

The ARCHITECTS of MODERN CHESS

From Steinitz to Kasparov

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Milos Pavlovic

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Key to Symbols

!	a good move	±	White has a serious advantage
?	a weak move	∓	Black has a serious advantage
!!	an excellent move	+−	White has a decisive advantage
??	a blunder	−+	Black has a decisive advantage
!?	an interesting move	→	with an attack
?!	a dubious move	↑	with initiative
□	only move	↔	with counterplay
=	equality	Δ	with the idea of
∞	unclear position	⊃	better is
≡	with compensation for the sacrificed material	N	novelty
±	White stands slightly better	+	check
∓	Black stands slightly better	#	mate

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Introduction

I have always loved chess history. I went to a chess school run by the Yugoslav master, Vladimir Sokolov, and he ingrained in us that one of the most important things is to analyze the games and learn the biographies of the World Champions and other extraordinarily strong players of the past. It was widely accepted that learning chess from their games is a first step in learning to play chess in the right way. That is what we call classical chess, and I think it is equally as important today as it was then. The question is: will it remain of such importance in years to come with Artificial Intelligence? The answer to that is... I don't know!

I have separated this book into three parts: the first part is this Introduction, which serves as a general and traditional introduction to the book; the second part is a biography of each World Champion, from Steinitz to Kasparov as the title states; and finally, we have 40 selected games. For this third part, the choice of games was made with a couple of ideas in mind: I tried to comment on games that are lesser-known, or at least less commented on, because I wanted to bring something new to the table. I must admit that today it is almost impossible to reach such goals: due to the Internet, apps, and such-like there is truly little that has not been commented on. Another reason for choosing those games is my personal preference, for several reasons, such as the impact they had on my own chess, for instance. Also, an important thing for readers to note is that I give inside some games even more games, as an overview of that time – but only games from that period or from the same player. I purposely did not compare them to modern chess theory, which would be pointless in my opinion – I only compared them to their time.

I will use this Introduction to mention some other things besides that of World Champions. It is important to talk about other players as well – and there are a lot of them. It is interesting that chess in the 19th century was widespread and Europe and U.S are among places where we have majority of events. When you see lives of those players, they traveled everywhere to play chess. I have no idea how Steinitz and Chigorin ended up in Havana to play their match. It is fascinating how they even travelled those distances at that time. It must have taken them so much time just to reach certain places. In one book about Morphy, who is considered the first unofficial World Champion, when he came back to the US from Europe his results received big publicity but that only applied to northern part of US. In his home in the south, chess was not seen equally. In the 19th century we also had a plethora of fantastic players, such as Pillsbury, Blackburne, and Alapin,

who all made a serious impact on chess in that time, but they never won a title. For instance, Pillsbury won the prestigious (even to this day) Hastings event in 1895, which was seen as a huge surprise as he finished ahead of Steinitz, Lasker, Tarrasch and others.

Another, lesser-known perhaps but remarkable tournament, perhaps the biggest ever if you look at it from the strength of the players, was Saint Petersburg 1895-96. In addition, we can cite that such a brilliant player as Rubinstein never got a chance to play a world title match, though he etched his name in chess history, nevertheless. We all think that theory starts with modern chess, but this is not true. Entire concepts were created long time ago, even longer than I could understand, until recently. When I was drafting a book on the Petroff Defence I came to understand that the basic position that is played today was played by Morphy as well!

This book ends with Kasparov for a reason: with him we can say that it is the end of Classical chess as we know it. Perhaps some will disagree, but all the players I cover used their inner strength, natural gifts and leaned on their own ability to create chess, whereas after Kasparov we have chess engines and tools that help players to develop faster, or simply to adopt knowledge created by A.I. The Kasparov match with IBM's Deep Blue is so important. I don't think players fully realized it then (though perhaps Kasparov himself did!?) but now we can see just how far things have gone. We are now in the Modern era of chess, and although there is still a connection between Classical and Modern, as I said at the beginning, it is a question: for how long? The appearance of A.I is something that may dramatically change chess as a game. The speed with which humans adopt technical progress seems much faster than our critical thinking. Due to the involvement of chess engines, for a long time now players have been watching such progress first-hand, so to speak.

What is interesting is that, while analyzing the selected games for this book, I noticed that every new champion – little-by-little – developed chess in a positive way, bringing new concepts or improving on existing ones. For example, Lasker was a better version of Steinitz, and Alekhine managed to surpass (at least in their match) Capablanca with his own style. Fischer had to be better than Spassky in the universal style that was Spassky's trademark, and so on...

I am not a historian, so I didn't want to go into deeper historic details or possible speculations on the many controversies that chess has witnessed. This book

is about having a broader picture of Classical chess, with attractive games, interesting biographies of the players, and to give a sense of the time in which the players lived.

Another important aspect to look at in those older times is that Steinitz, for example, revolutionized chess: he was World Champion, true, but one doesn't always go with the other. For instance, players such as Nimzowitsch and Tarrasch also gave fantastic new ideas in written form and their ideas still live on, fighters such as Korchnoi and Keres as well, or the fantastic Reuben Fine, though they never won a title. To win the ultimate title is connected also to other important aspects: better concentration, better sporting aspects in general, and the many obstacles one has to overcome. Playing a match is one of the most difficult tasks in chess, especially those matches played either to 6 or 10 wins, or 24 games in total. In any case, to win such chess match served as a fantastic example of human endurance and knowledge.

I sincerely hope that readers will enjoy this trip into the past (and near-past) of chess, and learn from history and all those valuable players, who are, after all, the founders of chess.

Biographies

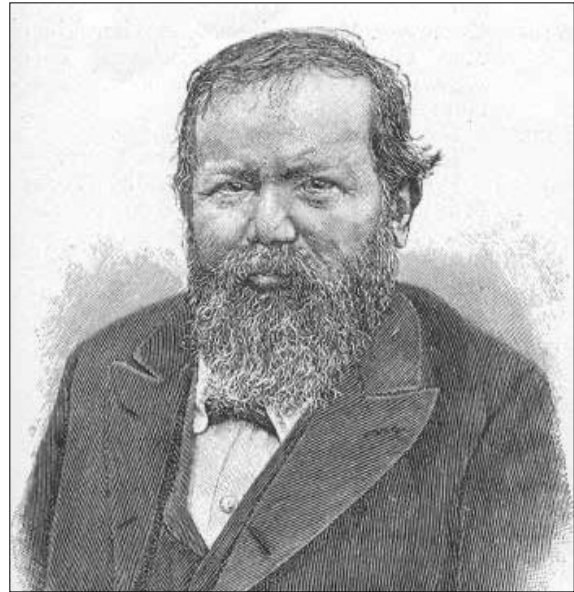
1. World Champion

Wilhelm STEINITZ

Wilhelm Steinitz was born on May 14, 1836, in Prague, which was then part of the Kingdom of Bohemia within the Austrian Empire.

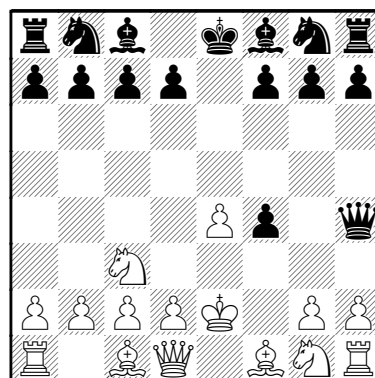
He studied mathematics at the Vienna Polytechnic but left to pursue chess full-time.

He had a rapid rise in the Vienna chess scene during the late 1850s but moved to London in 1862 after competing in his first international tournament.



Wilhelm Steinitz

He became known for his aggressive attacking style, later revolutionizing chess with a positional approach introduced in 1873. Before I continue with his biography, let's have a look at his typical approach:



After the opening moves 1.e4 e5 2.f4 exf4 3.Nc3!? 4.Kh4 5.Kf2 Steinitz's innovation! He believed the king to be an extraordinarily strong piece in the center, even in the opening. It is from him that modern chess accepted that, after castling for instance, the pawns in front of the king are strongest if not moved, especially