

**RUDOLF SPIELMANN:  
Fifty Great Short Games**

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**International Master  
Nikolay Minev**

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**Rudolf Spielmann: Fifty Great Short Games**

IM Nikolay Minev

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# RUDOLF SPIELMANN (1883 - 1942)

## His 50 Great Short Stories

Selected and annotated by IM Nikolay Minev

*“The defense, because of technical and also psychological reasons, is much more difficult than the attack.” - Rudolf Spielmann*

Rudolf Spielmann’s philosophy of play was this: whenever possible, attacking chess! He was known as one of the greatest creative and imaginative players of his day. In my opinion, he is one of the founders of the dynamic style of play that is dominant today.

Spielmann was born May 5, 1883 in Vienna, Austria. He lived in Germany most of his life. He emigrated from Germany in 1939 to escape Nazi Germany, and died in Stockholm, Sweden on August 20, 1942.

Spielmann was among the best chess players in the world in the early part of the twentieth century. Although he never played for the world championship, he was considered one of the most fearsome attacking players in the history of chess: a player to be respected, who could win tournaments and matches when competing with the best.

He was an active player, competing in numerous tournaments and matches in the course of his career. His most celebrated tournament success came at Semmering 1926, which included all of the leading masters of the time, except Lasker and Capablanca. He finished first in this event, scoring 10 wins, 6 draws, and only 1 loss.

Other notable tournament results include:

- 3rd at St. Petersburg 1909
- 1st at Abbazia 1912
- 2nd at Pestyán 1912
- 2nd at San Sebastian 1912
- 1st at Baden bei Wien 1914
- 1st at Stockholm 1919
- 1st at Teplitz-Schoenau 1922

- 2nd at Pistyan 1922
- 1st at Magdeburg 1927
- 2nd at Carlsbad 1929.

Spielmann's approach to chess placed a premium on having the initiative. More so than most masters, his games seem to be made up of a series of tactical strokes, including many beautiful ideas, relentless attacks, and brilliant sacrifices. To seize the initiative and to build up attacking chances, he did not hesitate to invest small (or large!) amounts of material. His style of play therefore was dynamic, with unbalanced and complex positions.

His winning combinations, whether straight-forward or very complicated, were often surprising and always attractive. And when there arose an opportunity to finish the game with a decisive tactical blow, he was almost perfect.

As GM Stahlberg noted "...[Spielmann] seemed to love fighting and danger for their own sakes...It is no coincidence that, despite his extremely uneven results, he was one of the most popular of all masters. His intrepid and imaginative play contributed yet another attraction to great tournaments by making them full of games of fighting interest and colorful content." (Chess and Chessmasters, p.85)

Because of his style of play, Spielmann continues to be relevant and is studied by players of each new generation who want to hone the ability to execute combinations and dictate the course of the game.

The games presented in this collection include only short games, where Spielmann is victorious in 26 moves or less. One might say without exaggeration that each of these victories is an instructive lesson for anyone who wants to master the secrets of attack, initiative and modern dynamic chess.

International Master Nikolay Minev

# SPIELMANN OFFERS ADVICE

## ON TACTICS, ATTACK, AND INITIATIVE

*“The faculty...of converting energy into matter and matter into energy, constitutes one of the most wonderful characteristics of chess. ...The question: ‘How can I favorably turn matter into energy?’ occurs as a rule in the early phase of the game; the converse is more likely to obtain for the later phase.”*

\*\*\*

*“Sacrifices represent in chess an exceptionally important phase of the struggle. Beauty is not the sole object. They have the common aim of increasing the effectiveness of other pieces outside of the normal routine, if possible suddenly. In equalized positions their purpose is to gain time. But mostly they serve to increase already existing advantages... It may be an advantage in development is turned into a grand assault, or that a weak point in the enemy lines is ripped open in some way...A sacrifice at the right moment takes opportunity by the forelock. The opponent may gain material, but ...his troops become disordered and the disconnected forces are beaten before they can put up a united front to the enemy.”*

\*\*\*

*“The attacker’s troops are well deployed for the battle, he commands great freedom of space, he can carry out lightning changes of venue and of tactics, and in consequence, besides the main object, he can pursue all kinds of subsidiary schemes. The defender is limited to striving to see through his opponent’s plans and often he can only guess their purpose. At best he can spy some flaw in the enemy front. This task requires far more care and willpower than the attack, is therefore far more taxing and frequently leads to a weakening of the power of resistance; either the problem becomes too difficult or all faith in the position is lost.”*

\*\*\*

*“Practical play adduces evidence that errors occur far more frequently in defense than in attack. This is particularly the case when the defender has to solve unusual problems”*

\*\*\*

*“A tactical situation demands a counter-attack, not defense!”*

### **ON KING SAFETY**

*“In an opening castling may well be said to be the most important move, as two pieces are developed at one stroke. The King, to be sure, does not get into play thereby, but making the King secure is the equivalent at least of a strong developing move.”*

\*\*\*

*“The King, confined to his original square, not only hinders the development of his own forces, but his position also favors the immediate launching of the hostile attack. This is particularly the case if one or even two center files are open.”*

### **ON PAWNS AND PAWN STRUCTURE**

*“The pawns are the steel structure of the position and ordinarily dictate the course of events.”*

\*\*\*

*“In judging pawn formations the development and configuration of the pieces must at all times be taken into consideration. Where the pieces are well placed...a poor pawn formation can mostly be endured with a good grace. But, if the pieces are unfavorably situated, the slightest weakness amongst the pawns can become fatal.”*

### **ON PIECES AND PIECE VALUE**

*“The formula that three pawns are the equivalent of a piece must be taken with circumspection. In the endgame it will frequently be true, in the middle game only in certain circumstances – there must at least be some prospects of attack. This is more important as the adversary, with an extra piece, has attacking chances. As a rule, three pawns provide a better compensation for a Knight, than for a Bishop.”*

\*\*\*

*“All chess units have, in the language of the stock exchange, two prices, the par value and the quoted rate. The par value represents the absolute, the price from day to day the relative values.*

*“The absolute value forms the basis on which exchanges are made; the relative value is the decisive factor in positional play, for combinations and especially for sacrifices. The simpler the position, the more the absolute value carries weight. The more complicated the position, the more does the relative value gain in importance. In the original position, the absolute value practically counts alone, the relative value only arises in the course of the game.”*

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**[1] Schenkein J. – Spielmann R. A02**  
**Vienna (Trebitsch) 1910/11**

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**1.f4 e5 2.fxe5 d6 3.exd6 Bxd6 4.Nf3 g5**

Recommended by Em. Lasker. The alternative is 4...Nf6.

**5.g3 g4 6.Nh4 Ne7 7.d4 Ng6 8.Ng2?!**

Recent theory prefers 8.Nxg6 hxg6 9.Qd3 (but not 9.Bg2? Rxh2!) Nc6 10.c3 Bf5 11.e4 Qe7 12.Bg2 O-O-O with a sharp and unclear game.

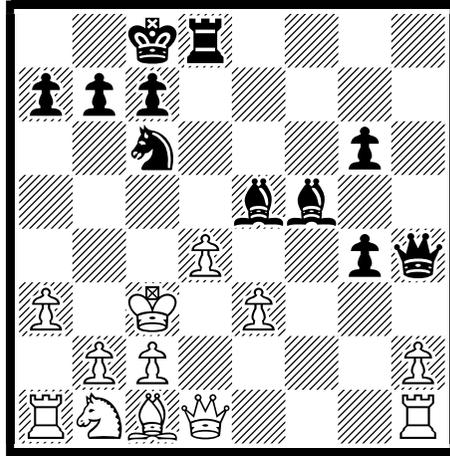
**8...Nc6 9.e3?**

Considered better is 9.c3 Qe7 10.Bh6. However, tournament practice shows that after 10...f5 11.Qc1 Bd7 12.Qe3 O-O-O 13.Qxe7 Ncxe7 14.e3 c5 Black has more than enough compensation for the pawn.

**9...h5 10.Bd3 h4! 11.Bxg6 fxc6 12.Nxh4 Rxh4! 13.gxh4 Qxh4+ 14. Kd2 Bf5 15.a3**

If 15.Kc3 immediately, then 15...Bb4+ 16.Kb3 Be6+ 17.d5 Na5+ 18. Kxb4 g3+ 19.Qd4 c5+! 20.Kxc5 Rc8+ 21.Kb4 Rc4+ and Black wins – Hoffer.

**15...O-O-O 16.Kc3 Be5!**



### 17.b4

There is no adequate defense. If 17.Kb3 Rxd4! 18.exd4 Nxd4+ 19. Ka2 Bxc2 or 17.dxe5 Rxd1 18.Rxd1 Qxh2 and Black wins in both cases.

**17...Nxd4 18.exd4 Rxd4 19.Nd2 Rd3+ 20.Kc4 g3+ 21.Kb5 Bd7+ 22.Ka5 Rd5+ 0-1**

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[2] **Kmoch H. – Spielmann R. A12**  
**Vienna 1928**

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*Notes by R. Reti*

**1.Nf3 Nf6 2.g3 d5 3.Bg2 h6 4.O-O Bf5 5.c4 c6 6.b3 e6 7.Bb2 Nbd7  
8.d3 Be7**

Lasker against Reti, New York 1924, developed the Bishop on d6. Spielmann's move should be considered an improvement because in Lasker's game, after e2-e4, White threatened with the fork e4-e5. Moreover, as we shall see further, it is in Black's favor that the Bishop does not obstruct the d-file.

**9.Nbd2 O-O 10.Re1**

Here probably the continuation 10.Qc2 first is the better choice, with the idea, if the d-file will be open, immediately to take possession of it with one of the Rooks.

**10...Bh7 11.e4 Nc5 12.Ne5 Nfd7! 13.Nxd7 Qxd7 14.Nf1 dxe4 15.  
Qg4?! Bg6 16.dxe4 Rad8 17.Red1 Nd3!**

Clearly a surprise for White. The position of the Knight, looking dangerous, proves to be very strong. There arises a situation with chances for both sides, and counter chances, where the smallest inaccuracy can be fatal.

**18.Ne3?**

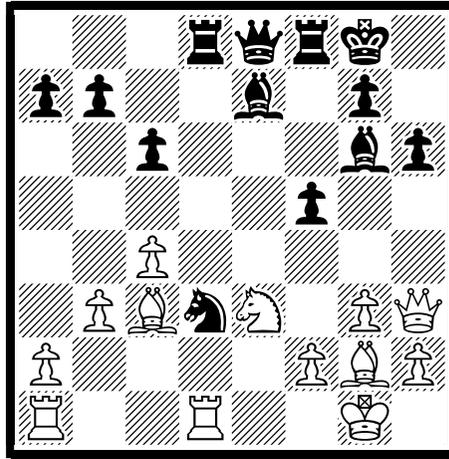
This is probably the decisive mistake. Playing 18.Bc3 White can hold.

**18...Qe8!**

On the contrary, Spielmann plays extraordinarily precisely. The text prepares f7-f5, and in case of the relatively best 19.Qe2 Nxb2 Black achieves two Bishops, which are very strong in such open positions.

**19.Bc3? f5 20.exf5 exf5 21.Qh3**

If 21.Qf3 Bh5, or 21.Qe2 f4.



**21...Nxf2!**

A surprising and decisive sacrifice.

**22.Kxf2 Bc5 0-1**

Because if 23.Re1 Rd3, or 23.Bd2 Rxd2+.

**[3]**

**Davidson J. – Spielmann R.**  
**Amsterdam (m) 1932**

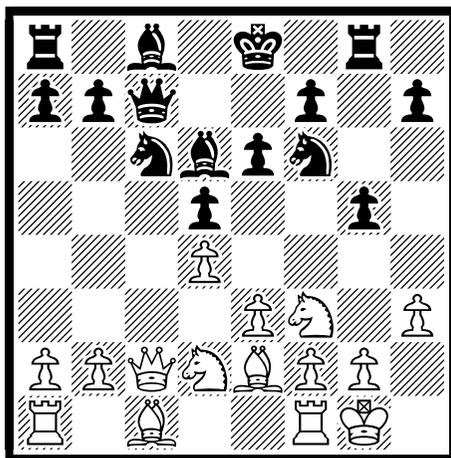
**A46**

*This lovely miniature shows how passive development and premature castling can be punished.*

**1.d4 e6 2.Nf3 c5 3.c3 Nf6 4.Nbd2? cxd4! 5.cxd4 d5 6.e3 Nc6 7.Be2**

Better is 7.a3, intending 8.b4.

**7...Bd6 8.O-O Qc7 9.h3? Rg8! 10.Qc2 g5**



**11.e4 g4! 12.hxg4 Nxc4 13.e5? Nxe5! 14.Qxh7**

This loses quickly, but also 14.Qxc7 Nxf3+ 15.Nxf3 Bxc7 is practically hopeless.

**14...Nf6 15.Qh4 Ng6!**

A new surprise! If now 16.Qxf6, then 16...Be7 and White's Queen is trapped.

**16.Qg5 Nf4 17.Bb5+ Ke7! 18.Qh6 Bd7 0-1**

Because of 19.Bxd7 Ne2+ 20.Kh1 Rh8.

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[4]

**Colle E. – Spielmann R.  
Merano 1926**

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**A48**

*Notes by Mises*

**1.d4 Nf6 2.Nf3 c5 3.e3**

More active is 3.d5.

**3...g6 4.Bd3 Bg7 5.O-O b6 6.c3 Bb7 7.Nbd2 O-O 8.e4 d6 9.Re1  
Nbd7 10.Nf1 Nh5!? 11.Be3 e5 12.dxe5**

There is nothing better. If 12.d5 Nf4 and ...f7-f5, or 12.Qd2 f5 13.Bh6 d5! with advantage for Black.

**12...Nxe5!**

Sharper than 12...dxe5.

**13.Bc2?**

Better is 13.Nxe5!? dxe5 14.Qc2.

**13...Nxf3+ 14.gxf3**

If 14.Qxf3 f5!

**14...f5 15.Bb3+ Kh8 16.Bd5 Bxd5 17.exd5**

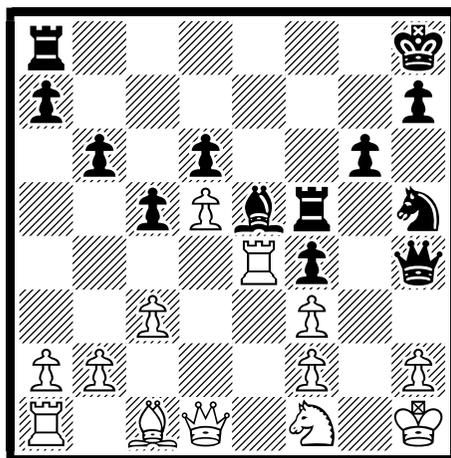
Also after 17.Qxd5 f4 18.Bd2 Qf6 White stands clearly worse.

**17...f4 18.Bc1 Rf5 19.Re4 Be5!**

In the case of 19...Qg5+ 20.Ng3! Rxd5 21.Qe2 White achieves serious

counter chances.

**20.Kh1 Qh4!**



Threatening 21...Qh3 and 22...Rg5.

**21.Ng3 Rg5**

If now 22.Qf1 Rxc3!

**22.Qe1**

Hoping for 22...Nxc3+? 23.fxc3 Rxc3 24.Qxc3!

**22...Qh3! 0-1**

An excellently played game by Spielmann.

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[5]

**Spielmann R. – Mieses J.  
Mannheim 1914**

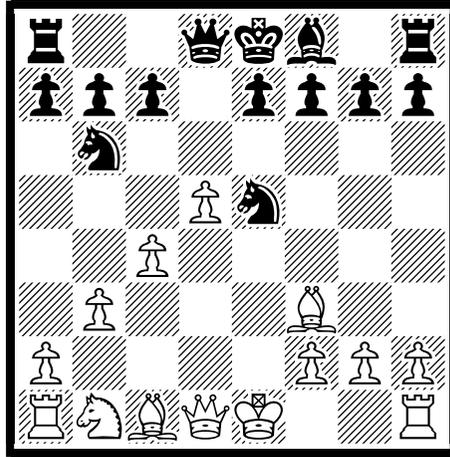
**B01**

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**1.e4 d5 2.exd5 Nf6 3.d4 Nxd5 4.c4 Nb6 5.Nf3 Bg4 6.Be2 Nc6?!**

Better is 6...e6 7.O-O Nc6.

**7.d5! Bxf3 8.Bxf3 Ne5 9.b3!**



ECO recommends this entire variation as best for White, showing some tournament examples from 70's and 80's. However, as we see from this game, the credit for the whole opening line belongs entirely to Spielmann.

**9...g6**

9...c6!?

**10.Bb2 Bg7 11.Nc3 c6 12.O-O! Nxf3+ 13.Qxf3 cxd5 14.c5 Nc8**

Also after 14...d4 15.Nb5 Nd7 16.b4 White has the advantage.

**15.Rad1 O-O**

The continuation 15...e6 16.Nxd5! Bxb2 17.Nb6 is clearly in White's favor.



*Notes by Spielmann.*

**1.e4 c6 2.Nc3 d5 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.e5 Ne4 5.Qe2**

Much stronger than 5.d4, as Bogoljubow has played against me in Magdeburg 1927.

**5...Nxc3**

In case of 5...Bf5 I intended to play 6.Nd4.

**6.dxc3 b6**

If 6...e6, then White's best is 7.c4.

**7.Nd4 c5?**

A fatal mistake. Here also 7...e6 was necessary. However, then after 8.Qh5 White will have an excellent game, because 8...c5 is again impossible in view of 9.Bb5+, and 8...g6 weakens the dark squares.

**8.e6! fxe6?**

After 8...cxd4 9.Qb5+ Bd7, or 9...Nd7, White wins an exchange by 10.exf7+ Kxf7 11.Qxd5+ and 12.Qxa8. 8...Bxe6 9.Nxe6 fxe6 10.Bf4 had to be played, eliminating White's most aggressive minor piece.

**9.Qh5+! Kd7 10.Nf3! Kc7 11.Ne5 Bd7 12.Nf7 Qe8 13.Qe5+ Kb7 14.Bf4!**

After 14.Nxh8 Nc6, followed by 15...g6, and Black is still alive.

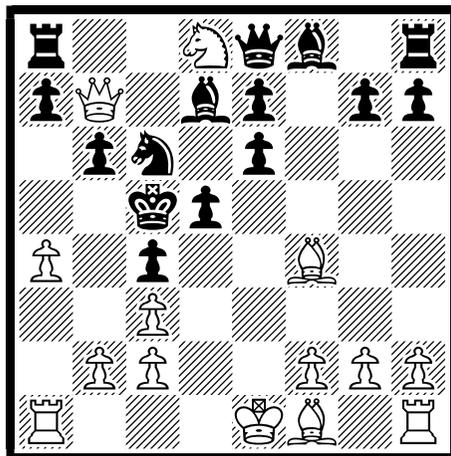
**14...c4 15.Qc7+ Ka6 16.Nd8!**

Here also 16.Nxh8 is weak because of 16...Nc6.

**16...Nc6 17.Qb7+ Kb5**

If 17...Ka5 18.Nxc6+ Bxc6 19.b4+ with an inevitable mate.

**18.a4+ Kc5**



**19.Qxc6+!! 1-0**

For if 19...Bxc6 20.Nxe6#.

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**[7] Spielmann R. – Nimzovitch A. B15**  
**Munich (m) 1905**

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*Two open files in the center always forebodes a quick outcome for the game. This example is not an exception. Also noteworthy is Spielmann's important but forgotten improvement 8.Be2.*

**1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 dxe4 4.Nxe4 Nf6 5.Ng3 e5**

Recent theory prefers 5...c5.

**6.Nf3 exd4 7.Nxd4 Be7 8.Be2! O-O**

If 8...c5?! 9.Ndf5 Qxd1+ 10.Bxd1 Bf8 11.Bf3 with a clear advantage.

**9.O-O**

White already stands better.

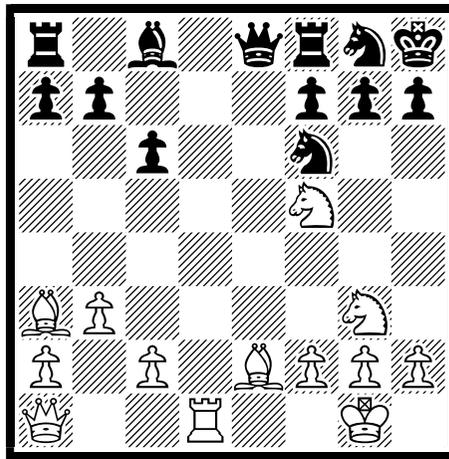
**9...Kh8 10.b3 Ng8 11.Bb2 Nd7 12.Ndf5 Bf6 13.Ba3!**

A fantastic introduction to a lightning attack on the dark squares.

**13...Bxa1**

If 13...Re8 14.Nd6 Re7 15.Nxc8 and Black loses an exchange.

**14.Qxa1 Ndf6 15.Rd1 Qe8**



**16.Nxg7! Kxg7 17.Rd6 Be6 18.Nh5+ Kg6 19.Qe5! 1-0**

There is no defense against 20.Bd3+.