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Chess

**MERRY
CHRISTMAS
&
HAPPY NEW YEAR
TO ALL OUR READERS**

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Just So Skilful - Wesley defeated Magnus in the final as the Champions Chess Tour began

Christmas Quiz - Fun and challenging positions, as well as a good dose of trivia to solve

Classical - Terry Chapman begs to differ with Magnus over the future of classical chess

Chess

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Showing the chess-themed Christmas tree display of Vilnius, Lithuania from 2019

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Reviving 4...f5

FM Stefan Bücker presents a daring line to shock the Ruy Lopez practitioner

Back in 1984 GM William Watson destroyed a minor line in the Ruy Lopez, the 'Delayed Jaenisch'. Against John Nunn he achieved this position:

**1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♙b5 a6 4 ♙a4 f5
5 d4 exd4 6 e5 ♙c5 7 0-0 ♗ge7 8 c3
dxc3 9 ♗xc3 d5**



Watson played **10 ♙g5** (!!N +- according to John Nunn in *Chess Informant* 38). The result for Black is disastrous. 10...0-0 fails to 11 ♗xd5, on 10...b5 11 ♗xb5 is strong and 10...♙e6 can be refuted by 11 ♖c1 or even 11 ♗e2. After **10...♗f8 11 ♖c1 ♙a7 12 ♙xc6+ bxc6 13 ♗e2 c5 14 ♗f4** Watson enjoyed an overwhelming position.

10 ♙g5 had been seen before, as in Jezek-Ratolistka, Sternberk 1962, but the inclusion in *ECO* made it official: 4...f5 is miserable. When the new *Encyclopaedia of Chess Openings Volume C* went to press in 1997, plus over equals had become '+-'. Such revolutions are rare in the Ruy Lopez. Subsequent rescue attempts did not succeed. One case may suffice: 9...0-0 10 ♗d5! h6 11 ♙b3 ♗h8 12 ♙xh6! and White was winning in Hracek-Biolek, Czech League 2010.

4...f5 was first examined in *Deutsche Schachzeitung* 1890 (pp. 161, 257). Its inventor Walter von Walthoffen preferred 5 d3, while Curt von Bardeleben pleaded for 5 d4! exd4 6 e5 ♙c5 7 0-0 ♗ge7 8 c3! (instead of von Walthoffen's 8 ♖e1) 8...dxc3 9 ♙b3 d5 10 ♗xc3 with an advantage, thus approaching the above diagram except for one move.

In the 1920s Frank Marshall and Rudolf Spielmann risked 4...f5, and from 1950 it was seen more often. Indeed, Correspondence World Champion Vladimir Zagorovsky believed in it and scored a fine 9 out of 15 with the Delayed Jaenisch.



Dr. Walter von Walthoffen, inventor of the Delayed Jaenisch variation in the Ruy Lopez.

G.Beikert-S.Bücker
Baden Championship, Sasbach 2018
Ruy Lopez

**1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♙b5 a6 4 ♙a4 f5!
In search of underestimated possibilities.
5 d4 exd4 6 e5 b5 7 ♙b3 ♙b7!**



Apparently a novelty; there were only 7...♗a5, 7...♗ge7 and 7...d5 in the database. Since then my idea has slowly spread, so far with a collective three points from seven tries.

8 0-0

A natural choice, but the engines suggest 8 a4! – see the end of the article.

Instead, after 8 c3 ♗a5 9 ♙c2 d6! White

is only slightly better: 10 ♙xf5 dxe5 11 ♗xe5 (if 11 cxd4 ♙b4+ or 11 0-0 ♖f6 12 ♙g4 ♗h6!) 11...♖d5 12 ♖xd4 ♙d6 13 ♖xd5 ♙xd5 14 ♗f3 ♗h6 with compensation for the sacrificed pawn. Even less critical here is 9 cxd4 ♗xb3 10 ♖xb3 ♖e7 11 ♗c3 ♖b4 12 ♖d1, as in Kovchan-Matviishen, Kremenchug 2020, and now 12...♖c4 is fine for Black.

8...♗a5 9 ♗xd4

Refusing to fall for the classic trap 9 ♖xd4? c5 10 ♖f4 c4. There are also:

a) 9 c3 ♗xb3 10 axb3 ♗e7 is harmless. David-L.Van Foreest, Cattolica 2020, continued 11 ♗xd4 (if 11 ♖xd4 ♗g6) 11...c5 12 ♗e2 ♖b6 13 c4 b4 14 ♗f4 0-0-0? 15 ♗d5 when White had sealed the long diagonal and went on to win, but correct was 14 ..♖c6! 15 f3 ♗g8 followed by ...g5 with some advantage for Black.

b) 9 ♙xg8 ♗xg8 10 ♗xd4 ♖h4 11 ♗c3 invites a strong attack with 11...0-0-0! (replacing the weaker 11...f4? 12 ♗f3? – 12 ♗d5!! would have been very strong – 12...♖g4 13 a4 ♗c4? 14 axb5 from the blitz chaos of Morozevich-Sychev, Moscow 2019) 12 ♗xf5 ♖c4 13 ♗e3 ♖e6.

9...c5

Aggressive, and 9...♗xb3? 10 ♗xb3 would leave White clearly for choice.

10 ♗xf5

This too looks aggressive, but Black is well armed.

The emergency solution 10 ♙xg8 is no better though: 10...cxd4 11 ♙b3 (11 b4? fails to 11...♖c7 12 bxa5 ♖c6) 11...♗xb3 12 axb3 ♖b6 13 c3 dxc3 14 ♗xc3 ♙c5 15 ♖h5+ g6 16 ♖h3 0-0 17 ♙f4?! ♗f7 18 ♗ad1 and now in Ter Sahakyan-Mikaelyan, Yerevan 2020, 18...g5! 19 ♙e3 ♙xe3 20 fxe3 ♗af8 would have left Black doing pretty well.

10...c4



11 ♖g4



Jan-Krzysztof Duda looks confident, but he would soon be some way behind on the clock as Aryan Tari surprised him with the Delayed Jaenisch.

There are alternatives, but in each case ...♖b6 provides good counterplay:

- a) 11 a4 cxb3 12 axb5 ♖b6.
- b) 11 ♙e1 ♖b6 12 ♙e3? (12 ♘d6+ can be met by 12...♙xd6 or if 12 ♘c3 ♖g6 13 ♘g3 0-0-0) 12...♖g6 13 ♘h4 (Mohammad Fahad-Kuybokarov, Asian Nations Online Cup 2020) 13...♖e6 is winning for Black.
- c) 11 ♙d2 ♖b6 12 ♘d6+ ♙xd6 13 exd6 ♙f8 14 ♙c3 ♘f6 is about equal.
- d) 11 ♙e3 ♖c7 12 ♘d6+ ♙xd6 13 exd6 ♖c6 should also be OK for Black.

11...♖b6 12 ♘d6+

After 12 ♘g7+ ♙xg7 13 ♖xg7 ♖g6! Black suddenly threatens mate on g2, while 12 ♙d1 might be met by 12...♖g6 13 ♙g5 ♙c6 14 e6 dxe6 15 ♙e1 ♙d7 16 ♘d4 ♙e7 17 ♘xe6 ♙xe6 18 ♙xe6 h5.

12...♙xd6 13 exd6 0-0-0 14 ♖xg7



14...♖xd6?

Here I managed to miss not just one, but two opportunities to win on the spot: 14...♘f6 15 ♖xf6 ♙hg8 16 ♙g5 ♖c6 17 f3 ♖c5+ or 14...♘e7! 15 dxe7 ♙dg8 16 e8 ♙+ ♙xe8 17 ♙e3 ♖e6 18 ♖h6 ♙hg8 19 g3 ♖e4.

The rest of this game was flawed, eventually concluding as a lucky draw and can be ignored, but we should return to 10...c4.



There was a surreal moment when the subsequent encounter Duda-Tari departed from my stem game. How odd it is to watch your pet line not only being tested at the Norway Chess elite tournament, but also being discussed online by Judit Polgar and Vladimir Kramnik!

While Aryan Tari blitzed out his opening moves, Polish no.1 Jan-Krzysztof Duda spent 42 minutes over 10 ♘xf5. Kramnik explained Duda's conflicting feelings, as follows: You know Tari must have studied it, at the same time you doubt it is one hundred percent sound, but it remains a matter of principle or honour to take on f5.

J.K.Duda-A.Tari
Stavanger 2020
Ruy Lopez

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♙b5 a6 4 ♙a4 f5

5 d4 exd4 6 e5 b5 7 ♙b3 ♙b7 8 0-0 ♘a5 9 ♘xd4 c5 10 ♘xf5 c4 11 ♘c3

11 ♖h5+!? g6 12 ♖h3 cxb3 (just as good could be 12...♙d5, intending an eventual ...♙e6 and ...♘c6, or perhaps 12...h6 followed by ...♙h7) 13 axb3 ♘c6 14 ♙e1 d5 is an original and very unclear line proposed by the Israeli GM and theoretician Victor Mikhalevski.

11...♖b6 12 ♘d5

Here Mikhalevski suggests 12 ♙e1 ♖g6 13 ♘g3 0-0-0 14 ♙d2 ♙e8 which looks fine for Black and 14...h5! is likely even better.

Instead, 12 ♘d6+ ♙xd6 13 exd6 ♖c5 14 ♙e1+ ♙f8 15 ♘e4, as proposed by Dejan Bojkov, can be met by 15...♙xe4 16 ♙xe4 ♘f6, etc.

12...♙xd5?

A positional error. Correct is 12...♖c6 13 ♘f4 0-0-0!



Kramnik quickly identified this as the critical line. Sometimes Black can play ...g5: for example, 14 ♙d2? g5! (Mikhalevski) 15 ♘d4 ♖b6, when both white knights are

hanging. As such, two options remain for White:

a) 14 a4 cxb3 (14...g5 15 d4 ♖b6 16 ♜f2 b4 17 ♙a2 ♜e8 is also quite unclear) 15 d4 bxc2! 16 ♖e2 ♗c4 17 axb5 ♗xe2 18 ♜fxe2 ♜c4 19 bxa6 ♙e4 "with a very unclear position, which my computer evaluates as equal" – Mikhalevski.

b) 14 d4 ♗c7 15 a4 b4 16 ♜e1 cxb3 17 cxb3 ♜b8. So far we've followed GM Dejan Bojkov's analysis, who adds "White has compensation, but hardly any advantage." There are even alternatives, including the crazy 17...d6 18 ♜b5 axb5 19 d5 ♗a5 20 ♙e3!. Earlier, White might try 16 ♙a2 or 16 ♙e3, and Black has 14...♗c5.

While the attack is dangerous, Black may just survive. The first rule: never take on b3 prematurely. The purpose of ...c4 is to keep the bishop out of play. Often the bishop can be allowed to escape to a2 and king safety has always to be the priority for Black.

13 ♗xd5 ♗c6 14 ♗d4

14 ♗d1 is also strong. After the mistake on move 12, the game has lost its theoretical value, but human play is always a struggle. Moreover, at this point White was already short of time, it is still complicated, and what about that bishop on b3?

14...♗e6 15 d6+?

15 ♗e4! d5 16 ♗g4 ♙d7 17 ♗f4 is clearly better for White, as shown by Mikhalevski.

15...♙xd6 16 exd6



16...♜f6?

Missing White's threat. 16...♙f7 17 ♗c3 ♜c6 was necessary. In spite of his insecure king, Black is hardly worse.

17 ♗c3! 0-0 18 ♗xa5 ♜g4?! 19 ♗c3 ♜ae8 20 ♙g5 cxb3

Or if 20...♗xf2 21 ♗xf2 ♜xf2 22 ♙xc4 bxc4 23 ♙xf2, etc.

21 ♗xb3 ♗xb3 22 axb3 ♜e2 23 f3 ♜f6 24 ♜fc1 h6 25 ♙f1 ♜fe8 26 ♙xf6 gxf6 27 ♜e1 0-0

Over the board humans prefer 8 0-0. Indeed, Duda needed only 50 seconds for this decision, the direct attempt to refute 7...♙b7. However, the engines all like 8 a4, to preserve the Spanish bishop, which also deserves our attention. We will focus on the main line and keep it short. Any impact on future human practice remains purely hypothetical.

1 e4 e5 2 ♜f3 ♜c6 3 ♙b5 a6 4 ♙a4 f5 5 d4 exd4 6 e5 b5 7 ♙b3 ♙b7! 8 a4!

Recommended by FM Joshua Doknjas in *The Ruy Lopez* (Everyman, 2019), and later supported by Mikhalevski: "Probably 8 a4 is the most accurate."

8...♙a5 9 ♙a2 c5 10 0-0 ♗b6



11 ♜e1

We are following Mikhalevski's analysis. There are tempting alternatives:

a) 11 c3 ♜e7 12 b4! is clearly better for White according to Doknjas, but I have my doubts: 12...cxb4 13 cxb4 ♜c4 14 ♜bd2 ♜d5 15 ♜xc4 bxc4 16 a5! (16 ♜xd4? ♜c3 wins) 16...♗c7 (and not 16...♗a7? 17 e6) 17 ♗xd4 ♜c8 18 ♙b1 ♙xb4 19 ♙xf5 ♜e7 20 ♙c2 ♙c5 21 ♗h4 ♙xf3 22 gxf3 ♗c6 can only leave Black slightly worse and 23 ♙e4 (or 23 ♙g2!? ♜g6 24 ♗xc4 ♗xf3+) 23 ..♗e6 24 ♜d1 ♗xe5 25 ♙f4 ♗e6 26 ♜e1 ♙b4 27 ♙f1 ♙f7 simply seems rather unclear.

b) 11 ♜a3 ♜e7 (11...♙e4!? 12 ♜e1 ♙e7 13 c3 d3! 14 ♙e3 ♗b8 15 ♜g5 c4 is also quite possible) 12 e6 d5 (12...d6 13 c3 g6 14 b4 ♜ac6 15 ♙f4 ♙g7 16 a5! favours White somewhat, and if 16...♗a7?! 17 ♙xd6 cxb4 18 cxb4 ♜d8 19 ♙c5 ♗b8 20 ♗d2!) 13 axb5 axb5 14 ♜g5 b4 15 ♜f7 bxa3 16 ♜xh8 axb2 17 ♗h5+! ♜d8 18 ♜f7+ ♜c8 19 ♙xb2 ♗xe6 20 ♜fe1 ♗g6 21 ♗xg6 ♜xg6 and Black must be able to hold.

11...♜e7 12 e6

12 b4 cxb4 13 e6 d6 14 ♜xd4 g6 (14...bxa4 15 ♙e3 0-0-0?! seems risky, but Black might consider 15...♗c7!?) 15 ♙e3 ♗c7 16 axb5 f4 17 b6 ♗c5 18 ♙xf4 ♙g7 leaves Black only slightly worse.

12...d6 13 ♜g5 g6 14 ♜f7 ♙g7 15 ♙g5



"With a clear edge for White", according to Mikhalevski in his ChessPublishing column.

15 ♙f4 0-0 16 ♜d2 c4 17 ♙xd6 ♜fe8 is only a little better for White.

15...♗c6 16 f3 h6

16...b4!? 17 ♜d2 d5 comes into consideration too.



17 ♙f4 d5 18 ♜xh8 ♙xh8 19 ♙xh6 b4 20 ♙g5 ♗c7 21 ♜d2

Matters also look rather unclear after 21 f4 d3 22 cxd3 ♙xb2 23 ♜d2 0-0-0!

21...f4!? 22 ♗e2

Black is surely OK after 22 ♜f1 0-0-0 23 ♗d2 ♜f8 24 ♙h6 ♜f6, while 22 ♗c1 c4 23 ♜f1 ♙e5 24 ♜xe5 ♗xe5 25 ♙xf4 ♗xe6 just looks pretty murky.

22...c4 23 ♜ad1 0-0-0



The position remains most unclear, as we can see from 24 ♗f2 ♜f5 25 ♙xd8 ♜xd8 26 e7+ ♙e8! or 24 ♜f1 ♜ac6 25 ♙xc4 dxc4 26 ♗xc4 ♜d5 27 h4 ♙b8, with everything to play for in both cases.

While commentating on Duda-Tari, Kramnik expressed his doubt as to whether 7...♙b7 will become very popular, "and everybody will start playing it tomorrow." Perhaps not, but the line looks like a decent practical try. Can we now talk about the strength of the Spanish bishop on a2?



Winter Warmers

Sean Marsh presents more of the best books of 2020 which you too may enjoy

Never have the words 'Happy New Year' had a greater meaning as right now, when we bid goodbye to 2020 and look ahead to its successor, more than a little unsure what to expect. For many, 2020 has undoubtedly been an *annus horribilis*, but the bottom line as far as chess literature is concerned is that the last 12 months have brought us a sparkling selection of books covering all aspects of the game.

Inevitably, many books went unreviewed in my regular column and now, as we clear the decks of 2020, it is time to catch up with a number of volumes I enjoyed. I would like to present brief snippets on and from each of these volumes to help explain why I am recommending them to readers.

Decision Making in Major Piece Endings

Boris Gelfand, 320 pages
Quality Chess

RRP £19.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £17.99**

Technically the fourth volume in Gelfand's impressive series for Quality Chess, this was released at the same time as *Technical Decision Making in Chess*, which is reviewed in this month's regular new releases pages.

Major piece endings are real heavyweight affairs and can be very difficult to handle. Rook endings are included, of course. Gelfand tells a good story of how pleased he was to receive a copy of *Practical Rook Endings* (Olms, 1999) directly from the author – none other than the great Viktor Korchnoi. "Even though I was already a world-class player at that point, I was deeply moved by this gesture."

He goes on to demonstrate a typically instructive Korchnoi ending.

V.Korchnoi-V.Antoshin

Yerevan 1954



Antoshin has just played 49...♖a3-g3? and Gelfand explains why this is a mistake:

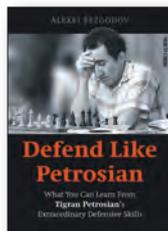
"If Black had played 49...♗f3 he would answer both 50 f5 and 50 ♖e5 with 50...f6+. After 51 ♖f5 ♗f1 we get the important position to remember. Black simply waits. There is no *zugzwang*, as Black always has two squares available to him on the f-line. White cannot create a passed pawn and will thus not be able to win."

After the move played, Korchnoi immediately sets about creating a passed pawn:

50 ♗f8! f6 51 e5! ♗xg4 52 e6 ♗xf4+ 53 ♖d5 ♗f5+ 54 ♖d6 ♗xh5 55 e7 ♗e5

Antoshin had to sacrifice his rook when the pawn promoted on the next move and Korchnoi made no mistake in converting his rook against three pawn advantage into a win.

As with the other three volumes in the series, this is a book which demands time and effort from the reader. However, the rewards for such diligence will be readily apparent.



Defend Like Petrosian

Alexey Bezgodov, 272 pages
New in Chess

RRP £22.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £20.69**

It is good to see more books about the giants of chess history and Petrosian's deep style is still a mystery in many ways. Bezgodov does a fine job in analysing a specific part of the great champion's playing style.

"My task here is to study Petrosian the defender. The greatest mistake would be to consider him a fan of boring passive defence. Defence according to Petrosian was always

the search for counter-chances, bluffing, posing the most difficult practical tasks to the opponent. He was Tal reversed."

The author draws significant comparisons between Petrosian and Nimzowitsch, such as "the tireless search for little-studied lines" and "the preference for knights over bishops." The first part presents 78 annotated games showing Petrosian in action and examines the themes and strategies he used – including, inevitably, his favourite exchange sacrifices. The second part, 'Tigran against the titans' examines his best games against a plethora of world (and near-) champions. Bobby Fischer is a glaring omission, explained away (unconvincingly) by the author in his introduction. This is a weakness, as is the reliance on the abbreviation 'TP' in place of Petrosian's name.

Nevertheless, the material is excellent and it is very good to see Petrosian's games against his most fierce rivals receiving an overdue airing. His encounters with Korchnoi stand out in this respect, of course. Few chess rivalries crackled with 'hate energy' quite as much as theirs did.

One of Petrosian's most famous pieces of defensive brilliance came in a notable encounter with another special 'K'.

G.Kasparov-T.Petrosian

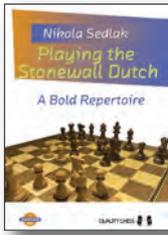
Tilburg 1981



Young Kasparov is clearly on the warpath in this position. Every white piece (apart from the king) is aggressively placed and it looks like the *denouement* is about to happen. However, after Petrosian's next move it was Kasparov who resigned, just seven moves later.

The move in question is the extraordinary **35...♖c6!!**. Even now, 40 years on, this move looks to be far ahead of its time.

Yes, indeed, we can all still learn plenty of ideas from the games of Tigran Petrosian.



Playing the Stonewall Dutch

Nikola Sedlak, 320 pages

Quality Chess

RRP £19.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £17.99**

The Dutch Defence is a difficult beast to handle; the Stonewall variation especially so. Many players will refuse to play with such a gaping hole on e5, yet those who take time to acclimatise to the special qualities of the Stonewall will find it to be a very good point-earner in club and tournament play.

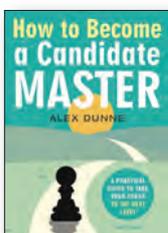
This book brought to my attention several ideas with which I was previously unfamiliar. The most startling of these is undoubtedly this one.



This already unusual, in that Black has moved the knight into e4 very early on and has eschewed the modern placement of the bishop, which is d6 rather than e7. Black now plays 7...♘c6 and follows up immediately with 8...h5 and 9...h4! Of course, it is not unusual to see Black's kingside pawns hurtling down the board in a Stonewall Dutch, but the h-pawn is normally the last one to join the party.

Nikola Sedlak is a Serbian Grandmaster and he clearly likes to practise what he preaches (surely an essential trait for any author of opening books), as there are numerous illustrative games of his own. All of White's deviations from the main lines are covered in detail also – and there is additional material showing 1...f5 in action against both 1 c4 and 1 ♘f3.

The aggressive lines given in this book will be a boon for those who need to play for a win as Black in Swiss tournaments and the like.



How to Become a Candidate Master

Alex Dunne, 272 pages

New in Chess

RRP £21.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £19.75**

Self-improvement is usually on the agenda as we head into a new year. Chess is just one part of the improvement plan, of course – but those who would like to become better players will find this book very useful.

Subtitled 'A practical guide to take your chess to the next level', this is a revised edition of the original 1985 book. FIDE Master Alex Dunne presents 52 games (one per chapter) to highlight the differences between 'you' (a typical player with a rating of 1800) and a plethora of opponents who are rated either higher or lower. Each game has annotations covering between four and six pages, and the aim is to help readers climb from the status of an average club player to a Candidate Master.

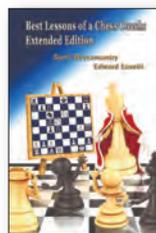
It is an interesting and easily accessible work, pointing out numerous pitfalls and faulty ways of thinking. One issue in particular will strike a very familiar chord with most readers. When you have the advantage against a player with a much higher rating, are you able to resist the temptation to halve out?



Here Black (the higher-rated player) offered a draw and White accepted.

"The 1800 player who expects to make progress must learn to beat – or at least try to beat – his Candidate Master opponent." Furthermore, "Though the 1800 player might not win, and, as we have seen, might even lose, he would learn more about chess and about his own abilities by continuing the fight. Taking the draw in such a position is a good way to remain an 1800 player."

How to Become a Candidate Master will help players identify mistakes and mis-steps in their own games and the advice given will help to eradicate such errors.



Best Lessons of a Coach: Extended Edition*

Sunil Weeramantny and Edward Eusebi

432 pages, Mongoose Press

(Due at Chess & Bridge in early 2021)

Staying with the subject of self-improvement, here is another updated version of a highly-respected book. The original version of this one dates back to 1994 and this new edition has been expanded considerably.

In the words of the *back cover*, "The reader is invited to take a seat in the classroom of a renowned chess teacher, and learn how to answer such questions while experiencing the beauty, logic, and artistry of great chess games."

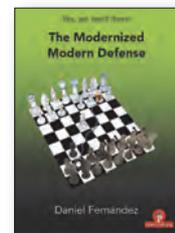
There are four sections to the book and 12 main lessons. Topics include 'Knight Music', 'King on the March', and 'Three for the Lady'. The third of these focuses on the unusual line from the Pirc Defence, in which White trades the queen for three minor pieces.



The fun starts after 6 e5!? when after 6 ...♞xd4 7 exf6 ♞xe2 8 fxg7 ♗g8 9 ♞gxe2 we have one of the earliest (intentional) queen sacrifices to be found in any opening. The annotations to the game in this lesson and the others in the book are full of pertinent questions for the reader and excellent explanations. Additional illustrative games follow each lesson

There are two ways to use this book. It can be used as a fine set of entertaining, annotated games to help one's self-improvement or alternatively as a set of challenging and engaging lessons in a classroom or club setting.

*Keep an eye on chess.co.uk for details of when this book appears at Chess & Bridge.



The Modernized Modern Defense

Daniel Fernandez, 376 pages

Thinkers Publishing

RRP £29.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £26.95**

There have been times in the past when I have struggled to keep up to date with the latest opening theory. Usually, a couple of my teammates have always managed to avoid the problem by utilising universal opening systems.

The Modern Defence (1...g6) against

anything and everything) is one such approach. The basic ideas are similar, no matter what White plays. Furthermore, most club players will have nothing new to show in terms of theory and will merely play a standard line in reply, such as the 150 Attack.

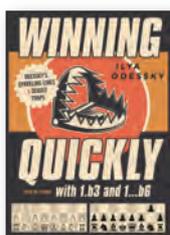
It is good to have a personal repertoire that is unlikely to be hit by a theoretical bomb. Having said that, the Modern Defence is not to everyone's taste. It won't work out so well for anyone who struggles to work with a space disadvantage, for instance.

I like the 'Modernized' series by Thinkers Publishing because it offers fresh and interesting ideas which I know will take opponents by surprise. Indeed, I've successfully used several suggestions from their *The Modernized Caro-Kann* (also by Fernandez).

Two aspects of this book are particularly noteworthy. First, it suggests good lines for White as well as for Black: for example, the trendy Sniper (1 e4 g6 2 d4 ♗g7 3 ♖c3 c5) is best met by 4 ♗e3! which causes problems. Second, the author doesn't go down the age-old route of copping out and claiming it is 'outside the scope of this book' when a transposition to the King's Indian Defence is on the cards. Instead, he examines 1 e4 g6 2 d4 ♗g7 3 c4 d6 4 ♖f3 e5. Black goes on to tread fresh ground with an early ...f6 and ...♗h6 in some lines, with a trade of bishops after ...♗h6 also on the agenda. This is something Black can spend a long time trying to achieve in a regular King's Indian, so the first player may end up confused.



If you cause your opponents new problems over-the-board there is more chance of them going wrong early in the game. Is 2021 the time to 'modernize' your own opening repertoire? 1...g6 against everything could be the way to go.



Winning Quickly with 1.b3 and 1...b6
Ilya Odessky, 464 pages
New in Chess
RRP £25.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £23.35**

Help is also at hand for fans of queenside fianchettoes. This is a very entertaining book, featuring lines and material as eccentric as the author.

Odessky has a story to tell, which explains how and why this book came about: "I left chess in 2012. I did not touch it for several years. Then I decided to test my strength in Internet blitz. I started from scratch. The board floated before my eyes, and my knee twitched. Less than two months later, I crossed the grandmaster rating mark. My opponents, among them lots of players with a big name, played chess better than me."

The opponents may have played better chess, but Odessky still found a way to be successful: "Surprisingly though, I knew more. On a small island of chess theory, on to which I lured them, I was better equipped. Much better! About 30% of the games ended in wins around the 20th move. A quarter of the games simply ended in mate. In all games, I opened with the moves 1.b3 and 1...b6."

The book is full of sharp lines and traps for the unwary. Here is a sample trap: **1 b3 d5 2 ♗b2 ♗g4 3 f3 ♗h5 4 e4!? dxe4 5 ♖e2.**



Sample pitfalls include 5...exf3?? 6 ♖b5+ followed by 7 ♗xh5 and the extended version 5...♖f6 6 ♗xf6 exf6 7 ♖b5+ and 8 ♖xb5.

It is not entirely clear how the repertoire would stand up in serious, over-the-board play, especially when opponents can predict how you are going to play and can make suitable arrangements to frustrate your intentions. However, as nearly all chess over the past year has been played via a screen, using much smaller amounts of time on the clock than normal for club and tournament games, we can expect the trend to remain the same for most, if not all [*Ed. – let's hope not!*] of 2021. Therefore it is worth experimenting with these unusual lines to see where the adventures will take you.

Whatever 2021 has in store for everyone, please stay safe and well and rest assured that if there are more lockdowns ahead then there are plenty of good chess books to keep you all occupied.



A Model Attack

A.Lenderman-S.Shankland
U.S. Championship (rapid) 2020
King's Indian Defence

1 ♖f3 ♗f6 2 c4 g6 3 d4 ♗g7 4 e3 0-0 5 ♗e2 d6 6 0-0 ♗bd7 7 ♖c3 e5 8 ♖c2 ♗e8 9 b4 e4 10 ♖d2 ♖e7 11 ♗b2 ♖f8 12 ♗fc1 ♗f5 13 ♖d1 h5

Thematic, as the position continues to mirror a reversed King's Indian Attack.

14 ♗b3 ♗8h7 15 d5?! ♗g4! 16 h3 ♗e5 17 ♖d4 ♖h4!

Unstereotyped, but good. White now avoids the bishop sacrifice on h3, but at some cost.

18 ♗xf5?!

18 ♖e1! followed by f4 was the way to try and defend.

18...gxf5 19 ♗c2 ♗g5 20 ♖f1

Good defence, unlike 20 c5? ♗ef3+! 21 gxf3 (or 21 ♗xf3 exf3 22 ♖f1 f4!) 21...♗xh3+ 22 ♖g2 ♖h7!, which would have decisively cleared g8 for a rook.

20...f4!? 21 exf4 ♖xf4



22 ♖h1?

22 g3? ♖f5 23 ♖h2 e3 was also excellent for Black, but the ice-cool 22 ♗b5! was possible, since after 22...♗ef3+ 23 ♗xf3! (23 gxf3? exf3 24 ♗d3 ♗xb2 25 ♗xb2 ♖h4 26 ♖h2 ♖h8! wins, and if 27 ♖xc7 ♗g8 28 ♖xa8 ♖xh3) 23...♖xf3+ (23...exf3!? 24 ♖xc7 ♗xb2 25 ♗xb2 ♖h8! 26 ♖xe8 ♗xe8 27 ♖h1 should also enable White to defend) 24 gxf3 ♗e5! 25 ♖h1 ♗g5 26 ♗xg7 ♖xf3+ 27 ♖h2 Black has nothing better than to keep checking with 27...♖f4+ 28 ♖h1 ♖f3+.

22...♗ef3!

Crashing through in view of 23 gxf3 exf3 24 ♗d3 ♖h4 25 ♗f5 ♗e5 26 ♗d7 ♗d8.

23 g3 ♖f5 24 h4 ♖d4 25 ♗d2 ♖g3 26 ♗xf3 ♖xf3 27 ♗e2 ♗xc3!

Another unstereotyped, but strong exchange, reducing the pressure against e4 and enabling Black to switch focus to the g-file.

28 ♗xc3 ♖g4 29 ♗f6 ♖h7! 30 ♗e3 ♖g8 31 c5 ♗g6 32 ♗g5 ♗e8!? 33 cxd6 ♗xd6 34 ♗c1 ♗xd5 35 ♖g2 c6 36 ♖c4 ♖f5 37 ♗f4 a6 38 ♖h1 ♖g8 39 a4 ♗d4 40 ♖c3 ♗ed8 41 ♗h6 ♖h7 42 ♗f4 ♗d1! 43 ♗xf3 ♗xh1 44 g4 exf3+ 45 ♖xf3 hxg4 0-1