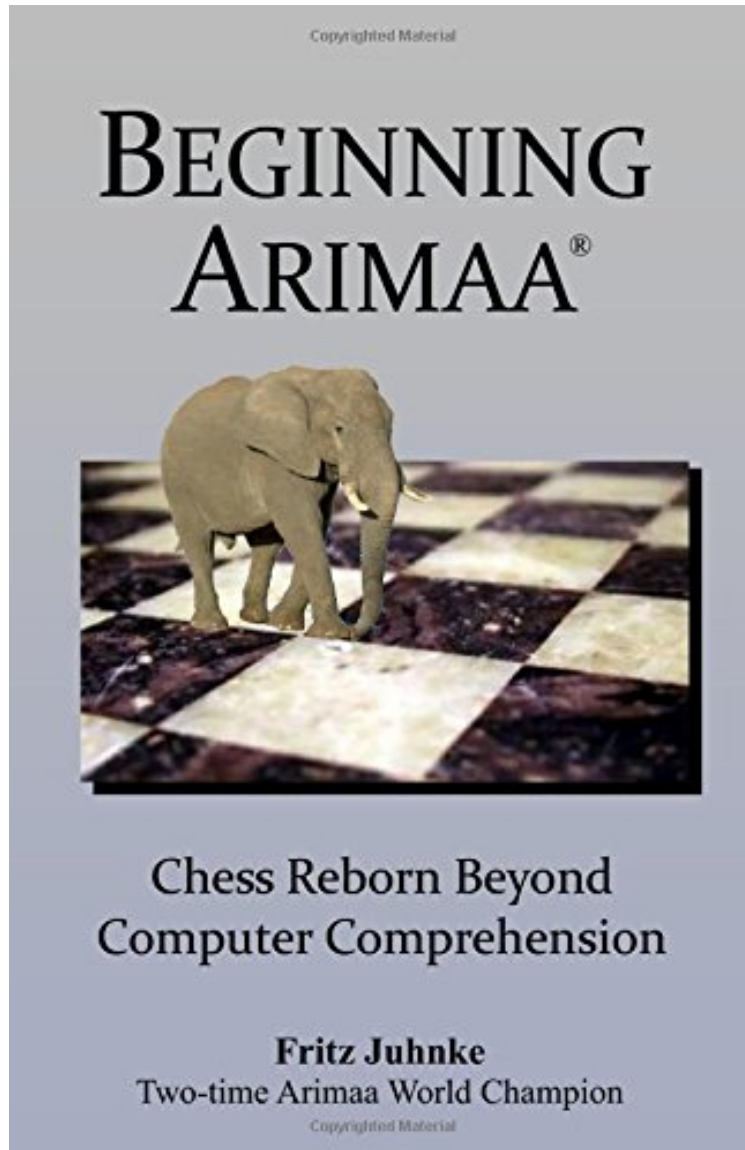


(Download) Beginning Arimaa: Chess Reborn Beyond Computer Comprehension

Beginning Arimaa: Chess Reborn Beyond Computer Comprehension

Fritz Juhnke

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Fritz Juhnke : Beginning Arimaa: Chess Reborn Beyond Computer Comprehension before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Beginning Arimaa: Chess Reborn Beyond Computer Comprehension:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. You can skip this and just pick Daligault's Arimaa Strategies and

Tactics book instead

By Laurentiu Cristofor

This is a good introduction for Arimaa, but it can be skipped if one is just interested in getting to play the game better; in which case they should directly start with Daligault's Arimaa Strategies and Tactics. The chapters in Fritz Juhnke's book alternate between two larger topics: Arimaa itself and how to play it. For me, the discussion of Arimaa had some interesting aspects, such as the author's discussion of what makes a great game, but otherwise it feels too much like promotional material that hypes the game from perspectives that most players will probably not care about. For example, I don't care much about how difficult it is for computers to play Arimaa and I don't think that necessarily indicates that Arimaa is a game that will generate interest for a long time; indeed, this aspect may just make the game more easily frustrating for casual players. The \$10,000 prize for writing a program that can beat expert Arimaa human players is brought up, but really, that money would not cover the cost of research and development of such a program, so that is not much of an incentive in itself. Arimaa is said to have been born from the event of Deep Blue's victory over Kasparov - Deep Blue being a specialized machine that must have cost many times Arimaa's prize without including the cost of its programming. It is true that these days computer chess programs are run on utility hardware but the rules for winning Arimaa's prize are even more carefully formulated than the conditions of many human-computer chess contests. Anyway, if this paragraph intrigued you, then you may appreciate this part of the book; if not, then just know that a good portion of its content is dedicated to topics like this. The chapters that cover the playing of Arimaa include many examples from actual gameplay in the arimaa game room. There is good information here, but I have three criticisms, two of which can hopefully be addressed in a future edition:

1. The move notation used by the book is different from the notation used on the game site, as well as from the notation used in Daligault's book. This is one important reason why I recommend skipping this book - you'll spend time learning a notation and then you'll not be able to reuse that knowledge when you'll move to the next book or to playing the game online. This can be fixed in a second edition by converting the notation to the official one.
2. Many important tactical concepts are introduced during the discussion of a position. When the term is introduced for the first time, it is written in bold, but this matter of fact introduction makes it hard to realize the importance of the concept until you come over other examples of its application later in the book (and it makes it hard to find again the paragraph where it was first introduced). This is an issue of presentation and might require a significant rewrite to address. In contrast, I find Daligault's presentation much better organized, as it introduces principles and concepts very clearly.
3. There is no index for the concepts. There is a glossary section that explains each concept, but there is no way to find out when a concept was first introduced and where else can you find additional examples of its application. This makes it hard to use the book as study material. And because concepts are introduced in regular commentary, you cannot even browse through the book looking at definitions until you find the one you're interested. Daligault's book does have an index, btw. Again, this issue could be fixed in a second condition.

I read this book, played several games against the AI on the arimaa site as well as against the arimaa Android app (which I highly recommend) and I just started reading through Daligault's book. Looking back, I think I could have just skipped this book, because the more interesting concepts that it covers are also covered in Daligault's book. I just noticed that *Beginning Arimaa: Chess Reborn Beyond Computer Comprehension* sells at twice the price of *Arimaa Strategies and Tactics* (\$15.26 vs \$7.12 at this time) so one cannot even excuse its purchase as an inexpensive add-on. [UPDATE 2015/10/30]: Earlier this year the Arimaa Challenge was won by David Wu, the author of the Android app I mentioned in this review. This makes me laugh because it now dates all the conversation about the complexity of Arimaa that appears in this book. At least now people can put computers at rest and just play the game for fun.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful.

Great book for a great game

By David J. Akenson

Beginning Arimaa is part guide book, part philosophical treatise and part love story. Yes, love story. The author is clearly passionate about the game Arimaa, as am I. The book is imbued with the author's love of the game and his keen insights into what might make this game special. The chapters cover the familiar such as tactics and strategy, and the usual analysis of actual games. Comparison with other games such as Twixt and Abalone is also useful to the reader wanting to understand how Arimaa works. It also ventures into some speculation on what might make Arimaa still engaging in the long distant future - what might find it a place alongside chess and go. Building on Mark Thompson's excellent paper on what makes a good, or great abstract strategy game, Juhnke adds the idea of tension and the economy of a game. How a game builds and holds tension and how to play economically with your moves. His insight into what Thompson calls "clarity" (how far one can see into the game) is of special interest. We do not just play the person across from us Juhnke claims, we also "play that invisible part of our soul". Perfect clarity allows machines to out-think humans. Total opacity prevents human engagement since we don't have a clue where to start in a game, or what strategic goals will bring us the ultimate goal. We need, Juhnke tells us, to find the "sweet spot" between extremes. It is the equation between clarity and opacity, or the hidden depth, that drives the player to search for deeper strategies and purpose for their tactical assaults. The author also, correctly in my opinion, does not provide opening and endgame theory as guides often do. To win at chess, it is almost essential to read every guide since the Game and Play of the Chest of 1474! Juhnke wants the joy of creative thinking and discovery to remain with the reader after the book is finished. His goal is to teach a way of approaching the deep structure of the game and to provide a way of finding pleasure in play. Apart from some chapter titles and their questionable justification (which doesn't negatively affect the reading or comprehension) the book is a must for fans of

Arimaa, those curious about the game, or anyone interested in how abstracts work. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Required reading for Arimaa beginners
By Matthew Jacobs
I caught the Arimaa "bug" two months ago, but after playing close to 100 games my rating plateaued. I had the distressing feeling that I was going to have to play a LOT of games before I started seeing any new improvements. I bought this book as well as "Arimaa Strategies and Tactics" for my birthday. Wow! My rating jumped around 100 points from reading this book, and I haven't topped out yet! (Your mileage may vary; I'm not a novice but my rating is only a few hundred points above the beginners.) One of the things I learned from the book is that not everyone has to come out of the gate with both guns blazing. I'm a control player, just like the author was at the time he wrote the book. (I think since that time he's become more aggressive.) I like stifling my opponent and cutting off all his options. Before I was feeling guilty that I should go on the offensive more, and reading this book helped me feel more comfortable that, right now, that's just not my style. Also Juhnke says he never tries to calculate a forced capture more than two moves out. Again, I always assumed that that was something that I needed to be able to do to be a world champion. Now I can just relax and have fun and play Arimaa, which is how life should be.

Arimaa is a modern abstract strategy game with potential to rival the majesty of classics such as chess and Go. In *Beginning Arimaa*, two-time Arimaa World Champion Fritz Juhnke tackles two questions in alternate chapters: How does one play Arimaa well? And how does one judge that Arimaa is worth playing? The strategy chapters are replete with diagrammed positions to illustrate the fundamental concepts of Arimaa play. Juhnke takes the reader step by step from basic winning configurations, through capture techniques, on to strategies that befuddle even experts. The Arimaa Challenge, an annual prize contest pitting the top computer player against top humans, was won by the computer in 2015, making some chapters of *Beginning Arimaa* obsolete. The game itself, however, still shows every sign of being a modern classic with inexhaustible depth and variety. The communal level of strategic understanding has continued to rise every year, with no end in sight.

About the Author
Fritz Juhnke lives in Dallas, Texas, with his beloved wife Katie Hoody. When asked about his nine-day facial stubble, Juhnke replies, "How can I shave when there is Arimaa to be played?"