

A drawn-out affair

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AS I WRITE from here in Moscow, November 1991, an historic moment has just been reached — the 1000th game in the world championship between Anatoly Karpov and Garri Kasparov. And did these two great fighters turn on a display for the occasion! Although the draw was not unexpected, being the 995th such result since the match began, it was the quality and accuracy of each and every one of the 22 moves that impressed. Kasparov the challenger, playing White, seized the initiative with a bold new opening idea as early as move 18. World title-holder Karpov, a sprightly 40-year-old, summoned up enormous courage to find the only equalising riposte. After the handshake, when peace was finally agreed, one elderly Soviet citizen next to me said that this was the sort of thing you'd come to watch even if the government didn't pay you.

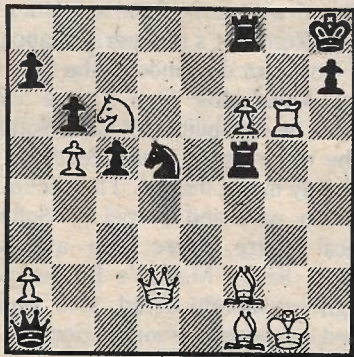
Clearly the result of this momentous match, which Karpov still leads by five wins to nil after seven years, remains crucially balanced with victory going to the first player to score six wins. Although interest here at the Moscow Hall of Pillars is not quite at fever pitch, experts believe the chances of the match finishing are "reasonable". "All of the signs point to a decisive result within six months," said the American master and journalist Jon Tisdall, who has been here since the match's inception. Kasparov's mother, speaking from her retirement dacha, believes that victory, when it comes, will favour her 28-year-old Garri. She reminisces back to game 546, where her son narrowly missed gaining a clear opening edge.

Karpov supporters admit that the champion had almost erred some time around 1987, but blame this on the sudden resignation of Fide president Florenco Campomanes, now President of the Philippines (with a takeover bid for South-east Asia in the offing). Fortunately the new administration had not changed Anatoly's favourite playing schedule (games on Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays, with time-outs to celebrate the Soviet revolution). Karpov's greatest joy in life has long been known to be just playing chess, which is fortunate. Due to the shortened two-year world championship qualifying cycle introduced by Campomanes back in 1982, four challengers are now waiting to play him should he ever reach the magic six wins. (Readers may not be aware that, should Kasparov win, Karpov has the right to a return match. This clause was little publicised even when this current championship began in 1984.)

One major Western casualty of this long battle has been the unfortunate publishers B. T. Batsford, whose commit-

ment to produce an "instant" book on the match for £5.95 has brought them to the brink of financial crisis. Fortunately, creative accounting solved some of the problems, but the sales figures on volumes two to nine remain disappointing. This week we take a backward glance at some of those exciting (but no doubt inaccurate) early games of the Moscow match, when there was at least a chance someone would win.

KARPOV

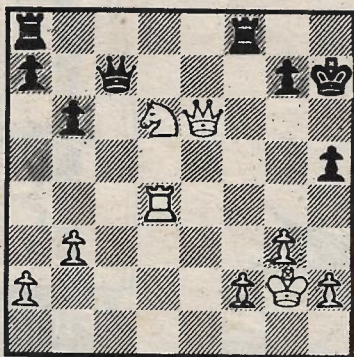


KASPAROV

Black to move

This position arose in game two. In time-pressure Karpov played **1...R(5)xf6**, and the game was eventually drawn. Instead the champion could have won with **1...Nxf6**, when Black threatens **2...h×g6** (as White's Qh6 would no longer force mate) and **2...Ne4**. Perhaps Karpov had feared the reply **2.Qh6**, but then the retreat **2...Ng8!** is as devastating as it is subtle.

KARPOV



KASPAROV

White to move

In game 16 Kasparov came very close to winning after launching a colossal attack against the Black king. Here he retained winning chances after the move **1.Rd5**, but an even stronger continuation was discovered by analysts later: **1.Rc4! Qd8 2.Qe4 ch!** when White should win easily. Possible variations are: **2...Kg8 3.Qd5 ch** followed by taking the pawn on h5; **2...Kh6 3.Nf5 ch**; **2...Kh8 3.Qd5** threatening **4.Nf7ch** and **4.Q×h5**. Finally, parrying the queen check with **2...g6** loses to **3.Qb7 ch Kg8 4.Rc7 Qf6 5.Qd5 ch Kh8 6.Nf7 ch**, and any Black king move is met by **7.Ng4** discovered check and **8.Rh7** checkmate. ■