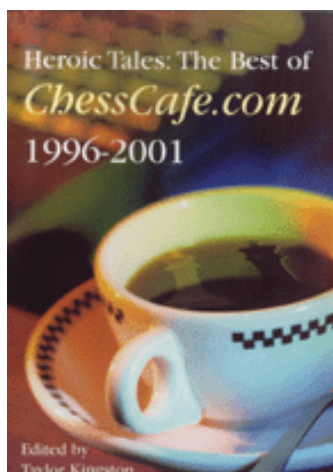




BOOK REVIEWS



The Color Black

Akram Shehata

Black is OK forever! by Andras Adorjan, 2005 Batsford Publications, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Softcover, 192pp., \$22.95.

No one can deny the negative feeling that occurs when playing with the black pieces, and the wide-ranging concept; when one thinks “If I can just draw this game and win tomorrow with the white pieces!” In 1988 the chess world received the book *Black is OK!* by the Hungarian GM Andras Adorjan with great interest. In this book Adorjan tried to explain how, in many openings, black is doing better than the simply seeking to draw and that the player with the black pieces should play from the beginning for a win, rejecting the negative feeling of not playing the first move.



The 1988 book was to some extent academic. In 2004 Adorjan introduced his second effort, *Black is Still OK*, emphasizing the same concept and containing some 29 letters from readers based on the internet survey published on the Grandmaster Square website. A year after that he introduced *Black is OK forever!*. It is supposed to transfer the concept from hypothesis into theorem.

Andras Adorjan is a respected Hungarian grandmaster, a former champion of Hungary, and a respected theoretician known for his ability to analyze deeply; he has written many books in various fields translated into many different languages. In my opinion his Elo rating doesn't reflect his true strength, but this maybe due to his special character. He is also a poet.

Black is OK forever! is put together in a unique way; I would describe it as a collection of articles. So we cannot really say there are chapters but there are different articles with different titles. For interested readers there are 21 articles (chapters). This allows the reader to read any article directly without regard to the order. And, all the diagrams are “reversed” – with black at the bottom! We are talking about black after all.

The second article in the book is called “A strange question: Is Black OK?” Of course we knew the answer to the question – “Yes” as indicated by the author.

This article serves as an introduction to the book. In this article (p.9) the author writes:

Those who:

- study my books thoroughly,
- give some unbiased thought to the psychological and philosophical underpinning of the strictly chess-related message, perhaps even discussing it with clever people,
- spend at least half of their opening sessions on BLACK (like they have never done before!),
- study the detailed analyses of games won by great players with BLACK
- simply cannot avoid improving their BLACK results significantly in 1, or maximum 2 years! Surprise, surprise: their White results are also likely to improve, although to a lesser extent! ... This is all I can promise. But mind you, dear reader I'm not giving you the result! Only strong faith and some food for thought!

I can confirm all the above, and add to it the joy the reader will experience when reading Adorjan's book. There follows an article (chapter) titled "Curiosities" with six deeply analyzed games are presented almost as appetizer.

The fourth article, "BLACK IS OK! Once more about the presumption of Innocence in Chess" is an essay that includes many philosophical and psychological ideas. For example (p.24): "The right to start is worth no more in chess than in, say, football. In this ball game, a lot of goals are scored from counterattacks, and it happens very rarely that a team scores from the very first attack after kick-off. As regards the 'course' taken by the game, my – otherwise 'orthodox' – friend GM Evgeny Sveshnikov and Mr Kenneth Bachman pointed out independently from each other that it is even EASIER to put together a BLACK repertoire."

There follows a comparison of what black might need to do to prepare a defense to 1 e4, and what white might need to do to prepare opening with 1 e4. We all know that white's task is harder and longer. Adorjan put it this way (p.24): "I can't be gravely mistaken if I say that after 1 e4, the lexical knowledge BLACK is required to have is about one-fifth of White's 'homework'!" One important subject to discuss is the effect of first move and symmetrical play ("mirror" positions). Regarding the psychological aspect he emphasizes the importance of being positive when having the Black pieces "So, two opponents are facing each other. Both believe in White's advantage. However one of them is 'forced to' have BLACK today. He fights for dear life, trying his best, but deep in his heart he plays against himself" (p.26).

Adorjan follows with a chapter of letters from readers. Then there is "More Curiosities" featuring a short draw against GM Hjartarson and an enormous amount of interesting analysis. The next chapter, "BLACK is BAD?," is article on the negative psychological association of the word 'black'. He also discusses

the first player, second player “thing” and asserts that a better way of referring to the players may be as occasionally used in German – ‘anziende’, ‘nachziende’ (starting to move, moving after). In my opinion he goes a little too far in this essay when he compares playing black pieces and the black side in chess with words and phrases that imply the negative. Maybe it is not so dark as in many languages ‘black’ often expresses beauty.

In my opinion, “Interrupted by Darkness” is by far the most interesting chapter in the book. It is about the relationship between Adorjan and Hungarian GM Peter Leko. Much new information will be found about this relationship and how it started, his opinion of Leko from his childhood (I do not think he has changed his opinion as otherwise he would have probably said so). I am giving this opinion from page 50:

“Tilburg, October 13, 1996. (extract from my tape-recorded ‘out loud diary’) ...Watching the kid's behaviour, I have noticed some frightening signs. It's very good, of course, that he is tough, merciless, and even 'inhuman' during chess games, he is also stubborn and persistent. The problem is that the same character traits can be observed in ‘peaceful times’.” Adorjan’s scandalous style appeals to the readers from the beginning of the article to its end. Interesting too is his patriotic approach towards his country which appeared parenthetically. Regarding Laszlo Polgar's attitude towards the Olympiad he states: “The doings of Laszlo Polgar concerning his daughters’ participation at the Olympiads, including treats and blackmails, are well-known in Hungary. That’s what we call the ‘Polgar-method,’ a ‘school of thought’ that has unfortunately found followers.)”

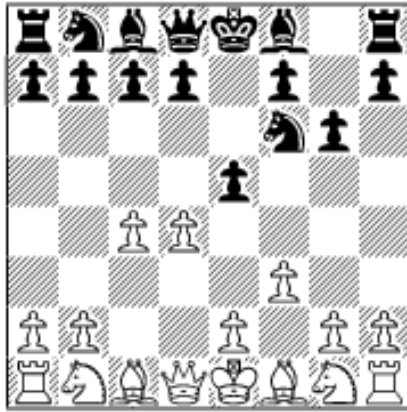
But enough of philosophy, psychology, and scandals; interested readers will find more in the book full of Andras's rants (replete with bold face type and the caps).

However, pure chess and high class analysis is there wherever you look for. Even in this scandalous article he discusses much of his work with Leko, which is exemplified by Leko in Tilburg 1998 when he played what Andras called the Adorjan Gambit. Here is the game without analysis:

Kramnik- Leko

Tilburg Fontys Tilburg (6), 29.10.1998

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.f3 e5



4.dxe5 Nh5 5.Nh3 Nc6 6.Bg5 Be7 7.Bxe7
 Qxe7 8.Nc3 Qxe5 9.g4 Ng7 10.f4 Qe7
 11.Nd5 Qd8 12.Qd3 0-0 13.Qc3 Ne8 14.g5
 Ne7 15.Nf6+ Nxf6 16.gxf6 Nf5 17.e4 Re8
 18.Ng5 c5 19.0-0-0 Nd4 20.e5 d6 21.Nf3
 Bg4 22.Nxd4 Bxd1 23.Nb5 dxe5 24.fxe5
 Ba4 25.Nd6 Re6 26.Bg2 Rxd6 27.exd6
 Qxd6 28.Bxb7 Re8 29.b3 Qf4+ 30.Kb2 Re3
 31.Rd1 h5 32.Qa5 Re2+ 33.Ka3 Qf2
 34.Qd8+ Be8 35.Rd2 Rxd2 36.Qxe8+ Kh7
 37.Qxf7+ Kh6 38.Ka4 Rxa2+ 39.Kb5 Qe3
 40.Bd5 Qxb3+ 41.Kc6 Ra6+ 42.Kd7 Qh3+!

43.Be6 Qd3+ 44.Ke8 Qd6 45.Qe7 Qxe6 0-1

Adorjan acknowledges that this gambit had been first played by Champman against Wohl, Melbourne 1993. Part of his introduction to that game, which follows immediately after the Kramnik-Leko game, reads as follows: “I had 3...e5 in mind since 1992. As often happens, I never had the opportunity to play it. Even my protégé P. Leko had to wait till 1998 when he beat Kramnik with it in Tilburg. I don't remember when we realized it had actually been played before. Since the pioneer lost the game, and anyway who's interested in novelties by players under 2400? It is of course impossible to follow all the news, on the other hand don't forget: the gift and democracy of chess is that anybody may come up with a bright idea!”

There are another six games deeply annotated in this chapter along with a detailed presentation of the Adorjan Gambit (E60). I hope readers will enjoy this article (chapter) as much as I did.

Two articles follow on novelties, “Some Novelties” and “More Novelties.” Adorjan thinks that there is no point keeping novelties secret for a long time for two reasons: on page 86: “As regards myself, I have never been a ‘taciturn’, and I never ‘stored’ my ideas for a long time. One reason for this was that the others are not idiots, either. There are a lot of excellent minds working on chess theory, any of them can ‘set the Thames on fire’ and get the laurels. Second, I have never feared that I would run out of steam. Even now, after being away from the chess scene for 3 years due to ‘literary pursuits’, I still have original ideas which are fit for life even at the heights of Linares. Plus the novelties, a few of which could also be called discoveries, which have not been refuted over the decades because I didn't have a chance to play them. I will publish those by all means.”

We will reveal some of the novelties here; there are many more in the book. Let's take **Dreev- Adorjan, Alusta 1994:**

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 d5 4.cxd5 Nxd5 5.e4 Nxc3 6.bxc3 Bg7 7.Bc4 0-0 8.Ne2 b6 9.h4 Nc6 10.h5



Adorjan revealed a secret here: White could improve here and obtain advantage – we will give short branch of the long analysis on page 87: "10. Bd5! Qd7 11 h5 e6 12 Bb3 Ba6 13 Ng3!N" and there is no satisfactory reply for BLACK according to the analysis published in the book.

10...Na5 11.Bd3 e5 12.Be3 Qe7 13.Qd2
exd4 14.cxd4 Bb7 15.e5 Bxg2 16.Rg1 Bf3
17.Ng3 Qd7N (untried novelty till now)
18.Nf5 Nc4! 19.Bxc4 Qxf5 20.hxg6 hxg6

21.Rg5 Qh3 22.Qc3 Bh5 23.Rg3 Qh4 24.Bd5 c5 25.Bg5 Qh2 26.Rg2 Qh1+
27.Kd2 cxd4 28.Rxh1 dxc3+ 29.Kc2 Rad8 30.Bxd8 Rxd8 31.Be4 Rd4 32.Bb7
Rd2+?! 33.Kxc3 Rxa2 34.f4 Ra4 35.Rh4?? Bxe5+36.Kb3 Bd1+ 37.Rc2 Rxf4
38.Rhh2 Rd4 39.Rh1 Bxc2+ 40.Kxc2 Ra4 41.Bc6 Ra2+ 0–1

Adorjan analyzes this game over five full pages! This game is followed by an amazing Sicilian Scheveningen, Keres Attack. All these point to Adorjan's contention that BLACK IS OK!

The next chapter/article is a letter from Lajos Portisch sent in 1994, with Adorjan's thoughts on it. It is supplemented with the 1991 game Portisch-Adorjan from the Hungarian Super Championship (½, 42).

Using the MegaDatabase 2003, Adorjan, in the next chapter, called "Statistics on Andras Adorjan's Games," presents a full statistical table of his results. He played 826 games with the Black pieces and lost only 17.6% of them, with 26.4% wins, and 56.1% draws. The book is filled with many other interesting articles.

And what should sensible leaders say for their team? AA answers this in an article titled "No Dogmas Please – Reasoning Only!": "White loses many games playing for a win even when it is no longer a realistic pursuit, simply because they are 'supposed to' win as White! It's horrible when a team instructed to try to win the White games, and hold the draw as BLACK. Sensible people don't say things like that ... What sensible people say is, OK guys, play the opening, and see what kinds of positions you get. Try to win the good ones and save the bad ones, regardless of colours! It's not the colour of the pieces that matters: it's their position!" (p.137)

And we of course cannot but agree. Adorjan's email address is included in the book for those who want to share their thoughts with him.

BLACK is OK forever! is filled with a lot of concepts, ideas, philosophy, psychology, and of course real chess games and analysis. I enjoyed reading this book, and even went through it twice. I can recommend it for all chess players who are looking for a good chess 'read', or those who want some inspiration playing black; the author promises no nonsense and he lives up to his promise. Andras Adorjan in his 2005 *BLACK is OK forever!* is by far better writer than the Andras Adorjan in the 1988 *Black is OK!* *BLACK is OK forever!* is an

extremely valuable book, worth far more than its price. BUY IT!

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