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Chess

Hey Mickey... You've Got Nine!

Michael Adams wins his ninth British Chess Championship ahead of a star-studded field

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Awesome Adams - Mickey won the English Championship as a warm-up for Liverpool



'Lucky Liverpool' - Stuart Conquest greatly enjoyed his return to St George's Hall



The Mirror Men - John Henderson charts the beginning of the Gothenburg variation

Chess

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'Lucky' Liverpool

Stuart Conquest enjoyed his return not just to Liverpool, but especially St George's Hall

It's curious how some locations seem to be 'lucky', inspiring us to performances which may rank if not among the best in our career, then certainly significantly better than those we might have expected. For me it seems that Liverpool, and specifically the magnificent St George's Hall, possesses this kind of allure. Does it have something to do with the city being the home of The Beatles?

Seventeen years ago I flew from Madrid to John Lennon Airport and spent a few days touring the city prior to the British, with a special emphasis on Beatles-related sites. Everything that could go my way did – and I ended up winning the tournament. Let me quickly add that I have also played on two other occasions in Liverpool, both times in the EU Individual Championship (2006 and 2008), with only modest success. The venue both times was the World Museum, just opposite St George's Hall.

Going into this year's last round there were six players tied for the lead on 6/8. When I played Simon Williams in the last round of the 2008 British – in those days there were eleven rounds – the schedule on the last day did not change, final games remained afternoon ones, and the championship play-off (I tied with Keith Arkell on 8/11) was held on the following morning, a Saturday. Now we were playing the last and ninth round at 10am, with any play-off scheduled for the same afternoon.

N.Vitiugov-S.Conquest British Championship, Liverpool 2025 *Nimzowitsch Defence*

1 e4 ♖c6!?

This was the first time I had faced Nikita. We got to know each other at the Gibraltar Masters, which he won in 2013.

2 d4

I had already tried Nimzowitsch's "other defence" in an earlier round against Harriet Hunt, and we transposed to a Spanish after 2 ♜f3 e5.

2...e5

In the spirit of Tony Miles.

3 d5 ♜ce7

It's a curious fact that I reached this position as White in the first round of the 2008 European Union Championship held, as I wrote above, in Liverpool. I chose 4 ♜e2! (a kind of mirror-move to Black's last) and after 4...♜f6 5 ♜bc3 ♜g6 6 f3 ♜c5 7 ♜a4

♜e7? 8 ♜g3 my opponent, Mike Yeo, already had a difficult position.

4 h4!?



Nikita thought some time before playing this.

4...♜f6

And I also reflected on this, which for now obstructs ...f5, but Black may find other ways to generate play.

4...f5 5 ♜g5!? d6 6 ♜c3 h6 (6...c6 7 dxc6 bxc6 8 ♜c4 fxe4? 9 ♜xg8! ♜xg8 10 ♜xe4 ♜a5+ 11 c3 d5 12 ♜h5+ ♜d7 13 ♜f7 was also a disaster for Black in Ubilava-Barle, Sukhumi 1970) 7 ♜b5+ ♜f7 8 ♜xe7 ♜xe7 9 exf5 ♜xf5 10 ♜f3 ♜f6 11 0-0-0 definitely wasn't a Black success story in Barle-Miles, Biel 1994: White won in only 24 moves, and Tony might have resigned much sooner. It's worth noting that these two game fragments feature the same Slovenian player on both sides of this line.

5 ♜c3 h6!?

I forget why, but this seemed to me a decent, flexible move. When people talk of being 'in form' it is partly to do with this I think, feeling your way into a position without justifying your choices by faultless (or so we like to imagine) calculation. Here I knew I had to wait for my chances.

6 h5

So, it's clear: the e7-knight won't be coming to g6 anytime soon. What to do with the dark-squared bishop?

6 g4!? was also an option for White. Then 6...♜g6? (6...d6 is correct) 7 h5 ♜f4 8 ♜xf4 exf4 9 e5 is terrible for Black.

6...d6 7 f4

You can worry about such moves or you can welcome them. Black will either be swept away or squeezed to death if he doesn't do something, so my next move wasn't difficult. In any case, I judged the opening a cautious success: Nikita is trying to punish Black's play,

but I felt my position an essentially sound one. Six of White's first seven moves have been pawn moves!

7...c6 8 ♜e3?!

A surprise.

8...♜g4 9 ♜d2 exf4 10 ♜xf4



10...g5!

After the game Nikita confessed to having overlooked this idea. Black's bishop finds its Dragon diagonal. Nikita later described White's position from this point as collapsing, and in a purely strategic sense he is right, but even if Black soon has a clear advantage, there is no knowing the future.

11 ♜g3

11 ♜e2! looks a better option, if not 11 hxg6 ♜xg6 and Black's knights are jumping.

11...♜b6 12 ♜d2 ♜g7

12...♜xb2? 13 ♜b1 ♜a3 felt all wrong – I didn't analyse further.

13 0-0-0 cxd5

I'm trying to get the f5-square for my knight.

14 ♜b5+ ♜d7 15 ♜xd7+ ♜xd7

Black connects his rooks. The king feels safe here as long as the d-file remains blocked.

16 ♜ge2! ♜ac8



16...♜hf8 is a move I nearly played, and it's

also good, anticipating an attack on f7 by ♖hf1 while preparing ...f5. But then I thought I was trying too hard: the natural 16...♖ac8 must be just as strong.

17 exd5

After 17 ♖hf1!? Black will do well to calculate 17...♗e3 18 ♖xf7 ♗c4! 19 ♖xe7+ ♗d8! (the key, without which this line fails; not 19...♗xe7? 20 ♗xd5+) 20 b3 ♗xd2 21 ♖xg7 (21 ♗xd5? ♗xb3+! makes use of the rook on c8, and if 22 axb3 ♖xb3) 21...♗xe4 22 ♗xe4 ♖e3+! and Black should be doing well – but this is hard to evaluate from afar.

Instead, after 17 ♖hf1, I saw the idea of 17...f5!? to block the f-file: 18 exf5 ♗e3 (18...♖hf8 is more solid) 19 f6 ♗xf1 (19...♗c4? fails to 20 ♗a4! when Black doesn't have 20...♗xb2+) 20 ♖xf1 ♖hf8 21 ♗f2 ♖xf6! 22 ♗xb6 ♖xf1+ 23 ♗d1 axb6 and Black is better, but a big struggle lies ahead. There is also nothing wrong with 17...♖hf8, with 18...♗e3 a clear threat and 18 ♖f3 f5 is again thematic.

17...f5

A strong positional move, setting the pawn majority on its way and driving White back without allowing counterplay on the f-file. I wasn't about to risk 17...♗f5 18 ♖hf1 when the rook lasers the f7-pawn, and if then 18...♗ge3? 19 ♖d3 when things have clearly gone wrong.

18 ♖d3

I expected this, which prevents an immediate ...♗f5 (after ...f4), and has other virtues, such as stopping ...♖c8-c4.

18...f4 19 ♗e1



19...♖e3+!

Just a good move. Black exchanges queens, but keeps all the advantages of the position.

Still, the natural 19...♖hf8 was also very good for Black. After 20 ♗d4 ♗xd4 (and not 20...♖xd4?? 21 ♖b5+) White does have the neat 21 ♖h3!?, rather than exchange queens, but here too Black's pieces enjoy fine play after 21...♗f5 (if 21...♗c7 White has an extra option: 22 ♖xd4!?) 22 ♖xg4 ♗c7.

20 ♗b1 ♖xd3 21 ♖xd3 ♗f5

A dream scenario for Black: his three minor pieces could hardly stand on better squares, so Nikita tries to disrupt the harmony of Black's position before things get worse.

22 g3 ♗e5 23 ♖d1 f3 24 ♗d4 ♗xd4

It would have been unforgivable to allow White to post his knight at e6.



Wins in rounds 7 and 8 catapulted Stuart Conquest into a six-way share of the lead entering the final round, where he would outplay Nikita Vitiugov before losing to Michael Adams in the playoff.

25 ♖xd4 ♖hf8 26 ♖f1 ♗c4 27 ♖d3

27 ♖e4? f2 wins on the spot.



27...♖ce8

With two major threats: 28...f2 and 28...♗e3.

An emotionless engine informs that 27...f2! 28 ♖xf2 (28 ♗xf2 ♗xc3 29 bxc3 ♖ce8 is also hopeless) 28...♖ce8! wins.

From this point until the time control the story of the game is one of tenacious defence from White while Black tries to wrap things up. I don't succeed in landing a knock-out blow – full credit is due to Nikita for hanging on.

28 ♗d1

After 28 ♗f2 ♖e2! 29 ♗c1 g4 White is surely not long for this world.

28...♖e2

Black's advantage ought to be crushing, but I was under some time pressure.

29 ♗c1 g4 30 b3 ♗e5 31 ♖d2 ♗f6!? 32 ♗c3 ♖g2 33 ♗e4!

This agile knight does its best to hold White's position together.

33...♗d8

The bishop re-routes.

34 ♗f2 ♖f5

From here the rook eyes h5 and d5.

35 ♖h1 ♗a5 36 c3

On 36 ♖dd1 I planned 36...♗b6 to loosen the blockade of the f-pawn. After 37 ♖d2 ♗xf2 38 ♖xf2 ♗f7! there is a threat of ...♗g5. One way or another Black should still be winning.



36...♗b6?

Pressed for time I missed the simple tactic 36...♗xc3! when 37 ♗xc3 ♖xf2 38 ♖xf2 ♗d3+ 39 ♗d2 ♗xf2 40 ♖f1 ♗h3 wins.

37 ♗c2

Stepping out of forks on d3, as well as checks on the back rank.

37...♗xf2 38 ♖xf2 b5

To rule out c3-c4. The d5-pawn is a target.

Here 38...♗f7? throws everything away after 39 ♖xg2 fxg2 40 ♖g1 when the game is equal – with White's king on c2 there is no check on f1.

39 ♗d2

39 ♖xg2? fxg2 40 ♖g1 ♗f3! 41 ♖xg2 ♗e1+ is of vital importance here.

39...♗f7

Now Black gets a pawn for his troubles.

40 ♖xg2

40 c4? ♗g5 wins a piece, as does 40...♖e5.

40...fxg2 41 ♖g1



The time control reached, and the dust partly settled, I saw that despite everything and that Nikita had weathered the worst of the storm, I must retain good winning chances.

41...xd5+

The important point about removing this pawn is that it allows Black to drive away the white knight with ...d5.

42 e3

42 e2 might have been a better try. If nothing else Black will move his king to e6 or e7 (to evade the fork at f6) followed by ...xh5.

42...e5 43 d3

43 f4 d5! 44 f6+? fails to 44...e6 45 xg4 e4+ 46 f3 g5+.

43...f5

Not 43...d5? 44 f6+ and g4 falls.

44 xg2 d5 45 c5+?!

The retreats to d2 or f2 were possible. Black would be a solid pawn up, but the win remains some distance off.

45...d6 46 d4??



But this is an oversight which costs the game. After 46 b7+ c6 47 a5+ White fights on.

46...d8!

Rather surprisingly, White is losing by force. The threat is 47...c6+ and there is no longer b7+.

47 d3

Or 47 b4 f3 and, as in the game, White can resign.

47...f3! 0-1

The only way to prevent mate next move is to play 48 c4, but that loses trivially to 48...e6+ and 49...c5 or 48...c6+ and 49...e5. Nikita therefore resigned.

Whether my play deserved it or not I can't say, but for this game I was judged joint winner – sharing the laurels with David Eggleston for his win over Gawain Jones in round two – of the Alexander Best Game prize.

2025 British Chess Championships

Most of the prizewinners from Liverpool (31st July to 10th August)

111th British Championship: 1-3 Michael Adams (Taunton; Champion after a playoff), Stuart Conquest (Hastings), Peter Roberson (St Albans) 7/9, 4-6 Jonah Willow (Nottingham), Gawain Maroroa Jones (Sheffield), Svyatoslav Bazakutsa (Liverpool; Under-21 and Under-18 Champion) 6½; Women's Champions, Lan Yao, Elmira Mirzoeva (both West London) 5½; Under-18 Girls' Champions, Bodhana Sivanandan (Harrow), Elis Dicen (Coventry) 5.

Major Open: 1 Tim Wall (Newcastle) 8/9, 2-3 Livio Cancedda-Dupuis (Caterham), Toby Quaite (Leeds) 7½.

Over-65 Championship: 1-2 Nigel Povah (Guildford), Andrew Lewis (Manningtree) 6/7, 3 Peter Varley (Newport) 5½; Women's Champion, Sheila Jackson (Liverpool) 4.

Over-50 Championship: 1-2 John Merriman (Petts Wood), Keith Arkell (Paignton) 6, 3 Phil Crocker (Chester) 5½; Women's Champions, Natasha Regan (Epsom), Rosemary Giulian (Cathcart) 3½.

Under-16 Championship: 1 Andrejs Gorskovs (Maidstone) 6½/7, 2 Rock Yu (Potters Bar) 5½, 3 Max Pert (Brentwood) 5; Girl's Champion, Mae Catabay (Colchester) 4½.

Under-14 Championship: 1 Adithya Vaidyanathan (Birmingham) 6½, 2-3 Arthur Kendall (Brighton), Pengxiao Zhu (Exeter) 5½; Girls' Champions, Yihua Ding (Barnes), Shristhti Sivan (Chelmsford), Rose Burgess (Bexhill), Yvon van Neerven (Leicester) 3.

Under-12 Championship: 1-2 Zack Norris (Gloucester), Advait Keerthi Kumar (Watford) 5½, 3-6 Tavish Railwani (Lenzie), Yashwardhan Shankar (Beckenham), Guranshvir Singh (Aylesbury), Sidhanth Pai (Worthing) 5; Girls' Champion, Yueci Li (Lewisham) 4½.

Under-10 Championship: 1 William Lin (Kingston) 6, 2 Lucas Zheng (Cardiff) 5½, 3-5 Adamjeet Singh (Leeds), Djan Sennaroglu (Wimbledon), Mary Cawdery (Wanstead; Girl's Champion) 5.

Under-8 Championship: 1 Vladyslav Shopynskyi (Ardrossan) 6, 2 Krish V (Gerrards Cross) 5½, 3-6 Kayal Vijay (Bishop's Stortford; Joint Girls' Champion) Kunyu Liu (Barnet), Amandeep Singh (Leeds), Scarlett Sanderson (Cheshire; Joint Girls' Champion) 5.

Weekend Atkins Open: 1 Thomas Villiers (Muswell Hill) 4½/5, 2-4 Arno Sterck (Pimlico), James Merriman (Petts Wood), Connor Clarke (Oxford University) 4.

Weekend Penrose Under-2000: 1 Denis Georgiou (Scunthorpe) 5, 2-4 Pranav Mathur (Birmingham), Carl Portman (Banbury), Max Fyson (Lancaster) 4.

Weekend Soanes Under-1750: 1-2 Beyazid Kocak (3Cs), Amanthika Anbalagan

(Grantham) 4½, 3-7 Ewan Herd (Hoylake), Bryony Eccleston (Bolton), James Peel (Rugby), Sarah Orsborne (Hastings), Rob Coles (Wiltshire) 4.

Weekend Yates Under-1500: 1-2 Stephen Deland (St Albans), Joshua Jackson (Camberley) 4½, 3-4 Pavan Gowda (Solihull), Glyn Hill (Shropshire) 4.

Weekday AM Open: 1 Matthew Dignam (Berkhamsted) 5½/6, 2-3 David Walker (Gateshead), Mikhail Sedykh (Lewisham) 5.

Weekday AM Under-1900: 1-3 Paul May (Boston Spa), Dale Westcott (Neath), Neil Coward (Blackpool) 5.

Weekday AM Under-1600: 1 Abbie Fisher (Cumbria) 6, 2-5 James Gomez (Brighton), Tsz Kin Cheung (London), Jonathan Miller (3Cs), William Taplin (Keynsham) 4½.

Weekday PM Under-2050: 1 Hooman Honarvarmahalati (Brighton) 5½/6, 2-4 Alexander Linton (Cambridge), Liam Rabbitte (Heywood), Sidhanth Pai (Worthing) 4½.

Weekday PM Under-1750: 1-5 Peter Mellor (Liverpool), Ryan McGrane (Gateshead), Daniel Broomfield (Preston), Steve Crow (Huddersfield), William Purle (Crowthorne) 5.

Weekday PM Under-1450: 1 Dhamindra Gunarathne (Nottingham) 5½, 2-4 Pavan Gowda (Solihull), Steve Carter (Haywards Heath), Raul Misquita Rodrigues (Crowborough) 5.

Rapidplay Open: 1 Enamul Hossain (London) 6/7, 2 Mohammad Ali (Sidcup) 5½, 3 Michael Green (Loughborough) 5.

Rapidplay Under-2000: 1-2 Alex Burke (Holmfirth), Tariq Khan (London) 6, 3-5 Leonardo Gupta (West London), Hassan Mugal (London), Joshua Pink (Stockport) 5½.

Rapidplay Under-1500: 1 Edis Glogic (Liverpool) 6, 2 Lalitranjan Vigneswaran (Ilford) 5½, 3-4 An Du Thinh (Liverpool), Matthew Walshaw (Sheffield) 5.

Tuesday Blitz Open: 1 Brandon Clarke (Ely) 8½/9, 2 Adam Sieczkowski (Witney) 8, 3-4 Livio Cancedda-Dupuis (Caterham), Theo Khoury (Maidenhead) 7.

Tuesday Blitz Under-1600: 1 Samidh Saxena (Liverpool) 8½, 2-3 Amandeep Singh (Leeds), Henri Blin (Fareham) 7.

Thursday Blitz Open: 1 Yichen Han (Oxford) 8½/9, 2 Brandon Clarke (Ely) 8, 3-4 Jamie Heritage (Hebden Bridge), Zack Norris (Gloucester) 7.

Thursday Blitz Under-1600: 1 Aviraj Bhaduri (Hendon) 7½, 2-4 Jason Ren (Colchester), Alexis Malibiran (Bristol), Krish Ghandi (Birmingham) 7.



60 Seconds with... Martyn Kravtsiv



Born: November 26th 1990, Lviv.

Place of residence: Lviv.

Occupation: Chess writer, player and trainer.

Enjoyable? I like to listen to music.

And home life? I'm not very outgoing and usually only communicate with the people closest to me.

But sometimes good to escape to: In the past, I used to play tournaments in different cities, but unfortunately in recent years I haven't been able to do that because of the war and martial law.

Sports played or followed: I like tennis and table tennis.

A favourite novel? I'm not sure... I really liked *Parallel Lives* by Plutarch some time ago.

Piece of music? I enjoy modern music of various styles – Linkin Park, Adele, Eminem, The Hardkiss, and many others.

Film or TV series? I find it a bit boring to watch long movies. I prefer entertaining, educational or documentary videos that are 15 to 30 minutes long.

What's the best thing about playing chess? It's a fight! Everything is in your hands – no

teammates or referees influencing the outcome.

And the worst? Preparation, especially at a high level. Most of the ideas you come up with will never actually appear on the board.

Your best move? The first thing that comes to mind is a nice manoeuvre from a game at the Grand Swiss.

M.Kravtsiv-A.Neiksans
FIDE Grand Swiss, Riga 2021
Nimzo-Indian Defence

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♙b4 4 g3 0-0
5 ♙g2 d5 6 ♘f3 dxc4 7 0-0 ♘c6 8 ♙a4
♘d5 9 ♙c2 ♙e7 10 ♙d1 ♙d7 11 e4 ♘cb4
12 ♙d2 ♘xc3 13 ♙xc3 ♙a4 14 b3 cxb3
15 axb3 ♙e8 16 ♙f4 c6 17 ♙h3 ♙h8



White can't play d4-d5 and it's unclear what the plan should be. After a long think, I found a strong manoeuvre:

18 ♙c1! f5 19 ♙b2!

The exchange 19 exf5?! would allow Black to place a knight on d5, preventing White from creating threats along the a1-h8 diagonal.

19...fxe4 20 d5

With a dangerous initiative. The problem for Black is that they can't play 20...♙f6?, because the rook on f8 would be hanging.

20...♙f6 21 dxc6 ♘d5 22 ♙e5 bxc6?!

After 22...♙xc6! 23 ♙xe6 exf3 24 ♙xd5 Black's position looks dangerous: for example, 24...♙xd5? (the correct move is 24...♙f8! as after 25 ♙xc6 ♙xc6 White doesn't have time to play 26 ♙d7? due to 26...♙f6 when Black is winning) 25 ♙xd5 ♙f8 26 ♙d7 and White's rook on d7 is simply too strong.

23 ♘g5?!

A natural attacking move, but we both missed a strong idea for Black.

23...♙g6

23...e3! gives Black dynamic counterplay based on forcing moves: 24 fxe3 ♙d6 25 ♙e4 ♙g6 26 ♙xf6 ♙xf6. Because the knight on g5 is hanging, White is forced to capture the pawn on e6, after which the game may end in perpetual check: for example, 27 ♙xe6 ♙xg5 28 ♙xd6 ♙xe3+ 29 ♙h1 ♙e4+ 30 ♙g2 ♙xg2+ 31 ♙xg2 ♙e2+ with a repetition.

24 ♙xe4 ♙xe4 25 ♙xe4 ♙f8 26 ♙xf6 ♙xf6



This is the position my opponent was aiming for when he played 23...♙g6. Black regains the exchange, but it doesn't solve all his problems due to the weakened c6-pawn and potentially vulnerable king. After **27 ♙xe6 ♙xa1 28 ♙xa1 ♙c5** (28...♙f6? loses to 29 ♙xa7!) **29 ♙f7 a5 30 ♙e1 ♙f8 31 ♙d7** White had a significant advantage, which I managed to convert, eventually with bishop and three connected passers against a rook.

But less memorable than your worst move? There was a funny moment when I could have obtained a winning position as early as move seven.

M.Kravtsiv-L.Aronian
World Blitz Championship,
Warsaw 2021
Four Knights Opening

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 a4 a6
5 d4 exd4 6 ♘xd4 ♘xe4?



This is a line without the inclusion of the moves a4 and ...a6. At first glance, this

inclusion seems to favor Black, since the a6-pawn controls the b5-square. However, after 7 ♖xe4! ♗e7 8 ♖a3! Black can't properly regain the piece and ends up losing: for example: 8...d5 9 ♘g5! f6 (9...♗b4+ 10 c3 wins) 10 ♘xf6! gxf6 11 ♗h5+ when White captures another pawn with check and should be able to convert the game into a win.

Instead, the game went 7 ♖xc6? ♖xc3 8 ♖xd8 ♖xd1 9 ♖xf7 ♖xf7 10 ♖xd1 with an equal endgame and ended in a draw.

And a highly memorable opponent? Ding Liren. I lost to him in rapid chess at the World Cup in 2017, but a couple of months ago I beat him in a rapid match in Freestyle Chess.

Favourite game of all time? Let's go with Carlsen-Tomashevsky, Wijk aan Zee 2016. But Magnus has many beautiful games – I wrote an entire book about them.

The best three chess books: Kasparov's *My Great Predecessors* series, Dvoretsky's *Endgame Manual*, and as a child, I really enjoyed the book *The Chess Heritage of Alekhine* by Kotov.

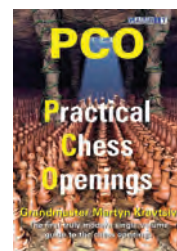
Is FIDE doing a good job? FIDE is trying to do something useful, but unfortunately strange mishaps often happen along the way.

Or your National Federation? Due to the war, my federation is unable to operate at full capacity.

Any advice for those new to the game? At the early stages, it's important to learn how to calculate variations. Technique and positional play can be developed later.

Can chess make one happy? Indeed! It's a blend of sport, science, and art.

A tip please for the club player: It's useful to play different lines and openings. Most opponents don't have broad knowledge, but they often prepare well before the game. It is quite simple if you are always repeating the same line.



Ed. – The 544-page PCO: Practical Chess Openings by Martyn Kravtsiv is already proving very popular at Chess & Bridge and is available for £27.50 or £24.75 for Subscribers.



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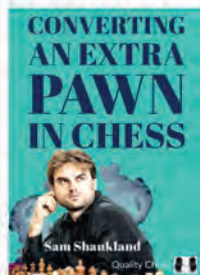
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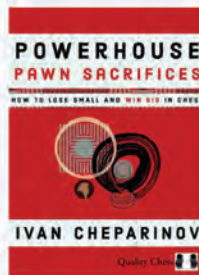
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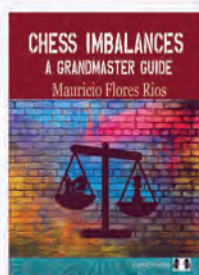
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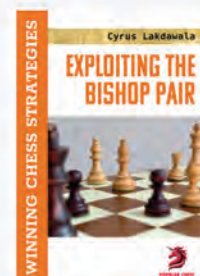
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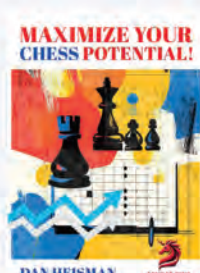
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Overseas News

ANDORRA – Aryan Tari prevailed at the Andorra Open (July 19-27), the Norwegian GM scoring 7/9 to finish half a point ahead of a 15-way tie for second, which included both WGM Lan Yao, who remained unbeaten while making her third IM norm, and IM Sohum Lohia, who made a small rating gain.

S.Lohia-A.Rodriguez Redondo

Andorra 2025

Ruy Lopez

1 e4 e5 2 ♟f3 ♞c6 3 ♟b5 ♜f6 4 0-0 ♜xe4 5 ♞e1 ♜d6 6 ♜xe5 ♜xe5 7 ♞xe5+ ♟e7 8 ♟f1 0-0 9 d4 ♟f6 10 ♟d3!?

A tricky sideline in place of the standard 10 ♞e1.

10...♟xe5 11 dxe5 ♜e8 12 ♜c3



12...♟e7?

Already a decisive mistake from the Spanish WFM, whereas after 12...d6! 13 ♟h5 g6 White has some play for the exchange, but probably not more than that: for example,



Quickly improving Sohum Lohia made the Berlin look anything but solid in Andorra.

14 ♟h6 ♟e7 15 exd6 ♜xd6 16 ♜d5 ♟e5 17 c4 was Yoo-Niemann, Julius Baer Cup (rapid) 2024, where 17...♜f5! 18 ♟f4! ♟xf4 19 ♟xf4 ♟e6 20 ♜f6+!? ♟g7 21 ♟e5 would most likely have led to a draw.

13 ♜d5! ♟xe5 14 ♟f4!

White's pieces flow to good squares, and with tempo.

14...♟xb2

Likewise, 14...♟e6 15 ♟f5! wins, and if 15...♟a6 16 ♟xh7+!

15 ♟xh7+! ♟h8

The only try in view of 15...♟xh7? 16 ♟h5+ ♟g8 17 ♜e7#.

16 ♟b1 ♟xb1

After 16...♟xa2 White can either go 17 ♟b3 or win the black queen with 17 ♟e4 g6 18 ♟d4+ f6 19 ♟a1.

17 ♟xb1 ♟xh7 18 ♟d1



Materially Black is doing OK, but the lack of development and exposed king are unsurprisingly going to cost her the game.

18...♟h8 19 ♟h5+ ♟g8 20 ♟e5 ♟h7

White would have won too after 20...♜f6 21 ♜xf6+ gxf6 22 ♟xf6 d6 23 ♟h6.

21 ♟e4+ g6 22 ♟e5

One of two crushing ways to force the win, the other being 22 ♟e7.

22...f6 23 ♜xf6+ ♜xf6 24 ♟xf6 ♟f8 25 ♟e7+ 1-0

BELGIUM – Swedish FM Deniz Arman won the 46th Ghent Open (July 19-23) on tiebreak after finishing in a five-way go for first on 7½/9. There was also the stronger TP Chess Masters, won by English GM and Thinkers Publishing writer Daniel Fernandez. He racked up a big 7½/9 in this GM norm all-play-all, finishing two points ahead of teenage Belgian FM Elias Ruzhansky, who used to play for Coulsdon while living in south London, as well as Danny Gormally and FM Sterre Dauw.

CHINA – The Chinese Rapid and Blitz Championships took place in Shaoxing (July



Daniel Fernandez was in fine form in Ghent, finishing two points clear in the TP Masters.

13-15), featuring a knockout format, with each match comprising two rapid games followed by two blitz ones, then armageddon if required. The semi-finals saw such a tiebreak game required as Yu Yangyi defeated Ding Liren 3-2, while Wang Hao overcame 21-year-old Huang Renjie 2½-1½, before losing by that same score to Yu come the final.

FRANCE – Former Russian GM Gleb Dudin now represents Hungary and won the Paris Championship (July 12-18) with 7½/9, finishing a point ahead of the young French IM Timothe Razafindratsima. Another teenager impressed in sharing third with GM Andrei Shchekachev, namely newly minted English IM Sohum Lohia who clocked up a 2529 performance.

Down in Marseilles, there was a 'Clash of Generations' match between eight-time Russian Champion, 49-year-old Peter Svidler and 14-year-old Turkish sensation Yagiz Erdogmus (July 24-29). Victory went to the younger player, Erdogmus running out a convincing 4-2 winner as his rating rose to 2642.

There was also the Trophee Dole in Aix-en-Provence (July 19-27), where Panneerselvam Iniyan overcame Jan Malek in a playoff after they had both finished on 7½/9 in this strong Open. No less notably, 10-year-old Bodhana Sivanandan would defeat Bulgarian IM Nikola Kanov and draw with Uzbek GM Ortik Nigmatov en route to a most impressive 4½/9 and 2401 performance, which meant she became the youngest-ever player to score a WGM norm!

GEORGIA – 19-year-old Indian IM Divya Deshmukh produced another impressive display as she won the FIDE Women's World Cup in Batumi (July 6-28). A team and individual gold medalist at last year's Women's Olympiad, Divya only lost one game and faced a strong field en route to success in Georgia, which netted her \$50,000, the GM title and qualified her for the 2026 Women's Candidates Tournament. Defeated finalist Humpy Koneru and third place Tan Zhongyi also qualified for the Candidates, which is scheduled for April next year.

Seeded 15th, Divya defeated teenage Georgian FM Kesaria Mgeladze, European Women's Champion Teodora Injac and then, after a rapid play-off, second seed Zhu Jiner to reach the quarter-finals. There she again relied on her skill at rapid chess to dispatch Indian team-mate Harika Dronavalli ahead of grinding down this year's beaten women's world championship finalist, Tan Zhongyi, to set up a final with another somewhat more experienced compatriot, Humpy Koneru. After two lively draws in the classical games, Koneru held tight for 81 moves in the first 15+10 rapid encounter before possibly cracking under the pressure of the occasion in the second.

H.Koneru-D.Divya

4th matchgame (rapid), Batumi 2025



40 e4?

A strange and overly ambitious winning try.

40...dxe4 41 d5?

Possibly overlooking Black's next. 41 ♖c3! ♕h7 42 d5 would have minimised the damage.

41...♖e5 42 ♖d1 cxd5?

The pressure and lack of time continue to tell. Instead, 42...♖d8 pins and 43 ♖c4 ♖b6 44 ♖xe4 ♖xe4+ 45 ♖xe4 ♖xd5 would be an extra two pawns for Black.

43 ♖xd5 ♖e8

43...♖b2!? 44 ♖xe4 a4 was likely a better winning try, confident though the engines might be that they, if not a human, can easily draw this.

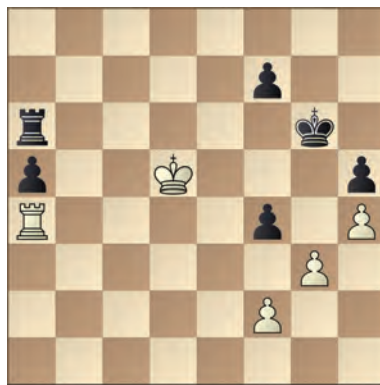
44 ♖d4+

This is fine, but there was also 44 ♖xa5! ♖xa5 45 ♖c3+ ♕h7 46 ♖xa5.

44...♕g8 45 ♖e5 ♖c6 46 ♖xe4 ♖xe4+ 47 ♖exe4 ♖f6 48 ♖e5 ♖f5!

A good try. The single-rook endgame is still drawn, but Black will be able to pose a few practical problems.

49 ♖xf5 gxf5 50 ♕f3 ♕g7 51 ♕f4 ♕g6 52 ♕e5 ♖a6 53 ♕d5 f4!?



54 ♖xf4??

Potentially a World Cup losing slip. Instead, 54 gxf4 was possible and a likely draw after 54...♕f5 55 f3!. There was also 54 ♕e4! fxg3 55 fxg3 ♕f6 56 ♕f4, and if 56...♖a7 57 g4, with sufficient counterplay and a clear draw.

54...a4! 55 ♖b4 a3 56 ♖b1 ♕f5 57 f3 a2 58 ♖a1 ♖a3 59 ♕d4 f6! 60 ♕d5 ♖a4

Continuing to restrict the white king, but cashing in with 60...♖xf3 61 ♖xa2 ♕g4 was also winning.

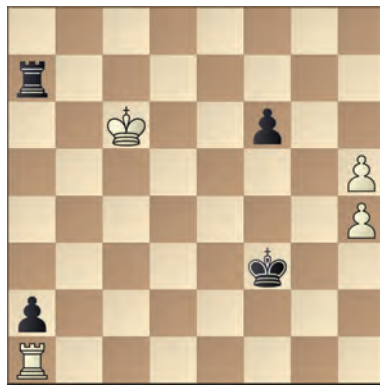
61 ♕d6 ♖a5! 62 ♕e7 ♖a6 63 ♕d7 ♕e5 64 g4!?

It's White's turn to make a good practical decision, although it should be pointed out that now the calm 64...♕f4! 65 gxh5 f5! 66 h6 ♖xh6 67 ♖xa2 ♕xf3 does win for Black, with the white king cut off.

64...♖a7+ 65 ♕c6 ♕f4?

This could have prolonged the match, whereas 65...f5! 66 gxh5 ♕f6! was still winning, as the black king would eventually consume all the white pawns after 67 ♕d5 ♖a4 68 ♕c5 ♕g7.

66 gxh5 ♕xf3



67 h6?

Involving her most important piece with 67 ♕d5! would yet have saved the day for Koneru, and if 67...♕g4 68 h6 f5 69 ♕e5! f4 70 ♖g1+.

67...f5?

It was high time to shoulder the white king away with 67...♕e4! when 68 ♕d6 f5 69 h7 ♖xh7 70 ♖xa2 f4 again leaves Black winning fairly straightforwardly.

68 ♕d5 f4 69 h7?

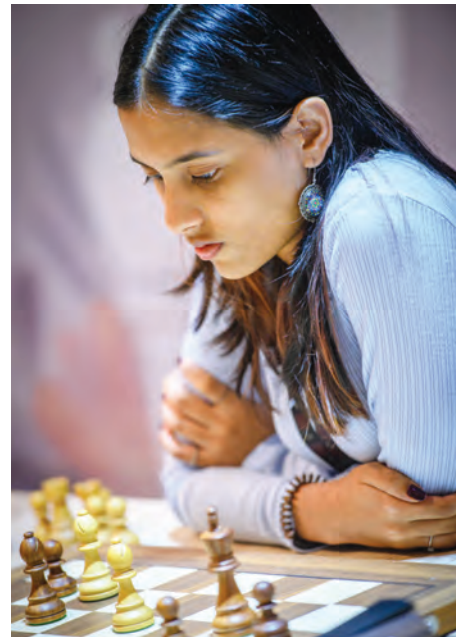
Missing the last chance which lay in – yes, you guessed it – 69 ♕e5! ♕g3 70 ♕f6 f3 71 ♕g6 f2 72 h7 when Black would have had to acquiesce to a draw.

69...♖xh7 70 ♖xa2 ♕g3 71 ♖a8 ♖xh4

72 ♖g8+

Even after 72 ♕e4!? ♖g4 73 ♖a3+ (or 73 ♖f8 ♖g7 and ...♖e7+) 73...f3+ 74 ♕f5 ♖g8! Black's superior king position would have made all the difference.

72...♖g4 73 ♖f8 f3 74 ♕e5 f2 75 ♖f7 ♕g2 0-1



Divya Deshmukh bagged quite the collection of prizes after winning the Women's World Cup, including immediately becoming a GM!

GERMANY – There was neither Vladimir Kramnik nor an elite section at the 52nd Dortmund Sparkassen Chess Meeting (August 2-10), although there was a strong Open in which German no.2 Matthias Blübaum just got the better on tiebreak of Surya Ganguly (IND), Dau Khuong Duy (VIE), Dmitrij Kollars (GER), Liu Yan (CHN) and Jan Malek (POL), after they had all finished on 7/9. There was also a fairly strong women's double-round all-play-all, won by 15-year-old Chinese IM Lu Miaoyi with 4½/6, with Elisabeth Pähtz second on 50%, ahead of Dinara Wagner and Deimante Daulyte-Cornette.

GREECE – The Atlantica Belvedere Resort on Kos again played host to the ACO World Amateur Chess Championship (May 6-15), which attracted a few UK players, including Aberdeen University's Andrew Todd who won Group E (1501-1650) with 7/9, while David Gilbert (DHSS) would finish fourth in Group F.

IRELAND – The 104th Irish Championship took place in Ennis and was a 37-player Swiss (August 2-10). With a few top players missing (both Kanyamaralas elected to play instead at the British), FM Kavin Venkatesan, FM Conor O'Donnell, IM Oleg Gubanov and Patryk Brozynski tied for first on 6½/9, with 16-year-old Venkatesan winning the resulting playoff.

POLAND – The 24th Warsaw Najdorf Chess Festival (July 7-16) saw Chinese IM Xinyang Nie win the main Open with 7½/9, which left him half a point ahead of the vastly

experienced Indian GM Deep Sengupta. Daniel Fernandez was a further half-point back in a share of third to eighth, as was the former Cheddleton player and Moldovan GM Vladimir Hamitevici.

RUSSIA – One associates the Karpov Tournament with Poikovsky, but this year's 22nd event moved approximately 100 miles west to Khanty-Mansiysk (July 14-26). Iranian no.2 Amin Tabatabaei won this category 16 and draw-laden event with an unbeaten 6/9, Haik Martirosyan (ARM), Raunak Sadhwani (IND), Vladimir Malakhov, Arseniy Nesterov (both RUS), Sanan Sjugirov (HUN) and Francisco Vallejo Pons (ESP) all finishing on 50%, while back on '-1' were Vladislav Artemiev (RUS), Shant Sargsyan (ARM) and Shamsiddin Vokhidov (UZB).

SAUDI ARABIA – Chess made its first appearance at the Esports World Cup in Riyadh (July 29 - August 1). In what was a decent pay day for the top players, the chess component of the event was a double elimination tournament, played with a quick 10+0 time control and with the players using computers in the same room. Magnus Carlsen overcame Nihal Sarin 2½-½ in the quarter-finals before eventually prevailing 4-3 in an epic semi-final against Hikaru Nakamura, winning an Armageddon encounter following an exchange-losing slip by crowd favourite Nakamura. The other semi saw Alireza Firouzja crush Arjun Erigaisi 4-1, but the French no.1 would have no answer to Carlsen, losing both the final and the subsequent Grand Final 3-1 as the Norwegian took home \$250,000 with team bonuses to follow.

SPAIN – Spain's Salvador del Rio de Angelis edged out fellow GM Sipke Ernst on tiebreak after they had both finished on 7½/9 at the Oviedo Open (July 21-27), where FM Jonathan Pein had an excellent result, defeating Spanish IM Javier Aguera Naredo in the final round to tie for third and obtain his first IM norm. Jonathan then popped up to the coast for the Marco Marino Memorial in Gijon (July 28 - August 3), equally impressively making a second IM norm while prevailing over fellow FM Gabriel Quispe Arteaga on tiebreak after they had both finished on 7/9.

There was also the Pontevedra Open (July 24-30), won with 7½/9 by Cuban GM Carlos Albornoz Cabrera, with Scottish talent Rishi Vijayakumar back on '+3', a point ahead of English IM Aaravamudhan Balaji.

SWITZERLAND – The famous Biel Chess Festival (July 12-25) was again headlined by the Biel Masters Triathlon. The initial Chess960 stage doesn't count towards the final scores, but does act as a tiebreaker if required, and so it proved as late replacement Vladimir Fedoseev took first prize from Aravindh Chithambaram thanks to a better Chess960 performance after they had both finished on 28½/52. After the Chess960 there was a day of rapid chess, in which both

Fedoseev and Aravindh scored 3½/5, which equated to 7/10 for the overall standings. Five classical games followed, in which Saleh Salem impressed, scoring 4/5 while Aravindh, Fedoseev and Volodar Murzin finished on 50%, with wins worth four points overall and draws one and a half.

If you're still following, a single-point and double-round blitz tournament followed, won by Fedoseev with 7½/10, by a point and half from Salem and Aravindh. And now for the confusing part: there was then a final classical event, but one only featuring the top four scorers at that point, meaning Radoslaw Wotjaszek and Frederik Svane were eliminated. This time a likely tired Saleh would manage just one draw, Fedoseev 50% and Aravindh and Murzin '+1'. However, that neglects to mention that Fedoseev collapsed from a strong position to lose to Murzin in the second round, before winning on demand against Salem, while Aravindh drew with Murzin.

F.Svane-V.Fedoseev Biel (rapid) 2025



19...dxe3!

White may have overlooked this blow or at least he now failed to find 20 ♖xh7+! ♕xh7 21 ♖h5+ ♕g8 22 ♖xc8 ♖xc8 23 fxe3 ♖xe3+ 24 ♕h1 when there should be enough counterplay to maintain the rough balance, including after 24...♗f2!? 25 ♖d1!.

20 ♖h5? f5! 21 ♖xc8 ♖xc8 22 ♖b1?

Now White's queen will be fatally sidelined, although even after 22 ♖a6! ♖d8! 23 ♖c7 ♖xc7 24 fxe3 g6 25 ♖e2 ♖c5 Black would have been in full control.

22...d4! 23 ♖g3 g6 24 ♖h3 ♖d4 25 ♖f1 ♖c2

A quick glance at the respective difference in terms of activity should reveal that White is a goner.

26 ♕h1 ♖xf2! 27 ♖e1 ♖d2 28 ♖b1 h5 29 ♖h4 ♖f4 30 ♖b3 ♖xh4 31 ♖xe6+ ♕g7 32 ♖c4 ♖d4 33 ♖f7+ ♕h6 34 ♖f8+ ♖g7 35 ♖xg7+ ♕xg7 36 g3 ♖xc4 0-1

There was also a Challengers event with the same format, won by rising Greek star Nikolas Theodorou with a big 33½ score, which left him some five points ahead of Armenian GM Aram Hakobyan. Held alongside too was the 58th Biel Master Open, won with 8/10 by 26-year-old Indian Karthikeyan

Murali and where FM Peter Sowray would finish on 50%.

Slightly strangely, at the same time as Biel the Swiss Championship was taking place in Disentis (July 12-20). Sebastian Bogner prevailed with '+5' to win his third Swiss title, with seven-time champion, veteran GM Joe Gallagher, who is still playing the Najdorf and King's Indian, back on 3½/9.



Vladimir Fedoseev was a late replacement for Le Quang Liem and has now also won Biel.

USA – As we prepared to go to press, the Sinquefeld Cup was about to start in Saint Louis. The Missouri city also hosted the US Junior, Girls' and Senior Championships a month earlier (July 15-25), where 15-year-old GM Andy Woodward won the Junior Championship with an undefeated 6½/9, which left him half a point ahead of the world's youngest-ever GM, Abhimanyu Mishra and Mishra's fellow 16-year-old GM Brewington Hardaway.

17-year-old WGM Zoey Tang became US Girls' Champion with 7/9, finishing a half-point in front of 12-year-old FM Megan Paragua, who is the niece of Filipino GM Mark Paragua, the recent winner of the IM D section at the Marshall Summer Invitational (July 8-13). Finally, in the US Senior Championship, Alex Fishbein, Vladimir Akopian and Alex Shabalov would land up on 5½/9, 57-year-old Fishbein winning the subsequent rapid playoff.

Middleton, Wisconsin played host to the 125th US Open (July 28 - August 3) won by Darius Swiercz with 8/9. Daniel Naroditsky was one of 10 players in the chasing pack half a point behind in this 514-strong field.

There was also the small matter of the Freestyle Grand Slam Las Vegas (July 16-20), which saw a classical time control abandoned in favour of an initial 10+10 rapid, then a more measured 30+30 for the knockout stages.

Initially there were two eight-player all-play-alls, one won by Hikaru Nakamura with 6/7 followed home by Hans Niemann on 4½ points, with Fabiano Caruana and Arjun Erigaisi also qualifying for the top part of the knockout section. The other was much tighter, Javokhir Sindarov, Rameshbabu Pragganandhaa and Nodirbek Abdusattorov finishing on 4½/7, half a point in front of Levon Aronian and Magnus Carlsen. The pre-

tournament favourite and tour leader lost to Praggnanandhaa and So, and then 2-0 to Aronian in a tiebreak mini-match, meaning he was out of the running for first place.

M. Carlsen-W. So

Las Vegas (freestyle, rapid) 2025



42 ♙xe5+?

Backwards moves are never easy to spot and here 42 ♙xe5+! ♖h6 43 ♙h2! was the resourceful way to win.

42...♙h6 43 ♙xf7??

It was high time to run away with 43 ♖d2 ♗xe5 44 ♙xe5 when Black has a few options, but after, for example, 44...♙g5+ 45 ♖c2 ♙c1+ 46 ♖b3 ♙b1+ 47 ♙b2 ♙xd3+ 48 ♖a2 the game would most likely have ended in a draw.

43...♙e1+! 44 ♖f3 ♙f2+ 0-1

It's mate in two in view of 45 ♖g4 ♙g2+ 46 ♖xh4 g5#.

Carlsen recovered by defeating Vidit Gujrathi, Sindarov, Praggnanandhaa and Erigaisi to take on Nakamura in a battle for third place, which he claimed thanks to a smooth win as Black and so still took home \$100,000. Meanwhile Aronian had gone on to stun Nakamura, then defeat Erigaisi and would overcome Niemann 1½-½ in the final to claim the \$200,000 first prize.

L. Aronian-H. Niemann

Las Vegas (freestyle, rapid) 2025



1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4 3 ♙xc4 f6 4 ♙c3 c6 5 ♗d3 ♗e6

Black struggles to untangle after this, with



The Freestyle Grand Slam events are always most slick and professional, but has main proponent Magnus Carlsen failed to convince the world that Freestyle should replace classical chess?

the engines preferring 5...♗c7 when one of their main lines runs 6 f3 a5 7 ♗f2 a4 8 ♗g3 h5 and it's chess, Jim, but not as we know it.

6 f3 ♗d6?!

White cuts out ...♗b5 after this, leaving both black knights stranded and 6...♗f4 7 ♗xf4 ♗xf4 8 e3 ♗d6 followed by ...c5 (Pein) was surely a better try.

7 a4! ♗f7 8 ♗f2 0-0 9 ♗d2 ♗d8 10 0-0 h5 11 e4

Aronian has reached a pleasant Queen's Gambit type set-up, while Niemann's queenside pieces present a sorry sight.

11...a6?! 12 ♗e1 ♖a7 13 ♗b3

13 ♗c5!? would also have kept Black gummed up.

13...b5



14 e5!?

Seizing the initiative, although objectively 14 ♗b4! was the way to go, since 14...♗c4 15 axb5 axb5? fails to 16 ♗xa7! ♗xa7 17 d5.

14...bxa4 15 exd6 axb3 16 dxe7 ♗e8?

16...♗d7! would only have left Black slightly worse after 17 ♗c5, whereas here 17 ♗b4?! would run into 17...♗xd4.

17 ♗b4 ♗xe7

Likewise, 17...♗xd4!? 18 ♗xd4 c5 19 ♙d3

would have left Black in big trouble after 19...f5 20 ♙xf5 ♙xf5 21 ♗xf5 cxd4 22 ♗d3.

18 ♗xc6 ♗c7 19 d5 ♗f4 20 ♗e7+

One of a few strong continuations, another being 20 ♗xa7!? ♗xc3 21 ♗xc8 ♗xc8 22 d6 followed by ♗e4.

20...♗xe7 21 ♗xe7 ♙xc3 22 bxc3 ♗xf2+ 23 ♗xf2 ♗xd5 24 ♗e4!

A key follow-up Aronian must have spotted before checking on e7 and now 24...♗b8 25 ♗xf7! ♗xc3 26 ♗a7 b2 27 ♗b1! should be winning.

24...f5! 25 ♗xf7! fxe4 26 ♗b7 e3+



27 ♗e1!

Niemann has done well to force White to be precise, but Aronian is up to the challenge. Instead, 27 ♗e2? ♗e8 28 ♗xb3 ♗f4+ 29 ♗e1 e2 and 27 ♗f1? ♗e8 28 ♗xb3 e2+ 29 ♗f2 ♗f4 30 c4 ♗xg2 would have seen Black escaping with a draw.

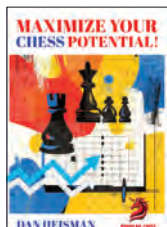
27...♗f4!

27...♗e8 28 ♗xb3 ♗f4 29 g3 would now be an easy win.

28 g3! ♗d3+ 29 ♗e2 b2 30 ♗b1 ♗d8 31 ♗xe3 ♗e5 32 ♗b4!

Aronian continues to restrict the black pieces and display fine technique.

This Month's New Releases



Maximize Your Chess Potential!

Dan Heisman

Popular Chess, 304 pages

RRP £19.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £17.99**

We often feel inundated by books purporting to be able to boost one's chess strength, especially as they often involve a large amount of work, which few amateur players ever have the spare time to put to such use. This book takes a different approach: "Dan Heisman has been teaching chess for over 50 years and has been doing so full-time since 1996. He therefore knows very well what kind of advice actually helps players improve. This book is a distillation of that advice."

Rather than fall into the common pattern of offering page after page of tough, semi-digestible material, this "is based around his X (Twitter) column 'Chess tip of the day' which has been running since 2009 and features over 4,000 tips. The most useful advice has been distilled into 164 tips that contain additional helpful material, including illustrative stories and many diagrams with instructive play."

Therefore, the majority of the 164 tips presented here cover no more than a double-page spread, which is much better for the digestion and makes this an excellent book to pick up whenever one has short periods of time available for chess study.

The material is split into seven chapters, with categories from General Improvement to Endgames. First, the basic tip is given and then a prose explanation of what it is all about and why it matters. Sometimes – but by no means always – a chess diagram or two is included to further emphasise the point of the tip.

This all makes the book sound very simplistic, but it is precisely the impressive level of accessibility, and that does not fall into the 'dumbed down' trap, which is the book's strength. Dan Heisman is a very well respected author and teacher, and he knows how to present his teaching points without the addition of any spam. This really is all killer, no filler.

Here is a sample tip, from the chapter on psychology.

Tip 86

"When you are winning, do not worry about the little things."



"In the position above Black is ahead a piece, so forcing the queen trade with 1...♖h6 is a great idea to remove the opponent's future tactical counterplay, even if it gives Black doubled isolated h-pawns. This is also in accordance with one of my six principles on how to play when ahead: Don't worry about the little things."

The diagram is immediately followed by an almost identical one, in which White has a knight on c3. Here, the 'little things' do matter, as after 1...♖h6? 2 ♜xh6 gxh6 "White has the double attack 3 ♜b5 which, on top of the superior pawn structure, is completely winning."

Of course, chess engines do not like 1...♖h6 even in the first diagram, but from the practical point of view, which is what this book is all about, we all know that being in possession of the sole surviving piece in (most) endgames is a virtual guarantee of victory, barring accidents.

In addition to the self-improvement aspect, which makes this book ideal for improving club players with little study time, it will also prove to be a boon for chess tutors, who will be able to turn every one of the 164 tips into chess lessons, with one or two extensions and additions. An impressive and fully accessible work.

Sean Marsh



Botvinnik's Best Games

Alexander Khalifman

New in Chess, 448 pages

RRP £24.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £22.45**

New in Chess continue their series on the best games of the world's top players with a presentation of fully annotated, cherry-picked encounters from the long and very successful career of Mikhail Botvinnik. Previous volumes in the series, which have all been well-received, have focused on Paul Morphy, Max Euwe, Boris Spassky, and Ding Liren.

This time, one former world champion has been enlisted to write about another. Although the name of the author may be a head-scratcher for those who follow only the so-called classical roll call of champions, we should not forget that Alexander Khalifman was FIDE world champion from 1999–2000 when the chess world enjoyed – or endured, depending on one's point of view – a dual set of tournaments and matches for the ultimate crown – or crowns, in this case.

As the back cover rightly informs us: "For this modern biography, the Russian grandmaster Alexander Khalifman has selected and annotated more than fifty of Botvinnik's best games. Khalifman is an excellent guide with a deep understanding of chess and a talent for explaining games in a clear and accessible manner."

The games cover the period of time from 1931 to 1970, the year in which Botvinnik retired from competitive play. He was just 59 at the time, but had achieved so much, especially in his battles for the world championship title. From winning the famous 1948 Match Tournament, played to overcome the gap left by the incumbent champion, Alexander Alekhine, who died with the title, but very little else to his name, Botvinnik, the seventh champion of the world, went on to defend his title against bitter rival David Bronstein, lose and regain it from Vasily Smyslov, do the same against Mikhail Tal and, finally, lose his title for good when he lost a tough match against Tigran Petrosian in 1963.

The abolition of the champion's right to a return match may have had something to do with Botvinnik's subsequent decision to drop out of the world championship cycle altogether, bringing an end to a remarkable span, from 1948–1963, during which every battle for the title featured Botvinnik as either champion or challenger. However, some of his best games were still ahead of him and his play remained extremely strong from 1963–1970.

Of course, this was all a very long time ago and the question is, are old games worthy of study by today's chess players and students? Khalifman addresses this very point.

"The younger generation often underestimates the classics. Young talents say: 'Why should I study Lasker's games when he played mainly against weaker players?' I am sure that Lasker's games should also be studied – if only because his opponents included Capablanca, Alekhine, Rubinstein, Bogoljubow, Nimzowitsch, Reti... often these games have instructional value, but the level of resistance of opponents, indeed, sometimes leaves much to be desired. But in the post-war period, there were many more strong chess players, and the average level increased significantly. So in Botvinnik's best games, as a rule, his opponents resisted quite stubbornly. Of course, these people also made mistakes, but these were already serious struggles at a high level. So these duels should not be neglected at all."

The notes are deep and the variations can appear off-putting, but as the author says, there is more than one way to read a chess book:

"When reading books, much depends on the goal the reader sets for himself. If he simply wants to enjoy the play of the great masters of the past, then he can just skim the text. I have tried to pay attention to all the critical moments, so reading 'diagonally' will also be useful. But if a chess player sets himself the goal of improving in chess, then it is much more useful to study these games in sufficient depth. They deserve it, and I have tried to make studying Botvinnik's best games with my comments even more interesting."

Here is an example of Botvinnik's skill from later on in his extraordinary career. Indeed, it is the penultimate game of the collection and shows how sharp he still was even though he was very close to retirement.

M.Botvinnik-L.Portisch Monaco 1968



Botvinnik steamed in with **16 ♖xc7!**. Has he fallen for something? Portisch plays to prevent the rook escaping, but Botvinnik has seen much further and lands a couple of bombs.

16...♗c6 17 ♖1xc6! bxc6 18 ♖xf7!

(1-0, 26).

Khalifman's notes are excellent throughout the book and he takes the time to place the openings played in the games in a modern context, which is very useful.

The all-time greats of the chess world have been celebrated many times before in chess literature, of course, but this solid series unfailingly offers new twists and turns in the illustrative games, no matter how well known they may already be. Yes, the games from former times are still very much worthy of study!

Sean Marsh



Battling the Aggressive Italian Game

Milos Pavlovic, 164 pages, hardback

RRP £29.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £26.99**

Meeting 1 e4 e5 with 2 ♖f3 ♗c6 3 ♗c4 remains pretty topical and here leading theoretician and Serbian GM Pavlovic aims to provide a practical guide to some of its famous variations, after both 3...♗c5 and 3...♗f6. It should be noted that quiet, Giuoco Pianissimo approaches characterised by an early d2-d3 are not covered, but gambit lines with an early d2-d4 and 3...♗f6 4 ♗g5 most certainly are. Those who enjoy playing either side of these fascinating variations are likely to find much of interest and several new twists.



Chess Informant 164 - Freestyle!

Sahovski Informator, 320 pages, paperback

RRP £39.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £35.95**

Freestyle chess, aka Chess960 and Fischer Random, has made such waves over the past year, largely thanks to the enthusiastic support of one Magnus Carlsen, that it even features in the latest 'Informant'. So too, thankfully, do plenty of traditional events, with detailed reports on the women's world championship match and Menorca Open. There are also several instructional articles, as well as all the traditional sections, including the latest novelties.

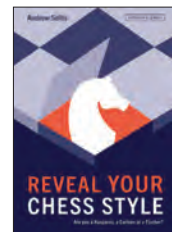


Master the Modern Defence (1...g6)

Daniel Fernandez, PC/MAC booklet or download; running time: 5 hours

RRP £34.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £31.45**

English GM Daniel Fernandez remains pretty active and successful, as we've seen in this month's Overseas News, and in recent months has also visited the ChessBase studio in Hamburg. There he recorded this guide to one of his favourite fighting weapons as Black, the Modern. Fernandez certainly knows his material inside out and presents well, while mapping out a fairly detailed repertoire, the cornerstones of which are 1 e4 g6 2 d4 ♗g7 3 ♗c3 d6 and then 4 f4 ♗f6 and 4 ♗e3 a6, as well as 3 c4 d6 4 ♗c3 e5.



Reveal Your Chess Style

Andrew Soltis, 230 pages, paperback

RRP £18.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £17.09**

The well-known American GM Andrew Soltis continues to write regularly for Batsford. This latest work sees him supply 100 positions for readers to consider and then pick from a number of options. The aim is to help them identify their style, as well as which famous players they have the most in common with. Along the way Soltis typically offers plenty of useful general chess advice, as well as on how to develop your style.



Silence the Sicilian

Svitlana Demchenko, PC/MAC booklet or download; running time: 6 hours, 22 minutes

RRP £34.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £31.45**

Canadian-Ukrainian FM and WIM Demchenko maps out a repertoire for White with a club player favourite on this new ChessBase release subtitled 'Win with the Alapin Variation'. She makes good use of some model variations and many club players will appreciate how she begins her coverage of 2 c3 by looking at 2...g6, 2...d6, 2...♗c6 and 2...e6 before moving on to the main lines, 2...♗f6 and 2...d5, along the way mapping out an easy-to-play if not undynamic repertoire for White.



The Art of Sacrificing

Krishnan Sasikiran, PC/MAC booklet or download; running time: 8 hours, 57 minutes
RRP £44.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £40.45**

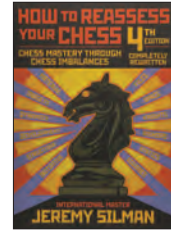
This is a detailed video course from a strong and very active Indian GM, who some readers will remember playing a fair bit in the UK around the millennium. Sasikiran puts his vast tournament experience, which includes an impressive 11 Olympiad appearances, to good use as he looks at various types of pawn sacrifice, not just for the initiative, but also to restrict the opponent's play. There is also plenty of insight on exchange sacrifices and even a few queen sacrifices are discussed. In short, if you want to improve your dynamic and attacking play, as well as become less materialistic, let Sasikiran be your guide!



The Scandinavian Defense Revisited

Thomas Engqvist, 490 pages, hardback
RRP £39.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £35.95**

Swedish IM Engqvist is an experienced player whom you might associate with Batsford, but here he teams up with Thinkers Publishing to present a very detailed work on that club player favourite, 1.e4 d5. The subtitle 'A Cold-Blooded Counter to 1.e4' makes it clear that Engqvist is fully aware of his target audience and his coverage is based around illustrative complete games. Despite the size of the book, most levels of player should be able to get plenty out of it in what is essentially a complete guide to the opening. If you currently play 2.exd5 ♖xd5 3.♘c3 ♗a5, you might want to add 2...♗f6 or 3...♗d6 to your repertoire, with all three lines well covered by Engqvist.



How to Reassess Your Chess (4th Edition)

Jeremy Silman, 658 pages, paperback
RRP £29.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £26.95**

The seminal instructional manual for those rated under 2000 is back in stock in limited supply. This fourth and final edition features solely new examples and takes the late Jeremy Silman's groundbreaking concept of imbalances to a whole new level. Designed for players in the 1400 to 2100 rating range and for teachers looking for a ready-made chess curriculum, Silman shares a mind-expanding journey that takes the reader through all the basics of imbalances. He ensures that every detail of every type of imbalance is mastered, while leaving the reader with something they always wanted, but never believed they could achieve: a master-level positional foundation.



Forthcoming Events

UK Open Blitz Championship Qualifiers:

September 6	Newcastle	September 7	Glasgow
September 7	Nottingham	September 13	Cardiff
September 13	Sheffield	September 13	Southampton
September 14	Harrow	September 20	Bristol
September 20	Golders Green	September 20	Liverpool
September 21	Belfast	September 27	Birmingham
September 28	Edinburgh	September 28	Leeds
September 28	Horwich		

Aug 30 - Sep 5 Torquay Riviera Congress
congress.org.uk/congress/583/home

September 5-7 Hull 4NCL Congress
4ncl.co.uk/fide/info_hull25.htm

September 6-7 Hampshire Rapid & Blitz Champs, Eastleigh
hampshirechess.co.uk/rapidblitz2025/

September 6-7 Northampton Standard Play
chesseventsuk.co.uk

Sep 13-14 Greater London Congress, Orpington
congress.org.uk/congress/514/home

September 13 Crowborough Congress (rapid)
crowborough.org/club/

September 14 South Yorkshire Rapidplay, Doncaster
sheffieldchessinternational.uk/2025-doncaster-rapidplay/

September 14 Uxbridge Rapid
uxbridgechessclubs.com

Sep 20-21 Derbyshire Congress, Long Eaton
congress.org.uk/congress/570/home

Sep 20-21 Oxford Congress
congress.org.uk/congress/531/home

September 20-21 Southall Congress
londonfidecongress.com/southall-congress

September 20-21 Warwickshire Rapid & Blitz Ch., Shirley
warwickshirechess.org

September 20-21 York Congress
ilkleychesscentre.com/events

September 21 Grimsby 150th Anniversary Rapidplay
congress.org.uk/congress/632/home

September 26-28 Northumberland Congress, N.Shields
northumberlandchess.wixsite.com/congress

September 26-28 Welsh Senior & Congress, Cardiff
welshchessunion.uk/WelshSeniors/2025/index.html

September 27 Camberley Keith Richardson Rapidplay
camberleychess.co.uk

September 27 Snodland Rapidplay
invictachess.co.uk/snodland.html

September 28 Cambridgeshire Rapidplay
cambschess.co.uk/Rapidplay.php

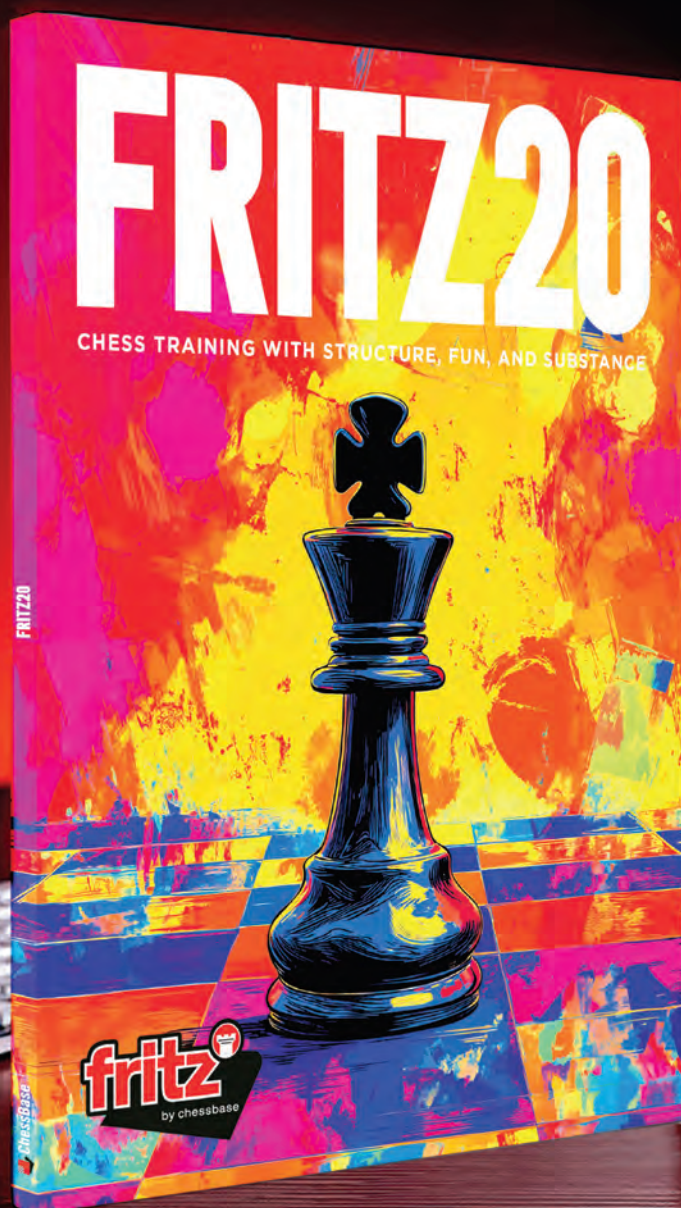
September 28 Witney Rapidplay
witneychess.co.uk/witneyrapid25_information.htm

And for the Online Connoisseur:

September 4-15 FIDE Grand Swiss, Samarkand
grandswiss2025.fide.com; Abdusattorov, Aronian, Erigaisi, Firouzja, Gukesh, Nepomniachtchi, Praggnanandhaa, Vitiugov, etc; also, Divya, Koneru, Muzychuk, Muzychuk, Tan Zhongyi, etc.

Congress organisers – Don't forget to email editor@chess.co.uk to ensure your event is listed, or if you really want to guarantee a good entry, contact tao@chess.co.uk to discuss having it advertised.

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