

About the Authors

Boris Gulko is one of the most distinguished Grandmasters in the chess world. He's a former Soviet Champion and has also won the US Championship twice since his immigration in 1986, making him the only chess player ever to have held both the American and Soviet championship titles. He is also one of the few players to hold a plus score against Garry Kasparov.

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Also by the Authors:

Lessons with a Grandmaster (Everyman Chess)

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Preface

The club player is unaware of the subtleties that exist in grandmaster chess both strategically and tactically. The psychology of the chess struggle is even less well understood. Grandmasters analyze chess at a depth that is unfathomable to amateurs; moreover, they have extensive knowledge of chess history and opening theory as well extraordinary endgame technique and tactical vision. However, having reached such a high level can make it difficult to understand what is lacking in the mind of the amateur, and therefore, what to explain, what not to explain, what to assume, etc. The purpose of this book is to bridge the gap between grandmaster and amateur through a conversation between Grandmaster Boris Gulko, the only player to hold both the USSR and US championship titles, and student Joel R. Sneed, PhD, a professor of psychology and amateur chess player.

Introduction

Boris: So we meet again to continue our study of the mystical teachings of chess.

Joel: Yes! Working with you on the first book had a major impact on my playing. I added several hundred points to my rating. Immediately after completing the book I scored 4 out of 5 with 2 draws and 3 wins at the Marshall Chess Club under-2000 tournament in New York. I tied for first and had a performance rating of 2100! My increased playing strength is a direct reflection of the work we did studying your games, solving exercises, and, in general, listening to you talk about chess. I will never forget the experience of going over your game against Kasparov (1990); it was so clear to me how little I understood about what was going on and how much more I need to learn in order to unlock the hidden mysteries of this great game.

Boris: Chess is a rich game indeed. In fact, we can say in general that it contains two games in one. First, there is strategic chess based on positional understanding, which includes prophylaxis, maneuvering, and understanding which pieces to exchange and which to keep on the board, to name a few of the elements we covered in the first book. Second, there is dynamic chess, which includes developing your chess imagination, capacity to take risks, ability to attack and defend simultaneously, and, perhaps above all, your ability to visualize the chessboard and calculate combinations in sharp positions.

It is not always true even at higher levels that players excel in both. For example, Grandmaster Ulf Andersson was a very skillful positional player but was not so inclined toward dynamic chess. On the other, Grandmaster Viktor Kupreichik was, in his prime, one of the most dangerous attacking players but he did not develop a predilection for positional play. Because of this, neither player realized their true potential in chess, despite their extraordinary talent.

Joel: In my case, it is clear that I overwhelmingly prefer playing positional games, to avoid complications, to grind people down based on positional superiority and

win in the endgame. As you have pointed out, this is a function both of individual taste (what kind of chess I like to play) but also a lack of confidence in my tactical ability, which is why I shy away from sharp positions.

Boris: Right, and in order to reach higher levels, it is critical to try and improve your skill in both directions. We devoted Volume One to positional play, so now we turn to dynamic chess. We'll discuss chess imagination, risk taking, simultaneous attack and defense, and the calculation of combinations in sharp positions as they come up in my most spectacular games. The games I have chosen for this book are very entertaining, some really beautiful, and many of the tasks I set will be very complicated. Therefore, instead of rating tasks in difficulty from 1 to 5 as I did in the first volume, I will rate the exercises from 1 to 6 to reflect the increased level of difficulty. Only after you have tried to solve the problems will I explain to you the secrets of the position. As you have shown, this method of teaching produces rapid results and I am sure you (and players at your level) will get a lot out of the book. Given the nature of the games selected, however, I think this volume will also be useful to stronger players who have more experience, because many of the tasks will be extremely difficult.

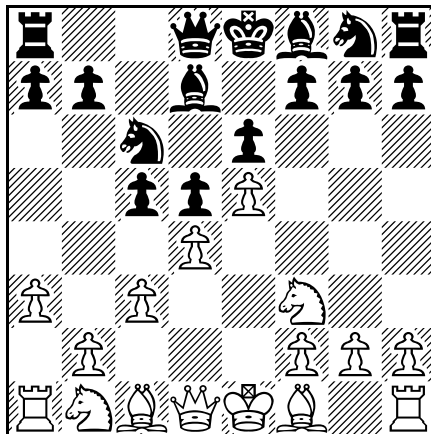
Joel: I am very excited to get started. My goal is to break the 2000 mark by the time we finish the second volume.

Boris: Alright then, let's get started. I will present the games in increasing order of difficulty, as in the first volume.

Game Three
E.Sveshnikov-B.Gulko
 Volgodonsk 1981
French Defense

Joel: I remember this game from studying the French Defense with you. It is very beautiful. I may look a lot stronger than I am because I've seen it before – or maybe not. Nevertheless, I don't fully understand one of the game's important maneuvers so it will be good to go over it again.

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 c5 4 c3 Nc6 5 Nf3 Bd7 6 a3



6...c4

Boris: If Black doesn't want to close the position, 6...a5!? or 6...Rc8!? are alternatives.

7 Bf4

Boris: This is an interesting novelty. White prepares to develop his b1-knight to d2 but not block his dark-squared bishop in on c1, so now Black has to solve new problems.

Joel: From a psychological standpoint, how do you go about handling that in a

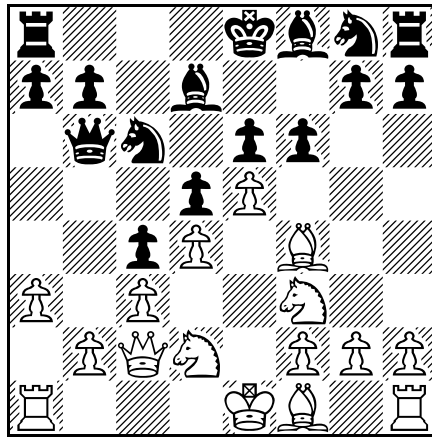
game or tournament situation? Do you have any advice?

Boris: This is a strategic position. A novelty in a strategic position is not so terrible to encounter; it is more dangerous in a tactical position because it means you are in your opponent's home preparation and competing with a computer. The usual advice is to think, try and understand the position, and try to find a plan. By definition, a novelty will appear on the board at some point, it just depends when. Here it occurred on move seven. A common move in this position at the time was 7 g3!?, when after 7...Na5 8 Nbd2 the bishop will be imprisoned on c1 for a long while, so Sveshnikov's idea makes sense.

7...Qb6 8 Qc2 f6

Boris: After Black's 6th move, which closed the queenside, this is the only opportunity he has to seek counterplay.

9 Nbd2?!



Exercise: Find the best way for Black. (difficulty level 3)

Joel: Black needs to undermine White's protection of the e5-pawn with 9...g5 (forcing 10 Bg3) followed by 10...g4, when White will not have enough defenders of e5.

Boris: Very good. Now Black has weakened White's center and pushed White's pieces to the side of the board. With 9 Nbd2?!, White gave Black the opportunity to

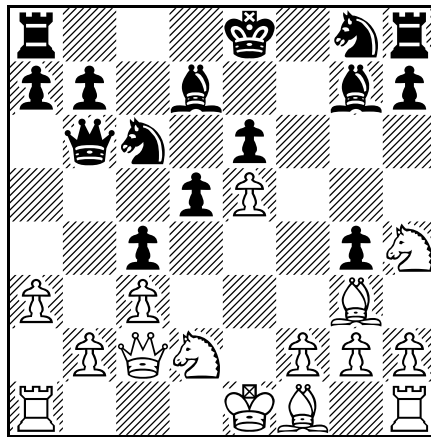
take over the initiative. He had to prefer 9 exf6 or 9 h4!? instead.

Joel: What do you like about 9 h4 - ?

Boris: With 9 h4 White prevents ...g7-g5 and simultaneously gains space on the kingside, while preparing to take the g6-square away from the black knight. Probably 9 h4 is more promising than 9 exf6.

9...g5! 10 Bg3 g4 11 Nh4 fxe5 12 dxe5 Nh6!

Boris: After 12...Bg7?!,



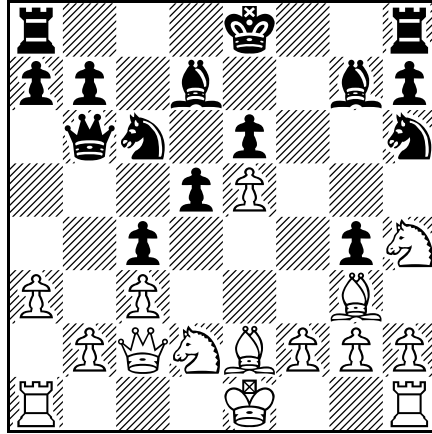
Exercise: What does White have to play? (difficulty level 2)

Joel: 13 Bxc4! when, if Black takes on c4, White takes back with the knight, hitting the queen and hopping into d6 with advantage. The point is that Black needs to keep his dark-squared bishop in contact with the d6-square (so 13 Bxc4 would also work against 12...Nge7?!). But what I don't understand here is what happens if Black decides not to take back on c4 and instead plays 13...Nxe5, when Black has traded his c4-pawn for the white e5-pawn, which seems favorable to me (a wing pawn for a center pawn).

Boris: You're right that after 13 Bxc4 Black's best move is 13...Nxe5. But we need to compare this position with the one we will come to in the game after the next move. Also worse for Black was 12...0-0-0?! 13 h3 Bg7 14 hxg4 Nxe5 15 Nh3 Nxg4

16 Bxc4! and White has the advantage, J.M.Hodgson-A.Shabalov, Winnipeg 1997.

13 Be2 Bg7!



Exercise: What does White have to play now? (difficulty level 2)

Joel: Given my previous analysis, I would play 14 Bxc4!?

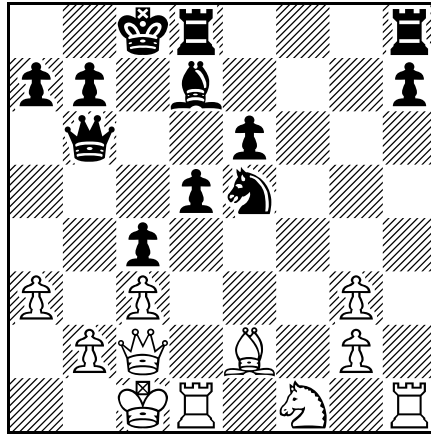
Boris: After moving the bishop to e2 it would have been very difficult to turn around and play 14 Bxc4, but it was the only way for White to obtain a playable game. After 14 Bxc4! Nxe5! (in the case of 14...dxc4? 15 Nxc4 Qa6 16 Nd6+ Kd8 17 Qd2 Kc7 18 Bf4 White would have decent compensation for the piece) 15 Be2 0-0! Black's position is preferable. Now we see the advantages of 12...Nh6 compared to 12...Bg7. In the first case, Black has an extra tempo.

14 h3? Bxe5 15 0-0-0 Bxg3 16 fxg3 0-0-0 17 hxg4 Ne5 18 Nhf3

Boris: 18 g5 Nhg4 would have been bad for White, who cannot protect the crucial e3- and f2-squares

18...Nhxg4 19 Nxe5 Nxe5 20 Nf1

Boris: And 20 Rxh7 would have been bad because of 20...Ba4 and Black wins the exchange.



Exercise: Find a winning maneuver. (difficulty level 3)

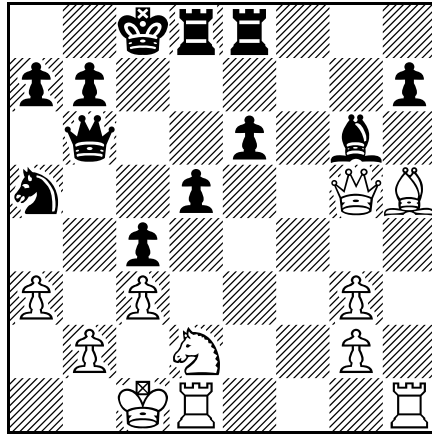
Joel: I considered a number of possibilities, such as ...Nc6-a5-b3, but they did not seem convincing. Then I came upon the idea of 20...Be8! with the plan of ...Bg6, when the light-squared bishop becomes a monster on the b1-h7 diagonal (which makes us French Defense devotees very happy).

Boris: Excellent!

20...Be8! 21 Qd2 Bg6 22 Qg5 Nc6

Boris: Black could not win immediately with 22...Qb3? 23 Ne3 d4? because of 24 Rxd4 Rxd4?? 25 Qxe5! when White is winning.

23 Bg4 Na5 24 Nd2 Rhe8 25 Bh5

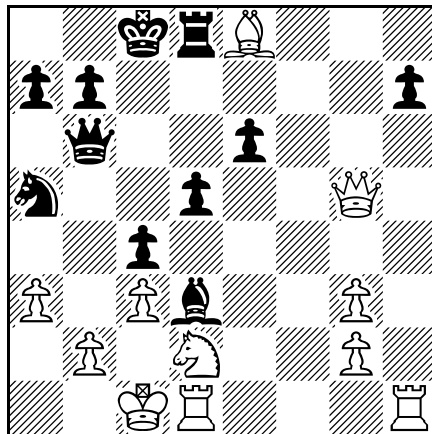


Exercise: Find a winning combination. (difficulty level 4)

Joel: 25...Bd3!! (the knight can't move because of ...Nb3 mate). I don't think White has much better than 26 Bxe8, but then 26...Qb3!! (threatening mate) 27 Nxb3 Nxb3 is mate again.

Boris: Excellent!

25...Bd3! 26 Bxe8



26...Qb3!

Boris: During this period, our effort to emigrate from the Soviet Union was a hot topic for chess players. After 26...Qb3!, Grandmaster Vladimirov told me: “If you play such moves they will never permit you to emigrate!”

27 Ba4 Qxa4 0-1

Joel: What I like so much about this game is how you counterattack on the king’s flank and generate counterplay with ...f7-f6 and ...g7-g5. It seems to be an important idea in such French Defense positions, although it always seems to backfire when I do it. I think one can learn quite a bit about how to handle this kind of position by studying this game closely.

Boris: I can add that counterattacking with ...g7-g5 in the French has become very fashionable in the last few years, as has been demonstrated in the games of Morozovich.