



Chess Man Malcolm Body

Jon Now it's not every day you get to meet a knight in shining armour, but I'm sitting opposite one now - otherwise known as Malcolm. So I'm white, I'll go first, Malcolm.

Malcolm Yes, yes. Okay.

Jon So, um, what do you think is the secret of being a good chess player?

Malcolm Er, like a lot of things, it's practice, dedication to the game, yes. People think if you play chess you're intelligent, but really all it means is that you're good at playing chess. It doesn't relate to intelligence at all, really.

Jon I'm glad you're saying that because you're up on me already. Better start concentrating. But to be a good chess player, have you got to know quite a few moves ... automatically?

Malcolm Oh yes, yes. Like the opening there, 'Bird's opening'. It's a recognised opening, and you need to know the ideas behind that opening to be a good player.

Jon So the thing is, if you're a total beginner, is it possible to enjoy playing chess, to have a good game?

Malcolm Yes, I used to teach juniors sub-games of chess. There's one game where you play just with pawns, and that could be over in 30 seconds.

Jon Well, this game isn't going to last much longer. When you say 'juniors', how old would they be?

Malcolm Anything down to about three years old.

Jon Three, good lord. Do you think I'm at that standard yet, three-year-old?

Malcolm Er not quite, no. Getting there.

Jon Right, I'd better concentrate a little bit more. So, what level did you play?

Malcolm I played at county level, not quite international level, though I played

against various Grand Masters. I played one game against a guy called Leonid Stein when he was Champion of Russia ...

Jon Dare I ask who won?

Malcolm No point in asking. Yes, at their level they're ... I thought I played chess, but they play something different to me.

Jon So what's the longest - this won't be the longest game you've ever had, but what's the longest game you've played?

Malcolm That was just over 12 hours long, with a friend. He didn't stay a friend long after that, we just wore each other out.

Jon I think at 12 hours, I'd start to play correspondence chess.

Malcolm One of the nice things is the quickest game in chess. People think it's what's called Scholar's Mate, but it is actually Fool's Mate, which is ... that ... check mate in two moves!

Jon Two moves?

Malcolm F4, for white, D6, for black, G4, for white, and then Queen H4, mate! Er, Scholar's Mate is mate in four ... that is check mate, like that.

Jon Yes, yeah.

Malcolm That's four moves, for white.

Jon And that's Scholar's Mate?

Malcolm That's Scholar's Mate. It's quite a well-known one but, yes, it does happen in chess.

Jon Even at high level?

Malcolm Even at high level, yes.

Jon Good Lord.

Malcolm Because a lot of the good players have forgotten about it. I mean there was a match between Magnus Carlson, the World Chess Champion, and the founder of Apple, Steve Jobs. And Magnus Carlson mated Steve Jobs in less than 30 seconds using that. (Moves a piece) I think we'll say that check mate.

Jon Oh dear. That's about the length of our game. That's what comes of not concentrating. Thank you very much for your Master Class, Malcolm ...

Malcolm No problem at all.

