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Players and Pawns: How Chess Builds Community and Culture

Gary Alan Fine

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A chess match seems as solitary an endeavor as there is in sports: two minds, on their own, in fierce opposition. In contrast, Gary Alan Fine argues that chess is a social duet: two players in silent dialogue who always take each other into account in their play. Surrounding that one-on-one contest is a community life that can be nearly as dramatic and intense as the across-the-board confrontation.

Fine has spent years immersed in the communities of amateur and professional chess players, and with *Players and Pawns* he takes readers deep inside them, revealing a complex, brilliant, feisty world of commitment and conflict. Opening with a close look at a typical tournament in Atlantic City, Fine carries us from planning and setup through the climactic final day's match-ups between the weekend's top players, introducing us along the way to countless players and their relationships to the game. At tournaments like that one, as well as in locales as diverse as collegiate matches and community chess clubs, players find themselves part of what Fine terms a "soft community," an open, welcoming space built on their shared commitment to the game. Within that community, chess players find both support and challenges, all amid a shared interest in and love of the long-standing traditions of the game, traditions that help chess players build a communal identity.

Full of idiosyncratic characters and dramatic gameplay, *Players and Pawns* is a celebration of the ever-fascinating world of serious chess.

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