

The Internet Chess Club and Coach Dan Heisman



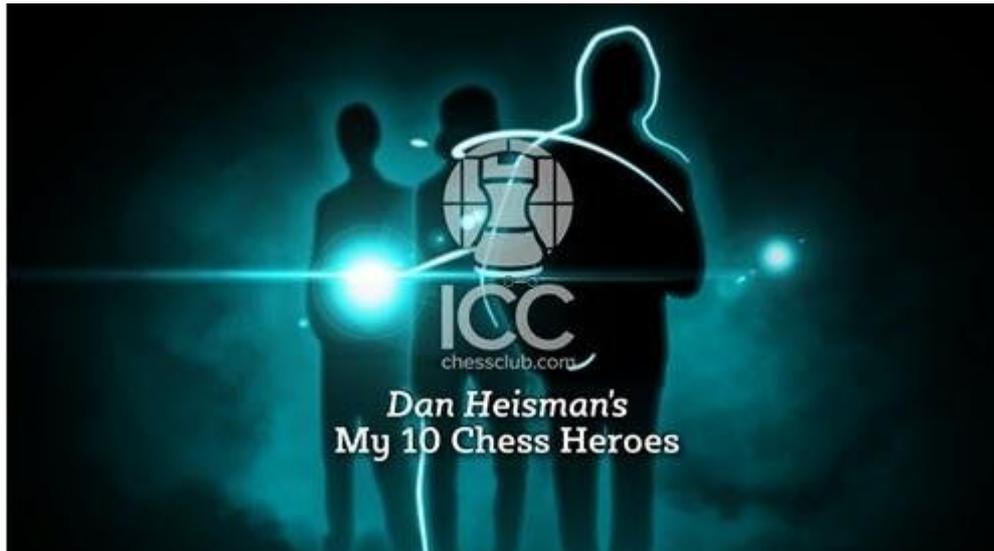
present

My 10 Chess Heroes

This is a guide that comes with the video course “My 10 Chess Heroes”.

We highly recommend you watch the video series AND read this Course Guide to enjoy your product!

To watch the videos, click [here](#)



Since the beginning of the modern chess era, players like Morphy, Lasker, Keres, Spassky, Fischer, Kasparov, Carlsen and many others have ruled the world of the 64-square board, inspiring and influencing people devoted to the noble game.

Studying their games and their life is the fuel that feeds the engines of millions of players. It's almost impossible to become a good chess player without the knowledge that these great artists of the board have given us.

In this fantastic video-series, renowned coach Dan Heisman, with his unmistakable and easy-to-understand style, shares with you stories and games of his ten chess heroes.

Dan takes you on a journey that will help to discover tactics, positional play, error management, initiative, defense, and all of this presented you by some of the greatest players ever!

Here is a list with Dan's 10 chess heroes:

- Paul Morphy
- Emanuel Lasker
- Paul Keres
- Donald Byrne
- David Bronstein
- Boris Spassky
- Robert J. Fischer
- John Nunn
- Garry Kasparov
- Alexei Shirov

In the videos, Dan analyzes and discuss games, showing the style of play, tricks, and nuances that characterize the uniqueness of each of these "monsters."

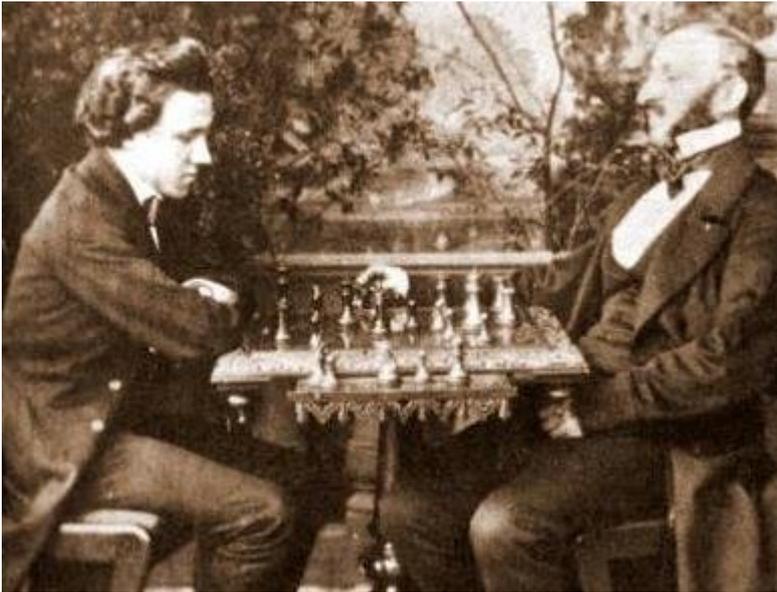
Video 1 – Paul Morphy



Paul Morphy was born in New Orleans on June 22, 1837. He was an American chess player, considered the strongest master of his time, and the unofficial World Champion. He was called "The Pride and Sorrow of Chess" because he had a brilliant chess career but retired from the game while still young.

Bobby Fischer said that Morphy was "perhaps the most accurate player who ever lived". Morphy lived in the romantic chess era, and his style is characterized by sacrifices and tactics that today would not work at the top level.

Yet, he is one of the most brilliant chess players ever, and studying his games is a fundamental step to improve.



Morphy-Lowenthal

Here is what Dan Heisman says about his choice:

Morphy is selected due to his dashing play and for being the first American superstar. In the game, Paulsen makes an opening positional mistake. Morphy applies pressure to the kingside and eventually forces a “desperado” combination to win a piece. Paulsen resists but eventually plays til he is mated.

Video 2 – Emanuel Lasker



Emanuel Lasker was born in Berlinchen, Prussia (now Barlinek, Poland), in 1868. Lasker was World Champion for 27 years, from 1894 to 1921, when he lost the title to Capablanca. Chess was not the only interest of our chess hero: he obtained a Ph.D. in Mathematics and contributed to commutative algebra, and was a first-class Bridge player.



Lasker was considered to have a "psychological" method of play in which he felt the subjective qualities of his opponent, in addition to the objective requirements of his position on the board.

In reality, as great modern players and writers affirm, *"the features that made his play mysterious to contemporaries now appear regularly in modern play: the g2-g4 "Spike" attack against the Dragon Sicilian; sacrifices to gain positional advantage; playing the "practical" move rather than trying to find the best move; counterattacking and complicating the game before a disadvantage became serious."* [IM John Watson].

Vladimir Kramnik said: *"He realized that different types of advantage could be interchangeable: tactical edge could be converted into strategic advantage and vice versa."*



Lasker is considered one of the best players ever. However, Fischer in 1964 wrote about Lasker: "He was a coffee-house player who knew nothing about openings and didn't understand positional chess."

In a poll of the world's leading players taken some time after Fischer's shocking assertion, Tal, Korchnoi, and Robert Byrne all said that Lasker was the greatest player ever. Both Pal Benko and Byrne stated that Fischer later reconsidered and said that Lasker was a great player. Looking at the statistics, Lasker can easily be placed among the first five players of all time.

The game Dan chose to talk about Lasker's chess genius is a pretty unknown game, which Lasker played against Mortimer in Paris, in 1900.

Here are Dan's comments on the game:

"2nd World Champion Lasker is known for his cleverness and counterattacking style. In the game, Lasker overlooks a cute "computer" tactic piece sacrifice in the opening but instead plays an aggressive "g4?!" Mortimer, not exactly a top GM, hangs in against the unorthodox play by Lasker, but eventually, his passive play allows the World Champion to break through
with a fairly straightforward sacrificial attack.

Video 3 – Paul Keres



Paul Keres was born in Estonia in 1916 and passed away in 1975.

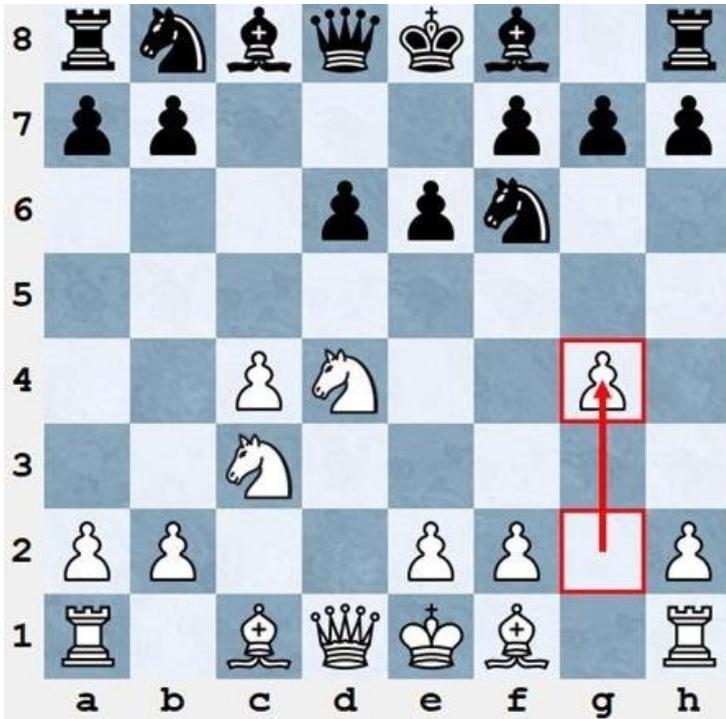
His chess career, though influenced by the URSS which annexed Estonia and wanted to keep Botvinnik as their champion, has been dazzling:

Keres narrowly missed a chance at a world championship match on five occasions. He won the 1938 AVRO tournament, which led to negotiations for a title match against champion Alexander Alekhine, but the match never took place due to World War II. After the war, Keres was runner-up in the Candidates' Tournament on four consecutive occasions, which earned him an ugly nickname: Paul II. For his fantastic results, Keres gained a "sad" title: the strongest player never to become world champion.

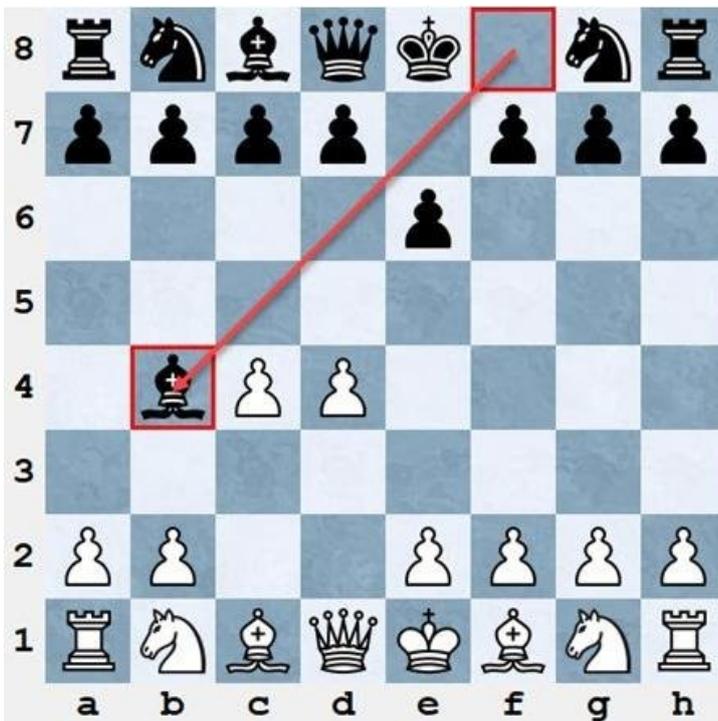
But the legacy Paul Keres left to the chess world is enormous.

He was one of few players to have plus records against Capablanca, Euwe, and Tal, and he also had equal records against Smyslov, Petrosian and Anatoly Karpov. In his long career, he played 10 world champions. He won at least one game against all from Capablanca to Bobby Fischer (his two games with Karpov were drawn), making him one of only three players to beat nine undisputed world champions (the other two are Victor Korchnoi and Alexander Beliavsky). Other notable grandmasters against whom he had plus records include Fine, Flohr, Viktor Korchnoi, Efim Geller, Savielly Tartakower, Mark Taimanov, Milan Vidmar, Svetozar Gligorić, Isaac Boleslavsky, Efim Bogoljubov, and Bent Larsen.

Keres made many important contributions to opening theory. Perhaps best-known is the Keres Attack against the Scheveningen Variation of the Sicilian Defence (1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 e6 6.g4),



which was successfully introduced against Efim Bogolyubov at Salzburg 1943, and remains a famous line. He also popularized the Keres Defence (1.d4 e6 2.c4 Bb4+)



and a system on the Black side of the English Opening that runs 1.c4 e5 2.Nc3 Nf6 3.g3 c6.

To describe Keres' personality, we will quote his friend and rival Samuel Reshevsky: "[Keres] was too mild a person to give his all in order to defeat his opponents. He took everything, including his chess, philosophically. Keres is one of the nicest people that I have ever had the pleasure of meeting. With his friendly and sincere smile, he makes friends easily. He is goodnatured and kind. Yes, he loves chess, but being a human being is his first consideration. In addition to chess, Keres was interested in tennis, Ping-Pong, swimming, and bridge."

Here is the intro of this video that Heisman wrote:

One of my first chess heroes was Estonian Paul Keres. A fierce attacker, Keres' games always seemed fun and fresh. Here he is involved in a positional struggle with Najdorf when Najdorf strangely miscalculates a simplifying maneuver, and Keres wins a crucial pawn. Najdorf tries to complicate, but a series of accurate moves nets Keres a second pawn and Najdorf resigns.

Video 4 – Donald Byrne



Donald Byrne, the brother of Robert, formed the best brothers couple of chess players in history. Despite being the second rated player in the U.S., and solid opponent for everyone, even internationally, Donald never became a GM. Donald Byrne was Dan Heisman's coach when Dan was in college. Dan knew Donald - who passed away in 1976, aged 45 - very well, and coach Heisman has a lot of stories to be told about Byrne. Here is one: Donald was back from a trip; he'd been playing in Europe and was telling his students about his adventures with other Grandmasters. He seemed to be in good terms with everybody: the Soviet block players, the European players, the American players; it looked like everybody was Donald's friend. And it's easily understandable since Byrne was a very nice guy all around. So, Dan asked: "professor Byrne, it looks like you get along well with everybody in the chess world. Is that true?"

Professor Byrne thought for a minute, then said: "well, everybody but Reshevsky. But nobody gets along with Reshevsky!", laughing as he said that, turning red; everybody - at that point - was laughing with him.

Fond memories for Dan that he brings up in this fantastic video about one of his favorite chess heroes.

There is another episode that shows the excellent temperament and the kindness of Donald Byrne:

In the 1956 Rosenwald tournament during the Game of the Century between Byrne and Bobby Fischer, Fischer was winning the game decisively, and Byrne asked some of the other players if it would be a good "tip of the hat" to Fischer's superb play to let young Fischer play the game to a checkmate instead of Byrne resigning, which would generally happen between masters. When the other players agreed, Byrne played the game out until Fischer checkmated him. Byrne added, "You have to remember, Bobby wasn't yet *Bobby Fischer* at that time," meaning that the then 13-year-old Fischer was 'only' a master, and not yet the 14-year-old wunderkind and top U.S. player he became the following year.



Here are Dan's comments on this video:

Donald Byrne was my college chess coach and a wonderful person. Byrne would regale us with stories, usually humorous, from all over the chess world. Here he plays U.S. #1 Reshevsky (the year before Fischer took that title) and outplays him in a positional Benoni. Byrne has the advantage the entire way, and eventually uses his bishop pair and passed d-pawn to force through an impressive win against one of the all-time great positional players.

Video 5 - David Bronstein



David Bronstein (February 19, 1924 – December 5, 2006), is the fifth Chess Hero in this video series by Coach Dan Heisman.

Bronstein had the misfortune to live his prime during WWII. He had to interrupt his studies. Bronstein wanted to study Mathematics at college - and he was playing in the 1941 semifinal of the Soviet Championships when the war began.

Nonetheless, after the war, Bronstein gradually proved to belong in the Soviet Chess elite, by tying for first place in the Soviet Championships in 1948 and 1949.

Bronstein's first major international tournament success occurred at the Saltsjöbaden Interzonal of 1948, which he won. His qualifying place in this event came through nominations from foreign chess federations. He earned his Grandmaster title in 1950 when FIDE formalized the process. His Interzonal win qualified him for the Candidates' Tournament of 1950 in Budapest. Bronstein became the eventual Candidates' winner over Boleslavsky in a (Moscow) 1950 playoff match, following two overtime match games, after the two had tied in Budapest, and then again remained level over the 12 scheduled match games.

The period 1945–1950 saw a meteoric rise in Bronstein's development, as he reached the World Chess Championship challenge match, in 1951.

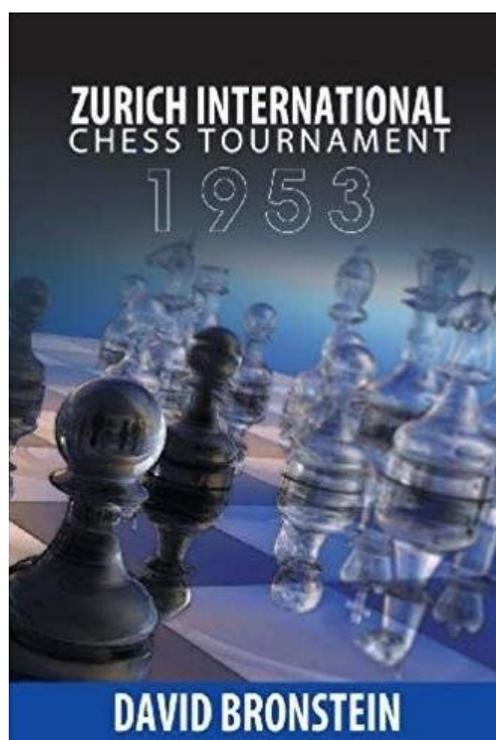
The match was a blood-bath, grueling confrontation between two of the best players ever. Bronstein led by one point with two games to go, but lost the 23rd game and drew the final (24th) game. Under FIDE rules, the title remained with the holder.

It has been alleged by some that Bronstein was forced by the Soviet authorities to throw this match and to allow Botvinnik to win. Bronstein never confirmed this but did later write that it was likely better that he didn't win the world title since his free-spirited, artistic personality would have been at odds with Soviet bureaucracy.

The 1953 Candidates' is again a controversial tournament, with allegations that the Soviets forced the victory of one of their players by asking them to collude. Vassily Smyslov went on to win the Candidates' that year.

After 1953, Bronstein kept playing at the top-level for decades, winning many tournaments, among which Hastings 1953–54, Belgrade 1954, Gotha 1957, Moscow 1959, Szombathely 1966, East Berlin 1968, Dnepropetrovsk 1970, Sarajevo 1971, Sandomierz 1976, Iwonicz Zdrój 1976, Budapest 1977, and Jūrmala 1978.

David Bronstein was also a renowned chess writer, and his book *Zurich International Chess Tournament 1953* is widely considered one of the most excellent chess books ever written.



Here are Dan Heisman's comments about this video:

Bronstein is one of the most original thinkers in modern chess. Besides, he was an accomplished author (e.g., "Zurich 1953"). In this game, he essays the Modern Defense, long before it was popular. Polugaevsky gets an opening advantage but, in the middle of the "Tal" era, tries a Tal-like sacrifice that just falls short. Bronstein manages to hold onto his extra material, out-play Polugaevsky in the complications, and come out with a decisive victory.

Video 6 – Boris Spassky

Boris Vasilievich Spassky was born in the Soviet Union (Leningrad, now St. Petersburg, Russia), in 1937.



He is the tenth World Champion, holding the title from 1969 to 1972.

Spassky became internationally famous, even outside the chess world, when he lost his title, in 1972. Every chess fan knows what happened. The American hero, Bobby Fischer, broke the Soviet hegemony - which was on since 1948 when Botvinnik became World Champion in a match that got its place among the legendary events of chess.

The match took place in the Laugardalshöll arena in Reykjavík, Iceland, and has been dubbed the **Match of the Century**. Fischer became the first American born in the United States to win the world title, and the second American overall (Wilhelm Steinitz, the first world champion, became a naturalized American citizen in 1888).



The Match of the Century (1972)

The match was widely followed, all over the World. And, as Garry Kasparov said in 2006, not only for the chess aspect of it:

"I think the reason you look at these matches probably was not so much the chess factor but to the political element, which was inevitable because in the Soviet Union, chess was treated by the Soviet authorities as a very important and useful ideological tool to demonstrate the intellectual superiority of the Soviet communist regime over the decadent West. That's why the Spassky defeat [...] was treated by people on both sides of the Atlantic as a crushing moment in the midst of the Cold War."

Boris Spassky, during the match, had to put up with a lot of pressure. From his side, obviously, the Soviet hierarchs wanted him to win at all costs, and from his opponent's hand, Boris had to deal with all the strangest requests made by Bobby Fischer.

Spassky proved to be an honest, respectful, and super-strong opponent for the American. Spassky best chess happened when he was young, and some critics say he lost ambition once he became World Champion.



A young Boris Spassky (1956)

But there are hundreds of fantastic games played by the Russian chess genius, and his legacy is one of the most important ever.

Heisman describes this video as follows:

" Spassky is a hero as a World Champion with a style I felt was similar to mine – aggressive but well-rounded. Stein plays a rare variation (8.c4) of the mainline Tarrasch but goes astray on the next move, allowing Spassky more than equality. Again on the 16th move, Stein fails to find the best line and Spassky gets on the verge of a winning position. Then Spassky makes a tactical mistake on move 25 which Stein, in turn, fails to capitalize. After that, Spassky's position is too good, and he gathers in the full point before time control."

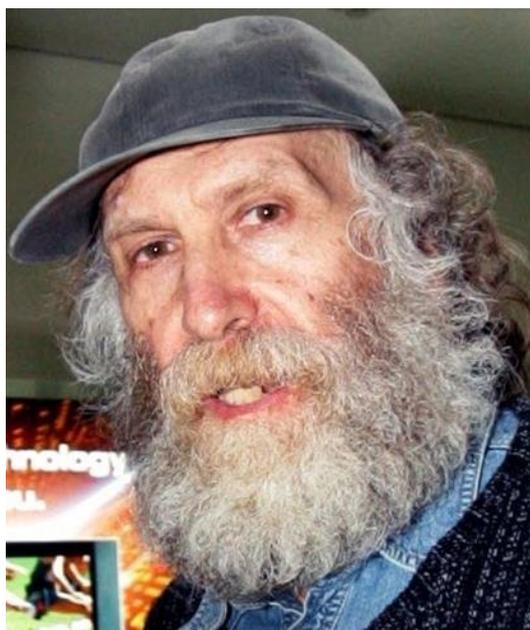
Video 7 – Bobby Fischer



A torrent of words has been told and written about Robert J. Fischer, one of the most influential and famous chess players of all time.

Yet, it's always hard to talk about Bobby. His chess contributions and achievements are beyond any doubt, whereas his personal life is controversial, challenging to comment on.

Fischer was born in Chicago in 1943, and passed away in Iceland, in 2008, aged 64.



He was an enfant prodige. Bobby learned chess at age six, with a chess set bought at a candy store. When his sister lost interest in the game, Fischer kept on playing against himself, until he found a book of old games, and studied it intensely. His mother, once they had moved to Brooklin, was worried about little Bobby spending too much time alone, with his board and pieces. At 12 Fischer joined the Manhattan Chess club, the first step to become the youngest Master ever.



On the tenth national rating list of the United States Chess Federation (USCF), published on May 20, 1956, Fischer's rating was 1726.

Two months later, Bobby won the US Junior Chess Championship, scoring 8½/10 at Philadelphia to become the youngest-ever Junior Champion at age 13. And at 13, Fischer played the "Game of the Century" against Donal Byrne.

It was easy to foresee a great future in chess for this mono-maniac kid.

Actually, Fischer took frequent pauses from chess competition and arrived at his victory at the Candidates' matches "only" in 1971, becoming the official challenger to the World Champion Boris Spassky.

Tons of ink has been spent to describe what most of the fans consider the most important, viewed and thrilling World Championship Match ever.

Fischer with his unusual requests; Spassky who had to cope with a lot of pressure; the Cold War that changed a chess match into a fight between the two super-powers. All of this contributed to making the match an event followed like never before. Chess, which is a little-known game in many countries, suddenly made the front page of the newspapers.

Fischer triumphed, and America broke 24 years of Russian hegemony at the top level of chess.



After Bobby conquered the title, he just disappeared. His mental problems were already surfacing, and would eventually lead him to a life of auto-segregation, with rare appearances on the media, only to proclaim his anti-semitic tirades. The Chess World lost one of the greatest geniuses of the game, way too early.

His legacy is enormous: he patented a modified chess timing system that added a time increment after each move, now standard practice in top tournament and match play. He also invented Fischerandom, a new variant of chess known today as Chess960.

As an author, Fischer published several books, among which the iconic "My 60 Memorable Games", which was studied by the young Kasparov.

This is what Dan Heisman says about this video:

" Fischer may have had his personal problems, but he was likely the most charismatic player of all time over-the-board. In his Candidates Match with Larsen, Fischer manages to equalize with a bold queen maneuver (17...Qe5!). Larsen manages to hold equality into the endgame when he overlooks a cute tactic (37.Bc4? Ra4!), probably in time trouble. Fischer emerges after time control with two extra pawns and the rest, as they say, is a matter of technique."

Video 8 - John Nunn



Dr. John Nunn - born in London, in 1955 - is a brilliant mathematician who decided to become a chess professional, showing the world he was able to excel in that field of the mind-driven activities as well.

John Nunn was a child prodigy. In 1967, at twelve years of age, he won the British under-14 Championship. At fourteen, he was London Under-18 Champion for the 1969/70 season and less than a year later, at just fifteen years of age, he proceeded to Oriel College, Oxford, to study mathematics. At the time, Nunn was Oxford's youngest undergraduate since Cardinal Wolsey in 1520. John went on to get his Doctorate in 1978 and remained in Oxford as a mathematics lecturer until 1981 when he became a professional chess player.



Here is an extract of his chess career:

In 1975, he became the European Junior Chess Champion. He gained the Grandmaster title in 1978 and was British champion in 1980. Nunn has twice won individual gold medals at Chess Olympiads. In 1989, he finished sixth in the inaugural 'World Cup,' a series of tournaments in which the top 25 players in the world competed. He won the prestigious Hoogovens tournament (held annually in Wijk aan Zee, today known as Tata Steel) in 1982, 1990 and 1991.

His peak rating, achieved in January 1995, placed Nunn in ninth position in the world list. Nunn has now retired from serious tournament play.

As well as being a strong player, Nunn is regarded as one of the best contemporary authors of chess books. He has penned many books, including **Secrets of Grandmaster Chess**, which won the British Chess Federation Book of the Year award in 1988, and **John Nunn's Best Games**, which took the prize in 1995.

In a 2010 interview, Magnus Carlsen explained that he thought extreme intelligence could actually be an obstacle to one's chess career. As an example of this, he cited Nunn's failure to have ever won the World Chess Championship:

"He has so incredibly much in his head. Simply too much. His enormous powers of understanding and his constant thirst for knowledge distracted him from chess."



Here is Dan's comment about this video:

Nunn and I have a lot in common: math, chess, puzzles, writing. In this game versus Britain's first GM Tony Miles, Nunn avoids the main Yugoslav variation of the Dragon with the tame 6.g3. Miles quickly equalizes but allows a shot on move 20 (20...Nd4? 21.Rc7!). Nunn misses the logical follow-up (22.Bh3), and the game returns to equal. In complications, Miles misses the best line on move 27 (27...Be6!), and his position deteriorates until Nunn wraps things up with some tactics (34.Nb6) and Miles goes down on move 42.

Video 9 – Garry Kasparov



Garry Kimovich Kasparov was born in 1963, in Baku, Azerbaijan (USSR).

Many consider Kasparov the best player ever. It's always tricky to set up a list and place great protagonists in a specific order, due to the different eras they lived in, but for Garry, we can make an exception: he is for sure the greatest. All that we can concede is placing some other great player there on top of the list, sharing the throne with Kasparov!

It's almost useless to list here all Garry's achievements in Chess, and probably the list would be too long thus boring.

Let's just say that from 1986 until his retirement in 2005, Kasparov was ranked world No. 1 for 225 out of 228 months. His peak rating of 2851, achieved in 1999, was the highest recorded until being surpassed by Magnus Carlsen in 2013. Kasparov also holds records for consecutive professional tournament victories (15) and Chess Oscars (11).



Kasparov became World Champion in 1985, after the (in)famous first match with Karpov, which was ended by FIDE President Campomanes, who said he was worried about the players' health due to the protracting of the match. Both players expressed their will to continue the match, but Campomanes was irremovable. A new match was set up and took place in 1985. This time the match was over 24 games and the first to score 12.5 points declared the winner. On 9 November 1985, Kasparov secured the title by a score of 13–11, winning the 24th game with Black, using a Sicilian defense. He was 22 years old at the time, making him the youngest ever World Champion, and breaking the record held by Mikhail Tal for over 20 years.

Kasparov and Karpov played a record five matches for the title.

In their five world championship matches, Kasparov had 21 wins, 19 losses, and 104 draws in 144 games.

Kasparov lost the title to Kramnik in 2000 and, with FIDE split and weak, there was no way to organize a rematch, until in 2005 Kasparov decided to give up trying to regain the World Champion title, retiring from Chess.

Since then, Kasparov has become a politician, a writer and, last but not least, an influencer on the socials. Moreover, from time to time, Garry has come out of retirement, playing occasional events. This year he participated in the Champions Showdown in St. Louis, playing a match against World Number Two Fabiano Caruana, in chess960 (Fischer Random).



The champ hasn't lost his grit!

No series on chess heroes could do without the great Kasparov in, and Heisman's introduces this video as follows:

Kasparov is in the argument for best player ever, and his aggressive style made his games "must-watch". Here the young GM plays one of the world's top players. Polugaevsky avoids the complicated main line 7...e5 and Kasparov gets a nice opening advantage. After trading inaccuracies (14...Bb7? 15.Bd3?), the game reverts to chances for both sides. On move 26, Polugaevsky falters (26...d5?) and Kasparov wields a mating net. However, after missing the best move (28.Rh1!), Polugaevsky also misses the best defense (28...Kxg7) and errs with 28...Rxe5. This time Kasparov does not miss his chance, and he puts the game away with 29.f6. Polugaevsky resigns on move 37.

Video 10 – Alexei Shirov



Alexei Shirov was born in Riga, in 1972.

Riga is the town that gave birth to another legend of Chess: Mikhail Tal.

And Shirov, though with a slightly different style, is the very heir and successor of Tal's genius.

His career has seen the Latvian win a lot of important tournaments: Biel 1991, Madrid 1997 (shared first place with Veselin Topalov), Ter Apel 1997, Monte Carlo 1998, Mérida 2000, Paul Keres Memorial Rapid Tournament in Tallinn (2004, 2005, 2011, 2012, 2013), Canadian Open Chess Championship 2005.

Alexei has been World Champion material for a long time.



In 1998 Shirov's ranking rose to number four in the world. Based on his rating, he was invited to play a ten-game match against Vladimir Kramnik to select a challenger for World Champion Garry Kasparov. Shirov won the match with two wins, no losses and seven draws. However, the plans for the Kasparov match dissolved because of lack of sponsors. When Kasparov instead played Kramnik for the world title in 2000, Shirov affirmed that the match was invalid and he was the rightful challenger.

In 2000, Shirov reached the final of the FIDE World Chess Championship, losing $3\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}$ to Viswanathan Anand.

In May-June 2007 he played in the Candidates Tournament of the FIDE World Chess Championship 2007. He won his first-round match against Michael Adams (+1-1=4, won in rapid playoff), but was eliminated when he lost his second-round match to Levon Aronian (+0-1=5).

Alexi Shirov has been admired for his innate sense of tactic, and his fantastic technique in endgames.

His most famous book is titled "Fire on Board," and that tells the tale.

Shirov is still an active player, with a respectable FIDE rating of 2671 (as of September 2019).



In Chihuahua, 2018

Here is what Coach Heisman says about the video:

Shirov is a hero for his uncompromising and unbalanced, fun style. In this game, he essays the rare Evans Gambit and Timman returns the pawn for equality. However, Timman fails to find the most dangerous defense (12...Qxe4) and castles queenside, where Shirov's attack will arrive first. After a series of counterblows, Shirov's queenside play breaks through, and he administers a pretty finish.