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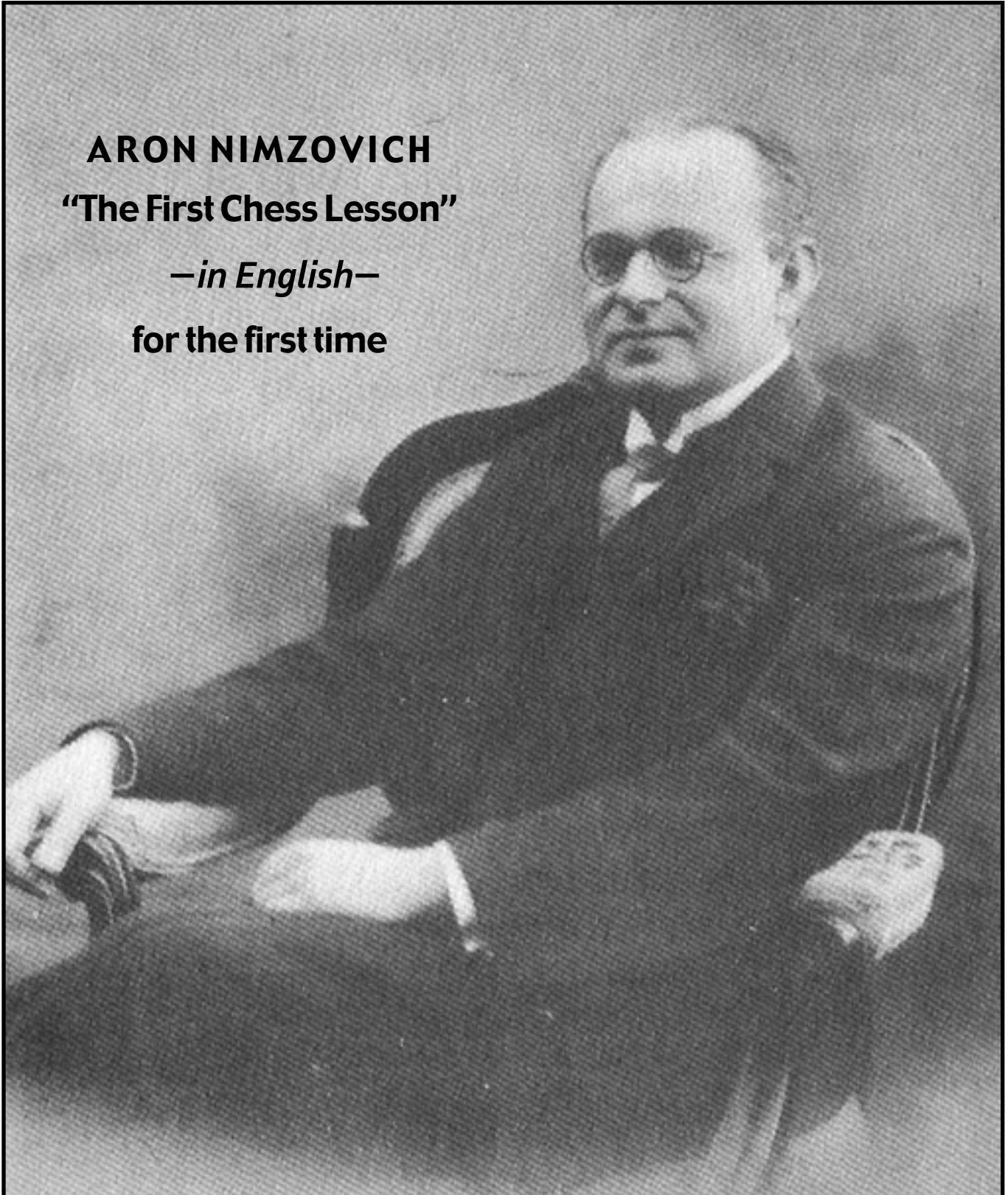
FALL 2011

ARON NIMZOVICH

“The First Chess Lesson”

—in English—

for the first time



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Cover: Aron Nimzowitch. Frontspiece to *My System*, 1st American edition,
New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1930

Cover design by Mark N. Taylor

Chess Journalists of America

PATRONS

The following members have put CJA on a firmer financial footing by
donating at least \$25 during Fiscal Years 2005-2010:

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Donations may be directed to CJA, c/o Treasurer Randy Hough (see
address at left).

NOTES & NOTICES

EDITOR'S NOTE

I'M PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE A NEW COLUMN beginning with this issue of *The Chess Journalist*. Hank Anzis will take on a practicum for chess bloggers and would-be bloggers. The blog (abbreviated from *weblog*) is the newest of journalistic genres and its growth and popularity since the advent of the internet has been phenomenal. The challengers are, first, getting started, which requires the motivation all non-professional writers need but also a certain amount of technical savvy; second, there is the challenge of getting your blog to stand out and get noticed from the many. Hank offers practical advice on these and other topics. Hank's own blog, *Broken Pawn*, won the 2011 CJA Best Blog award.

I am also looking for someone willing to take on a parallel column devoted to a practicum for state chess association and private chess websites. If you know of someone who might be a good person to author such a column, please let me know. Columns run about 1000 words four times a year—not too onerous, and it gives one another platform to promote one's good work.

Similarly, I am placing my articles under the column-heading *Redactions*. My practicum is directed to the print editors of state chess associations. I would be delighted if a state association print editor would like to author such a column, then my own articles can run as an at-large column.

Thus, ideally, I'd like to see *The Chess Journalist* publish three practicum columns each issue (print, web, blog), in addition to features of chess journalism, history, and scholarship. (Next issue will publish a feature by the redoubtable Dan Heisman.) I had a terrific response to my last call for volunteers. Yet, there is still room here for you. Write me.

—MNT

"I always wished my reporting to be objective but to read like a fairytale. The more the time passes, the more nostalgic I grow and more convinced that literature and journalism are conjoined."

— Gabriel Garcia Marquez

AL LAWRENCE CJA INTERIM PRESIDENT

The CJA search committee, led by Daniel Lucas, has secured the services of Al Lawrence as the association's interim president. Al will serve in this capacity until the next formal meeting, this August 2012 at the Vancouver, Washington, U.S. Open. An author, a former USCF executive director, and *Chess Life* managing editor, Al brings considerable experience at a crucial time. Read his President's Message where he lays out his vision for the future of the CJA.



Above: Al Lawrence

Below: Hank Anzis



WORLD CHESS FEDERATION OBJECTS TO WORLD CHESS FEDERATION

An excerpt of a letter received from Yan Alan, WCF Secretary:

We at World Chess Federation must take issue with your comments on page 3 of the Spring/Summer 2011 *The Chess Journalist*. Specifically the erroneous comment that the English designation World Chess Federation for FIDE is long established.

No, it is not. World Chess Federation prevailed over FIDE in a 17 year fight whereupon the courts after extensive review settled the issue once and for all time. As a party to the Madrid Agreement on worldwide trade names and trademarks, the issue is settled.

There follow directions on how to read the included seven pages of legal documents, articles, and notices. Interlaced are cryptic references to Alekhine's assassination and other surprisingly underreported thunderbolts of chess history.

So. The fact that a Las Vegas organization was granted the rights to the name World Chess Federation (WCF) a few years ago does not nullify the fact that FIDE has been commonly translated as World Chess Federation for several decades. (E. g., Horton's 1959 *Dictionary of Chess*, p. 66; Brace's 1989 *Illustrated Dictionary of Chess*, p. 308; Golombek's 1976 *Chess: A History*, p. 196—just to grab a few books off my shelf. I could produce the earliest use of this translation, but I am presently too busy channeling Morphy-Fischer games.)

It is also true that other writers translate FIDE more closely as International Chess Federation or leave it untranslated in French, either option which I personally find preferable to WCF.

And lest anyone think your editor is just another FIDE lackey, I remind readers that I was the first to publish—at great risk to my personal reputation—a photograph of a FIDE president's secret meeting with an extraterrestrial alien (see our last issue, p. 8). ♔



THE RELAY OF GENERATIONS

Recently, a search committee asked me to serve as CJA's interim president until the next formal meeting, this August at the Vancouver, Washington, U.S. Open. I've long been a member and an admirer of the organization's goals. So I welcome the opportunity to help.

Chess Journalists of America has a long, proud tradition of recognizing and supporting what can be a very lonely pursuit—excellence in writing about chess. Almost everyone, for example, interested in writing about our game knows about the annual CJA awards. But CJA has for a long time relied on the same stalwarts to keep it going. Some of these staunchest supporters are more than ready to pass the keyboard to new blood (as long as there's the traditional ink mixed in the veins as well). And, sadly, key contributors—former CJA president Jerry Hanken, vice president Ira Riddle, and longtime journal editor John Hillery—have in recent years passed away.

Mark Taylor has ably stepped in to produce CJA's publication. And GM and former woman's world champion Alexandra Kosteniuk filled in last year as president despite her many other commitments. Veteran CJA webmaster J. Franklin Campbell seeks well-earned relief, and so does current treasurer Randy Hough, although he continues to serve until we can find an adequate replacement. Rachel and Myron Lieberman remain valuable "consultants emeritus."

Although I've met many of you over the years, I feel I should quickly recap my relevant resume here. I studied journalism and writing, going on to teach after grad school. In 1981 I served as managing editor of *Chess Life*. I then went to work as USCF's first scholastic director as we began building its national school program. I eventually led the USCF staff as executive director from 1988 to 1996—an exciting period of growth for the organization. From 2001 to 2007 I served as volunteer executive director of the World Chess Hall of Fame in Miami and later helped find it a new home in St. Louis. Along the way, I did decades of work in commercial writing, as well as editing books and writing articles on a number of

subjects, but mainly on chess—quite a few with my ongoing writing partner, GM Lev Albur. Since 1982, I've been the World Book Encyclopedia Yearbook contributor on chess. I've been honored to receive a number of CJA awards, including Chess Journalist of the Year and Best Story. I remain a frequent contributor to *Chess Life* magazine. My most recent articles are the centennial cover-story on Sammy Reshevsky in the November 2011 issue and the piece on Life Master Arthur Feuerstein in the January 2012 magazine.

You can tell by that recap that I'm not a youngster. In fact, I'm from the same generation as Ira, John and Randy. And that's the problem I'd most like to fix—well, I'm stuck with my age. But we can bring in younger leaders. With the exception of Mark, who is a young professional, we need to reset CJA's board with a new generation of leadership.

My overall goal is to help lay a foundation to better involve all the generations of American chess writers and provide resources, recognition and a sense of fellowship that will support them. American chess writers themselves can best do this, of course. So the primary role of CJA as an organization is to make it easier and more productive for the group to share.

Here are some specific goals I believe are necessary to facilitate the overall mission. It's a substantial list, but many of the ideas are directly related to upgrading our web presence. I need to hear from you—whether it's to agree, disagree, or provide more and better ideas:

- ☛ Identify what the current membership most wants out of CJA;
- ☛ Involve younger journalists in CJA, re-staffing key leadership roles;

Some of these staunchest supporters are more than ready to pass the keyboard to new blood (as long as there's the traditional ink mixed in the veins as well).

- ☛ Begin to modernize CJA's website and provide easy-to-find-resources most useful to chess writers;
- ☛ To keep dues at the current low rate while making the most of our resources, move from a paper-printed journal to a partially web-based publication—for example, by printing and mailing only two of the quarterly issues in 2012, while posting all four prominently on a revamped website;
- ☛ Provide the opportunity for current members to print a CJA ID card from our website;
- ☛ Provide online opportunities for developing chess writers to publish articles and receive comments from other writers;
- ☛ Provide an online forum for CJA members to exchange questions and observations;
- ☛ Help local chess promoters by providing templates of press releases online;
- ☛ Seek reciprocal support from more chess-related organizations,

including the new World Chess Hall of Fame in St. Louis.

CJA is very lucky to have influential friends in American chess who can help promote our goals. USCF and *Chess Life* have been wonderfully supportive. Editor Dan Lucas continues to devote significant volunteer time to the organization. But we have to do the inside work ourselves.

We need your help to modernize CJA to foster new generations of chess journalists with support and fellowship. Please email me to let me know how you react to the ideas I've suggested here and, importantly, to let me know your own ideas. And tell me if you'd be willing to help CJA in a particular role you feel qualified for!

My overall goal is to help lay a foundation to better involve all the generations of American chess writers and provide resources, recognition and a sense of fellowship that will support them.

Thank you,
Al Lawrence
Interim CJA President
al@allawrence.com ♔

PUZZLE SOLUTIONS

Platovy brothers, Bohemia 1909 Solution:

1.e7, the only move to counter Black's threat of advancing the f-pawn. Now on 1...f2 follows 2.Rh5+ with e8Q and a quick checkmate. After the text, the e-pawn seems vulnerable but some tactics will help: 1...Re4
2.Nc4+ Kb4 3.Ne5 Rxe5 4.Rh4+ Kc5 5.Rh5 Rxh5 6.e8Q and wins. On 2...Ka6 3.Rh6+ Ka7 4.Nd6 Rxe7 (4...f2 5.Rf6) 5.Nc8+ and wins.

G. Nadareishvili, 1951 Solution:

1.Bc4! Kf6! Cutting off the white king
2.Bg8! the white bishop needs to get out of the way of the black king, not allowing him to get a tempo by attacking it on its way toward the pawns (1.Bb1? Loses: 1...Kf4 2.Kg7 Ke3 3.Kf6 Kd2 4.Ke5 Kc1 5.Ba2 Kb2 +-) 2...Ke5 3.Kg7 Kd4 4.Kf6 Kc3 5.Ke5 Kb2 6.Kd4 a2 7.Bxa2 Kxa2 8.Kc3 =

Kling and Horwitz, 1853 Solution:

The black king needs three moves to get to f3 to support his pawns while the white king needs four moves to get to g4. 1.Bg2! Now the black king needs four moves to get to e2. 1...Ke6 2.Ke8 Ke5 3.Kf7 Kf4 4.Kf6 Ke3 5.Kf5 Ke2 6.Kg4=

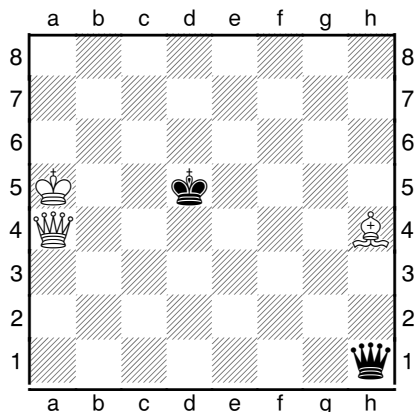
COOKED!?

I enjoyed solving the mechanical Havel puzzles on the back of the Spring/Summer 2011 issue. However, when I checked the solutions, I found the printed solution for the Q&B vs Q (*Chess*, 1926, 1st prize) problem to be different from my analysis. On examination, my solution and the published one had very similar themes—but at least in one line my way worked a move faster! I'm afraid having two different starting moves is a definite no-no in puzzle land, so *Chess* will have to revoke that 1st prize.

Instead of 1. Qd7+, try 1. Qb5+. The key continuations are 1. ...Kd62. Qb8+, and 1. ...Ke6 2. Qe8+. I kind of liked the following line, since it didn't require contact between queen and bishop for the theme to work: 1. Qb5+ Kd6 2. Qb8+ Ke6 3. Qe8+ Kf5 4. Qf7+ Kg4 5. Qg6+ Kf46. Qh6+!, and now Black can choose a somewhat different way to lose with 6. ...Ke5 7. Bg3+ and 8. Qxh1. Also faster than Havel's line is 1. ...Kd4 2. Bf2+, clearly saving a move.

Alas, I'm not enough of a problemist to figure out how to repair the position to remove the cook.

Regards,
Ralph Dubisch ♔



M.Havel, *Chess*, 1926. 1st prize
White to move and win

INTRODUCTION TO THE CONTACTS METHOD

Momir Radovic

LET ME BE TOTALLY OPEN WITH THE READER. I will tell you the whole truth right away: I have been fighting a crusade against an almost invisible enemy for some time now. Actually ever since April of 2008 when I witnessed the following game between two second-graders in an after-school program, each boy with more than a year in chess: 1.e4 d5 2.Bd3 Bg4 3.exd5 Bxd1. I had seen similar games before that, but for some reason I was so struck by it that something just clicked inside me. All of a sudden my path was set out for me: a crusade against the enemy, a serious one, keeping the entire world's chess population in check.

Actually, it is a kind of an infectious disease caused by a virus. The name of this widely spread chronic disease is *poor chess vision*. In severe cases it may turn into *amaurosis scacchistica*, total chess blindness.

I myself have been a victim of it. Once infected, it took me 45 years to finally figure out its true origins and how it spreads by infecting novice chess players. There is an effective cure for it, but it is not permanent. Only a few are cured to a substantial degree (these are called chess masters), but even they are not totally immune to it as the virus may strike back again at any moment—a blunder moment.

Okay, we have diagnosed the disease. But how does it infect its bearers? And what is the treatment for it so we may avoid a relapse (as there is never a complete recovery)?

When do we first get infected by the virus?

Believe it or not, during our first hour of chess—the very moment they start teaching us chess by showing how pieces move on the board. By a curious paradox, the seeds of poor chess vision sets in right there.

How is that possible? Moves are indispensable to be able to go on any further in chess, wouldn't you say? Well, what seems evident often masks some higher truths within itself. And that is exactly why this problem has been hidden for so long.

The problem lies partly in this: we are living the 21st century, yet we ignore the way humans basically act and behave, how the brain works and how learning occurs. That is why, with the encouragement of this magazine's editor, I set out to do this article. It represents an attempt to bring awareness of this serious disease and throw some light at how it can be controlled, to come up with some sort of early vaccination that will make novice chess players less vulnerable to its lasting and damaging effects. Here we propose a new "Contacts Method," as opposed to the traditional method of teaching. Strong chess vision should be reinforced early and become second nature. Once established, it is a sound foundation for all chess concepts to learn later on, including all tactics and

strategy. Ultimately, strong chess vision will make it possible for more people to stay with chess and become life-time addicts of the wonderful and absorbing game.

First, here we are going to show what the basic model of human behavior looks like and how important vision is in acting in the world around us (including when we play chess). Then we will explain why we think the traditional method of teaching is flawed and what modern cognitive neuroscience and psychology tell us against it. We will compare the traditional versus the new Contacts Method and give the verdict in favor of the latter, backed by Aron Nimzovich's view on the issue. In his words, the traditional approach to teaching chess by showing the moves first is "fundamentally false". For that purpose we give an excerpt from his original article, "How I became a Grandmaster," in the Russian chess newsletter *Шахматный листок* (*Shakhmatny listok*), first published in 1929. There Nimzovich gives us his first chess lesson as he saw it. To the best of my knowledge this article has never been fully translated into English. GM Raymond Keene included an excerpt in his *Aron Nimzowitsch: A Reappraisal* (Batsford, 1999), but Keene omitted the first chess lesson given here. We offer *Georgia Chess* readers the opportunity to read Nimzovich's first chess lesson in its entirety in English, as it is essential for understanding of the problem we are facing—poor chess vision.

How humans behave: the Stimulus-Response mechanism

First we need to know how humans (and other species) act and behave. Behavior is an organism's activity in response to external or internal stimuli. For example, sunflowers turn toward the sun with the purpose of making food using sunlight (photosynthesis). The mechanism is basically this:

stimulus → *some nervous system activity* → *response*.

In chess, the stimulus, or change, is the move your opponent just made. There then follows a mental thought process which produces your next move, or response.

With repeated exposure to a stimulus, we create routine behavior or a habit that we replay regularly and which tends to occur subconsciously. There must be some evolutionary advantage here. By having habits:

- a) we don't have to engage the brain all the time (which takes time and energy), and
- b) we can avoid risks and dangers by sticking to the safe, proven path.

It is very important to stress that there is a strong link between the habit formed and survival. All our behavior is goal-directed and purpose-driven. This is hard-wired in all species.

Chess visualization skills

We see not with our eyes, but with our brains.

The ability to interpret, process and integrate incoming (sensory) information allows us to act in and on the world. Visual perceptual skills are the basic building blocks of all functional activity; no human activity is performed without the use of these skills. We call it chess visualization skills, or board vision. All else follows from the visual input and its processing.

Perceiving objects and spatial and functional relationships between objects is fundamental to understanding visual environments. This is experienced internally; it is related to our ability to recognize and construct patterns, which are nature's means of communicating and translating information. We need to look at "patterns that connect" in order to realize the secrets and meaning of things. The loss of pattern is the loss of information.

Chess is a complex cognitive activity that rests on the recognition of chess objects, or pieces. The form of a chess piece is not directly related to its *function*, but the form and function are firmly coupled through chess rules (e.g., how pieces control the board and make movements). The functions are then linked to actions, that is, movements associated with pieces (such as executing a move).

The flawed traditional method of teaching

Let's take a look now at the traditional method of teaching, which starts with "showing the moves first".

What does executing a move represent in the S>R model of behavior? Just the end of a sequence, including the last opponent's move (the stimulus), understanding the context, visual processing with pattern recognition, and decision-making.

Of course, the beginner is not supposed to get started with all of it. Nevertheless, what we do when we start teaching chess is that everything preceding the move execution is actually out of the picture; it's been amputated. What is left is just aimless woodpushing which sets up a detrimental habit formation early in the learning process. When bad habits set in, the understanding of the game, the enjoyment of it, a fast learning curve, and future success are all likely to suffer. Probability of giving up the game completely?—very high.

Neuropsychology and cognitive neuroscience findings

A research team led by Merim Bilalic at the University of Tübingen in Germany used behavioral and neuro-imaging techniques to uncover cognitive and neural mechanisms underlying skilled object recognition (<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3025982/>)

The main conclusion of the study is that expert chess players are faster than novices in identifying chess objects and their functional relations. (Functions are roles pieces have when contacts between them and the squares are established: attack, support, block, etc. For more details go to my blog at <http://wp.me/p1BAmu-nH>, section B). In particular, chess masters are superior over novices when they have to retrieve a piece function and relate it to other chess pieces.

Traditional vs Contacts method: the verdict

The traditional method of teaching chess with "showing the moves first" develops an inappropriate perception that takes the form of misinterpretation and distortion of chess reality. This leads to poor judgment and inadequate chess

vision. The traditional approach is characterized by:

- 1) Isolated piece movements
- 2) Only R from the S>R behavioral model is utilized—meaning is amputated
- 3) Poor chess vision
- 4) Slow learning curve

In contrast, the Contacts Method features:

- 1) Spatial and functional relationships between pieces
- 2) Meaning as a critical ingredient for developing any skill
- 3) Good chess vision/pattern recognition
- 4) Faster learning curve



The big question now: Why is the traditional method of "showing the moves first" still so pervasive, despite all of the behavioral studies against it and in favor of the Contacts Method? (See <http://wp.me/p1BAmu-ou> for details on these studies.) It is more than just coincidental that theorists, such as Wittgenstein and Saussure, employ chess as a key metaphor to illustrate how meaning is produced. Chess pieces are just placeholders for certain functions that bring the meaning. Nimzovich, one of greatest theoreticians, knew a thing or two about it.

In "How I Became a Grandmaster," Nimzovich tells us that in the first hours of chess he uses spatial and functional relationships between pieces to introduce chess to a novice, not the traditional approach with moves first, which he calls "fundamentally false." He actually refers to the roles pieces have to bring the meaning into the learning process. There is no learning without meaning, for meaning strengthens the memory through utilizing existing patterns and helping to construct new ones. This is the foundation of the Contacts Method of teaching chess.

For example, when Nimzovich comes to teach the attacking contact, the novice already has some meaning about attack stored in the brain through previous experience (e.g., sports or war), so the subconscious brain picks it up quickly without any effort. Such is not the case with teaching how the knight moves. Nimzovich similarly introduces the protecting and restricting contacts in the first lesson of chess. He introduces the concept of double attack to start teaching a "tactics core", but also "more advanced" concepts, such as significance of the seventh-rank penetration and the outpost.

Without help from modern cognitive neuroscience, Nimzovich intuitively knew the most important things to initiate effective learning that would start building up a strong board vision and understanding. Some eighty 70-80 years later, the science backs his views up with its best current evidence from research studies.

The disease is still out there in the open. It remains to be seen how long it will take for the Contacts Method to be adopted by chess educators for effective treatment. Albert Einstein understood the difficulty of paradigmatic shifts: "it is harder to crack a prejudice than an atom." ♔

(reprinted by permission from Georgia Chess 2011 Nov/Dec)

You can visit Momir Radovic's blog (started precisely to fight for the cause) at iPlayooChess.WordPress.com. You can e-mail him at chessContact@facebook.com or iPlayooChess@gmail.com. You can find him on Facebook under ChessContact and there is also iPlayoo fan page there (you don't need to be a Facebook member to get access). You can also find him on Twitter: @chessContact, or @iPlayoo

The First Chess Lesson, from “How I Became a Grandmaster”

translated by Momir Radovic

LET'S BEGIN at the beginning, that is, by criticizing my very first lesson. I was “shown the moves.” Was that the right thing to do? “Well of course it was,” my esteemed reader will say. “You cannot do without that.”

But my whole point is that, in this case, the reader is mistaken: *this approach is fundamentally false.*

You cannot take a boy who is entirely new to the game and immediately confound him by showing him that the rook moves like this and the bishop like that, that the pawn crawls forward at such a ridiculous snail's pace, that the knight leaps eccentrically all over the place, that the queen can go anywhere she pleases, that the rook moves and takes in straight lines, but the pawn moves straight forward and takes diagonally, etc.

Dreariness will be the only result from all these demonstrations. Information of this kind, which the beginner absorbs, is purely *formal*, without a trace of vitality or significance, and by flooding him with all this mass of material, he may only sink into depression.

No, one should not teach first principles in this wise, but quite otherwise. *A bit less formal ballast and a bit more substance, that is the basic principle!* But let us show concretely how we think that the first two or three lessons should be conducted.

First lesson: Familiarization with the board, understanding of the demarcation between White and Black, and the center of the board.

The Rook. Understanding about ranks and files, drills and exercises:

White rook on e1 (the student always has White pieces), black pawn on e6. In this position the rook is *attacking* the pawn.

Exercise: ask the student to attack the pawn. Then ask the student to attack it sideways, and, finally, from behind.

Next, form some obstacles on the board: white rook on h1, pawns on g2 and h4, king on f1, black pawn on d6. White attacks the d6-pawn by playing Rh1-h3-d3. Then a black rook is introduced to take the role of the defender of the d6-pawn.

This gives us a primitive basis to set up some basic combinations. For example: White has Ra1, Black has Rh8, Pc7, Pe5. Ask the student, “How many moves does it take for the rook to attack both pawns at the same time?” Let's play: 1.Ra5 Re8 2.Rc5 Re7.

We move on by explaining the natural tendency for the rook to reach the seventh rank. Set the white rook on g1, the enemy king on h8 and explain to the student that the king attacks one square diagonally. “Let's go with the rook invade the seventh rank!” We play: 1.Rg7 Kxg7. The student is given a pawn on h5. “Let us defend the entry point on the seventh rank!” 1.h6 and then 2.Rg7.

In this way, the student will spend an hour or two without getting bored and will intuitively grasp the basic concepts, as well as the basics of combinatorial chess.

Notice how the entire first hour of chess actually uses a single rook and pawn while the king's movements are mentioned just in passing. At the same time, a lively play drives out all formal approach. The rook is to attack the student's pawn; if the student manages to save it, student wins.

The reader will, I hope, have got our basic idea: from the very start we are *playing—fighting, battling—and* have no intention of giving precedence to any formal approach. And we are inclined to ascribe a decisive significance to the initial impression formed by the student after the first lesson.

One's interest must be appealed to,

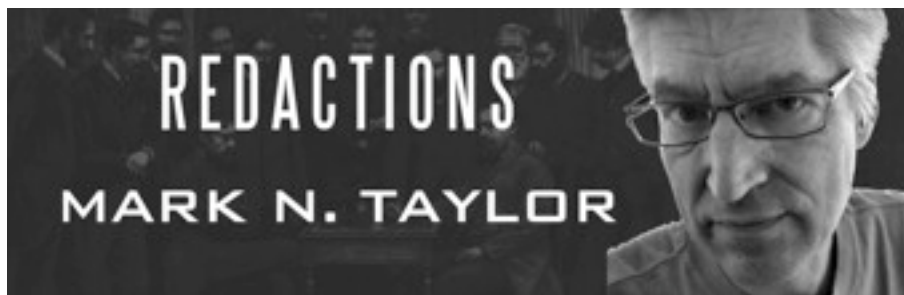
one must feel from the onset that this is a game in which *victory* is both possible and gratifying.

When studying the *queen* (second lesson), it is a good thing to introduce the concept of the fork, that is, the simultaneous attack on two enemy pieces, which, by the way, has been partially addressed in the first lesson. And here, again, are practical examples and combinations....

The third lesson is devoted to a study of the pawn: the pawn attacks an enemy piece, the pawn protects a friendly piece (through a series of examples), the pawn protects or creates a strong point (an outpost), etc. ♙

Source: *Шахматный листок* (Shakhmatny listok), 1929





NEWSLETTER OR MAGAZINE?

THE SHORT ANSWER IS, it does not matter. Your state association probably only produces one periodical. The Chess Journalists of America annual awards do not differentiate between the two. Yet, I am prone to ask stupid questions. I am told astronomers made certain advances in their field by asking “Why is it dark at night?” So maybe stupid questions can sometimes lead to fruitful discussions.

I suggest the difference defies definitive categorization and is more a matter of psychology and organizational culture.

Those organizations that tend to make their periodical a higher priority tend to regard it as a magazine; those who don't tend to think of it as a newsletter. Inwardly I cringe whenever I hear a Georgia Chess Association board member refer to *Georgia Chess* as “the newsletter.” My knee-jerk reaction is to regard him with suspicion, someone who does not hold the publication in high enough esteem—for, in the editor's eyes, the esteem had better be very high indeed.

Correspondingly, the organizations that prioritize their periodical are more willing to support the cost of producing a nice-looking magazine. Most annual memberships to a state chess association cost \$10–20. Assuming the association's tournaments and other activities pay for themselves, that leaves about \$3 per member to produce, print, and mail each periodical. If you are doing it within that budget, it's probably a newsletter. If the organization subsidizes the periodical, it might be a magazine.

And if you are publishing it online? Newsletter! Nowadays it is tempting for associations to forego printing and mailing costs by switching to an online periodical. (I touched on this last issue, and the topic deserves an entire column and a lively follow up exchange.) If you look carefully at traditional print magazines and at websites, you'll see that the content for print and web is different. You could begin by comparing *Chess Life* and *USCF Online*. You can of course throw a PDF file up on your site, but a real online publication is not a magazine—not yet. Kindle? Perhaps, but not yet relevant to us.

Back to print, what are some physical features that might distinguish a magazine from a newsletter?

☛ **Dimensions**—8½ x 11 inches is standard for both. I think all state publications in 5½ x 8½ inches are newsletters. None of them come close in appearance to similarly-dimensioned international publications, such as Larry Evan's *American Chess Quarterly*, *Chess Mail*, Britain's *Kingpin*, and, of course, the *BCM*.

☛ **Length**—Not to put too fine a point on it, newsletters tend to be shorter than magazines, from a four-page single sheet to a dozen or so pages. Magazines tend to run two to four dozen pages.

☛ **Layout**—Newsletters tend toward the simple, amateurish, uninspired, but they need not be. One should strive to do good work within whatever limits. I tend to move onto new software only once I've thoroughly outgrown the last. Software is available today that is easy to learn and use and some will even do much of the work for you, if you don't mind a rather mechanistic look. Photos and graphics, once limited to magazines, can be included in any newsletter today.

☛ **Cover**—Newsletters used to begin text on page one, now most give the cover over to a photograph or graphic. Magazine editors, however, eschew the blurry trophy shot in favor of a more complex and carefully composed cover. Sometimes I have spent weeks creating an appropriate cover (usually when I have not got a good photograph to use!).

☛ **Content**—both newsletters and magazines run tournament reports, crosstables, games, and local news. Magazines, however, tend to have more and regular feature articles and columns, and the features are often lengthier.

☛ **Timeliness**—this is not to be underestimated. If your association is not mailing out a periodical consistently and on time, then it is not a magazine. This is also one of the hardest things to maintain, especially during periods of rapid turnover of editors.

It is good to always be improving the work you do. It's also good to hold steady and maintain consistency, although that does not require ambition. To move immediately from a newsletter to a magazine, however, is very ambitious. It's like playing a decisive combination in the middlegame: if it turns out not to be sound, your position will be left in tatters.

Here is a cautionary tale. In 1977 the Georgia Chess Association had been publishing a solid but unambitious newsletter for some 15 years. Under the president, J. Earle Morrison, the board decided to change the publication's name to *The Chessman*, go large format, print a photograph on a card stock cover, and try to place the magazine in newsstands. Meanwhile Morrison was working to bring other state chess associations into the orbit of this new publication. The newsletter editor initiated these changes, but by the second issue he submitted his resignation letter. It reveals that,

Because this issue was destined for newsstands in and around the state, we made several changes. We increased the size of the Newsletter to 8½ x 11, printed on better quality paper, changed the title to *The Chessman* to give it better selling chances regionally, and, most importantly, printed on all this good stuff quality material [sic] the likes of which had never been seen in a GCA publication before.

(continued on page 11)



HOW DID I GET HERE?

W

HEN Mark Taylor issued his call to arms in the last issue of *The Chess Journalist* requesting submissions, I wrote to him, offering to contribute some of my blog posts. Mark instead asked if I would be interested in writing a column about chess blogging. Many of the best experiences I've had came from saying yes when asked to do something I felt unqualified for, so I agreed to write this column. I hope to explore some of the blogging decisions and questions that I and my fellow bloggers have encountered and to encourage the beginning blogger. I want to thank you for reading and I hope you enjoy this series. I promise to consider and value any feedback you care to send my way, positive or negative.

If you are a current chess blogger, congratulations for being willing to share your thoughts, opinions, and experiences with the chess community and the world at large. If you have thought about blogging, you are in the right place at the right time because it has never been easier to get started in blogging. Sites like wordpress.com, blogger.com, and chess.com will provide a free '.com' address, templates, and tools to take the 'tech' out of blogging, all designed to make writing your posts as easy as writing an email.

I got my start in chess writing by submitting articles of tournaments I directed to the website and quarterly magazine of the Iowa State Chess Association (IASCA). When I served as the Scholastic Director of the IASCA from 2006 to 2008, in addition to writing scholastic tournament reports, I wrote a monthly web column to promote Iowa scholastic tournaments and explain tricky concepts like pairings, ratings, and tiebreaks to chess parents. I gave up my position as IASCA Scholastic Director in April 2008, my two boys stopped playing scholastic chess, and, just like that, I wasn't around scholastic chess anymore. I missed running tournaments and interacting with the young chess players and their parents, but I found I missed writing my monthly scholastic column most of all; blogging seemed like an answer to satisfying my writing fix. I participated in the 2009 U.S. Open in Indianapolis with my son and planned on starting my blog by writing about my games, but I got hung up trying to find a catchy title. I was at a church meeting when my friend Eldon came in with a big paper bag and yelled, "Look what I got for you." He pulled out a big ceramic pawn from a lawn chess set and slapped it down on the table. The pawn broke into three pieces. As we all looked at it, the name "Broken Pawn"

popped in my head and my blog was born.

How often to blog? Some bloggers like to write small snippets daily, others only write when they feel they have something of value to share, like tournament games or puzzles, and still others write longer article-type pieces on a periodic basis. I've always been a twice a week blogger and have settled into the routine of posting an article of a thousand or so words on Wednesday and Sunday. I feel it's vital to pick a regular pace that is maintainable, even if it's only once a month. A prolific pace can be had when you're just starting and flush with ideas for posts, but your readers will be discouraged when a week or two pass without new content. I have times when the words seem to shoot out of my fingertips and times when writing seems like the hardest thing in the world and my brain and fingers are stuck in mud. Your readers will appreciate consistency and you'll be in a better position to provide it if you get in the habit of publishing with regularity and saving some ideas and posts for a rainy day.

What to blog about is a personal decision, but it seems obvious to me that if you write about topics you're familiar with and passionate about, you'll enjoy writing your blog, and readers who share your passion will find you with minimal effort on your part. Do you have a passion for playing the Staunton Gambit against the Dutch Defense? By all means, blog about it! Your enthusiasm will shine in your writing, you'll enjoy writing about a topic close to your heart, and people who like the Staunton Gambit and the Dutch Defense will be drawn to your blog because you have injected part of yourself into it.

I find it helps to mention the people you meet through your chess activities. I've held free rated G/10 tournaments the past three years at the Salvation Army in Marshalltown, Iowa (pop. 25,000), on Thursday nights and I try to work in references to the people I play and meet at the tournaments. Relating my chess battles and offhand conversations with Dave the barefoot chess player, Joe from Waterloo, fellow blogger Dan Troxell, etc., builds a sense of community between me and my readers and gives a sense of continuity to my blog, even when I go 'off-topic' and devote an article to political events, sports, my two beagles, or Cheetos Puffs (the best snack food in the world). Giving your readers a glimpse in your world will help them relate to you and remove the sense of distance inherent in a one-way conversation.

I'd like to close this edition with one last piece of advice.

Delegate the job of being your worst critic to someone other than yourself. Writing is like exercising for the non-professional blogger. As you write more and more, you will get better and better at it without even noticing the improvement. Resist the urge to judge each individual post as soon as you write it. Leave yourself a reminder to read your first two or three months' worth of posts in one sitting. I promise you will cringe at some, take pride in others, but you will see your improvement.

See you next issue. ♔

*A New Jersey native transplanted to Marshalltown Iowa, Hank is a Senior Tournament Director who runs free weekly blitz tournaments in Marshalltown and monthly family chess tournaments in the Des Moines area. Hank is a Class B chess player who won national class championships in the 2006(C) and 2007(B) US Game/30 tournaments. Hank has written the Broken Pawn chess blog (brokenpawn1.blogspot.com) since 2009 and also self-published the children's book, *The Adventures of Bulldog Beagle*. Broken Pawn was the winner of the 2011 CJA Best Chess Blog award. A programmer by trade and Yankee fan by blood, Hank lives with his wife Kathy, sons Matt and Ben, and a house full of pets including two beagles, Daisy and Baxter. Visit Hank Anzis's award winning blog, Broken Pawn, at <http://brokenpawn1.blogspot.com/>*



NEWSLETTER OR MAGAZINE, continued

The ex-editor notes that there were objections to this ambition among some members. He supports the effort and asks members to give it a chance, then goes on to explain his decision:

[I]f *The Chessman* is to succeed, it will do so only with an editor who can devote more time to it than I can. My prior commitments and activities do not allow me to spend the amount of time on the Newsletter as is necessary to produce the type of publication that we have come to expect and demand [sic]. Editing the Newsletter and turning out high-quality work causes more problems than I can cope with, and, in my opinion hinders our progress forward on the magazine.

The ex-editor assesses what is needed to move from a newsletter to a magazine and honestly admits his inability to fulfill that need. Interestingly, though, he still refers to it as "the Newsletter," indicative, perhaps, of a certain mentality that had not and would not become fully engaged in the new magazine for him.

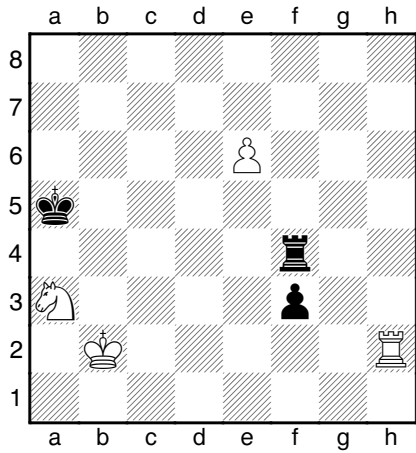
President Morrison pressed ahead bringing together other state chess associations and, through a series of editors, forged *The Chessman* into a regional chess magazine that, at its height, represented seven associations from Pennsylvania to Florida. *The Chessman* peaked near the end of its first year with a slick thirty-six-page illustrated production (albeit in black and white) with corporate advertising. The following issue, however, looks like the wreck of the Hindenburg. What happened? "After pouring a great deal of his own time and money into *The Chessman*, our editor... has resigned," the new acting editor writes. "[He] received little in the way of contri-

butions from those state officers responsible for submitting material and co-ordinating the publishing of this magazine." There was a high level of commitment at the top, but not at the lower levels. There was vision and ambition and enough energy to keep *The Chessman* going for three years. In the end, however, the Georgia Chess Association reverted back to a newsletter, although something of the quality of *The Chessman* remained, vibrant or latent, depending on the quality of its editor. Another ambitious GCA editor was Daniel Lucas. He, however, over seven years transformed *Georgia Chess* from a newsletter into a magazine. And so it remains.

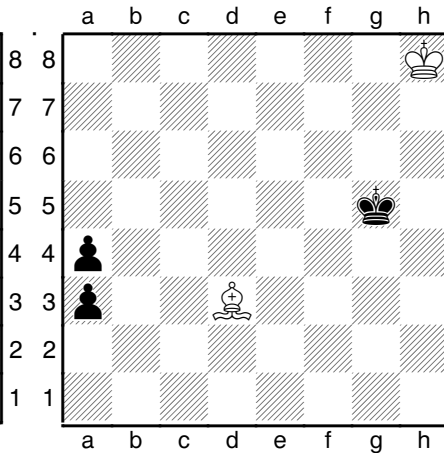
This leads to a final point. A newsletter can conveniently be the work of a single editor with a day job working at leisure in evenings and on weekends. A successful magazine usually requires a highly-committed team to function, from coordinating with tournament directors to get crosstables and games, creating databases for columnists to use to write about local games, to photographers, to volunteers to write reports—this on top of the need to network to get decent feature articles and news.

The Chess Journalists of America does not discriminate between newsletters and magazines. Were I a judge I would not hesitate to award points to a well-produced newsletter over a poorly-produced magazine. Apart from awards, however, this organization is at the service of all editors, and our common goal is to improve the work we do.

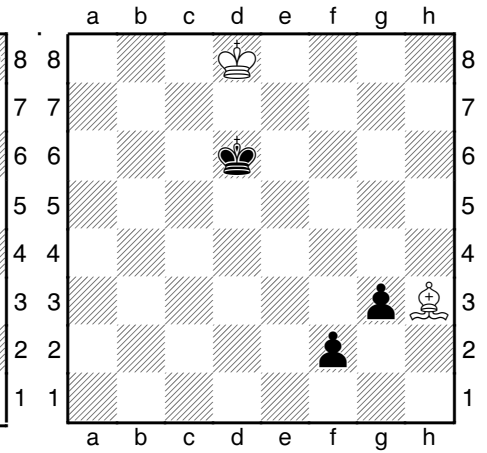
By the way, *The Chess Journalist* is neither newsletter nor magazine. It is a journal. If it's not, that's how I like to think of it, and, as an editor thinks, so the publication will go. ♔



Platovy brothers, Bohemia, 1909
White to move and draw



G. Nadareishvili, 1951
White to move and draw



Kling and Horwitz, 1853
White to move and draw

SOLUTIONS ON p. 5

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FIRST CLASS