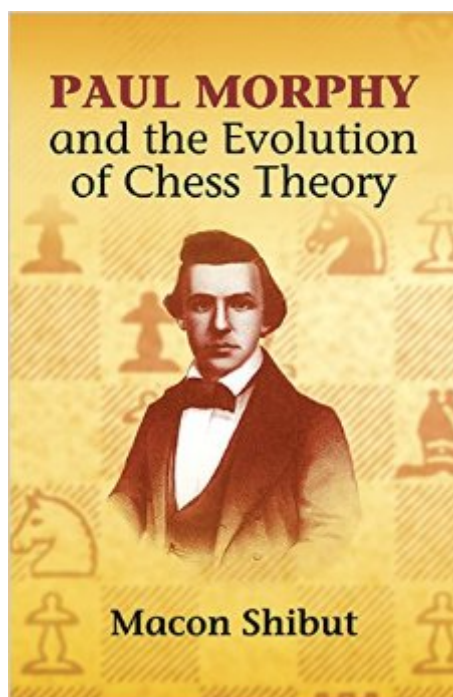


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Paul Morphy And The Evolution Of Chess Theory (Dover Chess)



Synopsis

This book about the best chess player of the 19th century analyzes Paul Morphy's games and positions in depth to get to the essence of his style. Chapters discuss other players of the period (Adolph Anderssen and Wilhelm Steinitz), Morphy's rare blunders and omissions, as well as selected endgames and openings. Also included are a 27-page essay on Morphy by Steinitz and a series of letters between Alexander Alekhine and Eugene Znosko-Borovsky debating Morphy's chess style. With large, clear diagrams, "this book should take its place among first-rank historical chess works." — USA Today Sports Network. 15 halftones.

Book Information

Age Range: 5 and up

Series: Dover Chess

Paperback: 368 pages

Publisher: Dover Publications (May 7, 2004)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0486435741

ISBN-13: 978-0486435749

Product Dimensions: 5.4 x 0.8 x 8.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 13.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars — See all reviews (10 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #552,819 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #664 in Books > Humor & Entertainment > Puzzles & Games > Chess #1041 in Books > Humor & Entertainment > Puzzles & Games > Puzzles #96076 in Books > Children's Books

Customer Reviews

This book deserves to be re-printed. It's simply fascinating. Did Morphy really anticipate Steinitz? Did masters understand the "principle of early development" even before Morphy? Shibut has many interesting things to say about the evolution of chess, with reference to games and history for support. It's a fairly scholarly work, but not a dry one. I think a club-level chess player could learn a bit about chess from this book, while enjoying the lessons of history. The meat of the book lies in the chapters comparing Morphy to a) Anderssen and the romantics, b) Steinitz, c) Barnes, who scored more points off him than anyone, and d) modern players (via Reti's assessments). Here you will find dozens of Morphy games with an unusual sort of annotation. Shibut does not give us many lines of variations, though he does sometimes point out tactical shots. More often, he assesses the positions

qualitatively, showing us the sorts of plans that Morphy used. He also includes a great many references to the specific ideas and refutations of other authors, often pointing out THEIR mistakes. All of this gives you a sense that Morphy was both far ahead of his time in opening theory, and competitive with anyone alive today tactically. The games in these chapters are (mainly) real struggles, rather than the dashing brilliancies we are used to seeing from Morphy. Shibut explains, "The effect of such presentations in countless beginner's texts has been to reduce Morphy's games to a collection of fables. Their moral is understood to be something about developing pieces, or the evils of chasing pawns in the opening. Whatever the pedagogical value of such portrayals, the games, so presented, can't help but appear shallow compared to modern grandmaster warfare.

BACKGROUND: In the past few years, I've gone from being nothing more than a very casual online correspondence chess player to one who is now playing in USCF-rated tournaments. My current (though still provisional) USCF 'slow' rating is in the 2000s; "actual" playing strength probably in the 1800-2000 range. Played my share of 1|0,3|0 and 5|0 blitz against players ranging from Class E to Expert (and even one master). I've finished around 20 chess books, and half-finished dozens of others (similar to most 'serious' chess players I reckon). Done loads of tactics problems. Gone through dozens of annotated master games. Etc. Suffice it to say that while there are still far better chess players on this Earth than me, compared to the average club player, I'm not a complete slouch either. In other words, I have some idea of what passes for good chess literature and what doesn't.

REVIEW: Basically this is a game collection book, with a particular emphasis (not surprisingly) on Paul Morphy. This book aims to be as objective as possible in discussing Morphy's games and his legacy as a whole, often dispelling the exaggerated mystique surrounding the Morphy legend. For example, it disproves Fischer's statement that Morphy "never" blundered (the 'Blunders and Omissions' chapter); rectifies Philip Sergeant's comment that "in nothing was Morphy so fortunate as the frequency with which his opponents played P-R3 [i.e. h3 or h6]" since "Morphy himself was more apt to play this move than would be a modern master" (pg. 9); that Morphy opted for the Dutch Defense against 1.d4 because he feared the line 1.d4,d5 2.c4,e6 3.Nc3,Nf6 4.Bf4 for black since an impending Nb5 by white would "attack" c7 (pg.

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