

The champion's championship

WORLD TITLEHOLDER Anatoly Karpov narrowly won this year's 50th anniversary USSR Championship in Moscow from a star-studded field. The annual 17-player, 25-day battle of the Soviet giants was especially grueling this time as, for the jubilee, there was considerable pressure on all of the best Soviet grandmasters to participate. Vassily Smyslov was still locked in battle with Hubner, but even Alexander Belyavsky, straight from his Candidates quarter-final drubbing by Garri Kasparov, took part. Kasparov, however, chose to risk Moscow officialdom's disapproval and said he was off to the sun of Azerbaijan to prepare for his forthcoming match with Korchnoi.

The final winning score was low, even allowing for the withdrawal of Mikhail Tal with "high blood pressure" after five rounds. Going into the last round Karpov, on nine points, was a slender half-point in front of his major rival, Lev Polugayevsky. Karpov, who had the black pieces against Razuvaev, took a quick "grandmaster draw" — even though Polugayevsky was white against the lesser-known Malaniuk. But time and time again, in Interzonals and tournaments, I have seen this short-draw policy work. While Karpov could sit back and watch the rest of the games on the huge demonstration boards, his chief competitor had to sweat it out on the stage, knowing he had to win. Result: Polugayevsky suffered an upset defeat and was even relegated to third equal.

Final leading scores were: 1, Karpov 9½/15; 2, Tukmakov 9; 3-4 Polugayevsky and Vaganian 8½; 5, Balashov 8; 6-9, Romanishin, Petrosian, Psakhis and Malaniuk 7½. Karpov was the only player to lose just one game — a shock defeat by outsider Azmaiparashvili as white in a Pirc Defence (1. e4 d6 2.d4 g6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Nc3 Bg7 5.Be2 0-0 6.0-0 Bg4 7.Be3 Nc6 8.Qd2 e5 9.d5 Ne7 10.Rad1 and in this well-known position Black produced the novelty 10...b5!?). But the world number one's recovery included the following game against Efim Geller, a superb victory positionally encompassing the whole board.

RUY LOPEZ

A. KARPOV		E. GELLER
1. e4		e5
2. Nf3		Nc6
3. Bb5		a6
4. Ba4		Nf6

5. 0-0		Be7
6. Re1		b5
7. Bb3		0-0
8. d3		

A typically circumspect Karpov decision, avoiding the murky Marshall Gambit (8.c3 d5). Psakhis, playing against Geller in Sochi 1982, was less cautious, and after 8.c3 d5 9.e×d5 N×d5 10.N×e5 N×e5 11.R×e5 c6 12.d4 Bd6 13.Re2!? Qh4 14.g3 Qh5 15.Nd2 Bh3 16.Re1 Rae8! White was already struggling.

8. ...		Bb7
9. Nbd2		h6
10. Nf1		Re8
11. Ne3		Bf8
12. Bd2		d6

Geller's piece formation with his rook on e8 and his bishop on f8 is uncommon, but it is not immediately apparent how White can exploit it. Karpov finds a deep plan to pressure Black's weakened f7 point.

13. a4		Nd7
14. c3		Ne7
15. Qb1		

A striking move. From the remarkable b1 square the queen exerts potential attacking pressure along the b1-h7 diagonal, and meanwhile Black must deal with the threatened 16.Qa2.

15. ...		Nc5
16. Bc2		d5
17. e×d5		N×d5
18. Ng4!		Nf4

Counter-attacking g2; protecting the e-pawn with 18...f6 would leave Black's king draughty on the light squares.

19. B×f4		e×f4
20. Nge5		Bd6
21. d4		B×e5
22. N×e5		

Here 22...N×a4 loses to 23.Bh7 ch Kf8 (23...Kh8 24.N×f7 mate) 24.Qf5, so Geller tries to hold his game together by tactical means.

22. ...		Qg5
23. f3		Rad8

Again if 23...N×a4 24.Bh7 ch and now 24...Kf8 25.Nd7 is mate. The White knight on e5 is proving a beautifully stationed attacker, and naturally Karpov now rejects exchanging it by 24.d×c5 R×e5.

24. a×b5		a×b5
25. Ra7		Bd5
26. R×c7		Na6
27. Ra7		Nc5
28. Bh7 ch		Kf8
29. b4		Na4
30. Qd3		Bc4
31. Q×c4!		Resigns

31...b×c4 32.R×f7 is checkmate.

MURRAY CHANDLER

ALGEBRAIC NOTATION

The algebraic notation in this chess column is that used almost exclusively in Europe and in many countries elsewhere. Each square has one designation only. The vertical files are labelled a to h from White's left. In horizontal rank the squares are labelled 1 to 8 from White's end. Normal symbols are used, except that pawns as such are not mentioned; just the arrival square is given for a non-capturing pawn move.

a8	b8	c8	d8	e8	f8	g8	h8
a7	b7	c7	d7	e7	f7	g7	h7
a6	b6	c6	d6	e6	f6	g6	h6
a5	b5	c5	d5	e5	f5	g5	h5
a4	b4	c4	d4	e4	f4	g4	h4
a3	b3	c3	d3	e3	f3	g3	h3
a2	b2	c2	d2	e2	f2	g2	h2
a1	b1	c1	d1	e1	f1	g1	h1