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CANDIDATES CRISIS

FIDE stops Candidates tournament at midway point after Russia bans flights due to Covid-19, Vachier-Lagrave and Nepomniachtchi lead...



Sultan Khan - Daniel King on the Indian legend's first weekend in London

Toddler Chess - Shannon Carpenter on having to expect the unexpected

Cécile & Giorgi - James Essinger introduces us to a story of love and chess

Chess

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Best of Bunratty

Tim Wall continues to explain what makes a February weekend in County Clare so special

One of my personal highlights of this year's Bunratty International Chess Festival was watching the gripping final round encounter between GMs Vlastimil Hort and Keith Arkell. To see Hort playing in the flesh, all those years after watching him pronounce "Vell, vot to do now?" on BBC2's *The Master Game*, was a treat in itself. The double-rook endgame arising from a Carlsbad pawn structure, where Arkell is probably one of the world's leading experts, did not disappoint, with end-to-end play as first Hort and later Arkell pressed for the advantage.

V.Hort-K.Arkell Round 6 Caro-Kann Defence

1 e4 c6 2 d4 c3 d5 3 d4 dxe4 4 dxe4 d7
5 f3 g6 6 xf6+ xf6 7 c4 f5
8 0-0 e6 9 e1 g4 10 c3 e7 11 h3
xf3 12 xf3 0-0 13 d2 d5 14
ad1 g5 15 xg5 xg5 16 e5 f6
17 xd5 cxd5 18 xf6 gxf6 19 e3 b5
20 f4 fe8 21 de1 ab8 22 f5 b6 23
a3 a5 24 f2 f8 25 g4 e7 26 g3
g8 27 f4 h5 28 g3 hxg4



We join the game just as the double-rook endgame starts to get interesting. Hort could head for a draw by recapturing on g4 with the h-pawn, but instead elects to keep the outside passed h-pawn at the cost of allowing Arkell a greater preponderance of pawns in the centre. This imbalance leads to an epic struggle between the two grandmasters.

29 h4!?
A gutsy move. Who says veterans can't fight? Instead, 29 hxg4 h8 looks about equal.

29...b4 30 axb4 axb4 31 xg4 h8 32 a1 bxc3 33 bxc3 h5!?
Forcing the exchange of pawns on e6 (33...d6 was the alternative). We now see both sides repeatedly going for it in an

attempt to play for the win.

34 a7+ d6 35 fxe6 fxe6 36 g3

Changing the guard, and allowing the white rook on g4 to get active.

36...h8 37 gg7 c8 38 g7+

After 38 h5 xc3+ 39 g4 f5+ 40 h4 White is a pawn down, but active enough to draw, as after 40...c4 41 ad7+ c6 42 c7+ b5 43 h6 xd4+ 44 g5 b8 45 f6 h8 46 h7 h4 47 xe6.

38...c6 39 h5 b3



It looks risky to have allowed the white h-pawn to reach h7, but Black should have enough counterplay with the central pawns.

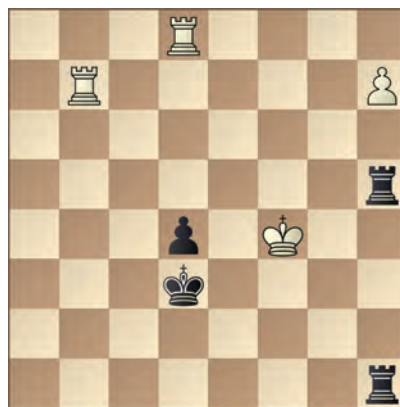
40 h6 xc3+ 41 f2 h3 42 h7 e5 43 g7 b8 44 g2 h5 45 a6+

Not 45 g8?? xh7!.

45...b6 46 a8 b2+ 47 g3 bh2 48 a6+ b5 49 xf6 exd4 50 b7+ c4 51 c6+ d3 52 cc7

The engines still give the double-rook ending as dead equal, but playing out these endgames is what gives endgame experts such as Arkell so many points. Both sides have to keep coming up with accurate moves, when even a single slip can spell disaster.

52...c2 53 d7 c8 54 g4 h1 55 xd5 cc1 56 d8 cg1+ 57 f5 h5+ 58 f4 gh1



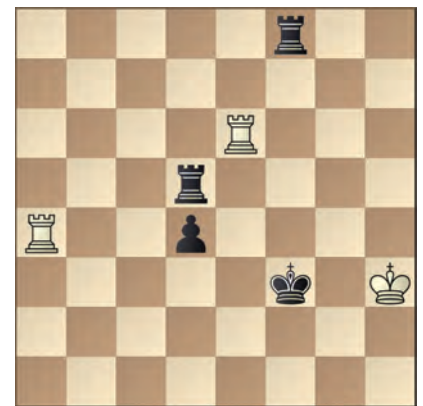
59 bd7?

And here's the slip. White loses the coveted h7-pawn and now faces an uphill struggle for the draw, if it is still there at all. 59 dd7 would have kept the draw.

59...1h4+ 60 f3 xh7 61 d6 f7+ 62 g3 e4 63 a8 g7+ 64 f3 f7+ 65 g3 c7 66 f3 e3+ 67 f4 e1 68 a3+ c3 69 a4 f1+ 70 g4 c4 71 a2 c3 72 g3 f8 73 g2 d3 74 a3+ e4 75 e6+ d5 76 aa6 cc2+ 77 g3 c5 78 ed6+?

Allowing the black king to easily join the attack (78 e7 was a better try). How Arkell finishes off is instructive.

78...e4 79 a4 g5+ 80 h4 d5 81 e6+ f4 82 h3 f3!



Using the king to set up a mating net. A virtuoso, even Carlsen-like, practical performance from GM Keith Arkell.

83 h4 h8+ 0-1

Drink Like A Grandmaster

The book Soviet GM Alexander Kotov should have written, but never did, was 'Drink like a Grandmaster'. It would have made for interesting reading, if only to work out how to do the tree of analysis after a pint of Guinness or three.

Bunratty has always prided itself on encouraging players to enjoy a drink during games, and perhaps this is part of the Irish Chess Union's Five-Year Plan to produce five homegrown grandmasters: Get the visiting foreign titled players generally hammered, and then gently separate them from their Elo points.

Except that – it isn't. Bunratty is not FIDE-rated, and therefore visiting GMs can come and enjoy themselves, have a few pints, and play with a slightly sore head in the morning without it affecting their rating (and thus their earning potential). Of course, it does help to attract strong players, who can

provide valuable experience to promising young local players. But that's as far as the Machiavellian plan goes – the rest is just down to the legendary Irish hospitality and the innate desire for good craic.

Plenty of fun and frivolity was indeed had over the weekend, if the scenes in the hotel bar and in Durty Nelly's across the road were anything to go by. Lots of the fun was also scattered over the chessboard – especially during the Sunday Night Blitz, in which something like 100 players of all strengths took part.

The 'Blair Blitzed' Project

One of my favourite players from Bunrattys past and present, Blair Connell from Surrey, lived up to his reputation for inebriated levity. Just a few small instances of Blair's chess-related adventures may suffice. In round 3 (on Saturday afternoon), his opponent, Pawel Grachowalski, offered a tipsy Blair a draw in an extremely drawn bishop versus knight endgame.

From my vantage point on the next board I could just about hear as a po-faced Blair leaned over and whispered to Pawel in slurred tones: "If you buy me a pint, I'll agree to a draw." A slightly shocked Pawel replied, "No!", at which point Blair shrugged: "OK, I'll buy you one. Draw!"

In the next round, on Saturday evening – bear in mind this is the third game of the day – Blair was paired against Jonathan O'Connor, and another somewhat stodgy position on the board was fighting a losing battle for Blair's attentions compared to the craic at the bar. On one of his staggered visits to the board, he found Jonathan not present, and after a little thought he sat down and pondered the next move. Again, I was perched a couple of feet away, and I found it difficult to suppress a giggle as Blair casually picked up the chocolate bar next to the board and took a bite.

For Blair was sitting in his opponent's chair, eating his opponent's chocolate, and mulling which move to play – also for his opponent. It was gently pointed out to Blair that he might want to resume his own seat, and he did. Only a few more, strange moves were required before Blair could happily resume his place in the bar.

On Sunday morning, when the start of round 5 was at the ungodly hour of 9:15am, I saw Blair outside the front of the hotel, enjoying what he announced proudly was the 'Breakfast of Champions'. As far as I could make out, the glass in his hand contained a Bloody Mary.

The Deadly Irish

The early rounds also saw some picturesque miniatures, such as this one by one of Ireland's newest IMs, David Fitzsimons.

D.Fitzsimons-B.Van der Zwet

Round 1

Pirc Defence

1 e4 d6 2 d4 g6 3 f3 g7 4 e3 f6 5 c3 0-0



A superb calculator, David Fitzsimons can also attack – and powerfully. He is currently ranked 10th in Ireland; Trisha Kanyamarala, pictured in the background playing Nigel Short, is 22nd.

This and Black's next few moves are rather accommodating, and exactly what the higher-rated player wants to face on a Friday evening.

6 d2 e8 7 0-0-0 c6 8 h6 h8 9 h4!

David Fitzsimons doesn't need to be told by AlphaZero to give Harry a push in this position. Black will be eviscerated on the kingside if he isn't careful.

9...g4 10 f4 a5 11 c4 xf3 12 gxf3 e5 13 g5 b4 14 b3 exd4 15 h5! e5??



A flimsy Friday Night defence that's fooling no one. Wrecking ball, do your work!

A far more reasonable try was 15...hxh5 16 d5 cxd5 17 xxd5 e7 18 hxh5 d7. **16 hxg6!**

As Spanish YouTubing GM Pepe Cuenca is fond of saying: 'Boom!'.

16...xb3 17 gxh7+ xh7 18 g7+ g8 19 hxh8# 1-0

Another sparkling miniature was played on Saturday evening by the young Irish FM Henry Li, who can count victims such as English GM Mark Hebden from Kilkenny, the other major Irish weekender (held in November), which is also not FIDE-rated.

In this game, Henry catches his opponent out with a rare gambit line against the c3 Sicilian.

M.Manojlovic-H.Li

Round 4

Sicilian Alapin

1 e4 c5 2 c3 d5 3 exd5 f6!?

An offbeat continuation recommended by GM Daniel King on his ChessBase DVD *Power Play 21: A Repertoire for Black Against Anti-Sicilians*. It may or may not be sound, but it's perfect for a Saturday Night Special at Bunratty. **4 a4+ bd7 5 c4 a6 6 c3 g6 7 f3 g7 8 g3?!**

This seems a little too loosening. Sensible and presumably good was 8 d3.

8...b5! 9 cxb5 b6 10 a3 fxd5 11 xc5 g4 12 g2?

By this stage, even 12 c6+ d7 13 c5 c8 14 a3 axb5 would have given Black pleasant and active play.

12...c8 13 a3 xc3 14 dxc3 d3! 15 a5 d8 16 f4 c4 17 c7



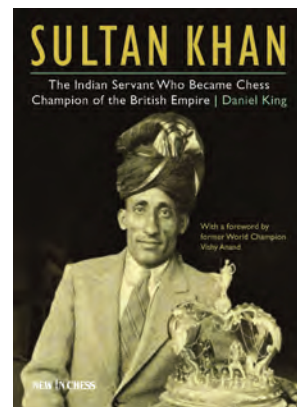
White is busted, so he decides to go down 'Butch and Sundance' style, in a hail of bullets.

17...xc3+! 18 bxc3 xc3+ 19 f1 xa1+ 20 e1 xe1+! 0-1

Bunratty 2021: 19-21 February.

Sultan Khan

Daniel King introduces his new book on the Indian legend and describes an extraordinary first weekend in London



Sultan Khan is one of the most mysterious chess players in the history of the game. Here are the bare facts. He arrived in England in 1929, virtually unknown. He spoke little English, had a rudimentary chess education, yet within a few months had won the British Championship, and was to repeat this triumph in 1932 and 1933. During his time in Europe he defeated many of the leading players in the world, including Capablanca, Flohr, Rubinstein and Tartakower. At the end of 1933, he returned to India and little was heard of him again.

The mystery was all the greater as India, the land that had given birth to the game of chess centuries before, had no tradition (at that time!) of playing the western version of the game. In fact, chess *was* played all over India, but with myriad different rules, most of these variations closer in spirit to the older middle-eastern game with pawns taking just short steps (among other differences). This was the type of game that Khan had grown up playing and accounts for his highly unorthodox style when playing the western game.

Incredibly, he had only been introduced to western chess three years before he arrived in England. As Capablanca was later to write: "The fact that even under such conditions he succeeded in becoming champion reveals a genius for chess which is nothing short of extraordinary." Capablanca knew Khan well: not only did they play a famous game in the Hastings Premier in 1930/31, but, as I discovered in my research for the book, they faced each other across the chessboard just a few days after the Indian first arrived in London.

How did Sultan Khan end up coming to Europe? Why did he suddenly return to India? And how good was he? It was these questions that I sought to answer when I started researching his life a few years ago and, in the process, I uncovered a story of empire, nationalism, religion and class – and of course, a prodigious talent.

Sultan Khan. The name sounds noble, magnificent, even terrifying, reminiscent of the Mughal Emperors who conquered and ruled in northern India centuries before, but the reality was different. The future champion was born into a poor Muslim family in 1905 in a remote region of the Punjab, then part of the British Empire. His family had a tradition of playing chess and he became well known in the area for his skill at the game – the Indian game.

His chess career would have gone no further if it wasn't for Colonel Nawab Sir Umar Hayat Khan, the owner of extensive landholdings in the Punjab, a soldier, politician, sportsman and keen chess player, who spotted his talent and was determined to produce a champion. Sir Umar invited Sultan Khan into his household and gathered a coterie of strong players to school him in western chess. In effect Sultan Khan became Sir Umar's court chess player. Make no mistake, this was a master-servant relationship. Having built up Sultan Khan's skills, two years later, in 1928, Sir Umar organised an All-India Championship in Delhi to test his protégé.

Here is where a chance encounter changed the course of Sultan Khan's life. During the championship, Sir Umar, in his capacity as a member of the Indian upper house, hosted a parliamentary commission from Britain. The Simon Commission, comprising seven members of the British parliament, led by the eminent politician Sir John Simon, was to report on Indian governmental structures and propose constitutional reform as part of a policy of placating Indian nationalists. Simon was a keen club chess player, playing for the National Liberal Club and the Reform Club in London, and Sir Umar invited him to the All-India Championship to show off his protégé, Sultan Khan.

Sir John visited during round 2 of the championship when Sultan Khan was facing one of his trainers.

Ramsukh Kaka-Sultan Khan All-India Championship, Delhi 1928



**39 a5 bxa5 40 ♖c5+ ♗d5 41 ♜xc6 axb4
42 ♜xa6 ♜b5 43 ♜a2 b3 44 ♜b2 ♕e4
45 ♕e2 g4 0-1**

Not for the last time in his career, Khan demonstrated his power in the endgame.

While the round was taking place, Sir Umar and Sir John played a game themselves, and I suspect that it was over the chessboard that the plan of bringing Sultan Khan to England started to take shape.

Sultan Khan won the All-India Championship with a resounding 8½/9 and over the next year won further tournaments in Delhi and Simla. The Simon Commission made another trip to India in 1929, and when they returned to England, Sir Umar Hayat Khan and his protégé Sultan Khan went with them.

The party travelled by ship from Bombay to Marseille, took the train through France and crossed the channel by ferry, arriving by the boat train into Victoria Station in the centre of London on Friday 26th April. The Prime Minister, Stanley Baldwin, greeted Sir John Simon on the platform, and a deputation from the Punjab Association of London presented him with a garland of flowers and gave a welcoming address.

Outside the station, various groups, including the London branch of the Indian National Congress, had organised a protest rally at Hyde Park with the controversial communist MP Shapurji Saklatvala (a Parsi Indian of the renowned Tata family) the chief speaker. Demonstrators had marched on to Victoria Station and scuffles ensued as the police blocked the entrance to the building; several arrests were made. The situation was a reflection of the troubled relationship between Britain and India in the years before independence and is crucial to understanding Sultan Khan's time in Europe – as I explore in the book.

The day after their arrival, on Saturday 27th April, Sultan Khan was formally introduced to London society at the National Liberal Club by Sir John Simon. Housed in a fine building in Whitehall, a mere knight's jump from parliament and the offices of government, this was at the heart of the establishment.

In this safe enclave, Sultan Khan played a four-game match against the club's strongest player, Bruno Siegheim. Born in Berlin, the cosmopolitan Siegheim had lived for many years in South Africa, winning the national championship on numerous occasions. He had moved to London in 1919 and recorded notable successes, including second place at the 1922/23 Hastings Christmas

tournament, equal with Reti and just behind Rubinstein. In other words, Siegheim was no pushover, but Khan acquitted himself well, winning two games, and drawing two.

B.Siegheim-Sultan Khan London 1929



White threatens to construct a laboured checkmating attack by ganging up with the heavy pieces on the h6-pawn, but Black's knight arrives just in time to save the day:

28...♖b7 29 ♖1g3 ♗d6 30 ♖g5 ♖f7! 31 ♖g1 (31 ♖h3 ♗xf5! 32 ♖xf5 ♖xg6) **31...b5 32 ♖f1 a5 33 ♖e1 b4 34 axb4 axb4 35 ♗d2 c3+ 36 bxc3 bxc3+ 37 ♖c1 ♖b7 0-1**

The following day, Sunday 28th April, the former world champion, Jose Raul Capablanca, gave a simultaneous display hosted by the Maccabeans, a club of Anglo-Jewish professionals, in a function hall of the Jewish Liberal Synagogue in leafy St. John's Wood, north London. Capablanca had recently played in a 'Scheveningen' style tournament in Ramsgate against a team of English players, finishing with the best score of 5½/7. He had then returned to London and played a series of simultaneous displays.

On this day, Capablanca took on 35 opponents, including many highly experienced London players. Sultan Khan was also granted a board. With hindsight it seems incredible that he was allowed to play in the pack against Capa, but no one really knew how strong Sultan Khan was. He had only played in a few tournaments in India and was inexperienced in the western game.

J.Capablanca-Sultan Khan London (simul) 1929 *Queen's Gambit Declined*

1 d4 ♗f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♗c3 d5 4 ♗g5 ♗e7 5 e3 a6

Khan liked to advance his rook's pawn at this early stage, and it isn't bad (it has come back into fashion), but it also indicates, as so often in his games, that he was going his own way, right from the start.

In general, Khan's grasp of openings was poor. He often did not pay much attention to



Sultan Khan (1905 – 1966) had a busy first weekend on arrival in London in April 1929.

the element of time in the opening, and I am sure that this was a hangover from the slower-paced Indian game where pawns only moved one square forward. How else can one make sense of these bizarre improvisations: 1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 e6, Price-Khan, British Championship 1929; and 1 e4 c6 2 c4 c5, Steiner-Khan, Prague 1931?

6 cxd5 exd5 7 ♗d3 ♗e6?! 8 ♗ge2 h6 9 ♗h4 c5?

It would have been better to castle or play 7...♗bd7. The bishop becomes a target.

8 ♗ge2 h6 9 ♗h4 c5?

Breaking the centre open with the king in the middle feels odd: 9...♗bd7 or 9...0-0 are more sensible.

10 dxc5 ♗xc5 11 0-0 ♗c6 12 ♗f4

Black needs to castle, but it would lose a pawn: 12...0-0 13 ♗cxd5 ♗xd5 14 ♗xd5 ♖xd5 15 ♗xf6 (the bishop cannot be taken because of the discovered check) 15...♖e6 16 ♗c3, with the advantage. To avoid this, Khan has to weaken his kingside pawns:

12...g5 13 ♗xe6 fxe6 14 ♗g3 ♖e7



Remember that in the version of the game

Khan grew up playing, there were very different castling rules and the king often ended up in the middle of the board. That explains why Khan so often lingered with his king in the middle – the risk was normal.

15 ♖c1 ♗d6 16 f4

Capablanca senses that Black is wobbling and starts to open the centre. But Khan finds counterplay.

16...♖c7 17 ♗e2 ♗g4 18 ♗d4 ♗xe3 19 ♖e2 gxf4 20 ♗h4+ ♗d7 21 ♖h5

Capablanca goes all out for the attack. Considering that every single one of White's pieces is in play, Black's king does look precariously placed.

21...♖af8!

Excellent defence. Resisting the rook, as 21...♗xf1? would run into 22 ♗xe6! ♗xe6 23 ♖f5 mate.

22 ♖g6 ♖b6

Very coolly played. Khan makes room for his king on c7 and appreciates that dropping e6 isn't critical.

23 ♖xe6+ ♖c7



Against all the odds, Khan has found a relatively safe square for the king on c7 and it isn't clear where White's attack goes from here. Meanwhile, at the other end of the board the knight on e3 is a monster, the queen on b6 is tricky, and the g-file is open. In a simul, this would be a nightmare position for the star to play: too many randomly-placed pieces and no clear strategy. Capablanca immediately self-destructed:

24 ♖xd5?? ♗xd5 0-1

The Cuban had cracked in the face of stout defence. He would have been expecting to win this game considering how inaccurately his opponent had played the opening, but Khan defended with coolness and originality, qualities he was to display so often in his chess career. Did this game prey on Capablanca's mind when they met at Hastings a couple of years later?

That was Sultan Khan's remarkable first weekend in London. What happened next? You can find out from *Sultan Khan – the Indian servant who became chess champion of the British Empire*.

Ed. – Daniel's new work is, of course, available from Chess & Bridge, retailing at £26.95 or just £24.25 for Subscribers.

of some nice geometry, while being the only winning move: **1...♖c3** (1...♗e4? fails to 2 ♗h8+ ♗e7 3 ♗xd8# and 1...♗g5 2 ♗h8+ ♗e7 3 ♗xg7+ ♗d6 is now winning for White in view of 4 ♗xd5+!, and if 4...♗xd5? 5 ♗xf6, 4...♗xd5? 5 ♗b7+ ♗d6 6 ♗d4+, and especially 4...exd5 5 ♗e7+ ♗c6 6 ♗e8+ ♗xe8 7 ♗xe8+ ♗d6 8 ♗d8+ ♗c6 9 ♗c8+ ♗d6 10 ♗e8! with a winning attack, as shown by 10...♗f4 11 ♗e6+! ♗e6 12 ♗b8+ ♗e7 13 ♗xf4 and 10...d4 11 h4! ♗xh4 12 ♗d8+ ♗c6 13 ♗e6+!) **2 h4!** (or 2 h3!, but 2 ♗h8+ ♗e7 3 ♗xg7+ ♗d6 is now only extremely unclear, Black's king again finding refuge in the centre of the board) **2...♗e7** (2...♗xg6 3 ♗xg6 ♗c7 is the engine's preference, but just a clear extra exchange for White after 4 ♗g4 ♗g8 5 ♗xh6) **3 ♗xg7+** (only now) **3...♗d6 4 ♗dd4! ♗a1+ 5 ♗h2 ♗f1 6 ♗e3** when it's only the black king which is now in grave danger, as shown by **6...♗h1+ 7 ♗g3 ♗d7 8 ♗e5+ ♗e7 9 ♗xd5!**

22) Pranesh-Stupak

White has just advanced the wrong pawn on the kingside and now placing another pawn on a light square gives Black a decisive advantage: **1...g4! 2 ♗d7** (2 ♗g2 ♗b5! also

leaves White helpless, and if 3 ♗c6 ♗c3 4 ♗e8 f6 5 ♗d7 ♗d1+ 6 ♗g1 ♗e3 7 ♗xe6 ♗f3 8 ♗h2 ♗e3 followed by ...♗f1+ and ...♗xg3 or here 6 ♗g2 e5 7 ♗xg4 ♗e3+ 8 ♗h3 ♗xg4 9 ♗xg4 e4) **2...♗e4+ 3 ♗g2 ♗e1 4 ♗e8 ♗d6 5 ♗d7 ♗f5 6 ♗e8 f6 7 ♗d7 ♗e3+ 8 ♗g1 ♗e2!** (once again, White must either lose g3 or allow Black to create a passed e-pawn) **9 ♗c6 e5 10 fxe5 fxe5 11 ♗e4 ♗d1 12 ♗f5 ♗f2 13 ♗g2 e4 14 ♗d7 e3 15 ♗b5+ ♗d2 16 ♗f1 e2 17 ♗h2 exf1R! 18 ♗g2 ♗e2 19 ♗h2 ♗d3 20 ♗g2 ♗e5 21 ♗h2 ♗f3+ 22 ♗g2 ♗g1# 0-1**

23) Wagner-Maghsoodloo

1 ♗b2! (in the game White activated with 1 ♗f4?? ♗xd4 2 ♗e5 ♗b5 3 ♗e6, but had presumably missed 3...♗xa3! when 4 ♗xa3 d4 5 ♗d6 d3 6 ♗c1 a3 is hopeless and he had to resign after 4 ♗d6 ♗c4+ 5 ♗xc6 a3 6 ♗xa3 ♗xa3 7 ♗xd5 b5) **1...♗xh3** (1...♗g5 2 ♗c1+ ♗f6 3 ♗g4! cannot favour Black) **2 b5!** (the star move to take the b5-square away from the black knight, as shown in the American GM Robert Hungaski's ChessPublishing column; Black again wins after 2 ♗f4 ♗d6 3 ♗c1 ♗g2 4 ♗e5 ♗b5

followed by sending his king westwards) **2...cxb3 3 ♗f4 ♗d6 4 ♗c1!** (and not 4 ♗e5?? ♗c4+) **4...♗c4 5 ♗f5 b4** (the only real try with ♗e6 and ♗xd5 on its way) **6 axb4 a3 7 ♗xa3 ♗xa3 8 ♗e6 ♗c2** (or 8...b5 9 ♗xd5 ♗g4 10 ♗c6 ♗f5 11 d5) **9 ♗xd5 ♗xb4+ 10 ♗c4** leaves Black unable to save his remaining pawn.

24) Cernousek-Navara

Play concluded 1...a4? 2 h4! a3 (2...♗e6 3 ♗b4 ♗d5 4 ♗xa4 ♗e4 5 f5 gxf5 6 g5! is similar) 3 ♗b3 ♗d5 4 ♗xa3 ♗e4 5 f5 gxf5 6 g5! (and not 6 gxf5? ♗xf5 7 ♗b3 ♗g4 8 ♗c2 ♗xh4 9 ♗d2 ♗g3 10 ♗e1 ♗g2) 6...hxg5 7 hxg5 ♗e5 8 ♗b3 ♗e6 9 ♗c3 ♗f7 10 ♗d4 ♗g6 11 ♗e3 ♗xg5 12 ♗f3 f4 ½-½. Instead, the paradoxical **1...♗e6!** would have won, as shown by Daniel Fernandez on ChessPublishing: **2 ♗b5** (2 h4 h5! is the other key point, Black winning the race after 3 gxh5 gxh5 4 ♗b5 ♗f5 5 ♗xa5 ♗xf4 6 ♗b4 ♗g4 7 ♗c3 ♗xh4 8 ♗d2 ♗g3 9 ♗e1 ♗g2) **2...♗d5 3 h4 ♗e4 4 f5 gxf5 5 g5 hxg5 6 hxg5** (6 h5 ♗e5! catches the h-pawn) **6...♗e5! 7 ♗xa5 f4** and only Black will queen.

This Month's New Releases

Duchamp's Pipe*

Celia Rabinovitch, 256 pages,
North Atlantic Books

If you had asked me what I knew about Marcel Duchamp before reading this book, which is subtitled 'A Chess Romance: Marcel Duchamp & George Koltanowski', I would have referred you to the story in *The Complete Chess Addict* concerning Duchamp's somewhat disappointing honeymoon. Apparently after long days spent studying chess problems, by nightfall he was always utterly exhausted. A sorry state of affairs that culminated in his new bride gluing his chess pieces to the board. Sadly, if unsurprisingly, the marriage only lasted a few months. However, Duchamp did have the posthumous honour of making it to board two in *The Complete Chess Addict's* team of artists. As well as, of course, recognition as one of the founders of Daidism and the surrealist movements.

I knew even less about George Koltanowski, a chess promoter and writer. A man who set the then world blindfold record (34 games) in 1937 and much later in 1960 claimed another record by playing 56 consecutive blindfold games at 10 seconds a move. *Duchamp's Pipe* sets out to explore the relationship between these two men, whose lives were shaped by art, chess and the second world war. For

players of a certain age (which scarily also now includes me), there will always be some form of relationship between chess and smoking – in my case memories of the smoke-filled rooms I used to play in as a child. *Duchamp's Pipe* also tells the story of a pipe that Duchamp made for Koltanowski, as well as of the smoky world of coffee-house chess and the figurative impact of tobacco on the imagination.

So far, so promising. There are certainly some very nice touches in this book. The idea that Duchamp, an artist who rejected rules in his art, was drawn to the structures and rigours of chess is well conveyed. The tale of Duchamp in Casablanca keeping himself occupied playing chess on the tiles of his bathroom floor is nicely done. There are lots of interesting photographs, chess quotations and detailed discussion on both chess and art. I very much liked the passage on Duchamp's chess book, *Opposition and Sister Squares are Reconciled*, which was described by Surrealist artist Max Ernst as "One of the most frequently mentioned and most infrequently read books of the twentieth century."

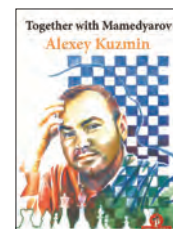
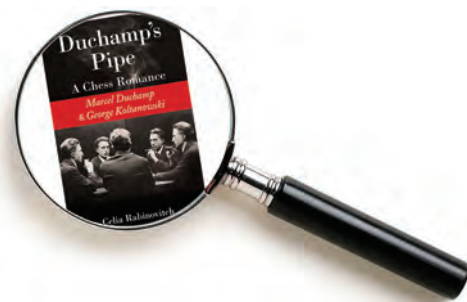
However, I did also have some challenges. Perhaps it is a 'modern' expectation that the author gives a clear sense of their own relationship with the story and why telling it matters to them. I didn't feel this quite came

across as strongly as it might have done, and the book would have been better for it. There are also several different contributors and while the passages all work well in stand-alone form, they tend to overlap – giving the feel of something that is not quite a cohesive book, not quite individual essays. Moreover, the prose style is not always easy – this is quite an academic read.

If a potential reader has a keen interest in Duchamp, Koltanowski, surrealist art or the precise details of when and where these men met and played, this is for you. Personally, I felt that this was a brilliant idea for a book, but despite many positives it could have been more accessible.

Ben Graff

* This title wasn't in stock at Chess & Bridge at the time of going to press. We'll update next month, but do email info@chess.co.uk or call 020 7486 7015 before trying to order it.



Together with Mamedyarov

Alexey Kuzmin, 354 pages

Thinkers Publishing

RRP £29.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £26.95**

'Together with Mamedyarov' feels like a risky title in these challenging times. Perhaps 'Social distancing with Mamedyarov' or 'Surviving with Shak' would have been more appropriate, but Coronavirus references aside, this is a solid effort from Thinkers Publishing who are quickly making a name for themselves as a publisher of merit.

What you have here is essentially a collection of puzzles from Mamedyarov's games, put together by Alexey Kuzmin, who as the blurb on the back of the volume states, is a professional chess coach and player who has worked with the likes of Karpov and Morozevich.

It seems to me that you can approach the content in a couple of ways: you can either browse through, occasionally taking your time to try and solve the puzzles; or, if you are slightly less lazy than me, you can adhere to the points system that the book contains. The first part 'Beginning to think like a Grandmaster' is intended to test players rated 1400-1900, and the second part 'Passing the Grandmaster test' is aimed at those rated 1700-2100. Personally speaking, I found most of the puzzles reasonably challenging and they seem to cover a wide range of ability, so I certainly don't think that strong players would find this any less than illuminating. Neither would those who have a lower rating than 1400 struggle to find anything useful. A good book is a good book after all.

Perhaps it's a personal thing, but I've always found a points system slightly puzzling – why are some solutions given four points, while others which seem just as testing are only given two? The whole thing seems rather arbitrary to me, and not especially scientific. While I don't think that the points system detracts from the book, it feels like an unnecessary adornment, especially as the quality of the puzzles within are more than good enough. It's my belief that this book offers more than enough value for money if you want to spend weeks in self isolation with a chess board, setting yourself problems, as I intend to do (it's either that or Netflix).

This book showcases Mamedyarov's startling tactical wizardry and strategic insight, and Kuzmin manages to present these examples while giving expert commentary. For example, when he states: "Do not trust even a strong opponent. Checking his calculations will never be superfluous!" I wish I had been given this advice earlier (I'm sure my opponents have found it useful over the years).

There are numerous examples of this advice in the book, and one of my personal favourites was: "If you have been looking only for a combination or a tactical stroke you have spent time in vain. Finding a black cat in a dark room is difficult especially if it is not in!" That

sounds like a typical Russian saying, but I got the impression that if you really absorbed this advice, your level would really jump, and this book is filled with gems like this one:

S.Mamedyarov-S.Vidit Kolkata 2009



You can also sense the passion of the author when he writes about this position, with Black to move: "This is a classic test for training your skills of calculating, three candidate moves appear each with their own direction. The task is to calculate their consequences and reach a verdict." The more of this, the better. It's like a night in with your favourite Russian chess trainer, and you really get the sense that you are being exposed to a serious chess culture that has years of development behind it.

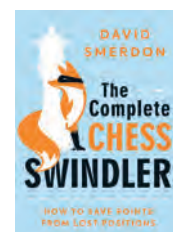
However, there are one or two niggling issues that I had with the book, none of which really detract from the overall impression that this is a volume that if carefully studied will bring great reward. On page 327 Kuzmin gives an example from a Bent Larsen game and writes: "14...g5! At that time – fifty years ago, this move choked the whole chess world." It is not difficult to imagine that the author meant 'shocked' rather than 'choked', but this is a surprising oversight. There are other slight errors (admittedly quite rare and not particularly important) in the grammatical presentation that don't seem to have picked up in the editing process. In general, the book has been well written and well edited, but some people are quite fastidious when it comes to these matters.

What did bug me more substantially was the lack of background on Mamedyarov himself. It seems to me that it is assumed that the reader is already a fan of 'Shak' and therefore knows plenty about him. Although there are plenty of mentions of his tournament successes during the course of the book, it would have been nice to have had some insight into his personality, what drives and motivates him as a player, and perhaps even some photographs of him in action at the board, although that would have presumably added to the publishing costs. From what I've heard, Shak is a formidable

calculating machine, and I recall one player recounting how he watched on as the Azeri demonstrated a 30-move variation in the post-mortem. While it might seem like a strange question, I did sort of wonder why the author chose Mamedyarov – why not Nakamura, or Vachier-Lagrave, or some of the other ridiculously strong chess players that seem to proliferate in chess these days. As a reader, I was almost tempted to ask, "What attracted you, Alexey, to the games of the super grandmaster Mamedyarov?"

These are minor gripes and ones that a publisher like Thinkers, who are still relatively new, will I assume sort out in the future. I certainly hope so, as the signs for them are extremely promising.

Danny Gormally



The Complete Chess Swindler

David Smerdon, 368 pages

New in Chess

RRP £21.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £18.85**

"Chess is a cruel game. We all know that feeling when your position has gone awry and everything seems hopeless. You feel like resigning. But don't give up! This is precisely the moment to switch to swindle mode."

This rallying cry should resonate with many practical chess players. Everyone loves swindling opponents out of what was otherwise going to be a hard-earned victory. It feels good; it is something to show our friends. Nobody cares about being dubbed 'lucky' (or an extended version of the same, using more words). On the other hand, we have all been victims of swindles and that never feels at all good. As they occur in the games of every player, it is worth spending study time on pondering how and why swindles occur.

One mission of this book is to show "How to save points from lost positions", which is probably the most succinct definition of what swindle actually is – at least in the chess sense. David Smerdon, a grandmaster from Australia, keeps to the same highly accessible style he used so well in his previous book, *Smerdon's Scandinavian* (Everyman Chess, 2015), but this book obviously has a much wider scope than an opening manual.

The material is split into six parts: What is a swindle?; The Psychology of Swindles; The Swindler's Toolbox; Core Skills; Swindles in Practice; and Exercises.

The examples of the swindles are extremely entertaining, as one would expect. Seeing very strong players blow large advantages can help the rest of us understand that there are times when we

really are all in the same leaky boat.

It is particularly interesting to read Smerdon's reasoning on various matters. For example, where are today's famous swindlers? "I wondered whether today's energetic young talents, even with – or perhaps because of – their use of computer engines and vast online materials, are somehow less motivated to look for swindles than players of former generations. After the wide research I conducted for this book, I am surprised how little attention has been paid to swindles in modern chess training."

Intriguing – and a new way of looking at the modern game. Could it be that the excessive use of computers has led to a situation where "We have forgotten the practical nature of the battle"? Maybe too many current players understand just how bad their position is, as they are used to following stark computer evaluations.

Yet we can all recall famous swindlers from our formative years, none more so than England's first grandmaster. Smerdon agrees: "Of all the players I came across in my research, Miles stood out as the most impressive Swindler." The ability of Miles to turn the tables was possibly forged in the cauldron of top-level events in which he had to battle it out with some of the toughest giants of the time, such as Karpov, Larsen and Portisch. Being initially outgunned, he had to fight to survive. Today's top tournaments mainly feature the same faces, all of whom know each other so well and most of whom have virtually identical styles; no street-fighting chess required.

Here is a perfect example of a Miles swindle.

S.Bouaziz-A.Miles

Riga Interzonal 1979



It is fair to say the game has been drifting away from Miles for some time. He is the exchange down and the passed c-pawn is looking highly dangerous. Yet he has still managed to place some of his forces deep into enemy territory, which gives him some practical chances. Bouaziz tried to tidy up with **43 ♖c2**, but Miles continued to muddy the waters with **43...♗b1!**.

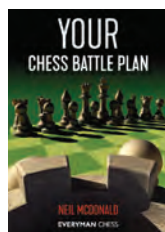
"He gives White the option of bailing out with **44 ♗xc1 ♗xc1** and **45...♗xc6**, after which he can set White technical problems to convert the extra exchange. White correctly senses that more is on offer, but keeping the pieces on also is not without side-effects."

Indeed, after the further moves **44 ♗dd2 ♗h1!** White blundered with **45 c7??**, allowing Miles to demonstrate his swindling prowess with the astonishing **45...♗xh3!!**. White can save the game with "**46 ♗f1! ♗g3+ 47 ♖f2 ♗xf3+ 48 ♖xf3 ♗xf1+ 49 ♖e3**, when the game ends by perpetual check." However, as so often happens, a player who has been in control for so long finds it too hard to adjust to the new circumstances and **46 ♖xh3?? ♗h1+** led to forced checkmate in five more moves (0-1, 49).

Smerdon calls this "A tremendous masterclass in chess psychology and swindling". It is hard to disagree.

This is not the first book to cover the subject of swindling, but it could claim to be the first one not to go down the potboiler route. Moreover, Smerdon is a very good writer; this book is fully accessible to all levels, but never crosses the line into dumbed-down territory. It is thoroughly instructive and extremely entertaining. The author has done a fine job in covering all of the swindling bases and offers the reader something a little bit different to previous books on the subject. This is the most interesting chess book of the year so far.

Sean Marsh



YOUR Chess Battle Plan

Neil McDonald, 318 pages

Everyman Chess

RRP £18.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £17.09**

This new book "Focuses on how Magnus Carlsen and other great masters decide on the best strategy in a position and then find the right ways to implement it. Clear advice shows you how to hone in on the most relevant features of a position in order to decide what your general plan needs to be."

In short, here is what it offers the reader:

- A complete self-improvement programme.
- Advice to evaluate the current level of planning in your own games.
- Utilises a structured approach, making the most of your study time.

Neil McDonald is, of course, a highly experienced coach and writer. Here he is keen to point out that chess is a war game and "When you have all your pieces in play in an equal position", then "You should manoeuvre

and probe, stop the opponent carrying out the advances he wishes, fortify strong points, try to create and seize control of holes, and so on."

There are 10 chapters of instructional material, starting with the standard 'Improving the Activity of your Pieces', moving through the likes of 'Full Grovel Mode', and concluding with 'Deciding the Character of the Game in the Opening'. The lessons on war plans are delivered via the means of a series of well-annotated games (or part-games), most of which have been taken from the period 2017-2019.

Top-level games come thick and fast these days and I was pleased to find some recent and highly instructive games with which I had been previously unfamiliar, such as this one, which resides in the chapter on 'Sacrificing to Gain the Initiative'.

A.Grischuk-A.Volokitin

Baku Olympiad 2016



Grischuk, one of the eight players in this year's Candidates tournament, has just played the logical-looking **13 ♗h3**. The idea is common; White would like to play **14 ♗d2**, embarrassing the bishop on e4, without allowing the bishop exchange with **14...♗xg2**. In terms of a battle plan, it is clear that White is hoping to gain the long-term advantage of the two bishops.

Volokitin threw a king-sized spanner in the works with a remarkable sacrifice to change the trend of the game:

13...dxc4!?

"It's rather remarkable to offer a piece sacrifice when you only have a queen and bishop ready to attack!"

14 ♗xd7 ♗h5!

Now McDonald's typically lucid prose helps to explain what is going on. "This is Black's idea. Besides the direct threat to f3, two other tactical features give Black a stronger initiative than is apparent. Firstly, the plight of the white bishop on d7. As things stand, when it is attacked by a black rook, it will have no safe retreat squares. Furthermore, as we shall see in the note to the next move, in a critical line attacking the bishop will be a way to ferry a rook into the

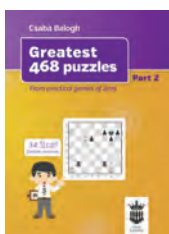
attack on f3 with gain of time.

“The second tactical resource for Black is the pawn on c4. It didn’t just clear the way for the queen to h5, it is also ready to support the move ...♗d3 should the bishop need a safe square or Black wish to regain the exchange with a subsequent ...♗xf1.”

It certainly is a remarkable concept. The black queen proved to be a menace as she infiltrated the enemy lines and, try as he might, Grischuk couldn’t shake off the pressure. Black won on the 38th move.

McDonald presents plenty of solid material for club and tournament players, backed up with fresh examples of the battle plans in action. Readers who enjoyed his recent *Coach Yourself* (Everyman, 2019) will definitely feel at home with *YOUR Chess Battle Plan* too.

Sean Marsh



Greatest 468 Puzzles: Part 2

Csaba Balogh, 216 pages, paperback
RRP £18.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £17.09**

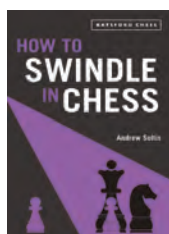
Chess Evolution certainly like their puzzle books, this latest one subtitled ‘From Practical Games of 2019’. Once again, the Hungarian Grandmaster groups his collection of beautiful as well as shocking moves into easy, medium, and hard categories, while providing a decent test for all levels of club player.



Hein Donner: The Biography

Alexander Munninghoff, 272 pages, paperback
RRP £22.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £20.65**

Munninghoff follows up his acclaimed biography of Max Euwe by tackling an extremely complex character and the author of *The King*, Jan Hein Donner. A strong grandmaster, Donner is best remembered for his bohemian lifestyle and highly insightful as well as often controversial writings. All fans of Donner and *The King* who’ve long wanted to know more about the man and his life should not go disappointed.



How to Swindle in Chess

Andrew Soltis, 240 pages, paperback
RRP £16.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £15.29**

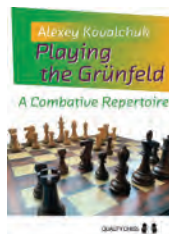
It’s amazing how often a topic is rather ignored by the chess press and then two publishers both release books on it within just a few weeks of each other. Like David Smerdon, the highly experienced American author Andrew Soltis believes that swindles are not accidental or a matter of luck, but rather that swindling should just be considered a different type of chess skill. This Batsford work is less thorough than its New in Chess equivalent, but also contains some excellent examples, with Soltis arguably at his best when he demonstrates how to set strategic traps to exploit the opponent’s overconfidence.



New in Chess Yearbook 134

Peter Boel, René Olthof & Jan Timman (eds.), 256 pages, paperback
RRP £26.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £24.25**

The latest *Yearbook* features Jordan van Foreest on the cover, along with the tag line ‘Van Foreest shines with crazy Najdorf sidelines’. Elsewhere Mickey Adams takes a close look at Daniil Dubov’s 8 a4 d5 in the Anti-Marshall, the 2019 Novelty of the Year is presented and Glenn Flear reviews three recent repertoire works.

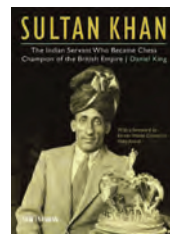


Playing the Grünfeld

Alexey Kovalchuk, 504 pages, paperback
RRP £23.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £21.59**

Quality Chess’ latest repertoire work is unsurprisingly detailed, which is no surprise considering that it’s on the Grünfeld, but it is usefully subtitled ‘A Combative Repertoire’, meaning that Kovalchuk has done his best to avoid overly popular variations and those long lines which tend to result in a draw. Most notably 7...a6 is recommended against the Russian System and in the main line, 7 ♗f3 c5 8 ♖b1 is met by 8...0-0 9 ♗e2 ♗c6!? and

7 ♗c4 c5 8 ♗e2 ♗c6 9 ♗e3 0-0 10 0-0 by 10...b6, intending 11 dxc5 ♗c7!.



Sultan Khan

Daniel King, 384 pages, paperback
RRP £26.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £24.25**

Subtitled ‘The Indian Servant Who Became Chess Champion of the British Empire’, Daniel King tells the full story of the enigmatic first Indian chess legend, including a great many previously unpublished games. For more information, do see pages 32 and 33 of this issue, and we’ll also have a full review next time. Do note too that a hardback version is available for £33.95 (Subscribers – £30.55).



The Benko Gambit Explained

Erwin L’Ami, PC-DVD;
running time: 6 hours, 30 minutes
RRP £26.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £24.25**

One doesn’t tend to think of Anish Giri’s second when it comes to 1 d4 ♗f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 b5 and yet L’Ami is clearly quite a fan of the Benko, with which even in 2020 Black starts a fight for the initiative as early as the third move. He makes good use of some interactive questions to check that the reader has grasped the key strategical ideas, while providing pretty decent coverage of all the key lines. That is based around a main illustrative game in each of the main lines, while Benko players may be relieved to know that after 4 cxb5 a6 5 bxa6 L’Ami doesn’t recommend the modern 5...g6 6 ♗c3 ♗g7, but rather the traditional move order 5...♗xa6 6 ♗c3 g6



The Greenbecker Gambit

Ben Graff, 368 pages, paperback
RRP £9.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £8.99**

Is Tennessee Greenbecker to be remembered as chess champion or fire-starter? You’ll find out in Ben Graff’s enjoyable novel, as covered in our April pages.

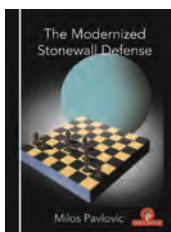


The Modern Triangle

Semko Semkov, 216 pages, paperback

RRP £18.99 SUBSCRIBERS £17.09

Semkov's latest work for his Chess Stars publishing house presents a repertoire for Black with the ever sharp and challenging 1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♖c3/♗f3 c6, based around the famous Abrahams-Noteboom variation. All manner of sidelines are presented for White, but it is important to note that the repertoire isn't quite complete, Semkov not covering 3 ♗f3 e6 4 e3 largely due to a distrust there of 4...f5. The existing coverage is, however, unsurprisingly cutting-edge with each section usefully introduced by a short 'Main Ideas' chapter.



The Modernized Stonewall Defense

Milos Pavlovic, 200 pages, paperback

RRP £23.95 SUBSCRIBERS £21.55

Our sometime contributor remains a leading theoretician and here maps out a repertoire for Black with a very modern interpretation of the Stonewall Dutch. The main emphasis is the main line, 1 d4 f5 2 g3 ♗f6 3 ♗g2 e6 4 c4 d5, where unsurprisingly Pavlovic doesn't fail to consider the tricky 5 ♗h3 before moving on to 5 ♗f3 c6 6 0-0. Interestingly, he then covers 6...♗e7 and even 6...♗e4, as well as his main recommendation, 6...♗d6, all the while highlighting various modern strategic concepts for Black and presenting much new analysis.



The White Sniper

Charlie Storey, PC-DVD; running time: 6 hours, 40 minutes

RRP £26.95 SUBSCRIBERS £24.25

Mr. Sniper, FM Charlie Storey, returns to the ChessBase studio to follow up his earlier work on his favourite opening. This time we get to discover that the Sniper isn't just an opening for Black, but also White, as becomes apparent right from the subtitle: 'Winning

with g3, ♗g2 and c4!'. Storey has plenty of experience of the resulting positions and clearly explains why that has led him preferring to begin with 1 g3 over 1 c4. Each section receives an upbeat headline and Storey's coverage is typically positive throughout, but he does also cover a number of key strategic ideas, as well as pretty much all the many set-ups Black can use against 1 g3.



Winning with 1.d4!

Jerzy Konikowski & Uwe Bekemann,

376 pages, paperback

RRP £24.95 SUBSCRIBERS £22.45

Joachim Beyer Verlag's latest work sees their leading author team map out a repertoire with 1 d4 and 2 c4 aimed squarely at the club player. This is yet another 1 d4 repertoire which includes the Exchange variation against both the Slav and QGD. Elsewhere the Nimzo is tackled with 4 a3, but not every line is as in Moskalenko's *An Attacking Repertoire for White with 1.d4*, with the German authors examining how to meet the Budapest and advocating the Sämisch against the King's Indian.



Yakov Vilner: A World Champion's Favourite Composers

Sergei Tkachenko, 386 pages, paperback

RRP £20.95 SUBSCRIBERS £18.85

Elk & Ruby's latest release looks at one of the leading Soviet masters of the 1920s, Yakov Vilner (1899-1931). Vilner certainly packed plenty into his short life, saving Alekhine from the firing squad in 1919 and excelling not only over the board, but as a chess composer. We'll have a full review next month.



Training Program for Chess Players: 1st Category (ELO 1600-2000)

Victor Golenishchev, 256 pages, hardback

RRP £19.99 SUBSCRIBERS £17.99

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