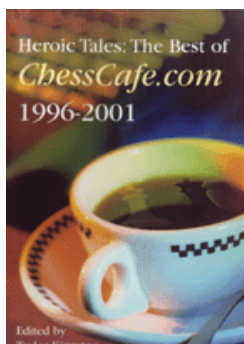




BOOK REVIEWS



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Practical Pandolfini

Steve Goldberg

Endgame Workshop, by Bruce Pandolfini, 2009 Russell Enterprises, Inc., Algebraic Notation, Paperback, 251pp., \$19.95

Endgame Workshop, by prolific writer and instructor Bruce Pandolfini, consists of lessons developed by Pandolfini over the past thirty-plus years. More specifically, five specific courses taught by the author, to classes consisting of players with USCF ratings between 1600 and 2000, served as the impetus for this text.

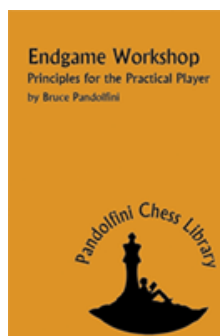
Basic but crucial endgame material is presented, although much of what is here has relevance to earlier portions of the game as well. The table of contents clarifies the nature of the book:

- Lesson 1: Opposition
- Lesson 2: Queen
- Lesson 3: Queen and rook
- Lesson 4: Rook
- Lesson 5: Two bishops
- Lesson 6: Bishop and knight
- Lesson 7: Minor pieces
- Lesson 8: Corners
- Lesson 9: Queen vs. rook
- Lesson 10: The exchange
- Lesson 11: Rook and minor piece vs. rook
- Lesson 12: Major piece tandems
- Lesson 13: Pawn endings
- Lesson 14: More opposition
- Lesson 15: Critical squares
- Lesson 16: Outside critical square
- Lesson 17: Minor pieces and pawns
- Lesson 18: Quadrangle of the pawn
- Lesson 19: Outflanking
- Lesson 20: More complex outflanking
- Lesson 21: Corresponding squares
- Lesson 22: Outside passed pawn
- Lesson 23: Diagonal king moves
- Lesson 24: Queen against pawns
- Lesson 25: Rook against pawns
- Lesson 26: Minor pieces against pawns
- Lesson 27: Minor pieces and pawn vs. minor pieces
- Lesson 28: More minor pieces and pawns
- Lesson 29: Rook tricks
- Lesson 30: Various matters

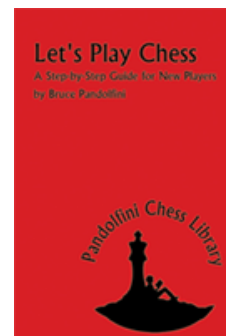
Pandolfini writes, “Clearly, this is not an all-inclusive manual. Yet I can say that most of what appears here has been fashioned for real people with real problems about chess problems.” That’s a mouthful, but it does explain Pandolfini’s approach. It’s not an encyclopedia, in the manner of *Dvoretsky’s Endgame Manual*, and it’s not a progressive step-by-step manual on the order of *Silman’s Complete Endgame Course*. Instead, *Endgame Workshop* is Pandolfini being Pandolfini. He writes in his refreshing, slightly offbeat manner, so that the reader feels that he is sitting one-on-one with the author.

An odd thing happened going through this book. At numerous points, just as I was preparing to skim forward because I thought the material was a little too simple, Pandolfini throws a wrench into the works as if to say, “still too simple for you?”

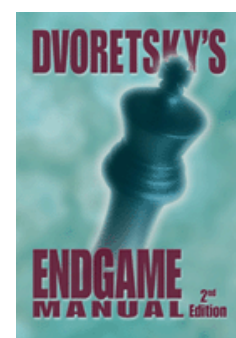
For example, he presents the following position:



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Let's Play Chess
by Bruce Pandolfini

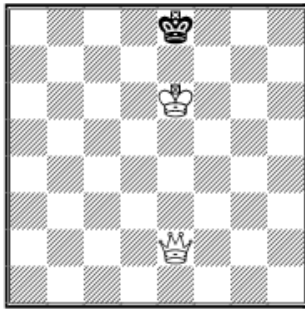


*Dvoretsky's Endgame
Manual*
by Mark Dvoretsky



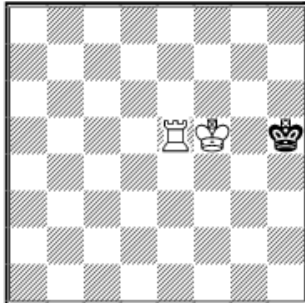
*A Practical Guide
to Rook Endgames*
by Nikolay Mineev

Read an excerpt [here](#).



The board doesn't get much simpler than this. Pandolfini asks the reader to find White's mate in two moves (it's White to move). Mating is child's play here, but how quickly can you find the mate in two? I'll let you think about it for a moment – the answer is at the end of this review. Actually, there are three solutions – can you find them all?

Then a few pages later, after rather simplistic mates with two queens or two rooks against a solitary king, Pandolfini poses the following problem:



It is White to play and mate in three moves. Pandolfini says, "Through the years, I've posed this problem, and similar ones, any number of times. I've gotten many answers, from the mundane to the intriguing. But I seldom get the response I'd like to get." What is your answer, and what do you suppose is the response the author is seeking? Again, the answer is below.

Shortly thereafter, Pandolfini spends twelve pages discussing mate with bishop and knight against a lone king. Who does such a thing? Doesn't everyone know that most players will likely never encounter this in a real game?

Of course, Pandolfini knows this as well. He states, "Why bother to study something that seems to have little practical significance? True, the actual mate doesn't frequently transpire. But how the pieces function effectively has much greater application. Especially worth knowing is how the two minor pieces can interact harmoniously. Indeed, they can cordon off wide areas, preventing the approach of enemy pieces, particularly the opposing king. This is significant, since control of territory is integral to all phases of chess, not just the endgame."

And that's why the author takes *twelve* pages to present this material, something I've never seen done in any other chess book (if I did, it certainly didn't stick with me, as Pandolfini's writing does).

There's nothing terribly complex in this book, and it's probably not a text that players much above ELO 1800 will salivate over, yet Pandolfini finds a way to break the somewhat complex into simpler, easily-digestible components. His explanations are clear and often humorous. He strives to present material (frequently with the use of various mnemonics) in such a manner that it will more likely be recalled when needed. In particular, I found his description of "critical squares" perhaps the most easily understandable I have yet seen. His explanation of "the opposition," when it is significant and when it is not, is superb. And he sprinkles in useful little tidbits throughout the text. In addition, quite a bit of space is devoted to rook and pawn endings and minor piece and pawn endings, so that the reader is exposed to a large amount of practical material that he is very likely to encounter rather often. On the other hand, the "corresponding square" chapter left me just a little hazy.

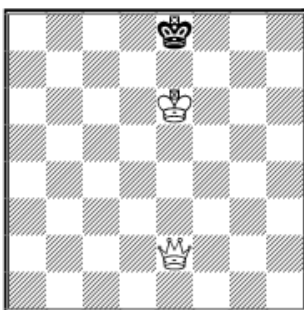
The one oft-repeated error I found was that references to diagrams are frequently misstated by one. For example, a reference to Diagram 288 might actually be intended to refer to Diagram 287. It's a somewhat annoying occurrence, but fortunately, also a rather minor error. The reader will quickly realize the author's true intention.

Pandolfini sums up the nature of his book best when he writes, "This is not an exhaustive textbook. But it does contain many useful practical ideas that amateur players can exploit to win and save games. Sometimes analysis is simply too difficult, and ordinary players can easily wind up getting lost in a maze of variations."

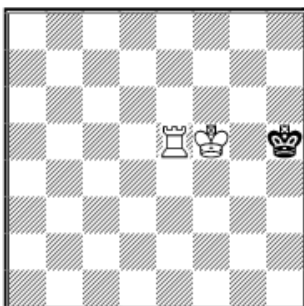
If you recognize a bit of yourself in that last sentence, and you'd like an easy-to-read text that covers a wide range of endgame fundamentals,

Endgame Workshop is your book. Or if you've been a bit intimidated by the idea of endgame study, this is a painless way to dip your feet in without getting burned.

Answers



White mates in two with **1.Qe5!** (or **1.Qb2!** or **1.Qh2!**) Then if **1...Kd8**, **2.Qb8#**. Or if **1...Kf8**, **2.Qh8#**.



It is White to play and mate in three moves. Pandolfini says, "Through the years, I've posed this problem, and similar ones, any number of times. I've gotten many answers, from the mundane to the intriguing. But I seldom get the response I'd like to get." What is your answer, and what do you suppose is the response the author is seeking?

Pandolfini writes that he'll often hear a response such as **1.Re6 Kh4 2.Re3 Kh5 3.Rh3#**, or a related answer. But the most comprehensive answer that Pandolfini almost never hears is that in fact, "any rook move whatsoever leads to the desired mate in three!"

[Order](#) *Endgame Workshop*

by Bruce Pandolfini

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