

The Boy Before His Dream

Who in the chess world is not familiar with the name Viswanathan Anand, holder of the world crown since 2007? Yet most of us are oblivious to how he blossomed into the role-model and world chess champion we see today. On June 11, 2010, the New Fremont Chess Club was fortunate to host Fide Master Kameswaran Visweswaran, the son of Anand's first official chess coach.

Visweswaran discussed Anand's younger days to inspire his audience to achieve new heights in chess understanding. The talk was lively enough to captivate chess masters and amateurs alike. Along with some of our local chess coaches, even the hard-to-find photographer Richard Shorman arrived with his trusty camera.



Visweswaran believes, "Anand's roots, compared to many other people, though dynamic, were not tough." At eight years of age, Anand immigrated to the Philippines for a year because his father was posted as an official of the Indian Railways. This is where technology first came into his life in the form of GM Eugene Torre's lectures on television. Prizes, such as chess books, were awarded to the first person to solve given puzzles. Through practice, Anand became skilled enough to receive a new prize every week. Many prizes later, Anand was told to stop submitting answers for the sake of other viewers!

The next phase of his life consisted of the young nine-year-old boy returning to India, where he joined Chennai's Tal Chess Club, named after the magic of Tal's spicy style. This club was co-founded by a quartet of chess aficionados including Kameswaran and Manuel Aaron, India's first IM. The club had only two clocks, one of which was broken. Twelve almost IM level players would slug it out with the remaining clock, striving to earn more time at the board. Occasionally, they gifted him a game (because of his youth), but as he grew stronger, their compassion turned to jealousy over his victories. Every game mattered, because every loss meant 60 dreadful minutes quarantined from the action.



This is where Anand practiced his speed chess abilities, learning how to defeat strong players. Visweswaran asserts that the secret to Anand's lightning chess is to think during the *opponent's* move. Anand mastered the art of anticipating his opponent's moves.

At the outset of his lecture, Visweswaran projected a page from a newspaper article with observations of Anand's attitudes and personality.

Aruna, Anand's wife, related "He hates getting up early in the morning." Visweswaran emphasized, "Somewhere between getting up late in the morning and going to sleep, there is this set of n number of hours wherein Anand really puts in his hardwork. The moral of the story is that you kids really have to put in that n number of hours. . . . There is no real substitute."

Visweswaran embedded life lessons at the heart of each piece of information about Anand for his younger audience. For example, he praised Anand's attitude toward people: "He respects elders. So, when his mother told him not to listen to too much music, he tried for a long time." Visweswaran later reverted back to this topic, "People thought, 'Oh, Anand is an Indian and Asian. They have weak nerves compared to Russians.' But Anand chose to be in a particular way. He chose not to react to his opponents. He only reacted over the board."



Visweswaran discusses newspaper.

Visweswaran made certain that his audience actively participated. One item on his agenda was a pleasing endgame position that Anand drew against Alexey Dreev in the U20 World Championship in Kiljava, Finland. He challenged anyone present to find a win. If successful, he promised to convey the solution to Anand via email and guaranteed a personal response!

The chess content of his lecture comprised the prevalent principles behind three of Anand's games, one of which is presented below:

Anand, Viswanathan (2635) - Dreev, Alexey (2625) [C13]
Candidates m7 Madras (2), 1991

At this point of time, Anand was not a great openings expert. He was more of a middlegame and tactical player. He relied heavily on intuition. Now this game is the beginning of Anand's great defensive style. In this game, he makes a comeback. In modern days, Anand is known as the world's greatest tactical defender. **1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5** Most of you know this is the French Defense. **3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bg5 dxe4 5.Nxe4** This is the Rubinstein variation. **5...Be7 6.Bxf6 gxf6 7.Nf3 b6 8.Bd3 Bb7 9.Qe2 c6 10.0-0 Nd7 11.Rfe1 Qc7 12.a4**

(Diagram)

This is how Anand plays. It is not part of a real plan. It is played just in case Black castles Queenside. **12...a5** Dreev is not letting him do anything. **13.c3** There is no point to this move. He just wants to see what Black is going to do. Unfortunately for him,



Black has some real plans of attack on the Kingside. **13...Nf8 14.Qd2 Ng6 15.b4 f5 16.Ng3 h5 17.bxa5 Rxa5 18.c4 Kf8 19.Bf1 Bf6 20.Ra3 Kg7** The Black King is safe. **21.Rb1 h4 22.Ne2 h3 23.g3 c5 24.d5 exd5 25.cxd5 c4** The Rook is unable to do anything on the third rank. The White pieces are severely uncoordinated, unlike Black's. This is advantageous to Black. **26.Nc3 Qc5 27.Ra2 Ne7 28.Rab2 Nxd5** The diagonal opens up. Look at the power of Black's Bishops. **29.Rb5** The first hint of some counter play. **29...Nxc3!**

30.Rxc5 Nxb1 31.Qd7 Rxc5 32.Nd4 Kg6 Dreev thinks that White is lost. He has two rooks and three minor pieces to White's Queen and two minor pieces.
33.Qxb7 Bxd4 34.Qxb6+ f6 35.Qxb1 c3 So this pawn moves steadily forward.
36.Bd3 Black would even be safe with one Rook in this position. Dreev starts playing less accurately. He wants to hold his advantage, but he does not want to calculate. This is a major drawback in our games, especially when we have an advantage. **36...c2 37.Bxc2** Dreev should be quiet. **37...Rhc8**



Dreev thinks that if the White Bishop moves, back-rank checkmate occurs. This move is a suspect. Dreev is in a hurry. He has lost the first game, so he wants to equalize. **38.Bxf5!+ Rxf5 39.g4 Rc1+ 40.Qxc1 Rxf2 41.Kh1 Be5**

X

As he said in his later analysis, Anand was still thinking of winning here. Since the position does not allow White victory, Anand chooses to force a draw. **42.Qg1! Rg2**

[This is a good move because 42...Rxf2+ 43.Qxf2 Bxf2 44.Kxf2 and the passed a-pawn will win.]

43.a5!

[43.Qxg2 hxf2+ 44.Kxf2 and the Bishop can stop White's pawns. The f-pawn will win.]

43...Rxf2+ 44.Kxf2 Kg7 45.a6 Bb8

46.Kh1 This is Anand's cunningness.

46...Kg8 47.Kg1 Kf8 48.Kh1 Ke8 49.g5 f5 50.g6 f4 51.g7 Kf7 52.g8Q+ Kxg8



Offering a draw in a bad position makes your opponent mad. You have to make him smile. **53.a7!** How do you make everybody smile? You don't offer a draw. You say stalemate. **53...Bxa7** Stalemate! In real life, Anand gets out of a difficult situation by cracking a joke. This is how you crack a joke in chess.
1/2-1/2

[Quoted from Visweswaran]

An important lesson to be learned from this game is that, contrary to some people's belief, a draw is not

Amusing anecdotes formed the heart of the lecture. For example, two ancient kings depicted in a movie called "Shatranj ke Khiladi" absolutely adored playing chess. Once, an important minister passed away, and both of the kings attended his funeral. Next to his tomb was displayed a beautiful, marble chess set. It would be bad manners and poor diplomacy to play chess beside the dead man's tomb, so they thought of a clever subterfuge: One king would pay homage to the minister, play a move, and return to his place. The next king would come forward to do the same. This cycle continued for the duration of the game! The moral of the story is to enjoy chess with all your heart, even under adverse conditions. For example, "Anand had to work very hard. . . . He did it, and his reward was chess; the beauty of chess" (Visweswaran).

equivalent to a waste of time and energy. It is the "third legitimate conclusion" of a game (Visweswaran).

This game represents the introduction of chess humor into Anand's arsenal. Visweswaran gave a piece of crucial advice here. Students looking to improve should imitate ideas, such as chess humor, not the opening! He also recommended studying "annotated games of top players." This will help to identify tactics submerged in the sea of variations, i.e., "Repetition [of tactics] is the mother of learning."

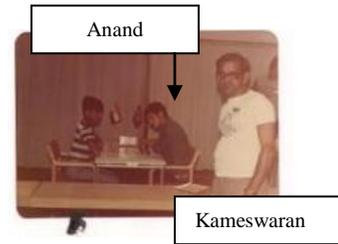


Six-year-old Anand



Kameswaran (speaker's father; left) and Anand (right)

Another amusing incident transpired by Anand's game against Dreev (the same game that contains the endgame position). As Anand and his coach, Kameswaran, explored the sea of complications, a loud knock echoed through their hotel room. It was the opponent's coach, come to propose a draw. Kameswaran requested time for analysis. He and Anand accepted the draw after about 30 minutes of analysis. Years later, Visweswaran found out that Dvoretzky used to coach Dreev. As Visweswaran claimed, "So this unknown Indian guy and his coach made Mr. Mark Dvoretzky wait for half an hour!"



Throughout, Visweswaran combined fascinating anecdotes about the young Anand with sage advice aimed at improving their chess. This was followed by a simultaneous exhibition on 14 boards, with ratings ranging from 711 to 1903. The New Fremont Chess Club congratulates David Trestor, who managed the full point, and Armaan Kalyanpur, who drew!



Positions from two of the games with commentary follow:

Trestor, David - Kameswaran, Visweswaran [B23]
Simultaneous Exhibition, 11.06.2010



David Trestor

(Diagram)

White's pieces are coordinated against the enemy King. Although Black is two pawns ahead, he must be careful. (Analysis verified by Fritz 11)



22...Bf6 Black's Bishop is overworked. **23.Bh6 Rd8** Another piece moves away from the King.

[23...Bg7 is an interesting option, attempting to trade another pair of pieces. 24.Bxg7 (24.Bc1 is a waste of time. Any other Bishop move loses the b2 pawn for insufficient compensation.) 24...Kxg7 25.Qxe7 (25.Qxd4+ f6 not retreating! 26.fxg6 hxg6 White no longer has an attack, e.g., 27.h4 a5 28.h5 Qf7 and White still has not gotten anywhere.)

his pawn structure is permanently ruined. If Black is able to castle by hand, he will have sufficient compensation.

14.Nc3 White has an advantage because of the weakened enemy King.]

11...Qc5

[11...Qb6 doesn't block the dark squared Bishop. 12.Kh1 Nxb3 13.axb3 Bxg2+ 14.Kxg2 Kxf7 15.Nc3 Bd6 This is an equal position.]

12.Rf2

[12.Kh1 Again, moving the King from the diagonal is worth considering. 12...Nxb3 13.Nxh8 Nxa1 There is a lot of play in this position.]

12...Nxb3 13.axb3 Kxf7 14.gxh3



14...Be7 is passive. (White is a pawn up, but has the inferior pawn structure). White has successfully weathered the storm. He later achieved a winning position, but erred slightly in the endgame, resulting in a draw. [14...Qb6! (Threatening Bc5). Black still has some compensation.] 1/2-1/2

The entire New Fremont Chess Club membership ardently wishes to encourage FM Visweswaran to visit us again the next time he comes to the Bay Area! As noted by Kenneth Zowal, the Director of the New Fremont Chess Club, "This event helped to elevate the club's reputation locally, and may result in increased attendance."

For more information about the New Fremont Chess Club, visit the following website: <http://www.newfremontchessclub.org>.

[Based on "Young Anand," a talk by Visweswaran from Chennai, India. Visweswaran is the National Coach of India, and he has trained many award-winning chess players and teams.]



Kenneth Zowal

Author: Ojas Chinchwadkar

Photographer: Richard Shorman