

= Emanuel Lasker =

Emanuel Lasker (December 24 , 1868 ? January 11 , 1941) was a German chess player , mathematician , and philosopher who was World Chess Champion for 27 years (from 1894 to 1921) . In his prime Lasker was one of the most dominant champions , and he is still generally regarded as one of the strongest players ever .

His contemporaries used to say that Lasker used a " psychological " approach to the game , and even that he sometimes deliberately played inferior moves to confuse opponents . Recent analysis , however , indicates that he was ahead of his time and used a more flexible approach than his contemporaries , which mystified many of them . Lasker knew contemporary analyses of openings well but disagreed with many of them . He published chess magazines and five chess books , but later players and commentators found it difficult to draw lessons from his methods .

Lasker made contributions to the development of other games . He was a first @-@ class contract bridge player and wrote about bridge and other games , including Go and his own invention , Lasca . His books about games presented a problem that is still considered notable in the mathematical analysis of card games . Lasker was also a research mathematician who was known for his contributions to commutative algebra , which included proving the primary decomposition of the ideals of polynomial rings . On the other hand , his philosophical works and a drama that he co @-@ authored received little attention .

= = Life and career = =

= = = Early years 1868 ? 94 = = =

Emanuel Lasker was born on December 24 , 1868 at Berlinchen in Neumark (now Barlinek in Poland) , the son of a Jewish cantor . At the age of eleven he was sent to Berlin to study mathematics , where he lived with his brother Berthold , eight years his senior , who taught him how to play chess . According to the website Chessmetrics , Berthold was among the world 's top ten players in the early 1890s . To supplement their income Emanuel Lasker played chess and card games for small stakes , especially at the Café Kaiserhof .

Lasker shot up through the chess rankings in 1889 , when he won the Café Kaiserhof 's annual Winter tournament 1888 / 89 and the Hauptturnier A (" second division " tournament) at the sixth DSB Congress (German Chess Federation 's congress) held in Breslau . Winning the Hauptturnier earned Lasker the title of " master " . The candidates were divided into two groups of ten . The top four in each group competed in a final . Lasker won his section , with 2 ½ points more than his nearest rival . However , scores were reset to 0 for the final . With two rounds to go , Lasker trailed the leader , Viennese amateur von Feierfeil , by 1 ½ points . Lasker won both of his final games , while von Feierfeil lost in the penultimate round (being mated in 121 moves after the position was reconstructed incorrectly following an adjournment) and drew in the last round . The two players were now tied . Lasker won a playoff and garnered the master title . This enabled him to play in master @-@ level tournaments and thus launched his chess career .

Lasker finished second in an international tournament at Amsterdam , ahead of some well @-@ known masters , including Isidore Gunsberg (assessed as the second strongest player in the world at that time by Chessmetrics) . In 1890 he finished third in Graz , then shared first prize with his brother Berthold in a tournament in Berlin . In spring 1892 , he won two tournaments in London , the second and stronger of these without losing a game . At New York 1893 , he won all thirteen games , one of the few times in chess history that a player has achieved a perfect score in a significant tournament .

His record in matches was equally impressive : at Berlin in 1890 he drew a short play @-@ off match against his brother Berthold ; and won all his other matches from 1889 to 1893 , mostly against top @-@ class opponents : Curt von Bardeleben (1889 ; ranked 9th best player in the world by Chessmetrics at that time) , Jacques Mieses (1889 ; ranked 11th) , Henry Edward Bird (1890 ;

then 60 years old ; ranked 29th) , Berthold Englisch (1890 ; ranked 18th) , Joseph Henry Blackburne (1892 , without losing a game ; Blackburne was aged 51 then , but still 9th in the world) , Jackson Showalter (1892 ? 93 ; 22nd) and Celso Golmayo Zúpide (1893 ; 29th) . Chessmetrics calculates that Emanuel Lasker became the world 's strongest player in mid @-@ 1890 , and that he was in the top ten from the very beginning of his recorded career in 1889 .

In 1892 Lasker founded the first of his chess magazines , The London Chess Fortnightly , which was published from August 15 , 1892 to July 30 , 1893 . In the second quarter of 1893 there was a gap of ten weeks between issues , allegedly because of problems with the printer . Shortly after its last issue Lasker traveled to the USA , where he spent the next two years .

Lasker challenged Siegbert Tarrasch , who had won three consecutive strong international tournaments (Breslau 1889 , Manchester 1890 , and Dresden 1892) , to a match . Tarrasch haughtily declined , stating that Lasker should first prove his mettle by attempting to win one or two major international events .

= = = Chess competition 1894 ? 1918 = = =

= = = Matches against Steinitz = = =

Rebuffed by Tarrasch , Lasker challenged the reigning World Champion Wilhelm Steinitz to a match for the title . Initially Lasker wanted to play for US \$ 5 @,@ 000 a side and a match was agreed at stakes of \$ 3 @,@ 000 a side , but Steinitz agreed to a series of reductions when Lasker found it difficult to raise the money . The final figure was \$ 2 @,@ 000 , which was less than for some of Steinitz ' earlier matches (the final combined stake of \$ 4 @,@ 000 would be worth over \$ 495 @,@ 000 at 2006 values) . Although this was publicly praised as an act of sportsmanship on Steinitz ' part , Steinitz may have desperately needed the money . The match was played in 1894 , at venues in New York , Philadelphia , and Montreal . Steinitz had previously declared he would win without doubt , so it came as a shock when Lasker won the first game . Steinitz responded by winning the second , and maintained the balance through the sixth . However , Lasker won all the games from the seventh to the eleventh , and Steinitz asked for a week 's rest . When the match resumed , Steinitz looked in better shape and won the 13th and 14th games . Lasker struck back in the 15th and 16th , and Steinitz did not compensate for his losses in the middle of the match . Hence Lasker won convincingly with ten wins , five losses and four draws . Lasker thus became the second formally recognized World Chess Champion , and confirmed his title by beating Steinitz even more convincingly in their re @-@ match in 1896 ? 97 (ten wins , two losses , and five draws) .

= = = Tournament successes = = =

Influential players and journalists belittled the 1894 match both before and after it took place . Lasker 's difficulty in getting backing may have been caused by hostile pre @-@ match comments from Gunsberg and Leopold Hoffer , who had long been a bitter enemy of Steinitz . One of the complaints was that Lasker had never played the other two members of the top four , Siegbert Tarrasch and Mikhail Chigorin ? although Tarrasch had rejected a challenge from Lasker in 1892 , publicly telling him to go and win an international tournament first . After the match some commentators , notably Tarrasch , said Lasker had won mainly because Steinitz was old (58 in 1894) .

Emanuel Lasker answered these criticisms by creating an even more impressive playing record . Before World War I broke out his most serious " setbacks " were third place at Hastings 1895 (where he may have been suffering from the after @-@ effects of typhoid fever) , a tie for second at Cambridge Springs 1904 , and a tie for first at the Chigorin Memorial in St Petersburg 1909 . He won first prizes at very strong tournaments in St Petersburg (1895 ? 96 , Quadrangular) , Nuremberg (1896) , London (1899) , Paris (1900) and St Petersburg (1914) , where he overcame a 1 ½

-point deficit to finish ahead of the rising stars , Capablanca and Alexander Alekhine , who later became the next two World Champions . For decades chess writers have reported that Tsar Nicholas II of Russia conferred the title of " Grandmaster of Chess " upon each of the five finalists at St Petersburg 1914 (Lasker , Capablanca , Alekhine , Tarrasch and Marshall) , but chess historian Edward Winter has questioned this , stating that the earliest known sources supporting this story were published in 1940 and 1942 .

== == Matches against Marshall and Tarrasch == ==

Lasker 's match record was as impressive between his 1896 ? 97 re @-@ match with Steinitz and 1914 : he won all but one of his normal matches , and three of those were convincing defenses of his title . He first faced Marshall in the World Chess Championship 1907 , when despite his aggressive style , Marshall could not win a single game , losing eight and drawing seven (final score : $11\frac{1}{2} ? 3\frac{1}{2}$) .

He then played Tarrasch in the World Chess Championship 1908 , first at Düsseldorf then at Munich . Tarrasch firmly believed the game of chess was governed by a precise set of principles . For him the strength of a chess move was in its logic , not in its efficiency . Because of his stubborn principles he considered Lasker as a coffeehouse player who won his games only thanks to dubious tricks , while Lasker mocked the arrogance of Tarrasch who , in his opinion , shone more in salons than at the chessboard . At the opening ceremony , Tarrasch refused to talk to Lasker , only saying : " Mr. Lasker , I have only three words to say to you : check and mate ! "

Lasker gave a brilliant answer on the chessboard , winning four of the first five games , and playing a type of chess Tarrasch could not understand . For example , in the second game after 19 moves arose a situation (see diagram at left) in which Lasker was a pawn down , with a bad bishop and doubled pawns . At this point it appeared Tarrasch was winning , but 20 moves later he was forced to resign . Lasker eventually won by $10\frac{1}{2} ? 5\frac{1}{2}$ (eight wins , five draws , and three losses) . Tarrasch claimed the wet weather was the cause of his defeat .

== == Matches against Janowski == ==

In 1909 Lasker drew a short match (two wins , two losses) against Dawid Janowski , an all @-@ out attacking Polish expatriate . Several months later they played a longer match in Paris , and chess historians still debate whether this was for the World Chess Championship . Understanding Janowski 's style , Lasker chose to defend solidly so that Janowski unleashed his attacks too soon and left himself vulnerable . Lasker easily won the match $8 ? 2$ (seven wins , two draws , one loss) . This victory was convincing for everyone but Janowski , who asked for a revenge match . Lasker accepted and they played a World Chess Championship match in Berlin in November ? December 1910 . Lasker crushed his opponent , winning $9\frac{1}{2} ? 1\frac{1}{2}$ (eight wins , three draws , no losses) . Janowski did not understand Lasker 's moves , and after his first three losses he declared to Edward Lasker , " Your homonym plays so stupidly that I cannot even look at the chessboard when he thinks . I am afraid I will not do anything good in this match . "

== == Match against Schlechter == ==

Between his two matches against Janowski , Lasker arranged another World Chess Championship in January ? February 1910 against Carl Schlechter . Schlechter was a modest gentleman , who was generally unlikely to win the major chess tournaments by his peaceful inclination , his lack of aggressiveness and his willingness to accept most draw offers from his opponents (about 80 % of his games finished by a draw) . The conditions of the match against Lasker are still debated among chess historians , but it seems Schlechter accepted to play under very unfavourable conditions , notably that he would need to finish two points ahead of Lasker to be declared the winner of the match , and he would need to win a revenge match to be declared World Champion . The match was originally meant to consist of 30 games , but when it became obvious that there were

insufficient funds (Lasker demanded a fee of 1 @, @ 000 marks per game played) , the number of games was reduced to ten , making the margin of two points all the more difficult .

At the beginning , Lasker tried to attack but Schlechter had no difficulty defending , so that the first four games finished in draws . In the fifth game Lasker had a big advantage , but committed a blunder that cost him the game . Hence at the middle of the match Schlechter was one point ahead . The next four games were drawn , despite fierce play from both players . In the sixth Schlechter managed to draw a game being a pawn down . In the seventh Lasker nearly lost because of a beautiful exchange sacrifice from Schlechter . In the ninth only a blunder from Lasker allowed Schlechter to draw a lost ending . The score before the last game was thus 5 ? 4 for Schlechter . In the tenth game Schlechter tried to win tactically and took a big advantage , but he missed a clear win at the 35th move , continued to take increasing risks and finished by losing . Hence the match was a draw and Lasker remained World Champion .

= = = Abandoned challenges = = =

In 1911 Lasker received a challenge for a world title match against the rising star José Raúl Capablanca . Lasker was unwilling to play the traditional " first to win ten games " type of match in the semi @-@ tropical conditions of Havana , especially as drawn games were becoming more frequent and the match might last for over six months . He therefore made a counter @-@ proposal : if neither player had a lead of at least two games by the end of the match , it should be considered a draw ; the match should be limited to the best of thirty games , counting draws ; except that if either player won six games and led by at least two games before thirty games were completed , he should be declared the winner ; the champion should decide the venue and stakes , and should have the exclusive right to publish the games ; the challenger should deposit a forfeit of US \$ 2 @, @ 000 (equivalent to over \$ 194 @, @ 000 in 2006 values) ; the time limit should be twelve moves per hour ; play should be limited to two sessions of 2 ½ hours each per day , five days a week . Capablanca objected to the time limit , the short playing times , the thirty @-@ game limit , and especially the requirement that he must win by two games to claim the title , which he regarded as unfair . Lasker took offence at the terms in which Capablanca criticized the two @-@ game lead condition and broke off negotiations , and until 1914 Lasker and Capablanca were not on speaking terms . However , at the 1914 St. Petersburg tournament , Capablanca proposed a set of rules for the conduct of World Championship matches , which were accepted by all the leading players , including Lasker .

Late in 1912 Lasker entered into negotiations for a world title match with Akiba Rubinstein , whose tournament record for the previous few years had been on a par with Lasker 's and a little ahead of Capablanca 's . The two players agreed to play a match if Rubinstein could raise the funds , but Rubinstein had few rich friends to back him and the match was never played . This situation demonstrated some of the flaws inherent in the championship system then being used . The start of World War I in summer 1914 put an end to hopes that Lasker would play either Rubinstein or Capablanca for the World Championship in the near future . Throughout World War I (1914 ? 18) Lasker played in only two serious chess events . He convincingly won (5 ½ ? ½) a non @-@ title match against Tarrasch in 1916 . In September ? October 1918 , shortly before the armistice , he won a quadrangular (four @-@ player) tournament , half a point ahead of Rubinstein .

= = = Academic activities 1894 ? 1918 = = =

Despite his superb playing results , chess was not Lasker 's only interest . His parents recognized his intellectual talents , especially for mathematics , and sent the adolescent Emanuel to study in Berlin (where he found he also had a talent for chess) . Lasker gained his abitur (high school graduation certificate) at Landsberg an der Warthe , now a Polish town named Gorzów Wielkopolski but then part of Prussia . He then studied mathematics and philosophy at the universities in Berlin , Göttingen (where David Hilbert was one of his doctoral advisors) and Heidelberg .

In 1895 Lasker published two mathematical articles in Nature . On the advice of David Hilbert he

registered for doctoral studies at Erlangen during 1900 ? 02 . In 1901 he presented his doctoral thesis *Über Reihen auf der Convergenzgrenze* (" On Series at Convergence Boundaries ") at Erlangen and in the same year it was published by the Royal Society . He was awarded a doctorate in mathematics in 1902 . His most significant mathematical article , in 1905 , published a theorem of which Emmy Noether developed a more generalized form , which is now regarded as of fundamental importance to modern algebra and algebraic geometry .

Lasker held short @-@ term positions as a mathematics lecturer at Tulane University in New Orleans (1893) and Victoria University in Manchester (1901 ; Victoria University was one of the " parents " of the current University of Manchester) . However , he was unable to secure a longer @-@ term position , and pursued his scholarly interests independently .

In 1906 Lasker published a booklet titled *Kampf* (*Struggle*) , in which he attempted to create a general theory of all competitive activities , including chess , business and war . He produced two other books which are generally categorized as philosophy , *Das Begreifen der Welt* (*Comprehending the World* ; 1913) and *Die Philosophie des Unvollendbar* (sic ; *The Philosophy of the Unattainable* ; 1918) .

= = = Other activities 1894 ? 1918 = = =

In 1896 ? 97 Lasker published his book *Common Sense in Chess* , based on lectures he had given in London in 1895 .

In 1903 , Lasker played in Ostend against Mikhail Chigorin , a six @-@ game match that was sponsored by the wealthy lawyer and industrialist Isaac Rice in order to test the Rice Gambit . Lasker narrowly lost the match . Three years later Lasker became secretary of the Rice Gambit Association , founded by Rice in order to promote the Rice Gambit , and in 1907 Lasker quoted with approval Rice 's views on the convergence of chess and military strategy .

In November 1904 , Lasker founded Lasker 's Chess Magazine , which ran until 1909 .

For a short time in 1906 Emanuel Lasker was interested in the strategy game Go , but soon returned to chess . He was introduced to the game by his namesake Edward Lasker , who wrote a successful book *Go and Go @-@ Moku* in 1934 .

At the age of 42 , in July 1911 , Lasker married Martha Cohn (née Bamberger) , a rich widow who was a year older than Lasker and already a grandmother . They lived in Berlin .

Martha Cohn wrote popular stories under the pseudonym " L. Marco " .

During World War I , Lasker invested all of his savings in German war bonds . Since Germany lost the war , Lasker lost all his money . During the war , he wrote a book which claimed that civilization would be in danger if Germany lost the war .

= = = Match against Capablanca = = =

In January 1920 Lasker and José Raúl Capablanca signed an agreement to play a World Championship match in 1921 , noting that Capablanca was not free to play in 1920 . Because of the delay , Lasker insisted on a final clause that allowed him to play anyone else for the championship in 1920 , that nullified the contract with Capablanca if Lasker lost a title match in 1920 , and that stipulated that if Lasker resigned the title Capablanca should become World Champion . Lasker had previously included in his agreement before World War I to play Akiba Rubinstein for the title a similar clause that if he resigned the title , it should become Rubinstein 's .

A report in the *American Chess Bulletin* (July ? August 1920 issue) said that Lasker had resigned the world title in favor of Capablanca because the conditions of the match were unpopular in the chess world . The *American Chess Bulletin* speculated that the conditions were not sufficiently unpopular to warrant resignation of the title , and that Lasker 's real concern was that there was not enough financial backing to justify his devoting nine months to the match . When Lasker resigned the title in favor of Capablanca he was unaware that enthusiasts in Havana had just raised \$ 20 @,@ 000 to fund the match provided it was played there . When Capablanca learned of Lasker 's resignation he went to the Netherlands , where Lasker was living at the time , to inform him that

Havana would finance the match . In August 1920 Lasker agreed to play in Havana , but insisted that he was the challenger as Capablanca was now the champion . Capablanca signed an agreement that accepted this point , and soon afterwards published a letter confirming this . Lasker also stated that , if he beat Capablanca , he would resign the title so that younger masters could compete for it .

The match was played in March ? April 1921 . After four draws , the fifth game saw Lasker blunder with Black in an equal ending . Capablanca 's solid style allowed him to easily draw the next four games , without taking any risks . In the tenth game , Lasker as White played a position with an isolated queen pawn but failed to create the necessary activity and Capablanca reached a superior ending , which he duly won . The eleventh and fourteenth games were also won by Capablanca , and Lasker resigned the match .

Reuben Fine and Harry Golombek attributed this to Lasker 's being in mysteriously poor form . On the other hand , Vladimir Kramnik thought that Lasker played quite well and the match was an " even and fascinating fight " until Lasker blundered in the last game , and explained that Capablanca was twenty years younger , a slightly stronger player , and had more recent competitive practice .

= = = 1921 to end of life = = =

By this time Lasker was nearly 53 years old , and he never played another serious match ; his only other match was a short exhibition against Frank James Marshall in 1940 , which Lasker lost . After winning the New York 1924 chess tournament (1 ½ points ahead of Capablanca) and finishing second at Moscow in 1925 (1 ½ points behind Efim Bogoljubow , ½ point ahead of Capablanca) , he effectively retired from serious chess .

During the Moscow 1925 chess tournament , Emanuel Lasker received a telegram informing him that the drama written by himself and his brother Berthold , Vom Menschen die Geschichte (" History of Mankind ") , had been accepted for performance at the Lessing theatre in Berlin . Emanuel Lasker was so distracted by this news that he lost badly to Carlos Torre the same day . The play , however , was not a success .

In 1926 Lasker wrote Lehrbuch des Schachspiels , which he re @-@ wrote in English in 1927 as Lasker 's Manual of Chess . He also wrote books on other games of mental skill : Encyclopedia of Games (1929) and Das verständige Kartenspiel (means " Sensible Card Play " ; 1929 ; English translation in the same year) , both of which posed a problem in the mathematical analysis of card games ; Brettspiele der Völker (" Board Games of the Nations " ; 1931) , which includes 30 pages about Go and a section about a game he had invented in 1911 , Lasca .

In 1930 , Lasker was a special correspondent for Dutch and German newspapers reporting on the Culbertson @-@ Buller bridge match during which he became a registered teacher of the Culbertson system . He became an expert bridge player , representing Germany at international events in the early 1930s , and wrote Das Bridgespiel (" The Game of Bridge ") in 1931 .

In October 1928 Emanuel Lasker 's brother Berthold died .

In spring 1933 Adolf Hitler started a campaign of discrimination and intimidation against Jews , depriving them of their property and citizenship . Lasker and his wife Martha , who were both Jewish , were forced to leave Germany in the same year . After a short stay in England , in 1935 they were invited to live in the USSR by Nikolai Krylenko , the Commissar of Justice who was responsible for the Moscow show trials and , in his other capacity as Sports Minister , was an enthusiastic supporter of chess . In the USSR , Lasker renounced his German citizenship and received Soviet citizenship . He took permanent residence in Moscow , and was given a post at Moscow 's Institute for Mathematics and a post of trainer of the USSR national team . Lasker returned to competitive chess to make some money , finishing fifth in Zürich 1934 and third in Moscow 1935 (undefeated , ½ point behind Mikhail Botvinnik and Salo Flohr ; ahead of Capablanca , Rudolf Spielmann and several Soviet masters) , sixth in Moscow 1936 and seventh equal in Nottingham 1936 . His performance in Moscow 1935 at age 66 was hailed as " a biological miracle . "

Joseph Stalin 's Great Purge started at about the same time the Laskers arrived in the USSR . In August 1937 , Martha and Emanuel Lasker decided to leave the Soviet Union , and they moved , via

the Netherlands , to the United States (first Chicago , next New York) in October 1937 . In the following year Emanuel Lasker 's patron , Krylenko , was purged . Lasker tried to support himself by giving chess and bridge lectures and exhibitions , as he was now too old for serious competition . In 1940 he published his last book , The Community of the Future , in which he proposed solutions for serious political problems , including anti @-@ Semitism and unemployment . He died of a kidney infection in New York on January 11 , 1941 , at the age of 72 , as a charity patient at the Mount Sinai Hospital . He was buried in the Beth Olom Cemetery , Queens , New York . He was survived by his wife Martha and his sister , Mrs. Lotta Hirschberg .

= = Assessment = =

= = = Playing strength and style = = =

Lasker was considered to have a " psychological " method of play in which he considered the subjective qualities of his opponent , in addition to the objective requirements of his position on the board . Richard Réti published a lengthy analysis of Lasker 's play in which he concluded that Lasker deliberately played inferior moves that he knew would make his opponent uncomfortable . W. H. K. Pollock commented , " It is no easy matter to reply correctly to Lasker 's bad moves . "

Lasker himself denied the claim that he deliberately played bad moves , and most modern writers agree . According to Grandmaster Andrew Soltis and International Master John L. Watson , the features that made his play mysterious to contemporaries now appear regularly in modern play : the g2 @-@ g4 " Spike " attack against the Dragon Sicilian ; sacrifices to gain positional advantage ; playing the " practical " move rather than trying to find the best move ; counterattacking and complicating the game before a disadvantage became serious . Former World Champion Vladimir Kramnik said , " He realized that different types of advantage could be interchangeable : tactical edge could be converted into strategic advantage and vice versa " , which mystified contemporaries who were just becoming used to the theories of Steinitz as codified by Siegbert Tarrasch .

Max Euwe opined that the real reason behind Lasker 's success was his " exceptional defensive technique " and that " almost all there is to say about defensive chess can be demonstrated by examples from the games of Steinitz and Lasker " , with the former exemplifying passive defence and the latter an active defence .

The famous win against José Raúl Capablanca at St. Petersburg in 1914 , which Lasker needed in order to retain any chance of catching up with Capablanca , is sometimes offered as evidence of his " psychological " approach . Reuben Fine describes Lasker 's choice of opening , the Exchange Variation of the Ruy Lopez , as " innocuous but psychologically potent " . However , an analysis of Lasker 's use of this variation throughout his career concludes that he had excellent results with it as White against top @-@ class opponents , and sometimes used it in " must @-@ win " situations . Lud?k Pachman writes that Lasker 's choice presented his opponent with a dilemma : with only a ½ point lead , Capablanca would have wanted to play safe ; but the Exchange Variation 's pawn structure gives White an endgame advantage , and Black must use his bishop pair aggressively in the middle game to nullify this . In Kramnik 's opinion , Lasker 's play in this game demonstrated deep positional understanding , rather than psychology .

Fine reckoned Lasker paid little attention to the openings , but Capablanca thought Lasker knew the openings very well but disagreed with a lot of contemporary opening analysis . In fact before the 1894 world title match Lasker studied the openings thoroughly , especially Steinitz ' favorite lines . In Capablanca 's opinion , no player surpassed Lasker in the ability to assess a position quickly and accurately , in terms of who had the better prospects of winning and what strategy each side should adopt . Capablanca also wrote that Lasker was so adaptable that he played in no definite style , and that he was both a tenacious defender and a very efficient finisher of his own attacks .

He did everything at a high level . However , he was the first great endgame player , and instead of using his epic tactical skills solely for mating schemes , he used them for attack and , most importantly , for defense . In a way , he was the first universal player , which made him very odd

indeed for those times . Like all great players , Lasker could play any type of position ; however , the classic course of a Lasker game was to concede some small concession to an opponent , exchange off either one or two minor pieces and then play a game of manoeuvre where he did not necessarily stand better but in which he could keep the position balanced . When his opponent could not maintain the balance , either by over @-@ pressing or by playing too passively , Lasker would have them . Although famed for his defence , Lasker was equally brutal in his treatment of opponents who overpressed or played passively .

Lasker followed Steinitz principles , and both demonstrated a completely different chess paradigm than the ? romantic ? mentality before them . Thanks to Steinitz and Lasker , positional players gradually became common (Tarrasch , Schlechter , and Rubinstein stand out .) But , while Steinitz created a new school of chess thought , Lasker ? s talents were far harder for the masses to grasp ; hence there was no Lasker school .

In addition to his enormous chess skill , Lasker was said to have an excellent competitive temperament : his rival Siegbert Tarrasch once said , " Lasker occasionally loses a game , but he never loses his head . " Lasker enjoyed the need to adapt to varying styles and to the shifting fortunes of tournaments . Although very strong in matches , he was even stronger in tournaments . For over twenty years , he always finished ahead of the younger Capablanca : at St. Petersburg 1914 , New York 1924 , Moscow 1925 , and Moscow 1935 . Only in 1936 (15 years after their match) , when Lasker was 67 , did Capablanca finish ahead of him .

In 1964 , Chessworld magazine published an article in which future World Champion Bobby Fischer listed the ten greatest players in history . Fischer did not include Lasker in the list , deriding him as a " coffee @-@ house player [who] knew nothing about openings and didn 't understand positional chess " . In a poll of the world 's leading players taken some time after Fischer 's list appeared , Tal , Korchnoi , and Robert Byrne all said that Lasker was the greatest player ever . Both Pal Benko and Byrne stated that Fischer later reconsidered and said that Lasker was a great player .

Statistical ranking systems place Lasker high among the greatest players of all time . The book Warriors of the Mind places him sixth , behind Garry Kasparov , Anatoly Karpov , Fischer , Mikhail Botvinnik and Capablanca . In his 1978 book The Rating of Chessplayers , Past and Present , Arpad Elo gave retrospective ratings to players based on their performance over the best five @-@ year span of their career . He concluded that Lasker was the joint second strongest player of those surveyed (tied with Botvinnik and behind Capablanca) . The most up @-@ to @-@ date system , Chessmetrics , is rather sensitive to the length of the periods being compared , and ranks Lasker between fifth and second strongest of all time for peak periods ranging in length from one to twenty years . Its author , the statistician Jeff Sonas , concluded that only Kasparov and Karpov surpassed Lasker 's long @-@ term dominance of the game . By Chessmetrics ' reckoning , Lasker was the number 1 player in 292 different months ? a total of over 24 years . His first No. 1 rank was in June 1890 , and his last in December 1926 ? a span of 36 ½ years . Chessmetrics also considers him the strongest 67 @-@ year @-@ old in history : in December 1935 , at age 67 years and 0 months , his rating was 2691 (number 7 in the world) , well above second @-@ place Viktor Korchnoi 's rating at that age (2660 , number 39 in the world , in March 1998) .

= = = Influence on chess = = =

Lasker founded no school of players who played in a similar style . Max Euwe , World Champion 1935 ? 37 and a prolific writer of chess manuals , who had a lifetime 0 ? 3 score against Lasker , said , " It is not possible to learn much from him . One can only stand and wonder . " However , Lasker 's pragmatic , combative approach had a great influence on Soviet players like Mikhail Tal and Viktor Korchnoi .

There are several " Lasker Variations " in the chess openings , including Lasker 's Defense to the Queen 's Gambit , Lasker 's Defense to the Evans Gambit (which effectively ended the use of this gambit in tournament play until a revival in the 1990s) , and the Lasker Variation in the McCutcheon Variation of the French Defense .

One of Lasker 's most famous games is Lasker ? Bauer , Amsterdam 1889 , in which he sacrificed

both bishops in a maneuver later repeated in a number of games . Similar sacrifices had already been played by Cecil Valentine De Vere and John Owen , but these were not in major events and Lasker probably had not seen them .

Lasker was shocked by the poverty in which Wilhelm Steinitz died and did not intend to die in similar circumstances . He became notorious for demanding high fees for playing matches and tournaments , and he argued that players should own the copyright in their games rather than let publishers get all the profits . These demands initially angered editors and other players , but helped to pave the way for the rise of full @-@ time chess professionals who earn most of their living from playing , writing and teaching . Copyright in chess games had been contentious at least as far back as the mid @-@ 1840s , and Steinitz and Lasker vigorously asserted that players should own the copyright and wrote copyright clauses into their match contracts . However , Lasker 's demands that challengers should raise large purses prevented or delayed some eagerly awaited World Championship matches ? for example Frank James Marshall challenged him in 1904 to a match for the World Championship but could not raise the stakes demanded by Lasker until 1907 . This problem continued throughout the reign of his successor Capablanca .

Some of the controversial conditions that Lasker insisted on for championship matches led Capablanca to attempt twice (1914 and 1922) to publish rules for such matches , to which other top players readily agreed .

= = = Work in other fields = = =

Lasker was also a mathematician . In his 1905 article on commutative algebra , Lasker introduced the theory of primary decomposition of ideals , which has influence in the theory of Noetherian rings . Rings having the primary decomposition property are called " Laskerian rings " in his honor .

His attempt to create a general theory of all competitive activities were followed by more consistent efforts from von Neumann on game theory , and his later writings about card games presented a significant issue in the mathematical analysis of card games .

However , his dramatic and philosophical works have never been highly regarded .

= = Friends and relatives = =

Lasker was a good friend of Albert Einstein , who wrote the introduction to the posthumous biography Emanuel Lasker , The Life of a Chess Master from Dr. Jacques Hannak (1952) . In this preface Einstein express his satisfaction at having met Lasker , writing :

Emanuel Lasker was undoubtedly one of the most interesting people I came to know in my later years . We must be thankful to those who have penned the story of his life for this and succeeding generations . For there are few men who have had a warm interest in all the great human problems and at the same time kept their personality so uniquely independent .

Poetess Else Lasker @-@ Schüler was his sister @-@ in @-@ law . Edward Lasker , born in Kempen (K?pno) , Greater Poland (then Prussia) , the German @-@ American chess master , engineer , and author , claimed that he was distantly related to Emanuel Lasker . They both played in the great New York 1924 chess tournament .

= = Publications = =

= = = Chess = = =

The London Chess Fortnightly , 1892 ? 93

Common Sense in Chess , 1896 (an abstract of 12 lectures delivered to a London audience in 1895)

Lasker 's How to Play Chess : An Elementary Text Book for Beginners , Which Teaches Chess By a New , Easy and Comprehensive Method , 1900

Lasker 's Chess Magazine , OCLC 5002324 , 1904 ? 07 .

The International Chess Congress , St. Petersburg , 1909 , 1910

Lasker 's Manual of Chess , 1925 , is as famous in chess circles for its philosophical tone as for its content .

Lehrbuch des Schachspiels , 1926 ? English version Lasker 's Manual of Chess published in 1927 .

Lasker 's Chess Primer , 1934

= = = Other games = = =

Encyclopedia of Games , 1929 .

Das verständige Kartenspiel (Sensible Card Play) , 1929 ? English translation published in the same year .

Brettspiele der Völker (Board Games of the Nations) , 1931 ? includes sections about Go and Lasca .

Das Bridgespiel (" The Game of Bridge ") , 1931 .

= = = Mathematics = = =

Lasker , Emanuel (August 1895) . " Metrical Relations of Plane Spaces of n Manifoldness " . Nature 52 (1345) : 340 ? 343 . Bibcode : 1895Natur .. 52R.340L. doi : 10 @. @ 1038 / 052340d0 . Retrieved 2008 @- @ 05 @- @ 31 .

Lasker , Emanuel (October 1895) . " About a certain Class of Curved Lines in Space of n Manifoldness " . Nature 52 (1355) : 596 ? 596 . Bibcode : 1895Natur .. 52 .. 596L. doi : 10 @. @ 1038 / 052596a0 . Retrieved 2008 @- @ 05 @- @ 31 .

Lasker , Emanuel (1901) . " Über Reihen auf der Convergenzgrenze (" On Series at Convergence Boundaries ") " . Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society A 196 (274 ? 286) : 431 ? 477 . Bibcode : 1901RSPTA.196 .. 431L. doi : 10 @. @ 1098 / rsta.1901.0009. ? Lasker 's Ph.D. thesis .

Lasker , E. (1905) . " Zur Theorie der Moduln und Ideale " . Math . Ann . 60 (1) : 19 ? 116 @. @ doi : 10 @. @ 1007 / BF01447495 .

= = = Philosophy = = =

Kampf (Struggle) , 1906 .

Das Begreifen der Welt (Comprehending the World) , 1913 .

Die Philosophie des Unvollendbar (sic ; The Philosophy of the Unattainable) , 1918 .

Vom Menschen die Geschichte (" History of Mankind ") , 1925 ? a play , co @- @ written with his brother Berthold .

The Community of the Future , 1940 .

= = In popular culture = =

= = = Fiction = = =

In Michael Chabon 's alternate history mystery novel , The Yiddish Policemen 's Union , the murdered man , Mendel Shpilman (born during the 1960s) , being a chess enthusiast , uses the name " Emanuel Lasker " as an alias . The reference is clearly understood by the protagonist , Detective Meyer Landsman , because he has also studied chess .

= = = Quotations = = =

===== By Lasker =====

" Lies and hypocrisy do not survive for long on the chessboard . The creative combination lays bare the presumption of a lie , while the merciless fact , culminating in a checkmate , contradicts the hypocrite . "

" Education in Chess has to be an education in independent thinking and judgement . Chess must not be memorized , simply because it is not important enough Memory is too valuable to be stocked with trifles . "

" Pit two players against each other who both have perfect technique , who both avoid weaknesses , and what is left ? ? a sorry caricature of chess . "

Although the adage " If you find a good move , look for a better one " is often attributed to Lasker , it actually dates earlier .

===== About Lasker =====

W. H. K. Pollock : " It is no easy matter to reply correctly to Lasker 's bad moves . "

Viktor Korchnoi : " My chess hero . "

Mikhail Tal : " The greatest of the champions was , of course , Emanuel Lasker . "

== Notable games ==

" Emanuel Lasker vs Johann Hermann Bauer , Amsterdam 1889 " . ChessGames.com.

Although this was not the earliest known game with a successful two bishops sacrifice , this combination is now known as a " Lasker ? Bauer combination " or " Lasker sacrifice " .

" Harry Nelson Pillsbury vs Emanuel Lasker , St Petersburg 1895 " . ChessGames.com.

A brilliant sacrifice in the seventeenth move leads to a victorious attack .

" Wilhelm Steinitz vs Emanuel Lasker , London 1899 " . ChessGames.com.

The old champion and the new one really go for it .

" Frank James Marshall vs Emanuel Lasker , World Championship Match 1907 , game 1 " . ChessGames.com.

Lasker 's attack is insufficient for a quick win , so he trades it in for an endgame in which he quickly ties Marshall in knots .

" Emanuel Lasker vs Carl Schlechter , match 1910 , game 10 " . ChessGames.com.

Not a great game , but the one that saved Emanuel Lasker from losing his world title in 1910 .

" Emanuel Lasker vs Jose Raul Capablanca , St Petersburg 1914 " . ChessGames.com.

Lasker , who needed a win here , surprisingly used a quiet opening , allowing Capablanca to simplify the game early . There has been much debate about whether Lasker 's approach represented subtle psychology or deep positional understanding .

" Max Euwe vs Emanuel Lasker , Zurich 1934 " . ChessGames.com.

66 @-@ year @-@ old Lasker beats a future World Champion , sacrificing his Queen to turn defense into attack .

== Tournament results ==

The following table gives Lasker 's placings and scores in tournaments . The first " Score " column gives the number of points on the total possible . In the second " Score " column , " + " indicates the number of won games , " ? " the number of losses , and " = " the number of draws .

== Match results ==

Here are Lasker 's results in matches . The first " Score " column gives the number of points on the total possible . In the second " Score " column , " + " indicates the number of won games , " ? " the number of losses , and " = " the number of draws .

