



Chess

The ?! winner

CRAIG LAIRD rode a tidal wave to victory at the Windy Music New Zealand championships in Wellington. Pre-tournament selections favoured myself and perennial champion Ortvin Sarapu, with players like Small, Anderson and Garbett

considered dangerous to all. No one even noticed the Laird, who had been playing in Australia for the past 18 months — in fact, because of his low New Zealand grading, he only just made the championship field of 12, after two withdrawals!

Laird exhibited a depth of understanding of the ancient openings of Nimzowitsch that he had not displayed in the past. One of his most interesting games was a battle of ideas with Kai Jensen.

Windy Music NZCA
85th Congress
Wellington, January 1978

PONZIANI OPENING

- | | |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Kai Jensen
(Hamilton) | Craig Laird
(Tauranga) |
| 1. e4 | e5 |
| 2. Nf3 | Nc6 |
| 3. c3 | f5 |

Left: new chess champion Craig Laird with his trophy.

Laird played this move instantly. I personally consider it to be Black's best reply against the Ponziani.

4. d4 fxe4
5. Nxe5 Qf6
6. Nxc6?!

Ljubojevic against Pachman (Manila IZT, 1976) continued here 6.Ng4 Qg6 7.Bf4! A novelty. (7.d5 Nd8 8.B32 Bc5=) 7...d6 8.Ne3 Nf6 9.Na3 Be7 10.Qb3 with advantage. Now (of course) Laird should really recapture with his d-pawn; but he goes his own way.

- 6... Qxc6?!
7. Be2 Nf6
8. 0-0 Be7
9. c4 0-0
10. d5?!
10. Nc3!

Jensen had used 36 minutes to Laird's 18 at this stage.

11. Nc3 Qe5
12. g3?

A pointless weakening of the king-side that gets White into trouble later on. Simple and safe was 12.Be3.

- 12... d6
13. Nb5 Ne8
14. f4 exf3 ep
15. Bxf3 Bg5!

Laird spent 20 minutes of his allocated two and half hours on this interesting move. Jensen replied with a 15-minute think, eventually looked up at Laird and made a typical comment — "Let's be greedy, then" — before his next move.

16. Re1?!
16.Qd4 is again safest and simplest.

- 16... Qf6
17. Rxe8 Rxe8
18. Nxc7 Bxc1
19. Nxe8

On 19.Rxc1 comes 19... Re3! with a ferocious attack, aided by the misplacement of White's knight on a8 after it captures the hanging rook.

- 19... Be3 ch
20. Kh1 Qxb2
20... Qe7?! 21. Qe2 Qxe8
22. Re1 regains the piece.
21. Nxd6

So Jensen has won his pawn but Black has the bishop pair and a very open king to play with.

- 21... Bh3
22. Rb1 Qxa2
23. Rb3

If White captures the knight's pawn either way on b7. Black replies 23... Rf8! Anyway...

- 23... Rf8!
24. Rxe3 Rxf3

An immune rook! 25.Rxf3 Qg2 mate or 25.Qxf3 Qb1 ch, which takes just a little longer.

25. Re8 ch Rf8
26. Rxf8 ch Kxf8
27. Qf3 ch Ke7
28. Nf5 ch Kd7

Black's king is surprisingly safe. Now all Laird wants is to exchange queens...

29. Ne3 Qa8 ch
30. Nd1 Qf6!
31. Qxf6 gxf6
32. Ne3 Kd6
33. g4

"Trapping" the bishop.

33... a5!
The salient point. In this type of endgame a passed a-pawn is the equivalent of an a-bomb. Suddenly White's king and knight have a full-time job preventing its promotion.

34. Kg1 a4
35. Kf2 a3
36. Nc2 a2
37. Ke3 Bxg4
38. Kd4 b6
39. Kc3 Bf5
40. Na1 Be4
41. Kb3 Kc5

Laird sealed here, but after looking at the game Jensen resigned before the resumption. Black claims a decisive pawn after 42.Kxa2 Bd3 or 42.Kc3 b5.

So it's off to Japan for Laird. The New Zealand champs were a qualifying tourney for the zonal one comprising countries of Asia. New Zealand's other place is to be decided by the NZ Chess Association.

MURRAY CHANDLER

85th NZ Chess Championships — how they finished

PLAYER	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	PTS
1 Craig Laird	1	1	1	1/2	0	1/2	1	1	1	1/2	1	1/2	8
2 Ortvin Sarapu	0	1/2	0	1	1/2	1	1/2	1	1	1	1	1	7 1/2
3 Ewen Green	0	1/2	1	1/2	1	1/2	1/2	1/2	1/2	1	1	1	7
4 Murray Chandler	1/2	1	0	0	1	1	1/2	1/2	0	1	1	1	6 1/2
5 Vernon Small	1	0	1/2	1	1/2	1/2	1	1/2	1/2	0	1/2	1	6
6 Paul Garbett	1/2	1/2	0	0	1/2	1	0	1/2	1/2	1	1	1	5 1/2
7 Kai Jensen	0	0	1/2	0	1/2	0	1/2	1	1	1	1	1	5 1/2
8 Peter Stuart	0	1/2	1/2	1/2	0	1	1/2	1/2	1	0	1	1	5 1/2
9 Paul Clemance	0	0	1/2	1/2	1/2	1/2	0	1/2	1	1/2	1	1	5
10 Bruce Anderson	1/2	0	1/2	1	1/2	1/2	0	0	0	1	0	1	4
11 Roger Perry	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1/2	0	1/2	1	3
12 Robert Smith	1/2	0	0	0	1/2	0	0	0	0	1	1/2	1	2 1/2