

Out for blood

THE RECENT ICL Hastings congress in England, won in dashing style by Russian Grandmaster Viktor Kupreichik, featured exciting chess throughout. This was hardly surprising, considering the presence of so many aggressive young players, especially amid the home contingent. Certainly I have rarely faced such a vicious pack of masters together in the same tournament before, and even the veteran, Laszlo Szabo of Hungary, had to be watched with care.

Hastings, for the uninitiated, is a tournament with traditions stretching back 50 annual congresses. In days gone by it was a world-class event, of the stature of the modern super-tournaments, where the home representatives could habitually be found skulking at the bottom end of the score-table. Nowadays the English players are stronger, although the tournament (despite this year's category II) is of a slightly lesser status in global terms.

But some things never change. Each year the players can listen to a pantomime, for free, every day — clearly audible through the roof of the playing hall at the White Rock Pavilion. This Christmas festivity seems, unfortunately, to be as traditional as the chess congress, and as there is no other venue in Hastings for either, they run concurrently.

This year it was *Sleeping Beauty* and my spies tell me that the chess downstairs has even been woven into the plot. At one moment in the performance the children were told they had better stamp extra loudly "to put the Russian off!"

Probably nothing short of the ceiling caving in would have stopped 31-year-old Kupreichik this time. His main rivals, two of the more positional grandmasters in the event, were his countryman, former world champion Vassily Smyslov, and Ulf Andersson from Sweden. Andersson was actually going for a fourth victory in a row at Hastings, but although he didn't lose any games he could not match Kupreichik's bloodthirsty lust for wins.

Final results were: Kupreichik (USSR) 9; Smyslov (USSR) and Speelman (England) 8; Andersson (Sweden) and Mestel (England) 7½; Lein (USA), Rivas (Spain) and Short (England) 7; Taulbut (England) 6½; P. Littlewood (England) 6; Chandler (New Zealand) 5; Christiansen (USA) 4½; Ree (Holland) and Szabo (Hungary) 4.

The moral of the following game, played in the first round at Hastings, is clear enough. Black, the highly rated American Grandmaster Larry Christiansen, obtains a promising position before a single strategic error completely turns the tables. When the safety of one's king is involved, one inaccurate move can often be an unaffordable luxury.

CARO KANN DEFENCE

V. KUPREICHIK L. CHRISTIANSEN

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| 1. e4 | c6 |
| 2. Nc3 | d5 |
| 3. Nf3 | Bg4 |
| 4. h3 | Bh5! |

A safe but passive alternative is 4... Bxj3 5.Qxj3 Nj6 — White has the slight advantage of having the pair of bishops versus bishop and knight, but Black's position is solid.

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| 5. exd5 | cxd5 |
| 6. Bb5 ch | Nc6 |
| 7. g4 | Bg6 |
| 8. Ne5 | Rc8 |
| 9. d4 | e6 |
| 10. h4 | |

The normal line is first 10.Qe2 Bb4 and then 11.h4 — the point of 10.Qe2 being to prevent the resource Christiansen now plays.

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| 10. ... | f6! |
| 11. Nxg6 | hxg6 |

At first glance the Black kingside looks a little shaky, but in fact the doubled pawns provide reasonable protection for his king. In the past White has made little progress from this position, and Kupreichik's innovation next move does little to change this assessment.

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| 12. Bd3?! | f5! |
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Suddenly Black wins a pawn — White cannot protect both d4 and h4, as 13.Bg5 is met by 13... Be7.

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| 13. Ne2 | Rxh4 |
| 14. Rg1 | Nf6 |
| 15. Bg5 | Qa5 ch |
| 16. Bd2 | Qc7 |
| 17. gxh5 | gxh5 |
| 18. c3 | Ne4 |
| 19. Bxe4 | Rxe4 |
| 20. f3 | Rh4 |
| 21. Bg5 | Rh2 |
| 22. Qd2 | Bd6 |
| 23. Qe3 | Kf7 |
| 24. 0-0-0 | Qb6 |
| 25. Rd2 | e5? |

As every Russian schoolboy would realise, this is a clear strategic error. Black's king is in the centre, and without good cause he opens lines there.

Afterwards Christiansen gave the exchange sacrifice 25... Rxe2! 26.Rxe2 Nxh4 (using the pin down the c-file) as the correct path, eg 27.Reg2 Bc5 with strong threats.

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| 26. Qd3 | e4 |
| 27. fxh4 | fxh4 |
| 28. Qe3 | Na5 |
| 29. Bf4! | Nc4 |
| 30. Qg3 | |

CHRISTIANSEN



KUPREICHIK

The threats along the g-file leave Black suddenly defenceless.

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| 30. ... | Bxf4 |
| 31. Qxg7 ch | Ke8 |
| 32. Nxf4! | |

Overhasty would be 32.Qg8 ch Kd7 33.Rg7 ch Kd6.

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| 32. ... | Rxd2 |
| 33. Qg8 ch | Kd7 |
| 34. Rg7 ch | Resigns |

Mate by 35.Qxd5 follows next move.

MURRAY CHANDLER