

# Sammy Reshevsky-America's New Champion

SIXTEEN years ago, when Sammy Reshevsky, diminutive prodigy approaching his eighth birthday, was spoken of as the possible world's chess champion, there were many who laughed up their sleeves. Infant prodigies have a habit of not growing into geniuses.

When seven years ago Sammy, at the banquet given in his honor on February 21, 1929, in Detroit, at the home of Morris Fishman, gave the promise: "I hope to bring laurels to Detroit some day by capturing the world's chess title," many were still skeptical.

But Sammy is making good his promise. If the outstanding chess experts in America are correct in their prophecies, it will not be long before the world title will be in Sammy's possession.

The one-time infant prodigy, now in his twenty-fourth year, is already close to the title, having won the championship of the United States on May 16.

There is a most interesting story attached to Sammy's latest triumph. When he first came to Detroit in 1920, Morris Steinberg, a nationally known checker enthusiast and publisher of literature on checker playing, took an interest in the boy and became directly responsible for the manner in which his life has been shaped. Steinberg interested the late Julius Rosenwald in the chess prodigy and it was at the behest of the eminent millionaire and philanthropist that the boy went into retirement and recessed as professional chess player for a period of eight years in order to be able to devote himself to his studies and to enjoy a normal boyhood. Sammy entered Northern High School in Detroit, from which he graduated with honors. He then entered the University of Chicago and in 1934 earned his Ph.B. degree from this university's School of Commerce, having specialized in accounting.

## About a Chess Prodigy Who Made Good as a Player and a Human Being

By Philip Slomovitz

*Sammy Reshevsky is only one step from the World's Chess Championship. His rise from boy prodigy to holder of the United States Chess title is interestingly told in this article by the editor of the Detroit Jewish Chronicle in an exclusive Seven Arts article. The parts which Julius Rosenwald and Morris Steinberg played in the making of Sammy's life are herewith revealed for the first time.*

—THE EDITOR

With his graduation from the University of Chicago also began the revival of his chess career which, in the opinion of experts, is leading the young genius to the world's title. In 1934 Sammy again attracted world interest by defeating the best talent from the United States, Germany, Canada, Mexico, and Italy, in an international contest held at Syracuse. He did not lose a game of the fourteen he played, since he won ten games and drew four.

Shortly thereafter, in the summer of 1935, Sammy met twelve outstanding players at Margate, England, and again did not lose a game, winning eight and drawing three. Among those he defeated was Jose R. Capablanca of Cuba, a former world champion. Because of the defeat inflicted upon Capablanca, Reshevsky was awarded the title of the great master, an honor given to those who defeat champions. Only about ten people

in the world today hold this title in chess.

Shortly after the Margate contests, Sammy also played in an international series of games at Yarmouth, England, and lost only one game and that on a technicality.

Sammy had already been decorated for his chess playing by the governments of the United States, France, Germany, Austria, England, Belgium and Holland. As a native of Poland, he naturally began to play in that country. When he visited his "pal" and "big brother," Morris Steinberg in Detroit during the week following his acquisition of the United States championship in chess, he remarked, "I remember when the Germans were occupying Poland and General Von Bessler challenged me. I was only six years old at that time but I beat him. I told him 'You can shoot but I can play.'"

Mr. Steinberg, who has now been

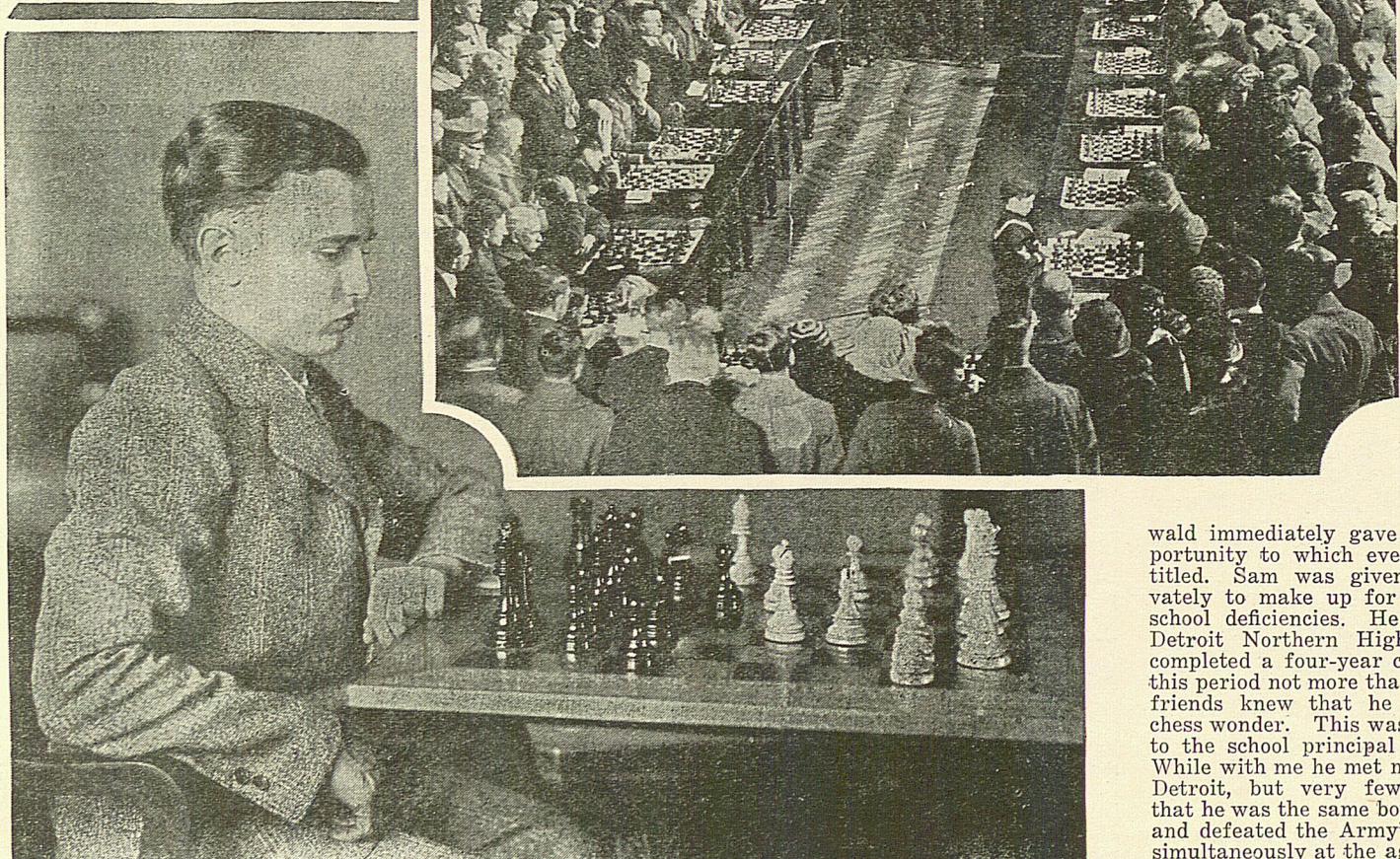
Sammy's "pal" for sixteen years, has made it his life's hobby to guide the boy in the right direction. Mr. Steinberg relates the following facts to illustrate the manner in which Julius Rosenwald became interested in the chess prodigy and became the boy's guardian angel:

"It was my privilege to know Mr. Rosenwald for seven years. Many opportunities presented themselves during those years for me to come into close contact with this great man.

"In 1924 he interested himself in Sammy Reshevsky, the chess prodigy, and through Fred M. Butzel, Detroit philanthropist and communal leader, and Dr. A. M. Dushkin, executive director of the Board of Jewish Education of Chicago, it was agreed that Sam and his parents should live in Detroit. Sam had already been in this country three years, but made virtually no progress educationally, it having been made constantly necessary for him to give exhibitions to help support his parents, sisters and brothers abroad.

"Mr. Rosenwald was more interested in having Sam enjoy a normal boyhood and education and develop into a worth-while citizen, even though he might show no extraordinary qualities other than genius as a chess player. He admonished us to keep him out of public notice and saw to it that he enjoyed boy friends and participated in their play and educational activities. Prior to that time Sam's necessity for making a living forced only adult contacts on him.

"The interest taken by Mr. Rosen-



Lower photograph is of Sammy Reshevsky engrossed at the chessboard. Upper photograph is of Sammy taken in the winter of 1920 at West Point, where he opposed the army's best chess players and won 19 games and tied one. Sam my played at West Point shortly after his arrival in this country.

wald immediately gave Sam the opportunity to which every boy is entitled. Sam was given lessons privately to make up for his grammar school deficiencies. He then entered Detroit Northern High School and completed a four-year course. During this period not more than a handful of friends knew that he was the boy chess wonder. This was confided only to the school principal and teachers. While with me he met many people in Detroit, but very few were aware that he was the same boy who opposed and defeated the Army's best players simultaneously at the age of eight. So closely was his identity concealed that when a leading magazine published an article on "What Becomes of Our Prodigies?" only a picture was used of Sam with the statement that no one seems to know what became of him. (Continued on page 32)