PREFACE

In the mid-nineties, my friend Ilija Vukmirović realized that I was too strong for him in chess, so we began to play Antichess. Our games at that time were pretty random and at a very low level. However, during a summer break I analysed some openings over the chessboard, and concluded on my own that 1. d3, the move that we played most often, actually loses. This has significantly changed my understanding of the game, but we soon stopped playing.

At the beginning of 2002, I restarted playing Antichess, this time online on the FICS server. Things were more serious, because I began to search the internet for any information about the game. The initial reference was Liardet's website *Les échecs à qui perd gagne* [12] which covered all stages of the game. On the other hand, Taelman had a website [16] with some computer generated proofs that refute some openings.

I worked a lot on the game, especially in the openings, where I analysed and upgraded Liardet's opening lines, and even memorized by heart a large part of Taelman's proofs. Every work has a reward, which was gradually displayed on my FICS rating, until I became the best rated human on the server by the end of 2003. At some point there were very few decent players available on the server, and I often played against engines (SELFKILLER, NILATAC, SORDID), until mid 2004 when I stopped playing online. In the following years, I only played correspondence games, but I continued to analyse the openings and started writing fragments of this book (Chapter III and Chapter 3), until I quit the game in 2010.

It took a long time for great things to happen at the end of 2016. Then, Watkins proved that the first move 1. e3 wins while I had discovered the Lichess server and reactivated. Many excellent players on Lichess convinced me that it makes sense to continue working on the book and deepen my existing analysis of the opening. This time, many difficult things could be proved with the help of Watkins' software, which he so generously left to the public. Two years later, after an enormous time invested in the analysis, this book has just been completed.

The aim of this book is to give Antichess players a high-quality opening analysis. It is designed as an opening encyclopedia, or at least as my playing repertoire. I want to emphasize that the opening chapters are not just fragments from the computer proof records. I try to offer a repertoire that is understandable to humans with a clear human plan if possi-

ble, and therefore my recommended repertoire is often different from the incomprehensible solutions that computers have generated. As a good understanding of the opening requires basic knowledge of tactics and endgames, they are treated in detail in the initial chapters.

As a rule the ordering of the moves being discussed is from worst to best. The moves that are easy to refute are mentioned in the first section of each chapter. All other moves have their own section, also ordered from worse (or less good) to best.

Many people have contributed to the development of this book in indispensable ways. I am very grateful to Mark Watkins for his opening theory contribution as well as John Beasley for his endgame theory contribution, who have always been kind and helpful in our private communication. I also would like to mention Johan Bosman, Cătălin Frâncu, Fabrice Liardet, Ben Nye, Klaas Steenhuis, and Lenny Taelman, all of whom generously shared their own knowledge and ideas about Antichess. Special credit was deserved by Klaas Steenhuis who carefully read the initial manuscript and gave a number of useful remarks and suggestions.

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