

Reserves of talent

WHILE the New Zealand Championship remains the centrepiece of our annual Congress (see March 31 column), the Premier Reserve tournament is just as determinedly fought. 98 players from all over the country participated in this latest Honeywell Computers-sponsored event, first prize in which includes automatic elevation to next year's championship. The larger than normal field led many to feel that a high score was going to be needed this time to claim top honours, and so it happened. Dropping just three draws from his 11 games, talented Christchurch student Michael Freeman scored a decisive first place with 9½ points, ahead of G. Aldridge (Tawa) and G. Spain (Hamilton) 8½, and P. van Dijk (Nelson) and L. McLaren (Wellington) 8. For Freeman it was reward for his sufferings in New Delhi prior to Congress, when he brought home a gold medal from the Asian Teams Championship despite dubious playing conditions.

There were few complaints about conditions at Congress, however, thanks to good organisation by the Auckland Chess Centre in its centennial year. It is appropriate to mention hard-working organisers Jon Stephenson, Alan Hignett and Nigel Metge in this respect. Nigel in particular (husband of Katrine Metge, who won the women's championship) was not deterred by narrowly missing out on championship selection; yet many other established names did not appear in Auckland after missing the top group.

Among the established names who did participate in the Premier Reserve were Paul Spiller, Michael Steadman, Peter Hensman and Leonard McLaren. Playing this quality of contender is valuable training for our up-and-coming juniors, several of whom scored creditable plus scores. Winner Michael Freeman (himself no senior citizen) singled out Martin Dreyer (7 points), Mark Wilson and Tony Boswell (6 points) and Charles Ker (5½ points) for special mention. Considering also 19-year-old Jonathan Salfati's promising fourth equal in the championship class, New Zealand's future prospects seem on the rise. Already we can lay claim to one of the best produced national magazines in the world. *New Zealand Chess*, under the editorship of Chess Association president Peter Stuart, goes from strength to strength with glossy paper, photographs, up-to-date international results and a club directory. Subscriptions are still marvellous value at \$6.50 per annum (six issues) from NZCA, PO Box 8802, Symonds St, Auckland. Start from February's issue and you'll get a full Congress report.

Seeing as how all *Listener* readers will now subscribe to *New Zealand Chess*, this week's game comes from somewhere a little colder than Auckland at Christmas. It was played in the first round of this year's Reykjavik Open tournament, and White was the strong and respected Russian Grand-

master Yuri Balashov. Nobody gave Black, an eccentric old Icelander named Benony Benediktsson, much of a chance — especially after the opening! Here is what happened.

RUY LOPEZ

Y. BALASHOV	B. BENEDIKTSSON
1. e4	e5
2. Nf3	Nc6
3. Bb5	Qf6

Although this strange queen move breaks several opening principles, it has been sighted before.

4. c3	g5
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More opening principles out the window, along, I suspect, with Balashov's equanimity. In fact this outlandish pawn thrust has some point if followed up with 5... g4, but old Benony has his own interpretation.

5. d4	h6
6. Bxc6	Qxc6
7. Nbd2	exd4
8. Nxd4	Qg6
9. 0-0	Be7
10. Re1	Nf6
11. N(2)f3	0-0
12. Nf5	Bd8

Perplexing — 12 whole moves and Black is still in the game. Not to panic — let's prise open the kingside.

13. h4	d6
14. hxg5	hxg5
15. Bxg5	Bxf5
16. exf5	Qxf5
17. Qd4	Kg7
18. Re3	c5
19. Qxd6	Ng4
20. Bxd8	

Winning a pawn; 20... Raxd8 is met by 21. Qg3.

20. ...	Nxe3
21. Be7	Ng4
22. Bxf8 ch	Rxf8
23. Re1?	

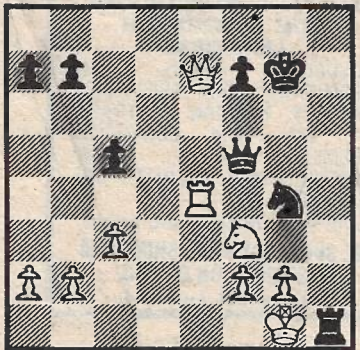
Safest and best was 23. Qe7, to swap queens with Qg5 ch.

23. ...	Rh8!
24. Qe7	Rh5!

Suddenly the situation changes, and White's worst fears — of not winning against this absurd opening — become reality! The unpleasant threat of ... Qh7 is not easy to meet.

25. Re4	Rh1 ch!
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In fact 25... Qxe4! 26. Qxe4 Rh1 ch 27. Kxh1 Nxf2 ch and 28... Nxe4 draws as well.



26. Kxh1	Nxf2 ch
27. Kg1	Nxe4
28. Qxb7	Qf4
29. Qd5	Qe3 ch

Draw agreed

It is perpetual check after 30. Kh2 Qf4 ch 31. Kgl.

MURRAY CHANDLER