

CHESS

Suddenly a pair of killers

by Murray Chandler

OCCASIONALLY a player suddenly starts achieving spectacularly good results. Sometimes there is no obvious reason for this quantum leap, as happened in at least two notable cases last year. One was the 29-year-old Soviet grandmaster Mikhail Gurevich, who picked up a string of first prizes in the USSR and Eastern Europe. In the process he catapulted his Elo rating from 2515 on the July 1987 list (about 49th equal in the World) to 2625 on the January 1988 list (ninth equal). Yet this former helper of World Champion Garri Kasparov had been established as an "ordinary" grandmaster for many years. Now his fellow Soviets look on with admiration as his career soars.

The other case is the 31-year-old English grandmaster Jonathan Speelman, ranked 2550 in January 1987. Then he stormed through the British Zonal in February and came first equal in the Subotica Interzonal. Thus he qualified for the Candidates matches of the World Championship cycle and raised his international rating, also to 2625. Speelman's colleagues have long recognised him as a vegetarian of considerable talent, but in the past he has lacked a killer instinct. Now, over the chessboard anyway, he is becoming distinctly carnivorous — as I can personally testify, have spent seven grim hours saving an inferior position against him at Hastings.

This week's game won the brilliancy prize for Speelman at the Hastings tournament in England over the new year. His opponent was former Soviet champion Lev Psakhis, whose defence was only marginally less brilliant than the attack. Watch those astonishing Black knights — as well as White's startling bishop manoeuvre on move 29, which nearly turned the tables.

QUEENS GAMBIT ACCEPTED

PSAKHIS	SPEELMAN
1. d4	d5
2. c4	dxc4
3. Nf3	c5
4. d5	e6
5. Nc3	exd5
6. Qxd5	Qxd5
7. Nxd5	Bd6
8. Nd2	Ne7
9. Nxc4	Nxd5
10. Nxd6 ch	Ke7
11. Nxc8 ch	Rxc8

So White secures the bishop pair, but Black's knight on d5 is well centralised.

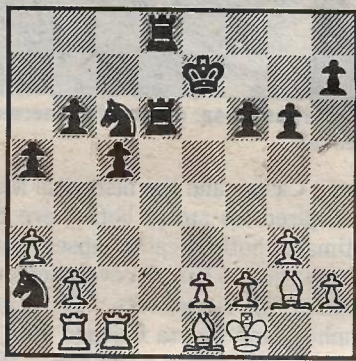
12. g3	Nc6
13. Bg2	Rd8
14. Bg5 ch	f6
15. Bd2	Rd6
16. 0-0	Rad8
17. Rfc1	

Here White turned down a draw offer.

17. ...	b6
18. Kf1	a5
19. Be1	g6

20. Rab1
21. a3

Ndb4
Na2!?!



An amazing move, self-trapping the knight. How it evades capture for the next 18 moves can only be described as Black magic.

22. Rc4 Nd4
23. b3

If 23.Ra1 Nb3! 24.Rxa2 Rd1 is most unpleasant. Black threatens... Nd2 ch, and 25.Rc2 Rb1 26.e3 Rdd1 27.Re2 Nc1! is both picturesque and advantageous.

23. ... Nb5
24. Rb2 Nac3

As 25.Bxc3 Nxc3 26. Rxc3 Rd1 is checkmate.

25. a4 Nd1
26. Rb1 Na3
27. Rcc1 Nxb1
28. Rxb1

White has given up the exchange with a very clever idea in mind. Black's knight is still trapped, and if White can transfer his bishop to the d3 square, cutting off the defence, he might even be winning. So Speelman stops 29.Be4.

28. ... f5
29. Bb7!!

But the bishop finds a remarkable alternative route via a6, overlooked by the commentary room, the spectators — and Speelman. Black has only one path to continue.

29. ... g5!
30. Ba6 f4!
31. Bd3?

Perhaps the losing move → did Psakhis miss Black's trick two moves later? White can try for a positional draw by just waiting.

31. ... Rxd3
32. exd3 Rxd3
33. Ke2 Rd5!

The point: 34. Rxd1 f3 ch 35. Kxf3 Rxd1 wins while 34.f3 allows 34. ... Ne3.

34. gxh4 gxh4
35. Rc1 Nb2
36. Bc3 Nd3
37. Rg1 Nb4

Miraculously the knight emerges unscathed from its incredible journey. By now Psakhis should have taken the hint and swapped with 38. Bxb4 cxb4.

38. Rg7 ch? Kf8
39. Bb2

Too late White saw 39. Rxb7 f3 ch!! winning (40. Kxf3 Rd3 ch; 40. Ke1 Nc2 ch 41. Kf1 Rd1 ch; 40. Kf1 Rd1 ch).

39. ... Rd3
40. Resigns

40. f3 Rxb3 41. Ba1 Ra3! 42. Bf6 Nd5 traps the bishop in mid-board; 43. Be5 Re3 ch or 43. Bb2 Ra2. I take back everything I ever said about vegetarians. ■