

## **HAVANA OLYMPIAD 1966**

The Havana Chess Olympiad 1966 was, by common consent, the most memorable of all the Olympiads. I was fortunate to be a member of the Irish team at the Olympiad.

### **Irish Team-Selection Method**

The Irish Chess Union decided on the following method to select the Irish team:

- (a) three automatic places were to be filled by ICU selection;
- (b) the remaining three places were to be determined on the basis of the result of an eight player candidates tournament to be held over the Easter weekend 1966;
- (c) seven automatic places in the candidates tournament were to be selected by the ICU. The eighth and final place in the tournament was to be filled in the following way:
  - (i) a preliminary mini tournament between three selected Leinster players; (ii) the winner of that tournament to play a two game match against a selected Munster player;
  - (iii) the winner of the match to qualify for the candidates tournament. I was one of the Leinster players selected for this cycle.

In the event, one of the players selected (I think it was Michael Littleton) to fill the automatic places on the Irish team was unable to play. The other two automatic choices were Wolfgang Heidenfeld, many times Irish Champion, and Brian Reilly, who had played on a number of Irish Olympiad teams and who had beaten grandmaster Reuben Fine at the 1935 Warsaw Olympiad.

### **Preliminary Tournament and Match**

The other players in the preliminary Leinster tournament were Barney O'Sullivan and Brian Canton. I won that tournament by beating Barney O'Sullivan and drawing with Brian Canton after a 74 move struggle where I was clearly inferior for much of the game and perhaps lost at one stage.

I then beat Liam Spillane of Munster 1.5 to 0.5 in the match to obtain the final place in the candidates tournament.

### **Candidates Tournament**

The other seven players in the candidates tournament, who had been selected automatically by the ICU, were Ray Cassidy, Eamonn Keogh, PJ Murphy and Donal Deiseach of Leinster and John Moles, Eugene O'Hare and Brian Kerr of Ulster.

The candidates tournament took place over the Easter weekend, 8 to 11 April inclusive. In the first round I was fortunate enough to draw with Black against Eugene O'Hare but I then

played what I consider to be one of the best games of my career against John Moles, who won the Irish Championship later that year, in the second round. This game is given below.

### **Cassidy,P - Moles,J [A72]**

**Dublin, 1966**

1.c4 Nf6 2.Nc3 g6 3.d4 Bg7 4.e4 0-0 5.Be2 d6 6.Bg5 c5 7.d5 e6 8.Nf3 exd5 9.cxd5 h6 10.Bh4 Re8 11.Nd2 Na6 12.0-0 Nc7 13.a4 g5 14.Bg3 Qe7 15.Qc2 Nd7 16.Nc4 Ne5 17.Ne3 Ng6 18.Bd3 h5 19.f3 Bd4 20.Bf2 Nf4 21.Nc4 Na6 22.Qd2 Qf6 23.Nb5 Bxf2+ 24.Rxf2 Rd8 25.Bf1 Ng6 26.Re1 Ne5 27.Nxe5 dxe5 28.Na3 b6 29.g3 Qg7 30.Kh1 Nb8 31.Qc3 Nd7 32.Nc4 f6 33.f4 g4 34.Bg2 Rf8 35.Nd6 h4 36.Nf5 Qh7 37.Nxh4 exf4 38.Rxf4 Ne5 39.Ref1 Ba6 40.Rd1 Bc8 41.Bf1 a6 42.Be2 Bd7 43.Rdf1 Qg7 44.a5 b5 45.Qxc5 Rac8 46.Qd6 Rc2 47.Rxf6 Rxf6 48.Rxf6 Rxe2 49.Qxe5 Rxe4 50.Qxe4 Qxf6 51.Qg6+ 1-0

A generous resignation but Black was lost.

Before I played 45 Qc5 I had to work out that the complications and exchanges after 45..... Rac8 would favour White. Not too easy in a situation of high tension and where the game was resumed on move 41 after a very short luncheon adjournment.

After I beat Moles I had three draws against Ray Cassidy, PJ Murphy and Brian Kerr. The games against Cassidy and Kerr were short draws but I gained a significant opening advantage as Black in a Sicilian Najdorf against Murphy and should have played on. I later won relatively easily as Black from the exact same position in an Armstrong Cup game.

This left me on 3 points from 5 rounds with Donal Deiseach to play next. In my pre tournament planning, I had counted on a win against Donal, especially as I was White. I was his bogey opponent. He had never beaten me and had often messed up very good and sometimes winning positions against me.

I duly beat Deiseach and now, as one of the joint leaders, I had to face my own bogey opponent Eamonn Keogh in the final round. Even at that time I had never done well against him (the situation has got worse since then and I have only beaten him once in nearly sixty years!).

So I approached the last round with a good deal of trepidation. I was Black and I needed something from the game to stay in contention for the Irish team. In the event, things turned out very well. I held my own in the opening against the Vienna game and then found a not too obvious Queen sacrifice for Rook and Bishop which gave me an advantage and at worst a forced repetition of moves. I opted for the latter as I did not wish to take any risks. Wolfgang Heidenfeld, who was watching the game, thought the sacrifice was quite original. Here is the game:

## Keogh,E - Cassidy,P [C30]

Dublin, 1966

1.e4 e5 2.Nc3 Nf6 3.Bc4 Bc5 4.f4 d6 5.Nf3 Nc6 6.d3 a6 7.fxe5 dxe5 8.Bg5 Qd6 9.Bxf6 Qxf6 10.Qd2 Be6 11.Bxe6 fxe6 12.Rf1 0-0 13.0-0-0 Qf4 14.g3 Qxf3 15.Rxf3 Rxf3 16.Re1 Rf2 17.Re2 Rf1+ 18.Re1 Rf2 19.Re2 Rf1+ 20.Re1 Rf3 21.Nd1 Nd4 22.Rh1 Nc6 23.Qg2 Raf8 24.c3 1/2-1/2

The final standings in the tournament were Ray Cassidy, Eamonn Keogh, Brian Kerr and I on 4.5 points; John Moles 3.5 points; P J Murphy 3 points; Donal Deiseach 2 points; and Eugene O'Hare 1.5 points.

I remember sitting in the pub with Ray Cassidy and Eamonn Keogh on the Easter Monday evening after the final round of the tournament had finished. We knew each other well from team tournaments and various chess events in Dublin and, indeed, from the poker school in which we were all members! At that stage we were not sure how the ICU would respond to the withdrawal of one of their automatic choices, ie, whether they would make another automatic selection (in which case they would have to pick three of the four joint winners of the candidate's tournament and leave one out) or select the whole four. We did not really care that night. We were all simply relieved to have successfully got through such an arduous tournament. I was particularly delighted to have also come through a tough qualification process to finish equal first in the tournament.



In the event, the ICU selected the four joint winners of the candidate's tournament for the Irish team. So I was going to represent my country in the Cuban Olympiad at the age of 24! It was a really proud moment for me.

### Havana Olympiad Selection tournament Dublin Easter holidays, ending 12 April

- 1=4. B. Kerr, P. Cassidy, R. Cassidy, E. Keogh 4.5/7
5. J. Moles 3.5
6. P.J. Murphy 3.0
7. D. Deiseach 2.0
8. E. O'Hare 1.5

(W. Heidenfeld, M. Littleton and B. Reilly were selected for the Olympiad. This tournament was held to fill the other 3 Olympiad places. Littleton had the choice to play in the Olympiad or the World Championship Zonal but a further play-off became unnecessary when Littleton opted to play in the Zonal instead. Keogh was his alternate).

## **The Irish Team**

The Irish team in board order was Wolfgang Heidenfeld, Ray Cassidy, Eamonn Keogh, Brian Reilly, Brian Kerr and I.

## **Off To Cuba**

We left for Cuba in October 1966. It was a very exciting time for me! But I nearly did not make it. I left my passport on the restaurant counter at Shannon Airport and was lucky that it was still there when I came back about a quarter of an hour later.

I believe that a picture of one or some of us appeared in one Irish newspaper, not because we were representing Ireland at chess but because we were the first Irish persons to fly from Shannon to Cuba!

It was an eventful enough flight. We flew into very strong winds at Gander in Newfoundland, our first stop. I remember that the plane rocked from side to side during the landing. The take-off from Gander for Havana was worse with the plane struggling in even stronger winds to get off the tarmac. Luckily it did!

I also remember that when we flew over Cuba on our way to landing in Havana I was struck by how brown and parched the fields looked compared to the green of Ireland. This was my first long haul flight and indeed practically my first flight of any great significance.

The flight, which had originated in Prague prior to landing at Shannon, carried the players of many of the teams participating in the Olympiad. A number of our players who had been at earlier Olympiads were very glad to meet and exchange news and views with old acquaintances. It was interesting for me to see the strong and friendly rapport as people reminisced about previous Olympiads and discussed chess matters in general.

## **Reception at Havana Airport**

Two things struck me immediately on disembarking from the plane at Havana Airport. The first was the heat which was entirely different to anything I had experienced in Ireland.

The second was the sheer warmth of the welcome awaiting us. There was a big crowd at the airport, including quite a number of Cuban dignitaries. A special cocktail reception was laid out (at about 7am in the morning!) and there was a large spread of food which was most welcome. There was even a band playing the Cuban national anthem and what I later learned was the FIDE hymn.

I had bought a large furry hat at Shannon Airport. Totally unsuited to the Cuban weather, it attracted a good deal of attention. As Wolfgang Heidenfeld said in his report of the Olympiad in the British Chess magazine, "the crowds too had their shocks such as the sight

of Paul Cassidy's bearskin cap stoically worn throughout the proceedings regardless of climatic conditions". A picture of me wearing the hat with Ray Cassidy appeared in the Cuban national newspaper.

### **Pre Tournament Events**

When we arrived in Cuba it was about a week before the Olympiad began and there were many memorable moments, both official and unofficial, in that period.

Nothing was too good for the competing teams in the Olympiad and we were treated with lavish hospitality from the moment we arrived.

All the teams were housed in the Havana Libre, a huge and magnificent hotel in the middle of Havana. It was formerly the Havana Hilton which was renamed after the Revolution.

The hotel was the epitome of luxury. We were wined and dined like royalty. There was an excellent bar and night club where very cheap drinks (including very strong rum) were available and where groups of performers (led by the top of the bill Madame Pa Cha), entertained us with singing and cabaret. The food, especially the sea food, was wonderful. Each team had its own table in the huge dining room. Our bedrooms (two people sharing) were comfortable and spacious. I shared with Eamonn Keogh.

Each team was provided their own Cadillac with a guide/interpreter. Ours was Nelson and he could not do enough for us. Interestingly, the only black guide was assigned to the South African team. Coincidence or deliberate policy, it meant the end of apartheid for the next five weeks.

The friendliness of the people was genuine and exceptional. Everywhere we went we got a great reception. We were treated like chess elite. It was a unique experience to be surrounded by a very enthusiastic group of people looking for your autograph, an enthusiasm which did not diminish even when you lost an impromptu game or two against them.

One of the big attractions in Havana was the huge ice cream palace located near our hotel. We spent many a pleasant time there eating ice cream up to 3am in the morning in very balmy weather.

We also spent a lot of time in the large pool of the hotel. Many of the locals probably thought we were a bit odd as it was the Cuban autumn (indeed we never saw a Cuban in the pool). As I mentioned earlier, however, the temperature was much higher than anything we had experienced in Ireland. We were sometimes joined at poolside for a game of cards by Boris Spassky from the Russian team. He was extremely friendly and later became world champion.

In fact one of my abiding memories of the Havana Olympiad was to see the chess greats, Bobby Fischer, Tigran Petrosian (then world champion) and others at close quarters. Most of them were very friendly and approachable.

I had my own very memorable experience of meeting a chess great which I outline below.

### **Encounter with Michael Tal**

One day I was alone in the hotel lift when it stopped at a particular floor and in walked Michael Tal, the ex-World Champion and a legend of the game. He smiled, extended his hand and said "Tal". I shook his hand and said "Cassidy", hardly a household name in the world of chess! The lift stopped shortly afterwards and Tal got out, nodding and smiling goodbye.

Although the encounter lasted a very short time, it was definitely one of the most memorable moments of my chess career.

### **Official pre Olympiad Events**

We were taken to the Havana Chess Club and shown the chess set and pieces on which the world championship match between Capablanca and Lasker was played. This was a really memorable and in some ways emotional experience.

A very comprehensive entertaining programme was laid on for the teams. We were taken to various functions and events, too numerous to mention. But one event stood out and made a memorable impression on all of us. That was an open air banquet for all the teams under a cloudless night blue sky in the beautiful old world Plaza de La Cathedral. Each team had its own beautifully decorated table where a wide variety of food, copious drinks and unlimited cigars were available. This was followed by all sorts of music ranging from Cuban opera and folklore songs and dancing. While things may have got a little fuzzy towards the end of the night, it was definitely a very memorable experience.

The last pre-tournament event was the official opening of the Olympiad in a huge sports arena with Fidel Castro and about 15,000 people present. A chess ballet was staged representing the Lasker-Capablanca game from the Moscow 1936 tournament. It was lavishly costumed and beautifully produced.

### **The Olympiad**

After all of the events and activities it was almost a relief to begin playing chess with the start of the Olympiad on 25 October (it lasted until 20 November).

The playing area for the Olympiad was the second floor of the Havana Libre hotel. This was a huge hall which easily accommodated the 104 boards of the tournament and also allowed some seating and standing accommodation for spectators.

## The Preliminary Groups

There was a record entry of 52 teams in the Olympiad and the same qualification arrangements were adopted as in the previous Olympiad at Tel Aviv.

There were seven preliminary groups, from which two teams would qualify for final Section A, two for final Section B, two for final Section C, and one for final Section D.

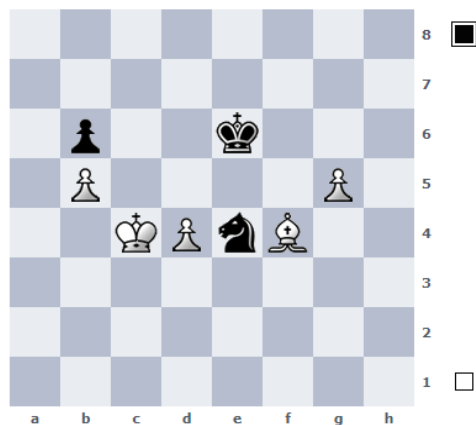
We were drawn in a group comprising Argentina, Denmark, England, France, Chile and South Africa. This was a tough group and our first objective was to qualify for Section C which we had made at the Tel Aviv Olympiad.

I did not play in our first round match against Chile which ended in a very satisfactory and possibly a little surprising 2.5-1.5 win for us. In that match Wolfgang Heidenfeld withdrew both Knights to their starting squares in the first nine moves but later won an interesting tactical struggle.

My first game for Ireland was against England in the next round where I played Norman Littlewood. To be frank, I was as nervous as a kitten approaching this game where I was Black. I lost two pawns in the first 20 moves of a Nimzo Indian by woeful play and had a completely lost position. I managed, however, to make it difficult for him by establishing a Knight at d5 which he found hard to dislodge and I reached the adjournment still lost but with some honour restored.

After the adjournment the following position was reached on move 53 with Black (me) to move:

This ending is, of course, completely won for White with patient play but I was hoping that Littlewood, a very sharp and tactical player, would go for a quick fix.



It duly happened. I played 53.....Kf5 and he replied 54 Kd5 (Bc7 wins). The game continued: 54.....Kf4; 55. g6, Kf5; 56. g7, Nf6+; 57. Kc6, Kg6; 58. Kb6, Kg7; 59. Kc6, Kf7; 60. b6, Ke7. Draw!

Naturally I was delighted with this result. I felt I had got out of goal which I undoubtedly had.

We lost narrowly to England by 2.5-1.5 which was an excellent result for us. It could have been even better as Brian Kerr missed several forced wins against Hartson. He eventually drew an ending with Queen and two pawns against Rook, Bishop and pawn.

I again played in the third round against France and again I lost a pawn within 20 moves. This time I confined it to one and eventually drew the game after the adjournment by creating a very unbalanced and tactical position where I had chances and where my opponent was happy to accept my draw offer.

We drew 2-2 with France and were now level with England with only one loss in our first three matches. This was unheard of for a country that had barely made the third section in the Tel Aviv Olympiad. It was by far the best performance of any Irish team in an Olympiad to date.

The scores after 3 rounds were Denmark 7.5; Argentina 7; England 6; Ireland 6; France 5; South Africa 3; Chile 1.5. Denmark, Argentina and Chile had had the bye to date.

At this half way stage in the group it seemed clear that England would qualify for final Section B and that the battle for the remaining place in Section B would be between us and France.

I did not play in the fourth round (or in any further preliminary round match) where we lost 3.5 to 0.5 to Denmark. Since France were beaten 3-1 by Argentina we remained ahead of them by half a point.

Wolfgang Heidenfeld had a great result in this match by drawing with Bent Larsen, one of the top players in the world. This is the game:

### **Heidenfeld, Wolfgang — Larsen, Bent**

**Havana Olympiad prelim 1966, Havana CUB, 1966, ½-½**

1. e4 c5 2. c3 Nf6 3. e5 Nd5 4. Nf3 Nc6 5. Na3 g6 6. g3 Bg7 7. Bg2 O-O 8. O-O d6 9. exd6 Qxd6 10. d4 cxd4 11. Nb5 Qc5 12. Nbx d4 Rd8 13. Qa4 Nb6 14. Qb5 Qxb5 15. Nx b5 e5 16. Bg5 f6 17. Bc1 Bf5 18. Na3 Na4 19. Re1 Rd7 20. Bf1 Rad8 21. Bb5 Nc5 22. Be3 Nd3 23. Bxd3 Bxd3 24. Rac1 h6 25. Red1 f5 26. Ne1 Ba6 27. Rxd7 Rxd7 28. b4 Bf8 29. Nec2 Bd3 30. b5 Ne7 31. c4 Nc8 32. c5 a6 33. bxa6 Bxa6 34. Nb4 Be2 35. Nc4 Bg7 36. c6 bxc6 37. Nxc6 e4 38. N4e5 Rd6 39. Nd4 Ba6 40. f4 Ne7 41. Nb3 Rd5 42. Nc6 Nxc6 43. Rxc6 Be2 44. Rc8+ Kf7 45. Rc7+ Kg8 46. Rc8+ Kf7 1/2-1/2

The wheels came off in the next round where we lost 2.5-1.5 to South Africa. This was a most disappointing result since South Africa finished last in the group. It greatly damaged our chances of finishing ahead of France who beat Chile 2.5-1.5 and thus moved half a point ahead of us.

We had a bye in the sixth round and France lost 2.5-1.5 to England. Since they had the bye in the final round, this meant we had to score 1.5 points against Argentina to catch them, virtually an impossible task.



In the final round that impossible task became a sad reality. We lost 4-0 to Argentina. This was not surprising since they fielded Grandmasters Najdorf, Panno and Bolbochan on the top three boards.

The final standings in our preliminary group were: Argentina 20.5; Denmark 18; England 15; France 9.5; Ireland 8; Chile 7 and South Africa 6.

### Qualifying group 4

fin	no	team	code	flag	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	pts	MP	S-B	+	=	-
A	1.	Argentina	<a href="#">ARG</a>		•	$\frac{2}{\frac{1}{2}}$	$\frac{3}{\frac{1}{2}}$	$\frac{3}{\frac{1}{2}}$	$\frac{4}{\frac{1}{2}}$	$\frac{4}{\frac{1}{2}}$	$\frac{4}{\frac{1}{2}}$	20 $\frac{1}{2}$	12	63.5 0	6	0	0
	2.	Denmark	<a href="#">DEN</a>		$\frac{1}{\frac{1}{2}}$	•	$\frac{1}{\frac{1}{2}}$	$\frac{3}{\frac{1}{2}}$	$\frac{3}{\frac{1}{2}}$	$\frac{4}{\frac{1}{2}}$	$\frac{4}{\frac{1}{2}}$	18	8	30.5 0	4	0	2
B	3.	England	<a href="#">ENG</a>		$\frac{1}{\frac{1}{2}}$	$\frac{2}{\frac{1}{2}}$	•	$\frac{3}{\frac{1}{2}}$	$\frac{2}{\frac{1}{2}}$	$\frac{3}{\frac{1}{2}}$	$\frac{2}{\frac{1}{2}}$	15	10	48.5 0	5	0	1
	4.	France	<a href="#">FRA</a>		$\frac{1}{\frac{1}{2}}$	$\frac{1}{\frac{1}{2}}$	$\frac{1}{\frac{1}{2}}$	•	$\frac{2}{\frac{1}{2}}$	$\frac{2}{\frac{1}{2}}$	$\frac{2}{\frac{1}{2}}$	9½	5	17.0 0	2	1	3
C	5.	Ireland	<a href="#">IRL</a>		0	$\frac{1}{\frac{1}{2}}$	$\frac{1}{\frac{1}{2}}$	$\frac{2}{\frac{1}{2}}$	•	$\frac{2}{\frac{1}{2}}$	$\frac{1}{\frac{1}{2}}$	8	3	11.7 5	1	1	4
	6.	Chile	<a href="#">CHI</a>		0	0	$\frac{1}{\frac{1}{2}}$	$\frac{1}{\frac{1}{2}}$	$\frac{1}{\frac{1}{2}}$	•	$\frac{3}{\frac{1}{2}}$	7	2	6.00	1	0	5
D	7.	Republic of South Africa	<a href="#">RSA</a>		0	0	$\frac{1}{\frac{1}{2}}$	$\frac{1}{\frac{1}{2}}$	$\frac{2}{\frac{1}{2}}$	$\frac{1}{\frac{1}{2}}$	•	6	2	8.00	1	0	5

While we had a disappointing finish, our performance was a distinct improvement on our past Olympiad efforts. We were only outclassed by Argentina and Wolfgang Heidenfeld had a very creditable performance on top board with 3 points from six games. Our other individual results were Ray Cassidy 1/5; Eamonn Keogh 2/6; Brian Reilly 0.5/2; Brian Kerr 0.5/3; Paul Cassidy 1/2.

### Final Group C

We had a mixed performance in this final group of 14 which was won by Italy. We finished twelfth with 21 points from our 13 matches.

Our performance was typical of the sort of Irish sporting performances not confined to chess, ie, we did relatively well against the strong teams and not so well against the weaker ones. Of the top six teams in the group, we beat the third and fourth placed teams (Philippines and Greece) and drew against the fifth and sixth placed teams (Uruguay and Tunisia). At the other end, we lost against the bottom team (Luxembourg) and drew with the second last team (Puerto Rico). Our draw against Puerto Rico was in the final round after five hard weeks of chess where people were getting a little tired.

This was the first time ever in an Olympiad where Ireland was offered a package 2-2 draw not once but twice (by Uruguay and Puerto Rico). Before this, any captain taking such an action would probably have been sent forthwith to an asylum. It was a reflection of our new found status in the chess world (maybe it started with my encounter with Tal!).

I suffered my two losses of the Olympiad in this section. In the first, I was well beaten by Norcia of Italy. The second, however, which occurred against Chile, was a different story. As Wolfgang Heidenfeld said, referring to this game in his report for the British Chess Magazine, "Chile got their revenge against Ireland for their preliminary round defeat but not without fear and trembling".

This is the game in question:

**Pablo Vergara vs Paul L Cassidy**

Havana ol (Men) fin-C (1966), Havana CUB, rd 7, Nov-?? King's Gambit: Accepted. Abbazia Defense [\(C36\)](#) 1-0

1.e4 e5 2.f4 exf4 3.Nf3 d5 4.exd5 Nf6 5.c4c6 6.dxc6 Nxc6 7.d4 Bg4 8.d5 Bc5 9.Nbd2 Qb6 10.Qa4 Bf2+ 11.Kd1 Qe3 12.dxc6 Qe1+ 13.Kc2 Bf5+ 14.Bd3 Bxd3+ 15.Kxd3 O-O-O+ 16.Kc2 Qxh1 17.cxb7+ Kb8 18.b4 Qxg2 19.Bb2 Rhe8 20.Qb5 Ng4 21.Bc3 Re2 22.Kb3 Rd3 23.Qc6 Rd8 24.Ne5 Qxc6 25.Nxc6+Kxb7 26.Nxd8+ Kc7 27.Nxf7 Be1 28.Nf1 Bxc3 29.Kxc3 Nxb2 30.Nxb2 Rxb2 31.Ng5 Kd7 32.Rd1+Ke7 33.c5 h6 34.Ne4 f3 35.c6 f2 36.c7 Rh3+ 37.Kc4 1-0

On move 17 I could have played Kb7 with a probable draw. I considered, however, that my game was much better and I was playing for a win. I did not want to give White the possibility of perpetual check after Kb7 so I decided to leave the White pawn on b7 untouched and use it to shelter my King on b8. I paid dearly for that decision later!

If my loss to Vergara was somewhat unlucky, my sole win against Khalid Mohsen of Tunisia had a bit of good fortune about it. This was another wild and woolly game where I got an excellent position but started to lose my way in the late middlegame. Fortunately, however, my opponent went wrong with 38... Nc5 (38... c2 would have given him a very strong position and probably winning position) and I was able to simplify into a winning endgame an exchange up. Here is the game:

**Paul L Cassidy vs Khalid Mohsen**

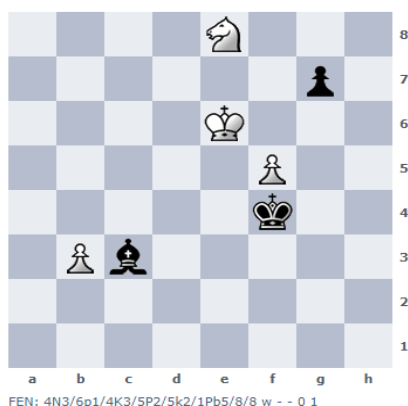
Havana ol (Men) fin-C (1966), Havana CUB, rd 4, Nov-?? Benoni Defense: Old Benoni [\(A43\)](#) 1-0

1.d4 c5 2.d5 d6 3.c4 g6 4.Nc3 Bg7 5.e4a6 6.a4 e6 7.Be2 exd5 8.cxd5 Ne7 9.Nf3 Bg4 10.Bf4 Bxf3 11.Bxf3 O-O 12.Qd2 f5 13.O- O Kh8 14.Rfe1 Qc7 15.e5 Nc8 16.exd6 Nxd6 17.Re6 Nc4 18.d6 Nxd2 19.dxc7 Nxf3+ 20.gxf3 Nc6 21.Nd5 Nd4 22.Re7 Nc6 23.Rd7 Be5 24.Bh6 Rg8 25.Nb6 Rae8 26.c8=Q Rxc8 27.Nxc8 Rxc8 28.Re1 Bxb2 29.Rxb7 Bc3 30.Re6 Kg8 31.Rd6 Nd8 32.Ra7 Nf7 33.Rd3 Bd4 34.Bc1 Ne5 35.Ra3c4 36.Rxa6 c3 37.Rb3 Nd3 38.Ba3 Nc5 39.Bxc5 c2 40.Ba3 1=Q+ 41.Bxc1 Rxc1+ 42.Kg2 Rc2 43.Rb7 Rc8 44.Ra5 Bc5 45.Rab5 Bd6 46.R5b6 Be5 47.Rb8 Rxb8 48.Rxb8+ Kg7 49.a5 Kf6 50.a6 Ke6 51.Rb7 1-0

An unusual game in which both sides queened pawns. I still remember to this day the look of thunder of my opponent **face** when he realised he had badly blundered with 38....Nc5?.

In our match against the Philippines, I had a very interesting ending against F. Campomanes who later became famous as President of Fide during the marathon first match between Karpov and Kasparov for the world championship. That was the match that was finally abandoned, Campomanes playing a central role in the decision much to Kasparov's annoyance.

Anyway, back to our game. I had a very good position with winning chances in the early middlegame but once again I messed things up nearing the adjournment. The critical position arose well into the second session with White to play:



Subsequent analysis established that this position could only be won (if at all) with long and patient manoeuvring by White but, just like Littlewood in the first round, Campomanes went for a quick kill with 57 Ng7, Bg7; 58 b4, Ke4; 59 b5, Bd4! (the only move subsequent analysis established that this position could only be won (if at all) with long and patient manoeuvring by White but, just like Littlewood in the first round, Campomanes went for a quick kill with 57 Ng7, Bg7; 58 b4, Ke4; 59 b5, Bd4! (the only move). Drawn

The final position is a mutual zugzwang. If it is Black to move, he loses. With White to move, he concedes the draw whatever move he chooses.

This position appeared in a book published in Czechoslovakia called "Chess Olympics", which took interesting positions from all the Olympiads held since 1933. I was chuffed that I was one of the few Irish players up to that time to have a game or position published which was not a loss! Wolfgang Heidenfeld told me later when we returned home that the position was also published in an East German chess magazine.

Looking back at it, my endings against Littlewood and Campomanes had some almost uncanny similarities. Both players went for a quick kill by sacrificing a piece but were thwarted by the heroic defence of my remaining piece.

My final game from the Olympiad was against Christos Papapostolou of Greece and it was one I should probably have won. It featured some original opening play.

#### [Paul L Cassidy](#) vs [Christos Papapostolou](#)

Havana ol (Men) fin-C (1966), Havana CUB, rd 8, Nov-??

King's Indian Defense: Zinnowitz Variation ([E90](#)) · 1/2-1/2

1.c4 Nf6 2.Nc3 g6 3.e4 d6 4.d4 Bg7 5.Nf3 O-O 6.Bg5 h6 7.Bd2 c5 8.d5 e6 9.Qc1 Kh7 10.h4 exd5 11.cxd5 Re8 12.Bd3 Na6 13.Kf1 Nb4 14.Bb1 b6 15.e5 dxe5 16.h5 Ng4 17.hxg6+ fxg6 18.Bg5 Qd6 19.Nh2 Nxf2 20.Kxf2 hxg5 21.Nf3+ Kg8 22.Qxg5 Qf6 23.Qxf6 Bxf6 24.Bxg6 Rd8

25.Be4 Bb7 26.Rad1 c4 27.Ke3 a6 28.Rh6 Rd6 29.Rh5 Bg7 30.a3 Nd3 31.Bxd 3cxd3 32.Rxd3 Re8 33.Ke4 Rde6 34.Rd1 b5 35.Rd3 Rg6 36. Rg5 Kf7 37.Rxg6 Kxg6 38.Nh4+ Kf7 39.Nf3 Bf6 40.Rd1 Rg8 41.Rd2 Re8 42.Kf5 Bc8+ 43.Ke4 Kg6 44.d6 Bf5+ 45.Ke3 e4 46.d7 Bxd7 47.Rxd7 exf3+ 48.Kxf3 Bxc3 49.bxc3 Re6 50.Ra7 Kf5 51.c4 bxc4 52.Rc7 Rb6 1/2-1/2 Draw

Once again I was in extreme time trouble (the time allowed for each player was 2.5 hours for 40 moves) and I was not sure how many moves I had made. I remember I played 42 Kf5 “just to be sure”. Instead I think 42 g4 wins. I saw this move over the board but I had no time to analyse it as I was worried about making the time control.

The move 51 c4 simply lost my extra pawn. The game might well have been drawn at that stage but I could have continued it a pawn up as I was in no danger of losing.







I remember that as soon as I saw I was losing my extra pawn I quickly agreed a draw with my opponent. Wolfgang Heidenfeld was wandering around looking at the adjourned games being played and was nearing our table. I wanted the pieces back in the box before he arrived. Wolfgang did not take too kindly to Irish players overlooking pawn losses!

In looking over my games for this article I noticed that quite a lot of them were long games continuing well after the adjournment. I had not realised that at the time. They were also a good deal more tactical than my normal positional approach.

## Standings



n o .	team	co de	flag	2 9	3 0	3 1	3 2	3 3	3 4	3 5	3 6	3 7	3 8	3 9	4 0	4 1	4 2	pt s	M P	S- B	+	=	-
2 9 .	Italy	<a href="#">ITA</a>		•	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>2 1/2</u>	<u>2 1/2</u>	<u>3 1/2</u>	<u>2 1/2</u>	<u>2 1/2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>2 1/2</u>	<u>3 1/2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>3 1/2</u>	38	25	309.25	12	1	0
3 0 .	Mongolia	<a href="#">MGL</a>		<u>2</u>	•	<u>1</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>3 1/2</u>	<u>1 1/2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3 1/2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>2 1/2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>2 1/2</u>	33 1/2	20	241.25	9	2	2
3 1 .	The Philippines	<a href="#">PHI</a>		<u>1</u>	<u>3</u>	•	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>2 1/2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3 1/2</u>	<u>2 1/2</u>	<u>1 1/2</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>3</u>	31	17	209.25	7	3	3
3 2 .	Greece	<a href="#">GRE</a>		<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	•	<u>2 1/2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2 1/2</u>	<u>2 1/2</u>	<u>2 1/2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>1 1/2</u>	<u>3 1/2</u>	<u>4</u>	29	17	201.00	7	3	3
3 3 .	Uruguay	<a href="#">URU</a>		<u>1 1/2</u>	<u>1 1/2</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1 1/2</u>	•	<u>3 1/2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2 1/2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3 1/2</u>	28	14	160.50	5	4	4
3 4 .	Tunisia	<a href="#">TUN</a>		<u>1 1/2</u>	<u>2 1/2</u>	<u>1 1/2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>1 1/2</u>	•	<u>2</u>	<u>2 1/2</u>	<u>2 1/2</u>	<u>2 1/2</u>	<u>2 1/2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2 1/2</u>	<u>2</u>	26 1/2	16	194.75	6	4	3
3 5 .	Turkey	<a href="#">TUR</a>		<u>1 1/2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	•	<u>1 1/2</u>	<u>2 1/2</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>2 1/2</u>	<u>2 1/2</u>	<u>3</u>	25 1/2	14	164.00	5	4	4
3 6 .	Venezuela	<a href="#">VEN</a>		<u>1 1/2</u>	<u>1 1/2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>1 1/2</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1 1/2</u>	<u>2 1/2</u>	•	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2 1/2</u>	25	12	138.75	4	4	5
3	Portugal	<a href="#">POR</a>		<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	•	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>2</u>	2	1	11	3	4	6

7 .		<u>R</u>		$\frac{1}{2}$			$\frac{1}{2}$		$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$			$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$				5	0	3.00				
3 8 .	Chile	<u>CHI</u>		$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	2 3 $\frac{1}{2}$	9	10 0. 00	4	1	8
3 9 .	Ecuador	<u>ECU</u>		$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	2 3 $\frac{1}{2}$	8	84 .5 0	3	2	8
4 0 .	Ireland	<u>IRL</u>		$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	2 1	9	12 0. 00	3	3	7
4 1 .	Puerto Rico	<u>PU R</u>		$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	1 8 $\frac{1}{2}$	6	68 .5 0	1	4	8
4 2 .	Luxembourg																							

### End of Event Dinner

Towards the end of the tournament the Cuban Government organised a dinner for all the teams. This was a really lavish event where Fidel Castro presided.



Each team had its own table with a Cuban dignitary in attendance. I discovered afterwards that ours was the Minister for Finance.

The food was top class and the drink was copious. There was a bottle of rum, whiskey, brandy and I think vodka at each table (between seven people!). Naturally everybody got a little high. In the bus home I remember one of our players, who shall be nameless, wrestling with Stein the Russian grandmaster over a bottle of rum. Stein might have been one of the best players in the world at the time but he lost that particular struggle!

### **Simultaneous Display**

I returned home shortly before the Olympiad ended and thus missed the Simultaneous Display which took place in the Plaza de la Revolution on Capablanca Day, 19 November.

This was a spectacular event, beating anything that had gone before. A total of 380 players from the visiting teams and strong local players played 18 players each, giving an overall total of 6,840 boards! The world champion Tigran Petrosian had Fidel Castro among his opponents.

Unfortunately it was the only event which went wrong through no fault of the Cuban organisers. It opened with a spectacular display of fireworks and ended with a spectacular display of waterworks. After five weeks of glorious sunshine, the weather broke that night after about one hour's play into the simultaneous with a torrential downpour which drenched most of the participants with the exception of the few lucky enough to find shelter. Effectively the event was abandoned.

### **Summary of Ireland's Performance**

We finished 40th out of 52 teams with a total score (preliminaries and finals) of 9 wins, 40 draws and 27 losses.

This does not appear to be a great result but in fact it was the best performance of any Irish team in an Olympiad to date. It also represented a significant change in selection approaches and attitudes. Heretofore, some players on Irish Olympiad teams were those who had the time and money to travel. For whatever reason, stronger players did not make the team. That situation had been gradually changing but Cuba was the first time where the individual members of the Irish team were active players at a high level and were clearly among the top players in the country.

The Cuban Olympiad thus saw a new beginning for Irish chess. With players of the calibre of Littleton, Moles and McGrillen available, and with other strong players later emerging, Ireland began to field strong teams in the Olympiads and to enhance its position and reputation in the world of chess.

### **Individual Performances**

The individual performances of the Irish team were:

Player	Played	Points	%
W Heidenfeld	15	6.5	43.3
R Cassidy	15	4.5	30
E Keogh	17	6.5	38.2
B Reilly	7	3.5	50
B Kerr	12	3.5	29.2
P Cassidy	10	4.5	45

### **The Journey Home**

I left a few days before the Olympiad concluded and travelled with a number of players from other teams. My route home was Havana-Madrid-London-Dublin.

It was an eventful journey. In the middle of the night before I left, I got a telephone call to meet the organisers in the administration room.

I was not sure what this was about and I was a little uneasy in fact to get such a phone call at that time of night. When I entered the room I got a most pleasant surprise. I was presented with a magnificent chess set in a magnificent ornate box embellished with the FIDE inscription and the place and date of the Olympiad. The pieces were Staunton pattern. These were the pieces used during the actual Olympiad by all the players.





The pieces on a board.





I was also presented with a box containing 25 of the best Cuban cigars.

I was told that Fidel Castro would have liked to personally present the chess set and cigars to me personally but that he was otherwise occupied as an attack had taken place in the south of Cuba earlier that day (at that time Cuban émigrés were occasionally flying sorties from Florida on bombing raids).

The next day at the airport brought another surprise and this time it was more worrying. We were told that our flight was delayed because the plane that had taken off before us for Madrid had developed a fire in the engine and had to return to Havana Airport. Not the sort of news one wants to hear when about to embark on a long flight!

We finally took off but a greater shock awaited us. We were scheduled to have a refuelling stop in the Azores on our way to Madrid. After what seemed like an endless flight we arrived at the Azores in darkness. The airstrip there is the length of the island, not particularly long and running into the sea at both ends. When we landed there was a loud crash and the plane shuddered to a halt with the pilot jamming on the brakes.

Nothing was said when we disembarked from the plane to head into the airport building for our scheduled wait and a snack. When it was time to depart, we all headed out of the building to walk across the tarmac to the plane.

The plane looked quite eerie silhouetted against the night sky. I just knew that it was not going to take off but I was so tired at this stage that I really did not care. All I wanted was to get back into my seat and sleep.

We did get back into the plane but we were then told to disembark again. On returning to the airport building we were informed that the plane had burst its front two tyres on landing and that we would have to wait in the Azores until replacement tyres were flown in by Lloyds of London (there was an American airbase on the Azores which could have supplied the tyres but they of course would not do so in view of the relationships between the US and Cuba at the time).

We were put up in a hotel for the night and spent the next day waiting for the tyres. My abiding memory was how cold the Azores were after the heat of Cuba.

Finally the tyres arrived late in the afternoon and we resumed our flight to Madrid. There were no further mishaps and I arrived back in Dublin exhausted but happy after a five week adventure with my wonderful chess set and a box of 25 of the best Cuban cigars which I was very happy to give to my friend Bro. Louis Summerling of St. Joseph's School of the Blind who had done trojan work in developing schoolboy chess.

### **Overall Impression of Olympiad**

The Cuban Olympiad was something I will remember for the rest of my life.

I was immensely proud to play for my country and I was generally satisfied with the way I played and my overall result.

The Olympiad and the whole atmosphere surrounding it was a magical chess experience. I saw and spoke to many of the great players and I will never forget my encounter with Michael Tal.

It was great to meet and develop friendships with other teams. We were particularly friendly with the Italian team, some of whom had family members in Cuba, and we spent many a pleasant evening with them and their extended family.

The Cuban people were extremely friendly and we were feted everywhere we went. There was chess memorabilia everywhere. One side of the Havana Libre hotel was completely illuminated at night with a chessboard giving the moves of the game of the round. Large crowds thronged the street to look at this, particularly when a game involving a Cuban player was featured.

Everything was new to me- the travel, the luxury hotel, the chess atmosphere, the friendliness of the people. I had simply never experienced anything like that before.

The camaraderie among the Irish team was excellent. The younger players got on very well and had some good times. We also looked up to and learned a lot from our two senior players, Wolfgang and Brian.

I think it is generally agreed that this was the greatest Olympiad of them all and that it will never be surpassed. I believe that to be so and I was very lucky to be part of it.

Paul Cassidy

27 June 2018