

Out on his own

VERNON SMALL had Hong Kong on his mind as he won the 89th New Zealand championship, organised by the North Shore club over the Christmas-New Year holiday period. It was Small's third successive title, but the first time he had come first alone.

Small, a 27-year-old Christchurch student who is putting the finishing touches to a PhD thesis in English literature, played in solid, classical style, scoring three of his four wins in well-executed endgames. He said afterwards that he had probably played altogether too solidly, as he had at first been regarding the championship as training for the Asian zonal championship in Hong Kong this month. Small and Murray Chandler are representing New Zealand in the zonal, a stage in the elimination series to choose a challenger for the world championship. "I was not playing sharply enough to get winning chances with Black," Small said.

Half a point behind Small came Aucklanders Orvin Sarapu, not quite managing his 19th championship, and Dunedin student Tony Dowden. Dowden, in his first championship, enjoyed a certain amount of good fortune during the tournament, but also displayed considerable tenacity and resourcefulness.

Wellington schoolboy Jonathon Sarfati, also in his first championship, surprised everyone including himself by playing with great solidity, losing only one game and finishing fourth equal, a further half a point back. Equal with him was Aucklanders Bruce Watson, who scored five wins, more than anyone else. Watson in round three put his queen en prise to Dowden when a pawn up in a time scramble, but suffered with remarkable equanimity and did not let the shock affect his play in the rest of the tournament.

Scores: V. Small, 7½ (out of 11), 1st; O. Sarapu, A. Dowden, 7, 2nd equal; J. Sarfati, B. Watson, 6½, 4th equal; E. Green, 6, 6th; P. Stuart, R. Smith, 5½, 7th equal; N. Metge, P. Green, 4½, 9th equal; P. Garbett, 3, 11th; P. Spiller, 2½, 12th.

Vivian Burndred won her first women's championship, a point clear of Winsome Stretch. The top-rated woman player, Fenella Foster, chose to play in the premier reserve championship in order to get more experience against strong players. She scored six points out of 11 in the reserve championship, which was won jointly by David Gollongly and myself with 8½ points.

This attacking game allowed Small to seize the lead after round three:

CARO KANN

V. SMALL	P. GARBETT
1. e4	c6
2. d4	d5
3. Nc3	dxe4
4. Nxe4	Bf5
5. Ng3	Bg6
6. h4	h6

7. Nf3	Nd7
8. h5	Bh7
9. Bd3	Bxd3
10. Qxd3	e6
11. Bd2	

More common is 11.Bf4, but Small did not want the bishop exposed to attack by a later ... Nd5.

11. ...	Ngf6
12. 0-0-0	a5
13. Ne4	Nxe4
14. Qxe4	Nf6
15. Qe2	Qd5

Attacking two pawns.

16. Kb1	Bb4
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Black says no thanks. No immediate catastrophe would have befallen him had he pinched the pawn on h5, but White would certainly have got some initiative.

On 16 ... Nxh5 Small was considering either 17.Ne5 Nf6 18.f3 followed by g4, or else 17.g4 Nf6 18.g5, although 18 ... Qe4 is a good reply in the latter line. Garbett would also have had to consider the consequences of 17.c4 Qf5 ch 18.Kb1, when his queen is awkwardly placed.

17. Ne5!	Ra6
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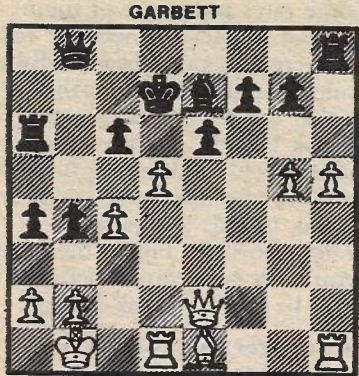
Black looks for a counterattack on the queenside. He gets an uncomfortable position after 17 ... Qxg2 18.Rhg1 Qe4 19.Qxe4 (or 19.Be3) Nxe4 20.Bxb4 axb4 21.Rxg7, but this may have been his best chance. Of course, 17 ... Qxd4 loses to 18.c3 or 18.Bxh6.

White's reply keeps the Black pieces out of e4.

18. f3	Be7
19. c4	Qd8
20. g4	a4
21. Bc3	Qb8
22. f4	b5
23. g5	b4
24. Be1	

White cannot win a piece with 24.gxf6 because 24 ... gxf6 attacks the knight on e5.

24. ...	hxc5
25. fxg5	Nd7
26. Nxd7	Kxd7
27. d5	



27. ...	e5
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27 ... cxd5 28.cxd5 leaves the rook on a6 hanging, and 28 ... Rd6 would then lose to 29.Bg3.

28. d6	Bf8
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Not 28 ... Bxd6 29.c5.

29. Qg4 ch	Kd8
30. Rf1	c5

If Black tries to defend the f7 pawn along the second rank, White simply plays 31.d7.

31. Rx17	Resigns
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Because 31 ... Rxd6 loses to 32.Rd7 ch Ke8 (32 ... Kc8 33.Rxd6 discovered ch) 33.Rxd6 Bxd6 34.Qe6 ch (winning the bishop).

BERNARD CARPINTER

Murray Chandler is on leave.