

## **Franco, Z., 2018. *Lasker Move by Move* – Reviewed by Adam Spencer**

Everyman's 'Move by Move' series boasts a good number of titles now, especially on opening variations. From my own collection I especially recommend Junior Tay's book on the unfashionable, but very easy to learn, Old Indian Defence. The format is pretty simple. Present a game, in full, and at key points the reader is posed a question such as 'Why not Bf5?' or 'Can you find the win if white were to err by Ng3?' and similar such puzzles. I find this approach rather good for learning an opening. One gets decent explanation of the plans for both sides and the question format reinforces key ideas and helps to avoid traps.

The subject of this review, however, is not from the Everyman opening series of move by move books but, rather, about one player, in this case Emanuel Lasker. The back cover of the book advertises others in the series on Morphy, Alekhine, Tal, and Rubinstein.

When I found the book I was very pleased as Lasker is one of my favourite players. I remember in my youth thinking that Irving Chernev had pretty poor judgement placing Lasker third in his 1976 book *The Golden Dozen* before, as I got a little older, thinking that perhaps third behind Alekhine and Capablanca wasn't too bad. Alas, however, Franco's book has a number of flaws which I shall come to.

The book is arranged in five chapters, each representing a period of time, with an introductory chapter where Franco looks at Lasker's contribution to opening, middlegame, and endgame play. The games, as per the move by move format, are given in full with questions dotted throughout. It should be good, but why isn't it?

The main reason is that it reads like a book put together in a hurry. There is nothing new beyond a few computer lines that add to previous iterations of the games. In short, it's a 'Lasker's Greatest Hits' collection. Now, to a certain extent this is inevitable. Of course you want some of his match games for the world championship but does anyone really need another run through Lasker's 1889 defeat of Bauer in Bird's Opening, or yet another chance to play through Lasker v Capablanca 1914 in the Ruy Lopez Exchange?

The impression of a book put together in a rush is compounded by some very poor errors in production which really should not be present in a modern book. For example, in Lasker v Capablanca Moscow 1935 the game is nicely annotated until move 33 when Franco has Lasker playing a move that simply isn't possible. At first I assumed I had made an error playing through the game but I checked a couple of times and it's simply an error in the book.

Another example is this. Imagine that you want to see how Lasker met the Caro-Kann Defence. Naturally enough you turn to the Index of Openings where it says quite clearly that numbers refer to games. Super. The first Caro-Kann is given as game 28. Turning to game 28, however, reveals Lasker v Salwe in a Ruy Lopez! The

error is compounded by game 28 appearing, correctly, in the list of Lopez games. OK, you might say to yourself, who hasn't made an error in indexing; what's next? Game 54. But search for game 54 you do in vain for the book contains but 46 games.

Should you buy this book? Honestly, no. Keep your £19.99 for other purchases. Only buy this book if you are a die-hard Laskerphile who simply must have every book on your hero on your shelves.