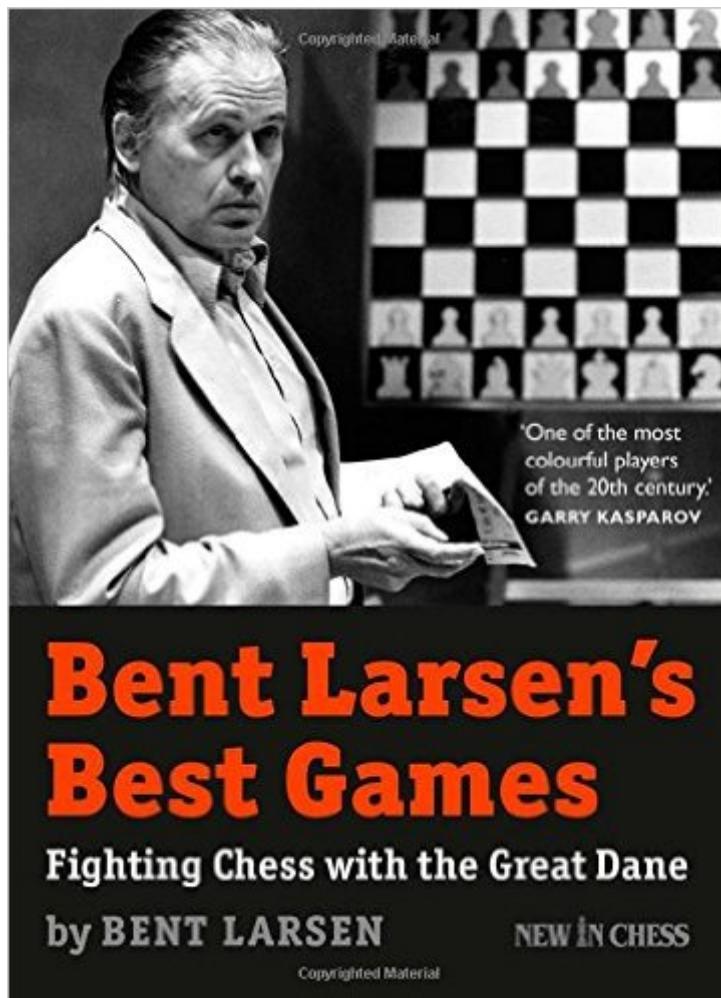


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Bent Larsen's Best Games: Fighting Chess With The Great Dane



Synopsis

Bent Larsen (1935-2010) was one of the greatest fighters chess has ever seen. In his rich career the great Dane defeated all World Champions from Botvinnik to Karpov. He was a Candidate for the World Championship four times and became one of the most successful tournament players of his time. His uncompromising style and his unorthodox thinking made him popular with chess players all around the globe. In 1967/1968 Larsen won five international elite events in a row, a truly spectacular achievement. His successes were such that Bobby Fischer let him play first board in the legendary match Soviet Union vs. the World in 1970 in Belgrade. Bent Larsen also was a highly original chess writer and an extremely productive chess journalist. Not surprisingly the first chess book that Magnus Carlsen ever studied was written by the strongest Scandinavian player before him. This collection brings together more than 120 of Bent Larsen's best games, annotated by himself. His comments are lucid, to the point, instructive and humorous. Together, these games are a tribute to his genius and a continuous joy to read and play through.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

From 1964 to 1971, Bent Larsen & Bobby Fischer were the only non-Russians in the world's top ten. Up to 1970, Larsen's record was better than Fischer's. He had won 2 interzonals, qualified for the semi-finals of the Candidates three times, actually won 5 international tournaments in one year (!!), beaten Tal & Geller in match play and defeated several world champions (including the unbeatable Petrosian twice in the same event!!). His games feature a range of openings (QP, Flank Openings, Larsen's Opening, Sicilian, KID, Nimzo, Vienna, Bishops, ... with loads of innovations). He can be

described as a Neo-Nimzowitchean with clever tactics, unusual strategic ideas in semi-closed positions, out-standing endgame technique. Larsen usually moved quickly through his opening phase, intending to reach a dynamic position testing who is the better player. He consistently refused draws no matter who was his opponent. His aversion of draws worked well in tournament play, but strategic draws are a necessity in match play, where Spassky & Fischer destroyed him. I have had his 1969 classic ('Selected Games') since the late 70's. I regularly return to it for the beautiful play and great writing; (incidentally I prefer it to Fischer's book from the same year). This new book has those 50 Selected Games translated from Descriptive to Algebraic Notation, + 70 more games from a second volume translated from a spanish edition, + 2 wins over Karpov, and a 20 page introduction by Nielsen + a couple pages of homage from peers. Larsen's prose is a delight. Lots of humor, humanity, excellent explanations about what is going on with deep details of his thinking at that moment. The chapters are arranged by years, with introductions, life details, tournament background, and chat about other players.

A disclaimer - I am probably one of Bent Larsen's biggest fanboys. I am perpetually searching for rare items like signed books on eBay, I own books by/about him in Danish that I can't read, and I have a 40-inch canvas of a rare photograph of him on my office wall. This book is one of the best chess books in history. As far as game collections go, I think there are only one or two that might be in the same league - some might prefer Tal's Life and Games, and that's a fine choice. Larsen's writing style is truly excellent - to the point but playful and humorous, and insightful in a way that most top-level grandmasters might not be. He is extremely adept at including psychological and external factors in his annotations, and there are plenty of interesting stories and anecdotes crammed in/between the games to make this book something more than a simple games collection. I'm not going to spend a ton of time talking about the structure - you can see that with the "Look Inside" feature yourself. Long story short, this is an updated version of many different Larsen's Best Games tomes under different names. I think the latest English version was called "Bent Larsen: Master of Counterattack". This version is quite a bit longer though - over 100 games organized by year/tournament. Larsen's games themselves are inspiring as well - I have been studying this book (in chunks, sometimes straight through) or previous versions for a decade now, and I find something new every time. Larsen had an unusual style in my opinion - he always looking for a fight, but was an admittedly positionally focused player, relatively poor or apathetic about wild combinations or attacks compared to his peers.

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