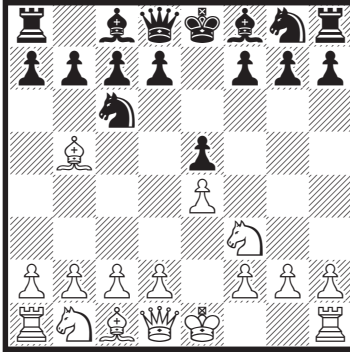


## WORLD CHAMPION OPENINGS

### SPANISH GAME



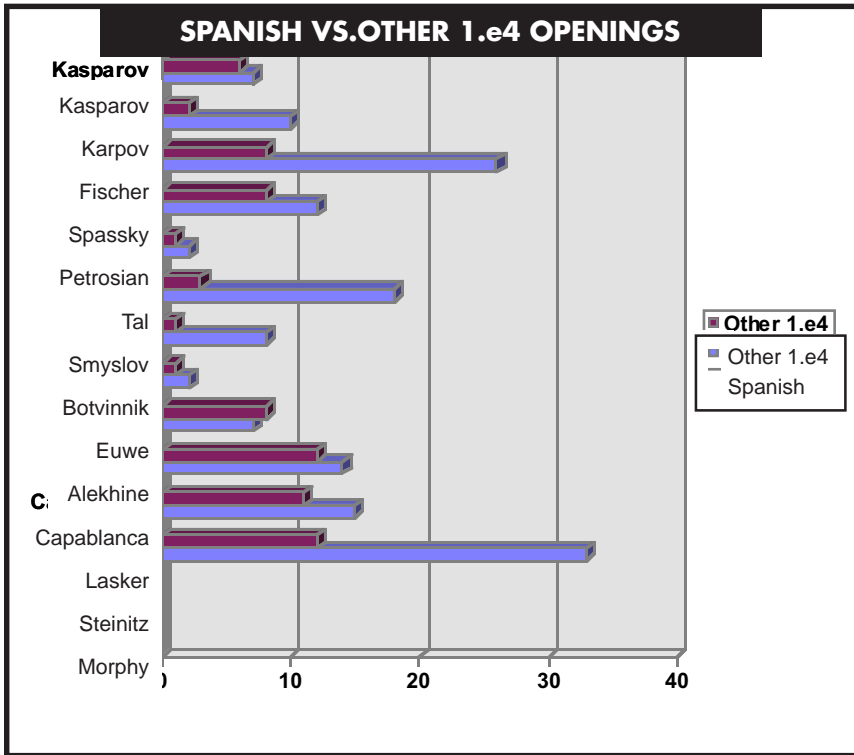
1.e4 e5  
2.Nf3 Nc6  
3.Bb5

The **Spanish Game**, also known as the **Ruy Lopez**, has figured prominently in the repertoire of several World Champions, especially Fischer, Lasker, Alekhine and Capablanca. Each of them played it in at least one out of every 6 games as White!

And when opponents ventured 1.e4 as White, the Spanish was often the result, except for Morphy and Steinitz, because the Spanish was out of favor then, considered too slow. Other 19<sup>th</sup> century masters preferred more direct attacking methods, such as the Italian Game or King's Gambit, for defensive technique was poor, and it was possible to win many games quickly in the opening. As chess evolved, defensive technique improved, and the Spanish took over the scene.

Notice in the graph on the following page how even when the Open Games did not figure prominently in the repertoire of a champion, the Spanish still usually featured in more games than all the remaining Open Games combined.

## WORLD CHAMPION OPENINGS



The Spanish Game is characterized by almost infinite variety, from quiet maneuvering games to savage kingside attacks. It is very easy to understand, and the typical ideas surface over and over again, giving the advantage to serious players. For me, the Spanish Game is like an old friend. I may travel the paths of many openings in the sheer joy of exploration, but there is always a satisfying feeling when I am back in Spanish territory again.

This is in many ways the most logical of chess openings. White plants a pawn at e4, hoping to send its companion to d4 as soon as possible. Black responds by occupying the important central square e5, while at the same time clamping down on d4. White then targets the enemy pawn at e5 while simultaneously developing a knight, and Black defends, but also gains development for the knight. Since the knight at c6 now defends the pawn at e5, White undermines the defense by threatening to capture the knight at c6 with the bishop that is now at b5.

Black usually reacts by provoking the exchange, playing 3...a6. Although this seems to fall in with White's plans, in fact after 4.Bxc6, the **Exchange Variation**, Black plays 4...dxc6. Now 5.Nxe5 fails to 5...Qd4!

## WORLD CHAMPION OPENINGS

Of the World Champions, only Bobby Fischer has used the Exchange Variation as White with any regularity.

Normally, White retreats the bishop to a4, being unwilling to trade the powerful bishop for a mere knight. Then Black usually attacks the pawn at e4 with 4...Nf6, and White can afford to castle, since after 5.0-0 Nxe4 the pawn can be regained either quickly with 6.Re1, or with the superior 6.d4! b5; 7.Bb3, as we'll see in the section on the **Open Variation**. So instead of 5...Nxe4, the simple 5...Be7 is more common, leading to the **Closed Variation**.

Black does not have to play 3...a6. There are plenty of alternatives, even in the repertoires of the World Champions. We'll take a look at the active **Modern Steinitz Defense** and the wild **Schliemann Variation**, too.