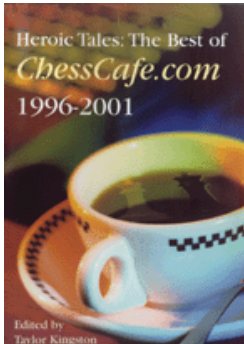




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One of a Kind

Steve Goldberg

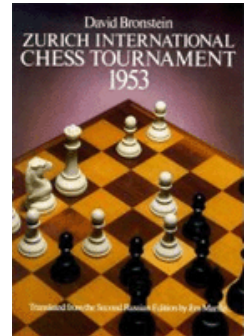
The Sorcerer's Apprentice, Revised & expanded edition, by David Bronstein & Tom Fürstenberg, 2009 New in Chess, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Paperback, 384pp., \$34.95

First published by Cadogan Books in 1995, *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*, featured 222 games along with twenty or so photographs, and it quickly became a modern chess classic. This new edition has 237 games along with more than 100 photographs, as well as offering a cleaner, more readable layout. David Bronstein was rather unique, as is the table of contents in the book by and about him:

- The King has Resigned
- The Sorcerer's Apprentice
- To the Second Edition
- A Word from the Grandmaster
- Devik
- P.S. In Memoriam
- 40 Combinations with Explanations
- 50
- 50 Games with Comments
- 60
- 60 Games with Diagrams
- 70
- 70 Picturesque Games
- 75
- One Horse is Faster Than Another
- My Experience with Computers
- Time, Gentlemen!

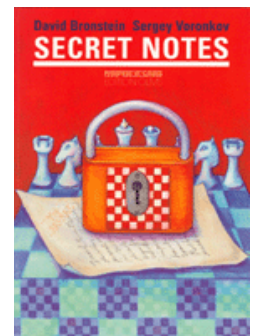


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[Botvinnik-Bronstein](#)

[Moscow 1951](#)

by Mikhail Botvinnik

The initial chapter, "The King has Resigned," is a eulogy of Bronstein from his close friend and co-author Tom Fürstenberg. It is clear that Fürstenberg has deep respect and admiration for Bronstein, and the reader is treated in this and other chapters to penetrating insights into the mind and feelings of the great Bronstein, and how he affected those around him.

The next chapter, "The Sorcerer's Apprentice," also written by Fürstenberg, continues to profile the make-up of Bronstein and lays bare the raw tension between Bronstein and Mikhail Botvinnik. About Bronstein, Botvinnik is quoted as saying, "Please never mention his name in my presence ever again; he is my enemy!" Years later, when Bronstein heard that Botvinnik had died, he quipped, "What a surprise, he was human after all!" It's not specifically mentioned what led to this mutual animosity, but this theme appears a number of times in the book. Events connected to their 1951 world championship match, ending in a 12-12 tie (with Botvinnik thus maintaining his title), are a likely catalyst. Some have suggested that the Soviet establishment, including the KGB, threatened that things would not go well with Bronstein's father, a former political prisoner, if Botvinnik did not retain his title.

About this matter, Bronstein writes, "The only thing that I am prepared to say about all this controversy is that I was subjected to strong psychological pressure from various origins." The reader can draw his or her own conclusions.

It's a somewhat unsatisfying explanation, but Fürstenberg explains the reason for the unusual name of this book. "Why the title *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*? Play through the games, study them, and then play through them again until you begin to understand what you have seen. Then you will know that a *Sorcerer* has been at work and you have become his *Apprentice*!"

In addition to the brief chapters written since Bronstein's passing, a few items have been updated from the original 1995 edition. One especially nice touch is the addition of a paragraph entitled "What have we learned from this game" that has been appended to each game in the chapter "40 Combinations with Explanations." Additional comments have been added to other games, and thirty-two pages of photographs are included in this second edition. Many of the foremost players during Bronstein's lifetime

appear in these photographs, from a young Keres and Smyslov and Botvinnik, to Reshevsky and Fischer and Kasparov. These photographs add quite a bit of personality to the book.



With Mikhail Tal, 1979.

“A Word from the Grandmaster” was penned by Bronstein for the 1995 edition. In this chapter, he suggests how the reader ought to study the games in this volume in order to achieve maximum benefit. Here is his advice:

First, play through the whole game without hesitating more than a couple seconds at each move. If you have the urge to pause longer – don't! Take a piece of paper and make some notes if you wish, and continue to play the game to the end. Then get a cup of tea or coffee, relax and try your best to recall from memory the spectacle you have just seen. Try to establish the reasons why certain decisions were made.

Second, play through the game again, somewhat slower this time, and make notes of everything that you did not see the first time.

Third, now go straight to those pencil marks and give your imaginative and creative energy free reign. Try to play better than my partner and I. If you do not agree, look closely at each decision, either for White or for Black, with a critical eye. If you look at a game like this you will discover a lot of new and useful knowledge, which you can use for your own benefit.

Write your findings in a notebook in order to look at them later when you are in a different mood, especially if you like the game... When I was learning to play chess, I studied thousands and thousands of games played by the older generation in exactly the same way and gained a lot from them.

Later in this chapter, Bronstein adds more detail to his feud with Botvinnik and discusses their 1951 world championship match. The incumbent Botvinnik retained his title although Bronstein states, “As far as I am concerned this match was a complete victory for my chess ideas as from then on Botvinnik, obviously having become a wiser man, started to change his style and his results improved.”

The next chapter, “Devik,” refers to the nickname conferred upon Bronstein. This section, written for the original edition, is a loving profile of the grandmaster, written by his second wife Tatiana, who is also the daughter of grandmaster Isaak Boleslavsky. It details some of the difficulties and some of the joy felt by Bronstein throughout his life.

The final introductory chapter is “P.S. In Memoriam.” Also written by Tatiana, it is a brief eulogy of her beloved husband and it details some of her innermost feelings. “When David died,” she writes, “I naively expected a telegram from FIDE, assuming that David Bronstein was part of the history of chess. Nothing came.”

Unlike most game compilations, *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* is organized into several discrete and very different sections. “40 Combinations with Explanations” consists of games with complete game scores and precisely one diagram – at the point of a crucial combination. Bronstein provides an explanation of the dynamics of the position, and follows this with additional commentary labeled “What have we learned from this game?,” all on a single page. Let's take a look at one of these presentations:

Zita,Frantisek - Bronstein,David

Prague vs. Moscow Match, 6th round, Prague 1946

[E68] King's Indian Defense

1.c4 e5 2.Nc3 Nf6 3.Nf3 d6 4.d4 Nbd7 5.g3 g6 6.Bg2 Bg7 7.0-0 0-0 8. b3 Re8 9.Bb2 c6 10.e4 exd4 11.Nxd4 Qb6 12.Qd2 Nc5 13.Rfe1 a5 14. Rab1 a4 15.Ba1 axb3 16.axb3 Ng4 17.h3 Rxa1 18.Rxa1 Nxf2 19.Re3

Nxh3+ 20.Kh2 Nf2 21.Rf3 Nxe4 22.Qf4 Ng4+ 23.Kh1 f5 24.Nxe4
Rxe4 25.Qxd6 Rxd4 26.Qb8 Rd8 27.Ra8 Be5 28.Qa7 Qb4 29.Qa2 Qf8
30.Bh3 Qh6 The white King resigns.



Position after 17.h3

17...Ra8xa1!

There was clearly a conflict between the Knight on g4 and the white h-pawn. The Knight has come too close to the white King and the h-pawn is asking the Knight to retreat behind the demarcation line. What decision should Black take?

Of course retreating is the simplest, but then we must ask ourselves why the black Knight went into the attack in the first place. Maybe we can create confusion amongst White's defences and boldly take the pawn on f2 by playing 17...Nxf2. After 18.Kxf2 can we play 18...Nxb3 19.Rxb3 Bxd4+ 20.Kf1 Qxb3, or after 18.Qxf2 play the other Knight to d3? Very tempting, isn't it? But upon a closer look we see that if the Rook on b3 is taken by the Queen she leaves the Bishop on d4 without protection and after 21.Qxd4 White can put his hopes up again as he can now play Nd5, with threats along the diagonal a1-h8, not to mention the move Nf6+. After 17...Nxf2 White may also play 18.Na4!.

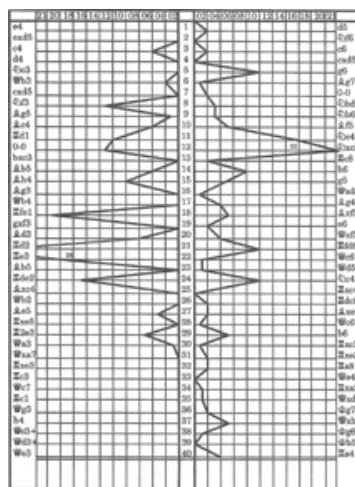
That is why Black first takes the Bishop on a1 with his Rook and only then the Knight takes the pawn on f2.

What have we learned from this game? *This example helps us to understand that not only long-range pieces such as Queens, Rooks and Bishops are important in the attack, but also short-legged Knights can be very useful. Of course they cannot exploit open files and diagonals, but they are able to jump between the pawns and pieces. In this case they were unstoppable and they disrupted the co-ordination between White's pieces...In this game both black Knights are attacking relentlessly. They helped the black Queen on b6 and Bishop on g7 to increase the diagonal pressure on the d4-Knight. Also, using the fact that in the opening both white c- and e-pawns have left their original positions, one of the Knights was able to enter the undefended square on d3. It was interesting to see how bravely the black king's Knight was jumping from one square to another into the heart of the white position and still survived.*

The next two-page chapter is mysteriously titled simply "50." It refers to Bronstein's fiftieth birthday, and discusses important tournaments around this time. A similar explanation applies to chapters labeled "60," "70" and "75."

The subsequent chapter, "50 Games with Comments," is the longest section of the book, comprising 149 pages. It is also the most useful for the reader interested in numerous insightful game annotations. Bronstein includes alternative variations as appropriate, but more typically his commentary takes the form of textual explanations, such as "The time has come to play actively! All White's pieces are ready for action" and "The rook is laying a smoke screen for a pretty combination." Each game in this chapter is preceded by interesting background information.

Within this section are several games with multiple annotators, including other world-class players. Another interesting inclusion in a few games is a Time Graph, looking rather like a vertical electrocardiogram. It indicates graphically the time utilized for each move by each player. I hadn't seen this before, and it would be interesting to compare such time graphs for stronger versus weaker players in similar positions.



Time Graph Tal-Bronstein

After the phenomenal “50 Games with Comments” chapter, the “60 Games with Diagrams” section is a bit of a letdown. It’s not that the game quality is less, but there are no annotations here. Diagrams abound (more numerous than in the 1995 edition, but of a smaller size), but no commentary.

Similarly, “70 Picturesque Games” consists of many interesting games, but no annotation. Each game does, however, end with one quick identifying feature of each side, such as:

- White’s most efficient pieces: the rooks.
- Black’s worst move: the 34th, allowing White to prepare a mate in three moves.

The chapter “One Horse is Faster than Another” is an interesting interview with Bronstein, in which he expresses a number of opinions sure to surprise some readers. For example, he is asked if he has become disillusioned with chess, to which he replies, “I was never really enraptured by it. My interest was in life in all its diversity...But I believed that since chess had become my profession, it was my duty to be an artist, to develop my favourite art in every way.”

In the twenty-nine page chapter “My Experience with Computers,” Bronstein explains that he learned the necessity of playing a computer differently than he would play another human. Multiple games are included here, including one that Fürstenberg refers to as “probably the most remarkable game ever played against a computer by a human being.” Play it over and you’ll see that it is not your typical grandmaster battle. Better yet, Bronstein’s thoughts throughout the game are included in the game notes in the book.

David Bronstein - Fidelity Elite

Aegon Human v Computer Tournament, The Hague, 1991

1.e4 e5 2.f4 exf4 3.Nf3 Be7 4.Bc4 Nf6 5.Nc3 Nxe4 6.Ne5 Ng5 7.d4 d6 8.Nd3 f3 9.Be3 Bg4 10.Kd2 fxg2 11.Qxg4 gxh1Q 12.Rxh1 c6 13.Re1 h6 14.d5 Qd7 15.Qg3 Qf5 16.Nf4 cxd5 17.Bxd5 Nc6 18.Qg2 Rc8 19.Rf1 Nb4 20.Bb3 Qd7 21.a3 d5 22.Bd4 Nc6 23.Bg1 d4 24.Ncd5 d3 25.Nxd3 Na5 26.Ba2 b6 27.h4 Ne6 28.Ne5 Qa4 29.Kc1 Qxh4 30.Nxf7 0-0 31.Qg6 Bg5+ 32.Kb1 Qh3 33.Rf6 Rce8 34.b4 Qh1 35.Rf1 Nc6 36.Bc4 Qh3 37.Bd3 Qxf1+ 38.Bxf1 Rxf7 39.Bd3 Nf8 40.Qxc6 Re1+ 41.Ka2 Rxg1 42.Nc3 Kh8 43.Qe8 Rf2 44.Ne4 Rf3 45.Nd6 Rf6 46.Nf7+ Kg8 47.Bc4 b5 48.Qxb5 Rxf7 49.Qf5 Bf6 50.Qd5 Kh7 51.Qxf7 1-0

If your only knowledge of David Bronstein is his famous commentary in the [Zurich 1953](#) tournament book, *The Sorcerer’s Apprentice* will open your eyes to the depth of his personality and his play. Despite years of the Soviet authorities denying him the freedom to play where, when and how he chose, he emerged as one of the strongest players of recent times. He was a non-conformist in many ways, but a gentleman to all.

The annotations in this book are beneficial in themselves, but this book isn’t only about chess. It’s about the life and experiences of David Bronstein, and the reader will enjoy the additional insight into those character traits that made Bronstein the man he was.

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by David Bronstein & Tom Fürstenberg

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