

Playing possum

IT MAY SEEM suicidal for a possum at night to freeze when caught in a car's headlights, but many chess-players exhibit similar traits when facing a strong master. Some are reduced to quivering, nail-biting lumps even before the game begins. "How many moves will I last?" and "Will I make a fool of myself?" are common questions that race through their minds, as the master sits there as nonchalantly as a Capablanca. The answers are usually "less than 25 moves" and "yes".

Which is rather silly really; in reality the master should be worrying. When he wins, the result is passed over as "expected". But should he lose, the game is a sensation talked about everywhere. By realising this the weaker player can start off with psychological equality — perhaps the single most important step for improving one's results against stronger opposition. The next barrier to overcome is the one where one limits oneself to the optimum possibility of scraping a draw.

Let us look at the game of Scared Possum versus Master. Scared Possum eschews his normal opening for a sideline, hoping that Master will be less familiar with it. If Scared Possum doesn't get skinned alive (for Master quite possibly knows the sideline equally well) he intends to swap off as many pieces as possible to reach an endgame. The best he can look forward to is a long and difficult defence in a slightly inferior endgame, and just maybe a draw.

Smart Possum, on the other hand, plays the favourite opening he knows best from dozens of club games. Master may be familiar with its intricacies, but at least Smart Possum has his own experience to draw from. Then Smart Possum plays the position, but keeps an alert eye open for possibilities of attack — particularly aimed at the opposition King. The master will also realise he must exhibit caution here, and not overpress in search of the win. Unlike Scared Possum, Smart Possum will refuse draws if he gains a sizeable advantage.

Of course it is probable that, in either case, the best player will triumph. But the unexpected does occur, and it is then that fortune favours the boldest possum. This week's game confirms that the underdog should not sit there waiting for that rare grandmasterly miscalculation.

The unranked Swiss player Fernand Gobet plays an outstanding game to defeat the world-class Czech grandmaster Vlastimil Hort.

Biel 1982

SICILIAN DEFENCE

F. GOBET	V. HORT?
1. e4	c5
2. Nf3	Nc6
3. Nc3	d6
4. d4	cxd4
5. Nx d4	Nf6
6. Bc4	Qb6

This disrupts White's plan to build up a dangerous attack with Be3, Qe2 and 0-0-0.

7. Ndb5	a6
8. Be3	Qa5
9. Nd4	e6

Black has won a tempo but he must not be too greedy — 9...Nx e4? 10.Qf3 gives White powerful pressure.

10. 0-0	Be7
11. Bb3	0-0
12. f4	Nxd4
13. Bxd4	e5
14. fx e5	dxe5
15. Be3	Ng4?

Correct was 15...Be6.

HORT



GOBET

16. Qd5!

A fine move which gives White an endgame advantage. Hort had only considered the sacrifice 16.Rxf7 Rxf7 17.Qf1 when Black defends with 17...Nh6! 18.Bxh6 Be6 19.Bxe6 Qb6 ch.

16. ...	Qxd5
17. Nx d5	Bd6
18. Bb6	Be6
19. Rfd1	Rac8
20. h3	Rc6!

A clever resource to avoid the passive retreat 20...Nh6, when 21.Be3 Rfd8 22.Bg5 sets Black real problems. However, Gobet finds a way to keep the initiative.

21. hxg4!	Bxd5
22. Rxd5	Rxb6
23. Rfd1	Bb8
24. Rd7	

White's attacking pressure on f7 is enhanced by the presence of opposite coloured bishops:

24. ...	Ba7
25. Kh2	Rh6 ch
26. Kg3	Rf6

Black threatens mate by 27...Bf2 ch 28.Kh2 (or Kh3) Rh6, but this is easily dealt with.

27. g5	Rf4
28. Kh3	g6

If 28...Rxe4, 29.Rxf7 Rxf7 30.Rd8 mate.

29. g3	Rf2
30. Rxb7	Bd4
31. c3	Be3
32. Kg4	Kg7

32...h5 ch immediately was better, but, as in the game, the advance of White's passed c-pawn should ultimately prove decisive.

33. Rdd7	h5 ch
34. gxh6 ch	Bxh6
35. Bd5	Bd2
36. c4	Be1
37. c5	Rg2
38. Rb3	Kh6
39. Bxf7	Resigns

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