

Volume 88 No. 11 February 2024 £5.95

www.chess.co.uk

Chess Update

ROYAL RESULT

**A Second GM norm for Shreyas Royal
at the 2023 London Chess Classic!**

ISSN 0964-6221



Magnificent Mickey - Michael Adams won the Classic and annotates a win



Return of the Rookie - Stephen Moss is back with a new monthly series



Time Management - Phil Crocker on how best to use most of your time

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

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FRONT COVER:

Cover Design: Matt Read
Cover image: Tao Bhokanandh

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



60 Seconds with... IM Shreyas Royal



Born: 9th January 2009, Bengaluru, India.

Place of residence: London.

Occupation: Secondary school student and chess player.

Enjoyable? It's not easy balancing both, but it will get easier and more enjoyable the older and stronger I get.

And home life? I live with my parents; things are pretty peaceful, and boring at times, but good. Having access to the internet enables many ways for me to cure my boredom.

But sometimes good to escape to: A destination with warmer weather and less rain.

Sports played or followed: Chess, football, cricket and table tennis.

A favourite novel? I've indulged in many novels, usually on the journeys to chess tournaments, but I've always enamoured the Alex Rider books the most.

Piece of music? It depends on my mood really: sometimes I want to listen to music that will help me unwind and relax, sometimes I want to listen to music that will motivate me and get my blood pumping.

Film or TV series? Neither, as both of them are too long to watch. I like to be more

productive with my time and prefer watching entertaining videos that are usually less than 45 minutes long.

What's the best thing about playing chess? The smorgasbord of intellectual benefits that one can obtain from the game.

And the worst? The lack of money in it.

Can chess make one happy? It depends who you ask. For most people who try to make a living out of the game, but aren't in the top 100, probably not. As for me, it has and will, hopefully, continue to do so.

Favourite game of all time? I've been spoiled for choice! There are too many candidates to pick from. If you ask me about the favourite game I've played – I'd say my game against Tabatabaei at the LCC.

Your best move? I'm fortunate to have played a lot of good tactical shots and combinations, including one in one of my best games.

S.Royal-G.Karacsonyi Miercurea Ciuc 2022



36 ♖d2??

36 ♜e5! would force resignation.

36... ♜h3+ 37 ♖h1 ♗xd2 38 ♜xd2 ♜xe1 39 ♗xe1

Although I ended up winning, it was not before achieving a losing position!

D.Hausrath-S.Royal Dortmund Sparkassen Open 2022



26... ♗e3+!

Eliminating one of the key defensive pawns.

27 fxe3 ♜h5! 28 ♗g5 dxe3 29 ♜e5 ♗xe5! 30 ♗xd8+ ♜h7 0-1

But less memorable than your worst move? This was possibly the worst move I've ever played. From almost mating him in a few moves, I blunder the entire winning advantage. I simply missed that my e1-rook was hanging. However, in a strange twist, I ended up winning the resulting endgame where my opponent should have been playing for two results.

And a highly memorable opponent? To be honest, I've faced numerous memorable and profound opponents in the last two months. For now, it'd have to be Mickey; he was one of the players I idolised while growing up and I have an immense amount of respect for his longevity. It felt surreal to be facing him in the final game of LCC and all the more memorable knowing that the game handed me my second GM norm and Mickey the LCC title.

The best three chess books: *The Anand Files* by Michiel Abel, the 3,000+ positions in the *Encyclopedia of Chess Combinations*, and Aron Nimzowitsch's classic, *My System*.

Is FIDE doing a good job? I am yet to develop an opinion; however, I must say that they do have some peculiar rules.

Or your National Federation? Once again, I'm yet to have an opinion, but there have been improvements in recent years.

A tip please for the club player: Try to put yourself in your opponent's shoes, in order to understand what they're planning. After you find out, try to stop those aims; it can get really frustrating for your opponent when their ideas keep on being prevented.



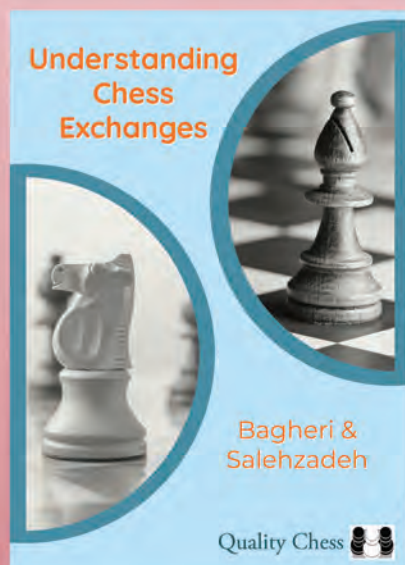
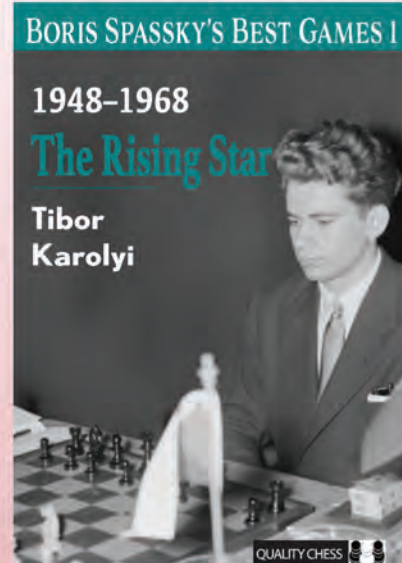
New from Quality Chess!

Boris Spassky's Best Games 1

Boris Spassky is the most underappreciated World Champion in chess history, remembered as the Soviet who lost to Bobby Fischer in 1972. In this two-volume work, biographer extraordinaire **Tibor Karolyi** puts the focus on Spassky's brilliant career and life story.

Born in 1937, Spassky barely escaped with his life when evacuating from the Siege of Leningrad as a young boy. This book tells the story of how that boy subsequently learned to play chess and rose through the Soviet ranks to become the strongest player in the world in the late 1960s.

International Master **Tibor Karolyi** is a renowned author and trainer from Hungary. His biographical works for Quality Chess have received glowing praise from readers and reviewers.



Understanding Chess Exchanges

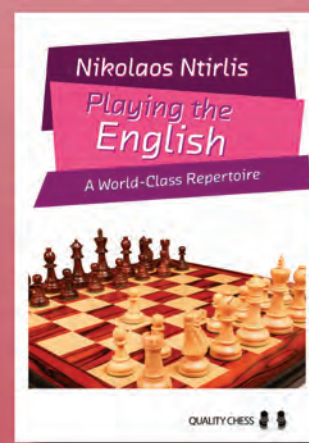
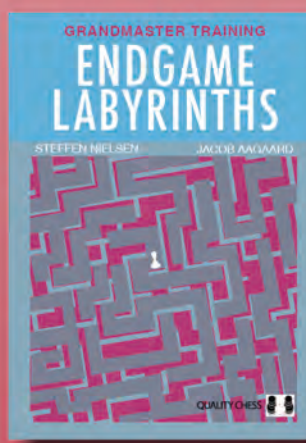
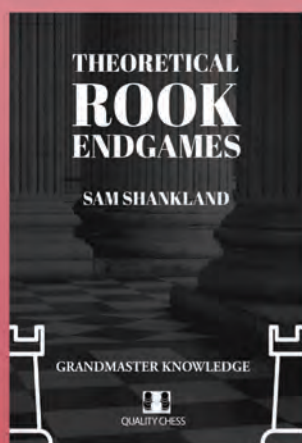
Have you ever wondered how grandmasters always seem to know which pieces need to be exchanged? Or how an attack is influenced by the number of pieces on the board? When should we keep the queens on, and when should we switch to an endgame?

Understanding Chess Exchanges shares expert insights into using exchanges as a strategic weapon. Filled with tips, principles, practical advice and carefully selected exercises, this book demystifies a vital part of chess strategy.

GM Amir Bagheri is an experienced player and coach from Monaco, and was the second-ever Iranian to achieve the grandmaster title.

Mohammad Reza Salehzadeh is a FIDE Trainer and respected chess coach from Iran.

Also available



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Hooray for Hastings!

The 2023/24 Caplin Hastings Masters was another feast of hard-fought chess

In part due to former Gibraltar organising supremo Stuart Conquest taking over as Tournament Director, the 2023/24 Caplin Hastings International Congress – the 97th since the first Hastings Christmas Congress back in 1920/21 – was a major success, attracting a great many players, plenty of regular participants but also some new ones, to the East Sussex seaside town for the post-Christmas and New Year period.

The flagship event was once again the Masters, made possible thanks to the support of Caplin Systems, whose CEO John Ashworth opened the Congress alongside ECF President Dominic Lawson, as well as the John Robinson Youth Chess Trust, Hastings Borough Council, The White Rock Hotel, Lansdowne Hotel, and the ECF. That enabled 15 grandmasters to play in the 100-strong Masters, which was headlined by French 2640-rated GM Maxime Lagarde, who certainly got off to a flyer.

F. Waldhausen Gordon-M. Lagarde Round 2 *Benko Gambit*

**1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 b5 4 cxb5 a6
5 bxa6 e6 6 ♘c3 exd5 7 ♘xd5 ♙e7
8 ♘f3 ♘xd5 9 ♗xd5 ♗xa6 10 e3 ♘c6!?**

A bold exchange sacrifice to fight for the initiative.

11 ♘e5

11 ♙xa6 ♘b4 12 ♗d1 ♙xa6 13 ♘e5 ♗a8! 14 ♗xd7+ ♘f8 15 f3 f6 also supplies decent compensation, so White may do best with 11 ♙c4!? 0-0 12 0-0 ♗b6 (Piliposyan-Yeritsyan, Yerevan 2022) 13 ♙d2!?, with a pull and chances of a kingside attack.

**11...♘xe5 12 ♙xa6 ♙xa6 13 ♗xe5 0-0
14 f3?!?**



Making things a little too easy for Black,



Brendan O’Gorman captures the moment where top seed Maxime Lagarde may well have first conceived the idea of a sacrificial breakthrough on f3 as he gets ready to go lift his rook via e5 after the loosening 18 g3.

although only an engine would feel confident that 14 ♗d5 ♗b6 15 f3 ♗b5 16 ♗d1 d5 17 ♘f2 could be a little better for White.
14...d5 15 ♘f2 ♙d6 16 ♗h5 g6 17 ♗h6 ♗e8 18 g3?!?

Weakening and it seems that White needed to go 18 ♙d2, and if 18...♗f6 (or 18...♗e5 19 g4) 19 ♗hd1! ♗xb2 20 ♗ab1 ♗xa2 21 ♗a1 ♗b3 22 ♗h4 when he should be active enough.

18...♗e5 19 ♗h4 ♗e8 20 a4?

20 b3 ♗h5 21 ♗a4 ♙b5 22 ♗a5 ♗f5 23 ♗e1 was a bit grim, but also fairly essential.
20...♗h5! 21 ♗f6 ♗f5!

Continuing to harass White’s only active piece, since now 22 ♗xd6 ♗e4 23 ♗xa6 ♗xf3+ 24 ♘e1 ♗xh1+ 25 ♘d2 ♗f2+ 26 ♘c3 ♗d1 would win material and leave Black with good winning chances.

22 ♗h4? ♗e6 23 a5



23...♗xf3+!!

Recognising his significant advantage in terms of activity and king safety, Lagarde strikes, calculating a neat forced win.

24 ♘xf3 ♗f5+ 25 ♘g2 ♗c2+ 26 ♘h3

♙c8+! 27 g4 ♗e2

Mate is now inevitable.

28 ♗d8+ ♘g7 29 ♗xc8 ♗f3+ 30 ♘h4 ♙g3+! 31 hxg3 ♗xh1+ 32 ♘g5 ♗h6# 0-1

Lagarde’s play never quite scaled the same heights again, with his challenge eventually ended in round seven by 20-year-old American Grandmaster Brandon Jacobson.

This year’s Masters was notable for its fighting chess and lack of quick draws, although special mention must still be made of the experienced Chinese GM and third seed Zhang Pengxiang who managed to go throughout undefeated whilst finishing second.

Grandmasters Romain Edouard, Eldar Gasanov, Martin Petrov and Deep Sengupta also remained unbeaten, as did those strong English IMs Ameet Ghasi and Shreyas Royal. The latter was up on the very top boards throughout and performed at 2558, which unfortunately meant missing out a third GM norm by just half a point. Royal did have his chances in the final rounds though and will surely qualify for the title soon.

One other undefeated player, although he should really have been put away by Matthew Wadsworth in round three, was second seed Abhijeet Gupta. The near-2600, 34-year-old Indian GM ground down last year’s Hastings winner in Sarunas Sulskis in round eight then held his nerve to overcome Jacobson in the ninth and final round to pull clear and come first.

A. Gupta-F. Waldhausen Gordon Round 6 *London System*

1 d4 ♘f6 2 ♘f3 d5 3 c3 e6 4 ♙f4 ♙d6

5 e3 0-0 6 ♖bd2 c5 7 ♕d3 ♖c6 8 ♗g3 b6 9 e4 ♗e7

Keeping things solid, rather than allow White some pressure with 9...dxe4 10 ♖xe4 ♗xe4 11 ♗xe4 ♗b7 12 dxc5 ♗xc5 13 ♖a4.

10 e5 ♖h5 11 ♖g5! ♗xg5 12 ♖xh5 g6

Perhaps the best defensive try, although this still feels like a slightly suspicious version of a French for Black. Instead, 12...h6 13 ♖f3 cxd4 14 h4 ♗e7 15 ♗f4 f5 16 ♗xh6 favoured White in Firouzja-Svidler, Paris (rapid) 2021.

13 ♖e2 cxd4 14 h4!



14...♗h6

Matters also look a little scary for Black after 14...♗e7 15 h5 dxc3 16 bxc3 d4! 17 hxg6 hxg6 18 ♖e4, and even 14...♗xd2! 15 ♖xd2 dxc3 16 bxc3 d4 17 c4 ♖e7 18 ♗e4 ♗b7 19 h5 retains good compensation, objectively unclear though this must be after 19...g5! 20 h6 ♗h8.

15 h5 dxc3 16 bxc3 ♗g7 17 ♖f3 f5?

Closing down one white bishop, but helping the other one and not the black king. It's never easy to do, but Black needed to sit tight with 17...♖e7.

18 hxg6 hxg6 19 ♗f4 ♖c7 20 ♗f1!

Avoiding any cheapos with ...♖b4.

20...♗d7 21 ♖e1 ♖d8



Remarkably a novelty, 21...♗f7? 22 ♖h7 ♖h8 23 ♖g5+ ♗e8 24 ♖xh8+ ♗xh8 25 ♖e3 having been even worse for Black in Meiwes-Roth, Aurich 2018.

22 ♖h3

22 ♖h4!? ♗e8 23 ♖e3! was arguably even stronger, and if 23...♖xc3 24 ♖c1 ♖a3 25 ♗g1 followed by swinging the queen across.

22...♖f7 23 ♖g3 ♖h8 24 c4!

With two of Black's minor pieces



Despite facing the top two seeds, 13-year-old Freddy Gordon finished on an impressive '+3' on the south coast. The Edinburgh star didn't draw any games and overcame Danny Gormally in the final round.



Abhijeet Gupta rode his luck at times, but was impressive when it really mattered. His finishing burst of 5½/6 took him clear of the chasing pack to net the first prize of £2,500.

effectively out of the game, Gupta opens further lines to increase the pressure.

24...♖xc4 25 ♗xc4 b5 26 ♗b3 a5 27 ♖g5 ♖fe8

It's hard to believe it would have held out, but 27...♖a6!? 28 ♖d3 a4 29 ♖d6! axb3! 30 ♖xa6 b2 was perhaps the last real try to muddy the waters, winning though White should be after 31 ♖xe6 ♗xe6 32 ♖xe6.

28 ♖c1 ♖b6? 29 ♖d3 ♖a7 30 ♖cd1 ♗c8 31 ♖d8! ♖e7



32 ♖xc8!

Cashing in to win material.

32...♖axc8 33 ♗xe6+ ♖xe6

White's queen will now run amok, but if 33...♗f8? 34 ♖h7#.

34 ♖xe6 ♖xe6 35 ♖xb5 ♖f7 36 ♖b7 ♖f8 37 ♖d7 g5 38 ♖xf7! ♖xf7 39 ♖c8+ ♗f8 40 ♖xe6 gxf4 41 ♖g6+ ♗g7 42 e6 ♖f6 43 ♖e8+ ♖f8 44 ♖d7 ♗f6 45 e7 ♗xe7 46 ♖xe7 f3 47 ♖g5+ ♗h7 48 ♖h5+ 1-0

Leading scores:

- 1 Abhijeet Gupta (IND) 7½/9
- 2 Zhang Pengxiang (CHN) 7
- 3-11 Maxime Lagarde (FRA), Brandon Jacobson (USA), Romain Edouard, Pierre Laurent-Paoli (both FRA), Ameet Ghasi (ENG), Martin Petrov (BUL), Deep Sengupta (IND), Eldar Gasanov (UKR), Shreyas Royal (ENG) 6½
- 12-14 Victor Mikhalevski (ISR), Frederick Waldhausen-Gordon (SCO, 2394 performance), Bai Xue (CHN, WIM norm) 6.

GREAT NEW TITLES FROM EVERYMAN CHESS

**PUBLISHING
MARCH 2024**

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Paperback 384 pages

Andrew Martin

Play the French with 3...dxe4



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

Opening Repertoire

Queen's Gambit Accepted

Nicolás Yap



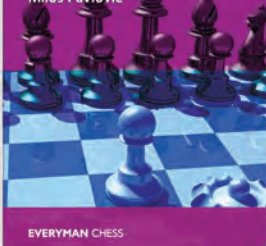
Yap analyses the line 1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4 3 e4 b5!? in forensic detail. This is now almost the main line of the Queen's Gambit Accepted and there is currently very little theoretical material on it. Yap also investigates other popular, counterattacking lines such as 3 e5!?

Paperback 448 pages

Opening Repertoire

Strategic Play with 1 d4

Milos Pavlovic



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

Richard Palliser & Simon Williams

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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.

Paperback 240 pages



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Return of the Rookie

Stephen Moss, alias the Rookie, is back with the first part of a new monthly series

You may recall that in 2016 I published a book called *The Rookie: An Odyssey Through Chess (and Life)*. It represented my attempt to be a better chess player and, perhaps more important, a better person. Strong, resourceful, determined – a winner, but one who knew how to win with grace. And someone who, after a lifetime of dilettantism, had finally mastered a discipline, a whole world, the world of chess, in all its depth and complexity. If you read the book you will know what happened: I felt I did improve as a player (emphatically not as a person), but the gains were marginal. Mastery remained elusive.

After the paperback of the book was published in 2017, things got even worse. I carried on playing, but less often than in the years I spent working on the book and with much less motivation. And as you will no doubt have discovered, if you've got no motivation you are nothing. In a game between two opponents with similar skill levels, the will to win is everything. You really do have to want it and be willing to push yourself. The comfort zone is for losers.

I could happily have retired from chess after the book was published. I was not one of those obsessives who had to play. I could exist without – and beyond – the board. My ECF grade had dipped to 144 after peaking at 152, and following a wretched, dispiriting, motivation-less autumn 2019 (eight draws against largely low-ranked opponents, four losses to decent players graded between 157 and 176, and a solitary win against a weak player), I really did feel like packing it in. There was, though, one thing stopping me – Kingston Chess Club.

Kingston had been a good choice of club while I was writing the book: small, quirky, full of idiosyncratic characters, and based first at a freezing hall owned by the Quakers and then at a 24-hour Asda hypermarket on the A3. It was good for copy – much more rewarding than the bigger and slicker Surbiton club, where I also had a foothold, nearby. But once the book was done, there was a problem: I felt a certain obligation to struggling Kingston (which had fewer than 20 active members and an average age close to 60). If I quit, even with my modest talents it would leave a

hole. So I decided to carry on, but more as organiser than player. The more I organised, the worse I played – the two are rarely compatible.

But it was worth it. Kingston were transformed after the pandemic, attracting members new to chess and some very strong players, notably the young Mexican David Maycock, the ferociously competitive Peter Lalic, the expert Russian-trained theoretician Vladimir Li, and Silverio Abasolo from the Philippines. Those four 2250-plus players' talent and tenacity galvanised the first team, supplementing the group of strong players we already had and creating a formidable unit. Suddenly Kingston were contenders.

We won five trophies in 2021/22, including the Alexander Cup – Surrey's premier knockout tournament – for the first time since 1975/76, and did even better in 2022/23, achieving a unique 'quadruple' of both league titles and both knockout cups in the Surrey League and Thames Valley League. We sensed it would probably never be that good again, and this season is indeed proving tougher as other teams emerge from their pandemic-induced torpor. But we remain confident and ambitious, though are now less obsessed with winning trophies (been there, done that, literally can't improve on last season), and more interested in building a sustainable club with a mission to give opportunities to all players, regardless of strength, and develop juniors.

My own performance has continued to be patchy – a succession of 'drawn positions' (to use an expression my friend and mentor John Saunders will hate), which I managed to lose through a combination of poor time management and useless endgame technique. Just let it go, I thought, and concentrate on helping the club. (Cynics might suggest that the best way to help the club was by not playing.) But then a moment of revelation. It came in a game I played for CSC/Kingston's third team in Division Four of the 4NCL in Telford. I do not relish the three-hour drive from Kingston to Telford to play in the 4NCL, in which Kingston partners with Chess in Schools and Communities under the able captaincy of Kate and Charlie Cooke, but this second-round game was memorable for me

and reignited my interest in playing.

My opponent was educational psychologist and chess writer Barry Hymer, who was rated more than 200 points higher than me – I was 1763 ECF, he was 1975. He also had White. Life really isn't fair, though my team-mate on board one in this match against Lancaster faced an even tougher proposition, up against IM Gediminas Sarakas, not the sort of player one would normally expect to be meeting in Division Four. A case of what in opera is called 'luxury casting'.



Barry Hymer is the co-author of the excellent Chess Improvement: It's All in the Mindset.

Barry immediately endeared himself to me by saying he had enjoyed my book. He also clearly knew all my quirks – laying out apple, Twix and water bottle on the table ready to consume them in the course of the afternoon. If I could eat a five-course meal at the board, I would. Barry said he would have been disappointed if I hadn't come with a Twix – a motif in my book when, after a surprise win against an experienced campaigner in Gibraltar, I convinced myself that eating a Twix during a game was the key to playing well (rather than, say, having an intimate knowledge of fashionable openings, an eye for complex middlegame tactics or some rudimentary sense of how to play the endgame).

I'm going to annotate this game, and apologise for its inadequacies. I want to show it because the long time control at 4NCL (especially compared to the thud and blunder of evening club chess) meant that for the first time in six or seven years I felt I was actually thinking properly (or almost properly) about chess – that zen moment when you become truly absorbed in a game. And in the endgame we reached a position which later came to fascinate me.

Normally once I have played a game I put it on my database, do some swift analysis with an engine (bad, I know, not to use my brain to work out all the variations), and then rarely look at it again. But I did return to this game and one crucial position in particular, shared it with friends and club-mates, and tried to think about it more critically than I usually do. I felt I was a chess player again. The Rookie was back!

B.Hymer-S.Moss
Kingston vs Lancaster, Telford 2023
Jobava-Príe Attack

1 d4 d5 2 ♘c3 ♘f6 3 ♙f4 c6

My opening knowledge is horribly limited and I just try to play sensible moves. I had no real idea what to play here.

4 e3 ♙f5

To my surprise the engine likes this. I had serious doubts about it at the time, but was determined not to lock my light-squared bishop away.

5 f3

I thought this was an odd move, but it seems OK.

5...e6 6 g4

I rather resented this show of aggression so early in the game.

6...♙g6 7 h4

Now I really resented it. Where was the respect? Was he going to try to obliterate me before I'd even had a chance to eat the 'lucky' Twix I'd brought along? Maybe being nice about my book had been a feint. I'd been duped!

7...h6 8 ♙d3

I thought it was a bit odd to push all the pawns on the kingside to harass my bishop and then offer to exchange, but OK whatever.

8...♙xd3 9 ♗xd3 ♙d6 10 ♘ge2 ♙xf4

I fear I may be playing for a draw.

11 ♘xf4 ♗b6 12 0-0-0 ♗a6



I'm definitely playing for a draw, though what I fail to realise is that each exchange is increasing White's plus.

13 g5 ♗xd3 14 cxd3 ♘fd7 15 e4 ♘a6 16 ♗dg1 hxg5 17 ♗xg5 ♗h7

My position looks ugly, but I felt reasonably relaxed about it. Engines confirm that White has an edge, but it's nothing too troublesome.

18 h5 ♙e7 19 ♗hg1 ♗g8 20 a3 ♘c7 21 b4

Even though White has all the space, Black is fine here. 21 b4 suggested to me that he had no concrete plan.

21...f6

I'd been preparing this break for some time.

22 ♗5g2 ♙f7 23 ♗h1 e5 24 ♘fe2 exd4

25 ♘xd4 ♘e5



I offered a draw around this point: the position is dead level. Barry said, "Let's play on for a little bit." We were maybe two hours into the game. The "little bit" went on for another three and a quarter hours, but I'm glad he turned it down because all the fun was yet to come.

26 ♙d2?

An error that allows me to attack on the d-file. Better was 26 ♗d2 ♗d8 27 ♘ce2 dxe4 28 dxe4 ♘c4 29 ♗dd1 ♗hh8, which maintains equality.

26...dxe4 27 fxe4 ♗d8 28 ♘ce2 ♘e6?

Right piece, wrong square. The engine suggests 28...♘b5 29 ♙e3 ♗d7 30 a4 ♘xd4 31 ♘xd4 a5 32 bxa5 c5 33 ♘f5 ♗xd3+ 34 ♙e2 ♙f8 35 h6 g5 36 ♗b1 ♗dd7, which gives Black a small edge.

29 ♙c3 c5

I felt I should keep attacking, though with correct play White would now have a plus. Luckily for me Barry makes the wrong choice.

30 bxc5?

This hands the advantage back to Black. Better is 30 ♘xe6 cxb4+ 31 axb4 ♙xe6 32 ♘f4+ ♙d6.

30...♘xc5 31 ♗h3 ♘cxd3

I didn't think overlong about this exchange of knights for rook. I just factored in the two pawns and felt it was good for Black.

32 ♗xd3 ♘xd3 33 ♙xd3 ♗xh5 34 ♘f4

Black does indeed have the advantage, but I knew it would not be easy to make it count. IM Sarakauskas, playing for Lancaster at the adjoining table (he was board one, Barry was board two), had by now finished his game against Jon Eckert and was watching our game. I coyly invited him to play the endgame for me, but sadly he declined.



34...♗a5?

I go wrong straightaway, because I have missed a straightforward tactic that has to be guarded against – ♗xg7! But even engines find it hard to settle on the best move for Black here, variously suggesting 34...♗h7, 34...♗e5 and 34...♗hh8.

35 ♗xg7+ ♙xg7 36 ♘e6+ ♙g6 37 ♘xd8 ♗xa3+ 38 ♙c4 b6 39 ♘8c6 ♗a1 40 ♙d5 a5 41 ♙e6?

Barry's attacking intent is admirable, but allowing my a-pawn to run free is inadvisable.

41...a4 42 ♘e7+ ♙g5 43 ♘d5 a3 44 ♘xf6 a2

Now I am winning, but how do I win?

45 ♘d5



This is the position that came to fascinate me. I knew there was a win here, but how could I achieve it? I had to keep the b-pawn in order to win, because even with my inadequate knowledge of endgames I knew that rook versus knight was a theoretical draw.

45...♗e1

This move is fine and I liked the fact I was allowing a knight fork on f3. But it is only the third best engine move. More forcing is 45...♗b1 46 ♘c2 ♗b2 47 ♘a1 b5 48 ♙d6 ♗b1 49 ♘c2 b4 50 ♘dxb4 ♗xb4 51 ♘xb4 a1♗. There are other lines, but they all win for Black.

46 ♘c2 ♗xe4+ 47 ♙d6 ♗d4

I was pleased by my play here at the time and I am maintaining an advantage, but it is convoluted and by allowing his king to get closer than mine to the action I am giving him a chance. What I didn't realise until I looked at it later was that the clearest-cut opportunity to win had already gone. Learn to spot the decisive chance! Surely the key rule in chess.

48 ♖e5 ♜c4



Better is 48...♗d1, which should win: for example, 49 ♗db4 a1♗ 50 ♗xa1 ♗xa1 51 ♖d4 ♗c1 52 ♗a2 ♗c6 53 ♗b4 ♗c8 54 ♗d5 b5 55 ♖d3 ♗c5 56 ♖d4 ♗c4+ 57 ♖d3 ♖g6 58 ♗b6 ♗c6 59 ♗d5 ♖f7 60 ♖d4 ♖e6 61 ♗e3 b4 62 ♖d3 b3 63 ♗d1 ♗d6+ 64 ♖e2 ♖e5 65 ♗c3 b2 66 ♗b1 ♗c6 67 ♖f3 ♗c1 68 ♗d2 b1♗ 69 ♗xb1 ♗xb1. Being an engine of course helps in endgames like this.

49 ♗de3 ♗a4

My advantage is diminishing rapidly.

50 ♗a1 b5 51 ♖d5 ♗b4 52 ♖c5 ♗b1

53 ♗ec2 ♖f4 54 ♖d4 ♖f3



I was playing on the increment – Barry kept a sizeable time advantage throughout – and now realised that my chance to win had gone. As I made one last effort to get my king into the game, my main concern was not to get forked.

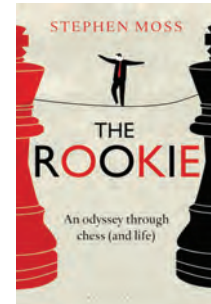
55 ♖c3 ♖e2 56 ♗b3 ♗xb3+

I settled for the draw.

57 ♖xb3 ♖d2 58 ♖b2 ♖d3 59 ♗b4+ ♖c4 60 ♗xa2 ½-½

I could have been disappointed not to win this game, but I felt absolutely fine about it –

relieved to have drawn with a good player, pleased to have played a long and interesting game (Barry said how much he had enjoyed it; I recall him saying something to the effect that it had been a “great game”), happy to have played it to a natural conclusion and thought (or tried to think) properly about each phase. I was playing chess again, rather than going through the motions. Hence the resurrection of the Rookie, who will feature in these pages every month. Unless I suffer a spate of wretched defeats, of course, in which case you will never hear of him again.



Stephen Moss is the author of *The Rookie: An Odyssey Through Chess (and Life)*, published by Bloomsbury and in stock at Chess & Bridge.

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Black escaping with a draw) **1...♗c8** (likewise, 1...♗c6+ 2 ♖e5 ♗xb7 3 ♗xf6 ♗a8 4 ♖e5 ♗c7 5 ♗d5 wins, as does 1...♗f5+ 2 ♗d6 ♗f6+ 3 ♗c5 ♗f5+ 4 ♗b4 ♗c8 5 ♗b6) **2 ♗b8 ♗c7** (or 2...♗f7 3 ♗c5 and ♗d5) **3 a7 ♗b7+ 4 ♖e5! ♗f2! 5 ♗h8** (5 a8♗? ♗xa8 6 ♗xa8 ♗h2 would remove White's final pawn, but the engines quite like 5 ♗g8!?, and if 5...♗h2 6 ♗e6! ♗xh4? 7 ♗d5) **5...♗b6 6 ♗xh5 ♗xa7 7 ♗h7 ♗b6 8 h5** seems to be winning, since Black won't manage to give up the bishop for the h-pawn: for example, **8...♗h2 9 ♗d3! ♗c6 10 h6 ♗e8 11 ♗h8 ♗c7 12 h7!** and wins.

29) Vidit-Suleymanli

1 ♗xc5! (forcing and one of two ways to win, the other being the equally flashy 1 ♗b3!?, and if 1...♗xb3 2 ♗c7+ ♗a8 3 axb3, whereas after 1 ♗xc5? Black might have saved himself with 1...♗xf3! – the game saw: 1...♗c8? 2 ♗d6+ ♗a8 3 ♗xc8+! ♗xc8 4 ♗b3 ♗c3 5 ♗xb4! ♗c1+ 6 ♗f1 ♗c2 7 ♗d8+ 1-0 – 2 ♗c7+ ♗a8 3 ♗c6 ♗xc6 4 ♗xc6 ♗d1+ 5 ♗xd1 ♗xd1+, thereby forcing perpetual check, or if 2 ♗c6!? ♗xc6 3 ♗xb4+ ♗c7 4 ♗a7+ ♗d6 5 ♗xc6+! ♗xc6 6 ♗b6 ♗xb6 7 ♗xb6+ ♗e7 when Black should again be able to draw) **1...♗xb1+**

2 ♗g2 ♗c8 (or 2...♗e4 3 ♗c7+ ♗a8 4 ♗c6) **3 ♗a6 ♗e4 4 ♗d6+!** wins, and if **4...♗a8 5 ♗xb7+ ♗xb7 6 ♗a5+**.

30) Nguyen Thai Dai Van-Vachier-Lagrave

1...♗g5! (1...♗xd4? 2 ♗xd4 ♗xd4 3 ♗xe6 seems to be OK for White, but Black could also use the move order 1...♗b7! 2 f3 ♗g5!) **2 ♗xe6** (likewise, 2 ♗c3 ♗b7 3 ♗f3 ♗xf3+ 4 gxf3 ♗c6 is just pretty bad news for White) **2...♗b7 3 f3 ♗e3+** (or even 3...♗a7!?) **4 ♗f1 ♗xd4 5 ♗xd4 ♗xd4** netted a piece.

31) Panda-Iniyan

1 f6! g6 2 e6! ♗xd4 3 e7! (a third powerful pawn blow in a row) **3...♗xg4?** (3...♗xd1 4 ♗xd1! ♗xd1 5 e8♗+ ♗h7 6 ♗xd1 ♗d6 7 ♗d7 ♗f5 8 ♗d5 should also be winning in the long run) **4 ♗xd8+! ♗h7** (now it's mate, but so would it have been after 4...♗xd8 5 exd8♗+ ♗h7 6 ♗f8) **5 ♗h8+! 1-0**

32) Giri-Le Quang Liem

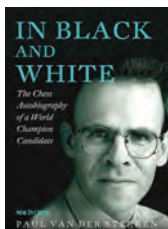
After 1 ♗f7 ♗d3 2 ♗f3 ♗b1 3 ♗f7 ♗c2 had Giri not gone 4 h4?, but 4 ♗g3 followed by ♗h4-h5, g2-g4 and h3-h4, when "White can either look around for a knockout, or offer a

queen trade", he would have been winning, as pointed out by Daniel Fernandez in his generally excellent Anti-Sicilians column for Chess Publishing. However, there was a much more forcing and aesthetic way to win, namely **1 ♗a3!! ♗xa3** (or 1...♗f4+ 2 ♗g3 followed by ♗d6) **2 ♗g5! hgx5 3 ♗h5+**.

33) Predke-Brunello

1 ♗xg6!! (crashing through in style; 1 ♗xg6+! also works, and if 1...hgx6 2 ♗xg6! ♗g7 3 ♗xg7 ♗xg7 4 ♗xf7! or 1...fxg6 2 ♗xg6 ♗h8 3 ♗xh5) **1...fxg6 2 ♗xg6+! ♗h8** (2...hgx6 3 ♗xg6+ ♗h8 4 ♗xh5 ends the game) **3 ♗xd5!** (somewhat more pointed than 3 ♗xd5 hgx6 – 3...exd5? 4 ♗g7+! ♗xg7 5 ♗h6 forces mate – 4 ♗f4 ♗xf4 5 ♗xd8 ♗axd8 6 ♗xf4, although this should also do the job) **3...♗c8** (here too, if 3...exd5? there's 4 ♗g7+! ♗xg7 5 ♗h6, which is winning after 5...♗g8 6 ♗xh7+ ♗f8 7 ♗g6) **4 ♗d4 hgx6 5 ♗xg6 ♗g8 6 ♗xh5 ♗e8 7 ♗g7+!** (the former Russian GM doesn't let up) **7...♗xg7 8 ♗g4+ ♗f8?** (now it's mate, but even after 8...♗g5 9 ♗xg5+ ♗f8 10 ♗h6+ ♗e7 White would have been winning, such as with 11 ♗f6+ ♗d7 12 ♗e4 ♗xg5 13 ♗xg5 ♗e7 14 ♗f6+ ♗c6 15 h5) **9 ♗h6+ 1-0**

This Month's New Releases



In Black and White

Paul van der Sterren, 480 pages

New in Chess

RRP £31.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £28.75**

The name of Paul van der Sterren isn't one we hear very often at all these days, but he was an extremely active player from the 1970s to the 1990s, rising, as the subtitle ('The Chess Autobiography of a World Champion Candidate') suggests, all the way to the level of Candidate for the World Chess Championship. Furthermore, he won the Dutch Championship twice and was part of his country's team at a plethora of Olympiads.

Van der Sterren's 1994 Candidates match against Gata Kamsky was a combative affair, in which Kamsky proved to be too strong. Following a trade of wins in the first two games, Kamsky won the next two and the last three games were drawn. To put the

result into context, Kamsky was the heavy favourite and, as this was the era in which there were two sets of Candidates matches on the go (the FIDE version and the rival PCA strand), he was very active and successful in both cycles, beating Vishy Anand, Vladimir Kramnik, Nigel Short and Valery Salov in matches. Therefore, we can say van der Sterren was a shade unfortunate in meeting Kamsky in his first – and last – Candidates match.

All of the games of the match are annotated in this new work, and van der Sterren certainly had his chances, but Kamsky's uncompromising resourcefulness carried the day (it was similar, in some ways, to the famous 1971 Candidates clash between Bobby Fischer and Mark Taimanov).

As the blurb puts it: "The story doesn't end there – the book's final part describes the slow decline of an ageing pro and his eventual shift to meditation and mindfulness." Indeed, the first part of the book – 'the sun rises' – covers the years 1969-1993 and the second part – covering 1993-2003 – is called 'the sun sets'. There are 300 annotated games (including game fragments), representing all of the years in question.

This is a translation of the original Dutch

version from 2011 and the author has chosen not to update it, admitting that he is "fully aware that game notes which are *not* based on engine-produced analysis are rather old-fashioned nowadays, to say the least. But I hope the reader will appreciate that since this book was written by a man looking back on his chess career just a few years after that career had finished, updating the perspective and the insights he then had by some fifteen years, would radically alter the content."

I see this as a positive rather than anything acting to the detriment of the book. I want something I can *read* – this is an autobiography, after all – and I never bother playing through computer-corrected lines anyway.

The story unfolds from the very beginning, with tales of learning chess at home and playing in school matches. The experiences will resonate with club player readers who started chess in exactly the same way.

The author's main problem, which stopped him advancing further through the ranks, was the fact that he never fully believed in himself – a problem exacerbated by his frequent battles with the chess clock. Both aspects impacted on the outcome of this, the first game of his Candidates match.

P. Van der Sterren-G.Kamsky
1st matchgame, Wijk aan Zee 1994



“Haunted by the clock and perhaps simply unable to believe that I was on my way to a smooth win in the first game in a Candidates Match, I now played neither the powerful 32. ♖c3! (after which the endgame is winning) nor a reasonably strong B-move like 32. ♖e1. Instead, I quickly played an utterly wretched move: 32. ♜b7+??.”

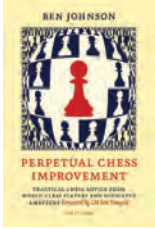
This is where Kamsky demonstrated his defensive skill with 32...♘h6! and, almost unbelievably, after enjoying such a strong position, van der Sterren had to resign on move 36.

Elsewhere in the book, the author sportingly shows games in which he was thoroughly outplayed by giants such as Anatoly Karpov and Vladimir Kramnik, although there are some terrific battles with the great Viktor Korchnoi, in which the results were more even. Photographs too can be found throughout the book, with the hairstyles confirming the relevant decades.

Having decided to retire from serious chess games, the author comments that “there was, above all, relief. No longer tormented by the tension of competition, the permanently nagging worries of ‘what to do against the Slav, the Grunfeld, against 1.e4, against Piket?’ – although there were subsequent forays into the world of league chess. I am sure most of us can sympathise with most of the above and that is one of the key points of this excellent book; van der Sterren comes across as one of us and with his refreshing honesty – especially at the times during which he never felt good enough or fully believed in himself – will definitely bring knowing nods from the reader.

I hope this very enjoyable tome finds the sizeable audience it deserves, despite not being able to offer the instant gratification of enormous self-improvement or a crushing repertoire to take on all-comers. There are enough of those tomes already; this is a *real* book.

Sean Marsh



Perpetual Chess Improvement
Ben Johnson, 240 pages
New in Chess

RRP £22.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £20.65**

The subtitle promises ‘Practical Chess Advice from World-Class Players and Dedicated Amateurs’, but the author’s name may be unfamiliar to readers of a certain age, who do not use the internet to search for chess instruction. For the uninitiated:

“Ben Johnson is a USCF Master and accomplished chess coach. In 2016, he started the Perpetual Chess Podcast, the most successful chess podcast, with over five million downloads and streams in over a hundred different countries – and counting. Ben grew up in Philadelphia and lives in New Jersey with his family. Before dedicating his life to chess, he was a professional poker player and a stock trader.”

In his foreword, Ben Finegold says: “This book should lead the reader to a bevy of new ideas and thoughts about the challenges and rewards of chess improvement. Chess is a lifelong passion, and improvement is always possible. One just needs to work, work, work, and the results will follow.”

This leaves no doubt that the reader has work to do, which has to be a good thing, of course. The material is split into five main chapters: The four pillars of chess improvement; Other aspects of chess you may want to work on; Working on your game away from the board; Tools of improvement; Final thoughts on incorporating chess study into your life.

The contents of the book represent the distilled wisdom from the author’s ‘Adult Improver Series’ of podcast interviews. Of particular interest to readers will be the section on ‘Old Man Chess: playing against children’ which is a problem which is now seen at every level of chess.

Wisely stepping aside from the controversy surrounding Magnus Carlsen and Hans Niemann (“that particular loss and its aftermath should be the subject of its own book”), the point is made that even the world’s strongest player is not immune from the problem.

There is some good practical advice here. For example, as children (repeatedly and unfortunately referred to as ‘kids’ in this book) “often play instinctively” the antidote could be to “be patient and look to set devious traps, especially later in the game.” Here is that very antidote in action, from one of the author’s own games.

B.Johnson-G.Prasanna
Princeton 2021



“In this game, I had recovered from dropping a pawn in the opening and was beginning to gain some hope against my talented teenage opponent.”

A timely *zwischenzug* helped to decide the game in White’s favour: 44 ♖e5+! was played, and after 44...♜xe5 there followed 45 ♗xf7+! “to win a piece, and eventually the game.”

I think it was a good idea to put the best material from the podcasts into book form, as there will be so many people out there who are not interested in the former genre, but who will surely enjoy reading the thought-provoking nuggets of wisdom to be found within the pages of this interesting book.

Sean Marsh

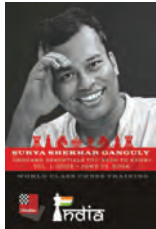


Chess Informant 158 – Aurora

Chess Informant, 350 pages, paperback
RRP £39.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £35.95**

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the cover of the latest ‘Informator’ has a colourful nocturnal theme to the cover. Inside there aren’t just all the latest leading games, novelties, endgames and compositions, but tournament reports on the Grand Swiss, U.S. Championships and European Teams, as well as theoretical surveys and the ever enjoyable historical articles from Douglas Griffin and Ian Rogers.

Note: it’s possible to get all the material on CD format too for an extra £10.00, i.e. £49.95 or £44.95 for Subscribers.



All the chess from this issue is available each month in PGN format - subscribers can request the digital edition for free via info@chess.co.uk



Endgame Essentials

You Need to Know: Volume 1

Surya Ganguly, PC-DVD;

running time: 4 hours, 46 minutes

RRP £34.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £31.45**

The strong Indian GM and former Anand second Surya Sekhar Ganguly joins Sagar Shah in the ChessBase India studio to help viewers really master their basic endgames. They begin by tackling the Lucena, Philidor and Vancura positions before the material becomes more detailed. Shah does a fine job of asking pertinent questions, while Ganguly is especially good when it comes to rules of thumb and especially to admitting uncertainty and thus revealing in which endgames he would be especially watchful.

There's also a companion DVD, *Endgame Essentials You Need to Know: Volume 2*, retailing too at £34.95 (Subscribers: £31.45) while running to 3 hours and 17 minutes of footage. Here Ganguly and Shah continue to emphasise the basics in rook and pawn endings, with the former "staying true to his philosophy that comprehension and confusion are two sides of the same coin". Both DVDs may also be purchased together for the special price of £65 or £58.50 for Subscribers.



Positional Sacrifice in Modern Chess

Dejan & Nikola Nestorovic,

312 pages, hardback

RRP £34.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £31.45**

This new work from Chess Informant Publishing is the follow-up to *Secrets of Positional Sacrifice*. This time the Serbian IM and GM author team, who are also father and son, examine all five main types of positional sacrifice: pawn, exchange, piece, rook and queen. The material gradually becomes more complex, not least in the case of positional rook sacrifices, which are often far from easy

to assess, if also not overly common. The hard-working reader should find plenty of useful instruction within, while the Nestorovics end their coverage with six 'hot games' which encompass their main themes and several exercises.

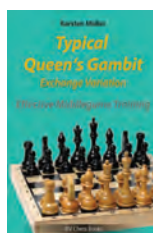


Time Management in Chess

Regina Theissl-Pokorna, PC-DVD; running time: 7 hours, 20 minutes

RRP £30.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £27.85**

Almost every serious player has at least occasionally suffered from time trouble. As such, this detailed DVD presentation from Austrian WGM Theissl-Pokorna is likely to prove of use to a great many players. The first half of the material is devoted to ways to combat ever getting into time trouble, including your opening repertoire, ability to identify critical positions, when to think prophylactically and especially on how to avoid perfectionism at the board. The second half is devoted to how best to handle time trouble, which doesn't just mean staying calm, but being cautious when it comes to possible changes to the pawn structure and how best to fight for chances in worse positions.



Typical Queen's Gambit: Exchange Variation

Karsten Müller, 178 pages, paperback

RRP £21.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £19.75**

This new work fits neatly into Joachim Beyer Verlag's 'Effective Middlegame

Training' series, as one of Karsten Müller's main skills is being able to break down positions in a clear manner to help the club player. Here his focus is the famous Carlsbad structure, determined by white pawns on d4 and e3 against black ones on d5 and c6, after an exchange on d5. All the main plans for both sides are examined, including ...c5 from Black and the famous Minority Attack from White in what might be viewed as an interactive middlegame guide. Over 32 pages, Müller presents a number of positions for readers to solve – four per page, each featuring a question and a QR code should you wish to see the position on your phone – before supplying very detailed solutions, ones which should ensure that the key middlegame plans and concepts for both sides really sink in for this important structure.



What Would You Play?

Thomas Willemze, 230 pages, paperback

RRP £22.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £20.65**

Dutch IM Willemze is building up a reputation as an author with much to offer the club player and his latest work is no exception. Moreover, the 30 games explored by Willemze were not played by grandmasters, but by amateurs. Each of the main chapters presents a few positions for the reader to really spend some time on, before the solutions are revealed as the whole games are annotated. Topics include not just expected ones such as piece activity and the king in the middle, but also some less expected and yet very instructive material on such things as irreversible decisions and attacking the Achilles' heel.

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