, who quickly picked it up and won several games before blacks were able to equalize. During the last decade, however, the line became rather dormant. Last month, it reappeared at the 2006 Spring North American FIDE Invitational in Schaumburg, Ill., in the game between the former U.S. women's champion Irina Krush and the International Master Stan Kriventsov.

Krush-Kriventsov

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 d5 4.cxd5 Nxd5 5.e4 Nxc3 6.bxc3 Bg7 7.Bc4 c5 8.Ne2 Nc6 9.Be3 0-0 10.Rc1!? (Polugaevsky's discovery from the late 1980s. The rook escapes from the long diagonal, limiting black's counterplay against white's strong pawn center.) 10...cxd4 11.cxd4 Qa5+! (Black has to act quickly, otherwise white simply castles.)

12.Kf1 (The drawback of the variation. To keep the center strong, white has to surrender his castling privileges. After 12.Bd2?! black can pressure the white center with 12...Qb6, but 12...Qh5 is also playable.) 12...Bg4?! (Preparing the bishop pin with 12...Qa3, eyeing the bishop on e3, is stronger. The game Polugaevsky-Kudrin, New York 1989, showed how treacherous the variation could be after 12...Bd7 13.h4 Rac8 14.h5 e5 15.hxg6 hxg6 16.d5 Nd4 17.Nxd4 Rxc4 18.Rxc4 Qa6 19.Qd3 exd4 20.Bxd4 Bb5 21.Qh3 Bxc4+ 22.Kg1 f6 23.Qh7+ Kf7 24.Rh6 and black resigned.) 13.f3 Bd7 14.h4! Rad8 15.h5 e5 (The central counterplay comes too late. White opens the h-file for a powerful attack.)

16.hxg6 hxg6 17.Bd2! Qb6 (After 17...Qa3 18.Qe1 Qe7 19.Qg3! white wins.) 18.Qe1! (A decisive shuffle to the h-file.) 18...Rfe8 (After 18...Nxd4 19.Qh4 Rfe8 20.Nxd4 exd4 21.Qh7+ Kf8 22.Bh6 Qf6 23.Qh8+ Ke7 24.Qxg7 white wins. And 18...Bf6 is met by 19.Qg3!, threatening 20.Qxg6+.) 19.Qh4 Kf8 20.Qh7!? (The queen is X-raying the pawn on f7, and white threatens 21.Bh6. But the immediate 20.Bh6! is more vigorous, for example 20...Bxh6 21.Qf6! Be6 22.Rxh6 Ne7 23.Rh7! Ng8 24.Qxf7+ Bxf7 25.Rxf7 mate.) 20...Ne7 (After 20...Nxd4 21.Nxd4 exd4 22.Bh6 white wins.) 21.Bh6 Qf6 22.dxe5 (A thematic way to win, taking the black queen out of the defense. The straightforward 22.Qh8+ Ng8 23.Bxg7+ Qxg7 24.Rh7! also wins, with the idea 24...Qxh8 25.Rxf7 mate.) 22...Qxe5 23.f4 Qb2 24.e5! (Breaking the defensive connection between the black queen and the dark bishop leads to a mating finale.) 24...Nf5 25.Bxg7+ Nxg7 26.Qh8+ (After 26...Ke7 27.Qh4+! Kf8 28.Qf6! white threatens either 29.Rh8 mate or 29.Qxf7 mate.) Black resigned.

One of the best German grandmasters in history, Wolfgang Unzicker, died on April 20 at the age of 80. As a presiding judge of an administrative court in Munich, he did not have much time to play chess, but his achievements were remarkable. Anatoly Karpov called him "the world champion among amateurs." Unzicker won the West German championship seven times and played for his country in 13 chess olympiads, mostly on the top board. Influenced by Siegbert Tarrasch, he aimed for logical and precise play. At the 1961 European team championship in Oberhausen, he defeated the world champion Mikhail Botvinnik in a fine performance against the Winawer variation of the French defense.

Unzicker-Botvinnik

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.e5 c5 5.a3 Bxc3+ 6.bxc3 Qc7 7.Nf3 (Choosing the quiet line, since Botvinnik was ready for the sharp 7.Qg4.) 7...Ne7 8.Bd3 Bd7 9.a4 Nbc6 10.Qd2 h6 11.0-0 c4 12.Be2 a5 13.Ba3 Na7 14.g3 Nac8 15.Nh4 Qd8? (A decisive mistake, according to Botvinnik. 15...Nf5 was necessary.) 16.f4! Nf5 17.Nxf5 exf5 18.Bf3 Be6 19.Rfb1 b6 20.Qg2! (Targeting the pawn on d5 and preparing g3-g4.) 20...Ra7 (After 20...h5 21.Rb5 Na7 22.Rxd5! Bxd5 23.Bxd5 Rc8 24.e6! white's attack breaks through.) 21.Rb5 Rd7 22.g4 Ne7 23.Bxe7 Kxe7 24.Kh1! (Threatening 25.gxf5 and 26.Qxg7.) 24...g6 25.Rab1 Kf8 26.gxf5 [26.Rxb6] 26...Bxf5 (Or 26...gxf5 27.Rg1 Ke7 28.Qg7 Rb7 29.Rg6 and white wins.) 27.Bxd5 Qh4 28.Be4 Qxf4 29.Bxf5 gxf5 (After 29...Qxf5 30.Rxb6 Kg7 31.Rf6 Qg5 32.Qf3 black's position is hopeless.) 30.Rxb6 Ke7 31.e6! (After 31.e6 Rd6 32.Qb7+! Kxe6 33.Rxd6+ Qxd6 34.Rb6 wins.) Black resigned.

Solution to today's study by L. Kubbel (White: Kh4,Qh1,P:b3,d2; Black: Kf4,Qa5,P:f7,e5,e6,c5,c7): 1.Qg2! f5 2.Qe2! e4 3.Qe1! Ke5 4.d4+! wins the black queen.

CHESS | Lubomir Kavalek

By {vbar} Lubomir Kavalek Monday, May 8, 2006; C10

The FIDE world champion Veselin Topalov won the 2005 Chess Oscar as the best player of the year. It was not surprising, since the Bulgarian grandmaster scored many excellent tournament victories last year, including the one in San Luis, Argentina, that gained him the world title. Topalov begins to play tomorrow in the elite Mtel Masters in Sofia, Bulgaria, where his chief rival is the Indian superstar Vishy Anand. The American grandmaster Gata Kamsky also takes part.

Grandmasters for Rent

When they don't compete in individual tournaments, many of the world's top players supplement their income by playing in national team competitions, mostly in Europe. It is not uncommon to see one grandmaster play on teams in four different countries. One of the most successful top stars is Alexander Grischuk. In the span of one week, he collected two national titles. Last Monday in Sochi, Russia, the talented Russian grandmaster anchored his team "Ural" from the Sverdlovsk region to win the 13th Russian Club championship. Yesterday, he played for the powerful NAO Chess Club from Paris and won the French team championship.

Levon Aronian, who is No. 3 behind Topalov and Anand on the FIDE rating list, played in Sochi for the defending champion "Tomsk-400" team. His team finished third, but the Armenian grandmaster scored a fascinating victory against a Russian grandmaster, Anton Shomoev, in a sharp variation of the Nimzo Indian defense.

Aronian-Shomoev

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.e3 0-0 5.Bd3 c5 6.Nf3 d5 7.0-0 Nc6 8.a3 Bxc3 9.bxc3 Qc7 (A flexible queen move, giving white fewer choices than 9...dxc4 10.Bxc4 Qc7. Black does not mind the central exchange 10.cxd5 exd5, because it opens up the e-file for him and allows his light bishop more freedom. It appeared with a bang 50 years ago at the opening round of the 1956 Candidates tournament in Amsterdam in the game Geller-Petrosian. Somehow unnoticed, it was played 10 years earlier at the 1946 U.S. Open in Pittsburgh, in the game R. Byrne-Forster, which continued 10.Qe2 b6 11.a4 Rd8 12.Ba3 Na5 13.Ne5 Ba6 14.cxd5 Bxd3 15.Qxd3 exd5 16.Qb5 Ne4 17.Qb2 f6 18.Nf3 c4 19.Qc2 Nb3 20.Ra2 Qd7 21.Rd1 Re8 22.Bc1 Qf7 23.Nd2 Nexd2 24.Bxd2 f5 and black's light square strategy triumphed.) 10.Bb2 Na5 (Forcing the exchange on d5, but giving up control of the square e5. The classical world champion Vladimir Kramnik preferred 10...dxc4 11.Bxc4 e5.) 11.cxd5 exd5 12.Ne5!? c4 (Black hopes to block the position and make the white knight on e5 vulnerable.) 13.Bc2 Ne4 14.f3 Nd6 (White can't play 15.e4 because of 15...f6! and black wins a pawn.)

15.a4!? (This move has already been analyzed by grandmasters Jeroen Piket and Joel Lautier. It opens the diagonal a3-f8 for the bishop.) 15...Bf5?! (The exchange of the light bishops fits well with black's strategy, but white can easily avoid it. Chasing the knight on e5 with 15...f6 is critical. Retreating 16.Ng4 is harmless, since both 16...Re8 or 16...Bxg4 17.fxg4 Rae8!? give black a good game. But Aronian would most likely follow Lautier's idea 16.Ba3!? Re8! [16...fxe5? 17.dxe5 Nf7 18.Bxf8 Kxf8 19.f4! with white's edge.] 17.f4!? fxe5 18.Qh5 g6 19.Bxg6 hxg6 20.Qxg6+ Qg7 21.Qxd6, collecting a few pawns for the piece, but leaving the position in chaos.)

16.e4! (Busting the position open and taking control of the game.) 16...dxe4 17.Ba3! f6 18.fxe4 fxe5 (After 18...Be6 19.Qh5! fxe5 20.Qxe5, the queen attacks two pieces and white wins.) 19.exf5 exd4 (After 19...Rad8 20.f6! Rxf6 21.Qg4 Ne8 22.Qe6+! Qf7 23.Qh3 g6 24.dxe5 black has problems.) 20.Qxd4 Rfd8 (Trying to escape from the diagonal a3-f8. Black can't block the dangerous f-pawn

with 20...Rf6, because after 21.Rad1 Nf7 22.Rfe1 he has no good moves, for example 22...Rd8? 23.Qxd8+! Nxd8 24.Re8+ Kf7 25.Rf8 mate.)

21.f6! (Opening the scope of the light bishop, white threatens 22.Bxh7+! Kxh7 23.Qh4+ Kg8 25.Bxd6 Qxd6 26.f7+ Kf8 27.Rae1!, mating soon. White's bishop pair is leaving the black knights without a chance.) 21...Nc6 22.Bxh7+!? (The prosaic 22.Qf4! gxf6 23.Qg3+ Kh8 24.Rxf6 also gives white a decisive attack.) 22...Kxh7 23.Qh4+ Kg8 (After 23...Kg6 24.Bxd6 Rxd6 25.Qg4+ Kh6 26.Rf5 white wins.) 24.Bxd6 Qxd6 25.f7+ Kf8 26.Qh8+ (Limiting the black king with 26.Rae1 is more stylish, e.g. 26...Qh6 27.Qe4 g5 28.Qe8+! and the game is over.) 26...Ke7 27.Rae1+ Kd7 28.f8Q! (After 28...Rxf8 29.Qxg7+ wins the exchange.) Black resigned.

New Endgame Books

The revised, updated and enlarged second edition of Mark Dvoretsky's popular "Endgame Manual" has been recently published by Russell Enterprises. The Russian star coach's important new discoveries in the rook endgame are included in the new volume. G.C. van Perlo's "Endgame Tactics" presents more than 1,000 endgame fragments from actual games. The author collected the material for some 30 years, and his selection proves that all chess players are human and ready to make mistakes. In this respect, it resembles Dvoretsky's "Tragicomedies," from his "Endgame Manual." Issued by New In Chess, van Perlo's work is indexed, but you can open it on any page to enjoy the tactical endgame twists. One of the gems from this enjoyable book is presented in today's diagram (White: Kh5,Qf2,P:g3,h4; Black: Kh8,Qg7,Rg6,P:g4). White draws with the remarkable 1.Qf6!

CHESS Lubomir Kavalek

By {vbar} Lubomir Kavalek Monday, May 15, 2006; C10

The comeback man, Gata Kamsky, is stealing the spotlight at the elite double round-robin M-Tel Masters in Sofia, Bulgaria. The American grandmaster won three games in a row, and the surprising hat trick boosted him into the lead. After yesterday's fourth round, Kamsky had 3 1/2 points, a half point ahead of Vishy Anand of India. Peter Svidler of Russia scored two points, and the world champion Veselin Topalov of Bulgaria had 1 1/2 points. Last place is shared by Ruslan Ponomariov of Ukraine and Etienne Bacrot of France, both with one point.

In 1996, at the height of his powers, Kamsky lost a world championship match to Anatoly Karpov and decided to quit chess. He made an unexpected, brief appearance at the 1999 FIDE world championship in Las Vegas but was eliminated by the eventual winner, Alexander Khalifman. Kamsky reappeared in a few tournaments in New York about two years ago and since then played in two U.S. championships, the 2005 World Cup and in the elite Corus tournament in January. His opening play seemed rusty, but he was still able to display his excellent endgame technique and the will to win. But nobody could have predicted his amazing start in Sofia.

In the first round, Kamsky made a draw against Ponomariov from a slightly worse position. In the second game, Kamsky's great determination earned him a full point against Bacrot. He won in one of the oldest analyzed endgames -- rook vs. knight -- that can be traced to the 9th century. A player rated among the top 10 in the world should know how to make a draw in this endgame, but the Frenchman failed the test and Kamsky won in 103 moves. In the third round, Kamsky faced Anand, whom he beat in January. Some observers claimed that Kamsky was invited to Sofia to pave the way to victory for Topalov by stopping Anand. But the expected duel between Topalov and Anand, the world's top two rated players, is not happening. Anand's blazing start, two wins with the black pieces in the first two games, included a magical victory against Topalov. The Indian grandmaster, however, stumbled against Kamsky and lost to the American a slightly worse rook endgame in 57 moves.

Striking With Flair

Yesterday, Kamsky's stunning victory over the four-time Russian champion Svidler took just 24 moves. In the Scheveningen Sicilian, Kamsky punished Svidler's careless knight move with a marvelous knight leap, performing a lesson on attacking power play.

Kamsky-Svidler

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nc6 5.Nc3 d6 6.Be2 Nf6 7.0-0 Be7 8.Be3 0-0 9.f4 e5 10.Nxc6 (Kamsky likes this move, although 10.Nb3 or 10.fxe5 are more popular choices.) 10...bxc6 11.Kh1 exf4 (Kamsky downed Khalifman at the 1999 world championship in Las Vegas after 11...Be6 12.Bf3 Bc4 13.Re1 Nd7 14.b3 Ba6 15.f5 Nf6 16.g4 h6 17.g5 hxg5 18.Bxg5 Nh7 19.Be3 Bb7 20.Rg1 Bf6 21.Rg3 and the pressure along the g-file was too strong for black and Kamsky won in 37 moves. However, Khalifman bounced back, won the match against Kamsky and later the world title.) 12.Bxf4 Be6 (The alternative is 12...Qc7, preparing to switch the knight to the square e5 via d7.) 13.Bf3 Qb6 14.b3 Rfd8 (Using the other rook 14...Rad8 was played previously and seems like a better choice.) 15.Qe1 Nd7? (This automatic knight move is a serious blunder.)

16.Nd5! (Sometimes you have to sacrifice the knight to make this popular leap in the Sicilian. Kamsky simply uses tactical weaknesses along the e-file, wreaking havoc among the black pieces.) 16...cxd5 (Black does not have many choices. After 16...Bxd5 17.exd5 Ne5 18.dxc6 Nxf3 19.Qxe7 Re8 20.Qb7 white wins.) 17.exd5 Bg4 (Trying to stay in the game by giving up a pawn. After

17...Bxd5 18.Bxd5 Bf6 19.Rd1! Rac8 20.c4 Ne5 21.Qg3, white's pressure on the kingside is unbearable, e.g. 21...Ng6 22.Bg5! Bxg5 23.Bxf7+ wins.) *18.Qxe7! Bxf3 19.Rxf3* (Threatening to win with 20.Be3.) *19...Nf6* (Svidler tries to defend the pawn d6 and block the attack on the pawn f7 at the same time, but runs into a simple refutation. After 19...Nc5 20.Rg3! white has a decisive attack, for example 20...Rd7 21.Rxg7+! Kxg7 22.Bh6+! Kxh6 23.Qf6+ Kh5 24.g4+ Kxg4 25.Rg1+ and white mates. After 19...Qd4 20.Qxf7+! Kxf7 21.Be5+ and 22.Bxd4 black's prospects are hopeless.)

20...Qa5 (After 20...Re8 21.Qxe8+ Rxe8 22.Bxb6 black is an exchange down.) 21.Rxf6! (Exposing the weak dark squares near the black king.) 21...gxf6 22.Qxf6 Re8 (After 22...Qxd5 23.Bd4! [Not 23.Bh6? Qe5!] 23...Kf8 24.Re1! threatens 25.Qh8 mate.) 23.Qg5+ (Avoiding black's last trick: 23.Bh6? Re1+ and black wins!) 23...Kf8 24.Bd2! (Pushing the black queen from the diagonal e1-a5 before finishing off the black king. After either 24...Qc5 25.Qf6 Re2 26.Qh8+ Ke7 27.Bg5+ Kd7 28.Qxa8; or 24...Qd8 25.Qh6+ Kg8 26.Bc3 Re5 27.Bxe5 dxe5 28.c4 white should win.) Black resigned.

Solution to today's problem -- mate in eight -- by S. Limbach (White: Kh8,Qf3,P;h7; Black: Kh1,Rg2,P:b2,e5,h2): 1.Qe4! b1Q 2.Qxb1+ Rg1 3.Qb7+ e4 (3...Rg2 4.Qe4!) 4.Qxe4+ Rg2 5.Qb1+ Rg1 6.Qb7+ Rg2 7.Qe4 Kg1 8.Qe1 mate.

CHESS | Lubomir Kavalek

By Lubomir Kavalek Monday, May 22, 2006; C12

With a turbocharged finish -- four wins in the last four games -- world champion Veselin Topalov clinched the victory in the elite M-Tel Masters in Sofia, Bulgaria, yesterday. The Bulgarian grandmaster scored 6 1/2 points in 10 games, edging the American Gata Kamsky by a half-point. The Indian superstar Vishy Anand ended with 5 1/2 points; four-time Russian champion Peter Svidler had 5 points; and Etienne Bacrot of France and Ruslan Ponomariov of Ukraine shared the last place with 3 1/2 points.

Incredibly, the lowest-rated Kamsky led the double round-robin by a full point with two games to go. He then lost to Topalov almost without a fight and drew his last game against Svidler, yielding the tournament victory to the world champion. Still, it was Kamsky's best result since he came out of retirement. He will soon join the U.S. team at the chess olympiad in Turin, Italy, that began yesterday.

Going for Broke

Before defeating Kamsky, Topalov created his own luck in the game against Ponomariov in the Anti-Marshall Spanish. It was the key game in Topalov's splendid climb into the tournament lead, featuring a fascinating hidden combination that impressed even the computer programs, the foremost critics of tactical play.

Topalov-Ponomariov

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 Be7 6.Re1 b5 7.Bb3 0-0 (This position was reached in 12 games in Sofia, but in only one game did white allow the Marshall Attack 9.c3 d5.) 8.h3 Bb7 9.d3 d6 10.a4 Na5 11.Ba2 c5 12.Nbd2 Nd7 13.Nf1 Nb6 14.Bd2 b4 15.c3 bxc3 16.Bxc3 Nc6 17.a5 Nc8 18.Ne3 N8a7 19.Nf5 Bc8 20.Nd2 Rb8 21.f4?! (Topalov wants to open the diagonal a1-h8, but surrenders control of dark squares. After 21.Bd5 Nb4! black is fine.) 21 . . . Bxf5 22.exf5 exf4 23.Qg4 Nd4 24.Ne4 Nab5 (Black is threatening to win an exchange after 25 . . . Nxc3 26.bxc3 Nc2.)

25.Bd2?! (Topalov sacrifices an exchange, preserving his dark bishop, but putting himself at the brink of defeat.) 25... Nc2 26.Bxf4 Kh8! 27.Qh5 Nxe1 28.Rxe1 Qxa5 29.Ra1 Rbd8? (Ponomariov wants to neutralize white's light bishop by advancing his d-pawn, but it plays into white's hands. At least four different computer programs suggested 29... f6!, and after 30.Kh2 d5!, giving back the exchange 31.Bxb8 Rxb8, but refuting white's attack, e.g. 32.Qf7 Qc7+ 33.Ng3 Nd4!; or 32.Ng3 Bd6! and black wins.)

30.f6? (Unable to resist shattering the pawn cover of the black king, Topalov misses the more precise way to play for advantage: 30.Kh2! d5 [Black loses after 30 . . . Nd4? 31.Bxf7 Qxa1 32.Bg6 h6 33.Bxh6!] and white has two ways to continue: The first is 31.Bxd5 Qxa1 32.f6 Qf1! 33.fxg7+ Kxg7 34.Bh6+ Kh8 35.Qe5+ Qf6! 36.Nxf6 Bd6 37.Bg7+! Kxg7 38.Ne8+ Kg8 39.Nxd6 Rxd6 40.Be4 with a clear advantage. The second way is 31.f6!, forcing black to transfer to the game with 31 . . . gxf6, because after 31 . . . dxe4? 32.Bxf7! Qxa1 33.fxg7+ Kxg7 34.Be5+ Bf6 35.Qg5+ Kxf7 36.Qxf6+ Ke8 white wins with a pretty 37.Qe6 epaulet mate.) 30 . . . gxf6 (After 30 . . . Bxf6? 31.Nxf6 gxf6 32.Qf5! white wins.) 31.Kh2 d5? (Black cracks under pressure. He should have moved to the open g-file with 31 . . . Rg8!, for example 32.Qxf7 Rg7, beating back white's attack.)

32.Nxf6! Bxf6 33.d4!! (An amazing point of Topalov's combination. Suddenly, black is in dire straits,

unable to cope with 34.Bb1!, threatening 35.Qxh7 mate or 35.Rxa5 winning the black queen. Black's answer is forced, leading to white's material advantage.) 33...Qxa2 34.Rxa2 Nxd4 35.b4! (Winning the game is still not easy, but breaking black's connected passed pawns helps.) 35...Ne6 (After 35...cxb4 36.Be5! wins the knight.) 36.Be5 Bg7 37.bxc5 Rc8 (White ends up with a strong passed pawn since after 37...Nxc5? 38.Bxg7+ Kxg7 39.Qg4+ Kh6 40.Qf4+ Kg6 41.Qg3+ Kh6 [or 41...Kh5 42.Rf2 f5 43.Rf4 and mates] 42.Qe3+ black loses the knight.) 38.Bd6 Rfd8 39.Ra5 Kg8 40.Rxa6 Rd7 (After 40...Nxc5 41.Ra7! wins.) 41.Qxd5 Bf8 42.Qf3 Bxd6+ (After 42...Nxc5? 43.Bxc5 Bxc5 44.Qg4+ wins.) 43.cxd6 Rcd8 44.Qd5 Ng7 45.Ra8 Ne6 46.Rxd8+ Rxd8 47.g4 h6 48.h4 Rb8 49.Kg3 Re8 50.Kf3 Nf8 51.Qd2 (Black's only hope is to give up the knight for the d-pawn and create a fortress, for example 51...Ng6 52.Qxh6 Rd8 and now after 53.h5? Rxd6 54.hxg6 Rxg6 black draws. But after 53.Qd2! Nxh4+ 54.Ke4 Ng6 55.d7 white wins.) 51...Kg7 52.Qd4+ Kg8 53.Qf6 Re6 54.Qe7! (Disturbing black's defensive coordination.) 54...Kg7 55.Qc7 Kg8 56.d7 Nxd7 57.Qxd7 Kg7 58.Qd4+ Kg8 59.Kf4 Rg6 60.Kf5 Re6 61.Qd7 Rg6 62.h5 Rg5+ 63.Kf6 Kh8 64.Qe8+ Rg8 65.Kxf7 (The pawn endgame is lost.) Black resigned.

Burt Hochberg (1933-2006)

A brilliant editor and prolific writer, Burt Hochberg died on May 13 in New York at the age of 72. He edited the monthly periodical Chess Life during the golden age of American chess journalism from 1966 to 1979. His work "Title Chess," covering the 1972 U.S. championship, is one of the best tournament books. Hochberg edited "The 64-Square Looking Glass," a comprehensive anthology of chess in literature. He was also senior editor at the RHM Press chess publishing house and at Games magazine. He will be missed.

Solution to today's problem by W. Speckmann (White: Ke6, Nd8,P:e7; Black: Ke8,Nb2,P:b5): 1.Nb7 Nc4 2.Nc5 Nd6 3.Na6! b4 4.Nc7 mate

CHESS | Lubomir Kavalek

By {vbar} Lubomir Kavalek Monday, May 29, 2006; C12

After yesterday's seventh round, Armenia is the surprising leader at the 37th Chess Olympiad in Turin, Italy, scoring 21 points in 28 games. Russia, the favorite team to win the gold, has 20 points. On Saturday the Russians lost narrowly 1 1/2 -2 1/2 to the Dutch team. Cuba is third with 19 1/2 points. The U.S. team has 18 1/2 points and is still within medal reach. The olympiad concludes Sunday.

Fascinating Novelties

The classical world champion Vladimir Kramnik is healthy enough to anchor the Russian team. He scored four points in five games. His win in the Reti opening against the top Armenian grandmaster, Levon Aronian, is a positional masterpiece.

Kramnik-Aronian

1.Nf3 Nf6 2.c4 b6 3.g3 c5 4.Bg2 Bb7 5.0-0 g6 6.d4 cxd4 7.Qxd4 Bg7 8.Nc3 d6 9.Rd1 Nbd7 10.Be3 Rc8 11.Rac1 a6 12.b3 0-0 13.Qh4 Rc7 14.Bh3!? Qb8 15.Bg5! (A new move, increasing the pressure along the diagonal d8-h4, specifically on the knight on f6. Interestingly, the high scoring 15.g4!? was played in the game Aronian-Kramnik, St.Vincent 2005. It was drawn in 85 moves.) 15...Bxf3?! (Black tries to ease his defense by simplifying, but he is surrendering the light squares.) 16.exf3 b5 17.Bxd7 Rxd7 18.Nd5! (Creating a powerful outpost on the square c6.) 18...Nxd5 (Forced, since after 18...bxc4 19.Bxf6 Bxf6 20.Nxf6+ exf6 21.Qxc4 black's pawn structure is falling apart.) 19.cxd5 Rc7?! (After 19...Qb7 20.Rc6 the undermining of the rook on c6 with 20...e6!? is met with 21.Bf6! and white has a clear advantage, e.g. 21...exd5 22.Bxg7 Kxg7 [On 22...Qxc6 23.Qf6! wins.] 23.Qd4+ Kg8 and now either 24.Rb6 or 24.Qb6 is better for white.)

20.Rc6! (Kramnik keeps the pressure on. After 20.Bxe7 Re8! black buys some freedom for his pieces.) 20...Rxc6 21.dxc6 (Trading the outpost on c6 for a strong passed pawn that ties black up.) 21...Rc8 22.Rc1! e6 23.Bd2 Qc7 (The queen is a poor blocker, but white threatened 24.Ba5. After 23...Qb6 24.c7! seals white's advantage, for example 24...Bd4 25.Qe7! Bxf2+ 26.Kg2 Bc5 27.Bh6! and white wins.)

24.a4! (Undermining black's queenside pawns gives white new targets.) 24...d5 25.axb5 axb5 26.Qb4 (The white queen now infiltrates black's position via the a-file.) 26...Rb8 27.Qa3 Bd4 28.Qa6 Be5 (After 28...Rb6 29.Qa5! the pin is unpleasant and white threatens 29.Be3 Bxe3 30.fxe3 with the queen sacrifice on b6 in the air.) 29.f4 Bd6 30.Ba5 Qc8 31.Qa7 Ra8 32.Qb6 Rb8 33.Qd4! (Suddenly, black has problems on the diagonal a1-h8. White threatens 34.Bc3.) 33...b4?! 34.c7! Ra8 (After 34...Rb7 35.Qf6 Bxc7 36.Qe5! white wins a piece.) 35.Qb6 Bf8 36.Bxb4 Bxb4 37.Qxb4 Qe8 (After 38.Qb7 Rc8 39.b4 the b-pawn marches to victory.) Black resigned.

Last year Aronian won the World Cup and this year finished first in Linares, Spain. He is currently rated No. 3 in the world. Yesterday in Turin, he showed his great tactical skills, defeating the Dutch grandmaster Ivan Sokolov with the Nimzo-Indian defense in a mere 19 moves.

Sokolov-Aronian

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.Qc2 d5 5.cxd5 exd5 6.Bg5 c5 7.dxc5 h6 8.Bh4 g5 9. Bg3 Ne4 (I discovered this move order when I was preparing Nigel Short for his world championship match against Garry Kasparov in 1993. The idea is to play after 10.e3 Qa5!, eliminating 11.Bb5+.) 10.Bxb8?! (Based on 10...Rxb8? 11.Qa4+! and white wins a piece.)

10... Of6!! (A shocking novelty. The previously played 10... Bxc3+ 11.bxc3 Rxb8 12.Qa4+ Bd7 13.Qd4 0-0 14.f3 gave white an edge.) 11.Bg3 (A forced retreat. After 11.0-0-0 Bxc3 12.Bg3 Bf5 13.Qa4+ Kf8 14.Qb3 Bd4 white struggles. The wild 11.Qa4+?! Bd7 12.Qxb4 Qxf2+ 13.Kd1 Qxf1+ 14.Kc2 Qxa1 is dangerous for white, for example 15.Nxd5 Bf5 16.Qd4 Nxc5+ 17.Kc3 0-0 18.Ne7+ Kh7 19.Nxf5 Oc1+ 20.Kb4 Ne6 21.Of6?! a5+! 22.Kb3 a4+ 23.Ka3 Oc5+ and black's attack wins; or 15.Qxb7 Nxc3 16.Bd6 Qd1+ 17.Kxc3 d4+ 18.Kc4 Rc8 and black should win.) 11...Nxc3 12.a3 Bf5 13.Qd2 Ba5 14.b4? (Loses quickly. White had to try either 14.Nf3 Nb1 15.Qxa5 Qxb2 16.Qa4+ Bd7 17.Be5 Nc3 18.Qd1 Nxd1 19.Bxb2 Nxb2 20.e3; or14.e3 0-0! [Not 14...Nb1? 15.Qxa5 Qxb2 16.Qb5+ and white wins.] 15.b4 Ne4 16.Qd4!) 14...Ne4 15.Qc1 Rc8! (An incredibly powerful move, threatening 16...Rxc5.) 16.Ra2 (After 16.bxa5 Rxc5 the white gueen is overloaded and black wins. But it is too late for white anyway, for example 16.Nf3 Rxc5 17.Be5 Rxc1+ 18.Rxc1 Qb6 wins; or 16.f3 Rxc5 17.fxe4 Rxc1+ 18.Rxc1 Qb2 19.Rd1 Qc3+ 20.Rd2 Bb6 21.exf5 Be3 22.Nf3 g4 23.Be5 Bxd2+ 24.Nxd2 Qxe5 wins for black.) 16...Rxc5 17.Qa1 Qc6! (White can't defend well against the mating threats on the first rank.) 18.Qe5+ Kd8 19.Qxh8+ (After 19.Rd2 Re8 wins.) 19...Kd7 (White gets mated either after 20.Rd2 Rc1+ 21.Rd1 Qc2 22.Qd4 Rxd1+ 23.Qxd1 Qc3+ 24.Qd2 Qxd2 mate; or after 20.e3 Rc1+21.Ke2 Bg4+! 22.f3 Qc4 mate.) White resigned.

Solution to today's composition by A. Gurvitch (White: Kb1,Rg1,Bg5,Na4; Black: Ka3,Rc4,Na7,P:a6,b3,b7): 1.Nb2! Re4 (Or 1...Rc7 2.Bf4 Rd7 3.Bd6+! Rxd6 4.Nc4+ wins.) 2.Be3! Nc6 (Or 2...Rxe3 3.Nc4+ wins.) 3.Bc5+ Nb4 4.Nd3 a5 5.Bxb4+ axb4 6.Rg8 Re6 7.Ra8+ Ra6 8.Rxa6+ bxa6 9.Nb2 a5 10.Ka1 a4 11.Nc4 mate.

CHESSLubomir Kavalek

By Lubomir Kavalek Monday, June 5, 2006; C10

The United States has taken home another bronze medal this year from Turin, Italy, this time at the 37th Chess Olympiad. With yesterday's dramatic last-round victory, defeating Norway 3 1/2 - 1/2, the U.S. team jumped into a tie for third with Israel, then clinched the bronze with a better tiebreak. Armenia secured the gold medals among 148 teams with a fabulous performance, scoring 36 points in 52 games.

China won the silver medals with 34 points. The Americans and the Israelis finished with 33 points each. Russia, a pre-olympiad favorite to win the gold, ended sixth with 32 points.

Levon Aronian anchored the golden Armenian team with a solid 7-4 performance. But the contribution of Gabriel Sargissian, who amassed a 10-3 score on the fourth board, and Vladimir Akopian's 9-3 result on the second board played huge roles in their victory. U.S. champion Alexander Onischuk's 7-3 and Gregory Kaidanov's 5-2 were the best performances on the U.S. team.

Ukraine took gold in the women's olympiad, scoring 29 1/2 points in 39 games. Russia was second with 28 points, and China third with 27 1/2 points. The U.S. team collected 23 1/2 points and finished fourth with a better tiebreak over Hungary, Georgia and the Netherlands.

On Friday at the FIDE Congress, Kirsan Ilyumzhinov was reelected as president of international chess federation for the next four years.

Magnificent Leaps

In his 1997 book "C.O.O.L. Chess," the Scottish grandmaster Paul Motwani refuted one variation of the Philidor defense with a marvelous knight leap, accelerating white's attack against the black king. His idea appeared in a game played this year in the traditional open tournament at the French coastal town of Cappelle la Grande.

Pavlovic-Van Dooren

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 f5?! 4.Nc3 fxe4 5.Nxe4 d5 6.Neg5! h6 (This move was supposed to save black.) 7.Nf7!! (Motwani's discovery. The fork gains white time for the attack on the weak light squares.) 7...Kxf7 8.Nxe5+ Ke7 9.Bd3! (White continues the attack against the black king with a strong developing move. Black is in a worse predicament than Kasparov in the last game loss against Deep Blue in 1997. The materialistic 9.Ng6+ can wait.) 9...Qe8 10.0-0 Be6 11.Re1 Nc6 (After 11...Nf6 white finally gets the rook 12.Ng6+ Kf7 13.Nxh8+ Kg8 14.Ng6 and wins.) 12.Ng6+ Kd7 13.Nf4! Bd6 (After 13...Nd8 14.Nxe6 Nxe6 15.Bf5 wins.) 14.Nxe6 Qf7 15.Qg4 (After 15...Nge7 16.Ng5+ wins the queen; and after 15...Nf6 16.Nc5+ Kd8 17.Nxb7 mates.) Black resigned.

In Turin, Motwani's fabulous knight jump came to life again, but in a different opening. Aronian performed it in the Queen's Indian defense, and his version was as shocking as the original. His victim was David Navara, who played well overall, scoring 8 1/2 -3 1/2 on the top board for the Czech Republic.

Aronian-Navara

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 b6 4.g3 Bb7 5.Bg2 Be7 6.Nc3 Ne4 7.Bd2 (The Opocensky variation. White begins to fight for the central squares immediately.) 7...f5 8.Qc2 Bf6 (The legendary Soviet grandmaster Efim Geller recommended 8...Nxc3 9.Bxc3 d5, but it was never tested.) 9.Ne5 d5 (A new try. After 9...Nd6 10.Bxb7 Nxb7 11.Nf3 black surrenders the center.) 10.cxd5 Nxc3?! (Black could have played 10...exd5 11.Qa4+ c6 with a good chance to equalize.)

11.Nf7!! (Unlike the Motwani's sacrifice that targeted the black king, Aronian's amazing knight leap intends to win material. Black can't accepts the knight with 11...Kxf7, because white wins with 12.dxe6+ and 13.Bxb7.) 11...Qd7? (Navara is going astray. Protecting the bishop on b7 with 11...Qc8! is the right answer, forcing 12.Nxh8 and now 12...Bxd5 13.Bxd5 Nxd5 14.e4 fxe4 15.Qxe4 g6 16.h4! Bxh8 17.h5 gxh5 18.Qxh7 Bxd4 19.0-0-0 gives white the edge. But 12...Nxd5!? 13.e4 Ne7 is not entirely clear, for example 14.Bc3 Kf8! 15.f3 Kg8 and the black king picks up the knight on h8 without creating weaknesses on the kingside.) 12.Bxc3 Bxd5 (Black still can't touch the knight because of 13.dxe6 and white wins.) 13.Bxd5 Qxd5 14.e4! (Blocking the diagonal a8-h1 gives white time to collect the rook.) 14...fxe4 15.Nxh8 Nc6 16.0-0 Ke7 17.Rae1 Rxh8 18.Rxe4 Rd8 (Navara wants to protect the pawn on e6 from the square d6, but it leaves his kingside vulnerable. After 18...Kd7 19.Rfe1 Re8 20.Qe2 black is tied up.) 19.Rfe1 Rd6 20.Rf4 g6 (Giving white a target to attack. Black could have considered running with the king: 20...Kd7 21.Qxh7 Kc8 although after 22.a4 white has a clear advantage.) 21.h4! Rd7 (Black wants to free the knight on c6 by protecting the pawn on c7, but it is too late. His kingside collapses.) 22.h5! Bxd4 (After 22...Qxh5 23.d5! wins. And after 22...Nxd4 23.Bxd4 Bxd4 24.hxg6 hxg6 25.Qxg6 c5 26.b4! the black king has nowhere to hide from white's heavy artillery.) 23.hxg6 hxg6 24.Qxg6 Ne5 (Loses outright, but after 24...Kd6 25.Bxd4 Nxd4 26.Rxd4! Qxd4 27.Qxe6+ Kc5 28.Re5+ Rd5 29.b4+ Kc4 30.Re4 white wins.) 25.0f6+ (After 25...Kd6 26.Rxd4 wins the gueen and on 25...Ke8 26.Qf8 mates.) Black resigned.

Solution to today's problem by W. Speckmann (White: Ka7,Qa3,Rd8,Nc3,P:a4; Black: Kc6,Rh5,P:a6,c7,g3): 1.Qc1! Rc5 2.Qh6 mate; or 1...Rh2 2.Ne2 mate; or 1...Rh1 2.Nd1 mate; or 1...Kc5 2.Na2 mate; or 1...Rh4 2.Ne4 mate; or 1...g2 2.Nd5 mate.

CHESS Lubomir Kavalek

By Lubomir Kavalek Monday, June 12, 2006; C12

The United States has participated in 33 chess olympiads, winning five gold, five silver and seven bronze medals. The team dominated the event in the 1930s, finishing first four times. The legendary U.S. champion Frank Marshall was the only player from that marvelous run to win four golds. The youngest U.S. player ever was Bobby Fischer. At age 17, he anchored the U.S. team at the 1960 olympiad in the German city of Leipzig.

Yasser Seirawan was the most active grandmaster, playing in 10 olympiads. I took part in seven olympiads and ended with six medals, one gold and five bronzes -- the most team medals by any of the 58 players who represented this country throughout the years.

A Gritty Performance

Hard work, good fortune and excellent team effort helped the United States finish third at the recent 37th Chess Olympiad in Turin, Italy, according to John Donaldson, the team captain. With a good blend of young talent and experienced players, the team fought vigorously for every point. Only one of their decisive games concluded before move 30. Gata Kamsky performed solidly at the helm, coming to Turin straight from his success in the M-Tel Masters in Sofia. The U.S. champion Alexander Onischuk was the only undefeated player with a great performance rating of 2743, the 15th best of the olympiad. Hikaru Nakamura's three wins in his last three games helped the team down the stretch. Gregory Kaidanov's punching power was indispensable. Kamsky, Ildar Ibragimov and Varuzhan Akobian unselfishly took a heavy load of the black pieces. The individual scores of the U.S. team were: Kamsky 5 1/2 -4 1/2, Onischuk 7-3, Nakamura 7-4, Ibragimov 4-3, Kaidanov 5-2 and Akobian 4 1/2 -2 1/2.

In his victory against the former European champion, Bartlomiej Macieja of Poland, Nakamura chose a sharp pawn sacrifice in the Classical French brought into tournament play last year by the Russian wizard Alexander Morozevich. Playing in his first olympiad, the 18-year-old former U.S. champion increased the pressure with every move until it became unbearable for the Pole.

Macieja-Nakamura

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.e5 Nfd7 5.f4 c5 6.Nf3 Nc6 7.Be3 a6 8.Qd2 b5 9.a3 g5?! (Morozevich's fantasy, introduced in his blindfold game against Vishy Anand in Monaco last year. Black sacrifices a pawn to control the dark squares.)

10.Nxg5?! (Macieja grabs the pawn, ready to defend. Giving up the center with 10.fxg5 cxd4 11.Nxd4 Ncxe5 produced excellent results for white after 12.Bd3!. For example, the game Kosintseva-Zatonskih, played at the women's olympiad in Turin, ended with fireworks: 12...Nxd3+ 13.cxd3 Ne5 14.0-0 Bg7 15.Nce2 Ng4 16.Ng3 Qd6 17.Rae1 0-0 18.Kh1 Nxe3 19.Qxe3 Qb6 20.Rf6! Bxf6 21.gxf6 Kh8 22.Qh6 Rg8 23.Nf3 Bb7 24.Ng5 Rxg5 25.Qxg5 Rg8 26.Qe5 b4 27.d4 bxa3 28.bxa3 Bc6 29.Qd6 Qa5 30.Rxe6! fxe6 31.Qe5 Qxa3 32.f7+ Rg7 33.Qb8+ and black resigned.) 10...cxd4 11.Bxd4 Nxd4 12.Qxd4 Bc5 13.Qd2 Qb6!? (Black is securing the domination on the dark squares and keeps the white king in the middle, since 14.0-0-0 loses to 14...Be3.) 14.Nd1 f6! (Nakamura is opening the game for his bishops and rooks by undermining the center.) 15.exf6 Nxf6 16.Bd3 0-0 17.Rf1 Ra7! (The rook not only defends the seventh rank, but reinforces black's

offensive.)

18.Nf3 Ng4! (Winning the fight for the square e3, the knight also helps open up the position with 19...e5!) 19.g3 e5! 20.fxe5 (After 20.Nxe5 Re7 21.Qe2 Nxe5 22.fxe5 Rxf1+ 23.Kxf1 Bh3+ 24.Ke1 Bd4, all black's pieces join the attack.) 20...Ne3 (20...Re7 is met by 21.Be2, attacking the pawn on d5.) 21.Nxe3 Bxe3 22.Qg2 (After 22.Qe2 Bh3 23.Rh1 Raf7 black wins.) 22...Raf7 23.g4 Kh8 24.Rd1 d4 25.Nd2 (After 25.Ke2 black can easily break the blockade with 25...Rf4 26.h3 Bb7 27.Bf5 Qc6!, threatening 28...R4xf5 29.gxf5 Qxc2+.)

25...Bf2+ (Winning the queen, but keeping the pressure on with 25...Qh6! 26.Rxf7 Rxf7 27.Nf3 Qf4 28.Be2 Bxg4 was even stronger.) 26.Rxf2 Rxf2 27.Qxf2 (27.Qg3 is met by 27...Qh6.) 27...Rxf2 28.Kxf2 Qh6 29.Nf1?! (White should have tried to build a fortress with 29.Nf3 Bxg4 30.Rf1, making it more difficult for black to break through.) 29...Qh4+ 30.Ng3 Bxg4 31.Rh1 Qg5 32.Nf1 Qf4+ 33.Ke1 (After 33.Kg1 Bh3 34.b4 [On 34.Ng3 Qe3 mates.] 34...Qf3! and black wins.) 33...Qxe5+ 34.Kf2 Qf4+ 35.Ke1 Qc1+ 36.Kf2 Bd1! (Picking up the queenside with 36...Qxb2 was also fine.) 37.Ng3 Qd2+ (Black also wins with 37...Qe3+ 38.Kf1 Bg4, threatening 39...Bh3 mate.) 38.Ne2 Bxc2 39.Bxc2 Qxc2 40.Rc1 Qf5+ (After 41.Ke1 Qe4, advancing the passed d-pawn decides.) White resigned.

The women's olympiads began in 1957 and were dominated by the Soviets, Georgians and lately by the Chinese team. The U.S. women gained one medal, winning the silver two years ago in Calvia, Spain. This month in Turin, the U.S. women's team finished fourth with the following individual scores: Anna Zatonskih 5-6, Irina Krush 8-3, Rusudan Goletiani 8 1/2 -3 1/2, Camilla Baginskaite 3-2. Yury Shulman was the team captain.

Solution to today's study by L. Kubbel (White: Kc6,Ba8,P:g6,h6; Black: Kh8,Bg2,P:e4,g7): 1.Kd6! gxh6 (Not 1...e3? 2.Ke7! Kg8 3.Bxg2 gxh6 4.Kf6! and white wins.) 2.Ke5 e3 3.Bxg2 e2 4.Kf6 e1Q 5.g7+ Kh7! 6.Be4+ Qxe4 7.g8Q+! Kxg8 stalemate.

CHESS Lubomir Kavalek

By Lubomir Kavalek Monday, June 19, 2006; C12

The world champion Vladimir Kramnik stormed the 37th chess olympiad in Turin, Italy, achieving a performance rating of 2847, the best of all players. The Russian grandmaster is still under treatment for a rare form of arthritis, but returning to the chess board in such good form after a six-month hiatus must be encouraging for him. Kramnik will face the FIDE world champion Veselin Topalov of Bulgaria in a unifying world championship match in September in Elista, Russia.

Kramnik's great result did not prevent the Russian team from slipping to sixth place, the worst result of any Soviet or Russian team since 1952, when they began participating in the chess olympiads. For the first time Russia failed to win an olympic medal.

Young Stars

With its hectic schedule, the chess olympiad is well suited for energetic young players. The fabulous result of the Chinese grandmaster Wang Yue, 20, who amassed 10 points in 12 games, helped China to win the silver.

Two prodigies, the 15-year-old Magnus Carlsen of Norway and Ukraine's Sergei Karjakin, 16, were among the top five performers.

The Czech grandmaster David Navara, 22, booked eight important victories for his country on the top board, defeating, among others, Peter Svidler of Russia and Alexander Beliavsky of Slovenia. Navara's win against Ilya Smirin of Israel is a masterpiece of efficiency. Black goes under in the Chigorin variation of the Spanish without making a significant blunder. Interestingly, both grandmasters play for the same team in the Czech national team competition.

Navara-Smirin

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 Be7 6.Re1 b5 7.Bb3 d6 8.c3 0-0 9.h3 Na5 10.Bc2 c5 11.d4 Qc7 12.Nbd2 (The main move in the Chigorin variation of the Spanish.) 12...cxd4 13.cxd4 Rd8 (A cunning move, anticipating 14.Nf1. The idea worked in the game Tal-Balashov, Leningrad 1977, where after 14.Nf1 black was able to strike in the center with 14...exd4 15.Nxd4 d5!? 16.e5 Ne4. Tal did not find anything better than returning with 17.Nd2, but now 17...Bc5 would have given black the edge. Chasing the black knight with 17.f3 runs into a promising piece sacrifice 17...Bc5.)

14.b3!? (White gets his dark bishop on the long diagonal a1-h8, while his knight on d2 still supports the center. It first appeared in the game Kavalek-Balashov, Tilburg 1977, played a few months after the Tal-Balashov game. In those days it was still possible to create an opening novelty at the chessboard.) 14...Nc6 (Black had to do something against a positional threat 15.d5, severely restricting the knight at the edge of the board. Opening up the center with 14...{dagger}d5 backfires, because white simply keeps the pressure on with 15.Bb2!, for example 15...dxe4 16.Rc1! Qb6 17.Nxe4 and black has problems, since after 17...Nc6 18.Nxf6+ Bxf6 19.Qe2! white is clearly better; and after 17...exd4?! 18.Bxd4 Qb8 19.Nxf6+ Bxf6 20.Qd3 g6 21.Bxf6! white wins.) 15.Bb2 Qb6 (Surrendering the center 15...exd4 16.Nxd4 Nxd4 17.Bxd4 Be6 18.Rc1 Qa5 gives white the advantage after either 19.Bb1 or 19.Nf1.) 16.Nf1 Bb7 17.Ne3 g6?! (As a King's Indian player Smirin would like to see his dark bishop on the long diagonal a1-h8, but his move weakens the dark squares. He could have played 17...Bf8 first. In the game Zhigalko-Avrukh, Saint Vincent 2005, black solved his problems with 17...Rac8 18.d5 Nb4 19.Bb1 a5 with a good play on the queenside. Striking in the

center 17...Nb4 18.Bb1 d5?! gives white a more attractive position after 19.Nf5!) 18.Qd2!? (The queen controls the square b4 and white plans 19.d5, followed by 20.a4.) 18...Bf8 19.Nd5!? (Navara is changing plans on the fly. Smirin probably would not mind to have the center closed, although after 19.d5 Ne7 20.a4 Bh6 21.Bd3 white's pressure on the queenside is noticeable.) 19...Nxd5 20.exd5 Nxd4? (This natural move is a decisive mistake. Black's only chance to stay in the game is 20...Ne7, although defending after 21.dxe5 is not easy.

For example, after 21...dxe5 22.Nxe5 Bg7 Navara contemplated spectacular sacrifices 23.Nxf7! Bxb2 24.Rxe7 Bxa1 25.d6!! [25.Nxd8 Rxd8 26.Qh6 Bxd5 27.Qxh7+ Kf8 28.Rc7 Qf6 29.Qh6+ Kg8 30.Qh7+ only leads to a draw.] and retreating black's dark bishop fails either after 25...Bf6 26.Nh6+ Kh8 27.Bxg6! hxg6 28.Nf5! g5 29.Qe2!, threatening 30.Qh5+; or after 25...Bg7 26.b4! Rdc8 [After 26...Qc6 27.Be4! Qxe4 28.Rxe4 Bxe4 29.Nxd8 Rxd8 30.Qe3 Bf5 31.g4 white should win.] 27.Bb3 Rc4 28.Bxc4 bxc4 29.Nh6+ Kh8 30.d7 and white wins. After 25.d6!! black would have to defend with 25...Re8! 26.Nh6+ Kh8 27.Qe1 Rxe7 28.dxe7 Kg7 29.Ng4 Bd4 30.e8Q Rxe8 31.Qxe8 Qc7! with some chances to equalize.)

21.Nxd4 exd4 22.Bxd4 Qc7 23.Rac1! Qb8 (The black queen does not have a good square to hide on. After 23...Qd7 24.Qg5!, threatening 26.Qf6, decides either after 24...Bg7 25.Bxg7 Kxg7 26.Re7; or after 24...f5 25.Qf6 Bg7 26.Qxg7+ Qxg7 27.Bxg7 Kxg7 28.Re7+ winning a piece.) 24.Qf4! Bg7 25.Bxg7 Kxg7 26.Re7 Rf8 27.Be4 (Threatening 28.Rcc7, to get the hogs on the seventh rank.) Black resigned.

Solution to today's problem -- mate in three -- by V. Novikov (White: Kg8,Rd5,P:d7; Black: Ke6): 1.d8R! Ke7 2.R8d6 Ke8 3.Re6 mate; or 1...Kf6 2.Re8 Kg6 3.Re6 mate.

CHESS Lubomir Kavalek

By Lubomir Kavalek Monday, June 26, 2006; C11

The National Open in Las Vegas, played June 15-19, was the first of several major chess tournaments in the United States this summer. It ended in a five-way tie for first place among grandmasters Alek Wojtkiewicz of Maryland, Varuzhan Akobian of California and three foreigners, Nikola Mitkov of Macedonia, Merab Gagunashvili of Georgia and Lubomir Ftacnik of Slovakia. They scored five points in seven games, but Wojtkiewicz won the Edmondson trophy with the best tiebreak.

Swift Punishment

The Israeli grandmaster Victor Mikhalevski finished a half-point behind the winners. His best game was an instructive victory against a New Hampshire junior, Joshua Friedel. Black plays the Ben-Oni defense and the game turns out badly for him after he grabs a poisoned central pawn. White mounts a strong pressure against the black king on the open e-file and breaks through with a powerful exchange sacrifice.

Mikhalevski-Friedel

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.g3 c5 4.d5 exd5 5.cxd5 b5 (The right moment to expand on the queenside.) 6.Bg2 d6 7.e4 (Mikhalevski is shying away from a gambit play 7.b4 cxb4 8.a3 he preferred in the past.) 7...Qe7?! (Securing the queenside with 7...Nbd7 8.f4 Rb8 is more solid.) 8.Ne2! (A novelty, ignoring black's threat. For a mere pawn white brings most of his forces quickly into play.) 8...Nxe4? (Black does not show any respect and snatches the central pawn, but it is an extremely risky decision.) 9.0-0! Nf6 (The threat of 10.Re1 is forcing black to clear the e-file in a hurry.) 10.Re1 Qb7 (Black managed to protect everything, but his king is vulnerable.)

11.Nd4+! (The correct discovered check, allowing the knight to descend on the square c6.) 11...Be7 12.Bf4! (Developing with a tempo, since 12...cxd4 is met by 13.Bxd6 and white wins.) 12...Kf8?! (Black makes this strange king move because after 12...0-0 13.Nc6! Nxc6 14.dxc6 Qc7 15.Nc3 Ba6 16.Rxe7 Qxe7 17.Bxd6, white wins the pawn back with an edge. But leaving the king in the middle is dangerous, and black never attains harmony between his rooks.) 13.Nc6! Nxc6 14.dxc6 Qc7 15.Nc3 a6 16.Nd5 Nxd5 17.Qxd5 (White threatens 18.Rxe7! Kxe7 19.Re1+ Be6 20.Bh3 Kd8 21.Rxe6! fxe6 22.Bxe6 and the black king is in a mating net.) 17...Be6 (Black's last hope.)

18.Rxe6! (With the help of this exchange sacrifice, white smashes his way through, dominating on the light squares.) 18...fxe6 19.Qxe6 Qc8 (The strength of white's attack is clear in the variation 19...g5 20.Bd5 Ke8 21.Bxg5 Kd8 22.Bxe7+ Qxe7 23.c7+! Qxc7 24.Qf6+ Kd7 25.Qg7+ and white wins. After 19...Rd8 20.Re1 Bf6 21.Bd5 Qe7, white wins with 22.c7! Qxc7 23.Bxd6+! Qxd6 24.Qf7 mate.) 20.Qd5 Ra7 (After 20...Qc7 white also plays 21.Re1!) 21.Re1! (The last piece joins the attack.) 21...Qd8 (After 21...g6 22.Bh6+ Ke8 23.Qxd6 Qc7 24.Rxe7+ Qxe7 25.Qb8+ Qd8 [or 25...Kf7 26.Bd5+] 26.Qe5+! Kf7 27.Bd5+ wins.) 22.Qe6 (Threatening to wrap up the game with 23.Bd5.) 22...g6 23.Bh6+ Ke8 24.Bd5 Qa5 25.Bg7 (White gains material, but the pawn jab 25.b4! wins more elegantly either after 25...cxb4 26.Qf6! or after 25...Qxb4 26.Qc8 mate.) Black resigned.

The Dutch King

The Dutch publisher New In Chess has issued two fascinating books. The first is an expanded English edition of Jan Hein Donner's acclaimed masterpiece "The King." The late Dutch

grandmaster was a brilliant, amusing, provoking and self-mocking author, a master of verbal hyperboles and shortcuts. Summing up Boris Spassky's predicament during the 1972 world championship match against Bobby Fischer, Donner simply wrote: "Last night, I dreamt I was Spassky and I woke up bathed in sweat." The line "Fighting has flared up once again between the Soviet Union and Ludek Pachman" immediately evokes a powerful image about a courageous and hopeless fight of a Czech grandmaster against a totalitarian regime. Donner had great influence on many Dutch chess writers, and two of them, Tim Krabbe and Max Pam, selected articles from Donner's writing for this magnificent volume.

A chapter on Donner is the finest piece in Genna Sosonko's new work "Smart Chip From St. Petersburg." Sosonko calls it "Hein." "You know all the great men in history were known by just their first name -- Rembrandt, Leonardo, Michelangelo," Donner told him and added with laughter: "When I die, they'll call me Hein, just Hein, and everyone will know who they mean." Sosonko expands his writing with remarkable essays on fame, sleep and religion. Both books are a wonderful read.

Delaune Honored

The Delaune Memorial, a five-round Swiss event in memory of International Master and four-time Virginia champion Richard Delaune, was played June 16-18 in Springfield. GM Joel Benjamin, IM Larry Kaufman, FM Thomas Bartell, FM Dov Gorman and Boris Privman shared first place, scoring four points. Benjamin, Delaune's good friend, had the best tiebreak. William Marcelino won the Under 2200 section with 4 1/2 points.

Solution to today's study by H. Rinck (White: Kf6, Ra2,Rf1; Black: Kg8,Qe8): 1.Rg2+ Kf8 2.Kg5+ Kg7 3.Kf4+ Kf6 4.Kg3+ Kg5 5.Kf2+ Kf4 6.Kg1+ Ke3 7.Re1+ wins.

CHESS Lubomir Kavalek

By Lubomir Kavalek Monday, July 3, 2006; C12

Sergei Rublevsky has been undergoing an unbelievable metamorphosis -- from a terrible team player, largely blamed for Russia's failure at the 37th Chess Olympiad in Turin, Italy, to a spectacular winner of the elite Aerosvit tournament in Foros, Ukraine, which finished last week. The Russian champion scored 7 1/2 points in 11 games, edging out the top-rated Ukrainian veteran Vassily Ivanchuk by half a point. Other grandmasters finished as follows: Viktor Bologan of Moldova, 6 1/2 points;

Shakhriyar Mamedyarov of Azerbaijan, Alexei Shirov of Spain and Alexander Grischuk of Russia, 6 points; Ukraine's Alexander Areshchenko and Romania's Liviu-Dieter Nisipeanu, 5 points; Ruslan Ponomariov and Sergei Karjakin, both of Ukraine, 4 1/2 points; Ukraine's Andrei Volokitin and India's Pentala Harikrishna, 4 points.

Creative Force

The tournament in Foros did not start well for Rublevsky. He was smashed in the first round by the two-time world junior champion Mamedyarov, 21, one of the most creative young grandmasters in the world. Rublevsky has a narrow but well-prepared opening repertoire, hard to rattle. Mamedyarov enjoys razor-sharp openings where his skill in creating spectacular combinations flourishes. The Azerbaijani won the theoretical skirmish in the Four Knights opening and took down the Russian champion with aggressive play. His fine victory was awarded the best game of the tournament.

Rublevsky-Mamedyarov

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bb5 Nd4 5.Ba4 c6 (Developing the bishop 5...Bc5 has been the main line in the Rubinstein variation of the Four Knights. Mamedyarov's move, preparing a central strike, has some venom. It was first played a century ago by the American champion Frank Marshall. A few years later, the move appeared in the game Abonyi-Hromadka, Prague 1908, bringing black swift victory after 5...c6 6.0-0?! Bc5 7.Nxe5 d6 8.Nd3 Bg4 9.Qe1 Nf3+! 10.gxf3 Bxf3 11.e5 0-0 12.exd6 Ng4 13.Qe7 Bxd6 and white resigned, since he is mated.) 6.Nxe5 d5!? (Rubinstein, who did not mind shedding both central pawns in this opening, would be delighted with this choice, accelerating the assault on white's center. It is more aggressive than 6...d6 7.Nf3 Bg4.) 7.d3 (White has to be careful not to open the game for black. For example, in the game Osman-Glodeanu, Bucharest 2001, after 7.exd5? Bd6 8.Nc4 b5 9.Nxd6+ Qxd6 10.Bb3 0-0 11.0-0 Re8! 12.d3, black quickly created decisive threats with 12...Ng4 13.g3 Ne5! and after 14.f4 Nef3+ 15.Rxf3 Re1+! soon won.) 7...Bd6 8.f4?! (Weakening the diagonal g1-a7. Retreating with 8.Nf3 is safer, although after 8...Nxf3+ 9.gxf3 [9.Qxf3 d4! wins for black] 0-0, black has a good play for the pawn.)

8...Bc5!? (Preventing white's castling, black makes sure the white king stays in the middle.) 9.exd5 0-0 10.Ne4!? (White is trying desperately to plug the holes in his position. After grabbing more pawns 10.dxc6 bxc6 11.Nxc6 Nxc6 12.Bxc6 Bg4 13.Qd2 Rc8 14.Bb5 Nd5! the white king is in trouble.) 10...Nxe4 11.dxe4 Qh4+! (Sending the queen on a rampage.) 12.g3 (Forced, since 12.Kf1 can be met by 12...Nb3!? 13.Nd3 Nxa1 14.Nxc5 cxd5 with black's advantage.) 12...Qh3 13.Be3

(Allowing the queen to walk in to do some damage. Preventing it with 13.Qd2 runs into 13...f6 14.c3 fxe5 15.cxd4 exf4!! with a dangerous attack, e.g. 16.gxf4 Qf3!; or 16.dxc5 fxg3 wins for black.) 13...Qg2 14.Rg1 Qxe4 15.Kf2 (The tide is turning against white, and Mamedyarov increases the pressure with his next move.)

15...Re8! (Black is preparing an exchange sacrifice, threatening to eliminate the knight on e5 to gain control of the light squares, for example after 16.c3 Rxe5! 17.fxe5 Bg4!) 16.Qd3 (After 16.dxc6 black simply plays 16...bxc6, keeping his threats intact. The next 10 moves are rather forced, leading to a winning position for black.) 16...Rxe5! 17.fxe5 Qf3+ 18.Ke1 Bf5 (Black develops with tempo. White is in dire straits.) 19.Rf1 Bb4+! 20.c3 Bxd3 21.Rxf3 Nxf3+ 22.Kf2 Nxh2 23.cxb4 Ng4+ 24.Kf3 Nxe5+ 25.Kf4 Ng6+ 26.Kf3 cxd5 (The smoke clears and black is two pawns up.) 27.Rc1 Ne5+ 28.Kf4 Ng6+ 29.Kf3 b5 30.Bb3 Bc4 31.Bc2 Ne5+ 32.Kf4 f6 33.Rd1 (White could have peacefully resigned. Mamedyarov brings the point home easily.) 33...Bxa2!? (Snatching another pawn leaves white hopeless. Another way to win was 33...g5+! 34.Kf5 Re8, threatening 35...Be2.) 34.b3 Rc8 35.Bc5 a5! 36.Bf5 Bxb3 37.Rb1 Bc2! (A beautiful deflection.) 38.Be6+ (After 38.Bxc2 axb4, black wins one of the bishops.) 38...Kh8 39.Ra1 Re8 40.bxa5 Nd3+ 41.Kf3 Nxc5 42.Bxd5 b4 43.a6 Nxa6 (After 44.Rxa6 Rb8 the b-pawn runs for the touchdown.) White resigned.

Kamsky Wins

The Mayor's Cup, a six-grandmaster double-round rapid event, finished last week at the New York Athletic Club with Gata Kamsky's victory. The top-rated American scored 6 1/2 points in 10 games. Susan Polgar was second with 6 points. The U.S. champion Alexander Onischuk ended with 5 1/2 points. The last three players were Boris Gulko with 5 points, Ildar Ibragimov with 4 points and Alex Stripunsky with 3 points.

Solution to today's two-mover by Z. Mach (White: Ke1,Qe8,Rf4,Rh6,Be3; Black: Kd5,Rf6): 1.Bb6! Rxh6 (or 1...Kd6) 2.Rd4 mate; or 1...Rxf4 2.Qe6 mate; or 1...Rxb6 2.Qh5 mate.

CHESS Lubomir Kavalek

By <u>Lubomir Kavalek</u> Monday, July 10, 2006; Page C10

Gata Kamsky won the 34th World Open in Philadelphia on Independence Day.

The premier American open tournament attracted nearly 1,500 players, participating in several sections. The open section, with 235 players, ended in a massive nine-way tie for first place among grandmasters Kamsky, Vadim Milov, Ildar Ibragimov, Jaan Ehlvest, Leonid Yudasin, Alexander Ivanov, Giorgi Kacheishvili, Aleks Wojtkiewicz and Joel Benjamin. They scored seven points in nine games, but Kamsky and Milov had the best tiebreakers. Their playoff blitz game ended in Kamsky's victory.

Testing the Legends

Nearly half a century ago, the legendary American grandmaster Sammy Reshevsky came up with a new plan for black in the Dragon Sicilian. He left his king in the center, expanded on the queenside and prevented white's usual activities on the opposite wing. The world champion Mikhail Botvinnik took note of his former rival's idea and a few years later tried to improve on it. It turned out that Reshevsky read the position better.

However, his plan suffered a setback last week at the World Open in the game between the Brazilian grandmaster Giovanni Vescovi and the American grandmaster Sergei Kudrin. White moved his heavy pieces on the central files, threatening to bust the game open and forcing the black king to hide on the kingside. The Brazilian finished the game with a powerful attack.

Vescovi-Kudrin

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 g6 6.Be3 Bg7 7.f3 a6 8.Bc4 b5 9.Bb3 Bb7 10.Qd2 h5!? (Killing two birds with one stone, black prevents white's bayonet attack g2-g4 and the exchange of the dark bishops with Be3-h6. It was played by Reshevsky in his match against Arthur Bisguier in New York in 1957. Botvinnik later tried 10...Nbd7?!, allowing the unpleasant 11.Bh6! that weakens black's dark squares on the kingside.) 11.0-0-0 (Bisguier chose 11.a4 and later castled short, but moving the king to the other wing is more logical.) 11...Nbd7 12.a3!? (White tries to preserve his light bishop: After 12...Nc5 he simply moves away with 13.Ba2.) 12...Rc8 13.Kb1 Ne5 14.Rhe1 (Preparing 15.f4, white is ready to open the central files on the black king.) 14...0-0 (The king escapes the central assault but is not safe on the kingside either. After 14...Nc4 15.Bxc4 Rxc4 white has 16.e5 dxe5 17.Ne6!? Qxd2 18.Nxg7+ Kf8 19.Ne6+ fxe6 20.Rxd2 with a slight edge.)

15.Bh6! (Shifting the battle to the kingside.) 15...Bxh6 16.Qxh6 Rxc3?! (The threat 17.f4 was looming, and Kudrin did not hesitate to give up an exchange. It is a typical sacrifice in the Dragon to get counterplay, but it does not quite work in this position because the black king is too vulnerable.) 17.bxc3 (Simple and good. The fancy leap 17.Ne6!? seems to favor white after 17...fxe6 18.Bxe6+Rf7 [or 18...Nf7 19.e5!] 19.f4!, for example 19...Qf8 20.Qxf8+ Kxf8 21.fxe5 Nxe4 22.exd6 exd6 23.Bxf7 Kxf7 24.Rxe4 Bxe4 25.bxc3 and white wins.) 17...Qc8 18.f4 Nc4 19.f5! (Threatening to dismantle black's kingside.) 19...g5 (Black sheds a pawn, trying to avert an immediate disaster. After 19...Ng4 20.Qg5 Nf2 21.Bxc4 bxc4 22.Ne6! Nxd1 23.Qh6! fxe6 24.fxg6 white wins.)

20.Bxc4 (Vescovi missed a spectacular way to continue the attack: 20.Rd3 g4 21.Rh3!! gxh3 22.gxh3 and black does not have a good defense against 23.Rg1+.) 20...Qxc4 21.Rd3 (White is

lifting the rook for kingside action, but attacking the black king through the center with 21.e5! was more to the point, for example 21...dxe5 22.Rxe5 Bd5 23.Nb3 Re8 24.Rxe7! Rxe7 25.Qxf6 Rd7 26.Qxg5+ Kf8 27.f6 and white wins.) 21...b4 (After 21...Nxe4 22.f6! Nxf6 23.Nf5 white wins.)

22.Rg3 (Both 22.e5! dxe5 23.Rxe5 Bd5 24.Rxd5! Qxd5 25.Ne6 and 22.Ne6! fxe6 23.Qxg5+ Kh8 24.Qh6+ Nh7 25.Rg3 Rg8 26.Rxg8+ Kxg8 27.Qg6+ Kf8 28.fxe6 also win for white.) 22...g4 23.axb4 Rb8 24.h3! (White opens the h-file for the final blow.) 24...Bxe4 (After 24...h4 25.Qg5+ Kf8 26.Qxh4 wins.) 25.hxg4 h4 26.g5! Ng4 (After 26...hxg3 27.gxf6 Rxb4+ 28.Kc1! exf6 29.Rh1 white mates.) 27.Qxh4 Nf2 28.g6! Rxb4+ 29.Kc1 fxg6 (White could have played 30.Rxg6+ Kf7 31.Qh8 and mate, but his move is good enough.) 30.fxg6 (After 30...Kg7 31.Nf5+! Bxf5 32.Rxe7+ white mates soon.) Black resigned.

Topalov on Top

The FIDE world champion Veselin Topalov leads the July rating list with 2813 points. The next four grandmasters are Vishy Anand, 2779 points; Levon Aronian, 2761 points; Vladimir Kramnik, 2743 points; and Peter Svidler, 2742 points.

Women's Cup Victory

Susan Polgar, representing the United States, won the Women's Chess Cup on Saturday in the German city of Dresden. Based on the formula from the soccer World Cup, the organizers invited 32 women from the same countries that participated in the soccer event. Polgar, the top-rated player and a clear favorite, made it to the final, where she defeated Germany's Elisabeth Paehtz 1 1/2 - 1/2.

Solution to today's study by H. Rinck (White: Kc3,Bb5,Bc7,P:a4,f4; Black: Kc5,P:a5,g3,h3): 1.Bf1! g2 (Or 1...h2 2.Bg2 h1Q 3.Bxh1 g2 4.Bd6+! Kxd6 5.Bxg2 wins.) 2.Bxg2 hxg2 3.Bb8! Kb6 (Or 3...g1Q 4.Ba7+ wins.) 4.Be5! g1Q 5.Bd4+ white wins.

A Crisp Victory

Monday, July 17, 2006; C12

David Navara leapt to new heights during the last rating period. In 36 games, the 21-year-old top Czech grandmaster gained a whopping 61 rating points, moving to No. 14 in the world on the FIDE list. Breaking the 2700 rating barrier -- which divides the elite grandmasters from the rest of the world -- is not usually accomplished in leaps and bounds. But Navara earned every single point, mainly from the Turin Olympiad and from national team competitions in England, France and the Czech Republic.

A Crisp Victory

As a student of logic at Charles University in Prague, Navara is the only grandmaster among the world's top 20 who does not play chess full time. In the Greek team championship that finished in Ermioni last Monday, the Czech grandmaster scored seven points in nine games. It was not only the best result on the top board, but the best performance in the event, and it should move him even higher on the FIDE list. Navara builds his games around a solid positional foundation, but can attack without mercy. One of his victims in Greece was former European champion Bartlomiej Macieja of Poland, who was smashed in the Taimanov Sicilian after making a single inaccuracy.

Navara - Macieja

1.Nf3 c5 2.e4 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nc6 5.Nc3 a6 (The Taimanov Sicilian is reached with a different move order.) 6.Nxc6 (White does not waste time, develops quickly and puts the black king under pressure.) 6. . . . bxc6 7.Bd3 (The 19th-century Max Lange's advance 7.e5 looks too artificial, but it has some admirers among contemporary grandmasters.) 7... d5 8.0-0 Nf6 9.Re1 (A flexible rook move, supporting a possible advance of the e-pawn or opening the e-file. Black has to tiptoe carefully to avoid trouble. In the game Teichmann-Spielmann, Leipzig 1914, white created a pretty miniature playing 9.Bf4 Bb4 10.e5 Nd7 11.Qg4 g6 12.Rfe1 c5 13.a3 Ba5 14.Bg5 Qb6 15.b4! cxb4 16.Nxd5! exd5 17.e6! f5 18.exd7+ Kxd7 19.Bxf5+ and black resigned.) 9... Bb7 (The logical developing move 9... Be7 is met by 10.e5 Nd7 11.Qg4 and black has to weaken his kingside, since 11 . . . 0-0 loses to 12.Bh6. Navara had some experience with this position as black, playing 11 . . . g6 12.Bh6 Rb8 13.Qh3 Rb4 against Evgeniy Alexeev in Lausanne 2004. However, some correspondence players came up with a promising exchange sacrifice 13 . . . Rxb2!? 14.Bg7 Rg8 15.Qxh7 Rxg7 16.Qxg7 Bb4! with good counterplay. It was later successfully adopted by the French grandmaster Joel Lautier.) 10.0f3 (Aiming to harass black's kingside. Another plan, used by Peter Svidler against Vishy Anand in Cap d'Agne in 2003, is to play through the center 10.Bf4 Be7 11.Qf3 0-0 12.Rad1.) 10 . . . Be7 11.Qg3 g6 12.Bh6 (Preventing short castling.) 12 . . . Nd7? (A losing mistake. The Swedish grandmaster Ulf Andersson, with his sixth sense of danger, played here 12 . . . Bf8, but after 13.Qh3 Bxh6 14.Qxh6 the dark squares in black's camp cried for help.)

13.exd5! exd5 (Black is forced to open the e-file because after 13...cxd5 14.Rxe6! fxe6 15.Qxg6+ hxg6 16.Bxg6 mates. It also does not help to interpose 13...Bh4, because after 14.Rxe6+! fxe6 15.Bxg6+ hxg6 [15...Ke7 16.d6+ Kf6 17.Ne4 mate.] 16.Qxg6+ Ke7 17.Qxe6 mates.) 14.Re2! (White simply doubles his rooks on the only open file, leaving black without good defense.) 14...Nc5 15.Rae1 Ne6 (Blocking white's two top guns on the e-file does not work, but black did not have a choice.)

16.Rxe6! (A splendid exchange sacrifice, smashing the way through black's defense.) 16...fxe6 17.Qe5

Rg8 (After 17...Bf6 18.Qxe6+ Qe7 19.Qxe7+ Bxe7 20.Bg5 white should win.) 18.Qxe6 Rf8 19.Bg5 (Exploiting the pin leads to a winning position. Another way was 19.Bxg6+!? hxg6 20.Qxg6+ Kd7 21.Qe6+ Ke8 22.Na4!, for example 22...Bc8 23.Qg6+ Kd7 24.Nb6+ Qxb6 25.Bxf8 and white wins.) 19...Rf7 20.Bxg6! hxg6 21.Qxg6 Qd7 (After 21...Kf8 22.Bh6+ Ke8 23.Qg8+ wins the rook.) 22.Rxe7+ Qxe7 23.Bxe7 Kxe7 24.Na4! (The knight comes quickly into play through the dark squares to help the queen harass the black king. Black can't coordinate his forces.) 24...Rf6 (After 24...Re8 25.Nc5 Ba8 26.g4 black's bishop is out of play and white's kingside pawns roll forward.) 25.Qg7+ Rf7 26.Qe5+ Kf8 27.Nc5 Kg8 28.Ne6 Re7 29.Qg5+ Kf7 30.Qf5+ Ke8 (After 30...Kg8 31.Qg6+ Kh8 32.Qf6+ wins quickly, but now black loses the house.) 31.Qf8+ Kd7 32.Nc5+ Black resigned.

Aleksander Wojtkiewicz, 1963-2006

The Maryland grandmaster died Friday at the age of 43. One of the busiest American players, Wojtkiewicz successfully competed in nearly 650 open tournaments in this country since 1991, finishing first in six annual Grand Prix competitions. Recently he shared first place in two major U.S. tournaments -- the National and World opens. Wojtkiewicz won the Polish championship twice and was a member of the University of Maryland Baltimore County championship team. He lived in the Soviet Union and Poland before coming to the United States.

Solution to today's problem -- mate in three -- by J. Fritz (White: Ka6,Qe1,Rf2,Ne3; Black: Kh1,Bg1,Nh4,P:e4,f3,g5,g6.h2): 1.Ka5! Ng2 2.Nf1!! Nxe1 (or 2...Bxf2) 3.Ng3 mate; or 1...Nf5 2.Ng4 Ng3 3.Rxh2 mate; or 1...g4 2.Rxh2+ Kxh2 3.Qxh4 mate.

CHESS Lubomir Kavalek

By Lubomir Kavalek Monday, July 24, 2006; C12

Ni Hua is the new Chinese champion. He scored 7 1/2 points in 11 games in a tough championship that left the top Chinese player, Bu Xiangzhi, sharing last place with four points.

We first noticed Ni in 2001 in Seattle 2001 at the match United States vs. China, where his two victories over the young Hikaru Nakamura helped the Chinese team win the match 21 to 19. Since that time, Ni has shown steady improvement and soon became a stalwart member of the Chinese team.

Last November at the World Team Championship in Bersheeba, Israel, Ni was playing excellently, but lost a last-round game to the Russian wizard Alexander Morozevich. A draw would have clinched the gold medals for the Chinese.

Ni was in tears, thinking that he missed a draw, blaming himself personally for the overall team result. Still, the silver medals were not too shabby.

At this year's chess Olympiad in Turin, Ni Hua played peacefully, drawing seven games.

His teammates joked that he should be nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize.

But then came the last round and a difficult encounter against the strong Dutch team.

This time Ni redeemed himself by winning his game against the Dutch grandmaster Friso Nijboer. The Chinese team took the silver medals for the second time in seven months.

When the River Flows

The young Boris Spassky thought that a correctly played game is like a river.

It gathers strength from little streams until it becomes a strong waterway flowing into the sea. Ni's performance against Zhang Pengxiang in the Chinese championship had just such a flow. In the Winawer French, Ni improved his position little by little until his opponent could not cope with the deluge.

Ni - Zhang

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.e5 c5 5.a3 Ba5 (Mikhail Botvinnik used this bishop retreat in the 1954 world championship match against Vassily Smyslov, but the variation was later developed further by Armenian grandmasters, notably Rafael Vaganian and Smbat Lputian.) 6.b4 cxd4 7.Nb5 Bc7 8.f4 Bd7 (This is Vaganian's idea, giving black the option to exchange his bad light bishop. Black can also play 8...Nh6, preventing 9.Qg4, as was tried in the game Jandera-Schubert, Prague 1933.)

9.Nf3 (After 9.Qg4 Vaganian once played 9...Kf8 10.Nxd4 Nc6 11.Ngf3 Nh6 with a good game.) 9...Nh6 (Black controls white's pawn advances on the kingside and the move is more to the point than 9...Ne7. The immediate 9...Bxb5 was fashionable for some time. The tireless attacker from Ukraine, GM

Mihail Golubev, introduced after 9...Bxb5 10.Bxb5+ Nd7 the reckless 11.f5!?, which worked well for white after 11...exf5 12.Qxd4 a6 13.e6!; or after 11...a6 12.fxe6 fxe6 13.Bg5!)

10.Bd3 (Ni comes up with a new move. He is not in a hurry to take the pawn on d4.) 10...Bxb5 11.Bxb5+ Nd7 (It seems that 11...Nc6 is more logical, but black might have been afraid of 12.Nxd4 Qd7 13.c4 with white's advantage.) 12.Nxd4 Bb6 13.Be3!? (White's dark bishop has a better future on e3, opposing black's bishop.) 13...0-0 14.0-0 Rc8 15.Kh1 Nb8 (Black is finally going to pressure the knight on d4 from c6, but it is too late.) 16.a4 a6 (After 16...Nc6 17.Bxc6 bxc6 18.a5 Bxd4 19.Bxd4 Qd7 20.Bc5 Rfd8 21.c3, black is without counterplay and white can roll his pawns on the kingside.) 17.Bd3 Nc6 18.Nxc6 Rxc6 19.b5! axb5 20.axb5 Rc8 21.Bxb6 Qxb6 (White's bishop is superior to black's knight, controlling important squares on both wings.)

22.g4! (Ni launches a kingside attack, limiting the black knight at the same time.) 22...Kh8 23.Qf3 Ng8 24.f5 Qd4 25.Rae1 (Threatening to win with 26.fxe6 fxe6 27.Qxf8 Rxf8 28.Rxf8.) 25...exf5 (Black has hardly anything else, but his move opens the g-file for white.) 26.gxf5 f6 (Otherwise white plays 27.f6, leaving the black knight out of play.)

27.e6 (The passed e-pawn is potentially very dangerous.) 27...Ne7 (For the time being the knight blocks the e-pawn well, but white can concentrate his heavy forces on the pawn on g7.) 28.Rg1 Qh4 29.Rg3 Rc4!? (Desperate times, desperate measures. The white attack is gaining strength and the exchange sacrifice can only slow it down. After 29...Rg8 30.Reg1 h6 31.Rg4 Qh5 32.Qf4 Ra8 33.Rh4 Ra4, white should not take the rook 34.Qxa4 since 34...Qf3+ 35.Rg2 Qd1+ draws, but should play instead 34.c4!, for example 34...Qe8 35.Qxh6+ gxh6 36.Rxh6 mate.)

30.Bxc4 Qxc4 31.Qg4! (White takes the queens off the board, relying on his strong passed e-pawn.) 31...Qxg4 32.Rxg4 Nxf5 33.c4! (Bringing the rook from g4 to the queenside.) 33...d4 (After 33...dxc4 34.Rxc4 Kg8 35.b6 Rb8 36.Rec1, white exchanges a pair of rooks and wins.) 34.c5 Kg8 35.Rf4 g6 36.Rxf5! (The shortest way to win. White's two passed pawns decide.) 36...gxf5 37.Rg1+! (Forcing the black king into the corner.) 37...Kh8 38.c6 bxc6 39.bxc6 Rc8 40.e7 d3 41.c7 (After 41...d2 42.Rd1 Kg8 43.Rxd2 Kf7 44.Rd8 wins.) Black resigned.

Solution to today's problem -- mate in three -- by L. Kuijpers (White: Kh6,Qb7,Rb3,Nf6,P:d3; Black: Kd4,P:c5,f4,f5,h5): 1.Ra3! f3 2.Qb2+ Ke3 3.Nd5 mate; or 1...Ke3 2.Qb2 c4 3.dxc4 mate; or 1...Ke5 2.d4+ cxd4 3.Qe7 mate.

CHESS Lubomir Kavalek

By Lubomir Kavalek Monday, July 31, 2006; C11

Two major open tournaments finished in Europe yesterday. The Politiken Cup in Copenhagen, with 260 participants, ended in a three-way tie among grandmasters Nigel Short of England, Vadim Malakhatko of Ukraine and Jonny Hector of Sweden. They tallied 7 1/2 points in nine games. The Czech Open in the town of Pardubice is one of the world's largest festivals of games in which chess plays a major part. The grandmaster group attracted 406 players and was won by Stanislav Novikov; the Russian grandmaster defeated the top Czech grandmaster David Navara in the last round and scored 7 1/2 points in nine games.

The Spanish Conquest

The Classical defense (3...Bc5), one of the oldest defenses against the Spanish opening, is still playable, but not the way Russia's International Master Mikhail Ekdyshman tried against the Polish grandmaster Piotr Bobras in Pardubice. A rare variation, involving an early queen move, was once a good toy in the hands of formidable players, but not anymore.

Bobras-Ekdyshman

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 Bc5 4.c3 Qf6?! (The queen move, which seems to prevent white from building a strong pawn center, was played even by the world champions William Steinitz, Jose Raul Capablanca and Alexander Alekhine. But this idea is not working well lately.) 5.d4! (White punches in the center anyway, but Capablanca's 6.Re1 is also strong. After 6...0-0 7.d4 exd4 8.e5 Qg6 9.Bd3! destroys black's piece coordination, e.g. 9...Qh5 10.Re4!; or 9...Qg4 10.Bxh7+ Kh8 11.Re4 wins; or 9...f5 10.exf6 Qxf6 11.b4 Bd6 [11...Bb6? 12.b5! wins a piece due to the threat 13.Bg5.] 12.Bc4+! Kh8 13.Bg5 Qf5 14.b5 and black is in dire straits.) 5...exd4 6.e5! Qg6 (The tactical justification of white's central advance is clear after 6...Nxe5? 7.Qe2!, winning a piece.) 7.cxd4 Nxd4?! (This little combination is not good, because the black king is still in the middle.) 8.Nxd4 Qb6 (Black wins the piece back but falls behind in development.)

9.Be3! (Simple and strong. The theory recommends the amazing 9.e6!? with the idea 9 . . . fxe6? 10.Be3 Bxd4 11.Bxd4 Qxb5 12.Bxg7 and white wins. But after 9.e6!? black plays 9 . . . Bxd4, and after 10.exd7+ Bxd7 11.Bxd7+ Kxd7 12.Be3 c5 13.Nd2 Rd8, it is not completely clear how white can successfully attack the exposed black king. Another alternative is to weaken the kingside with 9.Qg4 and only after 9...g6 to play 10.Be3.) 9...Bxd4 10.Qxd4! (The correct capture. In the game Kavalek-Ratolistka, Prague 1960, I played 10.Bxd4 and after 10...Qxb5 11.Nc3 Qc6 12.0-0 Ne7 13.Re1 b6 14.Ne4 Bb7 15.f3 Nd5 16.Rc1 Qg6, the exchange sacrifice 17.Rxc7!? Nxc7 18.Nd6+ Kf8 19.Nxb7 led only to a draw in 57 moves.) 10...Qxb5 11.Nc3 Qc6 (The greedy 11...Qxb2 gets black in trouble after 12.Rb1 Qc2 13.Rc1 Qg6 14.Nd5.) 12.Nd5 Ne7 13.Nxe7 Kxe7 14.0-0 (White finished his development and can concentrate his forces on the black king. Black has a few weaknesses, notably the pawn on c7, and many of his pieces on the back rank did not wake up.) 14...d5 (A new attempt to free himself. In the game Rytshagov-Gretarsson, Gothenburg 1997, black played 14...Qg6, but after 15.Rac1 c6 white should have tried 16.Rfd1!, for example 16...b6 17.Qf4 f6 18.Rd6!, with winning chances.) 15.Rac1 Qd7 (Giving up a pawn with 15...Qe6 16.Rxc7+ Bd7 does not give black relief because of 17.Qb4+ Ke8 18.Qxb7 Rd8 19.Rd1 and white should win.)

16.e6! (Opening the roads to the black king.) 16...Qxe6 (After 16...Kxe6 17.Qxg7 Re8 18.Rfe1 black is in trouble on the e-file.) 17.Rfe1 Kf8 18.Bd2 Qd7 (The weakness of the last rank allows white two final jabs.) 19.Rxc7! Qd8 (After 19...Qxc7 20.Qb4+ Kg8 21.Re8 mates.) 20.Bh6! (After 20...f6 21.Qb4+ white mates soon.) Black resigned.

Kasparov Is Back

Garry Kasparov will take part in the Lichthof Chess Champions Day. The four-player rapid tournament - with Anatoly Karpov, Viktor Korchnoi and Judit Polgar -- will take place in Zurich on Aug. 22. Korchnoi recently finished second in the Swiss championship in Lenzerheide, half a point behind Florian Jenni, who scored seven points in nine games. Korchnoi had the title in sight, but blundered badly against GM Joe Gallagher.

Gallagher-Korchnoi

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.e5 Nfd7 5.f4 c5 6.Nce2 cxd4 7.Nxd4 Qb6 8.Ngf3 Nc6 9.c3 Nc5 10.Qc2 Nxd4 11.Nxd4 Bd7 12.Be3 Rc8 13.Nf3 Bb5? (A great strategic idea, exchanging the bad bishop, but a terrible tactical oversight.) 14.b4 (After 14...Nd3+ 15.Kd2! black will be a piece down.) Black resigned.

Young Champions

Two New Yorkers won important junior events in Dallas this month. Robert Hess triumphed at the U.S. junior invitational (under 21) championship with seven points in nine games. Marc Tyler Arnold won the U.S. Cadet (under 16) championship and a four-year scholarship from the University of Maryland Baltimore County. His winning score was 5 1/2 -1 1/2.

Solution to today's problem -- mate in three -- by J. Chocholous (White: Kg1,Qe7,Ba5,Nc5,P:b3; Black: Kb5,Rh6,P:c6,c7,f6,g4,h5,h7): 1.Qd8! f5 2.Qxc7 Kxc5 3.Qe5 mate; or 1...Kxc5 2.Qd3! and 3.b4 mate; or 1...Kxa5 2.Qb8 and 3.b4 mate; or 1...Rg6 2.b4 and 3.Qd3 mate.

CHESS Lubomir Kavalek

By Lubomir Kavalek Monday, August 7, 2006; C10

Imagine one particular opening novelty being discovered independently, almost at the same time, in two different parts of the world more than 40 years ago.

Was it a remarkable coincidence or an attempt to steal an idea created in the Closed Sicilian on move 3? Jeroen Bosch and his Dutch friends, preparing the fifth volume of "Secrets of Opening Surprises," were not sure and began to ask around.

They discovered that Duncan Suttles played this variation in June 1965 at the Canadian championship and thought that he was the inventor. They also found out that Michael Janata and I played the line one month later at the Student Olympiad in Sinaia, Romania.

Because news about new chess ideas was not traveling as fast as it does today, the Dutchmen assumed that we worked it out separately, but Suttles beat us by a month. We knew differently.

The Vinohrady Variation

The spiritual father of the variation was Jaromir Kubicek, a romantic player with a passion for the King's and other gambits and for various unusual openings. He was also a member of our school team, on which Janata was the leading player. Together we won several school championships in Prague. Janata became an exceptional player, sharing first place at the 1963 World Junior championship with Florin Gheorghiu of Romania.

At the 1965 Student Olympiad in Sinaia, Janata and I decided to introduce Kubicek's variation to the international scene.

We played it on the same day in the match against Sweden and it caused a huge stir in the tournament hall.

The Soviet captain, grandmaster Alexander Konstantinopolsky, later called it "the Czech Double-Punch."

We named the line "the Vinohrady variation," after a district in Prague where we went to school. Here is my game from Sinaia against Jan-Erik Westman.

Kavalek-Westman

1.e4 c5 2.Nc3 Nc6 3.g4!? (Kubicek's idea. His bayonet attack can't be easily refuted and provides good opportunity for an opening surprise. The main idea is to grab space and save a tempo in the attack from the usual slow buildup with 3.g3. The disadvantage could be the weak dark squares f4 and h4, but that is not easy to exploit. For example, after 3...e5, white can play 4.Bc4!) 3...g6 4.d3 Bg7 5.Be3 d6 6.Bg2 Rb8 7.f4 e6 8.h4! (The four-pawn attack drew a lot of spectators, and they began encircling our chessboard. Black played the opening rather passively, allowing me to gain space on the kingside.) 8...Nge7 9.h5 b5 10.Qd2 Qa5 (Black plans to strike with 11...b4 and 12...d5, but white prevents it and keeps the black king in the middle.)

11.e5! dxe5 12.h6! (Forcing black to regroup.) 12...Bf8 13.Bxc5 (White needs only to exchange the dark bishops to exploit the weak dark squares.) 13...Qc7 14.Nge2 b4 15.Ne4 (Covering the dark squares is not easy for black.) 15...Nd5 16.Bxf8 Kxf8 17.fxe5 Nxe5 18.Qg5?! (Locking up the kingside with 18.g5 is better.) 18...Ba6 19.0-0 Nd7 20.Nf4! (Exchanging black's best piece.) 20...Nxf4 21.Rxf4 Ke8 22.Nf6+ Nxf6 23.Qxf6 Rf8 24.Re1! (Threatening 25.Rxe6+!) 24...Rb6 25.Rd4 Qe7 (Relatively the best. After 25...Rd6 26.Rxd6 Qxd6 27.Re4 Qe7 28.Qe5 f6 29.Qxe6 white wins.) 26.g5! Bb7 27.Bxb7 Rxb7 28.Re5 Qc7 (Westman allows a decisive combination. The queen exchange 28...Qxf6 loses fast after 29.gxf6 Rd7 30.Rxb4 Rd8 31.Rb7 Rd7 32.Reb5. Also after 28...Rd7 29.Rc4 wins.)

29.Rxe6+! fxe6 30.Qxe6+ Qe7 31.Qc8+ Kf7 32.Rf4+ Kg8 33.Rxf8+ Qxf8 34.Qxb7 Qc5+ 35.Kh1 (Black has no good checks and white threatens 34.Qg7 mate.) 35...Qd4 36.Qg7+! (Simplifying into a winning pawn endgame.) 36...Qxg7 37.hxg7 Kxg7 38.Kg2 h6 39.gxh6+ Kxh6 40.a3 a5 41.axb4 axb4 42.c4 Kg5 43.c5 Black resigned.

Kubicek played the variation in the late 1950s and has a 1958 game on the record. He always maintained that it could be tried in serious tournaments.

I was finally convinced after our consultation game against Vlastimil Jansa, who later became a fine Czech grandmaster, and IM Jacek Bednarski of Poland. It was played in Prague in 1964.

Kavalek, Kubicek-

Jansa, Bednarski

1.e4 c5 2.Nc3 Nc6 3.g4 e5 4.Bc4! d6 5.d3 Be7 6.h4!? Bxh4? 7.Qf3?! (We got carried away with an attractive tactical variation, but correct was 7.g5! Bxg5 8.Qh5 Be7 9.Qxf7+ Kd7 10.Qxg7 Nf6 11.Bg5 and white is better.) 7...Bf6 8.g5! Nd4 9.Qg3 Be7 10.g6! (Threatening to win with 11.Rxh7.) 10...fxg6 11.Rxh7! Rxh7 12.Qxg6+ Kd7 13.Qxh7 Nf6 14.Qxg7 Nxc2+ 15.Kd1 Nxa1 16.Bg5 (Whites have some pressure for the sacrificed material.) 16...Kc6? (After 16...Qf8! black is better.) 17.Nd5 Nxd5 18.exd5+ Kb6 19.Bxe7 Qd7 20.Qf8 a6 (After 20...Qa4+ 21.b3 Bg4+ 22.f3 Rxf8 23.bxa4 Re8! [Not 23...Bxf3+? 24.Nxf3 Rxf3 25.Bd8 mate.] 24.Bxd6 Bd7 25.Ne2 and

white has a slight edge.) 21.Bxd6 Ka7 22.Bxc5+ (22.b3 is more precise.) 22...b6 23.Be3 Bb7 24.Qf6 Qc7 25.a4 a5 26.b4! Rg8 27.Nf3 axb4 28.a5 and whites later won.

Solution to today's study by H. Rinck (White: Kh5,Qf1; Black: Kh7,Rg6,Bg8): 1.Qf5 Kh8! 2.Qe5+! (Not 2.Qxg6? Bf7 3.Qxf7; nor 2.Kxg6? Bh7+ and black draws.) 2...Kh7 3.Qe7+ Rg7 4.Qe4+ Kh8 5.Qe5 Kh7 6.Qf5+ Kh8 7.Qf6 (Threatening 8.Kh6.) 7...Kh7 8.Qh6 mate.

CHESS Lubomir Kavalek

By Lubomir Kavalek Monday, August 14, 2006; C10

Garry Kasparov has not always been playing the dynamic Sicilian with the black pieces. Early in his career he also defended with the Caro-Kann. In his first Soviet championship in 1978 in Tbilisi, he lost two Scheveningen Sicilians, while his Caro-Kann was holding up pretty well, until he was defeated by Vitaly Tseshkovsky

towards the end. At the party after the championship, the colorful grandmaster Eduard Gufeld called him a coward for even playing the Caro-Kann. "Look at you, shining eyes, such dark hair, you must be a Sicilian Mafioso! You must play the Sicilian!" Kasparov quoted Gufeld in one of his regular columns in New in Chess.

In the same article Kasparov explained the perils of playing the Scheveningen, arguing that allowing white the central advance e4-e5 is not wise. Permitting it is like "treading on the thinnest possible ice," he thought. "The power of the e5 pawn was taught to my generation by [Mikhail] Tal," Kasparov explained. The winner of last month's Pardubice Open, Stanislav Novikov, demonstrated Kasparov's Scheveningen theory against the young talented Polish grandmaster Radoslaw Wojtaszek. It was an impressive and powerful victory by the Russian grandmaster.

Novikov-Wojtaszek

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.Be2 e6 (The Scheveningen variation.) 7.f4 Be7 8.0-0 0-0 9.Kh1 Qc7 10.a4 b6?! (Allowing white the central advance with the e-pawn is asking for trouble. In the game Balashov-Kavalek, Manila Interzonal 1976, I played the solid 10...Nc6 11.Be3 Re8 12.Bf3 and now came the novelty 12...Rb8. It is a flexible waiting move, getting the rook off the diagonal a8-h1 and preparing counterplay on the queenside. It also keeps the square d7 free for the knight. The logic behind it was simple: Black previously played 12...Bd7 and after 13.Nb3 b6 14.g4, his best move was 14...Bc8, leaving the black knight the square d7 after 15.g5. The game was drawn after a dramatic play in 36 moves.

Balashov and his coach Vladimir Yurkov were impressed by the 12...Rb8 move and tried to find something against it. A few months later at the Dubai olympiad, another Yurkov protege, Andrei Sokolov, showed the fruits of their work and defeated the Czech Vlastimil Jansa by playing, after 12...Rb8, the sharp 13.g4!?. It is still a troublesome move for black today. Still, the move 12...Rb8 was an important

discovery at that time. Kasparov soon began playing it, using it for his decisive victory in the last game of the 1985 world championship match against Anatoly Karpov.

11.e5! dxe5 12.fxe5 Nfd7 (Black can't take the pawn: After 12...Qxe5? 13.Bf4 Qc5 14.Bf3 he is in trouble.) 13.Bf4 Bb7 (After 13...Nxe5?! 14.Bf3 Ra7 15.Ndb5 axb5 16.Nxb5, white is better.) 14.Bd3! (The bishop is looking at the black pawn on h7 with great interest.) 14...Nc5 15.Qg4 Nxd3 (Eliminating the perilous bishop. After the immediate 15...Rd8 comes 16.Bg3! and black does not have time for 16...Nxd3? because of 17.Rxf7! Kxf7 18.Rf1+! Ke8 19.Nxe6 and white wins; and 16...Nc6 is refuted by 17.Bxh7+! Kxh7 18.Rxf7.

In the game Volokitin-Rublevsky, Budva 2004, black tried 15...Nc6, allowing the brilliant 16.Nd5! exd5 17.e6! Qc8 18.Bh6 g6 19.Bxf8 Bxf8 21.Bf5 Qc7 22.Bxg6! and white's attack succeeded after 22...Ne5 23.Qg3 Bg7 24.Bxh7! Kxh7 25.Qh3+ Bh6 26.Rf6 Nxf7 27.Raf1 Rf8 28.Qh5 Kg8 29.Qg6+ Bg7 30.Nf5 Ne6 31.Rxe6 and black resigned.) *16.cxd3 Rd8* (The open c-file helps white.)

17.Rac1! (A spectacular way of defending the knight on d4. White brings his rook into action with a tempo.) 17...Rxd4?! (This capture leads to a worse position for black. 17...Nc6 is more cautious and black should not worry about 18.Nxe6?! fxe6 19.Qxe6+Kh8 20.Nd5 Rxd5 21.Qxd5 because 21...Qd8 gives him a good counterplay. Another way to defend is 17...Qd7 18.Bh6 Bf8 19.Be3 Qe8 20.Ne4 Nd7, but it looks rather passive.) 18.Ne2 Qd8 19.Nxd4 Qxd4 20.Rc7 Ra7 21.Rxe7 Bxg2+ 22.Qxg2 Rxe7 23.Bh6! g6 (Black weakens the dark squares around his king. Exchanging the queens with 23...Qd5 does not help. After 24.Qxd5 exd5 25.Rg1! g6 [After 25...Rxe5? 26.Bxg7 Re8 27.Bc3+ Kf8 28.Bb4+ white wins.] 26.Rc1! Re8 27.Rc7 black is tied up.) 24.Qf3 Qh4 (Trying to dislodge the unpleasant bishop on h6. Again 24...Qd5 25.Qxd5 exd5 26.Rc1 transposes to the previous note.)

25...Rd7 (After 25...Re8 26.Rc7! white attacks another weak point -- the pawn on f7 -- and meets the tricky 26...Kh8 with 27.Bg5! Qxg5 28.Qxf7 and wins.) 26.Qf4 Qe7 (Black is having a hard time. White wins either after 26...Qd8 27.Rc8! Qxc8 28.Qf6; or after 26...Qxf4 27.Rc8+ mating.) 27.Bg5 Qf8 28.Bh6 Qe7 29.Bg5 Qf8 30.Qf6! (White finally makes the winning move. Black can't find any suitable defense against the mating threats on the square g7 or on the last rank.) 30...Rxd3 31.Bh6! Nd7 (After 31...Qxh6 32.Rc8+ Qf8 33.Rxf8+ Kxf8 34.Qh8+ wins.) 32.Rc8! (A splendid finale. Black is getting mated.) Black resigned.

Solution to today's study by R. Bianchetti (White: Kg1,Qh1,Be2; Black: Ke1,Qc2,Bb2,P:d2): 1.Bd1!! Qxd1 (or 1...Kxd1 2.Kf2 mate.) 2.Kg2+ Ke2 3.Qh5+ Ke1 4.Qh4+ Ke2 5.Qe4 mate.

Monday, August 21, 2006; C10

One of the most potent and popular attacking schemes -- the classic bishop sacrifice -- appeared in the writings of two famous Italian chess masters, Giulio Cesare Polerio and Gioacchino Greco. Polerio, a leading 16th-century player who defeated the famous Spanish player Ruy Lopez in the 1570s, performed pioneering work in many important openings of his time. Greco wrote about the bishop sacrifice in the manuscript for a wealthy Roman patron in 1619.

Recently, I came across a game played in Milan in 1881 at the third Italian national championship. Edoardo Crespi Pozzi gave the bishop sacrifice a new twist in the French defense, brilliantly defeating the last finisher of the event, Mattia Cavallotti.

Crespi Pozzi-Cavallotti

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bg5 Be7 5.Bxf6 Bxf6 6.Nf3 0-0 7.Bd3 b6 8.h4!?
(Preparing the classic bishop sacrifice.) 8...Bb7? 9.e5 Be7 10.Bxh7+! (The sacrifice works well in this position.) 10...Kxh7 11.Ng5+ Kg6 (The king has to move up. After 11...Kg8 12.Qh5 Bxg5 13.hxg5 f5 14.g6 white mates. After 11...Kh6 12.Qd2! Bxg5 13.hxg5+ Kg6 14.Qd3+ f5 15.gxf6+ Kf7 16.Qh7 Rg8 17.Qh5+ Kf8 18.f7, white wins. Finally, after 11...Bxg5 12.hxg5+ Kg6 13.Qh5+ Kf5 14.Rh3! Qxg5 15.Rf3 mates.) 12.Ne2 Kh6 (In the game Fritz-Mason, Nuremberg 1883, black played 12...Bxg5 13.hxg5 f5 [After 12...Bxg5 13.hxg5 Qxg5 14.Nf4+! Kf5 15.Qd3+ Kg4 16.Qh3+ Kxf4 17.Qf3 mates.] 14.gxf6 Rh8 15.Nf4+ Kf7 16.Qg4!! [Amazing!] 16...Rxh1+ 17.Kd2 gxf6 18.Qg6+ Ke7 19.Qg7+ Ke8 20.Qg8+ Ke7 21.Qxe6+ Kf8 22.Rxh1 and white won.) 13.Nf4 g6 14.h5! (The old maestros knew how to open up the files against the enemy king.) 14...Bxg5 (It seems that 14...Bb4+ 15.c3 Qxg5 was the way out, but white can strike with 16.hxg6+ Kg7 17.Nh5+ Kxg6 18.Nf6! Rc8 19.Rh5 Qxg2 20.Qd2!! Qg1+ 21.Ke2 Ba6+ 22.Kf3 and mates soon.) 15.hxg6+ Kg7 16.Rh7+ Kg8 17.Qh5 Bf6 18.Rh8+ (After 18...Bxh8 19.Qh7 mates.) Black resigned.

Grandmaster Valeri Beim uses the classic bishop sacrifice to explain some of the important ideas in his new book, "How to Calculate Chess Tactics." Beim gives the impression that the sacrifice is fairly obvious. He gives the following example from a 1965 candidates game played in Riga between legends Boris Spassky and Efim Geller.

Spassky-Geller

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 Be7 6.Re1 b5 7.Bb3 0-0 8.c3 d6 9.h3 Nd7

10.d4 Nb6 11.Nbd2 Bf6 12.Nf1 Re8 13.N1h2 exd4 14.cxd4 Na5 15.Bc2 c5 16.Ng4 Bxg4 17.hxg4 cxd4 18.g5 Be7? (Geller should have played 18...Be5, preventing Spassky from opening the dangerous Spanish bishop.) 19.e5! Bf8? ("The combinative motif present in this position is clear to any player, even one with little experience. It is probably the best-known of all tactical motifs -- the bishop sacrifice on h7. The calculation of the variations is also not terribly difficult in this case," writes Beim.)

20.Bxh7+! Kxh7 21.g6+!! (Beim is silent here, but without this brilliant move, freeing the square g5 for the knight, the bishop sacrifice would not make sense.) 21...Kg8 (After 21...Kxg6 22.Qd3+ f5 23.exf6+ Kf7 24.Ng5+ Kxf6 25.Qf3+ Kg6 26.Qf7+ Kh6 27.Re6+ white wins by force.) 22.Ng5 fxg6 23.Qf3 Qxg5 (The queen sacrifice is the only chance to prolong the struggle. White wins either after 23...Qd7 24.e6; or after 23...Be7 24.Qf7+ Kh8 25.Ne6.) 24.Bxg5 Black resisted stubbornly, but lost in 44 moves.

In the duel between two former world champions, Spassky was on the losing end of the classic bishop sacrifice against Mikhail Tal. The Queen's Indian game was played at the memorable Montreal tournament in 1979. Beim uses it to show how to work out the follow-up.

Spassky-Tal

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 b6 4.e3 Bb7 5.Bd3 d5 6.b3 Bd6 7.0-0 0-0 8.Bb2 Nbd7 9.Nbd2 Qe7 10.Rc1 Rad8 11.Qc2 c5 12.cxd5 exd5 13.dxc5 bxc5 14.Qc3 Rfe8 15.Rfd1 d4 16.exd4 cxd4 17.Qa5?! Ne5 18.Nxe5 Bxe5 19.Nc4 Rd5 20.Qd2 (Spassky's queen expedition to the queenside gave Tal a chance to execute the classic bishop sacrifice.)

20...Bxh2+! 21.Kxh2 (A crossroad that interests Beim.) 21...Rh5+! (This move gives white fewer defensive options. Beim shows that 21...Ng4+ leads to a complicated position after 22.Kg3! and requires precise calculations. Black still wins after 22...Rg5 23.f4 Ne3+ 24.fxg5 Qc7+!, for example 25.Nd6 Qxd6+ 26.Kh3 Bxg2+ 27.Qxg2 Qd7+ 28.Kh2 Nxg2 29.Kxg2 Re3! and white is done.) 22.Kg1 (Now after 22.Kg3 the problem is solved by 22...Ne4+ 23.Bxe4 Qh4+ 24.Kf3 Qxe4+ 25.Kg3 Qh4 mate.) 22...Ng4 (Black wins. For example, after 23.Re1 Rh1+ 24.Kxh1 Qh4+ 25.Kg1 Qh2+ 26.Kf1 Qh1 mate.) White resigned.

Beim's new book, issued by Gambit Publications, combines well-selected games and fragments with instructive problems and studies -- a trademark of Beim's previous excellent books. It also includes 100 positions for the reader to solve.

Solution to today's composition by M. Camorani (White: Kc3,Rc8,Nd5,P:c4,e2,g2; Black: Kf5,P:e3,e6,f6,h2,h5): 1.Rh8! h1Q 2.Rxh5+ Qxh5 3.g4+ Qxg4 (or 3...Kxg4 4.Nxf6+ wins.) 4.Nxe3+ Kf4 5.Nxg4 Kxg4 6.c5 wins.

Germany

Monday, August 28, 2006; C10

August was a busy month, with several spectacular chess events taking place, mostly in Europe. Let's see where some of the world's best players went and what they have done.

Germany

Vladimir Kramnik and his Russian compatriot Peter Svidler shared first place at the elite tournament in Dortmund. It was a successful tuneup for Kramnik before his world championship match against Veselin Topalov of Bulgaria, scheduled to begin Sept. 23 in Elista, Russia. In Mainz, Vishy Anand of India defended his status as the world's best player in rapid play, defeating the young Azerbaijani Teimur Radjabov 5-3.

Switzerland

The formidable former world champions Garry Kasparov and Anatoly Karpov tied for first in a four-player blitz event in Zurich, celebrating the 150th anniversary of Credit Suisse. Judit Polgar was third. The 75-year-old Viktor Korchnoi, drawing with Kasparov and losing all other games, finished last. Earlier in the month, the Muscovite Alexander Morozevich won the traditional tournament in Biel, scoring 7 1/2 points in 10 games. But Morozevich lost both games to the talented Norwegian Magnus Carlsen, who shared second place with Radjabov.

In Davos, Serbia's Borislav Ivkov, 73, won the sixth European senior championship, scoring eight points in nine games.

Czech Republic

At the CEZ Chess Trophy in Prague, the Israeli Boris Gelfand and the top Czech male, David Navara, played to a 2-2 tie. Their blitz match ended with the same score. In another match, the top Czech female, Jana Jackova, defeated the veteran grandmaster Vlastimil Hort 2 1/2 -1 1/2 . Jackova also won the blitz event with a 3 1/2 - 1/2 score.

Great Britain

Ivan Sokolov of the Netherlands won the fourth Staunton Memorial on Friday with a 9-2 score, a half point ahead of England's Michael Adams and another Dutchman, Jan Timman. The event began at the famous Simpsons in the Strand in London. The

British championship at Swansea, Wales, went for the third year in a row to Jonathan Rowson of Scotland. He scored 8 1/2 points in 11 games.

U.S. Open

Yuri Shulman, the runner-up of this year's U.S. championship, won the 107th annual U.S. Open in Chicago, scoring eight points in nine games. In one of the key games of the event, Shulman defeated the fun-loving grandmaster Alexander Shabalov in the Slav defense.

Shulman-Shabalov

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Nc3 a6 5.a4 e6 (Shabalov is turning the Slav defense into the Semi-Slav, hoping that the inclusion of the rook-pawn moves is in his favor.) 6.Bg5 h6 (The French GM Etienne Bacrot has been successful against Kramnik and Gelfand with 6...a5, fixing the queenside and gaining control of the square b4.) 7.Bh4 dxc4 (True to his style, Shabalov is unbalancing the position by giving up the center. More common is 7...Nbd7.) 8.a5!? (Shulman makes good use of his a-pawn, preventing black from supporting the pawn on c4 with b7-b5.) 8...c5 (Shabalov wants to clarify the situation in the center. After 8...Bb4 9.Qa4 Qe7 10.e3, white has the edge.) 9.Bxf6! Oxf6 10.d5 Qd8?! (Too many queen moves. 10...Nd7 was preferable.) 11.Ne5 Nd7 12.Nxc4 Be7 13.dxe6 fxe6 (The pawn on e6 gives white a clear target.) 14.g3!? (Threatening to attack the isolated pawn on e6 with 15.Bh3.) 14...b5 15.axb6 Bb7 (Shabalov often likes to shed material to activate his pieces. After 15...Nxb6 16.Qxd8+ Bxd8 17.Nd6+ Ke7 18.Nxc8+ Nxc8 19.Ne4, white is clearly better.) 16.e4 0-0 (Black can't recapture the b-pawn: After 16...Nxb6? 17.Qxd8+ Bxd8 18.Nd6+ white wins.) 17.Bh3 Rf6 18.Qb3! (Shulman calmly protects the pawn on b6. His queen is also X-raying the pawn on e6.) 18...Nb8 (Shabalov is trying to reach the square d4 with his knight. After either 18...Nf8 19.0-0; or 18...Qb8 19.f4, white has the edge.) 19.Rd1 Qf8 20.Ne5! (The pawn on e6 is in crossfire.) 20...Rxf2 21.Qxe6+ Kh7 22.0g6+ (White dominates the light squares.) 22...Kh8 23.0g4 (The threat of 24.Ng6 is sufficient to win, but 23.Rf1! is more to the point, for example 23...Rxf1+ 24.Bxf1 Qf6 and white's light bishop delivers the final blow from a different diagonal with 25.Bc4!) 23...Kh7 24.Ng6 Qf6 25.Nxe7 (White is a piece up and the game is over.) 25...Nc6 (After 25...Qxe7 26.Kxf2 wins.) 26.Ned5 Qf7 27.Nf4 Bc8 (After 27...Rxb2 28.Rd7 decides.) 28.Rd7! (A beautiful interpolation, although 28.b7 was adequate.) 28...Bxd7 29.Qxd7 Qxd7 30.Bxd7 (After 30...Rxf4 31.Bxc6 wins.) Black resigned.

Chess Journalists Awards

The Chess Journalists of America selected this column, together with David Sand's chess column in the Washington Times, as the 2006 best regular newspaper columns. They also voted George Koltanowski, Irving Chernev, Glenn Peterson and myself to the "Gallery of Distinguished Chess Journalists." Koltanowski was one of the finest chess promoters and wrote more than 19,000 columns for the San Francisco Chronicle.

Solution to today's puzzle -- mate in three -- by P. Stamma (White: Kf7,Rd1,Rf1,Nf2,P:g3; Black: Ke5,Ra6,Rg6,Nh7,P:d6,e4): 1.Ng4+! Rxg4 2.Rf5+!! Kxf5 3.Rd5 mate.

D.C.'s Atlantic Open

Monday, September 4, 2006; C12

Can experience match youthful energy? The NH Chess Tournament, played last month in the Grand Hotel Krasnapolsky in Amsterdam, provided the answer. The team of "Rising Stars" beat the team of "Experience" 28-22, in a double-round Scheveningen system event with five grandmasters on each team.

Fifteen-year-old Magnus Carlsen of Norway led the young team, composed mostly of the world's top teenagers, with 6 1/2 points in 10 games. His teammate Sergei Karjakin of Ukraine added six points. Alexander Beliavsky of Slovenia, age 52, was the only veteran with more than 50 percent, scoring 6 1/2 points. Ljubomir Ljubojevic of Serbia, 55, had 4 1/2 points. But the most brilliant victory was delivered by the English veteran John Nunn, 51, against the 21-year-old Dutchman Jan Smeets in the Spanish opening.

Nunn-Smeets

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 Nf6 4.d3 (Not allowing the Berlin defense 4. 0-0 Nxe4. In the 1990s Nunn enjoyed 4.Nc3, the Four Knights Game.) 4... Bc5 5.0-0 d6 6.c3 0-0 7.Nbd2 Bd7 (In the memorable Eurotel rapid event in Prague in 2002, world champion Vladimir Kramnik played against Czech GM Zbynek Hracek 7... a6 and after 8.Bxc6?! the power of two bishops helped launch a surprisingly powerful attack on the kingside after 8 . . . bxc6 9.Nc4 h6 10.b4 Ba7 11.Qe2 c5 12.Na5 cxb4 13.cxb4 Bd7 14.Bd2 Rb8 15.a3 c5 16.h3 cxb4 17.Bxb4 Nh5 18.Qd2 Qf6 19.Kh2 Nf4 20.Ng1 Qg6 21.f3 Be3 22.Qc2 d5! and white resigned, since after 23.exd5 Rxc4! decides. But after 7... a6, the formidable computer Hydra kept the pressure on against the young Karjakin, in Bilbao in 2004, with 8.Ba4!? and won after a long battle in 59 moves.) 8.h3 a6 9.Ba4 Ba7 10.Re1 Ne7 (A computer suggested the aggressive 10 . . . Nh5 and after either 11.d4 or 11.Nf1 to follow with 11...Qf6, preparing Nh5-f4.) 11.Bb3 Ng6 12.Nf1 h6 13.Ng3 c6 14.d4 (Controlling more squares in the center, the opening advantage goes to white.) 14... Qc7 15.Be3 Rfe8 (Hoping to neutralize the Spanish bishop with Bd7-e6.)

16.Qd2! (A simple developing move with a powerful threat 17.Bxh6!, destroying the kingside.) 16... exd4 (It is too late for 16... Be6 because white wins with a kaleidoscope of beautiful sacrifices:17.Bxh6! Bxb3 18.Bxg7! Nh7 [After 18... Kxg7 19.Nf5+ Kg8 20.Qh6 Nh5 21.g4 or 21.Qxh5 wins.]19.axb3 Kxg7 20.Qh6+!! Kh8 [On

20...Kxh6 21.Nf5+ Kh5 22.g4 mates.] 21.Nh5 Rg8 22.Ng5 Ngf8 23.Qxd6!! Rc8! [After 23...Qxd6 24.Nxf7 mates.] 24.Qxe5+ f6 25.Qxc7 Rxc7 26.Nxh7 Nxh7 27.g4 and with four pawns for a piece white should win.)

17.Bxd4! (The bishop sacrifice 17.Bxh6 is met by 17...dxc3 18.Qxc3 d5! to counter 19.Bxg7? with 19...Qxg3!, winning.) 17...Bxd4 18.cxd4 c5?! (Opposing the dangerous Spanish bishop with 18...Be6 was preferable.) 19.Rac1 b6 20.Qc3 (The queen supports the advance of the e-pawn. After 20.Qc2, threatening 21.e5 dxe5 22.Qxg6, black plays 22...Nf4.) 20...Qb7 (The computer suggested the provocative 20...Bc6, but after 21.e5 dxe5 22.Nxe5 white has strong pressure.) 21.dxc5 dxc5 22.e5 (Creating a potent outpost for his knight on the square d6.) 22...Nd5 23.Qd2 Ndf4 24.Rc4? (Nunn wants to include the rook in the kingside attack, but gives black a chance to fight back. The immediate leap 24.Ne4 -- threatening to win material with 25.Nd6 -- is stronger.) 24...Ne6? (An unfortunate slip. Smeets missed his last chance: 24...Nxh3+! 25.Kh2 [25.gxh3 Qxf3 26.Qxd7?! Nxe5 is to black's favor.] 25...Rad8 26.Qe3 Ng5 27.Nxg5 hxg5 28.Qxg5 Be6 29.Rce4 Qe7 30.Qh5 Rd4 with a defensible position.) 25.Ne4 Qc7 (Allowing white a pretty finish.)

26.Nf6+! (The red carpet was prepared for the white knight on the square d6, but Nunn always liked a direct attack on the king. His last move destroys the pawn blanket that securely hugs the black king.) 26...gxf6 27.Qxh6 f5 (The only move. After 27...fxe5 comes 28.Rg4! with numerous threats.) 28.Nh4 Bb5 (After 28...Nef8 white has several choices how to win, but 29.Rxc5 Qxc5 [Or 29...bxc5 30.Nxg6 Nxg6 31.Qxg6+ Kh8 32.Qh6+ Kg8 33.Re3 winning.] 30.Nxg6 Nxg6 31.Qxg6+ Kh8 32.Qh5+ Kg7 33.Qxf7+ Kh6 34.Qf6+ Kh7 35.Qh4+ Kg6 36.Re3 is rather convincing.)

29.Nxf5! Rad8 (Taking the exchange 29...Bxc4 gives white an irresistible attack after 30.Bxc4 Nxe5 31.Re4!, for example 31...Rad8 32.Rh4 Rd1+ 33.Bf1 Rxf1+ 34.Kxf1 f6 35.Qh8+ Kf7 36.Rh7+ Kg6 37.Nh4+ Kg5 38.Rh5+ Kf4 39.Qxe8 white has a material advantage and the king's hunt continues.) 30.Rg4 c4 31.Bc2 (The bishop X-rays the square h7.) 31...Rd5 (After 31...Rd3 white wins with 32.h4, followed by 33.h5.) 32.Rh4! (Nailing the victory. After 32...Nxh4 33.Ne7+! Qxe7 34.Qh7+ Kf8 35.Qh8 mates.) Black resigned.

D.C.'s Atlantic Open

Eugene Perelshteyn, a new American grandmaster and former captain of the UMBC powerhouse college team, won the 38th Atlantic Open, scoring 4 1/2 points in five games. The event, played in downtown Washingon's Wyndham Hotel Aug. 25-27, attracted 355 players in various sections.

Solution to today's study by S. Isenegger (White: Kd5,Rb4,Ng7; Black: Kc7,Rh7): 1.Ne8+ Kc8 2.Nd6+ Kd8 3.Rb8+ Kd7 4.Rb7+ Kd8 5.Nf7+ Kc8 (Or 5...Ke8 6.Ke6 Kf8 7.Kf6 Ke8 8.Re7+ Kf8 9.Rd7 Kg8 10.Rd8 mate.) 6.Kc6 Rg7 7.Nd6+ Kd8 8.Rb8+ Ke7 9.Nf5+ Kf6 10.Nxg7 wins.

CHESSLubomir Kavalek

By Lubomir Kavalek Monday, September 11, 2006; C12

Yasser Seirawan's "Winning Chess Combinations," recently issued by Everyman Chess, is a new fascinating book in his Winning Chess series. How to define a combination turned into a big debate in the last century. Some experts believed that a combination is a sequence of forced moves leading to an advantage. Others, including the former world champion Mikhail Botvinnik, maintained that a sacrifice must be always present in a combination. The young Seirawan joked that he always wanted to sacrifice his opponent's pieces and keep his own, but hiding behind these words was a player with excellent tactical skills.

Smoked-Salmon Chess

As in his previous books, Seirawan tackles his subject by first explaining the basic ideas and patterns and subsequently discussing some of the most complex and brilliant performances of the world's leading players. Garry Kasparov's "immortal" game against Veselin Topalov, played in the Dutch town of Wijk aan Zee in 1999, is one of the masterpieces analyzed in great detail. Kasparov turned a double rook sacrifice into a vicious king's hunt, but at one point missed a shorter and more brilliant finish. After I published the improvement in this column, Seirawan was impressed and sent me a box of smoked salmon posthaste. It was the first and last time my chess move was rewarded with a fish.

To explain the classic bishop sacrifice, Seirawan chose another Kasparov game for his new book, and I immediately smelled another salmon. It was the controversial fifth game from his 2003 match against Deep Junior that angered the New York fans after it ended in 19 moves with a boring move repetition. Kasparov allowed the bishop sacrifice and later lacked the courage to play for a win. What he really feared and saw during the game is still a mystery.

Kasparov-Deep Junior

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.e3 0-0 5.Bd3 d5 6.cxd5 exd5 7.Nge2 Re8 8.0-0 Bd6 9.a3 c6 10.Qc2? Bxh2+! 11.Kxh2 (The Hungarian grandmaster Joseph Horvath reached this position via a different move order in 1989 and thought that black can force a

draw.) 11...Ng4+ 12.Kg3 Qg5 13.f4 Qh5 14.Bd2 (Suggested by Carsten Hansen in his 2002 Gambit Publications book "The Nimzo-Indian 4.e3," as an improvement to Horvath's 14.Ng1?! Qh2+ 15.Kf3 Qh5 18.Kg3 repeating the moves.) 14...Qh2+ 15.Kf3 Qh4 (Threatening 16...Nh2 mate. The game concluded with a repetition of moves: 16.Bxh7+ Kh8 17.Ng3 Nh2+ 18.Kf2 Ng4+ 19.Kf3 Nh2+ draw. Instead of 16.Bxh7+ Kasparov could have made the game fun to watch with 16.g3. The following analyses were published in this column shortly after the game.)

16.g3!? Qh2! (Tightening the mating net.) 17.f5 (A more exciting draw than in the actual game could be achieved after 17.Rae1 g6 [threatening 18...Nxe3! 19.Bxe3 Bg4+! 20.Kxg4 Qh5 mate] 18.f5 Nd7! 19.e4 [The only move, otherwise white gets mated either after 19.Kxg4 Qh5+ 20.Kf4 g5 mate; or after 19.fxg6 Nde5+! 20.dxe5 Nxe5+ 21.Kf4 Qh6 mate.] 19...dxe4+ 20.Nxe4 gxf5 21.N4c3 Re3+!? 22.Bxe3 Nde5+ 23.dxe5 Nxe5+ 24.Kf4 Qh6+ 25.Kxe5 Qg7+ 26.Kd6 Qf8+ draw by a perpetual check. This variation should be corrected: Instead of 21...Re3+, black can play 21...c5!, for example 22.Bf4 b5!, threatening 23...Bb7+ with good winning chances.) 17...Nd7! (The key move to black's triple-piece sacrifice. Threatening 18...Nde5+! 19.dxe5 Nxe5+ 20.Kf4 Qh6 mate, it forces white to accept the first gift. Seirawan claims that Kasparov saw this move and its consequences during the game, but at the postmortem Kasparov only talked about 17...h5.) 18.Kxg4 Qg2! (Not allowing the white king to drop back.) 19.Kf4 (After 19.Rh1 Nf6+ 20.Kh4 h6! 21.Rag1 Bxf5! 22.Rxg2 g5 mates.) 19...Nf6 20.e4! dxe4 21.Bxe4 (Prompting black to sacrifice a rook and a bishop.)

21...Rxe4+! (This spectacular sacrifice, suggested by Deep Junior, began to circulate on the Internet only a few days after the game. On 21...Nxe4 22.Nxe4 Qxe2 23.Rae1! wins.) 22.Nxe4 Nd5+ 23.Ke5 (The white king is forced to walk into a lion's den. After 23.Kg4? Qxe2+ 24.Kh3 Ne3 black wins.) 23...Bxf5!! (Black quickly brings in his rook, speeding up the attack. Seirawan writes that 24.Rxf5 is now a forced capture. "Is the position after 24.Rxf5 good or bad for White?" he asks the reader. The answer was published in this column shortly after the game. Here goes...) 24.Rxf5? (The best defense, 24.Nf4!, is so complicated that it could fill another column. Seirawan does not even mention it. On the other hand, 24.Kxf5 loses to 24...Qh3+ 25.g4 [or 25.Kg5 h6 mate] 25...Re8 and white is mated soon, e.g. 26.Nf4 g6+ 27.Nxg6 fxg6+ 28.Kg5 h6+ 29.Kxg6 Qxg4+ 30.Kxh6 Qh4+ 31.Kg6 Ne7 mate.) 24...Re8+ 25.Kd6 Rd8+! (Seirawan shows 25...Qxe2 26.Re5?? Rd8+ 27.Kc5 Qb5 mate.) 26.Ke5 (On 26.Kc5 Qxe2 27.Nd6 b6+ 28.Kxc6 Rxd6+! wins.) 26...Qxe2 27.Re1 (Black also wins after 27.Raf1 Nb4!; or after 27.Rxf7 Ne3!) 27...Ne7!! 28.Rf6 (On 28.Rxe2 Ng6 mates.) 28...Rd5+ 29.Kf4 Rf5+! 30.Rxf5 Ng6+ 31. Kg5 h6 mate.

Do I get another salmon, Yasser?

Solution to today's study by S. Isenegger (White: Kb6,P:f6,h3; Black: Kb8,P:a6,c5,f7): 1.h4! c4 2.h5 c3 3.h6 c2 4.h7 c1Q 5.h8Q+ Qc8 6.Qh2+ Ka8 7.Qg2+ Kb8 8.Qg3+ Ka8 9.Qf3+ Kb8 10.Qf4+ Ka8 11.Qe4+ Kb8 12.Qe7! Qe6+ 13.Qxe6 fxe6 14.f7 wins.

CHESS

By Lubomir Kavalek Monday, September 18, 2006; C12

Alexander Grischuk won the World Blitz championship in the Israeli town of Rishon Le Zion this month. He defeated Peter Svidler in a playoff game after both Russian grandmasters shared first place in the 16-player round-robin final with 10 1/2 points. They edged India's Vishy Anand and Teimur Radjabov of Azerbaijan by half a point. Hungary's Judit Polgar and Boris Gelfand of Israel finished with 9 1/2 points. These six players outclassed the rest of the field.

The championship was decided among the top four finishers. Anand and Radjabov beat Svidler, but both lost to Grischuk. Anand, one of the fastest players, dominates the other world-class players in rapid games with roughly a 30-minute-pergame time limit. The Indian grandmaster is more vulnerable in the five-minute blitz games. Still, had he beaten Grischuk in their individual game, Anand would have won the championship. But the Moscow grandmaster dictated the tempo of the game from the beginning, unveiling a surprising novelty in the Spanish opening by Move 10. Grischuk's enterprising piece sacrifice five moves later threw the game into turmoil.

Grischuk-Anand

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 b5 6.Bb3 Bc5 (The modern Moller variation is a popular choice of the current U.S. champion Alexander Onischuk and the FIDE world champion Veselin Topalov. We can only speculate that this was one of the reasons why Onischuk was added to Topalov's team for the world championship match against Vladimir Kramnik that begins next Saturday.) 7.a4 Rb8 8.c3 0-0 9.d4 Bb6 (Grischuk now comes up with a surprise that is well suited for a blitz game.)

10.a5!? (White tries either to push the black pieces back or to divert them from the center. Grischuk was obviously familiar with the game T. Kosintseva- Skripchenko from this year's olympiad in Turin, where white played 10.dxe5 Ng4 and only now 11.a5. By playing 10.a5 immediately, Grischuk eliminates 10...Bxa5?, since after 11.d5 white wins a piece.) 10...Ba7 (After this retreat white fortifies his center. Grabbing the a-pawn with 10...Nxa5 is crucial, but tough to calculate with a limited time. It is not clear what Grischuk intended, but even the exchange sacrifice 11.Rxa5 Bxa5 12.dxe5 Ng4 [12...Nxe4? 13.Bd5 Nc5 14.b4 loses a piece.] 13.h3 Nh6 14.Bg5

gives white plenty of play with the black pieces scattered all over the board.) 11.Re1!? d6 12.h3 (Preventing 12...Bg4.) 12...Re8! (Black has to be aggressive and attack white's e-pawn. Preventing the Bc1-g5 pin with 12...h6 allows white to secure the center with 13.Be3 Qe7 14.Nbd2.) 13.Bg5 h6 14.Bh4 g5 (Anand probably realized that after 14...exd4 15.cxd4 g5, white does not have to play 16.Nxg5? hxg5 17.Bxg5 Nxd4 with black's advantage, but can try 16.d5 instead.)

15.Nxg5?! (The sacrifice, maintaining the bishop pin, is spectacular but not necessary. First of all, white almost has a draw in hand with 15.Qd2!? gxh4 [Not 15...Nh5? 16.Nxg5! hxg5 17.Bxg5 Qd7 18.Bd1! Nf4 19.Bg4 f5 20.exf5 with white's edge.] 16.Qxh6 Qe7 17.Ng5 Nd8 18.Qg6+ draw by a perpetual check. Second, he can try 15.Bg3 exd4 16.Qc2!, since 16...dxc3? 17.e5!, threatening 18.Qg6+, leads to white's edge.) 15...hxg5 16.Bxg5 exd4 17.Bd5!? (Finding the best chance, since 17.cxd4 Nxd4 is hopeless for white. And after 17.Qf3 Kg7 18.Qg3, black can calmly defend with 18...Be6!?, or even better with 18...Nh5! 19.Qh4 f6!, for example 20.Qxh5 fxg5 21.Qf7+ Kh6; or 20.Bc1 Rh8 and black should win.) 17...Bd7 (From this square, the bishop can help on the kingside.) 18.cxd4!? (Opening the third rank for his queenside rook.) 18...Nxd4! 19.Ra3! Re5 20.Bh4 (After 20.Rg3 black defends with 20...Kh7! 21.Qc1 Be8! 22.Qf4 Nh5 23.Qh4 f6 and wins.) 20...Be6 21.Rg3+ Kh7!? (The best. After 21...Kf8 white can try to stir trouble with 22.Qc1.)

22.Nd2!? (Grischuk tries to confuse Anand, and it works. After the logical 22.Bxe6 Rxe6 23.Bxf6 Qxf6 24.Qh5+ Qh6 25.Qxf7+ Kh8 26.Qxc7 Qh7 black beats the attack.) 22...Bxd5? (Black makes a losing blunder. He should have played 22...Qh8!?, for example 23.Nf3 Nxf3+ 24.Qxf3 Nxd5 25.Bg5 Qg7 26.Qh5+ Kg8 27.Qh4 Bf5 28.Bh6 Qxg3 29.Qxg3+ Bg6 with advantage.) 23.exd5 Rxe1+ (After 23...Nf5 24.Rxe5 Nxg3 25.Re1! white's attack flows smoothly, for example 25...Ngh5 26.Ne4 Qh8 27.Qf3 Bd4 28.Nxf6+ Nxf6 29.Qd3+; or 25...Nf5 26.Qc2 Kg6 27.g4 and white wins.) 24.Qxe1 Nf5?! (This move loses quickly, but even after 24...Qe8 25.Qb1+ Kh6 26.Bxf6 Ne2+ 27.Kh2 Nxg3 28.fxg3 Qe3 29.Nf3 Rg8 30.Qf5 Rg6 31.g4!; or after 24...Qh8 25.Ne4 white wins.) 25.Qb1! (Another pin decides the game.) 25...Ne4 26.Qxe4 Qxh4 27.Qxf5+ Kh8 28.Rg4 Qh6 29.Nf3 (Threatening 30.Rh4.) Black resigned.

Virginia Championships

Andrew Samuelson won the 70th Virginia Closed Championship in Richmond this month. He scored five points in six games. Two teenage girls, Abby Marshall and Ettie Nikolova, shared second place with two former Virginia champions, Daniel Miller and Macon Shibut, all finishing with 4 1/2 points. The amateur championship went to Carson Wang, who notched up 5 1/2 points.

Solution to today's study by S. Isenegger (White: Ka8,Nc7,P:a4; Black: Kc5,P:a5): 1.Na6+ Kb6 2.Nb8 Kc5 3.Nd7+ Kc6 4.Ne5+ Kc5 5.Nd3+ Kc4 6.Nb2+ Kb3 7.Ka7 wins.

CHESS Lubomir Kavalek

By Lubomir Kavalek Monday, September 25, 2006; C11

Vladimir Kramnik of Russia began the world championship match against Veselin Topalov of Bulgaria with two stunning victories in the first two games. The 12-game reunification match in Elista, Russia, scheduled to finish on Oct. 12, will establish the ultimate world champion. Topalov is already in a big hole and despite his ability to win several games in a row in tournaments, overcoming such a large deficit in a short match will be difficult.

Objectively, Topalov created enough chances with his aggressive, imaginative play to lead 1 1/2 to 1/2. Still, Kramnik was somehow able to deflect everything Topalov threw at him, from little pawns to heavy queens. In the first game, Topalov sacrificed a pawn, tied up Kramnik's pieces and was in command in the endgame before blundering and losing in 75 moves. Yesterday, in one of the most dramatic games in the history of world championships, Topalov tackled Kramnik's Slav defense by launching a promising attack against the black king. Kramnik tried to stand tall, but was quickly outnumbered by the white forces. He was kept in the game by Topalov's slips. First, the Bulgarian missed a few wins and later did not manage to hold draws. Kramnik won in 63 moves.

The third game of the match will be played tomorrow.

World Champion Korchnoi

The legendary Viktor Korchnoi, 75, won the 16th World Senior Championship Friday in Arvier, Italy. He scored nine points in 11 games, edging the Czech grandmaster Vlastimil Jansa by half a point. The best American players were Stuart Wagman, at 87 the oldest participant, and the local Silver Spring master Bill Hook, both finishing with 6 points. Ludmila Saunina won the World Senior Women's championship with 8 1/2 points.

Jansa secured the second place with a last-round win, a positional masterpiece in the Spanish opening, against the Latvian grandmaster Janis Klovans. After locking up the center with a dominating knight, white launched a devastating attack on the kingside.

Jansa-Klovans

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 Be7 6.Re1 b5 7.Bb3 d6 8.c3 0-0 9.h3 Bb7 10.d4 Re8 11.Nbd2 Bf8 12.d5!? (One of the most unpleasant variations against the Zaitsev Spanish.) 12...Nb8 13.Nf1 Nbd7 14.N3h2 Nc5 15.Bc2 c6!? (Undermining the center is the best alternative. The fight for control of the square d5 begins.) 16.b4 Ncd7 17.dxc6 Bxc6 18.Bg5!? (Kasparov once played 18.Ng4, but Jansa's move is more to the point: White has better chances to exchange more black pieces that can control the square d5.)

18...Qc7 (Breaking the unpleasant pin with 18...h6 leaves black without counterplay after 19.Bxf6 Nxf6 20.Ng4 Nxg4 21.Qxg4, since the freeing attempt 21...d5?! backfires. For instance, the game McShane-Stefansson, Reykjavik 2003, continued 22.exd5 Qxd5 23.Bb3 Qd7 24.Qh5 a5 25.bxa5 Qe7 26.Ne3 Rxa5 27.Ng4 Rd8 28.Nxe5 and black resigned.

(The clever alternative 18...Qc8 from the game Almasi-Bacrot, Szeged 2000, netted black a pawn after 19.Bxf6 Nxf6 20.Ng4 Nxg4 21.hxg4 Bd7 22.Ne3 Qxc3, but after 23.Nd5 Qc6 24.Bb3 Qb7 25.g5 Be6 26.Re3 Rec8 27.Qh5, white got a powerful attack and won in 34 moves.

(In a 2002 Czech game, Jansa-Stocek, black fought for freedom with 18...Be7 19.Bxf6 Nxf6 20.Ng4 d5?! But after 21.Nxe5 Bb7, Jansa found a winning combination, 22.Nxf7! Kxf7 23.e5 Ne4 24.Rxe4! dxe4 25.Bb3+ Kg6 26.Qg4+ Kh6, and now instead of 27.Ng3, he could have played 27.Rd1 Qc7 28.Ne3! with a decisive attack: for example, 28...Bc8 29.Qxe4 Rb8 30.e6 g6 31.Ng4+ Kg7 32.Qd4+ and white mates; or 28...g6 29.Qe6! Kg7 [After 29...Bc8 30.Nf5+ white wins soon.] 30.Rd7 Qc6 31.Rxe7+ Rxe7 32.Qxe7+ Kh8 33.Be6! wins.)

19.Bxf6 Nxf6 20.Ng4 Nxg4 21.hxg4 (This position was tested in a few correspondence games with acceptable results for black. The aggressive 21...Bb7 22.Qf3 Rac8 23.Bb3 [23.Re3!?] 23...d5!? looks the best, for example 24.Bxd5 Bxd5 25.exd5 Qxc3 and black is without problems.) 21...Rac8 22.Bb3 Bd7?! (This retreat is passive, and Klovans will soon be smothered. He should have considered a flamboyant pawn sacrifice 22...d5!? 23.exd5 Bd7, increasing the range of his dark bishop.) 23.Rc1 Be7 24.Ne3 Bg5 25.Nd5 Qb8 26.Rc2 (With a dominant knight on d5, white can switch his attention to the black king.) 26...Rc6 27.g3 Qc8 28.f3 Be6 29.Qd3 Bd8 30.Kg2 Qb7 31.Rh1 Be7 32.Kf1 (Preparing to double the rooks on the h-file.) 32...Rec8 33.Rch2 h6 (Stopping the attack only temporarily.)

34.Qe3! (An excellent way to break through the black defense, threatening 35.Rxh6!) 34...Kf8 (After 34...Bg5 35.Qxg5! wins.) 35.g5! h5 (Loses outright and so does 35...Bxg5 36.Qxg5! Black can only prolong the game with 35...Kg8 36.gxh6 g6 37.h7+ Kh8, but after 38.f4! white should win.) 36.Rxh5 (White has a pawn more and the attack.) 36...Ke8 37.Rh8+ Kd7 38.Rxc8 Kxc8 39.Rh8+ Kd7 40.g6 fxg6 41.Nxe7 (After 41...Kxe7 42.Qg5+ black is mated soon; and 41...Bxb3 42.Nxc6 is hopeless for black.) Black resigned.

Today's puzzle (White: Kg1,Rf1,P:c7,h2; Black: Kh7,Ra2,Nf2,P:f3) was inspired by a side variation from the first game between Kramnik and Topalov. Black mates in four moves: 1...Nh3+ 2.Kh1 Rg2! 3.c8Q Rg1+! 4.Rxg1 Nf2 mate.

CHESS Lubomir Kavalek

By Lubomir Kavalek Monday, October 2, 2006; C10

The World Chess Championship match between Russia's Vladimir Kramnik and Bulgaria's Veselin Topalov in Elista, Russia, turned into a farce last Thursday. With Kramnik leading 3-1, Topalov's manager, Silvio Danailov, moved the battle outside of the chessboard. He protested Kramnik's frequent toilet visits during the games, implying cheating. Without any proof, the appeals committee, consisting mostly of Danailov's friends, ordered Kramnik's toilet room closed. Kramnik considered it a breach of the rules and a baseless invasion of his privacy. He did not play Game 5 on Friday and was forfeited. But the Bulgarian Toilet Gambit did not quite work. Yesterday, the appeals committee resigned and the rest areas were returned to the status quo ante. The \$1 million 12-game match should resume, in our opinion, with the score 3-1 in Kramnik's favor.

Magnificent Flaws

The second game between Topalov and Kramnik could be the most important game of the match because all three results -- a win, loss and draw -- were possible. The mistakes made in the highly entertaining Slav defense game added to the drama.

Topalov-Kramnik

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 dxc4 5.a4 Bf5 (The Czech system of the Slav defense.) 6.e3 e6 7.Bxc4 Bb4 8.0-0 Nbd7 9.Qe2 Bg6 10.e4!? (Played 60 years ago by Cenek Kottnauer against Vassily Smyslov in the match Prague-Moscow, the pawn sacrifice has enough venom after 10...Bxc3 11.bxc3 Nxe4 12.Ba3. Today it is often declined.) 10...0-0 11.Bd3 Bh5 12.e5 Nd5 13.Nxd5 cxd5 14.Qe3 Bg6 15.Ng5 Re8 16.f4 (White has a simple plan to roll on the kingside with g2-g4 and f4-f5. Kramnik finds a new way to stop it.) 16...Bxd3 17.Qxd3 f5 (Blocking the kingside, but not for long.) 18.Be3 Nf8 19.Kh1 Rc8 (Heavily criticized, but perhaps unjustly. After the recommended 19...Be7, white opens the g-file anyway after 20.Nf3 Rc8 21.Rg1 Qd7 22.g4.)

20.g4! (Speeding up the attack along the g-file since 20...fxg4 allows 21.f5!; and 20...h6 can be met by 21.Nxe6!? Rxe6 22.gxf5 Re7 23.Rg1 with a strong pressure along the g-file.) 20...Qd7 21.Rg1 Be7 22.Nf3 Rc4 23.Rg2! (A pawn sacrifice, preparing the doubling of the rooks.) 23...fxg4 (Kramnik decides to win a pawn. After 23...Rec8 24.h4! Kh8 25.Rag1 g6 26.h5 is dangerous for black.) 24.Rxg4 Rxa4 25.Rag1 g6 (This forced move gives white an excellent target. After 25...Ng6 26.h4 Bf8 27.Ng5 h6 [or 27...Rb4 28.Nxh7!] 28.Qxg6 hxg5 29.Rxg5 Qf7 30.Qh6 Qc7 31.f5, white's attack breaks through.) 26.h4 Rb4 27.h5 Qb5 (Desperately trying to take the queens off the board to slow white's assault. After 27...Rxb2 28.hxg6 h5 29.R4g3 Kg7 30.f5! exf5 31.Bh6+! Kxh6 32.g7 white wins.) 28.Qc2! Rxb2? (Allowing Topalov to sacrifice his queen. Kramnik based this move on a

miscalculation. It looks like black can defend with 28...Rb3 29.hxg6 h5 30.g7 hxg4 31.gxf8Q+ Kxf8 32.Qh7 Qd3!, but white can improve with 30.R4g2!, for example 30...Qd3 31.g7 Nd7 32.Qxd3 Rxd3 33.Rh2! Kf7 [or 33...Rxe3 34.Rxh5 Kf7 35.Nh2! wins] 34.Re2! Kg8 Rg8 35.f5!, punching through. Kramnik suggested after the game 28...Qc4, but after 29.Qh2 Qd3 30.hxg6 Nxg6 31.Qh5!, threatening 32.Rxg6+ white wins.)

29..hxg6!! h5 (Accepting the queen 29...Rxc2 loses to 30.gxh7+ Kxh7 31.Rg7+ Kh8 32.Rg8+ Kh7 33.R1g7+ Kh6 34.f5+ Bg5 35.Rxg5 and the black king is in a mating net. Kramnik thought that after 29...Nxg6 30.Rxg6+? Kh8! black wins. Only at the last moment he saw the queen sacrifice 30.Qxg6+!! hxg6 31.Rxg6+ Kh7 32.R6g3 and black does not have a good defense against 33.Rh3 mate.) 30.g7!! hxg4 (After 30...Rxc2 31.gxf8Q+ Kxf8 32.Rg8+ Kf7 33.R1g7 mates. And after 30...Nh7 31.Qg6 hxg4 32.Qxe6+ Kxg7 33.Qxg4+ Ng5 34.Nxg5 white wins.) 31.gxf8Q+ Bxf8? (A careless move that should have been punished. Topalov saw 31...Kxf8 32.Qg6 Qe2 and thought that he should take a draw with 33.Qh6+, because after 33.Qxg4 black defends with the incredible 33... Bg5!, blunting white's attack. The Bulgarian was happy that Kramnik played something else and moved quickly.)

32.Qg6+? (Both sides overlooked that after 32.Rxg4+ Bg7 the queen delivers the fatal blow from the other wing along the seventh rank: 33.Qc7! threatening 34.Qxg7 mate; and after 33...Qf1+ 34.Ng1 the game is over.) 32...Bg7 33.f5! (Missed by Kramnik.) 33...Re7 (After 33...exf5 34.Ng5 Qc6 35.Qf7+ Kh8 36.e6 Re2 37.Rc1 white wins.) 34.f6 Qe2 35.Qxg4 Rf7 36.Rc1? (The computers show that white could win with 36.Qh5!, for example 36...Qxe3 37.Ng5; or 36...Rb3 37.Rxg7+ Rxg7 38.fxg7 Rb1+ 39.Bg1 white wins. After a waiting move, say 36...a5, white lifts the rook to the third rank 37.Rg3! with the idea 37...a4 [after 37...Qxe3 38.fxg7 wins]. 38.fxg7 Rxg7 39.Qe8+ Kh7 40.Rh3 mate.) 36...Rc2 37.Rxc2 (Heading to the endgame. We will look at the rest of the game next week. Here it is without comments.) 37...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 White resigned .

Solution to today's two-mover by B. Pustovoy (White: Kg3,Rf6,Ne6,P:g5; Black: Kh5,Ng6): 1.Rf5! and 2.Nf4 mate.

CHESS Lubomir Kavalek

By Lubomir Kavalek Monday, October 9, 2006; C12

The World Chess Championship between Veselin Topalov and Vladimir Kramnik in Elista, Russia, is tied 5-5. With two games remaining in the match, Kramnik's victory yesterday in the tenth game is huge. If the match ends with a 6-6 tie, a tiebreak for the world title is scheduled for Friday, Oct. 13.

The Agony of Forfeit

The legendary world champion Boris Spassky was recently in San Francisco, giving a series of lectures and playing a simultaneous exhibition at the Mechanics Institute. On Oct. 1, Spassky suffered a mild stroke, but recovered well. He flew home to France Saturday.

Spassky was the last player to win a world championship game by forfeit. During the 1972 world championship in Reykjavik, Iceland, Bobby Fischer protested the filming of the match and forfeited the second game. Spassky could have walked away with the match victory, but gave in to Fischer's demands and continued to play. After 10 games Fischer led 6½-3½ and won the world title in 21 games with the score 12½ to 8½.

Topalov's protests in Elista over Kramnik's restroom visits were clearly aimed to disturb his opponent. Forfeiting Kramnik in the fifth game underscores Topalov's unsportsmanlike behavior and the unprofessional conduct of the FIDE officials. Last week, we expected the match to resume with the score 3-1 in Kramnik's favor, but the FIDE president, Kirsan Ilyumzhinov, awarded the forfeit point to Topalov. Suddenly the score was 3-2. Many leading grandmasters, including the notorious rivals Viktor Korchnoi and Anatoly Karpov, believed that Kramnik should not have continued the match. Instead, Kramnik played and drew two games before suffering two consecutive losses. It looked as if Topalov was going to coast to a match victory, but Kramnik bounced back and tied the match yesterday.

The Endgame

Today we will continue the analysis of Game 2 between Topalov and Kramnik. After surviving the rollercoaster in the first 36 moves, the players headed for the endgame.

Topalov-Kramnik

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+ Bxf8 32.Qg6+ Bg7 33.f5 Re7 34.f6 Qe2 35.Qxg4 Rf7 36.Rc1 Rc2 37.Rxc2 (This is the position we abandoned last week. In order to survive,

Kramnik has to exchange the queens. But when and how shall he do it? The players still had a few moves to make the time control.)

37...Qd1+ (Kramnik picks up the rook with a check. The immediate 37...Qxc2 was worth trying, for example 38.Ng5 Qb1+ 39.Kh2 Qc2+ 40.Kh3 Qd3 41.Qf3 Bh6! 42.Nxf7 Qxe3 43.Qxe3 Bxe3 44.Nd8 b5! is fine for black.) 38.Kg2 Qxc2+ 39.Kg3 Qe4 (Another choice was 39...Qf5, but hard to calculate after 40.Qxf5 exf5 41.fxg7 f4+ 42.Bxf4 Rxg7+ 43.Kf2 a5.) 40.Bf4 (Swapping the queens 40.Qxe4 dxe4 and playing 41.Ng5 was recommended. After 41...Bh6 42.Nxf7 Bxe3 43.Nd8 a5 44.d5! white breaks through and wins; and after 41...Bf8 42.Nxe6 white's pawn avalanche is dangerous. But is white winning easily after 41...Rxf6 42.exf6 Bxf6 or after 41...Bxf6 42.Nxf7 Kxf7 43.exf6 a5 44.Kf4 Kxf6?) 40...Qf5 41.Qxf5?! (The time control was over and Topalov was probably still thinking about a win, since he had a forced draw after 41.Ng5 Rc7 42.Nxe6! Rc3+ 43.Kh4 Qh7+ 44.Kg5 Qh6+ 45.Kf5 Qh7+ etc.)

41...exf5 42.Bg5?! (Topalov decided to protect his f-pawn, but he was now fighting for a draw. After 42.Ng5 the play is forced: 42...Rc7 43.Ne6 [43.fxg7 a5!] 43...Rc3+ 44.Kh4 Bxf6+ 45.exf6 Kf7 46.Nc7 a5! [not 46...Kxf6? 47.Nxd5+ winning] and black is fine.) 42...a5! 43.Kf4 (After 43.fxg7 Rxg7 44.Kf4 a4 black is better.) 43...a4 44.Kxf5 a3 45.Bc1! (Stopping the a-pawn with the knight is worse, for example 45.Nd2 Rc7 46.Nb3 a2 47.e6 Bxf6 48.Kxf6 Kf8 49.Ke5 Rc2 50.Kxd5 Rb2 51.Bh6+ Ke8 52.Na1 Rb1 53.Nc2 b5 54.Ke5 b4 55.d5 b3 56.d6 Rd1 and black wins.) 45...Bf8 46.e6 Rc7 47.Bxa3 (After 47.e7 Bxe7 48.fxe7 Rxe7 49.Bxa3 the fork 49...Re3 decides.) 47...Bxa3 48.Ke5 Rc1 49.Ng5 Rf1?! (Missing 49...Rg1 and only after 50.Nf7 Rf1!, winning easily.) 50.e7 Re1+ 51.Kxd5 Bxe7 52.fxe7 Rxe7 53.Kd6 Re1? (Using computer endgame tables, John Nunn pointed out a win: 53...Re3! 54.d5 Kf8 55.Kd7 b5 56.Ne6+ Kg8 57.d6 b4 58.Nc5 Kf7 59.Kc6 Rc3 60.Kb5 b3 61.Na4 Rc2 62.d7 Ke7 followed by 63...b2. Kramnik's move gets the rook out of the knight's range. Nunn's move limits the knight and supports the advance of the b-pawn.)

54.d5 Kf8 55.Ne6+? (Elbowing the black king with 55.Kd7! draws, for example 55...b5 56.Ne6+ Kf7 57.Nd8+ Kf6 58.Nc6 Rb1 59.Kd6! b4 60.Kc5! b3 61.Kb4 the white king chases the b-pawn and wins it.) 55...Ke8 56.Nc7+ Kd8 57.Ne6+ Kc8 58.Ke7 Rh1! 59.Ng5?! (After 59.Nf8 Rh8! 60.d6 Rxf8! 61.Kxf8 Kd7 black wins, but 59.Kd6 would have made it more difficult for black.) 59...b5 60.d6 Rd1 61.Ne6 b4 62.Nc5 Re1+ 63.Kf6 Re3 White resigned.

Solution to today's two-mover by L. Kubbel (White: Kb7,Qf4,Bf8,P:c2; Black: Kb5,P:a5,c5): 1.Qe3 Kc4(or 2...a4) 2.Qxc5 mate; or 1...c4 2.Qe8 mate; or 1...Kb4 2.Qb3 mate.

CHESS Lubomir Kavalek

By Lubomir Kavalek Monday, October 16, 2006; C12

Vladimir Kramnik of Russia is the undisputed chess champion of the world. He defeated Bulgaria's Veselin Topalov on Friday in the \$1 million World Chess Championship in Elista, Russia. After the regular 12 games finished in a 6-6 tie Thursday between the 31-year-old players, Kramnik won the rapid-game tiebreak 2 1/2 -1 1/2. The match unified the world title and ended the schism in the chess world that began in my kitchen 13 years ago.

The Kitchen Debacle

On Feb. 23, 1993, FIDE President Florencio Campomanes announced Manchester, England, as the venue for the world championship match between Nigel Short and Garry Kasparov. That day Short was unavailable, crossing on a ferry from Italy to Greece. Instead of Manchester, the English grandmaster preferred two bids from London. By not consulting Short, Campomanes broke FIDE rules. Suddenly, Short had a reason to pursue the bids from London even at the cost of breaking up with FIDE -- provided Kasparov agreed. When Short contemplated how to reach Kasparov, I pointed to the phone in my kitchen and said: "Call Kasparov in Linares directly." Kasparov answered Short's call in Spain shortly after midnight on March 3. In a 13-minute conversation they discussed for the first time playing their match outside FIDE. Kasparov later called it one of the biggest mistakes of his chess career. Not only did they get less money in London, but they began the 13-year split of the world titles that ended only last Friday with Kramnik's victory.

The Clincher

For the first time in the history of the world championship, the outcome was decided in rapid games (roughly 30 minutes per game). With the score tied 1 1/2 -1 1/2 after three games, Kramnik clinched the championship by winning the last rapid game. He gradually outplayed Topalov in the Meran defense. In a difficult position, the Bulgarian blundered the game away.

Kramnik-Topalov

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Nc3 e6 5.e3 Nbd7 6.Bd3 dxc4 7.Bxc4 b5 8.Be2 Bb7 9.0-0 Be7 10.e4 b4 11.e5 bxc3 12.exf6 Bxf6 13.bxc3 c5 14.dxc5 Nxc5 (The usual answer is 14...0-0 and it worked out well for black. Topalov borrowed the knight capture from computer games played in 2004 and 2005.) 15.Bb5+ (This is a logical check, forcing the black king to move. In a 2004 Internet game between two computer programs, Deep Fritz 8 vs. Shredder 8, white tried 15.Ba3 and after 15...Qc7 16.Rb1 Rd8 17.Qc1 Ne4? 18.Bb5+ Bc6 came up with a brilliant queen sacrifice 19.Qf4!! with the idea of 19...Qxf4 20.Bxc6+ Rd7 20.Rd7 with a powerful attack. Black declined the offer with 19...Qb7, but after 20.Nd4! Bxd4 21.Bxc6+ Qxc6 22.cxd4 g5 23.Qf3 Qc3 24.Qxe4 Qxa3 25.Qe5 Rg8 26.Rb8 Ke7 27.Rb7+ Rd7 28.Rxd7+ Kxd7 29.d5 the black king was in trouble and white won in 60 moves.) 15...Kf8 (The only good move. Retreating with 15...Nd7 is dangerous after 16.Ba3!?, depriving black of the short castling. For example, after 16...Bxc3? 17.Rb1 Bd5?!, white wins with a spectacular 18.Qxd5!! exd5 19.Rfe1+! Bxe1 20.Rxe1+ Qe7 21.Rxe7+ Kf8 22.Bxd7 etc.)

16.Qxd8+ (Having an excellent endgame technique, Kramnik does not mind getting the queens off the board.) 16...Rxd8 17.Ba3 Rc8 18.Nd4! (Kramnik improves on a computer move 18.Rab1, played last

year.) 18...Be7! (Allowing his knight to move from the square c5, Topalov could have done the same thing with 18...Kg8.) 19.Rfd1? (Seemingly preventing the knight move from c5.) 19...a6? (Kramnik gets away with a possible miscalculation. Topalov should have played 19...Ne4! because after 20.Nxe6+? fxe6 21.Bxe7+ Kxe7 22.Rd7+ Kf6 23.Rxb7 Nd6, black wins the exchange. White would have to try surviving with 20.Bb4 Bxb4 21.cxb4 Nc3 22.Re1.) 20.Bf1 Na4 (Topalov goes after the pawn on c3 and is hoping to bring his king into play after 21.Bxe7+ Kxe7. But Kramnik finds a great counterattack and slowly turns the table.)

21.Rab1! Be4 22.Rb3 Bxa3 (After 22...Nxc3 the pin 23.Rc1! wins.) 23.Rxa3 Nc5 24.Nb3! (Kramnik immediately challenges black's best defender.) 24...Ke7 25.Rd4 Bg6 (After 25...Nxb3 26.axb3 Bb7 27.b4, black is left with a weak pawn on a6.) 26.c4 Rc6? (Topalov drops a pawn. Exchanging first 26...Nxb3 and only afterward 27.axb3 Rc6 was better.) 27.Nxc5 Rxc5 28.Rxa6 Rb8 29.Rd1! (Covering all threats and getting the rook behind the a-pawn.) 29...Rb2 30.Ra7+ Kf6 31.Ra1! Rf5 (31...Bb1!? with the idea 32.a4?! Ba2 was better.) 32.f3 Re5 33.Ra3! (Threatening 34.Rb3, to unleash the a-pawn.) 33...Rc2 34.Rb3 Ra5 35.a4 Ke7 36.Rb5 Ra7 37.a5 Kd6 38.a6 Kc7 39.c5 Rc3 40.Raa5 Rc1 (After 40...Bd3 41.Bxd3 Rxd3 42.Rb6 Rc3 43.Rab5 Ra8 44.Rb4! Rxc5 45.Rb7+ Kd6 46.R4b6+ and white cleans up the kingside.) 41.Rb3 Kc6 42.Rb6+ Kc7 43.Kf2 Rc2+ 44.Ke3 Rxc5?? (Losing outright, but Topalov's position is difficult to defend. White should win by picking up pawns on the kingside. For example: 44...Rc1 45.Be2 Rc3+ 46.Kd2 Rc2+ 47.Kd1 Rc3 48.Rab5 Ra8 49.Kd2 Ra3 [Or 49...Rxc5 50.Rb7+ Kc6 51.Rxc5+ Kxc5 52.f4! Kd4 53.a7 e5 54.fxe5 Kxe5 55.Bf3 wins.] 50.Rb3 Rxb3 51.Rxb3 Kc6 52.g4 Kxc5 53.h4 f5 54.Rb7 and white should win.) 45.Rb7+! (After 45...Rxb7 46.Rxc5+ Kb6 47.axb7 wins.) Black resigned.

Solution to today's two-mover by B. Pustovoy (White: Ke5,Qe8,Bb8,Bd7; Black: Kb7): 1.Ba4! Ka8 2.Bc6 mate; or 1...Kb6 2.Qb5 mate.

CHESS Lubomir Kavalek

By Lubomir Kavalek Monday, October 23, 2006; C10

The Russian team Tomsk-400 won the 22nd European Club Cup, played Oct. 7-15 in the Austrian town of Fuegen. The team was led by the Moscow grandmaster Alexander Morozevich, who posted the best performance rating of 2916 in the event. Tomsk-400 shared first place with two other Russian teams, Ladya Kazan (with Teimour Radjabov and Rustam Kasimdzhanov) and the pretournament favorite Ural Sverdlovskaya (Peter Svidler, Alexei Shirov, Vladimir Akopian, Alexander Grischuk), all winning five and drawing two matches. Morozevich's team won the title on a superior tiebreak.

In 1976, I played in the first European Club Cup for the German team of Solingen. In a dramatic two-team final, we defeated the favored squad of Burevestnik Moscow, with the former world champion Vassily Smyslov at the helm, on a tiebreak. In 30 years the competition has become a popular event with 60 teams and 406 players, including 124 grandmasters, arriving in Fuegen. In addition, 14 teams competed in the 11th European Club Cup for Women. The team of Mika Yerevan with former women's world champion Maya Chiburdanidze won the title.

Vaganian's Turbulent Life

Rafael Vaganian has been always regarded as the best talent coming from Armenia after the late Tigran Petrosian, who was world champion in the 1960s. He is now being eclipsed by Levon Aronian, recently rated No. 3 in the world. Vaganian built his entire career on the French defense, specifically the Winawer variation. It brought him many important victories. But with the glory came setbacks. In Fuegen, three days before his 55th birthday, the veteran grandmaster faced a vicious attack against his king and succumbed to Viroel Bologan of Moldova in a mere 19 moves.

Bologan-Vaganian

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.e5 c5 5.a3 Bxc3+ (For several decades, Vaganian preferred 5...Ba5.) 6.bxc3 Ne7 7.Qg4 0-0 (In his excellent German book "Franzoesisch Winawer -- Band 1: 7.Qg4 0-0," the German grandmaster Stefan Kindermann calls it the Warsaw variation, since it was played for the first time by a Finnish master, Eero Book, at the 1935 chess olympiad in Warsaw. For many years it was downgraded as a dubious alternative to 7...Qc7, but the line was resurrected in the 1990s.) 8.Bd3 Nbc6 (Blocking the position with 8...c4 runs into 9.Bh6! Ng6 10.Bxg6 fxg6 11.Be3, followed by h2-h4 and white has a powerful initiative on the kingside.) 9.Bg5!? (Daring black to win a couple of pawns.)

9...Qa5 10.Ne2 Re8 (A new move, preparing 11...c4 or 11...Nxd4. The immediate 10...c4 is met by 11.Bxh7+ Kxh7 12.Bxe7 Nxe7 13.Qh4+ and 14.Qxe7. Picking up the pawns 10...cxd4 11.f4 dxc3 gives white a powerful attack after 12.0-0! For example, several games proceeded with 12...Ng6 13.Qh5 Qc5+ 14.Kh1 Nce7 15.Rf3 f6 16.exf6 gxf6 17.Rh3 Rf7 18.Bxf6! Rxf6 19.Qxh7+ Kf8 20.Rg3 Qf2 and now in the game Petrosian-Mkrtchian, Yerevan 2006, white got a big advantage after 21.Ng1! with the idea 21...Qxf4 22.Rf3 Qe5 23.Re1! Qd4 24.Ref1 Nf4 25.Ne2 winning. Black played 21...Bd7 and after 22.Qh6+ Kf7 23.Qh7+ Kf8 24.Rf1 Qd4 25.Qh6+ Ke8 26.Qg7 Rxf4 27.Bxg6+ Kd8 28.Qxd4 Rxd4 29.Rf8+ Kc7 30.Rxa8 white won in 42 moves. The most popular defense is 10...Ng6 to follow 11.0-0 with either 11...Qa4 or 11...c4, but it was lately turning to white's advantage.)

11.h4! (A well-calculated sharp move, allowing the white rook to join the attack.) 11...Nxd4 (Taking

with the pawn 11...cxd4 is also inadequate after 12.Bf6! Ng6 13.Qg3 gxf6 14.exf6 Qd8 15.Qg5, for example 15...h6 16.Qxh6 Qxf6 17.h5 Qh8 18.hxg6 Qxh6 19.Rxh6 dxc3 20.0-0-0 fxg6 21.Rdh1; or after 15...dxc3 16.h5 h6 17.Qxh6 Qxf6 18.hxg6 Re7 19.Rh3! Ne5 20.Rg3 fxg6 21.Bxg6 Rg7 21.Nf4! with a strong initiative for white. After 11...c4 12.Bf6! white wins either after 12...Ng6 13.Bxg6 fxg6 14.h5 gxf6 15.hxg6 f5 16.Qh4 Qc7 17.gxh7+ Kh8 18.Nf4 Qf7 19.Qf6+ Qxf6 20.exf6 Ne7 21.fxe7; or after 12...g6 13.Bxg6 fxg6 14.h5 Nf5 15.hxg6 h6 16.Qxf5! exf5 17.Rxh6 white mates on h8.)

12.Rh3 (By lifting the rook, white threatens to create threats along the g-file.) 12...Nxe2?! (Black is defending the wrong way. Vaganian should have helped his king with 12...Ndf5. On the other hand, after 12...Ndc6?! 13.Bf6 Ng6 14.Qg5! white's pressure is too strong, for example 14...h6 15.Qg3 gxf6 16.exf6 Qd8 17.h5 Qxf6 18.hxg6 Qg5 19.Qh2 Kg7 20.Rh5 and white wins.)

13.Kxe2 Ng6 (Winning a piece with 13...c4 loses to 14.Bxh7+ Kxh7 15.Bxe7, for example 15...Rxe7 16.Rg3 f5 17.exf6 Rf7 18.Qg6+ Kg8 19.fxg7 Bd7 20.Qh6 wins; or 15...Qa4 16.Rc1 Rxe7 17.Rg3 f5 [or 17...g6 18.h5!] 18.exf6 Rc7 19.fxg7 Kg8 20.Qg6 Bd7 21.h5! Qxa3 [or 21...Be8 22.Qh7+! Kxh7 23.g8Q+ Kh6 24.Rg6+ mates] 22.h6 and 23.h7 mate. After 13...Nf5 14.Bf6 Kf8 15.Bxg7+ Nxg7 16.Rg3 decides, e.g. 16...Nf5 17.Bxf5 exf5 18.Qg7+ Ke7 19.Qf6+ Kf8 20.Qh6+ Ke7 21.Qd6 mates.) 14.h5! Nxe5 15.Qg3 Nxd3 16.Bf6! Nf4+ (Black is trying to divert the white queen. After 16...g6 17.hxg6 fxg6 18.Rxh7! Kxh7 19.Qh2+ Kg8 20.Qh8+ Kf7 21.Qg7 mates.) 17.Kd2 Ng6 18.hxg6 fxg6 19.Rxh7! (After 19...Kxh7 20.Rh1+ Kg8 21.Qxg6 wins.) Black resigned.

Solution to today's problem by L. Fayvuzhinsky (White: Kd7,Qg1,Bd1,Nc6; Black: Kd5,P:c5,e5): 1.Qg3 e4 2.Qg8 mate; or 1... Kc4 2.Qb3 mate; or 1...Ke4 2.Qf3 mate; or 1...c4 2.Qxe5 mate.

CHESS Lubomir Kavalek

By Lubomir Kavalek Monday, October 30, 2006; C10

Seventeen-year-old International Master Zaven Andriasian of Armenia, playing before his home crowd in Yerevan, won the World Junior (under 20) Championship this month, scoring 9 1/2 points in 13 games. The top-finishing American, IM Robert Hungaski, ended in 46th place with 6 1/2 points.

Andriasian is progressing fast. Last year, he won the Boys' Under 16 European championship in Herceg-Novi, Montenegro. He was only the 29th seed in Yerevan but won the event convincingly. His victory against IM Maxim Rodshtein of Israel in the Tarrasch variation of the French defense reveals an outstanding opening preparation and maturity.

Andriasian-Rodshtein

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.Nd2 c5 4.exd5 Qxd5 5.Ngf3 cxd4 6.Bc4 Qd6 7.0-0 Nf6 8.Nb3 Nc6 9.Nbxd4 Nxd4 10.Nxd4 a6 11.Re1 Bd7 12.Bg5! (The most aggressive approach.) 12...Qc7 (Black's position is already not easy to play. After 12...Be7 comes 13.Nf5! Qxd1 14.Nxg7+, followed by 15.Raxd1 and white is better. Castling long 12...0-0-0 seems to be the safest, although in the game Asrian-Wang Hao, Taiyuan 2006, the rook lift 13.Re3 caused black problems after 13...Kb8 14.Rb3 Rc8 15.Qf3 Bc6 16.Nxc6+ Qxc6 17.Bxf6 gxf6 18.Qxf6 Rg8 19.Bf1 Rg6 20.Qxf7 and white later won. Andriasian was more likely aware of another queen move, 12...Qc5?!, with a double-attack on white's bishops and control of the fifth rank. It can quickly draw fire: 13.Bxe6! fxe6 14.Bxf6 gxf6 15.Nxe6 Bxe6 16.Rxe6+ with powerful pressure, for example 16...Be7 17.b4! Qxb4 [17...Qf5 18.Qe2!] 18.Rb1 Qc5 19.Rxb7; or 16...Kf7 17.Qd7+ and now 17...Kg8 18.Rxf6 Qh5 19.Re1! h6 20.Re5! wins; or 17...Kg6 18.Rae1 Qf5 19.R1e3 Bh6 20.g4! wins; or 17...Be7 18.Rae1 Rae8 19.Qxb7, threatening 20.b4, white has a clear advantage.)

13.Bxe6! (The bishop sacrifice works also in this position. White is not risking anything, having a draw by perpetual check at hand .) 13...Bxe6 14.Bxf6 gxf6 15.Nxe6 fxe6 16.Rxe6+ Kf7 (After 16...Be7 17.Qh5+ white's attack is decisive either after 17...Kd8 18.Qf7 Bd6 19.Qxf6+ Kd7 20.Rd1; or after 17...Kf8 18.Rae1 Re8 19.Rxf6+ Bxf6 20.Rxe8+ Kg7 21.Qg4+ Kf7 [or 21...Kh6 22.Re3!] 22.Qe6+ Kg7 23.Rxh8 Kxh8 24.Qxf6+ winning.) 17.Qd5! Kg7 18.Qf5 Qf7 (The point of black's 12th move: The black queen can help on the kingside. After 18...Be7 19.Rae1 Rae8 20.R1e3 white's heavy artillery outmaneuvers black's pieces, for example 20...Qd8 21.Rg3+ Kf7 22.Rd3 Qc7 23.Qh5+ Kf8 24.Rg3 Rd8 25.Qg4 Qc5 [or 25...Ke8 26.Rxe7+! Qxe7 27.Re3!] 26.Qg7+ Ke8 27.h3! Rf8 28.Rc3 Qb4 29.Rc4! wins.) 19.Rd1 Be7 (After 19...Qg6 20.Rd7+ Kg8 21.Qd5! wins.) 20.Rd7 Rhe8 21.g3 (Black is in a bind and does not have many useful moves. White simply improves his position and slowly creates a dangerous passed pawn on the queenside.) 21...Rab8 22.h4 h5 23.c4 b6 24.b4 Rbc8? 25.Rexe7 Rxe7 26.Rxe7 Qxe7 27.Qxc8 (White is winning easily.) 27...Qxb4 28.Qxa6 Qe1+ 29.Kg2 Qe4+ 30.Kh2 Qd4 31.Kg1 Kh6 32.Qa4 Kg7 33.Qb3 Kg6 34.a3 Kg7 35.Kg2 Qd6 36.Qb5 Kh6 37.a4 Qd4 38.Qd5 Qc3 39.Qd6 Black resigned.

The Chinese Wonder Girl

Remember the Chinese girl who dreamed of beating the best woman ever, Judit Polgar, and of buying real estate in Paris? Twelve-year-old Hou Yifan is on her way to fulfilling her dreams. She tied for first in the girls' section of the Junior World Championship in Yerevan with her countrywoman Shan Young, Salome Melia of Georgia and Mongontuul Bathuyag of Mongolia. They each scored nine points in 13 games, but the 18-year-old Shan won the title on a tiebreaker, just

edging Hou. American Tatev Abrahamyan finished 14th with 7 1/2 points. Hou's one-sided victory over Vietnamese women's grandmaster Hoang Thi Bao Tram in the Caro-Kann defense is very impressive.

Hou-Hoang

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 dxe4 4.Nxe4 Nd7 5.Ng5 Ngf6 6.Bd3 e6 7.N1f3 Bd6 8.Qe2 h6 9.Ne4 Nxe4 10.Qxe4 Qc7 11.0-0 b6 12.Qg4 Kf8 (You have to have Anatoly Karpov's great defensive skills to hold this position.) 13.b3 c5?! 14.dxc5 Nxc5 15.Bb2 e5 16.Bf5 Bxf5?! (Usually black plays 16...h5 17.Qh3 Ne6, but now instead of 18.Bxe6, the current women's world champion, Xu Yuhua of China, tried successfully 18.Nh4 against Liu Pei in Wuxi last year, and after 18...Kg8 19.Rfe1 Nf4 20.Qf3 Bb7 21.Be4 Bxe4 22.Qxe4 Re8 23.Nf5 f6 24.g3 Ne6 25.h4 Kf7 26.Rad1 was clearly better and won in 43 moves.) 17.Qxf5 Re8 18.Rad1 Kg8 (After18...e4 19.Nh4 Kg8 20.Qh3 black is still tied up.) 19.Rfe1 (Mobilizing the last piece and attacking the pawn on e5 gives white an overwhelming advantage.) 19...f6? (Surrendering the light squares, but after 19...e4 20.Qg4 Bf8 21.Nd4 black is playing without the rook on h8.) 20.Nh4! Rd8 21.f4 (The move order 21.Ng6 Rh7 22.f4 is more precise.) 21...exf4 22.Ng6 Rh7 23.b4 Nb7 24.Re7! (Playing for 24...Bxe7 25.Qe6 mate.) 24...Qc4 (24...Bc5+ is met by 25.Bd4.) 25.Rd5 (After 25...Bc5+ 26.bxc5 Qxd5 27.Re8+ Kf7 28.Rf8+ Rxf8 29.Qxd5+ wins.) Black resigned.

Solution to today's study by F. Lazard (White: Ke3,Rh8,Ba7,P:a6,d3; Black: Kg1,Rd6,Nd7,P:h2): 1.Ke2+ Kg2 2.Rxh2+ Kxh2 3.Bb8 Nxb8 4.a7 wins; or 1...Nb6 2.Bxb6+ Rxb6 3.a7 Rb2+ [3...Re6+ 4.Kd2 Ra6 5.a8Q Rxa8 6.Rxa8 h1Q 7.Ra1+ wins] 4.Ke3 Ra2 5.a8Q Rxa8 6.Rxa8 h1Q 7.Ra1+ wins.

CHESS Lubomir Kavalek

By Lubomir Kavalek Monday, November 6, 2006; C10

Everyman Chess has produced a chain of interesting books throughout the years, explaining openings in its "Starting Out" series or targeting specific defenses and variations. Recently it came up with a new opening concept, presenting variations that are "ambitious, sharp, innovative, disruptive, tricky, enjoyable to analyze; ones not already weighed down by mountains of theory, and ones unfairly ignored or discredited." It sounded like a tournament player's dream.

The first book, "Dangerous Weapons: The Nimzo-Indian," is a lot of fun and it includes ideas for both sides. It is written by two experienced grandmasters, John Emms and Chris Ward, and by the international master Richard Palliser, who did a marvelous job earlier this year with the book "Starting Out: Sicilian Najdorf." The authors don't mind shedding lots of pawns, but these well-timed sacrifices give you plenty of play. A good example is Alvis Vitolins's idea 1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.Qc2 0-0 5.a3 Bxc3+6.Qxc3 b5!? 7.cxb5 c6!?

Emms, in particular, seems to be obsessed with an early black knight move to the square e4. He likes it against the Rubinstein line 1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.e3, based on the following game, played in New York in 1998.

Aleksandrov-Sulskis

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.e3 Ne4?! (Here goes the "don't move the same piece twice early on" rule.) 5.Qc2 f5 (Emms also looks at the bizarre 5...Nxc3 6.bxc3 Ba5?!) 6.Bd3 0-0!? 7.Nge2 (Accepting the pawn 7.Bxe4 fxe4 8.Qxe4 gives black a good game after 8...d5!) 7...b6 8.0-0 Bxc3 9.Bxe4?! (After 9.Nxc3 Nxc3 10.Qxc3 Bb7 11.b4 d6 12.Bb2 Nd7 13.d5, Emms suggests 13...Qe7 14.dxe6 Ne5 15.Be2 Qxe6 to meet 16.f4 with 16...Qg6!) 9...fxe4 10.Nxc3 d5 11.b4 (After 11.cxd5 exd5 12.Qb3, Sulskis planned 12...Ba6! and the complications favor black.) 11...Nc6!? (11...Bb7 12.Bb2 Nd7 is more solid.) 12.Qb3?! (Taking the wrong path. Sulskis analyzed a forcing line: 12.Ba3! Rf6 13.Qb3 Rh6 14.cxd5! Qh4 15.h3 Ne7! [After 15...Rg6 16.Ne2! Qxh3? 17.Nf4 white wins.] 16.b5 Rg6 17.Kh1!? e5!? 18.Bxe7! Qh5! and now instead of 19.d6+ Kh8 20.Qd5 Bxh3 21.Qxa8+ Bc8+ 22.Kg1 Rxg2+! with a perpetual check, Emms discovered that 19.h4! Rxg2 20.Rg1! wins for white.) 12...Ba6! (A well-calculated sacrifice.) 13.Qa4 (After 13.b5 Na5 14.Qc2 Bb7 15.cxd5 exd5, black gets the outpost on c4.) 13...Bxc4! 14.Qxc6 Bxf1 15.Qxe6+? (Loses. White had to play 15.Kxf1 Qh4 16.Nd1 Qxh2 17.Qxe6+ Kh8 18.Qh3 with a slightly worse position after 18...Qd6.) 15...Kh8 16.Kxf1 Qh4 17.Nd1?! (After 17.f4 exf3 18.gxf3 Rxf3+ 19.Ke2 Qf2+ 20.Kd3 Qf1+ wins.) 17...Rxf2+!! (A decisive sacrifice. White is getting mated after 18.Nxf2 Rf8 19.Ke2 Qxf2+ 20.Kd1 Qf1+! 21.Kc2 Qd3+, followed by 22...Rf2+.) White resigned.

After seeing this game I would expect the same treatment against the Samisch variation, namely 4.a3 Bxc3+ 5.bxc3 Ne4, played by Mikhail Tal against Mikhail Botvinnik in the 1960 world championship, but Emms recommends the good old-fashioned line 5...c5 6.e3 b6. However, against 4.Nf3 he comes back with 4...Ne4.

The book should be welcomed by all tournament players who like to see their pieces flying.

A Central Collapse

Against the center-grabbing idea 5.f3, threatening e2-e4, Palliser advises playing the gambit 4...c5 5.d5 0-0 6.e4 b5!?. He might have changed his mind had he seen the game between the German grandmaster Igor Khenkin and the Indian international master Jha Sriram. The way black destroyed the white center is remarkable. It was played last month at the 15th Monarch Assurance International at the Isle of Man, won

by Alexander Areshchenko. The Ukrainian grandmaster shared first place with GM Sergey Volkov of Russia, but had a better tiebreaker. They both scored seven points in nine games. The American GM Alexander Shabalov, last year's winner, finished with 5 1/2 points.

Sriram-Khenkin

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.f3 0-0 5.e4 d5 (Engaging the white pawn center with brute force.) 6.cxd5 exd5 7.e5 Nfd7 8.f4?! (8.a3 is necessary.) 8...c5! 9.Nf3 cxd4! 10.Nxd4 (After 10.Qxd4 Nc6 11.Qxd5 Ndxe5! 12.Qxd8 Nxf3+ 13.gxf3 Rxd8, black is better.) 10...Nxe5!! (Suggested in 2004 by Yuri Yakovich; black is destroying white's center. The sacrifice leads to forced play.) 11.fxe5 Qh4+ 12.Ke2 Bc5! 13.Be3 Bg4+ 14.Nf3 d4! 15.Bg1 (After 15.Ne4 dxe3 16.Nxc5 Qf2+ 17.Kd3 Rd8+ 18.Kc3 Rxd1 19.Rxd1 Nd7 20.Nxd7 Rc8+ wins.) 15...Bxf3+! (An improvement on the game Bluvshtein-Romanov, Belfort 2005, where black played 15...Re8 and after 16.Ne4 Rxe5 17.Kd3, white somehow survived and won the game in 41 moves.) 16.Kxf3 (After 16.gxf3 dxc3 17.Bxc5 cxb2 18.Rb1 Qc4+! black wins.) 16...Nd7 17.g3 Nxe5+ 18.Kg2 Qf6! 19.Na4 (Black wins either after 19.Ne4 Qc6 20.Qc2 f5!; or after 19.Bb5 dxc3! 20.Bxc5 Rfd8! 21.Bd4 c2 22.Qd2 Qf3+ 23.Kg1 Qe4!) 19...Qc6+ 20.Kf2 (After 20.Kh3 g5! 21.g4 f5! it's over.) 20...d3+ 21.Nxc5 Qxc5+ 22.Kg2 (After 22.Ke1 Qb4+ 23.Kf2 Qxb2+ 24.Ke1 Rfe8 white is done.) 22...Qc6+! 23.Kf2 Rac8! (Possible is also 23...Rae8 24.Bg2 Qf6+ winning.) 24.Bg2 (After 24.h4 Qf6+ 25.Kg2 Rc2+ wins.) 24...Qf6+ 25.Ke1 Rfe8 White resigned.

Solution to today's problem by B. Pustovoy (White: Kg5,Qf8,P:h5; Black: Kh7,P:g7): 1.Kf5 Kh6 2.Qh8 mate; or 1...g5 2.hxg6 mate.

CHESSLubomir Kavalek

By Lubomir Kavalek Monday, December 11, 2006; C10

The chess giant David Bronstein died Tuesday in Minsk, Belarus, at the age of 82. The same day, world champion Vladimir Kramnik lost the Man vs. Machine contest, 4-2, in Bonn, Germany.

The Last Romantic

Bronstein was a phenomenal chess artist whose imaginative ideas marked the arrival of modern chess shortly after World War II. In his prime he could outplay anybody. In the 1951 world championship, Bronstein easily matched Mikhail Botvinnik, opening by opening, move by move.

But when the world title was within reach, Bronstein, like Carl Schlechter against Emanuel Lasker in 1910, was reluctant to take it. When the match ended in a 12-12 tie, he did not see it as a tragedy.

When computers began to defeat human players in the 1990s, Bronstein challenged the machines head-on. Comparing himself to Don Quixote and the computers to windmills, he wrote: "I truly believed that the human brain is more powerful than any electronic monster. And I did not change my mind even after playing computers for eight years."

Somehow, Bronstein seemed able to confuse the machines. He played gambits, sacrificed pieces and followed with strong positional concepts. He could attack on the kingside and win the game by snatching material on the opposing wing -- as did the computer program Deep Fritz 10 that defeated Kramnik in the sixth and last game of the match on Tuesday. Was the machine paying tribute to the great master on the day he left us?

Deep Fritz 10-Kramnik

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.Bc4 (The Fischer-Sozin variation of the Najdorf Sicilian.) 6...e6 7.0-0 Be7 8.Bb3 Qc7 (The theoretical move is the aggressive 8...b5, but after 9.Qf3 white can hope for a slight edge.) 9.Re1 (Preventing 9...Nbd7 because of 10.Bxe6! fxe6 11.Nxe6, followed by 12 . . . Nxg7+ with three pawns and attack chances for a piece. After 9.f4 black plays 9...Nbd7 to meet 10.f5 with 10...Nc5; and the sacrifice 10.Bxe6 fxe6 11.Nxe6 with 11...Qb6+.) 9...Nc6 (A solid developing move, although 9...0-0 was possible.)

10.Re3!? (This unusual rook lift in this position is the machine's contribution to mankind. White plans to create weaknesses in the black camp with 11.Rg3.) 10...0-0 11.Rg3 Kh8 12.Nxc6!? (White's activity on the kingside makes black's pawn center less relevant.) 12...bxc6 13.Qe2 a5 (Building the center 13...d5 gives white a free hand on the kingside after 14.e5 Nd7 15.Bf4 and the black king is in peril, for example 15... 15...c5?! 16.Qh5 g6 17.Qh6 Rg8?! 18.Qxh7+! Kxh7 19.Rh3+ Kg7 20.Bh6+ Kh7 21.Bf8+ Bh4 22.Rxh4 mate.) 14.Bg5 Ba6 15.Qf3 Rab8 16.Re1 c5 (Planning to shut down white's light bishop with 17...c4.)

17.Bf4! (Threatening to burst the game open with 18.e5!) 17...Qb7 (Kramnik prevents the central thrust e4-e5. After 17...c4 18.e5! things may get icky for black, for example: 18...cxb3 19.exf6 Bxf6 20.Rh3 bxc2 [20...Qc5 21.axb3] 21.Qh5 with a winning attack; or18...dxe5 19.Bxe5 Qb7 20.Ne4! cxb3 21.Rxg7!! Kxg7 22.Qg3+ Kh8 23.Nxf6 wins for white. The upcoming crawling-back strategy of both players was not easy to anticipate.) 18.Bc1!? (Protecting the pawn on b2 allows white to regroup his pieces.) 18...Ng8?! (The knight was fine on f6.) 19.Nb1!? (Fritz simply wants to find a new life for his light bishop. Still, it looks like a ghost from the 11th game of the 1972 world championship match Spassky-Fischer or from the ninth game of the 1974 Candidates match Karpov-Spassky, where the same knight move turned the games around.) 19...Bf6 (The immediate19...c4 runs into 20.Bxc4! Bxc4 21.Qc3.) 20.c3 g6 21.Na3 Qc6 22.Rh3 Bg7 23.Qg3 a4?! (Giving white a target and forcing white's light bishop

where it wants to go anyway.) 24.Bc2 Rb6? (Kramnik would like to double the rooks on the b-file and sacrifice the exchange on b2. Unfortunately, he is late.)

25.e5! dxe5 26.Rxe5! Nf6 (The rook is untouchable: After 26...Bxe5 27.Qxe5+ f6 28.Rxh7+! Kxh7 29.Qh5+ Kg7 30.Qxg6+ Kh8 31.Qh7 mates. Kramnik also did not have time to finish his plan: After 26...Rfb8 comes 27.Bxg6! fxg6 28.Qxg6 with a decisive attack.) 27.Qh4 Qb7 28.Re1 (After playing a useful role in opening the lines towards the kingside, the rook slides back to defend the back rank. White threatens to win with 29.Bg5 Nh5 30.g4.) 28...h5 29.Rf3 Nh7 (The active 29...Ng4 is met by 30.h3 and after either 30...Nh6 31.Qxa4; or 30...Ne5 31.Rxe5! Bxe5 32.Bxg6 Qxf3 33.gxf3 fxg6 34.Nc4! it is hopeless for black.)

30.Qxa4 (White's attacking fury yielded a healthy pawn.) 30...Qc6 (Kramnik does not have the nerve to see the queens on the board, but the machine shows excellent endgame technique.) 31.Qxc6 Rxc6 32.Ba4 Rb6 33.b3 Kg8 34.c4 Rd8 35.Nb5 Bb7 36.Rfe3 Bh6?! 37.Re5 Bxc1 38.Rxc1 Rc6 39.Nc3 Rc7 40.Bb5 Nf8 41.Na4 Rdc8 42.Rd1 Kg7 43.Rd6 f6 44.Re2 e5 45.Red2 g5 46.Nb6 Rb8 47.a4 (The siege is complete and the a-pawn moves decisively forward.) Black resigned.

Solution to today's three-mover by J. Fritz (White: Ke3,Bc5,Nb2,Nd4,P:a2; Black: Ka5,Ba8,P:a6,a7,e4):1.a3!! Bd5 2.a4 Bg8 [2...Bb7 3.Nb3 mate] 3.Nc6 mate; or 1...Bc6 2.Nb3+ Kb5 3.a4 mate; or 1...Bb7 2.Bd6! Kb6 [2...Bd5 3.Bc7 mate] 3.Nc4 mate.

CHESSLubomir Kavalek

By Lubomir Kavalek Monday, November 13, 2006; C10

Shortly after losing the world championship match to Vladimir Kramnik last month in Elista, Russia, Veselin Topalov appeared in a four-grandmaster double round Essent tournament in the Dutch town of Hoogeveen. The Bulgarian won two games but was twice smashed by Hungary's Judit Polgar and once by Azerbaijan's Shakhriyar Mamedyarov. The elite event ended Oct. 28 with a dead run between Polgar and Mamedyarov, both scoring 4 1/2 points. The Azerbaijani had a better tiebreaker and was declared the winner. Topalov ended with 2 1/2 points, and the Dutchman Ivan Sokolov managed only a half a point.

Living on the Edge

In a decisive game of the event, Mamedyarov, a two-time world junior champion, played with a confidence into Polgar's favorite line in the Breyer variation of the Spanish opening. The variation, prepared by Polgar for her 1993 match against Boris Spassky in Budapest, hinges on the success of white's knight sacrifice on move 18. Polgar could not make it work and lost. Mamedyarov took the variation to the Tal Memorial, underway in Moscow, and drew with it against Spain's Alexei Shirov and Russia's Alexander Grischuk.

However, the line has some flaws, discovered by David Navara long before all Mamedyarov's games were played. The Czech grandmaster produced several pages of wonderful analysis, concluding that white's attack shall break through. The essential points with some additions are included here.

Polgar-Mamedyarov

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 Be7 6.Re1 b5 7.Bb3 d6 8.c3 0-0 9.h3 Nb8 10.d4 Nbd7 11.Nbd2 Bb7 (After I arrived in Budapest in February 1993, Spassky informed me that he messed up the opening, playing first 11...Re8?, allowing 12.Bxf7+! Kxf7 13.Ng5+ Kg8 14.Ne6 winning the queen. Polgar did not notice it and played 12.Bc2. Somebody later altered the move order and the oversight did not appear in the databases.) 12.Bc2 Re8 13.Nf1 Bf8 14.Ng3 g6 15.b3!? (Polgar's pet line. White threatens to grab the space with 16.d5 c6 17.c4.) 15...d5 16.Bg5 h6 17.Bh4!? g5 (Black picks up a piece and tries to survive the assault. In the eighth game of Polgar-Spassky, Budapest 1993, 17...dxe4 18.Nxe4 g5? turned out to be disastrous for black after 19.dxe5! Nxe4 20.Bxe4 Bxe4 21.Rxe4 gxh4 22.Rd4 Re7 23.e6! fxe6 24.Ne5.)

18.Nxg5! hxg5 19.Bxg5 (The pin is unpleasant.) 19...exd4! 20.e5! (Blocking the bishop on b7.) 20...Rxe5 21.Rxe5 Nxe5 22.cxd4! (Controlling the square e5 is important. In his first game against Bartosz Socko, played in the 2005 Greek team championship, Navara learned a painful lesson after 22.Qxd4? Qd6! 23.Re1 Ne4 and black won in 41 moves.) 22...Nc6!? (The best defense. In the second game Navara-Socko, Ustron 2006, black tried the weaker 22...Ned7?! and after 23.Qf3 Qe7 24.Bf5 Qd6 25.Bf4 Qe7 26.Rc1 c6 27.Bg5 Qd6 28.Nh5 Bg7 29.Nxg7 Kxg7 30.Bf4 Qe7 31.Qg3+ Kh8 32.Qh4+ Kg8 33.Bxd7 Qxd7 34.Qxf6 Qe6 35.Qg5+ white won.)

23.Nf5? (A tempting leap, but Mamedyarov handles it with ease. Shirov tried 23.Nh5 against the Azerbaijani grandmaster and after 23...Be7 24.Bxf6 Bxf6 25.Qd3 Kf8 26.Qh7 Bxd4 27.Qh6+ Ke8?! 28.Re1+ Ne5, played the weaker 29.Bf5?! and the game ended 29...Qd6 30.Qg5 c5 31.Nf6+ Kd8 32.Nxd5+ Ke8 33.Nf6+ Kd8 34.Nd5+with a draw. However, Navara concluded that after 29.Ng7+! Kd7 30.Bf5+ Ke7 31.Qf4! black is in trouble.

Still, according to Navara, white's attack can succeed after 23.Qd3!, a move played by coincidence Saturday in Moscow in the game Grischuk-Mamedyarov. After the logical 23...Nb4 24.Qf3! Be7 Grischuk chose the weaker 25.Bb1?! and after 25...Bc8 [25...Ne4 is also possible] 26.Qf4 Ne4 27.Bxe7 Qxe7 28.a3 Nc6 29.Bxe4 dxe4 30.Nh5 Qd6 31.Nf6+ Kf8 32.Qh6+ Ke7 33.Ng8+ Ke8 34.Nf6+ Ke7 a draw was

agreed.

Instead of locking up the rook on a1 with 25.Bb1?!, Navara analyzed 25.Bf5! with good winning chances for white either after 25...Ne4 26.Bh6! Bf8 27.Qg4+ Kh8 28.Qh5 Nf6 29.Qh4 Kg8 30.Bg5 Bg7 31.Nh5!; or after 25...Nc6 26.Re1 Nxd4 27.Qe3!, for example 27...Nxf5 28.Nxf5 Bf8 29.Qg3 Kh7 30.Qh4+ Kg6 31.g4! wins; or 27...Bc5 28.Qf4 Qd6 29.Qh4 wins; and finally after 27...Nc6 Navara looked at 28.Bxf6, but 28.Bh6! does a better job, e.g. 28...Nh7 29.Qf3 Bf6 [or 29...Bc8 30.Qg4+! Bg5 31.h4] 30.Nh5 and white's attack is too strong.)

23...Bc8! (Threatening to eliminate the pesky knight on f5.) 24.Rc1 Bxf5 25.Bxf5 Qd6 26.Bh4 Ne7 27.Bg3 Qb4! (White is a piece down and her attack is only illusory.) 28.Bb1 c6 29.Be5 Bg7 30.a3 (Deflecting the black queen, since after 30.Qf3? Qd2! 31.Rd1 Qg5 black beats the attack.) 30...Qxa3 31.Rc3 Nd7 (A sufficient defense. Black also has 31...Ne4; or 31...Kf8 32.Rg3 Qb2!) 32.Rg3 (After 32.Bxg7 Kxg7 33.Qg4+ Kf8 34.Qxd7 Qb2 black wins a piece.) 32...Nxe5 33.dxe5 Qb4! (The black queen eyes the square e1, preventing the white queen from leaving the first rank.) 34.Rg4 Qc3 35.f4 d4 (Also after 35...f5 36.exf6 Qxf6 white can't generate any real threats.) 36.Kh2 Nd5 37.f5 d3! (Attacking the pawn on e5.) 38.Qxd3 Qxe5+ 39.Rg3 Nf6 40.Qf3 Rd8 White resigned.

Solution to today's study by S. Isenegger (White: Kc1,P:c2,e5; Black: Ka2,P:d5,d7,e7): 1.e6! dxe6 2.c4!! dxc4 3.Kc2 e5 4.Kc3 e4 5.Kxc4 e5 6.Kc3 Ka3 7.Kd2 Kb4 8.Ke3 Kc5 9.Kxe4 draw.

CHESS Lubomir Kavalek

By Lubomir Kavalek Monday, November 20, 2006; C10

Everybody loved Mikhail Tal. Books and songs were written about the legendary world champion whose imaginative attacking style and amazing, unexpected combinations captured our hearts. "You played like Tal" is still the highest praise to any attacking player. A memorial tournament, honoring the great chess magician from Riga, Latvia, and featuring some of the world's best players, finished Thursday in Moscow.

Peter Leko of Hungary, Ruslan Ponomariov of Ukraine and Levon Aronian of Armenia shared first place, scoring 5 1/2 points in nine games. The rest of the powerful field finished as follows: Boris Gelfand of Israel, 5 points; Shakhriyar Mamedyarov of Azerbaijan and Alexander Grischuk and Peter Svidler (both of Russia), 4 1/2 points; Alexei Shirov and Magnus Carlsen of Norway, 3 1/2 points; Alexander Morozevich of Russia, 3 points.

Entombing the King

Aronian scored three victories, the most in the event; a terrible blunder against Svidler prevented him from taking first place alone. Aronian's most spectacular victory came in the Marshall variation of the Spanish opening against Shirov when he brought the more than 200-year-old combination to life.

Shirov-Aronian

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 Be7 6.Re1 b5 7.Bb3 0-0 8.c3 d5 9.exd5 Nxd5 10.Nxe5 Nxe5 11.Rxe5 c6 12.d4 Bd6 13.Re1 Qh4 14.g3 Qh3 15.Re4 g5 16.Qf1 Qh5 17.Nd2 Bf5 18.f3 Nf6 19.a4 (In an almost fateful game of the 2004 world championship in Brissago, Switzerland, Vladimir Kramnik lost to Leko after 19.Re1 Rae8 20.Rxe8 Rxe8 21.a4 Qg6 22.axb5 Bd3 23.Qf2? [23.Qd1!] 23...Re2 24.Qxe2 Bxe2 25.bxa6 Qd3! 26.Kf2 Bxf3 27.Nxf3 Ne4+ 28.Ke1 Nxc3 29.bxc3 Qxc3+ 30.Kf2 Qxa1 31.a7 h6 32.h4 g4 and white resigned. Kramnik recovered by winning the last game of the match and kept the title.) 19...Nxe4 20.Nxe4 Qg6 21.Nxd6 Qxd6 22.Bxg5 Qg6!? (Shirov obviously had some improvement in mind. His game against Leko from an earlier round ended: 22...Rfe8 23.Re1 Qg6 24.Be7 Ra7 25.Bc5 Raa8 26.Be7 Ra7 27.Bc5 draw. But Aronian deviates first. His strategy is to dominate on the light squares.) 23.Qc1 Bd3! 24.axb5 axb5 25.Rxa8 Rxa8 26.Kf2?! (26.Bf4!?, freeing the white queen was better.) 26...Bc4!! 27.Bxc4 (White is not interested in 27.Bc2 Qe6!, where black threatens to penetrate with 28...Qe2+ and 28...Qh3.) 27...bxc4 28.g4 Re8 29.Bf4 Qd3 30.Kg3? (Blocking the e-file with 30.Be5!? is better, although after 30...f6 31.Bxf6 Qe2+ 32.Kg3 Re3 33.Qh1 Qxb2 34.Bg5! Re8 35.Qc1 Qxc1 36.Bxc1 Ra8!, threatening 37...Ra2, white still has problems.) 30...Qe2 31.Qb1 Qe1+ 32.Qxe1 Rxe1 33.Bd6 (An awkward way to protect the weak pawn on b2, but there was no other way.) 33...Rg1+ 34.Kf2 Rb1 35.Ba3 Kg7 (White's position is passive and black improves his king.) 36.Kg3 Kg6 37.h3 h5 (It is not easy to break into white's position, but Shirov helps his opponent with the next move.)

38.Kh4? (Being short of time, Shirov is trying to enforce the exchange of the h-pawn. It allows Aronian to cut off the white king.) 38...Rg1! 39.Bc5 Rg2 40.Ba3 f6 41.gxh5+ (Shirov was in zugzwang. After 41.f4 hxg4 42.hxg4 f5! white's position collapses.) 41...Kf5!? (Former world champion Anatoly Karpov advocated 41...Kh7, but after 42.Be7! Rxb2 [42...Kg7 43.h6+!] 43.Bxf6 Rc2 44.d5 cxd5 45.Kg4 the outcome is not clear. But 41...Kg7! is clearly the best choice, for example 42.f4 Kf7! and white is running out of good moves.) 42.f4!? Rg8 (Avoiding the trap: 42...Kxf4? 43.h6 Rg8 44.Kh5 and black has to make draw with 44...Rg5+ 45.Kh4 Rg8.) 43.Bd6 Ke6!? (Giving Shirov a chance to sacrifice a piece, Aronian must have seen the incredible idea of his 48th move. However, after the simple 43...Rg2! white is in trouble, for example 44.Ba3 Rf2, and now either after 45.Kg3 Rxf4 46.h6 Re4 47.h7 Re8 or after 45.h6 Kg6 46.Kg3 Rf1! 47.h7 [47.Bc5 f5!] 47...Kxh7 48.Kg4 Kg6, black should win.)

44.h6? (Shirov chooses to lose brilliantly. After 44.Ba3 Kf7 45.Bb4 Rg2 46.Ba3 Kg7, white is in

zugzwang and has to give up a pawn, but with 47.Be7 [47.f5 Rg5] 47...Rxb2 48.Kg4 he can still pose some technical problems.) 44...Kxd6 45.Kh5 f5! 46.h7 Rh8 47.Kg6 Ke7 48.Kg7 Ke8!! (Deflecting the white king to the corner, where it suffocates. The idea can be found already in a composition by an 18th-century Italian master, Domenico Ercole del Rio [White: Ke1,Rc6,P:b4; Black: Kg3,P:a6,b5,h2]:1.Rg6+ Kf3! 2.Rf6+ Kg2 3.Rf2+ Kg3 4.Rf1 Kg2 5.Rh1!! Kxh1 6.Kf2 a5 7.bxa5 b4 8.a6 b3 9.a7 b2 10.a8Q mate.) 49.Kg6 (After 49.Kxh8 Kf7 white would eventually have to move his b-pawn, allowing black to capture it, promote a new queen and mate.) 49...Kf8 (The black king can triangulate on the squares f8,e7 and e8 until white runs out of moves with his h-pawn.) 50.h4 Ke7 51.Kg7 Ke8 52.Kg6 Kf8 53.h5 Ke7 54.Kg7 Ke8 55.Kg6 Kf8 56.h6 Ke8 57.Kf6 (After 57.Kg7 Ke7 58.Kg6 Kf8 59.Kxf5 Kf7 wins.) 57...Rxh7 58.Kg6 Rf7 (After 59.h7 Rf8 60.Kg7 Rh8! 61.Kxh8 Kf8 wins.) White resigned.

Aronian's idea was masterfully exploited in today's composition by an unknown author (White:Kc4,Ra2,Ng3,P:e4; Black: Kd1,P:e5,f6,g2,h2,h3):1.Kd3 Ke1 (Or 1...Kc1 2.Ne2+ Kb1 3.Nc3+ Kc1 4.Rc2 mate.) 2.Nh1!! (Threatening 3.Ra1 mate.) 2...gxh1Q 3.Ra1+ Kf2 4.Rxh1 Kg2 5.Ke2!! Kxh1 6.Kf1! f5 7.exf5 e4 8.f6 e3 9.f7 e2+ 10.Kxe2 Kg2 11.f8Q h1Q 12.Qf2 mate.

CHESS Lubomir Kavalek

By Lubomir Kavalek Monday, November 27, 2006; C10

On Saturday in Bonn, Germany, world champion Vladimir Kramnik began a six-game match against the computer program Deep Fritz. The first game of the Man vs. Machine World Chess Challenge was drawn in 47 moves. Kramnik enjoyed a typical endgame advantage from the Catalan Opening, but the computer defended well. The match ends Dec. 5. The commercial version of Kramnik's opponent, Fritz 10, was just released by Chessbase. It is expected to challenge the top program on the market, Rybka 2.2, invented by Vasik Rajlich, an American International Master living in the Hungarian capital of Budapest.

Notable Books

The English Chess Federation Book of the Year award was a surprising choice. It went to Ger C. van Perlo's "Endgame Tactics." This extraordinary collection of 1,000 endgame positions is educational, funny and refreshing, and anybody can enjoy it. It came ahead of Jonathan Rowson's "Chess for Zebras" and the latest volume of Garry Kasparov's "On My Great Predecessors," covering the careers of Viktor Korchnoi and Anatoly Karpov. Kasparov did not include the duels with Karpov, planning to publish them separately. Among other interesting books about world champions, Igor Stohl's two volumes of "Garry Kasparov's Greatest Chess Games" contain penetrating analyses of the maverick champion's games, and Andrew Soltis's "Why Lasker Matters" dispels some myths about the second official world champion.

The opening theory is moving fast. It is like a runaway train and even experienced writers have a hard time keeping up. Opening books can be outdated by the time they appear in bookstores. An example is an ambitious new book by the International Master John Watson, "Mastering the Chess Openings," issued by the Gambit Publications. It promises to unlock the mysteries of modern opening play, and as usual Watson is great in explaining the fundamentals and the basic ideas. But one has to be careful about his evaluation of some specific opening variations. A resurrection of old, forgotten lines can suddenly appear out of nowhere, challenging the author's opinion.

For example, Shakhriyar Mamedyarov's favorite line with the black pieces in the Breyer Spanish was developed only in the last few months. After 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 Be7 6.Re1 b5 7.Bb3 d6 8.c3 0-0 9.h3 Nb8 10.d4 Nbd7 11.Nbd2 Bb7 12.Bc2 Re8 13.Nf1 Bf8 14.Ng3 g6 15.b3 d5 16.Bg5 h6 17.Bh4 Watson says that International Masters Malcom Pein and Andrew Martin tore into the line 17...g5 18.Nxg5 hxg5 19.Bxg5 exd4 with huge complications ultimately favoring black. "Notice how the modern Breyer seems to do best when Black can successfully implement the 'blow it all to bits' strategy as opposed to the 'cleverly shift around' method of defense," Watson writes. But after the forced continuation 20.e5! Rxe5 21.Rxe5 Nxe5 22.cxd4 Nc6 23.Qd3 Nb4 24.Qf3 Be7, David Navara's improvement 25.Bf5! leaves black in dire straits.

Another example is Teimur Radjabov's new way of playing the sharp line in the Poisoned Pawn variation of the Najdorf Sicilian: 1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.Bg5 e6 7.f4 Qb6 8.Qd2 Qxb2 9.Rb1 Qa3 10.e5 (Watson gives preference to 10.f5.) 10...dxe5 11.fxe5 Nfd7 12.Ne4!? (Watson only covers 12.Bc4.) 12...h6 13.Bh4 Qxa2 (The game Radjabov-Anand from this year's world championship in Rishon LeZiyyon, Israel, finished quickly: 13...Qa4 14.Be2 Nc6 15.Nxe6 g5 16.Nf6+ black resigned.) 14.Rd1!? and now the game Radjabov-Karjakin from a rapid knockout in Cap d'Agde, France, ended: 14...Qb2 15.Qe3 Bc5 16.Be2 Nc6 17.c3 Qa3 18.0-0 0-0 19.Nf6+! Nxf6 20.Bxf6 Nxd4 21.Rxd4 Bxd4 22.Qxd4 gxf6 23.exf6 Qa5 24.h4 Kh7 25.Bd3+ Qf5 26.Re1 Rg8 27.Kh2 a5 28.g4 Qxd3 29.Qxd3+ Kh8 30.Re5 Rxg4 31.Rh5 Rg6 32.Qd8+ Kh7 33.Qe7 and black resigned.

From other opening books I like works by authors who specialize in one particular approach. Mikhail Golubev's "Understanding the King's Indian" or Alex Yermolinsky's "Chess Explained: The Classical Sicilian" come immediately to mind. All the above books belong in any serious player's library.

Local Chess Bonanza

Two major events will occur a few blocks apart in Washington Dec. 27-30. The 2006 Pan-American Championships, with teams from North, Central and South America, will take place at the Renaissance Hotel, 999 Ninth St. NW (at Massachusetts Avenue and K Street). It includes the Pan-Am intercollegiate team championship, called the World Series of College Chess, and the Pan-Am scholastic team individual and team championships for students in grades 1-12. The top individual scholastic winner will be offered a four-year scholarship at the University of Maryland Baltimore County. More information is at http://www.umbc.edu/chess/Pan-Am2006.

Also the 33rd annual Eastern Open, a traditional eight-round Swiss tournament, will be played at the Wyndham Washington hotel (1400 M St. NW). It is organized by the U.S. Chess Center, a top scholastic organization that promotes chess among D.C. area children. See http://www.chessctr.org.

Solution to today's problem by J. Fritz (White: Kh1,Qc8,Rf7,Bf1,P:b7,c7; Black: Ka7,Bb8,P:a5,c6): 1.Qf8! Nxf8 or Kb6 2.c8N mate; or 1...Bxc7 2.b8Q mate.

CHESSLubomir Kavalek

By Lubomir Kavalek Monday, December 4, 2006; C10

With an incredible blunder against the computer program Deep Fritz 10 last Monday, the world champion Vladimir Kramnik redefined the difference between human players and computers: Machines don't overlook mate in one move. The mate led to Kramnik's loss of the second game, the only decisive result so far in the Man vs. Machine six-game match in Bonn, Germany. It deprived Kramnik of the half-million dollar bonus he would have gotten for winning the contest. After yesterday's fifth game, the computer led 3-2. Tomorrow is the last game.

In the United States, two major open tournaments took place over the Thanksgiving weekend. The youngest American grandmaster, Hikaru Nakamura, took a break from his college classes to win the National Congress in Philadelphia, scoring 5 1/2 points in six games. In Los Angeles, grandmaster Melikset Khachiyan and International Master David Pruess shared first place at the American Open, scoring six points in eight games. Pruess was also a member of the San Francisco Mechanics' team that won the 2006 U.S. Chess League on Wednesday by beating the New York Knights.

Mirroring Spassky

The former world champion Boris Spassky treated his cavalry cavalierly, often dispatching his knights to certain death. The astonishing sacrifices against Yuri Averbach from the 1956 Soviet championship playoff or against me in Linares in 1981 are prime examples. In the sixth game of the 1968 Candidates Final against Viktor Korchnoi, Spassky conceived a fabulous knight sacrifice already by move 8 -- five moves before it actually happened. Although Spassky was close to winning these duels, he never did, and you don't find them in the collections of his selected games.

Korchnoi-Spassky

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Be7 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bf4 c6 6.Qc2 g6 7.0-0-0 (A wild idea of Mikhail Tal, 7.e4!? dxe4 8.d5, for example 8...cxd5 9.Nxd5!, gives white the edge.) 7...Nf6 8.f3 Na6! (Spassky's coach, Igor Bondarevsky, wrote that Spassky had the knight sacrifice on b4 already in mind.) 9.e4 Nb4 10.Qb3 Be6! 11.e5 (The tempting 11.a3 dxe4 12.d5 Nbxd5 13.fxe4 is refuted by 13...Qb6!) 11...Nd7! 12.a3 a5! (A wonderful intuitive sacrifice, taking advantage of white's poor development and the unsafe position of the white king.) 13.axb4 axb4 (Black can now penetrate via the a-file.) 14.Nb1 c5! 15.g4 c4 (Suffocating the white pieces.) 16.Qe3 Ra2 17.h4 Qa5 18.Rh2 Ra1! (The threat of 19...Qa2 forces white to return the piece.) 19.Bd3 b3 20.Ne2 Bb4?! (This move does not spoil the win but allows Korchnoi some counterplay. Reclaiming the piece 20...cxd3 was the best, and after 21.Qxd3 both Tal and Bondarevsky preferred 21...h5!, while today's computers like 21...0-0! better, for example 22.h5 Rc8+ 23.Nec3 Ba3!, threatening 24...Rxc3+!, and black should win.) 21.h5 0-0 22.hxg6 fxg6 23.Rdh1 cxd3 24.Qxd3 Qc7+! 25.Nec3 Nb6? (Blundering the win away. According to Tal, 25...Bxc3! 26.bxc3 Rxf4 27.Rxh7 [Or 27.Qxg6+ Kf8!] 27...Kf8 28.Kd2 Ra2+ 29.Ke3 Nxe5!! wins for black.) 26.Qxg6+! hxg6 27.Rh8+ Kf7 28.R1h7+ Ke8 29.Rxf8+ Kxf8 30.Rxc7 Nc4 31.Rxb7 Bxc3 32.bxc3 b2+ 33.Kc2 Ke8 34.Bg5 Ra6? (A final error, missing 34...Bd7 with some resistance.) 35.Nd2 Bc8 36.Re7+ Kf8 37.Nxc4 dxc4 38.Kxb2 Rb6+ 39.Kc2 Bb7 40.Rxb7 Rxb7 41.f4 Rh7 42.Kb2 and black resigned.

The San Francisco grandmaster Alex Yermolinsky, who like Spassky and Korchnoi grew up in the Russian city of St. Petersburg, should have remembered the above game. His knight sacrifice against Takashi Iwamoto from this year's American Open closely resembles Spassky's idea.

Iwamoto-Yermolinsky

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 Nc6 ("The Tango," as this double knight dance is being called, originated in the game Saemisch-Torre, Baden-Baden 1925.) 3.Nf3 e6 4.Nc3 Bb4 5.Qc2 d6 6.Bd2 0-0 7.a3 Bxc3 8.Bxc3 Qe7

9.0-0-0 e5 10.dxe5 dxe5 11.e3 a5 12.h3 Re8 13.g4 Nd7 14.Nd2 Nc5 15.Ne4 (It looks as if white is winning the fight for control of the square e4 and the diagonal b1-h7, but Yermolinsky applies Spassky's idea, opening the a-file for a dangerous attack.)

15...Nb4!? (The sacrifice is the best way out. After 15...Be6 16.Nxc5 Qxc5 17.Qe4 Rad8 18.Be2 white's position is more pleasant.) 16.axb4! (Rejecting the offer is not wise. After 16.Bxb4 axb4 17.Nxc5 Qxc5 18.a4 Qc6! 19.Bd3 Rxa4 black's attack is dangerous.) 16...axb4 17.Bg2? (White immediately blunders. He should have played 17.Bxb4! Ra1+ 18.Kd2 Nxe4+ 19.Ke2! instead. For example, after the obvious 19...Rxd1 20.Bxe7 Rd2+ 21.Qxd2 Nxd2 22.Kxd2 Rxe7, the bishop move 23.Bg2, followed by 24.Ra1, leads to a slightly better endgame for white. Black has to play 19...Qxb4 20.Rxa1 Rd8 and now after 21.Ra4?! a draw is possible after 21...Rd2+ 22.Ke1 Qd6! 23.Qxe4 Rd1+ 24.Ke2 Rd2+ 25.Ke1 [25.Kf3? loses to 25...Qf6+.] 25...Rd1+ repeating the moves. But instead of 21.Ra4?, white can play 21.Rd1!? Rxd1 22.Kxd1 Bd7 23.Ke2 Ba4 24.Qc1 Bb3 25.Kf3! with chances to win.) 17...Ra1+ 18.Kd2 b3! (The white queen is trapped.) 19.Rxa1 bxc2 20.Kxc2 Nxe4 21.Bxe4 Be6 22.b3 b6 23.Rhd1 Qh4 24.Rd2 Qxh3 and black won in 29 moves.

Solution to today's study by L. Prokes (White: Kb1,Re7,Be3,Nc7,P:c2,c5,f3; Black: Kc6,Qf6,P:b4,b5,f7,g5): 1.Nd5! Kxd5 2.Rd7+ Kc4 3.Rd4+ Kc3 4.Bc1!!, threatening 5.Bb2 mate, wins.

CHESS Lubomir Kavalek

By Lubomir Kavalek Monday, December 18, 2006; C10

David Bronstein was the Michelangelo of modern chess, sharing with the famous Italian Renaissance artist a love of beauty. Carving his masterpieces on the chessboard, Bronstein perceived the royal game as an art. When he passed away this month at the age of 82, the chess world lost a marvelous and exceptional artist whose games and writings influenced generations of chess players.

Poetry in Motion

Bronstein created his first masterpiece 60 years ago. Like any evergreen, the brilliant twin combination against two Czech masters, Ludek Pachman and Frantisek Zita, played in the 1946 match Prague vs. Moscow, looks incredibly fresh and unbelievable even today. It became his calling card, opening doors to the hearts of many chess enthusiasts.

Amazingly, Bronstein's power to create did not seem to diminish even half a century later. During the 1996 open tournament in the Spanish town of Ubeda, the then-71-year-old grandmaster produced the following gem against the Armenian grandmaster Smbat Lputian in the Grunfeld Indian defense. With the elegant dance of his pieces, Bronstein created a stormy mating attack along the long diagonal a1-h8.

Bronstein-Lputian

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nf3 Bg7 4.g3 d5 5.cxd5 Nxd5 6.Bg2 0-0 7.0-0 Nc6 8.e4 Nb6 9.d5 Na5 10.Nc3 c6 11.h3!? (White limits black's light bishop, but the move is an invitation to a pawn snatching.) 11...Bxc3?! (Lputian takes the pawn, hoping he can protect the weak dark squares around his king.) 12.bxc3 cxd5 13.exd5 Nxd5 (After 13...Qxd5 either 14.Ba3 or 14.Qe1 give white plenty of play.) 14.Bh6 Re8 (After 14...Nxc3 15.Qe1 wins .) 15.Ne5! Be6 (15...Nxc3? is met decisively with 16.Qf3!) 16.c4 Nb6 (The triple-attack on the c-pawn is tempting, but helping to defend the king with 16...Nf6 was preferable.)

17.Qe1! (Bronstein already sees his queen mating on the square g7.) 17...Nbxc4?! (Too greedy. After 17...Naxc4 18.Bxb7 Rb8 19.Bg2 [Not 19.Nc6? Qd7! 20.Nxb8 Qxb7 and black should win.] 19...Qd6 black has good chances to equalize.) 18.Qc3 (Threatening to mate on g7 after 19.Nxf7!) 18...f6 (Lputian defends against the mate, shortens the long diagonal and hopes to drive the white knight back.)

19.Rfe1!! (A victory for the human spirit! Bronstein does not retreat with his knight, keeping the pressure on. Almost all computer programs prefer the obvious 19.Nxc4.) 19...Rc8 (Lputian thought about this move for nearly an hour. The white knight on e5 is taboo. First, after19...fxe5? 20.Rxe5! white wins either after 20...Nxe5 21.Qxe5, followed by Qe5-g7 mate; or after 20...Rf8 21.Rxe6! Rf7 22.Rae1 Rc8 23.Rxe7! Rxe7 24.Rxe7 Qxe7 25.Bd5+ Qf7 26.Qg7 mate. Secondly, white wins a piece with a double-attack after 19...Nxe5? 20.Rxe5! Rc8 21.Qe1!, since 21...fxe5? is met by 22.Qxe5 and white mates.) 20.Rad1 Qb6? (Missing the best defense 20...Nd6! 21.Nc6 Nxc6 22.Rxe6 Ne5!, but not 22...Qa5? 23.Bd5! Qxc3 24.Rxe7+ Nf7 25.Rxf7 and white wins.)

21.Nd7! (The magician strikes again. After 21.Nxg6 black defends with 21...Ne5! 22.Qa1 hxg6 23.Rxe5 Bf7!) 21...Qb2 (Avoiding the trap 21...Bxd7 22.Rxd7 Ne5? 23.Rxe7! and white wins, e.g. 23...Rxc3 24.Bd5+ Kh8 25.Bg7 mate.) 22.Qd3 (22.Qf3! is stronger, for example 22...Ne5 23.Nxf6+ exf6 24.Qxf6 Nd3 25.Rxe6 Qxf6 26.Rxf6 and white should win because the black knights can't match the power of white's bishop pair. But we would miss the wonderful finale.) 22...Bf7 23.Re2 Qa3? (A decisive lapse. After 23...Qb5 24.Rde1 Nc6 25.Nxf6+ exf6 26.Rxe8+ Rxe8 27.Rxe8+ Bxe8 28.Bd5+ Kh8 29.Bxc4 white's bishop pair is unpleasant, but black is still in the game.) 24.Qd4 Qd6 (After 24...Ne5 25.Rxe5! fxe5 26.Qxe5 Qc3 27.Rd4 black has no good defense against 28.Qg7 mate.)

25..Qa1! (A perfect hiding place for the queen. White's attack is ready to explode.) 25...Qa6 (After 25...Qb4 26.Rxe7! white breaks through either after 26...Qxe7 27.Nxf6+ Kh8 28.Bg7+! [The point!] 28...Kxg7 29.Nh5+! Kh6 30.Qg7+ Kxh5 [Or 30...Kg5 31.f4+ Kf5 32.g4+ Ke6 33.f5+ gxf5 34.Nf4 mate.] 31.g4+ Kg5 32.h4+ Kxg4 33.Rd4+ Qe4 34.Qf6!! Rc5 35.Bf3+ Kh3 36.Bxe4 and white mates soon; or after 26...Rxe7 27.Nxf6+ Kh8 28.Bg7+! Kxg7 29.Ne8+ Kh6 [Or 29...Kf8 30.Qg7+ Kxe8 31.Qh8+ Bg8 32.Qxg8 mate.] 30.Qg7+ Kh5 31.Qxh7+ Kg5 32.Qh4+ Kf5 33.Qf6 mate.)

26.Rxe7! (Crashing the defensive base, white triumphs on the diagonal a1-h8.) 26...Rxe7 27.Nxf6+ Kh8 28.Nd7+ (The mating combination 28.Bg7+! shortens the game, for example 28...Kxg7 29.Ne8+ Kh6 30.Qg7+ and white mates either after 30...Kg5 31.Rd5+ Bxd5 32.Qxe7+ Kh6 33.Qh4 mate; or after 30...Kh5 31.Qxh7+ Kg5 32.Qh4+ Kf5 33.Ng7+ Ke5 34.f4 mate.) 28...Ne5 29.Nxe5 Kg8 30.Nc6! (Threatening both 31.Qg7 mate or 31.Nxe7 mate. Equally good was 30.Nxf7 Kxf7 [Or 30...Rxf7 31.Bd5, preparing 32.Qg7 mate.] 31.Qg7+ Ke6 32.Re1+ Kf5 [32...Kd6 33.Qxe7 mate.] 33.g4 mate.) Black resigned

Arlington Chess Club

With a perfect score, four wins in four games, IM Larry Kaufmanwon this year's club championship, played Dec. 9-10. The amateur title went to Glenn Shelton,who finished with 21/2 points.<252> </body>

Solution to today's study by F. Amelung (White: Kf3,Rg8,Bc5; Black: Kh1,P:h2): 1.Kg4 Kg2 2.Rf8!! h1Q 3.Rf2+ Kg1 4.Kg3! White wins.

CHESS: Lubomir Kavalek

Monday, December 25, 2006; C13

The future of the FIDE world chess championships looks brighter. On Thursday FIDE President Kirsan Ilyumzhinov and the Dutch businessman Bessel Kok signed a memorandum of understanding launching an Amsterdam-based company called Global Chess BV to manage the championships and other chess ventures in the next five years. But for Kok to succeed, FIDE has to establish stable rules for the world championship cycles that go beyond the next year.

Looking Back

When William Steinitz defeated Johann Hermann Zukertort in the first official world championship in 1886 in the United States, the organization of the match was left to the players' seconds, Thomas Frere and James Innes Minchin. We can read about the negotiations leading to the match in Martin Frere Hillyer's fascinating work "Thomas Frere and the Brotherhood of Chess: A History of 19th Century Chess in New York City," recently published by McFarland & Drotherhood, was Steinitz's second and a good friend of the legendary Paul Morphy. The book offers a unique look at chess life in this country in the 19th century and includes games and compositions by the best chess artists of that time.

Russian Superfinal

In the absence of a few of Russia's top talents, Evgeny Alekseev, 21, won the national title in Moscow this month. He defeated Dmitry Jakovenko, 23, in the rapid playoff after the players shared first place in the championship with 7 1/2 points in 11 games. Ernesto Inarkiev was third with 7 points. Peter Svidler, the highest-rated player of the event, finished fourth with 6 1/2 points.

Sixteen-year-old Ian Nepomniachtchi is not yet Russia's answer to Norway's Magnus Carlsen or Ukraine's Sergei Karjakin, but the young player from Moscow is undoubtedly talented. In the Paulsen variation of the Sicilian, he defeated last year's Russian champion Sergei Rublevsky with highly original play.

Nepomniachtchi-Rublevsky

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 a6 (The solid Paulsen variation eliminates many dangerous lines in the Sicilian defense, where white develops his bishops either to c4 or to g5.) 5.Nc3 Qc7 6.Qf3 (Aiming for a quick development of the queenside, this unusual move was played by Viktor Korchnoi in 1958.) 6 . . . Nf6 (Attacking the knight in the center with 6 . . . Nc6 seems more logical. After 7.Be3?! black has the shocking 7 . . . Ba3!?, for example 8.bxa3? Ne5 or 8.Nxc6 Bxb2 9.Bd4 Bxa1 10.Bxg7 Qxc6 with advantage.) 7.Bg5!? Qe5 (Rublevsky tries to refute white's opening experiment, going after the e-pawn.) 8.Be3 Bb4 9.0-0-0!? (White hopes that his bishop pair and better development will compensate for the shattered queenside.) 9 . . . Bxc3 10.bxc3 0-0 (Black suddenly realizes that taking the pawn is dangerous. After 10 . . . Qxe4 11.Qg3 0-0 12.Bd3 Qg4

13.Qd6 white jams black on the dark squares; and 10 . . . Nxe4? loses the knight after 11.Bf4 Qd5 12.c4.)

11.Bd3 d6 12.Nb3 d5 (Grabbing the c-pawn 12 . . . Qxc3?! is risky. After 13.Bd4 Qb4 14.Bxf6 gxf6 15.Rhe1! Nd7 16.Re3 Re8 17.Qh5 white has a fierce attack, for example 17 . . . Nf8 18.Rg3+ Ng6 19.Rh3 Nf8 20.e5! dxe5 21.Bxh7+ Nxh7 22.Qxh7+ etc.) 13.exd5 exd5 14.h3 Nc6 15.Bf4 Qe7 16.Bg5! (The pin is unpleasant.) 16 . . . Be6 17.Qg3 Rfe8 (Black should have tried to unpin himself with 17 . . . Rfc8 18.Kb1 Qc7.) 18.Kb1 a5 19.Rhe1 a4 (Hoping to gain ground on the queenside, black runs into a surprise.) 20.Nc5! Ra5 (After 20...Qxc5 21.Bxf6 Qf8 22.Qh4 g6 [Or 22...h6 23.Re3!] 23.f4 white has strong pressure. Computers can calculate well the piece sacrifice 20...h6? 21.Bxh6! Nh5 22.Qf3 Qxc5 23.Qxh5 gxh6 24.Qxh6 and white should prevail, for example 24...Qxc3 25.Bh7+ Kh8 26.Be4+ Kg8 27.Re3 Qb4+ 28.Ka1 Qxe4 29.Rg3+ Qg6 30.Rxg6+ fxg6 31.Qxg6+ Kf8 32.Qh6+ Ke7 33.f4 and the kingside avalanche of the white pawns decides.)

21.Nd7!! (Jumping into the storm, white takes advantage of various cross-pins and forces a promising endgame.) 21...Nh5 (After 21...Ne4 22.Rxe4 Qxd7 23.Bf6 g6 24.Rh4 d4 25.Rxh7! wins; and 21...Qxd7 loses to 22.Bxf6 g6 23.Qf4 followed by 24.Qh6 and mate on g7.) 22.Bxe7 Nxg3 23.Bb4 Ra7 (Not 23...Nxb4? 24.cxb4 Ra7 25.Rxe6! fxe6 26.fxg3 and white should win.) 24.Bc5 Ra5 25.Bb4 (White decided against 25.Rxe6 fxe6 26.fxg3 Rd8, although after 27.Rf1! e5 28.Bb4 he should win.) 25...Ra7 26.Nc5 Nh5 27.Bb5! (Threatening both 28.Nxb7 and 28.c4.) 27...Nf4 28.g3 Nxh3 29.f4 (Threatening the unpleasant 30.f5.) 29...Raa8 (After 29...Nf2 comes 30.Rxd5.) 30.Nxb7 Rec8 31.Nd6 Nf2? (Loses, but 31...Rc7 32.f5 Bd7 33.Rxd5 only prolongs the game.) 32.Nxc8 Rxc8 (After 32...Nxb4 33.Ne7+ Kf8 34.cxb4 Nxd1 35.Nxd5! white should win. And 32...Nxd1 33.Bxc6 Rxc8 34.Bxa4 wins for white, for example 34...Nf2 35.f5 Bxf5 36.Rf1; or 34...Nxc3+ 35.Bxc3 Rxc3 36.f5; or 34...Bg4 35.Kc1 Nf2 36.Bb3.) 33.Rd2 Ne4 34.Rxe4! dxe4 35.Bxc6 e3 36.Rd4 e2 37.c4 Rb8 38.Kc1 (Saving the bishop since 38...Rxb4 is met by 39.Rd8 mate.) Black resigned.

Solution to today's six-mover by G. Nadareishvili (White: Ke2,Rh4,Ba6,Ng4; Black: Kg1,P:g2,g3): 1.Rh2!! gxh2 2.Ne5 Kh1 (Or 2...h1Q 3.Nf3 mate.) 3.Bb7 Kg1 4.Nf3+ Kh1 5.Kf2 g1Q+ 6.Nxg1 mate.

CHESSLubomir Kavalek

By Lubomir Kavalek Monday, January 1, 2007; C11

The last week of a dramatic year ended with a bang in the nation's capital, where two major chess events finished Saturday.

International Master Fabiano Caruana, 14, who shared first place in the Italian championship in early December, tied for first with Kazim Gulamali and grandmasters Jaan Ehlvest and Sergei Kudrin at the 33rd Eastern Open. They posted a 6-2 score. The annual tournament, with more than 200 participants, was played at the downtown Wyndham hotel.

Only a few blocks away, at the Renaissance hotel, two teams from the University of Texas at Dallas (UTD) dominated the 2006 Pan-American Intercollegiate Team Championship, winning five matches and drawing against each other; the title went to the UTD B-team on a better tiebreaker.

The University of Maryland Baltimore County (UMBC) shared third place with Miami Dade College, Duke University and Universidad Catolica del Peru, each winning four matches and losing two.

Bruci Lopez, the UMBC A-team's second board, played one of the most spectacular games of the event, smashing Yale's Kurt Schneider with a powerful knight sacrifice in the McCutcheon variation of the French defense.

Lopez - Schneider

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bg5 Bb4 5.e5 h6 6.Bd2 Bxc3 7.bxc3 Ne4 8.Qg4 g6 9.Bd3 Nxd2 10.Kxd2 c5 11.h4! (Without delay, white goes after the target on g6. It is sharper than 11.Nf3.) 11 . . . Bd7 12.h5 g5 13.f4! (Planning to create a weak pawn on g5.) 13 . . . f5? (Black was probably going for Jakob Murey's idea 13 . . . c4 14.Be2 f5 15.exf6 e5 and mixed up the move order.) 14.exf6 e5? 15.Bg6+ (Black's central advance can be also refuted with the simple 15.Qf3!, for example 15 . . . e4 16.Bxe4 dxe4 17.Qxe4+ and white wins either after 17 . . . Kf8 18.Qg6 Rg8 19.Qxh6+ Kf7 20.fxg5 Bf5 21.Nf3; or after 17 . . . Kf7 18.fxg5 hxg5 19.Qg6+ Ke6 20.f7+ Kd5 21.Nf3 cxd4 22.cxd4 b5 23.Rae1 and the black king is in trouble.) 15 . . . Kf8 16.Bf5! (Making it difficult for black to win the pawn on f6.) 16 . . . exf4 17.Nf3 Qc8 (Trying to force white to exchange the bishops, but white has a shocking surprise.)

18.Nxg5!! (A decisive sacrifice that opens the path to the black king.) 18...hxg5 (After 18...Bxf5 19.Ne6+! white wins, for example 19...Qxe6 20.Qg7+ Ke8 21.Qxh8+ Kd7 22.Rhe1 Be4 23.dxc5 Kc6 24.Qf8! and black is tied up.) 19.Qxg5 (Threatening mate in two, the white queen easily outplays black's only defender -- the rook on h8.) 19...Rg8 (After 19...Ke8 20.f7+! Kxf7 [20...Kf8 21.h6!] 21.Bg6+ Kg8 22.h6 white wins.) 20.Bg6 Rh8 21.Bf7! (Flushing out the black king.) 21...Kxf7 22.Qg7+ Ke6 23.Qe7+ Kf5 24.Qe5+ (White also had mate in three with 24.g4+! fxg3 [24...Kxg4 25.Rag1+ etc.] 25.Raf1+ Kg5 26.Qg7 mate.) 24...Kg4 25.Raf1 cxd4 26.Qxf4 mate.

Adithya Balasubramanian, a 10th-grader from Yorktown, Va., won the 2006 Pan-American Scholastic Individual Championship, and the team title went to Thomas Jefferson High School.

In Las Vegas

Hikaru Nakamura, 19, won the North American Open Friday with a 6-1 score. The event attracted nearly 600 players. Nakamura virtually clinched the tournament victory in the penultimate round, defeating the top-rated Swiss grandmaster, Vadim Milov, with a fabulous knight leap in the Paulsen Sicilian.

Nakamura - Milov

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 a6 5.Bd3 Ne7 6.0-0 Nbc6 7.Nxc6 Nxc6 8.f4 d6 9.Nd2 g6 (9...Be7 looks more solid.) 10.Nf3 Bg7 11.c3 0-0 12.Qe2 Re8 13.Qf2 Qc7 14.Nh4 b5 15.Be3 Bb7 16.Rad1 (White has space advantage, but needs to find a way to dent black's position.) 16...Qe7 17.Bb6 Bf6 18.Nf3 e5! 19.g3!? (Nakamura finds the only way to keep tension. After 19.f5!? black plays 19...gxf5! 20.exf5 e4 21. Rfe1 d5 with a good game.) 19...Bg7?! (Too passive. The aggressive 19...exf4 20.gxf4 Nd8 21.Qg3 Ne6 was called for.) 20.Bb1 Nd8 21.f5! Bf8 22.Nh4 Bc6 23.a3! (Making room on a2 for his light bishop, white concentrates his forces on the pawn f7.) 23...Qb7 24.Ba2 g5 (Black wants to keep the position closed. After 24...Bxe4? 25.fxg6 hxg6 26.Bxd8 Rexd8 27.Bxf7+ Kh7 28.Qf6 the pawn on g6 falls.) 25.Ng6!! (A wonderful leap!) 25...Bxe4 (Accepting the knight sacrifice accelerates white's powerful attack. After 25...hxg6 26.fxg6 the black pawn on f7 is in a crossfire and white easily prevails, e.g. 26...Kh8 27.gxf7 Re7 28.Qf6+ Kh7 29.Qf5+ Kh8 30.Bxd8 Rxd8 31.Qg6 winning. Hoping to win the knight later with 25...Bg7 is simply met with 26.Rxd6!, for example 26...hxg6 27.fxg6 Kh8 28.Qf5!! Qxb6+ 29.Rf2 Re7 30.Qh3+ Kg8 31.Qh7+ Kf8 32.gxf7 Nxf7 33.Rg6 wins.) 26.Nxf8 d5 (After 26...Rxf8 27.Rxd6 Kh8 28.Rfd1 Nc6 29.Rd7 white wins.) 27.Qe3 h6 28.Nd7! (The knight escapes and the game is over. After 28...Qxd7 29.Qxe4 Qc6 30.Qe3 d4 31.Qf3 e4 32.Qh5 Qxb6 33.f6 wins.) Black resigned.

Happy New Year!

And if you lose some games, don't despair. Lionel Kieseritzky, born 201 years ago today, achieved fame by losing what is known as the "Immortal Game" to Adolf Anderssen in 1851 in London.

Solution to today's problem by Eugene B. Cook (White: Kf7,Qh1,Bd6,P:e4: Black: Kh8,Bg5,P;e5,g7,h7): 1.Qh6!! Bxh6 2.Bxe5 and 3.Bxg7 mate; or 1...gxh6 2.Bxe5+ Bf6 3.Bxf6 mate; or 1...Bf6 2.Be7! and white mates next move.