

**The Grandmaster Mindset  
– A First Course in Chess  
Improvement**

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# Key to Symbols

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

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# Preface

Every year chess knowledge increases rapidly, and it is getting harder and harder to find one's way through that giant forest of chess information. As a young player, I used to take lessons from respected coaches -- mostly grandmasters -- with the idea of learning to orientate myself in that forest by absorbing their great experience, but in a concise way. After my theoretical books about the Richter-Rauzer Sicilian (written together with former European Champion, GM Zdenko Kozul) which went into great depth, this time I wanted to focus more on general skills which I find essential for every young player, and even for club players who are already familiar with some of the ideas covered in this book.

By going through the chapters you will get acquainted with my way of grandmaster-type thinking. I can assure you of one thing: there are better and weaker grandmasters, but you won't find a GM who is playing without ideas or, let's say, without his way of thinking! As you will find out, I am basically trying to detect the problem or goal of the position and then I am starting to scan factors which can lead to the solution. That process you will find in many examples in the book.

To be able to correctly deal with positions in your games, first you need to know who stands better; that is, you need to assess the position correctly. Then when you are searching for moves, you should be able to find the best move in every position; my candidate-moves system will help you with that. In the book there are many examples from tournament praxis, mine and the top players', even of the World Champion himself! In my coaching career those examples were tested in individual lessons, and also in top group lectures like the one in Croatia which consisted of 1700-rated players and also strong GMs rated around 2600. These examples have stood the test of time and, what's even better, there are always some questions and suggestions from the participants and I have used these to update the examples, so now you are getting better quality out of my initial material.

To be able to raise your level of play you will need to work hard on your chess. This book will arm you with some important chess ideas and skills but, more importantly, you will get into the grandmaster's mind. I don't want you to play chess the following way: he attacked me -- I need to move away, I attacked him -- he needs to retreat. Everyone can play like that. No, I want something completely different, I want you to think this way: how can I make a counterattack? He is

controlling that square, I can't put my piece there, wait, or can I? By this critical and creative thinking you will dig deeper into the positions and be able to spot moves or bonds between pieces which you couldn't see before. And, what's even more important, you will see more than your opponent!

Take your time when going through the examples. Maybe sometimes you will have questions about some moves which I didn't mention and that's good, that's how I was improving when I was a young player. I can assure you, even the strongest books include unanswered logical questions, but only the one who is reading them correctly will find them! In the first chapter, about the pin, I give you some time to get warmed up with some basic stuff, but as you will notice quickly, already in Chapter Two (candidate moves) the examples are getting more complicated and you won't have too much time to rest!

I will tell you a secret: that chapter contains my favourite example, the one from the Boensch-Jankovic game. I will never forget the chance I missed. And I will also give you this advice: don't worry too much about losses, it's more important that you learn lessons from them so you can raise your level of play. Rating follows the quality of your play, not a few results! And last but not least, sometimes when you are working hard on new things, your results get worse for a short period, but after that your level of play rises one or even two categories! So be patient, your time will come for sure. Good luck!

Grandmaster Alojzije Jankovic  
Zagreb, April 2020