

Hungarian hero

IN MY ARTICLE on the Hungarian chess phenomenon a few weeks ago I spoke of the remarkable strength in depth this small country has achieved. This was vividly spotlighted shortly thereafter in their national championship, an event of no less than category 12 status containing seven grandmasters and three international masters.

Lajos Portisch, the greatest Hungarian player ever, naturally started as favourite, but in a field containing Zoltan Ribli, Andreas Adorjan and Gyula Sax among others, nothing could be certain. In fact it was another grandmaster, Ivan Farago, who led going into the last round, but he only drew. Portisch won and was then awarded the title on tie-break.

Final scores were: Portisch and Farago 5½; Ribli and Pinter 5; Adorjan and Csom 4½; Sax, Lukacs and Groszpeter 4; Forintos 3.

Portisch, now 44, has been one of my favourite super-grandmasters since I witnessed at first hand the controlled technique with which he won the Rio Interzonal in 1979. I also followed his exploits with particular interest since (apart from a shared birthday) I have found my style of play resembles Portisch's more than any other leading grandmaster's.

Possibly the most instructive aspect of Portisch's play is his handling of the White side of the Nimzo-Indian defence, an opening with which he has scored many magnificent victories.

NIMZO-INDIAN DEFENCE

L. PORTISCH	J. PINTER
1. d4	Nf6
2. c4	e6
3. Nc3	Bb4
4. e3	c5
5. Bd3	0-0
6. Nf3	d5
7. 0-0	dxc4!
8. Bxc4	cxd4
9. exd4	b6
10. Bg5	Bb7
11. Re1	Nbd7
12. Bd3	Rc8
13. Rc1	Bxc3
14. bxc3	Qc7?! Better is 14...Re8!?, waiting for White's queen to come to e2 so that Bh4 can be answered by ...Nh5.

15. Bh4! Rfd8

So that on 16.Bg3 Qc6 Black has a playable position. Portisch, however, manages to exploit the dark side of Pinter's previous move with an original knight manoeuvre.

16. Nd2! Now 16...Qc6 is met by 17. Ne4!, and meanwhile Ne4 is a threat anyway, as black concedes with his response.

16. ...	Re8
17. Bg3	Qc6
18. f3	Nf8
19. Nc4!	

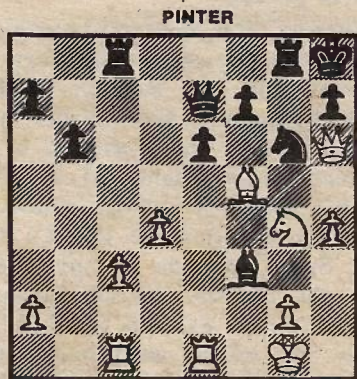
Eying the hole at d6, Pinter's rook shuffles back to the d-file.

19. ...	Red8
20. Ne5	Qe8
21. Bh4!	Ng6
22. Bxf6	gxf6

Black's back-rank tactics were to no avail after all, and his kingside pawn formation is disrupted and weakened. Pinter nevertheless succeeds in meeting the inevitable assault with an ingenious counter-attack of his own.

23. Ng4	Qe7
24. Qd2	Kh8
25. Qh6	Rg8
26. h4	f5!?
27. Bxf5	Bxf3!

A spirited try — 28.gxf3 Qxh4! leads to highly unclear complications. Portisch keeps his cool.



28. Ne5!	exf5
29. Nxf3	

Not 29.Nxg6 ch Rxg6 30.Qxg6 Qxe1 ch 31.Rxe1 hxg6 32.gxf3 Rxc3.

29. ...	Qf8
30. Qg5	Qd8

To answer 31.Qxf5 with 31...Nxh4. With his next move Portisch sets in motion a tactical sequence lasting some nine moves to simplify the position.

31. h5	Qxg5
32. Nxg5	Nh4
33. Nx17 ch	Kg7
34. Nd6	Kf6
35. Nxc8	Nf3 ch
36. Kh1	Nxe1
37. Nxa7	Nxg2
38. Rg1	Ra8
39. Kxg2	Rxa7
40. Rb1!	

Rook endgames must be played actively! If now 40...Rxa2 ch 41.Kf3 Ra6 42.Kf4 and Black has a hopelessly passive position. After Pinter's defence the exploitation of White's extra pawn still requires great skill.

40. ...	Kg5!
41. Kf3	Rc7
42. Rb3	Rc6
43. a4	h6
44. Ke3	Re6 ch
45. Kd3!	f4
46. d5	Re1
47. Kd2	Re5
48. Rb5	Kf5
49. d6!	Rxb5
50. axb5	

The pawn ending is winning — but only just!

50. ...	Ke6
51. Kd3	Kxd6
52. Ke4	resigns

The point is that after 52...Kc5 53.Kxf4 Kxb5 54.Kf5 Kc4 55.Kg6 Kxc3 56.Kxh6 b5 57.Kg5 (to play 57.Kg7 after such a game would not be amusing) b4 58.h6 b3 59.h7 b2 60.h8-Q is check and White wins with queen against knight's pawn.

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