



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...

Just Rewards

Just the Facts! Winning Endgame Knowledge in One Volume, by Lev Alburtt & Nikolay Krogius, 2000 Chess Information and Research Center, Softcover, English Algebraic Notation, 408pp., \$26.95 (ChessCafe Price: \$23.95)

It has long been understood by masters that, when playing non-masters, if the game gets to an equal ending, the chances are very good that the stronger player will have a better understanding of that ending than the weaker player. Opening lines may be memorized and the nature of middlegame complications may be such that a winning advantage is not forthcoming. But endgames operate on principles that need to be understood.

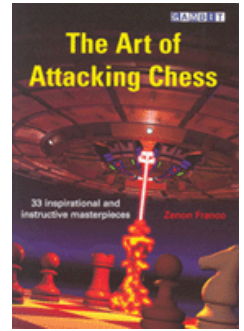
When playing stronger players, we have all had a similar experience: The opening is left behind, no progress is made in the middlegame, the pieces begin to leave the board and suddenly, with fewer pieces and pawns, an apparently even game begins to slip away. For the winner, the application of experience, knowledge and understanding has prevailed; for the loser, it becomes another "could've-should've-would've."

Three-time United States Champion Lev Alburtt has already established himself as one of the premier instructors in this country. GM Alburtt has gone far beyond just being an outstanding chess teacher, however. The first six volumes of his *Comprehensive Chess Course Series* take the student from the most elementary levels through most major tactical and strategic concepts of the game. His easy-to-follow approach has resulted in this series being immensely popular. The seventh and final volume in the series has just been released. *Just the Facts!, Winning Endgame Knowledge in One Volume*, puts the finishing touch on this outstanding series. (The title comes from a statement made by the character Joe Friday - portrayed by Jack Webb - in the popular television crime drama series *Dragnet* when interviewing witnesses, trying to get to the point as quickly as possible. Every episode featured at least one instance of him saying: "Just the facts...")

This 408-page book is comprised of eleven chapters:

- What Is an Endgame?
- Pawn Endings
- Pawns against Pieces
- Rook Endings
- Knight Endings
- Bishop Endings

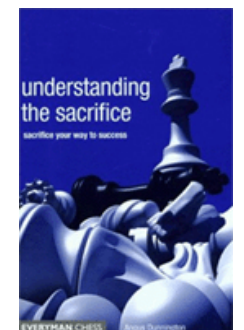
Purchases from our shop help keep ChessCafe.com freely accessible:



The Art of Attacking Chess
by Zenon Franco



Pawn Sacrifice!
by Timothy Taylor



Understanding the Sacrifice
by Angus Dunnington

- Knight against Bishop
- Queen Endings
- Mixed Bags
- Multi-Piece Endings
- Transitions

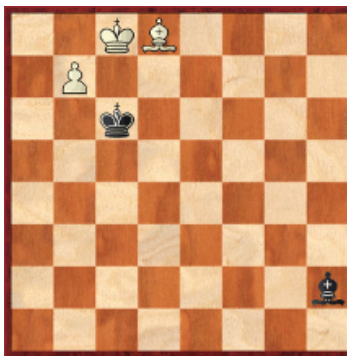
Each chapter finishes with "Learning Exercises" which are positions that the reader may attempt to solve and of course their solutions. You should note that you will not find the basic mates in the book. No K+Q versus K, etc. You have to go to the first volume in the *Comprehensive Chess Series* for that.

Each chapter is divided into smaller sections. So, for example, Chapter 6, Bishop Endings, has two main parts, (1) Bishops of the Same Color; and (2) Bishops of Opposite Color. The first part has the following seven sub-sections: Pawn on the sixth or seventh rank; Pawn not yet on the sixth or seventh rank; Bishop and two pawns against bishop; Both sides have pawns - the "bad" bishop; Both sides have pawns - the "good" bishop; Same-Color Bishops: Drawing and Winning Methods; and Other Strategies.

An effort has been made to present the material so that the reader may study and analyze without having to set up a board and pieces. Although this works most of the time, occasionally even the most alert minds will be challenged. However, there is no doubt that the 542(!) diagrams greatly assist the reader. (More about this at the end of this review.) Special positions and concepts are highlighted in distinctive blue throughout the book.

As regular readers of our reviews know, we like to present excerpts from the book being reviewed so that you may get a better idea of what the book is about. Several weeks ago, we played in a small local tournament and saw an endgame between two "A" (1800-2000 Elo) players. It was a B+P versus B ending and the Bishops were of the same color. It was clear that the side with the extra pawn had no idea how to win the ending, while the defending side had no idea how to defend. The game's result, a draw, therefore somehow seemed justified. Here is this week's excerpt, from the Bishops of the Same Color chapter. We also give diagrams as they appear in the book...

It is not hard to conclude ... that side pawns are more dangerous than central ones, because of the shortened diagonal side pawns provide to the defending bishop. With a knight-pawn on seventh rank, where the short diagonal has only two squares, the defender can't save himself, even with vertical opposition.



White to move

1.Bh4

To win, White should first take the long diagonal under control, and then deflect his opponent's bishop from the very short a7-b8 diagonal. Here's his winning plan if Black simply waits:

1...Bf4 2.Bf2 Bh2 3.Ba7 Bg3 4.Bb8 Bf2 5.Bh2 Ba7 6.Bg1



This last move "distracts" or decoys Black's bishop away from his last lane of defense to the queening square. If Black doesn't stop this plan, White wins easily.

Back to the first diagram. Black, by controlling the a7-square, plays to prevent White's maneuver.

1...Kb5 2.Bf2 Ka6 3.Bc5!



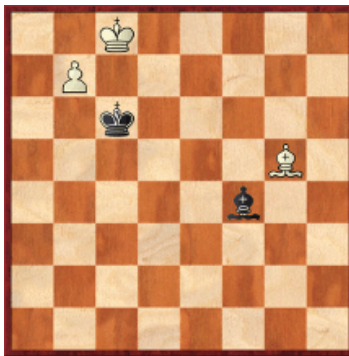
Black is in zugzwang. His bishop has to leave the safe haven of h2.

3...Bf4 4.Be7 Kb5

White threatens to bring his bishop to c7, so the Black king must rush back to c6.

5.Bd8 Kc6 6.Bg5

Another "distracting" maneuver. 6.Bg5 wins a decisive tempo, confirming the importance of the tempo-passing 3.Bc5.



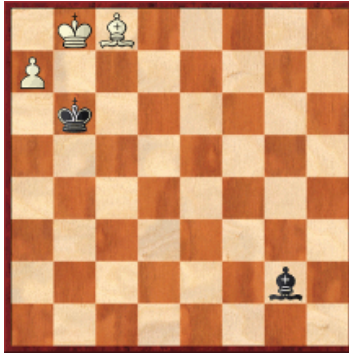
After 6...Bh2 7.Be3, White gets his bishop to a7 and wins.

[The following appeared in contrasting blue print at the end of this example.]

With a knight-pawn on the seventh rank, where the short diagonal has only two squares, the weaker side can't save himself, even with vertical opposition.

[The following sidebar appeared after 3.Bc5!.]

Move all the pieces in the first diagram one square to the left (into the corner) and Black holds because White's bishop can't get to the only - and very long - diagonal.



When it comes to the explanation of pure endgame theory, there may never have been a better book than Reuben Fine's [Basic Chess Endings](#). We await the day an algebraic notation reprint will be produced. (Are you listening David McKay?) For bringing clear and simple endgame instruction to the masses, however, *Just the Facts!* is terrific.

At the risk of venturing where perhaps no reviewer should go, but understanding that everyone's time is at a premium, we have come up with the following interesting idea: As previously noted, the book is loaded with diagrams and is quite user-friendly. Read through chapters 2-7 of *Just the Facts!*. Use a chess set for positions you are not able to follow with the book alone. (The book is designed to be used without a set, but as mentioned earlier, this is probably not going to be possible for many players.) When done, repeat. Continue this cycle until you are able to follow all the main lines and variations in these six chapters without using a set at all. At that point (and with the occasional brushing up before tournaments) you should have increased your ability to play endings so that you will begin to see a marked improvement in your endgame technique.

At any rate, *Just the Facts!* is splendid in its simplicity and instructional value. You will not find detailed discussions of the rule of corresponding squares and the like. You will find a useful hands-on approach that may well reap deserved rewards. They will, of course, be your Just rewards.

[Order *Just the Facts*](#)

by Lev Alburt & Nikolay Krogius
On sale until 1/26/10 for only \$20.21!!

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