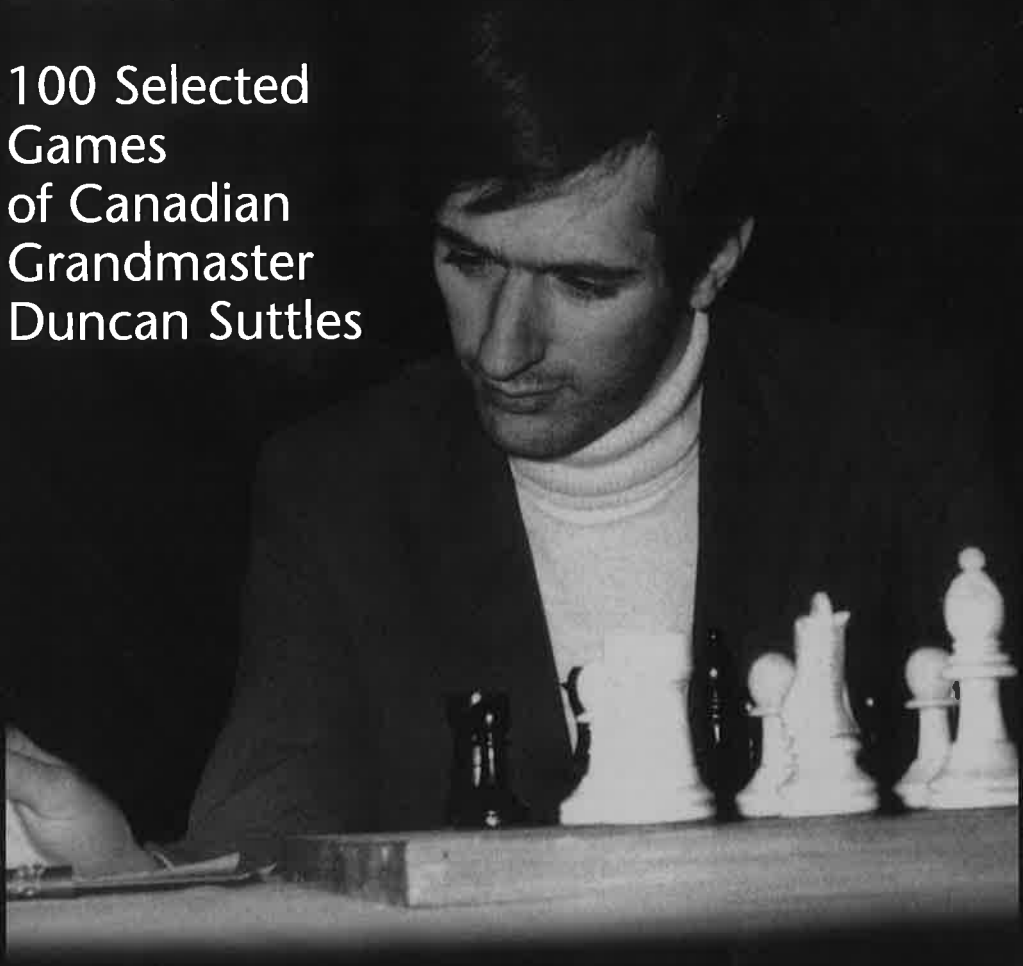
Chess on the Edge

Volume 1

100 Selected Games of Canadian Grandmaster Duncan Suttles



Bruce Harper
Yasser Seirawan

Introduction by Lawrence Day

Contributions by Gerard Welling

To Dr. Elod Macskasy,

who taught us all a great deal.

and

To Robin, Jamie and Laura Harper,

who put up with crabby, cranky, crusty
and sometimes even cantankerous
behavior on the part of one of the
authors while this book was being written.
Their forbearance has been appreciated.

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100 Selected Games
of Canadian Grandmaster
Duncan Suttles

by Bruce Harper and
Yasser Seirawan

Chess'n Math Association

published by
Chess'n Math Association,
3423 St. Denis #400, Montreal, Quebec, Canada H2X 3L1
www.chess-math.org
Tel (514) 845-8352 Fax (514) 845-8810

website for these books:
http://www.suttlesbook.com
Webmaster: Len Molden

ISBN 978-1-895525-15-1

The volumes of this series have the following last three digits in their ISBN: Volume 1, 15-1. Volume 2, 16-8. Volume 3, 17-5.
Copy Editors: Robin Harper, Ramona Roberts
Proofreaders: Dan Scoones, Erik Malmsten
Diagrams: Jonathan Berry's YesWeDoDiagrams (customized)
Typeset: Jonathan Berry with Xerox Ventura Publisher 2, PCLWorks
Drawings, pages 251 and 306: Laura Harper
Cover design: Leslee Hyman

Harper, Bruce, Seirawan, Yasser
Chess on the Edge, Volume 1
100 Selected Games of Canadian Grandmaster Duncan Suttles

First printing: February 2008
314 + xxii pages + photo section, 100 + 7 games, 628 chess diagrams

Contents

Acknowledgements

Few books have ever been completed without help, and certainly this one wasn't. Over the years that this book was created, many people have contributed and it is impossible to thank them all.

A number of players were kind enough to provide us with games—including losses, which are always painful for a chess player! Colin Aykroyd and Brian Potter were especially helpful in this regard, as their games from the early 1960s provide insight into Suttles' development as a player.

International Master John Donaldson used his research skills to find issues of magazines which contained otherwise unknown games. International Master Gerard Welling (more of whom later) also uncovered "missing" games which were in computer databases.

While on this topic, we should acknowledge the debt of the entire chess community to those who selflessly spent many hours editing and producing chess magazines which recorded games and annotations for posterity in the pre-computer age. The *California Chess Reporter*, *Northwest Chess*, *Chess Canada*, *En Passant* (the magazine of the Chess Federation of Canada, under various incarnations) and, perhaps most valuable of all, *Chess Chat*, edited by Nathan Divinksy, all were invaluable. The annotations from *Chess Chat*, often by Divinsky himself, were almost always witty and quotable, and many have found their way into this book.

International Master Lawrence Day kindly reviewed an early draft of Volume 1, and provided some unique insights into Suttles' play. International Master Welling painstakingly reviewed the penultimate draft of the book, and his contributions to the final product were many. He corrected the identities of players and the spelling of their names, pointed out the actual date and location of games, provided obscure source games for equally obscure openings, found analytical errors, and discovered unnoticed typographical errors, misspellings and grammatical errors.

The thankless task of copy editing fell to Robin Harper and Ramona Roberts, whose knowledge of spelling, grammar and style vastly exceeds their knowledge of chess. Many errors and shortcomings will never be seen by the reader, thanks to their tireless and diligent efforts. Dan Scoones and Erik Malmsten proofed later versions, and the final product also benefited from their considerable and much appreciated efforts.

Grudging thanks must also be given to the soulless Fritz, the computer engine which never tired of pointing out errors and omissions in analysis. It's hard not to think that deep in its program, Fritz has some sense of satisfaction at having discovered so many concealed possibilities. We do not refer specifically to Fritz's contributions in the text, but they are many.

We also wish to express our appreciation for the many players who encouraged us to persevere in completing this work. There are many Suttles fans and we hope the result of our efforts meet or exceed their expectations.

Finally, we acknowledge the contribution of Grandmaster Duncan Suttles and his wife Dobrila to what must have seemed like an endless project. Duncan's published notes to his games and willingness to answer specific questions have been invaluable, but most of all we thank him for having played the games which are the heart of this book.

Interview with Duncan Suttles

Q: What do you think of the book?

A: It's good.

Q: Were you involved in the book?

A: Yes. We analyzed some of the games especially for the book, and many others we'd analyzed anyway. I didn't do any writing.

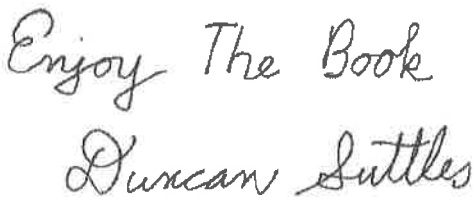
Q: Do you think reading the book have an effect on the reader's rating?

A: For sure, one way or the other.

Q: What game in the book is your favorite?

A: Cook - Suttles, Canadian Open, 1973.

Q: What would you do if someone asked you to sign their copy of the book?



Prologue

Reading these books

The three volumes contain all of Suttles' tournament games which could be found. The first volume consists of 100 games, ordered by theme. Our intention is to help the reader explore various positional ideas and strategies, or particularly good or bad results, in a single place. The main goal of the first volume is to help the reader understand Suttles' unique style, but there may be instructional or inspirational value in this volume as well.

Where a game is annotated in the first volume, it is referred to throughout all three volumes as "(Game [#]").

The second and third volumes consist of 513 full Suttles games, ordered by opening, plus 7 supplemental games. In addition, the first ten moves of the 100 games in the first volume are given in the appropriate location. Here the idea is to let the reader see how Suttles handled different openings and the positions arising out of them. Some of the games in the second and third volumes are annotated briefly, but many have very detailed notes.

Where a game appears in the second and third volumes, it is referred to in the usual manner, with the players' names, the location and the year. The absence of a game number indicates the game is not one of the 100 selected games in the first volume.

Terminology and language

Each game is identified by opening, the players and the place and date it was played.

Opening names have generally been shortened to reflect the usage of tournament players. For example, "Pirc" is used rather than the longer "Pirc Defense"; "English" rather than "English Opening" (no "English Defenses" are found in these books!); and so on. The more traditional and colorful "Ruy López" is used instead of the "Spanish Opening"; "Center Counter" is used instead of "Scandinavian". "Rat" is used instead of the unfortunate "Modern Defense", for reasons explained more fully in Appendix I.

Figurine algebraic notation is used throughout, including where analysis refers to a specific move (34...f5). Where the possibility of a move at some point is discussed, the longer form is used (...f7-f5). References to pieces and pawns are usually prefaced by the square they occupy (White's h3-♘), especially where this will assist the reader in following analysis without the use of a board (for example, reference may be made to "White's e4-♔" if it helps the reader to be reminded of the location of White's king).

Chess terms have been used, including evocative non-English terms such as *Zugzwang*, which convey more meaning than any English equivalent. Most readers will be familiar with these terms.

Editorial license

In a relatively small number of games, we have taken the liberty of revising the game score to make sense of the moves played. These revisions have been identified in the text and the reader may judge in each case whether they were justified. All too often writers accept the game scores in tournament bulletins, magazines or databases as sacrosanct, even though the resulting poor play can be easily understood once the errors are corrected.

Where sources give different move orders, especially early in the game, we have used the most reliable source or, failing that, our own judgment in deciding which move order to use.

When significant errors occur between move 30 and 40, or sometimes later, we have often assumed that time pressure was a contributing factor. In many of the games, the time control was 40 moves for each player in two and a half hours (or sometimes less), although in some games the time control required 45 or even 50 moves to be made before the first time control was reached. For some games the existence of time trouble is a matter of record, but for many games it can be assumed.

The annotations

Annotating these games was not easy. Suttles' play is often complicated and confusing, which is precisely why his games should be better known and understood. "Objective analysis" often doesn't do his games justice, because the psychological component of Suttles' play is so important.

Because of this, we have tried to be sympathetic to the players, who often had to make difficult decisions in complication positions, frequently while in time pressure. No player intentionally makes a bad move, and too many annotators forget what is like to actually play a game, without the luxury of time to reflect, the crutch of computer assistance and the benefit of hindsight.

We are occasionally less sympathetic to other commentators, who at times subjected Suttles and his opponents to unjustifiably harsh criticism. Playing chess is difficult, and annotating chess games no less so, but annotators should approach their task with a certain humility. We have tried to do so.

Vancouver & Amsterdam
December, 2007

Biography

Duncan Suttles was born in San Francisco on December 21, 1945. He came to Canada at an early age and became a Canadian citizen in 1966. He married his wife Dobrila in 1968 and they have been together ever since.

Suttles learned to play chess at the relatively late age of 15. He played in his first Canadian Championship in 1961 and finished poorly, but his results in that event steadily improved over time: in 1963 he scored 8.5 out of 15; in 1965 he finished second, with 8 out of 11, and in 1969 he tied for first, then defeated Zvonko Vranešić in a four-game playoff match.

Suttles represented Canada in the chess Olympiads from 1964 to 1984, with the exception of 1976, 1978 and 1980. His best result was in Lugano, 1968, when he scored seven wins, nine draws and only one loss. This result was sufficient to obtain the Grandmaster title, except that he played one more game than required (which he won), and the title was denied him as a result of Cold War politics (the fewer western Grandmasters the better).

This omission was rectified after Suttles' strong result in the San Antonio super-tournament in 1972.

Suttles also represented Canada in the Interzonal tournaments in Sousse (1967) and Palma de Mallorca (1970).

Suttles' banner year was 1973, when he won the Canadian Open (clear) and tied for first in the U.S. Open immediately afterwards. He continued to have good results in 1974 (Venice), but tailed off in 1975, when he took a break from competitive chess.

During this interlude, he played in a pre-computer-era correspondence tournament (1978-1981) and won, obtaining the title of Correspondence Chess Grandmaster.

Suttles delighted his fans with a comeback in 1981. He played in the Western Canadian Open in 1981, and after a shaky start he finished with a streak of wins against International Master Leon Piasetski and Grandmasters Tony Miles and Yasser Seirawan, winning first place.

Suttles' final tournament was a futurity tournament in Vancouver in 1984, in which he tied for first.

Since that time he has continued to play chess and other games casually, while devoted his main energies to computer programming.

Foreword
by Lawrence Day

When I first heard of Duncan Suttles I was 12 and he was 15. My dad drove me down from Ottawa to watch the last round of the 1961 Canadian Closed in Brockville. Not realizing the final game was in the morning we arrived too late. Duncan had qualified representing British Columbia. This was most impressive to me, despite his scoring poorly. Becoming a fan was automatic; his example was inspiring. Chess was clearly a game where age didn't matter!

I met Duncan in 1964 in New York at the 42nd Street Chess and Checker Club of New York. It was, I later learned, commonly known as the Flea House. All that year he had been playing in every tournament he could get to by Greyhound bus. Duncan criss-crossed the continent collecting U.S. State Championships. Killing a week in New York before the U.S. Open in Boston, he was engaged in a very long blitz match with Asa Hoffman. When the club closed at 5:00 a.m., he slept briefly until the club reopened. His appetite for chess was inexhaustible.

We were paired against one another a month later in the second round of the Canadian Open at Scarborough. It was the first of our five encounters. Sharing third at that Canadian Open (behind Pal Benko and Zvonko Vranešić), Suttles became the Canadian Junior Champion and our representative at the 1965 World Junior in Spain. There, although he didn't qualify for the A-group, he won the B-group ahead of England's Raymond Keene. My dad bought me the tournament bulletins for Christmas and I pored over them, dissecting each game.

In 1968 I went to the Lugano Olympiad as a reserve. Duncan was playing board two behind Grandmaster Abe Yanofsky. We analyzed together a great deal and prepared openings. This was tremendously beneficial to my understanding of the game.

All this reflects the sporting aspect of chess. Duncan was inspirational in his commitment, perseverance and success. But there was another, deeper element, relating to the evolution of opening theory. Suttles was the iconoclastic maverick who challenged much of the classical orthodoxy that had been received wisdom for previous generations. Alexander Alekhine had dismissed the defence 1.e4 g6 as "a joke" in his theoretical review of the New York 1924 tournament. Capablanca had tried it but Alekhine considered it totally unsound (see Volume 1, Appendix 1). After several generations, this ridicule had cemented itself into players' praxis as axiomatic, but in the 1960s Duncan turned this on its head.

Duncan *always* played 1..g6. It was time for a 60s-style counter-culture reassessment of what had been considered "normal". Style aside, Suttles had a logical basis for playing 1...g6. It had to do with the retention of options and basic flexibility. Black defers committing his central pawns in favor of developing his f8-♗ to a square where it has *both* a defensive and offensive

function. Of all Black's pieces, the f8-♗ was the one with the clearest optimum placement, so that was the first piece Duncan developed.

Like Tigran Petrosian, Duncan was very attracted to flexibility. What appeared to classical eyes to be a lack of development, he saw as a field of opportunity. Partly this may be explicable geographically. British Columbia itself was enormously concerned with questions of development. Viewed from London, Vancouver did seem the edge of the world so it was logical, Keene observed, that Suttles 'crept round the edges' with ...g7-g6, ...h7-h5-h4 or ...c7-c6, ...b7-b5, and ...a7-a5-a4 in some intense Rat counterplay.

If this connection seems a tad mythopoetic, keep in mind that in general chess' animal variations are composed more of an attitude than long calculated variations. The Dragon variation of the Sicilian Defense was a state of mind long before books were written about it. The Rat likes the murky shade of fog and dark corners. What is going on is never exactly clear, but it is most dangerous when its back is to the wall. The Rat is a defence while the Dragon is more of a counter-attack. When they crossbred the offspring was a Pterodactyl, but that swooped the long diagonal after Suttles had evolved to the extra-flexible 1...g6, 2...d6 move order. These were rarer animals compared to the Hedgehogs which reproduced ferociously in the 1970s. In that opening, Black retained his options, remained flexible, developed slowly but carefully, and generally hid in the hedge. Classical theory, with its stand-up central combat, had also considered them unsound.

Before Suttles, Rat strategy was not an entirely new approach: Stein-Bronstein, USSR Championship, 1961, for example, had explored the idea. Even Mikhail Botvinnik had tried it. Boris Spassky tried Hippopotamuses against Tigran Petrosian in their 1966 World Championship match, although in truth Petrosian had occasional Rats in his own repertoire and seemed more bemused than confused by the critter showing up at the world championship level. But for Suttles it wasn't a surprise weapon. He always played it, and he was successful enough to popularize it widely.

Searching the digital code B06 for year 1961 in the chessgames.com archives brings up 15 examples, a third of them by Czech Maxim Ujtelky. A decade later, there are 83 examples, many of them from young players like Hort, Timman, Keene, Adorján, Andersson, Hübner and Mecking, but also from established stars like Benko, Portisch, Ivkov, Olafsson and Petrosian himself. In 1971, Bobby Fischer was in Vancouver for his Candidates Match against Mark Taimanov. Brain-storming with Suttles about the Pirc-style f2-f4 variations may have contributed to Fischer trying the early 5...c5 variation of the Pirc in his 1972 World Championship match with Spassky. Spassky himself, as World Champion, visited Vancouver for an extra-strong Canadian Open in the summer of 1971. The critical games of that event, Ree-Benko, Spassky-Ree and Spassky-Suttles were all Rats, although Suttles missed a win against Spassky in a time scramble (Volume 1, Game 99).

These were heady times for young Canadian masters. Through familiarity with Suttles' original approach, we surprisingly found ourselves on the cutting

edge of chess theory. That summer Suttles led us to the Bronze medal at the World Student Games at Mayaguez. In the last round we beat the U.S. 2.5-1.5, missing by half a point the Silver medal behind the mighty Soviets (with a young Anatoly Karpov on third board).

Our Canadian theoretical advantage was temporary. It disappeared fairly quickly as the variation became "internationalized". Keene's book *The Modern Defence* popularized the wild Rat until what had seemed radical and challenging became normal and mainstream. Nevertheless there was residue—moving the pieces on the board and drawing one's own conclusions, as Suttles did, was much more powerful than simply following the analysis or previous play of others.

Suttles had made Grandmaster performances at the 1968 and 1972 Olympiads but in both cases he kept playing and did not receive the title. After the 1972 Skopje games Duncan and his wife Dobrila, Bruce Amos and I kicked around Yugoslavia for a few weeks. I was quite surprised at how well known Duncan was. At one point a bus driver recognized him, made an unscheduled stop at a closed hotel in a rural area, and the hotel opened especially for a feast to honor the visiting hero. This celebrity extended to the back woods. Hiking in the mountains outside Sarajevo, Duncan, Bruce and I came across three shotgun-armed fellows with a home-made still for making moonshine *slivowitz*. Any chance of a "Deliverance" moment vanished when one of them began jumping up and down, pointing and yelling "Suttles! Suttles! Suttles!". As honored guests, we were treated to a sample of their new product which, while not too tasty, was effective in an alcohol way.

Oddly, at that point Suttles didn't yet have the official Grandmaster title. That came near the end of the year at San Antonio. Suttles prepared while staying at Vlad Dobrich's "chess commune" in Toronto where producing the *Chess Canada* magazine sufficed to pay the mortgage. As "resident analyst", Duncan asked if I'd spotted any way his chess could be improved. I pointed out a few positions where he had declined opportunities to advance d3-d4 even though, as he admitted, it seemed to be the best move. If that small aversion to advancing his d-♙ was obstructing his progress, he determined to blow it away which he did, in typically radical fashion, by opening 1.d4 against Gligorić in the first round in Texas. He lost that game, but the new, well-rounded Duncan Suttles was even scarier than before and he went on to score the required Grandmaster-level performance at San Antonio.

As an honorific the title was not significant, but it carried financial weight for appearance fees and invitations. Money had always been a problem for Canadian chess masters and eventually the lack of it led to Suttles' first retirement from the game. Playing the stock market was a much more lucrative use of his talents. He would come back, he said in 1975, when he had a million dollars in the bank.

Dobrila held him to that. An International Open was organized in 1981 at the mathematics building of U.B.C., within walking distance from the Suttles' apartment. Dobrila had invited Angela and me to billet. Duncan and I played

a training game on the porch with the tournament time limit. He was very rusty and remained so for the first half of the event. What really turned him back on was his adjournment against Leon Piasetski three rounds from the end (Volume 1, Game 16). At first he thought it was a draw, but then he illuminated, as if he had finally found an old light switch in a dusty attic. Again the chess bug bit him. Suddenly rabid and ferocious, he won the endgame, then upset top Grandmasters Tony Miles (Volume 1, Game 26) and Yasser Seirawan (Volume 1, Game 79) to take first prize.

Hopefully this book will introduce a whole new generation to Duncan's anomalous adventures in chess. A student can learn much about the handling of ∞ positions, deferred options, positional tension, speculation and pawn power from his games. Suttles' pawns, like Philidor's or Chigorin's, seem organic parts of one big snake. Pawn-storming was his specialty, and his games provide many instructive examples.

One thing that doesn't show up in the raw games is Suttles' attitude to the clock. Of course it was original. FIDE's classical time control was 40 moves in 150 minutes, adjourn after five hours, 18 moves in 60 minutes, adjourn, etc. The serious competitors took specialized analysts to dissect adjourned games. By 1972 Suttles had discovered that by playing his own moves quickly he could force his opponents to go through two time scrambles in the first session, without the aid of their adjournment assistants. This was a new tactic then and was quite successful.

Above all, Suttles was a very practical player.

Toronto
November, 2007

Preface
by Yasser Seirawan

I first met Grandmaster Duncan Suttles in 1973 at the U.S. Open in Chicago. I was thirteen years old and a B-class rated player. Although I had only been playing chess for fourteen months, it seemed as though I had known of him and his playing style for the whole of my young chess career. As luck would have it we met in the first round, a mismatch if ever there was one and I was destroyed (this game is found in Volume 2).

The 1973 U.S. Open in Chicago made an outsized impression on my young mind for a variety of reasons. It broke all types of decades-old records in terms of attendance with well over 700 players. This was really a sign of the times and the "Bobby Fischer boom" was very much in full swing. The top boards had their own large room with a stage and roped off areas that were constantly full of spectators. It was a delight to pop over to the top boards and look at the array of grandmasters sitting there doing battle for first place. Walter Browne and his frenetic energy at the board drew all eyes. A habitual time pressure addict, regardless of the opposition, Walter delighted us all by scrambling to make his final moves. He inevitably won and was leading the tournament throughout.

After an extremely tough tournament, it all came down to the final game. Walter was leading the tournament and needed only a draw to clinch first place. His opponent, playing Black, was none other then Duncan Suttles, my first-round opponent (see Volume 1, Game 63). Walter established a classical set-up against Duncan's favorite "Rat" defense and, from a better position, offered an early draw. Without a moment's consideration, Duncan waved his hand in a gesture of, "no way." The audience stirred with delight. I'm not sure how many other players would have been so courageous.

Walter seemed to have built up a strong strategic position but it seemed as if everyone knew what was about to erupt: Walter would get in time trouble. There would be a time scramble where tactics would abound. What would happen after that would be anyone's guess. Sure enough both players followed the expected script. Duncan kept avoiding trades and did everything to keep the game as lively as possible, often ceding ground in the process. Walter got more nervous as his flag rose and suddenly the pieces were being thrashed around quickly and decisively. The poor wall-boy could hardly keep up with the moves. The audience craned their necks and scanned the player's reactions to understand what happened. Duncan was unreadable whereas Walter's body language said it all: he had blown a won game.

When the audience realized that Duncan had won the game, there was spontaneous applause—it seemed as if everyone at the tournament had crammed their way into the playing hall. I happened to be standing beside Grandmaster Father William Lombardy, who had earlier lost to Walter and who seemed to have a slight grudge against him. He held a huge cigar in his

mouth, twisted it around with his left hand, exhaled a long plume of blue smoke into the air and said with considerable relish, "You sure hate to see a nice guy like that lose..."

I could hardly wait to get back to Seattle and share all my stories from the event with my friends and family. Duncan was very much a folk-hero in the whole Pacific Northwest. His original style of play thrilled and delighted us all. It seemed as if he would deliberately defy all the "rules" of chess strategy by refusing to occupy the center, instead building up first on the flanks, developing his knights and rooks to obscure squares and all the while baiting his opponent into a premature attack. His style of play made a huge impression on my young mind and I too took up the "Rat" with gusto and would play it for many years to come.

It was in Chicago that I first met Duncan's wife, Dobrila. It is impossible for me to think about Duncan without thinking about the two together. It is hard to imagine two more dissimilar personalities. Duncan can be quiet to the point of reticence. although once engaged he is a wonderful conversationalist. Conversely, Dobrila is happy to start a conversation on any subject in an instant. She is as friendly and out-going a person as I've ever met. As demonstrated by the longevity of their marriage, they are an ideal couple.

Duncan habitually has a very open perspective on most issues and only after careful thought will he reach a firm conclusion. Once he has done so, he can become unshakable in his belief. This stubborn streak, which sometimes resembles that of Wilhelm Steinitz in his choice of openings, has at times caused Duncan to repeatedly try to uphold some objectively suspect, or even rank, openings.

Over the many years since Chicago, I've been a frequent guest of Dobrila and Duncan, and have played numerous blitz sessions with Duncan and spent countless hours analyzing positions with him. The one constant in these sessions was Duncan's creativity—his ability to penetrate a position and find outstanding ideas is inexhaustible.

When Bobby Fischer stopped playing after winning the World Championship in 1972, the great parade of players who studied chess and wanted to be professionals gradually saw their ranks reduced. The expected profusion of tournaments did not appear, and sponsors disappeared as Bobby remained away from the board. By the late 1970s, Duncan reached the conclusion that to support his family he couldn't remain a professional player. Duncan turned to computers and became a brilliant and successful programmer. Even so, Duncan has retained his affection for chess and has often performed charity exhibitions at no charge and has visited many local events. On occasion he will play a game or two, much to the delight of the spectators. Whenever we meet he is always keen to ask me what is happening in the chess world.

Throughout the years I've often visited Vancouver, B.C. and have taken advantage of the hospitality of Bruce Harper and his charming wife Robin to spend long, leisurely weekends playing chess, Risk and other games. Most recently, this has included "Seirawan chess", which Bruce and I devised in an

effort to restore some of the originality and creativity to chess that has been lost over the years (see seirawanchess.com). Bruce and I also spent many enjoyable and puzzling hours analyzing Duncan's games and specific positions.

The three volumes of this book have incorporated the results of these joint analysis sessions and discussions. There is no record of the vast amount of time that Bruce has put into this project, but he kept his day job and I have no concerns on that score. Our writing styles and views of chess are similar and there can have been fewer co-authorships that have gone more smoothly. I am grateful for the work he has put into this project, without which this book would not exist.

Unlike a "Best Games" collection, where the featured player looks almost infallible, in many games the reader will be see mistakes from both players. In today's age of instant information and computer-generated analysis, it can be rather disconcerting to have to point out that a particularly creative idea had a glaring, or even a subtle, hidden flaw. Surely better players would have seen the win?

Such hindsight misses the point entirely. Duncan's style involves flinging down a gauntlet and proudly exclaiming, "Refute this—if you can!" In many of his games, his opponents are drawn out of their comfort zones as early as the first few moves. Unable to rely on memorized openings and familiar patterns, stresses and tensions begin early and often last through the whole game. Fighting from the very start to the finish is unfamiliar terrain for even the most experienced grandmasters. The players tire and when the inevitable time trouble arises, the tensions which have built up may take their toll. In Duncan's games, more than almost any grandmasters' games that I know, mistakes are induced, good lines are missed and sometimes both players follow an entirely wrong channel of play. Duncan's opponents often focus on what Duncan is planning (or what they think he is planning) and become absorbed in trying to prevent Duncan from carrying out his plans or in trying to show that his ideas are wrong. This is not so much case of hypnosis—rather it is Duncan setting the agenda for the game.

Emanuel Lasker described chess as a battle of wills and this is very much the case in Duncan's games. They are not cold, intellectual calculating games, but rather oven-hot contests of red cheeks and shaky hands. The games are complex and confusing, and often seem to turn on a single tempo or a missed tactic.

It is hard to describe Duncan's style. While the word "murky" might be best, it is simplistic, negative and somewhat dismissive. Duncan most enjoys unbalanced positions. His games often resemble those where the kings are castled on opposite flanks, even when they are not (Duncan's king has never been fearful—nor can he afford to be). Duncan has an intriguing ability to raise the tensions in the position by stirring up trouble in parts of the board where his opponent hasn't been looking. This often distracts and confuses his

opponents, but when those opponents dare to play in a similar vein, disaster can strike quickly and suddenly.

Duncan's style is nearly impossible to imitate and players often caution others against trying to play in the "Suttles style". Certainly it can be dangerous to do so without understanding the ideas behind Duncan's play, but everyone can enjoy Duncan's games for their quality, originality and creative ideas.

Duncan's style is unmistakable. His propensity to play on the flanks at the expense of the center can seem too daring, but this criticism is largely unjustified. Duncan enjoys sharp, tactical positions but the core of his style is to build up sound positions with long-term strategic plans. The reader should pay careful attention to how Duncan plays with his pawns, as he is constantly trying to damage his opponent's pawn structure while retaining the integrity of his own. Duncan is a positional player with a propensity for provoking wild tactical slugfests. He is a fine calculator with an ability to look deeply into a position.

If there is one weakness in Duncan's play (apart from his dislike of boring positions, if that can be termed a "weakness"), it might be his tendency to overlook relatively simple tactical strokes while executing a long-term plan or calculating long and complicated variations. This combination of incredible depth and occasional blindness to "obvious" (in hindsight) tactics is both amusing and confounding. I dare say each of us shares this trait with Duncan, but to a much lesser extent.

If these books bring you pleasure at watching an outstanding original player practicing his craft we will be pleased. One thing is for sure—Duncan's games will be enjoyed by a wide range of players.

Preface
by Bruce Harper

I also met Duncan Suttles at an impressionable age, when I had been playing tournament chess for a year or so. Duncan was the dominant personality in the very active Vancouver chess scene and it was really something to think that you were playing next to a person who was about to go to Europe to take on the world's best in this or that event.

In the pre-internet days we all played blitz chess (five minutes per game, which certainly allowed for more thinking than three minutes or the addictive on-line one-minute bullet which is so popular now). Duncan was not (and still is not) a chess snob. He would play all comers, but if you wanted to keep playing him you were well advised to win some games. That alone was an incentive to study and improve your play, and so I did.

I can't consider any of the thousands of hours that Duncan, Peter Biyiasas (who become a Grandmaster and Canadian Champion) and I spent playing

blitz chess to have been wasted. We all had different styles, and the level of play kept going up.

My approach to chess was greatly influenced by Duncan's play. Skeptics have pointed to me as one of the best examples of a player whose chess was "ruined" by Suttles—an accusation which I consider a tremendous compliment and of which I have always been proud. Even during my "non-Suttles phases" (open Sicilians, Caro Kanns and who knows what other openings), Duncan's influence has always been there.

There is an importance difference in the way Duncan and I play, of course—he's much better! The spark of genius in a great player cannot be simply acquired by someone else, and Duncan's spark is in any case unique. There have always been moves that only he would consider, and analyzing with Duncan was often a humbling, albeit an instructive, experience.

My familiarity with Duncan's chess, geographical proximity to him (we live only a few minutes away from each other), writing experience, and our long-standing friendship made me a logical candidate to write a book about him.

The idea of a book on Canadian Grandmaster Duncan Suttles was first conceived in the summer of 1975. The book was to consist of a selection of annotated games. Duncan and I even started work on the project, but the summer ended and the idea was put on hold.

Later a more ambitious concept was adopted—a book containing both annotated games and the raw game scores of all the other Suttles games which could be found. Since Duncan habitually either threw his game scores away or just left them at the board once the game ended, it wasn't easy finding unpublished games. There was no convenient box of score sheets, much less an embossed, carefully maintained scrapbook of published games. Instead Duncan had only a handful of sometimes illegible game scores.

The hunting-gathering phase of the project then began. In the late 1980s, some momentum developed, in large part because of the development of chess databases, which made the tracking and organization of Suttles' games much easier. There were 200, then 300, then 400, and finally over 600 games... New games seemed to come out of nowhere, and will undoubtedly continue to come to light for some time to come.

At some point the original idea of a book of selected Suttles' games grew into something larger. It was thought that a second volume of Suttles' remaining games, unannotated, should be added, so that readers would have access to these games.

The idea of a second volume of unannotated games was overtaken by events. The development of databases made raw games scores readily available to the average player, so putting unannotated games in a book made little sense. In any case, many of these games had notes, and it seemed wrong not to use them. Finally, the games themselves were interesting and worthy of analysis.

The decision was therefore made to expand the second volume of the book by annotating all of Suttles' remaining games, while retaining the original idea of selecting 100 games and ordering them by theme in the first volume. The other games were sorted by opening, using the well-established *Encyclopedia of Chess Openings* codes. The result is a three-volume work, as the original "volume 2" expanded into an additional two books.

The main goal of this work is to allow chess players of all levels to become more familiar with Suttles' games. I think most readers will learn from both the games and their annotations, but learning should be fun. Win, lose or draw, Suttles seldom fails to entertain.

In the era before the computer-driven homogenization of chess styles and the instant transmission of new moves through the internet, chess players had distinctive styles, and none was more distinctive than Suttles'. Few players have been as willing to take risks as Suttles, and his games combine fearlessness and creativity in a unique way. Put simply, Suttles was not afraid to lose, and while his competitive results may have suffered from this, his games endure in value because of it. Suttles played fighting, uncompromising chess. While his ideas may not always have been objectively correct, his opponents faced the challenge of proving that at the board. Suttles was not afraid to lose games, and he was even less afraid to lose post-mortems!

Suttles' unique and confusing style reflected his radical (and sometimes single-minded) implementation of known positional ideas in unusual settings. Because Suttles often carried out his strategic plans in a pure and almost fanatical manner, his games have considerable instructional value, and this has led the authors into some long digressions about chess and has influenced the structure of the book itself.

Finally, Suttles' chess has an artistic element that adds to its uniqueness. Like the rest of us, he played to win, but not at all costs. Suttles viewed the chessboard the way a painter views a blank canvas—as an opportunity to create something of lasting value and beauty. Beauty being in the eye of the beholder, this aspect of Suttles' chess has created legions of devoted fans, and surprisingly acerbic detractors as well. Doing something differently will always attract scorn. A number of these derisive comments by critics have been faithfully reproduced in this book. The one thing which Suttles' critics appear to have in common is that they did not appreciate *why* Suttles played chess (as opposed to understanding *how* Suttles plays chess, which is also not that easy).

For all these reasons, this book seemed like a worthy project, and now it is done.

http://www.suttlesbook.com/

Chapter 1

The "Suttles Style"

Any attempt to define precisely the "Suttles style" is doomed to failure. The essential feature of Suttles' play is creativity, and by definition no one can hope to predict what original creation will come next. All we can do is look at and appreciate the games Suttles has played, and try to discern the various themes which run through his play.

One frequently asked question is whether Suttles is a super-positional player or a super-tactical player. Our answer to this common question is that Suttles is a super-positional player, although like all positional players he understands that the tactics must work. As a competitor, Suttles is quite willing (and able) to resort to tactics when his strategic ideas have failed, but in most of his games tactics are subordinate to strategic goals. The misconception that Suttles is just a very good tactician arises from the fact that Suttles' strategic ideas are so deep that it is sometimes hard to know if he has any plan at all. Some of his frustrated opponents have been left with the impression that they were swindled by an incompetent strategist. This might be the highest compliment a defeated opponent can pay to the victor's strategic abilities.

In Suttles' games, the reader will find many familiar examples of positional ideas. Part of Suttles' genius is his ability to penetrate the fog of battle and apply these positional ideas in seemingly impossible ways. The result is a unique style of chess.

Game 1

Rat B06/19
Zinn, L - Suttles
Havana, Olympiad, 1966

1.e4 g6

The proper name for this opening is the "Rat". See Appendix I for a full discussion of this interesting topic.

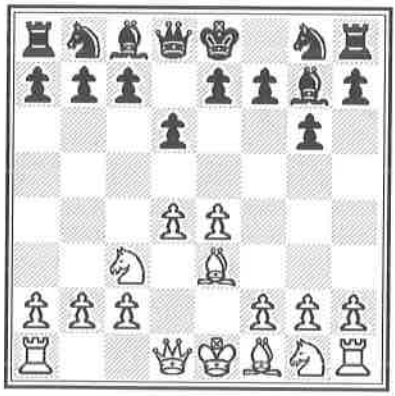
2.d4 ♗g7

Suttles came upon the refinement 2...d6!? only later. Objectively speaking, both moves are probably equally good or bad.

3.♘c3

Here there are so many possible moves for White, most of which we shall eventually see, that it's not worth discussing the alternatives.

3...d6 4.♗e3



The beginning of a scheme of development which resembles the Sämisch variation of the King's Indian Defense (1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.f3). In his notes to this game (*Chess Canada*, January 1973), Suttles makes the following observation:

"This opening set-up is rather solid for White and gives attacking chances on the kingside. Should Black castle early he may run into an attack similar to that in the Dragon Sicilian. Hence, Black's best is to begin immediate counterplay on the queen's wing."

In contrast to the Sämisch variation, White's pawn is at c2 rather than c4, which gives him less control over the center and queenside. In return, he is a tempo ahead in development. Black, on the other hand, has not yet committed his g8-♘ to f6, and is therefore less exposed to immediate attack by e4-e5. Black also retains better control of the dark squares on the kingside, making White's d2-♕ and e3-♗ lineup less effective, as White cannot exchange Black's g7-♗ with ♗e3-h6.

All in all, Black's next move meets the requirements of the position, as does the more current 4...a6.

4...c6 5.♕d2 b5!

A consistent continuation. As pointed out by Suttles, Black's counterplay lies on the queenside, not in the center, which will remain in a state of flux for some time. Black is unconcerned that he has already made four pawn moves, as White's lead in development cannot immediately be translated into anything concrete.

6.f3 ♘d7

7.a3!?

Passive, but not necessarily bad. Suttles gives the variation 7.d5?! b4! 8.dxc6 bxc3 9.cxd7† ♗xd7 10.bxc3, "where White's extra pawn is rather useless", while 7.a4 b4 8.♘a2 a5 9.c3 bxc3 10.bxc3 leaves White's a2-♘ badly placed. There are other ways for White to handle this sort of position, as we shall see. But it is characteristic of Suttles' style that important positional issues and confusing variations often arise very early in his games, throwing both players on their own resources right from the start.

7...a6

Taking the sting out of 8.d5. Another approach is 7...♖b8, followed by ...a7-a5 and ...b5-b4.

8.♘h3

A good move, as the knight will be effectively placed at f2.

8...♘b6 9.♘f2 h5!?

Another characteristic move. The idea is to restrain White's expansion with g2-g4 and h2-h4-h5, and at the same time permit development of Black's g8-♘ to h6. The drawback of 9...h5!? is that it weakens g6 and g5, which could have unpleasant consequences when Black later plays ...f7-f5, which Suttles terms a "natural lever ... against White's center."

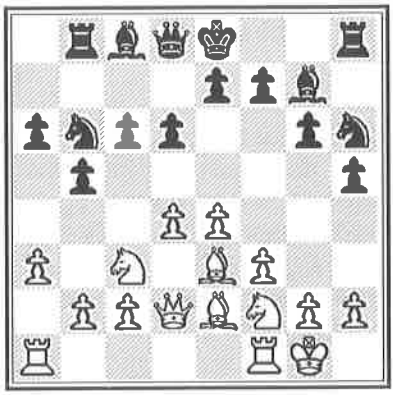
Throughout his career, Suttles has had a fondness for placing his pieces behind his pawns, and thus he often makes a large number of pawn moves early in the game. Imitators have often come to grief, not appreciating that every pawn move Suttles makes has a strategic purpose. The principle that it is better to move pieces than pawns in the opening is really an example of the more general principle that in the opening nothing should be moved without a good reason. Aimless pawn moves are a recipe for disaster; but purposeful pawn moves are an attempt to seek a long-term advantage at the risk of short-term adversity.

10.♗e2 ♖b8!?

How can this move be explained? There are no open or half-open files in the position, and no immediate prospect of the position opening up. But both Black rooks now have as much scope as possible, as they are behind Black pawns which are relatively far up the board (all the way to the fourth rank—beggars can't be choosers), and there are real possibilities that the Black b5- and h5-♙s will later disappear, further increasing the power of the Black rooks. Nimzowitsch used the term "mysterious rook moves" to describe the placement of heavy pieces on lines which a player anticipates will open later in the game, or which the opponent must open if he is to make progress.

10...♖b8!? is therefore an example of "prophylaxis"—another term coined by Nimzowitsch. Black is not only gradually generating counterplay; he is preparing to meet White's attack on the queenside. This sort of "anticipatory defense" figures prominently in Suttles' games, and explains why his positions are often surprisingly hard to demolish, appearances notwithstanding.

11.O-O ♘h6



In his notes to this game, Suttles passes by this move without comment. We cannot do the same, as it is the first, but by no means the last, time we shall see the development of Suttles' king's knight to h6 (or h3). Perhaps the only reason to regret the passing of the old "descriptive" notation is that "N-KR3" describes for both White and Black the move which has, more than anything, be-

come a Suttles trademark. (Suttles himself, by the way, employs a complex mixture of algebraic and descriptive notation when recording his games, which acts something like a cypher).

Positionally 11...♘h6 fits into Black's scheme of development. The h6-♘ supports the advance ...f7-f5, and after Black captures White's e4-♙ with ...fxe4, Black's h6-♘ will be able to go to either f5 or g4, depending on how White recaptures. In the meantime, Black's h6-♘ is safe and does not impede the action of his g7-♗.

Finally, it is worth noting that all of Black's pieces, developed or not, are behind his pawns.

12.b3

Preparing to open lines on the queenside. The tournament Bulletin gives 12.a4 b4 13.♘cd1 a5 14.c4 as an alternative.

12...♕c7

Another "creeping" move. Black still has not committed himself to a specific counterattack against White's center (either ...c5 or ...f5, or both, are possible), and is ready to meet any line opening triggered by his opponent.

It may look as though Black has just made a bunch of near-random moves, with no unifying idea behind them, but in fact considerable care is required to make sure that White can't suddenly blow the position open and make use of his superior development. After all, Black is unable to castle and therefore his king is a fixed, although elusive, target.

White, for his part, is now almost fully mobilized and decides to open the c-file, relying on the principle that opening the position should favor the side with the better development.

13.a4 b4 14.♘a2

14.♘cd1 was also possible, but White plans to attack down the c-file.

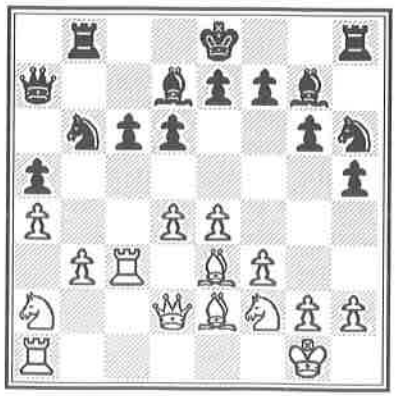
14...a5 15.♖fc1

White's intentions are fairly transparent. He will pry open the c-file, but wishes to recapture on c3 with a rook. The immediate 15.c3!? bxc3 16.♕xc3 is a reasonable alternative, when White can hope to exploit Black's pawn weaknesses on the queenside.

15...♗d7 16.c3 bxc3 17.♖xc3

After a natural sequence of moves, White has opened the c-file and threatens to gain the initiative. 17.♘xc3, bringing the wayward a2-♘ back into the game, was also good.

17...♕a7!?



Black removes his queen from the c-file, where it was subject to a masked attack from White's rook, only to put it on the seemingly dangerous g1-a7 diagonal, where it is subject to a similar attack from White's bishop! But Suttles has seen that White's e3-♗ can't effectively attack Black's a7-♕. He comments:

"The diagonal a7-g1 turns out to play a very important role in the game as White has weakened d4 by his previous moves on the queenside."

While it's far from obvious, White's d4-♙ is potentially weak. White's knights are not well placed to protect his d4-♙, and White's c-♙ is gone. As the game develops, White will find himself in difficulties because of this central weakness.

It is interesting to note Suttles' reference to the "a7-g1" diagonal, in place of the normal usage "g1-a7", which follows the convention of putting the White side of the board first. Suttles has never been one to follow conventions, but in any case his way of putting it makes a great deal of sense. As the game progresses, the g1-a7 diagonal turns out to be less important than the a7-g1 diagonal.

18.♖ac1 f5!?

Just in time, if it works. Black tries to take advantage of the fact that White's pieces have concentrated on the queenside, but have not yet broken through. Black intends to bring his h6-♘ into the game and create counterplay, albeit at the cost of weakening his own kingside. Strategically the game is very tense—another hallmark of Suttles' chess.

19.♗d3

Having spotted the weakness on g6 resulting from 18...f5!?, White moves his e2-♗ to d3 in order to attack it. 19.♗d3 is a sound, conservative move, and while we can admire the originality and strategic depth of Black's play, White's position is by no means inferior.

If only psychological considerations mattered, 18...f5!? deserves two exclamation marks. Black is trying to shake his opponent's self-confidence, so White will start asking himself "where did I go wrong?" The correct answer is "nowhere", but this is often more easily seen afterwards, rather than during the game when the clock is ticking. Time and time again, we shall see examples of the psychological element of Suttles' style.

Looking at the position from White's point of view, his only real problem is his a2-♘, which has no moves. The weakness of White's a4-♙ makes the liberating pawn advance b3-b4 difficult, and c1 and c3 are blocked by White's rooks. So White's position is fine, except for one bad piece and the potential weakness of his d4-♙.

What about Black's position? The advance 18...f5!? is not without drawbacks, but Black's weakness on g6 is really just one facet of an incipient light square weakness throughout Black's position. The light squares g6, e6, c6, d5 and b5 are all potentially weak, although Black's d7-♗ and c6-♙ both control important squares.

The last sentence provides a clue. White can use his superior develop-