

**Sanakoev, Grigory, 1999. *World Champion at the Third Attempt*. London: Gambit Publications Ltd.**

You will, doubtless, be familiar with the saying 'If at first you don't succeed, try, try again.' Well, after reading this delightful book I am convinced that there is a similar saying in Russian. Grigory Sanakoev finally became World Correspondence Champion in 1992, at his third attempt having first tried way back in 1968.

These tournaments did not proceed at the relatively quick pace of a Natcor webserver triplet but were hard slogs over three to seven years. One mistake and the work of years could be undone! One must admire the endurance of a man to play the same game over several years. One must also admire his stamina as these finals contained 15-16 players so quite an undertaking.

What can be said of this book? It is, essentially, a chess biography illustrated with 59 of the author's games. I was delighted to come across a game played against Dave Toothill who Cumbrian readers will recognise as long time top board for Windermere in the Cumbrian OTB league and, undoubtedly, Cumbria's strongest correspondence player. For me, to see the name of someone with whom I have shared a playing hall added a nice touch to my enjoyment of the book. For the record, Toothill managed a draw against the great man.

While one can read this book as a games collection, it is more than that. At the end of each of the book's eight chapters Sanakoev offers some advice, what he calls his 'postal player's code' and much of this advice is wise indeed and all we correspondence players could learn something from it.

I have lost count how many times I have worked out a line only to have forgotten it by the time I receive my opponent's next move. Oh for Sanakoev's advice 'Don't be slack about writing down what you have found in your analysis, even if you aren't entirely convinced of its accuracy.' And in the opening, 'Play anything that suits your own taste' is sage advice to anyone who discovers that their score is better in some openings than others despite the former being 'less good' in theory. Lastly, Natcor members will surely say 'Amen' to Sanakoev's advice of dealing with opponents. 'Treat your opponent considerately. Let each of your postcards be a letter to a friend.'

I cannot, in one page, do justice to this wonderful book. I recommend it wholeheartedly. I got my copy in a sale via Chess magazine for £5. At the time of writing it is offered for sale on Amazon for £9.50 but is, alas, temporarily out of stock.

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