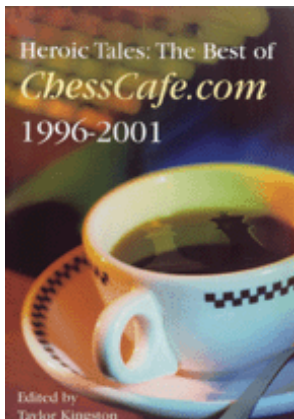




BOOK REVIEWS



Combinations under the Kaleidoscope

Akram Shehata

Encyclopedia of Chess Combinations by Nikolai Kalinichenko, 2004 Asterl Publishers, Figurine Algebraic, Hardcover, 829pp., \$34.95

Nikolai Kalinichenko is a correspondence grandmaster and the author and co-author of many books such as: *Opening Repertoire for the Positional Player* (with Gufeld) *Chess Strategy* (with Gufeld and Sugden), *Anand's Best Games*, among others. He is an experienced chess writer. His latest effort is a massive collection of tactical positions entitled the *Encyclopedia of Chess Combinations*.



From a production perspective, the book's cover design is not bad, but the paper quality is poor—just a few grades above newsprint—actually fairly typical of Russian publishers. There is no language problem as the book is written with Informant-style codes for annotations and evaluations.

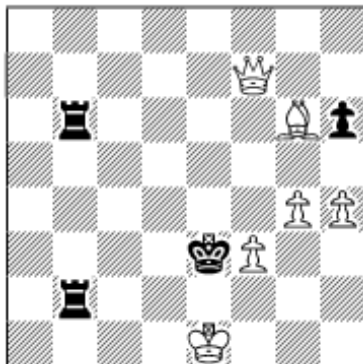
The use of the word “Encyclopedia” may not be appropriate here; perhaps a term like “Guide” would perhaps describe the book better. As usual with such books (combination, problem and puzzle books) the introduction tends to be short. Unfortunately, in this instance, I do not think it describes the book very well, promising more than it delivers, even though we see assertions like “combinational vision and the abilities of calculating all the variations are the basic ways which lead to success in chess” – which is of course true, as is the statement that “regular training in this field will increase tactical vision”.

The ability to calculate, however, should be developed differently and for this the reader is probably better served by consulting other texts, such as the highly acclaimed books by Mark Dvoretsky. The material used for such a task (the training of tactical vision or calculating abilities) should of course be different for each level of player and what may be useful (and fun) for one level may not be for another. So, when the author says, “the book can be used by professional chess players, [and] by those, who make the first steps in learning chess tactics” this is not completely correct as the book is probably not very useful for ‘professionals’. Finally the English in the introduction needed a good editor.

The author mentions in the introduction that this is a course. The author divides the material into two parts: ‘Direct Hit Methods’ (1,354 positions supposedly “grouped by 24 traditional chess themes” though how this is so is not clear; and ‘Supported Methods’ (2,913 positions) divided into a series of

smaller chapters. And, the author has come up with a few new terms to help us remember the themes.

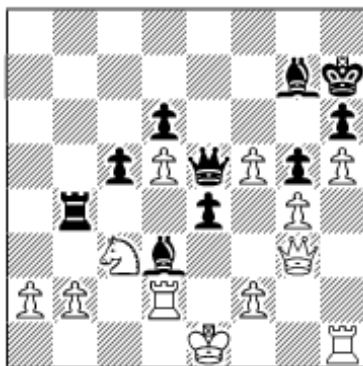
The first chapter is “Mate in one” although this hardly amounts to a ‘combination’ as that term is normally understood. A ‘mating attack’ is classified as a combination but surely is not a *mate in one*. The reader can probably solve the whole chapter (108 positions—only 18 practical examples—the rest are training positions by the author) in 15 minutes or less. So it seems that this chapter is for the ‘novice’ mentioned in the introduction. It is not that mate-in-one puzzles are not important; on the contrary I myself once saw Georgiev on the receiving end of such a mate from Leko at the Dubai Grand Prix. In the time scramble Leko (White) played the mating move in a flash; Georgiev looked like he had been hit by a bullet!



White to play; he has less than 9 seconds remaining, no increments.

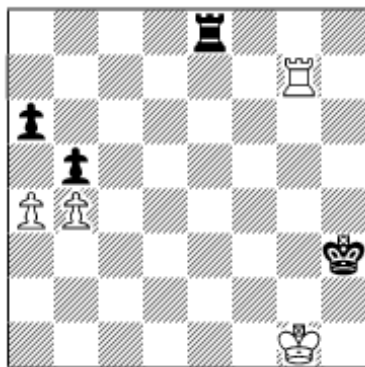
1.Kf1 Rf2+ 2.Kg1 Rbb2 3.Qe6+ Kf3 4.Qe4+ Kg3 5.Qe3+ Rf3?? (this loses if White has enough time) **6.Qe5+ Kg4 7.Qb2 Kh4 8.Qh2+ Rh3?? 9.Qf4#**. Of course, it was highly expected that if Gerogiev played 8...Kg5 Leko would lose on time even though he has a won position theoretically.

So familiarizing your eye with such mates is still useful and fun (maybe mate in two would be more instructive), but it doesn't happen a lot, and this is confirmed by the number of training position given compared to practical examples. To show the reader the difference between mate in one and a *mating combination*, take this example:



This is Enklaar-Timman Amsterdam 1972, Black to move. **1...Qc3 2.bc3** (According to my database, Enklaar actually played 2.f4 here and immediately resigned.) **2...Rb1+ 3.Rd1** (Now it is a ‘mate in one position’) **3...Bc3#**. Of course, there is no real challenge to presenting the reader with the position before Black's third move.

The remainder of the first part deals with tactical themes such as double attack, discovered attack as well as some specially named by the author: Ambush!, Furious Figure! And so the terminology might be ambiguous for the beginner and it in fact is not standard terminology usually found in an encyclopedia! The creative labeling ability of the author aside, it is not always quite on point. For example, let's take a look at an example from “Furious Figure” (No. 859 in the chapter):



White to play and draw.

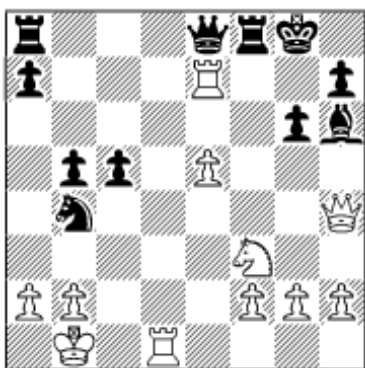
The solution is: **1.Rh7+ Kg3 2. Re7** and =

This is a stalemate combination! However, the immediately preceding chapter is called... Stalemate!

The chapter called "Trap" is quite useful. It has 104 traps of great practical value that should be engraved in the memory of

all players. Let's take a look at No. 460

This is from Belyavsky-Kasparov, Reykjavik, 1990. Black to move and win.



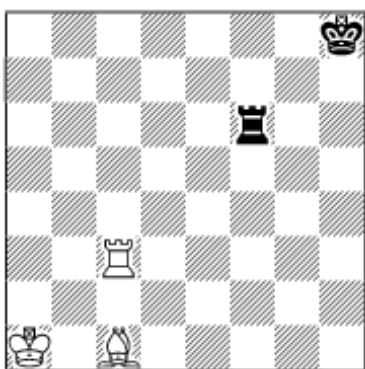
1...Rd8 2.Rd6 [AM: if 1.Re1 then g5-+]
2...Qc6 3.a3 [AM: 3.Qh6 Qe4-+]
3...Rd6 4.ed Qd6 5.ab cb 6.Qe4 b3+
 (with the idea 7.Qe6 Qe6 8.Re6 Rc8
 9.Re1 Rc2-+) **7.Nd4 Rf4 8. Qa8+ Bf8 0-1**

Actually, this was not played at Reykjavik in 1990; it was played in the 1988 Belfort World Cup. Not every error can be picked up as we have more than 4000 positions but it does indicate that

computer was not used to check for mistakes

The chapter "Zugzwang" covers the topic well, but of course most of the positions are studies, because Zugzwang is not that common in practice. Nevertheless, the positions in this chapter are all interesting and instructive.

The Ambush! chapter—with its unconventional title—is a nice chapter and the examples are useful. Let's take a look at No. 735:



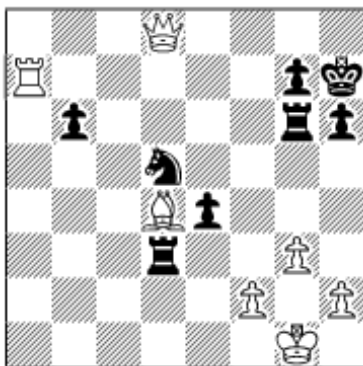
This is a 1925 problem by Bianchetti, White to play and win.

1. Bb2! (obvious, although perhaps not that obvious for beginners) **1...Rf8**
 (After 1..Rf7 Black will be mated: 2.Rh3 Kg8 3.Rh8#) **2.Rc7 Kg8 3.Rg7 Kh84. Ka2 Ra85. Ra7+-** Exercises finish the chapter off, giving the reader the chance to test what has been learned.

The second part of the book, "Supported Methods," is more advanced and the author here uses more standard terminology. This section is divided into more than 85 chapters followed by another Exercise chapter

The first group of chapters covers mates, double attacks, skewers, discoveries and pins, followed by Exercises. The material is not difficult. In the Exercise chapter there is a diagram from the game Alekhine-Bogoljubow

1929, Black to play and win (actually it is mate in two!!)



The solution is **1...Rd1+2.Kg2 Nf4#**.

Then the author moves on with more tactical themes like deflections and sub-categories based on themes such as deflection-checkmate, deflection-invasion square, deflection- double attack, and so on.

Let us take an example from the chapter "Deflection-pinning." No. 1879 Panov-Grekov 1928.

White to play:



1. Nd6+ (Deflecting) **1...Bd6** (The pinned piece) **2.Ne4** (winning).

So, in the final analysis, how does this book rate? The quality of the production is fair, while the content seems to be uneven. Certainly this book cannot be recommended for players above Elo 2200; there simply would not be much of a challenge. Players below this level may

find it useful—certainly there is a tremendous amount of material contained in the book. However, programs such as Blokh's *CT ART 3.0* or Renko's *Intensive Course Tactics* may prove to be better training tools. (Perhaps the author and publisher should consider releasing this as a CD program?!). Quantity is there. Now if only the quality could rise to the same level...

Order *Encyclopedia of Chess Combinations*
by Nikolai Kalinichenko

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