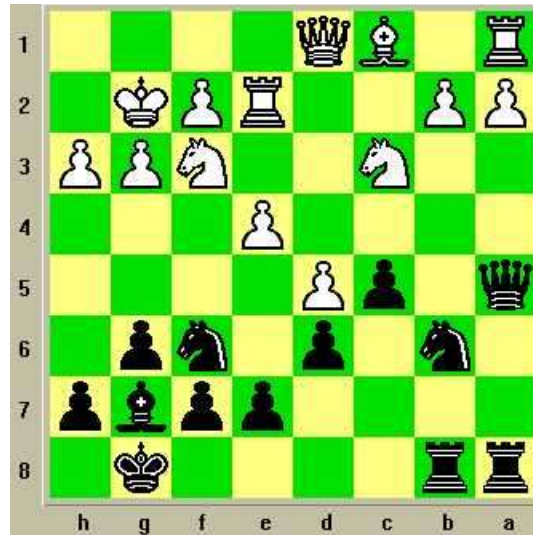


John Fincken

I regret to inform the chess community of the passing of a good friend and chess Master, John Fincken. He enjoyed chess, music and traveling and loved his wife and son very much. He was rated 2300 as a teen and part of a New Jersey generation to replace the legends before them. Sadly his life ended all too soon at 38 following a heart attack. He was a great fan of chess theory and Anatoly Karpov was his favorite player. Inspired by his hero and some home preparation we had done on the phone, he played the best novelty of his career and the game he was most proud. He always wanted this game in Chess Life. I had told him that when I gave a simul, I didn't like to be attacked since the defense needs to be more accurate and he chose the Benko Gambit. He was stunned by the offer of a draw and accepted immediately, leading to a hero's write-up in the local paper. However, when he called and computers were used, black can really think about playing on! Please read further comments at my web page <http://www.geocities.com/bmcc333/jfincken.html>

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 c5 3. d5 b5 4. cxb5 a6 5. bxa6 g6 6. Nc3 Bxa6 7. e4 Bxf1 8. Kxf1 d6 9. g3 Bg7 10. Kg2 O-O 11. Nf3 Nbd7 12. Re1 Qa5 13. h3 Rfb8 14. Re2 Nb6! TN 15. Rc2 Na4 16. e5 Nxc3 17. bxc3 Nd7 18. e6 fxe6 19. dxe6 Ne5 20. Nxe5 Bxe5

½-½ A.Karpov-J.Fincken Simultaneous Exhibition New York 1995



A TN on the World Champion!



John made yearly trips to Amsterdam, insisting year after year that he would pay my way if I went. Trying to play professionally or attending school I never took him up on his offer but now I wish we could take that trip. Chess was more than a hobby to John but he also had some "normal" jobs. He worked at the Daily News, as an extra on daytime TV and for a Nasa sub-contractor involved with the space shuttle. I remember him and GM Anatoly Lein talking government work all the way home from one tournament. We formed a company to teach chess in the New Jersey schools, which led to my first chess job in a school. Years later I've used that reference for after-school, Saturday and night classes. More importantly, after you have learned how to teach 1st and 2nd graders you can teach anyone. I have John to thank for prodding me into taking that biggest 1st step into classroom instruction.

He loved chess, maybe more than anyone I have met. He had to have every informant and ECO as soon as it came out. I stopped buying ECO updates at edition 2. He had every ECO they ever printed. There is no doubt about who was his favorite player, Anatoly Karpov. We would argue on the phone long distance about what lines might work against him, how his style matched Fischer's and then ours. I remember mocking him more than once, "you act like we will get to play him". Incredibly, we both played him on his second go-round as world champion! John played him in a simul and I played him in a last round, board one game with the US Amateur East team title on the line. We studied for a month in preparation for his game and he took my advice to try and attack him and play the Benko Gambit. As it turns out he found a novelty at the board after Karpov varied from his known games. Black seems better but John was stunned into accepting a draw after Karpov extended his hand and said "draw?". He was so much better that I found a line over the phone without a board that led to a very strong position while he was using a computer to play Karpov's moves. His draw earned him a picture as hero in the local newspaper. Since Karpov grilled me in 30 moves I obviously should have spent more time considering the possibility that I might fulfill a dream akin to the chess version of Rocky and play the world champ with a title on the line. My team ruined their tiebreak and Karpov didn't get the team title so both our games had some happiness to their endings.

Ironically, John may have influenced the course of my game more than I did his. John told me later that he had been approached by Roman Dzindzichasvilli and Karpov and was asked what I had been playing lately. Knowing what I had been planning to play, he tried to misdirect them by saying a modern defense among other things. Somehow, probably not wanting to be annoyed, he played 1.c4 for one of the rare times in his life! I replied c6 trying to reach a normal Slav and many famous Karpov games. He played e4 keeping in line with how Dzindzi might punish my move order. I decided I had to call his bluff and played d5, he reached up and took exd5 but had to take a think after Nf6! transposed to the Center Counter, the opening I used to win the Tennessee state high school. After the game Karpov replied yes with a laugh when I asked him if he meant to play Dzindzi's move order and take everything. After I entered the g6 variation, by move 5, Karpov was in a position he had never played from either side!

Karpov proceeded to play into a Tal game from 1961 which I had not seen, or had long forgotten. Dzindzi asked me afterwards how I could take so long on forced moves. John tried to console me afterwards by saying he had heard of Russian analysis that said I turned down the normal book plan leading to a possible perpetual because my team needed a win. Karpov has played many openings over the years but also acknowledged after the game that it was his 1st white side of the Panov-Botvink attack in his pet Caro-Kann. With John's help, Karpov was on his own at move 5! That worked out great for Tony Miles with 1 a6 but with me it had the effect of waking an angry tiger. I think because of the interjections of Dzindzi and John I learned a lot more about what made Karpov tick. I was out-booked in an opening I had been winning with for 20 years and my opponent had never played. My second had done his job. In the parking lot when it was just Dzindzi and I, he tried to console me with "you were good after Nb6". Then he gave a chuckle, which I thought was an admission that team Karpov had been put through something they hadn't planned on. I have John and his "modern" comment to thank for the course of my life's most significant game. I think he had the best intentions for the game and dedicated a huge portion of his life to the game we all love. He died way too young but who can say what is a lifetime full of memories? The chess world will miss him. Here is the announcement I posted on the web site I host for team chess and following that is more analysis of his Karpov game.

Posted On 01/20/03 01:17PM

<http://boards.gamers.com/messages/overview.asp?name=RealWT&page=1>

I was just informed by his wife that John Fincken, known here as Clapton, passed away of apparent heart problems. I will print a more fitting obituary later, hopefully for Chess Life. He was about 38 and although he had health and personal problems previously, it is a terrible tragedy.

I will remember him for the organized way he and his wife attacked a big money Swiss. Coolers filled with all the right food and drinks with every detail taken care of in advance. Quite a refreshing contrast from my usual trip to the desk at 5 a.m. seeing if they have a room for early check-in or more often, another night in my van. Although they worked for years to have a child, finally successfully using in-vitro fertilization, his marriage ended about 2 years ago and he was never the same. Life as a single person didn't suit him and he spent considerable time trying to reunite with his wife. This Christmas they spent a lot of time together and had plans for him visiting her in North Carolina, where she moved, this Valentines.

He didn't like our form of team chess much, not enough action but he did like some of our positions and we would analyze them together. Mainly he came here to defend me and tell off some of the people from New Jersey who were using fake names and bad taste. Thanks buddy.

He liked to use the name Clapton as a log in name,

with good reason.

Nothing made him more proud than to have Clapton as a guest at his wedding and for him to play a song. His mother is involved in record production, if you were wondering. Once when we had tickets to a Clapton show, his wife's mother in law took ill and he ran off without leaving me directions to pick up the tickets. He always swore he would get me to another concert, but this was difficult, since Clapton was rarely touring. He fulfilled his promise of many years 100 fold by getting good seats to his very last concert in Madison square garden. Clapton, stinging from poor reviews, unleashed top songs that have never been performed together before and ended with "somewhere over the rainbow". A place I hope my old friend enjoys.

God bless John Fincken

Brian

Here is his game with full database comments.

1. d4

The Queen's gambit and Catalan have large amounts of theory but simply Nf3 and Bf4 are also possible. Most believe it is called the London System because Rubinstein used Bf4 extensively in London 1922, and they are right, but Capa used it years before (@1915) in London and Janowski used Bf4 in NY in the 19th century. The reversed opening is called the NY System, although I'm sure both have been played in each city. When Capablanca used Bf4 he first played h3, which has the modern benefit of being able to use black theory with the free h3! he later used Bf4 in NY 1910 (O-O-O!). Lasker used Bf5 to beat Reti in NY 1924 after Reti stopped Capa's legendary win streak. I recall a game of Janowski's from the 1800's played in New York d4 d5 Nf3 Nf6 Bf4 g6 Be5!?. When I mentioned this to IM M. Ginsburg he dubbed it the Janowski wedgie!! The very first World Championship game played by Steintz as black against Anderson went 1.d4 d5 2. e3 Bf5! The Queen's gambit was in its infancy and some of this database predates the emergence of the classical Queen's Gambit in the early 1900s. A sample Bookup repertoire is based on 1...d5, using the Queen's Gambit Accepted, but some of the variations may be reached by transposition after 1...Nf6.

Nf6

PV: Nc3 e6 Nf3 Bb4 Bg5 Bxc3+ bxc3 2.c4 leads to the Indian Defenses. A45 Queen's pawn game pv Nc3 d5 Qd3 Nc6 Nf3 e6 e4 Be7 exd5 exd5 Bf4 O-O O-O Be6 -13 [wow]

2. c4

PV: e6 Nf3 d5 cxd5 exd5 Nc3 Bb4 A50 Queen's pawn game pv d5 e3 Nc6 Nf3

Be6 c5 Qd7 Bd3 Bf5 O-O O-O-O +11 [wow]

c5

PV: dxc5 Na6 Nc3 Nxc5 b4 Ne6 A56 Benoni defence pv e3 cxd4 exd4 d5 Nf3 Nc6 cxd5 Nxd5 Bc4 +5 [wow]

3. d5

This is the Benoni Defense, an aggressive opening utilized by Fischer, Tal, and many other grandmasters. Some prefer to play ...c5 only after a White Nf3, which precludes the sharp lines which arise from the advance of White's f-pawn, such as Taimanov's Variation. Transpositions to and from the King's Indian Defense occur frequently. PV: d6 Nc3 Bf5 e3 e6 Nf3 pv e6 dxe6 fxe6 Nc3 Be7 e3 O-O Nf3 Ng4 Bd3 Bf6 Ne4 Be7 +2 [wow]

b5

This is the Benko Gambit, popularized by Pal Benko in the 1970's. Black sacrifices his queenside pawns in order to set up pressure along the resulting a and b-files. This is one gambit where the exchange of pieces does not necessarily benefit the defender. Perhaps the biggest effect of the gambit is to open up players to the idea that such positions are acceptable for Black. Similar gambits have been examined in the Benoni proper and King's Indian defense. Bl 46 PV: cxb5 d6 Nc3 Bf5 e3 Nbd7 A57 Benko gambit (Volga gambit) pv cxb5 e6 dxe6 fxe6 Nc3 d5 Nf3 Be7 e3 O-O Be2 c4 O-O Nbd7 +95 [wow]

4. cxb5

Based on 4...e6 PV: e6 dxe6 fxe6 Nc3 d5 Nf3 Bd6 pv e6 dxe6 fxe6 Nc3 d5 e4 d4 e5 Nd5 Nxd5 Qxd5 Qh5+ g6 Qe2 Be7 Bf4 +98 [wow]

a6

Based on 5 e3 PV: e3 e6 dxe6 fxe6 Nc3 d5 Nf3 A57 Benko gambit half accepted pv bxa6 Nxa6 Nc3 Qa5 Bd2 Qb4 Qc2 Rb8 Rb1 e5 a3 Qb3 Qd3 +121 [wow]

5. bxa6

PV: e6 dxe6 fxe6 Nc3 Bxa6 Bf4 A58 Benko gambit accepted pv e6 Nc3 exd5 Nxd5 Nxa6 Bg5 Be7 Nxe7 Qxe7 Nf3 O-O e3 Nb4 Bc4 Bb7 +135 [wow]

g6

pv e4 Bxa6 Bxa6 Rxa6 Nc3 Bg7 Be3 d6 +118 [Zarkov] g6 is now thought more accurate in case of b2-b3

6. Nc3 Bxa6

pv Nf3 Bg7 e4 Bxf1 Rxf1 d6 Ke2 O-O Bg5 +124 [Zarkov] Based on 7 Nf3

7. e4 Bxf1 8. Kxf1 d6

pv Nf3 Bg7 Ke2 O-O Re1 Ng4 Kf1 Nd7 Bd2 Qb6 b3 c4 +142 [wow]

9. g3

pv Bg7 Kg2 O-O Nf3 Nbd7 Qc2 Rb8 a4 Qa5 Bf4 Ng4 Rhc1 +142 [wow]

Bg7

pv Kg2 O-O Nf3 Ng4 Ng5 Ne5 f4 Ned7 Bd2 Na6 Qg4 Rb8 Rhb1 +126 [wow]

10. Kg2

pv Nbd7 Nf3 Rb8 a4 Qa5 Qe1 O-O Nd1 Qb4 Ng5 Qxe1 Rxe1 Ng4 +136 [wow]

O-O

pv Bg5 Nfd7 Nf3 Bxc3 bxc3 Nb6 Qd3 N8d7 Bh6 Re8 c4 Ra4 Rhc1 +141 [wow]

11. Nf3

A59 Benko gambit: main line pv Nbd7 Qe2 Nb6 Bd2 Nh5 Rhc1 Na4 Nxa4 Rxa4 Bc3 Bxc3 Rxc3 Nf6 +144 [wow]

Nbd7

pv Re1 Qb8 Re2 c4 Qc2 e6 a4 Re8 Bf4 exd5 exd5 Qb4 Nd4 +105 [Zarkov]

12. Re1

Bakalarz, M.-Ehrenfeucht, W. dr ch PL Porabka 1/2-1/2 Round 9 1986

Qa5 13. h3 Rfb8 14. Re2

Salov, V.-Seirawan, Y. Skelleftea 1/2-1/2 1989

e5 is the main line these days but Re2 still has some adherents, Korchnoi used it in 2000. Here is one of those moments where a teacher is more proud of a student than ever expected. As I recall, John told me he had remembered me saying something about playing Qa5 whenever possible. He knew he was in main theory and that e5 was a threat so he thought about Nb6 being used to slow e5 in the main line of g3-Bg2 lines. Darrel Royal, a coach at Texas, said luck was where preparation meets execution. John was lucky to discover the best theoretical novelty of his life while sitting across from the reigning world

champion. This wasn't the only time he used our preparation and made the coach proud. Once he used a line from my d4-Bf4 opening system to beat a 2300 quickly in the last round and win the NJ expert title around 2000. I remember he used the plan Qb1-a2 instead of the usual Qc2 in the position reversed and combined e4 control with an f7 attack to get a better game than usual.

Nb6! TN

A few years after this game Nb6 was used to score the full point in Kiss-Wege, Danube Open.

[Event "Danube Open"]
[Site "Aschach AUT"]
[Date "1998.???.??"]
[White "Kiss, A"]
[Black "Wege, J"]
[Result "0-1"]
[WhiteElo "2340"]
[BlackElo "2260"]
[ECO "A58"]
[Round "06"]

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 c5 3. d5 b5 4. cxb5 a6 5. bxa6 Bxa6 6. Nc3 g6 7. Nf3 d6 8. e4 Bxf1 9. Kxf1 Bg7 10. g3 O-O 11. Kg2 Nbd7 12. h3 Qa5 13. Re1 Rfb8 14. Re2 Nb6 15. Qc2 Nfd7 16. Nd1 Qa6 17. a3 Nc4 18. Ra2 Na5 19. Re3 Ra7 20. Bd2 Nc4 21. Re1 Nxd2 22. Nxd2 Ne5 23. Re3 g5 24. b3 g4 25. hxg4 Nxd4 26. Re1 Rab7 27. Ne3 Ne5 28. Nf5 Bf6 29. f4 Ng4 30. Kf3 h5 31. Rh1 c4 32. Qxc4 Rxb3+ 33. Ke2 Qa7 34. Nh6+ Nxd6 35. Nxb3 Ng4 36. Nd4 Bxd4 37. Rxh5 Bf6 38. Kf3 Ne3 39. Qd3 Qa4 40. e5 dxe5 41. Rg2 e4+ 42. Qxe4 Qd1+ 43. Re2 Rb3 44. Qh7+ Kf8 45. Qh6+ Ke8 46. Qh7 Qf1+ 47. Rf2 Nd1+ 0-1

15. Rc2 Na4

pv e5 Nd7 Nxa4 Qxa4 e6 fxe6 dxe6 Ne5 Nxe5 Bxe5 +66 [Zarkov]

16. e5

pv Nxc3 bxc3 Nd7 Bg5 dxe5 Bxe7 e4 Ng5 Bxc3 +43 [Zarkov]

Nxc3

pv Rxc3 Nd7 Ra3 Qc7 Rxa8 Rxa8 exd6 exd6 +50 [Zarkov]

17. bxc3

pv dxe5 Nxe5 Qa4 Nc6 Rb7 Rd2 Qc4 Qf3 +24 [Zarkov]

Nd7

pv e6 Bxc3 Rxc3 Qxc3 Bd2 Qd3 exd7 Qxd5 +41 [Zarkov]

18. e6 fxe6 19. dxe6 Ne5 20. Nxe5 Bxe5

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Here is one possible line to illustrate the potential for black to obtain the superior position. Obviously a world champion does not give draws too often with white when the game is just coming out of theory. He probably saw something he didn't like with his e6 pawn and possibly was discouraged by his queenside pawn's lack of mobility.

pv Qd3 c4 Qxc4 Rc8 Qe4 Bxc3 Rb1 Bg7 Bd2 Qd8 Rb7 +59 [Zarkov] pv Qd3 c4 Qxc4 Rc8 Qe4 Bxc3 Rb1 Qd8 Qd3 Bg7 +61 [Zarkov] pv Qd3 c4 Qxc4 Rc8 Qd3 Rxc3 Rxc3 Bxc3 +70 [Zarkov]

21. Qd3

pv c4 Qxc4 Rc8 Qe4 Bxc3 Bb2 Bxb2 Rxb2 Qc3 Rab1 Qf6 Rd2 Ra3 Rb7 +62 [Zarkov]

Qa4 22. Bg5 Qc6+ 23. Kg1 Rb7 24. Re1 Ra3 25. Rd1 Rba7

pv f4 Bd4+ Kh2 Bg7 Qc4 R7a4 Qe2 +71 [Zarkov]

26. f4 Bd4+ 27. Kh2 Bg7

pv Qc4 R7a4 Qe2 Re4 Qg2 d5 Rcd2 Rxc3 Rxd5 Qxe6 +22 [Zarkov]

28. Rb1

pv Qc8 Qc4 Qf8 Ra1 Qf5 Rcc1 +52 [Zarkov]

Qa8 29. Rbb2 d5

pv Qd2 R3a6 Qe3 d4 Qe2 dxc3 Rb5 Rxa2 Rxc5 +39 [Zarkov] pv g4 c4 Qd2 Qd8 Rb5 +32 [Zarkov]

30. Qd2 R3a6

pv Qe2 c4 g4 Qf8 Qe3 Ra8 Rd2 Rd8 +30 [Zarkov]

31. Qe2

pv Qc8 Qe1 h6 Bh4 d4 cxd4 Bxd4 Rb3 Rxa2 +13 [Zarkov] pv Qc8 Qe3 Ra4 Qf2 R4a6 Rb5 Qxe6 Rxc5 +24 [Zarkov]

Qc8

pv Qe1 h6 Bh4 d4 Qb1 Qxe6 Rb8+ Kh7 cxd4 cxd4 +35 [Zarkov] pv Qe1 h6 Bh4 d4 cxd4 Bxd4 Rb3 Rxa2 +17 [Zarkov]

32. Qe1

pv Ra3 Qe3 R3a4 Qd3 h6 Qxg6 hxg5 Qf7+ Kh8 fxg5 +5 [Zarkov]

Ra3

pv Bh4 d4 Qe2 Rxc3 Rxc3 dxc3 +40 [Zarkov]

33. Bh4 d4

pv Qe2 R3a6 Qb5 Rc7 cxd4 Bxd4 Rb1 Qxe6 +32 [Zarkov]

34. Qe2 Rxc3 35. Rxc3 dxc3 36. Rb5 Ra6

pv Qc4 Qxe6 Qxe6+ Rxe6 Rxc5 Re2+ Kh1 c2 Rc8+ Kf7 g4 -85 [Zarkov] pv Bxe7 Qxe6 Qxe6+ Rxe6 Rb8+ Kf7 Bxc5 c2 Rb7+ Kf6 Ba3 c1 Bxc1 Re2+ Kh1 Re1+ Kh2 Rxc1 Rxg7 Kxg7 -104 [Zarkov]