

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: Primoz Zerdin, Primoz 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 Mikhalkishin

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
Deschelles – 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?

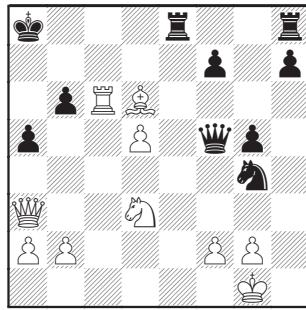
Maribor, 2025

Georg Mohr & Adrian Mikhalkishin
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...Qf5

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...Qf2!, and after 28.Qf2 Qe1#, 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. Rc1??

If White had just a little more time - or better concentration - he would have surely found the brilliant 27.Qa5!!, sacrificing the queen: 27...ba5 28.Qa6 Qb7 29.Qc5 Qc8 30.Qa8#!

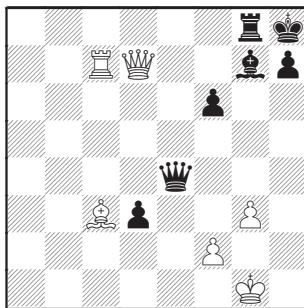
Had this happened, your humble servant might have remained just an International Master, and this book might have lost a bit of its credibility... Instead, the game continued:

**27...Qd5 28.Qg3 Qc8 29.Qf1 Qhd8
30.Qa4 Qc4 31.Qc4 Qc4 32.Qe5 Qe5
33.Qe5 Qdc8 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 : Mikhalkishin
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. $\mathbb{Q}c8?$

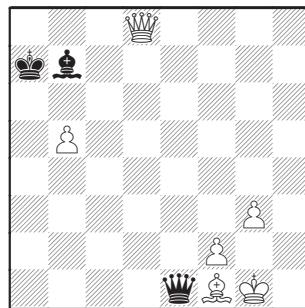
After the game, **Irina Krush** was the only person in the hall who immediately spotted the winning move: 43. $\mathbb{Q}g7!$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 44. $\mathbb{Q}c8$ $\mathbb{Q}g8$ 45. $\mathbb{Q}f6\#$! Instead, the game continued:

43...h5 44. $\mathbb{Q}c7$ $\mathbb{Q}g6$ 45. $\mathbb{Q}d2$ ½-½

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. $\mathbb{Q}a5??$

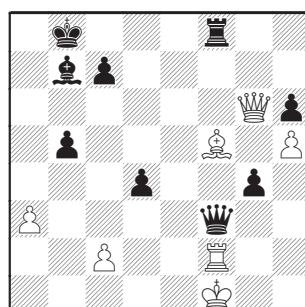
White completely missed a mate-in-one: 57. $b6\#$! Instead, in severe time trouble, she repeated the position twice (57... $\mathbb{Q}b8$ 58. $\mathbb{Q}d8$ $\mathbb{Q}a7$...) but then...

57... $\mathbb{Q}a5$ 0:1

A complete shock!

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

Knaak : Luther
Zittau 1989



39... $\mathbb{Q}h3?$

39... $\mathbb{Q}d1\#$!

40. $\mathbb{Q}e1$ $\mathbb{Q}h1?$

40... $\mathbb{Q}e3$; 40... $\mathbb{Q}c3$ –+.

41. $\mathbb{Q}f1$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 42. $\mathbb{Q}g4$

and White slowly edged his way to a draw! 1/2 (68).

Even (future) world champions can make mistakes:

Euwe : Landau

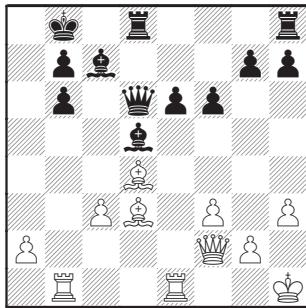
Netherlands 1933

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

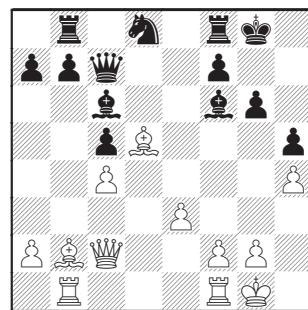
Zürich 1953



27. $\mathbb{Q}b6??$ $\mathbb{Q}h2\#!!$

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



21. $\mathbb{Q}f6??$

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. $\mathbb{Q}g6!$ $\mathbb{Q}g7$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}g7\#!!$, the game would have ended in a beautiful checkmate. Instead, the game continued:

21... $\mathbb{Q}d5$ 22. $\mathbb{Q}cd5$ $\mathbb{Q}d6$ 23. $\mathbb{Q}c3$ $\mathbb{Q}d5$
 24. $\mathbb{Q}fd1$ $\mathbb{Q}f5$ 25. $\mathbb{Q}e4$ $\mathbb{Q}e6$ 26. $\mathbb{Q}g7$ $b6$
 27. $\mathbb{Q}f8$ $\mathbb{Q}f8$ ½-½