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# CHESS LIFE

NOVEMBER 2020 | USCHESS.ORG

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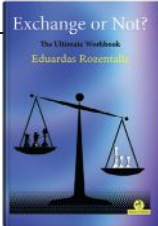


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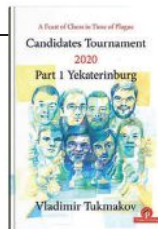


## MAGNUS WINS WITH WHITE

by Zenon Franco

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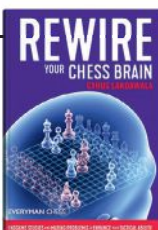


## CANDIDATES TOURNAMENT 2020 - PART 1 - YEKATERINBURG

by Vladimir Tukmakov

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Another ground-breaking work from the author, bringing the story of the Candidates 2020. According to his observations and analysis the players were ready to fight for a place to challenge the World Champion. However no one could have even imagined how difficult the road to that tournament would be nor how unexpected the outcome. Yet the significance of the actual numbers in this dramatic epic is hard to overestimate which is why the author will attempt to play the role of chronicler and try to describe as accurately as possible the key moments of this historic event.



## REWIRE YOUR CHESS BRAIN

by Cyrus Lakdawala

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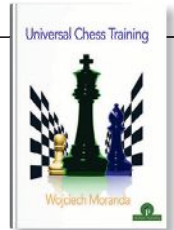
Prolific chess author and coach Cyrus Lakdawala has been intrigued by studies and problems all his life. When training his students he often sets them studies and problems to solve. Many of them who have adopted this technique have seen extraordinary increases in their chess ratings. In this book Lakdawala assembles the problems and studies that are most effective to improve tactical ability. Work your way through this book and you will undoubtedly see the results in your own games.

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## PETROSIAN YEAR BY YEAR - VOLUME 1 (1942-1962)

by Tibor Karolyi & Tigran Gyozyalyan

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International Master Tibor Karolyi and FIDE Master Tigran Gyozyalyan have written a comprehensive two-volume treatise on the life and games of Tigran Petrosian, who was world champion from 1963-1969. The present Volume I takes the reader on a journey from Tigran's childhood, through the war years, successes in Georgian and Armenian national championships, his emergence as an elite player winning the Soviet championship and Olympic gold, and victory at the famous 1962 Candidates Tournament in Curacao.

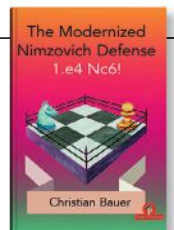


## THE MODERNIZED NIMZOWICH DEFENSE - 1. e4 Nc6!

by Christian Bauer

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There is no doubt that the Nimzovich Defense is one of Black's most inspiring openings after 1.e4. Black strives to unbalance the position by creating new problems for White from move two, giving himself every opportunity to fight for the initiative from the outset. In this book, GM Christian Bauer explains how to use this powerful weapon drawing from his own successful experiences.

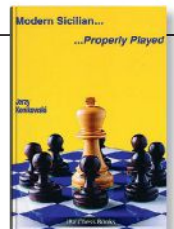


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by Jerry Konikowski

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The Sicilian Defense, which is suitable for players of all levels, has long been the most played opening against 1.e2-e4 and its popularity continues to grow. The reason is that sharp and complicated positions arise, which offer black excellent dynamic counter play. In the first part, the author treats all possible deviations before reaching the basic position with 1.e5 c5 2.♁f3 d6 3.d4 etc. – such as the Closed Sicilian, the Morra Gambit, the Alapin Variation, the Grand-Prix Attack, the continuation 3.♁b5+ etc.

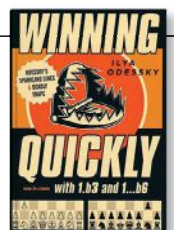


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by Ilya Odessky

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MEMBER AT LARGE **David Hater** ([dhater1@aol.com](mailto:dhater1@aol.com))

### { INQUIRIES }

For communications and press inquiries, please contact Dan Lucas at [dllucas@uschess.org](mailto:dllucas@uschess.org) (931) 200-5509

For advertising inquiries, please contact Melinda Matthews [mmatthews@uschess.org](mailto:mmatthews@uschess.org)

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## CONTRIBUTORS

## NOVEMBER



### GM Jacob Aagaard

One of the world's leading chess writers and trainers, GM Jacob Aagaard has worked with both young talents and elite players around the globe, including some of America's best juniors at the US Chess School. Aagaard is one of the founders of Quality Chess Publishing and a partner in the online Killer Chess Academy. His most recent literary efforts are two co-authorial roles in Boris Gelfand's newest books: *Decision Making in Major Piece Endings* and *Technical Decision Making in Chess*.



### Bruce Pandolfini

*Chess Life* columnist Bruce Pandolfini shot to chess stardom with his work as an analyst for the WNET/PBS live coverage of the 1972 World Championship Match between Bobby Fischer and Boris Spassky. Since then he has become perhaps the most famous scholastic chess coach in America, working with the likes of Fabiano Caruana and Josh Waitzkin through the years, and he has authored dozens of chess books.



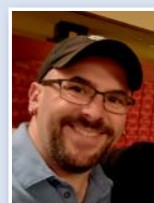
### GM Sam Shankland

Former U.S. Champion (2018) GM Sam Shankland is one of America's top chess competitors, currently ranked sixth among active players at 2691 FIDE. He is the author of two books—*Small Steps to Giant Improvement: Master Pawn Play in Chess* (2018) and *Small Steps 2 Success: Mastering Passed Pawn Play* (2019)—and is currently working on a book on technical rook endgames.



### WFM Elizabeth Spiegel

While WFM Elizabeth Spiegel was made famous for her real-life performance in *Brooklyn Castle*, the 2012 documentary focused on the chess program at I.S. 318 in Brooklyn, NY where she coaches, Spiegel has been one of America's top scholastic coaches and advocates for two decades. A participant in the 2007 U.S. Women's Championship, Spiegel was named the 2019 Chess Educator of the Year, an award presented by the University of Texas at Dallas.



### John Hartmann

John Hartmann is the current editor of *Chess Life* and the winner of the 2020 Chess Journalist of the Year Award from the Chess Journalists of America.

### ON THE COVER

Anya Taylor-Joy is brilliant in her portrayal of Beth Harmon in the new Netflix limited series "The Queen's Gambit."

COVER PHOTO BY CHARLIE GRAY, COURTESY OF NETFLIX



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PHOTO: KEN WORONER, NETFLIX

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Rochelle Wu, 2017  
National Girls Tournament of  
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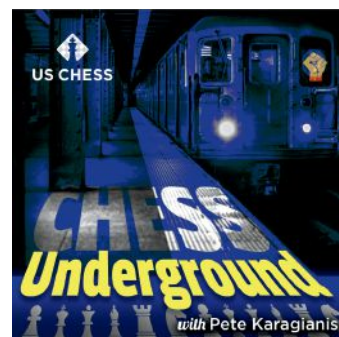
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# CHESS LIFE ONLINE

## NOVEMBER PREVIEW



Tune in and listen to our podcasts at [uschess.org](https://uschess.org)

**COVER STORIES WITH CHESS LIFE** For the November edition of Cover Stories, available on the first Tuesday of the month, *Chess Life* editor John Hartmann will talk with Bruce Pandolfini about his involvement (and on-screen cameo!) with the newly released Netflix series, *The Queen's Gambit*.

### ONE MOVE AT A TIME

In November, our podcast that highlights people around the country who are advancing our mission to “empower people, enrich lives, and enhance communities through chess” will feature Tim Just talking about the *Rulebook's* updated Online Chess rules, his monthly *CLO* column, and his life in chess. Hosted by Senior Director of Strategic Communication Dan Lucas, One Move is available on the second Tuesday of each month.

### LADIES KNIGHT

Ladies Knight kicked off a spectacular fall with September's guest, GM Irina Krush, who spoke about her battle with COVID-19 and her renewed commitment to training. Special guests from Kenya, part of our “Kenya and US Chess Girls Meet Through Chess” project, also will be featured in upcoming months. Women's Program Director Jennifer Shahade hosts this award-winning podcast, which drops on the third Tuesday of the month.

### THE CHESS UNDERGROUND

Hosted by Assistant Director of Events Pete Karagianis, The Chess Underground explores the subculture (and occasionally, subversive culture) that is chess—all of its eccentricities, peculiarities, and theoretical novelties. The Chess Underground is available the fourth Tuesday of the month.

## USCHESS *Streaming*

NEW VIDEO PROGRAMS FOR MEMBERS

### LEVELLING UP

*Chess Life / Chess Life Online* Editor **John Hartmann** takes a look at games between players rated under 1400. By understanding typical mistakes at that level, newer players young and old can “level up” more quickly.

### THE TD SHOW

FIDE Events Manager and National Tournament Director **Chris Bird** and guests help explain everything you could ever want to know about US Chess rules and tournament direction.

### CLASS IN SESSION

US Chess Women's online programming, created by **Jennifer Shahade**, is growing: in addition to our weekly “Girls Club Zooms” with the top players in the country, we are expanding our offerings to adult Ladies Knights, teenager college prep discussions, and beginner classes.

**Sign up to these playlists on YouTube!**



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# Letters: *Knight Moves*



## THAT DARNED KNIGHT ...

Every 10 or 15 years or so GM Andy Soltis manages to disappoint me, albeit unintentionally. Now, for perhaps the third or fourth time since the 1970s he does it in my favorite *Chess Life* column, “Chess to Enjoy” (Beginner’s Luck, September 2020) by succumbing to one of the most egregious sins of many chess writers. I speak of the notorious practice of describing the move of the knight as “L-shaped” !?

The knight’s move is the one that causes most problems for newcomers to chess, but it would appear that the move also causes big problems for writers of chess primers.

Soltis writes, “The simplest way to explain the knight is to show an L-shape in a diagram,” after observing that “we teach chess in a way that is needlessly difficult.”

Well, would that be a tall L or a squat L, an upside down L or a backwards L? And what about the possibility of other pieces in the way? Then there’s an alternate approach of describing the knight as moving one square as a rook followed by an additional square as a bishop—or vice-versa. At least there’s some harmony or affinity with those other two other pieces ... sort of. We then go completely overboard by opting for the knight moving from one corner of a two by three square rectangle to the catty corner as an “explanation.” Whew!

None of these well-meaning attempts take into account that chess grew from *chatarunga*, the ancient game where the knight represented a horse, one of four divisions of the Indian army. The knight symbolized animal energy—a dynamic based on a living muscular entity, not an inorganic apparatus that progressed robotically.

Horses jump. Infantry (pawns) don’t. Neither do elephants (bishops) or even chariots (rooks).

The knight moves two squares, leaping over adjacent squares, occupied or not, to an opposite-color square from its origin. For example, when moving from g1 to f3, the knight flies over both f2 and g2. Unlike all other chessmen, it leaves the two-dimensional plane of the board as it moves, whether capturing or occupying an empty square.

Knights arc over surrounding squares with alacrity and grace. Ask the “L-shaped” crowd if they really think that when Kramnik plays 1. Nf3 he actually moves the piece “through” his g-pawn to g3 and then, braking and turning like some squeaking wheel, moves the piece sideways to f3. No! He, like every other chessplayer, picks UP the knight from g1 and arcs it over f2 and g2 to f3 straight away. Our German friends don’t call this piece “springer” for nothing.

The only other instance where we see this kind of movement is when we castle and the involved rook goes over the king ... but that’s another story.

It’s fitting, I think, that the knight not only has the unique power to leap, but it also is the only piece in a set of Staunton chessmen that is

not a symmetrically turned figurine. I applaud Nathaniel Cooke for his decision to design his knight on the horses of the “Elgin Marbles” of the Parthenon! I suspect Mr. Cooke would see it my way on the matter of the knight’s wonderful move.

In closing—should GM Soltis unexpectedly wish to make amends to me for his latest transgression—he need only forward me a complimentary copy of his new book on Botvinnik. I don’t expect I will find fault with it.

Paul Kollat  
via email

*Soltis responds:*

*My point is that it is much easier to learn how the knight moves from a diagram.*

*If you don’t believe me, try teaching an absolute beginner, perhaps your grandmother, using Mr. Kollat’s words: “The knight moves two squares, leaping over adjacent squares, occupied or not, to an opposite colored square of its origin.”*

*I think Grandma would have an easier time if you tried to explain the infield fly rule.*

## ANOTHER LETTER ...

There are many awkward ways to describe the Knight Move. But the L shape that Soltis recommends is also a little clunky. An L is only intuitive if it’s right side up. If it’s upside down or on its side, not so much. The “Fishhook,” which Soltis didn’t mention, is a little awkward, too.

My rating is 2200, and ever since I first began playing, I’ve imagined that the knight always moves exactly two squares—one lateral (left, right, up, down), the second diagonal (away from its starting point, no doubling back). In other words, sort of a short-range combination of the rook’s and bishop’s moves.

So, if a game opens 1. Nf3, I’ve always imagined the knight starting on g1 (or KN1, as it was called in those days), passing over g2 (but NOT g3, because what’s the point in that?), and landing on f3. It would work equally well if you imagined the diagonal move coming first.

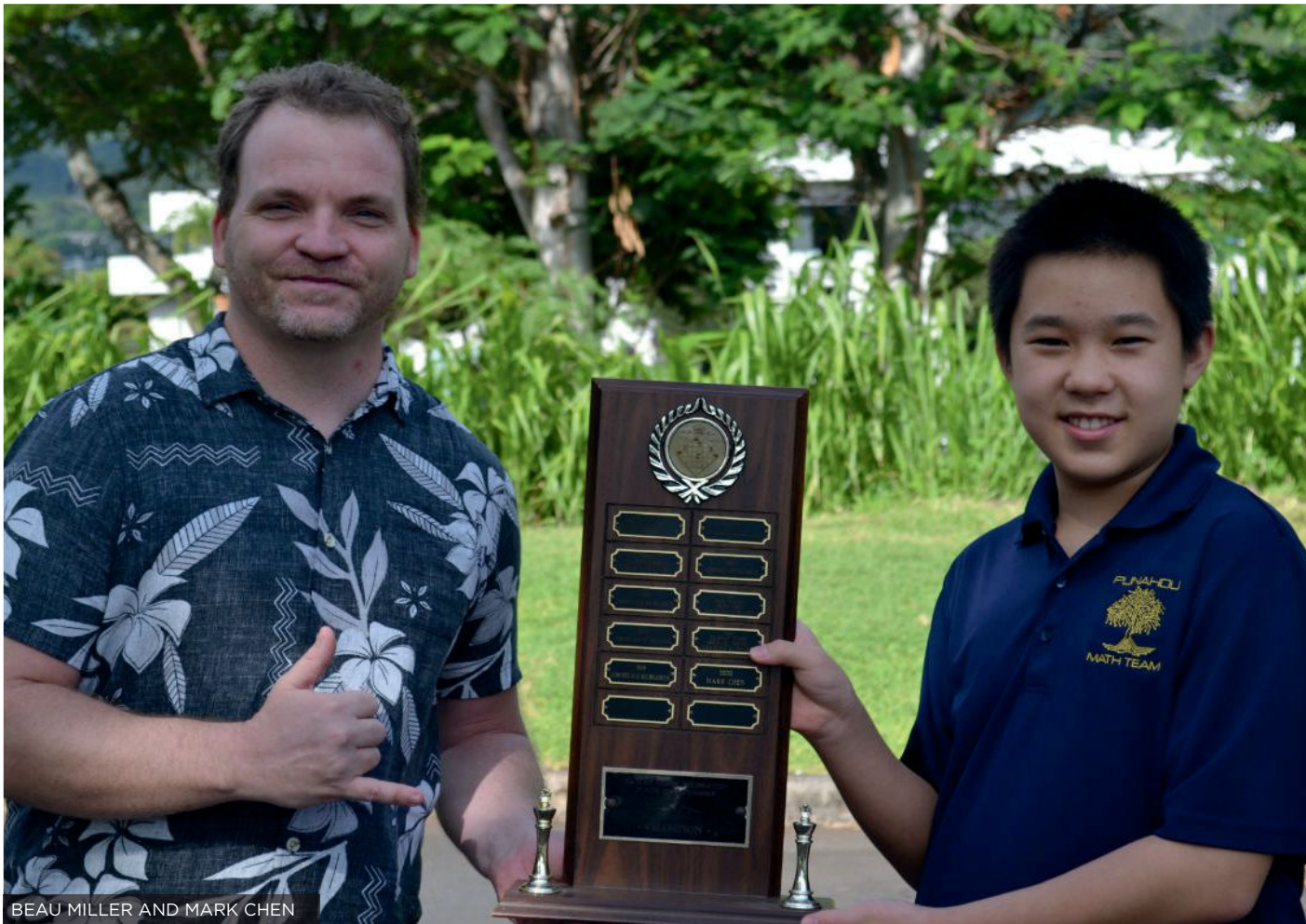
Graeme Cree  
via email

## ... AND ANOTHER

Since the knight sits between the bishop and rook, I say move one square like a bishop and one square like a rook, or one square like a rook and one square like a bishop, and always end up on the opposite color.

Tony Cottell  
via email

Send your letters to [letters@uschess.org](mailto:letters@uschess.org). Letters are subject to editing for style, length, and content.



# Youth Prevails at 2020 Hawaii State Championship

At age 12, Mark Chen wins state crown with 4-1 score.

By DAMIAN NASH

Over the Labor Day weekend, 12-year-old Mark Chen became the youngest Hawaii state chess champion in state history. Chen may seem like a typical eighth grader to his peers, enjoying hanging out and playing games with friends, but he pursues his hobbies with great discipline and remarkable achievement. Chen won first place in his division as a seven-year-old at the Hawaii Music Teachers Association (HMTA) Piano

Competition in 2015, an event he described as “stressful.” He still plays piano and especially loves Chopin’s Nocturnes, but his competitive energy has found a new home in chess.

The five-round Hawaii State Open Chess tournament went online for the first time because of COVID-19 restrictions. While the new format kept some of Hawaii’s top players from participating, Mark still started in the middle of a strong field. (Hawaii players tend to

play above their official US Chess rating strength because of the lack of rated events on the islands.) As a relatively experienced tournament player who has represented Hawaii twice in the Dewain Barber National Tournament of Middle School State Champions, Chen systematically defeated his first two opponents.

In the third round, playing with black, Chen faced the top-seed, a former state champion, and soon found himself in a very



sharp line of the Evans Gambit. Instead of castling to safety, he played a natural-looking move, which allowed a beautiful sacrifice by his opponent. With his king trapped in the middle of the board, Chen was checkmated quickly. “After that loss I thought my chances to win the tournament were over, so I just relaxed a little and decided to have more fun.” His fourth round turned out to be a very complicated game against a tournament veteran, but Chen was able to squeeze out a win from a drawn position.

## FRENCH DEFENSE (C10)

Mark Chen (1701)

Marvin Alvarez (1649)

Hawaii State Open Championship (4),

09.06.2020

Annotations by Mark Chen

**1. e4 e6 2. d4 d5 3. Nc3 dxe4 4. Nxe4 Bd7 5. Nf3 Bc6 6. Ng3**

Better was 6. Bd3 to support the e4-knight.

**6. ... Nd7 7. Be2 Ngf6 8. O-O Bd6 9. Bg5 h6 10. Be3 O-O 11. c4 Bxf3 12. Bxf3 c6 13. Rc1**

This move wasn't good, as the rook really isn't useful on the c-file. It would have been smarter to do something like 13. Re1 followed by Qd1-d2 and Ra1-d1.

**13. ... a5 14. Qb3 Qc7 15. Rfd1 Rfe8 16. d5**

Imprecise, as my center was pretty strong and I shouldn't have rushed a breakthrough. The problem with my position is that there's no easy way to improve it.

**16. ... Nc5**

He missed his chance to open up and get some counterplay with 16. ... a4 and ... Nd7-e5.

**17. Qc2 Rad8 18. dxc6 bxc6 19. Rd2**

I was struggling to find a plan, so I just decided to double my rooks on the d-file.

**19. ... Be7 20. Rcd1 Rxd2 21. Rxd2 Nfd7 22. Ne4 f5 23. Nxc5 Nxc5 24. Bxc5**

I calculated that I win a pawn at the end of this line, but in hindsight, it really wasn't worth getting into an opposite color bishop endgame.

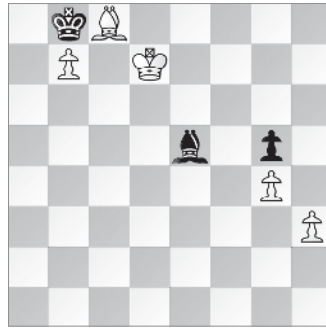
**24. ... Bxc5 25. Qd3 Bb6 26. Qd7**

Here I could have kept the rooks on the board with 26. Qd6, but for some reason I thought I would be better if I traded them off.

**26. ... Re7 27. Qxc7 Rxc7 28. Rd6 Kf7 29. Rxc6 Rxc6 30. Bxc6 Kf6 31. a3 Bc5 32. Kf1 e5 33. Ke2 Bd4 34. b4 axb4 35. axb4 Bc3 36. b5 Bd4 37. f3 g5**

Stopping my pawns with 37. ... Kg5 would be better.

**38. h3 Ke6 39. Kd3 Kd6 40. g4 Ke6 41. Bb7 fxg4 42. fxg4 Bc5 43. Ke4 Bf8 44. Bc8+ Kd6 45. Kf5 Kc5 46. Kxe5 Kxc4 47. b6 Kc5 48. b7 Bd6+ 49. Kf5 Kc6 50. Kg6 Kc7 51. Kxh6 Be7 52. Kg6 Kb8 53. Kf7 Bd8 54. Ke8 Bf6 55. Kd7 Be5**



**56. Kc6?**

When I made this move, I thought it was already a drawn position. I miscalculated and didn't realize that 56. h4! actually won!

**56. ... Bf6?**

Very lucky he didn't see 56. ... Bg3 followed by 57. ... Bh4, just locking the position up.

**57. Bf5 Bd8 58. Be4 Bf6 59. h4 gxh4 60. Kd6 h3 61. Ke6 Bh4 62. Kf5 Bg3 63. g5 Kc7 64. Kf6 Kd7 65. Kf7 h2 66. g6 Be5 67. g7 Bxg7 68. Kxg7, Black resigned.**

This resilient attitude also paid off in the final round when Chen faced the second-seeded player, who needed only a draw to win the tournament. “The game stayed very close up until the end,” he explained. “Then, in the endgame, he finally made a little mistake that allowed me to win a pawn.” Chen carefully applied correct endgame technique until his opponent was forced to resign.

“I didn't expect to win this tournament,” Chen modestly admitted. “It was my goal to win this tournament before I graduated from high school.” He credits his recent success to his current coach, International Grandmaster Andriy Vovk, who is helping him understand the game at a deeper level. Two Hawaii teenagers have won the state chess champion title before—Robert Lau in 2008 and Eldon Nakagawa in 2012, both at age 16. But now a pre-teen has claimed the title and put Hawaii's active master players on notice. ♠

*Damien Nash is a US Chess rated expert and a senior tournament director. He was Hawaii state co-champion in 2018, and is the current Hawaii senior state champion. Nash has worked as an educator for many years, teaching high school STEM fields, AP psychology, and gifted and talented programs. Currently he is a school improvement coach in Honolulu.*

# FACES ACROSS THE BOARD

By AL LAWRENCE



## COACH ERIC LUSTER

CALUMET CITY,  
ILLINOIS

*The art of making good decisions*

Captured chess pieces fly while *en prise* French fries go missing every day of the week at the South Chicago McDonald's where Eric plays blitz.

He showed his potential when he once drew an IM and defeated all other opponents to win a tournament. But he says his biggest accomplishments are “the many students that I have been able to reach.” Eric's chess goals now “focus on my daughter Shakira, who wishes to become a chess master someday.” (For more on Shakira, see the October 2020 issue of *Chess Life Kids*. ~ed.)

Coach Luster teaches math and science to sixth, seventh, and eighth graders at St. Ethelreda's Catholic School in Chicago. Earlier this year, the Archdiocese selected Eric as Elementary School Educator of the Year.

Seven years ago, he started a school chess club after reading about the benefits the game provides for kids. “I love watching kids progress in chess. There's something amazing to see a child learn ... in such a short period of time.”

“In the fall, I was able to bring a St. Ethelreda school team to the Illinois All Grade Championship.” That team, later taking the name “The Unruly Queens” won the eighth-grade section, becoming the first African American team, as well as the first female team, to win the Illinois title! Shakira led the squad. She's number 31 (as of September) on the US Chess Top 100 list of 14 years old girls.

Eric hosts the Facebook page “African American Chess Association,” open to all. Working with Dr. Daaim Shabazz of *The Chess Drum*, Eric began a website registry of African Americans who play chess somewhat seriously, whether or not they're US Chess members. You can find a link on the Facebook page.

“Chess can help all people channel their thinking and practice the art of making good decisions. Particularly in the African American community, I feel that chess could be a remedy to some of the ills that we face. Many of our young men in particular get caught up in bad situations due to poor decision-making practices that could possibly be eliminated via chess.”

## US Chess Welcomes Brian Jerauld



BRIAN JERAULD

Effective September 14 2020, Brian Jerauld joined US Chess as its Digital Assistant. Although Brian’s “official” start date is recent, his name may be familiar from his freelance work for *Chess Life* and *Chess Life Online* dating back to 2013. Based in St. Louis, the Mizzou journalist has covered several U.S. Championships, U.S. Junior and Sinquefeld Cup tournaments. He also penned a weekly chess column for St. Louis-NPR for several years, and later served as the communications specialist for the Saint Louis Chess Club, leading the media arm for the international center and its high-profile events.

Beyond writing, Brian’s other chess passion is connecting the game to education. He teaches chess for gifted classes, organizes social clubs, and coaches competitive teams in several St. Louis schools and parishes. Outside of chess, Brian enjoys coaching youth soccer, playing ultimate frisbee, and spending time with his wife and four kids.

The Digital Assistant works directly with the *Chess Life Online* editor to advance the US Chess mission via our website and social media platforms. Key responsibilities of the Digital Assistant include writing articles that help drive traffic to *uschess.org*, editing content and posting to the website, promoting US Chess across social media platforms, discovering and sharing appropriate stories and photos that communicate our mission, and growing our social media presence.

Brian can be reached at [bjerauld@uschess.org](mailto:bjerauld@uschess.org).

## Nominating Committee Election

On Saturday, September 26, US Chess held a Special Delegates Meeting to elect members to the new Nominating Committee. The Nominating Committee will have eight members—six appointed by the Delegates and two appointed by the Executive Board. The Nominating Committee was created to broaden the candidate pool for US Chess Executive Board elections.

The top six candidates receiving votes will serve as members of the Nominating Committee:

NAME	VOTES
Michelle Martinez (AZ)	81
Sophia Rohde (NY)	80
David Grimaud (SC)	77
Daa'im Shabazz (FL)	76
Chris Wainscott (WI)	66
Randy Hough (CA-S)	57
Jonathon Singler (AK)	33
Steve Morford (CA-S)	31



In addition, several write-in candidates received one vote each: Brian Glover, Rachel Liebermann, Jim Mennella, Allen Priest, Dylan Quercia, Tim Redman.

The Executive Board has appointed two additional members to the Nominating Committee, Joy Bray (MO) and Hal Sprechman (NJ).

Congratulations to the inaugural members of the Nominating Committee, who will begin their work on identifying candidates for the Executive Board for the 2021 election.

Video of this meeting is available at <https://new.uschess.org/news/executive-board-nominating-committee-election>

## Call for Nominations

The US Chess Federation (US Chess) will hold an election in 2021 for three at-large positions on the US Chess Executive Board. The top two finishers will be elected for term a term of four years expiring in 2025. The third place finisher will be elected to a term of two years expiring in 2023.

Any current US Chess member who is not a current US Chess employee or designated contractor (as defined in the US Chess bylaws) may be nominated for election to the Executive Board.

Nominations must be made by petition containing the signatures of fifty (50) or more members of US Chess who are either registered or eligible to register to vote, and by payment of a filing fee of \$100 to the US Chess Federation.

The members signing the nomination petition must include at least fifteen (15) US Chess delegates representing at least five (5) states. (Signatures of alternate delegates do not count toward this requirement.) The petition to nominate a candidate and the filing fee must be postmarked by Wednesday, December 30, 2020. Send petitions and the filing fee to: US Chess Federation, ATTN: Governance Coordinator, P.O. Box 3967, Crossville, TN 38557-3967. Petitions may also be submitted electronically to [governance@uschess.org](mailto:governance@uschess.org).

The nomination petitions must contain the dated signature, printed name, and US Chess ID number of each signer, and should contain the following text:

“We, the undersigned members of the US Chess Federation, nominate \_(candidate name goes here)\_ as a candidate for election to the US Chess Executive Board in the 2021 election. We also consent to having our names and US Chess ID numbers published as having signed this petition.”

A sample nomination form will be made available on the US Chess website.

Candidates must consent to be on the ballot either by signing their own nomination petition or by separate notice to US Chess.

A voting member for this election is any current US Chess member (active as of May 4, 2021) whose membership expires on or after June 30, 2021, who will be age 16 or older as of June 30, 2021, and who registers to vote by May 1, 2021. Members with memberships of less than one year duration at their start are not eligible to become voting members.

Ballots will be distributed to voting members who are registered to vote as of May 1, 2021. Ballot distribution will occur around June 10th and returned ballots will be counted in July. The terms will begin at the conclusion of the 2021 delegates’ meeting.

# ACROSS THE BOARD

By **MIKE HOFFPAUIR** PRESIDENT, US CHESS EXECUTIVE BOARD

**Dear friends,**

I know that we are all eager to get back to over-the-board play as soon as we can. We can only hope that the next few weeks and months will shed more light on a vaccine that lets us 'round the corner' on the COVID-19 crisis. In the meantime, please be sure you continue to observe local regulations when organizing an over-the-board event — no one wants their chess tournament making front page news as the unwitting cause of COVID resurgence.

While we are all waiting for over-the-board play to resume, I believe that online play is here to stay, even after the COVID situation subsides. My view is that it has opened new opportunities that we have not yet begun to fully explore. Just imagine, for example, the top 30 players in Chicago playing the top 30 in Los Angeles in a weekend-long online match. Or an elementary, middle, or high school in one state playing a counterpart school in another state!

Fair play violations—or cheating, as it is more commonly known—continues to be a major concern among players, organizers, and tournament directors. The surge in online play has increased those concerns. To deter cheating and help assure a fair playing environment for all players, US Chess intends to begin posting the results of adjudicated cheating claims. We are working with the Ethics Committee and other committees with sanctioning authority to solidify the format for such postings.

In addition, we have tasked the US Chess Competition Integrity Committee to review the results of completed cases that involved cheating. Their goal is to identify best practices that organizers and tournament directors can implement to deter and detect cheating.

I'll conclude by noting that the 2020 Holiday Season is almost upon us. US Chess will soon launch its annual holiday giving campaign, enabling you to contribute to a wide array of chess initiatives such as our women's program, support for at-risk youth, and general program support. As you contemplate a gift, just remember that if you want your donation to go to US Chess, then give to US Chess. There are many worthwhile charitable organizations, like the US Chess Trust (which is a separate 501(c)(3) organization operating independent of US Chess), but there is only one US Chess. If you have a question about donating to US Chess, please contact Geoff Isaak at [Geoff.Isaak@uschess.org](mailto:Geoff.Isaak@uschess.org).

Stay safe out there!

Yours in chess,  
**Mike Hoffpauir, President**

## THE 2020 EXECUTIVE BOARD



# Life, interrupted

Internet disconnections and server errors are only the latest in a long line of unplanned in-game intermissions.

By GM ANDY SOLTIS

GRANDMASTER GAMES ARE OFTEN hyped as “historic.” This game set a precedent and it’s one we seem doomed to repeat.

## RUY LOPEZ, BREYER VARIATION (C95)

GM Garry Kasparov

GM Jeroen Piket

KasparovChess Grand Prix finals, 02.19.2000

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bb5 a6 4. Ba4 Nf6 5. O-O Be7 6. Re1 b5 7. Bb3 d6 8. c3 O-O 9. h3 Nb8 10. d4 Nbd7 11. Nbd2 Bb7 12. Bc2 Re8 13. Nf1 Bf8 14. Ng3 c5 15. d5 c4 16. Bg5 Qc7 17. Qd2 Reb8



WHITE TO MOVE

Black’s last move was an opening innovation. World champion Garry Kasparov responded **18. Nf5** and waited for a reply. And waited.

After a prolonged delay the arbiter contacted Black and found he was also waiting. There had been a break in the internet connection and 18. Nf5 never reached him.

This was played in the \$20,000 finals of the first prestigious on-line tournament. There were no agreed-upon rules of what to do in case of a technical malfunction.

Deep Junior, the world’s best engine, was playing in this tournament when its Internet Service Provider crashed. Junior was forfeited.

But when the connection was lost in Kasparov versus Piket, the arbiter ruled that the game should be annulled. A new game began, from move one, the next day.

That touched off a furious controversy. What is the fair thing to do when a game cannot be continued? We haven’t come up with a good answer and the rulings have been as contradictory as the Deep Junior and Kasparov games.

In the recent FIDE Online Olympiad (see Sam Shankland’s article beginning on page 16 for more on this event ~ed.), Armenia forfeited a crucial game in the quarterfinals. India forfeited two games in the finals. In both cases it was due to a server outage that wasn’t their fault. But Armenia was knocked out of the tournament (they withdrew in protest ~ed.) and India shared gold medals with Russia.

Before now technical delays were rare and due to major events, such as typhoons, and lesser acts of God, such as broken clocks. Arbiters made up chess law on the fly.

The 1978 World Championship match between GM Anatoly Karpov and GM Viktor Korchnoi set a record for worst weather, suffering 20 major storms and 22 inches of rain on a single day. As Karpov studied the board in the fifth game, Typhoon Emang knocked out power in the playing hall.

The chief arbiter, Lothar Schmid, quickly led Karpov away from the board and stopped the clocks. Schmid knew the game would be quickly resumed because the match organizer had anticipated a blackout by having a standby electrical generator on hand.

Power was restored within a minute and the game was eventually drawn, in a record 124

moves. The enterprising match organizer won praise for his foresight. Four years later he was elected president of FIDE. He was Florencio Campomanes.

Schmid knew what not to do in such a situation, because he was the arbiter when this happened:

## SICILIAN DEFENSE, TAIMANOV VARIATION (B44)

GM Bobby Fischer

GM Tigran Petrosian

Candidate match finals (1), Buenos Aires, 09.30.1971

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 e6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 Nc6 5. Nb5 d6 6. Bf4 e5 7. Be3 Nf6 8. Bg5 Be6 9. N1c3 a6 10. Bxf6 gxf6 11. Na3 d5!! 12. exd5 Bxa3 13. bxa3 Qa5 14. Qd2 O-O-O



WHITE TO MOVE

Fischer had won an astonishing 19 straight games against elite opponents. Petrosian hoped to stop him with his deeply prepared innovation 11. ... d5!! At this moment a blown fuse knocked out the main lights in the playing hall.

Schmid stopped the clocks. Petrosian stood up. But Fischer continued to study the position in the dim light. Petrosian demanded that he step away from the board. But Fischer said he was

## QUIZ FOR NOVEMBER

This year marks the anniversary of another time when chess revived after a long, forced “pause.” The pause was World War II and the revival came in a 1945 10-board match between the United States and Soviet Union. The moves were transmitted by radiotelegraphy and the match was a stunning 15½ - 4½ victory for the USSR. Remarkably, there were no glitches, just long delays in transmissions of the moves.

In each of the six diagrams you are asked to find the fastest winning line of play. This will usually mean the forced win of a decisive amount of material, such as a rook or minor piece. For solutions, see Page 59.

### PROBLEM I.

Isaac Kashdan  
Alexander Kotov



BLACK TO MOVE

### PROBLEM II.

Vasily Smyslov  
Samuel Reshevsky



WHITE TO MOVE

### PROBLEM III.

Arnold Denker  
Mikhail Botvinnik



BLACK TO MOVE

### PROBLEM IV.

Abraham Kupchik  
Vladimir Makogonov



BLACK TO MOVE

### PROBLEM V.

Al Horowitz  
Salo Flohr



WHITE TO MOVE

### PROBLEM VI.

Igor Bondarevsky  
Herman Steiner



BLACK TO MOVE

willing to let his clock run. (During the plague of internet disconnects in 2020, some playing platforms allowed a game to continue if the clock of the disconnected player was allowed to run.)

Eleven minutes passed before the lights returned. Fischer blundered with **15. Bc4?** and was lost after **15. ... Rhg8 16. Rd1.**

But Petrosian was upset. He was not the “Iron Tigran” that he was purported to be. He forgot the winning **16. ... Rxc2!** he had prepared. After 40 minutes he played **16. ... Bf5?** and eventually lost. Fischer’s streak extended to 20 wins.

What do we learn from incidents like this?

(1) *Sudden halts in play are more bearable if we know they won’t last long.*

During the next-to-last round of the 1966 U.S. Open, the players suddenly heard thunderous noise. More than 14,000 Beatles fans had packed into the nearby Seattle Center Coliseum to hear the Fab Four start their evening performance. IM Tony Saidy remembered how the tournament clocks were stopped for 20 minutes until, as expected, things quieted down.

(2) *Some players benefit from delays.*

When Petrosian resigned to GM Svetozar Gligoric in a Belgrade international tournament in 1954, there was such an emotional celebration by Gligoric’s hometown fans that the playing hall had to be cleared by police and the lights turned off. During the blackout, the other players in the tournament were allowed to analyze their

quasi-adjourned games. At least one of them figured out how to win an unclear position.

(3) *Quick resumption is often worse than adjournment.*

In 2011 Vladimir Kramnik was trying to regain his world championship title. He lost the first game of a blitz playoff in a Candidates match. This was a must-win game.

### EQUIPMENT FAILURE

GM Vladimir Kramnik  
GM Teimour Radjabov  
Candidates match, Kazan, 05.09.2011



WHITE TO MOVE

Kramnik had a slight time edge, 25 seconds to Black’s 15 seconds, as the players blitzed out their moves in this drawish position.

The electronic clock couldn’t take the pounding. Suddenly it reset to zero.

“I didn’t know what to do,” Kramnik said afterward. He asked the arbiters for a ruling. But “nowhere was it specifically written what to do in such a situation.”

It took 13 minutes before the arbiters resumed play with a new clock. Kramnik appeared calm. Teimour Radjabov was anything but that.

He quickly fell into *zugzwang*: **61. Bc2 Rd4 62. Bb3 Be7 63. Bc4 Rd6 64. Kg2 Rd2+ 65. Kf3 Rd6 66. Ke4 Rd8? 67. Bd5 Rd6? 68. Rb7!.**

Black has no good moves (68. ... Bf8?? 69. Rf7 mate).

The rest was **68. ... Rd8 69. Rxb6+ Rd6 70. Rb5 Bd8 71. Rb7 Be7 72. Ra7 Rb6 73. Rxa5 Rb4+ 74. Kf3 Rd4 75. Ra6+ Kg7 76. Be4 Rd6 77. Rxd6 Bxd6 78. a5 Bc5 79. a6 Kf6 80. Ke2, Black resigned.**

Today we have powerful engines that make any quasi-adjournment suspicious. But the alternatives often seem worse.

During the Magnus Carlsen International earlier this year, GM Alireza Firouzja was disconnected in a very favorable position against GM Hikaru Nakamura. It took so long to resume that the game became a diplomatic draw.

Firouzja, hailed as the “next Magnus Carlsen,” was evidently upset. He was unrecognizable in losing the next three games, one in 14 moves due to a mouse slip. ♣

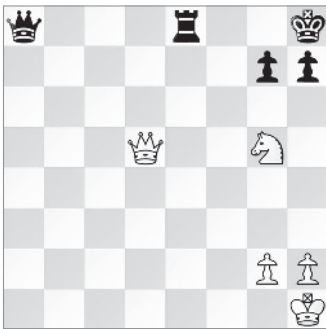
# Finding the Big Move

## When and how to look for it

By **GM LEV ALBURT** and **AL LAWRENCE**

IN THIS MONTH'S COLUMN, WE ARE sharing a position that both shows and tells. It shows you a lot about when to look for tactics and how to calculate them. And it can tell you a lot about your own play and where you can improve.

Start by pausing to evaluate the following position. (As you do, it will evaluate you.) Just note the main pluses and minuses of each side, and then go on to "concrete analysis"—move by move calculations. Take a few minutes before reading on.



WHITE TO MOVE

(By the way, if you already know the *abracadabra* White has in this position, go to the head of the class. But tag along with the rest of us. There's a lot more than a forced sequence of moves to learn from this position.)

### MATERIAL ADVANTAGES

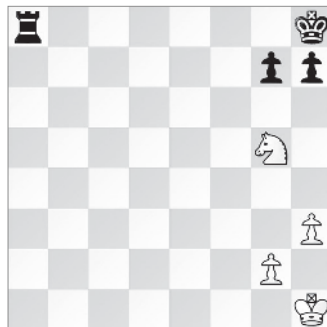
How did you tally the material? If you assigned memorized values to each piece and counted each side up, you're doing this the slow, hard way. We recommend "cancellation." You can see quickly that each side has a queen

that negates each other and two pawns that do the same, all a net zero. You're left with knight against rook—what chess annotators call being "up the Exchange."

### THREATS

This position is all about tactics. White has a *weak back rank*, definitely a tactical disadvantage. If it were Black's move, even better than capturing White's queen would be giving back-rank mate with 1. ... Re1 mate.

White could play 1. Qxa8. Now Black's rook can't execute the mate because it's temporarily pinned. After Black recaptures with 1. ... Rxa8, White has time to make *luft*—German for "air"—for his king with 2. h3. As grim as the long fight ahead appears, White has eliminated the threat of an immediate mate.

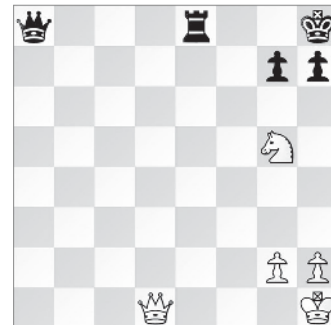


BLACK TO MOVE—FALLBACK POSITION #1

No more mate, but a tough struggle ahead for White.

This is our first *fallback position*. Keep it in mind in case our search finds nothing better.

Another defensive try protecting the back rank is 1. Qd1.

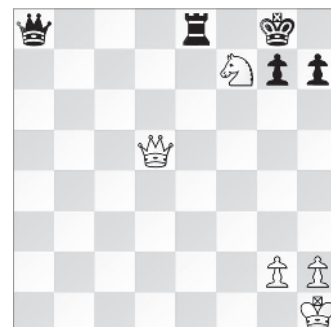


BLACK TO MOVE—FALLBACK POSITION #2: HOMEWORK FOR NEXT MONTH.

This could be fallback position #2. But let's set it aside for now. It offers disappointments, surprises, and tempting blunders all its own, and turns out to be a meaty training position. In preparation for next month's column, see what you can work out without computer help.

Before we begin to analyze and compare fallback positions, let's try to find something better. After all, queen plus knight is a very powerful attacking duo. We know we must begin with check. That's always an important clue.

1. Nf7+ Kg8 (Black's only legal move.)



WHITE TO MOVE SUPPORT POSITION #1

Now our queen still hangs in the middle of the board, so we better have something good. A normal check doesn't work, for instance, 1. Nd6+? Qxd5. We must find a *double check*. We need to calculate a bit—to visualize the moves that could be played.

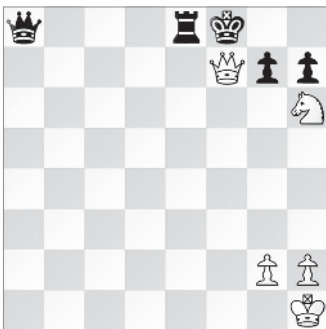
Clearer calculation comes with practice—and you can learn to become a good calculator. A helpful technique during an actual game is the use of *support positions*, what GM Andy Soltis calls “stepping stones.” Our first support position is the previous diagram. Visualize support positions very clearly, keeping them firmly in mind.

“How far should I see ahead?” The famous masters have come up with many cryptic answers. But Richard Reti is perhaps on record with the most provocative response: “One move! But always the right one!” Our suggestion is: *You need to calculate only as far as necessary, and not a half-move longer.*

**2. Nh6+!**

A powerful tactic! *Discovered, double check!* (It would more correctly be called “uncovered” double check.) Despite the fact that both (all) of White's pieces are hanging, neither can be taken because the other would still leave Black's king in check.

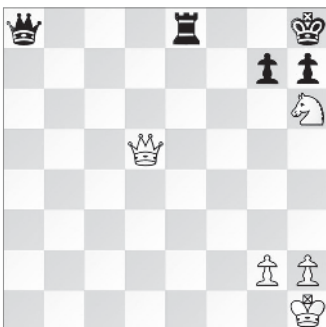
Now if Black chooses the blunder 2. ... Kf8?!, what happens? 3. Qf7 mate! When the enemy king is on the edge of the board, and our queen can move immediately in front of him and not be captured, that's checkmate.



ANALYSIS AFTER 3. Qf7 MATE.

Thus Black must choose his only other move.

**2. ... Kh8**



WHITE TO MOVE  
NEW FALLBACK POSITION

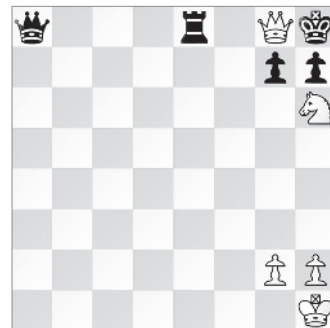
Now we should notice that we can repeat the position by moving our knight back and forth from h6 to f7, making a draw by perpetual check. The position after 2. ... Kh8 thus becomes our new and favorite *fallback position*. As long as we can return to it, we're safe from losing, free to achieve an outcome better than our material disadvantage might suggest. At this point, we can ignore the previous fallback positions, which offer only a worse position for White.

We might see only this far. At such a “turnaround” moment in any game—seeing a way out of what appeared to be an impending loss—it's tempting to grab the opportunity to get out of the game with our skin. But resist such immediate reactions!

After making the move 2. Nh6+! and seeing the response 2. ... Kh8, stop! Re-check the positions you've already analyzed in your mind. Take time for a good look. There's no hurry. You can always make the draw by perpetual. But there may be something better!

If our creative juices are flowing, or we've seen the idea before, we could find a bold and beautiful finisher!

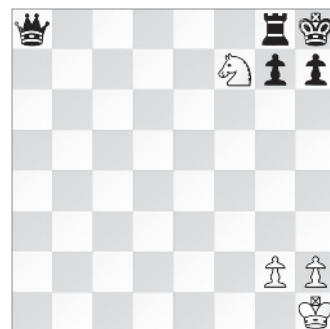
**3. Qg8+!**



BLACK TO MOVE

Black can't take with the king, since he'd be in check from White's knight. So ...

**3. ... Rxg8, allowing 4. Nf7 mate!**



AFTER 4. Nf7 MATE

This is the famous *smothered mate* position. White mates with his last piece. Black's heavy artillery looks on abjectly. All the while, it's

been mate-in-one *against* White! (If only Black wasn't always in check!)

If you see this sequence for the first time, and it doesn't inspire a quick intake of breath and a broad grin if not a giggle, perhaps you should find another hobby! This is the logic, poetry, and explosive surprise of chess condensed into three moves.

So far in this position, we've looked at *counting material, weak back rank, back-rank mate, fallback position, discovered check, double check, support position, and smothered mate.*

Keep the initial position in your mind. Play over the variations living in our initial position until you can recall them all without notes. You can even go to the Al Lawrence YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/user/outexcel> and see GM Lev explain the key ideas in three short video lessons. Then teach all this to one of your friends. We know first-hand that you never learn as much about something until you teach it. ♣

*Did you know you could read archival copies of “Back to Basics” (and all other columns and features)? Go to [uschess.org](http://uschess.org) click on “Chess Life Magazine,” and then “Archives.”*

**SEND IN YOUR GAMES!**

If you are unrated or rated 1799 or below, then GM Lev Alburt and Al Lawrence invite you to send your most instructive game with notes to:

Back to Basics, c/o Chess Life  
PO Box 3967  
Crossville, TN 38557-3967

Or e-mail your material to  
[backtobasics@uschess.org](mailto:backtobasics@uschess.org)

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# Team USA Falls in FIDE Online Olympiad Semi-Finals

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Russia and India share gold  
in controversial final.

By GM SAM SHANKLAND



Coming into the 2020 FIDE Online Olympiad, held from July 24-August 30, I had no clue what to expect. In my previous three Olympiads, my pre-tournament routine was the same as most others. I would arrive at the playing site a few days early, get accustomed to the time change, rest up, and prepare a bit for the event. For the 2016 and 2018 editions, I was joined in Baku and Tbilisi, respectively, by GM Ray Robson and team coach GM Alex Lenderman, and we would try to make sure that we were on our best possible form.

With the COVID-19 situation causing global upheaval, this year I was not expecting there to be an Olympiad at all. And while the online version isn't quite the same thing, especially considering that there will supposedly be a "real" Olympiad again next year, it was still an important event and I was every bit as motivated to bring my best for Team USA.

My first task was getting accustomed to the time control. I've almost exclusively trained to be the best classical player I can be for many years, as I believe that classical chess is chess, and that it is the most important time control to master. I've had some notable successes in classical play, including winning the U.S. Championship in 2018 and reaching a rank of 22nd in the world. But I never was able to reach the same level at rapid chess, and while I am working very hard on my rapid play, I knew that the time control would present a huge challenge.

I've always felt that traveling to events helps me play better—some level of discomfort and unfamiliarity makes it feel more serious, like I am on the road to fight, not at home to relax. Here, the only trip I took was the 10-second walk from my bedroom to my training room. So I made it a point to keep to my normal tournament routine as much as possible, even though I was staying at home. Despite having easy food delivery options and my own kitchen, I ate the same bowl of nonfat Greek yogurt mixed with low sugar granola along with a half banana, exactly 90 minutes before the rounds were scheduled to start.

Bracketing the fact that we were competing online, the tournament format was unlike any Olympiad I had ever played before. With different countries playing from all over the world, there was no way to have everyone competing at one set time. This is why the tournament was broken into stages, with the top teams from each stage qualifying to the next one. As one of the top finishing teams at the previous Olympiad, the U.S. was seeded in the final stage preceding the quarterfinals. We were placed in Division D and faced a three-day schedule with three games each day.

The team makeup was unusual as well. In normal times, an Open Olympiad and a Women's Olympiad run concurrently, and a Junior Olympiad is played at a different time. Here all of the Olympiads were combined into one event! Each team was to field six players in each match, with two open players, two women, one junior, and one junior girl. Reserves were also allowed. The American roster included a total of eight players: GMs Wesley So, Ray Robson, and me for the open slots; IMs Carissa Yip, Anna Zatonskih, and WGM Tatev Abrahamyan for the women's slots; and GM Jeffery Xiong and IM Annie Wang for the junior positions. Of my seven teammates, I had only ever played on a team with two of them before!

Thankfully our team chemistry was great, due in no small part to the leadership of our team captain IM John Donaldson. Despite not often playing on teams with each other before, the whole team knew each other well, attending many of the same tournaments and chess camps over the years, even across the (small) generational gaps. We got along great and had several remote Zoom meetings before the start of the event, discussing preparation, fundraising, and organizational issues. Sometimes in team events it can feel like six separate individual games are being played. Not here.

The tournament started well enough for Team USA, although it not without some drama on my end. Twenty minutes before the start of the first round, I received an urgent email from

my homeowner's association (HOA) alerting me that there was a leak coming from my downstairs bathroom, damaging the ceiling of the carport underneath, and leaking onto the car parked there!

It wasn't a massive issue, but one that still had to be addressed right away, and meanwhile I had to play my game. I frantically called both the HOA groundskeeper and my father, let them know about the situation, left my door unlocked, and started playing. In the middle of the game, I could hear noises coming from the bathroom, and trusted that everything was in good hands.

My first game of the tournament was probably my most interesting one. But it was badly misplayed at several moments, as can be expected in rapid, and both sides missed a lot of chances.

### SICILIAN DEFENSE, TAIMANOV VARIATION (B48)

GM Antonios Pavlidis (2543)

GM Sam Shankland (2691)

2020 FIDE Online Olympiad Division D (1.3), 08.21.2020

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 e6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 Nc6

With all of the commotion going on downstairs as well as an unexpected pairing, I did realize that I was playing the Taimanov against a guy who just wrote a book on it! Thankfully, I managed to survive the opening in one piece.

5. Nc3 Qc7 6. Be3 a6 7. Nxc6 Qxc6 8. Be2 b5 9. Bf3 Bb7 10. O-O Qc7 11. Re1 Bd6 12. g3 Nf6 13. Bd4 e5 14. Be3 h6

Another idea is 14. ... 0-0 as there was no need to prevent Be3-g5. After 15. Bg5 b4! White is still unable to get his knight to the d5 square.

15. a4 b4 16. Nd5 Nxd5 17. exd5 O-O



This is exactly the kind of fascinating position that rapid chess simply cannot do justice to. White has a powerful continuation that secures a clear advantage, but it is difficult to find. Difficult, but certainly doable for a strong player in a slow game. But with no time, forget about it.

18. Qd2

White could have secured a nice advantage

by immediately pushing 18. a5! without bothering to playing Qd1–d2 first. I was not at all worried about this move during the game, but my intended best response—18. ... Rac8—had a flaw. At this point, we can see why White wanted his queen on d2—it makes it easier to defend his c2 pawn with Rec1. Now, 19. Rac1 would drop the a5–pawn, and 19. Re2 leaves the rook on a very awkward square after the natural ... f7–f5, when White’s bishops look very shaky. But White has a very powerful idea: 19. c3! bxc3 20. bxc3 and White is clearly better with an invasion on the b-file coming. After the natural 20. ... Qxc3 21. Qb1! Black must lose a tempo on his bishop, and after 21. ... Ba8 22. Qf5! and it’s all over but the crying as mating threats loom large.

**18. ... f5!**

Now Black has a lot of counterplay.

**19. a5 Rac8 20. Rec1 e4 21. Bb6 Qb8 22. Bg2 Rce8 23. Re1 Re5! 24. Rad1 Rxd5**



Black has won a key central pawn, and should easily win the game if he could consolidate. In a classical game I would expect to still have a fair amount of time on move 25, and to win routinely. But in rapid, not so much!

**25. Qe2 Rxd1 26. Rxd1 Rf6 27. Bd4 Rf7 28. Qc4 Bf8 29. Be5**



**29. ... d6?**

I should have played 29. ... Qd8! when White cannot prevent ... d7–d5. Black should win.

**30. Bf1!**

A powerful resource. Of course the bishop

is immune to capture thanks to the d1–rook’s ability to come to d7.

**30. ... Qc7 31. Bf4**

I had calculated up to this point when I had played 29. ... d6, and thought that I should routinely win with 31. ... g5 followed by 32. ... d5. Unfortunately I missed a nasty resource.

**31. ... g5 32. Bxd6! Bxd6 33. Qe6!**

Black is facing massive threats, and the g5–pawn no longer being on g7 will prove to be his undoing.

**33. ... Bc8!**

I found the only move. 33. ... Bf8 falls to 34. Bc4! when the threat of Rd1–d7 compels 34. ... Bc8. But now, since Black’s pawn is on g5 instead of g7, White has a better move than resigning. 35. Qg6+! Bg7 36. Bxf7+ Qxf7 37. Rd8+ and White wins.

**34. Qxd6 Kh7?**

Now I am definitely lost, but with the clocks so low, I was able to make some counterplay. Black should survive after 34. ... Qxd6! 35. Rxd6 Rc7.

**35. Bxa6 Bxa6 36. Qxa6 e3!**

The best try. If your position is bad, confuse your opponent!

**37. fxe3?**

With the clocks ticking down, my opponent missed the win. 37. Rd6! exf2+ 38. Kf1! would have won for White.

**37. ... Qxc2 38. Rd6 Qc1+ 39. Kf2 Qxb2+ 40. Kg1 Qc1+ 41. Kf2 Qc2+ 42. Kg1 Qb1+ 43. Kf2 f4 44. exf4 gxf4 45. Qd3+ Qxd3 46. Rxd3 fxg3+ 47. Kxg3 Ra7 48. Rb3 Rxa5 49. Rxb4, Draw agreed.**

The game turned out to be largely irrelevant, as the rest of the team did very well to put away our Greek counterparts. I never would have guessed that this match would be our most important one. The Greek team ended up finishing second in the division!

I was able to sit out round two to deal with the plumbing problem, and came back to win a nice game in round three. The team was cruising along very nicely. Making her Olympiad debut, Carissa Yip really got on a roll, winning four games in a row to start the event. This was my favorite.

**GIUOCO PIANO (C53)**

IM Carissa Yip (2421)  
IM Lisandra Teresa Ordaz Valdes (2369)  
2020 FIDE Online Olympiad Division D  
(5.1), 08.22.2020

**1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. d4 exd4 4. Bc4 Bc5 5. c3 Nf6 6. e5**

Through a somewhat unusual move order. Carissa has taken the game into one of the modern mainlines of the Italian. She really put on a clinic for how to handle the resulting pawn structures.

**6. ... d5 7. Bb5 Ne4 8. cxd4 Bb6 9. O–O O–O 10. Nc3 Bg4 11. Be3 f6 12. exf6 Nxc3 13. bxc3 Qxf6 14. Be2 Rae8**

At first glance, the position looks pretty dry, and it seems that Black should be totally fine due to her active pieces and general lack of weaknesses. But White is not without ideas, and Carissa showed them very nicely.

**15. h3 Bxf3?**

Black makes her first mistake in ceding the bishop pair. There was nothing wrong with ducking the bishop back with 15. ... Bh5 when Black looks okay.

**16. Bxf3 Ne7 17. Qd2 c6**



Black’s plan is clear enough. She will play ... Ne7–f5 next, challenging the e3 bishop, who will struggle to avoid being exchanged. Once this happens and White’s bishop pair advantage is gone, Black will certainly be fine. Carissa found the best path forward.

**18. Bh5!**

An excellent decision. White provokes the g7–pawn forwards.

**18. ... Ng6?**

The knight will be misplaced here. Black should have tried 18. ... g6 but after 19. Bg4 Nf5 20. Bg5! we see the point. White’s bishop is much more secure on g5 now that Black’s pawn has been pushed up to g6—there will never be any ... h7–h6 advances to worry about.

**19. Rab1!**

Another strong move. White prevents Black from rerouting the blunted b6–bishop to the more active c7–square.

**19. ... Qd6 20. Rfe1**

I would not have minded playing prophylactically with 20. g3, once again preventing ... Bb6–c7 from coming. Carissa’s move is fine too of course.



WGM JENNIFER YU TALKS WITH IMS AND OLYMPIANS CARISSA YIP AND ANNIE WANG AT THE 2019 U.S. CHAMPIONSHIP.

20. ... Bc7 21. g3 b5



22. Bg5!

Another good decision. Once all of the rooks come off, White's light square bishop will become very dangerous.

22. ... Re4

According to the machine, 22. ... Qd7 was a better option, but after something like 23. Rxe8 Rxe8 24. Re1 I would be very worried about Bh5-g4 coming next.

23. Rxe4 dxe4 24. Bd1!

A clever regrouping. The bishop did its job on h5, provoking Black's knight to the dreadful g6 square, and now that the knight is no longer pinned, the bishop can transfer to the c2 square.

24. ... h6 25. Be3 Kh7 26. Bc2 Qe6



I started watching the game at this moment, and I was worried. White's position looks very difficult—Black is ready for some combination of ... Rf8-f3, ... Ng6-h4, and a mating attack is on the way. Carissa found the best way once more.

27. Kg2! Rf3 28. Rh1!

White overprotects the h3-pawn, preventing ... Ng6-h4+ from coming. The position looks passive, but it is only temporary. White is ready for Qd2-e2 next, threatening Bc2xe4 and expelling the active rook. Black can hardly do anything about it.

28. ... Rf8 29. Qd1!

The queen is on the way to g4.

29. ... Kh8 30. Qg4 Qxg4 31. hxg4 Ne7

Saving the e4-pawn would not have changed

the result. After 31. ... Re8 32. g5 White easily wins after crashing through on the kingside.

32. Bxe4 Kg8 33. Rb1 a6 34. g5 Nd5 35. Bxd5+ cxd5 36. gxh6 gxh6 37. Bxh6 Rc8 38. Bd2 Ba5 39. Re1 Rc6 40. g4 Bc7 41. g5 Kf7 42. Rh1 Kg7 43. Rh6 Rg6 44. Kf3 Bd8 45. Rxc6+ Kxc6 46. Kg4 a5 47. f4 Be7 48. f5+ Kf7 49. f6 Bf8 50. Kf5, Black resigned.

After the first two days of the group stage, we had won all six of our matches. The last day was a bit more stressful as we dropped a match to Poland, but a draw with Peru and a win over Canada clinched us our place in the quarterfinals against Ukraine.

Coming into the Ukraine match, I knew that I had a big challenge ahead of me. Their second board, GM Anton Korobov, is a real rapid specialist, and while I would think I'd be a clear favorite against him in classical, rapid time controls are another matter. Luckily my recent work paid off.

I had published an opening repertoire on the website *Chessable.com* on the Semi-Slav some months back, and using my analysis, I was able to drop a really nasty novelty on Korobov, reaching a winning position. But once again, the rapid time control meant that the quality dropped and a chance was missed.

SEMI-SLAV, MERAN VARIATION (D45)

GM Anton Korobov (2688)  
GM Sam Shankland (2691)  
2020 FIDE Online Olympiad Quarterfinal (2.41), 08.28.2020

1. d4 Nf6 2. Nf3 d5 3. e3 c6 4. c4 e6 5. Nc3 Nbd7 6. Qc2 Bd6 7. Bd3 dxc4 8. Bxc4 O-O 9. O-O b5 10. Be2 Bb7 11. e4 e5 12. dxe5 Nxe5 13. Nh4 g6 14. f4 Neg4 15. g3 Bc5+ 16. Kh1 b4 17. Nd1 Bd4 18. Bf3 c5 19. e5?!

I think this is a little inaccurate and gives Black some extra options. More challenging is 19. Qg2 but after 19. ... Qd7 20. h3 Black has the same idea as in the game: 20. ... h5!, which would transpose after 21. e5 Nd5.

19. ... Nd5 20. Qg2 Qd7 21. h3



21. ... h5!

This is a novelty. Surprising as it is to give up a piece here, White will not be able to keep the long diagonal closed.

22. hxg4 hxg4 23. Be4

If White's bishop were forced off the e4-square, he would face a disaster along the long diagonal. Black has an energetic way to make this happen.

23. ... f5! 24. exf6 e.p. Rae8!

The threat of 25. ... Rxe4 is absurdly powerful.

25. Kh2 Rxf6

I knew that Black was winning here from my preparation, and the computer, which is almost never wrong in direct positions such as these, confirmed my assessment. Now I navigated my advantage to a point, but could not find the final touch under such short time constraints.

26. Nf2 g5!

Black plays with maximal energy.

27. fxg5!

Certainly the best practical try. 27. Nxc4 briefly concerned me before I saw the strong reply 27. ... Rxe4! when White is busted. For example, after 28. Qxe4 Qxc4 the h4-knight is all but trapped, when ... Re6-e2 is on the way, and White will never be able to use his a1-rook or c1-bishop. Time to resign.

27. ... Rxf2 28. Rxf2 Bxf2 29. Qxf2

Trying to save the e4-bishop before taking on f2 with 29. Bf5? might be tempting, but after 29. ... Qb5! White cannot stop a rook from landing on e2, and he can comfortably resign.

29. ... Rxe4 30. Bd2

I had already burned a fair amount of time on the previous few moves, and was down to eight minutes or so for the rest of the game. The winning move here is difficult, but far from impossible to find in a classical game; in rapid, however, it proved a bridge too far. White is ready to play Ra1-e1 next against almost anything Black can try, reaching a defensible position. So what is the breakthrough?

30. ... Qe6?

I missed my chance.

Finding 30. ... Nf4!! would have put the cherry on top of a great game. The point is that Black is threatening ... Re4-e2. White cannot respond with Ra1-e1 on pain of ... Nf4-d3, and as things stand the knight cannot be captured by either the bishop or the pawn. If 31. Bxf4 (31. gxf4 Qd3! and White will be crushed on the h3 square.) 31. ... Qe8!! is the final touch. Now that the bishop has left d2, White cannot play Ra1-e1, and as such, cannot prevent ... Re4-e2 finishing the game. Note that 31. ...



GM ALEXANDER GRISCHUK



GM RAY ROBSON



GM JEFFERY XIONG



GM WESLEY SO

PHOTOS: GRISCHUK, SO, XIONG, (SLCC / OOTES); ROBSON (SLCC / KELLAR).

Qe6? looks very tempting, but fails to achieve the desired goal. The point is that if the queen does not stay on e8 to cover the back rank, White gets enough counterplay to hang on: 32. Rd1! Re2 33. Rd8+ Kg7 34. Be5+!! Qxe5 35. Rd7+ and Black cannot escape the checks on the seventh and eighth ranks.

**31. Re1 Rxe1 32. Qxe1 Qxe1 33. Bxe1 c4**

Black is a little better in this endgame, but White should hold without a ton of trouble.

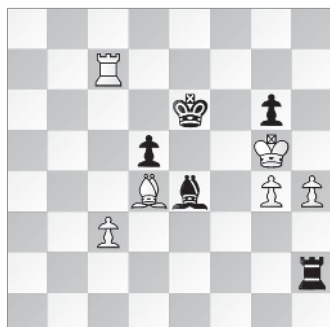
**34. Nf5 c3 35. bxc3 bxc3 36. Nh6+ Kh7 37. Nxg4 Kg6 38. Nf2 Ba6 39. Nh3 c2 40. Bd2 Nb4 41. Nf4+ Kf5 42. g4+ Ke4 43. a3 Na2 44. g6 Bc4 45. g7 c1=Q 46. Bxc1 Nxc1 47. Ng6 Nd3 48. Kg3 Ne5 49. Ne7 a5 50. g8=Q Bxg8 51. Nxg8 Nc4 52. a4 Nb6 53. Ne7 Nxa4 54. Nc6 Nc5 55. Nxa5 Nd7 56. g5 Kf5 57. g6 Kxg6, draw.**

Painful as this miss was, the team played very well and won the first of the two semifinal matches. I redeemed myself for my missed chance by winning nicely in the second game with the white pieces, and the rest of the team followed suit, giving us a clear win over Ukraine. Wesley seemed to be on great form, beating both Korobov and GM Vasyl Ivanchuk to score a clean 2-0 over a very strong team. The biggest challenge was still ahead: we had to play Russia the next morning.

The Russian top seeds were certainly having a good event, and their squad was packed with super elite players who also seem to excel at rapid play. In the first game, I found myself facing GM Daniil Dubov, a very creative player who “only” ever made it to 2700 or so in classical, but was once World Rapid Champion. I played a really great game, but with the U.S. down 3-2, I had one of the worst oversights in my life in the waning moments.

**TIME TROUBLES (C11)**

GM Sam Shankland (2691)  
GM Daniil Dubov (2699)  
2020 FIDE Online Olympiad Semifinal (3.21), 08.29.2020

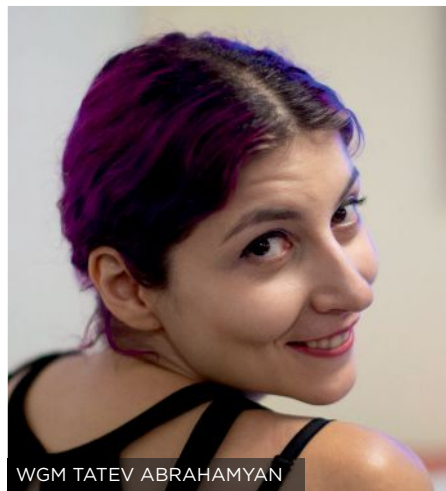


WHITE TO MOVE

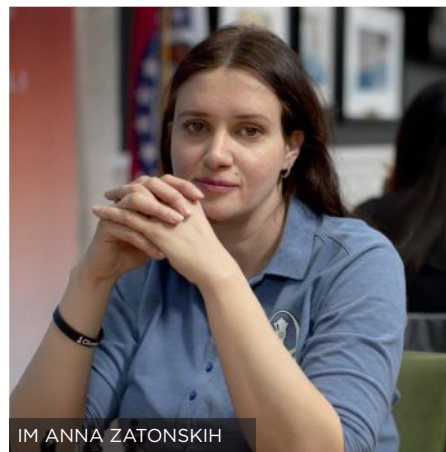
I had cleanly outplayed my opponent up to this point, and White should be routinely winning in this endgame. A good start is finding an immediate checkmate.

**40. Bc5!**

White secures the d6-square and is ready for Rc7-e7 next, giving mate. Black desperately tried pitching a pawn to give his king some breathing room.



WGM TATEV ABRAHAMYAN



IM ANNA ZATONSKIH

**40. ... d4 41. Re7+?!**

One of the ‘benefits’ of essentially playing on the increment. This is not a huge mistake as White is still routinely winning—he takes a second pawn and cuts Black’s king off from the kingside. But the first mistake is the one that makes the win harder. White should take over the d5 square once again with 41. c4 and there is nothing to be done about mate next move.

**41. ... Kd5 42. Bxd4 Bd3 43. Re5+ Kc4 44. Re3 Rg2 45. Kf4 Rh2 46. Kg5 Rg2 47. Rf3 Be2 48. Rf4 Kd5 49. Bf2 Kc6 50. c4 Bd3 51. c5 Be2 52. Bd4 Kd5 53. Be3 Kc6 54. Kxg6 Bxg4 55. Rf6+ Kd5 56. Rd6+ Ke4 57. Bg5 Bf5+ 58. Kf6 Rf2 59. Kg7 Ke5 60. Rf6 Rc2 61. c6 Be4**

Despite missing the mate in two, I did a fine job closing out the game while playing on a five second increment, but with just a few seconds, disaster struck.

**62. c7??**

Of course checking first with 62. Bf4+ wins routinely. White gets c6-c7 next and Black can resign.

**62. ... Rxc7+**

Check! And there’s no time for the skewer with the bishop. Now the game is drawn.

**63. Rf7. Draw agreed.**

This was a very tough pill for me to swallow, and worse, I had to play again some 15 minutes later! At Captain Donaldson’s suggestion, I did some pushups to try to blow off some steam. Alas, it was to no avail.

In the final round, I blundered away another (nearly) winning position against GM Ian Nepomniachtchi. This proved to be the critical half point lost, as the team drew the match overall. It was especially painful to see the brilliant wins that Jeffery Xiong and Wesley So produced in the final round go to waste due to my own difficulties. I particularly liked Jeffery’s fighting spirit, showing the kind of tenacious resourcefulness in bad positions that makes him such a tremendous rapid player.

**NIMZO-INDIAN DEFENSE (E32)**

GM Jeffery Xiong (2709)  
GM Andrey Esipenko (2682)  
2020 FIDE Online Olympiad Semifinal (3.22), 08.29.2020

**1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 e6 3. Nc3 Bb4 4. Qc2 0-0 5. e4 d5 6. e5 Ne4 7. Bd3 c5 8. Nf3 cxd4 9. Nxd4 Nd7 10. Bf4 Qh4 11. g3 Qh5 12. h4 Nxe5 13. Be2 Ng4 14. Bxg4 Qxg4 15. f3 Qh5 16. g4 Qg6 17. fxe4 e5 18. 0-0-0 Bxc3 19. Nf5 Bxf5 20. gxf5 Qa6 21. Qxc3 d4 22. Qb3 exf4 23. Rxd4 Rad8 24. Qd3 Rxd4 25. Qxd4 Rc8**



Something went badly wrong in the opening for Jeffery and his position looks really bad. The white king is quite weak, Black’s f4-pawn can become quite dangerous at any moment, and the White position is full of weaknesses. I can’t imagine saving this in a classical game, but in rapid, Jeffery got the job done. In the end, he won in fine style, showing exactly how to handle such situations.



**26. b3!**

Saving the right pawn. Black would have a much easier task if White has saved the a2-pawn instead. After 26. Kb1 Qxc4 White's odds of saving this rook endgame are approximately zero.

**26. ... Qxa2 27. Rd1 g6 28. f6!**

The computer really does not care for this move, but in practice, I think it is definitely the best decision. Black is technically winning, and the only way White will save the game is if Black messes it up. Giving him things to worry about, like back rank mates, is a good way to entice a mistake.

**28. ... h5 29. Rd3!**

Another good move, defending the b3-pawn and preventing the ... f4-f3 advance. The computer hates it, but it makes Black's winning task much more difficult. I would expect Esipenko to easily win this position in a classical game, but rapid is a different story.

**29. ... Qg2?**

A very understandable move. Black wants to play ... f4-f3-f2-f1. What could be more natural? But now Jeffery sets his plan in motion. The machine points out that 29. ... Re8! wins routinely. The point is that White is not able to force the rook into passivity with Qd4-d7, as it will be able to take on e4 instead of relocating to a bad square on the back rank.

**30. Qd7! Rf8 31. Qe7!**

All of a sudden, thanks to White playing 28. f6, the weak back rank is a real cause of concern for Black. Now Qe7xf8+ is a huge threat.

**31. ... Qg1+ 32. Kc2 Qb6 33. Rd6!**

White hits the queen with a gain of tempo. She must stay in touch with the d8-square to prevent Qe7xf8+ ending the game.

**33. ... Qa5 34. Rd5! Qb6 35. Rd6 Qa5 36. Rd5 Qb6 37. Rg5!**

Declining the draw. White is ready for 38. Rxc6+ next, and Black is in a bad way. Esipenko could have saved the game with a long sequence of computer moves, but he is only human.

**37. ... Qf2+**

According to the machines, 37. ... Rc8!! is the only move that holds. I won't pretend to understand the reason why, or any of the resulting variations.

**38. Kb1 Qe1+ 39. Ka2 Qd2+ 40. Ka3!**

White's king moves up the board, and soon the checks run out.

**40. ... Qc1+ 41. Ka4 Qa1+ 42. Kb4 Qe1+****43. Kb5! a6+ 44. Kb6 Qe3+ 45. Kc7**

No more checks—game over. A great practical effort from Jeffery.

**45. ... Qc3 46. Rxc6+ Kh7 47. Rg7+ Kh6 48. Qxf8 Qe5+ 49. Qd6, Black resigned.**

Wesley's final round win over GM Alexander Grischuk was an absolute marvel to behold.

**GIUOCO PIANO (C53)**

GM Wesley So (2770)

GM Alexander Grischuk (2777)

2020 FIDE Online Olympiad Semifinal (3.22), 08.29.2020

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bc4 Bc5 4. c3 Nf6 5. d3 d6 6. 0-0 0-0 7. Re1 a5 8. h3 Ba7 9. Bb3 h6 10. Nbd2 Be6 11. Bc2 Re8 12. Nf1 d5 13. exd5 Bxd5 14. Ng3 Qd6 15. Nf5 Qd7 16. N3h4 Ne7 17. Rxe5 Nxf5 18. Rxf5 Qe6 19. d4 Qe1+ 20. Kh2 c5



White is a pawn up, but Black's activity is through the roof. Black's last move not only pressures White's center, but also creates the subtle threat of ... Ba7-b8+ at any moment, putting White's king in serious peril. Despite the enormous pressure on White's position, Wesley flawlessly navigated his way through the complications and found the best move.

**21. Bxh6!**

Let the tactics fly.

**21. ... Bb8+**

If 21. ... Qxd1 22. Rxd1 gxh6 it turns out that taking the bishop doesn't help Black, as his knight is hanging.

**22. Bf4!**

Another good move. White's pieces all seem very loose, but Black cannot take them. 22. g3!? is also plausible.

**22. ... Qxd1 23. Rxd1 Be6 24. Rxf6!**

The rook was done for anyway, so White should at least cripple the kingside structure.

**24. ... gxf6 25. Bxb8 Raxb8 26. d5! Bd7 27. Rd2!**

White has two pawns for the Exchange, and

two very good ones at that, but the main reason his position is so good is the f5-square. Once White exchanges off the bishops, plants his knight on f5, secures it with g4, and advances d5-d6, will the knight be any worse than one of Black's rooks? I don't think so!

**27. ... b5 28. Bf5 Rbd8 29. Bxd7 Rxd7 30. Nf5 Kh7 31. g4**

White is strategically winning. The Black rooks look pretty but can't do anything effective, while the f5-knight is the boss of the board.

**31. ... Re4 32. Kg3 b4 33. d6 bxc3 34. bxc3 Rc4 35. Rd3 Ra4 36. Re3!**

The rook comes to e7 for the decisive final invasion.

**36. ... Rd8 37. Re7 Rc4 38. Rxf7+ Kg8 39. Rxf6 Rxc3+ 40. Kh4 c4 41. g5 Rd3 42. g6 Rf8 43. Kg5 c3 44. Ne7+ Kg7 45. Nf5+ Kg8 46. Rxf8+ Kxf8 47. Kf6 Rxd6+ 48. Nxd6 c2 49. g7+ Kg8 50. Nf5 c1=Q 51. Ne7+, Black resigned.**

A truly brilliant game, start to finish.

This painful match brought Team USA's run at the 2020 FIDE Online Olympiad to a close. And then ... well, things got weird.

The final match between Russia and India was declared drawn when a major internet issue left a lot of India without internet access for several hours. FIDE declared the teams joint winners rather than forcing some of the Indian players to forfeit their games in the middle. There was a similar issue for the Armenian team in the quarterfinals, who quit the tournament in protest when one of their players lost on time in a drawn position after losing his connection to the server.

I think FIDE did a fine job with this tournament and made the very best of an unpleasant pandemic situation. Still, the Online Olympiad cannot replace the "real" Olympiad, whose return I eagerly await once the state of the world is in a better place.

Between connection issues, some cheating incidents and disqualifications in the early rounds, time changes forcing players to play at unusual hours, mouse slips, and last but not least, the very fast time control and degradation of quality of play, I believe that the chess world badly needs face-to-face tournaments back. Until then, we are fortunate to be able to play events like these. While I produced several good games, I really wish I could have played better on the final day.

To Wesley, Ray, Jeffery, Anna, Tatev, Carissa, and Annie: it was an honor to play alongside you all. You were the best teammates I ever could have asked for, and if we ever have another mixed gender/age team event, online or over the board, I'd love to play alongside you again. ♠



# MASTER CLASS: Analyzing Your Games with Engines

GM JACOB AAGAARD, SAINT LOUIS 2019

## Killer tips from an elite chess writer and trainer

By **GM JACOB AAGAARD**

It is a truism repeated by many of the world's greatest players: the analysis of one's own games is a certain path to improvement. (GM Alex Yermolinsky even wrote a whole book on the topic, *The Road to Chess Improvement*.) And they were right.

There are of course many ways to improve your game. Mark Dvoretsky used to say that "training" was the most effective, which means solving lots of exercises. In my experience these two methods—game analysis and solving exercises—along with opening preparation are the main methods of chess improvement. Often players, even the very top players, will prefer

one or two of these methods of improvement and neglect the third.

Each of these improvement methods have their own challenges. In this article we shall look at the art of analyzing your own games with an engine. But before we move on to the engine part, let's talk about what we should do before we turn on the machine.

The limitations of the engine are not immediately obvious, as the machine has a hypnotic effect that leads to people turning their brains off the moment they press Alt+F2 to turn on the engine. Here is a snapshot of those limitations:

PHOTO: ERIC ROSEN

## The Limitations of Engine Analysis

- The engine does not explain why a move is good.
- The engine does not focus on the variations we need to see in order to make a decision during the game.
- The engines are hardly ever wrong, but in a wonderful Minority Report kind of way, they often disagree with one another.
- The engines have horizons. They will give you one evaluation at the root move, and when you put the suggested moves on the board, they will give you another. (This is known in the literature as the 'horizon effect.' ~ed.)
- The engines do not have any sense of practicality.

My recommendation has for a long time been to approach your own games in the following way.

## How to Analyze Your Own Games

1. Have a post-mortem or a chat with your opponent after the game ends. Everyone did this when I was growing up. But just yesterday IM Andrew Greet told me that when he lost to GM Fabiano Caruana at the 2016 Olympiad, the U.S. number one greedily agreed to analyze the game, telling Andrew that it had been two years since anyone had agreed to discuss the game afterwards with him. (Note: at the moment where many tournaments are online, this forgotten ritual is virtually impossible. Pun intended.)
2. Put the game into ChessBase and put in all the things you were thinking about, or talked about with your opponent, after the game. It is too soon to turn off the engine! You want to make sure that you keep the flow of human ideas open for as long as possible.
3. Analyze your game with the engine after the tournament. It is the last part we are going to talk about a bit in this article.

Let's start with the obvious.

## INTERMEZZO

Before we move on, you will get the most out of this article if you try to solve these four positions. White is to move in all of them. In the first three he has to win, and in the fourth he has to survive. Positions one and four are very tricky, while positions two and three are more friendly.

An important note is that while positions two and three follow from position one, it does not mean that you should try to find a path from one to the others. This attempt to game the system will not give you the results you wish for.

### Exercise 1:



WHITE TO MOVE

### Exercise 2:



WHITE TO MOVE

### Exercise 3:



WHITE TO MOVE

### Exercise 4:



WHITE TO MOVE

## WHAT THE COMPUTER TELLS YOU IS NOT THE WHOLE STORY

Stockfish may tell you that only one position is playable in a given position. But if you sit with the same position at the board, you may think that five moves look reasonable ... or that none do! I have one-move exercises in my files that GM Sam Shankland and other top players have routinely failed to solve. Naturally Stockfish sees the moves immediately, every time. What it cannot do is tell you if a grandmaster would have seen them immediately too, or if it would have been challenging.

Not that it stops most engine users from deeming themselves omniscient! I will avoid talking about the number of times I have witnessed spectators — real weakies, as was said in the old American vernacular according to my editor — berating grandmasters for not finding the (so-called) 'obvious' computer moves. I will also not mention the number of

times people have said this kind of thing to my face. People shooting off their mouths is nothing new.

To try to illustrate the difficulties in learning to use the engine well, I want to show you a fascinating game from one of the training camps we had this summer. I was introduced to many strong American juniors in these online camps, making it quite fitting that I publish this article in the national magazine of US Chess.

I have chosen this particular game for a number of reasons. First of all, Jason Lu had annotated the game for a class assignment reasonably well and put real effort into it. The omissions are thus presented here as an illustration for the scope for improvement and not meant as criticism at all. It's also for this reason that I have chosen a game where the student won. If this is the first time you will see your name in a big magazine, it is infinitely preferable to be on the winning side. Finally,

the game is really interesting, although in all honesty, most games are if you dig deep and try to understand what is really happening in them.

The two key moments in this game are on moves 19 and 33.

## SICILIAN DEFENSE, SCHEVENINGEN VARIATION (B83)

Brewington Hardaway (2217)

Jason Lu (2170)

Marshall Chess Club Championship (5),  
12.10.2019

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 d6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 Nf6  
5. Nc3 a6 6. Be2 e6 7. a4 Be7 8. O-O O-O  
9. Be3 Qc7 10. f4 b6 11. Bf3 Bb7 12. Qe1  
Nc6 13. Kh1 Nb4?



A small positional mistake. Black is wanting to play ... d6-d5, but he leaves White too much freedom in the center to build an attack.

The right reaction was 13. ... Nxd4! 14. Bxd4 e5. After 15. Be3, I would intuitively go for 15. ... b5!?, but looking in the database I found the following forgotten gem: 15. ... Bc6!?



A nice flexible move. After 16. g4? White does not have full development and thus cannot justify this reaction. Play continued:

16. ... Qb7 17. Bd2 d5! (This was the start of a sweeping annihilation of the greatest Indonesian player of all time.) 18. exd5 Nxd5 19. Qxe5 Rad8!? (19. ... Bf6! 20. Qe2 Nxc3 21. bxc3 Rad8 and Black has a big advantage) 20. Nxd5 Rxd5! 21. Bxd5 Bxd5+ 22. Kg1 Qd7 23. Qf5 Bc5+ 24. Rf2 Qd6!? (24. ... Qc6!) 25. Re1? (White cracks under the pressure. 25. Qd3! was right, with an unclear position.)



25. ... Bb7! 26. Be3 Re8! 27. Qd3 Qxd3  
28. cxd3 Rxe3 29. Rd1 Bf3, White resigned.  
Utut Adianto-GM Jim Tarjan, Jakarta 1983.

### 14. Qg3 Rfe4?

Jason did not like this move, as it weakens the defense of the f7-pawn. As we shall soon see, this is more than hypothetical.

Jason did not investigate the outcome of 14. ... d5 15. e5 Ne4, which I guess was his plan. After 16. Bxe4 dxe4 17. f5 it must have been clear to him during the game that things were not going well. Black can of course play 15. ... Nd7, but this was not what he wanted with 13. ... Nb4, so we shall just say that White is much better.

14. ... Nd7!? could be a possible move, anticipating the e4-e5 break. White should be better. As the knight has abandoned the control of the d5-square, it is logical to play 15. f5!?, but also bringing in the rook from d1 seems logical. Here play can soon become sharp: 15. ... e5 16. Nde2 Rfc8 (or 16. ... Nxc2!? 17. Bh6 Bf6 18. Rac1 Kh8 19. Bd2 b5! 20. Rxc2 b4 21. Rfc1 bxc3 22. Nxc3) 17. Rac1 Bc6! and White does not appear to be better at all.

### 15. Rae1 Rad8?

A very natural move made probably without too much thinking.

Stockfish suggests that 15. ... Rf8!? is the best option for Black here. I do not think anyone, besides GM Lev Polugaevsky, has ever been brave enough to admit their mistake in this way.



### 16. e5!

White strikes in the center.

### 16. ... dxe5

It is undesirable to open the f-line, but after 16. ... Nfd5 17. Nxd5 Nxd5 18. f5! tremendous anarchy is unleashed, with a morbid ending awaiting Black.

### 17. fxe5 Nfd5

Stockfish is interested in 17. ... Bxf3?!, but humans know that while the position after 18. exf6 Qxg3 19. hxg3 Bxf6 20. Nxf3 may be “objectively” better than the game continuation, White has no real chance to go wrong and should convert the extra piece without showing too much muscle. Curiously Leela agrees.

### 18. Bh5!

A nice attacking move. White could also have moved forward a bit less energetically without ruining anything with: 18. Bh6!? g6 19. Ne4 and Black is subject to a strong attack.

### 18. ... g6 19. Nxe6!

Jason explained that he had completely missed this move.

19. Rxf7 Bh4! he had seen. The complications are certainly going wrong for White then, although he is not yet worse.



AFTER 19. Nxe6

This is our first moment of interest.

### 19. ... Bh4!

“The only move,” declared Jason in his annotations. The computer confirmed that this is indeed the highest rated move. But was it the most practical choice? At this point Black admits defeat, gives up a pawn, and hopes for the opponent to make mistakes later. In the game the strategy was successful, but all who succeed in laying a simple trap would do well to remember this: if your opponent fell for this trick, he might as well have been defeated with sound moves too.

In order to determine if Jason’s move was indeed the best practical decision, we would have to analyze the game. Jason had provided no variations as a justification of the correctness of White’s sacrifice. Not doubting the kid, I decided to check out the variations and quickly found them to be anything but straightforward.

The critical defensive try is **19. ... fxe6** **20. Bxg6 Nxe3!**. Note that **20. ... hxg6** **21. Qxg6+** and **22. Rf7** clearly does not work. Neither does **20. ... Bh4** **21. Bf7+!** **Kh8** **22. Qxh4**, i.e. **22. ... Nxe3** **23. Qf6** mate.



When you look at the position with an engine, you will get overwhelmed with win after win for White. But when you put the position on the board and have to find a win on your own, suddenly things are far less obvious. I asked the students both in the online camp (including Jason) and those at my online academy, [www.killerchesstraining.com](http://www.killerchesstraining.com), to try and find a win. Many strong players, including IMs and GMs, were involved in this process. They went through more than a few blind paths before coming up with a winning line.

(a) **21. Bxh7+** looks incredibly tempting. But after **21. ... Kh8** there is no win. **22. Rf7?** was everyone's first choice, but after **22. ... Bxg2+** **23. Kg1**



**23. ... Nf5!** **24. Bxf5 Bc5+** **25. Kxg2 Qxf7** and Black wins. This line may seem elementary, but it took us a long time to come up with it on our own. And that's the point.

(b) We also tried **21. Rf7 Bxg2+** **22. Kg1**, but once again Black escapes: **22. ... Nf5!** **23. Qxg2 Bc5+** **24. Kh1 Qxf7** **25. Bxf7+ Kxf7**

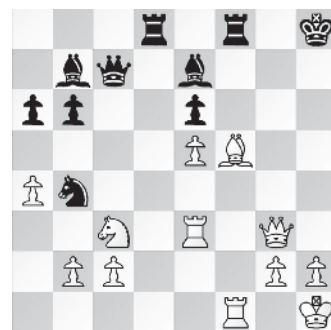


JASON LU

with an unclear position where White has to play very energetically in order to keep the balance.

(c) Another venomous idea was discovered in **21. Rxe3**, where Black escapes only through fabulous defense:

**21. ... Rf8!** **22. Bxh7+ Kh8** **23. Bf5!**



Now the paths diverge.

(c1) **23. ... exf5?**

This is evaluated as equal with Stockfish at first, but when you put the moves on the board and expand the horizon of the machine, it turns out that White has a winning attack:

**24. Qh3+ Kg7** **25. Rg3+ Kf7** **26. e6+!** **26. ... Kxe6** **27. Re1+**



Here there are three alternatives:

(c11) **27. ... Qe5** **28. Rxe5+ Kxe5** **29. Re3+ Kd6** **30. Qh6+ Rf6** **31. Qf4+ Kd7** and White presses on.

(c12) **27. ... Kd7**



EXERCISE 2

28. Rxe7+! Kxe7 29. Rg7+ Rf7 30. Rxf7+ Kxf7 31. Qh7+ winning the queen is a nice tactic in its own right.

(c13) 27. ... Kd6 28. Qh6+ Bf6



EXERCISE 3

29. Nb5+!! is not something you will discover if you do not investigate the position. 29. ... axb5 30. Qf4+ Kc6 31. axb5+ and White wins the queen.

(c2) 23. ... Rd4!!

The rook transfers to h4, to aid in the defense.

24. Ne2 Bh4!

White would have a winning attack after 24. ... Rh4 25. Nf4!

25. Qg6 Rxf5 26. Rxf5 Rd1+ 27. Ng1

Black still looks lost, but is saved by a recurring tactic.



27. ... Bxg2+!! 28. Kxg2

Play is unclear — read 0.00 — after 28. Qxg2 exf5 29. Rh3 Qc4.

28. ... Qxc2+ 29. Kh1 Qxf5 30. Qh6+ Qh7 31. Qf8+ Qg8 32. Qh6+ with a draw.

(d) 21. Bxe8+

This is the “official” win. Stockfish gives it a score of about plus a million, but finding the moves is anything but easy.

21. ... Kh8 22. Rxe3

22. Rf7 once again fails to 22. ... Bxg2+ 23. Kg1 Nf5, when 24. Rxh7+ Kxh7 25. Qg6+ only offers White a perpetual check. However, at this point a draw is not a bad outcome.

22. ... Rxe8 23. Rf7

White’s position may look promising here, but things are not simple yet.

23. ... Rg8



The counterplay against g2 is real. In order to rely on this variation, you will have to have seen that White is winning after:

24. Rxh7+! Kxh7 25. Qh3+ Kg7

If 25. ... Kg6 26. Qxe6+ wins.

26. Rg3+ Kf8 27. Qh6+!

Another key move that has to have been anticipated.

27. ... Ke8 28. Rxg8+ Kd7 29. Qg6

White wins. One line is:

29. ... Bd8 30. Qe8+ Kc8 31. Qxe6+ Qd7 32. Qxd7+ Kxd7 33. e6+

And White wins another piece, making the conversion elementary.

(e) 21. Be4+!

This is the human move. Rather than relying on long variations where the “hit rate” is unacceptable, the key point is that all counterplay against the g2-square is eliminated. Black cannot play 21. ... Kh8 on account of 22. Rf7 when mate looms. Black thus has to return the piece immediately.

21. ... Bg5

The moment you see that Black has to play this, you know that 21. Be4+ is strong. But in order to do this, you have to think of returning the bishop with a discovered check, and only to e4. This will seem quite obvious to you now, once it has been explained, but it was very difficult for my students to find the move and it took a long time before someone suggested it.

22. Qxg5+ Qg7 23. Qxg7+

Surely you saw 23. Qxe3? Nxc2!, but I note it for completeness.

23. ... Kxg7 24. Rxe3

White has a winning endgame. One little point is that 24. ... Bxe4 is met with 25. Nxe4! bringing the remaining piece decisively into the game. Again, analysis could always continue, but one key aspect of working with engines is to know when to stop feeding the beast.

Back to the game.

20. Qxh4 Rxe6 21. Nxd5

A devastating attack on the dark squares with 21. Bg5!? Rde8 22. Bf3 was also winning, but White’s play in the game is very logical.

21. ... Nxd5 22. Bg4 Nxe3



White missed his chance to win the game. And what a chance it was!

23. Rxe3??

Here White has 23. Rxf7!! Qxf7 (After 23. ... Kxf7 24. Qxh7+ Ke8 Jason gave the computer variation 25. Qg8+ Ke7 26. Qxe6+, which is obviously totally winning. But a human analysis of the position would reveal 25. Qxc7, which is also completely winning and practical to boot.) 24. Bxe6 Qxe6 25. Qxd8+ with a winning position.

23. ... Rd4! 24. Qg3 Qc4 25. Be2 Qxc2 26. Qf2

Jason evaluates the position very maturely: “The engine says the position is equal, but in practice, Black is better.” This is accurate. The white pawns are divided and weak. The active play White has to display to equalize is hard to come up with, especially when he knows he has blown a winning attack.

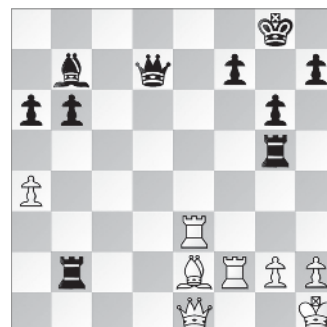
26. ... Qc7 27. Rc3 Qd7 28. Bc4?

Just a blunder.

28. ... Rd2 29. Be2 Rxe5 30. Re3 Rf5 31. Qe1 Rg5 32. Rf2 Rxb2?

This looks obvious, but it too is a blunder.

Jason points out that 32. ... Qd4 was winning for Black. We do not need variations here. There are other winning moves too.



EXERCISE 4

33. Qc1?

But what Jason does not point out is that the saving variation for White is virtually impossible to find.

33. Bg4!

The first move is not too hard to find, but

soon it gets trickier.

**33. ... Rxf2 34. Bxd7 Rgxc2!**

Black is not out of bullets.

**35. Re8+**

Black wins after 35. Qxf2? Rg3+.

**35. ... Kg7 36. Qc3+!**

The accurate move order. 36. Bc6?! gives Black the extra option of playing 36. ... Rxh2+ before transposing to our main line.

**36. ... Rf6**



White's situation seems desperate, so desperate defense is needed!

**37. Bc6!! Bxc6**

37. ... Rc2 38. Qxf6+ is an immediate draw.

**38. Rg8+ Kxg8 39. Qxf6 Rc2+**

Another immediate draw is found after 39. ... Bb7 40. Qd8+ Kg7 41. Qd4+ Kh6 42. Qh4+.

**40. Kg1 Rc4 41. Qd8+ Kg7 42. Qxb6 Bxa4 43. Qb2+ Kh6 44. Qa3!**



White has enough counterplay to make the draw. The key point is that the black king is not allowed to hide in peace behind the pawns, but is harassed, making it hard to coordinate to advance of the a-pawn, for example. If Black were able to put the bishop on e6, the pawn on h5, the king on h7 and the rook on a2, it would be curtains.

**33. ... Qd2**

Finally, Black is cruising to victory.

**34. Re8+ Kg7 35. Qf1 Bd5 36. Re7 Rf5 37. Rxf5 gxf5 38. h3 Be4 39. Rxe4 fxe4 40. Qf5 Rb1+ 41. Kh2 Qd6+ 42. g3 Qc5 43. Qg4+ Kh8 44. Bd1 Qf2+ 45. Kh1 Qf1+ 46. Kh2 Rb2+ 47. Be2 Rxe2+ 48. Qxe2 Qxe2+ 49. Kh1 Qd2 50. a5 e3 51. axb6 e2 52. b7 e1=Q, mate.**



## SUMMARY

The first point is probably the easiest to make, but also the most important to understand. We should not believe computer evaluations without understanding them. The test for this is easy: can you explain to another person why it is winning? Jason was rightly scared of his opponent's attack, but once he had to show how his opponent could inflict real damage, he could not. Doing so took a team of talents more than half an hour to accomplish.

As you will probably also have noticed in this game, there is a tendency for us to give lots and lots of long variations when we are analyzing with the computer. We should remember that we would rarely be able to produce these variations without silicon support. Therefore, when we analyze with a computer, we should look for variations that we believe it would be possible for us to see, in order to say that a variation is winning.

Learning from the computer requires that we translate the information we get from the machine into something humans can comprehend. This task is easier if you base it on a foundation of understanding, but that is a discussion for another time. ♠



# Worth *the* Wait

Walter Tevis' 1983 novel, *The Queen's Gambit*, has finally hit the (small) screen as a Netflix limited series.

**BRUCE PANDOLFINI** brings us the story, from start to finish.

**A**fter some 38 years, Walter Tevis' novel *The Queen's Gambit*, a coming of age drama about Beth Harmon, an orphaned Kentucky girl who surmounts addiction and sexism to climb to the top of the chess pantheon, has made it to the (small) screen. Created by renowned director/screenwriter Scott Frank, the seven-part Netflix production is, as you read these words, viewable by chess fans around the globe. Playing the lead role of Beth is Anya Taylor-Joy, who headed the cast in the recent remake of Jane Austen's *Emma*.

Paralleling Beth's fictional travails, the novel has gone on its own

journey. Originally published by Random House in 1983, there was initial interest in developing a screenplay, but it waned after the author's death a year later. Notable directors and actors thereafter considered the possibility of doing it on film, but nothing ever quite panned out. The project continued to waver even after screenwriter and producer Allan Scott, probably best known for his work with director Nicolas Roeg on *Don't Look Now*, purchased the rights from Walter's widow Eleanora in 1992. Mr. Scott eventually hooked up with Scott Frank, who created "Godless," and William Horberg, who





produced *Searching for Bobby Fischer*. The triumvirate of Scott, Frank, and Horberg were then able to bring “The Queen’s Gambit” to visual reality under the Netflix umbrella.

Filmed mainly in Berlin, with a few scenes shot in Toronto, the series manages to convey the look and feel of local and international tournament chess in the 1960s. Whether the setting is Kentucky, Cincinnati, Las Vegas, Mexico City, Paris, or Moscow, it’s all depicted realistically and vividly by the camera of cinematographer Steven Meizler, the sets of Uli Hanisch, and the costumes of Gabriele Binder. Editor Michelle Tesoro impeccably weaves it together, with the original score of composer Carlos Rafael Rivera, supported by pop, jazz, and classical selections, all breezily accompanying the seven episodes. Certain aspects of tournament interplay and ambience were informed by the input of former world chess champion Garry Kasparov. He consulted with director Scott Frank on competitive milieus and joined me in creating some chess games, especially the climactic last round thriller.

Anya Taylor-Joy’s portrayal of lead character Beth Harmon is superb. She captures the tortuous complications of chess at the highest levels, while never missing an emotional beat. Overcoming abandonment

and isolation, addictive drugs and alcohol, confused and confusing relationships, fierce rivalries and the highs and lows of competition, she emerges as a paladin of strength and courage to inspire everyone. She is compelling in every scene.

The supporting cast includes Marielle Heller as Beth’s adoptive mother, a woman who must cope with her husband’s neglect and indifference; Thomas Brodie-Sangster as Benny Watts (somewhat like Bobby Fischer, but with a few twists); Moses Ingram as Beth’s fellow orphan, who shares much of her early and later trials; Harry Melling, a Kentucky competitor who befriends and romances Beth, helping her through dark days (Harry Potter fans will recognize him as Dudley Dursley); and veteran all-pro actor Bill Camp as Mr. Shaibel, the janitor who introduces Beth to chess, the elixir of life. Praise must also go to Isla Johnston who plays the young Beth. She does so with the perceptive intelligence of a chess prodigy.

It has been a long road, but “The Queen’s Gambit” is finally here. Netflix released the full seven episodes on October 23, meaning that many of our readers will already have “binged it” before this issue hits their mailboxes.



BRUCE PANDOLFINI INSTRUCTS VLAD CHIRIAC (LEONID SHAPKIN IN THE LIMITED SERIES) ON THE FINER POINTS OF THE POSITION.

## How I got to consult on the novel *The Queen's Gambit*

Little did I realize, when called into Random House headquarters in the late summer of 1982, that I was about to become involved in a project that would take almost 38 years to complete. Having read a manuscript written by novelist/screenwriter Walter Tevis about an eight-year-old orphan girl who goes on to become a super chess player, I of course was excited. Walter and several editors at Random House were interested in my thoughts on it. I told them I loved the novel, but not all the chess moves were quite right. Some of them didn't make sense, and chess players might complain. Anne Freedgood, Walter's main editor, wondered if I could help make them less "complainable."

Walter Tevis was not happy with that possibility. A chess player himself, he felt he didn't need any help. Any changes might destroy the narrative and literary quality of the work. I also sensed he was put off by my fee. Nevertheless, I understood his feelings and the conversation came to a dead end. As we were saying goodbye, for reasons I can't explain, I threw out what I thought the title should be. Something about that was music to their ears. Anne asked me to stay a bit longer. After

thirty minutes of further talk, I was hired as a consultant for what would now be called *The Queen's Gambit*.

I met with Walter eight to ten times at his brownstone in Manhattan. We went over every chess reference, I came up with improvements for each questionable one, and Walter seemingly accepted most of them. When it was all done, he thanked me for my recommendations, which he planned to incorporate. It was a wonderful experience.

As it happens, Walter was also a first-rate teacher. During that month of meetings, he read some of my own pieces and offered advice I still find useful. Afterwards, we exchanged a couple of friendly letters. He even talked about taking chess lessons. But that would not be. Within a year, Walter Tevis became ill and died.

Sometime after the novel was published in 1983, I read it again. I was dumbstruck. Except for a few trivial changes, I couldn't find a single one of my major suggestions. Walter had given me a nice credit in his acknowledgements. Yet the only thing I really did for the book was to come up with the final title.

# In Conversation: Director, Screenwriter, and Producer Scott Frank

Interview by BRUCE PANDOLFINI



SCOTT FRANK

**S**cott Frank was the screenwriter, director, and executive producer (along with Allan Scott and William Horberg) of “The Queen’s Gambit” Netflix series. In an exclusive interview for *Chess Life*, he shares his thoughts and insights on this challenging project.

**When did you first learn about the novel *The Queen’s Gambit*?**

Bill Horberg told me about it sometime in the mid-1990s. Bill and I have been friends ever since he joined Paramount as an executive, now some 30 years, and he introduced me in that time to Charles Willeford, Chester Himes, and Walter Tevis, among many others.

**You’ve written wonderful screenplays for the movies. *Dead Again*, *Little Man Tate*, *Out of Sight*, *Minority Report*, *Get Shorty*, and *Logan* are all films that benefited from your masterful writing. What was it about the Tevis novel that intrigued you enough to write a script based on it?**

It read like a good thriller, with a protagonist I’d never seen before at the center of it. Beth Harmon was unique to my experience. But the theme of the “cost of genius” was something I’d been playing with since *Little Man Tate*. And the fascinating thing about the book is one need not know a whit about chess to be thoroughly engrossed in the storytelling. It’s a testament to Tevis’ power as a writer.

**Did you pretty much stay with the original storyline? Or were significant changes necessary for filming purposes?**

The storyline is basically the same. I’ve added some things with regards to Beth’s birth mother and her adoptive mother. The first to provide foreshadowing as to where Beth may end up, and the latter to give the story slightly more emotional breadth. I’ve also deepened her relationships with the three men in the story. But these all amount to a lot of very small changes or adjustments. The Tevis story holds up in both shape and tone.

**With sequences of abstract chess moves embedded in the text, how hard was it to adapt Tevis’s writing into an intelligible but entertaining screenplay?**

I pretended that no one watching knew anything about chess. I would ask myself, how much do they need to know in a given situation in order to appreciate the drama? I would try to serve up that information and no more. I also treated each match or tournament as a character. I spent a lot of time in the script making one feel different from the other and contextualizing each one in terms of how they may affect Beth’s life.

Later, when we shot the tournaments, we carried on with this idea of making each chess game specific and special. If we show the board, we want it to be both accurate, but visually and audibly pleasing. So there was a lot of thought about how to shoot each one and how each one would sound. There are many instances throughout the story where we stay on the faces of the actors and never see the board. All of the drama, having hopefully been set up right beforehand, plays out on their faces. These matches are as thrilling as any of the more detailed matches. I’m thinking in particular of the adjournment Beth plays with the young boy in Mexico City.

My conversations with our other consultant, Garry Kasparov, provided a deep background for the STAKES in each of these tournaments. Not just for the Russian players, but for Beth, who shared their desperate need to win or literally have nothing. Some of the dialogue came from Garry—specifically, the scene in the elevator where she overhears them speaking about her. This inspired me to write the payoff scene at the press conference where he realizes she had understood every word.

Both you and Garry designed the major games. The final game in Russia, was I believe Garry’s design. But all through it, I either had you or the German chess coaches on set to make sure EVERYONE looked authentic, and the moves and positions reflected the drama and proper chess play/progression.

**In 2017 you brought to television the critically acclaimed seven-part “*Godless*,” for which you were the creator, executive producer, and director. You wear the same three hats for “*The Queen’s Gambit*.” How did your experience with “*Godless*” help you in making this new series?**

I was prepared for the endurance I’d need, both mental and physical. I also knew I had to meticulously plan the production ahead of time, so that the actors wouldn’t feel pressured during the chess scenes. They were learning the moves as we shot. And if I weren’t prepared and had to find a shooting style on the go, it would have been frustrating. So to that end, I felt like we were very well prepared.

A key element of that preparation: we had a “chess summit” where you and our German chess experts discussed the reality of each tournament, what the boards and pieces and clocks and displays might look like, and that gave me tons of terminology to use. The production designer, cinematographer, prop master, and the editor all took part. It was an enormous help.

**During filming, it was clear that you have a real interest in chess. I’d see you playing with different people on set, including cinematographer Steven Meizler, and both of you seemed passionate about it. When did you first get interested in chess and what was it about the game that appealed to you?**

I learned how to play chess from a neighborhood friend when I was about eight or nine. Later, when I was a teenager, it was a great way for my father and me to have something to do together. My parents were friends with the son of Irving Chernev. My father read his



BETH HARMON PLAYS BENNY WATTS IN A CRITICAL GAME AT THE 1966 U.S. OPEN.



BETH TAKES A BIG STEP FORWARD IN 1967.

PHOTO, TOP LEFT: COURTESY OF NETFLIX; TOP RIGHT & BOTTOM LEFT: PHIL BRAY/NETFLIX; BOTTOM RIGHT: CHARLIE GRAY/NETFLIX



BETH HARMON AND BENNY WATTS, U.S. OPEN, 1966.



BETH PLAYS THE WHITE SIDE OF A FRENCH MC CUTCHEON IN PARIS, 1967.

books and used to joke about how his game actually got worse. We would play these epic games that went on forever. I actually made a beautiful chess board in my high school wood shop and we would play on that.

What appealed most to me is the complexity in having to think ahead and think about all of the permutations of what might happen as the result of a given move. That's storytelling! Each game is its own story. And that's what Walter Tevis discovered, too, I think.

*It's the most beautiful game there is. The most frustrating sometimes, but also the most beautiful. And you never stop learning it.*

***Casting is crucial to cinematic success. Anya Taylor-Joy does a fantastic job playing the main character. She gets all kinds of nuances right and is totally convincing. How did you go about casting the principal roles and especially Anya?***

I work with the world's greatest casting director, Ellen Lewis. She has always brought me actors I'd not been familiar with, or actors I'd dismissed for the wrong reasons. The actors are everything for me. Working with them in a scene is my favorite part of production. Because, when you have great actors, they make what I've written so much better. I call it the one plus one equals three theory.

I knew that for the role of Beth, I'd need three actors, but the bulk of the movie will be "owned" by one of them. And that actor has to have a face you can't take your eyes off, has to convey intensity, anger, intelligence, as well as a kind of evolving glamour. That narrowed it down for me to Anya Taylor-Joy. She was my first, second, third, and fourth choice for the role. If she had said no, I don't know what I would have done.

***Isla Johnston, the actress who plays the younger Beth, is also quite excellent. I think you made a great choice. Did you consider the possibility of casting a practiced tournament player for that role?***

We did consider that. And I think you even sent me some terrific kids to look at. But ultimately the "thing" that Isla has, this intensity and physical control, proved so undeniable, that I figured she could learn the chess. And learn she did. A very smart cookie and a future star. Thank God she has lovely parents!

***When Tevis wrote The Queen's Gambit in 1983 the idea of an eight or nine year old girl eventually becoming the best chess player in the world was visionary. But these days it is entirely plausible. What influence do you think your series, and Anya's performance, will have on the empowerment of women and girls?***

I hope that it has two influences. First, I hope it encourages young girls to ignore anyone of any gender who tells them they can't do something. Only the universe can tell us what we can and can't do. We get that message eventually, but only after we've given our attempt at whatever a thousand percent. Beth ignored everyone who said she "can't." That part of Beth is a wonderful role model. Second, I hope we see, not just a lot more girls, but a lot more people playing chess.

It's the most beautiful game there is. The most frustrating sometimes, but also the most beautiful. And you never stop learning it.

***I know you were determined to get things chessically right. But with any film venture, entertainment is paramount. What were some of the things you did to make the chess abstractions visually more enjoyable?***

I think this goes back to making each game its own "character." Once I started from there, it was about trying to find fun/different ways to show the game, and to see how LITTLE of each game we could get away with. Also, I spent a lot of time casting "faces" for her opponents. People who felt very specific and not all just like the stereotypical "nerd" chess player. I know lots of very cool chess players! But it was fun to play with that trope.

***"The Queen's Gambit" has superbly designed sets and tournament scenes. Almost all of it was filmed in Berlin. Why Berlin?***

Berlin turned out to be a great hub. As you know, the story takes place in many locations, among them: Lexington, Kentucky; New York City; Las Vegas; Cincinnati; Ohio University; Mexico City; Paris; and Moscow. We could do almost all of the interiors in Berlin. Even pieces of the exteriors. We found all sorts of buildings that worked for places like a Las Vegas Hotel or a Mexico City Hotel. Paris and Moscow were easy to find in Berlin. But outside of the city we found tons of great locations for rural Kentucky. We shot for five days in Toronto, mostly to get the Lexington suburban street Beth lived on, her high school, and exteriors for the U.S. Championships at Ohio University and the car accident.

***I know from my own work for Walter Tevis that it was his intention not to mention Bobby Fischer. The series also does not mention Fischer. Do you have any doubts about that decision?***

It didn't even occur to me. I thought it was far more interesting mentioning all of the players who had come BEFORE Fischer. Also, not mentioning him gave me a bit more help in creating a world that's specific to our story.

***Principal photography on "The Queen's Gambit" was completed before COVID-19 messed up our world. How did the pandemic impact post-production?***

We ended up doing a good portion of it remotely. I was in my home in Connecticut. The editor was in her apartment in Chelsea. The music and sound editors were also in New York. The sound designer was in Topanga Canyon (Los Angeles). Through new technology, I could be on the screen watching the editor and working with her. We could review visual effects shots and color timing and do most everything this way. I actually liked it because it gave me more time to write in between sessions with the editor. Whereas, if I'm in the cutting room with her, and I gave her something to try that might take a while, I'd go off, eat a snack, surf the web, do anything but write, as the office is too "busy."

***What about the future? How do you see filmmaking adapting to the possibility of future epidemics?***

I wish I knew. I think everyone is trying. But until we have a real vaccine, I'm not sure this way of working is tenable.

***Now that the making of "The Queen's Gambit" has come to an end, is there anything you wish you had done differently?***

I have a list of moments I missed or didn't direct as well as I might have, or shots I could have done better, but all in all, once something is done, those things begin to fade in my mind. The piece becomes the piece. There have only been a couple of times where I wished that I could back in and recut the whole damn thing.

***Did you have a favorite moment in the entire project?***

My favorite moment in the show is the same as my favorite moment in the book: the very last scene.

***Do you have any personal chess ambitions from here on?***

Yes! I want you to be my teacher!!!

*“I never knew when Garry would call,  
or what distant part of the planet he was calling from.  
But he always had some delightful chess treat to share.”*



KASPAROV'S BRILLIANT INVENTION 41. ... h5 GETS ITS 15 MINUTES OF FAME IN AN ON-SCREEN CLOSEUP.

## The Chess Moves

**T**HE QUEEN'S GAMBIT™ has a lot of real chess in it. About 350 unique positions were adapted or created for the series. These positions were needed not only for scenes with the principals, but as an aspect of the atmosphere, even for actors not necessarily on camera.

Initially, I came up with 92 positions to correspond to essential script situations. That block was called “The Bible.” Many of those appear in the final cut.

There were six to eight key positions that had to be framed perfectly, including the game for the tension-filled last scene, as well as the penultimate battle with Luchenko (see next column). Garry Kasparov came aboard and infused his special genius into workable ideas for these critical moments. We reviewed his chosen games together and finalized them.

Truly, it was great fun. I never knew when Garry would call, or what distant part of the planet he was calling from. But he always had some delightful chess treat to share. Most of Garry's setups were left inviolate, but filmmaking has its own flow, and there were last minute adjustments to meet emergent needs on the set.

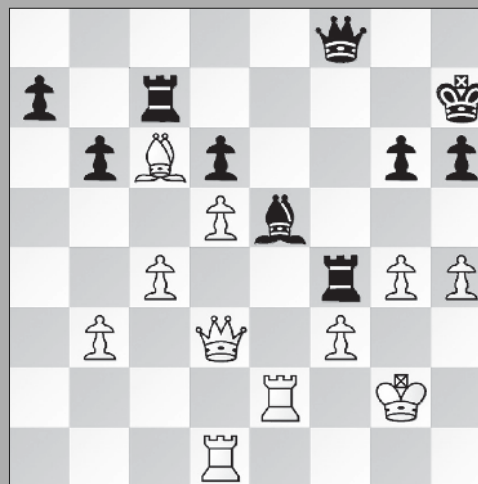
Special commendation must go to our German chess/tech crew, John Paul Atkinson and Iepe Rubingh (who sadly passed away in May 2020). Both were indispensable. Along with myself and Garry, their efforts are very much a part of the chess you see.

It wouldn't be an article for *Chess Life* without a chess diagram. So here's how an example of a real game was modified to fit the dramatic situation. The basis for Beth's battle with former world champion Dimitri Luchenko comes from a 1988 battle between GM Arshak Petrosian and GM Vladimir Akopian in Yerevan. Garry's focus was on the position after White's 38th move.

Here Akopian (playing Black; see diagram to the right) doubled his rooks with 38. ... Rcf7, and the game was soon drawn. As we analyzed, Garry had an ingenious idea for Black, one that provided just the drama we needed for a critical moment in the narrative. Note: we had to renumber the moves to begin with Black's 41st move for filming purposes, as part of the plot revolves around the game's being adjourned.

### DEFEATING LUCHENKO

Dimitri Luchenko  
Beth Harmon  
Moscow, 1968



BLACK TO MOVE

41. ... h5! 42. gxh5 Kh8! 43. hxg6 Rxh4 44. Rh1 Rch7! 45. Rg1

If 45. gxh7? mate is unavoidable after 45. ... Qg7+.

45. ... R7h5 46. Kf1 Kg7 47. Bd7 Rd4 48. Ge3 Rd1+ 49. Re1 Bd4, White resigned.

There is only one Garry Kasparov.

*“Playing Beth is something I’ll never forget. The deeper I dove into the role, the clearer the similarities between my passion and chess became. Both require a singular focus, a hunger to grow, and an unwavering determination. As someone who did not have a great understanding of the complexities of the game before I started, I very quickly became enamored with it. The joy I felt in being able to execute and understand the sequences, particularly when speed chess was involved, was second to none.”*

—ANYA TAYLOR-JOY ON STARRING IN “THE QUEEN’S GAMBIT”



## Producer William Horberg on “The Queen’s Gambit”



ANYA TAYLOR-JOY AND WILLIAM HORBERG ON SET

**P**roducer William Horberg, a chairman of the Producers Guild of America, has a long list of prestigious honors to his credit. As it turns out, he and I share a common link. We are the only ones who were involved with both *Searching for Bobby Fischer* and “The Queen’s Gambit.” Here he offers a few discerning remarks on his work, life and the game of chess.

### *What attracted him to both chess projects*

With both *Searching for Bobby Fischer* and “The Queen’s Gambit,” I fell in love with the story and the characters first, and then I found the milieu of the world of chess and chess players that YOU introduced me to so fascinating.

### *Comparing the two productions*

*Searching for Bobby Fischer* was obviously a true story, a memoir, and it was really a family story about parenting and competition among children. And while “The Queen’s Gambit” is a work of fiction, like all of Tevis’ writing, it has so much truth in it. He is really able to make a page-turner out of this young girl’s coming of age story, and the chess and her addictions and life struggles really mirror each other in such a unique and interesting way.

### *What was emphasized*

No one is going to watch a movie about chess. But they will watch a movie about people: people who are obsessed, who are vulnerable and confused, who are curious, who are competitive, who are exploring their identity, their sexuality, and their sanity!!

### *Concerns chess might be viewed as too esoteric*

Are you kidding? We were scared to death! We thought the audience would feel like they were watching paint dry!! But fear is a great motivator, and Scott and his team found a way to shoot the chess where each game has a point in her story, and some emotional meaning as well, and he found so much variety in how to dramatize the matches. Still, we were shocked when we cut it together and started to show it to friends how much they really got caught up in the excitement of the games. It was one of their favorite aspects of the show. A lot of credit goes to our wonderful editor Michelle Tesoro. We could finally let our breath out.

### *On when he first considered filming “The Queen’s Gambit”*

I would say it was almost 20 years ago. The author Michael Ondaatje turned me on to the book. He said it was one of his favorites, which was a great motivation to read it. I got hooked, and when I tried to track down the rights, lo and behold, it turned out to be owned by an old friend of mine, a screenwriter and producer named Allan Scott with whom I had worked on a TV series many years earlier. He had his own long history of trying to get the

book made as a movie, and we joined forces. But it was really Scott Frank who had the vision of telling the story as a limited series that finally unlocked the puzzle, and Netflix was the perfect home for this show. We just had to wait for the world to catch up to us.

### *On the chain of events leading to this production*

Allan Scott had the insight to buy the rights to the book when it was published. He carried the torch for many lonely years. Ironically, while *Searching for Bobby Fischer* was well reviewed and has become a beloved cult movie over time, when it came out it didn’t do well at the box office. I think was a setback for Allan’s plans to get his own chess movie made in Hollywood.

The project attracted a lot of interesting filmmakers over the years, from Bernardo Bertolucci to Tom Tykwer. It came closest to getting made with Heath Ledger directing, but it was abandoned once again after his shocking and untimely death. Scott Frank and I had flirted with making it together at least 10 years ago, but there wasn’t a way to get it financed as a movie. It was really Scott revisiting it after “Godless,” and his conviction that the story would work better in this format, that finally allowed it to get made.

### *On Anya Taylor-Joy*

We knew we had to find a Beth with a rich and complex interior life, and whose face and eyes you could just park the camera on and see the story play. The windows to the soul and all that. Anya has those qualities and more. You can’t take your eyes off of her over a seven-hour series.

### *On his life and career*

I love books and I’ve been really fortunate to work with a number of writer/directors who are masterful at adaptation. Steve Zaillian on *Searching for Bobby Fischer*, Anthony Minghella on *The Talented Mr. Ripley* and *Cold Mountain* and now Scott on “The Queen’s Gambit.” They all have in common their ability to find and honor the essence of the book, but also to make it their own, to the point where you often forget what came from the novel and what came from the adaptation. I knew that Scott’s natural gifts as a storyteller and as someone who knows how to find the humor in great drama and the pain and truth inside the entertainment would serve this story well. He really understood Beth Harmon on a molecular level and he found the right tone to pull this off—no small feat. ♠



WFM ELIZABETH SPIEGEL

# Improving Your Tactical Sensibilities

One of America's leading scholastic coaches shares three questions that will help you see more in-game shots.

By WFM ELIZABETH SPIEGEL

I've been teaching at a large public middle school—I.S. 318, in Brooklyn, NY—for 20 years. And in that time, I've been to a lot of national scholastic championships.

One thing has never made sense to me: isn't it a bit strange that the national scholastic championships count only the top four scores from a school? Is a school with just four very strong players really the definition of the best chess program in the country?

In any case, I'm a public school teacher, so I always have large classes of kids. While their playing strengths vary dramatically, I think it's incredibly important to include as many students on the team as possible. For the last 18 years, we have brought 55-60 kids to nationals. One year our team t-shirts had each player's number on the back—where your number was your rank on the school rating list. It was great fun for me to see kids from other teams, especially opponents we faced in multiple rounds, realize what the numbers meant. ("I lost to #56 and now I have to play #39?!")

Through this experience of teaching large classes of kids at different levels of skill, I have continually found myself returning to one question: what is the most efficient way to teach a group of students to improve their calculative abilities? Or, put differently, exactly what does a strong player think about when she/he tries to solve a tactics problem?

The first thing I teach is that it is *your job as a chess player* to look at *every forcing move* on every turn. Forcing moves are checks, captures, and major threats like checkmate or threats against the queen. You must calculate every forcing move to the end of the forced variation.

I say this over and over to my students. It is your job to calculate every check and every capture, for both sides, on every move. This is admittedly a lot of work. Fortunately, there are more efficient thinking methods than sheer brute force. Over the years I have found three questions that, I think, help to direct students' thinking in the most useful way:

## **QUESTION 1: What enemy pieces and pawns are not protected or not well protected?**

"Not well protected" means a piece is protected only as many times as it is attacked, so if you attack it again, you will be threatening to take it. These pieces (unprotected and not well protected) are the potential targets. Keep them at the front of your tactical mind.

## **QUESTION 2: What enemy pieces are on the same line as each other or as my piece?**

This will help you find discoveries, pins, and skewers.

## **QUESTION 3: What's your dream move?**

This question actually has a few versions. The beginner version is, "If you could pick up your queen and put it anywhere, where would it be checkmate?" and, for such a highly specific question, it is remarkably helpful!

The advanced version of the question is "If you could pick up any piece and put it on another square, where would you put it?" This will often give you great maneuvering ideas but will also draw your attention to tactics that might otherwise look impossible. The idea is to focus on what you want to achieve and not be limited by what you think your immediate choices are.

Let's look at how we can ask our questions in a few positions. We will start by circling the targets: the unprotected and not-well-protected pieces. Then draw lines wherever you notice pieces on the same line. Finally, let your imagination run a little and ask yourself what would happen if you pick a piece up and move it anywhere. See what ideas jump into your mind.

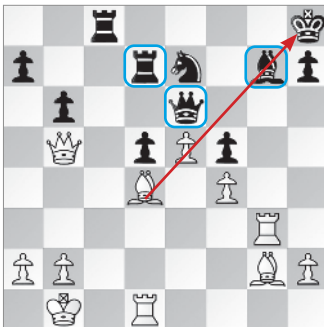
**EXAMPLE 1:**



WHITE TO MOVE

Question 1 asks, “What enemy pieces or pawns are unprotected or not well protected?” Here, Black’s a4–knight and h5–bishop are unprotected. The queen can attack them both from a5 or b5. This helps us find **1. Qb8+ Kh7** **2. Qb5**, winning a piece.

**EXAMPLE 2:**



WHITE TO MOVE

Black’s queen is unprotected and both rooks are not well protected. But the most important clue in this position is that White’s bishop shares a diagonal with Black’s king. White wins by removing the pieces between them: **1. Rxc7**. Note that it’s important to get the move order right, as **1. Qxd7? Qxd7** **2. Rxc7 Qc7** is totally winning for Black. Don’t let them accept the first sacrifice and decline the second! **1. ... Kxc7** **2. Qxd7 Qxd7** **3. e6+** and White is winning.

**EXAMPLE 3:**

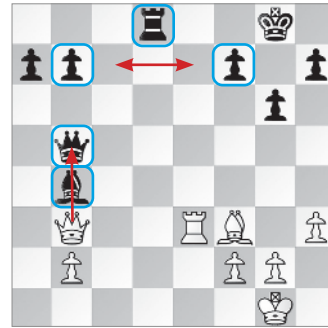


WHITE TO MOVE

Here’s a great example of how helpful question 3 can be. It would be checkmate if White’s queen was on e5, so... **1. Bh6+ Rxc6** **2. Qe5** mate.

Now let’s look at some more complex positions.

**EXAMPLE 4:**



WHITE TO MOVE

Here, Black’s rook and queen are unprotected. Black’s b4–bishop and f7– and b7–pawns are not well-protected. Notice the pin on the b-file, and that the black pawns are both on the seventh rank. This should point you right to **1. Re7 Bxe7** (if **1. ... Rf8** **2. Rxb7**) **2. Qxb5**, which wins the house.

**EXAMPLE 5:**



BLACK TO MOVE

The rook looks good on b8, but where would it be great?

**1. ... Rd8!**

There is no stopping ... **Rd8–d2**, followed by ... **Rd2–c2**, and Black wins.

**2. g4 Rd2**

Cleaner is **2. ... hxg4!** **3. Qxg4 Rd2** (GM John Nunn-GM Tony Miles, London 1980, 0-1) with the idea **4. h5 Rc2**.

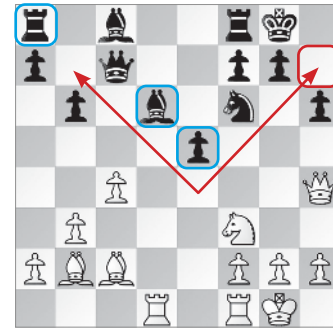
**3. gxh5**

**3. g5!?** tries to make things messy, but to no avail. Black is still winning.

**3. ... Rc2**

Now ... **Rc2–c1** is crushing.

**EXAMPLE 6:**



WHITE TO MOVE

Let’s go through our three questions: (1) Black’s a8–rook is undefended. Black’s d6–bishop and e5–pawn are not well protected. (2) The two important lines here are the e4–a8 diagonal, leading to Black’s hanging rook, and the b1–h7 diagonal, which leads to Black’s king. Notice that they intersect at e4. (3) The queen on h7 would be checkmate, except for the presence of Black’s f6–knight. This gives us a lot of clues, and it’s just a matter of looking at the forcing moves all the way to the end:

**17. Rxd6! Qxd6** **18. Bxe5 Qe6** **19. Bxf6 Qxf6**

After **19. ... gxf6** White wins with **20. Be4 Rb8** **21. Qg3+ Qg4** **22. Qxb8**.

**20. Qe4! Qg6** **21. Qxa8 Qxc2** **22. Qxa7**

White is up two pawns and is totally winning in Shakhriyar Mamedyarov-Samir Davidov, (Baku 2001, 1-0).

**EXAMPLE 7:**



WHITE TO MOVE

Black’s a8–rook is unprotected but hard to target. Black’s queen is also unprotected. Nothing special seems to be going on until you ask yourself where White’s c7–bishop would be better placed. The winning move is:

**1. Bg3!!** and White will win the queen after **f2–f3** and **Bg3–e1!**

Next, try these yourself. Start by circling the targets, drawing any important lines you notice, and making note of any drop-queen checkmates or piece improvements. Check your answers on page 44.

**EXERCISE I.**



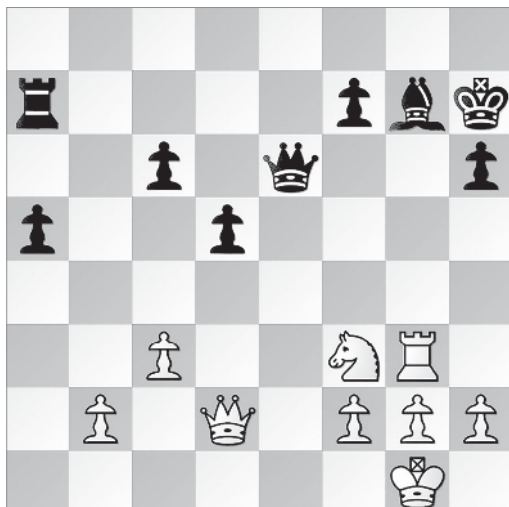
WHITE TO MOVE

**EXERCISE II.**



WHITE TO MOVE

**EXERCISE III.**



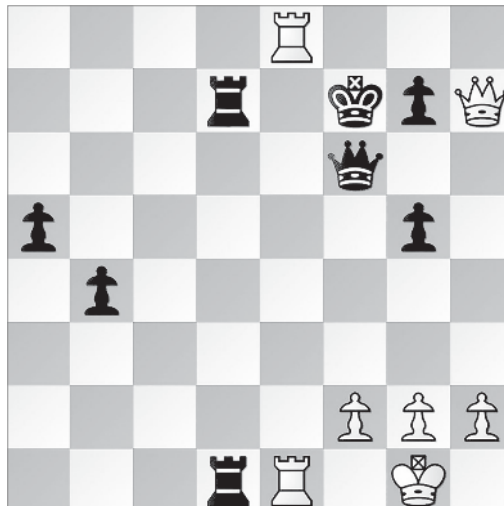
WHITE TO MOVE

**EXERCISE IV.**



WHITE TO MOVE

**EXERCISE V.**



WHITE TO MOVE

**EXERCISE VI.**



WHITE TO MOVE

**EXERCISE VII.**



WHITE TO MOVE

**EXERCISE X.**



BLACK TO MOVE

**EXERCISE VIII.**



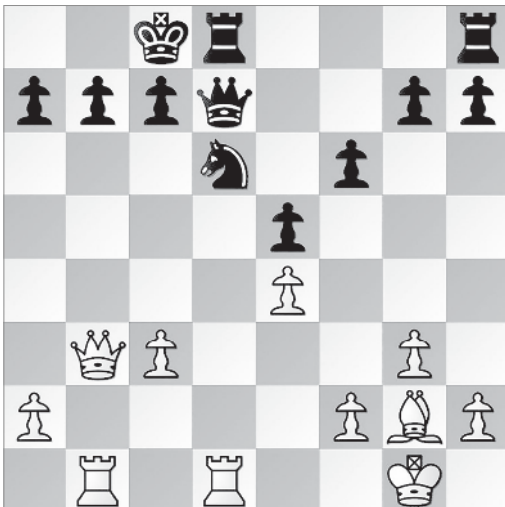
WHITE TO MOVE

**EXERCISE XI.**



WHITE TO MOVE

**EXERCISE IX.**



WHITE TO MOVE

**EXERCISE XII.**



WHITE TO MOVE



## Answers

### EXERCISE I

This position looks simple: the h4-rook and e6-bishop are both unprotected. It looks like both Qc3-f6 and Qc3-e1 fork them, but only one move works: **1. Qe1!** 1. Qf6? allows the defense 1. ... Re4.

### EXERCISE II

Black's d6-bishop and f7-pawn are not well protected, and a queen drop on h7 would lead to mate. Thus, **1. Qd3!**

### EXERCISE III

Black's a7-rook is unprotected and the g7-bishop is not well protected. **1. Rxc7+! Kxc7 2. Qd4+** wins material.

### EXERCISE IV

Black's a8-rook is unprotected and the c7-pawn is not well protected. Black's king and queen are on the same diagonal as White's bishop.

You might first look at 1. Bxe6 Bxe6 2. Nxc7 but you'd soon realize it gains only a tiny amount of material (rook and two pawns for bishop and knight). If you try changing the move order, you'll find the excellent **1. Nxc7!** with a double attack on the rooks. If Black takes with 1. ... Qxc7 **2. Bxe6+** wins the queen and two pawns for two pieces.

### EXERCISE V

Black's pieces are fairly well defended here; only the d1-rook is not well defended. But

notice that if you could replace the e8-rook with White's queen, it would be mate. **1. Rf8+! Kxf8 2. Qh8+ Kf7 3. Qe8, mate.**

### EXERCISE VI

Black's knight is not well defended, and Black's queen and a8-rook share a diagonal. **1. Rxc4 dxc4 2. Be4** wins material.

### EXERCISE VII

Black's queen is *en prise* and the e5-knight is not well protected. Black's d5-pawn is pinned by White's queen. Taken together, we find the idea **1. Rxe5! Rxe5 2. Nc4!**

### EXERCISE VIII

Black's rook is not well protected. White's bishop is pinning the g7-pawn to the Black king. This leads us to **1. Qxc7+! Qxc7 2. Rxe7!**

### EXERCISE IX

Black's b7-pawn is not well-protected, as it is attacked by the queen and rook and defended by the king and knight. Black's king and queen are on the same diagonal line. White's rook pins Black's knight to the queen. If White can take on b7, it's checkmate. My first thought would be to remove the defender of the checkmate:

**1. Rxd6**

Black can recapture with the pawn, defending the b7-square sideways with the queen.

**1. ... cxd6**

Now White uses the fact that the Black king and queen share a diagonal to pin the queen.

**2. Bh3 Qxh3 3. Qxb7, mate.**

### EXERCISE X

This is a perfect position for question 3. If Black could play ... Qe8-g2, it would be mate. How to get the queen get to this fantastic square? How about ...

**1. ... Rc7!!**

(preparing ... Qe8-a8)

**2. a3 Qa8 3. Be3 Nd3 4. Rc2**

If 4. Qxd3? Qg2, mate.

**4. ... b4 5. Na2**

5. Qxd3? fails to 5. ... Rxc3.

**5. ... Nc5**

Black has a dominating position and went on to win.

### EXERCISE XI

This is a tough one. Let's look at it with our questions in mind. The a6-rook is undefended. The g6-square is not well protected, and there is some pressure on the d-file, even if the d8-rook looks safe now.

**1. Bf7!! Kxf7**

1. ... Qxf7 loses material after 2. Rxd8.

**2. Rxd8 Qxd8 3. Qb7+**

and White goes up the Exchange.

### EXERCISE XII

What clues do our questions give us? Black's h8-rook is unprotected, and the e5-pawn is not well protected. If White could pick up the rook or queen and place it at d8 it would be mate. Nd5-f6 would also be mate without the d7-knight defending the f6-square. Finally, White's rook is on the same line as Black's king.

**1. Rxe5+! Be7**

Other moves lose instantly: if 1. ... Nxe5? 2. Nf6 mate; and if 1. ... dxe5? 2. Nf6+ Nxf6 3. Rd8, mate.

**2. Rxe7+ Kf8 3. Qf5**

Threatening mate on f7.

**3. ... Ne5**

Defending the f7-square and uncovering the c8-bishop's attack on the queen.

**4. Qf6**

Hitting the unprotected h8-rook and maintaining the threat of f4xe5 and Qf6xf7.

**4. ... Rh7 5. Re8+ Kxe8 6. Qd8, mate**

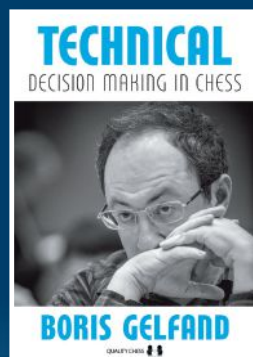
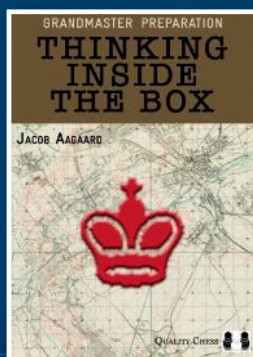
The game reference is Shibarevic-Bukic (Banja Luka 1976, 1-0). ♣

# He's back!



GM Jacob Aagaard, one of the world's leading trainers and writers, will headline our award-winning coverage of the 2020 Candidates on Chess Life Online.

Aagaard will analyze the most interesting game of each round as only he can: deeply, extensively, definitively. This is the analysis that the experts will be quoting tomorrow, and we have it exclusively here at *Chess Life Online*.





# MAKE YOUR MOVE!

NOVEMBER 2020 | FM CARSTEN HANSEN

Today's chess competitions have become a mixture of online and some more traditional events, and that is reflected this month in the sourcing of the exercises.

The puzzles start from easy and gradually move toward being difficult. Try first to solve the puzzle before reading the text at the bottom of the page. If unsuccessful, play through the solution, but return to the puzzle in 1-2 weeks to see if you can now solve it. That way you gradually expand your tactical vision and it will be more likely that you will spot tactics as they occur in your own games. Whatever you do, do not use an engine to solve the puzzles, that will only cheat yourself out of improving your game. (Note – hints are in a separate box below the diagrams. ~ed.)

**TACTIC I.**



WHITE TO MOVE

**TACTIC II.**



WHITE TO MOVE

**TACTIC III.**



BLACK TO MOVE

**TACTIC IV.**



WHITE TO MOVE

**TACTIC V.**



WHITE TO MOVE

**TACTIC VI.**



WHITE TO MOVE

**TACTIC VII.**



WHITE TO MOVE

**TACTIC VIII.**



WHITE TO MOVE

**TACTIC IX.**



BLACK TO MOVE

POSITION 1: Where are you going?  
 POSITION 2: Missing connection  
 POSITION 3: Overburdened defenders

POSITION 4: Diversion, then strike!  
 POSITION 5: Pins  
 POSITION 6: Interfere and clear

POSITION 7: A lead in development can be decisive  
 POSITION 8: Mobilization  
 POSITION 9: Identify White's weaknesses, then strike





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# Some Real Puzzlers

## Three winners from the 2020 FIDE World Cup in Composing

By JOHN HARTMANN

Once relegated to the subterranean problemist community, today there is a growing recognition that composed problems and endgame studies can be useful for players looking to improve.

Today's players are also turning to composing problems and studies. GM Jan Timman is perhaps the most famous player turned composer, while IM Yochanan Afek is one of the world's leading study authors. The

young American IM Christopher Yoo, who just won the 2020 U.S. Cadet Championship (see the December issue for more on this event - ~ed.), is one of the leading lights of a new generation of composers.

FIDE recently released the results of the 2020 FIDE World Cup in Composing. Below are the winning mate-in-two, mate-in-three, and endgame study, with the solutions further below. For more, go to the World Federation for Chess Composition website: <https://www.wfcc.ch/>



MIHAILO STOJNIC  
MATE-IN-TWO.  
WHITE TO MOVE



ALEXANDER KUZOVKO  
MATE-IN-THREE  
WHITE TO MOVE

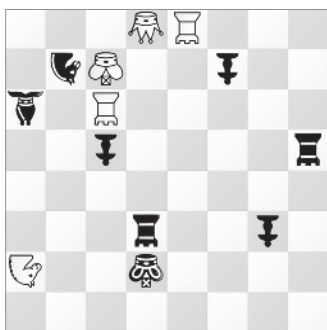


DARKO HLEBEC  
WHITE WINS  
BLACK TO MOVE

### Solutions

Hlebec created an alternative version of his idea for the final award presentation, in order to counter some criticisms that the study started with Black to move, and that it depended on some tablebase evaluations to make clear which tries failed.

DARKO HLEBEC  
VERSION, 2020



1. Rd7+! Kxd7 2. Qd2+ Rf6+! (3. Qxc2 Rxd4 4. Nf6+ Kd8! is equal) 3. ... Ke6 4. Qxc2 Rxd4 5. Ne4 Bf5 6. Qb3+ Rf6 7. Qxb6+ (7. Nc3? fails to 7. ... Bc2!) 7. ... Ke5 8. Qb8+ (8. Qc7+ Nxf4 10. Re3 mate. Kxf4 9. Qxf4+!! try—a bit of a drawback) 8. ... Kxe4 9. Qxf4+!!

In most compositions, White is on move at the outset for purposes of standardization. Not here, and with good reason. Hlebec's study is all the more beautiful for its originality, especially for the way that the f4-rook has to avoid multiple pitfalls or self-blocks before fulfilling its purpose.

1. ... f1=N+! 2. Rxf1! (2. Rxf1? Nxf1+ only draws) 2. ... Nxf1+ 3. Ke2! (3. Rxf1? and both rook captures on d5 are draws) 3. ... Raxd5 4. Ne5! (4. Rxf4? Ng3+ 5. Qxg3 Rfd2+ is equal) 4. ... Ng3+ 5. Kf3 Bf6 6. Qb4+ (6. Qa3+? R7d6 7. Qa7+ Ke6 is a draw) 6. ... R7d6 7. Qb7+ (7. Nc4? Bc3 8. Qa3 Rdx3+ 9. Kg2 Bc1! with equality) 7. ... Ke6 8. Qc8+ Kxe5 (8. ... Ke7 9. Nc6+ wins) 9. Qxf5+!! Nxf5 10. Re4! mate.

DARKO HLEBEC  
2020 FIDE CUP D, 1ST PRIZE

compositions, having two of them is not exactly commonplace! The key is 1. f8=N! (2. Nd7+ Kxd5 3. Ba2 mate. Note that 1. f8=Q? fails to ... Kxd5. Black's defensive tries are:

1. ... cxd5 2. Nxd4! followed by 3. Nd7 mate; 1. ... Ncxd5 2. exd4+! Kxf4 3. Ne6 mate; 1. ... Nexd5 2. Bxd4+ Kd6 3. bxc8=N mate; 1. ... Kxd5 2. Rxd4+ Ke5 (2. ... Kxc5 3. Ndt7 mate) 3. Bde6 mate; 1. ... Bxd5 2. Rfxd4 (threatening 3. f4 mate) 2. ... Bf3 (2. ... Ne6 3. Ndt7 mate) 3. Bde6 mate.

MIHAILO STOJNIC  
2020 FIDE CUP A, 1ST PRIZE

This is a fine example of the deep complexities of modern directmate composition. Here Stojnic has created a problem based on the Rukhliis theme, where no fewer than six initial mate tries now work against different defenses after the first key move. But you needn't know all that to enjoy this mate-in-two.

Imagine it was Black to move. White will checkmate Black after any of Black's moves: 1. ... Qg8 (1. ... Qf4+ 2. exf4 mate; 1. ... Qxe3 2. Qxe3 mate; 1. ... dxe5 2. Nc3 mate; 1. ... f2 2. Qh1 mate; 1. ... cxb4 2. Qxb4 mate; 1. ... Qxf5 mate) 2. Nf6 mate

The key move is 1. Qg3! when all the mates change! Here are all the tries: 1. ... Qg8 2. Qf4 mate; 1. ... Qxf4 2. Qxf4 mate; 1. ... Qxd4 2. Qxd4 mate; 1. ... Qxe5 2. Qxe5 mate; 1. ... f2 2. Qh1 mate; 1. ... cxb4 2. Qxb4 mate; 1. ... Qxf5 mate

2. Nf6 mate (2. Nf6+? Qxf6); 1. ... cxb4 2. Rd4 mate; 1. ... Qxf5 2. Bxf5 mate; 1. ... c4 2. Rd4 mate.

ALEXANDER KUZOVKO  
2020 FIDE CUP B, 1ST PRIZE

This, as event judge Milodrag Mladenovic notes, is "a beautiful problem where five Black defenses on the same square (d5) are answered by five White's second moves to the [d4-square]". And while underpromotion is not a typical in

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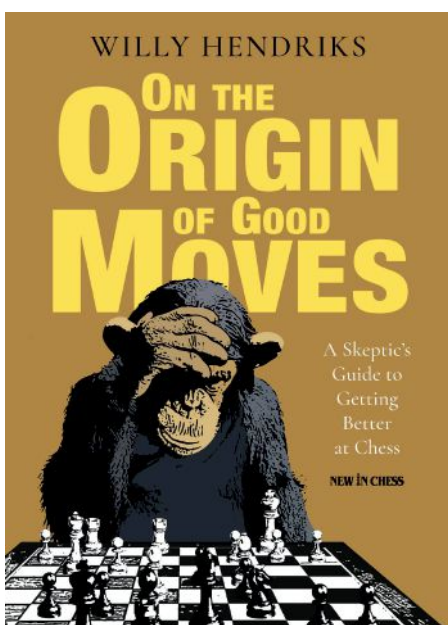


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# Rewriting the History of the Development of Chess Ideas

Iconoclastic IM Willy Hendriks hits his mark once more.

By IM JOHN WATSON



**IM** Willy Hendriks made a big splash in the chess world with his controversial 2012 book *Move First, Think Later*, which basically savaged the bulk of existing instructional literature while laying forth his own view of the learning process. Since his new book *On the Origin of Good Moves* refers back to the ideas in that work, and at one point recaps the important ones at length, I'm going to refer you to my lengthy review of the earlier work on the *This Week in Chess* website:

[theweekinchess.com/john-watson-reviews/john-watson-book-review-103-challenging-conventional-wisdom](http://theweekinchess.com/john-watson-reviews/john-watson-book-review-103-challenging-conventional-wisdom)

I found that I agreed with most of what Hendriks had to say in *Move First, Think Later* (although not with his dismissal of some classic literature), and that is also true of *On the Origin of Good Moves*. In both cases, he's noticed misconceptions and myths that have persisted in chess literature and has been the first to point them out. He introduces this new project by describing a standard view of how chess ideas have evolved through the years:

*[Quotations from the best-known books about this subject] seem to suggest that there is agreement on what 'the stages in the development of chess' consist of, and indeed, there is a view that almost all those writing about the history of our game adhere to.*

*In this generally approved view, William Steinitz plays a central role. He is supposed to have been the first to understand the laws of positional chess and also the first to present this knowledge in his writings. The period before Steinitz is often described as 'romantic,' with 'attacking at all costs' as its main characteristic. With his concepts of balance and of making plans based on the elements of the position, Steinitz more or less brought science and enlightenment into chess thinking. (p.10)*

Hendriks thinks that this whole picture is nonsense. To expand upon this, I'll note that the same books also tend to assert that Morphy introduced the "principles of development," while Tarrasch and Lasker are supposed to have carried on and put Steinitz's methods on a "scientific" basis. Hendriks continues:

*However, I believe that if you take a closer look at this history, it seems rather strange that we have ended up with this 'official' version of how chess developed... at first it was my intention to shape this book as a whodunnit. While describing all the battles that have been fought in the history of chess between different schools of thinking and styles of playing, and all the discussions and controversies that went along with it, somewhere near the end it should become clear how the crime was committed. Unfortunately, this asks too much of my writing abilities. So I may just as well give it away right here: Emanuel Lasker did it! (ibid.)*

That is, Lasker concocted this standard version of events (he refers to it as "The Great Lasker Hoax"), and promulgated it to the world. A fair criticism, but not the whole story. It's true that Lasker's idealistic view of the development of positional principles and transitions between Steinitz, Lasker, and their forebears laid the grounds for later misconceptions, but what expanded and cemented the myths about the history of chess ideas all the way into this century was Richard Reti's brilliant *Modern Ideas in Chess*.

This was one of the first few chess books I read, and I absolutely fell in love with it. Sweeping, romantic, thought-provoking—and what a writer! Reti not only made the development of chess thought into a series of fundamental positional insights, but his notion that personality differences and fundamental spiritual and cultural trends underlie the contrasting approaches of these great geniuses makes a wonderful story.

Nevertheless, it didn't take me too many years of studying the great players' games to realize that most of what Reti actually said about their styles was at best misleading and often simply wrong. Worse, the basic distinctions he drew and the evolution of thought he described became baked into the next 70 years of chess literature, with Euwe being one of several who essentially repeated them.

More recently, the most disappointing thing to me about Kasparov's *My Great Predecessors* series, which is a masterpiece of analysis by a chess genius, is that it buys into the same old stereotyped portrayal of the great players' styles. To be fair, I believe that he was fed the historical material by his collaborator Dmitry Plisetsky and largely limited himself to the most famous games, which are hardly characteristic. Had he done broader research, it wouldn't have taken Kasparov long at all to realize how misleading these pretty pictures were. Hendriks does a masterful job of showing how the standard story fails, and why. What makes the book delightful is that he does so with spectacular examples and loads of entertaining stories.

With that in mind, let me step back and describe some examples of what he has included in this sweeping and complex historical overview. To begin with, Hendriks has a chapter on Greco, who is shockingly advanced for his time, especially in terms of attacking ideas, pawn chains, rook lifts and other strategies. A few years ago, Jeremy Silman had a wonderful article about Greco outlining all this (on *Chess.com*); it makes for eye-opening reading.

An examination of Philidor and his contemporaries is next, taking a hard look at Philidor's legendary claims about pawn play. This is followed by a close look at the La Bourdonnais-McDonnell matches and what the games tell us about the advancement of tactical and positional play. Throughout his exposition, Hendriks intersperses entertaining stories about the old players and their eccentricities, which makes for easy reading. In the middle of one Morphy-Paulsen match game, Morphy has used 25 minutes for his moves, versus 11 hours(!) for Louis Paulsen; he gets up quietly at that point, crunches his fist, and says "Paulsen will never win a game of me again." Different times.

I was happy to find that Adolf Anderssen is given his due as a premier positional player well ahead of his time, something obscured by his famous brilliancies but obvious if you examine the games from his long career. The Morphy-Anderssen section shows that Morphy wasn't more advanced conceptually than his great

contemporary, as Reti would have it.

Anderssen was more subtle and skilled at maneuvering in a wide variety of middlegames, including some very modern ones (Hendriks even calls him "the father of modern chess.") However, he was indecisive and not as accurate in positions he was unfamiliar with, and while a tactical genius, he had somewhat worse tactical instincts than Morphy, and was prone to make more tactical mistakes, whereas Morphy was more accurate in all phases of the game, and made fewer blunders.

I loved the sections in which Steinitz, Zukertort, and Chigorin are featured. Hendriks demonstrates how often Steinitz won in spite of his theories (several about pawn play are horribly off base, and his reckless use of the king was notoriously deluded), or lost while stubbornly trying to follow them against all common sense.

Hendriks subjects the 1892 Chigorin-Steinitz match to a devastating critique, concluding "[t]he average master of today would surely stand a good chance against Steinitz or Chigorin." (p.333) That sounds harsh, but is actually consistent with these two being among the top 15 all-time chess geniuses deserving the highest respect. Hendriks' point is that their tactical level was quite primitive; today's player sees and solves more tactical positions in a few sessions of online exercises than Steinitz and Chigorin did in a lifetime. Furthermore, the two played many terribly error-ridden games with time controls three to ten times longer than we see today. In spite of this, considering the state of chess knowledge at the time, one comes away with high regard for the depth and sophistication, if not the accuracy, of their play.

In the midst of these chapters, Hendriks cites uniquely modern games and ideas from some lesser-known masters such as Paulsen, Semyon Alapin, and Marmaduke Wyvill. The latter put up a good fight versus Anderssen in the famous London 1851 match tournament, using the English Opening and Sicilian Defense in ways that you wouldn't be able to distinguish from contemporary practice.

Nominally, a major topic of this book is chess improvement (the subtitle is "A Skeptic's Guide to Getting Better at Chess"), so let's listen to Hendriks' contentions with respect to how one might or might not be able to learn from the historical development of the game:

*Returning to the question of how and what to learn from the history of chess, Euwe, Kasparov and many others have suggested that every beginner in chess has to get past some sort of primitive Romantic style, 'the manner of play in the 16th and 17th*

*centuries'. The follow-up to this is the idea that we develop from wildly attacking players into more positional ones, with Steinitz as the turning point in the historical part.*

*Neither at the historical nor at the individual level do I share this observation. It is more likely that most players develop from bad attacking and bad positional players into better ones on both terrains. This way, the resemblance between personal and general history that is left becomes very modest: throughout the history of chess we became better in all areas and you, as an individual, have also become better in all areas in your career as well or are still in the process of trying to. So, to make the comparison fruitful, we have to look at a deeper level.*

*Getting better is essentially not a passage through styles, as Euwe and Kasparov make it appear, but an accumulation of small bits of knowledge: opening knowledge, endgame knowledge, and knowledge of typical tactics and typical strategic ideas. History books tend to hop from this style to that style, together with the typical features or big ideas that belong to them and their most prominent representatives. But beneath the surface there is an evolution going on of an enormous quantity of small concrete elements that are discovered, become part of common knowledge, and get developed further. We have seen a few of these elements in this book and followed some through time. (p.397)*

What to make of all this? I am biased, having a special interest in this area and here seeing another writer explicitly say what I've thought for years about the subject (and much more). But whether or not you buy into Hendriks' philosophy of chess thinking, I'm certain that *On the Origin of Moves* is the most important and original work written about the evolution of chess ideas. Furthermore, he has made this subject accessible, easily comprehensible, and fun to boot. For those of you who want a break from opening study, improvement books, and games collections, I highly recommend getting a copy and enjoying a new perspective on our game. You might find yourself getting addicted to chess history in the bargain. ♠

*Editor's note: Both IM Willy Hendriks and IM John Watson have appeared on The Perpetual Chess Podcast, as have many other interesting chess personalities. To hear their episodes, and many others, visit: [www.perpetualchesspod.com](http://www.perpetualchesspod.com)*

# The Professional

Former *Chess Life* columnist GM Larry Evans played as well as he wrote.

By **BRUCE PANDOLFINI**

GRANDMASTER LARRY EVANS (1932-2010) was for some years America's top chess professional. He did everything well, and that includes teaching, writing, exhibiting, presenting, and even playing chess. While he wasn't as strong as Bobby Fischer, he was a terrific player in his own right, winning or tying for the U.S. Championship five times. We get a sense for the quality of his play from his game against Bela Berger (Black) from the 1964 Amsterdam Interzonal. After a steady opening, Evans sacrificed a piece. In no time, he had converted his initiative into a winning endgame. The encounter began as a Caro-Kann Defense:

## CARO-KANN DEFENSE (B19)

GM Larry Evans  
Bela Berger  
Amsterdam 1964

1. e4 c6 2. d4 d5 3. Nc3 dxe4



Now ensure that the position above is set up on your chessboard. As you play through the remaining moves in this game, use a piece of paper to cover the article, exposing White's next move only after trying to guess

it. If you guess correctly, give yourself the par score. Sometimes points are also awarded for second-best moves, and there may even be bonus points—or deductions—for other moves and variations. Note that \*\* means that White's move is on the next line.\*\*

4. **Nxe4** **Par Score 5**

You may accept *full credit* for either 4. f3 or 4. Bc4. Both are playable.

4. ... **Bf5\*\***

5. **Ng3** **Par Score 5**

White gains a tempo on the f5-bishop.

5. ... **Bg6\*\***

6. **Nf3** **Par Score 5**

Evans develops toward the center. You may accept *full credit* for 6. h4.

6. ... **Nd7**

Black might also have played 6. ... Nf6.\*\*

7. **h4** **Par Score 5**

The immediate point of this move is clear. The threat is to trap the bishop by h4-h5.

7. ... **h6**

Black creates a retreat square. A little weaker is 7. ... h5.\*\*

8. **h5** **Par Score 5**

The standard move. You may accept *full credit* for 8. Bd3.

8. ... **Bh7\*\***

9. **Bd3** **Par Score 5**

Nothing new here. We're still in a popular line.

9. ... **Bxd3**

Naturally, Black doesn't want to allow capture on h7.\*\*

10. **Qxd3** **Par Score 5**

In this trendy variation, White gets ready to castle queenside.

10. ... **Qc7**

Black stops Bc1-f4 and in turn also makes queenside castling possible.\*\*

11. **Bd2** **Par Score 5**

This is the main line. You may accept *4 points part credit* for either 11. Ne2 or 11. Rh4.

11. ... **Ngf6**

Queenside castling was also possible, but Black does have to get the g8-knight out sometime.\*\*

12. **O-O-O** **Par Score 5**

So far, everything has gone according to plan.

12. ... **e6**

It's time for Black's remaining bishop to come into the game.\*\*

13. **Kb1** **Par Score 5**

This is the most practical move. It gets the king to a safer place before serious operations begin. You may accept *full credit* for 13. Ne4.

13. ... **c5**

Black changes plans. Queenside castling has now become a little riskier.\*\*

14. **c4** **Par Score 5**

## ABCs of Chess

These problems are all related to key positions in this month's game. In each case, **Black is to move**. The answers can be found in Solutions on page 59.

**November Exercise:** There are various ways you can try to improve your self-protective awareness. You could study the games of known defensive and counterattacking wizards. You could also try this exercise. Whenever you see a winning tactical situation, create a diagram of the previous move, when there was still a chance to avoid trouble. Create a database of these landmine positions and regularly play through each example. As you review these critical setups again and again, you should become tactically more alert to possible hazards and snares. Without doubt, learning how to ward off danger will indeed strengthen your overall game.

**PROBLEM I.**  
Mating net



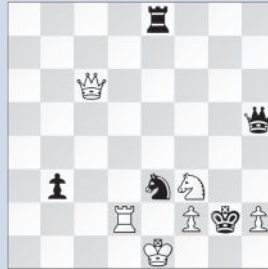
**PROBLEM II.**  
Mating net



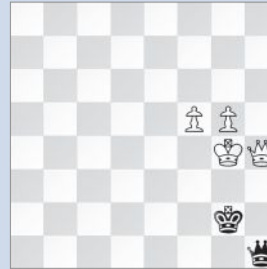
**PROBLEM III.**  
Mating net



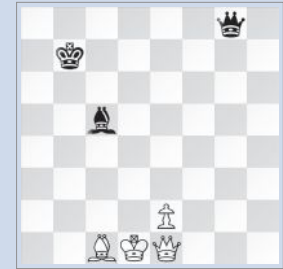
**PROBLEM IV.**  
Mating net



**PROBLEM V.**  
Mating net



**PROBLEM VI.**  
Mating net



If 14. Rhe1, Black could continue with 14. ... c4.

14. ... **cx**d4 **Par Score 4**

Black opens the c-file and clears c5 for a piece.\*\*

15. **N**xd4 **Par Score 5**

*Deduct 1 point* for 15. Qxd4, which would be answered by 15. ... Bc5.

15. ... **a**6

Berger stops a knight invasion at b5. But he could also have played either 15. ... Bc5 or 15. ... Be7.\*\*

16. **N**xe6 **Par Score 6**

This sacrifice does not win by force, but it leads to some intriguing possibilities. You may accept *full credit* for 16. Rhe1.

16. ... **f**xe6

The best way to refute a sacrifice is to accept it.\*\*

17. **Q**g6+ **Par Score 5**

The expected follow-up. White makes the black king move.

17. ... **K**d8

Black could keep the e6-pawn defended by 17. ... Ke7, but that would keep his bishop blocked.\*\*

18. **R**he1 **Par Score 6**

All White's pieces are now in play. Does he have enough for the sacrificed piece?

18. ... **K**c8

Black removes his king from the d-file. Add *1 bonus point* if you had planned to answer 18. ... Qxc4 by 19. Ba5+.\*\*

19. **R**xe6 **Par Score 5**

White now has two pawns for his piece, while retaining considerable attacking chances.

19. ... **b**6

This gives the black king a potential escape square at b7. He might have tried either 19. ... Kb8 or even 19. ... Nc5.\*\*

20. **Q**f5 **Par Score 6**

Evans repositions his queen nicely. Clearly, there are indirect possibilities against the black king. You may accept *4 points part credit* for 20. Ne2.

20. ... **K**b7

Black is running, but he can't hide.\*\*

21. **B**f4 **Par Score 5**

Suddenly, the sacrifice has been made to work. Black's pieces are hopelessly uninvolved on their home rank.

21. ... **Q**c5

No better was 21. ... Qc8. Black would still be lost.\*\*

22. **R**xf6 **Par Score 7**

A pretty shot! Give yourself *1 bonus point* for seeing that 22. ... Nxf6 loses to 23. Rd7+. Black has no better than trading queens, 22. ... Qxf5 23. Rxf5, leaving White with an easily won endgame, two pawns up.

22. ... **Black Resigned** ↴

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# Solutions

## Page 11 / CHESS TO ENJOY

**PROBLEM I.** 37. ... Qf4 threatens 38. ... Qxh2 mate and 38. ... Qxc1+. White resigned after 38. Qxe6+ Kf8 because 39. Qc8+ Kf7 40. Qd7+ Kg6 41. Qe8+ Kh6 42. Qe6+ g6 runs out of safe checks. **PROBLEM II.** Don't take full credit for 41. Bg6! (threat of Rd8 mate) unless you also saw 41. ... Rd2 42. Bd4! Re2 43. Rd8+. **PROBLEM III.** 22. ... Rxh2+! 23. Kxh2 Rh8+ 24. Qh4 (24. Bh6 Qxf4) Rxh4+ 25. Bxh4 Qf4!. **PROBLEM IV.** 39. ... Qd3! and, for example, 40. ... Bf5 and 41. ... Bh3 (42. Qxh3 Qxe2). White resigned after 40. Nf1 h3. Also good is 39. ... Qc2! and ... Bd3. **PROBLEM V.** 26. Bb6! threatens 27. Rd8+ and mates. White eventually won after 26. ... Rxc2+ 27. Qxc2 Qxf5 28. Rd8+ Rxd8 29. Rxd8+ Ke7 30. Qg3. **PROBLEM VI.** 46. ... Qa1! threatens 47. ... Qxa5+. Black won after 47. Kc2 Bd3+! (also 47. ... Qxa5) 48. Qxd3 Rxc5+ 49. Kb3 Rxa5 (also 49. ... Qxa5 and 50. ... Rc4).

## Page 46 / MAKE YOUR MOVE!


**TACTIC I.** 28. Nd5! The best, aiming to trap Black's queen. White has many good moves, for instance, 28. Ra3 Qe6 29. Ra6 Rd6 30. Nd5 with an overwhelming advantage. 28. Bh3 (threatening both 29. Bxd7 and 29. Ra3) is also winning, as 28. ... Ng4 29. Nxc4 hxc4 30. Bxc4 picks up material. **28. ... Ne7** Black misses White's threat, but 28. ... Nxd5 29. exd5 Rxd5 30. Bxd5 Qxd5 31. b5 Ne7 32. c4 is also hopeless for Black. 29. Ra3! The queen is trapped and **Black resigned**. Azaladze-Manukyan, Titled Tuesday 2020. **TACTIC II.** 22. Bxd3! White forces Black's queen forward. **22. ... Qxd3 23. Nd5!** The point! Now Black's queen and bishop are hanging and there's no way to save both of them. **23. ... Qxb3 24. Nxe7+!** The intermediary check wins the piece. **24. ... Kh7 25. axb3** and **Black resigned**. Yanchenko-Sawlin, Titled Tuesday 2020. **TACTIC III.** 13. ... Nxe4! **14. Rxe4** After 14. dxe4 Bxc4, Black has simply won a pawn. **14. ... d5 15. Rh4 g5!** and now Black wins material. In the game, Black played 15. ... dxc4 which should have been met with **16. Bxh6 Bxh6 17. Rxh6 Nc5 18. d4** and Black is only slightly better. The stem game is Guimaraes-Aizpurua, Titled Tuesday 2020. **TACTIC IV.** 14. d5! Best. In the game, White played another strong continuation: **14. Nxe5 Qxc7 15. d5 Bf5 16. e4 Bc8??** (Black collapses; after 16. ... fxe5 17. exf5 Nd4 18. Na3 0-0-0 Black can still fight) **17. Qh5+ g6 18. Nxc6 Qf7 19. Bxf6 Rg8 20. Qe5+** and **Black resigned**. 1-0 **14. ... Qxd5** The point! **15. Nd4! e4** Or 15. ... Qc4 16. Nxe6 Qxe6 17. Bxb7 and White is winning. **16. Qxb3 Qxb3 17. Nxb3 Bxb3 18. Bh3!** The clever point behind White's combination: the c-pawn cannot be stopped. Zwardon-Csonka, Slovakian Team ch 2020. **TACTIC V.** 19. Qe3! After this sneaky move, Black cannot organize his pieces adequately. In the game, White won quickly after **19. Bxh7+? Kxh7 20. Qxd4 Qxa2 21. Qd3+ Kg8??** (21. ... f5! defends) **22. Qg6!** and **Black resigned** in Cerveny-Patrascu, Titled Tuesday 2020. **19. ... Qc5** Or 19. ... Qa4 20. Qe7 and Black is struggling to guard g7. **20. Rb5!** Exploiting the pin of the knight

to win a piece. **20. ... Qc7 21. Qxd4 Qxh2+ 22. Kf1 Qh1+ 23. Qg1 Qxf3+ 24. Ke1** and White should win. **TACTIC VI.** 23. Bd7! A nasty move that threatens to play Ne3-f5 and if ... Qe7-f6, then Rd1-d6. With the bishop on d7, Black cannot organize a proper defense. **23. ... h5!** Black's only chance to stay in the game as 23. ... Qf6 can be met with 24. Nd5 (or 24. Nf5 h5 25. Qxh5 Bc8 26. Bxc8 Rxd1 27. Qxd1 Rxc8 28. Qd7 and White is winning) 24. ... Qxb2 25. Bxc6 Bxc6 26. Ne7+, winning a piece. **24. Qxcg7+!** Winning a pawn, but also opening up for Black's king. **24. ... Kxcg7 25. Nf5+ Kf6??** Black should have played 25. ... Kg6 26. Nxe7+ Nxe7 27. Rxe7 Bc8 28. Ba4 with chances of saving the endgame if White cooperates. **26. Rxe7!** Ouch! **26. ... Kg6** Necessary as 26. ... Nxe7 27. Rd6 mate would end the game on the spot. **27. Rd6+ Kh7 28. Rh6+ Kg8 29. Re3** and **Black resigned** before he would get mated. Espinosa Aranda-Jimenez Ruano, Spanish ch (Linares) 2020. **TACTIC VII.** It's hard to believe that Black should be in danger of losing already, but White's lead in development is causing major headaches. **12. cxd5! exd5** Or 12. ... Bxd5 13. Bc4 (but not 13. e4? Bc6! and Black saves himself) 13. ... a5 14. Ne5 Qc8 15. Bxd5 exd5 16. Rxd5 Qe6 17. Rd2 and White has both a pawn and a major lead in development. **13. Ng5!** The pin on the d-pawn forces Black's hand. In the game, White won after **13. Bd3 Qe7??** (Black can put up a better fight after 13. ... Qe8 14. Bb5 Qc8 although White here too is clearly better) **14. Bxe4 dxe4 15. Ng5! Rd8 16. Rxd8+ Qxd8 17. Qxe4** and **Black resigned** in Weetik-Jenni, Titled Tuesday 2020. **13. ... Qe7** or 13. ... Bg6 14. Bc4 and the threat of Bxd5 costs Black material. **14. b4!** White also has a decisive advantage after 14. Nxe4 Qxe4 15. Qxe4 dxe4 16. Bc4 a5 17. Bd5 Ra7 18. Bxe4 but the text move wins a piece. **14. ... h6 15. Nxe4 Qxe4 16. f3** White chases Black's queen away, removing the pin the pawn on b4 and therefore winning the bishop on c5. **TACTIC VIII.** 18. Nh5! White removes an important defender while simultaneously accelerating his attack. White has two good alternatives in 18. Nf5! exf5 19. Bxf6 Bxf6 20. Qxf5, winning a pawn, and 18. Re3 with a strong attack. **18. ... Qd8** If 18. ... Nxc5 then the thematic and classic 19. Bxh7+! (note that White should also win after 19. Qxh5 f5 20. Bxc7 Kxc7 21. Rxe6 Ra7 22. Rfe1 Bd8 23. Bxf5 and Black's defense will not hold for long) 19. ... Kxc7 20. Qxh5+ Kg8 21. Bxc7 Kxc7 22. Qg4+ Kh7 23. Re3 decides the game. **19. Nxc7!** Now Black's king shelter gets ripped to shreds. **19. ... Kxc7 20. Qg4+ Kh8 21. Qh4!** and with forced mate in a few moves, **Black resigned**. Of course, both Qg4-h5 and Qg4-h3 would have led to the same result. Lugovskoy-Reprintsev, Titled Tuesday 2020. **TACTIC IX.** 20. ... d4!! An important intermediary move. The game went **20. ... Rb8? 21. Qxc3! Qxc3+ 22. Rxc3 Rb1+ 23. Kd2 Rxh1 24. Rxc6**, and here **Black resigned** in disgust in Tang-Willow, Titled Tuesday 2020, but he is still very much in the game: 24. ... h5 25. Rxa6 Rxh2 26. Ra8+ Kh7 27. Rf8 Rxc2 28. Rxf7 Rg4 with a sharp rook ending and chances to both sides. **21. exd4 Rb8!** Now the rook move is decisive because after **22. Qxc3 Rb1+ 23. Kd2**, the e-pawn is now a d-pawn and therefore Black has **23. ... Qg5+**, forcing **24. Qe3 Qxe3+ 25. Kxe3 Rxh1** and Black is winning.

## Page 53 / ABCs OF CHESS

**PROBLEM I. Mating Net:** It is mate by 1. ... Qd2+ 2. Qc2 Qxc2 mate. **PROBLEM II. Mating Net:** Black mates in two: 1. ... Qg3+ 2. Ke2 Nf4 mate. **PROBLEM III. Mating net:** Black mates in one: 1. ... Rd1 mate. **PROBLEM IV. Mating net:** Black mates in two: 1. ... Nc2+ 2. Kd1 Re1 mate. **PROBLEM V. Mating net:** Sudden mate happens by 1. ... Qd1+ 2. Kf4 Qd4 mate. **PROBLEM VI. Mating net:** Black mates after 1. ... Qb3+ 2. Kd2 by either 2. ... Be3 mate or 2. ... Bb4 mate.

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## MY BEST MOVE

### Kimberly Liu

#### Women's FIDE Master and Chess Streamer

Right after finishing a clay art exhibition at a local library, and right before Thanksgiving, my family and I embarked on a road trip down to Baja California for the 2018 North American Junior Championships. I was in good spirits after helping many children bring their imagination to life through the form of clay. They typically approach me with a request to make a character that they admire, but instead of simply sculpting one for them, I give them a ball of clay and work with them to create their own unique masterpieces.

The step-by-step process in art has greatly influenced my chess methodology. In chess games, if I have an idea, I make sure that I achieve the end goal one move at a time while resolving any difficulties I may face along the way. Sometimes, there are unexpected surprises. But improvisation is what makes chess so gripping and exciting!

The North American Junior Championships was one of the biggest tournaments of my life. As the third seed, I had a decent chance at achieving first place and earning the coveted WIM title. Despite the pressure, I only focused on putting my best foot forward, one step at a time.

#### SICILIAN DEFENSE, ALAPIN VARIATION (B22)

Kimberly Liu

Svitlana Demchenko

North American Junior U20 Girls, 2018

1. e4 c5 2. c3 Nf6 3. e5 Nd5 4. g3

A novelty introduced to me by my coach GM Gregory Kaidanov, largely aimed at avoiding main lines.

4. ... d6 5. exd6 Qxd6 6. Bg2 Nc6 7. Ne2 Bf5 8. d4 Rd8 9. O-O e6 10. Na3 a6 11. Nf4 Nf6 12. Nc4 Qc7 13. d5!

An attempt to open the center while Black's king is still stranded in the middle.

13. ... Be7 14. Ne3 Ne5 15. Nxf5 exf5 16. Qc2 g6 17. c4 O-O 18. Bd2 Nfd7 19. h4 Bf6 20. Rae1 Qd6 21. Re2 b5

This pawn break completely undermines my center by targeting the c4-pawn. I was slowly



*... improvisation is what makes chess so gripping and exciting!*

but surely losing my grip on the position.

22. cxb5 axb5 23. Rfe1 Rc8 24. Nh3? Qa6 25. Bc3 Nc4 26. Bxf6 Nxf6 27. b3 Nd6 28. Qd2 Kg7 29. Nf4 Nde4 30. Qb2 c4 31. Qd4 c3 32. Bxe4 fxe4 33. Rxe4 c2 34. Rc1 Qxa2 35. Re7

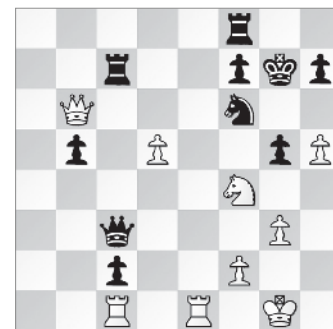
With just a few minutes left on the clock, time pressure was settling in for both of us. I was ready to launch a reckless attack and go out in a blaze of glory.

35. ... Qa3 36. Ree1 Qxb3 37. h5 Qc3 38. Qa7 Rc7 39. Qb6 g5

(See diagram top of next column)

40. h6+!

MY BEST MOVE: A subtle tactic. After luring the black king away from the defense of the f6-knight, the black queen is overloaded, having to protect both the c7-rook and



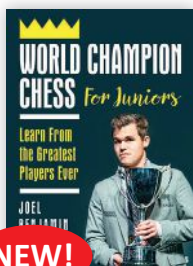
f6-knight. I proceed to take advantage of this fact by chasing the queen from her comfy spot on c3.

40. ... Kxh6 41. Ne2 Qe5 42. Nd4 Qxe1+ 43. Rxe1 c1=Q 44. Qxf6+ Kh5 45. Rxc1 Rxc1+ 46. Kg2 Rg8 47. g4+ Kh4 48. Qh6+ Kxg4 49. Qh3+ Kf4 50. Qe3+ Kg4 51. Qf3+, Black resigned. ♠

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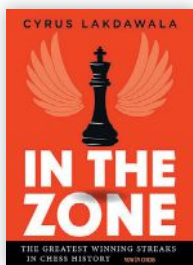


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*Cyrus Lakdawala*

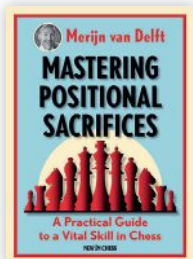
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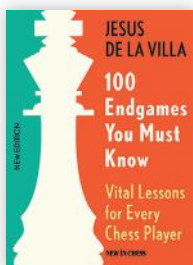


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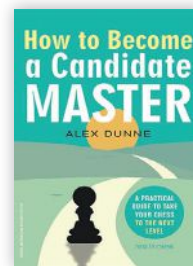
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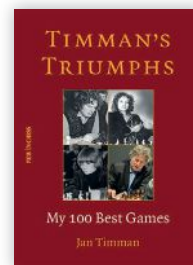


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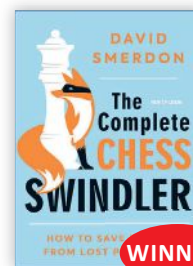
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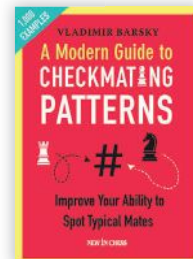
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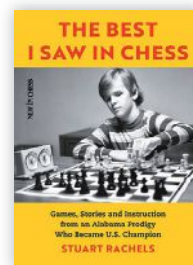


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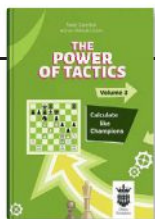
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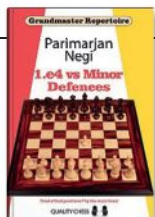


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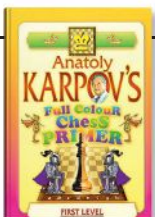


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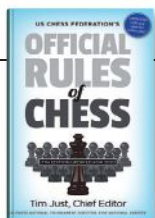


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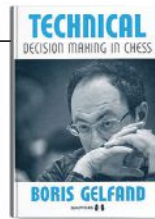
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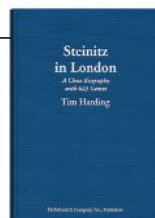


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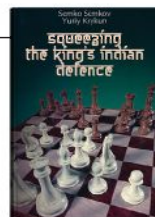


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