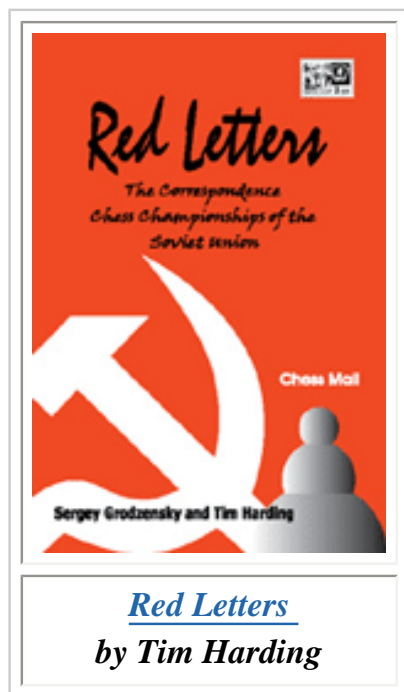




COLUMNISTS

The Kibitzer

Tim Harding



World Champions Play Correspondence Chess

Sometimes the hardest thing about writing this column is finding a suitable topic. This month the problem was solved for me, indirectly, by Edward Winter who recently asked his readers for information on world champions that played correspondence chess. As most of you will know this topic is rather close to one of my main areas of expertise, since I have been writing on correspondence chess since the 1970s. I prefer to answer in my own column rather than to provide free copy for someone else and I invite the wide readership of *The Kibitzer* to help increase the store of human knowledge on this topic.

Apparently John Blackstone (of Las Vegas, NV, USA) wrote to Mr. Winter, mentioning that several on-line databases contain correspondence games attributed to Mikhail Tal and asked him which world champions have played postal chess. I hope Mr. Blackstone reads *The Kibitzer* regularly, but in case he does not, if any reader out there knows him, please inform him about this article.

To restrict the question to “postal games” may seem narrow, but I am not aware of any recent world champions playing email or other Internet games with the exception of exhibition matches where the readers of a website vote to decide which move is made against a grandmaster; both Karpov and Kasparov have played such matches, but I won’t include them here. It would be an interesting, but separate, question to compile a complete list of such matches played by FIDE grandmasters with full details of the circumstances.

Posing the question in terms of postal games, the way that Mr. Blackstone did, has the merit of excluding telegraph, cable and radio games played in one or two sessions, with a time limit measured in hours and minutes rather than days. Several world champions have been involved in events of that kind, but they would only count as “correspondence chess” on a very broad definition.

Mr. Winter says he would “like to build up a list of authenticated correspondence games played by the world champions of the post-Second

World War era. Their predecessors' exploits in this field are already relatively well documented." I take him to mean games played at any time in their career, from juvenilia to games (if any) played while holding the world champion title to games played in later life.

My contribution to this debate follows and maybe some readers will know of more examples, or be able to provide documentation for the doubtful cases. Any replies I receive will also be forwarded to Mr. Winter.

At least one attempt has been made to answer this question before. The book *Khod v Konverte (Move in the Envelope)* by I. Romanov and S. Grodzensky (Moscow 1982) included a section on this topic. That book has not been translated into English, but I believe there was an extended Hungarian edition that I have not seen. References to that book later in this article will be to "Khod", with the page number. However, many of the examples in that book are radio games, not true correspondence games.

It may be true that the activities in this area of pre-WW2 champions are "relatively well documented", and time and space being limited, I will only say a little about the champions before Euwe. Yes, I know that Euwe was not world champion after World War II (except that he was briefly declared to be champion before FIDE rescinded the decision), but he was an active player, of both over-the-board and postal chess, after 1945, so I am going to include him.

The recognised world champions before Euwe were: Steinitz, Emanuel Lasker, Capablanca and Alekhine. Of these, I am not aware of any postal games being played by Capablanca, but the other three did play postal chess. In the case of Steinitz, he played several private challenge games, the two-game match with Chigorin and was one of the two principals in the London team that won the match against Vienna in the 1870s. This still amounts to not much more than a dozen games that I am aware of.

Alekhine's case is more complicated, but a considerable advance was made by the publication of Skinner and Verhoeven's compendium *Alexander Alekhine's Chess Games, 1902-1946*. Subsequently, Alekhine's CC career was discussed in detail in *Chess Mail*, and a revised article including all my conclusions on the matter will be one of the main chapters in *The Write Move*, an anthology of writings on correspondence chess, which will be published in Dublin in June.

It seems that more research could be done in America on Emanuel Lasker. I don't know of any postal games he played in Europe and I don't think there is any evidence of him playing any. His best-known postal games are the two-game match he played with John Lindsay McCutcheon in 1904 to test the latter's variation of the French Defence; they each won the game they played

with White.

After that, he is known to have offered to play postal matches against amateurs for payment. I don't have the reference in *Lasker's Chess Magazine* but the *Weekly Irish Times* for 11 November 1905 refers to his offer, so it was presumably earlier that year. I should be interested to receive game scores and details about any such matches that Lasker played.

I now move on to discuss the champions of the modern time. There are too many game scores to give in an article of this type, so I shall just give a selection without many notes. All these games and more (including the Alekhine and Steinitz games, etc.) will be included in my next correspondence database CD-ROM, *MegaCorr4*, due to be released in August or September 2005.

Max Euwe

Now we move on to Euwe, some of whose postal chess activities are recorded in the standard work on CC in the Netherlands by L. C. M. Diepstraten, *Tweehonderdvijftigjaar Correspondentieschaak in Nederland* (Uitgeverij Van Spijk, Venlo, 1991; ISBN 90-6216-076X). Unfortunately, this book lacks an index but on page 124 there are four games by Euwe from the 1950s. I know he played many more than these four, but not whether he played any before or during the war. Some radio games by him are in correspondence databases, including my own *MegaCorr* series, and the circumstances usually are not known.

First was the game with the Italian CC specialist Dr. Mario Napolitano, which was played in 1952-53 to test the opening variation 1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Bg5!?, Euwe eventually won with White. Euwe's own notes are in Hanon Russell's book *Correspondence Chess* (Thinkers' Press, 1980, pp152-159) and my notes, with several important corrections to Euwe's analysis, are in my book *50 Golden Chess Games* (Chess Mail, Dublin, 2004).

During or after 1955, Euwe played some games with a man called Martin, about whom I would like more information. I read somewhere that E. B. Martin was from New York but Diepstraten calls him a Spanish correspondence player (and gives no initials). I am not sure of the circumstances of this game, which was annotated in *Schach-Archiv* and is Game 235 in Diepstraten. For example, were the opening variations agreed in advance?

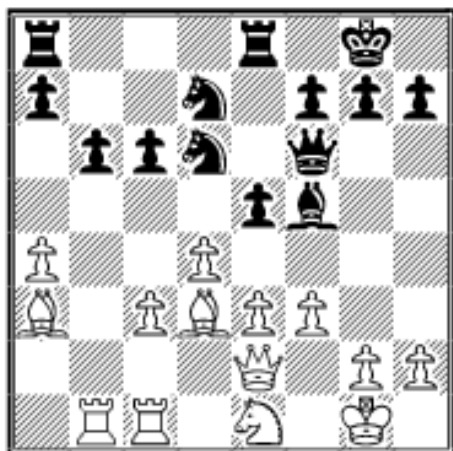
Euwe - Martin

corr, 1955

Slav Defence (D19)

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 dxc4 5 a4 Bf5 6 e3 e6 7 Bxc4 Bb4 8 0-0

0-0 9 Qe2 Bxc3? 10 bxc3 Ne4 11 Ba3 Re8 12 Rfc1 Nd7 13 Ne1 e5 14 Bd3 Qf6 15 Rab1 b6 16 f3! Nd6



17 e4! Bg6 18 Qf2 Qe6 19 Rd1 f5! 20 Bxd6 fxe4 21 Bc2! e3? 22 Qe2! Qxd6 23 dxe5 Qe7 24 f4

Not 24 Bxg6 hxg6 25 Qc4+ Kf8!.

24...Rf8 25 Qxe3 Bxc2 26 Nxc2 Rad8 27 Nb4 Qc5 28 Qxc5 Nxc5 29 Rxd8 Rxd8 30 Nxc6 1-0

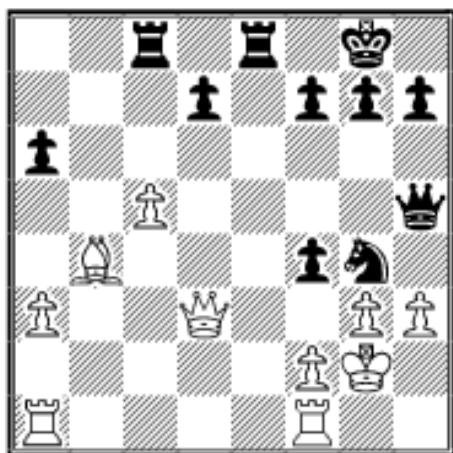
Here is the game they played with reverse colours (Diepstraten game 234).

Martin - Euwe

corr, 1955

Nimzo-Indian Defence (E32)

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Qc2 0-0 5 g3 c5 6 dxc5 Nc6 7 Nf3 Qa5 8 Bd2 Qxc5 9 a3 Bxc3 10 Qxc3 Ng4 11 e3 b6 12 Nd4 Bb7 13 Bg2 Qh5 14 Nb5 Na5 15 Bxb7 Nxb7 16 e4 Ne5 17 0-0 Rac8 18 b3 a6 19 Nd4 b5 20 Kg2 bxc4 21 Nf5 exf5 22 Qxe5 Nc5! 23 Bb4 Rfe8 24 Qd5 Nxe4 25 bxc4 Nf6 26 Qd3 f4 27 c5 Ng4 28 h3



28...Ne3+!! 0-1

The last of Euwe's postal games to be printed by Diepstraten is the following, against a player from Mauritius, which he says was played from 1 January 1961 to 8 February 1961; he found it in a newspaper *le Cernéen* of Saturday 10 March 1973.

Euwe's opponent played in the 4th semifinal section of ICCF World

Championship VI (1965-68) finishing 14th of 15th players. Diepstraten gives his name as "J. le Quen", but I believe it should be J. le Guen (following *Fernschach* 5/1965 p108, which prints the start-list, and 5/1968 page 109, the final table of that event).

J. le Guen - Euwe

corr, 1961

King's Indian Defence (E62)

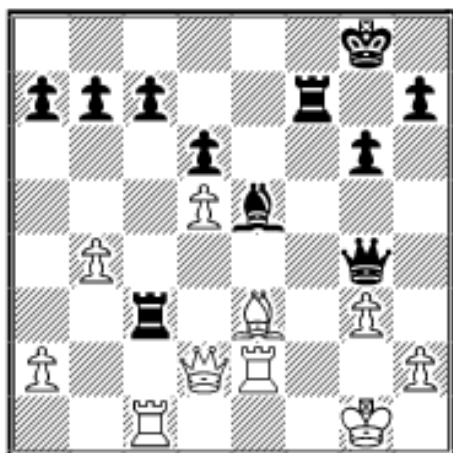
1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 Bg7 4 e4 d6 5 g3 0-0 6 Bg2 e5 7 Nf3

Diepstraten prefers 7 Nge2.

7...Nc6 8 d5 Ne7 9 0-0 Ne8 10 Nh4 f5 11 Bg5 Nf6 12 Qd2 Nxe4 13 Nxe4 fxe4 14 Rfe1 Bf5 15 Bxe4 Qd7



16 f4? Bxe4 17 Rxe4 Nf5 18 fxe5 Bxe5 19 Nxf5 Rxf5 20 Rae1 Raf8 21 R4e2 Qf7 22 Kg2 Rf1 23 Qe3 Qf5 24 Bh6 Rf7 25 b4 Rf3 26 Qd2 Rc3 27 Be3 Qe4+ 28 Kg1 Qxc4 29 Rc1 Qg4



30 Rf2? Rxe3! 0-1

If 31 Qxe3 Rxf2 and 32...Bd4.

I also have two other Euwe games vs. Le Guen, which need to be authenticated. Can anyone provide source information?

Euwe - Le Guen

corr, 1958

Queen's Gambit Declined (D54)

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Bg5 Be7 5 e3 0-0 6 Rc1 h6 7 Bh4 b6 8 cxd5 Nxd5 9 Nxd5 exd5 10 Bxe7 Qxe7 11 Be2 Rd8 12 Bf3 c5 13 Ne2 Nc6 14 0-0 Ba6 15 Re1 Qd6 16 Nf4 Ne7 17 Qa4 Bb7 18 dxc5 bxc5 19 Red1 Qb6 20 Qa3 Rac8 21 Nd3 c4 22 Qxe7 cxd3 23 Rxc8 Rxc8 24 b3 Qa6 25 Bg4 d2 26 Bxc8 Qe2 27 Qe8+ 1-0

Euwe - Le Guen

corr, 1962

Queen's Gambit, Marshall Defence (D06)

1 d4 d5 2 c4 Nf6 3 cxd5 Nxd5 4 Nf3 e6 5 e4 Nb6 6 Bd3 c5 7 dxc5 Bxc5 8 0-0 Qc7 9 e5 Nc6 10 Nc3 Nxe5 11 Bf4 Nxf3+ 12 Qxf3 Qe7 13 Ne4 Nd5 14

Rac1 b6 15 Rxc5 Nxf4 16 Rxc8+ Rxc8 17 Bb5+ Kf8 18 Qxf4 e5 19 Qf5 Rc7 20 f4 exf4 21 Qxf4 h5 22 Bc4 Kg8 23 Nd6 Rh6 24 Bxf7+ 1-0

Diepstraten (page 140) also mentions the participation of Euwe in the 10th Dutch Correspondence Championship (1981-2), but gives no further details beyond the points totals of the players. In fact, Euwe entered this as preparation for the 11th ICCF World Championship Final, for which he had accepted a personal invitation.

However, that did not begin until 1983 and Euwe died in 1982 shortly before the end of the Dutch Championship. His unfinished games were adjudicated and he finished in fourth place with 10/14 behind two players who were to go on to become CC World Champions. Euwe lost only to the current titleholder, J. J. van Oosterom, and he drew a not very exciting game with the 15th champion, G. J. Timmerman.

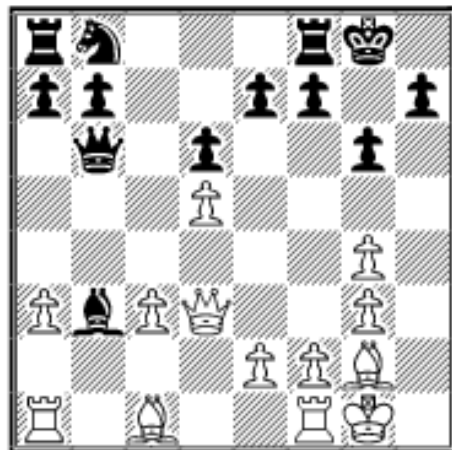
I have all Euwe's games from the event, but I cannot remember how I obtained them; they are possibly on a Dutch website and were probably published originally in a Dutch CC magazine, *Schaakshakeringen*. Here is one of his wins.

Euwe – Johannes J. Sinke

Netherlands ch-10 1981-82

King's Indian Defence (E62)

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 g3 Bg7 4 Bg2 0-0 5 Nc3 d6 6 Nf3 c6 7 0-0 Qa5 8 d5 Qb4 9 Nd2 Bd7 10 a3 Qb6 11 Nb3 cxd5 12 cxd5 Ng4 13 h3 Bxc3 14 bxc3 Ba4 15 hxd4 Bxb3 16 Qd3



16...Rc8? 17 Rb1 Rc4

An artificial move, but the bishop is also in big trouble after 17...Nd7 18 Be3 Nc5 19 Qd2.

18 Be3 Qb5 19 Rb2 1-0

Black resigns, since after 19...a5 20 a4! Qxa4 21 Rfb1 he loses a piece.

Mikhail Botvinnik

When he was a young candidate master (or master?), in December 1929-January 1930, Botvinnik played the only correspondence game of his career. He was one of ten Leningrad players opposing Abram Yakovlevich Model (1895-1976), in a challenge simultaneous organised by the paper *Smyena*.

Model was a mathematician who had tied third in the 5th Soviet Championship, earning the title of Master of Sport, of which he was later stripped because of indifferent results; he had too many interests besides chess.

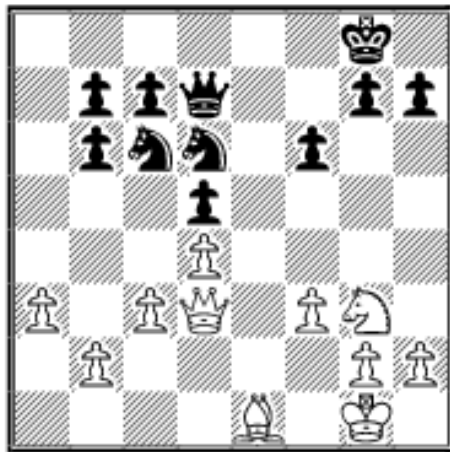
The circumstances of this event are outlined in the book *Soviet Chess 1917-91* by Soltis (pp.53-54), but he gives none of the games or the individual results. I found the game in *Fernschach* 7/1973 where Botvinnik gave an interview to Yakov Estrin. Unfortunately, the game is a rather dull draw. Model won seven games and drew three, against quite strong opposition.

Abram Model - Botvinnik

Smyena challenge match 1929-30

French Defence (C01)

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 exd5 exd5 5 Bd3 Nc6 6 Nge2 Nge7 7 0-0 Bg4 8 f3 Be6 9 a3 Ba5 10 Na4 0-0 11 c3 Bf5 12 Ng3 Bxd3 13 Qxd3 Bb6 14 Nxb6 axb6 15 Bg5 f6 16 Bd2 Qd7 17 Rae1 Rae8 18 Re2 Nc8 19 Rxe8 Rxe8 20 Re1 Rxe1+ 21 Bxe1 Nd6



22 Bd2 Nc4 23 Bc1 N6a5 24 Qd1 Qe8 25 Nf1 Qg6 26 b3 Nd6 27 Bf4 Ne8 28 Ne3 Qf7 29 b4 Nc6 30 h4 ½-½

Vassily Smyslov

Smyslov probably played no postal games or genuine correspondence games. A game versus Ståhlberg from 1961 is mentioned in *Khod v Konvert*, but I think this was one of a series of radio games that the Swedish grandmaster played against various opponents, with a few

moves being made in each session and adjournments in between. I have seen an article about these in *SSKK Bulletin* some years ago, but my Swedish is not up to translating them. I should welcome more details about these events from somebody who knows the facts or has access to the article.

Mikhail Tal

Mr. Blackstone asked in particular about Tal. When I was in Riga, I was told about a postal tournament from which he withdrew. The following game against M. S. Abroshin (a very active postal player) is possibly from this, but I have no more details and would welcome more information.

Tal - Abroshin

Possible postal game, date uncertain

Philidor Defence (C41)

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 Nd7 4 Bc4 c6 5 Nc3 Be7 6 a4 Ngf6 7 0-0 0-0 8 Qe2 exd4 9 Nxd4 Nxe4 10 Nxe4 d5 11 Nf5 dxe4 12 Qxe4 Bc5 13 Rd1 Qf6 14 Bd3 Kh8 15 Bf4 Bxf2+ 16 Kxf2 Nc5 17 Qe7 Nxd3+ 18 Rxd3 Bxf5 19 Qxf6 gxf6 20 Rb3 b6 21 Rc3 Be4 1/2-1/2

Tal certainly played one game that can be classed as correspondence, since it was played over a period of time, although the telephone may have been the medium of transmission. His opposition was the readership of the youth paper *Pionierskaya Pravda*.

Some databases give White as “Tsjitatjeli” but this is a Germanic corruption of “chitateli”, the Russian word for “Readers”. I have also seen White stated as “White Rook Youth Club” which is possibly connected with *Pionierskaya Pravda*.

The game was annotated afterwards by Yakov Estrin. Some databases may have the finish wrong, e.g. Dan Heisman’s electronic book on the Traxler variation of the Two Knights, probably because he was following an inaccurate American secondary source.

Pionierskaya Pravda - Tal

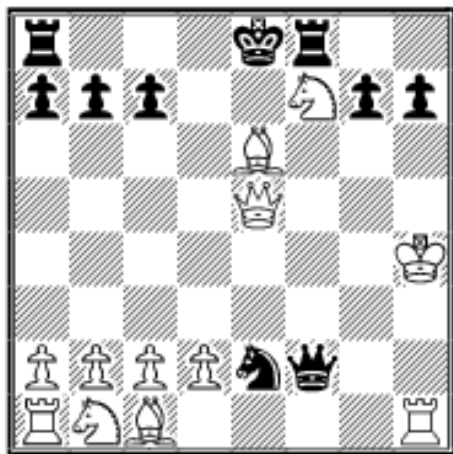
Telephone challenge, 1968-9

Two Knights Defence (C57)

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bc4 Nf6 4 Ng5 Bc5 5 Nxf7 Bxf2+ 6 Kxf2 Nxe4+ 7 Kg1 Qh4 8 g3 Nxg3 9 hxg3 Qxg3+ 10 Kf1 Rf8 11 Qh5 d5! 12 Bxd5 Nd4

12...Nb4! is recommended for Black by Heisman also.

13 Qh2 Qg4 14 Qxe5+ Be6 15 Bxe6 Qf3+ 16 Kg1 Ne2+ 17 Kh2 Qf2+ 18 Kh3 Qf3+ 19 Kh4 Qf2+

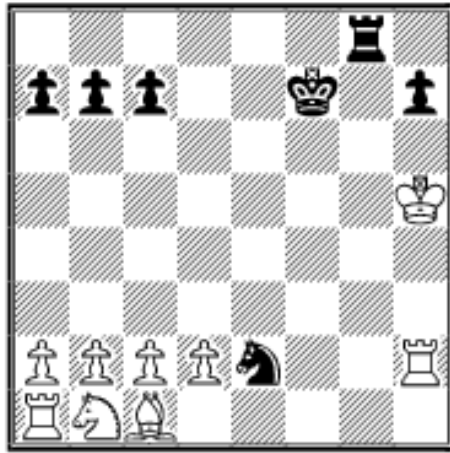


Not 19...Qxh1+ 20 Bh3+ Kxf7 21 Qe6 mate!.

20 Kh5?

The correct move is 20 Kh3!, when the game should have ended in perpetual check.

20...Rxf7 21 Bxf7+ Kxf7 22 Rh2 Qf3+ 23 Kh4 g5+ 24 Qxg5 Rg8 25 Qh5+

Qxh5+ 26 Kxh5

Now Tal should have played 26...Nf4+!
27 Kh6 (27 Kh4? h5!) 27...Rg6+ 28 Kxh7
Rg7+ and now the critical reply is 29 Kh6
(not 29 Kh8? Ng6 mate).

According to Heisman, the position after
29 Kh6 was called a draw by GM Soltis
in the January 16, 2000 edition of the
New York Post, but now comes 29...Kg8!
and ...Rg6 mate, just like Rotlevi's win
against Fahrni at move 81 in Carlsbad

1911. (Heisman prides himself on finding this win but Moscow schoolboy
Vadim Brodsky had discovered it 30 years earlier and Heisman would have
found it on page 145 of "Khod" if he had looked there.)

This game, which puts rather a dent in the reputation of Tal the magical
tactician, instead ended:

26...Ng3+? 27 Kh6 Nf5+ 28 Kxh7 Rg7+ 1/2-1/2

The "Khod" book also has a game Tal played against Shevchak (Szecwzak?),
but I don't know the circumstances of it.

Tigran Petrosian

I have four of his games in my database, but I think three (one versus
Kristian Skold and two against Zandor Nilsson) are either inauthentic or were
played in radio exhibition matches or something similar. The genuine game
is the following, which he lost in 1970-1 to East German television viewers.

This game has been published before, on page 147 of Dr. Fritz Baumbach's
book *52-54 Stop* (in German). Dr. Baumbach says the game was between ex-
world champion Petrosian and the East German broadcasting organisation,
supervised by the 6th ICCF World Champion Horst Rittner. Each week a
move was made and Baumbach says that Rittner practically played the game
himself.

DDR TV viewers - Petrosian

Television game 1970-1

French Defence (C16)

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e5 b6 5 a3 Bf8 6 Nf3 Qd7

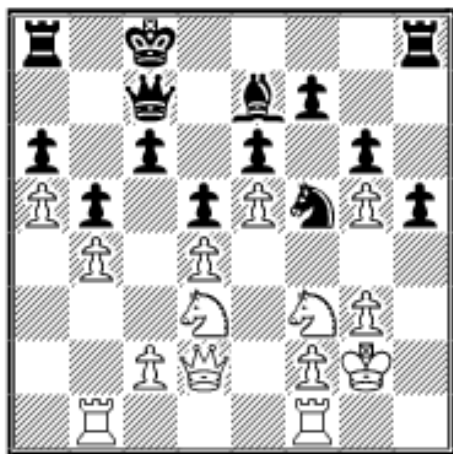
In his book, Baumbach points out that against Nedeljko (Vienna 1957),
Petrosian had played 6...Ne7 and eventually drew. This time he follows the

move Korchnoi played against the same opponent in that event. Nedeljkovic replied 7 Be2, but Rittner plays more aggressively. Nowadays, 7 Bb5 c6 8 Ba4 is usually preferred.

7 b4 c6

Known at this time was 7...Ne7 8 Bd3 c5 9 bxc5 bxc5 10 Nb5 Nf5 11 dxc5 Bxc5 12 c3 Nc6 13 0-0 a6 14 g4 Nfe7 15 Nbd4 Qc7 16 Re1 Bd7 17 Qe2 Qa7 18 Nb3 Bb6 19 Rb1 Ng6 20 a4 ½-½ Ciocaltea-Maric, 1969.

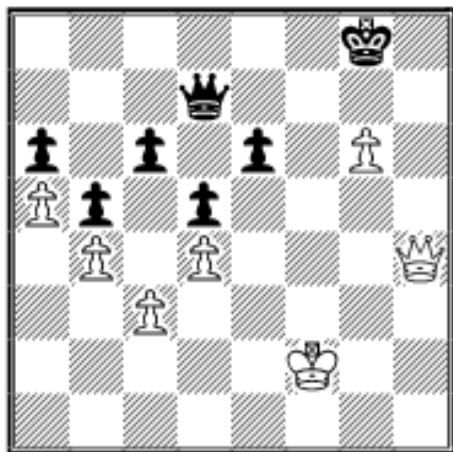
8 Rb1 Ne7 9 Bd3 Ba6 10 0-0 Bxd3 11 Qxd3 Qb7 12 a4 g6 13 Nd1 Nd7 14 Ne3 b5 15 Ng4 h6 16 Bd2 Bg7 17 h4 h5 18 Ne3 a6 19 a5 Nf8 20 g3 Qc7 21 Ng2 Nf5 22 Bg5 Nh7 23 Nf4 Kd7 24 Qd2 Kc8 25 Nd3 Nxc5 26 hxc5 Bf8 27 Kg2 Be7



28 Rh1 Kb7 29 Rh2 Raf8 30 Nf4 Qd8 31 Nh3 Rh7 32 Rbh1 Rfh8 33 Nfg1 Qf8 34 c3 Qd8 35 Ne2 Ka7 36 f4 Qg8 37 Nhg1 Kb8 38 Nf3 Kc7 39 Rh3 Kd7 40 R1h2 Ke8 41 Qc1 Kf8 42 Kf2 Kg7 43 Qh1 Bd8 44 Ne1 Be7 45 Nd3 Bf8 46 Nec1 h4 47 g4 Ng3 48 Qe1 Be7 49 Ne2 Qd8 50 Nxc3 hxc3+ 51 Kxc3 Rxc3+ 52 Rxc3 Rxc3+ 53 Kxc3 Qh8+ 54 Qh4 Qc8 55 Kg3 Kg8 56 Ne1 Qd7 57 Nf3 Qc8 58 Qh3 Kg7 59 Kf2 Qd7 60 Nh4 Kg8

Baumbach's book has the misprint 60...Kh8, which would allow 61 Nxc6++.

61 f5 exf5 62 gxf5 Bxc5 63 e6 Bxh4+ 64 Qxh4 fxe6 65 fxg6



65...Qg7?

A miscalculation by the ex-world champion. 65...e5 was necessary, although after 66 Qh7+ Qxh7 67 gxh7+ Kxh7 68 dxe5 Kg6 69 Ke3 Kf5 70 Kd4 Ke6 71 Kc5 Kxe5 72 Kxc6 Ke4 73 Kb6 Kd3 74 Kxa6 Kxc3 75 Kxb5 d4 76 a6 d3 77 a7 d2 78 a8Q d1Q 79 Qa3+ White has winning chances (Baumbach).

66 Qd8+ Qf8+ 67 Qxf8+ Kxf8 68 Ke3 1-0

Boris Spassky

Many years ago when I interviewed Spassky in Dublin, I asked him for his advice to players who wanted to improve and he said, “play correspondence chess.” Unfortunately, I didn’t find out what CC game he had played himself. My database has a possible (but unauthenticated) game with Boris Rozinov in 1962, won by White in the Najdorf Sicilian. Perhaps another Spassky played it.

Like Tal, Spassky played a correspondence match against a youth paper, except while he was world champion. This was a two-game match against the readers of *Komsomolskaya Pravda* in 1970-71; he won one game and drew the other. These games were printed in *Fernschach* 6/1972 and elsewhere.

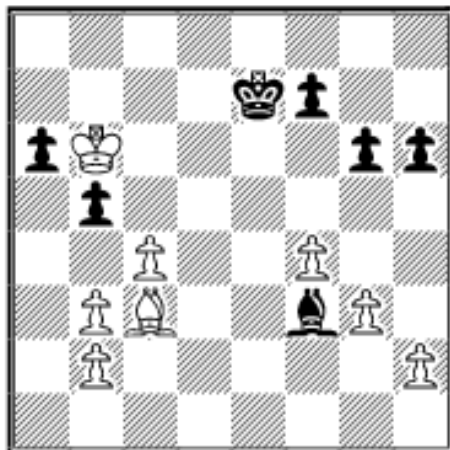
Spassky - Komsomolskaya Pravda

Newspaper challenge match 1970-1
Najdorf Sicilian (B97)

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 a6 6 Bg5 e6 7 f4 Qb6 8 Nb3 Nbd7 9 Qf3 h6 10 Bh4 Be7 11 Bd3 Nxe4 12 Bxe7 Nxc3 13 Bh4 Nd5 14 0-0-0 Qe3+ 15 Qxe3 Nxe3 16 Rd2 b5

Better 16...Nd5 (Spassky).

17 Re1 Nd5 18 Be4 0-0 19 Bxd5 exd5 20 Rxd5 Nc5 21 Rxd6 Nxb3+ 22 axb3 Ra7 23 Bf2 Rd7 24 Bc5 Rxd6 25 Bxd6 Rd8 26 Bc7 Rf8 27 Re7 Bb7 28 g3 Bc6 29 Ba5 Re8 30 Rc7 Bf3 31 c4 Re6 32 Bc3 Rc6 33 Rxc6 Bxc6 34 Kd2 Kf8 35 Ke3 g6 36 Kd4 Ke7 37 Kc5 Bf3 38 Kb6



38...bxc4

An inaccuracy: 38...Kd7 39 Kxa6 Kc6! 40 Be5 h5 41 cxb5+ Kd7 and ...Kc8, leads to a clear draw.

39 bxc4 Be2 40 c5 Kd7 41 Kb7 Bf3+ 42 Kxa6 Kc6 43 b4 Be2+ 44 Ka5

If 44 Ka7 h5 45 Kb8 Bg4.

44...h5 1/2-1/2

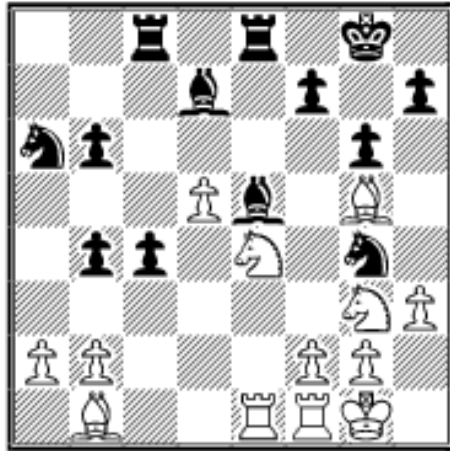
Komsomolskaya Pravda - Spassky

Newspaper challenge match 1970-1
Modern Benoni (A65)

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 Nc3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 e4 g6 7 Bd3 Bg7 8 Nge2 0-0 9 0-0 Na6 10 Bg5 Re8 11 Qd2 Bd7 12 Ng3 Rc8 13 Rae1 c4 14 Bb1 b5 15 Qf4 b4 16 Qxd6 Qb6 17 Qxb6 axb6 18 e5!?

“Romantic,” said Spassky; the normal move was 18 Nce2.

18...Ng4 19 Nce4 Bxe5 20 h3



20...f6

Spassky called this the hardest move of the match. 20...f5 21 Nd2 would leave Black in a critical situation. If 20...h6 21 Bh4 g5 22 hxg4 gxh4 23 Nh5.

21 Bc1 f5 22 hxg4 fxe4 23 Nxe4 Bxg4 24 b3 c3 25 Bd3 Nc5 26 Nxc5 bxc5 27 Bb5

Better 27 a4 Bd6 28 Bc4 with a probable draw (Grodzensky & Romanov).

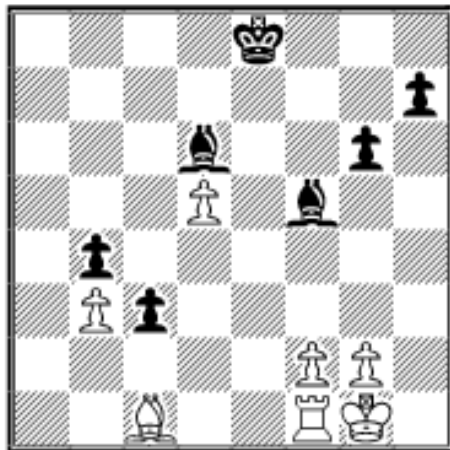
27...Kf7

If 2..Re7 28 Bg5.

28 Bxe8+ Rxe8 29 a3 Bf5

If 29...c4 30 Re4! Bh2+ 31 Kxh2 Rxe4 32 f3.

30 axb4 cxb4 31 Re3 Bd6 32 Rxe8 Kxe8



33 Be3?

A losing blunder; 33 Re1+ Kd7 34 Re2 fights on.

33...Bc2 34 Ra1 Bxb3 35 Ra6 Ke7 36 Bg5+ Kd7 37 Ra7+ Kc8 38 Ra6 Kc7 39 Ra7+ Kb6 40 Be3+ Bc5 41 d6 Bxe3 42 fxe3 c2 43 Rc7 Ba4 0-1

Bobby Fischer

I believe that the following awful game appeared in a book in America about

Fischer and may be an authentic CC loss by the future world chess champion Bobby Fischer! Unfortunately, I don't have a copy, can anyone provide the reference?

In the first round of the Golden Knights 1955, Fischer (then about 12 years old) would have been paired with six opponents. The other five games are unknown.

A. Wayne Conger - Fischer

Golden Knights corr, 1955

King's Indian Defence (E70)

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 Bg7 4 e4 d6 5 Bg5 h6 6 Bh4 0-0 7 f4 c5 8 d5 Qa5 9 Qd2 Qc7 10 Bd3 e6 11 Nb5 Qb6 12 Nxd6 1-0 Black loses a piece (12...Qxd6 13 e5, etc.).

Other Champions

I do not have records of any other correspondence games by male FIDE world champions, apart from the Internet challenges played by Karpov (1997, but on what website?) and Kasparov (MSN, 1999). If anyone knows of such games, please supply the game scores and information.

Women world champions are not mentioned in Mr. Winter's question, but I shall, of course, include them in my answer. Actually, I do not have information about most of the female FIDE world champions and I am unaware of any correspondence games played by Vera Menchik or the second and third world champions, Ludmila Rudenko and Elizaveta Ivanovna Bykova, nor by recent female champions. Of the later world champions, I have two games in my database attributed to Zsuzsa Polgar from 1983, both losses, and I won't publish them unless they can be proved authentic.

However, it cannot be overlooked that the only person who has held the title of World Champion at both OTB and CC (though not at the same time) was Olga Nikolaevna Rubtsova (1909-95) who was, in 1972, the first woman to be crowned ICCF world champion. She was OTB world champion from 1956 (when she won a triangular title match with Rudenko and Bykova in Moscow) to 1958 when she lost a return match to Bykova.

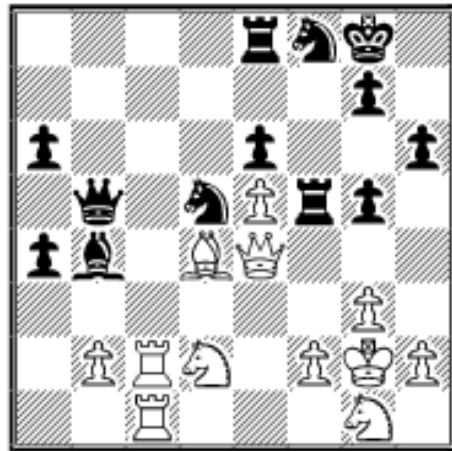
I only have 16 complete postal games by Rubtsova, and a few fragments, in my database. I found the following game in a Russian booklet on CC by M. Arkhangelsky. Another of her games may be found in my 1996 book *Winning at Correspondence Chess*.

Juliane Hund – Olga Rubtsova

Women's CC World Ch 1968

Slav Defence (D19)

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 dxc4 5 a4 Bf5 6 e3 e6 7 Bxc4 Bb4 8 0-0
 0-0 9 Qe2 Nbd7 10 e4 Bg6 11 Bd3 Bh5 12 e5 Nd5 13 Ne4 c5 14 Bg5 Qc7
 15 Rfc1 a6 16 Ng3 Bg6 17 Be3 Qa5 18 Bxg6 fxg6 19 Ne4 cxd4 20 Bxd4
 Nf4 21 Qe3 b5 22 g3 Nd5 23 Qd3 bxa4 24 Neg5 Qb5 25 Qe4 Rae8 26 Rc2
 Rf5 27 Rac1 h6 28 Nh3 Be7 29 Kg2 g5 30 Rc6 Nf8 31 Nhg1 Qb7 32 Nd2
 Bb4 33 Rc7 Qb5 34 R7c2



34...Nf4+! 35 gxf4

If 35 Kh1 Nd3.

35...Rxf4 36 Qe3 Qd5+ 37 Ngf3 Ng6 38
 Rc5 Nh4+ 39 Kf1 Bxd2!

Not 39...Bxc5 40 Rxc5.

40 Nxd2 Qg2+ 41 Ke2 Nf5 0-1

On the above evidence, it cannot be said that, apart from Euwe and Rubtsova, any of the other modern world champions showed any evidence of the talent and patience required for success at correspondence chess.

Now it is over to you, readers, to provide more games and information if you can! Please provide full printed source information where possible.

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