

(Free pdf) What It Takes to Become a Chess Master (Batsford Chess)

## What It Takes to Become a Chess Master (Batsford Chess)

*Andrew Soltis*

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#1016980 in Books The House of Staunton, Inc. 2012-04-03Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 9.40 x .60 x 6.30l, .71 #File Name: 1849940266208 pagesAuthor: Andrew SoltisPages: 208 PagesPublication Years: 2012 | File size: 45.Mb

**Andrew Soltis : What It Takes to Become a Chess Master (Batsford Chess)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised What It Takes to Become a Chess Master (Batsford Chess):

21 of 21 people found the following review helpful. Another Soltis Book that Sounds Good, But in Practice Falls Somewhat ShortBy Deaf ZedBACKGROUND: In the past few years, I've gone from being nothing more than a very casual online correspondence chess player to one who is now starting to play in USCF rated tournaments. My current

(albeit still provisional) USCF rating is in the 2000s. My "actual" playing strength for 'slow' chess is probably in the 1800-2000 USCF range. I've now played my share of speed games (1|0 bullet and 5|0 blitz) against players ranging from Class E to Expert (and even one master). To date I've completely read through at least 16 chess books, as well as half-finished at least a dozen others (probably the same as most other 'serious' chess players). Done loads of tactics problems. Read and still read dozens of annotated master games. Etc. Suffice it to say that while there are still far better chess players on this Earth than me, compared to the average club player, I'm not a complete slouch either. In other words, I have some idea of what passes for good chess literature and what doesn't.

**REVIEW:** Anyone familiar with author Andrew Soltis' previous books will recognize the format of this one as well. Basically this is a collection of game fragments, organized thematically into a chapter which (here) is about the prime differences between an amateur chess player and a master. Soltis will repeatedly tag-team between explanatory prose and a game example, using the one to support the other (at least in theory). After finishing one game example, he'll move on to another. Until the next chapter of the book. Ad nauseam until the book is complete.

**Chapters include:**

- 1.) 'What Matters Most' - Soltis argues that a master doesn't necessarily calculate better or farther than an amateur. Rather, the master has a better idea of what matters most in a position and hence, what's even WORTH calculating to begin with. Although I disagree with some of Soltis' claims here, this is one of the best parts of this book I admit.
- 2.) 'Targets' - How a master will always look for targets to attack, and if he doesn't have any, he'll try to create some
- 3.) 'Little Tactics' - How masters won't immediately give up on a promising line just because of a small tactical flaw. Rather, the master will try to use 'little tactics' to make his idea work, if possible.
- 4.) 'Sensing,' - Discusses a master's superior ability to sense things over an amateur, like when zugzwang is approaching, when a position is becoming critical, etc. Soltis' main suggestion for developing better sense is going over more annotated master games.

There's also a chapter (the name of which I forget) that discusses how experienced masters will often forgo objectively better, but more complicated, calculation-intense lines in preference to simpler, more practical moves, so long as the more practical choice still does whatever the master is looking for in the position (win or draw). All of this is well-and-good-sounding and indeed, much of Soltis' prose is rather engaging, instructive, and practical. Unfortunately, Soltis has the rather annoying habit of trying to support his good prose with bad, or at least considerably-less-than-ideal, examples. In one part of his book where he's discussing prophylactic moves, for instance, he wants you to guess a move that Carlsen played in a Sicilian Defense game. Did you guess Ka1? If not, then you obviously didn't see all the far-fetched (for me, at any rate) plans that Soltis discussed for black that would make such a move worthwhile for white. A frustrating experience when the same thing happens time and again throughout the book. So much for the prose explanations, I guess. What's worse is that the majority of Soltis' 'quiz' positions have the same not-very-obvious solutions to them, ones that will likely take you minutes (more than 20 quite conceivably) to even come close to solving. Maybe it's because I'm still not quite where Soltis' target audience is (presumably 2000-2200 level players); maybe it's because Soltis' examples overwhelmingly draw from the absolute best players in the world, who themselves are/were many cuts above plain ol' masters. I'm not sure.

**CONCLUSION:** Like most of Soltis' books, the topics sound good, the prose sounds good...but the specific examples that are meant to support the prose fall short. Instead of giving examples where the solution move is challenging, yet logical and illustrative, Soltis consistently goes for examples where the solutions are just baffling, if not outright over-the-heads of most strong club players. Maybe I'm still not quite strong enough of a player to fully "appreciate" his examples or something. At any rate, this book, like the other Soltis books I've read, isn't total trash and does have its good points. Unfortunately, it also has more than its share of bad ones.

7 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Solid, but not Invaluable Soltis

By R. Tobias

American GM Andy Soltis is a long time very popular chess author. He is not so fortunately known for pumping out some, to put it kindly, rather hastily pasted together opening manuals of dubious value, but is even more well known for putting out some gems of the chess literature that are of lasting value. 'Pawn Structure Chess' and 'The Art of Defense in Chess' are just a couple of numerous gems he has written. The volume under review is closer in tone to the latter kind of work, but I do not think it is destined for classic status. The advice is often valuable, but sometimes borders on being worthless. Telling me that a chess master is not just better than me because of his deeper knowledge of openings, middlegames, and endgames, but because of his better chess 'sense' (a better sense of chess danger, eg) gives me virtually nothing of actionable value. What he is saying to me is that you have to play and study a whole lot more to develop this sense, but I already knew that, so he is filling pages in places with what is essentially just that: page filler. But there are many gems given as well, so the work certainly has its value. His chapter on playing for easier positions, for example is rather unique in my experience, and gives real food for thought, as I have been trapped in the past by playing for positions that were considered good by theory, but turned out to be beyond my ability to comprehend and thus come up with an effective plan for. So this is a good book, but I think that there are better works available for the non-master who is looking to improve. Yermolinsky's 'The Road to Chess Improvement', for one example, does a better job, in my opinion of offering practical and insightful advice.

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Silly Title, Great Book

By aulachs

Obviously, most of us are never going to be masters (or even experts), and a 200 page book is not going to help a lot. I can understand that with so many chess books out there you have to put on a little spin to sell. On the upside, this book makes the point that being a great player requires a lot more than just memorizing openings without

understanding "why." Soltis provides many good examples of why a club player move and the master move in the middle game can be wildly different. Why? Because the master understands the position. Buy it today! It reminds me a little of the now ancient "Judgement and Planning in Chess" by Max Euwe, also good.

Chess players sometimes wonder if they have what it takes to become a chess master. International Grandmaster Andrew Soltis answers their questions: How much talent does it take, what do you need to know, how much do you have to practice, which tournaments do you enter, and who do you have to beat? He offers detailed advice, practical exercises, and test games to make any player more competitive and help rising stars join the elite ranks of chess.

About the Author Andrew Soltis is an International Grandmaster and popular chess writer. He's the chess correspondent for the New York Post and author of many books, including *The Wisest Things Ever Said About Chess*, *Transpo Tricks in Chess*, and *How to Choose a Chess Move*.