



**HERMAN STEINER CHESS CLUB, INC.**

8801 CASHIO STREET

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**Open Letter to Chess Life - (Frank R. Brady)**

**SATURDAY NIGHT OR SUNDAY MORNING**

Your convincing review of the Fischer-Reshevsky production, presents the chess-playing public with a technically accurate picture of the events leading up to the forfeiture, if not a factually accurate one, and thus helps to add to the confusion of misinformation. What beclouds your account is not a lack of sincerity but the understandable handicap of compiling piecemeal information from various sources, with embellishments from each source.

We owe it to the public to attempt to unuddle some of the "facts".

**NUMBER ONE**

Various considerations led to the 11 A.M. scheduling of the 12th game on Sunday, Aug. 13. (Clarification concerning the change from Saturday to Sunday is not pertinent here).

a) The U.S. Open, in which many Los Angeles chess players planned to participate, was starting the following day, and a number of them expected to leave for San Francisco Sunday evening. It was just a matter of common sense to avoid jeopardizing gate receipts by starting the show early.

b) Judging from the number of adjourned games there had been throughout the match, there was a strong possibility that the 12th game also would be adjourned, in which case it would have to be played off the same day. Therefore, the early starting time seemed advisable.

c) The Piatigorsky concert was a factor, but I would like to point out that in the concessions department, the Herman Steiner Chess Club did a herculean backward-bend in

getting the club's Quarters ready on time for the Fischer-Reshevsky match, the Los Angeles portion of which was ORIGINALLY SCHEDULED FOR SEPTEMBER. To accommodate Reshevsky because of the Jewish holidays in September, and Fischer because of his intended participation in Yugoslavia, we went through a hellish two months, accelerating the construction job, which involved, besides the constant worry and energy-draining work, a greater financial outlay than had been first estimated. No half-way measures, no time-saving devices were employed. Once we had committed ourselves it was our responsibility to see it through to the best of our ability.

It is an ironic commentary on the deep concern and the thankless, unending hours of work expended by Mrs. Gregor Piotigorsky to further the progress of chess, that all can be destroyed by the vindictive whim of the boy who represents chess in this country, and who thus stood to reap the rewards.

#### NUMBER TWO

Here I must quote Mr. Saul Rubin: "Many reports have been circulating that Fischer, by his contemptuous conduct, intemperate remarks and other offensive characteristics found disfavor in the eyes of the referee and other chess personages, and that this disfavor contributed in a substantial way toward the referee's decision to forfeit the 12th game against him."

I cannot take these words seriously. Does Mr. Rubin, who appears to be a gentleman and a scholar, truly believe that the tournament committee, comprising men and women of intelligence and integrity, would rule against Fischer because he was "unpopular" or used pool-parlor language? Does Mr. Rubin believe that only within the narrow confines of New York chess, can an equitable decision be rendered? Whose word does Mr. Rubin have that Fischer had not agreed to play on Sunday at 11 A.M., before August 10th, at which time he voiced his first objection?

And anyway, since when was Reshevsky a popularity hero?

#### NUMBER THREE

Since it was usually my privilege to escort the young chess prodigy from hotel to playing quarters, and back, it would thus appear that, more than the other members of the tournament committee, the American Chess Foundation, the United States Chess Federation, and Mr. Saul Rubin, I would have a smattering of insight into the thought pattern that motivated him. While much of it is not important to this account, I can say that Fischer was extremely put out (and that's saying it mildly) by having drawn two games that were practically conceded to be wins by our top masters here. The rebellious attitude that dominated his behaviour in Los Angeles, his perverseness, his defiance of authority

and his shocking language, all took root from his great frustration in not having shown any concrete proof of superiority over Reshevsky.

Mr. Rubin says: "Was not the re-scheduling required to accommodate Reshevsky?"

Reshevsky's strict observance of his religion has been deferred to for years, and if correcting a thoughtless oversight on the part of the planning committee is considered an accommodation, then that's what it was. But - and this may come as a surprise - almost all of the concessions, accommodations or allowances that were made, were made for Fischer!

For example - Fischer loved the Beverly Hilton ballroom where he performed on opening night. He showed off to advantage on the stage and he was not unaware of it. He nagged me for days to schedule more games at the Hilton, regardless of the problems or expenses involved, and of the fact that we would practically have to launch a new publicity campaign. However, as a concession to our star we arranged a second night at the Beverly Hilton (see enclosed release, sent to the press on Aug. 3), despite Reshevsky's equally strong preference for playing at the club.

On Aug. 3rd, the day the confirmation from the Hilton was received, I immediately phoned Fischer and told him of the change in schedule to the Hilton, for Aug. 10. AT THE SAME TIME I told him of the switch from Saturday, 7:30 P.M. to Sunday, 11 A.M. Fischer was the first person to be notified of BOTH re-schedulings, and when I say first I mean FIRST - not Reshevsky, not Rivise, not even Mrs. Piatigorsky who had not yet seen the confirmation from the Hilton. Subsequently, both changes were announced before and after each game, releases sent to all newspapers, and a paid ad inserted in the Sunday Times, Aug. 6, (under Mr. Kashdan's chess column).

It was Fischer not Reshevsky who was the prima donna. It was Fischer who complained about the air-conditioning, the noise, the crowds, the lighting, the referee, the club (which might not have found favor with him had it been modeled after the Taj Mahal.)

On Thursday, Aug. 10, the day of the Beverly Hilton game, Fischer, having exhausted his repertoire of gripes, decided to object to the 11 A.M. time.....But by then it was too late to publicize another time change!

To restore Mr. Rubin's peace of mind, he can stop....  
"wondering why there was not enough maturity, tact and understanding among those who directed this excellent event to see it through to its logical conclusion."

No one in Los Angeles had the perspicacity, foresight, or experience even to imagine what they were letting themselves in for, dealing with a genius like Fischer. While Fischer's capers and didoes might have created amusing spectator diversion on the

Gilbert and Sullivan stage, one can hardly credit their exhibition on the chess arena.

NUMBER FOUR

An enterprise, costly in time, effort and money, ended in disruptive inconclusiveness virtually wiping out all justification for its existence. You can be sure that it was with extreme reluctance, and only because there was no alternative, that the tournament committee in Los Angeles declared the forfeiture of the twelfth game. To have done otherwise would have been not only a violation of F.I.D.E. rules but also a breach of principle and ethics.

Fischer knew, that his protest came too late to notify the public of another time change, and also that the 12th game (the last Los Angeles game) would draw a large attendance. When, despite all reasoning and persuasion, he failed to appear on Sunday, could one conscientiously allow 150 spectators, the tournament committee, and Mr. Reshevsky, to sit for 2½ hours twiddling their thumbs while his majesty chose to snooze in his hotel room?

No one expects to tell top players how to perform. So long as there is no infraction of the rules, they can turn somersaults or chase rabbits while their opponent is on the move. And we are even willing to pay the piper and let them call the tunes. But tunes for a piper, not a 40-piece string ensemble!

You pose the question: "Why can't there be some concessions made to our country's greatest player and our one hope of a possible world's champion?"

This narrows down to deciding -- how subservient should one be to genius? To what degree can one let an arrogant, rough-shod rider trample on order, dignity and decency? Having borne his complaints, surliness, contempt, and unwashed language to the point of ludicrousness, one should draw the line - where?

Fischer's protest was nothing as high-falutin' as a rebellion against "the element of force" or "the ever-growing specter of patronage". It was simply the spitefulness of a captious boy venting his annoyance with the progress of the match, on everyone connected with it - including himself!

And speaking of that worrisome "specter of patronage", how far would the "technical arm" reach without the helping hand of a Piatigorsky, a Rosenwald, an Edgar, a Laucks, Gressor or Calderon? In what fields of creative endeavor does the helping hand not reach out to fan and feed the spark of genius that would otherwise be smothered in obscurity?

Lina Grumette