

# ELEMENTS OF CHESSTROLOGY

By Bob Basalla

Did you ever wonder why your chess never seems to get any better? Why you keep making the same mistakes over and over? It seems sometimes that the style of most amateurs can be defined by their ingrained bad habits. Well, if this is you (and if you're honest, you know it is), it may be that you are fighting against your true chess nature, something that was preset for you upon your birth. You are either not aware of or have not yet fully appreciated that you—we all—were born under a specific sign which largely controls our behavior on the 64. Yes, I am talking about the arcane science of chesstrology.

For those few of you unfamiliar with chesstrology, the Caissic offshoot of astrology, let me provide you with a primer to get you up to speed. Perhaps then the road to improvement will open wide for you the closer and closer you conform your game to chesstrological principles.

As in astrology proper, your chesstrological sign is imparted to you at birth. The influence of one of twelve signs will largely determine your fate as a chess player, whether you like it or believe it or not. Therefore, it behooves every player to know their sign so they may incorporate these universal and eternal truths into their manner and method of play instead of the usual futile battle against these predetermined qualities. Let us then list the twelve chesstrological signs with a brief synopsis of their individual properties. Of course, these are only thumbnail sketches; a fuller exposition can be had only by consultation with a professional chesstrologer.

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## **SQUARIES**, *the space grabber*

March 21—April 19

Symbol: the hashtag (#), representing a chessboard

It is fitting that the chesstrological year opens on March 21, the equinox, as all chess games begin in relative equality. Players under the influence of Squaries love expanding their chessboard domain. They are encroachers, spreaders, annexers, and infiltrators, always searching for a way to ram home their advantage in space. Indefatigable in this regard, those of the Squaries caste must always take care and pace themselves so as not to overextend.

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## **TAUROOKS**, *the aggressor*

April 20—May 20

Symbol: the rook

The direct, straightforward, one could say bullying, style of those under this sign perfectly accords with their rook symbol. Though laudably inerrant in pursuit of their goal, it does make opponents of Taurooks persuasion rather predictable, one of many reasons a player should ferret out the other side's sign before an important game. On the romance front, Taurooks do have a strange affinity for Capaborns, desirous of making a castle with them. Incidentally, the 19th letter of the Greek alphabet, formed from two perpendicular line segments ("T"), corresponds to the

avored move types of a Taurooks, which is likely how in ancient times it came to be incorporated into the sign's name.

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## **TEMPI—EYE**, *the two timer*

May 21—June 21

Symbol: a chess clock

Efficient to the end, the Tempi—Eye are the most accurate of players, able to see in—between moves at a far greater rate than their chesstrological brethren. Time pressure may be a problem though, as many Tempi—Eyes can be mesmerized by the hands of a running chess clock. For them, digital timer technology is a must. The Tempi—Eyed are also inexplicably fascinated by twin chess problems as well as doubled pawns or rooks.

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## **CHANCER**, *the gambler*

June 22—July 22

Symbol: dice

Those born under Chancer are the chessboard risk takers. Soundness is of only secondary importance, if that. Consequently, Chancers win many a brilliant victory while having more than their fair share of debacles. The regularity of such defeats in their shell games can make many a Chancer crabby.

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## **CLEO**, *the lioness*

July 23—August 22

Symbol: the queen

Tenacious and resourceful, aggressive Cleos, allegedly named after Cleopatra, Queen of the Nile, powerfully range the chessboard savannah in search of their prey. They take great pride in this. But pride is the deadly sin they must work to avoid. Cleos have a curious relationship with Score—Peons who seem strangely willing to promote the interests of this other sign.

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## **ERGO**, *the strategist*

August 23—September 22

Symbol: Rodin's The Thinker

Ergos are the innovators in the chess world, hence The Thinker symbol. Their original (virginal?) ideas enliven our game and make chess the enjoyable pastime we love. Unfortunately, not all new concepts are sound and not all games can be won sans tactics. And are like their Tempi—Eye colleagues, but for different reasons, Ergos are prone to time trouble as they seek Kantian certitude for their every move.

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**LEAPRA, the vaulter**

September 23—October 23

Symbol: the knight

Leapras can be clever players due to their indirect approach. The sign's very first letter, an "L," visually signifies their circuitous intent. On the downside, Leapras have a penchant for rashly jumping to conclusions, which explains the desire of many a Leapra to keep the positional scales balanced and level, hardly the way to make progress in a competitive tournament. Favorite vacations for Leapras? Why touring of course, visiting venues once and only once due to their curiosity and inherent wanderlust. Favorite foods: oats, apples and sugar cubes.

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**SCORE—PEON, the promoter**

October 24—November 21

Symbol: the pawn

Score—Peons make up a disproportionate number of the rank and file "grunt" players in most events. They are the soul of tournaments, always striving to promote their rankings. Oddly, Score—Peons usually prefer to be chained to others of their persuasion rather than those of alternative signs (the exception being Cleos). And isolated Score—Peons are the most miserable of chess players. It should be noted in passing that those of Score—Peon parentage are commonly known for the sting at the end of their combinations.

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**SAC—INVARIABLE, the gambiteer**

November 22—December 21

Symbol: doubled check marks

Swashbucklers at heart, Sac—Invariable folks go arrow straight for the gusto no matter what the material cost. Consequently, their checking accounts are perpetually being overdrawn. Their favorite color is Evergreen, their favorite metaphysics Immortal. No wonder 19th century great Adolf Anderssen (Dec. 6) is the quintessential Sac—Invariable. In our era of modern chess play though, some chesstrologers have suggested that the symbol for this sign be amended to double question marks for all too many of its tribe.

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**CAPABORN, the prodigy**

December 22—January 20

Symbol: the king

Capaborns are the foreordained leaders of the chess world. Contrary to prevailing opinion, the "Capa" in the sign's name refers to "head" as in various languages (Spanish for instance), and not to Jose Raoul Capablanca who was actually born on November 19 under the sign of Score—Peon. Unfortunately, because of their noble status, many Capaborns have an arrogant streak, considering themselves as the most indispensable members of the chess community, and in their mind at least, the best players. Ironically, this leads them to be cowardly over the board, crouching in the corners of the tournament hall until it is safe to emerge. Capaborns are also notorious for being unreliable teammates, often making them the goat in a match loss.

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**VICARIOUS, the kibitzer**

January 21—February 18

Symbol: the bishop

The "vicar" in Vicarious explains this sign's symbol of a bishop, someone who vicariously hears confessions concerning the bad life choices of others. And just as a cleric is employed to give his opinion, his slant, on a penitent's decisions, the Vicarious do the same on the chessboard, exploiting blunders religiously, or even off the board as annoying spectators. As the world is now entering the Age of Vicarious, be prepared for a great increase in unwanted advice about your chess games for, oh, the next thousand years or so.

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**PIECES, the materialist**

February 19—March 20

Symbol: bag of chessmen

Consummate grubbers of pawn and piece alike, those from Pieces hold the chessmen point count as the game's ultimate good. By necessity this makes them the stodgiest of defenders as their loot must be protected and only given back under extreme duress. As the bag of chessmen symbol suggests Pieces players are not always the most coordinated with all their extra men constantly and clumsily getting in each other's way. As such, Pieces people are often said to play like fish.

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Armed with your newfound knowledge of chesstrology you can immediately improve your game in several ways. Knowing yourself and your innate, wired in, tendencies will help you design an appropriate style of play and openings array to best fit the sign you are fated to occupy. Then prudent research on upcoming opponents will give you insider awareness of how they are very likely to conduct their game. (Consider steering into a closed game against a Squaries, an open one against a Pieces, a slow game against a Sac—Invariable, a fast one against an Ergo, and if possible, use an analog clock against a Tempi—Eye.)

Remember, chesstrology has *never* been proven false. No skeptic study exists to refute its claims. Never mind the dozens of exceptions to the rule of the signs you may find by generating actual examples (Bobby Fischer (Mar. 9) as a stodgy Pieces, Tal (Nov. 9) as a Score—Peon rather than a Chancer or a Sac—Invariable, Karpov (May 5) as a Taurooks instead of an Ergo, Kasparov (Apr. 13) as a Squaries, Carlsen (Nov. 30) a Sac—Invariable, and on and on). Don't let that deter your belief. After all, chesstrological signs *impel*, they do not *compel*. Exceptions can occur. Your mileage may vary. Focus on the hits rather than the misses, the fits rather than the disses. Only then will your play finally approach the very cusp of mastery!