



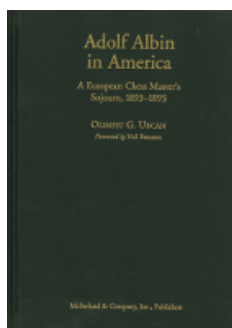
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A Lifeless Game Collection

Isaac Kashdan, American Chess Grandmaster
A Career Summary with 757 Games

By Peter L. Lahde

McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers

348 pages

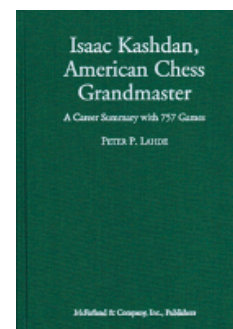
There is no shortage of subjects for books covering pre-1945 American chess history. There are many strong players of the 1920s and 1940s whose lives and careers deserve to be researched. One such player was Isaac I. Kashdan (1905-1985), who played some magnificent chess in the late 1920s and throughout the 1930s in the United States and in Europe. In 2008, Peter L. Lahde was working with McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, on finalizing the work on a manuscript dealing with Kashdan's chess career. This was not Lahde's first involvement with chess history: together with Rogelio Caparrós, he co-authored *The Games of Alekhine World Chess Champion 1927-1935 & 1937-1946* (Brentwood, 1992); more recently, with John S. Hilbert, Lahde – certainly in a secondary role for this particular project – co-authored the Hodges biography, which we reviewed in our August 2009 column. Lahde's work on Kashdan represents his first solo effort while tackling a long-standing figure of chess in America.



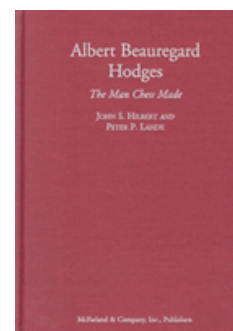
Isaac I. Kashdan
Chess Review, April 1942, Vol. X, No. 4, page 84.

The main topic of such a project is indeed exceedingly tantalizing. During the late 1920s into the mid-1930s, the young Kashdan emerged as one of the top players in America. Invited to lead the American Olympic team on several notable occasions, Kashdan proved an incontestable leader with some jaw-dropping scores: The Hague, 1928 (+12 = 2 – 1), Hamburg, 1930 (+12 = 4 – 1), Prague, 1931, (+8 = 8 – 1), Folkestone, 1933 (+7 = 6 – 1), Stockholm, 1937 (+13 = 2 – 1). He led the United States team to three gold medals (1931, 1933, 1937) and was twice awarded the individual gold for his first board performances (1928 and 1937), silver (1933), and bronze (1930 and 1931). His playing record in the United States championships between 1936 and 1948 indicate that he was always in contention for a top place (he never finished lower than fifth in the final standings) and tied for first with Samuel Reshevsky in 1942, definitely his greatest achievement on the national scene. Between the mid-1920s and 1954, Kashdan played in more than sixty-five tournaments (including the Olympiads) and in more than a dozen individual serious matches against strong American-based masters such as Jaffe, L. Steiner, Horowitz, and Reshevsky. In addition, throughout the 1930s Kashdan

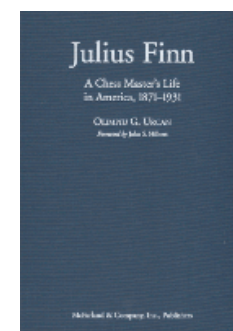
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Isaac Kashdan,
American Chess Grandmaster
 by Peter P. Lahde



Albert Beauregard Hodges
 by John S. Hilbert
 & Peter P. Lahde



Julius Finn
 by Olimpiu G. Urcan

journeyed countrywide while giving a large number of simultaneous exhibitions amounting to at least a thousand games played with some very positive scores.

By all accounts, besides his strong Olympiad appearances, Kashdan's best results in tournament play were the following: first in a quadrangular tournament in Berlin, 1930 (+5 – 1, ahead of Helling, Herman Steiner, and Sämisch), second in a twelve-player tournament held in Frankfurt, September 1930 (+7 = 4 – 0, behind Nimzowitsch but ahead of masters such as Ahues, List, Colle, Prezpiorka, Pirc, Sämisch, and Mises), second in twelve-player event in New York, 1931 (+6 = 5 – 0, behind Capablanca, but ahead of Kevitz, Horowitz, Kupchik, and others), second in Hastings, 1931-32 (+6 = 3 – 0, behind Flohr but ahead of Euwe and Sultan Khan), third at London, 1932 (+5 = 5 – 1, behind Alekhine and Flohr but ahead of Sultan Khan, Maróczy, Tartakower, and Koltanowski among others), and second in a twelve-player event held in Pasadena, California, August 1932 (+5 = 5 – 1, behind Alekhine but ahead of the entire American chess elite: Dake, Reshevsky, H. Steiner, J. Bernstein, Reinfeld, and others). It is easy to notice Kashdan's very low loss ratio in all these strong tournaments: he only lost two games (to H. Steiner and Alekhine). In 1938, Kashdan tied for first in the U.S. Open with Horowitz and in 1947 he would win the event. Some believed him a world-title candidate.

But Kashdan was more than a top grandmaster-level player. In January 1933, he founded *Chess Review*, acting as Editor-in-Chief, with Horowitz as Associate Editor. Towards the end of that year, bent on further practical play at the top, he relinquished all his editorial duties to Horowitz, who would make *Chess Review* a leading American chess journal. Although he had plans to author some interesting books, his only finished product was *Folkestone 1933 International Team Chess Tournament* (New York, 1933). After his relocation to California in early 1949/1950, Kashdan began a life-long chess column in the *Los Angeles Times*, turned into an assiduous organizer and even served as an U.S. delegate to FIDE in 1964. He remained connected to chess until his death on February 20, 1985 in Los Angeles.

Thus, Kashdan's chess exploits, especially those between roughly 1925 and 1955, can serve as excellent material for a much needed book on an American star player, perhaps one similar to Aidan Woodger's [Reuben Fine](#) biography, also published by McFarland. While any author would no doubt welcome such a challenge, a dilemma presents itself right from the start: what is the best framework in which to present the subject? There are some basic choices (which can intertwine): a fully-fledged chess biography with games, a brief biographical text with a collection of selected best games or a collection of all available and newly-recovered games. Based on Kashdan's outstanding playing strength, his continuous involvement with top American chess and the lack of a biographical work up to this moment, Kashdan's biography and games would fully merit a most comprehensive treatment in all aspects: his life, his games, his records and – if a biographer is really ambitious – connecting the man to the times he lived in. Lahde's own choice focused the research mainly on the latter two. As he remarked in his introduction, he collected Kashdan's games for the past two decades. "The main purpose of this book has been the presentation of all the games by Kashdan that I could find," the author writes, "particularly his tournament and match games but also those he played in simultaneous exhibitions, in speed tournaments, and on other occasions" [page two]. While the main title of the book, *Isaac Kashdan, American Chess Grandmaster*, might suggest a full biographical treatment, the subtitle makes it pretty clear what the author's main game plan was "A Career Summary with 757 Games." This is exactly what the work is: a synopsis of Kashdan's career with nearly 800 games.



An artwork dealing with Isaac I. Kashdan
Chess Review, December 1934, Vol. II, No. 12, page 235.
[\[Click here to enlarge image.\]](#)

With his work structured in two main parts, "The Career of Isaac Kashdan" (pages 5-71) and "The Games of Isaac Kashdan" (pages 73-302), the author's treatment of Kashdan's career is direct and succinct. The first is divided into seven chapters that deal chronologically with Kashdan's involvement with competitive chess from the early 1920s to his demise. These chapters, spread over less than seventy pages, are mainly made up from brief texts summarizing Kashdan's play in important tournaments in the U.S. or abroad, some basics statistics and records, and some illustrations. With only a few exceptions (such as a good article by Kashdan himself in the May 1942 *Chess Review* about his play in the 1942 U.S. championship, given on pages 41-44 of the book), there are very few quotes from historical sources. From this angle, these texts serve as a basic introduction to Kashdan's tournament play and not so much to Kashdan's life, writings, or the chess world around him.

The second part of the book is Lahde's main contribution: it presents 661 tournament and match games between 1924 and 1961 [pages 75-280], fifty-six games from various simultaneous exhibitions between 1930 and 1961 [pages 280-291], twenty-six speed tournament games from the war-time years [pages 291-295], and twenty-three consultation, practice and correspondence games between 1924 and 1956 [pages 295-302]. It is possible that the author overlooked including one extra game in this category, because he refers to a game numbered 758 several times, yet there are only 757 games given (at least one of them being a double). While this collection of games represents the greatest number of Kashdan games collected to date (with some databases indicating a number close to 400 or slightly more), it is remarkable that a majority of the games are presented as simple scores, without annotations or even without a diagram. The games that are annotated (not at all elaborated), are mainly Kashdan's own annotations from various journals where his games were published. For most of these games, a source is specified and Lahde's bibliographical list mentions a handful of tournament books and other secondary material. Although the author doesn't provide a comprehensive list, among the newspaper chess columns that were consulted appear to be the following: *New Yorker Staats-Zeitung*, *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, *New York Sun*, *New York Post*, *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, and a few others.



Kashdan (first sitting from the left) on the cover of May 1942 *Chess Review* (Vol. X, No. 5) together with N. May Karff, Samuel Reshevsky, and (standing from left) Herman Steiner, Arnold Denker and Albert Pinkus
[\[Click here to enlarge image.\]](#)

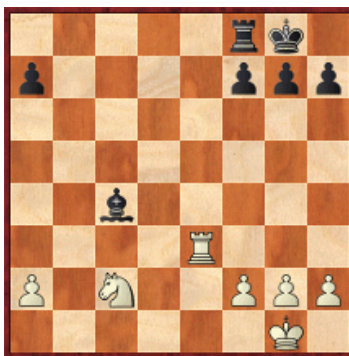
Although the author doesn't present any alternative source list in addition to the secondary sources listed at the end of the book, mention is made about the author having access to some rare primary material: Kashdan's collection of original scoresheets. In 2005, Lahde established links with Richard Kashdan, the grandmaster's son, and the latter introduced him to a relative who sent copies of over 200 original scoresheets. The operation resulted in about thirty new games for his manuscript, according to the author's own calculations. One relatively important finding facilitated by such scoresheets is the full score of the famous encounter with Gösta Stoltz in the tenth round of the The Hague Olympiad, 1928. While the latter part of this game was well-known, the whole score was not available until Lahde's book was published:

Gösta Stoltz – Isaac I. Kashdan

The Hague Olympiad, 30 July 1928

Scotch Four Knights [C47]

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.d4 exd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 Bb4 6.Nxc6 bxc6 7.Bd3 d5 8.exd5 cxd5 9.0–0 0–0 10.Bg5 c6 11.Qf3 Be7 12.Rae1 Rb8 13.Ne2 Ne4 14.Bxe7 Qxe7 15.Nd4 Rxb2 16.Nxc6 Qc5 17.Bxe4 dxe4 18.Qxe4 Ba6 19.Re3 Qxc2 20.Qxc2 Rxc2 21.Nb4 Bxf1 22.Nxc2 Bc4



[FEN"5rk1/p4ppp/8/8/2b5/4R3/P1N2PPP/6K1 w - - 0 23"]

23.Ra3 Rb8 24.h3 Rb7 25.Rc3 Be6 26.Nd4 Bd7 27.Rb3 Rxb3 28.axb3 Kf8 29.Kf1 Ke7 30.Ke2 Kd6 31.Kd3 Kd5 32.h4 Bc8 33.Nf3 Ba6+ 34.Kc3 h6 35.Nd4 g6 36.Nc2 Ke4 37.Ne3 f5 38.Kd2 f4 39.Ng4 h5 40.Nf6+ Kf5 41.Nd7 Bc8 42.Nf8 g5 43.g3 gxh4 44.gxh4 Kg4 45.Ng6 Bf5 46.Ne7 Be6 47.b4 Kxh4 48.Kd3 Kg4 49.Ke4 h4 50.Nc6 Bf5+ 51.Kd5 f3 52.b5 h3 53.Nxa7 h2 54.b6 h1Q 55.Nc6 Qb1 56.Kc5 Be4 0-1

For those interested in Kashdan's play, this collection of games represents a true bonanza but – unlike with other works where no space and effort was spared for an easy reading – one has to be armed with patience and a

chessboard to go through almost each score in the hunt for the pleasure given by an old, well-played game. On page 75 the author gives a 33-game list of "outstanding games," but we suspect readers, especially those with the habit of checking variations and disposed to spend time on actual game analysis, may find some more among the large collection presented. Below we reproduce a little known game which appears on page 164 of the book (without a diagram or any notes) and was taken from Kashdan's scoresheet:

Isaac I. Kashdan – José Joaquín Araiza

35th Western Chess Congress, (Finals)

30 July 1934. Round 6

Queen's gambit Declined [D60]

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 d5 4.Nc3 c6 5.Bg5 Nbd7 6.e3 Be7 7.Qc2 0-0 8.Bd3 dxc4 9.Bxc4 Nd5 10.Bxe7 Qxe7 11.0-0 Nxc3 12.Qxc3 b6 13.e4 Bb7 14. Rad1 Rfe8 15.Rfe1 Rac8 16.e5 b5 17.Bf1 Nb6 18.Nd2 b4 19.Qg3 c5 20. dxc5 Rxc5 21.Ne4 Bxe4 22.Rxe4 Rd5 23.Rde1 Red8 24.Rg4 g6 25.h4 Rd4



[FEN"3r2k1/p3qp1p/1n2p1p1/4P3/1p1r2RP/6Q1/PP3PP1/4RBK1 w - - 0 26"]

Understandably, Black wishes to trade the dangerous rook. The alternative was 25...Rd2!? 26.a3 Rxb2 27.axb4 Rxb4 28.h5 a5 29.hxg6 hxg6 30.Ree4 Rxe4 31.Rxe4 Qc5 32.Rh4 with some opportunities for White to speculate Black's weakened kingside.

26.h5! Na4 27.Re3!?

27.hxg6 hxg6 28.Ree4 Rxe4 29.Rxe4 Rd5 30.Qh2 Qc7 31.Rxb4=.

27...Rxb4 28.Qxb4 Nxb2 29.Rb3 Nd1

29...Na4 30.Rxb4 Nb6 31.Rd4 led to an equal position.

30.Rg3?!

Kashdan maintains his kingside ambitions. But better was 30.Rxb4! Nc3 31. Rc4 Nxa2 32.Qh3 Nb4 33.hxg6 fxg6 (33...hxg6?? 34.Rh4) 34.Rxb4 Qxb4 35. Qxe6+ Kf8 36.Qf6+ Ke8 37.Qh8+ Qf8 38.Bb5+ Ke7 39.Qxh7+ Ke6 40.Qxg6 + Kxe5 41.Qg5+ with equal chances.

30...Nc3

30...Rd2! Going after the a-pawn should have been stronger: 31.Rf3 Rxa2 32. Bd3! and Black has to be very careful here: 32...Nxf2! (32...Nc3? 33.hxg6 hxg6 34.Bxg6+-) 33.Rxf2 Qc5 34.Qf3 Rxf2 35.Qxf2 Qxe5 36.Qxa7 gxh5=/+ and Black should be quite satisfied with this position.

31.Bd3 Qe8

31...Kh8!? appears to have been necessary: 32.Qc4 a5 33.a3 Nd5 34.hxg6 fxg6 35.axb4 Qxb4 36.Rf3 Qxc4 37.Bxc4 Rc8 38.Bxd5 exd5 with a fine rook endgame: 39.Rf7 Ra8 40.e6 a4 41.e7 Kg8 42.Rf4! a3 43.Ra4 Re8 44.Rxa3 Rxe7 45.Ra5 Rd7 46.Kf1 Kf7 and it's questionable if Black can win this but the Mexican player would have certainly tried.

32.Qxb4 Nd5 33.Qg4 Ne7



[FEN"3rq1k1/p3np1p/4p1p1/4P2P/6Q1/3B2R1/P4PP1/6K1 w - - 0 34"]

Araiza seems to have been extremely worried about the growing pressure upon his kingside. 33...Rb8!? 34.hxg6 hxg6 35.Rh3 Rb4! 36.Qg5 Nf4 37.Rh6 Qf8 Only move. 38.Bc2 Rc4 was a more active way to defend his position.

34.hxg6 hxg6??

34...Nxg6 Only move. 35.Rh3 Qc6 36.Qg5 Rc8 37.Bxg6 Qc1+ 38.Qxc1 Rxc1 + 39.Kh2 hxg6= was the best way to go forward.

35.Qg5?

Kashdan missed a clear win here: 35.Rh3! Nf5 36.Qf4 Ng7 37.Qh6 Nh5 38.g4 Qf8 39.Qg5 Rxd3 40.Rxd3 Ng7 41.Rd8 Ne8 42.Rb8+.

35...Qf8?!

Even stronger was 35...Nf5! 36.Bxf5 exf5 37.Qxf5 Rd1+ 38.Kh2 Re1=.

36.Rh3! Rd7 37.Qh4 Qg7 38.Qa4!

A very clever switch to the queenside targeting the a7-pawn.

38...Rd8 39.Qxa7 Nd5 40.Qd4!

Now the push of White's a-pawn forces Black to a quick breakdown.

40...Rb8 41.a4 Rb4 42.Qc5 Rb8 43.Qd6 Rc8 44.Ba6 Rf8 45.a5 1-0

This may seem like a premature resignation, but White's advantage is indeed enough to win the game.

No doubt, a further systematic study of American chess columns (1920s-1950s) would recover a significant number of extra Kashdan games, a fact the author himself acknowledges. Herewith we present what appears to be a forgotten consultation game that does not appear in the book:

Charles Jaffe & S. Lubowski – A. I. Horowitz & Isaac I. Kashdan
Café Central
Manhattan, New York, December 1930/January 1931
French Defense [C14]

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bg5 Be7

Kashdan: "The old orthodox defense, which is rapidly coming into favor again. The McCutcheon (4...Bb4) is considered inferior."

5.e5 Nfd7 6.Bxe7 Qxe7 7.Qd2 0-0 8.f4 c5

Kashdan: "8...a6 used to be thought necessary here but the text is quite playable."

9.Nf3

Kashdan: "If 9.Nb5 a6 10.Nd6 cxd4 11.Nf3 Nc6 followed by f6, with a good game.

9...Nc6 10.Be2 a6 11.0-0 b5 12.Rae1

Kashdan: "12.Rad1 is better to hold the center."

12...cxd4 13.Nd1



[FEN"r1b2rk1/3nqppp/p1n1p3/1p1pP3/3p1P2/5N2/PPQBB1PP/3NRRK1 b - - 0 13"]

Kashdan: "If 13.Nxd4 Qc5 14.Rd1, White has at least lost a tempo. There might follow 14...Nb6 - threatening Nc4 - and if 15.b3 Bd7 with an attack on the Queen Bishop's file. They decided instead to gamble on a Kingside attack, which doesn't quite come off."

13...f6 14.Bd3?!

14.exf6 Qxf6 15.g3 h6 16.Nf2 Bb7 17.Bd3 was White's only chance to get something stable out of this opening.

14...Nc5 15.Nf2

Kashdan: "If 15.exf6, then 15...gxf6 and the break e6-e5 break cannot be long delayed.

15...Bd7 16.Kh1 Rac8 17.b4 Na4

Kashdan: "[White was] hoping for 17...Nxd3 18.Nxd3 with Nc5 to come. But the move seriously weakens the Queenside structure."

18.a3 f5

Kashdan: "The plan is Nc3 and, at the proper moment, Ne4. White now obtains the semblance of an attack but it proves only a mild flurry, as the pieces do not cooperate properly."

19.g4 g6 20.Rg1 Kh8 21.Rg3 Nc3 22.gxf5

Kashdan: "If at once 22.Rh3 Ne4 23.Nxe4 dxe4 24.Ng5 exd3 25.Rxh7+ Qxh7 26.Nxh7 Kxh7 27.cxd3 fxg4 with three pieces for the Queen, Black wins handily."

22...gxf5 23.Rh3 Rg8

Kashdan: "But now 23...Ne4 etc as in the previous note, would not be good, for, after the exchanges, the Black King is exposed and White has several strong continuations. The situation has been cleared up, however, and the text forms a simple defense."

24.Ng5 Rg7!



[FEN"2r4k/3bq1rp/p1n1p3/1p1pPpN1/1P1p1P2/P1nB3R/2PQ1N1P/4R2K w - - 0 25"]

25.Rh6?

Kashdan: "This threatens nothing, and the Rook later on comes to grief. There is hardly anything better though." It is hard to suggest anything good for White: 25.Rg1 Rcg8 26.Bf1 Ne4 27.Nfxe4 dxe4 28.Rh5 Be8 29.Rh6 Qd7—+.

25...Ne4

Kashdan: "After the forced exchange on this square every Black piece enters the fray and the end comes with unexpected suddenness."

26.Nfxe4 dxe4 27.Bf1 e3 28.Qd1

Kashdan: "If 28.Qe2 Nxe5 wins."

28...Nxb4! 29.Re2

Kashdan: " [Black's sacrifice was] sound and forceful. If 29.axb4 Rxb4 30.fxb4 Bc6+ 31.Bg2 Bxb4+ 32.Kxg2 Qxb4+ Black wins."

29...Nd5 30.Qxd4 Rc4 0-1

Kashdan: "For after the Queen moves, Nxf4 attacks about everything on the board." [Source: *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, January 29, 1931].

The work ends with a series of Appendices dealing with Kashdan's overall records, tournament crosstables and various other statistics [pages 304-334]. Surprisingly, there are only ten illustrations throughout, seven of them featuring Kashdan and three being images of private letters written by Kashdan. *Chess Review* archives contain dozens of fine photographs with Kashdan, although it may be safe to assume not all could be obtained in good resolution. All but one of the photographs featured in this column do not appear in Lahde's book. Images of Kashdan's original scoresheets in his own handwriting would have been a welcome addition, but for some reason they are not included.



Kashdan (left) vs. Reshevsky in a rapid chess tournament preceding their encounters from the 1942 championship playoffs
Chess Review, June-July 1942, Vol. X, No. 6, page 135.

Since Lahde did not intend his book to be a fully-fledged biography of Kashdan and apparently did not make such a work his goal for this project, it wouldn't be quite fair to chastise the author for failing to provide one. As he expressed it, his primary purpose was to provide the most extensive collection of Kashdan games. Of that task, the author has acquitted himself well. However, the problem with this approach as it was executed is twofold: firstly, some games deserve to be presented in a more attractive way and with enough contemporary analysis to keep the reader's interest; secondly, such a drastic separation of Kashdan the man from Kashdan the grandmaster has some drawbacks. The reader is left without much of a sense who Kashdan was, and without a proper context for one of the most fascinating and little researched periods of American chess history. Kashdan is an iconic figure of American chess for many reasons, not just because of his outstanding play and results: he represents the link between the late 1920s/1930s – the Second World War and the beginning of Cold War era. There is a wealth of material that could have been used for reconstructing his life within the context of American chess in those critical years. Lahde's own method and philosophy about what chess history mainly should represent seems evident: game scores and cold facts and statistics about tournaments. From this perspective the current Kashdan work stands in stark contrast with the treatment Hodges received when Lahde worked with Hilbert on that particular project. There, the Hilbertian method of connecting the man to the context of his time is fully at work.

Something of Lahde's attitude toward historical detail is evident in the first part of the book. His citation system is somewhat cursory; he seldom directs readers to specific page numbers. Citing "Bill Wall; source lost" on page four when stating that the Mexican government made Kashdan and Fine lieutenants in the army in an effort to attract foreign chess masters to work as instructors for the military, is a dubious thing to do when writing a historical book dealing with a serious subject. Edward Winter saw in this (and other errors) the author's "casual approach to history" (C.N. 6339). Here's another example: while acknowledging the source as being *Chess Review*, from the group illustration given at page thirty-three in the book the author identifies only Kashdan and Marshall who are sitting across a chessboard under the caption: "Kashdan (left) and Marshall engaged in a friendly game around 1935. The onlookers are not identified." In fact, the photo was taken during the Puerto Rico International Tournament in November 1936 and appeared on page 277 of the *Chess Review* of December 1936. As our copy below shows, the caption identified all the individuals:



Standing (left to right): Eduardo Robert, Jr., Rafael Paez, Antonio Rodriguez
Seated: Issac Kashdan, Rev. Paul Morondo, Mrs. Marshall, Frank J. Marshall

Lahde's focus on games was made at the expense of further biographical digging. For instance, it is somewhat strange that he chose to ignore altogether the riddle regarding the presence of "Irving" in Kashdan's full name. We are told nothing about Kashdan's ancestors, adolescence and education, and we are told too little about several matters that should have been scrutinized more extensively: How did the Great Depression impact Kashdan's decision to remain a professional chess player? How did he get involved with the insurance business and how important was it for his financial stability in such a difficult period? The whole matter of the U.S.

championship title between Frank J. Marshall and Kashdan would have deserved a full chapter. After all, it was puzzling that Kashdan was the strongest American player throughout the 1930s and one of the top in the world, yet he was not an official American champion. When Kashdan challenged Marshall to a match in 1933, the latter asked for a \$5,000 purse to be raised by the challenger. The author closes the matter with the simple statement that "unfortunately that amount could not be raised in the end because of the Great Depression" and the match never took place. The evident rivalry between the two men might have been highlighted in order to emphasize the need for a reform (which came soon after) regarding the U.S. national title. Similarly, Kashdan's involvement with chess in California after his move to the West Coast in 1949 is treated too lightly [pages 58-70].



Kashdan (right) against I. Chernev in the 1942 U.S. Championship
Chess Review, May 1942, Vol. X, No. 5, page 109.

Establishing contacts not only with Kashdan's son, Richard Kashdan, but also with some American players who knew Kashdan could have provided Lahde a cache of oral history to be used for remembering the man and not only access to some rare family photographs, correspondence and the apparently valuable Kashdan scoresheets. Instead, Lahde limits himself to citing only a few anecdotes from Arnold Denker's books and gave space to a paragraph signed by Denker and titled "The Kashdan Legacy" on page seventy-one. While some basic details of Kashdan's wife and two children are offered, one cannot help the feeling that [Kashdan's appearance](#) on Groucho Marx's *You Bet Your Life* in 1950 gives us a greater glimpse at Kashdan the man, something that Lahde's book does not attempt to reveal in sufficient detail. Watch the first eleven minutes of this clip closely for Kashdan's performance on this popular American show in the mid-1950s, alongside an exceptionally charming Hungarian-born Helen Schwarz, the mother of Tony Curtis.

Overall, Peter Lahde's Kashdan book is a commendable effort to present the games of one of the strongest American players in history. It offers the largest collection of Kashdan games known to date. A great number of them will prove little-known or new even to specialized historians. They are worth being replayed and studied. Connoisseurs of historical games will not be disappointed. However, it would have been an immensely richer book if the author had given us more about Kashdan's life and his extraordinary times. On page one of his introduction, the author noted that "You could say chess was his [Kashdan's] life." On the chessboard, Kashdan's growth to a world top master paralleled the rise and fall of Capablanca and Alekhine, the domination of U.S. teams at Olympiads, the emergence of the Soviet Union as a ruling powerhouse up through the 1950s and 1960s and, towards the end of Kashdan's long life, the unexpected rise of Robert J. Fischer. There is more than enough history for a complete Kashdan biography to still be written.

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