



**FRED REINFELD CHESS CLASSICS** Peter Kurzdorfer, General Editor

**THE**

**COMPLETE**

**CHESS**

**COURSE**

**Fred Reinfeld**

**21<sup>st</sup> Century Edition**



# The Complete Chess Course

From Beginning  
To  
Winning Chess!

by  
Fred Reinfeld

*21st Century Edition*

*Fred Reinfeld Chess Classics*  
Peter Kurzdorfer, General Editor



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Russell Enterprises, Inc.  
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The Complete Chess Course  
From Beginning to Winning Chess!

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## From the Editor

Mid-20th century best-selling author Fred Reinfeld introduced thousands of players to the wonderful game of chess through his tireless efforts. His books were ubiquitous and covered every conceivable aspect of the royal game.

I was one of countless chess players representing several generations who grew up surrounded by Reinfeld books. We couldn't get enough of them! He not only taught us how to play the game well, but also implanted in us his enthusiastic passion for learning the game.

Fred's books are peppered throughout with words and phrases in italics to emphasize ideas. Moves are punctuated with single, double, and even triple exclamation marks and question marks to span the entire spectrum of emotions the moves conjure up.

He had a way of reducing the most intricate, complicated combinations to their basic components. After Reinfeld explains a combination, it makes sense.

Thus I am pleased and honored to be a part of bringing back my old mentor to new generations of chess players. Russell Enterprises Inc. is engaged in a project of resurrecting the immortal Reinfeld classics, republishing them with the modern algebraic notation in place of the archaic English descriptive notation that was popular years ago to make them accessible to 21st century chess players.

This undertaking, begun under General Editor Bruce Alberston, has been passed on to me. So I get to reread these wonderful old books, change the notation in ChessBase, type up Fred's snappy prose, and look out for potential errors.

The few analytical errors that crop up from time to time are easily checked with the monster chess engine Fritz, which Fred never had access to. In those far-off pre-computer days, you analyzed each and every position, including any variations you thought up, with nothing more than a board and pieces, using your knowledge of the pieces' potential.

Thus the few errors are no reflection on the author's ability or knowledge at all. I have called attention to only the most egregious ones, indicated by an asterisk, and appearing on page 288. They certainly do not detract at all from the fresh charm he imparts on each and every position he looks at.

*The Complete Chess Course* in particular was originally brought out as a series of separate books that Fred later combined. The only part that is slightly out of date is his treatment of the openings, which are rather naïve by modern standards; however, that should make no difference at the intermediate or even national master level, as I know all too well.

Absorb the material included in this volume and you will play chess at a fairly high level. Or read through it all and enjoy Fred's masterful explanations; you will certainly be entranced by his enthusiasm for the intricate relationships the pieces experience in the context of a game or even a standout plan or combination.

The section on notation is the only portion of this work that Fred Reinfeld did not write. Since he used the old English descriptive notation exclusively, that section has been replaced with the gracious permission of David MacEnulty from his *My First Book of Chess Tactics*.

Peter Kurzdorfer  
Olean, New York  
October 2015

## The Complete Chess Course

### Introduction

Although seven of the eight sections of this book were originally published as separate volumes, they were written with their coordination as a complete chess course in mind. Conveniently prefaced now by a new summarized review of the basic elements of chess, the resulting comprehensive whole provides the instruction that any chessplayer needs to develop a respectable degree of skill.

The integrated progression of subjects is treated in the following order. A player who knows the elements but little more about chess may not need the introductory steps revealed in Book One, but he does need to be warned about the types of mistakes – neglected development and the like – that beginning and intermediate players make so frequently. He can then go on to study opening play in its larger aspects, and examine its consequences in the ensuing middlegame. From this point he proceeds to study the endgame stage, which evolves out of the middlegame previously studied. And finally, having seen the logical relationship which binds together opening, middlegame, and ending, the student is now ready to go back to the initial stage and study the chief openings in rewarding detail.

With this overall scheme in mind, the reader is in a better position to appreciate the detailed treatment in each section.

Book One is a summary of chess fundamentals that provides the first springboard into the “royal” game for beginners, and also serves as a refresher for the more advanced player.

Book Two is a study of the nine most common mistakes made by chessplayers. These include such typical errors as failing to guard against hostile captures, underestimating the opponent’s threats, and making pawn moves that weaken the castled position. Many examples are given to show how these and other mistakes prove disastrous in the opening and middlegame.

Now that the reader has been made aware of the kinds of mistakes he must avoid, he is ready to study the problem of planning the opening so as to get a promising middlegame position. First the subject is treated from White’s point of view (Book Three). Dealing with such problems as control of the center, how to exploit superior development and mobility, and the like. But it is at least equally important to deal with opening problems from Black’s point of view, and this brings us to Book Four; here problems of counterattack and defense are emphasized.

These studies of middlegame play lead logically to a treatment of the endgame stage, for whatever happens in the final part of the game is the consequence of what happened earlier in the opening and middlegame. As a rule, the chief practical problem of endgame play is how to win with a material advantage which has been obtained in the middlegame. In Book Five the different types of endings are classified and studied; many practical examples are explained, and the reader acquires an excellent grasp of the vital problem of converting a material advantage into victory.

But to know how to make use of advantages is not enough; so in Book Six we go on to the related problem of how to make the most of disadvantageous positions. This section contains many valuable pointers that will help the reader to salvage many an apparently lost game.

Now that opening, middlegame, and endgame have been surveyed, what remains? It is now time to survey the chess openings in some detail, paying particular attention to the way in which opening moves are intertwined with the ensuing middlegame play. This material appears in Books Seven and Eight. Each opening is presented with explanations of its *basic ideas* – the plans of each player, their middlegame goals, the clash that follows their attempts to enforce their disparate conceptions.

Throughout, my aim has been to give the reader a better idea of the fine points of chess as it is played by the masters. The appreciative comments I have had from readers encourage me to believe that a much wider circle of new readers will enjoy this material and apply it profitably in their own games.

Fred Reinfeld

# The Complete Chess Course

## Chapter One

### Counterattack – How to Meet the Crisis

Not so long ago I read a magazine article about a baseball manager who is famous for his fighting spirit and aggressiveness. I was not surprised to learn that this manager has no equal when it comes to bellowing at an umpire. But, when his team falls behind, this manager “seems to lose interest.”

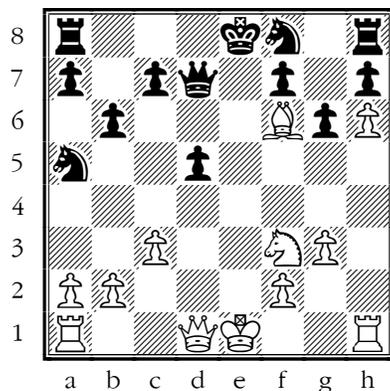
So it is with us chessplayers. *We attack because we like to; we defend because we have to.* We tend to do badly the things we dislike. And, since we dislike to defend, we defend miserably. Thus we lose many games which we might have won.

Have you ever stopped to think that attacking ability plays a big role in defensive play? Forget about the common assumption that defending means passive maneuvers, patient crawling, endless dread of the decisive blow.

There are many times when you can smash your opponent’s attack with one vigorous thrust. If you size up your resources accurately, you can seize the attack for yourself. In other words, play the defense in an aggressive mood. Here’s how:

#### Look for Counterplay

Let’s look at some actual examples to see the far-reaching difference between active and passive defense. In Diagram 1, for instance, passive play will never do: (D)



Black to move

1

At first sight it seems that Black can win a piece by the double attack ...♙e6+.

White’s bishop is attacking Black’s king rook. Black can simply save the rook with ...♞g8. Instead, he tries:

**1...♙e6+**

Now if White tries to save his menaced bishop by 2..♘e5 (passive defense), he loses his bishop after 2...f6.

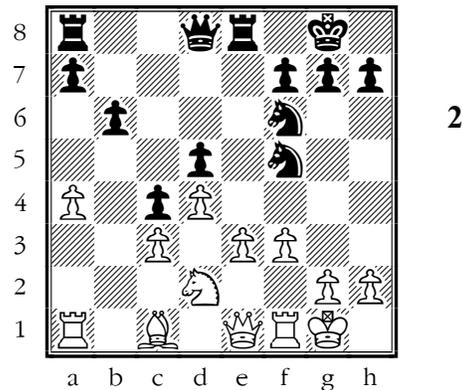
White must find counterplay – *active* defense! Therefore:

**2.♙e2!**

By interposing his queen, White has pinned the black queen, and has thus saved his bishop.

This was a very clean-cut example, in which White was confronted with a stark decision. He *had* to find the right move; otherwise his bishop would be lost at once.

But sometimes the crisis, though real, is not so obvious to us. In such cases we tend to take it easy, thereby drifting into a lost game. Diagram 2 illustrates this possibility. (D)



White to move

White wants to save his attacked e-pawn, and at the same time get a powerful pawn center, with 1.e4. Is this plan good or bad?

White plays the move that looks logical:

**1.e4 d×e4 2.f×e4**

Now Black has to look sharp. If he plays the dull 2...♘e7, he has a hopeless position after 3.e5 ♗fd5 4.♘e4. In that event, White has a magnificent attacking position, with his open f-file, his powerfully centralized knight, and his queen and bishop poised for action on the

## How to Fight Back

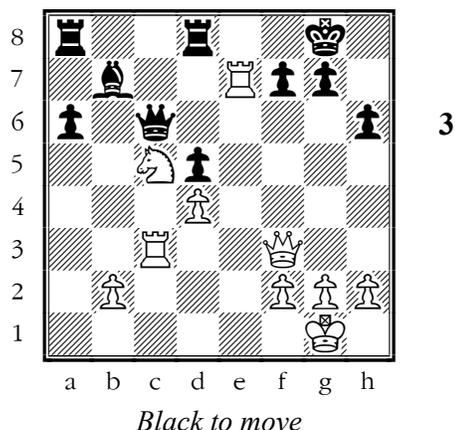
kingside. (Even his queen rook can be switched quickly to the kingside by means of ♖a2 followed by ♗af2.)

So here is the crisis. Black can play listlessly, falling into a helpless defensive position – or, he can strike out boldly at the one weakness in White’s position. Namely:

**2...♟×d4!**

This wins a pawn and destroys White’s mighty pawn center and his beautiful attacking position. For if now 3.c×d4 ♕×d4+ winning White’s queen rook! Vigorous counterplay solved Black’s problem.

In Diagram 3 we come to a situation where the crisis is drastic and immediate. Black’s position is threatened so strongly that he seems quite lost: (D)



White threatens ♕×f7+ followed by ♕×g7#. He also threatens to win a piece by ...♖×b7 or ...♟×b7. Can Black hold the position?

Most players would see no way for Black to save himself in this predicament. And yet there is a way out – if only Black is determined!

His problem is this: how can he parry the mate threat without losing the bishop? If there is a way, it must be based on a *counter-threat* – a threat of mate, for example. And Black finds the resource he needs:

**1...♗g6!**

This defends against White’s mate threat of ♕×f7+ etc.

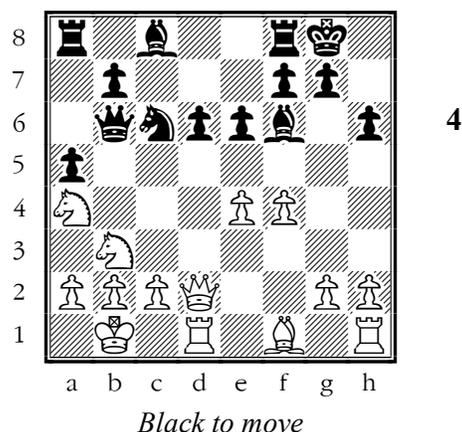
At the same time Black indirectly defends his bishop by threatening ...♗b1+ followed by checkmate on the back rank. In other words, White must now stop to prevent this checkmate, giving Black the time to salvage his bishop.

Thus you see how Black, by his alert counterplay, saved a position which many players would have dismissed as hopeless.

### Find the Hidden Flaw

The first step toward becoming a skilful defensive player, then, is to handle the defense in an aggressive spirit. If you do that, you can find subtle defensive resources that other players would not dream of. By seeking active counterplay, you will often upset clever attacking lines. Better yet, you will upset your opponent.

Diagram 4 offers a good example of such a refutation: (D)



Black’s queen is attacked; so is his d-pawn. Naturally he will save his queen. Does that mean his d-pawn is lost?

No doubt of it – this is a difficult situation for Black. If he saves the queen by 1...♗c7, then White simply continues 2.♕×d6 with a pawn to the good.

Or if Black tries 1...♗b4, White has 2.♕×b4 a×b4 3.♟b6 ♖b8 4.♟×c8 ♖f×c8 followed by 5.♖×d6 and again White has won a pawn, leaving Black without compensation.

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Must White win a pawn – or is there some sly, hidden resource for Black? There is, if Black is alert enough to search for it. Here it is:

**1...♖c7 2.♗×d6**

Now comes a stinging surprise:

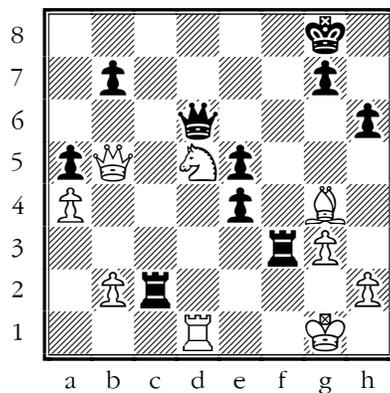
**2...♞d8!!**

Giving away the queen?

**3.♗×c7 ♞×d1+ 4.♝c1 ♞d8!!**

The beautiful point of Black's exceptionally clever play. White's queen is trapped, and White has nothing better than to give up the queen for a minor piece. In that case, Black will have a rook for a minor piece and pawn. This advantage of "the exchange" will assure Black victory in the endgame.

Black's play in Diagram 4 was remarkably fine. But the way White fights back in the position of Diagram 5 is even more fascinating, especially from a sporting point of view. Here White evolved his defense in a very difficult position, with all the spectators certain that Black was building up a brilliant winning position. (D)



*Black to move*

Materially the position is about even, as Black has a rook and two pawns for two minor pieces. Positionally, however, Black has a very strong game with one of his rooks on the second rank.

The powerful position of one of Black's rooks on the second rank gives Black formidable mating threats. The situation is all the more difficult for White because his forces

are scattered, and his queen is unable to get back to the kingside. (Note, for example, that ♖f1 or ♖e2 are impossible.)

Well aware of the strength of his position, Black tries to achieve a decision on the kingside. He starts with:

**1...♗f8**

This looks terrifying, as Black threatens 2...♞×g3+!. If then 3.h×g3 ♖f2+ and mate next move. If instead 3.♞h1 ♞×h2+! 4.♞×h2 ♖f2+ forces mate.

How is White to defend? If he tries passive play with 2.♞f1, Black has 2...♞×f1+ 3.♗×f1 ♖c5+ winning White's knight. That would leave Black with two pawns and the exchange ahead – an easy win for him.

So White does the best he can:

**2.♞×f3 ♗×f3**

Apparently Black has calculated beautifully. He threatens 3...♗g2#.

If White tries 3.♗f1 – this seems the only defense – there follows 3...♞g2+! 4.♗×g2 ♖×d1+ followed by 5...♗×d5. With two pawns ahead, Black would have an easy win in the queen and pawn ending.

So there you see White's predicament – either he gets mated (immediate death), or he loses the ending (slow death, with torture). Or...is there some way out for White? There is – and what a way!

**3.♝f6+!! Black resigns!!**

Black resigns although he's on the point of administering checkmate! Why?

In the first place, if Black plays 3...g×f6 he allows White to snatch the attack: 4.♖e8+ ♞g7 5.♞d7#. Bravo!

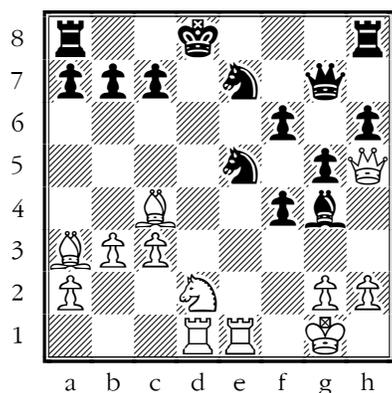
And if Black plays 3...♗×f6, White has 4.♖b3+ winning Black's rook and coming out a rook ahead.

Finally, if Black tries 3...♞f7 (or 3...♞h8 4.♖e8#), White has a neat checkmate with 4.♖e8+! ♞×f6 5.♞d6+ ♞g5 6.♖g6#!.

Admittedly, White's resource was not easy to see. And why? Because few players, threatened with mate on the move, would have the imaginative daring to try to fight their way out – *to hit back*, instead of being resigned to a hopeless endgame.

## How to Fight Back

In Diagram 6 you can see the same point illustrated even more forcefully. White's pieces are beautifully posted – and yet his queen is lost! What would you do in such a position – would you resign, or would you look for some way out? (D)



6

White to move

White's queen is lost. How should he proceed? Is his game hopeless, or does he have some subtle, deeply hidden resource that wins for him?

There is a clue to White's procedure in this fact: Black's king has a very shaky position, right in the middle of the board and facing White's businesslike rook on the d-file.

Well, what then? Suppose White gives a discovered check:

1. ♖f3+ ♜c8

As it happens, Black can hold out longer with 1... ♘d7. But why play this chicken-hearted interposition when he can win White's queen?

So, here we have a critical position. What can White do to make up for the threatened loss of his queen? Is there any resource which offers the slightest hope in this desperate situation?

2. ♗x e5!!

If now 2... fxe5 3. ♖xg4+ and White's queen is safe, with a piece to the good. But Black is relentless:

2... ♙xh5

What now?

Well, White has a check. Let's try it:

3. ♙e6+ ♜b8

And now another check:

4. ♗d7+ ♜c8

Wonderful! White has a perpetual check by moving his knight back and forth. His faith in the strength of his position has been justified.

But wait... this is a dangerous moment. What a pity if White, in a moment of relief because he's managed to save the game, misses the fact *that he has a forced checkmate!* This is how:

5. ♗f8+! ♜b8 6. ♙d8+ ♗c8 7. ♙x c8#

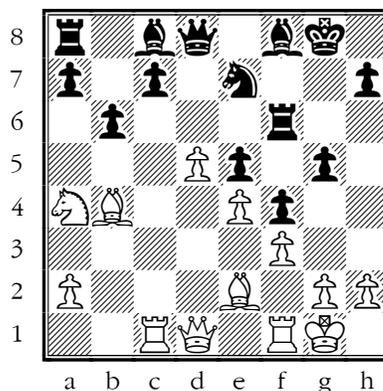
White's uphill struggle was very rewarding. It takes a lot of courage to fight on in a situation where the queen is irretrievably lost.

But note this, which is typical: instead of giving way to despair, White calmly sized up the position and made the best possible use of the factors favoring him. In this case it was the splendid attacking position of his pieces poised to smite the black king that gave White the all-important hint.

One point that's rather puzzling: how was White able to unleash such a powerful attack without having the services of his queen? The answer is partly, as we've seen, that Black's king was badly exposed to attack. But this isn't the whole answer. The other vital element was the fact that *Black's queen was not in a position to aid the defense.*

And so it turned out that White's loss of the queen was minor – but only because he hit back immediately, with all the forces at his command.

In the position of Diagram 7, on the other hand, everything is deceptively serene. Black is a pawn ahead, and while his pieces are somewhat awkwardly placed, he seems to have no reason to worry. (D)



7

White to move

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Black is all set to answer an astonishing sacrifice with an even more astonishing reply.

White has deliberately headed for this position, as he has a very powerful-looking move which seems to give him an overwhelming advantage:

**1. ♖xc7?**

Black's first reaction might well be one of terror as he considers the consequences of 1... ♗xc7? 2. d6.

The fight against White's formidable passed d-pawn seems hopeless, for example:

If 2... ♗b7 3. dxe7 ♕xe7 4. ♕xe7 ♗xe7 5. ♗d5+ winning Black's queen rook.

Or if 2... ♗d8 3. dxe7 ♕xe7 4. ♕xe7 winning the same way.

The same motif appears after 2... ♗c6 3. dxe7 ♕g7 4. ♗d5+! ♗xd5 5. e8 ♗+ and wins.

Black, in despair, might try 2... ♖xd6 3. ♕xd6. But then White wins back his pawn and remains with a vastly superior position.

This is a very useful position to study; it is in just such situations that a player, confronted with several unattractive possibilities, loses his head completely. The strain proves too much for the player who is on the defensive.

But in this case Black plays with admirable poise, unleashing a counterattack which leaves White with a lost game.

**1... ♗f5!!**

A magnificent move, which to begin with takes the sting out of White's contemplated d5-d6.

In addition, look at Black's threats: 2... ♗xc7 or 2... ♕xb4 or 2... ♗e3. His keen, alert countermove has snatched the initiative from White.

If White tries 2. ♖xc8 ♖xc8 3. exf5, then 3... ♕xb4 leaves Black the exchange ahead.

Or if 3. ♕xf8 then Black has a crushing reply in 3... ♗e3.

White tries a different way, but Black still remains with a winning game.

**2. ♕xf8 ♗xc7 3. ♕a3 ♗e3 4. ♗c1**

Now Black has two ways to proceed. He

can play 4... ♗d7 attacking White's knight and thus winning a second exchange. Or he can play 4... ♗g7, with the idea of playing for a kingside attack.

Actually Black made the second choice, but this no longer concerns us here. What interests us is that Black, confronted by a stern challenge, met the crisis with a superb countermove that turned the game in his favor.

So there you have the moral of this chapter. Beware of passive defense that may force you into a straitjacket position. Look for defensive moves that are active and aggressive. Don't be satisfied merely with moves that blunt the hostile attack. Look for moves that enable you to take the attack into your own hands. The examples in this chapter show you how it's done.

### Chapter Two

#### Resourceful Defense – How to Simplify

No sooner have I convinced you of the value of *active* defense than I must add a word of caution.

Alert, aggressive defense is fine, but it isn't always possible. What do you do when it isn't possible? Do you just allow the attack to overwhelm you? Do you give up hope, resigning yourself to the inevitable? Or do you look for some resource against your opponent's attack?

#### Simplify!

Few of us realize that one of the best weapons against an attack is to play for an exchange of pieces. An attack flourishes on complications, on the efforts of powerfully posted pieces aimed at cramped positions.

Every time you simplify, you remove a hostile piece that might have done a great deal of damage. You're also removing a unit of your own that might have been idle or useless. But above all, you're whittling down the force of your opponent's attack; *you're reducing the danger to which you're exposed.*