

Chess Barbs

by Jude Acers (US senior master)

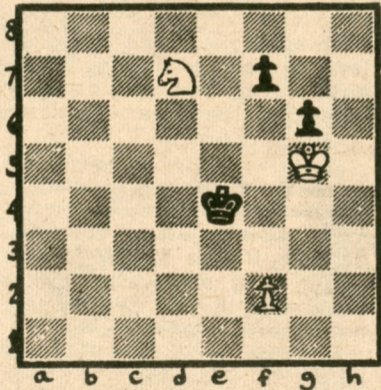


DIAGRAM: From master play, where White, to move, could have achieved a beautiful forced win. How? Solution elsewhere in this issue of the BARB.

MORE QUESTIONS YOU ASK JUDE ACERS:

Q. Who is the "dentist of chess champions"?

A. Dr. George Marsh of San Francisco. If you promise to behave and are at least a chess-player of grandmaster potential, Dr. Marsh calls in his super assistant Kristin to help, surely one of the loveliest chess widows of all time. The Marsh chess team members are roller coaster freaks, authentic chess cheerleaders. Once when I was lonely, blue and sick in a fleabag San Francisco dive hotel, the Marsh team snuck me magic soup and encouragement by secret means and mystery cour-

ier daily. Heavy, heavy good people, those Marsh kids.

Q. Is there a California chess magazine?

A. Yes, the groovy California Chess Reporter, which editor Guthrie G. McClain has been publishing for more than 20 years. It regularly features annotated games by masters like John Grefe, Julio Kaplan, Dennis Fritzinger, Robert Burger and the great international master William Addison. Six issues a year at \$5, which includes membership in the California Chess Federation as well. Address: California Chess Reporter, Att., Avis the Great, 244 Kearny St., 4th Floor, San Francisco, CA 94108.

Q. I have played in four Berkeley and San Francisco chess tournaments and have never once met "W. G. McClain", who is listed as the editor of the California Chess Reporter. Is he a ghost?

A. No, he is a very real and wonderful human being, who never makes headlines, because he does not bomb people. Guthrie McClain is a silver-haired, dignified

gentleman who keeps his cool and encouragement at all times, and, believe me, you need that attitude when you have a games editor named Acers and a problemist department headed by the great Robert E. Burger!

Guthrie McClain has been punching out the California Chess Reporter since I was six years old, baby blue! He only saved me from starvation more than 100 times, while I played more than 800 clocked games at the Mechanics' Institute from 1968 to 1970. McClain was the first chess editor in the United States to pay chess masters for notes to their games. His publication was the first professionally produced regional chess journal in the United States...the only one to this day that features top U.S. players like Jim Commons (Los Angeles), John Grefe, James Tarjan, Dennis Waterman and Dennis Fritzinger. The games editors since 1958 have been Addison, Burger and Acers. (See above for the California Chess Reporter address.) McClain rarely plays today in nationally rated

events, but spooks the city team championships occasionally.

McClain, introduced to me by William Addison, has a peculiar way in dealing with people. He ignores everything bad! He smiles, recalls good times in bad times while I am crying, screaming, jumping up and down! It was McClain who taught me to ignore everything, unless the problem is olympic.

It was McClain who arranged the immortal, deadly rivalry between Robert Burger, alias Burgermeister, alias great Burgermeister, and one Jude F. Acers, alias the greatest. Their duels were fought in Harrington's Bar and Restaurant, with Acers supposedly having an edge because he does not partake of the spirits! What egos clashed in our encounters!

It is a fact that McClain, once a rated master and longtime U.S. expert, has played Robert Burger every conceivable type of chess contest. I remember one dynamite scene, which found McClain entering the Harrington chess hideout and being instantly challenged by the great Burgermeister to a

knight and rook odds game! (i.e., Burger removes both his rook and knight from the surface of the chess board BEFORE the game even begins). I mean, man, I was shocked. Guthrie McClain looked as if he had been stabbed with a spear. "Now, Burgermeister, you don't really mean that. I am overwhelmed that you should even think of such a thing...er-r-r-r...five dollars a game?" Whereupon the elderly gentleman was seated before a packed house, yes, in the presence of numerous reputable witnesses, took odds of full rook and full knight and creamed the great Burgermeister four times in a row! Wow! And there stood starving Jude Acers, dying, just dying, for a piece of the action. In fact, Acers was negotiating Burger for QUEEN odds! Alas for dreams, time ran out. Well, next time? Rookie odds for me, little me?!...

One other note: it was Guthrie McClain's car that Bobby Fischer, Gilbert Ramirez and William Addison used to travel to the Cleveland, 1958 U.S. Open. It was also McClain who was phoned by Fis-

cher's mother repeatedly to check on her little boy! Of course, McClain's car was wrecked. During the trip the little Gilbert Ramirez boy hit Fischer and gave him a black eye!!!! After that Fischer got so mad he won the U.S. Open.

Q. Own up, Jude Acers! Is it not true that Robert Burger has decisively defeated both Robert Fischer and one Jude Acers, while thoroughly aglow with high spirits?

A. It is, I regret to state, an absolute fact. Burger was challenged to a wager that he would be crushed by Fischer in a 34-board simultaneous exhibition at the Mechanics' Institute in 1964. The man who made the now legendary wager was Bob Harrington, co-owner and operator of Harrington's chess haunt, where literally thousands of chess games have been played by famous chess personalities. Burger proceeded direct from Harrington's Bar and

Restaurant to the scene of battle and won an astounding 14-move shocker against Fischer. To his credit, Mr. Harrington somehow was able to struggle to his wallet and pay up on the spot. I believe I would have choked in such trauma...

The Acers demolition came about on September 5, 1969, when Acers dared to play eight games against Burger in a skittles session for the championship of the Harrington establishment. Seriously, I do not remember how many games I won and they do not matter. The point is that I do remember Games 2 and 3 of our noble encounters, which saw a swift moving, swiftly imbibing Robert E. Burger winning against the slow, careful play of the city's most immodest, ambitious chess master--me! And me a non-drinker! Burger has been one of the nation's top 70 rated players for

15 years, despite never being able to study theory or play in master training events. He is the real McCoy, a chess genius of the first water. He crushed six masters in a row in the 1970 Mechanics' Invitational Masters' Tournament and has a 2-2 lifetime score with international master William Addison.

On other encounter will live forever in my mind with the mysterious, snakey, sneaky, slimey, brilliant maestro Burger. During an eight-game correspondence chess match (each move sent by mail) with Burger, I achieved a two-pawn plus and a totally won position vrs. the dastardly sneakaroo. Countless hours of analysis (I was already a full-time professional player) were going into all games to seal Burger's tomb. Burger naturally had no time to do comparable analysis, due to his successful advertising agency,

nine children and wife and other concerns. Burger simply looked at the games when he could during office hours or sessions at Harrington's.

Imagine my shock when two weeks (ten moves) later Burger forced a draw by three-fold repetition with practically all the chess pieces still on the board and me, still two pawns to the good! I shall never forget the horrible nausea, temporary sickness, and emotional collapse that I felt when I received the all-revealing key move, which took the win that was mine away from my greedy clutches. I would gladly trade any ten wins against masters in my career for the other half of that game point which was stolen, yes, gentlemen, stolen from me. And you have to remember that when this happened I had already drawn two games against grandmasters and had attained a master

rating!

Burger lives with his huge family of little fans and wife Theresa in a castle in Berkeley. They make wine in the cellar, as in medieval times.

Q. Jude, I have heard several stupid or vague versions of how Harry Nelson Pillsbury and Vera Menchik died. What really happened to them?

SOLUTION TO DIAGRAM: the position is Siskov--Uzsoki, Magyarozag, 1972(1), where White played 1 f4!, but missed the win after 1...Ke3! 2 Nf6! 3 Ng4ch Kg3! 4 Nf6 (if 4 Ne5 f6) Kf3 5 Nds Ke4 6 Ne7 Kf3, forcing a draw.
White could have won with 2 Ne5!! f6ch 3 Kg4!! g5 4 f5! (Analysis by Maric).