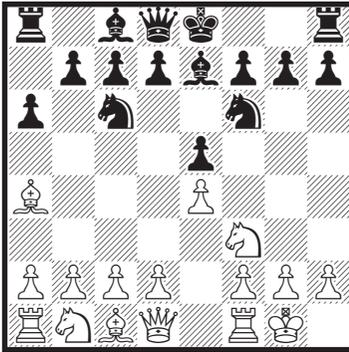


# WORLD CHAMPION OPENINGS

## CLOSED VARIATION



1.e4 e5  
2.Nf3 Nc6  
3.Bb5 a6  
4.Ba4 Nf6  
5.0-0 Be7

In the **Closed Variation**, both sides develop all of their forces before undertaking any active operations. The style of play is slow, maneuvering, and positional. If either side creates a serious weakness, however, the game can become vicious. Karpov is a leading exponent of the Black side. Kasparov once gave a convincing demonstration as Black, but is more often found playing White. It is fair to say that most great players have played both sides of the Closed Variation at some point in their career, if only when quite young.

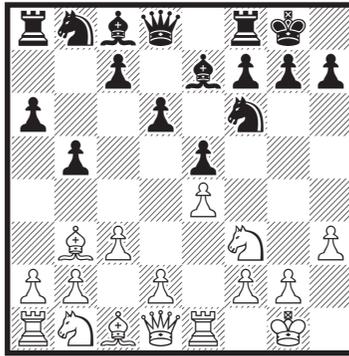
Let's look at how Mikhail Tal handled the Black side:

### (2) UNZICKER - TAL

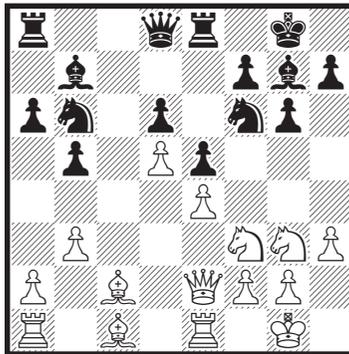
Hamburg (W. Germany vs. USSR), 1996

1.e4 e5; 2.Nf3 Nc6; 3.Bb5 a6; 4.Ba4 Nf6; 5.0-0 Be7; 6.Re1 b5; 7.Bb3 0-0. Black should play 7...d6 if the Breyer Variation is the goal, because against this move Kasparov has demonstrated the power of 8.a4! 8.c3 d6; 9.h3 White plays this to keep the enemy bishop away from g4, when the pin on the knight is annoying. Now Black has many different strategies, including combining ...Bb7 and ...Re8, repositioning minor pieces with ...Nd7 and ...Bf6, or playing on the queenside with ...Na5. Tal chooses another, very respectable path. 9...Nb8.

## WORLD CHAMPION OPENINGS

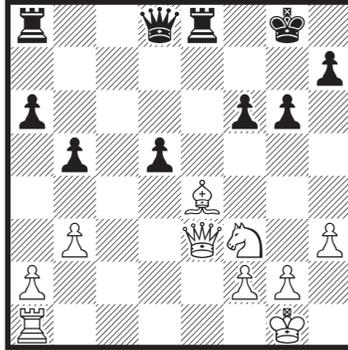


The Breyer Variation, which has held up well throughout the century. **10.d4 Nbd7; 11.Nbd2 Bb7; 12.Bc2 Re8; 13.Nf1 Bf8; 14.Ng3 g6; 15.b3.** An old fashioned line. Now 15.Bg5 and 15.a4 are preferred. **15...Bg7; 16.d5 Nb6; 17.Qe2?** A serious error which allows Tal to undermine White's center. The best plan is to play Be3 in order to put pressure on the dark squares and bring the other rook to a more active position. **17...c6; 18.c4 cxd5; 19.cxd5.**



Time for Tal to create some fireworks. White's center looks very strong, but it crumbles quickly. **19...Nfxd5; 20.exd5 e4** The bishop on g7 now springs to life. **21.Nxe4 Bxa1; 22.Bg5 f6; 23.Be3.** Some people never learn. Over three decades later, White tried to improve with 23.Bh4 but suffered a similar fate after **23...Bxd5; 24.Rxa1 Bxe4; 25.Bxe4 d5** and Black, in another game played in Germany, had a big advantage. **23...Nxd5; 24.Rxa1 Nxe3; 25.Qxe3 Bxe4; 26.Bxe4 d5.**

## WORLD CHAMPION OPENINGS



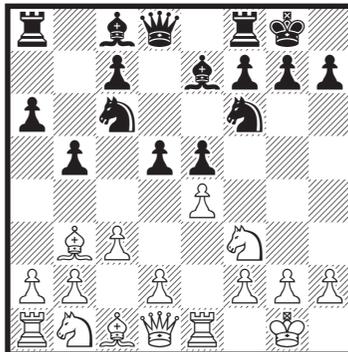
White resigned, since the bishop is lost. Note that Rd1 doesn't help because Black can capture the bishop with the rook anyway, with a decisive advantage.

One of the most exciting variations in the Closed Spanish is the Marshall Attack, seen here in a game between Frank Marshall and World Champion Capablanca.

### (3) CAPABLANCA - MARSHALL

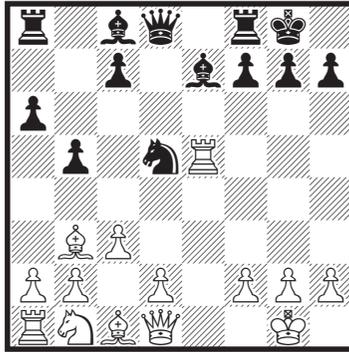
New York, 1918

1.e4 e5; 2.Nf3 Nc6; 3.Bb5 a6; 4.Ba4 Nf6; 5.0-0 Be7; 6.Re1 b5; 7.Bb3 0-0; 8.c3. Kasparov has demonstrated recently that 8.a4 may be more accurate, keeping the initiative by attacking at b5. 8...d5!?



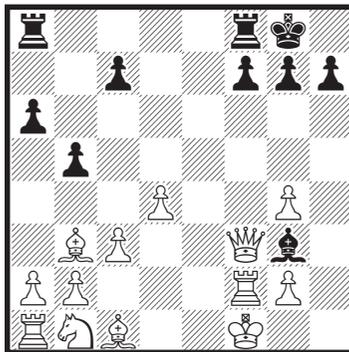
The now-famous Marshall Attack, is still popular in contemporary chess, with Viswanathan Anand the leading advocate. It was quite a shock when this game was played with the inventor handling the Black pieces. 9.exd5 Nxd5; 10.Nxe5 Nxe5; 11.Rxe5.

## WORLD CHAMPION OPENINGS



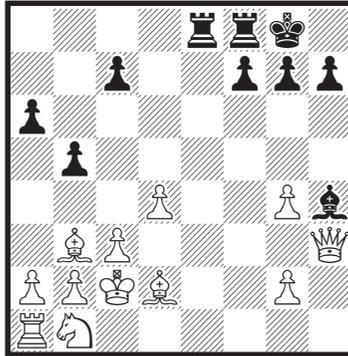
**11...Nf6.** As a result of this game, 11...Nf6 fell out of favor, and 11...c6 has become the standard continuation. The evaluation of the Marshall remains unclear, but as noted in the note to move 8, White may have a way of avoiding it and obtaining an advantage at the same time. **12.Re1 Bd6; 13.h3 Ng4; 14.Qf3!** 14.hxg4 Qh4; 15.g3 Bxg3; 16.fxg3 Qxg3+; 17.Kf1 Bxg4 and Black wins. **14...Qh4; 15.d4!** 15.Re8 is met by 15...Bb7! **15...Nxf2; 16.Re2** 16.Qxf2? would be a blunder because of 16...Bh2+; 17.Kf1 Bg3; 18.Qxf7+ Rxf7+ and, because it is check, White has no time for 19.Re8 mate.

**16...Bg4.** 16...Ng4; 17.Nd2. Taking the rook leads to disaster because Black infiltrates with the queen at g3. 17...Bd7; 18.Nf1 Nf6; 19.Be3 and White is clearly better. **17.hxg4 Bh2+; 18.Kf1 Bg3;** 18...Nh1; 19.Be3 Ng3+; 20.Ke1 Nxe2+; 21.Kxe2 Rae8; 22.Nd2 is a position Black wouldn't wish on his mother-in-law. The h-file will be an expressway to disaster, and the pressure on the e-file is irrelevant. **19.Rxf2 Qh1+.**

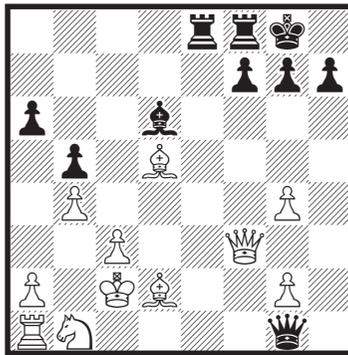


**20.Ke2.** Capablanca is conducting the defense with utmost precision and Black's attack is falling apart. **20...Bxf2; 20...Qxc1;** 21.Rf1 Qxb2+; 22.Nd2 Bd6; 23.Bxf7+ and White wins. **21.Bd2 Bh4; 22.Qh3.** If Black exchanges queens, then there is no more attack and resignation is inevitable. **22...Rae8+; 23.Kd3 Qf1+; 24.Kc2.**

## WORLD CHAMPION OPENINGS



White is not worried. Black has too little in the way of attacking force, and all Capablanca has to do is activate the rook at a1. **24...Bf2; 25.Qf3 Qg1; 26.Bd5 c5; 27.dxc5 Bxc5; 28.b4 Bd6** White has two pieces for a rook, but the rook has been sitting on a1 the entire game.



Now Capablanca brings it out. **29.a4! a5; 30.axb5 axb4; 31.Ra6! bxc3; 32.Nxc3 Bb4** Capablanca's king is completely safe, and his attack is stronger than it looks. **33.b6 Bxc3; 34.Bxc3 h6; 35.b7 Re3**. Here Capablanca finished off the game with a brilliant move, announcing mate in 6. **36.Bxf7+; 36.Qxf7+!? Rxf7; 37.b8Q+ Kh7; 38.Rxh6+ Kxh6; 39.Qh8+ Kg5; 40.Qh5+ Kf4; 41.Qxf7+ would have been pretty, but much slower. 36...Rxf7; 36...Kh8; 37.Rxh6 mate. 37.b8Q+. A new queen brings the game to a swift conclusion. 37...Re8; 38.Qxe8+ Kh7; 39.Qfe4+ Rf5; 40.Qxf5+ g6; 41.Qexg6 mate.**