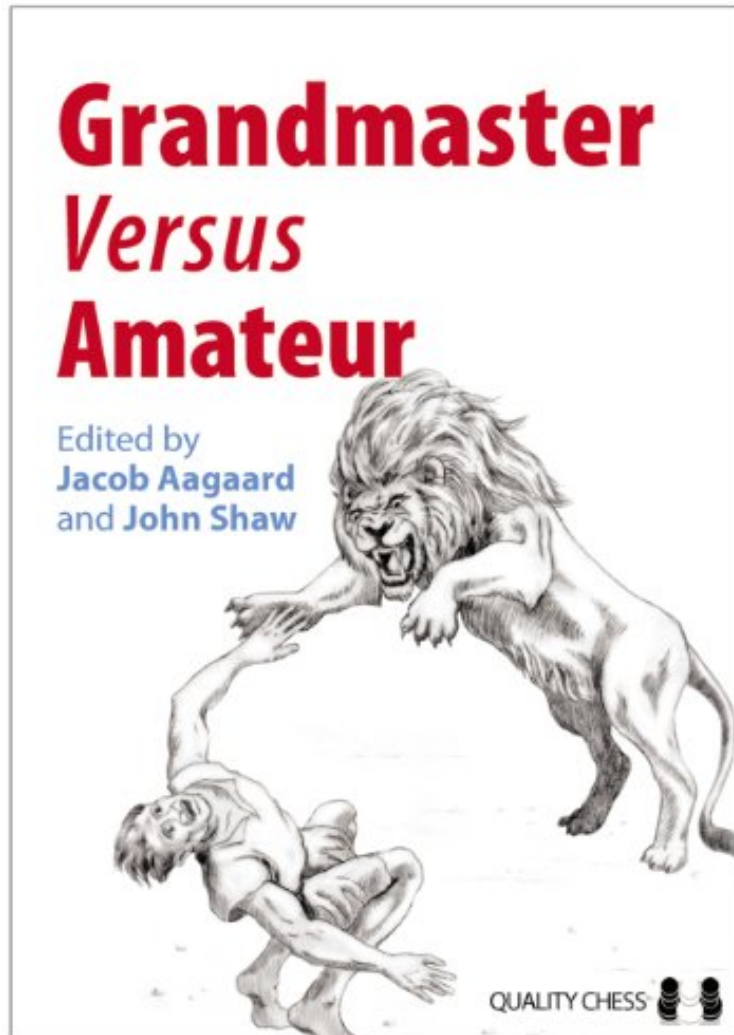


(Download pdf) Grandmaster versus Amateur

## Grandmaster versus Amateur

*John Shaw*

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**John Shaw : Grandmaster versus Amateur** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Grandmaster versus Amateur:

10 of 10 people found the following review helpful. A good book that could have been greatBy IgelfeldWhen it comes to books like this, a one size fits all is nearly impossible. Meaning that it's hard to appeal to players of all skill levels (or at least in the amateur standing) without some compromise. As a result, some chapters are written at a very basic and coarse level, while a couple are written for the advanced club player. This probably means that as a reader you'll find some chapters far less insightful or interesting, or in the case of a lower club player, still over your head. The book is a collection of contributions from leading GMs (or GMS on the Quality CHess payroll) and are intended to

tackle the subject of how the clash between amateur and GM provides insight into not only chess thinking, but also illustrates common problems in thinking patterns of amateurs as well as the psychology for each combatant. Having completed the book (in its entirety), it was obvious that each author interpreted the question slightly differently with the net result a nice variation in thought that broadened the overall perspective or insight offered to the reader. But the negative side of this is that it also diluted any central threads that the reader might draw from the entire book. It's worth noting some of the contributions from each of the authors. The real star of the book is Pavel Eljanov, a recognized super GM. I have to say that I was surprised by his ability to write and provide some real insight via his game annotations. He provided details when needed and provided positional assessments that are both approachable and useful for the advanced club player. A quick summary of other authors (with my opinion on the quality of their contribution) is as follows: GM Aagaard - Provided two chapters with most of the material directed toward the slightly advanced club player. It's a bit hard to overcome his pompous style because it often interferes with a highly affective explanation. GM Shaw - GM Shaw explains how he achieved GM status at a very late age. The games and narrative really are directed at the beginning club player, but there are a few tidbits that are worth thinking about for almost anyone. For example, he mentions that he relied heavily on his superior endgame knowledge to bring home points, but sometimes relies too heavily on transitioning into an endgame avoiding tactics (in positions where tactics are really needed). Overall, his contribution relative to his other works is really diluted and I'm sure that he just shot something off to get the book done. GM Marin - I almost hero worship Marin as an author, but this was easily his worst book contribution that I've read. He is a talented writer and chess teacher, but his effort for this book was well below his usual standard. This was perhaps my greatest disappointment in the book. GM Avrukh - I found that the material in his section provided a very effective set of insights into the clash between GMs and amateurs. I've not read any of his books, also published by Quality, but I'm now at least interested. He provides critical lines, answers pertinent questions, and delivers insight into not only the chess positions, but also the chess thinking behind the moves. Without this chapter, the book would have easily slipped to three stars (instead of the 3 1/2 rounded up to 4). Material is directed at middle to advanced club players. The remaining chapters provide decent insight, but overall don't provide any mind-bending insight that really is going to revolutionize your game. Overall, this is a nice book that doesn't really address in volume, the needs of any one group of chess players. I do think the book would have been significantly better if the authors had stuck to appealing to the needs of the advanced club player. Mid-range and beginning club players hardly need to know about GM vs amateur battles for improvement. So the chapter by Shaw and much of the material by Aagaard is simply a waste of precious space in the book. This could have been an excellent book if they'd recruited some other authors like Eljanov AND had Marin really write a good chapter (one that he'd be proud of). It's hard to recommend this book because it attempts to appeal to all amateur players, but is simply too diluted. Overall, if you see this book at closeout price, it's worth getting, but when stacked up against other 20 plus dollar books, there are tons of better choices for good instruction.

2 of 9 people found the following review helpful. It's informative, but not QUITE what I was seeking

By James King TBH, I haven't yet gone over the book in detail. I was seeking a prose explanation, from those who have achieved the GM title, of how their method of thinking differs from mine. The book is stuffed with many games and variations...if GMs think like that, I will never be one! Oh, well, I'll keep trying anyway.

22 of 25 people found the following review helpful. Superb

By A. Ali This is another superb book published by Quality Chess, easily worth its weight in silver. This 196-page book sparkles with insight and will serve as an elixir to revive flagging and jaded spirits. The contributors are the GMs Aagaard, Marin, Avrukh, Nielsen, Persson, Shaw, and Eljanov. The theme of the difference in thinking between amateur and GM is explored by the writers in their own fashion. My favorite chapter so far is the one by John Shaw, where he explains how he made the slow 18-year ascent from a 1745 player to a GM. As he argues, an untalented player can become a GM if he works hard enough for long enough. In his case he concentrated on endgame study -- but seemingly never developed a thorough opening repertoire nor studied tactics (and indeed shied away from tactical play). Despite these failings he managed to make GM. He presents four entertainingly annotated games to show how both his strengths and his weaknesses manifest themselves. The two chapters by Aagaard -- "Danes Eat Fish for Breakfast," and "Fish Eat Danes for Supper" -- are also great. In the first, he explains the differences in thinking between GMs and lesser mortals. For instance, GMs think in a less forcing fashion, and GMs know a positional advantage is better than a material advantage. He presents carefully chosen examples to drive home his points. In his second chapter, he explains how an amateur (by which he means a 2100-2350) can defeat a GM: Play a good solid opening, play natural moves, and be vigilant to pounce if the GM presses too hard or otherwise makes a slip. The other five chapters are also excellent -- I just haven't had a chance to work through them (in detail) yet. Chess books can often be dull and dry reading but this one -- like Aagaard's earlier 2-volume "Attacking Manual" -- is a fun read and it's difficult to put down. This is a book of enduring worth.

A multinational array of top chess grandmasters has assembled to explore the differences in thinking between professional and amateur chess players, and how the amateur can bridge the gap. It usually takes at least a decade of sustained effort for even the most talented player to reach the grandmaster level and though this book cannot guarantee to make the reader a grandmaster, it is certainly a healthy nudge in the right direction.

Through its rollicking pages, *Grandmaster Versus Amateur* shows us that even though the road to the top is a minefield, struggle is noble, and playing itself can be fun where you find it. John D. Warth, *ChessCafe* There's plenty of advice too, but the best reason to buy it is as a celebration of the game we all love, and of the people who play it. Dennis Monokroussos, *Chess Today*