

Chess



Magnus Carlsen The Greatest of All Time?

ISSN 0964-6221



An Inside View - Sean Marsh reports from the 12th London Chess Classic

A Killer KID - Gawain Jones deployed his new King's Indian repertoire

Steinitz to Today - Craig Pritchett discusses how the game has evolved

Chess

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Chess Magazine (ISSN 0964-6221) is published by:
Chess & Bridge Ltd, 44 Baker St, London, W1U 7RT
Tel: 020 7486 7015 (9:30am - 5pm Monday to Friday)
Email: info@chess.co.uk, Website: www.chess.co.uk

Twitter: @CHESS_Magazine
Twitter: @TelegraphChess - Malcolm Pein
Twitter: @chessandbridge

Subscription Rates:

United Kingdom

1 year (12 issues)	£50
2 year (24 issues)	£90
3 year (36 issues)	£125

Europe

1 year (12 issues)	£60
2 year (24 issues)	£115
3 year (36 issues)	£165

Rest of World (Airmail)

1 year (12 issues)	£75
2 year (24 issues)	£145
3 year (36 issues)	£210

Views expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of the Editors. Contributions to the magazine will be published at the Editors' discretion and may be shortened if space is limited.

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FRONT COVER:

Cover Design: Matt Read
Cover image: FIDE - Nikki Riga

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Contents

Editorial	4
Malcolm Pein on the latest developments in the game	
An Inside View	8
Sean Marsh reports from the London Chess Classic	
A Huge Encounter	14
Jonathan Speelman on that pivotal sixth game in Dubai	
Calamitous Collapse	18
The world championship match really was one of two halves	
Uzbek & Kazakh Joy	20
Two 17-year-olds starred at the World Rapid & Blitz	
A Killer King's Indian	22
Gawain Jones got to make good use of his new KID repertoire	
Find the Winning Moves	26
Can you do as well as Nakamura, Navara, Shankland et al?	
From Steinitz to the 21st Century	30
Craig Pritchett on his fascinating and impressive new book	
Shared Harmonies	34
Ben Graff explores the relationship between chess, music & maths	
How to Beat a Grandmaster	36
Paul Littlewood continues to demonstrate just how to do so	
The Candlestick Chess Problem	37
Geoff Chandler has been busy thinking about Cluedo	
Christmas Chess Solutions	38
The full answers are revealed by Graham Phythian	
60 Seconds with... Jonathan Tait	40
We catch up with the star editor, PGN compiler and author	
How Good is Your Chess?	42
Daniel King has been enjoyed <i>Kupreichik: The Maestro from Minsk</i>	
Never Mind the Grandmasters...	46
Carl on how John Footner inspired him to try the Grünfeld	
Remembering Jonathan Wells	48
David LeMoir pays tribute to a pillar of East Anglian chess	
Home News	50
Mark Hebden made 100% as Guildford Young Guns triumphed	
Overseas News	52
Harry Grieve tied for first at the Roquetas de Mar Open	
Forthcoming Events	52
Will you be playing anywhere in February?	
Solutions	54
This Month's New Releases	55
Notable new books by McDonald and Voronkov are reviewed	
Saunders on Chess	58
John is excited by the emergence of new chess communities	

Printed in the UK by The Magazine Printing Company using only paper from FSC/PEFC suppliers www.magprint.co.uk

Photo credits: Brendan O'Gorman (p.49), Lennart Ootes (pp. 5, 20, 22), Nikki Riga (pp.1, 5, 19), Anna Shtourman (p.6), Sally Pritchett (p.30), John Upham (pp.9-12).

Uzbek & Kazakh Joy

Two 17-year-olds starred at the World Rapid & Blitz between Christmas and New Year

Kudos to Ian Nepomniachtchi, who evidently decided that the best way to not dwell on proceedings in Dubai was to rock up to the World Rapid & Blitz Championships, which began in Warsaw on Boxing Day. A hat-trick-gunning Magnus Carlsen was the clear favourite for both championships, but at 15+10 and 3+2 upsets can occur – and they did.

The Rapid Championship had been reduced from 15 to 13 rounds, which in a very strong 173-player field was inviting trouble. Sure enough four players tied for first on 9½/13, two of whom had been defeated by 17-year-old Uzbek sensation Nodirbek Abdusattorov, who outplayed Fabiano Caruana and then took advantage of Carlsen overpressing in an unbalanced but roughly level endgame. A four-way contest would have been better than deploying tie-breaks to reach a two-player blitz play-off, in which Abdusattorov kept his cool to inflict on Nepomniachtchi his first defeat at the Championships.

The Women's Rapid Championship was only 11 rounds, but that was enough for Alexandra Kosteniuk to dominate, her 9/11 seeing the famous Russian home half a point ahead of Kazakh prodigy, 17-year-old Bibisara Assaubayeva, with a further half-point in arrears, Valentina Gunina taking bronze on tie-break from compatriot Kateryna Lahno.

The sub-optimal tie-break situation reared its ugly head again in the subsequent Blitz Championship, as Vachier-Lagrave, Duda and Firouzja finished on 15/21, Maxime defeating Jan-Krzysztof in the subsequent play-off which Alireza cannot have been overjoyed to have missed out on. Meanwhile Dubov was clear fourth on 14½, Nepomniachtchi and Abdusattorov could only muster 12½ and 12 points respectively, and Carlsen suffered as many as five defeats on his way to a score of 13½/21. Dare we say that the protagonists still hadn't fully recovered from their labours in and in advance of Dubai?

There was at least a clear winner in the Women's Blitz – Assaubayeva, who racked up a huge 14/17 to finish a point and half ahead of Kosteniuk, with the bronze medal again going to Gunina.

17-year-old Steppe stars Abdusattorov and Assaubayeva are clearly exciting talents, currently rated at 2641 and 2434 at classical chess. Do not be surprised if they are respectively over 2700 and 2500 by the end of the year. Both, like so many young players these days, have quite a universal style, being capable of positional grinds, as well as exploiting any attacking chances which come their way.



Two young players and two major trophies. Nodirbek Abdusattorov won gold and Bibisara Assaubayeva (r.) gold and silver in Warsaw.



27 e4 dxe4 28 fxe4 ♖d6 29 e5 ♜b5
30 axb4 axb4 31 d5!

The connected central passed pawns will sweep all before them.

31...bxc3 32 ♙c1 ♜b7 33 ♖g1 ♜cd8
34 e6 ♜f6 35 ♜e5! ♜d6 36 ♜g5 ♜e7
37 ♜g6 ♜fe8 38 ♜h3 1-0

N. Abdusattorov - V. Mikhalevski World Rapid Ch., Warsaw 2021

B. Assaubayeva - N. Batsiashvili World Women's Rapid Championships, Warsaw 2021



Instead, of 17...♙a8-c8, as just played, Black would have been at least OK after 17...♜h7! and ...♜g5 or 18 e4 dxe4 19 fxe4 ♜e5.

18 ♜f2 ♜d7 19 ♙h1 c4?

83 years on and the same slip as Capablanca once famously made, releasing the tension. 19...♜e7! 20 ♜xh3 ♜g6 was required.

20 ♜c2 b5 21 ♜xh3 a5 22 ♜f4 b4 23 g5
♜h7 24 g6!

Making good use of the kingside trumps and all the while e3-e4 is in reserve.

24...fxg6 25 ♜xg6 ♜e7 26 ♜g2 ♜f5?



18 ♙xh6!? gxf6 19 ♜d2 ♜h7 20 ♜f5 ♜e6?

The attack was already a most dangerous one in practice and here Black needed to find 20...♙h8! to stay afloat, when 21 ♜xh6 cxd4 22 ♜g5 d3! is but extremely murky.

21 d5 ♜f6 22 ♜xh6+ ♙f8 23 ♜g4 ♜g6
24 ♜h4! Assaubayeva had a most dominant pair of pawns, Abdusattorov more than makes do with a dominating knight-pair.

24...♜g5?

Allowing a further blow, but even 24...♙xg4 25 ♜h6+ ♙g8 26 hxg4 f6 27 ♜f5 followed by ♜h3 should be crushing.

25 ♜f6! ♜xf6 26 ♜xg5 ♜e7 27 ♜f3

It's fast become a massacre.

27...♜bxd5 28 e5! dxe5 29 ♜xe5 ♜c7
30 ♜h6+ 1-0

Find the Winning Moves

24 puzzles to test your tactical ability, with, as ever, the positions grouped in rough order of difficulty. This month we revisit some of the biggest tournaments from the second half of last year. Don't forget that whilst sometimes the key move will force mate or the win of material, other times it will just win a pawn.

Solutions on pages 54.



Warm-up Puzzles



(1) Yao Lan-J.Volovich
English Women's Rapidplay, London 2021
White to Play



(2) R.Cumming-J.Roettgen
Figueira da Foz 2021
White to Play



(3) P.Morgan-T.Herman
4NCL Online League 2021
Black to Play



(4) M.Perez Gormaz-E.Ronka
Titled Tuesday Blitz 2021
White to Play



(5) R.Cowan-R.Donahue
Leeds 2021
White to Play



(6) S.Sethuraman-L.Van Foreest
Sitges (rapid) 2021
Black to Play

Intermediate Puzzles for the Club Player - Solutions on page 54



(7) H.Nakamura-L.Dominguez Perez
 Saint Louis (rapid) 2021
 White to Play



(8) D.Naroditsky-W.So
 Aimchess US Rapid 2021
 White to Play



(9) Le Quang Liem-L.Aronian
 Tata Steel India Rapid 2021
 White to Play



(10) S.Shankland-J.Xiong
 Saint Louis (blitz) 2021
 White to Play



(11) N.Saraci-G.Toczek
 European Team Ch., Terme Catez 2021
 White to Play



(12) A.Lenderman-F.Caruana
 U.S. Championship, Saint Louis 2021
 Black to Play



(13) E.Ghaem Maghami-N.Yakubboev
 Tashkent 2021
 Black to Play



(14) M.Petrov-M.Vasilev
 Sofia 2021
 White to Play



(15) M.Donnely-B.Moricz
 Coventry 2021
 White to Play

Harder Puzzles for the Club Player – Solutions on page 54



(16) A.Neiksans-A.Sarana
FIDE Grand Swiss, Riga 2021
White to Play



(17) S.Fedorchuk-J.Jens
Dutch League 2021
White to Play



(18) S.Maze-A.Setyaki
Sitges 2021
Black to Play



(19) G.Jones-Y.Pelletier
European Team Ch., Terme Catez 2021
White to Play



(20) S.Mamedyarov-S.Shankland
Saint Louis (rapid) 2021
Black to Play



(21) P.Svidler-Le Quang Liem
Saint Louis (rapid) 2021
Black to Play



(22) D.Navara-Hj.Gretarsson
European Team Ch., Terme Catez 2021
White to Play



(23) A.Puranik-R.Haria
Riga 2021
White to Play



(24) M.Vachier-Lagrave-S.Mamedyarov
Meltwater Tour Final (rapid) 2021
Black to Play

While you can't say for sure that players who have less formal maths training lack an inherent ability for the subject, it is clear practising and developing maths to an advanced level is not a prerequisite for reaching the upper levels of the chess world. In fact, you would only need to find and test one elite player who scored poorly on maths aptitude tests to show the limitations of the link between the two."

This made me think about IQ tests. I mentioned that some players such as Fischer, Kasparov and Carlsen had stellar IQs, whereas certain other grandmasters (whose blushes I will spare) have had their IQs measured at entirely average levels. Amy told me that "IQ tests measure what they measure, and they aren't measuring chess. A low IQ and an exceptional talent for the game is certainly possible and I would imagine that an average IQ and a gift for chess is likely to be relatively common. The way our brains work is fascinating and mysterious, and an ability to be good at some things but not others is all a part of being human."

We reflected on music and Amy elaborated on a point that Andy had previously shared with me. "Music is often played in groups and therefore often rewards the brain with a feeling of collaboration that a more solitary pursuit such as chess might not offer as readily. Equally, because music is not competitive it does not bring with it the same pain of losing as you will get at the chess board. Stress isn't great for the brain, especially for the hippocampus which plays a key role in learning and memory. I can imagine that losing a long and difficult game will be challenging for any player. There has been so much work done by sports psychologists on the need to reframe defeats, to see them as a learning opportunity, to not judge an activity wholly by the result and that's worth keeping in mind if you want to maximise the neurological benefits chess can offer."

As we strolled back from the park, I felt that I now had a fresh understanding on the questions I had been seeking to answer. The history books had shown me that many chess players were fine musicians or mathematicians. Andy and Jonathan had given me further perspective on their own achievements, while also highlighting the limitations in drawing too general a conclusion. Amy had helped me see that while a relationship between chess, music and mathematics existed, aptitude was the wrong lens to use. Each would benefit the brain and all shared certain characteristics and traits. Yet struggling at one in no way meant that you could not be good at another.

So, whether you are a mathematical genius or failed your GCSE, an accomplished musician or tone deaf, there is hope for all of us when we take to the chess board. No matter if your next game is in a New York café or much closer to home. Whatever your level. Whatever your goal. However you personally view the link between chess, music and mathematics, Tarrasch certainly had one thing right. Chess has the power to make us happy.

How to Beat a Grandmaster

IM Paul Littlewood continues to explain how he has defeated his fair share of GMs over the years

I suggested in my first article that there are at least four ways you might achieve your goal of beating a grandmaster:

i. You play really well and simply outplay your illustrious opponent.

ii. You adopt an aggressive strategy, sacrificing material (not always 100% soundly), and your GM opponent cracks under the pressure.

iii. You play an unusual opening line which takes your GM opponent out of his comfort zone and he fails to find the right plan.

iv. You play quite well, but in a superior position your GM opponent blunders.

Having covered option no.1 last month, I would now like to look at option no.2.

Consider the following game:

E.Ermenkov-P.Littlewood

Borovo 1980

Ruy Lopez

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♙b5 a6 4 ♙a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♙e7 6 ♙xc6 dxc6 7 ♖e1 ♙g4 8 h3 ♙h5 9 g4 ♘g4 10 hxg4 ♙xg4



Black has sacrificed a piece for two pawns, but is it sound? *Stockfish* regards the position as unclear, although I do remember GM Velimirovic commenting at the time that he thought the manoeuvre d3, ♘bd2, ♘f1 and ♘h2 gave White the better game. However, looking at it now, I do believe Black still has good chances.

11 ♖e2 ♙g5

Preventing 12 d3 because of 12...♙xc1 13 ♙xc1 ♙xf3 14 ♖xf3 ♖g5+ and wins.

12 ♘c3?

It is difficult to believe that this obvious developing move is a bad error. 12 ♘a3 had

to be played when the position is unclear after 12...♖f6 13 ♙g2 h5 14 ♘c4.

12...♖f6 13 ♙g2 h5 14 d3 ♙xc1 15 ♖exc1 ♖h6



Suddenly the threat of 16...♙xf3+ 17 ♖xf3 ♖g6+ means that White is lost. The game concluded: 16 ♖e3 ♙xf3+ 17 ♙f1 h4 18 ♙e1 h3 19 ♙d2 h2 20 ♖h1 ♙d7 21 ♘e2 ♙xh1 22 ♖xh1 ♖ah8 23 c3 ♖h3 24 ♘g3 ♖h6 25 d4 ♙e6 26 ♖xh6+ ♖8xh6 27 ♙e3 g6 28 ♙f3 exd4 29 cxd4 f5 30 b4 ♖6h4 31 exf5+ gxf5 32 ♖e1+ 0-1



White resigned as after 32...♙d5 33 ♖h1 then 33...f4 wins a piece or 33 ♙g2 f4 34 ♘h1 f3+ 35 ♙f1 ♖g4 wins.

So what we can conclude? Well even grandmasters falter when under pressure. The piece sacrifice was speculative, but White struggled to find the right counter, with one casual developing move causing his downfall.

In my next article I will consider option no.3. If you have any games where you have beaten a grandmaster then please send them to me via plittl@hotmail.com, and if they are suitable, I will try to include them.



60 Seconds with... Jonathan Tait



Born: Ashton-under-Lyne, December 1963.

Place of residence: North Nottinghamshire.

Occupation: Editing chess books is my primary occupation.

Enjoyable? It mostly depends how good the books are – and how well written (chess authors have particular foibles that seriously irritate me). One highlight (of several) was Glenn Flear's *Practical Endgame Play – Beyond the Basics*, which seemed a significant addition to the literature.

And home life? It's the same as work life. I get up in the morning and go into the next room.

But sometimes good to escape to: Out of that room.

Sports played or followed: As a Brentford supporter, 2021 was football heaven.

A favourite novel? Ursula Le Guin – *The Dispossessed*.

Piece of music? Henry Cow – *Legend*.

Film or TV series? Edgar Reitz's *Heimat*, especially the second series. Those characters live in your head like family.

What's the best thing about playing chess? Seeing your own ideas triumph.

And the worst? Realising that an opening in which you've invested so much can't be repaired.

Your best move? Can I choose best *non-move*? I once won a 37-move game where my bishops never left their starting squares.

J.Tait-A.Oomen
correspondence 1992
French Winawer

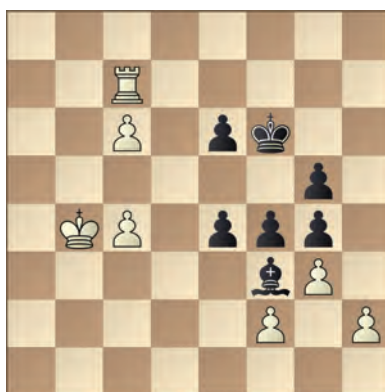


20 ♖c4 d3 21 ♜xc3 dxc2 22 ♜b2 e3
23 ♜xc2 ♟f5 24 ♜cg2 ♜d4 25 ♖c5 ♖xf4
26 ♜e2 ♖h4+ 27 ♜g3 ♜c4 28 ♖xe3
♜f7 29 ♖f2 ♜d6 30 f7 ♜d8 31 g6 ♜d4
32 ♜c3 ♖xf2+ 33 ♖xf2 ♜e4+ 34 ♜g2
♜xc3 35 g7 ♟e4+ 36 ♖h2 ♜f3+ 37 ♜g3
1-0

But less memorable than your worst move? Well, no, because I make at least one atrocious move in almost every game. For instance, very recently:

J.Tait-G.Jennings

Nottinghamshire League 2021



40 ♜f7+?? Stupid and totally unnecessary.
40...♜xf7 41 c7 e3 42 c8 ♖exf2 How do I stop that now? 43 ♖d7+ ♟f8 ½-½

And a highly memorable opponent? FM Michael Barnes, just because I've played him so often.

Favourite game of all time? An Italian in the 2018 *Stockfish-AlphaZero* match. By move 17 AZ had sacrificed three pawns and its kingside structure for the rather nebulous gains of a well-placed knight, open files for its rooks, and an offside enemy bishop. And yet its initiative proved to be so great that *Stockfish* was unable even to draw.

Stockfish 8-AlphaZero

Computer Match, London 2018



And 0-1, 97 (see this month's PGN download).

The best three chess books: Discounting any I've edited, probably my three favourites are: Bronstein – *200 Open Games*; Donner – *The King*; Sadler & Regan – *Game Changer*.

Is FIDE doing a good job? No idea. Better than when Kirsan was in charge, I'd presume.

Or your National Federation? It's never had much relevance to me; and since they messed around with the rating system (twice), even that little has gone.

Any advice for either? No advice, just a request. To FIDE: make the world championship matches longer, and bring back the Candidates matches, and the Interzonals.

Can chess make one happy? Winning usually makes me happy.

A tip please for the club player: I'd quote Craig Hanley from these pages: "Play openings that you enjoy!", while adding that you can play pretty much any old rubbish at club level.

Ed. – Not only is Jonathan responsible for bringing you our very handy PGN download each month, they've just penned A Disreputable Opening Repertoire for Everyman Chess.



Solutions

to Find the Winning Moves (pages 26-28)

1) Yao Lan-Volovich

1 ♖xh6+! 1-0

2) Cumming-Roettgen

White spotted the loose rook on f2: 1 c6+! 1-0

3) Morgan-Herman

1...♖f1+! 2 ♖xf1 ♖xf3+ 3 ♖e1 ♗e4 4 ♖e2 ♖h1# 0-1

4) Perez Gormaz-Ronka

1 ♗xe5! 1-0 There's just no good way to deal with the mate on h8.

5) Cowan-Donahue

1 ♗xf7! 1-0 2 ♖e8+ or 2 ♗g5 will lead to mate, or if 1...♖xf7 2 ♖e8+.

6) Sethuraman-Van Foreest

1...♖xe4+! 0-1 Mate is forced, as with 2 ♖xe4 ♗g1+.

7) Nakamura-Dominguez Perez

1 ♗c8! ♗xc8 (Black also isn't going to survive after 1...♗b8 2 ♗xa7 ♗xa7 3 ♖d1) 2 ♖xc6 ♗c7 3 ♗d5 1-0

8) Naroditsky-So

1 ♖g5! ♖xb5 (of course, if 1...fxg5? 2 ♖xf8+ ♖xf8 3 ♖xf8#) 2 ♖xf6 ♖fe8 3 ♖xg6! ♗d7 4 ♖g7 1-0 5 ♖xh7+ follows or if 4...♖g8 5 ♖e7.

9) Le Quang Liem-Aronian

1 ♗f5! 1-0 Forcing mate is even stronger than the also devastating 1 ♗d5!.

10) Shankland-Xiong

1 ♗xg7! ♗xf4 (1...♗xg7? 2 ♗h5+ is mate in two) 2 ♗xf8 ♗xe3 3 ♗h6 won the exchange while destroying the black king's defences.

11) Saraci-Toczek

1 ♗g5! ♗f5 (if 1...hxg5 2 ♖xf8+ or 1...♖xf2 2 ♖h7+ ♗f8 3 ♖xf2+ ♗f6 4 ♗ge4 with decisive pressure) 2 ♖d5+ ♗h8 3 ♗e6! ♗g6 4 ♗xf8 1-0

12) Lenderman-Caruana

1...♖f3+! 2 ♗xf3 (or 2 ♗e2 ♖xg2+ 3 ♗d1 ♖f1+ 4 ♗c2 ♖xa1) 2...♗e3+ 3 ♗e1 ♖g1+ 4 ♗e2 ♖xa1 0-1

13) Ghaem Maghami-Yakubboev

1...♗xb2! 0-1 2 ♖xb2 ♗c4 forks and overloads to inflict decisive material gain.

14) Petrov-Vasilev

1 ♖g7+! ♗xg7 (or 1...♖xg7 2 hxg7+ ♗xg7 3 ♗h6+ ♗h7 4 ♗g7+!, forcing mate) 2 hxg7+ ♗h5 (2...♗xg7? 3 ♗h6+ again forces mate, in view of 3...♗g6 4 ♖g5+) 3 ♖g2 (instructively preparing to line the queen up behind the rook; 3 ♖xh5+ ♗xg7 4 ♖g5+ also

does the trick) 3...♖xg7 4 ♖xh5+ ♗g8 5 ♖h2 1-0 5...f6 6 ♖h8+ ♗f7 7 ♖h5+ ♗e7 8 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 9 ♗b4 is clearly rather crushing.

15) Donnelly-Moricz

1 ♗g5! (forcing the pace, although 1 ♖h4 f6 2 b4 ♖b6+ 3 ♗c5 should also win) 1...f6? (there's no defence in any case: 1...♖d7!? fails to 2 ♖e4! and 1...♖b6+ 2 ♗h1 wins, in view of 2...♖xb3? 3 ♖xc7! ♖xc7 4 ♖e8+ or 2...♖f2 3 ♖e4 g6 4 ♗h3 ♖c5 5 ♖h4 ♖f8 6 ♗g5 ♖g7 7 ♗xf7!, as pointed out by Mike Donnelly) 2 ♖xc7! 1-0 Black is undone on the back rank.

16) Neiksans-Sarana

1 ♖e2! (otherwise Black could escape the mating net and win, but now 1...♖xa3 2 bxa3 ♖d3 3 ♗e3 wins the exchange and the game in view of the double mate threat) 1...♖bd3 2 ♖xd3 ♖xd3 3 ♗e3 1-0

17) Fedorchuk-Jens

1 ♗xf7! ♗xf7? (allowing a deadly second sacrifice, but even, say, 1...♗c6 2 ♗e6! followed by ♗b2 would surely have been pretty crushing too) 2 ♗dxe5+! fxe5 3 ♗xe5+! (and a third!) 3...dxe5? (or 3...♗e8 4 ♖f6 dxe5 5 ♖xe5+ ♗d8 6 ♖xh8+ ♗c7 7 ♖xd7+! ♗xd7 8 ♖d1+ with a winning attack in view of 8...♗c7? 9 ♖h7+ and 8...♗e7 9 f6+!) 4 ♖xd7+ ♗g8 5 ♖g3+ ♗f8 6 ♖xe5 1-0 Mate is forced.

18) Maze-Setyaki

1...exf4! (even stronger than 1...♗h6 2 ♗e2 dxc5 3 ♖ae1 exf4 4 ♖d3 when White is clearly worse, but holding on for now) 2 ♗d4 (2 f3 doesn't really help: 2...dxc5 3 ♖ac1 ♖e5 and Black still enjoys an overwhelming attack) 2...f3! 3 ♖h1 (3 ♗xf3 ♖xh3+ 4 ♗g1 ♖xf3 5 ♗xg7 ♗h3 6 ♖g5 ♗xg7 forces White to shed serious material) 3...♗xd4! (or even 3...♖e5!?) 4 ♖xd4 ♖e5 5 ♖e3 ♖f8 6 ♗xf3 (the attack is just too strong, with 6 ♗f1 ♖h5 a killer, in view of 7 ♗g1 ♖g5+ 8 ♗h2 ♗xh3!) 6...♖g5 7 ♗g2 ♗xh3! 8 ♖g3 ♖xg3 9 fxg3 ♖h6 0-1

19) Jones-Pelletier

1 ♗f2! (to free the knight; 1 ♗g2!? also wins, and if 1...♖c2+ 2 ♗f3! ♖d1+ 3 ♗f4 ♖g4+ 4 ♗e5) 1...♖c2+ 2 ♖e2! (or 2 ♗f3, as per the previous variation) 2...♗xe2 3 ♗f5+ ♗h5 4 ♖h4# 1-0

20) Mamedyarov-Shankland

1...♗xf2+! (1...♗c8 2 ♖h4 favours Black, but not yet decisively so) 2 ♗xf2 ♗c8! 3 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 4 g4 (now 4 ♖h4? fails to 4...♗e4+) 4...♖d2 5 ♖d1 (5 ♗c1 ♗xg4+ is also a game-ender, and if 6 ♗g1 ♖c5+) 5...♗xg4 0-1

21) Svidler-Le Quang Liem

White went on to win after 1...♖f5? 2 ♖d4, but 1...♖f2! would have been decisive in view of the cunning threat of 2...♖xh3+! 3 ♗xh3 ♖h4# or if 2 ♖d4 ♖g3+ 3 ♗h1 ♖e1+.

22) Navara-Gretarsson

1 ♖xd4! exd4 2 ♗xf4 (the twin threats of ♗e6+ and ♖g3 are too strong) 2...d5 3 ♗xd5 ♖b6? (3...♗xd5 4 ♗xd5 ♖d6 would see Black saving the exchange, but after 5 ♖f2 ♖e5 6 ♖e1 followed by f3-f4 he would do extremely well to also save the game; note too that 3...d3!? is best met by 4 c4, keeping lines closed, and after 4...♖b6+ 5 ♗h2 ♗xd5 6 cxd5! White should be winning due to the famed power of the queen and knight attacking duo, not least in the case of 6...♖xb3? 7 ♖xc8 ♖xc8 8 ♖g3 d2 9 ♖xg6+ ♗f8 10 ♖f6+ ♗e8 11 ♗g6!) 4 a5! ♖c5 5 ♗e6+ (power play with 5 ♖g3! d3+ 6 ♗h1 was even stronger) 5...♖xe6 6 ♗xe6 d3+ 7 ♗h1 ♖c3 8 ♖xc3 ♖xc3 and now 9 ♗g1 would have been the simplest way to win, and if 9...♖xc2 10 ♖d1 d2 11 ♗f1.

23) Puranik-Haria

1 ♗xd5! exd5 (1...♖c5 2 ♗b6 is of little help to Black) 2 e6! fxe6 (2...♗xe6? 3 ♗xe6 fxe6 4 ♖xe6+ leads to mate) 3 ♗xe6 ♗e7 (or 3...♗b4 4 ♖e3 and wins after 4...♖d2 5 ♖g4, 4...♖c1 5 ♗c7+ or even 4...♗xe6 5 ♖xc3 ♗xc3 6 ♖a4+ ♗f8 7 ♖xa6) 4 ♖e2 ♖f6 5 ♗f4! 1-0 The threats of ♗xd5 and ♗g6 are terminal.

24) Vachier-Lagrave-Mamedyarov

White has just erred with 1 ♖h4-e7? (1 d7! would win), and was now hit by a bolt from the blue: 1...♖h5!! 2 h4 (if 2 ♗xh5? ♖f1#) 2...♖xe2 (or just 2...♖f5!) 3 ♖e8+ ♗h7 4 ♖e4+ ♗h8 5 ♖e8+ ♗h7 6 ♖e4+ ♗g8 0-1 7 ♖e6+ ♖f7 8 ♖e8+ ♗h7 leads to mate.

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This Month's New Releases

Dynamic Defence

Neil McDonald, 348 pages
Everyman Chess

RRP £19.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £17.99**

Neil McDonald is an accomplished and thoughtful writer, but unlike some who like to think style is more important than substance, he is not a flamboyant character. He does his chess talking in the pages of his books – and in this one he has quite a lot to say.

Dynamic defence is the order of the day, and that includes a plethora of methods under the umbrella title. It is a part of the game players can be reluctant to study, but it is clearly important. "Defensive skill is crucial in chess. Good, accurate defence can win a game just as well as a fine attacking display can, so expertise in this department is essential for any player wishing to improve their game." The examples and explanations given in the book will "enable you to hone your defensive skill and not feel intimidated when your opponent hurls pieces at your king."

It is easy to overlook such a book, which makes no claims to reveal 'chess secrets' and offers no promises of 'winning' almost by force. Numerous tomes, of course, even offer such temptations in their titles. Yet judging books purely on their covers and titles leads to gems being missed.

The subjects covered here are: The Power of Centralisation; Keeping Out the Queen and Rooks; Knight versus Bishop: Caution or Counterattack?; Resisting Raking Bishops; Challenging a Mighty Knight; Opposing an Advanced Pawn; Using the King as Bait; and Fighting to Survive a Bad Endgame.

There are many excellent examples showing how top players deal with the problems of having to defend against dangerous attacks. Have you ever tried attacking Michael Adams's king? It is not often we see him under serious pressure. There are reasons why he has been so strong for so long. In this example, we see the uncharacteristic situation of his king being circled by several potential vultures. However, White's attack is built on sand. Then game is very close to its decisive end, but it is certainly not Adams who ends up resigning just a few short moves later.



A.Naiditsch-M.Adams Dortmund 2013



Question: It's easy to see why White strayed from the correct path. He has a large armada in the shape of a bishop, two knights and a rook hovering near the black king, with his queen at hand to back them up. Already there is the impressive threat of 23 ♘fg6+ fxg6 24 ♖xg6+ winning the queen. But can you see a good defensive move for Black that breaks up the attack?"

Answer: 22...♗e8!! The bishop guards the g6-square through the f7-pawn to stop White's threat of 23 ♘fg6+."

White's d-pawn soon went west and the b4-knight was able to relocate to c6 to defuse what was left of White's activity.

Moves featuring pieces travelling backwards are notoriously difficult to spot, but seeing such examples makes us much more aware of the possibilities and opportunities. Wilhelm Steinitz would be delighted to see that his original ideas are still alive and kicking after all this time.

I pondered the reasons why books on defence in chess may not be as popular as those on other parts of the game. One point which came to mind is that the reader has to admit that there will be times when exemplary defence is necessary. Psychologically, this may be unappealing. Then I was reminded of how much I had enjoyed reading *Art of Defence in Chess* by Polugaevsky and Damsky (Pergamon, 1988), and it made me wonder if I learned more from there than from the vast majority of books on openings I read at the time.

If we accept that we will indeed come under severe pressure during some of our chess games then we can also accept that the



defence needs to be strengthened. Given that particular ethos as a prerequisite, I can recommend this book as a worthy guide to help you master the art of "taking the fight to the opponent, not simply building an invincible fortress".

Sean Marsh

Masterpieces and Dramas of the Soviet Championships: Volume II (1938-1947)

Sergey Voronkov, 524 pages
Elk and Ruby

RRP £36.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £33.25**

The first volume of Voronkov's extraordinary trilogy won the title of ECF Book of the Year for 2021. This second volume continues from the exact point that the first one left off, taking the reader on a journey from game 108 to no.191, complete with a kaleidoscope full of larger-than-life characters and enough mystery and intrigue to keep one happily busy for a very long time.

The 'Krylenko era' chronicled in the first volume was brought to an abrupt end when Nikolai Krylenko was arrested at the start of the year and executed several months later. Times were changing – and quickly. Krylenko's arrest came shortly after Stalin himself had called him to say, "We trust you." This was a much more serious version of the way a board of directors may issue a vote of confidence in our time. Incidentally, stories of the old Soviet days should act as a warning against the perils of the so-called 'cancel culture' movement.

The world would soon be in flames, partly fuelled by unrequited trust. It seems remarkable that any chess could be played, let alone major championships, during the bitter years of the Second World War. Yet there are six Soviet Championships covered in this book, with enough drama and intrigue to last a lifetime.

There is so much in this book. My initial, scene-setting skim ended up lasting several days, and my more in-depth read took a lot longer. Voronkov brings an extraordinary amount of detail to the book's 524 pages. Open the book at random and there will surely be something enticing and intriguing staring back at the reader.

The author was accused by Mark Dvoretzky of being biased against Mikhail Botvinnik, but Voronkov successfully defends his stance. Botvinnik was a clever man and one who was adept at getting his own way. There was an obsession to claim the title of world champion. The war interrupted a direct

challenge to Alexander Alekhine and the champion's controversial wartime activities presented another barrier afterwards.

Botvinnik was the obvious choice to the challenger and talks were already underway, but a disastrous showing at the 12th Soviet Championships in 1940 brought an unimpressive share of fifth place, with Boleslavsky. Bondarevsky and Lilienthal shared first place, with Smyslov and Keres also finishing above Botvinnik.

What could be done to resurrect Botvinnik's plan? A play-off match between the two tournament was scrapped and a unique tournament was created – the Match Tournament for the Title of Soviet Absolute Champion, which was held in 1941, featuring all six of the aforementioned players. Botvinnik pulled the strings to make the tournament happen, although publicly he maintained the usual air of innocence.

Botvinnik had two months of intensive preparation to ensure he was in excellent shape to meet the challenge. He won the tournament in style, but the war still stood in the way of a match with Alekhine.

It was very easy to induce paranoia at that time. According to Botvinnik, there was a danger of Max Euwe reclaiming the title if anything happened to Alekhine and this could lead to Euwe losing the title to Samuel Reshevsky in a match. The fear of seeing America snatch the title from the Soviet machine would certainly have opened many organisational doors. Such intrigues are to be found throughout the book. Of course, we will never know if Botvinnik would have beaten Alekhine in a match, as the champion died shortly after the war.

There are plenty of interesting photographs in this book. My favourite can be found on page 195. It shows a packed hall full of spectators at the Soviet Absolute Championship, with everyone listening to the commentary through headphones. Keep in mind that this was over 80 years ago. I thought it was cutting-edge technology when I experienced the headphone commentary for the first time, at the 1986 world chess championship in London.

In amongst the intrigue, there are many tragic and sad stories about the fate of numerous chess players who failed to survive the war. Grim reading, indeed.

The post-war coverage includes some excellent material on Paul Keres. He could have suffered serious consequence for playing in Nazi-sponsored tournaments and yet he was still allowed to not only to live, but also to play in the 1948 world championship tournament, although his terrible score against Botvinnik in that event (1-4) hints at a different form of punishment.

Let us not forget that there was an abundance of fighting chess in all of the tournaments covered in this volume. It all may seem irrelevant compared to the tragic loss of life incurred – one way or another – at the time, but that such games have been passed down to us as something to celebrate, at least.

P.Keres-V.Petrovs USSR Championship, Moscow 1940



Keres, a free spirit at the board, opened with the King's Gambit. He finished the game in style: **21 ♖c4! c6** (21...♗xc4 22 ♖e8+ and 21...♗xe3 22 ♗d8+ both force mate) **22 ♗xd5! ♗xc4 23 ♖e8+ 1-0.**

Meanwhile, other talented players were emerging, including the extraordinary David Bronstein. No doubt we shall encounter that young man again in volume three.

Masterpieces and Dramas of the Soviet Championships Volume II (1938-1947) is a treasure trove of wonderful historical material. It is an essential purchase and whets the appetite for the third and final volume, which cannot come soon enough.

Sean Marsh

100 Endgame Patterns You Must Know

Jesus De la Villa, 464 pages, paperback

RRP £24.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £22.45**

Spanish GM De la Villa follows up his best-selling *100 Endgames You Must Know* and *The 100 Endgames You Must Know Workbook* with a third title for New in Chess, this time focussing on the phase which tends to predate the technical part of an endgame. Simplification will occur, but to help the reader appreciate the key patterns and so be able to handle their own endings better and faster at the board, De la Villa mainly focusses on endgames involving no more than one piece aside. As such, there is very useful material on rook and opposite-coloured bishop endings, as well as those involving queen against rook and bishop against knight.

500 Chess Questions Answered

Andrew Soltis, 272 pages, paperback

RRP £14.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £13.49**

Soltis's latest work for Batsford is seemingly designed for those new to the game, not least everyone who has been inspired by *The Queen's Gambit* to take up chess. The aim is to get the reader up to speed with all the technical terminology, while imparting a fair amount of practical advice. Along the way Soltis tackles such questions as: how long should I think before choosing a move and is there a best way to study chess?



Anthology of Chess Problems 2345 (2nd edition)

Milan Velimirovic & Marjan Kovacevic,
420 pages, hardback

£39.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £35.95**

Chess Informant's latest well-produced hardback sees two leading Serbian chess problemists, both International Solving Grandmasters, compile the most comprehensive anthology of chess problems around. Each of the 2345 positions (all with a maximum of 12 pieces) comes with a full solution and even highly experienced solvers will surely find new mates in 2, 3, 4 and 5 to enjoy.

Attacking with the Jobava London System

Elisabeth Pähtz, PC-DVD;

running time: 6 hours

RRP £26.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £24.25**

Eric Prié, Simon Williams and especially Baadur Jobava have all contributed significantly to the evolution of 1 d4 ♗f6 2 ♗c3 d5 3 ♖f4, which now receives a ChessBase repertoire devoted to it and by one of Germany's most famous players no less. Across 54 mini-sections of video, which are followed by some useful interactive exercises, Pähtz supplies everything which the club player needs to know to get up and running with this simple set-up. Notably too she tackles 3...e6 with 4 ♗b5, thereby sidestepping 4 e3 ♖b4, while 3...g6 is met by 4 ♗d2 ♖g7 5 f3 (5 ♗f3 would transpose to the Barry Attack – see below).

Best Lessons of a Chess Coach: Extended Edition

Sunil Weeramantry & Ed Eusebi,

412 pages, paperback

RRP £19.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £17.99**

This is a new and expanded edition for Mongoose Press of Weeramantry's *Best Lessons of a Chess Coach*, with the successful coach and stepfather of Hikaru Nakamura now sharing the writing load with fellow coach and organiser Ed Eusebi. The reader certainly feels that they have been transported to Weeramantry's classroom and while enjoying his lectures on famous games and some of his own, will pick up many handy tips on such important topics as knowing when to resolve the tension and improving one's pieces.

Bobby Fischer Explained, And Some Stories

Zenón Franco, 364 pages, paperback

RRP £21.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £19.05**

Paraguayan Grandmaster Zenón Franco has long been domiciled in Spain and become well known over the past decade or so to English-speaking audiences for his chess writing. Franco has a number of *Move by Move* titles to his name in the Everyman

Chess series and has also written in that style for Elk & Ruby. This work too is also very much in the question-and-answer form and even openly in a "move-by-move" approach, while being published by Zenonchess Ediciones. Fischer's legendary and highly instructive games are the main focus, but Franco also includes a number of enjoyable anecdotes about the legendary American Champion.



Kingwalks: Paths of Glory

Yasser Seirawan & Bruce Harper,
288 pages, paperback

RRP £24.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £22.45**

Anything written or produced by Yasser Seirawan makes one sit up and take notice. Here, in collaboration with Canadian Master Bruce Harper, he examines a topic which has long fascinated most chess players, namely kingwalks. The reader gets to see kingwalks which prepare attacks, kingwalks to defend key points, kingwalks to escape an attack, many other varieties and even some unsuccessful kingwalks. The games featured are heavy on textual annotation and may prove ideal if you are looking for some new year inspiration, as well as handy instruction.

Leading American publisher Russell Enterprises haven't just released *Kingwalks* of late, but also *Oops! I Resigned Again!*, a most unusual puzzle book by Ian Rogers (160 pages, RRP £18.95, Subscribers £17.05). Readers have 100 positions to solve where the aim is to do better than the player in question who resigned when there was no need. Yes, even plenty of grandmasters have been known to resign when there was no need to, including Sam Shankland, who contributes a foreword.

Hanon Russell has also produced *Dvoretsky's Endgame Manual: FastTrack Edition* (216 pages, RRP £18.99, Subscribers £17.09), in which Karsten Müller and Alex Fishbein have gone through Mark Dvoretsky's famous endgame manual, selecting the more important material for the amateur player to study and enjoy, as well as *The Sicilian Four Knights* (240 pages, RRP £24.95, Subscribers £22.45), in which American Correspondence senior master David Willis maps out a repertoire with his favourite 1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♗xd4 ♘f6 5 ♗c3 ♗c6.

Magnus Carlsen's Middlegame Evolution

Ivan Sokolov, 280 pages, hardback

RRP £26.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £24.29**

This is a major new release from Quality Chess featuring one of the world's leading chess writers exploring the amazing middlegame play of the world champion. Sokolov doesn't just draw a number of very useful lessons from Carlsen's middlegame prowess, but aims to put his finger on how

Carlsen became so strong and in so many different types of middlegame. The annotations are unsurprisingly generally excellent and the list of chapters both revealing and intriguing: A Minor Sacrifice, Pawn Majority in the Centre, Hanging Pawns in the Centre, Mastering the Nimzo-Indian Sämisch, Attack & Prophylaxis, Knight Dominates Bishop and Magnus is Human.

New in Chess Yearbook 141

Peter Boel, René Olthof & Jan Timman
(eds.), 256 pages, paperback

RRP £26.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £24.25**

The latest *Yearbook* features an extremely interesting forum section, as well as Matthew Sadler's second column devoted to the openings used in the TCEC. Glenn Flear's reviews include Gawain Jones's *Coffeehouse Repertoire* and there are all the usual opening surveys, including four on the Sicilian and one by Michael Adams on the QGA.

The Barry Attack

Andrew Martin, PC-DVD;
running time: 5 hours

RRP £26.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £24.25**

Mark Hebden's old favourite remains a decent anti-King's Indian choice for the club player and is ideal material to be presented by Andrew Martin, a man who was actively involved in the early days of the evolution of the opening. After 1 d4 ♘f6 2 ♗f3 g6 3 ♗c3 d5 4 ♗f4 ♗g7 Martin maps out not just the history of the opening and all the key ideas, but supplies mini-repertoires for White with 5 ♗b5 and 5 h3, as well as with the two main lines, 5 e3 and 5 ♗d2.

On top of Martin and Pähz's new DVDs, ChessBase have also already this year released the intriguingly titled *The 4 Player Types Standard Model*, another PC-DVD, this time by Luis Engel and Karsten Müller (RRP £26.95 or £24.25 for Subscribers). Across almost seven hours of video, the German Grandmasters build on Lars Bo Hansen's model of players falling broadly into four categories: activists, pragmatics, theoreticians and reflectors. Viewers should be able to work out which category they fall into, while also learning plenty about how to trouble those with different styles.

ChessBase have also put out of late both *ChessBase Magazine 204* and *ChessBase Magazine 205*. These PC-DVDs retail at £17.99 (Subscribers – £16.29), feature Judit Polgar and Alireza Firouzja on their respective covers, and contain all the usual features, not least a number of new opening surveys for the more theoretically inclined to enjoy.

The Modernized Grivas Sicilian

Efstratios Grivas, 492 pages, paperback

RRP £31.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £28.75**

It was back in 2005 that the Greek Grandmaster and Gambit Publications brought out *A Complete Guide to the Grivas Sicilian*, thereby bringing 1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♗c6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♗xd4 ♗b6 to a much wider audience. Readers of that work may recall Grivas christening the various sub-variations

Medusa, Eros, Cyclopes, etc, and those terms have been retained in this detailed new Thinkers repertoire on the opening.

Thinkers Publishing have also released *The Modernized Sicilian Kan* by Adrien Demuth (272 pages, RRP £26.95, Subscribers £24.25), which is somewhat less detailed than Grivas's work, but still maps out an easily sufficiently detailed repertoire with 1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♗xd4 a6, as well as *The ♗g5 Najdorf Revisited: Volume 2* (416 pages, RRP £29.95, Subscribers £26.95), in which Lukasz Jarmula completes his detailed look at 1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♗xd4 ♘f6 5 ♗c3 a6 6 ♗g5 by examining the rather important variations 6...e6 7 f4 ♗b6 and 6...♗bd7.

The Modernized King's Indian: Mar del Plata

Milos Pavlovic, 244 pages, paperback

RRP £23.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £21.55**

It's not just the Sicilian which has received the Modernized treatment of late, but also the King's Indian, with our sometime contributor Milos Pavlovic delving into the opening's most famous and richest variation. He is keen to impart his knowledge of the main and some less well-known strategic motifs, while after 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♗c3 ♗g7 4 e4 d6 5 ♘f3 0-0 6 ♗e2 e5 7 0-0 ♗c6 Pavlovic's coverage is mainly devoted to 8 d5 ♗e7 and then 9 ♗e1 and 9 b4, with recent developments and prospective novelties often to the fore.

There's also Jan Boekelman's *The Modernized King's Indian Defense: Averbakh Variation* (400 pages, RRP £29.95, Subscribers £26.95), in which the Dutch author maps out a detailed repertoire for White with his favourite 5 ♗e2 and 6 ♗g5 against the King's Indian, a line which continues to go a little under the radar at all levels.

Finally, we should mention that the indefatigable Thinkers Publishing team have also just released *Unbeatable: The Art of Defense* by Jan Werle (340 pages, RRP £28.95, Subscribers £26.05), which is certain to contain a wealth of very useful information. We'll have more on this fascinating new work next month.

The Road to Reykjavik

Tibor Karolyi, 432 pages, hardback

RRP £26.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £22.29**

2022 is, of course, fifty years on from the Match of the Century in Reykjavik, so it is no surprise that Quality Chess will mark the occasion with a two-volume work by Hungarian GM Karolyi. *Fischer - Spassky 1972* will be devoted to the match itself, but first readers are taken on a eye-opening journey as they follow Fischer from child prodigy to world-class superstar and then the man, who, yes, really did whitewash Taimanov and Larsen come the Candidates matches in the run-up to taking on Spassky for the world title. Fischer's most important and most instructive victories come under Karolyi's microscope with the annotations highly accessible for the club player.