Chess Barbs

by Jude Acers   (US senior master)

DIAGRAM No. 11: An Acers Chess Challenge position. White checkmates in seven moves. Four USCF expert and Class A players failed to find the solution after ½ hour of frenzied analysis. Send your solution to the BARB. Experts and masters please affix the time required for complete analysis of the position. Only absolutely correct solutions will be returned and the algebraic notation must be used, as in this column. 150 correct solutions earn a BARB GOLD STAR and other goodies. We suggest you get on the case immediately good readers!

NEWS: Lazlo Szabo, veteran Hungarian grandmaster, scored an excellent and unexpected victory at last month's Sarajevo, Yugoslavia international masters tournament. Enroute to first prize with an 11-4 tally, Szabo beat Hort, drew with Petrosian, Keres, and Matulovic (just out of prison after vehicular homicide and the second most controversial grandmaster on the world tournament circuit). Here is his decisive game against Hort (Czechoslovakia), who is one of the top 15 ranked players in the world. Notes by Lazlo Szabo follow as well.

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GAME: White: L. Szabo. Black: V. Hort. Yugo., 1972. Gruenfeld Indian Defense, Exchange Variation 1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 d5 4 cd(A) Nd5 5 e4 Nc3 6 bc Bg7 7 Bc4 c5 8 Ne2 Ne6 9 Be3 0-0 10 0-0 Qc7 11 Rc1 Rd8(B) 12 f4?!(C) Bg4(D) 13 f5 Na5?!(E) 14 Bd3 Qd7(F) 15 d5! gf(G) 16 c4!(H) b5(I) 17 h3!(J) fe 18 Be4 Bh5(K) 19 cb Rac8?(L) 20 Qe1 Qb5 21 Nf4 Bg6 22 Ng6 fg(M) 23 Bg5! Bf6(N) 24 Bf6 ef 25 Bg6!!(O) Rf8(P) 26 Qg3(Q) Kh8 27 Bh7 Qb2(R) 28 Bf5 Qd4ch 29 Kh1 Rg8 30 Qf3 Rce8 31 Qh5ch Kg7 32 Qh7ch(S) Black resigns.

(A) This move must have been the first surprise for my opponent. I almost never play the exchange variation.

(B) For a while the game follows the course of the variation currently in vogue. With it Spassky won a brilliant victory from Fischer in the 1970 world olympiad and obtained a winning position against Stein in the Moscow 1971 tournament.

(C) This must have come as a second surprise, for my move is not considered good by theory, which prefers instead the prophylactic 12 h3. But this is exactly what I wish, for by avoiding current theory White is able to give his opponent a surprise.

(D) The natural continuation. If 12...e6 White avoids losing time with h3, which he must play according to the usual theoretical variations.

(E) We can now see the psychological effect of the surprise. It is very likely that Black feared improvements in the old variation, 13...gf 14 Bf7ch. In the books contradictory opinions appear. Some theorists write that after 14...Kf7 15 Qb3ch e6 16 Nf4 Qd7 17 ef Na5 18 fech Kg8 19 edch Nb3 20 ab cd White remains with an extra pawn, not noticing that 18... Be6! 19 Ne6ch Kg8 would win for Black. Hort perhaps had not worked on the position or did not care for Black's position after 18 Qe6ch Qe6 19 Ne6. Whatever the case, Black has difficult play with the uncomfortably placed knight.

(F) Possibly better was 14...cd.

(G) If 15...c4 16 Bb1 and taking on f5 has already become impossible: 16...gf 17 h3 Be2 18 Qe2 fe 19 Be4 with an irresistible attack for White.

(H) If 16 h3 Black takes at e4 and wins an important tempo for entering his knight into play by Nc4 immediately afterward.

(I) Another means of obtaining counterplay is not evident (16...fe 17 Be4 Bh5 18 Qe1, etc.).

(J) Correct now. If here 17...bc, then 18 Bb1 and Black is not able to take at e4 without exchanging off his white-squared bishop.

(K) Unsafe for Black is 18...Nc4 19 Rc4 Be2 20 Qe2 bc 21 Qh5.

(L) Simplifying White's problem. If instead 19...Qb5 20 g4 Bg6 21 Rc5 Qb6 22 Bg2!, white's advantage is beyond question, however.

(M) Somewhat better is 22...hg. Then White would have to come to a decision to avoid combinational play with 23 Bg5 and would have played 23 Bd2.

(N) On 23...Rf8 White decides the game by 24 Rf8ch Bf8 25 d6! (Acers note: 25...ed 26 Bd5ch Kg7 27 Qe6).

(O) Ending Black's resistance.

(P) After 25...hg 26 Qe6ch Kh7 27 Qf7ch Kh6 28 Rf4 and it is possible to stop mate only by sacrificing the queen.

(Q) Necessary to prevent the black rook from defending at c7, which would allow black resistance.

(R) Taking the bishop is answered by 28 Rf4.

(S) Black resigns, as after 32... Kf8 33 Be6 White wins both rooks or checkmates.

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WHERE TO PLAY CHESS: Berkeley YMCA, Fri., 7:30 p.m.... Hardcastle Coffee Shop, 2516 Telegraph, all hours...S.F. Mechanics' Institute Chess Room, 57 Post, 4th floor, all hours...In Oakland: the East Asia Book & Game Center, 5897 College, 6 p.m. to midnight.