

# Settling old scores

THE RESULTS of the fourth leg of the Asian Grandmasters' Chess circuit in Pinang, Malaysia looked rather strange after the sixth or so round. The leader was the untitled Kamran Shirazi on 5, followed by grandmaster Eugene Torre who, on 4½, was surrounded by international masters. And because there were no norms to play for they were scoring more points than ever!

Maybe some of us were inspired by the sea, which laps

the shores of the Wisma Persekutuan, a huge Government mansion where we were billeted for the tournament, and perhaps sheer weariness from months of gruelling circuit chess was simply taking its toll on others; but whatever the reason, the tournament quickly divided into two groups that had a quite alarming points difference between them.

Fortunately (or maybe finally!) I stayed with the front pack of Iranian Shirazi,

Torre, Sharif, Mascarinas and Ardiansyah. Our other New Zealand representative, Craig Laird, the current New Zealand champion, was not so lucky. And after this tournament he has threatened to retreat to the mountains to study and prepare for the next tournament in India in September.

In our individual game I had a score to settle with him as he had beaten me in a long endgame in Jakarta, and our only other clash had been a draw in which he had had the better in the New Zealand

Congress in Wellington last Christmas.

## Asian Grandmasters' Circuit ALEKHINE'S DEFENCE

M. CHANDLER (New Zealand) C. LAIRD (New Zealand)

1. e4 Nf6

I had expected a Ruy Lopez, or maybe even a French Defence but this move surprised me. Then, thinking back — yes, Laird used to play this opening, particularly in fun games when I stayed at his house once!

2. e5 Nd5  
3. d4 d6  
4. Nf3

Often I used to play the double-edged four pawns attack with 4.c4 Nb6 5.f4!?, but against Laird I decided an unpretentious quick development of pieces would be a better strategy.

4. . . . Bg4  
5. Be2 e6  
6. O-O Be7  
7. c4 Nb6  
8. Nc3 O-O  
9. h3 Bh5  
10. Be3 Nc6?!

This move is rarely played, but even after the main line 10 . . . d5, Black has no easy route to equality; eg. 11.c5 Bx3! 12.gxf3! (stopping 12

. . . Nc4) Nc8 13. b4 f5 14.f4 and White dominates the board.

11. exd6 cxd6  
12. b3?!

This is a mistake which turns out well! I should have played the immediate pawn thrust 12.d5! Bxf3 13.Bxf3 Ne5 14.Bg4! Ncxc4 15.dxe6 fxe6 16.Bxe6 ch Kh8 17.Bxb6 Nxb6 18.Qb3 and White has the initiative due to the isolated Black d-pawn.

12. . . . d5?

And Laird reciprocates with a bad error. 12. . . . Bf6 first was indispensable, followed by 13 . . . d5 with counterplay. As it is he enables me to gain a decisive tempo for my queen-side advance.

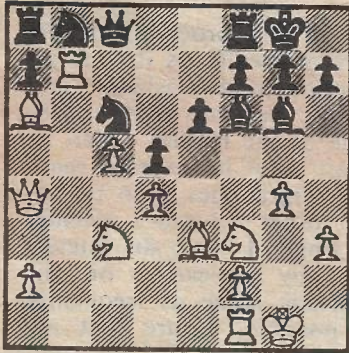
13. c5 Nd7  
14. b4! Nxb4

It is very risky to open the queenside files like this, but White's attack is well under way, while Black is doing nothing in the centre as yet.

15. Rb1 Nc6

Or 15. . . . Qa5 16. Qb3 Nc6 17.Qxb7!

16. Rxb7 Bf6  
17. g4 Bg6  
18. Qa4 Qc8!



20. Rxb8

This was the simple discovery Laird had missed. White wins two pieces for a rook — and maintains that c-pawn.

20. . . . Qxb8  
21. Qxc6 Qb2  
22. Rc1 Bc2

22. . . . Rab8 and White still has to think — the text permits a little simplification.

23. Qb5 Qxc3  
24. Qe2 Rab8

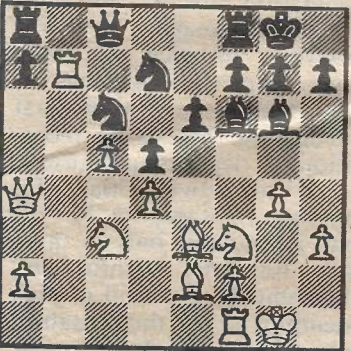
25. Rxc2 Qa1 ch  
26. Kg2 e5  
27. dxe5 Bxe5  
28. Rc1

Now the queens come off.

28. . . . Qb2  
29. Qxb2 Bxb2  
30. Rc2 Resigns

As Ardiansyah would say: just push, push, push, the c-pawn.

MURRAY CHANDLER



A fascinating position. White controls acres of space but Black has nasty threats in the centre with 19 . . . Nxc5! 20.dxc5 Bxc3. 19.Rxd7 is tempting, after 19. . . . Qxd7 20.g5 (for if 20 . . . Be7 21.Bb5 Rfe8 22.Ne5) but Black can leave his bishop on f6 and play dangerously against the weakened White kingside with 20 . . . Bf5!

I have no rook retreats either. 19.Rc1 meets 19 . . . Bc2 and 19.Rh5 gets hassled by 19 . . . a6. But following the theory that the best method of defence is attack there is a move.

19. Ba6! Ndb8 (?)

Sigh . . . why are the best lines always in the notes! I had calculated the startling 19 . . . Bd3! to which I had planned the rejoinder 20.Nb5! Bxf1 21.Kxf1 when there is no good defence. Laird's best is probably 21 . . . Ndb8 (21 . . . Ncb8 22.Nd6 Qd8 23.Bh5) 22.Nd6 Qd8 23.Rxb8! Rxb8. (or 23 . . . Nxb8 24.Bb7) 24.Qxc6 when White has three minor pieces v two rooks, approximate material equality; but my active minor pieces and strong passed c-pawn must prove decisive.