



BOOK REVIEWS



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Discriminating Taste Treat

Stephen Ham

Garry Kasparov on Modern Chess, Part Two: Kasparov vs. Karpov 1975-1985, by Garry Kasparov, 2008 Everyman Chess, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Hardcover, 424pp., \$45.00.

Chess players have discriminating tastes. Just as gastronomes desire savoring the finest foods available, chess players desire the best chess games of the strongest players. Ideally these games are annotated by the victor, while assisted by his trainers and checked by powerful computer engines. In short, chess players desire the best of the best from the best. Now we can all enjoy exactly that...and it's the latest as well! It's Garry Kasparov's *Garry Kasparov on Modern Chess, Part Two: Kasparov vs. Karpov 1975-1985*.



Garry Kasparov on Modern Chess, Part Two: Kasparov vs. Karpov 1975-1985 recounts in detail all 76 games played between these two chess titans (possibly the strongest players in history) during that period, while also providing deep contextual and autobiographical material.

Kasparov and Karpov played almost 200 games against each other in the careers. Many of these games were subsequently annotated by each protagonist independently. In addition to the 76 finely annotated games in *Garry Kasparov on Modern Chess, Part Two: Kasparov vs. Karpov 1975-1985*, we're treated to highly informative commentary from "behind the scenes." This commentary includes discussion of the ubiquitous politics involved with such high-level matches. It also provides character development of the people who were involved, autobiographical data, and the thoughts and perceptions of Garry Kasparov – both contemporary with the events described, and after the passage of time.

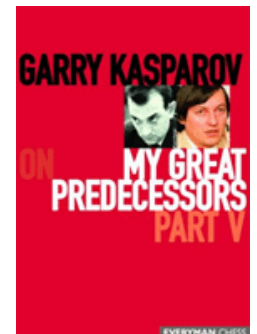
Kasparov has an introduction to each game and some are quite detailed and lengthy. One of my favorite stories is part of the lead-in to Garry's very first battle against Karpov. Garry was then a member of the Baku Young Pioneers team that was competing against Karpov's Chelyabinsk team. The format of such matches involves the grandmaster from each team playing a simultaneous exhibition against the young players from the opposing team. The year was 1975 and Karpov was 24 and already world champion, while Kasparov was just 12.

"...that first meeting with Karpov did not provoke in me the same trepidation as the game with Tal. But the other lads in my team were nervous and they went along to the game as though they were already lost. In the foyer of the hotel, where the tournament was being held, I said: 'What are you afraid of? Karpov is the world champion, but even he can make a mistake.' Apparently these words were overheard, and the following day one of Karpov's backers, the secretary of the local regional party committee Tupikin, said to my mother: 'Bear in mind: Karpov is unforgiving.'"

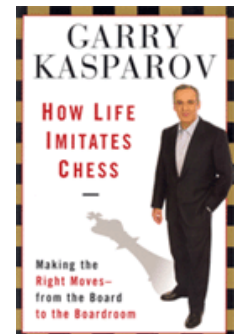
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What ominous words to say to the mother of a twelve-year old! But, this sets the almost paranoid tone for subsequent anti-Kasparov politics, the dirty deeds, and the shenanigans documented throughout the book. These exist in such quantity that one almost suspects Kafka of being the book's "ghost writer."

An example of such nasty machinations? One involves arguably the most controversial event in chess world championship history. Perhaps most of us recall the very strange termination of the very first Karpov-Kasparov World Championship match in 1984/5 – a marathon match of 48-games. That match was to decide the winner without a set number of games. The first combatant to reach six wins would be the chess World Champion.

Karpov quickly established a 4-0 lead in just the first nine games, but their next 17 games were draws. Karpov won again in game 27. So, a lop-sided match victory for Karpov seemed inevitable – the score was now 5-0. Many experts predicted a 6-0 whitewash.

But, Karpov then seemed to falter. Exhaustion? Nerves? Poor health? He reached promising or winning positions only to make mistakes and allow draws. Kasparov was finally victorious in game 32. But then fourteen more draws followed. Karpov fashioned a winning position in game 41, but again blundered, allowing a draw. When Kasparov won game 47, Raymond Keene wrote (page 233): "Karpov's play was surprisingly feeble and towards the end of the game he turned bright red – usually a reliable sign of one of his rare defeats. 5-2 remained a commanding lead, but Karpov had now not won a game for over two months and must have recalled with apprehension how Korchnoi pulled back from 5-2 in 1978."

The next sentence in the book sets the stage for the controversial match climax: "It was not only Karpov who might have remembered Baguio – Campomanes, Sevastyanov, and Baturinsky were also there. It was then that the idea occurred to them of terminating the match."

Kasparov won the next game, making the score 5-3. On page 247, a prophetic quote of from Botvinnik is cited. "There are three possibilities of how the match will end. The first, and least likely, is that Karpov will after all win the single game he needs and will remain champion. The second, and more likely, is that Kasparov will win another three games and become the champion. And the third possibility is that the match will simply be stopped. The third possibility is the most likely, because the second possibility is more likely than the first."

At this point in the match, before the start of Game 49, Kasparov took a timeout. Things then unraveled swiftly. First, FIDE president Campomanes declared a time-out, and then terminated the entire match! Several "official" reasons were given for the match truncation, but the primary reason cited was the health of *both* players. Yet, both players publicly claimed they wanted to continue, although Karpov had visibly lost a lot of weight. So, was the match stopped against the wishes of both players, or was one player's public declaration a sham?

Naturally, Kasparov perceives entirely different reasons for FIDE stopping this match, reasons that conflict with the "official" ones. Garry suggests the real reasons for the match termination were largely political and for the benefit of Karpov. Specifically, Garry claims Karpov was psychologically exhausted and feared a match continuation. [Garry elaborates in the exclusive [ChessCafe.com](#) interview now available in the [Skittles Room](#).]

In any event, the termination of their first world championship match led to a rematch in Moscow, later in 1985. Kasparov eventually triumphed in this back-and-forth struggle by winning the twenty-fourth and final game, as black. So, at the age of 22, Garry Kasparov became the youngest world champion in history. The games and commentary for that match are also presented thoroughly in this wonderful book.

So, where does *Garry Kasparov on Modern Chess, Part Two: Kasparov vs. Karpov 1975-1985* fit into the overall collection of Kasparov's chess output? This is not immediately clear. Garry sets things straight in his interview however, noting that this is the first of three books that will deal with his games with Karpov.

The issue of the title is surprisingly murky. [Garry Kasparov on Modern Chess, Part One: Revolution in the 70s](#) suggests the next in the series will be a thematic sequel to Part One. Conversely, will a potential purchaser of *Garry Kasparov on Modern Chess, Part Two: Kasparov vs. Karpov 1975-1985* think there was a Part One: Kasparov vs. Karpov 1975-1985, and thus not purchase the book because the initial volume is missing? This is very confusing stuff. There is no doubt that the publisher could have greatly assisted the public by coming up with a clearer, easier-to-understand title. Again, Garry suggests something very similar in the [ChessCafe.com interview](#).

All games in *Garry Kasparov on Modern Chess, Part Two: Kasparov vs. Karpov 1975-1985* have some lead-in commentary or some post-game commentary, or both. And the games themselves are annotated in great detail, with at least the same level of analytical depth and quality, plus verbal commentary, as seen in the previous volumes of *My Great Predecessors*. Volume V of that series discussed Karpov's games in the section entitled "Anatoly the Twelfth." None of the K-K games appeared in that volume, however.

Note that *Chess Informants* #39 and #40 offer these same match games, annotated either by Karpov or Kasparov. But the annotations of these games in this book are vastly deeper and more thorough...and they've been checked by computer engines. Plus, we have the benefit of Kasparov's narratives here, an aspect always absent in the *Informant's* language-less format.

As with all Everyman Chess books I've seen, *Garry Kasparov on Modern Chess, Part Two: Kasparov vs. Karpov 1975-1985* is published in "British" English and usage. It has occasional typos, but is generally well prepared.

Ken Neat seems to be the "go-to man" for Everyman Chess when they want to translate Russian into English. But translators also end up being writers since direct translations usually result in the same gibberish we see from computer translations. But as a book reviewer, I've seen several examples where Neat's English leaves a great deal to be desired. Here, the translated prose isn't too bad – sometimes just awkward. It's on par with the writing seen in the *My Great Predecessors* series.

Everyman Chess's production quality is reliably good with regard to paper quality, print size, and frequency and clarity of diagrams. Diagrams seem to be incorporated about every five moves, on average. The hardcopy covers are covered with a paper jacket peppered with small photos of Kasparov and Karpov together.

I recommend *Garry Kasparov on Modern Chess, Part Two: Kasparov vs. Karpov 1975-1985* very highly. It's one of the best chess tomes I've ever read. Besides offering discriminating readers the "best of the best from the best", the book presents 76 highly detailed chess games – each of them an educational gem for nearly endless study, plus chess history, chess politics, and a partial autobiography of perhaps the strongest chess player in history. If you enjoy and value the *My Great Predecessors* series, you will not want to miss this masterpiece.

Order *Garry Kasparov on Modern Chess, Part Two:
Kasparov vs. Karpov 1975-1985*

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