



COLUMNISTS

The Q & A Way

Bruce Pandolfini



*The Q & A Way is based in large part on readers' questions. Do you have a question about preparation, strategy or tactics? Submit your questions (with you full name and country of residence please) and perhaps Bruce will reply in his next **Chess Cafe** column...*

Yes, I have a question for Bruce!

Perfect, All Too Perfect

Question I am a young student of chess who has improved steadily over the last four years after taking up the game. My question is whether or not chess is really worth pursuing, or am I wasting my time? Recently, with the increasing strength of computers, and the decline in the amount of OTB tournaments and turnout, will chess still be around in 30 years? Or will some supercomputer have solved chess by then, and will it then become nothing more than a mathematical curiosity, not worthy of playing? I would like chess to be a companion for life, as it has been for so many other generations, but I'm scared that it may be dying, and that this great pastime will be forgotten. Can you give your opinion and some guidance. Thank you for your time.

Geoffrey Herman, USA

Answer You're asking the wrong person about the worth of chess. I'm prejudiced. I think it's the greatest game there is, and I believe finding challenging and stimulating leisure time is absolutely cardinal to civilization. But let's accept a part of your reasoning as being valid, that computers will eventually solve the game. Why should this stop people from playing? Most of us continue to pursue, long after learning how they're done, ridiculously trivial tasks that require little or no expertise at all. Do you have any idea how many people, for hours on end, mindlessly play solitaire or other jejune games (such as bullet chess)? Rather than halting these activities computers have actually fueled their proliferation.

I don't see that the rise of artificial intelligence will put an end to chess. Millions of people already play the game even though they have

no chance whatsoever of beating the world champion. For them he is as good as a perfect machine. What difference does it make if the best player in the world is called Garry Kasparov, Vladimir Kramnik or Deep Blue? If anything the success of computers might actually increase our own development, probably far beyond the level naturally achieved without them. Most of us are pleased by improving our ability regardless how we do it.

Will chess eventually be ignored or forgotten because the computer can suddenly do it better than any person? The camera can capture the human face far more accurately than Rembrandt, but this hasn't stopped the world from continuing to appreciate his portraits. The music of Bach and Mozart can be recorded perfectly, but this hasn't stopped people from continuing to attend live performances of their compositions. And computers may eventually play mistake-proof chess, even reducing the game to a tautology, but would this stop true fans from continuing to admire the classic confrontations, those vicissitudinous battles between Alekhine and Capablanca, Fischer and Spassky, and Karpov and Kasparov? In truth it's the subtle imperfections that skilled humans give to things that make them interesting, that give them character, that turn them into art. So in the end it matters what you think, not what anyone else thinks. Will this great pastime eventually be abandoned or forgotten? Not by you, not if you love it, and this is what counts.

Question I'm 50 years old and I am a 1900 USCF rated player from Sioux City, Iowa. I just never seem to improve. What reading material would you suggest for me that may help me get to the next level?

Greg Sanford, USA

Answer I'm not sure what you mean by getting to the next level. Are you talking about chess ability or age? If you're talking about reaching the expert class in chess, there is no reading material in itself that will work, even this. If you're talking about living long enough to reach a ripe old age, I'd say just about any reading material will work, even this.

Question I am a 30-year-old "near-Expert" USCF-rated player who has never studied openings in depth, preferring to think for myself. However, I've begun to feel that those elusive twenty points to expert status could be mine if every 8th move in an opening weren't a "theoretical novelty" to me. When I ask "How do you remember opening moves well enough to have an opening repertoire?," I get the predictable response (like I'm a child): "Don't memorize, understand." Well, how can you understand if you can't remember? If moves orders were so unimportant, why bother classifying openings at all? We'd all be just playing "knights before bishops," never moving a piece twice, "pushing center pawns forward," and other general principles. I've recently compiled games and variations for a repertoire, adopted chess

mentors (e.g. Spassky for the Closed Sicilian) and replay openings they've used, trying to predict tactics and strategy. What I've done to aid my memory is to use a well-known software program to hold "my" repertoire, including all those move-orders, branches, evaluations, and my notes on EACH move (like Chernev's *Logical Chess*) as well as key ideas, and replay the games. It's basically an updated version of making the moves, over and over. OK, the question is: Do you know any methods that other people use to remember openings? Particularly, methods for openings they don't play but may have to respond to?

J.F.B. Taylor, USA

Answer Wow. I'll try to address a few of your questions, but on the whole I'd rather be in Philadelphia. Let's see. You wonder how to remember opening moves well enough to have an opening repertoire. You've been asking around and apparently you've been getting the "predictable response," as if you're a child: "Don't memorize, understand."

That you typically hear this little bit of sententious wisdom suggests your problem. You've been hanging out with the wrong people. You should be congregating with chessplayers, not oracles. Perhaps you do need to work on your memory, but you also need to develop some new associates, no matter their age, so you shouldn't be so hard on children. Often they play much older than they talk. You might even want to be more like a child, because some children have very good memories, especially those who play chess. But you should still be selective, arranging play dates with kids having good memories and less with those giving predictable responses.

By the way, if any chessplayer, sermonizer, or child has been telling you that move orders were unimportant, he or she is just plain wrong. Transpositions, unexpected sequences, and different move orders are often the means to getting an opening advantage. But I have a feeling you somehow knew this and didn't really need to ask about it in the first place. Presumably you just forgot.

As far as the three principles you refer to, none of them are really principles. The first one, "knights before bishops," is a maxim. It refers to a highly unsatisfactory principle, that if followed religiously in king-pawn openings would lead to an automatic Four Knights Game. A lot of the kids I teach seem to like that. Your second principle, "never moving a piece twice," isn't quite a principle either, particularly when you throw in the word "never." Principles merely suggest courses of action, nothing more. They practically never rely on words like "never," but as a 1980 player you must know this. Probably you forgot about it when drawing up your e-mail. Then there's your third principle, "pushing center pawns forward." It's not only not a principle, it's not even a useful thought. What are you supposed to do with center pawns, push them backward?

Maybe this points out your real need. Certainly it can't hurt to study openings, but it might also help if you tried to be a little more logical. If logic became your strength you wouldn't waste time asking questions to which you already knew the answers. Stop complaining and get back to studying and playing chess. At least then you might actually have a chance to improve. Who knows, you may even acquire those elusive twenty points.

As far as the eclectic course of study you've chosen for yourself, it's fine, but so are thousands of comparable courses. It has no general didactic worth, but please continue to utilize what works for you. Finally, you ask if I know any methods that other people use to remember openings, principally openings they don't ordinarily play but to which they are obliged to respond (kind of like me with regard to your e-mail). The answer is I do, but I surmise you already knew that too.

Question I have been "stuck" in Class A ratings for more years than I care to remember. Yet, today I understand the game better, calculate deeper, read positions better, and I'm now better at move selection than last year and find better tactical "shots" than in the past. Still the 2000 level eludes me! Although, every now and then I do poorly against lower rated players at some time during the tournament. My Expert and Master friends feel I should be about 2100 rating! Any thoughts? Any suggestions? What's the difference in Class A and Expert chess ability? It seems to be a thin mental line! **John E. Davies, USA**

Answer Rating does mean something, though not everything. Some people excel in competition and others bomb out. It would help if I understood what your friends mean when they say you play at the 2,100 level. While naturally trying to encourage you, do they really feel you are a 2,100 player, or that some aspects of your game are this good, or something else? If you really want to know where you stand, I recommend that you have your game evaluated by an experienced analyst. Find someone to judge your play objectively while making specific suggestions to propel you onward and in the right direction.

Admittedly there is a difference between Class A and Expert, but the disparity is not necessarily so manifest. Experts tend to be a little more careful, a little more knowledgeable, a little better prepared, a little more experienced, and so on. It's often a matter of little things, but unfortunately in this game little things often matter. Factor in the thin mental line you mention, a line that may be thin but defiantly impenetrable, and no wonder headway can seem impossible. But it does appear as if you're close, as well as mindful of both the progress you've already made and the potential difficulties ahead. Get that assessment and have a course of action laid out for you. With a fresh start you'll feel inspired and be ready to move forward. Good luck on

your purposeful adventure.

Question I'm a 1900 USCF rated player and I just don't get any better. What suggestions do you have for me? I'm willing to buy the material that can get me to the next level. **G.J. Lakeport, USA**

Answer I'm not suggesting that you have a problem, but you might want to rethink why you're playing chess. I hope you're playing it primarily because it's a great game and you love it. If you love it, you'll get better at it. Life can be a lot fairer than many of us care to admit.

There's nothing you can buy that will guarantee a gain in strength, so buy what you want, but buy for the right reasons. Buy chess books not so much to get to the next level but especially because you enjoy reading them. Buy chess software not merely to help you improve but primarily because you are stimulated by doing chess on computer. Buy a chess teacher's time not solely to get better but mainly because you really want to understand the game. If you buy things for the right reasons your money will be well spent and you'll have a good chance to achieve your subordinate goals, such as acquiring enough rating points to get to the next level.

Question I enjoy your *Solitaire Chess* column [in *Chess Life*] the best and I always work those out. My problem is that while I score out at high Class A or Expert, I can't seem to do the same in OTB chess performance. Most of my study is with tactics and while I've seen improvement in ability to "see" and calculate I can't get out of the Class C category and I seem headed for Class D at this rate with my last tournament costing me 88 rating points. Any thoughts on this please? **Mark V. Butler, USA**

Answer I'm sorry to say there's no verifiable correlation between Solitaire Chess and over-the-board play. Solitaire Chess categories are merely rough approximations. Besides, no matter how accurate any chess test might be, it's unlikely to take into account factors based on direct competition. If you score in a particular test category it means at best that you understand some of the ideas typical to play at that level. It does not guarantee that you actually can perform at a corresponding strength. So while I appreciate your compliments I have to admit that the Solitaire Chess column is not a reliable barometer.

Assuming your over-the-board rating is in the right ballpark, and that indeed you are a Class C player, it makes sense to study tactics. Do them regularly and as many as feasible. You should also be developing your opening repertoire and assimilating some basic endings, whether by study or solving puzzles. But no set of quizzes, regardless how sophisticated, can quite replace the most reliable test of all, regular tournament play. If you record those games and subject them to rigorous and objective analysis, perhaps with the aid of a master or

teacher, your game has a prospect to advance.

Question I am a regular club player, on the lower side of the bell curve to be sure regarding strength. Recently after observing another member providing tuition to a gentleman new to chess, I was invited by the club member to provide a bit of tuition myself. The gentleman had a children's beginner's book which explained the pieces moves, castling, fool's mate and some basic starts. My question, I felt that I over-loaded the gentleman with information. Of course there is a lot about the game to learn. I talked about, in the opening, moving the minor pieces first and towards the center of the board; what are minor and major pieces; placing a piece so it has the greatest (or greater) scope for moving; trying to mate playing K v K & R, K v Q & K; counting how many pieces will cover a square for captures and defense; the relative value of the pieces; thinking of what your opponent may do first, then what you must do second. All this, and maybe a little more. He knew the piece's moves - but not exactly their worth. So how should I start? I do not see myself in a career as a chess teacher, but it would be nice to know what is sensible. Also was there something basic which I missed in the above. We also played an instructive game where I suggested moves and discussed relative merit of positions. I closed by saying that the most that can be learned comes from playing. **James Stenner, Australia**

Answer I wouldn't be so troubled with your material or your method, for there are many things to teach in chess and just as many ways to teach them. Your regimen is fine and your approach seems honest. What's more, it's good to play your student to see directly how well he or she has implemented what you've been teaching. If you should become more attracted to teaching, and would like to bone up on curriculum, you could turn to any number of excellent books that lay out full courses of study. Lev Alburt's *Comprehensive Chess Course*, for example, comes to mind. It has a surfeit of great material and should prove invaluable. But there are many other worthwhile texts that could assist admirably. Just go to a major bookstore, or check out any online service, such as **The Chess Cafe's**, and see what appeals to you.

You're right, however, to be concerned about burdening the student with too many details. Nor is being a good teacher solely a matter of presenting correct information. Many prospective teachers assume that's all it is, becoming discouraged when they feel their knowledge is inadequate. But this is patently false. If teaching were merely a matter of knowledge it would be reasonable to seek out the strongest player and get him or her to teach you. Yet the teacher can't make the moves for the student. And the teacher could never hope to show the student everything he or she knows anyway. So more important than conveying information is instilling how to think. This means that some of the best lessons contain a lot of silence, where the teacher says just

enough and the student is allowed to ponder in peace. How else can one figure out what's going on? Nothing is more repellent than a teacher who thinks he knows it all, who fills out the hour with an intolerably incessant display of learning. I wouldn't be surprised if you already understood the value of timely silence. You may not want to teach again, but from the heartfelt and sincere way you've expressed yourself, I think you should consider giving it another try. My hunch is that you'd be good at it.

Question First I had the pleasure to meet you about a year ago when you came to Pittsburgh to speak at a scholastic chess event. Your accessibility was appreciated. I have a number of questions about when to resign and when to play on. We teach our young chessplayers (under 1000) to play out a game and not resign when they are down pieces or believe that they have no way of winning. One reason for this is because there are numerous circumstances where young players can win a lost game when their opponent does not know how to win a won game (i.e. they do not know how to checkmate) and two, playing on teaches a young player how to play down.

First do you agree with this and second at what point do you teach a child to resign a game. Related to this is chess's equivalent of "running up the score." Often I see players toying with an opponent, refusing to checkmate and just cleaning off their opponents' pieces or going after just one more queen. While I know this does not violate the rules of chess I feel it is violates the spirit of the game. Any suggestion as to how to handle this other then praying to the gods of chess for a stalemate? **Rich Barbara, USA**

Answer Your outlook is on the money, emboldening students to resist when the game is lost. As a rule, students should be trained to fight tooth and nail. They must come to recognize that chess is a struggle, that they can't win by spiritless play or simple resignation. This mindset develops resourcefulness, which is essential to top level chess.

As far as teaching a child when to resign, experienced teachers generally stay away from this. When asked why in a particular position the loser resigned, the teacher should just give the reasoning without encouraging the student to resign in parallel situations. In fact, as you suggest, the teacher often takes the opposite course altogether, dissuading students from resigning until they themselves are strong enough to win most won games by force. You can possibly even bring up chess aesthetics, and how playing on in hopelessly lost situations violates the artistry of the game, though I wouldn't push this too far. You might only confuse them, and eventually they'll come to appreciate such things anyway, assuming they wind up staying with the game.

When it comes to running up the score, that is, making unneeded

queens, the veteran teacher usually stresses the practical drawbacks to this, how it might lead to stalemate, occasional time forfeiture, or at least an extension of the game, when anything might happen. You could get back to the art thing, and tell your students that strong players seeing their play will be critical of it. This may have an affect on the impressionable ones, but again it makes more sense to be pragmatic and leave the acquiring of an artistic sensibility to experience, with gentle reminders now and then.

Another thing, rather than reproving players who consistently violate the principles, it's usually more effective to praise those who play sound chess. So instead of overly criticizing those who pile up the score, give proper credit to those who win economically. This might not achieve immediate results, though over time it should influence the rest of the group. You can't just remake the world. But the accumulation of small gains eventually matters, so think how much could be achieved if daily you reached even a single student. As Horace Mann put it, each day "be afraid to die before winning one small battle for humanity." I'm not resigned to it, but it seems like a pretty good philosophy to me.

Question I am 23 years old. I live in the Caribbean. I am writing to you to find out about coaching lessons. Do you give them? Thanking you in advance. **Ravishen Singh, Trinidad and Tobago**

Answer I don't really give coaching lessons. Besides, I'm still learning how to be a coach myself. But you're right to ask me and other coaches for advice. Where possible, try to observe lessons in progress, inasmuch as you can discover far more from the actual thing than from its description. You might also take some chess lessons yourself, because when you sit across from a teacher on a regular basis you tend to absorb the process almost by osmosis. Indeed, some of the very best teachers assimilated their trade from the other side of the table, beginning as students. Another way to go would be to read the books of chess educators -- for instance, those by Jeremy Silman and C.J.S. Purdy. Each of these writers provides copious insights into the art and science of teaching chess. And don't forget to contact official chess organizations, such as the U.S. Chess Federation and Chess-in-the-Schools, to see what they have to offer. But ultimately there's no substitute for experience, and there's no learning like learning on the job. So if you want to learn about teaching, just start doing it and don't stop.

Question I just read your column for the first time and really enjoyed it. I currently play on the ICC and I am rated at around 1600 depending on the day. To give you some background, I started playing chess when I was five, won some tournaments and ended up quitting when I was nine due to things at the time. I am now 37 and have just started playing again for about the past year. What I am finding is that

I am not improving much, so, I have started to re-evaluate the way that I play. Here's where the question comes in. I am trying now to play my game based on the imbalances that I see on the board instead of a constant calculation mode. By imbalances, I mean that I take a step back and look at the entire picture. Try to evaluate the specifics of both players pieces and play based on those (time, space, material, strong or weak minor pieces, etc). By the way, I am currently learning how to figure what is strong and weak. In constant calculation mode I would be looking for I move, he moves, I take him, he takes me, etc. Will this work pay off in the end? I do say work because it requires a lot of concentration to understand an entire game from a picture and a list of moves. Just so that you know, I have never had a chess teacher. Anything I have learned about the game has been from getting beaten or study. **Bill Kury, Canada**

Answer You ask if the work you're doing will pay off in the end. I take this to mean it hasn't paid off yet. I won't pretend to comprehend your program, or quite what you're saying, but it seems as if you're attempting to assign numerical values to chess concepts and then basing your play on these assessments. This is the kind of thing computer algorithms do. Are you trying to think like a computer? It might make more sense to find a chess teacher and let him or her evaluate your game, and possibly your method of re-evaluation. See what the teacher thinks about the constant calculation mode before going any further with it, not that it hasn't gone far enough. Not only are you possibly wasting time, but you may be on the verge of falling into a trap similar to the one that snared Franklin K. Young, a chess innovator from bygone times. He had many creative ideas, but it's unclear any of them enabled people to improve their chess. So let's get back to reality. If you want to play chess better, really try to understand your opponent's intentions before responding. This you can do by asking probing questions about the moves, not by assigning them values. I say this, of course, not knowing anything about the imbalances, how constantly you calculate them, or who takes who.

Question I am an elementary school principal seeking information to assist me in setting up a chess tournament at my school. I wish to know how to set up the brackets, how to choose appropriate age levels, and how to motivate children to become involved. Any assistance will be very much appreciated. **Norman Dover, USA**

Answer Start by contacting Tom Brownscombe, the scholastic coordinator of the U. S. Chess Federation. He will be happy to provide information on setting up a chess tournament at your school. You might also seek out David MacEnulty of Chess-in-the-Schools. He is an informed educator who loves to see new programs get underfoot. Then there's the Internet and a bounty of useful information. Type in "chess" and see where it takes you. You could also inquire at some of the prominent American chess clubs, such as the Manhattan and

Marshall Chess Clubs in New York or the Mechanics Institute Chess Club in San Francisco. It wouldn't hurt to reach out to your own state chess affiliate either, for you might find someone close by to help you directly. Some books may help too, such as *The Official Rule Book of Chess*. With regard to getting children involved, put up signs, send letters home, organize teacher meetings to see who is interested and what they can do, make a big thing of those individuals whose chess achievements stand out, invite local masters to give chess exhibitions, celebrate chess day, organize chess problem-solving contests, leave chess sets out in the lunch room and library, hold tournaments, especially rated ones, as you already are attempting to do, arrange matches with other schools, encourage parents and other engaged people to volunteer, get radio and television stations, as well as local newspapers, to cover your chess happenings, and so on. You know, do the same things you would to promote any other school activity. Good luck, and please let me know how it goes.

Question I have a deep desire to improve my game although I am already slightly better than Josh (that is, when Josh was 8). Most of the books I've read over the years and the little instruction I've received emphasize tactical perception. A tactical threat or opportunity can require some searching but once you've found it the course of action is concrete. I believe to improve my game, I need to be able to recognize more subtle threats and opportunities. Your book, *Weapons of Chess* is helping. Also, I'm reading with excitement, *The Amateur's Mind* (Silman) which I'm confident will dramatically improve my positional perception and enable me to one day beat Josh (actually a computer simulation of Josh at age 9). While drills abound for improving tactical play, exercises for improving strategic play seem scarce. What advice do you give in learning to recognize and leverage subtle positional imbalances? With the greatest abundance of respect and admiration.
Lawrence Kilmer, USA

Answer I'm glad you told me it was a computer simulation of the 9-year old Josh, and not the real one, because the last time I saw him he was 24 and he wasn't trying to simulate anything. Anyhow, chess books emphasize tactics (now and also when Josh was 8) because most chess games hinge on tactical motifs. Tactics also tend to be easier to grasp than strategy, so while there are many ways to buff up your tactics, there really isn't a quick fix for strategic improvement.

I suppose you could try various things to improve your strategy. You could study the games of great strategic players. You could read books on strategy or strategic sections within more general books. Any of Jeremy Silman's volumes, such as the one you've been reading, are excellent for this. You could take lessons, especially emphasizing strategy. Or you could play regularly against serious opponents and analyze the games afterward, possibly with their help, while concentrating on the strategic aspects of the play. But all this takes

time, and that's why it's usually the more experienced player who understands something about strategic thinking. So the best approach to understanding strategy may simply be to live long and play often.

Question Greetings from Sao Paulo. First of all congratulations for your articles and for your books. Now I refer to a question presented by my compatriot Henrique Marinho: "Which is the best definition of strategy?" I would like to freely quote S. Tartakover: "tactic is what you do when you have something to do; strategy is what you do when you have nothing to do." **Luciano Amaral, Brazil**

Answer Thanks for sharing Tartakover's wisdom. You and he have certainly brought a smile to my face, but you've also put me in a quandary. I've been smiling strategically for a long time with no immediate tactical relief in sight. If only I had nothing to do.

Question I am playing 1...e5 against 1.e4 and the Nimzo against 1.d4. But I am having a hard time deciding what to play when I am White. I have been told that 1.d4 is much more solid and easier to play than 1.e4. What do you think? **Carlos Guaimare, Venezuela**

Answer Although it's hard to go wrong here, it's not hard enough, so a teacher really shouldn't commit to either 1. e4 or 1. d4 without knowing more about you. And even with such knowledge most strong players realize that the choice of an opening move is largely personal, not necessarily based on objective merit. I suppose you could play equal numbers of games with each and, like a pretend-scientist, review the results before coming out with your conclusions. Or you could just cut the Gordian Knot, like a pretend-Alexander, and play your preference without further thought. If after this you fail to win enough, or if typically you find the resulting positions to be uncomfortable, go with the other choice also on a whim. But don't forget, as Tarrasch reminds us, after the opening the gods have placed the middlegame and the endgame. You're going to have to work on them too, unless most of your games are lost in under ten moves, whereupon you might just prefer to study another beginning move altogether.

Question I've recently developed a fascination collecting chess sets. Do you know what set will be used for the London 2000 Championship and what was the choice for previous championships? **Walt Armbruster, USA**

Answer If you're asking about design, all chess championships since the formation of FIDE have used Staunton style pieces, even those held in the former Soviet Union. If you're asking about particular models or manufacturers, that's another question. Some of the title matches have used sets made by the Jaques company in England. David Levy tells me that several of the championships since 1986 used French cuts with the insides hollowed out for electronics, so that the moves could immediately be transmitted to a demonstration screen for

the audience. "Perhaps the person who would know best is Frank Camaratta. He is the proprietor of The House of Staunton, the exclusive importer of Jaques chess sets into the United States. His fine quality Staunton sets are available at **The Chess Cafe**. You may see them at www.chesscafe.com/catalog/sets2.htm."

Question Hi there, Mister Pandolfini. My question does not pertain to ratings, opening theory or Ben Kingsley. I am quite curious to know how one becomes a chess journalist. Must one be an exceptional chess master, as certain websites would have us believe (by virtue of who they employ), or is background in writing and journalism satisfactory? I am sure in your career you have crossed paths with many sorts of reporters, photographers and other sundry individuals. How did they achieve their opportunity? I am a playwriting student chess player, and I have tried to meld the two before (with minimal success). If there is any sort of step(s) or path you could recommend I take now, I would most appreciate it. But I am thankful for any sort of response: advice, anecdote, raspberries, etc. Keep up the good neo-Steinitzian-Nietzschean work! **C.Zack Gonzales, USA**

Answer The truth is there's no one way to become anything, even a chess journalist. You can get there by being a good writer, a good chessplayer, both or neither. There are no rules here, which can be very appealing.

Of course you could cover yourself by working on both chess and writing. To improve your chess skills, play against good players every chance you get. To develop your writing talents, write as often as you can. Write about what interests you and about what doesn't. And if you're trying to get published, be willing to work for nothing at first, but only at first. Eventually you'll want to be paid for your efforts, which is why I recommend that you forget chess journalism completely. It pays nothing even when it pays, and the fringe benefits are truly on the fringe.

As far as developing a writing style, find yourself and go with that. Just be clear and direct. Chessplayers prefer clarity to subtlety, though they want that too. So don't be afraid to repeat things for emphasis, which is why I'm suggesting for a second time that you skip chess journalism and seek another career. To heck with subtlety.

But if you still disagree, and persist in your quest, deciding to become a chess journalist despite these warnings, then it's clear that you're for real and you should continue your journey. As Joyce urges the budding artist at the end of the Portrait, "go to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience." If this is who you are, and what you want to be, then forge ahead and give us some of the best chess writing the world has ever seen. Besides, even chess people need a good read.

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