

CHESS

Timely warning

by Murray Chandler

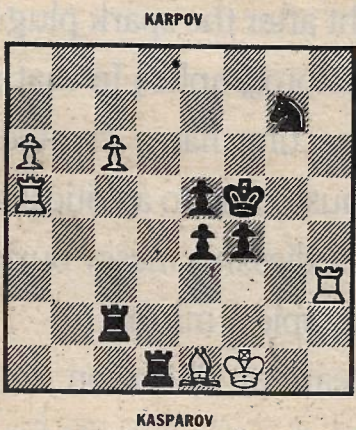
EVEN THOUGH the final 24th game was played only as a formality, the Kasparov-Karpov World Championship clash finished in truly climactic fashion. Anatoly Karpov's astonishing hat trick of wins in games 17, 18 and 19 catapulted him back into the 24-game contest from an apparently hopeless situation. In order to regain his title from Garri Kasparov, 35-year-old Karpov suddenly had to win only one further game and draw four.

Kasparov had made the mistake of assuming it was all over. He said afterwards, "Karpov had to win four from eight games — it was impossible! After three losses ... the first time in chess praxis for me ... my situation had become critical."

Then Karpov took his last remaining time-out, postponing their 20th game at the Hotel Leningrad from the Friday until the Monday. He wanted mentally to prepare himself for the five games to come, but this break may have proved the respite that his younger rival needed. After careful draws in games 20 and 21, Kasparov produced a positional masterpiece with White in their next encounter, stunning even the experts with a brilliant and decisive overnight sealed move.

One could rave for paragraphs about the magnificent and complex games we have seen in this clash spanning London and Leningrad. But perhaps the most telling tribute is the eagerness with which all enthusiasts now await a future K-K challenge — a far cry from the yawns following their tedious and draw-ridden first encounter. The dynamic 23-year-old Kasparov remains a worthy champion, but Karpov's play was also quite exceptional and the ex-champion remains quietly defiant. "I had the feeling, and I am sure now, that I played even better than Kasparov," he said. "The main reason I lost was my problems in time trouble. If I can overcome this weakness I am quite optimistic for the future." Kasparov will do well to heed these words.

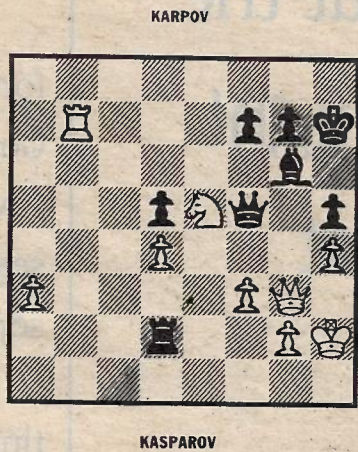
Here are some examples of the complications that enthralled the capacity crowd in Leningrad. The first, from game 18, arose from a very favourable adjourned position for Karpov.



The game ended 58. a7 e3! and Kasparov resigned, as despite promoting a new queen he gets checkmated: 59. Rf3 (Black threatened ... Rf2 ch and then ... Rxe1 mate) Nh5! 60. a8=Q Ng3 ch 61. Rxe1 Rf2 ch 62. Kg1 Rxe1. But even several days later grandmasters still couldn't decide whether pushing the other pawn instead with 58. c7! would draw for White. 58. ... Rxc7 is met by 59. a7, and if Black instead tries for checkmate with 58. ... e3 as in the game, it was thought White could hold with a remarkable resource: 59. Rh2 Rxc7 60. a7 f3 (intending 61. a8=Q Rxe1 ch 62. Kxe1 Rc1 mate) 61. Re2!! fxe2 ch 62. Kxe2 Rd8 63. a8=Q Rxa8 64. Rxa8 Kf4. This position is assessed as a win for Karpov in the Keene/Goodman instant Batsford book of the match, but in fact White draws immediately with 65. Ra4 ch e4 66. Bg3 ch! Kxg3 67. Kxe3. Next move White will gobble the last remaining Black pawn leaving rook v rook and knight — a technical draw.

Later improvements were discovered for both sides, but the conclusion was that Black could force a win even after 58. c7.

Game 22, which effectively decided the match, also went to adjournment. Everything hinged on what move Kasparov had sealed in the envelope the night before. 41. Rb4, defending White's attacked d-pawn, was the most obvious candidate, but then Black's active pieces give him promising drawing chances in spite of his pawn minus.



Instead Kasparov sealed the brilliant 41. Nd7! jettisoning the d-pawn and leaving me to explain on live BBC TV why the Soviet audience were cheering and shouting. The point was revealed after 41. ... Rxd4 42. Nf8 ch Kh6 (42. ... Kg8 43. Rb8 wins) 43. Rb4! Rc4 44. Rxc4 dxc4 45. Qd6. Although material is equal once again, any c1-h6 diagonal check by the White queen will be deadly. After 45. ... c3, 46. Qd4 Karpov resigned — 46. ... c2 47. Qe3 ch is mate next move, and 46. ... Bh7 47. Qxc3 Qf4 ch 48. g3 is followed again by a decisive diagonal check next move.

1986 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP MATCH

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	
Kasparov	½	½	½	1	0	½	½	1	½	½	½	½	½	1	½	1	0	0	0	½	½	1	½	½	12½
Karpov	½	½	½	0	1	½	½	0	½	½	½	½	½	0	½	0	1	1	1	½	½	0	½	½	11½