

Value judgments

ONE OF THE first things a beginner learns is the values of the pieces. On most scales a queen is worth nine pawns, a rook five pawns, and a minor piece (bishop or knight) three pawns. These are, of course, still only approximations (though fairly accurate ones) and even in the late 19th century masters were still arguing the relative strengths of bishops and knights. Modern consensus concedes the long-range bishop a slight superiority, depending on circumstances. However the bishop pair (two bishops opposed by two knights or bishop and knight) is a tangible advantage.

It is somewhat curious that, apart from this, other rules of thumb are not more widely known. Queen and knight, for example, are said to cooperate better than Queen and bishop in an open position. It is also recognised that, in an endgame, three pawns often hold the edge over a minor piece due to promotion possibilities. Conversely, in the middlegame a bishop or knight is more valuable. The attacking potential of the extra piece usually leads to further material gain before the endgame is reached.

As always there are the inevitable exceptions, as in this week's interesting game won by postal World Champion Tonu Yim. Contrary to expectation, though an opponent in correspondence chess has several days to calculate his reply this does not result in many risk-free, boring games. Conservative positional play will not create the imbalance needed to gain winning chances. Here Yim gives up a piece for an eventual three pawns as early as move 14, but is able to maintain an attacking initiative because of his lead in development. Black exchanges queens and a pair of rooks to blunt the onslaught, but then white's three rapidly advancing passed pawns decide.

RUY LOPEZ

T. YIM	F. POPP
1. e4	e5
2. Nf3	Nc6
3. Bb5	a6
4. Ba4	d6
5. c3	f5

Openings in correspondence play are subtle, psychological tussles. If an opponent deviates from a main line, as Black has done here, the idea is to guess his intended improvement over established theory — and either refute or circumvent it.

6. e×f5	B×f5
7. d4	e4

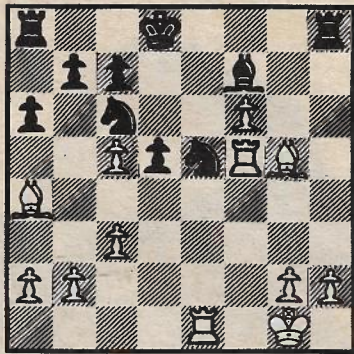
8. Ng5	Nf6?
<i>The books prefer 8...d5 9.f3 h6.</i>	
9. Qb3	Qc8!
10. Qf7 ch	Kd8
11. f3!	h6
12. f×e4	h×g5
13. B×g5	Be7
14. Nd2!	

Recapturing with 14.e×f5 Q×f5 would give Black dynamic counterplay. Instead Yim hopes that, even with a piece less, his co-ordinated forces will not prove easy to repel.

14. ...	Be6
15. Qg6	Bg4
16. Q×g7	Rh7
17. Qg6	Bh5
18. Qf5	Q×f5
19. e×f5	Ng4

19...Nd5 looks better.

20. Ne4	d5
21. f6!	Bf8
<i>Not 21...d×e4 22.f×e7 ch N×e7 23.0-0 with powerful threats down the f-file.</i>	
22. Nc5	B×c5
23. d×c5	Nge5
24. 0-0	Bf7
25. Rae1	Rh8
26. Rf5!	



Here 26...Nd3 is destroyed by 27.R×d5 ch B×d5 28.f7 dis. ch Kd7 29.Re7 ch.

26. ...	Re8
27. Re3	Nd7
28. Bd1!	R×e3

Or 28...N×c5 29.Bh5! with the idea of 29...B×h5 30.f7 ch wins. As the game goes Black deals with the direct tactical threats, only to face a tidal wave of kingside passed pawns.

29. B×e3	Ke8
30. h4!	Bg6
31. Rg5	Bf7
32. Rf5	Bg6
33. Rf4	Kf7
34. h5	Be4
35. g4	Rg8

Now matters end with a small combination.

36. R×e4	d×e4
37. Bb3 ch	Kf8
38. Bh6 ch	Resigns

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