

The
LATVIAN
GAMBIT
LIVES!

TONY KOSTEN

The LATVIAN GAMBIT LIVES!

This eagerly awaited book answers claims made by other writers about the value of this controversial opening. Written for both club and tournament players, *The Latvian Gambit Lives!* shows that Black and White have a number of important resources that prove the validity of the gambit. The author has been through all 9000 or more Latvian Gambits ever published to produce an analytical book, showing which lines are definitely good and which bad. Ultimately, the book confirms that the Latvian Gambit lives.

Tony Kosten is an International Grandmaster and the author of several chess books, including *Winning with the Philidor*.

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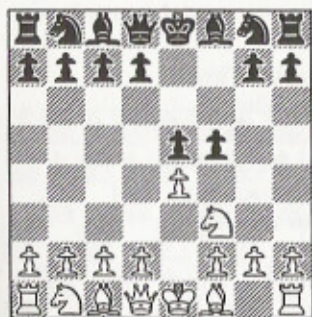


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Introduction

The Latvian Gambit can be thought of as a sort of King's Gambit played by Black:

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 f5



The move 2...f5 was originally quoted by Damiano in 1512 (and not in the Gottingen Manuscript, which only mentions 1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 ♙c4 f5 4 d3 f4), and for centuries the opening was known as the Greco Counter Gambit after the Italian Gioachino Greco (1600-1634). Then, from around 1900, the Latvian Karlis Betinš started to play and analyse the opening, winning many exciting games. He was joined by other Latvian masters, and from 1934 to 1936 the Seniors Club of Riga, under Betinš, employed the opening to gain a famous victory in the correspondence match against Stockholm. Recognizing the contribution of the Latvian chess players to the renewal of interest in the opening, it was renamed the

Latvian Gambit at the 1937 FIDE Congress.

When I agreed to revise my book *The Latvian Gambit* for Batsford, I told them that I did not want to spend more than a week or two over it. Fortunately for the reader, and unfortunately for my free time, that was four months ago! This revision has become a labour of love for me. I have been through all 9000 or so Latvian Gambits ever published, with the help of the *ChessBase* 'Tree' function to catch any transpositions, and have deeply analysed all the critical lines.

Although I have kept the same basic structure (after all, it seemed logical to me in 1994, and it still does) the contents have been thoroughly reworked, and updated. There is no subjective bias, this is no 'Winning with ...' book—when a line is good for White I say so.

Interestingly, when I wrote the original tome, I based it around games of the strongest over-the-board players (in particular Jonny Hector), because the standard of many correspondence games was not that high. However, seven years on, it is the games by the correspondence players that are the real mainstay of the book. Not only are these players now armed with databases containing all the relevant games and can use published literature to recite the most theoretical lines, but they also have access to powerful

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analytical engines. This means that many correspondence games are now tactically flawless, and that the theory has been pushed to new limits.

The Latvian Gambit is now a mature opening, and it is possible to

say which lines are definitely good, which bad. I hope the reader gets much enjoyment out of reading this work, and scores many points!

Tony Kosten,
Chamalières, March 2001