

CHESS BARBS

CHESSMAN 'ON THE ROAD'

by Jude Acers
(US senior master)

(Continued from last week)

We've mentioned negative, depressing things on the nationwide tour that are just certain to happen in one form or another. You are probably afraid, upset, giving up your planned tour, which will entertain thousands of people at a near hysterical pitch, notable children and convicts. Now let's stop right here and give ten reasons for your 1971 U.S. tour:

1. The ladies are very nice. Be like grandmaster Walter Browne, alert, cheerful and oh, so modest! The ladies will love you in airline terminals, buses, trains, planes and cars. But, most of all, on foot. Watch out, though, while you're reading this--one, possibly two, ladies just passed you by and walked into Walter's open arms. Interesting, the ladies like strange people. Beth Cassidy was right, "Chess players are VERY sensual!"

2. The standing - room - only crowds and ovations following a dynamic, well-prepared lecture in a prison or in Buttner's Childrens' Home in Lubbock, Texas can float you past agonizing loneliness, self-doubt and a hundred worries.

3. To see America.

4. To meet people.

5. To develop tolerance, patience and self-reliance under tremendous pressure (like in the boy scouts), while teaching and playing the great game.

6. To reaffirm your greatness.

7. To help all promoters possible, including a 54-year-old school teacher who never, never dreamed that after she'd just taught 60 youngsters to play chess you would come along to wow 'em 1 hour and 15 minutes flat!

8. Because nobody else does anything this crazy, this year. Just imagine the possibilities!

9. It's fun, funny, scary, corny, vaudeville, tiring, but secretly you'll delight in the fact that the show must go on.

10. Russell Miller. Who's he? He's the greatest promoter, most reliable, brilliant, unrelenting, and organized chess arranger in the nation, that's who! Seeing him in operation April 6-8, 1971 was to watch forty-five exhibitions in schools, clubs and shopping centers booked from absolutely nothing. Promoting in Yakima, Washington, he is second to none in thoroughness at both prison-hospital and public exhibitions. He handles the press totally before and after all Miller promoted exhibitions. He personally handles all tour arrangements for Jude Acers, from supplying the chess sets to housing and airline schedules. His efficiency, timing and experience totally explain why he's the Acers' nationwide tour manager. He is also totally responsible for the fact that Acers will do another

tour, period.

Miller is long-time President of the Washington Chess Federation and also heads the East-West Tournament Association as well. No person even begins to approach the clocklike planning of a Miller Event. His promotional ideas (advertising, wording, exhibitions in shopping centers, chain exhibitions, i.e., a high school, a club, a hospital, plus a shopping center when you hit a town, within 24 hours) were refined and put into effect by hundreds of Miller phone calls. He also set up the worldwide photograph of a King County Jail 22-board simultaneous used by all the wire services, probably the greatest single promotional play ever used for a touring player up to that time. It was printed in Bombay and the Canary Islands! Boston! Vancouver! Miller's ideas of chess promotion is accurate personal control and knowledge of all phases of his events. HE uses postcard or letter notices to all

radio, TV and newspapers one week or less before a scheduled exhibition. He books all exhibitions and confirms all of them personally. He is totally responsible for the nationwide shopping center circuit which grandmaster Lubomir Kavalek and Jude Acers sued in 1971. HE tries to locate WATTS-line (free long distance) telephones in his area, so that in off-business hours he can promote by phone as well. Ask Miller why he does it.

"It's knowing I do it better than anybody else and trying to be thorough. It's a challenge and interesting. If I don't do it, nobody will," he once said. But just because Miller really is the best in the promoter business doesn't mean that chess organizers on a local, state and national level cannot use things that Miller devised for his exhibitions and tournaments. Here are some amazingly simple tips to help readers promote chess in the United States, as devised for the Washington Chess Federation appearances of Kavalek and Acers.

1. All exhibitions start on time, period.

2. The master exhibiter has a Coke, whistles a tune, watches girls, but AVOIDS going near the exhibition hall or classroom, library, etc. until everything is absolutely ready to go. This means the organizer should personally set up all chess sets, tables, chairs, etc., and check sets being put on the boards by players as well. The organizer tips the master on who really worked on the exhibition locally and should be thanked.

3. Only on instruction from the organizer does the exhibiter enter the room and delivers immediately a prepared, entertaining address with at least one problem and game on a demonstration board. (According to Miller, the lightweight metal model rused to Seattle

by the United States Chess Federation for an Acers' simultaneous proved entirely adequate for more than 20 different types of exhibitions booked later. It also withstood the tremendous punishment which Acers' travel places on man and machine over a period of eight months. Acers just comes in and blasts away!

4. Some radio and television stations are visited, if possible, personally by organizer and exhibitor in each city where chess promotion is known to be difficult. In Yakima, Washington alone, Jude Acers did six radio interviews, a 30-minute interview on "Viewpoint" for the educational television station, and other items.

5. Signboards in every city are a novel way to promote chess. It's just a matter of having a short message in mind, walking into the board location (e.g., paintshop, hardware store or shopping center) and asking the manager courteously. A good sign in the case of yours truly, for instance, would be "JUDE ACERS IS SUPER GREAT!"

6. Plugging the U.S. Chess Federation (how to join, how to get "Chess Life & Review") and local chess club information at each event is an absolute must. No exceptions are allowed, under penalty of being hung up from the roof of the nearest club. (Miller never missed once!) Sample copies of "Chess Life & Review" and regional publications also should be on hand.

7. An exhibition monitor or referee is certain to be kept busy by explaining "en passant" captures, the illegality of castling out of check, the option of replacing a pawn that has reached the eighth rank with a knight, bishop or rook, instead of a queen, etc. In an unbelievable 50-board exhibition

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bition at Lancaster, Pennsylvania, two adult opponents were caught moving twice before Acers returned to their board. Acers somehow won anyway, but was visibly shaken by this and other small worries, such as players shifting the pieces around, analyzing and replacing them in his sight as he approached their board. The Lancaster exhibition happened solely by chance (and the inexperience of the organizers) to be a classic in "no-noes" for the

promotion and execution of a simultaneous lecture and exhibition. Here is Acers' version of exactly what transpired:

"I entered the shopping mall at two minutes before 6 p.m. and had made it clear that I expected to begin precisely at 6 p.m. Only two of about 30 people at the chess tables were placing 20 or 30 box sets out. No order prevailed. I just skipped the lecture and introduction entirely and went around and made opening moves on the few boards available. The whole exhibition was poor showmanship on my part (three sets were improperly placed with black square on the right). A large crowd was asking questions nobody could answer. Publicity of the event had played up the sponsor so heavily that local

media did not use it at all and many people did not play thinking that the event was for grandmasters. In my opinion, in spite of the large crowd at the shopping center, not one person was introduced to USCF or area chess organizations and the exhibition must be classed as a near failure on that account. And to think, I had arrived in the area 72 hours early and had never thought to organize or check last minute promotion or arrangements. Never again!"

Don't let this happen to your club exhibition.

8. An exhibition is a gimmick to promote chess. It should be treated as a show and very professionally, too.

9. Under no circumstances

should the master be required to do anything but lecture, play and leave immediately. Collecting money, exhibition tickets, explaining rules, etc., is out. It's hard work, according to grandmasters Browne and Kavalek, and especially for Acers, who plays more of them than anyone else in the world.

10. More crowd the better-- school cafeterias, a college library. Don't hide a simultaneous.

11. In exhibitions for blind, crippled or very young kids, it is best to throw out the rulebook. Arrive on time with a few simple chess problems and one or two quick checkmates and pour on the enthusiasm and warmth. Samples: Find White's possible checkmates with the White king at "c3" and

the White queen at "h8" and the Black king at "c1", or with the White king at "c3" and the White queen at "b8" and the Black king at "a1".

Using a few games like Gibaud--Lazard, Paris, 1924, 1 d4 Nf6 2 Nd2 e5 3 de Ng4 4 h3?? Ne3! 5 White resigns, or Keres--Arslanovskiy, Shchavno-Zdrui, 1950, 1 e4 c6 2 Nc3 d5 3 Nf3 de 4 Ne4 Nf6 5 Qe2 Nbd7?? 6 Nd60tel, Jude Acers was able to create wild enthusiasm among very young audiences without a miss. Also, absolute beginner audiences, such as the Techachapi, California prison audiences, found Acers' simple explanations of development with the symmetrical Giuoco Piano very

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