

MURRAY CHANDLER

Back to Biel

FIRST came to Biel in 1976 as a poor junior, living off milk and biscuits and sleeping in bunks in a cellar with 15 other impoverished chess-players. Nine years on Switzerland remains expensive, but fortunately the British Chess Federation are footing the bill. I'm here as the second of 20-year-old Nigel Short, the last English Grandmaster with a chance to qualify for the World Championship Candidates Tournament. Only the top four from this strong 18-man field, the last of the three Interzonals, go through to the Candidates event, scheduled for France later this year. It is rather nice just to be able to watch, rather than play, as no holds are barred in these qualification events.

Already after three rounds a fast pace has been set, with the Soviets Rafael Vaganian and Andrei Sokolov, ex-Soviet Lev Gutman and John van der Wiel from Holland all on 2½ points. Even players with an outside chance of qualification have been spurred on by the final results of the Mexico Interzonal, where Nogueiras from Cuba came in a surprise second. But the battle for first place here will be a lot closer than Taxco, where Jan Timman dominated a field weakened by withdrawals. Mexico results were: 1, Timman (Holland) 12 points; 2, Nogueiras (Cuba) 10½; 3, Tal (USSR) 10; 4, Spraggett (Canada) 9; 5, Speelman (England) 8; 6-7 Agdestein (Norway) and Cebalo (Yugoslavia) 7½; 8, Alburt (US) 7; 9-13, Browne (US), Pinter (Hungary), Romanishin (USSR), Sisniega (Mexico) and Qi (China) 6½; 14, Prandsetter (Czechoslovakia) 6; 15, Saeed (UAE) 5½; 16, Balashov (USSR) 4½. Balashov defaulted his last four games (to Timman, Nogueiras, Tal and Sisniega) apparently because of illness.

Here in Biel there are open tournaments, women's tournaments, and many other events going on at the same time as the Interzonal. This provides an excellent opportunity for many enthusiasts to see the world stars in action. I remember how impressed I was in 1976, while playing in the under-21 event, to watch the grandmasters in the Interzonal then. Now, as then, the playing hall of the main event is dramatically darkened except for the stage and the nine huge demonstration boards on which spectators follow the play. The highlight on round one was Sokolov's slaying of Sax's Dragon, using an opening variation once considered innocuous. Here is that game.

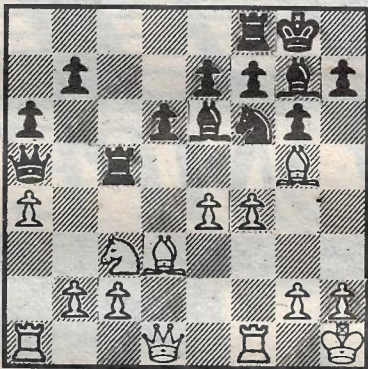
SICILIAN DEFENCE

A SOKOLOV	G SAX
1. e4	c5
2. Nf3	d6
3. d4	cxd4
4. Nxd4	Nf6
5. Nc3	g6
6. Be2	Bg7
7. O-O	Nc6
8. Nb3	O-O
9. Bg5	a6
10. a4	Be6
11. f4	Na5

12. Kh1 Rc8
13. Nxa5!

New and apparently strong. Previously played (Dolmatov-Gufeld, USSR 1978) was 13. f5 and Bxb3 14. cxb3 Rxc3! 15. bxc3 Nxe4 with compensation for the exchange.

13. ... Qxa5
14. Bd3 Rc5



Mistakenly thinking he had prevented White's pawn thrust f5.

15. f5 gxf5
16. Bd2! Qc7

Instead 16. ... fxe4? 17. Nxe4 wins material. Sokolov's clever finesse has saddled Black with a weakened kingside, which the former Soviet Champion proceeds to exploit.

17. exf5 Bc4
18. Be3 Rc6
19. Rf3 Kh8
20. Qe2 Bxd3
21. cxd3 Rxc3

This sacrifice shows the signs of panic. 21. ... Rg8 offered better resistance.

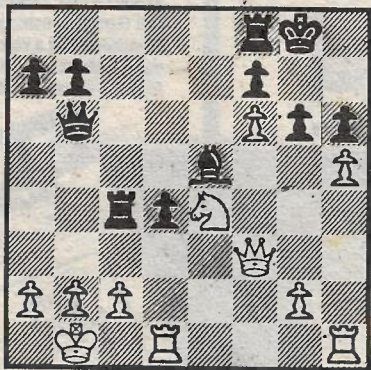
22. bxc3 Qxc3
23. Raf1 Qe5
24. Rh3 Qd5
25. Bg5 Rg8
26. Rg3

Not 26. Qxe7 Re8 27. Qc7 Qxf5! (if 28. Rxf5 Re1 mates), but Sokolov's move makes this capture on e7 a threat. Sax misses the subtle difference...

26. ... b5?
27. axb5 axb5
28. Qxe7! Re8
29. Bxf6 Resigns

After 29. ... Rxe7 30. Rxe7! h6 (30. ... Qxf5 31. Rg6 dis. ch) 31. Rxf7 dis.ch followed by Rxe7 is a comfortable win on material.

Van der Wiel



Sax

Another position featuring the unfortunate Sax, this time from round two. Black to play; how did the game end? (solution upside down below).

Solution: 1. ... d3 2. c3 Rxe4! 3. Qxe4 Bxc3 and white resigns. If 4. b3 Qf2! forces mate.