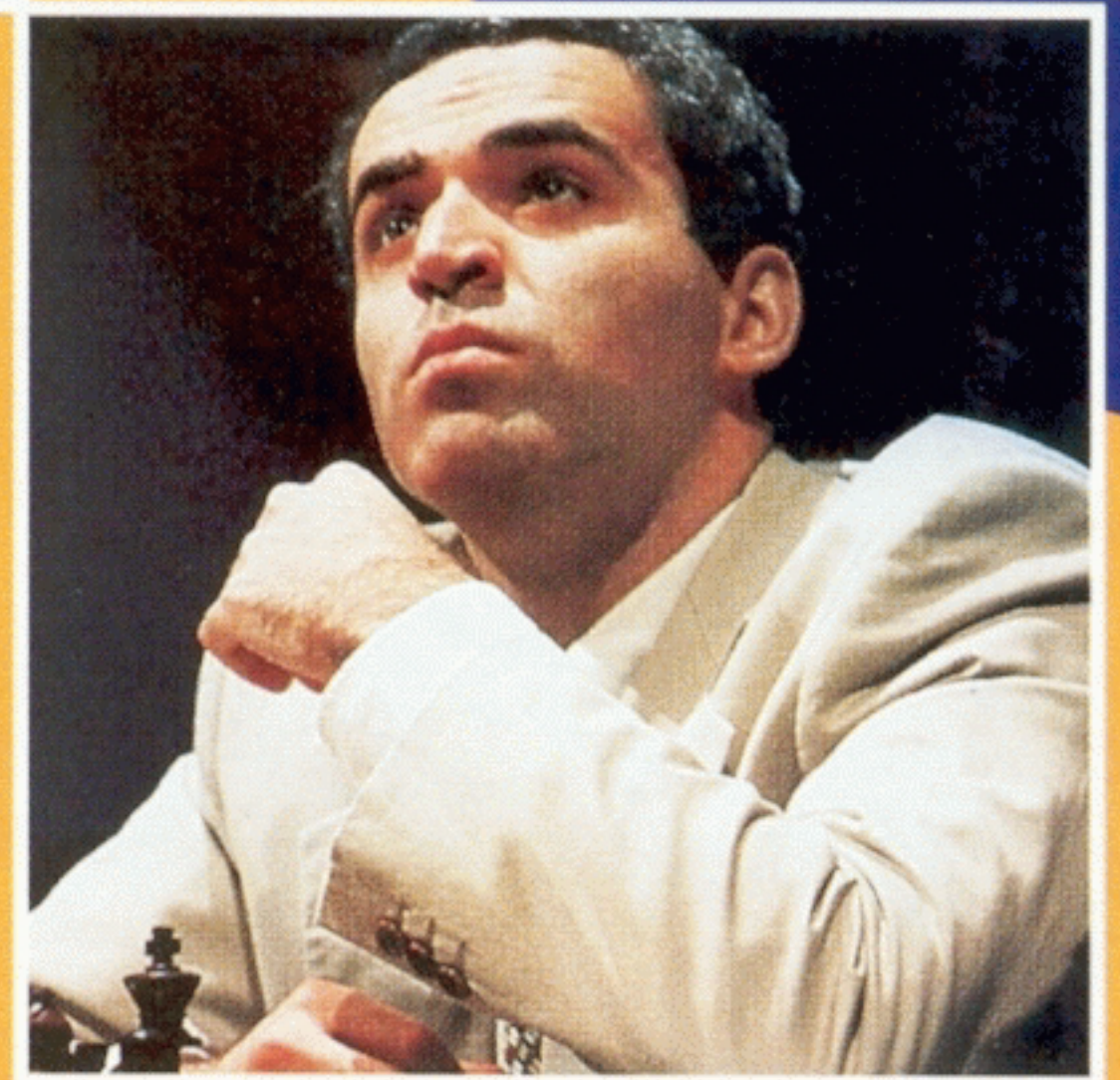
 MAY 1995

Chess Life



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ON THE COVER

• We know that Gata Kamsky (upper right) will play Anatoly Karpov (center) for the World Championship (administered by FIDE) title later this year, by virtue of their recent victories in Sanghi Nagar. Karpov beat Boris Gelfand 6-3, and Kamsky eliminated Valery Salov 5½-1½.

We know that Kamsky is currently playing Viswanathan Anand (left) for the right to challenge Garry Kasparov (lower right) for the World Championship (administered by the PCA) even later this year.

We also know that in 1996, a unification match will take place, with the following possibilities:

Kamsky (FIDE) vs.	Kasparov (PCA)
Karpov (FIDE) vs.	Kasparov (PCA)
Karpov (FIDE) vs.	Kamsky (PCA)
Karpov (FIDE) vs.	Anand (PCA)
Kamsky (FIDE) vs.	Anand (PCA)

There is also the possibility that no unification match will be needed:

Kamsky (FIDE) vs.	Kamsky (PCA)
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"Kinquering Congs their titles take," an original spoonerism, seems appropriate, although I'm not sure why.

Both camps seem to recognize the economic realities/benefits of recognizing one champion and one championship. The beginning steps in this process, starting with the FIDE Congress in Moscow, and the renewed friendship between Garry Kasparov and FIDE President Florencio Campomanes, have been alternately panned and praised in other publications and the electronic media.

Be you a panner or a praiser, all can voice the same sentiment: 1996 cannot come quickly enough.

• Thanks to A.F. Downey of Atlanta, Georgia, we also know that the Discovery Channel will be airing the "Man versus Machine" playoff match (between Joel Benjamin and WChess) on April 19 at 9 p.m. EST, and April 22 at 5 p.m. EST. The match was taped at the Manhattan Chess Club on October 9, 1994.

• Former *Chess Life* editor Burt Hochberg, now faces a long period of physical therapy and rehabilitation, after a life-threatening bout with an (as of yet) undiagnosed illness, which left him currently, but not permanently, paralyzed. His attitude is positive, but I'm sure that words of encouragement will be appreciated. You can write to Burt in care of the USCF.

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USCF promotes the study and knowledge of the game of chess, for its own sake as an art and enjoyment, but also as a means for the improvement of society. It informs, educates, and fosters the development of players (professional and amateur) and potential players. It encourages the development of a network of institutions devoted to enhancing the growth of chess, from local clubs to state and regional associations, and it promotes chess in American schools.

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40 Years at the Top: An Appreciation

Part Two

by Larry Eldridge

FOR THE NEXT TWO DECADES OR so Curdo was pretty much "king of the hill" throughout New England — the top seed and the man to beat at virtually every tournament he entered. Then as one promising young rival after another arrived on the scene, he became the standard against which this steady procession of future GMs and IMs was measured.

It's quite a list, too, headed in the '70s and early '80s by Jack Peters, Norman Weinstein, and Jim Rizzitano, all on the way to IM titles, then in the '80s by Patrick Wolff and Ilya Gurevich enroute to GM status.

Curdo gave all of them plenty of painful over-the-board "lessons" before they eventually began returning the favor, prompting his now-favorite philosophy about dealing mercilessly with these whiz kids. "Get 'em while they're young," he likes to say, "because you know they're going to get you sooner or later."

He also holds victories at various times over GMs Alexander Ivanov and Edmar Mednis along with IMs Danny Kopec and Igor Ivanov, and draws with Robert Byrne, Walter Browne, Arthur Bisguier, and many other top names.

But few if any chessplayers can survive economically on tournament prizes alone, so like most of his peers, Curdo spends a good deal of time in the ancillary aspects of his profession — lectures, simultaneous exhibitions, writing, and teaching.

One of his students, in fact, was Wolff, who remembers appreciatively, the tutelage he got from Curdo as a young teenager.

"I think I benefitted most by just being around him, being able to play him, and having his experience accessible to me," says the 1992 U.S. champion. "He'd teach me, and we'd go to tournaments together. It was quite an experience for me.

"I'm really glad to see him getting the recognition he deserves," Wolff adds. "John was for many years the man to beat in New England chess. He's really a fixture of the chess culture of the region — both a product of and partly responsible for the great chess heritage we have in New England."

In the March issue we began this two-part article on John Curdo, prompted by his 500th tournament win. John has now won or tied for first place in 511 events!

But how does Curdo keep doing all this now? How does he keep all these wheels turning at a stage in life when most people in any field — and particularly one as demanding as full-time professional chess — are cutting back?

One big key is staying in shape. For years Curdo has maintained a regular fitness regimen including running two miles three times a week, and it pays off in a level of stamina that is extraordinary for a man of his years. Indeed, in the late rounds of a difficult tournament, it is a common sight to see him still there grinding out a point while players half his age give into fatigue.

It's obvious from his results that in his heyday Curdo had the playing strength to achieve at least the IM title, but he has no regrets — and no intention of pursuing such a goal at this point.

"At the right time in my career, I just didn't go for it," he says. "And I'm just not as strong now. Oh, no. The nerves aren't the same. The memory's not the same."

SICILIAN DEFENSE [B53]
W: John Curdo
B: Danny Kopec
Merrimack Grand Prix, Salem, N.H., 1969

Curdo was the No. 1 rated player in New England in 1969, completing a remarkable decade in which he held that position seven times and was No. 2 the other three years (if you go back to include the late '50s, his "King of the Mountain" record shows 10 No. 1 rankings in 13 years). In this game his victim was a young Danny Kopec, who has gone on to become a strong IM as well as a professor of computer science at the U.S. Coast Guard Academy, and a leading national authority on artificial intelligence. The actual game notes, here and below, are by John Curdo as they appeared in his book, *Forty Years at the Top*.

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 d6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Qxd4 Nc6 5. Bb5 Bd7 6. Bxc6 Bxc6 7. Nc3 e5

I have never liked this move in many situations. If played, then 8. ... h6 is probably necessary.

8. Qd3 Nf6 9. Bg5 Be7 10. Rd1 Qb6 11. 0-0 Rd8

The b-pawn is tainted, for example 11. ... Qxb2 12. Nh4!, with good play.

12. b3 h6 13. Bxf6 Bxf6 14. Nd2 0-0 15. Nc4 Qc5 16. Ne3 b5 17. Ncd5 Bxd5 18. Nxd5 Bg5 19. g3 Rfe8 20. h4 Be7 21. Rc1 Rc8 22. c4 b4 23. a3! a5

Better was the active, though still losing 23. ... bxa3 24. b4 Qc6 25. Qxa3.

24. axb4 axb4 25. Ra1 Bd8 26. Ra4 Ba5

27. Rfa1 Ra8 28. Qe3! Rf8 29. Ne7+, Black resigns.

The arrival of New Yorker Norman Weinstein as a student along with the emergence of local whiz Jack Peters combined to boost up New England chess several notches in the 1970s. Curdo suddenly found himself facing tougher competition week in and week out, but he still won his share of the battles — even against these two outstanding young IMs-to-be. This game was played on the 195th anniversary of Paul Revere's Ride, and in a case of poetic justice the "Patriot" forces prevailed just as they had in 1775. About the game Curdo says, "If *Zugzwang*s can be measured by the material on the board, then this has to be my best *Zugzwang* game."

SICILIAN DEFENSE [B31]
Rossolimo Variation
W: John Curdo
B: Norman Weinstein
New England Invitational, 1970

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bb5 g6 4. c3 Nf6 5. Qe2 a6 6. Ba4 Bg7 7. 0-0 0-0 8. d4 cxd4 9. cxd4 d5 10. e5 Ne8 11. Nc3 Bg4

The threat, 11. ... b5, would have stymied White's plan.

12. Bxc6 bxc6 13. Na4 f6?

Especially bad, since it forces White's strong reply.

14. e6 Qd6 15. Nc5 Nc7 16. Re1 f5 17. Qd2!

Breaking the pin with the cunning threat of 18. Nb7.

17. ... Nb5 18. Ne5 Bxe5 19. Rxe5 f4 20. a4 Na7 21. f3 Bf5 22. Qxf4

Trading the thorn for a pawn plus a strong attack.

22. ... Bxe6 23. Qh4 Bf7

Naturally not 23. ... Rf6 24. Bg5.

24. Rxe7 Nc8 25. Rd7 Qb8 26. Rb7 Qd6 27. Bf4 Qd8 28. Bg5 Qd6

If 28. ... Qa5, then 29. b4 traps the queen.

29. Rd7 Qb8 30. Rb7 Qd6 31. Re1

Black is now in *Zugzwang*. Any piece move loses material or allows mate.

31. ... Ra7 32. Rxa7 Nxa7 33. Be7, Black resigns.

SICILIAN DEFENSE [B89]
Scheveningen Variation
W: John Curdo
B: Jack Peters
New England Open, Boston, 1973

IM and *Los Angeles Times* chess columnist Jack Peters grew up just south of Boston and cut his chess teeth in New

England. Naturally he got some "lessons" along the way from Curdo, as in this pleasing effort.

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 e6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 Nf6 5. Nc3 d6 6. g3 Be7 7. Bg2 0-0 8. 0-0 Nc6 9. b3 Qa5 10. Bb2 Rd8 11. Re1 Bd7 12. Qd2 Ng4

A point behind in the last round, Peters tries to stir things up!

13. Rad1 Qh5 14. h3 Nge5 15. Nce2 Nxd4 16. Nxd4 Nc6 17. Nf3 e5 18. g4 Qg6 19. Nh2 Be6 20. c4 Rd7 21. Nf1 h5 22. f3 Bd8 23. Ne3 Bb6 24. Kh2 hxg4

Positionally unwise. White now has the f-file along with his center control.

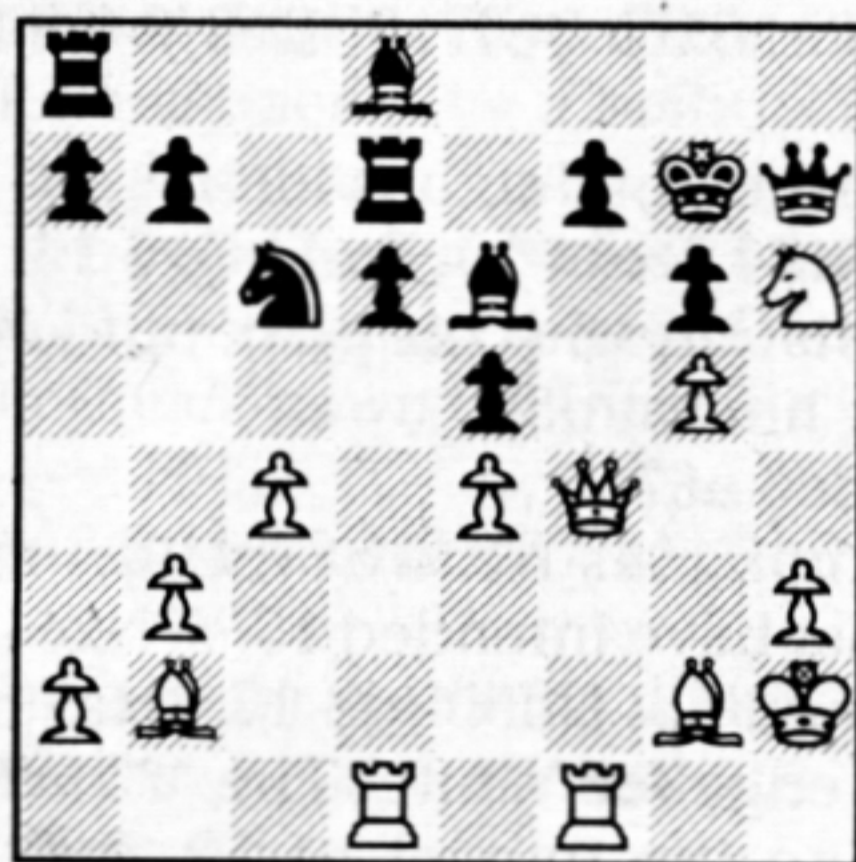
25. fxf4 Qh7 26. Nf5 g6 27. Rf1!

Not 27. Nxd6? Bc5. If now 27. ... gxf5 28. exf5 regains the piece and opens lines to White's advantage.

27. ... Bc5 28. Nh6+ Kg7 29. g5 Bb6 30. Qf4!

Threatening 31. Qf6+ Kf8 32. Qxe6, and White's next.

30. ... Bd8



31. Rxd6 Bxg5

Black also loses after 31. ... Rxd6 32. Bxe5+ Nxe5 33. Qxe5+, etc.

32. Qxg5 Rxd6 33. Bxe5+ Nxe5 34. Qxe5+ Kxh6 35. Rf4!, Black resigns.

Since 35. ... g5 36. Rf6+ Kh5 37. Bf3+, leads to mate.

SICILIAN DEFENSE

[B51]

Rossolimo Variation

W: John Curdo

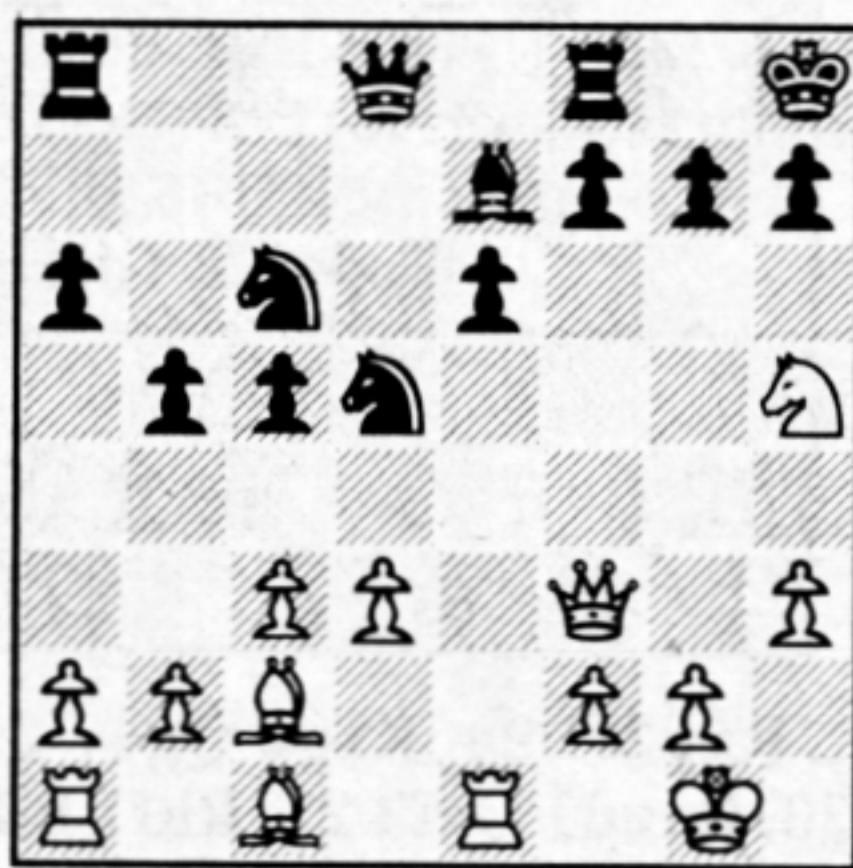
B: GM Walter Browne

Philadelphia, July 2, 1977

Although Curdo played matches all over the United States and in Canada and Mexico for the Log Cabin Chess Club as a teenager, and even competed for an Oxford University-affiliated club in England during his military service, this was actually his first tournament outside New England. It almost provided his first grandmaster scalp as well, but Walter Browne's reputation proved to be a little too intimidating. Or, as Curdo puts it, "When a grandmaster invites a sacrifice, as Browne did with 16. ... Kh8, you have to wonder: Is it calculation or *chutzpah*? I didn't have the nerve to find out!"

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 d6 3. Bb5+ Nc6 4. 0-0 Bd7 5. c3 Nf6 6. Re1 a6 7. Ba4 b5 8. Bc2 Bg4 9. d3 e6 10. Nbd2 Be7 11. h3 Bh5

12. Nf1 d5 13. Ng3 Bxf3 14. Qxf3 0-0 15. exd5 Nxd5 16. Nh5! Kh8?!



17. Nf4

Having never even drawn with a grandmaster before this game, I opted for safety over 17. d4!? cxd4 18. Nxd4 Kxd4 19. Qh5 d3 20. Bxd3 Nf6, thinking my attack unclear.

17. ... Nxf4 18. Bxf4 Rc8 19. Rad1 Bd6 20. Bxd6 Qxd6 21. Qe4

I offered a draw after this move.

21. ... e5 22. f4! exf4 23. Rf1 Rce8

Black would be ill-advised to hold the pawn with 23. ... g5 because White wins after 24. Qf5! Qe5! 25. d4! Qxf5 26. Bxf5 Rc7 27. dxc5 Ne7 28. Rd7!

24. Qxf4 Qxf4 25. Rxf4 Re2 26. Rf2 Rfe8 27. Kf1 R2e7 28. Bb3 f6 29. Rf5 Ne5 30. d4 cxd4 31. Rxd4 h6 32. g3 Kh7 33. Rf2 a5 34. Kg2 Rb8

Presently, Browne offered a draw, and I accepted.

FOUR KNIGHTS DEFENSE

[C49]

W: John Curdo

B: GM Arthur Bisguier

Greater Boston Open, 1979

Three months after Curdo's near-miss against Browne, he again came close to beating one of the nation's best-known grandmasters of the day. This time Arthur Bisguier was the near-victim, but despite a ferocious attack, Curdo had to settle in the end for the half-point.

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Nc3 Nf6 4. Bb5 Bb4 5. 0-0 0-0 6. d3 Bxc3 7. bxc3 d6 8. Bg5 Qe7 9. d4

Customary is 9. Re1.

9. ... Nd8

The win of White's e-pawn after 9. ... exd4 10. cxd4 Qxe4 11. Bxf6 gxf6 12. Re1 (Curdo-Terrie, Somersworth, NH 1979) could be hazardous to Black's health!

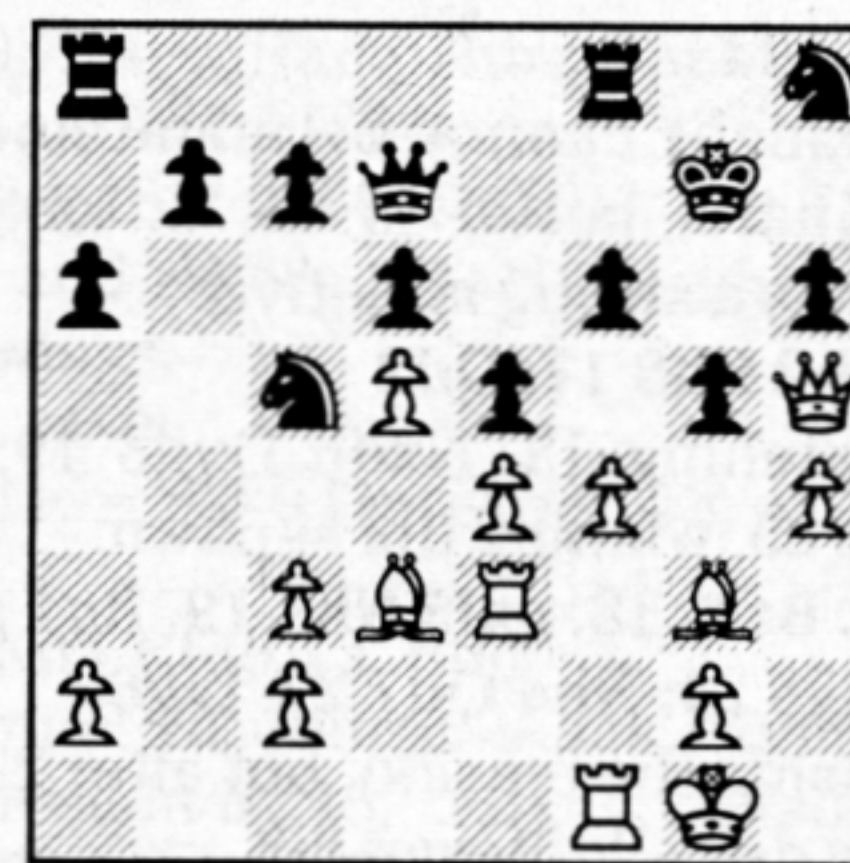
10. d5 h6 11. Bh4 Bg4

The sacrifice 11. ... g5?! 12. Nxd5 has to be good for White.

12. h3 Bxf3 13. Qxf3 g5 14. Bg3 Nd7 15. h4 Nc5 16. Qf5

I may have misused my initiative somewhere through here.

16. ... f6 17. Rae1 Kg7 18. Re3 a6 19. Bd3 Qd7 20. Qf3 Nf7 21. Qh5 Nh8 22. f4!



An offer that Black CAN refuse, unfortunately.

22. ... Qe8!

Apparently, Arthur agrees that 22. ... exf4 23. Rxf4 gxf4 24. Bxf4 is strong for White.

23. Qxe8 Rxe8 24. fxf5 fxf5 25. hxg5 Rxf1+ 26. Kxf1 Rf8+ 27. Bf2 hxg5 28. Rg3 Nf7 29. Be3 Kg6 30. Kg1 Rh8 31. Rg4 Nd7 32. Rg3 Nc5 33. Rh3 Rxh3 34. gxh3 Nh6 35. Kg2 Ng8 36. Kf3 Nf6

The knights are better than the bishops, but not enough to win.

37. Bf2 Kh5 38. Be1, draw.

Black's hedgehog kingside defense doesn't allow White to get his men in.

FOUR KNIGHTS GAME

[C48]

W: John Curdo

B: Jim Rizzitano

Franklin K. Young Memorial, Boston, 1982

In the '70s Weinstein and Peters came along to make Curdo's life more interesting; now it was Jim Rizzitano and a young Patrick Wolff bringing their tremendous budding talents into the mix. By 1982 Rizzitano had actually surpassed Curdo on the rating list, while Wolff, though still a young teenager, was already a force to be reckoned with. It was quite a feat, therefore, to defeat them both in the same tournament — as Curdo did in this event.

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nf6 3. Nc3 Nc6 4. Bb5 Bc5 5. 0-0 0-0 6. Bxc6

I lost with the sharpest move 6. Nxe5, and drew with 6. d3 d6 7. Bxc6.

6. ... dxc6 7. d3 Bg4 8. Be3 Bd6 9. h3 Bh5

The bishop is misplaced on the kingside; it is safer to play 9. ... Bxf3 10. Qxf3 Nd7, with equality.

10. Kh1!

The beginning of an excellent plan. Not 10. g4? Nxd4! 11. hxg4 Bxg4, followed by ... f7-f5, with advantage for Black.

10. ... Nd7?

Missing his last chance for 10. ... Bxf3.

11. g4 Bg6 12. Ne2

Heading for a powerful outpost on f5.

12. ... Re8 13. Ng3 Nf8 14. Nf5 Ne6 15. Rg1

White methodically concentrates his forces on the kingside, while Black eyes the hole on f4.

15. ... Nf4

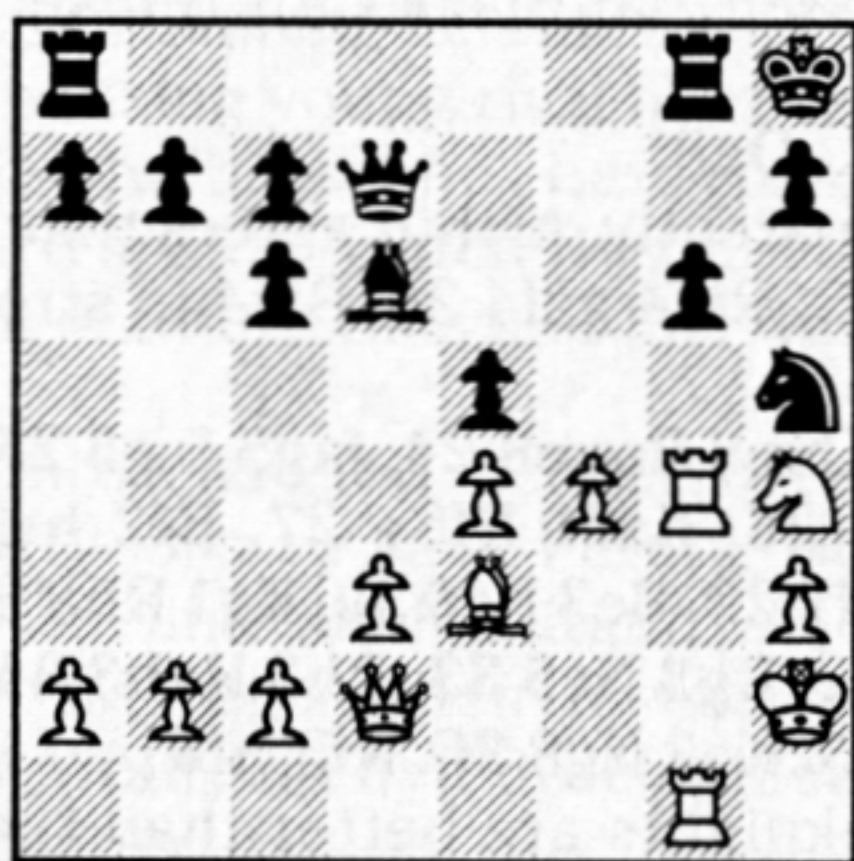
The knight cannot be maintained on this square; better is 15. ... Kh8, but White has a strong initiative.

16. Kh2 Kh8 17. Qd2

Threatening 18. Nxd6 Qxd6 19. Bxf4 exf4 20. e5, winning the f4-pawn.

17. ... Bxf5 18. gxf5 Nh5 19. Rg4 g6 20. Rg1 Rg8 21. Nh4 Qd7 22. fxxg6

Releasing the tension, but after 22. Kh1 c5, how does White get in?

22. ... fxxg6 23. f4!?

Although this unexpected shot presents Black with difficult problems, it should not work against the best defense.

23. ... Nf6??

An incredible blunder. Also bad is 23. ... exf4? 24. Bd4+ Ng7? 25. Nxxg6+! hxxg6 26. Rh4 mate. The correct defense is 23. ... Nxf4 24. Rxf4 exf4 25. Bd4+ Rg7 26. Nf5! Bf8! 27. Bxxg7+ Bxxg7 28. Nxxg7 Qxxg7, and Black is no worse.

24. Rg5 exf4 25. Bd4! f3+ 26. e5 Rae8! 27. Qf4!

The most accurate.

27. ... Rgf8 28. Nxxg6+! hxxg6 29. Rxxg6 Ng4+

There is no defense against the multitude of threats.

30. Qxxg4 Qxxg4 31. exd6+ Kh7

Or 31. ... Qxd4 32. Rh6 mate.

32. R6xxg4, Black resigns.**RUY LOPEZ**

[C68]

Exchange Variation

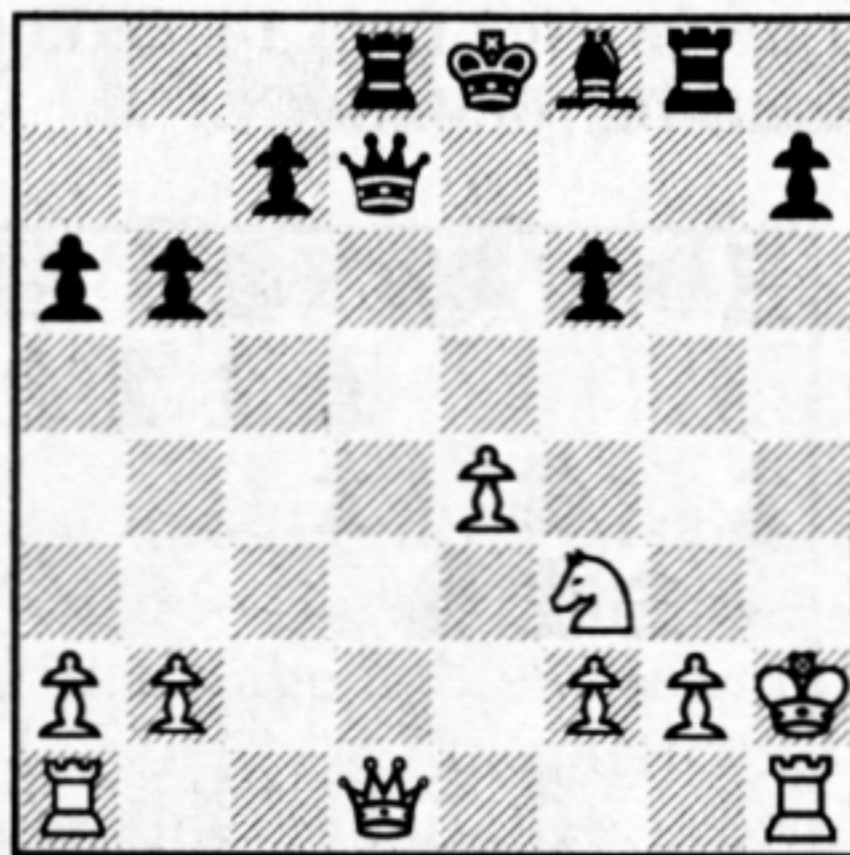
W: Patrick Wolff

B: John Curdo

Franklin K. Young Memorial, Boston, 1982

Patrick Wolff took lessons from Curdo as a youngster — and absorbed them so well that eventually the student surpassed the master. At this stage, though, Patrick was still learning — so Curdo was good enough to give him a “free class” in this tournament!

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bb5 a6 4. Bxc6 dxc6 5. 0-0 Qd6 6. d3 f6 7. Nbd2 Bg4 8. Nc4 Qd7 9. Be3 Ne7 10. h3 Be6 11. Na5 b6 12. Nb3 c5 13. Nc1 g5 14. c3 g4 15. hxxg4 Bxxg4 16. d4 Rg8 17. Kh2 Rd8 18. Nb3 exd4 19. cxd4 Nc6 20. Rh1 cxd4 21. Bxd4 Nxd4 22. Nxxd4 Bxf3 23. Nxf3

**23. ... Rxxg2+! 24. Kxxg2 Qg4+ 25. Kh2 Rxd1 26. Raxd1 Qxf3 27. Rhf1 Bd6+ 28. Kg1 Qg4+, White resigns.**

Curdo keeps a scrapbook of quotations he likes and/or thinks appropriate to his own situation, and here he pulls out one from the well-known chessplayer Sidney Bernstein: “You reach a certain age, and you don't do the computing; you rely more on intuition.”

In his own case, Curdo says, “I can still compute very well at times, but the percentage of intuition to calculation increases as you get older. So I'm still dangerous, but I have to face the fact that there are just gonna be times against Ivanov, guys of that stature, when I get outcomputed. You learn to live with it, or else you stop playing.”

Indeed, many players Curdo's age or even younger opt for the latter course — at least as far as high-level chess is concerned — and he says he understands perfectly.

“They just can't keep banging heads,” he says. “They can't take the losses.”

But Curdo is cast in a different mold. After all these years, all these tournaments, all these thousands and thousands of games, he still finds enough incentive to risk the consequences in order to be able to reap the rewards.

“I enjoy the process of winning,” he says, repeating another favorite quote (this time he doesn't know the source). “I feel that recognition is in fact the heart of the matter,” says Curdo, adding that those who haven't spent much time in the arena don't really think about what it takes to keep coming back.

“It's taken a lot of desire and energy to keep on doing what I've done,” he says. “Money has to be a measuring stick, of course, but yeah, in the end it's the winning, the winning, the winning!”

But then in a revealing moment Curdo acknowledges that perhaps even more important than winning is the excitement of the chase itself. This time the quote is an original — and one that says it all about a truly remarkable individual. “One of the greatest joys in my life,” he says, “is to head for a tournament Saturday morning and stop to mail in my entry for the next week's tournament!”

SICILIAN DEFENSE

[B52]

Rossolimo Variation

W: John Curdo

B: Charles Braun

Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1984

Curdo hasn't won 500-plus tournaments without knowing how to handle last-round pressure. Tied for the lead and duking it out with another top gun — half a point ahead and battling to nail down first place ... half a point behind and seeking to overtake the leader — he's been in each of these scenarios so many hundreds of times that it's all second nature to him at this point. This time it was Curdo who needed the win, and as he has done so many times before and since, he got it. Finally, in addition to its importance in the tournament, Curdo notes that this game is an excellent example of the outpost theme — in this case d5.

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 d6 3. Bb5+ Bd7 4. Bxd7+ Qxd7 5. 0-0 Nc6 6. c4 Nf6 7. Nc3 e6 8. d4 cxd4 9. Nxd4 Be7 10. Be3 0-0 11. Qe2 Rfc8

A clever, but dubious idea.

12. Rfd1 Nxd4 13. Bxd4 Qc6 14. b3 e5

Consistent with his plan, but leaving a gaping hole at d5!

15. Be3 a6?

Changing his mind at the last minute. He must have intended 15. ... Nxe4, when I planned 16. Nd5! Bd8 17. Bxa7, with a slight edge for White. The “?” is for not realizing the impact of 16. Bg5. Black needed to play 15. ... h6.

16. Bg5 Rab8 17. Bxf6 Bxf6 18. Nd5 Bd8 19. Rac1 Qe8

Needing only a draw, Black reacts passively. He does better to play 19. ... b5, when 20. Rc3 is fine for White.

20. Rc3 b6

If 20. ... b5, 21. Rdc1.

21. Ne3

Initiating a shift to the kingside.

21. ... Qe6 22. Rcd3 Be7 23. Nf5 Rc6

This awkward rook placement is forced; if 23. ... Rd8 then 24. Qd2 wins the d-pawn.

24. Qd2 Rd8 25. Rg3 g6

Again forced; 25. ... Bf6 (or ... Bf8) 26. Nxxg7! Bxxg7 27. Qg5 wins.

26. Nh6+ Kg7

The try 26. ... Kh8 loses to the neat 27. Qd5!, but 26. ... Kf8 is better than the text.

27. f4!

The best move in the game, with the strong threat of 28. f5.

27. ... exf4 28. Nf5+ Kh8 29. Nd4 fxxg3

Maintaining material parity seems best, e.g. 29. ... Qd7 30. Nxc6 fxxg3 (30. ... Qxc6 31. Qxf4) 31. Nxd8 Qxd8 32. e5.

30. Nxe6 gxh2+ 31. Kxh2 fxe6 32. Rf1 Rc7?

Time pressure makes Black's task of survival hopeless.

33. Qd4+ Kg8 34. Qxb6 Rdd7 35. Qf2!

Kg7 36. Qf7+ Kh6 37. Rf3 Bh4 38. Qf4+ g5 39. Qf6+ Kh5 40. Qxe6 Rg7 41. g4 mate.

VIENNA GAME

[C28]

W: Edgar McCormick
B: John Curdo

Hot Springs, Arkansas, 1986

In Curdo's four trips to the U.S. Senior Open he has come away with two outright championships and two first place ties. This instructive victory over Edgar McCormick led to his first clear title.

1. e4 e5 2. Nc3 Nf6 3. Bc4 Nc6 4. d3

Edgar was a friend and disciple of the late Weaver Adams, so I expected the aggressive 4. f4.

4. ... Na5 5. Bb3 Nxb3 6. axb3 d5 7. Bg5 c6 8. exd5 cxd5 9. Nf3 d4

White's development lead is annoying, and 9. ... d4 seemed the only way to gain any edge.

10. Ne4 Be7 11. 0-0

Not 11. Nxe5? when ... Nxe4 12. Bxe7 Qxe7 wins material.

11. ... Nxe4 12. Bxe7 Qxe7 13. dxe4 0-0

Black has space plus a bishop versus knight in a favorable pawn structure. These are small advantages to be sure, but if White remains passive Black will work on the c2-pawn via the c-file, with a possible ... f7-f5.

14. Qd3 Bg4 15. h3 Bd7 16. Ra5 f6 17. Nh4

Hoping to get in f2-f4, which never materializes, so the immediate 17. c3 makes more sense.

17. ... a6! 18. c3?

The threat of 18. ... Bb5 stops White's 18. f4. But this opening of the center gives Black the d-file.

18. ... dxc3 19. bxc3 Be6 20. c4

The alternative 20. b4 weakens a different set of squares. Either way, White's disorganized army can't contest the d-file.

20. ... Rad8 21. Qe3 Rd7 22. Raa1 Rfd8 23. Rab1 Rd3?!

With visions of a kingside attack. Better, however, is 23. ... Rd4 24. Nf3 Rd3 25. Qb6? Bxh3! 26. Ne1 R3d6.

24. Qb6! Qd7 25. Nf5

Probably his best chance — hoping for a double-rook endgame after the exchange of queens.

25. ... Bxf5 26. exf5 Rd6 27. Qb4 Qc6 28. Rbc1 Rd4 29. Qe7 Re8 30. Qb4 Red8 31. Qe7

To protect the f5-pawn by 31. g4 would be dangerously weakening.

31. ... R4d7 32. Qb4

After 32. Qe6+ Qxe6 33. fxe6 Re7, either a single or double rook ending is good for Black.

32. ... Qe4 33. Rc3 Qxf5 34. c5 Rd1!

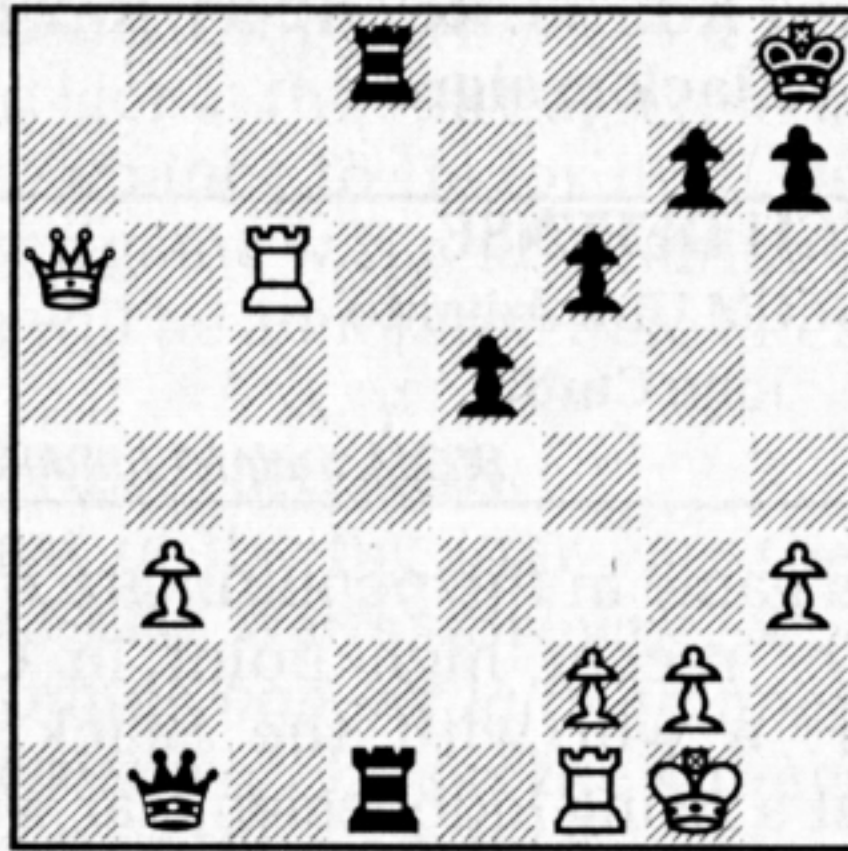
The queenside is falling apart. If the a- and b-pawns disappear, Black's four to three majority on the kingside isn't worth much in most endings, so I decid-

ed to go for the king.

35. Qc4+ Kh8 36. c6 bxc6 37. Qxa6

Worse is 37. Qxc6 Rxf1+ 38. Kxf1 Qb1+ 39. Ke2 (39. Rc1 Rd1+!) 39. ... Qd1+ 40. Ke3 Qd2+ 41. Kf3 (41. Ke4 Qf4 mate) 41. ... Qf4+ 42. Ke2 Rd2+, mating.

37. ... Qb1 38. Rxc6



38. ... h6!

Threatening 39. ... Rxf1+ 40. Qxf1 Rd1 winning, so White is forced to suffer through a long king march.

39. Rxd1 Rxd1+ 40. Kh2 Rh1+ 41. Kg3 Qg6+ 42. Kf3 Qf5+ 43. Ke2

If 43. Kg3 Qf4 mate, while 43. Ke3 Re1+ 44. Kd2 Qxf2+ is similar to the game.

43. ... Qe4+ 44. Kd2 Qd4+ 45. Kc2 Qxf2+ 46. Kc3 Qd4+ 47. Kc2 Qe4+ 48. Kb2 Qxg2+ 49. Rc2 Qe4!

Protecting the critical b1-h7 diagonal, e.g. 49. ... Qxh3?! 50. Qa8+ Kh7 51. Qe4+, when 51. ... f5 is forced.

50. Qc8+ Kh7 51. Qd7 Qf3 52. Rc7 Qe2+ 53. Rc2 Qf1! 54. b4 Rxh3 55. b5 Qf3 56. Qc6 Qa3+ 57. Kb1 Rb3+, White resigns.

MODERN DEFENSE

[B06]

W: John Curdo
B: FM Ilya Gurevich

Southeastern New England Open, 1987

For decades Curdo was like those legendary gunslingers of the Old West, fighting off one young challenger after another. Weinstein, Peters, Rizzitano, Wolff — and then in the mid '80s, along came Ilya Gurevich to keep him on his toes. The future GM and World Junior Champion was still a young teenager at this point, though, and Curdo was true to his philosophy of "get 'em while they're young." (An added twist to this game was that it enabled Curdo to give himself another "birthday present" — for just as he had celebrated his 17th birthday one day early by beating Harlow Daly on Nov. 13, 1948, now with the situation reversed, Curdo the veteran defeated the region's latest teenage sensation to give himself a one-day-late 56th birthday gift).

1. e4 d6 2. d4 g6 3. Nc3 Bg7 4. f4 c6 5. Nf3 Bg4 6. Be3 Qb6 7. Qd2

I've been known to play the unclear sacrificial line 7. Rb1 Bxf3 8. Qxf3 Bxd4 9. Na4 Qa5+ 10. b4 Qxa4 11. Bxd4.

7. ... Bxf3 8. gxf3 Nf6 9. Bh3 Qa5 10. f5

Ilya refused my offer of a draw here. And why not? He had beaten me badly at

the 1987 New Hampshire Open.

10. ... Nbd7 11. 0-0

I know that 0-0-0 is usual, but 11. 0-0 is safer and offers attacking chances on both wings.

11. ... 0-0

On 11. ... 0-0-0 I intended 12. a3, 13. b4, etc.

12. Kh1 Rfd8 13. Bh6

Asinine! Of course Black won't invite my queen in by 13. ... Bxh6, or fall for 13. ... Bh8?? 14. Nd5! Qxd2 15. Nxe7 mate.

13. ... c5 14. dxc5 Qxc5 15. Be3

Admitting my error; 15. Bxg7 Kxg7 is fine for Black, and 16. fxg6? hxg6 gives away the h-file.

15. ... Qc6

Black has all the benefits of a Sicilian setup: a half-open c-file, and a1-to-h8 pressure. I figured I could not sit on the position, so ...

16. Nd5 Nxd5 17. exd5 Qc4 18. fxg6 hxg6 19. Bxd7

Giving up the two bishops, which is usually a difficult decision. Here the Black knight is a dynamic attacker and defender.

19. ... Rxd7 20. c3 b5

The minority attack for counterplay. During the game, the idea 20. ... e6 21. dxe6 Qxe6 seemed bad for Black, but now I'm not sure.

21. a3 a5 22. Rg1 Rc8 23. Rg4 Qb3 24. Rag1 Rb7

One preparatory move too many. Necessary is 24. ... Rc4.

25. Qd3!

Threatening 26. Rxg6 fxg6 27. Qxg6, winning. I thought 25. ... e5 was forced, since Black can't grab the b-pawn ... or can he?

25. ... Qxb2?! 26. Bd4! Rxc3

Ilya must have counted on this defense. Indeed, it does work after 27. Bxc3? Qxc3 28. Qxc3 Bxc3, but White has something better.

27. Rxg6!!

Not a real queen sac, because 27. ... Rxd3 28. Rxg7+ leads to mate. It is, however, a rook sacrifice.

27. ... fxg6 28. Qxg6 e5 29. dxe6 e.p. Qe2!

This almost works! The other try 29. ... Qc2 30. Qe8+ Kh7 31. Qh5+ Kg8 32. Bxg7 Rxg7 33. Qf7+, mating on the next move.

30. Qe8+ Kh7 31. Qh5+ Kg8 32. Bxc3 Qxe6

Material equality. Now White wins easily.

33. Re1 Be5 34. Bxe5 dxe5 35. Rxe5 Qc4 36. Qg6+, Black resigns.

SICILIAN DEFENSE

[B31]

Rossolimo Variation
W: John Curdo
B: Mikhail Braude

Greater Boston Open, 1992

Lest anyone doubt that Curdo is still going strong in his 60s, this and the

remaining games offer some pretty conclusive evidence. Mikhail Braude, a Russian emigre living in Florida and studying in Rhode Island, was ranked 35th in the nation with a rating of 2553 at the time of this game. Undaunted, Curdo played sharply from the beginning, sacking a pawn early for open lines, then giving up his queen in a pretty combination that eventually left him up a double Exchange with an easy win.

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bb5 g6 4. 0-0 Bg7 5. c3 e5 6. Na3 a6

Much better first is the natural 6. ... Nge7.

7. Bxc6 dxc6

The other capture, 7. ... bxc6, 8. Nc4 d6 9. d4 Be6 should be considered.

8. Nc4 Qc7 9. d4 cxd4 10. cxd4 exd4 11. e5

Securing an outpost for the knight at d6. It will influence Black's plans.

11. ... Bg4 12. h3! Bxf3 13. Qxf3 0-0-0

Not 13. ... Bxe5 when 14. Re1 f6 15. Nxe5 fxe5 16. Bf4 is winning.

14. Bf4

With the terrific threat of 15. e6 Qe7 16. Nb6 mate.

14. ... Rd5 15. e6 Qd8 16. Qxd5! cxd5

Even worse is 16. ... Qxd5 17. Nb6+ Kd8 18. Nxd5 cxd5 19. exf7.

17. Rac1! Qh4

The best try, since Black loses after 17. ... dxc4 18. Rxc4+ or 17. ... b5 18. Na5+.

18. Ne5+ Kd8

Or 18. ... Kb8 19. Nd7+ Ka7 20. Bb8+ Ka8 21. Rc8 b5 22. Rc7, mating.

19. Nxf7+ Ke8 20. Bg5

Faster was 20. Nd6+ Ke7 21. Rc7+ Kxe6

22. Re1+ Be5 23. Bxe5 (Zamora, Jr.).

20. ... Qxg5 21. Nxg5 Ne7 22. Nf7

More efficient is 22. Rc7. Black now resists to the bitter end.

22. ... Nc6 23. Nxe8 Bxe8 24. f4 Ke7 25. f5 gxf5 26. Rxf5 Kxe6 27. Rh5 d3 28. Rd1 Bd4+ 29. Kf1 Ne5 30. b3 Be3 31. Rxh7 d4 32. Rxb7 Kd5 33. Re7 d2 34. Ke2 Bg5 35. Rxe5+, Black resigns.

DUTCH DEFENSE

[A88]

W: GM Utut Adianto

B: John Curdo

St. Martin International, 1993

This game in the penultimate round is another recent high point in Curdo's career: a win with the Black pieces against a rising Indonesian star who was fresh from a spectacular tie for first place in the New York Open (and who has since gone on to win the Biel Festival Open ahead of a 150-player field that included 22 GMs). The victory kept Curdo among the leaders going into the last round, where he built up an imposing attacking position against GM John Fedorowicz before settling for the half point that clinched a major prize.

1. d4 f5 2. Nf3 Nf6 3. g3 g6 4. Bg2 Bg7 5. 0-0 0-0 6. c4 d6 7. Nc3 c6 8. d5 e5 9. dxe6 Bxe6 10. Bf4 Bxc4 11. Bxd6 Re8 12. Rc1 Nd5 13. Nxd5 Bxd5 14. Bf4 Bxa2 15. Qa4 Bd5 16. Rfd1 Nd7 17. Rd2 Nb6 18. Qd1 Qe7 19. h4 h6 20. b3 Rad8 21. Be3 Be4 22. Bc5 Qc7 23. h5 g5 24. b4 Rxd2 25. Qxd2 Qf7 26. Rd1 Qxh5 27. Qa2+ Qf7 28. Qxa7 Nd5 29. Bd4 Nxb4 30. Bxg7 Qxg7 31. Rd6 Nd5 32. Nd4 Rf8 33. Ne6 Qe7 34. Qc5 Rf6 35. Rxd5 Qxc5

36. Rxc5 Rxe6 37. f3 Bd5 38. Kf2 Kf7 39. Bh3 Re5 40. Ra5 Kf6 41. Ra8 h5 42. Rf8+ Bf7 43. f4 gxf4 44. gxf4 Re8 45. Rxe8 Bxe8 46. Ke3 c5, White resigns.

SICILIAN DEFENSE

[B51]

Rossolimo Variation

W: John Curdo

B: GM Robert Byrne

U.S. Open, 1994

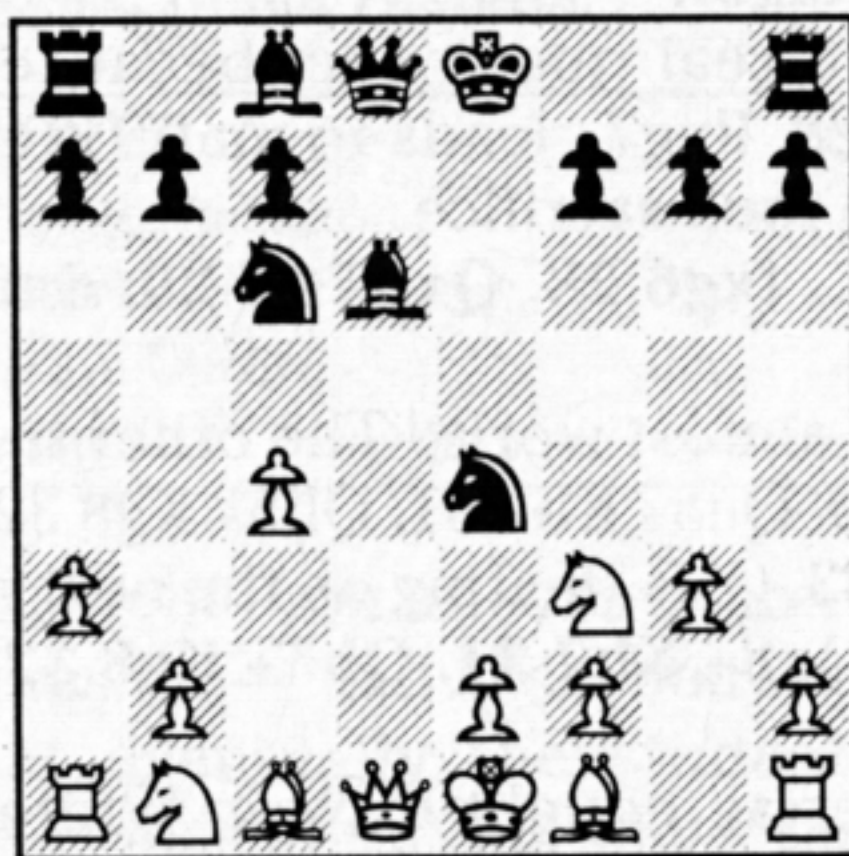
What better way to conclude this selection of outstanding games over nearly half a century than with yet another grandmaster scalp — this time that of Robert Byrne. Showing no fear of the former world championship candidate, Curdo attacked sharply from the beginning, sacrificed a piece at the key moment, then finished off his famous foe in just 22 moves with a pretty little mating combination featuring a queen sacrifice.

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 d6 3. Bb5+ Nd7 4. d4 Nf6 5. e5 Qa5+ 6. Nc3 Ne4 7. Bd2 Nxc3 8. Bxd7+ Bxd7 9. Bxc3 Qa6 10. d5 e6 11. Ng5 dxe5 12. Qf3 f6 13. dxe6 Bc6 14. Qf5 Be7 15. 0-0-0 g6 16. Qh3 fxe5 17. Bxe5 0-0 18. Qh6 Rf6 19. h4 Bf8? 20. Qxh7+ Kxh7 21. hxg5+ Kg8 22. gxf6, Black resigns.

Since breaking the 500 barrier, John Curdo has continued his winning ways. Indeed, when asked how he could verify all his records and be absolutely sure that he had won 500 events, Curdo replied: "I don't have to. I'll just keep going to 550 to clear up any doubts!"

CANNES 1995

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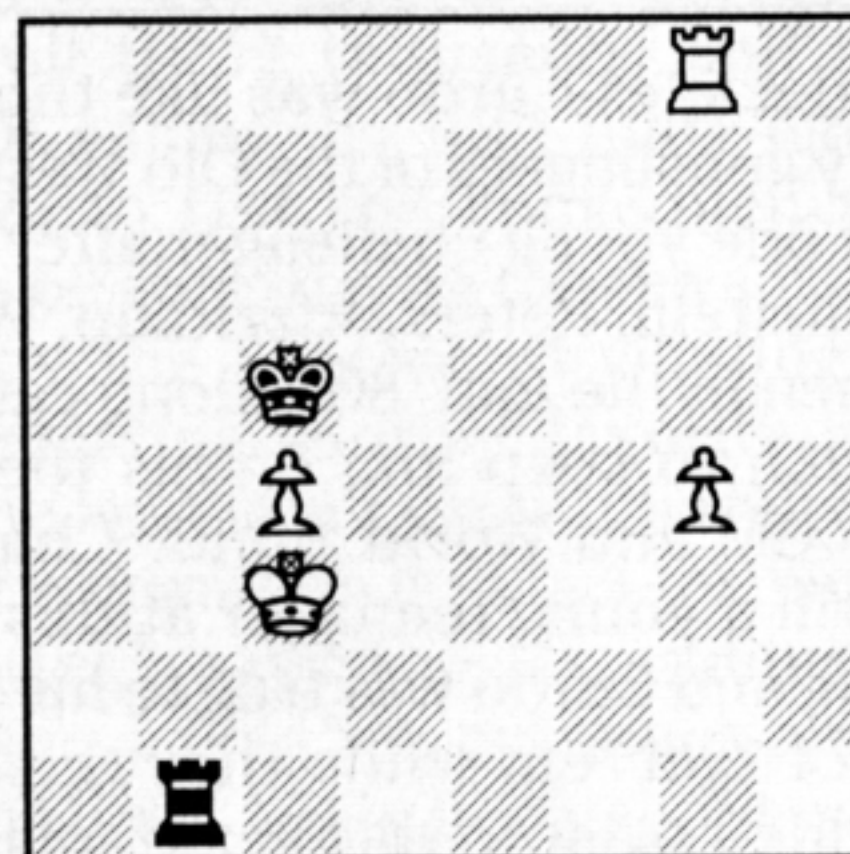


Position after 7. g3??

7. ... Nxf2! 8. Kxf2

Now, White loses his queen. The alternative, moving the queen, loses at least the Exchange and pawn, leaving him in a hopeless position.

8. ... Bxg3+, White resigns.



Our trappy endgame will result from Diagram 2, IM Z. Mestrovic-GM S. Skembris, after Black's 63rd move. Endgames of rook and two disconnected pawns vs. Rook are normally theoretical wins except when the defender has the a- and c- or f- and h-pawns. The general winning technique is to activate the king and aim for the Lucena position. routine play from Diagram 2 would be 64. Kd3! Rg1 65. Ke4 Kxc4 66. Rc8+ Kb5 67. Kf5 etc. Of course, we wouldn't have a story then. Instead the game continued:

64. g5

The move is O.K., but the idea to advance the g-pawn as quickly as possi-

ble is not.

64. ... Rg1

White must now release Black's king from potential stalemate with 65. Kd3!, thus retaining the win. But ...

65. g6?? Rxg6! 66. Rxg6 Stalemate!

Note that the trap works just as well with reversed rook positions, i.e. White rook on g1; Black rook on g8. again 65. g6?? allows 65. ... Rxg6!.

GRAND PRIX DE CANNES

February 11-19, 1995 Cannes, France

1st: Matthew Sadler, 7; 2nd-6th: Artashes Minasian, Vladislav Tkachiev, Andrei Sokolov, Evgeny Solozhenkin, Vyacheslav Ikonnikov, 6½; 7th-14th: Manuel Apicella, M.C. Lupu, Josif Dorfman Gennadi Sosonko, Efstratios Grivas, Arkadij Rotstein, James Howell, Marc Santo-Roman, 6.

There were 92 players in this event. The special, much anticipated event was a six game match between 12-year Etienne Bacrot of France and 27-year-old IM Michele Godena, Champion of Italy in 1992 and 1993. FM Bacrot is already World and European Youth Champion in various categories and has a 2300 FIDE Rating. He is reportedly the most popular chess figure for the French media with hardly a week passing by without a major television, newspaper or magazine feature about him. Yet the more experienced IM carried the day easily, winning the first two games, drawing the next two, and closing with two more victories for a 5-1 result. The winner's purse was 4000 FF; the loser received 2000 FF.