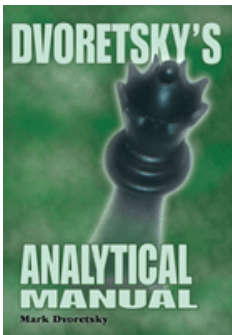




BOOK REVIEWS

From the Archives

Hosted by
Mark Donlan



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From the Archives...

Since it came online many years ago, ChessCafe.com has presented literally thousands of articles, reviews, columns and the like for the enjoyment of its worldwide readership. The good news is that almost all of this high quality material remains available in the [Archives](#). The bad news is that this great collection of chess literature is now so large and extensive – and growing each week – that it is becoming increasingly difficult to navigate it effectively. We decided that the occasional selection from the archives posted publicly online might be a welcomed addition to the regular fare.

Watch for an item to be posted online periodically throughout each month. We will update the ChessCafe.com home page whenever there has been a “new” item posted here. We hope you enjoy *From the Archives...*

Let Lev Help

by Eugene Manchester

Chess Training Pocket Book: 300 Most Important Positions and Ideas by GM Lev Albut, 1997 Chess Information and Research Center, English Algebraic Notation, Softcover, 188pp., \$17.95

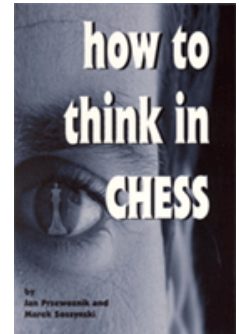
Three-time U.S. Champion Lev Albut has established himself as one of the premier instructors in the game today. His series *Comprehensive Chess Course* has become a best-seller, favorite of both students and teachers. The sixth volume in this series has just been released. *Chess Training Pocket Book* takes a unique route to teaching chess mastery and it appears that it will be as successful and as well received as the previous five volumes.



Albut's theory as presented in this book is that a chessplayer's game can be significantly improved by focusing on a finite, manageable number of positions, understanding them and virtually memorizing them so that when a similar pattern presents itself in actual play, the chessplayer's memory will be positively stimulated, allowing the same kind of solution to be applied in the game.

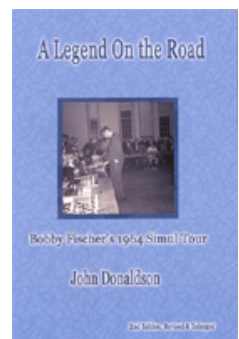
After a brief introductory chapter (part of which is excerpted below), the meat of the book is served up to the reader. Three hundred positions, four per page. With the book open, the diagrams appear on the left side, and the solutions/explanations for these diagrams are on the right. The solutions usually contain sub-variations and instructive remarks. The author suggests that the reader should go through the book more than once until complete mastery is attained. Although no discernible pattern of presentation of the positions is evident, the author does state that there is some method to the apparent randomness.

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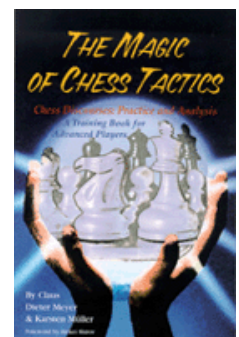
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From Chapter One...

Making the Most Out of this Book

Making Your Time Count!

This book is written specifically for the non-master who wants to become a strong tournament player in the shortest period of time possible. Of course, it's also a great book for masters to use to review and retain the knowledge that earned them their rank.

Finding what's important is most of the battle; remembering it is the rest! We hold this truth to be self-evident: Not all chess knowledge is created equal. A chess player must sift the gold nuggets from the silt. Otherwise, he can waste hundreds or even thousands of hours of life, acquiring knowledge that is of little practical value. And because it's impractical, it can't be often used or even remembered for very long anyway!

The simple truth is this: To become a strong tournament player, you must indelibly carve into your chess memory a certain *limited* number of *essential* positions and concepts. As similar situations arise in your own chess games, these memories stir and come to your conscious mind, alerting you to the best course of action. Naturally, increasing levels of skill require an increasing number of essential positions and concepts. Experts have a greater storehouse than the average club player.

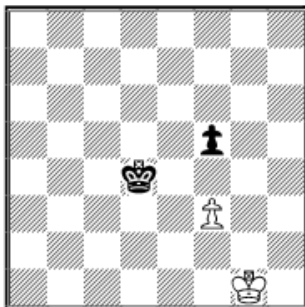
The purpose of this book is to provide you with the 300 positions essential to becoming a strong tournament player.

Chess Positions as “Zipped” Files

Those familiar with computers know that, to send information quickly and to store it in the smallest possible space, electronic files are “zipped” or compacted dramatically by special programs. On retrieval, they can be quickly “unzipped” to burst into their full detail. The 300 positions in this book are very much “zipped files.” Engaged with the “special programs” of your own problem-solving skills, each position will expand and make connections that provide volumes of chess-playing knowledge.

Here's a promise: To be a strong player, you do not need to know hundreds of King and Pawn endgame positions – but only 12 *key* positions. Of course they have to be the right positions – and they're in this book! To be a master you do *not* need to know thousands of King and Pawn endings. You need to know 50 key positions.

As an example, let me introduce you to a specific position that will become an old and trusted friend, one you'll see again as position #133 on page 92.



White to move

This position alone contains perhaps a full 50% of the knowledge needed by a tournament player to play King and Pawn endgames well! So the right positions, effectively explained, can be more helpful than volumes and volumes of off-target “instruction.”

[Solution and discussion as given later in the book:]

133. Capturing on the Right Square.

It's tempting to attack the pawn with 1...Ke3, expecting 2 Kg2, the only way to protect the pawn. And it must be protected (must it not?) as all our chess experiences have "taught" us. Then 2...f4 wins the f3-pawn and the game.

The King on the 6th rank in front of a non-Rook pawn always wins.
This is one of those dozen or so maxims every 1600 player must know about pawn endings in order to become an Expert!

*Well, the f3-pawn is doomed. The only question is on which rank it will be taken. Thus, 1...Ke3? leads to only a draw after 2 f4 Kxf4 3 Kf2 (Another key position to remember: Here f2 – **the opposition!** – is the only square to which the White King can move to for a draw).*

Black wins with **1...f4!** (fixing the pawn on f3) **2 Kf2 Kd3 3 Kf1 Ke3 4 Kg2 Ke2 0-1.** Black won because he always had waiting moves while White didn't. And now we can see that, with White to play, the only move to draw is **1 f4!** (1...Ke4 2 Kf1 Kxf4 3 Kf2=).

Of course, without subjecting ourselves to a prolonged regimen, it is difficult if not impossible to determine if this approach will be effective. But a few observations may be made: You can pick up this book when you have a few minutes, study a few positions, and put it down, with good effect. Furthermore, the book is designed by the author to be used alone, i. e., the benefits may be achieved without having read the previous five volumes in the series. And there is no question that this series has been enormously popular. That is because the system taught by Alburst has been effective. On that basis alone, this is a worthwhile acquisition. Let Lev help you improve your game.

[Order Chess Training Pocket Book](#)
by Lev Alburst

This article first appeared at [ChessCafe.com](#) in December, 1997.

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