

Commonwealth closeness

THE INAUGURAL 1983 Novag Commonwealth Championship staged in Melbourne, Australia, saw a highly successful home result when Victorians Ian Rogers and Greg Hjorth tied for first prize. They finished ahead of an international field of 20 competitors drawn from nine countries in the Commonwealth, including Fiji, Hong Kong, Jamaica and Guyana. It was a closely fought competition which nobody (especially the English contingent of Grandmaster Ray Keene and myself) seemed to want to win! Indeed, everybody suffered at least two defeats.

New Zealand was well represented by Vernon Small (thrice in a row national champion), Paul Garbett (current joint champion) and Ortvin Sarapu (who has been champion so many times I've lost count). All three of our entries stayed in the upper half of the tournament, as could be expected, and Vernon might have done better but for a jet-lagged first-round defeat. But the highest Kiwi place went, in the end, to the wily Sarapu — 59 years old and still going strong.

Perhaps it was unfortunate for me that my old rival Ortvin was playing — he delights in pointing out that, in tournaments we have played together, I have never finished above him! Of course, on Elo ratings, Keene and I were expected to take the tournament fairly comfortably. Obviously we were off form, but the final outcome is nevertheless a major tribute to Australia's young talents, who have received great boosts from recent forays overseas. Rogers played constantly in the US during 1982, and Hjorth spent time in Europe. At the Lucerne Olympiad Robert Jamieson (who did not play in Melbourne) made a grandmaster norm. Darryl Johansen is currently the highest rated Aussie ever, on Elo 2490 after successes abroad.

The final leading placings in Melbourne were: Rogers and Hjorth 7½; Keene and Johansen 7; Chandler, Sarapu and Solomon (Australia) 6½; Small, Garbett, Teo (Singapore), Shaw and West (both Australia) 6 points. It is to be hoped this event — it was the first Commonwealth Championship staged under the auspices of the Commonwealth Chess Association — will become at least a bi-annual event. Ray Keene is president of this organisation, but as can be seen his rivals did not go easy on him for this reason!

SICILIAN DEFENCE

P. GARBETT	R. KEENE
1. e4	c5
2. Nf3	d6
3. d4	cxd4
4. Nxd4	Nf6
5. Nc3	g6
6. Be3	Bg7
7. f3	Nc6
8. Qd2	Bd7

A slightly unusual interpretation of the Dragon variation. Black's idea is to

develop his queenside before castling, thus discouraging White putting his bishop on c4.

9. 0-0-0	Rc8
10. Kb1	Ne5
11. g4	0-0
12. h4	h5
13. g×h5	N×h5
14. Rg1	Kh7?!

Worried by Garbett's subtle rook move, Keene moves his king off the g-file. But it was probably more important to keep up Black's own initiative with the immediate 14... Nc4.

15. Nd5	Nc4
16. B×c4	R×c4
17. Nf5!	

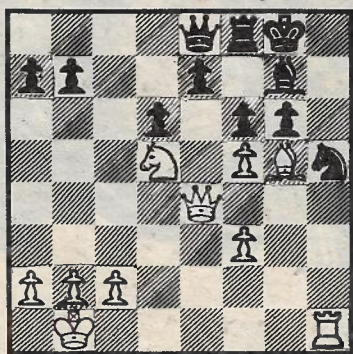
Garbett is not afraid of his opponent's GM title. White's knight cannot be tolerated on f5, but 17... g×f5 18.Rg5 wins.

17. ...	B×f5
18. e×f5	Qe8
19. Qd3	R×h4

Desperate defence which opens further lines to the Black king, but 19...Rc8 20.Rg5! is almost hopeless.

20. Rh1!	R×h1
21. R×h1	Kg8
22. Bg5	f6
23. Qe4?	

23.f×g6! e6 (23... f×g5 fails to 24.N×e7 ch Q×e7 25.Qd5 ch) 24.Bcl! was the best way to pursue the attack, when White must be winning.



23. ...	e6!
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The tricky defence Garbett had underestimated. Not of course 23... f×g5 24.N×e7 ch Kh7 25.f×g6 ch.

24. f×g6	f×g5
25. R×h5	Rf5

Now Black picks up the g-pawn and extricates himself.

26. Nc7	Q×g6
27. Rh1	Qf6
28. Q×b7	R×f3
29. Qc8 ch	Bf8
30. Q×e6 ch	Q×e6
31. N×e6	Be7

Material equality is restored but now Black has bishop against knight and an already passed g-pawn.

32. c3	Bf6
33. Rg1	Rf5
34. a4	Kf7
35. Nc7	Be5
36. Nb5	a6
37. Nc7	a5
38. Rg2	Rf4

A curious decision which indicates some of the pressure Keene must have been under during this game. In the race of pawns Black stands well after 38... Kg6 39.Nd5 Rf3!, delaying 40.h4 by White. The plan of ... Kh5 and ... g4 followed by ... g3 would then be very strong. Not realising this, Keene instead elects to force the drawn game which would follow from 39.R×g5 R×a4.

Draw Agreed

MURRAY CHANDLER