

NM Chess Champions – Ruben Shocron, Part I

Ruben Shocron was New Mexico Champion in 1982. But he also had a notable chess career outside of New Mexico. He was born in Argentina 2/20/1921 and lived and played chess there until the early 1960's when he moved to the United States.

He was one of the leading Argentine players from the late 40's until he moved to the U.S. He played in almost every Argentina Championship from 1948 to 1959, winning in 1952. Based on the win in the 1952 tournament, he challenged GM Miguel Najdorf to a match in 1953. Najdorf, then at the height of his powers, won easily 4.5 – 0.5.

Shocron played in the Mar del Plata, South American Zonal Tournament in 1954, scoring a respectable 8.5 out of 19. He also played in the International Chess Tournaments in Mar del Plata in 1953 (9-10), 1956 (9-6), and 1959 (5-9). In the 1959 tournament he played his famous game against Bobby Fischer, which Fischer annotated in "My 60 Memorable Games." Had there been such a thing as FIDE ratings in the 50's, his peak probably would have been about 2500.

After moving to the U.S. he apparently dropped out of the chess scene for a decade. Emerging again in the 70's, he was not the player he had been in 50's, but he still had some notable successes. Besides the New Mexico Championship in 1982, he won the Georgia Championship in 1972 and 1975 and the Pennsylvania Championship in 1986 and 1992.

He was a regular at the Amateur Team East Championships for many years. His team won in 1989.



1989 Amateur Team East Champions (left to right: David Rubinsky, Ruben Shocron, Rodion Rubenchik, and Vladimir Rubenchik) celebrate in the lobby of the Somerset Hilton Hotel. Shocron won the First Board Prize with a score of 6-0.

His last tournament was the 2005 Amateur Team East where he scored a strong 4.5 out of 6 while celebrating his 84th birthday. He passed away 3/8/2013.

Here is a tribute to Ruben Shocron by Richard Sherman of the Coronado Chess Club in Albuquerque.

“Some Reflections by Richard Sherman

“For nearly fifteen years of its quarter-century existence, the Coronado Chess Club has been meeting Wednesday nights at the Frontier Restaurant in Albuquerque. Since Gary Collard founded the Club in 1980, the basic format has never varied: two nonrated half-hour games.

“At one time or another, many very strong players have been active at the Club. In the early years it was Ruben Shocron, Stephen Sandager, and Ronald Kensek (then on extended summer sojourns from Michigan). At the end of the 1980's, Richard Wood, many-time Oregon Champion, spent a year in Albuquerque and appeared frequently at the Club. In the 1990's, the Club saw much of Spencer Lower, Steve Stubenrauch (both now in Arizona) and the redoubtable attorney John Cline. In recent years, the Club has benefited from multiple visits by Robert Haines and the German master Uwe Schenk.

“The Shocron period, 1981-84, was a golden era for the Club. In those years, Ruben lived in the Albuquerque area and seldom missed a Club meeting. Shocron played many offhand games.

“Shocron was a native of Argentina. In 1952 he won the Argentine championship. This was no small feat; in the 1930's, many prominent European players fled the Holocaust and settled in Argentina. In 1959, at Mar del Plata, Shocron played a celebrated game with Bobby Fischer, richly annotated in Fischer's My Sixty Memorable Games (Elsa Shocron gleefully related how Fischer arrived at the hotel with a bulging suitcase: no clothes, all chess books).

“Shocron seldom lost at the Coronado Chess Club, even when up against the formidable opposition of Kensek and Sandager. But the great blessing of Shocron was that, though he appreciated strong opponents, he so loved to compete that he was willing to play anyone, making the job easier for the pairing director. Accordingly, a very wide range of players had the opportunity to learn from him.”

For more articles about Ruben Shocron (and better pictures) go to http://lehighvalleychessclub.org/RUBEN_SHOCRON.HTML

Fischer, Robert (Bobby) J. – Ruben Shocron, 1:0 Mar del Plata International Chess Tournament, 1959

Like William Napier, who is best known for a brilliant loss to Emanuel Lasker at Cambridge Springs, 1904, Ruben Shocron is best known for this game he lost Bobby Fischer.

Ruy Lopez, Closed Defense

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bb5 a6 4. Ba4 Nf6 5. O-O Be7 6. Re1 b5 7. Bb3 d6 8. c3 O-O 9. h3 Na5 10. Bc2 c5 11. d4 Qc7 12. Nbd2 Bd7 13. Nf1 Rfe8 14. Ne3 g6 15. dxe5 dxe5 16. Nh2 Rad8 17. Qf3 Be6 18. Nhg4 Nxe4 19. hxg4 Qc6 A novelty by Fischer, clearing g4 for his knight. 20. g5 Nc4 21. Ng4 Bxg4 22. Qxg4 Nb6 23. g3 c4 24. Kg2 Nd7 25. Rh1 Nf8 26. b4 Qe6 27. Qe2 a5 28. bxa5 Qa6 29. Be3 Qxa5 30. a4 Ra8 31. axb5 Qxb5 32. Rhb1 Qc6 33. Rb6 Qc7 34. Rba6 Rxa6 35. Rxa6 Rc8 36. Qg4 Ne6 37. Ba4 Rb8 38. Rc6 Up to here Shocron has defended well against the rising super star, Bobby Fischer. But he misses a trick Fischer has up his sleeve and goes down in just two more moves.



38... Qd8?

[38... Qd7! 39. Rb6 (39. Rxc4? Qd3 40. Rc6 Rb1 "With a strong attack." (Fischer)) 39...

NM Chess Champions – Ruben Shocron, Part II

The following game was won by Shocron over Pilnik in the same Mar del Plata International Tournament where he lost his famous game to Bobby Fischer. Both players aggressively play for a win, but Pilnik takes it one step too far. In an interesting rook endgame, Shocron finally secures the win.

Hermann Pilnik was born in Germany in 1914. He moved to Argentina in 1930 and won the Argentine Championship in 1942, 1945 and 1958. His peak period was in the early 1950's when he won several international tournaments in both Argentina and Europe. He was awarded the Grandmaster title by FIDE in 1952.

Shocron, Ruben – Pilnik, Hermann, 1:0
Mar del Plata International Chess Tournament, 1959

Gruenfeld Defense

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 g6 3. Nc3 d5 The Gruenfeld Defense. **4. Bf4 dxc4** Black allows White to occupy the center with his pawns with the plan of undermining them later.

[More typical is 4... Bg7 which led to a very messy draw in this game 5. e3 c5 6. dxc5 Qa5 7. Rc1 dxc4 8. Bxc4 O-O 9. Nge2 Qxc5 10. Qb3 Nc6 11. Nb5 Qh5 12. Ng3 Qh4 13. Nc7 e5 14. Bg5 Qxg5 15. h4 Qg4 16. Nxa8 Qd7 17. Rd1 Qe7 18. Qa3 Nb4 19. O-O Bg4 20. f3 Bh6 21. fxg4 Nxg4 22. Rxf7 Rxf7 23. Nf1 Kg7 24. Bxf7 Qxf7 25. Qxb4 Qf2 26. Kh1 Qxh4 27. Kgl Qf2 28. Kh1 Qh4 29. Kgl Bxe3 30. Nxe3 Qf2 31. Kh1 Qh4 32. Kgl Qf2 33. Kh1 Qh4 1/2-1/2, Wang Yue (CHN) 2736 - Topalov Veselin (BUL) 2813 , Sofia 5/23/2009 It "MTel Masters" (cat.21)]

5. e4 Bg7 6. Bxc4 O-O 7. h3 Nfd7!?

[7... c5 immediately undermining White's center is better]

8. Nf3 Nb6 9. Bb3N Nc6 10. d5!? Ironically this aggressive move helps Black to undermine White's center.

[10. Nb5 e5 11. dxe5 Qe7 12. O-O Nxe5 13. Rc1 c6 14. Bxe5 Bxe5 15. Nxe5 Qxe5 16. Nd6 leaves Black in an awkward position]

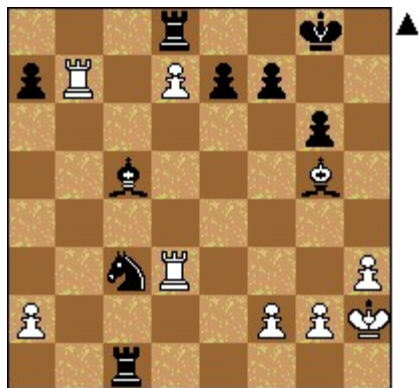
10... Na5 11. O-O c6! Of course! **12. Re1 Nxb3 13. Qxb3 cxd5 14. Nxd5 Be6 15. Rad1 Bxd5 16. exd5 Qd7 17. Bg5 Rfe8 18. Bh4 Rac8 19. Ng5 Qa4 20. Qxa4 Nxa4 21. Re2?!** The complications introduced with this move favor Black.

[Instead returning the knight to f3 and threatening e7 secures equality. 21. Nf3 Kf8 22. b3 Nc3 23. d6 exd6 24. Rxd6 Rxe1 25. Nxe1 Nxa2 26. Rd7 Rb8 27. Bg3=]

21... Bxb2 22. Rb1 Ba3?! This awkward placement of the bishop cedes his advantage.

[22... Bf6 makes more sense both offensively and defensively]

23. Rxb7 Rc1 24. Kh2 Nc3 25. Re3 Bc5 26. Rd3 h6 27. d6! hxg5 28. d7 Rd8 29. Bxg5



29... Rb1? Up to now this has been an up and down battle in which neither side has managed to get a decisive advantage, but here either Pilnik miscalculated, or he is playing for a win when he should be happy with a draw.

[Better is 29... Rc2 30. Rc7 Nd5 31. Rc8 Bd6 32. g3 Rdx8 33. dxc8=Q Rxc8 34. Rxd5 Rc2 35. Rd2=]

30. Rc7 Shocron forces exchanges that lead to a winning rook endgame. **30... Rbb8 31. Rxc5 Ne4 32. Ra5 Nxg5 33. Rxg5** It is not obvious that White wins because he cannot avoid losing the passed pawn, but White has two things going for him besides the passed d-pawn. First, it takes time for Black to win the pawn. White can use that time to improve his position. Second, White has the potential outside passed pawn on the h-file. **33... Rb7 34. Rgd5 e6 35. R5d4 Kf8 36. h4 Ke7 37. g4 Rb2** Pilnik correctly senses that the pawn endgame after the exchanges on d7 would lose and prefers to keep the rooks on the board for counter play.

[37... Rbxd7 38. Rxd7 Rxd7 39. Rxd7 Kxd7 40. Kg3 Ke7 41. Kf4 f6 White has better king position and a potential outside passed pawn. Black's king has to both guard against the advance of the h-pawn and protect the queenside against an invasion by White's king. 42. Ke4 (Not the immediate 42. h5? Kf7 43. Ke4 gxh5 44. gxh5 Kg7 45. Kf3 Kh6 46. Kg4= Black just moves his king back and forth between h6 and h7 and White cannot make progress.) 42... Kf8 43. Kd4 Ke7 44. a4 Black's king is stuck. Moving either way allows disaster. But moving his pawns opens up the position for White's king. 44... f5 45. gxf5 exf5 46. Ke5 Winning the opposition and the game]

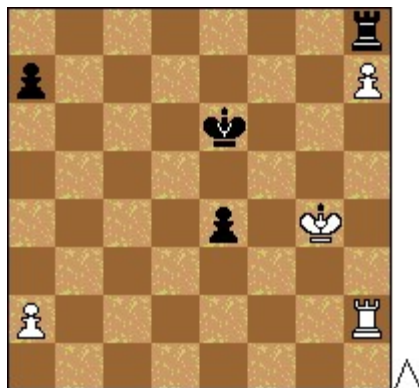
38. Rd2 Rb5 39. Kg3 Ra5 40. R4d3 f5 The opening of the position helps White, though other moves lose anyway. **41. f3 Rc5 42. Kf4 fxg4 43. fxg4 Ra5 44. Rh2 e5 45. Kf3 Rxd7** Pilnik cannot take it any longer. What is the use of having a rook on the board if you cannot do anything with it? **46. Rxd7 Kxd7 47. h5 gxh5 48. gxh5 Ke6 49. h6 e4 50. Kf4** Good enough, but taking the pawn also wins. Curiously from here on both sides seem to ignore the pawn on e4.

[50. Kxe4 Re5 51. Kd4 Rd5 52. Kc4 Rd8 53. h7 Rh8 54. Kb5 and wins]

50... Rf5 51. Kg4 Again eschewing the pawn.

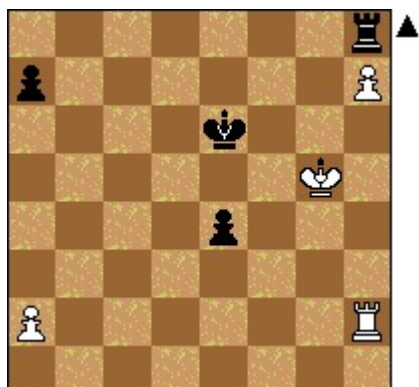
[51. Kxe4 wins as above]

51... Rf8 52. h7 Rh8



53. Kg5?? Shocron lets the win through his fingers, but...

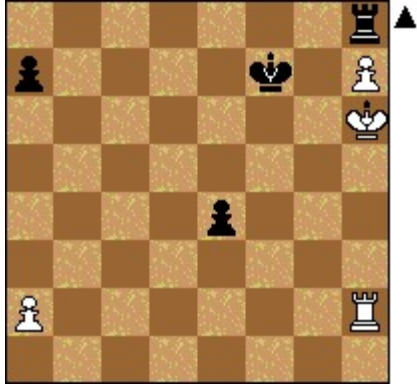
[He should still go after the e-pawn. In spite of the time White has wasted, after the exchanges on h7 he will still have a won pawn endgame. 53. Kf4 Kf6 (Trying to save the pawn is futile. 53... Kd5 54. Ke3 Ke5 55. Rh5 White wins) 54. Kxe4 Kg7 55. Kd5 Rxh7 56. Rxh7 Kxh7 57. Kc6 Kg6 58. Kb5! (Not 58. Kb7?? when Black sneaks away with a draw. 58... a5 59. a4 Kf7 60. Kc7 Ke6 61. Kb6 Kd5 62. Kxa5 Kc5 63. Ka6 Kc6= White's king cannot get out of the way of his pawn without allowing Black's king to block it) 58... Kf5 59. Ka6 Ke5 60. Kxa7 Kd6 61. Kb6 Kd7 62. Kb7 Kd6 63. a4 Kc5 64. a5 Kb5 65. a6 White wins]



53... Kf7?? only for a moment. Pilnik immediately returns the favor.

[53... Ke5 54. Kg6 Kd4 55. Kg7 Re8 56. h8=Q Rxh8 57. Rxh8 e3 58. Kf6 e2 59. Rh1 Kd3 60. Ke5 Kd2 61. a4 e1=Q 62. Rxe1 Kxe1 63. a5 Kd2 64. a6 Kc3 65. Kd6 Kd4 66. Kc6 Ke5 67. Kb7 Kd6 68. Kxa7 Kc7= Black's king gets back in the nick of time]

54. Kh6 Pilnik resigned.



[54... Kf6 55. Rg2 Kf5 (Or 55... Kf7 56. Rg7 Kf8 57. Rxa7 and wins) 56. Rg8 Rxh7 57. Kxh7 e3 58. Ra8 Kf4 59. Rxa7 e2 60. Re7 Kf3 61. Kg6 Kf2 62. Kf5 e1=Q 63. Rxe1 Kxe1 64. a4 and wins]

[1:0]

New Mexico Chess Champions

- Ruben Shocron, Part III

I present one more game of Ruben Shocron before moving on. His opponent, Akiba Rubinstein, was one of the world's greatest players in the years immediately before WWI.

Rubinstein was a Polish Jew born in 1880. He died in 1961, just three years after this game was played. In 1912 he may have been the strongest player in the world. He finished first in five consecutive major tournaments: San Sebastian, Pieštany, Breslau (the German championship), Warsaw and Vilnius. At the time Rubinstein was not able to raise the money he needed to challenge Emanuel Lasker for the World Championship. After Rubinstein had a poor result at St. Petersburg, 1914, Lasker "magnanimously" agreed to a match in October, 1914. Unfortunately WWI intervened and by the time the war ended Jose Raul Capablanca was considered to be the best challenger for Lasker.

After the war Rubinstein was not the player he had once been, but he still played in many of the Grandmaster tournaments in the 1920's. He won the Vienna 1922 tournament ahead of future World Champion, Alexander Aleksandrovich Alekhine. In 1930 he had one of the great successes of his career, leading the Polish team to the gold medal at the Chess Olympiad in Hamburg, Germany, with an individual score of 13 wins and 4 draws. But the following year he stopped playing in tournaments. At some point he moved to Belgium where he miraculously survived WWII.

He remained in obscurity until he came out of retirement in 1958 to play in the Buenos Aires International Tournament. The game below was played in that tournament. Though he was 78 years old and had not played in tournaments for 27 years, he scored a respectable 5-8.

Rubinstein plays a series of one off moves which first leave him with a difficult position and finally a lost position. Shocron, on the other hand, calmly plays to improve his position - nothing brilliant, just winning positional chess.

Shocron, Ruben – Akiba Rubinstein, 1:0 **Buenos Aires International Chess Tournament, 1959**

English Opening

- 1. c4 Nf6 2. Nc3 e5 3. Nf3 d6** This is solid and conservative, but it shuts in his bishop.
[3... Nc6 4. g3 Bb4 5. Bg2 O-O 6. O-O=]
- 4. d4 exd4!?** He gives White the superior center.
[It is better to transpose to a King's Indian Defense. 4... Nbd7 5. e4 g6 6. Be2 Bg7?/=]
- 5. Nxd4 Be7 6. e4 O-O 7. Be2 Nbd7 8. O-O Nc5 9. f3 a5 10. Be3 Be6!?** Why offer up your good bishop?

[Either 10... Re8² followed by Bf8;
or 10... c6² followed by Qc7 looks better]

11. Qc2 Qc8 This is an odd "development" of the queen. Again, c6 and Re8 both look better.
12. Rfd1 Nfd7 13. b3 White's pieces are superbly developed, whereas Black's are awkward.



13... Ne5 14. Nd5 Bxd5! Of course something has to be done about the threat of Nxe7+, but aside from giving up his good bishop, he puts a strong pawn on d5, opens the c-file for White and gives White's knight a strong outpost on f5.

[14... Bd8²± is not pretty, but it does not give up as much as the move played]

15. Nf5! Taking advantage of the fact that the bishop no longer covers f5 and the bishop on e7 is hanging. 15... Bf6 16. cxd5 b6 Effectively ceding c6 to White, but it is difficult to find a good plan for Black.

[16... Nxf3 is cute, but solidifies White's advantage. 17. gxf3 Bxa1 18. Rxa1±]

17. Rac1 Qd7 18. Nd4! The knight comes back securing a bind on light color squares on the queenside. 18... Kh8 19. Bb5 Qe7 20. a3 Bg5 21. Bxg5 Qxg5 22. Qe2 Ng6?! Rubinstein misses his last chance for a decent position.

[22... a4! 23. b4 Nb3 24. Rc3 (Not 24. Rxc7?! because Black gains control of the c-file in exchange for the pawn. 24... Nxd4 25. Rxd4 Rfc8 26. Rxc8 Rxc8²) 24... Nxd4 25. Rxd4 f5!± White is better, but Black has some counter play]

23. g3! Setting a sly trap. 23... Nf4? This looks nice, but gets him into worse trouble.

[The best chance is still 23... a4 24. b4 Nb3 25. Rxc7 With Black's knight misplaced on g6, White can make this capture without losing control over the c-file. 25... Nxd4 26. Rxd4 Rfc8 27. Rdc4 With an extra pawn and control of the open file, White should win]

24. Qd2 Nh3 25. Kg2 Qxd2? Now his is quite lost.

[He can muddy the waters with 25... Qh5 26. g4 Qh4 27. Nf5 Qf6 28. Kxh3 Nxb3 29. Qc3 Nxc1 30. Qxf6 gxf6 31. Rxc1 Ra7 32. Kg3 Though the material is even, White's pieces totally dominate the position. White's win is inevitable]

26. Rxd2 Ng5 27. h4 Ngxe4 28. fxe4 Nxe4 29. Re2 Nf6 30. Bc6 Ra6? Strange, but there is nothing good anyway. 31. Nb5 a4 32. b4 Black resigns. White threatens both Bb7, winning the rook, and Nxc7. There is no way to stop both.



[1:0]

Matt Grinberg, 5/24/2016