

## Misha Interviews...

### Misha Savinov

Orders? Inquiries? You can now call toll-free:

**1-866-301-CAFE**



## Interview with Dmitry Yakovenko

*Alexander Morozevich once described Dmitry Jakovenko as one of the most talented players of his generation. I first met Dmitry in the press center of the 57<sup>th</sup> Russian Championship in Moscow, where the slim young student of Moscow State University was working as an expert commentator. He was the only grandmaster among the journalists, and with his deep understanding of chess he could easily have been participating in the event. Indeed, Jakovenko missed qualifying by the narrowest of margins – he placed 4<sup>th</sup> in the Tomsk qualifier, because of a slightly poorer tiebreak, and only the top three advanced.*

*Jakovenko's work in the press center was essentially divided into three parts. First he followed the games and often suggested which moves would be played by the participants. Following the games, he assisted at the demonstration board. And if Alexey Dreev had difficulties recalling his moves, it would be Dmitry who reminded him. He discussed candidate moves with Kasparov, showed early middlegame improvements to Korotylev, explored endgame subtleties with Timofeev, and exchanged lengthy variations with Svidler. He looked very comfortable as an expert, but it was obvious that he would have been happier playing. Jakovenko's third task was to prepare press releases and he quickly provided flawless assessments of each game or position. Now I would like to introduce him to **ChessCafe** readers.*

**Misha Savinov:** Where you were born?

**Dmitry Javenko:** I was born in Omsk on June 28<sup>th</sup>, 1983, but I spent my childhood in Nizhnevartovsk.

**MS:** Were you the first grandmaster in Omsk?

**DJ:** I actually don't know, but there were certainly no other grandmasters in Nizhnevartovsk!

**MS:** How far is it from Moscow?

**DJ:** More than 3,000 kilometers. It is one of the main cities of Northern Siberia. As we say, the exact geometrical center of Russia (smiles).

**MS:** What was the climate like?

**DJ:** Well, the air temperature varies from 30• C in the summer to -30• C in the winter. It can get as cold as -49• but, fortunately, that doesn't happen too regularly. When the temperature falls to -30•, all school classes are cancelled.

**MS:** Yes, I experienced this, too.

**DJ:** So, in Nizhnevartovsk I would usually lose about 3 weeks of schooling because of these "weather holidays."

**MS:** Well then, you are a perfect example of a Russian who learns to play chess to occupy his time during the long, cold, boring winter! When did you learn the moves?

**DJ:** I don't recall. My parents say I was around three. My dad taught me the rules. He is somewhere between 1<sup>st</sup> Category and candidate master. He played correspondence chess at that time and often analyzed his games at home.

**MS:** When did you start reading, by the way?

**DJ:** At about the same age.

**MS:** OK! What were your early results?

**DJ:** At the age of five I competed with adults at the local chess club. There were several 1<sup>st</sup> Category players, 2 or 3 candidate masters, and even one master. At seven I reached 1<sup>st</sup> Category during the city championship. In four more years I advanced to candidate master. Curiously, I won the



championship of Nizhnevartovsk only at 14, when I was already an international master! So the competition was indeed strong.

**MS:** Who was your first teacher?

**DJ:** My father taught me the openings, basic strategy and tactics. The first chess book that I remember was *100 Wins of Anatoly Karpov*. I read it carefully and enjoyed it very much. It is very likely that this book made a great impact on my style of play.

**MS:** But you did not only play in Nizhnevartovsk, correct?

**DJ:** Of course, there were also various regional and national competitions. In 1991 I won the last championship of the Russian Soviet Socialist Federation for my age. At 10 I won the Russian U10 championship in Kazan with a perfect score of 9-0. Misha Roiz, now an Israeli grandmaster, finished with 8-1. Our individual encounter decided the outcome of the tournament.

**MS:** Did you preserve the scoresheets of your early games?

**DJ:** Yes, most of my games from that period are preserved.

**MS:** Winning U10 means qualifying for international chess...

**DJ:** Yes, we went to Bratislava (Slovakia) to participate in the world championship. I did not play very well there, finishing below the top 5, but my main achievement was meeting Alexander Sergeyeovich Nikitin and since then I have worked with him. (IM Nikitin, below with Jakovenko, was also Kasparov's head trainer – MS)

**MS:** How did you arrange a study schedule while living in Nizhnevartovsk?

**DJ:** Nikitin visited me at home 3 or 4 times; we had extended training sessions. Also, we had regular lessons by phone. Later, with the development of the Internet and email, staying in touch became very simple.

**MS:** So, a distant chess education was effective? I have heard different opinions on this subject...

**DJ:** Undoubtedly, I believe that the major role in chess improvement belongs to individual study; working on one's own. One needs a trainer to know what to work on, and to learn the methods of study, but the hard work should be



done alone. Also, when I was around nine I attended a couple of the last sessions of the Panchenko School which especially improved my understanding of the endgame.

**MS:** Did you miss much school because of your chess activities?

**DJ:** No, not really. I only missed school during official tournaments outside of Nizhnevartovsk and that did not happen often. Chess didn't interfere with my studies. It is more likely that chess assisted my performance in school.

**MS:** Did you have "4s" in your school graduation certificate? ("5" is the top grade A- to A+, and "4" corresponds to B - MS)

**DJ:** No, only "5s." I obtained a gold medal for academic excellence upon graduation.

**MS:** Do you think your success in chess helped you enter Russia's most prestigious university, MSU?

**DJ:** Well, I passed the exams by the visiting committee. This system has already been abandoned, but at that time (in 1999) it was routine to organize MSU's entrance exams in distant regions during the spring. The professors traveled and examined potential students. Prior to the examinations I won a zonal final of the all-Russian Mathematical Olympiad. My zone was Siberia and the Far East. Of course, the professors knew about my mathematical achievements as well as my chess victories, and so perhaps they didn't judge my answers too harshly. However, I knew my subjects very well.

**MS:** And you enrolled in the math faculty?

**DJ:** Yes, computing, math and cybernetics.

**MS:** Was math your favorite subject?

**DJ:** Yes, as well as physics – when we didn't go skiing!

**MS:** What were your other international results in junior chess?

**DJ:** In Bratislava I finished 6<sup>th</sup>. My qualifying for the U14 in Hungary is a long story. I had 3-0 score in the Russian U12 championship and was leading the field with Grischuk, but I had to withdraw from the tournament because of injury. The scar on my forehead is a reminder of that incident.

I broke a glass hotel window with my head. I was running fast and did not notice the glass. As a consolation, I was included in the U14 championship, and won it quite surprisingly. However, in Hungary I only finished 11<sup>th</sup>. The other participants were: Malakhov, Asrian, Gershon, Blehm, and

Shaposhnikov. With two losses to Vajda and Labollita I scored only 6-3. I did better in 1999 in Spain, finishing 2<sup>nd</sup> at the world U16. Finally, in 2001 I became the world champion U18, scoring 9-2 with 8 wins and one loss to Artyom Timofeev.



**MS:** Did you travel alone to tournaments or in a group?

**DJ:** In a group, but my mother also accompanied me.

**MS:** But you didn't have personal trainer?

**DJ:** No, and I don't believe it is important.

**MS:** When did you decide to become a professional chess player?

**DJ:** Just this year in 2004. For the next two years I will focus on my chess development.

**MS:** Only this year? Not when you became an IM at 14?

**DJ:** Actually, the level of play of a modern IM doesn't allow one to be a chess professional! And boys like Karjakin become grandmasters at 13 these days...

**MS:** What were your main achievements after junior chess?

**DJ:** One of my best tournament results, considering the strength of the field, was 4<sup>th</sup> place in the Tomsk Higher League. In 2001 I won the St. Vincent Open. In 2002 I scored +5 at the start of the European Championship in Batumi, but a loss to the future winner Macieja led to a disaster – 3 more defeats and only a modest 7-6 finish. Twice I was 11<sup>th</sup> at the Russian championships before Tomsk. And for several years I have finish near the top in Pardubice.

**MS:** When did you start playing for the team “Tomsk-400.”

**DJ:** Also this year.

**MS:** How do you evaluate the results?

**DJ:** Well, in Dagomys we became champions of Russia in blitz, rapid and classical chess! In addition, I scored the best result on my board. The European championship was neither a success, nor a disaster. Without Morozevich and Akopian it was difficult to participate in the struggle for the title.

**MS:** Do you keep track of your statistics, such as tournament record, performances etc?

**DJ:** My father does. However, I haven't checked my statistics for a long time.

**MS:** Who are the strongest players you've defeated to date?

**DJ:** Let me think... Dolmatov, Milov, Filippov, Baklan, Najer – all over 2600. I haven't beaten anyone above 2650 yet, but I don't meet them too often, either.

**MS:** What is your favorite kind of chess?

**DJ:** I think my style is based on common sense positional chess.

**MS:** So you believe in logic in the game?

**DJ:** Would you expect to hear a different opinion from a mathematician?

**MS:** And who are favorite players?

**DJ:** I like Karpov's games very much. I also enjoy Anand's games, although I have never studied them seriously, maybe I should. Except that there is no book about Anand in Russian, as far as I know. Well, obviously, I also like to watch Kasparov, Morozevich, Shirov, but I am not sure if I could handle such play, it is very demanding.

**MS:** If it were possible, which chess epoch would you choose to be in?

**DJ:** (thinking for a while) Maybe 60s - 70s of XX century. Names of Botvinnik, Tal, Smyslov, Keres...

**MS:** Why?

**DJ:** It is a very interesting period of chess history, of course. And, I don't like the level of opening preparation which is now required from chess players in order to compete. Everyone has to do this work, of course, but we lose much of the playing component that makes the game enjoyable.

**MS:** What do you think about Chess-960 (Fischer Random)? Or Kasparov's recent suggestion of selecting just those 30 or 40 positions "that are not too ugly" and choosing just one starting position at the beginning of each year?

**DJ:** I quite like Kasparov's idea! One of the main problems would be to pick interesting initial positions, but with 960 to choose from it should be possible to select 30 playable ones.

**MS:** Have you ever played Chess-960?

**DJ:** I have never participated in a 960 tournament, but I have played a couple of games with friends in a relaxing manner. My results, by the way, were poor, but we didn't spend any time in the opening.

**MS:** What do you consider your main advantages and disadvantages in chess?

**DJ:** My strong area is the endgame. As for weaknesses – well, I do not calculate enough variations. This is something I must work on.



**MS:** Are you too lazy when choosing candidate moves, or do you simply not calculate long enough, and prematurely cease your calculations?

**DJ:** It is more likely that I calculate a little bit too slowly. Or, perhaps, I put too little effort into it because I am not used to calculating? It is difficult to say. (laughs) If I knew the reason, I'd fix the problem quickly! Sometimes I neglect the opportunity to complicate things – just because of my distrust in my ability to calculate everything correctly.

**MS:** You were a very good student at the best Russian university and you have a valuable profession. Why are you willing to pursue a chess career?

**DJ:** The real reason is that I regard my recent results as promising and I want to give chess a try. Also, I passed the exams permitting me to pursue a Ph.D. degree in Economics at MSU, so I can always return to a civil occupation.

**MS:** What was the title of your Graduate thesis?

**DJ:** (without thinking) “Formalizing the definition of diversifying an investment portfolio.”

**MS:** And what are you planning to work on for your Ph.D.?

**DJ:** I am going to study dynamic models of economics.

**MS:** It seems to me even though you want to play chess that science is still not-to-be forgotten?

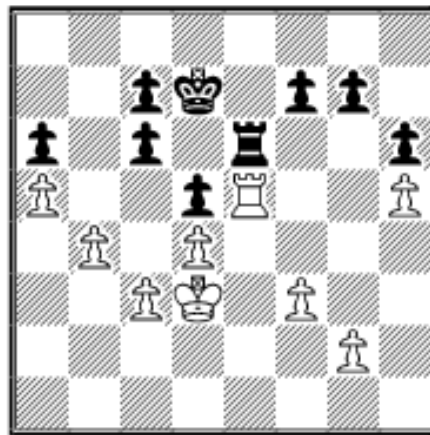
**DJ:** Absolutely!

### **Dmitry Jakovenko Annotates**

First here is a fragment from the Russia-ch U10 in Kazan, 1993.

#### ***Jakovenko - Roiz***

The opening was an Exchange French. White had forced the exchange of queens and ruined Black’s pawn structure, which led to a favorable endgame and after 33 moves we reached the following position:



With his last move, 33...Re6, Black offered to enter a seemingly drawn pawn endgame. However, already at that time, I understood that achieving a draw with such a deteriorated pawn structure is very difficult if not impossible.

**34.K•3 f6 35.Rx•6 Kx•6 36. Kf4 f5  
37.g4 fxg4 38.fxg4 Kf6 39.g5+ K•6  
40.Kg4 K•7 41.Kf4 K•8 42.gxh6 gxh6  
43.K•5 K•7 44.b5!**

That’s the point – a pawn break decides the game!

**44...cxb5 45.Kxd5 Kd7 46.K•5 Kd8 47.K•6 K•8 48.d5 Kb8 49.d6** Black resigns

#### ***Jakovenko, D - Wang, R*** [B85] *Aeroflot 2004*

**1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nc6 5.Nc3 Qc7 6.Be2 a6 7.0-0 Nf6  
8.Kh1 Be7 9.f4 d6 10.a4 0-0 11.Be3 Re8 12.Bf3 Bd7 13.Nb3 b6**

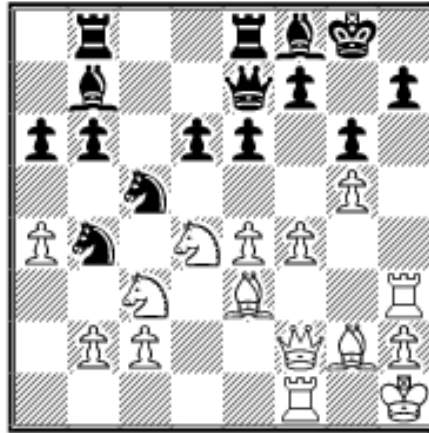
This is the Scheveningen variation of the Sicilian. White commences the

most straightforward plan in this position – a kingside pawn storm.

**14.g4 Bc8 15.g5 Nd7 16.Bg2 Bb7 17.Rf3**

The black knight is driven away from f6, and White utilizes a rook-lift to attack the h7-pawn – a common approach in this line.

**17...Nb4 18.Rh3 g6 19.Qd2 Nc5 20.Qf2 Bf8 21.Rf1 Rab8?! 22.Nd4 Qe7?!**



The text parries White's threat of 23.Qh4, which would reveal itself in a variation like 22...e5 23.fxe5 dxe5 24.Qh4 h5 25.gxh6 Kh7 26.Qf6+-. Now Black is ready to answer 23.Qh4 with 23...h5, and after 24.gxh5 the queens would be swapped. However, White's attack is already unstoppable.

**23.f5 exf5 24.Nxf5! Qe6**

After 24...gxf5 25.Qxf5 Black would not

last long:

25...Bg7 26.Qxh7+ Kf8 27.g6 f6 28.Bh6+-;

25...h6 26.gxh6 (threatening Rg3+ and Bd4+) 26...Ne6 27.Rg3+ Kh8

28.Qg4+-;

25...f6 26.gxf6 Qf7 27.Rxh7! Qxh7 28.f7+ Kh8 29.Bd4+ Bg7 30.fxe8Q+ Rxe8 31.Bxg7+ Qxg7 32.Qh5+-

**25.Rxh7!**

The rook sacrifice completely ruins Black's defense.

**25...gxf5**

25...Kxh7 26.Qh4+ Kg8 27.Bd4 is also a quick win for White. The only way to extend the struggle is to part with the queen: 27...f6 28.Bxf6 Qxf6 29.gxf6 gxf5 30.f7+ Kxf7 31.Qh7+-, but it would not affect the outcome.

**26.Qh4 Bg7**

26...Qe5 27.Rxf5+-

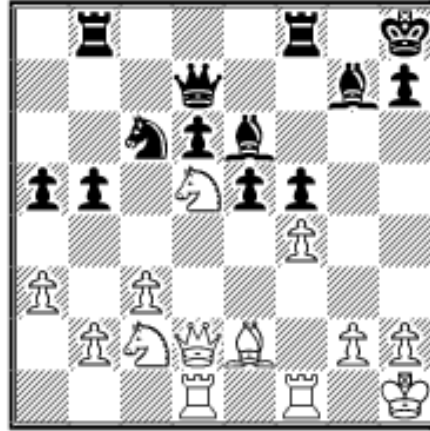
**27.Rxg7+ Kf8**

Or 27...Kxg7 28.Bd4+ Kf8 29.Bf6+- and mate in three.

**28.g6 Kxg7 29.Bd4+ 1-0***Dvoiryys, Semyon – Jakovenko, Dmitry*

Tomsk, ch-RUS (5), 2004

**1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 e5 6.Ndb5 d6 7.Bg5 a6  
8.Na3 b5 9.Bxf6 gxf6 10.Nd5 f5 11.c3 Bg7 12.exf5 Bxf5 13.Nc2 Be6  
14.Be2 O-O 15.Qd2 16.Rd1 Qd7 17.O-O f5 18.f4 Kh8 19.Kh1 a5 20.a3**



Such a dynamically balanced position is typical for the Sveshnikov Sicilian. White plans to attack his opponent's central pawns, utilizing his powerful knight on d5, while Black prepares to break on the queenside with b5-b4 and to utilize his bishop pair after the position opens.

**20...Qb7**

This seems to be an ideal spot for the queen. It supports the b5-b4 break as well as aiming at the white king in case of g2-g4, which is usually a part of White's plan. Apart from that, it creates the threat Nc6-d4.

**21.Nce3 e4**

Premature is 21...b4 in view of 22.a4 and White takes control over the b5-square for his bishop.

**22.g4**

It looks like there is no other way to make progress.

**22...fxg4 23.Bxg4**

23.f5 Bg8 leads nowhere: 24.Nxg4 Ne5 25.f6 Nxg4 26.Bxg4 Bxd5 27.fxg7+ Qxg7 28.Qxd5 Qxg4 and the position is even.

**23...Bxg4**

During the game I also calculated 23...Bxd5 24.Qxd5 Ne5 25.Qxb7 Rxb7 26.Rxd6 Nf3 27.Nxg4 Rxf5 28.Rd8+ Rf8 29.Rxf8+ Bxf8 30.Bxf3 exf3 31.Rxf3 Bg7 32.Rf5 Kg8, followed by b5-b4, drawing.

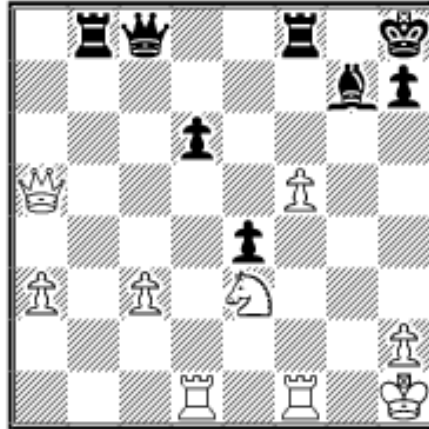
**24.Nxg4 Ne7 25.Nge3 Nxd5 26.Qxd5 b4!**

Naturally, Black does not want to play an endgame after exchanging on d5; he has sufficient counterplay in the middlegame.

### 27.Qxa5?!

From a practical point of view it was better to play 27.Qxb7 Rxb7 28.axb4 axb4 29.cxb4 Rxb4 30.Rxd6 Rxb2 with a draw. After the text Black does not risk losing, but White needs to be very careful.

### 27...bxc3 28.bxc3 Qc8 29.f5



White prevents ...Qh3, but presents a cozy square for the black bishop.

### 29...Be5!

Black is not interested in the opponent's pawns – piece activity is paramount! Here I started to play for a win. It should be noted that Semyon was already somewhat short of time.

### 30.Rf2 Rb3 31.Rc1 Bd4!

Black establishes pressure on the e3-knight, which is the key defensive piece that holds White's position.

### 32.Re2 Bc5 33.Qa4 Qb7 34.Qc4 Rb1 35.Rf1?

It was still possible to defend with 35.Rxb1 Qxb1+ 36.Kg2 Qd3 (there's no mate after 36...Rg8+ 37.Kh3) 37.Re1! For example, 37...Rxf5 38.Qxd3 Rg5+ 39.Kh3 exd3 40.Ng2 and White should be able to draw.

### 35...Rg8

It was tempting to play 35...Rxf5, but after 36.Ree1 White holds.

### 36.Rg2 Rxc2

I almost went for 36...Rf1 37.Nf1 e3 38.Ng3 Qb1 39.Rg1 Qg1 40.Kg1 e2+, but I noticed 38.Qg8 checkmate just in time!

### 37.Rxb1?

More stubborn is 37.Nxc2, however, Black still must win after 37...d5 38.Qe2 Qb2 39.Qa6 Rxf1+ 40.Qxf1 Qxc3.

**37...Qxb1+ 38.Kxg2 Bxe3 39.Qc8+ Kg7 40.Qd7+ Kh6**

Time trouble is over and it is clear that after 41.Qe6+ Kh5 42.Qf7+ Kg4 43.Qg7+ Bg5 the black king escapes from the checks. Therefore, White resigned. This game is probably my best creative achievement in the last two years.



[\[ChessCafe Home Page\]](#) [\[Book Review\]](#) [\[Bulletin Board\]](#) [\[Columnists\]](#)  
[\[Endgame Study\]](#) [\[The Skittles Room\]](#) [\[Archives\]](#)  
[\[Links\]](#) [\[Online Bookstore\]](#) [\[About ChessCafe.com\]](#) [\[Contact Us\]](#)

Copyright 2004 CyberCafes, LLC. All Rights Reserved.

"**The Chess Cafe®**" is a registered trademark of Russell Enterprises, Inc.