

Capablanca on Maróczy

Edward Winter



Géza Maróczy

Below is our translation of a tribute by Capablanca to Géza Maróczy which did not appear in the English edition of the Cuban's radio *Lectures* but was included on pages 149-154 of the Spanish version, *Lecciones elementales de ajedrez* (Madrid, 1973).

'In a conversation with one of New York's strongest chess enthusiasts about the teaching of chess in accordance with general principles in which I believe, he said to me, "There is no doubt that if the works of the great masters paid more attention to explaining the basic principles of chess, amateurs would understand much more fully and accurately the merit of

many of the games produced by them”.

In this respect, I recall that one of the reasons I was able for many years to achieve unequalled scores in simultaneous exhibitions was the continued application of these principles. Even today it is thanks to these principles that I can still successfully oppose 20 or 25 first-class players in any club in the world.

Listeners will remember my game against Steiner in the Budapest tournament. The director of that event was the great Hungarian master Geza Maróczy. Today, Maróczy is over 70 years of age, and as far as I know he is living in Budapest, the capital of Hungary, his country of birth. Maróczy is an engineer by profession and in this capacity he played an active role in the construction of one of Budapest's aqueducts. Maróczy has been one of the greatest masters of his time. He is very gentlemanly and correct and has many friends and admirers in England, Holland and the USA, countries where he lived for a long time.

As a chessplayer he was a little lacking in imagination and aggressive spirit. His positional judgment, the greatest quality of the true master, was excellent. A very accurate player and an excellent endgame artist, he became famous as an expert on queen endings.

In a tournament many years ago he won a knight endgame against the Viennese master Marco which has gone into history as one of the classic endings of this type.

The great master Teichmann had great respect for his ability. I remember that during the International Tournament at San Sebastián in 1911, Teichmann spoke to me one day about the competitors, saying: “Maróczy is a very profound player and he plays the endgame very well; at his best he is a very dangerous opponent in this kind of tournament.”

As listeners will know, this was my first tournament in Europe, and I had the good luck to win it. At that time I did not know the great European masters, and it was only through the kindness of some of them, such as Teichmann, Schlechter, Maróczy and Tarrasch, that I found out about the qualities and strengths of each master. The Russians, represented by Rubinstein, Bernstein and Nimzowitsch, kept themselves apart and were not as amiable as the other players. From everything that was said it was possible to deduce that Tarrasch, Schlechter, Maróczy and Rubinstein were considered the strongest. But let us return to Maróczy.

In 1929 [*sic*], when Maróczy was approaching 60 years of age and had been participating in many important tournaments for a long time, the young Hungarian players began to say that he had passed into history and that the new players were superior to those of his day. They argued in the same way as do the young players of today with respect to the masters of 20 or 30 years ago.

Maróczy told me about it. “These young Hungarian players”, he said, “are nothing special. They play well but are at most players of the second or third rank. They do not know the real game, the great masters' play; but they believe that they know a great deal and they say they are stronger than I. For my part, I am now old, I do not have the same interest as before, but their claims have annoyed me so much that I have told them I am ready to play a match with any of them.”

The outcome was that a match was organized between the old master and one of the young Hungarians [Géza Nagy], who had just [*sic*] won the national championship. The result of the match was total success for Maróczy, for his opponent lost five games without being able to score a single point.

Maróczy was a good teacher and guide for talented players. A large part of the success of Miss Menchik is due to the time Maróczy dedicated to the present woman champion of the world when she was a young player in Hastings. At that time, Miss Menchik was talented, but had not yet shown great strength. Maróczy, who then lived in Hastings, realized the natural ability of the young girl and devoted himself to teaching her. The pupil has done her teacher proud. Without doubt Miss Menchik is superior to all women players we have known up till now.

Concerning the relative strength of Maróczy and the best young masters of today, my opinion is that, with the exception of Botvinnik and Keres, Maróczy in his time was superior to all the other players of today.

If it is appreciated that in 1900 Maróczy was one of the world's top players and that 30 years later he was still capable of giving the champion of Hungary such a tremendous beating, it must be agreed that to compare another player with him a similar performance will be necessary over a more or less identical period. This brings us to the question of whether today's players are as strong as, or more strong than, the players of 30 years ago.

The modern players believe that they know more and are stronger than the players of 30 years ago. In my opinion, this is a major error. A group of players like Tarrasch, Schlechter, Maróczy, Rubinstein, Lasker and I, as we were 30 years ago, does not exist today, and I do not think it has ever existed. Moreover, it should be borne in mind that I have not mentioned Bernstein, Marshall, Dûras, Vidmar, Teichmann, Janowsky, Nimzowitsch, Spielmann and Tartakower, all of whom won important tournaments and matches.

Some years ago Maróczy, a great admirer of Morphy, published the best collection of the games of the famous American master which has appeared so far.

His chief contribution to opening technique has been the well-known variation in the Sicilian Defence wherein White places pawns at a1, b3, c4, e4, f3, g2 and h2, against black pawns at h7, g6, f7, e7, d6, b7 and a7. White's formation is considered so advantageous that Black generally avoids it by all means available.

This is a summary, in outline form, of the great Hungarian master, a kindly figure.'

To the Chess Notes [main page](#).

To the Archives for [other feature articles](#).

Copyright 2007 Edward Winter. All rights reserved.