

# Tata Steel

## PREMIER PRAGG

**Praggnanandhaa wins Tata Steel Masters on tie-break as Gukesh loses first game as world champion**



Remembering Adam - Simon Williams pays tribute to IM Adam Hunt



Slaughter's & Simpson's - Ben Graff looks back at London's coffee houses



Stewart Reuben - John Saunders on the hugely important organiser

# Chess

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# The Odd Couples

## Malcolm Pein reports on a hard-fought Pro-Biz Cup which raised funds for CSC

The ProBiz Cup, in which Chess in Schools and Communities donors give money to secure the rights to play with one of the top players, was staged on the Wednesday after round 5 of the Elite tournament at the Classic. The teams lined up: Shakhriyar Mamedyarov and Ethan Ifeld, Peter Svidler and Justin Baptie, Nikita Vitiugov and Yuri Bedny (definitely the pre-tournament favourites), Gawain Jones and Colm O'Shea (last year's winners), Michael Adams and Neil Dickenson (who remembered each other from junior days), Ju Wenjun and Natasha Regan, Andrew Hong and Rajko Vujatovic, and Shreyas Royal and Ethan Pang.

The highlight of the random draw for round one was the match-up between two of the strongest teams on paper. Yuri Bedny is ex-St. Petersburg and works for the tournament sponsors, XTX Markets.



FM Neil Dickenson has made a welcome return to chess of late and teamed up with Michael Adams.

### Y. Bedny & N. Vitiugov - C. O'Shea & G. Jones

ProBiz Cup, London (rapid) 2024  
*Sicilian Moscow*

**1 e4 c5 2 d4 f3 d6 3 b5+ d7 4 dxd7+  
Wxd7 5 0-0 c6 6 c3 d6 7 e1 e6  
8 d4 cxd4 9 cxd4 d5 10 e5 d4 11 a3**  
White often does without this and plays  
11 d4 b2 dxd2 12 dxd2 e7 13 c1.  
**11... e7 12 d4 b2 dxd2 13 dxd2 0-0  
14 c1 ac8 15 c3**

A real tabiya and it looks like the black players were out of theory now. 15...b5, 15...c7, 15...a6 and 15...d8 have all been investigated thoroughly.

**15...h6 16 h4 b6**

Preparing ...a5. 16...d8 17 h5 b6 18 d3 f5 or the immediate 16...f5 was also OK.

**17 d3 a5**



**18 h5**

18 d2! was good because if 18...hx4? 19 h3 e7 20 g4 gives White an overwhelming attack.

**18... b5 19 c3 c7 20 d2!**

Beginning to attack, but Black has sufficient resources.

**20... c4 21 g3 h8 22 g4 g8**

**23 f1 a4 24 b3! xb3 25 d2! dxd2!**

25...c2 26 hx6 wh7 was also

completely playable, but this is much more fun.

**26 xb3 dx3 27 d2?**

27 e3 d1 28 f4 was completely unclear.

**27... c3?!**

27...xa3! was even better.

**28 f4 f8 29 d3**



Black dominates the c-file and White has

no play; g2-g4-g5 is the only idea and that would put the king in peril.

**29... g8?**

29...xa3 30 g4 c1 wins. The queenside pawns would be unstoppable.

**30 a4 fc8 31 e3 d1**

Perhaps 31...c1+ 32 h2 b1.

**32 xc3 de2+ 33 h2 dxc3 34 c1**

**xc4 35 b2 de4 36 a5**

Finally a little counterplay.

**36... b4 37 c2 bxa5 38 c7 f8**

**39 xa5 dx2 40 xa7 de4 41 a8 b1**

**42 c8 b4 43 c6 c4 44 e8 c1**

**45 d7 d2 46 g3 de4+ 47 h2 f1**



Both sides have a fortress!

**48 c8 d2 49 g3 de4+ 50 h2 d2**

**51 g3 de4+ ½-½**

Mickey and Neil defeated Ju Wenjun and Natasha Regan in round one after turning round a lost position and were better against Vidit Gujrathi and Terry Chapman, but could not convert. They reached the top score with this miniature where I am sure 9-year-old Ethan Pang – already an FM – was soon on very unfamiliar territory.

**N.Dickenson & M.Adams  
- E.Pang & S.Royal**  
ProBiz Cup, London (rapid) 2024  
*London System*

**1 d4 d5 2 ♟f4 c5 3 e4!?**

An inspired idea of Mickey's. The youngsters would likely have a limited knowledge of the Albin Counter-Gambit and White is playing it with the extra move ♟f4.

**3...dxe4**

If 3...e6 4 exd5 exd5 5 ♘c3 ♜f6 6 ♜b5 ♜a6 7 c3, but 3...♜c6!?

**4 d5 ♜f6 5 ♘c3 ♟f5?!**

Already an error. 5...g6 is reasonable à la the Albin and 5...a6 is safe, but not 5...e6 6 ♟b5+ ♟d7 7 dxe6 when White gets an edge.

**6 ♜ge2 ♜bd7 7 ♜g3 ♟g6?!**

7...e5! 8 ♟g5 ♟g6 9 h4 h5 10 ♜e2 ♜a5 11 0-0-0 0-0-0 is relative safety.

**8 h4 h6 9 ♜e2 a6 10 0-0-0 b5 11 ♜cxe4**



Black is three moves from castling. The end is nigh. **11...♜xe4 12 ♜xe4 ♟xe4 13 ♜xe4 ♜f6 14 ♜f3 ♜d7 15 g3**

Nasty! If 15...0-0-0 16 ♟h3.

**15...♜b7 16 ♟g2 ♜d8 17 ♜he1 ♜b6 18 g4**

Black's king is a sitting duck.

**18...g6 19 d6**



**19...♟g7**

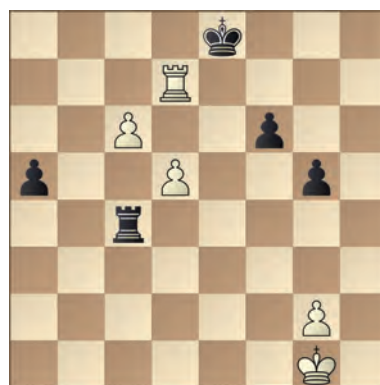


After a tie for first on 2½/3, Etan Ifeld (left) and Neil Dickenson (right) had to jettison their grandmaster team-mates and go head-to-head in a blitz play-off. A nerve-tingling affair, overseen by some illustrious kibitzers, and to think they had paid handsomely for the privilege!

Or if 19...e6 20 ♟e5.  
**20 ♜c6+ ♜xc6 21 ♟xc6+ ♜d7 22 dxe7 1-0**

Etan Ifeld and Shakh Mamedyarov survived a lost position after Shakh made an unsound piece sacrifice uttering the words "We are Team Tal!". Under Peter Svidler's guidance, Justin Baptie navigated the complexities, until the blunder of a knight in time-trouble produced a complex rook and pawn endgame – a nightmare to play with little time.

**E.Ifeld & S.Mamedyarov  
- J.Baptie & P.Svidler**  
ProBiz Cup, London (rapid) 2024



**53 ♜a7**  
53 ♟f2 a4 54 ♟e3 a3 55 ♜a7 wins.  
**53...♜c5! 54 ♜a8+ ♟e7 55 ♟f2 ♟d6 56 ♜d8+ ♟c7??**

After 56...♟e5 57 ♜d7 a4 58 c7 a3 Black is in time and even on the better side of a draw following 59 ♜e7+ ♟xd5 60 ♜e3 ♜xc7 61 ♜xa3.

**57 ♜d7+ ♟b6 58 ♟e3**

White is in time to free the rook from defensive duties on d5 and switch it to help force the pawn duo forward.

**58...f5 59 ♜b7+ ♟a6 60 ♟d4 ♜c1 61 ♜b8 ♟a7 62 ♜b7+ ♟a6 63 ♜b8 ♟a7 64 ♜b5 ♟a6 65 ♜c5 ♜d1+ 66 ♟e5 ♟b6 67 c7 ♟xc5 68 c8♜+ 1-0**

With two teams finishing on 2½/3, Adams and Dickenson, as well as Mamedyarov and Ifeld, there was a blitz play-off between the amateurs which was settled in Neil's favour after a blunder from Etan. And as we went to press, Neil and Mickey were back in action, both representing England at the World Senior Team Championships in Prague.

The money raised from the Pro-Biz Cup enabled 1,000 children to visit the London Chess Classic at the Emirates for a day of group lessons, simulms and a tournament. If you would like to play next year, contributions start from £2,000 and do just get in touch with Chess in Schools and Communities via [info@chessinschools.co.uk](mailto:info@chessinschools.co.uk).

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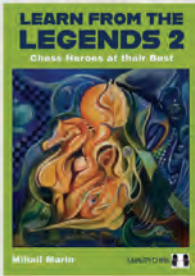
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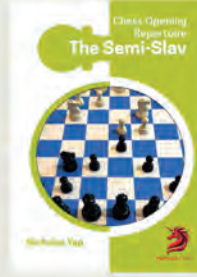
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16 f3 ♖b7 is clearly better for Black.

14 ♖g5 ♜b6 15 ♘d6+ ♙xd6 16 exd6 f6  
17 ♖ae1+ ♚f8 18 ♙xf6 ♘xf6 19 ♖e7!



Penetrating the black position.

19...♜xb2 20 c3!!

A nice quiet move, keeping the black queen out of the game.

20...♜d2 21 ♜e5 1-0

An excellent, attacking game full of energy and enterprise.

### S. Winawer-C. De Vere

Baden-Baden 1870

French Defence

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘c3 ♙b4

A certain irony that De Vere is playing the Winawer variation against Winawer.

4 ♙d3 dxe4 5 ♙xe4 c5

An energetic response.

6 ♘e2 cxd4 7 ♘xd4 ♙xc3+ 8 bxc3 ♜a5

9 ♜f3 ♘f6 Not fearing the capture on b7.

10 ♙xb7 ♙xb7 11 ♜xb7 ♜xc3+ 12 ♙e2 ♜xd4

De Vere resists the rook on a1, preferring to centralise his queen.

13 ♜xa8 0-0!



A wonderful, multi-functional move: it brings the h8-rook into the game, defends the knight and secures the king. There is a beautiful economy to De Vere's play.

14 ♖b1 ♜c4+ 15 ♙e1 ♘c6!



Another lovely move, activating the knight

with tempo.

16 ♜b7 ♘d4 0-1

Mate on e2 will follow. A pleasing miniature by De Vere.

De Vere's style is sharp and incisive, and certainly reminiscent of Paul Morphy.



Szymon Winawer (1838 – 1919) was playing the variation of the French which became named after him at least as early as 1867, but still struggled against it when Cecil De Vere unleashed 3...♙b4 in 1870. Unlike for the tragic and much shorter lived De Vere, print resolution images of Winawer do exist!



  
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# 60 Seconds with... ICCF IM Nikos Ntirlis



**Born:** 13th August 1984; Patras, Greece.

**Place of residence:** Maribor, Slovenia

**Occupation:** Partnership Manager at Databox.

**Enjoyable?** Yes!

**And home life?** Even more!

**But sometimes good to escape to:** A beach with a great book and iced coffee.

**Sports played or followed:** Basketball mostly. I'm a Panathinaikos fan (current EuroLeague champions), although haven't as much time to follow as I used to.

**A favourite novel?** I am a sucker for Jo Nesbø's Harry Hole series.

**Piece of music?** Alternative/Indie Rock – can't help it, I am a child of the 90s!

**Film or TV series?** Somehow *Jerry Maguire* and *High Fidelity* resonated deeply with me years ago when I watched them for the first time. More recently, *Gone Baby Gone* had me thinking about the film for a long time after I watched it as well. I love sci-fi movies and crime series in general, but a truly great movie is one that you cannot help analysing in your mind to understand what it means for you.

**What's the best thing about playing chess?** The satisfaction felt after playing a deep but also fighting game, and winning! It is difficult to compare with anything else. Maybe when you truly understand a deep philosophical idea or a complex mathematical

concept it can compare, but both lack the competitive element.

**And the worst?** The illusion you get about feeling smart, or doing something truly important until life slaps you in the face, proving you that you were wrong about both.

**Your best move?** The win that gave me the title of ICCF IM.

## P.Wölfelschneider-N.Ntirlis correspondence 2018



I played **30...h8!**. If you check this position today with *Stockfish*, it will quickly show this move in the top 2-3 moves, but back then it wasn't even in the top five! Of course, this is a typical move for a King's Indian player, but in complex correspondence games like this one, with engines not as strong as today, you needed to move around the pieces for many days to come up with a reasonable plan, and I remember how satisfying it was to prove to myself that the move is good. I felt a bit like Nimzowitsch

playing against Rubinstein at Dresden in 1929, when he found the idea **18 g3-h1!!**.

**But less memorable than your worst move?** This is one of countless winning positions I have lost. It wasn't the first time and I am afraid it won't be the last...

## N.Ntirlis-E.Vidalis

Thessaloniki Team Championship 2018



Four moves win here and I managed to play **25 f1??**, losing to **25...h2+**.

**And a highly memorable opponent?** I remember beating FM Bo Jacobsen in round one of the Odense Open in 2012. Bo was something like 400+ rating points above me and a legend in Danish chess. He had famously beaten Karpov in a match, when Karpov was a European youth champion and Bo a Scandinavian youth champion. The thing is that I completely outplayed Bo, in the opening and in the middlegame, and won quickly with a nice combination that simplified in to a winning endgame. This impressed everyone and I didn't know why. I was then told the story of Bo and I understood what I had done. A good thing that I didn't know before the game that I was playing a legend!

**Favourite game of all time?** Smith-Philidor, London 1790. What an amazing game with so many modern themes and brilliant play by both sides! I have a favorite exercise from this game, which once I showed to Yusupov and he was truly impressed. I may show it to you one day!

## A.Smith-F.A.Philidor

London (simul) 1790

*Bishop's Opening*

**1 e4 e5 2 c4 f6 3 d3 c6 4 g5 h6 5 xf6 xf6 6 c3 b5 7 b3 a5 8 a3 c5 9 f3 d6 10 d2 e6 11 xe6**

fxe6 12 0-0 g5 13 h3 ♖d7 14 ♗h2 h5



15 g3 ♖e7 16 ♖g2 d5 17 f3 ♗f8  
18 ♗e2 ♗g6 19 c3 ♖ag8 20 d4 ♖b6  
21 dxe5 ♗xe5 22 ♗d4 ♗d7 23 ♖ae1 h4  
24 ♗f2 ♖c7 25 ♗e2 hgx3 26 ♗xg3

♗xg3+ 27 ♗xg3 ♗f4+ 28 ♗h1 ♖xh3  
29 ♖g1 ♖xh2+ 30 ♗xh2 ♖h8+ 31 ♗h5  
♖xh5+ 32 ♖g3 ♗h3+ 33 ♖g4 ♖h4# 0-1

**The best three chess books:** Gershon and Nor's *San Luis 2005* (by far the best chess book ever produced), *Play the Grünfeld* by Rowson, and *Learn from the Legends* by Marin. Honourable mention: club players should absolutely get *1000 Checkmate Combinations* by Henkin.

**Is FIDE doing a good job?** Objectively, no. Better compared to the past? Probably yes.

**Or your National Federation?** Objectively, no. Better compared to the past? Absolutely no.

**Any advice for either?** Become data-driven, get trained on ethics.

**Can chess make one happy?** Happiness for me is a state, not a feeling. Chess cannot make you happy, as not one thing on its own can make you happy. Living a life worth living makes one happy. Reduce suffering around you as much as you can, develop your skills and knowledge, and enjoy the aesthetic side of life. I wish I'd have come up with this formula for happiness, but I haven't. It's what the best philosophers in history have passed to us. Chess, of course, can be part of this.

**A tip please for the club player:** Enjoy your learning journey and make it social. Travel, make friends, analyse together! What sense does it make otherwise?

*Ed. – Reimagining 1.e4 by Nikolaos Ntirlis is available from Chess & Bridge, retailing at £24.99 or £22.49 for Subscribers.*



# Overseas News

**AUSTRALIA** – IM Mihajlo Radovanovic and Tri Kien Le both scored 7½/9 at the Australian Championship in Melbourne, with WIM Heather Richards back on 5½/9.

**AZERBAIJAN** – A dramatic 79th Azerbaijan Championship in Baku (February 1-15) saw Shakhriyar Mamedyarov win six games in a row en route to reaching the final of this knockout event, where he faced Rauf Mamedov. It had appeared Teimour Radjabov would also reach the final, but he would blunder a queen when winning an armageddon game against Mamedov, who would then prevail 2½-1½ after a rapid playoff against Mamedyarov.

**CZECH REPUBLIC** – The Marienbad Open (January 18-25) in Mariánské Lázně was headlined by a 10-player all-play-all, won with an unbeaten 6½/9 by Anton Korobov. There was also a Seniors Open in which Keith Arkell racked up a huge 8½/9 to finish some two points clear.

**GERMANY** – Having been one of Gukesh's successful seconds, Vincent Keymer may have been disappointed not to have done better at Wijk this year, but the 20-year-old German no.1 seized his chance with both hands at the Freestyle Grand Slam Weissenhaus (February 7-14). Admittedly, Keymer didn't especially shine in the preliminary all-play-all especially in the preliminary all-play-all stage, finishing on 4/9 as Alireza Firouzja and Javokhir Sindarov top-scored with 6½/9, while Vladimir Fedoseev and Levon Aronian were eliminated.

Keymer has long been a better classical than speed player and we also shouldn't forget that his long-time coach is Peter Leko, who back in 1996 won the first ever

Fischerandom tournament in Kanjiza, just across the Serbian border from Hungary.

The quarter-finals at Jan Henric Buettner's grand Weissenhaus estate saw Keymer overcome Firouzja 1½-½, the same score by which he would then eliminate Magnus Carlsen and Fabiano Caruana no less. Keymer had White first in both the semi-final and final, quickly securing a large advantage each time before defending well in the return.

## V.Keymer-F.Caruana Weissenhaus (Freestyle) 2025



1 c4

With a threat!

1...♗f6 2 ♗f3

2 e4 e5 3 f4!? would be an unusual take on the King's Gambit.

2...b6 3 b4 c5

Countering against h2, hence White's next.

4 ♖e5 d6 5 ♖xf6 exf6 6 ♗xh7 ♗g6

White has won a pawn, but the queen is sidelined and 7 bxc5? dxc5 gives Black a powerful initiative with ...0-0-0 one possibility.

7 e3! cxb4 8 ♖e2 ♖c5?

Fischerandom encourages early creativity, but this rook lift is too much. Instead, 8...♗e5 would be OK for Black, as well as positionally complex after 9 d4 ♗xf3 10 gxf3 ♗b7.

9 ♗g3 ♗c7 10 d4! ♖a5 11 ♖c2



What is the rook doing on a5? You might be wondering too about the king on d1, but White can easily castle kingside, as well as race the h-pawn up the board.

11...♖c6 12 0-0 ♖a3?

12...f5! was necessary to acquire some much-needed counterplay.

13 h4! ♖a4 14 ♖cc1 a5 15 h5 ♗e7 16 d5 ♖xa2 17 ♗d4

Black has won a pawn and enjoys a 3-0 majority on the left of the board, but on the right-hand side there's one of the worst bishops you'll ever see. The bottom line is that Black is positionally lost.

17...♗d7 18 ♖a1 ♖d2

18...♖xa1 19 ♖xa1 b3 20 ♖d3 ♖c7 21 ♗ge2 would be no less horrific for Black.

19 h6! gxf6 20 ♖h5 ♖xd4!

The best practical try in view of 20...♗g6?



21 ♖xa4! ♗xa4 22 ♜c6+ ♝c8 23 ♙xg6 fxc6? 24 ♗a7 and mates.

**21 exd4 ♙b3 22 ♗d3 a4 23 ♖fb1!**



White remains in full control and may not even need to return an exchange on b3.

**23...♜c8 24 ♜f1 b5!? 25 cxb5 ♗c7?**

Now the open c-file will prove Black's undoing and while 25...♜b6 26 ♜d2 ♙xd5 27 ♖xb4 was likely lost, it was also the last try.

**26 ♜e3 ♜b6 27 ♖c1! ♗b7 28 ♙f3 f5 29 ♗xf5 ♙g7 30 ♗f4 ♙f8 31 ♖c6 a3 32 ♖xd6+! ♜d7**

Hopeless, but so would have been 32...♙xd6 33 ♗xd6+ ♜d7 34 ♗xb4.

**33 ♖a6 1-0**

Overall, just like last year, Weissenhaus was an interesting experiment. However, it was hard to escape the notion that even these superbly-gifted players sought to reach normal-looking positions wherever possible and that overall the games lacked the richness of Tata Steel which, of course, had the most harmonious starting position in every game.

Elsewhere in Germany, Baden-Baden have now lost a second match in the Bundesliga, which is almost unprecedented. We shouldn't forget that between the 2005/06 and 2022/23 seasons, they won every title bar one and yet this season they have been defeated by Viernheim and now also Düsseldorf.

On February 1st, Düsseldorf crushed Baden-Baden 5½-2½ to lead with 14/14. Wesley So rather butchered Vishy Anand on board 2, Victor Bologan ground down Alexander Donchenko on bottom board, and Javokhir Sindarov also won on board 4. The 19-year-old Uzbek has now scored 7/7 this season and also did well at Weissenhaus, eliminating Hikaru Nakamura before finding Caruana and, in a third-place play-off, Carlsen too good.

**J.Sindarov-M.Vachier-Lagrave**  
Düsseldorf vs Baden-Baden  
*English Opening*

**1 c4 e5 2 g3 c6 3 ♜f3 e4 4 ♜d4 d5 5 cxd5 ♗xd5 6 ♜c2 ♜f6 7 ♜c3 ♗e5 8 ♙g2 ♙e7 9 b4!?**

A rare but challenging approach, seizing space and preparing to take control of the a1-h8 diagonal.

**9...0-0**

9...a5!? 10 bxa5 ♜bd7 11 ♙b2 0-0 could be the critical line when the engines suggest that 12 ♜e3 ♗xa5! 13 ♜xe4 ♜xe4 14 ♙xe4 ♜c5 gives Black enough for the pawn.

**10 ♙b2 ♖e8**

White was also slightly for choice after 10...♖d8 11 0-0 ♜a6 12 a3 ♙f5 13 ♜e3 in Artemiev-Sjugirov, Tashkent 2025.

**11 ♗b1!**



A new move, one which is unsurprisingly engine-approved and eyes the e4-pawn.

**11...♗h5!?**

Vachier-Lagrave opts for active counterplay rather than the safer 11...♗e6 when 12 ♜d4 ♗d7 13 e3 ♙xb4 14 ♜xe4 ♜xe4 15 ♙xe4 could be a little better for White.

**12 ♜xe4 ♜xe4!?**

Black may have overestimated his next move. Correct was the immediate 12...♙h3! when 13 ♙f3 ♗h6 14 ♜e3 ♜bd7 isn't so clear at all, including after 15 g4 ♜xe4 16 ♗xe4 ♙h4.

**13 ♙xe4 ♙h3 14 ♙f3?!**

Failing to punish Black, something which 14 ♜e3! would have done, and if 14...♙xb4? 15 g4! ♗h4 16 ♙xg7!, removing a key pawn due to the potential fork on f5.

**14...♗g5 15 g4!? ♜d7 16 ♖g1 h5**

Another uncompromising move, but 16...♙d6! was likely better, and if 17 ♜e3 ♜e5 18 ♙e4 h5 with decent counterplay.

**17 ♜e3 ♙f6?!**

Vachier-Lagrave is drifting. He may not have liked 17...♜e5! 18 ♗f5!, but after 18...♗xf5 19 gxf5 ♜xf3+ 20 exf3 ♙xf5 21 0-0-0 ♙d3 (21...♙g6?! 22 f4 clears the bishop away after all) 22 ♖xg7+ ♜f8 23 ♖dg1 ♙g6 Black has avoided disaster and would retain good chances to hold.

**18 ♖g3! hxg4 19 ♙xg4**



**19...♖xe3?**

Another overly optimistic move, one which may also have been based on a miscalculation. Necessary was 19...♙xg4 20 ♜xg4 ♙xb2 21 ♗xb2 a5 when the game would very much have continued, if likely slightly in White's favour.

**20 dxex3 ♙xg4 21 h3 ♗d5 22 ♖xg4 ♗h1+ 23 ♜d2 ♗d5+**

This may have looked effective in advance, but White has some good defensive resources.

**24 ♙d4! ♜e5 25 ♗b3! ♜c4+?**

This pretty much loses by force. After 25...♗xb3 26 axb3 ♜xg4 27 hxg4 a6 28 ♜c2 White would enjoy excellent winning chances, but his not entirely optimal structure would have given Black a little hope of saving the game.

**26 ♜c2 a5 27 ♖d1!**



Involving the final piece. Likewise, 27 ♖ag1! ♙xd4 28 ♖xd4 ♗f5+ 29 ♜c1 b5 30 ♗c3 would have left Black teetering on the brink.

**27...b5 28 ♙xf6 ♗f5+ 29 ♗d3 ♗xf6 30 ♗d4! ♗h6**

30...♗xd4 31 ♖gxd4 ♖a6 32 a4! is winning too, and if 32...axb4 33 axb5 cxb5 34 ♜b3

**31 bxa5 f5 32 ♖g3 ♖xa5 33 ♖dg1**

Now g7 will fall and it's game over.

**33...♖xa2+ 34 ♜c1 1-0**

**HOLLAND** – Sunilduth Narayanan prevailed at the 60th edition of the famous Groningen Chess Festival (December 21-30), scoring 7/9 to finish half a point ahead of fellow Indian IM Manish Anto Cristiano, as well as Swiss IM Theo Stijve and Holland's Thomas Beerdsen and Nick Maatman. 13-year-old Scottish talent Rishi Vijayakumar only lost twice while his impressive 5/9 sufficed for a 2387 performance and gain of some 82 Elo points.

**HUNGARY** – Serbian GM Misa Pap won December's First Saturday GM tournament in Budapest (Dec 7-14), scoring 6½/9 and only losing to Yao Lan who would finish back on 4/9.

**IRELAND** – The Gonzaga Charity Classic was once again an impressive event and attracted just shy of 200 players, including 20 women, to Gonzaga College in Ranelagh, Dublin (January 17-19). There were four competitive sections, with Matthew Turner edging out fellow GM Ante Saric from Croatia on tiebreak to take the €650 first prize in the Masters, after they had both finished on 4½/5, a whole point ahead of Egyptian WGM Shrook Wafa, as well as Ireland's Jacob Flynn and Colm Daly.

**MACEDONIA** – Vladimir Fedoseev triumphed with 9½/11 at the European Rapid Championship in Skopje (December 7-8), finishing half a point ahead of Anton Korobov and Baadur Jobava. Koichi Nicholas was the highest of the English amateurs in action, scoring 6/11, as did Scotland's Daniel McGowan and Steven Tweedie. The subsequent Blitz Championship on December 9th saw Jorden van Foreest edge out Alexey Sarana on tiebreak after they had both scored 11/13 to finish half a point ahead of Jobava and Bogdan-Daniel Deac.

**NEW ZEALAND** – Australian star Zong-Yuan Zhao and Hungarian GM Gabor Nagy were both unbeaten as they tied for first on 6½/9 at the Bob Wade Masters in Auckland (January 13-19). In this 10-player all-play-all, 16-year-old IM Sravan Renjith was the highest-scoring home player, finishing just half a point behind the winners.

**SPAIN** – As we noted last month, Matthew Wadsworth had a fine result as he tied for second at the Roquetas de Mar Open (Jan 2-7), which sufficed for his third and final GM norm. Wadsworth's crushing win against the strong Armenian GM Karen Grigoryan was impressive.

**M. Wadsworth-K. Grigoryan**  
Roquetas de Mar 2025  
*English Opening*

**1 c4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 g3 g6 4 ♘c3 ♙g7 5 ♙g2 d6**

A move order wrinkle designed to avoid the gambit 5...e6 6 d4!?

**6 0-0 e6 7 e3 ♘ge7 8 d4 cxd4**

A little compliant, unlike the more common 8...0-0! when 9 b3 (9 d5 ♘a5 10 ♘d2 exd5 11 cxd5 ♖b8 followed by ...b5 gives Black decent Benoni-style counterplay) 9...cxd4 10 ♘xd4 ♘xd4 11 exd4 ♘f5 12 ♘e2 ♖b8 13 a4 b6 was fine for Black in Moussard-Vachier Lagrave, French Team Championship 2016.

**9 exd4 d5 10 b3 0-0 11 ♖b1!**

An accurate choice, improving the rook while also preparing White's next.

**11...♘f5 12 ♙g5 ♖a5?**

This runs into a tactical issue. 12...♖b6! would have been much safer when 13 cxd5 ♘cxd4 14 ♘xd4 ♘xd4 15 ♖e1 can only be a little better for White.

**13 b4!**



The first of two powerful advances by the knights' pawns.

**13...♘xb4 14 g4! ♘c6**

As good a try as anything, with 14...♘d6 running into 15 ♙e7 and 14...h6? 15 ♙d2 even worse for Black, in view of 15...♘e7 16 ♘a4 ♘ec6 17 a3.

**15 gxf5 ♖xc3 16 f6!**

Jamming Black's once proud bishop into the corner.

**16...♙h8 17 ♖c1**

17 ♖e1!? ♖xc4 18 ♘e5 would also have been pretty strong. Interestingly the engines evaluate 18...♘xe5 19 dxe5 ♖xa2 20 h4 as '+2', despite Black's three extra pawns (his dark-squared bishop is sidelined for good, of course).

**17...♖a3 18 ♘e5 ♖d8?!**

18...h6! 19 ♙xh6 ♙xf6 20 ♙xf8 ♘xf8 was grim, but surely a better practical try.



**19 cxd5?!**

Teeing up his next, but 19 ♘g4! would have been even stronger, and if 19...dxc4 20 ♘h6+ ♘f8 21 ♖xc4 ♙d7 22 ♖g4 with full control and a dangerous attack for White.

**19...exd5 20 ♖xc6!**

Wadsworth continues to eschew material to fight hard for the initiative.

**20...bxc6 21 ♘xc6 ♙e6?**

The final mistake. After 21...♖e8 22 ♘e7+ ♖xe7 23 fxe7 ♙e6 24 ♖c2 White is definitely pressing and clearly for choice, but must still display some accuracy and Black can definitely aim to resist after 24...♖d6!.

**22 ♘e7+ ♘f8 23 ♖e2 ♖ab8 24 ♙h6+ ♘e8 25 ♘xd5**



You wouldn't need to be Jonathan Rowson as Black to sense that the king and dark-squared bishop are both extremely unhappy.

**25...♘d7 26 ♖c1**

26 ♙f4! was even more clinical, and if

26...♖b2 27 ♖e5.

**26...♖dc8 27 ♖xc8 ♖b1+?**

This loses by force, although even after 27...♖xc8 28 ♖b5+ ♘d8 29 h4! Black surely wouldn't have survived.

**28 ♙f1 ♖xf1+ 29 ♘xf1 ♘xc8 30 ♖c4+ ♘d7 31 ♖c7+ ♘e8 32 ♘g1!**

A deft sidestep to avoid a check on d3. The game is now well and truly up for Grigoryan.

**32...g5 33 ♙f8! 1-0**

Black will either lose his king or his queen, and 33 ♙xg5! followed by ♙f4 would also have been rather brutal.

Elsewhere in Spain, Benidorm hosted the Gran Hotel Bali Festival (November 29 - December 5), where Italian GM Andrea Stella prevailed on tiebreak after an eight-way tie for first on 7/9. Just half a point behind was Danny Gormally, with Keith Arkell on 6/9.

An even stronger Open was the 11th Sunway Sitges Festival (December 12-24), where 22-year-old Israeli GM Ido Gorshtein and 16-year-old Savva Vetokhin tied for first on 8/10, the rising Russian star winning the resulting blitz playoff. Keith Arkell finished strongly, including a draw with Vasyl Ivanchuk, to score 7/10, half a point more than Danny Gormally, with prodigy Supratit Banerjee gaining rating for his '+1'.

**SWITZERLAND** – While the March rating list was, of course, yet to be published by the FIDE Office in Lausanne, as we prepared to go to press, the world's top-10, post-Wijk and pre-Prague, was: 1 Magnus Carlsen (NOR) 2833, 2 Hikaru Nakamura (USA) 2802, 3 Dommaraju Gukesh (IND) 2787, 4 Fabiano Caruana (USA) 2783, 5 Arjun Erigaisi (IND) 2777, 6 Nodirbek Abdusattorov (UZB) 2773, 7 Rameshbabu Praggnanandhaa (IND) 2758, 8 Alireza Firouzja (FRA) 2758, 9 Wei Yi (CHN) 2757, 10 Ian Nepomniachtchi (FIDE) 2753. Evidently not playing can be effective for one's rating, as can be winning a major tournament.

**USA** – Fabiano Caruana was tempted to play the Saint Louis Masters (December 3-7), despite its double-round schedule. He reached 6½/8, but would then be defeated by Alexander Donchenko and so have to share first with the German Grandmaster, half a point ahead of Sam Sevian, Grigoriy Oparin, Zhou Jianchao (all USA), Ivan Saric (CRO), Aram Hakobyan (ARM) and Isik Can (TUR).



*Caruana might need to brush up his final rounds*

# This Month's New Releases



## Strategic Play with 1 e4

Milos Pavlovic, 320 pages  
Popular Chess

RRP £19.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £17.99**

The early part of 2025 has brought forth several interesting opening books. Naturally, there is more than one way to present a 1 e4 "complete repertoire for White". This book takes a different approach, heading down the strategic route instead of taking the bull immediately by the horns.

As the blurb puts it: "Milos Pavlovic's 1 e4 repertoire is based on lines where an understanding of plans and strategic ideas is more important than rote memorisation. The focus is on important positional considerations such as:

"How to make the pieces work most effectively with a given pawn structure;

"How to spot weak points and exploit them;

"How to limit the opponent's counterplay".

The author states: "This book is about positional play when starting 1 e4. Not in a sense of slow or boring, but based on a strong positional points, such as rapid development, more space, attacking chances, or even gambit ideas in some cases." This means understanding is more important than memorisation, but, of course, the recommended repertoire still needs to be robust and fireproof, especially as observant tournament opponents will be able to prepare thoroughly against what are, in several cases, relative sidelines.

In contrast to the more main line approach taken by Nikolaos Ntirlis in *Reimagining 1.e4* (reviewed last month), Pavlovic steers away from the most critical variations, opting, in the main, for sidelines instead. This means we find 1 e4 c5 2 ♖f3 d6 3 ♗b5+, 1 e4 c5 2 ♖f3 e6 3 b3 and 1 e4 c5 2 ♖f3 ♗c6 3 c3 as the main weapons against the Sicilian Defence, 1 e4 e5 2 ♖f3 ♗c6 3 ♗c3 ♖f6 4 g3 against Black's most classical response to 1 e4, 1 e4 c6 2 ♖f3 d5 3 exd5 cxd5 4 ♗e5 against the Caro-Kann, and the Advance variation (1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 e5) against the French.

It is always appealing to head away from extreme memorisation in the opening. Even Gukesh and Ding Liren, playing for the ultimate title, avoided main lines on many occasions in their recent match, heading instead into the calmer waters of the London System and the Exchange variation of the French. There was a time when nobody would have dreamed of playing such openings at the highest level with the hope of a successful outcome (one can imagine Viktor Korchnoi's reaction), but the chess world has certainly changed dramatically in recent times.

There is no doubt about it; the lines suggested in this book will definitely delay the main struggle of the game until later on the middlegame, should be immune to strong innovations by Black, and give the second player a lack of something on which to bite. For example, how many 1 e4 e5 defenders take time out from studying the highly popular Spanish Game and Italian Game in order to book up on their methods of play against the Four Knights with 4 g3, the Glek System? Meanwhile, what is White hoping to achieve? The following position answers the second question.

## I.Glek-M.Novikov

Moscow 2006



"Question: Can we say that this is an ideal set-up for White?"

"Answer: Yes it is; we can see clear domination of the f-file, the knight on e4 is a tremendous piece, and the idea of g4-g5 will create further threats." After further adventures, White won (1-0, 50).

There is less of a sense of 'standing on giants' shoulders' here as compared to *Reimagining 1.e4*, but, of course, ultimately 'you spend your money; you take your choice.' One thing is certain; the slow-burners recommended here will definitely appeal to those who are wary of the early conflict afforded by Ntirlis and a greater understanding of the positions should give an advantage on the clock, which will be very useful when the games become livelier in the late-middlegame.

Incidentally, Popular Chess is essentially the new name for Everyman Chess since the merger with New in Chess and Quality Chess. Internally, the books are stylistically extremely similar, but they now have Quality Chess-type paper and are available as hardbacks too [Ed. – Strategic Play with 1 e4 *retailing at*

£24.99 for the hardback edition, or £22.49 for Subscribers]. Soon there will be re-releases of older Everyman titles, like *The Iron English*, under the name of Popular Chess and it will be interesting to see how the journey develops.

Sean Marsh



## Magic Chess Moves

Michal Konopka, 368 pages  
Quality Chess

RRP £24.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £22.49**

What should we consider to be a magic chess move? Well, the title of this book was almost going to be 'Memorable Positions' and the original, Czech edition was called 'Magic Positions' before undergoing a slight transformation to the more specific and better version just published by Quality Chess, *Magic Chess Moves* with a subtitle of 'Puzzles Powering Practical Performance'.

What is in store for the reader? *Magic Chess Moves* contains the condensed wisdom of an experienced chess trainer with an emphasis on practical improvement. The 317 positions in this book are of mixed difficulty levels, with examples from over-the-board play and from chess compositions. Each and every exercise has been carefully selected for its instructive value to the practical player."

Mention of compositions – or studies – usually sends over-the-board aficionados running for cover, but as the positions rub shoulders with positions from real games, they are all realistic rather than esoteric.

David Navara provides a very personal foreword, detailing a dip in his results over a key period of time and his thoughts on why it happened. "I had neglected to train my calculating skill and solve exercises. I would emerge from the opening with an acceptable position, but afterwards commit crude oversights. Why hadn't I practised solving exercise positions before the tournament? Again there were several reasons, but not the least important was the fact that I didn't have a suitable collection of such positions to hand. One such collection is the book that you now have before you."

High praise indeed, as Navara is noted for his honesty. Incidentally, in a very rare slip in the production values of a Quality Chess book, the picture of David Navara is badly

pixelated and should not have slipped through the proofreading stage.

Books with chess problems and puzzles as their main offering are rife and, to stand out, they need a special feature. In this book, apart from the abundance of excellent material, the author – an International Master and very experienced coach – also shares his thoughts on a plethora of other subjects along the way, in anecdotal fashion.

Amid the plethora of extraordinary moves, my attention was taken by a game between two champions of the world (one outgoing, one incoming). It brings home the point that we can still learn lots of very valuable lessons from the old masters, many of whom had ideas way ahead of their time.

**T.Petrosian-B.Spasky**  
World Championship Match  
(Game 12), Moscow 1969

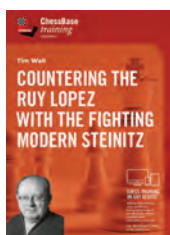


Spasky's last move, 47...♖a7-a6, has the intention of marching the king to d6 and achieving the advance ...c6-c5. Petrosian, realising he needed to match the challenger in terms of the number of active pieces, played the remarkable **48 g4!**, sacrificing a pawn to activate the king. The game was agreed drawn after **48...hxg4 49 ♔g3**.

A little bit of endgame magic from one of the most original players of all, but one whose magic moves tend to avoid the limelight as they are not all big tactical explosions.

*Magic Chess Moves* provides plenty of engaging and entertaining material and will encourage a decent break for readers who have been rather forcibly encouraged – by me – to study 1 e4 openings over the course of the last couple of months.

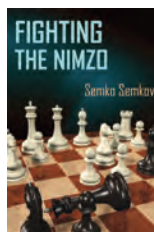
Sean Marsh



**Countering the Ruy Lopez with the Fighting Modern Steinitz**

Tim Wall, PC-DVD; running time: 9 hours  
RRP £41.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £37.75**  
Leading chess organiser and junior coach,

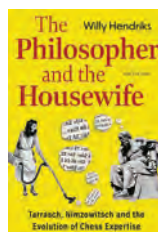
FM Tim Wall, makes his debut for ChessBase with this detailed production devoted to 1 e4 e5 2 ♟f3 ♟c6 3 ♟b5 a6 4 ♟a4 d6. After White's main moves, 5 c3 and 5 0-0, Wall examines both a relatively positional repertoire for Black with 5...♟d7 and a more aggressive approach with 5 c3 f5, the famous Siesta variation, and 5 0-0 ♟g4 6 h3 h5!?. While plenty of theory is covered, Wall's main emphasis is on a great many instructive games and the viewer will certainly come away with a good grasp of the key middlegame plans, as well as the more critical lines.



**Fighting the Nimzo**

Semko Semkov, 208 pages, paperback  
RRP £23.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £21.55**

Semkov's latest work for his Chess Stars company sees him tackle the venerable 1 d4 ♟f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♟c3 ♟b4 with 4 ♟f3, an old favourite of Garry Kasparov's. White prepares to meet 4...0-0 with 5 ♟g5 and will switch to an e2-e3 approach in the event of 4...c5 e3 or 4...b6 5 e3. He has found several neglected and new paths for White, and Nimzo practitioners may not find things so easy the next time they face 4 ♟f3. All the usual Chess Stars features are also present, not least the step by step sections and illustrative games at the end of each chapter.

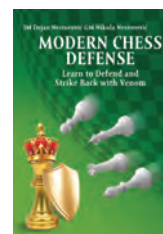


**The Philosopher and the Housewife**

Willy Hendriks, 392 pages, paperback  
RRP £25.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £23.35**

Dutch IM Willy Hendriks has carved out quite a reputation as a highly original thinker and writer whose *Move First, Think Later* won the 2012 ECF Book of the Year award. This new work is another fascinating read, one devoted to the lifelong rivalry between Aron Nimzowitsch and Siegbert Tarrasch. Nimzowitsch thought that Tarrasch didn't offer much more than "the advice of an experienced housewife", advice which often clashed with this philosopher's systematic approach to chess. Hendriks examines the famous clash between the two, along the way reproducing much of Tarrasch and Nimzowitsch's best prose while never failing to offer his own opinion.

If you would prefer to enjoy *The Philosopher and the Housewife* as a hardback, such an edition is also available, retailing at £29.95 or £26.95 for Subscribers.



**Modern Chess Defense**

Dejan & Nikola Nestorovic, 280 pages, paperback  
RRP £32.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £29.65**

Subtitled 'Learn to Defend and Strike Back with Venom', this new release from Informant Publishing is devoted to the art of defence. It's almost 20 years since Colin Crouch's excellent *How to Defend in Chess* appeared and despite that, the subject remains rather neglected by many players. As such, this is a welcome release from the Nestorovics, father, IM Dejan, and son, GM Nikola. They begin by examining in detail several instructive cases of both good and bad defence, before looking at more specific topics, not least king safety and typical defensive methods which frequently arise from certain openings.



**The How to Study Chess on Your Own Workbook Volume 3**

Davorin Kuljasevic, 232 pages, paperback  
RRP £22.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £20.65**

Kuljasevic's *How to Study Chess on Your Own* remains a bestseller for New in Chess and now we have a third workbook to accompany the original book. This one is designed to help those over 2100 improve their chess, with chapters devoted to visualisation, tactics, the middlegame and the endgame. The exercises are often not easy, but will certainly help stronger club players who suffer from such things as hazy calculation or regularly misevaluating positional transformations.

Note too that *How to Study Chess on Your Own* and the three accompanying Workbooks can be purchased together from Chess & Bridge for the special price of £85.00.

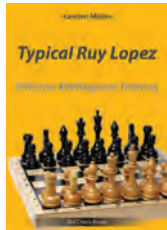


**The Surprising Black Knights' Tango**

Andrew Martin, PC-DVD; running time: 5 hours  
RRP £29.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £26.95**

The Tango, 1 d4 ♟f6 2 c4 ♟c6!?, is an old favourite of your editor's and should still spring a surprise online or at club level. Andrew Martin is the ideal presenter to cover

this surprise weapon, with his positive and clear delivery, as he presents a repertoire for Black. He begins by examining some model games, where we find the likes of Fabiano Caruana and Hikaru Nakamura on the black side, as well as Alex Yermolinsky and Tango guru Georgi Orlov, before he maps out a fairly thorough repertoire for Black with 3 d5 ♖e5, 3 ♖c3 e5 and 3 ♖f3 e6.

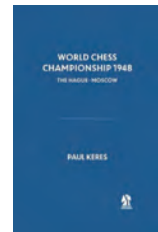


### Typical Ruy Lopez

Karsten Müller, 182 pages, paperback  
RRP £21.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £19.75**

This is a middlegame textbook aimed squarely at all those who play the Lopez and would like to deepen their understanding of

it, as well as anyone thinking of taking up the opening and who would like to appreciate its key motifs before learning any specific opening theory on 1 e4 e5 2 ♖f3 ♗c6 3 ♗b5. Müller's initial focus is the structure with white pawns on c3, d4 and e4 opposed by black pawns on e5 and d6, one which also frequently arises from the Giuoco Piano, before he examines the many related structures marked by exchanges on e5 or d4. 100 positions are presented with accompanying questions, and the solutions are certainly quite detailed. Readers won't learn any Ruy Lopez theory from this work, but will learn plenty about handling its main pawn structures and key piece manoeuvres.



### World Chess Championship 1948: The Hague-Moscow

Paul Keres, 544 pages, hardback  
RRP £44.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £40.45**

Verendel Publishing created quite a splash last year with Peter Holmgren's *Gideon Ståhlberg* and this is a similarly lavish and very well-priced publication. Paul Keres's classic book on the 1948 world championship tournament has long been praised and now we have this English translation and new edition of his original Estonian work. Keres's annotations to every game are certainly highly instructive and all players should learn plenty from studying this work, while enjoying too the large number of colour and striking photographs.



# Forthcoming Events

**March 7-9 Wells Congress**  
[congress.org.uk/congress/518/home](http://congress.org.uk/congress/518/home)

**March 8-9 East Kent Congress, Folkestone**  
[congress.org.uk/congress/526/home](http://congress.org.uk/congress/526/home)

**March 8 Bent Larsen Allegro, Hamilton**  
[chessscotland.com/calendar/bent-larsen-fide-allegro-2025/](http://chessscotland.com/calendar/bent-larsen-fide-allegro-2025/)

**March 8 Swindon Rapidplay**  
[swindonchessevents.yolasite.com](http://swindonchessevents.yolasite.com)

**March 8 University of Reading Rapidplay**  
email: [readinguniversitychesssociety@gmail.com](mailto:readinguniversitychesssociety@gmail.com)

**March 7-9 Irish National Clubs Championships, Sligo**  
[icu.ie/events/1975](http://icu.ie/events/1975)

**March 11 Muswell Hill Rapid**  
[muswellhillchess.blogspot.com](http://muswellhillchess.blogspot.com)

**March 14-16 BCA Congress, Leicester**  
[braillechess.org.uk/2025-agm-weekend-chess-congress](http://braillechess.org.uk/2025-agm-weekend-chess-congress)

**March 14-16 Fareham Congress**  
[castle-chess.co.uk](http://castle-chess.co.uk)

**March 14-16 London Chess League Weekender**  
[londonchess.org.uk](http://londonchess.org.uk); venue: London MindSports Centre

**March 15 Earsfield Rapidplay**  
[londonfidecongress.com/earsfield-rapidplay](http://londonfidecongress.com/earsfield-rapidplay)

**March 15 Stoke Gifford Rapidplay**  
[congress.org.uk/congress/519/home](http://congress.org.uk/congress/519/home)

**March 18 Muswell Hill Rapid**  
[muswellhillchess.blogspot.com](http://muswellhillchess.blogspot.com)

**March 21-23 East Devon Congress, Exeter**  
[eastdevonchesscongress.com](http://eastdevonchesscongress.com)

**March 22-23 Southall Congress**  
[londonfidecongress.com/southall-congress](http://londonfidecongress.com/southall-congress)

**March 22 Darnall & Handsworth Rapidplay, Sheffield**  
[dhchessclub.co.uk/index.php/rapidplay/rapidplay-info](http://dhchessclub.co.uk/index.php/rapidplay/rapidplay-info)

**March 22 Poplar Rapidplay**  
[www.spanglefish.com/docklandschessclub/](http://www.spanglefish.com/docklandschessclub/)

**March 23 Manchester Rapidplay, Horwich**  
[congress.org.uk/congress/121/home](http://congress.org.uk/congress/121/home)

**March 28-30 Bournemouth Congress**  
[dorsetchess.co.uk/5th-bournemouth-grand-chess-congress/](http://dorsetchess.co.uk/5th-bournemouth-grand-chess-congress/)

**March 28-30 Bristol Open Championship**  
[bristolcongress.co.uk](http://bristolcongress.co.uk)

**March 28-30 Glasgow Congress**  
[congress.playchess.org.uk/congress/555/home](http://congress.playchess.org.uk/congress/555/home)

**March 28-29 Earlsfield Congress**  
[londonfidecongress.com/earlsfield-congress](http://londonfidecongress.com/earlsfield-congress)

**March 29 Golders Green Rapidplay**  
[goldersgreenchess.blogspot.com](http://goldersgreenchess.blogspot.com)

**March 30 Birmingham Rapidplay**  
[rapidplay.birminghamchess.org.uk](http://rapidplay.birminghamchess.org.uk)

And for the Online Connoisseur:

**February 26 - March 7 Prague Masters**  
[praguechessfestival.com/en/2025](http://praguechessfestival.com/en/2025); Keymer, Le Quang Liem, Navara, Wei Yi, etc.

**March 15-24 American Cup, St. Louis**  
[uschesschamps.com/event/2025-american-cup/](http://uschesschamps.com/event/2025-american-cup/)

*Congress organisers – Don't forget to email [editor@chess.co.uk](mailto:editor@chess.co.uk) to ensure your event is listed, or if you really want to guarantee a good entry, contact [tao@chess.co.uk](mailto:tao@chess.co.uk) to discuss having it advertised.*

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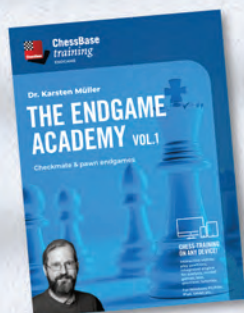
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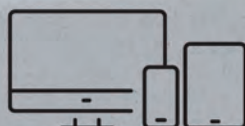


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