

NEW ENGLANDER

Chess Club Update – Christmas 2015

Chairman's Chatter

'Tis the season of goodwill. Time, in our imagination at least, to sit by a roaring log fire, sample a glass or two of mulled wine and enjoy rather more mince pies than are strictly good for us. Yes, for a brief while, we can attune ourselves to a leisurely pace of life, banish memories of mental battles over the chessboard and indulge in that great Christmas tradition of relaxing in front of the television. Let's switch on and pass a pleasant hour watching nothing more stressful than a gruesome mystery...

Midwinter Murders

The programme is set in the seaside town of Playa Benoni on the east coast. A noble gentleman has just crossed the central square when he is jostled by youths of the Black Hand Gang. Is Mr W King seriously threatened or is it merely horseplay? It quickly becomes clear he was resigned to his fate but what was the fatal blow?¹



According to procedure, Inspector Ben Coe of the Chessex police reviews the background to the case in the hunt for clues. Just as Sherlock Holmes solved *The Hound of the Baskervilles* by noting the curious incident of the dog that did not bark in the night, the sleuth discovers the conspirators refrained from shaking hands at the start of the game. Why?²

The victim's evening started at the *The Dragon* tandoori but a Sicilian Defence was not served up and any mafia connection could be ruled out. In fact, after King's Indian, the game was proceeding smoothly until a ritual sacrifice b7-b5 increased the central tension.

Then, another body appears – this time, a suicide.



The black queen can give up her life for the benefit of her kin in an obvious insurance scam. How does Black get the best payoff?³

- i 14 ... Bxb5 15 Bxb5 Qxb5 16 axb5 Rxa1+
- ii 14 ... Nxe4 15 Qxe4 Bxb5 16 Bxb5 Qxb5 17 axb5 Rxa1+

Allegedly, this fraud went undetected by the Felony Investigation DEpartment and shortly afterwards, the future champion was tempted again.



Can Black cash in with 20 ... Rxf1 21 Kxf1 cxb4 22 Qc6 b3 23 Qxd5 b2 24 Qa2 Rc8?⁴

You have now read all the subtitles and are ready to retire to the drawing room for the denouement. So, who were the perpetrators?

Merry Combinations and a Happy New Year!

Paul Hanks