

# The Fox Enigma

## Edward Winter

We have often discussed positions in which a player moved his queen to Kk6 (i.e. g6 or g3) when the opponent had three unmoved pawns before his castled king, and the present article focuses on a strange pair. Below, first of all, is a complete list of the instances that we have found:

- N.N. v H. Caro, Berlin (?), 1888
- V. Tietz v C. Mader, Carlsbad, 1896
- W. Cohn v G. Marco, Ostend, 1907
- S. Levitzky v F.J. Marshall, Breslau, 1912
- F.J. Marshall v Allies, Kingston, NY, 1914
- A. Alekhine v A. Supico, Lisbon, 1941
- R.G. Wade v E.W. Bennett, correspondence, 1942
- N. Rossolimo v P. Reissman, San Juan, 1967.

Plus, most interestingly:

- Fox v Bauer
- Fox v Casper or Karper.

It may seem curious that two games should involve a player named Fox. The first of them is particularly well known: 1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 Nf6 4 O-O Nxe4 5 Re1 Nd6 6 Nxe5 Be7 7 Bf1 O-O 8 d4 Nf5 9 c3 d5 10 Qd3 Re8 11 f4 Nd6 12 Re3 Na5 13 Nd2 Nf5 14 Rh3 Nh4 15 g4 Ng6 16 Rh5 Nc6 17 Ndc4 dxc4



18 Qxg6 hxg6 19 Nxc4 fxg6 20 Bxc4+ Black resigns.

This game is often given as 'M.A. Fox v H.E. Bauer, Antwerp, 1901', but books have many variants. *The Basis of Combination in Chess* by J. du Mont (London, 1938) claimed (see pages 135 and 215) that White was A.W. Fox. So did page 133 of *The Golden Treasury of Chess* 'compiled by the editors of *Chess Review*' (London, 1958), a book which, moreover, stated 'Washington, D.C., 1901'. Page 48 of *500 Ruy Lopez Miniatures* by Bill Wall (Coraopolis, 1986) followed the version but gave 'J. Bauer' as Black. Page 46 of *All About Chess* by Al Horowitz (New York, 1971) proposed 'A.W. Fox v J. H. Bauer', although the latter, who lost a famous game to Lasker, had died in 1891.

The second game with a spectacular Qg6 from a player named Fox concerns the following position from page 52 of *Combinations The Heart of Chess* by Irving Chernev (New York, 1960):



This was given by Chernev as Fox v Casper, but no venue or date was stipulated. The finish was 1 Bb6 Qxb6 2 Qg6 hxg6 3 Ne7+ Kh7 4 Rf3 Qc5 5 Rd5 Black resigns, although Chernev noted a simpler win: 1 Qg5 g6 2 Qh6 gxf5 3 Bd4, etc. See also page 3 of *Blunders and Brilliances* by Ian Mullen and Moe Moss (Oxford, 1990).

It is time now to turn to primary sources. The Fox v Bauer game was published on pages 145-146 of the July 1901 *American Chess World*, with the headings 'A.W. Fox – H. Bauer' and 'Played at Antwerp on 11 December 1900'. The score continued with 20...Kf8 21 Rh8 mate. Moreover, page 36 of the February 1901 issue had given the other Fox game in full (identifying Black as Karper, rather than Chernev's Casper, but giving no details about the occasion):

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bc4 Bc5 4 d3 a6 5 Nc3 Bb4 6 O-O Nf6 7 Be3 b5 8 Bb3 Bb7 9 Nd5 Nxd5 10 Bxd5 d6 11 d4 Qe7 12 Kh1 Na5 13 Qe2 c6 14 Bb3 exd4 15 Nxd4 O-O 16 Nf5 Qd7 17 Rad1 Qc7 18 f4 Rac8 19 Qh5 Ba8 (This is the position in which Chernev's book took up the game, as in the diagram

above.) 20 Bb6 Qxb6 21 Qg6 hxg6 22 Ne7+ Kh7 23 Rf3 Qc5



24 Rd5 Resigns.

In that February 1901 issue of the *American Chess*

*World* no initials for Fox were indicated in the above game's heading, but immediately before it came a game-score headed 'J.W. Fox – F.B. Walker' (1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 Nf6 4 O-O Nxe4 5 d4 Be7 6 Qe2 Nd6 7 Bxc6 bxc6 8 dxe5 Nb7 9 Nc3 O-O 10 Re1 Re8 11 Qc4 Nc5 12 Ng5 Bxg5 13 Bxg5 Qxg5 14 Qxc5 Bb7 15 Rad1 d5 16 Qb4 Bc8 17 Re3 Rxe5 18 Nxd5 Rxe3 19 Ne7+ Resigns). And, just before that, there was this introduction to the pair of games:

'Through the medium of the *Washington Star*

we learn of a Mr J.W. Fox, of whom it may be said – he will awake some morning to find himself famous. In the two examples given below, he is seen to be conversant with the latest developments in opening play, and quick to perceive the vulnerable point in his adversary's position. Mr Fox has been abroad for several years, pursuing his studies, and is expected to take up a permanent residence in Washington this year.'

No mention was made of where either 'J.W. Fox' game was played, and we wonder if a reader has access to the *Washington Star*, to ascertain whether further details were provided there.

Later in 1901, the *American Chess World*

(July issue, page 146) attributed a further brilliancy to A.W. Fox (over A. Clerc at the Café de la Régence, again without any date given): 1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 Nf6 4 O-O Nxe4 5 d4 Be7 6 Qe2 Nd6 7 Bxc6 bxc6 8 dxe5 Nb7 9 Nc3 O-O 10 Be3 Nc5 11 Bxc5 Bxc5 12 Ne4 Be7 13 Rad1 a5 14 Rfe1 a4 15 Nd4 Qe8 16 Qh5 Kh8 17 Nf6 Bxf6 18 exf6 Qd8 19 fxg7+ Kxg7 20 Nf5+ Kh8 21 Qh6 Rg8



22 Re8 Resigns. 'Trip-hammer brilliancy of the highest order', commented the magazine.

The September 1901 issue (page 162) quoted from the New Orleans *Times-Democrat* 'the following pretty ending which occurred in a game played at Anvers [i.e. Antwerp in French] in December 1900, between Messrs Segal and A. Fox':



23...Qxg3+ 24 Kxg3 Rg8+ 25 Kh4 Ng6+ 26 Kh5. 'Black mates in three.'

By now, the many Fox combinations were provoking comment, and on pages 152-153 of the September 1901 *American Chess World* the following paragraphs were cited from the *Pittsburg Dispatch* under the title 'Mr Fox not a Myth':

'The excellence of a number of brilliant games published in this and other chess periodicals, played by A.W. Fox, of Washington, has aroused a suspicion in the minds of not a few chessplayers that Mr Fox might have been, after all, the imaginative

product of him who had given most of these games to the public. Our Game Editor disposes of the idea that he has been guilty of palming off a "gold brick" upon the chess reading public, thusly:

"Some lively speculation has been indulged of late as to the authorship of those remarkable games attributed to a Mr Fox. Of itself the rumor that they are spurious is not wanting in virtue, for it shows us there are still those who believe their eyes. They pounce upon these delicacies as contraband having run the blockade of their most exalted notions. To be told, without any gilding of the pill, that you are the suspected author of certain charming conceits is, to put it mildly, an equivocal compliment. This is the writer's position, however, and as he relishes a good joke, the intimations are forgiven. Information concerning Mr Fox can be had by inquiry at the Washington, DC Chess Club. When we take to depositing unicorn eggs on the chess fraternity, the scribes may expect a product not less amiable than estimable."

So what sense can be made of the Fox jumble? We have seen above that the *American Chess World* a) ascribed to both J.W. Fox and A.W. Fox brilliant miniatures against the same 8...Nb7 line in the Ruy López, b) stated that J. W. Fox 'has been abroad for several years', and c) quoted games played by A.W. Fox in Belgium and France. If A.W. Fox was, as might be supposed, the relatively well-known player Albert Whiting Fox (1881-1964), his age would indeed be that of a student, and the logical conclusion from the foregoing is, of course, that the two references in the February 1901 to 'J.W. Fox' were simply mistakes for A.W. Fox.



Albert Whiting Fox

It may be added here that in 1901 the *American Chess World* gave only one loss by A.W. Fox, on pages 225-226 of the December issue: 1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 g6 5 Be3 Bg7 6 Bc4 Nf6 7 Nc3 d6 8 O-O O-O 9 f4 Bd7 10 h3 Rc8 11 Bb3 Qa5 12 Qf3 Ne8 13 Rad1 a6 14 g4 e6 15 Qg3 Kh8 16 Nf3 Qd8 17 f5 gxf5 18 exf5 Na5 19 fxe6 fxe6 20 Ng5 Qe7 21 Rxf8+ Bxf8 22 Rf1 Nf6 23 Qh4 h6 24 Nf7+ Qxf7 25 Rxf6 Qh7 26 Bxe6 Bxe6 27 Rxe6 Nc4 28 Bxh6 Ne5 29 Qf6+ Kg8 30 Nd5 Qxh6 31 Ne7+ Kh7 32 Qxh6+ Bxh6 33 Nxc8 and wins. No occasion was indicated, but White was named as F.B. Walker (who, it will be recalled,

the magazine said earlier in the year had lost a game to 'J.W. Fox').

But were all the Fox games, and particularly the spectacular queen sacrifices, genuine? Most notably, in the game between Fox and Karper/Casper is suspicion justified over the way Black's slow moves 18...Rac8 and 19...Ba8 allowed the final combination to be set up? For that game, moreover, what was Chernev's source for naming Black as Casper, rather than Karper? And where and when was it played?

Pages 187-189 of *Napier The Forgotten Chessmaster*

by John S. Hilbert (Yorklyn, 1997) contain some relevant information on A.W. Fox. It is reported, for instance, that Napier gave the Fox v Karper game (the occasion being specified as 'Heidelberg, 1901') in his column in the *Pittsburg Dispatch* of 28 January 1901, misidentifying White as J.W. Fox (who, Dr Hilbert added, was Albert Fox's father). The Napier book also gave the complete score (1 e4 d5 2 e5 Bf5 3 d3 e6 4 h4 h6 5 Be2 c5 6 b3 Nc6 7 Bb2 d4 8 f4 Be7 9 g3 Nb4 10 Na3 Qa5 11 Kf2 Nd5 12 Nc4 Qc7 13 Bf3 f6 14 Qe2 O-O-O 15 a4 g5 16 hxg5 fxe5 17 fxe5 Bxe5 18 Bxd5 exd5 19 Nd6+ Rxd6 20 exd6 Be3+ 21 Kg2 Qxd6 22 Nf3 Ne7 23 c3 Qxg3+ 24 Kxg3 Rg8+ 25 Kh4 Ng6+ 26 Kh5 Nf4+ 27 Kxh6 Ne6+ 28 Qxe3 Rh8 mate.) of the above-mentioned game wherein Fox, as Black, played a different kind of queen sacrifice on g3. The book named Black as Segel, not Segal, and described it as an offhand game dated 1901. This was on the basis of Napier's column of 15 July 1901, which had stated:

'... we are enabled to present another specimen of the play of A.W. Fox, the young American so recently sprung into fame and the liberal praise of critics. Dr Lasker, when in Pittsburg, admitted that if Mr Fox were not a myth living in someone's mind he certainly gave evidence of a brilliant career.'

Dr Hilbert's book (page 189) also included the passage, quoted above, which began 'Some lively speculation ...', pointing out that it had appeared in Napier's *Dispatch* column of 12 August 1901. Thereafter Dr Hilbert gave the Fox v Bauer encounter ('Washington, 1901').

Thus we still have a contradiction over the venue of the Fox v Bauer game (Washington or Antwerp?) and the date (1900 or 1901?), but an easier matter to settle is the reference in many sources to 'M.A. Fox'. An early publication of the game was on pages 79-80 of the 15 March 1901 issue of *La Stratégie*, which presented it as an

'*Intéressante partie jouée récemment à Anvers*

', headed 'M. A. Fox – M. H.-E. Bauer' and with notes ascribed to 'M. A. Fox'. M. A. Fox clearly meant Monsieur A. Fox.



3903\* PARTIE

Intéressante partie jouée récemment à Anvers.

**Partie Lopez**

BLANCS	NOIRS		
M. A. Fox.	M. H.-E. Bauer.		
1 P.4R	P.4R	8 T pr C	Roq
2 C.3FR	C.3FD	9 C.3FD	F.3FR
3 F.5CD	C.3FR	10 T.3R	T.1R !
4 Roq	C pr P	7	Roq
5 T.1R	C.3D	8 P.4D	C.4FR
6 C pr P	F.2R	9 P.3FD	P.4D
7 F.4FR. L'on joue ordinairement F.3D dans cette position, mais les Noirs ont une bonne défense :		10 D.3D. Si les Noirs répondent — F.3R, les Blancs croyaient obtenir un avantage par 11 D.5CD — C pr C, 12 P pr C — D.4FD, 13 P.4CR, mais le C peut entrer à 5TR.	
7 F.3D	C pr C	10	T.1R

11 P.4FR C.3D! — Les Noirs ont meilleur jeu.

12 T.3R. Comptant sur la réponse 12 — F.4FR les Blancs espéraient obtenir une attaque par 13 D.2R — C.5R, 14 P.4CR.

12 C.4TD? Joué évidemment dans l'intention d'avancer le PFD.

13 C.2D C.4FR. Ils pouvaient jouer tout de suite — P.4FD.

14 T.3TR C.5TR

15 P.4CR C.3CR

16 T.5TR C.3FD. Pour se débarrasser du C à 5R qui commence à gêner.

*Position après le 16<sup>e</sup> coup des Noirs.*



17 C de 2D à 4FD! Un piège très bizarre.

17 P pr C

18 D pr C! PT pr D

19 C pr PG P pr C

20 F pr P +

Les Noirs abandonnent.

(Notes par M. A. Fox).

But were the two games featuring that rarest of queen sacrifices on g6 really played not only by the same person, A.W. Fox, but also within a few months of each other? We felt as far as ever from knowing whether either or them was an invention or a hoax.

In C.N. 4409 Harrie Grondijs (Rijswijk, the Netherlands) presented an item by Louis Uedemann in the *Chicago Tribune* of 12 May 1901, page 20:

'Now another American youth, Albert Whiting Fox, born 17 years ago, at Boston, is attracting attention to himself by his brilliant play. Two of his games appeared

recently in the new *American Chess*

*World* and contained, as may appropriately be said, some "foxy moves". They caused chessplayers to wonder who Mr Fox was. The following letter from Paris, France, to J.D. Séguin contains this much desired information:

"I have been going a good deal lately to the Café de la Régence and I had the pleasure of meeting occasionally a young countryman of ours who struck me as being a good chessplayer, and who has fair chances of becoming a 'master' of the future. His name is Albert Whiting Fox. He was born in Boston 17 years ago. He spent a few years in Germany, and is now studying the higher branches of mathematics in one of the colleges of this city. He speaks German and French (the latter with the genuine Parisian accent) and is altogether an accomplished and agreeable young gentleman. As a chessplayer he ranks among the best of those who frequent the 'Régence', so I suppose some of his games, which I inclose, may prove interesting. They may not be the most favourable specimens of Mr Fox's play, but they were the only ones I could procure; some of them were played in the course of a recent journey to Washington, DC, where the young man's parents now reside."

The first was played at the Café de la Régence, Paris and the second in Antwerp on 31 [*sic*] December 1900. The latter is unquestionably a remarkable game and, if any recognized master had played it, it would rank among his brilliancies. The average strong player will overlook the object of the sacrifice of the knight on the 17th move, and this, followed by the sacrifice of the queen and another knight, stamps the pretty combination as a genuine masterpiece.

The third and fourth games (from the *ACW*) are also good. In the third a well-known Washington expert is the victim, and in the fourth a German player. The last game has a similar fierce attack against the king's side, and ends in a finale as dazzlingly brilliant as the second game.'

The newspaper then gave the four game-scores:



### First Game—Ruy Lopez.

A. W. Fox, White.	A. Clerc, Black.	A. W. Fox, White.	A. Clerc, Black.
1 P K 4	P K 4	12 Kt K 4	B K 2
2 Kt K B 3	Kt Q B 3	13 Q R Q 1	P Q R 4
3 B Kt 5	Kt B 3	14 K R K 1	P R 5
4 Castles	KtxP	15 Kt Q 4	Q K 1
5 P Q 4	B K 2?	16 Q R 5	K R 1
6 Q K 2	Kt Q 3	17 Kt B 6	BxKt
7 BxKt	Kt Px B	18 Px B	Q Q 1
8 Px P	Kt Kt 2	19 Px P ch	KxP
9 Kt B 3	Castles	20 Kt B 5 ch	K R 1
10 B K 3	Kt B 4	21 Q R 6	R Kt 1
11 BxKt	BxB	22 R K 8!	Resigns.

### Second Game—Roy Lopez.

A. W. Fox, White.	H. Bauer, Black.	A. W. Fox, White.	H. Bauer, Black.
1 P K 4	P K 4	12 R K 3	Kt R 4
2 Kt K B 3	Kt Q B 3	13 Kt Q 2	Kt B 4
3 B Kt 5	Kt B 3	14 R R 3	Kt R 5
4 Castles	KtxP	15 P K Kt 4	Kt Kt 3
5 R K 1	Kt Q 3	16 R R 5	Kt B 3
6 KtxP	B K 2	17 Q Kt B 4!	PxKt?
7 B B 1	Castles	18 QxKt!!	R PxQ
8 P Q 4	Kt B 4	19 KtxKt P!	PxKt
9 P Q B 3	P Q 4	20 BxP ch	K B 1
10 Q Q 3	R K 1	21 R R 8 mate.	A beautiful termination!
11 P K B 4	Kt Q 3		

### Third Game—Ruy Lopez.

Fox, White.	Walker, Black.	Fox, White.	Walker, Black.
1 P K 4	P K 4	11 Q B 4	Kt B 4
2 Kt K B 3	Kt Q B 3	12 Kt Kt 5	BxKt
3 B Kt 5	Kt B 3	13 BxB	QxB
4 Castles	KtxP	14 QxKt	B Kt 2
5 P Q 4	B K 2?	15 Q R Q 1	P Q 4
6 Q K 2	Kt Q 3	16 Q Kt 4	B B 1
7 BxKt	Kt Px B	17 R K 3!	RxP?
8 Px P	Kt Kt 2	18 KtxP!	RxR
9 Kt B 3	Castles	19 Kt K 7 ch!	Resigns.
10 R K 1	R K 1		

### Fourth Game—Giucco Piano.

Fox, White.	Karper, Black.	Fox, White.	Karper, Black.
1 P K 4	P K 4	13 Q K 2	P Q B 3
2 Kt K B 3	Kt Q B 3	14 B Kt 3	PxP
3 B B 4	B B 4	15 KtxP	Castles K R
4 P Q 3	P Q R 3?	16 Kt B 5	Q Q 2?
5 Kt B 3	B Kt 5?	17 Q R Q 1	Q B 2
6 Castles	Kt B 3	18 P K B 4	Q R B 1
7 B K 3	P Q Kt 4	19 Q R 5	B R 1?
8 B Kt 3	B Kt 2	20 B O Kt 6!	QxB?
9 Kt Q 5	KtxKt	21 O Kt 6!!	R PxQ
10 BxKt	P Q 3	22 Kt K 7 ch	K R 2
11 P Q 4	Q K 2	23 R B 3	Q B 4
12 K R 1	Kt R 4	24 R Q 5	Resigns.

It is difficult to know what to make of all this. Fox would certainly be fortunate to have a correspondent (anonymous) so conveniently placed to relate his exploits at home and abroad. To date, we have found, in the history of chess, only ten games which featured such a queen sacrifice on g6 or g3, yet two of them, both attributed to A.W. Fox, were purportedly played in quick succession and, as shown above, even appeared on the same page of the *Chicago Tribune*, 12 May 1901.

In C.N. 4415 Leonard Barden (London) commented:

*' A.W. Fox used the Ruy López and 4 O-O against the Berlin Defence several times during his period of master play in 1904-06 (which included Cambridge Springs), so I do not see any difficulty with that brilliancy.*

*However, the Giuoco Piano game against Karper is peculiar in that A.W. Fox (if it is he) eschews his normal Ruy López, then passes over not just the simpler win pointed out by Chernev but also two easy wins earlier. 13 c3 or 13 a3 wins a piece (Black at b4 and knight at a5 are in a tangle), while four moves later 17 Qg4 wins instantly with the double threat Qxg7 mate and Nh6+ with Qxd7.*

*' s bishop*

*So if the Giuoco Piano is indeed an A.W. Fox game (clearly this is not 100% sure) it seems that, recognizing that he had a cooperative opponent, enjoying the thrill of a brilliancy, and maybe with fond memories of his other Qg6, he declined the easy wins in favour of a flashy finish which he*

*may well have  
foreseen some way in  
advance.*

What more can be discovered about the Fox enigma?

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