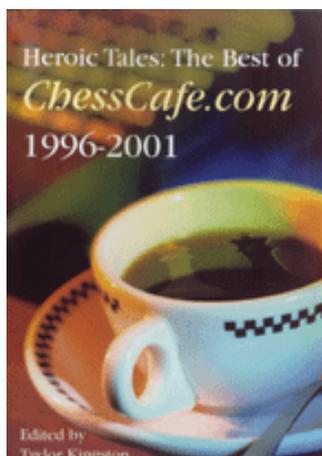




## BOOK REVIEWS



## Déjà Vu, All Over Again

Stephen Ham

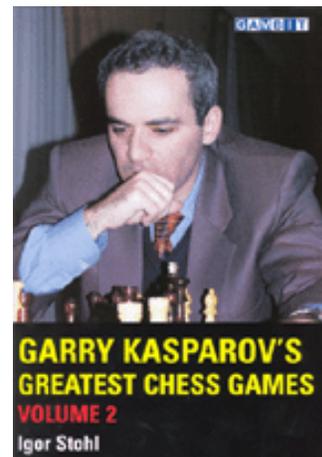
*Garry Kasparov's Greatest Chess Games, Volume 2*, by Igor Stohl, 2006 Gambit Publications, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Hardcover, 350pp., \$35.00

"The King is dead! Long live the King!" Retirement has taken Garry Kasparov from us. So, other than his occasional interviews and columns in *New In Chess*, we'll have no more chess games from the highest rated player in chess history. That makes a collection of his games all the more important. To date, the ultimate collection of them is *Garry Kasparov's Greatest Chess Games, Volume 1 and 2*.

I had the honor of reviewing volume 1 of this two-part collection of Garry Kasparov's greatest games and therefore asked to be able to review this book. So, those interested in either of these books are recommended to utilize that review as a general reference. The review is found in [ChessCafe.com's](http://ChessCafe.com's) archives.

Slovak GM Igor Stohl, already hailed as a wonderfully fine author and annotator who won awards for his [Instructive Modern Chess Masterpieces](#) (my review of that book is also in the archives), amassed numerous annotated Kasparov games due to writing a column for a Slovak newspaper. The quantity of games and the depth of Stohl's annotations were such that Gambit Publications advised that his work should be split into two volumes. The first volume takes us through the end of Kasparov's 1993 World Championship match with Nigel Short, while this volume starts in 1994 with Kasparov-Ivanchuk, Linares 1994 (game 75) and ends with Adams-Kasparov, Linares 2005 (game 129). The latter game is the one that trivia experts must remember as Kasparov's last tournament victory.

With book publishing, as in life, timing is everything. My review of volume 1 noted that Stohl offered the world a detailed look at Kasparov's greatest games, prior to Garry being able to do so with his next volume of *My Great Predecessors*. But, the timing was serendipitous also due to the fact that volume 1 was brought to market only two months after Kasparov announced his retirement from chess. In the Preface to volume 2, Stohl wrote that this timing was, "...just pure coincidence. And from a marketing perspective a welcome one, which greatly increased the interest in the book from the prospective readership."



*Garry Kasparov's Greatest Chess Games, Volume 2* begins with an index of the 54-games in this volume (there are 74-games in volume 1), an index of symbols found in the book, a Bibliography (the book thus includes Kasparov's own notes from *Chess Informant*, *New In Chess*, and his books, plus Stohl's own *Instructive Modern Chess Masterpieces*), and a two-page Preface. The heart of the book begins with a nine-page Introduction that chronicles Kasparov's chess life and games from 1994-2005. A personal biography isn't offered, but then, this is a game collection. This is followed by the 54 games, and concludes with a tabulation of Kasparov's tournament and match career, and an index of opponents and openings (the latter are listed by name and sub-categorized via the Informant System Code).

So far, it probably reads as though volume 2 is merely a continuation of volume 1. But, to my delight, this isn't exactly true. Volume 1 offers us relatively little examination of opening theory. In that book's Preface, Stohl wrote, "The theoretical phase of the games usually contains only brief coverage and quite often refers mostly to Kasparov's past and present treatment of the opening in question." So, while my review praised that book, I also wanted to see the detailed analyses of opening theory that was offered in *Instructive Modern Chess Masterpieces*. Fortunately, volume 2 offers us exactly that. This is why we have 30 more pages in volume 2, but 20 fewer games.

Opening theory and preparation are especially important issues with respect to Garry Kasparov, since his computer database and chess engine utilization seem relatively more advanced than that of other grandmasters. As such, Kasparov was famous for the thoroughness of his preparation for each of his opponents. Stohl commented that Kasparov's games often introduced not just new moves for opening theory, but whole new plans prepared through hard work, database analysis, and chess engine utilization. Stohl addresses this in his Preface with a discussion of the role of computer software upon opening preparation and theory. "The sometimes really amazing resources found with their help have clearly shown that chess tactics are a far more integral part of the game than was previously imagined. We have been repeatedly forced to rethink their role in relationship to strategy...The style of the contemporary elite has adopted to this trend by becoming even more concrete and dynamic. That practical effect on *Garry Kasparov's Greatest Chess Games* is that although Volume 2 is even larger than Volume 1, it contains fewer games. I've had first-hand experience of the aforementioned tendencies when writing *Instructive Modern Chess Masterpieces*, and I simply felt that presenting and understanding the complex play of a mature and experienced Kasparov at the peak of his strength simply required more explanation. This goes not only for the analytical, but also the verbal side of the notes, although I didn't delve into such detail as [much] in my first book."

My review of volume 1 wondered how Stohl would annotate the Kasparov games that he'd previously annotated for *Instructive Modern Chess Masterpieces*. Would he use the exact same annotations? After all, how can one argue with the great success of that book? His Preface answered with, "Incidentally, Volume 2 contains a few of Kasparov's games that were included in *Instructive Modern Chess Masterpieces*. These clashes cost me perhaps more effort than many 'fresh' games, as I took nothing for granted and didn't want to quote myself excessively. Readers who have both books may easily compare the notes and see for themselves the richness of Kasparov's ideas. Although I concentrated on the most relevant lines, the passage of time had had the result of bringing new insights even into the critical positions."



The annotation in both books next continues with analyses of 15...e6, which again seems superior in the earlier book. But, the important analysis is of the best move: 15...b5. In *Instructive Modern Chess Masterpieces*, we're offered, "My personal favorite is 15...b5!? 16 Be3 (16 Bg5 Ne4 17 Nxe4 Qxe4 18 Qb3 Qc4 favors Black; Krush's suggestion is 16 Re1!? b4 17 Na4 Qb5 18 a3 e6 19 axb4 Nxb4 is interesting, but also inconclusive) 16...Rd8! (16...b4 17 Na4 is exactly what Black doesn't want, while 16...Ra8 transposes to the note to White's 16<sup>th</sup> move) and now 17 Rc1 allows 17...b4 18 Na4 Qb5 with a safe position." Now, compare and contrast that to *Garry Kasparov's Greatest Chess Games, Volume 2* where we're offered, "However, Kasparov was relieved that Black missed the ambitious 15...b5!, and Krush in fact played this move in one of her later games. After 16 Be3 (Krush's idea of 16 Re1 b4 17 Na4 Qb5 18 a3 e6 19 axb4 Nxb4 is also inconclusive) 16...Rd8! (16...b4?! 17 Na4 forces Black's king to stay on the vulnerable queenside, while 16...Ra8 transposes to the note to White's 16<sup>th</sup> move) 17 Rc1 Black has 17...b4 18 Na4 Qb5 19 a3 Ke8!? with a safe position in which he can fight for an edge." While I prefer the latter commentary, I'm confused by Stohl's comment that Krush's 16 Re1 line is "...also inconclusive". In order for something to be "also" inconclusive, there must first be another line assessed as inconclusive too. Since Stohl didn't establish this, then the wording is incorrect. Such matters are trifling, but they are seen occasionally throughout the book. Since no translator is mentioned, then possibly Stohl wrote in English. But then Gambit Publication's editor, Graham Burgess, should have edited Stohl's English word selection and punctuation better. This was noted in my review of the first volume. Nonetheless, the book is easy and pleasant to read and the author's English prose is generally quite good.

For the record, the position after 15...b5 is of personal interest to me since I think that I was the first person to play that move. My notes and analysis have been online at: [http://www.correspondencechess.com/campbell/ham/fr\\_hambl.htm](http://www.correspondencechess.com/campbell/ham/fr_hambl.htm) since the day my move was played (I annotated my games "live"). Apparently, Stohl was ignorant of both my game and my analysis, which differs from his analysis at several points.

However, a more extreme example of updated annotations from *Instructive Modern Chess Masterpieces* is seen in game 100, *Kasparov-van Wely*, Wijk aan Zee 2000. In the note to White's 14<sup>th</sup> move, Stohl wrote that his "long line" from his former book is faulty and explains why with corrected analysis (page 219).

Mention of Kasparov's successes, preparation for opponents, and game analyses would be incomplete without mention of his assistant, Yuri Dokhoian. While I'd like to know more about this partnership, such as whether Dokhoian's Armenian nationality played a role in selecting and trusting him (Kasparov is Armenian on his mother's side, and she has strong influences upon him), Stohl's Introduction stated, "Kasparov himself mentions one specific reason why 1994 was a significant year for him – this was when Yuri Dokhoian became an integral part of his team. Despite being a reasonably strong GM in his own right, Dokhoian was nevertheless willing to give up any ambitions of his own and from 1995 onwards, his name completely disappears from the tournament circuit. He remained by Kasparov's side right up to [it should read: through] Linares 2005 and become the most productive and diligent of his assistants. Apart from Dokhoian's purely analytical contributions, Kasparov also highly valued his psychological support. While his previous coaches were sometimes skeptical about his ideas, Dokhoian trusted and believed Kasparov's

intuition, often developing his ideas with the help of a computer.”

Gambit Publications again demonstrated excellent production values with this book. The paper is of fine quality and the print size is just right. Diagrams are offered at appropriate positions, while the general appearance of each double-column page is one of attractiveness and reading efficiency. The hardcover review copy has a spine sufficiently flexible for laying flat. And, the book seems nearly devoid of typographical errors. British English spellings (e.g., centre) were used, but should not bother American readers.

Likewise, Igor Stohl has a very pleasant writing style. I find this interesting since the author is a Slovak, and we've seen some very odd and stiff writing from Slavic authors writing in English. But, as previously noted, the book doesn't mention any translator. Possibly Stohl wrote directly into English, with some editing assistance from Graham Burgess (Gambit's Editorial Director).

I enthusiastically recommend *Garry Kasparov's Greatest Chess Games, Volume 2*. It's yet another fine effort from both Igor Stohl and Gambit Publications, which in combination with volume 1, provides us with 129 Kasparov games. All are annotated to the highest level of accuracy. Yes, many of these games are already well known (but of course most of GK's games are!) - all have been previously published and annotated, often by Kasparov himself. But, given Stohl's attention to detail, his access to multiple previously published versions of these games, and his updating of all the analyses with computer assistance, this means that we now have the finest annotations to date for these games. Besides, the mere act of pairing Kasparov's selected games with a superb and objective author/annotator means that those who love fighting chess and detailed annotations will really appreciate this book.

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**Order** *Garry Kasparov's Greatest Chess Games, Volume 2*  
by Igor Stohl,

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