

## **English Chess Federation**

### **BOOK of the YEAR 2008**

The judges this year had no difficulty choosing a book which gives a remarkable inside view of match play chess at the highest level.

#### **From London to Elista Evgeny Bareev and Ilya Levitov New in Chess pp398 £21.95**

This volume, which is in three parts, covers in sequence the three world title matches Kramnik has played. The first part "Overthrow of a Colossus" was his defeat of Kasparov in London 2000; the second "Photo finish in Brissago" was the 2004 drawn match against Leko where Kramnik held onto his title by winning the last game. Lastly, "Big Brother in Elista" refers to the controversy-ridden match with Topalov in 2006 which Kramnik won on the tie break.

Grandmaster Bareev was one of Kramnik's seconds for the first two matches and a closely involved spectator in the match with Topalov. Levitov is a journalist and an enthusiastic amateur chess player. There are also contributions from Smyslov, and two of Kramnik's other seconds Lautier and Svidler. The basis of the book is a dialogue between Levitov and Bareev. Levitov, a spectator and outsider to the professional chess world, seeks to understand the complex inner workings of world championship chess matches. Bareev as the professional insider explains what is going on. Bareev also annotates all the games in depth concentrating on the critical moments of play in the openings and the interface between the contestants.

Well written and translated the quality of the book resides in the open and frank way Bareev answers the questions. Amongst the many subjects discussed (and we can only list a few here) are stress, opening preparation, team working, relations with Kramnik, the opponents, fatigue and exhaustion of players and seconds. But above all the narrative captures very well the psychological issues behind the drama of the matches. When will Kasparov's fight back take place? How to keep an ailing Kramnik going when behind in his match with Leko? And last but not least can Kramnik keep his composure after being defaulted a game against Topalov?

London to Elista gives a unique insight into world championship chess. Without doubt this is one of the most original and interesting books to have won the Book of the Year award.

**R B Edwards J Farrand D Friedgood**

1<sup>st</sup> October 2008