

A Black day for Portisch

THE remaining two quarter-finals of the world championship candidates matches are now completed, with Hungarian Lajos Portisch going through to challenge Robert Hubner of West Germany in one semi-final.

Hubner, who approached his quarter-final in typical pessimistic style ("I just want to get it over with and go back to university!") defeated Hungarian Andreas Adorjan, by 5½ points to 4½ in Bad Lauterburg, West Germany.

Portisch, pitted against Russian Boris Spassky in Mexico City, won his first game — with Black. Thanks to an absurd new tie-breaking procedure adopted for this cycle, this ultimately gave him the match. Candidates matches are for the best of 10 games, with an extension to 14 in case of a tie. If after 14 games the score still stands level the player to have won most with the Black pieces is awarded the contest.

Why it should be more meritorious to win with Black rather than with White I have no idea, and the system has considerably less virtue than tossing a coin (or playing Russian roulette). Under the current system a player (in this case Portisch) has the unfair advantage of having to play only for a draw in the last few games, secure in the knowledge that he will win on the tie-split.

Despite an heroic come-back in game 10, Spassky was eliminated after the remaining games were drawn.

The winner of Portisch-Hubner will compete with the winner of the match between Soviet defector Viktor Korchnoi and Russian Lev Polugayevsky for the right to challenge Soviet world champion Anatoly Karpov next year.

SICILIAN DEFENCE

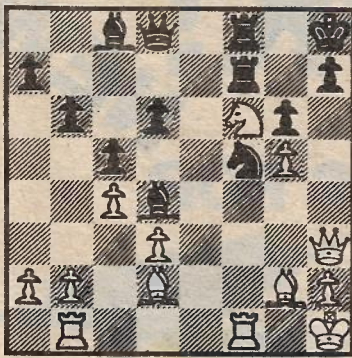
B. SPASSKY (USSR)	L. PORTISCH (Hungary)
1. e4	c5
2. Nc3	d6
3. g3	Nc6
4. Bg2	g6
5. d3	Bg7
6. f4	e6
7. Nf3	Nge7
8. 0-0	0-0
9. Rb1	b6!
10. Bd2	Bb7
11. Ne2	Qd7
12. g4	f5
13. gxf5	exf5
14. c4	Nd8!
15. Nc3	Ne6
16. Ng5	Nxg5
17. fxg5	Rf7
18. Qf3	Raf8

Portisch's strong point is undoubtedly his extensive opening preparation and here the Hungarian Grandmaster reaches the middlegame having countered Spassky's attack almost before it has started.

19. Qh3	Qd8
20. exf5	Bc8!
21. Ne4	Bd4 ch

22. Kh1 Nxf5
23. Nf6 ch Kh8?!

L. PORTISCH



B. SPASSKY

White is in considerable trouble as his queen has no move to hide from a discovered attack after ... Ne3.

Nevertheless it would have been safer for Portisch to have won a pawn immediately with 23...Bxf6 24.gxf6 Nd4 25.Qe3 Rxf6 since Spassky could now have tried a complicated sacrifice of queen for two pieces with 24.Bd5 Ne3 25.Qxe3! Bxe3 26.Bxe3. White's plan of re-routing his bishop to c3 via d2 could even give him winning chances in some lines — eg 26...Rxf6? 27.gxf6 Rxf6 28.Bd2! However the Russian blundered instead by ...

24. Bc3?	Ne3
25. Qh4	

25.Qxe3 Bxe3 is no use now — White has no very strong discovered check, and Black will shortly be able to block the diagonal again by replacing his bishop on d4. White loses rook for knight.

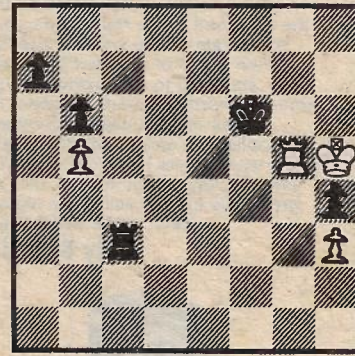
25. ...	Bxc3
26. bxc3	Nxf1
27. Rxf1	Bf5
28. d4	Rxf6

29. gxf6 Qxf6
30. Qxf6 ch Rxf6
31. a4 Kg7
32. a5 Bd3
33. Rxf6 Kxf6
34. axb6 axb6
35. Bd5 Kf5
36. dxc5 dxc5
37. Kg1 Kf4
38. Kf2
and resigns.

* * *

In one of the later games of his match, Hubner stood in a rather precarious situation against Adorjan.

ADORJAN



HUBNER

In this position Adorjan produced 1...Rc5? (1...Rxh3 wins easily) thinking he could exchange rooks to a simple win in a king and pawn ending. However Hubner calmly gobbled a pawn with 2.Kxh4! drawing because 2...Rxg5 leaves White in stalemate! Seeing that Adorjan was Black, if he had won this game he would probably have qualified on tie-break!

MURRAY CHANDLER