

Titles, Endgames and Endings:

*A response to Richard James' review of my new book
Chess Rivals of the 19th Century*

By Tony Cullen

*Richard James kindly reviewed my book *Chess Rivals of the 19th Century*. There is plenty of praise mixed with a healthy dose of criticism, which authors must accept. But I do think several of his criticisms are unwarranted. Let me deal with some of the points that he brings up in his review, starting with my placing finishes with multiple pieces on the board under the heading of "Endings."*

"The one feature which somewhat confused me was the 'endings' at the end of most chapters. Many of them are indeed endgames, and fascinating they are as well, but some of them are game finishes with plenty of pieces still on the board, while a few serve as a basis for anecdotes."

*When a writer wants to include a finish with multiple pieces on the board it is perfectly okay to enter it under "Endings." I believe that Edgar Cordingley around 1950 wrote in his *Chess Students Quarterly* that the word "Ending" means the final moves concluding the game irrespective of whether these are in the opening, middlegame or endgame. But "Endgame" means an actual endgame (e.g., king and pawn). Like many writers, I have not worried about the distinction between the two terms.*

*In Freeborough's, *Chess Endings*, 1891, pp. 10-11 we read that the author chose to limit his choice of endings to those with no more than two pieces on either side with or without pawns. "We admit, however, as exceptions, some positions with more pieces on the board, in which the force of a winning or drawing combination can be shown to greater advantage than when the board is clear.*

"Brilliant and Instructive"

ENDGAMES

S. Tarrasch - M. I. Chigorin

Match: St. Petersburg, 1893

(From *The Chess Amateur*, January 1909, p.114.)



The diagram in *The Chess Amateur* (flipped here for convenience) has the pawn on c7 incorrectly placed on d7. 36...Bxf3 37.gxf3 h2+! 38.Kg2 Ne3+ 39.Kh1 Qc6 40.Ne4 Ng4! 41.Kg2 Nxf2 42.Nxf2 Qc5 White resigns. If 43.Qf1 h1Q+, etc.

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“Brilliant and Instructive”

ENDGAMES

I. Kolisch - A. Anderssen

Friendly Match 1860

(From *The Chess Amateur*, Aug. 1908, p. 339.)



10...g5 11.Qd1 Qd7 12.b4 Bb6 13.Bb2 d3 14.Qxd3 Ne5 15.Qe2 The game ended 15...Qh3 16.Nd2 g4 and White resigned.

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The next example is taken from *Instructive Positions from Master Chess* by J. Mieses, 1951 (first published 1938).

“From the End- Game”

Dr. Euwe (to move)



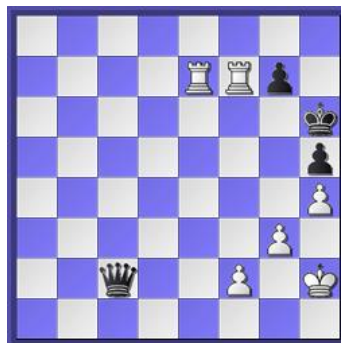
Botvinnik

This multiple-piece ending is from the World Championship Tournament 1948, and was won by Botvinnik sixteen moves later!

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From *Chess Rivals of the 19th Century*: “Researching Louis Paulsen’s games, this ending was found in which his brother was brilliantly swindled. White cannot capture on g7, as Black would draw by ...Qxf2+. But with his next move Black sets a devilish trap for his opponent.”

Wilfred Paulsen - M. Bier Hamburg 1885



"43...Qc3! Black appears to have blundered by lifting the threat against White's f2-pawn in a futile attempt to protect his g-pawn." 44.Rxg7?? Qxg3+! and a draw was agreed. Not many pieces here, I admit, and not many moves either. 44.Re6+ Kh7 45.Rf5 was an easy win. The queen versus two rooks ending began on move 30, and I simply truncated it to the amusing finish.

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What's in a name?

I wrote in *Chess Rivals of the 19th Century*: "Steinitz and Anderssen went into their London match of 1866 quite unaware that they were effectively playing for the vacant world title." I then go on to claim there is a consensus among historians that Steinitz's lengthy reign as world champion really began with his match victory over Anderssen in 1866. That assertion has been questioned by Richard James. However, if I am wrong, most importantly in my claim that Steinitz became the unofficial world champion in 1866, then I am in good company with such esteemed personages as Golombek and Kasparov:

Golombek's Encyclopedia of Chess (1977), p.51 "World Champion 1866-1894. Steinitz was the first official chess champion of the world..." Of course, he was not the official world champion until 1886 when he and Zukertort battled for the crown and Steinitz won.

Hooper & Whyld, The Oxford Companion to Chess, (1984) p. 330: "At London 1872 he (Steinitz) won first prize (+7=1) ahead of Blackburne and Zukertort; and in Sept. 1872 he decisively beat Zukertort in match play (+7=4-1). At this time Löwenthal wrote: 'Mr Steinitz may be fairly regarded as the present occupant of the exceptional position formerly held by Mr Morphy,' and Burn wrote that Steinitz was 'now probably the strongest living player.'

Landsberger, William Steinitz, World Champion, p.59. From the time he assumed the title in 1866 he never lost a match on even terms until he lost the title in 1894."

Kasparov: "Steinitz's encounter with Anderssen can be fully regarded as the fourth in history, after the duels La Bourdonnais - McDonnell, Staunton - Saint Amant and Morphy - Anderssen, to resemble a match for the world championship."..... "But since hopes of Morphy returning had died, any big match involving Anderssen effectively became a battle for the crown." My Great Predecessors, Part 1 p.51.

Steinitz was not recognized as the strongest player in the world after his victory over Anderssen in 1866, because Morphy was still alive, and Steinitz was not dominant in tournament play. Nevertheless, Kasparov regards the match as having been effectively for the crown.

Mieses, quoted in Chess Rivals, p. 237: "After his victory over Anderssen in 1866 and, especially after his sensational success in tournaments and matches in the period 1873 to 1882, Steinitz was recognized as beyond doubt the strongest player in the world." In other words, the unofficial world champion.

Hartston, The Kings of Chess. p. 57: "In later years, Steinitz was to backdate his tenure of the World Championship to that match with Anderssen in 1866." Because Morphy never returned to the field after he retired in 1859.

Hoffer, quoted in Chess Rivals p. 170: "Mr. Steinitz is the champion match player of the world, and, therefore, entitled to lay claim to the championship of the world, for this reason, that success in single combat is of a higher value than success in tournament play. In a tournament the match of twenty games against a Zukertort is equal to a tournament of twenty players of Zukertort's strength, and such a tournament does not exist. This is the chief argument, various others may be dispensed with."

From The Chess Amateur, April, 1908, p.196: According to the Jewish Chronicle the Championship in Chess has been retained in Jewish hands for the past 42 years. Steinitz held it for 28 years till 1894."

Dr. Kurtz, professor of History at Southeastern Louisiana University: "Paul Morphy...unofficial but universally acknowledged chess champion of the world."

To conclude on this subject: Are we to erase from history the position occupied by the universally recognized strongest players in the world during their time, such as La Bourdonnais, and Morphy, simply because of the name of a title that was invented long after they had gone? As for Steinitz, he was the strongest player in the world, the unofficial world chess champion by virtue of his dominance in match play, long before he was officially crowned "World Chess Champion." I believe that any list of world chess champions should include the universally recognized unofficial champions. And there is a strong case for Steinitz having begun his reign as unofficial world champion with his match victory over Anderssen in 1866. Ask Kasparov.

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More from Richard James' review:

"Playing through the games won't help your openings very much." Why not? They are annotated master games. Consider the following example from *Chess Rivals* of a fatal mistake in an opening variation of the Sicilian Defence:

J. H. Zukertort - C.V. De Vere

London 1872

(Notes by Zukertort in *Westminster Papers*, v.6, July 1873, p.54.)

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Nc3 e6 4.d4 cxd4 5.Nxd4 a6 6.Be2 "Stronger than 6.Be3 and 7.Bd3." 6...Qc7 7.O-O Nge7? (see diagram) "Black overlooks the dangerous position of his queen." [The main line in modern chess is 7...Nf6 while 7...b5 is also popular.]



Position after 7...Nge7

8·Ndb5! “A perfectly sound sacrifice.” 8…axb5 9·Nxb5 Qa5? “9…Qb8 was perhaps the best, but this only prolongs the game.” 10·Bd2 Qb6 “If 10…Qa4, White wins the queen by b3.” 11·Be3 Qa5 12·Nd6+ Kd8 13·Nxf7+ Ke8 [13…Kc7 is of course answered by 14·Qd6 mate.] 14·Nd6+ Kd8 (see diagram)



After 14 ... Kd8

15·Nc4! “Winning the queen or mating in two moves.” 15…Qb4 16·a3 Qxc4 [If 16…Qa4 17·Bb6+ Ke8 18·Nd6 mate.] 17·Bxc4 Black resigns.

“It might just take (my italics) your tactical play to a new level.” *Chess Rivals* is a veritable mine of tactical motifs. It will definitively take any improving player who plays through the games to a higher tactical level.

“Nor will it teach you much about modern middle-game strategy.” Obviously not, since it’s a book about 19th century chess! There are, however, many games in the book with instructive middlegame strategies that can benefit any competent player. Let’s not ignore the classics. I’ll give just two of many examples from the book:

H· Pillsbury - I· Gunsberg

Hastings 1895

(Notes by Lasker in the tournament book.)



After 13...cxd5

14.Nd3! "He must now try to reserve the knight for the ending, as the abundance of obstructions leaves little scope for the bishops and rooks."

M. I. Chigorin - R. Teichmann

Hastings 1895

(Notes by Tarrasch in the tournament book.)



Position after 20...Nd8

21.Nd5! "If Black takes the knight, the pawn retakes, and the cleverly isolated pawn at b5 is threatened with capture after Ra5 and Bf1."

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Richard James questions whether Chess Rivals can be of any real use to players hoping to improve the practical side of their game. In fact, improving players will significantly enhance their tactical ability and increase their general knowledge of the game by playing through the master games in Chess Rivals. The material was deliberately selected to help players up to ECF 200 improve their play, while learning a great deal about 19th century chess. It's pitched

at that level because my own grading was never more than BCF 203 or FIDE 2206.

And still more!

“On the other hand, there were plenty of English players who might have been included: Buckle, Wyvill, Williams, Boden, Owen and others off the top of my head. I’m not sure whether or not this was a deliberate policy.” I’m not sure what to make of this. The players selected for inclusion in my book are mostly masters competing for prizes in international tournaments in the latter half of the 19th century. Buckle, for example, did not play in a single international tournament.

“The book is somewhat cluttered.” No, it is not. “...with diagrams not always appearing adjacent to the correct position, and sometimes not even on the same page.” So, how is the reader to know where the ‘misplaced’ diagrams belong in the score of a game? Richard James does not mention that there is a move under every diagram to indicate where the position occurred in the game. Nor does he mention that the format is one that has been used for many years, although it is certainly less popular nowadays. The same format is used, for example, in the book *New York International Chess Congress, 1924*. The diagram below is from the game Réti – Marshall. The score of the game is on page 165, while the diagram from the game is on page 166.



Position after 19...Rh6

(I’ve changed the descriptive notation to the algebraic.)

However, it is preferable, I agree, to have *all* the diagrams adjacent to their correct positions in the game scores. I will ensure that this format is adopted

in my next book. But let's be clear, diagrams have not been placed around the book with no indication as to where they belong in the game scores, and the format for the diagrams, although not popular today, has long been employed in chess books.