



BOOK REVIEWS



One Move at a Time, in Chess and in Life

Steve Goldberg

One Move at a Time, by Orrin Hudson, 2006 10 Finger Press, Algebraic Notation, Paperback, 224pp.

*I played one game of chess with Orrin Hudson. He beat me. But I've never had so much fun losing...And if playing chess with Orrin is memorable, watching him with his students is unforgettable. Nobody brings this game to life as vividly as he can...He sings and dances his way through chess lessons in a whirlwind of energy, letting himself go in the joy of the moment. You can't help but be swept up in the experience. The magic he works will soon have even the quietest kid in the room smiling and shouting. – Jack Canfield (co-creator of the *Chicken Soup for the Soul* series) in the Foreword to *One Move at a Time*.*

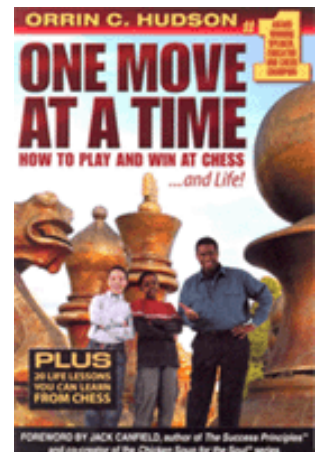
Consistent with Canfield's vivid description in the book's foreword, *One Move at a Time* is written for kids. Thus the author gets his message across in a tone that kids will be able to relate to. For instance, to the question "Why study chess?" Hudson responds:

- *Chess is easy*
- *Chess is cool*
- *Chess will help you succeed in school*
- *Chess opens your mind*

The book is divided into two parts. Part I is used to explain how each of the pieces move, how to use chess notation, and some basic strategic and tactical considerations.

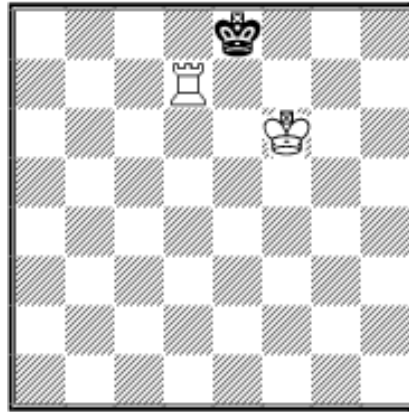
In the *Plan Ahead* chapter of Part I, Hudson spells out and explains his "Seven Key Strategies":

- *Control the center*
- *Make the most of your moves*
- *Keep your king safe*
- *Build a strong pawn structure*
- *Be mobile*
- *Attack wisely*
- *Choose the best defense*



Hudson also lays out some general considerations for opening play, middlegame tactics and examples of basic checkmate patterns.

Orrin spends a lot of time showing in intricate detail how to execute a rook and king vs. king endgame. After successfully pushing the enemy king to the side of the board, we find ourselves with the following position:



With this type of position, many beginning players will struggle to close the door on their opponent, endlessly shifting pieces around the board.

The author states:

Here is the important moment.

Look at the position above carefully. What's happening?

First, the Black king is threatening your rook. You could bring your king to e6 to protect him but that doesn't get you anywhere in getting the checkmate.

Hudson provides the answer:

The solution is to play what's called a 'waiting move.'

Remember that no matter where the rook is on file d, he controls the whole file, so just move him somewhere along file d! It makes no difference how far.

After Rd1, the Black king has only one move, Kf8. Now White finishes him off with Rd8#.

It's a simple mating pattern, but one that may prove difficult for the new player who hasn't learned the proper technique.

Next Hudson shows the queen and king vs. king ending, being cautious to avoid stalemate. This is followed by the more difficult two bishops and king vs. king finish.

An important point that Hudson makes at the end of this demonstration is:

Practicing this checkmate will help you understand one of the main ideas in winning chess: Empty squares are never just empty squares - they're space. And learning how to control that space is as important as learning how to control the chess pieces.

There are a few typos, such as writing “f8” when “e8” is really meant, and I might quarrel with some of the wording (i.e. “It’s not the best choice” when in actuality it is!). The rare typographical error and questionable choice of phrase may be sources of occasional confusion to the reader, but the clarity of most explanations should prove very helpful to the beginning player.

The final chapter of Part I (“Be a Champion”) segues easily into Part II, which is a series of brief pep talks meant to demonstrate how the same work that goes into becoming a good chess player can also be effective in becoming a good person. Here are a few examples:

One of the secrets to becoming a successful chess player is to follow the masters...But don't limit yourself to studying the masters of chess. Whatever you want to do in life, whether it be a sport like basketball, a talent like singing, or a trade like computer repair, follow the masters of those skills.

There's an old saying that goes 'Birds of a feather flock together.' This saying means that ...you become like the people you spend time with. If you hang out with crooks, there's a good chance you'll become a crook yourself. If you hang out with people who are negative and depressing, you'll become negative and depressing too.

I like to put it this way: spend heavyweight time with heavyweight people and lightweight time with lightweight people. Your heavyweight people are the ones who share your dreams and desires, and who want to see you attain them. Your lightweight people are the ones who don't help you, or who stand in the way and block your path.

Working within a set of rules makes you smarter and more creative. If forces you to find answers and solutions when things don't line up your way.

Everyone you play chess with gives you a gift...When other people compete with us, what they're really doing is pushing us to become stronger and better, while at the same time allowing us to see our own strengths and weaknesses.

The Part II pep talks are not standard fare in chess books, but do impart valuable life lessons from the voice of experience, and build on the advice scattered throughout the text. Many books are available to teach the basics of chess to beginning players. *One Move at a Time* also prepares the student for the ups and downs that chess, and life, necessarily entail.



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