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Chess

# Firouzja First!

Alireza Firouzja wins the  
2020 Prague Chess Festival -  
his first major title at age of 16

ISSN 0964-6221



Drink like a Grandmaster - Tim Wall explains what makes the Bunratty Festival so special

The Top Two March On - Guildford and Manx Liberty have reached 6/6 in the 4NCL

How Good is Your Chess? - Daniel King presents an attacking masterclass by a 16 year old



# Chess

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# The Top Two March On



**The 4NCL was still thriving in February, with Guildford and Manx Liberty on 6/6**

Storm Dennis was yet to hit when the second top-flight 4NCL weekend of the season got underway in Daventry in early February. The storm only disrupted travel the next day, but on that Saturday the 'big two' – champions Guildford, who are looking for an eighth successive title, and likely title challengers Manx Liberty – enjoyed contrasting voyages.

Guildford II were always likely to have been incentivised and given a rousing team talk by Roger Emerson, but Manx still appeared to underestimate them, perhaps overly trusting in their average rating of 2539 (lofty, if still somewhat behind Guildford I's 2596) to Guildford II's 2359. Viktor Erdos was happy to draw as Black in just 10 moves with Yang-Fan Zhou and after four hours' play it was only 2-1 to Manx, Nigel Povah having been ground down by Lukasz Cyborowski. Fellow Polish GM Rafal Antoniewski found himself two pawns up in a double-rook ending against Callum Kilpatrick, but faced with spirited defence, stumbled and only drew. In contrast, Manx's Irina Bulmaga had to rely on opposite-coloured bishops to hold a clearly worse endgame against Dagne Ciuksyte, but on board 3 Manx couldn't even draw against rising star IM Matthew Wadsworth.



*Recently minted IM Matthew Wadsworth continues to rise up the rating list after beating Parligras.*

## M. Wadsworth–M. Parligras Guildford II vs Manx Liberty



Black has two pawns for the exchange and the chances should be about level, albeit, of course, with all three results very much to play for. White now sensibly decided to tuck his king away while creating a threat.

### 41 ♖h1 ♜f5?

Allowing White to improve with tempo cannot be right, but presumably Black thought that he had to play for a win. Otherwise, 41...♜c5 42 ♜e4 ♖g7! feels risky to human eyes, but is fine according to the all-seeing oracle, and 41...♜c8! is just very sensible, and if 42 ♜f3 (42 ♜xd5?? ♜xh3+ 43 ♖g1 ♜g3+ would be a horrible oversight) 42...♖g7 43 ♜f1 e2! 44 ♜e1 (44 ♜f7+?? ♖h6 wins, and 44 ♜xe2 ♜xh3+ 45 ♖g1 ♜g3+ 46 ♖h1 is likely to end up as a split point, even after 46...♜e3!? 47 ♜f3 ♜f5 48 ♜e4!) 44...♜c3 45 ♖g2 when one side or other will surely force perpetual check sooner rather than later.

### 42 ♜f1 ♜f4?

As so often, one mistake follows another. Now Black is lost, so he either had to retreat to e6 or go 42...♜h5 43 ♜g3 ♖g7 when he would have been clearly worse, but still with definite chances to resist.

### 43 ♜a8+ ♖g7 44 ♜a7+

Perhaps this backwards queen move is what the 2600 Romanian Grandmaster had overlooked.

### 44...♖f6 45 ♜d4+ ♖g5 46 h4+!

A clever advance, although White would also have won after 46 ♜xe3 ♜xh3+ 47 ♜xh3 ♜xh3 48 ♜f7.

### 46...♖g4 47 ♜xe3 ♜d5+ 48 ♜e4 ♜xe4+ 49 dxe4 g5

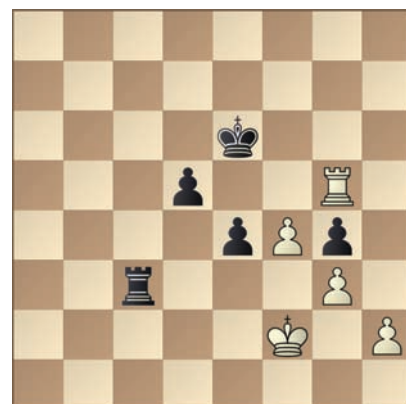
Desperation and in any case the pawn on

a5 is a game-winner for White.

### 50 hxg5 ♖xg5 51 e5 ♜e6 52 ♜f6 ♜d4 53 ♜xa6 ♜xc2 54 ♜d6 b3 55 ♜d3 1-0

With just two games left, the big match appeared to be heading for 4-4. The ever-solid Gediminas Sarakasas always appeared to be holding a pawn-down queen ending against Constantin Lupulescu and did, while it appeared that after being under pressure, Manx skipper Dietmar Kolbus had defended well and would hold against Cambridge undergraduate Harry Grieve.

## D. Kolbus–H. Grieve Manx Liberty vs Guildford II



Matters look bad for White and after 45...♔d6! (never forget to activate the king!) 46 ♖xg4 (46 ♖g8 is now too slow in view of 46...♔c5 or even 46...d4 47 ♖e8 ♖e3! 48 ♖e5 ♔c6, placing White in a deadly zugzwang) 46...d4 47 ♖g8 ♖c2+ 48 ♔e1 ♔d5 49 ♖d8+ ♔c4 Black's active king and much further advanced pawns would have forced White to resign.

**45...e3+? 46 ♔e2 d4 47 ♖e5+ ♔d6 48 ♖e8!**

Kolbus finds the only real defence, preparing to check with the rook from behind while freeing the f-pawn to advance.

**48...♔d5**

Unfortunately for Black, there's no good way to make progress after 48...♖c2+ 49 ♔d3 ♖d2+ 50 ♔c4.

**49 ♖d8+ ♔c4 50 ♖c8+ ♔b3**

Black can get away with this. The alternative was 50...♔d5 51 ♖d8+ ♔e4!?, but after 52 ♖e8+ ♔f5 53 ♖e5+ ♔f6 54 ♖e4 ♖c2+ 55 ♔e1 it seems that White has a fortress.

**51 ♖b8+ ♔c4 52 ♖c8+ ♔b3 53 ♖b8+ ♔c2!**

By now Grieve had pretty much used up all the additional 50 minutes he'd gained at move 40, but kudos to him for trying this advance having first checked that he'd now be able to halt the f-pawn.

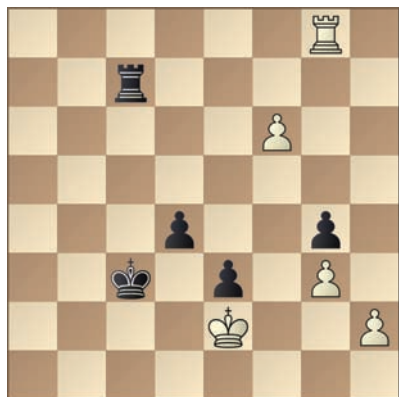
**54 ♖d8!**

Naturally Kolbus was never going to fall for 54 f5?? d3+ 55 ♔xe3 d2+.

**54...♖c4**

Still trying to win rather than acquiesce to a repetition with 54...♖d3 55 ♖c8+ ♖c3.

**55 f5 ♔c3 56 f6 ♖c7 57 ♖g8**



57 ♖e8 was also possible, and if 57...♔c4 58 ♖e7 ♖c8 59 f7 ♖f8 60 ♖c7+ ♔d5 61 ♔d3.

**57...♖f7?**

A step in the wrong direction. Black wouldn't have been in any danger of losing after 57...♔c4 58 ♖g7 ♖c8.

**58 ♖c8+ ♔b4?**

What was easily drawn by now needed precision to hold and the text loses. 58...♔b3! was imperative so that after 59 ♔d3 (59 ♖c6 is a more tricky try when 59...♖h7! appears to be the most accurate path to the half-point) 59...♖xf6 there's no check on c4 and 60 ♔xd4 e2 61 ♖c3+! ♔b2 62 ♖e3 ♖d6+ 63 ♔e5 ♖d2 only leaves White with enough counterplay to draw following

64 ♔f4 ♔c2 65 ♔xg4 ♔d1 66 h4 e1 ♖ 67 ♖xe1+ ♔xe1 68 h5.

**59 ♔d3 ♖xf6**

Even 59...e2!? 60 ♔xe2 ♖xf6 61 ♔d3 ♖f2 62 ♔xd4 ♖h2 63 ♖b8+ ♔a4 64 ♔e5 is lost with Black's king so badly cut off.

**60 ♖c4+ ♔b5 61 ♖xd4 ♖f2 62 ♔xe3 ♖xh2 63 ♖xg4 ♔c5 64 ♖g6!**

Black was no doubt hoping for 64 ♖d4? ♖g2, but now White reaches an easily won rook and pawn ending.

**64...♔d5 65 ♔f4 ♖f2+ 66 ♔g5 ♔e5 67 g4 ♖f8 68 ♖g7 ♔e6 69 ♔h6**

Kolbus makes inexorable progress and by now both Grieve and his team-mates must have been in extreme pain.

**69...♖h8+ 70 ♖h7 ♖a8 71 g5 ♖a1 72 ♖b7 ♖h1+ 73 ♔g7 ♖g1 74 g6 ♖g2 75 ♔h7 ♖h2+ 76 ♔g8 ♖g2 77 g7 ♖g1 78 ♔f8 ♖f1+ 79 ♔e8 ♖g1 80 ♖b6+ ♔e5 81 ♔f7 ♖f1+ 82 ♔e7 ♖g1 83 ♖b5+ ♔e4 84 ♔f7 ♖f1+ 85 ♔g6 1-0**

A tragedy for the young FM, who must have been relieved to only have to face 1600-rated opposition the next day, as Guildford II rather massacred Barbican II, who were coming off the back of a 6-2 drubbing at the hands of Wood Green Monarchs. This time Barbican mustered half a point less, despite George O'Toole holding tight against Wadsworth on top board. Meanwhile Manx triumphed on boards 2-4, courtesy of good wins for Lupulescu, Erdos and Pawel Jaracz, while holding the remaining boards against another tricky second team in the shape of Wood Green Monarchs.

### Guildford I show Manx how it's done

Guildford, by contrast, thumped 3Cs 7-1 then the dangerous, largely young guns of Wood Green 7½-½, and the former scoreline would have been bigger had Macedonian GM Aleksandar Colovic not been a little fortunate to see his kingside survive after grabbing an early

pawn against Luke McShane. Elisabeth Paehtz was also held, by Stuart Clarke, with the next day the plaudits going to Ravi Haria who deployed Smyslov's defence (3...g6) to the Lopez to draw fairly comfortably with McShane. That meant that six Guildford stars racked up 2/2, Michael Adams outplaying Stephen Gordon and Jon Speelman, with the highlights arguably Mark Hebden's thematic if old-fashioned use of his favourite King's Indian to outplay Adam Taylor, and Matthew Sadler doing his best impression yet of AlphaZero.

### M.Sadler-A.Horton

Guildford vs 3Cs

English Opening

**1 ♖f3 ♖f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♖c3 ♔b4 4 ♖c2 0-0 5 a3 ♔xc3 6 ♖xc3 d6 7 b4 a5**

Surprisingly this natural thrust turns out to be new, 7...e5 8 ♔b2 ♖e8 9 e3 ♔g4 10 ♔e2 ♖bd7 11 d3 c5 12 h3 ♔h5 13 0-0 b6 having left Black very solid, if surely not quite equal in Leitaó-S.Zhigalko, Selfoss 2019.

**8 e3 b6 9 b5!?**

Far from forced, but Sadler is, of course, quite the expert on AlphaZero and so elects to make an early gain of space in its style.

**9...♔b7 10 ♔b2 ♖bd7 11 ♔e2 ♖e7 12 0-0 ♖ad8 13 ♖d4 e5**



Matthew Sadler is an excellent communicator and is also, of course, a major expert on AlphaZero whose style he likes to imitate. Do check out the 'Game Changer' YouTube channel.



Now one might well expect 14 ♖f5, but Sadler had a deeper plan, to sacrifice a pawn to obtain two bishops against two knights.

**14 ♖c6!? ♗xc6 15 bxc6 ♖b8 16 f4 ♗xc6 17 ♖f3**

White is clearly looking to create some pressure on the kingside, as well as down the long diagonal, which Black might now have kept closed with 17...♖b8! 18 ♖af1 (18 fxe5?! dxe5 19 ♖xe5?! ♖xe5 20 ♗xe5 ♖xd2 21 ♗f1 ♖bd7! can only favour Black) 18...♖bd7.

**17...exf4 18 ♖af1! ♖e5!**

Settling for a knight rather than a pawn to act as a key defensive barrier, and certainly not 18...fxe3? 19 ♖xe3 ♖d7? 20 ♖xf6! when it's a total massacre in view of 20...gxf6 21 ♖g3+ ♗h8 22 ♗xf6#.

**19 ♖xf4 ♖fd7 20 ♗d1 f6 21 ♗c2**

White might have saved himself some time with 21 d4! ♖g6 22 ♖4f3 and only then ♗c2.

**21...♗de8 22 h3 ♖f7 23 ♖h4 ♖f8 24 ♗e4 ♖d8**

24...♖e6!? might have been a more challenging defence, and if 25 d4? f5, so perhaps White would have tried to probe with 25 ♖f5!? g6 26 ♖f1, and if 26...f5 27 ♖ef4 or even 27 ♖xe5!? dxe5 28 ♗a4.

**25 d4**

Finally White decides that it's time to advance.

**25...♖ed7 26 ♖g4 ♖fe7 27 ♖g3 ♖g6?!**

Now Black runs into trouble on the light squares. His set-up is quite passive, but it is at least very solid and would have remained so after 27...♗h8 or even 27...c5!?, and if 28 ♗a4 ♖c7.

**28 ♖d3 ♖df8 29 ♗a4! ♖d7 30 ♗c6 ♗h8 31 ♖f5 ♖gf8**



White's pieces are all on good squares and his next move will surely not come as a shock to all who have read the highly-acclaimed *Game Changer*.

**32 h4! ♖f7 33 e4**

33 ♖h3!? followed by g2-g4 was also worth consideration with Black so tied up.

**33...♖ee7 34 h5 ♖e6?!**

34...h6 would have been weakening, but also forced White to work hard to turn e4-e5 into a particularly effective breakthrough.

**35 h6! g6**

35...gxh6 36 ♖f1 ♖g5 37 ♖g4 is quite

bad news too for Black.

**36 ♖f1 ♖f8 37 ♖e3 ♖b8 38 ♗d5!? ♖d7**

Continuing to sit tight, but it was quite possibly high time to force an exchange of pieces with 38...c6! 39 ♗xe6 ♖xe6 40 d5 cxd5 41 cxd5 ♖e8, when White can pick off b6 or play to win f6, but in view of the potential weakness of e4 and h6, even here he may not be more than slightly for choice.

**39 ♖f2 ♗g8 40 ♖gf3 ♗h8 41 c5!**

It was also possible to first manoeuvre, but this second pawn sacrifice to rip open lines for White's bishops is extremely dangerous from a practical perspective.

**41...bxc5 42 dxc5**



**42...♖e5?**

Now everything collapses and already radical measures with 42...♖exc5! were required, although here White can do better than grab the exchange, with 43 ♖c1! an especially sneaky retreat, intending 43...♖xe4 44 ♖f1 ♖ec5 45 ♖c4 followed by ♗xf7 and ♖h4 or even just going after the a5-pawn.

**43 cxd6 cxd6 44 ♗xe5! dxe5 45 ♖b6**

Lovely geometry from Sadler and now 45...♖e8? 46 ♖xf6 ♖xf6 47 ♖xf6 ♖d4 48 ♖d6 would end the game.

**45...♖f4 46 ♗xf7 ♖xf7 47 ♖c3 ♖xh6 48 ♖c7 ♖xc7?**

It's hard to believe it would have held out for long, but 48...♖f8 49 ♖d6 ♖h5 was the last real try.

**49 ♖xf6+! ♗g8 50 ♖d8+ ♖f8 51 ♖xc7 ♖xa3**

There was nothing that much better, Black's exposed king being the predominant feature of the position.

**52 ♖b8+ ♗f7 53 ♖xe5 1-0**

## A Change of Direction?

Behind Guildford in Pool A, two teams reached 3/4, Wood Green and White Rose, who are nowadays partnered by Chessable. Such a lack of early upsets is nothing new, and it might be time for a look at restructuring the league back to being headlined by a 12-team all-play-all. That format would increase competition, reduce the number of mismatches seen in recent seasons, and might also increase the number of norms made, as well as make it easier for

the league to find hotels which can accommodate all its leading teams.

Of course, it's never easy to rebottle genies, but with Divisions Three (and Four) South and Three North flourishing, further regionalisation could be possible. Division Two could also remain alongside the top flight, whether slimmed down to 12 teams too or still with a 16-team, two-pool format (*Ed - As we prepared to go to press we learnt that the 4NCL is to look at the structure of all its divisions over the next two years, which will be a huge undertaking, so kudos to supremo Mike Turan and the rest of the 4NCL board*).

Back in Daventry on a grey, early February Saturday, Wood Green were not at their best as they rather limped past Cambridge 5-3 – kudos to Andrew McClement and Daniel Gallagher for outplaying IMs Joseph McPhillips and Ravi Haria respectively (Cambridge did even better the next day to draw with 3Cs, Gallagher winning again, while Ali Hill outplayed IM Andy Horton with the black pieces). White Rose meanwhile had Chessable COO Dmitry Schneider on top board as they outclassed Celtic Tigers before getting the better of Barbican, unusually remaining undefeated in both matches. Highlights were Svetlana Sucikova's pretty finish, which you can find later in these pages, and 2/2 for Peter Wells. The long-time White Rose team leader engaged in a spot of time travel against James Jackson, where the 17 ♖a3 Zaitsev made famous by K-K was seen, the day after turning two seemingly docile bishops into absolute monsters.

## P.Wells-R.Maciol White Rose vs Celtic Tigers Nimzo-Indian Defence

**1 d4 e6 2 c4 ♖f6 3 ♖c3 ♗b4 4 e3 c5 5 ♗d3 0-0 6 ♖f3 d5 7 0-0 dxc4 8 ♗xc4 ♖c6 9 a3 ♗xc3 10 bxc3 ♖c7 11 ♗b2 e5 12 h3 ♗f5**

Useful prophylaxis and now 12...e4 13 ♖d2 ♖a5 14 ♗a2 ♗f5 15 c4! was good for one white bishop, if not its colleague, and gave White a pull in Kramnik-Tiviakov, Wijk aan Zee 2001.

**13 ♗a2 ♖ad8 14 ♖e2 ♖fe8 15 ♖fd1 e4**

Black hopes to obtain counterplay on the kingside. Of course, he needs to keep a lid on White's bishops, which 15...cxd4 16 cxd4 exd4?! 17 ♖xd4 ♖xd4 18 ♗xd4 would fail to do, but 15...♗e4!? might have been a better try, leaving it to White to decide how best to resolve the tension.

**16 ♖h2 ♖d7**

Black is struggling for a good plan and didn't have to retreat so. Instead, 16...cxd4 17 exd4 (or 17 cxd4 ♗e6) 17...♖d5 18 ♗xd5 ♖xd5 19 c4 ♖d6 would have been positionally most unclear.

**17 c4**



#### 17...cxd4?

Doing White's hard work for him by opening the position, rather than maintaining a semi-closed structure with chances for counterplay after 17...g6 and ...f5 or even 17...b6!?

#### 18 exd4 b6 19 Rac1 e7?!

This doesn't help, but matters had already gone awry with White's bishops now supporting a mobile central pawn mass.

#### 20 e3! d7 21 f1 g6 22 a1 h4 23 d5 e5 24 c5

The pawns continue to advance, all the while as Black's position goes from sickly to terminally ill.

#### 24...c8 25 g3 de7 26 d6 d7 27 c3



Consistent with the plan begun back on move 20, but 27 d5!? c6 28 g5 was arguably even more crushing.

#### 27...h8 28 d5 f5 29 xb7! xb7 30 c6 f7 31 d7 d8 32 dxc8 f3+ 33 gxf3 xxc8 34 d7 xd7 35 cxd7 g8

Allowing Wells to complete his master class in style.

#### 36 xg7+! 1-0

### The Demise of Cheddleton

Pool B at least had a slightly more open look to it after two weekends, partly due to Blackthorne Russia being one of the four seeded sides after last year making a rare appearance in the Championship and not Demotion Pool. Gonzaga, by contrast, are a rising side full of young players and enjoying their debut season in Division One.



WGM Katarzyna Toma was snapped up by Wood Green captain Lawrence Cooper last summer and now regularly plays for their second team with IM Jovanka Houska in the firsts.

Having only been edged out 4½-3½ by the in-form Grantham Sharks on the Saturday (crushing wins for Adam Bremner and Louise Head doing the damage), Gonzaga may have fancied their chances against Blackthorne, but experience was to carry the day as the side sometimes dubbed Ledger United found themselves on the right side of another 4½-3½. Danny Gormally was quickly in trouble and lost to teenage FM Tarun Kanyamarala, and Andrew Ledger misplayed a clear advantage to also lose as White against Gavin Wall, but wins lower down from Laurence Webb, Dave Ledger and Zoe Varney, in a dramatic endgame against Carl Jackson, saw Blackthorne home.

Pre-Storm Dennis, Blackthorne had found themselves outclassed by former regular league runners-up Cheddleton, who didn't lose a game as Tamas Fodor, Ezra Kirk and Fiona Steil-Antoni got the better of Gormally, Webb and Varney respectively. That was, however, remarkably their first win of the season.

Cheddleton have been hard hit by the departure of long-time board one David Howell and were also without Jonathan Hawkins in early February. Even so, with an extra 170 points on average per board, one would have backed them to beat the Sharks, but a tense match was to land up all square, Tom Rendle gradually outplaying Alex Lopez as Black, as did Bao Nghia Dong against David Eggleston to cancel out wins for Steil-Antoni and Kirk. As such, Grantham Sharks entered the third weekend of the season in an unprecedented second place, while Cheddleton had plenty to do to even make the Championship Pool.

### The Sharks take a Liberty too many

The top two sides in Pool B would meet in round 6, but first there was the small matter of a round on an unusual day for 4NCL activity, Saturday 29th February. Grantham Sharks continued their excellent season, despite being out-rated by 50 points a board. They didn't lose a board and prevailed 5-3, thanks to wins for Chris Dorrington and 12-year-old Rajat Makkar.

#### K.Toma-R.Makkar Wood Green Monarchs vs Grantham Sharks Ruy Lopez

#### 1 e4 e5 2 f3 c6 3 b5 a6 4 a4 f6 5 e2 e7 6 c3 b5 7 b3 0-0 8 0-0 d5

A critical test of the White's Worrall as 9 exd5 dxd5 10 xe5 xe5 11 xe5 b7 would leave Black with an improved version of a Marshall Gambit.

#### 9 d3 e6 10 d1 e8 11 b2 h6 12 f1 d7?!

A new move. It appears slightly risky in view of 13 d4, but Black can perhaps then get away with 13...d6.

#### 13 g3 ad8 14 h4

This might be too ambitious with 14 h3 one sensible alternative to maintain the tension.

#### 14...f8

14...a5 15 c2 c5 16 hf5 c6 also looks quite comfortable for Black.

#### 15 hf5 h7?!



An attempt to prepare ...g6, but Black should have preferred 15...♗e7 or even 15...a5!?, and if 16 ♖f3 a4 17 ♕c2 ♖h7!.

**16 ♖f3 ♗e7?**



**17 h3?**

Both players must have seen 17 ♖xh6! gxh6 18 ♖xf6 ♕g7, but presumably failed to spot 19 ♖h5!, the fabled one move deeper, as well as one which leaves White doing pretty well after 19...♕xf6 20 ♖xf6+ ♔g7 21 ♖xd7 ♖xd7 22 ♕e3.

**17...♕xf6 18 exf5 c5 19 ♕e3 d4**

A little rushed. There was no reason not to keep both white bishops under control with 19...♖c8.

**20 cxd4**

20 ♖xh6!? gxh6 21 ♕xf7 wasn't such a bad try to unbalance the flow of the game.

**20...exd4 21 ♕d2 ♖g8 22 a4?**

This doesn't achieve enough. To maintain equality White needed to centralise and obtain some pressure of her own with 22 ♖e1 ♖c6 23 ♖e4.

**22...♖c6 23 axb5 ♖e5 24 ♖e2 axb5 25 ♖f1**

The only safe spot for the queen, if also a clear sign that something has gone wrong.

**25...♖c8 26 ♖dc1 ♖c6 27 ♖d1 ♕d6! 28 f4 ♖e7**

A Botvinnik disciple would have struggled to reject 28...♖e3!?, and if 29 ♕xe3 dxe3 30 ♖e2 ♖e8 with superb control in return for the exchange.

**29 ♖a6 ♖c6 30 ♖ca1 ♖ec8 31 ♖a7 ♖8c7 32 ♖a8+ ♖h7?**



The patient 32...♖c8 33 ♖8a7 ♕c7 was



Hampton School's Rajat Makkar gave full notice of his promise at the third 4NCL weekend of the season, outplaying Toma ahead of drawing with a 2600 GM in the shape of Viktor Erdos.

required to maintain Black's advantage.

**33 ♕xf7?**

Tempting and yet 33 ♖f3! was much stronger, threatening to take on f7 while preventing ...♖ed5, and after 33...c4!? (33...♖xf5? 34 ♖xf5 ♖xf5 35 g4! ♖d7 36 g5 would be very bad news for Black) 34 dxc4 bxc4 35 ♕a4 c3 anything might have happened in the run-up to move 40.

**33...♖xf5 34 ♖xf5 ♖xf5 35 ♖f3 c4!**

It's high time to roll the pawns.

**36 dxc4 bxc4 37 ♖e1?**

This doesn't help, although even after 37 ♖d8 ♖c2 and 37 g4!? ♖c2 38 f5 ♖xf7! 39 ♖xc6 ♖xd2 40 ♖xd6 ♖e3+ 41 ♖g2 ♖b7 White would have been in some trouble.

**37...c3 38 bxc3 dxc3 39 ♕c1 c2**

The c-pawn should be a winner.

**40 ♕a2 ♖c3 41 ♖f1 ♖e7 42 ♖xe7 ♕xe7**

**43 ♖a4? ♕c5+ 44 ♖h2**



**44...♖d3?**

Missing 44...♖g4+!, and if 45 hxg4 ♖xg4

or 45 ♖h1 ♖f2+ 46 ♖h2 ♖g6 followed by ...♖g3+.

**45 ♖e2?**

Remarkably after 45 ♕e6! ♖g6 46 g4! White would have been OK.

**45...♖d1 46 g4 ♕g1+!**

Now the youngster regains the winning thread ahead of finishing clinically.

**47 ♖g2 ♖c5 48 ♖c4 ♖d5+ 49 ♖g3 ♖xc1 50 ♖xc2 ♕h2+! 51 ♖xh2 ♖d3+ 52 ♖h4 ♖xc2 0-1**

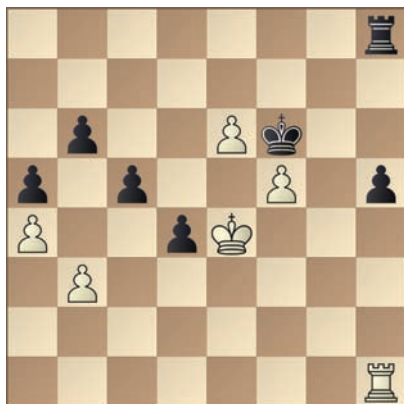
In contrast to the Sharks, Manx Liberty continue to look a little inexperienced in what is only their second campaign in the top flight. Last season they were defeated by White Rose; this year they wobbled, as we saw above, against Guildford II and they were also fortunate to defeat a resurgent Cheddleton. Tamas Fodor held solidly against Romanian GM Mircea-Emilian Parligas on top board, but Manx might well have been left wondering why the also 2600-rated Viktor Erdos and Aryan Tari drew relatively quickly with Dutch IM Thomas Beerdsen and Alex Lopez respectively, even if both were Black.

Boards 6 and 7 looked 50-50 on paper, but both were won by Cheddleton, David Eggleston outplaying Irina Bulmaga, while Ezra Kirk got the better of Miklos Galyas. Board 8 was also hard to call, where poker legend Bard Dahl overcame Fiona Steil-Antoni in a wild encounter. Manx were also grateful to Constantin Lupulescu who outplayed Simon Williams on board 3, while Lukasz Cyborowski rather crushed Keith Arkell. That all meant that Manx had scraped home 4½-3½ in a match that demonstrated the power of connected passed pawns.



Five-time Romanian Champion Constantin Lupulescu is another of Manx Liberty's 2600-rated star players. He calculated most precisely to overcome Simon Williams in a tricky rook ending.

### C.Lupulescu-S.Williams Manx Liberty vs Cheddleton



Firstly, White needs to break the blockade.

**53 ♖g1 ♜h6**

53...h4 54 ♖g6+ ♜e7 55 ♜e5 h3 56 f6+ would be fairly trivial.

**54 ♜g8!**

An only move, if also a consistent and very strong one.

**54...h4 55 ♜f8+ ♜e7 56 ♜f7+ ♜e8 57 ♜e5! h3**

The h-pawn is now unstoppable, but Lupulescu has matters under control.

**58 ♜b7!**

Precise to the last, and not 58 ♜a7? h2 59 ♜a8+ ♜e7 60 f6+ ♜xf6 61 ♜a7+ ♜f8 62 ♜xf6? h1♚ when there's no decisive check.

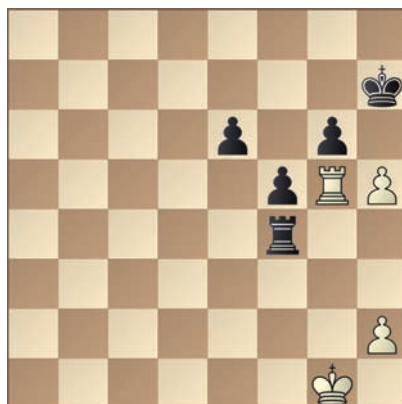
**58...h2 59 ♜b8+ ♜e7 60 f6+! ♜xf6 61 ♜b7+ ♜d8**

This time 61...♜f8 62 ♜xf6 h1♚ would, of course, be met by 63 ♜b8#.

**62 e7+ ♜c8 63 ♜a7** And that was that in view of 63...h1♚ 64 e8♚#.

**63...♜b8 64 ♜d7 1-0**

### M.Galyas-E.Kirk Manx Liberty vs Cheddleton



**39 hxg6+?**

A horrible mistake from the strong Hungarian IM in the run-up to the time control. Instead, 39 ♜xg6! e5 (39...♜g4+ 40 ♜xg4 fxf4 41 ♜g2 ♜h6 42 h3 ♜xh5 43 ♜g3! is the other key line, forcing a drawn king and pawn endgame) 40 ♜g2 e4 (White's king is also active enough after 40...♜a4 41 ♜g3) 41 ♜g3 ♜f3+ 42 ♜h4 e3 43 ♜g5 would have drawn.

**39...♜g7 40 ♜g2 ♜h4 41 ♜g3 ♜h6**

And so White not only loses a pawn, but finds himself up against mobile connected passed pawns.

**42 ♜a3 ♜xg6+ 43 ♜f3 ♜f6 44 ♜a4 ♜g1**

# The Trends in Chess Openings

The top twenty openings as played by International Masters and Grandmasters in February

1 =	Reti Opening	159 games
2 =	Queen's Gambit Declined	111 games
3 ↑	Caro-Kann Defence	104 games
4 ↑	King's Indian Defence	104 games
5 ↑	Sicilian Najdorf	90 games
6 ↓	1 d4 ♘f6 sidelines	82 games
7 ↑	Ruy Lopez, Berlin	81 games
8 ↑	Nimzo-Indian Defence	79 games
9 ↑	English, 1...c5	64 games
10 ↓	Slav Defence	59 games
11 ↑	1 d4 d5 sidelines	58 games
12 ↓	Sicilian, 2 ♘f3 d6 sidelines	56 games
13 ↑	English, 1...e6	54 games
14 ↑	English, 1...♘f6	54 games
15 ↓	English, 1...e5	54 games
16 ↓	Catalan Opening	49 games
17 ↓	Sicilian, 2 ♘f3 sidelines	46 games
18 =	Sicilian Kan	46 games
19 ↑	Sicilian Taimanov	35 games
20 ↑	Giuoco Piano	35 games

**2,354 games played between 1-29 February where both players were rated over 2400 Elo**

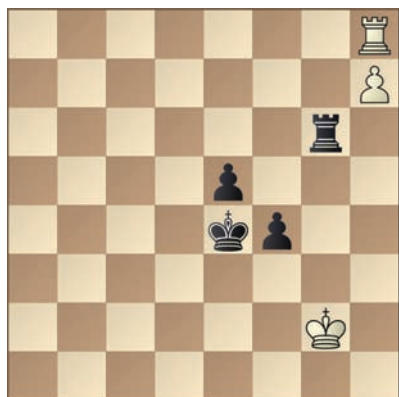
Source: TWIC. Compiled by HIARCS 14.



In association with  
HIARCS Chess Explorer - [hiarcs.com](http://hiarcs.com)  
and The Week in Chess --  
[theweekinchess.com](http://theweekinchess.com)



45 h4 ♖b1 46 ♜c4 ♖b3+ 47 ♜f2 ♖b6  
48 ♜c8 ♖b4 49 ♜g3 ♖b3+ 50 ♜g2 f4  
Finally it's time to advance the pawns.  
51 ♖f8+ ♜e5 52 h5 ♖g3+ 53 ♜f2 ♖h3  
54 ♖h8 ♜e4 55 h6 e5 56 h7 ♖h6  
57 ♜g2 ♖g6+!



Preparing a key switch with the rook, and most certainly not 57...♜e3?? 58 ♖e8.  
58 ♜f1 ♖g7 59 ♜f2 ♖a7 60 ♜g2 ♜e3  
61 ♖e8 f3+ 62 ♜g1 f2+ 0-1  
63 ♜g2 ♖g7+ is quite hopeless.

Grantham Sharks predictably found being outrated by almost 300 points too big a hurdle to overcome, although they only went down 2½-5½ to Manx, with Peter Roberson continuing to remain undefeated on top board and Hampton schoolboy Makkar again impressing as he held Erdos as Black.

At least the Sharks are comfortably through to the Promotion Pool and only three points behind Manx who might count themselves fortunate to still have 100%. Guildford II have also avoided the Demotion Pool, despite following up a 5½-2½ victory over Blackthorne Russia by going down by that same margin against the dangerous and talented young Irish side, Gonzaga. Guildford II's top board, the Spanish IM Alberto Suarez Real, certainly had a weekend to forget, being out prepared and crushed by Danny Gormally ahead of being slaughtered by Sam Collins.

### S.Collins-A.Suarez Real

Gonzaga vs Guildford II



26 ♜xg6! hxg6 27 ♜xe6!

Very pretty, although 27 h5 was also crushing.  
27...♜d7 28 ♖h5! 1-0

Black won't be able to stave off mate for long after 28...fxe6 29 ♖xg6+ ♜g7 30 ♜xg7.

Whilst Gonzaga are theoretically still in the hunt to claim the fourth and final spot from Pool B in the Championship Pool, they will surely find Manx a step too far. In contrast, the race between Cheddleton and Wood Green Monarchs should be a fascinating one come round 7. The former are currently half a board point behind, but appear to have the easier pairing, having the out-of-sorts Barbican II left to play while the Monarchs face Blackthorne. It could be a busy afternoon indeed for captains Lawrence Cooper and Fiona Steil-Antoni, who scored a crushing and important win over Nadia Jaufarally as Cheddleton drew with the Monarchs in round 6.

## Guildford again show Manx how it's done

Champions Guildford remain on course for a most impressive eighth 4NCL title in a row and they did so in late February and at the start of March without both Michael Adams and Matthew Sadler. How to cope with such a loss? Simple – sign another former British Champion and Olympiad regular. David Howell duly won twice on debut, with Luke McShane, Romain Edouard and Monika Socko also making 2/2, as Guildford defeated a resurgent Celtic Tigers 6-2 and then Chessable White Rose 7-1. At least Tigers supremo Chris Skulte could celebrate a win over another Guildford debutant, the French FM Guillaume Lamard, while honorary Yorkshireman Sam Chow took his score for the season to 4½/6 as he fought back from an opening disaster to salvage a half-point against Gawain Jones.

Both White Rose and the Tigers did win a match in the third weekend, 3Cs their victim in both cases. A 6-2 victory saw the Chessable-partnered side seal their place in the Championship Pool, despite your Editor failing to spot a hidden tactic, while the Tigers will carry three points into the Demotion Pool after a fully deserved 5½-2½ victory.

### D.Abbas-R.Palliser

3Cs vs White Rose



I did consider 26...♜c4!?, which would have been a good move, but there's an even stronger one available in the silent sacrifice 26...♜c3!, and if 27 bxc3 (what else?) 27...♜xd3 28 ♜c2 dxc3 29 ♜xc3 ♜gxf2 30 ♜f1 ♜c5 31 g3 ♜f7 with good winning chances for Black. Instead, play continued:

26...♖f8? 27 ♜xb4 ♜xb4 28 ♜f3 d3 29 g3?

Losing by force. 29 ♜d1 d2 30 ♜xd2 ♜xd2 31 ♜xd2 ♖xf4 is only a little better for Black.

29...d2 30 ♜d1 ♜c8!

A decisive switch-back.

31 ♜xd2 ♜c2 32 ♜e1 ♜e3 0-1

Wood Green are likely to advance in second place from Pool A, thumping Spirit of Atticus 6½-1½, despite Ravi Haria and Justin Tan being held by Paul Macklin and Brett Lund respectively on the top boards. The former champions followed that with a wild draw against Barbican during which Jovanka Houska lost control against James Jackson, while Alan Merry outplayed Justin Tan in the run-up to the time scramble. Barbican had earlier dispatched Cambridge 6-2, although James Jackson was defeated in some 108 moves by Ali Hill who now has a most impressive '+3' all the while his team remains firmly rooted to the foot of the table.

With the league approaching an exciting seventh round, we just hope that and the remaining four rounds will be played at some stage.

# 25<sup>TH</sup> 4NCL CONGRESS

Friday 10th July to  
Sunday 12th July

Wychwood Park Hotel,  
Crewe, CW2 5GP

FIDE Rated Open,  
FIDE Rated U2000,  
ECF Under 135

Prize fund £3,000

For further information  
and entry visit:

[www.4ncl.co.uk](http://www.4ncl.co.uk)

## 2019/2020 4NCL Championships - Division 1 - Pool A

	Team	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	GP	Pts
1	Guildford		7½-½	7-1	7-1		6-2	7-1	8-0	42½	12
2	Wood Green	½-7½		5-3	4-4	6½-1½		6-2	5-3	27	9
3	Chessable White Rose	1-7	3-5		5½-2½	4½-3½	6½-1½	6-2		26½	8
4	Barbican 4NCL	1-7	4-4	2½-5½		4½-3½	6-2		6-2	24	7
5	Spirit of Atticus		1½-6½	3½-4½	3½-4½		5-3	2½-5½	6-2	22	4
6	Celtic Tigers	2-6		1½-6½	2-6	3-5		5½-2½	4-4	18	3
7	3Cs	1-7	2-6	2-6		5½-2½	2½-5½		4-4	17	3
8	Cambridge University	0-8	3-5		2-6	2-6	4-4	4-4		15	2

## 2019/2020 4NCL Championships - Division 1 - Pool B

	Team	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	GP	Pts
1	Chess.com Manx Liberty	X	5½-2½	4½-3½	5½-2½	4½-3½		7-1	7½-½	34½	12
2	Grantham Sharks	2½-5½	X		5-3	4-4	4½-3½	5-3	5-3	26	9
3	Guildford II	3½-4½		X	6-2	5½-2½	2½-5½	5½-2½	6½-1½	29½	8
4	Wood Green Monarchs	2½-5½	3-5	2-6	X	4-4	6½-1½		6-2	24	5
5	Cheddleton	3½-4½	4-4	2½-5½	4-4	X	4-4	5½-2½		23½	5
6	Gonzaga		3½-4½	5½-2½	1½-6½	4-4	X	3½-4½	4½-3½	22½	5
7	Blackthorne Russia	1-7	3-5	2½-5½		2½-5½	4½-3½	X	6-2	19½	4
8	Barbican 4NCL II	½-7½	3-5	1½-6½	2-6		3½-4½	2-6	X	12½	0



# Forthcoming Events

### April 2 — Henden 'First Thursday' Blitz

[www.hendenchessclub.com](http://www.hendenchessclub.com) or call 07855 036537

### April 3-5 Edinburgh Congress

[www.chessedinburgh.co.uk/edincongress.php](http://www.chessedinburgh.co.uk/edincongress.php) or call 0131 334 1062

### April 4-5 — 4NCL, Daventry (Divisions 3 & 4 South)

[www.4ncl.co.uk](http://www.4ncl.co.uk) or call 01993 708645

### April 9-13 — 4NCL Easter Congress, Kenilworth

[www.4ncl.co.uk/fide/information\\_easter20.htm](http://www.4ncl.co.uk/fide/information_easter20.htm) or call 01993 708645

### April 9-13 — Southend Easter Congress

[www.southendchesscongress.org.uk](http://www.southendchesscongress.org.uk) or call 07855 036537

### April 10-13 Welsh Championships, Cardiff

[www.welshchessunion.uk/calendar/](http://www.welshchessunion.uk/calendar/) or call 01443 772750

### April 10-13 WECU Championships, Exmouth

[wecucongress.com](http://wecucongress.com) or call 07906 682158

### April 10-11 Coulsdon Easter Congress

[www.ccfworld.com/Chess/](http://www.ccfworld.com/Chess/)

### April 10-12 Bolton Easter Congress

email: [roderickmiddleton@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:roderickmiddleton@yahoo.co.uk)

### April 10 Richmond Stars Barred Rapidplay

[www.rjcc.org.uk/richard/index.htm](http://www.rjcc.org.uk/richard/index.htm) or call 0208 756 0474

### April 18-19 — St. Alban's Congress

[www.stalbanscongress.com](http://www.stalbanscongress.com) or call 01727 751072

### April 18-19 Staffordshire Congress, Walsall

[congress.org.uk/congress/62/home](http://congress.org.uk/congress/62/home) or call 07565 554003

### April 18 Poplar Rapidplay

[www.spanglefish.com/docklandschessclub](http://www.spanglefish.com/docklandschessclub)

### April 19 Richmond Rapidplay

[rjcc.org.uk](http://rjcc.org.uk) or call 0208 756 0474

### April 21 Muswell Hill Rapidplay

[muswellhillchess.blogspot.com](http://muswellhillchess.blogspot.com) or call 07855 036537

### April 25-26 — 4NCL Women's League, Birmingham

[www.4ncl.co.uk](http://www.4ncl.co.uk) or call 01993 708645

### April 25-26 Great Yarmouth Congress

Email: [j.r.wickham@btinternet.com](mailto:j.r.wickham@btinternet.com) or call 07808 876785

### April 25-26 Hampstead U2200 Congress

[hampsteadchess.blogspot.com](http://hampsteadchess.blogspot.com) or call 07855 036537

### April 30 - May 3 English Seniors Championships, Kenilworth

[www.englishchess.org.uk/english-seniors-championships/](http://www.englishchess.org.uk/english-seniors-championships/)

And for the Online Connoisseur:

### March 15 - April 5 Yekaterinburg Candidates

[worldchess.com](http://worldchess.com); Alekseenko, Caruana, Ding Liren, Giri, Grischuk, Nepomniachtchi, Radjabov, Wang Hao.

### April 8-23 U.S. Championships, St. Louis

[www.uschesschamps.com](http://www.uschesschamps.com); Nakamura, Shankland, So, etc.

### April 11-20 GRENKE Chess Classic, Baden-Baden

[grenkechessclassic.com/en/](http://grenkechessclassic.com/en/); Carlsen, Caruana, Keymer, etc.

*Congress organisers – Don't forget to email [editor@chess.co.uk](mailto:editor@chess.co.uk) to ensure your event is listed, or if you really want to guarantee a good entry, contact [Matt@chess.co.uk](mailto:Matt@chess.co.uk) to discuss having it advertised.*

**As can be seen, due to the recent outbreak of Coronavirus many upcoming events have already been cancelled. It is highly likely that many more will be cancelled or postponed. We highly recommend checking with the organiser before attending an event.**



# This Month's New Releases



## Chess Calculation Training for Kids and Club Players: Level 1 Checkmating

Romain Edouard, 152 pages,

Thinkers Publishing

RRP £20.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £18.85**

The main series of *Chess Calculation Training* started in 2017 and is currently up to its third volume. This book starts a new series, aimed at juniors and lesser-experienced players. The theme of this first volume cuts to the chase, with 276 examples of checkmates. These are split into eight chapters, with the level of difficulty ranging from checkmate in two moves to more complex mating ideas later in the book.

We are given a rallying cry: "After you have completed all 276 exercises in the book you definitely won't let your opponent's king escape when it shouldn't. Reading it should pay off quickly in terms of results!". After that, the reader is presented with the positions – four to a page – and told nothing about each apart from whose move it happens to be. The positions are all from real games, but apart from the names of the players, further information (event, year, etc) is absent from the text until we reach the answer pages.

For the first three chapters it's check all the way, but the exercises become tougher from chapter four onwards. Indeed, chapter

eight brings such grand ideas as Nigel Short's extraordinary and famous king march against Jan Timman to the table. The progression of the material works well, especially the way in which the early chapters are made easy by the eternal presence of checks, which will be a great help to less-experienced players.

Edouard is not shy about visiting the classics and his selection of positions reaches far back into history. There's nothing wrong with reminding the database generation that the original champions could play chess too. This position is from the fifth chapter, which focuses on being able to 'Hit the Defender'.

## M.Reiner-W.Steinitz

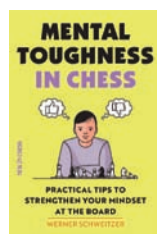
Vienna 1860



Steinitz was still 26 years away from becoming the first official world champion. How did he finish off this tense position?

This book should appeal to anyone wanting to build up their checkmating skills and with its progressive approach it will enjoy an extended shelf life too.

Sean Marsh



## Mental Toughness in Chess

Werner Schweitzer, 144 pages

New in Chess

RRP £17.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £16.15**

This is a very interesting book from Werner Schweitzer, who "Graduated as a mental coach at the University of Salzburg",

and is described as "An avid amateur chess player" who "Has been coaching players and teams for many years."

Given that "A good mental state is often decisive in determining success or failure", the author is here to offer a wide range of "Practical tips to strengthen your mindset at the board." This all might sound somewhat fanciful at first glance, but there can be little doubt that the art of training one's mental toughness must be a good thing for a chess player to study.

The material is based on series of monthly chess columns from *Schach Aktiv*, an Austrian chess magazine, and it is split into the following chapters: Mental Toughness Can Be Trained; Game Preparation; Playing Successfully; and More Practical Tips.

The first, physical impression suggests the book is slight. The page count is relatively low for a chess book and there is a lot of white space at the beginning and end of each chapter. However, this works to the book's advantage and makes it a very accessible manual rather than being a deep, encyclopaedia-sized volume very few would ever attempt to read.

Chess players will immediately want to know the practical value of the material. The 41 individual topics, typically lasting a page and half each, include: Put your defeats behind you; More confidence; The right way to set goals; Proper nutrition; Maintain your concentration even after a mistake; Mental toughness through focusing clearly; and Realizing your full potential through more enthusiasm.

The advice on proper nutrition for chess players is interesting. Water, berries and nuts are all highly recommended. Alcohol is clearly not going to be helpful, but the real champion is tea, which is "A true wonder drug for your body and brain. It can be both soothing and stimulating" and is "More helpful during the game than coffee or Red Bull". There are probably enough clues there to work out some of the reasons why our own country doesn't rule the chess world, but there isn't any advice on the practical problem of the extra tea requiring more expeditions away from the board for players of a certain age.

Elsewhere, there is very interesting material on changing one's thoughts during the game. This is not from the chess point of view, but rather from the stance of removing or replacing those disturbing thoughts which occur to all of us at the most unhelpful moments.

Meditation is advocated too. It is classed as "A generic term for various methods of training our brains and is also referred to as

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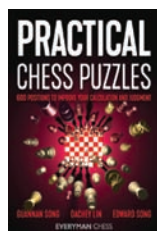
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Contact: Des Green, 93 Eldmon Lane,  
Birmingham, B37 7DN  
or email: [treasurer@natcor.org.uk](mailto:treasurer@natcor.org.uk)

the supreme discipline of brain training.” The advice is not to overdo it, but to start with “Three scheduled sessions of five minutes in the first week in which you are completely undisturbed.” Maybe meditation is, after all, better than sitting around doing nothing.

It is difficult to say whether or not the methods given in this book will have a beneficial impact in the practical sense; they need to be put into practice to see if the promise of such benefits can bear fruit. I am, however, committed to trying out some of the techniques and look forward to finding out. Meanwhile, I can recommend *Mental Toughness in Chess* as an interesting, intriguing and entertaining read and one which – you never know – might even lead to an increase in chess performance from an unexpected angle. Instead of looking outwards, gathering new information from the development of the openings, perhaps it really is time to turn inwards.

Sean Marsh



### Practical Chess Puzzles

Guannan Song, Dache Lin & Edward Song,  
288 pages

Everyman Chess

RRP £17.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £16.19**

Three authors have joined forces to present Everyman's latest book of chess puzzles, offering “600 puzzles to improve your calculation and judgement.” The need to practice is highlighted: “You won't get better at tennis until you can consistently hit the ball with accuracy and you won't get better at chess until you improve your ability to calculate. It is that simple and there are no shortcuts.” The relevance of the puzzles to the practical chess player is important too and in this book “The positions chosen are far more like those that actually appear on the board during the vast majority of games.”

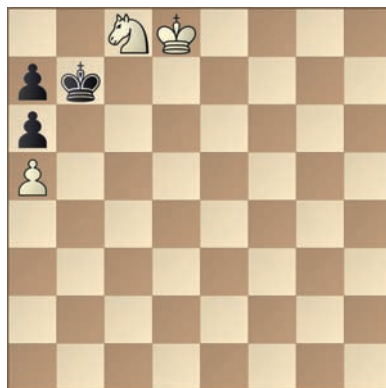
The scope is large. “This book is aimed at aspiring players from Novice to National Master strength, or players rated approximately 1200-2000. That being said, players above this range may find this book helpful to sharpen and review their skills or simply for fun.” I would say anyone rated 1200 will struggle with the vast majority of the puzzles, so perhaps the blurb is overselling the book to some extent. I would pitch the lower end of the scale at 1800.

The first chapter is a short one, showing some model games played by the authors. Then there are chapters offering readers the opportunity to work first on combinations and then evaluations. The test positions are given without clues, meaning readers will have to work hard to pick on the respective themes. The solutions, which take up more

than half of the book, are lightly annotated.

The positions have been taken from recent games (typically from 2010-2019), and feature all phases of the game. The endgame positions are tricky and require careful footwork, such as this one.

### R.Chen-G.Song Guelph 2015



Black has only one way of making a draw. What did he play?

This is a high-end puzzle book which will offer a tough test, even to experienced players. I think it will be most useful as a book to dip into rather than running the risk of breaking your head over a torrent of tricky positions.

Sean Marsh



### Understanding before Moving 3: Sicilian Structures Part 1 – Najdorf & Scheveningen

Herman Grooten, 400 pages

Thinkers Publishing

RRP £29.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £26.95**

In this age of super-powerful chess engines, multi-million game databases and increasingly large theoretical books, the quantity of available information about chess openings has never been greater. But for all that quantity, what about quality?

As a psychology student, I once studied the memories of expert (Elo: 2400+), and non-expert chess players. The key difference, it transpired, is that expert players have both a higher quantity and quality of knowledge about the game. In the opening phase this manifests itself in knowing more opening variations and more of the typical manoeuvres and strategies associated with them. In short, expert chess players *know* more about where to put their pieces and understand better *why* they are there.

Since leaving academia I have often wondered what an openings book based on emphasising understanding over knowledge

would look like. The answer to that question is the subject of this review, and the short answer is very good: every section has a clear reason for being included, and from chapter two onwards the reader is able to build on the understanding they have already developed.

Furthermore, I was very happy to see the author using complete games throughout the book. By realising that the typical pawn structures, piece configurations and plans associated with them can last into the middlegame and endgame, it is possible to develop better understanding of all phases of the game.

Grooten begins with a short chapter on how he recommends studying openings – find model games by strong players that have been played in a particular pawn structure – which sets the scene nicely for the rest of book. This is followed by a look at typical Sicilian tactics for White and Black. This was very pleasing to see because all the mainline Sicilian understanding in the world probably isn't going to get you very far if it is not backed up by an awareness of the myriad tactical shots available to both sides. Furthermore, the use of complete games enables the reader to see that tactics don't simply arise like lightning from a clear sky, but from certain features being present in a position. Even when it comes to typical tactics, understanding is important.

The book then moves on to strategic themes. Grooten introduces each with a diagram and a short passage of text explaining what each strategy is endeavouring to achieve and, you guessed it, why it is important. These bite-size morsels are a nice preparation for the main course of model games to come. This section is rounded out with a short historical overview of the Najdorf and the ‘Fundamentals of the Scheveningen’. The former is an instructive explanation of why the Najdorf first came to be played, whilst the latter seems a little light compared to the attention lavished upon the Najdorf.

The bulk of the book comprises two chapters consisting of short theoretical introductions to White's sixth-move alternatives in the Najdorf and Scheveningen variations, followed by annotated model games. Quite simply, the games are well chosen and nicely annotated – with the emphasis on maximum words and minimum variations. The book is then rounded out by eight puzzles, which challenge the reader to be able to find key ideas and tactics presented earlier. Like the complete games, these seemed to be well chosen, although I would like there to have been a few more.

Other than that, my only other minor quibbles are that the editing seems a little sloppy in places, and that at the end of some games the rest of the column has been left blank, which gives the layout a slightly disjointed appearance. However, these concerns take little away from what is a very good book. Not only is the content of a high quality, but the amount of explanatory text and the order in which it is presented gives the reader the best chance to extract the



most from the material presented.

This book sets out to enable the reader to learn two variations of the Sicilian by placing maximum emphasis on understanding, but succeeds in accomplishing significantly more. Reading this book offers a chance to improve your ability to study opening variations and chess as a whole. And best of all, you will understand *why* this is so. Highly recommended.

Paul Hopwood

### ChessBase Magazine 194

ChessBase PC-DVD

RRP £17.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £16.15**

The latest issue of *CBM* is for 'March/April 2020' and unsurprisingly focusses heavily on the action from Wijk, with the likes of Jan-Krzysztof Duda and Anish Giri analysing. Elsewhere 6 a3 against the Najdorf is touted, while Mihail Marin takes a look at middle-games without any minor pieces.



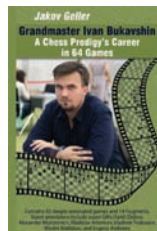
### Coaching Kasparov Volume 2: The Assassin (1982-1990)

Alexander Nikitin, 264 pages, paperback

RRP £20.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £18.85**

Having already explained all about how he guided Garry Kasparov through his formative years, Nikitin now reveals how the future world champion trained in the early 1980s and then throughout his many matches with Karpov. There are plenty of fascinating insights, such as on how Kasparov's team analysed the best way to allocate time throughout a game, while this second volume also contains 39 games, including 20 previously unpublished ones from the training matches that Kasparov played against Timoshchenko and Vladimirov 1982-83, which are annotated by Dorian Rogozenco.

If you're yet to read *Coaching Kasparov Volume 1: The Whizz Kid (1973-1981)*, and would like to order that alongside *Volume 2*, both books can be purchased together from Chess & Bridge for the special price of £40.00, or just £36.00 for Subscribers.



### Grandmaster Ivan Bukavshin: A Chess Prodigy's Career in 64 Games

Jakov Geller, 216 pages, paperback

RRP £15.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £14.39**

Ivan Bukavshin died at the age of only 20 in early 2016 just when it looked like he would reach at least 2700 level. In this fitting

tribute for Elk and Ruby, Bukavshin's friend and fellow GM Jakov Geller takes a detailed look at his life and especially his games, some of which are annotated by other friends, including Vladislav Artemiev and Daniil Dubov. Bukavshin may have had a short life, but he was an extremely creative player and his games contain a wealth of fascinating material, not least for fans of spectacular attacks.

### Mastering the Sicilian Najdorf

Yannick Pelletier, PC-DVD; running time: 7 hours

RRP £26.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £24.25**

The subtitle of 'A classical repertoire for Black' may surprise some, but there is much which is classical about arguably the Rolls Royce of Sicilian variations. Only in the 6 ♗g5 variation does Black struggle to prevent a tactical firestorm from erupting on the board, and even there the acclaimed Swiss presenter does a decent job of explaining the key motifs to look out for. Those new to the opening will further benefit from the additional database of 250 model games, many of which have been annotated by Pelletier, although highly-experienced Najdorf practitioners may wish that there could have been even more coverage in places.



### Opening Repertoire: The Sveshnikov

Cyrus Lakdawala, 320 pages, paperback

RRP £18.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £18.09**

We tend to associate the prolific Californian with strategic openings, but there is, of course, a fair amount of strategic understanding required to play the Sveshnikov with its often unique, dynamic structures. Lakdawala also tends to like a challenge and here makes good use of the series' question-and-answer format to explain the key positional and tactical motifs for both sides, while we quickly learn that he has played the opening since the late nineties and so is well placed to map out a repertoire for Black with it.

### The Complete Bogo-Indian Defense

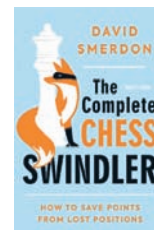
Maxim Chetverik, 256 pages, paperback

RRP £21.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £19.85**

Highly experienced Russian IM Chetverik has played a great many games with the Bogo-Indian, an opening which he believes is a much better accompaniment to the Nimzo-Indian for the club player than its cousin, the Queen's Indian. Chetverik looks at both the key pawn structures and a vast array of recent games, all while revealing plenty of his own analysis.

Muscovite publishers Elk and Ruby have certainly been busy of late, having also released *Yakov Vilner: A World Champion's*

*Favourite Composers* by Sergei Tkachenko (386 pages, paperback, RRP £20.95; Subscribers – £18.85), which examines the all-too-brief life of one of the leading Soviet masters of the 1920s who was also an expert problem composer.



### The Complete Chess Swindler

David Smerdon, 368 pages, paperback

RRP £21.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £18.85**

Australian GM David Smerdon's work on the Scandinavian was very popular when it appeared in 2015 and he has now written another book which stands out from the crowd. Smerdon turns out to be something of an expert on saving points from lost points and highlights well the four key criteria which can help the swindler: the opponent's impatience, hubris, fear, and need to stay in control. We'll have a full review next month.

### Together with Mamedyarov

Alexey Kuzmin, 354 pages, paperback

RRP £29.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £26.95**

Kuzmin's *Together with the Candidates* won the 2018 FIDE Book of the Year Award, but this is a different type of work for Thinkers Publishing, not least because Kuzmin has written with a target audience of 1400-2100 rated players in mind. Mamedyarov's games are often fine examples of powerplay, as quickly becomes clear to the reader. However, this work is not a collection of Mamedyarov's best games, but mainly a test book, containing a large number of positions taken from the Azeri no.1's games together with detailed solutions which usually follow straight away.

### Your Chess Battle Plan

Neil McDonald, 318 pages, paperback

RRP £18.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £18.09**

Neil McDonald remains a slightly underrated but excellent chess writer, not least for the club player. Here he examines how to decide on the best strategy in a position, highlighting which aspects of the piece and pawn configurations will best help one to come up with a good plan. Pawn structure certainly plays an important role, while McDonald also looks at such useful practical topics as improving the activity of the pieces and how to grovel in strategically suspect positions.

Everyman Chess have certainly been quite busy of late, having also released *A Complete Guide to 1 e4 e5 2 ♖f3 ♘c6 3 ♗c4* by Jan Pinski (352 pages, RRP £18.99, Subscribers – £17.09), which packages together his book on the Italian Game and Evans Gambit (this combination itself caused far fewer eyebrows to raise in 2005 than it would nowadays), with Pinski's work on the Four Knights.