

Adding injury to insult

RARELY has such a disastrous start been made in a world championship bid as challenger Viktor Korchnoi's against champion Anatoly Karpov in Merano. It was not just the two losses in the first two games suffered by self-exiled Soviet dissident Korchnoi, who at 50 is some 20 years Karpov's senior. It was his tired and lack-lustre handling of both games, culminating in two terrible middlegame blunders ominously symptomatic of middle-age fatigue.

As in the 1978 K-K world championship battle in Baguio City — in which Karpov narrowly held his title by six wins to five with 21 draws — the rival entourages exchanged insults before the start. Korchnoi personally, however, was more subdued, even after a venomous personal attack launched on him by Tass on the eve of the first game.

This could have been taken as a sign that this time he intended to concentrate solely on realising his one burning ambition — relieving the Soviets of their world crown — rather than formulating endless protests. But it soon became apparent that Karpov, the Russian golden boy, was probably the better prepared as well as in excellent form. In contrast with the challenger's oversight in game one, Karpov's play was forthright and flawless. Even after a draw in game three, Korchnoi's chances of being first to win six games were looking very slim.

Here is the first game of the match.

QUEEN'S GAMBIT DECLINED

V. KORCHNOI	A. KARPOV
1. c4	e6
2. Nc3	d5
3. d4	Be7
4. Nf3	Nf6
5. Bg5	h6
6. Bh4	0-0
7. e3	b6
8. Rc1	Bb7
9. Be2	Nbd7
10. cxd5	exd5
11. 0-0	c5
12. dxc5	

Black is given "hanging pawns" — strong if they can be maintained and advanced under favourable terms; weak if they can be attacked and undermined.

12. ...	bxc5
13. Qc2	Rc8
14. Rfd1	Qb6
15. Qb1	Rfd8
16. Rc2	Qe6
17. Bg3	Nh5
18. Rcd2	Nxg3
19. hxg3	Nf6
20. Qc2	g6
21. Qa4	a6
22. Bd3	

Having made little impact on Karpov's central pawns so far, Korchnoi embarks on a somewhat laborious manoeuvre to bring his bishop into play.

22. ...	Kg7
23. Bb1	Qb6

This is the moment when Korchnoi blundered through blindly following his plan of bringing the bishop to a2.

24. a3?	d4!
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KORCHNOI

A tremendously strong thrust. To stay in the game strategically White must capture the pawn. But he can't — 25. exd4 Bc6! (the in-between move that Korchnoi missed) 26. Qc2 Bxf3! 27. gx3fx3 cxd4 and now that White's queen has been forced to the c-file, his attacked knight is pinned — and lost (28. Na4 Qb5).

Thus Korchnoi was compelled to accept the game, continuation, and a busted kingside pawn formation.

25. Ne2	dxe3
26. fxe3	c4
27. Ned4	Qc7
28. Nh4	Qe5

Karpov avoids the trap 28... Qxg3 29. N(either)f5 ch forking king and queen.

29. Kh1	Kg8!
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Now the crippled pawns on e3 and g3 really are threatened.

30. Ndf3	Qxg3
31. Rxd8 ch	Bxd8
32. Qb4	Be4
33. Bxe4	Nxe4
34. Rd4	Nf2 ch
35. Kg1	Nd3
36. Qb7	Rb8
37. Qd7	Bc7

Setting a cute trap which Korchnoi side-steps: if 38. Rxc4 Qf2 ch 39. Kh1 Qf1 ch 40. Ng1 Nf2 with a smothered mate!

38. Kh1	Rxb2
39. Rxd3	cxd3
40. Qxd3	Qd6
41. Qe4	Qd1 ch
42. Ng1	Qd6
43. Nhf3	Rb5
44. Resigns	

Korchnoi's error in the second game was even worse.



KORCHNOI

KARPOV

Black to play. Karpov has a clear positional edge, but Korchnoi has defended such positions successfully in the past. Instead in this position he played 34... f6? overlooking a threat even beginners might see. There followed 35. Rxa7! winning a key pawn — as 35... Qxa7 36. Qxe6 ch followed by queen takes rook would win White a piece. Once again Karpov converted his advantage with no real difficulty.

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