

# Tough near the top

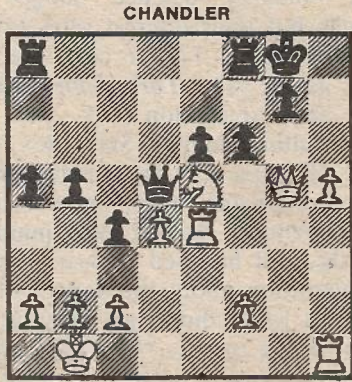
ONE OF THE hardest things to do — even for a quite successful master on the professional circuit — is to break into the super-class level. Most of the leading tournaments, such as Bugojno, Tilburg or Clarin are a virtual closed shop to anyone who is not already a leading grandmaster. Consequently it was with a feeling of surprise that I received, and slight trepidation that I accepted, my invitation to the prestigious 1982 Wijkaan Zee tournament (see last week's column for full results).

Others invited included Dutchman Jan Timman (currently ranked second in the world) and Soviet ex-world champion Mikhail Tal, as well as eventual joint winners John Nunn from England and Russian Yuri Balashov. Three other young international masters, apart from myself, also participated: John van der Wiel from Holland, Predrag Nikolic from Yugoslavia and Jamie Sunye from Brazil.

This rare clash of aspiring youth and the established mega-stars certainly livened up the games — Nikolic, Sunye and van der Wiel all crushed Timman, for example! My "Indian summer" was a first round win, with Black in a Caro Kann defence, over the legendary Tal. This unexpected windfall was even more astonishing considering that for this, and the next three games, I felt on death's door from a lingering Hastings illness. Perhaps there was something in the doctor's prescription...

During the remaining two-thirds of the tournament, however, I was able to appreciate the differences of such an event where one must face a supremely skilled opponent day after day. The problems that arose were mostly connected with the openings. Particularly disconcerting was the versatility of the grandmasters, switching variations in order to exploit any weak link in the opponent's repertoire.

Despite its initial success the Caro Kann quickly began to suffer when the American GM Larry Christiansen forced me into a passive line. I persevered until two rounds later against the Czechoslovakian GM Vlastimil Hort. Since the finish was really quite attractive, I have managed to recall it in the interests of journalistic truth.



HORT

Black is a piece down but white has

a queen, rook and knight all en prise. However Hort found...

1. h6! Resigns

\* White threatens Qxg7 mate, and 1...fxg5 fails to 2.h7 ch Kh8 3.Ng6 mate.

Following this I belatedly started to switch around and play a variety of openings — with immediately tangible rewards. Surprise value is more effective at this level than I had realised.

The most successful of the youngsters was 21-year-old John van der Wiel, whose outstanding third equal also gained him his first of the two-three grandmaster norms necessary to receive the title. The following game, however, shows again that we kiddies still have a lot to learn.

Holland 1982

## ENGLISH OPENING

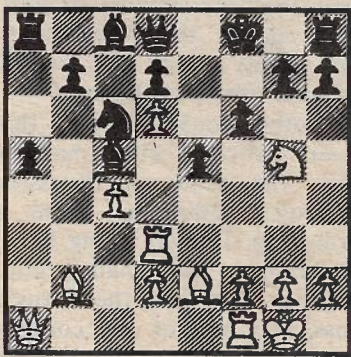
M. TAL	J. van der WIEL
1. c4	e6
2. Nc3	Bb4
3. e4	c5
4. Nb5	Nc6
5. a3	Ba5
6. b4!	

Investing a pawn for the initiative.

6. ...	cxb4
7. Bb2	Kf8
8. e5	Nge7
9. Nf3	a6
10. Nd6	Nf5
11. Be2	Nxd6
12. exd6	bxa3
13. Rxa3!	Bb4
14. Rd3	

This rock is very useful on the d3 square protecting the pawn wedge on d6 as well as being ready to swing over to the kingside.

14. ...	Bc5
15. O-O	a5
16. Qa1	f6
17. Ng5	e5



18. Kh1	Bd4
19. f4!	Qb6
20. Bc3	Bxc3
21. Qxc3	Kg8

Still the knight cannot be touched 21...fxg5 22.fxg5 ch Kg8 23.Bf3 Nb4 (to stop 24.Bd5) 24.Qxb4! axb4 25.Bd5 mate. Van der Wiel was notorious for his extreme slipperiness throughout Wijkaan Zee, but here the Dutch eel was clearly running out of water.

22. fxg5	Nxe5
23. Ne4	h5
24. Nxf6 ch!	Resigns

On 24...gxf6 Tal would surely have continued with the elegant queen sacrifice 25.Qxe5! fxg5 26.Rg3 ch Kh7 27.Bd3 ch Kh6 28.Rf6 checkmate.

A few rounds later van der Wiel threw himself in the freezing North Sea. But this was, I understand, more in response to a pre-tournament bet about grandmaster norms, than an overwhelming urge to drown his sorrow.

MURRAY CHANDLER