

CHESS

Unfunny money

by Murray Chandler

CONTROVERSY broke out in the British press just before Christmas when Nigel Short declined an invitation to the annual Hastings tournament, saying he was "insulted" by the small appearance fee offered. Hastings had offered 20-year-old Short, currently England's brightest grandmaster star, an appearance fee of £250 (\$NZ650). When Short rejected this with the words "Better to offer nothing than to insult me like this", organiser W Ritson Morry promptly sent his letter to the press, appending the comment: "This just shows what a big headed idiot he really is." Both the quality and gutter press had a field day, most of it at young Nigel's expense, in spite of Short's protest that Lugano had offered him four times the Hastings fee.

Although personally I decline my invitations more diplomatically, the sad fact is that Hastings is quite out of touch with modern-day professional chess. In 1984-85 not a single English grandmaster participated. An organised boycott, as the press at the time had darkly intimated? No — just several world-class players, many with mortgages, opening their envelopes to find offers that wouldn't buy a set of *Sahovski Informators*. Compared with other sports competitors (golf, football and tennis being the most obvious), international chess players live humble enough lives for people at the peak of their profession. Now, it seems, we are to be publicly harangued for refusing to accept poor conditions. If a solicitor or other professional person declined to do a job at a quarter of their usual fees, it would be unthinkable to slate them in the press in such a fashion.

Short, I know, was upset by the newspapers' abuse and accusations of "disloyalty". It is to his credit that this gifted young man was able, a few weeks later, to storm through Holland's Wijk aan Zee GM tournament. His victory by the remarkable margin of 1½ points, together with last year's Candidates tournament qualification, confirms his status as the West's best hope for the future. But the final irony to the Hastings episode was probably an apparently insignificant team game Short played — for free — as a favour to his old local club Atherton. In doing so he inadvertently contravened strict West German Bundesliga rules about not playing for more than one club. Solingen, Nigel's German club, had to abruptly retire him from their lucrative team championship for the rest of the season. Sometimes you just can't win!

Final scores of Wijk aan Zee were: 1, Short 9½/13 points; 2-4, van der Wiel (Holland), Ljubojevic and P Nikolic (both Yugoslavia) 8; 5, Hubner (West Germany) 7½; 6-7, Sosonko (Holland) and Hodgson (England) 7; 8-10, Chernin (USSR), Hort (ex-Czechoslovakia, now West Germany), Seirawan (US) 6½; 11-

13, Hellers (Norway), Ree and van der Sterren (both Holland) 4½; 14, De Firmian (US) 3. The American grandmaster Nick De Firmian's bad tournament began in round one:

SICILIAN DEFENCE

L LJUBOJEVIC	N DE FIRMIAN
1. e4	c5
2. Nf3	d6
3. d4	cxd4
4. Nxd4	Nf6
5. Nc3	a6
6. Bg5	e6
7. f4	Be7
8. Qf3	Qc7
9. 0-0-0	Nbd7
10. g4	b5
11. Bxf6	Nxf6
12. g5	Nd7
13. f5	Nc5

Still all main-line theory. 13. . . . Bxg5 ch 14.Kb1 Ne5 15.Qh5 gives White a dangerous initiative.

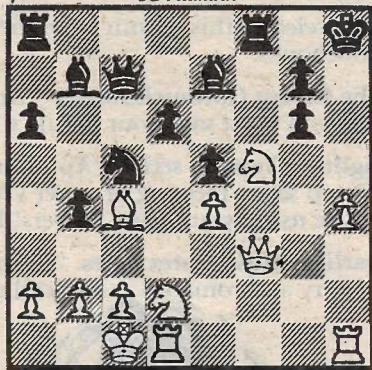
14. h4	b4
15. Nb1!?	

An attempted improvement on Nunn-Browne, Gjovik 1983, which went 15.Nce2 e5 16.Nb3 Nxe4! 17.Qxe4 Bb7 18.Rd5 Rc8 19.c3 Qc4! and Black won a brilliant game.

15. . . .	Bb7
16. fxe6	fxe6
17. Nd2	e5
18. Nf5	0-0
19. Bc4 ch	Kh8
20. g6	h×g6?

The losing blunder. In round three England's Julian Hodgson reached this same position against Ljubojevic. His improvement was 20. . . . Nxe4! 21.Nxe4 h×g6 22.Be6 Rf6! unclear.

DE FIRMIAN



LJUBOJEVIC

21. Qg4!
White cleverly breaks the f-file pin, and prepares the kingside assault. 21. . . . g×f5 fails to 22.Qh5 checkmate.

21. . . .	d5
22. Nxe7	Qxe7
23. e×d5	Rad8
24. Qg5	

A striking feature of this attack is White's offer of a queen exchange lasting three moves. But Black must always decline: 24. . . . Q×g5 25.h×g5 dis ch Kg8 26.d6 dis ch wins.

24. . . .	Rfe8
25. Nf3	Rd6
26. h5!	g×h5

Once the h-file has been prised open all is lost, but 26. . . . Q×g5 27.N×g5 Kg8 28.h×g6 is little better (28. . . . R×g6 29.d6 is another devastating discovered check).

27. Q×h5 ch	Rh6
28. Qg6!	Resigns

28. . . . Qf8 29.R×h6 ch g×h6 30.Rh1 etc. ■