

CHESS

Fever pitch

by Murray Chandler

THE MAGNIFICENT success of the London half of the Kasparov-Karpov title clash has a clear moral: hold world championship matches in major Western capitals. Since 1948, when Mikhail Botvinnik won the Candidates Tournament, the coveted title has been staged only three times previously outside the USSR. In 1981 it was in the quiet mountainside setting of Merano, Italy; in 1978 in Baguio City in the Philippines; and in 1972 in Reykjavik, Iceland. In Merano and Baguio it fell on the more determined members of the press brigade to tell the world of dramatic games, coded yoghurts and robed gurus. Iceland, where the American Bobby Fischer toppled the Soviet Boris Spassky, was a freak; a clash that would have been front-page headlines on the moon. But in London, even for a match between two Soviets, over 600 correspondents were accredited, and the city itself was gripped by chess fever.

There are currently four chess TV programmes a week in London; the Tim Rice/Abba musical remains a box office hit; and sponsors are almost queuing to give tournament money. Each of the 12 games that Garri Kasparov and Anatoly Karpov played started at 5.00pm and it was normal to see a 60-metre ticket line at midday outside the Park Lane Hotel. It was standing room only in the large commentary room where grandmasters explained the games move by move. Huge electronic demonstration boards were linked directly to hidden sensors beneath the actual playing board, and moves appeared instantaneously — a far cry from the second half in Leningrad, where pieces were still shifted by a man with a long stick!

In the darkened, hushed playing hall (where even pocket sets were banned because of the noise of moving the pieces), portable headsets could be hired to tune into "radio chesschamp". Here a variety of personalities expounded their views on the game in progress, from a (theoretically) sound-proof box overlooking the playing area.

Interviewed just before the second half shift to Leningrad, Kasparov, who retained his title 12-11 with a draw in the 23rd game, had clearly enjoyed the first leg. "At first Karpov and I hesitated because the London organisers had no experience," he said. "But we saw the people in London did everything to arrange the best World Championship match we have ever seen." It was certainly the best I have seen too, and this week's game ranks as one of the most gripping draws I have seen in a World Championship. It was so well played that the judges split the £10,000 prize (\$30,000), for the best game in the London leg and gave the players half each.

GRUNFELD DEFENCE

A KARPOV	G KASPAROV
1. d4	Nf6
2. c4	g6
3. Nc3	d5
4. Bf4	Bg7
5. e3	c5

6. dxc5	Qa5
7. Rc1	dxc4
8. Bxc4	0-0
9. Nf3	Qxc5
10. Bb3	Nc6
11. 0-0	Qa5
12. h3	Bf5
13. Qe2	Ne4
14. Nd5	e5
15. Rxc6!	

A stunning opening novelty, intending 15... bxc6 16.Ne7 ch Kh8 17.Nxc6 Qb6 18.Ncxe5 and White has two pawns for the exchange. Kasparov's double-edged reply leads to mind-boggling complications.

15. ...	exf4
16. Rc7	Be6!
17. Qe1!	Qb5!
18. Ne7 ch	Kh8
19. Bxe6	fxe6
20. Qb1!	Ng5!
21. Nh4	Nxh3 ch

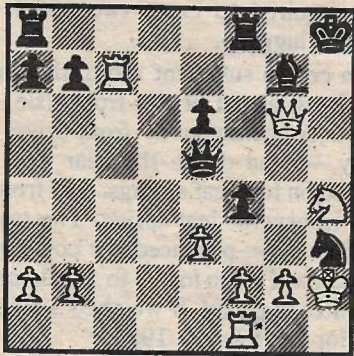
Most unusually, both players are attacking on the same side of the board. Obviously 22. gxh3 Qg5 ch 23. Ng2 f3 loses for White, and Karpov made his prepared reply instantly.

22. Kh2	Qh5
23. Ne×g6 ch!	

Now White offers the sacrifice! Bad is 23. Kxh3 g5 and Black wins back his knight, while the White king is terribly exposed.

23. ...	hxg6
24. Qxg6	Qe5!

Inspired defence, although 24... Qh7 25. R×g7 Q×g7 26. Qh5 ch Kg8! may also hold (but not 26... Qh7? 27. Ng6 ch Kg7 28. Q×h7 ch K×h7 29. N×f8 ch R×f8 30. K×h3 fxh3 31. f3! with a winning rook endgame). Now 25. R×g7, 25. R×b7 and 25. Qc2 were all considered in the commentary room, with horrendous complications. Nobody at all considered the move Karpov now played which incorporates a remarkable blend of defence and attack.



25. Rf7!?	R×f7!
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But the World Champion cuts through the variations to reach a level endgame.

26. Qxf7	Ng5
27. Ng6 ch	Kh7
28. Nxe5	N×f7
29. Nxf7	Kg6!
30. Nd6	f×e3

Black regains his pawn with the threatened skewer... Be5 ch.

31. Nc4	e×f2
32. Rxf2	b5
33. Ne3	a5
34. Kg3	a4
35. Rc2	Rf8
36. Kg4	Bd4
37. Re2	B×e3
38. R×e3	Rf2
39. b3	R×g2 ch
40. Kf3	R×a2
41. b×a4	

Draw agreed

After 41... R×a4 42. R×e6 ch and 43. Rb6 it is a known draw, despite Black's one extra pawn. ■