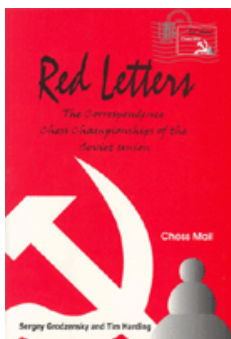




COLUMNISTS

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The Cincinnati Commercial Correspondence Tournament

One of the current projects of the Historical Commission of the International Correspondence Chess Federation is to collect the crosstables of each all-play-all correspondence tournament played throughout the world before the First World War. I have primarily been researching British and Irish events, for a book due to be published next year, but along the way I found information about some events played in other countries.

A striking omission from the book *Correspondence Chess in America*, by Bryce Avery, are details of tournaments held in the USA in the nineteenth century. This happened because he was primarily writing a history of the Correspondence Chess League of America, which did not exist then. The first chapter, dealing with events before 1909, does include one game from a tournament played in the 1870s, in connection with the *Maryland Chess Review*, a magazine that ceased publication before the tournament could be completed. (The event may have been won by the problemist Shinkman, but I have seen no official result.) Avery points out that correspondence players could now take advantage of the introduction of one-cent postcards in the United States during that decade.

Avery also wrote that “only the *Dubuque Chess Journal*, published between 1870 and 1892 under various names, appears to have organized any domestic correspondence tournaments during this time period,” but gave no details of these, and I should like to know more about those Dubuque events.

However, there were other North American correspondence tournaments in the nineteenth century. Several of these were Canadian tournaments, which Leonard Zehr and J. Ken MacDonald have documented in their book *The History of Correspondence Chess in Canada* (Thinkers’ Press 2006). Generally speaking, both Canadians and U.S. entries were accepted, irrespective of which was the organising country. The best-known is the Continental tournament of the 1890s, which John Hilbert is researching.

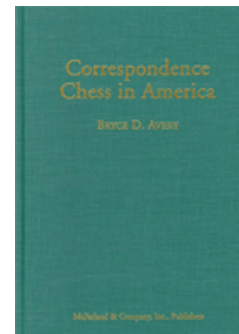
Between the Maryland and the Continental, there were at least two other postal tournaments organised in the United States: the one which is discussed in this article, and the *Elmira Telegraph* tourney, which began in 1884, and in which Jackson Whipps Showalter (late U.S. Champion) competed early in his career. Neil Brennen has written about Showalter’s postal chess games [here](#). I should be pleased to receive more information about it (I have so far found five games from it.).

It was an Ohio newspaper called the *Cincinnati Commercial Gazette* that ran, between 1882-5, what was probably the second correspondence chess tournament organised in the United States. This may have been the first time a U.S. newspaper sponsored a postal tournament. Although it was run by a paper published in the state of Ohio, there was little local response; yet several strong players from various states and Canadian provinces competed.

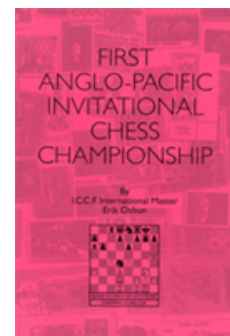
Whyld’s *Chess Columns* lists Joseph W. Miller as the column’s editor, but the conductor of the tournament (as well as one of its prize-winners) was William Jacob Ferris, whose connection (if any) with Cincinnati is unknown.

The competition was open to men and women in the U.S. and Canada, and twenty-three competitors, including two unmarried women, began play on 3 April 1882. That was three more players than the original announcement envisaged. There had been some speculation (e.g. in the *New York Clipper*, 18 March 1882) that Mrs. Ellen Gilbert would play, as there was to be a ladies’ prize, but in fact she did not do so. By that date, she had apparently taken the decision to retire from competitive chess. One player died during the event, and of the others, only seventeen completed their games. Any results by the others were discounted. The start-list was published in the paper on 15 April. The rate of play, stated by Miller in a note accompanying the start announcement, was forty-eight hours per move, Sundays not counting. The fact that the tournament took so long to complete probably means that a player conducted only a few of his games simultaneously and then took on a new set of opponents.

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conductor I have been able at all to add to the pleasure of my chess friends on the tourney, it will be enough to repay me for my trouble.” He also thanked Mr. G. Reichhelm of Philadelphia, and Alex Sellman of Baltimore for judging the brilliancy awards. *The Chess-Monthly* published the miniature with which Narraway, who had a bad result overall, won the prize for the most brilliant game with the Petroff Defence.

W. Ferris – J. Narraway
Cincinnati Commercial Gazette tourney corr, 1882
Petroff Defence [C42]

This game, first published in the *Cincinnati Commercial* on 19 August 1882, won the brilliancy prize for the Petroff in the tourney. It was reprinted in Hoffer and Zukertort’s magazine *The Chess Monthly*, volume 6, pp. 272-3.

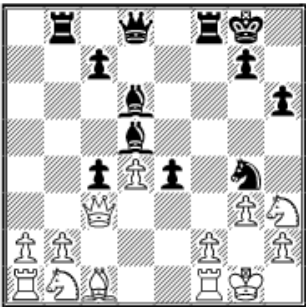
1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 Nxe5 d6 4 Nf3 Nxe4 5 d4 d5 6 Bd3 Bd6 7 0–0 0–0 8 c4 Be6 9 Qc2 f5

Better 9...Nf6.

10 Qb3 dxc4 11 Qxb7 Nd7 12 Bxe4 Rb8 13 Qxa7

The *Handbuch* gave 13 Qa6 but this was evidently a misprint said *Chess-Monthly*; saying they meant 13 Qc6 Rb6 14 Qa4 fxe4 15 Ne5 Bd5 16 Nc3 with the superior game.

13...fxe4 14 Ng5 Bd5 15 Qa5 Nf6 16 Qc3 h6 17 Nh3 Ng4 18 g3



18...Rf3

Up to this point Black wisely trusts the authorities and avoids any originality. The *Handbuch* continues with 18...Qe8 19 Nf4 Bxf4 20 Bxf4 Qh5 21 h4 Rxf4 22 gxf4 e3! 23 f3 Qxh4.

19 Qe1

If 19 Be3 Bxg3 20 hxg3 Nxe3, when if 21 fxe3 Rxg3+ and 22...Qh4.

19...e3 20 Bxe3

Suicidal, but White has no satisfactory continuation, for if 20 fxe3 Nxh2.

Now Black announced mate in six moves with:

20...Qh4! 0-1

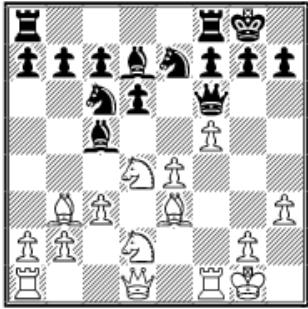


TH: The six-move announcement seems incorrect as White can prolong the agony by 21 Qa5 Be4 and now various queen sacrifices do not change the result, but postpone the mate by several moves.

It was not unusual in those days for tournament controllers to compete in their own events. Ferris was successful in the next game, Ferris-Braithwaite, which actually won the prize for the most brilliant Scotch Gambit. Sellman was the judge of this one, according to the *Leeds Mercury* which published the game.

W. Ferris – W. Braithwaite
Cincinnati Commercial Gazette tourney, 1882
Scotch Game [C45]
[*Leeds Mercury*, 13 April 1885]

**1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4 Bc5 5 Be3 Qf6 6 c3 Nge7 7 Bc4
Ne5 8 Bb3 d6 9 0–0 0–0 10 h3 Bd7 11 Nd2 N7g6 12 f4 Nc6 13 f5 Nge7**



13...Nge5 failed in Braithwaite-Henderson, corr 1880.

**14 N2f3 Ne5 15 Kh1 h6 16 Nxe5 dxe5 17 Ne6 Bxe3 18 Nxf8 Bc6 19
Nd7 Qg5**

If 19...Qd6 20 f6 Ng6 21 fxg7 wins.

**20 Nxe5 Bxe4 21 Qg4 Nxf5 22 Kh2 Nd6 23 Nxf7 Nxf7 24 Qxe4 Bc5 25
Rxf7 Bd6+ 26 Kh1 Kh8 27 Bc2 g6 28 Qe6 1–0**

The following is the only game by the first prize-winner so far found. It also won the prize for most brilliant game in the tournament played with the King’s Knight’s Gambit; judged by Reichhelm. I include some of the notes by Tatnall that appeared in the Cincinnati paper, and which were translated into French in *La Stratégie* (April 1885, pp. 13-4).

Henry Kittson – George Tatnall
Cincinnati Commercial Gazette tourney corr, 1882
Salvio Gambit [C37]

1 e4 e5 2 f4 exf4 3 Nf3 g5 4 Bc4 g4 5 Ne5?! Qh4+ 6 Kf1 Nh6

TH: 6...Nc6 and 6...f3 were also tried around this period.

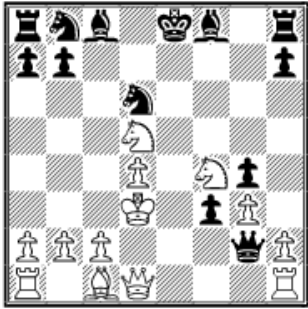
7 d4 f3 8 g3 Qh3+ 9 Kf2 Qg2+ 10 Ke3 f5 11 Nc3

If 11 exf5, Black forces mate in a few moves.

11...c6 12 Nd3

The normal book move is 12 Bd3. The point of the text move is to shut in the queen; at first sight it appears embarrassing.

**12...fxe4 13 Nf4 Nf5+ 14 Kxe4 d5+ 15 Bxd5 cxd5+ 16 Ncxd5 Nd6+ 17
Kd3**



17...Qf2

TH: Reichhelm remarked that it would be much stronger to play 17...Bf5 + 18 Kc3 Qf2 19 Nc7+ Kd7 20 Nxa8 Bxc2 21 Qe1 Ne4+ 22 Kc4 b5+ 23 Kxb5 Nd6+ etc. However, White can improve by 19 Be3 with roughly equal chances.

18 Be3 Bf5+ 19 Kc3 Nb5+

TH: This is an inaccuracy of which White fails to take advantage. 19... Bxc2 20 Qxc2 Nb5+ 21 Kd3 Qxc2+ 22 Kxc2 Nc6 is somewhat better for Black.

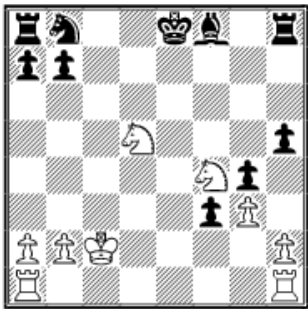
20 Kb3

Tatnall observed that 20 Kc4 would avoid the loss of a pawn that results from the following exchanges, but that the white king’s position would be very dangerous. Nevertheless it was the correct move, objectively. Black cannot keep queens on the board, e.g. 20...Qxc2+ 21 Qxc2 Bxc2 22 Kxb5 looks like a line Steinitz would have been happy to play with White.

20...Bxc2+!

The combination commencing with this move is very pretty (Reichhelm).

21 Qxc2 Qxe3+ 22 Nxe3 Nxd4+ 23 Kc3 Nxc2 24 Kxc2 h5 25 Ned5!



25...Na6

Tatnall: An error that costs the game.

TH: No! Black is probably winning if he follows this up correctly. The right move was 25...Bd6, but then 26 Nxb5 followed by Nhf6 may be tenable.

26 Rae1+ Kf7 27 Re5 Rc8+

TH: 27...Nb4+! reduces material and ought still to win.

28 Kb1 Rc5?

TH: Here 28...Rc6 29 Rf5+ Kg7 (not possible with the rook on c5) should draw, White's activity balancing Black's extra pawn.

29 Rf5+! Kg8

TH: White now wins material. But if 29...Kg7 30 Ne6+ or if 29...Ke8 30 Re1+ and wins.

30 Ng6 Rh6

TH: 30...Rxd5 31 Rxd5 Rh7 is better but White has chances after 32 h3.

31 Nxf8 Rxd5 32 Rxd5 Kxf8 33 h3 Nb4

TH: The finish of the game from this point is not clear in some sources.

34 Rf5+ Kg7 35 hxc4 hxc4 36 Rd1

This is probably what happened. 36 Re1 was an incorrect version, continuing 36...Rb6 and Black gave up a few moves later according to *Gambit Revue* issue 2-3/2002.

36 Rxh6? would give Black winning chances after 36...Kxh6 37 a3 Nd3 (*Gambit Revue*).

36...Kg6 37 Rb5 f2 38 Rxb4 Kg5 39 Rf4 Rh2 40 Rf1 Rg2 41 R4xf2 Rxg3 42 Rf7 Rg2 43 Rxb7 1-0

Further games

J. Shaw – F. Walker
Cincinnati Commercial Gazette tourney corr, 1882
Bishop's Gambit [C33]
[*Cincinnati Commercial Gazette 11 November 1882*]

Notes from *Turf, Field and Farm*.

1 e4 e5 2 f4 exf4 3 Bc4 Qh4+ 4 Kf1 g5?

“This defense, without first advancing 4...d5, is no longer considered good, as it permits of White playing the variation known as Fraser's attack, against which the second player has no really good defense.”

5 Nc3 Bg7 6 g3

“This move followed by Qf3 constitutes the ‘Fraser’ attack.”

Another column calls 6 g3 McDonnell's Attack and 7 Qf3 Fraser's amendment to it.

6...fxg3 7 Qf3 Qf4

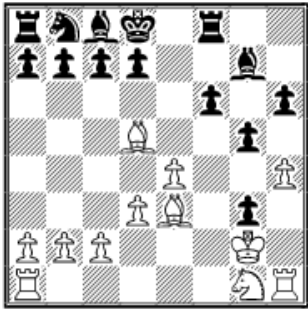
“One of the recognised defenses, but according to Mr Fraser not as good as 7...Nh6 followed by ...Kd8.”

Another press cutting with the same game said that 7...g2+ 8 Kxg2 Nh6 were the moves usually played.

8 Nd5 Qd6

“The usual move is 8...Qxf3+ 9 Nxf3 Kd8 and the text move cannot be regarded as an improvement on the books.”

9 d3 f6 10 h4 h6 11 Be3 Ne7 12 Qh5+ Kd8 13 Qf7 Nxd5 14 Bxd5 Qf8 15 Qxf8+ Rxf8 16 Kg2



16...c6

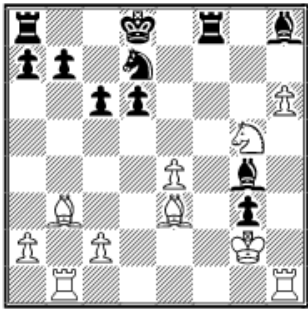
“Although Black is a pawn ahead, his game is much cramped, and he should make the most of his time to follow the excellent advice of Geo. Walker, to ‘bring out your pieces’ instead of the useless maneuvering of his pawns which he now indulges in.”

17 Bb3 f5?

17...d6 would give Black a better game according to the *New York Clipper*.

18 hxg5 fxe4 19 gxh6 Bxb2 20 Rb1 Bh8 21 dxe4 d6 22 Nf3 Bg4 23 Ng5 Nd7

“Black, when all but too late, endeavors to develop, and doubtless overlooks White’s powerful rejoinder.”



24 Be6! Bxe6

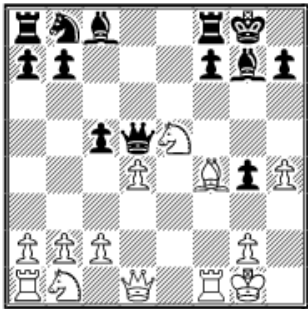
“He might have saved the exchange by playing 24...Be2 but White would then take P 25 Rxb7 with a winning attack. The result is now but a matter of a few moves.”

25 Nxe6+ Kc8 26 Nxf8 Nxf8 27 h7 b6 28 Bf4 d5 29 exd5 Ng6 30 Bxg3 cxd5 31 Rh6 Ne7 32 Re1 Kd7 33 Rd6+ 1-0

“Enough.”

H. J. Anderson – Joseph W. Shaw
Cincinnati Commercial Gazette tourney corr, 1882
Kieseritzky Gambit [C39]
From *BCM* 1884, p. 253

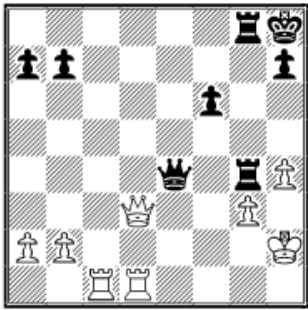
1 e4 e5 2 f4 exf4 3 Nf3 g5 4 h4 g4 5 Ne5 Bg7 6 d4 Nf6 7 Bc4 d5 8 exd5 0–0 9 Bxf4 Nxd5 10 Bxd5 Qxd5 11 0–0 c5!



12 c3 cxd4 13 Nxg4 Qe6 14 Nf2 Qb6! 15 Qc1 Be6 16 cxd4 Qxd4 17 Nc3 Nd7 18 Rd1 Qc4 19 g3 Kh8



20 Bh6? Rg8 21 Bxg7+ Rxc7 22 Nfe4 Rg8 23 Qe3 Bf5 24 Rac1 Qe6
25 Qd4 Bxe4 26 Nxe4 f6! 27 Kh2 Rg4 28 Qxd7 Qxe4 29 Qd3

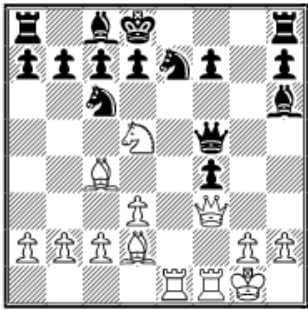


Black announced mate in four moves with 29...Rxb4+ 0–1

C. Boivin – E. Greenshields
Cincinnati Commercial Gazette tourney corr, 1882
Muzio Gambit [C37]

From the *Cincinnati Commercial Gazette* 19 August 1882

1 e4 e5 2 f4 exf4 3 Nf3 g5 4 Bc4 g4 5 0–0 gxf3 6 Qxf3 Qf6 7 e5 Qxe5 8
d3 Bh6 9 Bd2 Ne7 10 Nc3 Nbc6 11 Rae1 Qf5 12 Nd5 Kd8



White’s gambit line may have been book then but looks dubious; 13 Bxf4
had also been tried here. 13 Qe2 was successful in some later games.

13 Bc3 Re8 14 Nf6 Rf8 15 Nd5 Nxd5 16 g4 Qg5 17 Bxd5 d6 18 h3 f5
19 Be6 fxg4 20 hxg4 Bg7 21 Bxc8 Rxc8 22 Bxg7 Qxg7 23 Qh3 Qg5 24
Qh5 Qxh5 25 gxh5 Kd7 26 Kh2 Rf5 27 Kh3 Rg8 28 Kh4 Ne5 0–1

Miss Phoebe Himrod – W. Braithwaite
Cincinnati Commercial Gazette tourney corr, 1882
Scotch Game [C45]

(Game found in a scrapbook of cuttings in the Cleveland library.)

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4 Bc5 5 Be3 Qf6 6 c3 Nge7 7 Bb5

TH: This is inferior to 7 Bc4 as in Ferris-Braithwaite, above.

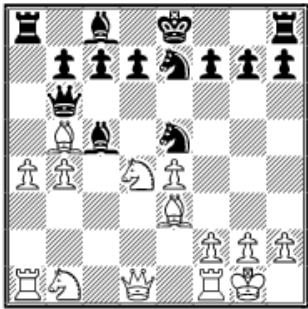
7...Ne5

“7...a6 or 7...Nxd4 is stronger play.”

8 0–0 Qb6

“Trying to mend a bad position. 8...a6 would have been better.”

9 a4 a5 10 b4 axb4 11 cxb4



11...Bxd4

TH: not 11...Bxb4? 12 Nc6 Qxe3 13 fxe3 dxc6 14 Qd4 Bd6 15 Be2 with advantage to White.

12 Bxd4 Qe6 13 Nc3 f6 14 f4 Nf7 15 Nd5 Kd8 16 Bc4 Nxd5 17 exd5 Qe7 18 Bc5 d6 19 Re1 Qf8 20 Qd4 Nh6

“If 20...dxc5 21 bxc5 and White has the better game.”

21 a5 Nf5 22 Qf2 Qf7 23 Kh1 h5 24 Bd3 h4 25 Bxf5 Bxf5 26 Bxd6 cxd6 27 Rac1 Rc8 28 Qb6+ Rc7 29 b5 Bc8 30 a6 bxa6 31 bxa6 Bxa6 32 Qxd6+ Qd7 33 Qxa6 Rxc1 34 Rxc1 Ke7 35 d6+ 1–0

E. Greenshields – W. Braithwaite

Cincinnati Commercial Gazette tourney corr, 1882
Scotch Game [C45]

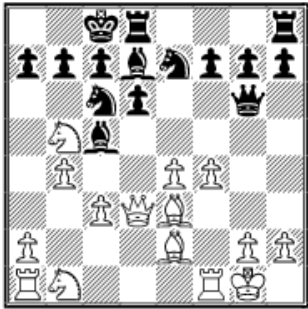
1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4 Bc5 5 Be3 Qf6 6 c3 Nge7 7 Bb5 Ne5 8 Be2

White has lost a move; Miss Himrod castled here.

8...d6 9 0–0 Bd7 10 f4 N5c6 11 Qd3 Qg6 12 Nb5

“A premature attack. 12 Nd2 would have given White a better game.”

12...0–0–0 13 b4



“13 Bxc5 was the better play.”

13...Nxb4!

“Brilliant, but sound.”

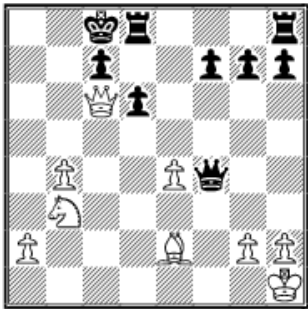
14 Nxa7+

TH: if 14 cxb4 Bxb5 15 Qd2 Bxb4 16 Qxb4 Bxe2.

14...Bxa7 15 cxb4 Bb5 16 Qxb5

16 Qd2 “would have given White a better endgame” according to the paper, but 16...Bxe2 17 Qxe2 Qxe4 wins for Black.

16...Bxe3+ 17 Kh1 Bd4 18 Nd2 Bxa1 19 Rxa1 Qf6 20 Nb3 Nc6 21 Rc1 Qxf4 22 Rxc6 bxc6 23 Qxc6



23...Rde8 24 Ba6+ Kd8 25 Bb5 Ke7 26 Nd2 Rb8 27 Bc4 Rhc8 28 Qd5 Rxb4 0–1

J. Narraway – H. Kittson
Cincinnati Commercial Gazette tourney corr, 1882
Italian Game [C54]
[In Zehr & MacDonald pp. 49-50]

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bc4 Bc5 4 c3 Nf6 5 d4 exd4 6 e5 d5 7 Bb5 Ne4 8 Bxc6+ bxc6 9 cxd4 Bb6 10 Nc3 f5 11 0–0 0–0 12 Re1 Re8 13 Bf4 Bb7 14 Nd2 g5?! 15 Ndx e4 dxe4 16 Bc1 Qxd4 17 Qb3+ Kh8 18 Bxg5 Qxe5 19 Rad1 Qg7



20 Bd2! Bc8 21 Nxe4! Bd4 22 Nd6! Rf8 23 Bh6! Qxh6 24 Nf7+ Rxf7 25 Qxf7 Bb7 26 Rxd4 Rf8 27 Qxc7 c5 28 Rd8 Be4 29 Red1 Bd3 30 R1xd3 Qc1+ 31 Rd1 1–0

J. Narraway – D. Robertson
Cincinnati Commercial Gazette tourney corr, 1882
Philidor Defense [C62]
[Cincinnati Commercial Gazette 19 August 1882]

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 exd4 4 Qxd4 Nc6 5 Bb5 Bd7 6 Bxc6 Bxc6 7 Bg5 Nf6



This line was seen in the Morphy-Harrwitz match of 1858. Although Staunton recommended 7...f6, the knight move was nearly always played. White’s next move simplifies prematurely; 8 Nc3 is normal.

8 e5?! dxe5 9 Qxe5+ Qe7 10 Bxf6 gxf6 11 Qxe7+ Bxe7

Two bishops against two knights is now a significant advantage for Black.

12 Nbd2 Rg8 13 0–0 0–0 14 g3 f5 15 Rad1 Bf6 16 b3 Bc3 17 h4 Rge8 18 a4 Re2 19 Nb1 Rxd1 20 Rxd1 Bxf3 21 g4 Rxc2 0–1

C. Waterman – G. Tatnall
Cincinnati Commercial Gazette tourney corr, 1882.
Four Knights’ Game [C49]

From a *Cincinnati Commercial* scrapbook in Cleveland, probably early 1883.

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 Nc3 Nc6 4 Bb5 Bb4 5 Nd5 Nxd5 6 exd5 Nd4 7 Nxd4 exd4 8 Qg4

A premature attack, which loses White the game.

8...Qe7+ 9 Kd1 Qf6 10 a3

Too slow 10 Re1+ would have given White a little better position.

10...Be7 11 d3 c6 12 Bc4 0–0 13 f4 d6 14 Qf3 b5 15 Ba2 c5



16 Bd2

16 g4 would have given White a counter-attack which might have relieved him of the anaconda-like pressure of Black’s pawns.

16...a5 17 Qe2 Re8 18 Qf3 Qg6 19 h3 h5 20 Be1 Bf5 21 Rg1 c4 22 dxc4

22 Kd2 would have been better.

22...Bxc2+ 23 Kd2 Bg5 24 Bg3

RR: 24 fxg5 Re3.

24...Re3 25 cxb5 Qd3+ 26 Kc1 Rxf3 0–1

Postscript

There will not now be a title match this year, as had originally been planned by FIDE. World Champion Viswanathan Anand and number one rated player Veselin Topalov had been due to meet in a long-awaited showdown. Even 2010 (or at least the first half of the year) seems in doubt. At the time the Topalov-Kramnik eliminator was played, the FIDE website stated that the winner would meet Anand in 2009. At one point an announcement was made that the match would be held in February 2009. This was superseded by a release by the FIDE Secretariat dated 24 April which gave a 30 September 2009 deadline for bids to be submitted, for a match now scheduled for April 2010. Will even this come to pass? I shall probably say something about this in the October column if FIDE makes an announcement before my deadline.

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