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Last Lectures The Chess Legacy of Jose Raoul Capabanca

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Last Lectures is, as the name suggests, a series of lectures given over the radio by former World Chess Champion José Raúl Capablanca just a few months before he died. While he was preparing these lectures, he dictated them to his wife, Olga Capablanca, who typed them. As a result, we have them today. Perhaps more than any other player in the history of chess, Jose Raoul Capablanca was noted for his ability to cut through the complexities of modern chess theory and find the winning line in grandmaster tournament play. Capablanca was often called the greatest natural chess player of all time. His clarity of vision, his simplicity and precision of style were legendary. Here, in these twelve lectures originally delivered by short-wave radio to a Latin American audience shortly before his death in 1942, the qualities that made Capablanca one of the game's uniquely great masters are reflected in a timeless legacy of chess wisdom. His observations on the fundamental principles of sound chess thinking are expressed so clearly and simply that a novice can follow them; yet they touch on such profoundly important underlying themes that the most advanced player will benefit by absorbing them. In fact, these lectures reveal that much of Capablanca's supposedly instinctive genius for unraveling highly complex situations over the board consisted of a deeper and sounder understanding of the basic principles of endgame strategy (and the ability to see the endgame structure foreshadowed during the tactical maneuvering of the middle game) than that possessed by any other player of his time. Last Lectures contains Capablanca's chess “instinct” preserved for a later generation. Over and over again he stresses the vital importance of knowing how to play the endings. He gives simple rules of proper endgame play many of which he says are often overlooked by top flight masters. He shows how to recognize the winning elements of the commonest endings: Rook and Pawn, Bishop vs. Knight. He gives his analysis of the relative value of the pieces. Even in this era of exhaustive analysis of the openings, there is wisdom and profit to be gained from his chapter on the Ruy Lopez. Perhaps the greatest pleasure for the modern player, whether he is a beginner or an expert, in reading Last Lectures will come from Capablanca's lively anecdotes and strongly expressed opinions about his contemporaries. Using their play as examples for his observations on universal chess truths, Capablanca rates (and sometimes rakes) Morphy, Steinitz, Emanuel Lasker, Nimzovch, Alekhine, Reshevsky, Frank Marshall and other chess immortals. Last Lectures will enrich the play, as well as the library, of all chess enthusiasts.

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