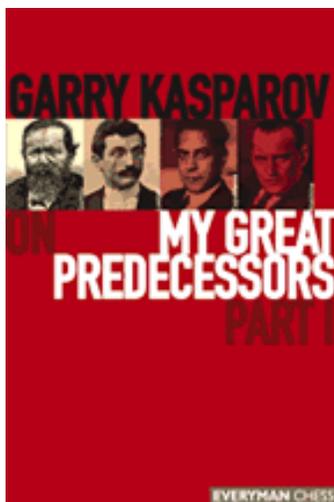




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SKITTLES
ROOM



One of the most anticipated publishing events of the year is the release of the new book by Garry Kasparov. Published by Everyman Chess, it is the first of a planned three-volume series and it is entitled *Garry Kasparov on My Great Predecessors*.

On July 10, we had the opportunity to interview him in New York City. Accompanied by Burt Hochberg, Mark Donlan and Carsten Hansen, we arrived shortly before 3 p.m. We were greeted by Garry's agent, Owen Williams. A few minutes later, the man himself arrived.

During the interview, Garry was animated and focused, discussing his new book with vigor and intensity, pouring his energy into the discussion as if he were doing battle - and winning - against a rival over the board.

An audio file of this interview, part 1, is also available for your enjoyment. It is an mp3 file and, because it is so large (approximately 26 meg) it may take a few minutes initially to open. You may access it at:

<http://www.chesscafe.com/zip/kasparovinterviewpt1.mp3>

The interview lasted about an hour. We are pleased to present - and hope you enjoy - the [ChessCafe.com](http://www.chesscafe.com)...

Interview with Garry Kasparov

Part 1

by Hanon W. Russell

Hanon Russell: We are here with Garry Kasparov, who is widely regarded as the strongest chess player ever to play the game. And Garry has been kind enough to do an interview with [ChessCafe.com](http://www.chesscafe.com) regarding the release of his new book, which is the first of three volumes. It is entitled *Garry Kasparov on My Great Predecessors*.



Garry Kasparov on behalf of **ChessCafe**, welcome and thank you for agreeing to do this interview.

Garry Kasparov: Thanks for organizing it.

HR: Well, it is a most interesting book and to my knowledge I could be wrong, maybe you have additional information, I'm not aware of a player of your stature doing a book on the world champions from a historical perspective. Is this a unique book?

GK: I think it is. Probably there were some sort of researches of that type, maybe 19th century. But I'm not aware of anything similar being conducted in the 20th century. First of all, it is a colossal work, because if you want to get involved you have to do it right. You have to do it right, you have to go around all these games, check them again and again. Now with computers it's easier, but at the same time it is a little bit more dangerous because every club player can check you and find mistakes.

So it's the quality of analytical work has to be upgraded dramatically. And also, thinking about such a book you have to come up with something new. What is the point of just writing the biography of Steinitz? Many people did it before me and they had more material and they could do much better. So, at one point, I thought about this really big, big, big, big picture and it started by accident. So the book, I never thought about the book, because you know, when you're an active chess player, you're on top of the world. So do you care about writing books? I had a good book about my two matches with Karpov. That was a very good book. I was proud of that, before that I had a book *Test of Time*. And all these books, they were under the strong influence of Botvinnik, who always told me and convinced me that, "Unless Garry you are working hard, unless you are analyzing your games, you will not be making progress." So keeping in shape means analyzing your games, looking for some new ideas, fresh ideas. So that's how Botvinnik stayed for so long and that's what he taught me as my mentor.



I think in '95 Fred Friedel came up with the offer to write columns for *Welt am Sonntag*, weekly column, and it didn't sound exciting for me. But eventually I said no. It was first reaction, but then I had another thought and I said maybe what could I do if I started looking at the world champions. So I had sort of the idea that maybe I could try to project every world champion to his own time and just to show the contribution of this person into the game of chess. And also the connection between the game of chess and the rest of the world, the signs, the culture, all spirits and flavors of the time.

So that was a very, very vague idea. Very vague idea, but you know it worked, we had quite a good working mechanism with Friedel. You know, I wrote the first

columns in English and we had 64 columns. And I finished writing it just before my match with Deep Blue, the second match. I remember finishing Tal in the plane, flying from Moscow to New York. But it was sort of raw material. It never had anything close to a book, it didn't look like a book. It was just a combination of my thoughts, combination of my thoughts that I was able to put together with Fred's help, but at one point I had to come back to that because in Russia, one of our Russian papers, *Sport Express*, wanted me to write it in Russian.

HR: And it has appeared in Russian?

GK: No, originally the first 64 columns were written in English.

HR: Oh, I was talking about the book.

GK: The book, yes. And I said OK you translate it. But then what happened it was changed from English to Russian and that's a different text. So I had to work hard on it. So then I actually came up with the idea of inviting someone I met, Dmitry Plisetsky, whom I knew for a long time. And we teamed up for this specific work, it's yet not a book. Then they asked us also to have also Petrosian and Spassky, so we added. Then at one point Dmitry told me, "Why not just come up with a book?" But, it's not enough for the book. And what's happened is that we began to work on the book and then it was more and more to come, because if you want to have a book you have to do it right.



So just having to write, it's not just you know a small story about a world champion playing some great games and some of his greatest competitors. You have then to try to find out the entire development of the game, through the games of the best players. Then I got the idea, that was probably in the year 2000, when I already had the idea of the book. The idea sort of... I called it the

Development of the Game of Chess. So the entire development of the game of chess throughout the games of the greatest players for the last 200 years. I realized it would be a gigantic task.

And then we made sort of the framework and I was puzzled because I saw the amount of work, but then Dmitry and my mother, in fact my mother told me, "Look Garry, you did a lot of good things in the world of chess, you played great games, but you have to leave a sort of legacy behind you. No one will be able to do it." And also now we are sort of facing, I wouldn't say the end of history, but definitely the classical chess as the game is no longer carrying the same importance. So to some extent these books, sort of the milestone that ends a great period of the history of

chess.

HR: The chronicle of...

GK: The chronicle of the game, because the game is different now with rapid chess, with world championship matches decided by blitz games, with Internet, we have to admit it's another game. It's sort of a new game.

HR: It has evolved.

GK: It has evolved. I wouldn't say it's bad or good. I think it's bad from the classical perspective, but it's good because the game is able to evolve. It means it's catching up with time. So it's ancient, but it also remains highly advanced technologically. So it fits Internet and technological era. So we could be proud about it. But at the end of the day someone has to come up with the story. Not the final story, but I wanted to lay down a foundation for more people to contribute, because we have a great history. What we can document is probably 200 years, but it's 200 years not only of great history of chess, but great people that played the game of chess. And analyzing these games I realized that each of them was a product of its time. And everybody fit the dominant agenda of its time. And that's why analyzing the games and presenting it in the right light – colors, I could show the importance of the game of chess for mankind. As you can see, every step we made enlarged the amount of work... Sorry

HR: That's clear. No, don't be sorry at all. You've explained how the book gradually came to be and you've mentioned Dmitry Plisetsky.

GK: Yes.

HR: This is one of three volumes; this is an enormous amount of material.



GK: I could reveal a secret. It could be more than three.

HR: Oh, OK.

GK: It could be... It's not yet decided, because also while working on that... Originally we didn't have any games that were important for the career of the player, each player. So we paid attention to the games that are fundamental to the development of chess. Not the games that were deciding the world championship matches. And eventually Dmitry convinced me that that's not right. We have to cover that because you can't give the full picture to grasp the whole contribution of the player without showing his most important, vital games in the world championship matches. So that's why we actually added it in and now looking at the picture... Now I'm finishing Volume Three, now, Karpov.

HR: OK.

GK: We decided that the whole story would not be full without whole coverage of Kasparov-Karpov matches. It was not covered... Match, the first one, I don't count some lousy books. I wrote about two matches, but still it had to be upgraded, because now with computer I could do more work. And also matches four and five. These matches sort of created, it was sort of the birth sport of a new generation of players. Most of these young players the came up... they entered the world of chess by studying these games. These matches contributed to the development of the theory and also I think created a sort of new concept. That's why I recognized that without having these matches it would not be full story. Having these matches, Volume Three becomes...

HR: A thousand pages.

GK: So that's why most likely, most likely, you know, it will be moved to Volume Four.

HR: Fourth Volume.

GK: And the fifth one will be my own games. So just to have a complete story... It's difficult challenge. It's hard, you know, but if you do it you have to do it right. So you have to make it complete. Otherwise people, you know, will feel that it's not enough.

HR: Let me ask you a little, a few questions, about the development of this book. Plisetsky helped. Did you have anybody else doing research?

GK: No. Two of us.

HR: Because that's an enormous amount of work for two people.

GK: Two of us... and I can reveal how we worked. We took a champion. I analyzed the games, so I looked at the games. A list of the games. And we discussed the concept. So what was the contribution of this player? In fact, the first eight were already covered in ChessBase. So I already had the concept there. And I picked up some games. And I analyzed them with a computer and then I had my tape recorder and we were recording my thoughts about the game. Then he took it back, he was

writing it, he was transcribing it from the tapes. He came up with the material. He also looked with his computer, so just to find whether there were mistakes.

Then I worked again on this text. I made all my comments. I made analysis, send it back to him. He worked on that he came back with the original text and then I made final remarks. So that it works this way. We proceed through the games of each champion and we trying to make picture complete. The problem is that with each champion, the number grows. It's quite phenomenal that the best demonstrations of chess is growing and developing, is the fact that by trying to cover the contribution of each player I had to struggle with the fact that each champion, the chapter, just grows. Games are getting more complicated, there are more lines there, and also there are more games that I have to pick up to have the complete picture.

HR: Isn't that partially because each champion has the benefit of the previous?

GK: Probably, probably. That's why you see a very nice sort of staircase. And Fischer is huge. The size of Fischer is equal to the size of Botvinnik, which has Bronstein and Keres inside. But Karpov is bigger than Fischer, probably much bigger than Fischer.

Burt Hochberg: Bigger in what sense?

GK: Bigger in terms of the size. Because I'm interested in the contribution of the player. I have to see how these persons changed the world of chess throughout his chess career. And I have a number of games that are vital for me to present this case. So Fischer, was huge in terms of number of games I had to pick up. For instance, Spassky I think I had about 25... average is 25 games and segments. Fischer it's 45. Karpov, I think I'm dealing with number like 70. And it's even without fully covering my matches with him.

One fact is that Karpov's career is long. But it's quite amazing that it's not only a long career, because for instance Spassky's contribution to chess ends in my view in 1974. He lost to Karpov and that's... he played some great games, but he didn't make the same contribution as before. Karpov is quite unique. His contribution lasts from 1971 till 1996. Analyzing, you know, his games you can that the man was at the edge. So that's what I have to find out.



And it's quite amazing to see how they are enriching the game of chess. You're right, you know. The successor benefits from his predecessors and the game is getting richer.

HR: Well, you have the principles that are pointed out by Steinitz...

GK: Right.

HR: ... and then you have Lasker benefiting from that, etcetera.

GK: Absolutely.

HR: You say in your Introduction and I'm quoting here: "For quite some time I have been wanting to write a book on the new and modern history of chess. And moreover, deviating from the traditional approach, to demonstrate the continuous progress of the game through the play of the world champions." Now I call that... When I was going through this book it struck me how you are viewing the champions from Steinitz through yourself and Kramnik as really different parts of one whole. I called it an 'integrated continuum'. In other words, and I haven't heard this idea that you were putting forth in this game suggested by anyone else. We all know Steinitz had these principles, everybody benefited from them, Lasker added the psychological aspect in a great way, but in fact they're all connected. And you say, yes, they're all part of the same whole and I thought that was a very interesting idea.

GK: Yes, a part of champions, I have the greatest challengers, because the theories were born by the champions fighting the best opponents. Like, you know, Steinitz theory would not be best proven without Chigorin. So Lasker needed Dr. Tarrasch. This is the fight of great personalities.

HR: There are people who suggest that you needed Karpov in that way.

GK: Yeah, absolutely. So you always have the sort of the different styles clash and produce as a result... open new horizons in the game of chess. And it's amazing that you could, actually in later volumes I will do it, I will show it, that you can quite easily analyze the games of Fischer tracing certain elements back to other champions. So that's why I always say that when you look at Kramnik you can actually see certain elements, you know, from Lasker, or Botvinnik, or Capablanca, or Karpov. So when you look at my style you can see that the... a lot from Alekhine, Tal. So it's all... it's like a new level, you have the world champion who is inheriting certain elements from his predecessors. And that's why there are many lines that you can actually trace. Starting from Anderssen, Chigorin, it goes up, you know, Alekhine, Bronstein, Tal, Kasparov, Shirov now, for instance... It's integrated history and that makes it, I think, makes us proud.

HR: I think you have a clear, every once in a while you have a very, very clear example. What came to my mind was Fischer's play in the '63 championship where he played the Nh3, Steinitz' move against, the Two Knights'. He played the King's Gambit, and that was a very clear link. It wasn't probably as subtle as you're talking about.

GK: No, I also played the Evan's Gambit once.

HR: Right.

GK: I think it's important... but it's not only in the openings. I think it's about the way we are presenting these ideas. So, I think it's about look and presentation. In our games you can see the similarities between some champions of the past and the leading players today. So chess it's... when you look at games of each of top players that fought in the world championship matches, you will be able to go backward and actually to see the roots. So they all come from certain roots. Strange mixtures, you know, we inherit different parts from different champions, because we're all personalities. But it's quite entertaining to analyze and actually to find similarities. Something, "Oh, I saw it somewhere, look at this Kramnik game I think it's something from Lasker". So that's quite amazing. And I take as an open challenge for everybody, just do more. We need more, because that's our history so it's just a foundation. There could be more stories, more anecdotes, more human facts... Volume One is most difficult for me: I never met these people. Volume Two and Three, I played with most of them and I met, except for Euwe, I met everybody. So that's why it will be more of a human interaction.

But I urge people to come up with new ideas, because I want to see more stories added. And to create the history that will show that chess was, is, and will be very valuable item in the human society.

HR: One of the things that you do that I found extremely interesting, you don't do it often, but every once in a while you come to a position... And I believe you came to a position that Lasker played a move and then you immediately say "had Alekhine had this position he would have played something else" and it goes along with what you were saying. How did you come up with something... First of all, it's obviously speculation, we don't know what Alekhine would have played, but it's fascinating to have you say "well here's someone of Alekhine's style, in this position, he doesn't play what Lasker would, he would certainly play something else." This is a very interesting concept.

GK: But it's again... I agree it's highly speculative, but that's why this book is written, you know. For us to see how the great players made their minds and what was the decision making process, and how different. You could view the book as the, not only in the historical context, but also as sort of the manual. It's not a final destination, people can vary, but, as I said it's an open challenge. So I think Alekhine would do this and Capablanca would do that, because I analyzed their games and I think I could be positive in making an educated guess. Because I sense their decision making process. It's speculation, yes.

HR: But it's extremely interesting.

GK: Yes, but you have to make it entertaining and also I always wanted to give people food for thought. Now with everybody equipped with computers and already Volume One, you know, was published in Russian and we already received a number of comments about the mistakes we made there. For instance, in Volume Two we already wrote, in Volume Two we have sort of a diary; in Volume Two will be added two or three pages, it's our comments on the comments received from the Russian edition. So for instance, I think the cleanest edition will be Spanish edition, because they are behind. I'm sure there will be more comments after publication and

we welcome that. Every volume will have a few more pages saying, “OK we found mistakes, other people found mistakes and people had their provocative thoughts, great!” That’s why the book is there.

HR: I was struck by the... really the great respect that you showed these champions. When you think of it, here you are; probably the best ever and you’re treating these people with tremendous respect. You also treat the players who almost made it; in particular you had some great things to say about Rubinstein. And, let me give you one quote and maybe you can elaborate a little bit. On page 204 you say: “Careful analysis shows that modern chess, proceeding from the Botvinnik era, is very strongly influenced by the games of Rubinstein, who was, essentially, one of the fathers of modern chess history.” Could you elaborate on that for us?

GK: Yes, as you can see, I believe that the world champions they were *crème de la crème* of world of chess and without them we wouldn’t be here. So it’s treating them with great respect, as treating your own ancestors. So, you know, Garry Kasparov owes everything he knows to these people. And game of chess, that we all love and we promote, wouldn’t be here without their games. And they made tremendous contributions, and I always feel these contributions were heavily underestimated. But moreover, the contributions of players that never made it, was even more underestimated, because world champions deserve the greatest credit. And it’s right, because they were unique. Rubinstein was the greatest mind, one of the greatest minds, but he never made it. We came blame the World War I that, you know, he was not in the right spot; Capablanca had time to enjoy vacations while everybody was suffering.

There are many elements, but still, you know, it’s the big tournaments like in St. Petersburg 1914 he missed it. So there was something, a littler bit, like Rubinstein, Keres, Bronstein, they lacked just one bit. But because they lacked this little bit and it’s more of psychology and fighting spirit and they were superseded by Lasker, Capablanca, or Botvinnik, it doesn’t mean that Rubinstein, Keres, and Bronstein,



they didn’t deserve the same credit promoting the game of chess. So that’s why I felt it vitally important to analyze the contribution of these players. And I was surprised myself, because I wanted to be absolutely impartial. When I write about the players, the stories, and you will see in Volume Two and

Volume Three, I’m not giving my own personal opinion neither on Botvinnik or Karpov. There are facts. I don’t want to deal with the facts outside of the game of chess. The facts, what’s happened with Botvinnik or Keres, or Karpov they will be there, but it’s not for me to decide. My task is to analyze their contribution. And I’m trying to be very, very impartial. So I see this match played a big role, this one didn’t play a big role. And I disregard some big games, some that are traditionally considered to be very important or a big matches and I said: OK look, this match,

this player, played quite poorly, but here is his contribution.

And I've been analyzing Rubinstein games, and I looked at the... it's not only his games, you have to look at his games in his time. So I analyzed quite thoroughly the games of Lasker, Tarrasch, all the games played in the beginning of the 20th Century, first 50 years, before World War I, and it was crystal clear to me that Rubinstein's contribution was enormous. And then I could immediately trace, could it be, Botvinnik as his successor. But he never liked to talk about it. But I saw, you know, Botvinnik actually inheriting a lot from... opening approach, you know, the technique, so it's, Rubinstein was there, he had a lot of elements that he was not able because of probably some psychological weaknesses to put into most powerful display. But it happened.

And I even learned, you know, later Plisetsky found that in early sixties, before playing Botvinnik, Petrosian studied Rubinstein games.

So it's very entertaining, sometimes, you know, it could be questionable, but if other players, other experts will display different opinions that's good for the game of chess.

HR: Well, I thought your treatment of Rubinstein was so interesting because for the most part he's not regarded by most players as being as important as you make him. And I think he's ignored unfairly.

GK: Absolutely, but that's happened with many players who just missed it by an inch.

HR: Do you think if he had – now this is a guess on your part of course – but based on what you have done, do you think if he played Lasker say between 1908 and 1912 he defeats Lasker or not?

GK: Still think Lasker would have beaten him.

HR: You think Lasker wins?

GK: Because he was missing, you know, this very important element of psychology. I think he didn't stand a chance against Lasker before World War I. Why I'm unhappy about the failure to have such a match, because this kind of match could make tremendous contribution to the game of chess. And if this match would have been played you could see the real contribution of Rubinstein and he would not be disregarded as much as he was without being able to play the match.

End Part 1. Part 2 will appear in the Skittles Room July 30.

ChessCafe.com would like to thank the following people for their assistance: Owen Williams, Dan Addelman, Burt Hochberg, Mark Donlan and Carsten Hansen.



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