

Volume 84 No. 11 February 2019 £4.95

www.chess.co.uk

Chess

Candidates Confirmed!

GM Ian Nepomniachtchi wins the Jerusalem FIDE Grand Prix to capture the last remaining spot for the Candidates Tournament

ISSN 0964-6221



Classic Drama - Ding Liren and MVL dented Carlsen's almost perfect year

Chess Fever - Mark Ozanne tries to understand why he sacrificed a relationship

He's Ours! - Leon Watson explains how one club is reclaiming its part in history

Chess

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Subscription Rates:

United Kingdom

1 year (12 issues)	£49.95
2 year (24 issues)	£89.95
3 year (36 issues)	£125

Europe

1 year (12 issues)	£60
2 year (24 issues)	£112.50
3 year (36 issues)	£165

USA & Canada

1 year (12 issues)	\$90
2 year (24 issues)	\$170
3 year (36 issues)	\$250

Rest of World (Airmail)

1 year (12 issues)	£72
2 year (24 issues)	£130
3 year (36 issues)	£180

Distributed by:

Post Scriptum (UK only),
Unit G, OYO Business Park, Hindmans Way,
Dagenham, RM9 6LN – Tel: 020 8526 7779

LMPI (North America)
8155 Larrey Street, Montreal (Quebec),
H1J 2L5, Canada – Tel: 514 355-5610

Views expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of the Editors. Contributions to the magazine will be published at the Editors' discretion and may be shortened if space is limited.

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Chess Magazine (ISSN 0964-6221) is published by:
Chess & Bridge Ltd, 44 Baker St, London, W1U 7RT
Tel: 020 7288 1305 Fax: 020 7486 7015
Email: info@chess.co.uk, Website: www.chess.co.uk

FRONT COVER:

Cover Design: Matt Read
Cover image: Niki Riga

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Printed in the UK by The Magazine Printing Company using only paper from FSC/PEFC suppliers www.magprint.co.uk



60 Seconds with... Leon Watson



Born: 28th April 1978, Bishop Auckland, County Durham.

Place of residence: South London, la-la-la.

Occupation: I was a crime reporter, now I work for Chessable.

Enjoyable? It has been a big change, but it's the dream job, genuinely.

And home life? Partner, four-year-old boy and another bun in the oven.

But sometimes good to escape to: White Hart Lane, the home of the mighty Tottenham.

Sports played or followed: I play cricket, but I'm a Spurs season ticket holder.

A favourite novel? I absolutely loved *Everything Is Illuminated* by Jonathan Safran Foer.

Piece of music? I'm a Stone Roses obsessive. The best band in history. 'I Am The Resurrection' gives me goosebumps even after hearing it a million times.

Film or TV series? *The Wire*, *The Sopranos* – as a former crime reporter in South London I

would say those .

What's the best thing about playing chess? Being able to zone out.

And the worst? Losing – everyone knows that!

Your best move? Probably playing less chess and sparing myself the pain.

And a highly memorable opponent? I played Kasparov one-on-one, and beat his a***. No, that's a lie... I got thrashed.

Your favourite game?

N.Short-J.Timman

Tilburg 1991

Alekhine's Defence

1 e4 ♘f6 2 e5 ♘d5 3 d4 d6 4 ♘f3 g6 5 ♙c4 ♘b6 6 ♙b3 ♙g7 7 ♚e2 ♘c6 8 0-0 0-0 9 h3 a5 10 a4 dxe5 11 dxe5 ♘d4 12 ♘xd4 ♚xd4 13 ♚e1 e6 14 ♘d2 ♘d5 15 ♘f3 ♚c5 16 ♚e4 ♚b4 17 ♙c4 ♘b6 18 b3 ♘xc4 19 bxc4 ♚e8 20 ♚d1 ♚c5 21 ♚h4 b6 22 ♙e3 ♚c6 23 ♙h6 ♙h8 24 ♚d8 ♙b7 25 ♚ad1 ♙g7 26 ♚g8d7 ♚f8 27 ♙xg7 ♙xg7 28 ♚1d4 ♚ae8 29 ♚f6+ ♙g8 30 h4 h5



31 ♙h2! ♚c8 32 ♙g3! ♚ce8 33 ♙f4! ♙c8



34 ♙g5! 1-0

The best three chess books: *The King* by Jan Hein Donner is really entertaining and funny, *100 Endgames You Must Know* by Jesus de la Villa (the Chessable version, because it's better), and *Chess Strategy for Club Players* by Herman Grooten.

Is FIDE doing a good job? The jury is still out on the new administration. I think we'll get a better idea soon about which direction it has really gone under Arkady Dvorkovich. Keep an eye on the (now late) General Assembly, because I will be...

Or your National Federation? The ECF is improving, slowly.

Any advice for either? Move into the 21st century, please!

Can chess make one happy? Not being a strong player I wouldn't know. What I do know is that it has an amazing capacity to bring you back down to earth.

A tip please for the club player: Get on Chessable – it's built for you!

One of My Games

I never played in the British Championships as Sam Renshawe does in *Chess Fever*, but I loved to play in the Major Open which is the next best thing. I've always liked the British Championships, especially its quaint seaside holiday atmosphere which forms the background to the deadly professionalism of the top players fighting it out for the title.

Here is one of my shorter games:

P. Marusenko – M. Ozanne
Major Open, Douglas 2005
French Defence

**1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘c3 ♙b4 4 e5 c5 5 a3
♙xc3+ 6 bxc3 ♗e7 7 a4 ♖a5 8 ♙d2
♗bc6 9 ♗f3 ♙d7 10 ♙b5 a6 11 ♙xc6
♗xc6 12 0-0 0-0**

Risky. 12...0-0 would be safer.

13 c4!?

Double-edged. It looks tempting to play this, but it is not clear that White benefits from the destabilising of the centre. 13 ♗e1 is an alternative.

13... ♗c7 14 cxd5 exd5 15 dxc5 f6!?



If 15... ♗e5 then 16 ♙f4 is strong, hence the text attacking the centre at the cost of a pawn.

16 exf6 gxf6

And gaining the open g-file.

17 ♙c3 d4!?

Sacrificing a second pawn to tie up White's pieces.

18 ♙xd4?!

18 ♙xd4 is probably better when I had intended 18... ♗e5 with some compensation.

18... ♙g4 19 c3 ♖hg8 20 ♗h1 ♗d5



Lifting the other rook into the action.

21 ♖b3??

A terrible blunder, especially from an IM. I had been trying to see how to continue after the obvious 21 ♖d3, unpinning the knight. After 21... ♖h5 I have some attacking chances for my two pawns, but no more than that.

21... ♙xf3 22 ♗g1 ♖xh2+! 0-1

Ed. – Chess Fever is published by The Conrad Press: £9.99 paperback and £3.99 e-book.

Chess Marathon

Ben Graff has been playing a lot of chess recently. From rescuing a stranded arbiter, to brushing up on his openings and enjoying a diet optimised for the tournament player, he reveals all...

A rail strike meant I took a late train into London for the first leg of a fifteen-game, four-day chess fest, that would start the following morning. I had tried to explain to my better half that I could not be blamed for any of this. The London Chess Classic and Coventry Rapidplays happened to be on successive days and were followed by two vital league games in Kenilworth's annual bid for mid-table anonymity. What was a chess player to do?

As I headed south through the gloaming, I started to read an opening book that had been sitting on my shelf for quite some time. By High Wycombe, I was convinced I had pretty much got the hang of 1...e5. How hard could it be really? Having employed a similar attitude to my chess for the last thirty-five years, I figured it would have to come good eventually.

I was sure my more general preparations were top notch. I had purchased three bananas and four bars of chocolate to see me through the Saturday, along with a large bottle of water

and a multipack of crisps. All of which bulged from my carrier bag and would doubtless demonstrate to any opponent what a serious player I was. The Security Guard at Olympia was suitably impressed when he inspected my wares. "I've never known any group eat as much as chess players do," he says. "It's important to keep the mind fuelled," I reply. "Does that actually help with your results?" he asks. I tell him no, but being hungry would probably make things even worse.

In the first round, I am Black and after 1 e4 e5 I end up in a terrible position, enter an endgame a pawn down and somehow manage to win, which I try and put down to my natural understanding of the opening. On an adjacent table, two children are playing. The slightly taller one wins and asks his opponent how old he is. "I'm seven," he says. "Well, I'm eight," the victor replies. "I have to say though, you play very well for your age."

In round two, I again win an endgame from a pawn down and wonder if I have stumbled

on some hitherto unknown chess secret. In round three, when I fail to repeat the trick, I realise I have not. I chicken out of repeating 1...e5 in the following game, reverting to my previous choice and proving once more why I really do need to find a replacement system.

During my next encounter, our Editor wanders down to the cheap seats to see how I am doing. He smiles encouragingly and I return a look which is intended to convey a sense that the shambolic mess on the board in front of me, is not of my doing. I don't remember precisely why so many of my pieces have ended up on such odd squares, but there we have it. Somehow, I win this one and we go and drink the free coffee in the VIP area and watch Aronian-Carlsen on the big screen.

Carlsen, who will later draw, appears to be struggling. It seems to me that every chess player essentially faces the same challenges. We're all ultimately human after all. Good days and bad days are inevitable – even if some of us have more of one than the other. Perhaps

Magnus sometimes sits at the board and wonders where the hell that came from, as his opponent unleashes some unconsidered possibility. Then again, perhaps he doesn't. Either way, this is not a game that is meant to be easy. Our Editor nods politely and wishes me well for the rest of the marathon.

Inevitably things go wrong. I lose a game I vaguely feel I shouldn't have done and eventually go into the final round on 4/6. For a while this looks as if this might never start. A pairing from round six in which White has two rooks and a bishop to the black queen appears destined to play out until the end of time on the increment. Nothing else can start until it is done. While we wait, the man sat next to me asks if his opponent has been following the Carlsen game during the breaks. "Don't you think I have enough to worry about with my chess as it is?" she replies. We are instructed to leave our bank account details if we think we might have won a prize, which causes general amusement amongst us also-rans.

Eventually the black queen runs out of checks and the final round gets underway, only for me to walk into an opening trap within seconds and – not just that – one I know well. I play on purely to avoid the embarrassment of resigning so quickly and then my opponent returns the favour with a blunder and we draw. We resolve never to speak of this again.

I coax the arbitration team and John Nunn into a group photo before heading back to the Midlands. I consider getting out the opening book to brush up for the morning, but ultimately elect to focus on refuelling properly for the following day. With a sausage roll and can of lager purchased at Marylebone station, I know I am well placed to be in prime condition for the Coventry Rapidplay.

The next morning, I arrive early at the Massey Ferguson Club, to a scene of chaos. Tables are still being pulled into place, very few boards are set up, and most of the local players seem to have deemed this the perfect moment to give the organisers a ring to put in their entry. I offer to help and am asked if I have a car. I reply yes, somewhat guardedly, at which point I am dispatched to Tile Hill Station to pick up the Chief Arbiter, Dave Thomas, whose train has been delayed. The event gets underway 20 minutes late, despite the quality of my driving and not at all because of the photos I made Dave pose for in the car park.

This tournament was always going to be more difficult, as I'm in the Open section. I start with a wild game against Nathaniel Paul – who is much my superior – but by some miracle I beat last time out. I wonder whether it might work more to my advantage if he remembers this or does not. Either way, after a tactical game in which I miss the key defensive resource, I am summarily dispatched.

I then play Rohan Pal, a ten-year-old Coventry Chess Academy star, and win from a terrible position, in which at one awful point in the opening my king ended up stuck on e2. The



Well fuelled by caffeine we see Ben in action against rising star Rohan Pal at the Coventry Rapidplay, the second leg of his chess marathon – only seven more games to go!

victory was more than I deserved, and the Chess Gods exact their price as I go down in the next two games. Still at least no one has played 1 e4 today, so my decision not to study this further on the train has been fully vindicated.

It would be rude not to enjoy the hospitality at the Coventry event, and the chips and bacon baps on offer nicely compliment the chocolate and crisps I had consumed earlier in the day. I might not be winning, but it seems unlikely that I will starve either. Don Mason, the strongest player in the Open, is not having the best of tournaments, but then neither are the struggling opponents who face him, as he clicks into gear in the later rounds. We chat in one of the breaks about balancing chess and other commitments. Life is busy for both of us, just as it doubtless is for every player here today.

Perhaps what we all have in common is that whatever else is going on in our lives, anywhere there is chess from the grandest venues, like Olympia, through to the Massey Ferguson Club, we all feel the same call. The same desire to play and participate. Even if when we review our results, we sometimes wish we didn't. That sense of optimism as to what can occasionally be possible on those rare occasions when everything goes right most likely plays a part in keeping many of us hanging on. Even if I sometimes think the successful days are perhaps the equivalent of a poker player winning the occasional hand and then paying it back out ten times over.

I scramble to a win in round 5, before going down to a player who has a rapidplay grade 50 ECF points lower than his standard play rating in the final round. He had reassured me beforehand that he was "terrible" at rapidplay, which somehow, I now find a touch annoying. After thirteen games of chess I have scored 6.5 points. Exactly 50%. I try and convince myself that I won't have lost rating points,

even though I know I probably have.

Still, I am confident that I am now fully practised for my slow play games against Rugby on the Monday night and Coventry on the Tuesday. Things begin promisingly when Rugby tell us they are starting a man down in a four-board match. I play Jonathan Cox and for once I look like I know what I am doing. I sacrifice a piece, open the h-file, but then inexplicably miss a forced mate that would have made this a good game. Jonathan misses a defensive resource and I win anyway, but despite beating a strong opponent I still feel somewhat flat. I can't even play my good games properly. We obviously lose the other two games to draw 2-2.

That night I dream I am in a never-ending game of chess. My chessmen dance in front of me, the rooks refusing to move to the squares that would have mated Jonathan. I speculate as to whether so much chess is starting to adversely affect me. My wife points out that she has been saying as much for years. It is certainly a powerful drug.

I arrive at Kenilworth's venue on the Tuesday feeling tired, but ready to go one more time. For most of the evening against Ed Goodwin I am practically lost, and I reflect that losing will move me back to level across the fifteen games, which will give the ending of this piece a nice poetic symmetry if nothing else. Just as I am contemplating this, Ed blunders and I win.

My fifteen-game, four-day marathon is at an end. Besides a slight headache, I feel both a sense of relief and loss now it is done. Another happening that starts out as experience and then transforms into story. It was great to be a part of the London Chess Classic in some small way. The Coventry Rapidplay was also a lot of fun. For a player like me, '+2' is an epic triumph, even if I know that I have spent most of my games wrestling my own limitations as

much as my opponent's skill. Still, my passion to play some more is entirely undimmed. Perhaps 2020 could be the year...

I had dreamed of sharing some 'brilliance' with *CHESS* readers, but inevitably 15 games were not a sufficient sample. John Nunn does so much for our game and bumping into him at the London Chess Classic reminded me of when we played in a simultaneous. My thanks to Mike Donnelly for his help with the notes to what was a most interesting encounter.

J.Nunn-B.Graff
Hanwell (simul) 2014
French Defence

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘c3 dxe4 4 ♗xe4 ♙d7 5 ♖f3 ♙c6 6 ♙d3 ♗d7 7 0-0 ♗gf6 8 ♖e2

White may also try and retain pieces with the retreat 8 ♗g3, but Black can achieve a reasonable game via 8...♙e7, or 8...g6 9 ♖e2 ♙g7, as in So-Carlsen, Internet (blitz) 2017.

8...♗xe4 9 ♙xe4 ♙xe4 10 ♖xe4 c6

The more active 10...c5 is too risky as White, being well ahead in development, may safely grab a pawn with 11 ♙g5 ♙e7 12 ♙xe7 ♖xe7 13 ♖xb7.

11 c4

Gaining space and controlling d5 is White's most natural choice.

11...♗f6 12 ♖c2 ♙e7 13 ♙f4 0-0



So far, so good!

14 ♖ad1

14 ♖b3, attacking b7, could be met simply by 14...♖b6, but not the structurally weakening 14...b6 when White is a touch better after 15 ♖ad1.

14...♖a5 15 a3 ♖fe8

Also fine for Black is 15...♖fd8 16 ♖fe1 ♖ac8 since now the aggressive move 17 ♗e5?! fails to 17...♖xd4!, De Firmian-Saidy, Las Vegas 1992.

16 ♖fe1 ♖ac8 17 ♗e5 b5 18 ♖e2 bxc4 19 ♗xc4 ♖d8 20 ♗e5 ♗d5 21 ♙d2 ♙d6 22 ♖c1 c5 23 dxc5 ♙xc5 24 b4 ♙d6 25 ♗c6 ♖b6

25...♙h2+ was in fact playable, but after 26 ♙xh2 ♖d6+ 27 ♗e5 (not 27 ♙g1 ♖xc6 and Black is a safe pawn up) 27...f6 28 b5 ♖xe5+ 29 ♖xe5 fxe5 30 ♖xe5 White is to be slightly preferred due to the weak e6-pawn and that he has a bishop for a knight in



What is the collective noun for a group of fine chess arbiters, a former British Champion (John Nunn - centre, front row), and an also-ran? A gaggle of chess enthusiasts perhaps?

an open position, so overall this was best avoided against a GM.

26 b5



Quite a deep move, not only supporting the strong c6-knight, but offering the a3-pawn.

26...a6

A consistent plan attempting to undermine the knight. Instead, 26...♙xa3 gives White good play after 27 ♖a1 ♙c5 (or 27...♙f8 28 ♖a6 ♖b7 29 ♖xa7, while here 28...♖xa6 29 bxa6 ♖xc6 obtains sufficient material for the queen, but White still has the better chances after 30 ♖b1 as the rook could penetrate to b7) 28 ♖ec1 and ♖a6 will be strong.

27 a4 axb5 28 axb5 ♖a8

Black controls the open file as some compensation for the passed b-pawn and strongly posted white knight.

29 ♖b1

Securing b5, but 29 ♖c4, preventing Black's next active move, looks more purposeful.

29...♖a2 30 ♖d3 ♖ea8 31 ♙e3 ♙c5 32 ♙xc5 ♖xc5 33 ♖d4 ♖xd4 34 ♗xd4

This looks good for White with the b-pawn ready to rush forward, but I now manage to defend accurately.

34...♖d2

Blockading the pawn with 34...♗b6 was also feasible, but after 35 ♖ec1 White might

make progress with ♖c6 at some point.

35 ♗b3

35 b6? just doesn't work as Black has 35...♖xd4 (but not 35...♗xb6 due to 36 ♗xe6 - 36 ♖xb6 is weaker because of 36...♖xd4 - 36...fxe6 37 ♖xb6 with a level ending) 36 b7 ♖b8 37 ♖ec1 ♗e7 38 ♖c7 ♙f8 which prevents the decisive ♖c8+ and so Black retains an extra piece.

35...♖c2 36 ♖ec1 ♖aa2 37 ♖xc2 ♖xc2 38 ♖c1 ♖xc1+ 39 ♗xc1



The question now: Is White's advanced pawn on b5 strong or weak?

39...♙f8

Correctly hurrying the king to the queenside.

40 ♗d3 ♙e7 41 f4 f6

Preventing the knight coming to e5 as shown in the following line: 41...♙d6 42 ♙f2 ♙c7 43 ♙f3 ♙b6 44 ♗e5 f6 45 ♗d7+ ♙xb5 and although Black has won the b5-pawn, White restores material equality with 46 ♗f8.

42 ♙f2 ♙d7

Too risky is the attempt to win the pawn with the knight via 42...♗c3 as White can play 43 b6 ♙d6 (43...♗a4 loses simply to 44 b7 and the pawn queens) 44 ♗c5 ♗d5 45 b7 ♙c7 46 ♗xe6+ ♙xb7 47 ♙f3

(if 47 ♖xg7 ♜xf4) 47...g6 48 ♜f8, picking up a pawn, with significant winning chances due to Black's distant king and lack of coordination between knight and pawns.

43 ♜f3 ♜c7 44 ♜c5 ♜d6 45 ♜b3

White tries another path as 45 ♜e4+ ♜c7 46 ♜c5 would repeat moves. Obviously Black is being forced to continue to work hard to avoid losing.

45...♜c7 46 h4 h5



Again solid play in preventing a cramping h4-h5 by White. Another possibility was 46...♜b6 47 ♜d4 e5 48 fxe5 fxe5 49 ♜c6

♜xb5 50 ♜xe5 which is a more difficult draw as White's king can advance rapidly towards the pawns, but Black can just hold with very careful play: for example, 50...♜f6 51 ♜f4 (or 51 g4 ♜d5 52 g5 ♜c5 53 ♜e4 ♜c3+ 54 ♜f5 ♜d5 55 ♜e6 ♜d4) 51...♜d5+ 52 ♜f5 ♜e3+.

47 g3 ♜b6 48 ♜d4 ♜c7

Straightforward defence. Alternatively, 48...e5 49 fxe5 fxe5 50 ♜e6 requires Black to find 50...♜f6 (definitely not 50...♜xb5 as White wins with 51 ♜e4) 51 ♜xg7 ♜xb5 with a draw.

49 ♜e4 ♜c5 50 f5

White persistently finds ways to create problems for Black.

50...exf5+

50...e5? seems at first glance to win the b5-pawn, but in fact loses to 51 ♜e6+ ♜b6 (or 51...♜xe6 52 fxe6 ♜d6 53 b6 ♜xe6 54 b7 and queens) 52 ♜xg7 ♜xb5 53 ♜xh5 when f6 falls.

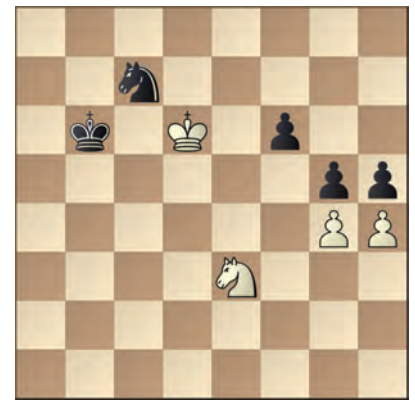
51 ♜xf5 ♜e6

51...♜xb5? 52 ♜xg7 is another winning line for White.

52 b6 ♜xb6 53 ♜d5 ♜c7+ 54 ♜d6 g6

Just in time Black gains a tempo to commence exchanging off pawns.

55 ♜e3 g5 56 g4



Yet another curve-ball.

56...♜e8+

This timely check just saves Black. Certainly not 56...hxg4? 57 h5 or 56...gxh4? 57 gxh5 and White snatches victory in both cases.

57 ♜e7 gxh4 58 gxh5

Now forced as 58 ♜xe8?, winning a piece, loses to 58...h3 59 ♜f1 hxg4 and ...f5 follows when the knight can't hold back all the pawns.

58...h3 59 ♜f1 ♜g7 60 ♜xf6

Similarly, 60 h6 ♜f5+ and ...♜xh6 eliminates the last pawn to draw.

60...♜xh5+ ½-½

Phew, that was tough!



Forthcoming Events

Jan 31 - Feb 2 Frodsham Congress

www.kisekigo.com/frodsham or call 0151 339 6561

February 1-2 Weekend Chess U2200 Congress, Birmingham

www.firstweekendchess.org.uk or call 07999 067969

February 1-2 Kidlington Congress

kidlingtonchess.org.uk or call 01865 727419

February 1 Ulster Rapidplay Championships, Newry

www.ulsterchess.org/events

February 6 Hendon 'First Thursday' Blitz

www.hendonchessclub.com or call 07855 036537

February 7-9 Perth Congress

congress.popmalc.org.uk/congress/54/home or call 01772 434060

February 8-9 4NCL, Daventry, Maidenhead & Blackrod

www.4ncl.co.uk or call 01993 708645

February 8 Golders Green Rapidplay

goldersgreenchess.blogspot.com or call 07855 036537

Feb 14-16 Bristol Winter Congress

www.bristolcongress.co.uk

Feb 14-16 Dyfed Congress, Fishguard

www.dyfed-chess.org or call 07811 852829

Feb 15-16 Hampstead U2200 Congress

hampsteadchess.blogspot.com or call 07855 036537

February 16 Leyland Rapidplay

congress.popmalc.org.uk/congress/55/home or call 01772 434060

February 16 Nottingham Rapidplay

nottsches.org or call 0115 945 5908

February 18 Muswell Hill Rapidplay

muswellhillchess.blogspot.com or call 07855 036537

Feb 21-23 Bunratty Chess Festival

www.bunrattychess.com

Feb 21-23 Doncaster Congress

mannchess.org.uk/doncong.htm

Feb 21-23 Warwickshire Open Championships, Coventry

www.congress.warwickshirechess.org or call 07528 611483

Feb 22-23 BUCA Championships, Birmingham

www.bucachess.org.uk

February 22 Poplar Rapidplay

www.spanglefish.com/docklandschessclub

Feb 28 - Mar 1 Fareham Congress

www.castlechess.co.uk or call 01707 659080

February 29 - March 1 4NCL, Daventry

www.4ncl.co.uk or call 01993 708645

And for the Online Connoisseur:

January 20-31 Gibraltar Chess Festival

www.gibchess.com; Adams, Jones, Vachier-Lagrave, Vitiugov, etc.

February 11-22 Prague Chess Festival

praguechessfestival.com; Duda, Harikrishna, Vitiugov, Wei Yi etc.

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This Month's New Releases

Kaufman's New Repertoire for Black and White

Larry Kaufman, 460 pages

New in Chess

RRP £26.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £24.25**

It is probable that many chess players think about changing at least part of their opening repertoire as we head into a new year. It fits in with the concepts of change and renewal. For some, it will be as far as their resolutions will ever extend. It is therefore timely that there are a number of new repertoire books on the market, with each one making a tempting case to attract newcomers to their wares.

Those who enjoyed *Kaufman's Repertoire for Black and White* (New in Chess, 2013) will be wondering whether this new one is a worthy upgrade. For Black, the repertoire is still based on 1 e4 e5 and the Grünfeld against 1 d4, but it has all been updated to incorporate many recent developments. The Marshall Attack has also been added to help Black play against the Ruy Lopez, but the Breyer has been retained as a serious option. There is even a chapter looking at the Moller Defence (1 e4 e5 2 ♖f3 ♗c6 3 ♘b5 a6 4 ♘a4 ♗f6 5 0-0 ♘c5) to give a further option.

Everything has changed for White. 1 d4 has been replaced by 1 e4, but don't expect to see long lines balancing on the cutting edge of modern theory. As Kaufman says: "The main theme of the book, especially the White portion, is that you can obtain good positions, meaning slightly favourable ones as Black, without having to play the most complex, theory-heavy lines in most cases. I was pleasantly surprised to see how little Whites gives up by avoiding the most critical lines."

Going back to 1 e4 for White brings back the ghost of the first version of Kaufman's book (*The Chess Advantage in Black and White*, Random House, 2004), and some of the variations – such as the Tarrasch against the French – are common to both. Some openings now have more than one suggestion. Against the Caro-Kann, for instance, Kaufman offers material on 3 exd5, 3 ♗c3 and then the main weapon, the Two Knights' variation. The coverage is not encyclopaedic, of course, and often heads into more obscure waters, such as 1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 ♗c3 dxe4 4 ♗xe4 ♙f5 5 ♗f3 and 1 e4 c6 2 ♗c3 d5 3 ♗f3 dxe4 4 ♗xe4 ♗f6 5 ♗e2, which might reap the very occasional early checkmate.

The repertoire provides for both the Italian and Spanish games after 1 e4 e5 and a lot of ground is covered in not many pages; just 40 for both openings. The Sicilian is met by 2 ♗c3, again with some unusual twists. 1 e4 c5 2 ♗c3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♗xd4 ♗c6 5 ♗d2 is a new one on me, with b3, ♘b2, 0-0-0 and a kingside attack to follow. If Black cleverly angles into the main lines, White fianchettoes the king's bishop instead and follows a more positional path. An alternative approach is given too, with 2 ♗f3 and then 3 ♘b5(+) against 2...♗c6 and 2...d6.

To demonstrate the inclusion of recent developments, the trendy and mysterious-looking **1 e4 c5 2 ♗f3 d6 3 ♘b5+ ♗d7 4 ♘a4!** is one of the recommendations. Moving the bishop for the second time looks slow, but there are some very interesting points. After the further moves **4...♗f6 5 0-0 a6** White can play the surprising **6 c4!**



White is gaining a favourable Maroczy Bind, because his bishop is more active than it would be on e2. Black is now advised not to take the gambit pawn, as after **6...♗xe4?!** [Ed. – Black also struggled after 6...e5 in *Adams-Gordon, Torquay 2019*, as covered in the September CHESS] **7 ♙e1 ♗ef6 8 d4 cxd4 9 ♗xd4 e6 10 ♗c3 ♙e7 11 ♗xe6 fxe6 12 ♗xe6 ♗a5 13 ♘d2** "White is clearly better."

It is useful to have an entire repertoire – for both colours – in a single book. The downside is that some lines will need to be backed up with by a significant amount of further reading in order to put more flesh on the bones. Nevertheless, this would be a good starting point for anyone wanting to give their openings a major overhaul.

Sean Marsh



Keep It Simple: 1.d4

Christof Sielecki, 428 pages

New in Chess

RRP £26.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £24.25**

Sielecki's earlier volume on 1 e4 was well received and even won the ChessPub 2018 Book of the Year award. The ethos remains the same, with the book offering "Variations that are straightforward and easy to remember, and require little or no maintenance." To this end, the universal approach of 1 d4, 2 ♗f3, 3 g3, 4 ♘g2 and 5 0-0 is utilised (with 6 c4 following "in most cases"). Naturally, this means playing the Catalan against classical 1...d5 adherents, allowing the Queen's Indian rather than the Nimzo, and adopting the Fianchetto variation against the King's Indian Defence.

Black still has lots of different ways to play, of course; 35 chapters are needed to cover all bases. White is aiming to avoid early conflict with these lines and to reach a decent middlegame. The move orders are usually slightly unusual (for example, most 1 d4 players will play 2 c4 automatically instead of delaying the most natural move), and this will help to place the opponents in territory which they may find less familiar. "We want to fight on our ground. Not on the ground the opponent chooses." This rules out some of the trickiest defences for Black, with the Benoni family given especially short shrift.

After 1 d4 ♗f6 2 ♗f3 g6 3 g3 c5, the recommendation is to eschew the advance 4 d5 and to opt instead for 4 dxc5. "In my mind, this line sets Black some problems that are not easy to solve over the board. I need to emphasize that this line is based solely on fresh analysis and has never been covered in a book, so Black players are unlikely to know anything about it, but rather have to figure it out on their own." Salient points include White holding on to the pawn after 4...♗a6 5 ♘e3 ♗c7 6 ♗d4 and the idea of meeting 4...♗xc5 with 5 ♗fd2, when the knight will be able to kick the queen around after a subsequent ♗b3.

Only 1 d4 c5 and 1 d4 ♗f6 2 ♗f3 c5 tempt White to advance with d4-d5, but even here all Black's hopes of a sharp Modern Benoni are dashed by 3 d5 e6 4 ♗c3.

Incidentally, Benko fans will not be happy to see 1 d4 ♘f6 2 ♘f3 c5 3 d5 b5 4 c3. This odd-looking move plans 4...g6 5 e4 ♘xe4 6 ♙xb5 (without the preparatory 4 c3 this would all fail to ...♙a5+). Another idea can be seen after ♙c1-g5xf6; after...♙xf6 the b2-pawn isn't automatically attacked.

Black players with a well-structured repertoire will automatically home in on any perceived weakness in the 1 d4, 2 ♘f3, 3 g3 order of moves. Delaying 2 c4 allows Black to play an early ...b5, which is a good way to play provided Black is careful to not slip up in the sharper attempts offered in the book. That is always the problem; fresh positions produce original nuances, such as this one:

1 d4 ♘f6 2 ♘f3 e6 3 g3 b5 4 ♙g2 ♙b7 5 0-0 c5 6 ♙g5 ♘a6 7 e4 h6 8 ♙xf6 ♙xf6 9 ♘e5 d6



Black looks fine, but there is a stinger on the road to comfort.

10 ♘c6!

This shot is not winning on the spot, but Black would need to play very carefully to avoid slipping into a substantially worse position.

Of course, one cannot avoid all of the main lines. In addition to entering the worlds of the Catalan and Queen's Indian, White will take the Dutch bull by the g3 horns and enter into the heavy positional waters, in which his knights will swim around looking to control key squares. Against the Stonewall, for example, the f3-knight flips over to d3 and the b1-knight finds its way to f3, with a synchronised assault on the weak e5 point.

Anyone adopting the recommended repertoire should not expect to win many games quickly, but short defeats will be completely ruled out. The author has amassed plenty of interesting new material and it would be very interesting to try some of it over the board. Anyone who liked the style of *Keep It Simple: 1 e4* (New in Chess, 2018) will find themselves quite at home here too.

Sean Marsh



Soviet Outcast: The Life and Games of Grigory Levenfish

Grigory Levenfish, 304 pages
Quality Chess

RRP £26.50 **SUBSCRIBERS £23.85**

This is the latest in the impressive Quality Chess series of Chess Classics. The main part of the book is a translation by Douglas Griffin of a memoir with annotated games never previously published in English. Grigory Levenfish (1889-1961) competed at the top level over a long period, yet if his name is familiar at all, it is as co-author (with Vassily Smyslov) of the theoretical manual *Rook Endings*. As *Soviet Outcast* proves, both his games and life story deserve to be much better known.

Levenfish's work appeared in the USSR in 1967. According to Gennady Sosonko (*Russian Silhouettes*, New in Chess 2001, p. 191), Levenfish complained that much material was cut from it, presumably due to Soviet censorship. This may help to explain certain gaps in the narrative, which Griffin fills in with a light touch (Griffin's personal website, with materials including a short biography of Levenfish and annotated games discovered since the publication of this book, is also highly informative).

Levenfish recounts his early successes in St Petersburg before the First World War. He explains that he remained an amateur for the majority of his life, graduating as a chemist and working as a glass manufacturer. In 1932, however, Levenfish suddenly "Found himself with a lot of free time": Griffin tells us that the leading Russian master fell victim to state paranoia during Stalin's Five-Year Plan, coming under suspicion of sabotage when some defective glass was found to have contributed to a train crash (p. 99). Deprived of his job, Levenfish took up chess full time, with remarkable results.

He won the USSR Championship in 1934-35 and retained his title in 1937, whereupon he was challenged to a match by Mikhail Botvinnik. An exciting match ended in a draw. Levenfish was rightly proud of his crushing victory against Botvinnik in game two (pp. 180-82). This proved the high-point of his chess career. With his highly cultivated, pre-revolutionary background Levenfish never found favour with the Soviet authorities who supported other grandmasters. He experienced spectacular hardship in the Second World War (pp. 211-12), yet survived to achieve third place in the USSR Championship as late as 1949. His demolition of Smyslov in the latter tournament (pp. 217-19) is one of the most memorable among many sparkling games.

In addition to the 79 games annotated by Levenfish in the memoir, Griffin has collected a further selection of additional games published in Soviet sources. This is an excellent feature: Griffin has dug out some gems. Equally welcome is Jacob Aagaard's analytical Afterword. Rather than intervene directly in Levenfish's annotations, Aagaard presents a set of themed corrections here. It

is inevitable that notes written before the computer age will contain errors. Respectful of his 'great predecessor', Aagaard draws the reader's attention to the difficulty of Levenfish's task by challenging us to spot mistakes in his variations. Even if his own work is not totally error-free (diagram 19 on p. 269 has the wrong player to move), it seems to me a model for scrutinising classic annotations.

Levenfish's game notes are concise and instructive, and often interspersed with witty and psychologically incisive anecdotes about his opponents and other figures in the chess world. Stylistically, Levenfish began his career as a tactician, gradually developing a more universal approach as he grew older. Here is an example of his youthful calculating prowess: if you want to test yourself, try to work out 18 ♘xe6! as far as you can before reading on.

G. Levenfish-S. Alapin
Vilnius 1912



18 ♘xe6! fxe6 19 ♙xe6+ ♙f8 20 ♙c7 ♘d5 21 ♙c4 ♙d6 22 ♙f5+ ♘f6

22...♙f6 23 ♙xh7 and 22...♙f6 23 ♙xd5 25 ♙xh7 are variations given by Levenfish.

23 ♙e1!

Threatening 24 ♙xe7.

23...♙d8 24 ♘c6! ♙xc7

24...♙xc6 allows mate in three, 24...♙xc6 25 ♙xe8+! mate in five.

25 ♘xa7

And White went on to win, as 25...♙xa7 loses to 26 ♙e5 ♙d7 27 ♙c5+, picking up the rook.

Levenfish's relative weaknesses included a tendency to let opponents off the hook, and over-optimism about his combinations. Though a classical player in terms of openings, preferring mainline 1 e4 and 1 d4 lines as White, Levenfish had a gambling streak. An interesting analytical error not picked up by Aagaard occurs in a game with Levenfish's frequent opponent and fellow author, Peter Romanovsky.

