

Richard Shorman

Chess

SPASSKY HURDLES BYRNE 3-0

Boris Spassky passed his first match test on the way to the world championship by defeating Robert Byrne 3-0 in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Three draws, which do not count in the final score, were interspersed among the six games.

White: Boris Spassky. Black: Robert Byrne. San Juan, 1974, 6th Match Game. Sicilian Defense 1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 Bb5 Bd7 4 Bd7 Qd7 5 c4 e5 6 Nc3 Nc6 7 d3 g6 8 a3 Bg7 9 Rb1 Nge7 10 b4 b6 11 0-0 0-0 12 Nd5 Nd5 13 cd Nd4 14 Nd4 cd 15 Bd2 Rac8 16 Qb3 Rc7 17 Rbc1 Rfc8 18 b5 Rc1 19 Rc1 Rc1 20 Bc1 Qc7 21 Qc4 Qc4 22 dc f6 23 Kf1 Bf8 24 a4 Be7 25 Ke2 Kf7 26 Bd2 f5 27 ef gf 28 Kd3 Bf6 29 f3 h5 30 a5 Ke8 31 a6 Kd7 32 g3 Kc7 33 h3 Kd7 34 Ba5 Kc8 35 Be1 Kd7 36 Bf2 Ke8 37 Be1 Kf7 38 Bb4 Be7 39 f4 ef 40 gf Ke8 41 Kd4 Kd7 42 Kd3 Kc7 43 Ke3 Bf6 44 Kf3 h4 45 Ke3 Bg7 46 Kd3 Bf6 47 Bd2 Kd7 48 Be3 Kc7 49 Bf2 Kc8 50 c5 dc 51 d6 Kd7 52 Bc5 Bd8 53 Bb4 Ke6 54 Kc4 Bf6 55 Bc5 Bd8 56 Bd4 Kd6 57 Be5 Ke6 58 Bb8 Kd7 59 Kd5 Resigns.

PRISON CHESS SUCCESS STORY

By Joseph R. Brierley

Prior to my employment at the Eastern State Penitentiary in Philadelphia, I was a woodpusher member of the Mercantile Library Chess Club in Philadelphia. When I went to work at the Eastern Penitentiary, I noticed that there were chess players among the inmates, but that their chess activity was unorganized. Outside of the natural order embodied in the game itself, the only other use made of it was to gamble.

After World War II, when I returned to the institution, I was assigned to the garage as a transportation officer. I obtained a few chess boards and chess sets and encouraged the playing of chess among the inmates who were employed in the garage. In due time it became known throughout the institution that if you wanted a job in the garage you had better be a chess player.

It wasn't too long after my assignment to the garage that I was called into the Deputy Warden's office and informed by him that "the game you're playing out there with them cons had better stop." I told him that there is nothing of a deleterious nature going on, except that in their spare time the inmates were playing chess. He then stated, "I don't give a damn what they're playing, or what it is, you are going to stop it!" Although this type of stupidity vexed me, I was under direct orders, so I put a stop to it.

However, about 1954 I had attained the rank of Major of the Guard, and with a new Warden, whom I sensed was more receptive to this type of activity, I requested permission to organize a chess club. The Warden not only consented, but, to facilitate matters, I was assigned to an area of the institution where they could meet to play chess.

After about a year of this the inmates wanted to test their abilities relative to the strength of outside chess clubs. So I requested and received permission from the Warden to invite one of the local chess clubs to visit with us and play a match. We won the majority of games in this match, and the players and I were elated. We invited more and more outside clubs to play matches with us.

It's interesting to note that the reaction on the part of the visitors was most favorable. They were aware, of course, that the inmates were serving sentences ranging from life for murder through all of the felony crimes, including burglary, armed robbery, etc., and that we were a maximum security institution.

Their comment was, "We don't care what crimes they've committed or what their sentences are; we find them to be gentlemen and very sincere chess players." Our guests' excellent behavior in response to their stated sentiments was observed by all the inmates of our institution. It was a unique experience, something at which to marvel, that these free members of society would give so freely of their time to visit the institution, play chess with us and accept us, not as criminals but as fellow chess players.

As a result of this ever growing comradeship and our men's demonstrated prowess in chess, we were invited to join the Philadelphia Chess Association and participate in League Matches. We accepted, of course.

We formed our chess club and drew up our own constitution and by-laws. As a mark of self-determination, the inmates stated that a member would be removed if during play with an outside team or during any of our intramural play he evidenced behavior unbecoming a gentleman and chess player, and also if he were involved in any serious violation of the institution's rules and regulations. Further interest was created when our players recognized that chess players from the outside teams were all rated by the U. S. Chess Federation, and requests on their part to become rated members ensued.

We entered three teams in the PCA and won two city championships. What a boost in morale these victories were to our entire population! It had the effect of consolidating our residents in support of our chess team, an opposite reaction to that manifested over such activities as basketball or baseball. In these sports the inmates would always root for the outside team and boo their own team, but this was reversed with the chess players.

Gradually the loyalty of the inmates who were not involved in playing chess increased. They became concerned about the reputation and about the strength of our chess playing group. Especially was this so when they became aware that we won two city championships.

It is important to note the change in the behavior patterns of the chess players as they strove to live according to their by-laws. Most influential in this alteration was the imbued discipline that naturally accrues to one as he strives to arrive at a point in the playing of chess above that of wood-pusher. This discipline that we instill in ourselves had a bearing upon their general behavior.

When our players became eligible for parole, they were befriended by the outside players. I am convinced that it resulted in the commutation of one of our lifers, when the PCA presented the Parole Board with a petition signed by hundreds of chess players in support of his application for commutation.

Even more significant was that, prior to their release from our institution, each of our chess players would be invited to become a member of one of the visiting teams. This membership, upon release, resulted in their being invited to visit with the other members' families and meet their friends.

Their successful adjustment can be attributed both to the discipline, to which we previously alluded, and to their complete acceptance into a community of friends, so that the rate of recidivism was noticeably less in the chess group than in any of the other organized activities.

We completed 12 years as members in the PCA before the old Eastern Penitentiary was phased out, and documented evidence on the recidivist rate, based on a survey of many of our chess members, is rather substantial. At first, being skeptical of this, I contacted some of our ex-members who had settled in Philadelphia, so that I could assure myself of this fact. Those thus contacted, and by now there were several hundred ex-members resulting from the 12 years of our play, could recall only four of their members returning as parole violators.

Mr. Allyn R. Sielaff, Commissioner of the Bureau of Corrections, has made his feelings to our chess program known with words of encouragement both as to the actual playing of the game and also as good public relations in closing the gap of naivete between the inmates of our institutions and the free society. There is a high probability that the Commissioner's progressive and accepted philosophies will bring about a realistic penal reform program in Pennsylvania.