CHESS MATCH BETWEEN STEINITZ & BLACKBURNE: PLAYED AT THE WEST END CHESS CLUB, LONDON, FEBRUARY 17 TO MARCH 2, 1876

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Chess Match Between Steinitz & Blackburne: Played at the West End Chess Club, London, February 17 to March 2, 1876 by J. H. Blackburne & W. Steinitz

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J . H. BLACKBURNE & W. STEINITZ

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Trieste

CHESS MATCH

BETWEEN

MESSRS. STEINITZ & BLACKBURNE,

1377 PLAYED AT

The West End Chess Club, London,

FEBRUARY 17 TO MARCH 2, 1876.

ANNOTATED BY W. STEINITZ.

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1876.

A CHESS ANALYST

DEDICATES

HIS SMALL COLLECTION OF GAMES

TO THE GREAT ANALYST

HUMAN FEELING AND CHARACTER

R. D. Blackmore, Esq.

INTRODUCTION.

THE undersigned ventures to submit to the chess community, in a collected form, the games lately played in the match between Mr. Blackburne and himself. Amongst chess players this contest excited at least an average amount of interest; and, perhaps for the first time, the general public bestowed a good deal of attention upon a chess match—a result which is doubtless owing to the great space the London daily papers devoted to the details of the play.

A few introductory remarks as to the origin and character of the match may not be out of place. For a long time past various patrons of the game had expressed a wish to see a set contest between the first and second winners in the competition for the Emperor of Austria's prize in the Vienna Tournament of 1873. On the one hand Mr. Blackburne's friends considered the issue so close that the victory of Mr. Steinitz could be regarded as little more than an affair of chance; on the other hand Mr. Steinitz and his supporters were of opinion that the regulations enforced at Vienna were highly unfavourable to the development of the best play, or to the success of the best player, whoever he might be. Particularly unhappy was the stipulation that each competitor should play a match of three games with every other—the matches, and not the games, to score as results. The unfairness of such an arrangement may be shown by the following example: Suppose there be twelve players—the same number as played in Vienna—and that A wins nine

matches, in each case winning two games and drawing one; and that he draws the other two matches, all three games being drawn. A drawn match scores a half, and therefore A's score in matches would be 10. Suppose B wins five matches, gaining in each two games and losing one; then he wins five others, winning one game and drawing two; finally he draws his eleventh match against A. The ten won matches and the one drawn one would make 10½ and would render B the winner of the tournament. Yet if we analyse the score we find that the latter has won 15 games and lost 5, whereas A won 18 and lost none! both players having played an equal number of games. Besides, the player who has won the first game in a match need only play the next two for a draw; he thus saves himself trouble and very much lessens the chances of his adversary.

Perhaps the result of the score actually obtained in Vienna towards the end of the tournament may also, in some measure, be regarded as a proof of the incongruity of that modus, and Mr. Steinitz asserts that the detailed score of the games won and lost by each player ought to have been clearly in his favour even before he won the two games of the final tie between him and Mr. Blackburne; for at that point both players had won an equal number of matches, while the score of games stood thus: Blackburne won 20, lost 7; Steinitz won 18; lost 2.

The time limit, too, was wholly inadequate at Vienna, as at Paris and Baden. The best play can certainly not be developed at twenty moves an hour. Whatever may be said of the late match, it produced no such blunders as those of Baden and Vienna, when pieces were thrown away and checkmates overlooked on the move.

To return: Mr. Blackburne having expressed a wish to play for a moderate stake, it was finally agreed that the stakes should be £60 a side. Considering the position the two

players occupied in the chess world, this amount will not be deemed excessive when it is remembered that the late Mr. Staunton desired to play Mr. Morphy for £1000, and afterwards reduced the sum to £500.

The match having been determined upon, it remained to settle the preliminaries. Unfortunately this proved a tedious affair; and although the match was decided upon last summer, Mr. Blackburne's numerous business engagements in the country prevented any rapid progress. At the end of January everything was arranged, and the following stipulations were ultimately agreed upon by both players.

Conditions of the Match.

(1) The stakes in the match shall be £60 a side, and either player who first scores seven games, exclusive of draws, shall be declared the victor, and be entitled to receive the stakes of both sides.

(2) Each player shall deposit his stake of £60 with Mr J. H. Walsh, the chief editor of *The Field* newspaper, at least one day previous to the commencement of the match.

(3) The rooms of the West-end Chess Club, No. 8, New Coventry-street, W., shall be the place of meeting throughout the contest for the purpose of play. The first game shall commence on Thursday, the 17th of February, at 2 p.m.. and play shall proceed on every subsequent Saturday, Tuesday, and Thursday, at the same time until the conclusion of the match. After four hours' play either party may claim an adjournment for an hour. After eight hours' play the game shall be adjourned to the next day, Sundays excepted.

(4) Each player shall be allowed two hours for making his first series of thirty moves, and an hour for every subsequent fifteen moves, and the time gained in each series of moves shall be counted to the credit of the next series. This time limit shall be regulated by sand-glasses, and either player exceeding it by five minutes shall forfeit the game.

(5) The sand-glass of a player who does not appear within half an hour of the time appointed for the commencement of a new game, or punctually in order to continue an adjourned game, shall be set running by the opponent, and the time thus wasted shall be counted as consumed by the absent player, who shall forfeit the game if his time limit be exceeded.

(6) The games shall be played in accordance with the laws of the British Chess Association, with the exception that if either player repeat the same move or series of moves six times in succession, the opponent may claim a drawn game.

The contest began on the 17th of February, and proceeded in accordance with the above conditions, which were only slightly modified during the progress of the match.

The one-sided state of the score at the finish has naturally caused a good deal of surprise; yet many other matches had ended similarly without entitling the winner to assume overwhelming superiority.

At the Paris Tournament of 1867, M. Winawere won the second prize, and Herr Neumann, the fourth only. Yet, in a subsequent match played immediately after the tournament, Herr Neumann defeated the same antagonist by five wins against four draws. The scores of Morphy against Andersen (seven to two) in 1858, and of Steinitz against Zukertort in 1872 (seven to one and four draws) are equally cases in point.

Still more is the incertitude of chess skill illustrated by the record of a number of matches, wherein the player who first won a large number of games ultimately broke down altogether. A remarkable example may be found in the match between Messrs. Harrwitz and Lowenthal (1853). In this case Mr. Lowenthal scored nine games, whilst his opponent was winning two; but he failed to add more than one to this number, and ultimately lost by ten games to eleven. If in this case we seek in the score the only test of merit, the result is a complete *reductio ad absurdum;* for if the winning number had been nine, Mr. Lowenthal would have secured a striking victory; but, as it was eleven, Mr. Harrwitz gained an insignificant triumph.

The late Mr. Barnes won six games against Mr. Campbell in a match of seven up; yet he lost all the seven without scoring another game. Mr. Wywill lost three games in 1851