

YOUR MOVE

Chess wizards explore new ideas



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CHESS WIZARDS LIKE GJON FEINSTEIN (LEFT) SEE CHESS AS A WAY TO EXPLORE NEW IDEAS WHILE FINDING OUT MORE ABOUT YOURSELF, AND YOUR OPPONENT.



Instruction & Match Training

"The chess board is the world."

— Thomas Huxley



It is then that adversaries must dig deep for the skills they'll need to win.

Fortitude.
Endurance.
Flexibility.
Concentration.

Patience. Focus.

"You need a balance between patience and persistence in chess," Feinstein said.

"You need to make a plan and be patient for it to unfold. You also need to learn how to persist with your goal and not give up at the first sight of blood," he said, adding that many novice players are flustered when their major pieces are taken.

Feinstein, who teaches chess in public and private schools as well as in home-school situations and on a private basis, says that novice players tend to move their pawns too much and often don't spend enough time developing their officers before they go on the attack.

"When I train people, I expose them to new ideas, try to develop a side of themselves they don't have and strengthen their weaknesses."



GERHARD RINGEL (ABOVE) LOOKS FOR AN OPENING, WHILE JAMES SMYTH (LEFT) MAKES HIS MOVE.

Feinstein himself is ranked somewhere between Master and Senior Master, but adds that the game teaches him something every time he plays.

His favorite combination is the knight-bishop. In fact, he admitted,

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AS RECREATIONS GO, the game of chess reigns supreme. While your body relaxes, your mind is fully engaged in strategic maneuvers, attacks and defenses, ploys and subterfuges, in besting your opponent on a counterpane field that mimics a medieval battlefield. For the most part, the engagement is a silent affair — the required adrenalin rush sublimated into grimaces, frowns and sighs.

Occasionally, however, grunts of approval become audible, a player pounds the table in frustration, or the checkmate is punctuated by jubilant approval. At such moments, it becomes

quite obvious that the ancient game of chess is as interactive a pastime as anything that Sega or Nintendo has created.

Gjon Feinstein, who learned the game at age 12 and now

earns his living by training others, understands intimately that chess engages a player on more than merely a physical level.

"Chess allows you to escape to a very rich place, a place where you are king and have power," Feinstein said recently before the regular Tuesday night games were officially under way at the Santa Cruz Chess Club.

"Chess gives you a place to rise above your own ego and explore new things. It allows you to go beyond your reach — to learn about your weaknesses and to either compensate for them or change them into strengths.

"It's a game that mirrors who you are."

THE SHORT, FAST games of skittles enjoyed by children and novices alike do not quite fit Feinstein's lofty psychological profile of the game of chess.

In the short, fast games, deep strategy gives way to

broad, dangerous, swashbuckling moves.

But the game changes character significantly when the time played jumps from minutes to hours.



STORY BY CHRIS WATSON

PHOTOS BY BILL LOVEJOY

Chess

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he's willing to sacrifice major pieces — his queen, his rooks — to improve the position of his knights and bishops.

"I think it's a David and Goliath thing."

Feinstein says you can also judge your opponents' character by how they play a game.

"Sometimes people will try to hide or reserve their character, but their true nature is always revealed — in how they study the pieces, how they move them, how they touch them, if they play with great calculation or intuitively."

The calculated, analytical player, Feinstein said, has discipline and thinks in terms of what he already knows.

The intuitive, creative chess player thinks in terms of what is possible, of new frontiers.

"Above all, a chess player learns that you can't play with only one piece. You learn that the pieces have to work together, that they're strong only as a team. In chess you learn that, by integrating the qualities of each piece, harmony can be achieved."

FEINSTEIN ADVISES beginning players to practice planning one or two plays in advance, controlling the center of the board, and developing the officers well before attacking.

For slightly more advanced players, Feinstein says playing with a chess clock can significantly improve their game.

"A clock forces you to organize your thoughts into quick concise variations of the game."

Despite all his advice and the deep satisfaction he gets from winning a long chess game from a worthy opponent, Feinstein admits that playing quick, pick-up games of skittles is still his favorite pastime — sparring with a partner at the Coffee Roasting Company, going ten rounds at Pergolesi, a quick work-out at the Jahva House.

And, of course, come Tuesday evening, a game or two or three at the chess club with other lovers of the game.

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