

The first moves

PEOPLE ARE sometimes put off learning how to play chess because they feel it is "too complicated". This, indeed, is often how the royal game is portrayed. We see a distinguished intellectual clasping hands to head in deepest concentration, or a terrifyingly youthful prodigy zapping out all his moves instantaneously.

The truth is that at high levels games can be incredibly intricate, requiring extreme amounts of concentration and calculation. But just learning how to play a reasonable and enjoyable game is surprisingly simple.

It should be possible to pick up the basic moves of the pieces in around half an hour. Although play may be rather slow at first, one can begin playing games immediately. All one needs is a board, a set, and if possible an opponent who has played before and knows the rules. Suddenly a colourful new world of attack, defence, sacrifices and gambits is opened up.

And you never know what might happen. I learnt the rudiments of play during the blaze of publicity surrounding the 1972 "match of the century" for the world championship between Russian Boris Spassky and American Bobby Fischer. It was not even a castle in the air that nine years later, on my 21st birthday, I might myself be sitting opposite (let alone scraping a draw with!) Spassky himself, in a West German League match.

The ideal age for a budding Boris to learn is reckoned to be around five or six years old. A set and elementary book make wonderful gifts, though parents should be warned that children at this age can play a pretty mean game!

Inexpensive plastic sets (which usually also contain instructions on basic moves) are freely available in the shops. It is difficult to advise on the numerous beginners' books on the market but there are a few I remember being intrigued by. Particularly enjoyable were two large books by R. Bott and S. Morrison entitled *Chess for Children* and *More Chess for Children* published by Collins. A smaller, very good soft-cover series is *Learn Chess* by Alexander and Beach (Pergamon), volumes one and two.

A more recent work of the same title has been written by Littlewood and Penn, publication rights of which have just been transferred from Pitmans to A. & C. Black Ltd.

After mastering the basic principles and playing several offhand games, the enthusiast can find a wider selection of opponents of various strengths at his or her local club. The New Zealand Chess Association (PO Box 8802, Symonds Street, Auckland) can give helpful advice on your nearest club.

The next step after the moves is learning the algebraic (and less common descriptive) notation used to record games. Once this straightforward

task has been achieved, the vast wealth of chess literature becomes comprehensible.

I have drawn the following game from Pergamon's newest Russian translation, *Selected Games* by 69-year-old former world champion Mikhail Botvinnik.

Monte Carlo 1968 CATALAN OPENING

M. BOTVINNIK (USSR) N. PADEVSKY (Bulgaria)

1. Nf3

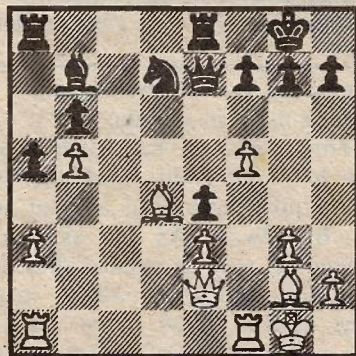
Beginners usually first learn the open games brought about by 1.e4 e5. At top levels, complicated and subtle flank openings, as in this encounter, are also common.

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| 1. ... | Nf6 |
| 2. c4 | e6 |
| 3. g3 | d5 |
| 4. Bg2 | Be7 |
| 5. 0-0 | 0-0 |
| 6. d4 | Nbd7 |
| 7. b3! | b6 |
| 8. Bb2 | Bb7 |
| 9. cxd5 | exd5 |
| 10. Nc3 | Re8 |
| 11. Ne5 | Bd6 |
| 12. f4 | Ne4 |
| 13. Nxe4 | dxe4 |
| 14. e3 | Nf6 |
| 15. a3 | |

A positional move to restrict the scope of the Black king's bishop. White also has ideas of the pawn advance b4-b5, taking control of the c6 square.

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| 15. ... | c5 |
| 16. Qe2 | cxd4 |
| 17. Bxd4 | Qe7 |
| 18. b4 | a5 |
| 19. b5 | Bxe5 |
| 20. Bxe5 | Nd7 |
| 21. Bd4 | Nc5 |
| 22. f5 | Nd7? |

PADEVSKY



BOTVINNIK

This allows Botvinnik to smash Black's healthy row of defensive king-side pawns. Necessary was 22... f6.

23. f6! Qe6

Instead 23...Nxf6 would lose to 24.Rxf6 gxf6 25.Qg4 ch Kh8 26.Qg5 (or 25...Kf8 26.Qh4).

24. Qh5 Ne5
25. Rf5 Ng6

25...g6 fails to 26.Qh6. With his next move Padevsky overlooks White's threatened mate in four, but, as Tarasch once wrote, in a bad position all moves are bad!

26. f×g7 Rad8?
27. Q×h7 ch! Resigns

A queen sacrifice to win the king: 27...K×h7 28.Rh5 ch Kg8 29.Rh8 ch N×h8 30.g×h8=Q checkmate.

MURRAY CHANDLER