

## Eric Schiller

### Edward Winter

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Our article [Over and Out](#) referred to ‘a clear-cut lie’ by Eric Schiller and to his ‘mendacity’. The ink was hardly dry before we had occasion to note more of the same, in the form of a grotesque attack on us at his Chesscity website which was flatly untrue, not to say libellous.

As is well known, Lasker and Tarrasch played two matches, in 1908 and 1916. The first of these was for the world championship, but the second (six games only) was not. Even so, some authors have erroneously indicated that the 1916 encounter was a world title match, two examples being Karpov in *Miniatures from the World Champions* (Batsford, 1985, pages 43-44) and Koltanowski in *With the Chess Masters* (Falcon Publishers, 1972, page 48).

Koltanowski wrote: ‘Twice Tarrasch mounted a campaign to take the world title from Lasker – and twice Lasker beat him badly.’

We quoted this in the September-October 1986 issue of *Chess Notes* and simply added a five-word rhetorical question, ‘When was the second time?’ The item was included on page 160 of our 1996 book *Chess Explorations*.

A straightforward matter, it might be thought, but now enter Eric Schiller. In late 1999 he posted on his website the following monstrosity:

‘Young Mr Winter gives as an “example of general carelessness” that Koltanowski makes the absurd statement that Tarrasch played two matches with Lasker, as only one was played. Anyone who has followed the careers of these great players knows that there were, of course, two matches. The second match does contain some rather poor play by Tarrasch, who got clobbered, but nevertheless it was a real match. The games are presented below. In his 90s Kolty may slip up from time to time. But the insult by the impudent young chess historian is without foundation. In any case, Kolty’s witty prose and wealth of anecdotes are far more valuable than some whining lad who can’t even get the facts right.’

On another page on the same site Schiller wrote, under the heading ‘Chess Explorations and Exploitations’:

‘So when Young Salieri (not his real name, but many will recognize the moniker) claimed that he knows more about the early days of the century, when George was actually playing and eye-witnessing events, it behooved us to check the facts. The question is simple: did Lasker play one match against Tarrasch (as claimed by Young Salieri), or two, as Kolty stated. Click here for the answer.’

In short, although we had been referring to the *status* of the 1916 match, i.e. the (indisputable) fact that it was not for the world title, Schiller falsely and aggressively proclaimed that we were unaware of the very existence of the match.

On 14 December 1999 we sent an e-mail message to the Chesscity site asking for a retraction and apology. To quote just one paragraph from our message:

‘To claim that I am unaware of the 1916 match is absurd, if only because on page 214 of my book [*Chess Explorations*] I specifically referred to it. Or again, the book that I edited for Pergamon Press, *World Chess Champions*, included some discussion of the 1916 match, together with the annotated score of one of the games.’

Apprised of the truth, Schiller had no intention of apologizing. On 18 December he wrote to us:

*‘Nio [sic] apology necessary, you are guilty of an unwarranted [sic] attack on Koltanowski. I will defend him against your garbage.’*

The same day he rewrote bits of his website, maintaining the untruth that we had claimed there had been only one Lasker v Tarrasch match, intensifying his personal attack on us and introducing a fresh charge, equally groundless: now, he added, we were also guilty of ‘sloppiness, poor editing’. To be accused of that by Schiller, of all people, is priceless.

It may be recalled that our ‘Over and Out’ article mentioned that Schiller’s books contain ‘hundreds of gross errors’, and we have often quoted chapter and verse. See, for example, the 1999 *Kingpin*, in which we cited a selection of nearly 40 such instances from three books published by Schiller in 1999 alone. In our book *Kings, Commoners and Knaves* we pointed out dozens of historical and other blunders in his book [World Champion Combinations](#) (in which, for example, the chapter on

Capablanca has six games and four positions, with obvious factual gaffes in every single one of them).

Our 'Over and Out' article also commented on how some writers who are criticized 'ignore the (unanswerable) facts and pin their hopes on a water-muddying counterattack', and that is precisely what Schiller has been doing in the present case. He has brushed aside the inconvenient matter of his hundreds of gross errors, trying instead to retaliate via another issue of his own choice, Lasker v Tarrasch. But what do we find? His attempted revenge is based on a distortion of the facts which is brazen even by his own dire standards. And when it blows up in his face, he refuses to correct the record properly or apologize, preferring to launch fresh attacks, also false. Despicable? Of course. Surprising? Not at all. It is vintage Eric Schiller.

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This statement was first published in 1999 at the *Inside Chess* website.

**To the Chess Notes [main page](#).**

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