

# Getting to meet the champ

IN DAYS gone by, challenging for the world championship was a rather haphazard procedure. The reigning titleholder actually picked his own opponent — with only the weight of public opinion ensuring he chose the most worthy candidate. The challenger then had to raise the prize fund himself. Around 1912 Akiba Rubinstein was the leading rival of world champion Emmanuel Lasker, but never did manage to arrange a match — a fact which, some hypothesise, led to him later spending time in a sanatorium. Another example where the system lapsed is considered Alexander Alekhine's refusal to grant Jose Capablanca a rematch after defeating him against the odds in 1927.

It was after Alekhine's death in 1946 that Fide, the World Chess Federation, stepped in to create some order. Firstly, a tournament containing the leading masters of the day was held to decide who would fill the vacant throne. It was won by Russian Mikhail Botvinnik, who, under the new rules, would have to defend his title once every three years. The challenger would be the ultimate winner of a series of interzonal and candidates contests, in which all top players would be eligible to participate.

The modern qualification cycle is essentially the same, although candidates matches have replaced candidates tournaments (mainly thanks to Bobby Fischer's complaints of "commie cheating" when there were several Soviet players in one event). From a worldwide series of 12 zonal tournaments, the leading players qualify for the interzonals. There are three interzonal tournaments in this current 1981-1984 cycle, to be held in Moscow, Mexico City and Las Palmas later this year.

Next, the top two from each interzonal qualify through to the candidates, where they are joined by the two candidates finalists from the previous cycle, Viktor Korchnoi and Robert Hubner. Next year a series of knockout matches will decide which of them will fight the current world champion, Anatoly Karpov of the USSR, for his crown in 1984.

It is all touchingly democratic except for a wee anomaly in the rules. To get into the zonal tournaments, at the bottom rung, one has to be selected by one's national federation. Usually, of course, a federation will select its strongest players — but there have been occasions when this power has been abused. One such was a few years back, when the Finnish Chess Federation decided to punish their only grandmaster, Heikki Westerinen, for playing in an event in South Africa — and refused to select him.

The recent spate of zonal tournaments has certainly livened up the

national scene. Despite my own withdrawal (through illness) from the Asian Zonal in Hong Kong, New Zealand was well represented by Bruce Watson and current national champion Vernon Small. Unfortunately both Bruce and Vernon appeared badly off form, and never seriously challenged for the interzonal spots which were won by Filipinos Eugene Torre and Rueben Rodriguez.

The Western European Zonal in Marbella, Spain, was less fortunate. After 17 rounds still nobody had qualified — as Nunn, Stean, Mestel (all England) and van der Wiel (Holland) all tied for first. As there are only three places a play-off must now be arranged! This week's game comes from the thrilling last round at Marbella, and features an entertaining — but vital — win in just 15 moves by one of the tournament victors.

## KING'S GAMBIT

<b>M. HEBDEN</b>	<b>M. STEAN</b>
1. e4	e5
2. f4!	

*Young English International Master Michael Hebden frequently employs this double-edged gambit, which had its heyday in the Romantic era last century.*

2. ...	e×f4
3. Nf3	g5
4. h4	g4
5. Ne5	Nf6
6. N×g4	

*The manuscript of a forthcoming Pergamon Press book on the King's Gambit, by Estrin and Yarkov, labels this move dubious. Presumably Hebden — who devotes extensive home analysis to his pet lines — thought he had found an improvement.*

6. ...	N×e4
7. d3	Ng3
8. B×f4	N×h1
9. Bg5	

*The Pergamon book gives 9.Qe2 ch Qe7 10.Nf6 ch Kd8 11.B×e7 ch K×c7 12.Nd5 ch Kd8 13.N×e7 B×e7 when Black's three pieces are superior to the queen. Hebden's novelty looks threatening, but White's defence saves the day.*

9. ...	Be7
10. Qe2	h5!
11. Qe5	

*What is Black to do? 11...Rg8 or 11...Rh7 lose the rook to 12.Nf6 ch, and 11...Rf8?? 12.Nf6 is mate in one!*



11. ...	f6!!
12. B×f6	

*Or 12.N×f6 ch Kf7 13.Qd5 ch Kg7 and the attack peters out.*

12. ...	d6!
13. Qe4	B×g4
14. B×h8	Kd7!
15. Bd4	B×h4 ch
16. Resigns	

*Suddenly White notices he is a piece down and his king is going walkabout.*

MURRAY CHANDLER