

MEETING OF THE CHAMPIONS

THE BIG BILLIARD TOURNAMENT TO BEGIN TO-MORROW.

What Ives, Schaefer, and Slosson Have Been Doing in Practice—The Older Players Not Afraid of the Big Runs Made by Ives—Something About the Rise and Progress of the Young "Napoleon" of the Billiard World.

Modest George F. Slosson, ambitious Frank C. Ives, and wiry little Jacob Schaefer will begin their triangular billiard tournament in the Madison Square Garden Concert Hall to-morrow night. It will be a fourteen-inch balk-line game, and, judging from the opinions expressed by clever followers of billiards, it ought to equal any tournament ever held in this city.

Ives and Schaefer appear to be the favorites, but Slosson is not without admirers. His friends all admit that, while he is not a champion, he may upset all cal-



Jacob Schaefer.

culations by carrying off first honors. Slosson, as usual, is very non-committal. He has heard of the marvelous practice games of Ives, the wonderful runs credited to Schaefer, but he takes a philosophical view of the situation and says that he will be prepared to do his best. The probabilities are that the opening game will be between Ives and Slosson.

It is interesting to note the difference in the styles of the three men. Schaefer plays with that speed, dash, and daring that have made him famous in Europe and America; Slosson's game is indicative of careful study and deep thinking, and Ives strikes a happy medium. He is not as fast as Schaefer and not as slow as Slosson.

Ives's stroke is a thing of beauty. He does not use the wrist motion like Schaefer, but the touch is as delicate as it possibly can be. This is noticeable particularly when the balls are in the centre of the table. On those occasions he can work them forward and backward, tallying carrom after carrom, with the regularity of clockwork, and apparently only moving the ivories the smallest possible fraction of an inch.

The judgment of speed displayed by the little Chicago player has created no small amount of favorable comment. In his practice games last week with Maurice Daly and J. R. Heiser in this respect his game



Frank C. Ives.

was an innovation. While making his record-breaking runs of 553 and 503, frequently when the balls were in balk, he would drive one to the side cushion and it would return to the identical spot that it had left.

Of course other players can do the same thing, but not with the accuracy that marks the work of Ives. Another thing that marks the game played by Ives is his wonderful position play. All experts try to get the balls together, but sometimes it requires two or perhaps three strokes to accomplish the object. Not so, however, with the "Napoleon." In this respect he is indeed a General. He always strives to get the balls in position on the first attempt, and in order to do so makes some of the most difficult shots ever seen on a table. While playing with Maurice Daly last week the balls were in a poor position. He took a long draw from the object ball, came up on the side cushion, counted, and had the three ivories lined up in the corner. It was a very risky play.



George Slosson.

"Where did you get that shot from?" asked Daly. "Have you been taking lessons from Yank Adams?"

Ives is the youngest billiard champion that we have ever had. He is now only twenty-seven years old. Formerly the billiard champions were men who had been before the public for years. Slosson, Schaefer, Daly, Sexton, Vignaux, all held the honors, and Slosson and Schaefer alternated with them for some years. Suddenly young Ives came to the front, whipped the "old timers," and practically from obscurity at one gigantic leap reached the pinnacle of fame in the billiard world.

When the Eastern critics heard of the wonderful Ives, they remembered a small, white-faced boy who took part in a tournament here six years ago. At that time he gave evidence of being in the class of McLoughlin, Gallagher, or Heiser, but few ever thought that he would wrest the laurels from the champions of three coun-

tries. Ives, however, when he failed in his first tournament never lost heart.

When the "Napoleon" made the match at English billiards with John Roberts many believed that he was going too far, and it was hinted that the youngster was suffering from an enlarged cranium. Roberts had had a monopoly of his game for years, and men of the calibre of Vignaux, Plot, Fournil, Schaefer, Slosson, Sexton, and Carter would not even entertain the thought of meeting the Englishman on the big table with the small balls and pockets. But Ives was constituted differently. He made a match with Roberts got an English table, practiced on it for some weeks, went across the ocean, and the result is a matter of history. Roberts was beaten in the most hollow style—a defeat that he says he will remember as long as he lives.

The betting was largely in favor of the Briton, but they never figured on the nursing abilities of the Yankee boy. The latter paid no attention to English cannons, but worked the rail for all it was worth. Finally he got the balls choked in the corner pocket and made as many shots as he cared to. The spectators hissed and howled, and finally, when Ives felt that he was far enough ahead to make the result a certainty, he broke the balls intentionally, as he termed it, to give the onlookers their money's worth. Roberts came over here, met Ives in a match in the Lenox Lyceum, on a table with the pockets enlarged, so as to preclude all possibility of getting the ivories choked again, and to handicap rail nursing.

Ives on that occasion was ill, and he did not play up to his standard. As a result the Englishman won. The American, however, had defeated Roberts for the second time in Chicago prior to the New-York match.

Everybody who has ever handled a cue knows of George Franklin Slosson. He is a Canadian by birth, but he has spent most of his years in this city and Chicago, where he has been the proprietor of billiard parlors. At present he is running Columbia Hall, on Broadway, one of the biggest and most profitable rooms in this city. Slosson has been a most peculiar player for a champion. At times he would put up a remarkable game, and again he would play billiards of a character that would cause a second-rate amateur to get on bad terms with himself.

"George is a most remarkable player," said "Ed" Donaldson, who was one of Slosson's warmest admirers. "He either plays like a world beater or a beginner. But he's honest, and that can't be said of every man connected with a sporting business."

And he was right. Slosson has beaten Schaefer, Sexton, Vignaux, and other cracks in an easy manner, only to be defeated in return. This is attributed to his nervous temperament. Physically he is inferior to any of the other players, and the strain and tension incident to the preliminary work for a match have always told heavily against him. On this occasion, however, the "Student" reports himself as being as fine as the proverbial fiddle, and on that account his friends look for a big upset this week. Slosson has paid several visits to Europe to play games, and on different occasions has been the guest of Adeline Patti in her castle in Wales. He gave the great singer lessons at billiards.

"Jake" Schaefer is the friend of the sporting men. He possesses rare gameness, and, with perhaps the exception of Sexton, plays nearer to his standard in matches than any other man in the profession. Schaefer's forte has been his nursing. By a peculiar movement of his wrist he simply toys with the ivories, and can make more shots in a given space of time than any other player in the world. Schaefer has played the champion's game, cushion carrom, and balk-line billiards with equal success, and is said by many to be the best all-round player in the world.

Some years ago, after repeated efforts, Maurice Vignaux was induced to come here from France to take part in a tournament. At the time the Frenchman was thought to be invincible, and the friends of "Jake" felt for him. It was different, however,



Maurice Daly.

with Schaefer. He just encountered the European champion with all the confidence in the world, and beat him in a manner that caused the friends of the American crack to howl with joy. It would require too much space to enumerate the contests in which the "Wizard" has taken part. He has played in every city, tournaments, and exhibition games in each of prominence from Maine to California, and his name is a household word wherever billiards is played.

Two years ago Schaefer fell and broke his wrist, and it is claimed that the accident has robbed the expert of his skillful stroke. Schaefer, however, denies the report, but admits that the injury has affected his masse shots only.

One thing is certain. If the men are in the good condition they say they are, some wonderful billiards can be looked for during the tournament. Many believe that all past runs and averages at the game will be beaten. Everybody knows that Ives has been doing marvelous work in practice, and the fact that the other two men are not alarmed is ample evidence that they have shown some big billiards in private. Schaefer does not care to have his form known, and on that account has not played in public since he came here. He has done his work on a private table in a room on the second floor of the Coleman House, and has had as trial "horses" his brother Charles and Prof. Spinks.

Maurice Daly has been foremost in the efforts to bring together the three experts. He will have the management of the tournament, and will look after the interests of the contestants. Daly is known as "everybody's friend." When the players fall out he takes them under his paternal wing and in a fatherly way talks common sense to them. He has healed many breaches and his purse has been opened on various occasions to assist a brother-player in hard luck. Ives has done his practice work at Daly's parlors, on Broadway, but the genial Maurice is on the most friendly terms with all three players.

The proprietors of billiard rooms throughout the city report business as booming. This is due to the interest in the coming match, and the chances are that billiard tournaments in this city will not be as few and far between as heretofore.