

Burgess, G., Nunn, J., and Emms, J., 2010. *The Mammoth Book of the World's Greatest Chess Games*. London: Robinson.

This issue's book review was suggested by John Zlosnik to whom thanks for the great suggestion. Now I must confess to a slight error. John suggested a more recent version of this book which also has annotations by Wesley So and Michael Adams. It was this 2021 edition which I thought I had ordered but it was the earlier 1998 edition which arrived. So my remarks pertain to the original edition but I am confident that the updated version is similar in every way but with the addition of a bit of super GM-iness thrown in for good measure.

I like games collections, always have. I have reviewed in these pages best games collections featuring the games Arkell, Larsen, and Smyslov. This one is different in that it claims to contain the best games played ever. This also appeals and has done so since childhood. I am part of the generation of children who first learned to play following the 1972 Spassky v Fisher match. Imagine my excitement as an eleven year old boy being allowed into the adult section of the local library - absolutely best behaviour, and no talking on pain of the librarian's death stare- and finding Irving Chernev's Golden Dozen in the chess section.

In that book, Chernev sought to put the greatest players in order and provided a selection of each player's games. To this day I think they are some of the finest annotations. So, from that joyous long summer of 1976 onwards, except for periods when I stopped playing for various reasons, games collections and lists have always appealed to me.

I know what you are thinking. For goodness sake, Spencer, stop blethering and get on with it man. Good point, well made. Onwards.

The Mammoth book contains 125 games each annotated by one of Burgess, Nunn, or Emms. They range in time from 1834 to 2010. Each game starts with a brief biography of each of the players and the circumstances of the game. The game itself is then very well annotated with a good mix of description and variation analysis. Finally, at the end, the annotator draws three little lessons from the game which might serve the club player well. All absolutely excellent and well worth the £7 I paid for the older 2010 edition. The 2021 edition seems to range from £10-12, also not a fortune.

However, such a great price has a reason for it. This is not a 'forever' book. The paper is not the best quality and I suspect the pages will yellow with age. If it lives that long, as at 702 pages it's quite likely that the pages will start to separate from the spine before then if well used. I could be wrong. I hope I am. Even with that warning, I thoroughly recommend the book.

You may be wondering how the authors selected the games. Well, the authors explain. They constructed a shortlist of 270 games and each author gave each game a rating. Five, for one of the top 25 games of all time, 4 if the game was in the top 60, 3 if in the top 125, 2 outside the top 125, and 1 if the game was not high enough quality. Thus the maximum score any one

game could get was 15, five each from the three authors. No game in the book has a score of less than 9. But did any get the magic 15? Well, yes, three did. Botvinnik v Capablanca, AVRO 1938, Karpov v Kasparov 1985 match, game 16, and Kasparov v Topalov, Wijk Aan Zee 1999. Quite a few others score 14. In short, the standard of the games is very high.

Enjoy!

Special Bonus Review

I have been looking at Caruana's new book on the Ruy Lopez on the grounds that it's about time I started to play like a grown-up and give up my assortment of odds and ends openings. I was looking online for some reviews and came across one by our very own Colin Lyne in British Chess News. Colin has written a brilliant review and, if you have one of these new fangled computer things, you can read it at

<https://britishchessnews.com/2021/09/29/caruanas-ruy-lopez-a-white-repertoire-for-club-players/>

Adam Spencer