

VIRGINIA CHESS

Newsletter

The bimonthly publication of the
Virginia Chess Federation

2025 - #4



See You in Glen Allen
for the
Virginia Closed State Championship
August 30 - September 1
(See page 3 for details)



Image by Shi (石)

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Newsletter

2025 - Issue #4

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Virginia Chess is published six times per year by the Virginia Chess Federation. Membership benefits include a subscription to *Virginia Chess*. Send material for publication to the editor. Send dues, address changes, etc to Circulation.

The **Virginia Chess Federation (VCF)** is a



non-profit organization for the use of its members.

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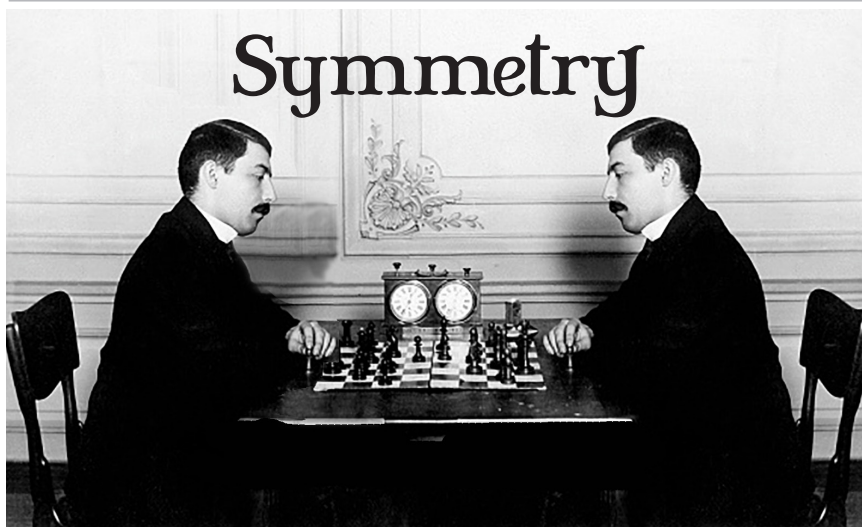
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by Macon Shibut

“With Dr Berthold Lasker, the brother of the world champion, and Paul Leonhard, I labored for months on a most thorough analysis of a variation of the Four Knights Opening in which Black continues to imitate White’s moves for as long as possible and after temporary deviations, forced by a check or another threat that must be attended to immediately, always manages to reestablish complete symmetry.”

—Edward Lasker, *Chess Secrets I Learned from the Masters*, p 26-27.

EARLY IN OUR CHESS LIVES, we all encounter the annoying opponent who, as Black, tries to copy our moves. Usually Caissa administers due comeuppance. With purposeful play, White’s ‘advantage of the first move’ — henceforth ‘AFM’ since I’ll be using it so often in what follows — the AFM asserts itself sooner or later in the form of “a check or another threat”. Often Black’s whole pretension crumbles as soon as tactics put a stop to the mimicking.

I wonder what exact sequence Edward Lasker wrote about. I did some poking in Chessbase and found a Capablanca game that beautifully illustrates the danger in copycat tactics.



Jose Raul Capablanca - NN
Casual game, New York 1918

Four Knights

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Nc3 Nf6
4 Bb5 Bb4 5 O-O O-O 6 d3 d6
7 Bg5 Bg4 8 Nd5 Nd4 9 Nxb4
Nxb5 10 Nd5 Nd4 11 Qd2!



A subtle move! Edward Lasker's account concerns his student years in Berlin, roughly 1907-11. Could this have been the very line they analyzed? If so, did they know this move, or did Capablanca reveal it a few years later? **11...Qd7?** [blindly copying for too long] **12 Bxf6 Bxf3 13 Ne7+ Kh8 14 Bxg7+! Kxg7 15 Qg5+ Kh8 16 Qf6mate 1-0**

Edward Lasker continued, "*We knew that sooner or later Black was bound to get into trouble, because symmetry meant that White had maintained the initiative inherent in the first move; and in many variations we were able to prove the validity of this theoretical consideration;*

nevertheless, we also found that White had plenty of opportunities to go wrong by unduly hastening the attack, and we employed this opening successfully in many off-hand games."

The diagram position arose again in **Curdo-Whitworth, New Hampshire 1974**. On that occasion Black tried **11...Bxf3** but then **12 Bxf6! gxf6** [Attempting to reestablish symmetry just leads back to Capablanca (12...Qd7 13 Ne7+ Kh8 14 Bxg7+ Kxg7 15 Qg5+). But Black's queen was attacked, other queen moves don't change anything, so he must capture the bishop.] **13 Qh6! Ne2** [Thanks to a device symmetrical to what Capablanca (playing White) did, Whitworth (playing Black) manages to eliminate White's knight before the death blow Nxf6+. However, the salvation is only temporarily.] **14 Kh1 Bxg2+ 15 Kxg2 Nf4+ 16 Nxf4 exf4 17 Kh1 Kh8 18 Rg1 Rg8 19 Rxg8+ Qxg8 20 Rg1! 1-0**

The position appeared yet again in a tournament for players age 12 and under. White was a future grandmaster and FIDE champion. Did he know Capablanca's game, or did he select 11 Qd2 on his own? **Ponomariov-Azarov, Verdun 1995** continued **11...Nxf3+!** [finally the correct defense] **12 gxf3 Bxf3 13 Bxf6 gxf6 14 Qe3**



2025 Virginia Closed State Championships

Aug 30 – Sept 1

Hilton Garden Inn Innsbrook, 4050 Cox Road, Glen Allen, Va

Championship and Amateur sections open only to Virginia residents, military stationed in Virginia, and students attending a Virginia school or college (student ID or other proof of Fall 2025 enrollment required). No residency requirement for Novice section or Blitz tournament.

\$5000 based on 90 paid entries, 1st-9th places guaranteed in all three sections. *Championship:* \$900+2025 Virginia State Championship - \$650 - \$450+Plaque; Top Expert and Top Class A, Class B, each \$200, Top Upset \$125. *Amateur (Under 1800):* \$600+2025 Virginia Amateur Championship - \$400 - \$300, Top Class C, D each \$150, Top Unrated \$125, Top Upset \$110. Winnings for an Unrated player limited to \$300. *Novice (Under-1200):* \$400+2025 Virginia Novice Championship - \$300 - \$200, Top Unrated \$100, Trophies to Top and 2nd U-1000, U-800, and U600. Top Upset \$100. Winnings for Unrated player limited to \$250.

EF \$100 through Saturday Aug 23, \$125 starting Sunday Aug 24, \$150 starting Thursday Aug 28 and onsite Friday or Saturday. Players rated below 1800 in the August 2025 US Chess Rating Supplement pay \$25 premium to play in the Championship Section unless they have had a post-tournament rating of at least 1800 in their Member Services Area record or in a US Chess Rating Supplement in the past two years. Optional ½ pt byes available – see full details online. Unrated players may not enter Championship section. VCF will retain \$10 from any player who withdraws before rd 1.

Championship & Amateur Schedules:

LONG Rds 1-7, 11-5, 10-4, all with time Control is 30/90, SD/1, d5 (e.g., 30 moves in the first 90 minutes)

SHORT Rds 1-2 Saturday evening at 5pm – 8pm , with time control Game/60, d5, then merge with Long

Schedule beginning rd 3 Sunday morning.

Novice Schedule (Saturday & Sunday only) Rds 1-3 10am -1pm - 5pm with time control Game/60, delay 5, rds 4-5 11 am - 3:30pm with time control Game/90, delay 5.

Enter: Online at www.vachess.org; or by Mail (check payable to “VCF”, include Name, Address, Email, Phone Number, US Chess ID, Section Playing In, Long or Short Schedule, Bye selections if any) by Saturday Aug 23 to Mike Hoffpauir, ATTN: VA Closed, 405 Hounds Chase, Yorktown, VA 23693; or Onsite Friday, Aug 29, 3-7 pm or Saturday, Aug 30 8 am-noon. Long Schedule entries received after 12-noon may have to wait until Round 2 to play. Short Schedule players can register from 1:30 pm to 4 pm on Saturday afternoon.

Blitz tournament 7:30 PM Friday night, Aug 29

Hotel (804)521-2901 call by Friday August 22 to request the “Virginia Chess Federation” rate \$118/night-King or \$128/night-Double Queen.

Additional details www.vachess.org or contact Mike Hoffpauir by email (mhoffpauir@aol.com) or text (757-846-4805)



[the critical moment] **14...Bh5?**
 [After this Black does not find time to evict White's strong knight. He must do it right away: 14...c6! and after 15 Qxf3 cxd5 16 exd5 Kh8 anything could yet happen.] **15 Qh6 Bg6 16 f4! c6** [too late!] **17 fxe5! fxe5 18 Nf6+ Kh8 19 h4 Rg8** [Giving up the exchange extends the game, but the outcome is more or less certain.] **20 Nxg8 Qxg8 21 Kh2 Qg7 22 Qg5 Rg8 23 Rf2 h6 24 Qg4 d5 25 Raf1 Qh7 26 Qg3 Qg7 27 exd5 cxd5 28 h5 Bxh5 29 Qxg7+ Rxd7 30 Rf5 Bg4 31 Rxe5 Be6 32 Rf4 Rg5 33 Rxg5 hxg5 34 Rb4 b6 35 a4 Kg7 36 a5 bxa5 37 Ra4 f5 38 Rxa5 f4 39 Rxa7+ Kg6 40 b4 g4 41 b5 Kg5 42 b6 g3+ 43 Kg2 Kg4 44 Rg7+ 1-0**

In the initial position, the AFM is a mere abstraction because the armies have not yet come into direct contact. It becomes tangible as soon as hand-to-hand combat commences. Consider the Petroff Defense:

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 [attacking undefended pawn e5 — *contact!*] **Nf6 3 Nxe5 Nxe4?** **4 Qe2** [A well-known cautionary tale. Black's knight is attacked. If it moves, 4...Nf6 5 Nc6+ wins the queen. But it's actually not as bad as that. Black can avoid the worst by maintaining symmetry...] **4...Qe7! 5 Qxe4 d6** Since White's queen is undefended, Black recovers

the piece. He will wind up a pawn down after **6 d4** or **6 f4**, and while some may dispute the extent of White's advantage, few players volunteer for defending this way. I doubt Black's copycat strategy can hope to equalize in this line.

Yes, sooner or later Black was bound to get into trouble, because symmetry meant that White had maintained the initiative inherent in the first move. Playing symmetrically involves the art of timely breaking the symmetry, and also sometimes techniques for reestablishing symmetry. The Petroff main line is **3...d6** (instead of **3...Nxe4**) and after **4 Nf3 Nxe4** White can reestablish pure symmetry if he chooses: **5 d3 Nf6 6 d4 d5**. Philosophical question: Has Black "equalized"? Or put another way, is White's AFM in this position less than what it was in the initial starting position?

Conventional wisdom claims that it is. The sole open file is thought to be a likely avenue for exchanging major pieces, ergo Black is closer to equalizing here than at move 1. Again a rather abstract argument; you'd have to prove it for me in practice. In this connection, compare with the Exchange Variation of the French Defense: **1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 exd5 exd5 4 Nf3 Nf6**. Yes, it's exactly the same position. And while the French



Exchange has long had a drawish reputation, it's actually enjoying a resurgence of late. The databases contain thousands of recent games by strong grandmasters who score a healthy 66% this way. Maybe that open e-file doesn't actually extinguish the AFM.

Instead of uber-symmetrical 5 d3, look now at the Petroff main line 5 d4 d5. This position demonstrates a most important and sometimes overlooked dynamic of symmetrical positions. The AFM is clear and understandable, but *getting to move first is not a wholly uncompensated advantage.*



When you think about it, something really weird has happened. It's as though White *lost a tempo* somehow. It's the French Exchange except Black got an extra move ...Nf6-e4. Or put another way, Black has achieved White's position in the French line 1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3

exd5 exd5 4 Nf3 Nf6 5 Ne5. Yet opening theory continues to treat the diagram position in terms of White (a 'tempo down') seeking an advantage rather than just trying to equalize (as if he were Black). How can this be?

Like I said, the AFM is not an uncompensated advantage. White starts the game a tempo ahead. *But Black starts with more information.* He gets to see what White has done before choosing his move. In some situations (and this is one of them) the information can be worth even more than the tempo.

This is why 'reverse color openings' (ie, White playing a Black opening with an extra move) are not as effective as one might hope. The Dutch Defense, 1 d4 f5, is much more popular as a Black opening than is Bird's Opening, 1 f4, for White, precisely because the Dutch player already knows 1 d4 is on the board. 1 d4 slightly weakens White's control over the square e4, and that weakening is what makes the Dutch hum.

Bobby Fischer claimed the position after 1 Nf3 Nf6 2 g3 g6 3 Bg2 Bg7 4 O-O O-O 5 d3 d6 actually favors Black (!?). His point was that Black can *favorably* break the symmetry after 6 e4 c5! or 6 c4 e5! I'm not sure how seriously Fischer



intended this, nor am I clear on why ...c5! / ...e5! are necessarily favorable for the second player. But whatever Fischer had in mind, it must have been some higher order version of the same argument as in the the Dutch/Bird comparison.

In the Petroff main line, Black is similarly *committed to using his 'extra' tempo on the move ...Nf6-e4*. Ne5 / ...Ne4 can often be good for either side in this pawn structure, but right here it's premature. It violates the rule of not moving the same piece again before developing the others. In the French Exchange, 5 Ne5 should be punctuated ?! as it takes a position with at least the AFM still, and changes it to one where White must try to equalize as if he were Black in a Petroff.

The critical variations of the Petroff logically continue with

White pressuring Ne4 by moves like Bd3, Re1 and the undermining c4. If White manages to induce the exchange or retreat of Black's tempi-eating knight, the tempi 'disappear' as it were and White will have built upon his AFM.

I can illustrate this with a variation that used to be a main line but is now largely discredited. **6 Bd3 Be7 7 O-O Nc6 8 c4** The pressure on e4 is growing. Black's main move today is 8...Nb4 but in nothing less than a world championship match game, no less a player than Anatoly Karpov chose the retreat **8...Nf6**. His opponent Garry Kasparov later wrote: *"Realizing that in the event of 8...Nb4 I would use his own prescription 9 Be2!, Karpov made another, less critical move, which has been known since the mid-19th century."*

2nd Annual

Blue Ridge Open — Sept 19-21

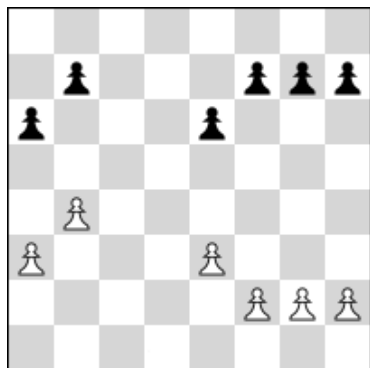
Washington Dulles Airport Marriott, 45020 Aviation Dr., Dulles 5 rd SS in 3 Sections: Premier, Under 2000, and Under 1500. Premier Section plays all 3 days. Under 2000 section has a 2-day schedule option. Under 1500 plays Sat & Sun only. \$\$5,750 based on 100 paid entries. Up to two ½ pt byes allowed, must commit 1 hour before the start of Round 2. Premier Section requires a minimum post-event rating of 1900 since Jan 1, 2025. Players rated 1800-1900 can play in the Premier Section for an additional \$200 fee. September US Chess Supplement ratings being used. Free entry with no deductions for GM, IM, WGM, WIM if committed by July 31 (must play all 5 rounds, no Byes). Time Controls are Game-90, increment 30 for the Premier and Under 2000 Sections, Under 2000 time control for Rds 1 and 2 in the 2-day schedule is Game-60, delay 5. Under 1500 Time Control is G/60, delay 5 for all rounds. More event information and Enter at <https://www.atlanticchessassociation.com> or email director@atlanticchessassociation.com.



The Kasparov-Karpov game continued **9 Nc3 O-O**. Who has 'lost a tempo' now? The difference between White's Bd3 and Black's Be7 we'll call a wash for present purposes. Otherwise, it is White to play plus he got the extra move c4. His AFM has become an ATM — advantage of *two* moves. White has scored in excess of 80% after 8... Nf6 in recent years. (But to be fair, Karpov was ready to keep defending the variation in several later games.)

Earlier I offered the notion that a single open file may diminish the AFM. There are statistics — "*Lies, damn lies, and statistics*"? — supporting this. High drawing rates in variations like 1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 exd5 exd5; or 1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 d6 3 Nc3 e5 4 dxe5 dxe5; or 1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 cxd5 cxd5.

But what about *two* open files? Contrary to what one might expect, that's a different story. Consider symmetrical pawn formations of this sort:



Many pawn structures have names. Hanging Pawns, Maroczy Bind, IQP. Hans Kmoch's book *Pawn Power in Chess* gave us Ram Formations and Jump Formations and more. But neither Kmoch nor anyone else to my knowledge have attached a name to this formation, which is strange because it arises in several different openings and is really important in practice.

I recently read *Akiba Rubinstein*, by Yuri Razuvaev & Valery Murakhveri. (Verendel Publishing 2022. Hardcover, 572 pages., list €45 (approximately \$51)). It's a beautifully produced volume with fine paper and many interesting photographs I had not seen elsewhere. (I used one of the photos to create the 'artwork' atop this article.)

I was eager to read this book. I'd heard it was a classic of Soviet chess literature. Boris Gelfand's Forward to this English edition calls it one of his favorite books and one that had great impact on him. "*The joint author, Yuri Razuvaev, was one of the best coaches in chess history and very important for my own development as a chess player,*" Gelfand writes. "*Razuvaev had a unique gift of explaining complicated things in just a few words. And in this book, too, he explains the games of Akiba Rubinstein in a very clear and specific way.*"



The book disappointed me. It's okay, but I don't understand the praise lavished upon it or the joy at it finally being translated. I saw no "unique gift of explaining complicated things in just few words"—although I did see just a few words. The annotations are not extensive and mostly perfunctory. Eric Schiller might just as easily have written them. I will give a few examples in what follows. Where Razuvaev does dig a bit deeper, he often commits tactical mistakes as evidenced by the book's 111 footnotes, mostly significant engine corrections.

That said, I did enjoy the book! Rubinstein's games are just that good. He is on the short list of Greatest Players Who Never Became World Champion. In *Masters of the Chessboard*, Richard Reti wrote, "Rubinstein has created the most perfect games of the epoch since Steinitz." Of the world champions he encountered — Lasker, Capablanca, Alekhine and Euwe — Rubinstein beat every one of them the first time they played!

Alas, he was also nervous, extremely withdrawn, and burdened by obsessive/compulsive disorders. World War I and then afterwards the ascent of younger, more charismatic, better-financed Capablanca nixed Rubinstein's

highest ambitions. He ceased playing competitive chess altogether in 1930, at age 50.

The diagram pawn formation was featured in what is perhaps Rubinstein's most famous game.

Georg Rotlewi - Akiba Rubinstein Lodz 1907

Notes here are 'from the wind', having been copied and recopied so many time that the original sources are lost. Of course, the true source was Rubinstein himself. He did not write much, but he doubtless worked out all these variations in his head. **1 d4 d5 2 Nf3 e6 3 e3 c5 4 c4 Nc6 5 Nc3 Nf6 6 dxc5 Bxc5 7 a3 a6 8 b4 Bd6 9 Bb2 O-O 10 Qd2 Qe7 11 Bd3 dxc4 12 Bxc4 b5 13 Bd3 Rd8 14 Qe2 Bb7 15 O-O**



15...Ne5 16 Nxe5 Bxe5 17 f4 Bc7 18 e4 Rac8 19 e5 Bb6+ 20 Kh1 Ng4! 21 Be4 [21 Qxg4? Rxd3 ΔRc3; 21 Ne4 Rxd3! 22 Qxd3 Bxe4 23 Qxe4 Qh4 24 h3 Qg3 25 hxg4



Qh4mate; 21 Bxh7+ Kxh7 22 Qxg4 Rd2 -+] 21...Qh4 22 g3 [22 h3 Rxc3 23 Bxc3 (23 Bxb7 Rxh3+ 24 gxh3 Qxh3+ 25 Qh2 Qxh2mate; 23 Qxg4 Rxh3+ 24 Qxh3 Qxh3+ 25 gxh3 Bxe4+ 26 Kh2 Rd2+ 27 Kg3 Rg2+ 28 Kh4 Bd8+ 29 Kh5 Bg6mate) 23...Bxe4 24 Qxg4 (24 Qxe4 Qg3 -+) 24...Qxg4 25 hxg4 Rd3 26 Kh2 Rxc3 -+] 22...Rxc3 23 gxh4 [23 Bxc3 Bxe4+ 24 Qxe4 Qxh2mate; 23 Bxb7 Rxg3 24 Rf3 (24 Bf3 Nxh2 -+) 24...Rxf3 25 Bxf3 Nf2+ 26 Kg1 (26 Kg2 Qh3+ 27 Kg1 Ne4+ 28 Kh1 Ng3mate) 26...Ne4+ 27 Kf1 Nd2+ 28 Kg2 Nxf3 29 Qxf3 (29 Kxf3 Qh5+) 29...Rd2+ -+] 23...Rd2 24 Qxd2 [24 Qxg4 Bxe4+ 25 Rf3 Rxf3 -+; 24 Bxc3 Rxe2 25 Rf2 Bxe4+ 26 Kg1 Bxf2+ 27 Kf1 Bf3 28 Rd1 Nxh2mate; 24 Bxb7 Rxe2 25 Bg2 Rh3 -+] 24...Bxe4+ 25 Qg2 Rh3 0-1

Playing through Razuveav & Murakhveri, I could not but notice how many of the games feature symmetrical pawn formations. The frequency is so extraordinary, I wonder if Rubinstein's OCD may have played some role in shaping his chess style. I could put together an entire monograph of Rubinstein games featuring just our structure here. If it needs a name, we could do a worse than calling it the Rubinstein Formation.

Akiba Rubinstein - Ernst Gruenfeld Semmering 1926

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nf3 dxc4 4 e3 Nf6 5 Bxc4 c5 6 O-O a6 7 Qe2 Nc6 8 Nc3 Be7 9 dxc5 Bxc5 10 a3 Bd6 11 b4 O-O 12 Bb2 Qe7 13 Rad1 b5 14 Bd3 Bb7



White has built upon the AFM. The position is completely symmetrical except he got the obviously useful Rad1 with it still his turn to move. Time and again, this sort of advantage was enough for Rubinstein to weave solutions that almost seem like forced wins.

Rubinstein's games playing both White and Black yield a rule of thumb for navigating this structure. Like all 'rules' of chess strategy, it has exceptions, but it's useful still: *The advantage goes to the player who can first move either e4/...e5 or Ne4/...Ne5 with effect.* "With effect" always comes down to concrete tactics. We saw this rule operate in Rotlewi-Rubinstein (15...Ne5!) and we see it again here.



15 Ne4 Nxe4 16 Bxe4 [Things are awkward for Black already because of the twin threats Bxh7+ followed by Q-d3+xd6; and also Qc2 hitting h7 and c6 simultaneously. Also Black has to worry about Qd3 with tempo against h7 followed by Qc3 threatening c6 as well as mate on g7] **16...f5 17 Bb1 e5 18 e4!**

Almost 20 years earlier, there had been a game Schlechter-Maroczy, Vienna 1907 that followed a remarkably similar course with colors reversed. Maroczy played all the Rubinsteinesque moves including this challenge in the center, except that for Rubinstein here it all works, whereas poor Maroczy's king got nuked. The Devil is always in the details. (1 d4 d5 2 Nf3 c5 3 e3 e6 4 c4 Nf6 5 a3 Nc6 6 Nc3 dxc4 7 Bxc4 a6 8 O-O b5 9 Bd3 Bb7 10 dxc5 Bxc5 11 b4 Bd6 12 Bb2 Ne5 13 Nxe5 Bxe5 14 f4 Bc7 15 Qe2 O-O 16 Rad1 Qe7 17 e4 e5 18 Nd5 Nxd5 19 exd5 Rfe8 {19... Bxd5 and if 20 Bxh7+ (20 fxe5) Kxh7 21 Rxd5} 20 fxe5 Bxe5 21 Bxh7+ Kxh7 22 Qh5+ Kg8 23 Bxe5 f6 24 Bxf6 gxf6 25 Rd3 Qh7 26 Rg3+ Kh8

27 Qf3 Qf7 28 Qg4 1-0 Schlechter-Maroczy, Vienna 1907)

18...Nd4 19 Nxd4 exd4 20 Bxd4 [As noted above, this is how Maroczy should have tried to hold his position. Playing à la Maroczy by 20 Rfe1 would also be good here.] **20...fxe4 21 Rfe1 Rae8 22 Qg4!** [Threatening Ba2+ followed by a bunch of captures on g7 and then finally Rxd6. This explains Black's next move, but it doesn't help because his other bishop is hanging too.] **22...Bb8 23 Ba2+ Kh8 24 Bxg7+! Qxg7 25 Qxg7+ Kxg7 26 Rd7+ Kh8 27 Rxb7 Be5 28 Bf7 Rd8 29 g3 Rd4 30 Kg2 Rc8 31 Re2 Rc7** [Counterattacking White's queenside pawns would leave his king defenseless: 31...Rc3 32 Be6 Rxa3 33 Rc2 etc] **32 Rb8+ Kg7 33 Ba2 Bf6 34 Rg8+ Kh6 35 Bb1 Re7 36 h4 Bg7 37 Kh3 Re6 38 Ra8 Bf6 39 Ra7 Bg7 40 Bxe4!** [I often got the sense Rubinstein taunted opponents by appearing to have made a mistake or allowed a chance, when in reality he was setting up a study-like finish.] **40... Rdxe4 41 Rxe4 Rxe4 42 Rxa6+ Kh5 43 f3! 1-0 g4** will be mate



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Oct 25-26

Country Inn & Suites Fredericksburg South
Three Sections Championship,
Amateur (U1800/unrated) &
Novice (U1200). Details at www.vachess.org. Hotel \$89/night plus
taxes through Oct 22.



Akiba Rubinstein - Jacques Mieses St Petersburg 1909

1 d4 d5 2 Nf3 c5 3 c4 Nf6 4
cxd5 cxd4 5 Nxd4 Nxd5



6 e4 Nf6 7 Nc3 e5 8 Bb5+! Bd7 9
Nf5 Nc6 10 Nd6+ Bxd6 11 Qxd6
Qe7 12 Qxe7+ Nxe7 13 Be3 a6 14
Bxd7+ Nxd7 [White's next move
connects his rooks, something that
proves difficult for Black as the game
goes. But the symmetrical pawn
formation and lack of concrete
targets make progress hard. A
single lax move by White and the
advantage could vanish.] 15 Ke2
Rc8 [Conventional wisdom says the
king wants to stay near the center in
such positions, but in this case maybe
connecting the rooks was a higher
priority, eg 15...O-O!? 16 Rac1 Rfd8
17 Rhd1 Rac8 18 Nd5 Kf8] 16
Rhd1 Nc5 17 Bxc5!? [Razuvaev's
note here is typical: *"A surprising
decision - White exchanges his prized
bishop. Rubinstein's idea will become
apparent after his 19th move. 17 Rac1
was a good alternative."*] 17...Rxc5

18 Rac1 Nc6 19 Rd5! [Razuvaev:
*"Converting control of an open file into
a passed pawn is a priyome. {Russian
term, means a typical maneuver or
technique in chess.} Black has to
agree to trade because 19...Rc4 is good
for White. Lasker gave the following line
in the tournament book: 20 b3 Rd4 21
Ke3 f6 22 Na4 Ke7 23 Nc5 Rxd5 24
exd5 Nb4 25 d6+ Kxd6 26 Nxb7+*
with advantage to White."] 19...Rxd5
20 exd5 Nd4+ 21 Kd3 Ke7 [The
advantage is still a mere a tempo at
some critical moment. Were it not
for the next move's tactics working,
one could imagine Black being
better after some ...f5 and ...Kd6]
22 f4! [Black's knight looks pretty
on d4 but its vulnerability requires
him accepting an isolated pawn
as well.] 22...f6 23 fxe5 fxe5 24
Ke4 Kd6 [Still just a matter of the
AFM! Were it Black to move now,
...Rf8 and it's ♣] 25 Rf1 Rc8 26 Rf7
Rc4 27 Kd3 Rb4 [Black defends
resourcefully] 28 Rxc7 [Lasker in
the *St Petersburg 1909* tournament
book: *"Also strong was 28 b3!?"* and
White will win at least a pawn; for
example 28...Nb5 29 Nxb5+ Rxb5
30 Rxc7 h5 31 Rh7 Rxd5+ 32
Ke3] 28...Rxb2 29 Rxc7 Rxc7
30 Rh6+ Kd7 31 Rh7+ Kd6 32
Rh6+ Kd7 33 Ne4! [Razuvaev:
*"An excellent move. Black's king will be
pushed to the back rank."* Thank you.
Comrade. Indeed he will!] 33...Rxa2
34 Rh7+ Kd8 35 d6 [Mieses has



only one defense against the brute force threat $Nf6$ & $Rh8$ mate] **35... Nb5** [For the moment this ties White's knight to the pawn.] **36 Kc4 Ra5!** [Inhibiting $Kd5$ in light of $...Nc7+$] **37 Rxb7** [But now $Kd5$ is threatened again because White's king will have square $c6$] **37...Na3+ 38 Kb4 Rb5+ 39 Rxb5 Nxb5** [It comes to White winning thanks to superior king position.] **40 Kc5 Kd7 41 Kd5 a5 42 Nc5+ Ke8 43 Kxe5 Kf7 44 Nb7 1-0** The d-pawn is going through unless $44...Nxd6$ $45 Nxd6+$ $Kg6$ $46 Kd4 Kg5$ $47 Ne4+$ $Kg4$ $48 Nd2 Kh3$ $49 Nf1$ Now the king goes to capture the a-pawn, then returns to escort the h-pawn. Black can never take the knight because the pawn will run. The rook pawn ending with a knight is winning, unlike the drawn 'wrong color' bishop ending:

Akiba Rubinstein - Siegbert Tarrasch Berlin 1928

1 c4 c5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 d5 5 cxd5 Nxd5 6 e4 Nf6 7 Nc3 [the same position as in the Rubinstein-Mieses game via a completely different move sequence] **7...e5 8 Ndb5** [Razuvaev awarded $8 Bb5+$ an exclamation mark in the Mieses game without explaining why. Nineteen years later, Rubinstein goes a different way. He had also preferred the knight move against Reti at Budapest 1926. To my

eyes, this poses more problems than the bishop check. Black will be warding off pressure on his queenside for a long while.] **8... Qxd1+ 9 Kxd1** [For starters something must be done about $Nc7+$] **9...Na6**



This knight immobilizes his a7 pawn, which will be an enduring problem. Still, Rubinstein needed great patience and care in targeting the weakness. Razuvaev had nothing to offer, but it seems to me the natural $10 Be3$ could let Tarrasch grab the initiative by $10...Ng4!$ $11 Bxa7 Rxa7!?$ $12 Nxa7 Bd7$ $13 Ke1 Bc5$ etc.

10 f3! Bc5 [Black's bishop is first to occupy the key diagonal but he cannot stay there.] **11 Na4! Be7 12 Be3 Bd7 13 Rc1** [if $13 Nac3$ $O-O$ $14 Nxa7 Bc5$ $15 Bxc5 Nxc5$ $16 Nab5 Bxb5$ $17 Bxb5 Nb3$ $18 Rb1 Nd4$ $19 Be2 Rfc8$] **13...O-O 14 a3 Rfd8 15 Ke1 Ne8** [The a7 weakness precludes challenging the c-file; moreover, $10 f3$ has rendered



Nf6 ineffective. So Tarrasch quite reasonably maneuvers the knight toward the queenside hoping to trade it for the oppressive Nb5. However, he winds up eliminating not the strong Nb5 but, in effect, the 'dim' and undefended Na4. So perhaps with hindsight Black ought to have tried 15...b6 here. Based on the course of the actual game, I guess Rubinstein would reply 16 b4 preventing ...Nc5. White retains his small but nagging advantage.] **16 Be2 Nd6 17 Nac3 Nxb5 18 Nxb5 b6 19 b4 Be6 20 Kf2 Rd7** [Covering a7 so the other rook can finally move to the center. It may seem Black has weathered the difficulties, but Rubinstein maintains his pressure with simple, natural moves.] **21 Rhd1 Rxd1** [21...Rad8 22 Rxd7 Rxd7 23 Rc8+ Bf8 looks worse somehow] **22 Rxd1 Kf8 23 g3 Ke8 24 f4 f6** [Tarrasch operates on the principle that imbalances favors the aggressor, but it's not

clear why 24...exf4 25 gxf4 or (25 Bxf4!?) 25...g6 should be worse.] **25 fxe5 fxe5 26 Bc1!** [In fact, a new target has appeared and White's active pieces nimbly retarget.] **26...Bc8** [Not merely mirroring White, but played for a concrete reason. He plans to meet Bb2 with ...Bf6 but in that case his knight will need a defender against Nd6+ and Bxa6] **27 Bb2 Bf6 28 Nd6+ Ke7 29 Nc4 Ke6 30 Nxe5!** [Just so!] **30...Nc7** [If 30...Bxe5 31 Bc4+ Kf6 32 Rd6+ Ke7 33 Bxe5] **31 Bc4+ Ke7 32 Nc6+ Kf8 33 Bxf6 gxf6 34 Rd8+ Ne8** [Black is pressed to the wall. Now brute force might win somehow, but it is not the most effective: 35 Ba6 Bxa6 36 Rxa8 Bb7 looks annoying, but still, 37 Rxe8+ Kxe8 38 Nxa7 Kd7 (38...Bxe4 39 Nc8) 39 Ke3 Ba6 40 a4 etc. The way Rubinstein actually concluded the game looks more his style.] **35 b5!** [Paralyzing. Black simply has no moves.] **35...Bb7 36 Rd7 Bxc6 37 bxc6 1-0**



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More Cherry Blossom Games

We reported on the 2025 Cherry Blossom Festival last issue. GMs Titas Stremavicius & Luka Budisavljevic tied for 1st and we gave some games. But a lot of other games didn't make the article. Here are a few of those.

Andrew Samuelson – Yang Yu Sicilian

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 a6 6 h4 e5 7 Nb3 Be6 8 f4 exf4 9 Bxf4 Nc6 10 Qd2 Nh5 11 Bg5 Be7 12 Bxe7 Qxe7 13 O-O-O Ng3 14 Rh2 Ne5 15 Qf4 Nh5 16 Qg5 Qxg5+ 17 hxg5 Ng3 18 Bd3 h5 19 gxh6 gxh6 20 Nd4 h5 21 Nf5 Bxf5 22 exf5 Nxd3+ 23 Rxd3 Nxf5 24 g4 Ng7 25 gxh5 Rh6 26 Rg3 Kf8



27 Rhg2 Ne8 28 Rg8+ Ke7 29 Nd5+ Ke6 30 Nb6 Rd8 31 Re2+ Kf5 32 Rxe8 Rxe8 33 Rxe8 Rxh5 34 Re7 Rh1+ 35 Kd2 Rb1 36 Nc4 b5 37 Nxd6+ Kf6 38 Ra7 Rxb2 39 Rxa6 Ke7 40 Nf5+ Kd7 41 Nd4 Ke7 42 Kc1 Rb4 43 Nc6+ and White won 1-0

Justin Paul – Will Moorhouse Reti

1 Nf3 Nf6 2 b3 g6 3 Bb2 Bg7 4 g3 O-O 5 Bg2 d5 6 c4 c6 7 O-O a5 8 d3 Nbd7 9 Qc2 Qb6 10 Nc3 Qa6 11 Rac1 e5 12 cxd5 Nxd5 13 Nxd5 cxd5 14 Qc7



14...e4? 15 Bxg7 exf3 16 Bxf8 fxg2 17 Bh6! gxf1Q+ 18 Kxf1 Nf8 19 Qxc8! g5 20 Qh3 Qf6 21 Bxf8 Rxf8 22 Qd7 Rd8 23 Qxb7 Qb2 24 Rc8 Rxc8 25 Qxc8+ Kg7 26 Qd8 h6 27 Qxa5 Qb1+ 28 Kg2 Qc2 29 Qxd5 Qxe2 30 a4 1-0

Tyson Brady – Daniel Clancy King's Indian Reversed

1 e4 e6 2 d3 d5 3 Qe2 Nf6 4 g3 dxe4 5 dxe4 b6 6 Nf3 Ba6 7 c4 Bb7 8 e5 Ne4 9 a3 Bc5 10 Be3 Bxe3



11 Qxe3 Ng5 12 Nbd2 Nxf3+ 13 Nxf3 Nd7 14 Bg2 Qe7 15 O-O O-O 16 Rfd1 Rfd8 17 Rd4 a5 18 Rg4 Kh8 19 Re1 Nc5 20 Nd4 Bxg2 21 Kxg2 Qf8 22 Qg5 a4 23 Re3 Rd7 24 Rf3 Rad8 25 Nc6 Re8 26 Rh4 g6 27 Rh6 Qg7 28 Rf4 Kg8 29 Rfh4 Nd3 30 Kf1 1-0

Sophie Li - Matthew Shih

Sicilian

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bc4 Nf6 4 d3 Be7 5 Nc3 d6 6 a4 O-O 7 h3 Be6 8 Nd5 Bxd5 9 Bxd5 Nxd5 10 exd5 Nb4 11 c4 c6 12 Qb3 a5 13 dxc6 bxc6 14 O-O Bf6 15 Be3 Rb8 16 Qd1 Re8 17 d4 e4 18 Nd2 d5 19 c5 Nd3 20 b3 Rb4 21 Qc2 Bxd4 22 Bxd4 Rxd4 23 Qc3 Rb4 24 Rad1 Qg5 25 Kh1 Re6 26 g3 Rh6 27 Kh2 Qg4 28 h4 Nf4 0-1

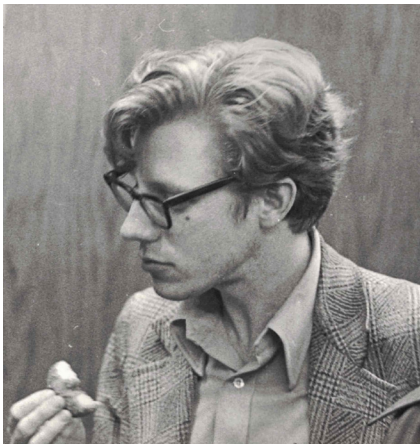
Matthew Guo Diao - L De Silva
Queen's Gambit Declined

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Nf3 Bb4 5 cxd5 exd5 6 Bg5 h6 7 Bh4 Nbd7 8 e3 g5 9 Bg3 Ne4 10 Nd2 Nxc3 11 hxg3 Nb6 12 Qc2 Be6 13 a3 Bf8 14 O-O-O c6 15 Kb1 Qf6 16 Nb3 O-O-O 17 Bd3 Kb8 18 Na5 Rc8 19 Na4 Nxa4 20 Qxa4 Rc7 21 Rd2 Bd7 22 Qd1 b6 23 Nb3 Bg7 [23...c5] 24 Qf3 Qxf3 25 gxf3 c5 26 dxc5 bxc5 27 Be2 Be6 28 Rc1 Bf8 29 e4 d4 30 Bc4 h5 [30...Bxc4 31 Rxc4 h5] 31 Rdc2 Bd6 32 Bxe6 fxe6 33 Nxc5 [33 e5 Δ 33...Be7 34 Nxd4 or 33... Bxe5 34 Rxc5 Rxc5 35 Nxc5] 33 Bxc5 34 Rxc5 Rxc5 35 Rxc5 h4 36 gxh4 gxh4 37 Rc1 Rf8 38 Rh1 Rxf3 39 Rxh4 Kc7 40 e5 ½-½

More Photo Archive Stuff...

The discussion continues regarding the identity of the player looking over GM Kavalek's shoulder. (*For the photo, see our previous two issues.*) Several readers weighed in. William Stokes suggested it might be **Phil Collier**. Sorry but no, and thank you for playing. It so happens that the same photo set includes an image of the real Phil Collier showing what he looked like at that time...

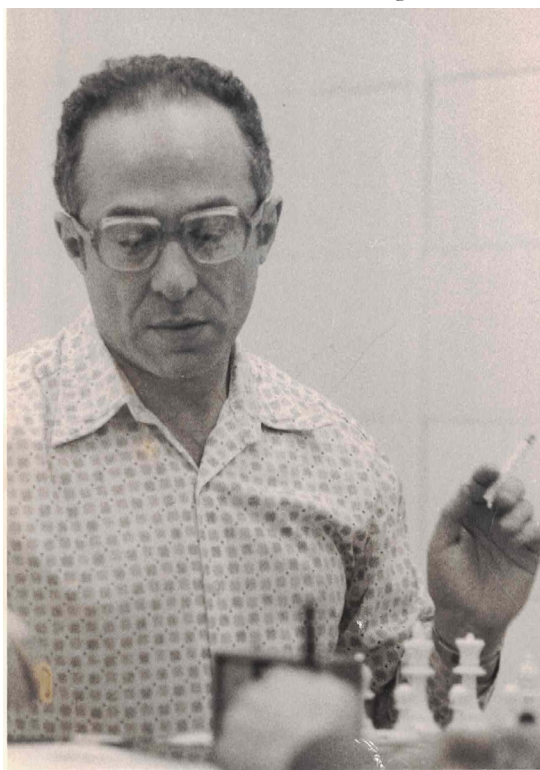
Former VCF President Mark Johnson pushed hard the Leonid Shamkovich position hard, in spite or even because of details in the CHESS LIFE images of





Shamkovich we reproduced last issue. Okay, this remains a question of personal opinions. Several people do think it's Shamkovich. But I took the picture to the World Open in Philadelphia and showed it to several veterans of the New York chess scene, including Sophia Rohde and John Fedorowicz. I presented the picture without giving away any prejudices, just "*Who is it?*" None of them knew, but when I proffered Shamkovich as a possibility, they all doubted it was him. Fedorowicz did allow that the clothes look like what Shamkovich or other Soviet émigrés would have worn at the time.

Here are a few more selections from the photo set. I'm pleasantly surprised at how much reaction these are eliciting.



Speaking of Soviet émigrés, this is Grandmaster **Anatoly Lein**. He and Shamkovich were among the first to arrive on our shores and they dominated the US swiss tournament circuit for a while. Speaking for the up-and-coming 'Fischer Generation' of young American-born players, Fedorowicz once recalled to me, "*We thought 'Wow, and these guys were the 'B' team... Imagine what it must be like playing against Karpov!'*"

Before there was Internet, kids, there were telephones! For a couple years in the 1970s there was a long distance telephone chess league with teams throughout the country. Teams would

assemble in the presence of certified TDs and compete under as normal tournament conditions as possible, given that your opponent was not physically present. Instead, volunteer 'runners' would monitor an open phone line and execute the opponents' moves as they came in. Clock adjustment was handled manually, turn by turn. In 1976 the Washington Plumbers (the name derives from the Watergate affair — read your history) won the National Chess League championship. The image here



shows the Plumbers in action. *Left to right:* Bob Eberlein (brought his cat!), John Meyer, Larry Gilden (standing), Charlie Powell and Mark Diesen (mostly obscured behind Powell). The opponents' names are posted in front of each board. Based on that, it looks like on that day they were playing against a team from Cleveland.

Finally, we have long-time Virginia chess stalwart, and correspondence chess champion David Eisen. He owned one of the most beautiful tournament chess sets I've ever seen.



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