



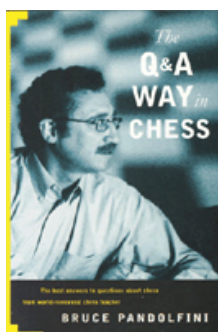
COLUMNISTS

The Q & A
Way

Bruce Pandolfini

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Booking Back

Question There are many good endgame books. It is said that Bobby Fischer studied the endgame deeply. Do you know which endgame book or books he used? Was it Reuben Fine's *Basic Chess Endings*? Or do you know whether he studied other texts? I believe that by tracing the study paths of great players I can find insights that might help my own play. **Dick Reed (USA)**

Answer I'm certain that Fischer played through much of the interesting stuff in *Basic Chess Endings*, but he most assuredly also went through many other endgame volumes, articles, and games with intriguing endgame play in them, in a variety of languages. One book (actually, there were several other books in the series as well) that Fischer seemed to sport around town was Stanislaw Gawlikowski's volume on rook-and-pawn endings, which was in Polish.

In the early 1960s I worked for Walter Goldwater, then president of the Marshall Chess Club, at his University Place Bookshop in New York's Greenwich Village. One day Fischer came into the shop with two big shopping bags of chess books. Fischer often stopped in to see what chess books Goldwater had for sale. That day he wasn't buying. He was selling. Fischer needed money for something, and so Goldwater "helped" him out. When I later saw that the cache contained Fischer's favored Gawlikowski volume, along with Fischer's actual copy of Lipnitsky's outstanding work on contemporary opening play, I practically begged Walter to sell them to me, along with a few other Fischer treasures. It wound up draining me of two week's salary, but for a teenager to get copies of texts actually used by Bobby Fischer (some signed by Bobby) was well worth the price. Yes, I still have the Gawlikowski (and the Lipnitsky) in my personal collection, and I'm not selling.

Question In teaching chess to younger players, especially in school-room situations, I find that many students move too quickly, responding without analyzing. They go ahead with their own plans almost no matter what the opponents may do. I try to correct this tendency as best I can, with various results. If I recall, Garry Kasparov has recommended that one encourage students to sit on their hands while thinking, so that they do not reach out so easily and move without first thinking. Do you agree with this method? Is there some other way you get students to take their time and not rush their moves? **Stan Tripp (USA)**

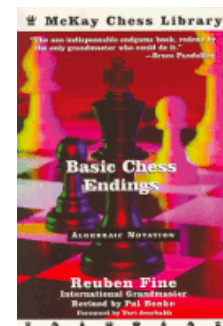
Answer I'm not aware that Kasparov in particular has advised that method for grappling with the problem. Perhaps he has, but others certainly have. I have nothing against that approach, but what I emphasize instead, in training sessions with students, is for them to say their analysis out loud before playing their moves. This naturally slows them down and accomplishes the aim, getting them to think ahead of time. If they don't do that, and play their thoughts out without stating them aloud, even if they get the right moves, they are automatically marked as being wrong. Furthermore, if they say their moves first, before getting approval to make the actual moves, and even if they say moves or lines that are wrong, I tell them they are not wrong until they actually play those moves on the board. Thus, if they can talk out their analysis, changing their thinking by discussion and reason, they will never be marked wrong. In putting it so, the process is stressed over the individual moves, and eventually students get it: that is, they come to slow down and value the give and take of chess ideas before making their moves.

Question I am a great fan of speed chess (or rapid chess or blitz chess, as different people call it). I tend to play better at speed chess than I do at slower forms of chess. Maybe I am about a 1400 player in standard chess, but in speed chess I can do even better, maybe 1600-1800. I also know it is a

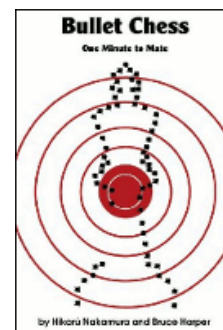
Purchases from our
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accessible:

*Solitaire Chess*

by Bruce Pandolfini

*Basic Chess Endings*

by Reuben Fine

*Bullet Chess*by Hikaru Nakamura
& Bruce Harper

function somewhat of how long the speed chess game goes. I know that there is one-minute chess, two-minute speed chess, three-minute speed chess, five-minute speed chess, and of course longer versions of speed chess, ten, fifteen and twenty minutes long. I also read a wonderful book by Nakamura called [Bullet Chess](#), and he likes that kind of chess very much. Most of my speed chess games are not played at the board anymore but on the Internet. I play speed chess because it is too, too much fun, as the book points out, but I also would like to improve my game. I think at various places you have both attacked speed chess and praised it, so I am confused. When it comes to openings to play during speed chess (my opponents understand less about it than other defenses), I should tell you that I like to play versions of the Rat. As you know, the characterizing moves are 1.Nf3, g3, Bg2; or for Black, 1... d6, with its variations constituting a kind of chess poetry for the defensive speed player. Could you tell me what you think of Nakamura's book, what you think about speed chess, the ideal speed chess time to play and learn and improve, and any other pertinent things you have to say about speed chess? Other than an occasional dead hand, from too much and too tight and too rigid handling of the mouse, I cannot see too many problems with speed chess on the Internet. Thank you for your time and consideration. I'd like to know what you think, if you do not mind. What do you think? **Tommy Donovan (UK)**

Answer With apologies to T.S. Eliot, I think we are in rats' alley where the dead hands have lost their bones. While I don't believe your question is large enough for the *Waste Land*, it is a bit large for this forum. Just the thought of tackling it leaves my mouse hand numb. But let's see what I can say about a few of all those *too's* and such. I promise not to organize my comments into a coherent whole, but rather will address what I see as I go through your answer, if that's okay with you.

First of all, I wouldn't say that time limits of ten, fifteen and twenty minutes are forms of speed chess. Other than apparently you, I don't think anyone would. The slowest form of speed chess is probably seven minutes per side. With increments of, say, twelve seconds a move, those games can last a long time. Most serious speed chess players go with the three-minute version to get better quality games. But one-minute speed chess, better known as bullet chess, and often played as if one is on speed, is popular. It gives less proficient players a chance to confront stronger ones with what the lesser ones may deem as increased chances to win.

Much depends on readying your moves ahead of time and often playing without considering what your opponent does. When competing online, indicating your next move before the opponent has yet moved (pre-moving) is intelligently discussed as a viable approach in the Nakamura book. That technique can be incredibly risky against true bullet mavens, but sometimes the strategy scores. Hikaru Nakamura has extraordinary talent, and his book, co-authored by Canadian Bruce Harper, is excellent. But what a chess genius like Nakamura can do with ease most of us can't do at all.

I think speed chess is wonderful, if that's what you like doing. I may have cautioned players against going from a session of heated speed chess immediately into more demanding play, since there could be a carryover of superficiality and insufficiently analyzed, reactive thinking. Thus, I've recommended taking a break after a session of speed chess to prepare oneself for the new conditions and parameters that slower encounters require.

Besides being pleasurable, I've certainly outlined before that speed chess can be used to practice opening lines and test out types of positions. Indeed, when there's an approaching time limit, one is compelled to be more intense, and that greater degree of focus could actually reveal things that might not otherwise come out at all, regardless how much time one spends over a chessboard. Moreover, by engaging in speed chess sessions, one naturally becomes more attuned to cope with shortages of time. That has to redound in one's favor when confronted with time pressure in more significant contests.

The Rat? Have you found that setup starter to be helpful in your own speed chess play? If that's how you like to begin, so be it. Continue employing it to your own delight. The mere fact that you think so highly of it should lead to getting more out of it. Let's stop here. I'm not sure I've answered all your

questions, but I am certain I don't want to think anymore about it, if you do not mind.

Question The Fischer-Spassky match of 1972 changed the game of chess and the way it is perceived in the public eye. That match was covered wonderfully on PBS, and it supposedly was watched by millions of people. Since you were an integral part of the coverage, do you have any special moments to share? Any anecdotes would be appreciated. **Barry Weintraub (USA)**

Answer That surely was the greatest spectacle in the history of chess, but I must correct one of your misconceptions. I had very little to do with the coverage. True, I was on a bunch of the shows, but my contribution was insignificant. Rather, the show worked for two reasons. One had to do with the greatness of Fischer, combining with the global significance of the match. The other had to do with the host of the show, Shelby Lyman. He was truly outstanding and was definitely a key element on the charmed chain that hooked so many viewers. Let's give credit where credit is due. Anecdotes? I have plenty of them, but the most interesting are probably too risqué. I say we leave them for another time and place.

Question Obviously, world chess champions are very unusual personages, and there haven't been that many in history. It seems to me that there have been other great players who had what it takes to become world chess champion but never made it. Who do you think is the greatest chess player in history who never became world chess champion? **Sandra Olsson (USA)**

Answer For me, it's an impossible question to answer, since I appreciate so many of them for various reasons. If I had to construct a short list, however, and I would do so only by injecting personal bias, I guess it would include Rubinstein, Reshevsky, Keres, Korchnoi, Stein, Larsen, and maybe a few others. But let's see what the readership has to say on this enthralling question.

Question of the Month

The best answers will be published below.

Who is the strongest player never to become world chess champion?

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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...

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