



THE ROOKIE

AN ODYSSEY THROUGH
CHESS (AND LIFE)

STEPHEN MOSS

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Chess is over 1,500 years old and played throughout the world. Over the course of three years, **Stephen Moss** travelled east and west to the game's hotbeds in an effort to master its mysteries and unlock the secret of its enduring appeal. What he asks, is the essence of chess? And what will his quest to become a top-level player reveal about his own character along the way?

The Rookie is part history of the game, part travelogue, part self-help book. At its heart lies Moss's attempt to escape a lifetime of amateurism. He wants to become an expert at one thing, understand what grandmasters see, get inside their heads. But what will be the consequences when he realises he is doomed to mediocrity – in chess, as in life?

Mirroring the squares on a board and alternating between 'black' chapters (in which Moss blunders his way through tournaments at home and abroad) and 'white' chapters (in which he seeks inspiration from the current crop of grandmasters and delves into the greatest players of the past), *The Rookie* offers a wonderfully acerbic report on the world of chess.

Moss travels to Russia and the US; talks to players and officials who knew Bobby Fischer and tries to unravel the enigma of that tortured genius; meets Garry Kasparov and Magnus Carlsen, world champions past and present; and keeps bumping into Armenian superstar Levon Aronian in the gents at tournaments. Along the way he experiences triumphs and even wins trophies but too often he is beaten by precocious ten-year-olds, leaving his ego in tatters. He is looking for spiritual fulfilment from the game, but for much of the time finds only mental torture. Which, in the end, will be the winner?

For editors:

In a long journalistic career – too long, his critics would say – **Stephen Moss** has written mainly for the *Guardian*. He is one of a select band to have met Bobby Fischer, Garry Kasparov and Magnus Carlsen, three of the game's greatest world champions. He has even faced Carlsen and Kasparov across the board, losing insipidly on both occasions. Whether any of this constitutes a qualification for writing this book is highly questionable. He lives in London and is available for interview | @StephenMossGdn

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