



C O L U M N I S T S

From the Archives

Hosted by
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From the Archives...

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Vienna 1898

From the *British Chess Magazine*, August 1898

The history of one Chess Tourney is in many respects very like that of others which have preceded it, but in this instance there is a remarkable difference. At no previous gathering of Chess experts for a trial of strength and endurance have there been prizes of such value offered, nor, as far as we remember, has the contest ever been so long protracted. Nearly two months of hard fighting between the best masters of the game (with one or two exceptions) in the world are enough to try the mettle of the strongest physique, especially in the summer months of a pretty warm climate. We had anticipated that some of the combatants, more particularly the older ones, would infallibly break down, but we are glad to record that in no case has this prediction been at all signally verified. The senior players, Messrs. Steinitz and Blackburne, appear to have kept up their strength, notwithstanding their age, and though our English champion, Mr. Blackburne, has been handicapped by former ill health, he has attained a very respectable position in the final score. As to Mr. Steinitz, we can only say that for his time of life he has done wonders, and thoroughly vindicated his former title to be still one of the best players in the world. His position in the prize list is one that is most creditable to him; and so, we may remark, is that of M. Tchigorin, who is also advancing in years. Perhaps we may be allowed to say of these two masters that they are both ingenious and eccentric. Their eccentricity consists in the adoption of defences, such as that of

Steinitz to the Ruy Lopez Opening, and that of Tchigorin to the Q P Opening, which have certainly lost them games that they might have otherwise won or drawn; but their ingenuity has been shown on several occasions in many unexpected ways by saving games which they ought to have lost. Blackburne has also been fortunate in this respect, owing greatly to his wonderful knowledge and skill in end-games. For this reason his tale of draws has been larger than we ever have been credited to him in other tourneys. The rest of the group we believe, are mostly comparative young men, though we do not know the ages of all of them.

Mr. Showalter has certainly not done himself justice, and his place in the score by no means represents what it ought to have been, but he does not seem to do so well in tourneys as in individual matches. The Austrian representatives, Messrs. Halprin, Marco, and Schlechter have scored moderately well, but they are the editors of the *Vienna Chess Magazine* which published supplements containing tourney games and notes throughout the whole contest, and we well know the effect which the labours cares of a responsibility of this nature must have upon tournament results. The Hungarian, Maróczy, has also fallen short of what was expected of considering the success which he attained in the Nuremberg Tourney years ago, but he looks not very strong, and possibly felt the strain of the long conflict too much for him. Of the three representatives of Russia Messrs. Alapin, Schiffers, and Tchigorin, the first named went ahead first, but fell off somewhat afterwards. He is an ingenious player, and a good analyst, but perhaps lacks staying power. M. Schiffers began badly, and scored only 6½ in the first half of the tourney, but did rather better in the second. Of M. Tchigorin we have already spoken; he is one of those players who emit every now and then bright flashes of genius, but cannot be depended on for steadiness, and whose final score will always be uncertain. Of all tournament competitors there is none, we think, more reliable than Mr. Burn. He has not much brilliancy, but is sound and plodding, seems always as hard as nails and as cool as a cucumber. He has well represented his country at Vienna, and we may all be very proud of him. Herren Lipke and Walbrodt, who, together with Dr. Tarrasch, appeared as champions for Germany, have sustained their previous reputation, but Herr Walbrodt lost two games by want of punctuality. Of M. Janowski we may also say that France may be well satisfied with the prowess which he has displayed in her behalf. He is an ingenious and brilliant player, and will one day, we believe, rise to the highest point in the realm of chess. Mr. Caro, we think, has obtained quite as high a position in the score list as might have been expected. He is an Englishman by birth, but has long been resident in Germany, and has only recently returned to this country. He played, it will be remembered, in the late telegraph match between England and America.

Finally, of Messrs. Pillsbury and Tarrasch it is hardly necessary to speak, for their proud position speaks for itself. Throughout the whole contest they have been running a neck and neck race, and both of them, as the French would say, have covered themselves with glory by such success in such a tournament as this. The only two previous European Chess Congresses in which Mr. Pillsbury has taken part were those of Nuremberg and Buda Pesth, in 1896. [Here the author errs surprisingly – Pillsbury was the winner of the powerful Hastings

1895 tournament. HWR] Curiously enough at Nuremberg he tied with Dr. Tarrasch for third and fourth prizes, and gained the third prize at Buda Pesth. He is a young man, and made his debut in America only a few years ago, in the inter-collegiate matches. The doctor is the hero of many a battle, the winner of two international tourneys, the equal of M. Tchigorin in a set match at St. Petersburg, the conqueror in a match with Walbrodt, &c., &c.; and the only wonder is how, with his professional engagements, he could keep himself in training for an international contest of this nature, in which he had to meet nearly all the best amateurs and professionals of the world. He has, however, been able to do so, and we congratulate him heartily on his splendid success. His play has been characterised always by unflinching soundness, together with constant patience, and a readiness to take advantage of any weak point in that of his opponent, so that he really deserves the position he has gained. The great Vienna Tourney has passed off without a hitch, and although we much regret the absence of Herr Lasker and poor Charousek, we still are of opinion that it has really been worthy of the great pains bestowed upon it, and the enormous amount of prizes which have been contributed.

The *Deutsche Schachzeitung* makes an interesting comparison between the two Vienna International Tourneys of 1882 and 1898. Of those who took part in the former only Blackburne, Steinitz, and Tchigorin contended in the latter. In 1882 Steinitz and Winawer tied for the two first prizes, and Blackburne won the 6th. No less than six of the 1882 competitors are now dead: Mackenzie and Zukertort (who were both prize winners), Englisch, L. Paulsen, Wittek, and Ware. In place of the living masters Winawer; Mason, Max Weiss, Dr. Meitner, Hruba, Bird, Dr. Noa, Fleissig, and Schwarz, who competed in 1882, sixteen new players entered the lists in 1898, most of whom in 1882 were quite unknown. In 1873 there was also an International Tourney at Vienna, in which Blackburne and Steinitz tied for highest honours, and then played a short deciding match, which Steinitz won... Messrs. Pillsbury and Tarrasch will play a match of four games to decide first and second prizes.

Interested readers may also read about this famous tournament in Tim Harding's "Kibitzer" column, [January 1998](#), available in the [ChessCafe Archives](#).



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