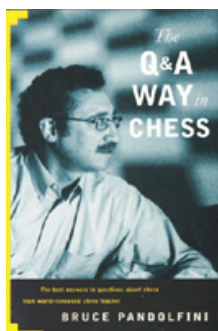




COLUMNISTS

The Q & A
Way

Bruce Pandolfini



CHESSTHEATRE
Play through and download
the games from
ChessCafe.com in the
DGT Game Viewer.



Rock and Roll High School

Question I live near San Francisco, California. My chess strength is around 1800, though I am possibly better than my rating, and I would like to do some chess teaching, maybe at the high school level. In trying to relate, not that I am trying to be funny here, maybe I should learn more about the new music as well as the new chess. I have been connected to a few summer camps before and I have given a number of private and small group chess lessons. Although I have to make some supplemental money to live on, I do not have to make much, and can get by without a whole lot. I want to enlighten you on my background to help you think about this. I am thirty-three-years old and have been playing chess since I was a teenager in school. Besides chess, my background was in philosophy and economics. I spent a few unproductive years at Berkeley and did not graduate. Now I would like to help people learn chess. What would you recommend I do to become more conversant with chess teaching techniques without going crazy? Even a couple of suggestions might be helpful to someone like me. Can you help me, even somewhat, considering your experience and craft? I would appreciate your advice.

Jonathan Mothfield (USA)

Answer Thank you for enlightening me on your background. Nonetheless, even with that vital information, I'm not sure I can provide the kind of assistance you may need, Mr. Mothfield, if that really is your name. But let's assume it is and that, with my "experience and craft," I can find a way. Let me shorten my response, however, since, with each line, I feel I'm getting older. To be sure, in attempting to grapple with all these inquiries, I find that I may be getting too old to be old.

So here are three suggestions:

- Read books by chess teachers who talk about the art of teaching. Sunil Weeramantry's *Best Lessons of a Chess Coach* is pretty good, and any of the books by Dan Heisman or Cecil Purdy should also prove extremely helpful.
- Ask every teacher and strong player you encounter for advice. Better yet, seek them out. Some of them might actually help you.
- Try to observe lessons and classes given by other teachers.

It's as baseball great, Yogi Berra, supposedly said. "You can learn a lot by watching."

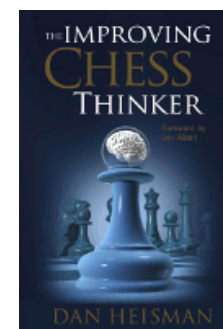
Question Perhaps it was you (I am not certain), but recently I read somewhere of an excellent way to study the endgame. It was suggested that one play out games that players have already resigned. Supposedly, by doing that, a player could develop his endgame technique. In order to do this one could find another player to work with or set up the positions and play them out against software. Can you think, offhand, of any games, at least a few, that would be especially worthwhile for this purpose? Also, what percentage of such games should one expect to win? Thank you for your columns and I apologize if similar questions have already been asked. **Thomas Bartlett (USA)**

Answer Similar questions have already been asked, and answered, but that's okay. These things happen. Besides, no two questions are exactly alike. Most of the time, it only seems that way. I'm not going to suggest any games in particular. That is, I think it pointless to recommend, say, the final game of the Alekhine-Capablanca 1927 World Championship Match, as great as it was, since you're going to need to play out more than a couple of such games to make this exercise work. Without a doubt, you should think in terms of finishing out hundreds of games, if not more.

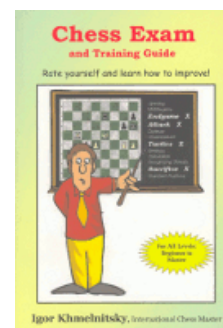
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Solitaire Chess
by Bruce Pandolfini



Improving Chess Thinker
by Dan Heisman



*Chess Exam and
Training Guide*
by Igor Khmelnitsky

The best place to go would be to [ChessBase](#), or a comparable product, with their large databases. Choose players known for their endgame play, such as the world champions and their respective challengers. Then start searching. As part of the filtering process, seek games that lasted long enough. Let's say you pursue games going fifty moves or longer. Surely, you can vary these parameters as you go along and to suit your adapting requirements. Against Fritz, or some other piece of artificial intelligence, play the selected positions out to mate or decisive promotion. Give yourself a point for every game you win, half point for every draw, and nothing for games you lose that should have been won. Your technique is decent if you score seventy-five percent or better. Some of the games will be ridiculously easy, but a number of them may require real expertise to implement, even though each of the lost games was abandoned at the point you're picking it up. Unlike almost everyone else, top grandmasters and strong players resign well ahead of the rest of us. They don't need to play out the obvious, even though what they often deem obvious may remain for us shrouded in mystery. Good luck on your worthy task.

Question These days, everyone plays chess on computer. Blitz chess is very popular, and the one minute time controls are hard for ordinary players like me to handle. I prefer playing at the slower time controls, fifteen minutes and greater. But my question is not about that. I am more concerned with teaching chess using computers. I hear about the use of computers in classrooms and in private teaching. I was wondering if you have any things you do when using computers to teach chess. I think I may have put the cart before the horse. I should ask, do you use computers to teach chess, or to have your students study chess? Were there one or two things in particular that you do with computers? Any other tools you can think of that you use or have used? **Karl Brown (USA)**

Answer I've always used whatever tools I could find to help me teach the game. Since I often don't have a clue, I have to turn to all sorts of gimmicks to help the student improve. So, even as far as back as 1972, I gave lessons by phone, before it became more pedestrian. Furthermore, before the modern age, when it wasn't easy to make diagrams, I would set up positions on pocket sets and either photocopy them or take Polaroid pictures. I'd also use tape recorders to emphasize specific points I thought the student needed to hear more often. Index cards, blowing up key notes to make wall hangings, placing vectors and markers on squares and lines for accent and clarification during lessons, and destroying books with purpose (this was one of my favorite activities, but more on this some other time), were all in my arsenal, as were many other ordinary and experimentally specialized effects.

Certainly, I've utilized computers, once it became more feasible, and ever since I've turned to them as often as needed and practical. Computers indeed have many usages for studying and teaching chess. If my students have appropriate software, I will give them searches and projects to explore databases. Here, I'm interested in what they think is relevant and also how they organize their material. Although I don't ask them to write chess books so much, I want them to proceed as if they were writing one. This means they must first gather material and then sequence the examples in logical order. If I'm really being Tarraschian, I might just make them write a book.

Back to computers: the main thing I do is play with certain students as a team, against the software, adjusted to suitable levels of response. I prefer doing this, instead of examining games from a score sheet after they've been played. Being there as the game unfolds allows me to get right inside the heads of students as they are making critical determinations. Examine a game days after it's been played, even hours or immediately afterward, and much of the inner workings that informed the decision-making process have been lost. Another virtue of using the software is that we can discuss the game in progress without altering our opponent's replies. In this sense the computer is dumb. That is, it doesn't factor in our conversation to better its play. Try that against a human being and everything we say will be taken into account and used against us. I hope this gives you some ideas, because, at this moment, I've used up all of mine.

Question I know you have published a lot of books, so maybe you realize

how chess publishing is exploding, with many incredible chess books being out there now. Is there one you have seen that you thought was fantastic or particularly good? I am really looking for a book that would help me evaluate my play, almost as if I had gone to a chess master for help. What about your own books? **Randy Harris (USA)**

Answer Leave me out of this. But I agree with you, there are many great books out there, so many, that I don't even know where to begin. So let's just wrap it up with one book, passing over all the other wonderful titles I probably should also mention (some other time). For now, get yourself a copy of Igor Khmel'nitsky's [Chess Exam and Training Guide](#). It's a truly original, superlative effort. To my mind, it nicely fulfills its stated goals, enabling you to evaluate your play, while helping you to improve. Why don't you give it a try?

Question I regularly play ICC chess. My ability swings from 1400-1600, depending on how I feel, the time of day, the time control, and even whether or not I am eating while playing. But recently I have felt like it is useless because of all the cheating that goes on. I enjoy time controls of fifteen to twenty minutes, with increments of ten seconds for every move played. It bothers me that in tough positions my opponents go away for minutes at a time, or disconnect and come back, and it is clear what they have been doing. They have been analyzing the game with the aid of Fritz or whatever. Should I stop playing because of this obvious cheating? What do you think? Have you ever had an experience where you knew you were cheated? **Bill Blank (USA)**

Answer All of us, from time to time, encounter these transgressions. I remember an incident when I was a kid. I was playing in the Eastern Open, in Washington, our nation's capitol. The position was quite complex, and at a crucial moment, I played a complicating move that was not quite right. As soon as I played it, I had bad feeling about it, but I knew the situation required lengthy and intricate analysis to exploit. My opponent immediately got up and left the board, with his clock ticking. I believe the time control was fifty moves in two hours, but I don't recall for sure. He didn't show his face again for the next hour. With his time dwindling down, he came back to the board, and over my shoulder, as if to rub it in, played the winning move, without even bothering to sit down. Needless to say, I was crushed both on and off the board, but I don't know what I could have done about it. On another occasion, also in my adolescence, I caught one of the best chess players in America, indeed, in the world, analyzing his game in a door-less stall of the bathroom at the old Henry Hudson Hotel, on a pocket set. I didn't know what to make of it, and though he was playing an even bigger creep in the New York chess community, I brought this up to one of the officials. He said he'd look into it. I don't know that he ever did.

I'm not sure what you can do about your particular complaint, analyzing your game on the Internet while in play. Perhaps our readers may have suggestions, and I will put up whatever comes in regarding it. But I would say this. Even if your opponent is cheating, his or her rating probably reflects the rating the acts of cheating have helped attain. Thus, you can count on that rating, no matter how it was achieved. After all, do you really know who is making the moves? Nevertheless, my heart goes out to you. But I wouldn't give up playing. Why should you be additionally punished for other people's wrongdoing?

Question of the Month

The best answers will be published below.

How would you deal with cheating on the Internet?

Readers' Responses from Last Month

We received many responses to the [May](#) question of the month:

Is there a better board game than chess?

Among the many interesting replies were the following:

Iain from England - Is there a better game board game than chess? Possibly, but you need to get the context right. A beer-soaked, all night, all-male game of Diplomacy at University some 25 years ago. A game of snakes and ladders when my son (then aged 3) got the giggles every time he went down a snake. A family game of Uno to help the hours slip by in a flight-delayed foreign airport with nothing else to do. Naked Twister with a supermodel or two. Actually, I'm still waiting for the last one...

(BP - Once again, your responses were wonderful. I remember in the 1960s playing Diplomacy with my Marshall Chess Club friends and the game's brilliant inventor, Alan Calhamer. Those were great times.)

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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 **ChessCafe.com** column...

[Yes, I have a question for Bruce!](#)

Comment on this month's column via our [Contact Page](#)! Pertinent responses will be posted below daily.

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