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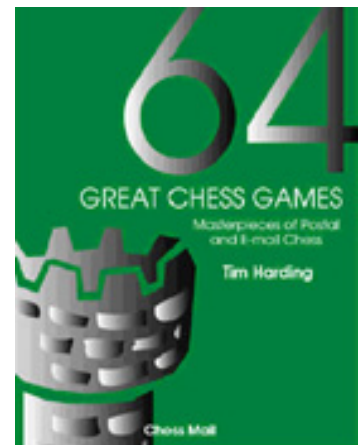
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## Correspondence Caviar

Tim McGrew

*64 Great Chess Games* by Tim Harding, 2002 Chess Mail Ltd.,  
Figurine Algebraic, Softcover, 304 pp., \$19.95

The high-powered games of the world's correspondence elite are often inscrutable. Middlegame sacrifices with points that emerge only ten moves later are simply beyond the average player's grasp and doubly beyond the blitz mind for which combinations over a three or four move horizon simply do not exist. To appreciate the best postal games, we need an astute guide who can explain what is going on without drowning us in variations, who knows the state of opening theory intimately. And in the best of all possible worlds, our guide should know the players, their personalities, and the sometimes astonishing stories behind the games that show us the human side of these titans of chess.



Tim Harding's book *64 Great Chess Games* gives us all of this in abundance. With the exception of the first, the games are arranged chronologically, reaching as far back as the London-Vienna match of 1872 and including several games that were just finished early in 2002. This not only diversifies the opening selection but also gives us a unique temporal perspective on the development of chess. The selection of games is excellent, exhibiting the widest cross-section of what makes chess interesting, from slashing attacks to endgames of exquisite mathematical perfection, from opening bombshells to the iron logic of positional squeezes so ruthless that no serious reader will ever again be tempted to equate "positional" with "passive." The notes are excellent: deep but never needlessly baroque, judicious in both the use and the evaluation of the work of previous annotators, and often enlightening. Harding never talks down to



the reader, but he does not assume that his audience is a group of masters either.

Consider his notes to this sensational clash between the current World Correspondence Champion and a powerful FIDE Grandmaster:

*Timmerman, G - Andersson, U*

**NPSF-50, 1994-96**

**Sicilian Scheveningen, Keres Attack (B81)**

**1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 e6 6.g4 h6 7.h4 Nc6 8.Rg1 d5! 9.Bb5 Bd7 10.exd5 Nxd5 11.Nxd5 exd5 12.Be3 Be7 13.Qd2**

I have omitted Harding's notes to the preceding moves, but now we pick up the thread.

**13...0-0!**

Until this game, theory followed Karpov-Spassky, Tilburg 1980 (White got the advantage after 13...Bxh4?! 14 0-0-0 Bf6 15 Nf5) and Black's attempts to improve with 13...Nxd4 14 Bxd7+ Qxd7 (in Marjanovic-Cebalo, Yugoslav Ch 1962, and Kindermann-Vogt, Baden-Baden 1993).

Andersson prefers to castle, which threatens ...Nxd4. This move was dismissed in analysis by Karpov in 1980, and by Krnic in *Informator*.

Andersson's novelty is in showing it to be playable; instead of capturing White's h-pawn, he will sacrifice his own for the initiative, based on fantastically deep calculation."

**14.Nf5**



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### 14...d4!

Andersson always prefers to go his own way in the openings, and while he often does not know what other players have written, he probably knew Karpov's book very well. This pawn advance is the move which the former world champion Karpov, Yugoslav analyst Krnic, and

many others missed.

Old theory following Karpov was 14...Bxf5 15 gxf5 Kh7 16 0-0-0 with a clear advantage for the first player. On 14...Bf6, Karpov's mysterious claim that 15 Nxf6+?! gxf6 16 g5 gives a decisive attack for White has never been tested but simply 15 0-0-0 looks good.

### 15.Bxh6!?

Most people might stop analyzing after seeing this; White's attack looks dangerous." [Harding gives three alternative lines for White and dismisses them as inferior.]

### 15...Bb4

This is the point of Andersson's play: he counter-attacks against White's K. Capturing on h6 is not good because after 15...gxh6? 16 Qxh6 Bf6 17 g5 Re8+ 18 Kf1 Be5 19 g6 Black will be mated.

### 16.c3 dxc3 17.bxc3 Ne5

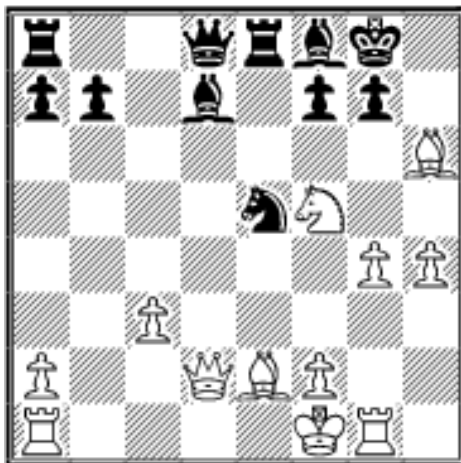
The threat of the family fork by the N and the second threat to b5 give White no time to take on g7 or b4.

### 18.Be2

Obviously not 18 Nd4?? Bxb5 19 cxb4 Nd3+. So Timmerman tries to control the square f3, as 18 Rg3 fails to 18...Bxb5 19 cxb4 Nd3+, or if White exchanges the Queens at d8 instead, the B at h6 gets lost, e.g. 19 Qxd8 Raxd8 20 Bxg7? Rfe8 and Black wins.

**18...Re8**

This renews the threat of ...Nf3+ and forces White's K to move.

**19.Kf1 Bf8**

The first phase of direct threats is over; everything is protected, White has lost castling rights, and for the pawn Andersson has great piece activity. Now it is time for the active Bs to retire.

Readers will have to get Harding's book to find out whether White could have improved from here on out.

For the record, the finish was:

**20.Bf4 Qa5 21.Rg3 Rad8 22.Nd4 Ba4 23.h5 Nc6 24.Be3 Nxd4  
25.Bxd4 Re4 26.Qb2 Bc5 27.Rb1 Bxd4 28.cxd4 Bc6 29.Rd1  
Rf4 30.d5 Rxd5 31.Rgd3 Qc5 32.f3 Rxd3 33.Rxd3 Qg5 34.Ke1  
Rc4 35.Kf2 Qh4+ 36.Ke3 Rc5 37.Rd1 Qg3 38.Rd8+ Kh7  
39.Bd3+ f5! 40.Qd4 Qxf3+ 41.Kd2 Qg2+ 42.Ke3 Qg3+ 43.Kd2  
Qh2+ 44.Be2 Re5 45.Qc4 Bf3 46.Qg8+ Kh6 47.Qh8+ Kg5  
48.Qxg7+ Kh4 49.Qf6+ Kh3 0-1**

The quality and interest of the games in this book is so great that it is difficult to make a selection for purposes of review. No one will want to miss the "Swedish Immortal Correspondence Game," with the ravishing finish in which White mates though he is a Rook, Knight, and two (!) Queens down. (Typically, Harding not only annotates the game but tells us something extra -- the mating position was the basis for a Swedish 3 kroner postage stamp issued in 1985.) The sensational struggle Estrin-Berliner, surely the most famous and perhaps the greatest correspondence game ever played, is analyzed in tremendous detail. Harding's notes are, in fact, a concise statement of the state of the argument about Berliner's sacrifice, checked with Deep Fritz 7 augmented by human intuition. And what can one add to the praises of the titanic struggle between Kasparov and the rest of the World, which Garry himself described as "the greatest game in the history of chess"?

Those hungry for opening theory will revel in the discussion of the Marshall Gambit in game 44 where John Nunn's analysis is bettered. Or examine the Nimzowitsch line in the Falkbeer Counter-Gambit in game 40 where a correspondence GM pokes a hole in Gallagher's analysis. Don't miss the way that Gottardi handles the White side of the Alapin Anti-Sicilian in game 42, which won a prize for the best novelty of the tournament -- something that would have been useful to GM Rozentalis, who let Dydysko get away with an easy draw in this line last year in the Polish Championship when he could have had excellent winning chances by playing Gottardi's move instead.

If you are interested in the human side of chess, you won't want to miss the tangled tale of Morgado-Estrin from the 10th World Correspondence Championship. And you might also be interested to discover which American correspondence IM went on playing uninterruptedly for over a decade after his death.

In a chess market overrun with organized database dumps (I should know; I own hundreds of them), well-annotated game collections are worth ten times their weight in Informants. There are a few good examples: Tartakower and Du Mont's classic *500 Master Games of Chess*, Chernev's *The Golden Dozen*, and *The World's Greatest Chess Games* by the trio Burgess, Nunn and Emms. Harding's *64 Great Chess Games* is a most welcome and worthy addition to this list. I recommend it very highly.

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**Order** *64 Great Chess Games* by Tim Harding. It is also available as our **Special of the Week**, October 16-22.

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