

# CHESS BARBS

by Jude Acers (U.S senior master)

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**CYNAMO PRISON CHESS PROMOTOR:** So many comments, both pro and con, have been generated by the writing of Cleveland chess master and torcher critic James Schroeder, that I have decided to include Mr. Schroeder's electrifying writing in my column more often in these times of critical energy shortage.

This week Mr. Schroeder examines the entire history of chess in America. Readers particularly anxious to keep abreast of the activities of this amazing man (now in his sixties) are strongly urged to subscribe to the incredible Mini-Might Chess Bulletin, published monthly, at \$4 for 12 months. Mail to: Cleveland Chess Foundation, P.O. Box 5268, Cleveland, Ohio 44101 (Phone: 432-2924).

I would like to seize every occasion to point out to my readers that while the U.S. Chess Federation continues to do nothing, Mr. Schroeder's one-man prison rehabilitation chess fund sends chess books and equipment at a clickety-clack rate that leaves even long-time members, of the James Schroeder fan club, so stunned they are late paying their membership dues. All contributions are 100 per cent tax deductible and every cent is used totally for the prison program by the immortal promotal! Drop him \$1, or whatever, today.

The Mini-Might Chess Bulletin steals grandmaster matches, tournaments throughout the world, and steals the notes of the world's leading players as well. It's an education, entertainment, sophist forum and crossroads of the chess world. It makes Chess Life and Review look like a tub of dirty dishwater with 110 goldfish swishing about and dozens of unclean marshmallows floating in a daze.

Just thought you should know about these matters. Get with it -- Help!

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Knowledge Cannot Supplant Reason by James Schroeder: Tournaments are much different from my time: 1950-65. When I played there were only a few prizes, at the top, and it was a thrill and an honor to get to play a good player. The reason for playing in tournaments was to meet good players and to improve by tough competition, under strictly-supervised conditions. If you were good, you won a prize. That's the best system there is.

Now, prizes are for patzers. Players don't enter tournaments to meet good competition; they play in events where they won't meet good competition. 'Open' tournaments are out, and 'Class' (poor-class) tournaments are in. It's a disgusting situation because it doesn't produce good players and it doesn't provide the incentive to become good. As a matter of fact, it does just the opposite. You can make more money by cheating, and many players are doing it. They keep their rating low in order to win Class prizes, when they should be rated as Expert and Master. I'd like to see the USCF refuse to rate any tournament which offered Class prizes other than Trophies.

I advise you to look at contract bridge. They are ten times more successful than chess and don't give any cash prizes. Their prizes usually consist of a couple of decks of cards. The Officials and Directors are paid a high fee and give good service.

There's another type of cheating which goes on at chess tournaments, the real kind. More players touch pieces and don't move them, or move pieces and take the moves back, and other things, even worse. This is prominent in events organized by Goichberg (Continental Chess Association), because he, and his assistants, are non-tournament directors. They are the worst-run tournaments imaginable. The recorder (there's no reason to call him a 'director') posts the pairings, and points to the playing room

and says: "Get in there and fight it out." Playing conditions are horrible, what with crowded rooms and players fighting for playing space on too-small tables to put their boards and clocks, and spectators and kibitzers making a lot of noise.

Is that what makes success? Do players want to play in non-directed tournaments? They must, because that's what they do. The situation will get worse unless we eliminate so-called 'Class' prizes, i.e., prizes for failure, or cheating, or incompetence.

Let's go back to those exciting days of yesteryear, when the 1st American Chess Congress was held in New York in 1857 and Paul Morphy of New Orleans began his two-year annihilation of any other good player in the world. (All names, dates and other data are from memory and will probably be inaccurate.)

After Morphy came Showalter, Machenzie, Hodges, Mason, John Barry (who taught Pillsbury), Franklin K. Young -- the great strategist and original thinker who was a military genius without being in the military! Then came Harry N. Pillsbury, of Boston, who won the First great chess tournament, Hastings 1895, ahead of Emanuel Lasker, Siegbert Tarrasch and Champions of a dozen countries. A year later Pillsbury contracted a fatal illness and died in 1906. Had he remained healthy he might have become World Champion.

Frank Marshall was USA Champion, 1909-36, and was the only player to win a tournament ahead of Lasker or Capablanca (he finished ahead of each) from 1896 through 1924!

I forgot about William Steinitz, who came to the USA around 1883 to give some exhibitions and lectures. He was so well-treated and respected that he stayed here and became a USA citizen. He wrote: "I would rather die in the USA than live in England." His International Chess Magazine is one of the masterpieces of chess literature and Robert Fischer had often praised Steinitz' writings.

Emanuel Lasker followed Steinitz to the USA, for the same reason. He also published a chess magazine, but I believe Sam Loyd wrote

most of it. It was a real 'homey' publication with lots of news and interesting articles, but not much analysis of value. Because Lasker was too good, interest in chess waned until the appearance of Jose Capablanca. Born in Cuba in 1888, he won a match from J. Corzo for the Championship of Cuba, when he was about 13 years old.

Capa was sent to New York to learn English and prepare to attend Columbia University. He was very good at 'speed' chess, but did not make much impression otherwise. After two years of college life he dropped out to become a professional chess player, and the American Chess Bulletin sponsored him on a nationwide series of simultaneous exhibitions. Who was Jose Capablanca in 1907? He got the bookings, all right, but hardly any good players turned out to play him. He later wrote an article which exposes his ignorance, immaturity and arrogance, claiming a 'world record' for simultaneous play.

In 1909 an Exhibition match was arranged between Capablanca and Frank Marshall, who trained for the match by drinking scotch (that's a joke, son). But really, Marshall was playing to earn some money and did not believe that Capablanca would provide any decent competition. But Capablanca won by a huge margin and drove Marshall back to the scotch.

Capablanca won first prize in his first International tournament, San Sebastian 1911, ahead of the great Rubinstein, and demonstrated a style combining the tactical genius of Morphy and Pillsbury with his own elegant effortlessness. He was like Tarrasch, who had all the right ideas about space, time and force. But Tarrasch played to win in the endgame while Capa played for mate. When Capablanca became World Champion in 1921, chess was popularized in the USA to an extent never seen before, or after.

The Manhattan Chess Club was the strongest in the world and the Marshall Chess Club was not far behind. They produced the players that would bring the USA the World Team Championship in 1931, 1933, 1935 and 1937. Mostly amateurs, but the key player was Frank Marshall, who had retired from the

tournament arena but could still drag his weary bones to the table and fight for his country.

The player who dominated USA chess for thirty years, was Samuel Reshevsky. Was he really 20 players at once, at the age of four? I'll accept six years old, but I'm still skeptical. He came to the USA from Poland in 1920 and made a tour of the country, playing 20 persons at once. In 1922, at age eleven, he played in a Master tournament, and proved that he was an Expert.

A good source of history is the American Chess Bulletin. It died about ten years ago, when Herman Helms died. He was a strange individual and did not make any provision for the magazine to be continued.

Isaac Kashdan whipped around the world (the chess world) in the early 30's and was one of many players considered to be 'second-best in the world'. Then Reshevsky began playing again and Reuben Fine made the scene and they were a class above the other USA players.

The 1936 USA Championship tournament (Marshall retired) was won by Reshevsky, followed by Simonson, Treysman and Fine. Reshevsky won again in 1938, 1940, 1942 and 1946 -- not losing a game. That he lost on time against Denker in 1942, only to see the referee forfeit his opponent; makes you undersnd something about the quality of chess officials. Because of that forfeit, Kashdan was cheated out of first prize and lost a playoff match to Reshevsky.

What made the USA the strongest country in the late 30's was Al Horowitz, who helped establish Chess Review magazine in 1933 and then became sole owner and publisher and editor. Horowitz had 'class'. I never heard or read of anything petty or selfish. He was slightly arrogant, but who isn't? When he lost to Grombacher (a Class A player) in the 1953 US Open, that was the biggest upset in USA Chess History. Horowitz wrote about many of the 'upsets' at the tournament, but he didn't mention his loss to Brombacher. Well, nobody's perfect.

Continued next week.....