

Together with the Candidates

Budapest 1950 to Berlin 2018

Alexey Kuzmin

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Key to Symbols used

!	a good move	+−	White has a decisive advantage
?	a weak move	−+	Black has a decisive advantage
!!	an excellent move	→	with an attack
??	a blunder	↑	with an initiative
!?	an interesting move	↔	with counterplay
?!	a dubious move	Δ	with the idea of
□	only move	⊃	better is
=	equality	≤	worse is
∞	unclear position	N	novelty
±	White stands slightly better	+	check
∓	Black stands slightly better	#	mate
±	White has a serious advantage	∞	with compensation for the sacrificed material
∓	Black has a serious advantage		

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Introduction

First of all I have to say some words about two remarkable books...

A very long time ago, when I was studying at primary school, I found on my dad's shelf the book by David Bronstein, *The International Grandmasters Tournament*. My grandfather had bought it for my father. I already knew how to play chess so I started to look at the games and read the comments. I liked the book a lot. It talked about the Candidates tournament in Zurich 1953. Generally there were several tournament books in my dad's library: books of championships of the USSR, Interzonals and simply great tournaments. But Bronstein's book contained unusual comments. The chess pieces seemed to be alive there with their own problems, hopes and plans. This original and talented book made the tournament itself wonderful for me. From that time on I have been convinced that the Candidates tournaments are the special ones!

The second book that I would like to mention here was bought for me by my dad a bit later. Written by two famous Czech grandmasters, Hort and Jansa, it immediately became one of my favourite books. The book contained 230 tests from the authors' games and their bright, sometimes ironic comments. In one or two sentences the grandmasters talked about their thoughts and emotions before, during and after the games and even in the moment of decision-making there. It created the feeling of being in a dialogue with them. When I started to solve the tests I imagined myself being a grandmaster too and it was in my own game that the position happened so I had to play like Hort or Jansa or even better! This book impressed me very much! In the Russian version its title was *Together with the Grandmasters...*

The book *Together with the Candidates* that you are holding is firstly a book of tests with their solutions, given in the format of game fragments with detailed comments. All the tasks in this book have been taken from games of the Candidates competitions. They differ very much in their degree of complexity. I hope this will allow a wide circle of readers to find the tests corresponding to their own chess level here.

The first chapter is a presentation of the history of all the Candidates tournaments and matches. The chapters "Tests for Grandmasters" and "When the Opponent

Attacks” have collected the most difficult tests, each one being a hard nut to crack. The tests of the fourth and the fifth chapters are considerably simpler, and the tests from the sixth and final chapter, “The Primary School”, could be a walk in the park for experienced players.

The third and the fourth chapters, “When the Opponent Attacks” and “Strategy in Action”, are characterized by a thematic selection of the tests. In the third chapter you have to try to discover the opponent’s threats and plans, to refute them or at least to disarm them. This is one of the most difficult practical tasks that a chess player faces in a game. The title of the fourth one speaks for itself. Relatively easy tests where you should make correct strategic decisions have been gathered here.

I suggest that when solving the tests you imagine yourselves between the participants in the Candidates competitions, to see the chessboard through their eyes. Together with the Candidates you should think over the crucial positions, feel the fighting tension and, the most important thing, try to make the right decisions.

However if the first component of this book is definitely training, the second one is likely to be called aesthetic or even nostalgic. I remind readers of the great tournaments and matches of yesteryear, dramatic turns of fighting and key moments from the brightest games played there.

Of course not all the famous combinations have been included in the book. Some of them, realized already in the initial stage of a game, became a part of opening theory, and some of them were simply not convenient for the tests’ format. That is why the book *Together with the Candidates* is not a book of the best games of the Candidates tournaments.

Personally, I love examining cross-tables of the old tournaments. I had been following some of these tournaments in my school and student years, and some of them my dad told me about... That is why I have included the cross-tables of the Candidates tournaments for their entire history of almost 70 years.

I hope that this book will be useful for improving chess players and their coaches. Perhaps it will also stimulate the interest of chess lovers wishing to relive the history of the Candidates battles.

I think the individual test solutions will be useful for your improvement, and looking through the detailed comments of these solutions will give you aesthetic pleasure.

And if the episodes of the old battles, remarkable tournaments of the past as well as the names of slightly forgotten great chess players rekindle warm memories of those years, the author of this book will consider his task fulfilled...

Alexey Kuzmin, Moscow, June 2018



Through the Pages of History

This first chapter is the chapter of presentation.

All the official Candidates competitions to select challengers for the world chess crown are introduced here. We leaf through the pages of their almost 70-years of history.

Our story starts with the Candidates tournament in Budapest in 1950. Of course, tournaments connected with determining the challenger for a reigning world champion had been already held before. The famous tournament in New York in 1927 contained in its initial regulations a special paragraph stating that the winner would earn the right to a match against the champion. Another one, the AVRO tournament in Holland in 1938, had been considered an unofficial Candidates tournament by the organizers and the majority of the chess world. However in those years the right of a challenger had a moral rather than legal character. Furthermore, the challenger faced the extremely difficult task of ensuring a prize fund for the title match.

The role of FIDE (the world chess governing body) increased very much after the end of the Second World War. FIDE assumed the entire organization of the world championships.

From 1948 the well-defined cycle system of organizing a world championship, including the system of determining a challenger, started to work. A challenger, having earned the right to play a title match, had to worry no more about organizational and financial questions. The Candidates competitions became the highest step of the stairway leading to the world championship match.

The presentation of the Candidates tournament in Berlin 2018 opens our historical tour. Then we shall come back to the first such competition, held in Budapest in 1950, and start moving from Mikhail Botvinnik's reign on the chess throne up to the present day.

For the presentation I have chosen one bright game from each Candidates competition – except for Berlin 2018, with three games presented – and have given them in test format.

About a half century ago, Robert Fischer wrote a book. It had an unusual title for a book of selected games: *My 60 Memorable Games*. Up to now, it has been one of my favourite books. The tests given in the first chapter have been taken just from the most memorable games of the Candidates tournaments and matches. Therefore, a tournament winner has not always been presented as an author of a chosen game. Of course the tests from these memorable games have different levels of difficulty as well as various characters of tasks. In this chapter I have not aimed to classify the tests by any definite feature. I guess the majority of these tests correspond to the level 2100-2300.

However, I am sure that many readers will be very interested to see – and perhaps be reminded of – sparkling combinations and unexpected finales of spectacular games.

The Tournaments' Presentation and the Test Positions

Candidates Tournament - Berlin 2018

The tournament was held in Berlin 10-28 March 2018.

Rk.	Name	Rtg	FED	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Pts.
1	Caruana Fabiano	2784	USA	***	½ ½	½ 0	½ ½	1 ½	½ 1	1 ½	1 1	9
2	Mamedyarov Shakhriyar	2809	AZE	½ ½	***	1 ½	½ 0	1 ½	½ 1	½ ½	½ ½	8
3	Karjakin Sergey	2763	RUS	½ 1	0 ½	***	½ ½	½ 1	½ ½	1 ½	0 1	8
4	Ding Liren	2769	CHN	½ ½	½ 1	½ ½	***	½ ½	½ ½	½ ½	½ ½	7,5
5	Kramnik Vladimir	2800	RUS	0 ½	0 ½	½ 0	½ ½	***	1 0	½ ½	1 1	6,5
6	Grischuk Alexander	2767	RUS	½ 0	½ 0	½ ½	½ ½	0 1	***	1 ½	½ ½	6,5
7	So Wesley	2799	USA	0 ½	½ ½	0 ½	½ ½	½ ½	0 ½	***	1 ½	6
8	Aronian Levon	2794	ARM	0 0	½ ½	1 0	½ ½	0 0	½ ½	0 ½	***	4,5

The main intrigue developed during the last three rounds.

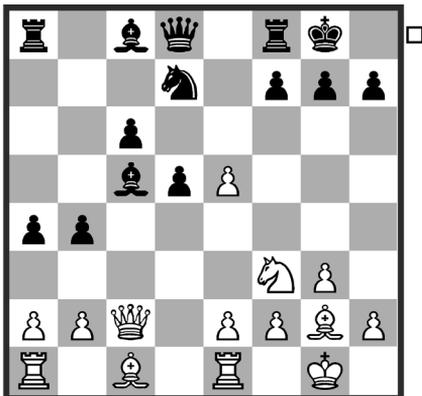
Sergey Karjakin, who had won the previous Candidates tournament but narrowly failed to unseat world champion Magnus Carlsen in their title match, had started the tournament awfully with one point from the first four rounds, but then he started to improve his standing step-by-step. In the 12th round he defeated Fabiano Caruana and seized joint leadership: Karjakin and Caruana had seven points (with Karjakin leading on tie-break), and half a point behind were Shakhriyar Mamedyarov, Alexander Grischuk and Ding Liren.

In the penultimate round, Mamedyarov and Caruana defeated Grischuk and Aronian respectively, while Ding Liren and Karjakin drew their games. That gave Caruana a half-point lead over Karjakin and Mamedyarov before the final round but he had worse tie breaks than both of them.

In the last round, Karjakin and Mamedyarov tried hard but could not get enough winning chances – their games ended in draws. At that time Caruana obtained a strong position with Black against Grischuk and converted it to a win!

TEST №1

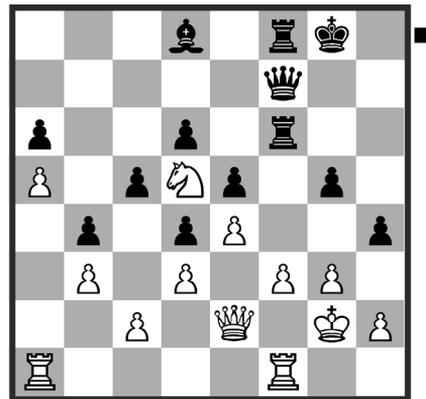
 Caruana, Fabiano (2784)
 So, Wesley (2799)
 Berlin 2018



White to move

TEST №3

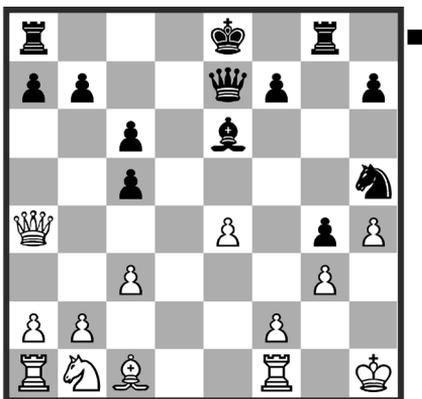
 Karjakin, Sergey (2763)
 Ding, Liren (2769)
 Berlin 2018



Black to move

TEST №2

 Aronian, Levon (2794)
 Kramnik, Vladimir (2800)
 Berlin 2018



Black to move

Now let's go back to almost 70 years ago and begin from the first Candidates Tournament...

Candidates Tournament - Budapest 1950

The first Candidates tournament was held in Budapest 9 April-20 May 1950.

Rk.	Name	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Score
1	David Bronstein	xx	= =	0 1	= 1	1 1	1 =	0 1	= =	1 =	= 1	12
2	Isaac Boleslavsky	= =	xx	1 =	= =	= =	1 =	= =	= 1	= 1	1 1	12
3	Vasily Smyslov	1 0	0 =	xx	= =	1 =	= 1	0 1	= 1	= =	= =	10
4	Paul Keres	= 0	= =	= =	xx	= =	1 0	1 =	= =	= 1	= =	9½
5	Miguel Najdorf	0 0	= =	0 =	= =	xx	= =	= =	1 1	= 1	= =	9
6	Alexander Kotov	0 =	0 =	= 0	0 1	= =	xx	= 1	1 0	1 0	1 =	8½
7	Gideon Ståhlberg	1 0	= =	1 0	0 =	= =	= 0	xx	= =	= =	= =	8
8	Andor Lilienthal	= =	= 0	= 0	= =	0 0	0 1	= =	xx	1 0	= =	7
9	László Szabó	0 =	= 0	= =	= 0	= 0	0 1	= =	0 1	xx	1 0	7
10	Salo Flohr	= 0	0 0	= =	= =	= =	0 =	= =	= =	0 1	xx	7

Going into the final round, Isaak Boleslavsky had a half-point lead over David Bronstein. He made a short draw and gave Bronstein the opportunity to catch him, which he did, with a bright win against Keres (you can see the end of this game in Chapter 6 – “The Primary School”).

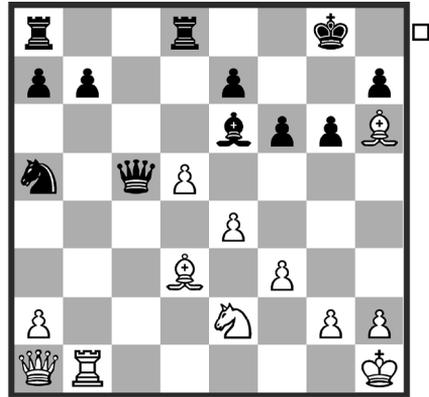
The winners played a tie-break match two months later in Moscow.

Name	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Pts	13	14	Total
David Bronstein	1	½	½	½	½	½	1	0	½	½	0	½	6	½	1	7½
Isaac Boleslavsky	0	½	½	½	½	½	0	1	½	½	1	½	6	½	0	6½

Bronstein earned the right to challenge the reigning champion, Mikhail Botvinnik. Their match took place the following year in Moscow. The dramatic fight ended in a draw, 12-12, and Botvinnik kept his title.

TEST №4

-  Bronstein, David
 -  Boleslavsky, Isaak
 -  Moscow 1950
-



White to move

Candidates Tournament - Zurich 1953

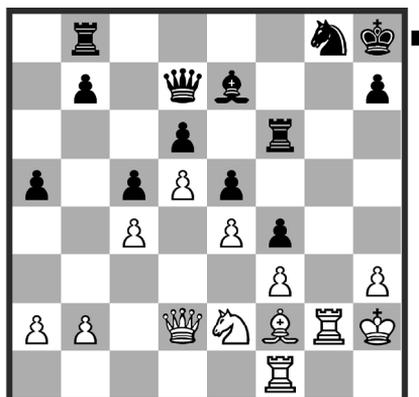
This remarkable tournament was held in Zurich 28 August-24 October 1953. It remains famous because of the great players, the number of brilliant games, and the tournament book (!) by David Bronstein that is considered one of the best tournament books ever written.

Rk.	Name	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	Total
1	Vasily Smyslov	xx	½½	11	½1	½½	11	½½	½0	½½	½½	½½	½½	1½	11	1½	18
2	David Bronstein	½½	xx	1½	11	½½	½0	½½	½½	1½	½½	½½	01	1½	½½	½½	16
3	Paul Keres	00	0½	xx	½½	½1	½1	½½	½½	½½	0½	11	1½	½1	½½	11	16
4	Samuel Reshevsky	½0	00	½½	xx	½½	½½	½½	10	½½	½1	½1	1½	½1	11	1½	16
5	Tigran Petrosian	½½	½½	½0	½½	xx	½½	0½	½½	00	½½	½½	11	½1	1½	11	15
6	Efim Geller	00	½1	½0	½½	½½	xx	11	½0	01	½½	01	1½	½1	01	½½	14½
7	Miguel Najdorf	½½	½½	½½	½½	1½	00	xx	1½	1½	½0	½½	½½	½½	0½	11	14½
8	Alexander Kotov	½1	½½	½½	01	½½	½1	0½	xx	10	1½	00	10	1½	0½	01	14
9	Mark Taimanov	½½	0½	½½	½½	11	10	0½	01	xx	10	½½	½½	½0	0½	11	14
10	Yuri Averbakh	½½	½½	1½	0½	½½	½½	1½	0½	01	xx	½½	½½	0½	11	00	13½
11	Isaac Boleslavsky	½½	½½	00	½0	½½	10	½½	11	½½	½½	xx	½0	½½	½1	½½	13½
12	Laszlo Szabo	½½	10	0½	0½	00	0½	½½	01	½½	½½	½1	xx	1½	½½	1½	13
13	Svetozar Gligorić	0½	0½	½0	½0	½0	½0	½½	0½	½1	1½	½½	0½	xx	½1	11	12½
14	Max Euwe	00	½½	½½	00	0½	10	1½	1½	1½	00	½0	½½	½0	xx	1½	11½
15	Gideon Ståhlberg	0½	½½	00	0½	00	½½	00	10	00	11	½½	0½	00	0½	xx	8

Smyslov qualified for his first world championship match, which was drawn, allowing Botvinnik to retain his title.

TEST №5

-  Averbakh, Yuri
-  Kotov, Alexander
-  Zurich 1953



Black to move