

# Mail men

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**C**ORRESPONDENCE chess players may well wonder what all the fuss is about in the continuing "over-the-board" world championship controversy. After all, Karpov and Kasparov had got through a full 48 games in five months before Fide, the World Chess Federation, arbitrarily halted their Moscow match on the grounds that it had gone on too long. In correspondence chess, to finish just one game within five months you normally need a helpful opponent or John Walker as postman. With approximately a week before each move, most games take around a year to complete — and in international competition three years is not unknown.

Yet correspondence play has always been quite popular. For one thing, it is not nearly so slow as it seems, as many enthusiasts have up to a dozen games running at any one time — meaning two letters a day on average. The games can be speeded up by offering conditional moves in the margin of the special scoresheet that is sent back and forth each time. (Though take heed of the game that apparently opened 1.d4 g6, with Black giving the conditional: "On anything I play 2...Bg7." White replied with 2. Bh6 Bg7 3, Bxg7.) Window envelopes are used (and re-used and re-used...) so you only ever have to write your opponent's address once, at the start of a game. The main drawbacks are the cost of postage and the fact that you may become a registered addict. Michael Freeman, New Zealand correspondence chess champion 1983-84 (and also a New Zealand international in over-the-board play) reckons he spends 25-30 hours a week studying his games.

There are several major differences between correspondence and normal over-the-board play. In postal chess a player is quite entitled to consult books, so an encyclopedic knowledge of openings is not essential. Additionally, one can move the pieces around in analysis and try out different variations at leisure — naturally impossible during normal games. One thing which is strictly forbidden in both spheres is receiving advice from other players. As yet, however, I am not totally sure whether asking your home computer what is the best move counts as an infringement in CC! No doubt the answer to this, and any other inquiries on postal play you may have, can be answered by: J W Maxwell, Secretary New Zealand Correspondence Chess Association, 82 Tireti Rd, Titahi Bay, Wellington.

If you have never tried out chess by mail, I strongly recommend you do so — even if you start with just four games or so. It is especially suited to enthusiasts in the more sparsely populated sectors of the country who cannot always attend a local club. It is also a great way to strike up acquaintances nationwide — and closer. When, as a junior, I received my first list of opponents from the NZCCA, I was startled to find myself paired against a strong player I knew by reputation only. He had not only recently moved to the same street I lived in at Wainuiomata, but was directly opposite my house! I saved on postage and became the grateful recipient of many cups of coffee and friendly over-the-board games.

The following game won the Best Game Prize in the 1980/81 New Zealand Correspondence Chess Championship.

## SICILIAN DEFENCE

R TAYLOR L F TALBOT

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|----------|------|
| 1. e4    | c5   |
| 2. Nf3   | Nc6  |
| 3. d4    | cxd4 |
| 4. Nxd4  | Nf6  |
| 5. Nc3   | d6   |
| 6. Bg5   | e6   |
| 7. Qd2   | a6   |
| 8. 0-0-0 | Bd7  |
| 9. f4    | Be7  |
| 10. Be2  | Rc8  |

*Non-correspondence players may wonder how either side ever gains a decisive advantage from the opening if both players are consulting the relevant books. The fact is that there are many positions on which even grandmasters cannot agree after weeks of study. Here 10...0-0, or 10...Qb6 11. Nf3 0-0-0 are major alternatives, but Talbot's choice is not necessarily so bad.*

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| 11. Bf3  | Na5  |
| 12. e5   | Nc4  |
| 13. Qe1  | Qb6  |
| 14. Nb3  | dxe5 |
| 15. fxe5 | Nd5  |

*Here the Encyclopaedia of Chess Openings ends with the notorious "unclear" symbol, quoting the game Sokolsky-Kopilov, USSR championship 1949. With specialist journals like Tournament Chess unavailable for that time period, I suspect neither player in the postal game had further reference material.*

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| 16. Bxe7 | Nxc3?! |
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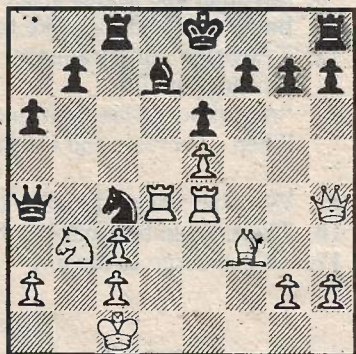
*16...Nxe7 really looks "unclear" to me. Perhaps Black had underestimated his opponent's response.*

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| 17. bxc3?! | Kxe7 |
| 18. Qh4 ch | Ke8? |

*Sentencing the Black rook on h8 to a life of unemployment. Necessary was 18...f6 19. exf6 ch gxf6 with a double-edged struggle.*

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| 19. Rhe1  | Qb5 |
| 20. Re4   | Qa4 |
| 21. Rdd4! |     |

TALBOT



TAYLOR

*Black's potential penetration to a3 with his Queen looked dangerous, but this centralising manoeuvre calmly defuses the threat.*

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| 21. ... | b5? |
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*Checking with 21...Qa3 ch 22. Kd1 Nb2 ch 23. Kd2 achieves nothing, but this loses immediately.*

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| 22. Rxd7! | g5 |
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*Or 22...Kxd7 23. Rd4 ch Ke8 (23...Kc7 24. Qe7 ch) 24. Bc6 ch Rxc6 25. Rd8 checkmate.*

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|------------|---------|
| 23. Qh5    | Rf8     |
| 24. Ra7    | Rd8     |
| 25. Rd4    | Rxd4    |
| 26. Ra8 ch | Resigns |

*If 26...Kd7 27. Nc5 ch and 28. Nxa4. ■*