

The Life and Games of **MIKHAIL TAL**

A black and white photograph of Mikhail Tal, a chess player, leaning over a chessboard. He is wearing a dark suit jacket, a white shirt, and a dark tie. His expression is one of intense concentration as he looks down at the board. The chessboard is in the foreground, with several pieces visible, including a white king and a black pawn. The background is blurred, showing other people in a crowd.

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The Life and Games of
Mikhail Tal

Mikhail Tal

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Editor's Foreword

Mikhail Tal was a remarkable man. His brilliant successes in the years leading up to his World Championship victory excited the chess world; his very name became synonymous with brilliance and attacking flair.

'Misha' had a warm and engaging personality without a hint of malice. His enthusiasm for the game he loved was unquenchable. In his later years he was afflicted by severe health problems which would have crushed a lesser man, but he never complained about his difficulties and continued to play chess right up to his death. Misha hated to postpone a game; even if he had to slip out of his doctors' grasp, he would try to make it somehow. Despite his fragile appearance, his attacking powers and astonishingly quick sight of the board remained intact.

My last visit to him was in May 1992, just after he had returned from Barcelona, his last major tournament. He 'showed' me his fine win against Lautier, but was so weak that he had to lie on his back and dictate the moves and analysis 'blindfold' to me, while I played them over on a board. He died on 28th June 1992, and the chess world is a much poorer place for his absence.

I was delighted to be asked by Cadogan Books to work on a new edition of his, classic book *The Life and Games of Mikhail Tal*, which covers his career up to 1975. This is one of those rare chess books which is not only splendidly instructive, but also conveys a real impression of the author's personality.

There was relatively little for me to do apart from convert the moves to algebraic notation. I corrected some obvious misprints and errors (the incorrect diagram for the game fragment and the missed mate in one in the analysis of game 90 are typical examples). In some cases there were errors caused by misprints, for instance the accidental omission of moves. I have corrected these without comment. Likewise, in about 20 academic cases, I have tidied up the end of a variation. I do not doubt that Tal would have agreed to these changes had he still been alive to go over the proofs. If there was any doubt about the analysis, or if the change was in any way significant, my remark appears as a footnote.

To avoid confusion, I should explain that footnotes which are marked

‘Editor’s note’ and ‘Translator’s note’ are transcribed from the RHM edition. The unattributed footnotes are mine and appear for the first time in this edition.

John Nunn
Chertsey, June 1997

Acknowledgements

The chess world owes Cadogan Books plc a debt of gratitude for undertaking the monumental task of bringing this classic work by Mikhail Tal back into print. Since being first published in 1976 by RHM, and never reprinted due to the subsequent collapse of the publisher, a whole generation has grown up who have never even seen a copy. Yet *The Life and Games of Mikhail Tal* is quite probably the greatest chess book ever written. I am sure that everybody involved in the initial edition will be delighted that Tal's masterpiece is once again available to lovers of chess world-wide.

In this respect we must thank David Levy (the original editor), and everyone else involved in RHM's pioneering original edition. All of the game annotations are by Tal himself, except for games 8, 11-13, 16-18, 23 and 29 (done jointly by Tal and Koblents, his Latvian trainer) and games 87, 88 and 92 (done jointly by Tal and Kirilov).

For this marvellous new algebraic version, Grandmaster John Nunn spent weeks transcribing the material from descriptive notation, checking the text and deciphering unintelligible variations. Ken Neat (who did so much fine translation work on the original version) has retranslated games 33 and 34 from Russian especially for this edition, and has also fully updated Tal's tournament and match record.

Murray Chandler
London, June 1997