



TACTICS TIME USER'S GUIDE

How to Make the Most of Your Tactics Training

By Tim Brennan
TacticsTime.com

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<http://tacticstime.com>

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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to **YOU**,
the chess player seeking improvement in your game,
wanting to win more games, and taking your rating to the next level!



ABOUT THE AUTHOR



TIMOTHY BRENNAN has been writing about chess improvement and creating chess tactics problems from amateur chess games since 2003 when he took over duties as Editor of the Colorado Chess Informant magazine.

Tim created his website, Tactics Time, <http://tacticstime.com> in May 2011 as a way to help class players out there improve their chess game, raise their rating, build their tactical muscles, and have fun while doing it.

Tim enjoys playing in over the board USCF rated tournaments, and correspondence chess online at redhotpawn.com (handle TimmyBx).

You can e-mail Tim at Tim@tacticstime.com.

You can follow TacticsTime on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/#!/TacticsTime> and on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/TacticsTime>.

PREFACE

Years ago I was invited over to a coworker's house after work for some "friendly" games of chess. When I arrived, my two coworkers were finishing up a game.

After the game was over, they started discussing some of the positions that occurred, also known as a "post mortem".

These two players were rated higher than me. I was rated around 1100 at the time, and they were in the 1400-1500 range. I was new to town, and didn't know them very well, but was glad to have some new chess friends.

I chimed in with some of my opinions about the position, and was promptly told by the "host" that I should just "keep my mouth shut", and "maybe I would learn something".

I felt horribly offended by this remark, and stormed out of the house, and went home feeling dejected. The only reason this person felt he had the right to speak to me in this rude and disrespectful way was because of my lowly rating!

After I got home I vowed to do **whatever it takes** to raise my rating, and get the respect I deserved!

I did a lot of research on what worked for raising your rating. I scoured chess forums and online bulletin boards. I spoke with stronger players. I read articles, magazines, blogs, books, newsletters and anything I could find on the topic of chess improvement.

I was like Keanu Reeve's character "Mr. Anderson" in the opening scenes of The Matrix where he is sitting in front of his computer 24 hours a day looking for a secret that he knows is out there!

What I found was a big mess of confusing, harmful and often conflicting advice. For example, some people on the Internet advocated to "study the endgame first". I tried this, but ended up never even getting to an endgame in any of my games because I was losing so quickly!



My rating was going nowhere, I was losing games, and getting frustrated. But I knew there had to be a better way. After trying a lot of terrible advice, I *finally* found something that worked!

My “Ah-HA!” moment came when I read the articles “400 points in 400 days” by Michael de la Maza. De la Maza pointed out that there is a difference between “chess knowledge” and “chess ability”. He advocated a program of studying tactics, and nothing but tactics.

A lot of critics *blasted* this system, but it made perfect sense to me, and I “drank the kool aid” like a brain washed cult member.

I bought a bunch of chess tactics books, chess tactics software, and anything I could find related to chess tactics. I went through hundreds of chess tactics. I started to look for tactics on every move of every game. I even started to publish my own chess tactics problems!

To make a long story short, the system worked!

My rating went from 1301 to 1696 in just over a year! AND when I finally got the chance to play a USCF rated game against the coworker who had humiliated me – I KICKED HIS ARSE!

That felt *good*.

But more than the victories, and prize money, and rating points, I realized that I had found a “magic bullet” that *actually worked*.

Normally I am very skeptical of “quick fixes” and over simplifications of problems. Thousands of books on chess have been written, how could the answer to getting better at chess be this simple? And why wasn’t everyone talking about this?

I took a little break from chess for a few years, and when I came back, I found most of the *same players*, at the *same rating* level, and making the *same mistakes* over and over again.

It’s not that these players are stupid, or lazy. Many of them devote a lot of time, money and energy to chess, and make efforts to get better.

The truth is, it’s not their fault!



TACTICS TIME USER'S GUIDE

There is SO much information out there about chess that it can be overwhelming. I have heard that more books have been written about chess, than all other games combined.

That is why I decided to create my Tactics Time website, eBooks, database and newsletter.

I felt I was in a unique position as someone who started as an adult beginner and made a massive improvement that most players never do.

I wanted to help “spread the gospel” on the importance of studying chess tactics, and share some of the tips and tricks I have learned to make it less painful for the next person who wants to experience rapid improvement.

I hope that my ideas can help you on your chess journey.

Good Luck!



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Dedication	i
About the Author	ii
Preface.....	iii
Introduction	1
Foreword.....	2
Chapter 1: Getting Started	3
Loading the Software.....	3
Opening the Database.....	4
Understanding What the Numbers in the Game Mean	6
Troubleshooting	6
Refunds	7
Suggestions	7
Referrals.....	8
Testimonials.....	8
Using Fritz and Chessbase	9
Chapter 2: Why Tactics?	10
Introduction.....	10
Tactics Versus Strategy	10
Why You Must First Master Tactics	11
Chapter 3: Tactics Time Philosophy.....	16
Introduction.....	16
What Makes a Good Set of Tactics Problems?.....	16
Problems I Have with Other Chess Tactics Training Programs	17
<i>Problems That Are Too Difficult</i>	<i>18</i>

TACTICS TIME USER'S GUIDE

<i>Problems Have Errors</i>	18
<i>Problems Are Not Realistic</i>	19
<i>Problems Are Stolen</i>	20
<i>Problems Are All Over the Map in Difficulty</i>	20
<i>Problems Have Too Many Hints</i>	20
<i>Problems Have Subjective Answers</i>	21
Why Study the Tactics from Class Player Games?	21
Chapter 4: Tactical Training Plan	23
Introduction.....	23
The Michael de la Maza Approach (and my problems with it)	23
Progress not Perfection	25
The 15 Minutes a Day, 90-Day Plan.....	26
Setting Goals.....	27
Chapter 5: Following the Plan	29
How to Solve the Problems	29
Behavior Change.....	30
Applying the Knowledge	31
Sticking with the Plan	32
Chapter 6: The “Inner Game” of Chess Tactics	34
Positive Mental Attitude	34
<i>Positive Thinking</i>	34
<i>Affirmations</i>	34
<i>Visualization</i>	35
Thinking Process During the Game	36
Checklist for Finding Tactics	36
Rambo Mode	37

Chapter 7: After the Game39

 There is No Failure, Only Feedback..... 39

 Post Mortems..... 40

 Using the Computer to Do Game Analysis 41

 Dealing with Losses..... 41

Chapter 8: Tactics Time Bonuses.....43

 Tactics Time Newsletters 43

 PDF File of All the Tactics 44

 E-Book Formats of All the Tactics..... 44

 Tactics Time Column Collection E-Book..... 45

 Tactics Time Continuity Program 45

 Tactics Time Blog, Social Media, Twitter, Podcasts..... 46

 101 Tactical Tips..... 46

 Other Tactics Resources..... 47

Final Thoughts.....48

Bibliography49

INTRODUCTION

Thank you so much for your purchase of the Tactics Time Training Database!



I really believe that solving lots of tactics puzzles will be the best investment that you can make on your path to chess improvement.

Inside this document you will find everything you need to help get you started with your new investment. Included are ideas for a training program that you can follow, and information about the bonuses that are included.

I also give some ideas about the study of chess tactics, and some of the philosophy behind the product.

If you haven't purchased Tactics Time yet, you can do it here:

http://tacticstime.com/?page_id=2.

If I left anything out, please e-mail me at Tim@TacticsTime.com and I will be glad to help you, and will update this document for future customers!

FOREWORD

When Tim asked me to write the foreword for "Tactics Time User's Guide" that he had just completed, I asked "why me?" on the inside. But to Tim, my answer of "Yes!" might have seemed too eager and abrupt. After all, I am not a titled player, coach, author, innovator, or entrepreneur. I'm just a chess enthusiast.

I will admit that at times I have been one of the most enthusiastic chess players that Tim has ever known. But I am just that, a friend who has played thousands of speed chess games against him; talked for endless hours about chess, its history, and its great players; and traveled with him to countless tournaments coast-to-coast. But in actuality, I am the perfect person to write the foreword because this program and user's guide was written specifically for me, a player with average playing ability who wants to improve his game and his rating through a healthy regimen of studying tactics.

Tim was the first person I knew who solved the riddle that countless grandmaster's like Tal, Nimzowitsch, Fischer, Tartakower, Reshevsky, and Kasparov have known all along. To quote Rudolph Teichmann, "Chess is 99% tactics". For the last decade, I have shared Tim's passion for learning that the essence of chess strategy is taking advantage of the tactics it produces.

You should spend time learning opening theory, middle game strategy, and understand how to win in the endgame. But if you spend all of your time memorizing the lines that result from 1.e4 and do not appreciate the beauty of pins, forks, gambits, and well-timed sacrifices, you may find yourself feeling violated by a swindler like Tim Brennan. No one ever re-won the lost game in post-mortem analysis. "Yes, at move 28 you did have a better position, your pawns were stronger, materially you were ahead, and my hats off to you for playing the exact line that Karpov implored at Linares in 1985 well into the middle game. But a smothered mate is a smothered mate."

If you are a tournament player and if I could dissuade you from using this product and following Tim's program, I would. After all, it's not going to help my rating if everyone else improves their game as well.

Pete Short

Elizabeth, Colorado



CHAPTER 1 GETTING STARTED

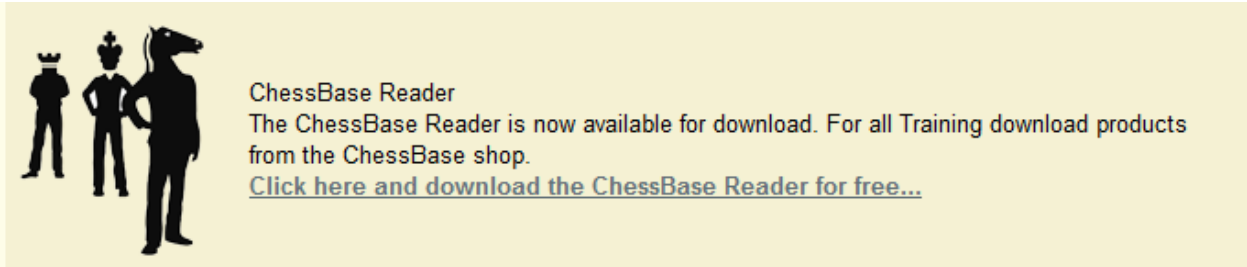
Loading the Software

Inside the download area you will find several links and bonuses.

The main product is the Tactics Time Training Database. This is a database of **10,001 chess games**, all taken from real amateur class players, each containing at least one tactics problem in it.

You can use this database with the free “Chessbase Reader” software, which you can download here: <http://www.chessbase.com/download/index.asp>. If you already own a Chessbase product, such as Chessbase or Fritz, you can use these as well.

This is what the download link looks like on the Chessbase website:

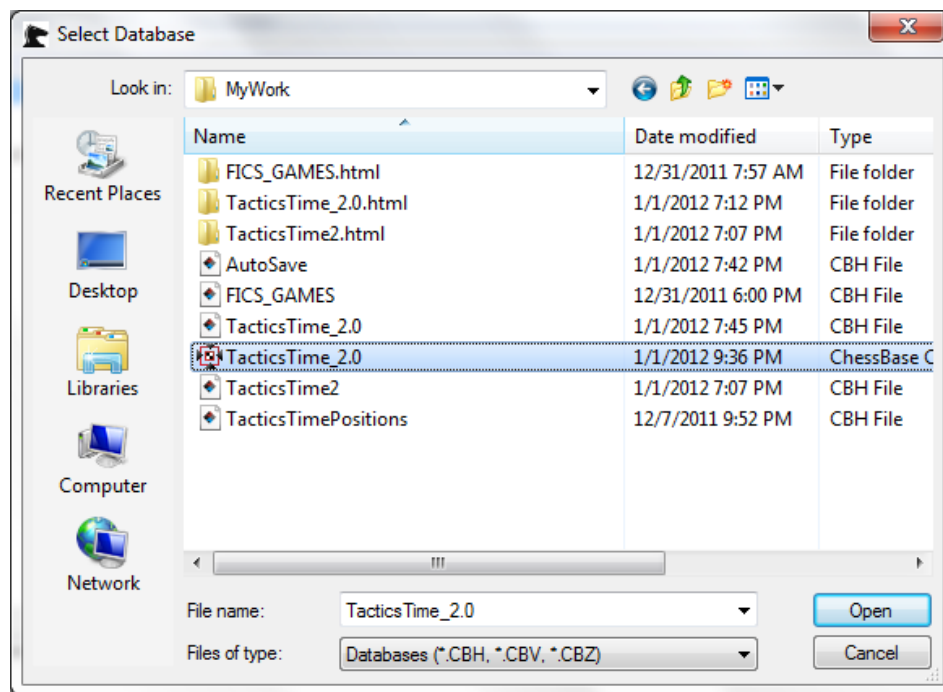


The image shows a promotional banner for ChessBase Reader. On the left, there are three black silhouettes of chess pieces: a king, a queen, and a knight. To the right of the silhouettes, the text reads: "ChessBase Reader", "The ChessBase Reader is now available for download. For all Training download products from the ChessBase shop.", and a blue underlined link: "Click here and download the ChessBase Reader for free...".

Opening the Database

Once you have the Chessbase software installed, you are ready to use the database. The Tactics Time database is a “Chessbase Archive File” (the filename ends in .cbv).

Save this file to a directory where you will remember where it located. You can then open this file using the Chessbase software.



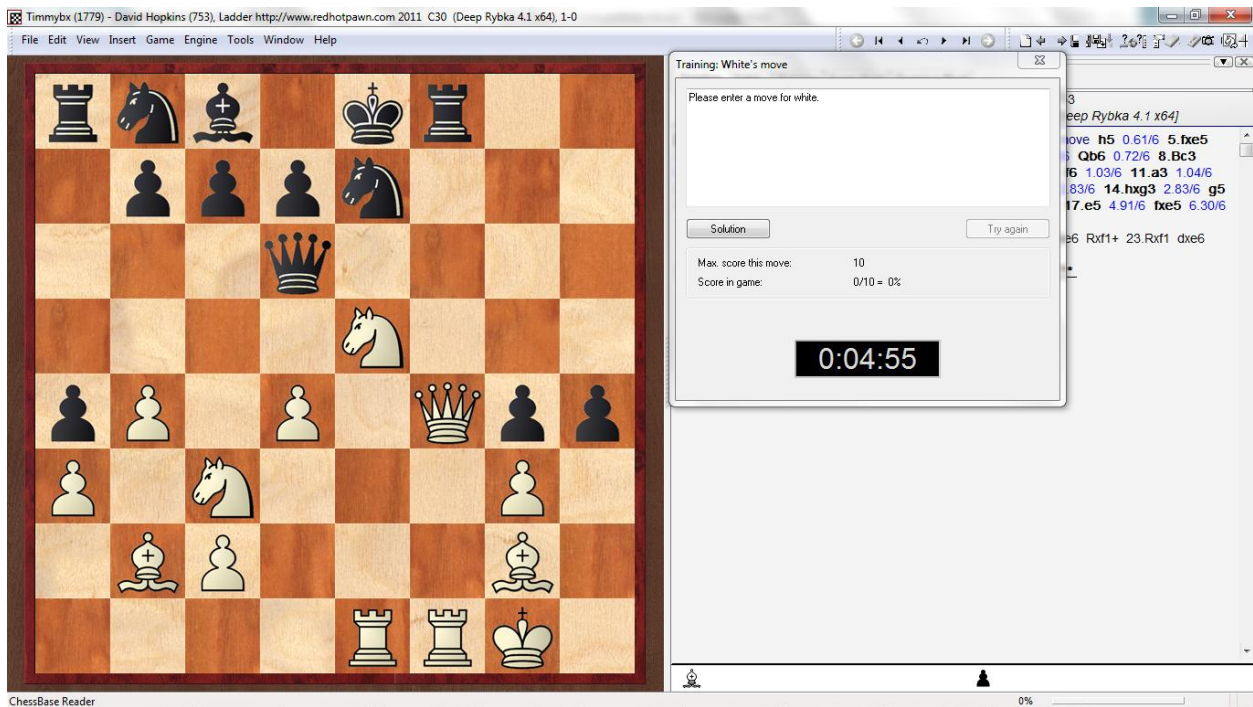
Note that after the database is opened for the first time, you can open the TacticsTime_2.0.cbh file instead of the TacticsTime_2.0.cbv file.

Click on the Games tab, and you will see a database with 10,001 games in it.

TACTICS TIME USER'S GUIDE

Number	White	Elo W	Black	Elo B	Result	Moves	ECO	Tournament	Date	VCS	P	Medals	Annotator
Tactics Time					Text								
2	Timmybx	1779	David Hopkins	753	1-0	22	C30	Ladder http://ww..	05.02.2011	vcs			Deep Rybka..
3	Flagg	1401	Timmybx	1779	0-1	25	C45	2011 Champion..	02.02.2011	cs			Deep Rybka..
4	Mydogspot	1638	Timmybx	1779	0-1	31	B13	2011 Champion..	02.02.2011	cs			Deep Rybka..
5	Timmybx	1779	Flagg	1401	1-0	8	C34	2011 Champion..	02.02.2011	cs			Deep Rybka..
6	Timmybx	1779	Jmm	1264	1-0	13	A00	2011 Champion..	02.02.2011	vcs			Deep Rybka..
7	Timmybx	1779	Pattrick06	2237	0-1	28	D03	2011 Champion..	02.02.2011	vcs			Deep Rybka..

Double click on the first game and you should see a board like this:



Click on the piece that you want to move, and drag it to the square that you want to move it to. In this case, the move is Qxf8#.

After you have done this, it will tell you if you were correct, or incorrect. If you were incorrect, you can try again.

If you give up, you can click "Solution", and it will tell you the answer.

After you are done with this position, you can go to the next game by either hitting “F10” on your keyboard, or hit the green arrow at the top



If the tactic occurred in the opening, you may want to play through the moves up to that point to see how it happened, so you can avoid similar traps in your games. I have collected a large number of “miniature” games where one side is checkmated in less than 20 moves.

This is one of the main benefits of using the database, as opposed to a normal tactics book – you have access to the full game, and can see how it came about, and how the game ended.

Understanding What the Numbers in the Game Mean

Each game is annotated by Rybka 4.1 with a number after each move. These numbers represent who Rybka considers to be winning after each move. The numbers are given in terms of “pawns”, with positive numbers meaning that white is winning, and negative numbers meaning that black is winning.

So for example a score of 2.5 will mean that white is winning by 2.5 pawns. A score of -3.0 would mean that black is winning by 3 pawns.

All of the tactics in this database give the winning player an advantage of at least 2 pawns. So you will not see moves that are based on subjective “positional considerations”, but instead moves that give one side gain a significant material advantage.

Troubleshooting

If you are not seeing the window that pops up asking you to make your move, make sure that “Training” is enabled. In Chessbase Reader you can do this under the “Game” menu and click “Training”.

You may also see arrows that Fritz is putting in, which will give you a “hint” as to what the move is. You will want to disable this feature under “Options”. Fritz also has a “Threatened Squares” feature which may be useful if you are having a hard time solving the problems. It will color the squares based on which pieces are attacking certain squares, and how often they are defended.

If you get stuck please do not hesitate to contact me at Tim@Tacticstime.com – I will be more than happy to assist you. If needed we can even get on the phone or Skype, and I can help you troubleshoot the issues you are having.

I am a software engineer by profession, so I am on the computer all the time, and check email regularly. I am very good at helping people solve their software problems. Additionally I have been using Fritz and Chessbase products for over 10 years, so I am very experienced with them. They can sometimes be frustrating to use, and can take some getting used to.

Refunds

If for any reason you are not happy with the Tactics Time Training Program, and would like a refund please send me an e-mail to let me know, and I will give you one, zero hassle. And you can keep the downloads, as my gift, and way of saying “thanks” for trying it.

I offer a 100% money back guarantee, and I do not want anyone to feel the slightest bit of risk when they purchase it. I want it to be the best chess purchase you ever made.

I want **YOU to be happy** with the product, and want to see **YOUR rating increase**, and see **YOU win more games!**

Suggestions

I welcome any feedback on how to make the product better. I am trying to make it the best deal for a chess tactics training product that you can get. I have already incorporated a lot of feedback from customers (including making this users guide!) I am also constantly making updates, corrections, and adding new games. Existing customers always receive free updates for life!



Referrals

If you like my chess product, website, newsletters, podcast, etc., I would greatly appreciate it if you told your friends! The finest complement I can receive is a referral. There are many ways that you could do this. Here are a few ideas...

- Post a link on your Facebook status to <http://tacticstime.com> and encourage your friends to sign up to my newsletter.
- Spread the word with a twitter post about the newsletter.
- Send an e-mail to your 5-10 closest chess friends and encourage them to check out the newsletter.
- Post a message to any online chess related forums/chat rooms/bulletin boards that you participate in.
- Add a link to a chess related website or blog that you write (I am happy to add a link back to your site as well!).
- Tell your friends in person at your local chess club.
- Add a link or recommendation to you online chess profile.
- If you have any chess students let them know about the newsletter.
- If you are in any chess related e-mail lists, send a shout out to the list.
- Mention the site in your state or local chess newsletter.
- "Like" Tactics Time on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Tactics-Time/275412842501613>.
- Put up a sign up sheet at a chess tournament.
- Hang up a flyer if your club has a permanent location.
- Any other ideas you might have!

I really appreciate the support! Thanks so much!

Testimonials

I would also appreciate a testimonial that I can put on my webpage, and marketing materials if you are a satisfied customer!

Using Fritz and Chessbase

The Chessbase Reader software is somewhat limited, since it is free. It will allow you to do all of the training you need though. There is much more that you can do with the Fritz and Chessbase software, such as using multiple engines to check the analysis, save off your own notes, create your own databases, do positional searches, filter games, etc.

You can often find older versions of the Fritz software fairly cheap on places like e-Bay, since most users want the “latest and greatest” versions. For example as I write this Fritz 13 is the newest version, and I just looked on E-Bay and you can get Fritz 11 for \$3.88. So you might consider getting one of these programs.

CHAPTER 2 WHY TACTICS?

Introduction

The main reason I advocate studying tactics to improve your rating and win more games is simply because it works. If standing on your head and singing the Star Spangled Banner in Esperanto worked, I would advocate doing that.

Studying tactics has worked for me in raising my rating, and has worked for many others, and I know that it can work for you too.

Tactics Versus Strategy

This is a popular area of debate that I have seen many times on chess forums, that chess players love to talk about.

I was recently reading the RedHotPawn forum, when I came across this funny little story written by a user named "Thabtots" on the thread subject of "Does Tactics help with Strategy", which you can read here:

<http://www.redhotpawn.com/board/showthread.php?&threadid=144634>.

Thabtots writes:

Tactics are absolutely necessary to even begin to use strategy. There was a very weak chess player at my club who read Silman, a lot.

I beat him with Queen odds, because he just didn't pay attention to what was attacking what.

So we played a game together, but I made him talk about the position before he made a move.

Him: "Well, let's see. I have an active dark square bishop, and my pawns are controlling the light squares. I'd say I have a positional advantage here. Now I'm going to control the center!" (Moves pawn)

Me: "Huh? Dude, I just attacked your knight with my pawn on the last move and you didn't move it. Lolz."

Fischer said that tactics flow from a superior position, but the irony is that you can't get a superior position without taking tactics into account.

I found this little story rather amusing, but it is also somewhat sad that there are players like this spending a lot of time and energy honing their thinking process in the wrong direction.

This is a rather extreme example of someone ignoring tactics at the expense of strategy, but it isn't too far off from what many class players are doing in their games.

Why You Must First Master Tactics

I got an interesting tweet directed to me the other day that said

"@TacticsTime After reading Tal-Botvinnik (1960), I realized from Tal's revealing notes that a sound Strategy is the basis for sound tactics".

This was in response to a tweet that I made, which said:

"If you want to play like your favorite Grandmaster you must first master chess tactics"

Like I said above, this is kind of the old "tactics versus strategy" debate, which is one of those things that chess players love to talk about.

The point I was trying to make is that all Grandmasters have an outstanding grasp of chess tactics. They also have a ton of knowledge on top of this, but the tactics are the foundation.

Once you take two players at the highest level, the tactics are going to be less of a factor. This is because they are all really good at tactics. Therefore other things become more important in determining who wins the games – things like

- opening preparation
- opening novelties
- creating a good strategy
- taking advantage of the smallest positional edge
- creating microscopic weaknesses for the opponent
- etc.

Therefore when these people are writing books about their games, they are talking about these sorts of things, because these are the types of things that determine the outcome of their games.

These are not necessarily the things that will determine the outcome of YOUR games.

The GMs know that their opponent is not going to miss a two move combination.

I have no doubt that Tal had to use all sorts of genius ideas in order to be able to get to the point where he could do a tactic against his opponent.

The problem comes in when amateurs extrapolate these ideas back into their own games. These assumptions and factors are not applicable in most amateur games. Amateurs make stupid tactical mistakes.

Most amateurs are TERRIBLE at chess tactics compared to the top players.

Amateurs:

- Hang pieces
- Forget to recapture
- Miss Mates in one
- Make illegal moves
- Don't see that they are in check
- Miss simple patterns like back rank mates
- Etc

Comparing Grandmasters to the typical weekend tournament chess player would be like comparing two National Football League (NFL) football teams playing a game, compared to a backyard football game played between random groups of adults on a weekend afternoon.

In the NFL game things like

- strategy
- weather
- coaching
- home field advantage
- etc.

will determine which team wins the game.

With the backyard game the “winners” will probably be the slobs that are the least out of shape.

In the NFL ***ALL*** of the players are in unbelievable shape. Their conditioning is not even a question. They are some of the best athletes on the entire planet.

People don't even mention how athletic and in shape these guys are, because it is just assumed, and taken for granted. Therefore most of the debate comes down to smaller things like strategy, coaching, home field advantage, etc.

If you took one team that was conditioned, and in shape, and another that was not, the game would not even be close. Things like strength and endurance would dominate the game.

You could take the worst NFL team, and put them against any college team. Give the college team every small advantage like home field, coaching staff, unlimited time outs, etc. Give the NFL players no coaches, no playbook, and only their natural ability.

The NFL players will **crush** the college team on brute strength alone.

No amount of the smaller things will make up for how much bigger, stronger, faster and more experienced the NFL players are than the college kids.

With random people, most of them will not even be able to play for half an hour without being extremely winded. Strategy will have very little to do with who wins in the backyard football game.

It is the same with top Grandmasters. They are ALL unbelievable at tactics. Their tactical ability is not even a question. People don't even mention how good they are at tactics, because it is a given.

The tactical ability of the top players in chess is analogous to the physical conditioning in professional football. It is so assumed to be there, that it isn't even a factor, and no one talks about it. But put any nonprofessional against the professional, and it will be an obvious difference.

It is true for any sport at the top level.

No one talks about how good NHL players are at skating.

This is because these things are just taken for granted. If you aren't good at skating, you will not be in the NHL. But if you want to be good at Hockey, you need to be good at skating. Being able to skate is the foundation.

Only after you have this foundation, do you even need to worry about things like understanding the different types of formations, and plays, and strategy etc. If you have all the knowledge, but not ability, you might make a good coach, but you won't be able to compete.

It is the same with chess. Only after you have a strong tactical foundation, do these smaller factors start to matter.

Most all games at the amateur level are determined by tactics.

Tactics are the foundation.

If you don't know Tactics you are like the Football player who knows the entire playbook, but is weak, slow and totally out of shape.

If you don't know Tactics you are like the Hockey player who can describe 100 different power play strategies, but can't skate backwards.



I could make a million analogies, but I think you get the point. Without the tactics, none of the other pieces work.

So I will stand by my original statement:

**If you want to play like your favorite Grandmaster
you must first master chess tactics :-)**



CHAPTER 3

TACTICS TIME PHILOSOPHY

Introduction

I put a lot of thought into how *Tactics Time* could improve upon every other chess tactics training program out there, to give chess players the “most bang for their buck” when studying with it, and make chess improvement as quick, fun and effective as possible.

Here is some background information, and ideas on the subject of chess tactics.

What Makes a Good Set of Tactics Problems?

Dan Heisman, who writes the Novice Nook column on chesscafe.com, thinks that there are about 2,000 basic tactics patterns.

He recommends that:

- All of the problems should be easy enough to eventually be solved on recognition, within reason. They should also be basic enough to either be single motif, or very easy double motif. They should be building blocks for more difficult problems.
- Most of the problems should be to win material not checkmate. In chess, most games are won by attrition, not checkmates with equal material (what percentage of the games has the reader won with checkmate from a position of even material?). So a problem set that is 75% or more material wins ("X to play and win") and less than 25% checkmates seems about right.
- Most of the problems should be from normal looking positions that may occur frequently in games. No crazy positions; instead lots of problems featuring trapped pieces, removal of the guards, double attacks - normal stuff - not too many queen sacrifices, etc.

I took these recommendations seriously, and you can find all of these criteria are met with the Tactics Time trainings.

Problems I Have with Other Chess Tactics Training Programs

There are plenty of chess tactics training products out there, and I have used quite a few of them. Many are very good, some are terrible, and others are in between. I put a lot of thought into how Tactics Time should be designed, and be different than the other tactical training programs out there.

- The problems are too difficult
- The problems have errors in the solutions
- The problems have errors in the diagrams
- The problems are not realistic
- The problems are just copy and paste from other people's work
- The problems are all over the map in difficulty
- The problems have too many flashy moves
- The problems have too many hints
- The problems have subjective answers

I don't want to specifically call out all the products or books I have seen with these errors and flaws, but I have seen them all. I have made errors myself in some of the problems I have published, so I know it is easy to do, and I am grateful to the people who have helped me catch some of them!

I try to address all of these problems in Tactics Time, and will discuss each one of these problems in a little more detail.

PROBLEMS THAT ARE TOO DIFFICULT

I am a big fan of John Wooden, who was a basketball coach who really stressed the fundamentals. At his practices his players focused on the basics, over and over – passing, dribbling, shooting, etc. As a result his team won 10 championships in a 12 year period, including an 88 game winning streak.

With chess, the fundamentals get over looked a lot. I think it is better to do 1000 problems quickly that are “too easy” and work at getting them 100% correct, than it is to spend 5 minutes per diagram calculating moves in a 5 move combination that you would never see unless someone told you there was a tactic there.

In this really excellent article, <http://www.chesscafe.com/text/heisman109.pdf>, Dan Heisman tells a story in his “Novice Nook” column about a student that he recommended study a set of “easy” chess problems.

The student came back the next week and said “You have got to be kidding me. These problems are way too easy for me!”

They then proceeded to review the most recent games that the student had played, and in both of them the student lost due to a 2 move combination that was no more difficult than the problems that were too “easy” for him to study.

Don't be afraid to study “easy” problems. I know I have got some complaints from readers who say some of my problems are too easy as well. Remember “Repetition is the mother of skill”.

PROBLEMS HAVE ERRORS

This is somewhat understandable, but can be very annoying.

A lot of older tactics books like the Reinfeld 1001 books have tons of errors in them, but this is somewhat understandable, as they were written before computers were widespread.

With my Tactics Time database all of the games are checked by the computer (although I have found that even the Chessbase software makes mistakes sometimes!).

The Newsletters have been proof read by a lot of readers, and since it is all electronic, as opposed to print, corrections can be made, and updated versions released.

I try to check everything as best I can before publishing a tactic, and appreciate when people point out a mistake, or a better way of explaining an answer.

PROBLEMS ARE NOT REALISTIC

This is the main reason that I chose to take all of my tactics from real class player games.

Many chess tactics collections have tons of “flashy” moves, where one side sacrifices his queen, or lots of double discovered attacks, smothered mates, etc.

The main problem with these is that, although they are cool, they don't happen very often in real games.

The “Windmill” for example, is a very fun chess tactic, and I hope everyone gets to play one at some point in their chess career, but they are very rare, so it is not really valuable to have a bunch of chess tactics problems with this motif.

The same is true of Queen sacrifices, smothered mates, etc.

I try to have a lot of “real” positions, even if they tend to be kind of boring, and repetitive.

The Flashy tactics reminds me of the first time I went to an NBA (National Basketball Association) game. I had never sat and watched an NBA game before, only highlights on TV.

So I was expecting all kinds of cool windmill dunks, spread eagles, behind the back passes, and stuff you see on ESPN's Sports Center. In reality maybe one or two of those things happen in a game, and the other 60 minutes is just normal fundamentals. Kind of like chess, lol :-)

I do tactics on chess.com sometimes, and it is cool, because people can leave comments.

One of the running jokes is “When in doubt, sac your queen”. This can create a lot of lazy thinking when solving problems, because they have too many cool queen sac problems, which in real games maybe happens 1 in 10000 moves or even less.

That is why I created a set of tactics that mostly focuses on positions from real games, to get the most “bang for your buck”, when it comes to study.

PROBLEMS ARE STOLEN

This is really annoying to me, when I see the same tactics problem being repeated in different places without proper credit. It is also annoying if I buy a book just to see the same problems I already have in a different book.

All of my problems are originals, and I always try to give credit for where I learned an idea.

PROBLEMS ARE ALL OVER THE MAP IN DIFFICULTY

This is not a horrible problem, but it is a problem I have seen in some of the Reinfeld 1001 books. They will have a mate in 1 followed by an 8 move combination that wins a pawn. Who is the target audience for these types of problems?

PROBLEMS HAVE TOO MANY HINTS

I am not a huge fan of giving hints. For example if you tell the problem solver there is a Queen Sacrifice, that is a huge hint. Just knowing that it is a tactics problem already makes it an artificial environment.

Hints can be useful. For example, if you have a specific weakness you want to work on, such as knight forks. Then it is beneficial to find a bunch of knight fork problems, and really work on them over and over, until you get the patterns down.

With Tactics Time, I do not give any hints other than there is a tactic in there. I have seen at least one book, Lev Albert's Pocket Chess book, which actually contains a few trick positions, where there is no tactic. This is a unique idea, but I am not trying to trick anyone here.

PROBLEMS HAVE SUBJECTIVE ANSWERS

Some programs, such as Chess Mentor (which I actually really like, and would highly recommend, and is one of the first chess software programs I ever owned, and learned from), try to take all types of positions and use them as tactic style problems. This can be challenging, since things like opening moves, can have a lot of different options, all of which are good. Chess Mentor does a good job handling this challenge, but many other sources are not as successful.

Why Study the Tactics from Class Player Games?

I think this is a common misconception that there is nothing to be gained from the study of class player games.

One common piece of chess advice is to "Play through lots of master games". While this is not a horrible idea, I think it is an overrated idea.

The games that Masters are playing are much different than the games being played "down in the trenches" of class players.

"Most class player games are decided by 2-3 move tactics".

My main focus of this eBook, the newsletters, database, and website is TACTICS. Tactics occur in all sorts of games, but happen A LOT in class player games. Most class player games are decided by 2-3 move tactics.

My other objective was to do something different than every other chess magazine, website, newsletter, blog, etc that is out there.

Almost all of them focus exclusively on master games. There is no shortage of master games out there. The excellent “This Week in Chess” website contains hundreds of new chess games each week, which you can download for free. Chess Life magazine always has lot of master games, and thousands of books have been written with master games.

Not a lot of people are looking at, talking or writing about class player games. Personally I find class player games very interesting, and instructive.

To me, if you are a class player, and you want to beat other class players, the thing that would make the most sense would be to look at the common mistakes that class players are making, learn from them, avoid them in your own games, and use them against your opponents!

Looking at my USCF rating history statistics, I have played 687 rated games, and only 13 of them have been against players rated above 2200. That is 1% percent of my rated games.

So what makes more sense? To prepare for the 1% or the 99%?

An analogy: Right now there is a lot in the news about people “texting and driving” and trying to make the roads safer.

If you were doing a study for the government on the cause of car accidents, and how they can be reduced to save lives, would you:

- look at the car accidents that happen every day on normal roads with normal people?
- look at the car accidents with the best drivers in the world of the Indy 500?

To me looking at Grandmaster games is like watching the Indy 500. It is interesting, but far removed from the “real world”.

My goal is to “reduce the accidents” in chess games.

- I want YOU to get a higher rating this year!
- I want YOU to win more games this year!
- I want YOU to win more tournaments this year!

CHAPTER 4 TACTICAL TRAINING PLAN

Introduction

I am somewhat hesitant to give a “training plan” because I know that sometimes people will take it too literally, and not adapt it to their own needs.

However, I know that some people love “training plans” and I love them myself for things like working out and physical exercise.

To me the most important thing is to try and study chess tactics every day if possible.

I believe that with even just 15 minutes each day, you will see significant improvement in your game.

If you have time for more than 15 minutes, that is great, and you will improve even faster!

If you miss a day, or get sick, or can't do it for some reason on one day – that is OK. Don't “beat yourself up” about it. The main thing is to get back to the study habit as quickly as possible.

Here are a few possible tactical training plans for you to consider:

The Michael de la Maza Approach (and my problems with it)

Michael de la Maza in his outstanding “400 points in 400 days” articles laid out a plan he called “The Seven Circles”.

Part 1 here: <http://www.chesscafe.com/text/skittles148.pdf>

Part 2 here: <http://www.chesscafe.com/text/skittles150.pdf>



Michael de la Maza is probably the biggest influence on my chess career, and one of the main reasons that I have created Tactics Time. I think that he was able to clearly see "The Elusive Obvious" that many chess players have missed. If you haven't read his "400 points in 400 days" articles, they are highly recommended, and had a tremendous impact on me.

While I think that his ideas are genius, I do have a few "nits to pick" about the article. But one other point of praise before I do that, I also think that de la Maza is a brilliant marketer, whether he is trying to be or not.

Just the title "400 points in 400 days" is brilliant - it is catchy, it has a clear outcome, and it speaks to what a LOT of chess players want (whether they admit it or not) more rating points. I think that he should have found a way to include this in his book title "Rapid Chess Improvement", which is good, but vaguer.

What does "Rapid" mean? A day? A week? A year?

What does "Improvement" mean? Gaining 100 points? Becoming a GM?

400 points in 400 days is a super title!

His "7 Circles" is also a very catchy idea.

If you are not familiar with the idea, he basically says to take 1000 tactics problems, and do them over and over, faster and faster.

I think that this is a great idea.

The main problem is that it just isn't practical for most people. It is like saying - get killer abs, by doing 1000 crunches per day, and eating 1000 calories per day. Yes it works, and you will get killer abs if you do this, but it is not practical for most of us.

Having talked to a lot of people about de la Maza's system, I think that most people read it, and think that it is too impractical, and then the baby gets thrown out with the bath water.

For example here is a thread on chess.com, <http://www.chess.com/forum/view/general/400-points-in-400-days>, where someone started talking about this method, and the first response was "This method would probably kill your love of the game forever".



While I certainly advocate lots of tactics study, I would never want to kill anyone's love of the game. If you read the above thread, the original poster was actually discouraged from entering a program of tactics study because of this, and writes, "Maybe it is not such a good idea. I am a novice at studying chess, so I guess I will not do this program." I found this statement to be very sad.

It should also be noted that de la Maza was unemployed during the time that he completed his "7 circles". I realize that many of us have jobs, families, other interests, etc., and that it just isn't practical to do exactly what he teaches for many of us.

Progress not Perfection

In Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) there is a saying: "Progress, not Perfection".

I think that this idea can be used to modify de la Maza's idea.

People tend to think in black or white/ yes or no/ day or night. If they can't do the de la Maza program as he lays it out, then they don't do it at all. Instead they should focus on the main idea that de la Maza has - which is:

STUDY TACTICS FIRST

- and not get wrapped up in the exact details of if there is 5 circles, or 4 triangles, or if you do 1000 problems, or 1500 problems, or if you use software, or books, etc.

With de la Maza's idea, the devil is not in the details. There is no devil, and the details are not really necessary, other than to fill a book so people will buy it, and then debate the importance of each detail.

It is a very simple and profound idea - most games at the class player level are won or lost due to tactics. Therefore study tactics, and become a master at them, if you want to do well.

Personally I like doing tactics in various different ways. Sometimes I want to pick up a book. Other times I like looking at webpages, or even reading my own tactics columns, newsletter, and playing with the tactics database that I created.

Just like with exercise, the main thing is to do it, and get in the habit of doing it.

The 15 Minutes a Day, 90-Day Plan

" We are what we repeatedly do.

Excellence, therefore, is not an act but a habit."

Aristotle.

The secret to getting good at anything is daily practice.

I think that a reasonable goal is to do 15 minutes of chess tactics problems every day for 90 days. A lot of experts say that it takes 90 days for a new habit to form. 90 days is not a lot of time, but it is enough time to see if something is working or not.

Also if you can maintain a new habit for 90 days it will become almost effortless at that point, and not require "will power" after that.

One thing that might help to keep you on track is to create an e-mail reminder on <http://habitforge.com>. Every day you will get an email reminding you to do the new habit you want to take on.

So for example, you could have it send you an e-mail every day that asks "Did you study chess tactics for 15 minutes the previous day?" and then answer "Yes" or "No". It will keep track of your responses.

Just this little bit of accountability can help a lot.

Setting Goals

Having goals can often help to keep you on track, keep you motivated, and prevent frustration. One method that I like for goals is the SMART criteria for goal setting - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SMART_criteria.

SMART stands for:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Attainable
- Relevant
- Time-Bound

You can use the above link to the Wikipedia article for more details on each of these.

Here are some possible goals related to chess tactics training that might be useful:

- Gain 75 USCF rating points in the next 6 months with play in the weekly local chess club G/90 tournaments, and 1 weekend tournament per month.
- Study 2-3 move chess tactics problems for 15 minutes per day for the next 4 weeks.
- Play in B section of the 2012 World Open tournament (5 day schedule), and finish with a score of 7.5 points out of 9.

Setting goals like these can help your brain (especially the subconscious) know what you would like to accomplish, and help propel you in the right direction.

Here are some goals that are not as useful

- Get better at chess (not specific, not measurable, not time bound)
- Become a Grandmaster (probably not attainable, not relevant for most of us)
- Raise my chess rating (not specific, not time bound)

Writing down your goals can be especially powerful. Writing down your goals multiple times, in the form of affirmations is even more powerful, and is a technique I have used in my life a lot. Goal setting is a huge topic in itself, and one I find very interesting.



TACTICS TIME USER'S GUIDE

Brian Tracy (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brian_Tracy) and Tony Robbins (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tony_Robbins) both have some excellent books and audio programs on the subject that you might enjoy, if you would like to explore this topic further.

CHAPTER 5 FOLLOWING THE PLAN

How to Solve the Problems

The main focus of my problems is to build your PATTERN RECOGNITION. It is not to build you CALCULATION skills, although obviously some calculation will be required to solve the problems, and calculation is a very important skill to develop.

The goal is to be able to solve the problems quickly and accurately.

The goal is for the patterns to eventually just jump out at you, and reach the “unconscious competence” level.

This is similar to driving a car. At first you have to really think about everything that is going on. How hard your foot steps on the gas, where the other cars are, where your hands are on the steering wheel, etc. After enough practice driving, you don't have to think about each little thing, and you can do it without a lot of conscious thought.

Some of the problems may seem “easy”, and some of them are easier than others.

Some of the problems are as simple as grabbing a piece that is hanging. It might seem odd to include these types of problems, but there is a “method to the madness”.

First of all – class players make these types of mistakes all the time, especially in faster time controls. Secondly, it is easy to get into “tactics solving mode” where you are only looking for brilliancies, and then miss the “obvious”. I noticed that the chess.com Tactics Trainer often has these types of problems, and the success rates are surprisingly low – sometimes only 60% of the players get the problem correct.

The purpose is not to trick you, or make the problems harder than they need to be, just for the sake of it.

Remember – these are all problems taken from real games, and real players. These are the exact types of mistakes that players are making in their games, and how games are being won and lost.



You have to avoid the “I know that already” syndrome when solving these problems, and go through them over and over to really drill the patterns into your head.

It is just like when you learned the multiplication tables – they didn’t teach you how to calculate the answer to 8×7 – they drilled the multiplication tables into your head over and over, with tons of repetition until you just *knew* the answer was 56.

Behavior Change

You might think that the main purpose of the Tactics Time Training database is to “practice tactics”, “learn tactics”, “get better at tactics”, etc.

The main goal of working through the Tactics Time materials is “Behavior Change” and specifically behavior change when you are playing chess.

"Learning is behavior change"

This is an idea that I learned from Eben Pagan and Wyatt Woodsmall on the subject of learning itself. Wyatt says that "Learning is behavior change".

For most of us, Learning just means that you know something. It's a simple thing to understand, right? If someone tells you how to lose weight, for example, then you've 'learned' how to lose weight, right?

Not so, according to Wyatt and Eben.

What they teach is that "Learning equals Behavior Change". In other words, learning isn't learning, and matters very little if it doesn't affect some change in you.

So if you read how to do an Arabian Mate, solve a puzzle, but then miss a similar mate a week later at your chess club, you haven't really learned anything, because your behavior didn't change.

They also teach that 'Education' means literally 'drawing out' what's already inside a person, not 'filling' them up with information they don't need or want.

That is really what I would like to do with Tactics Time. You might be able to find the right moves in these positions when they are presented as chess puzzle. Most of them aren't really that difficult.

And I have no desire to fill your brain with useless chess knowledge just for the sake of it. What I would really like to draw out of you is the behavior change of always seeing these same types of tactics in your real games.

- To look for tactics on every move.
- To never miss a tactic, or an opponent's tactic.
- To just see the tactic automatically through pattern recognition.

The skills to find the tactics are already in you, they just need to be used on a highly consistent basis - i.e. behavior change, and true learning. This will cause you to win more games, raise your rating, and have more fun playing chess!

That is my goal!

Applying the Knowledge

It is important to have a balance between playing and studying.

If you only study, you won't get the change to apply what you have learned, and it will be forgotten. If you only play, you will likely make the same mistakes over and over, and not improve.

I do not have an exact ratio that you need to follow of play time to study time, but just try to maintain some balance.

Sticking with the Plan

Here is an interesting cautionary tale about the study of chess tactics that I really enjoyed called "Tactics Should Never Take a Backseat" that I read on the weaksquare blog at <http://weaksquare.blogspot.com/>

The story is reprinted here with the author's permission:

*"Chess is 99% Tactics" -
Teichmann*

Last year I wrote a well-received article on how I gained over 400 USCF rating points in one year (<http://weaksquare.blogspot.com/2009/11/how-i-gained-434-points-in-one-year.html>). The bulk of my hard work during that year span was related to intense tactical training. My tactical acumen got sharp, really sharp. I showed a few of my games to an International Master who told me that my tactical ability was equal to an expert.

Since that time I started focusing on improving other parts of my game. I began some intense endgame training, as well as trying to improve my middlegame play. I have been studying Capablanca's 60 Best Chess Endings as well as 100 Endgames You Must Know. I have also been reviewing hundreds of annotated Grandmaster games throughout history.

My understanding of chess has reached a level I never imagined, and my rating has plummeted over the last six months. In my last 30 rated, long games I am 8 wins, 17 losses, and 5 draws. At one point during the last six months, I realized a span of six losses in a row.

This of course is very frustrating to someone who is as intensely competitive as I am. Not to mention considering the amount of work I put into chess, the results are very disappointing.

"My understanding of chess has reached a level I never imagined, and my rating has plummeted"

A worse fate than constantly losing, is not being able to accurately pinpoint the problem. So it finally occurred to me in one of my recent losses that just about all of my 17 losses in the last six months have been due to miscalculating a combination, not seeing a line that gives my opponent an out, or underestimating the strength of my opponents possible response. In short, my tactical vision has gotten soft.

What used to be a strength in my game, that forged the way for me to experience a 400+ point surge, is now contributing to my dwindling rating. Yes, it's true, I have not done any tactical study or exercises in nearly a year.

*I foolishly thought that my tactical ability had reached a strong place and that effort in other parts of my game was now required to improve. I made the mistake of putting a sharpened knife in a case, and leaving it there to rust. I realize now that endgame study, middlegame study, **and continued** tactical study was required to improve.*

At the beginning of this rant, I reference the Teichmann quote that "Chess is 99% tactics". It seems silly to me now that I forgot about the 99% and started focusing solely on the other 1%. I truly believe that the 99% that Teichmann references separates 2400 from 400. The other 1% separates 2400 from 2800.

There's nothing wrong with spending some time, learning about the other 1%, but not at the expense or detriment of the 99%.

CHAPTER 6 THE "INNER GAME" OF CHESS TACTICS

Positive Mental Attitude

Disclaimer: I am a bit of a "self-help junkie". I am a big fan of "positive thinking", "affirmations", and "visualization", and believe that they are very powerful. All of these topics have entire books written about them, but I wanted to touch on them, because I feel they are very important to your success in chess.

POSITIVE THINKING

Having a positive mental attitude can be very valuable in chess, and can help you save games, and recover faster from losses.

Often times in a chess game you will get a bad position. If you just mentally give up at this point the game is already lost. But if you stay positive, and keep looking for tactics, amazing turnarounds are possible.

You may also end up with a losing streak or slump at some point. Having a positive attitude can help you turn these around, and help you deal with these losses.

AFFIRMATIONS

"What the mind of man can conceive and believe, it can achieve"-

W. Clement Stone

I have had a lot of success using affirmations in my life. To me it is about letting your subconscious mind know what you want, since it is the one who is often "driving the bus".



To me affirmations are about repeating an idea that you want to have happen. You can write them such as “I John Doe will gain 100 rating points in the next 3 months” or “I John Doe will win the Bobby Fischer tournament B section”.

You can also repeat the affirmations out loud, or mentally. There is no “wrong” way to do them.

I realize this idea will not appeal to everyone, and I can't “prove” they work, but I am a big fan of them, and want to offer every tool in my tool box to help you improve at chess.

VISUALIZATION

Visualization is an often-taught mental rehearsal technique in sports. It is an extremely powerful tool and numerous studies have been done to test this. You may have heard of this basketball study:

A study conducted by Dr. Blaslotto at the University of Chicago was done where he split people into three groups and tested each group on how many free throws they could make.

After this, he had

- The first group practice free throws every day for an hour.
- The second group just **visualized** themselves making free throws.
- The third group did nothing.

After 30 days, he tested them again.

- The first group improved by 24%.
- The second group improved by 23% *without touching a basketball!*
- The third group did not improve, which was expected.

I'm not condoning being lazy and not practicing. The key is to imagine what you could do if you implemented both practice and the mental rehearsal technique of visualization. The sky is the limit. You can apply this to all sports and if you do, it can do wonders.

Thinking Process During the Game

It is not enough just to study tactics if you don't change your mindset and thinking process during the game and while playing.

In the podcast interview I did with Andy Pineda he made a really good point – in almost every game a tactical opportunity comes up.

You have to get in the habit of looking for tactics on every move. This includes

- the opening
- the endgame
- every single move of the game.

This includes looking both tactics that you can do to your opponent, and tactics that your opponent can do to you.

Before you make your move and hit the clock, it is a good idea to ask yourself “Have I looked for tactics in this position”.

Checklist for Finding Tactics

Here are some ideas that you can use to find tactics in both games, and while solving the tactics problems.

- Are there any “loose pieces” (LPDO – Loose Pieces Drop Off) that are undefended
- Are there any under defended pieces – for example you are attacking it 3 times, but it is only defended 2 times
- What checks do I have, and how would my opponent have to respond
- What captures do I have, and how would my opponent have to respond
- What pieces are on the same colored squares that might be available for a fork
- What pieces are on the same rank or file that might be vulnerable to a double attack
- What tactical patterns are there – a weakened f7 square, a back rank mate possibility, a queen check on a4, etc.

I am sure that you can come up with many more. After solving many tactical problems, and getting in the habit of always looking for tactics on each move, these kinds of mental checklists will become automatic and internalized. Asking yourself questions about the position can be very helpful in solving tactics problems, and while playing.

Rambo Mode

Over the years I have met several chess players who have a “no retreat, no surrender” attitude when it comes to chess games. They are always looking for hidden resources, always looking for tactics, and hate to resign. Two players that come to mind with this attitude are my friends, Paul Grimm and Francisco Baltier.

I have learned a lot from these guys about the importance of not giving up when you have a bad position, and to keep fighting even when you are losing.

Francisco has an outstanding attitude when it comes to playing losing positions. Most people just start pushing wood, waiting to resign, with a helpless feeling that there is nothing that they can do to save the game.

Not Francisco. He goes into what I call "RAMBO MODE".

He says to himself a quote from the original Rambo movie, "First Blood". In the scene the commander is telling him that the mission is over. Rambo screams back "NOTHING IS OVER!! NOTHING!!" Here is a 6 second YouTube video showing that quote.

Here is the dialogue, taken from the Internet Movie Database (IMDB):

Trautman: You did everything to make this private war happen. You've done enough damage. This mission is over, Rambo. Do you understand me? This mission is over! Look at them out there! Look at them! If you won't end this now, they will kill you. Is that what you want? It's over Johnny. It's over!

Rambo: Nothing is over! Nothing! You just don't turn it off! It wasn't my war! You asked me, I didn't ask you! And I did what I had to do to win!



Chris Peterson and Brian Wall made an outstanding video called "Fishing Pole: First Blood", which features Francisco's win against GM Walter Browne in a simul in Reno, with a brilliant Rambo theme. You can see the video here: <http://youtu.be/exGSXjvKej0>.

Francisco even has an award named after him called the "Jim Burden - Francisco Baltier Award" given out each year by Life Master Brian Wall. This award goes to the best game where the player lost their queen for no good reason, and then still won the game. The award is given out on April 1 (April Fools Day), each year by creator Brian Wall.

The next time that you have a bad position say to yourself "NOTHING IS OVER!" (Sylvester Stallone accent is optional). I have done this myself, and saved a lot of games where I was losing!

CHAPTER 7 AFTER THE GAME

There is No Failure, Only Feedback

After you are done with a chess game, look it over to see what you did well, and what you didn't do well. As yourself questions like

- Did I make any blunders?
- Did I miss any tactics?
- How did I lose the game?
- How did I win the game?
- etc

Looking over the game with a computer can be very helpful as well. If you are going to enter the game into a computer program, such as Fritz, it is useful to do it as soon as possible after a game. Scoresheets can often be messy, hard to read, have moves missing, etc. As a former editor of a chess magazine, reading score sheets can be very challenging. Even master level players often have scoresheets filled with little errors.

Pinpointing mistakes after a game can provide great feedback, and help you to avoid these mistakes in the future.

I remember one time when I was rated about 1100, I was entering a game in the computer that I had played the previous day at the Dallas chess club against a young girl who was probably rated around 800.

I was entering the game in the computer program, and it would not let me play her move, which was to castle. It took me a while to figure out that that program would not let me make her move, because she had already moved her king from its original square, and then back again, and then castled in the game!

Neither of us noticed during the game that this was an illegal move!

So you might be at the stage where you are still making illegal moves. That is ok. We have all done it. Using the computer can help you pinpoint areas like this that you need to work on.

I remember one other game that I played at the Denver Chess Club, where after the game I realized I had missed a checkmate with an “Arabian Mate” style checkmate with Rook and Knight against a King. I studied this pattern very closely, and made sure that **I never missed it again.**

It is not just enough to figure out why you lost a game, the important thing is to make sure the same mistake doesn't happen again.

Post Mortems

I personally am not a big fan of doing “post mortems” with my opponents, although I know many players and teachers recommend them. I only think it is valuable if you are playing a **much** stronger player, who is willing to give you constructive feedback, and genuinely wants to help.

I think a lot of post mortems turn into a “revisionist history” with people trying to ease the pain of losing, by finding some “winning line” that they could have done, so they can “win” the post mortem, even if they lost the game. The ego and subconscious mind doesn't really understand the difference between winning a game, or a post mortem.

I have seen people even spend more time and energy on winning the post mortem than they did actually trying to win the game!

Don't be one of these people.

I would rather just use the computer to find the errors after the game personally, because I know that it is objective, and not waste my time on fruitless activities like this.

Using the Computer to Do Game Analysis

One valuable way to use the computer is with the “Blunder Check” and “Full Analysis” features that come with Fritz. You can let the computer run through the game, and it will quickly tell you where the problems are.

This is how I find a lot of the tactics that I use in my database, newsletter and e-Book.

I used to use the “??” annotations that these programs output as a guide for how well I was playing. When I was in the 1100s, I would often get multiple “??” moves in a game. My goal at that point was to eliminate all of the “??”s from my games.

Once I got to about 1400 I was getting fewer “??” moves, and often only one at the most, and a few “?” moves.

Once I got to 1600 I was rarely making “??” moves, still had some “?” moves, and started to get more “!” moves, and even the occasion “!!” moves.

And the higher up you go, this trend continues.

So this is one way to gauge your progress. If you can just eliminate the “??” moves, that alone can prevent a lot of games from being lost.

Dealing with Losses

This is an area that a lot of players struggle with. I have had good friends quit playing chess because they could not handle the stress or pain of losing.

Losing does suck, but it is part of the process. If we won every game, chess would not be fun.

Everyone has to deal with this issue in their own way.

For me doing an intense study of tactics caused me to lose fewer games, which eased the pain a lot.



I am also a big fan of the “There is no failure, only feedback” reframe that comes from Neurolinguistic Programming, “NLP”. As long as you learned something, and can apply it to future games, it was a valuable lesson, and worth the cost of a loss.

CHAPTER 8 TACTICS TIME BONUSES

In addition to the huge tactics database of 10,001 games, there are several highly valuable bonuses that you get with your Tactics Time purchase to supplement your chess tactics study!

If you are not a Tactics Time customer yet, please go to http://tacticstime.com/?page_id=2, and buy it now!

Tactics Time Newsletters

I included all of the Tactics Time Chess e-mail Newsletters that I have written in PDF format. These newsletters contain some of my best ideas in the world of chess tactics.

Even if you have read some of the newsletters before it is a good idea to go through them again. Remember, as Tony Robbins says, “Repetition is the Mother of Skill”

I even subscribe to my own newsletter, and sometimes have a hard time remembering the answers, and I was the one that wrote them! I can tell you first hand as well that the patterns in those newsletters have helped me win games.

I include lots of different types of tactics including:

- Checkmates (smothered mates, Anastasia’s Mate, Legal’s Mate)
- Opening Tactics (Miniatures, traps, and common tricks in certain openings)
- Offbeat openings (The Grob, The Fishing Pole, The Raccoon)
- Standard Tactics (knight forks, skewers, pins, overloaded piece)
- Unusual Tactics (checkmate with just a knight, multiple queens on the board)
- Endgame Tactics (pawn pushes, really long games, zugszwang)



If you have not subscribed yet to the e-mail newsletters on my website, you can do so at <http://tacticstime.com>. The newsletter is free and comes out every other day. Each new subscriber starts off with Newsletter #1.

If you have already subscribed, and have a second e-mail account, you could even consider having it delivered to more than one address. Each address would be getting a different newsletter, depending on the sign up times.

PDF File of All the Tactics



I also included a bonus of all the tactics in PDF format. This is a large file. I would recommend looking at the problem, and writing down the answers on a piece of paper. Then look at the answer key in the back to see which ones you got right and wrong. This will also help you with your chess notation.

E-Book Formats of All the Tactics

I really like the Tactics Time e-book formats. They are nice, because they present a tactic in a full screen, and then the answer is on the very next page. I know a lot of people who recently got e-Book readers for the first time, so I think that this will become a very popular bonus and at some point might become more popular than using the database.

The eBook formats come in two different versions. One is the Amazon Kindle version. These files end in .mobi.

The other eBook format is the ePub open format which can be used on the iPhone, iPod Touch, iPad, Nook, Sony Reader,



Android devices, desktop computer, and many more.

Because of the large size of the eBook files they are broken down into smaller eBooks, instead of having one giant monster sized eBook.

Tactics Time Column Collection E-Book



This is a PDF that contains all of the tactics I have published in my Tactics Time column over the years. Each page contains 9 tactics taken from real games. On the next page is the answer with some verbal explanation of why the move works.

Tactics Time Continuity Program

I also created an automated email that will send you 100 free new tactics once a month. This will help keep you on track, serve as a reminder to study your tactics, and give you a new “bones to chew on”, so that you always have new tactics to study.

Make sure that you confirm your subscription to the customer mailing list, so that you receive these. If you are not on the list for some reason, contact me at Tim@TacticsTime.com and I will add you.

Tactics Time Blog, Social Media, Twitter, Podcasts

I am always writing about chess tactics on my blog at <http://tactictime.com> and through my twitter feed at <https://twitter.com/#!/TacticsTime>.

You can also “Like” Tactics Time on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Tactics-Time/275412842501613>.

Additionally I do Tactics Time podcasts about chess. You can subscribe to the **Tactics Time Podcast** on **iTunes**. Search for “Tactics Time” in the iTunes store, or online at <http://itunes.apple.com/us/podcast/tactics-time/id436422044>.

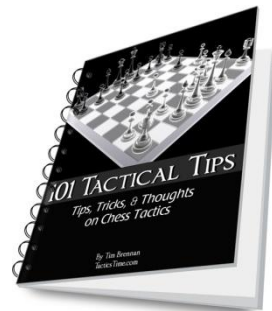
Or check out the individual links at http://tacticstime.com/?page_id=30 that link to the associated podcast’s blog post, where you can download them, or listen right on the webpage. All podcasts are in MP3 format.

101 Tactical Tips

This is a 21 page e-Book that I wrote as a bonus for when people sign up for my newsletter. I give a lot of great ideas and resources for the study of chess tactics, many of which I write more about in the newsletter.

Included are ideas on:

- Tactics in the Opening
- Books on Tactics
- Using your computer to find Tactics
- Quotes and Wisdom about Tactics
- Tactics Improvement
- Tactics and Psychology
- Tactics in Tournament Play
- Tactics in the Endgame
- Tactics in Blitz and Correspondence Chess
- Tips on Studying Tactics



Other Tactics Resources

While I think that Tactics Time is great, and think it will help you a lot, there are a lot of other great tactics resources out there as well.

I am a big fan of Ward Farnsworth's Predator at the Chess Board website, <http://www.chesstactics.org/>, which gives a lengthy verbal explanation of the various chess tactics.

There are a lot of great chess tactics books, including

- *How to Beat Your Dad at Chess*
- *Bobby Fischer Teaches Chess*

I love these two books by Fred Reinfeld, even though they have mistakes, and the level of difficulty varies widely from problem to problem, but it is almost a "rite of passage" to go through them, and they are pretty cheap at 10 bucks a piece.

- *1001 Brilliant Ways to Checkmate*
- *Thousand and One Winning Chess Sacrifices and Combinations*

I also recommend just about everything that Dan Heisman has written in his "Novice Nook" columns, and I think that he really "gets it", unlike a lot of chess authors and teachers. See some of my favorite articles of his related to chess tactics are:

Counting Material

<http://www.chesscafe.com/text/heisman119.pdf>

Tactical Sets and Goals

<http://www.chesscafe.com/text/heisman109.pdf>

The Most Common and Important Use of Tactics

<http://www.chesscafe.com/text/heisman106.pdf>

The Two Types of Counting Problems

<http://www.chesscafe.com/text/heisman75.pdf>



FINAL THOUGHTS

Good luck on your journey to chess improvement!

Remember:

"Ordinary things consistently done produce extraordinary results" -
Keith Cunningham

"Repetition is the Mother of Skill"
Tony Robbins

"A journey of a thousand miles must begin with a single step."
Lao Tzu

Happy Tactics!

Your Friend,

Tim Brennan

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