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The World Chess Championship And the Mystery of Baguio City

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How did Baguio City, a posh but littleknown resort in the Philippines, win the bidding for the right to play host to the coming world championship chess match?

The match, between Anatoly Karpov of the Soviet Union, the title holder, and Viktor Korchnoi, will be watched closely by chess aficionados. It is even likely to be watched by less-than-aficionados, since Korchnoi—a Soviet star who defected to the West two years ago—has insisted that the match will be as much politics as chess.

There is little likelihood, however, that the Karpov-Korchnoi series, which begins July 16, will capture the attention of the world the way Bobby Fischer and Boris Spassky did when they played for the title in Iceland in the summer of 1972. Korchnoi, despite his defection and his recent rhetoric, is no Fischer. And he is unlikely to make the kind of headlines the enfant terrible of chess did six years ago with demands, protests, disappearances and on-again-off-again willingness to play.

High Bidder Is Tilburg

Still, somebody must expect a good, high-spending crowd to flow in for the match, and possibly some fringe benefits such as television or film rights, because the bids were far from paltry.

The high bidder was Tilburg, the Netherlands, with \$610,000, followed by Baguio City with \$527,000 and Hamburg, West Germany, and Graz, Austria, with \$500,000 each. There were various other bids that had to be discounted as being out of the competitive price range.

Each of the players had to vote his first, second and third choices. Had they not been able to agree, Max Euwe, the president of the Federation Internationale des Echecs—the World Chess Federation —would have had to impose a compromise decision.

As it turned out, Korchnoi's choices were Graz, Baguio City and Tilburg, in that order.

Karpov's choices, submitted not directly by him but through the Soviet Chess Federation, were Hamburg and Baguio City. He did not know why his Federation had not cast a third-place vote' on his behalf.

While the players are not bound to the highest bidder—other factors such as climate, suitability of the playing hall: and access to between-games recreation enter in—it is strange that Tilburg, which had recently staged a first-class international tournament, got only one thirdplace vote. It is even stranger when account is taken of Karpov's having played there and having said he found the conditions very much to his liking.

Baguio, a city of about 85,000 people 125 miles north and west of Manila, is 5,000 feet high and reputedly has delightful weather, even in the middle of the tropical summer. But is that enough to

explain its popularity with the contestants—or its winning the bidding match?

Asked to explain his high vote for Baguio City, Karpov seemed a bit nonplussed, admitting that he had never even been there. This has given credence to rumors floating around the higher echelons of the professional chess world that money had the final say about the match site—not what was counted in the publicly announced, sealed bids for the prize fund, but the amounts in the under-the-counter bidding, which is said to have begun immediately after the ceremony of opening the bids.

Those close to the negotiations hint that the actual prize fund in Baguio City is close to double the Philippine official bid. This would put the real bid at more than a million and a half dollars, dwarfing the mere \$250,000 that won Reykjavik the right to be the site for the 1972 Fischer-Spassky match.

John Slijkhuis, the Tilburg representative, said he had been warmly congratulated by the Philippines representative, Florencio Campomanes, when the official bids were opened. That, according to some chess professionals, should have been warning enough, since Campomanes, the deputy president of the federation, is a sharp entrepreneur who ordinarily does not take kindly to a defeat of any kind.

It's a good bet that he had a rook up his sleeve. But so far not one of the principals has admitted anything.

The diagram in today's chess column, on page 45 of Section 2, shows a black knight at Black's K5. The knight should be at Black's KB5. The position line should be 18 B-B4, not 18 . . .B-B4.