

"WHAT chance have I got when they're on the same team?" Cy the Cynic asked me before a match.

Ed, my club's best player, was teamed with Minnie Bottoms. Cy is regularly trounced by Ed's superior skill and is also a victim of Minnie's old bifocals, which make her confuse kings and jacks.

Ed was South at one table and played at six spades. He took the king of diamonds, led a trump to the ace and lost a finesse with the jack. When West led a second diamond, Ed ruffed in his hand, drew trumps and took the A-K of hearts. East-West followed low, so Ed threw his last heart on the ace of diamonds and let the queen of clubs ride. The finesse won: making six.

I watched the deal at the other table: Cy was South, and Minnie was East. The play began the same way, but when West took the queen of spades, he led a heart. Cy took the ace, ruffed a diamond and drew the last trump. He then led a heart to the king — and Minnie played the queen. She then led a diamond!

"You didn't win the trick, Minnie," West said gently.

NORTH			
♠ A 7			
♥ A K J 9			
♦ A 6 3			
♣ Q J 9 8			
WEST		EAST	
♠ Q 8 2		♠ 4 3	
♥ 8 5 2		♥ Q 10 6	
♦ J 10 9 7 2		♦ Q 8 5 4	
♣ 6 4		♣ K 5 3 2	
SOUTH			
♠ K J 10 9 6 5			
♥ 7 4 3			
♦ K			
♣ A 10 7			

North	East	South	West
1 ♠	Pass	1 ♠	Pass
2 NT	Pass	3 ♠	Pass
4 ♠	Pass	5 ♠	Pass
5 ♠	Pass	6 ♠	All Pass

Opening lead — ♦ J

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"Dummy played the jack," Minnie quavered.

Cy threw me a look that would have curdled milk. He could still play East for the king of clubs; but if Minnie had held the Q-6 of hearts, Cy could lead a club to his ace, return a heart to the nine, and discard two clubs on the jack of hearts and the ace of diamonds.

You can guess which play Cy chose. Minnie's glasses fixed him again.

Chess

Gambit gambols

If pieces sacrifices are your meat and potatoes, pawn gambits are the way to set the table.

The trouble is that almost all of the familiar gambits have been analyzed to death, and defenders know to decline their offers of a pawn.

But there are a few gambits that remain tempting appetizers, like the one in the Sicilian Defense that former US Champion Larry Christiansen tossed at Marko Zivanic in a US Chess League match last month.

The move 8 Bd3! originated in a 1971 postal game that ended soon after 10 ... Qc7 11 Qf3 d6 12 Bb6! Qe7 13 Bxb5+!. The sacrifices (12 ... Qxb6 13 Qxf7+ or 13 ... axb5 14 Nxb5 and Nxd6+ or Nc7+) were too strong.



Andy Soltis

Chess Grandmaster

Accepting a second pawn with 10 ... Qxh2, instead of 10 ... Qc7, is nearly as bad, in view of 11 Qf3 f6 12 e5!, threatening Qxa8.

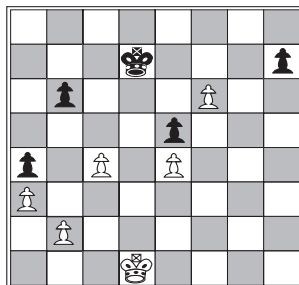
In fact, the 8 Bd3 gambit has been considered too hot for Black to accept. In this game, Black came up with a way to give back the pawn: 10 ... Qc7 11 Qh5 Nf6 (in place of 11 ... Nh6? 12 g4! and 13 g5).

But Christiansen got to make the kind of sacrifices he's lived on for 30-plus years, such as 17 Rxd6!, which threatens 18 Rd8+ Qxd8 19 Qxf7 mate.

SICILIAN DEFENSE US Chess League

L. Christiansen **M. Zivanic**

1 e4	c5	18 Rxf6!	Qxf6
2 Nf3	e6	19 Nd5	Qg6
3 d4	cxd4	20 Rd8+	Kg7
4 Nxd4	Nc6	21 Qe5+	f6
5 Nc3	Qc7	22 Qc7+	Bd7
6 Be3	a6	23 Rxd7+	Kh6
7 f4	b5	24 Qf4+	Qg5
8 Bd3!	Nxd4	25 Bc6	Rac8
9 Bxd4	Qxf4?	26 Rd6	Rhd8
10 Rf1	Qc7	27 Qxg5+	Kxg5
11 Qh5	Nf6	28 Rxe6	Rf8
12 Bxf6	gxf6	29 Kd2	f5
13 Rxf6	d6	30 Ke3	fxe4
14 0-0-0	Bg7	31 Kxe4	Rf2
15 Bxb5+!	Kf8	32 Ne3	Rcf8
16 Rf3	Qe7	33 Re5+	Kg6
17 Rxd6!	Bf6	34 Kd4	Resigns



White to play and win.

Baramidze-Khamrakul

Dresden 2008

Last week: 1 Nd2 threatens to win a piece with 2 Bxg4 and 2 Nb1 Qa4 3 Rxc5 (or 2 ... Qa4 3 Rxc5).

Pets

Rub-ber donkey

Pups, cats and farm animals enjoy self-massages

EVERYBODY enjoys a good massage, and pets are no exception. In fact, animals are ahead of us humans because they're never too busy for a relaxing rubdown with self-grooming and scratching. Ever notice your cat rubbing her neck and cheeks against a corner of your home — or a dog rolling happily on his back on the floor? That's your pet giving himself a massage.

Of course, our pets especially enjoy when we comb or massage them, which usually makes the experience more

invigorating. But busy New Yorkers' schedules don't permit much massage time.

Happily, there's a product that pets can use to enhance their own self-massaging sessions: Scratch n All, a colorful system of interlocking, silicone pads that mount to walls or floors.

Inventor Cynthia Garry created the product when she noticed her own pets — dogs Brandy and Tom-

my, horse Sundance and Teddy the donkey — all share a common need to self-groom.

"It's a self-enriching activity enjoyed by all animals, so they will rub on any surface, corner or object," Garry explains. "I designed the Scratch n All to provide a convenient, safe surface for animals to satisfy that basic 'feel-good' feeling."

The pads enhance animals' enjoyment while simultaneously protecting a home's interior. Attached to any corner or item of furniture that a pet frequently rubs up against, the pads protect that surface from scuffs and dings, and also cover up existing flaws. What's more, the pads are recyclable.

Since starting her business, Garry reports that happy customers range from dairy cows, pigs and goats to dogs, cats and rabbits, plus a lynx named Diesel who resides at Pennsylvania's East Coast Exotic Animal Rescue. Check out these critters in the "Scratch n All promo" on YouTube.

When I installed the pads in my cats' wing of my apartment, they could hardly wait to gear-test the nubby new surface. Like many cat owners, I feel guilty about leaving my feline friends alone for hours, and these pads are an inexpensive way to relieve that guilt (they're \$12.99 at scratchnall.com).

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Julia Szabo



ASS BLISSING: Teddy the donkey gives himself a rubdown with the Scratch n All.

LOVE FOR KITTY

By BETH ADELMAN

The Cat Lady

I can't think of a better way to start the New Year than by remembering what makes our cats so precious to us.

Bob in Stuart, Fla., writes, "Let's face it, when that little face looks up at us in total adoration, who can resist?"

Bill in Long Island recently lost his beloved cat, Noogie: "What do they ask for?" he writes. "Love, affection, food, water, a warm place to sleep and a little entertainment. It's so little, how could you not give it to them?"

Kenny in Staten Island says he sits with his cat, Sunday, while she drinks water from the sink, wakes up early on the weekends to get her breakfast and moves over on the recliner so she can squeeze in next to him. "Since I'm a bachelor, she is a constant companion to me and I to her," he writes. "I strongly believe that I understand my cat just by the way her beautiful green eyes stare at me, waiting for me to attend to her different needs. What

compels me to do the things I do for her is the greatest gift of all—LOVE!"

Bill in New York City lived with his cat, Scoop, for 13 years. He writes, "I put up with all of Scoop's demands because he put up with all of mine. Cats kind of adopt their owner's personality, or at least tune in to it. I see how cool I am when I look at my cat. There's a reason people are called 'cool cats' as a compliment."

And finally, Joe in Brentwood, LI, says Fluffy likes to sleep on his pillow. When his wife suggested that if she were on Joe's pillow he'd just move her aside, he told her, "You cannot compare Fluffy to yourself because cats know they can get away with anything. They say, 'Look at me, I am adorable, cuddly and you know that you want to pick me up and hold me.'" I think Joe definitely has a point.

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Adopt me



Humane Society of New York

Melanie is a beautiful, 2-year-old spayed kitty who's sweet and charming. What more can you want? Meet her from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Humane Society of New York, 306 E. 59th St.; 212-752-4840 or visit humanesocietyny.org.