

# Chess

*Introducing the...*

## FANTASTIC FOUR



*Coming to London this December*



Super Shak - Shakhriyar Mamedyarov stole the show at Biel

All Change! - The GCT leaderboard was shaken up in St. Louis

A Warm Hullo - Stephen Greep on the social side of the British

# Chess

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# Contents

<b>Editorial</b> .....	4
Malcolm Pein on the latest developments in the game	
<b>60 Seconds with...Nigel Povah</b> .....	7
The Guildford IM fondly remembers playing Alexander Kotov	
<b>Super Shak</b> .....	8
It was world no.3 Mamedyarov who stole the show at Biel	
<b>How Good is Your Chess?</b> .....	14
Daniel King looks at the recent rise of Shakhriyar Mamedyarov	
<b>Chess at the Top</b> .....	17
James Plaskett reports from the World Senior Team Championship	
<b>All Hail the Speed King!</b> .....	20
Hikaru Nakamura triumphed at the St. Louis Rapid and Blitz	
<b>All Change</b> .....	24
The GCT leaderboard was shaken up by the Sinquefeld Cup	
<b>Modern Chess</b> .....	28
Milos Pavlovic presents two fine examples of it from the British	
<b>A Warm Hullo</b> .....	30
Stephen Greep reports on the social element at this year's British	
<b>Never Mind the Grandmasters...</b> .....	32
Carl certainly found it far from dull in Hull, on and off the board	
<b>The Man in the Middle</b> .....	35
Remains a most essential part of any game, as Alan Burke explains	
<b>Find the Winning Moves</b> .....	37
Some tricky positions to solve to warm you up for the new season	
<b>Myths &amp; Legends</b> .....	40
Charles Higgie revisits <i>that</i> Capablanca-Marshall encounter	
<b>Forthcoming Events</b> .....	42
Where will you be playing this October?	
<b>Fun in Gent</b> .....	44
Like many Brits, Tim Kett enjoyed visiting the Gent Festival	
<b>Overseas News</b> .....	48
Matthew Turner missed out in Bruges, but triumphed in Prague	
<b>Home News</b> .....	51
Kanwal Bhatia and Ingrid Lauterback shared the English Women's title	
<b>Solutions</b> .....	53
Detailed answers to all the <i>Find the Winning Moves</i> positions	
<b>New Books and Software</b> .....	54
Elk and Ruby are a new publisher going places	
<b>Saunders on Chess</b> .....	58
John looks forward to some big chess events in the British Isles	

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# A Warm Hullo

## Stephen Greep reports on the social element at this year's British Championships

For the first time in its history the British was coming to Hull. The challenge from Kevin Staveley, the Championships manager, was: Can you do us a social programme? Yes, we could, and we set ourselves the aims of promoting Hull (and chess in Hull and District), and to make the British in Hull one to remember, while remembering that the main event was, of course, the chess itself.

With the help of a financial contribution from the ECF and a very generous one from Hull Culture and Leisure (who provided the Championship venue), together with our own charitable funds, we were well placed. Our plan was to try and do something for everyone, with events from the first Saturday to the second Friday, and with a mixture of things for adults and juniors. The following is a brief account of some of what we did.

The programme was complete well before the British and a full version placed on the British Championship website. We ran an event every day, sometimes two. Every single event we put on ran; nothing was cancelled. Altogether 500 players and families took part in a social event (obviously some repeat attendees). Our funding meant all events (except entry to The Deep, Hull's huge aquarium, and the Championship meal) were free to participants and their families. The most popular were:

The film night – we hired a whole screen and played *Pawn Sacrifice*, with an introduction from Stewart Reuben who was in Reykjavik in 1972 (100 with a waiting list).

Open air chess night (80, although the 100 free pints of Grandmaster Ale likely helped).

The Deep (78 reduced price tickets sold and 50 took the land train from the Championships venue).

History, ghost and pub walks (100, with waiting lists).

Quiz night (45).

A casino night, championship meal, pizza making afternoon and a live chess event (see below), made up our eleven offerings. It didn't all go without a hitch – the machinery broke at the start of *Pawn Sacrifice* and the Land Train was late – but all things considered, it was not a complete disaster!

The Hull City of Culture volunteers did us proud, with every train arriving at Paragon Station – Hull's main train station – met with a friendly smile and an offer of help. Standing alongside our congress banner and a chess board

(just so they couldn't be missed), we estimate that well over 100 players and their families received a formal welcome to the City of Hull.

We also managed savings for players. The reduced-price tickets we negotiated with the Deep saved people around £300 in total, and they got the land train for free. Two local eateries who also had social events offered a 20% discount to all players and their families – these were well used as we gave out over 60 discount vouchers. HEY (Visit Hull and East Yorkshire), who had produced the Championships accommodation website for free, also produced the 'Hull Passport', a discount book of local venues, and provided a local tourist information table throughout the event.

Our 'star' event was probably the Living Chess, taking place on the Wednesday lunchtime with a giant, specially-made 64 square metre board, with players supporting sandwich boards with local designs (we did it this way because we didn't know the sizes required until late on): for instance, the rooks were the Humber Bridge; the queen, the Queen Victoria statue, the kings, the three crowns of the Hull shield. Despite a last-minute panic, where 10 pieces (sorry, players) dropped out because of the hot weather, it all went very well with a few Championship competitors able to have a go at commanding the pieces in real live games.

We estimated 400 or so members of the public watched the Living Chess (although not all at once), and about 30 members of the public (non 'normal' chess players) played games in the surrounding area, where we put out chess boards – which were fully in use for the event's three hours. Radio Humberside did an hour-long live broadcast from Queen Victoria Square – their anchor man, Burnsy, was the black queen as we started by playing out the Evergreen and Immortal games from the nineteenth century.

Chess publicity as good as this has to be priceless. Moreover, the day before the Living Chess, Radio Humberside had carried a live interview with Kevin Staveley and Chris Bird, an international arbiter who left Hull for the states 20 years ago, but who returned for the British.

We manned our own stall for 56 hours during the Championships, with at least two local players there all the time – where we gave away tickets for the events and ran a raffle and a Cake Chess Solving Competition (all proceeds went to The Chess Trust). We

gave away 80 Championship mugs and nearly 100 copies of a new book, launched at the British – a 100 page history of local chess entitled *Rank and File*, by Roger Noble (enquiries to roger\_noble@hotmail.com). So far around £900 for Yorkshire Cancer Research has been raised by Roger through donations [Ed. – *It's certainly a beautifully produced work, well illustrated, and full of some fascinating tales*].

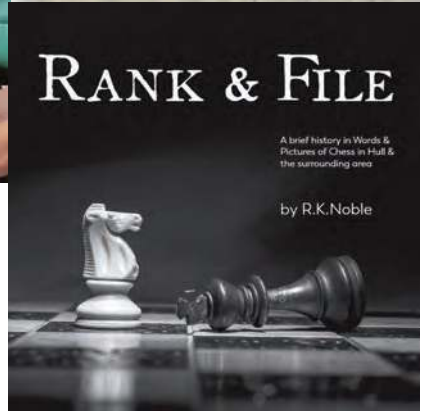
We also gave out over 600 badges – mostly to children, but not all! – and we distributed 1,100 copies of the social programme booklet and 2,000 event flyers. Alongside the programme we provided a new trophy, the City of Hull Trophy, for the Over-50's Championship. In return, an economic evaluation by Visit Hull and East Yorkshire puts the value of the British Chess Championships to Hull at £1.3m!

If we did it all again, we'd do even more for families and juniors. All tickets for the family-oriented events went very quickly. We'd also consider a small charge for events – we had enough funding to make most free, but were disappointed that a small number of people failed to turn up for events, leaving it too late to bring in people from the waiting list. The cost? £10,000 went on *Rank and File*, the Living Chess, Over-50's prize sponsorship and the City of Hull trophy (a splendid 20-inch high, silver-plated trophy). On the actual social programme, including printing, mugs, badges, banners, etc, costs were around £3,000.

The commitment? We couldn't have done all this without the commitment of local players who freely gave up their time, of the British Championships Management Team and the ECF, of Visit Hull and East Yorkshire and, in particular, the support and funding from Hull Culture and Leisure.

Local players gave up an enormous amount of time and effort – apart from the 150 hours manning the stall and another 50 hours at events, there was probably 100-plus hours in pre-Championships organising, not to mention the three hours of training and a further three hours of 'playing time' that the Living Chess pieces gave.

Was all this worth it? Judging by the number of compliments we received and the increased profile for Hull – yes. The final judgement lies with those who took part. We just hope it made the British that little bit different and one that players will remember.



**Just a small selection of photos from some of the many social events**

(L-R) **1.** Living Chess Display in front of Hull City Hall **2.** Radio Humber's anchor man Burnsby, aka the black queen **3.** History Walk **4.** Open Air Chess Evening **5.** The new City of Hull Trophy **6.** One of the many pubs visited during the two pub walks **7.** Pizza making afternoon for children at Ask Restaurant **8.** Championship Meal **9.** The cake from the Chess Problem Solving Competition **10.** The cover of Roger Noble's book which has so far raised £900 for charity. All photos: Stephen Greep & Roger Noble- **Next up in Hull, the Hull Congress, 2-4 November; see [www.hullchess.com](http://www.hullchess.com)**

# Find the Winning Moves

24 puzzles to test your tactical ability, with, as ever, the positions grouped in rough order of difficulty. The games come from various recent events, not least the British Championship in Hull, and should help to get you up and running for the new season. 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 page 53-54.



## Warm-up Puzzles



(1) J.Hirst-N.Pearce

British Under-1750 Ch., Hull 2018  
Black to Play



(2) A.Muir-D.Young

British Championship, Hull 2018  
Black to Play



(3) M.Staniforth-S.Jones

Cardiff 2018  
White to Play



(4) E.Mikalsen-B.Chatalbashev

Oslo 2018  
Black to Play



(5) J.Eric-S.Alok

Veliko Gradiste 2018  
White to Play



(6) L.Head-F.Meissner

Pardubice 2018  
White to Play

# Fun in Gent

Like many Brits, Tim Kett enjoyed visiting the Gent Festival, where he didn't drink too much and did OK at the chessboard too



Straight after the South Wales International, Tom Brown and I headed for St Pancras station and a Eurostar train to the beautiful Belgian city of Gent (often spelled 'Ghent', but locally they prefer no 'h'). As soon as you arrive you are quickly reminded that you are in Flanders rather than the Francophone southern half of the country: in this most multi-lingual of places and tournaments, we heard Flemish, Dutch, English and German all being spoken more than French, the first language I used to associate with the country.

I'd also heard about the Gent Festival – a massive musical (and beer-drinking!) extravaganza that completely takes over the centre of town and attracts about 1.5 million visitors every year. We met up with a quite a few English players who are regularly drawn here by all aspects of the entertainment on offer.

Mainly though we were here for the chess and the basic set-up was this: a 9-round Swiss with around 220 players in the main group, headed up by four GMs and another 2500 player, more of whom later. A decent sprinkling of 2400s, 2300s and 2200s were then followed a large troupe of 2000-2200s. 84 of the field had FIDE ratings over 2000 so we were going to meet plenty of them.

My first round win is probably best skipped over. With White against a 1700 I played a fairly shallow and dubious line, but my opponent succumbed at the first opportunity and lost in 13 moves. On to the first proper test in round 2.



The Gent Open was a truly multilingual event and do observe the high board numbers.

## A.Mauquoy-T.Kett Round 2



I've been reading Ilya Smirin's excellent new book *King's Indian Warfare* recently and had decided to play the KID at every opportunity in this tournament (with the pleasing result of 3/3). At this point I have decent chances, but White's well-centralised queen and rook mean it won't be easy to break through. Fortunately I recalled Smirin's chapter on releasing the power of your dark-squared bishop and the examples he gave of sacrificing a pawn to do just this. The thought suddenly occurred to me that sometimes you might have to give away two...

**22...e3! 23 fxe3 e4! 24 ♖d2**

The small downside risk when playing this was opening the f-file for White's king's rook, but Black is just in time there: 24 ♖f1 ♖ab8 25 ♖xf7 ♖xb2+ 26 ♔d1 ♖b1+ 27 ♔c2 ♖c3+! 28 ♔xb1 ♖b2#.

**24...♖b6 25 ♖b1 ♖fd8**

Black takes over control of all the main lines, and I won in a further 44 moves.

Round 3 saw another poor white opening from me: **1 e4 e5 2 ♖c3 ♖f6 3 ♔c4 ♖xe4 4 ♖h5 ♖d6 5 ♔b3** (hoping for the Frankenstein-Dracula variation 5...♖c6 6.♖b5!?, but my sensible young 2107-rated

opponent saw no reason to enter that maelstrom) **5...♔e7 6 ♖f3 ♖c6**. Now I reasoned that since Black wouldn't have any serious problems if I recaptured the pawn with 6 ♖xe5 that it made sense to continue to offer a gambit with **7 d3?** instead. Black simply continued with **7...g6 8 ♖g4 h5 9 ♖h3 ♖f5** and had a better position with a pawn up to boot (0-1, 33). Lesson learned? Probably not.

Round 4 was a tough manoeuvring battle in another KID which became more like a Benoni. At move 41 we reached the following position where the liberation of my dark-square bishop finally heralds the end (even if it's the light-squared colleague who delivers the final blow).



♠c3 11 ♖xh6 ♜e4+ Black certainly retains definite winning chances.

## 22) Ovetchkin-Ponkratov

1...♙xe5?! was played in the game, but then rather than Ovetchkin's 2 ♜f3+ ♙f3+, White might have defended with 2 ♙d1! and the game very much goes on, since 2...♙xf4!? 3 ♖xd4 ♖g5+ 4 ♙h1 ♖h4 5 ♙g2! ♖xh2+ 6 ♙f3 ♖a8 gives White at least a draw with 7 ♖xf4 ♖a3+ 8 ♙e4 ♖g2+ 9 ♙d4 ♖xf1 10 ♖c8+ ♙g7 11 ♖e5+ ♙h6 12 ♖h2+. Instead, the elegant way to win was pointed out by Glenn Flear in his ChessPublishing column: **1...♖g4+! 2 ♙h1 ♙f3! 3 ♙d7** and now the impressive concept Ponkratov must have missed, **3...e6 4 dxe6 f5!**, leaving White powerless against the threat of ...♖h3.

## 23) Pert-Britton

1 ♙xh7!! ♙f5 (1...♙xh7? 2 ♖xg6 is fairly

simple and 1...♙xh7 2 ♙g5+ ♙g8 3 ♙xf6 ♙xf6? 4 ♖xg6+ ♙g7 5 ♖h7 is similar, so here Black must prefer 3...♙f5 4 ♙xg7! ♙xg7! 5 ♖e3 ♖h8 when he is a pawn in arrears and suffering badly) **2 ♙xg7! ♙xd3** (if 2...♙xg7 3 ♖e3 again, or 2...♙xh7 3 ♖e3 ♙xg7 4 ♖h6+ ♙f6 5 ♖xh7) **3 ♙xf6** (with the massive threat of 4 ♙g5 and 5 ♖h8#) **3...♖b6 4 exd3 ♖xf6 5 ♙xf6+ ♙g7 6 ♙d5 ♖d8 7 ♙xe7 ♖xe7 8 ♖e4** and White easily converted his material advantage to conclude a lovely game.

## 24) Nepomniachtchi-Giri

**1 ♙e3!** (precision; 1 ♙f3 ♖d3+ 2 ♙g2 ♖c2+ 3 ♙h3 was preferred in the game, but Nepomniachtchi had missed 3...♖c6!, pinning the d-pawn and holding: 4 ♖f5+ ♙g8 5 d7 ♖d6 6 ♙h2 a4 7 ♖g4 ♙f7 8 ♖xa4 ♙e7 9 ♖e4+ ♙xd7 10 ♖g4+ ♙e8 11 ♖xg7 ♖d2+ 12 ♙h3 ♖d7+ 13 ♖g4 ♙d8 ½-½) **1...♖c3+ 2 ♙e4! ♖c6+** (alternatively, if 2...♖c2+

3 ♙d4 ♖d2+ 4 ♙c5 ♖c3+ 5 ♙b6 ♖b2+ 6 ♙a6, reaching safety, or 2...♖b4+ 3 ♙f3! ♖c3+ 4 ♙g4 ♖c6 and this time 5 ♖f5+ ♙g8 6 d7 wins in view of 6...♖d6 7 ♙f3!, and if 7...a4 8 ♙e4 a3 9 ♖d5+ or 7...♖d1+ 8 ♙e4 ♖c2+ 9 ♙e5 ♖c5+ 10 ♙e6 ♖b6+ 11 ♙e7 ♖b4+ 12 ♙e8 ♖e1+ 13 ♙d8 a4 14 ♖d5+ ♙h7 15 ♙c8 ♖c3+ 16 ♙b7 ♖b4+ 17 ♙a8) **3 ♖d5 ♖a4+ 4 ♙e5!** sees White's king threatening to shepherd the d-pawn home and so Black has nothing better than **4...♖d7 5 ♖xa5 ♖g4 6 ♖d5 ♖xh5+ 7 ♙d4**, but this is a relatively simple win for White: for example, **7...♖d1+ 8 ♙c5!** (now the advanced pawn will easily outweigh Black's extra one) **8...♖g1+ 9 ♙c6 ♖xg3 10 ♖f5+ ♙h8 11 d7 ♖c3+ 12 ♖c5 ♖f3+ 13 ♙c7 ♖g3+ 14 ♙b7 ♖b3+ 15 ♙c8 ♖h3 16 ♖c4! h5 17 ♖e4 h4** (or 17...♖c3+ 18 ♙d8 ♖f6+ 19 ♙e8) **18 ♖e8+ ♙h7 19 ♖h5+ ♙g8 20 ♖d5+ ♙h7 21 ♙b7.**

# This Month's New Releases



## Alexander Alekhine: Complete Games Collection, Volume 1 1905-1920

Alexander Alekhine, 340 pages  
Russian Chess House

RRP £24.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £22.45**

There is certainly no shortage of books featuring collections of Alekhine's games. The books written by the champion himself are still very much in print. Leonid Skinner, together with Peter Verhoven, presented the world with the massive, 800-plus page *Alexander Alekhine's Chess Games 1902-1946* (McFarland, 1996), and Moravian Chess started a series covering his complete games which unfortunately stopped after three volumes, taking the story only to 1927. There are also many more to add to the list.

Russian Chess House has now started a new series with a nicely-produced and attractive hardback. The main selling point is the inclusion of Alekhine's annotations, taken from a range of newspapers and chess periodicals.

The foreword offers a brief overview of Alekhine's chess life up to 1920 and then it is straight into the first of the 147 annotated games, starting with battles from a correspondence tournament played in 1905-1906. We are told that "In the editorial notes the achievements of modern computer analysis have been incorporated", but fortunately these are not as intrusive as they could have been and appear only occasionally as italicised notes.

The book does, however, have a big problem. Some sources are mentioned in the foreword, but it is not stated anywhere in the book exactly where the notes were originally

found. Moravian Chess brought out *Chess Duels 1893-1920* in 2017 featuring Alekhine's annotations up to the same year (not just to his own games, although they formed the large majority), and in that book the sources are cited at the end of each game.

A comparison between the two books reveals significant differences in the respective translations. For example, in his notes to his correspondence game against Giese (the first Alekhine game in both books; the Moravian volume has Alekhine's notes to a game Ursov-N.N. from Kiev 1893, which explains the date span of the book), Alekhine is quoted as writing, after the 10th move, "Slavishly copying Janowski in the afore-mentioned game. Good God, I was only twelve years old..." in the Moravian book (translated by Ken Neat), and "Blindly copying Janowski's play in the afore-mentioned game. What else would you expect from a 12-year old?" in the Russian Chess House version (translated by Reilly Costigan).

There are further discrepancies between the two books, such as the disagreement on which Rabinovich Alekhine is facing in certain games. Away from editorial concerns, it has to be said that Alekhine's games and comments sparkle and shine just as brightly as ever. He is opinionated, not afraid to be self-critical and clearly obsessed with chess on a scale that was seen only once more in the history of chess, in the man born three years to the month before Alekhine died – Bobby Fischer, the only other undefeated world champion of chess.

Open the book at random and a position or

note of great interest is virtually guaranteed to appear. Alekhine fires off sacrificial bombardments where others would simply overlook the possibilities even existed, and this applies to his tournament games as well as his exhibition outings and simultaneous displays. I was both amused and amazed by the following finish (to a game not present in the Moravian book).

## De Rodzynski-A.Alekhine

Paris 1913



### 11...♙xf3!

"By this unexpected combination Black secures the advantage in any event. Incorrect would be, however, 11...♙d4 because of 12 d3 ♖xd3 13 cxd4 ♙xf3 14 ♙c3!"

### 12 gxf3 ♙d4! 13 d3

"This move loses at once. The only chance

was perhaps: 13 cxd4 ♖xc1+ 14 ♔e2 ♖xh1 15 d5 ♖xh2+ 16 ♔d3 ♖g1! 17 ♖c6+ ♔d8, but Black's position in manifestly superior."

**13...♖xd3 14 cxd4 ♔e7!**

"After this move White has the choice between the loss of the queen or mate. He prefers the latter."

**15 ♖xh8 ♔h4#**

Elsewhere, there is the laconic note of "Mate in 10" to a position from a simultaneous game (against Prat in Paris, 1913), which Alekhine had the pleasure of playing over the board – starting with a queen sacrifice.

It wasn't just in middlegame attacks that Alekhine excelled, of course, even in his younger years, as the following snippet shows.

### E.Ilyin-Zhenevsky-A.Alekhine Moscow 1920



The editors have added a supplementary story from Ilyin-Zhenevsky, part of which reveals he thought had a winning endgame whether or not Alekhine would exchange the rooks.

"What did Alekhine do while I was gone? According to Grigoryev, Alekhine sat at the board for about an hour, sealed his move and left. Not long before the end of the break, he came to the club all cheerful and he was beaming. Upon bumping into Grigoryev, he handed him a notebook of variations that he had written down at home and said: 'I'm dedicating this endgame to you, a pawn endgame expert.' It turns out that having precisely calculated the only possible moves forcing a draw, Alekhine did risk going for a pawn endgame. Here is that remarkable endgame."

**36...♖xe4 37 dxe4 ♔g5 38 f3 a5!!**

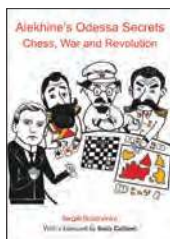
"The only move, salvaging the game."

**39 c4 b5 40 cxb5 cxb5 ½-½**

This is a lovely book and the ideal antidote for anyone feeling their chess is becoming stale. Alekhine's voice shines all the way through his notes to these entertaining games. Furthermore, the notes are mainly in prose and long variations are kept to a minimum, making this collection accessible to everyone from club players upwards.

It will be interesting to see how this series pans out, especially as Alekhine still had some years to go before he reached his peak.

Sean Marsh



### Alekhine's Odessa Secrets: Chess, War and Revolution

Sergei Tkachenko, 214 pages

Elk and Ruby

RRP £23.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £21.55**

This intriguing book describes the young Alekhine's visits to Odessa in the years 1916-1919, and their aftermath. Alekhine played a number of training games as well as simultaneous displays, both regular and blindfold, and consultation games.

The chess content of the book consists of 25 annotated games and five problems. Most of these games were previously known, but here they are presented with notes by Alekhine, other contemporaries, or Tkachenko himself. A few opponents are newly identified. Alekhine's most frequent opponent was Boris Verlinsky, who despite his deafness became one of the top-ten Soviet players (pp.37-40 describes his life).

Alekhine took these games remarkably seriously. Alekhine's commentaries – in one case two sets of notes written at different times – testify to the great energy he invested even in apparently casual encounters. Also, the blindfold games are ferociously tactical. One of Alekhine's closest contemporary rivals in blindfold expertise, Richard Reti, wrote that he did not find tactical play more difficult without sight of the board – it was only positional play that was harder (Jan Kalendovsky, *Reti: poesia del paradossso*, 2003, p.281). Perhaps Alekhine felt the same way, or perhaps he just wanted to produce an exciting show.

The majority of Tkachenko's work is historical. With great skill he steers the reader through the events of the First World War and Russian Revolution as they impinged on Alekhine's Odessa tours. Drawing on detailed archival research, he presents mini-biographies of political and organisational figures involved in setting up, publicising and reporting on Alekhine's activities. The many photos include an evocative shot of Alekhine's Odessite relatives (p.43), the family connection explaining part of his interest in the city.

Elsewhere Tkachenko casts a sceptical eye over the rather thin evidence surrounding Alekhine's claim to have suffered severe wounds while working as a Red Cross battlefield medical assistant. Tkachenko suggests that Alekhine took this role out of embarrassment at the disapproval of those who thought he had no right to engage in chess tours during wartime (p.60).

Alekhine's third, longest and most eventful trip (mid-October 1918 until July 1919) began when Odessa was briefly a cultural 'oasis' in the midst of civil war. Hetman Skoropadsky, installed as Ukrainian leader by the invading

Germans who had toppled the previous, "dysfunctional" government of "socialists... and racketeers" (p.63), allowed cultural activities including chess and chess-journalism to flourish. Alekhine played chess at Robinat's famous cafe, home to the Odessa Chess Society.

Following Skoropadsky's abrupt fall, which gave way to a period of anarchy and then Bolshevik rule, life became unexpectedly dangerous for Alekhine. He was helped first by another remarkable chessplayer and journalist, whose name I omit here because Tkachenko prefers to maintain the suspense of his narrative. Alekhine faced almost certain death when he was arrested by the Soviet 'cheka' on a trumped-up charge and imprisoned. Tkachenko reconstructs the exciting story of his rescue, in which his status as a leading chessplayer played a key role.

Private drama accompanied the political upheaval, too: Alekhine embarked on the first of his four marriages. Tkachenko presents some valuable testimony regarding Alekhine's third wife, an Odessite. Finally, he reveals new evidence about the secret negotiations for a match between Alekhine and Botvinnik, and offers a speculation about Alekhine's suspicious death in a Portuguese hotel room in 1946.

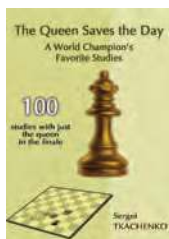
Throughout these adventures we learn more about the people Alekhine encountered than about his own opinions or thoughts, for which there is presumably little evidence. I wonder whether Tkachenko might have tried to fill out certain hints. For instance, describing the career of Boris Pelikan, who became a brutal anti-semitic, Tkachenko comments: "With the start of revolutionary activities in 1905, Pelikan became an active participant of the monarchy movement in Odessa. In fact, Alekhine held similar views" (p.49). It would be interesting to know more about this, especially given that Alekhine much later wrote anti-semitic, pro-Nazi articles (p.190). Tkachenko occasionally veers the other way, recounting distracting minutiae, such as the fact that the name of Verlinsky's violin teacher is unknown.

The amount of new research in this book is impressive, as is Tkachenko's care to distinguish fact from speculation. Ilan Rubin has done a great service by translating it into English and producing it as an affordable paperback. Readers with an appetite for history or an interest in Alekhine will find it absorbing. It is a pity that the referencing does not match the general quality of the book. Apart from the table of games, there is no index. Photo credits are missing, as is a bibliography. Citations of sources are either given within the text, often incompletely, or omitted altogether. Nevertheless, the lack of a full list will be a hindrance to subsequent researchers.

Perhaps the publisher calculated that most readers are unlikely to understand Russian. True, but it would only take a few extra pages to help the specialist and thoroughly ground the claims being made. *Alekhine's Odessa Secrets* is nevertheless a masterpiece, and an unusual one.

James Vigus





**The Queen Saves the Day**  
Sergei Tkachenko, 206 pages  
Elk and Ruby

RRP £11.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £10.75**

Subtitled 'A World Champion's Favourite Studies', this little book is from the versatile and recently prolific Sergei Tkachenko. It collects a hundred studies with a common feature: White (to win or draw) has just a king and queen in the final position. It is the sixth book in a series by the same author, following 'One Pawn...', 'One Knight', 'One Bishop', 'One Rook' and 'The King'. It is delightfully addictive.

Trainers often advise us to solve studies as a way of developing calculation skills and cultivating imagination. In principle, I willingly follow this advice, as I usually enjoy studies. But in this age of distraction, what is the best physical format? Various downloads and websites are available, but concentrating hard on the screen tends not to work for me. Books of studies (*Test your Endgame Ability* being an old favourite) usually have multiple diagrams on each page and/or require the reader to set up the positions on a board, which a solver like me is usually too tired (lazy) to do.

The new Russian publishing house Elk and Ruby has solved this problem in style. Tkachenko's work is pocket-sized – as long and only a little wider and thicker than a large smartphone – and ideal for travel. Each diagram has a full page to itself. The solution is immediately overleaf, so it is very easy to find without having to flick to the back. Each solution contains a further diagram to assist visualisation. Since the solutions are almost all six moves or less, a reasonably experienced player can go through the whole book without ever needing a board. The level is nicely judged, too: I solved some in a minute or two, took a lot longer on others, and was stumped by a few. Peeping at the first move of the solution sometimes helped. The solutions are accompanied by brief but helpful comments.

Tkachenko, a composer and long-term member of the successful Ukrainian solving team, includes a few of his own compositions along with other modern offerings. There are also plenty of classic studies by composers such as Troitsky. I wondered whether the knowledge that White will be left with just a queen at the end might provide too great a clue, but in fact found it no problem. Does this theme help us, as the blurb claims, to master what the queen can do in the endgame? Individual readers will have to decide that for themselves.

*James Vigus*

**The Woodpecker Method**

Axel Smith and Hans Tikkanen, 392 pages  
Quality Chess  
RRP £26.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £24.29**

Another puzzle book? Does this one offer anything the others don't? After close examination of the contents, I can confirm that it does; it offers a method in addition to entertainment, as explained by the authors: "The general idea of the Method is to develop intuitive/automatic pattern recognition through repetitive solving of the same exercises in a cyclical fashion."

Unusually for a chess book, there are various disclaimers on show, including this one: "The Woodpecker Method is quite gruelling and not for everyone", and: "The question is whether the time and energy could be better spent on improving another part of your game."

In the case of co-author Tikkanen, "This method gave me a tremendous increase in stability in time trouble, improved my tactical vision quite a bit, and significantly reduced my blunder rate." However, he "Will not repeat it in the foreseeable future – for now, I have done enough", which gives a good indication as to how much work is expected from the reader.

The method was named by Axel Smith, based on two influences. First, the name Tikkanen translates to 'little woodpecker' and second, the repetitive pecking away at the same exercises several times over. Indeed, Smith already used the name and method in his earlier work, *Pump Up Your Rating* (Quality Chess, 2013).

There is a summary of tactical motifs and then it is straight into the exercises. There are 1,128 in all and they are split into three categories: Easy, Intermediate and Advanced.

Another interesting aspect of the book is that the positions are all taken from games featuring world champions – and that includes the alternative title holders from the years 1993-2006. The exercises are presented chronologically, starting with a group of positions from the games of Steinitz all the way through to Carlsen.

There are no clues and the positions are not all mating attacks, by any stretch of the imagination, so the reader will be placed in almost-game like situations. Here's an easy one to start you off, featuring the two men of the moment.

**F.Caruana-M.Carlsen**  
Shamkir 2014



*White to play*

I like the idea of working through the exercises for a second time, or even more, and I am looking forward to trying to use the book as intended to see if the method will indeed improve my tactical vision and ability. The reality of the situation is that most readers will almost certainly start off with similar good intentions, solve a few of the exercises and then quickly lose the discipline to continue. However, that won't be down to any fault of the authors, who have clearly done their best to present a large amount of extremely interesting material in an attractive way.

Club players can use the material to dip into from time to time, and there's nothing wrong with that, but anyone following the Woodpecker Method as it is intended to be used would need lots of time determination and a very serious approach to chess improvement.

*Sean Marsh*

**A Complete Guide to Playing 3...c3**  
**Against the French Defence**

Byron Jacobs & Neil McDonald, 320 pages,  
RRP £17.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £16.19**

The latest compendium work from Everyman Chess should help both those who like to meet the French with 3...c3, as well as those who have to fight against it, whether they prefer the lines in Jacobs' *French Classical* from 2001 or McDonald's *French Winawer*, which first appeared back in 2000.

**Evil-Doer:**

**Half a Century with Victor Korchnoi**

Genna Sosonko, 314 pages, paperback  
RRP £27.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £25.15**

Genna Sosonko's articles and books are almost always a good read, and this new work on the legendary Viktor Korchnoi appears to be no different. Sosonko was actually Korchnoi's second during the Candidates cycle of 1970-71 and would later play a pivotal role in Korchnoi's life once he had emigrated to the west. In this work for new publishers Elk and Ruby, Sosonko tackles difficult questions about Korchnoi's personality, while looking back on some of their many conversations. The book doesn't contain any actual chess, but does contain a wealth of photos, as well as Sosonko's unique viewpoint on one of the greatest players of the 20th century. We'll have a full review next month.

**Fabiano Caruana: His Amazing Story**  
**and His Most Instructive Games**

Alexander Kalinin, 208 pages, paperback  
RRP £18.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £17.05**

Ahead of the world championship match Russian Grandmaster Kalinin has chronicled Fabiano's Caruana's career, while presenting a number of his best games. These are well-annotated and grouped by theme, with the emphasis on clear and instructive notes. We'll have a full review next month.

**Learn to Play the Queen's Gambit**

Anatoly Karpov & Nikolay Kalinichenko,  
448 pages, hardback  
RRP £29.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £26.95**

Even if one has to suspect that Russian

Correspondence GM Kalinichenko wrote most of this work, there's no doubt that Karpov's games and experience with the opening are very much to the fore. This new work from the Russian Chess House contains 85 illustrative games and presents detailed coverage of the main lines of the QGD, as well as the likes of the Tarrasch, Semi-Tarrasch and Ragozin, but not the Slav and QGA.

### Neumann, Hirschfeld and Suhle

Hans Renette and Fabrizio Zavatarelli,  
376 pages, hardback  
RRP £59.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £53.99**

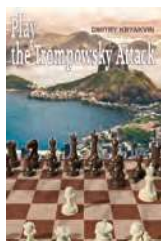
Subtitled '19th Century Berlin Chess Biographies with 711 Games', the Belgian and Italian author team present the fascinating story of chess life in Berlin in the 1860s, focussing especially on the lives and games of Berthold Suhle, Philipp Hirschfeld and Gustav Neuman, the last of whom would go on to become one of the world's strongest players. In typical McFarland fashion, the book is well written, well presented and contains a great number of rare photographs.

### One Pawn Saves the Day

Sergei Tkachenko, 204 pages, paperback  
RRP £11.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £10.75**

A fun collection of 100 studies where White has "just one pawn in the finale" and yet manages to win or draw. This is the sister work of *The Queen Saves the Day*, as reviewed above, and is an equally slim, pocket-size work. As the publisher's blurb says, readers, aided by the fact that most of the solutions are no longer than six moves, will "Learn great traps, turn losses into draws and draws into wins".

Also just out in the same series from Elk and Ruby are Sergei Tkachenko's *One Knight Saves the Day*, *One Bishop Saves the Day*, *One Rook Saves the Day* and *The King Saves the Day*. Each of these is available from Chess & Bridge for £11.95 or £10.75 for Subscribers, as are two other works in the same series, *Mikhail Zinar's Difficult Pawn Endings* and *Nikolai Rezvov, from Child Burglar to Grandmaster*.



### Play the Trompowsky Attack

Dmitry Kryakvin, 264 pages, paperback  
RRP £19.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £17.99**

We tend to associate Chess Stars repertoire works with quite theoretical openings, but they can also cover openings which might only work as occasional weapons at the top level, but which can really bring in the points at club level. Here Kryakvin, a Russian GM, maps out a detailed repertoire for White with the Trompowsky. The largest part of the book is devoted to 2...d4, while along the way the key strategic ideas and a number of new

ideas for White are presented.

### Team Tal: An Inside Story

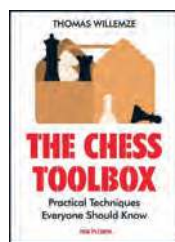
Valentine Kirillov, 158 pages, paperback  
RRP £12.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £11.65**

Valentine Kirillov was a Latvian master, coach and journalist who passed away last year. Just prior to that he completed this memoir of Tal, which first appeared in Russian and is now available in English. It is likely to prove popular with Tal's many fans, as Kirillov maps out Tal's life, especially in connection to those around him, not least his mentor Alexander Koblencs, while the man whom many consider to be a modern day Magician from Riga, Alexei Shirov, provides a foreword.

### The Baffling 2.b3 Sicilian

Lawrence Trent, PC-DVD,  
running time: 5 hours, 49 minutes  
RRP £26.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £24.25**

Not so long ago Kramnik deployed 1 e4 c5 2 b3!? as a surprise weapon and it's considered "A most overlooked and underrated system" by the English IM and popular commentator. Trent accepts that White can't prove an advantage with 2 b3, but in some detail explains the most important variations, lines which may well baffle even an experienced Sicilian practitioner, such as when White counters the trendy 2...g6 with 3 ♖b2 ♜f6 4 h4!?



### The Chess Toolbox

Thomas Willemze, 400 pages, paperback  
RRP £22.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £20.65**

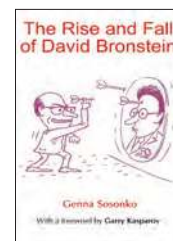
Experienced Dutch trainer and IM Thomas Willemze is fully aware that if there was the equivalent of a hardware store for chess, few club players would know what tools they should be looking to buy. Willemze aims to fill up that chess toolbox in this work which is sensibly subtitled 'Practical Techniques Everyone Should Know'. Such topics as the importance of controlling an open file and how to eliminate an important defender are discussed as Willemze presents a number of key improvement techniques in a user-friendly format.

### The Reliable Petroff

Daniel Fernandez, PC-DVD,  
running time: 5 hours, 29 minutes  
RRP £26.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £24.25**

The young English Grandmaster follows up his recent work on the Caro-Kann by visiting the ChessBase studio to record a DVD on another of his favourite openings, the Petroff. As both Daniel and Fabiano Caruana have realised, while the Petroff has always been a rock-solid choice, it does not have to be a draw. Fernandez explains in some detail the most important structures that Black needs to understand, while mapping out a repertoire

and demonstrating how Black can play for a win against a lower-graded opponent.



### The Rise and Fall of David Bronstein

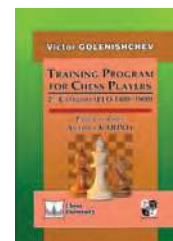
Genna Sosonko, 272 pages, paperback  
RRP £24.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £22.45**

Sosonko has been pretty busy of late, although this semi-biographical work first appeared in Russian in 2014, with only now an English version appearing courtesy of Elk and Ruby. The work is rather summed up by the cover which portrays Bronstein throwing darts at a dartboard depicting the face of Mikhail Botvinnik. That near-miss was to haunt Bronstein's whole life, as Sosonko is acutely aware. Bronstein and Furstenberg's *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* remains an first-class collection of Bronstein's best chess, so in *The Rise and Fall of David Bronstein* Sosonko sticks to presenting the full character of David Bronstein, revealing plenty of his strong opinions while not being afraid to tackle some tricky questions.

### The Vienna Variation: A reliable and ambitious weapon against 1.d4

Yannick Pelletier, PC-DVD,  
running time: 4 hours, 22 minutes  
RRP £26.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £24.25**

Fairly hot on the heels of Panczyk and Ilczuk's *Queen's Gambit Declined: Vienna for Everyman* comes this ChessBase DVD on 1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♜f3 ♜f6 4 ♜c3 dxc4 5 e4 ♖b4 6 ♗g5 c5. Pelletier doesn't neglect to present a number of instructive games and positions, but his emphasis is unsurprisingly on mapping out a repertoire for Black with this reliable and theoretical, if also quite unbalanced opening.



### Training Program For Chess Players: 2<sup>nd</sup> Category (ELO 1400-1800)

Victor Golenishchev, 320 pages, hardback  
RRP £24.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £22.45**

Appearing in English for the first time, courtesy of the Russian Chess House, is this classic training programme put together by leading Soviet trainer Victor Golenishchev. He also created programmes to help players reach Candidate Master level, but here the emphasis is very much on those rated roughly 1400-1800, i.e. the average club player. The work should still serve as a handy textbook for the keen and hard-working player, as well as provide some useful insights for those who coach.