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**ChessLife**

# SPEED DEMON

**- GAWAIN JONES -  
EUROPEAN BLITZ CHAMPION**

ISSN 0964-6221



Russian Champions - Nepo and Goryachkina both edged home in Moscow



A Witness to History - Ben Graff was honoured to talk with Genna Sosonko



A Most Unusual Year - Keith Arkell explains how he adjusted to life in 2020

# Chess

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# 60 Seconds with... Barry Hymer



**Born:** 31st December 1960, Ladysmith, South Africa.

**Place of residence:** Lancaster, England.

**Occupation:** Semi-retired educational psychologist and academic, but now working part-time as science consultant to Chessable.

**Enjoyable?** Hugely. Especially since I'd long since given up on the dream of chess as a career!

**And home life?** Now that the children have fledged, much quieter...

**But sometimes good to escape to:** Our small beach shack in the Gironde, France.

**Sports played or followed:** I grew up in South Africa, so rugby union and cricket, obviously.

**A favourite novel?** Tough to choose one. Almost anything by Doris Lessing, JM Coetzee, Michiel Heyns and EM Forster.

**Piece of music?** Ditto. Almost anything by Pavlov's Dog, Rodriguez, Dylan, Pink Floyd, and Van Morrison (I'm carbon dateable).

**Film or TV series?** *Pelle the Conqueror*, *Nuts in May*, *Succession*, and something chess-themed I watched on Netflix recently – forget the name.

**What's the best thing about playing chess?** Being wholly responsible for the outcome.

**And the worst?** Being wholly responsible for the outcome.

**Your best move?** Possibly the finish to a game in the first round of the Yorkshire Open way back in 1984. I was lucky to catch Cambridge University's top board cold:

## A.Dyson-B.Hymer Harrogate 1984



20...♖g4!? (the calm 20...♖e8 or 20...♗xe7 are even stronger) 21 0-0-0 ♗xe7 22 ♖g3?! ♖e3 23 ♗h3?! ♖xc3! 24 bxc3 ♗a3+ 25 ♖b1 ♖h6 0-1

Or, more recently, having the courage to play a not-difficult but all-in move. The double exclaim derives from the circumstances of mounting mutual time trouble:

## B.Hymer-O.Jackson Rhyl 2018



Black has just blundered terribly with 46...♗b3-c4?!, inviting 47 ♖xf6!! and White's central connected pawns are (just) far enough advanced to win the promotion race, turning all the winning chances over to White (1-0, 57).

**But less memorable than your worst move?** At my level, I've lost count of the howlers, but this takes some beating:

## B.Hymer-R.Bryant Leyland 2017



Spurning a mate in three (or any number above that), I instead found the exquisite 55 ♖g5?? ♗h5+! ½-½.

**And a highly memorable opponent?** In a sim, Ulf Andersson. In a tournament, probably Julian Hodgson in his terrifying early 80s pomp. But as a schoolboy in Cape Town I once came within a pairing error of playing Miguel Najdorf.

**Favourite game of all time?** Either Mark Hebden-Colm Daly, Dublin 2007, for the brutal clarity of Hebden's play, or Vadim Malakhatko-Aleksandar Wohl, Tromsø 2010, for evidence of the Hippo's bite and a superb, genuine sacrifice on move 22 [Ed. – Do see this month's pgn download for those games.].

**The best three chess books:** For instruction, Bronstein's *The Chess Struggle in Practice*, which even has the edge on a more recent book by Hymer and Wells(!). For fun, Bruce Hayden's *Cabbage Heads and Chess Kings* or Simon Webb's *Chess for Tigers*, and for culture, Reinfeld's *The Human Side of Chess*.

**Is FIDE doing a good job?** As well as they've done since Euwe's day.

**Or your National Federation?** I have nothing but admiration and gratitude for those who put in the hours for the good of chess, and largely for free.

**Any advice for either?** Until I'm prepared to put up, I'll shut up.

**Can chess make one happy?** Is Richard Dawkins an atheist?

**A tip please for the club player:** As one himself, don't stop believing.

# Champions!



## Gawain Jones and Michael Adams have both claimed inaugural online titles of late

Gawain Jones triumphed in the European Blitz Championship, which unsurprisingly went online and took place on the Tornelo platform the weekend before Christmas. The Friday saw 353 players contest a rather strong 3+2 qualifier, in which Gawain finished seventh with 8½/11, thereby qualifying for the knockout stage the next day. Notably none of the eventual semi-finalists were amongst the five players who topped the initial standings on '+7': Radoslaw Wojtaszek, Robert Hovhannisyan, Levan Pantsulaia, Vladimir Onischuk and Aleksandar Indjic.

The last sixteen saw Gawain tackle rising 19-year-old Romanian star Bogdan-Daniel Deac, eventually progressing 2½-1½ courtesy of a wild victory in the final game. Next up both Manuel Petrosyan and then, the following day, David Navara were overcome only after Armageddon games, the latter especially impressive with the Czech no.1 having just equalised after being 2-0 down.

### D.Navara-G.Jones

European Online Blitz Ch. 2020



Thus far Black has stuck tight in a Giuoco Piano, but now decided it was time to grab.

**25...♖xa4! 26 b3?**

The key mistake as the black knight actually isn't about to get trapped. Instead, 26 ♗d7 ♖c5 followed by 27 ♗xb7 or 27 ♖e2 would have fought on, albeit in an inferior position.

**26...♗b2 27 ♗1d2 a4!**

The resource which Black had to see in advance. The a-pawn now proves a mighty asset.

**28 ♗d7 ♖e6 29 ♖b6 a3 30 ♗2d6 ♖xd6! 31 ♗xd6 a2 32 ♖xb7 a1♖+ 33 ♖h2 ♖a7 34 ♖xc6 ♖xf2 35 ♗d2 ♖e3 36 ♗xb2 ♖f4+ 37 ♖g1 ♖c1+ 0-1**

The final saw Gawain up against the Latvian-Spanish legend Alexei Shirov, who had also had to go to Armageddon to get by Matthias Bluebaum. The Sheffield-based star only needed three games to triumph 2½-½ and so claim the €2,500 first prize, in part after wheeling out his old favourite, the Dragon, ahead of inflicting this massacre.

### G.Jones-A.Shirov

European Online Blitz Ch. 2020

Scotch Gambit

**1 e4 e5 2 ♖f3 ♗c6 3 ♗c4 ♗f6 4 d4 exd4 5 e5 d5 6 ♗b5 ♗d7!?**

An offbeat alternative to 6...♗e4, if one also considered in some detail by Gawain in his forthcoming Quality Chess work, *Coffeehouse Repertoire 1.e4*.

**7 0-0 ♗e7 8 ♗xc6 bxc6 9 ♗xd4 ♗b8 10 ♗c3 c5?!**

This asks too much of Black's position. According to Gawain, the critical line is 10...0-0 11 ♖f3.

**11 ♗db5 c6 12 ♗d6+! ♗xd6 13 exd6 ♖xd6?**

Far too greedy. 13...0-0 14 ♗f4 would have restricted White to a pleasant edge.

**14 ♗e1+ ♗e6 15 ♗e4 ♖e7 16 ♗g5**



White's pieces flow to good squares as he enjoys a dream position for blitz, as well as one in which he was very much still in book.

**16...f6? 17 ♗xc5! ♖xc5 18 ♗xe6+ ♖f7**

Shirov was relying on this double attack, but now his king is going to have to go for something of a walk.

**19 ♗xf6+! gxf6 20 ♖h5+**

As Gawain explains, "White has an overwhelming attack."

**20...♖e7 21 ♗e1+ ♗d7 22 ♖g4+ ♖c7 23 ♗f4+ ♖b7 24 ♖g7+**



Regaining some of the sacrificed material while retaining a deadly initiative.

**24...♗d7 25 ♖xd7+ ♖a6 26 ♗e7 ♖b6 27 ♗e3 ♗ad8 28 ♗xb6**

Opting for a winning rook endgame, in which Gawain displays fine technique, but 28 ♖f5! d4 29 ♖d3+ ♖b5 30 ♖a3+ ♖a5 31 ♗xa7+! would have been even more clinical. **28...♗xd7 29 ♗xd7 ♗xb6 30 ♖f1 h5 31 ♖f7 ♗h6 32 ♖e2 ♗g6 33 g3 h4 34 ♖e3 hxg3 35 hxg3 ♗h6 36 g4 a5 37 ♖f4 ♗h2 38 ♖g3 ♗h6 39 f4 ♖c5 40 g5 fxg5 41 fxg5 ♗h1 42 ♖f2! ♗d4 43 ♖f4 ♗g1 44 ♗d2+ ♖c4 45 ♖f5 ♖f1+ 46 ♖e6 ♗e1+ 47 ♖f6 ♖f1+ 48 ♖g7 a4 49 g6 ♗b1 50 b3+ ♖c3 51 ♗g2 a3 52 ♖f8 ♖f1+ 53 ♖e7 ♗e1+ 54 ♗d8 1-0**



Gawain Jones is something of a blitz specialist and sensibly decided that attack, not defence, was the best policy against Shirov.

Gawain later admitted, "I only found out about the event three days or so before it started. I decided to play in the qualifier, but wasn't expecting anything to come from it. I certainly didn't make it easy for myself; two matches went down to Armageddon, but luck went my way."

Reflecting on the year as a whole, he added: "Organisers have done a fantastic job considering the circumstances and I think I've actually played more competitive chess in 2020 than any other year, but of course online just isn't the same. Like everyone, I hope to be back playing opponents across the board again very soon, as well as finishing off a course for Chessable!"

Also a new champion is Michael Adams, the top seed having triumphed in the British Online Championship, which took place on Chess.com over Christmas and the New Year. The seven-time British Champion had to adjust to the 60+15 time control and was forced to work hard to overcome Will Claridge-Hansen with rook, bishop and three against rook, knight and three in round 2. After that Mickey appeared at his imperious best, racing to 5/5 while outplaying both Ameet Ghasi and Matthew Turner.

**A.Ghasi-M.Adams**  
British Online Championship 2020  
*King's Indian Attack*

**1 d3 f6 2 g3 c5 3 g2 c6 4 0-0 e5 5 d3 d5 6 g5**

A rather unusual choice at this juncture and now, just as in the reversed position, Black responds by making a fairly favourable positional exchange, to stabilise his centre and weaken any white kingside attack (there won't be any typical type King's Indian xh6 sacrifices).

**6...e7 7 f2 d2 8 g8! 8 e7 gxe7 9 d3**

Black is pretty comfortable in any case, but 9 e4 d4 10 a4 followed by f2-f4 might have been a better try.

**9...0-0 10 a4?!**

Without the dark-squared bishops, it's hard to believe that Black will get mated after 10 e4 d4 11 e2 e6 12 f4 f6 13 f5 f7 14 g4 d8 15 g3, but this would at least have give White some much-needed play.

**10...b6 11 c4 d4 12 a3 b8 13 f3 d6 14 d2 a5!**



Observe how Adams isn't in a rush to play ...f5, but is content to gradually improve his pieces while denying White any play of his own.

**15 e3 g6 16 fe1 h6 17 c2 e6**

Continuing the unhurried policy, but a good case might also be made for 17...f5 followed by ...f4.

**18 exd4 exd4 19 d2 ge5 20 b3 d7 21 b2 fe8 22 e2 g4**

Forcing a weakness or the rook to retreat.

**23 f3 f5 24 ae1**  
Finally all Ghasi's pieces are in play and we must give some credit to the way he has manoeuvred, but White is still somewhat worse and here the engines even tout 24...g5!?

**24...f8 25 e4 e7 26 f2 be8 27 h3?**

This badly fails to erect a solid barricade, whereas 27 d2 would have restricted Black to a very pleasant edge.

**27...g5!**

Creating a retreat square for the knight and preparing to go after the newly-created weakness on g3.

**28 a4 c7 29 d2?**



**29...g6**

Consistent, but 29...xf3+! 30 e3 f3 g3+ 31 g2 e5 would have been even stronger. In view of 32 h1? f3 and 32 f1? f3 33 f3 f3 g3! 34 e7 xh3+ 35 g1 g2#, White likely has to try 32 e5 e5 33 e5 e5, but even here Black's initiative is too strong, as shown by 34 xb6 e3 35 d5 xh3! 36 xh3 e1+

and 34 b2 e3 35 f1 h2 36 bd1 g3 37 e4 xg2! 38 xg2 xh3.

**30 xe7 xe7 31 xe7 cxe7 32 f4!?**  
Desperately trying to activate as 32 h2 d7 33 e4 f5 34 b2 c6 35 f2 fails to defend due to simply 35...h5.

**32...gxf4 33 e4 d7 34 f6 xa4 35 bxa4 d6 36 h5 f5! 37 gxf4?**

Now White is destroyed down the g-file, but 37 e4 g7 38 xf4 xf4 39 xf4 xf4 40 gxf4 h5 41 f5 e7 would but have been a graphic illustration of the wrong-coloured bishop and a completely hopeless endgame for White.

**37...dgh4 38 e2 g6 39 g4 xg2 0-1**

Mickey was then unable to get anywhere against Bogdan Lalic and Daniel Fernandez, and must have been disappointed at being unable to convert an extra pawn in a rook ending against Matthew Wadsworth in the penultimate round. Even for one as calm as Mickey, frustration levels must have been high when he was then unable to grind down teenager Tanmay Chopra, despite pressing for some 122 moves in the final round.

Thanks to a final round victory as Black over Fernandez, Ghasi was thereby able to catch up Adams on '+5' and force a playoff. An early blunder left Ghasi in front in the first 10+5 game, but he was quickly somewhat down on time and eventually outplayed from a position where he was the exchange ahead. Adams made no mistake in the return, even forcing a draw in a winning position to end a long enough evening and take the first ever British Online Championship.

**Leading Scores in the British Online Ch.:**

1-2 Michael Adams (Taunton), Ameet Ghasi (Richmond)	7/9
3 Matthew Wadsworth (Maidenhead)	6½
4 Matthew Turner (Street)	6
5-12 Daniel Fernandez (Stockport), Mark Hebden (Leicester), Bogdan Lalic (Wood Green), Harry Grieve (Guildford), Tanmay Chopra (Harrow), Tristan Cox (Sutton Coldfield), Peter Finn (Cambridge), Mohammed Ismail (Newham)	5½



*Michael Adams is relatively inexperienced at playing online for an elite grandmaster, but still proved far too strong when it counted in the British Online Chess Championship, which was, like Hastings this year, most generously supported by John Ashworth's company, Caplin Systems.*

# Find the Winning Moves

24 puzzles to test your tactical ability, with, as ever, the positions grouped in rough order of difficulty. The games mainly come from various recent tournaments, not least the British Online Chess Championship. Don't forget that whilst sometimes the key move will force mate or the win of material, other times it will just win a pawn.

**Solutions on pages 54.**



## Warm-up Puzzles



**(1) P.Roberson-J.Redmond**  
4NCL Online League 2020  
*White to Play*



**(2) C.Aravindh-D.Fridman**  
RBI Open (Internet, blitz) 2020  
*White to Play and Draw*



**(3) N.Navalgund-M.Erdogdu**  
Titled Tuesday (Internet, blitz) 2020  
*White to Play*



**(4) J.Shearsby-O.Stubbs**  
British Online Championship 2020  
*Black to Play*



**(5) A.Balaji-C.Finn**  
British Online Championship 2020  
*White to Play*



**(6) W.So-M.Vachier-Lagrave**  
Airthings Masters (Internet, rapid) 2020  
*Black to Play*

Intermediate Puzzles for the Club Player - Solutions on page 54



**(7) T.Cox-T.O’Gorman**  
British Online Championship 2020  
*White to Play*



**(8) M.Turner-D.Fernandez**  
British Online Championship 2020  
*White to Play*



**(9) V.Sivuk-V.Bernadskiy**  
Ukrainian Championship, Kremenchug 2020  
*Black to Play*



**(10) D.Shafi-T.Arora**  
British Online Championship 2020  
*Black to Play*



**(11) R.Mamedov-M.Bluebaum**  
Chessable Qualifier (Internet, rapid) 2020  
*White to Play*



**(12) M.Mchedlishvili-D.Jojua**  
Gaprindashvili Cup (Internet, rapid) 2020  
*White to Play*



**(13) I.Novikov-A.Shabalov**  
U.S. Senior Ch., (Internet, rapid) 2020  
*White to Play*



**(14) J.Subelj-M.Petkov**  
November First Saturday, Budapest 2020  
*Black to Play*



**(15) L.Aronian-I.Nepomniachtchi**  
Skillig Open (Internet, rapid) 2020  
*Black to Play*

## Harder Puzzles for the Club Player – Solutions on page 54



**(16) K.Dragun-B.Gledura**  
U.S. Collegiate (Internet, rapid) 2020  
*Black to Play*



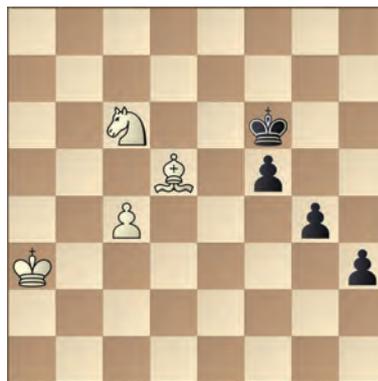
**(17) W.Claridge-Hansen-O.Stubbs**  
British Online Championship 2020  
*White to Play*



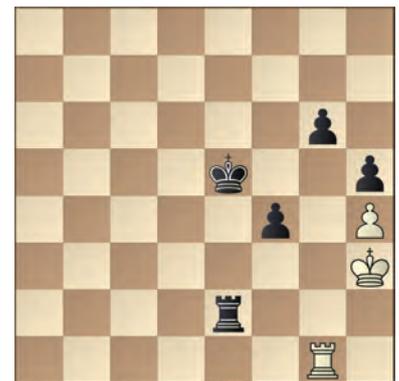
**(18) I.Nepomniachtchi-L.Aronian**  
Skilling Open (Internet, rapid) 2020  
*White to Play*



**(19) Tan Zhongyi-M.Muzychuk**  
World Chess Summit (Internet, rapid) 2020  
*White to Play*



**(20) F.Caruana-J.K.Duda**  
Chess.com Speed Championship 2020  
*Black to Play and Draw*



**(21) M.Bortnyk-J.Martinez Alcantara**  
Chess.com Bullet Open 2020  
*Black to Play*



**(22) A.Brewis-L.Dometakis**  
Internet (blitz) 2020  
*White to Play*



**(23) J.Adamia-L.Pantsulaia**  
Gaprindashvili Cup (Internet, rapid) 2020  
*Black to Play*



**(24) M.Chigaev-V.Murzin**  
Russian Team Championship, Sochi 2020  
*Black to Play and Draw*



# Solutions

to Find the Winning Moves (pages 36–38)

## 1) Poberson-Redmond

**1 ♖xd4! 1-0** 1... ♖xf3+ 2 ♜xf3 is just an extra piece.

## 2) Aravindh-Fridman

**1 ♖c5+!** (not the only drawing move, but the only way to draw immediately, as Black must acquiesce to stalemate or lose his knight) **1... ♖xc5 ½-½**

## 3) Navalgund-Erdogdu

All three king moves to the d-file win trivially, just not the game's **1 ♖f8?? ♖e8+!** 2 ♖xe8 ½-½. It's stalemate.

## 4) Shearsby-Stubbs

**1... ♖xb3+!** (1... ♖b8 followed by an exchange sacrifice also does the trick) **2 axb3 ♖c3** (threatening mate on a1 with 3... ♖a8 or 3... ♖c8) **3 ♖h3 ♖xh3** left Black a piece ahead and still with a winning attack, while here after the alternative **3... ♖a1+ 4 ♖c2 ♖c8+ 5 ♖d2 ♖b2+ 6 ♖e1 ♖c1+ 7 ♖d1** the machine points out the neat **7... ♖c5!** to force mate.

## 5) Balaji-Finn

**1 ♖xf5+!** (not the only way to win, but by far the neatest and fastest) **1... ♖xf5** (or **1... ♖h5 2 ♖g4+ ♖h4 3 g3#**) **2 g4# 1-0**

## 6) So-Vachier-Lagrave

**1... ♖xg2+!** **2 ♖xg2 ♖xg3+!** **0-1** 3 ♖xg3 ♖g6+ picks off the rook on b1 with a trivial win.

## 7) Cox-O'Gorman

**1 ♜h8! 1-0** Black is unable to prevent mate in view of **1... ♖f8 2 ♖g6** and **1... ♖xh8 2 ♖xf7**.

## 8) Turner-Fernandez

**1 e5! ♖c8** (the knight isn't trapped after **1... ♖xe5 2 ♖xe5 ♖xe5 3 ♜xc7+ ♖d7 4 ♜xa8** and **1... ♖xe5 2 ♖xe5+ ♖xe5 3 ♖e1** also decisively wins material) **2 ♜xa7 1-0** It's all over in view of **2... ♖a8 3 exd6! ♖xe2 4 dxc7**.

## 9) Sivuk-Bernadskiy

**1... ♖xe4!** **2 ♖xg4** (of course, if **2 ♖xe4? ♖f1+**) **2... ♖xe1+ 3 ♖xh2 ♖xg4 4 ♖xg7+** (or **4 ♖xg4 ♖f2+ 5 ♖h3 ♖h1+ 6 ♖g3 ♖h2#**) **4... ♖xg7 5 ♖xg4+ ♖h6 6 ♖e6+ ♖h5 0-1**

## 10) Shafi-Arora

**1... ♜xc5!** **2 ♖xc5 ♖e1+!** **3 ♖xe1** (or if **3 ♖f2 ♖xd1 4 ♖xd1 ♖xd4+**) **3... ♖xd4+ 4 ♖h1 ♖xc5** netted a whole piece.

## 11) Mamedov-Bluebaum

**1 ♖xg6!** (1 ♜xf7+ ♖xf7 2 ♖xg6 ♖xf4 3 ♖xf4 ♖d8 4 ♖f7 ♖g8 fights on) **1... ♖xd6** (or **1... fxc6 2 ♖xg6 ♖g8 3 ♜f7#**) **2 ♖h7! 1-0**

## 12) Mchedlishvili-Jojua

**1 ♜xd5!** (stronger and more forcing than picking off the a-pawn) **1... exd5** (1... ♜xd5

2 ♖xd5 exd5 3 ♖xd7 is two extra pawns) **2 ♖xd7!** **♜xd7 3 ♖xd5+ ♖h8 4 ♖xa8 ♖xb2 5 ♖c6 ♖a3 6 ♖g1** (more simple chess) **6... ♖xf3 7 ♖xf3 ♖e7 8 ♖d3 1-0**

## 13) Novikov-Shabalov

**1 ♖f4! g5** (1... ♖xd7 2 ♖xg7 ♖xg7 3 ♖xc4! exploits the pin down the d-file to pocket a piece) **2 ♖c1 ♖xd7 3 ♖xg7 ♖xg7 4 ♖xg5+ ♖f8 5 ♖h6+ ♖g8 6 ♜xd5 ♖a7+ 7 ♖g3! 1-0** 7... ♖e6 8 ♜f6+ ♖xf6 9 ♖xf6 ♖c7+ 10 ♖h3 is far too much extra material.

## 14) Subelj-Petkov

White even went on to win after **1... ♖xe1+?? 2 ♖xe1 ♜g3 3 ♖xg3 h1 ♖+ 4 ♖b2**, but **1... ♖f2!** followed by **... ♜g3** would have won, or, more clinically, **1... ♜g3!**, and if **2 ♖xg1 hxg1 ♖+ 3 ♖xg1 ♜e2+ 4 ♖c2 ♜xg1**.

## 15) Aronian-Nepomniachtchi

**1... ♖d5!** (1... ♖a1? 2 ♖b7 is less effective) **2 e6** (2 ♖f6 ♖a1 3 ♖g6+ ♖h7 leaves White in a mating net) **2... ♖xf3 3 ♖e5+ ♖f6 0-1**

## 16) Dragun-Gledura

**1... ♜g4! 0-1** White must give up the queen after **2 fxg4 ♖xg4**, as **3 ♖d2** (or **3 ♖f1 ♖f3+ 4 ♖g1 ♖g4+**) **3... ♖f3+ 4 ♖g1 ♖h3** forces mate.

## 17) Claridge-Hansen-Stubbs

**1 ♖xh5!** (1 ♖xg7 ♖xg7 2 ♖xh5! also works, and if **2... gxh5 3 ♖g5+ ♖f8 4 ♖h6+ ♖g8 5 ♖e5 ♖g4 6 ♖g5+ ♖xg5 7 ♖xg5+**) **1... f5?** (critical, but Black would have done better by giving up a pawn, such as with **1... ♖f6**) **2 ♖xg7!** (2 ♖g5! is arguably even simpler, and if **2... fxe4 3 ♖xg6 e5 4 ♖xg7 ♖xg7 5 ♖e6+ ♖f7 6 ♖h8+ ♖xh8 7 ♖xf7** when the extra queen is just far too strong) **2... fxe4 3 ♖b2 ♖f8** (there just isn't a good defence, as shown by **3... ♖g4 4 ♖g5** and **3... ♖d6 4 ♖h6 ♖f7 5 ♖g7+ ♖e8 6 ♖e5 exd3 7 exd3**, followed by **♖d4** or **7... ♖d7 8 ♖e4** when White's ongoing initiative is simply far too strong) **4 ♖h6 ♖f7 5 ♖g7+ ♖e8 6 ♖xg6+ ♖d8 7 ♖xe4** gave White three pawns for the exchange and by far the safer king. Indeed, Black's cause is already hopeless: **7... ♖c7 8 ♖e5+ ♖c8 9 ♖h7 ♖e6 10 f4 a5 11 f5 ♖xa2 12 ♖xe7 ♖b1+ 13 ♖h2 ♖xb4 14 ♖c7+ ♖d8 15 d4 a4 16 ♖f4 ♖e8 17 ♖d6 1-0**

## 18) Nepomniachtchi-Aronian

**1 ♜exg5!** (1 cxb6!? and if **1... ♖xc1 2 ♜c5!** is also fairly effective) **1... hxg5 2 ♖xf5 bxc5** (unfortunately for Black, **2... exf5?** 3 ♖xg5+ is a game-ender, and if **3... f6 4 ♖e3!** taking full advantage of the open file) **3 dxc5 a5** (3... exf5 4 ♖xg5+ would again be crushing, and if **4... ♖xg5 5 ♜xg5 ♜f6 6 ♖f3**) **4 ♖xg5+ ♖c8 5 ♖e3** left White with an overwhelming initiative and Black didn't last too much longer: **5... ♖a6 6 ♖f4 d4 7 ♖xd4 ♖xf3 8 ♖xc7 ♖xg2+ 9 ♖f1 exf5 10 ♖e8+!**

**♜b7 11 ♖xd7 ♖ag6 12 ♖b6+ 1-0**

## 19) Tan Zhongyi-Muzychuk

**1 ♖h1!** (this leaves White, not Black, with a decisive attack; instead, **1 ♖h6?? ♖xb2+!** would have been most unwise, and while the calm **1 b3!? ♖d2! 2 ♖xd2 ♖c2+ 3 ♖a1 ♖xd1+ 4 ♖b2 ♖c2+ 5 ♖a3** should be winning, this is somewhat less effective than the game) **1... ♖b5?** (now it's mate, but of course if **1... ♖xb2+ 2 ♖xb2 ♖c2+ 3 ♖a1** and even **1... ♖f8 2 ♖g6** would have been quite hopeless for Black) **2 ♜xf6+ ♖f8 3 ♖d6# 1-0**

## 20) Caruana-Duda

White was in time to halt the pawns in the game, play concluding: **1... g3? 2 ♜d4 g2 3 ♜e2 f4 4 c5 ♖e5 5 ♖f3 ♖e6 6 c6 1-0**. However, **1... f4!** **2 ♜d4 ♖e5** would have drawn: **3 ♜e2** (3 ♜c6+! ♖d6 4 ♜d4 would be a little more prudent) **3... f3 4 ♜g3 h2** and White is only just in time with **5 ♖xf3 gxf3 6 ♜h1 ♖f4 7 c5 ♖e3 8 c6 f2 9 ♜xf2 ♖xf2 10 c7 h1 ♖ 11 c8 ♖**.

## 21) Bortnyk-Martinez Alcantara

In the game Black blundered into stalemate: **1... ♖f5?** (1... ♖f6? 2 ♖xg6+! also won't do) **2 ♖g5+!** ♖f6 3 ♖f5+! ♖g7 4 ♖f7+ (the mad rook, to borrow a term from Cyrus Lakdawala's latest books on chess problems and endgame studies, continues to wreak havoc) **4... ♖g8 5 ♖f8+ ♖h7 6 ♖f7+ ♖h8 7 ♖f8+ ♖g7 8 ♖f7+ ♖h6 9 ♖h7+ ♖xh7 ½-½**. Instead, **1... f3!** **2 ♖f1** (if **2 ♖g3? ♖g2+**) **2... f2 3 ♖g2 ♖e4 4 ♖xf2 ♖xh4** would have simplified to a theoretical win, and **1... ♖e3+!** **2 ♖h2 ♖g3!** is even simpler, followed by **... ♖f5-g4** or **3 ♖xg3 fxc3+ 4 ♖xg3 ♖e4!** with a trivially won pawn ending.

## 22) Brewis-Dometakis

**1 ♖xg5+!** (only this move forces mate, but you were hardly wrong if you preferred any of **1 ♜df3** followed by **♜xg5**, **1 ♖xg5 hxg5 2 ♖xg5+ ♖g7 3 ♖h6 ♜e8 4 ♖xg7+!** **♜xg7 5 ♜df3** or just **1 ♖h4** followed by **♜xg5**) **1... hxg5 2 ♖xg5 ♜e4 3 ♜xe4 ♖g7** (or **3... dxe4 4 ♖f6 ♖g7 5 ♖g4 ♖f8 6 ♖xg7+ ♖e8 7 ♖xf7#**) **4 ♖h7+!** (finishing in style) **4... ♖f8** (4... ♖xh7 5 ♜f6+ ♖h8 6 ♜xf7# would have been a lovely finish) **5 ♖f6 dxe4 6 ♖xg7+ ♖e8 7 ♖xf7# 1-0**

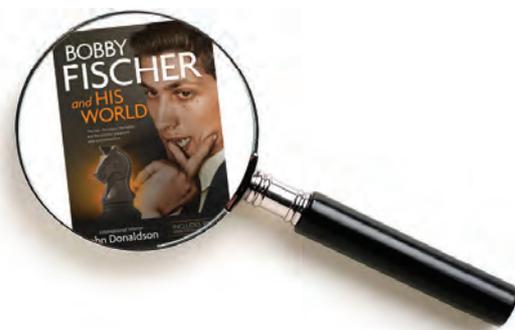
## 23) Adamia-Pantsulaia

**1... ♜xh3+!** **2 gxh3?** (relatively best would be to give up the exchange: **2 ♖xh3 ♖xh3**, exploiting the potential fork on f3, as well as a pin with **3 f4 ♖h6**) **2... ♖g5+!** **0-1** 3 ♖h1 ♜f3! wins the queen, as does **3 ♖g2 ♜f3+!**

## 24) Chigaev-Murzin

After **1... ♖f4?** **2 ♖e7 ♖xf6 3 ♖xe3** White was simply winning, but **1... ♖e5!** **2 ♖e7+** (and not **2 f7?? e2 3 f8 ♖e1 ♖#**) **2... ♖xf6 3 ♖xe3 ♖h4 4 ♖f3+ ♖g7 5 ♖f7+ ♖g8 6 ♖f5 a4** leaves White unable to make progress, and **1... ♖e6!** also draws, in view of a fun line given by Michael Roiz on ChessPublishing: **2 f7** (2 ♖e7+ ♖xf6 transposes to our previous note) **2... e2 3 f8 ♖+ ♖f5 4 ♖f7+ ♖e4 5 ♖e7+ ♖d3 6 ♖xe2 ♖xe2 7 g7 ♖d1 8 b3! ♖c1+** and Black forces perpetual check.

# This Month's New Releases



## **Bobby Fischer and His World**

John Donaldson, 648 pages  
Siles Press

RRP £25.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £23.35**

*"As his bus disappeared into the darkness, I wondered how this could be the same Bobby Fischer who had been the world's most famous person twenty years earlier, riding a city bus on his way to a small apartment that he didn't want me to see... I could barely get my mind around this sad spectacle."*

Lou Hays – quoted in *Bobby Fischer and His World*

It is to John Donaldson's credit that he covers significant fresh ground in this fascinating and strikingly original contribution. Donaldson steps through Fischer's life by reviewing a host of less well known and, in some instances, previously unknown games. He shares testimony from those who were around Fischer at every stage of his journey, as well as many terrific photographs that all chess fans will enjoy.

As Donaldson highlights, Fischer was initially no prodigy. His first rating aged 12 was 1726 – at an equivalent age Karjakin was already a GM. Yet within two years, Fischer had climbed an unprecedented 900 rating points. This is the story of the "good kid", who was "very unsophisticated about anything but chess." A man who while not entirely free of mental health issues when younger, saw them accentuated by his disastrous relationship with the Worldwide Church of God, his inability to handle fame and his descent into anti-Semitism.

Donaldson shares some great anecdotes. For example, the young Fischer was very shy around the opposite sex and once tried to start a conversation by telling a potential companion who he was. Sadly, she had never heard of him, but Fischer managed to deduce that she was Dutch. The obvious follow-up question that occurred to Bobby was to ask whether she knew Max Euwe. After a reply in the negative, Fischer was done.

I very much enjoyed Donaldson's passage on a BBC radio consultation game Fischer and Leonard Barden played as a pair against Jonathan Penrose and Peter Clarke in 1960. Barden is quoted as saying his true function "was to encourage the sometimes-taciturn Bobby to verbalise his ideas." Sadly, the BBC subsequently wiped the tape, but the gamescore remains. Donaldson's assessment of the adjudicated position (and Fischer's

views on it) make for entertaining reading.

The chapter on *My Sixty Memorable Games* is another good one. Fischer was torn as to whether to write the best chess book of all time, or whether to concentrate on protecting his ideas from Soviet eyes. After much deliberation he decided to publish because he thought the world was on the brink of a nuclear holocaust and he wanted to cash in while he could. Albeit, it would have been interesting to learn more about the role of Larry Evans in the writing of the book and how much money Fischer really made from it. One of those instances where a little more context would have been useful.

Donaldson notes that Fischer's antipathy for the Russians started with his first disastrous visit as a schoolboy in 1958. He wrote to a friend to say: "Dear Comrades. How are you? I have been in Moscow since Wednesday. I do not like Russian hospitality and the people themselves. It seems they don't like me either."

Fourteen years on, Fischer would triumph over the Soviet system by beating Spassky to take the world title, before walking away from glory and ultimately into a very dark place. In his last public appearance for twenty years, Fischer somewhat poignantly ended up watching the San Antonio event through a pair of binoculars. Donaldson traces Fischer's withdrawal and re-emergence with sensitivity and perception.

Donaldson draws some interesting conclusions about Fischer's 1992 rematch with Spassky. Not least that Fischer underestimated how long the games would last with an incremental time limit. Games of eight or nine hours were longer than anything Kasparov ever played and must have been a factor in some of the weaker efforts, such as Fischer's failed attempt to close out Game 19.

Whatever approach a writer takes is destined to have pluses and minuses, and that is inevitably the case with this book. No one has done a better job than Donaldson, when it comes to shining a light on some of the less well-known moments in Fischer's life. However, less attention is paid to key happenings and their significance. The Candidates tournament victories, the world title match and the rematch are all covered, but the treatment is more perfunctory. There is little on Fischer within the historical context of the Cold War or much discussion on the meaning of his 6-0 demolitions of Taimanov and Larsen. That said, I was fascinated to learn that Taimanov was apparently skimping on food to try and save money during the match.

*Bobby Fischer and His World* is not (nor

was it intended to be) a simple narrative retelling of Fischer's story. Did I feel that I understood Fischer better by the time I reached the final page? Perhaps not. In their different ways, genius and madness are destined to remain unknowable. However, thanks to John Donaldson I learnt a lot about the flawed genius who took chess to unparalleled heights, before his world came crashing down. For anyone who is already reasonably knowledgeable about Fischer, this is a must-have addition.

Ben Graff



## **Game of the Gods**

Paolo Maurensig, 250 pages  
World Editions \*

Best-known to chess fans for 1993's *The Lüneberg Variation*, Paolo Maurensig has returned to the world of 64 squares with a novel about a historical figure that was very much in the chess news last year.

*Game of the Gods* is "inspired by the unlikely true story of chess master Malik Mir Sultan Khan." It is an intriguing subject, of course – and chess fiction could be all set to take off in 2021, riding on the wave of enthusiasm for the genre brought about by the tremendous success of the Netflix series, *The Queen's Gambit*. However, this novel is not a case of an author jumping on the bandwagon. The original, Italian edition of this book was published in 2019.

The plot device to bring Sultan Khan into the story concerns a journalist from *The Washington Post*, to whom Khan tells his life story. As with most historical fiction, fact mixes freely with fiction: "The episodes of the life of the great Indian chess master, and of his brief career, are partly true and partly imagined."

The timing of the English translation of this book may prove to be unfortunate. When Daniel King wrote *Sultan Khan: The Indian Servant Who Became Chess Champion of the British Empire* (New in Chess, 2020), he would have had no idea how controversial it would prove to be. There could be similar discussions for this one too, especially when we encounter lines such as these two: "The story of a lowly servant who, for an instant, becomes a king" and "Brought to England as

the prince's pawn, Malik becomes a chess legend, winning the world championship and humiliating the British colonialists."

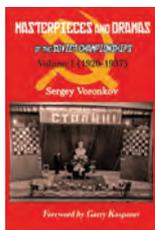
The story rattles along nicely enough; it is a light read. I shall refrain from giving spoilers, but suffice to say Sultan Khan finds himself embroiled in certain matters away from the chessboard.

Here is a sample of the prose: "My career was meteoric, like a luminous trail of a Bengal light. It lasted for three years or so. It was an intolerable humiliation for my detractors to see me win the British Chess Championship again, twice in a row, and some found it embarrassing to have me captain the British team at the Olympics, but what left everyone stunned was the victory achieved in Hastings, in the match played against José Raúl Capablanca."

There some issues here. Describing a career as "meteoric" is a well-known blunder. Meteorites don't rise; they simply fall. Yet again we have the incorrect chess terminology suggesting the words 'match' and 'game' are interchangeable in this context, when, of course, they are not.

As a light read, this book does the job. However, chess fiction – if it is going to be on the increase – needs to be more careful with terminology and I suspect the talking points of *Game of the Gods* are going to be pinned on to the controversial aspects of the prose. They may have been inadvertent, but sensitivities have changed dramatically of late and this book could change from being an easy read to an easy target.

Sean Marsh



### Masterpieces and Dramas of the Soviet Chess Championships: Volume I (1920-1937)

Sergey Voronkov, 534 pages  
Elk and Ruby

RRP £35.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £32.35**

Elk and Ruby have had books on the shortlist of the English Chess Federation Book of the Year Award for the last three years. They have started 2021 very strongly, with an impressive and weighty tome on the Soviet Chess Championships. The author, Sergey Voronkov is a Russian chess historian, journalist and author. This book is the first of three volumes and the series certainly hits the ground running.

Garry Kasparov provides the foreword (Voronkov edited the Russian editions of *My Great Predecessors*), and Voronkov himself, in the introduction, recalls a conversation with David Bronstein in which the latter asked, "Why has nobody published a collection of the best games of our championships? Annotated by the players themselves, eight world champions among them. This would be an instant bestseller!" The conversation was one of the inspirations for the series.

An older book, *The Soviet Championships*,

by Bernard Cafferty and Mark Taimanov, is still available (Everyman Chess, 2016; original version, 1998), and remains a fine read. This new series goes much deeper and the first volume covers each of the championships from the start all the way up to 1937. There are 107 games (or part-games) with excellent annotations – mostly by the players themselves – a full set of tournament tables and an impressive bibliography covering two and a half pages.

Each of the 10 championships featured in this volume receives a significant amount of coverage, complete with a history of each event, anecdotes and copious contemporary quotes and interviews with the players.

The icing on the cake is the visual material. As the blurb puts it: "This book is illustrated with around 170 rarely seen photos and cartoons from the period, mostly taken from 1920s-1930s Russian chess magazines." It is a real gold mine of archive material. One picture, from the late 1920s, shows soldiers in gas masks playing chess, with the caption: "Even when they play chess, the Red Army soldiers are always ready for attack by their capitalist neighbors."

The tournaments were strong and victory had to be eared the hard way. Alexander Alekhine was the first champion and the only player in the first 10 tournaments not to lose a single game. Even so, Bogoljubow tops the table as the player with the highest percentage, despite losing two games on his way to earning two titles.

It is great to be able to read a lot more about lesser-known players such as Romanovsky, Bogatyrychuk and Levenfish. The latter won the championships of 1935 and 1937, in Botvinnik's absence. He had spent time away from the chess board, deep in his academic work. Yet Botvinnik, not for the only time in his career by any stretch of the imagination, still found a way to re-enter the battle – by means of a match against the newly-crowned Levenfish.

"We needed to determine the strongest Soviet player!" he said, confident of his victory against an opponent already in his late 40s. The match was billed as 'first to win six games' and to be tied if they made it to 5-5.

Botvinnik was 4-2 ahead at one point, but lost three of the last four games to end up at 5-5 (with just three draws, which did not count towards the target score). It was a classic match (the cover of the book shows one of the games in action, on a stage much more impressive than the ones used for modern world championship matches), and it is very good to see it given the serious attention it deserves. Levenfish kept his title, but Botvinnik must have gained extremely important experience in the art of match play, which would stand him in very good stead for years to come.

There are so many excellent games in this book that it is difficult to choose just one highlight. However, this snippet certainly sparkles and would make an excellent position for a training exercise, with Black to play.

\* - This title is not currently available from Chess & Bridge, but we hope to be able to offer it soon. Check [chess.co.uk/shop](http://chess.co.uk/shop) for availability.

### P.Ismailov-N.Grigroriev

Odessa 1929



1...♖xa2+

Grigroriev comments: "Now, of course, the king needs to retreat to a dark square, otherwise a bishop check would cost him the queen."

2 ♖e3 ♗e2+! 0-1

White is lost from the diagram, as shown by the alternatives: 2 ♖g3 ♗g2+!, 2 ♖g1 ♗g2+! 3 ♖h1 ♗g4 4 ♖f3 e4 and 2 ♖e1 ♗e2+! 3 ♖d1 ♗g4 4 ♖b6 ♗a7! when Black will either win the queen or deliver checkmate.

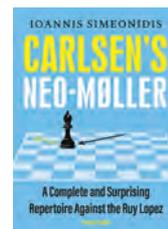
This is a fabulous work and I strongly recommend it to anyone interested in chess history and fine games. Elk and Ruby have made this book available in both softback and hardback editions [Ed. – the hardback version retails at £49.95, or £44.45 for Subscribers]. It will get a lot of use, so the hardback is my recommendation. I would be surprised if *Masterpieces and Dramas of the Soviet Chess Championships: Volume I* didn't turn out to be a serious challenger for the ECF Book of the Year award of 2021.

Sean Marsh

### Beat the French Defense with 3.Nc3

Pentala Harikrishna, 456 pages, paperback  
RRP £31.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £28.75**

The Indian no.2 has made good use of the French throughout his career, but here switches sides and explores some of his favourite lines against 1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5. Harikrishna maps out a complete repertoire with 3 ♖c3, meeting the Winawer with 4 exd5, but his main focus is 3...♖f6 4 e5 ♖fd7 when both 5 ♖ce2 and 5 f4 are examined.



### Carlsen's Neo-Møller

Ioannis Simeonidis, 160 pages, paperback  
RRP £21.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £19.75**

Greek theoretician Ioannis Simeonidis supplies a repertoire for New in Chess against the Lopez based around the world champion's

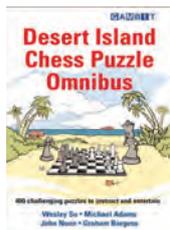
praxis with 3...a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗c5, and if 6 c3 0-0 7 d4 ♗a7. White underestimates the pressure on his centre at his peril, with Black usually able to obtain counterplay, sometimes in quite a sharp and forcing manner.

*New in Chess Yearbook 137* has also arrived at Chess & Bridge, with the cover featuring the world champion alongside the strapline 'Eccentric juggles by Magnus in the English'. All the usual surveys and excellent features can be found within this 256-page softback journal, which retails at £27.95 or just £25.15 for Subscribers.

### Chess Informant 146

Chess Informant, 352 pages, paperback  
RRP £32.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £29.69**

Subtitled 'Once Upon a Time', the latest 'Informator' examines not only that fun OTB event that was Norway Chess 2020, but also all the latest leading games and novelties. British authors also feature somewhat. Gawain Jones reflects on the 4NCL's move online, there's Danny Gormally's Chess Diary, and the excellent chess historian Douglas Griffin looks back on Walter Browne's career. As ever, if you'd also like *Chess Informant 146* in CD format too, do just add £7 to your order.



### Desert Island Chess Puzzle Omnibus

Wesley So, Michael Adams, John Nunn & Graham Burgess, 320 pages, paperback  
RRP £18.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £17.09**

Any puzzle book featuring 100 favourite positions selected by each of John Nunn and Graham Burgess would likely prove popular, but Gambit Publications have scored something of a coup by also persuading Wesley So and Michael Adams to contribute. So selects 100 positions to solve from his recent games, while Adams picks out 100 from his files, ones which have inspired him over the years.

### Grivas Opening Laboratory Volume 5

Efstrosios Grivas, 280 pages, paperback  
RRP £23.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £21.55**

The Greek GM and theoretician continues to map out his detailed repertoire for Chess Evolution, here tackling some of Black's less common defences to 1 d4 d5 2 c4 before moving on to the fairly theoretical waters of the Tarrasch, which is met with the main line and 9 ♗g5, and the Semi-Tarrasch.

### Improve Your Life by Playing a Game

Jana Krivec, 192 pages, paperback  
RRP £32.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £29.65**

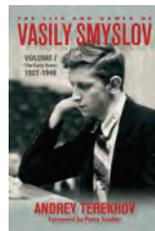
Jana Krivec is both a WGM and an academic in the field of cognitive psychology, so is ideally placed to examine the role of

psychology in chess. She argues that the two fields are closely linked, while aiming to help the tournament player deepen their understanding of the psychological aspect in chess and improve their strategic thinking. Topics include focus and concentration, never stop fighting, and coping with stress and losses.

### Opening Repertoire: The Grünfeld Defence

Nigel Davies, 288 pages, paperback  
RRP £17.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £16.19**

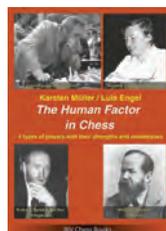
Nigel Davies returns to the repertoire book front by tackling an opening he knows quite well, the Grünfeld. Coverage is based around complete games, with Davies particularly keen to emphasize the key strategic ideas while advocating "high quality but low maintenance lines".



### The Life and Games of Vasily Smyslov: Volume 1

Andrey Terekhov, 536 pages, hardback  
RRP £32.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £29.65**

You may well recall Andrey Terekhov's excellent article on Vera Menchik in these pages and he has supplied the same level of research in this new work. In this first of several planned volumes, subtitled 'The Early Years 1921-1948', Terekhov looks at how Vasily Smyslov became a world-class player at a relatively young age, drawing on not just a plethora of Soviet sources, but also the Smyslov family's archive. 49 annotated games give a full impression of Smyslov's strength, while publisher Russell Enterprises have gone the extra yard by including a number of illuminating photos.



### The Human Factor in Chess

Karsten Müller & Luis Engel,  
244 pages, paperback

RRP £24.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £22.45**

Based on Lars Bo Hansen's classification of chessplayers as activists, pragmatists, theorist and reflectors, the GM authors aim to help readers classify themselves, as well as quickly identify what type of style an opponent has when preparing for them. Each of the four categories is explored in some detail with, for instance, Garry Kasparov one great example of an activist, whereas his great rival, Anatoly Karpov, falls into the slightly mysterious category of a reflector.

Also just arrived from Joachim Beyer Verlag is *Winning with 1.e4* by Jerzy Konikowski and Uwe Bekemann (256 pages, paperback; RRP £21.99, Subscribers – £19.79), which maps out a practical repertoire for the club player based around 80 illustrative games.

### The Modernized Anti-Sicilians Volume 1: Rossolimo Variation

Ravi Haria, 520 pages, paperback  
RRP £32.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £29.65**

The young English IM doesn't believe in playing the Anti-Sicilians to avoid theory and reach an easy position, rather he advocates playing actively and dynamically, while posing Black early questions. That said, the positions he reaches are generally chosen to be as human-friendly as possible, with Haria doing a fine job of weaving good strategic explanation in amongst some quite detailed coverage. Notably too he offers two options against each of Black's main defences to 1 e4 c5 2 ♗f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5, 3...g6 and 3...e6, tackling the former with both 4 0-0 and 4 ♗xc6 and the latter with 4 0-0 ♗ge7 followed by 5 d4! and 5 0-0.

Thinkers Publishing are certainly ambitious and don't believe in letting the grass grow under their feet. On top of the works by Haria, Harikrishna and Krivec, they have also released an expanded and updated edition of Herman Grooten's *Understanding Before Moving 1: Ruy Lopez-Italian Structures* (236 pages, paperback; RRP £24.95, Subscribers – £22.45), as well as the detailed *The Modernized Modern Benoni* by Alexey Kovalchuk (280 pages, paperback; RRP £28.95, Subscribers – £26.05), Dariusz Swiercz's thorough *The Modernized Ruy Lopez: Volume 1* (520 pages, paperback; RRP £32.95, Subscribers – £29.65), and *Your Jungle Guide to Chess Tactics* by Peter Prohaszka (500 pages, paperback; RRP £32.95, Subscribers – £29.65). The last of these is designed to help the stronger club player improve their pattern recognition, featuring all manner of position types and motifs, supported by a number of puzzles to solve.



### Vlastimil Hort: My Chess Stories

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As German readers and those who frequent ChessBase news will be aware, the legendary Czech Grandmaster has led quite a colourful life and is quite the raconteur. Here Hort presents 64 of his favourite stories, ones which will certainly entertain on these dark, winter days. We'll have a full review next month.