

The mass exchanges have led to a dead equal position and the game was drawn on move 43.

Then came the seesawing, tragic, final game—given above—which ended the match.

With the match decided by a few hasty moves in time trouble, it would be easy to write off Topalov's victory as lucky.

Yet Kamsky's mistakes tended to overshadow some great practical chess from Topalov: the piece sacrifice from nowhere in game two, the slow increase of pressure in games five and six, and the incredible risk-taking in the final game.

For once Topalov was unable to dominate in the openings yet he lost only one game from the seven. The Bulgarian found another path to victory; setting practical problems for his opponent until Kamsky cracked. "He is a great tactician," admitted Kamsky. "He was able to come up with moves that kept surprising me. He really deserved to win this match."

Whether Topalov's strategy will work against Anand—himself the archetypal practical player—is a question which chess pundits will be discussing until the title match begins.

Meanwhile Kamsky, while admitting he may not be the player he was when he unsuccessfully challenged for Anatoly Karpov's FIDE world title in 1996, scotched suggestions that he might retire (again). "I have still got some chances [to play for the world title]. [Though] maybe I am not as ambitious as I should be ... When you get older it's really hard to study; there are many other things in my life."

### High Anxiety

"We don't want a scandal like in Elista" was the mantra which was repeated endlessly by the organizers of the match, the Bulgarian Chess Federation and even by spectators paying their 10 Lev to come to the NDK to watch the match.

That Topalov was robbed in his 2006 world title match by Vladimir Kramnik and the Russian security agency, the FSB, is a national myth apparently believed throughout Sofia, despite the rest of the world's view that all the scandals in Elista were created by the Bulgarian side. So to avoid their national hero being robbed again, security measures at the Sofia match were extraordinary, including metal detectors for both players and spectators and a total ban on press photographers after the first five minutes of the game.

In fact in Sofia 2009 a determination existed on both sides to ensure that no cheating of any sort was possible. After three solid days of negotiations in November at the Dresden Olympiad, the two players and their managers signed an enormously detailed match agreement. However upon arrival the Kamsky team realized that enforcing many of the details would require constant argument with the match organizing committee.

Topalov's manager, Silvio Danailov, also began a psychological war, with a bogus claim that Kamsky (who has an Israeli manager, Emil Sutovsky) had sent a Mossad agent to inspect the playing venue.

In fact the Kamsky team did bring a technical expert, a Russian, who ensured that the mobile phone jammer in the playing hall—installed only midway through the first game—was operational

and checked Team Kamsky's hotel room for listening devices.

"We don't want conflict—we want to concentrate on chess," explained Sutovsky. "That's why I have to be absolutely sure, that Gata is focused on the game itself. I have nothing personally against Topalov (whom I greatly respect as a chess player) but it is a reality of today's world that you have to take precautions. Five years ago, a computer could help you a lot. Today, the use of a computer just wins. It's today's reality. I am ready to risk sounding paranoid, but really I'm not."

Sutovsky went on to say that the security matters should be separated from the overall match organization: "The hotel and the playing hall were great and all security measures are just minor. [However it is true that] most of the minor things in the contract were not realized [at first]. We arrived on the 12th, had the inspection on the 14th. The playing area was not ready on the 15th, not even on the 16th [the day of the opening ceremony] but only on the morning of the 17th."

Ultimately, it is to the credit of the organizers and the two teams that the match took place without incident. There is no doubt that, in today's paranoid times, playing in Bulgaria was an advantage for Topalov, who could be more relaxed about potential espionage threats. However there is no doubt that the Sofia match was decided entirely over the board, a fact for which many will breathe a sigh of relief. ■

*See additional match reports on Chess Life Online at [uschess.org](http://uschess.org), February archives.*

## Qualification Quarrels

The world body FIDE had decided in 2006 that the winner of the 2007 World Cup in Khanty-Mansiysk would qualify to play the world champion in a title match but in mid-2007 the rules were altered and it was announced that the World Cup winner would have to play against Topalov before challenging for the world title.

Why such a late change to the world championship system?

In essence, the answer is a tribute to the negotiating skills of Topalov's manager IM Silvio Danailov.

In 2006 when the contracts for the Kramnik-Topalov match in Elista were being negotiated, Danailov made sure that a clause was included to exclude the loser—which at that time looked likely to be Kramnik—from the next world championship cycle.

When his player lost in Elista, Danailov spared no effort to ensure that Topalov would not have to wait years for his next challenge and, though he failed to have Topalov added to the 2007 World Championship tournament in Mexico City, Danailov did succeed in having Topalov included as an extra obstacle for the World Cup winner.

Topalov rationalized: "This was a privilege but also compensation [to me] for the changes FIDE made to the cycle."

The unorthodox nature of this agreement in part explains why it was so difficult to find a neutral sponsor for the match.

As Kamsky's manager Sutovsky explained, "In some ways the match was only of interest to the Bulgarians. It was an artificial match—Gata (or eventually, any winner of World Cup

2007) should have qualified directly to play Anand by winning the World Cup but then Topalov was added to the cycle.

"So we could go to war—a legal war—or renegotiate and play; a difficult choice. If we took the legal route, some would say that we were doing it because we were scared about the outcome—not true at all. So I advised Gata to agree to Sofia."

Kamsky's decision to play in Sofia had one huge positive spin-off for the American; one not entirely unexpected. In March FIDE changed the rules for the 2010-11 world championship cycle and announced a new eight player candidates tournament to find a world title challenger. Only two players were pre-qualified for the new tournament—the loser of the Anand-Topalov title match and ... Kamsky! ~I.R.