

Contracts in clubs

CLUB MATCHES in several European countries are taken extremely seriously, with foreign professionals often being flown in from anywhere on the globe just to play a single game. In contrast to New Zealand, and other countries where tournament chess tends to take precedence, the team contests are all-important and have also become big business.

In Holland and West Germany, for example, large sponsors pour funds into the national leagues, the winners of which qualify for the European club championships. In West Germany a couple of millionaire enthusiasts manage the top two teams, Porz and Solingen, who vie with 14 other teams in this season's Bundesliga. Both have an impressive array of grandmasters, Porz with Hubner, Hort, Sigurjonsson and Smejkal and Solingen with Spassky, Kavalek and Hecht.

Last season Kavalek regularly travelled from the USA for single games, though this year the contests are arranged with two games over the weekend. As to the question of why the millionaires back the teams, one answer may be that, being chess lovers themselves, they derive satisfaction from pitting their wits against the opposition by moving grandmasters around the continent as though they were pawns on a giant European chessboard.

The West German club I play for, Hamburg, has yet to find a regular sponsor although we are in the top section of the national league and I am their only active professional. I usually fly in for pre-match training and analysis sessions as well as the matches, and as we have won two matches and drawn one so far this serious approach seems to be paying off.

An illuminating comparison with club play in New Zealand can be taken from our last away match, in Berlin. The eight-man team with two supporters just pitched up at Hamburg airport and flew to Berlin, arriving barely half an hour before the match started — commuting as casually as we used to travel by car to a Wellington match when I played with the Pencarrow club in Wainuiomata!

The whole set-up is not simply a financial joyride for the masters, however, thanks to a rising generation of strong young players. With the strict limitation of three foreigners per team the local German players benefit greatly from playing with, and general exposure to, the leading international players constantly visiting.

The following game, however, is one case where perhaps the local player did not benefit as much as he would have liked. It was played in the Dutch League, Volmac v Utrecht.

NIMZO-INDIAN DEFENCE

R. D. KEENE (England)	K. LANGEWEG (Holland)
1. d4	Nf6

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| 2. c4 | e6 |
| 3. Nc3 | Bb4 |
| 4. e3 | 0-0 |
| 5. Bd3 | c5 |
| 6. Nge2! | |

An interesting attempt to rehabilitate an unusual variation. Normal is 6.Nf3 d5 7.0-0 Nc6 8.a3 Bxc3 9.bxc3 dxc4 10.Bxc4.

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| 6. ... | d5 |
| 7. 0-0 | Nc6 |
| 8. cxd5 | exd5 |
| 9. a3 | cxd4 |
| 10. axb4 | dxc3 |
| 11. b5! | Ne5 |

Black could win a pawn with 11...cxb2 12.Bxb2 Nb8 (if 12...Nb4 then 13.Bxh7 ch Kxh7 14.Qb1 ch followed by 15.Bxf6 and 16.Qxb4, or 13...Nxh7 14.Qd4!) but White would have too much compensation with the two bishops bearing down on the kingside, and the much superior development.

After the text, and White's reply, a position known to theory is reached which Keene believes may be better for White.

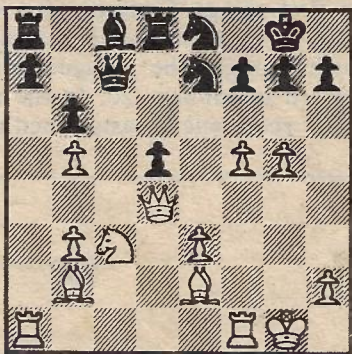
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| 12. Nxc3 | Qc7 |
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Probably the critical continuation is 12...Bg4 13.f3 d4!? on which Keene had planned 14.Bxh7 ch! Kxh7 15.cxd4 Nxj3 ch 16.gxf3 and White has won a pawn, though after 16...Bh3 the position is not entirely clear.

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| 13. Be2 | Rd8 |
| 14. Qd4 | b6 |
| 15. b3 | Bf5 |
| 16. Bb2 | Ng6 |
| 17. g4! | Be6 |
| 18. f4 | Ne7 |
| 19. f5 | Bc8 |
| 20. g5 | Ne8 |

By four pawn moves on the kingside chasing back all of Black's minor pieces, White has suddenly summoned up a winning attack.

LANGEWEG



KEENE

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| 21. Bd3 | f6 |
| 22. Ne2 | Kh8 |
| 23. Rf3 | Bd7 |
| 24. Raf1 | Resigns |

Langeweg, unable to think of any defence to Keene's mating plan of Rh3 and Qh4, became so depressed with his position he resigned without waiting for the crunch! The only possibility to defend was 24...Ng8, whereupon 25.Nf4 fxg5 26.Ng6 ch hxg6 27.Rh3 ch Nh6 28.Rxh6 ch Kg8 29.fxg6 leaves White with overwhelming threats (29...gxh6 allows 30.Qh8 mate).

MURRAY CHANDLER