

MIHAIL MARIN CHESS

A MISSED INTERVIEW WITH A
LEGEND – VICTOR KORTSCHNOJ



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Introduction

Some time around March 2016 I planned making an interview with my greatest chess idol ever, Viktor L'vovich Kortschnoj. It soon became clear that travelling to his home town would not be indicated as his health condition was rather whimsy, so I decided to send him a series of questions through a connecting person.

Caught with several other projects, I moved on too slowly. Shortly after sending the questions by e-mail, the terrible notice arrived: the immortal Kortschnoj had passed away.

Time has come to pay a farewell tribute to my hero by publishing the interview as initially planned, but with my comments instead of his own answers.

"Dear and highly esteemed grandmaster Kortschnoj,

Much has been written and said about your chess life and games (I wrote several articles on you myself) you have published several books, but I believe that there is never enough when it comes to such a glorious and long career as yours. With this interview I will not try to "objati neobjatnoje" (comprehend the incomprehensible in Russian) but just to cast some light over a few memorable moments, mostly between

1974 and 1981, which were not only just some of your best years, but also

covered my childhood and teenage, a period when you were my indisputable chess "kumir" (idol in Russian). When asking the questions I have tried to remember my impressions from those times, not altered by more mature thinking. I will be happy if you just speak about the games mentioned below from what you remember, including all kind of psychological aspects and closely related off-board stories, without the need to analyze or properly comment them. I could do that for the readers starting from the hints you give me."

As you write in several editions of "Chess is my life" you were not in your best shape during the match against Mecking in 1974. But your superior class of play eventually prevailed and I believe the 5th game was quite relevant for it. You played some relatively modest opening, a reversed Queen's Indian and Black seemed to be fine most of the time but then you took advantage of your bishops' pair in the ending. Please talk about the psychological approach in that game and in the match and also about the critical moment when things started going your way in the game.

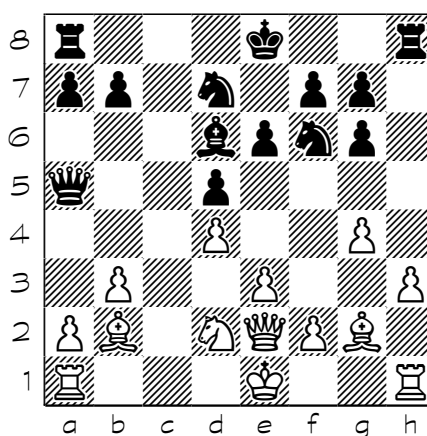
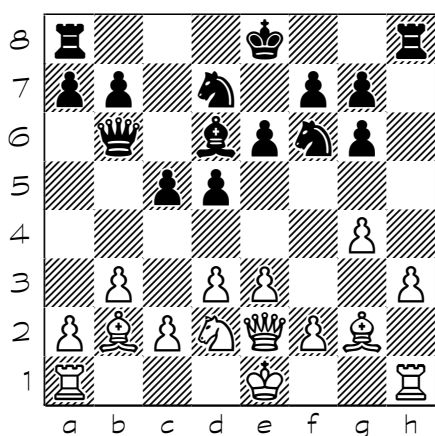
Kortschnoj - Mecking

Candidates quarter final match
Augusta 1974

1.♘f3 d5 2.b3 ♙g4 3.e3 ♘f6 4.♙b2
e6 5.h3 ♙h5 6.d3 c5 7.g4 ♙g6 8.♘e5
♘bd7 9.♘xg6 hxg6 10.♙g2 ♚b6
11.♚e2 ♙d6 12.♘d2

issue in the article dedicated to his
technique in handling the two
bishops.

13...♚a5 14.d4 cxd4 15.cxd4 ♙d6



White has adopted a flexible structure and his bishops' pair offers him the perspective on starting pawn play on either wing (for instance c2-c4 or g4-g5 and f2-f4). But Black has wisely kept his king in the centre thus avoiding exposing it to the aforementioned plans and with his next move will force White somewhat spoiling his position.

12...♙e5! 13.c3

An optically ugly, but nevertheless consistent move. The bishops' exchange would only leave White with weaknesses on dark squares. The ulterior course of the game will justify Kortschnoj's decision to keep the bishops' pair. More about this

The structure is almost symmetrical now, somewhat reminiscent of the exchange Slav. White's immediate problems are the positional threat ...♙a3 and the passive d2-knight.

16.a3 ♚c8 17.b4

This weakens the queenside chronically, but preventing the rook's intrusion with 17.♚d3 would run into 17...e5.

17...♚a4 18.0-0 0-0 19.♙fc1 ♘b6

Black is doing great by this moment, controlling the weak squares and threatening to take over the control of the open file with ...♙c2.

20.♚d3 ♚d7 21.♙ab1