

CHESS HORIZONS

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*Understanding the
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About MACA

The Massachusetts Chess Association is an educational non-profit organization whose purpose is to promote chess in Massachusetts and represent the interest of chess players within the state to the governing body of chess in the United States, **The United States Chess Federation (USCF)**.

As part of its role as a state organization, MACA has programs in place to support the existing chess community as well as promote chess among schools and the general public. Highlights of these programs are:



Providing at least four major tournaments each year:

Massachusetts Open (State Championship)
Massachusetts Game/60 Championship
Greater Boston Open
Pillsbury Memorial



Running a scholastic program, which consists of a series of tournaments to determine the state's scholastic champions as well as "warm up" tournaments throughout the year. Free boards and sets are provided to schools and clubs through MACA's **Comeau and Living Memorial Chess Fund (LMCF)**.

Quarterly publication of the award winning *Chess Horizons*, a journal of regional, national and international chess news and features.

Promotion and development of chess in correctional institutions through our Prison Chess program.

We hope you will chose to join MACA and enjoy the benefits of membership while knowing that you are helping to promote chess throughout Massachusetts.

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP RATES

(Includes Subscription to Chess Horizons unless otherwise noted.)

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Make checks payable to MACA and mail to:

Gus Gosselin, PO Box 1255, Melrose, MA 02176
(781) 397-0919, GGosse1600@aol.com

Dues are non-refundable

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THE CHESS WORLD'S PICTURE MAGAZINE

PREMIER ISSUE

SPRING 2003



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Four times per year: Spring • Summer • Fall • Winter 2003

SUBSCRIPTION: \$25 (USA) before May 1, 2003; \$30 after
International \$32.50 surface (\$40 air); add \$5 after. (Sample copy \$9.50)

Published by

Thinkers' Press, Inc.

P.O. Box 3037

Davenport, IA 52808-3037

Visa/Mastercard Accepted

call toll free: 1-800-397-7117

Each issue is a minimum of 64 (8.5x11) pages. No news, no politics, just bringing back chess the way it used to be: fun, enjoyable, and memorable by chess lovers for chess lovers.

Chess in the Breakdown Lane

Tim Hanke

Perhaps you have heard the little anecdote about the grandmaster, I think it was Savielly Tartakover, who was strolling with a friend in Paris many years ago. They passed a chess game in progress at a table in a café. Tartakover, who caught the merest glimpse of the board as they walked by, remarked to his companion, "They are good players."

Chess is a game of pattern recognition. A body of research shows a strong correlation between the sheer quantity of positions a chessplayer can recognize quickly, and practical chessplaying strength. Tartakover was a grandmaster, and he could "read" a chess position with one passing glance.

What does this mean for the amateur chessplayer who wants to improve? For one thing, it suggests there is a definite place in your training routine for simple drills, especially tactical drills. Drills help to fix in your mind simple concepts that must be second nature in order for you to play well.

Too many players shun lower-level chess books because they think such books are below them. After all, why should a Class A player have to review simple checkmates or combinations? He already has seen them all and understands them all.

But think of the high-level pianist. Every day he performs endless finger exercises that present little or no challenge to his virtuosity. Why? He does it because he knows he must keep his muscles supple, and he knows it is important for the simplest things to become automatic.

Think also of the process of learning a second language. If you are not lucky enough to learn a language as a child, or by total immersion in the culture, you have to learn it by drill and practice.

Most of us can remember sitting in a foreign-language class and repeating simple phrases, in various permutations, over and over again. The point of the drill was not to teach you a

Tim Hanke, former U.S. Chess Journalist of the Year, has been on the road to national master for 30 years. Unfortunately he has taken a few detours.

new idea: you already understood what the phrases meant. The point was to make these simple concepts second nature, so you wouldn't even have to think when it came time to use them. When someone says to you in Spanish, "Gracias," you don't want to have to translate the Spanish word into "Thank you," and you don't want to have to translate "You're welcome" back into the Spanish phrase "De nada." The process should be automatic and instantaneous, without thought: "Gracias." "De nada."

As a chessplayer, you should think of training your brain the same way.

The Importance of Tactical Drill

Tactical drills are especially important, and should be practiced every day. Think you are too good for that? Viktor Korchnoi, one of the strongest grandmasters of all time and ranked #2 in the world for several years back in the 1970s and early '80s, supposedly spends a chunk of time every day on tactical drills.

We can probably assume Korchnoi's tactical drills are more sophisticated than we need as chess amateurs. As a player currently rated about 2000, I can recommend several books you will probably find extremely useful for tactical drills. You will benefit by working through these books again ... and again ... and again. In fact, if you are like me, you will probably never cease to benefit from these books.

Remember: even when you know how to solve every combination in the book, the simple act of solving it again will help to reinforce the pattern in your mind. Remember the pianist and his finger exercises. Remember the language learner and his drills. The point is to practice the pattern—even if you already know how it works!

Here are some of my top book recommendations for tactical drill, from easier to harder:

Chernev and Reinfeld, *Winning Chess: How to See Three Moves Ahead*

The existence of chess can only be justified by the necessity of making errors.
Savielly Tartakower

Renaud and Kahn, *Art of the Checkmate*

Reinfeld, *1001 Brilliant Ways to Checkmate*

Reinfeld, *1001 Winning and Instructive Combinations*

Classic Mating Patterns

When you see a classic pattern such as mate with rook and bishop you say, "Yes, of course, very simple."

The advantage to you of doing regular tactical drills, especially mating drills, is that such patterns will always be in the forefront of your mind. You will not just recognize these patterns on the board, you will be better able to foresee them and create them in your own games. You will understand that games like the following do not depend on strokes of inspiration, but on familiarity with basic mating patterns.

My opponent in this game had already beaten IM Igor Foygel two rounds earlier. I knew if he could beat a 2560 player, he could certainly beat me—so I played very carefully!

White: Tim Hanke (2000)

Black: Trevor de Koekoek (1950)

[B22] MetroWest CC May 2003 Swiss (3), 21.05.2003

1.e4 c5 2.c3

The Sicilian 2.c3 Variation is relatively easy to play for White, and often leads to the kind of attacking positions I like.

2...Nf6 3.e5 Nd5 4.d4 cxd4 5.cxd4 e6 6.Nf3 b6

Believe it or not, I thought for 11 minutes on my next move. The ...b6 idea is not one I am used to seeing in this opening. Usually when I see ...b6 I am happy, but here I realized it could be a prelude to ...Ba6 forcing me to trade off my white-squared bishop. This bishop is key to the kingside attack I am already planning. Probably Black had no intention of playing ...Ba6, but I had to take it into account. I even considered 7.Qa4 to prevent 7...Ba6, but decided that was excessive.

7.Nc3 Nxc3 8.bxc3

See Diagram Next Page



Black has created a target on c3, but at the cost of a few knight moves. White has a good pawn structure for a kingside attack, and could possibly play c4 if Black tries to trade bishops with a future ...Ba6. In some variations ...Ba6 could even lose a piece for Black, after x...Ba6 y.Bxa6 Nxa6 z.Qa4+.

8...Qc7

Black immediately attacks the weak c3 pawn. But which is more important: the white c3 pawn or the black king?

9.Bd2 Bb7 10.Bd3 d6 11.0-0 Nd7

12.Re1 Be7 13.Rc1 0-0 14.Qe2 Rfd8

Black correctly intends to place his two rooks on the c- and d- files, which are likely to become open.

15.Bf4



The tension on e5 is at its height. As always in a kingside attack, the Pe5 keeps the black knight from f6, its natural defensive square. White defends the Pe5 with no less than five pieces: Q, R, B, N, and P. Black attacks it with three pieces: Q, N, and P.

15...Bxf3

At one stroke Black removes the influence of two White pieces on e5. I briefly considered recapturing with 16.gxf3, which keeps the Q focused on e5 and opens the g- file toward Black's king, but rejected it as too ugly.

16.Qxf3 dxe5 17.dxe5 Nc5

Black immediately grabs the square

c5 for his N with gain of tempo by attacking the white-squared B, but I was actually pleased to see the move. The N is moving away from the black king, which indicates Black sees little danger on the kingside.

18.Bb1

Played without much thought. I have won many an attacking game with a B on b1. Interestingly, Fritz8 thinks 18.Bc2 is very slightly better, perhaps because it prevents ...Na4 as occurred in the game.

18...Rac8

Fritz prefers 18...Nd7 returning toward the kingside!

19.Qh3

Forcing Black to weaken his kingside pawns.

19...g6 20.Re3 Na4

Fritz8 thought 20...f5! was an equalizing shot. But it's easy to see a human player might think this was a risky plan, especially considering the weak Pe6 it creates. Computers often recommend very tactical, trappy variations that are hard for humans to play accurately. Instead Black continues his plan to attack the weak Pc3.

21.g4!?

It's very interesting to note that Fritz8 considers 21.g4 a blunder that loses the equivalent of a pawn. Fritz8 now evaluates Black as better by 0.72 of a pawn and recommends that Black respond exactly as he does in the game. But remarkably, the human playing White already recognizes a mating pattern on the kingside, and using pattern recognition is able to evaluate the very long variation more accurately than Fritz8 with its brute force methods.

21...Ba3 22.Rce1 Nxc3 23.Bg5 Rd4



We have now reached the position Fritz8 recommended, back on move 20, that Black should play for. Finally Fritz8 sees the win for White, which the

human saw some time ago. Here Fritz8 sees mate in 11.

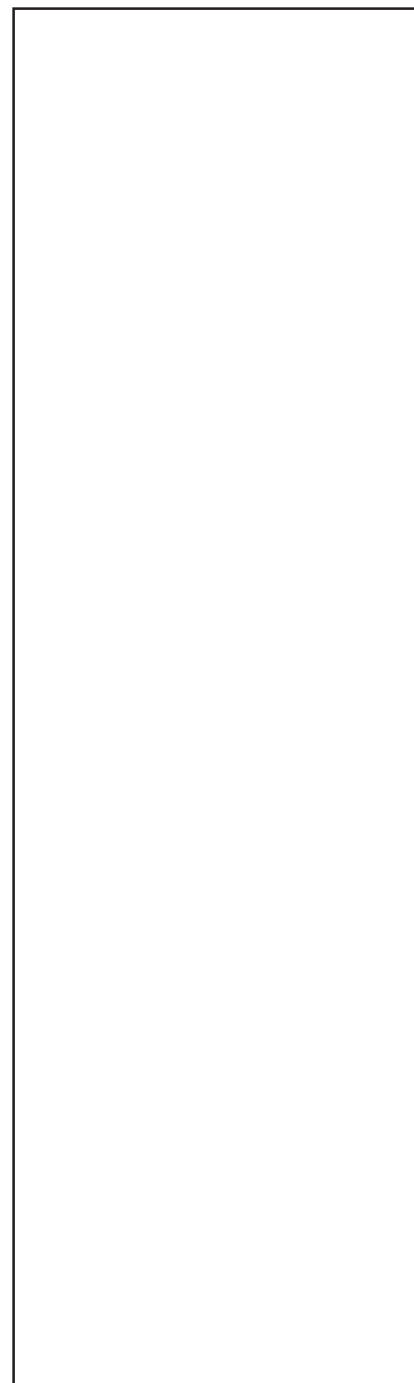
24.Qxh7+! Kxh7 25.Rh3+ Kg8

26.Bf6 Rxc4+ 27.Kh1!

White still has to be careful. 27.Kf1? loses to 27...Qc4+. The entire variation after 21...Ba3 is quite long but White was able to calculate everything because he recognized the approaching mating pattern.

27...Qc6+ 28.Be4! 1-0

It's mate in six after the best defense, 28...Rg1+ 29.Kxg1 Ne2+ 30.Kf1 Ng3+ 31.hxg3 Qc4+ 32. Kg1 Qf1+ 33.Kxf1 any 34.Rh8#



A Self-Reflective Chessplayer

Paul J. Ragonnet

Like most avid chessplayers, I like to play chess. In fact, it is my contention that this is actually an essential requirement for being an avid chessplayer. If that sort of tautological construct appeals to you then you might wish to consider what it means to be a self-reflective chessplayer.

This is the type of thing that is not addressed in most chess books. This article touches upon only a couple of very special chess books, which may be difficult to find, as they are conceived, written, published, and sold only in my imagination, and perhaps in the imaginations of other like-minded devotees of Caissa.

One book that all self-reflective chessplayers should have in their collection is *Hey, This Chess Thing is Sort of Interesting* by I.M. Yawning. Mr. Yawning is not an IM or a GM, or even a FM, in fact he usually listens to A.M. radio. The author is more of a “YY,” if any letters at all are to be appended to his name.

For Mr. Yawning frequently asks “why, why” about many chess related matters. One such question he asks is “Why are Bishops and Knights both commonly given relative values of 3 in most chess books, with pawns being valued at one? He then asks, “What are their **true relative values?**” (*Emphasis in the original*) Of course, here the author asks “what” and not “why” but still “YY” fits him to a tee.

The first third of HTCTISOI (the cognoscenti use initials of the book upon second reference) is devoted to a deep mathematical analysis of this valuation question. Since algebraic notation is used in most chess books, Mr. Yawning reasoned that the use of algebra would be the preferred methodology to employ in solving all valuation issues, including the vexing and ubiquitous Bishop and Knight conundrum. His conclusion is that a Knight’s relative pawn value is equal to Pi, while a Bishop’s relative pawn value is equal to the positive square root of 10. The former being 3.1415926... and the latter being 3.1622776... or vice-versa?

Of course, both numbers are, mathematically speaking, irrational. Unfortunately, Mr. Yawning can not resist making a feeble attempt at humor by stating, “...the numbers are irrational, but the valuation is not.” Personally, I find that so-called humorous content is not appropriate for the serious subject of chess, but perhaps this is a short-coming that is just a part of my own serious and semi-solemn temperament. In any event, the au-

thor ultimately concludes, after some 150-plus pages of algebraic analysis that, “...for the sake of simplicity, both Bishops and Knights should be valued at 3.”

The remaining two-thirds of the book is far less enlightening, but vastly more entertaining, being written as rhyming couplets. This does make some of his analysis difficult to follow, yet, HTCTISOI is a must for every self-respecting self-reflective chessplayer to own.

Another thought-provoking book is *Go, Checkers, Tic-Tac-Toe, Steal the Senior Citizen’s Bundle, Go Fish, and Chess* by Benjamin (“The Dip”) Franklin.

The author should not be confused with the famous kite-flying Franklin from colonial times. This author is a completely different person, a convicted felon and pickpocket. Mr. Franklin died in a prison glee club accident just two days before he was to be paroled. He spent the last 10 to 25 years of his life studying games. The penultimate game mentioned in the title was originally “steal the old man’s bundle,” but due to protests from both women’s groups and AARP (formerly known as, American Association of Retired Persons), the name was changed to be more politically correct.

Of course tic-tac-toe is judged to be an unworthy game for intelligent people, and as Mr. Franklin puts it, “only a real dope would play that game for more than a couple of months.” The big surprise is that chess is the third-place finisher behind go fish and steal the senior citizen’s bundle. In fourth place is checkers, Go comes in fifth, and tic-tac-toe is dead last. “Stop playing go and go play go fish,” according to Mr. Franklin.

He also states that the phrase “got any three’s” is one that tickles his fancy and that of many a go-fisher. I am not sure what this means but it does not sound good.

Finally, I had hoped to ask Dr. Fine, famous chess author, chessplayer, and psycho or psychologist, why people play chess. Unfortunately, I have now been reliably informed that Dr. Fine is dead and in fact has been so for many years. His two colleagues, both named Dr. Howard, are similarly situated death-wise. Alas, they are all gone now, but rather than leave this overarching chess question unanswered, I thought it should be answered, and so I am answering it here and now. What are my qualifications to answer such a weighty question? Well, I am a chessplayer with a couple of college degrees, although they are in

Ragonnet continued on page 18

MACA LMCF Living Memorial Chess Fund

The *Living Memorial Chess Fund* has provided hundreds of chess sets and boards to schools, libraries, junior chess clubs, human service organizations, and community groups!

For the last several years the fund has run many inner city chess tournaments such as the Boston Youth Chessfest. This low cost tournament has attracted hundreds of children.

Low cost or free inner-city tournaments have also been held in Rhode Island. Numerous Schools and libraries have received free equipment for chess programs.

**Please donate to the LMCF.
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Donations can be given in the name of persons living or deceased. If the person is alive be sure to include his/her address; and we'll be happy to send a card acknowledging your thoughtfulness. If you do not want to honor someone you still can make a donation.

To give a permanent memorial to one that is deceased or a continuous honor to one who is living, please consider a donation to the LMCF.

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Polgar continued

This position is a theoretical draw as White will simply move back and forth between the a1- and b2-squares, while Black has no improvement because of the danger of stalemate!

8. Ka1 Kb4 9. Kb2 Kc4 10. Ka1 Bb1

10...Kc3 would result in stalemate.

11. Kxb1 Kc3 12. Kc1 b2+ 13. Kb1 Kb3 Stalemate.

You work hard to reach a favorable endgame to score a victory. Watch out for pitfalls that can cost you a win. On the other hand, if you have a worse position, by knowing your endgame, you may have a chance to save ½ the point.

Therefore, the endgame is a critical part of a chess game and it should not be overlooked.

Ragonnet continued

accounting and taxation, and not in psychology or philosophy, and most importantly I am an avid observer of the human condition, or at least of Nick-at-Night and TV Land. That ought to do it.

Here it is, (imagine a drum roll and a ta-da sound) chess is fun to play and it is especially great when you beat the other person. The desire to crush your opponent is the true driving force for all chessplayers.

One may talk about the depth and beauty of chess, the art of it, the creation of ideas or of developing different themes, but really you just want to chessically and figuratively kill the other person.

Also, if you are an accounting-

type of person, or a computer-type of person, then in comparison to your working life, chess is actually exciting. Here is one more very important thing to keep in mind; chess is a relatively safe undertaking.

Golf and tennis, for example, are considerably more dangerous and much more tiring. Stick with chess that is my advice.

If there is a demand for it, I will be pleased to address your various chess questions in future columns. It's a strange world and an even stranger chess world.

If there are no future columns, then you will just have to muddle along as best you can without my help, may Caissa smile upon you.