

A game of mistakes only?

Chess

Sadly, cleanliness does not seem to be one of our strongest traits. As I waited with my daughter, we watched the lady next to us taking the drinks and snacks on offer. I watched with dismay as she loaded her arms with as much as she could and told her son to do the same. In fact, it seemed to be the norm rather than the exception as people were constantly going to the galley and taking five drinks per person and as many biscuits as they could carry! No wonder the airline attendants were putting the snacks out with caution as they had to make the snacks and drinks last for the remainder of the flight. What I was thinking was that a) it was downright greedy, b) what kind of example was she setting for her son, teaching him to grab as much as possible just because it was free, and c) what kind of impression do we give people by behaving in such an uncivilised manner? Am I being too harsh? Possibly, but at some point free does not mean freeloading!

The flight was finally over and I heaved a sigh of relief and walked off the plane. Trust me, when you have three kids and hand luggage, running to get to the front of the queue is just not an option. The saying "never count your chickens till they're hatched" kept popping up in my head as I stood at the back of the queue at passport control. I really believe that even if they tried, the line could not have moved any slower. I felt as if I was watching things in slow motion. Forty-five minutes later when I was almost at the front of the line, an airport official asked me to go to a counter that was empty. As I showed the man at the counter my passport, he asked quite rudely why I had not stayed in my queue and that he couldn't see my passports because they weren't Bangladeshi and I was standing in the queue for people with "Bangladeshi Passports". Have any of you seen the Incredible Hulk? Apart from the size and colour, I could have been his stunt double. I figured that committing homicide would not get me out of the airport any faster so I told him as frostily as I could that the lady before me had a foreign passport, the official had asked me to move and lastly, if he didn't let me through I would let three tired and hungry children loose on him (okay, exaggerating again)! Well, he relented and typed our details into the computer--with one finger, of course.

At long last I could see the light at the end of the tunnel -- actually, what I could see in my mind's eye was food, sleep, family, sleep...Oh yes, I saw the girl with "Appu" - I swear she gave me a look and so did "Appu". (At this point you should hear scary music in the background). ■

S chess a game of mistakes only? For the beginner or the average player, that may be true. They usually wait for their opponents to make some horrible blunder and win without having to do anything. That's chess at the wood-pushers' level.

There are many types of mistakes, usually depending on the strength of the players. A wood-pusher hopes for a checkmate overlooked by the opponent. He is happy with the win since he knows that chess is a game of mistakes only. Move a little ahead, and you meet players who do not rely on gross oversights. They miss combinations of three or four moves, but not a knight fork or a mate in one. Moving further along the line, you find the masters who do not usually miss tactical threats. They commit positional mistakes which can be exploited only through patient manoeuvring. Then there is the super-master level where the mistakes are too subtle for lesser mortals like us to understand anything. The inanimate objects called chessmen come to life in the hands of a master. In fact, chess is played at so many levels that at times you may wonder whether they are playing the same game!

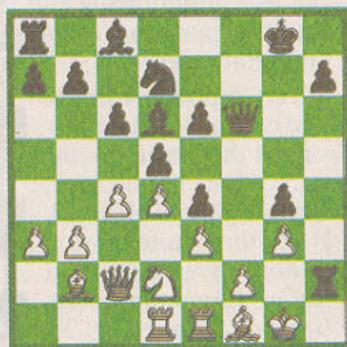
But even grandmasters do believe that mistakes, even elementary ones, influence the outcome of a game. I think it was Dr. S Tartakower (1887-1956) who said that the winner of a game is the player who makes the second last mistake. "Mistakes are there, just waiting to be made", was another of his many interesting observations. Try to work out the point of this one -- "Some players don't consider a move strong enough if it is not audible in the next room"!

Tartakower was a poet and linguist and, above all, a very witty man. He never quite rose to the very top, but was a leading player in the 1920's. He was not orthodox (no poet can ever be!). Nevertheless, his new ideas enriched the game in many ways.

Here is a game in which the Ukrainian master gives up a rook like a real gambler and then recovers his money with interest!

White-Geza Maroczy
Black-Savely Tartakower [A85]
Teplitz-Schoenau 1922

1.d4 e6 2.c4 f5 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.a3 Be7
5.e3 00 6.Bd3 d5 7.Nf3 c6 8.00 Ne4
9.Qc2 Bd6 10.b3 Nd7 11.Bb2 Rf6
12.Rfe1 Rh6 13.g3. Qf6 14.Bf1 g5
15.Rad1 g4 16.Nxe4 fxe4 17.Nd2
Rxh2 18.Kxh2 Qxf2+ 19.Kh1 Nf6
20.Re2 Qxg3 21.Nb1 Nh5 22.Qd2
Bd7 23.Rf2 Qh4+ 24.Kg1 Bg3 25.Bc3
Bxf2+ 26.Qxf2 g3 27.Qg2 Rf8 28.Be1
Rxf1+ 29.Kxf1 e5 30.Kg1 Bg4
31.Bxg3 Nxg3 32.Rel Nf5 33.Qf2
Qg5 34.dxe5 Bf3+ 35.Kf1 Ng3+ 0-1.



Position after 17...Rh2

-PATZER