



SKITTLES
ROOM

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](#) home page whenever there has been a “new” item posted here. We hope you enjoy *From the Archives*...

In 1949 G.H. Diggle, a British chess author and historian created a record in London Banks League Chess by losing a game in seven moves. Later, he sent the score on a Christmas card to the late C.H. O’D. Alexander who, with a flash of genius, sent a card in return awarding him the title of “Badmaster.” Proudly adopting the appellation, the Badmaster went on to contribute regular columns to the British Chess Federation. As the Badmaster himself notes: “[The Badmaster] has now mingled from time to time with three generations of eminent players ranging Isidor Gunsberg to Nigel Short, and rambled extensively round the highways and byways of provincial chess. It is in these obscure haunts, as well as in the higher circles, that he has observed great Chess Characters and overheard many weird chess utterances...” G.H. Diggle passed away several years ago; we were delighted to receive permission from the then 90-year young Badmaster to use items from his Badmaster series.

Towering Tarrasch

G.H. Diggle

Seventy years ago occurred a memorable encounter at Dusseldorf between the two great chess Doctors, Emanuel Lasker and Siegbert Tarrasch, won decisively by Lasker (8-3-5). Bobby Fischer, nevertheless, in naming “the ten greatest masters in history” includes Tarrasch and leaves out Lasker who, proclaims Bobby, “was a coffee house player.” Lasker’s “coffee,” however, proved stronger than anyone else’s in the World for over 25 years – yet there is

(as usual) a certain truth in Bobby's uncouth blasphemy. For Tarrasch was a fanatically sincere and hidebound theorist, who thought less a victory by himself than a victory for his own dogma in a game won by somebody else; whereas Lasker, with all his genius, was "a bit of an old so-and-so" who sometimes bemused his readers with phony chess philosophy and his opponents by making rotten moves on purpose.

Tarrasch's dogmatic utterances caused "unfortunate moments" in his career, as when he irascibly objected to the entry of "a certain Mr. Yates" to the Hamburg Masters Tournament of 1910. In the event, Yates came last with one win, three draws, and twelve losses, but his solitary win, needless to say, was against the Doctor himself! On another occasion, he subjected a Marshall-Lasker Match game to 380 lines of magisterial comment, which (sneered a contemporary) "served to teach us poor bunglers how not to annotate." The Doctor, however, could be equally "down on himself." At the Leipzig Tournament of 1888 he "suffered the humiliation of tailing the list ... I had underestimated my opponents and overestimated myself. This was the true reason for my downfall. I had thought that to win I needed but to sit myself at the board and make moves. My opponents, playing against Dr. Tarrasch, must of course be overwhelmed. This time I was justly punished, but it proved a wholesome corrective. I perceived that it did not suffice to be a good player if one did not play well." But his best known caustic remark was inspired by a dull tournament game when a spectator was observed to be asleep. "Ah! An acute critic!" explained the Doctor.

He was a man of awe-inspiring personality, with the towering authority of a great chess Headmaster. William Winter, who saw him at only one Tournament (London, 1927) confesses that he felt "rather nervous in his presence. However, the Doctor did me the honour of sitting on my hat for three hours while he analysed an adjourned game." Not daring to point this out, Winter waited reverently until the Court arose, recovered his property, and "wore it faithfully till my hair came through the crown."



[\[ChessCafe Home Page\]](#) [\[Book Review\]](#) [\[Columnists\]](#)
[\[Endgame Study\]](#) [\[Skittles Room\]](#) [\[Archives\]](#)
[\[Links\]](#) [\[Online Bookstore\]](#) [\[About ChessCafe\]](#) [\[Contact Us\]](#)

Copyright 2006 CyberCafes, LLC. All Rights Reserved.

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