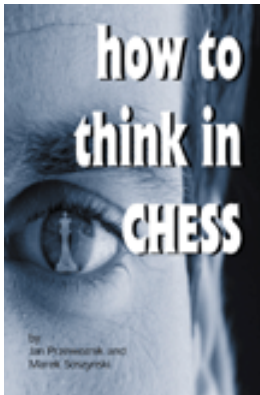




C O L U M N I S T S

The Instructor

Mark Dvoretsky



A Chessplayer and How He Grows

“Experience shows that people are most active in pursuit of a goal when the likelihood of success is about 50 percent. Any “50/50” activity requires belief that you will succeed; at the same time, it must also allow you to believe in it. When belief is not necessary (100% guaranteed success) or impossible (when there is a 100% chance of failure), work becomes soulless and repellent; and, for that reason, of little value.” Simon Soloveychik

The first sporting goal I would usually set when beginning work with a young chessplayer was to become, within a couple of years, the strongest player in his age group, and to demonstrate this by winning the World Junior title. Of course, this is a very difficult task; but it is achievable. Many of my students in fact achieved it - there are more such Champions among them than probably from any country in the world, with the exception of the former USSR.

This distant goal always provided the stimulus for great and devoted toil towards the achievement of chess mastery. Some particulars of such work will become clear to you from the following tale of Alexey Dreev’s preparation.

I met Alyosha Dreev early in 1980, when he had just turned 11. Within two years, he was already a participant in the World Cadet Championship (for boys under 16). In the qualifying tournament, Dreev shared 1st-2nd places with Zhenya Bareev, who was over two years older than he (at such a young age, that’s an enormous advantage). Bareev earned the ticket to the Championship; but it was obvious that the next year would be ours.

In the Championship of Russia among boys his own age, Alyosha won every game. Then, in an adult master event, he took second place, fulfilling the master norm. That was a record for that time - no one, not Karpov, not Kasparov, had ever become master at 13. Finally, early in the following year, 1983, Dreev took the bronze medal in the USSR Schoolboys’ Championship (under 18). All these great, but especially steady, victories induced the USSR Chess Federation to offer him the ticket to the next World Cadet Championship, in Colombia, without holding a selection tournament. There remained half a year before the Championship; it was up to us to prepare as best we might for this important event.

For training purposes, Dreev entered the qualifying tournament for the World Under-20 Championship. For the first time in a long while, he had a very serious lapse. Analyzing the reasons for his failure afterwards (I could not attend the tournament with him), I singled out two main factors:

- (1) terrible time-pressure; and
- (2) his extremely narrow opening repertoire.



Dreev lost an incredible six games with Black in the same opening - the Dutch Defense. We had prepared other openings, even though we had not tried them out in practice. Why didn't Alyosha see that his familiar opening wasn't working for this tournament, and switch to another opening? Evidently, the reason was psychological - he was afraid of these new openings, and did not wish to cast off into uncharted opening waters.

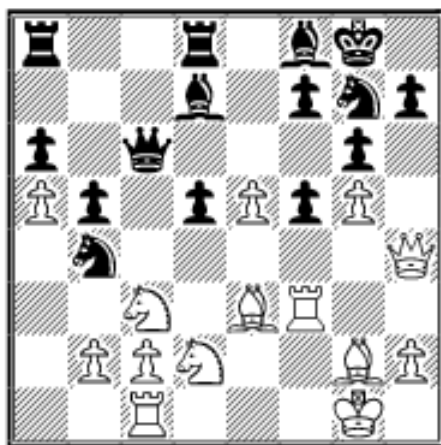
Prior to the World Championship, he was also scheduled to participate in an international youth event in Leningrad. Almost every one of his opponents would be considerably older than the 14-year-old Alyosha; among them would be such future stars as Alexander Khalifman, Julian Hodgson, Valery Salov, Vladimir Epishin, Lembit Oll... I wasn't interested in his sporting result (although it turned out decently: 6th among 14 players); it was far more important to resolve the problems that now loomed before us.

Dreev was put on a strict anti-time-pressure regimen: he was obliged, in every game, to control his time expenditure so as not to allow even the shadow of time-pressure, even at cost to the quality of his play. Alyosha fulfilled his task to the letter; later, in Colombia, he experienced no clock difficulties whatsoever, despite playing under a harsher regimen than that used in our internal events (2 hours for 40 moves, instead of 2½).

In what would perhaps be the most important encounters in Leningrad, against older opponents who had an excellent knowledge of theory, I insisted that Dreev employ openings he had never played before. Thus, with Black against Zhenya Bareev, he used the sharp Botvinnik System of the Slav Defense; playing White against Sasha Shabalov, he used the open Sicilian, and won both games in good style. Here's one of those wins.

Dreev - Shabalov Leningrad 1983

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 e6 3. d4! (certainly a "novelty" - for Dreev!) **3...cd 4. Nxd4 Nf6 5. Nc3 d6 6. g3 Nc6 7. Bg2 Bd7 8. 0-0 a6 9. a4 Be7 10. Nb3 0-0 11. f4 b6 12. Be3 Qc7 13. g4 Rfd8 14. g5 Ne8 15. Qh5 Nb4 16. Rac1 b5 17. a5 Qc4 18. Nd2 Qc6 19. Rf3 g6 20. Qh6 Ng7 21. f5! Bf8 22. Qh4 ef 23. e5! d5 (23...de 24. Rh3)**



Immediate sight of the whole board is the mark of a great talent. Dreev appears to be attacking the king; but he achieves a decisive advantage by exploiting the unfortunate position of the knight, which has gotten lost on the queenside.

24. Rf4! Be6 25. Rxb4 Bxb4 26. Qxb4 Rac8 27. Ne2 Rd7 28. Nf4 Qc7 29. Bd4 Qd8 30. h4 h6 31. Bb6 Qf8 32. Qxf8+ Kxf8 33. gh Ne8 34. Nb3 Kg8 35. Nc5 Re7 36. Nxa6 Rc4 37. Nd3 Bc8 38. Nab4 Nc7 39. b3 Rxh4 40. Nc6 Re6 41. Na7, and

Black resigned, 1-0.

As a result, Dreev understood that he need not fear his opponent's opening surprises - his current level of mastery was such that he could resolve relatively

complex problems over the board. This had been clear to me for a long time already; but for Alyosha to truly believe in his own powers - and not just to say he did - it was necessary to test them in practice: he had to be successful against strong opposition in unfamiliar situations, the sort he had previously avoided.

Dreev won the World Championship going away - in eleven games, he scored nine wins and two draws. The self-confidence, calmness, and the knowhow to be able to figure out for himself the opening riddle his opponent would set before him - all this, worked out during the process of preparation, came constantly to the fore in the course of the tournament. Perhaps the most convincing demonstration of the value of the work we did was his encounter with the talented American junior, Patrick Wolff (who later went on to win the US Championship twice), which put Alyosha into the tournament lead.

Dreev – Wolff World Junior Championship Bucaramanga 1983

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nf6 3. Nxe5 d6 4. Nf3 Nxe4 5. d4 d5 6. Bd3 Be7 7. 0-0 Nc6 8. Re1 Bg4

At that time, Alyosha himself sometimes played the Petroff; but he would only use the 8...Bf5 system, popular in those days; he was unacquainted with the theory behind 8...Bg4. In consequence, he found himself drawn (unbeknownst to himself) into a maze of very sharp forcing variations, which had all been studied for decades earlier, and which evidently had been well prepared by his opponent.

9. c3

Play goes in a different direction after 9. c4. According to contemporary theory, White would have done better to have played this a little earlier - that is, without including 8. Re1 Bg4.

9...f5 10. Qb3 0-0



White wins the b7-pawn, but his king comes under attack. I admit my mood at that moment was somber: I knew well how dangerous White's position was, and how difficult it would be for him to neutralize his opponent's activity. All the more so, when one sees this position for the first time in one's life. Under such circumstances, even an experienced player can lose his way. For example, in the game Ljubojevic - Makarychev, Amsterdam 1975, the young master (who, by the way, made significant contributions to the theory of the Petroff)

quickly dusted off one of the world's leading grandmasters: 11. Nfd2? Nxf2! 12. Kxf2 (12. Bf1 was better) 12...Bh4+ 13. g3 f4! 14. Kg2 fg 15. Be4? (on 15. hg, Black has a choice between 15...Bxg3 16. Kxg3 Qd6+ and 15...Qd6 16. gh Rf2+) 15...Bh3+! 16. Kg1 (16 Kxh3 Qd7+ 17. Kg2 Rf2+) 16...gh+ 17. Kxh2 Qd6+ 18. Kh1 Bxe1 19. Qxd5+ Qxd5 20. Bxd5+ Kh8 21. Nf3 Bg3 22. Ng1 Bf1 23. Nd2 Rae8 24. Ne4 Rxe4! 25. Bxe4 Rf2 26. Nf3 Bg2+ 27. Kg1 Bxf3 28. Bxf3 Rxf3 White resigned, 0-1.

11. Nbd2 Kh8 12. Qxb7 Rf6 13. Qb3 Rg6

Intending 14...Qd6 and 15...Rf8, after which all of Black's pieces will participate in the attack. Here's a practical example of the sort of dangers facing White.

Tukmakov - Dvoretzky, USSR 1st League, Odessa 1974: 14. Be2 Qd6 15. Nf1 f4 16. N3d2 Nxf2! (16...Bh3 17. Bf3 Ng5 18. Bh5! Rh6 19. Qd1 is unconvincing) 17. Bxg4 Rg4 (17...Nxc4) 18. Rxe7?! (after 18. Re2 Ne4, also, Black would have an excellent position, i.e.: 19. Nxe4 de 20. Rxe4 Qg6 21. Qc2 f3 22. Ng3 Rf8)



The game ended in perpetual check after 18...Nh3+ 19. Kh1 Nf2+ 20. Kg1 Nh3+. After 18...Nxe7! 19. Kxf2 Qg6 20. g3 Rf8 21. Nf3, I unfortunately failed to find a way to strengthen the attack - but it's there: 21...fg+ 22. hg Qh5! 23. Qd1 Ng6!, threatening 24...Qh3 and 24...Nh4!

In the 6th game of the 1974 Candidates' Final Karpov - Korchnoi, the future World Champion evidently took the advice of his trainer, Sergei Makarychev, and postponed the immediate capture of the b-pawn by inserting 12. h3 Bh5 (Black gets an inferior game after both 12... Bh4?! 13. Rf1! Nxd2 14. Nxd2 Bh5 15. Qxb7 [Makarychev - Shershukov, 1975], and 12...Bxf3?! 13. Nxf3 Rb8 14. Bf4 Bd6 15. Bxd6 Qxd6 16. Re2). There followed: 13. Qxb7 Rf6 (13...Na5 14. Qa6 c5 15. Be2 Rb8 16. Ne5 Be8 17. Qd3 cd 18. cd, as occurred in Ligterink - Dvoretzky, Wijk aan Zee 1975, is weaker: White's position deserves preference) 14. Qb3 Rg6 15. Be2



The point to the move h2-h3 is that now 15...Qd6? is not possible, owing to 16. Ne5! - and Black's lightsquare bishop is undefended. 15...Nxf2? fails to 16. Kxf2 Bh4+ 17. Kf1 Bxe1 18. Nxe1 Bxe2+ 19. Kxe2 Qe7+ 20. Kf1 Re8 21. Qd1 [M. Botvinnik]. Korchnoi's choice was bad too: 15...Bh4? 16. Rf1 Bxf3 17. Nxf3 Bxf2+ 18. Rxf2 Nxf2 19. Kxf2 Qd6 20. Ng5!, with a won position for White.

15...Rb8 looks logical, as was played in the correspondence game Steig - Mende (1976); but after 16. Qd1 Bd6 17. Nxe4! fe 18. Ne5 Nxe5 19. Bxh5 Nd3 20. Bxg6 Qf6, White's chances in this complicated game are still preferable.

Later, the proper attacking setup was worked out: 15...Bd6! If 16. Nf1 Rb8 17. Qa4(c2) Bxf3 18. Bxf3 Qh4. The main line is: 16. Ne5 Nxe5 17. Bxh5 (17. Nxe4 Nf3+!) Rxc2+! 18. Kxc2 Qg5+ 19. Kf1 (bad is 19. Bg4? fg! 20. Nxe4 gh+ 21. Kf1 Qg2+) 19...Qh4! 20. Nxe4 Qxh3+, with a draw (O'Kelly).

After our excursion into opening theory, let us now return to the meeting of

these two young chessplayers.

Since the moves 12. h3 Bh5 have not been included here, White can no longer play according to Karpov - on 14. Be2 we get the considerably less favorable position from the Tukmakov - Dvoretsky game. My pupil did not lose his composure, and found a wonderful strategic solution.



14. Bb5!!

Simple and logical! e5 is the weak square in Black's camp, and Dreev attacks its sole defender - the knight at c6. All variations are in his favor, for example:

14...Rb8 15. Qa4 Qd6 16. Bxc6 Bh3 17. g3!
(17. Nxe4 Rxc6+ 17. Kh1 fe 18. Ne5 Qf6!
is weaker) 17...Nxc3 18. fg Rxc3+ 19. Kf2
Rg2+ 20. Ke3 f4+ 21. Kd3 Bf5+ 22. Ne4,
when White repels the threats to his king,
while keeping his extra material;

14...Nxd2 15. Nxd2 Bd6! (15...f4?! 16. Bd3 Rh6 17. Be2 Rb8 18. Qd1 Bxe2
19. Qxe2 Bd6 20. Nf3, with an obvious advantage to White, as in Jung -
Mueller, Hamburg 1989) 16. g3! Ne7 - Black retains definite compensation for
his pawn, but all the same, it's insufficient.

Since it appears there is no safe way to equality here, proponents of Petroff's
Defense had to adjust their weapon, and refrain from 13...Rg6 in favor of
13...Rb8! 14. Qc2 (Qa4) Bd6!, with a double-edged game.

14...f4?! 15. Qd1?

Here Alyosha was too trusting. He refrained from 15. Bxc6!, fearing the attack
after 15...Bh3 16. g3 fg 17. hg Nxg3. But instead of 16. g3, White wins easily
by 16. Nxe4! Bxc6 17. Ne5! And on 15...Nxd2, White, besides the simple 16.
Nxd2 Rxc6 17. f3, may also choose the sharper 16. Ne5! For instance,
16...Nxb3 17. Nf7+ Kg8 18. Nxd8 Rxd8 19. ab Kf8 20. Bb5 (or Ba4), with an
extra pawn in the endgame.

15...Bh3 16. Bf1 Qd6?

16...Bf5 was necessary. Patrick didn't like the reply 17. Nxe4 de 18. Ne5; but
the position after 18...Nxe5 19. de Qxd1 20. Rxd1 e3! 21. fe Bc5 is hardly
clear, despite the two extra pawns. Stronger would be 17. Nb3 Bd6 18. Nc5.

17. Nxe4 de 18. Rxe4

Now Black's in bad shape, and Dreev confidently wraps up the game.

18...Raf8 19. Kh1 Bg4 20. b4! Qd5 21. Qe2 Rf7 22. b5 Bf5 23. Rxf4 Black
resigned, 1-0.

The reader may rightly ask why the trainer, in this instance, did not show his
pupil the theoretical variations he already knew so well.

What should I say? It doesn't take a rocket scientist to drill a pupil with the

latest variation of Petroff's Defense. But, as Kozma Prutkov once said, "Don't try to fathom the unfathomable." How does one guess, in other words, precisely which systems one will need at the World Championship? What would most certainly do Alyosha good, on the other hand, was optimism, the sense not to lose heart when faced with new problems over the board, but confidently to come up with a solution.

Yes, it's also true that it's "better to be rich, but healthy, than poor, but sick" - a good knowledge of the opening is also necessary for a chessplayer. Here the matter comes down to a question of time (which is always limited) and priorities. Once you get bogged down in studying openings, there will be no time left for anything else - because the information one has to acquire and rework for theory is practically limitless. Of course, we also worked on opening theory - but we spent considerably more time on what I considered then, and consider now, to be incomparably more valuable, especially for a young player. And that is, the acquisition of chess as a whole, the raising of one's cultural level in chess, developing habits of making decisions over the board, the nurturing of psychological toughness, fighting character, etc. The growth of general chess mastery has a far stronger influence on one's results than the improvement of one's opening understanding, because it will tell under the most diverse circumstances, in every stage of the battle, and not just in the opening of the game.

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Translated by Jim Marfia

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