

Waiting for the clock to start play at the 2018 Commonwealth Chess Championships, New Delhi



2022 Koshnitsky Medal

By Paul Glissan

In January this year the Australian Chess Federation (ACF) awarded the Koshnitsky Medal for lifetime achievement in chess administration at a national level to NSW barrister, Paul Glissan.

The Medal is named in memory of the late Australian Chess Master, Gary Koshnitsky MBE (affectionately known as 'Kosh'). Born in Moldova in 1907, he emigrated to Australia in 1926 and was a jeweller by trade. He was also a chess author and chess columnist. As a competitive chess player, he was Australian Champion in 1933 and 1939 (tied with former Hungarian Lajos Steiner), NSW champion seven times, Queensland champion three times and South Australian champion once. He captained the Australian Chess Olympiad team four times, was President of the ACF, an International Correspondence Chess Master, and an Honorary Member of the International Chess Federation (FIDE). He died in 1999 aged 92 years.

Koshnitsky and his wife Evelyn dedicated their lives to chess education, promotion

and administration, and were pioneers in developing junior chess in Australia, a development that has gathered strength ever since. He believed that chess builds character and develops the mind in many ways, including by improving analytical and calculating abilities and strategic planning.

In 1942, Koshnitsky and the famous Australian Chess Champion C J S Purdy, co-authored a chess beginners booklet titled 'Chess Made Easy', which originally sold for two shillings, and is still available today on ebay for \$20.99.

While Paul Glissan was playing inter-school chess at high school more than sixty years ago, he met Koshnitsky and his wife Evelyn on a number of occasions. Paul recalls Koshnitsky's ebullient personality, that he was an inspirational public speaker and natural leader.

Paul was nominated for the Medal by the immediate past editor of the ACF Newsletter, Frank Low, a retired solicitor who generously cited Paul's efforts and

achievements over a period of twenty years, including:

- ACF Honorary Secretary 1998;
- President of Norths Chess Club from 2008 until 2018;
- occupied central role in organising and hosting ACF's 2010 Australian Chess Championship, ACF's 2011 and 2013 Australian Open Chess Championships, FIDE Oceania Zone 2014 Seniors Chess Championship, FIDE Oceania Zone 2015 Chess Championship, and ACF's 2018 Australian Chess Championship;
- invited local Members of Parliament and other distinguished guests to attend opening or closing ceremonies of national events at Norths Chess Club (invitations were accepted);
- organised local print and live media coverage of national and international events at Norths Chess Club;

- presided over the growth of Norths Chess Club into one of the largest, most active and strongest chess clubs in Australia, during which period members Max Illingworth and Anton Smirnov achieved GM titles, many other members achieved other titles, and members represented Australia or Oceania Zone in Chess Olympiads and World or Commonwealth Chess Championships;

- led Australia's small contingent of players at 2018 Commonwealth Chess Championships at New Delhi, India.

Paul's leadership of 'a small contingent of players' at the 2018 Commonwealth Chess Championships at New Delhi, India, ended up involving minimal chess administration at a national level by him. The number of Australian players who competed shrank to two: a Sydney school boy and Paul. Donning the green and gold to play for Australia was the summit of Paul's personal chess achievement.

Paul was entered in the Seniors Division at New Delhi. On arrival, he found to his surprise that the Seniors Division was included in the Open Division, forcing him to compete against the strongest Commonwealth players of any age. Nevertheless, inspired by representing Australia, he drew his first game against a South African Master, won a game against a Ugandan Women's Master, and won another game against a strong Indian university student after seven rounds, finishing one point short of a Seniors Silver Medal.

Paul believes that playing chess has greatly benefitted his practise as a barrister, particularly in the conduct of litigation. Like chess, litigation is a gladiatorial contest, requiring analysis of issues, calculation, evaluation and strategic planning.

Law Professor Mark Kende of Drake University, USA, a high-level chess player, lists five reasons why playing chess makes you a better lawyer:

1. chess is intellectually rigorous, requiring concentration at a competitive level over as many as five or six hours;
2. a chess player and a lawyer must discover the key aspects of a situation;
3. strong performance in chess and law involves strategising effectively;
4. both chess and law have rules, general principles and exceptions;
5. success in chess and law requires a strong will to win and thorough preparation – on the other hand, both chess players and lawyers must cope with adversity, including losing.

Paul commends chess to everyone at the Bar – if you have time for it! **BN**

WHO COULD WIN?



PROBLEM

The position shown on the board above was reached after 30 moves of an actual competition game.

You are the white pieces.

And it is your move.

Black has a material advantage resulting from having captured your Rook and a positional advantage resulting from your draughty King's position.

Assume that on move 31 you move your Knight to a6, checking black's King.

Black did not capture your Knight with his b pawn, to avoid opening up the long white-squared diagonal and allowing you to deliver check-mate by moving your Queen to a8, supported by your Bishop on g2.

So, rather than exchanging the black Queen for your Knight, black simply moved his King to a8.

NOW, WHO COULD WIN?

SOLUTION

Paul Glissan provides the following analysis of the actual game in which he played the white pieces in the above scenario and discusses possible counter-factuals:

After a lengthy analysis I could not see how I could win, so on move 32 I moved my Knight to c7, checking black's King again. Rather than exchanging his Queen for my Knight again, black simply moved his King back to b8.

On move 33 I moved my Knight back to a6, checking black's King again. Black then realised that, by virtue of the threefold repetition of position rule, a draw was inevitable, and he graciously accepted a 'most beautiful draw'.

After the game I examined what would have occurred after move 32 had I, instead of moving my Knight to c7, moved my pawn to a5, threatening black's Queen, which could not have captured my pawn on b5 because I would then have been able to move my Knight to c7, checking black's King and simultaneously forking and capturing black's Queen.

The problem for me was that on move 32 black could have simply replied by exchanging his g Rook for my Bishop on g2. Then, if on move 33 I had captured black's Queen with my pawn, black could have moved his g Rook to g3, threatening to win my Queen and to eventually win the game.

The diagrammed position offers an exceptional challenge to chess engines and to live players to find the best continuation. Who could win? Or was a draw forced by white inevitable?