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# Chess



**THE FULL STORY FROM  
WIJK AAN ZEE  
& GIBRALTAR**

ISSN 0964-6221



The Benefits of Netflix - Matt Read on a new London social chess venture



Jonathan Penrose - Daniel King features a trademark attacking victory



A Sense of Purpose - Julian Way pays homage to the play of Evgeny Najer



# Chess

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# Contents

<b>Editorial</b> .....	4
Malcolm Pein on the latest developments in the game	
<b>A Different Class</b> .....	8
Magnus Carlsen simply destroyed the Tata Steel field at Wijk	
<b>Battle of the Sexes</b> .....	18
John Saunders was in Gibraltar to witness a unique match	
<b>60 Seconds with... IM &amp; WGM Irina Bulmaga</b> .....	23
We meet the Gibraltar commentator and professional player	
<b>A Sense of Purpose</b> .....	24
Julian Way pays homage to the fine strategic play of Evgeny Najer	
<b>Find the Winning Moves</b> .....	26
Can you do as well as Karjakin, Mannion, Morozevich et al?	
<b>The Benefits of Netflix</b> .....	30
Matthew Read on a new London-based social chess venture	
<b>How Good is Your Chess?</b> .....	32
Daniel King remembers 10-time British Champion Jonathan Penrose	
<b>How to Beat a Grandmaster</b> .....	35
Paul Littlewood explores how he beat GM Vltako Kovacevic	
<b>Endgame Expertise</b> .....	36
Andrew Brett enjoyed an Arkell and D'Costa endings masterclass	
<b>Forthcoming Events</b> .....	38
Will you be playing at Blackpool or somewhere else this March?	
<b>Never Mind the Grandmasters...</b> .....	40
Carl has decided on a second for his return to the tournament hall	
<b>Kurt Richter: Chess Blitzkrieg</b> .....	42
Mike Donnelly on how Richter's style fitted the 1930s and 40s	
<b>Back in the (Hey) Day</b> .....	46
Bob Jones on the size of Staffordshire, and Cannock's early success	
<b>Home News</b> .....	48
Some cracking games, and Keith Arkell triumphed at Harrogate	
<b>Studies with Stephenson</b> .....	51
Brian on Paul Byway and the lack of UK study composers	
<b>Overseas News</b> .....	52
Success for Aronian, Kolbus, Matlakov, Mirzoev and Nakamura	
<b>Solutions</b> .....	53
<b>This Month's New Releases</b> .....	54
Impressive tomes from Pritchett, Sokolov and Werle are reviewed	
<b>Saunders on Chess</b> .....	58
John very much enjoyed Gibraltar and ponders team success	

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# 60 Seconds with...

# Irina Bulmaga



**Born:** Chisinau, Republic of Moldova, 11th November 1993.

**Place of residence:** Bucharest, Romania.

**Occupation:** Professional chess player.

**Enjoyable?** I am grateful I've found something I love in chess and succeeded in making a profession out of it. There's nothing in life which brings me more suffering, but at the same time more joy.

**And home life?** It used to be almost non-existent before Covid, as I would be there for a few days, then head to my next tournament. Things have changed in the last years and I have learned the names of a few neighbours.

**But sometimes good to escape to:** I have rediscovered my passion for writing (still mostly chess related), and have recorded some chess courses. I recently tried being a chess commentator and absolutely loved it. When I can't take anymore chess... well, I will have to figure it out if and when that moment comes.

**Sports played or followed:** Tennis and

figure skating – love to watch them! I find running very calming, and did a half marathon some years ago.

**A favourite novel?** My all-time favourite is *Steppenwolf* by Herman Hesse, while I recently really enjoyed *The Midnight Library* by Matt Haig.

**Piece of music?** 'Anyà' – Deep Purple.

**Film or TV series?** *Doctor House*. I try to watch it again from time to time, but I still remember every episode.

**What's the best thing about playing chess?** Meeting interesting people with different backgrounds from all around the world.

**And the worst?** Not being able to forget, whether a move, a game, or a tournament. I wouldn't be surprised if many professional chess players suffer from a sort of PTSD.

**Favourite game of all time?** A difficult one... Can I just say that I love Bobby Fischer's games? I believe he's one of the greatest players of all time.

**The best three chess books:** *Dvoretsky's Endgame Manual*, all the volumes of Kasparov's *My Great Predecessors*, and *Winning* by Nigel Short.

**Your best move?** Not sure if it is the best one, but it was very aesthetically pleasing.

## I. Bulmaga-M. Socko Wroclaw 2019



31 ♖g6!! ♜c5 32 ♘g5 ♜xg1+ 33 ♔a2 ♜xg5 34 ♜xg5 (1-0, 65)

**But less memorable than your worst move?** In a position where the engines give '+10' for White after almost any sensible move, I managed to find one of the only ones which loses. It still gives me nightmares.

## I. Bulmaga-E. Paetz Gibraltar 2021



38 ♘d2?? ♜c1 39 ♘e4+ ♔c6 40 ♘d5+ ♔xd5 41 ♘d7+ ♔xe4 42 ♜h7+ ♔f4 43 ♜h2+ ♔f5 44 ♜h7+ ♔g4 45 ♜e4+ ♜f4 46 ♜g2+ ♔f5 47 ♜h3+ g4 48 ♜h7+ ♔g5 49 ♘d1 ♔h8 50 ♜a7 ♔h2 51 ♜a8 ♜c4+ 52 ♔a1 ♜xc2 0-1

**And a highly memorable opponent?** Veselin Topalov, the strongest player I have ever defeated (Cap d'Agde Rapid, October 2021). One of the most recent moments when chess filled my eyes with tears of happiness.

**Is FIDE doing a good job?** I think they're doing better than previous regimes.

**Or your National Federation?** A new team won the elections some months ago. I like what they've been doing so far.

**Any advice for either?** I would love to see the tournaments in Europe where players buy rating and norms disappear. I think FIDE could direct more efforts in that direction. As for the Romanian Federation, I would love to see them support women's chess more.

**Can chess make one happy?** In more than one way!

**A tip please for the club player:** Love and respect chess, and it will love you back. Also, don't forget about the basic chess principles!

# A Sense of Purpose

## FM Julian Way pays homage to the fine strategic play of Evgeny Najer

Evgeny Najer (b. 1977) is a strong Russian Grandmaster with a peak rating of over 2700. He has a distinctive style based on detailed planning and purposeful endeavour. He is the coach of the Russian women's team and was one of the seconds to Gata Kamsky in his match against Veselin Topalov in the 2009 Candidates final in Sofia. Najer was European Individual Champion in 2015 in Jerusalem and the 2016 winner of the prestigious Aeroflot Open in Moscow. He recently defeated Anand in a tense complex struggle on the Isle of Man in 2019.

His principal coach was the strong correspondence player Alexander Bodisko. The significance of working with a correspondence player should not be passed over as it almost certainly contributed to Najer's extremely purposeful play and his profound sense of strategy. In today's chess scene, with the huge popularity of blitz and bullet and a possible over-reliance on technology, taking time out to consider one's own strategic aims in a given position may be a dying art. Najer is also acutely aware of his opponent's opportunities. For instance, in the first game analysed below, Najer looks to blunt Smirin's attacking potential before proceeding with his own plans.

In the second game against Bluebaum, Najer co-ordinates his forces in harmonious fashion, while in stark contrast his opponent's attack lacks any real cohesion. Although the game contains genuine momentum, Najer never seems in a great hurry and there is a curious inevitability about his opponent's demise. The careful and meticulous planning that goes into the attack is particularly instructive.

### E. Najer - I. Smirin

European Individual Ch., Yerevan 2014  
*Sicilian Classical*

**1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♜f6 5 ♜c3 ♜c6 6 ♙g5 e6 7 ♛d2 a6 8 0-0-0**

White has solved the problem of his king position while Black keeps his options open.

**8... ♙d7 9 f3 b5 10 ♙b1**

A useful prophylactic move typical of Najer's unhurried style.

**10... ♙e7 11 h4**

This could discourage kingside castling.

**11... 0-0!? 12 g4**

Najer's clear purpose is kingside action.

**12... b4 13 ♜ce2 a5 14 ♜xc6**

White wants the initiative. He intends to

play 15 ♜d4 with tempo.

**14... ♙xc6 15 ♜d4 ♙b7 16 ♙b5!**



A superb move: White activates the inept bishop on f1, intending to use it to blockade the menacing black pawns. The bishop is heading for a4.

**16... ♛c7 17 h5 ♜fc8 18 ♙a4!**

Completing a wonderful manoeuvre by Najer. It is noteworthy that Najer has one eye on defence while the other eyes up the black monarch.

**18... ♛d8 19 ♛h2!**

A very clever if natural queen move, not only moving on to the sensitive h-file, but also putting pressure on d6.

**19... h6 20 ♙h4 ♜h7 21 ♜b5!**

Applying further pressure to d6.

**21... d5 22 ♙xe7 ♛xe7 23 ♜d6!**



A very useful outpost giving real meaning to 19 ♛h2.

**23... ♜d8 24 e5!**

Securing the knight.

**24... ♜g5 25 ♛f2!**

The queen now takes up a new role heading for the sensitive b6-square. Her duties on h2 are no longer required.

**25... ♜xd6!?**

A brave and hugely practical choice from Smirin; he sacrifices the exchange in an effort to free his position.

**26 exd6 ♛xd6 27 f4!**

Controversial as e4 is now available for the black knight, but Najer is in firm control.

**27... ♜e4 28 ♛e3 ♜d8 29 ♜d4!**



Another blockading move from Najer, preventing the freeing move ...d4, which would unleash the bishop on b7.

**29... f6 30 ♙b3**

Another pertinent move, preventing ...e5 as after 30...e5 Black's knight will no longer have protection from the pinned pawn on d5.

**30... ♜c5!?**

Frustrated Black retreats his loose knight hoping for a later ...a4 which will trap the bishop on b3.

**31 ♜e1**

Najer now asks his king's rook to make a contribution, hitting the vulnerable e6-pawn.

**31... ♙a6**

Black threatens ...a4, trapping the bishop, an immediate 31...a4 would allow 32 ♙c4.

**32 g5**





Najer neglects his bishop's safety, hoping to crash through on the kingside.

**32...a4 33 ♖xa4 ♗xa4 34 gxf6 ♖c5 35 ♖g1 ♖d7**

Smirin clings on for dear life.

**36 f5 exf5 37 ♖e8**

Najer aims to simplify into a winning ending.

**37...♗f8 38 ♖xg7 ♖xg7 39 ♖xf8 ♗xf8 40 fxg7 ♗xg7 41 ♖xd5**



**41...♗e4??**

Black misses 41...f4!! which actually draws as White does not have time for 42 ♖xc5.

**42 ♖xf5 ♗f6 43 ♖c1**

Now Najer's king enters the frame with decisive effect.

**43...♖e2 44 ♖d2 ♖xh5**

Too little, too late.

**45 ♖b5 ♖f3 46 ♖xb4 h5 47 a4 ♖e4**

**48 ♖b3** Keeping an eye on the black h-pawn.

**48...♗g6 49 a5 h4 50 a6 ♗g5 51 a7 ♖g2**

**52 ♖e2 1-0**

### M.Bluebaum-E.Najer

Aeroflot Open, Moscow 2017

King's Indian Attack

**1 ♖f3 d5 2 g3 ♖g4 3 ♖g2 c6 4 0-0 ♗f6 5 h3 ♖xf3 6 ♖xf3 e5 7 d3 a5!**

This is a fantastic move, taking time out to discourage b2-b3. Najer is always keen to restrict his opponent and disrupt their plans.

**8 a4 ♖c5**

An aggressive posting for the bishop.

**9 ♗d2 0-0 10 e4 ♖e8 11 c3 ♗bd7**



Let's take stock: after 11 moves Black has completed his development and has a strong presence in the centre. On the other hand,



Nowadays Evgeny Najer spends much of his time working with the Russian women's team and on commentary duties, but he remains a strong grandmaster, currently rated at 2661.

White has the two bishops, but even so Black cannot be worse.

**12 ♖g2 ♖a7**

Vacating the c5-square for the knight, Najer reorganises his pieces.

**13 exd5**

White cedes in the centre, perhaps hoping to open the position for his two bishops.

**13...cxd5 14 ♗b1!?**

An ignominious retreat; White hopes to liberate his bishop on c1.

**14...e4!**

This move is typical of Najer's desire to restrict his opponent's pieces, in this case the bishop on g2.

**15 d4 h6!**

Depriving the white bishop of g5.

**16 ♗a3 ♖b8!**

The Bishop's range was blunted on the a7-g1 diagonal, so Najer empowers it on a more fruitful diagonal.

**17 ♖e3**

Both the white bishops are fairly docile.

**17...♖a6!**



Wonderful chess from Najer. The black rook seeks activity laterally, making use of the infamous rook lift. A hard move to find, but very instructive.

**18 b4**

White expands on the queenside, but his expansion will prove remarkably futile.

**18...axb4 19 cxb4 ♗f8!**

More regrouping from Najer. His moves have genuine purpose.

**20 ♖b3 h5!**

Najer now moves on to the offensive.

**21 ♖g5 ♗h7 22 ♖d2 h4**

Black intends to soften up White's defences.

**23 g4 ♖d6**

Black moves on to the vulnerable b8-h2 diagonal.

**24 ♖fc1 ♖h2 25 ♖f1 ♖g3!!**



An absolutely brilliant move which busts open the white position.

**26 g5**

If White takes the bishop on g3 then 26...♗xg4 27 hxg4 ♖f6 and White's goose is cooked.

**26...♖xf2!**

More defences are depleted.

**27 ♗xf2 e3!**

A superb interference move which cuts off the white queen.

**28 ♖xe3 ♗xg5**

The black pieces are a swarming menace to the white king.

**29 ♖f1**

If 29 ♖xg5 then 29...♗e4 looks very nasty.

**29...♗h5 30 ♖a2 ♗g3 31 ♖e1 ♖g1! 0-1**

Exploiting the pin on the e file and picking up the bishop on g2 on the next move. A brilliant co-ordinated attack from Najer.

# The Benefits of Netflix

## Matthew Read reports back from a new London-based social chess venture

Chess is currently experiencing a surge of popularity that hasn't been seen since the days of Fischer versus Spassky in 1972, including even the Kasparov-Short boom of 1993. No one could have predicted this level of chess interest, born from a combination of the COVID pandemic, *The Queen's Gambit* on Netflix, and unparalleled amounts of news coverage in the media.

Has this heightened level of interest had any effect on the game itself? Following the 1972 'match of the century', participation in chess tournaments skyrocketed, with weekend events sponsored by the *London Evening Standard* attracting entries of over 700. There was also an important increase in sponsorship: Cutty Sark sponsored the British Championship in 1973 and, in the Royal Jubilee year of the 1977, the Queen's jewellers, Collingwood of Conduit Street Ltd, sponsored the event. Our own magazine benefitted with a rise in new subscribers that would make our current editor cry.

Due to two years of the pandemic, over-the-board chess is still in the resumption stage in many parts of the UK, if even that. Moreover, with many still uneasy about returning to the board, any increase in club membership or tournament entries has been minimal.

The gains that chess has made have come about in a different way this time, at least for now, namely an explosion of social players, online and, arguably more critically, over the board.

Chess.com, the world's largest playing server, reported an unprecedented surge in interest, with daily active users averaging a



little over one million at the end of 2019 compared to over 3 million on average day in 2022. Their predicted growth over the next decade was achieved and surpassed in a mere matter of months

On video platforms like YouTube and Twitch, individual chess players who stream games and analysis reported their daily viewership doubling, and even tripling in some cases, from pre-coronavirus conditions. With this increase in viewers comes an

equally welcome increase in income.

I experienced the pulling power of the new generation of chess streamers first-hand when Chess & Bridge ran an impromptu livestream from Andrea Botez (pictured above), one half of the Botez sisters, the other half, Alexandria, was incapacitated after a heavy evening's blitz and streaming with the Ginger GM from Battersea Chess Club.

Arranged literally hours before her arrival and advertised through Twitter alone, the



*It's still early evening at the Thornhill Arms, but the wide array of chess players appear relaxed and clearly enjoying their OTB battles.*



*There were also a few slightly more serious faces on display when Matt popped into the London Chess Community, as well as plenty of blitz.*





Ruth, a primary-school teacher from Oval, was just one of many female players Matt met at the Thornhill Arms. Having not played since school, Ruth is exactly the demographic and fresh blood that chess needs.



A drop-in visit to the London Chess Community from YouTube star IM Eric Rosen and IM Irene Sukhander, who are pictured with organiser Jake Williams. The duo stopped in London on their way back from Gibraltar.

business benefitted from a steady stream of the new generation of casual chess players, most of whom were blissfully unaware there was a chess shop in London. Andrea spent four hours broadcasting her games against all-comers. The result: 25,000+ viewers watched some or part of the stream live and over half a million followed by the end of that week.

Will this new generation of chess players be destined to play the game only via the glare of a monitor, or is there hope that they will also enjoy some old-fashioned 3D chess?

If Jake Williams, the founder of the London Chess Community, has anything to do with it, the answer is definitely yes. I'd come across the London Chess Community on Twitter, and decided to head down to King's Cross on a wet Wednesday evening to see what all the fuss was about.

The club meets at the Thornhill Arms, a typical London pub, five minute's walk from Kings Cross underground station. I arrived just before 7pm and the place was already a fully-fledged chess zone with dozens of tables already occupied, with pairs looking as friendly and relaxed as can be possible when playing blitz. Indeed, shortly after I arrived, the last non-chess table in the entire pub had a plastic set plonked it and a game between two latecomers ensured total domination.

I call it a 'club', but with no membership or board fee and nothing resembling a rulebook, it doesn't really operate like one. Neither does it look like one, with an average age firmly south of 40, and a gender ratio that would make even the most progressive club jealous.

Every Wednesday since last October a steadily growing group of players have been meeting weekly to do battle at the Thornhill Arms. On the night I visited there were around 40 or so people playing at any one time, and I would imagine over 60 people in total attended that night.

One of my first games that evening was against Eva from Germany, who popped in for an hour on her way to a dance class. Over the next couple of hours I got to meet more of Jake's regulars, most of whom have never set foot in a conventional chess club or played any form of competitive chess.

Ability levels vary from almost beginner status to a 2250-rated 4NCL player. Checking out the photos from the group's Facebook page I did notice a few familiar faces in Tom Rendle, Peter Roberson and Kanwal Bhatia.

Speaking to Jake, he's not your typical organiser, though he did utter the following words, which I'm sure will be familiar to anyone who has ever sat on a chess club committee: "I run it by default. There is no one else!" He does, however, have a friendly demeanor and boundless energy as he frequently pauses our chat to greet a returning member or to introduce two strangers, pairing them off quickly and efficiently, like he's the Cilla Black of chess OTB matchmaking.

Jake formed the idea of the London Chess Community whilst living in Australia after making many lifelong friends over a game of chess there. Upon his return he couldn't find a London-based equivalent and the rest, as they say, is history.

"What we are selling here is a connection, but it is for free." Jake states, before going on to add. "I'm aware of how much isolation is a key issue now in society. Especially now with the pandemic, people miss that interaction and that is huge for mental health. A lot of people here tonight are new to London and it can be a really lonely place. You could be alone and see people sitting together and think, why don't I have that? People can have at least one night here and think these are my people."

A noble goal for the London Chess

Community, as they seek to reinforce the social connection that the game can bring. Jake's welcoming attitude and not-for-profit ethos is especially refreshing and is undoubtedly the cornerstone of his success. He is planning further expansion, possibly in to non-pub venues, which may in itself attract a different crowd - and improve my results. I won only a single game that night, and, frankly, I blame the pints of Neck Oil.

## London Chess Community

Twitter: @LChesscommunity

Website: londonchesscommunity.com

Currently offers social chess on three nights of the week, but has ambitions to eventually offer social chess every day.

### Mondays (7:30pm-late)

@ The Lauriston, E9 7JN

### Wednesdays (6pm-late)

@ Thornhill Arms, N1 9RD

### Fridays (5-8pm)

@ Coffee Zee, N7 6NE

### Other free London-based social chess:

The following are outside venues, so either wrap up or wait until spring before trying them out!

#### FourCorner Club

(Twitter: @FourCornerClub)

Outside venue: Saturdays from 12pm

@ St John's Square, EC1M 4BU

#### OTB Southbank

www.meetup.com/otbsouthbank/

Outdoor venue: Sundays from 1pm.

Located outside The National Theatre

@ The Understudy, SE1 9PX

# This Month's New Releases



**Magnus Carlsen's Middlegame Evolution**  
Ivan Sokolov, 280 pages  
Quality Chess  
RRP £26.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £24.29**

Ivan Sokolov, now a veteran but long an almost-top-ten star, takes his successful work on middlegames and pawn structures in a new direction with this collection of deeply annotated Carlsen games. There are 26 main games, with many other fragments and full games within the notes. Seven thematic chapters are followed by a chapter of exercises, which require us to find plans and ideas, as well as tactics – a challenging and useful feature.

The main focus is on middlegame patterns. A few diagrams at the start of each main chapter encourage us to try to solve some of the problems we are about to see Magnus confront. We witness some fine examples of play with hanging pawns, with a central pawn majority, with a knight dominating a bishop, and so on.

Sokolov identifies Carlsen's general preferences, such as having a space advantage and pawn breaks available, and his willingness to make 'minor' sacrifices (of a pawn or the exchange), to gain such features in the position. Complex though some of the material is, I found this book compulsive reading and I learned a great deal from it. Sokolov is an excellent annotator of middlegames, choosing variations wisely and homing in on the dynamic features of a position.

The title concept of 'evolution' appears when Sokolov intermittently points out how the world champion's thinking has developed. It doesn't seem to be a structuring principle of the book, however. Sokolov's love of sharp 1 d4 openings is perhaps closer to being such a principle. Many of the games involve Carlsen on the white side of 1 d4, albeit not in the 'Magnus is Human' chapter, which studies a few of his defeats. Sokolov is a great expert on these openings and in some cases even gives enough information to supply a mini-repertoire: the book left me keen to try the line 1 d4 ♖f6 2 c4 g6 3 f3 with White.

There is also a whole chapter on the Sämisch variation of the Nimzo-Indian, 1 d4 ♖f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♙b4 4 a3. There are some thrilling ideas here. I wasn't filled with the same desire to try the Sämisch, however, since Sokolov has no proposal to combat the 'old main line', 4...♙xc3+ 5 bxc3 c5 6 e3 (6 f3, as in a 2019 Carlsen-Karjakin game, also receives attention, but after 6...♘c6 7 e4 d6 8 ♙e3 b6 9 ♙d3 the flexible move 9...♘a5, which would worry me, goes unmentioned)

6...♘c6 7 ♙d3 0-0 8 ♘e2 b6 9 e4 ♘e8 10 0-0 ♙a6 11 f4 f5. Maybe one has to purchase Sokolov's Chessable course on the Sämisch to find out more.

There is no bibliography, and to this reader the lack of reference to previous annotators' work seems unfortunate. An author might perhaps argue that the combination of a grandmaster's brain with 3500-level engines is sufficient. But even at such a high analytical level, others' ideas can help. One example: presenting the very first game in the book, Sokolov encourages 1 e4 players to follow Carlsen's example against Rapport (Wijk aan Zee 2019), with 1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘c6 5 ♘c3 ♖c7 6 g3 a6 7 ♙g2 ♘f6 8 0-0 d6 9 ♘xc6 bxc6 10 ♘a4 ♖b8 11 c4 c5 12 b3 ♙e7 13 ♙b2 0-0 14 ♖e1 (14 f4, as Sokolov analyses, is probably stronger).



This is reasonable, but Martyn Kravtsov in *Magnus Carlsen's Most Instructive Games* (Gambit, 2021) points out that 14...♙d7! (not in Sokolov's notes) is Black's best response, and also argues that 10...♖b8?! is superfluous and 10...♙e7 preferable. Why not check such notes? Incidentally, this is the only main game the Sokolov and Kravtsov collections have in common.

These aspects do not seriously detract from a very rich book, which is presented attractively with photographs and ample diagrams. Sokolov's introduction promises a sequel, probably featuring more 1 e4 games. I eagerly await it.

James Vigus



**Modern Chess: From Steinitz to the 21st Century**

Craig Pritchett, 324 pages  
Thinkers Publishing

RRP £27.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £25.15**

It is good to see a new book by Craig Pritchett. Readers of a certain age may recall his classic book, *The Sicilian Scheveningen* (Batsford, 1977), as part of Batsford's famous series on 'contemporary chess openings'. Oh, those beautiful white Batsford hardbacks!

Pritchett's new book examines the evolution of chess from the era of Bourdonnais and McDonnell all the way up to the current reign of Magnus Carlsen. "I wrote this book primarily to explore, confirm and convey my own understanding of this grand sweep of chess history."

The author is standing in the footsteps of one of the greatest of all players: "Recalling a period of intense study in his father's chess library, Smyslov stressed that, without obtaining an understanding of the ways in which chess has developed over time, no aspiring player is ever likely to achieve his or her fullest potential. What went for Smyslov also applies to all of the inspirational players who appear in this book. Today's top players still borrow from the best games and ideas of past generations. Do join them!"

There are highly perceptive points throughout the book. Assessing the play of Bourdonnais and McDonnell, based on the games of their extraordinary and lengthy match, Pritchett observes: "They understood the significance of material, time and spatial strengths and weaknesses, not least around vulnerable kings, but the idea that a player might best seek to accumulate 'small advantages at any point on the board', rather than to overwhelm an opponent's king directly, was largely beyond them." Nevertheless, I am in full agreement with the author when he states, after showing Game 50 of their 85-game battle: "This dramatic kind of bare-knuckle contest still warms the soul."

Although many of the games in the book will be familiar to a lot of readers, Pritchett provides a lot more context than we usually see. Commenting on game one of Adolf Anderssen's mini-match against Howard Staunton at the great London tournament of 1851, he says: "Credit to both players! Yet contrast this heavyweight battle with Anderssen's so-called Immortal Game, also played at London 1851, but only as one of a very large number of 'friendly' games that were played 'almost daily' (according to Anderssen's biographer, Hermann Gottschall)



between Anderssen and Lionel Kieseritzky, at Simpson's Divan, in downtime from the main tournament, in which Kieseritzky had been defeated by Anderssen (+2=1) in the first knockout round."

I have spoken to plenty of people who believed the Immortal Game was played in the tournament, so it is important and relevant to provide such context. Indeed, wiser heads than ours have already made similar points. Pritchett adds, "It is far from clear how seriously the two protagonists took their friendlier 'contests' but White's final combination in The Immortal Game, probably the best known and most re-published in chess history, is still widely held to be emblematic of Anderssen and the early Romantic Age. In his *Manual of Chess*, Emanuel Lasker, an ardent Anderssen fan, considered it 'splendid' but quite rightly cautioned against reading too much into the game's overall course."

It is particularly good to see some lesser-praised star players receive favourable coverage. In last month's *CHESS*, Pritchett mentioned that the project was a result of an initial idea to write a book about Siegbert Tarrasch, who was far more than merely an unsuccessful challenger to Emanuel Lasker's title. Apparently, the project was dismissed as being "commercially too risky", but at least we can enjoy the significant coverage given to Tarrasch in this book.

Tarrasch's games are full of action. In this famous example, he beats one of his arch-rivals with a classic double-bishop sacrificial attack.

### A. Nimzowitsch-S. Tarrasch Saint Petersburg 1914



**18...d4! 19 exd4 ♖xh2+ 20 ♔xh2 ♖h4+ 21 ♖g1 ♗xg2** and 0-1, 32.

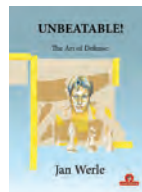
Later on, there is a thoughtful appreciation of Max Euwe. He didn't win the title because Alexander Alekhine was permanently inebriated, as some would have it, but rather proved that extreme preparation both in the chess and the physical aspects can indeed lead to great success.

After working his way through all of the champions and their challenges (although the action from the most recent title match, Carlsen-Nepomniachtchi, is not covered), Pritchett turns his attention to women's

chess and then, finally, to the impact of Artificial Intelligence.

This is a well written and nicely researched book. The bibliography stretches to an impressive five pages, providing plenty of suggestions for further reading. I just wonder if it would have been a good decision to delay the publication very slightly, to bring the story fully up to date with Carlsen's victory in December 2021. However, this is a fine book and one which can be definitely recommended to readers who would like a single-volume work covering a large and very significant slice of chess history.

Sean Marsh



### Unbeatable!

Jan Werle, 340 pages  
Thinkers Publishing

RRP £28.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £26.05**

Thinkers Publishing continue to publish books at an extraordinary rate. Their range of subjects is admirable and here with a work subtitled 'The Art of Defense', we have the first book in a series focusing on defence.

Loek van Wely's foreword sets the scene for what is to follow, in more ways than one: "This book gives you an insight what your options are *over* how to handle certain situations psychologically, in my opinion much more valuable than to know what your options are in the Poisoned Pawn line of the Najdorf."

He praises the book behind comments intended to amuse, such as this one. "I don't mind to be found dead with this book in my hands..." However, the use of typed emojis (the keyboard equivalent of unwelcome canned laughter) make an immature impression.

Jan Werle wishes the reader well in his introduction. "Hopefully this first Volume of *Unbeatable!* will be enjoyable for you dear reader, and simultaneously, serves you well in practice how to stand firm in using your defensive resources as a last resort." There also the promise of more to come: "In Volume II we pay attention to all the technical facets of defense, both active and passive."

Psychology is the order of the day, as explained by the author. "In this book I try to shed light on how to put up tenacious resistance, as well as why most defenders aren't able to do so." Furthermore, "The aspect of psychology in chess has always fascinated me, given my share of failures, disappointments and visits to sport psychologists. There have been many times I've had an opponent in a headlock, only to let him slip away through both psychological and technical mistakes. In wasting these significant advantages and failing to realize the potential in my positions, I've squandered a significant number of half (and full!) points throughout my career."

The work is split into five categories: The

Passion and the Pain; Inaccurate Defense; The rise of defense in chess history; Emotions in Chess; Defensive Strategies; and Barricade your Doors!

The material is interesting and instructive. We see so many games in which Mikhail Tal's sacrifices work brilliantly well, but this book reminds us that some players, such as the great Viktor Korchnoi, were able to navigate the complications caused by Tal's extravagant moves rather more successfully than others.

### M. Tal-V. Korchnoi USSR Championship, Riga 1958



### 33 h6+?

"This tactical idea contains a flaw. Because of Black's unsafe king, the position was still balanced had White just kept alive the threat of an invasion along the 7th rank. 33 ♖f3! because of the threat of ♖b7+, Korchnoi is compelled to impede the invasion allowing a repetition of moves. 33...♗d5 34 ♖f4 ♗e5.

**33...♗xh6 34 ♖xh6+ ♔xh6 35 g7 ♖xg3+! 0-1**

"Missed by Tal, the g-pawn doesn't come to promotion and the resulting pawn ending is winning for Black."

There is a section devoted to the Korchnoi-Tal scenario in the chapter on The rise of defense in chess history. Unfortunately, this section is a prime example of the weaknesses of the book. Four proofreaders are listed in the credits, but a number of glaring errors still jump out of from the pages.

The spelling of 'Korchnoi' fails to remain consistent, even on the same page. 'Mikhail' becomes 'Mihail' at various junctures too. A reference to 'the Black pieces' changes to 'the black pieces' on the same page at one point, despite the identical context. The prose reads oddly too, as in this example: "His opening knowledge was not always up to par, nevertheless Korchnoi proved unyielding on all fronts. He was unbeatable, like a cat with nine lives."

Such matters detract from the text, which is a shame, as there is a lot of good material to be found here. For instance, there are some excellent examples of prophylactic and unexpected knight retreats by Anatoly Karpov. Yet this is not the first time I have been disappointed by the editorial standards

of a Thinkers Publishing book. Something is going wrong between the editing and proofreading stages. Could it be a case of too many titles, and not enough hands and eyes?

Everything else is fine. The topic is unusual, the material is strong, the paper is of good quality and there are plenty of interesting photographs of the players. It just needs one more go by a proofreader or editor to pick up the faults, which would enable readers to enjoy being less distracted while working through the book.

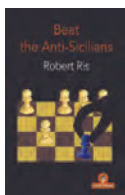
Sean Marsh



### A Disreputable Opening Repertoire

Jonathan Tait, 360 pages, paperback  
RRP £19.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £17.99**

Senior International Correspondence Chess Master Jonathan Tait takes the opening seriously and also likes to have fun, as quickly becomes apparent in this complete repertoire for Black with 1 e4 e5, which can be especially recommended to those looking to spice up their existing black lines. Tait meets the Lopez with the Jaenisch Gambit (3...f5) and 3 ♗c4 with 3...♗f6, and if 4 ♗g5 d5 5 exd5 b5!?. Meanwhile the King's Gambit is met by a pet Tait line, the Wagenbach Defence (2...exf4 3 ♗f3 h5!?), and even the Calabrese Counter-Gambit (2 ♗c4 f5!?) makes an appearance. Yes, the resulting play is wild and even whacky at times, but Black has every chance of securing an early initiative with these dangerous gambits, even if they may not all be 100% sound.



### Beat the Anti-Sicilians

Robert Ris, 248 pages, paperback  
RRP £25.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £23.35**

Dutch IM Ris can be relied upon to present a thorough repertoire while also not losing sight of the practical aspects. Here he provides plenty of explanatory text while mapping out a repertoire for Black and Thinkers Publishing with 1 e4 c5 2 ♗f3 ♗c6. Ris makes typically good use of the latest engine ideas and correspondence games, meaning that even experienced 2...♗c6 Sicilian players should find plenty of interest for when their opponents deviate from 3 d4, be it on move 3 or move 2.

Also recently released by Thinkers Publishing is *Your Jungle Guide to 1.d4!* by Vasilios Kotronias and Mikhail Ivanov (320 pages, paperback, RRP £27.95, Subscribers – £25.15). Do note that this is actually volume 1A of what will surely be a pretty

detailed repertoire with 1 d4 once complete. Here the authors examine how to meet the Albin, Baltic, Chigorin, Mamedyarov (2...c5), and especially the QGA, 2...dxc4.



### Beating the Najdorf Rare Lines

Ranko Szuhaneck, 264 pages, hardback  
RRP £26.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £24.25**

Serbian IM and Najdorf aficionado Ranko Szuhaneck presents a repertoire for Black and Chess Informant against all those pesky white sidelines after 1 e4 c5 2 ♗f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♗xd4 ♗f6 5 ♗c3 a6, not least 6 h3, as well as 6 a4 and a whole host of modern offbeat tries, including 6 ♗g1, 6 ♗d3, 6 ♗f3, 6 h4 and even 6 ♗b3. The coverage is pretty detailed, featuring a number of improvements over existing theory and while coverage is from Black's perspective, fans of White's offbeat tries may also find something of interest.



### Carlsen vs. Nepomniachtchi - World Chess Championship 2021

Goran Arsovic, Daniel Gormally, Douglas Griffin & Igor Zveglic, 248 pages, paperback  
RRP £22.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £20.65**

The year might now begin with a '2', but world championship match books are very much still a thing. They're no longer quite the rushed print jobs they were in the 1980s, but will still appeal to those who love their matches, as well as fans of chess history. Chess Informant's offering on last December's big clash sees Douglas Griffin provide an overview of all the world championship matches since 1886 before IM Goran Arsovic previews the latest match. The scene is then set for Danny Gormally's annotations of the 11 games from Dubai, which he does in typically detailed, insightful and witty fashion.



### Chess Informant 150 - Midwinter Dream

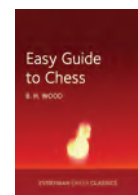
Sahovski Informant, 344 pages, paperback  
RRP £32.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £29.65**

The famous theoretical journal has reached a major landmark and, as ever, there is plenty to enjoy in the latest 'Informator'. Lubomir Ftacnik examines the key action from October's Grand Swiss and chess historian Douglas Griffin presents his "five

most memorable *Informant* games", while other contributors include Nigel Davies and Ian Rogers. There are also all the latest leading games annotated in classic languageless fashion, as well as the most important theoretical novelties.

*Chess Informant 150* can also be purchased along with a CD of the material, if you prefer to add the games to your database. The printed and CD combined version is available from Chess & Bridge for £39.95 or £36.95 for Subscribers.

The famous Belgrade chess publishing house have certainly been busy of late, also releasing *Encyclopaedia of Chess Miniatures*. It runs to some 620 pages, while featuring the 1,200 most interesting miniatures played since 2014, all of which are annotated and arranged in ECO code order. This well-produced hardback retails at £42.95 or £38.65 for Subscribers.



### Easy Guide to Chess

BH Wood, 154 pages, paperback  
RRP £14.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £13.49**

Our founder's classic 1942 guide on how to play chess is now available in a modern, algebraic format courtesy of Everyman Chess. Wood explains how the pieces move before progressing to slightly more advanced topics, such as making the best use of the pawns, recording the moves and some basic openings.

Another recent release in the Everyman Chess Classic series is *Rate Your Endgame* by Edmar Mednis and Colin Crouch (240 pages, paperback, RRP £16.99, Subscribers – £15.29), featuring plenty of highly useful instruction from two endgame experts and excellent authors, all augmented by more than 20 test positions.

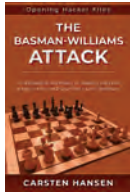


### Tata Steel Chess Tournament 2021

Daniel Fernandez, 750 pages, paperback  
RRP £34.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £31.45**

English Grandmaster Daniel Fernandez has developed a reputation as an insightful writer and excellent analyst, skills very much to the fore in this modern tournament classic, a work devoted solely to last year's edition of Wijk aan Zee. The chapters are interestingly grouped by the white games of each participant, beginning with the late reserve who finished last, Alexander Donchenko. On top of Fernandez's detailed analysis, Thinkers Publishing deserve credit for also including an insightful interview with the tournament victor, Jorden van Foreest.





### The Basman-Williams Attack

Carsten Hansen, 144 pages, paperback  
RRP £17.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £16.29**

The Basman-Williams Attack? That's how the nowadays pretty prolific Carsten Hansen has christened 1 d4 e5 2 c4 g6 3 h4!?, a sharp sideline which with Maxime Vachier-Lagrave has seen plenty of recent action – on both sides of the board. The book is part of Hansen's 'Opening Hacker Files' and provides detailed coverage of this unexpected early advance of the h-pawn, while also mapping out a repertoire for White. Do expect this decent effort to help put 3 h4 on the map at club level, as may well an upcoming Chessable course on the opening by Simon Williams no less.

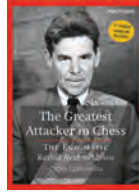


### The Scotch Game

Svitlana Demchenko, PC-DVD;  
running time: 5 hours, 10 minutes  
RRP £26.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £24.25**

Canadian WIM Demchenko's second DVD for ChessBase sees her present a repertoire for White with that old favourite of Garry Kasparov's, the Scotch. Demchenko is an enthusiastic presenter and not content with just providing the club player with a sufficient

grounding in and theory on 1 e4 e5 2 d3 d6 3 d4 exd4 4 dxd4, she also takes a quick look at the Scotch Gambit with 4 e4.



### The Greatest Attacker in Chess

Cyrus Lakdawala, 288 pages, paperback  
RRP £26.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £24.25**

It's now more than 20 years since Alex Pishkin's *Super Nezh* was published by Thinkers Press (not to be confused with Thinkers Publishing), introducing a whole new generation to the wonderful creativity and play of Nezhmetdinov (1912-1974). Now Lakdawala's work for New in Chess, subtitled 'The Enigmatic Rashid Nezhmetdinov', is likely to gain the five-time Russian Champion yet more fans. Nezhmetdinov defeated the likes of Bronstein, Geller, Polugaevsky, Spassky and Tal, and if his famous victory over Chernikov doesn't ring any bells, you really should immediately order this book, or at least run a search!



### Winning the World Open

Joel Benjamin & Harold Scott,  
344 pages, paperback  
RRP £26.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £24.25**  
The World Open has been not just one of

America's, but fittingly considering the name, one of the world's leading chess tournaments since it began in 1973. Held around the time of Independence Day and for a long while organised by the legendary Bill Goichberg, it always attracts a strong field and is famous for its large prize money in every section. Joel Benjamin has twice won the tournament and, along with FM Scott, aims to explain how some players do well time and time again in it. *Winning the World Open* is a fascinating read, one likely to appeal to more than just fans of the 'glory days' of the U.S. chess scene in the 1970s and 80s, and contains plenty of useful nuggets for the tournament competitor. Spoiler alert: fighting spirit is key to doing well at the World Open.



### World Chess Championship 2021: Nepomniachtchi vs Carlsen

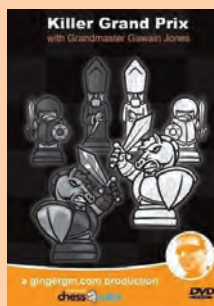
Jerzy Konikowski, Uwe Bekemann & Karsten Müller, 164 pages, paperback  
RRP £19.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £17.99**

We shouldn't be surprised that Chess Informant's hot-off-the-press guide to Carlsen-Nepomniachtchi has a rival in this slimmer volume from German publishers Joachim Beyer Verlag. This work also sets the scene for the match, albeit with far less historical background than its Serbian rival, before the bulk of the book is devoted to the games, on which the commentary is both fairly detailed and full of useful instruction for the general reader.

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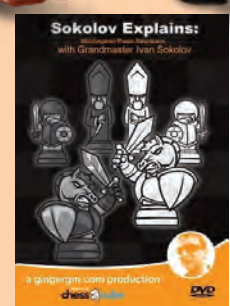
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