

The Immortal Games of Capablanca

Fred Reinfeld

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by Fred Reinfeld

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Efim Bogoljubow

It is more customary to continue with 8... $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 9. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ c5 as for example in game 40. However Black has a new continuation in mind.

9.d4

As Black is now able to secure a good game, it subsequently became customary to preface the advance of the d-pawn with h3, preventing the annoying ... $\mathbb{Q}g4$.

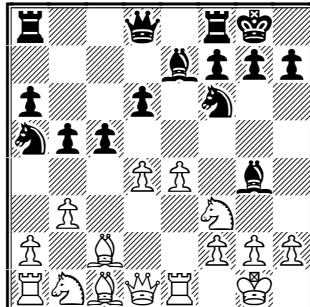
9...exd4

More exact is 9... $\mathbb{Q}g4$ 10. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ exd4 11.cxd4 $\mathbb{Q}a5$ leading into the text continuation.

10.c×d4 $\mathbb{Q}g4$

The inexactitude of Black's opening play could now be demonstrated by 11. $\mathbb{Q}c3!$ (the early exchange of pawns has made this effective development possible) as played by Lasker against the same opponent a year later at Maehrisch-

11. $\mathbb{Q}e3$ $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 12. $\mathbb{Q}c2$ $\mathbb{Q}c4$ 13. $\mathbb{Q}c1$ c5 14.b3 $\mathbb{Q}a5$



White's losses of time have been more apparent than real, as Black's a5-knight has also lost time. But it cannot be denied that Black has obtained a satisfactory position.

15. $\mathbb{Q}b2$ $\mathbb{Q}c6$ 16.d5 $\mathbb{Q}b4$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}bd2$ $\mathbb{Q}xc2$

It is indicative of the tense character of the coming struggle that this exchange is advantageous for both (!) players: It rids Black of the useless knight, while it removes White's c2-bishop, which could have little value while hemmed in by White pawns. Furthermore, Black's queenside majority of pawns is compensated by White's preponderance in the center. Finally, Black has two bishops, but his best course is to exchange one or both of them!

18. $\mathbb{Q}xc2$ $\mathbb{Q}e8$ 19. $\mathbb{Q}d3$

In order to play $\mathbb{Q}f1$, but Capablanca now considers that 19.a4 at once would have been more exact (see Black's 24th move). Black likewise would have continued more effectively by playing ... $\mathbb{Q}d7$ immediately.

19...h6 20. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}d7$ 21.h3 $\mathbb{Q}h5?!$

This must not be condemned too harshly, since Black ultimately comes

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within an ace of winning the game, but the notion of allowing this bishop to be penned in permanently is highly uneconomical play. Simply 21... $\mathbb{Q}xf3$ 22. $\mathbb{W}xf3$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$ was better.

22. $\mathbb{Q}3d2!$ $\mathbb{Q}f6$

The indicated procedure, but meanwhile he has lost his opportunity to exchange the h5-bishop, which will soon be imprisoned.

23. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $\mathbb{W}xf6$ 24.a4 c4!

A fighting move, whereby Black scores a strong trump in the form of a passed a-pawn. In addition, he will have a fine square for his knight on c5, as well as the b-file as the basis for future operations. All told, a promising speculation, and White must do his very best if he is to avoid getting the inferior game.

25.bxc4 $\mathbb{Q}c5$ 26. $\mathbb{W}e3$ bxa4 27.f4

Now White's counterplay sets in.

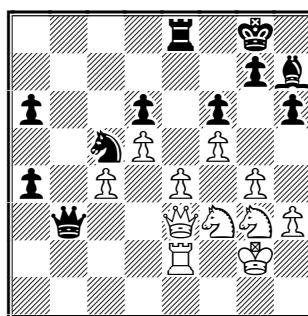
27... $\mathbb{W}e7$ 28.g4 $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 29.f5 $\mathbb{Q}h7$

White's pawn formation is not a thing of beauty, but he has achieved his object: Black's bishop is out of play for the balance of the game.

**30. $\mathbb{Q}g3$ $\mathbb{W}e5$ 31. $\mathbb{Q}g2$ $\mathbb{B}ab8$
32. $\mathbb{B}ab1$ f6**

This move will be needed eventually as part of an attempt to free the bishop. But the immediate 32... $\mathbb{B}b2$ was more to the point. If then 33. $\mathbb{B}xb2$ $\mathbb{W}xb2$ 34. $\mathbb{B}b1$ $\mathbb{W}c2$ 35. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{Q}b3$ with strong pressure. The inaccurate text allows White to improve his position.

**33. $\mathbb{Q}f3$ $\mathbb{B}b2+$ 34. $\mathbb{B}xb2$ $\mathbb{W}xb2+$
35. $\mathbb{Q}e2!$ $\mathbb{W}b3$**



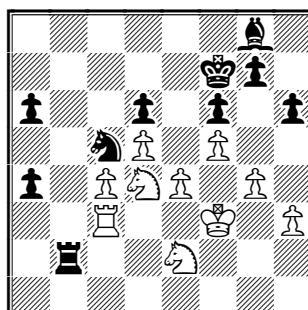
36. $\mathbb{Q}d4!$

A fine positional sacrifice which cannot be accepted. The ending which follows is extremely exciting because of the dangerous a-pawn.

36... $\mathbb{W}xe3$

On 36... $\mathbb{W}xc4$ there would have followed 37. $\mathbb{Q}e6!$ (not 37. $\mathbb{B}b2$ $\mathbb{W}xd5!$) 38. $\mathbb{Q}e6$ $\mathbb{B}xe6!$ with a fine game.) 37... $\mathbb{B}b8$ 38. $\mathbb{Q}xc5$ $d\times c5$ 39. $\mathbb{B}d2$ $\mathbb{B}b3$ 40. $\mathbb{W}f2$ and the passed d-pawn should win quickly (Tartakower). The helplessness of the bishop is a decisive factor here.

37. $\mathbb{B}xe3$ $\mathbb{B}b8$ 38. $\mathbb{B}c3$ $\mathbb{W}f7$ 39. $\mathbb{B}f3$ $\mathbb{B}b2$ 40. $\mathbb{Q}ge2$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$



41.♘e6! ♘b3

If 41...♘xe6 42.dxe6+ with an easy win, or 41...♘xe4 42.♗xe4 ♜xe2+ 43.♕d4 ♜d2+ 44.♗d3 and wins. **S14:** 44...♗xd3+ 45.♗xd3 ♜h7=.

42.c5!

At last White's pawns come to life. The remaining play is a race between White's d-pawn and Black's a-pawn.

42...dxc5 43.♘xc5 ♘d2+ 44.♗f2

If 44.♗e3? a3!

44...♗e7

Tartakower recommends as Black's last drawing resource 44...♗b1 45.♗c4 (45.♘xa4 ♘xc3, etc.) 45...a3 46.♗e6! ♗e7! (if 46...a2? 47.d6!!) 47.♗c7+ ♘d6 48.♗c6+ ♗e7 and Black can hold the position.

45.♗e1 ♘b1 46.♗d3 a3

After this Capablanca finishes off the game with a well-timed series of forcing moves. Tartakower's 46...♗d6 47.♘xa4 ♘b4 48.♘ac3 ♘xc3 49.♘xc3 ♘f7 50.♗d2 g6 still holds out some hope.

47.d6+ ♘d8 48.♘d4! ♜b6

Forced by the threat of ♘c6+, etc.

49.♘de6+! ♜xe6 50.f×e6 ♜b8

All forced.

51.e7+ ♗e8 52.♘xa6! Resigns. If 52...a2 53.♘xb8 a1♗ 54.d7+ and mate follows, or 52...♗b7 53.♘c7+, etc. A superb struggle.

(46) Atkins – Capablanca

Caro-Kann Defense [B12]

London, 1922

This seems to be the first occasion on which Capablanca adopted the defense which later became so great a favorite with him. The game is quite unpretentious, but it shows the stuff of which a world champion is made.

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.e5

Inferior, as will be seen. 3.exd5 cxd5 4.c4 has been the fashionable continuation for some time. Regarding the opening, see also game 64.

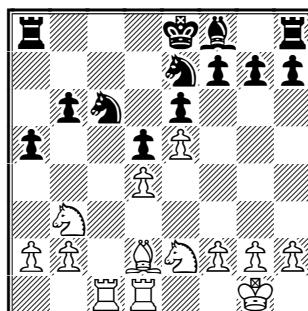
**3...♘f5 4.♘d3 ♘×d3 5.♗×d3 e6
6.♘e2 ♘b6 7.0-0 ♘a6**

Capablanca steers for the ending because his opponent is weak on the white squares and his bishop is hemmed in by his own pawns.

**8.♗d1 c5 9.c3 ♘c6 10.♘d2 c×d4
11.c×d4 ♘d3!**

Achieving his object.

**12.♘b3 ♘×d1 13.♗×d1 ♘ge7
14.♘d2 a5 15.♗ac1 b6!**



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The two pawn moves have greatly limited the scope of White's knights. The following play centers about a struggle for control of the c-file.

16.a4

Unavoidable in the long run, but now White has two weak points (b4 and c4) as well as two weak pawns (the a- and d-pawns).

16...♝d7 17.♞c3 ♚a7 18.♝f1 ♜ec6 19.♝e2 ♜c8 20.♝e1

Note how this bishop is helpless throughout the game.

20...♝e7 21.♞b1 f5 22.e×f6

Exposing the d-pawn to a direct frontal attack, but Atkins must have hoped to be able to get his bishop into more effective play.

22...♝×f6 23.♞c3 ♜b4 24.♝d2

A difficult moment for White. Exchanging would rid him of the feeble bishop, but his pieces would no longer have access to c3 and his a-pawn would be exposed to attack.

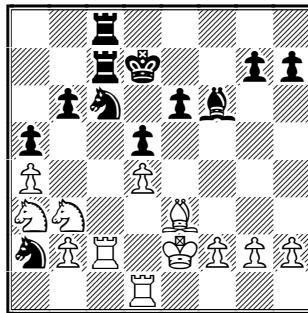
24...♜ac6 25.♝e3 ♜a2!

An important move which enables Black to control the c-file.

26.♝c2 ♜c7 27.♞a3 ♜hc8! (D)

28.♝cd2

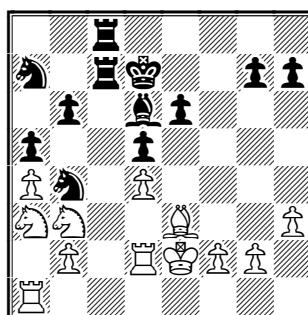
Positively deceptive. The seemingly strong reply 28.♝b5? is refuted by 28...♝xd4+!



28...♜a7 29.♝d3 ♜b4 30.♝3d2 ♜c6 31.♝b1 ♜e7!

Planning the elimination of White's a3-knight so as to be able to penetrate at c2.

32.♝a1 ♜d6 33.h3 ♜6c7



34.♝ad1

If the rook remains at a1, Black gains his object by 34...♜bc6 35.♞c2 ♜e7, etc.

34...♜a2! 35.♝a1 ♜×a3 36.♝×a2 ♜b4 37.♝d1 ♜c4 38.♝c1 ♜c6!

Threatening ...♝×d4+ once more and thus virtually forcing White's reply, which gives Black access to the vital d5-square.