

Chess Still Growing in Popularity

THE CHESS PLAYER

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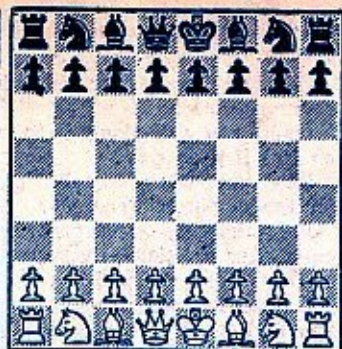
We are happy to announce to our many chess friends in the San Francisco Bay Area that each Friday we shall publish a chess column in this newspaper. The San Francisco News is to be congratulated on its recognition of the growing popularity and importance of chess in California.

On Broad Lines

We plan to conduct this column along very broad lines. Emphasis will of course be placed on chess activity in San Francisco and immediate vicinity, but we shall also cover other important events in the chess world, both national and international. Several weeks ago we noted in The News that the Soviet Union had accepted an invitation extended by the United States to engage in an eight-man team match in New York, and at the present writing it appears that this match will take place beginning July 15. This event will be of very great political significance, since it appears to be part of the general peace program of the Soviet Union. We do not expect to beat the Russians, since chess is heavily subsidized in the U.S.S.R., but we hope that our chess players will make a good showing.

Each week we shall present a chess problem or other task, to which a definite value in points will be assigned. Readers sending solutions to the tasks will be rated in a "ladder." At suitable intervals the person at the top of the ladder will receive a cash prize. We shall also award cash prizes for original compositions by our readers, game scores, chess stories or anecdotes, etc. Any contribution which we consider to be of interest to chess players will be eligible for such a prize. We hope that our readers will co-operate with us in making this column a really community undertaking.

A few words on the game of chess would seem to be pertinent in this initial column. Chess in a clearly recognizable form appears to have been played in India in the sixth century of the Christian era. It continued to be played



without much change until about the year 1485. Then, suddenly, a new type of chess appeared, in which the previously limited moves of the Queen and Bishop were extended, greatly modifying and speeding up the game. Contrary to common opinion, chess is not a slow game, or at least need not be a slow game. So-called "rapid" chess is played in all chess clubs, in which each player must make his move within 10 seconds, with the result that an average game is finished within ten minutes. For hard tournament chess, it is customary that each player make 20 moves per hour, or an average of one move each three minutes.

Game for Young, Too

Also contrary to general opinion, chess is not an "old man's game." The present champion of the United States is only about 21 years of age, and at least half of the strongest players in the United States are less than 25. Children take to chess very readily. A child of six has no difficulty in learning the moves, and there are many strong players who are still in their teens. There are well-organized chess programs for children in many communities of the United States, the two chief ones in California being in Los Angeles and Sutter Counties. The movement for school chess programs is growing in several other places in California, including San Francisco. There are active chess clubs in several San Francisco high schools.

The principal chess center in San Francisco is at the Mechanics' Institute Chess Club, 57 Post-st. We do not know exactly when this club was founded, but it probably came into existence not

much later than 1855, when the Mechanics' Institute itself was established through the generosity of San Franciscans who were trying to improve educational opportunities for working men. The Mechanics' Institute Chess Club is probably the oldest in the United States.

Another leading club in San Francisco is the Golden Gate Chess Club, which meets several times a week in the Hotel Cecil on Post-st. The original Golden Gate club was founded back in the 80s, and was re-established a couple of years ago by Mr. Henry Gross, San Francisco attorney, and present chess champion of California.

There is a strong chess club at Russian Center in San Francisco. This club won both the "A" and "B" divisions in the recently concluded team matches of the San Francisco Bay Area Chess League.

So much, then, for our first column. We shall be with you next week, with a chess problem, news and games.