

The masters stumble

VERY SHORT losses by experienced tournament contenders are relatively rare, but they do happen. When they do a myriad of explanations is invariably forwarded — from bad luck to illness, crass stupidity, drugs, predestination, a broken heart or any combination of the above.

Whatever the excuse, it is sure that many ordinary players gain a modicum of comfort and hope when they see that the masters are also capable of falling on sharp pawns. With this in mind, here are three examples from recent tournaments of the sort of mini-miniature that can happen.

This first one, played in the grandmaster group at Wijk aan Zee this year, is between Robert Hubner — ranked eighth in the world — and former world champion Mikhail Tal.

RUY LOPEZ

R. HUBNER (West Germany)	M. TAL (USSR)
1. e4	e5
2. Nf3	Nc6
3. Bb5	a6
4. Bxc6	dxc6
5. 0-0	f6
6. d4	Bg4
7. dxe5	Qxd1
8. Rxd1	fxe5
9. Rd3	Bd6
10. Nbd2	Nf6
11. Nc4	0-0
12. Ncxe5	Bh5

Now Hubner continued with the gross blunder...

13. Bf4?? Bxf3

14. Resigns
White loses a piece: 14.Nxf3 Bxf4 or 14.Rxf3 (14.gxf3 Nh5) Nh5 15.Bg3 Nxf3 followed by 16...Bxe5. The fact that Tal's bishop had retreated to h5 the move before may have caused Hubner to forget the possibility of 13...Bxf3.

This entertaining next encounter looks to have come straight out of the romantic era. It actually took place at Ramsgate last year.

SCOTCH FOUR KNIGHTS

R. KENWORTHY (England)	P. VAN DER STERREN (Holland)
1. e4	e5
2. Nc3	Nf6
3. Nf3	Nc6
4. d4	exd4
5. Nd5!	

An extremely rare line nowadays, but Kenworthy seems to have a few trappy new ideas.

5. ... Nxe4
6. Bc4 Be7
7. Nxd4!

Previously only 7.0-0 0-0 8.Re1 Nf6 had been considered by theory.

7. ... 0-0
8. Nb5

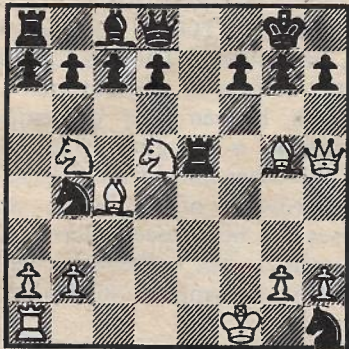
Another surprising knight move. Black could now try 8...Bd6 or perhaps 8...Bc5 with unclear complications, but van der Sterren thought he'd spotted a combination.

8. ... Bb4 ch
9. c3 Nxf2

So that if 10.Kxf2 Qh4 ch and 11...Qxc4.

10. Qh5! Nxh1
11. cxb4 Nxb4!
12. Bg5! Re8 ch

13. Kf1 Re5
van der STERREN



KENWORTHY

14. Re1! Resigns

On 14...Rxc5 15.Qxc5! White back-rank mates with 16.Re8. The only chance was 14...Rxe1 ch 15.Kxe1 Qf8 (15...Qe8 ch 16.Ne7 ch Kh8 17.Bxf7, or if 16...Kf8 17.Nxc7 Qd8 18.Ng6ch) but then comes 16.Nf6 ch! gxf6 17.Bxf6 and Black has only a few random checks to postpone mate.

This final game features a delightful smothered mate from the New Zealand Premier Reserve championships, Auckland 1981/82.

BISHOP'S OPENING

M. FREEMAN (Christchurch)	S. HART (Auckland)
1. e4	e5
2. Bc4	Bc5
3. Nf3	d6
4. c3	Nf6
5. d3	0-0
6. 0-0	Bg4?

The trouble is that Black cannot maintain this pin on the knight.

7. h3 Bh5
8. Nbd2 Nbd7
9. Re1 c6
10. Nf1 h6
11. Ng3 Bg6
12. Bb3 Re8
13. Nh4 Nxe4

After 13...Bh7 14.Nhf5 White would have a strong attack. With the text move Black attempts to exploit the loose knight on h4 (14.dxe4 Qxh4).

14. Nxc6 Nxf2

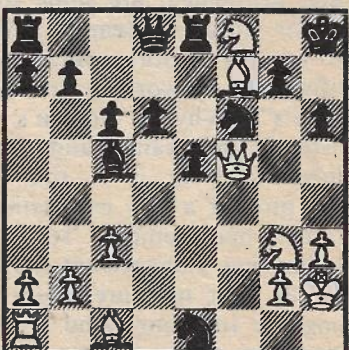
On 14...Nxc6 15.d4 or 14...Bxf2 ch 15.Kf1! White wins a piece.

15. Qf3! Nxd3 dis ch
16. Kh2 Nxe1
17. Bxf7 ch Kh7
18. Qf5 Nf6

18...Qf6 fails to 19.Nf8 double check and 20.Qh7 mate.

19. Nf8 dble ch Kh8

HART



FREEMAN

20. Qh7 chl Nxh7
21. Ng6 mate!

MURRAY CHANDLER