

Volume 90 No. 4 July 2025 £5.95

[www.chess.co.uk](http://www.chess.co.uk)



Chess

# PRIME PRAGG

**Praggnanandhaa wins his first-ever GCT event, the Superbet Chess Classic Romania 2025 following a blitz play-off**



'The Chess Game' - Gary Haines on the dual roles played by chess in The Great War



Vasyl Ivanchuk - Daniel King features the mercurial Ukrainian at his brilliant best



Brilliant Bjerre - José Vilela saw Jonas Bjerre dazzle at the Capablanca Memorial

# 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](mailto:info@chess.co.uk), Website: [www.chess.co.uk](http://www.chess.co.uk)

Twitter: @CHESS\_Magazine  
Twitter: @TelegraphChess – Malcolm Pein  
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## 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: Lennart Ootes

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# Experiments with the Dragondorf

**James Plaskett remains happy to mix it up early on and to attack with gusto**

In a previous life I was a chess grandmaster. Well, kind of...

I clocked up the British Championship, achieved a ranking in the world top-100 and managed to inflict a couple of defeats on each of Anand, Larsen, Vaganian and Speelman. I even played Nigel Short for the first time in late 1982 – three years after he had tied for first in the British Championship – and went on to notch up a ludicrous seven victories over him. (Please don't ever ask me to explain how.)

To pass the time since, I have been known to amuse myself with other bits and pieces: for instance, a hunt for a giant octopus on the boat aboard which Peter Benchley wrote parts of *Jaws*; a blog of those coincidences of my life which strike me as improbable, meaningful, or just plain cute; and books on other topics than chess, including a co-authored one on how Major Charles Ingram was the victim of a miscarriage of justice in being found guilty of cheating his way to the top prize on *Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?* in 2001. I also popped into the studio myself, just for a friendly chat with Chris Tarrant... and to take a few quid off him.

A copy of that book *Bad Show* then made its way into the hands of the dramatist of our times, James Graham, who was so impressed that in 2020 he fashioned it into the tripart TV series *Quiz*. Which would be described by Nick Pope in *Esquire* as "The TV event of the decade."

And, let me assure you all, the story of whether they pay Charles the million quid they owe him is far from over yet!

Back to chess and before the pension arrives next year, I took part in a local league game and tried deploying something against an FM which I vaguely recalled having seen here and there in an occasional chess magazine. It is a hybrid of the Sicilians Dragon and Najdorf. Botvinnik once wheeled it out against John Littlewood yonks ago, and hasn't Simon Williams faffed about with it too?

I subsequently learned that guys who truly know lots about the Dragon have termed it 'The Dragondorf' or sometimes 'The Dragadorf'.

**J.Mahomed-J.Plaskett**  
Valencia League 2025  
*Sicilian Dragondorf*

1 e4 c5 2 d4 f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 dxd4 d6

5 dxc3 a6 6 f3 g6!? 7 e3 bd7 8 d2 b5

Taking away the deployment of the bishop on c4. But the black boys on the kingside aren't doing much either. 'Didn't Larsen once beat Tony Kosten at Hastings in the 1980s with something not a million miles different?' I seem to recall thinking, hereabouts. I also recalled the Great Dane's notes where it came across, to some extent, as if he himself was confused about the attribution of a name to whatever it was he had improvised and ended up playing. He went on to realise the advantage he obtained though, with his, characteristically, first-class technique.

9 0-0-0 b7 10 a3 c8 11 g4!? d5 12 h4

Hmm... It could well be that 12...h5!? isn't so daft here, but I tried to stir things up immediately.

12...dxf3!? 13 dxf3 dxe4



Fun, fun, fun!

14 dxe4

I wasn't too perturbed by his option of 14 dxe4 since, following 14...dxc3 I was confident that I could not emerge at all worse.

14...dxe4

I think it may have been FM Kevin Wicker whom I once heard describe a situation which had arisen in a game of his as one where his opponent had "a chess set for the queen". Here if Black gets to capture on c2, he'll have three pawns and the queen versus rook, bishop and knight.

But the position is highly unusual, for there are many additional factors: for example, the potential attacking effect of the Dragondorf bishop, combined with the queen's mobility, the vulnerability of the g4-pawn, the potential use of the central pawn majority and the displacement of White's king.

There is also the significance of White's lack of pawns, making it hard for him to secure the positions of his minor pieces. And there is nothing facetious in that comment.

White's possibilities include coordinating his umpteen bits to create domination and/or making use of the g- and h-pawns to get a kingside attack together. In addition there are, of course, the 'unreachable computer moves' of *Stockfish 15*, which threads its way through the variations to now support a slight black superiority.

15 g2

Very rational. On 15 e2 xc2+ 16 xc2 xc2 17 xc2 comes 17...g7 18 d4. Black ought then to get his pawns in action via 18...d5!?, intending 19 f3 d7, 19 b1 e5 20 g5 b6 21 d3 d4 or 19 h5 e5 20 h6 f6 and 21...d4. The drawback of 15 e2 would be that without the fianchetto it will be far less easy for White to give an irritant check at c6 to thereby deprive Black of castling rights.

15...xc2+ 16 xc2 xc2 17 xc2

Another line was 17 d4!? when there's the threat of 18 c6+. After 17...g7 18 c6+ f8 19 dxc2 h5 Black is doing well.

17...c8+ 18 d2



I had appreciated that the natural 18 b1 drops a pawn and a bishop after 18...xcg4, so therefore White would have to acquiesce to the less comfortable option of keeping his king in the centre.

18...xcg4

18...g7 completed development, initiated a threat to another knight's pawn and, in the practical sense, was at least as good. In some lines after 18...xcg4 *Stockfish*

has to show the most extraordinary of moves.

**19 ♖e1**

I was most relieved to see that.

I had thought 19 ♖d1 to be critical. And it is. After 19...♗g7 20 ♘d4 0-0 Black indeed has managed to castle. But he has castled into it! With 21 ♗d5 ♖d7? 22 h5 all the white pieces combine in the attack. It is, nevertheless, apparently tenable by 22...♗xd4 (what!?) 23 ♗xd4 e6 when neither 24 hxg6 fxg6 nor 24 ♗e4 e5 would lead to a white superiority.

Instead, here 21...♗c8! is the only very good move. For there's now the threat of 22...♗c5 to snaffle one of his 'unsecured' minor pieces, so White needs to play something like 22 ♖c1, but the shift of that attacker enables Black to effectively reorganise himself.

I think any human being would have difficulty in finding the counter-intuitive and vital 21...♗c8!. Indeed, my intent was not to fianchetto, but instead to play 19...d5! and then pull the queen back to d7 and, most likely, play...e6.

**19...♗g7**

19...♗d7 20 ♖c1 d5 was also a way of handling it here.

**20 ♗c6+ ♖f8**



**21 ♗f3**

Costing White material. On 21 ♗d3 h5 Black has the better chances as the band plays on. Nevertheless, that would have been my play as White. Fischer's maxim was "Take all that you are given", and that underplays my planned pawn snatch.

**21...♗f5 22 h5**

22 ♗c1? loses to 22...♗e5 23 ♗d4 ♗f4+.

**22...♗xb2**

A healthy grab and addition to the bunch of extra pawns, as well as a further weakening of White's structure. I was getting the impression that I just had now to be better, and also that it wasn't only me having trouble in orienting himself!

**23 ♗e2 g5**

The top choice of *Stockfish 15*. 23...♗g7 and 23...h6 were also to be considered.

**24 ♗d5 ♗e6 25 ♗d3 ♗g7**

The machine prefers 25...f5. That did occur to me, but given a simpler alternative, I thought to play it would be taking the piss out of the position and my opponent. And myself.

**26 ♗c5 ♗c8**

The only square, but a quite satisfactory one.



Seen with the head of the Murcian Chess Federation, Javier Valera, on his right, James Plaskett (centre) recently came first at a blitz tournament in Murica with 8/9, despite missing round 1!

**27 h6 ♗b2**



**28 ♗h5**

This never entered my head, but 28 ♗d3 g4! is obviously good. Now 28...♗g8 makes a lot of sense and also either of the captures is viable too.

**28...f6?**

'This can't be all that daft', I reasoned.

**29 ♗f3**

Both captures (c5 and a3) are still OK here, but the notion of not giving up on the ...g4 advance won the day.

**29...f5?**

Very far from rational, yet it may still suffice.

**30 ♗hd1?**

After my bonkers moves with the f-pawn, it would have made more sense to try to exploit those by just dropping back with 30 ♗g2. *Stockfish 15* gives the following line as then best. Start by killing the horse with 30...dxc5! and on 31 ♗xc5 ♗c6 32 ♗d1 (or if 32 ♗f3 just 32...♗e6 and the king can then run up by f7 to f6) 32...♗xh6 33 ♗xf5+ ♗f6 34 ♗h1 g4! 35 ♗xf6+ ♗xf6 36 ♗f1 ♗g7, etc.

**30...♗xa3**

Bringing another way to take care of the horse into consideration, but 30...♗g8 was even simpler and better.

**31 ♗g2 ♗g8**



After a few tense moments I was now confident I had solved my problems, since 32 ♗xf5+ ♗xf5 33 ♗f1 loses to 33...♗xf1+ 34 ♗xg1 ♗xc5. Play concluded:

**32 ♗f2 g4 33 ♗1d3 ♗xc5 34 ♗xc5 ♗g5**  
Gotcha!

**35 ♗xd6 ♗xh5 36 ♗c5 ♗c6 37 ♗g1 ♗xh6 38 ♗xf5+ ♗f6 39 ♗xf6+ ♗xf6 40 ♗f1 ♗f7 41 ♗xf6+ ♗xf6 42 ♗b4 h5 43 ♗f2 h4 44 ♗e3 h3 45 ♗f2 e5 0-1**

But I was never, unlike Professor Jonathan Mestel or Dr John Nunn, a Grandmaster of Chess Composition. Had I acquired that title then I would quite possibly have spotted that my 'most rational' of moves, 31...♗g8, deserved a double question mark!

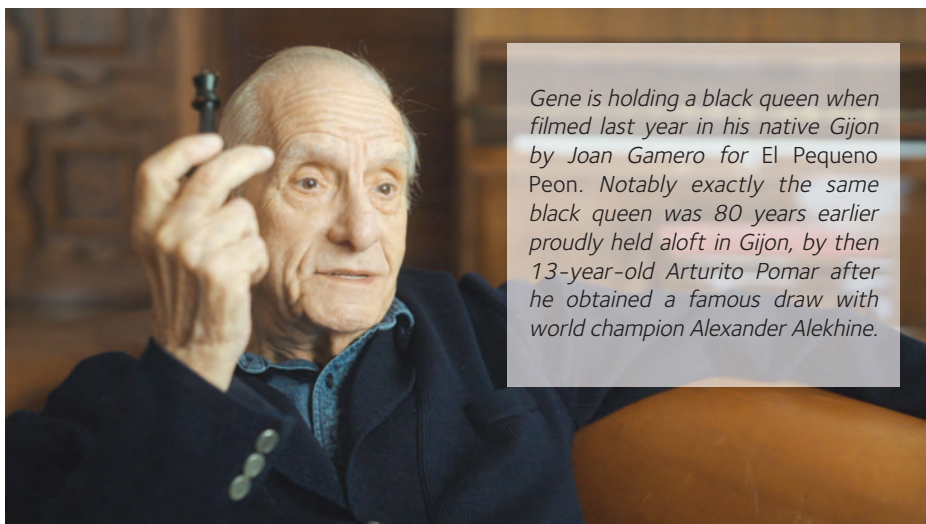
For it permitted checkmate in four with 32 ♗xf5+! ♗xf5 33 ♗d7+!! ♗xd7 34 ♗f1+ ♗f5 35 ♗xf5#.

Ah well, my Elo will now be zipping up beyond 2330...





# 60 Seconds with... Gene Salomon



*Gene is holding a black queen when filmed last year in his native Gijon by Joan Gamero for El Pequeno Peon. Notably exactly the same black queen was 80 years earlier proudly held aloft in Gijon, by then 13-year-old Arturito Pomar after he obtained a famous draw with world champion Alexander Alekhine.*

**Born:** September 29th 1928, Gijon, Spain.

**Place of residence:** Lakewood, New Jersey.

**Occupation:** Food Industry Consultant for the last 35 years, currently finishing my last project.

**Enjoyable?** I still participate in bridge tournaments four days per week.

**And home life?** 63 years of marriage, with four children and seven grandchildren. I'm very proud of them all.

**But sometimes good to escape to:** A concert, a good dinner, the occasional visit to Manhattan.

**Sports played or followed:** I always enjoyed playing tennis and table tennis, and as well as tennis, like to watch football on the TV.

**A favourite novel?** Anything by Stefan Zweig or Agatha Christie, or perhaps El Quijote's *La Historia de St. Michele*.

**Piece of music?** Rodgers and Hammerstein's 'Some Enchanted Evening', which was playing as I met my wife at a Christmas party in 1960.

**Film or TV series?** *Casablanca*.

**The best three chess books:** *Pawn Endings* by Yuri Averbakh and Ilya Maizelis, Kurt Richter's *Chess Combination as a Fine Art*, and *Mis 100 Mejores Partidas* by Ramon Rey Ardid.

**What's the best thing about playing chess?** It's the best life 'coaching': great for reasoning, creativity, patience and the evaluation of alternatives. It's also the best and most pleasant mental exercise, as well as a big help with longevity.

**And the worst?** Times of frustration with stupid errors or miscalculations.

**And a highly memorable opponent?** Historically, I very much enjoyed playing Alekhine in 1944 and Arturo Pomar the following year. I also got to face Joel Benjamin when he was a child prodigy and contested six games with the legendary GM Arthur Bisguier.

**Your best move?** Playing Mitchell Klug at the 1974 Atlantic Open. When I played 24 ♖g3, a psychological move, if ever there was one, I knew that my opponent would not resist the temptation of playing 24...♜f4, allowing me my beloved knight and queen combination.

## E.Salomon Rugarcia-M.Klug Crystal City 1974



24 ♖g3 ♜f4? 25 ♜f5+! gxf5 26 ♜e6+ ♜f6 27 ♜g5+ ♜xe6 28 ♜xf5# 1-0

**But less memorable than your worst move?** A game where I missed a beautiful

queen sacrifice and mating under-promotion, and even went on to lose painfully.

## R.Ribeiro-E.Salomon Rugarcia US Open, Somerset 1986



**34...e2?**

Missing 34...♜b8!! 35 ♜xb8+ ♜xb8 36 ♜xb8+ ♜h7 37 ♜xf5 e2! 38 ♜xg7 exf1♜#. 35 ♜xe2 ♜b8 36 ♜xb8+ ♜xb8 37 ♜xb8+ ♜h7 38 ♜a6 c5 39 ♜c8 ♜e4 40 ♜e6 ♜a7? 40...♜c7! 41 ♜d8 ♜xf4 42 ♜d7+ ♜g7 would still have won.

41 ♜d8! ♜g7? 42 ♜g8+ ♜g6 43 ♜d6+ ♜f6 44 ♜xf6+ ♜g7 45 ♜f7+ ♜xf7 46 ♜xf7 ♜xf7 47 ♜d8 ♜b1 48 a4 1-0

**Any advice for FIDE or the USCF?** Chess belongs in schools as a character formation tool.

**Can chess make one happy?** Yes, especially helping to forget the bad times!

**A tip please for the club player:** Endings and combinations are far more important than openings for fast progress.

**Favourite game of all time?** Playing Steve Pozarek at the 1968 New Jersey Open, which was my first tournament in the US after 16 years away from competitive chess. My father, my first chess teacher, had just died a few months before, but I could feel his presence with me during the game.

## S.Pozarek-E.Salomon Rugarcia New Jersey Open 1968 *King's Indian Defence*

1 c4 ♜f6 2 ♜c3 g6 3 e4 d6 4 d4 ♜g7 5 f3 0-0 6 ♜e3 e5 7 d5 a5 8 ♜d3 ♜a6 9 ♜ge2 ♜d7 10 ♜d2 ♜b4 11 0-0 f5 12 exf5 gxf5 13 f4 ♜xd3 14 ♜xd3 e4

15 ♔d2 ♜c5 16 ♙d4 ♚e7 17 ♙xg7  
 ♚xg7 18 ♜b5 ♜f7 19 ♜ed4 ♜d3 20 b3  
 ♙d7 21 ♚e3 ♜c8 22 a3 ♜f6 23 b4 c6  
 24 ♜c3 ♜g6 25 ♜ce2? cxd5 26 ♜g3



26...♜xc4! 0-1

If 27 ♜dx5 ♙xf5 28 ♜xf5 ♜xg2+ 29 ♙h1  
 ♜cc2! 30 ♜xg7 ♜xh2+ 31 ♙g1 ♜cg2#.



Gene appears in the Artur Pomar documentary, 'The Little Pawn', about to appear on Spanish TV.



# Forthcoming Events

**July 4-9** **South Wales International, Bridgend**  
[welshchessunion.uk/SWI/2025/](http://welshchessunion.uk/SWI/2025/)

**July 5** **Earlsfield Rapid**  
[londonfidecongress.com/earlsfield-rapidplay](http://londonfidecongress.com/earlsfield-rapidplay)

**July 5** **Golders Green Rapidplay**  
[goldersgreenschess.blogspot.com](http://goldersgreenschess.blogspot.com)

**July 6** **Coulsdon Summer Rapidplay**  
[ccfworld.com/Chess/Adult%20Competitions/Rapidplay\\_info.html](http://ccfworld.com/Chess/Adult%20Competitions/Rapidplay_info.html)

**July 6** **Ealing Rapidplay**  
[londonfidecongress.com/ealing-rapidplay](http://londonfidecongress.com/ealing-rapidplay)

**July 7-13** **Scottish Championships, Dunfermline**  
[congress.playchess.org.uk/congress/560/home](http://congress.playchess.org.uk/congress/560/home)

**July 8** **Muswell Hill Rapid**  
[muswellhillchess.blogspot.com](http://muswellhillchess.blogspot.com)

**July 11-13** **Kent Congress, Tunbridge Wells**  
[congress.org.uk/congress/533/home](http://congress.org.uk/congress/533/home)

**July 12-13** **Southall Congress**  
[londonfidecongress.com/southall-congress](http://londonfidecongress.com/southall-congress)

**July 12** **Milton Keynes Rapidplay**  
[mkbishopschess.co.uk/upcoming-events/](http://mkbishopschess.co.uk/upcoming-events/)

**July 13** **ChessFest, Trafalgar Square**  
[chess-fest.com](http://chess-fest.com)

**July 15** **Muswell Hill Rapid**  
[muswellhillchess.blogspot.com](http://muswellhillchess.blogspot.com)

**July 18-21** **English Championships, Kenilworth**  
[englishchess.org.uk/english-championships-2025/](http://englishchess.org.uk/english-championships-2025/)

**July 18-19** **Earlsfield Congress**  
[londonfidecongress.com/earlsfield-congress](http://londonfidecongress.com/earlsfield-congress)

**July 19-26** **BCA Chairman's Cup, Bournemouth**  
[braillechess.org.uk/events](http://braillechess.org.uk/events)

**July 19-20** **Glossop Congress**  
[congress.org.uk/congress/610/home](http://congress.org.uk/congress/610/home)

**July 20** **Ashton Rapidplay**  
[ashtonccc.co.uk](http://ashtonccc.co.uk)

**July 26** **Poplar Rapidplay**  
[www.spanglefish.com/docklandschessclub/](http://www.spanglefish.com/docklandschessclub/)

**July 31 - August 10** **British Championships, Liverpool**  
[britishchesschampionships.co.uk](http://britishchesschampionships.co.uk)

*And for the Online Connoisseur:*

**July 1-5** **Grand Chess Tour Croatia, Zagreb**  
[grandchesstour.org](http://grandchesstour.org); Abdusattorov, Carlsen, Caruana, Duda, Firouzja, Giri, Gukesh, Praggnanandhaa, Saric & So.

**July 12-25** **Biel International Chess Festival**  
[bielchessfestival.ch](http://bielchessfestival.ch); Aravindh, Le Quang Liem, Murzin, Saleh, Frederik Svane & Wojtaszek.

**August 10-14** **Grand Chess Tour, Saint Louis Rapid & Blitz**  
[grandchesstour.org](http://grandchesstour.org); Abdusattorov, Aronian, Caruana, Duda, Firouzja, Gukesh, Praggnanandhaa, So & Vachier-Lagrave.

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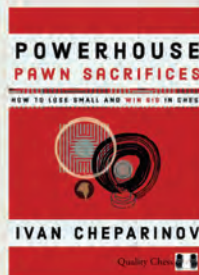
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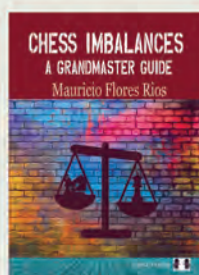
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### Chess Imbalances by Mauricio Flores Rios

Material imbalances are a fundamental part of almost every chess game, yet have not received much attention in chess literature. In this illuminating book, GM Mauricio Flores Rios breaks down this universal topic into categories such as bishop vs knight, opposite-coloured bishops, possessing and playing against the bishop pair, and various scenarios with a queen or rook being traded for several pieces.

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### Maximise Your Chess Potential by Dan Heisman

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### Benoni Mayhem by Andrew Martin

The hallmark of this opening is that Black makes the positional concession of allowing White a central majority and hopes for counterchances via active piece play in return. However, as the very experienced chess coach and author Andrew Martin demonstrates in this highly engaging book, there are many other weird and wonderful ways to handle these 'Benoni structures'.

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### Accelerated Dragon by Nigel Davies

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# England Excels

## Peter Sullivan reports on the first FIDE Continental Online Prisons Chess Championships

We've all lived through the developments in modern chess, the influence of AI engines, ever more sophisticated opening theory, faster time limits and a world in which the majority of elite tournament games end in a draw. Let me take you to a different world, a world in which nobody has heard of *Stockfish* or the Sicilian Najdorf, very few have seen a chess clock and absolutely nobody would ever dream of offering a draw. It's the world of prison chess.

Under the guidance of the ECF and Chess in Schools and Communities (CSC), four prisons lined up to represent England in the first FIDE Continental Online Prisons Chess Championships. An England Open team included players from HMP Winchester, HMP Highpoint and HMP Wormwood Scrubs, and a Youth team from HMP/YOI Isis. The teams were organised by the Chess in Schools and Communities (CSC) management team, which I led, with tutors on site at HMP Winchester, Highpoint, Wandsworth and Isis. Nigel Towers from the ECF helped coordinate the group as competing teams are prohibited from being in touch with the organisers by Zoom.

The start could not have been more different, with the Open team recording convincing victories against Norway and Spain, a draw in round 3 and a great win against Croatia, one of the favourites. By contrast, the Youth team defaulted the first three rounds because of internet connection difficulties. Connecting 24 prisons from Iceland to Armenia is no simple task. Everyone wrote the young players off, I suspect not for the first time in their lives, but they managed a morale boosting victory against the Greece senior team followed by a 4-0 victory against Latvia Youth when the connections finally worked.

After a fantastic fightback by the Youth team, both teams were in contention in the final round. The Open team were beaten by a fantastically strong Ukraine women's team and finished a creditable fourth equal in the Open section. Congratulations to Serbia, who deservedly won the tournament.

The Youth team needed to avoid defeat against the Czech team to pip Ukraine Youth for the title, which they achieved in the final game of the match. Many congratulations to HMP/YOI Isis, representing England – gold medallists!

The two things that stand out are the raw talent and dedication of the players, and the amazing things that are possible with

teamwork. People across all four prisons from education, IT, governors, officers and men, CSC tutors and volunteers all worked together and went out of their way to make it possible to compete so successfully.

It is hard to overstate the impact that these tournaments can have on self-esteem and confidence. One player told me: "I've never been in a team before. I didn't want to let anyone down. Now I know I can do it. The others were brilliant."

Another young player, who has been brought up in children's homes, whose parents have both been to prison and has been in at least three prisons that I know of, said to me: "No-one has ever told me I'm good at anything. Everyone tells me I'm rubbish. But you trusted me and now I'm an England player, and I did alright and nobody can take that away from me." He did more than alright.

Now we look forward to the World Championships in October, where we hope to field teams in the Open, Women's and Youth sections.

The following miniature was played by the top board of the England Open team in the final round of the competition.

### Notes by IM Malcolm Pein

#### England Open vs Ukraine Women Internet (rapid) 2025 *English Opening*

1 c4 e5 2 ♘c3 ♘f6 3 ♘f3 ♘c6 4 a3

A move order nuance to rule out ...♗b4. White often plays b2-b4 in the English anyway.  
4...a5 5 e4 ♗c5 6 ♘xe5!



6...♗xf2+?

A fairly common mistake. Now White obtains a huge centre and his king is only slightly inconvenienced.

7 ♗xf2 ♘xe5 8 d4 ♘g6

8...♗eg4+ 9 ♖g1 d6 10 h3 ♘h6 is also grim for Black.

9 e5 ♘g8 10 ♖g1

10 h4!? was also possible, as 10...♘xh4 11 ♖h5 ♘g6 12 ♗g5 f6? 13 ♗d3! wins.

10...c5 11 ♘b5! cxd4 12 ♘d6+ ♖f8 13 ♖xd4



13...f6

Likewise, 13...♗e7 14 ♗d2 ♗xe5 15 ♖b6! is pretty crushing, and if 15...♘f6 16 ♖d8+ ♘e8 17 ♗e1.

14 ♖c5 ♘8e7

After 14...♘6e7 15 h4 ♗a6 16 ♖h3 ♗c6 17 ♖d4 Black runs out of constructive moves and even a queen exchange offers no relief following 17...♖b6 18 ♖xb6 ♗xb6 19 b4 h5 20 c5 ♗c6 21 ♗f3.

15 exf6 gxf6 16 ♗h6+ ♖g8 17 ♖d4 ♘e5 18 c5 b6



Now it's White to play and mate in three.

19 ♖c4+!

Flashy. 19 ♗c4+ and 19 ♖g4+!? also work.

19...♗xc4 20 ♗xc4+ ♘d5 21 ♗xd5# 1-0





# Home News

**BELFAST** – Steve Scannell (Lisburn) prevailed with 5/6 to win the City of Belfast Championship at the Maynard Sinclair Pavilion on the Stormont Estate (May 24-26), finishing half a point ahead of Mandar Tahmankar (Antrim) and Padraig Hughes (Curragh).

**CAMBRIDGE** – For a third year in a row Michael Adams won the Cambridge International Open (May 26-31), this time on tiebreak from Brandon Clarke, both taking home £1,125. Adams conceded a few draws, but won when it counted and solidly held as Black against second seed and old rival Sergei Tiviakov in the final round (some readers may remember Adams defeating Tiviakov in a PCA world championship quarter-final at Trump Tower back in 1994).

Final scores: 1-2 Michael Adams (Taunton), Brandon Clarke (Ely) 7/9, 3-7 Wenxiang Li (University College London), Marin Bosicic (Croatia), Daniel Fernandez (Little Heath), Sergei Tiviakov (Holland), Matthew Wadsworth (Maidenhead) 6½.

Brandon Clarke's only defeat came at the hands of Lorenzo Fava in round four, against whom Michael Adams would provide an endgame masterclass in round five.

## L.Fava-M.Adams Cambridge 2025



Here 25...xc6 dxc6 26...d8+ g7 27...d7 should be a fairly comfortable hold for White, but instead Fava was to miss a tactic:

**25...d5? a1!**

Forcing a winning queen endgame.

**26...d3 fxd1+ 27...xd1 a5 28...a1?**

Now it's easy for Black, although even after 28...d3 a4 29...f1 c7 30...d5 a7 31...e2 a3 32...a2 he should be winning, as with 32...g1 33...xa3 xg2+ 34...e3 g1+ 35...d3 xh2 when the passed h-pawn should prove decisive – with care.

**28...a4 29...a2 c3!**

A further tactic to aid the a-pawn's advance.

**30...f1 a3 31...d5 h5 32...f4 b2 33...a8+ g7 34...a6 a2 35...f6+ g8 36...d8+ h7 0-1**

Heading into the last round, Indian IM Siva Mahadevan was on for a GM norm, but would be crushed by Clarke.

## S.Mahadevan-B.Clarke Cambridge 2025 Sicilian Dragon

**1 e4 c5 2 f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 xd4 xf6 5 c3 g6 6 e3 g7**

6...a6 7 f3 bd7 is another Dragadorf way of handling the position, as we saw on page 22.

**7 f3 a6 8 d2 h5!?**

A trendy approach, seizing space and ruling out e6 ideas.

**9 c4**

This is more critical than 9 0-0-0 bd7 10 b1 b5 11 a3 b7 12 e2 c8 13 he1 c7 14 h3 h4! when Black was very comfortable in F.Svane-Nakamura, Titled Tuesday Blitz 2025.

**9...b5 10 d5! xd5 11 xd5 e6!**



**12...xe6?!**

The complications are OK for Black after this, whereas 12...b6! xb6?! (12...a7 is the sensible approach, but still not fully equal after 13...xc8 xc8 14...xb5 axb5 15...xa7 xb2 16...d4!) 13...xe6 looks good for White, even after 13...xe3+!? 14...xe3 xe6 15 0-0-0 followed by fxd6 and/or f3-f4, when the queen should be more relevant than the three minor pieces.

**12...xe6 13...b6 c8 14...c7+ g8 15...xa8 c6!**

Simple and strong, whereas 15...d7? 16...c7! xb6 17...xd6+ g8 18...xb6 xb2 19...d1 had worked out well for White in Eliseev-Harutyunian, Istanbul 2012.

**16...c7?**

16 0-0-0! was necessary when 16...xa8 17...xd6+ g8 18...c7! would have remained pretty unclear.

**16...xb2 17 0-0**



**17...xa1?**

Allowing White a chance to save himself. Instead, 17...xa8! 18...xd6+ g7 19...ad1 f6 would leave Black with a large advantage thanks to the minor pieces and queenside targets.

**18...xb8?**

This loses by force, unlike 18...xd6+! g8 (18...g7 19...xa1 xa8 20...e5+ is another important point, and if 20...f6 21...xf6+! xf6 22...d4+) 19...xa1 xa8 20...e5! and then, for example, 20...a7+ 21...f2 b7 22...d1 d7 23...xh8 xh8 24...d6 when White would have been worse, but still very much fighting.

**18...e7! Winning a piece and the game.**

**19...c7 fxb8 20...xe6 c3! 21...d4 c5 0-1**

**DARLINGTON** – Two Yorkshire juniors enjoyed a notable result in the Open at the County Durham Congress which again took place at the Dolphin Centre, Darlington (May 9-11), and was very hard-fought in all three sections.

**Open:** 1-2 Toby Quait (Leeds), Shriaansh Ganti (Ilkley) 4½, 3 Jack Erskine-Pereira (L'pool) 4.

**Major:** 1 Andy Trevelyan (Jesmond) 5, 2 Robert Kane (West London) 4½, 3-4 Daniel Meredith (York), Jonathan Slater (Hull) 4.

**Minor:** 1-2 Gautham Sathishkumar (Gosforth), Alan Tunnaccliffe (Ilkley) 4½, 3-8 Deborah Edmundson, Gregory Ellis (both Bishop Auckland), Dominik Pitel (Hull), Alfie McMonagle (Middlesbrough), John Hilton (Alnwick), Ryan Duff (Forest Hall) 4.

**LIVINGSTON** – Teenager Marvin Gera shared first place with Angus Dunnington at the Livingston Allegro on May 4th.

**Open:** 1 Angus Dunnington (Cambuslang), Marvin Gera (Corstorphine) 4/5, 3-4 Samuel Ross, Alagu Karthik (both Edinburgh) 3½.

**Major:** 1-3 Lokesh Pulkanti (Stirling), Ruslan

Dudkin (Ardrossan), Darima Donitova-Johnstone (Edinburgh University) 3½.

**Intermediate:** 1 Alastair Muirhead (Carrick) 5, 2 Humam Al Dakl Alla (Kirkintilloch) 4, 3 Eve Clark (Glasgow Polytechnic) 3½.

**Minor:** 1 Misuzu Daniels (Edinburgh) 4½, 2nd Ally McLellan (Queen's Park) 4, 3 Sriram Bhaskar (Kirkintilloch) 3½.

**LONDON** – There was a three-way tie in the Open at the Golders Green Rapidplay on May 10th.

**Open:** 1–3 Peter Large (Kingston), Junyi Zhang (Coulsdon), Rock Yu (Little Heath) 5/6.

**Under-1900:** 1–3 Engham Harshavardhan (Coventry University), Torrey Horwood (west London), Ivan Georgiev (Chandler's Ford) 5.

**Under-1600:** 1 Ronak Bansal (Hendon) 5½, 2 Hamza Eddahmani (Greenwich) 5, 3–5 Rineesh Bansal, Antoine Clarke (both Hendon), Raphael Biju-Duval (Swiss Cottage) 4½.

**Under-1100:** 1 Daniel Dugdale (Woodbridge) 5½, 2–3 Spriha Punjabi (Crowborough), Albert Guan (Richmond) 4.

Peter Large also prevailed at the Muswell Hill Rapid on May 13th, scoring 6/6 to finish a point ahead of Mikhailo Kapechun (Rainham). Kapechun managed to take a draw off Large exactly a week later, but finished third on 4½/6 after losing to Mohammad Mozaffari (Coulsdon), who in turn was defeated by Large, the overall winner with 5½/6.

Adam Raoof and his team also staged a Muswell Hill Congress (April 29–30), at which Benedict Keohane (Coulsdon) scored a perfect 4/4 to finish a point ahead of Koby Kalavannan (Cambridge University) and Michael Fernandez (Little Heath).

**NOTTINGHAM** – We reported last month on Mark Hebden's victory at the Nottingham Congress (May 10–11). En route he produced a typically instructive performance on the black side of 1 e4 e5 to defeat a 2250-rated opponent from Nottingham University.

### S.Schweizer-M.Hebden Nottingham 2025 Four Knights Game

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 g3 d5 5 exd5 ♘xd5 6 ♗g2 ♘xc3 7 bxc3 ♗c5 8 0-0 0-0 9 d3 A straightforward approach.

9 ♖e1 is a little more common and challenging. 9...f6 10 a4 ♖b8!?

A new idea in this particular position, preparing to challenge for control of the long light-square diagonal.

11 ♖e2 b6 12 ♔d1

12 ♔d2!? was worth a thought with the idea of 12...♗b7? (12...♔a5! maintains the rough balance) 13 d4! when White will win a piece thanks to the checks on c4 and e6.

12...♗e8 13 ♔g5!?

Schweizer is up for the challenge.

13...fxg5 14 ♗xc6 ♖f8 15 d4

15 ♗e3 was likely a better way of dealing with Black's best-placed piece.

15...exd4 16 cxd4 ♗d6 17 ♖e1

And here 17 c4!? ♖f6 18 ♗e3 would have been more consistent with White's

aggressive 15th move.

17...♖f6 18 c3 ♗g4!?



Beginning to exploit the pressure down the f-file, although here White might have gone 19 f3!?, intending 19...♗xf3 20 ♗xg5!.

19 ♖e3 ♖bd8 20 ♗d5+ ♗h8 21 ♗g2?!

White is drifting and 21 f3! ♗xf3 22 ♗xf3 ♖xf3 23 ♖xf3 ♗xf3 24 ♗xg5 ♖df8 25 ♗e3 followed by ♗g2 would have been a somewhat better defensive method.

21...h6!

Now g5 is secure and White's slight lack of play a concern.

22 ♗a3 a5

A good positional move to fix the weakness on a4, although 22...♗xa3!? 23 ♖xa3 ♖de8! 24 ♖d2 (24 ♖xe8? ♖xf2+ 25 ♗h1 ♖xe8 26 ♖xe8+ ♗h7 27 ♗e4+ ♗f5 28 ♗xf5+ ♖xf5 leaves the queen rampant with the rooks uncoordinated) 24...♖xe1+ 25 ♖xe1 a5 might have been an even better way to do things.

23 ♗xd6 ♖xd6 24 ♖a2?!

Black begins to take over after this and the more dynamic 24 d5! was really required.

24...♖e6



What is the rook doing on a2?

25 ♖c1 ♖fe8 26 ♖xe6 ♖xe6 27 ♗d5

27 d5!? ♖e8 28 c4 still feels like a better try, even if White's queenside pawns are now on the wrong colour.

27...♖e8 28 ♗g2? c6?

Far from terrible, but 28...♖f5! would pretty much have won on the spot, and if 29 c4 (or 29 ♗c6 ♖e6!) 29...c6! 30 ♗xc6 ♖c8 31 ♗b7 (both 31 d5? ♗h3+ 32 ♗g1 ♖f3 and 31 ♗d5? ♗h3+ 32 ♗g1 ♖xd5! are even worse) 31...♖xc4! 32 ♖e1 (32 ♖xc4? ♗h3+ forces mate) 32...♖c7! 33 ♖e8+ (or 33 ♗a8 ♗h3+ 34 ♗g1 ♖c8 and wins) 33...♗h7 34 ♗e4 ♗h3+ 35 ♗g1 ♖c1#.

29 f3! ♗f5 30 ♗c4 g4!



Trying to reopen lines and now 31 f4 was required when 31...♗d7!? 32 ♖d2 b5 is still clearly better for Black.

31 fxg4? ♗xg4?

31...♗e4+! 32 ♗h3 (32 ♗g1? ♖f3 clearly can't be allowed) 32...g5! would have been surprisingly strong, and if 33 ♖f1 (33 ♖e2? h5! wins, in view of 34 gxh5? ♖f5+ 35 g4 ♖f3#) 33...♗f3 34 ♖f2 ♖f8.

32 ♖f2 ♗h3+ 33 ♗g1 ♖d6 34 ♖f4

Schweizer continues to defend largely well, but with such an exposed king, White's position continues to remain fairly unpleasant from a practical perspective.

34...g5!? 35 ♖f7 ♖g6 36 ♖f2 ♖e4 37 ♖b2?

37 ♖e2 ♖g6 38 ♖b2!? would have been a much improved version of the game and objectively OK for White. 37...♖f8 38 ♖d2?

Time was likely very short by now, but only an engine would find 38 ♖e2 ♖f5 39 ♖d2! to keep White afloat, and if 39...b5!? 40 axb5 cxb5 41 ♗d3 ♖f3 42 ♖e1!.

38...♖f3!



Placing White pretty much in zugzwang.

39 ♖xb6 ♖xc3! 40 ♖b8+ ♗g7 41 ♖b7+ ♗g6

Only one king is in danger, and it isn't Black's.

42 ♗f7+ ♗f6 43 ♖f2+ ♖f3 0-1

**PERTH** – Shubham Lakudkar defeated FM Andrew Burnett and drew with top seed IM Angus Dunnington to prevail at the Perth Congress (May 23–26).

**Open:** 1 Shubham Lakudkar (Stirling) 6/7, 2–3 Angus Dunnington (Cambuslang), Andrew McCusker (Hamilton) 5½.

**Major:** 1 Michael Ash (Musselburgh) 6, 2 Nick Webb (Ireland) 5½, 3–4 Mark Gyalus (Edinburgh), Kyle Lopez Henderson (Stepps) 5.

**Minor:** 1 Liam Mathieson (Perth) 6, 2–6 Michael Dobson (Arran), Katarina Tanzerova (Dundee), Aniruddha Vishwanath (Aberdeen), Aaron Gourlay (Glasgow University), Kyriakos McKenzie (Edinburgh West) 5.



# Readers' Letters



## BH Wood's Visit to the Wirral

Last Thursday, founder member of our chess club Les Bresnen made a rare summer evening appearance and brought along one of his early scorebooks. On the 18th of January 1954, B. H. Wood (founder of this very magazine, one of the leading English players of his generation and, of course, a Yorkshireman) played a simul at Calday Grange Grammar School on the Wirral; amongst his opponents was L. F. Bresnen.

### B. Wood-L. Bresnen

West Kirby (simul) 1954

*Ragozin Defence*

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♖c3 ♜f6 4 ♕g5 ♜bd7 5 e3

White cannot take the d-pawn because of the trap: 5 cxd5 exd5 6 ♜xd5?? ♜xd5 7 ♕xd8 ♕b4+, ending with Black a piece up. Of course, Wood knew the schoolboy trap, but he missed the next one...

5... ♕b4 6 ♖a4 ♕xc3+ 7 bxc3 ♖e7 8 ♜f3 0-0 9 ♜e5 ♖d6 10 c5?

Black has played some strange queen moves, and Wood was tempted into an indiscretion.

10... ♜xc5!

When Wood returned to the board, he looked a little startled, exclaimed "Good move!" and retreated his queen. Black then had a slight edge.

11 ♖c2 ♜cd7 12 f4 c5 13 ♕d3 ♜e4 14 ♕xe4 dxe4 15 ♖xe4 f6 16 ♜xd7 ♖xd7 17 ♕h4 ♖d5 18 ♖c2 ♜d7 19 0-0 ♜ac8 20 c4?



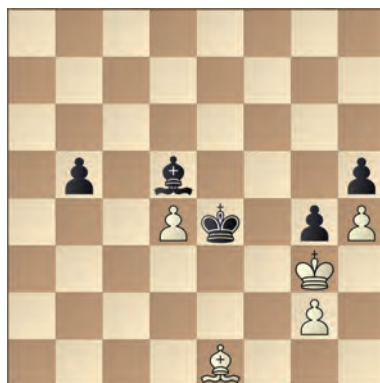
20... cxd4!

Black takes full advantage of White's unwise pawn push.

21 cxd5 ♖xc2 22 dxe6 ♕xe6

This left Black's pieces in the ascendancy, but Wood had equalised by move 29.

23 exd4 ♕f5 24 ♕f2 ♖e8 25 ♖fc1 ♖ee2 26 ♖xc2 ♕xc2 27 ♖c1 ♕e4 28 ♖a1 g5 29 fxg5 fxg5 30 a4 h5 31 ♖d1 ♕d5 32 ♖e1 ♖xe1+ 33 ♕xe1 ♜f7 34 ♜f2 ♜f6 35 ♜g3 ♜f5 36 h4 g4 37 ♜f2 ♜e4 38 ♜g3 a6 39 ♕f2? b5 40 axb5 axb5 41 ♕e1



41... ♜xd4?

A mistake by Les, but the obvious move to me. The computer says it leaves the game equal because the white king can now get across while the bishop stops the g-pawn. Instead, 41... ♜e3 keeps control and seemingly wins [Ed. – Black is too fast after 42 ♕b4 ♜d3 43 ♜f2 ♜c4 44 ♕d6 b4 45 ♜e2 ♜c3]. Luckily Wood didn't realise either and returned the blunder.

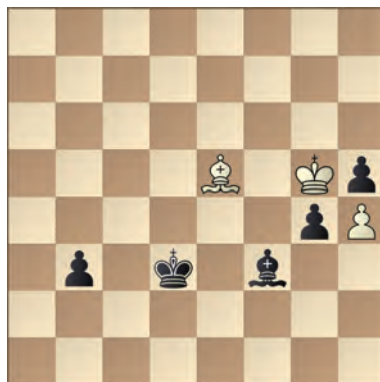
42 ♜f4?

42 ♜f2 was needed for the draw.

42... ♕xg2 43 ♕g5 ♕f3!

Wood was obviously hoping his king could take h5 and then return to block the g-pawn, but after this move the h-pawn is invulnerable.

44 ♕g3 b4 45 ♜f5 b3 46 ♕e5+ ♜c4 47 ♜f4 ♜d3 48 ♜g5



Retired music teacher and conductor Les Bresnen remains an active chess player.

Watching the endgame is like watching *Endeavour* and seeing the early signs of the older man's pedantry! Here Black is accurate to the end.

48... ♜e4!

There are many ways to win, but this is the prettiest and most effective. White's king is stuck and the bishop has to choose which pawn to stop.

49 ♕b2 g3 0-1

Impressive play by the young Bresnen! Maths teacher at Calday Grange and chess enthusiast Mr Thompson must have been proud.

The school was the first to win *The Sunday Times National Schools Knockout* when it started in 1958. More recently, Les was a key member of our Eagle & Child title-winning third team this season (7½/12), and I've discovered that chess is being played at Calday Grange Grammar School to this day.

Steve Whitehead, York



IN LONDON ON SUNDAY 13TH JULY? COME TO CHESSFEST! WWW.CHESS-FEST.COM

# This Month's New Releases

## Korchnoi Year by Year: Volume IV (1992-2016)

Hans Renette & Tibor Karolyi, 528 pages  
Elk and Ruby

RRP £41.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £37.75**

There are not many chess players who could command or deserve a four-volume series on their life and games, especially when the concluding volume features an old warrior whose best days are long behind him.

However, there never was – and never will be – another player anything like Viktor Korchnoi. His dramas on the chessboard were more than matched by the dramas in his real life, from growing up during the siege of Leningrad in the Second World War, through manifold political capers, including his hugely controversial defection, and his decades-long struggle through a plethora of Candidates tournaments and matches to three titanic clashes with Anatoly Karpov for the ultimate title. Korchnoi's extremely long career saw him taking on the generation of Mikhail Botvinnik and Vasily Smyslov, outlasting several other generations and still being able to beat the youngsters such as Magnus Carlsen and Fabiano Caruana in his twilight years.

The major factor running throughout his entire career was his extraordinary fighting spirit. Short draws were very few and far between, and he played virtually every game as if his life depended upon it.

This year-by-year presentation of Korchnoi's best games from his latter years shines the light on an abundance of gems, with his opponents including Garry Kasparov, Anatoly Karpov, Jan Timman, Yasser Seirawan and Boris Spassky. Even the veteran Svetozar Gligoric is represented, with his last-ever public chess games coming against Korchnoi in 2007 (a win and a draw for Korchnoi). After the first game, Korchnoi's win, he said to his opponent: "You are stronger now than you were fifty years ago!" Was this a compliment, or not?

Alas, throughout the book, there are plenty of tales of Korchnoi proving unable to resist the urge to directly insult his opponents, particularly if he thought they were leaving it a little late to resign. It is rude behaviour, of course, but Korchnoi never set out to become a role model. He was certainly still full of fury when he performed his simultaneous displays at the early editions of the London Chess Classic.

The games in this book show how his indomitable fighting spirit remained intact all the way to the end, albeit with more mistakes

than in former times. His endgame skills never faded though, with deft tactical flourishes well to the fore, such as this one.

## V.Korchnoi-A.Yusupov Essen 2002



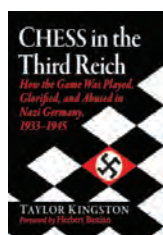
36 ♖c6! 1-0

Incidentally, after his last round defeat to Rustam Kasimdzhanov at the same event, Korchnoi said: "You won, but still can't play chess."

There are 669 games (or game fragments), and as many Korchnoi stories as one could possibly want across the four magnificent volumes. Hans Renette and Tibor Karolyi have done a simply wonderful job in collating the treasures of Korchnoi's life and career, fully augmented by an excellent selection of photographs.

Very few players will have a multi-volume series of books published about them, long after their death (although Elk and Ruby have already started such a task about Alexander Alekhine, of course). What a magnificent series! Congratulations to all concerned.

Sean Marsh



## Chess in the Third Reich

Taylor Kingston, 291 pages  
McFarland

RRP £49.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £44.95**

It takes a brave author and publisher to step into the crossover world of the Third Reich and chess – especially as the front



cover even features a swastika. Beyond the historical berating of Alexander Alekhine, the world champion who wrote – in extremely derogatory terms – about his Jewish chess opponents and who also played in Nazi-sponsored tournaments, the rest of the story is usually airbrushed from history.

Yet feelings on the matter clearly run extremely deeply. Many years ago, at a congress bookstall, I witnessed a man very angrily demanding the recently published third edition of *Alekhine Nazi Articles* (Moravian Chess, 2002) be removed from sight. The next day, he came back and demanded to buy the copy, with the plan of reporting the bookseller to various authorities and using the book as direct evidence of his "crimes".

Many years later, I wrote a blog piece on the Semi-Slav and highlighted the key role Klaus Junge played in its development. A standard post on Twitter to draw attention to the blog brought an angry response within seconds: "Remove the post immediately!" Even for Twitter, the naming of a German soldier from the era of World War Two proved to be too 'X'-rated for comfort.

The subtitle for this intriguing new book is 'How the Game Was Played, Glorified, and Abused in Nazi Germany, 1933-1945'. The author does not resort to hyperbole or sensationalism, but instead keeps the chess narrative firmly within the context of the times. Indeed, he starts with an overview of chess in Europe up until the mid-19th Century and moves through Germany's ascendancy from 1851 – with the successes of Adolf Anderssen – into the years of social upheaval following the Great War.

Of course, the world started to change in unprecedented fashion after the rise of the Nazis in the run-up to the World War Two. As much as we would all like to think chess is a world apart from anything else, our perfect place for escapism, the fact is that when everything has to change, the cosy world of chess has no right to retain the status quo.

Meanwhile, Alekhine, the ultimate opportunist, had already been gathering critics due to his strong terms for a rematch with Jose Raul Capablanca, the match the world wanted to see. Instead, 1934 brought the second title challenge of Efim Bogoljubow, played out in a series of German cities in an atmosphere which had become politically charged.

This sets the scene for much of what is to follow. Having the undivided services of the world champion at their disposal meant any



tournaments sponsored and organised in Nazi Germany were given a degree of authenticity.

Among the many fascinating parts of this book, there is a discussion on the role played by Paul Keres in the tournaments in question. His reputation somehow survived more or less unscathed, partly because a title match between himself and Alekhine was never arranged, even though it would have been easy enough to do so. In truth, the form of Keres was not particularly impressive during the war tournaments and it was clear to him that there would be a rejection of his further ambitions if he failed to win the match and would ultimately not be taken seriously as world champion in a match played under such circumstances.

Political machinations aside, we get to see lots of great games which are not usually celebrated. The aforementioned Klaus Junge, who died a very short time before the end of the war, was talked about as a potential title challenger and has several games in this book, mainly his close battles with Alekhine. The world champion himself dominates the book, of course. His chess may have become more variable in terms of strength, but his imagination was still in full flow.

### A.Alekhine-P.Keres Salzburg 1942

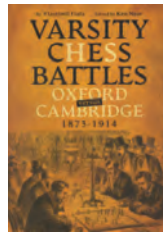


Keres, who already stands worse, now played **35...♖d4?** (35...♖b2 was the best chance, but White is still clearly better), and Alekhine replied with the stunning **36 ♜xe4!**, which is a winning shot. No move should save Keres, but after **36...f5?** Alekhine played some weaker follow-up moves, although he still went on to win (1-0, 57). However, a prime Alekhine would surely have found 37 ♜xf5!.

Stylistically, it is a real shame that McFarland are no longer publishing their books as hardbacks. A book of this size is harder to read in paperback format; the pages have to be stretched open unnaturally to find all of the text. However, there are plenty of rare photographs, numerous crosstables and certainly no shortage of fine games. Taylor Kingston has done an excellent job in collating such an impressive array of material and for not falling into the trap of presenting an opinionated work. We are fortunate indeed to

have such a book in our hands. Read it with the full historical context or simply enjoy playing through the 'new' old games.

Sean Marsh



### Varsity Chess Battles: Oxford vs Cambridge 1873-1914 Vlastimil Fiala, 557 pages

Moravia Chess

RRP £74.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £67.45**

When I saw that a printed book had been published on the Varsity Chess Match – the oldest regular fixture in the chess calendar – I was naturally intrigued. For the past couple of decades I have been collating games, results and reports from this venerable match for my BritBase website and I had no idea a printed work was in the offing, never having been consulted by the author for my input. I imagine readers might be wondering, too, given the hefty price tag. At BritBase you can download all the available games played in the match from 1873 to 2025, view the results, read contemporary newspaper and magazine reports, and consult a plethora of biographical details of Oxford and Cambridge players from 1873 to the 1950s, for the not unreasonable price of £0.00. So what are differences, you might ask?

Let's start with the gamescores: in terms of quantity, the total is about the same. I found around a dozen games in the book which had hitherto escaped my notice, while the book was short of a smaller number which I had added to my website in recent years. A small victory for the book, but a short-lived one as I promptly added the missing scores to the BritBase website, so it can now claim to have more games. That is an area where web publication wins hands down: the ability to fix reported errors and make additions in timely fashion. In minutes and hours in some cases, compared to the glacially slow production cycle of a printed work which will often be measured in months and years.

Now for annotations: games in the Fiala book features contemporary annotations of games as published in newspapers and magazines, while BritBase features the same to a lesser extent, though there are still plenty of them. Some of the annotations are rather more interesting than the games, in that they were written by major chess figures of the time. The presentation of games in the book can be a little eccentric at times. Game moves are in black, with annotations in red, which is a good idea generally except that occasionally the moves suggested by adjudicators appear in black as if they belong to the score.

Results of matches: here BritBase does a lot better. All of the match results are there

and, I like to think, accurate, thanks to positive interactions with eagle-eyed readers and contributors. The same cannot be said for the results listed in the book, which is not without serious typos. An example is the 1888 match which Oxford won 7½-2½; the results table shows the overall score correctly, but contains four individual results which never happened. Of course, BritBase has had (and no doubt still has) a few such gremlins, but with the advantage that its readers can question them and, if they are wrong, get them fixed.

It is clear that Fiala has gone the extra mile in hunting down newspaper reports, not simply relying on those which have found their way into online archives. These probably make up the bulk of the text in the book and are of historical interest. The book also features chapters on chess at the two universities prior to the start of the annual fixture, which is an area covered in considerably less detail on BritBase, though it too has some of the material leading up to the initiation of the Varsity match.

As regards biographical material on the match participants, the book falls a long way short of what can be found on BritBase. It is an area of research into which I have put considerable effort and produced much original work. The Fiala book simply indexes the players, the Varsity matches they took part in and perhaps a small image culled from the internet. The BritBase biographies go into vastly more detail where it is available, producing a rounded picture of many of the player's professional lives and chess careers.

I hope I'm not giving the impression that I consider web publication to be superior to book publication in general, as that is far from being true. Where an author is producing original work, a book remains the best way to deliver the work to the readership, but that is not really the case here. This book is essentially a collation of source material, as is much of the material on BritBase. When I started to delve into the history of the Varsity chess match, I spent some time thinking how best to publish it. I came down heavily on the side of the web. Its advantages are legion: infinite space and access; ease of publication, correction and amendment; minimal administrative hassle, etc.

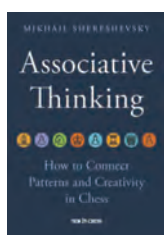
It might have been a different story had I imagined that the material had a monetary value. This particular subject matter has virtually none. Chess itself is a niche activity, so its authors cannot dream of riches from their *oeuvre*. Secondly, chess history is a niche within a niche, as most buyers of chess books focus more on improving their game, buying endless works on the opening and tactical puzzles. And, thirdly, the history of events such as the Varsity match constitutes a niche within a niche within a niche, as I imagine most buyers of chess history books will be more interested in works on Fischer, Morphy, Capablanca and co, which will contain masterpieces of the time (or even our own).

The quality of games played in these early Varsity chess games was much further down

the scale, probably averaging below an Elo of 2000, if not lower. The star player whose games feature in the book was H. E. Atkins who probably weighed in around the 2400 mark, but he was very much the exception. Incidentally, BritBase happens to feature the largest available collection of his games.

The ultra-niche nature of the book's contents probably accounts for the eye-watering price tag as it is intended primarily for the dedicated chess book collector or history buff and is unlikely to interest the general reader. On the plus side, you get 557 large pages on good quality paper, between hard covers. The author has unquestionably done a lot of research, but one cannot help wondering whether his energies might have been better spent working on some other area of chess history rather than choosing a subject which overlaps so closely with what already appears in prodigious detail online.

*John Saunders*



### Associative Thinking

Mikhail Shereshevsky, 304 pages, paperback  
RRP £26.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £24.25**

The leading Russian coach and author is renowned for the clarity of his training and advice, with this new work subtitled 'How to Connect Patterns and Creativity in Chess'. Shereshevsky begins by looking at 'Masonry' and the essence of associative thinking, before examining the relationship between knight and pawn. He has plenty of endgame and middlegame advice, be it in clearly better or worse positions, and throughout offers a number of handy pointers. Studying this work may even change how you think at the board.

Like *The Shereshevsky Method* and *Endgame Strategy*, *Associative Thinking* is published by New in Chess. All three of those Shereshevsky modern classics may be purchased together from Chess & Bridge for the special price of £74.55, or you may prefer just to receive *Associate Thinking* in hardback for £31.95 (Subscribers: £28.75).



### Becoming an IM

Cyrus Lakdawala, 368 pages, paperback  
RRP £19.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £17.99**

This new release from Popular Chess features some striking artwork on the cover, as well as a lot of very useful general advice from leading author Lakdawala. He reveals

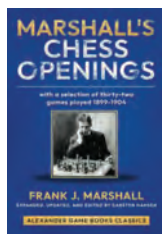
how he progressed as an adult from being a strong player to the IM ranks, covering not only the mental, physical and psychological improvements he found necessary, but also several of the pitfalls which befell him along the way. Even those only interested in improving their play a little will find much of interest here, including on must-win games, choosing your openings and in the fascinating chapter 'Reversing the Polarity of Our Negative Traits'.

Note that *Becoming an IM* is also available in hardback format, for £24.99 or £22.49 for Subscribers.

### Fritz 20

ChessBase, PC/MAC booklet or download  
RRP £59.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £53.95**

The latest version of *Fritz* features several new features, not least the program's ability to play in the style of several famous players. It can also analyse the style of a future opponent and then replicate that in test games. There's now AI chat and voice output, as well as several upgraded traditional features. See too the advert on page 59.



### Marshall's Chess Openings

Frank Marshall, 237 pages, paperback  
RRP £16.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £15.29**

Subtitled 'A selection of 32 games played 1899-1904', this is a modern, algebraic edition of Frank Marshall's original work from 1904, updated and expanded by Carsten Hansen. Frank Marshall only turned 27 in 1904, but had already produced many attacking gems and worked hard on his openings. If you want to see how theory looked back then and which of Marshall's assessments have stood the test of time, look no further.



### Marvelous Modern Miniatures:

**2020 Chess Games in 20 Moves or Less**  
Carsten Hansen, 520 pages, paperback  
RRP £27.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £25.19**

This is a new edition of another Hansen-produced book, one which first appeared in 2020 and where he is the author. It features over 2,000 miniatures from the past fifty years, each at least lightly annotated and with a clear emphasis on tactics. Indeed, a thorough study of this book will undoubtedly improve the reader's tactical ability, as well as knowledge of opening traps.

Hansen has also authored and produced

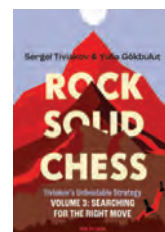
*Miniatures in the King's Indian: Fianchetto Systems*, which has been "written to entertain and inspire". Readers will learn a fair bit of theory and even some new ideas in the opening, as well as enjoy many sparkling attacking gems. This paperback volume runs to 316 pages, while retailing at £18.99 or £17.09 for Subscribers.

Hansen has also republished *The Chameleon Sicilian* (RRP £16.99; Subscribers £15.29), which first appeared in 2017. It advocates meeting 1 e4 c5 with 2 ♖c3 then 3 ♗ge2 and at just 160 pages quickly gives White a repertoire against the Sicilian.

### Reinventing the Ragozin

Surya Ganguly, PC/MAC booklet or download; running time: 4 hours, 46 minutes  
RRP £34.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £31.55**

The strong Indian Grandmaster and former Anand second returns to the ChessBase studio to map out a repertoire for Black with a system that remains quite trendy, 1 d4 ♗f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♗f3 d5 4 ♗c3 ♗b4. For each of White's main approaches, Ganguly covers the theory in decent depth before presenting a few test and practice positions. Along the way he includes some new ideas for Black while doing his best to emphasise the key features in each standard position type.



### Rock Solid Chess Volume 3: Searching for the Right Move

Sergei Tiviakov & Yulia Gökbulut,  
232 pages paperback  
£25.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £23.35**

Tiviakov's series continues to grow and collect plaudits, with apparently even Magnus Carlsen a fan. Volume one saw him examine pawn structures, volume two covered piece play and now the Dutch Grandmaster looks at another important topic: how should we choose which move to play? Over 11 chapters Tiviakov looks at how he selects which move to make in a variety of different positions, drawing largely on his own games, as well as a few classics.

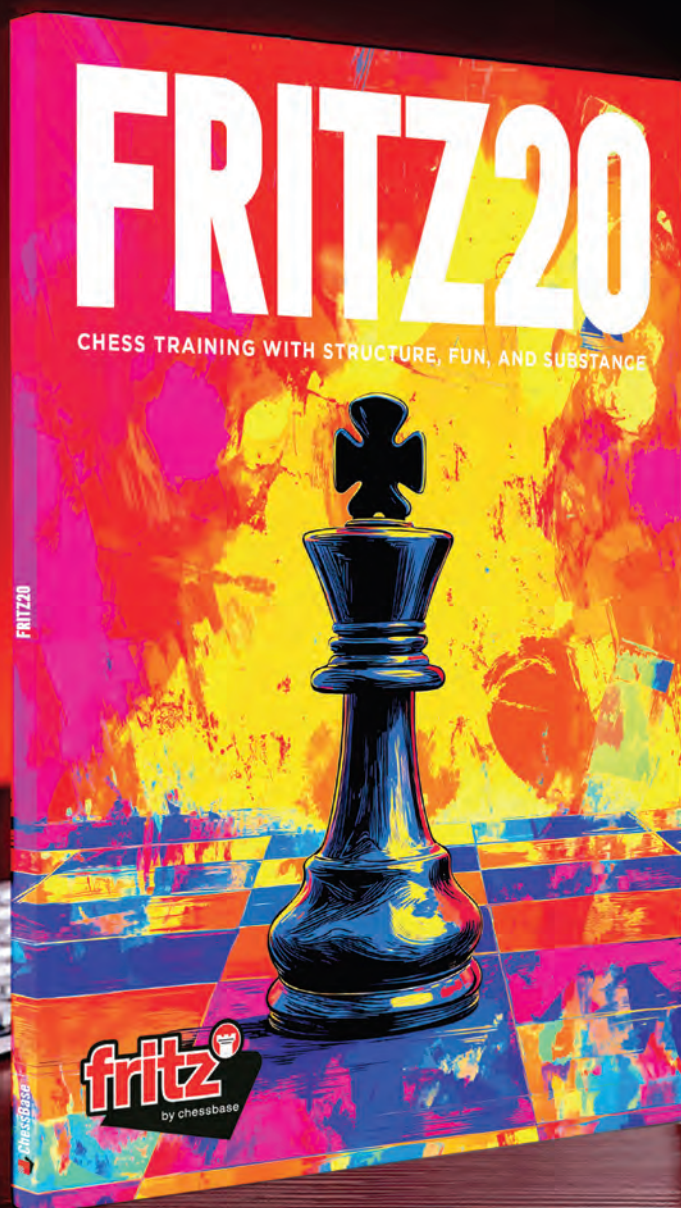
### Ruy Lopez for Tournament Players

Jana Schneider, PC/MAC booklet or download; running time: 8 hours, 56 minutes  
RRP £41.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £37.75**

This detailed production from ChessBase and German WGM Jana Schneider maps out a repertoire for White with the venerable Ruy Lopez. While plenty of theory is unsurprisingly covered, so are many key general ideas, as well as several classic illustrative games. Interestingly both 8 a4 and 8 h3 are recommended against a Marshall move order, while Schneider also looks at a few options against the Berlin, including an early exchange sacrifice.



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