



Book Reviews



Translate this page



Rating Chart

- Awful –  Utter rubbish
- Poor –  Inferior
- Uneven –  Mix of good and bad
- Good –  Worth buying
- Great –  Above and beyond average
- Excellent –  Everyone should own



Fantactics!

by Steve Goldberg

Winning Chess by Irving Chernev and Fred Reinfeld, 2013 Batsford, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Paperback, 229pp. \$22.95

This book is a reprinted edition of the original 1949 book of the same name, by the same authors. For players too young to know the names Chernev and Reinfeld, these two were among the most prolific chess writers around the middle of the last century. Chernev's *Logical Chess: Move by Move* was one of the first chess books I read, and I was hooked.

Winning Chess is a guide to tactics for beginning and intermediate players. This edition uses figurine algebraic notation, instead of the original descriptive notation. It is well-written and actually fun to work through.

Newer players will be amazed at the assortment and beauty of the many tactical maneuvers available to them, perhaps opening their eyes to some of the wonders of the game for the first time.

Intermediate players will not struggle with most of the 333 puzzle positions provided, but they will likely enjoy the experience of working through all the major tactical motifs the book covers. One can hardly ever have enough tactics puzzles to solve.

All the typical themes are present: pins, forks, skewers, double attack, discovered attack, removing the guard, overworked piece, trapped piece, back rank vulnerabilities and more. The authors present each item separately, beginning with a brief introduction, followed by numerous examples, culminating in a brief quiz on the theme.

The quiz positions tend to be a bit easier, in general, than most of the prior examples presented. This may have been done in order that the reader feels a sense of accomplishment as he or she works through the problems. But as the authors state, simply working through puzzle position after puzzle position certainly will acclimate the player to the theme at hand.

Especially helpful for the less experienced player are the brief explanations that accompany each puzzle. For example, here is a sample from the "No Retreat" section, which covers trapped pieces:

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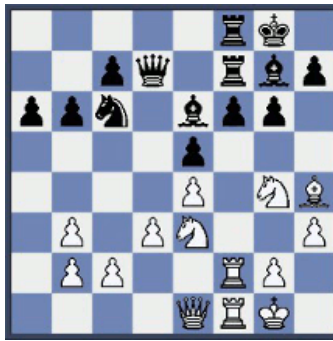
The Panov-Botvinnik Attack: Move by Move by Lorin D'Costa



The Nimzo-Larsen Attack: Move by Move by Cyrus Lakdawala



Magnus Force (Ebook) by Colin Crouch



[FEN "5rk1/2pq1rbp/ppn1bpp1/4p3/4P1NB/1P1PN2P/1PP2RP1/4QRK1"]

194A. Black moves. His f-Pawn requires protection. Instead of resorting to passive defense, he prefers to counterattack. This takes the form of exploiting the awkward position of White's Bishop and his Knight on g4. When fleeing from attack, they are bound to get in each other's way:

1...g5 2.Bg3 h5

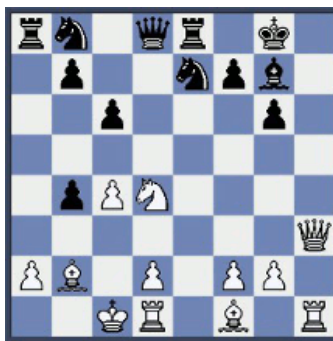


[FEN "5rk1/2pq1rb1/ppn1bp2/4p1pp/4P1N1/1P1PN1BP/1PP2RP1/4QRK1"]

194B. White moves. The menaced Knight must retreat, and he has only one square for the purpose: h2. But by going there (3.Nh2), he robs the Bishop of its only flight square. Now 3...h4 strikes at the helpless Bishop, which has no retreat and is therefore lost.

This pattern, of breaking down the problems into two pieces, into two diagrams, is typical of most of the puzzles in the book. This certainly helps inexperienced readers to better visualize what is happening on the board, although the authors clearly advise players to set up these positions on a board in front of them, rather than going through the problems only mentally.

One of the more entertaining portions of *Winning Chess* may be the section titled "The Surprise Move." There is no quiz for this chapter, just nine fun problems. Here is one:



[FEN "rn1qr1k1/1p2npb1/2p3p1/8/1pPN4/7Q/PB1P1PPI/2KR1B1R"]

259A. Black moves. He sees the three-move threat of mate with 1.Qh7+, Kf8; 2.Ne6+, fx6; 3.Qxg7 mate. What more natural than 1...Bxd4 parrying the threat and winning a piece? But Black gets a rude awakening, as White replies with the electrifying 2.Qh8+.



[FEN "rn1qr1kQ/1p2np2/2p3p1/8/
1pPb4/8/PB1P1PP1/2KR1B1R"]

259B. Black moves. He has no choice: he must play 2...Bxh8, allowing 3.Rxh8 mate. The Queen sacrifice seems a lot less startling to one who is familiar with *mating patterns*. An early combination by Dr. Euwe, who later became World Champion.

A nice element to *Winning Chess* is that the authors not only demonstrate how to develop tactical prowess, but also how to defend against various tactical maneuvers. The final puzzle position is quite useful in pointing out the importance of finding a proper order to our combinations. One move order may lead to victory, while the same moves, but in a slightly modified move order, may result in disaster.

The book concludes with six short annotated games that demonstrate many of the tactical themes covered in previous sections. One of the games is mislabeled as a Ruy Lopez, but the game's beauty is sufficient to overcome this slight oversight.

Certainly for players who do not fully grasp the meaning of terms such as skewer, pin, fork, discovered attack, and the like, *Winning Chess* is a wonderful resource to bring the budding player to a much greater appreciation of the game.

But also for intermediate players who all too often fall victim to these tactical maneuvers, or who realize in postmortems the many attacking threats they overlooked, this should be a book to consider. It will bring many hours of instruction and enjoyment, and likely a few rating points as well.

And this book might even put a smile on the face of a few grizzled veterans. It did for me.

My assessment of this product:

Winning Chess

by Irving Chernev and Fred Reinfeld

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