

Back in the USSR

IT HAS ALWAYS been one of the hazards of New Zealand chess that, because there are so few major tournaments, a single abnormal result can unduly affect a player's status. The considerable role that being in good or bad form can play has been dramatically illustrated in all three of the Soviet tournaments I have recently participated in. In Minsk Vitaly Tseshkovsky swept all before him; in Sochi ex-world-champion Mikhail Tal devastated the field. But in the event just ended in Jurmala, even these feats were surpassed by Oleg Romanishin.

The 31-year-old Grandmaster from Lvov amassed 11 points from a maximum 13 — three points clear of those of us struggling for second place. It was an astonishing feat in an international field that included Tal, in his home republic Latvia, Guillermo Garcia from Cuba, Aivars Gipslis and USSR championship contender Konstantins Lerner. It was accomplished by dint of energetic, sound but fighting play. Like most top Soviet players, Romanishin is at home in such strategically complex variations as the main-line Ruy Lopez. Two days from the finish he ground down the off-form Tal as Black in the opening, professionally neutralising every vestige of kingside counterplay before breaking through in the centre.

Final scores from Jurmala were: 1, Romanishin 11 points; 2, Chandler (New Zealand/England) 8; 3, Gipslis (USSR) 7½; 4, J. Fernandez (Spain) 7; 5-8, Klovan, Lerner, A. Petrosian, Tal (all USSR) 6½; 9, G. Garcia 6; 10-12, Disdar (Yugoslavia), Kengis and Vitolins (USSR) 5½; 13-14, Lanka (USSR) and Pytel (Poland) 4½. Jurmala, a resort town near Riga, is a favourite haunt of poets in the winter when the Baltic Sea freezes to ice. Fortunately we were there in summer, and as well as sunshine, food and living conditions were exceptionally good. As usual with Soviet tournaments we foreigners were allocated sports committee interpreters to look after us for the duration. Another indication of the esteem chess commands in this country was the busy press room, and the post office representative there each day to cancel chess envelopes and cards with the special tournament post mark.

A Romanishin game next week; meanwhile, here is one of the rare glimpses of the "old Tal" the spectators had during this tournament.

ENGLISH OPENING

K. PYTEL	M. TAL
1. Nf3	c5
2. c4	Nc6
3. Nc3	g6
4. e3	d6
5. d4	Bg7
6. d5	Ne5
7. Nd2	f5
8. Be2	Nf6
9. h3	e6
10. f4	N7
11. dxe6	Bxe6

Although the opening play seems original, up to here it has all been seen before, in the game Korchnoi-Fischer, Sousse Interzonal, 1967.

12. Bf3 ?!

Better is the move Korchnoi chose, 12. g4.

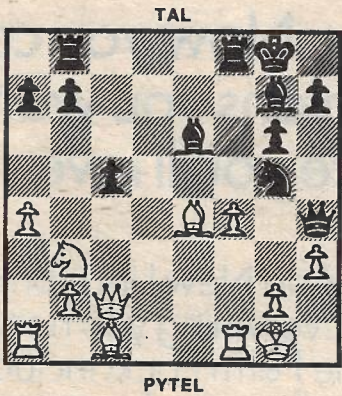
12. . . .	0-0
13. 0-0	Rb8
14. a4	d5!
15. cxd5	Nxd5
16. Nxd5	Bxd5
17. e4 ?!	

Underestimating Tal's fine response, 17. Qc2 was still reasonable.

17. . . . Be6!
18. Qc2

If 18.e5 g5! is strong.

18. . . .	Qh4
19. Nb3	fxe4
20. Bxe4	Ng5!



This is the Tal we know! Declining the sacrifice with 21. Bf3 doesn't help; 21. . . . Nxf3 ch 22. gxf3 Qg3 ch 23. Kh1 (23. Bg2 Bxb3 or 23. Qg2 Qxg2 ch 24. Bxg2 Bxb3 both leave Black a pawn ahead) 23. . . . Qxf3 ch 24. Kgl c4! 25. Na5 Bd4 ch 26. Rf2 Qxf3 and wins.

21. fxg5	Rxf1 ch
22. Kxf1	Rf8 ch!
23. Bf3	

23. Kgl Qel ch 24. Kh2 Rf1 (threatening Rh1 mate) is simplest.

23. . . .	Bc4 chl
24. Resigns.	

The king is caught in the criss-cross of diagonals. 24. Kgl Qel ch 25. Kh2 Be5 ch and it's all-over.

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