

**Harding, T., 1996. *Winning at Correspondence Chess*. New York: Henry Holt**

There are not so many books dedicated to our particular enthusiasm of correspondence chess. On my shelves I have *My Chess Adventures* by Warburton that I mentioned, en passant, in a recent piece and Sanakoev's *World Champion at the Third Attempt* that I discussed in more detail. There is also a handy chapter in Simon Webb's *Chess for Tigers*. And this, the subject of my present musing.

Tim Harding is well known as a correspondence player over many years. This book is dated, yes, but still contains much of interest. 'This book is primarily a battle manual for the player who wants to be a winner at correspondence chess' is his opening sentence of the preface. Who does not want to be that? OK, I'm sold, do tell more.

Harding sets the scene with a jolly – isn't everything that Harding writes jolly? – description of the world of correspondence chess and its history. He then moves on to discuss how to get started at CC and gives a quick overview of the various organisations active in the UK and, happily, our own NCCC gets a brief mention. There is a good run-through of the 'kit' one requires for CC play. Although somewhat dated in the age of the webserver, focusing as it does on items for postal play, his advice to use a notebook is sage advice indeed and, one day, I *will* get round to using one.

The Correspondence Player's Armoury is a lovely chapter that considers questions such as conditionals, analysis, and how many games one should take on. He also mentions clerical errors and his method of avoiding them. Handy for those playing by post. There is also the problem of setting up the wrong position to analyse. Now I play mostly on the webserver these days and I still find this a problem. I seem to have a kind of chess dyslexia that, occasionally, has me setting up a board missing a piece or putting it on an adjacent square. Most frustrating.

Harding has a most instructive chapter on use of books and choice of openings. Spoiler alert: beware innovations! That apart, he makes a good case for using main line openings and for using particular systems. However, he mentions the late A. M. Stewart's use of a Stonewall approach in the Veresov as an example of successful deployment of a non-main line system.

Chapter 6 looks at some of the great players of CC; Purdy, Estrin, Berliner, etc with examples of their games. The last chapter looks at computers and the future of CC. Given some of the debate in EP's pages, his definition of correspondence chess as 'a game of chess played between opponents not physically present in one venue, the moves being mutually delivered by post or some other form of transmission' will be controversial to some.

I am giving post a go at the moment and this little book currently lives on my desk as an aid.