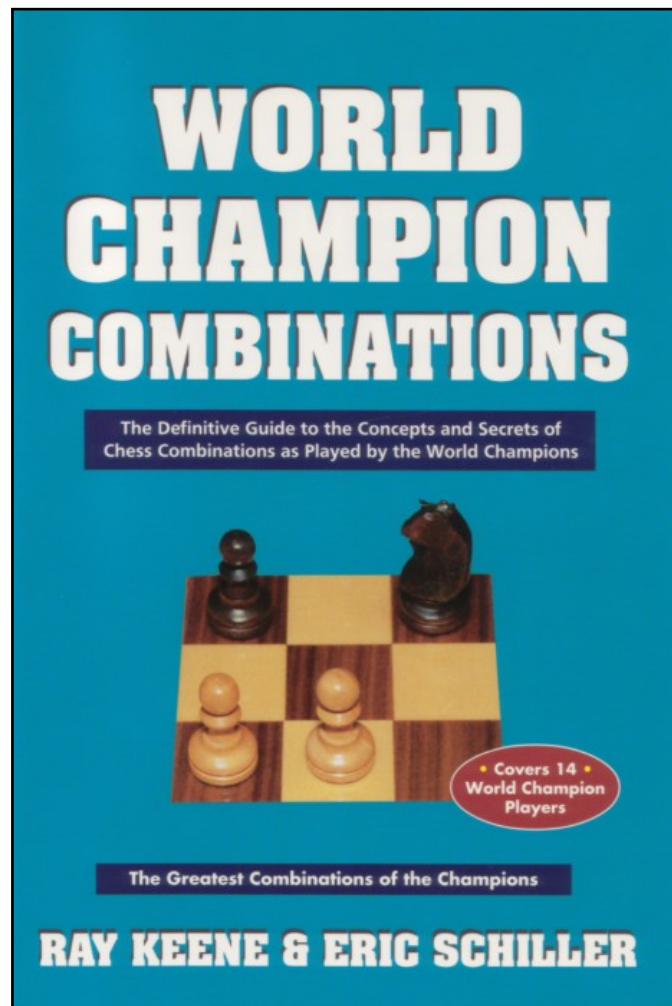


Raymond Keene and Eric Schiller

Edward Winter

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The laugh of the year has been provided by Cardoza Publishing (New York) for the following proclamation: ‘Our philosophy is to bring you the best quality chess books from the top authors and authorities in the chess world’. That incongruously appears in the company’s latest production, *World Champion Combinations* by – wait for it – Raymond Keene and Eric Schiller. But there is more. Keene, we are solemnly apprised, is ‘considered one of the strongest players in the world’. In reality, he played his last serious chess in the mid-1980s, and on the 1986 rating list he was not among the top ten players in England, let alone the world. Then Eric Schiller is lauded for being ‘widely considered one of the world’s foremost chess analysts, writers and teachers’, though who exactly considers him that is not specified.

Schiller ‘has also presided over world championship matches dating back to 1983’. Really? All of them? Some of them? Any of them? Readers may be baffled too as to where a world championship match was held in 1983, but, as will be seen in the penultimate paragraph below, Raymond Keene is on hand to offer corroboration.

Either Cardoza Publishing is attempting to deceive the public or it has itself been taken in by the self-flattery of two oversize egos. It all brings to mind the Spring 1998 issue of *Kingpin*, where Tony Miles debunked a similar dose of Keene bombast from a book which had promoted him as ‘the world’s leading authority on chess and mind sports’ and ‘the winner of 14 separate British championship titles’. As Miles scoffed, ‘that’s 12 more than are generally known about’.

Whether or not Cardoza Publishing is aware of it, the reality is that Keene and Schiller have a peerless record for factual howlers, even on the simplest of matters, for chicanery and for being impervious to correction. Concerning Keene’s determination to twist and twirl rather than admit the smallest error, one example will suffice here (with dozens more on stand-by in case of a challenge). A few years ago in his (London) *Times* column he called a player named Archangelski a grandmaster. As reported on page 38 of issue 23 of *Kingpin*, when this mistake was pointed out Keene assured *The Times* that his remark had been true because ‘FIDE is not the only body to award grandmaster titles’ and because he believed ‘that Archangelski was awarded a national title by the USSR Federation’. Even Malcolm Pein of *CHESS*, a committed protector of Keene, observed: ‘Quite astounding. Perhaps I should start awarding titles myself. I could give a few to Keene.’

World Champion Combinations goes on to compliment itself on being ‘The Definitive Guide to the Concepts and Secrets of Chess Combinations as Played by the World Champions’, but the only definitive guide offered is to the authors’ incompetence. Each of the champions receives a few paragraphs of introductory generalities, although the ‘Capsule Biographies of Each World Champion’ threatened by the back-cover blurb mercifully never materialize. The announced ‘insightful detail’ on the combinations of ‘the 14 World Champions’ is also left undelivered. Insights are out. Instead we are given a run-through of a small number of the champions’ best-known games and positions of the Morphy-versus-the-Duke-and-Count sort. Putting out such facile material requires minimal knowledge of either chess play or chess history and should at least result in presentation without error. Alas, presenting things without error is not a Keene/Schiller speciality.

The reason there are 14 champions is that the co-authors have decided to add on Morphy, who they say was ‘Unofficial World Champion’ from 1857 to 1859. How that can be when it is stated just a few lines later that ‘when he went to Europe in 1858, he was not considered a threat to the great players of his day’ is never

explained. One of those ‘great players’ is named as Adolph [*sic* – Adolf is the correct spelling] Anderssen, but he is omitted from the book, even though another Raymond Keene co-production, the insidious *Warriors of the Mind*, called Anderssen ‘one of the most brilliant combinational players of all time’. Page 20 of *World Champion Combinations* puzzlingly says ‘as in the game Kolisch-Anderssen’, as if such a game were included somewhere.

In presenting Paulsen-Morphy, New York, 1857 the book (page 18) credits the discovery of a quicker win at move 23 to Maróczy, whereas it had already been attributed to J.H. Bauer on pages 172-173 of the February 1887 *Chess Monthly*, i.e. long before Maróczy came onto the scene. The same page has a game headed only ‘Morphy-Amateur’, yet a glance at a number of sources (including David Lawson’s biography of Morphy and *Chess Explorations*) would have sufficed to obtain Black’s name, P.E. Bonford. Almost every page lays bare one aspect or another of Keene and Schiller’s ignorance and negligence. The game Pillsbury-Lasker, St Petersburg, 1896 ends (page 48) with ‘Black resigned’ in bold letters, but it was White who lost. The position from the second game of the 1896-97 world championship match between Lasker and Steinitz has the authors overlooking an elementary mate in two moves (i.e. Nb3+ rather than Re4+, as pointed out on page 366 of the December 1896 *Deutsche Schachzeitung*). A position headed ‘Alekhine-Bogoljubow’ was actually from a four-man consultation game. The next diagram is for ‘Alekhine-Freeman, USA, 1924’. Firstly, Black was Frieman. Secondly, USA should read New York. Thirdly, the game continuation given is wrong, being a well-known case of Alekhine’s subsequent invention of a more spectacular win. (See, for instance, C.N. 1394 and page 17 of *Chess Explorations*.)

On the following page Keene and Schiller report that Euwe dethroned Alekhine in 1937; everybody else believes that Euwe won the title in 1935 and lost it in 1937. Page 119 erroneously declares that Botvinnik won the 1954 world championship match against Smyslov. The first page of the Botvinnik chapter says: ‘Beating Capablanca was an achievement that every World Champion in the first half of the 20th century achieved, and Botvinnik was the last of a long line to do so ...’. (Let’s pause here to admire the polished prose style: ‘an achievement ... achieved’.) In reality, of course, the ‘long line’ consisted of just four champions, and the last of those victories was by Euwe, not Botvinnik. Regarding the famous game Botvinnik-Capablanca, AVRO, 1938, page 101 affirms after 34 e7, ‘Of course Botvinnik had to see that there was no perpetual check when he played 30 Ba3’. That is flatly disproved by Botvinnik’s own annotations on pages 92-94 of *Half a Century of Chess*; after 30 Ba3 he wrote: ‘I must admit that I could not calculate it right to the end and operated in two stages. First I evaluated the position after six moves and convinced myself that I had a draw by perpetual check. Then after the first six moves I calculated the rest to the end.’

The chapter on Tal starts with a heading which reduces the game's occasion to unintelligibility: 'Riga Soviet Latvia, 1952'. Throughout the book there are typos aplenty (e.g. 'suprise' on page 52, 'Jonnn Nunn' on page 72), interwoven with the authors' posits and postulations (e.g. Lasker 'was not a deep strategist' – page 44). And so it all staggers on, through to the final game, by Kasparov (the co-authors neglect to say how it ended), and a slaphappy book-list comprising 18 titles. *Warriors of the Mind* is there, with misspellings of the names of Keene's co-author and publisher. That is the only Keene title to be cited, which helps disguise the fact that whole sections of *World Champion Combinations* have simply been reproduced, without correction, from previous tomes of his, most notably *The Chess Combination from Philidor to Karpov* (Pergamon Press, 1977). Now we can understand *World Champion Combinations'* mention of a non-existent Kolisch-Anderssen game: in copying from page 56 of the Pergamon book, Keene and Schiller have forgotten to delete a cross-reference that no longer applies. Recycling old trash into new trash is a notorious book-spawning trick of Keene's, and for this co-production it merely involves changing any uses of 'I' to 'we'. In a Spassky game, another unattributed rehash from the Pergamon book, the pronominal change is duly made on page 167, but overleaf 'in my opinion' has been left untouched, and it all descends into farce on page 74 (Alekhine-Reshevsky, Kemerli, 1937). After 23 h3, the 'I' has been pluralized ('Here Alekhine has a note we like very much ...'), but unfortunately the quoted words of Alekhine include the remark, 'I was not a little surprised to read ...'. No medals for guessing the upshot: yes, Alekhine's 'I' has also become 'we'. For good measure, there is another typo ('to the questioned') two lines further on in the Alekhine quote. Only Keene and Schiller can make copying look so difficult.

The entirety of *World Champion Combinations* could be demolished in this way, but for the benefit of anyone lucky enough not to have seen the book the best way of showing the extent of the shambles is to pick a complete chapter and to examine every game and position given.

Chapter 6, dealing with Capablanca, has six games and four positions:

1. Réti-Capablanca, Berlin, 1928. A one-sentence note at move 10 reads 'White miscalculates and Black won't be able to take advantage of the exposed queen'. That is the exact opposite of the intended meaning; 'and' should read 'that'. (This time it is a case of unsuccessful copying from page 58 of Schiller's 1997 companion volume, *World Champion Openings*.) There is also an inaccurate concluding note. Following 17...Bf3 it is stated, 'The sacrifice must be accepted, or else ...Qh3 is an easy win'. Yet after 18 gxf3, the move 18...Qh3 was indeed played, with such an easy win that Réti at once resigned.
2. Capablanca-Havasi, Budapest, 1928. In the note after Black's 7th move,

- reference is made to Capablanca-Bogoljubow, Moscow, 1925: ‘... according to Golombek, Capablanca played this sacrifice immediately’. It was Bogoljubow himself who revealed Capablanca’s speed at this point, on page 190 of the Moscow, 1925 tournament book. In the note to Black’s 9th move Keene and Schiller place a full stop in mid-sentence, and the next note says ‘the exposed position of Black’s knight’ instead of ‘Black’s king’. (Why? Because they have miscopied from page 79 of *The Chess Combination from Philidor to Karpov*, which had ‘Black’s K’.)
3. Alatorsev-Capablanca, Moscow, 1935. ‘A gem from Capablanca’s last years as an active player, but it is often left out of anthologies of his best games.’ On the contrary, it is one of the scores most often included, to be found in, for example, both of the best-known books in English, *Capablanca’s Hundred Best Games of Chess* by Golombek and *The Immortal Games of Capablanca* by Reinfeld. The note to White’s 23rd move gives a line beginning 23 Kxf2 Rc2+ 24 Kg3 Qxg2+, overlooking that 24...Rxc2+ leads to a quicker forced mate. The same note has 30...Rh5 *check*, whereas the move administers mate. (See page 40 for another instance.)
 4. Marshall-Capablanca, New York, 1931. A note at move 10: ‘Again, more vigorous is 10 Qc2 as in the game Bogoljubow-Nimzowitsch, Berlin, 1927.’ Not so. A different position had arisen in that game.
 5. Capablanca-Souza Campos, São Paulo, 1927. Although it is not specified, this game occurred in a simultaneous exhibition, or ‘in a simulation’ to borrow the abstruse term used by the book elsewhere (page 254). The co-authors do not know that Capablanca’s ‘brilliant’ combination was refuted by Réti in the *Morgenzeitung* (see pages 121-122 of the April 1928 *Deutsche Schachzeitung* and page 203 of the Dover edition of *The Unknown Capablanca* by Hooper and Brandreth).
 6. Capablanca-Steiner, Los Angeles, 1933. The co-authors are unaware that this exhibition game with living pieces is not an example of Capablanca’s brilliance but was pre-arranged, as Steiner himself recorded on page 66 of the March 1943 *Chess Review* and as was reported in C.N. 2037.
 7. Capablanca-Fonaroff, New York, 1904. The Cuban did not play this game when in his teens because the actual date was 1918, as given on page 112 of *The Unknown Capablanca* and many other places. On page 200 of the May 1985 *BCM* (an item which included criticism of Raymond Keene for other historical blunders) we pointed out that ‘1904’ was wrong. Eric Schiller nonetheless persisted with it on page 17 of *The Big Book of Combinations*. His mangling there of Capablanca’s games was reported on page 267 of *Chess Explorations*. ‘Impervious to correction’ was the phrase used above.
 8. Capablanca-Mieses, Berlin, 1931. The mistakes here too were corrected in the 1985 *British Chess Magazine* yet repeated in *The Big Book of Combinations* (page 27). Firstly, the date should read 1913. Moreover, as also explained in the *BCM*, ‘the diagrammed position never arose and no

combination of the kind indicated was played’.

9. Capablanca-Yates, Barcelona, 1929. To quote one more time from the *BCM*: ‘Another position which did not happen in the actual game, since Black resigned after 32 f7+. There should, in any event, be a black pawn on a5, not a6’.
10. Capablanca-Lasker, Berlin, 1914. The position did not occur in a game won by Capablanca, but was composed jointly by Capablanca and Lasker (see page 168 of *The Unknown Capablanca* and any number of other reliable books).

In short, not one of the ten Capablanca games and positions given by Keene and Schiller emerges with a clean bill of health. In passing it should be noted that most of the above appeared in Eric Tangborn’s 1994 book *Chess Combinations of The World Champions*, with similar factual mistakes. It is no surprise that Keene and Schiller put the Tangborn work in their book-list, or, for that matter, that they get its title wrong.

What kind of people can show chess, and the chess public, so little respect? Why such *illiterati* presume to inflict themselves on us incessantly, or at all, is a question that has preoccupied the American openings expert Hugh Myers. A dozen years ago he wrote in *CHESS* (mid-August 1986 issue, page 241) that Schiller was ‘an assassin of chess history’. That brought forth a pained response from Schiller (September 1986 issue, page 259): ‘I have always researched my facts to the best of my ability’. The number of *CHESS* readers who fell off their chairs on seeing that one is not recorded, but the following year Schiller showed his true colors. On page 50 of *Unorthodox Openings* he attempted to exact revenge on Myers, who had written a book on Nimzowitsch’s Defence. Schiller maintained that the best book on 1 e4 Nc6 was not Myers’ but one by H. Westerinen. Despite Schiller’s protestations to the contrary, it emerged that no such book had ever existed. We too had a telling experience, after publishing in *C.N.* two letters from Schiller. Every word of both was printed, yet Schiller repeatedly put it about that they had been truncated and taken out of context. To refute this, *C.N.* published them a second time, in the form of photographic reproductions. Schiller’s response? He naturally continued to write that his letters had been truncated and taken out of context. Pressed to apologize, he went silent.

And what of Raymond Keene? A single article can hardly do justice to his track-record, so a potted history must suffice for now. He broke his contract with Korchnoi by writing a book on the 1978 world championship match in ‘a premeditated and deliberate plan to deceive’ (see page 84 of the February 1980 *CHESS*). He was described by Korchnoi’s work *Antischach* (page 109) as ‘a man without moral scruples’. He wrote a book on the 1983 Kasparov-Korchnoi semi-final and called it the ‘World Chess Championship’ on the front cover. He unveraciously attacked the

termination of the 1984-85 world title match even though, beforehand, he had written a telex to Campomanes advocating termination. He told a succession of barefaced whoppers in his abortive and aborted 1986 campaign to gain control of FIDE, besmirching various innocent parties along the way. He so disgusted the late editor of *CHESS*, B.H. Wood, that the latter declared him 'capable of claiming anything on the flimsiest evidence'. He resigned from the British Chess Federation in 1987 after it was revealed that he had misappropriated appeal funds collected to provide a British player with a second at an Interzonal tournament. He was castigated by Karpov (*New in Chess*, 3/1993, page 46) on the grounds that 'everything he is involved in is based on personal interests'. He was criticized by the following issue of the same magazine (page 9) because, regarding the 1993 Kasparov-Short match, *The Times* had 'set a new standard for one-sided, prejudiced and wilfully misleading reporting'. He was roasted by the (normally Keene-compliant) *BCM* for his factual inaccuracies and 'selective *Pravda*-style' writing (May 1993 issue, pages 228 and 232). He wrote newspaper articles and an 'official' book on the Kasparov-Short match which professed to be quoting verbatim Short's own annotations, only to have it revealed (on page 224 of *The Inner Game* by Dominic Lawson, Short's close friend) that Short had 'never once' supplied any such material. He was denounced by another *CHESS* editor (and associate), Paul Lamford, for writing 'Keene junk'. He was obliged to make a settlement when legal action was threatened (see *Inside Chess*, 2/1994, page 3) following the discovery that one of his books had plagiarized John Donaldson's openings analysis. He even ...

But no. The above should be ample to give Cardoza Publishing a belated inkling of the truth. Chapter and verse are available on every point.

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