



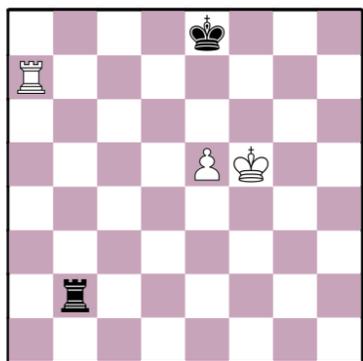
Born in St. Petersburg, Russia, in 1968, Alex Fishbein relocated to the United States in 1979. Mentored by Vladimir Zak, who previously coached Boris Spassky and Viktor Korchnoi, Fishbein swiftly built a strong chess foundation. By 14, he was a master, and he climbed the ranks to become an IM in 1988 and a GM in 1992 after an international victory in Norway. In 1985, Fishbein championed the first Denker Tournament of High School Champions, setting off a string of achievements at home and abroad. Even while pursuing a career in finance, he remained an active competitor into the 2000s, appearing in four U.S. Championships.

REVISITING ESSENTIAL PATTERNS IN ROOK ENDGAMES

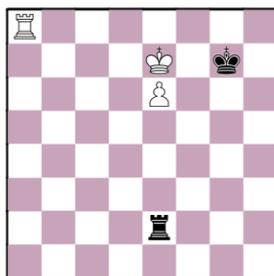
You Thought You Knew The Philidor Position?

Just as you regularly practice and refine your opening strategies, it's essential to frequently revisit and reinforce your grasp of fundamental endgame theory. After all, repetition is often heralded as the mother of all learning.

Philidor Position, 1777

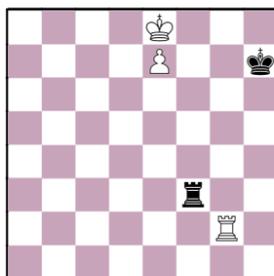


1.♔f6! ♖f2+ This was considered to be the only reasonable defense. After all, the other check, 1...♖b6+, loses quickly to 2.e6. Now Black can only try the first-rank (or “passive”) defense with 2...♖b8, but **passive defense only works against a knight pawn or a rook pawn**. Here, White has room on the other side for the rook, and after 3.♖h7 the game is over. **2.♔e6 ♔f8 3.♖a8+ ♔g7 4.♔e7 ♖e2** Black does not have enough checking room on the side, for example: 4...♖b2 5.e6 ♖b7+ 6.♔d6 ♖b6+ 7.♔d7 ♖b7+ 8.♔c6 ♖e7 9.♔d6 ♖b7 10.e7+- . If the white rook had been on b8, then 4...♖a2, with enough distance to check, would have drawn. **5.e6**

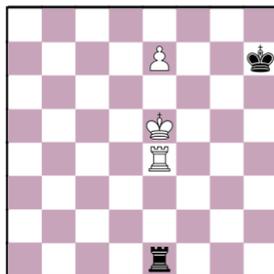


If the pawn reaches the sixth rank, the rook cannot successfully defend from behind. This usually ends up in something called the “Lucena position” (although it was first discussed more than 100 years after Lucena). White “builds a bridge” (there are other ways to win, but we want to show the bridge because with

a knight pawn, only the bridge wins): **5...♖e1 6.♖a2 ♖e3 7.♖g2+ ♔h7 8.♔f7 ♖f3+ 9.♔e8 ♖f1 10.e7 ♖f3**



11.♖g4 ♖f1 12.♔d7 ♖d1+ 13.♔e6 ♖e1+ 14.♔f6 ♖f1+ 15.♔e5 ♖e1+ 16.♖e4 winning.



If this was too simple for you, I ask you to stay patient. You will soon see that there are subtleties in these positions that even top-level GMs can miss.

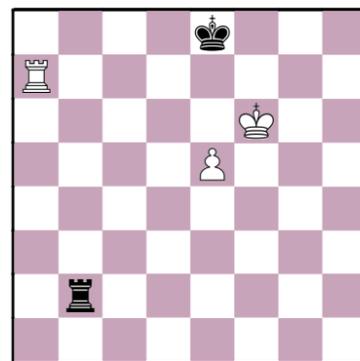
Let's go on a road trip back to the time when America was just one year old. At that time, the world's strongest player published an analysis of a rook ending which remains, to this day, the most important theoretical position. We will closely follow the explanation in *Dvoretsky's Endgame Manual*, 5th edition.

With Black to move, 1...♖b6 draws easily. If the white pawn moves (2.e6), then 2...♖b1 leaves the white king with **no refuge from checks from behind**. The best White can do is trade rooks with a simple draw in the pawn ending.

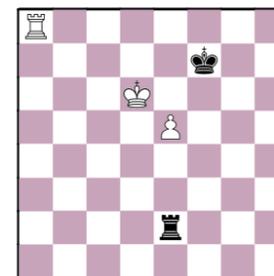
Francois-Andre Danican Philidor was, of course, a genius of chess. In addition to this endgame, he also studied ♖ vs. ♖, then ♖ vs. ♖+♔, and ♖+♔ vs. ♖ endings. He published flawless solutions that grandmasters find it hard to replicate even today. No one after Philidor was that far ahead of his contemporaries, both in theory and practical play.

But this simple-looking rook ending, with just five pieces on the board, left its deepest mysteries hidden from Philidor, and from everyone else, for a long time! For more than one hundred years, it was thought that with White to move, this position is a win.

Karstedt Method, 1897

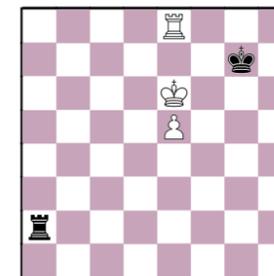


Here, after 1.♔f6, Black must play **1...♖e2!** and after **2.♔e6** (2.♖a8+ ♔d7 or 2.e6 ♖f2+ lead nowhere.) **2...♔f8 3.♖a8+ ♔g7 4.♔d6** Black has the key defense **4...♔f7!**



German endgame composer Max Karstedt (1868-1945) is credited with discovering that the Philidor position is also a draw with White to move.

♔e8 6.♔e6 ♔f8 7.♖a8+ ♔g7 returning to the position we already had. If White tries **8.♖e8**, then **8...♖a2!**



This ensures plenty of checking distance. Now White comes nowhere close with **9.♔d7 ♖a7+ 10.♔d6 ♖a6+ 11.♔c7 ♔f7**, and if instead **9.♖d8**, Black can just come back with **9...♖e2!**

This little bit of geometry works if the white pawn is still on the fifth rank. White has nothing better than **5.♖a7+**

This drawing method is so watertight that, as Mark Dvoretsky explains, Black can even take his king to the long side with **2...♔d8 3.♖a8+ ♔c7 4.♖e8 ♖h1!** But the long side is never recommended unless it is the only option. For example, it doesn't work against a bishop pawn.

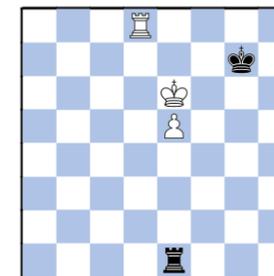
The Karstedt drawing method is basic and important. But Karstedt didn't become famous for it, and today many people refer to it as the “second defensive method” in the Philidor position. And, as it turns out, many more people haven't committed it to memory by any name.



GM Zoltan Almasi undoubtedly realized right away what he had done.

Our next example shows that even the greatest endgame players of all time are not immune to mistakes like this.

♔f8 68.♖h8+ ♔g7 69.♖d8!? A good try, as Black's best move is now... not to move!



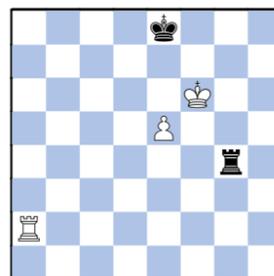
69...♖a1? Although this does not yet throw away the draw (as we mentioned, **four squares is enough checking distance**), we give this move a question mark as it makes it possible for White to create traps.

Black should sit with **69...♖e2!** and if **70.♔d6 ♔f7**. Only if the white rook goes to e8, should Black release the tension on the pawn with **...♖a1**.

70.♔e7 ♖a5 71.e6 ♖a7+ 72.♖d7 ♖a8 73.♖d6!

Pavel Tregubov	2614
Zoltan Almasi	2704

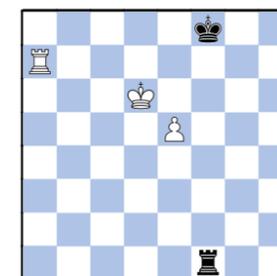
European Championship, Yerevan 2014



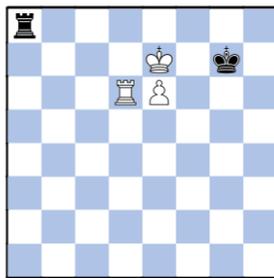
54...♖f4+? Uh oh! Wrong square. We already know that **54...♖e4!** draws easily. **55.♔e6 ♔f8 56.♖a8+ ♔g7 57.♔e7 Black resigned**

Levon Aronian	2741
Magnus Carlsen	2698

Tal Memorial, Moscow 2006



64...♖d1+ 64...♖e1 would immediately construct the Karstedt position, but the text is also good. **65.♔e6 ♖e1! 66.♖f7+ ♔e8 67.♖h7**



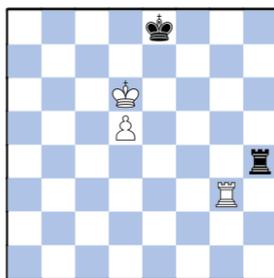
73...♖a7?? In time pressure, it is easy to make a mistake. 73...♖a1?? also loses to 74.♗e8 (if the white rook were on d7 here, 74...♗f6! 75.e7 ♗e6! would draw). The only move is 73...♗g6!=.

74.♗e8 **Black resigned**, as the white pawn can't be stopped after either 74...♗f6 75.e7+ or 74...♖a8+ 75.♖d8 and 76.e7. The future world champion was 15 years old at the time of this game.

I am showing you all these errors not because I want you to think "Hey, if Magnus messed this up, then I shouldn't be expected to learn any of this. And really, what do these so-called geniuses know?" That's the opposite of the right attitude. Yes, even the top players of the world are human, but you are much more human than they are, and you will make worse blunders and more of them if you don't learn these endings! That's especially true if you literally have seconds to play these positions, as is often the case at the end of a classical game.

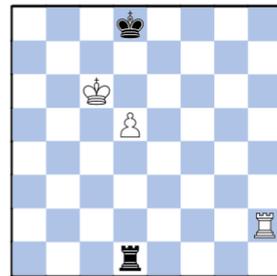
Zhu Chen 2480
Mark Taimanov 2455

Cancan Women-Veterans Match,
Roquebrune 1998

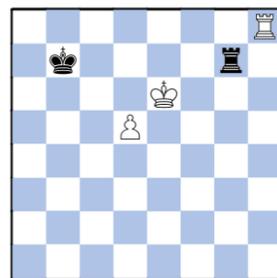


75...♖d4! Facing the future women's world champion, the 72-year-old Mark Taimanov digs out from his memory the Karstedt position. Instead, 75...♖h6+?? would lead to disaster after 76.♗c7. 76.♖g8+ ♗f7 77.♖d8 ♖a4! We see the second defensive method from the short side.

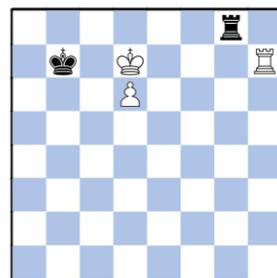
78.♖c8 ♖d4! 79.♖d8 ♖a4 80.♖b8 80.♗c7 achieves nothing: 80...♖a7+ 81.♗b6 ♖a1. 80...♖d4! 81.♖c8 ♖d1 82.♖c2 ♗e8! Another only move. Black cannot allow his king to get cut off with ♖e2. 83.♗c6 ♗e7 84.♖e2+ ♗d8 85.♖h2



85...♖c1+? A senior moment! After demonstrating the correct defense, Taimanov makes the error we are already familiar with, and it is fatal with the white rook on the h-file. He needed to just sit with 85...♖d3. 86.♗d6 ♗c8 87.♖h8+ ♗b7 88.♗d7 ♖c7+ 89.♗e6 ♖g7



90.♖e8? These mistakes can only be explained by time trouble. Simply 90.d6 wins. 90...♖g5? 90...♖g6+! 91.♗d7 ♖h6! draws: the rook distance is long enough. 91.d6 ♖g6+ 92.♗d7? 92.♗e7! wins. 92...♖g1? 92...♖h6!= 93.♖e7? 93.♗e7 is again an easy win, but she allows her opponent one more chance... 93...♖g8? 93...♖h1!= is still good for a draw. 94.♖h7



94...♖f8 Black chooses a less stubborn

response than 94...♗b6, after which White wins with 95.♖h1 ♖g7+ 96.♗e6 ♖g6+ 97.♗e7 ♖g7+ 98.♗f6 ♖g2 99.♖d1!

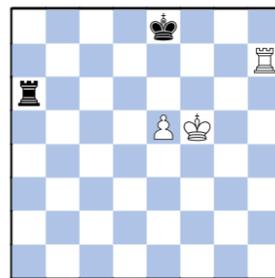
Note that this method would not work if the black king were on b7, as ...♗c8 would stop the pawn. Therefore, White to move in the last diagram would have to create a zugzwang with 1.♗e6+! ♗c6 2.♗e7! ♗b7 3.♗d7! Mark Dvoretzky, in the aforementioned DEM, covers this position very well. 95.♗e7 ♖f1 96.d7 ♖e1+ 97.♗d8 ♗c6 98.♗c8 **Black resigned**

As you see, when you step down a couple notches from 2700, mistakes are right there, just waiting to be made. I had no trouble finding examples of good players failing to execute what looks like a simple Karstedt draw. My bigger problem was deciding which "tragicomedies" to present here.

Now, we started with the actual Philidor position, where the defending rook could occupy the third rank. It's very rare to see masters (or higher) lose that position in classical games, but it happens too:

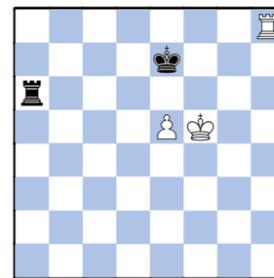
Aleksandr Lenderman 2614
Oleg Gladyshev 2446

Chigorin Memorial, St Petersburg 2012

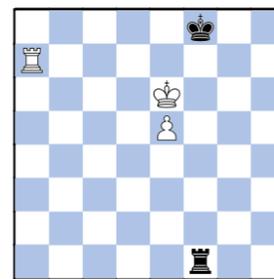


We are late in the game, but the increment here was 30 seconds. That should be enough. 95...♖b6 96.♖c7 ♖a6 All good so far. 97.♖b7 ♗f8 This I already don't like. The king should be directly in front of the pawn whenever possible. Otherwise, White could try to disrupt the defense with ♖d7-d6. Alex Lenderman does not try it here, probably assuming his opponent might get the hint and play 98...♗e8 after 98.♖d7. But Black should be confidently demonstrating the drawing method (rook moving along the third rank), and not confuse the matter with the king. Lenderman slowly concludes that it makes sense to play on for a bit. 98.♖h7 ♗e8 99.♖c7 ♗f8 100.♗e4 ♗e8 101.♗d4 ♖a4+ 102.♗d5 ♖a5+

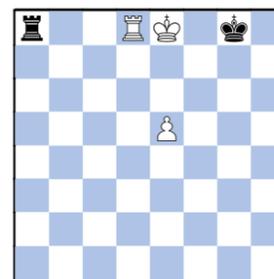
103.♗e6 ♖a6+ 104.♗f5 ♗f8 105.♖d7 ♗e8 Seems like he got the hint, right? 106.♖d5 ♗e7 107.♖b5 ♗e8 108.♖b8+ ♗e7 109.♖h8



109...♖a1? What?? 109...♖b6 maintains the Philidor position. I guess when the clock is running down, even strong players sometimes find it hard to just "sit." 110.♖h7+ ♗e8 111.♗f6! ♖f1+? Black misses his chance for the Karstedt position with 111...♖e1. 112.♗e6 ♗f8 But all is not lost! 113.♖a7



113...♖b1?! Again 113...♖e1 is the Karstedt method, but the game continuation still holds. 114.♖a8+ ♗g7 115.♖e8 ♖a1 On the right track! 116.♖d8 ♖a6+? Not a fatal error! How many times can you go wrong and still not lose? We already know the best move: 116...♖e1. 117.♗e7 ♖a7+ 118.♖d7 ♖a6 118...♖a8 is safer. 119.♗e8+! ♗g8 120.♖d6! As we saw in Aronian-Carlsen, a rook on d6 can be tricky for Black. 120...♖a8+! 121.♖d8!



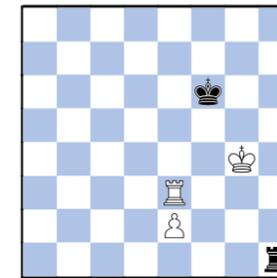
121...♖a7?? 121...♖a6! draws: 122.♗e7+ ♗g7 123.e6 ♖a7+ 124.♖d7 ♖a8 122.e6 **Black resigned**

Once the pawn gets to e7, there is no hope for Black.

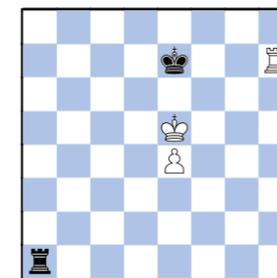
As you can see, there were three lines of defense: the third-rank Philidor, the Karstedt, and then the side checks. In the previous examples, Black had only two or one of these available. But I found one more ending where the defender bungled all three. I like this one because the winner, Tony Kosten, actually tried to trick his opponent's rook away from the third rank - and succeeded!

Anthony Kosten 2507
Gerhard Schroll 2404

Austrian Team Championship 2004



You gotta love the fact that the grandmaster is not yet ready to call it a draw. 62...♖a1 63.♗f4 ♖a4+ 64.♖e4 Maybe Black will trade rooks?? 64...♖a2 65.♖e5 ♖a4+ 66.♖e4 ♖a2 67.♗f3 The opponent might start getting annoyed here. 67...♖a3+ 68.e3 ♗f5 69.♖h4 ♖a1 70.♖h5+ ♗g6 71.♖b5 ♗f6 72.♗f4 ♖f1+ 73.♗e4 ♖a1 74.♖b6+ ♗e7 75.♖h6 ♖a4+ 76.♗e5 ♖a5+ 77.♗f4 ♖a4+ 78.e4 White has occupied Black's third rank. So Black should slide the Philidor position up to the fourth rank, with 78...♖a5! 78...♖a1?! 79.♗f5 ♖f1+ 80.♗e5 ♖a1 81.♖h7+

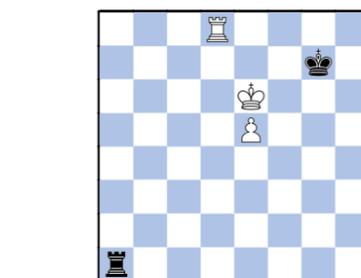


81...♗f8? Noooooo! You should go straight back, or else the white rook can

start interposing. 82.♖d7! ♗e8 Black doesn't have the straight Philidor anymore, although, of course, 82...♖a6 83.♖d6 ♖a7 84.♗e6 ♖e7+ 85.♗d5 ♖a7 is an easy draw. But at the end of the time control, you want to play positions that you know by heart!

83.♗e6! ♖a6+ 84.♖d6 ♖a4 85.e5 ♖a1 85...♖a8?? would be terrible: 86.♖b6 ♗f8 87.♗f6 ♗e8 88.e6 ♗f8 89.♖b7 ♗g8 90.♖g7+ ♗h8 91.♖g3, etc. Passive defense works against a knight pawn, not the bishop or central pawn.

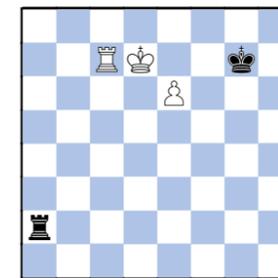
But it was a good time to use the second defensive method: 85...♖e4 86.♖b6 ♗f8=.



88...♖a6+? Missing the last chance for the Karstedt draw with 88...♖e1 89.♖d5 ♗f8!, etc.

89.♗e7 ♖a5 90.e6 ♖a7+ 91.♖d7 ♖a1 92.♖c7 ♖a2 The black rook is for some reason avoiding the eighth rank, which is usually the safest place for it, once it's on the side.

93.♗d7!



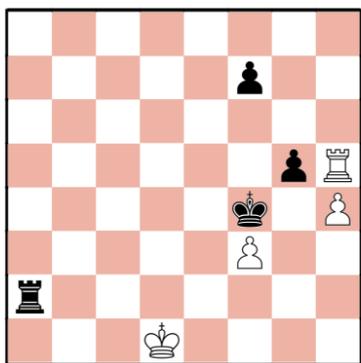
93...♖d2+?? Black has reached the stage of despair. 93...♖a8! still holds.

94.♗e8+ ♗g8 95.e7 ♗g7 96.♖c4 ♖a2 97.♖g4+ and we have the Lucena position.

Black resigned



E. Sutovsky 2018



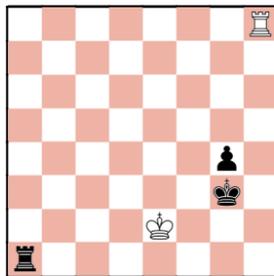
be anything other than a dead draw? But let's think about those three lines of defense and see if they apply here, when you're fighting against a knight pawn.

1. The Philidor third-rank defense. Well, here, the black rook is there. And the white rook is so misplaced that it can't access the next best rank: 50.♖h2 loses to the trade of rooks, as does 50.♖h1.

2. The Karstedt method doesn't apply to the g-pawn because the king can't slide away to the short side (there is no short side), and going to the long side leaves the rook no place to check from.

3. Side checks also don't work against the g-pawn: there is no short side.

Indeed, the knight pawn is in some ways the most dangerous: the only defense, other than the third-rank defense, is the passive defense on the first rank. Here, the white rook is offside, and neither defense is feasible. If you move the pawns one file to the left, it's an easy draw because the king escapes through the h-file. But here, White loses.
50.♖h8 ♖a2+ 51.♔g1 ♔g3 The rook needs two moves to get to either the third or first rank.
52.♔f1 This is where you can't go to h1 and then to "i2," and there is also no 52.♖f8 ♖a1+ 53.♖f1 ♖xf1+ 54.♔xf1 ♔h2+.
52...♖a1+ 53.♔e2 g4 and the Lucena position is unavoidable.



Let's show the bridge again:
54.♖g8 ♖g1 55.♖g7 ♔h2 56.♖h7+ ♔g2 57.♖g7 g3 58.♖h7 ♖a1 59.♖h6 ♖a5 60.♖h8 ♖e5+ 61.♔d2 ♔g1 62.♖g8 g2 63.♖h8 ♔f2 64.♖f8+ ♔g3 65.♖g8+ ♔f3 66.♖f8+ 66.♖g7 ♖e4! 66...♔g4 67.♖g8+ ♖g5-+

How much undiscovered beauty is there in seemingly simple endgames?

I recommend refreshing this "basic" endgame theory regularly. If people starting with Philidor and all the way to Magnus Carlsen made mistakes here, it's not so basic after all.

Although we mostly focused on the Philidor position here (the third-rank defense and the Karstedt method), our journey also took us on some turns. We encountered some surprises (I suspect, even for many GMs):

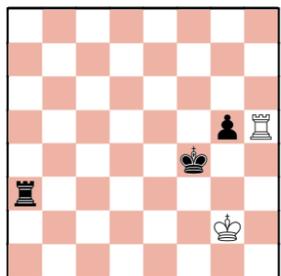
1. White can set some dangerous traps against the side check defense (for example, with ♔d6!). With no time on the clock, the defender has to know it cold.
2. If the black rook is behind the central pawn on the fifth rank, the defending king can even go to the long side.
3. The defender can lose with a king in front of the knight pawn, even if it hasn't reached the fifth rank.

I hope I have convinced you that these endings are not just practically useful but also, and more importantly, fascinating.

After this kaleidoscope of howlers, I want to finish with the most surprising (♖+♔) vs. ♖ position that I can recall seeing. GM Emil Sutovsky published a detailed analysis of this ending, from the game Vaissier-Martinovic (Vrnjacka Banja 1984), in the article "Illusion of Simplicity" (ChessPro.ru, June 2018).

I will give only the main line.

45...f6!! The game instead continued 45...gxh4? 46.♖xh4+ ♔xf3 47.♖h5 ♔g4 48.♖b5 f5 49.♔e1 ♖a3 50.♔f2 f4 51.♖b2 ♖h3 52.♖b8 ♖h2+ 53.♔g1 ♖a2 54.♖b3 and we have a Philidor position. The draw was soon agreed.
46.hxg5 fxg5 47.♔e1 ♖a3! 48.♔f2 ♖xf3+ 49.♔g2 ♖a3



Wait a minute! The white king is in front of the pawn, and that pawn is not even on its fifth rank yet. How can this

ALEKHINE'S NEW JERSEY VICTORY

The Lost Supertournament of 1929

By Thomas Shupe

In 1928, an eager chess enthusiast by the name of Victor Spark, made his family's hotels available to the chess world and successfully organized a couple of significant chess events. However, his ambitions increased further and resulted in an international tournament in 1929, featuring the reigning world champion Alexander Alekhine along with the best U.S. masters of the time.



▲ Alexander Alekhine, Fourth World Chess Champion

By the 1920s, Bradley Beach, NJ, had become a very popular resort town and attracted thousands of visitors from New York City and surrounding areas. This included Victor D. Spark, a chess enthusiast and member of the Manhattan Chess Club ("MCC"). A native of Brooklyn, Spark was a veteran of World War I. He served in the 6th Marine Regiment, which fought valiantly in France as part of the U.S. 2nd Division, American Expeditionary Force. After the war, Spark went to work for his father, Ned, who owned two hotels in Bradley Beach – Hotel La Reine and the Bradley Hotel. Construction of Hotel La Reine and the adjoining Bradley Hotel was completed in 1900 and 1928, respectively.

Spark and MCC played an instrumental role in Bradley Beach's foray into chess. In September 1928, Hotel La Reine hosted the 2nd Annual Congress of the National Chess Federation (predecessor to US Chess). Spark organized Bradley Beach 1928 and most of the tournament participants were also MCC members, including: Dr. Norbert Lederer (tournament director), Edward Lasker, I.A. Horowitz, Oscar Tenner, and eventual tournament winner, Abraham Kupchik.

A DREAM DATE SWIPES LEFT

Shortly after Bradley Beach 1928, former World Champion Emanuel Lasker accepted an invitation from Spark to visit Bradley Beach and stay at his family's hotel. Lasker's stay at Hotel La Reine was part pleasure, but mostly business. At the time, Spark was seeking to solidify Bradley Beach's rapid rise to prominence in the chess world. He was in the midst of negotiations to host at Hotel La Reine a rematch between World Champion Alexander Alekhine and Jose Raul Capablanca, who surprisingly lost the 1927 World Chess Championship in Buenos Aires. As evidenced by his visit, it appears that Lasker was serving as mediator between the three parties to organize the match. Alas, Alekhine eventually declined and instead agreed to a match with Efim Bogoljubov. Lasker went on to serve as an arbiter during this match, which confirms

the active role he played in organizing the 1929 World Chess Championship. However, Spark's efforts were likely in vain, as Alekhine blatantly avoided playing Capablanca for the rest of his chess career.

ALEKHINE'S ODYSSEY

After upsetting Capablanca for the title in 1927, Alekhine embarked on a two-year worldwide simultaneous exhibition tour, which brought him to New York City in March 1929. After being the guest of honor at a dinner held by the University Club, Alekhine kicked off his American tour with a series of exhibitions produced by MCC. First, he played a forty-board simultaneous exhibition at MCC's headquarters in Hotel Sherman Square. Next, he played ten hand-picked opponents blindfolded. Finally, he played a three-board consultation match, where teams of MCC members put their



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