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Chess



GOTHAMCHESS COMES TO LONDON

**IM Levy Rozman, the world's most-popular chess streamer
comes to London in May as part of a European tour**

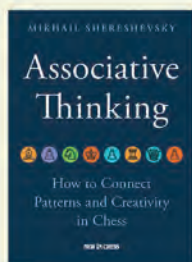
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Reaching 2500! - Matthew Wadsworth is England's newest GM

Glorious Godinn - Simon Williams on his favourite tournament

Frank Marshall - Ben Graff looks back at "The amateur's friend"



Associative Thinking *Mikhail Shereshevsky*

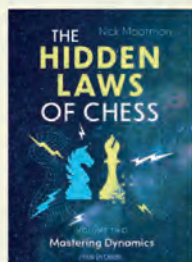
One of the most respected chess trainers in the world introduces an important but little-explored topic: associative thinking. It is not about specific pawn structures, but about more abstract things. For example, what is the best interaction between knight and pawn?



Did You Come Here to Play Chess or to Have Fun?

Dana Mackenzie

Dana Mackenzie celebrates the joy of chess – the ordinary, everyday chess we amateurs play. He has selected 40 of his favourite posts from his award-winning chess blog, including a diverse mix of stories, philosophical musings, chess improvement tips, and game analysis. In each story, the fun leaps off the page.



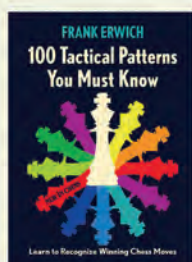
The Hidden Laws of Chess – Volume 2 *Nick Maatman*

In the first volume of this series, International Master Nick Maatman explored the deeper patterns behind pawn structures. In his second chess book, Maatman explains how to improve one's understanding of dynamics. He discusses themes such as material imbalance and quality versus quantity and introduces concepts such as the field of vision, the impact of error, and the price of a move.



Valuable lessons for every chess player *Jesus de la Villa*

Jesus de la Villa, the author of the international bestseller *100 Endgames You Must Know*, loves this quote from the American First Lady, Eleanor Roosevelt: 'Learn from the errors of others. You can't live long enough to make them all yourself.' For his new book, he has carefully selected the 50 mistakes every player should be aware of – so the mistake can be avoided.

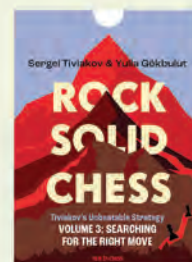


100 Tactical Patterns You Must Know *Frank Erwich*

The long-awaited middlegame companion to the bestseller *100 Endgames You Must Know*. Experienced chess trainer Frank Erwich teaches the most frequent and easy-to-learn tactical patterns. The book offers clear, concise, and easy-to-follow chess tactics instruction, ideal for post-beginners, club players, and candidate masters.

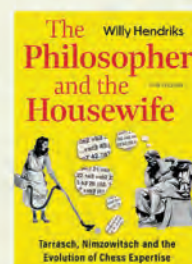
Rock Solid Chess – Volume 3 *Sergei Tiviakov and Yulia Gökbulut*

Choosing a move is an eternal dilemma for a chess player. How can we recognize the right solution in any position? How can we gain confidence in our decisions? Where do we direct our pieces and pawns? In ten chapters, Tiviakov explains clearly and uniquely how a single move can strengthen your position, weaken your opponent's position, or simply avoid trouble.



The Philosopher and the Housewife *Willy Hendriks*

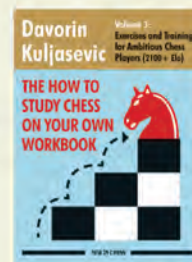
This is the fascinating story of the lifelong rivalry between the two most vain chess players in history: Siegbert Tarrasch and Aron Nimzowitsch. They clashed as personalities, players, and chess writers, both searching for the truth in chess but with very different perspectives. IM Willy Hendriks offers a fantastic and often highly entertaining look at this great controversy.



The How to Study Chess on Your Own Workbook – Volume 3

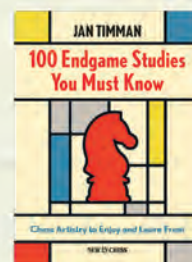
Davorin Kuljasevic

The bestselling *How to Study Chess on Your Own* by GM Kuljasevic offers a structured approach and training plans. Due to popular demand, Kuljasevic has created a series of accompanying Workbooks with exercises and tools a chess student can use to start training immediately. Most workbooks offer puzzles only, but Kuljasevic has used his coaching experience to create a broader and more exciting training schedule.



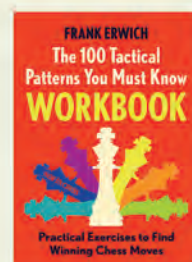
Chess artistry to enjoy and learn from *Jan Timman*

Perhaps the greatest beauty in chess can be found in endgame studies. Delightful twists and turns on the board are combined into true works of art. In studies, chess is distilled to its purest form, with all the pieces making only the most essential moves. Jan Timman guides you through masterpieces of increasing difficulty. You will be amazed at the possibilities of chess and inspired to add more finesse to your own endgame play.



Practical exercises to spot the key moves *Frank Erwich*

The workbook that offers over 500 exercises to accompany the *100 Tactical Patterns You Must Know*. Erwich not only identified the most important tactical patterns, he also collected hundreds of exercises to help you train them. The workbook can be used as a stand-alone training tool since each pattern is summarized.



Chess

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Chess Editorial

By Executive Editor, IM Malcolm Pein



@TelegraphChess

Levy on Tour

The surge in the popularity of the game has created a new generation of chess stars who create online content. With the exception of Hikaru Nakamura, most are not top-flight players, but good players and great entertainers. The most successful of these, the New Yorker IM Levy Rozman, is making his second visit to the UK and will appear at Westminster Central Hall on the evening of May the 9th. If you receive our regular updates by e-mail, then you will have a discount code for tickets. Signed merchandise is available and you can meet the great man in person either at Westminster Hall as above, or at Chess & Bridge on the morning of May 10th, between 10:30 and 12:00. Levy's Book for beginners, *How to Win at Chess*, makes an excellent gift for anyone wanting to learn the game.



GothamChess comes to London this month.

The Icelandic Candidate

I went to Iceland to play a few games at the Reykjavik Open during the Easter holidays. Sadly, the tournament was overshadowed to a degree by the death of the former Candidate and FIDE President GM Fridrik Olafsson, who passed away on April 4th.

Olafsson's death came just before the start of the tournament. The President of the Icelandic Chess Federation, Gunnar Bjornsson, had spoken to Olafsson just the day before his passing. Gunnar told me Olafsson had been cracking jokes and saying how he was looking forward to attending.

The funeral was held during the tournament at the imposing Hallgrímskirkja church which dominates the Reykjavik skyline. Afterwards, Iceland's other former Candidate, Johann Hjartarson, gave me a lift to a gathering held at the Hotel Loftleidir, now known as the Berjaya Reykjavik Natura Hotel, which is where Bobby Fischer stayed during his match against Boris Spassky in 1972.



The imposing Hallgrímskirkja was an apt setting for the funeral of the remarkable Olafsson.

Olafsson was elected FIDE President in 1978 while he was still a strong and active GM. During his tenure he had to deal with the difficult situation surrounding the match between Anatoly Karpov and Viktor Korchnoi in Baguio City in 1981 at the height of the Cold War.

Korchnoi had defected in 1976 and the Soviets were holding his wife and son effectively hostage. Olafsson travelled to Moscow to see if he could secure their release and the match was even delayed as negotiations continued. It was all to no avail, although Korchnoi's son was allowed to travel to the West after the match was over and Karpov had retained the world title.

It seems clear in hindsight that the Soviets felt that Olafsson's deputy Florencio Campomanes would be more malleable and so they shifted their votes to the Filipino at the next FIDE presidential election in 1982. Many said at the time that the election was to some extent rigged and votes were bought.

The Soviet Communist Party duly got its reward in 1985 when Campomanes controversially halted the first match between Garry Kasparov and Anatoly Karpov after 48 games and five months' play in Moscow. In a race to six wins, Karpov was leading 5-3, but had lost the last two games and was looking ill and demoralised. It was clear that the Soviet authorities wanted the match to end, and Campomanes did their bidding.

Olafsson defeated nearly everybody bar the



Fridrik Olafsson's coffin decorated with the final position of his famous win over Tal at Las Palmas.

Soviet authorities. His list of victims included Bobby Fischer and Mikhail Tal, whom he defeated brilliantly twice. Olafsson also got the better of Tigran Petrosian twice at the Candidates tournament held at Zagreb, Bled and Belgrade in the former Yugoslavia in 1959. They had proper tournaments in those days – it was an eight-player all-play-all and they played each other with both colours twice, so there were 28 rounds! Olafsson finished seventh.

Other notable victories for Olafsson included wins against Candidates Yuri Averbakh, Miguel Najdorf, Paul Keres, Efim Geller, Viktor Korchnoi, Mark Taimanov, Bent Larsen, Svetozar Gligoric, Lajos Portisch, Jan Timman, Robert Hübner, Zoltan Ribli and Ulf Andersson. His tournament career included a shared first place at Hastings 1955/56 with Korchnoi.

Olafsson's wins over Tal were both spectacular. To trick Tal on more than one occasion was remarkable.

F.Olafsson-M.Tal

Alekhine Memorial, Moscow 1971

English Opening

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 ♘f3 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 e6
5 ♘c3 ♙b4 6 ♘db5 0-0 7 a3 ♙xc3+
8 ♘xc3 d5 9 ♙g5 h6 10 ♙xf6 ♚xf6
11 e3 ♙d8 12 cxd5 exd5 13 ♚d4 ♚g5!?

Of course Tal heads for complications,



Two photos of Fridrik Olafsson (1935 – 2025) from *Wijk aan Zee* in 1971; on the left we see him tackling a typically solid Tigran Petrosian set-up.

avoiding 13...♖xd4 14 exd4 ♜c6.

14 h4 ♜f5 15 ♙d3 ♜e6

15...♜h5!? could be met by 16 ♙e2.

16 0-0-0!

Upping the ante. Not many would play this way against Tal.

16...♜c6 17 ♜f4 d4 18 exd4

18 ♜b5 ♙d7 19 ♜c7 ♜a2 would be madness against the great man. **18...♜xd4**

19 ♜c7 ♙d7 20 ♜he1 ♜f6 21 ♜e4!



Setting a trap.

21...♜c8??

Soviet audiences were highly knowledgeable and here there was an audible gasp from the spectators.

22 ♜xc8+! 1-0

If 22...♙xc8 23 ♜e8#.

The final position of this next game was recreated on a sculpture of a chess board and pieces that was placed on Olafsson's coffin. The game was played almost 50 years to the day before Olafsson passed away.

M. Tal-F. Olafsson
Las Palmas 1975
Modern Defence

1 e4 d6 2 d4 g6 3 ♙c4 ♜f6 4 ♜e2 ♜c6!

Neatly avoiding 4...♙g7 5 ♜c3 ♜c6 6 e5

♜xd4 7 exf6 ♜xe2 8 fxg7 ♜g8 9 ♜gxe2 which scored many wins for White back in the day, although engines are not so impressed with it.

5 ♜f3 ♙g4 6 c3 e5 7 ♙b5 exd4 8 cxd4 ♜d7

Unpinning the knight on c6 and preparing to intensify the pressure against the d4-pawn by unmasking the bishop on arrival at g7.

9 ♙e3 ♙g7 10 ♙xc6 bxc6 11 ♜bd2 0-0 12 ♜c1 c5

12...♜b6 was also a good move when 13 ♜xc6 ♙d7 14 ♜c2 f5! is good for Black, especially so after 15 ♙g5? ♜e8! 16 exf5 ♙xf5 17 ♜xc7 ♜d5 18 ♜c1 ♙d3!.

13 dxc5 ♙xb2 14 ♜c2 ♙g7 15 0-0 ♜e8

16 ♜d1 ♜xc5 17 ♙xc5 dxc5 18 ♜xc5 ♜d6 19 ♜dc1 ♙h6!



Threatening ...♙xf3. The pins are very annoying for White.

20 ♜xc7?

Playing for tricks, but missing a crucial point. Better to unpin everything with 20 ♜1c2 ♜ab8 21 ♜e1.

20...♜ad8 21 ♜1c2

21 ♜7c2 ♙xf3 22 gxf3 ♜d3! (22...♙xd2? 23 ♜d1 would see White escape) 23 ♜f1 ♙xd2 24 ♜xd3 ♜xd3 25 ♜d1 ♜xf3 26 ♜dx2 ♜xe4 should win and here even better would be 23...♜d7 24 ♙g2 then 24...♜e6 or 24...♜e5.

21...♙xd2 22 ♜xd2 ♜f4!



23 ♜e7!

Not 23 ♜xf4?? ♜d1+ 24 ♜e1 ♜xe1#.

23...♜f8!

23...♜xd2 24 ♜xe8+ ♙g7 25 ♜xd2! was the trick Tal had in mind and White emerges unscathed.

24 ♜a5 ♜d1+ 25 ♜e1 ♜g5!! 0-1



Olafsson's achievements cannot be overstated, coming as they did from relative isolation in Iceland that was just a chess backwater, until he rose to fame. Early in his career, Olafsson had to travel to Europe by boat – that included fishing trawlers.

His success inspired generations of Icelandic players to the extent, that as any Icelandic tour guide will tell you, Iceland has the highest number of grandmasters per capita and I understand the government still

People tend to remember Olafsson's victories over Tal and Petrosian, but he also once stunned Anatoly Karpov at the height of his powers with wonderful positional chess.

English Defence

24 ♖cb1 ♜ab8



Again 28...♖xe4 29 ♖xe4 ♖c5 30 e3 h5



32 c5!



36...♔f5! 37 ♔a4 ♖c1 38 ♖xe7 ♖c4!

The tournament was won by the top seed Parham Maghsoodloo who benefitted from a quick 19-move win over Shreyas Royal in the penultimate round, after England's youngest GM forgot his opening theory. Maghsoodloo was sole first on 7½/9, with Ivanchuk in a group of 10 on 7/9. Shreyas had a very good tournament overall, gaining 15 rating points. It was also very pleasing to see two England juniors, Emily Maton and Abigail Riis-Weersing, competing and playing some excellent chess. The playing conditions in the magnificent Harpa on the Reykjavik waterfront were, as always, first class.

Last year Gene was enticed back across the pond from New Jersey, where he has long resided, to his native Spain to take part in the filming of *El Pequeno Peon* ('The Little Pawn').

Directed by Joan Gamero, this upcoming documentary is devoted to one of Spain's greatest ever players, Arturo Pomar Salamanca (1931 – 2016). Pomar was a prodigy who drew with Alekhine when aged just 13 in 1944 at a tournament in Gijón, causing him to quickly be exploited for publicity gains by Franco's regime, but he still went on to become a seven-time Spanish Champion.

El Pequeno Peon will be appearing at film festivals and in cinemas in Spain this summer, as well as on the Spanish television network RTVE from September 15th. Helpfully the production company, Barcelona-based Minimal Films, have included English subtitles, so do look out for the documentary appearing further afield later this year.

Yet More Senior Service

You can only defeat what's put in front of you and England made a clean sweep of the gold medals at the European Senior Team Championships held at Swidnica in Poland last month. A regrettable lack of coordination between FIDE and the ECU led to the World Senior Team Championships being held not long before the Europeans. This put a big strain on the budgets of many federations and there was a very poor turnout in Poland.

England's 65+ team led by John Nunn won all their eight matches, while the 50+ team led by Mickey Adams drew one match, but still finished comfortably ahead of the Germans. Congratulations to the England second team as well on picking up the bronze medals.

I had already made strong representations to the FIDE Events Commission to try and get them to work with the ECU on fixing a time of year for all these Seniors events that take place. There has been some movement on this – we will see how things pan out. In the meantime, more kudos to all the players, and to IM Nigel Povah for his herculean efforts in organising and financing our teams, and thanks also to my old mucker from junior days Chris Baker, for taking on some of the responsibilities in Poland.

They've Gone Postal!

After the revelations in last month's magazine about alleged dirty tricks in correspondence chess, I received a 'request for retraction and apology' from officials at the International Correspondence Chess Federation (ICCF). I won't waste any trees reproducing it here, but it did give me a jolly good laugh, as the writer, ICCF President Dr Eric Ruch, helpfully included several clauses from English libel law at the end, I assume to assist me in the process of contrition. The whole thing felt like it might have been produced by ChatGPT, but who knows?

Almost immediately afterwards, further compelling evidence came to light, strongly suggesting that the identity of the ICCF account holder (ICCF Reg: 810278) Rhys Jones is not genuine. Readers may remember from last month that Rhys Jones was the participant in the British Correspondence



Leading NYC coach and figurehead Russell Makofsky is keen for chess to be recognised as a sport.

Chess Championship (2022-2024) who had three ETLs – exceeded time limit – in the event and effectively determined the outcome, since all the other games were drawn. All three ETLs were before move 10. This 'player' has participated in many ICCF events and even holds the title of CC Master, awarded by the game's governing body in 2021.

Indeed, the actual Rhys Jones, or should I say the Rhys Jones whose profile was apparently adopted by the prolific correspondence player, has been tracked down. The poor chap is a completely blameless and unwitting participant in this strange tale. Rhys Jones is a casual chess player who has never played correspondence chess, only playing social chess online, and has never registered with the ICCF. He was not unnaturally, dismayed and distressed to find out that someone on the ICCF server has been purporting to be him to conceal their own identity.

The actual Mr Jones's online account includes a photo of him with his dog and I understand that this account was used when the ICCF asked the correspondence Rhys Jones to verify his identity. We contacted the dog for comment. He was unwilling to say too much, given the legal threats, but made it clear he would attack any correspondence chess scorecard that comes through his owner's letterbox in the traditional canine fashion.

Since publication last month I've been contacted by several other CC players who have grave concerns of wrongdoing. My advice to the ICCF would be to introduce more stringent identity verification and get your house in order!

More than a Game

It is an argument we hear a lot about in CSC from parents and teachers – pushing to level the playing field between chess kids and student athletes. Now we hear good news that New York City public school parents have taken a step towards that goal, by looking to have chess considered an official sport for high school students.

The NYC Citywide Council on High Schools (CCHS) is pushing for the Public School

Athletic League (PSAL) to recognise the game as a sport. The PSAL currently oversees 25 sports in city high schools, with over 45,000 student athletes, ranging from football, basketball and baseball to soccer, table tennis and even Double Dutch (the girls' skipping activity popularised by punk guru Malcolm McLaren in a 1983 pop hit).

While chess has grown more popular in recent years, there are not many opportunities for older youths who have showed early promise. Just 200 high school students participated in recent state competitions, compared to 1,800 elementary-aged players. The idea behind the council move is to give the elementary kids hope of continuing their chess activities through better team recognition and activities while at high school.

The resolution, which was passed 8-1 last month by the council, cited studies we've all seen and endorse that show the benefits of chess in the classroom, including the development of critical thinking, strategic planning, problem solving and neuroplasticity (the brain's ability to adapt).

"There's a tremendous community of students yearning to play chess – and families that are supportive of it and having a team in every school," said CCHS member Ben Morden, who co-sponsored the resolution. And parents at the meeting were also vocal in their support of recategorising chess. "The game has completely changed my daughters' lives, improving their academic performance and focus," mother Tara Murphy added at the meeting that was streamed live and soon caught the attention of the Big Apple's media outlets.

Chess is a team sport, said Russell Makofsky, founder of the Impact Coaching Network and the charity Gift of Chess, who has coached several kids that have gone on to capture prestigious national awards and titles. "If we get high school kids engaged, we'll give the kids in elementary school something to aspire to, to continue to play and care about the game of chess all while learning incredible life lessons," he told the council.

The recommendations by the council will now go forward to the city's Department of Education and PSAL leadership.

Reaching 2500!

Matthew Wadsworth explains how he became England's newest GM at Bad Wörishofen

In late March, I played in the Bad Wörishofen Open in Bavaria. I would recommend the tournament to anyone interested in playing in Europe – the town is lovely and easy to get to, the playing conditions were excellent, and the schedule of one game a day gave the event a relaxed feel. With nearly 400 players across three sections (the 'A' Open, a 'B' Open for players below 2000, and a Senior section), it was no surprise to see England well represented. FM Stephen Dishman and Peter Finn also played in the A Open, while Robert Stern, Ian Heppell, Tim Spanton and Alan Collins played in the Senior section.

My goal for the tournament was relatively simple: while placing highly would be a nice bonus, my principal target was to break the 2500 rating barrier. I started the event at 2491, and had already achieved all three GM norms, so only needed to gain 9 points to secure the title. The A section was relatively strong at the top with eight GMs and six IMs, but had a relatively long tail and therefore an average rating of 2087.

A third of the way through the tournament, I was one of four players on 100%. Typically, the first two or three rounds of an Open are tricky obstacles to navigate, as you are usually facing fresh, underrated opposition that can pose significant problems. Given that my overall goal was gaining rating, slipping up early on would be disastrous. I thankfully managed to avoid this, although I definitely got lucky in round 1 against an opponent rated 2038.

My wins in rounds 2 and 3 were a lot cleaner, and in the fourth round I faced French GM Anthony Wirig with the black pieces. At around the 40-move mark I reached a slightly better rook endgame, but my opponent defended well, and we eventually agreed a draw on move 86. The following round was another draw, this time against GM Yago Santiago of Brazil, where I unfortunately missed a couple of winning continuations. A win in either game would have put me on the brink of the GM title, but the two draws left me reasonably placed after round 5.

Round 6 saw me win a nice game against GM Thal Abergel to move to a live rating of 2498. Abergel played a sharp sideline against the French Winawer (4 ♖g4), but I took control of the game from moves 10-20, then gradually converted a superior position. This round also saw Steven and Peter win nice games to both reach 4½/6. Consequently,



24-year-old IM Matthew Wadsworth reached the 2500 rating threshold while tying for first at the Bad Wörishofen Open, meaning that he will become England's next grandmaster.

English players occupied boards 2, 3 and 5 in round 7; unfortunately, we amassed a collective score of 0/3. I lost from a promising position to Armenian GM and top seed, Karen Grigoryan, while Steven and Peter lost to Wirig and German IM Ashot Parvanyan, respectively.

This loss was definitely a setback for me, but I managed to bounce back with a win over 2241-rated German Joshua Eckardt. The game combined some of the good and bad of my play over the tournament, with some nice opening preparation, appalling calculation and then holding my nerve in a complex endgame.

J.Eckardt-M.Wadsworth Bad Wörishofen 2025 *Modern Benoni*

1 d4 ♠f6 2 c4 e6 3 g3

My opponent almost exclusively played the Catalan with this move order, which allows Black some extra flexibility.

3...c5!?

The Benoni used to be a mainstay of my repertoire, but unfortunately it has suffered more in the new computer age than almost any other opening. However, the Fianchetto Benoni remains totally acceptable for Black, and I was happy to give my old favourite a try.

4 d5 d6 5 ♠c3 exd5 6 cxd5 g6 7 ♠f3 ♠g7 8 ♠g2 0-0 9 0-0 ♖e8

Black has a wide range of options here, but this is the current trend at top levels.

10 ♠f4 h6 11 ♖c1 g5



Pushing the kingside pawns is a little double-edged: it does create some weaknesses, but I gain space and time in return.

12 ♖e3 ♗f5 13 h4 g4 14 ♘d2 ♜xe3!

An important exchange sacrifice for the status of the line. Black gets immediate compensation in the form of the e5-square, white weaknesses on e3 and g3, and general dominance on the dark squares.

If Black does not sacrifice the exchange, his position quickly turns very unpleasant. I faced 14...a6 on the white side last year, and after a few moves was already close to winning: 15 a4 ♖h7 16 ♖c4 ♘h5 17 ♗f4 ♗f8 18 a5, Wadsworth-Derakhshani, Stafford 2024.

15 fxe3 ♗g6 16 ♖c4 ♜e7



17 a4?!

17 ♖b5! is the correct move here. I had actually played the white side of this line only a month earlier, so was familiar with the theory: 17...♗e8 18 e4 a6 19 ♖c3 ♘d7 20 a4 ♜d8?! (20...♗ef6!) 21 a5 was clearly better for White in Wadsworth-S.Badacsonyi, Ryde 2025.

17...♗h5 18 ♖h2?!

It is a mark of how difficult the white position actually is, when natural moves like this turn out to be mistakes. The exchange sacrifice 18 ♜f4!? is actually given as White's best move here, which is not exactly a great sign. **18...♘d7 19 ♖b5 a6!** My opponent had missed that ♘xd6 fails tactically.

20 ♖ba3

After 20 ♖bxd6 ♗e5! 21 ♘xe5 ♜xe5 Black threatens g3 and the knight on d6. Apparently, White is not yet lost after 22 ♖c4 ♜xg3+ 23 ♖g1 ♜xh4 24 ♘d2, but it looks incredibly bad.

20...♗df6 21 ♖e1 ♗e4

21...♗e4 was almost certainly more precise. White is essentially forced to capture, and after 22 ♗xe4 ♗xe4 Black is dominant.

22 ♖g1



22 ♜f2! was a better defensive try.

22...b5?!

I had been trying to make this work for a couple of moves, and thought that it was just crushing. Not only had I made some basic errors in calculation, but trying to force a win in such a pleasant position is just totally unnecessary.

Moreover, 22...♗xg2 23 ♜xg2 ♗e4 is so good for Black, it doesn't really require any further calculation. There are threats of ...♘xg3 and ...♜xh4+; alternatively, I can just gradually improve my position and there is very little White can do.

23 axb5 axb5 24 ♘xb5 ♜xa1 25 ♜xa1 ♘xg3

I thought I was breaking through on the kingside here, so...

26 ♜a7!

...came as a very unpleasant surprise. White can force the queen exchange, and any attack I might have had disappears. I spent a long time on my next move, not because I had much of a choice, but just to mentally prepare for a completely different game.

26...♜xa7

After 26...♘d7 27 ♜xg3 (White can safely grab the knight this time) 27...♗e5+ 28 ♖f2! (28 ♘xe5 ♜xe5+ allows Black to rescue a draw with 29 ♖f2 g3+ 30 ♖e1 ♜xb2 31 ♜a3 ♜b1+ 32 ♖d2 ♜c2+) 28...♜xh4+ 29 ♖f1 ♗xg2+ 30 ♜xg2 there isn't a mate, and White is a full rook ahead.

27 ♘xa7 ♘xe2 28 ♜e1 ♗d3



29 ♘d2?

A very hard decision to understand. 29 ♘d6 is the obvious move, and just looks very strong for White. Perhaps my opponent saw some tactics with ...♗e5+ at some point, but they never quite materialise. I was probably going to play 29...♘xd5, but White wins after 30 ♗xd5 ♗e5+ 31 ♖g2 ♗xd6 32 ♜d1! c4 33 ♗xc4.

29...♗h5

Black is now fully back in the game, with a complete mess on the board.

30 ♗e4 c4!

An only move, but not especially hard to find.

31 ♗xd3 cxd3 32 ♘c4

White would love to push the b-pawn immediately, but 32 b4 runs directly into 32...♗c3.

32...f5 33 ♖c6 f4 34 exf4

34 ♖b4! is the only move to hold the

balance, and a near impossible find for White.

34...♗hxf4

The threat of queening the g-pawn forces White to take immediate action.

35 ♗e7+ ♖h7 36 ♗f5 ♗d4!?

With ...♗f2 ideas.

37 ♜a1?

37 ♜f1! is best, but White is walking a tightrope while Black is able to make fairly natural and easy moves: for example, 37...♖g6 38 ♘g3 h5 39 ♜d1 ♗f2 40 ♜xd3! ♘xd3 41 ♘xe2 ♗xh4 42 ♘xd6 ♗f6 when White is barely hanging on and faces a very tricky defence.

37...♗f2 38 ♗fe3 g3+ 39 ♖h1 ♖g6



Black's advantage is now decisive. There is no immediate breakthrough, but the two passed pawns force White into total passivity.

40 ♘g2 ♗c5

40...♖h5! 41 ♘xd6 ♖g4! is the most efficient.

41 ♜a8 ♘xd5 42 ♜f8 ♗f6 43 h5+ ♖g7

44 ♜d8 ♗e4

Black just has too many threats: aside from ...♗f2# and the promotion of either the d- or g-pawn, ...♗f4 and ...d5 is going to be very unpleasant for White to handle.

45 ♗h4 ♗f4 46 ♜e8 ♗f2+ 47 ♖g1 d5

48 b4 dxc4 49 bxc5 ♖f7 0-1

This meant that everything went down to the final round. I was on 6/8, half a point behind the leaders, so a win was necessary to guarantee a finish in the prizes. More consequentially, a win would be just enough to reach 2500, so there was a lot of pressure!

My opponent, a German IM who had beaten Peter in round 7, was an experienced player who had been above 2450 in the past. The game certainly wasn't perfect, but I was a lot happier with my performance than in round 8, making it a very satisfying way to secure the GM title.

M.Wadsworth-A.Parvanyan

Bad Wörishofen 2025

King's Indian Defence

1 d4 ♗f6 2 c4 g6 3 g3

The Fianchetto variation is among the most reliable ways to meet the King's Indian these days.

3...♗g7 4 ♗g2 0-0 5 ♗c3 d6 6 ♗f3 c5

The ...c5 systems are generally considered

to be the most reliable approach for Black here, and were recommended by Gawain Jones in his King's Indian course and book. Instead, 6...♘bd7 is still the most common move here, while 6...♘c6 and 6...c6 are also fully playable.

7 0-0 ♘c6 8 d5

An important decision: White should release the tension, and can either advance the d-pawn or exchange on c5. The dxc5 lines tend to be safe for White, but a little dry; I therefore decided to head in the other direction.

8...♘a5 9 ♘d2 a6 10 ♖b1 ♖b8 11 ♖c2 b5 12 b3 h5!?

Black has several alternatives to this move, but it does appear quite logical. Having the pawn on h5 will be useful in most situations, and Black is maintaining flexibility elsewhere on the board. My opponent had played this a couple of times before, so I was still within my preparation.

13 ♙b2 ♖e8

13...h4 14 gxh4! was an important idea I had found before the game – I can just take this pawn and Black struggles to exploit my h-pawn or my slightly weak king.

14 e3 ♙f5 15 e4 ♙d7



Another thematic idea in these lines for Black, forcing me to play e3-e4 before dropping back to d7. The e4-pawn can be a strength, but also leaves some weaknesses behind.

16 h3

I decide to keep making useful moves. Controlling the g4-square will be beneficial to my position in almost every situation I might find myself in, so there was no reason not to play it.

16...♖c8 17 ♙h2 h4 18 gxh4!?

I referred back to some of my preparation for this move, where White was fine after playing gxh4 in similar situations.

18 g4 is the natural move, but does allow some interesting sacrifices for Black on g4: for example, 18...bxc4 19 bxc4 ♙xg4! 20 hxg4 ♖xg4 when White has to be a little careful.

18...e5 19 ♙e2

19 dxe6 was probably a stronger alternative.

19...♙h5 20 f4

20 ♙f3! was a nice idea that I completely overlooked at the time. The critical line runs 20...♙xh3 21 ♙xh5 ♙xf1 22 ♙xf1 gxh5 23 ♙e3 and White is totally winning, with a knight landing on f5.

20...♖d8 21 fxe5 dxe5



A critical moment. I had been happy with most of my play up to this point, and had built up a big advantage on the clock, but Black is still fully in the fight.

22 ♖c3!?

Not forced, but a nice way to improve the queen. My idea is ♖f3 in certain positions to hit the f7-pawn.

22 ♙f3 was my original intention, but Black gets annoying counterplay after 22...bxc4 23 bxc4 ♖b4.

22...♙b7 23 ♖f3 ♙d6?!

Black's first real mistake of the game. Also, with this move, my opponent went below two minutes to reach move 40.

23...♖e7! was the correct way to defend f7. After 24 ♖f2 ♙h6 25 ♙f3 White is probably better, but the position remains very unclear.

24 b4!

A critical idea to see, and a thematic breakthrough on the queenside. Black cannot allow a pawn to reach c5 under any circumstances.

24...♖c7 25 ♖f2?!

25 bxc5 ♖xc5 26 ♙b3! wins cleanly for White, due to the continuation 26...♖xc4 27 ♖fc1 ♖b4 28 a3 and Black loses material, since 28...♖a4 is met with 29 ♙c5.

25...♖ec8 26 ♙b3 bxc4 27 ♙xc5



I can't get a pawn to c5, but a knight will also cause a lot of damage from this square. The immediate threat is ♙xa6, while I am about to turn my attention to the kingside.

27...♖a8?!

27...♖a7 feels like the correct direction, but Black's position is still highly unpleasant.

28 ♙f3 ♙f6 29 h5!

Opening up the kingside. With Black's major pieces all stranded on the queenside, the defence becomes very tricky.

29...a5 30 a3 axb4

Black initiates a sequence of exchanges,



German IM Ashot Parvanyan played a topical KID line, but was outprepared by Matthew.

which at least gets him closer to the time control on move 40.

31 axb4 ♙b7 32 hxg6 fxg6 33 ♖g3 ♙xc5 34 bxc5 ♖xc5 35 ♙xe5

After the following set of exchanges, I evaluated this as winning for White. While this is true, Black has some resources left in the position.

35...♖a6!



A resourceful move, indirectly defending g6.

36 ♙h1??

A very casual move that should have cost the win. 36 ♙d4 was my initial instinct here. I think that I rejected it because of 36...♙xe4, but White still should win after 37 ♙xe4 ♙xd4 38 ♙xd4 ♖xd4 39 ♙xg6 ♖g7 40 ♖g1.

36...♖e3??

36...♙xe4! is a nice resource that wins material. Had my opponent not been playing on increment, I'm sure he would have found this. 37 ♙xe4 ♖e7! 38 d6 ♖xe5 39 ♖xg6 ♖xe4+! is another nice tactical shot and after 40 ♖xe4 ♙c6 41 ♖xc6 ♖axc6 Black should not lose.

37 ♖xg6 ♖e8 38 ♙d4 ♖d3 39 ♖b7

Now it is effectively game over. Among other things, I threaten ♖xd7.

39...♖e7 40 ♖b8+ ♙e8 41 ♙xf6 1-0

I win a piece after 41...♖xf6 42 ♖xe8+, so my opponent resigned. With the exception of 36 ♙h1, this was probably my best game of the tournament, and a very satisfying way to reach 2500.

This final round win put me on 7/9, sharing first equal with Santiago, Grigoryan, Wirig and IM Leya Garifullina. Steven and Peter finished on 5½ and 5 points respectively, both gaining rating and enjoying successful tournaments. Meanwhile, Robert Stern and Tim Spanton were the standout English performers in a very strong Senior section, which was ultimately won by German IM Dieter Pirrot on 7½/9. Elsewhere, the top two places in the B Open were taken by Timur Yrysov of Kyrgyzstan and Israel Cohen of

Israel, who were born in 2015 and 2014 respectively – definitely ones to watch for in the future!

I concluded the event with a 2556 rating performance and gained 8.9 rating points, enough to put me on 2500 after thankfully being rounded up from 2499.9 on the April rating list. I won't officially receive the title until the summer, but it does feel humbling to join such a select group of players, both in England and the entire world.

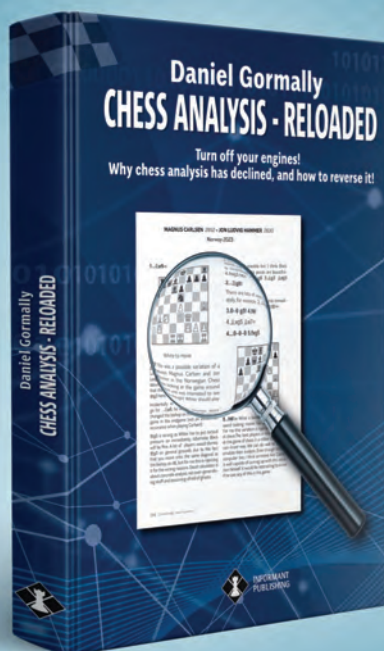
It is a journey that began with me learning

the rules of the game aged 5. I have had several ups and downs since then and would never have made it to where I am now without the help and support of so many people. The most important contributions were made by my parents, followed by coaches in my younger years – Andrew Martin, Nick Pert and Glenn Flear. I would also like to thank the ECF for their continued support, particularly over the last 12 months with the DCMS funds allocated towards support for norm seekers.



The podium at Bad Wörishofen reminded us that chess truly is a game for all ages. Matthew Wadsworth can be seen fifth from the left of the photo, between the overall winner on tiebreak, the Brazilian GM Yago De Moura Santiago, and Russian WGM and IM Leya Garifullina.

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The Ginger GM journeyed to Glorious Godinn!



Simon Williams enjoyed visiting Northern Iceland for the Godinn Chess Open

Some invites are best ignored, yet some invites claw at our imagination and sense of adventure. So it was with delight when I received the following email message:

"A friend of mine, Hermann (direct translation is Armyman), is a farmer in the north. Beautiful valley in-between the towns of Akureyri and Husavik. He runs a small chess club there and they are celebrating their 20th anniversary in the spring with a 6 round weekend. They really want 1-2 international players to join and you would be their number one choice. Also I would buy you a minimum of 10 beers during your stay!

"So Armyman's idea would be that you could fly over to Akureyri on a Tuesday and explore Akureyri and surroundings until the tournament starts. You could even help Armyman out on his farm! I imagine you are a good worker."

It was slightly unclear if I was being offered the chance to play in a chess tournament or being given the opportunity to start a new career as an Icelandic farmer, but both options sounded very tempting. My curiosity got the better of me and I readied myself for an adventure to the north of Iceland, packing my wellies just in case I was expected to milk some cows in between games.

My previous knowledge of Akureyri and Husavik was similar to that of theoretical rook endings. I seemed to recall some weird comedy film based on Eurovision, with Will Ferrell the main hero coming from the seaside town of Husavik in the north of Iceland. I mean, how many times would I get a chance to visit such a place?

I boarded my flight to Akureyri without any preconceived ideas. EasyJet conveniently now flies at a very reasonable cost every Tuesday and Saturday to this town, and as the plane started to descend into my destination, I was blessed with a beautiful clear sky and the most stunning views I have ever seen.

Iceland is a magical place, and I was blessed with glorious weather through out my stay. Every ten minutes in my various car journeys, the scenery changed from



Stunning falls and breathtaking wintry landscapes dazzled Simon throughout his Icelandic adventure.



A herd of Icelandic cows and, yes, the Ginger GM really did roll up his sleeves and milk them.

something one could imagine out of *Lord of the Rings* into another stunning view. It is hard to put into words the wonders I saw, but I would recommend that a trip to Iceland should be on everyone's bucket list, and why not combine it with chess?

The tournament was being held on the banks of Lake Myvatn, a location many consider to be the most beautiful in all of Iceland. The natural wonder was created as a result of a massive eruption and the lake's surroundings are dotted with diverse volcanic landforms. It really is like another world, an alien world where one's mind can wonder. A perfect setting to play chess.

For the first two days of my stay I joined my amazing host, Hermann. His family very kindly let me stay at their small farm. I spent my time wondering the hills and milking the odd cow. We then drove to a great hotel to start the tournament and here we met the other organiser, Ingihaf, who along with his brother took me on a tour of all the local sights. It is amazing to think that only 4,500 people live in this big part of the north-east of Iceland, and those 4,500 are more like 45 million people with the kindness and warm that they showed.

After a great start to my adventure, it was time to go to war on the chess board. After a quick draw in Saturday morning game against my friend Bragi Thorfinnsson to reach 3/4, this was a game that I had to win, if I wanted to give myself a chance of winning the tournament. My opponent was a dangerous grandmaster, Throstur Thorhallsson, a player that I had faced without success a couple of times before.

S. Williams-T. Thorhallsson

Godinn Open, Skutustadir 2025

Queen's Gambit Accepted

1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4

The QGA. This was not a major surprise, as I had faced this opening a couple of rounds previously and decided on a dubious set-up for White. For that reason I figured that Throstur might try the same opening against me.

3 ♖f3 ♘f6 4 e3

4 ♘c3 a6 5 e4 b5 6 ♙e2!? was the risky idea that I played against Pall Jonsson in round 3. This was really a practical idea as I had expected that my opponent had prepared something in my normal line. I wasn't aware of the theory in this position, but had played similar sacrifices in numerous games. White gains the centre, but Black is a pawn to the good. Here 6...♙b7?! was already a mistake, allowing me to sacrifice a second pawn for a good position, with 7 e5 ♘d5 8 e6!.

4...e6 5 ♙xc4 a6 6 0-0 c5

6...b5 is also very logical when White has a number of ideas. One sensible approach for White here is 7 ♙d3 ♙b7 (7...c5 can lead back into the main game) 8 ♙e2!?, trying to deter the natural 8...c5?! due to 9 dxc5 ♙xc5? 10 ♙xb5+ axb5 11 ♙xb5+.

7 e4!?



An idea that David Howell once suggested to me. It is super aggressive and rather tricky for Black to handle.

7...b5

The most sensible reply. Accepting the gambit should be fine for Black, but also very hard to work out without any prior experience. 7...♘e4!? 8 ♙e2 ♘f6 9 d5!? is the main idea and after 9...♘xd5 (9...b5? is too much and allows a beautiful idea: 10 dxe6 bxc4 11 exf7+ ♗xf7 12 ♙d1 ♙b6 13 ♘g5+ ♗g6 14 ♙d5!!), which is a stunning way to win, and if 14...♘xd5 15 ♙e8+ ♗f5 16 ♙xc8+ ♗e5 17 ♘a3) 10 ♙d1 when White has some pressure.

8 ♙d3 cxd4

Unfortunately this was where my theory ended, but in general I very much enjoy playing positions with an advanced pawn on e5, just like Nimzowitsch advocated in *My System*.

9 a4

It makes a lot of sense to tempt my opponent's pawn to b4. I gain control of the c4-square, most likely for my knight on b1, and I stop ...♘c6-b4 ideas.

9...b4 10 e5 ♘d5 11 ♘bd2

Bringing all my pieces into the game before starting any attack.

11 ♘g5?! is very tempting in these type of positions, but the attack does not have enough support to work here: for example, 11...♙e7 12 ♙h5 g6 13 ♙h6 ♙f8 14 ♙h3 (14 ♙h4 h6 is also much better for Black) 14...♘d7 15 ♙xg6!? ♘xe5 16 ♙e4 ♙g8 17 ♘h7 ♙e7 and who is attacking who?

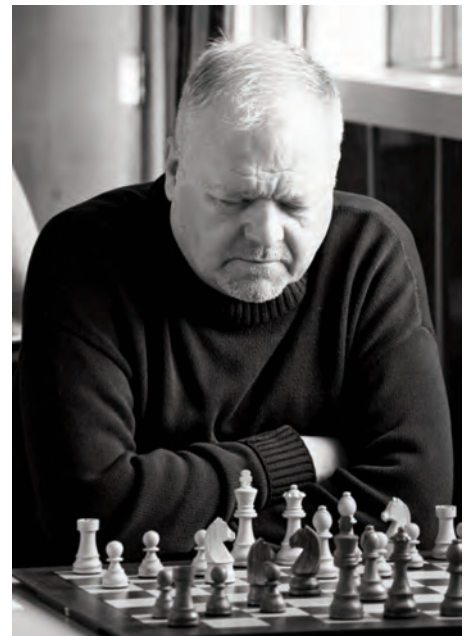
11...♘d7

I now sank into a long think, trying to work out the best square for my knight on d2. Should it go to c4, my original plan, or to e4?

12 ♘e4!?



The engine dislikes this move, but it seemed too interesting to avoid. I had an idea in mind...



Like Simon, Throstur Thorhallsson revels in attacking chess and chaos on the board.

12 ♘c4 seems simple and good for White. 12...♘c5 was what put me off ♘c4, as I wanted to keep my light-squared bishop, which is a key attacker with a pawn on e5. Saying that, White should be very happy after 13 ♘xd4 ♙b7 14 ♙c2! when Black will find it very hard to ever castle due to tactics on h7.

12...♙c7?!

This critical move was the only option that I had calculated before playing ♘e4, as it sees Black winning a second pawn. The engine does indicate that it is too much though and Black should have played 12...♙e7! when I had some ideas of playing ♘g3-h5. After 13 ♙e1 0-0 (13...h6!?) 14 ♙b1! Black is OK, but I would still prefer to be attacking with the white pieces here.

13 ♙g5!

The idea! Quick development with tempo.

13...♘xe5 14 ♙c1

I briefly looked at 14 ♘xe5 ♙xe5 15 f4 ♙b8 16 f5!?, but couldn't find anything concrete.

14...♘xf3+ 15 ♙xf3 The black queen is now struggling to find a safe square.

15...♙d7

15...♙b8 also looks uncomfortable for Black. I was planning 16 ♙fe1 ♙b7 17 ♙h5 g6 18 ♙h4 ♙g7 19 ♙c4!, stopping Black castling due to 19...0-0 20 ♙xd5 ♙xd5 21 ♘f6+ ♙xf6 22 ♙xf6 and wins.

16 ♙f6!!



The move that I had to foresee before playing 12 ♖e4. After this, Black is in serious trouble.

16...♙b7

16...gxf6? 17 ♖xf6+ ♖xf6 18 ♜xa8 ♘d8 19 ♙xa6 is just winning for White.

17 ♙xd4

At first sight the position may look OK for Black, but it is a mess. Black will find it very hard to find safety for his king. My bishop on d4 points at g7, making it hard for Black to develop the bishop on f8.

17...♞c8?

This makes matters seriously worse, but it was difficult to find a move. 17...f6 is the computer's suggestion, but this looks very risky to the human eye and 18 ♜fe1 ♙e7 19 ♜h5+! g6 20 ♜h6 should be winning.

18 ♜xc8+ ♜xc8

18...♙xc8 19 ♞c1 also leaves White dominating the board.

19 ♙xg7! ♞g8

The point was 19...♙xg7 20 ♖d6+.

20 ♙xf8 ♙xf8 21 ♖d6



21...♜c7

21...♖f4!? was the one move that I had to keep an eye open for. In actual fact I had a moment of worry as only at this point did I see that my planned idea wasn't working. 22 ♙e4? was what I had intended, but while waiting for my opponent to move I saw that the position was only a draw after 22...♙xe4 23 ♜xe4 ♖h3+! 24 ♖h1 ♖xf2+! This looks very scary for White, but I had also seen that I had a draw after the calm 25 ♖g1! (and not 25 ♜xf2?? ♜c1+) 25...♖h3+ 26 ♖h1 ♖f2+ 27 ♖g1, since if 27...♖xe4?? 28 ♜xf7#. Instead, 22 ♖xb7 would have been the right way to play. Hopefully I would have spotted this had it occurred! White should be winning after 22...♖xd3 23 ♞d1! ♖e5 24 ♜e4.

22 ♖xb7 ♜xb7 23 ♙xh7 ♞g5 24 ♙e4

I had assumed that this position was winning, but I now started to play like an idiot whilst my opponent upped his game.

24...♜c7 25 ♞d1 ♖f4?!

I was happy to see this as the knight seemed very strong in the centre, and I was uncertain if I should exchange it. 25...♞e5 worried me more, as 26 h4 a5 27 ♙xd5 ♞xd5 28 ♞xd5 exd5 didn't seem that clear, and if 29 ♜xd5? (29 ♜f6! is the way) 29...♜c1+ 30 ♖h2 ♜xb2 with a likely draw.

26 g3 ♖h5 (see diagram at top of next column)

If Black can get a set-up with the knight on f6 and king on g7, he will be well positioned, so I wanted to stop that.



27 ♙d3?!

I now start to drift. 27 ♜e3! was my first thought, but at the time I couldn't find a good solution to 27...♜e5. However, actually there are now a number of good moves, including 28 h4 ♞g4 29 ♜h6+ ♖e7 30 ♙f3.

27...a5 28 ♙b5 ♜f5 29 ♜e3 ♖f6 30 ♞c1 ♜d6 31 ♜h6+ ♖e7 32 ♞c8 ♜d1+ 33 ♙f1

And not 33 ♖g2?? ♜f3+.

33...♖d7!

The only defensive move, but a good one.

34 ♜h4+!

Making Black's rook a little less active.

34...♜f6 35 ♜h8 ♜d4!

I had only banked on 35...♜e1 36 ♜d8+ ♖d6 37 ♜c7+ ♖e7 38 ♜a7, with an extra pawn and clear advantage.

36 ♜d8+ ♖d6 37 ♞c2



37...♜f5?

In time-trouble Throstur misses his last chance. 37...b3 would have discombobulated me somewhat. After 38 ♞e2 ♜f5 Black has good coordination with his pieces and my task of winning would have been pretty tough.

38 b3!

Stopping ...b3 and now Black is struggling to find a useful move.

38...♜f3 39 ♜g5!?

Threatening ♞d2.

39...f6?

The final error. 39...♖e5! was best, aiming for the nasty trick 40 ♞d2? (40 ♜d8+, repeating and then changing plan would have been the only way to win, and if 40...♖d7 41 ♜xa5 ♜xb3 42 ♞c4!) 40...♜xg3+!! 41 hxg3 ♖f3+ 42 ♖h1 ♖xd2 when Black is OK.

40 ♜h6 ♖e5 41 ♜f8+ ♖d5 42 ♜d8+ ♖e4 43 ♞e2+ 1-0

My opponent gracefully resigned. After discussing the game Throstur then offered

me a lift back to the hotel. As soon as I got into his car Throstur also extended his kindness by pulling a beer out from boot to offer to me. "Icelandic hospitality, you beat us and we still look after you," accompanied with a wry smile. I do not know many English Grandmasters who would respond to a defeat in the same way!

I have known Bjorn Thorfinnsson, and his brother Bragi, since the Under-16 World Team Championships, where I was playing board one for England in a very tough competition. England faced Iceland in the last round. Iceland were victorious and ended up winning the gold medal, a medal that is still mentioned in Iceland to this day! Bjorn is a very dangerous player who seems to have made some strides in his development recently. This game shows a combination of good opening preparation and a sharp tactical eye.

In the end Bjorn and myself shared first equal in the tournament, though this was a bone of contention during the stunning eight hour drive back to Reykjavik. Bjorn insisted that he had won the tournament on tiebreak. In the end I had to resign myself to his argument, mainly as I was staying at his house that night. It was really first equal, Bjorn!

Bj.Thorfinnsson-D.Kjartansso
Godinn Open, Skutustadir 2025
Triangle System

1 d4 ♖f6 2 ♖f3 d5 3 c3!?

Bjorn's speciality, 'The Triangle System'. Do not worry if you have never heard of this opening, as neither had I! It is a close relative of 'system' openings such as the London and Torre. At first it seemed completely harmless to my eyes, but after witnessing some of the massacres that Bjorn has inflicted upon his opponents, I am no longer so sure...

3...c5

There are numerous ways that Black can meet The Triangle, but this seems to be a logical and aggressive answer. Luckily for Bjorn he had prepared to play against this line with the help of a Chessable course.

4 dxc5

With a pawn on c3, this seems very logical. The position is a turbocharged version of the Queens Gambit Accepted, as White has an extra tempo with c3.

4...e6 5 ♙e3!?



A very interesting approach and not a

move to play lightly. The bishop can get into all sorts of issues on e3. Saying that, it does defend the pawn and 5 b4 would allow Black typical counterplay with 5...a5 6 e3 axb4 7 cxb4 b6!.

5...a5

This seems pretty sensible. Black wants to stop b2-b4 and round up the c5-pawn. I would have probably preferred a move such as 5...dxc6, not rushing to win a pawn back, but instead hinting at ideas of ...e5 or ...d4g4, as with 6 b4 6...e7 7 d4bd2 d4g4!?

6 c4!

Still in Bjorn's preparation, this move works well now. The knight on b1 has a comfortable route into the game via c3 and b5.

6...d7 7 cxd5 dxd5 8 d4 da6?

This tempting move turns out badly. Black, understandably, wants to win the pawn back on c5, but in doing so White is able to generate a useful initiative in the centre.

8...dxc6 was a better option, but also quite scary to play as it is now not clear if Black will ever win his pawn back. 9 e3 dxd4 10 exd4 b6! seems critical, opening the position for Black's bishops. 11 dxc4!, prioritising development over greed, seems like a good answer, and if 11...bxc5 12 dxd5 exd5 13 0-0 dxe7 14 dxc3 with an even position. Black has the two bishops, but also some weak pawns in the centre.

9 e4 dxf6 10 exa6 fxa6 11 dxc3



White is a pawn up with the initiative.



The Thorfinnsson brothers had anything but a quick last round draw, but hold Bjorn eventually did.

11...dxc6 12 e2 a4?!

A luxury too far, Black just doesn't have time for this. Saying that his position was already a mess. 12...dxe7 was a bit better, as castling is often a decent plan. After 13 dxd1 dxc8 14 dxe5 0-0 15 dxc4!, heading into the big hole on b6 or d6. White is clearly doing well, but there is still some work to be done.

13 0-0 a5 14 dxe5!

The knight now travels to some good squares with tempo.

14...dxe7 15 dxc4 d8 16 ffd1 d7 17 g4!

Perfect play by Bjorn. The pawn on g7 is a big target.

17...dxf6 18 e5 h5



19 exf6! 1-0

A beautiful finish. Black resigned due to 19...hgx4 20 d6+ f8 21 fxg7+ and game over. A strong and brutal game throughout.

This next game was a key one for my fellow 'joint winner', Bjorn. His opponent, Bardur Birkisson, is an up and coming younger player with a very solid style of play. I got to know Bardur better during our journey back from Lake Myvatn to Reykjavik, one of the most amazing car journeys of my life.

I normally hate sitting in a car, but this journey transcended through a world of wonder and awe. Bjorn had a number of beers left over from the weekend, which made the time pass even better. As the beers were

slowly consumed by the passengers, Bardur slowly came out of his shell and started sharing some wonderful stories from his life travelling as chess player. During this trip Bjorn was also doing a great job as a tour guide, pointing out a wide range of stunning places, spanning from great valleys that have seen Viking battles to churches where headless ghosts are said to wonder. Certainly a journey that I won't forget quickly.

Bj.Thorfinnsson-B.Birkisson

Godinn Open, Skutustadir 2025

Queen's Gambit Declined

1 d4 d5 2 c4

No Triangle System in this game.

2...e6 3 dxc3 dxf6 4 cxd5 exd5 5 g5

I have always thought this to be a good and simple way to play against the QGD.

5...dxe7 6 c2

Stopping Black from simply developing with ...d5f5.

6...c6

6...g6 would also be pretty logical. Black insists on playing his bishop to f5. A key line must then be 7 e3 d5f5 8 dxb3 when Black would be forced to sacrifice a pawn, which is something that doesn't fit into Bardur's chess philosophy.

7 e3 h6

A trendy move that I was not really aware of. The standard way for Black to continue has always been 7...0-0 8 d3 d7 9 dge2 e8 10 0-0 d8f8.

8 d4 0-0 9 d3

A typical position. White has two main plans which involve pawn pushes: the minority attack with b2-b4-b5 and the more modern approach with f2-f3 and e3-e4.

9...d8

Black attempts to simplify the position. Generally Black's middlegame plan in this structure involves play along the e-file and the launching of pieces towards White's king.

10 g3 d6



Black's knight should stand pretty well here, but I would be a little concerned about the pieces stuck on the queenside.

11 dge2

Keeping both b2-b4 and f2-f3 ideas open.

11...e8 12 0-0 d8 13 b4

Logical and good. The break on b5 will create weaknesses in Black's pawn structure.

13...a6 14 a4 ♖d7 15 b5

Standard stuff. 15 a5!? is another interpretation of the position. I can even recall a young Peter Wells playing in this way some 35 years ago at the Lloyds Bank Masters. With a5, White aims for ideas with ♖a4-b6-c5, whilst keeping options of f2-f3 and e3-e4 open. **15...axb5 16 axb5 ♖xa1 17 ♖xa1 ♖b6 18 bxc6 bxc6**

White has achieved his aim, creating a weakness to attack on c6.

19 ♖a4 ♖xa4 20 ♖xa4 ♖d7 21 ♖a7



Keith Arkell has made a living from winning these positions as White. You can't go wrong by studying his games to understand about how to go about converting this type of position into a win. I am slightly surprised to see the engines give this position as equal, since it is clearly more pleasant for White.

21...♖e4 22 ♖c7

22 ♖xe4 was simple and good. Just exchange off any active black pieces and keep the pressure up against c6, and if 22...♖xe4 23 ♖e5!?, attempting to trap Black's rook.

22...♖h4 23 ♖g3 ♖f6 24 ♖e5

White is making progress. The threat is now ♖xf6 and ♖xd7, winning a piece.

24...♖c8 25 ♖f5 ♖g5 26 ♖f4 ♖h5 27 ♖g3 ♖h4 28 ♖c7

White has a great advantage now, but things do get rather messy...

28...♖d7 29 ♖e5 ♖e7 30 ♖d8 ♖e8 31 ♖c7 ♖e7 32 ♖a8 ♖e8



33 ♖xe7?!

This is not bad, but also unnecessary. When you have an advantage, the simplest route is nearly always the best route. There is no point in complicating matters and allowing the waters to be muddled.

Forcing the queens off with 33 ♖f5!

should be pretty straightforward for White: for example, 33...♖xc7 34 ♖hx4 ♖e7 (forced to defend e8) 35 ♖xf6 gxf6 36 ♖f5 ♖e6 37 g4 when White's advantages are clear.

33...♖xe7 34 ♖f5 ♖h5 35 ♖xe7+ ♖f8 36 ♖xf6?

Leaving Black with a queen comes with risks attached and here 36 ♖d6! was the only way to keep an advantage. 36...♖d1+ 37 ♖f1 ♖e4 is now very messy, but White is on top after 38 ♖g6+ ♖g8 39 ♖xe8+ ♖h7 40 ♖xe4! dxe4 41 ♖e5 when the three pieces outweigh the queen. White has no weaknesses and should be able to round up Black's weak pawns.

36...gxf6 37 ♖f5 ♖d1+ 38 ♖f1 ♖g4?

38...♖b1! was the only correct option. Black needs to move White's strong knight away from the outpost on f5. After 39 ♖d6 (39 g4 h5 40 h3 hxg4 41 hxg4 ♖d1 gives Black counterplay) 39...♖e7 40 ♖xe8 ♖b7 Black is most certainly in the game.

39 ♖g3?

39 ♖d6 was strong, as 39...♖d7 40 ♖xe8 ♖b7 can now be met with the clever 41 ♖d8 ♖e7 42 ♖d6! ♖xe8 43 ♖xf6. White should win this by making his h-pawn into a queen.

39...♖e6 40 ♖a6



40...♖g7?

Another error and 40...♖d7 would have been a better defence.

41 ♖d3?

41 ♖c8! was crushing, and if 41...♖d7 42 ♖h5+! ♖h7 43 ♖xd7 ♖xd7 44 ♖xf6+.

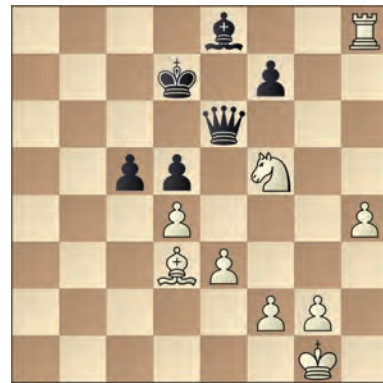
41...f5?!

Black had to defend passively with 41...♖f8! which would have been unpleasant, but playable. White still needs to find a way through.

42 ♖xf5+ ♖f6 43 ♖xh6

That is too many pawns.

43...♖d7 44 ♖d8 ♖e7 45 ♖h8 ♖e8 46 h4 c5 47 ♖f5+ ♖d7



Can you see the killer tactic?

48 ♖xe8!

A nice shot, as if 48...♖xe8 49 ♖g7+ or 48...♖xe8 49 ♖b5+.

48...♖b6 49 ♖e7+ ♖d8 50 dxc5 ♖b3 51 ♖f1 d4 52 c6 1-0

Those were three highly entertaining games, but the most exciting news is that the tournament is going to be back on in 2027. Most likely the dates will be 22-25 April. I know it is a long way off, but I cannot recommend the tournament highly enough. I have played all over the world and the Godinn Open is the most special tournament that I have ever been part of.

Imagine the social and fun side of Bunratty or Kilkenny on an alien planet heaped in mystery! The venue is only about an hour from Akureyri airport and it is easy to hire a car for the trip, so I really hope that more of you will experience it in two years' time.



Three happy Vikings celebrate at the end of the Godinn Open! Simon Williams is flanked by Bjorn Thorfinsson and x on his left, with Bragi Thorfinsson and y on his right

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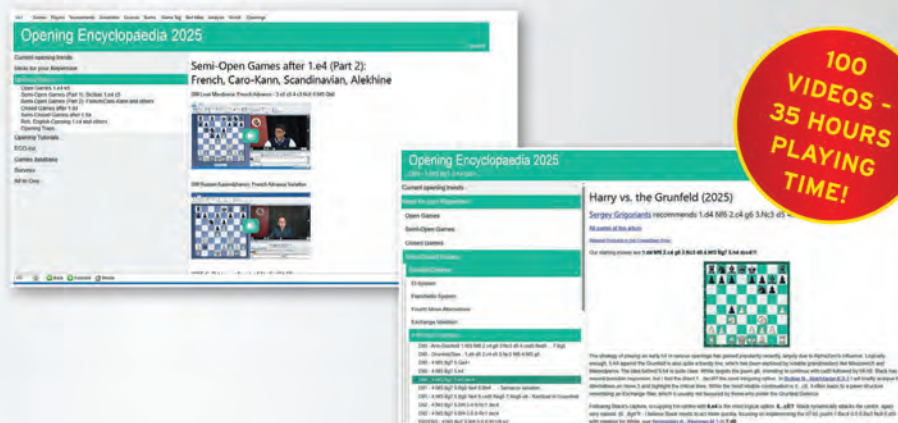
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How Good is Your Chess?

by Grandmaster Daniel King



Having written a book and a Chessable course on the Sicilian Kalashnikov, I feel a sense of ownership over the opening.

Practically every day, I check the latest tournament games to see if the Kalashnikov has been played and whether there are any new developments in my recommended opening lines. I researched all these variations with diligence and care, like bringing up a family; but when sent out into the great wide world, one never knows how they are going to fare. Disasters are hard to take – I feel a sense of responsibility – but if the opening proves successful and there is a glorious win, it's just like that feeling when one of your kids wins a gold medal on school sports day: it's validation for all the help you gave in their upbringing.

Not that the winner of this game is a child. Nor did he receive any help from me. Vlastimil Babula is a 51-year-old grandmaster from the Czech Republic and has been playing the Sicilian Kalashnikov for many years. However, he does employ a particular line that I have championed for a long time, and it is great to see it come through with flying colours. In this game he faced David Navara, 13-time Czech Champion and with a career best rating of 2751. If you are a regular reader of this column, you will know that I am a big fan of David's daring attacking play, but I gave an inward cheer when I saw how this game turned out.

Begin after the first diagram. Whenever White has moved, stop and try to guess Black's reply which will be on the next line. Try to analyse as much as you would in a game – it could earn you bonus points. The article will test your standard of play or, if you prefer, just enjoy a fine game.

D.Navara-V.Babula
Czech League 2025
Sicilian Kalashnikov

1 e4 c5 2 ♟f3 ♟c6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♟xd4 e5

This provocative prod already gives White plenty of chances to go wrong.

5 ♟b5

In my opinion, this is the only testing response.

5...d6

This is the real start of the Kalashnikov variation. How did it gain this moniker? The Dutch Grandmaster John van der Wiel was an

adopter of the opening when it had its first boom in the 1980s and he introduced the name in the magazine *New In Chess*. As he explained to me: "It was an inside joke amongst some players from my region in the Netherlands back then. Something like 'a primitive weapon, but it never jams'. To my great surprise others embraced this name and now it is the official name."

The humour of the name 'The Kalashnikov' is dark and for some does not read well in the context of our troubled times. I considered unilaterally renaming the opening and retitling the book, but that would have been a euphemism. In the chess community, 'The Sicilian Kalashnikov' is the name that has stuck over decades and that won't change for a long while.

There are two main continuations here: 6 ♟1c3, with mainly piece play, and the move that many consider the most principled...

6 c4

As the knight hasn't been forced to c3, White uses the opportunity to set up a Maroczy Bind, clamping the d5-square. In the past this had always been thought to be a problem for Black, but there are several ways to gain counterplay. In particular, the kingside fianchetto, which I recommended in the book and the course, has proved to be very spicy – as we are about to discover.

6...g6 7 ♟1c3 a6 8 ♟a3 ♟e6 9 ♟c2 ♟f6 10 ♟e2 ♟g7 11 ♟e3 0-0 12 ♟d2



There are around one hundred games in the database with the continuation 12 0-0 – that's the normal move. Hanging back with castling is a little unusual, but gives us a clue as to what Navara might have in mind. The test starts here – your move!

12...♟c8

Four points. This is where the rook belongs in most Sicilians, on the semi-open file, and here it is especially relevant with White's pawn on c4, not to mention the knights in line behind. Just imagine the tactics that might unfold if the c-file ever opened.

Given that White has yet to castle, it is worth considering immediate action: 12...b5 (*three points*). I like this: Black sets the house on fire and White still has to bring the king to safety. Hitting out at the Maroczy Bind (pawns on e4 and c4) is, in any case, good strategy. Such aggression has to be dealt with resolutely and accurately, and that isn't easy at such an early stage in the game.

Taking the pawn is the acid test: 13 cxb5 axb5 and now 14 ♟xb5? ♟xe4 looks terrible for White, therefore 14 ♟xb5. Black's knight is attacked and now 14...♟e7! is the best move. Playing the knight backwards looks odd, but when Black breaks, then the beast leaps into life: 15 0-0 d5 16 exd5 ♟exd5 and Black's active pieces compensate for the sacrificed pawn.

12...♟b8!? (*three points*) is slower, but also decent: 13 0-0 b5 gives excellent counterplay. Likewise, 13 f3 b5 14 cxb5 axb5 15 ♟xb5 ♟e7 16 a4 d5 provides good compensation for the pawn.

12...♟b8 (*three points*) is a cool move. The idea is well known in the Yugoslav Attack of the Sicilian Dragon, and of course there are similarities. Once again, the idea is to break with ...b5: for example, 13 f3 b5 14 cxb5 axb5 15 ♟xb5 (15 ♟xb5 d5! is already very dangerous for White) 15...♟c8 16 0-0 ♟e7. This move again! The pawn break ...d5 is on the way, and all Black's pieces spring to life.

12...♟h5!? (*two points*) is worth considering as 13 ♟xh5 gxh5 doesn't hurt Black (think back to Spassky-Fischer, Game 3, Reykjavik 1972). The pawn break ...f5 brings the light-squared bishop into play and the doubled h-pawn isn't an issue. Naturally, White doesn't need to play ♟xh5...

However, 12...♟a5? 13 b3 doesn't get Black very far.

13 f3

Bolstering the e-pawn – looking at the variations above where Black breaks on the queenside, that is understandable.

13...♟h5

Three points. Babula starts the fight: the knight is heading for the aggressive post on f4.

13...♖a5 (*three points*) gets really sharp: 14 b3 b5, and if 15 cxb5 ♗xb3! is a shocker for White. At the very least we can say that Black is causing trouble. 15 ♖d5 would be more prudent and then 15...♖d7 covers the b6-square (15...bxc4? 16 ♗b6 wouldn't be clever, and 15...♗xd5? 16 cxd5 leaves the knight on a5 in a poor position).

13...♖e7 (*one point*) can be met by 14 0-0-0! (14 b3 b5 15 cxb5 d5 would be tremendous for Black as White's minor pieces are so vulnerable) 14...♗xc4 15 ♗xc4 ♖xc4 16 ♖xd6 and White has a positional advantage as the bishop on g7 takes a long time to get into the game.

Black also has compensation for the pawn after 13...b5 (*one point*) 14 cxb5 axb5 15 ♗xb5 d5, or 15...♖e7 with the idea of ...d5.

14 0-0-0



True to his nature, Navara plays in the most uncompromising way, attacking Black's pawn on d6, but potentially placing his king in a vulnerable position on the c-file.

14...♖f4

Three points. Before that knight looks dim on the rim, let's throw it back into the fray. Confusingly, a correspondence game (Mezera-Huenerfauth, 2023) was agreed drawn in this position. No doubt the players' computers had foreseen a forced draw in 89 moves.

Alternatively, 14...♖d4 (*two points*) unleashes Black's forces: 15 ♖xd4 exd4 16 ♗xd4 ♗xd4 17 ♖xd4 ♖g5+ (that's the point) 18 ♖b1 ♖xg2. All very messy. The computer believes White is better, but proving it is not simple.

The King's Indian move, 14...f5, should be met by 15 ♖b1! and it isn't quite clear what the pawn advance has achieved.

15 ♗f1

The bishop drops out of the knight's range, but breaks communication between the rooks: it's a high-risk strategy. Before you go on to consider Black's response, how would you reply to 15 ♖xd6? Answer on the next line.

15...♖d4! is the key move (15...♖xe2+ 16 ♖xe2 ♖d4 would lead to the same thing): 16 ♖xd8 ♖dx2+ (that's the point – a *zwischenenschach*) 17 ♖xe2 ♖xe2+ 18 ♖d2 ♖fxd8+ 19 ♖xe2. White recovers the piece,



A longtime regular in the Czech Olympiad side, Vlastimil Babula kindly agrees to sign an autograph.

but 19...♗xc4+ 20 ♖f2 ♗xa2 leaves Black a comfortable pawn up with a winning endgame. *Four points* if you calculated this far.

15...♖a5

Three points. Playing for the attack makes complete sense when White's king is vulnerable and the kingside pieces don't connect with the other side of the board.

16 g3



Instead, 16 b3 would be met by 16...b5, hammering at the structure in the traditional manner.

16...♗xc4

Six points. Don't back down!

Instead, 16...♖xc4 would be a mistake: 17 ♗xc4 ♗xc4 18 gxf4 exf4 19 ♗d4, when Black has precious little for the piece.

Falling back with 16...♖h5 doesn't feel right – from a psychological viewpoint such a retreat would give your opponent a real lift. The endgame after 17 b3 b5 18 ♖xd6 ♖xd6 19 ♖xd6 bxc4 20 b4 ♖c6 21 ♗e2 is better for White.

17 gxf4

Navara is never afraid to accept a challenge – which is why he is so often

successful. Nevertheless, this was a mistake and 17 ♖f2 would have been better, with the following continuation representing best play: 17...♖e6 18 ♗b6 (that's the point, but Black survives!) 18...♖g5+ 19 ♖b1 ♗xf1 20 ♖hxg1 ♖c4 21 ♖d5 ♖xb6 22 ♖xb6 ♖b8 23 ♖xd6 ♖h8, which is about equal according to the silicon overlords.

17...♗xa2

Four points. This was quite possibly overlooked, or at the very least underestimated. Mate in one is threatened and 18 ♖xa2 ♖b3+ 19 ♖b1 ♖xd2+ bags the queen with a winning material advantage.

18 ♖a1



Perhaps Navara had reached this position and thought that he could hold out with the extra piece. He was to be sadly disillusioned.

18...♖b3+

Five points. Exchanging off the knight on a1 might look strange at first glance, but it establishes the bishop in a superb position.

Instead, 18...exf4 isn't as good: 19 ♗d4 with chances to defend. And 18...b5 19 ♖xd6 is also unconvincing for Black.

19 ♖xb3

19...♙xb3

One point.

20 ♖d3

20...♚a5

Four points. Sliding the queen into the danger zone around White's king. Something is bound to happen.

If you wanted to make absolutely sure that the position was going to open, then you might have chosen the flamboyant 20...d5 (also *four points*). If 21 exd5 ♗a5 is rather similar to the game.

But 20...♙xd1 is too hasty: there is no need to cash in; the bishop is stronger than the rook when it comes to the attack.

21 ♔d2



The queen made room for the king to run, but how far is it going to get?

21...exf4

Two points. It is high time to unleash the beast on g7. There is still no need to take that rook on d1.

22 ♔d4

White attempts to block out the bishop, but it's too late.

22 ♔f2 would lose to 22...♙xd1 (this is the right time) 23 ♙xd1 ♔xc3 24 bxc3 ♔xc3 and the king is helpless against the major pieces. And if 22 ♔xf4 d5 23 exd5 ♔fd8 will soon get through to the king.

22...♙c4

Three points. Winning material.

23 ♗xc4

Or 23 ♔xg7 ♔xd3 24 ♔f6 ♔xf1 25 ♔hxg1 d5! 26 exd5 ♗b6! crashes through to the king. And 23 ♗c2 ♔xd4 wins back the piece with a crushing attack.

23...♔xc4

One point.

24 ♔xg7

24...♗b4

Two points. The best move, but 24...♔xg7 (*one point*) is also winning: 25 ♔xc4 ♗b4 26 b3 b5 and White won't survive the attack. Crucially, Black's king is completely safe, so there is no counterplay.

25 ♔xf8

25...♗xb2+

One point.

26 ♔d3



26...♔xf8

One point. I am guessing that Babula was short of time, so he makes the pragmatic recapture.

26...♗c5 (*two points*) would have been a bit quicker: 27 ♔e7 (27 ♔xd6 ♗xd6+ 28 ♔d5 ♗c5 wins) 27...b5 and mate in a couple of moves. By the way, 26...♗b6 (also *two points*) would lead to the same.

27 ♗b1

27...♔f2

One point. Keeping the rook on the board is the natural way to maintain the attack, but by this stage precision isn't necessary.

27...♔xb1 (*one point*) also wins easily: 28 ♔xb1 ♗c5 29 ♔d2 ♗e3+ 30 ♔c2 and with White's pieces tied up, it's time to advance: 30...b5.

28 ♔e2

28...♗c5

Two points. With a big threat to land on e3.

29 ♔he1

29...b5

Two points. It's not necessary to push too hard, just keep rolling forward and an enemy piece is going to drop.

30 h4



30...♔h2

One point. The same for 30...♗c4+ 31 ♔d2 b4, as well as the immediate 30...b4. Likewise, 30...♗e3+ 31 ♔c2 ♗xf3.

31 ♗b2

31...♗e3+

One point. 31...♔xh4 (*one point*) is a distraction, but also good enough.

32 ♔c2

32...♗xf3

One point. Black still has seven pawns; White far fewer.

33 ♔b3

33...♗e3

One point. Maintaining the pin on the knight (and creating a new pin on the bishop) is sensible.

34 ♔d1



34...b4

Three points. The most precise.

34...f3 (no credit) doesn't jeopardise the win, but drags out matters: 35 ♔d3 ♗c5 36 ♔xf3 a5 – with a winning initiative, but it's not yet game over.

35 ♔d3

If 35 ♔xb4 f3 wins the bishop.

35...bxc3 0-1

Two points. White resigned. If 36 ♔xe3 cxb2, threatening to promote, then 37 ♔xb2 fxe3 really does end the argument.

If you have played a good game with the Sicilian Kalashnikov, do send it to me and it might be featured on my YouTube channel.

Now add up your points:

0-15	Unlucky
16-31	Average Club Player
32-39	Strong Club Player
40-44	FIDE Master
45-52	International Master
53-62	Grandmaster

Ed. – If you have any questions regarding this article, please contact Daniel directly through his website www.danielking.biz.



60 Seconds with... Roger Williamson



Born: Liverpool, 9th May 1980.

Place of residence: Liverpool.

Occupation: Chess coach, both in a private capacity and for Chess in Schools and Communities. Currently assisting the fledgling Merseyside Junior Academy run by Rob Steele.

Enjoyable? Equal parts enjoyable and frustrating.

Home life? Expecting a son in June.

But sometimes good to escape to: My own chess club, John Littlewood CC, currently in third place on Merseyside behind the strong Liverpool and Atticus sides.

Sports played or followed: Cricket and football, once, but our contemporary versions of those games have taken away much of their lustre.

Favourite novel? Many. No particular favourite, but I do keep returning to Shalamov's *Kolyma Tales*.

Favourite piece of music? Again, many. Anything Beethoven.

Film or TB series? I watch far too much of

Gomorra the series to be considered healthy. If I want to feel better about the world, a film like Whit Stillman's *Metropolitan* (1990).

The best three chess books: *Mastering the Endgame: Volume 1* by Shereshevsky, *Imagination in Chess* by Gaprindashvili, and the book for chess players who don't like chess books, *Chess for Zebras* by Rowson.

What's the best thing about playing chess? The beauty of the game itself.

And the worst? The fear of doing something basic wrong.

Your best move? 17...dxe3 versus John Redmond of Atticus in the Merseyside League, giving up the knight on c6 for the initiative. John has historically the better of me, so it was pleasing to be able to sacrifice a piece in such a fashion while recording a rare win.

J.Redmond-R.Williamson
Liverpool 2020



17...dxe3! 18 ♖xc6 e2 19 ♗fe1 ♜xf4 20 ♗e4 ♗f6 21 ♜ce5? ♜d5 22 ♜d7 ♗d6 23 ♗a4 ♗g6 24 ♜h4 ♗g4 25 ♜xf8 ♜h3+ 26 ♜h1 ♜xf2+ 27 ♜g1 ♜h3+ 28 ♜h1 ♜xg2+ 29 ♜xg2 ♗xa4 30 ♜e6 ♗g4 31 ♜xc7 ♗f8 32 ♜d5 ♗f3 33 ♜de3 ♗f2 34 ♗ac1 ♗g1+ 0-1

But less memorable than your worst move? Having a few too many drinks before talking to Ulf Andersson in 2006.

And a highly memorable opponent? How many people say Mike Surtees? I remember being impressed by IM Kalle Kiik both during and after he dismantled me in 2014.

Favourite game of all time? Morozevich-Topalov, Melody Amber Rapid 2004.

A.Morozevich-V.Topalov
Monaco (rapid) 2004
Sicilian Najdorf

1 e4 c5 2 ♜f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♜xd4 ♜f6 5 ♜c3 a6 6 ♜e3 e5 7 ♜b3 ♜e6 8 ♗d2 b5 9 0-0-0 ♜bd7 10 f4 ♜e7 11 ♜b1 ♜c8 12 f5 ♜c4 13 g4 ♜xg4 14 ♗g1 ♜xe3 15 ♗xe3 g6 16 ♜xc4 bxc4 17 ♜d2 ♜f6 18 ♗h3 ♗d7 19 ♜f1 gxf5 20 ♜e3 ♜xe4 21 ♜cd5!



21...♜f2 22 ♗h5 ♜xd1 23 ♜xd1 ♜c5? 24 ♜xe7 ♗xe7 25 ♜xf5 e4 26 ♜g7+ ♜f8 27 ♗h6 ♗e5 28 ♜f5+ ♜e8 29 ♜xd6+ ♜e7 30 ♜f5+ ♜e8 31 ♗g5 ♗c7 32 ♜g7+ 1-0

Is FIDE doing a good job? I try to stay out of geopolitics.

Or your national federation? No other to compare it to.

Any advice for either? It's an improbable ask, but some kind of state-assisted initiative that would enable more chess clubs to own their own venues. The impermanence and general crumminess of playing venues is detrimental to the growth of the game.

Can chess make one happy? Not on its own, but it can help.

A tip please for the club player: When analysing your own games on a site like Lichess, consult its master games database before using *Stockfish*. Human beings are easier to imitate than machines.

Ed. – Roger will be involved in the myriad of activities around the British Championships this summer and we've an enlightening take by him on chess fiction later in these pages.

xf7 in the Møller

A modern reappraisal of a bold gambit and dangerous piece sacrifice, by Junior Tay

Nowadays, one seldom sees the main line Møller Attack with 1 e4 e5 2 ♖f3 ♘c6 3 ♙c4 ♙c5 4 c3 ♘f6 5 d4 exd4 6 cxd4 ♙b4+ 7 ♘c3 ♘xe4 8 0-0 ♙xc3 9 d5 in tournament praxis. It's 5 e5 or 5 b4 that is normally wheeled out. I checked the ChessBase Online database and found only 15 games in this line played by masters in the past year and even then, mostly in Titled Tuesday Blitz events.

The lines with 9...♙f6 and 9...♘e5 have been defanged and seemingly White isn't having a good time, with both lines scoring about 59% for Black in tournament play. So it's normally 4 d3 or 5 d3, and in recent times 4 ♘c3 has also been making the rounds, with mainly Abdusattorov, Mamedov and Sindarov developing the knight early.

However, I would like to make the case for an antiquated line which was covered by two-time British Champion IM George Botterill in *Open Gambits* (Batsford, 1986). It goes:

1 e4 e5 2 ♖f3 ♘c6 3 ♙c4 ♙c5 4 c3 ♘f6 5 d4 exd4 6 cxd4 ♙b4+ 7 ♘c3 ♘xe4 8 0-0 ♙xc3 9 d5 ♙f6 10 ♖e1 ♘e7 11 ♖xe4 d6 12 ♙g5 ♙xg5 13 ♘xg5 h6 14 ♘xf7!?



This is the speculative knight sacrifice that has been summarily dismissed by every theoretical work I have looked at from the past until today, but I can assure you that it is very lethal, especially if this line is used in a blitz or rapid game against the uninitiated.

14...♘xf7 15 ♖f3+

Here Black has to make a tough decision. Should he or she keep the piece by moving the king away, return it by completing development with 15...♙f5, or instead block with 15...♘f5? There is only one correct choice here so the chance of ambushing the opponent is extremely high. Exceptions would be if they have walked into it before, read



A young Nigel Short faces two-time British Champion, Welsh IM and philosopher George Botterill, who was the first to analyse seriously the 14 ♘xf7! sacrifice in the Møller Attack.

Fernschach 4/90 (a German correspondence magazine where FM Konikowski covered the line), or the previously mentioned *Open Gambits* book.



The natural developing move, 15...♙f5?!, loses immediately to 16 ♖ae1! and White regains either the bishop or knight, with an ongoing onslaught against the black king. The latest beneficiary of this in tournament play, according to my database, is German FM Holger Namyslo, who caught FM Chassin Chassard in the German Online Blitz Championship of

2020. After 16...♖f8 17 ♖xe7+ ♔g8 18 ♖h5! White controls the e8-square, as well as prepares to blow Black's kingside pawn shield to bits with g2-g4-g5.

'Keeping' the piece with 15...♔g8?? loses immediately too, also after 16 ♖ae1 as White once again threatens ♖e8+ if the knight moves, leaving it doomed in any case. After 16...♖f8 the simplest is 17 ♖xf8+ ♔xf8 18 ♖xe7 when Black cannot stop White doubling rooks on seventh rank.

Note too that Black goes down in flames after 15...♔g6? 16 ♖xe7! ♖xe7 17 ♙d3+ ♔g5 18 h4+ ♔xh4 19 ♖g3+ ♔h5 20 ♙g6# 1-0, Nubling-C.Müller, correspondence 1989.

The earliest mention of 14 ♘xf7, as far as I can find, was when it was played by French correspondence chess player Henri Cleguer, who beat Jacques Delassus with it in 1976. As for over-the-board play, Josef Klinger (now a GM) wheeled it out against Jesper Norgaard (now an FM) in the 1979 World Under-16 Team Championship event, when they were 13 and 15 respectively.

The crucial line is 15...♘f5!, returning the piece and keeping a pawn, to find time to place the rook on f8 and move the king to g8.



In older theoretical works (we all know that most have been superseded in the age of Elo 3500+ engines), Botterill refuted 16...g6 17 g4 ♗e6 18 dxe6+ ♗e7 (18...♗g7 is also good) 19 gxf5 gxf5 20 ♖xf5 ♖g8+ 21 ♔h1 ♖h7 as the refutation, and that assessment still stands today.

Botterill also covered 16 g4 ♗f8 17 gxf5 ♗g8 and gave Black a large advantage, an assessment agreed with by Heyken and Fette, quoting Mularczyk-C.E.Johannsson, correspondence 1985, who concluded that “Black wins a pawn with safer king and the better pawn structure”.

In terms of recent theory works, FM Selim Citak’s Chessable course 1 e4 e5 *Gambit Busters* covered, a move earlier, 15 ♖h5+ g6 16 ♖f3+ ♔f5 17 g4 ♗f8 18 gxf5 ♗xf5, with the assessment that “not only do we have an extra pawn, but also a better king. The vulnerability of the light squares around White’s king will soon become very troublesome”.

However, as modern engines will show you, the crucial line today, which to the best of my knowledge isn’t covered by any theoretical work, is:

16 g4 ♗f8

The most natural. FM Jerzy Konikowski analysed instead 16...g6 17 ♗ae1 ♖f6 18 gxf5 ♗xf5, giving an unclear assessment. After 19 ♗e7+ ♗g8 20 ♗xc7 ♗h7! 21 ♗xh7 ♗h7 chances seem even.

17 ♗d3!?



This has the idea of entrenching the bishop on f5 right in the black king’s face while playing an exchange down, and also adds a defender to the f5-pawn should White play gxf5.

ChessBase’s *Mega Database 2025* does not have any games with 17 ♗d3, but Lichess has one master level game (players

above FIDE 2200), played the by Russian master Erik Chibukhchyan. There his opponent blundered quickly after 17...♗g8 18 ♗f4 ♔h4?? 19 ♗xf8+ ♖xf8 and 20 ♗xh7+! wins the queen. Let us go back two moves from that tactic:

17...♗g8

The black king gets to (relative) safety. Black can also complete development with 17...♗d7 when White can try 18 gxf5 ♗g8 19 ♗g4 ♖c8 20 ♗f4 ♗f6 21 ♗c1 c5 (otherwise, White will just push his b-pawn to fix the queenside) 22 dxc6 bxc6 23 ♗e4, with complex play.

18 ♗f4

The crux of the matter lies here, in the following two positions. The first one occurs after 18...♗g5.



Black endeavours to reach an ending a pawn up after 19 ♗xf5 g6 20 h4 ♖xh4 21 ♗xg6 ♗xf4 22 ♖xf4 ♖xg4+ 23 ♖xg4 ♗xg4.

The other important line is to force White into trading rooks, with 18...g5 19 ♗xf5 ♗xf5 20 ♗xf5.



In both lines, the top engines consider Black to have a large advantage, ranging from ‘-0.95’ to ‘-1.02’. However, I wasn’t quite convinced as in both positions it looks difficult for Black to start any active play (at least at my level where it is easier to hack players than to tai-chi them to bits), even with the extra material and no immediate danger.

For the first variation, I thought that after 19 h4 ♖xh4 20 gxf5 White must have good compensation for the pawn, especially in over-the-board play. His space advantage and Black’s lack of activity surely counts for something. There is also the matter of Black’s weak c-pawn for White to press.

For the second variation, I felt that the bishop on f5 was really a total nuisance and it

would be very easy for Black to blunder, unless he could find a way to sacrifice back the exchange to his benefit (a kingside attack or an endgame where White has split pawns).

When I checked the positions with the Chinese online Chess Cloud Database Query Interface server, as it played out the best analysed moves for both sides, my suspicions about Black’s compensation were more or less vindicated as Black’s evaluation advantage got subsequently smaller and smaller until White had totally equalised. Then when I set *Stockfish 17* and *Komodo Dragon 3.3* to play against each other with alternating colours, all the games ended in draws with the same thing happening: Black’s ‘extra pawn’ advantage kept whittling down move after move to ‘0.00’ by the time the truce was agreed.

Of course, whether this variation can be played out in human praxis would depend on how difficult it would be to understand the ideas for both sides which the engines make. Hence I would like to show you my findings on the matter, which I hope will make sense and perhaps even inspire you to give this line a whirl.

The Vacuum Attempt, 18...♗g5

The point of this, as mentioned earlier, is to prepare a trade of bishops, rooks and queens to reach a better rook ending with 19 ♗xf5 ♗xf5 20 ♗xf5 ♗xf5 21 ♖xf5 ♖xf5 22 gxf5 ♗e8 23 ♗c1 ♗e7. However, White is not forced to let that happen and with the aid of a pawn sacrifice, he can deflect the queen and get a kingside pawn wedge which is very difficult for Black to extricate himself from.

19 h4!



This allows White to jam the black pieces, except the queen, and also the g-file might be useful for White’s heavy pieces at some point. Black will now have to play accurately to mobilise his queenside, though White must make his pawn deficit count by pressing hard on the kingside and the c-file.

19...♖xh4 20 gxf5 ♖f6

After 20...♖e7 White has the resourceful 21 f6! (if White wants to try to make Black nervous, he can instead go for 21 ♗c1) 21...♗xf6 22 ♗xf6 ♖xf6 23 ♖xf6 gxf6 24 ♗c1 ♗g4 25 ♗xc7 ♗f3 26 ♗xb7 ♗xd5 27 ♗d7 ♗xa2 28 ♗xd6 ♗f7 29 ♗a6 ♗d5 30 ♗h2 and Black can hardly improve his position, despite his extra pawn.

Instead, 20...♖g5+ helps White to utilize

the g-file, but Black will hold the balance after 21 ♖h2 b5 22 ♖g1 ♗f6 23 ♖g6 ♗e5 24 ♖g3 ♗xf5 25 ♗xf5 ♗xf5 26 ♗xf5 ♗xf5 27 ♗xg7+ ♖h8 28 ♗c3 ♗e5+ 29 ♗xe5 dxe5 30 ♗xc7 ♗d8 31 ♗c5 a6, with equal chances.

21 ♗c1



This basically poses a few questions to Black, who must decide whether to:

- 1) Forsake the c-pawn for White's b-pawn.
- 2) Defend the c7-pawn with ...♗f7 and find a way to activate the dark-squared bishop.
- 3) Say to heck with it and play ...c6 or ...c5, to open up the queenside.

21...c5

No grovelling. Black takes his chances by opening up the centre.

Right now, it's not very practical to go 21...♗xb2 22 ♗xc7 ♗f6 23 ♗h5 when White has the initiative, but Black can try to shore up the c-pawn with 21...♗f7. After 22 ♖h1 b5 (22...c5 23 ♖g1 ♗e5 24 ♗e4 ♗xf5 25 ♗xe5 ♗xf3 26 ♗e8+ ♗f8 27 ♖h7+ ♖f7 28 ♖g6+ repeats moves) 23 ♖g1 ♖b7 White is forced to press hard, but it's still even stevens after, for example, 24 ♗g6 ♗e5 25 f6 ♖xd5 26 ♖e4 c6 27 ♗g4 ♗xf6 28 ♗xg7+ ♖f8 (and not 28...♖h8?? 29 ♗h7#) 29 ♗xf6+ ♗xf6 30 ♖xd5 ♗xg7 31 ♗f5+ ♖e7 32 ♗e6+ ♖d8 33 ♖xc6 ♗b8 34 ♗xd6+ ♖c8 35 ♖d5 ♗b6 36 ♖e6+ ♖b7 37 ♖d5+ when Black cannot avoid the checks, in view of 37...♖a6?? 38 ♗a3#.

22 dxc6 bxc6 23 ♖g3!



Obviously not 23 ♗xc6?? ♖b7, so White begins pressing on the g-file and forces Black to undertake accurate measures.

23...♗xb2

This is an attempt to complete development by allowing White to take on c6,

and thus let Black unravel with ...♖b7 followed by developing the rook from a8.

After 23...♖d7 24 ♗g4 Black can try to ward off the kingside pressure with 24...g5! 25 ♗e1 ♗fe8 (likewise, if 25...♗ae8 26 ♗xe8 ♗xe8 27 ♗e4 ♖f8 28 ♗e3 c5 29 b4! cxb4 30 ♗xa7 and White is fine, while after 25...♖xf5 he has the neat resource 26 ♗f4! ♗g6 27 ♗xf5 ♗xf5 28 ♖xf5 ♗xf5 29 ♗xd6 when Black's king is too exposed for the extra pawn to count) 26 ♗xe8+ ♗xe8 27 ♗e4 a5 28 ♖c4+ ♖g7 29 ♗xe8 ♖xe8 30 ♗e3!, but here White isn't worse for sure.

Instead, if 23...c5 White can go for the g-file attack with 24 ♗g4 or try 24 b4, with the idea of 24...cxb4 25 ♗c7.

24 ♗xc6 ♖b7 25 ♗xd6 ♗ae8 26 ♖c4+!

It is imperative that White fights back so. **26...♖h8 27 ♗d1**



The back rank must, of course, be covered and after **27...♗e5 28 ♖d3 ♗d8 29 ♗b4 ♗e7** (29...♗xg3+ 30 fxg3 ♖f3 31 ♗d2 ♗d6 32 ♖f2 is an equal ending) **30 ♗db1** chances are even.

Grabbing the Exchange, 18...g5

White is forced to sacrifice the exchange here: **19 ♗xf5 ♖xf5 20 ♖xf5**



Taking stock, White has kept a big space advantage at the expense of the exchange. The critical line occurs when White plays ♗e1-e6 and Black has to trade rooks, leaving White with a dangerous set-up: a bishop on f5, with pawns on g4 and e6.

20...♗f6

The alternative to connect the rooks is 20...♗e7 21 ♗b3! when White's strategy is to harass the queenside with ♗b3 and ♗c1 to deny Black the time to build up in the centre.

Here we can analyse:

a) Both 21...b6 22 ♗c1 and 21...♗ab8 22 ♗c1 makes it a chore for Black to be tied down to defending the c7-pawn.

b) 21...♗e2!? 22 ♗c1 ♗f7 23 ♗xb7 ♗e8 24 ♗b4 h5 25 h3 holds things together. Black can try the flashy 25...♗e3!?, but after 26 ♗f1!? a5 (or 26...♗f3 27 ♖e6 ♗h3 28 gxh5 ♗h4 29 ♗e1 ♗xh5 30 ♖xf7+ ♗xf7 31 f3 and White isn't worse) 27 ♗b8+ ♗e8 28 ♗b3 ♖g7 29 ♗c3+ ♖h6 30 b3 Black cannot improve his position.

b) With 21...h5 22 h3 ♗ae8 23 ♗c1 ♖g7 24 ♗xb7 ♗f7 25 ♖g2 hxg4 (after 25...c5!? 26 dxc6 ♗xb7 27 cxb7 ♗xb7 28 gxh5 ♗e2 29 ♖g6 ♗exb2 30 ♗c6 White's activity compensates for the material deficit) 26 hxg4 c5 (the queen trade favours Black as White doesn't get to snack on h5) 27 ♗b3! White must try to exploit the kingside weaknesses if Black tries to invade down the centre.



Here are some sample lines:

b1) If Black tries to use the h-file with 27...♗ff8, White can counter actively with 28 ♗c3. The logical 28...♗e1!? (White is also fine after 28...♗xf5 29 gxh5 ♗e4+ 30 ♖g1 ♗e1+ 31 ♖g2 ♗e4+ 32 ♖g1 ♗xf5 33 ♗e3 ♗g4+ 34 ♖f1 and 28...♗h8 29 ♗e3!, which is necessary to prevent Black from building up against the white king) is met by the counterattacking 29 ♗h3 ♗h8 30 ♗b7+ ♗e7 31 ♗xh8 ♗xb7 (not 31...♗xh8? 32 ♗b8+ ♖g7 33 ♗xd6 and Black is in trouble) 32 ♗h7+ ♖f8 33 ♗h8+ ♖e7 34 ♗h7+ ♖d8 35 ♗xb7 ♗e5 36 ♗xa7 when neither side can really make any headway.

b2) 27...♗f6 28 ♗h1 ♗h8 29 ♗xh8 ♖xh8 30 a4 ♖g7 31 a5 ♗e5 32 ♗h3 is likely to land up in perpetual check from one side or the other.

b3) If Black takes the h-file, White will play for the centre with 27...♗h8 28 ♗c3+ ♗f6 29 ♗e1 when the ending after 29...♗xc3 30 bxc3 a5 31 f4!? (White can risk less with 31 ♖g3 a4 32 f4 to achieve the same aim) 31...gxf4 32 ♖f3 ♗h3+ 33 ♖xf4 ♗xc3 34 ♗e6 ♗f6 35 ♗e7+ ♖f8 36 ♗a7 ♗a3 37 ♖g5 ♗f7 38 ♗a8+ ♖e7 39 ♗a7+ ♖f8 40 ♗a8+ is equal.

b4) 27...♗b7 is a neat queen swing to pressure both the b2- and d5-pawns. White can ditch the b-pawn to threaten the black king with 28 ♗f3 ♗xb2 29 ♗h1! ♗f6 30 ♗h3 ♖g8, resulting in mutual chances though the engine insists it's '0.00' at 75 ply depth!

21 ♗e1



Junior Tay (right) pictured with IM Hsu Li Yang at last year's world chess championship match.



White threatens ♕e6, so Black has to act fast.
21...♖ae8

It's best not to let White invade after 21...♖xb2 22 ♕e7.

22 ♕e6! ♗xe6 23 dxe6 ♖b8

It is most definitely not the time for a high tea snack with 23...♖xb2? due to 24 e7! and Black is lost.



24 ♕e3!

White probes for queenside weaknesses.

24...♗e8

Once again, not 24...♖xb2? 25 e7 ♖e5 26 ♖xe5 dxe5 27 ♔g6 when Black can resign.

25 ♖f3! b6

Again, of course, it's too dangerous to play 25...♖xb2?, since White wins after 26 ♔h7+! ♔xh7 27 ♖f7+ ♖g7 28 ♖xe8.

26 ♖b7 ♕e7! 27 b4!

Not just getting the pawn off the black queen's purview, but also to prepare to fix Black's queenside pawns. I could stop here and claim decent compensation, but for those who are curious or keen, the critical line runs: **27...♖e5!** (this appears to consolidate for Black, but White can still make inroads) **28 ♖xa7 ♔g7 29 ♖a4! d5 30 ♖b5 ♖a1+ 31 ♔g2 ♖xa2 32 h4! gxh4 33 ♖d3 ♖c4 34 ♖e3!** and we can see the point of h2-h4, weakening the h6-pawn. Now White can play for ♖e5+ to stress Black, while after **34...d4 35 ♖e5+ ♔g8 36 ♖f6 ♖c6+ 37 ♔f1 d3 38 ♔h7+!** (White boxes in the rook and now has endless checks to force a draw or win back the rook) **38...♗xh7 39 ♖d8+ ♔g7 40 ♖d4+ ♔f8 41 ♖f6+** a draw is likely.

Conclusion

I think pronouncements of the Møller Attack's inadequacies are quite misguided and that 14 ♔xf7! has been dismissed too early without much analysis. White retains attacking chances and has enough compensation. You might query, why play into a line where White has only a draw at best if Black plays accurately? Well, I feel that the propensity for Black to err and lose is actually rather high, and the whole line is double-edged indeed. The crux is whether one is comfortable playing material-down positions and how well one understands the key ideas in this fascinating variation.



A little bird just told me

A round-up of what the top players and chess personalities have been saying on Twitter

Judit Polgar - @GMJuditPolgar

"I was playing more and more in the zone!" said Ju Wenjun after defending today the Women's World Championship title vs Tan Zhongyi. Congratulations!

Susan Polgar - @SusanPolgar

Legend! Not enough people are talking about the legendary Ivanchuk! At 56 years old, he is still incredibly active! And at Reykjavik Open 2025, he is performing over 2700!! He does not pick and choose tournaments to benefit his rating. He plays in open tournaments and facing dangerous players who are young enough to be his kids or grandkids! Admirable and outstanding! #Legend

Women's Chess Coverage - @OnTheQueenside

EATING HER OPPONENTS ALIVE! Teodora Injac delivered her EIGHTH WIN IN A ROW (!!) to tighten her grip over the European Women's Championship! She still has the sole lead with only two rounds left!

English Chess Tracker - @EngChessTrack

GM Simon Williams' (@ginger_gm) was hot out of the blocks in the Reykjavik Open with 3/3. It earned him a clash vs GM Lu Shanglei. It lived up to its promise in terms of excitement, though the result went against Williams in the end. #chess #englishchess

2700chess - @2700chess

Maghsoodloo (2703.8) has already won 9 games in a row: four in the Austrian League and five at the Reykjavik Open! This great performance has brought him back to the 2700 club, with some margin to spare.

Hikaru Nakamura - @GMHikaru

So for @Kasparov63's Birthday we thought we'd put on a show. @MagnusCarlsen and I will be playing Game 1 of the Finals at @chess_freestyle today. Streaming the game on kick will be @photochess and @gmcanty. El Classico!!!

chess24 - @chess24com

Jan Henric Buettner announces that the next #FreestyleChess Grand Slam will be not in New York but in Las Vegas in July. The tournament will be cut from 8 to 5 days to appeal more to TV, with the 90+30 games cut to 45+10, so two can be held on one day.

GothamChess - @GothamChess

I'm doing a 6-show Europe Tour in May 2025 with special guests and live Guess The Elo.

Find the Winning Moves

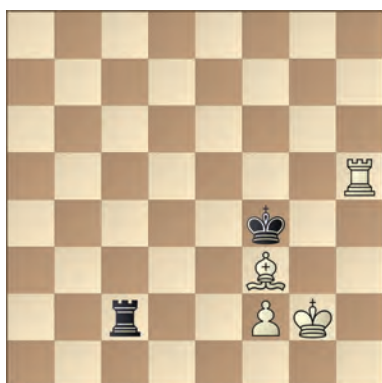
Or even Find the Drawing Moves, as there are a few tricky defences to spot this month!

In all, 24 puzzles to test your tactical ability with, as ever, the positions grouped in rough order of difficulty. As usual, the games come from a variety of recent events, not least the ChessMates International in York. Don't forget that whilst sometimes the key move will force mate or the win of material, other times it will just pick up a pawn.

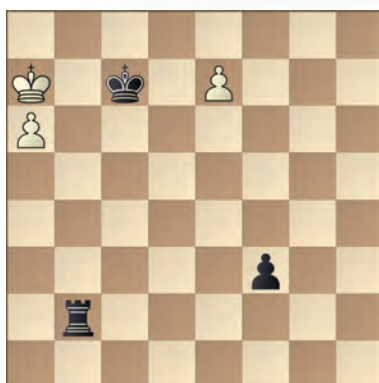
Solutions on pages 53.



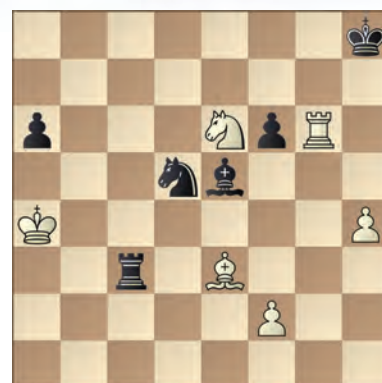
Warm-up Puzzles



(1) J.Fiorito-J.Colville
Titled Tuesday Blitz 2025
Black to Play and Draw



(2) O.Bykovskiy-R.Mcligeyo
Titled Tuesday Blitz 2025
Black to Play



(3) L.Aronian-S.Sevian
Saint Louis 2025
Black to Play



(4) M.Hamer-B.Harkness
Blackpool 2025
White to Play



(5) A.Rich-E.Marchix
York 2025
White to Play



(6) G.Koehler-P.Large
World Senior Team Ch., Prague 2025
Black to Play

Intermediate Puzzles for the Club Player - Solutions on page 53



(7) J.Tait-T.Gollins
Sheffield 2025
Black to Play



(8) R.Van Kemenade-C.Higgie
Shrewsbury 2025
White to Play and Draw



(9) I.Misyura-I.Camp
London 2025
White to Play



(10) T.Thorhallsson-J.Thorgeirsson
Skutustadir 2025
White to Play



(11) S.Royal-M.Assylov
World Junior Championship, Petrovac 2025
White to Play



(12) S.Arnold-A.Slinger
York 2025
White to Play



(13) S.Badacsonyi-B.Thorisson
York 2025
Black to Play



(14) M.Warmerdam-V.Fedoseev
German Bundesliga 2025
Black to Play



(15) P.Mason-M.Bramson
Leeds 2025
White to Play

Harder Puzzles for the Club Player – Solutions on page 53



(16) B.Assaubayeva-Tan Zhongyi
Monaco 2025
Black to Play



(17) C.Kien-S.Haubold
York 2025
Black to Play



(18) A.Dasgupta-S.Blokhin
York 2025
White to Play



(19) M.Ermitsch-I.Glek
Berlin 2025
Black to Play



(20) J.Santos Latasa-T.Razafindratsima
European Individual Ch., Eforie Nord 2025
White to Play



(21) J.Santos Latasa-T.Razafindratsima
European Individual Ch., Eforie Nord 2025
Black to Play and Draw



(22) A.Erigaisi-M.Carlsen
Chessable Masters (blitz) 2025
White to Play



(23) H.Nakamura-F.Caruana
Saint Louis 2025
Black to Play and Draw



(24) F.Caruana-S.Sevian
Chessable Masters (blitz) 2025
White to Play



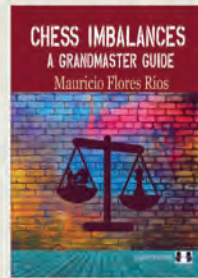
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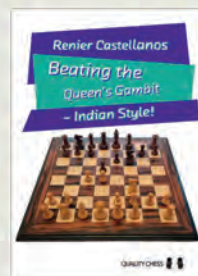
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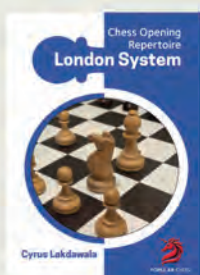
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Through the Looking-Glass



A recent donation of a private Lewis Carroll collection caught John Henderson's eye

Usually we are more accustomed to seeing British heritage art and literary collections going out of the country, being systematically bought up by mega-rich collectors via overseas telephone or online bids, as they loot the nation through the major auction houses of Bonhams, Christie's and Sotheby's. But recently, thousands of letters, photographs, illustrations and books from one of the world's largest private Lewis Carroll collections have found their way back to these shores after being donated out of the blue by an American philanthropist.

The extraordinary gift has been made to Christ Church, University of Oxford, where Carroll (aka Reverend Charles Lutwidge Dodgson) lectured and where he first met the fabled Alice Liddell, and where he conceived his *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* in 1865, which celebrates its 160th anniversary this year.



Charles Dodgson, aka Lewis Carroll, pictured in 1857 by when he lectured in mathematics.

Gabriel Sewell, the Christ Church college librarian, was taken aback when she received a surprise brief email from the US collector, scholar and businessman Jon A Lindseth, who wrote: "I have decided to donate my Lewis Carroll collection. It includes more than 200 letters and 100 photographs plus many obscure printed items. Have you any interest?" After picking her jaw up off the



One of the many recent treasures donated to Christ Church College by Jon A Lindseth.

floor, you can guess what her reply was.

The collection is now back at Christ Church – currently being archived, scanned and photographed, before proudly sitting alongside the rest of the college's Carroll collection – and includes rare autographed letters, some of which are unpublished and are of considerable interest. There are also significant early editions, including the Alice books, *The Hunting of the Snark* and mathematical works. A copy of *Alice's Adventures Under Ground* is inscribed to Alice's mother by Carroll: "To her, whose children's smiles fed the narrator's fancy and were his rich reward: from the author. Xmas 1886."

Carroll is also considered one of the best Victorian amateur photographers of his day and the donation includes more than 100 of his photographs. Apart from many of his speciality of self-portraits (or 'selfies', as we now call them), the subjects include his friends and noted figures such as the painter and poet Dante Gabriel Rossetti playing chess in 1863. Coincidentally, around the same time as this photo was taken, the Oxford don's surreal fantasies about a Victorian child was conceived that continues to charm, fascinate and obsess us even today.

The *Through the Looking-Glass, And What Alice Did There* followed in 1871. That story famously draws on chess imagery, inspired by Carroll's experiences teaching Alice how to

play the game he loved, and designed to be a playable, albeit whimsical chess problem. Whereas in the first story, Alice encountered a kingdom of playing cards after falling down the rabbit hole, in the sequel, she stepped through a mirror to find an entirely new wonderland populated by anthropomorphic red and white chessmen, the usual colours of an ivory or bone chess set of the period – and superbly brought to life in the original book by the leading illustrator of the day, Sir John Tenniel (who based the pieces on the design known as St George's pattern).

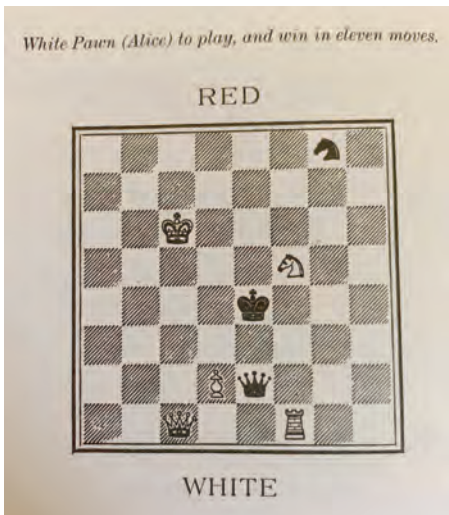
This point is important to the story, as it is widely believed it was Carroll who supplied the cartoonist/illustrator with one of his own favourite chess sets for his sketches; the same one he was said to be using to teach Alice Liddell how to play chess.

And chess wasn't just a recurring motif or symbol in Carroll's story, it was, in fact, the basis for the novel's structure, as evident from the description of Alice's first vision of this strange new land that stretched out before her: "*For some minutes Alice stood without speaking, looking out in all directions over the country – and a most curious country it was. There were a number of tiny little brooks running straight across it from side to side, and the ground between was divided up into squares by a number of little*

green hedges, that reached from brook to brook. 'I declare it's marked out just like a large chessboard!' Alice said at last."

The story was indeed designed around the author's favourite pastime of a game of chess – specifically, Alice's journey as a pawn across the chessboard eventually to become a Queen. This is made explicit from the very beginning of the book, when the reader is confronted with a chess problem and the following note: "White Pawn (Alice) to play, and win in eleven moves."

This opening salvo perplexed readers more than the "Calloo! Callay!" language of 'Jabberwocky'. Although the problem is a sort of funhouse mirror distortion of the novel (or



vice versa), with eleven moves roughly corresponding to the book's twelve chapters, Carroll's notation displays a flagrant disregard for the basic rules of chess. At best, it was viewed as a careless game, even with the explanatory Dramatis Personae included with early versions of the text that equated every character with a corresponding piece. In response to concerns and criticisms, Carroll included a preface to the 1896 edition of *Through the Looking Glass*, addressing the opening chess problem:

"As the chess-problem [...] has puzzled some of my readers, it may be well to explain that it is correctly worked out, so far as the moves are concerned. The alternation of Red and White is perhaps not so strictly observed as it might be, and the 'castling' of the three Queens is merely a way of saying that they entered the palace; but the 'check' of the White King at move 6, the capture of the Red Knight at move 7, and the final 'checkmate' of the Red King, will be found, by anyone who will take the trouble to set the pieces and play the moves as directed, to be strictly in accordance to the laws of the game."

So while Carroll admits taking some liberties with the game as he built a fanciful story to teach a young girl chess, the logic is, in his view at least, sound. Furthermore, although many of the moves listed in the introductory problem make no sense if taken on their own, when they are considered in the context of the story, a strange logic emerges,



Illustrations by Sir John Tenniel from *Alice Through Looking Glass*, which first appeared in 1871.

a logic based not on the rules of chess, but on Carroll's narrative.

The popularity of the Alice books is widely believed to be where the chess study/problem term 'fantasy chess' originated from. They also inspired leading English chess enthusiast and prolific chess variant inventor Vernon Parton (1897-1974), to invent chess variants based on Carroll's characters and stories, including Alice chess (played on two boards – after every move, the piece played is transferred to the other board), and Cheshire Cat chess (every time a square is vacated it disappears, although pieces may subsequently pass over it to move).

Down the generations, the 'Alice' story, depicting life as a game of chess, has inspired 'magical realism' writers, filmmakers and artists as diverse as Jorge Luis Borges, Tim Burton and Ralph Steadman. You can also, if you choose, play the characters as a game of

chess, with one of the most popular themed chess sets (especially around Christmas time) being Alice in Wonderland; which, the last time I looked, for a good quality handmade painted version can cost between £300 and £500!

And our lasting fascination with this fantasy tale of a curious little girl and her adventures resonates just as strong today – even more so if you witnessed the level of excitement generated through the 'Alice'-themed chess game re-enacted on a giant board with a troupe of professional performers at either the inaugural ChessFest or last year's event, CSC's annual chess extravaganza in London's Trafalgar Square.

So in this anniversary year, why not pick up this classic once again? Better still, perhaps even introduce a child you know to chess through Alice's adventures in *Through the Looking Glass*. But first, be sure to believe six impossible things before breakfast.

Remembering Frank Marshall (1877 – 1944)

Ben Graff looks back at “The amateur’s friend”

“I’ve always had a passion for new faces, new places, novelties in opening play, slashing attack and counterattack. The grim business of wearing down your opponent has never appealed to me.”

Frank Marshall – *My Fifty Years Of Chess*

In the beginning there were five. Following the 1914 St. Petersburg tournament, according to Marshall’s telling of the story, Tsar Nicholas II declared Lasker, Capablanca, Alekhine, Tarrasch and Marshall, “Grandmasters of Chess”. A small and illustrious band, three of whom would reach the summit as world champion. Perhaps it is inevitable that when we look back on chess history, it is generally the great champions that we remember. Yet often those who fall just short, make for an equally interesting study.

Frank Marshall placed fifth at St. Petersburg, and his career achievements were undoubtedly eclipsed by all who had finished ahead of him. Yet his life was a fascinating one. For the club player, we can both empathise with his reversals and marvel at his achievements. He is somehow simultaneously both like us, and not like us, and all the richer for this paradox.

Who amongst us could not sympathise with the fact that in the three key matches of his life, Marshall would come up disastrously short? Every player who has seen their pre-match preparation thwarted would doubtless also share Marshall’s pain that the best bit of opening homework he ever did, the Marshall Attack, years in the making and still potent to this day, actually resulted in a defeat in that famous first encounter. Equally, who wouldn’t marvel at a man who could play 155 games simultaneously and a week later be able to replay 154 of them from memory? A US Champion for 27 years with some glorious tournament victories, including at Cambridge Springs in 1904. A fighter who could boast of being one of the few to defeat Capablanca with the black pieces.

I wanted to look back at Marshall’s life. His struggles and his triumphs, both at and away from the board. To celebrate a creator who left behind a string of achievements and some lessons for all of us, in a life well lived.



Frank Marshall (1877 – 1944) defeated Jackson Showalter 8½-3½ in 1909 to become US Champion, retaining the title by defeating Edward Lasker 9½-8½ in 1923 and holding it until 1936.

Personality and Early Life

There must be something in the New York air that helps produce brilliant chess players, for Marshall was another in the long lineage of outstandingly talented players from the Big Apple. This was the city he was born in and the place he returned to in his late teenage years after time spent in Montreal. As Hans Ree puts it in *The Human Comedy of Chess*, “He was somewhat unworldly and totally dedicated to chess; someone who from a very early age never let a day go by without a game of chess, and who always took a pocket chess set to bed with him.”

Marshall wrote in *Marshall’s Best Games of Chess* that “Chess began to absorb my whole life [...] My head was full of it, from morning to night – and in my dreams as well.” The reality is that however much someone loves

the game, or works at it, inherent talent inevitably plays its part. As Marshall observed, “It’s just like card sense or an ear for music. Some have it, some don’t.”

John Hilbert points out in *Young Marshall* that we know little as to how Marshall got on in school, but it does seem that the world of conventional work was not for him. Marshall noted that: “When I left school, I got various jobs in Montreal but visions of queens and rooks and knights and bishops kept floating in my head and interfered with my work. In one clerical job [...] I thought I was getting on all right until the boss found out that it was a pocket chess set in my desk drawer which was responsible for my serious attitude.”

Andrew Soltis recalls in *Frank Marshall, United States Chess Champion* that much later Marshall got a job in a department store, which did not go well. “His entire job

consisted of wearing a suit with a white carnation in the lapel and of walking back and forth across a New York department store's main floor. There were no other responsibilities. Within a week Marshall was fired. He couldn't handle the task."

I always take a lot of comfort from the fact that people can be brilliant at some things and terrible at others. This is what it is to be human after all. As Hilbert points out, "It would be a trademark of Marshall's later personality to point out his similarities with the average man, not his distinctions from him." Yet despite his lack of conventional employability, and many struggles along the way, Marshall did have a knack of making money from the game which was ahead of its time.

Hans Ree observed that whereas Tarrasch could never understand the amateur player, Marshall realised that "Amateurs provided a more substantial means of support for professionals than the big tournaments could. Amateurs would pay to play in simultaneous exhibitions, would buy chess books and if they were rich, would sometimes become patrons. It is amazing to watch the deliberation with which Marshall managed to remain connected to such people."

These were relationships which benefited American chess well beyond Marshall himself, leading to both the finances being put in place to found the Marshall Chess Club, which of course flourishes to this day, and other benefactors leaving large sums of money to the US Chess Federation. Not for nothing was Marshall badged by Andrew Soltis and Hans Ree as "The Amateur's Friend".

While good with people, there was also a certain nervousness to Marshall's disposition. Apparently he would never travel to Europe without a revolver, which led Hans Ree to note that "The idea of an American arming himself for the perilous Europe sounds to the modern reader like the world turned upside down." He nearly used the gun once too, following a match against Janowsky.

Given that Janowsky was not entirely beloved by his fellow competitors – Schonberg described him in *Grandmasters of Chess* as "One of the eccentrics of chess – a violent man always feuding with his colleagues, a psychopathic gambler, a sore loser, but always an exciting, fighting player" – I did wonder momentarily if Marshall had come close to shooting his deeply flawed opponent, particularly as Marshall's own verdict on Janowsky was that "He follows the wrong path with more determination than any man I have ever met."

More prosaically, it transpires two men shadowed Marshall on his way back to his hotel. Marshall shouted, "Stand clear or I'll shoot you like a dog!" The police then arrived and the men fled, but a woman was murdered in the same street several days later. This led Marshall to believe that he had "narrowly escaped death", so perhaps the revolver was a prudent investment after all.

Hans Ree writes that while Marshall was "A bold and aggressive chess player, at times in real life he would see dangers that weren't

there." After that rarest of things, a victory over Capablanca in a tournament in Havana, Marshall was unable to enjoy the moment, dashing back to his hotel. "As he turned over his king I heard a roar go up [...] I thought the Cubans were going to kill me. Afterward I was told they were cheering for me. I was sorry but I guess I was nervous, as I was the only one who ever beat him in his own hometown."

Career Triumphs and Disasters

As a young player, Marshall played in simulms against Lasker, Steinitz and Pillsbury. He described Steinitz as "A short, heavy-set bearded man with a large head [and a limp]. Near-sighted, he leaned over each board and peered at the pieces. Every time he came to my board, he gave me an encouraging smile." Kurt Landsberger wrote in *William Steinitz, Chess Champion*, that "Steinitz was impressed with the young Marshall and predicted a great future." While Lasker and Steinitz would win these encounters, Marshall twice defeated Pillsbury, who, genius or freak that he was, was playing ten blindfold games simultaneously.

In 1904 Marshall secured his crowning tournament achievement at Cambridge Springs, where he would score 13/15, without losing a single game. Harry Golombek in *A History of Chess* described him as "the hero of the event" and he would leave Lasker, Janowsky, Schlechter and Chigorin amongst those trailing in his wake. We should also give Marshall credit for his attitude toward his crowning success. He wrote, "I got the thrill of my life when I walked through the Cambridge Springs tournament without losing a game but I still get a kick out of seeing a combination work in a friendly game." Yet this brilliant triumph gave a false picture as to Marshall's strength. A heavy match defeat would follow against Tarrasch in 1905, and two more seminal reversals still lay ahead.

Ultimately Marshall had a single shot at the world title against Lasker in 1907, and the one-sided nature of the encounter must have been a source of regret. This was the era where the crown was the property of the holder. Schonberg notes that negotiations for the match "dragged on interminably", leading William Napier to write witheringly in *British Chess Magazine* that "If Dr Lasker insists for the remainder of his life on selecting the time and place of meeting, it would seem that any bona-fide challenger would be disqualified by the champion's whim [...] Dr Lasker might prefer to play in a balloon, or in the nether recess of a coal mine, or at Archangel or Timbuctoo."

Marshall could not raise the \$2,000 necessary, and Lasker signed a deal to play Maroczy instead. Yet when this fell through, Lasker-Marshall was back on. The pair were peers in one sense, but from different eras in another. As Schonberg noted, "Attacking players like Spielmann and Marshall never do well against the completely rounded master." Lasker showed himself to be a "different class" as a match player, winning eight games

to Marshall's none, and drawing seven.

Just two years later a virtually unknown player would meat out a comparable beating to Marshall. As Schonberg put it, "Marshall [...] did not especially want to meet the young Cuban. Who was he? A flashy club player at best [...] Marshall must have known that he had little to gain and everything to lose in a match with Capablanca [...] If he now conquered Capablanca that was to be expected. If he was unable to beat Capablanca [...] Marshall, being Marshall, did not give much thought to that prospect. He sat down to teach the upstart a lesson."

Capablanca won eight games and lost one, with fourteen draws. Again, Marshall was to learn, as Schonberg puts it, "that attack was of no avail against a player of supreme technique." Even more gallingly, Capablanca observed: "The most amazing thing of all was the fact that I played without ever having opened a book to study openings." I appreciate this is a far from an exact analogy, but Capablanca's observation did make me recall the number of players who beat me and then claim it is their first game in years. Painful and somehow something that does not ring entirely true. That said this was a different era, and Capablanca was propelled by his talent rather than his work ethic, in a way that would not be sustainable today.

It can be argued that just as Marshall's defeat to Lasker played a part in cementing Lasker's legacy, so Marshall's defeat to Capablanca paved the way for the emergence of an even greater champion in the form of the Cuban. Whatever his reservations as to playing Capablanca in the first place, what Marshall did next speaks volumes as to the calibre of the man. It was Marshall who worked tirelessly to ensure that Capablanca was allowed to participate at the elite event in San Sebastian in 1911, despite objections from many that Capablanca had not proved himself to be an elite player. Capablanca would go on to win the tournament, with Marshall a creditable fourth, and the rest, as they say, is history.

The Marshall Attack

Marshall was an ideas man, an openings pioneer. He is known for innovative creations in the Slav and the Queen's Gambit Declined, but these are as nothing compared to the Marshall Attack with its 8...d5 against the Ruy Lopez. Such is the significance of the Marshall that Leko would defeat Kramnik with it in their 2004 world title match, and Karpov thought the fact that he had never faced it was a remarkable feature of his career. From Kasparov against Short in 1993, through to a host of other players who have chosen to adopt anti-Marshall 8 a4 or 8 h3 systems, the power and endurance of this gambit cannot be denied.

Many books suggest that Marshall waited years for the opportunity to unveil the Marshall against Capablanca, but as Edward Winter points out in *Chess Notes*, "between 1910 and 1918 the Cuban played 1 e4 against Marshall on six occasions. Five times

the American responded with the Petroff Defence and once with the French Defence. As little as three years before Marshall played his 8...d5 gambit he was still unwilling to face 1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♙b5 from Capablanca." That fateful day in 1918, Marshall thought he was ready. Of course Capablanca knew nothing of the theory, as it was yet to be written. Heck, even if it had been understood at this point, who is to say that he would actually have read it anyway, given his previous comments on opening books?

Yet if he did not know the ins and outs, Capablanca certainly recognised the challenge Marshall had posed. He later wrote in *My Chess Career*, "I thought for a while before playing this, knowing that I would be subjected to a terrific attack, all the lines of which would of necessity be familiar to my adversary. The lust for battle, however, had been aroused within me. I felt that my judgement and skill were being challenged by a player who had every reason to fear both [... I] decided that I was honour bound, so to speak, to take the Pawn".

I did think about sharing the full game here, but fascinating as it is, it is Capablanca's triumph and here we are celebrating Marshall. Essentially Capablanca found a series of only moves, and it would be another twenty years or so before the Marshall Attack was seen again. Marshall may have been second best in the moment, but the power of his ideas endured.

The Brilliances

Marshall might never have come close to truly challenging Lasker, Capablanca and those who followed, but his successes were significant. He captained the US team to four Olympiad gold medals in the 1930s, and while he did not much defend his US title, his supremacy in the US was undisputed for so long. Beyond his triumph at Cambridge Springs, he also placed first ahead of Duras and Schlechter at Nuremberg in 1909 and first at Havana in 1913 ahead of Capablanca. While he might have come up short in the matches that mattered most, Janowsky, Mieses, Leonhardt and Duras were all defeated by him in match play. So we shouldn't let his struggles against the very best detract from what Marshall was capable of.

This is Marshall's column, Marshall's moment, and I wanted to share his most famous game of all, which ended in this legendary position:



S. Levitsky-F. Marshall DSB Congress, Breslau 1912 French Defence

1 d4 e6 2 e4 d5 3 ♘c3 c5 4 ♘f3 ♘c6 5 exd5 exd5 6 ♙e2 ♘f6 7 0-0 ♙e7 8 ♙g5 0-0 9 dxc5 ♙e6 10 ♘d4 ♙xc5 11 ♘xe6?

Opening a line for Marshall's rook and allowing the threat of ...e5 with a strong centre **11...fxe6 12 ♙g4 ♘d6 13 ♙h3 ♙ae8 14 ♘d2 ♙b4 15 ♙xf6 ♙xf6 16 ♙ad1 ♙c5 17 ♙e2 ♙xc3 18 bxc3 ♙xc3 19 ♙xd5**

With the point 19...exd5?? 20 ♙xe8+ ♙f8 21 ♙e6+ ♙h8 22 ♙xf8 mate.

19...♘d4 20 ♙h5 ♙ef8



Marshall's rooks are doubled and the pressure is certainly building. Now the pawn is no longer pinned, 21...exd5 is a threat, as is 21...♙xf2! when 22 ♙xf2 succumbs to 22...♙e1+ 23 ♙f1 ♙xf1#.

21 ♙e5 ♙h6 22 ♙g5 ♙xh3! 23 ♙c5 ♙g3! 0-1

Levitsky is busted in all lines. Any move by the rook on f1 loses to 24...♙xh2+ 25 ♙f1 ♙h1 mate, and if 24 hxg3 ♘e2 mate or 24 fxg3 ♘e2+ 25 ♙h1 ♙xf1 mate. Likewise, if 24 f4 (or 24 f3) 24...♘e2+ 25 ♙h1 ♙xh2 mate or 24 ♙e5 ♘f3+ 25 ♙h1 ♙xh2 mate. Indeed, the only way to avoid checkmate is with 24 ♙xg3, but then 24...♘e2+ 25 ♙h1 ♘xg3+ 26 ♙g1 (if 26 fxg3 ♙xf1 mate) 26...♘xf1 27 gxh3 ♘d2 is curtains, as here is 26...♘e2+ 27 ♙h1 then moving the rook on h3.

A myth has grown up around this beautiful game, that the spectators showered the board with gold coins, mainly on the basis that Marshall claimed that they did. Schonberg says it best when he observes, "It should have been, but the story is apocryphal. Chess audiences do not *have* pieces of gold to throw away."

Final Thoughts

In his later years, Schonberg notes that Marshall "habitually wore flowing ties that made him look like a Shakespearean actor; a cigar was always glowing in his mouth; a twinkle in his eye." He may not have reached the very top, but it is hard to disagree with Hooper and Whyld's observation in *The Oxford Chess Companion* that Marshall was

in the world top ten for about 20 years from 1904, and of course his career stretched well beyond that.

Marshall was the ultimate chess player's player. He wrote that for all the ups and downs in his career, "Personally, I am not sorry that I took up chess as a profession. I enjoy playing in the Club with an old friend just for the fun of it, or matching my wits against the world's leading masters in an international tournament."

In 1944 Marshall died in the street when returning home from a chess event in New Jersey. A player who had both achieved so much and come up a little short. Undoubtedly Marshall was inconsistent, and a level below our fabled early world champions. The term the "Marshall swindle" might have celebrated Marshall's ability to dig himself out of difficult positions, but the very best of course avoiding getting themselves into trouble quite so regularly. Yet we can all learn something from his resilience in the face of adversity. As Schonberg puts it, "He could lose, and lose badly, as he did to Lasker and Capablanca, but back he always bounced, eternally optimistic, glorying in the battle of chess and the clash of opposed personalities."

Marshall left a host of brilliant games, enduring opening ideas and many wonderful achievements as we have seen. As we have noted, he has been called "the Amateur's Friend" by Andrew Soltis and others. They might have meant this in the context of the pioneering work that he did, to enable rank and file players to enjoy the game. Yet I think it is broader than this. We can relate to Marshall because we can glean something of ourselves more easily in him, than perhaps is possible with the greatest champions. We will not see Marshall's like again, but we will remember him.

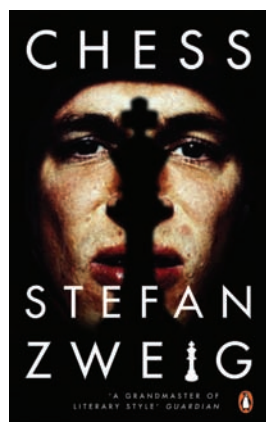


Frank Marshall left some great games and a well earned legacy as "the amateur's friend".

How Chess Life Imitates Chess Fiction

Roger Williamson looks at the ways fiction exaggerates, a little, the stresses of playing

There is an enduring misconception that playing chess is as potentially injurious to your health as to be equivalent to, say, belonging to an army bomb disposal unit. Fictional depictions of our game are often seen as partly responsible for this image problem. In the most famous examples, the eponymous grandmaster protagonist of Vladimir Nabokov's *The Luzhin Defence* jumps out of a window, presumably to his death, and in Stefan Zweig's *Schachnovelle* the stress even of a casual game against the world champion causes the talented amateur Dr. B to resign rather than risk a descent into madness.



As Charles Krauthammer observes in his essay 'The Romance of Chess', "a reader who relied solely on Nabokov and Zweig might conclude that chess sets should carry a warning label from the surgeon general." However, with respect to the late Mr. Krauthammer, in neither story is chess at the root of those unhappy characters' problems. True, one way or another, both Luzhin and Dr. B suffer for their involvement with the game. But at the hands of malevolent people, not chess.

Chess gets the blame for two reasons. The first is the human desire to make associations and identify patterns even where there are none. The second is the nature of fiction itself. Tragedy makes for a good story. Losing, whether at chess or at life, is more romantic than winning, as suffering generally produces a more heightened emotional response than jubilation. The more extreme the situation and the stronger the pain, the greater the entertainment.

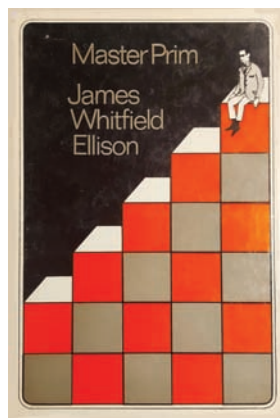
Playing chess is, of course, a serious business. Just not that serious. The vast

majority of players are unlikely to be driven mad and die from pushing pawns and shuffling pieces. Nevertheless, many of us still, at times, find the game we love to be akin to a form of torture. And in this our experiences are well represented by fiction away from Nabokov, Zweig, and also *The Queens Gambit* by Walter Tevis, which altogether constitute what chess journalist Peter Doggers describes as "the big three" of chess fiction in his recent *The Chess Revolution*.

Brilliant as those works are, there are other worthwhile novels and films that have fallen into relative obscurity that more accurately depict the emotional challenges many (perhaps most) players of all standards face. Though they feature fictional or fictionalised world champions and world championship contenders, each of the following works depicts ordeals that I suspect many players of club and tournament standard will recognise.

Master Prim: Failure to Keep Chess in Perspective

We all know people for whom chess means more than it should – not least our own selves when we play a nice game, or, more significantly, lose an absolute shocker to someone we don't like. An inability to keep chess in perspective is a trait of the typical player. The fictional archetype for this is Julian Prim, the young American Grandmaster in George Whitfield Ellison's long out-of-print 1968 novel *Master Prim*.



Prim, clearly modelled on the young Bobby Fischer, sees the world through the prism of

chess results. Obsessed, he assesses other men's worth purely in terms of how good they are at the game. Yet Prim is obsessed not just with chess, but also the power and status he imagines his success brings. The intermittent fits of megalomania this wider obsession produces are so extreme as to be comic. In the funniest of them, Prim declares to his exasperated girlfriend Rebecca his intention of founding his own chess club from which "weak" players and children are barred, before then declaring his desire to purchase a mansion shaped like a rook.

That's fiction for you. While I presume most of us have met chess players for whom chess status is the thing that matters most in life, few, even of them, unless in the grip of a psychotic episode, would expect to achieve such mastery of their own destiny as a benefit of being able to play a strong Ruy Lopez or a decent rook and pawn ending. In a better writer's hands, *Prim* might end tragically, as the life of its real-world inspiration did. Instead, Prim grows as a person when made to confront the limits of his power in the world away from chess. Faced with the potential end of his relationship with Rebecca, he comes to appreciate that love is both the opposite of power and its nemesis. His preoccupation with chess then becomes a profession capable of sustaining an adult life with adult relationships, rather than a means of acquiring a heavy piece-shaped house.

According to the philosopher George Steiner in 'A Death of Kings', his *New Yorker* essay about chess and chess fiction, *Master Prim* is "not a good novel, but there are worthwhile points to it". Reading *Prim* today, Steiner's verdict holds. Even though the novel is sometimes as unintentionally funny as it is intentionally so, *Prim* is full of interest.

Unusually for a chess novel, it features an actual game represented in notation form for readers to get their teeth into: Prim versus his hated rival Eugene Berlin – Samuel Reshevsky to Prim's Fischer. This is a risk writers of chess fiction usually tend not to take. To the uninitiated it means nothing, and risks slowing the pace of the story, whereas to the initiated it risks damaging the story's verisimilitude. The game used by Ellison to stand for Prim-Berlin, Alekhine-Sterk, Budapest 1921, is a case in point.

A.Alekhine-K.Sterk

Budapest 1921

Semi-Slav Defence

1 d4 d5 2 ♟f3 e6 3 c4 ♟f6 4 ♟c3 ♟bd7
5 e3 ♟d6 6 ♟b5 ♟e7 7 ♟c2 c6 8 ♟c3
0-0 9 ♟d3 dxc4 10 ♟xc4 c5 11 dxc5
♟xc5 12 0-0 b6 13 e4 ♟b7 14 ♟g5
♟c8 15 ♟e2 ♟b4 16 ♟d3 ♟xc3 17 ♟fc1
♟xe4?? 18 ♟xe4 ♟xe4 19 ♟xe4 ♟c5
20 ♟e2

20 ♟b1! was the best way to facilitate
b2-b4.

20 ..♟a5 21 ♟ab1? ♟a6! 22 ♟c4 ♟a4?



23 ♟f6! ♟fc8 24 ♟e5 ♟c5 25 ♟g3 g6
26 ♟xa4 ♟d3 27 ♟f1 ♟ac8 28 ♟d4 ♟f5
29 ♟f4 ♟c2 30 ♟h6 1-0

A pretty crush. The non-chess-playing reader is likely to skip over it, whereas the chess-playing reader might find Black's relatively low level of play as compared to that of Reshevsky somewhat jarring.

Among its less debatable qualities, *Prim*, like Tevis's *The Queen's Gambit*, stops short of showing its protagonist becoming world champion – even though we know that his doing so is, as it is for Beth Harmon, a foregone conclusion. Ellison understands what Tevis understands, and what the makers of the underwhelming 2014 Bobby Fischer film biography *Pawn Sacrifice* seemingly failed to come to terms with: as a climax to a story, becoming world chess champion is a massive anticlimax.

But if you do write a novel or make a film about the king, or queen, it had better be about the hardships of being the best. Chess being such a stressful game, it makes sense that the most stressful position to occupy is that of best in the world. Yet here too we amateurs might catch a glimpse of our reflections.

Dangerous Moves: Competitive Decline

For all chess players, competitive decline is as certain as death and taxes. Some find it so painful, it compels them to give up playing. Yet seldom is this the subject for fiction. In *Schachnovelle*, Dr. B verges on a nervous collapse in his friendly game against the world



Michel Piccoli's Akiva Liebskind faces Pavlius Fromm played by Alexandre Arbatt in *Dangerous Moves*.

champion, Mirko Czentovic. Chess, which had provided an escape for the preternaturally brilliant Dr. B during his incarceration by the Gestapo, proves to be its own prison when played aboard an ocean liner to the Americas. The discomfort Czentovic might endure in being publicly tested by an unknown amateur goes unexplored. Might Czentovic fear this incident to be the beginning of the end; the start of his downfall?

The 1984 Richard Dembo film *Dangerous Moves*, currently available to stream on Amazon, tackles the theme of the stresses of being the best. The film depicts high level chess as stressful enough to induce heart problems in its apparently otherwise healthy world champion Akiva Liebskind (Michel Piccoli). Liebskind, representing the Soviet Union, drives himself to the point of death in his title match with his much younger opponent Pavlius Fromm, played by the not-very-Viktor-Korchnoi-looking Alexandre Arbatt, an equally driven Soviet defector.

The story is only superficially political. It isn't primarily the weight of the Soviet terror machine that Liebskind feels bearing down upon him – the KGB direct their attentions at Fromm in the other half of the dual narrative – but rather the fear of being replaced by a younger model.

Most ambitious chess players, from the world champion to a 1200 club chess player competing in the back room of a northern working men's club, will, I suspect, be familiar with this fear of the inevitable. The fear of an opponent who demonstrates to you that, contrary to your hopes, from henceforth the only way forward is not up – never up again – but down. This phenomenon must be reckoned with, and, undeniably, it hurts. *Dangerous Moves* asks the viewer to sympathise with both players involved in its title match. But as straightforward as it is for most people to sympathise with Fromm as the victim of persecution by the Soviet state, the chess-playing viewer may find it easier to empathise with the trial Liebskind faces.

The aesthetic worth of *Dangerous Moves* is rather hard to evaluate. Winner in a particularly forgettable year for cinema of the

Oscar for Best Foreign Film, its sense of time and place suffers terribly in its current form by its being dubbed into English. A Swiss-French production involving Swiss, French, Polish and Russian actors, presumably mostly speaking French, the dubbing is as disorientating as the accelerated tempo of play in its depiction of the chess itself.

However, from a chess player's perspective, dialogue like "What's this opening?" "A real museum piece: the Ponziani. Those ***** aren't just sitting around over there!" when at least appearing to emanate from esteemed actors like Jean-Hugues Anglade and Wojciech Pszoniak, playing Fromm's seconds, cannot fail to bring a smile to the face. Besides which, the film is worth watching for its concluding scene alone.

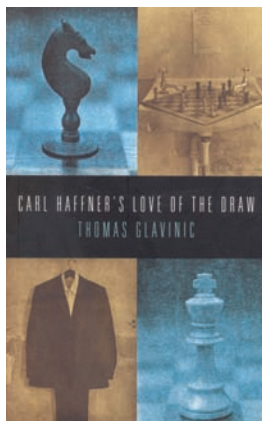
Spoiler Alert: Upon Liebskind's hospitalisation before the match is decided, Fromm, determined to prove himself the better man, rejects winning the title by default. In the concluding scene the two players elect to continue their match unofficially in Liebskind's hospital room, Liebskind playing from his bed. The match is effectively to the death, but the film fades out without a winner. For Liebskind, competitive decline is worse than death.

Carl Haffner's Love of the Draw: Regret

To finish, my own personal favourite chess novel: Austrian writer Thomas Glavinic's 1998 *Carl Haffner's Love of the Draw*, a fictionalised account of the life of Carl Schlechter and his 1910 world title match against Emanuel Lasker. At the novel's climax we learn that the chronically reserved Haffner (Schlechter), requiring only a draw from the final game in the match to become world champion, is secretly terrified of victory. He foresees some of what Czentovic and Liebskind must endure. Indeed, given recent speculation as to the now-former world champion Ding Liren's dislike of holding the title, not to mention Magnus Carlsen's rationale for giving it up in 2022, the

following passage in *Carl Haffner* seems topical:

"The world championship [...] It wasn't that he didn't value the title, but the burdens associated with that rank in the chess hierarchy filled him with trepidation. Not only because of the hungry challengers he would have to face, foremost among them the dreaded Lasker, but also because his obligations towards patrons, organizers and other masters – towards every chess enthusiast in the world, in a sense – would be overwhelmingly great. The world champion was an example to thousands. He was simultaneously revered and hunted. His opinion counted. Every word he wrote was perused with care. In every tournament he was the measure of all things. His victories were taken for granted, his defeats were humiliations. The world champion had to prove himself again and again."



Haffner, in order to lose while effectively deceiving himself he is trying to win, rationalises that he must beat Lasker in the final game in order to be a worthy champion. Just as it did for Ding against Gukesh in their recent title match, the contest comes down to a single move.



As faithfully reproduced from the actual match, Haffner's kamikaze 39...♖h1+? continues the decisive match game at the expense of potentially losing it. And lose it he does. While the alternative move Haffner rejected, 39...♖h4+, he knew to be drawing.

Whereas the suggestion that Ding threw the final game against Gukesh with the blunder 55 ♖f2 as a means of ridding himself of the burden of the title can, unless confirmed by Ding himself, only be malicious

speculation, the reader of *Carl Haffner* is left in little doubt that the challenger in the novel has surrendered to his anxieties.

What happens next is presumably dramatic licence on Glavinic's part. Haffner, upon realising the enormity of the opportunity he has just discarded, in an outburst as out of character as it would have been for the real Schlechter, heckles the prize giving. Lasker is awarded a gold watch for retaining the title. Haffner gets to his feet and shouts "This is a vile injustice!", then "Unfair and unjust!" and "This award is outrageous, scandalous! I strongly protest! I shall take no further part in this ceremony!"

It's difficult to overstate how good a novel *Carl Haffner* is. It is every bit the equal of any of Doggers' big three. One of the first things a creative writing course will teach a student is that a successfully realised fictional character must have two things: 'wants', those desires that are bad for them, and 'needs', those necessities that will save them. For example, Julian Prim *wants* to conquer the world, but he *needs* to settle down and have a family.

Like a chess coach reducing good chess to the product of a succession of formulae, the writing course will then wisely decline to confuse its student by suggesting that great writing, as opposed to merely good, sometimes entails neither the character nor their audience being able to confidently distinguish, like Hamlet, which scenarios are the character's wants and which are their needs. From what the reader learns of Haffner, he is clearly not suited to being world champion. Yet still he regrets his final decision not to be.

Regret over such a consequential miss is something all but a handful of players have been familiar with. The narrow failures of Viktor Korchnoi, David Bronstein, and Carl Schlechter were addressed recently by Ben Graff in 'The Nearly Men' in the September 2024 issue of *CHESS*. Yet we can no doubt each of us think of a commensurate equivalent in our own playing lives. I personally once lost out on £250 by blundering a rook in an advantageous position in the last round of the Heywood Rapidplay, Major section, and, much more painfully, missed a particularly beautiful mate-in-three versus a young International Master in classical tournament play. Such memories are

not quite enough to make you jump out of a window, but they certainly leave a pall – mercifully, gradually receding – over happier memories of playing.

The pain over a missed chance all chess players can understand. However, Glavinic shows us something more than just that universal chess agony. Haffner, unlikely to get a rematch from the canny Lasker, to whom Haffner's defensive style is anathema, is condemned to suffer the pain of what Jonathan Rowson in *The Moves That Matter* terms 'successful underachievement': the realisation that his potential will go forever unfulfilled.

Rowson is talking from the perspective of a strong grandmaster. Yet a form of successful underachievement is something chess players who have expressed regret at not taking the game more seriously at a younger age are familiar with. The same goes for people who give up the game.

To return to *Master Prim*, Rafe, the narrator of the novel, a former chess prodigy turned journalist, sees Julian Prim's success as a judgement on Rafe's own abandonment of his childhood dreams. Upon inviting Prim into his enviably bourgeois family home, Rafe tells the reader, "I was like a man standing dazed among his possessions, no longer sure in the face of another man's astounding presence that anything is bought and paid for." *Prim*, though it loses interest in the subject, is, for a while, as much about Rafe's coming to terms with his successful underachievement in life as it is Julian Prim's growth as a person.

Rowson advises us to do what Rafe appears to succeed in doing in *Prim* and confront this pain in our own lives. Rowson argues that there is "a deeper success available" in doing so than in achieving the goals we set ourselves, as such failures are inevitable in life. He suggests we each attempt to reconcile ourselves with our broken dreams so as to "see our unease and observe it, gently and kindly", suggesting that our regrets offer "the kind of deep friendship you only have with your former enemies" – incidentally, what happens between Rafe and Prim.

Wisdom, undoubtedly. But that doesn't change the fact that neither Haffner nor Schlechter became world champion, or that I'm probably alone in remembering that unclaimed mate-in-three.




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Never Mind the Grandmasters...

Here come the amateurs – by Carl Portman (carl.portman@hotmail.co.uk)

It is possible to travel back in time. Through the magic of chess notation, I can now transport you back two hundred years. The year 1825 was full of interest. Not only did Gideon Mantell name and describe the second known dinosaur *Iguanodon*, but the world's first modern railway, the Stockton and Darlington Railway, opened in England on February 10th. Chess was being played all around the globe of course, but it is to England that I turn to for this little gem. As I rummaged around in the dustbin of history on my database, I was rather taken with a swashbuckling and frankly mad game of chess. It contravened several fundamental principles (which is not a crime), and made for an exciting battle.

Alas, the player of the white pieces is unknown, a great shame as they played their part in a memorable king hunt, but playing Black was one William Lewis (1787 – 1870), who was an English chess player and author, best known for the Lewis Countergambit. He was a fellow Brummie (a person from Birmingham), and was apparently the hidden chess player inside the automaton The Turk for a while.

He even has an opening line named after him. The Lewis Countergambit is played by Black in the Bishop's Opening: 1 e4 e5 2 ♖c4 ♗c5 3 c3 where he now plays 3...d5!?



Lewis published analysis of this in 1834.

He was the leading English player in the correspondence match between London and Edinburgh in 1824, won by the Scots (+2 = 2 -1). Later, he published a book on the match with analysis of the games. One quick check on Wikipedia reveals that he was declared bankrupt in 1827 due to bad investments on a patent for the construction of pianos and his chess club was forced to close. 43 years

later Lewis was buried in Highgate Cemetery.

I derive immense joy from jumping freely down these chess rabbit holes to see what I can find. I selected a game at random from 10 million and look where it took me. It's like a fruit machine, scrolling through the database and stopping at any given moment. True enough, you might find a boring game, but you can always keep on scrolling until something catches your eye as this game did. Thanks to ChessBase for making all of this possible. I now cheerfully share this delightful encounter with you.

NN-W.Lewis
England 1825
King's Gambit

1 e4 e5 2 f4

The King's Gambit. The 'Romantic' opening. What's so romantic about it anyway? Well, I guess that White is bold (or mad) to offer a 'free' pawn on move two, but the romance is brought about by the challenge itself. White asks, 'Have you got the bottle to accept my challenge or will you refuse meekly with your tail between your legs?'

Two hundred years ago you weren't considered to be manly if you refused the offer, akin as it is to slapping your adversary in the face with a leather glove and demanding pistols to be drawn at dawn, when the victor will take the spoils – usually a fair lady. Were pistols even around in 1825? Well, yes, they were actually, with examples like the Philadelphia Deringer, Italian duelling pistols, and French silver-mounted rifled flintlock pistols, showcasing the evolution of firearms technology and their use in duels and other contexts.

2...exf4

'How dare you?' says Black. Of course, he takes up the offer. His honour is at stake here. I mean what is he supposed to play if he doesn't take? Personally I rather like 2...♗c5, but I might have been hounded out of the chess club back then.

3 ♖f3

White is interested in controlling the centre, in classical style.

3...g5

This move is still as precise today – some things never change.

4 ♗c4

4 h4 g4 5 ♖e5 ♖f6 6 ♗c4 d5 7 exd5 ♗d6 8 d4 is, I think, the most common continuation, but there are several lines for the keen player to study.

4...g4

When I first saw this opening as a teenager I wondered why anyone would seek to play it from either side. I did not consider it to be 'proper chess', but then I had been reading too much from the Soviet School and the likes of Karpov and Petrosian. Now, in the more advanced years of my life on planet earth, I feel that it is fun, and makes for a sharp game, as we shall soon see.

5 ♖e5

Interesting, but what about this for a move, dear reader?

Crikey, Nakamura and Shirov have played 5 O-O! Let's look a little deeper at this famous piece sacrifice: 5...gxf3 (the knight is snapped off, presumably gleefully) 6 ♖xf3 (I do have to note that *Stockfish* evaluates the position as better for Black, but is Metal Mickey just being materialistic and not looking to the future?) 6...♖f6. This is interesting, as here the online database shows 7 e5 as the most common move, but the engine plumps for the more circumspect 7 d3. 7 e5 would be my choice, although after 7...♖xe5 8 d3 ♗h6 Black seems to be much better, so what is in this for White?

5...♖h4+

It is already looking quite mad to my eyes.

6 ♗f1

So many opening principles are being shattered. Giving material away 'for free', moving a queen out early, not castling, etc. In order to break rules, there needs to be some tangible benefit. I cannot see it for White here.

6...♖f6

6...♖h6 is surely decent too, as is 6...♗c6. After 7 d4 six pieces occupy White's fourth rank.

7 ♗xf7+

Going for it, and I expect most people would play this, but it might not be the best move. 7 ♖e1!? is interesting. After 7...♖xe1+ 8 ♗xe1 (the f7-pawn is still going to be terminated) 8...d6 9 ♖xf7 ♗g8 10 ♖xd6+! (good heavens!) 10...cxd6 11 ♗xg8 ♖xg8 12 d3 the game is afoot.

7...♗e7

Blocking in the bishop, but after 7...♗d8, White can pull the bishop back to b3 with threats of a knight fork on f7.

8 ♖c4 d6



9 ♖d3

9 ♖f7 ventures bravely into the enemy position, but once in can the knight get out? After 9...b5! (with a cry of 'boom!'; only an engine would play this, right?) 10 ♖b3 ♖g7! White is in trouble due to 11 ♖h8? ♖h5! (wow, who cares about material?) 12 ♖f7? ♖g3+ 13 hxg3 (13 ♖g1 ♖d4# is mate) 13...♗xh1+ 14 ♖e2 ♗xg2+ 15 ♖d3 ♗xg3+. Here I must ask, are we having fun? Unsurprisingly Black is winning by force.

9...f3

This is precisely why I don't play the King's Gambit. It looks too unsafe for White.

10 g3

10 ♖f4 was better, if still much better for Black after 10...♖xe4 11 ♗e1 ♗xe1+ 12 ♖xe1 fxg2 13 ♖xg2 ♖c6. The dust is settling and what do we see across the field of battle? The queens are off and we still have all eight minor pieces on. Black has an extra pawn and indeed two against one on the kingside, but his king is in the centre. White has not developed his queenside. For what it is worth, *Stockfish* gives it as '+2.09' for Black after a five-minute compute. It's actually a fascinating position.

10...♗h3+ 11 ♖f2?!

11 ♖e1 was better, although after 11...♗g2 12 ♗f1 (how did we even get here?) 12...d5! (another engine move) 13 exd5? ♗xh2 14 ♖f2 ♖d8, looking to govern the e-file with a rook, I don't like the look of it, dear reader, I don't like it at all for White. Can you even begin to guess what the engine recommends now? 15 ♖e2. Oh, yes, dear friends. Read 'em and weep. Then 15...♖b4 says the silicon fiend. I am stopping here. I just cannot take any more.

11...♗g2+

11...♖xe4+ 12 ♖e1 ♗g2 was also very strong.

12 ♖e3 ♖h6+ 13 ♖f4



Self-pinning and attacking a queen that he cannot take. Glorious stuff, this.

13...♖xf4+ 14 gxf4

14 ♖xf4 would be audacious. I mean really does the king have no fear, no sense of danger? Look at White's queenside, still utterly moribund and after 14...♗f8 White is in deep trouble.

14...f2

OK, calm down everyone. It was 1825, right? The cigar smoke possibly obscured the view of the g-pawn and, yes, 14...g3! was strong, and if 15 hxg3 (or 15 ♗xf3 ♖g4+, and ouch) 15...♖g4+ 16 ♖d4. Look at that! I know we say control the centre, but not with the king when half of his army are still asleep.

15 d3 g3

A veritable pawn storm. As I look up to the north-west of the battlefield, I note that Black too has neglected to develop his queenside. This has totally been a fight down the e-, f-, g- and h-files to this point.

16 hxg3

An understandable reaction. After 16 ♗f1 ♗xf1 17 ♗xf1 g2 18 ♖xf2 gxf1 ♗+ 19 ♖xf1 Black is simply winning.

16...♖g4

Development with an attack. That's seldom a bad idea.

17 ♗f1 ♗xg3+ 18 ♖d4

Our anonymous friend must have figured that his king was safe here, but moving into to the centre as opposed to d2 was not the best choice. He possibly wanted to still defend the pawn on f4. The king wants to fight jusqu'au bout. That said, Black also wins after 18 ♖d2 ♗xf4+ 19 ♖c3! ♗e5+ 20 ♖b3 b5.

18...♖c6+

The final minor piece is developed – again with an attack as the bloodlust continues.

19 ♖c3



19...♖xe4+

Very nice indeed.

20 ♖b3 ♖d4+ 21 ♖a4

It is now mate in five...

21...♖d7+?!

...but Black does not see that far, and I for one cannot blame him. 21...♖c5+ 22 ♖b4 a5+ 23 ♖c3 ♖a4+ 24 ♖xd4 c5+ 25 ♖d5 ♗f3# (or 25...♖f3#) would have been gorgeous.

22 ♖a5

Anyone passing the board would have observed the king on a5 and wondered how it got there. An absurd position really.

22...b6+ 23 ♖b4 a5+ 24 ♖a3 ♖xc2+ 25 ♖b3 ♖a4+ 26 ♖xa4 ♖c5+ 27 ♖b5



Born in Birmingham, William Lewis (1787 – 1870) spent most of his adult life in London, where he was one of England's leading players.

♖d4# 0-1



Isn't that just beautiful? The king gets mated on b5, White's bishop and knight on b1 and c1 never entered the fray, and all four rooks are stationed on their starting squares. It illustrates further to me why playing the King's Gambit can be really dangerous because the king can get exposed very quickly. Boris Spassky didn't mind playing it, however, and it is well worth looking at some of his games with it.

I thoroughly enjoyed this game. Neither king castled and both players seemed to have scant regard for the safety of their monarch. I haven't had so much fun since I witnessed a huge seagull swoop down and steal my mate's chips on Eastbourne seafront, but that's another story. In a way this is chess as it should be played: no holds barred and both sides going for it. What other way is there to win a battle? Well, there is another school of thought. What about the art of defence in chess? This is a discipline all of its own and one which many cherish. Perhaps I shall visit that next time.

Ed. – Carl's new book, Never Mind The Grandmasters, featuring the best of this column, is out now and available from Chess & Bridge for £14.99 or £13.49 for Subscribers.

could still survive the storm.

28 ♖g5?!

However, Raj now makes a materialistic mistake. Instead 28 ♖h7+ ♜f7 29 ♙xe5 (29 ♙h6 is also pretty good) 29...dxe5 30 ♖h6 ♜f8 31 ♖xg6 gives White an overwhelming advantage.

28...b4 29 axb4?!

29 ♖h7+ was still strong: for example, 29...♜f7 30 dxe6+ ♙xe6 31 exf5 gxf5 32 ♖h6 ♜f8 33 ♙xd8 ♖xd8 34 axb4 cxb4 35 ♖xe6 ♖xe6 36 ♔d5 gives White a substantial advantage, and if Black then tries a counterattack by 36...♖g5, he loses quickly after 37 ♖xa6 ♖d2 38 ♖xf5+.

29...cxb4 30 ♙xd8?

A bad mistake as the game enters the time-trouble phase. 30 ♖h7+ was again good.

30...♖xd8 31 ♔d1?!

Objectively not good, but Raj was hoping his prestigious opponent would make a mistake under time pressure. Instead, 31 ♖h7+ ♜f7 (31...♜f8 is also possible, but White continues 32 dxe6 ♙xe6 33 ♔d5 ♙xd5 34 exd5 ♖xc2 35 ♖he1 and the position is dynamically equal) 32 f4 bxc3 33 fxe5 cxb2 34 exf5 was the best option, when the only way for Black to survive is by 34...gxf5! 35 ♖h6 ♜f8 and now after 36 ♖e1 the position is totally unclear. Just for fun I played it on against *Stockfish*

and the line continued 36...♖f7 37 exd6 ♙b7 38 c4 exd5 39 ♙h5 dxc4+ 40 ♙h3 ♖d5 41 ♖xg7+! ♜xg7 42 ♖g6+ ♙h8 43 ♖h6+ ♜g7 44 ♖g6+ ♜f8 45 ♖f6+, with a draw by perpetual check.

31...♖xc2 32 ♜f1 fxe4?!

Better was 32...exd5 as after 33 exf5 Black has the strong move 33...♖e8 when the game might continue 34 f6 ♙xf6 35 ♖h7+ ♜f8 36 ♖h6+ ♙g7 37 ♖c1 ♖f5 38 ♔e3 ♖e6 39 ♔g2 ♔c4 - Black is clearly better. I suspect Raj was going to try 33 f4, but Black can then play 33...♔c6 34 ♖h7+ ♜f7 35 ♖h6 ♔e7 when the attack comes to a halt and Black is winning.

33 f4!



33...♔f7?

The final mistake, after which it is all over. Instead, the active 33...♔f3 leads to a draw: 34 ♖h7+ ♜f7 35 ♖h6 ♔d2+ 36 ♜f2 e3+ 37 ♔xe3 ♔e4+ 38 ♜f3 ♔d2+ 39 ♜f2 ♔e4+, etc. If White tries to avoid the perpetual, he risks losing: 40 ♜g1 ♖xe2 41 dxe6+ ♙xe6 42 ♖xg6+ ♜f8 43 ♖xe4 ♙d5! 44 ♖f5+ ♙f7 45 ♔g4 ♖xb2 and Black is at least equal.

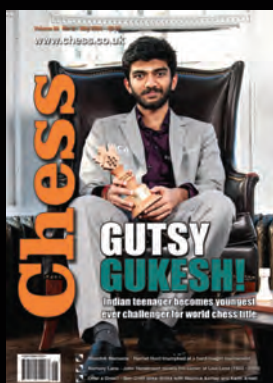
34 ♖h7+ ♜f8 35 ♖xg6+ ♔d7 36 dxe6 ♔h8 37 ♖f5+ ♙e8 38 exd7+ ♙xd7 39 ♖xh8+ 1-0

Black resigned because after 39...♙xh8, 40 ♖h5+ wins more material.

An incredible game, full of various tactics and quite a few errors, but didn't it make for exciting chess!

After this win Raj went through the tournament undefeated, playing a decent field of another GM, a WGM, three IMs, one FM and one untitled player like himself. His score of 4½/8 on board 1 was the best performance by a Scottish player in the tournament and he proved an inspiration for the rest of his team. Meanwhile if you have won a game against a strong player then please send it to me (plittl@hotmail.com), and I will try to publish it in this column.

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Mighty Manx

Manx Liberty have continued to set the pace with one weekend to go in the 4NCL

Shortly after this magazine arrives with subscribers, the leading lights of the 4NCL will return to Daventry to do battle in the final rounds of the season over the first May bank holiday weekend. Monday 5th May will see Manx Liberty and Wood Green face off in the very last round, but will the title already have been decided by then? Manx will certainly want to pull off overall victory as a fitting tribute to their former captain and sponsor IM Dietmar Kolbus, who sadly passed away while at the Biel Open last summer.

Currently the gap between the top two sides is two points, with Manx also holding a five-and-a-half-point lead on game points. They have been even more ruthless than normal this season, while Wood Green are likely still reflecting on their 5-3 defeat to Cheddleton in round six.

At the fourth weekend of the season in Peterborough, the big two both scored crushing 7-1 victories in round seven, Manx outclassing Barbican and Wood Green destroying bottom side, The Sharks II. The next day Manx defeated Barnet Knights 6-2, while Wood Green overcame Blackthorne 5-3, as an overly ambitious Marcus Harvey was outplayed by Danny Gormally on top board.

Hungarian GMs Gergely Kantor and Miklos Galyas both scored 2/2 for Manx, as did Shreyas Royal. Galyas now has 7/8 for the season, an impressive score matched only by his team-mates, IM Harry Grieve and WIM Julianna Terbe.

G.Kantor-A.Merry

Manx Liberty vs Barbican
Queen's Gambit Accepted

1 d4 ♟f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♟f3 d5 4 ♟c3 dxc4 5 e4 b5!?

A trendy move, one recommended in two recent books: Fernando Peralta's *The Modernized Vienna of the Queen's Gambit Declined* and *Beating the Queen's Gambit – Indian Style!* by Renier Castellanos. Play now transposes from the Vienna into the QGA.

6 e5 ♟d5 7 ♟xb5 ♟b6 8 ♟e2

Another direction is 8 ♟c3 ♟c6 9 ♟e3 when 9...♟b7 10 ♟e2 ♟e7 11 b3! cxb3 12 ♟xb3 ♟f5 13 ♟b5+! c6 14 ♟d3 was perhaps slightly better for White in Fedoseev-Gukesh, Wijk aan Zee 2025.

8...♟c6 9 ♟e3 ♟e7 10 a3!?



White leaves the knight on b5 for now, rather than quickly regroup it as Fedoseev did.

10...♟b8

This may well not be necessary and 10...♟b7!? 11 ♟c2 ♟d7 (threatening ...♟xe5) 12 ♟c3 ♟a5 doesn't look too bad for Black.

11 ♟c2 ♟a5 12 ♟c3

Retreating before ...♟d5 forces the issue.

12...♟d5

Black doesn't equalise after this and neither did he following 12...♟b7 13 ♟d1 ♟d7 14 h4! in Fier-Tari, Florianopolis 2025.

13 ♟d2

13 ♟d1!? also looks fairly pleasant for White, and if 13...♟xe3 14 fxe3 0-0 15 d5 when it seems that Black would have to resort to 15...♟e8! to stay afloat.

13...♟b3 14 ♟d1 ♟a6 15 0-0 ♟d7

The knight is left a little stranded on b3 after this, but even 15...0-0 16 ♟e4! ♟xd2 17 ♟xd2 should supply an edge, when perhaps Black might fight on the queenside with 17...♟b3!? 18 ♟xc4 ♟xc4 19 ♟xc4 ♟b8.

16 ♟e3! h6?!



Daniel King's least favourite move, an unnecessary advance of a rook's pawn in front of the king. 16...0-0 was a somewhat better defensive try.

17 ♟e4?!

But this rather lets Black off the hook, especially in contrast to 17 ♟e4! 0-0 18 ♟g4 ♟h7 19 ♟h4!? with a fairly dangerous attack for White.

17...♟c6 18 ♟g3 ♟xe3?

A bad misjudgement. Rather than open the f-file, Merry should have calmly played 18...0-0 when, for example, 19 ♟e4 ♟h8 20 ♟g4 c3! 21 ♟xa6 ♟xa6 22 bxc3 ♟xc3 23 d5!? is pretty sharp, and roughly equal.

19 fxe3 0-0 20 ♟h5!



A powerful leap. Now White would clearly love to bring the queen over to the g-file and also has a fairly strong regrouping plan in the shape of h2-h4, ♟h2 and ♟g4.

20...♟a5?

Trying to bring the knight back into play, but something like 20...♟b6!? 21 h4 ♟b7 would have been more prudent.

21 b4!

One of two dangerous and pretty strong advances, the other, likely even more dangerous one being 21 d5! exd5 22 ♟d4 ♟g6 23 ♟f5.

21...♟b3

21...cxb3!? 22 ♟xc6 ♟xc6 23 ♟xa6 b2 24 ♟d2 ♟xa3 25 ♟f4 surely can't give Black enough for the piece, but might still have been a better practical try.

22 ♟d3!

A neat and effective way to regroup.

22...♟b5?

22...♟b5 23 ♟e4 ♟b7 was grim, but really had to be tried.

23 ♟e4 ♟b6 24 ♟f2

And so the queen will make it to the g-file. The end is already nigh.

24...♟h8

Black would also have been highly unlikely to survive after 24...f5!? 25 exf6 ♟xf6 26 ♟b1. **25 ♟g3 ♟g8 26 ♟h4!**



Threatening ♔g6+ followed by mate.
26...♙xh4 27 ♜xh4 ♙e8 28 ♜f6!
 Finishing in style. It's a mating attack.
28...g6 29 ♣f4 1-0

Wood Green's top scorer so far for the season, with 6/8, features elsewhere in these pages, Matthew Wadsworth. He won both games at the Peterborough weekend, as did team-mate and fellow IM James Jackson.

M.Wadsworth-S.Ansell

Wood Green vs Blackthorne
Reti Opening

1 ♖f3 d5 2 g3 ♘d7!?

A topical line and one which Wadsworth has a fair amount of experience in, from both sides of the board.

3 d4 ♖b6 4 ♖c3

Deviating from his earlier 4 ♖bd2 ♙f5 5 ♖h4 when 5...e6 6 ♖xf5 exf5 7 ♙g2 c6 8 a4 a5 9 ♖f3 ♖f6 10 ♙f4 ♙e7 11 ♜c1 ♖e4 seemed fine for Black in Wadsworth-Navara, European Individual Championship, Petrovac 2024, as well as 4 a4!? a5 5 ♖c3, after which 5...♙f5 6 ♖h4 ♙g4 7 h3 ♙h5 8 ♖g2 e6 9 ♖f4 ♙g6 10 h4! echoed our main game and was slightly better for White in Wadsworth-Cabezas Ayala, Roquetas de Mar 2025.

4...♙f5 5 ♖h4

Hunting down the bishop-pair is a key motif in this variation, as, indeed, we've already seen.

5...♙g4

5...e6!? 6 a4 a5 7 ♖xf5 exf5 à la Navara might not be too bad for Black.

6 h3 ♙h5 7 ♖g2!



White is determined to hunt down the light-squared bishop and without weakening his kingside, as 7 g4 e6 8 ♖g2 ♙g6 9 ♖f4

would do.

7...e6 8 ♖f4 ♙g6 9 h4!?

A tricky novelty and now the experienced IM playing Black underestimates the danger.

9...♙f5?

9...♖f6! would have been sensible and after 10 ♖xg6 hxg6 11 ♙g2 ♙b4 nothing too bad should be happening to Black.

10 e4! dxe4

Likewise, 10...♙xe4 11 f3 ♙f5 12 g4 is rather awkward for Black.

11 g4! e5 12 gxf5 exf4 13 ♙xf4?

Allowing Black a reprieve. Instead, 13 ♖xf6 14 ♙g2 would have left White's bishops ruling the roost and supplied a clear advantage.

13...♙f6?

Missing his chance which lay in 13...♙b4! 14 a3 ♙xc3+ 15 bxc3 ♜d5 16 ♜b1 when White might still be slightly better, but it's clearly got rather messy all of a sudden.

14 ♜e2!



14...♙e7

14...♜xd4!? would have been more combative (14...♙b4?? now runs into 15 ♜b5+), although as both players may have realised, the precise sequence 15 ♖b5! ♜xb2! 16 ♖xc7+ ♙e7 17 ♜d1 ♜d8 18 ♜h3! leaves White with a strong initiative and more than enough for his pawn(s).

15 0-0-0 0-0

15...♖fd5!? 16 ♖xd5 ♜xd5 17 ♙b1 0-0-0 was still bad, but also arguably the last real try.

16 ♙g1

White's attack is extremely strong and almost plays itself, especially after Black's misguided next, moving a defender away from the kingside.

16...♖fd5? 17 ♜g4 g6 18 ♖xd5 ♖xd5

18...♜xd5 19 ♙b1 ♖a4 20 h5 would have been one-way traffic too.

19 ♙h6 ♖f6 20 ♜h3 ♜e8 21 ♙c4



Or just 21 h5. In any case, Black isn't long for this world.

21...♙f8 22 ♙g5 ♜d6 23 h5 1-0

Last season The Sharks ensured that a thrilling three-way title fight went right down to the wire, but this campaign has often seen them without some of their star players, as well as but the latest club to suffer when having two teams in the top division, which requires completely separate squads. In round seven, they were defeated 5-3 by CSC/Kingston, who thereby took a huge step towards securing their Division One status for next season. On board 3 FM Roland Bezuidenhout was tactically alert, while Peter Finn, WFM Luisa Bashyline and young Supratit Banerjee all scored crucial wins too.

R.Bezuidenhout-D.Fernandez

CSC/Kingston vs The Sharks



The black rook has just landed on a2 and it looks like anything might be happening after 36 ♜c3 ♜f8, but Bezuidenhout found something stronger.

36 ♖g4! ♖xg4

Unfortunately for Black, after 36...♜xe1+? 37 ♙xe1 ♜xb2 38 ♖xf6+ ♙g7 39 ♖xd5 ♜b1 40 ♙f1 the b4-pawn is overprotected, so instead he had to take on g4.

37 ♜xa2 ♜c6??

Far, far too ambitious a winning try. After 37...♜xe1+ 38 ♙xe1 ♙xa2 39 ♙xg4 ♙e6 White is clear pawn ahead, but such a generally strong endgame player as Fernandez would have had good chances to hold.

38 ♜b2

Or even 38 ♙g2!?. In either case Black doesn't have anything scary.

38...h5 39 ♜d4

Decisive centralisation.

39...♖f6 40 ♙xg4 hxg4 41 ♜xf6 1-0

The Sharks recovered with a 5-3 win over Alba, IM Peter Roberson, who now has a fine 6/8 for the season, and Liam Varnam winning on both days for them. In contrast, 5-3 was the score by which CSC/Kingston were largely outclassed by Chessable White Rose, despite Banerjee winning once more, attacking with aplomb against IM Gavin Wall. While after a superb season thus far CSC/Kingston have an excellent chance of survival, being on 6 points, Alba appear

doomed. They also lost 5½-2½ to White Rose, although at least on top board in Peterborough 14-year-old Freddy Gordon had a weekend to remember, holding solidly against Gawain Jones no less before getting the better of GM Daniel Fernandez.

D.Fernandez- F.Waldhausen Gordon The Sharks vs Alba



We join play following a time scramble in which White likely displayed a little too much ambition in breaking with d3-d4 after a hard fight in a Giuoco Piano. With the healthier structure and superior minor piece, Black is definitely for choice, although White should have good chances to draw.

41 f3 g7 42 h5 g5 43 xg5?

Underestimating the latent dynamism within Black's position, even at this late stage of the game. Instead, 43 h1! and then, for example, 43...dxc8 44 d2 d7 45 f4 d6 46 d3 b6 would have left Black pressing, but White still with reasonable drawing chances after 47 axb6 cxb6 48 b1.

43...hxg5 44 e3 xd4+!

A big decision. Gordon has correctly realised that he can effect a powerful transformation on the queenside. The alternative was 44...dxc6 when 45 dxc6 dxc6 46 d3 b5! 47 axb6 xxb6! and only then ...c5 would have left White in serious trouble too.

45 xd4

Allowing the pawn break, but 45 dxd4 dxc6 would only have given White a choice of lost endings, after trading knights or allowing 46 dxc2 d5.

45...c5+!



Frederick Waldhausen Gordon recently crossed the 2400 barrier, so is now an IM at the age of 14!

46 c3 d6 47 bxc5 dxc5 48 e1!

With a5 falling, White must quickly obtain some counterplay if there's to be any chance of saving the game.

48...xa5 49 f3 d6

Bringing the knight back into play, but it wasn't so badly placed on the rim and 49...b5! 50 cxb5 axb5 51 dxc5 e5 would have been winning with the connected passed pawns.

50 e5! b5?

Tempting, but misguided, whereas 50...e7! 51 d3 (instead, 51 dxc5 dxe5 52 d4 b6 is a key point and 51 d2 d8! 52 dxc5 f7 53 f3 f8 54 e3 g7 55 f4 b6 also winning for Black) 51...b5 would have been well-timed, since now 52 cxb5 axb5 53 dxc5 dxe5+ is check and 54 c3 b4+ 55 b3 d6 56 d4+ d5 57 f6+ d4 58 g5 d6 a fairly straightforward win for Black.

51 dxc5 dxe5 52 d4 c6 53 g5!



An only move and not 53 cxb5+? axb5 54 g5 b4+ 55 b3 d5 when Black is winning.

53...bxc4!

The best try, since after 53...dxc4 54 g6 d3 55 g7 d5+ 56 c2 d7 57 f6 a5 58 g8 dxc8 59 dxc8 d6 60 f6 a4 61 g4 the extra knight and g-pawn leave White with enough counterplay to draw.

54 f6 a5 55 d4h5?

A strange move, as well as the decisive mistake. 55 d4! would have put the knight on a much better square, helping to keep the black king restricted and after 55...a4 56 b2!

d6 57 d3 a draw would have been likely.

55...a4! 56 f4

After 56 c2 d6 57 f6 Black would have had to find 57...d7!, but this wins following 58 d4+ e5 59 d3 a3 60 d5 a2 61 b2 f5 62 xa2 xg5 63 d3 e5 64 b2 g4.

56...d6! 57 g6

The best try, since 57 b2? d3+ would be all too easy for Black and 57 d2 a3 58 c2 d6! 59 d3 d4+ 60 b1 e7! wins too.

57...e7 58 g7 f7 59 dxe6



The point of White's play, but as Black had likely planned in advance, there's a narrow path to victory.

59...a3! 60 c2

The black pawns would be just far enough apart after 60 dxc5 a2! 61 b2 d3+ 62 dxd3 cxd3.

60...d3 61 d5g5+

There's simply no good defence as Black would queen after 61 b1 c3.

61...xg7 0-1

Of the bottom three teams, don't write off Barbican just yet from pulling off a great escape come the final weekend. This season they've been strengthened by the welcome return to chess of Jonathan Parker, who has only lost once on top board. Barbican have plenty of experience to draw on, but will need to play much better in Daventry than they did when outpowered by Wood Green Youth in round eight, who thereby secured an impressive 6½-1½

win to go with butchering Barnet 7-1 the day before. Svyatoslav Bazakutsa won in both matches for Wood Green Youth, as did fellow IMs Jonah Willow and David Fitzsimons, as well as Jack Liu and GM Ketil Arakhamia-Grant.

Wood Green Youth are currently a narrow third and may well finish there, although there's all to play for in that battle, with Cheddleton very much in the mix too, as might even be White Rose. Cheddleton suffered a number of surprise defeats on the lower boards as they drew with Blackthorne in round seven, Laurence Webb claiming the scalp of Nick Pert, while Zoe Varney and Steve Ledger defeated Max and Nina Pert, respectively. However, Cheddleton were aided at the top end by a crushing victory for Simon Williams on board 1 over Andrew Ledger, while Max and Nina's father, Richard, got the better of Danny Gormally on board 2 and has racked up an impressive 6/8 so far this season.

Both Williams and Richard Pert won again the next day too, while the younger Perts continued to struggle as Cheddleton overcame The Sharks II 4½-3½. Indeed, it's been great in recent months to see the Ginger GM, Simon Williams, back at the board and still as dangerous as ever.

S.Williams-T.Rendle Cheddleton vs The Sharks II

1 ♖f3 d5 2 d4 ♜f6 3 c4 c6 4 ♜c3 dxc4 5 e4 b5 6 ♙e2!?

This modern take on the Geller Gambit (6 e5 ♜d5 7 a4 was the old main line) has been deployed on several occasions by both Richard and Nick Pert, team-mates and old friends of Williams.

6...e6 7 a4 ♙b7

This is sensible. Black can also go in for 7...b4!? 8 e5 bxc3 9 exf6 cxb2 10 fxg7, which is a truly crazy line. After 10...bxa1 ♙ 11 gxh8 ♙ ♙a5+! 12 ♜d2! c3 13 0-0 cxd2 14 ♙xd2 ♙xd1 15 ♙xd1 White is a whole piece down, but Black's position is far from a thing of beauty and 15...♙f5! (15...♙d8? 16 d5! is very nasty, threatening ♙b4) 16 d5! ♙g6 17 ♙e5 highly unclear.

8 0-0 a6 9 ♙g5

Developing the final piece in aggressive fashion, but this is by no means definitely best. Instead, 9 b3!? b4 10 e5 ♜d5 11 ♜xd5 cxd5 12 bxc4 dxc4 13 ♙xc4 is likely about equal.

9...♜bd7 10 d5?!



Simon Williams had a busy few weeks, sharing first (yes, Bjorn!) at the Godinn Open, as we've enjoyed, then scoring 2/2 at the 4NCL ahead of returning to Iceland for the Reykjavik Open.

After 10 e5 h6 11 ♙h4 g5 Black is at least OK, so Williams tries the other central push...

10...♙b6?

...and is immediately rewarded. Now White is doing very well, whereas after 10...cxd5! 11 axb5 (or 11 exd5 b4 12 dxe6 fxe6!) 11...dxe4 12 ♜d4 axb5 13 ♙xa8 ♙xa8 14 ♜dxb5 ♙b8 (Pein) he likely doesn't have quite enough compensation.

11 dxe6 fxe6 12 e5!

Establishing a powerful bridgehead ahead of seizing the initiative.

12...♜d5 13 ♜d4! ♜c5

The relatively best try. Of course, Black would like to go 13...c5?, but after 14 ♙h5+ g6 15 a5! ♙c7 16 ♜xe6 he would be quickly cleaned up, as shown by 16...♙xe5 17 ♙e1 and 16...♙c6 17 ♜xd5 ♙xd5 18 ♜c7+.

14 ♙g4



Taking aim at the vulnerable point on e6 and now the grim 14...♙c8 pretty much had to be tried.

14...h6? 15 ♙e3!

Threatening ♜xe6 and White also has a certain check on h5.

15...♜xe3 16 ♙h5+ ♜d7 17 fxe3

With the f-file now open for the rooks, the black king will swiftly be put to the sword.

17...♜d3

Likewise, 17...♙c8 18 ♙f7 b4 19 a5 ♙d8 20 ♜a4 ♜xa4 21 ♙xa4 is pretty crushing.

18 ♙g4 c5 19 ♙f7+ ♜c8 20 ♙af1!



The final piece joins the party and it's all over in view of 20...cxd4 21 ♙xf8+ ♙xf8 22 ♙xf8+ ♜d7 23 ♙xg7+ ♜c6 24 ♙f3+ ♜c5 25 ♙e7+.

20...♙e7 21 ♙xe7 1-0

4NCL Division One - 2024/2025 Season															
Team		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	MP	GP
1	Manx Liberty			6-2	5-3	5½-2½		6-2	6½-1½	6-2	7-1		7½-½	16	49½
2	Wood Green			6-2	3-5	6-2		5-3	5-3		5-3	7--1	7-1	14	44
3	Wood Green Youth	2-6	2-6				5½-2½	5-3	6½-1½	7-1	6½-1½	6½-1½		12	41
4	Cheddleton Savills Catering	3-5	5-3				5-3	4-4		4½-3½	6½-1½	4-4	4½-3½	12	36½
5	Chessable White Rose	2½-5½	2-6				2½-5½	4½-3½	5-3	5-3		5½-2½	4½-2½	10	31½
6	The Sharks II			2½-5½	3-5	5½-2½			3-5	3-5	4-3	5-3	6½-1½	8	32½
7	Blackthorne	2-6	3-5	3-5	4-4	3½-4½			4½-3½		4-4		6-2	6	30
8	CSC/Kingston	1½-6½	3-5	1½-6½		3-5	5-3	3½-4½		5½-2½		5-2		6	28
9	Barnet Knights	2-6		1-7	3½-4½	3-5	5-3		2½-5½		4½-3½		5-3	6	26½
10	Barbican 4NCL	1-7	3-5	1½-6½	1½-6½		3-4	4-4		3½-4½		4½-3½		3	22
11	Alba		-1-7	1½-6½	4-4	2½-5½	3-5		2-5		3½-4½		4½-3½	3	20
12	The Sharks II	½-7½	1-7		3½-4½	2½-4½	1½-6½	2-6		3-5		3½-4½		0	17½



Home News

BIRMINGHAM – Peter Large continued his good form from the World Senior Teams as he shared first with a rising local star at the Birmingham Rapidplay on March 30th.

Open: 1-2 Peter Large (Kingston), Finlay Bowcott-Terry (Halesowen) 5½/7, 3-5 Tomasz Sygnowski (Wolverhampton), Luke Honey (Exeter), Jonathan Arnott (Sheffield) 4½.

Major: 1-4 Joshua Pink (Stockport), Michael McDonagh (Chester), Pranav Mathur (Birmingham), Paul Colburn (Rugby) 5.

Intermediate: 1 Paul Leonard (Atherton) 6½, 2 Daniel Jones (Stourbridge) 6, 3 Rhys Edwards (Coventry) 5½.

Minor: 1-6 Carl Lawrence, Evaldas Navickis (both Birmingham), Alain Chandler-Hurst (Walsall Kipping), Santhoshkumar Ravisankar (Solihull), Rishab Murthy (South Birmingham), Nigel Foster (Shirley) 5½.

BOURNE END – The Bourne End One Day Congress took place on April 13th.

Section A: 1-2 Jon Ady (Guildford), Andrew Ram (Pinner) 4/5, 3 Nigel Fleming (Kings Head) 3½.

Section B: 1 Evan Pitts 4½, 2 Mithran Subbarj (both Maidenhead) 4, 3-4 Ian Gilders (Witney), Philip Roads (Yeovil) 3½.

Section C: 1 Ashley Melvin (Bourne End) 5, 2 Alen Biju (Maidenhead) 4, 3 Vijay Srao (High Wycombe) 3½.

BOURNEMOUTH – Danny Gormally made the long journey worthwhile as he scooped the £1,000 first prize at the Bournemouth Grand Congress (March 28-30).

Open: 1 Danny Gormally (Alnwick) 4½/5, 2-3 Jonathan Underwood (Seaton), Roland Bezuidenhout (Fareham) 4.

Major: 1 Mark Potter (Dorchester) 4½, 2-3 Daniel Goodlad (Southampton University), Hugo Melling (Ringwood) 4.

Intermediate: 1-4 Malcolm Probert (Llanelli), David Fowler (Glossop), Alex Dore

(Southampton), Stephen Williams (Cwmbran) 4.

Minor: 1-2 Ramganes Sridharan, Bugra Arslan (both Bournemouth) 4½, 3 Terence Greenaway (Torquay) 4.

BOVEY TRACEY – The 2nd Bovey Tracey Rapidplay featured two sections on April 5th.

Maestros: 1-2 Umut Temizer (Newton Abbot), Paul Hampton (Seaton) 5/6, 3-4 Martin Goldschmidt (Totnes), Ellis Manning (Newton Abbot) 4½.

Improvers: 1-2 Trevor Hurt (South Hams), Joe Forty 5, 3 Ben Darlington (both Torquay) 4½.

BRISTOL – There was a four-way tie for first at the 91st Bristol Open Championship (March 28-30).

Open: 1-4 Keith Arkell (Paignton), Oliver Stubbs (Downend), Kai Hanache (Hammersmith), Aditya Vaidyanathan (Birmingham) 4/5.

Under-1950: 1 Mohammad Mozaffari (Coulsdon) 4½, 2-4 Tony Harvey (South Bristol), Oliver Thornley, Vasyi Lopatko (both Bath) 4.

Under-1750: 1 Martin Jones (Llanelli) 4½, 2-4 Alexander Photiou (Plymouth), Judd Chidwick (Redland), Thomas Gerrard (Ashby) 4.

Under-1550: 1 Joseph Newland 5, 2 Sam King (both Bristol) 4, 3-9 Santosh Murali (Portishead), Ashish Antony (Redland), Chris Smith (Thornbury), Chris Thompson (Cwmbran), William Taplin (Keynsham), Kevin Markey (Stroud), Benjamin Zhang (Bath) 3½.

COVENTRY – The 7th University of Warwick Rapidplay took place on March 1st.

Open: 1 Javier Valdepenas Octavio (Kenilworth) 6½/7, 2 Sam Chow (Leamington) 6, 3 Damirali Magzumov (Warwick University) 5.

Major: 1 Alex Zhou 6½, 2-4 Hongxin Zhen (both Warwick University), Sahil Kohli

(Sutton), Jonathan Lee (Bristol) 5½.

Minor: 1 Alexander Wicks (Warwick University) 6½, 2 Mohanaditya Poluru (Newport) 5½, 3-6 Jim Gillespie (Olton), Elliot Long (Milton Keynes) Mira Ajeet Singh, Sidharth Panicker (both Warwick University) 5.

EASTLEIGH – Ivan Georgiev won the Hampshire Rapidplay at Eastleigh on April 5th.

Open: 1 Ivan Georgiev (Chandler's Ford) 5/6, 2-4 Paul Northcott (Emsworth), Piotr Mikolajczyk (Portsmouth), Martin Buckmaster (Southampton) 4½.

Major: 1 Jack McBurnie 5½, 2 Simon Redmill (both Fareham) 5, 3-4 Itmam Ekram (Portsmouth), Hamza Ozcali (Southampton) 4½.

EXETER – Devonian IM Jack Rudd triumphed at the East Devon Congress at the Mercure Exeter Rougemont Hotel (March 21-23).

Open: 1 Jack Rudd (Barnstaple) 4½/5, 2-3 Qixiang Han (Streatham), Dominic Mackle (Devon) 4.

Major: 1 Mohammad Mozaffari (Coulsdon) 4½, 2-6 Stephen Quartey (Exeter University), Andrew Waters (Rainham), Charles Howard (Totnes), Raman Kumar (Exeter), Reyansh Saxena (Petts Wood) 4.

Minor: 1 Joe Dornan (Devon) 5, 2-6 Geoff Ainsley (Calderdale), Shreyas Pasupulety (Newton Abbot), Joy Fursman (Clevedon), Christine Constable (Bude), William Taplin (Keynsham) 3½.

FAREHAM – The latest Castle Chess event was the Fareham Congress (March 14-16).

Open: 1 Tony Wells (Athenaeum) 4½/6, 2 Daniel Sullivan (Sheffield) 4, 3 Tim Spanton (Battersea) 3½.

Major: 1 Alikhan Menseitov (Chandler's Ford) 5, 2-3 Derek McGovern (Staines), Remel Ramirez (Chichester) 4.

Minor: 1 Nick Spearing (Reading) 4½, 2-3

David Archer (Godalming), Aiden Graham (Southampton University) 4.

FOLKESTONE – Satish Gaekwad was responsible for staging the 1st East-Kent FIDE Congress at the Grand Burstin Hotel, Folkestone (March 8–9).

Under-2250: 1 Robert Starley (Sandwich) 4½/5, 2 Lishoy Dildarav (Camberley) 3½, 3–4 Justinas Stojanas (London), Robert Collopy (Bridge) 3.

Under-1850: 1–2 Michael Stanners (Guildford), Edgar Pack (Tonbridge) 4, 3–4 Aditya Gupta (Brighton), Alan Prince (Brentwood) 3½.

Under-1500: 1 Max Dinley (Kent) 5, 2 Robert Twigg 3½, 3–4 Harrison Pitchford, Thomas Milligan (all Folkestone) 3.

GLASGOW – Two strong IMs and the main editors at Quality Chess shared first place at the Glasgow Congress, which took place at the Annie Lennox Building, Glasgow Caledonian University (March 28–30).

Open: 1–2 Andrew Greet, Kostis Megalios (both Bellshill) 4½/5, 3–5 Craig Thomson (Edinburgh), Jamie Malkin (Kilmarnock), Yevgeni Sprenger de la Iglesia (Glasgow Polytechnic) 4.

Major: 1 Jonathan Livingstone 4½, 2–6 Scott Kilgour (both Queen's Park), Joe Galbraith (Musselburgh), Richard Warcup (Stirling), Simon Kerridge (Bearsden), Kevin Maguire (Paisley) 4.

Minor: 1 Wayne Lee (Kirkintilloch), Charlie Rees (Stepps) 4½, 3 Callum McCue (Bearsden) 4.

HAMILTON – Hamilton Chess Club celebrated the 90th anniversary of GM Bent Larsen's birth with an Allegro on Saturday 8th March 2025.

Open: 1 Derek McCormack (Paisley) 5/5, 2–3 Andrew McCusker (Hamilton), Rob Colston (Bearsden) 4.

Under-1500: 1–2 Charlie Rees (Stepps), Ross Samuel (Lothians) 4½, 3–7 Donald McGregor (Cathcart), Samuel Abiodun (Nigeria), Eve Clark (Glasgow Polytechnic), Ian Fanning (Edinburgh), Henry Udeogu-Osita (Aberdeenshire) 4.

HORWICH – The The University of Bolton Arena hosted a strong Manchester Rapidplay on March 23rd.

Open: 1 Danny Gormally (Alnwick) 5½/6, 2–3 Bogdan Lalic (Lewisham), Maksym Larchikov (Hull) 4½.

Under-1950: 1 Morgan French (Newcastle) 5½, 2–3 Paul Leonard (Atherton), Shyam Murugesan (Huddersfield) 4½.

Under-1630: 1 Andy Yang (Bolton) 5½, 2–3 Dyfan Steele (Shrewsbury), Dheer Bhatia (Ashton-under-Lyne) 5.

HUDDERSFIELD – Organised by the Ilkley Chess Centre, the Huddersfield Congress (April 5–6) took place at the same venue used by the 4NCL earlier this year, the Cedar Court Hotel.

Open: 1 John Potter (Belper) 4½/5, 2–4 Srivathsan Sasikumar, Toby Quaitie (both Leeds), Shriaansh Ganti (Ilkley) 3½.

Major: 1–4 Richard Sanger (York), David Robinson (Meltham), Charlie Wainwright (Ilkley), Mohammad Abdulhamid (Bradford) 4.

Minor: 1–2 Rob Jarvis (Ashfield), Robert Oldfield (Meltham) 4, 3–5 Jake Howard (Oldham), Vidhyuth Sudagar (Leeds), Benjamin Findlay (Sheffield) 3½.

JERSEY – The Jersey International took place at the Hotel Ambassadeur, St Clement Bay (April 5–12), and saw a legendary Lithuanian Grandmaster win the £1,500 first prize at the age of 51.

Open: 1 Eduardas Rozentalis (Lithuania) 7½/9, 2 Georg Mohr (Slovenia) 7, 3 Tom O'Gorman (Oxford University) 6, 4–5 Katarzyna Toma (Worcestershire), Koby Kalavannan (Cambridge University) 5½.

Holiday: 1–2 Ali Imam-Sadeque (Oxford University), Anzel Laubscher (South Africa) 7½, 3–4 Sydney Jacob (Lewisham), David Hunn (Dagenham) 6.

LEICESTER – The British Universities Chess Association (BUCA) Championships saw UCL (Aaravamudhan Balaji, Wenxiang Li, Jacob Yoon and Dmitry Minko) claim their first ever Championship title as they pipped Oxford (Tom O'Gorman, Jun Wei Lee, Daniel Gallagher and Ashvin Sivakumar) on tiebreak after both had finished on 15/18 in Leicester (February 22–23). The nine-round rapid event also involved four other sections: Oxford II won the Plate, LSE dominated the Bowl, Queen Mary took the Shield and Reading II won the Cup.

LONDON – 14-year-old Harry Bryant racked up an impressive perfect score at the latest Golders Green Rapidplay on March 29th.

Open: 1 Harry Bryant (Hammersmith) 6/6, 2 Max Turner (Warwick University) 5, 3 Roman Kovalskyi (UCL) 4½.

Under-1900: 1 Michael Inzani (Kings Head) 6, 2 Orest Stus (Kent) 5, 3 Mikael Belay (Romford) 4½.

Under-1600: 1–2 Andrew Dugdale (Thornbury), Guillaume Soumier (Bloomsbury) 5½, 3–7 Marcel Bodereau (north London), Lara de Boer (Barnet), Jan Vanbiervliet (London), Alice Degrassi (Battersea), Jake Round (Rushden) 4½.

Under-1100: 1–2 Sharin Islam (Barking), Daniel Dugdale (Woodbridge) 5, 3–5 Julia Bednaya (Barnet), Noah Wang (Barnes), Jing Zhe Lim (Maidenhead) 4.

Over at Muswell Hill, Peter Large (Kingston) and Bogdan Lalic (Lewisham) shared first with 4½/5 on March 11th. A week later, on March 18th, the in-form Large would claim sole first with 5/6, which left him half a point clear of Michael Inzani (Kings Head) and Ashvin Sivakumar (Oxford University).

Michael Fernandez dominated the Open at the latest Southall Congress (March 22–23).

Under-2400: 1 Michael Fernandez (Little Heath) 5/5, 2–3 Josh Sharma (Maidenhead), Henry Adams (Lewes) 3.

Under-1900: 1–2 Julian Llewellyn (Muswell Hill), Timothy Watson (St Albans) 4, 3–5 Alan

Hayward (Coulsdon), Caelan Gopaldas (Pimlico), Shivam Sahoo (Milton Keynes) 3½.

Under-1600: 1–2 Mithran Subburaj (Maidenhead), Aditya Sengupta (Camberley) 4, 3–5 James Peel (Rugby), Aviraj Bhaduri (Charlton), Chandra Prakash (Southwark) 3½.

Peter Large also triumphed at the Ealing Rapidplay on March 2nd, scoring 5/5 to finish a point ahead of Michael Inzani (Kings Head), with Lam Vy Le Nguyen (Petts Wood) a further half-point adrift. With Large at the European Senior Teams, there was a three-way tie in the latest Ealing Rapidplay on April 6th: Ayush Ganbold (Ealing), Yicheng Ding (Barnes) and Vineet Sood (Greenwich) all scoring 4/5.

Sainbayar Tserendorj is also responsible for the Earlsfield events, including the Earlsfield Congress (March 28–29).

Under-2400: 1–2 James Scarry (Dulwich), Henry Cronin (Battersea) 4/5, 3–5 Alfred Soulier (Wimbledon), Hubert Bates (Barnet), Robin Haldane (Streatham) 3½.

Under-1800: 1 Avinash Reddy (Bloomsbury) 5, 2–5 Arjan Verdi (Wimbledon), Elijah de Lange (Guildford), Julian Llewellyn (Muswell Hill), Nika Istratova (Estonia) 2½.

Who else but Peter Large (Kingston) would score 100% to win the Earlsfield Rapidplay on March 15th? There Ayush Ganbold (Ealing) and Mikael Belay (Romford) shared second, back on 3/5. Then on April 5th it was the turn of Alfred Soulier (Wimbledon) and Benedict Keohane (Coulsdon) to tie for first on 4/5 in the Open, finishing half a point ahead of Constantin Mueller (Imperial College) and Edmond Andal (Lewisham). There was also an Under-1700 section that day, where Adam Neale (Ealing), Aarav Gujarathi (Coulsdon) and Gustavo Astolfi (Richmond) all scored 3½/5.

There was a Coulsdon Rapidplay on April 6th, in which Robin Haldane (Streatham) won the Open with 6/7, finishing a point ahead of Mark Smith (Coulsdon), while in the other section Henry Smith triumphed with 6½/7, which left him a half-point ahead of Coulsdon club-mate Aaron Fernandes.

Another popular event is the London Chess League Weekender, the latest of which took place March 14th to 16th at the London MindSports Centre.

Open: 1–2 Stanley Badacsonyi (Muswell Hill), Dylan Wastney (Reading) 4/5, 3–7 Zoltan Kovacs (Hackney), Matthew Dignam (Berkhamsted), Ethan Sanitt (Barnet), Wiktor Przedlacki (West Sussex), Luohe Wang (Chelmsford) 3½.

Under-2000: 1 Mohammad Mozafarri (Coulsdon) 4½, 2–3 Naavya Parikh (Harrow), Tom Balmond (Hammersmith) 4.

Under-1650: 1 Chris Soltysiak (Metropolitan) 4½, 2 Alice Degrassi (Battersea) 4, 3–9 Alex Lever (Watford), Jake Conyard (Camberley), Marcus Gordon (Muswell Hill), Djad Ben-Eshak (Barnet), James Sweetnam (north London), Euka Athukorallage (Horsham), Carol Taban (King's College) 3.

Finally, there was an Uxbridge Rapid on April 13th. Karanvir Singh (Uxbridge) and

Fahim Nasiri (Birmingham University) both scored 4/5 in the Open. In the somewhat larger Major section, Shlok Parakh (Uxbridge) top-scored with 5½/6 to finish half a point ahead of Aviraj Bhaduri (Charlton) and Aarav Gujarathi (Cambridgeshire).

READING – The 1st University of Reading Rapidplay was a definite success on March 8th.
Open: 1-2 David Collyer (Isle of Wight), Sebastien Chua (Oxford University) 5/6, 3 Forbes Welford-Ranson (Reading Uni.) 4½.
Challengers: 1-2 Jake Conyard (Camberley), Omar Balushi 5, 3-5 Hande Donmez, Luigi Sacco, Blaise Welch (all Reading University) 4½.

SHEFFIELD – Thomas Carroll triumphed at a hard-fought Darnall & Handsworth Rapidplay on March 22nd.

Open: 1 Thomas Carroll (Sheffield University) 4½/6, 2-3 Ayodeji Jeje (Hillsborough), Srivathsan Sasikumar (Leeds) 4.
Major: 1 Gary Hinchcliffe (Barnsley) 5, 2 Andrew Stoker 4½, 3-7 Jack Virgin (both Stockport), Zak Tomlinson (Doncaster), George Swanson (Stannington), Ved Boganadham (Ashton-under-Lyne), Sebastian Griffin-Young (West Nottingham) 4.
Intermediate: 1 Paul Wheatley (Sheffield Nomads) 5½, 2 Rico-Bradley Ellis (Scunthorpe) 5, 3 Vidhyuth Sudagar (Leeds) 4½.
Minor: 1 Mohammed Rohman (3Cs) 5½, 2 Mohanaditya Poluru (Newport) 5, 3 Raphael Stamolampros (Leeds) 4½.



Sheffield student Tom Carroll has become a White Rose first team 4NCL regular this season.

ST ALBANS – One of our regular columnists didn't have to face Michael Adams on this occasion as he won the St Albans Congress (April 5-6), to become Hertfordshire Champion.

Open: 1 Paul Littlewood (St Albans) 4½/5, 2-3 Qixiang Han (Streatham), Yichen Han (Oxford) 4.

Challengers: 1-2 Michael Botteley (Bedford), Anusweud Sasikumar (London) 4½, 3 Matthew Peat (Battersea) 4.

Major: 1 Richard Weston (Cowley) 4, 2-6 Hugh Fenwick (Mushrooms), Jack Hale (Bedford), Paul Kenning (Braintree), Timothy Watson, Noah Mosley (both St Albans) 3½.

Intermediate: 1 Bartosz Cieslik (Uxbridge) 5, 2-4 Russell Goodfellow (Tunbridge Wells), Joseph Stringer (Letchworth), Stephen Williams (Cwmbran) 4½.

Minor: 1-2 Lee Bullock (Hackney), Patrick Sartain (Harrow) 4½, 3-6 Charlie Ball, Oliver McWilliams, Peyman Owladi (all St Albans), Alan Borgars (Letchworth) 4.

STOKE GIFFORD – Haroon Majeed defeated a living legend, 91-year-old IM James Sherwin, as he racked up a big score at the Stoke Gifford Rapidplay on March 15th.

Open: 1 Haroon Majeed (Nottingham) 6½/7, 2-4 Tom Shepherd (Bicester), Chris Beaumont (Bristol), James Sherwin (Bradford-on-Avon) 5.

Major: 1-4 Dimitar Dinev, James Guest (both Bristol University), Rayyan Mussa (Bristol), Hayden Griffiths (Thornbury) 5½.

Minor: 1 Max Ridley (Bristol University) 7, 2-3 Ashish Antony (Redland), Noah Taylor (Bristol) 5.

WELLS – Keith Arkell drew with 13-year-old Daniel Udovenko in the final round en route to triumphing at the Wells Congress (March 7-9).

Open: 1 Keith Arkell (Paignton) 4½/5, 2-3 Daniel Udovenko, Jan Murawski (both Oxford) 4.

Major: 1-2 James Thomas (Bristol), David Egginton (Clevedon) 4½, 3-4 Leon Nelson (Wells), Andrew Swales (Wanstead) 4.

Intermediate: 1-2 Anay Misra, Alexis Malibiran (both Bristol) 4, 3-6 Carter Knight (Somerset), Nicholas Stout (Purbeck), Gregory Roome (Wells), Miheli Gunaratne (Nottingham) 3½.

Minor: 1 Dillon Harle (Frome) 4½, 2 Rene Butler 4 (Market Harborough), 3-7 William Taplin (Keynsham), Louis Mallender (Taunton), Tarun Pamunwa, Graham Strickland (both Bristol), Cameron Gregg (Somerset) 3½.

WEYMOUTH – Some rare non-chess news, but those who also take their draughts seriously might wish to know that an occasional contributor to Readers' Letters, Richard Pask, a grandmaster and noted authority on the game, has recently had his monumental *Complete Checkers: Insights* published in hardback.

YORK – The 12th ChessMates International took place in the inspiring setting of York Guildhall (March 21-23). This European junior team tournament is designed to foster friendship across the board, as well as provide strong competitive chess, and certainly delivered under the guidance of organiser Ben Rich. When the dust had settled, Sachsen-Anhalt from Germany emerged victorious, winning all five of their matches, although they were slightly fortunate to turn things round to prevail 5½-4½ against England in the final round.

Led by Stanley Badacsonyi, England took the silver medals, with Rotterdam third. There were also several very impressive individual performances: Zack Norris (England), Gustav Polzin (Sachsen-Anhalt) and Luka Wink (Rotterdam) all scored 5/5, while Anton Belin

and Christian Haubold (both Sachsen-Anhalt) amassed 4½/5. With such strong teenage talent on display, it was no surprise that guest of honour for the weekend, Gawain Jones, had his work cut out in a 20-board simul on the Friday evening, where he did well to only lose two games. There was also the Yorkshire Cup for northern juniors held alongside on the Saturday and Sunday, won with 4/5 by Daniel Sewart (Newcastle), which left him a half-point ahead of Daniel Meredith (York), while IM Richard Bates's nephew, Daniel Patterson (York), won the under-1400 section with 4½/5.

The ChessMates Best Game prize went to Monaco's Clovis Kien for his win over Yorkshire's Benedikt Pitel.

C.Kien-B.Pitel

ChessMates International, York 2025
Semi-Slav Defence

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♘f3 ♙f6 4 ♘c3 e6 5 e3 ♙d6 6 ♖c2 0-0 7 ♙d3 dxc4 8 ♙xc4 b6?

Black's sixth move was already a little unusual and here the standard policy of 8...♗bd7 was definitely required, enabling Black to meet 9 e4 with 9...e5.

9 e4 ♙e7 10 e5 ♙d5 11 ♗e4

Keeping pieces on to attack. There was also 11...♙d3!?, intending 11...♗b4 (11...h6 12 ♖e2 is rather awkward for Black) 12 ♙xh7+ ♗h8 13 ♖b1 g6 14 ♙xg6 fxg6 15 a3! ♙d5 16 ♖xg6, with three pawns and an attack for the piece.

11...h6 12 h4!

Not only preparing g2-g4-g5, but also ♗h3-g3, as well as even ♗eg5 in conjunction with ♙xh6.

12...♙b7?

Far too slow. Black absolutely had to go 12...♙a6! to swap off an attacker when 13 ♙xh6? (the calm 13 b3! maintains a clear advantage) 13...♗b4! 14 ♖e2 ♙xc4 15 ♖xc4 gxh6 16 ♗h3 ♖d5 17 ♖e2 would only have left White with just about enough for the bishop.

13 ♙xh6!



13...gxh6 14 ♗eg5!

A second and very powerful blow as now 14...hxg5? 15 hxg5 ♙b4+ 16 ♙f1 ♗e8 17 ♖h7+ ♙f8 18 g6 would wipe Black out.

14...♙xg5 15 hxg5?

Allowing Black a reprieve. Instead, 15 ♙xg5! f5 (15...hxg5 16 hxg5 is devastating, as per our previous note) 16 exf6 ♗xf6 17 ♖h7+

♔f8 18 ♖xb7 would have won.

15...♗e7?

Missing his chance which lay in 15...♗g7! to facilitate ...♖h8. After 16 0-0-0 ♗d7 17 ♖e4 c5 18 ♖xh6 ♖h8 19 ♖h4 ♗e7! 20 ♗d3 White retains full and dangerous compensation, but clearly anything might have happened.



16 0-0-0!

Inviting the final piece to join the party.

16...♗g6

Now 16...♗g7 can be met by 17 gxf6+!? ♗h8 18 ♗g5 ♗f5 19 f4 then g2-g4 with a crushing attack.

17 ♖xh6 ♗g7 18 ♗xe6!

Olé! Clearly the game is up for Black.

18...♖e7 19 ♖dh1 ♖g8 20 ♖h7+ ♗f8

21 ♖xf7+ ♖xf7 22 ♗xf7 ♗xf7 23 ♖h7+

Plenty good enough, but 23 ♖f5+! ♗e8 24 ♖h7 would have forced a quick mate.

23...♗g7 24 ♖f5+

The unopposed queen is far, far too strong.

24...♗g8 25 ♖xg7+ ♗xg7 26 ♖f6+ ♗g8

27 ♖xg6+ ♗f8 28 e6 ♗e7 29 ♖f7+ 1-0

Alongside proceedings at the Guildhall, chess also took place in the adjacent St. Helen's Square in central York, featuring a giant set and several boards for the public to play on, or even receive some tuition.



Pictured with ChessMates President Jurriaan Kien, England captain Stanley Badacsonyi lifts the second place trophy at the end of a highly competitive weekend's chess at York Guildhall.



York Town Crier Ben Fry announces the start of a special challenge game on the giant set in St. Helen's Square between York Central MP Rachael Maskell and British Champion Gawain Jones.

Readers' Letters:

Boris Spassky

John Henderson provided a wonderful article about Boris Spassky last month, but there is a major flaw. On p.33, at the foot of column three, he refers to Boris's "only visit to Scotland was in 1988." It is hard to understand how he could forget Spassky's visit to Glasgow for a simultaneous performance on 25th September 1987. And it was Tron Marketing, mentioned by John re the Glenrothes event, that was responsible for that success.

It all stemmed from the Glasgow September Congress, 18-20 September, the winners of the various sections being entitled to a board against Spassky in the simul. All of this only happened, however, because Tron Marketing distributed an impressive proposal that was immediately picked up by the *Sunday Mail* newspaper. So, for once, organisers had some money to work with. *The Sunday Mail Chess Challenge* – the weekend tournament – received great coverage, and resulted in a record entry of 481.

And the simul result? 30 boards, with Spassky scoring +18, =11, -1. His loss was to 26-year-old IM Paul Motwani, who, would you believe, defeated Spassky's King's Gambit.

B.Spassky-P.Motwani

Glasgow (simul) 1988

King's Gambit

1 e4 e5 2 f4 d5 3 exd5 c6 4 ♖e2 cxd5 5 fxe5 ♗c6 6 ♗f3 ♗c5 7 c3 d4 8 d3 ♗ge7 9 ♗bd2 0-0 10 ♗b3 ♗b6 11 ♗d2 ♗e8 12 0-0-0 dxc3 13 bxc3 a5



14 d4 a4 15 ♗a1 ♗e6 16 ♗g5 h6 17 ♗xe7 ♗xe7 18 ♖b2 a3 19 ♖c2 ♗d5 20 ♗b5 ♗xc3 21 ♗xe8 ♖c8 22 ♗d2 ♗a5 0-1

It was because of the coverage of the weekend congress and the later simul that Glenrothes approached Tron Marketing.

Alan McGowan
Waterloo, Ontario

Awsome Andreea!

Having dominated the Menchik Memorial Challengers with 9/9 last summer, French WGM Andreea Navrotescu didn't relent come the 10th Menchik Memorial itself at the London MindSports Centre (March 20-24). She remained unbeaten to triumph with 6½/9, which left her half a point ahead of Polish WGM Alicja Sliwicka. A further half-point in arrears was the leading English scorer, WGM Elmira Mirzoeva, who finished alongside Italian IM Olga Zimina.

A.Navrotescu-Yao Lan

Menchik Memorial, London 2025
Ragozin Defence

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 d5 4 ♘c3 ♙b4 5 cxd5 exd5 6 ♙g5 h6 7 ♙h4 g5 8 ♙g3 ♘e4 9 ♘d2! ♘xg3

9...♘xc3 10 bxc3 ♙xc3 11 ♙c1 ♙a5 12 e3 followed by h2-h4 has long been known to offer White excellent play for the pawn.

10 hxg3 c6 11 ♙c2 ♙e6 12 a3 ♙xc3 13 bxc3 ♘d7 14 e3 ♙e7 15 ♙d3 ♙f8

The fearless 15...0-0-0! was the way to go, with rough equality after 16 a4 ♙b8 17 ♙b1 ♙c8 18 c4 h5.

16 0-0 c5?

Playing on the wrong side. 16...h5! 17 e4 h4 18 ♙ab1 would have been slightly better for White, and quite messy.

17 f4!?

Or just 17 c4!.

17...gxf4 18 exf4 ♙g4! 19 ♙ae1 ♙f6 20 dxc5 ♘xc5?!

20...h5! was still the way to go.

21 ♙e5! ♙d8 22 ♘b3?! ♙d6?

22...♘xb3 23 ♙xb3 ♙b6+! offered good chances to hold.

23 ♘d4! ♘d7 24 ♙f5!



24...♙xf5? 25 ♙xf5 ♘xe5? 26 fxe5 ♙e7 27 e6 ♙d6

27...f6 28 ♙g6 is also crushing.

28 ♙g6 ♙e8 29 ♙xf7 ♙g5 30 ♙f8+! 1-0



Overseas News

GREECE – 24-year-old Serbian IM Teodora Injac missed a mate in two in the first round, but then won nine games in a row to destroy a strong field at the European Women's Individual Championship in Rhodes (March 30 – April 12). Injac finished on 9½/11, some one and a half points ahead of Irina Bulmaga (ROU), Mai Narva (EST) and Aleksandra Maltsevskaya (POL). WGM Lan Yao would finish on '+3', while 12-year-old Ruqayyah Rida would gain some 56 rating points after finishing on 50%, alongside Elis Dican, with Bodhana Sivanandan and Anusha Subramanian a further half-point back.

ICELAND – As we saw in this month's Editorial, Parham Maghsoodloo dominated the Reykjavik Open (April 9-15), claiming the €5,000 first prize with 7½/9. That left the Iranian no.1 half a point clear of Vasyl Ivanchuk (UKR), Mahammad Muradli (AZE), Velimir Ivic (SRB), Abhijeet Gupta (IND), Lu Shanglei (CHN), Brandon Jacobson (USA), Elham Amar (NOR), Matthieu Cornette (FRA), Joshua Friedel (USA), and Denis Kadric (MNE) in this 419-player Open. Shreyas Royal was a further half-point back, as well as a point in front of Ezra Kirk, Sohun Lohia, Daniel Savidge and Simon Williams, while Eric Eedle and Emily Maton had the biggest rating gains of the Brits, collecting 39 and 32 Elo points respectively.

ROMANIA – Eforie Nord hosted the European Individual Championship (March 15-26), where German GM Matthias Bluebaum became the first ever player to win the event for a second time, claiming the title on tiebreak after finishing alongside compatriot Frederick Svane and Israel's Maxim Rodshtein on 8½/11. In this typically very strong Swiss, IM Jonah Willow and FM Sohun Lohia were the best of the Brits, scoring '+1'.

USA – The latest big event at the St. Louis Chess Club was the 2025 American Cup (March 15-21), a double-elimination knockout. Just like when he had triumphed two years ago, Hikaru Nakamura was the only player to win a classical game. He had to ride his luck at blitz to get past Abhimanyu Mishra 3½-2½ in the opening round, but then defeated Leinier Dominguez Perez with a lovely late attack as Black before overcoming Fabiano Caruana 2½-1½ in the Final and then 1½-½ in the Grand Final after Caruana had bounced back by overcoming Levon Aronian 3-1 in the elimination pool.

There was also a Women's Cup, won for a second year in a row by Alice Lee. The 15-year-old IM again impressed as she overcame Nazi Paikidze 3-1 then Irina Krush 1½-½ before defeating Tatev Abrahamyan 1½-½ and 3-1.

L.Dominguez Perez-H.Nakamura Saint Louis 2025



53...♘xd3!

Likewise, 53...♙xa2 54 ♙xa2 ♘xd3! wins, and if 55 ♘xd3 ♙xf3+ 56 ♘xf3 ♙xf3+ 57 ♙c2 ♙e2+.

54 ♙xa7

There's just no good move, as if 54 ♙xd3 ♙xa2+ 55 ♙f1 ♙xh2 or 54 ♘xd3 ♙xf3+! 55 ♘xf3 ♙xf3+ 56 ♙c2 ♙xa2+, winning the queen and the game.

54...♘f4+ 55 ♙xf4!?

Desperation in view of 55 ♙f2 ♙xa7 followed by ...♘xh3+.

55...d3+! 56 ♘xd3 exf4 57 ♙xf7 ♘xf7 58 ♘f1 ♙c5 59 ♘d2 ♙e3+ 60 ♙c2 ♙f6!



The extra queen is far too strong and Nakamura elects to win not by picking off h3, but rather making good use of that most important piece in the endgame, the king.

61 ♙b2 ♙e5 62 ♙a2 ♘d4 63 ♙a8 ♙c3+ 64 ♘d1 ♘d3 65 ♙d8+ ♙e3 66 e5 ♙xe5 67 ♙c2 ♙c3+ 68 ♘d1 e5 69 ♙d5 e4! 70 fxe4

Now the black f-pawn decides, but if 70 ♘xe4 ♙xb3+ 71 ♙e1 ♙xc4.

70...f3 71 e5 f2 72 ♘f1+ ♙f3 0-1

Nakamura went on to play in the second leg of the Freestyle Chess Grand Slam Tour in Paris (April 7-14), where he only found old foe Magnus Carlsen too strong come the final.



Simple Chess

Malcolm Pein on a surprisingly one-sided women's world championship match

The women's world chess championship proved to be very one-sided, as Ju Wenjun claimed her fifth title, defeating her contemporary Tan Zhongyi with ease. After going one down in Game 2 of the best-of-12-match, Ju won four games in a row and proved far superior in simple positions and endgames. This game was typical. Ju had been outplayed somewhat in the opening and middlegame and lost a pawn, but the challenger played a series of slightly inaccurate moves and then failed to spot the danger as follows:

Ju Wenjun–Tan Zhongyi Women's World Championship, Chongqing (Game 7) 2025



Black is a pawn up (play has just seen **34...gxf4+ 35 ♖xe3**), but passively placed and there were at least three ways to equality from here. Perhaps Tan was envisaging retaining the extra pawn and playing for the win.

35...♗b7?

The most active defence was to jettison the c6-pawn and liberate the light-squared bishop with **35...♗a3 36 ♜xc6 ♗b7 37 ♜c4 ♗xe4 38 ♗xe4 ♖g7**, which is an easy draw. If White declines to take on c6 after **35...♗a3** with **36 ♜c3** then **36...f5 37 exf6 (or 37 ♘d6 ♜d5) 37...♜f5+ 38 ♗e3 (if 38 ♖g3 h4+) 38...♗b7 39 ♗c5 ♗b2 40 ♜c2 ♗xf6** is fine for Black.

Trying to reduce the remaining material and, more importantly, free the rook with **35...a4** was also fine, and if **36 ♗c5 ♗xc5 37 ♘xc5 axb3 38 axb3 ♖g7**. Black's rook can escape via a5 and although the knight dominates the bishop, Black should be OK, even if the h5-pawn falls.

Similarly after **35...♗f8 36 ♗c5 a4! 37 bxa4 ♜a5 38 ♜c4 ♗a6 39 ♗xe7+ ♗xe7 40 ♜xc6 ♜xa4** Black is fine; **...♗d3** is a threat.

However, after **35...♗d7 36 ♗c5 ♖f8 37 g3** Black might suffer for a long time.

36 ♗c5!



Few experts expected Ju Wenjun (left) to defeat her old rival Tan Zhongyi by as much as 6½–2½.



36...♗xc5

After **36...♗d8 37 ♜d1! ♗b6 38 ♗xb6 ♜xb6** White just marches her king in as Black's pieces watch helplessly from the queenside: **39 ♖g5 ♖g7 (or 39...♜b5 40 ♖h6 when Black must give up the rook on d5 to a knight fork, as 40...♗f8 41 ♘f6 threatens mate in two and 41...♜xe5 42 ♘d7+ is unfortunate) 40 ♘d6** is followed by **♜f1** and Black either loses material or is mated by the white rook, knight and king. One possible line would be **40...c5 41 ♜f1 ♗xg2 42 ♜xf7+ ♖g8 43 ♖h6 ♗d5 44 ♜e7 ♜b8 45 ♖g7+ ♖f8 46 ♖h7 and ♜f7#**.

Instead, **36...♗f8 37 ♜c3 ♗a6 38 a4 ♜b7 39 ♗d6 ♜b6? 40 ♘f6** threatens **♘d7+**, as well as **♜g3–g8#**, and an exchange on d6 does not prevent the latter. In this line even after the superior **39...♜d7 40 ♗xe7+ ♗xe7 41 ♘c7 ♜a7 42 ♜g3** Black has no prospects.

37 ♘xc5 ♖g7

It's too late for **37...a4 38 ♖g5!** (or **38 bxa4**

♜b2 39 ♜d1) 38...axb3 39 axb3 ♖g7 40 ♜c4 ♗c8 41 b4 ♜b8 42 ♜d4.

38 ♖g5 ♗a8

After **38...♗c8 39 a4 ♜b4 40 ♜c4 ♜xc4 41 bxc4** White continues **♘b3**, takes the a5-pawn and advances c4–c5 with a won position.

39 ♖xh5 ♜b8 40 ♜c4



Black's bishop will never see daylight. This must have been a particularly demoralising position and loss for Tan.

40...♜h8+ 41 ♖g4 ♜h2 42 ♖g3 ♜h5 43 ♜g4+ ♖f8 44 ♜a4 ♖e7 45 ♜xa5 ♜xe5 46 ♜a7+ ♖d6 47 b4 1–0

Those four wins in a row, the first two in Ju's hometown of Shanghai, the last two after the match had moved to Chongqing, where Tan hails from and resides, gave the defending champion a mammoth 6–2 lead and she secured overall victory by professionally steering Game 9 to a draw with the white pieces.



Studies with Stephenson

This month's column is a review of a slim volume (just 110 pages), celebrating the FIDE Centenary 1924-2024. The book is titled *One Endgame Study in a Thousand*. It is edited by study expert Gady Costeff and has been published in Bratislava by Peter Gvozdzák under the auspices of FIDE and the WFCC (World Federation for Chess Composition).

The editor has selected just one study from every year of FIDE's existence, from out of roughly 1,000 published each year. As he says, this has resulted in the presentation of 100 high-quality endgame studies. To promote FIDE's motto, *we are one family*, he has limited himself to just a single study by any one composer.

Each study takes up just one page and is illustrated by at least three diagrams. The solutions are intentionally brief, with few notes, to save space. Gady suggests that, to understand the more complex studies, readers should "consult your phone, or at least a grandmaster."

As well as being one of the foremost study experts in the world, Gady has always been an amusing and engaging writer. In answer to those who have been known to accuse composers of producing positions unlikely to occur in a game, Gady cheekily suggests that "this is reminiscent of criticising a painting for not being a photograph."

This book is warmly recommended, not just as a collection of 100 very fine endgame studies, which it most certainly is, but also as a celebration of the art of the endgame study during FIDE's first century. It should be remembered that FIDE's first president, Alexander Rueb, was a noted endgame study expert who wrote two standard works on the subject, *De Schaakstudie* (1949-1955), and *Bronnen van Schaakstudie*.

Our first study is the one that Gady selected to represent the year 1927.

Froim Simkhovich 1st Prize, *Pravda*, 1927



White to play and draw

We start with a sequence of checks forcing the black king to a3. If, at any stage, Black goes backwards, then he repeats and accedes to the draw.

1 ♖f7+ ♔d7 2 ♙e6+ ♔d6 3 ♙f4+ ♔c5!
4 ♙e3+ ♔b4 5 ♙d2+ ♔a3



What now? There are no further checks and the black queen threatens the white knight on a8, which can't save itself.

6 ♙b1!

Does this plan to check the black king back to e8?

6... ♖xa8

So Black captures the knight giving his king a potential bolt-hole at c7.

7 ♙a1!!



The second consecutive passing move. What is going on? Gady comments: "Now a queen move to any dark square, or ... ♖e8, or ... ♙ any, all lead to perpetual check starting with ♙c1+ all the way to ♙g5+." Gady also adds: "7... ♖e8 is a self-block which only becomes apparent after 8 ♙c1+ ♔b4 9 ♙d2+ ♔c5 10 ♙e3+ ♔d6 11 ♙f4+ ♔e7 12 ♙g5+."

7... ♖b7

Black's only try to avoid the draw is met with: 8 ♙b1!!

And we have what study enthusiasts call a *positional draw*. As Gady describes: "♖ moves to a white square or moves with the a-pawn are answered by ♙a1 or ♙b1 passing moves."



One Endgame Study in a Thousand can be obtained direct from fidealbum.com at the price of €8.00.

Our study for solving was selected by Gady for the year 1940.

Aleksandr Gulyaev

Special Prize, *Shakhmaty v SSSR*, 1940



White to play and win

To enter email editor@chess.co.uk or send your name and address, with the main variations, to Chess & Bridge, 44 Baker St, London W1U 7RT, postmarked no later than May 31st. £30 of products from Chess & Bridge are available for the first correct entry drawn.

The solution to November's competition:

Jonathan Mestel

2nd Prize, Champagne Tourney,
Rhodes 2007



Proof Game in 11.5 moves

1 c3 f5 2 ♖a4 ♙f7 3 ♖xd7 ♙g6 4 ♖xe7
♙h6 5 ♖e4 fxe4 6 h4 ♙g4 7 h5 ♙xe2
8 ♙xe2 ♖e8 9 ♙e3 ♙c5+ 10 d4 exd3+
11 ♙f3+ g5 12 hxg6+

Two, hopefully unexpected, *en-passant* captures.



Solutions

to Find the Winning Moves (pp.26-28)

1) Fiorito-Colville

1...xf2+! 2 ♖xf2 ½-½ Now it's stalemate, but otherwise the bishop would fall.

2) Bykovskiy-Mcligeyo

1...♔d7! (the only move; the game saw instead 1...♔e2? when 2 e8♗! ♔xe8 was stalemate) **2 e8♗+ ♔xe8 3 ♔a8 f2 4 a7 ♔a2!** wins trivially.

3) Aronian-Sevian

1...♔d6! (White will only be able to escape the mating net by giving up a whole piece on c5) **2 ♔a5 ♔a3# 0-1**

4) Hamer-Harkness

1 ♔xe4! ♔d4+ (if 1...fxe4?? 2 ♔g5#) **2 cxd4 fxe4 3 d5** (or 3 ♔e7!) **3...♔g7 4 ♔e6 ♔f8 5 ♔f2 b5 6 ♔e3 1-0**

5) Rich-Marchix

It's a quick mate: **1 ♔a3+! ♔g7 2 ♔h7+** (or 2 ♔f7+! ♔f6 3 ♗g6#) **2...♔xh7 3 ♗xf5+ 1-0**

6) Koehler-Large

1...d5! 0-1 The rook on b4 or pinned knight on f4 will fall.

7) Tait-Gollins

1...♔e1+! 2 ♔xe1? (even 2 ♔d2 ♔b1! 3 ♗g5+ ♔f7 4 ♗g4 ♔d8! is lost for White, who is far too tied down, with Tait offering the instructive line 5 ♔e5+ ♔f6 6 ♗g8 ♔e7 7 ♔ec4 b5! 8 ♔xa5 ♔a3! when Black wins after 9 ♔xc6 ♔xb2 10 ♔xd4 ♔d1+ 11 ♔e3 ♔d5+ or 9 ♔d3 ♔xb2 10 ♔xd4 ♔d5+ 11 ♔c5 ♔a3+!) **2...♔xf4# 0-1**

8) Van Kemenade-Higgie

1 ♔g7! (1 ♔g8? ♗g6+! 2 ♔h8 ♗xf7 3 g6 ♗f6+ 4 g7 ♗h6+ 5 ♔g8 ♔e6 6 ♔f8 ♔f6 0-1 was the game) **1...♗xg5+ 2 ♔h8 ♗f6+ 3 ♔g8 ♗g6+ 4 ♔h8!** is a well-known draw, based on the potential stalemate.

9) Misyura-Camp

1 ♔e7+! (a deadly intermediate check, and the only way to win) **1...♔c8 2 ♔xf1 ♔xf1 3 ♔xg5 e2 4 ♔d2** (the e-pawn is secure; White's own far-apart passed pawns will now swiftly prove decisive) **4...e1♗+ 5 ♔xe1 ♔b7 6 ♔f4 ♔a6 7 ♔e5 ♔c4 8 g5 ♔d5 9 g6 ♔b5 10 ♔f2 ♔xa5 11 g7 ♔a6 12 ♔d6 ♔b7 13 ♔e7 ♔c8 14 ♔f8 1-0**

10) Thorhallsson-Thorgeirsson

1 ♔xh7+! (1 cxd4!? ♗xd4+ 2 ♗e3! ♗xa1+ 3 ♔f1 ♔b2 4 ♗f4 g6 5 h4 also leaves White with a decisive attack) **1...♔xh7 2 cxd4 ♗e7 3 ♔h3+ ♔g8 4 ♔d3 ♔f8?** (this loses

by force, but if 4...g5 5 ♔f1 and ♔f6 wins) **5 ♗h7+ ♔f7 6 ♔f1+ ♔e8 7 ♔xf8+ 1-0** 7...♗xf8 8 ♔f3 is a killer, as is 7...♔xf8 8 ♗h8+ ♔f7 9 ♔g3.

11) Royal-Assylov

1 ♔xe6! (or 1 ♗h8+ ♔e7 2 ♔xe6+!) **1...fxe6 2 ♗h8+ ♔e7 3 ♗xg7+ ♔d6 4 dxc5+** picked up the loose rook on b2 to win the game.

12) Arnold-Slinger

White missed the sting in the tail and so didn't play: **1 ♔e4! ♔xe4** (or 1...♗xg5 2 ♔xa8 with an extra exchange) **2 ♔xe7 ♔e8 3 ♔ad1! ♔b7 4 ♗xe4!**, winning a piece due to the potential back-rank mate.

13) Badacsonyi-Thorissou

1...♔xc3! (1...♔ac8? 2 ♔fc1 rather let White off in the game, which was later drawn) **2 ♔ac1** (there's nothing better, as 2 ♔fc1 b4 is also very strong, and if 3 ♗xa6? ♗xf2+ 4 ♔h1 ♔e3) **2...♔b6 3 ♔xc3 b4** would have won material and left White in all sorts of trouble.

14) Warmerdam-Fedoseev

1...g6! 2 hxg6 fxc6 0-1 The queen is trapped. If 3 ♗xg6+ ♔g7 or 3 ♗e5 ♔f6 4 ♗e3 ♔xd4 and wins.

15) Mason-Bramson

1 ♔e5! (unfortunately rejected in the game as White had missed the neat follow-up) **1...♔b7 2 ♔b8!** (always consider all checks, captures and forcing moves!) **2...♗xb8** (2...♔d5? 3 cxd5 ♔cd8 4 ♔c6 is crushing) **3 ♔xb8 ♔xb8 4 ♗e2** leaves White clearly better, queen for rook and piece ahead.

16) Assaubayeva-Tan Zhongyi

1...♔xg2! 2 ♔xe5? (2 ♗xg2 f4 3 ♔xe5! ♔xe5 4 ♔xe5 had to be tried when after 4...♔xg3 5 ♔xd5 ♔xg2+ 6 ♔xg2 ♔g8 Black would grind away, but White must have decent chances to hold, beginning with 7 ♔e4) **2...♔xe1 3 ♔xd5 ♔g8! 4 ♔xf5** (or 4 ♔xf5? ♔xg3!) **4...♗a8! 0-1**

17) Kien-Haubold

1...♔xh3! (or 1...♗a7+ 2 ♔h1 ♔xh3!) **2 gxxh3** (2 axb5!? ♔c8 3 bxa6 ♗h4 4 ♔c4 ♔ef6 5 b5 ♔g4! should also be winning) **2...♗a7+! 3 ♔h1 ♗f2 4 ♔g2** (or 4 ♔e2 g2+! 5 ♔xg2 ♔g3+ 6 ♔h2 ♔xe2) **4...♗xe1+** left Black the exchange ahead and winning fairly straightforwardly.

18) Dasgupta-Blokhin

1 ♔h5! (1 ♔f1 ♔g5! would be good for White, but is also much less incisive and

strong) **1...gxf2+ 2 ♔xf2 ♔f6 3 ♗xb7 ♔g7?** (even 3...♔b8 4 ♗xc6+ ♔f7 5 b4 should be winning) **4 ♗xc6+ e6 5 ♔xe6! ♗xb2+ 6 ♔f1 ♗b6 7 ♔xf5+! ♔g6** (it's mate in any case and 7...♔xf5 8 ♔xg7+ ♔xg7 9 ♔d5+ ♔g4 10 ♗c4+ ♔g3 11 ♗f4# would be a neat finish) **8 ♔f8+! ♔xf5 9 ♗f3+ ♔g5 10 ♗f4+ ♔h5 11 ♔d5+ 1-0**

19) Ermitsch-Glek

1...♔xf5! 2 ♔xf7+ (the key point is that Black will queen after 2 ♔xf5? ♔xb3+! 3 axb3 a2) **2...♔c7 3 ♔b1 ♔b2** (3...♔xb1 4 ♔xb1 ♔e4 5 ♔e3 ♔d2+ 6 ♔c1 ♔xb3+! also wins, as pointed out by John Watson on ChessPublishing) **4 ♔xf5 ♔xa2 5 ♔e7+ ♔b6 6 ♔c8 ♔xh2 7 b4 a2! 8 bxc5+ ♔a5 0-1**

20) Santos Latasa-Razafindratsima

1 ♔d7! (in the game, 1 ♔d6? ♗b8+ 2 ♔e6 ♗c8+? 3 ♔e5? reached position no.21) **1...♗a6+** (or 1...♗f8 2 ♗f7! ♗c8+ 3 ♔e5 ♗b8+ 4 ♔e4 ♗a8+ 5 ♔e3 when Black is out of checks and the threat of h5-h6 deadly) **2 ♔e7! ♗f6+ 3 ♔e8** wins due to the weakness of Black's own king, and if **3...♗e5+** (likewise, 3...c4 4 ♗c8! wins, as does 3...♗a6!? 4 ♔d8! ♗b6+ 5 ♔c8 ♗a6+ 6 ♔b8 ♗b6+ 7 ♗b7) **4 ♔d8 ♗b8+ 5 ♗c8 ♔d6+ 6 ♔e8** (threatening 7 ♔f7+) **6...♔g8 7 ♗f5!** when the position of the black king makes all the difference, White winning straightforwardly after, for example, **7...♗b8+ 8 ♔e7 ♗c7+ 9 ♔d7 ♗e5+ 10 ♗e6+**.

21) Santos Latasa-Razafindratsima

1...c4! (setting up the stalemate resource) **2 ♗xc4** (if 2 bxc4 ♗f5+! too, and even 2 h6!? cxb3 3 hxg7+ ♔xg7 4 ♗f7+ ♔h6 5 ♗h7+ ♔g5 6 g7 ♗c5+ 7 ♔e6 ♗c6+ is a draw) **2...♗f5+! 3 ♔d4** (3 ♔d6 ♗e5+ 4 ♔d7 ♗e8+ 5 ♔c7 ♗b8+ would also leave the white king unable to avoid the desperado checks for too long) **3...♗e5+ 4 ♔d3 ♗e3+ 5 ♔c2 ♗xb3+! 6 ♔xb3 ½-½**

22) Erigaisi-Carlsen

1 ♔e2! (the only winning move, cutting off the black rook) **1...♔h1+** (1...♔xh3 2 c6 ♔h1+ 3 ♔f1 also wins, after 3...bxc6 4 b7 e2! 5 ♔xe2 ♔h2+ 6 ♔e1 ♔b2 7 ♔a6! ♔xf3 8 ♔d8) **2 ♔f1 ♔xf3 3 ♔f6+!** (an essential follow-up and not 3 c6?? e2 4 ♔f6+ because 4...♔f5! would leave White red-faced) **3...♔g3 4 c6 ♔d3 5 cxb7 1-0**

23) Nakamura-Caruana

1...♔g1! (1...♔h2+!? 2 ♔d2 ♔g2! also works, but 1...♔e1? was preferred in the game where the b-pawn quickly proved its worth: 2 ♔c3 ♔e3 3 ♔d5+! ♔xd5 4 exd5 ♔xg3 5 b6 ♔g2+ 6 ♔c3 ♔g3+ 7 ♔c4 1-0) **2 ♔d2** (2 ♔c3 ♔g2+! 3 ♔b3 ♔xg3 pins the knight and gives Black sufficient counterplay too after 4 ♔c4 ♔f3) **2...♔g2! 3 ♔d1** (threatening ♔a7; clearly if 3 ♔a7?! ♔xe4+ and 3 b6 ♔c6 4 ♔b4 ♔b7 also holds) **3...♔xg3 4 ♔a7 ♔g1+ 5 ♔c2 g3!** sees Black's counterplay arriving in the nick of

time, with the game likely to end as a draw after **6 ♖xb7** (if **6 ♖a3 g2 7 ♖g3 ♖e1 8 ♖xg2 ♖xe4!**) **6...g2 7 ♖b6+** (7 ♖b8!? ♖c1+ 8 ♖xc1 g1♖+ 9 ♖c2 should lead to a fortress) **7...♖g7 8 ♖f3 ♖f1 9 f6+! ♖h6** (or **9...♖h7 10 ♖g5+ ♖g6 11 ♖h3 ♖h1 12 ♖b8**) **10 ♖b8 ♖f2+ 11 ♖c1 ♖xf3 12 ♖h8+ ♖g6 13 ♖g8+**.

24) Caruana-Sevian

1 ♖h6+!! (1 ♖xf6! works too and transposes after **1...gxf6 2 ♖h6 1...gxh6** (1...♖f8 2 ♖d3! is a silent killer) **2 ♖xh6 ♖e7** (2...♖e8? 3 ♖g7 would be easy for White) **3 ♖g7+ ♖d6 4 ♖d2!** (going after the black king and bishop; 4 ♖h7!? ♖bc8 5 ♖c1! also wins, the main point being revealed after **5...e4 6 ♖d7+! ♖xd7 7 cxd7**

♖xd7 8 ♖c6+) **4...a5** (likewise, **4...♖b3 5 ♖xc7!** (the simplest) **5...♖xc7 6 ♖xa5+ ♖d6 7 c7 ♖d7 8 ♖c1 ♖bc8 9 ♖b6+ ♖d5 10 cxd8 ♖xd8 11 ♖xf6** (White is winning, being two pawns up and with a much safer king) **11...d3 12 ♖f3+ e4 13 ♖h5+ ♖e6 14 ♖c6+ ♖xc6 15 bxc6 d2 16 ♖d1 1-0**

This Month's New Releases



Learn from the Legends 2

Mihail Marin, 440 pages

Quality Chess

RRP £25.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £23.39**

This book is a sequel to 2004's highly regarded *Learn from the Legends* (Quality Chess). It was a popular and successful volume which went to three editions. The follow-up has suffered a lengthy gestation period, by anyone's standards, but it has been worth the wait.

The most instructive games of five hugely influential players – albeit all of whom failed to capture the ultimate title, despite their best efforts – are placed under the microscope, and they are: Leonid Stein, Lev Polugaevsky, David Bronstein, Paul Keres and Lajos Portisch.

In the words of the back cover: "Much like the first book, the ambitious student can learn a great deal from studying the legends of yesteryear, aided by the author's expert insights, while more casual readers will enjoy the biographical and best-games compilation of five wonderful chess players."

The author also found a theme with which to connect the chess stars in question: "I started my work free of preconceptions but, as the book progressed, it became clear that tactical abilities and attacking skills were common elements in the styles of my heroes. This discovery gave me the general direction for the book, turning it into a slightly unusual form of tactical and attacking manual, within a biographical framework. At the same time, all the players had their own trademark way of preparing and carrying out their attacks. It is easy to notice certain particularities of the double-edged tactical battles in each case too."

Therefore, readers can rightly expect to enjoy a feast of attacking chess games, backed up by often unusual ideas, especially

in the case of the eccentric David Bronstein, of course. Only one of the players in question is still with us and he is singled out for special praise in the book's introduction.

"Many may be surprised that I dedicated the last chapter to Lajos Portisch, but I had both objective and subjective reasons for doing so. Even though he never came close to challenging for the highest title in chess, Portisch qualified for the Candidates eight times, a record beaten only by Korchnoi. In my opinion, Portisch's style is the hardest to understand. Almost unanimously regarded as a theoretician and positional maestro, he gives me the impression of a very concrete player. His moves and general decisions were hard to anticipate; but after his games were finished, they looked logical overall. Like Polugaevsky and Keres, the classical strategist Portisch rarely missed an opportunity to initiate incalculable complications or attacks. He was also one of the players I was rooting for during my teenage years, a period in which I had the opportunity to play three games against him – all ending in my defeat."

Portisch, a player who "could attack in any phase of the game and irrespectively of the evaluation of the position, as long as this corresponded to the concrete requirements", is shown to let rip in the style of the young Garry Kasparov in the following game.

L.Portisch-I.Radulov

Nice Olympiad 1974



20 ♖xg7!

This looks very powerful, but is not the end of the story.

20...♖8e5!?

"This is the defence prepared by Radulov. Black removes the rook from the attacked square, defends the hanging bishop, puts White into an unpleasant pin and leaves the knight trapped. The concept looks brilliant! Black's centralization seems impressive but his pieces are not secure, as will soon become apparent."

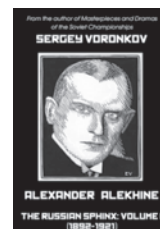
21 f4! ♖xf4 22 ♖e8!!

The lovely idea is **22...♖xe8 23 ♖xf4 ♖xf4 24 ♖xd5**, and the game did not last much longer (1-0, 24).

It is good to see the sharper side of Portisch's play highlighted, to help counter the stereotypical view that he was 'just' a positional player.

The deeply-annotated games are followed by test positions, inviting the reader to play like the chess heroes. There are lots of fine photographs too and, of course, biographical material on each of the five players. This book will doubtlessly do well, and it deserves to. It is a timely reminder to the online generation that we all still have a lot to learn from the games of the great chess legends.

Sean Marsh



Alexander Alekhine – The Russian Sphinx: Volume I (1892-1921)

Sergey Voronkov, 472 pages

Elk and Ruby

RRP £39.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £35.95**

Elk and Ruby have definitely come up trumps again with their latest historical chess book. There have been many books written about Alexander Alekhine, who was, of course, without any shadow of doubt, one of

the best players in history. However, this extraordinary book (the first of four volumes) features an incredible wealth of previously unpublished material that anyone interested in Alekhine must surely need to add it to their 'to buy' list of chess books.

The blurb sets the scene very nicely: "This first volume traces his early development through to his departure from Soviet Russia in 1921, while also attempting to untangle the knot of his complex relationships with all his five wives."

Five wives! There is enough intrigue in that aspect alone to pique the reader's interest, but there is more; much more:

"Unpublished or long forgotten memoirs, as well as original newspaper and magazine articles from around the world, are drawn together in forensic research to paint the most extensive picture of Alekhine ever created. Key events in his life are reconsidered, including his release from internment in Germany during World War 1, his escape from execution in Odessa, his service under the Bolsheviks as a detective, his trip to the Urals as a Comintern translator, as well as just how he emigrated."

The author has definitely left no stone unturned to bring the story of Alekhine to life. Memoirs of his classmates (not always showing Alekhine in a good light) are mined for important information and early impressions, and "chess-wise, Voronkov presents over 50 games and fragments with original commentary by Alekhine and his opponents, most of which has not been published in books before. These include eleven completely unknown Alekhine games as well as ten game scores of other players with light commentary by Alekhine from the first Soviet Championship in 1920, found in Alexander Kotov's archive."

Rare photographs abound. Alekhine's appearance changed dramatically over the years, but his attacking flair always remained undiminished, even in correspondence chess.

A.Vyakhirev-A.Alekhine

1st Prince Shakhovskoy
Correspondence Tournament 1907



32...♖e8!

"Beginning an elegant mating combination. Black cuts off the white king's escape to the queenside."

33 ♖e3 ♖h1+ 34 ♜g1 ♜h4! 35 ♜h2

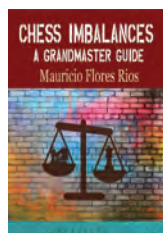
"Now the black queen is trapped. But it sacrifices itself, ordering the pawn to deliver the final blow to the opponent."

35...♜g2+! 36 ♜xg2 fxg2# 0-1

A typical Alekhine attack!

This is a truly extraordinary book and it will very interesting to see what else the author has unearthed for the forthcoming volumes in the series. It doesn't matter how much anyone has already read about Alekhine; this book features so much that will be new to all readers, making it an absolutely essential purchase to everyone interested in the fourth world champion and his extraordinary life.

Sean Marsh



Chess Imbalances: A Grandmaster Guide

Mauricio Flores Rios, 504 pages, paperback

RRP £25.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £23.39**

When Quality Chess released *Chess Structures: A Grandmaster Guide* by Mauricio Flores Rios in 2015, it quickly became established as a go-to book for coaches and all players serious about improving their own game. This follow-up work has been worth the wait and may well also become a bestseller, with the Chilean GM now turning his attention to unbalanced positions, including a detailed examination of such topics as bishop versus knight and rook against two minor pieces. Those are piece imbalances and unsurprisingly material imbalances also receive a great amount of coverage, ranging from pawn sacrifices right through to learning when it's a good time to even sacrifice the queen for lasting compensation.



Chess Opening Repertoire: London System

Cyrus Lakdawala, 336 pages, paperback

RRP £19.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £17.99**

Cyrus Lakdawala may have become established over the past 15 or so years as a leading chess author, but it's the London System with which he is most commonly associated. Back in 2010 he wrote *Play the London System* and now he returns with a new, up-to-date repertoire with his favourite opening for Popular Chess. A 1 d4 and 2 ♖f4 move order is again advocated, with 1...d5 2 ♖f4 ♖f6 3 e3 c5 countered with the flexible 4 c3 ♖c6 5 ♖bd2 and all Black's other major

defences covered. This might best be described as a steady repertoire for White, one authored by one of the London's leading experts.



Chess Opening Repertoire: Benoni Mayhem

Andrew Martin, 320 pages, paperback

RRP £19.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £17.99**

A world away from the London is 1 d4 ♖f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♖c3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 followed by 6...g6, the dynamic, exciting, if risky Modern Benoni. That receives the most coverage in this new work on the Benoni from Popular Chess and Andrew Martin. The highly experienced English IM and author also looks at the Old Benoni (1 d4 c5 2 d5 e5), the Vulture (1 d4 ♖f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 ♖e4!?), the Clarendon Court (1 d4 c5 2 d5 f5), and the Snake Benoni (1 d4 ♖f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 ♖c3 exd5 5 cxd5 ♖d6), with the needs of the club player kept firmly in mind by Martin throughout.

Note that both the Lakdawala and Martin new releases from Popular Chess are available too in hardback format should you prefer, retailing at £24.99 or £22.49 for Subscribers, while from Quality Chess a hardcover version of *Chess Imbalances* is also available: £29.99 or £26.99 for Subscribers.



King's Indian Attack

Svitlana Demchenko, PC/MAC booklet or download; running time: 6 hours, 37 minutes

RRP £34.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £31.45**

Canadian WIM Demchenko returns to the ChessBase studio to advocate the easy-to-learn and hardly unaggressive King's Indian Attack. After considering the most important set-ups to know, Demchenko's detailed coverage begins with 1 ♖f3, although near the end she does also consider the KIA after a 1 e4 move order. Along the way, good use is made of several model games, while users may also enjoy the typical tactics test and the practice repertoire positions.



Mastering Chess Exchanges

Jacob Aagaard & Renier Castellanos,
368 pages, paperback

RRP £24.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £22.49**

Knowing when to carry out, seek or avoid an exchange is a topic which players struggle with, right from fairly low levels up to grandmasters. Thankfully help is now at hand from Quality Chess and two leading chess trainers. The grandmaster authors will help you to better evaluate the difference between two pieces, as well as be guided by the pawn structure when it comes to looking at an exchange. They also devote plenty of space to explaining how to judge positional and dynamic factors, as well as the pivotal role played by exchanges in the endgame, with the whole book rounded off by 365 test positions, ranging from the relatively straightforward to the mind-bogglingly difficult. Note that a hardback version is also available, retailing at £29.50 or £26.55 for Subscribers.



Mastering Chess Strategy Vol.3

Robert Ris, PC/MAC booklet or download;
running time: 5 hours, 27 minutes

RRP £34.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £31.45**

Dutch IM Robert Ris has become a popular presenter for ChessBase, known for the clarity of his material and explanation. Here his focus is on showing how to “exploit your opponent’s weaknesses”. That means identifying weak spots in the opponent’s camp, then deciding which should be targeted. With the material built around a fair number of interactive exercises, Ris helpfully also explains when calculation is required even in a positional setting, and when it’s best to remain flexible.



Never Mind The Grandmasters

Carl Portman, 244 pages, paperback
RRP £14.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £13.49**

Our popular columnist has produced a collection of his favourite and most instructive columns in collaboration with Steel City Press. If you’re a fan of Carl’s work and fairly new to the magazine, you may especially enjoy this new book. Even long-term subscribers may well enjoy rereading the best of Carl, with several columns updated and even a little new material included, as well as a foreword from Matthew Sadler no less.

Opening Encyclopaedia 2025

ChessBase PC/MAC booklet or download
RRP £149.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £134.95**

The latest version of ChessBase’s famous databases appeared towards the end of last year and now it’s the turn of the annual release of the *Opening Encyclopaedia*. It now contains almost 8,000 opening surveys, as well as more than 1,500 special opening databases, and over 100 videos, including Dorian Rogozenco’s coverage of all the latest trends. For those who really like their theory, the *Opening Encyclopaedia* remains a very handy tool. If you already have *Opening Encyclopaedia 2024*, it’s possible to upgrade for £74.95 (or £67.45 for Subscribers), by supplying Chess & Bridge with your existing serial key.



Rebel Queen

Susan Polgar, 352 pages, hardback

RRP £25.00 **SUBSCRIBERS £22.50**

Subtitled ‘The Cold War, Misogyny, and the Making of a Grandmaster’, this is the autobiography of one of the game’s most famous female players, Susan Polgar, the eldest of the trio of extremely talented sisters. While not everyone will agree that Polgar has met adversity at every turn, there can be little doubt that she has had to regularly overcome misogyny, while forging successful careers, first at the chess board in her native Hungary and then as a leading chess coach and administrator in the USA. This enlightening read from mainstream publisher Hachette certainly packs a punch.



Smooth Chess Improvement

Daniel Gormally, 304 pages, hardback

RRP £34.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £31.45**

The popular English Grandmaster has again teamed up with Informant Publishing for his latest book, which certainly has an intriguing title. As usual for Gormally, this book is quite wide-ranging, if ever entertaining and often quite instructive or even thought-provoking. He begins by examining what he’s learnt from his own recent games and tournaments, reveals the often unexpected methods by which he’s aimed to remain sharp and improve, and then presents two quizzes: one designed to reveal what sort of chess personality you are and an “impossible” one, which will definitely fully keep the mind busy for a while.



The Black Sniper

Charlie Storey, PC/MAC booklet or
download; running time: 9 hours

RRP £34.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £31.45**

Geordie FM Charlie Storey is another to have made a return visit to Hamburg, in his case to update his 2017 coverage on his favourite opening, 1...g6, 2...g7 and 3...c5, the Black Sniper, which he considers to be “A hypermodern weapon for attackers”. This detailed recording is entirely new and Storey’s love of Black’s set-up and dynamic chances is once again impossible to miss. 1 e4 g6 2 d4 g7 and then 3 f3 c5 4 dxc5 and 3 c3 c5 4 dxc5 – dubbed respectively the Arsenal variation and the Manchester United variation by football-mad Storey – both ask definite questions of Black, ones which are not shirked on this lively presentation.

The Carlsbad Pawn Structure Revisited

Christian Bauer, 204 pages, hardback

RRP £32.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £29.65**

This famous pawn structure most commonly arises via 1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 f3 c3 f6 4 cxd5 exd5, but can occur in plenty of other settings, including lines of the Nimzo-Indian and, in reverse, the Exchange Caro-Kann. Understanding the key concepts for both sides will help not only all those who play the structure, with either colour, but also further one’s chess education, especially with French Grandmaster Christian Bauer as a guide. He focusses his attention on the two main plans for White in the Exchange QGD, central play and the fabled minority attack, while providing good coverage of the key theoretical variations along the way.



The Magic and Beauty of Quiet Chess Moves

Bogoslaw Boder & Jacek Bielczyk,
304 pages, hardback

RRP £35.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £33.35**

The Polish authors are determined to show even the most materialistic and unaesthetic player that chess really can possess a large amount of beauty, with their emphasis especially on quiet moves. These can radically change a position and might be fairly basic, such as improving a badly placed piece, or radical, subtle and even amazing, when in the middle of a tactical sequence or to place the opponent in zugzwang. This Thinkers

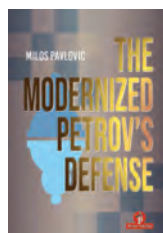
Publishing production is a hard book not to enjoy perusing, whether or not you attempt to solve the 396 exercises.



The Modernized Bird's Opening
Raven Sturt, 584 pages, hardback
RRP £37.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £34.15**

American GM Raven Sturt likes to surprise some of his opponents with 1 f4 and here sets out a detailed repertoire with it, albeit one aimed squarely at those in the 1200–2000 rating range. Sturt meets the critical 1...d5 with 2 ♖f3 ♖f6 3 e3, intending a queenside fianchetto, as well as a timely ♗b5(+). Good coverage is also given to Black's other set-ups, especially Sicilian style

ones with a pawn on c5, while the whole work is rounded off with a number of instructive games.



The Modernized Petrov's Defense
Milos Pavlovic, 208 pages, hardback
£32.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £29.65**

This is another release in Thinkers Publishing's 'Modernized' series, here with the highly experienced and leading theoretician Milos Pavlovic's focus on the rock-solid 1 e4 e5 2 ♖f3 ♖f6, the Petroff Defence or Petrov's Defence to use a modern spelling. Pavlovic maps out a complete repertoire for Black, taking in both the established main lines as well as recent trends after 3 ♖xe5

d6, with plenty of coverage also given to 3 d4 ♖xe4 and there's even a bonus chapter on the infamous Damiano variation, 3 ♖xe5 ♖xe4!?. Coverage tends to be fairly theoretical in appearance, although the key trends and ideas for each side do receive some textual explanation.

As can clearly be seen, Thinkers Publishing have certainly had a very busy start to the year and they're also responsible for two further new releases. Melvin Chen's *The Thinker's Game* (220 pages, hardback) is subtitled 'Decoding the Chess Universe' and written for the keen beginner, aiming to improve both their grasp and knowledge of the game. There's also *The Modernized Vienna of the Queen's Gambit Declined* by Fernando Peralta (232 pages, hardback), in which the Argentinean Grandmaster maps out a detailed repertoire for Black with 1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♖f3 ♖f6 4 ♖c3 dxc4 5 e4 and then not 5...c5, but 5...b5!?. Both these books also retail at £32.95 and so are available for Subscribers at £29.65.



Forthcoming Events

May 2–4 Cornwall Spring Congress, Falmouth
cornwallchess.org.uk/congress/spring/spring-2025.shtml

May 3–5 4NCL, Daventry & Coventry
4ncl.co.uk

May 3 Aberystwyth Rapidplay
aberystwythchess.com/general-information

May 4–5 Livingston Allegro
congress.org.uk/congress/594/home

May 4 Ealing Rapidplay
londonfidecongress.com/ealing-rapidplay

May 9–11 Durham Congress, Darlington
durhamchesscongress.co.uk

May 10–11 Greater London Congress, Bromley
congress.org.uk/congress/513/home

May 10–11 Nottingham Congress
congress.org.uk/congress/573/home

May 10 Welsh Rapid Championship, Bridgend
welshchessunion.uk/WCU Rapid Play 2025/index.html

May 11 Greenwich Rapid
gpchess.com

May 16–18 Frome Congress
congress.org.uk/congress/549/home

May 17–18 East Midlands Congress, Northampton
chesseventsuk.co.uk

May 17–18 Leamington Open
warwickshirechess.org/2025-leamington-open/

May 17–18 Southall Congress
londonfidecongress.com/southall-congress

May 17 Oxford Rapidplay, Kennington
congress.org.uk/congress/511/home

May 23–26 Perth Congress
congress.org.uk/congress/502/home

May 24–26 Cotswold Congress, Gloucester
cornwallchess.org.uk/congress/cotswold/cotswold-details.shtml

May 24–25 City of Belfast Classic
ulsterchess.org/events

May 24 Cheam Rapidplay
congress.org.uk/congress/527/home

May 24 Medway Rapidplay
invictachess.co.uk/medway.html

May 24 Sheffield Rapidplay
sheffieldchessinternational.uk/4th-chess-centre-rapid/

May 25–26 Coulsdon Late Spring Congress
ccfworld.com/Chess/Adult Competitions/Longplays_info.htm

May 25 Warrington Rapidplay
congress.org.uk/congress/568/home

May 26–31 Cambridge International Open
englishchess.org.uk/3rd-cambridge-international-open/

May 30 – June 1 London League Weekender
londonchess.com

And for the Online Connoisseur:

May 5–17 Superbet Chess Classic Romania, Bucharest
grandchesstour.org; Abdusattorov, Aronian, Caruana, Deac, Duda, Firouzja, Gukesh, Praggnanandhaa, So & Vachier-Lagrave.

May 25 – June 6 Norway Chess, Stavanger
norwaychess.no/en/; Carlsen, Caruana, Erigaisi, Gukesh, Nakamura & Wei Yi.

Congress organisers – Don't forget to email editor@chess.co.uk to ensure your event is listed, or if you really want to guarantee a good entry, contact tao@chess.co.uk to discuss having it advertised.



Saunders on Chess

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"Computers: the cause of, and the solution to, all of chess's problems." This adaptation of the memorable Homer Simpson paradox was partly inspired by our Executive Editor's criticisms of FIDE's Fair Play Commission in last month's editorial. Had computers not existed, I doubt that chess would be in the grip of paranoia amongst elite players as regards cheating and such bodies wouldn't need to exist. Of course, it has always been possible to cheat at chess, the difference being that it can now be done without the assistance or expertise of a second person.

Back in the 1990s we were fearful as machines overtook humans in strength and wondered whether the world at large would cease to take chess seriously and start comparing it with noughts and crosses as a lightweight amusement for children. That didn't happen, but some areas of the game took a body blow. Veteran readers of this magazine will recall how much space used to be given over to the Postal Chess Club in these pages. Correspondence chess was hugely popular at one time, but it is now living on borrowed time.

Also, back in the day, we could adjourn long-play games and take a much-needed break, but this too has been largely outlawed "because of computers" as people always say, quite wrongly. The reason adjournments were outlawed was because elite players feared their in-built advantage – recourse to expert seconds for adjournment analysis – would cease once lesser players had access to silicon assistance.

As a result, games lasting six or more hours without a break have become a test of physical stamina as much as chess expertise, thus drastically reducing the career trajectories of professional players into their fifties. As for amateurs, many of us old codgers have either quit longplay chess completely or else opted for senior chess where at least the suffering is the same for both players. I'm not sure seven-hour marathons are too great for pre-teens either. What other recreational activities subject their participants to such protracted stress? I'm struggling to think of one.

Now, for the upside of computers; I'll name just two of its manifold joys: watching big names play live and accessing an infinity of interesting reading matter. The women's world championship has been entertaining, with Ju Wenjun and Tan Zhongyi going head-to-head. Tan Zhongyi is a gritty competitor and her battle against adversity reminds me a little of the way Larsen tried to fight back against Fischer in 1971, not capitulating but fighting tooth and claw, albeit unsuccessfully. There's no disgrace in going down that way. (Now I've written that, no doubt I'll be

afflicted by the commentator's curse and she will agree a meek five-move draw in Game 9...)

One particular pleasure is finding historical items posted online, such as old chess club bulletins. I'm currently enjoying Wanstead and Woodford Chess Club bulletins, starting in the 1970s (easily discoverable via Google). The bulletin editor was Ian Hunnab, whom I note is still club chairman and webmaster to this day, and the bulletin is replete with entertaining material. Here's one of Ian's own efforts, demonstrating a key element of how to get the better of a GM in a simul.

J.Nunn-I.Hunnab

Phillips & Drew Simul, London 1980

Alekhine's Defence

1 e4 ♟f6 2 e5 ♟d5 3 d4 d6 4 ♟f3 dxe5 5 ♟xe5 g6 6 ♟c4 ♟e6 7 ♟b3 c6 8 0-0 ♟g7 9 ♟e1 0-0 10 ♟d2 ♟d7 11 ♟df3 ♟c7 12 c4 ♟xe5 13 ♟xe5 f6 14 ♟xg6!

An enterprising decision by the simul-giver.

14...hxg6 15 ♟xe6 ♟xe6 16 c5 ♟f7 17 ♟e2 ♟d7

17...♟c8! with the idea of ...♟d8 and ...♟d5, giving back the exchange rather than a whole piece, would have refuted White's sacrifice.

18 ♟d2 ♟h8 19 ♟e1 ♟f8 20 ♟xe6 ♟xd4 21 g3

With more time at his disposal, White might have preferred 21 h3! when 21...♟xc5 allows 22 ♟d3 when White's control of key lines gives him more than enough compensation for the exchange.

21...♟d8 22 ♟b3 e5? 23 ♟c3

23 ♟a5! is very strong, with White grabbing the d-file.

23...♟d3 24 ♟g4 ♟f5 25 ♟c4 ♟d7 26 h4



26...g5!?

Your computer will tell you this is a bad move, but in circumstances where White is taking on 30+ opponents, it makes a lot of

sense to stir up complications.

27 ♟d1?

White is tempted to go for the threat of a skewer, but the concept is flawed and has the disadvantage of taking the bishop off the key a2–g8 diagonal. Instead, 27 g4! followed by 27...♟f4 28 ♟e6 ♟e7 29 ♟c8+, etc, should work out in White's favour, but it's long and complicated and not easily calculable in the few seconds available to the simul-giver.

27...gxf4! 28 ♟g4 ♟d3 29 ♟e6 hxg3! 30 f3

30 ♟xd7 gxf2+ 31 ♟g2 (31 ♟xf2 ♟h2+ mates) 31...fxe1 ♟+ 32 ♟xe1 ♟xd7 33 ♟xd7 ♟e7 is an easy win for Black.

30...♟c2 0-1

Here's a little puzzle for you, tucked away somewhere in the following. To make it a bit more testing, I've not signalled the key moment with a diagram.

R.Grant-J.Duggan

London League 1980



31...♟e6 32 ♟f2 h5 33 g3? ♟h6 34 ♟g2 h4 35 ♟xh4?

A big mistake, after which White's position goes downhill fast.

35...♟hxf4 36 gxf4 ♟xf4 37 ♟c1 ♟xh4 38 ♟d2 ♟e4 39 ♟d1 ♟d8 40 ♟f3 ♟h7 41 ♟e2 ♟h4 42 ♟f4 ♟g6+ 43 ♟h1 ♟e1 44 ♟g2 ♟h7 45 ♟g5 ♟g4 46 ♟xg4 fxf4 47 ♟xg4 ♟e4+ 48 ♟xe4 dxe4 49 ♟g2 ♟xc3 50 ♟e7 ♟xd4 51 ♟f1 ♟xe5 52 h3 c3 53 ♟g5 f5 54 ♟c1 ♟d6 55 ♟a3 c2 56 ♟e2 ♟xb4 57 ♟c1 ♟xa5 58 ♟f1 ♟b4 0-1

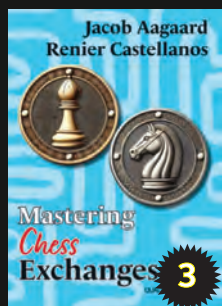
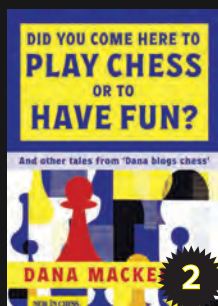
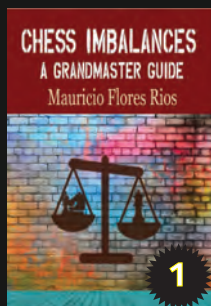
A nice win for Black, but can you spot the flaw? There was a golden opportunity which White missed to turn the tables. Answer below...

White could have won with 47...♟e4+ was a blunder. from queening. So 47...♟e4+ was a blunder. The white queenside pawns cannot be stopped ♟f1 ♟b4 0-1

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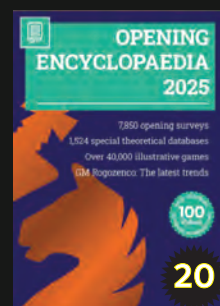
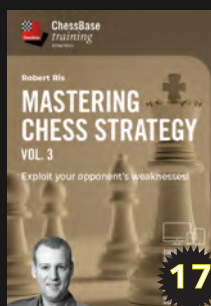
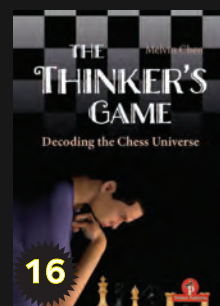
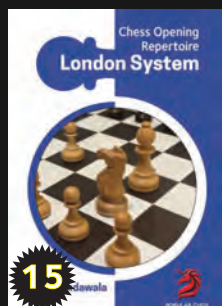
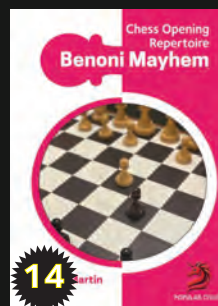
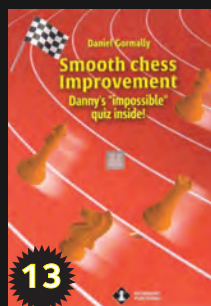
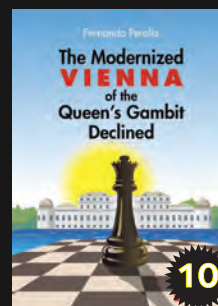
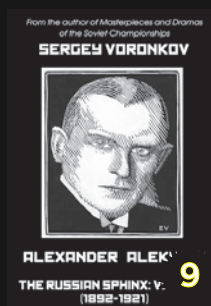
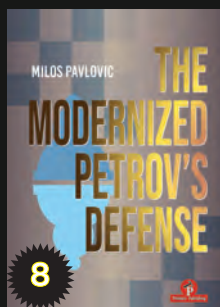
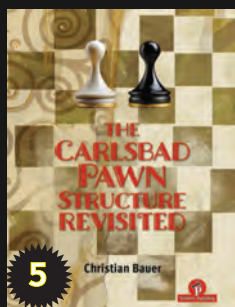
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