

A Lifetime of the King's Indian
by **Eduard Gufeld and Oleg Stetsko**

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Garry Kasparov

Through the Prism of Time

Chess players as a people are both distinctive and diverse. The unique individuality of each of them is something that we accept. However, this uniqueness does not always manifest itself.

Ask any player to name his best game, and you will almost certainly hear the standard phrase: 'I haven't played it yet!' This is how they all reply, with the exception of one player. On hearing such a question, Eduard Gufeld would merely shake his head and look at the questioner with a certain regret. And moments later, animatedly gesticulating and not sparing words, he would begin describing his 'immortal' game, which in his opinion eclipsed all other masterpieces created throughout the history of chess.

Yes, this game, lovingly called the 'Mona Lisa' by its creator, has made the rounds of nearly all chess publications in the world, without losing its genuine brilliance. Even now, after an analysis of the Bagirov-Gufeld game, the depth and richness of modern chess becomes closer and more understandable. And since a chess player is characterised above all by what he creates, this game says more about grandmaster Gufeld than any weighty tome.

But, of course, Gufeld's contribution to chess is not restricted to one game. Not even to many other fine games, to which any player would happily give his name. I have in mind the ideas which Eduard Efimovich put into effect throughout his chess career. There were a great many of them, but it is sufficient to look through a few games played by Gufeld with Black for one to be immediately struck by the grandmaster's 'idée fixe' – a fanatical belief in the all-powerful dark-square bishop, developed on the long diagonal. The notorious 'Gufeld bishop' has long been derided by chess players, but tell me, please, who can boast such a constant love for the King's Indian Defence? His faithfulness to this sharp opening, the nuances of which, by his own expression, he sensed with his finger-tips, was something he proclaimed all his life. Gufeld was rightly regarded as one of the best experts in the world on this dynamic opening.

However, a view expressed from this angle merely skates on the surface, without touching on the essence of one of the few chess romantics. But after all, behind all the 'eccentricities', full of humour, commentaries and witty remarks (often made even during a game!) was concealed a boundless devotion to chess, a sincere belief in the inexhaustible nature of chess, and a constant striving for beauty and harmony in his games. And while Gufeld's chess career was not adorned by a continuous stream of victories, his play helps us to open more widely the door to the immense land named CHESS.

Oleg Stetsko

My Friend Eduard Gufeld

It is well known that the measure of a person's creativity is what he leaves when he departs from this life. The creativity of Eduard Gufeld was multi-faceted, and his literary activity was only the visible part of his chess 'iceberg'. Brilliant games with famous contemporaries, numerous lectures, adorned by his inimitable humour, extensive game commentaries, marked by a deep and pedagogical talent, with the years were compiled into books. The last of these is now before you, dear reader. Unfortunately, the author was not in fact destined to see it. It is in the nature of an ode to the King's Indian Defence, to which he was faithful all his life: Gufeld sums up half a century's experience of employing this sharp opening, on which he was rightly considered an expert.

Gufeld developed his mastery during the post-war era, a difficult one for our country. But, despite the dire economic situation in the Soviet Union, as one of the fields of human culture chess was given state support and enjoyed great popularity. As with most of his contemporaries, Eduard's chess talent was polished in the system of junior competitions. He reached the master level only at the age of 22 (rather late by present-day standards, but at that time it was far harder to obtain the master title), but at the very first attempt he broke through to the final tournament of the 26th USSR Championship. The post-war generation regarded the 1950s and 1960s as a kind of chess renaissance, and it was no accident that the world arena was illuminated by the names of Soviet grandmasters, born in the pre-war years – Tal, Petrosian, Spassky, Korchnoi, Stein, Polugaevsky... To break through into the USSR championship finals with these players participating, one had to possess an outstanding chess strength. Gufeld achieved this on eight occasions.

At that unforgettable time, in the system of competitions for the championship of the Armed Forces of the country, our chess paths crossed and with the years they grew into friendship, and then into a creative collaboration. And despite the fact that after the break-up of the Soviet Union we ended up in different countries, in those difficult 1990s we jointly wrote several books. In October 1997 at Gufeld's invitation I visited him in Kiev, to where he travelled every year to see his mother Eva Yuryevna. Seeing me off at the station, Edik shared a dream: 'If you were to undertake to prepare a book on the King's Indian Defence based on my games. That would be a monument...' Gufeld had reasons for pessimism – his thirst for activity did not find an outlet: 'I can't live in Tbilisi – everything has been plundered, and in Kiev there is altogether no chess life...' We discussed the structure of the book: 'Take the annotated games from *My Life in Chess* (Edik was very proud of his biography, published in the USA in 1994) and add games published later in the *64* magazine. For the selection of the remaining material I give you carte blanche.' Edik did not keep his games, and I had to do a lot of digging about in periodicals to create a complete picture. In short, there was plenty to discuss by telephone, especially after Gufeld's world-wide wanderings finally led him to the USA. In 1998 I happened to visit Edik's apartment in Los Angeles, a kind of 'long box' with a single window, combining in a strange manner the bathroom, living space and kitchen. On the second floor of this block there was also a small room. A few chess boards and portraits of the world champions (as in the USSR Central Chess Club) proclaimed the 'Eduard Gufeld Chess Academy'...

In 2000 the English publishing house Batsford brought out our book *The Art of the King's Indian*, which elicited a positive response from readers. Eduard was burning with a desire to publish it in Russia. But he wanted to create something new. After all, that book was based only on Gufeld's main weapon – the concept of counterplay with the development of the knight on c6. For the Russian edition I suggested that it should be radically revised and that he should share his experience of playing his favourite opening in a book entitled *A Lifetime of the King's Indian*. Edik was delighted! He not only approved the idea, but also considered it necessary to reinforce the theme of his conception (knight on c6) in a separate section of the book with examples by the most prestigious modern King's Indian players, by selecting the best of the games played during the past two decades.

Edik phoned me nearly every morning: one felt that, cut off from the atmosphere of his native chess world, he was missing contact in Russian. I received such a call on 12 September 2002, the day after the conclusion of the 'Match of the new century' between teams from Russian and the strongest players in the world. I was late for a meeting at the publishing office of the *64* magazine, and I asked him: 'Phone tomorrow, and I'll tell you in more detail.' The following day there was no call. The indefatigable chess devotee had suffered a severe stroke, from which he did not recover...