

Foreword

I often thought about writing a book to analyze my best games and talk about my greatest victories. But either I didn't have time, or I kept thinking that the best games were yet to come...

Well, it looks like I've been beaten to it – but this is no cause for regret on my part! I looked at the games that Sarhan Guliev selected and analyzed and I took great pleasure in recalling the very beginning of my professional career, victories that I'd even forgotten. I feel that my style of play has always been the same – I won most of my games through active play.

I hope that readers will enjoy this book. It only remains for me to say a huge 'thank you' to Grandmaster Guliev for his captivating analysis of my games and, of course, to those people who have placed me on the same pedestal as great masters Alekhine and Capablanca, Korchnoi and Carlsen. For me this is a huge honour, I hope in my future games to demonstrate that this is not without justification.

Veselin Topalov

SIGNS AND SYMBOLS

+	check
#	checkmate
!	good move
?	bad move
!?	interesting move
?!	dubious move
!!	very good move
??	very bad move
\pm	White is slightly better
\pm	White is better
+—	White is winning
=	equal position
∞	unclear position
$\bar{+}$	Black is slightly better
$\bar{+}$	Black is better
—+	Black is winning
$\overline{\infty}$	with compensation for the material
→	with an attack
↑	with the initiative
↔	with double-edged play
Δ	with an idea

Veselin Topalov's sporting journey

This book is devoted to the games of a great chess player who has done much to set the agenda for the development of modern chess – Bulgarian Grandmaster, FIDE 2005 World Chess Champion Veselin Topalov.

After becoming Under 14 World Chess Champion in 1989 Topalov became one of the leading chess players in the world in the mid 1990s. The wider Russian public first heard of the Bulgarian Grandmaster in 1994, when Topalov beat the Great and Fearsome Garry Kasparov at the Olympiad.

V. Topalov – G. Kasparov [B81]

Olympiad, Moscow 1994

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4
4.♗xd4 ♞f6 5.♗c3 a6 6.♙e3 e6
7.g4 h6

Kasparov avoids the most principled line 7...e5 8.♗f5 g6 9.g5 gxf5 10.exf5 d5 11.gxf6 d4.

8.f4 (8.♙g2!? ♞c6 9.h3) 8...♞c6
9.♙e2 e5 10.♗f5 g6 11.♗g3 exf4
12.♙xf4 ♙e6 13.♖f1

Black only has one problem left to solve – what to do with the bishop on f8 in order to castle kingside. If he moves it to e7 then the pawn on h6 will be left hanging; if he moves it to g7 then the white bishop will take on d6, preventing White from castling. Black in the end decides to fianchetto his bishop, and after the capture on d6 to take advantage of the vulnerability of the pawn on b2, bishop on d6, knight on c3 – basically, of lots of White's pieces. But this means the black king has to remain in the centre.

13...♖c8 (13...♗b6!?) 14.h3
♗b6

14...d5!? deserved consideration (Bönsch) 15.e5 (15.exd5 ♗xd5 16.♗xd5 ♙xd5=) 15...♗h7!.

15.♗d2

15.♗c1 ♗d4 16.♙d3 (16.♙e3? – Ftacnik – 16...♗xc2+ 17.♗xc2 ♗xe3+).

15...♙g7

15...♗xb2 16.♖b1 ♗a3
17.♖f3∞; 15...♗d7 16.0-0-0 ♗de5
17.a3 (17.♙e3= Bönsch) 17...♗a5↑.

16.♙xd6

Apart from the pawn's capture White has gained a permanent 'nail' on d6 preventing the black king from castling. However, 16.0-0-0 also deserved consideration, given that Black can still not play 16...0-0 due to 17.♙xh6.

16...♗g4

16...♗d4 also deserved consideration. 17.e5!? (17.♙a3 ♖d8 18.♙d3±) 17...♗d7 (worse is 17...♗xb2 18.exf6 ♗xa1+ 19.♗f2 ♗xc3 20.♗xc3 ♖xc3 21.fxg7 ♖g8 22.♗e4+- and White wins material according to analysis by Dolmatov: 22...♖xc2 23.♗f6+ ♙d8 24.♗xg8 ♖xe2+ 25.♙g3 f5 26.♗xh6 ♖e3+ 27.♙f4 ♖xh3 28.g8♗+

♙xg8 29.♜xg8+-) 18.0-0-0
 ♜xe2+ 19.♜gxe2 ♜xe5 20.♜d5
 ♖c6 21.♜c7+ ♜xc7 22.♙xe5 ♜d7
 23.♖e3 ♙xe5 24.♖xe5 0-0 25.♜c3
 ♜xd1+ 26.♜xd1 ♜c8 with a more or
 less equal position;

16...♜d7 17.0-0-0 (17.e5 ♜cxe5
 18.0-0-0∞) 17...♜b4 18.♙xb4
 ♖xb4 19.a3 ♖b6. At first glance
 Black seems to have excellent com-
 pensation for the pawn, but White
 can play 20.♜f5!? gxf5 21.exf5 ♙xc3
 22.bxc3 ♜e5 (22...♖c5 23.fxe6)
 23.fxe6 ♖xe6 24.♖d6 ♖xd6
 25.♜xd6 ♜xc3 26.♙b6 0-0 27.♜xb7
 ♜xa3 28.♜f5 ♜e8 29.♙f1 with a
 slight advantage in the endgame.

17.♙xg4 ♖xb2

Or 17...♙xg4 18.hxg4 (18.♜a4
 ♖b5 19.hxg4 ♖xa4 20.♖d5 ♖a5+
 21.c3 ♖xd5 22.exd5 ♜d8 23.♜e4±)
 18...♖xb2 19.♜ge2 ♖xa1+ 20.♙f2
 ♖b2 21.♙b1±.

18.e5!?

Maintaining the attack.
 18.♜ge2!? also deserved consid-
 eration (Speelman) 18...♖xa1+
 19.♙f2 ♖b2 20.♙b1 ♖xb1 21.♜xb1
 ♜d8 22.♖f4. Black has insufficient
 compensation for the queen.

18...♜xe5

Otherwise the queen gets
 trapped: 18...♙xg4 19.♜b1+-; 18...
 ♙xe5 19.♜ge4 ♖xa1+ 20.♙f2 ♖b2
 21.♙b1!; 18...♖xa1+ 19.♙f2 ♖b2
 20.♙b1 ♖xb1 21.♜xb1±.

19.♙b1 ♖xc3

Black chooses a dangerous path.
 Better was 19...♜c4! 20.♜xb2 (20.

♙xe6? ♙xc3 21.♙xf7+ ♙d7+-)
 20...♜xd2 21.♙xe6 fxe6 (21...
 ♙xc3? 22.♙xc8 ♜xf1+ 23.♙xf1
 ♙xb2±) 22.♜xb7 (22.♙xd2 ♙xc3+
 23.♙c1 ♙xb2+ 24.♙xb2 ♜c4 – it's
 very difficult to assess this position,
 but given that the king 'escapes' via
 d7 it seems that Black is OK) 22...
 ♜xf1!? (a draw results with 22...
 ♙xc3 23.♜ff7 ♜e4+ 24.♙d1 ♜xd6
 25.♜be7+ ♙d8 26.♜d7+ ♙e8=)
 23.♜ge4 ♙xc3+ 24.♙xf1 ♜c6, and
 the best that White can achieve is
 perpetual check.

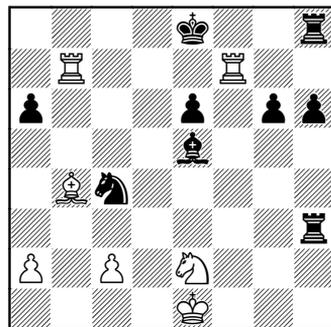
20.♖xc3 ♜xc3 21.♙xe6 fxe6
22.♜xb7

White's threats along the 7th rank
 are so powerful that Black's extra
 pawn is totally irrelevant.

22...♜c4

More resilient would have been
 22...♜d7 23.♜a7 (23.♜f7 ♙xf7
 24.♜xd7+ ♙f6 25.♙e7+ ♙f7
 26.♙d6+ only leads to a draw) 23...
 ♜c8 24.♜e4 ♙d4 25.♜xa6±.

23.♙b4 (23.♙c5!?) 23...♜e3+
 (23...♜xg3 24.♜xg7±) **24.♜e2 ♙e5**
25.♜ff7 ♜xh3?



We can only assume that in time trouble Kasparov simply failed to see White's reply.

He should have played 25...♔d6. Black's position with his king in the centre and the rook out on h8 is truly awful, but White cannot mount a decisive attack without bringing along his knight. A possible continuation is 26.♔xd6 ♖xd6 27.♖be7+ ♔d8 28.♖d7+ ♔e8 29.♖fe7+ ♔f8 30.♔f2 ♖e4 (30...♖e5 31.♖d4+-) 31.♔f3 g5 (White threatened to move the knight to f4; another attempt – 31...♖e3+ 32.♔xe3 ♖f5+ 33.♔e4 ♖xe7 34.♔e5 ♔f7 35.♖d4 ♖e8 36.c4 g5 37.c5 h5 38.c6± – also leads to a large advantage for White) 32.♖a7. Black needs his knight to defend against material threats, but for now it cannot move as it is defending the rook on e4. White needs to free it up – 32...h5 33.♖ed7 g4+ 34.♔f2 ♖e8 doesn't help due to 35.♖f7+ ♔g8 36.♖fe7 ♔f8 37.♖xe8+ ♔xe8 38.♖a8+-.

26.♖d4!

Taking advantage of the fact that the knight cannot be taken due to the mate threat White advances it to join a decisive attack.

26...♖e3+

26...♔xd4 27.♖fe7+ ♔d8 28.♖b8#; 26...♖h1+ 27.♔e2 ♖h2+ 28. ♔d3+- . Maybe Black can fight on after 26...♔g3+ 27.♔e2 (27.♔f1 ♖e3+ 28.♔e2 ♖d5) 27... ♖h2+ 28.♔f3 ♔h4 29.♖fe7+ ♔xe7 30.♖xe7+ ♔d8 31.♖xe6+ ♔c8

32.♖c7+ ♔b8 33.♖xc4±, but also without much success.

27.♔f1 ♖e4 28.♖fe7+ ♔d8 29.♖c6+

Black resigned due to the mate threat: 29.♖c6+ ♔c8 30.♖a7+ ♔d8 31.♖bd7#. Both players made huge efforts to calculate combinations and Topalov's turned out to be better. Moreover, the lines that Kasparov chose were extremely risky.

1-0

Topalov's membership of the elite was firmly established in 1996 after a number of first places (either joint or outright) in Madrid, Amsterdam, Lyon, Novgorod and Dos Hermanas.

V. Topalov – G. Kasparov [B86]

Amsterdam 1996

1.e4 c5 2.♖f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♖xd4 ♖f6 5.♖c3 a6 6.♔c4

This nearly dead variation (at least at top levels) was brought back to life by Nigel Short in his 1993 world title match against Kasparov.

6...e6 7.♔b3 ♖bd7 8.f4 ♖c5 9.0-0 (9.♖f3!?!; 9.f5!?) 9...♖cxe4

Black has good play after 9...♔e7 10.e5 dxe5 11.fxe5 ♖xb3 (the line 11...♖fd7 12.♔f4 ♖f8 13.♖f3 ♖g6 was twice played against the author of this text. It is sufficiently reliable and I have the suspicion that White barely has any advantage in these positions) 12.axb3 ♔c5 13.♔e3 ♖d5.