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Chicago is Milov's Kinda' Town

At the 2005 World Open, GM Kamil Miton took the title in a one-game shootout from the white side. He ends the Chicago Open embroiled in a shootout also, but this time GM Vadim Milov enjoyed the lighter side.

by Randy Hough

Continental Chess' annual Chicago Open over Memorial Day weekend confirmed its status as one of the nation's top-five tournaments in terms of attendance, strength, and prizes. But explaining the story requires a few caveats.

The turnout of 573 players (including 29 reentries) was about equal to last year's, but a bit disappointing. After all, in 2005 the one-time \$500,000 HB Global Challenge was held in not-too-far-away Minnesota just a week prior. Ah, but in 2006 the Chicago Open had to be reduced to six rounds because a hotel "snafu" resulted in losing the playing space for Monday, the actual holiday. The organizers were compensated, but surely not having that seventh round reduced the tournament's status in many potential players' eyes.

Ultimately, 68% of the "based on 800" prize fund was paid out, a total of \$102,000. And the Open section certainly exhibited great strength, including 13 GMs, 11 IMs, 16 FMs, and a total of 28 players over 2400. The concurrent Olympiad might have potentially kept several more GMs away.

Last caveat: The Chicago Open is not held in Chicago at all, but in Oak Brook, a leafy, upscale suburb in neighboring DuPage County. It features the corporate headquarters of McDonald's (and a truly large McDonald's restaurant) and a

nice mall directly across the road from the Double Tree Hotel. Ongoing construction in the hotel encouraged an escape to the great (though rather warm) outdoors.

Even a first round usually has some upsets, and the major victim this time was Hungarian GM Emil Anka (who will be remembered for having lost his first two games at the National Open in 2004 but gamely staying in and winning the rest), who yielded a draw to alert Expert Tim Steiner of Kansas.

Sicilian Dragon

GM Emil Anka (2520)
Tim Steiner (2071)
Chicago Open 2006

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 d6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 Nf6 5. Nc3 g6 6. Be3 Bg7 7. f3 Nc6 8. Qd2 Bd7 9. g4 h5 10. g5 Nh7 11. 0-0-0 0-0 12. f4 Rc8

An interesting form of the Dragon, with Black trying to slow down White's normal attack. Anka actually played it as Black in the next round against the young master Ray Robson, transposing into this position. Robson tried 13. h4 a6 14. Bh3, but Black stood better after 14. ... Na5 15. Bxd7 Nc4 16. Qe2 Qxd7 17. Bf2 e5, and went on to win.

13. Be2 a6 14. Kb1 b5 15. Rhf1 Na5 16. f5

Nc4 17. Bxc4 Rxc4 18. b3 Rc8 19. Nde2 Bc6 20. Bd4 Be5 21. Nf4 Bxf4 22. Rxf4 e5 23. fxe6 fxe6 24. Rxf8+ Qxf8 25. a3 Qf3

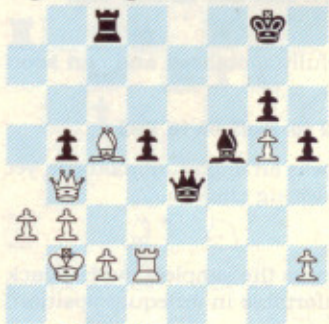
25. ... a5 looks better.

26. e5 d5 27. Ne2 a5

Now this pawn will become a target, though all alternatives also favor White.

28. Nf4 Nf8 29. Bc5 Nd7 30. Nxe6 Nxe5 31. Nd4 Qf7 32. Qxa5 Bd7 33. Qb4 Nf3 34. Nxf3 Qxf3 35. Rd2 Bf5 36. Kb2 Qe4

And with the opposite-colored bishops still making White's win problematical, Anka (perhaps in time pressure) grabs a second pawn, but allows Black an amusing drawing combination.



After 36. ... Qe4

37. Qxb5? Qe5+ 38. Ka2

Or 38. Bd4 Qxd4+!

38. ... Qc3 39. Bb4 Qxc2+! 40. Rxc2 Rxc2+
41. Ka1 Rc1+, Draw agreed.

IM Ben Finegold (one of the strongest "should be a GM's in the world) also yielded a first-round half-point, to FM Renard Anderson. As we shall see, this ultimately turned into a successful "Swiss Gambit." In Round 3, he took down young Salvijus Bercys in a tactical game.

Queen's Gambit Declined Chigorin Variation

FM Salvijus Bercys (2451)
IM Ben Finegold (2653)
Chicago Open 2006

1. d4 d5 2. c4 Nc6 3. Nf3 Bg4 4. cxd5 Bxf3 5.
gxf3 Qxd5 6. e3 e5 7. Nc3 Bb4 8. Bd2 Bxc3
9. bxc3 exd4 10. cxd4 Nge7

The Chigorin is a known favorite of Finegold's. White feels impelled to attack in order to utilize his two bishops and mitigate the value of Black's solid pawn structure.

11. Rg1 0-0 12. Bc3 Rad8 13. e4 Qh5 14. f4
Qxh2 15. Qg4 Ng6 16. d5 Rfe8 17. 0-0-0 Qxf2



After 17. ... Qxf2

A critical position. Are White's chances worth two pawns? One possibility is 18. f5! Nce5 19. Bxe5 Rxe5 20. fxe6 Qc5+ with perpetual check, or 18. ... Qe3+ 19. Kc2 Rxe4 20. Qg3 Qxg3 21. Rxg3 Nce7 22. fxe6 Nxe6 and Fritz likes White, but a silicon chip may underestimate the value of four pawns for a piece!

18. Bd3!? Qc5 19. Kb2 Nb4 20. Bb1 Rd6 21.
Bd4?!

21. a3! f5 22. exf5 Rb6! 23. axb4 Rxb4+
24. Bxb4 Qxb4+ 25. Kc1 Qc3+ 26. Bc2
Qa1+ is another perpetual check.

21. ... Qc4 22. a3?

Too late.

22. ... c5 23. Bc3 Na6

Now it's Finegold's turn to miss something. 23. ... Nxd5! 24. exd5 Rb6+ 25. Kc2 Re2+ wins. But he's still better after the game move, and White's time is vanishing.

24. Rg3 Qa4 25. f5 Rb6+ 26. Ka1 Qxa3+
27. Ba2 Nb4 28. Bxb4 Qxb4 29. Rb3 Ne5
30. Rxb4 Nxe4 31. Rxb6 axb6 32. Rb1 h5
and White lost on time.

By the third round of the "slow" schedule, GMs were playing each other in some cases, and GM Aleks Wojtkiewicz (the Grand Prix winner an amazing six times from 1999 to 2004) emerged with 3-0, joined by IM Eugene Perelshteyn (who received his GM title a few days later).

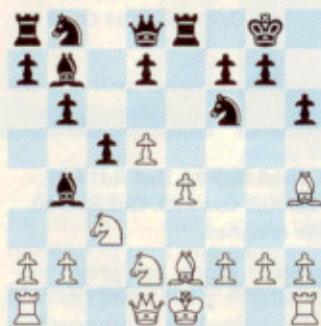
Queen's Indian Defense

IM Eugene Perelshteyn (2593)
IM Michael Brooks (2449)
Chicago Open 2006

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 e6 3. Nc3 Bb4 4. Nf3 b6
5. Bg5 Bb7 6. Nd2

A typical move in the Queen's Indian/Nimzo-Indian hybrid; here it leads to sort of a Benoni position.

6. ... h6 7. Bh4 c5 8. d5 exd5 9. cxd5 0-0 10.
e4 Re8 11. Be2



After 11. Be2

White has a slight advantage after 11. ... Qe7 12. f3 d6 13. a3 Bxc3 14. bxc3 Nbd7 15. Nc4. Black's actual move creates a target.

11. ... Ba6?! 12. Bxa6 Nxa6 13. 0-0 g5?

And this is the start of a plan that leaves another piece in jeopardy — as well as Black's king!

14. Bg3 Bxc3?! 15. bxc3 Nxe4? 16. Nxe4
Rxe4 17. Qd3 Ra4 18. f4! gxf4 19. Bxf4 Qf6
20. Rae1 d6 21. Qh3 Rd8?

The lesser evil (but still practically resignable) is 21. ... Rxf4 22. Qg3+ Qg5 23. Qxf4.

22. Bxh6 Qg6 23. Re7, Black resigned.

The weakness of f7 is decisive. The two Black pieces on the queenside are sad spectators.

Nobody could tally more than 2½ points in the nerve-wracking (Game/60) two-day schedule, but one of these, GM Kamil Miton of Poland (who despite his strength was not at the Olympiad, apparently because he failed to play in the national

championship), was in a tie for the lead with 3½ after the Round 4 merge with the three-day schedule, having just won this nice attacking game.

Blumenfeld Counter Gambit

GM Kamil Miton (2684)
IM Joshua Friedel (2511)
Chicago Open 2006

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 e6 3. Nf3 c5 4. d5 b5 5. dxe6
fxe6 6. cxb5 d5

Miton's willingness to accept the gambit is illustrative of the tendency to rethink "accepted wisdom." For many years declining the gambit with 5. Bg5 was deemed necessary.

7. g3 Bd6 8. Bg2 0-0 9. 0-0 Qe7 10. Nc3

10. Bg5 has been played previously.

10. ... Bb7 11. e4! d4 12. e5 Bxe5 13. Nxe5
Bxg2 14. Kxg2 dxc3 15. bxc3 Qb7+ 16. Kg1
Qxb5 17. Bg5

Black has recovered his pawn, but his kingside is weak and it's difficult to complete his development. Now the queen needs to help hold the position together; 17. ... Qe8 is best.



After 17. Bg5

17. ... c4? 18. Bxf6 gxf6

18. ... Rxf6 19. Qd8+ Rf8 20. Qd6 leaves Black paralyzed.

19. Qg4+ Kh8 20. Nxc4 Qf5?

The queen exchange actually accentuates White's advantage.

21. Qxf5 exf5 22. Rfe1 Nc6 23. Re6 Nd8
24. Ra6 f4?

One last error; a knight move or 24. ... Rf7 would enable Black to struggle on for awhile.

25. Nb6, Black resigned.

GM Vadim Milov of Switzerland, last year's U.S. Open champion, was also in that 3½ group, with a nice Round 4 win utilizing an old attacking setup.

(see game next page)