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TRAINING PROGRAM FOR CHESS PLAYERS

2ND CATEGORY (ELO 1400–1800)

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STUDY PROGRAM

Topic of study ............................................................... Number of lessons

TACTICS

1. Attack against the king .......................................................... 7
2. Competitions to solve combinations and miniature problems .......... 8

Total ............................................................... 15

STRATEGY FUNDAMENTALS

I. Differing mobility (activity) of pieces
1. Good and bad bishops .......................................................... 1
2. Bishop stronger than a knight .................................................... 1
3. Knight stronger than a bishop .................................................... 1
4. Opposite-coloured bishops in the middlegame ......................... 1
5. Locking a piece out of the game ............................................. 1

II. Open and semi-open files
1. Exploiting open and semi-open files ........................................ 1
2. Open and semi-open files and attacking the king ....................... 1
3. Outposts on open and semi-open files ..................................... 1
4. Fighting for an open file ...................................................... 1

III. The problem of the centre
1. A strong pawn centre ......................................................... 2
2. Undermining a pawn centre .................................................. 1
3. Pieces against a pawn centre ............................................... 1
4. A piece and pawn centre ..................................................... 1
5. Role of the centre during flank operations ............................... 1

IV. The bishop pair
1. The bishop pair in the middlegame ....................................... 2
2. The bishop pair in the endgame ............................................. 1
3. Successfully countering the bishop pair .................................. 1
V. Weak and strong squares

1. Weak squares in the enemy camp .............................................................. 1
2. Weakness of a set of squares ................................................................. 1
3. More on strong squares ...................................................................... 1

VI. Features of pawn setups

1. Pawn weaknesses .................................................................................. 1
2. Doubled pawns ................................................................................... 1
3. Backward pawns on a semi-open file ............................................... 1
4. Passed pawns ...................................................................................... 1

Total .................................................................................................... 26

FIGHTING WITH UNBALANCED FORCES AND COMPENSATION FOR MATERIAL

1. Queen (two rooks) against various material ........................................ 3
2. Compensation for the queen ............................................................... 1
3. Two minor pieces against a rook (and pawns) ..................................... 1
4. Rook against a minor piece and two pawns ...................................... 1
5. The exchange sacrifice ...................................................................... 1
6. Minor piece against three pawns ...................................................... 1
7. Compensation for a minor piece ....................................................... 1

Total .................................................................................................... 9
METHODOLOGICAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE STUDY PROGRAM

Although paying sufficient attention to tactics this study program spends more time on strategy and endings.

A major part of the Tactics section consists of various problem solving competitions. They should be held during the study year with a record kept of their cumulative results. It is also useful to organize additional competitions, for example at the New Year.

Material for the competitions and homework is included in the program: around 100 combinations, over 20 examples for blitz competitions and around 50 two-move miniatures.

The Strategy Fundamentals topic is aimed not only at teaching second category chess players; sections such as Pawn advantage on a flank and Different pawn formations are covered in the books Training Program for Chess Players with Categories. 1st Category and Training Program for Chess Players with Categories. Candidate Masters.

The Endings topic reviews two endgame types: pawn and rook endgames. Pawn endings can be considered the basis of the endgame, while rook endings are encountered the most frequently of all. As Rudolf Spielmann said, rook endings are a fact in ‘nearly 50% of all practical cases’. When explaining the material the main focus should be not on all the different possible balances of material, as is usually the case in current endgame manuals (rook and pawn vs. rook, rook and two pawns vs. rook and so on), but on ideas and technical ploys that can be executed not only in the endgames considered, but which are a common feature of the final stage of chess games.

The content of each lesson is fairly large in size and is aimed at strong 2nd category players. Depending on the level of preparation and age of the pupils the teacher might want to reduce the number of examples considered, discuss a fragment rather than a whole game or use only the part of the game in the selected extract that is essential to examine the topic.

It’s important to consider carefully in which order the topics are explained. Experience shows that studying any topic for long reduces interest in it.