

Colonial cheek

MURRAY CHANDLER

ENGLAND decided to take no chances at this year's Novag Commonwealth Championship in Hong Kong. Although Commonwealth Chess Association president Ray Keene keeps pointing out that they are the richest and most powerful chess nation in the former empire, the other countries have not always shown sufficient respect over the board. In Melbourne last year, for example, Australians Ian Rogers and Greg Hjorth tied for first in the inaugural championship. So this time three grandmasters, Jon Speelman, Ray Keene and myself, were despatched from London, with arbiter Bob Wade aboard to keep an eye on the five Aussies just in case.

As it turned out, however, the real threat was to come from two Canadians, Igor Ivanov and Kevin Spraggett, who had not been in Melbourne. Ivanov began confidently against New Zealand champion Paul Garbett after giving a local dignitary *carte blanche* to make his first move in round one. The dignitary played 1.d3, and, embarrassed, Garbett sportingly offered to let Ivanov retract this rather "unusual" opening move. The Russian emigre declined — and won brilliantly! But then Igor conceded several draws, and it became apparent that Spraggett was the man disappearing into the sunset with three points from three games.

By round nine Speelman had caught Spraggett, with myself half a point behind. Then Speelman was impressively ground down by Niaz Murshed, a talented 17-year-old from Bangladesh who went on to make a grandmaster norm. After that Spraggett was content to draw his last-round game, knowing he would win the title on tie-break even if I won my final game. Final leading scores were: 1-2, Spraggett and Chandler 8½; 3-4, Speelman and Murshed 8; 5, Ivanov 7½; 6-7, Aaron and Thipsay (both India) 7. Unfortunately for Kevin Spraggett, his result did not technically qualify as one of the two or three grandmaster norms needed to gain this title. The reason: most of the event he had too many points to play GM Ray Keene (who lost three games and finished on 6½ points) and thus did not meet enough grandmasters to fulfil the requirements for a norm.

There was one other competitor, rather metallic but well behaved, who did play Grandmaster Keene in round six. That was the prototype Novag "Super-Constellation" computer that had been entered in the tournament by the sponsors. The Super-C scored a commendable four points, and this particular model (available commercially later this year) struck me as the finest chess computer I have seen to date. Novag were so pleased they are repeating their funding for the next championship, scheduled for London in March next year.

My own last-round effort:

CENTRE COUNTER

M. CHANDLER I. ROGERS
1. e4 d5

While the Centre Counter is perhaps less dubious than its reputation, it is hard to believe Black will not suffer at all for the

premature excursion of his queen.

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| 2. e×d5 | Q×d5 |
| 3. Nc3 | Qa5 |
| 4. d4 | Nf6 |
| 5. Nf3 | c6 |
| 6. Bc4 | Bg4 |
| 7. h3 | Bh5 |
| 8. Bd2 | e6 |
| 9. Nd5! | Qd8 |
| 10. N×f6 ch | Q×f6?! |

Consistent, though objectively 10...g×f6 is better. Rogers had assumed I did not know some recent analysis which runs 11. g4 Bg6 12. Bg5? B×c2! 13. Qe2 Qg6 with advantage to Black.

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| 11. g4 | Bg6 |
| 12. Qe2 | B×c2 |
| 13. Rc1! | |

A big improvement. Black's next move is forced, for 12...Bg6 13. Bg5 really does trap the queen.

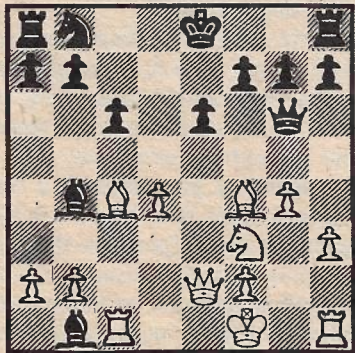
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| 13. ... | Qg6 |
| 14. Bf4! | Bb4 ch |

On 14...Qe4 15. B×b8 R×b8 16. R×c2 nabs a piece; 14...b5 15. Q×c2!? b×c4 16. Q×g6 h×g6 17. R×c4 gives a superior endgame, and 14...Bb1 15. O-O! h5 16. Ne5 wins.

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| 15. Kf1 | Bb1 |
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A clever defence. Instead 15...Be4 16. Ne5 wins Black's queen, but now 16. Kg2 (if 16. Ne5 Qe4) Be4! would pin the knight. However, I had planned a further sacrifice.

ROGERS



CHANDLER

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| 16. R×b1! | Q×b1 ch |
| 17. Kg2 | Qg6 |
| 18. Bd3 | |

Beginning a Centre Counter player's nightmare. Black must jettison two vital defensive pawns to rescue his queen, for on 18...Qf6 comes 19. Bg5.

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| 18. ... | f5 |
| 19. B×f5 | Qf6 |
| 20. Bg5 | Qf7 |
| 21. B×e6 | Qc7 |
| 22. Bb3 ch | |

The most useful discovered check. On 22...Be7 comes 23. Re1.

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| 22. ... | Kf8 |
| 23. Ne5 | Be7 |
| 24. Re1! | |

More efficient than 24. Qf3 ch Ke8. Now 24...B×g5 allows checkmate with 25. Ng6 ch h×g6 26. Qe8.

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| 24. ... | Ke8 |
| 25. Nf7 | Rf8 |
- and Black resigns ■