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# Chess Update

## ASTOUNDING ADAMS

**GM Michael Adams becomes  
the first UK winner of the  
London Chess Classic at 52!**



**Classy Caruana** – Fabiano Caruana wins the Sinquefeld & Grand Chess Tour



**Christmas Quiz** – Several fun and challenging positions from Graham Phythian



**Hard Works Pays Off** – Junior Tay caught up with the in-form WIM Yao Lan

# Chess

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# 60 Seconds with... Mateusz Bartel



**Born:** 3rd January 1985, Warsaw.

**Place of residence:** Warsaw.

**Occupation:** Chess influencer, podcaster, YouTuber (all in Polish), and in 2023 also a player!

**Enjoyable?** Totally.

**And home life?** I'm married to (WGM) Marta, and we have a 6-year-old son.

**But sometimes good to escape to:** A silent place.

**Sports played or followed:** There used to be plenty, but lately only football.

**A favourite novel?** *Lord of the Rings* or *Game of Thrones*.

**Piece of music?** Like my chess, it depends on my mood. Mainly rock, but sometimes I am ashamed of what I can listen to and... enjoy whatever! Eminem's 'Lose Yourself' was my frequent choice before the rounds in London.

**Film or TV series?** I would say film, but do they make good films these days? If I had to pick one, maybe *Seven*, directed by David Fincher.

**What's the best thing about playing chess?** Its richness doesn't stop impressing me.

**And the worst?** That a draw is the most logical outcome of a well-played game.

**Your best move?** To marry my wife. Chesswise, I really liked 19...♖h5 and later an exchange sacrifice against David Paravyan.

## D.Paravyan-M.Bartel FIDE Grand Swiss, Riga 2021



19...♖h5! 20 ♖g3 ♗g5 21 ♖e2 ♖d5  
22 h4 ♗xg3! 23 fxg3 ♖e4 24 ♖f3 ♗xg3  
25 ♗f2 ♖xb3 26 axb3 ♖c5 27 ♗d3 ♗f5  
28 ♗e2 ♗xh4 gave Black more than enough for the exchange and Mateusz eventually won, on move 124!

**But less memorable than your worst move?** In Bartel-Stocek I sacrificed the queen with 26 ♗g4, but wasn't able to calculate 27 ♗xf7, which would have given huge chances to win. It's always a pity when you miss the chance to play a brilliant game.

## M.Bartel-J.Stocek Prague Challengers 2019



26 ♗g4! ♖g7 27 ♗xd2? ♗xd2 ... (0-1, 58)

**And a highly memorable opponent?** A certain former member of the 2700+ club, who played a game with me (and the whole, 11-round classical tournament) while being completely drunk and, also, drinking during the game! To my surprise, he still was capable of playing well and I wasn't able to win.

**Favourite game of all time?** I don't have a great memory for games, but recall I had a lot of fun checking Anand-Kamsky, the first game from their 1994 match in Sanghi Nagar. It was extremely interesting and tense, and checking it with *Stockfish* reveals many hidden gems.

**The best three chess books:** I read a lot of books, but few of them are chess ones. Lately I have though enjoyed David Smerdon's *The Complete Chess Swindler* and Wojciech Moranda's *Universal Chess Training*. Somehow I prefer to read chess magazines to chess books!

**Is FIDE doing a good job?** Depends on whom one follows on X (Twitter): Peter-Heine Nielsen or Emil Sutovsky!

**Or your National Federation?** "If I say something, I am in big trouble."

**Any advice for either?** Be open for a dialogue and understand that criticism is not so-called hate speech.

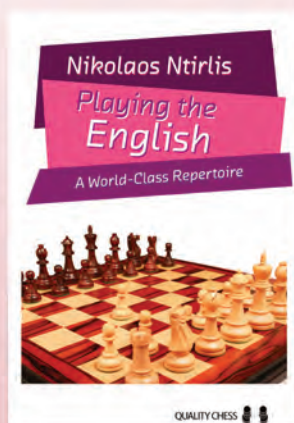
**Can chess make one happy?** With a proper attitude it always does.

**A tip please for the club player:** Chess is about skills not about memorising theory!

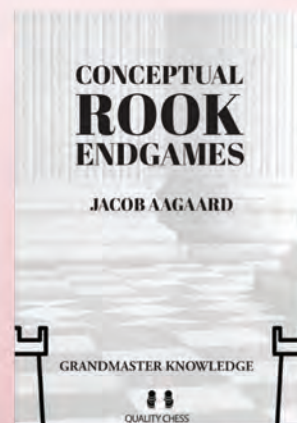
# A great year for Quality Chess!



Theoretical Rook  
Endgames



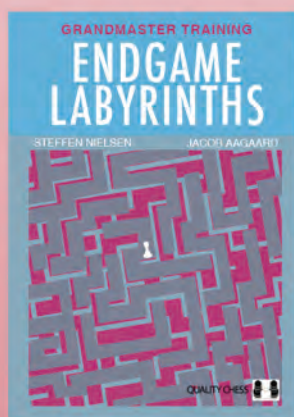
Playing the English



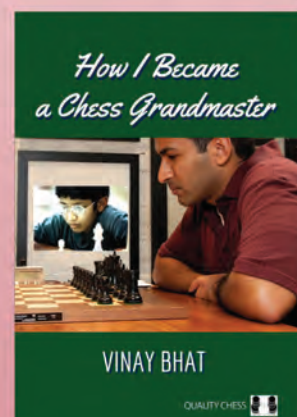
Conceptual Rook  
Endgames



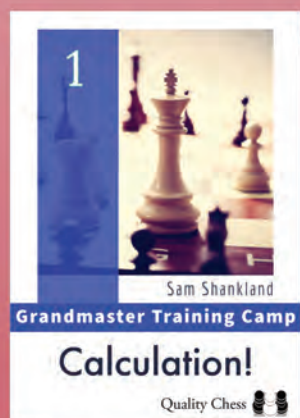
Black & White Magic



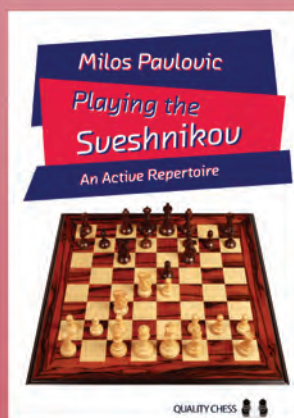
Endgame Labyrinths



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# A Late Surge from Serbia

England's Open team was up there for a long way, as Serbia won the European Teams



10th seeds Serbia came with a late rattle to pip long-time leaders Germany on tiebreak at the European Team Championship in Budva, Montenegro. In the Women's Championship, rising side Bulgaria claimed the gold medals, finishing a point clear of Azerbaijan.

England were fully in the hunt in the Open section, but the fourth seeds unfortunately faded at the death, albeit while still doing well enough to come sixth on tiebreak. In contrast, top seeds Azerbaijan never really got going and came home a distant eighteenth, with board one Teimour Radjabov and World Cup star Nijat Abasov only winning one game between them while finishing on a cumulative '-3'.

Despite David Howell repeating moves when he could have bravely run his king up the board and likely defeated Baadur Jobava, ahead of running into some seemingly pretty unimpressive arbiting, England began by defeating Georgia 2½-1½. Draws with the Czechs and Croats followed, before Turkey and Greece were dispatched 2½-1½ then the Dutch crushed 3½-1½, Nikita Vitiugov leading the way in style to dispatch Jorden van Foreest, as we saw in last month's Editorial.

A highly professional, zero-loss draw followed with leaders Germany before tiredness unfortunately began to take its toll, as England finished with 2½-1½ losses to Serbia then Armenia. That was enough to propel the Armenians into the bronze medal spot on 13/18, two points behind the unbeaten Germans (+6 =3 -0), who only lost two individual games. 19-year-old Vincent Keymer scored 5½/9 on top board, with Matthias Bluebaum's 4½/7 and Alexander Donchenko's 4/6 also impressive.

Serbia were defeated 2½-1½ by the Germans in round three, but thereafter only conceded a draw to Armenia. Those who enjoyed John Saunders' fine reports on the FIDE Grand Swiss may not be surprised by the Serbs' success. Alexandr Predke continued his good form as he anchored the team with 4½/8 on top board, while fellow former Russian Alexey Sarana racked up a huge '+4' on board two. Throw in healthy plus scores from Aleksandar Indjic, Robert Markus and Velimir Ivic, and Serbia's success was well deserved, with Sarana and Ivic also winning individual gold medals.



Serbia defeated the Rapport-led Romania 2½-1½ in round 7; Sarana defeating Deac on board 2.

## A.Sarana-B.D.Deac Serbia vs Romania



**43** ♖xh6+! ♕f8

Fairly necessary, since 43...gxh6? 44 ♖g6+ ♕f8 45 ♖xh6+ would force mate.

**44** ♖f5 ♕c5 **45** ♕c1 ♖d4 **46** ♕e3 ♖xf5

**47** ♕xc5+ ♕g8 **48** a4!

Fixing the pawn on a5 as a weakness.

**48...bxa4** **49** bxa4 ♖h6 **50** ♕e3 ♖g4 **51** ♕f4

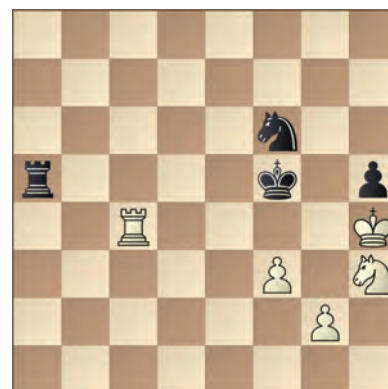
'Queen and knight, they're alright' is all very well when that combination of pieces can attack, but here they can't and Sarana now quickly takes charge.

**51...f5!?** **52** ♖a8+ ♕h7 **53** ♖xa5! ♖c6+ **54** f3!

Retaining full control in view of 54...♖xc2+ 55 ♖d2, whereas 54 ♕g1? ♖e4! would have allowed the queen and knight to strut their stuff, and Black to draw.

**54...♖h6** **55** ♕xh6 **1-0**

## M.Adams-S.Kourkoulos-Arditis England vs Greece



Black has so far defended the pawn-down



Matthias Bluebaum held Michael Adams, one of four draws as England-Germany finished 2-2.

endgame well and would now have met 54 ♖f4 with 54...♙a2. As such, Adams elected to reset his pieces and probe.

**54 ♖g3! ♗b5 55 ♗c7**

Hinting at causing trouble on the g-file, hence Black's next.

**55...♗g6 56 ♖f4+ ♖f5?**

Instructively the only path to the draw lay in accepting a restricted king position with 56...♖h6!

**57 ♗f7!**

The Greek GM had likely seen this coming, as White threatens ♖xh5, but had missed White's next two creeping moves.

**57...♗g5**

Going the other way only makes White's task easier: 57...♗e5? 58 ♖h4!, and if 58...♗xf4 59 ♗xf6+ ♖e3 60 g3! ♙a5 61 f4 ♖e4 62 ♗g6 with a straightforward conversion.

**58 ♗g7+! ♖f5 59 ♖h3!**

Ensuring that having the white rook on the g-file will cause major trouble after all.

**59...♖e6 60 ♖h4 ♗b4+ 61 ♖g5 ♗b5+ 62 ♖g6! ♖d5!**



The best try, going active.

**63 ♖h6?**

Overlooking a study-like resource. Instead, 63 ♖xh5 ♖f4+ 64 ♖h4 ♖f6 65 ♗g8! ♖g6+ 66 ♖g3 should be winning in the long run.

**63...h4 64 ♗g6+ ♖e7?**

Black also misses the concept of 64...♖d7! 65 ♗g5 ♖c6 66 ♖h5 ♖e3!, the main point being 67 ♗xb5 ♖xb5 68 ♖f4

♖xg2! when White would have had to avoid 69 ♖xg2?? h3.

**65 ♗g5 ♖f6 66 ♖f4!**

White can afford to give up the pawn on g2 to win the exchange. Adams has calculated well and now converts with the minimum of fuss.

**66...♖xf4 67 ♗xb5 ♖xg2 68 ♖h5! h3 69 ♖g4 h2 70 ♗h5 ♖e3+ 71 ♖g3 ♖g6 72 ♗h8! ♖g7 73 ♗h3 ♖g6 74 ♖xh2 ♖g5 75 ♖g3 1-0**

### L. McShane-N. Kacharava

England vs Georgia



White has just made a good practical try, pushing the h-pawn. How should Black defend?

**57...♙a3+?**

Not this way or 57...gxh5? 58 g6! when White will get to queen with check. Kudos to you if you found 57...♖xg5! 58 h6! f5!, the only move here which draws by preparing to meet 59 h7? with 59...♗h4+. White might try 59 ♖g2, but after 59...♗g4+! 60 ♖f3 ♗f4+ 61 ♖e3 ♗e4+ 62 ♖d3 ♗e7! it transpires that he is unable to win: for example, 63 ♖d4 f4 64 ♖c5 f3 65 ♖b6 ♗e6+! (Pein) draws, if not here 65...f2? 66 ♗f8 ♗e6+ 67 ♖b7 ♗e7+ 68 ♖b8!.

**58 ♖h2 ♙a2+**

This time 58...♖xg5 59 h6! would win as Black won't manage to bring his rook back to

e7 with checks.

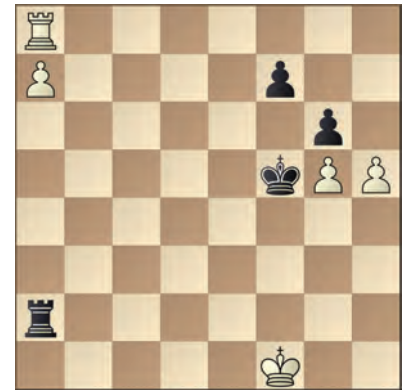
**59 ♖h1?**

Time-trouble. Instead, 59 ♖g1 or 59 ♖g3 wins, since here 59...gxh5 60 g6! h4+! fails to 61 ♖h3!, and not 61 ♖xh4? ♖f4! 62 ♖h3 ♗a3+ 63 ♖g2 f5! with a draw.

**59...♙a1+?**

Returning the favour, rather than advance the king to f4 or g4, threatening ...♖g3 and so supplying sufficient counterplay.

**60 ♖g2 ♙a2+ 61 ♖g1 ♙a1+ 62 ♖f2 ♙a2+ 63 ♖f1!**



The king will find safety in the wild west.

**63...♙a1+ 64 ♖e2 ♙a2+ 65 ♖e1 ♙a1+ 66 ♖d2 ♙a2+ 67 ♖d1 ♙a1+ 68 ♖c2 gxh5**

A final roll of the dice.

**69 g6! fxg6 70 ♗f8+ ♖g4 71 a8♖ ♗xa8 72 ♗xa8 ♖f3** Likewise, 72...h4 73 ♖d2 h3 74 ♖e2 h2 75 ♗h8 ♖g3 76 ♖f1 wins.

**73 ♖d2 ♖f2 74 ♗h8!**

Winning a pawn and the game.

**74...g5 75 ♗xh5 g4 76 ♗f5+ ♖g2 77 ♖e2 g3 78 ♗g5 ♖h2 79 ♖f3 1-0**

Before ending our coverage of the Open competition, we should mention that Magnus Carlsen's 6½/8 earned him individual gold even as Norway largely struggled, and that bottom seeds Scotland were heavily outclassed (the European Teams is always somewhat stronger than the Olympiad). However, the Scots did welcome back 78-year-old IM David Levy to play a couple of games and FM Graham Morrison at least had the satisfaction of crushing Albanian IM Dritan Mehmeti.

### Brilliant Bulgars

With former women's world champion Antoaneta Stefanova returning to the team on top board, fifth seeds Bulgaria largely proved a class apart in the Women's Championship. Stefanova lost her first game, but thereafter did well, anchoring the team with 5/8. Likewise, after a slightly slow start – draws with Hungary and Switzerland following a 2½-1½ win over Turkey – the Bulgarian side really hit their stride: Spain and Serbia were dispatched 3-1, and second seeds Azerbaijan overcome 2½-1½ before the seemingly in-form French women were crushed 3-1. 2½-1½ victories over Poland and top seeds Georgia, that famous women's chess powerhouse, followed to leave Bulgaria top with 16/18, a point ahead of Azerbaijan, four in

front of bronze medallists France and some six points ahead of the Georgians.

Special mention should be made of the fact that Alexandra Kosteniuk made her debut on top board for Switzerland, scoring 4½/7, while on board four for France IM Pauline Guichard scored a huge 7/8 for a 2636 performance. Another individual gold medalist was World Cup star, 20-year-old IM Nurgul Salimova, who was Bulgaria's top performer with an unbeaten 6½/9 on board two.

## L.Javakhishvili-P.Guichard

Georgia vs France  
English Opening

**1 c4 ♘f6 2 ♘c3 e5 3 ♘f3 ♘c6 4 e4!? ♗b4 5 d3 d6 6 a3 ♗c5 7 b4 ♗b6 8 ♘a4 ♗g4 9 ♘xb6**

Taking the bishop-pair and avoiding 9 ♗e2 ♗xf3 10 ♗xf3 ♗d4, although after 11 ♗b1 a6 12 ♗d2 ♗d7 (12...♗a7!? then ...♗d4 may improve) 13 ♘c3 0-0 14 0-0 White was slightly for choice, with ideas of both ♗g5 and g2-g3 in Caruana-Nepomniachtchi, Saint Louis (rapid) 2023.

**9...axb6 10 ♗b2 ♘d7!**

A thematic regrouping in such structures as the knight heads for d4 via f8 and e6.

**11 ♗e2 ♗xf3 12 ♗xf3 ♗f6!? 13 g3 ♘f8 14 ♗g2**



As had been demonstrated before this game, White should instead activate the bishop with 14 ♗g4!?

**14...h5!?**

A novelty. Instead, 14...♗e6 15 0-0 g5! gave Black good counterplay, although White eventually turned it round in Abdusattorov-Carlsen, World Rapid Ch., Warsaw 2021.

**15 b5! ♘e7**

15...♘d4!? 16 ♗xd4 exd4 17 0-0 should be good for White with e4-e5 imminent, but 15...♘d8!? may not be too bad for Black.

**16 f4?!**

A risky choice, whereas 16 h4! ♘e6 17 ♗c1 would have retained control, and here 17 f4!? ♗g6 18 ♗f3 exf4 19 gxf4 ♘xf4 20 ♗xf4 ♗xg2 21 0-0-0 ♘g6 22 ♗e3 ♘e5 leaves Black walking a tightrope, as pointed out by our Executive Editor in his *Daily Telegraph* column.

**16...h4! 17 0-0 hxg3 18 fxe5?!**

18 hxg3 followed by ♗f3 or 18...♗h6 19 ♗f2 was somewhat safer.

**18...♗g5 19 ♗f3 ♗xh2!**



Our Executive Editor, wearing his ECU Vice President's hat, awarded the individual medals for board 2 to (left-right) Yao Lan (bronze), Nurgul Salimova (gold), and Nataliya Buksa (silver).



Highly scary and definitely the move of a player at the top of their game.

**20 exd6 ♘fg6 21 ♗xf7+?**

This quickly backfires. Instead, the calm 21 dxe7! ♗xg2+! 22 ♗xg2 ♗e3+ 23 ♘h1 would have left Black with nothing better than a repetition, such as with 23...♗xe7!? (White is also OK after 23...♘h4!? 24 ♗ae1 ♘xg2 25 ♗xe3 ♘xe3 26 ♗f3) 24 ♗xg7! ♗h8+! 25 ♗xh8 ♗h6+ 26 ♘g1 ♗e3+.

**21...♗d7 22 dxe7**

There's no good defence after 22 ♗f3 ♗f8.

**22...♗e3+ 23 ♗f2 gxf2+ 24 ♗xf2 ♗xg2+!**

Finishing in style, although 24...♗xf2+ 25 ♘xf2 ♘f4 26 ♗g1 ♘xe7 also wins.

**25 ♘xg2 ♘f4+ 26 ♘f1 ♗xf2+**

Cashing in to win a piece. 26...♗h3+! 27 ♘g1 ♗g4+ 28 ♘f1 ♗h8 would have done the business too.

**27 ♘xf2 ♘xd3+ 28 ♘e3 ♘xb2 29 ♘d4 ♘a4 30 ♗g1 ♗g8 0-1**

And what of the Brits? Well, unfortunately Scotland and Wales didn't send teams (neither did the Irish), while 13th seeds England finished...13th. The high point was defeating ninth seeds Spain 2½-1½ to reach 8/12, but against the top teams England weren't quite strong enough or didn't have enough players in form, with the French, Azerbaijanis and Ukrainians all proving too strong to handle. WGM Katarzyna Toma scored 5/8 to gain 12

rating points on board four, but the star of the show was Yao Lan, whose unbeaten 5½/8 gained her 26 Elo points, as well as especially an IM norm and the individual bronze medal on board two. Junior Tay covers Yao's key final-round victory over the legendary Pia Cramling next in these pages. She also got to pull off quite the survival job.

## D.Belenkaya-Yao Lan

Israel vs England



Black has been completely outplayed. Her dark squares have collapsed and now 30 bxc6! ♗xc6 31 ♗ab1!? (31 ♗xc6 dxc6 32 ♗c4! also works) 31...♗xg2+ 32 ♘h2 was one way that White might have forced the win.

**30 ♗ab1? ♗d2!**

Seizing her chance with both hands to trouble the white king.

**31 ♗f3?**

31 ♗e4! c5!? (or 31...♗e2 32 ♗e1) 32 ♗xa8 ♗e3 33 ♗c2! ♗xh3+ 34 ♗h2 would still have been winning for White.

**31...♗d3! 32 ♗f1?**

Completing the turnaround. White simply had to bring her queen back with 32 ♗f2!, leaving all three results possible.

**32...c5!** A crushing piece sacrifice.

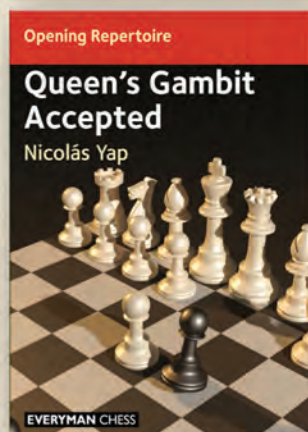
**33 ♗xa8 ♗xh3+ 34 ♘g1 ♗xg4+ 35 ♘f2 ♗g3# 0-1**

# GREAT NEW TITLES FROM EVERYMAN CHESS



The variation of the French that starts 1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 (or 3 Nd2) 3 ... dxe4 is often called the Rubinstein Variation. It is a great way to simplify the position and ensure that the middlegame battle rewards strategic understanding rather than rote memorisation of opening moves. It is also a very useful weapon to defuse the attacking intentions of aggressive White players who plan an all-out assault in the main lines of the French Defence.

Paperback 368 pages



Yap analyses the line 1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4 3 e4 b5! in forensic detail. This is now almost the main line of the Queen's Gambit Accepted and there is currently very little theoretical material on it. Yap also investigates other popular, counterattacking lines such as 3 e3 e5!.

Paperback 280 pages



In this book the highly experienced grandmaster Milos Pavlovic outlines a powerful repertoire for White based on 1 d4. The variations are very much based on strategic themes where an understanding of plans is far more important than memorisation of lines and move orders.

Paperback 280 pages



Do you want a simple and practical method to counter Black's kingside fianchetto defences after 1 d4? A line that takes the initiative from a very early stage and creates difficult practical problems? If so, then The Harry Attack (1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 h4!) is for you.

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The English Defence (1 d4 e6 2 c4 b6) is a dynamic, counter-attacking line, initially investigated by English grandmasters. José González provides an excellent analysis of this complex opening and carves out a powerful repertoire for Black covering all lines after 1 d4.

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# Hard Work Pays Off

## Yao Lan has been in fine form of late. Junior Tay caught up with the England board 2

Yao Lan was born in 2000 in Nantong, in the Chinese province of Jiangsu, and she picked up chess at the age of six. When she was seven, she finished 10th in the prestigious LiChengzhi Cup (the Chinese Youth Championships). Her swift ascent to the top junior ranks made her complacent and the following year, as she related, "I was as reckless as a calf, proud and arrogant, and crashed spectacularly." She thus thought of giving up the game, but ultimately decided to persevere on, quoting the Tang poem: "How can you get the fragrance of plum blossoms without experiencing bone-chilling cold conditions?"



As early as age seven, Yao Lan shone at chess.

The mentality to buckle down and work harder paid dividends two years later as Lan finished third in 2012. She reflected that her play was no longer a brash, all-out attacking and rather reckless style, but had been replaced by a calmer disposition and that she was less inclined to become discouraged by losses. Consequently, she finished second on tiebreak in 2014, which made her reflect if she should simply focus on her academic studies or push on. Deciding on the latter, she finally clinched the LiChengzhi Cup title in 2015 where she overcame several masters.

Seeking to find stronger opponents to challenge, she frequently travelled two hours from Nantong to Shanghai, where she could pit her skills in chess pubs and tournaments held by chess lovers. There, she got to experience playing against foreigners who have different styles of play from Chinese juniors. Lan resorted to this measure for improvement as the top Chinese coaches prefer their students to concentrate fully on chess without other interference. Her personal perspective was to have an equally strong focus on academic studies, so she was unable to get the rigorous chess training her peers had access to.

More chess successes followed as she

clinched seventh, fifth and sixth in the 2015, 2016 and 2017 World Youth Championships. She also finished first in the BSSZ Aranytiz IM event in Hungary in 2017, missing the IM norm by half a point.

What surprised me as I did some preliminary research for this article was that not only was she serious about her chess progress, but that the teenage Yao Lan also focused on training others. When she was 16, she participated in the 'Teaching China 2.0 Remote Video Classroom Volunteer Service Project'. The training program provided Liufan Primary School in Yuexi County with weekly chess lessons (more than 60 lessons were conducted).

To get there to meet her trainees, she had to endure nine-hour journeys on winding and narrow roads, straddling 10 cities, but she felt it was worth the effort upon seeing her students whom she had trained for two years. She also wanted to make the lessons sustainable in the long run for the school; as such, she used her summer vacation time to record eight basic chess video tutorials which could be used as a guide for lower grade children. Therefore, the senior students in the school could guide them and gradually enable chess to become popular in the whole school.



Lan also organised events and training sessions as the President of the Chengheng Chess Association. Her coaching stint in Shanghai and collaboration with FM Peter Kokol eventually led to her forming a Wechat channel in which she wrote about chess history, psychology, culture and education.

They eventually posted these articles on mustachess.com. Those which discuss the origins and development of chess, personal stories and some controversial issues around world champions gradually became popular among Chinese chess lovers.

Consequently, she went on to make videos about these topics, with the idea of presenting chess history in a more vivid style. Hence she "carefully selected clothes and hairstyles, adjusted the lighting, and sometimes used different accents and tones according to different topics to make the narrative more intriguing and at the same time instructive to the audience."



Yao Lan has also dabbled in live commentary more recently, joining other masters to cover the Cambridge International Open as well as the British Senior Championships this year.

One pertinent reason why she landed in London to read history at UCL was her love of English culture, which is part of the reason for the long car journeys to Shanghai – to learn and speak English with foreigners. Yao Lan is a firm believer in combining chess with her academic studies. She attributed her LiChengzhi Cup win over many full-time chess players to her non-stop daily chess training for at least one hour no matter how busy her school commitments were.

"Such long-term training provided me with intuition and enabled me to handle complex positions," she explained. She also noted that during her coaching stints many students were not willing to study chess every day, preferring to cram for tournaments. "This is a bad habit, because without every day's accumulation, it is hard for them to cultivate their intuition and proficiency on chess," she mused.

She has since changed affiliation to the English Chess Federation, representing England and also playing for Wood Green in the 4NCL. While she was at university in London, IM (now

GM) Ravi Haria advised the UCL Chess Society in a lecture to “keep practising chess every day, by getting up half an hour earlier, solve some puzzles or play some blitz”, as significant improvement would be made by the daily accumulation of effort. Lan attributed her strong result, including drawing with two GMs and one IM at Hastings in 2019/20 to following Ravi’s advice.

One particularly impressive piece of chess work she produced while a student was her treatise on ‘The Identity of Jewish Chess Players: An Analysis of Jewish Chess History Writings of the 19th and the Early 20th Century’ for the 3rd International Conference on Literature, Art and Human Development in 2021.

After completing her BA degree in History then MA in Education (History), she set her eyes on becoming a history teacher in Secondary Education. Meanwhile, she is on the hunt for the IM title and has played tons of tournaments over the past one and a half years. Significant successes during this period included in 2022 winning the Chessable English Women’s Championship and the ECF women’s norm event, while becoming the 2022 and 2023 British Women’s Champion. Most recently, Lan won the silver medal on board two in the European Women’s Club Cup and clinched the bronze medal while making an IM norm at the European Women’s Team Championship, again on board two.

I recently caught up with Yao Lan and asked her a few questions.

**You picked up chess aged 6. Why not Chinese chess, Xiangqi, or Go, Weiqi?**

“A friend of my mother’s had a chess club in my city, and my parents took me there to have a go at chess. I was talented and improved very fast, so I just stuck to chess. Later I also realised that chess is more international compared to Chinese chess and Go, meaning I could play chess tournaments abroad and engage with the wider world, so I would say that it’s been a good choice.”

**You started teaching chess at a very young age to children and adults face to face and online, and you plan to teach history in secondary schools. Would you not contemplate playing chess professionally or making coaching and playing as a career?**

“I am not going to play chess professionally, because I think chess is only one of my hobbies, rather than my whole life. When I was younger, I got many chances to enter a provincial team and becoming a professional chess player, but I refused because I wanted to focus more on school work and didn’t want to only play chess. Now, I still hope to try different things in life and have achievements other than just in chess. I will keep doing coaching in the future, but probably only as a part-time job.”

**Can you relate a memorable teaching or chess coaching experience you’ve had?**

“A memorable coaching experience I had is that I was almost outplayed by one of my very talented students in the opening. His openings were quite weak before and could



*Yao Lan recently gave a talk at Brentford School for Girls and is aiming to become a teacher.*

be easily prepared, so I was really surprised that he was now suddenly so good at openings. He told me that he had worked hard himself and focused on openings a lot since failures in his last tournament. He tried to adjust his openings based on his playing style so that he could manage to remember theory faster and obtain positions easier for him to play after the opening stage. I consider that it is important for players to analyse and work out their styles, strengths and weaknesses in chess, and make training plans suitable for their characteristics, rather than studying chess aimlessly.”

**I noticed you have been playing the same openings with both colours for long periods. Are you not concerned about getting ambushed by your opponent in your pet variations?**

“I was worried about it, but studying new openings is too time consuming. However, I may change lines within an opening system from time to time, and try to play the middlegame better.”

**How did you feel when you had to play a GM in the final round while going for that IM norm at the European Teams?**

“Actually I didn’t realise that I could gain an IM norm by winning the game. I didn’t check the regulations about norms very carefully, because I didn’t want to put myself under too much pressure, and I thought I couldn’t get a norm by playing only 8 rounds. So I didn’t think about the norm thing, but just focused on the game itself.”

**When your opponent, Pia Cramling, chose to play the very line you play with Black in that crucial ninth round game, how was the state of your mind?**

“I felt normal because I had prepared. I wouldn’t feel really happy or sad if she played other lines, because I had gone through all the openings she had played before and prepared OK. One thing I always worry about though is that I can forget the key ideas and plans, as well as the engine’s evaluations of some lines, so I may have no idea how to play after my

preparation finishes. So usually I don’t feel happy in the opening stages, even when I have prepared something surprising for my opponent.”

**Did you choose 7 g4 because Cramling didn’t seem to have any games against it in the database?**

“I had briefly looked through her games, and concluded that her opponents did better in complicated positions and with more aggressive lines. I had encountered the move 7 g4 a few times when I played Black and studied a bit. I felt that this line is very aggressive and can lead to tricky positions where you have to know the theory to hold.”

**Was 12 ♗d3 a prepared novelty? The comps don’t seem to consider it in the top two options in the position and you took 39 minutes to play it.**

“Obviously it wasn’t preparation! I had the impression that I had checked the move 10...♗b8 with the engine and I was sure that castling long was the best move, but I didn’t study 11...♗a5 and I forgot the ideas in this line. So I thought for a long time because at this point, many moves don’t work and it was hard to find the few options which might suffice. The idea of ...♗b2 is obvious and hard to prevent.

“I thought of 12 ♗d2 and was about to play it, because I saw an interesting variation: if Black plays 12...♗a3 13 ♖b5! ♗xb2+ 14 ♗xb2 and then the queen to somewhere. I am a pawn down, but I have the bishop-pair and enough compensation. However, then suddenly I saw 12...♗a3! and realised that I would be completely lost, so I tried to exclude every impossible move and finally found 12 ♗d3, which could save the position.”

**When you went the exchange down and Pia was systematically removing the queens, what were your thoughts?**

“Actually when I went the exchange down, I wasn’t that worried and still felt quite confident, because I thought I had enough compensation. My pieces were in better positions, my opponent hadn’t castled, and it

was hard for her to castle. But when she played 12...♖b4 and tried to exchange queens, I began to get nervous. I was running low of time and couldn't calculate clearly. After choosing to exchange the queens, I got a bit frustrated because I thought it was hard for me to win in such an endgame, but I was still confident that I could save the game and wouldn't lose."

**Yao Lan-P.Cramling**  
European Women's Team Ch.,  
Budva 2023  
*Sicilian Taimanov*

**1 e4 c5 2 ♟f3 ♟c6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♟xd4 e6 5 ♟c3 ♟c7 6 ♟e3 a6 7 g4!? h6**

Alexander Khalifman, in his *Play the Taimanov Sicilian* repertoire for Modern Chess, suggests 7...♟xd4 8 ♟xd4 b5 to circumvent White's kingside intentions.

**8 h4 ♟f6 9 ♟xc6 bxc6**

German GM Arik Braun noted that after 9...♟xc6 10 f3 (10 ♟g2 ♟a3 11 ♟c1!? ♟b4 12 ♟d2 is also promising) 10...♟a3! 11 bxa3 ♟xc3+ 12 ♟f2 d5 13 exd5 ♟xd5 14 ♟d4 ♟xa3 15 c4! ♟f6 16 ♟b3 ♟xb3 17 axb3 White is a pawn down, but controls Black's pieces and might play g4-g5 to open the position. Likewise, 9...dxc6?! 10 ♟f3! (preparing 0-0-0 and ♟g1-g5) 10...e5 11 ♟g1 ♟e6 (or 11...h5 12 gxh5! ♟hx5 13 ♟c4) 12 0-0-0 ♟d8 13 ♟h3 followed by g4-g5 is clearly better for White.

**10 ♟f3 ♟b8 11 0-0-0 ♟a5**

After 11...♟d6 the Indian prodigy Praggnanandhaa whipped up a ferocious attack: 12 g5! hxg5 13 hxg5 ♟hx1 14 ♟hx1 ♟g4 15 ♟h8+ ♟e7 16 g6! ♟xe3 17 ♟xg7 ♟xd1 18 gxf7 ♟f4+ 19 ♟xd1 ♟d6+ 20 ♟d5+ 1-0, Praggnanandhaa-Galperin, Online Olympiad (rapid) 2021.



**12 ♟d3!?**

Played after that very long think. Instead, following 12 ♟f4 e5 13 ♟g3 (13 g5!?) 13...d6 14 ♟h3 ♟b4 15 g5 ♟hx3 16 gxf6 ♟e6 17 fxf7 ♟xg7 18 b3 Black eventually lost in Nepomniachtchi-Aronian, Amsterdam (rapid) 2023.

**12...♟b4 13 b3 d6?!**

The superior 13...a5! 14 ♟f4 d6 15 ♟b2 e5 16 g5! ♟d7 17 ♟e3 restricts White to a slight pull.

**14 e5?!**

This seems like an overreaction as Black has no need to defend the c6-pawn due to the potential skewer with ...♟b7. Probably better is 14 ♟b2! d5 (14...♟d7 15 ♟d4 ♟a5 16 ♟a4 ♟c7 17 ♟xa6 ♟b6 18 ♟xb6 ♟xb6 19 ♟xc8 ♟xc8 is extremely good for White) 15 ♟d4! ♟b7 16 exd5 cxd5 17 ♟g2 ♟c8 18 ♟e1 ♟d6 19 ♟d1 with a clear advantage for White.

**14...♟d7!**

Now ♟xc6 is no longer a threat. Black also sets up a fork on e5, so White finds herself on the back foot.

**15 e6**

The correct choice, giving up the exchange to keep the initiative. Naturally Lan avoids 15 ♟xc6? ♟b7 16 ♟a4 ♟hx1 and 15 ♟f4 is also no fun as after 15...c5 and the impending ...♟b7, White is suffering.

**15...♟e5 16 ♟d1 ♟xd3+ 17 ♟xd3 ♟xd6 18 ♟e4 ♟b4!?**



The Swedish legend logically aims to trade queens and is willing to give up the c6-pawn to enforce this.

**19 ♟xc6+ ♟d7 20 ♟c4**

Most definitely not 20 ♟c7? ♟c8.

**20...♟c8 21 ♟xb4 ♟xb4 22 ♟e4 ♟c6**

*Stockfish* indicates that trading bishops would have given Black a large advantage: 22...♟b5 23 ♟xb5+ (or 23 ♟g2 f5 24 gxf5 exf5 25 ♟d2 0-0) 23...axb5 24 ♟d4 f6 25 h5 ♟f7 and Black should be winning.

**23 f3 f5?! 24 gxf5**

All of a sudden, White is back in business as she somehow gets to hit pawn after pawn while developing her pieces.

**24...exf5 25 ♟d2 a5**

Perhaps 25...♟xd2+ 26 ♟xd2 ♟xf3 27 ♟g1 0-0 was a better practical try.

**26 ♟g1**



Discouraging Black from castling due to ♟xh6.

**26...♟c3 27 ♟d3 ♟f8 28 ♟c4**

Probably Black was ruining not castling and giving up the h6-pawn when she had the chance. Now the white pieces start to exert themselves in the centre of the board.

**28...♟d8**

Averting the fork.

**29 ♟c5 ♟f7?**

This loses back the exchange, after which Black goes a pawn down. Instead, 29...♟f6 30 ♟xg7 ♟d7 31 ♟g3 f4 32 ♟g1 ♟xf3 33 ♟b6 ♟xd3 34 cxd3 ♟c6 gives Black strong counterplay.

**30 ♟d6+ ♟xd6 31 ♟xd6 ♟xf3?**

Black will maintain material parity for only two moves because she has missed White's upcoming horizontal rook sweep.

**32 ♟b5+ ♟d8 33 ♟g3**



One of the prelates is doomed.

**33...♟f6 34 ♟xf3 ♟hx4 35 ♟d3 ♟g5+**

And Lan wasted no time in translating this into a won ending.

**36 ♟f4+! ♟e7 37 ♟xg5+ hxg5 38 ♟d7+ 1-0**

**You have made a 128-point leap rating-wise from July 2023 until now. What do you attribute the improvement to?**

"I also felt quite surprised that I gained so many rating points because I didn't work hard or more on chess compared to before. I think probably I begin to pay more attention to details. When I was younger, I didn't pay attention to details that much and didn't play that accurately, largely hoping that my opponents wouldn't find the right moves. However, when I began to play in England, I found that even lower-rated players play really accurately and even think for a long time in completely winning positions, trying to find the best moves and prevent their opponents from counterattacking.

"As a result, I constantly lost to lower-rated players in the 4NCL and began to reflect on the way I played. All of them paid great attention to details, didn't give me the slightest chance during the games and I learned a lot from these defeats. Also, I am really grateful to my coach from China, GM Zeng Chongsheng. I began to work with him a bit more this year and he helped me a lot with openings."

**Are you planning more chess history projects in the near future?**



*Yao Lan loves to inspire children to enjoy chess.*

"Yes, I'm really keen to do more chess history projects. I really need support from someone who may have the same interest and hope to find good platforms to present my work."

**How about writing chess books or Chessable courses?**

"I am planning to write novels related to chess. I have read Jovanka's *The Mating Game* and think it's really interesting. In addition, I have been following many controversies in the chess world, especially the recent ones about sexual harassment and misogyny. I have experienced it myself and I signed the open letter initiated by 14 French female players this August. I really hope to tell my stories in the form of chess novels to raise the awareness of the issue and to support more women players."

**Have you intention of becoming a professional chess streamer like the Botez sisters or Zhou Qiyu?**

"I have thought about that, but as I previously said, I don't intend to do everything chess-wise in my work. I see a lot of streamers just keep playing blitz and doing puzzle rushes. I think that would be tiring for me and it's not something that I enjoy. I would be quite happy if I could talk about other topics during streaming, such as my experiences with chess and chess history, but I'm not sure whether this would attract many



*Yao Lan looks focussed while on duty for England, for whom she starred at the European Teams.*

viewers. However, the thing I really hope to do in the future is to become an official chess commentator like Jovanka and David, and analyse chess games seriously so that the audience can really learn something useful from me."

**The Chinese press has a tendency to emphasise your looks, as well as your perseverance. What's your take on that?**

"I think being deemed 'good looking' is a double-edged sword. I can attract more attention, but at the same time I can sometimes care too much about my looks and become distracted. As for perseverance, I just always wanted to be the best when I was young, and this was my motivation to never give up chess and work hard, even I once experienced many failures and my parents felt hopeless about my chess. Now I don't have the ambition of being the world champion or something like that in chess, but I still hope to be one of the best among amateur chess players."

**You had quite the adventure during the Chennai Olympiad last year and before even getting to your first game against Tania Sachdev. I believe you were the only native Chinese chess player to attain a visa for the event?**

"When we applied for the visa for India, I was informed that Chinese citizens were not allowed to apply for an Indian visa. Aga Milewska and the others from the team told me not to worry, and Aga began to push the staff in the visa centre to ask the Indian Embassy for special permission. Then I was allowed to apply for the visa and I submitted all the required materials. But as the Olympiad got closer, I had still heard no news about the visa."

"I remember that Aga and others in ECF kept calling the Indian Embassy many times a day and kept pushing them to provide me with the visa. Finally, I successfully got the visa just before the Olympiad, but I missed the flight we had originally booked together and had to rebook a new flight. It was hard to

search for a flight with a good timing and a reasonable price, and I remember that we searched for the whole afternoon and found nothing. Luckily, I then found that there was one ticket left with Lufthansa and I successfully booked it."

**You've noted before that promising female players lack the motivation to succeed in chess because they lack the financial support for national or international events, and chess achievements have no bearing on academic placements in the top universities. With the recent pledge by the British Government to fund the chess federation, do you think this will improve the level of women's chess in England?**

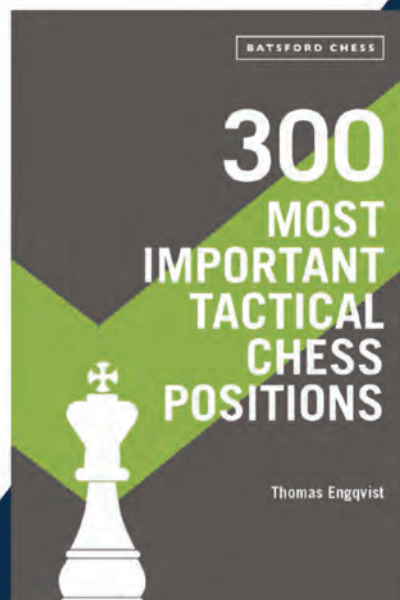
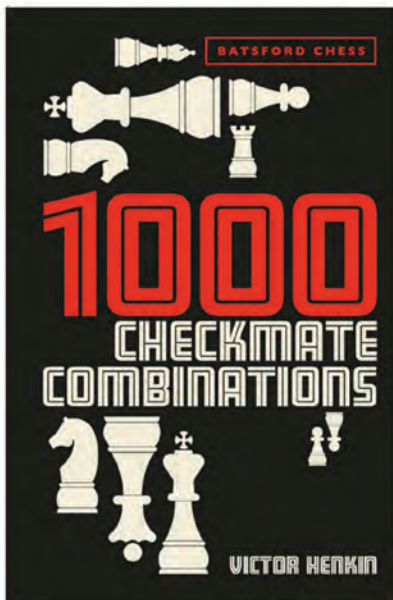
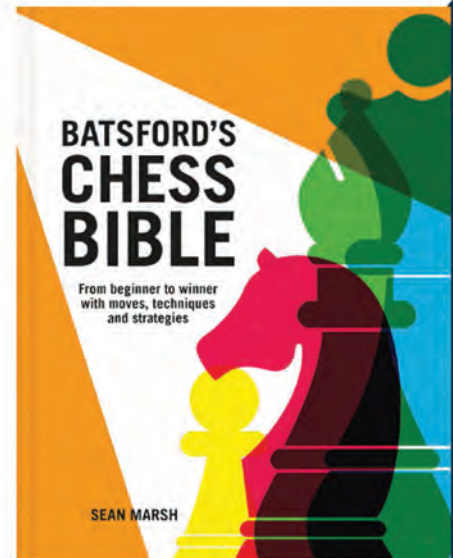
"I hope, first of all, that there will be more training events and tournaments with prize money for teenage girls, as well as more funds for the top girls to play big events abroad, so that they can be more motivated to work hard on chess. Also, as chess will be supported more by the government and will tend to be more popular in Britain, I hope that top universities in this country can value students who achieve high levels at chess more and consider admitting students who may do a bit worse at school, but make great achievements in chess. In this way, teenage girls will be more willing to spend time on chess and fight for higher levels."

"From my experience of coaching, I find that many girls take school really seriously and are willing to work hard for better grades, but they do not take chess seriously, because they consider that chess is only a game, rather than something counting for scores and things that matter a lot to their lives. As a result, they are lazy if the calculation is a bit complicated and lazy to remember openings if the theory is a bit longer. However, I think such young female players will definitely take chess much more seriously and work hard on it if chess could help come their university applications."

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d2 is covered between pages 288 and 351. Anyone new to the French will have to do some background reading to flesh out the suggested lines. The index of variations is very useful but there is no sign of a bibliography, which is a significant oversight for a book on openings.

If you are interested in defending the offbeat Fort Knox and related variations of the French Defence, then this is the book for you. Personally, I don't think the lines look like being much fun to play and I would be concerned about being unable to hold the resulting positions against stronger players and being unable to outplay slightly weaker opposition too. Perhaps I just don't have enough patience for these lines, but maybe there are plenty of readers out there who would welcome the challenge of turning the material presented in the book into a decent repertoire.

Sean Marsh



### Ding Liren's Best Games

Davorin Kuljasevic, 328 pages, New in Chess  
RRP £25.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £23.35**

There has, so far, been a dearth of chess literature on the new champion of the world, but New in Chess are ahead of the game with this new book on one of the most enigmatic chess kings of all. Stylistically, this book follows in the footsteps of *Spassky's Best Games* by Alexey Bezgodov & Dmitry Oleinikov (New in Chess, 2023) and *Max Euwe's Best Games* by Jan Timman (New in Chess, 2023).

I have seen a lot of Ding Liren's games, but would be at a loss if someone asked me to comment on his style. Usually, we find his achievements described in a standard description, such as this one from the book: "Few chess greats can boast that they reached first place in both the blitz and rapid world rankings and became World Champion in classical chess. Even fewer can claim an unbeaten streak of 100 classical games. That's how special Ding Liren is."

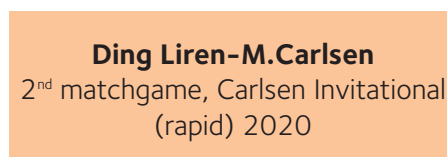
Special he may well be, but is he ever going to play again? Perhaps we have simply entered a new era, in which it no longer matters who holds the title and bragging rights from online events mean more than for those who can demonstrate the skill, commitment and endurance required to win a whole match in the dying genre of classical chess.

Kuljasevic provides a short biography of Ding Liren and then follows up with a more substantial chapter building up a profile of the world champion, which looks at his strengths and weaknesses. The subsequent chapters chart his rise through the ranks from the early years to his title success, before concluding with a section of 'Win Like Ding' exercises. There are 58 annotated games in total, with

11 making good use of Ding Liren's own notes.

The last title match was a curious affair, featuring two challengers and no defending champion, thanks to Magnus Carlsen's abdication. The future champion's path to the final was not without its eccentric aspects, either; a hastily-arranged small tournament of Chinese players was needed to assist Ding Liren's qualification for the Candidates tournament, by building up his number of rated games. When the big match eventually took place, it was full of blunders and brilliancies plus some very strange opening variations, such as the bizarre 1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 d3 d5 4 h3. One wonders what the late, great Viktor Korchnoi would have made of such preparation.

Ding Liren's true personality and character both remain out of reach; he is simply too illusive. However, his best games speak for themselves and he is more than capable of ruffling the most famous of feathers, as shown by this snippet.



**32** ♖xf6! gxf6 **33** ♔e3 and **1-0** "due to the unstoppable mating attack."

We still celebrate the lives and games of former champions through numerous well-written books, but I suspect the days of adding new champions to such an exalted legacy is coming to an end. Meanwhile, this is a worthy attempt to cover the career of the reigning champion and, for all we know, it may well already contain the full story, if Ding Liren has left the world of formal chess events for good. Or will he really play at Wijk aan Zee in the new year? We will soon find out.

Sean Marsh



### Fritz 19

ChessBase PC-DVD  
RRP £79.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £71.95**

Last month we explained all about the latest databases which had just been released by ChessBase, and so too now has been *Fritz 19*, the World Chess Software Champion 2023. These days *Fritz* is so much more than just a basic program to help analyse and save your games, as well as an engine to play against. Indeed, it now contains a number of training features, ones which will, for example, improve your calculation. One new feature is a set of six different characters, designed to mimic certain styles popular at club level. Play against the Swindler, for instance, and you will encounter an opponent who "takes aggressiveness to the extreme, and often overplays the position."



### Keep It Simple 1.e4 - 2.0

Christof Sielecki, 632 pages, hardback  
RRP £31.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £28.75**

Sielecki's repertoire may be simple, but his thorough explanation of all the key moves and especially ideas to remember still fills a substantial volume, produced once again to a very high standard by New in Chess for Chessable. The cornerstones of the repertoire are the Ruy Lopez, ♗b5 lines too against the Sicilian, the French Tarrasch and the Exchange Caro-Kann. Hard-working players who like a reliable repertoire which is both solid and not without bite could do far worse than Sielecki's. Sean Marsh certainly found it instructive – see page 36.



### Understanding Middlegame Strategies Vol.7: Dynamic Catalan

Ivan Sokolov, PC-DVD;  
running time: 4 hours, 48 minutes  
RRP £34.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £31.45**

Ivan Sokolov is quite the expert on the middlegame, not least in lines involving 1 d4 and 2 c4, and his books and DVDs are always popular. Here he covers the 'Dynamic Catalan', a set-up whereby White meets a ...d5, ...c6 and ...e6 approach with a kingside fianchetto: for example, 1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 d3 c6 4 g3 dxc4 5 ♗g2. Sokolov himself has made good use of such lines as White and, indeed, three of the nine featured games involve him on the white side.

Both ChessBase and Sokolov must have had busy autumns, since they have also combined to produce two further DVDs: *Understanding Middlegame Strategies Vol.8:*



French – Winawer and *Understanding Middlegame Strategies Vol.9: French – Tarrasch*. Both retail at £34.95 (Subscribers – £31.45), with the former running to 3 hours, 55 minutes of footage and the latter to 3 hours and 50 minutes. Sean Marsh quite enjoyed the Winawer product – see page 37 – while the Tarrasch one is mainly devoted to those IQP set-ups for Black popularised by Wolfgang Uhlmann and Viktor Korchnoi, i.e. 1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘d2 c5 4 exd5 exd5.



### Master Your Technique

Adrian Mikhalchishin, PC-DVD;  
running time: 5 hours

RRP £29.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £26.95**

Players with good technique tend to be quite logical and precise, but how do we improve our technique? That's the question which the highly experienced Ukrainian-Slovenian Grandmaster and trainer sets out to answer. Mikhalchishin doesn't just tackle endgame technique, but also many important middlegame concepts, with topics including how to improve your pieces, weakening squares in the opponent's camp and successfully blockading passed pawns.



### Najdorf: A dynamic grandmaster repertoire against 1.e4 Vol.1

Luis Engel, PC-DVD;

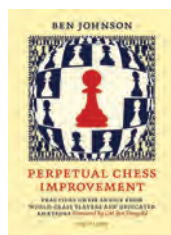
running time: 5 hours, 9 minutes

RRP £34.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £31.45**

The German Grandmaster maps out a repertoire for Black in the ever-popular Najdorf variation of the Sicilian, 1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 a6. This first volume covers White's main moves, 6 ♗g5, 6 ♗e3, 6 ♗e2 and 6 ♗c4. Against the critical 6 ♗g5 Engel covers the fairly modern line 6...e6 7 f4 h6 8 ♗h4 ♘bd7, while in the English Attack he likes the prophylactic approach that is 6 ♗e3 e5 7 ♘b3 ♗e6 8 f3 h5. Notably Engel presents everything in both English and German, while this ChessBase 'FritzTrainer' DVD also contains 20 key positions, which users are recommended to play out against *Fritz*.

These days once almost unknown sixth moves are far from uncommon against the Najdorf, so its aficionados will also be delighted to see that a second DVD completes the repertoire, *Najdorf: A dynamic grandmaster repertoire against 1.e4 Vol.2*. This retails too

at £34.95 (£31.45 for Subscribers) while containing 3 hours, 44 minutes of footage. Both Najdorf DVDs may be purchased together from Chess & Bridge for the special price of £65.00 or £58.50 for Subscribers.



### Perpetual Chess Improvement

Ben Johnson, 240 pages, paperback  
RRP £22.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £20.65**

USCF Master Ben Johnson's *Perpetual Chess* podcast remains extremely popular and now he aims to bring together the best advice he has heard. Over the years Johnson has chatted with many famous names, including Vishy Anand and Hikaru Nakamura, as well as spoken to a great number of adult improvers to ascertain just how they've improved their chess. On more than one occasion, Johnson has even heard conflicting advice, views he adjudicates on in this book for *New in Chess*, while discussing such useful topics as approaching and studying the most important aspects of the game, and how to make full use of all the powerful chess study tools available these days.



### The Safest Scandinavian Reloaded

Vassilios Kotronias, 300 pages, paperback  
£23.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £21.55**

The Scandinavian with 3...♙d6 certainly remains topical, as well as a good choice at club level. Last month we saw that Andrew Martin had a new DVD out on it, *The Sharp Scandinavian with 3...♙d6*, and now there's also this updated and fully revised repertoire out from a leading theoretician and Chess Stars. Do just turn to page 36 to find out Sean Marsh's thoughts on it.



## A little bird just told me

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

### Hans Niemann - @HansMokeNiemann

Two lone Americans up against the world, facing immeasurable odds. Victorious 53 years apart at the legendary Tournament of Peace. 8/9: 2946 performance rating. I know of no better life purpose than to perish in attempting the great and the impossible.

### Fabiano Caruana - @FabianoCaruana

3rd Sinquefeld Cup win and first GCT win. A perfect end to my classical chess games this year!

### Tarjei J. Svensen - @TarjeiJS

It's wild to see Maghsoodloo 12th, Pragg 13th, Keymer 14th and Vidit 15th on the world rankings.

### Greg Shahade - @GregShahade

My mind is blown by @JenShahade's new book! Super cool layout of chess puzzles and themes, with chapters on some of the most inspiring women in chess history. Also includes an example of @LawrenceTrentIM getting crushed. And me by @alexandrabotez!

### Ben Johnson - @Bennyficial1

Had a blast at @MarshallChessNY last night, as @JenShahade discussed her new book for a standing room only crowd. The two highlights were: 1) getting my hands on *Play Like a Champion* (it looks beautiful); 2) Getting to IRL meet legendary Fischer biographer Dr. Frank Brady, who is still razor sharp at 89!

### Women's Chess Coverage - @OnTheQueenside

Wow, we've gained almost 4000 followers this year! It was my goal to cross 5000 by year's end (!), but I need your help with the final push! Please tell your Twitter friends the place to be to follow all things women's chess! It's right here! #chess #womeninchess

### John Ashworth - @Ashwoja

Delighted that Stuart Conquest returns to Hastings as Tournament Director. He has gathered an impressive line-up of titled players in the Masters event... do sign-up!

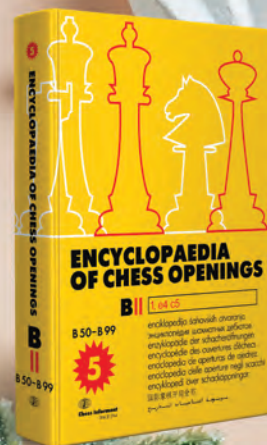
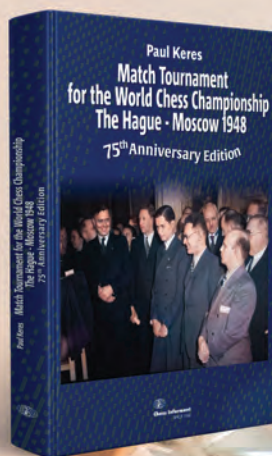
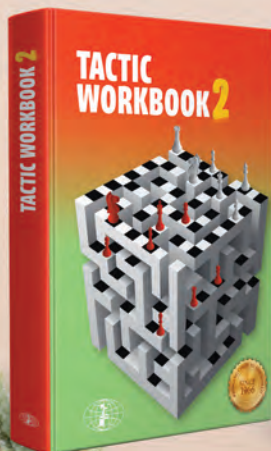
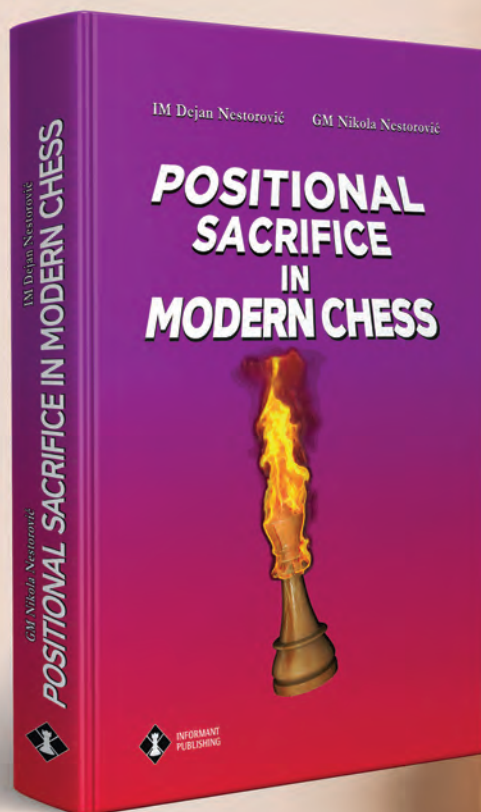
### Deep Sengupta - @gmdeepsengupta

One of my favourite chess tournament of all time is the Hastings Masters. The beautiful town of Hastings, unpredictable weather and a traditional chess tournament. What else do we need?! Looking forward to play there during the new year! @HICongress @CaplinSystems

# Merry Christmas and Happy New Year



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