

Profession: Chessplayer

Grandmaster at Work

by

Vladimir Tukmakov

Foreword by Genna Sosonko



2012
Russell Enterprises, Inc.
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Vladimir Tukmakov

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From the Author

This book is about finding your path, finding yourself. It is also about one's choice of profession. I think this choice, especially for men, is just as important and complicated as choosing a life partner. In both cases the union is often preceded by passion – a beautiful, inspiring beginning. But life, fortunately, is longer and more complex than the wildest passion, and therefore other, more subtle details of the future choice should not be ignored.

Chess in the Soviet Union occupied a unique niche. Seemingly at the forefront of the ideological competition with the West, chess still was under less pressure than other areas of Soviet life. Personal and biographical details played far less important roles than they did in art or science, and the administrative control was not as strict. But mostly my choice was determined by an inextricable link between creative and competitive drive. Work done correcting both chess-related and human problems was invariably reflected in the tournament charts, defining the direction for further improvement.

Of course, it is a different millennium now, a different era. Chess, boosted by general technological progress, has become quite different, having lost along the way most of its romanticism, irrationality and mystery.

The chess profession also has undergone great changes. It is difficult to determine whether the positive or the negative elements have prevailed. But the freedom remains unchanged (relative freedom, of course, like everything else in this world), which distinguishes this profession from the other, often far more profitable occupations.

The author's goal in writing this book was not to teach or guide anyone. I was inspired by the desire to re-examine my own life, to analyze the nearly-finished game.

This book is intended primarily for chessplayers, who are well aware that no one is immune to mistakes in analysis. Nevertheless, I would be glad if my story would help some of my young readers find their own path with fewer mistakes. An older generation of chess fans may find it interesting to go back to the atmosphere of Soviet chess, where I spent a large part of my chess life.

I tried to be honest with myself and the readers to the fullest possible extent, with the emphasis on defeats rather than on victories. Analyzing one's failures, both in life and in sports, is much more productive for growth than basking in success.

I followed the same approach in the second, purely chess-related, part of the book. When I was analyzing and annotating the games, I often felt despondency and disappointment, primarily from the imperfection of my own play. Games that

From the Author

I thought were the best sometimes did not withstand the scrutiny of the computer analysis. But the possibility of reinforcing harmony with analysis and achieving even more perfect harmony like in no other area makes chess even more valuable and unique for me.

Fortunately, I kept notes on my time expenditure during many of my games, as well as my comments at the time, which helped avoid the temptation to embellish my own, very imperfect creations. I hope that this information will be of interest to readers as well as the author himself.

To make playing over the games more instructive each diagram is accompanied by a question. Sometimes the answer is obvious, sometimes the author himself does not have the complete answer. As in life, in chess it is much easier to ask questions than to answer them.

It is however important to correctly formulate the question. It is for you, the reader, to judge how well I managed to do that.

Vladimir Tukmakov
Odessa, Ukraine

professionally “warmed up” the client. The first kettle of wine was won in a close and very grueling struggle. The second – with a rook as a handicap – was much easier. He had learned Yankel’s lessons well.

Unexpected Rise

And then the student routine started: lectures, seminars, term papers... Volodya was gradually drawn into the rhythm of new life and almost never thought of chess. Then suddenly he received an invitation to the World Youth Championship Qualifier – two years later that memorable failure had passed quickly, and he was still one of the strongest juniors. His first impulse was to decline without even thinking about it: after two years the competition had gotten even more intense, and months spent away from the chessboard did not help his self-confidence. Besides, the oath given to the dean was worth at least something. But the more Volodya thought about it, the more arguments in favor of this trip he found.

No one expected any feats from him, and he himself did not have any illusions about his chances for success. On the other hand, in the absence of the solid goal he could simply play chess, which he had suddenly started to miss. Also a possible failure would confirm that he had made the right choice. Little by little, anticipation for the tournament sucked him in. He was like an impatient stallion trembling in the stable before the race. Even a serious warning from the dean’s office did not stop him, so he found himself in Moscow. The tournament was very strong: more than half of the participants were masters. The favorites were Vitolinsh and Yuri Balashov, the youngest master in the country, a rising star from the provincial town of Shadrinsk.

Volodya played Alvis in the first round. The victory came surprisingly easy in this game. The second opponent, Gennady Kuzmin, was defeated by a direct attack.

He was playing effortlessly and freely. For the first time in a long time Volodya was playing without the pressure of responsibility for the result; he was simply enjoying his favorite game.

Even losses could not ruin his happy mood. When the tournament was over, he still wanted to play again and again. Even the joy of winning the tournament was tainted because it ended so quickly. Finishing two points higher than the runner-up suddenly made him the number one candidate for the world championship.

Volodya returned to Odessa and to the institute as a hero, because the national newspapers *Pravda* and *Izvestia* published reports from the tournament. Even the strict dean softened and allowed him to take the final exams that he had missed, at his convenience. I must say that Volodya was struggling with never-ending exams for a few more years. In the end he did not become a theoretical physicist,

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and eventually transferred to the economics department. We will come back to that later.

So what happened in Moscow? Why did victory keep slipping away when Volodya was waiting for it, and come when he abandoned all hope? Probably someone up above who cares about what we are doing with our lives guided Volodya toward his old path. Anyway I had nothing to do with it; a career in science seemed to me far more reliable and secure employment.

Another match with Yugoslavia was scheduled before the world championship, this time in Yugoslavia. This first trip abroad was a big event in the life of any Soviet citizen. The first forms to fill out, the first security clearance... Yugoslavia at the time was considered a capitalist country. Strictly speaking the applicant was supposed to be tested to see if he could resist the temptations in the socialist countries first, but there was no time for it, because the world championship in Spain was around the corner.

I do not remember why, but most players on the Soviet team were from Leningrad, among them Taimanov, Kortschnoi, and Spassky. Together with Polugaevsky and Stein they made a formidable team, hard for the Yugoslavs to beat. On the men's boards the Soviet team had a tangible advantage, but on the youth's boards it was not clear. Besides Volodya the team consisted of Levon Gregorian, who took second place in Moscow, and Andrei Lukin from Leningrad. Levon and his twin brother Karen were among the strongest juniors in the country. They got noticed at an early age, and by the time Volodya had started to go to national chess schools and tournaments, the brothers were already veterans. Usually accompanied by their mother, at the time something unusual, they stood out not only because of their obvious talent, but also because their family was conspicuously well-off. Sometimes their father, a famous Armenian poet Ashot Grashi, would join them.

The boys were different not only in their appearances, but also in their personalities. Hypochondriac and reflective Karen bore little resemblance to an open and carefree Levon. In chess, they played leap frog for a while, but gradually they parted their ways: Karen became one of the strongest masters of the country, while Levon started finding himself in questionable settings. The situation was probably exacerbated by their father's death: Karen's quiriness began to appear even more abnormal, and Levon completely disappeared from view.

They both died tragically. Levon was thrown out of a hotel room window in Tashkent, and Karen jumped from a bridge in Yerevan. But that all happened much later.

In Yugoslavia, Volodya won all five games, and of course such a result inspired optimism before the world championship.

The game with Bojan Kurajica (game #34) will be remembered not only as a prologue to their rivalry at the forthcoming championship. The game was adjourned in an endgame that was interesting from a theoretical standpoint. The best players were chosen to help with the analysis. Volodya spent several hours in the company of Boris Spassky and Lev Polugaevsky. Lyova, as everyone called Polugaevsky, plugged in right away. Volodya tried to counter him, but Spassky was openly bantering. He was in the prime of his game. But he stood out not only because of remarkable natural talent. His manners and behavior – especially in the presence of the officials – were stunning and even shocking. He could say something clearly anti-Soviet in some high office, like how inappropriate the presence of Soviet troops in Czechoslovakia was, or he could start talking about the revolutionary situation in the country, mocking Lenin’s characteristic burr. And he did it with an innocent and serious look – apparently the world had lost an exceptional artistic talent. The bosses were indignant, but tolerant: he was the hope of Soviet chess, a candidate and later the world champion.

Volodya felt completely lost in his company. A serious tone seemed out of place, and timid attempts to respond with a joke were abruptly interrupted – it was a one-man show. During rare intermissions, Boris Vasilyevich would drop a few chess evaluations, which were always unexpected and accurate. Whatever it was, the adjourned game was won without much trouble.



Boris Vasilyevich Spassky as the 10th world champion. The USSR Youth Masters Championship, Dubna, 1970

The world championship was approaching. However, the situation was complicated by the fact that the USSR and Spain did not have diplomatic relations, and therefore participation in the tournament remained unresolved for a long time. Franco was depicted in numerous caricatures as an ugly dwarf with a bloody hatchet, and his government was called nothing else but a fascist regime. But either diplomatic relations were emerging, or some political considerations came into play, as in the end the trip was allowed. Volodya was assigned to Yuri Lvovich Averbakh, a strong grandmaster and a famous endgame theorist. At the time Averbakh did not play much, combining his journalistic work as the editor of *Chess in the USSR* magazine and the position of the vice-president of the chess federation. He had a lot of experience, and Volodya felt very secure.

The route went through Paris, where we were supposed to get visas at the Spanish consulate. The very first direct contact with the bloody fascist regime led to confusion. At first everything went smoothly, until they realized that we did not

The Decisive Move

Decisive are those moves after which the fate of the game becomes completely obvious. In a long career I've seen a lot of them but the most memorable happened for me in the following game...

(10) Tukmakov – Panno, Oscar

Buenos Aires 1970

Sicilian Defense [B85]

1.e4

During those glorious times I was “serving with every hand,” in other words playing 1.e4, 1.d4, and 1.♟f3, as well as 1.c4. I still play this way but only during simultaneous exhibitions. In serious chess, I switched to a “closed” opening repertoire a long time ago.

1...c5 2.♟f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♟xd4 ♟f6 5.♟c3 d6 6.♞e2 ♞e7 7.0-0 0-0 8.♞e3 ♟c6 9.f4 ♟c7 10.♞h1 a6 11.a4

And so, a current tabia of the Scheveningen has been reached. Even now, not many chessplayers can boast about a deep understanding of the subtleties of this chameleon-like variation, although it is the starting position for most games only at the highest levels, where the current tenets of modern theory have been formed.

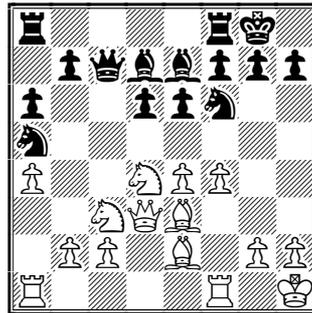
11...♟a5!?

This move has not survive the test of time. Lucky for me, because if my opponent played, say, 11...♞e8, 11...♞b8 or 11...♞d7, my annotations would turn into a multi-paged opening reference work.

12.♟d3!?

As previously mentioned, the theory of this variation at the time was in its infancy. Apparently, I was not overly impressed with my own game as I also tried to play this position with Black. My first experience wasn't very successful: 12.♟e1 ♟c4 13.♞c1 ♞d7 (here I should have played 13...e5!) 14.b3 ♟a5 15.♞d3 ♟c6 16.♟xc6 ♞xc6 17.♞b2 and in the end I lost (Karpov-Tukmakov, Tbilissi 1971).; The second attempt was better: 12.♞d3 ♟c4 13.♞c1 e5! 14.♟f5 ♞xf5 15.exf5 ♞ac8 with victory on around 60th move (Gufeld-Tukmakov, Moscow (blitz) 1972).

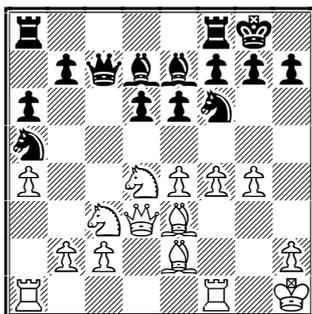
12...♞d7 (D)



What plan should White choose in this typical Scheveningen position?

13.g4!?

Karpov would never play this! But I thought that I had to take advantage of the outlandish position of the knight on a5 should be used in a most energetic way. The inclusion of the moves 13.♞ad1 ♞ac8 would only postpone the decision. (D)



How should Black react to White's aggression?

13...♖h8?!

This isn't the most commonly employed method of defense in these positions! The knight is close to its king and when the opportunity presents itself Black should be ready to make the freeing move f7-f5. In the game, this move led to ruin, but not everything is so clear here. According to classic canons, a flank attack should be answered with a counterattack in the center! After 13...d5! 14.e5 (14.exd5 ♖xd5 15.♗xd5 exd5 16.♗f3 ♗c4 17.♗c1 ♖ac8 is also unclear) 14...♗e8 15.♖ad1 ♗c4 16.♗c1 ♖c8 a difficult game with mutual chances is in store. I think this is the way I was planning to play with Black.

14.g5 ♗g8 15.♖f3!

The attempt to immediately decide the outcome of the game with 15.f5 ♗c6 16.fxe6 fxe6 17.♖c4 would not bring the desired result: 17...♖b6! 18.♗xc6?! ♖xe3 19.♗xe7 ♗xe7 20.♖c7 ♗c6 21.♖xf8+ ♖xf8 22.♖xe7 ♗xe4+ with a draw by perpetual check.

15...♗c6

On 15...♖ac8 16.♖g1 ♗c4 17.♗c1 White has enough time to regroup his forces for a quick attack.

16.♖g1!

With the possibility of quietly bringing up such important reserves to the battlefield, there is no point in considering the forced variations arising after 16.♖h3!? ♗xd4 17.♗xd4 e5 18.♗d5, all the more so as things are not all that simple here. Strongest for Black is 18...♖c6 19.♗c3 ♗xh3 20.♖xh3 f5! (on 20...exf4? White's plan would be completely justified: 21.♖g1! ♖xa4 22.♗d3 followed by ♖g4 or 21...f6 22.♗h5! ♗d8 23.♗g6 h6 24.gxh6 ♗xh6 25.♗f5!. White has an attack, but is it enough for the sacrificed exchange?)

16...♗xd4

There are different problems after 16...♗b4!? 17.♖d2 e5 18.♗f5 ♖ad8 19.a5! (Just so! The natural 19.♗xe7 ♗xe7 20.f5, after 20...♗c6 21.f6 ♗g6, doesn't look too convincing) 19...♖xa5 (also possible is 19...♗xf5 20.exf5! ♖c6 21.♖g2 e4 22.♖h3 f6! 23.♖e1! fxg5 24.fxg5 ♖xf5 25.♖h4 h6 26.gxh6 and White wins) 20.♗d5 ♗xf5 21.♗b6 ♖a4 22.b3 ♖d7 23.♖xb4 ♗g4 24.♖e3 ♗xe2 25.♗xd8 exf4 26.♖xe2 and White's advantage is indisputable.

17.♗xd4 f5?

The long-contemplated counterplay; however its aftermath is lamentable for Black. Better is the more modest 17...f6, avoiding a direct attack. White would have to be satisfied with a positional advantage: 18.g6! h6 19.f5 exf5 20.exf5 ♗c6 21.♗e3.

18.♖h3!

With the unambiguous idea of 19.♖xh7 ♕xh7 20.g6+ ♖h8 21.♖h3+.

18...e5 19.♘d5 ♖d8

There is no salvation in 19...♖c6 20.♖xh7+ ♕xh7 21.♖h3+ ♘h6 22.gxh6 g5 (22...g6 23.♖xg6!) 23.fxg5.

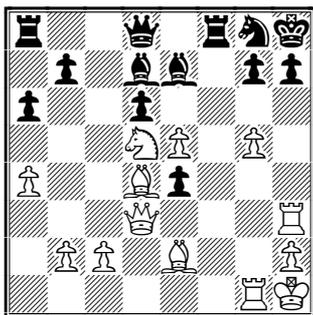
20.fxe5!

Weaker is 20.♙b6?! ♖e8! (20...fxe4? 21.♖xe4 ♙f5 22.♖xf5 ♖xf5 23.♙xd8 ♙xd8 24.♙d3 or 20...♖c8? 21.♖xh7+! ♕xh7 22.♖h3+ ♘h6 23.gxh6 g6 24.♘e7 clearly needs no additional commentary) 21.♘c7 ♖c8 22.♖xh7+ ♕xh7 23.♖h3+ ♘h6 24.gxh6 g6 25.♖g2 ♖g8 26.♘a8 ♖a8, but also winning is 20.♖xh7+!? ♕xh7 21.♖h3+ ♘h6 22.gxh6 g6 23.♖xg6! ♕xg6 24.♙b6!, but I had already found a much prettier win and wasn't looking around.

20...fxe4

The evaluation of this position leaves no doubt – White has a winning attack.

(D)



What is the most efficient way to finish off this game?

21.e6!!

I couldn't deny myself the pleasure of making this move instantaneously. Panno however thought more than an hour and still didn't find a defense.

What a colorful position! After 21...exd3 22.♙xd3, for the queen, White has only a pitiful pawn, but there is no defense against mate. And after 21...♙xe6, the d4-bishop has the last word: 22.♙xg7+ ♖xg7 23.♖d4+. Black resigned. **1-0**

This victory elevated my fighting spirit to such a degree that I went on to win three more games. And in general the move 21.e6 for many years was the subject of considerable pride on my part. However, at the time of the game a cruder win was available: 21.♖xh7+ ♕xh7 22.♖xe4+ ♙f5 23.♖h4+ ♘h6 24.♘e7 ♖xe7 25.g6+ which somewhat deflated the value of combination. But the major disappointment occurred when the Monster examined the game. Wretched Fritz 8 found the move of my life in seconds.

So what do we love these bastards for!?

(11) Kasparov, Garry – Tukmakov

Kislovodsk 1982

Queen's Indian Defense [E12]

Most of today's professional chessplayers have never adjourned a game, and some of them I'm sure don't even suspect that such a regulation ever existed. Meanwhile the sealed move (a necessary part of every adjournment) often significantly influenced the ebb and flow of a game, and sometimes even was itself quite critical.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 b6 4.a3