

# Sarapu yet again

by Murray Chandler

**O**RTVIN SARAPU's record number of national championship titles will never be beaten, except by the grand old man of New Zealand chess himself. His shared victory with Adrian Lloyd at the 1985/86 congress in Christchurch over Christmas was win No 19. The absence of defending champion Vernon Small left the 24-player Swiss-system competition wide open. Going into the final 11th round, Sarapu stood level with fellow Aucklanders Bob Smith. He safely drew but Smith lost, and 21-year-old Lloyd — runner-up to Small the previous year — seized his chance to catch up. Final leading scores were: 1-2, Sarapu (Auckland) and Lloyd (Christchurch) 7½ points; 3-6, R Smith, A Love (Dunedin), J Sarfati (Wellington) and R Nokes (Christchurch) 7.

New Zealand chess has changed a lot since 62-year-old Sarapu, a former Estonian, arrived in 1950. The emergence of a new chess-literate generation means those days of near maximum scores in the championship are well and truly over. The average level today, thanks to the wide availability of books and magazines, is unquestionably much higher. But I sometimes wonder whether the game has increased in popularity that much here. The 1972 Fischer v Spassky rumpus and all subsequent World Championship matches were fabulous boosts, while the more recent advent of the chess computer has also rekindled interest worldwide. Yet in the past, these surges in popularity have largely been wasted through the lack of any energetic follow-up. I wait in vain for even a press-release from this latest national championships, yet I do not imagine that Robert Jones Investments, the sponsors, wish to remain totally anonymous.

Compared to the amounts of money pumped into something as insane as boxing (with apologies to Bob Jones), the figures for chess are minute. Yet, properly presented, the image of chess is not an unattractive one for many major corporations such as banks and insurance companies. Publicity is long-lasting, with games and results still being published months after an event concludes. Furthermore, chess is a sport many executives take a personal interest in. We have had such sponsors here in New Zealand in the past but, not too surprisingly, most have drifted off. Elementary public relations calls for results and a game or two of all tournaments to be sent out to interested publications — even *Listener* columnists.

## ST GEORGE DEFENCE

Christchurch 1985/86

**O SARAPU**                      **R NOKES**  
1. e4                              a6

*The greatest living exponent of this bizarre opening is ex-Armenian Michael Basman, international maestro and inventor of Audio Chess, who lives in London. But these days he prefers the move order 1. e4 e6 2. d4 a6.*

2. d4                              b5  
3. Nf3                            Bb7  
4. Bd3                           Nf6?  
5. e5                            Nd5  
6. a4                            b4  
7. Ng5!

*Now Black will be forced into contortions to defend the f7-square (7... h6? 8. Qh5 g6 9. Bxg6 wins). 4... e6 was correct.*

7. ...                            e6  
8. Qf3                           Qe7  
9. c4!                           bxc3ep  
10. bxc3                        Nc6  
11. Ne4

*Playing safe. Instead 11. Nxh7 would allow dangerous counterplay with 11... Nx d4 12. cxd4 Qb4 ch, eg 13. Kf1 Qxd4 14. Ra2 Nc3! 15. Qxb7 Qxd3 ch and mates.*

11. ...                           f5  
12. exf6ep                    gx f6  
13. 0-0                        Bg7  
14. Nc5                        Bc8  
15. Re1                        0-0

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