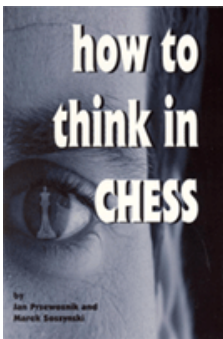




COLUMNISTS

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Hans Ree



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**A Newborn Wonder**

The third chapter of Vladimir Nabokov's famous novel *The Defense* starts with the sentence: "Only in April, during the Easter holidays, did that inevitable day come for Luzhin when the whole world suddenly went dark, as if someone had thrown a switch, and in the darkness only one thing remained brilliantly lit, a newborn wonder, a dazzling islet on which his whole life was destined to be concentrated."

The newborn wonder is a chess set that is briefly shown to him in his father's study by a visitor. Soon afterwards Luzhin will learn how to move the pieces, he will learn chess notation and come to play real chess, holding himself against an experienced player.

The chapter is about the wonderful time between wanting to play chess and really playing, the time when everything in chess is new.

For me that time is closely connected with a German chess manual, *Lehrbuch des Schachspiels*, by Jean Dufresne and Jacques Mieses. It was not the first chess book that I read, but it was the first one that I ever saw, the only chess book in the home of my parents.

I couldn't really read it because I didn't know German and certainly not German written in the old Gothic script. But I could look at the pictures, not knowing that they were called diagrams, but understanding that they pictured a position from a game. I tried to figure out if White or Black stood better and checked it with the real result. The words 'Black resigns' at the end of the game I could understand, even in Gothic German.

I think the fascination of the book lay for a big part in the fact that it was almost incomprehensible to me, but not completely.

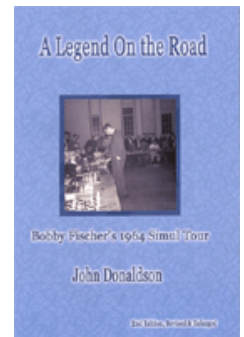
The Berlin chess player and writer Jean Dufresne (1829-1893) published the first edition of his *Kleines Lehrbuch des Schachspiels* (Short Manual of Chess) in 1881. When, after his death new editions were adapted by Jacques Mieses, the word 'kleines' disappeared and rightly so.

My copy, the one owned by my father, is of the 13th edition of 1935, which has 731 pages. Starting with the rules of chess it teaches openings, middlegames and endgames and something about the history of the game.

The pages are small, which makes the book a handy object that can easily be carried in a pocket of an overcoat. I have often taken it with me to tournaments, as a talisman. Its front cover has fallen off and the back cover may follow, but for the rest it is in excellent condition.

Although Dufresne was one of the best players in Germany, nowadays he is one of those masters, like Kieseritzky, Bardeleben and Rotlewi, who are mainly remembered because they lost an 'immortal' game, in Dufresne's case the 'evergreen' game against Adolf Anderssen.

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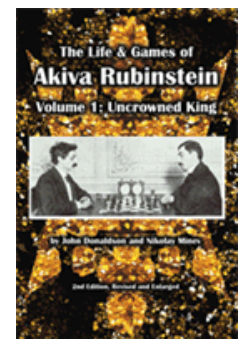
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Ralph Schiffman next to the gravestone of Jean Dufresne who is honoured now with a fine plaque.

Photo: [Ken Whyld Association](#)

In 2002 members of the Emanuel Lasker Society, which is based in Berlin, were visiting the Jewish Cemetery in Berlin Weissensee, looking for the grave of Emanuel Lasker's brother Berthold. By accident they also found Jean Dufresne's gravestone, which more than a century after his death was badly damaged.

They organized a collection for money to put a memorial plaque on Dufresne's gravestone. Funds were not easily forthcoming, but in 2006 the plaque was placed.

I am going to Berlin on holiday and I intend to visit Dufresne's grave to honor the man who created the *Lehrbuch*, the book that more than fifty years ago incorporated my newborn wonder, the game of chess.

Here is a game to show that as a player Dufresne was much more than just the loser of an immortal game. About Daniel Harrwitz, a German player from Breslau who later settled as a chess professional in London and Paris, *The Oxford Companion to Chess* writes that he was probably the world's best active player in the mid-1850s.

Jean Dufresne – Daniel Harrwitz, Berlin 1848

1.e2-e4 e7-e5 2.Ng1-f3 Nb8-c6 3.Bf1-c4 Bf8-c5 4.b2-b4 Bc5xb4 5.c2-c3 Bb4-c5 6.0-0 d7-d6 7.d2-d4 e5xd4 8.c3xd4 Bc5-b6

At the time they called this the 'normal position' in the Evans Gambit.

9.Bc1-b2 Ng8-f6 10.Qd1-c2 0-0 11.e4-e5 d6xe5 12.d4xe5 Nf6-d5

After 12...Ng4 13.Qe4, White's attack prevails, according to Tartakower. I hesitate to contradict the great man, but this isn't clear at all. One good answer seems 13...Be6, playing for the trick 14.Bxe6 Nxf2, with good play for Black.

13.Rf1-d1 Bc8-e6

13...Nce7 seems preferable, though White has a strong attack anyway.

14.Bc4xd5 Be6xd5 15.Nb1-c3 Nc6-e7 16.Nf3-g5 Ne7-g6

After 16...g6 17.Nce4 Black's weakness on f6 is fatal.

17.Ng5xh7 Kg8xh7 18.Nc3xd5 Qd8-g5 19.Rd1-d3 c7-c6 20.Rd3-h3+ Kh7-g8 21.Rh3-g3 Qg5-h4

22...Qh5 would prevent White's combination, but then 23.Nxb6 axb6 24.e6 is good for White.



22.Nd5-f6+ g7xf6 23.Rg3xg6+ f7xg6 24.Qc2xg6+ Kg8-h8 25.e5xf6

Now that the diagonal of White's Bb2 has been opened Black is helpless.

25...Rf8-f7 26.Qg6xf7 Ra8-g8 27.Kg1-h1 Qh4-g4 28.Ra1-g1 Bb6xf2 29.
Qf7-e8 Kh8-h7 30.f6-f7 1-0

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