



COLUMNISTS

From the Archives

Hosted by
Mark Donlan



From the Archives...

Since it came online many years ago, [ChessCafe.com](#) has presented literally thousands of articles, reviews, columns and the like for the enjoyment of its worldwide readership. The good news is that almost all of this high quality material remains available in the [Archives](#). The bad news is that this great collection of chess literature is now so large and extensive – and growing each week – that it is becoming increasingly difficult to navigate it effectively. We decided that the occasional selection from the archives posted publicly online might be a welcomed addition to the regular fare.

Watch for an item to be posted online periodically throughout each month. We will update the [ChessCafe.com](#) home page whenever there has been a “new” item posted here. We hope you enjoy *From the Archives*...

The Kibitzer, by Tim Harding

Kibitzer Turns Back the Clock

At the turn of the New Year it is customary to take a look in the archives, so this month the Kibitzer turns back the clock to see what was happening in the chess world in 1896-7.

In Russia, poor Wilhelm Steinitz was about to make a retreat from Moscow as abject as that of Napoleon Bonaparte. After the Nuremberg tournament of July-August 1896, in which he took sixth place with 11/18 (+10 =2 –6) to Emanuel Lasker’s +12 =3 –3, the writing was on the wall. For the older man to recapture of the world championship (which he had lost in 1894) was improbable before Nuremberg; to bounce back from this event, in which he had moreover lost his individual game with Lasker, was quite impossible, especially with an interval of only three months. Nuremberg was one of the crowning tournament successes of Lasker’s career; for Steinitz, his sixth prize (quite an achievement for a man of sixty) had been a disappointment.

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Wilhelm Steinitz

Steinitz lost the very first Moscow game, played on November 7, 1896 although he had the white pieces. Four days later, Lasker won the second game, generally reckoned his best of the match.

Lasker – Steinitz (2) Moscow-Wch, 1896

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 Bc5 4 c3 Nge7 5 0-0 Ng6 6 d4 exd4 7 cxd4 Bb6 8 Nc3 0-0 9 a4 a6 10 Bc4 h6



Here 10...d6 is reckoned to be better; 11 Ng5 h6 12 Qh5 doesn't work because of 12 Nh8!

11 h3 d6 12 Be3 Nce7 13 Re1 c6 14 Qb3 Bc7 15 Nd2 Rb8 16 Rac1 b5 17 axb5 axb5 18 Bd3 Kh8 19 Ne2 f5 20 exf5 Bxf5 21 Bxf5 Rxf5 22 Ng3 Rf8 23 Qe6 Qc8 24 Qxc8 Rfxc8 25 Nb3 Kg8 26 Ne4 Kf7 27 g3 Ke8 28 Re2 Kd7 29 Rce1 Bb6?

Steinitz fails at the critical moment. If 29...Re8 30 Bd2 or 29...Nd5 30 Bxh6! gxh6 31

defence.

Nec5+!, but 29...Nf5! could have given a successful

30 Bf4 Bc7

Now if 30...Nf5 31 Bxd6! or 30...Nxf4? 31 Nf6+! Kd8 32 Rxe7.

31 h4 h5 32 Bg5 Bd8



There's no defence to the threat of g4.

33 g4!! hxg4 34 h5 Nf8 35 Nec5+! dxc5 36 Nxc5+



Kd6 37 Bf4+

Many databases end the game here, perhaps Lasker announced mate? But most books on Lasker (e.g. Hannak, Zak and the normally authoritative *Weltgeschichte des Schachs* series by Wildhagen) give the remaining moves as played:

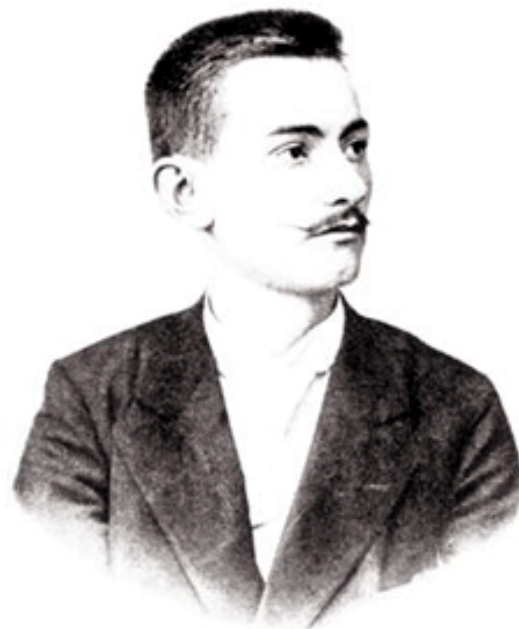
37...Kd5 38 Re5+ Kc4 39 Rc1+ Kxd4 40 Re4+ Kd5 41 Rd1+ Kxc5 42 Be3 mate

The third, fourth and sixth games also went to the champion; as a contest, the match was already as dead as some title matches of recent times, e.g. Kasparov-Short. However, the challenge was for the first to win ten games, so they soldiered on through December. Games ten and eleven went to Lasker too, but Steinitz won a game at last, the twelfth, played on December 23.

The win and Christmas refreshed the old champion and he won again in game thirteen (December 27), but that was the end of his joy in the match. Lasker consolidated with a 73-move win two days later, followed by two draws to complete the schedule for 1896.

On January 2, Lasker won game sixteen to move within one game of victory and Steinitz's health was cracking. It was January 14 before they could play game seventeen and Lasker won it to end the match. After that he played no serious chess until the middle of 1899.

With Lasker inactive, the year 1897 threatened to be a year of anti-climax in chess. However, there was one major tournament in Europe, which was remarkable for the triumph of a young star and the swansong of another. The Eveventh Congress of the German Chess Association, held in Berlin in September, was by no means as strong as the 1896 Nuremberg event (which had been arranged by independent organisers, causing a rift in German chess circles). There was no Lasker or Tarrasch, no Steinitz or Pillsbury, but it was nevertheless a strong field for those days and its nineteen-round duration certainly meant a major commitment. The health of some of the players was not up to it and von Bardeleben played only one round, Englisch retired after the eleventh (going home to die) while Teichmann defaulted one round and Albin three.



Rudolf Charousek

That the many defaults did not ruin the tournament was chiefly because of the twenty-three year old Hungarian Rudolf Charousek who had burst onto the top level chess scene the previous year, when he had performed very creditably at Nuremberg after coming in as a reserve. He began the Berlin tournament poorly, with two losses (to Walbrodt and Burn), two draws (Marco and Schlechter) and a walkover against von Bardeleben, but thereafter he was unbeaten. (This was the only free point he received, whereas some players had several.)

In round six Charousek drew with the English veteran Joseph Blackburne (then in his fifty-sixth year) and then scored his first two wins (Teichmann and Suchting) to move above fifty per cent. Draws with Englisch and Metger followed but at this stage he was two whole points adrift of Janowski and Marco.

What followed was astonishing: the young Hungarian won nine straight games. In rounds eleven through fourteen he defeated Janowski, Albin, Cohn and Schiffers but his poor start meant he was still half a point adrift of Blackburne and Janowski. Next he beat Alapin and Winawer but the doughty Blackburne kept pace with him. In round seventeen, Charousek beat Caro while Blackburne could only draw and their totals were level. Round eighteen brought him Black against the weakest player in the field, Zinkl, who played a symmetrical opening.

Seeking complications to avoid drawish lines brought Charousek into difficulties but he won eventually to take the sole lead at last. However, there was one more round.

Last of all he had to face the mighty grandmaster Mikhail Chigorin of Russia, no longer at the height of his powers but still a formidable foe, to whom Charousek had lost a play-off match at the Budapest tournament in 1896. Worse, although Blackburne had faltered (but still took a very well-deserved third prize, his last great success), Walbrodt had been scoring well and was only half a point behind with a last-round walkover, so Charousek had to win. Here is how he did it.

Rudolf Charousek – Mikhail Chigorin, Berlin 1897

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 b6!?

This unusual defence had been prepared for the tournament by the Russian players, Albin and Chigorin, and it is understandable that Charousek makes no attempt at a direct refutation (e.g. by playing an early e4 or developing his dark-squared bishop at f4) that could have led him into his opponents' prepared variations. Wisely, he relies on his good form to carry him to success in an even middle game. This variation with 3...b6 has been investigated recently by Dutch IM Gerard Welling who has written an interesting article about it in the German magazine *Kaissiber* (May 1996 issue), edited by Stefan Bucker.

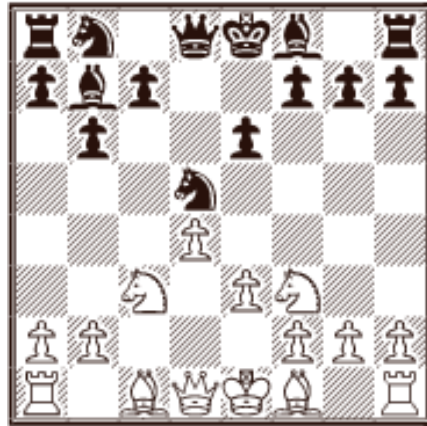
4 e3 Nf6

Black only plays this in the Alapin Defence when Bg5 is impossible.

5 Nf3 Bb7

Alapin also tried the more subtle 5...Nd7 here, against Zinkl at Berlin and against Schlechter in Vienna the following year.

6 cxd5 Nxd5



Alapin had played 6...exd5 against Charousek five days previously, the game continuing 6 cxd5 exd5 7 Bb5+ c6 8 Bd3 Be7(Alapin later indicated 8...Bd6!) 9 0-0 0-0 (better 9...Nbd7!?) 10 Ne5 Nbd7 11 f4! c5 12 Qf3 with an attacking position. After 6...Nxd5, Welling observes, White has a kind of Queen's Indian, in which he has not had to play the move a2-a3; the position offers him good dynamic chances.

7 Bb5+ c6 8 Bd3 Nd7 9 0-0 Bd6 10 e4 Nb4

In Alapin's opinion, Black should have continued 10...Nxc3 11 bxc3 e5. Philip W. Sergeant, in his book on Charousek (G. Bell & Sons, London 1919), recommended 10...Ne7, an ugly move to the modern eye, which leaves Black cramped with few active possibilities.

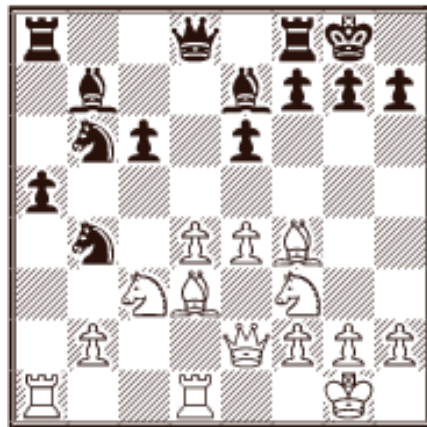
11 Bc4 a5 12 Bg5 Be7 13 Bf4

A neat switchback giving the bishop a good diagonal. This is the start of Chigorin's problems on the dark squares.

13...0-0 14 a3 Na6 15 Qe2 b5 16 Bd3 b4

He tries to get some active play. Again Sergeant's passive suggestion 16...Nc7 would not appeal to many players.

17 axb4 Nxb4 18 Rfd1 Nb6



18 ...Nxd3 19 Qxd3 Nf6 is one of Sergeant's better suggestions, but Chigorin probably desired to accumulate tension. Now White does not really have time to retreat the bishop. **19 Ne5!**

If 19 Bb1 Ba6, followed by ...Nc4, and Black is at last starting to get some play.

19...Bd6

19...Qxd4 was recommended by some contemporary commentators, but undoubtedly Chigorin, the master of attack in open positions,

could see the dangers. 20 Bb1 Qc5 21

Nxf7 is probably what Chigorin feared e.g. 21...Rxf7 (21...Ba6 22 Qg4) 22 Be3 and White regains his material since the b6-knight will hang.

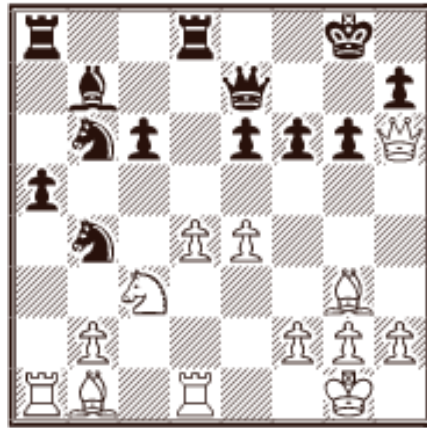
20 Bb1 Qe7 21 Qh5 Bxe5

21...f6 is best according to Sergeant. In any case, White has a growing initiative and it is becoming harder to find good moves for Black.

22 Bxe5 g6

This looks a horrible concession, in conjunction with the previous move.

23 Qh6 f6 24 Bg3 Rfd8?



Seeking complications. 24...Nc4 25 b3 Nd6 (Sergeant) is a bit safer.; 24 ...c5 is another Sergeant suggestion, but a blunder: 25 dxc5 Nc4 26 Bd6 Nxd6 27 cxd6.

25 e5! fxe5 26 Bxe5!?

Chigorin probably hoped for 26 Bh4 Qd7 27 Bxd8 Rxd8 with some compensation for the exchange.

26...Nc4 27 Be4 Nd5?

27...Nxe5 28 dxe5 is better for White, but not as

good as the game.

28 Bxd5 cxd5 29 Bg3 Rf8 30 b3 Nb6

30...Nd6 is better according to Sergeant.

31 Nb5 Qd7 32 Nd6

Sergeant observes: "The Knight has no means of getting away again, so that Charousek showed great confidence in making this move."

32...Bc6 33 h4!

Commencing the final attack. This is a good model of how to assail a fianchettoed king position that has lost its fianchettoed bishop (except, of course, in this game Chigorin never had a bishop on g7!).

33...a4?!

33...Nc8 34 Nxc8 would retain good attacking chances for White; Chigorin prefers to test his opponent's nerve and have a pawn for his trouble.

34 h5!



This stage of the game would have been fascinating for the Berlin kibitzers of 1897!

34...axb3 35 Rxa8 Nxa8 36 hxg6 hxg6 37 Qxg6+ Qg7 38 Qxe6+ Kh7 39 Re1!

The right solution, after which Black is totally lost.

39...Qd7



If 39...Qb2? 40 Qh3+ Kg8 41 Be5.

40 Qe3 Rf6 41 Qg5 Re6 42 Qh4+

Charousek gains time on the clock while he works out the finale.

42...Rh6 43 Qg5 Re6 44 Rxe6 Qxe6 45 Be5 Qg6 46 Qh4+ Qh6 47 Qe7+ 1 0

It's mate very soon.

Sadly, Charousek (whom I should probably have included in my "Lost Heroes" [column](#) a few months ago) died in the year 1900, of tuberculosis.



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