

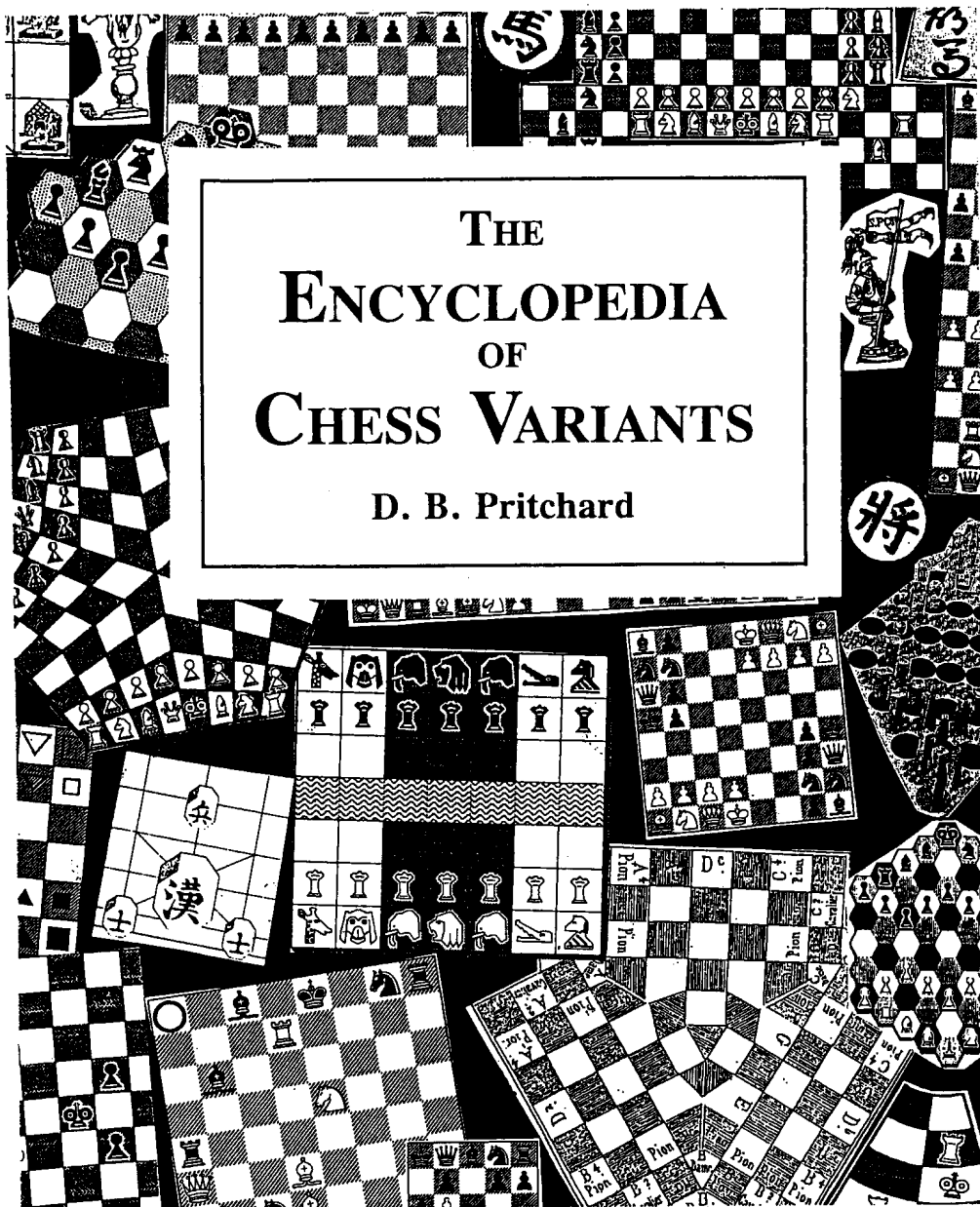
# Variant Chess

THE MAGAZINE TO BROADEN YOUR CHESS HORIZONS

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David Pritchard 1919-2005

Steve Boniface

Atomic Chess

## DAVID PRITCHARD

Oh dear. He had seemed fit enough when I spent a few days with him and Elaine early in November, but barely five weeks later came a telephone call from a lady who introduced herself as his daughter: he had fallen, and had fractured his skull. I learned later that he had been dining with friends in London, had seen them safely on their way home, and had then slipped.

I'll come to David's achievements in a moment, but let us start by looking at the man himself. I am somewhat hampered in this by having known him only since the late 1980s, but I have been asking around with a request to pass the enquiry forward, and Mike Adams, Paul Byway, Peter Horlock, George Jelliss, Stewart Reuben, David Sedgwick, and Eric Solomon have all come forward with information. In addition, Mike Adams has sent me a copy of the address read at his funeral service by his son-in-law Colin Dakin.

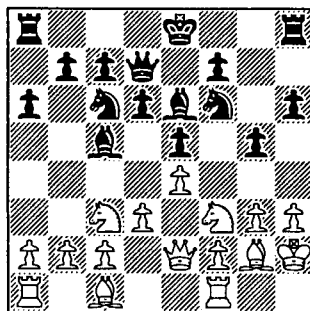
David was born in 1919, and the name "D. Pritchard (R.A.F.\*)" started to appear in *Fairy Chess Review* in April 1941. Eric Solomon describes him as having been reluctant to talk about his wartime experiences and he never said more to me than that he had been "in transport", but Colin Dakin said in his funeral address that he had been a navigator in Dakotas, and Eric reports him as having flown supplies dropped to British forces fighting the Japanese in the Far East. Read into this what you will, but I imagine that it included finding his way over mountain and enemy-occupied jungle to places like Imphal and Kohima.

Although demobilised after the war, he later rejoined the RAF, and then worked "in Intelligence". Again, that was all he said to me, but Colin Dakin reported him as having moved to the Ministry of Defence, where he worked on photographic reconnaissance. Yet in spite of this Services background, he was as far as could be from the Blimp of conventional caricature. Stewart Reuben has put it very neatly: "an affable man with a dry sense of humour who was in no sense old-fashioned in his views".

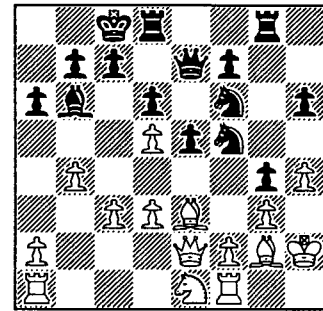
As for ourselves, our most abiding memory will be of the splendid meetings which he and Elaine hosted in their lovely house outside Godalming: a one-off "Chess Variants Day" in July 1992, and our annual meetings from 1997 to 2002. We used to deal with the formal business in the late morning, break for a most generous buffet lunch, and then have an afternoon five-minute tournament with his friends from the Guildford and Godalming clubs. George Jelliss has described these meetings as "always highlights of the year", and he speaks for all of us. David and Elaine enjoyed good food and routinely provided it for their friends, and his compliments on a bottle of wine were worth having.

We knew David as a variant player, but of course he was no slouch at orthodox chess. He took part in ten British Championship finals between 1959 and 1978, and if his best placings were relatively modest (equal 10-12 in 1963, equal 10-17 in 1970) he took some fine scalps along the way. He helped to dethrone Jonathan Penrose in 1970, and he did some horrible things to Tony Miles in 1973 in a game which found its way straight into the magazines.

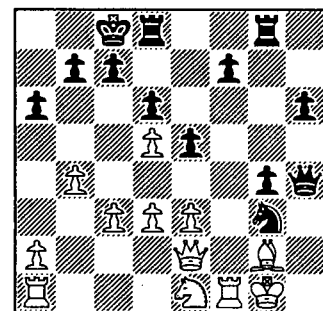
White **Tony Miles**, Black **David Pritchard**, British Championship 1973, Round 2. 1 e4 e5 2 Nc3 Nf6 3 g3 (apparently this is a recognised opening, but in my old-fashioned way I would be delighted to see my opponent adopting such a formation) Bc5 4 Bg2 d6 5 Nf3 Nc6 6 O-O a6 7 h3 Be6 8 d3 h6 9 Qe2 Qd7 10 Kh2 g5 and Black already threatens ...g4 breaking things up on the K side :



This sort of position is normally reached with *White* as the attacking side! 11 Ne1 Nd4 12 Qd2 g4 13 h4 O-O-O 14 Nd5 Bxd5 15 exd5 Nf5 16 b4 Bb6 17 c3 Qe7 18 Qe2 Rhg8 19 Be3 :



This would seem to have been the fatal mistake. David duly pounced: 19...Bxe3 20 fxe3 Nxf3! 21 Kxf3 Nh5+ 22 Kh2 (22 Kf2 makes no difference) Qxh4+ 23 Kg1 Ng3 :



24 Qf2 (other moves allow 24...Nxf1, leaving Black with a rook and three unopposed pawns against bishop and knight) f5 25 Nc2 Rg5 26 Rfe1 (understandable, but White doesn't have time for it) Rh5 (now White is soon crushed) 27 Qd2 Rf8 28 Rf1 f4 29 exf4 Qh2+ 30 Kf2 Rxf4+ 31 Ke1 Nxf1 and White gave up. To quote Stewart Reuben again, David was not a player from whom one expected a quick draw.

However, it was for the sheer breadth of his interest in games that David became outstanding. Even as pared down for the move from Godalming to Gloucestershire, his library was impressive; something over 300 books on chess and other board games, and well over a hundred on games of other

kinds. I believe his games collection was also impressive, though this was not visible in the same way. When visiting him in November, I happened to mention that I had recently bought a certain game from the 1930s at an auction (I am in no sense a serious collector, and had bid purely out of interest because I had played another game from the same family with a school friend). His reaction was immediate: oh yes, he said, there were four of these games, such-and-such is the rare one because only so-many were made, and the early copies are the best because the manufacturer later went over to cheap plastic. He went out, and came back with what had more recently been sold as the game I remembered from the 1950s (and alas, he was all too right about the plastic).

David was a prolific writer, both on chess and on other games. Eric Solomon tells me that he was editor of the first series of *Games and Puzzles* from 1973 until it ceased publication in 1981, and the British Library catalogue lists a host of games books quite apart from chess: *Go, A Quick Guide to the Game* (Faber 1973), *Puzzles and Teasers for the Easy Chair* (Elliott Right Way Books 1977), *Brain Games* (Penguin 1982), *The Family Book of Games* (Michael Joseph 1983), *Mahjong* (Teach Yourself 2001), *The New Mahjong* (Elliott Right Way Books 2004), and booklets *Oriental Board Games* (1977) and *Card Games* (1995) in the "Know the Game" series. No doubt some of these were introductory and elementary in nature, but these are just the books that make new friends for a game. He himself is reputed to have said that *The Right Way to Play Chess* (Elliott 1950, with numerous reprints) was the best paid work he ever did because of the continuing royalties.

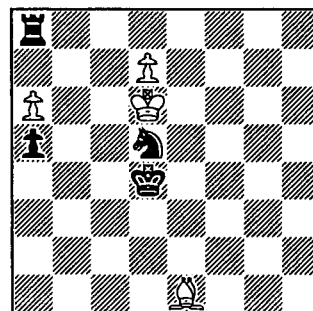
But it was the variant forms of chess that were his particular delight, and his knowledge was unrivalled: certainly in Britain, and probably worldwide. We have regularly had the benefit of his expertise in *VC*, from the four-page article on Burmese Chess in *VC* 43 to the snippets which so help to give variety to a magazine. All of this was to be crystallized in

*The Encyclopedia of Chess Variants* (1994), on which his reputation will surely rest. The original contract for this book was rendered worthless by the Robert Maxwell collapse and eventually he had to publish it himself, and not only did he do this but (I imagine at the cost of a lot of time spent on the grinding drudgery of day-to-day marketing) he even made a modest financial profit. Inevitably, the book is not perfect; no one man can be aware of every local rule in a field which is intrinsically so flexible, and self-publication deprived him of the publisher's reader who would surely have picked up a number of minor misprints. But it covers a vast amount of ground in an instructive and entertaining manner, and there is nothing else in existence that is remotely like it. His work on an intended second edition was interrupted by his death, but Elaine has asked me if I would be willing to complete it. The task will not be easy, but I will try.

David continued to play at a high standard throughout his life, both over the board and by correspondence; just from *VC*, we see that he played in the second Heterodox Olympiad (1993-6), on one of the variant boards in the 1994 UK-Italy correspondence match, and in at least the fifth (1995) and sixth (1999) of the international Progressive Chess tournaments run by AISE. In the latter, he scored a splendid 10/10 in the preliminaries, only to disgust himself by a mere 9/16 in the final. I had therefore intended to round off this notice by quoting some of his wins in variant games, but most of those that have been preserved seem already to have appeared in *VC*, and there is none where his opponent compelled him to perform with quite the same panache as against Miles in the game above. Perhaps the best were the sparkling announcement of mate in 8 at Alice Chess which was quoted in *VC* 29 and the off-hand but skilful Hostage Chess game which appeared in *VC* 32, but the Alice Chess finish was repeated as recently as *VC* 45, and the finer points of the Hostage Chess game would require rather too much detailed explanation for present

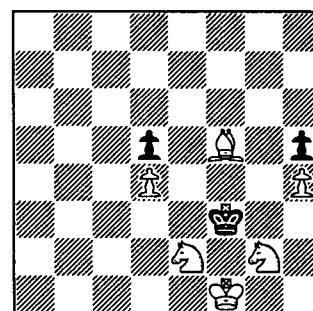
purposes. Instead, let me quote two of the light but entertaining problems which he contributed to *Fairy Chess Review* between 1941 and 1946:

David Pritchard  
Fairy Chess Review 1943



Maximummer  
Selfmate in 4

David Pritchard  
Fairy Chess Review 1946



Orthodox Chess  
Stalemate in 3

In a maximummer, Black, though not White, must always play his geometrically longest move, measured in a straight line from square centre to square centre (though check and mate are normal). Experienced solvers, and even imaginative newcomers, will quickly spot the main idea here, though they will then discover that there is a pleasant subsidiary motif. The second problem is orthodox as to rules but unorthodox as to objective, and may be found somewhat trickier. Answers on page 111.

To finish, two more comments which surely speak for us all. From George Jelliss, "a very warm and likeable man"; from Paul Byway, "I don't see who could fill the place he occupied".

## ATOMIC CHESS

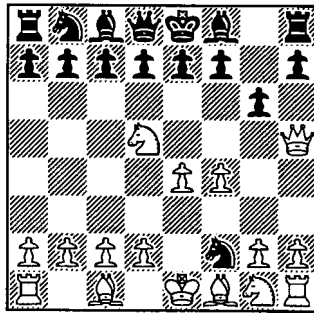
originally by David Pritchard  
with additional material from  
Fabrice Liardet, Tim Seymour,  
and Andrew Thompson

This was David's last contribution to VC, and was originally a mere space-filler consisting of a brief description and a game score with a few notes derived from annotations by Fabrice. Fabrice subsequently sent me a second copy of the game with much more extensive annotations, followed up by further notes from the players themselves, and it seemed to me that it would be best if these appeared in full. The present article therefore consists of David's brief description as I sent it to him for checking, and the game score with notes spliced together from all these sources. Unattributed notes are by Fabrice, translated and occasionally expanded by myself to help readers new to the game. - JDB

Normal chess rules apply except that when a capture is made the man capture, the capturer, and all pieces (but not pawns) on adjacent squares are removed from play. Win by checkmate or exploding the king (clearly a king cannot capture as he would blow himself up!). The following game from the Internet, of a remarkably high standard, is between two of the strongest players of this variant.

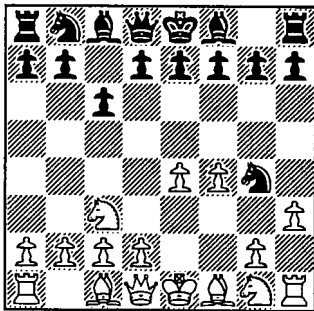
White Tim Seymour Black Andrew Thompson. 1 Nc3. A fairly vicious way of avoiding the hackneyed variations which follow the usual 1 Nf3/Nh3 f6 2 e3. Here, the knight threatens to play to d5 or to b5, and blocking these threats by ...c6 does not solve all the problems. 1...Nf6 2 e4 Ng4. Threatens to blow up the White king by ...Nxf2\*; it would seem that White has let Black take the initiative, but he remains better developed. TS: 2...c6 is more common now, for reasons discussed below. 3 f4. Now 3...Nf2 no longer blows up the king because it is not a capture, and indeed it loses. 4 Qh5 (threat

5 Qxf7\*) g6 5 Nd5 (threat 6 Nxe7\*) :

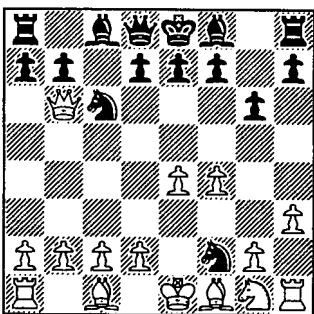


Now 5...Nxe4(-Nd5) 6 Qd5# (the threats are Qxd7\* and Qxf7\*), or 5...e5 6 Bc4 gxh5 7 Nf6# (White threatens Bxf7\* as well as NxK), or (AT) 5...e6 6 Bb5 (threat Bxd7\*) c6 7 Nc7+ forcing 7...Qxc7(-Nb8,-Bc8), after which White has time to retreat his queen.

Back to the game. 3...c6 4 h3 (TS: 4 Nh3 is also a problematic move for Black) :



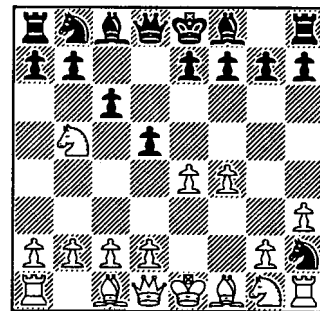
4...Nf2 still allows White a pretty combination: 5 Qh5 g6 6 Nd5 cxd5 (6...Nxe4(-Nd5) 7 Qe5 e6 8 Qc7! Qxc7(-Nb8,-Bc8) and White is two pieces up) 7 Qb5 Nc6 8 Qb6!! :



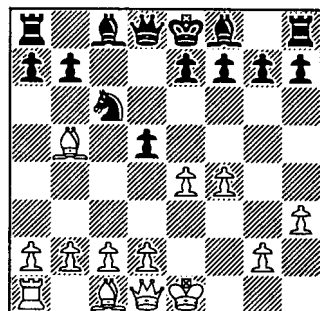
The point. If now 8...Q/axb6(-Nc6)? then 9 Bb5 and again the threat of Bxd7\* cannot be met, or 8...Qc7 9 Qxb7(-Ra8,-Bc8,-Qc7,-Nc6) with a massive advantage to White.

To the game again. 4...d5? This

appears completely to consolidate Black's position; if 5 hxg4? then 5...Bg4 (threat 6...Bxd1\*) 6 Nf3 dxe4(-Nf3). However... TS: Although extremely dangerous, this move hasn't held up under close inspection. If Black wants to play this line I think he has to try something like 4...e6 or 4...d6, giving up the g4 knight. 5 Nb5! Nh2 (threat Nxf1\*). TS: If 5...cxb5? then 6 Bb5 Nc6 7 d4 is too strong. The game move is the best chance, losing in a complicated instead of a simple way.

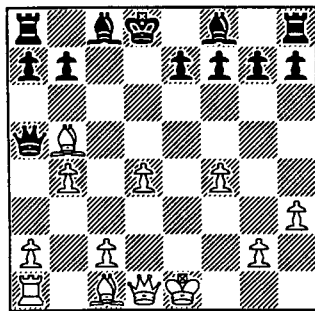


If now 6 Be2 then 6...Nf1 (threat Nxd2\*) 7 d4 Ne3 (threat Nxd1\*) with 8 Bxe3(-Be2) cxb5 or (TS) 8 Qd3 Qa5!. 6 Rxb2(-Ng1) cxb5. TS: Maybe a '?' is harsh as Black seems to be lost already but 6...Bg4 is a more testing move order. Then 7 hxg4 cxb5 8 Bb5 Nc6 9 Qh5! (9 d4 Qc8 10 exd5 Kd8 11 f5! is also good for White, but not 9 Kf1 Qc8! when 10 Qh5 can be answered with 10...Kd8!) g6 10.Kf1!. This move, like d4, threatens exd5 but Black can't use Qa5 as a defence. Now either 10...Bg7 11.Qh4! (to remove Black's attack on b2) f6 12 Qh3 e6 13 Qa3 or 10...Bh6 11 exd5+ Kf8 12 Qc5 Qd6 13 Be8 f6 14 b3! and White aims to continue with Ba3 and Re1. 7 Bb5+ Nc6 :

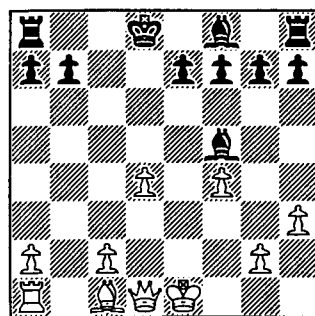


If now 8 exd5(-Nc6)+?? then

8...Qxd2\* and White's king falls first. Hence **8 d4?** after which the threat of exd5 is real and Black must sacrifice material, but... TS: The natural move. But **8 Kf1!** is simply winning here. This move prevents both the 8...Bg4 and 8...Qa5 defences to exd5. Now **8...Bd7 9 Qh5!** (not 9 exd5?? Bc6 when Black is hitting g2) **g6 10 exd5 Bc6 11 Qd5** and **8...a6 9 Qh5 g6 10 exd5+ axb5 11 Qb5+** both win. **8...Qa5+!** A new idea: the queen is sacrificed to give the king time to find shelter. The only move previously played in this position was **8...Bg4 9 hxg4 Qc8 10 exd5(-Nc6)+ Kd8** with advantage to White. If **8...dxe4??** then **9 Qh5 g6 10 Qd5# 9 b4**. TS: Blocking with b4 is more aggressive but maybe **9 c3** is an improvement. This is a common dilemma as to how to block the queen, which I always seem to get wrong! After **9 c3** black would have to alter his plan from the game as **9...Kd8 10 exd5 Bf5 11 d5** looks very pleasant for White. **9...Kd8 10 exd5(-Nc6) :**

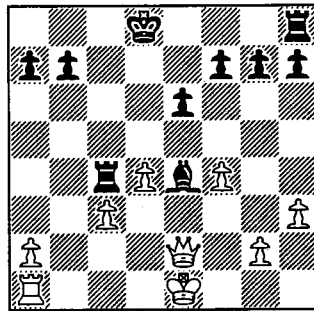


White now threatens mate by **11 Bd7! 10...Bf5!** TS: I think at the time I was expecting **10...Bg4 11 hxg4 Qc7** when White has far too much play, e.g. **12 Bc6 b5 13 d5 11 bxa5(-Bb5) :**

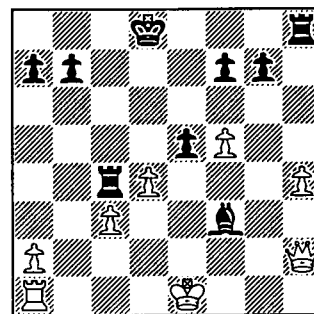


If now **11...Bxc2(-Bc1,-Qd1)** then **12 Rc1** followed by mate: **12...e5 13 Rc8+ Kd7 14 Rc7+ Kd8 15 Rd7#**

(if say **15...Kc8** then **16 Rxb7\***). **11...e6 12 Ba3** (TS: **12 c3** looks a slight improvement, but nothing amazing) **Bb4+ 13 c3 Rc8 14 Bxb4** (so that the White queen can play to a4 without being blown up by ...Bxa3) **Rc4 15 Qe2**. TS: **15 Rb1 Bxb1** (otherwise the White rook will enter the game via b5) **16 Qh5** was something else I remember looking at. Then if something like **16...g6?** White wins with **17 Qa5 b6 18 Qa6 Ke8 19 Qb7 Rc7 20 Qb8+ Rc8 21 Qd6**, so Black plays **16...a6!** (note **16...b5?** **17 a4!** is winning for White, e.g. **17...Rc7? 18 Qe5**) and can hold. Also White can't penetrate on the king-side with **17 Qg5 f6 18 Qh5 g6 19 Qh6** as **19...Rg8** defends all the squares. **15...Be4! :**

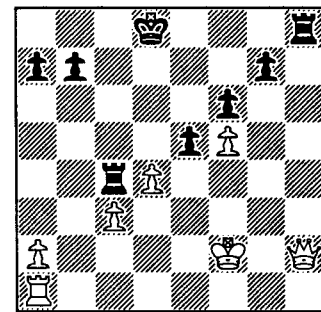


Black just succeeds in stopping the White queen from penetrating, which would be immediately fatal. **16 g4**. TS: White can draw here with **16 Qh5 Bf5 17 Qe2** etc. If Black deviates e.g. **17...g6** or **17...a6** White can play **18 Qe5! Rxd4 19 Rd1** winning (although **17...b6** seems to hold a draw after **18 Qe5 Rxd4 19 Rd1 Kc8 20 a4 a5!**). **16...h5 17 f5** (preparing a new penetration by Qh2) **hxg4 18 h4** (an immediate Qh2 would be met by ...Rhx3) **Bf3** (freeing e4 for the Black rook) **19 Qh2 e5 :**

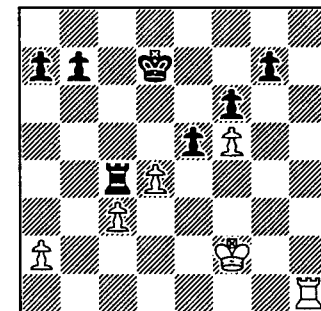


**20 h5**. This seems a little bizarre, but

White's plan is to follow up with **f6**, after which it is difficult for Black to keep all the lines closed. **20 dxe5** does not work on account of **20...Re4+**. More direct would be **20 Kf2**, but after (for example) **20...Bd1** Black still prevents the capture on e5: **21 dxe5? Rf4+**. If **20 f6** then **20...Rh5!?**. TS: I think I didn't play **20 Kf2** because I didn't want Black to do **20...Rh5**, when **21 dxe5** can be answered with **21...Rf4** when I couldn't see more than a draw after **22 Qxf4 f6**. I wanted to play a few more moves. **20...f6** (if **20...Re8** then **21 Kf2**). TS: If **20...Bxh5?** now then **21 0-0-0** and I think White is winning. For example **21...Kc8 (21...Rhx2? 22 dxe5) 22 Qg2 Rc6 (22...e4 23 Qg3) 23 dxe5 Rh1 24 Kb1 Rg1 25 a4! 21 Kf2 Bxh5 :**



**22 Qh5!** It would of course be futile to try and preserve the White queen, since the Black rook would then be able to harass the White king. TS: **22 Rd1 Ke8** also holds. **22...Rhx5 23 Rh1**. And now it is the White rook's turn to give perpetual check (with a pawn down, White cannot hope for more than a draw). **23...Kd7** and a draw was agreed :



**24 Rh8 Ra4 25 Rd8+ Kc6 26 Rc8+** and Black cannot escape the perpetual check; if **26...Kb5??** then **27 Rc5+ Kb6 28 Rb5# (28...K- 29 Rxb7\*)**.

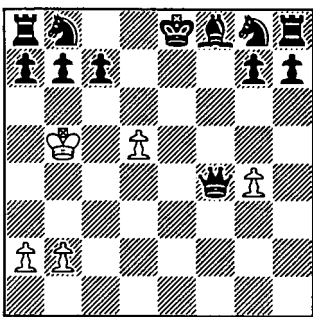
## EXCAVATIONS

**The King and Pawns Game** (one of several forms of Double-Move Chess)

The book I had earmarked for this time's "In the Library" proved on closer inspection to be of sadly low quality, but an invitation to spend a few days with Elaine and David and to look through his files alerted me to a number of items in the *Encyclopedia* whose merits had previously escaped me. Unless I receive contributions, therefore, I propose to let "In the Library" lapse for an issue or two, and in its place to resurrect Peter Fayers's idea of "ExCaVations".

There have been several versions of the King and Pawns Game over the centuries, but all have two features in common: White starts with king and pawns only, but in compensation he is allowed to make two moves at once. The material in the *Encyclopedia* quotes from articles by W. S. Branch in the *Chess Amateur* in 1910, and in fact there were three of these (September p 360, November p 64, and January 1911 p 101). They in turn relied heavily on earlier work, and together they contain several times as much material as David had room to quote in the *Encyclopedia*. My thanks to the Library of the British Chess Problem Society for access to them.

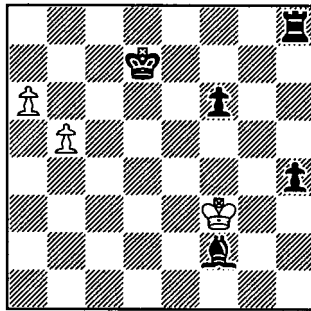
The first article contains a complete imaginary game, but its purpose was to illustrate the moves rather than to demonstrate best play and I see little point in giving it in full. It does however contain some instructive moments. At one point we have



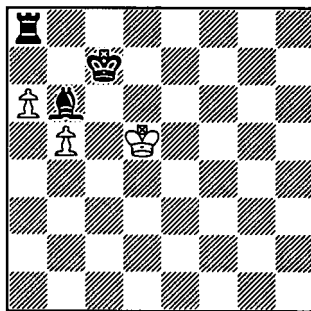
and White played **d6**, **dx7**. Black naturally took the pawn, **Qxc7**, but White could reply **Kc6**, **Kxc7** because

he is allowed to move through check, and after Black's rather pointless **a5** he continued **Kxb8**, **Kxa8** and wiped out Black's Q side. Black could have saved his knight instead of playing **a5**, but his rook was dead.

Later, this position arose :



Black now tried to do force matters on the K side and lost, but had he played **Bb6**, followed by **Kc7** and **Ra8**, I think he would have held the draw :



His rook can simply oscillate between **a8** and **a7**, and White can never break through.

A few more rules. Contrary to what happens in Progressive Chess, checks to the Black king at the first move of a turn are ignored, play proceeding regardless (so it would appear possible in theory for White to use both his moves to give a double check, and hence to leave Black in quadruple check). White can pass the second move of his turn, and indeed must pass it if he has no legal option (this does not count as stalemate). Additionally, White can "wait" at any time by playing a pair of self-cancelling moves with his king, and this has two practical consequences in the ending: one good for Black, in that he can push ahead without worrying about giving stalemate, one bad, in that he cannot use the zugzwang weapon to force White to retreat but

must check him back step by step. According to the *Encyclopedia*, there are two versions as to what should happen if White is left in check: "one version requires White to get out of check immediately, the other allows the king to escape on the second move". But the second version would seem to be much the more logical, and the examples in the *Chess Amateur* appear to assume it.

With these elementary examples in mind, some general comments in the first article may be easy to believe. Theoretically, says Branch, quoting C. E. Ranken (a former British champion at orthodox chess and apparently the leading expert in this game), Black should win every game (the reverse of the general view a century earlier, according to the *Encyclopedia*). "But it is difficult, until after considerable practice. He requires a lot of force to mate with—Q and two Rooks, or two Queens and a Rook; or Queen, Rook, and King can sometimes mate, with the help of a Bishop or Kt.

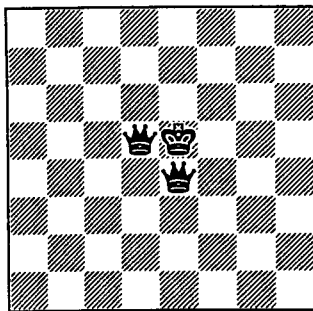
"Black's policy is to take pawns almost regardless of expense—giving two for one, or a Kt for one, or a Bishop for two—and to block White's pawns with his own or minor pieces when possible. He must keep his Queen and Rooks a long way from White King, and from White pawns, unless behind them. He must prevent White queening a pawn, and he must generally queen one of his own. Black King is a powerful force towards end of game, and often helps to mate.

"Games can be drawn, but stalemate is not possible—for the White King." A pedant might argue that this last statement is not quite true, because positions can be constructed in which any White first move would put him in check by capturing a shielding man and no second move would allow him to escape, the removal of the shield having left his original square under attack, but I doubt whether such a position could arise in the course of sensible play.

The articles say nothing about opening play, but the *Encyclopedia* cites a claim by T. R. Dawson that **1...e6** is Black's best move.

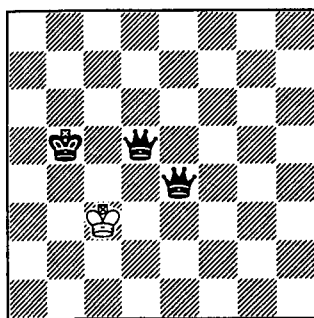
There are two examples of endgame play, but one is in the *Encyclopedia* and the other struck me as rather mundane. However, while studying them it occurred to me that king and two queens alone were a sufficient mating force, contrary to the apparent statement above that two queens and a rook were needed. I say "apparent" because the statement could be read as saying that two queens and a rook are needed without the help of the king, but this seems a pointless thing to say since the king must be there and might as well be used. Yet the alternative, that an apparently systematic win was not spotted by the experts of the period, seems even less plausible. What have I overlooked?

Black starts by playing his men to the centre, which he can always do :



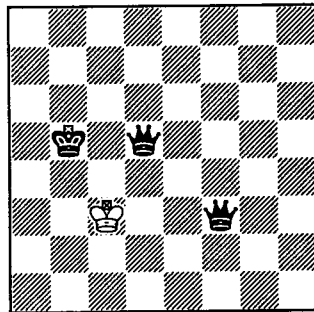
White must now choose a corner. Suppose he chooses the top left; Black plays his king to e7 and then moves Qe4-c4, and White is restricted to the three squares b8/a7/b6. This is worse for him than the position that will arise below, so we need consider this line no further.

So suppose he chooses the bottom left. Black plays his king to b5, and White does best to choose Kc3 :

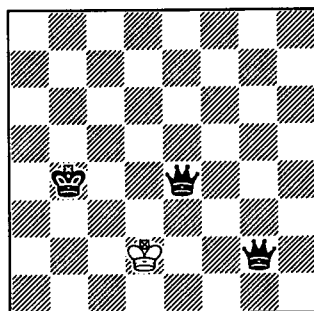


Black must now be careful. If he plays Qe3+, White can take either queen; if he plays either queen to d4

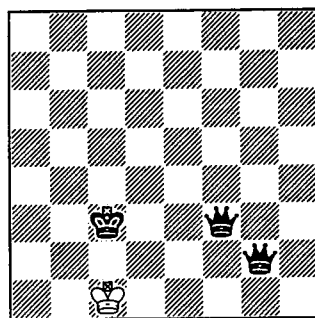
to give check, White can take both of them. But he also has Qf3+ :



The fifth, fourth, and third ranks are now completely covered, so White must retreat, and Black will be able to gain ground by Qd5-e4. If White tries to escape right by playing Ke1 and meeting Qd5-e4 by Kg1, Black will follow up with Qe4-e2, restricting him to out-and-back moves from g1, and will then bring his king round to g3 and mate by Qd1 (a finish that will recur). So White stays in the bottom left corner. Black duly plays Qd5-e4, and follows up with Kb4 and Qg2+ :

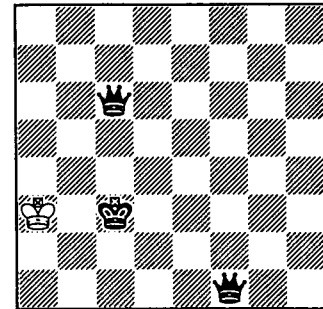


Again White must retreat, and if he chooses any square other than d1 Black will continue with Qg2-e2, Qe4-d3, Kb3, and Qf1 mate. Hence Kd1, and after Black's Qe4-f3+ the same argument makes White play Ke1. Now Kc3 seems to prepare the way for yet another advance, but after Kc1 we see that there is a difference :

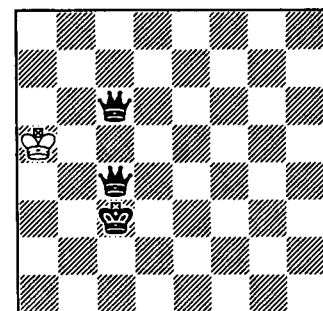


If Black copies his previous play and moves Qh1+, White can escape to a3 (he is allowed to pass through a square next to the Black king).

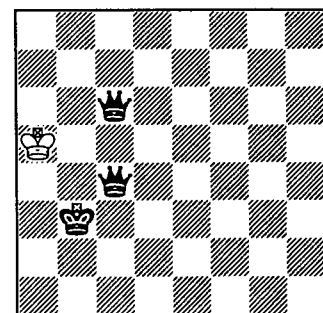
However, by moving to c1 White has put himself out of range of f1, so Black can play Qg2-f1+, and after Ka3 he can follow up with Qc6 :



Black now threatens Qc6-b5, followed by Kc2, Qf1-c4, and Qa6 mate. White must therefore play Ka5 while he can, but Black has Qf1-c4 :



This threatens Kb3 and as below, hence Ka3 (Ka7 allows Qc4-b5 shortening things), but Kc2 renews the threat of Qc6-b5 and Qa6 mate, and after White plays Ka5 to stop this Black has Kb3 :



This threatens Qc4-c5 mate, hence Ka7, and Qc4-b5 soon ends things (king round to c7, then Qa4 mate).

I cannot believe this is both sound and original. Where have I blundered?

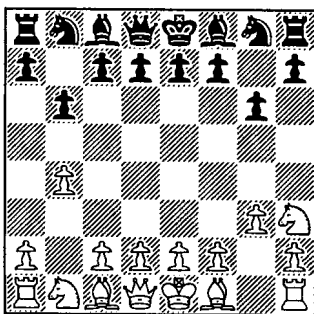


## LOSING CHESS

Most of the games from the 2001 "First Unofficial Losing Chess World Championship" were published only as bare scores, but Fabrice Liardet put an annotated copy of his Round 6 game against Fredrik Sandström on his web site and he has kindly allowed me to reprint his annotations here. This game won the prize for the best ending, but that was by no means its only merit; it had features of interest right from the opening, and Fabrice's notes will repay detailed study.

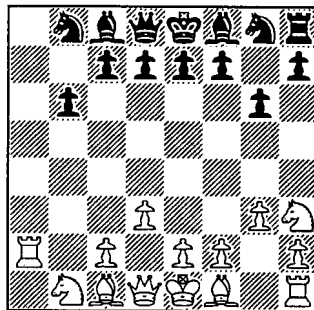
White **Fredrik Sandström**, Black **Fabrice Liardet**. Everything in quotation marks "... " is by Fabrice.

1 g3. "The reputation of this opening move is to lead to a theory-free and quiet game. The former is true - it has certainly received a lot less attention than 1 e3 from opening analysts - but in my opinion the latter is not if White plays aggressively, as in this game." 1...g6. "Assuming that playing symmetrically is always safe. Actually, the modern 1...c5 may be a harder test of the g3 opening." 2 b4. "As usual avoiding theoretical paths, Fredrik varies slightly from the usual 2 b3. This gives Black some more options, though none is particularly interesting." 2...b6 3 Nh3! :

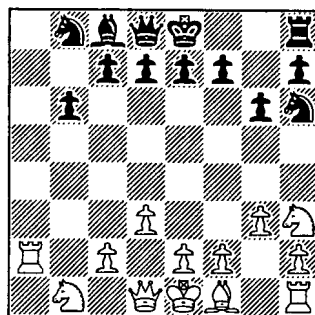


"The old belief that there was nothing for White to do in this position does not hold: the idea Ng5h7, aiming for the h6 weakness, is much more dangerous than it seems. For example after the often played 3...d6, 4 Ng5! Bh3? 5 Nxh7 Rxh7 6 Bxh3 Rxh3 7 e4! Rxh2 8 Rxh2, and there may seem to be a lot to play for but in fact the weakness on h6 kills Black. However, 4...h5!? 5 Nxf7 Kxf7 6 Bh3

Bxh3 7 Rf1 Bxf1 8 Kxf1 Nh6! still looks about OK for Black. But I was looking for something safer." 3...a5 4 bxa5 Rxa5. "The idea is to play 5...Rxa2 6 Rxa2 Ba6, now that the white b-pawn is gone." 5 d3! "After 5 Ba3 Rxa3 6 Nxa3, Black can create mayhem by 6...b5 7 Nxb5 Bg7!? 8 Nxc7 Bxa1 9 Qxa1 Qxc7, but also play the quiet 6...Bh6 (as was of course intended)." 5...Rxa2 6 Rxa2 :

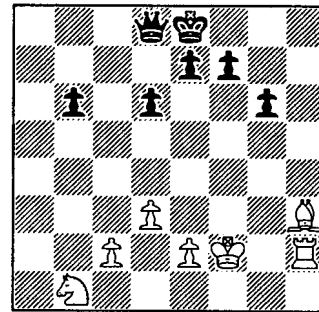


6...Bh6?! "A very risky choice, the normal move being the obvious 6...Ba6 7 Rxa6 Nxa6, after which Black is safe and the position is probably equal: 8 Ng5 (8 Bh6 Bxh6!) 8...Bh6 (safest, but 8...Qa8 and 8...h5!? are also possible) 9 Nxh7 Rxh7 10 Bxh6 Rxh6 11 Bh3 Rxh3 12 e4 Rxh2 13 Rxh2 Nh6 14 Rxh6 f6 15 Rxg6 f5 16 Rxb6 fxe4 17 dxe4 cxb6 18 Qxd7 Kxd7 with an ending which is difficult to assess. The text move tries to tempt White into getting an active position at the price of a few pawns. The analysis seems to show that I have been somewhat overconfident in the power of my pawn mass." 7 Bxh6 Nxh6 :



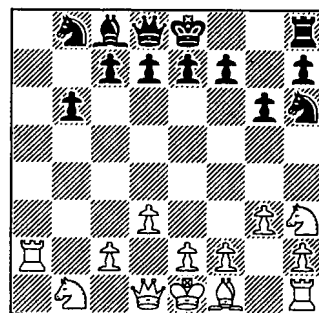
"Although the lines are quite tricky, White has an excellent tactical possibility here in 8 g4! Nxg4 9 Ng5 Nxf2 (Alas, the computer didn't like 9...Nxh2? 10 Nxh7 Nxf1 11 Rxf1 Rxh7 12 Ra5! bxa5 13 Rh1 Rxh1

14 Qd2 Rxe1 15 Qxa5 Rxe2 16 Qxc7 or 10...Rxh7 11 Rxh2 Rxh2 12 Bg2 Rxc2 13 Kd2 Rxf2 14 Qh1! Rxe2 15 Kxe2 Bb7 16 Qxb7 Na6 17 Rxa6! 10 Nxh7 Rxh7 11 Kxf2 Rxh2 12 Rxh2 Ba6 (12...c5 13 Rh5 gxh5 14 d4! cxd4 15 Qxd4 Qc7 16 Qxd7 and White wins the queen battle) 13 Rxa6 Nxa6 14 Qe1! Nb4 (only) 15 Qxb4 d6 16 Qxb6 cxb6 17 Bh3! :



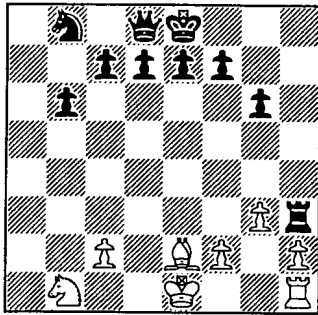
"Black still has a nice pawn phalanx but will be left with a lone king, and White should win."

Let us go back to the game :

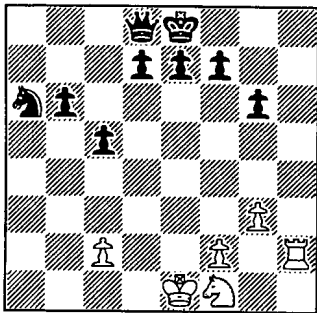


8 Ra6?! "However tempting, this is the wrong way." 8...Bxa6! "Aiming for the elimination of the white pawns, after which the black pawns should give White a hard time. After 8...Nxa6, 9 e3? Ng4 10 Qxg4 c5! is too dangerous; 9 g4!? still leads to tricky lines although Black seems to do better in these than in the 8 g4! variation." 9.Qc1! "Going for the refutation; 9 Ng5 Bxd3 10 Qxd3 Ng4 and 10 Nxh7 Rxh7 11 Qxd3 Rg7! both seem fine for Black." 9...Bxd3 10 Qxh6 Bxe2 11 Qxh7. "Less appealing though playable was 11 Bxe2 g5! 12 Nxg5 Rf8 13 Nxf7 Kxf7 14 Qxf8 Qxf8 15 Ba6 Nxa6 and Black stands slightly better." 11...Rxh7 12 Bxe2 Rxh3. "From move 9, everything has been more or less forced for both sides."



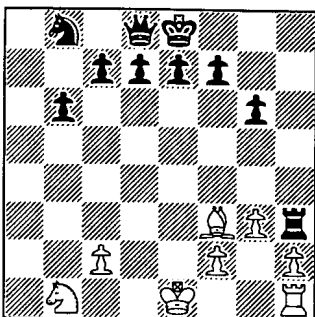


“Not any good is now 13 Bc4? Rxb2 14 Rxb2 e5! 15 Bxf7 Kxf7 16 Rh4 (better 16 Rh5 gxf5 17 Nd2) 16...Qxh4 17 gxh4 c5! and the White knight is imprisoned by the black pawns. The text move is about OK, but best was the safe 13 Ba6 Nxa6 14 Nd2! (14 c4?! Rxb2 15 Rxb2 e5! and the knight is in trouble again) 14...Rxb2 15 Rxb2 c5 16.Nf1, just escaping the Black steamroller.”

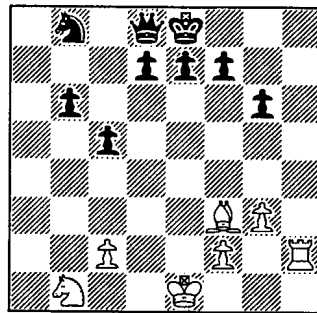


“As White is now threatening a simple win starting by 17 Rh5, Black has to give the queen: 16...Qc7 17 c4! (17 Ke2 Qxg3 18 fxg3 c4 gains space for Black) 17...Qxg3 18 fxg3 e5 and if Black survives immediate threats he will stand better, as it is hard for White to keep his rook after Black plays the king to the g-file. However, I may be somewhat biased in favour of the pawns against the pieces, as I often am (the game demonstrated it too!).”

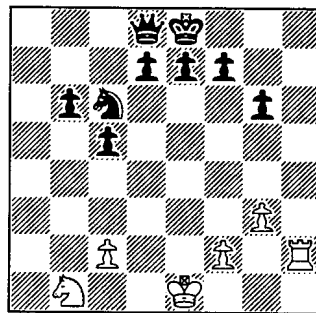
Back to the game move 13.Bf3?! :



“An excellent placement for the bishop, slowing down Black’s development, but at the price of a valuable tempo.” 13...Rxb2 14 Rxb2 c5! “This is the pawn which is going to win the game, and avoiding its being blocked by 15 Bc6 is here even more important than keeping the king.” Players new to Losing Chess tend not to realise just how valuable the king is; it is not quite as essential as in ordinary chess, but it is not a great deal short.

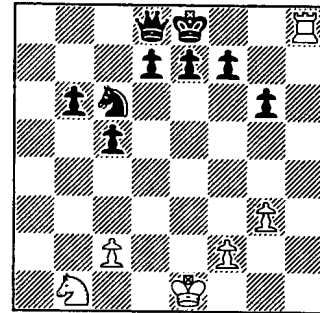


15 Bc6?! “15 Ke2 is more subtle, because 15...c4? loses to 16 Kd3!! cxd3 17 cxd3 followed by 18 Bc6 and 15...d6?! allows 16 Bc6 Nxc6 17 Nd2! However, 15...e5! keeps White boxed in. Other moves fail to address the positional threat of 15...c4, followed by 16...d6.” 15...Nxc6 :



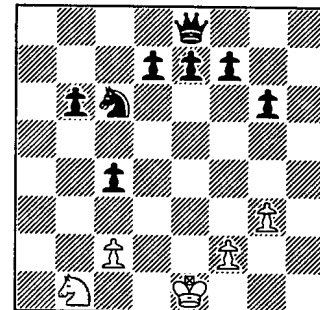
16 Rh8?! “Who wouldn’t have played this move? But although the king is the most powerful piece in Losing Chess, checkmate does not necessarily mean a win, and here it is actually losing! It is nevertheless already very hard for White to do anything against Black’s slowly reinforcing his position by c5-c4, Ke8-f8-g7, as for instance 16 c4? loses to 16...d6! (the simple threat of 17...b5 18 cxb5 Kf8 19 bxc6 Qd7 20 cxd7 Ke8 is too strong), and 16 f4 does not carry any threat.”

Fabrice now gives his verdict :

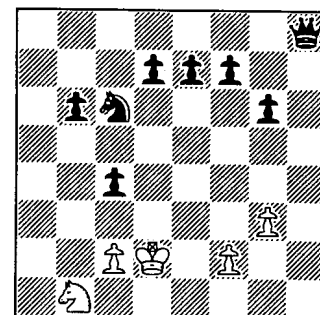


Black to play and win!

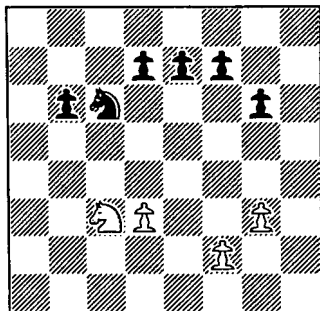
“There is no way to save the king, but the impressive black pawn mass is just about to get in action.” 16...c4! 17 Rxe8 Qxe8 :



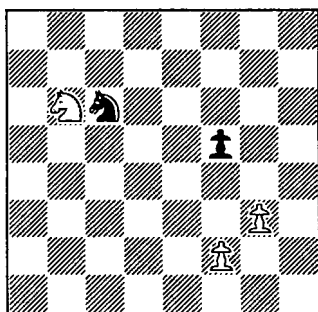
18 Kd2. “Forced: 18 c3 loses simply to 18...Nb4 19 cxb4 c3 20 Nxc3 d5 21 Nxd5 e6 etc. Now the win comes from a typical shot.” 18...Qh8! “Trivial and bad would be the king recovery 18...c3?? 19 Kxc3 Nd4 20 Kxd4 d5 21 Kxd5 e6? 22 Kxe6 fxe6 23 f4! b5 (Zugzwang) 24 Nd2! and Black loses. The queen is clearly worse than the knight in such endings with a few pawns on each side.”



“The threat is now 19...Qc3 with an immediate win and there is only one way to avoid it.” 19 Kd3 cxd3 20 cxd3 Qc3 21 Nxc3 and we have the diagram overleaf :



"How to win now? At first sight it looks as if Black only has the choice between several knight endings and pawn endings, all of which are very complicated. Nevertheless, two of them are much less complicated than the others." **21...d5**. "The other (less elegant) option was the pawn ending **21...b5 22 Nxb5 Nd4 23 Nxd4 f5 24 Nxf5 gxf5 25 g4 fxg4 26 f3 gxf3 27 d4 e5 28 dxe5 d6 29 exd6 f2 30 d7 f1R** and wins." **22 Nxd5 e5! 23 Nxb6 e4 24 dxe4 f5 25 exf5 gxf5 :**



In the absence of pawns, a knight against knight ending is won by the player to move when the knights are on squares of the same colour. In the present situation: "The win is much simpler than it seems: disregarding the pawns, the black knight will dominate the white one on the next move, as in a classical N v N ending. That means that White is forced to give both of his pawns. Then the white knight will still be dominated and will have to take the black one. The ending with N versus f-pawn loses unless the knight can sacrifice itself to the pawn (knight playing on the pawn's colour) or come to f3/g4 (N playing on the other colour; then a bishop promotion fails to Nh2!). It is easily checked that in the present position this is impossible."

Try it for yourself, or look at the game conclusion on page 111.

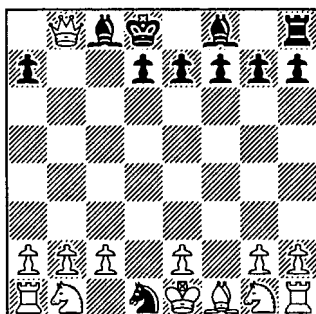
## EN PASSANT

by Paul Byway

In passing, it means - and here I would like to remember **Steve Boniface**, whose passing was noted in the last issue. He was 54 and the west country's best-known chess organiser - eventually being awarded the title of International Arbiter. To me he was at first only a name appearing in VC playing postal progressive chess, but later I saw him often at the Four Nations Chess League where he officiated. Earnest and hardworking - but always cheerful and ready for a friendly word or two. I tried to entice him into playing again, but he had too many commitments. I last saw him at this year's British Championships on the Isle of Man; my car broke down on the morning of prize-giving and I missed it. I eventually arrived when all was over and found him in the controllers' room - busy and cheerful as the event was being wound up. He handed over the prize money, chaffering me all the while. A short while after, I was at the Royal Beacon Seniors Congress in Exmouth - he had devised the formula for this in 2000 - and his name was on everybody's lips. It's very sad that he should have died so young. He won our first Progressive Chess tournament in 2002. Here is a game from that event.

Progressive Chess Tournament 2002. White **Jed Stone**, Black **Steve Boniface**.

- 1 d4
- 2 Nf6 c5
- 3 Bd2 Ba5 Bxd8
- 4 Ne4 Nxf2 Nxd1 Kxd8
- 5 dxc5 c6 cxb7 bxa8=Q Qxb8 :



6 e5 h5 Rh6 Bc5 Rd6 Bf2 mate.

Paul is by no means the only person to have written warmly about Steve Boniface, and David Sedgwick has drawn my attention to a number of tributes which have appeared on the web. I was particularly impressed by some remarks by John Richards of the Horfield & Redland Chess Club, Bristol, which I am sure I shall be excused for quoting :

"...For somebody who used to work in IT support, Steve had a very practical attitude to computers. [...] On using computers for pairing tournaments, Steve accepted that there were advantages in speed but believed that software would never generate as good pairings as could be done manually. He would ask, for example, whether a program could ever cope with avoiding pairing two people from the same club who had just driven over 200 miles to get to the tournament in the same car? Or could it avoid pairing a couple who had just had an acrimonious divorce?"

"Early in his career, Steve had made the mistake of pairing a blind player with a deaf player, only realising this when shouts of "What did you say? Speak up!" were coming from the far end of the room. After this, Steve was always careful to try to ensure a level playing field for all players, regardless of disability, and was unstintingly helpful and kind. I remember one Bristol tournament where a player revealed in the first round on the Friday evening that he had an eye problem which meant he found it difficult to see the board in normal artificial light. That night, Steve went up in his attic to find an old anglepoise and rewire it ready for the next day."

All this suggests a person very far removed from the self-important jacks-in-office with whom so many of us have had to contend in other fields, and I can well believe the comment by Bob Jones on the BCF web site: "He was a well-respected and greatly popular servant to the game, whose loss will be deeply felt by players and fellow organisers for years to come." David Sedgwick said much the same in a tribute at the first 4NCL weekend of the new season. - JDB

# PROOF GAMES

by Peter Fayers

27-29 - PMF Original

30/31/33/34 - GPJ, 32 - GPJ+JDB

My recent discovery of Kazan chess reminded me of another variant where many pieces move on a single turn, Full Belt Chess. Each file and each rank is considered as a conveyor belt; after each move, the player must move one of the belts as many squares as he likes (but not all the way round to leave the status quo). Pieces disappearing off the edge of the board re-appear on the opposite side (think of the board as a cylinder for the belt moves). The same belt cannot be immediately rotated again by the opponent.

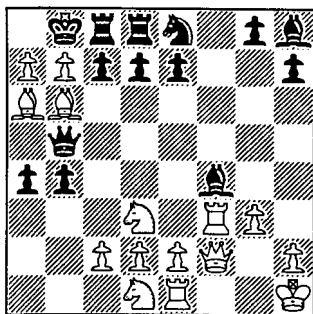
Check must be relieved with a normal move, not a belt move. Pawns only promote if they reach the 8th rank by a normal move, not via a belt move. Belts containing a King may not be rotated.

The opening game array is BBNRRQK left-to-right for each player, thus the two Kings are at opposite ends of the long diagonal a8-h1. (For full rules, see VC 23.)

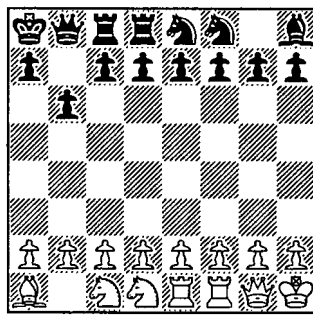
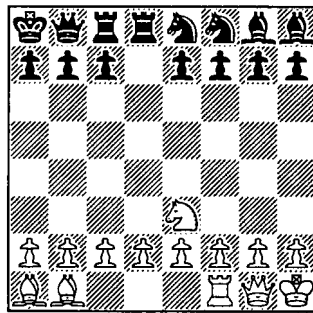
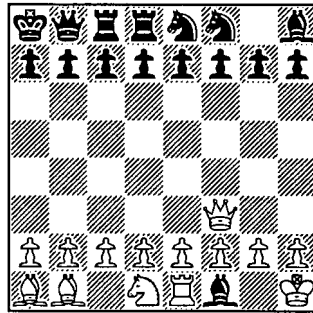
A game between Vito Rollo and Lorenzo De Angelis went

- 1 Nc1-d3/g:1 Bg1xf2/f:4
- 2 Qg2xf3/b:5+ Ka8-b8/f:6+
- 3 Qf1xf2/a:5#

The notation b:5 means file b is moved forward 5 squares, always from White's viewpoint.



As you can see, this variant can lead to an even more chaotic board layout than Kazan chess, but with one subtle difference - the chaos is determined by the players, not by the rules. This enables some remarkable effects to be shown in very short proof games:

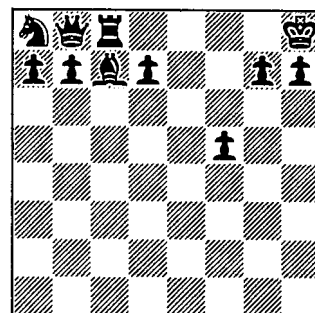
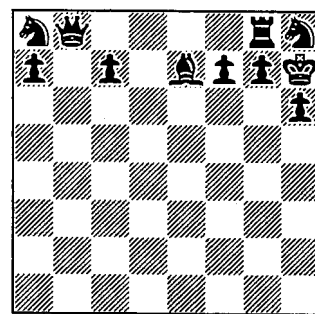
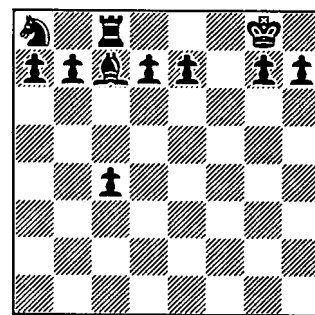
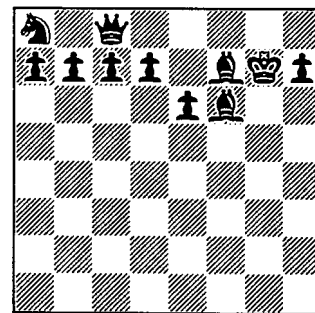
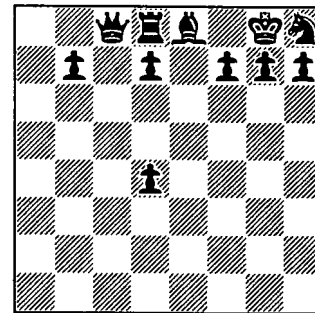
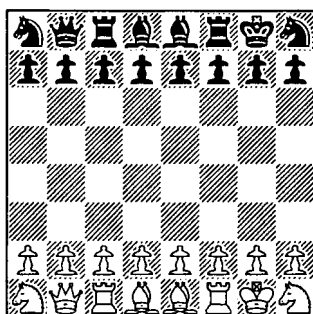


All after Black's 2nd, Full Belt Chess

Solutions next time, but if you get stuck there are hints on page 111.

It seems George Jelliss has definitely been bitten by the "Editor's Nightmare" bug (but then, in the very early days of VC, he actually *did* run out of Letraset ...)

Here are five problems from him, from the unique Guardian Chess setup with every man guarded at least once:



All after Black's 6th Guardian Chess

# MODERN COURIER CHESS

by Paul Byway

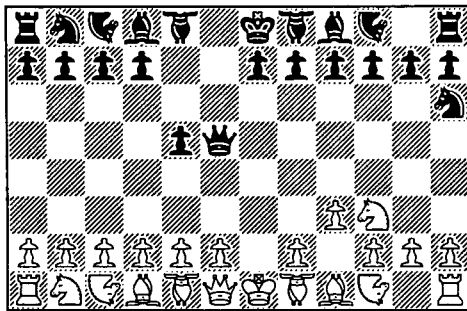
White **John Beasley**, Black **Paul Byway**; by post.

1 g2-g4 e7-e5  
 2 e3 g6 3 f4 exf4 4 exf4 j6 looks playable. If 2 h4 Bxh4  
 3 Bxe5 Bxj2 4 Bxc7 d6!

2 i2-i3 f7-f5  
 3 g4xf5 Qf8xf5  
 4 Nk1-j3

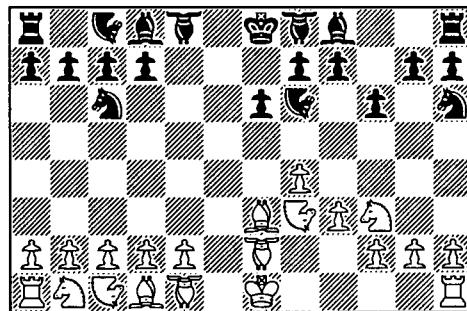
Now the possibility of N-h4-j5 comes into play.

4 - Nk8-16?



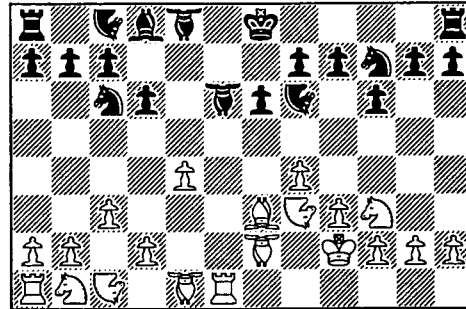
This is the time for ...Fe6 so that the queen can retreat to f7 without trapping it. The plan begun by ...Nl6 is not correct here. The idea is to defend the sensitive j5 and j7 squares, following with ...j6 and ...Bj7 or k6. In conjunction with ..g6, ...Ch6 this is a new and coherent plan of development - but I chose the wrong time to try it out!

5 h2-h4 Nb8-c6  
 6 Cj1-h3 Qf5-g6+  
 7 Fh1-g2 j7-j6  
 8 f2-f4 e5xf4  
 9 Qf1xf4 Cj8-h6  
 10 Qf4-g3 Qg6xg3  
 11 B11xg3 g7-g6



White is developing horribly fast. His play can't be faulted and I have a wretched position already.

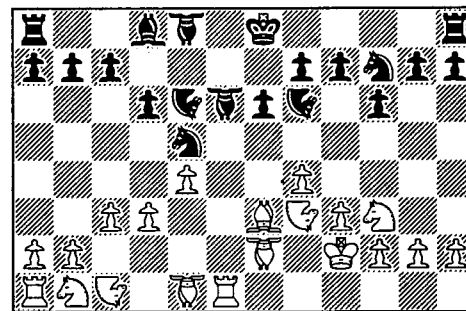
12 Kg1-i2 Fh8-f6  
 13 e2-e4 Bi8-j7  
 14 Bd1xj7 Nl6xj7  
 15 Rl1-f1 d7-d6  
 16 c2-c3



16 - Cc8-e6

Black is plagued by the problem of developing his queenside. Eventually I decided that ...Ce6; Ff3 Ne5 was the best way forward, when I can escape with minimal loss after eg d4 with Nxf3 and Cxc4. Also possible are Nc4, Nd3 in the right circumstances.

17 d2-d3 Nc6-e5

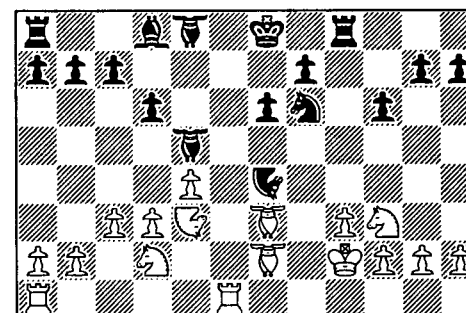


The conviction grows that White's 17th is not the best. If d4 Nd3 ; Nd2 Nxb2 ; Rb1 Na4 ; Rxb7 Nb6 and fers wins the rook. But I completely overlooked the possibility of Cf3; what should I have done then? I'm still very uncomfortable as Nj7 is badly placed and there is much work to do. I feel that I am surviving only thanks to a series of tactical points.

18 Bg3xe5? Ff6xe5  
 19 Fe1-g3 i7-i5  
 20 Ch3-j5 Nj7-16  
 21 h4xi5 Nl6xj5  
 22 i5xh6 Nj5xh6

The exchanges have helped Black and his position is now much improved - but White is still better and with his next two moves (and admirable consistency) he completes development.

23 Cc1-e3 Rl8-i8  
 24 Nb1-d2 Ce6-g4+



The start of a manoeuvre which is designed to help me out of difficulties with development on the queenside.

- 25      **Ki2-h1**      **Nh6-i4**
- 26      **Fg3-h4**

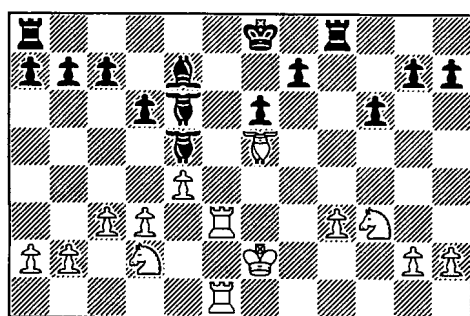
The best move; White is awkwardly placed.

- 26      -      **Cg4xg2**

The pair of ferses look like a powerful force - better they be scattered.

- 27      **Kh1xg2**      **Ni4xj2**
- 28      **Rf1-f3**      **Nj2-i4**
- 29      **Ra1-f1**      **Bd8-e7**
- 30      **Ce3-g5**      **Ni4xg5**
- 31      **Fh4xg5**      **Fe8-e6**

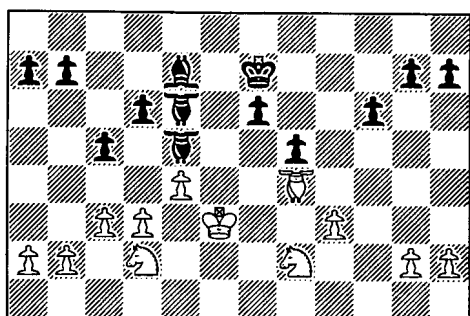
At last, I can see the completion of development ahead. White however, still has the initiative.



- 32      **Fg5-h4**      **Kg8-g7**
- 33      **Nj3-h2**      **c7-c5**
- 34      **Rf3-h3**      **Ra8-f8**

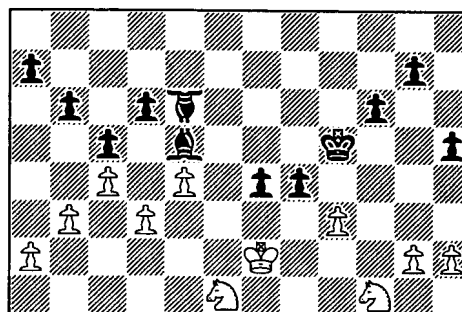
It dawns on me slowly that f3 is a key square. I'm happy to exchange one pair of rooks, but if all four come off and White plays his knights aggressively forward I think I'm still at a disadvantage. At this point White offered a conditional continuation which ends with his king on f3. I think this was a mistake. Certainly I would have played differently had there been a chance of a knight coming to f3 instead.

- 35      **Rf1xf8**      **Ri8xf8**
- 36      **Rh3-f3**      **Rf8xf3**
- 37      **Kg2xf3**      **h7-h5**



- 38      **Nh2-j1**      **g6-g5**
- 39      **Fh4-g3**      **Kg7-h6**
- 40      **Fg3-h2**      **Kh6-i5**
- 41      **Kf3-g2**      **b7-b6**
- 42      **c3-c4**      **Fe5-f4**
- 43      **Fh2-g3**      **Ff4xg3**

- 44      **Kg2xg3**      **Be7-f6**
  - 45      **b2-b3**      **Bf6-e5+**
  - 46      **Kg3-h3**      **17-15**
  - 47      **Nd2-f1**      **g5-g4+**
  - 48      **Kh3-g2**      **h5-h4**
- Draw agreed



I came into the ending with the rooks off after move 37 thinking I was slightly better and gradually changed my mind. The very local influence of the fers is a big drawback and if the game opens up the two knights can cause trouble if deployed widely separated. John, on the other hand, thought that my king tied down his king and knight on the kingside - leaving me a fers up which can march across the board. Had the fers already been there I would certainly have played on.

*"Draw with White" may seem a very modest cause for satisfaction, but I was feeling my way from first principles whereas my opponent was the game's leading exponent. I was very surprised by Paul's 4...Nl6, since it seems to me that the wider board makes central dominance even more valuable than in ordinary chess (though an example to the contrary will appear in my game with Roy Talbot, which I am sure Paul has scheduled for a future VC). The offer of a conditional continuation at move 35 was indeed a mistake, and such things highlight one of the differences between the regular match player and the occasional performer whose main interest lies in endgame studies. I shall know better next time!*

*The final position was very interesting, and my thoughts were the same as Paul's: I too felt at first that I stood better, only to become less and less confident the longer I looked. One difficulty is that even if a White knight can start rooting around on the Q side, it cannot do very much very quickly, and any pawn plus that may result will take a longish time to yield a queen. Black, on the other hand, has a pawn majority which is mobile and a king poised to invade, plus a bishop able to boost the attack from a distance while still performing a delaying role on the Q side. I did in fact pencil in a move, but thought better of it overnight and decided to take the draw while it was there.*

*White's isolated i-pawn is of course a major weakness, and after the game I thought I should have played 24 Fh3 to keep his courier out of g4 and postponed the completion of my development until the next move. Not necessarily, said Paul; it would have given him a precious tempo, which he could have put to use in various ways. - JDB*

# THE END IS NIGH

by Paul Byway

## Solutions to competition 26

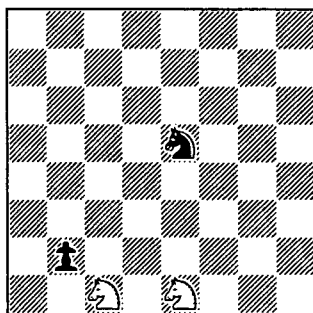
- #152 7 Ng6 f4 fxe5 Rxf1 Rxf8 Rb8 Nf8 mate.
- #153 7 Bg7 Bf8 Nd2 Rc1 Rxc7 Kc2 Rc8 mate.
- #154 7 c4 cxd5 dxc6 cxb7 b8=Q Qxc7 Qe7 mate.
- #155 8 g5 g4 gxh3 hxg2 gxh1=Q Qc1 Nc6 Nd4 mate.
- #156 7 Nxf7 Ba6 Bxb7 Re1 Nd2 Nxe4 Nc5 mate.
- #157 6 d5 Kf7 Be7 Bg4 Re8 Bb4 mate.
- #158 1 Cf9 Eg6 2 Ke3 Ei8 3 Ch9 Eg6 4 Ch10 mate. If Black plays Ee8 on his second move then Kd3 and mate next move by Pd10.

The current scores:- FG 96, IR 89, DP 67, PW 35, JB 29, CL 24, RT 19, RC xx, NE 2, SB 2. Our apologies to Roberto Cassano, whose solutions to VC 48/49 were lost in the e-mail. His points for these are included.

Congratulations to David Pritchard for the best attempt on the XiangQi problem. The XiangQi problem in this issue (rules in VC 50) shows Black with a free ranging rook; now how can Red win against those odds?

Here is an original Losing Chess composition from John Beasley; the solution is on the page opposite.

#159 John Beasley (2005)



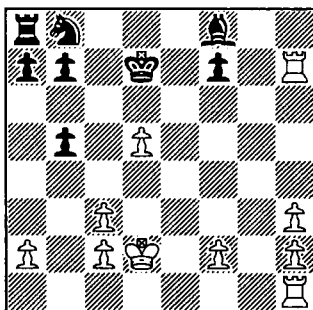
Losing Chess  
White to play and win

The second diagram in Pawn Play in XiangQi - on page 90 of issue 50 -

was adapted from an endgame manual by replacing a Red elephant on the 3rd rank by a Red guard on the 2nd. In my reading so far the Chinese do not notice zugzwang and perhaps this feature was deliberately avoided. I haven't checked - but it seems to me like a well known example of K+N+RP(7) v K; that is to say that 50% of general positions are drawn and 50% are won. None of the pieces present can lose a move.

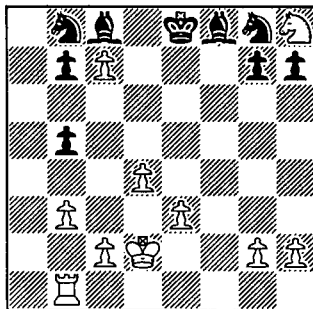
## Competition 27

#160 Ervetti - Del Frate (1988)



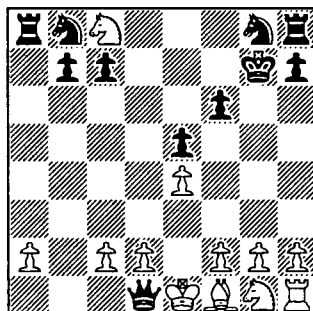
Black wins (series 8)

#161 Picasso - Sarale (1985)



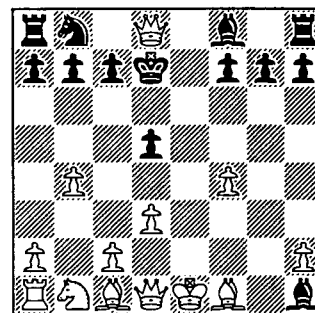
Black wins (series 8)

#162 Ervetti - Sarale (1985)



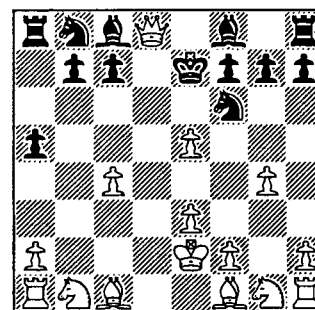
White wins (series 7)

#163 Picasso - Fabbri (1985)



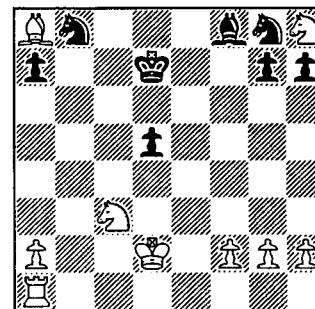
Black wins (series 6)

#164 Bratcenko - Petruk (1993)



Black wins (series 6)

#165 Biasutto - Cesaro (1989)



Black wins (series 8)

#166 Author unknown

10	.	.	.	g	k	:	.	.	.
9	.	.	.	:	g	:	P	.	.
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3	.	.	.	:	:	:	.	.	.
2	.	.	.	:	:	r	.	.	.
1	.	.	.	G	K	:	E	.	.

XiangQi : Red to play and win

## WORDS, WORDS

by David Pritchard

We can all manage a wry smile at the salesman's hyperbole ('Chessword is the most imaginative and refreshing — if no, the only — new way to play chess since the game's invention', 'People will be playing Isometric Chess — and only Isometric Chess — in 2001', 'Taliesin is unlike anything else in the world or any other').

Perhaps however we are a little more cautious of the flattery of the great and the good. Here is GM Yasser Seirawan: 'Megachess represents the dawning of a new era ... it will revolutionize the way chess is played in the future ... it's the greatest invention in chess since castling', GM Walter Browne adding for good measure 'Megachess is a great mental sport. Its potential is unlimited'. A Hungarian GM who chose, perhaps wisely, to remain anonymous, ecstatically declared Centrepoint to be 'The most intriguing game to evolve since 3 B.C.', a date that some may find perplexing; whilst Prashant Mistry, who holds the *Guinness Book of Records* chess endurance record, enthused 'Big Battle is undoubtedly superior to chess in all respects'.

Plenty of endorsements too: Intense Chess (the Polgar sisters), Cirondo (IM Chris Baker), Neo-chess (the USCF) and of course Fischerandom: ('Fischer has given life to radical changes that will shake the chess world').

Put-downs offer a little relief. Here is Fischer on Las Vegas Chess: 'A silly game in which skill plays no part at all' and Robert Erkes on Isometric Chess: 'All it is is a chessboard that looks funny'. Paul Yearout on Continuum Chess: 'I have the feeling that ... the whole thing is a kind of joke', whilst Frank Maus, the game's honest inventor, declared 'Magic Chess is deadly dull'. Finally, the censure of a *BCM* correspondent back in 1940 referring to the Duke of Rutland's Chess: 'Even the recommendation of the Duke of Rutland failed to popularise a game which could give rise to so questionable a move as Bishop takes Concubine'.

Another typical contribution from David; can readers offer more? Two of my own favourites are George Bernard Shaw's "Chess is a foolish expedient for making idle people believe they are doing something very clever when they are only wasting their time", which Fabrice Liardet quotes at the head of the chess section of his web pages, and the start of the entry on "Computers and Chess" in the *Oxford Companion*: "Under the delusion that skill at chess is evidence of high intelligence..." - JDB

## SOLUTIONS

**David Pritchard obituary** (page 99).

**Maximummer:** 1 Bxa5 Rh8 2 Bd8 Rh1 3 Bh4 Ra1 4 Be1 Rxa6. The rook tour is expected, that of the bishop perhaps is not.

**Stalemate.** It seems natural to drive the Black king towards the edge, but in fact he must be piloted the other way: 1 Ne1+ Ke3 2 Bc2 Kd2 3 Kf2! White, far from being able to profit from Black's inability to reach the squares "off the board", needs to make use of one of them himself.

**VC 50 proof games** (see page 92).

**22** (JDB misunderstanding of PMF diagram) 1 Nf3 d6 2 Ne5 Bd7 3 Nxd7 e6 4 Nxf8 Ne7 5 Ng6 Nc8 6 Nxc8 Ke7.

**23** (GPJ) 1 h4 g5 2 hxg5 c6 3 Rxh7 Qa5 4 Rxh8 Kd8 5 Rxc8 Kc7 6 Rxf8 Kd6 7 Rxc8 Ke5 8 Rxb8 Kf4 9 Rxa8 Qe5.

**24** (PMF) 1 a4 c6 2 a5 Qxa5 3 Rxa5 Kd8 4 Rxa7 Kc7 5 Rxa8 Kb6 6 Rxb8 Ka7.

**25** (PMF) 1 e3 h5 2 Qxh5 d6 3 Qxf7+ Kd7 4 Qxf8 Ke6 5 Qxg8+ Kf5 6 Qxh8 e6.

**26** (PMF/JDB) (a) 1 f4 c6 2 f6 Qb6 3 fxe7B Qxb2 4 Ba6 Qxc1 5 Bxc1, (b) 1 f4 e5 2 fxe5 Qf6 3 e7B Qxb2 4 Ba6 Qxc1 5 Bxc1 c6.

**21(v)** Michel Caillaud has found a dual - 2 Bg5 hxg5 works just as well as 2 Bh6 Rxh6. The composer has decided to consign this one to the scrap heap.

Hints for this issue:

**27:** In order to leave all the Pawns in their original position, White must have moved the same file twice, out and back again, and Black has done the same with another file.

**28:** Black moved last, all black pieces are in place, and a black Pawn is missing. Ring any bells?

**29:** Features Turbulent Priests, one of my favourite problem themes.

**30-34:** In the five problems the damage is mainly done by a P, N, B, R and Q, but not necessarily in that order.

**Losing Chess game** (page 106). The game concluded **26 g4 fxc4 27 Na4** "After **27 f3 gxf3 28 Nc4/Nd7**, Black needs only to avoid **28...Ne5???**

**29 Nxe5 f2 30 Nf3!** and to give away the knight on the other available square" **27...Nb4! 28 f3 gxf3 29 Nc3 Na2 30 Nxa2 f2 31 Nc3 f1=N** and White resigned.

**Losing Chess ending** (opposite). Try 1 Na2/b3/e2: no, 1...Nf3 2 Nxf3 b1N gives a standard win with bN at a distance 2 from each wN. White must give one knight away to prevent Black from doing so, and Black then wins the remaining N v N ending.

Try 1 Nd3: no, 1...Nxd3 2 Nxd3 b1B wins.

Try 1 Nf3: no, 1...bxc1N (simplest) 2 Nxe5 Nd3.

Try 1 Ng2: no, 1...bxc1K and White must allow two immediate giveaways (knight followed by king).

So it must be 1 Nc2 bxc1K 2 Na1, putting wN a distance 4 from bN and threatening the giveaway 3 Nc2. Now Black must give away his king first, 2...Kc2 3 Nxc2, and it is White who will win the N v N ending. If instead 1...bxc1N, White has several moves which will put him a distance 2 from each bN.



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Alas, our first item is self-explanatory, and inevitably it overshadows Paul Byway's tribute to Steve Boniface; but he too was a fine man, and I hope readers will find time to look at this as well.

**The second edition of David's Encyclopedia.** As reported on page 99, Elaine has invited me to complete this, and I shall be going down to Gloucestershire as soon as my other commitments permit to see how things stand and what still remains to be done. I will keep readers informed. In the meantime, please will readers who have been in correspondence with David over any matter relating to the *Encyclopedia* write or send me an e-mail so that I am in the picture?

**Hastings 2005-6.** Mike Adams tells me that he and Mike Gunn ran a variant tournament on New Year's Eve in David's memory, apparently using the same format as we used in our Godalming meetings (five-minute games, eight rounds, and I presume a different variant in each round). It attracted 17 competitors, and was won jointly by Andrew Greet and Jack Rudd.

## BCVS NOTICES

**BCVS web site.** George Jelliss has asked to hand over responsibility for this, and the rest of us already appear to have more than enough to do. I have therefore invited Sue to hold the fort, and she has been delighted to do so. Her role in our activities hitherto has merely been one of domestic tolerance and if a member would like to take over she would be happy to stand aside, but in the meantime I hope this will be thought acceptable. The site address remains unchanged.

I might add that Sue has been very complimentary about the way George set the site up; she has found everything neat, straightforward, and very easy for someone else to take over. To George: thank you!

**AGM 2006.** Members are reminded that nominations for office, and any resolutions for the AGM, should be in my hands as secretary by **March 1**. In respect of the Presidency, we are considering submitting a resolution to the AGM to suspend the relevant constitutional provisions for a year and allow the post to remain vacant in David's honour, and we would welcome members' opinions. The post is intrinsically honorific rather than active - "The President shall have no specific duties, but shall be free to further the interests of the society in whatever way he thinks fit" - so the suspension would not compromise our day-to-day activity. To the best of my knowledge, all the other officers are willing to continue, but if anyone else would like to join the team we shall be delighted to explain what is involved.

## CALENDAR

This year's **Circular Chess** World Championship will be held on **Saturday 20 May at Lincoln Castle**. More details next time.

**Notices for VC 52** should reach me by **March 1**, though later notices will be fitted in if at all practicable. There is also a "News and Notices" page on the web site, and notices for this can be accepted at any time.

**Web site links.** One of the standard pages on our web site contains links to other relevant sites, and if anyone would like to see a link to his or her site Sue will be willing to add it. It is also helpful if anyone trying to use a link and finding it no longer current will please tell her.

**Lloyd Shapley's Kriegspiel problem (VC 49 p 75).** Thomas Ferguson tells me my source was wrong; it was the *Black* king which could be anywhere, not the *White*. A correct statement: Kriegspiel, quarter-infinite board, wK on a1, wR on b2, location of bK unknown, *White* to play and win "with probability 1" (i.e. he can keep trying according to certain rules involving a random choice between defined alternatives and eventually he will strike lucky, in the same way that a coin tossed repeatedly will eventually yield any preassigned sequence of heads and tails). He has told me how it is done and I think I understand, give or take some advanced algebra which I am prepared to take for granted, but I feel the problem is one for mathematicians rather than chess players and I don't think *VC* is the place for the details.

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