



BOOK REVIEWS

Previous reviews are available
in [The Chess Cafe Archives](#).



**Orders? Inquiries? You can
now call toll-free:**

1-866-301-CAFE

Vishy Writes Again

Taylor Kingston

Vishy Anand: My Best Games of Chess (2nd edition), by Viswanathan Anand (with John Nunn), 2001 Gambit Publications, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Paperback, 336 pp., \$24.95.

Most readers are surely already familiar with the name of Viswanathan “Vishy” Anand. Born 1969 in Madras, India, Anand has for the last ten years been one of the most active and successful chess players in the world, arguably second only to Kasparov over that span. At this writing he stands 3rd on the FIDE rating list (behind Kasparov and Kramnik) at Elo 2770.



The first edition of this book was published in 1998, not long after Anand just missed dethroning Karpov in the finals of the new knockout-format FIDE world championship. In our review (see the Chess Café archives) we noted that “Rarely has a games collection by an active player come out at a more opportune time.” Considering that since then Anand has continued with stellar tournament performances and has won the FIDE title, while Kasparov and Karpov have fallen some from their



former heights, that statement fits this 2nd edition even better.

This book simply adds new games to the 1998 edition: 17 of them, dating from 1997 to 2000, increasing the total to 57 from the original 40, and bumping the page count from 240 to 336. The format is the same: a very brief autobiographical introduction, followed by the annotated games (presented chronologically with short prologues and epilogues), a 19-page section of 30 combinational quiz positions, and indexes of opponents and openings.

For those interested in statistical breakdowns, some numbers. All 57 games are wins by Anand. He plays White in 40, Black in 17. Anand usually plays 1.e4 as White. The most common opening in the collection is the Sicilian (21 in all, 8 Najdorfs, 5 Richter-Rauzers, 4 Scheveningens, 4 others), followed by the Ruy López (12), French (4), Petroff and Pirc (3 each). There are few queenside openings: 3 Semi-Slavs, 2 QGAs, a Dutch, a Grünfeld, a Trompowsky and miscellaneous others. Anand's most frequent opponents are Ivanchuk and Kamsky (5 games each), followed by Adams, Karpov, Kasparov, and Topalov (3 each), and appearing twice each are Bareev, Beliavsky, Benjamin, Gelfand, Kramnik, Lautier, Nikolic, Oll, Piket, J. Polgar, and Shirov. In all there are 37 different opponents — most of the current FIDE top 20 plus many others among today's best players.

Our opinion of the 1998 edition was quite high, and we see no reason to revise that now, except to note



The Chess Cafe

E-mail List:

Each week, as a free service to thousands of our readers, we send out a brief e-mail newsletter: *This Week at The Chess Cafe*. To receive this *free* weekly update, send us your e-mail address. You can remove your name whenever you wish and we do *not* make the list available to anyone else.

[Yes, include me on the e-mail list!](#)

that the new portions of the book may not appeal to quite the same readers as the old. Rather than rehash everything we said then, we encourage readers to consult the archives. This review will now concentrate on the new material.

The 17 new games are, like the original 40, from very high-level events, starting with Lautier-Anand, Biel 1997, and ending with Anand-Shirov, FIDE world championship final, Teheran 2000. They generally feature sharp, deeply prepared openings which evolve into very tense, double-edged struggles decided by complicated tactics in the middle game. Typical is Reinderman-Anand, Wijk aan Zee 1999:



24...h5! The h8-rook joins in a kingside attack from where it stands. **25.Nb6 h4**

26.Bd5 Bg5

Threatening

27...Ng3+ 28.hxg3 hxg3+ 29.Kg1 Be3+.

27.Rf3 h3! 28.Bxc6

— If 28.g3 Rxb6!

28...Qxc6 29. Qe2 Bf4! 30.Kg1 Be3+ 31.Kh1 Re8 32.Qc4 Nf2+ 33.Rxf2 Qxc4 34.Nxc4 Bxf2 35.Nxd6 Re2 36.b4



**36...Bg3! 37.gxh3
Bxd6, 0-1.**

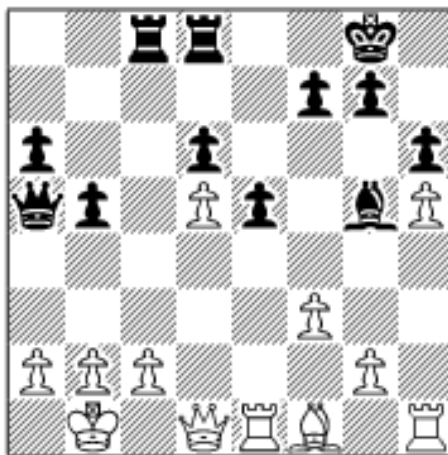
Another combinative finish is Ivanchuk-Anand, Linares 1998:



19...Bg5! 20.Qd1?

— Anand presents lengthy analysis indicating White might have held after 20.Qd3. **20...Qa5 21.Nd5** “There is no defence: 21 Qd3 b4 22 Nd5 b3! wins for Black, while 21 Bd3

Rxc3 22 bxc3 Bc8!, followed by ...Be6, gives Black a decisive attack.” (Anand) **21...Bxd5 22.exd5**

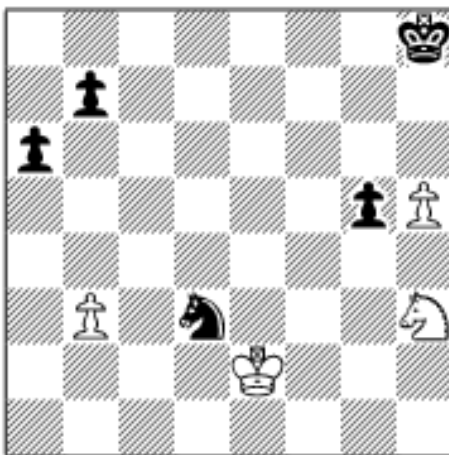


22...Rxc2! 23.Kxc2

Qxa2 “Simple – White can’t do anything to stop 24...Rc8+.” **24.f4 Rc8+ 25.Kd2 Bxf4+ 26.Ke2 Qxb2+ 27.Kf3 Rf1, 0-1.**

Due to the ferocity of the middlegames, endgames are relatively few, one rare example being Topalov-Anand, Linares

1999:



37...g4! Avoiding
 37...Nf4+?? 38.Nxf4
 gxf4 39.Kf3, draw.
38.Ng5 Nc1+ 39.Ke3
Nxb3 40.h6 a5
41.Kf4 Nd4!
42.Kxg4 a4 43.Kh5
Nc6 “It’s still not too
 late to be careless –
 after 43...a3?? 44

Ng6 White would even win. However, after the
 text-move 44 **Ng6 Ne5+** 45 **Kf5 a3!** 46 **Kxe5 a2**
 wraps it up.” **0-1.**

In 1998 we noted that the first edition “usually
 keeps itself accessible to the average player.”
 That is less true of the new material. The new
 games get about the same space as the old, on
 average about 5½ pages each, but there is a shift
 away from verbal exposition and toward more
 analytical detail, of the kind likely to appeal only
 to advanced, serious players. An example is this
 position,

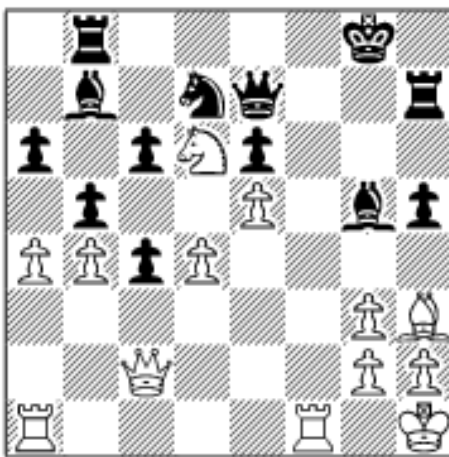


from Game 42,
 Kramnik-Anand,
 Belgrade 1997, where
 Kramnik played
17.Ne4. To the
 alternative 17.Qc2,
 Anand devotes a total
 of 2½ (!) tightly-
 packed pages, a mass
 of nested variations

(1, 1a, 1b, 2, 2a, 2a1, 2a11, 2a12, 2a2, 2a21,

2a22, 2a221, 2a222, 2a2221, 2a2222, 2a2223, 2a2224, 2b, etc. etc.), finally to conclude, somewhat anti-climactically, “Thus 17 Qc2 would have been good for White, but there is no reason to criticize the text-move.” The greater detail may be due to more computer assistance (*Fritz* is mentioned frequently in the notes), or it may be Anand’s idea of how a World Champion is supposed to sound, or it may simply reflect his increasingly sophisticated understanding of the game. However, we’re not sure anyone but a prospective opponent of Anand or Kramnik would ever actually *play* through all this.

Yet just when one thinks Anand is about to drown his readers in reams of soulless *Informant*-style computer read-out, his engaging personality surfaces. A few moves later in the same game, we again see some of the amiable, informal tone that prompted us in 1998 to liken his annotations to a friendly club post-mortem. After **22.Qd1-c2**,



he writes “Here I saw that he wanted to ‘triangulate’ his queen to e4. I then saw a variation which led to White playing 26 Nxg5. I didn’t see a defence to this and was about to play 22...Nf8 when a crazy

idea occurred to me – was it actually possible to allow his knight to take one of my pieces on g5 and then ignore it?” This is an aspect of Anand that is so appealing, as both a player and a writer

— despite being one of the best carbon-based calculating machines ever to push a pawn, he talks about “crazy ideas” — and they usually work. The game continued **22...Rg7 23.Qe2 Ba8 24.Qxh5 Rf8 25.Ne4 c5 26.Nxg5**



26...Bd5!! — The “crazy idea.” The bishop defends e6 and supports a decisive advance of queenside pawns.

27.Nf3? “White should have tried 27 Bxe6+! Bxe6 28 Rxf8+ Nxf8 29 Ne4

Rh7 30 Qd1 (30 Qe2 cxd4 is similar) 30...Rxb2+ 31 Kxb2 Qh7+ 32 Kg1 Qxe4. Black has a clear advantage but White is not quite dead.”

27...cxb4 28.axb5 axb5 29.Nh4 Qg5 30.Rxf8+ Nxf8 31.Qe8 Rf7 32.Nf3 Qg6! 33.Qxb5 b3 34.Rf1 Qd3 35.Kg1 Qe3+ 36.Kh1 c3 37.Bxe6+ Bxe6 38.d5 Rxf3 39.gxf3 Bh3 40.Qc4 Bxf1 41.Qg4+ Kh7 42.e6 Ng6 0-1.

As mentioned before, Anand, like most top-level GMs today, makes deep and extensive opening preparation, of the sort the average player can only dream of. An example is Anand-Kramnik, Tilburg 1998: **1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.Nxe5 d6 4.Nf3 Nxe4 5.d4 d5 6.Bd3 Nc6 7.0-0 Be7 8.Re1 Bg4 9.c3 f5 10.Qb3 0-0 11.Nbd2 Na5 12.Qa4 Nc6 13.Bb5 Nxd2 14.Nxd2 Qd6** — So far as in Anand-Yusupov, Linares 1993.



15.h3!! The TN.

Anand explains: “My second, Ubilava, suggested interposing this before continuing Nb3-c5. After some time, I realized that Black’s attack loses a lot of its force as a result of this

interpolation. There are two main reasons for this; the first is that the bishop no longer controls e6, so White can play Re6, and the second is revealed later in the game ... So five years after the Yusupov game, I managed to play the right move!”. Play continued **15...Bh5 16.Nb3 Bh4 17.Nc5 Bxf2+?** The “second reason.” This works with the pawn on h2, but not with it on h3, as Anand explains at length. **18. Kxf2 Qh2 19.Bxc6 bxc6 20.Qxc6 f4 21.Qxd5+ Kh8 22.Qxh5 f3**



23.Qxf3! Anand says “In my preparation I had analysed 23 Qxf3 ...”. OK, that tears it. We are undecided here: do we profess our admiration for someone who can plot his opponent’s demise by a queen

sacrifice on the 23rd move *before he even plays the game*, or do we just give up chess? Reading this kind of thing can make us woodpushers feel like tortoises watching an eagle, but Anand’s unpretentious wit (‘After five years I finally

found the right move!') takes the edge off. The analysis has become more sophisticated and complex, but Anand's humor, enthusiasm and love of the game still come through and keep the reader engaged. Oh, yes, Vishy also analyzed a win via 23.Bh6 fxg2+ 24.Ke3 Qg3+ 25.Kd2 g1=Q 26.Bxg7+! Kg8 27.Rxg1 Rf2+ 28.Qe2 Rxe2+ 29.Kxe2 Re8+ 30.Be5 "with two extra pieces." The game ended 1-0, 35.

The title page describes this as a "revised and expanded edition," but, aside from the introduction we could spot few if any revisions to the old material (though admittedly we are working from memory there, having donated our copy of the 1998 edition to a library). If our memory is correct, the 30 combination quiz positions are the same in both; there are no post-1997 additions there. Readers who already own the first edition may see little reason to buy the second; they would pay the same price over again for only about a 40% increase in content. Conversely, if you did not buy the 1998 edition, the 40% increase at the same price makes the new release a much better value.

A disappointment is the lack of any match records or tournament crosstables. These are traditional in single-player collections, and would be especially helpful for historians in Anand's case, since he has played so much at such a high level. These are not too difficult to generate from today's databases, so one wonders why Gambit neglected them.

It is interesting to compare the pictures of Anand on the covers of the two editions. The 1998 photo

is nothing special; Anand just sort of stands there with a slightly nerdish “I’m just glad to be here” grin on his face. The new edition’s photo is clearly from a game — Anand, sharply dressed in suit and tie, stares calmly but intently at the board, looking very much the confident grandmaster. The new photo reflects Anand’s growing stature.

The main problem with this book is that, like its predecessor, it is likely to be obsolete fairly soon. Anand is playing so much and so well that any collection of his “best games” quickly becomes outdated. At age 32, he is just now reaching his prime, and should remain a major force in the chess world for another decade at least. As we said in 1998, many of Anand's best games have yet to be played, and if subsequent editions follow the same procedure of simply adding on, the final edition, whenever it comes out, could have several hundred. For now, though, the 57 games of the second edition of *Vishy Anand: My Best Games of Chess* constitute an outstanding collection we recommend highly.

Order *Vishy Anand: My Best Games of Chess* (2nd edition), by Viswanathan Anand

 [TOP OF PAGE](#)

 [HOME](#)

 [COLUMNS](#)

 [LINKS](#)

 [ARCHIVES](#)

 [ABOUT THE CHESS CAFE](#)

[\[The Chess Cafe Home Page\]](#) [\[Book Reviews\]](#) [\[Bulletin Board\]](#) [\[Columnists\]](#)

[\[Endgame Studies\]](#) [\[The Skittles Room\]](#) [\[Archives\]](#)

[\[Links\]](#) [\[Online Bookstore\]](#) [\[About The Chess Cafe\]](#) [\[Contact Us\]](#)

Copyright 2002 CyberCafes, LLC. All Rights Reserved.

"The Chess Cafe®" is a registered trademark of Russell Enterprises, Inc.