

The honours list

ONE OF the most important functions of Fide, the World Chess Federation, is the bestowing of titles upon the most successful international players. These titles, such as International Master (IM) or Grandmaster (GM), are major criteria for deciding who receives invitations to the more prestigious tournaments. As such a title can be of considerable benefit to a player's career, and to assist Fide in awarding them fairly, a complicated statistical formula has been evolved.

Basically the system involves the acquisition of two or three "norms" covering at least 24 games in order to qualify for a title. A "norm" is won by an appropriate good performance in an international event, taking into account the strength of opposition as calculated on the official rating list. The tournament itself must also conform to certain Fide requirements regarding such matters as the speed of play and the number of foreign participants.

It is a fundamentally democratic process which in principle has worked fairly well. Perhaps too well — at the 1982 Lucerne Olympiad the Fide qualifications committee confirmed around 80 new IM titles! This massive increase on previous years is due to the wave of Fide-rated "Swiss-system" tournaments currently sweeping Europe. The original title formula was based on all-play-all contests, and clearly Fide must continue to review its title regulations regarding events which cater for much larger numbers of participants.

Due to the stringent requirements introduced at the beginning of 1979, the GM title has not suffered a similar devaluation. Only 12 new Grandmasters were confirmed in Lucerne. The most notable of these were A. J. Mestel (England), E. Lobron (West Germany), J. Pinter (Hungary), J. Van der Wiel (Holland), L. Karlsson (Sweden), S. Dolmatov and L. Psakhis (both USSR), and R. Henley (US). Other awards of interest include women's GM titles to Jana Miles (England), Pia Cramling (Sweden) and Liu She Lan (China). New Zealand's first recipient of the recently created Fide Master title was Craig Laird, national champion in 1977/78.

This week's game, when it was played in October last year, was a clash between two 22-year-old Grandmaster candidates. Subsequently the victor, John Van der Wiel, went on to win the tournament — thus gaining his final title norm. But things have not worked out too badly for the loser, Predrag Nolic. At Sochi recently he finished a superb second to Soviet ex-world champion Mikhail Tal, and apparently collected his final GM norm at the same time.

RUY LOPEZ

J. VAN DER WIEL	P. NICOLIC
1. e4	e5
2. Nf3	Nc6
3. Bb5	a6

4. Ba4	Nf6
5. 0-0	Be7
6. Re1	b5
7. Bb3	d6
8. c3	0-0
9. d4!	

Van der Wiel has a partiality for aggressive off-shoots from the usual opening lines. Usual is 9.h3.

9. ...	Bg4
10. Be3	d5

Not 10...Nxe4? 11.Bd5.

11. exd5	exd4
12. Bxd4	Nxd4
13. cxd4	Bb4
14. Nc3	Bxc3?

A natural response, but inferior. Better is 14...a5 15.a3 Bxc3 16.bxc3 a4 17.Ba2 Qd6! as in a game Gulko-Geller played in Lvov 1978.

15. bxc3	Nxd5
16. Qd3	g6
17. Re5	c6
18. Rae1	Ra7
19. Ng5	

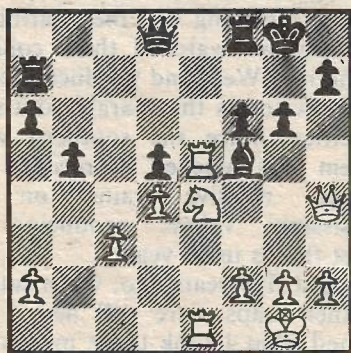
With the White forces all well-developed, Van der Wiel begins to apply kingside pressure.

19. ...	Bf5
20. Qg3	Qd6
21. Qh4	f6

This prevents 22.Qxh7 mate (Black's a7 rook now defends this square) and appears to leave the White rook on e5 embarrassed. But John has a trick up his sleeve.

22. Ne4	Qd8
23. Bxd5 ch	cxd5

NICOLIC



VAN DER WIEL

24. Re8!
Nicolic may well have foreseen this shot, for he counters it with a cunning riposte. But who has seen further?

24. ...	Rxe8
<i>On 24...Qxe8 25.Nxf6 ch wins.</i>	

25. Nxf6 ch Kf7
26. Rxe8 Re7!
A nice try which deserves a better fate. Now 27.Rxd8? allows 27...Rel mate, and 27.Rxe7 Qxe7 28.g4 Bd3! 29.g5 Qe1 ch 30.Kg2 Bf1 ch 31.Kg3 Qxc3 ch wins for Black.

Of course 26...Qxf6 loses to 27.Rf8 ch.

27. Qxh7 chl
The only move, but good enough.

27. ...	Kxh6
28. Qh8 ch	Kg5
<i>Or 28...Kf7 29.Qf8 ch Ke6 30.Rxd8.</i>	

29. h4 ch Resigns
After 29...Kg4 30.Rxd8 Rel ch the White king can now escape to h2.

MURRAY CHANDLER