Evgeny Bareev & Ilya Levitov

From London to Elista

Overthrow of a Colossus - London 2000 ★ Photo Finish in Brissago - 2004 ★ Big Brother in Chess City - Elista 2006

The Inside Story of the World Chess Championship Matches That Vladimir Kramnik Won Against Garry Kasparov, Peter Leko and Veselin Topalov

NEW IN CHESS

'Did Kramnik shout at you?'
'Justifiably!'

'After the opening we were absolutely horrified again.'

'This stinks. And it stinks badly.'

Three quotes about crucial moments in three World Chess Championship matches. They were spoken by Vladimir Kramnik's second Evgeny Bareev. Just a few dramatic fragments from an extraordinary account of the main battles in the life of Vladimir Kramnik, a World Champion and a Samurai, in Bareev's words.

From London to Elista gives a fascinating look behind the scenes of top-level chess. It provides superb analysis of all the games by Bareev, and it does much more. In Socrates-style dialogues, Bareev and co-author Ilya Levitov reveal everything about the preparation, the progress and the aftermath, about the secret strategy and the brutal stress of the three battles.

This rich book is indispensable for anyone who wants to know what makes top grandmasters tick. It is written from the horse's mouth, and it is full of honesty, irony, history, wit, anger, wisdom, and even poetry.

Evgeny Bareev is one of the world's strongest grandmasters today. He was Kramnik's second during the matches against Kasparov in 2000 and against Leko in 2004, and was in close contact with the Kramnik team during the scandal-plagued reunification match with Topalov in Elista.

Public relations expert Ilya Levitov has been an ardent chess amateur all his life. He is a close friend of Vladimir Kramnik and Evgeny Bareev.

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Translated by Sarah Hurst and Jimmy Adams

Evgeny Bareev & Ilya Levitov

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FOREWORD

'I can't get to sleep, it's freezing. Volodya went all-out!'
Evgeny Bareev during the match in Brissago (2004)

When Vladimir Kramnik surprised everyone in Game 8 of his World Championship match with Peter Leko by sharply complicating the situation on the board and playing a variation with a queen sacrifice that he'd prepared at home, his second, Evgeny Bareev, unusually, couldn't get to sleep peacefully after having been up all night working.

Evgeny BAREEV. Professional. In this book also called 'Zhenya'.
Born November 21, 1966 in Chelyabinsk Oblast, International Grandmaster. Gold medal-winner on the Russian team in four Chess Olympiads (1990, 1994, 1996, 1998), participant in two World Championships (1997, 2005) and two European Championships (1992, 2003). Winner of many Russian and international tournaments.
Character restrained and gentle. Lives in Moscow. Graduated from GTsOLIFK (the State Central Order of Lenin Institute of Physical Training). Married, has two children. Favourite animals: big cats, crocodiles, sharks. Favourite food: sweetcorn, tomatoes. Favourite drink: black tea. Hobbies: poker, downhill skiing.

Kramnik, six games from the end of the match, with an equal score, decided to throw off the fetters of a heavy, stodgy battle and take a risk... The computer, evaluating the position, endlessly changed its opinion and showed an unconditional win first for Kramnik, then for Leko. Volodya was playing unbelievably fast, and it was obvious that the entire variation was sitting at home on his computer screen... Peter was thinking for a long time. After Black's 25th move the computer thought for a minute or two and finally announced that Kramnik was losing the game. Having put himself in a critical position, Vladimir was only able to outplay his opponent in the last game and keep the title of World Chess Champion.

Constantly exchanging impressions with Bareev during this match, I thought it would be interesting to convey to the reader the unbelievable tension of the struggle that's characteristic of a battle for the chess crown. I – am Ilya Levitov.

Ilya LEVITOV. Amateur.

Born September 11, 1979 in Moscow. A partner in the Russian consultancy agency SV Consulting. By profession – public relations expert, by declaration – chess amateur.

Character strange. Married, has a son. Favourite animal: elephant. Favourite food: 'Soviet' pie with cabbage. Favourite drink: apple juice, diluted carbonated water with a ratio of 40/60. Hobbies: chess, football.

In autumn 2004 in the Swiss town of Brissago Vladimir Kramnik defended the title of World Champion that he had won in London in 2000 in single combat against the hitherto invincible Garry Kasparov.

Kasparov's five matches with Anatoly Karpov (1984-1990) had been an outstanding occurrence, and not only in the professional sense. They marked the end of a golden age of chess, an era when the duels for the title of strongest player on the planet attracted interest even from people who were far removed from this game. At least, this was the case in the USSR. In the '90s Russian citizens' value system endured powerful external pressure. People lost interest in chess, quiet indoor pastimes were the last thing on their minds. The chess kingdom also had to deal with restructurings[1] and revolutions.

The departure in 1993 of Garry Kasparov and Nigel Short from the International Chess Federation (FIDE), just before their match for the world crown, caused a schism, and the strict system for determining the chess king that had existed for half a century collapsed. People who hadn't been regularly following events in the chess world started asking professional players more and more often – some perplexed, others ironically – 'So how many champions do you have, exactly, and who are they, in fact?'

All the events that were held in that decade to establish the strongest chess player in the world suffered from some deficiency or other, which made it impossible to take them completely seriously. Either the strengths of the players were

1 A reference to Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev's policy of perestroika, which means restructuring.

clearly unequal, or the absence in a tournament of several of the top grandmasters inevitably devalued the title that was won in a tough sporting struggle, or the rules were too obviously favourable to one of the players, putting the other in disadvantageous conditions. And, most importantly, despite all his efforts to give weight to the play-off for the title of World Champion in the democratic knockout system, FIDE President Kirsan Ilyumzhinov didn't manage to shake the 'monarchist convictions' either of the ordinary amateurs or the venerable professionals that had developed over decades. In their opinion, the title could only be considered legal if it was won in single combat with the thirteenth chess king, Kasparov, who for all these years had still remained the absolute leader of the ratings list.

Indeed, the history of chess bears witness: the genuine World Champion, acknowledged by everyone, is the one who takes the title from the previous king in a one-on-one duel. Why is that? Because it just can't be any other way in this game.

A battle on the chess board is an ideal vehicle for a confrontation of personalities, a real intellectual rivalry. Here it's impossible to dump the blame for defeat on partners (there aren't any), arbiters (they decide almost nothing, they just ensure that the rules are followed), or coaches (during the game they can't do anything to help you). You have to depend only on your own strengths and possibilities.

In the hall where a World Championship match takes place, spectators sit and listen through earphones to the grandmasters' play being gone through with a fine toothcomb by other grandmasters; amateur chess players sit at home with a sandwich in their hand and, using the most modern computer programs, they see the strongest move in the position each time. But the participants have to find the best decisions over the course of five or six hours without any computers or hints, to the sound of the inexorably ticking clock, constantly bringing them closer and closer to their biggest nightmare – TIME TROUBLE.

A person walks down the street and says on his mobile phone: 'Dude, I'm in time trouble, talk faster.' And he doesn't suspect that he's slashed a knife through the heart of the professional chess player walking past him! What does he know about time trouble?! You get an advantage in the opening, you increase it in the middle of the game – the middlegame – and, when you only have to make a couple of precise moves to get the win... you make a mistake, because there's a minute left on your clock. You can only imagine what a tragedy this is – the results of complicated, stressful work that you've been doing for many hours, disappear in one minute! Or for the entire game you've had to defend, to search for hidden resources, to devise traps, and when there are seconds left before the time control and you have to make the only correct decision, you slip, nervously making the first move you can think of, and you immediately realise that you can shake your opponent's hand to admit defeat. Against the applause of the audience, turning red with shame and vexation, you hide backstage. And there isn't anyone you can pass the responsibility onto – you lost in an honest battle, one on one, and you turned out to be worse, weaker...

It's precisely these emotions that Kasparov went through when he lost the second game of his match with Kramnik in one move. We'll return to this incident again.

A defeat in chess has a more powerful impact on the human psyche than a defeat in any other sport, and a victory takes you to a higher peak of intellectual pleasure. Why did the famous Bobby Fischer, after winning a World Championship match, not sit down at the board for 20 years? Why did Morphy, Steinitz and Rubinstein go crazy? Why, when they look at some of today's great chess players, do people rotate their finger on their temple? Because it's sometimes impossible to withstand the crazy nervous tension of a game, a tournament or a match, and it's hard to acknowledge someone else's intellectual superiority. A defeat in chess is a harsh public destruction of the personality, and always a small death.

A World Chess Championship match... everyone's attention is riveted on you, and you have to come out onto the biggest chess stage in the world and prove that you're better, smarter, more talented. In 2000 in London Vladimir Kramnik achieved the biggest victory of his life. Beating Garry Kasparov in two out of fifteen games and not losing a single one, he became the fourteenth World Champion. We'll make a proviso: not everyone agrees with this. Part of the chess community thinks that Kramnik didn't obtain the right to a match in an honest sporting selection process, as Kasparov himself nominated him as his opponent, despite the fact that two years earlier Vladimir had lost a match to challenger Alexey Shirov. However, in the conditions of confusion that reigned in the chess world, evidently no decision existed that would have suited everyone. No matter how it all happened, only a person with very biased leanings, to put it mildly, could possibly diminish Kramnik's outstanding achievement.

After his London triumph Vladimir started organising the Candidates cycle that he had agreed on with Kasparov even before the match. The ex-champion didn't want to take part in the selection process, insisting that Kramnik should give him the right to a rematch – a ridiculous idea to transport from a century ago without a time machine, when anyone could challenge the champion to a match if they could secure a prize fund. So what, it was his business, his problem. Kramnik fulfilled his obligations. In 2002 in Dortmund a Candidates Tournament took place, which Peter Leko won. It took over two years to organise his match with Kramnik – another testament to the fact that chess wasn't going through its best times. In these years two attempts by FIDE to hold its own match, in which Kasparov's opponent would be the FIDE World Champion, were also unsuccessful – first this was Ruslan Ponomariov, and then Rustam Kasimdzhanov.

Next came the scandalous unification match between Vladimir Kramnik and Veselin Topalov, after which Kramnik became the absolute World Champion without any prefixes ('classical') or slander ('but he's completely forgotten how to play!').

In this way, the matches in London, Brissago and Elista have now become the last in the series of classical duels for the chess crown. Journalist Iakov Damsky and

grandmaster Sergey Shipov have already written a book, *The Last Intrigue of the Century*, about the Kasparov-Kramnik match. Is it worth going back to the events of seven years ago again? In our opinion, it is. If we're talking purely about the chess content, then in previous years events on this scale always underwent a critical interpretation – variations were checked thoroughly, and evaluations were fine-tuned several times. In our day it would seem that the annotator's use of 'infallible' computer programs would allow us to dot all the 'i's immediately. However, we appeal to the reader: don't become like the kind of advanced amateurs who, sitting at home on their sofa and watching their Fritzes or Juniors work on the grandmasters' game, criticise chess players from on high and think that there are no more secrets left in this game. There are still areas where a person understands things better, and for a high-quality commentary on a game between two grandmasters it isn't enough to simply press one button. And although Sergey Shipov did his work professionally and conscientiously, that doesn't mean at all that there's nothing left for other analysts to do here.

There are two more reasons why we decided to describe the London match in detail. Firstly, Evgeny Bareev was Kramnik's second in the matches with Kasparov and Leko, he viewed the battle from within, he was a direct participant in it and is able to convey the drama of the intellectual confrontation at the highest level like nobody else. Another motive is the natural desire to compare the matches. In the opinion of a large number of people, in particular Kasparov, a World Champion is a spokesman for the ideas of his era. If we take this as an axiom, then how can the era of Vladimir Kramnik be characterised, how is it different from the preceding ones? How did Kramnik manage to conquer a giant like Kasparov? What did Vladimir change in himself and in the chess world in the four years that passed before the next match? Why did the duel with Leko turn out to be so difficult, and thanks to what did Kramnik nevertheless manage to obtain the result that he required? In order to answer these questions, we met a few times a week and recorded Evgeny's opinion about Kramnik's matches on a Dictaphone. The interrogation was wide-ranging.

In our difficult times, concerned manufacturers often try to offer the grateful consumer a light version of their product. Shapely women drink the low-calorie Diet Coke, and the simple chess amateur puts the program ChessBase Light onto the computer, not burdening it with a database of a million games. It's rumoured that they've even invented a 'Viagra Light'.

By our reckoning, the notes to the games offered here shouldn't scare away those readers for whom chess is merely a pleasant leisure-time activity... Explaining the course of the battle to us, Evgeny laid stress on the positional and psychological subtleties, avoiding cumbersome theoretical computations and densely tangled variations. But for chess professionals all the games have also been annotated by Bareev in the traditional manner.

In the same form as the Platonic dialogues, discussions are presented about important elements like preparation for a match. In our time-outs and tea breaks we also touched on other subjects that the chess community is concerned about nowadays. Don't be surprised if, reading the book, you stumble upon reflections about the length of tennis player Maria Sharapova's legs and the whiteness of her skirt, or the dramatic penalty that Roberto Baggio missed. If we remain in our tower made of black and white wood, chess will never get out of the current crisis.

We hope that you won't get bored in the intervals between games. We have tried to ensure that a book about the most difficult ordeal in the life of a chess player can be read easily.

WHAT YOU SOW...

In 2000 Vladimir Kramnik won the title of World Chess Champion, outplaying the 'eternal' champion Garry Kasparov in brilliant style with a score of 8½-6½. For the majority of chess amateurs (and professionals, too) this result was shocking. Once again: Kasparov didn't win a single game!

But the people who were with Kramnik at that moment knew that Volodya had been able to approach the match in a virtually ideal physical and psychological condition. In this chapter you'll frequently read the delighted opinions of Kramnik's seconds about his external appearance before the match with Kasparov – 'he'd lost weight', 'he'd got stronger', 'he was glowing with health', 'he looked like an athlete'. In 2000 everything turned out better than it ever had – the choice of opening strategy proved to be correct, and his fighting mood and good sporting form helped him to save some hopeless positions. As often happens, a person approaching the peak of his career was able to gather everything he needed into his hands and carry out the final push towards the main goal of his life.

Four years passed. Kramnik looked more and more pale with each year (already not like an athlete). His health declined, he wasn't winning tournaments. Not possessing a big reserve of energy, he always gained his victories with great difficulty. In 2003 at the Dortmund tournament Vladimir was able to win only one game out of ten, and the rest were drawn. But Kasparov, whom he had conquered, won five(!) games out of ten in 2001 at the Linares super-tournament, not losing a single one. The chess world started talking about 'the accidental champion'... We, too, were starting to worry...

In July 2002, after winning the Dortmund Candidates Tournament, the young Hungarian Peter Leko was set for a match with Kramnik. Here we exchanged glances approvingly: 'Yes, this isn't a Kasparov for you, Volodya won't have any problems, he's both more talented and more experienced'. Volodya himself assessed his chances as 60-40. We assumed he was being modest.

And the first game of the match completely confirmed our assumptions – in a dead-drawn endgame Leko contrived to lose as White! But in the direct internet

broadcast of the post-game press conference we saw the tired, pallid face of Kramnik, who was only able to produce something like a smile at the end. It was then that doubt also crept in, the sense that something was rotten in the state of Denmark.

As a result, the match with Leko turned into sheer torment. Unconfident play, obvious psychological problems, the loss of a drawn endgame in the fifth game, an opening failure in the eighth. And only at the very end was Kramnik able to break Leko's resistance with an unbelievable exertion of his will, taking the match to a tie and retaining the World Title.

Doing a comparison with Bareev of Kramnik's preparation for the matches, we found that for Leko it was conducted differently than for Kasparov – most of the attention went to analysis of opening positions, and the physical and psychological aspects were put onto the back burner.

After the Leko match, we'd established with sadness that in our eyes Kramnik had lost his unique understanding of chess, his creative mood, his fighting spirit; or, in other words, all the qualities that had allowed him to beat Kasparov. Vladimir approached the match with Topalov in Elista in 2006 in a much more combative condition. He'd been able to deal with his health and to bring back his former understanding and energy at the board.

The general public in Russia mainly knows about how preparation is conducted for an important chess event from the Vladimir Vysotsky[2] song *The Honour of the Chess Crown*. Much of it is true to life, although some parts are grotesque, perhaps. In this chapter we'll try to look into the kitchen of a chess player in the period of his preparation for a World Championship match and to draw a complete picture of this labour-intensive process, and we'll also ask a question about why Kramnik, who had a successful recipe for preparation in 2000, didn't use it in 2004.

As Evgeny Bareev wasn't Kramnik's second at the time of the match with Topalov in 2006, our account of this event has received a slightly different form. There are obviously no 'notes of a second', but as there was frequent contact before, during and after this match, the information given will still be very much 'from the lion's mouth'.

STRATEGY AND TACTICS

JOEL LAUTIER, Kramnik's second in the London match: 'There was a strategy, but it didn't work, as the match didn't follow the planned scenario. It's psychologically difficult to work out a strategy in advance, because it's impossible to foresee many subtle points.' (*In this case Joel means the quick win in Game 2. A long series of draws or even a loss at first for Kramnik had been envisaged – E.B.*)

2 A Soviet singer, poet, actor and alcoholic who died in 1980, aged 42.

VASILY SMYSLOV, the seventh World Champion: 'The spirit of the age dictates that people have to prepare well. All these computer variations put pressure on them. I remember Marina Dolmatova described how Seryozha (*grandmaster Sergey Dolmatov – I.L.*) was playing in a tournament and before a game he worried: "Oh, we haven't looked at this variation." And I: "Does it really matter?" I often had to play people I didn't know. I didn't have a computer, I wasn't familiar with the ideas of the new players, I had to play it by ear. And I was used to playing any move – 1.e4, 1.d4, 1.c4, 1.♘f3.'

BAREEV: No, it does matter if your opponent is well prepared. The difference is that these obscure players also played it by ear and they played much worse than the harmonious Vasily Vasilievich.

LEVITOV: In recent years there's been a revolution in opening preparation. What only Kasparov used to do, everyone now does, and there's an enormous amount of work for the top-class grandmasters to shoulder in the search for a new move. It's become difficult to find any untravelled path.

BAREEV: This is mainly a problem for the top chess players. In essence, scrupulous analytical work that demands an enormous investment of effort and time is done by only a handful of people. They find and play the novelties, and the overwhelming majority of chess players sit with the Internet, patiently waiting for a fresh idea to appear in a variation that's interesting to them, and as soon as they see something new, having quickly checked it on their computer, they rush to successfully use it first. It's the kind of work that the mechanics do in the film *Only Old Men Go to Battle*[3]. They wait.

LEVITOV: So, does a grandmaster today really have to sit for two or three hours before the game and simply refresh his memory with a huge number of opening lines? To learn everything from cover to cover – otherwise he can't do anything?

BAREEV: If you've done a huge amount of work, then yes – you have to refresh your memory, because otherwise you won't remember it for the game, and it'll be as if you never had this knowledge. And Kramnik had to spend several hours before a game refreshing his information, memorising certain variations.

LEVITOV: So there's no creative work during a match?

BAREEV: Of course there is. Where do you think novelties come from?! But the volume of information that the chess player has to deal with is now so great that a team of assistants working several hours a day is needed, in order to work through a framework of variations. And to refresh the variations and ideas before the game, this takes several hours.

3 Soviet film about World War II pilots, released in 1973. In the film, the old men are only about 20.

We can get a sense of the full importance of opening preparation from the example of the 10th game of the 2000 match. Kasparov couldn't remember a certain variation at the board and a) lost a very important game, and b) played worse than average non-professionals had done before him. It turns out that even if you're a top chess player, that doesn't at all mean that you'll react in the best way in an unfamiliar position.

LEVITOV: It's precisely for this reason that chess players try so hard to analyse the opening deeply? So that they won't disgrace themselves?

BAREEV: So that they won't be unpresentable.

LEVITOV: But still, in my view, highly-qualified chess players overestimate the significance of the opening.

BAREEV: They know from their own experience that if their opponent has studied theory, he will get a very familiar position, and it becomes problematic to exploit his weak spots.

In principle, today the paths to achieving equal positions have been shown in the majority of openings. Let's say, on some theme there were 17 games, and there's equality everywhere, and you need to digest a heap of material in order to obtain some small plus the next time. It's terribly boring. That's precisely why it's easier to wait for someone else to do the dirty work. Chess players spend hours, days on preparation, in search of an improvement with the aim of achieving a plus-equal (*a minimal advantage for White*). But then there are also the kinds of plus-equals that, for example, send Leko into raptures, because he knows that he'll never in his life lose a slightly worse position.

LEVITOV: Well, yes, and you're also in raptures, because you've got your plus-equal, and two enraptured idiots are sitting there... The Kramnik-Leko match did go like that until Game 8.

BAREEV: We should note that there were still two games that produced results, which isn't so few. And in the others, of course, there was 'Greek football' on the board. But the point of the game was the result, and who's going to take a risk, playing sharp variations, if the score's equal? Where's the sense in that? There isn't any.

Volodya says that in five years it will become impossible to play – a win, especially with the black pieces, will be practically unattainable. In that case, in his opinion, the best solution to the problem would be a draw for the opening immediately before the game. This idea has a right to exist, and, most likely, that's what will happen. There are only two provisos: the first is that such conversations have been going on for about 80 years already, and the second is that if you make the time control stricter, speed the game up, an opportunity always appears to play some 'fringe' opening that your opponent hasn't prepared, and thus to avoid the drawing variations.

LEVITOV: Conversations about the fact that chess is threatened by 'draw death' were taking place even in Lasker's day. It's just that Kramnik always starts to talk about this when he cannot win, his attacking power has decreased, which is why

he allows such discussions. Kasparov wouldn't have been stopped by such 'quibbles'. That kind of draw for openings isn't a panacea. You could also have a draw for the time control – decide how much time to give immediately before the game. This influences the approach to the opening, it's also interesting.

BAREEV: We can come up with plenty of idiotic ideas. There's another incident here... This story is from Petya Svidler. During the Linares tournament in 1998 Kasparov makes a move and shakes his head in irritation: 'I don't remember anything.' Petya's a polite man, he's obliging, always ready to discuss any problem with anyone. So Garry Kimovich explains that Ivanchuk is playing the Zaitsev Variation in the Ruy Lopez against him, which Kasparov encountered many times in his matches with Karpov. 'Why didn't he warn me yesterday evening that he was planning on playing this?! I could have measured up to him!' This way he didn't even remember anything, and he had to go into some tributary (*a deviation from the main line in search of a draw – I.L.*).

Or I remember Kasparov also lost to Ivan Sokolov (*Wijk aan Zee 1999*). A variation in the Nimzo-Indian Defence, which he had analysed up to mate, he simply forgot. These episodes very precisely reflect the situation. A person isn't capable of keeping everything in his head!

TEAM POLITICS

LEVITOV: On what principle did Volodya form his team before the match with Kasparov?

BAREEV: On the professional principle – those who were capable of work, could withstand the serious physical and psychological burden, and wouldn't give up.

A limited number of people participated in the preparation. The team that formed was international, on the whole each person worked at home, and Kramnik himself held several study and coaching meetings with various chess players. In the preliminary stage I often got together with Sergey Dolmatov (later we again prepared together for Kramnik's match with the computer Deep Fritz in 2002). And no matter how many times we got together – there was always a big disaster. Together we have a terrible destructive power. The first time, when we came to Zvenigorod, the submarine Kursk sank; another time, when we were preparing for the match with Fritz on September 11 and were sitting there with the television on, in front of our eyes a plane smashed into the second tower, and it collapsed. And every time something happened... However, with Svidler it wasn't any better. Before the match in Brissago – Beslan, in 2005 – the jazz capital New Orleans was flooded.

Most of all I liked working with Lautier, not least because I could make a trip to Paris for this. And although I mainly saw the chess board with the Nimzo-Indian set up on it, the awareness of the fact that, walking around the Seventh Arondissement on the warm June evenings, I was breathing the air of the same

streets that Diaghilev once breathed, filled me with a sense that I had made the right choice of profession.

In general, each person answered for his own sphere. I worked on the white colour, with the exception of the Grünfeld Defence.

Dolmatov and Kramnik prepared the Berlin Wall together in about two weeks. Neither Lautier nor I knew what, specifically, would be our main weapon against 1.c4.

LEVITOV: That's nice! Volodya trusts you!

BAREEV: I think that in the first place, Volodya himself didn't even know what would happen. In the second place, experience suggested how he should behave. It's well known that Kasparov – a representative of the Soviet chess school – is a pupil of Botvinnik and Karpov. And they were famous for intrigues and behind-the-scenes squabbles, which they won on most occasions. That's why it was impossible to absolutely exclude the possibility that an attempt would be made to – I'm not afraid to use this word – swipe something. In case of a loss in some area, Kramnik divided the field. That way something would always remain...

LEVITOV: That's smart. Wasn't Dolmatov previously Kasparov's coach?

BAREEV: From 1987, and also earlier, in the matches with Karpov. He actually told us a lot about it, he described those epic times when the last matches between the titans took place, about the atmosphere within the camps and around them.

Continuing the subject of who was responsible for what, I'll tell you that Kramnik and Lautier worked on the Scotch Game (Kasparov didn't play this opening, but it came in handy later, in the match with the computer). If we're talking about the main opening for White, then Illescas worked on the Grünfeld, and he did very serious work on it.

Based on the assumption that it was impossible to look at everything, Kramnik determined which openings might occur and which wouldn't, and cut out the unnecessary. He thought that 1.e4 would be Kasparov's main weapon. 1.c4 Volodya himself plays as White, so he didn't put any particular work into this move. And about 1.d4 he simply decided that it wouldn't happen in the match – a mistake that almost cost him a loss in Game 15. And which, four years later, led to defeat in the fifth game with Leko.

LAUTIER: 'I should say Volodya is very capable of distributing tasks, his head works like a computer in this respect. He knows which areas to entrust to whom, he draws his own conclusions... The technical work was conducted at a high level. You can't palm off something of average quality to Volodya. He instantly sees: "No, guys, I don't like this, work harder!" You have to put all you've got into it. He understands perfectly well that there are moves suggested by the computer that don't contain a human idea. This was serious work.'

KRAMNIK: 'Forming the team turned out to be the simplest element of the pre-match preparation. I worked quite closely with Illescas and our joint work suited me. From time to time I collaborated with Lautier, and I also

liked the quality of that performance. Plus they had quite a good relationship with each other.

'I've known Zhenya for a long time, we have a good personal rapport. All the people more or less suited each other. Besides, it was impossible to think for long – there wasn't much time, we had to get to work. The choice has proven absolutely right, the team demonstrated superb results. The most important element of a team's work in a World Championship match is the performance of the chess players. In this respect the guys did even more work than I expected; to be more precise, they worked harder than I could force them to work!

'I also held two short sessions with Svidler and Dolmatov. I was interested in specific variations on which they were considered experts.'

LEVITOV: What changes in the team occurred four years later?

BAREEV: They were insignificant. Lautier went for a promotion – he became the president of the Association of Chess Professionals. Instead of him, Peter Svidler reported for duty. Petya is one of the 10 strongest players in the world, several times Russian champion – he's been doing this work for a long time. Perhaps his opening knowledge isn't quite as deep because he doesn't want to (or he can't) force himself to analyse pointless theoretical positions, but as compensation he has an incredibly wide chess horizon, which, without doubt, is useful during preparation for a match.

And, most importantly: the cook changed. For the match itself food was delivered from a restaurant, but at the last session in Roquebrune (Monte Carlo), Viktor Ivanovich Bobylev cooked for us, the chef from a Moscow restaurant who also pampered Karpov in Baguio (1978) and Merano (1981), and is completely incapable of cooking badly. These are my best recollections of the preparation for the match. The light delicacies that he found jostled with each other on the table, not repeated from one day to the next, lobster alternated with fresh lamb and sea bass or a succulent chop – the fridge wasn't locked, and you could always find a dessert and fresh fruit in there.

But, jumping ahead, I'll note that in the match with Leko the team was virtually unnecessary. The opponent changed his opening with every 'black' game, so our work between games became pointless. That is, the team was necessary, of course, but it followed that once we understood Leko's strategy, we should work on overcoming it in advance and doing that purposefully, without digging into what he'd already played. And it turned out that Volodya was only pounding sand, he gave the impression that his team was working intensively, he made moves from the previous game... and waited until Leko went into a new variation. With Kasparov, though, what we did at home appeared later on the board.

LEVITOV: Here's an example for you. At the football World Cup you have to get through the group tournament, then the quarter-final and the semi-final, and the idea is that a team has to come to the final in peak physical form. Is there a similar

principle or any other principle in chess players' preparation for tournaments of the highest level? Let's say, you approach the match in optimal form and you try to maintain it – or do you start playing and then reach your peak? Did you work on developing a match strategy? As Botvinnik did?

BAREEV: Meaning what, exactly?

LEVITOV: I plan that I'll win... well, the first, second and third games are draws – let's say the fourth. If I win, then I'll play such-and-such, and if I lose – such-and-such.

BAREEV: This is the first I've heard of it.

LEVITOV: This is written in the book *The Botvinnik-Bronstein Match*.

BAREEV: Well, nothing like that can happen. And as far as I understand it, in order to get a result, you have to forget about it. Concentrate on the game itself, the creativity. What kind of strategy is this – planning a win? And how are you going to win there?! Above all you mustn't lose, and after that, however it works out. And as for your best form – it would be good towards the end of the match, but it's preferable to have excellent form throughout the entire contest.

LEVITOV: I mean the scenarios. The match can be turning out well, and then you use certain openings, or it could be going badly – then other openings.

BAREEV: There are days between games, and in that time the player chooses a variation from those he has, from the arsenal that was worked on before the match. Or he prepares something new. Depending on the score and the character of the struggle in the match, and also his own general state of mind.

LEVITOV: During the match with Leko the impression was created that Volodya absolutely wasn't ready to be leading 1-0, or for the score to go to minus one. Leko had imagined that he could be losing 'minus one', and he had a precise strategy for this case. He knew that if he was ahead in the score, he'd dry things out (*simplify the position, play for a draw – I.L.*), and if he was losing, then he also wouldn't burn his bridges. As Black, dryness, and as White he'd obtain a slight advantage in his openings and try to make the most of it. Leko had a strategy, but Volodya, seemingly, devoted too much attention to the opening, and he pushed everything else into the background.

BAREEV: I can add that Leko, evidently, had an idea – on an equal score or minus one, in the first half of the match he wouldn't take a risk, but he would launch something only at the end, when Kramnik was getting tired.

But Volodya, possibly, decided thus: 'I'll play according to the score – I'll create an openings database and depending on the course of the match I'll choose whether to go there or here. I have a team that's capable of quickly preparing any variation I need.' We didn't discuss the possibility that he could be losing. Perhaps he went through some scenarios in his head, but we were far from everything that was connected with the strategy of conducting the battle. We were working on concrete things. He worked on the strategy himself.

LEVITOV: When you and I were talking about this subject earlier, I was surprised that you brought everything around to opening variations: he's obtained his position – it's fine, we play; he hasn't obtained it – everything's bad. During the match Volodya didn't have precise reference points, and, for example, an opening catastrophe knocked him off balance and he couldn't play properly.

BAREEV: That's another issue. But if he hadn't been knocked off balance, this kind of strategy would have had a right to exist. In the first match he anticipated all the strategic questions, in essence, broke Kasparov down into his constituent parts, but in all the strategic decisions that he made before the match with Leko he got a malfunction. Oversights and mistakes were made.

LEVITOV: He didn't consult with you?

BAREEV: We chatted about various subjects, his psychological condition wasn't a matter of indifference to me. But the feeling never left me that when he was talking to me it was as if he was discussing the problem with himself out loud. It's difficult for me to convey this.

He wasn't afraid of Kasparov, having played him successfully in tournaments, but it was still important to give him psychological confidence that six months was enough time for preparation and successful play. But before the match with Leko his psychological condition wasn't all that important, Kramnik had been World Champion for four years already and he could get in the right mood by himself.

PHYSICAL PREPARATION

KRAMNIK: 'I always used to train seriously. The difference is that when I was preparing for tournaments, I actively participated in sport for about two months before a tournament, and then I gave up. But here I did this very intensely for the entire six months before the match. And the closer we got to the match, the more intensive the activities became.'

LAUTIER: 'Before the match with Kasparov I saw a complete metamorphosis. In six months (in March 2000 we discussed everything, and the match was supposed to start at the end of October) he changed – you couldn't recognise him. In March he was even fatter than usual, and here – an athlete! He was ready by all measures. The fact that he was ready in the chess aspect, I knew. But when I saw him about two weeks before the start of the match, it was a shock for me. Before our arrival in London we hadn't seen each other for a couple of months, we'd been communicating by email and phone – and I barely recognised him. Tanned, strong, slim. He was so charged with energy that it was pleasant to look at him. Ideas came easily. It was clear that at this moment he was living only for the match and nothing else interested him. Unfortunately, after that time I never saw him like that again.'

BAREEV: A month before the match with Kasparov Volodya held a training session with Illescas in Spain. He left, and the next time I saw him was at the match. I didn't recognise him – he'd given up smoking and lost another five or six kilograms, he was so smart, energetic and relaxed. Physically he was unexpectedly in phenomenal form.
LEVITOV: He prepared for that match brilliantly. Was there a secret to his transformation into fighting condition?
BAREEV: There was.
LEVITOV: Which, apparently, had been lost after the match with Kasparov.
BAREEV: But the secret is simple: the all-consuming desire to be number one. The desire to prove that he was exceptional, to go down in history, a desire for which the man was ready to temporarily sacrifice even love, the love of his indulgences and bad habits. We didn't do much physical preparation before the match with Leko. He refused to give up smoking – categorically. Meaning that in this respect there was already a minus.
LEVITOV: I want to ask, as the only former smoker among those present: why's it obligatory to give up smoking? With a football player it's clear – in order to run for an hour-and-a-half, he has to be able to breathe. But why for a chess player?
BAREEV: Can you guarantee that smoking has a positive influence on the brain cells?
LEVITOV: A good question... No, I can't.
BAREEV: And no one can. Today among the top chess players there are virtually no smokers – this is probably significant. All that was done was that Kramnik swam a lot. (*It was the same story before the match with Topalov – I.L.*) But this wasn't enough, apparently. What's more, swimming is in the category of rhythmical sports, like running, too, for example. These are contra-indicated for players – it exhausts the nervous system. It's no coincidence, in my view, that Karpov, who on the advice of a distinguished psychologist went running along the African coast as a way to get himself into ideal physical form, convincingly lost his match to Short in 1992. Read Zagainov's book *The Defeat*.
LEVITOV: Volodya thought that he'd win no matter what?
BAREEV: No, he didn't think that. What basis did he have for that? Before the match he'd won one game out of thirty against Leko! In London in 2000 Kramnik had five or six worse positions, of which three were almost hopeless. Unbelievably, Kasparov couldn't win a single one. And despite the fact that Kramnik was very tenacious in defence, in some cases this won't save you, simply because of the way the position is, and you won't be able to do anything no matter how tenacious you are. Kramnik defended magnificently, but the positions were so bad that if Kasparov had played more accurately, Kramnik would have lost. Simply because the position was hopeless.

So, five difficult positions out of fifteen – where's the guarantee that the next time he won't have three or four out of fourteen and won't lose one or two of them? That means he also has to win somewhere. But how to do this, if the opening that Leko has before the match is very serious – the reliable Sveshnikov system

in the Sicilian Defence, which Kramnik himself plays as Black? Moreover, Leko defends well, he's young, he shouldn't get tired. Kramnik couldn't be certain of success, although the match started out optimistically.

LEVITOV: That means the physical preparation wasn't ideal...

BAREEV: Attention wasn't placed on this particularly. Theoretically it was known that it would be better not to smoke, to walk a lot, but in practice to force himself not to smoke, to walk, to sleep well – it didn't work out.

LEVITOV: But for what reason – lack of motivation?

BAREEV: No, he was working a lot, even too much – 10 to 12 hours a day, this does not seem to suggest a lack of motivation. But he couldn't drop his usual methods of preparing for tournaments, which he'd been using for three years. And even while planning the future match Volodya didn't anticipate that Leko was capable of pulling off such a breakthrough in his preparation – completely changing his opening repertoire.

LEVITOV: What could Kramnik have done to avoid this situation?

BAREEV: He simply shouldn't have allowed the mistakes he'd already made. He wasn't ready for Kasparov to play 1.d4 and 1.c4, he was swimming then. Kasparov is an ambidextrous player, but it didn't even occur to Kramnik that he had to prepare for 1.d4 too. With Leko it was even worse, because Leko couldn't do such a thing, he could never do such a thing. But he did it!

LEVITOV: Volodya devoted too much attention to the chess aspect and miscalculated strategically?

BAREEV: Yes, and he worked very deeply on the variations that seemed dangerous to him. From what we'd worked on, digging deeply, only a tiny portion occurred, and from what he himself had worked on before the match, nothing occurred. He worked so much that he wore himself out. In the theoretical aspect he was better prepared in some lines than he was for the match with Kasparov.

Another very serious mistake was made – before the start of the match we held a training session where we worked 10 to 12 hours a day, and we went to play immediately after this.

LEVITOV: I'll respond to this for you with a quote from Leko from an interview in the magazine *Schach* (December 2004): 'By September 1 we'd finished the opening preparation for the match. In any case, I had. After this I only worked on chess for one hour a day. I had to preserve my energy so that at the board during the match I'd be ready for a big battle. It was clear to me that Kramnik, thanks to his superiority in preparation, would put constant pressure on me and play with great confidence. My physical form had to be ideal in order to stand up to him. And physically I was ready!'

BAREEV: They made us laugh. Kasparov supposedly calculated variations slightly better than a computer before the match and regularly blundered during it, Leko prepared as if for a marathon, and lost the last game.

LEVITOV: As a result Volodya turned out to be unfit. It works out that he sacrificed some of his preparation in order to deal with problems in the opening. But he did

not do this consciously – emotionally – look, you should have worked another little hour here, another little half hour here, a little day there...

BAREEV: Absolutely correct. He couldn't force himself to get away from the so-called unsolved opening problems. To lie down and get to sleep peacefully, knowing that you haven't dealt with some scheme or other – you don't know how to obtain an advantage or to equalise in a variation which, most likely, will occur...

At the last training sessions you shouldn't even touch a chess set. Kramnik knew all this, but we had the experience of London, when during the match itself we had to get variations up to scratch in a rush job. And this time he wanted to overcome that, to do this work before the match.

LEVITOV: He wanted to smother his opponent with his knowledge of openings?

BAREEV: Yes, but perhaps this was due to a lack of confidence. He believed that it would be difficult, and in order to make his task easier, he thought he would besiege Leko with his opening preparation. But it all went down the drain. Accordingly, the physical preparation was almost ruined and the emotional background was also difficult – a week before the match we all simply needed to get some sleep. After such matches, by the way, you particularly value a good night's sleep. Precisely at those times when you have to take the children to school at eight in the morning.

LEVITOV: I'd say that Kramnik got into it like a creative person. Opening problems arose, and he was so bogged down in them that he lost his overall sense of direction.

BAREEV: Out of twelve hours that were spent on studying opening positions, Kramnik could calmly have assigned nine for the analysis of possible match situations, walking, swimming, sleeping and going to the opera, and three hours, not getting too intense, for looking at games with all the possible openings. That would have been more useful.

Boris Naumovich Postovsky[4] – our good old acquaintance – even called from America and fed him advice. He actually said that Volodya should walk more. You think there weren't people who said that he needed to relax more? Probably about seven people said this. Each said something of their own, but this, too.

LEVITOV: I don't understand why you need a physical trainer if he watches the man poring over the computer screen twelve hours a day...

BAREEV: Krylov[5] claims that Kramnik listened to him much more four years previously. Volodya had changed a little.

4 A former head coach of the Russian men's team for the chess Olympiads and subsequently captain of the US men's team (most of whom come from the former Soviet Union).

5 Dr. Valery Krylov, Kramnik's physiotherapist.

LEVITOV: In essence, we can draw the conclusion that pre-match strategy doesn't play a particular role – you can be lucky with it or unlucky. The main task, as it seems to me, is to prepare yourself so that during the match you're not sitting there with 'eyes wide shut'. Seeing something unexpected, you have to be ready to react to it correctly, and not be afraid. A match is long enough that during it many events can occur that you didn't even think about before the match. But if you're well prepared physically and mentally, there's a chance that you won't react in the most undistinguished manner and your opponent won't obtain a decisive advantage thanks to his prepared surprise. On the other hand, when your eyes are clouded, your reaction will be incorrect, as the fifth game of the match with Leko confirmed.

What did Krylov do at the training sessions? What was his sphere of responsibility?

BAREEV: Valery Nikolaevich was a masseur for many years. He worked with the rowing and basketball teams in the golden Soviet times (lots of medals). In 1978 he was thrown by the Sport Committee to the aid of Karpov in Baguio. Then for many years he revived him and put him to sleep. He got used to this. Specifically, his work consisted of ensuring that Volodya got a good night's sleep at the training sessions as well as the matches. In Brissago he didn't succeed in this.

LEVITOV: Zhenya, what condition should a chess player's head be in before the game – empty and light, or is this akin to the condition before an exam – crowded with answers, variations, images of the game?

BAREEV: Your head should be free of irrelevant thoughts, clear, light and able to quickly calculate the most complex variations. It shouldn't get foggy a couple of hours after the start of the game. It should produce opening variations on demand.

LEVITOV: And what was Kramnik's menu on the day of a game?

BAREEV: Immediately before a game Volodya eats only fish as a light nutritional product, otherwise he'll fall asleep during the game. At training sessions – anything he wants, according to his mood. Someone said that Kasparov, on the contrary, eats his fill before a game, so that he can ensure that his body has energy up to the fourth hour of the game.

LEVITOV: Did Kramnik take any medicines at training sessions? To increase his reserve of energy, so to speak?

BAREEV: Nothing in particular, he took some vitamins. I didn't get into the details.

LEVITOV: And what was the daily routine at the training session in Monaco?

BAREEV: Get up at 9, breakfast at 10, from 11 to 1 – chess, from 1 to 2 – the sea, 2:30 – lunch, from 3 to 4 – siesta, from 4 to 8 – chess, from 8 to 9 – dinner, from 9 to 3 in the morning – chess. Sleep.

LEVITOV: If we count that it works out as twelve hours of chess a day. You could go crazy! How could you tolerate the solitude with that work schedule, as you were there without your family and friends?

BAREEV: Yes, it wasn't easy, but we listened to music, Petya and I fooled about by writing doggerel – a joint effort. We didn't do this before or after the match. We

touched on various subjects, mainly lyric poetry, the anguish of the soul and the flesh.

LEVITOV: Example?

BAREEV: Almost innocent:

You appear so unexpectedly,
And disappear so suddenly,
Like the scent of roses in a tea-room
May beckons; and with one gulp
I drink in this smell – the smell of bliss,
And there'll be a strange sight:
Eyes closed from sheer delight,
I tremble with you in the wagon.