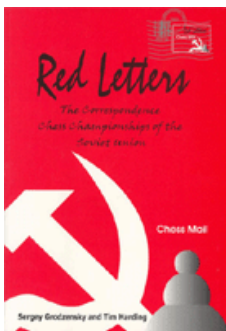




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Tim Harding



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One Hundred Years Ago: Chess in 1910

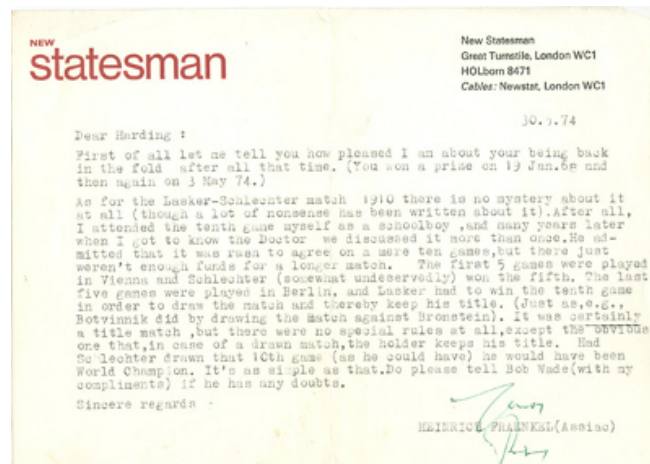
As I do every year in the January column, I turn the clock back a century to review the events of one hundred years ago in the chess world. 1910 was the year of the controversial 5-5 drawn match between Lasker and Schlechter which began on 7 January in Vienna, the second half being played in Berlin.

The controversy has centred on whether the match was for the world title at all, and if it was, whether Schlechter would have needed to win by a two-game margin to become champion. The final match conditions were never made public and speculation has been rife ever since journalist Robert John Buckley claimed in the *American Chess Bulletin* (1910, page 155) that Lasker had only agreed to play "a series of games" of which "the result was not to touch the title". David Hooper accepted this in an article in *Chess* (March 1976) but Edward Winter has [argued](#) that Buckley and Hooper were wrong about this.

The consensus, however, is that the title was at stake. Ken Whyld explained in his chapter about Lasker in Winter's essay collection *World Chess Champions* (Pergamon Press 1981) that the champion had committed himself in 1909 to defending his title against Schlechter, but that the original plan had been for thirty games in half a dozen cities, in which the Austrian would have been required to score two more wins than Lasker to become champion. Due to the lack of outside interest in such a match, finance was not forthcoming for such a marathon and it was scaled back first to fifteen games and then to ten.

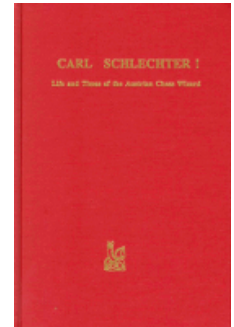
Whyld wrote that "clearly, to expect a margin of 2 points in a ten-game match would have destroyed what little interest there was, but equally clearly Lasker would not have agreed to put his title at risk in the shortest title match ever arranged without some sort of safeguard." A return match clause would seem to me to have been the most likely safeguard. Whyld's speculations in that article seemed to lack a firm basis, like those of most people on the subject. Graham Burgess raised these questions again in his [Chess Highlights of the 20th Century](#) but didn't try to answer.

The chess writer Heinrich Fraenkel ("Assiac") was quite definite, however, that Schlechter would have been world champion had he won the match by even a one-game margin. In other words, Schlechter only needed to avoid defeat in the crucial tenth game. I still have a letter Fraenkel wrote to me on 30 May 1974 in which he asserted that it was a title match and that Schlechter would have become champion had he drawn the tenth game.

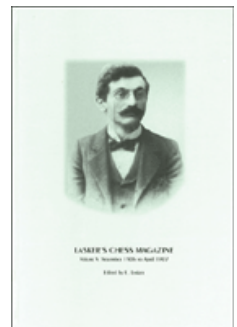


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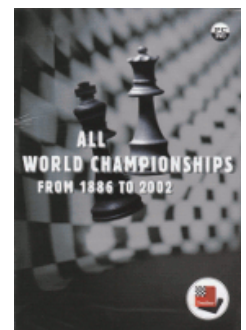
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Fraenkel wrote:

"As for the Lasker-Schlechter match 1910 there is no mystery about it at all (although a lot of nonsense has been written about it). After all, I attended the tenth game myself as a schoolboy, and many years later when I got to know the Doctor we discussed it more than once. He admitted that it was rash to agree on a mere ten games, but there just weren't enough funds for a longer match... Lasker had to win the tenth game in order to draw the match and thereby keep his title."

The quality of play in the match was quite high, with no short draws, but some opportunities were missed by Lasker. It was only after what might be called a "swindle" that Schlechter won game five.

Carl Schlechter – Emanuel Lasker

Ruy Lopez [C66]

Fifth match game, 1910

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 Nf6 4 0-0 d6 5 d4 Bd7 6 Nc3 Be7 7 Bg5 0-0 8 dxe5 Nxe5 9 Bxd7 Nfxd7 10 Bxe7 Nxf3+ 11 Qxf3 Qxe7 12 Nd5 Qd8 13 Rad1 Re8 14 Rfe1 Nb6 15 Qc3 Nxd5 16 Rxd5 Re6 17 Rd3 Qe7 18 Rg3 Rg6 19 Ree3 Re8 20 h3 Kf8 21 Rxg6 hxg6 22 Qb4 c6 23 Qa3 a6 24 Qb3 Rd8 25 c4 Rd7 26 Qd1 Qe5 27 Qg4 Ke8 28 Qe2 Kd8 29 Qd2 Kc7 30 a3 Re7 31 b4 b5 32 cxb5 axb5 33 g3 g5 34 Kg2 Re8 35 Qd1 f6 36 Qb3 Qe6 37 Qd1 Rh8 38 g4 Qc4 39 a4 Qxb4 40 axb5 Qxb5 41 Rb3 Qa6 42 Qd4 Re8 43 Rb1 Re5 44 Qb4 Qb5 45 Qe1 Qd3



46 Rb4!

Schlechter, renowned as a drawing master, is a pawn down but makes it tough for Lasker to finish the job.

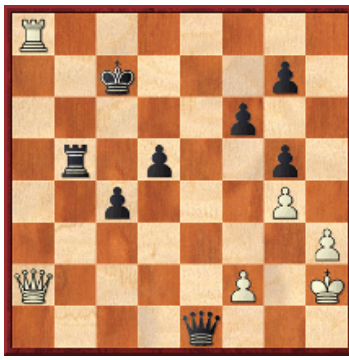
46...c5

The champion tries to find something better than the queen ending with an extra pawn that would arise after 46...Ra5 47 Rb3 Qxb3 48 Qxa5+ Qb6.

47 Ra4 c4 48 Qa1

Schlechter has to give up a second pawn in the hope of a swindle. Not 48 f3?? Qc2+ and ...Qxa4.

48...Qxe4+ 49 Kh2 Rb5 50 Qa2! Qe5+ 51 Kg1 Qe1+ 52 Kh2 d5 53 Ra8



White conjures up a threat of 54 Qa7+ Qb7 55 Qc5+.

53...Qb4 54 Kg2 Qc5??

The fatal blunder; Black, still dreaming of a win, loses control over the crucial b7-square. Instead 54...c3! is the best winning try according to Deep Rybka-3: 55 Re8 Kb6 (55...Ra5 56 Qe2 is still rather unclear.) 56 Rb8+ Kc5 57 Rc8+ Kd6 58 Qa6+ Rb6 59 Qa7 Rb7.

There were other safe moves at Lasker's disposal. 54...Rb7 probably leads to a draw, as Schlechter said, but clearly the champion was looking for more. Also 54...Rb8 55 Qa7+ Rb7 56 Qa6 (56 Qe3 transposes) 56...c3 57 Qe6 Qe4+ 58 Qxe4 dxe4 59 Ra3 reduces to a rook ending that White may be able to draw.

55 Qa6!



55...Rb8?

This rapidly ends in a mating net but the supposed drawing lines are perhaps not altogether clear.

a) 55...c3 is equal according to ChessBase, but the question is whether rook and pawns really draw against queen in such lines as 56 Ra7+ Qxa7 57 Qxa7+ Kc6 58 Qxg7 Rc5 59 Qxf6+ Kb5 60 f4 c2 (60...gxf4 61 Kf3) 61 Qb2+ and Qc1.

b) 55...Qb6 56 Qc8+ Kd6 57 Qf8+ (57 Ra6 Qxa6 58 Qxa6+ Kc5 = Capablanca, but is it?) 57...Kc6 (57...Ke5 58 Rb8! wins Q for R because if 58...Qxb8 White mates in two!) 58 Qe8+ Kd6 59 Rd8+ and again Black must give up Q for R and hope the pawns are strong enough.

56 Ra7+ Kd8 57 Rxg7 Qb6 58 Qa3 Kc8 1-0

R. N. Coles, writing in the November 1960 *British Chess Magazine*, stated that "on February 8th Schlechter sat down to defend a Queen's Gambit needing a draw to become the new Champion of the World." By the evening, he claimed, Schlechter was winning the game but though the second day he failed to end the game. "On the third day," wrote Coles "it became clear that Schlechter, after passing over several drawish lines, had overplayed his hand and was losing. He resigned on move 71".

It is not clear, however, that Schlechter ever had a clear winning line.

Running modern computer analysis over the critical moments, and blunder checks on the game as a whole, do show he missed at least one forced draw. In the early middlegame, Schlechter (not surprisingly as he was black) actually stood worse but Lasker did not play the best move at two points. At move twenty-three, in particular, the champion seems to have miscalculated.

Emanuel Lasker – Carl Schlechter

Tenth match game, 1910

Queen's Gambit, Slav Defence [D94]

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 e3 g6 5 Nc3 Bg7 6 Bd3 0–0 7 Qc2 Na6 8 a3 dxc4 9 Bxc4 b5 10 Bd3 b4 11 Na4 bxa3 12 bxa3 Bb7 13 Rb1 Qc7 14 Ne5 Nh5



15 g4!?

The choice of this unnecessarily sharp move may be "internal evidence" that Lasker was playing for a win at all costs in this game. Both 15 f4 and 15 0–0 have been suggested as calmer ways to keep the advantage.

15...Bxe5 16 gxh5 Bg7 17 hxg6 hxg6 18 Qc4 Bc8 19 Rg1 Qa5+ 20 Bd2 Qd5 21 Rc1 Bb7 22 Qc2 Qh5



23 Bxg6?

Here Lasker apparently underestimated the reply. He had two better options:

a) 23 Qb3 Qxh2 24 Rxg6 Rab8 25 Qc4 Qh1+ 26 Bf1 seems to offer White chances of playing for a win.

b) 23 Bc4 (suggested in Zak's book on Lasker) also looks strong.

23...Qxh2! 24 Rf1 fxg6 25 Qb3+ Rf7 26 Qxb7 Raf8



This position was virtually forced after White's twenty-third move; it is now Schlechter who has the winning chances. The black knight on a6 cannot be captured because of the reply 27...Rxf2, so Lasker pins the rook.

27 Qb3

27 f4 has been suggested instead, but then queen checks probably lead to a draw. Black could also play 27...Nb8!? but computers do not believe in 27...e5!? 28 Qxa6 exf4 (or (28...exd4) which was a Lasker suggestion for Black to sacrifice a piece in search of an attack.

27...Kh8 28 f4 g5!?

28...e5 (not mentioned in many early commentaries) looks a safer way to open up the position. After 29 dxe5 Rd8 30 Qc3 Rfd7, Black has pressure, while if 30 Ba5 there is 30...Qh4+ 31 Ke2 Qh2+ 32 Rf2 Qh5+, drawing immediately.

29 Qd3

29 Rxc6 has been suggested instead. Then

a) 29...gxf4 (Zak) is unconvincing after 30 exf4 (not 30 Rxa6? fxe3 forcing mate).

b) Instead it can be met by 29...Qg3+!? 30 Kd1 Rxf4! 31 Rxf4 gxf4 32 Qe6 f3 or (32...Nc7!?) 33 Rc8 Qg1+ (33...Nc7!?) 34 Be1 f2 drawing after, e.g., 35 Rxf8+ Bxf8 36 Qe5+ Kg8 37 Qe6+ Kh8.

29...gxf4 30 exf4 Qh4+ 31 Ke2 Qh2+ 32 Rf2 Qh5+ 33 Rf3 Nc7 34 Rxc6 Nb5 35 Rc4



This position is traditionally considered to have been one of the turning points. Was Schlechter playing for a win or not? The position is so complicated that it is hard to infer anything from his choice.

35...Rxf4?!

GM Larry Evans considers that Schlechter never saw a clear draw but missed 35...Rd8! "with good winning chances". That is so after 36 Be3 e5!; instead 36 Ke1 is somewhat better but Black has an edge.

Lasker suggested 35...Nd6 36 Rc5 Nf5 37 Kd1 Rd8 which is also somewhat

in Black's favour.

35...e5 (Capablanca) simplifies to a dead drawn queen endgame after 36 dxe5 Bxe5 37 Nc3 Nxc3+ 38 Bxc3 Rxf4 39 Rxf4 Rxf4.

35...Qg4!? also came into consideration.

36 Bxf4 Rxf4 37 Rc8+ Bf8 38 Kf2 Qh2+

Schlechter later said he intended 38...Qh4+? 39 Kg2 Qg4+ 40 Rg3 Qxc8 but only now he saw 41 Qg6 wins for White. His composure destroyed, he blundered next move.

39 Ke1 Qh1+?

The losing move according to Austrian analyst Marco. Black could have become world champion had he played 39...Qh4+ as these lines show:

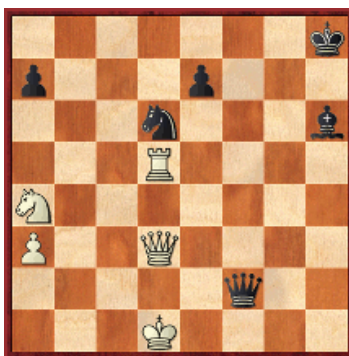
a) 40 Kd1? Qh1+ 41 Ke2 Rxf3 42 Qxf3 Nxd4+;

b) 40 Rg3? Qh1+ 41 Kd2 Rf2+;

c) 40 Kf1 Qh3+ 41 Kf2 Rxf3+ 42 Qxf3 Qxc8 43 Qh5+ Kg8 44 Qxb5 is about equal.

d) 40 Kd2 Qh2+ 41 Ke1 (41 Ke3? Rxf3+ 42 Kxf3 Qh3+ 43 Ke2 Qxc8 44 Qxb5 as in the 40 Kf1 line) 41...Qh4+ draws.

40 Rf1 Qh4+ 41 Kd2 Rxf1 42 Qxf1 Qxd4+ 43 Qd3 Qf2+ 44 Kd1 Nd6 45 Rc5 Bh6 46 Rd5



46...Kg8

46...Qa2 (Schlechter) gave more defensive chances but is not a clear draw by any means. Possible replies include 47 Rh5 and 47 Nc5.

47 Nc5 Qg1+ 48 Kc2 Qf2+ 49 Kb3 Bg7 50 Ne6 Qb2+ 51 Ka4 Kf7 52 Nxb7 Qxb7 53 Qb3 Ke8 54 Qb8+ Kf7 55 Qxa7 Qg4+ 56 Qd4 Qd7+ 57 Kb3 Qb7 + 58 Ka2 Qc6 59 Qd3 Ke6 60 Rg5 Kd7 61 Re5 Qg2+ 62 Re2 Qg4 63 Rd2 Qa4 64 Qf5+ Kc7?

Now queens come off and White has a straightforward win. Better but still clearly in White's favour was 64...Kd8 65 Qe6 Qh4 66 Qd5 Qa4 67 Re2 Qh4 68 Qa8+ Kd7 and White still faces technical difficulties to exploit his rook versus knight advantage.

65 Qc2+ Qxc2+ 66 Rxc2+ Kb7 67 Re2 Nc8 68 Kb3 Kc6 69 Rc2+ Kb7 70 Kb4 Na7 71 Kc5 1-0

So the match ended 5-5 but in its 26 February comments on the match, the *Illustrated London News* observed that "Lasker has failed to assert his supremacy."

He certainly had a lucky escape as the tension appears to have "got to" his

opponent on this occasion. Schlechter recovered to win the 1910 German Open Championship in Hamburg later in the year with 11½ out of 16. He finished ahead of Duras (the only one of his sixteen opponents to beat him) as well as Nimzowitsch and Spielmann, who were third and fourth. Following Teichmann, Marshall, and Dus-Chotimirsky came the young Alekhine, who finished eighth with 8½ points, ahead of Tarrasch. Lasker was not competing and neither was Rubinstein, who apparently played no serious chess in 1910 at all. Coles said the biggest disappointment was that Capablanca (who had entered) failed to appear because of poor health. Capablanca, Coles pointed out, had still never played an international tournament.

Lasker, in need of a positive result to restore his reputation, smashed Janowsky 9½-1½ in a title match towards the end of the year. Unlike Schlechter, Janowsky had a wealthy backer. In *The Field*, on 17 December, Leopold Hoffer attacked Lasker for winning the match very easily with a negative endgame-based style of play, unattractive to sponsor and spectators. (In my column twelve months ago, I had said, following ChessBase and some other writers, that the 1909 Janowsky match was for the world title but I am now persuaded that this was not the case and only their 1910 match was for the title.)

1910 was not a great year for correspondence chess. The final of *British Chess Magazine's* big postal tournament finally began, after a long delay due to some protracted games from the preliminaries that affected qualification. Future British OTB champion Frederick Yates was one of the finalists but turned professional soon after the event began, and withdrew from the postal event after losing a game on time.

Looking through *B.C.M.* for 1910, I noted the death of the newspaper magnate George Newnes, who had been one of the great patrons of chess in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Among other events, he sponsored the series of cable matches between English and American clubs which were virtually between full international teams by this stage. The Newnes Trophy series was still ongoing after a short hiatus earlier in the decade. In 1910 the City of London club won for the second year in a row.

Also in 1910 the first volume of Cecil Tattersall's *A Thousand End-games* appeared, with the second soon following. Tattersall was a strong player who appears to have given up chess after this and concentrated on his professional field, oriental carpets. (He was a curator at the Victoria and Albert museum in Kensington.)

The *Illustrated London News* reported that H. E. Atkins won the British Championship (held in Oxford) for the sixth time with Blackburne, in his fiftieth year of public play, finishing in second place. Coles made a surprising blunder in his article on chess in 1910, stating that Atkins took first place for the seventh time, forgetting that Napier had won in 1904. Atkins only scored his seventh consecutive win in 1911. He also praised the winner's play in the following game, overlooking a major flaw.

George Wainwright – Henry Atkins

British Championship, Oxford, 1910

Ruy Lopez [C92]

Notes by Tim Harding

**1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Ba4 Nf6 5 0-0 Be7 6 Re1 d6 7 c3 0-0 8 h3 b5
9 Bb3 Kh8 10 a4 Rb8 11 axb5 axb5 12 d4 Qe8 13 Nbd2 Ng8 14 Nf1 g6 15
Bd5**



White has nagging pressure throughout the early phase of the game but Atkins withstands it.

15...Bf6 16 Ng3 Bg7 17 Be3 f6 18 dxe5 fxe5 19 Nd2 Be6 20 Bb3 Bxb3 21 Nxb3 Nd8 22 Na5 Ne6 23 Qd2 Qd7 24 b4 Rf7 25 Nb3 Nf4 26 Kh2 h5 27 Red1 Rbf8



White still has a solid kingside and could have kept a slight initiative by 28 Nc5 or 28 Ra3.

28 Ne2? g5

28...Nxh3!? (not mentioned by Coles) was tempting but Atkins may have rejected it as a drawing line on account of 29 f3! (29 gxh3? Bh6) 29...Rxf3 (29...Nf4 30 Nxf4 exf4 31 Bd4 with enough play for the pawn) 30 gxf3 Rxf3 31 Rf1 Ng5 32 Ng1 Rh3+ 33 Nxh3 Qxh3+ 34 Kg1 Qg3+ 35 Kh1 Qh4+ etc.

29 Bxf4 gxf4 30 f3 Nf6 31 Qd3 Bh6 32 Ra5

White starts to go astray with this rook; he should have been thinking about how to hold the draw.

32...Rb8 33 Ra7?

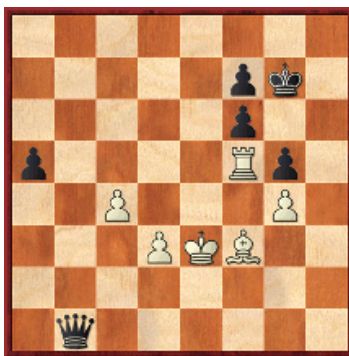
33 Rd2 was necessary.

33...Rg7



34 Rd2?

35 Bxb7 Qb1 36 Bf3 a5



37 c5

If 37 Rxa5?? Qb6+.

37...a4 38 Bd5

Or 38 c6 a3 39 c7 Qb6+.

38...a3 39 Rf2 Qc1+ 40 Kd4 Qg1 41 Ke3 Qxg4 42 d4 Qg3+ 43 Rf3 Qe1+ 44 Kd3 Qb1+ 45 Kd2 a2 46 Bxa2 Qxa2+ 47 Kd3 f5 48 Re3 Qb3+ 49 Kd2 Qc4 0-1

Also on the British scene in 1910, the short-lived *British Chess Bulletin* appeared, edited by H. T. Dickinson, who had been one of the founders of the British Correspondence Chess Association. This little monthly magazine lasted for only four issues (from October 1910 to January 1911) and frankly deserved no better fate. However, it did note in its December number that the death had occurred on 30 October of a great stalwart of Yorkshire chess, Frank P. Wildman, who Dickinson described as "possibly the best-known chess player in the North of England, and he was easily the most popular leader of the game in Yorkshire." Twice Yorkshire champion, one occasion being 1902, he belonged to the attacking school "and openly derided the 'modern' tactics in vogue"... The *Bulletin* said he would have been up to amateur champion standard but for his habit of occasionally making obvious blunders.

We conclude with another game which Coles chose for his article, one which showed the great Dr. Tarrasch in a very poor light.

Paul Leonhardt – Siegbert Tarrasch

German Union Congress, Hamburg 1910

Three Knights Game [C46]

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Nd5 Ba5 5 Bc4 d6 6 0-0 Nf6 7 d3 h6 8 c3 Nxd5 9 exd5 Ne7 10 d4 exd4 11 Qa4+ c6 12 dxc6 bxc6 13 Nxd4 Bd7 14 Re1



14...Kf8

14...0-0 loses two pieces for a rook after 15 Rxe7 Qxe7 16 Qxa5 but may

have been the least evil. 14...c5 would be met by 15 Nc6 and 14...d5 by 15 Bd3 or 15 Ba6 setting up threats.

15 Bf4

Even here 15 Rxe7!? Kxe7 16 Nxc6+ Bxc6 17 Qxc6 Rc8 18 Qd5 probably wins but White needs no risk-taking in his already dominant position.

15...Bc7 16 Qa3 Nc8 17 Re3 Kg8 18 Rae1



Coles wrote, "An astonishing position" - by which he presumably meant Tarrasch had broken all his own principles. "White has everything developed; Black nothing. There must be a catastrophe in the offing, and Leonhardt doesn't miss the chance."

18...d5?

18...Nb6 is better.

19 Bxc7 Qxc7 20 Re8+ Bxe8 21 Rxe8+ Kh7 22 Bd3+



22...f5

White also wins after 22...g6 23 Rxh8+ Kxh8 24 Qf8+ Kh7 25 Nf5! and if 25...gxf5 26 Bxf5#.

23 Rxh8+ Kxh8 24 Qf8+ Kh7 25 Bxf5+ g6 26 Bxg6+ 1-0

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