

**BOOK  
REVIEWS**

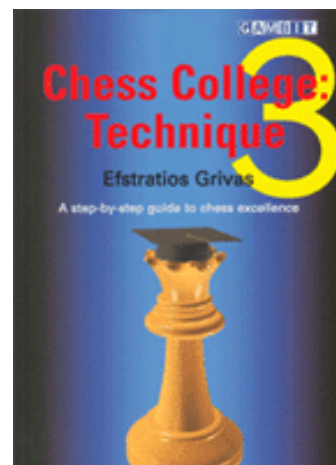
## Detailed Treatment of an Odd Array of Subjects

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*Chess College 3: Technique* by Efstratios Grivas, 2006 Gambit Publications, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Softcover, 112pp., \$19.95



In Gambit's *Chess College* series, Greek Grandmaster Efstratios Grivas sets out to "...introduce the reader to advanced training concepts, using the same methods of presentation and instruction that were taught to [him] personally by famous trainers..." He focuses on the middlegame and on what he calls "general chess theory," which includes themes and strategies of approach for various position-types, both for the player with the advantage and the player with the disadvantage. In this, the third volume of the series, he tackles the concept of technique in chess, which he explains is an



area of the game where "...knowledge of specific methods, procedures and sequences are especially important..." Technique most commonly arises in chess lexicon when a position is clearly won (usually in an endgame) and the writer or annotator indicates that now the win is merely a matter of technique. Grivas expands on this idea to introduce a range of technical approaches to position-types that indicate strategies for best play. In essence, he sets out to instruct players—presumably from intermediate level on up—on how to play middlegame positions according to set principles and rules that govern various positional imbalances that arise in the course of play.

Grivas begins his discussion with a series of brief overviews of general subjects related to technique. First, under the heading "Why Do We Lose?" he categorizes and organizes what he believes are the fundamental types of mistakes that plague players. He then introduces an interesting discussion of "Physical and Psychological Factors," proscribing certain rules for

successful play. For instance, he rejects the notion that players should compete on an “empty stomach” and instead suggests that “...consumption of food should take place 60-90 minutes before the start of play, as this time ensures the possibility of adequate absorption of food...” Grivas concludes his introduction section with a brief recommended reading list covering books and magazines that he feels are the best and most important for an improving player to read and understand.

The body of the text in *Chess College 3: Technique* is organized by positional theme in chapters composed of representative games, about half of which are taken from Grivas’ own praxis. This personal emphasis is useful, as Grivas is obviously intimate with the examples, and it is also interesting and engaging, as he steadily imparts a sense of his own style and approach to chess through his games.

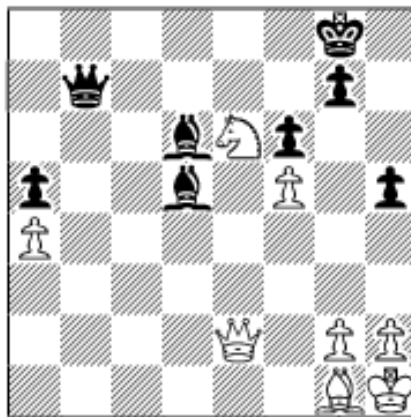
Topics covered include The Bishop-Pair, Bishop against Knight, Knight against Bishop, Classical Bishop Sacrifice, Double Bishop Sacrifice, Won Positions, Lost Positions, Opposite-Coloured Bishops, Small Advantages, and Immobilization. While coverage of these subjects is thorough and thoughtful, the selection of topics seems incomplete and slightly disorganized. Doubtless, Grivas chose not to discuss the technique of isolated queen pawns and hanging pawns because those topics were covered in [Chess College 2: Pawn Play](#), but other major technical areas are also omitted. For instance, Grivas does not emphasize rook and queen play at all, focusing almost exclusively on minor piece play in the middle and endgames. From my own experience, I know that many late middlegame or endgame positions with material imbalances involving exchange sacrifices require complex technique that would seem to fit in nicely with Grivas’ discussion. Alas, these and many other topics go uncovered.

Further accentuating the eccentricity of the topics chosen, Grivas’ inclusion of discussion of the “Classical Bishop Sacrifice” and the relatively rare (Grivas admits that the theme has never come up in his own games) “Double Bishop Sacrifice” appears nigh inexplicable. These are tactical motifs, not technical “...methods, procedures and sequences...” and though Grivas’ discussion of these sacrifices is interesting and careful, he makes no effort to explain how or why it is relevant to the book.

Looking past the strange selection of topics, however, Grivas does do a nice job covering his chosen areas, devoting at least a handful of game examples to each topic, annotating them carefully, and providing general strategies and themes. For example, in his first chapter, covering “The Bishop-Pair,” Grivas begins by pointing out that “The basic requirements for the exploitation of this element are: 1) Open centre (currently or in the future); 2) Presence of pawns on both flanks.” His subsequent discussion continues with the same clarity and directness. He reminds the reader that regardless of the general preference for two bishops among chess players, pawn placement ultimately determines whether the bishops afford an advantage at all. He goes on to discuss the situations in which the bishops are advantageous and explains how they may be used to advantage. “In the

middlegame, bishops can control many squares and from a distance; this implies better control of the position and the prospect of creating a direct attack... In the endgame... the absence of an adequate number of defensive pieces allows the bishops to impose their control on the position almost entirely.” Having made these points, Grivas proceeds to illustrate them in games. He provides the complete annotated scores of these games, sometimes rather superfluously including thoughts on the openings, but affording readers the opportunity to see how the various technical positions can arise in practice and how they may be converted to advantage.

In this position for example, taken from Schuh — Grivas *Strasbourg 1984*, black has just played **43...a5!**



Grivas offers the following analysis: “Black fixes the target pawn on a light square, where it will always be threatened by the d5-bishop. Black’s bishop-pair, augmented by the fact that there are no central pawns and that play develops on both flanks, prove deadly. White has no possibility of creating counterplay, and is thus condemned to a slow but certain death.” The rest of the game, including Grivas’ annotations, bears out his assessment, vividly demonstrating the power of the bishops.

**44.h3 h4 45.Nd4 Be4 46.Nf3 Bg3! 47.Nd2 Bc6 48.Bh2?!**

This speeds up the finish. White should have tried 48.Nc4 Bc7.

**48...Qd7! 49.Bxg3 hxg3 50.Nf1**

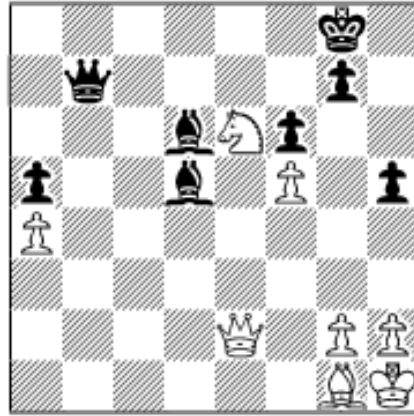
50.Qc4+ Bd5 51.Qc2 Qe8! does not save white either.

**50...Qxf5 51.Nxg3 Qxh3+ 52.Kg1 Qd7! etc.**

Grivas continues his analysis to the end of the game, where white resigned after black’s fifty-eighth move.

The next game example, taken from Bellia — Grivas *Vinkovci 1989*, also in the first chapter, illustrates a slower developing employment of the bishop

pair used to advantage.



White appears to have some pressure, but Grivas notes: “Black has repulsed White’s aggression while also catering for the future by obtaining the bishop-pair.”

The game and annotations continue:

### 21.a3

White cannot expect anything but trouble if he continues  
21.f5? b4! 22.fxe6 bxc3 23.exd7 cxb2

### 21...Rf7 22.Rc1 Qd8 23.Nce2?!

White should have chosen 23.Nf3! intending 24.d4 instead.

### 23...Bf6! 24.Rg2 Bg7 25.Qg5 e5! 26.Nc6

Black obtains complete control over the position after  
26.Qxd8?! Rxd8 27.Nc6 Bxc6! 28.Rxc6 d5!.

### 26...Qe8 27.Nb4 Ne6 28.Qg3 exf4 29.Nxf4 Be5 30.Nbd5 Rc8! 31.Rf1

And here 31.Rxc8? Qxc8 32.Nb6 Qc6 33.Nxd7 Qxd7 34.Rf2  
g5! is just winning for black.

### 31...Bc6 32.Qe1 Nxf4 33.Nxf4 Qe7!

The position slowly clarifies in black’s favour. His bishops  
keep all of White’s possible plans in check.

Again Grivas continues his annotations and analysis through to the end of  
the game.

As is clear from these examples, Grivas' explanation and analysis of subjects is consistently lucid and thorough. He does a great job conveying his understanding of position-types by using examples and guidelines to help players understand and learn how to approach similar positions in their own games. It is a shame that his selection of themes was not more organized though, or that he did not at least take the trouble to explain the logic behind his chapters. The book as a whole could use a more comprehensive and thorough introduction, clearly conveying the author's approach to the subject and his sense of the best approach for students wishing to improve their chess technique. While the "methods of presentation and instruction ... by famous trainers" are evidenced in the clarity of Grivas' examples, the book lacks a comprehensive organized approach to helping students understand technique and its overall application to the game of chess. Resultantly, *Chess College 3: Technique* cannot be considered a standalone comprehensive treatise on positional chess or on chess technique. Rather, the book is an excellent source of examples and explanation of the various idiosyncratic topics that Grivas covers in his chapters. However, for anyone looking to understand how to play with the Bishop-Pair, Bishop vs. Knight, Knight vs. Bishop, and Opposite-Coloured Bishops, the book is an excellent resource. It is also a well written, engaging, and interesting collection of games.

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**Order** *Chess College 3: Technique*  
by Efstratios Grivas

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