



The Lighter Side of Chess

**Games, Goofs and Funny Facts
Volume 1**



Copyright © 2026 Thinkers Publishing, Belgium

Authors: Georg Mohr & Adrian Mikhachishin
Managing Editor: Daniël Vanheirzeele
Typesetting: Primož Zerdin, Primož Riegler
Proofreading: Andrew Burnett
Cover Design: Diriq
Cartoons: Indigenius

ISBN 9789493435124
D/ 2026/31732/3

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission from the publisher.

All sales or enquiries should be directed to Thinkers Publishing, 9850 Landegem, Belgium.

E-mail: info@thinkerspublishing.com
Website: www.thinkerspublishing.com

First edition 2026 by Thinkers Publishing.
This book is printed on environmentally friendly paper.

The Lighter Side of Chess

Games, Goofs and Funny Facts Volume 1

Georg Mohr, Adrian Mikhalchishin

Thinkers Publishing 2026



Key to symbols

| | | | |
|----|--|----|--------------------------------|
| ! | a good move | ± | White has a serious advantage |
| ? | a weak move | ∓ | Black has a serious advantage |
| !! | an excellent move | +− | White has a decisive advantage |
| ?? | a blunder | −+ | Black has a decisive advantage |
| !? | an interesting move | → | with an attack |
| ?! | a dubious move | ↑ | with initiative |
| □ | only move | ↔ | with counterplay |
| = | equality | Δ | with the idea of |
| ∞ | unclear position | ⊃ | better is |
| ≡ | with compensation for the sacrificed material | N | novelty |
| ± | White stands slightly better | + | check |
| ∓ | Black stands slightly better | # | mate |

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Introduction..... | 15 |
| Grandmasters are (still) human | 17 |
| A more recent gift for the other author..... | 17 |
| Even World Championship players are not immune..... | 18 |
| “It’s never too late to resign” – unless you can keep attacking! | 20 |
| The comedy of the mess!..... | 22 |
| Back to the Soviet chess powerhouse..... | 22 |
| A solution that came in a dream..... | 22 |
| Let’s end with Magnus Carlsen!..... | 23 |
| The legends of chess: Myths and origins | 24 |
| The story of the Grand Vizier and the king..... | 24 |
| Other legends of chess | 24 |
| The most widely accepted origin | 25 |
| The Checkmate of Dilaram..... | 25 |
| Another ancient mansuba | 26 |
| The journey of chess through Europe | 27 |
| Chess capitals through the ages..... | 27 |
| Memory of the priest from Zafra | 28 |
| A priest who became a chess legend..... | 28 |
| An accidental invention: The Spanish Opening..... | 29 |
| Chess and religion..... | 30 |
| Leonardo – the romantic and the warrior of the chessboard..... | 34 |
| A life of passion and danger | 34 |
| Triumph and tragedy..... | 35 |
| A legacy remembered | 35 |

| | |
|---|-----------|
| How even grandmasters sometimes fall for traps | 37 |
| The opening revolution and its pitfalls | 38 |
| Theory's unexpected twist..... | 39 |
| Another victim of Kupreichik's analysis | 40 |
| The price of blindly trusting others' analysis | 40 |
| Impact atomic bomb (coordination destroyer) | 43 |
| Interference, deflection | 44 |
| Loek Van Wely: pro | 45 |
| ... and contra!..... | 45 |
| Either... or... or...? | 46 |
| To the heart... #1!..... | 46 |
| To the heart... #2! | 46 |
| Turning... .. | 47 |
| Under five attacks... #1!..... | 47 |
| Under five attacks... #2! | 47 |
| Intermediate move... .. | 47 |
| Boom and mate!..... | 48 |
| And ... the end!..... | 48 |
| Chess notation and the first chess textbook..... | 49 |
| Café de la Régence – the chess capital of the enlightenment..... | 51 |
| Philidor – a genius ahead of his time..... | 51 |
| Café de la Régence – the heart of chess in Paris | 51 |
| Legall de Kermeur | 52 |
| Philidor's legacy – “Pawns are the soul of chess!” | 54 |
| Philidor escapes the guillotine..... | 54 |
| Napoleon and his love for chess..... | 54 |
| Napoleon's defeat in Moscow | 55 |
| Three days for chess | 57 |
| Deschappelles – a natural genius | 57 |
| The rise of La Bourdonnais..... | 58 |

| | |
|---|---------------|
| Chess and the military | 59 |
| Military influence on chess terminology..... | 59 |
| Military influence in chess politics..... | 59 |
| Grandmasters in the military | 60 |
| Chess clubs in the military | 60 |
| World champions and war | 60 |
| Chess in wartime | 61 |
| How chess influenced the American revolution..... | 61 |
| The swindle | 62 |
| Resigning in a drawn position or offering a draw in a winning one..... | 64 |
| Chess hypnosis | 69 |
| The illusions continue..... | 70 |
| Chess in Britain in the 19th century | 75 |
| Staunton's reign..... | 75 |
| Chess and aristocracy..... | 77 |
| Anderssen | 82 |
| The American genius..... | 85 |
| Chess and money..... | 88 |
| World champions and their earnings..... | 88 |
| Soviet chess and state-controlled rewards..... | 89 |
| Fischer – Spassky: From Reykjavík to a record payday..... | 90 |
| The era of millionaire champions..... | 91 |
| Curiosities: bread, jeeps, and tractors..... | 91 |

| | |
|--|------------|
| Money, currency and gambling | 92 |
| Additional curiosities about chess and money | 93 |
| Karpov – owner of a mineral water empire | 93 |
| Kasparov – chess grandmaster of Wall Street..... | 94 |
| Wesley So and his millionaire patron..... | 94 |
| Nigel Short – a career in car sales? | 94 |
| Mamedyarov and the suitcases of cash | 94 |
| Largest single tournament prize fund | 94 |
| Top 10 highest-paid chess players of all time | 95 |
| Wilhelm Steinitz – the father of positional chess | 96 |
| Epstein..... | 96 |
| Steinitz the music lover..... | 98 |
| Punished for kindness | 98 |
| Self-confidence | 98 |
| Steinitz – Quasimodo | 98 |
| Losing the title..... | 99 |
| Steinitz and “psychological warfare” | 100 |
| Mate from a hospital bed | 101 |
| “Steinitz vs. the World” | 101 |
| The longest title in history..... | 101 |
| Chess and bankers | 102 |
| Additional Anecdotes..... | 105 |
| You can’t be serious! | 106 |
| Dr. Emanuel Lasker – the father of psychological chess..... | 114 |
| Lasker as a polymath | 115 |
| Martha | 115 |
| A fine gentleman..... | 116 |
| Lasker – the Clairvoyant | 116 |
| Poor memory..... | 116 |
| The knight handicap..... | 117 |
| Chess player and gambler..... | 117 |

| | |
|---|----------------|
| His style and psychological approach..... | 118 |
| Unusual table manners..... | 118 |
| A champion who disliked playing too much..... | 118 |
| Deadly rivals..... | 118 |
| Rivalry with Capablanca..... | 119 |
| The Lasker variation..... | 119 |
| Legacy..... | 120 |
| Lasker the composer..... | 121 |
| Lasker the attacker – the Lasker sacrifice | 124 |
| Chess, mathematics and physics | 134 |
| The greatest chess sin: Resigning in a winning position..... | 137 |
| Moral of the story..... | 141 |
| Touch-move (Pièce touchée, pièce jouée) | 142 |
| Epilogue..... | 149 |
| José Raúl Capablanca – the Cuban genius | 150 |
| The genius..... | 151 |
| Capablanca the reformer | 151 |
| The Bon Vivant | 151 |
| Incredible results | 152 |
| The Havana simultaneous | 152 |
| His own executioner | 152 |
| Stories with women..... | 153 |
| Mr. Ford | 153 |
| Two wives | 153 |
| Olga on Capablanca..... | 153 |
| Capablanca vs. Hollywood | 154 |
| Confidence | 154 |
| Revenge..... | 154 |

| | |
|--|------------|
| Capablanca as writer and teacher | 155 |
| The “no books” policy | 155 |
| Chess quiz | 156 |
| Questions | 156 |
| Answers | 158 |
| Chess and tennis | 159 |
| Karpov vs. Kafelnikov | 160 |
| The Fischer serve | 160 |
| Blitz on the baseline | 160 |
| Politics and chess – stalemate or checkmate | 161 |
| Truman’s chess diplomacy | 163 |
| Mitterrand’s gambit | 163 |
| Famous illegal moves | 164 |
| Some stories about move order mistakes | 171 |
| Threefold repetition | 174 |
| Deadly time trouble | 177 |
| Dr. Alexander Alekhine!!! | 179 |
| Madame Philidor | 179 |
| Advantage or nothing | 180 |
| Blindfold | 180 |
| Forgetfulness | 182 |
| Genius | 182 |
| Alekhine about himself | 183 |
| Which queen? | 183 |
| Autograph | 185 |

| | |
|---|----------------|
| Too early to celebrate | 185 |
| Tuesdays and teeth..... | 185 |
| Alekhine the thief..... | 186 |
| Alekhine and the world championship matches | 186 |
| At heaven's gate | 187 |
| Alekhine, champagne and caviar | 187 |
| Annamarie and chess..... | 187 |
| Later years and death | 188 |
| Luděk Pachman on Alekhine | 188 |
| King's golden cage | 190 |
| Epilogue..... | 192 |
| Foolish victories – when a game is won by an idiotic move..... | 193 |
| Some crazy chess stories..... | 195 |
| The king on a visit | 195 |
| Four rooks for four bishops..... | 197 |
| Trojan knights | 199 |
| Pawn heroes | 199 |
| Harem on the chessboard | 200 |
| The incredible oversight | 202 |
| DEJA VU | 205 |
| Dr. Max Euwe..... | 208 |
| The women of my life | 209 |
| Euwe and Maróczy | 209 |
| “The Euwe of our club” | 209 |
| Euwe's hat..... | 210 |
| Duels with Alekhine..... | 210 |
| Euwe on Alekhine..... | 211 |
| Euwe the problemist..... | 211 |

| | |
|---|------------|
| Champion for one day | 211 |
| At the Soviet border | 212 |
| A way of life | 212 |
| Euwe's miniature..... | 212 |
| Legacy..... | 213 |
| Chess giants – doctors of science..... | 214 |
| Grandmasters and PhDs | 214 |
| Chess and boxing..... | 216 |
| Chess and sport..... | 217 |
| Famous friendships and studies | 218 |
| Other sports | 218 |
| Big castle and ... finish!..... | 220 |
| Champions defeated in miniatures..... | 220 |
| Draw affairs | 223 |
| A draw is not always a draw..... | 223 |
| Endgame anecdotes..... | 224 |
| The draw offer – an interesting proposal | 225 |
| When silence means trouble | 226 |
| Najdorf, Stoltz ... and whisky..... | 227 |
| More little incidents..... | 227 |
| The draw offer | 227 |
| Not all draws are alike..... | 229 |
| Stalemate in a winning position..... | 231 |
| The shortest perpetual checks..... | 235 |
| Instructional use of theoretical study ideas | 243 |
| Chess streets and squares..... | 247 |

| | |
|---|------------|
| In your name lies the secret..... | 252 |
| What's in the name of an opening? | 254 |
| But..... | 255 |
| Oddest opening names in chess | 256 |
| The tactical “Tripwire” | 258 |
| Curious stories from chess history | 263 |
| Chess players of stronger build | 266 |
| The other extreme | 267 |
| Mysteries of chess history | 268 |
| Mysterious, unplayed matches | 270 |
| Divinely useless occupation..... | 273 |
| Famous writers about chess | 274 |
| Tripping the opponent..... | 275 |
| The great opening circus | 279 |
| About Georg..... | 285 |
| About Adrian..... | 287 |



Introduction

Dear Readers,

Countless chess books have been written – hundreds, thousands, perhaps even more. And because chess is often seen as a serious pursuit, most of these books reflect that tone, offering lessons on history, openings, middlegames, and endgames.

But chess isn't just about learning! Far from it. As many great minds have said, chess is a reflection of life itself. That's why we, the authors, set out to create something different – an unconventional book that presents chess through a lens of humor, wit, and even a touch of tragicomedy. We wanted to offer a fresh perspective on the royal game, filled with jokes, anecdotes, and the remarkable (and sometimes bittersweet) stories of chess legends. Within these pages, you'll find fascinating quotes, curious incidents, and astonishing moments that have unfolded on the chessboard – and will undoubtedly continue to do so. And yes, even grandmasters are only human, prone to mistakes – sometimes spectacular ones.

This is a book for every chess lover, from absolute beginners to seasoned grandmasters. Over the years, we've collected these stories with great passion, and we're certain this will not be our last – there are always more captivating tales waiting to be told.

A final word of advice: not everything in this book is meant to be taken at face value. Some stories remain unverified, passed down through generations of chess players. Some we've borrowed from other authors, while others have been shared informally for years. So, read with an open mind, a good sense of humor, and just a pinch of skepticism.

But then again... what if it's all true?

Maribor, 2025

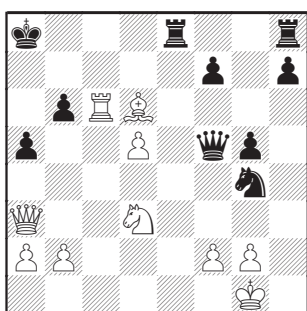
Georg Mohr & Adrian Mikhachishin
chess enthusiasts – and grandmasters, too.



Grandmasters are (still) human

Let's start close to home! Here's a look at how one of the authors earned his grandmaster title:

Sermek : Mohr
Maribor, 1993



This game comes from the traditional tournament in Maribor, Slovenia, held in honor of **grandmaster Vasja Pirc**. The player with the Black pieces (me!) needed a win to secure his grandmaster norm, and in a mutual time scramble, he played...

26...♔f5

King Louis XIV once played chess with a courtier when an urgent minister interrupted. Louis handed the minister the board and said, "*Decide the result!*" The minister declared: "*You've lost, Your Majesty!*" – without even looking at the board.

...setting up a deadly mating threat. Black now threatens the crushing 27...♔f2!, and after 28.♔f2 ♔e1#, it would be checkmate.

The Croatian-Slovenian grandmaster, under immense pressure, frantically searched for a way out. There was no immediate check, so he had to defend the back rank:

27. ♔c1??

If White had just a little more time - or better concentration - he would have surely found the brilliant 27.♔a5!!, sacrificing the queen: 27...ba5 28.♔a6 ♔b7 29.♔c5 ♔c8 30.♔a8#!

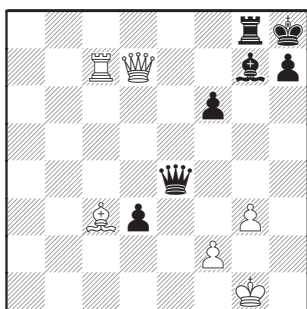
Had this happened, your humble servant might have remained just an International Master, and this book might have lost a bit of its credibility... Instead, the game continued:

27...♔d5 28.♔g3 ♔c8 29.♔f1 ♔hd8
30.♔a4 ♔c4 31.♔c4 ♔c4 32.♔e5 ♔e5
33.♔e5 ♔dc8 0:1

A more recent gift for the other author

The next example is much more recent, and this time, the other author of this book was the lucky recipient!

Klinova : Mikhalechishin
San Francisco 2014



This game was played in one of the fascinating chess festivals organized in the United States by **Anatoly Machulsky**, a Ukrainian émigré, businessman, and grandmaster. He frequently invited his old rivals, many of whom later became legendary grandmasters.

43. Bc8?

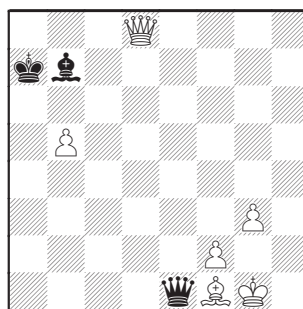
After the game, **Irina Krush** was the only person in the hall who immediately spotted the winning move: 43. Qg7! Bg7 44. Bc8 Bg8 45. Qf6#! Instead, the game continued:

43...h5 44. Bc7 Qg6 45. Qd2 1/2-1/2

Even World Championship players are not immune

Now, you might be thinking that the authors of this book are the luckiest people in the chess world. Not at all! Let's take a look at an example from the Women's World Championship.

Daulyte : Socko
Sochi 2015



57. Qa5??

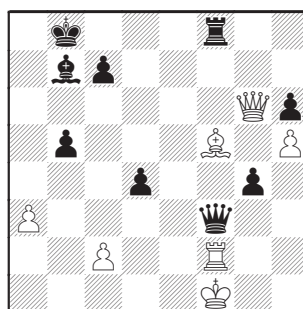
White completely missed a mate-in-one: 57.b6#! Instead, in severe time trouble, she repeated the position twice (57...Qb8 58. Qd8 Qa7 ...) but then...

57...Qa5 0:1

A complete shock!

Our next missed opportunity is from a battle between two German grandmasters:

Knaak : Luther
Zittau 1989



39...Qh3?

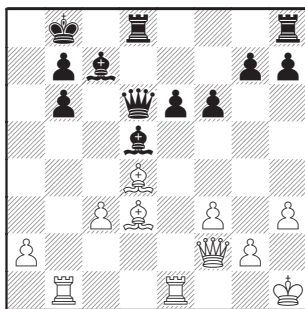
39...Qd1#!

40. ♖e1 ♜h1?
40... ♜e3; 40... ♜c3+.

41. ♜f1 ♜d5 42. ♜g4
and White slowly edged his way to a draw! 1/2 (68).

Even (future) world champions can make mistakes:

Euwe : Landau
Netherlands 1933



27. ♜b6?? ♜h2#!!

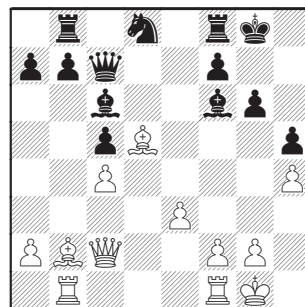
Despite their immense skill, even grandmasters miss mate-in-one opportunities on rare occasions. However, they much more frequently overlook simple forced combinations – sequences where the opponent has only one reasonable reply, or in the best-case scenario, only one legal move.

One of the most legendary chess tournaments of all time was the **Candidates Tournament** in **Zürich 1953**, largely thanks to **David Bronstein**, who documented the event in his famous book. His commentary not only covered the

games but also summarized almost all the chess knowledge known at the time.

The tournament was dominated by Soviet grandmasters, but two other players also played a significant role: the Hungarian László Szabó and the legendary American Samuel Reshevsky. Their game had a major impact on the top standings and, for a long time, it looked like Szabó was on his way to victory.

Szabó : Reshevsky
Zürich 1953



21. ♙f6??

Unbelievable! Szabó did everything right, and later admitted that he had actually seen the mate in two, but suddenly “forgot” about it and instinctively captured the piece.

If he had played 21. ♜g6! ♙g7 22. ♜g7#!!, the game would have ended in a beautiful checkmate. Instead, the game continued:

21... ♙d5 22. cd5 ♜d6 23. ♜c3 ♜d5
24. ♜fd1 ♜f5 25. e4 ♜e6 26. ♙g7 b6
27. ♙f8 ♙f8 1/2-1/2