

# Triple tie

ORTVIN SARAPU and Ewen Green, both of Auckland, and Vernon Small of Canterbury featured in a triple tie for first place in the New Zealand Centennial Championships in Upper Hutt. It was only the second time in 100 years that three players had shared the silver rook trophy for what is, in fact, the best-established national championship in the world.

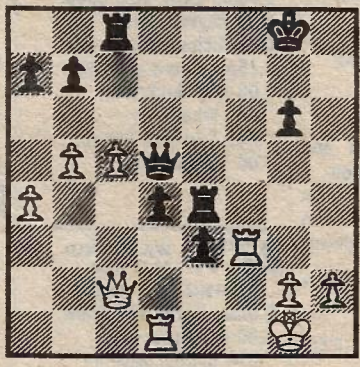
For Sarapu, it was his 17th time. His incredible string of victories dates back to 1951, when he arrived from Germany as a "displaced person", having originally come from Estonia. At the centennial dinner he was acclaimed "Champion of the Century", a tribute to his domination of New Zealand chess for nearly 30 years.

Neither Green nor Small has won the championship before, although both are top international campaigners. They both caught Sarapu up with late victories, while he was coasting home with three draws. Small managed to utilise his steady positional style to go through undefeated, while the more erratic Green had sparks of inspiration — such as his win over Sarapu — despite being devastated in a Queen sacrifice opening variation

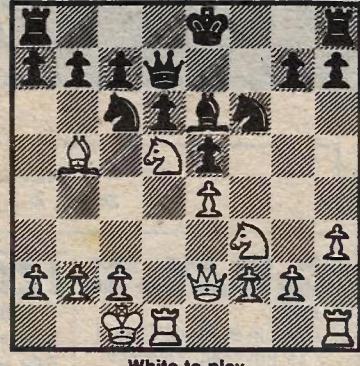
by fellow Aucklander Robert Smith.

A thrilling final round decided the concurrent New Zealand Women's Championship, in which Katrine McCarthy from Auckland was pipped at the post by Wellington schoolgirl Fenella Foster. By taking the title outright Foster improved on her tie for first two years ago with Winsome Stretch of Auckland.

In each of the following three positions from the Centennial Congress in Upper Hutt, one of our new champions found a way to checkmate or win material. How well can you do? Solutions are upside down at the end of the column.



No 1: Sarapu v Beach. Black has two menacing passed pawns, but his last move — Queen from e6 to d5 — was a mistake. How did Sarapu immediately exploit this?



No 2: Small v Weir. Weir's incorrect play in a Ruy Lopez opening has cost him dearly in time. Is there a way for Small to use his advantage in development to win material?



No 3: Green v Stuart. An unusual king move in the opening has given Green good chances to attack the

Black king. But must he now retreat his attacked knight on f4, or has he something else?

**SOLUTIONS**

No 1: The d5 square proves to be a sensitive one for the unprotected Queen, and Sarapu played the surprising 1.Rxe3!, which wins a pawn, the point being that 1...Rxe3 2.Qxg6 ch Kf8 3.Qh6 ch Kf7 4.Qxe3! gains back the rook. Beach then tried to save a draw with 4...Qxg2 ch, but got only a losing rook endgame after 5.Kxg2 dxe3 6.Kf3.

No 2: Yes — Small played 1.Nxe5, taking advantage of the bishop pin from b5 to e8, and the veiled pin down the d-file. After 1...dxe5 2.Nxf6 ch gxf6 3.Rxd7 Kxd7 4.Rd1 ch Ke8 5.Bxc6 ch bxc6 6.Qa6 Black resigns, as he is Queen for rook and bishop down with a poor position.

No 3: Green continued the attack with 1.Nxg6 Qxg6 2.Be4! (much better than 2.Bh6 ch? Qxh6 3.Rxh6 Kxh6 when Black has two minor pieces and a rook for the Queen) and now 2...Qe8 gets crushed by 3.Rh7 ch Kg8 4.Bd5 ch Be6 5.Bxe6 ch Qxe6 6.Qg6 ch Bg7 7.Qxg7 checkmate. Instead Stuart tried 2...Bg5 but was soon lost after 3.Bxe6 Bxe3 4.Rh7 ch Kf6 5.fxe3.

MURRAY CHANDLER