

Boris's best of both worlds



Boris Spassky: time for tennis.

BORIS SPASSKY'S victory in the Linares super-tournament hardly heralds a comeback, but it does confirm that life is better for him now than it was a few years back. Then he was still in disgrace in the USSR for losing his world championship title to American Bobby Fischer in 1972. His tournament results were erratic — a poor showing in the 1976 Manila Interzonal meant that, unless Fischer withdrew, he might be out of the Candidates matches for good. One bright spot that year came when the Soviet authorities surprisingly granted him a visa to live in France — but a condition attached banned him playing chess for a year.

Now, 11 years after the Fischer fiasco, Spassky can sit back contented at having gained the best of both worlds. At 46 he has the unique position whereby he still represents the USSR, but resides permanently in France with his French wife. Life for a great chess master in the West means a succession of luxurious tournament invitations, well-paid occasional exhibitions — and plenty of time off for tennis. To avoid too much work having to study modern openings, Boris nowadays tends to rely either on trusted old favourites (like the Queen's Gambit Declined) or offbeat fianchetto defences.

Spassky's Linares win was his finest international success since the 1972 match, and he even finished ahead of world champion Anatoly Karpov. This will have given Boris added satisfaction. It was Karpov who knocked him out of the Candidates matches in 1974 and, more recently, Karpov who beat him in the BBC Mastergame final in late 1982.

Spassky's expression after the last BBC game was one of visible disgust. His only consolation from the event was being voted "sexiest player" in a strictly unofficial poll organised by the BBC female assistants.

Spassky certainly has charisma, and at the board has the composure of an aristocrat. During a game, winning or losing, he is normally totally inscrutable. Possibly he permitted himself a smile, though, after the following game from Linares, where he trounced Jan Timman in just 29 moves with Black.

RUY LOPEZ

J. TIMMAN	B. SPASSKY
1. e5	e5
2. Nf3	Nc6
3. Bb5	a6
4. Ba4	d6
5. Bxc6 ch	bxc6
6. d4	exd4
7. Qxd4	c5
8. Qd3	g6!
9. Nc3	Bg7
10. Bf4	Ne7
11. 0-0-0?	

Spassky's fourth and sixth moves were slightly unusual, but the 2000-page Encyclopaedia of Chess Openings does not mention 8...g6! at all.

By castling queenside Timman announces his intention to attack the Black king. But his assessment of the position proves hopelessly optimistic. The already-opened b-file is like an expressway to the White king, and it is Spassky who breaks through first. Correct was the prosaic 11.0-0.

11. ...	0-0
12. Qd2	Re8
13. Bh6	Bh8
14. h4	Rb8
15. a3	

When defensive moves like this are necessary it is usually clear something has gone wrong. Here the natural 15.h5 Be6 threatens 16...Bxa2, so White will have to move his a-pawn anyway.

15. ...	Be6
16. Ng5	Qc8!
17. Nxe6	

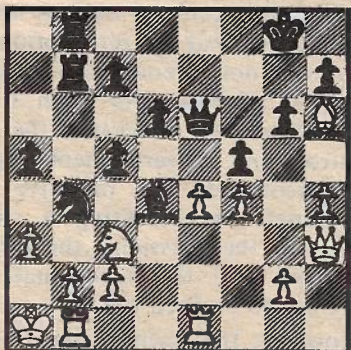
Black threatened a powerful piece sacrifice with 17...Qb7 18.b3 Bxb3 19.cxb3 Qxb3.

17. ...	Qxe6
18. Kb1	Rb7

Doubled rooks on the b-file will act as a battering ram against the White king's pawn shelter. Instead 18...Qc4 19.Kal Rxb2 20.Kxb2 Rb8 ch (20...Bxc3 ch 21.Qxc3 Rb8 ch 22.Qb3 is also not clear) 21.Kcl Bxc3 22.Qd3! allows White to defend.

19. Ka1	Reb8
20. Rb1	Nc6
21. f4	Bd4
22. Qd3	a5
23. Qh3	f5!
24. Rhe1	Nb4!

No wonder Timman was so anxious to swap queens. The immediate threats are 25...Nxc2 mate and 25...Bxc3 followed by ...Qa2 mate. White must take the knight.



25. axb4	axb4
26. Na4	Ra7
27. Qb3	c4
28. Qa2	Rba8
29. exf5	Rxa4!
30. Resigns	

30.Rxe6 or 30.fxe6 both allow 30...Rxa2 mate.

MURRAY CHANDLER