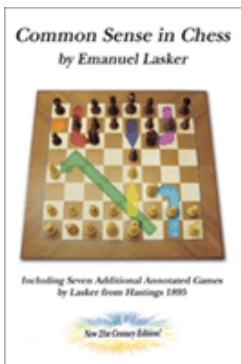




SKITTLES ROOM

From the Archives

Hosted by
Mark Donlan



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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*...

In an article published in the first number of the *American Chess Journal*, the legendary tournament held at New York in 1927, was examined in depth. One of the issues discussed was the failure of the only ex-World Champion of the time, Emanuel Lasker, to play. A month or so after the conclusion of the 1927 tournament, Lasker released his version of events. It was a ten-page single-spaced explanation of both the clock incident and the financial questions that lingered from the 1924 tournament. ChessCafe.com is pleased to present this article in four parts. Herewith, we bring you part two of...



Emanuel Lasker
December, 1927

The Emanuel Lasker Affair

Lasker's Version, Part Two

From: Emanuel Lasker
To: Various Newspapers and Organizations
Date: April or May [?], 1927

The Late New York Chess Tourney Dispute

[Continued from Part 1]

Some time ago the *Telegraaf* sent me the following article which Mr. Lederer had addressed to that paper:

The Truth About the Lasker Dispute

by N.L. Lederer

The recent attack launched by Mr. Emanuel Lasker in the Amsterdam *Telegraaf* has caused a flood of criticisms, suggestions and inquiries so that it seems advisable to put the correct facts involved before the chess public who are naturally anxious to know why one of the most prominent figures in chess is not participating in the coming International Grandmaster's Tournament starting on February 19th at the Hotel Manhattan Square.

Mr. Lasker has made a number of statements in his article not one of which even approaches the truth. His statement that when the invitations were issued of the New York Tournament, 1924, he was given only twenty-four hours to decide, without the option of placing his demands before the Committee, is an unmitigated lie; all the more amazing as the writer pointed out the correct facts to Mr. Lasker in a letter of December 10th, 1926, which letter was read by one of the staunchest friends of Mr. Lasker, Mr. Harold M. Phillips, who checked the data on hand with the original cables and wrote an accompanying letter to Mr. Lasker confirming the absolute correctness of these facts.

Mr. Lasker was invited to cable on January 9th, 1924, and did not reply until January 24th. He therefore had fifteen days in which to decide and not as he claims twenty-four hours. On January 19th, Mr. Lasker asked the Committee to cable him the complete list of participants

and it is evident that if he considered a playing fee due him he could at that time easily put his requests before the Committee.

Mr. Lasker states that the Committee had decided to pay him a playing fee and that the writer against the instructions of the Committee had forced him to play without this fee. This is totally untrue. The Committee had decided that the financial difficulties were such as to preclude the payment of any such fee.

The further statement of Mr. Lasker that he and the other masters were advised by letter that the surplus of about \$3,000 would be divided amongst the masters, he getting one third (!) of such surplus is likewise totally untrue. No letter was written to him or anybody else in the matter and the masters were told informally that should there be a surplus the same would be divided EQUALLY amongst the eleven participants; no sum was mentioned as the surplus, if any, was exceedingly doubtful and as a matter of fact so far from showing a surplus the Tournament ended with a deficit of about \$500 which was made up by the members of the Executive Committee. These facts were likewise presented to Mr. Lasker in the above-mentioned letter of December 10th and Mr. Phillips at the same time pointed out to Mr. Lasker that he himself had been one of the contributors to the deficit.

The reasons for the deficit were likewise fully explained to Mr. Lasker and were caused by additional allowances made to some of the European participants including Mr. Lasker; extra traveling expenses, etc.

No master received any extra allowance out of the Tournament funds with the sole exception of the Champion who received a playing fee which Mr. Lasker during his tenure of the championship was always careful to insist upon.

The incident of the chess clock in his game against Mr. Capablanca is certainly a most amazing misrepresentation of the facts.

The clock in question was in perfect order and what actually occurred was the Mr. Lasker did not properly push the lever of his clock with the result that for about eight minutes both his and his opponent's clock were running simultaneously. Although it is a well established rule in Tournament play that every player has to watch his own clock Mr. Lasker not only failed to push his lever but did not even notice that his clock had not stopped running. Contrary to his statement the incident was noticed not by Mr. Lasker but by an onlooker who drew the writer's attention to the clock. The writer then pushed the lever for Mr. Lasker thereby protecting his interests.

At adjournment time Mr. Lasker and the writer by adding the time registered on both clocks found that Mr. Lasker had lost about eight minutes of his time. It is therefore amazing to read that Mr. Lasker now claims that the writer was nowhere to be found and that he lost fifteen minutes and a further twenty minutes occupied in the repair of the clock. The clock was never repaired and the same clock was used after the adjournment and throughout the rest of the tournament.

As proven by the original score Mr. Lasker at all time had plenty of time to spare whereas his opponent was actually in time difficulties.

It is self-evident that if Mr. Lasker had had any cause whatever for complaint he would not have hesitated to present his claim at the time but to do so after three years is certainly an astonishing procedure. The chess world however is well accustomed to these and other unsportsmanlike manners of Mr. Lasker and is content to file such claims with similar alibis of a sore loser.

Mr. Lasker's attack on Mr. Maróczy is as tactless as it is childish. The Tournament record of Mr. Maróczy speaks for itself and needs no defense on the part of the writer. It is, however, ridiculous to suppose that Mr. M. could have had any influence on the decisions of the Committee of 1927, all the more as Mr. M. throughout the time of organizing this coming Tournament was not in the United States and therefore did not even know what masters were to be invited.

Mr. Lasker indulges in a long rhetorical outburst and appeals to the American Chess Public who as he supposes are very anxious to see him play another match with Mr. Capablanca although to every chess lover the result of the last match was sufficiently decisive [;] but [he] fails to state that when the subscription lists for raising the funds for Tournaments are sent around his particular friends are conspicuous by their absence with very few exceptions.

Recently Mr. Joseph Nemerov, one of the most generous of chess patrons has offered to put up a \$10,000 bet on Mr. Capablanca for a return match provided the friends of Mr. Lasker do likewise. Winner takes all. Unfortunately he will hardly be called upon to provide this tidy little sum as there has been so far no general rush to put up the \$10,000 on Mr. Lasker. But then, \$10,000 seems a somewhat excessive amount for the privilege of hearing a few

more or less original alibis to explain the defeat of Mr. Lasker.

FINIS

I will now reply to the above statement point by point.

As to the manner of invitation it was not by letter or telegram but by means of Mr. Kagan. Who arranged the Tourney of 1924 I could not tell until my arrival at New York. The invitation was public, also most of the correspondence, since Kagan's chess magazine spread the news immediately wide and far by extra editions. The whole European chess world was witness to the process which lasted about two weeks. Mr. Lederer knows all of this, of course. Under these circumstances it requires little intelligence to conclude, and Mr. Lederer has of course drawn the conclusion, that the assertion, the invitation and the ultimatum Yes or No arrived on the same day, was the mistake of a translator not conversant with chess. In my article I have, of course, not said that the two events were simultaneous. I said that first I was invited to participate – in case of my refusal Dr. Tarrasch would play in my stead – and then I was placed before an ultimatum. The discourtesy of the Committee is obvious. Would they have invited in this way Capablanca? They did not think enough of me to send me during those two weeks a letter or cable in order to get into direct touch with me; yet afterwards when they discovered that the public laid much store on my participation, they pretended that they had done so likewise.

I could not but interpret their invitation as meaning that it was indifferent to them whether I took part in the Tourney or whether Dr. Tarrasch played in my stead. No word nor indication of the contrary spirit reached me; a direct communication to the Committee had been made difficult if not impossible. I did not know Mr. Lederer except by name. I knew not even the name of any of the members of the Committee. Thus before I went to New York. When I heard the President of the Committee, then also President of the Manhattan Chess Club, in public speech at solemn occasion pronounce that the coming Tourney was particularly important because of my participation I was greatly surprised. If he had meant to say, "We got Lasker at a cheap price by pretending that he did not interest us; now that he is here we may tell him the truth," he could not have said it more precisely. But I doubted whether he was aware of the manner of the negotiations between Mr. Lederer, Mr. Kagan and myself. In fact, as far as the communication between Mr. Lederer and Mr. Kagan is considered, I am yet in the dark, for the correspondence between these two gentlemen has never been shown me nor ever been made public. Mr. Lederer had promised to show it to me, but he never lived up to his promise. That is a dark point that needs clearing up: the producing of the genuine, the complete correspondence between Mr. Lederer and Mr. Kagan.

Of course, if the Committee had said, "We meant to pay Capablanca a fee but we meant to imply that your participation was not worth a sacrifice on our part; we meant to make the bargain we made," I should have desisted. In that case I should have taken care not to enter into any kind of bargain again with the members of the Committee and ended the matter then and there. But I thought differently of the majority of the members of that Committee, asked an investigation which was denied me and was therefore driven to think that a minority, perhaps a small one, of that Committee intrigued skillfully in pursuing their own intentions. And under these circumstances I felt constrained to continue the fight so as to force the clandestine spirit of intrigue into the open.

Mr. Lederer above said: "The Committee (of 1924) had decided that the financial difficulties were such as to preclude the payment of any such playing fee." That is news to me. From a private source I had been told differently. I had requested information on this point, now it is forthcoming and I take notice of it.

I should have no fault to find with this declaration if no exception were made in favor of anyone. But an exception was made in favor of Capablanca. A champion has naturally a privileged position in a match, since he risks his title, but not in a Tourney. There all those participants who are considered drawing cards should have the same preference. The games that are played over by a million persons and which draw a throng of onlookers are naturally worth considerably more than those which interest only a small minority of players and onlookers. And that value has to be acknowledged by a Committee alive to its function, acknowledged not merely in words.

[End, Part 2]

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