

Chronicles



John Donaldson

Abrahams/Noteboom Variation

100 Years Ago: November 1901



Chessplayers love conspiracy theories. If you don't believe me check out *Chess Life*. Every month the question of whether Keres threw his games to Botvinnik at The Hague/Moscow 1948 is rehashed with a passion that never fails to amaze. Issue after issue, year after year it goes on. Since that one has been taken and the Lasker - Schlechter match /world championship issue has been answered, I will throw out a new bone. There has always been some suspicion that Emmanuel Lasker purposely fixed his four game mini-match match with David Janowski. Played in Paris in May 1909, the 2-2 result persuaded Janowski's wealthy patron, Leo Nardus , to sponsor lengthier battles between the two. Was this short match rigged?

Lets take a look at the facts. According to Gilchrist in his series, *Emmanuel Lasker, Chess Champion*, Lasker scored 24 wins, 6 draws and 4 losses to Janowski in serious competitions. MegaDatabase 2001 credits 41 games between the two opponents with similar ratios, but the exact total isn't really that important. What is clear is that Lasker was

much the better player. This superiority verged on totally overwhelming in their October 1909 and November 1910 matches which saw scores of 8-2 and 9½/11. The latter is a strong contender for the most one-sided World Championship match ever held.

So how did Janowski (and Lasker!?) persuade Nardus to sponsor the matches? Maybe the patron saw reason for hope prior to October 1909. Up to that point Janowski had close to an even score in match play with Lasker. He could not only point to their 2-2 result earlier in the year, but also a forgotten battle at the turn of the century where he could easily have drawn if only he had played the endgame better.

The *British Chess Magazine* of January 1902 reports "An impromptu contest of two games between Dr. E. Lasker and Monsieur D. Janowski, was promoted by and played under the auspices of the Manchester Chess Club on December 11th and 12th. The second game was actually finished on the 13th, there being a bit of play left on the 12th at 10:30. A certain sum was guaranteed the players by the committee of the club, and all the arrangements were left in the hands of Mr. J. Burgess (president), Mr. Rhodes Marriott (vice president), Mr. W.D. Bailey (honorary secretary) and Mr. Fineberg. Notwithstanding that there was very little time at the disposal of the committee to make and carry out the arrangements, the novel and interesting encounter proved a great success both financially and otherwise. Double the amount of the guarantee was raised and divided equally between the renowned masters. Both games were

of a highly entertaining character, some fine play being shown by both exponents. Lasker maintained his great reputation by winning the first and drawing the second game, although having had no serious chess for twelve months or more, whilst Janowski by his really fine play in the second game added considerably to his laurels. The moves of both games were recorded on a couple of wall boards one of which was kindly lent by the Liverpool Chess Club. On the second day of the match the players, along with the sub-committee and some of the patrons, were photographed, but not as successfully as one could have wished (the light being bad).

David Janowski - Emmanuel Lasker, Ruy Lopez C52 Manchester (m/1) 1901

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Bc5 4.b4 Bxb4 5.c3 Ba5 6.d4 exd4 7.0-0 dxc3

This move is considered a bit too greedy today with preference given to 7...d6 or 7...Bb6. Michael Adams has recently enjoyed good success with 7...Nge7.

8.Qb3 Qf6 9.Bg5

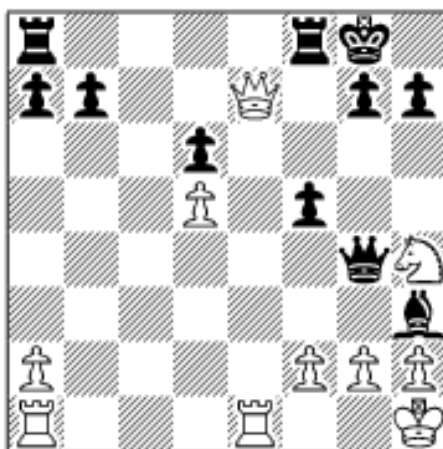
White has better in 9.e5, keeping the option of posting the Bishop on the a3-f8 diagonal. One good illustration of this is 9.e5 Qg6 10.Nxc3 Nge7 11.Ba3 0-0 12.Nd5 Nxd5 13.Bxd5 Re8 14.Ng5 Nxe5 15.f4 c6 16.Be4 Qh5 17.fxe5 d5 18.exd6 1-0, Labatt-Lasker (!), USA (simul) 1907. One wonders if the colors were inadvertently switched in ChessBase or if this was Lasker's worst ever simul loss!

9...Qg6 10.Nxc3 Bxc3

Lasker prefers to return his extra material to catch up in development

11.Qxc3 d6 12.Bd5 Nge7 13.Bxe7 Nxe7 14.Qxc7 Nxd5 15.exd5 0-0

Black has achieved his aim but White has some compensation for his pawn.

16.Rfe1 Bh3 17.Nh4 Qg4 18.Qe7 f5 19.Kh1**19...Rf6**

19...Qh5 20.gxh3 Rae8
21.Qxb7 (21.Qd7
Rxe1+ 22.Rxe1 Qxh4
23.Qe6+ Kh8 24.Qe7
Qxe7 25.Rxe7 Rb8
26.Rd7=) 21...Qxh4
was worth considering.

20.Qxb7 Raf8 21.gxh3 Qxh4 22.Qxa7 Qxh3 23.Re3

White has aggressive intentions. 23.Qe3 was a more solid choice.

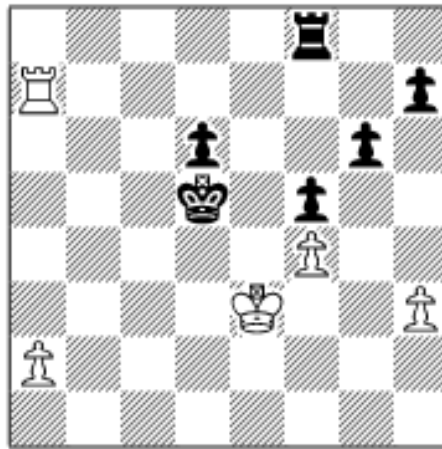
23...Qh4 24.Rg3 R6f7 25.Qa3?

More prudent was 25.Qe3 f4 26.Qd4, but Janowski was never fond of defense.

25...Qd4 26.Rag1 Qxd5+ 27.R1g2 Re8 28.h3 Re1+ 29.Kh2 Qe5 30.Qb4 g6 31.f4 Qa1 32.Rd3 Rfe7 33.Qb3+ R7e6 34.Rg1 Kg7

Here 34...R1e2+ 35.Kh1 (35.Rg2 Qf1) 35...Qb2 may have objectively been better, but Lasker was not only a better player than Janowski, he was a *much better endgame player*.

**35.Qxe6 Qb2+ 36.Rg2 Qxg2+ 37.Kxg2 Rxe6
38.Kf3 Kf7 39.Re3 Rf6 40.Ra3 Ke6 41.Ra7 Rf8
42.Ke3 Kd5**



ChessBase and the Lasker volume in the *Weltgeschichte des Schachs* series both end here with 0-1 and no further comment. Mason, in the *BCM* says "and Black eventually won". It would be interesting to

see the rest of the game as White is not without chances to draw. For example: 43.Rxh7 Ra8 44.Rg7 Ra3+ 45.Ke2 Rxa2+ 46.Kf3 Ra3+ 47.Kg2 Ke4 48.Rxg6 d5 49.h4 Kxf4 50.h5 Ra2+ 51.Kg1 d4 52.h6 Ra7 53.Rg7 Ra6 54.Rd7 Rxh6 55.Rxd4+ Kg3 56.Rd3+ Kg4 57.Kf1 is a book draw.

This doesn't seem that hard, but remember what Capablanca wrote? When it was pointed out to Janowski that he could have saved a position with a bit more endgame knowledge. He answered "I detest the endgame. A well-played game should be practically decided in the middle-game."

The question still remains how could Nardus sponsor the 1910 World Championship match after seeing his star get hammered 8-2 a year before .

Was he an eternal optimist or simply a kind heart?

75 Years Ago: November 1951

Meran , which started on December 4, 1926, was the greatest success of the short-lived Edgar Colle's career (1897-1932). 1. Colle 9; 2-4. Canal, Przepiorka and Spielmann 8.5; 5-6. Kostich and Yates 8; 7-8. Grunfeld and Tartakover 7.5; 9. Rosselli del Turco 5; 10.-12. Grob, Patay and Sacconi 4.5; 13. Alimonda 4; 14. Calapso 3.

50 Years Ago: November 1951

The 1951-52 edition of Hastings featured a victory by one of the great gentleman of chess, Svetozar. Gligoric (b.1923), who continues to play well today as he nears 80. Gliga, as he is known to friends, scored 7½ from 9 to easily outdistance Canada's Daniel Yanofsky who finished on 6. Other scores: 3. Schmid 5½; 4-6. Barden, Donner and Popel 4½; 7. A.R.B. Thomas 3½; 8-10. Abrahams, Golombek and Hooper 3.

Note the fine result by the long-time *Manchester Guardian* chess columnist Leonard Barden who retired from active play at an early age. Ukrainian Master Stephan Popel would later immigrate to the United States and settle in North Dakota, while prolific author Gerald Abrahams' gem *The Chess Mind* was published at roughly the same time the following game was played.

Svetozar Gligoric - Gerald Abrahams QGD
Noteboom-Abrahams Variation [D31] Hastings
1951/52 (6), 1951

**1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 c6 4.Nf3 dxc4 5.a4 Bb4
6.Bd2 a5 7.e3 b5 8.axb5 Bxc3 9.Bxc3 cxb5 10.b3
Bb7 11.bxc4 b4**

This line is commonly called the Noteboom variation after the Dutch Master Daniel Noteboom (1910-1932). The *Oxford Companion* says unequivocally that Noteboom was not the inventor but that he favored the variation. The authors, David Hooper and Kenneth Whyld, attribute the invention of the line to the ever energetic English barrister Gerald Abrahams (1907-1980). He first played it in 1925 in a Lancashire County Championship and used it again in 1929 versus William Winter. The latter was impressed enough that he employed later in the year versus Noteboom.

I'm not sure why the name Noteboom stuck and not Abrahams , but the Dutchman's untimely passing may have had something to do with it. Noteboom/Abrahams variation sounds right.

12.Bb2 Nf6 13.Bd3 Ne4?

Gligoric, in his notes to the game, rightly criticized this move, preferring 13...0-0 which is the mainline today.



14.Qa4+!

This move creates serious disorder in Black's position and should be reason enough for people to stay away from 13...Ne4? Strangely players still do try it

and White often doesn't play 14.Qa4+. Gliga mentions in his notes that he found the refutation over the board, but that the idea isn't new. This gives you an idea of how slow information traveled 50 years ago as Abrahams had played the line 13...Ne4? at least twice before.

14...Kf8

"After 14...Qd7 or 14...Bc6 15.Qc2 White gains a very important tempo by an eventual Ne5, thereby facilitating the advance of the center pawns. If 14...Nd7 then 15.Ne5 threatening Nc6 and preventing Black from castling." Gliga.

To bring things up to date : 14...Bc6 15.Qc2 Ng5 16.Ne5 Bxg2 17.Rg1 Nf3+ 18.Nxf3 Bxf3 19.d5 Qh4 20.Rg3 Bg4 21.dxe6 fxe6 22.Bg6+ and White won shortly in Vasilevich-A.Stangl, Germany 1999.

15.Qc2 f5 16.0-0 Nd7



17.d5!

A thematic pawn sacrifice in this line, which opens the position for the two Bishops.

**17...Ndc5 18.Nd4 exd5
19.f3 Ng5**

On 19...Nd6 White has 20.cxd5 Rc8 21.Nc6 with powerful play.

**20.cxd5 Nxd3 21.Qxd3 Qxd5 22.e4 Qd6 23.exf5
Ba6**

23...Kg8 was more stubborn.

24.Qd2 h6 25.Ne6+!

25.Rxa5 Kf7 is not so clear-cut according to Gligoric.

25...Ke7 26.Qxd6+ Kxd6 27.Rfd1+ Ke7

As 27...is met by 28.Rac1+.

**28.Nc7 Ra7 29.Nd5+ Kf7 30.Rxa5 Rd8 31.h4
Nh7 32.Rd4 Raa8**

Or 32...Rad7 33.Rxa6 Rxd5 34.Ra7+ and White is winning.

33.Rxb4 Bd3 34.Rb7+ Ke8 35.Nc7+ 1-0

25 Years Ago: November 1976

Mark Diesen brought the World Junior Championship back to the United States after a 20-year absence during the Holiday season in 1976/77. Competing against many future GMs including Lubomir Ftacnik, Evgeny Vladimirov, Daniel Campora, Ian Rogers, Krum Georgiev, Harry Schussler, Jonathan Mestel, Petar Popovic, Reynaldo Vera, Margeir Petursson and Murray Chandler, Diesen, ably seconded by Lubomir Kavalek, took home the gold with a score of 10-3. Taking the silver medal, and the title of European Junior Champion (the event was simultaneously a World and European Junior) was Lubomir Ftacnik, now one of the right hand men for ChessBase. Bronze medalist Nir Grinberg of Israel seems to have stopped playing in the mid-1980s.

Mark Diesen - Peter Egmond, Ruy Lopez C91
World Junior Championship Groningen 1976

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 Be7
6.Re1 b5 7.Bb3 0-0 8.d4

Diesen sidesteps the Marshall Attack.

8...d6 9.c3 Bg4 10.Be3 exd4 11.cxd4 Na5 12.Bc2
c5 13.Nbd2

13.dxc5 dxc5 14.Nbd2 is considered more precise.

13...cxd4 14.Bxd4 Nc6 15.Be3 d5

20.Bb3 Nbd5

20...Nd3!?! 21.Re2 Rc8 was worth considering.

21.Bg5 h6 22.Bh4 Re8 23.Rad1

Now White is starting to put the squeeze on Black.

23...Ra7 24.Ne4 Rd7 25.Ng3!

The Knight comes to f5 and Black's position collapses.

25...Nc7 26.Nf5 Bb4 27.Nxh6+ 1-0



[\[The Chess Cafe Home Page\]](#) [\[Book Reviews\]](#) [\[Bulletin Board\]](#) [\[Columnists\]](#)
[\[Endgame Studies\]](#) [\[The Skittles Room\]](#) [\[Archives\]](#) [\[Inside Chess\]](#)
[\[Links\]](#) [\[Online Bookstore\]](#) [\[About The Chess Cafe\]](#) [\[Contact Us\]](#)

Copyright 2001 Russell Enterprises, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

"The Chess Cafe®" is a registered trademark of Russell Enterprises, Inc.