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Chess

THE KING OF LOCKDOWN

Magnus Carlsen was a fitting winner of the third leg of the Magnus Carlsen Tour, the Chessable Masters

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- Anti-Cheating Online - Alex Holowczak lifts the lid on Ken Regan's methods and z scores
- A Hard Day's Knight - John Henderson reveals the link between the Beatles and U.S. Open
- Be a chess author! - David Lemoir has some handy advice for the budding chess writer

Chess

Founding Editor: B.H. Wood, OBE. M.Sc †
Executive Editor: Malcolm Pein
Editors: Richard Palliser, Matt Read
Associate Editor: John Saunders
Subscriptions Manager: Paul Harrington

Twitter: @CHESS_Magazine
Twitter: @TelegraphChess - Malcolm Pein
Website: www.chess.co.uk

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Anti-Cheating in Online Chess

Alex Holowczak lifts the lid on how the ECF and especially the 4NCL have been trying to prevent online cheating, while shining light on the mysteries of z scores

Since competitive over-the-board chess in England ceased near the end of March 2020, the ECF and 4NCL have done very well in setting up all sorts of online competitions: an online 4NCL and junior equivalent, an English Online Blitz Championship, a County Championship and a Club Championship; and an English Online Youth Championship. There are regular weekly internal events for England Juniors and England Women, and now the UK Chess Challenge is running online.

English chess in general is far more devolved in terms of its administration than a number of other federations around the world, and in these times that has meant that a number of people have got on with a number of projects without needing to lean on the ECF to make any of them happen. We can be very proud of what we've achieved.

Nevertheless, as thousands of English over-the-board players have suddenly landed on various online platforms and got acquainted with something in which they had minimal interest even four months ago, organisers have had to learn entirely new skills that they hadn't previously needed to quite the same extent. At a trivial level, this has meant adapting competitions to have formats that can cater with the 'off-the-shelf' solutions provided by the websites rather than a blank sheet of paper. The most complex of all the issues is, of course, the issue of fair play.

It is important at this stage to make it clear that I do not work for any of the platforms. I have been working on a number of the aforementioned events predominantly played in by English players, and so much of what I am writing is based purely on my experience with those. I have no vested interest in saying certain platforms are good and certain players are not; the purpose of this is to set out what I have learnt for the benefit of those who might come later.

The 4NCL has a two-way process towards handling these matters, which we believe has served us well:

a) Lichess has its own anti-cheating systems. They don't disclose how they work on the basis that if they did, people who are determined to cheat would use that information to get around it. In general, they have two levels of protection: so obvious that their computer detection calls it automatically, and a level requiring the intervention of a moderator for cases that either the computer detection thinks is questionable, or one or more other website users have reported to them as questionable. This general approach appears to be how all websites handle this. It is important to stress that the overwhelming majority of users on a chess platform are unknown to them, so their systems are detecting computer assistance rather than an improvement relative to users' play.

b) We use Professor Ken Regan's model, which has existed in various forms since the bitter Topalov-Kramnik world championship match. and has been used in FIDE and national cases since 2011. To some extent this is much more simplistic than what the websites have, because all that is available are the PGNs of the game, i.e. the moves that were made.

Professor Regan will therefore always get far less clear results than a website will due to having fewer inputs, but they are useful in three ways:

i. They have a rapid first step that filters down the people who need to be reported to the platform (the 'two-way process' I referred to earlier).

ii. The second stage does predictive analytics and factors in the standard rating of the player, which the platform can't in the majority of cases because the player is unknown to them – the 4NCL knows who all of the players and their over-the-board ratings.

iii. The results from Ken's data can be released to the player if they have been deemed to have used computer assistance, because doing so would not compromise his model.

Both of these systems have one fundamental question at the heart of them: how can you use any data to tell whether or not someone is using computer assistance?

Spotting Computer Use

Step one of Professor Regan's system looks for two characteristics about a given move:

a) Move Match Percentage (MMP). Does the player play the engine's first choice?

b) Average Scaled Difference (ASD). This is the average error per move judged by computer, but scaled using a method published in academic papers with Guy Haworth in 2011, so that differences in uneven positions count less. We don't know, but we think that this is very similar to the 'average centipawn loss' that Lichess provides if you get the computer to analyse your game afterwards.

Step two uses deep analysis of all reasonable moves and treats the opening book in detail, whereas step one is just a screening designed to give advice to cases where more detailed information is needed. There are two levels of depth in stage one, a lead of four pawns or a lead of four pawns – the latter is really only used for rapid and blitz.

Step one will provide a ranking list of who has the biggest match on these two characteristics, but it is insufficient to say that the people at the top of these lists are using assistance. By gathering PGN files over more than a decade, Professor Regan has been able to calibrate the expectations in these characteristics for players of a different rating.

Using this, Professor Regan can come up with a index, called a Raw Outlier Index (ROI). 50 means you have met expectations, but anywhere between 40-60 is normal. 60-70 is still normal, but you should take a complaint seriously. 70+ is a suggestion to contact the FIDE Fair Play Commission for further advice. In my years of over-the-board tournaments, I've only ever seen a ROI of 70 once, and that player was caught using assistance from an engine at Telford in 2018.

Sorted by this index, this is how the top 20 leaderboard with the 4NCL's data over-the-board looks after six rounds of the 2019/20 season (we've taken out the names of the players).

Good IT skills have become even more vital for arbiters of late - and they have also benefited greatly from Prof. Regan's anti-cheating system.

Rank	Matc%	AvScD	ROI	#Mvs	Sc/#Gm
1	60.1%	0.117	62.6	163	3.5/ 4
2	64.5%	0.084	62.5	138	2.0/ 3
3	65.7%	0.040	61.2	105	3.0/ 4
4	64.0%	0.055	61.2	100	3.0/ 4
5	63.0%	0.051	60.9	165	3.0/ 4
6	61.9%	0.062	60.8	139	2.0/ 3
7	59.0%	0.086	60.8	134	3.0/ 4
8	55.3%	0.092	60.7	141	0.5/ 4
9	61.5%	0.124	60.6	179	3.0/ 5
10	63.6%	0.075	60.6	162	4.5/ 6
11	67.9%	0.042	60.6	109	3.0/ 4
12	51.9%	0.088	60.5	181	3.5/ 6
13	63.6%	0.058	60.2	165	4.5/ 6
14	58.0%	0.087	60.2	88	2.0/ 4
15	59.9%	0.077	60.2	187	3.5/ 6
16	55.8%	0.134	60.1	104	1.5/ 4
17	55.1%	0.098	60.0	127	3.0/ 4
18	58.7%	0.092	60.0	223	3.5/ 6
19	57.0%	0.094	59.9	165	3.5/ 4
20	63.0%	0.076	59.6	108	2.5/ 4

Professor Regan uses two engines, and some of these players are duplicates – the same player with both engines. There are 18 readings of 60 or higher, so should we be worried? No. The first comment is that it is clear that some players with an objectively poor scores are scoring highly; the system is score-independent. The most important comment is that there are 1,097 names in this list. For a tournament of this size, we would naturally expect the screening to show a few players over 60. We would also expect to see that at the other end, there are players below 40; there are 26 such readings. We would expect to see the median ROI of 50; the median is actually 49.8, which means it is reasonable.

Here's the data from another tournament I was involved in:

Rank	Matc%	AvScD	ROI	#Mvs	Sc/#Gm
1	61.6%	0.101	67.0	250	5.0/ 7
2	58.9%	0.055	64.2	302	5.5/ 7
3	58.4%	0.082	64.0	250	5.0/ 7
4	71.9%	0.034	63.3	121	3.0/ 4
5	59.4%	0.136	62.2	106	2.5/ 3
6	47.7%	0.114	62.1	111	4.5/ 5
7	71.4%	0.031	62.0	119	2.0/ 3
8	68.5%	0.023	61.8	111	2.5/ 3
9	53.8%	0.075	61.4	78	2.5/ 3
10	54.0%	0.095	61.1	211	4.0/ 7
11	54.9%	0.130	61.1	266	3.5/ 9
12	52.9%	0.096	60.9	121	2.0/ 3
13	56.9%	0.090	60.9	216	5.0/ 7
14	52.4%	0.094	60.8	412	5.5/ 9
15	63.2%	0.049	60.7	190	6.5/ 9
16	54.8%	0.066	60.7	126	2.0/ 3
17	51.8%	0.114	60.6	394	5.5/ 9
18	50.4%	0.132	60.6	232	3.0/ 7
19	63.5%	0.049	60.4	203	6.0/ 8
20	56.1%	0.100	60.4	132	3.5/ 5
21	55.9%	0.069	60.4	202	4.0/ 5
22	52.3%	0.088	60.3	88	2.5/ 3
23	52.6%	0.095	60.3	291	4.5/ 7
24	62.0%	0.143	60.1	92	2.0/ 4
25	51.9%	0.119	60.1	131	1.5/ 3

Again, this is nothing to cause alarm. There were 1,364 readings in this one, and the median was 49.6, which is close enough to 50 to not worry about. There's a 67.0 at the top though – what is the explanation for that? This was a rapidplay tournament, and the problem was that the input was the player's FIDE Rapidplay rating. By making that adjustment, the ROI would drop accordingly and remove the cause for alarm.

Supplying a PGN file of any tournament tends to get results like this. I am sure that the Editor would not approve of me supplying another 20 examples. You get the occasional glimpse of something like a ROI of 67, but having identified the reason for it, you can move on.

So if we have this data for 4NCL Online, this is more or less what we would expect to see, with perhaps one case above ROI > 65 due to the size of the tournament. But what do we actually see?

Rank	Matc%	AvScD	ROI	#Mvs	Sc/#Gm
1	69.3%	0.030	74.0	189	7.5/ 8
2	76.5%	0.038	73.4	183	8.5/ 9
3	69.7%	0.049	73.3	175	7.5/ 8
4	70.6%	0.051	73.0	235	7.5/10
5	68.2%	0.064	71.6	220	7.5/10
6	70.1%	0.071	71.5	234	8.5/11
7	63.7%	0.069	71.5	267	8.5/10
8	62.7%	0.043	71.0	346	8.0/10
9	79.8%	0.033	70.4	119	2.5/ 3
10	73.1%	0.049	70.3	130	7.0/ 7
11	68.1%	0.053	70.3	251	8.5/11
12	78.0%	0.017	70.2	123	2.5/ 3
13	62.8%	0.041	69.7	188	6.5/ 7
14	73.5%	0.037	69.7	98	6.0/ 6
15	61.6%	0.057	69.6	185	7.5/10
16	65.4%	0.036	69.3	191	6.5/ 7
17	58.1%	0.050	69.2	265	7.5/ 9
18	60.1%	0.051	69.2	298	8.5/10
19	59.7%	0.052	69.1	320	8.0/10
20	71.7%	0.061	69.1	166	8.5/ 9

I've spoken to a number of cynics on the phone over the past three months, who don't believe that data can show the use of engine assistance. I would like to think that even the most hardened cynic might look at this and raise an eyebrow.

The median is 49.3, so the calibration is still OK. The MMP and ASD scores are noticeably different from over-the-board. But why do we suddenly have a string of

people with a ROI over 70? Is there something about online chess?

The ECF ran a charity blitz tournament which lasted 24 hours, with several players playing more than 100 games. For a data-gathering exercise, it was a great format. Maybe if there is something special about online chess, we would expect to see something similar in the blitz event to what we see in the 4NCL Online.

Rank	Matc%	AvScD	ROI	#Mvs	Sc/#Gm
1	64.4%	0.040	84.8	205	24.0/29
2	44.0%	0.201	67.0	822	33.0/58
3	47.5%	0.151	63.6	255	10.5/16
4	47.5%	0.170	62.8	693	21.5/38
5	49.3%	0.159	62.8	795	32.0/42
6	48.3%	0.171	62.5	1272	37.0/57
7	48.1%	0.158	60.7	1400	70.0/84
8	42.5%	0.238	60.1	186	7.0/23
9	43.9%	0.166	60.0	1986	67.5/97
10	39.4%	0.203	58.4	738	25.5/51
11	45.8%	0.206	58.3	1212	36.0/71
12	90.0%	0.107	58.2	10	2.0/ 2
13	60.0%	0.076	58.1	15	1.0/ 1
14	47.9%	0.184	57.8	691	25.5/40
15	50.1%	0.140	57.5	387	14.5/19
16	42.4%	0.218	57.4	1866	50.0/92
17	39.8%	0.272	56.9	465	16.0/33
18	48.6%	0.130	56.6	541	23.0/26
19	58.8%	0.245	56.5	34	0.0/ 2
20	44.2%	0.175	56.5	852	18.5/32

What we see is far closer to what we see in over-the-board chess; there are fewer ROI > 60 cases because there are only a few hundred players involved. It's much harder to use engine assistance in blitz than classical chess due to the short time limit. Professor Regan's model is calibrated for blitz here, so the corresponding reduction in MMP and ASD has been accounted for.

The other thing to factor in is the fact that out of necessity, this event used the Chess.com ratings as an input, some of which were new accounts set up for the event, and several of these ROI > 60 can be explained by that. This seems to suggest that there is nothing special about online chess; you don't appear to suddenly play better, and it doesn't explain the numerous ROI > 70 we can see in 4NCL Online. The median of this data was 49.3, which is still fine.

A common thing I have heard over the past few months is that websites have rushed into flawed judgements with regard to issuing bans. My experience is the opposite. The PGN file for this blitz event was sent off at 5pm on Sunday and the results came back later that Sunday evening. The player with a ROI of 84.8 still had their account open by the time I read the results email, and in fact they had used it to play other games on the website after the blitz tournament had finished.

Armed with this data, I manually reported the player, and within a few minutes the account was closed due to a fair play violation. In this specific case, I fully expect that the website would have done that itself once its checking system had caught up, but that intermediate step enabling the reporting to take place sped the process up. The burden of proof required by a website to automatically flag someone is high, and any anti-cheating regulations for an online tournament that rely solely on the provider without having Professor Regan's data to refine the search are going to have a lot of users who have used engine assistance slipping through undetected. I also reported the 67.0, which looks potentially suspicious, but the website took no action.

Z Scores

So far, I have only described step one of the process. Step two of the process is Professor Regan's full test. This calculates a sigma (z) score based on deviations from the expectation in the two characteristics described above. It also analyses the positions to greater depth, and only starts to check the positions when the opening book has been exhausted, rather than an arbitrary starting point of move 9. This is done on a case-by-case basis for up to four engines.

However, with the 4NCL Online this was happening much more often and it became impractical to do that. As a result, Professor Regan now supplies a spreadsheet with the z scores of all players in the competition, albeit using turn 14 as the start turn in order to avoid manually determining the end of the opening book for each game. After round 6 of the 4NCL Online, I received this spreadsheet for the first time, and plotted a graph of these scores against the scores for the 4NCL over-the-board. This was good timing, given the 4NCL 2019-20 season was paused after six rounds. The graph below shows the results, with any player who has played fewer than 30 moves in total omitted.

I've added three red lines, at z=-3, z=0 and z=3. I've then divided the graph into zones 1-4. You can see the data is largely concentrated in zones 2 and 3, between -3 < z < 3. Both competitions have approximately 1000 players, so this is exactly what I would expect to see; you would expect a bit of 'dribble' into zones 1 and 4. Zone 1 has a bit of dribble for both formats; although the worst zone 1 dribble in 4NCL over-the-board

can be explained by a game-inputting mistake(!) that Professor Regan discovered as a result of this work. Zone 4 makes the scale of the problem clear; the graph follows what is broadly a normal distribution, before suddenly rising up again and tailing off.

If a website flags or bans a player for using computer engine assistance in the 4NCL Online, I inform the captain of the player's z score, and the MMP/ASD characteristics I described earlier. There have only been two confessions out of about 30 cases at the time of writing. The usual response I receive is that the captain/team have independently reviewed them and said that there isn't a shred of evidence to support the allegation. The resulting implication is that the website is wrong, and Professor Regan's model (which seems to have otherwise worked well for 10 years) is wrong, and then a generally dissatisfied-with-everything article is published somewhere.

I can't comment on how any platform's systems work, because I have not seen them and even if I were given access to them, I would not be permitted to tell anyone. However, there are very few ways to skin this particular cat, and so I would expect that MMP and ASD are heavily involved in their detection processes. However, they also have other means of reaching the conclusion that are not contained in the PGN file. This could take a z=3.5 player for the 4NCL, which looks dodgy, but isn't enough to take action, and turn it into a z=5 or z=6 equivalent using their internal metrics.

So far I've discussed z scores without actually translating them into something more human to understand. It is a function of the normal distribution, and a z score can be translated into a probability. Professor Regan's model is an 'honesty' test, which means that using external assistance is a deviation from that.

z=4 means a 1 in 31,574 chance that no engine assistance was being used if this were the only data point under possible consideration. If we have 1,000 players in our tournament, then we would expect to see z=4 once every 31.574 tournaments; i.e. about once every 16 years given the 4NCL Online is intending to run two tournaments per year. The highest z score we have had before being flagged at the time of writing is z=5.33, which means a 1 in 20 million that no engine assistance was being used. Using the same analogy, we would expect to see this naturally once every 10,198 years. Given this is an exercise purely in statistics, where do you draw the line?

In UK law, there are two legal tests: the 'balance of probabilities' for a civil test, and 'beyond a reasonable doubt' for a criminal test. One of the arguments put forward sometimes is that 'You shouldn't do anything about cheating online unless you can be 100% certain.' You can never be 100% certain; if a court applied this test then it would never convict anyone if the defendant didn't admit it.

A line does need to be drawn somewhere, and so far as I am aware, chess websites actually work to 'comfortable satisfaction', which is somewhere between the balance of probabilities and beyond a reasonable doubt. There are two organisations of note that also use this definition for similar cases – the Court of Arbitration for Sport, and the English Bridge Union.

A general rule of thumb I have learned during this competition is that websites tend not to take action if a player's z < 3.5. Professor Regan's z-scores are not part of the website's process, but their own tests will do the same sort of thing, plus factoring in the website-specific factors not contained within the PGN file. The higher the z score, the more likely you are to be flagged. In practice, if someone's z score is < 3.5 and they've been flagged by a website, investigation has revealed that it was often based on games nothing to do with the 4NCL, or that the 4NCL games were only a part of the overall package of evidence used.

An important thing to bear in mind is that a player's z score does not correlate with their rating: for example, a grandmaster won't get z=3 because they are a grandmaster. If a grandmaster plays like one, they'll get approximately z=0. On the other hand, if I play like a grandmaster with my humble 1600 Elo rating, my z-score would be significantly >0.

For this reason, it is important to get the input rating right for Professor Regan's system. In another capacity I am involved in, we know that English FIDE ratings are about right, so we would be within our rights to use them. However, we are aware of the human perception that English FIDE ratings are stretched, but the statistics show that this is mostly because we are comparing them with countries in western Europe, where we can see that the ratings are comparatively inflated to ours.

To avoid these concerns, we use the highest possible rating we can find for someone, such as a national rating. The other cushioning is that the training data used by Professor Regan is over-the-board games of two hours each to move 60, whereas the 4NCL Online games equate to one hour each to move 60. It is possible to measure the difference in the reduced ability between those two time limits due to the shorter time limit – in fact, this has been done for standardplay and rapidplay. However, we made the conscious decision to ignore the impact of the shorter time limit to build in a second layer of cushioning. This means that the z-score we give will be lower than it might otherwise have been. Statistically there is no reason for this cushioning, but it adds a human layer of protection to the tests.

Running an Online Tournament

The final point to make is that in my experience so far, humans are very poor judges of cases that correlate with the data. So far, every player who has been flagged by Lichess during the 4NCL Online and hasn't confessed has been given a clean bill of health from either their team-mates or by their parents and coaches. There is only one player whose judgement on cases in 4NCL Online has correlated with the results of Professor Regan's system at all on a consistent basis, and he's in the world's top-100. If there is going to be a human element to this process, this is the level of player that needs to be involved in it. Sadly, even senior county officials tend not to be of that level.

My advice for any online tournament looking to impose anti-cheating restrictions is:

a) They should gather PGNs and send them off to Professor Regan.

b) They should use the screening results or z-score spreadsheet and report the problem cases to the website hosting the tournament.

c) Where the website unilaterally flags someone for using computer assistance, it is worth investigating if the data from Professor Regan supports the action they have taken; if not, the player can potentially use this to their benefit to try to get their flagging overturned.

d) Be prepared to receive a lot of grumpy, time-draining emails and phone calls on specific cases.

If you run a tournament with a classical time limit and you are relying on the website unilaterally, then there will be lots of players with high z-scores who go undetected, and people using engine assistance will get away with it because the two-way process isn't properly being implemented. The result might be that fewer players were banned at the end of it, but that isn't really the metric of a successful online tournament. The success criterion is to catch the people who you are 'comfortably satisfied' are using engine assistance, because unlike over the board, it is not really possible to prevent it.

Postscript

Since this article was originally written for the 4NCL website in July, the 4NCL has submitted to Professor Regan all PGN files dating back to the 2010-11 season, to see if the same data pattern with z-scores is observed, and to verify that the z-scores of this season show the same pattern as previous seasons. At the time of writing, the process has reached the 2015-16 season, and the z-score graph follows precisely the same pattern as the graph for 2019-20. Therefore, we can rule out there being something special about the 2019-20 4NCL season in terms of the published graph.

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, including the first season of the 4NCL Online League and various leading internet tournaments. 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 52.**

Warm-up Puzzles

(1) C.Sielecki-J.Cox
4NCL Online League 2020
White to Play

(2) G.Moss-J.McPhillips
4NCL Online League 2020
Black to Play

(3) J.Clarke-D.Laws
Northumberland 2020
Black to Play

(4) Ding Liren-F.Caruana
Carlsen Invitational (rapid) 2020
Black to Play

(5) M.Vachier-Lagrave-I.Nepomniachtchi
Carlsen Invitational (rapid) 2020
Black to Play

(6) S.Shehzad-E.Risting
Oslo 2020
Black to Play

Intermediate Puzzles for the Club Player - Solutions on page 52

(7) A.Esipenko-A.Shirov
Moscow (rapid) 2020
Black to Play

(8) A.Gjestemoen-Vonhirsch-L.Ranaldi
Oslo 2020
Black to Play and Draw

(9) I.Nepomniachtchi-M.Vachier-Lagrave
FIDE Nations Cup (rapid) 2020
Black to Play

(10) C.Higgie-B.Whyte
Internet 2020
White to Play

(11) D.Dubov-S.Karjakin
Lindores Abbey (rapid) 2020
White to Play

(12) T.Chapman-C.Duncan
4NCL Online League 2020
White to Play

(13) I.Nepomniachtchi-Ding Liren
Carlsen Invitational (rapid) 2020
White to Play

(14) S.Ter Sahakyan-A.Grischuk
Internet (blitz) 2020
White to Play

(15) S.Zierk-B.Grachev
Internet (blitz) 2020
White to Play

Harder Puzzles for the Club Player – Solutions on page 52

(16) H.Nakamura-J.K.Duda
Lindores Abbey (rapid) 2020
White to Play

(17) D.Dubov-S.Karjakin
Lindores Abbey (rapid) 2020
Black to Play

(18) Y.Kuzubov-M.Van der Werf
Leiden 2020
White to Play and Draw

(19) A.Firouzja-F.Caruana
Carlsen Invitational (rapid) 2020
White to Play and Draw

(20) M.Vachier-Lagrave-I.Nepomniachtchi
Carlsen Invitational (rapid) 2020
White to Play

(21) A.Firouzja-M.Carlsen
Internet (blitz) 2020
White to Play and Draw

(22) V.Dragnev-T.Vandenbussche
German Bundesliga 2020
Black to Play

(23) J.Redmond-G.Cooper
4NCL Online League 2020
Black to Play

(24) L.Aronian-Wei Yi
FIDE Nations Cup (rapid) 2020
Black to Play

Solutions

to Find the Winning Moves (pages 26-28)

1) Sielecki-Cox
1 ♗d6! 1-0 1...♕xd6 (or 1...♕d7 2 ♘e5) 2 ♕xb7 forks to win a piece.

2) Moss-McPhillips
1...♖g3+! 0-1 Creeping in and so mating White with 2 fxg3 ♕f3+ 3 ♔g1 ♕xg3+ 4 ♔h1 ♗f3#.

3) Clarke-Laws
1...♘xa2! 2 ♘c5? (panic; 2 ♖xa2? fails to 2...♖xb3+, of course, but White might have fought on with 2 ♖d1 ♘b4 3 ♘c5) **2...♕xc5 3 ♖xa2 ♕xc4 4 ♖b2 ♕d5** left Black two pawns to the good, with an easy win.

4) Ding Liren-Caruana
1...♖xa2! 0-1 White is devoid of a single good move, as if 2 ♕d4 ♕xf2+ or 2 ♖xa2 ♕xd1+ 3 ♔h2 ♖xa2 4 ♕xa2 ♗xb3.

5) Vachier-Lagrave-Nepomniachtchi
1...♘eg4! (generating a crushing pin down the open file) **2 ♗xe8 ♖xe8 3 ♖f3 ♘xe3 4 ♖e1 ♘f5 0-1**

6) Shehzad-Risting
1...♘f4! (the most forcing, although 1...♘c3 2 ♗d2 ♕b2 is easily winning too) **2 ♗xf4 ♖xf4 3 ♕g3 ♖f1+! 0-1** 4 ♖xf1 exf1♕+ 5 ♔xf1 ♕b1+ leads to mate on e3.

7) Esipenko-Shirov
1...♗xe3! 2 ♕xg3 (2 ♕xe3 ♖g2 also spells the end, and if 3 ♕c1 ♖xb3+ 4 axb3 ♕xb3+) **2...♗xd4** (strangely missing 2...♖xb3+! 3 axb3 ♕xb3+ 4 ♔a1 ♗xd4#) **3 ♖d8+ ♔xd8 4 ♕d6+ ♔e8 5 ♕a3 0-1** 5...a4 is curtains for White.

8) Gjestemoen-Vonhirsch-Ranaldi
1...g2! (and not 1...h2?? 2 ♔xg3 h1♕ 3 ♖a1+ ♔e2 4 ♖xh1) **2 ♔f3! ♔g1!** (setting up a stalemate defence is a somewhat easier way to draw than 2...g1♘+ 3 ♔e3 h2 4 ♖xh2 ♔e1) **3 ♖a1+ ♔h2 4 ♔f2 g1♕+! 5 ♖xg1 ½-½**

9) Nepomniachtchi-Vachier-Lagrave
1...♔f1! 0-1 By far the quickest and cleanest win, and not, of course, 1...♕xg3? and stalemate. White can keep covering the potential mates on g2 and h4 for a move with 2 ♖g4, but then there's just 2...♕f3+.

10) Higgie-Whyte
1 ♗xg7! (a somewhat clearer win than 1 ♕xh6 ♗xd6 2 c5 ♗xe5 3 cxb6 ♕xd1+ 4 ♖xd1 ♖xd1+ 5 ♔g2) **1...♖xd6** (1...♕xg7 2 ♕xg7+ ♔xg7 3 ♘f5+ costs Black far too much material, but now he is mated) **2 ♗f6+ ♔f8 3 ♕xh6+ ♔f7 4 ♕g7+ ♔e6 5 ♖e1+ ♔f5 6 ♕g5# 1-0**

11) Dubov-Karjakin
1 ♖xf7! ♘xf7 2 ♗e6 broke Black's fortress, White crashing through with **2...♕b8** (2...♕a5 3 ♖f2 keeps everything under control) **3 ♕xg6 ♕e8 4 e5! dxe5 5 d6** before wrapping up matters: **5...♔f8 6 ♕f5 ♕c6+ 7 ♗d5 ♕d7 8 ♗xf7 ♕xf5 9 ♖xf5 ♖xb3 10 ♗d5+ ♔e8 11 ♖f7 ♗h6 12 ♖e7+ ♔f8 13 ♖f7+ ♔e8 14 ♖f6 ♗g7 15 ♗c6+ ♔d8 16 ♖e6 1-0**

12) Chapman-Duncan
White bagged a pawn with **1 ♗xf5!** (1 ♖ac1 is also strong, and if 1...0-0 2 ♗xf5!) **1...♖xf5 2 ♖ac1 0-0** (fairly essential, since 2...♔d8? 3 ♕c4 would cost Black the game, while 2...♕d8 3 ♕e4+ ♖e5 4 ♕xb7 threatens 5 ♖c8 and keeps the pin a decisive one after 4...♖b5 5 ♕xa6 ♖b8 6 ♕a4) **3 ♕xd7** and went on to win.

13) Nepomniachtchi-Ding Liren
1 ♘g4! ♖xf5? (1...♖d6 avoids losing the exchange, but still leaves Black in trouble after 2 ♖ae1 ♕xf5 3 ♖xe5!) **2 ♘f6+! 1-0** The black queen is a goner.

14) Ter Sahakyan-Grischuk
1 ♗b5+! (1 ♖h8+ ♔e7 2 ♕g5+ ♔d7 3 ♖xd8+ ♕xd8 4 ♕xe5 ♕c7 would still leave White with some work to do) **1...♔e7** (if 1...♕xb5? 2 ♖h8+ ♔e7 3 ♕xd8#) **2 ♕g5+ f6 3 ♕g7+ ♔d6 4 ♖d1+** (a devastating check) **4...♗d5 5 exd5 ♕xb5 6 dxe6+ ♔xe6 7 ♖xd8 ♕f1+ 8 ♔a2 ♕c4+ 9 ♔a3 ♕d3+ 10 ♖xd3 1-0**

15) Zierk-Grachev
1 ♕xe6! (1 ♕c5? ♗xc2 was suddenly very much game on, until White collapsed with 2 ♗e2? ♕h1! 3 ♕e3 ♗e4 4 h4 d4! 0-1) **1...♕d2+** (and not 1...fxe6? 2 ♖g7+ ♔h8 3 ♖xh7+ ♔g8 4 ♖bg7#) **2 ♔g1 ♕d1+ 3 ♔g2 ♗e8 4 ♕f6 ♕d2+ 5 ♔h3** and the threat of e5-e6 is a killer.

16) Nakamura-Duda
1 ♗c4! (a lovely deflection, although 1 ♘e8 should also lead to a fairly simple win) **1...♗xc4 2 ♖e8** (threatening 3 ♖xf8+! or if 2...♖b7 3 ♘xh7!) **2...h5 3 ♘d7 ♗xd5 4 ♖xf8+ ♗g8 5 ♕d8 1-0** ♘f6 follows.

17) Dubov-Karjakin
1...♗xe3! 2 fxe3 (in any case, White is in serious trouble, as we can see too from 2 ♕d6 ♕xd6 3 ♖xd6 ♗c5 4 ♖xc6 e3 5 fxe3 ♖xe3) **2...♕xg3+ 3 ♔f1?** (even 3 ♔h1 ♕xh4+ 4 ♔g2 ♖e5 5 ♕d4 shouldn't save the day due to 5...♕f6, and if 6 ♔h1 ♔g8 7 ♖d8+ ♔h7) **3...♖e6! 4 ♔e2 ♕g2+ 5 ♔e1 ♖f6 6 ♕d4 ♕xc2 7 ♖d6 ♕f2+ 8 ♔d1 ♕g1+ 9 ♔c2 ♕h2+ 0-1**

18) Kuzubov-Van der Werf
1 ♖a8+! (1 ♔f1?? ♗d3 set up familiar mating threats in the game, where White threw in the towel after 2 ♖a8+ ♔d7 3 ♖a7+ ♔e8 4 ♖a8+ ♔f7 5 ♖d8 ♖f2+ 6 ♔g1 ♖g2+ 0-1) **1...♔d7** (1...♔f7 2 ♖f1+ ♔g7 3 ♖f2 is another key defensive resource) **2 ♖a7+ ♔c6 3 ♖a6+ ♔b5** (White shouldn't have too much trouble holding after 3...♔d5 4 ♖d6+ ♔e4 5 ♖xd2 ♖xd2 6 ♖e1+ ♔f3 7 b5) **4 ♖b6+! ♔c4 5 ♖d6 ♖g2+ 6 ♔f1** and, as pointed out by Robert Hungaski in his detailed annotations on ChessPublishing, White holds as Black won't manage to arrange ...♗d3. He can try **6...♔c3**, but then White has at least **7 ♗e3 ♖xd6 8 ♔xg2 ♔b2 9 b5 ♗d3 10 b6!** when he is never going to lose, with two such opposite-coloured bishops.

19) Firouzja-Caruana
White had to resign after 1 ♕c2+? ♗g6 2 ♕c5 ♕f1 3 ♗f6 ♗e4!, as if 4 ♖h8+ ♔g6!. However, the immediate **1 ♗f6!** would have saved the day, and if **1...♖h1+!** (Black must avoid 1...gxf6? 2 ♕f8) **2 ♔xh1 ♕f1+ 3 ♔h2 ♗f3! 4 ♖h8+!? ♔g6! 5 gxf3 ♕xf2+** when Black forces perpetual.

20) Vachier-Lagrave-Nepomniachtchi
1 ♗a7! (1 ♗xh6? ♘e4 2 ♗e3 ♘d6 3 ♗c5 – 3 c5 ♘b5 4 ♔c4 ♘a3+ keeps White at bay too – 3...♘e8 4 ♔e3 ♔e6 5 ♗b6 saw the players shake hands in the game; the engines suggest that 5 ♗a3!? ♘f6 6 g5 ♘d7 7 ♔d4 is a better try to break Black's fortress, but he still draws after 7...♘e5! 8 ♗b4 ♘f3+ 9 ♔c5 ♘xg5 10 ♔b6 ♔d7 11 c5 ♔c8 12 c6 ♘e6 13 ♗d6 ♘d8!, or here 11 ♔xa6 ♔c6 12 ♔a7 ♘e6 13 ♔b8 ♘c7) **1...♔e6** (not where Black wanted to go, but 1...♔f4? 2 ♗b8+ ♔xg4 3 ♗xg3 ♔xg3 4 c5 is an easy win, as is 1...♘e4 2 ♗b8+ ♘d6 3 c5) **2 ♗b8 ♘f1** (2...♘h1 3 ♔e2 also corrals the knight) **3 ♔e2** and Black loses his knight and the game.

21) Firouzja-Carlsen
1 ♘h2+? ♖xh2+! 2 ♔xh2 f2 3 gxf4 ♔e2 cost White the game. 1 ♖d1+? ♔e2 2 ♖a1 ♗d2 is also hopeless, but the cold-blooded **1 gxf4!** draws, and if **1...c3** (or 1...f2 2 ♖c5 ♖c2!? when White should reject the rook in favour of 3 ♘h2+, and if 3...♔e1 4 f5 gxf5 5 ♖xf5 c3 6 ♘f3+ or 3...♔e2 4 ♔g2 c3 5 ♘f1 ♔d3 6 ♖d5+, which also successfully keeps things under control) **2 ♖c5 c2 3 ♖xc2 ♖xc2 4 ♘e3+ ♔e2 5 ♘xc2 f2 6 ♘d4+! ♔e3 7 ♔g2**.

22) Dragnev-Vandenbussche
1...♖e3! (Black couldn't resist 1...♖xc3?

2 bxc3 ♖e4 3 ♕d2 ♘xh2 in the game, but after 4 ♔xh2 ♕h4+ 5 ♔g1 ♗e5 6 ♖f3 he had no more than a draw) **2 ♘xc8** (Black also wins after both 2 ♖f3 ♗e5 and 2 ♘c4 ♗xc3! 3 ♘xe3 ♗e5 4 ♕f3 ♘xh2) **2...♗e5 3 ♕c4 ♕h4** and the attack is absolutely deadly, as pointed out by David Vigorito, and if **4 h3 ♖xh3+! 5 gxh3 ♕xh3+ 6 ♔g1 ♕h2#**.

23) Redmond-Cooper

1...♘xe5!! (the tempting 1...d4 2 ♘xd4 ♗xd4 3 ♖xd4 ♕c6 would merely have been very unclear in the game had White now found 4 ♘e4!, and if 4...♘xe4 5 ♗xd7) **2 ♗xc8** (after 2 ♘xe5 ♕xh3 the ...d4 advance will prove absolutely ruinous to White, and 2 ♗xe5 ♕xh3 also wins after 3 ♗xf6 d4! 4 ♘e4 ♕f5 or 3 ♗d4 ♖fe8, with complete domination and three extra pawns) **2...♘xf3+ 3 ♔f1** (trying to stay off the long diagonal; 3 ♔g2 ♖axc8 4 ♔xf3 d4+ quickly leads to an absolute massacre, Black's gigantic initiative easily outweighing the extra queen after 5 ♔e2 d3+ 6 ♖xd3 cxd3+ 7 ♕xd3 ♖fe8+ 8 ♔f1 ♘g4) **3...♖axc8** gives Black materially enough for the queen (bishop, knight and three pawns), but of much greater importance are his ongoing initiative and control of the board. Indeed, White's cause is completely hopeless here, as shown by **4 ♘e2** (or 4 h3 d4 5 ♘b1 d3 6 ♕b2 ♘d5 when Black's central pawns are too strong) **4...♘g4 5 ♕f5 d4! 6 ♕d7** (if 6 ♕xg4 ♘xh2+) **6...♘fxh2+ 7 ♔g1 ♗c6 8 ♕f5 d3** with a crushing attack.

24) Aronian-Wei Yi

1...♔h5? 2 ♖xe4 ♖ag3+ 3 ♔f1 ♖h1+ 4 ♔e2 ♖h2+ 5 ♔d1 ♖a3 6 ♖xh4+! saw White's queenside pawns saving the day, and the players shook hands after 6...♖xh4 7 ♖h7+ ♔g5 8 ♖xh4 ♖xa7! 9 ♖b4 ♔f6 ½-½. Instead, **1...♖a1+! 2 ♔g2** (2 ♔f2 ♖f3+ 3 ♔e2 ♖a2+ 4 ♔e1 ♖h3 5 ♖g1 ♖hh2 is a fairly straightforward win) **2...♖e3!** was the hard-to-see win, but a forced win at that, as we can see from 3 ♖xh4+ ♔g5 4 ♖h8 ♖e2+ 5 ♔g3 ♖a3# and 3 ♔h2 ♖ee1! 4 b6 (4 ♖b6 ♖e2+ 5 ♖g2 ♖xg2+ 6 ♔xg2 ♖xa7 7 ♖a6 ♖b7 8 b6 g5 leaves Black with too many extra pawns) 4...♖h1+ 5 ♔g2 ♖hg1+ when White must fatally part with his rook, in view of 6 ♔h3 ♖a3+ 7 ♔xh4? ♖h1#.

July's Find the Winning Moves

T.Munkhzul-A.Fier
Chess.com Titled Tuesday (blitz) 2020

This was puzzle no.10 last month, where we saw that 1...♗b7 2 ♗d7 e5 3 ♗xc8 ♗xc8 is an easy draw. However, as a few of you pointed out, there was, of course, nothing wrong with the game's 1...e5 as after 2 ♗a6 Black has 2...♖xc7! 3 ♗xc7 when he draws so long as he maintains his bishop on the long light-square diagonal (1...♖xc7 2 ♗xc7 ♗g2 comes to the same thing).

This Month's New Releases

Chess in Art:
History of chess in paintings 1100-1900
Peter Herel Raabenstein, 320 pages
HereLove,
RRP €111

Chess is art, science and sport, or so they say. There have been debates around this assertion across the centuries. Marcel Duchamp famously said that "While all artists are not chess players, all chess players are artists". However, there has been a dearth of books about chess in art. Enter stage right this new hardcover from Peter Herel Raabenstein, a conceptual artist born in the Czech Republic.

I write this review as a chess player for chess players. The advertising strapline says: "This unique book, a collection of paintings where chess is the main theme, is a brilliant example of connection between the Game of Kings, art and history. He was inspired by the symbolism of chess and evolution of art itself".

This is a book that contains mostly pictures with little text. Each page carries one or more images of art with the name of the artist. There are several pages at the end of the book giving a basic profile of each artist. The book is divided into five eras across eight centuries (1100-1500, 1500-1600, 1600-1700, 1700-1800, and 1800-1900), followed by the index.

It's tricky to review a book like this. It is art, and therefore subjective to the reader. If you like art and chess, then I am sure you will relish this. It is the biggest collection of chess in art that I have ever seen in one place, and I can put it all on my coffee table. There is a lot of material to study and it was fun to see if the boards were set up correctly – something which often goes wrong, and infuriates real chess players, as it leaves a question as to whether the artist actually knew and played the game, or not.

Unsurprisingly, as the centuries progress, the artistic presentation changes and this will be a question of taste. I find some of the paintings to be magnificent such as Peder H. K. Zahrtmann's work (only one figure seems truly interested in the chess, and they are not at the board), but other works are not to my taste. As I said, it is subjective.

Raabenstein demonstrates that the game of chess has been and still is played across the social spectrum, from royalty to ragamuffin, in castles and ale houses around the world. Chess is depicted as an intellectual pursuit, a thinking person's game. These paintings declare openly that chess brings families together in drawing rooms and clubs (online chess, take note), and that women and children are every bit as interested in the game. Indeed, there are plenty of paintings of women playing both men and one another.

In most of the paintings, the chessboard is the centre of attention, but in others I had to look further to work out the chess connection. The answers are all there. There are Baroque and Classical works, and it is fun to study the costumes and the settings. Then we can scrutinise the actual positions on the chessboard. How were such positions arrived at? Did they declare a broader message, perhaps even secret ones? There is a wonderful painting by Dominik Skutecky from 1898 which reminds me of Stephen Fry as General Melchett. I wonder if he has seen

it – he likes chess after all.

I do have a couple of critical observations. I am not an art student, so I benefit from an expert explaining aspects of a painting to me. It helps me to increase my appreciation of a work. You won't get that here. I craved further information, but I appreciate that this is difficult to achieve. I wondered who the characters are, why did the artist add this or that aspect, what materials were used for the painting, etc.

The author declares that it was not possible to obtain all images in the highest printing quality. He is reaching back hundreds of years after all. What is the objective of the book? Clearly to offer images of chess in art. In that sense, it has achieved the objective, but there is more to this. It was a cultural journey. It reminded me of the old adage, 'It's not enough to look, you have to see'.

Chess players might baulk at the hefty price tag, but I do believe that it is one of a kind. Do I recommend it? Yes. I see it as an investment in any chess player's collection that can be enjoyed time and again. Visit www.chessinart.com to learn more.

Carl Portman

Mind Master
Viswanathan Anand, 312 pages
Hachette India
RRP £19.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £17.99**

This new book, subtitled 'Winning Lessons from a Champion's Life' and written "with Susan Ninan", is not a regular (auto)biography and it is definitely not a collection of Anand's best games either. In fact, the pure chess aspect is confined to a small number of diagrams. Instead, it is an attempt to do something different, as partly explained by this teaser:

"In *Mind Master*, Vishy looks back on a lifetime of games played, opponents tackled and circumstances overcome, and draws from its depths significant tools that will help every reader navigate life's challenges."

Thus we find a narrative of Anand's chess career at the top with significant moments highlighted in an almost spiritual way. This is an original, attractively-presented book which contains much absorbing material. Reaching the chess summit changes a person forever and Anand is well aware of the impact it can have. "A World Championship match can transform its protagonists. You are never the same after it."

This snippet shows an example of the chess content and how it used in the context of a life lesson.

I.Smirin-V.Anand
Intel Chess Grand Prix,
New York (blitz) 1994

Smirin had played the "rather unusual" **4 ♘xe5**.

"Against Smirin, on move 4, I suddenly drew a blank. The normal move would be to attack his knight, but I was worried about him making a capture on f7. I sat there, mulling over my next move, aware of the clock ticking away. My hand was unwilling to move until my mind found a path. Looking back, taking the time to think calmly through my next moves, even while pressured for time, turned out to be a good decision."

Anand spent a mighty one minute and 43 seconds on the unpretentious reply **4...d6** when after **5 ♘f3 d5** a regular Petroff position was duly reached. Then he needed just two minutes for the rest of the game (0-1, 50).

Most players would find this a very impractical approach, especially in blitz chess, but Anand turns the moment into one of the book's life lessons: "Training your mind to take a step back at the crucial moment and developing cues to organise your thoughts is more advantageous than making a move while your mind is in turmoil."

Anyone will tell you that Anand is a real gentleman, but people will be surprised when he reveals all-too familiar human emotions after setbacks, including an incident when his post-defeat mood spilled over into an angry exchange with his wife, Aruna.

"Aruna walked quietly beside me, struggling to maintain pace. 'Have you nothing to say?' I'd snapped at her. 'Normally, you have a lot of advice to give.' Aruna didn't respond, perhaps aware that nothing she said was going to placate me. After I'd nagged her enough for a response, she replied: 'Tomorrow may be better; maybe you should try breathing deeply.'"

Anand became "awfully annoyed" and retorted, "Is this the best advice you can give? Tell me if you have something against the Berlin opening?"

Aruna, "now angry too, and rightly so" replied with, "If I knew of something against the Berlin, do you think I would be married to you?" They then started laughing, which "detonated the fuse that was waiting to go off in my head."

It is the sort of thing we have all done and all regretted, but to hear it from a champion of the world certainly breaks down the boundaries. Aruna, of course, has always been a very important part of Anand's success and there are plenty of examples of her positive actions given in the book. For instance, just before the title match with Topalov, word came through that his opponent now had "Access to a computer cluster with frighteningly superior hardware [...] for his team to use during the match." To avoid causing upset and concern to Anand, "Aruna chose not to pass on the disturbing information to me, and instead went over to the workroom and shared it with the team."

When I reviewed Michiel Abeln's *The Anand Files* (Quality Chess, 2019) back in March, I said "I would be very interested in reading a follow-up on the matches against Carlsen, but I suppose history is still written by the winners." In this new book we do though get to read Anand's first-hand experiences in his two title battles with Magnus Carlsen. Anand feels himself caught up on the wrong end of an historical changing of the ways before and during the first match. "There's no way I could explain the three-point deficit. Carlsen was simply the better player."

Even when the second match came around in 2014, with Anand having won the Candidates tournament against expectations (including his own: "In fact, I'd predicted last place for myself and had been thinking up ways to feel miserable"), he arrived "With my expectations at a bare minimum."

It is rare, indeed, to read such honest and personal thoughts of a chess world champion. Anand really has opened up in this book and even though there is very little in the way of chess instruction, it is a very impressive book. The production values are high too; the book is a hardback and concludes with a fine set of colour photographs.

This book is recommended to anyone who wants to see the lid lifted off chess at the top level and who would like to know what Anand really thinks about his chess friends and rivals.

Sean Marsh

My Chess World
David Navara, 616 pages
Thinkers Publishing
RRP £33.95 **SPECIAL PRICE £29.95**

This tome combines material from David Navara's books *My Chess World* (2015) and *My World Chess* (2017), both of which were

published in the Czech language. Some of the annotations have also been taken from Navara's blog and various other magazines and books.

David Navara is a very strong player. He became a grandmaster at 16, has won the Czech Championship nine times, and has many other achievements to his name, including a gold medal on board two at the 2012 Olympiad.

"The title of the book might seem presumptuous" opines the author, "But I wanted to show how I see or experience competitions without denying the chess worlds of others." Throughout the prose is lightly humorous. For example, Navara starts off the biographical aspect of the book with the quip: "I have no recollection of it, but according to reliable sources, I was born on 27 March 1985."

While I was investigating the book, I read the following snippet: "I recall how Pavel Matocha once told me that I should give fewer variations, but more diagrams and written commentary. He emphasised that many people don't play through annotations, and generally skip long variations. I had to smile, because I myself belong to that group of readers. Despite this, I haven't learnt how to write concisely. Often something jumps into my head and I diverge completely from the original topic. What did I actually want to write about?"

It made me wonder if the book would be carrying too much analysis. Matocha is right: nobody plays through the long variations in books. Was this going to be the reason for the large page count?

My doubts were dispelled once I started to analyse the content properly. Each game comes with a prose introduction, typically four pages long. The game annotations run for an average of eight pages, which certainly gives them space to breath. It wasn't as unfocused as Navara's statement would have the reader believe; the variations are not overblown and the game analysis is not merely a dumping ground for the engines' output. Instead, Navara shares his thoughts from during the games, freely admitting moves he missed.

Despite being rated consistently above 2700 for many years, Navara has spent 2020 just inside the world's top-30 players, keeping him a little short of invitations to top tournaments, which is why he is not quite the chess-hold name of some of his contemporaries. Therefore it may seem strange to see a big book devoted to his games. However, this is a very impressive book which genuinely offers something new, fresh and interesting to the world of chess literature.

There are two glaring omissions: an index of players and an index of openings. This is odd because Thinkers Publishing are certainly not ones to skimp on adding extra pages (there is even space for a Navara poem at the end). Openings-wise there are Grünfelds against 1 d4 and Sicilians plus 1...e5 against 1 e4; as White, Navara essays both 1 d4 and 1 e4, and plays very much with a straight bat (Spanish Game; Open Sicilians; Tarrasch against the French).

The games are full of fighting chess, typically giving both players new problems to solve at regular intervals.

D.Navara-F.Caruana
European Club Cup, Rhodes 2013

51 ♘e5!

"One should not hurry when playing the endgame. It is also advisable to develop maximum activity with the remaining pieces. I quite like forcing moves, but forking might be better!"

51...♖b2?

"Being short of time, the elite grandmaster erred. Black should have given check on d2 first. In the game I managed to restrict Black's rook."

52 ♗c2!

"White's knight is ready to give a fork on c4, c6, g4 or g6, depending on Black's reply. Apart from that, it can return to d3 and clear the way for the b-pawn. Last but not least, White's king might re-enter play in some lines."

In fact all three white pawns advanced over the course of the next few moves and Black resigned on move 61 [*Ed. – see pp.20-21 of the December 2013* CHESS].

The games feature players from Korchnoi to Carlsen and they provide plenty of instruction and entertainment. Navara has a reputation of being a perfect gentleman, even going so far as to stand up to shake hands with his opponents (a dying art). He is also quirky and eccentric; an original character with something new to say.

In the words of the author, "I tried hard to stick to the facts and provide some food for thought." He has certainly succeeded in the task. This is a very big, interesting and enjoyable book.

Sean Marsh

Yakov Vilner: First Ukrainian Chess Champion and First USSR Chess Composition Champion
Sergei Tkachenko, 386 pages
Elk and Ruby
RRP £20.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £18.85**

This chunky book consists of two distinct parts: it was published in two volumes in the original Russian. The first section is a biography of Yakov Vilner with 49 annotated games (plus fragments), the second a collection of 95 problems (including a few endgame studies) composed by the creative Ukrainian.

The latter part is the larger section of the book, which is thus included in Tkachenko's 'A World Champion's Favorite Composers' series. Like the other, smaller-format books in that series, the problems are laid out in a solver-friendly format: the solution is over the page from the diagram. This is welcome, even if it generates some white space here and there. The innovations and evolution of Vilner's compositional work are explained, often through comparison with other compositions. Part two contains plenty for novices and experienced solvers alike.

Part one is the fruit of Tkachenko's archival research (though a list of sources is lacking). Vilner is not a household name, but Tkachenko has already put him on the map: for the story of his part in saving Alekhine from a firing squad, readers must turn to the same author's *Alekhine's Odessa Secrets*. It is perhaps a pity that this episode is omitted from *Yakov Vilner*, but otherwise Tkachenko is admirably thorough, interspersing his narrative with contemporary caricatures, photos, tournament tables and quotations from newspapers.

Tkachenko provides a fascinating reconstruction of the politically fraught rehabilitation of chess in Odessa after the civil war. Vilner (1899-1931) died young due to chronic asthma. Poor health explains his erratic results, including relatively frequent blunders. Vilner's spirit of determination nevertheless enabled him to win the first two Ukrainian Championships in 1924 and 1925. Also in 1925 he finished mid-table in the gruelling USSR Championship, demolishing the winner, Bogoljubov, in scintillating style. Further successes followed, including the title of USSR champion at chess composition (3-move problems) in 1929. Vilner had a noteworthy record against Botvinnik, whom he let off with a draw in a fine game in the last year of his life.

Although Vilner never reached the top, his games show flashes of brilliance. For readers who want to leave the beaten track of anthologies and databases, the games in this book provide a vivid glimpse into the fighting chess of the early Soviet era. Tkachenko reproduces contemporary annotations, including Vilner's own, supplying analytical corrections. This is an excellent method for presenting historical games. I sometimes felt

that Tkachenko misses significant candidate moves, however. Let's consider this example of Vilner's tactical dynamism in a 1928 correspondence game between two cities, Odessa and Kirnasovka (whether Vilner, as White, was sole representative of the former is not made clear).

29...♕f5?

Black wanted something more decisive than to remain a healthy pawn up after 29...♕d5, but now Vilner unleashes a combination. Can you spot his next two moves before reading on?

30 ♘g5+! ♕xg5 31 ♗c1

The bishop's pressure on h6 now prevents 31...♕d5 and 31...♕f5 (32 hxg6+, 33 ♖xh6+, etc), leaving Black with a choice of four plausible moves.

31...♕e5

After 31...♕xg4+ 32 ♕xg4 gxh5 33 ♕xg8+ ♔xg8 34 ♗xh6 ♔f7 Tkachenko writes that Black has good winning chances. Although all three results are possible, I don't see how White can be worse. Instead, Black might preface ...♕xg4+ with 31...♖e5 32 ♕f3 or now try the wild 32...♖e3, where Tkachenko stops. A sample continuation runs 33 fxe3 gxh5 34 ♕e4+ ♖g6 35 exd4 ♕xg4+ 36 ♕xg4 ♖xg4+ 37 ♔f1 ♘xd4 38 ♖g2 when Black should hold.

Black's best may be 31...♖e8, unmentioned by Tkachenko. Now 32 hxg6+ ♔g7 33 ♕xe8 ♕xg4+ 34 ♔f1 ♕d1+ 35 ♕e1 (the only way to avoid a repetition) 35...♕xe1+ 36 ♔xe1 d3 leaves all to play for. Instead, the game concluded:

32 hxg6+ ♔h8 33 ♖xh6+ ♔g7 34 ♕f3

Tkachenko gives an odd alternative beginning 34 ♖h7+ ♔f8 35 ♕d3, but now 35...♕e6 is murky; *Stockfish* evaluates it with the ubiquitous '0.00'.

34... ♖f8

Black misses an opportunity to limit the damage with another move omitted by Tkachenko: 34...♕d5. Now 35 ♖h7+ ♔xg6 36 ♖h6+ ♔g7 37 ♖xf6 may look worrying, but the queens will soon come off and Black's pieces are active.

35 ♖h5! ♗g5 36 ♖h7+ ♔g8 37 ♖f7! ♕e8 38 a4!?

After 38 ♗xg5 Tkachenko only considers 38...♖xg5 39 ♕f6 ♖xg4+ 40 ♔h3 ♖xf7 41 gxf7+ ♕xf7 42 ♕xf7+ ♔xf7 43 ♔xg4, rather than the natural 38...♖xf7 39 gxf7+ ♕xf7 with decent saving chances for Black.

38... ♖e5 39 ♖xf8+

Again possible was 39 ♗xg5 when 39...♖xf7 40 gxf7+ ♕xf7 41 ♗f6 ♖e6 42 g5 leaves White with strong protected passed pawns. Vilner's sharper approach is rewarded.

39...♕xf8 40 ♕b3+ ♔h8

Or 40...♔g7 41 ♕xb7+ ♘e7 42 ♗xg5 ♖xg5 43 ♖e2 ♖xg4+ 44 ♔f1! – Tkachenko.

41 ♕h3+ ♔g7??

Necessary was 41...♕h6 42 ♕xh6+ ♗xh6 43 ♗xh6 ♖e6 when 44 ♗d2 (Tkachenko's materialistic 44 g7+ ♔h7 45 g5 hems in the bishop and 45...d3 46 ♖d2 ♖d6 47 ♔f3 ♘a5 48 ♔e4 ♘b3 49 ♖d1 d2 may save Black) 44...♖xg6 45 g5 ♖e6 46 f4 sees White continue to press.

42 ♕h7+ ♔f6 43 f4! ♖e7 44 g7! 1-0

This well-presented, original book is both historically informative and thoroughly entertaining.

James Vigus

An Attacking Repertoire with 1.d4 Part 3 (King's Indian, Grünfeld and Sidelines)
Nicholas Pert, ChessBase PC-DVD;
running time: 5 hours
RRP £26.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £24.25**

Nick Pert completes his 1 d4 and 2 c4 DVD repertoire from last year. There is plenty of coverage of the Dutch (Pert likes 1 d4 f5 2 ♗g5, which he has long played with success), and both 1...d6 and 1...g6, against which the recommendation is to transpose into 1 e4 lines and go for the Austrian Attack. 1...e6 2 c4 also receives a fair bit of attention, but some viewers may be surprised that there isn't more space devoted to the Grünfeld and King's Indian, as Pert only looks at the trendy top-level idea of 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 h4!?, aiming to largely bypass those two venerable defences.

The latest *CBM* is also out, *ChessBase Magazine 196* featuring annotations from the likes of Duda, Firouzja and Giri, as well as Karsten Müller and Simon Williams. This PC-DVD is available from Chess & Bridge for £17.95 or £16.15 for Subscribers.

An Idiot-Proof Chess Opening Repertoire
Graham Burgess, 176 pages, paperback
RRP £17.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £16.19**

Plenty of club players don't really like to study theory, but also don't want to be making it up too early over the board. In this new work for Gambit, help is at hand from experienced author Graham Burgess. He ensures that you should get through the opening with a fully playable position and without needing to know too much theory, thanks to a repertoire based around the English, Scandinavian and a QGA/Slav hybrid.

Beat the Najdorf & Taimanov Sicilians!
S.P. Sethuraman, 250 pages, paperback
RRP £24.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £22.45**

The Indian Grandmaster has something of a reputation as a theoretician and Sicilian killer, so we should not be surprised that for his first book for Thinkers Publishing he has tackled two of the major Sicilians head on. Sethuraman includes a great many new ideas and supplies detailed coverage of two modern ideas, 6 h3 against the Najdorf and 6 ♗e3 a6 7 ♕f3 against the Taimanov.

Daily Chess Training: Chess Tactics Volume 3
Carsten Hansen, 300 pages, paperback
RRP £20.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £18.89**

Leading Danish-American author Carsten Hansen continues to self-publish a large number of works, including this latest puzzle book. As with our *Find the Winning Moves*, all readers know is that there is a strong move to find, not what type of tactic or sacrifice it may be. The level varies from easy to pretty difficult, with the book most certainly suitable for the club player.

Grivas Opening Laboratory Volume 2
Efstratios Grivas, 280 pages, paperback
RRP £23.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £21.55**

The second of six volumes from Chess Evolution devoted to a 1 d4 repertoire. Here the Greek GM, theoretician and trainer tackles the King's Indian, Dutch and Benko. His aim remains sound but challenging lines, so we perhaps shouldn't be too surprised to see the Averbakh being recommended against the KID.

How to Slay the Sicilian Volume 1: 2...d6 3.d4
Roeland Pruijssers & Nico Zwirs, ChessBase
PC-DVD; running time: 13 hours
RRP £26.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £24.25**

Sicilian-bashing repertoires have long been popular and now we have a new, lengthy series from ChessBase devoted to the Open Sicilian. The Dutch presenters like set-ups with ♗e3, so it won't come as a surprise to discover that they meet the Najdorf with 6 ♗e3, although after 6...e6 they go for 7 ♕f3!?. The Classical Sicilian meanwhile is met by 6 f3 and the Dragon with a 9 0-0-0 Yugoslav. Throughout Pruijssers and Zwirs don't fail to explain the key motifs in each line, while revealing a fair few dangerous new ideas.

There are also three companion DVDs, which are all available too for £26.95 or just £24.25 for Subscribers: *How to Slay the Sicilian Volume 2: 2...♘c6 3.d4* (running to 7 hours of coverage, while featuring 5 c4 against the Accelerated Dragon and 9 ♘d5 against the Sveshnikov); *How to Slay the Sicilian Volume 3: 2...e6 3.d4 and others* (running time: 10 hours and largely devoted to a ♗e3 and ♕f3 set-up against the Taimanov); and *Tactic Toolbox Open Sicilian* (7 hours of coverage devoted to all the key sacrificial ideas and positional principles the aspiring Open Sicilian player should know).

Modern Chess Formula: The Powerful Impact of Engines
Vladimir Tukmakov, 496 pages, paperback
RRP £32.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £29.69**

With the lengthy and often highly entertaining games between the likes of *Leela* and *Stockfish* receiving a fair bit of attention these days, we shouldn't be too surprised to see a number of works devoted to the power of the engines. The highly experienced Ukrainian Grandmaster and trainer has, of course, had a great many pupils in both the pre-engine and current eras. He even suggests at times that we are slowly seeing intuition and improvisation being gradually phased out by exact knowledge and calculation. Tukmakov reveals how, whilst breaking his coverage down into how the engines have affected grandmaster play in the opening, middlegame and endgame.

New in Chess Yearbook 135
Peter Boel, René Olthof, Jan Timman (eds.), 256 pages, paperback
RRP £26.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £24.25**

The latest Yearbook unsurprisingly pays homage to the Candidates, with Ian Nepomniachtchi on the cover alongside the headline: 'Nepo outguns Giri's deep English prep'. Inside Erwin L'Ami examines some very topical lines, Glenn Flear reviews the latest books and there are the usual detailed opening surveys, including as many as five on the King's Indian, with one on the Fianchetto KID by Gawain Jones.

Playing the Petroff
Swapnil Dhopade, 328 pages, paperback
RRP £19.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £17.99**

Subtitled 'A concise and bulletproof repertoire against 1.e4', the young Indian GM and theoretician has supplied just that: an immensely solid repertoire for Black with 1 e4 e5, modelled on the games of Caruana and Kramnik. Helpfully Swapnil Dhopade doesn't fail to consider White's second-move alternatives, while existing Petroff players may be interested to note that he advocates 6...♗d6 in the old main line (3 ♘xe5 d6 4 ♘f3 ♘xe4 5 d4 d5 6 ♗d3), meets 3 d4 with 3...♘xe4 4 ♗d3 d5 5 ♘xe5 ♘d7, and against the modern 3 ♘xe5 d6 4 ♘f3 ♘xe4 5 ♘c3 is happy to castle kingside as Black. Do note too that if you'd prefer a hardback version of this work, please just add £4.00 to your order with Chess & Bridge.

Playing the Stonewall Dutch
Nikola Sedlak, 328 pages, paperback
RRP £19.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £17.99**

The Petroff can actually lead to quite an unbalanced struggle, but so can the Stonewall Dutch, which even Magnus Carlsen has turned to on occasion in return years. The Serbian GM author certainly demonstrates that Black receives plenty of dynamic counter-chances in return for the hole on e5 and his supposedly bad light-squared bishop. Sedlak likes to place his other bishop on d6 and even analyses whether Black might manage without the invariable ...c6. He also takes a fairly brief look at White's early deviations and considers meeting both 1 c4 and 1 ♘f3 too with 1...f5. *Playing the Stonewall Dutch* is also available in hardback form if you prefer, for £23.99 or £21.59.

Sergey Karjakin: Best Games of the Minister of Defence
Alexander Kalinin, 230 pages, paperback
RRP £23.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £21.59**

This new work from Elk and Ruby is devoted to the modern leader of the Russian school of chess, a man renowned for being extremely hard to beat and, of course, a former world championship challenger. After a biographical introduction, Russian GM Kalinin turns his attention to 66 of Karjakin's best games, which are grouped by theme and annotated in detail, while fully revealing both Karjakin's positional prowess and, arguably more surprisingly, his keen awareness of dynamic possibilities.

Testbook of Attacking the King
Gerd Treppner, 124 pages, paperback
RRP £12.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £11.65**

This latest English language edition from Joachim Beyer Verlag features 120 instructive positions. In each the reader is faced with a choice of three attacking decisions, which involve both assessing the position and calculating some important moves, after which German FM Gerd Treppner supplies detailed solutions.

The Modernized Sveshnikov
Robert Ris, 328 pages, paperback
RRP £29.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £26.95**

It may not be that common these days at elite level, despite more than one appearance in the 2018 world championship match, but developments continue a tempo in the Sveshnikov. Ris was already aware of many of these and had some new ideas of his own, and now makes good use of both to map out a detailed and fully up-to-date repertoire with the Sveshnikov for Thinkers Publishing.

Think Like A Machine
Noam Manella & Zeev Zohar, 248 pages, hardback
RRP £23.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £21.59**

One by-product of regularly analysing with the leading engines is that a number of quite unexpected, sometimes even breathtaking ideas pop up. The Israeli authors of the earlier *Play Unconventional Chess and Win* are quite aware of that and in this new work present a great number of amazing ideas from the machine. These are generally well explained with the aim of improving not just the reader's creativity, but also their general understanding. Chapters such as 'Total Chess', 'Cold-Blooded Defence' and 'Endgame Fantasy' may do just that.

Quality Chess have certainly been busy of late, releasing not just this fascinating new work and the repertoires by Swapnil and Sedlak, but paperback versions of four modern classics. Both Grigory Levenfish's *Soviet Outcast* and *The Nemesis: Geller's Greatest Games* are available from Chess & Bridge for £22.50 (Subscribers – £20.25), while Michiel Abeln's *The Anand Files* and *Small Steps 2 Success* by Sam Shankland retail at £23.99 (Subscribers – £21.59).