

CHESS HORIZONS

Short Fiction
by Harold
Dondis

The U.S. Senior
Championship,
Part Two

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Garry Kasparov Visits
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Bob Messenger
4 Hamlett Dr. Apt. 12
Nashua, NH 03062
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MACA

Massachusetts Chess Association

www.masschess.org

OFFICERS

PRESIDENT

Maryanne C. Reilly

37 Kenmore St.

Newton Centre, MA 02459-2105

(617) 641-9621

president@masschess.org

VICE PRESIDENT

Donna M. Alarie

21 Blueberry Lane

Rutland, MA 01543-1320

(508) 847-8574

vicepresident@masschess.org

TREASURER

Robert D. Messenger

4 Hamlett Dr. Apt. 12

Nashua, NH 03062

(603) 891-2484

treasurer@masschess.org

CLERK

Steven J. Frymer

64 Asbury St.

Lexington, MA 02421-6521

(781) 862-3799

clerk@masschess.org

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

Robert D. Messenger

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As Real as it Gets

Mark Donlan

*On October 15, 2007, Garry Kasparov discussed his new book *How Life Imitates Chess at the First Parish Church Meetinghouse in Cambridge. The event was sponsored by the Harvard Book Store. Tickets were \$5.00 and about 600 people attended the sold-out event. Despite having a cold, Kasparov spoke for about thirty minutes and then answered questions from the audience. He was introduced by co-author Mig Greengard, who quipped that Kasparov was the "the Bill Belichick of chess." Here is the full text of Kasparov's discussion.**

Good evening, thanks for missing the Red Sox. Mig gave you a little story about the creation of this book and I have to add that today if you speak Russian you can read three different versions. One is the original submitted in English to European publishers, another is an American version, which is, I wouldn't say simplified, but it is more business-like. The basic difference is that in the U.K. edition it is "we," and here it is "you."

So the American publisher, by the way it is not the publishing house that was first trying to create a simple "diet" book; a book of tips from Garry Kasparov. But the American version went one way because they saw that if Garry Kasparov had written the book and every-

body who buys it recognizes him already, why spend time telling them about my chess accomplishments. The Russian edition actually went in the opposite direction, because in Russian it's totally reorganized. There is more biography, more philosophy and I was trying to address the audience that still remembers the Soviet Union and understands certain things that were related to the game of chess and my career.

The funny thing is that among twenty-seven countries where the book is to be published, there are eight or nine publications already out, some countries are picking up the original manuscript (most of them), some are picking up the Russian text (as you can guess the Baltic States, Bulgaria, Poland), and; for instance, the Japanese publisher picked up the American version.

As Mig pointed out, one of the ideas behind the book was to answer many questions that I had to confront during my chess career. And I was always, I wouldn't say sick and tired, but I was irritated upon hearing the same question: "Give me a tip. How can I get better?" And I didn't know how to respond. Then I just realized that asking for a tip is an attempt to oversimplify things and misses the big picture. The main point is that there is no generic advice on how to get better; so that's why if I have to characterize the book, it is the book that recommends for you not to listen to any tip. (Laughter)

Because a tip is something universal, something generic, and we are all different. Decision making is as unique as DNA or fingerprints; and each of us has a unique ability to put things together. That's why first



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you have to understand your own abilities, your strengths and weaknesses. It's what I learned from the game of chess, and I'm trying to use chess in the book as a tool to reveal your own potential. It's more of a dialogue with the reader, because I want you to find out what you do best, what is best for you, and also what your weaknesses are.

I spent my life in chess thinking about thinking. Because to be on the top in the world of chess, you have to be very relentless in analyzing your own game to understand the nature of what was a good or a bad decision. By the way, very often we miss the point of analyzing our own success. So that's another important element of the book. When we fail it is obvious something went wrong. We made a mistake and we have to go back and find the mistake and improve. But if we won, it doesn't mean we did everything perfectly. It might well be that we made mistakes and the opponent made mistakes and eventually we won. Then next time, because there are always more losers than winners, those who lost would come back, having found those mistakes, and they would be ahead of us. So to be ahead of the curve, you always have to make sure that you know how to challenge, not only your own failure, but your own success.

This applies to virtually everything we do. I felt very comfortable when I found these paths, and I try to describe this in the book. I incorporated a lot of the material from my lectures, but also working on the book helped to improve my lectures as well. There is an important element in what I call "the courage to fail." Because we are all afraid; everyone is afraid of making a step forward or at least concerned that we could fail. And I think that the advantage is always on the side of those who know how to cope with this fear, how to cope with doubts.

Everyone fails from time to time. I've been playing chess for thirty years and I won hundreds and hundreds of games, but I also lost dozens and dozens. (Laughter) It was quite a painful exercise to sit down at the chessboard hour after hour and eventually be forced to resign. So I knew that if you had to start a big event or match, any challenge always has the potential for disaster. I think I managed to cope with this fear and I am trying to present my own experiences in this book.

What I ask the reader to do (or in fact not to do) is not to take my experience as the guiding light. It should be yours, because we all have different strengths and weaknesses. Obviously, some of us are much better with small details, some are very good in managing businesses. I am very bad at that. Some are much better at seeing the big picture and being more intuitive. Mixing these elements will create your own unique formula for success. When you analyze it and you know everything about yourself (or at least think you do), then you should study your opponent in order to create a playing field that best



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compliments your abilities, and is least complimentary to the opposition. For instance, if you have an advantage in cavalry on the battlefield, you want to fight in the valley; if you're fighting against cavalry, you're looking for a different landscape with hills. It's very important that you understand your strengths and the strengths and weaknesses of the opposition.

Some people think that certain styles are better or more attractive and that they give you an ultimate advantage. In the book I talk about the attacker's advantage, because I am a more aggressive player, a more dynamic player. But you should stick with the style you are more comfortable with. In tennis you can have a very aggressive player with a powerful serve who rushes to the net and you can have an equally good player who plays from the back line. They both could be number one. So first it is about identifying your strengths and not trying to change to please others. Your style might not be very attractive, but at the end of the day it's about achieving your own potential and there is nothing to be ashamed of.

I have stories in the book from my chess career. I have stories from military history, from business, and from politics, which I analyze and I came up a theory that I call "MTQ": material, time, and quality. I try to apply this to different aspects of our lives. In simple terms, that's what I learned from chess. There are three components. One is very simple: material. Everyone knows that when you first begin playing the game of chess you look at the material, whether it's a pawn up, a pawn down, or an extra piece. The second one that we learn is time. You can be ahead a passed pawn or organize a very powerful attack and your opponent has no time to bring pieces to defend his king. And then you learn how to actually trade time for material. But the most complicated one is quality, because it is not a factor that can be

explained in simple terms. It could be control of the center, it could be more mobility, or you could have more space, or better pawn structure. There are dozens and dozens and maybe hundreds of elements.

The strength of every player is how to combine material, time and quality. When we make every decision in our lives, we are combining these elements. We do it subconsciously. We just don't understand that when we are picking up the kids from school, we are still contemplating different things: the distance to the school, the price we have to pay, the possibilities for future educational possibilities, etc. So be it buying a new house or looking for a new job, we are always going through a similar promise.

I think people are very often mistaken by the magnitude of the decision. In my view the decisions made in the kitchen have the same pattern as a decision made in the White House. Sometimes you make more intelligent decisions in the kitchen. (Laughter) We do things subconsciously, so I hope with the book that I can help you to reveal these hidden thinking processes that you are going through. Many things that you do automatically may be seen in a different light when you hear about my experiences.

I thought it would be important in the book to share not only my successes, but also my failures. I always felt that it was very useful, because losing a game or match gave me a very important psychological push. One of the stories in the book that I like a lot is the one about playing Tigran Petrosian. The former world champion was known as a great defensive player and I refer to him in the book as "the last inaction hero." (Laughter) In fact this kind of chess might not be very attractive, but it was deadly effective because he was a great master at doing nothing and then suddenly winning the game. (Laughter)

In chess we have a very good saying, "tactics is knowing what to do when there is something to do, while strategy is knowing what to do when there is nothing to do." So this "nothing to do" stage is a very important element of any game because you don't always have a clear target. Sometimes you have to maneuver before a target actually appears. I played Petrosian in '81-82, and the first two encounters were disastrous because I wanted to *crush* an old champion and I was very close.

In Moscow in April of '81 at a big tournament I was just that close, but missed the win and eventually lost the game in time trouble. Then at the end of 1981 we played again in Hol-

land at another big international tournament. I was prepared psychologically that I had to actually consolidate the position before attacking, but my instincts prevailed. When I sacrificed the material I was right, my evaluation of the position was correct, but I thought at a certain point that it was all over because I massed my pieces against Petrosian's king and I was waiting for the final blow to be delivered. But he maneuvered and he made these little moves and I couldn't find a win. I got irritated because I knew something was there, but I couldn't find it. The frustration completely took over my mind and I missed a good attacking opportunity and eventually I missed a draw and I lost another game.

I was truly devastated because it went against everything I thought was right in the game of chess. The next time we played was six months later in Yugoslavia, and I knew I had to take revenge because if you lose once it's an accident, if you lose twice it's habit forming. (Laughter) I definitely didn't want to start a tradition (laughter), so I got advice from Boris Spassky, who is also a former world champion, and who took the title from Petrosian in 1969. Spassky also had the same trouble against Petrosian in their first match in 1966 because he didn't know how to get around this unique defensive style. So before the game I asked Spassky for advice. He looked at me and said, "Garry, the key for success against Petrosian is to apply pressure steadily, step by step." Then he explained it in more visual terms. He said, "Garry, squeeze his balls." (Laughter) "But don't rush. Squeeze one, not both." (Laughter) Of course I won the game, how could I not after receiving such immortal advice. (Laughter)

Actually I won a second game playing in the same style. These games gave me a lot of useful information that you have to make sure that you can adjust your style for certain matches. But at the end of the day it's



Maryanne Reilly and Max Wiegand in conversation with Harold Dondis

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about your best abilities. You can't ignore them. I also have a comparison with soccer. For instance, we have two sort of opposing teams: Brazil and Italy. The Italians are known for "catenaccio" a defensive playing system. The Brazilians were five time world champions and the Italians were four time world champions. So it's not about style it's about your ability to stick with your style, to make sure that the game is kept on the territory you know best.

Also, in the book I spoke a little bit about my new engagement, but I decided to refrain from having any significant political section in this book, because the book is about decision making. It's not about some temporary achievements that could be here today but not tomorrow. I wanted to make sure that I demonstrated how I use my own experiences. This is not a very generic lesson or case study for everybody that I refrain from using myself. I try to give an idea how I use my chess experience in my current political fight.

People always ask me, "how did it help you. Or did it help you at all." Because in politics there are no rules, especially in Russian politics, and I know there are no rules. In fact there is one rule: that you're opponent changes the rules at his convenience. (Laughter)

But recognizing this rule also helps you because you have no illusions anymore. So you understand that you have to make the moves that keep you in the game. Being objective, and objectivity is one of the very important elements of success in chess, helped me to read the demands of the position when I entered this political game. The position was not very promising; the opposition forces were in total disarray in March 2005, not that they are that well organized now. But we managed to do what I believe is the most important thing: we survived. When you're trying to challenge an authoritarian government that looks increasingly dictatorial you can't afford to make any mistakes, because you pay an ultimate price. I recognized that our goal was not, and still is not, about winning elections. Our goal is trying to have elections.

It's very different and it requires a different pattern and a different framework of the coalition forces. So I applied my chess expertise and I think that we are still doing fine by Russian standards. I always urge people not to use words such as elections, primaries, voters, and other elements of the normal political environment when we discuss the situation in Russia, because the current political climate in Russia ahead of these so-



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called elections in December and in March could be explained by a Russian joke that in the polling stations there will be only two boxes: one says "Putin," the other: "Shredder." (Laughter/applause)

I'm also asked about how I feel now that I'm no longer competing as a chessplayer. I think it happens in everyone's life that at a certain point we have to look for new horizons and I knew that in the game of chess winning was not everything for me. I had to concentrate on winning, but it was also about making a difference. I recognized at some point that I had achieved even more than I had dreamed about in the game of chess and I needed new horizons. I believed at that time that moving into this new battlefield was the best thing I could do, because I had to feel comfortable with my own conscious, with my own ideas about my personal role and my usefulness in the events that are happening in the world and especially in my country.

Now I follow the game of chess. I watch matches on the Internet, I write chess books and articles, but I concentrate on something that I believe gives me the best opportunity to realize my own potential. And at the end of the day that is what I am trying to promote in this book. We all should not be afraid to uncover new horizons and look for new challenges, because you never know what is lying ahead. I think the courage to fail, the courage to accept new challenges is the most decisive factor in success and failure. Now I am happy to answer your questions. (Applause)

Chess Gems

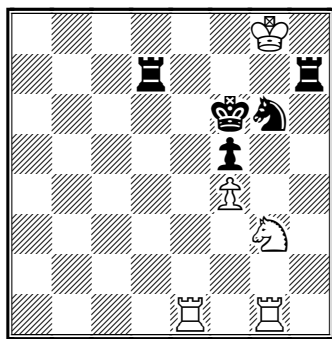
Igor Sukhin

According to the Rules of Shatranj (ninth – fifteenth centuries)

The joy of great inventions is in the remote past. Now, thousands of tactical ideas are recorded in “the black list” of theory. All is known — that is, almost all. Naturally every chess player improvises over the board in accordance with his talent and imagination. But that which is already known, must be known!
– Mikhail Tal

Our book with 1,000 combinations starts with the exquisite tactical operation found about 1,000 years ago by the renowned master of Shatranj Abu Naim Al-Khadim, a resident of central Asia in the ninth century.

1 White to move



White’s position appears utterly hopeless. Black is threatening 1...Rh8#, as well as 1 Rhg7#, or 1...Rdg7#, or 1...Rd8+ 2 Re8 Rxe8+ 3 Kxh7 Rh8#. Still, Abu Naim sacrificed two pieces and he won.

- 1 Ng3 - h5+! Rh7xh5**
2 Rg1xg6+! Kf6xg6
3 Re1 - e6#

This is a beautiful combination which would make any present-day chess player proud. White does not have a single redundant piece in the final position.

We have to mention, before going on, that the game was played according to the rules of chess at that time. The rooks, the king and the knights were moved according to contemporary rules. Pawns were moved and they captured as they do today, but they could not be advanced two squares from the initial position, and they could be promoted only to queens. The queen could be moved only one square on the diagonal, while the bishop could jump over a square on the diagonal. It could also jump over an enemy piece without capturing it. There were other differences as well. There was no castling whatsoever and the game was considered to be won after either a checkmate or a stalemate. Capturing all the pieces of the opponent was counted as a win as well. You must know all this in order to understand the following examples.

As a rule, in the ancient books entire games of the masters of shatranj were not quoted; we could see only mansubat – that were the final positions from games – and they were often “perfected” by their authors. Often in these mansubat White’s king was threatened with checkmate, but after a series of checks and sacrifices the ostensibly weaker side was victorious.

2 White to move

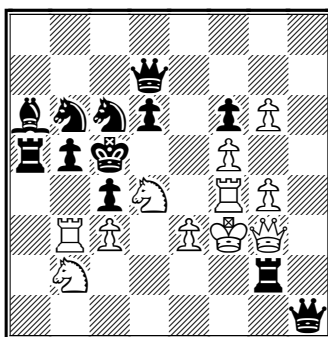


Diagram 2 is another mansuba of Abu Naim Al-Khadim, of which he was quite proud. White sacrifices three pieces in a row and captures Black’s monarch.

- 1 Rb3xb5+! Ra5xb5**

Black could not have played here 1...Bxb5, because under the rules of shatranj, the bishop jumps over a square on the diagonal.

- 2 Nd4 - e6+! Qd7xe6**

It is not better for Black to play 2...Kd5 3 Nc7+ Kc5 (Or 3...Ke5 4 Re4#,

while Black could not continue with 3...Qxc7, since in shatranj the queen moved only to the adjacent square on the diagonal and captured in the same fashion.) 4 Rxc4+! (After 4 Nxa6+ Kd5 5 Nc7+ the solution only becomes a couple of moves longer.) 4...Nxc4 (Here, according to the rules of shatranj, Black could have captured with his rook, or with his bishop, or he could have jumped over his rook with his bishop, but all that would not have saved him from being checkmated: 4...Bxc4 5 Nd3#) 5 Na4#.

- 3 Rf4xc4+!! Nb6xc4**

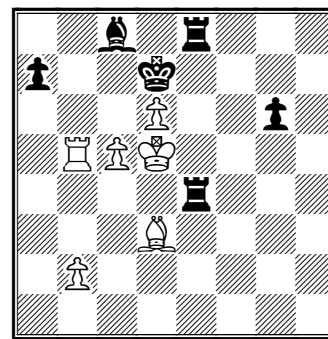
Black loses even faster after 3...Bxc4 (The bishop jumps again.) 4 Nd3+ Kd5 5 e4#, or 3...Kd5 4 e4+ Ke5 and now White would win by either 5 Nd3# or 5 Qf4#.

- 4 Nb2 - a4+ Kc5 - d5**
5 e3 - e4+ Kd5 - e5
6 Qg3 - f4#.

This was a brilliant combination from the era of shatranj!

White wins more easily in the following mansuba.

3 White to move



- 1 Rb5 - b7+ Kd7 - d8**

But not 1...Bxb7+, because in shatranj the bishop moves and captures over a square along the diagonal. Now White begins an instructive combination.

- 2 Rb7 - d7+! Kd8xd7**

Once again Black’s bishop cannot capture the rook, according to the rules.

- 3 c5 - c6+ Kd7 - d8**
4 c6 - c7+ Kd8 - d7

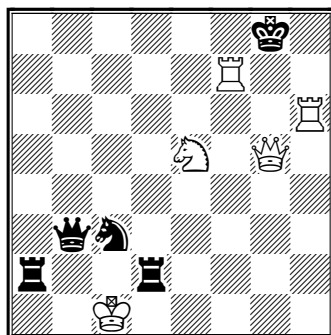
Black’s king was forced to move back and forth between d7 and d8 for four moves. These “maneuvers” are terminated by White’s next move.

- 5 Bd3 - b5#.**

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The mansuba of Al-Adli (one of the first famous shatranj players in the ninth century) is no less interesting and it is presented in Diagram 4.

4 White to move



Black's king is checkmated, is it not? No, the queen moves only on the adjacent square on the diagonal in shatranj.

- 1 Rh6 - g6+ Kg8 - h8**
- 2 Rf7 - f8+ Kh8 - h7**
- 3 Rg6 - h6+ Kh7 - g7**

Now White settles the issue with a beautiful move.

- 4 Qg5 - f6+! Kg7xf8**

Or the game might end after a mirror-like variation: 4...Kxh6 5 Rh8#.

- 5 Rh6 - h8#.**

One of the most famous mansu-bat of the Middle Ages (tenth century) was "Dilaram's checkmate." The solution is usually preceded by an amusing story of how the game was actually played.

The Legend of Dilaram

Many centuries ago, somewhere in the East, Dilaram, whose name means "Ease of the soul" in Arabic, was the favorite lovely wife of a nobleman. He liked to gamble, and the game of shatranj was his passion. Once, however, he had the mishap to be opposed by a strong player and the game was played as usual for high stakes. Our hero kept losing, but he kept arranging the pieces for each new game in the hope of recovering.

The stakes were increasing, and finally the nobleman had lost everything he possessed. He insisted, "Let us play one more game, the last one."

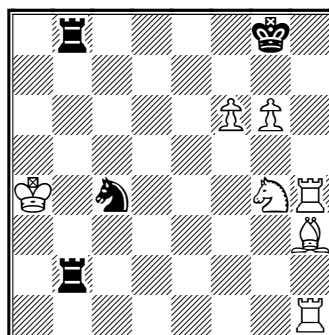
"At what stakes?"

"Stakes? I pledge my loving wife, beautiful Dilaram," the man said. That

exquisite beauty came over to the players and stood humbly next to her husband. His opponent said, "I will bet everything I have won, if you will wager Dilaram." He was overwhelmed with lust.

The battle started and it was tough and fierce. Still, the players' abilities were unequal, and the guest was already attacking. It looked like the nobleman was about to surrender. He was losing hope, and his opponent was smiling triumphantly.

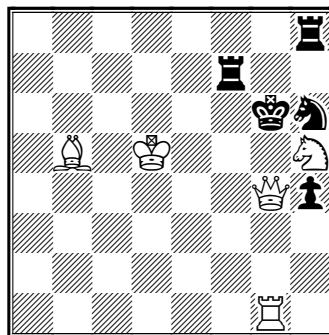
5 White to move



Suddenly the host heard his wife whisper "Oh, my master! Sacrifice both your rooks but do not surrender me, your Dilaram." So he kept his composure, and he saw a beautiful combination, winning by force. He sacrificed two rooks and he checkmated his opponent's king.

- 1 Rh4 - h8+! Kg8xh8**
- 2 Bh3 - f5+ Kh8 - g8**
- 3 Rh1 - h8+! Kg8xh8**
- 4 g6 - g7+ Kh8 - g8**
- 5 Ng4 - h6#.**

6 White to move
From the manuscript of Abu Al-Fath
(twelfth century)



An ingenious combination followed.

- 1 Qg4 - f5++! Kg6 - h7**

Black can capture neither the knight nor the queen: 1...Kxf5 2 Bd3#, or 1...Kxh5 2 Qg6#.

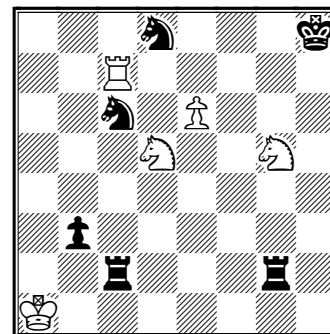
Here, White sacrifices his rook in spectacular fashion.

- 2 Rg1 - g7+ Rf7xg7**
- 3 Nh5 - f6#.**

We finish our first chapter the way we started it – with a wonderful example of a combination whose idea has been exploited numerous times by masters and grandmasters of the nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty first centuries. We will ignore the rules of shatranj, since the pieces remaining on the board are moved according to contemporary rules.

7 White to move

From the treatise of King Alfonse X
the Wise, 1283



"Both sides have attacked the enemy king. White has less material indeed, but it is his move and he must try to exploit that to the maximal extent. The standard and routine moves do not achieve anything. It looks like Black's position is super solid and White is doomed. But maybe there is an idea!" (Emmanuel Lasker)

- 1 Rc7 - h7+ Kh8 - g8**
- 2 Nd5 - f6+ Kg8 - f8**
- 3 e6 - e7+!**

White sacrifices first a pawn.

- 3 ... Nc6xe7**
- 4 Rh7 - f7+!**

Then he sacrifices a rook.

- 4 ... Nd8xf7**

Black has no choice, but now he gets mated in exquisite fashion.

- 5 Ng5 - e6#!**