Analysis will help discipline thinking

By Kevin Burnett
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The best chess book of the 1970s, and one of the best of alltime, was **Think Like a Grandmaster** by the late Soviet GM Alexander Kotov. In the introduction Kotov recalls giving a lecture to a group of experts and asking them a seemingly simple question, "Do you know how to analyze?" Upon receiving "Yes, of course"-type noises, Kotov tested them and found the opposite to be the case. Incredible, we're inclined to think, shocking. But as it happens, Kotov, as an expert in the late 1930s, was equally in the dark. By his own account, his scatter-shot approach to analysis cost him several big victories.

In his disgust with himself, he turned to the writings of the famous masters of the day for some tips on the subject and found. . .nothing. Analysis (or, in the popular conception, "How many moves ahead can you see?") was a skill that every master was supposed to possess but none had deigned to write about. So Kotov formed a committee of one, tackled the subject, and saw his tournament results improve astronomically. The keys, he wrote, are thoroughness and discipline — examine each candidate move in turn and get it all the first time around. No hopping back and forth from one line to another. Easier said than done!

I first read Kotov's book almost 10 years ago when I was a Category II player. I was quite discouraged at how hard it was to avoid undisciplined wandering and stay on one analytical track. But I consoled myself with the thought that when I became a master, all this would be second nature. Well, I don't mean to spoil your Sunday, but I'm a master now and I'm still not sure I know how to analyze. The more I delve into the subject, the more mysterious I find it.

Despite Kotov's exhortations on thoroughness, it seems that analyses by top GMs are being questioned every day. Opening theory, another form of analysis, utilizing master games and analyses to determine the best lines of play, meanders back and forth in its evaluations like a badly confused D-player in time-pressure. As the joke has it, to solve all your opening difficulties, just learn the best lines of 1965 and wait 'til they're rehabilitated. It won't be long.

It seems that chess is just too deep. Even with all the Kotovian willpower in the world, the best of analysis (a word with such an authoritative ring) is often tentative and temporary. Maybe the old masters Kotov turned to knew what they were about when they declined to pontificate on the subject. (All except Reti, that is, who still has me baffled with his statement that he seldom looked even one move ahead.)

Yet, confused as we may be about it, analysis is essential, whether we're seeking victory over the board or improvement at home. And, despite the somewhat dire, sink-or-swim tone in Kotov's book, I believe there are grades of analysis for different grades of players.
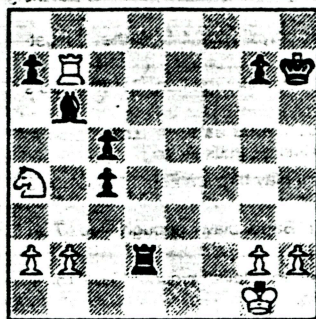
At the top, for masters only, is full analysis, taking unannotated games and figuring everything out from scratch. Leave no question about the game unanswered. Very challenging, but very rewarding.

On the next level, take annotated games, cover up the moves and notes and try to figure out the moves (and the reasons why) one by one. This is excellent practice, even for masters, but much too hard for beginners and most intermediate players. So they should narrow the field somewhat and study books full of tactical positions. These are extracted from games right at the point where there's a sure-fire way to win. Thus, even a beginner can do real analysis and discover the master's path to victory. At the same time, he'll be learning the tricks of combination play, a vital stepping stone to fuller analysis.

At all levels, it's important to analyze as efficiently as possible, without moving the pieces on the board. To earn an extra gold star, write down your analysis and check it against the appropriate source. It's amazing how the very act of writing will make your thinking much more disciplined.

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Five-round tournament next Saturday and Sunday at Labate's Chess Centre, 10222 Lakewood Blvd., Downey 90241. Guaranteed prize fund of $1,200, entry fees $21 to $27. First round 10 a.m. Saturday. Call 213-861-3371 for details.

**Ortueta - Sanz (1933)
Black to play and win
(solution below)**

Sacrificial intent

White-Larsen. . .Black-Van der Wiel. . .Amsterdam 1980. . .English Opening. . .**1 P-QB4 N-KB3 2 N-QB3 P-B4 3 P-KN3 P-Q4 4 PxP NxP 5 B-N2 N-B2 6 Q-N3** (Geller's move, trying to trick Black into playing 6. . .N-Q2, when he is very cramped.) **6. . .N-B3 7 BxN+ PxB** (Black is compensated for his doubled pawns by White's loss of time — Q-N3-R4.) **8 Q-R4 Q-Q2 9 N-B3 N-N4 10 P-Q3 P-B3 11 B-K3 P-K4 12 R-QB1 N-Q5 13 N-K4 R-QN1 14 NxQBP BxN 15 RxB RxP?!** (Looks fine, but Larsen's got some tricks up his sleeve. So better was 15. . .NxN+ 16 PxN RxP.) **16 BxN! R-N8+** (In for a dime, in for a dollar. After 16. . .PxB 17 0-0, White is much better.) **17 K-Q2 RxR 18 NxP! PxN 19 RxKP+ K-Q1** (On 19. . .K-B2 comes 20 Q-B4+ K-N3 21 B-B3 RxP 22 Q-K4+ K-B2 23 Q-KB4+ K-N1 24 Q-B4+ and wins.) **20 B-B5!** (The best, threatening 21 R-K7 an 21 Q-R4+.) **20. . .RxP** (The other try is 20. . .Q-N2. Then, after 21 Q-R5+ Q-B2 22 B-K7+ K-Q2 23 Q-B5 B-R3 24 B-B8! QxR 25 QxQ RxB 26 QxP+ K-K1 27 Q-K5+ K-B2 28 Q-B7+ K-N1 29 QxBP RxRP 30 QxB, White wins with his pawns.) **21 B-N4 B-N2 22 QxRP! RxP** (Or 22. . .R-K1 23 Q-N8+ Q-B1 24 Q-Q6+ Q-Q2 25 RxR+ KxR 26 Q-B8 mate.) **23 QxR** (There was a quicker win with 23 R-K7! But Larsen saw that the endgame was a breeze despite the opposite-colored Bs.) **23. . .R-K1 24 RxR+ QxR 25 P-R4 Q-N1 26 Q-N6+ K-B1 27 B-Q6 Q-Q1 28 Q-B5 K-Q2 29 B-B4 K-K3 30 Q-N4 Q-K2 31 Q-B4+ K-B4** (Not 31. . .K-B3?, 32 B-N5+ wins the Q.) **32 P-N4+ K-B3 33 P-R5 Q-K3 34 P-N5+ K-B2 35 K-B3!** (Black is stuck for useful moves, so White gains time at his expense.) **35. . .P-B4 36 QxQ+ KxQ 37 K-B4 B-N7 38 P-R6 K-Q2 39 KxP and Black resigns.** Because of the threat of 40 P-K4 the B must retreat. But after 39. . .B-R1 40 K-N6 K-B1 41 P-K4 Black is in zugzwang. Black's K will have to move and the white K will go to QN8 and win the B for the RP.

Solution: **1. . .RxQNP!! 2 NxR P-B6 3 RxB!** (The best. If 3 N-Q3, then 3. . .P-B5+ 4 K-B1 PxN 5 K-K1 P-B7 6 K-Q2 B-K6+!) **3. . .P-B5!! 4 R-N4 P-R4! 5 RxP PxN** and Black queens. Incredible pawn play! 5 R-N7 would have been answered with 5. . .P-B7!