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CHESS Lubomir Kavalek

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By Lubomir Kavalek



Monday, January 3, 2005; Page C08

In the January 2005 rating list issued by the World Chess Federation (FIDE), Garry Kasparov of Russia is still on top with a 2804 rating. Vishy Anand of India is second with 2786; Bulgaria's Veselin Topalov moves to the third spot with 2757. World champion Vladimir Kramnik of Russia has 2754, and his opponent, Peter Leko of Hungary, is fifth with 2749. Russia's Alexander Morozevich and England's Michael Adams share a rating of 2741. Peter Svidler, a four-time Russian champion, has 2735. The top woman in the world, Judit Polgar of Hungary, has a 2728 rating. Etienne Bacrot of France closes the Top 10 list with 2715.

A Wicked Trap

Alexei Shirov, soon to be living back in Riga, Latvia, is only two points behind Bacrot. He is still a formidable player who can turn a game around by a single, unsuspected idea. In the Smartfish Masters underway in the Norwegian town of Drammen, Shirov was outplayed in the Advanced variation of the French defense by the legendary Viktor Korchnoi of Switzerland. To get out of an unpleasant position, Shirov set up an uncanny trap sacrificing a pawn. He was rewarded when the unsuspecting Korchnoi took the bait.

Shirov-Korchnoi

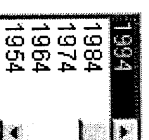
1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5 4.c3 Qb6 5.Nf3 Bd7 6.Be2 Nc6 (The strategic exchange of light bishops 6...Bb5 is successfully met by 7.c4! Bxc4 8.Bxc4 dxc4 9.d5 with white's edge.) **7.0-0 cxd4 8.cxd4 Nge7 9.Na3 Nf5 10.Nc2 h5** (Securing the knight on f5, but weakening the kingside.) **11.b3** (Shirov decides to fortify his pawn on d4. White can also relieve black's pressure on the center with 11.Bd3 since 11...Nfxd4? 12.Nfxd4 Nxd4 13.Be3 Bc5 14.b4 wins a piece for white.) **11...a5 12.Bb2 Be7 13.Ne3** (By sufficiently protecting the pawn on d4, white can now chase the pesky knight on f5.) **13...Nxe3** (After 13...g6 14.Nxf5 gxf5 the black king can't hide on the kingside anymore.) **14.fxe3 a4!** (Korchnoi begins his advance on the queenside.)

15.Rb1 axb3 16.axb3 Ra2 17.Kh1 Nb4 18.Bc3 0-0?! (Korchnoi must feel confident that his king is safe.) **19.Ng1 h4 20.Nh3 Nc2 21.Bd2** (After 21.Bd3 Nxe3 22.Qh5 Nf5! 23.Nf4 Nh6 black defends.) **21...Na3 22.Rc1 Rb2 23.b4!?** (Shirov is setting up a trap. He can't protect his b-pawn and, chasing away black's active rook with 23.Bc3, leads after 23...Rxe2! 24.Qxe2 Bb5 to black's advantage.) **23...Bxb4?** (Even as a young player, Korchnoi loved to snatch pawns no matter how poisonous they might have been. This time he is quickly punished. Black has the edge with 23...Bb5!)

24.Bd3!? (By deflecting the dark bishop from the kingside, Shirov opens a deadly attack against the black king. Suddenly, black can't cope with a double threat: 25.Qh5 and 25.Bh7+! Kxh7 26.Qh5+ Kg8 27.Ng5 with a quick mate.) **24...g6** (The bishop on d2 is untouchable. After either 24...Rxd2 25.Bh7+ Kxh7 26.Qh5+ Kg8 27.Ng5; or after 24...Bxd2 25.Qh5 f5 26.exf6 Rxf6 27.Rc8+! Bxc8 28.Qe8+ black

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gets mated.) **25.Qg4** (Threatening to blow up black's kingside with 26.Bxg6. Black does not have a good defense, for example 25...Kg7 26.Ng5 Be8 27.Bxb4 Qxb4 28.Qxh4 Rh8 29.Rxf7+! Bxf7 30.Nxe6+! Bxe6 31.Qf6+ Kg8 32.Qxe6+ Kg7 33.Qf6+ Kg8 34.Rc8+ Qf8 35.Qxg6 is an epaulet mate.) **Black resigns.**

Easter Open

The only grandmaster in the field, Alexander Ivanov, won the 31st edition of the annual traditional open tournament held at the Washington Wynnham hotel, Dec. 26-29. He scored seven points in eight games, finishing a full point ahead of International Master Stanis Smetankin.

Ivanov defeated FIDE Master Ilye Figler, one of the highest-rated players in the event, in the Tarrasch variation of the French defense in a mere 18 moves.

Ivanov-Figler

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.Nd2 Be7 (A popular waiting move, courtesy of Ukrainian GM Oleg Romanishin.)
4.Ngf3 (4.e5 c5 5.Qg4 is more aggressive.) **4...Nf6 5.e5 Nf7 6.Bd3 c5 7.c3 Nc6 8.0-0 h5 9.Re1 g5**
 (Black could have first exchanged pawns in the center 9...cxd4 10.cxd4 before striking on the wing with 10...g5. White can sacrifice a pawn 11.Nb3 g4 12.Nf2 a5 13.a4 Qb6 14.Nb1! Nxd4 15.Nxd4 Qxd4 16.Nc3 with a promising game.) **10.dxc5!?** **g4 11.Nd4 Ndx5 12.N2b3** (A new idea. In the previous games white tried to save his light bishop either with 12.Bb5 or with 12.Nxc6.) **12...Bd7?!** (Black should have played here, or on the next move, Ne5xd3.) **13.Bf4 Bf6 14.Nxc6 Nxc6 15.Bd6!** (This unpleasant bishop prevents short castling and can't be easily dislodged.) **15...Ne7** (After 15...Be7 white opens up the game with 16.c4!) **16.Nd4 b6 17.b4 Nc8?** (Loses at once, but the black king was under pressure, nowhere to go.) **18.Nxe6!** (After 18...Bxe6 19.Bb5+ wins the black queen and after 18...fex6 19.Bg6 mates.) **Black resigns.**

Pan Am Intercollegiate Championship

The University of Texas at Dallas won the annual competition among the 24 best college teams in the Western Hemisphere in Wichita, Kan., on Thursday. The team won five matches and tied one. The University of Maryland Baltimore County, a pre-tournament favorite, also won five matches, but lost to the winning team 1-3 and finished second.

Solution to today's study by L. Prokes (White: Ka6, Bd1; Black: Kf5, Nc4, P:b3, b5, c5): 1.Kxb5! (On 1.Bxb3 Na3 wins.) 1...Na3+ 2.Ka4 b2 3.Kxa3 b1Q 4.Bc2+! Qxc2 stalemate.

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