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## CHESS

# Fighting talk

by Murray Chandler

**"T**HIS tournament I will fight," Boris Spassky told me in the transit lounge of Los Angeles airport, where we met by chance en route to the Plaza International tournament. I remembered these prophetic words as we sat down for the final game of that tournament in Wellington, where the overall standings could scarcely have been more dramatic. In the lead was Soviet grandmaster Edward Gufeld on 7½ points, but he had the bye. Spassky and I had seven points, and by the luck of the pairings were playing each other. A win for either of us would mean clear victory in the most prestigious event yet staged in Australasia, or a draw would mean a three-way tie with Gufeld. A loss would mean a disastrous demotion to third place, costing money and rating points.

Although Spassky had the advantage of the White pieces, American grandmaster Larry Christiansen said he thought the former world champion might want a quick draw. I wasn't banking on it. During the previous fortnight Spassky had produced some vintage play, including a daring King's Gambit against Zsuzsa Polgar. The game he had to win — his round nine Closed Sicilian against Gufeld — was a creative masterpiece, easily the most brilliant of the whole event (see my last column).

The last round clash between Spassky and myself proved to be even more exciting than the capacity crowd realised at the time. Playing safe, Spassky swapped off Queens early — but this was not the prelude to a draw offer. Instead he subtly built up unpleasant endgame pressure, where Black's King proved to be awkwardly placed in the centre. After 19 moves, with the tension mounting, and the clock ticking, I made a hasty knight advance. The idea was to invite exchanges and relieve my cramped position, but while Spassky was considering his reply I was suddenly struck by a terrible possibility. With an unthematic, but nevertheless quite straightforward bishop move, White could win a piece. Trying desperately to look calm, I checked the variations again and again, but there was no escape — if Spassky made the move I would have to resign.

Incredibly, after 20 minutes' thought, Spassky missed it.

New Zealand 1988

### QUEEN'S GAMBIT ACCEPTED

B SPASSKY	M CHANDLER
1. d4	d5
2. c4	dxc4
3. Nf3	Nf6
4. e3	e6
5. Bxc4	c5
6. 0-0	a6
7. dxc5	Bxc5
8. Qxd8 ch	Kxd8
9. b3	b6
10. Bb2	Bb7
11. Nc3	Nbd7
12. Rfd1	Ke7

Spassky is a fantastic endgame player. I'm told the Plaza lecture room now virtually dismissed the game as a boring draw ... sometimes it would be nice to swap places with the commentators!

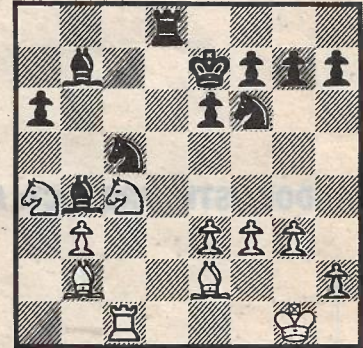
13. Be2	Rac8
14. Nd2	Rhd8
15. Rac1	b5
16. a4	bxa4?!

A mistake; with 16. ... b4 Black at least forces the White knight to a passive square on b1 or a2. I had expected 17. bxa4, but Spassky's superior recapture gives his knight excellent outposts on a4 and c4.

17. Nxa4!	Bb4
18. Nc4	Nd5
19. g3	

Wisely avoiding 19. Bxg7 Rg8 with unpleasant discovered threats to g2.

19. ...	N5f6
20. f3	Nc5??
21. Rxd8	Rxd8



### 22. Nxc5??

Here was the moment that 22. Bc3! would have won a piece; after 22. ... Bxc3 23. Nxc5 both Black bishops are attacked, 22. ... Nxa4 23. Bxb4 is check and 22. ... Nd3 23. Bxd3 Bxc3 24. Rxc3 defends the bishop. I could scarcely believe that I had allowed such a possibility, let alone that Spassky had missed it, but had to regain my composure quickly. Although White's 22nd merits two question marks, it is nevertheless quite a strong move!

22. ...	Bxc5
23. Kf1	Bb4
24. Ne5	Ne8
25. e4	Rd2?!

Hoping for 26. Nd3 a5! with ... Ba6 to follow, but 25. ... f6 26. Nc6 ch Bxc6 27. Rxc6 a5 was the correct path.

26. Nc4!	Rd7
27. Ra1	Rc7
28. Ra4	Bc5
29. b4?!	

This inaccuracy lets Black liquidate the queenside pawns, virtually ensuring a draw. Both of us now had so little time to reach the control at move 40 that we stopped recording our moves.

29. ...	Bc6!
30. Rxa6	Bxb4
31. Be5	Rc8
32. Ra7 ch	Kf8
33. Na5	Ba4
34. Nc4	Bb5
35. Rb7	Bxc4
36. Rxb4	Bxe2 ch
37. Kxe2	f6

In fact 37. ... Rc2 ch 38. Kd3 Rch2 wins Black a pawn, though White should be okay after 39. Rb8 f6. 40. Bd6 ch Kf7 41. Rb7 ch Kg6 42. Bf8. With about five seconds to go before a time forfeit, I must confess I didn't calculate this.

38. Bf4	Rc2 ch
39. Bd2	Kf7
40. Rb7 ch	Kg6
41. Re7	Nc7
42. Kd3	Rc6
43. Ba5	Na6
44. f4	Nc5 ch
45. Ke3	h5

Draw agreed.



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