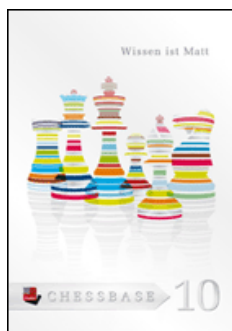




COLUMNISTS

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Louis Lima is an active tournament player in Long Island, NY. He holds a Masters Degree in Training & Development from Teachers College, Columbia University. He has been involved in the field of intercultural training for fifteen years and currently serves as training director for Prudential Relocation's Intercultural Group.

His published articles include "Faux Pas and Adventures of a Latino in the American Workplace," "Communication Etiquette 101" and "Utilizing a Competency-Based Model to Enhance Intercultural Training Effectiveness." Louis speaks fluent English, Spanish, and Mandarin Chinese. He enjoys making chess instructional [videos](#), and currently teaches chess to young children at Tzu-Chi Foundation's Chinese School in Oyster Bay, NY.

Openings for 1.e4 Players

I have been a hopeless chess media junkie for some years now, amassing a number of videos, DVDs, and Fritz Trainers that I am too embarrassed to count. However, I am glad to make good use of my learning experiences with these products.

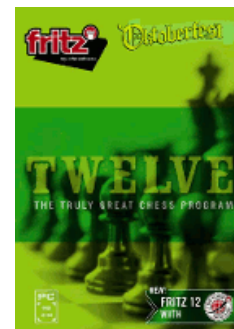
I often refer Fritz Trainers to my friends as the next generation of chess media instruction. The advantages over traditional chess videos and DVDs include the ability to clearly see the presenter and the board, the ability to pause the video in order to examine the game notation, and the option of adding a computer engine to evaluate the lines while the presenter is speaking. When a presenter makes the most of this new medium it can truly feel like having a live GM coach by your side. Thus, the overall quality and effectiveness of a Fritz Trainer is often impacted by how the presenter maximizes the opportunities this relatively new platform provides. All the authors featured in this column have a long history of appearing in videos and DVDs, but some have adapted better than others to the Fritz Trainer platform.

The f4 Sicilian (DVD) by GM Nigel Davies, Running Time: 4 hrs.

This opening is commonly referred to as the Grand Prix Attack and it is an attempt by White to launch a quick kingside attack, with the mighty f-pawn usually leading the charge into Black's camp. The position is reached via 1.e4 c5 2.f4, though players who want to avoid 1.e4 c5 2.f4 d5 lines tend to prefer the move order 1.e4 c5 2.Nc3, and only then play 3.f4. The early f-pawn push not only helps open up lines against Black's king, but also gains space for a quick piece transfer into the attacking zone via maneuvers such as rooks lifts along the f-file and the transfer of the queen via e1. A cute little miniature illustrating the kind of massacre White can inflict can be seen in the following game (which is not on the DVD): Lorenz, Sascha (2306) - Kieseckamp, Marcos (2223) Berlin 2000, 1.e4 c5 2.f4 Nc6 3.Nf3 g6 4.Bb5 Bg7 5.0-0 e6 6.Bxc6 bxc6 7.Nc3 d5 8.d3 Rb8 9.Qe1 Nh6 10.f5 gxf5?? 11. Qg3 1-0.

Davies begins with a sample game outlining several key features of White's attack when it succeeds, and then moves on to demonstrate a couple of games advocating the ever-interesting "Tal's Gambit" after 1.e4 c5 2.f4 d5 3.exd5 Nf6!?. Davies also shows us a game where he tried to sidestep the gambit with 3.Nc3. These are Davies own games and he does this to build up a case for reaching the f4 Sicilian via the move order 1.e4 c5 2.Nc3 followed by 3.

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Fritz 12



The Philidor Defense
by Alexei Shirov

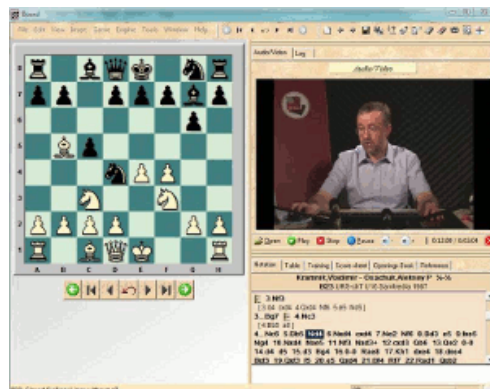


ABC of Chess Openings
by Andrew Martin



f4.

Readers should know that this is not a repertoire DVD, where Davies suggests specific lines and then presents sample supporting games. Instead, we have a series of games that sketches the historical trajectory of the f4 Sicilian; a bit of case builder that presents a survey of various ideas. For example, after 1.e4 c5 2.f4 g6 3.Nf3 Bg7 4.Nc3 Nc6 5.Bb5 Nd4 we reach one of the main positions in this line.



Here Davies explains that White has many responses such as 6.Nxd4, 6.Bc4, 6.Bd3, 6.Ba4, 6.a4, and he presents a sample game for each of these lines. He then moves on to recommend 6.0-0 and shows several illustrative games in this line. Although Black did not win any of these games, he occasionally offers ways for Black to combat these positions.

By now the case has been made that 1.e4 c5 2.Nc3 is the way to go and Davies proceeds to show us a sample game that outlines the reasons why Najdorf players need to leave their pet variation pronto after 1.e4 c5 2.Nc3 d6 3.f4. He then concentrates the rest of the DVD on 1.e4 c5 2.Nc3 e6 lines, commenting on several games and concluding with a recent idea for White (1.e4 c5 2.Nc3 Nc6 3.Bb5!? trying to trade on c6, and only then to follow with 4.f4) and another one for Black (1.c4 e5 2. Nc3 Nc6 3.g3 f5.)

Overall, I found the video stimulating, and I particularly appreciated the wide array of ideas for both sides, though the DVD tends to concentrate on the white side of the picture. The DVD does have some shortcomings, which perhaps makes the product have less appeal to players rated 1500 and below. For one, Davies occasionally speeds through certain sequences of moves with no explanation and appearing slightly bored. He sometimes ends a variation with a comment such as “I assess this as good for White,” without any explanation as to why this is so. If he is going to explain obvious things such as why White’s bishop cannot go to b5 after 1.e4 c5 2.f4 g6 3.Nc3 Bg7 as he does on the DVD, then he should also justify his subjective evaluations in complex positions. Some very brief and succinct comments regarding his final assessments in these instances would probably be highly appreciated by lower-rated players.

For those rated less than 2000, I would suggest [PowerPlay3: Pawnstorm](#) by GM King as an excellent companion volume. King goes into practical detail about positions featuring the f-pawn advance, and I have improved my game through his insights. The f4 Sicilian by Davies runs for four hours, and it is surprising that he does not take the time to describe the disadvantages of pushing the f4-pawn. While the f4-push does gain space and can open lines of attack, it does not develop a piece and it weakens White’s kingside along the second rank and g1-h6 diagonal. In addition, when the f-pawn gets stuck on f4, the bishop on c1 often makes a poor impression. Perhaps this is the reason the f4 Sicilian is a “perennial favorite with club players” but only a surprise practical choice of GMs.

The ABC of the Vienna (DVD) by IM Andrew Martin, Running time: 3 hrs. and 43 min.

As a 1.e4 player who has never played the Vienna, I wondered whether Martin's ABC of the Vienna would make me want to try it out in tournament play. The DVD certainly sparked my interest, and I can only hope my regular opponents at the local chess club are not reading this column.

The Vienna is characterized by the moves 1.e4 e5 and 2.Nc3. If you have never played this opening before it might attract you for the same reasons as it did me: To avoid die-hard players of the Petroff Defense (yes, they exist) and to try enter the King's Gambit without running into a booked-up Albin Countergambiteer after 1.e4 e5 2.f4 d5.



This is a repertoire DVD where Martin recommends specific lines, and uses various illustrative games to demonstrate typical play:

- a) 1.e4 e5 2.Nc3 Nc6 White plays 3.Bc4, followed by a speedy d3 and f4, except when Black plays 1.e4 e5 2.Nc3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Nf6. In these instances, White abandons the f4 idea and opts for 4.d3 and 5.Nge2. There are a total of eight lectures in the 2...Nc6 line.
- b) 1.e4 e5 2.Nc3 Nf6 we see 3.g3 where White fianchettoes the bishop and adds extra control to d5, a square of special importance in Vienna strategy. There are nine lectures covering this line.
- c) One lecture on 1.e4 e5 2.Nc3 Bc5 where he recommends 3.Bc4 Nf6 4.f4
- d) One lecture on 1.e4 e5 2.Nc3 d6 where Martin again advocates 3.Bc4 and looks at Black's attempt to contest the a2-g8 diagonal with 3...Be6.
- e) One lecture exploring 1.e4 e5 2.Nc3 d6 where the recommended continuation is 3.f4
- f) One lecture on 1.e4 e5 2.Nc3 Bb4 featuring a game played by Alexander Alekhine during a simul tour in 1924.

I have mixed impressions about this DVD. Martin is terrific when it comes to utilizing the Fritz Trainer platform. He often smiles and makes eye-contact with the camera, and speaks in a clear, eloquent, and entertaining manner. He also plays through the moves at a moderate pace, while making good use of the ability to use arrows and colors to highlight his ideas. The video starts with a valuable nine-minute lecture summarizing the basic ideas in open games. For White he discusses the f7-weakness, control of d5, and the attempt to outstrip Black of his queenside play. For Black he discusses the f2-square, the liberation of Black's position with d5, and keeping up the pace with White regarding queenside development. I walked away from this mini-lecture with a greater understanding of basic ideas in the Vienna as well as other openings.

In fact, Martin did such a great job in his open game summary, that when he moved on to his first inspirational game Sheldrick (2161) – Rout (1949) Australian Open, after 1.e4 e5 2.Nc3 Nf6 3.Bc4 Bc5 4.d3 0-0 5.f4 exf4 6.Bxf4 c6, I thought Black is doing fine and getting on with the d5-break Martin had just mentioned. Except, this is how Martin assesses this position:

“...And now here is the first sign that Black wants to get d5 in. He plays c6, but already I believe Black's position is critical, this only after six moves”

This left me slightly puzzled, and after the following move 7.Qf3 the obvious d5-break I just learned from Martin is screaming to be played. This move is

completely overlooked in his commentary. 7...d5 is very much possible here since White's king has not castled yet. If 8.exd5, Black has a nice number of choices such as 8...Re8, 8...Bg4 or 8...Qb6; and if White plays 8.Bb3, Black has already achieved one of his opening objectives.

I often felt Martin underestimated Black's chances in many positions, and over-dramatized moves where logical alternatives were available. A perfect example of this is illustrated in a sample variation he presents in the game Larsen-Portisch from the Candidates Match in 1968. After 1.e4 e5 2.Nc3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Nf6 4.d3 Na5 5.Nge2 Nxc4 6.dxc4 Be7 7.0-0 d6 8.b3 0-0 9.Ng3 c6 10.Bb2 Qa5? 11.Qe1! Qc7, he offers the variation 11...Be6 12.Nd5 Qd8 13.Nxe7 + Qxe7



Martin comments

“...And the problem in this position is of course the pawn on d6. So White can start putting pressure on it immediately, for instance, with a move like 14.Ba3 and Black's position here is prospect-less. I mean, Black can play the move 14...c5, but then how on earth is Black going to shake the grip on d5?...”

I agree Black's pawn on d6 is weak, but even the average 1900-rated player Martin often refers to on this DVD would think twice before leaving himself with a gaping hole on d5. Why not simply sidestep the pin with 14.Qc7 and keep the d5-break possibility alive?

It is this superficial treatment by Martin that I found slightly irritating at times. I subscribe to his philosophy of incorporating some offbeat openings into one's repertoire, in order to occasionally catch unprepared opponents. However, it would be helpful to enter Martin's recommended lines with more realistic assessments. Martin does a great job at making succinct and lively comments that any rated-level player can understand, but the actual moves don't always back his commentary.

It is perfectly appropriate to show illustrative games that contain mistakes, but these ought to be pointed out by the presenter, and this is not always the case with Martin. One example of this is the last game in the DVD, which shows a sparkling game by Alekhine. The game is a nice illustration of White's attacking chances in the Vienna, and serves as a final inspirational game in the DVD: Alekhine-Downman USA Simul Tour 1924 - 1.e4 e5 2.Nc3 Bb4 3.Bc4 d6 4.f4 Nc6 5.Nf3 Bg4 6.0-0 Nf6 7.d3 0-0 8.h3 Bxf3 9.Qxf3 Nd4 10.Qd1 Bc5 11.Kh1 exf4 12.Bxf4 Qd7 13.Bg5 Ne8 14.Nd5 Nc6 15.Qh5 Kh8 16.Rf6 Bd4



During the game Downman allowed Alekhine to offer a second rook after 17. Raf1 Bxf6 18.Rxf6, and Black can't recapture on f6 without Alekhine announcing mate in five or six moves. However, from an attacker's perspective, the critical line to consider is typically the one that gives up the most material. Thus, after 17.Raf1, it seems to me that the critical line is not 17...Bxf6 but 17...gxf6, losing a whole rook for the g-pawn. Martin overlooks this move in his excitement to show White's attack. Surely 17...gxf6 is an ugly move, but I couldn't come up with a way for White to wrap things up as Alekhine did during the actual game continuation. 17...gxf6 clears the g7-square for the knight to defend the kingside, and Black's pieces are not that far away from the king as it visually appears.

However, I still recommend this DVD to anyone looking to sit back and enjoy a series of lectures on the Vienna, or to the club level player who wants to start building a repertoire in this opening.

[Order](#) *The ABC of the Vienna*
by Andrew Martin

The Sicilian with 3.Bb5 (DVD) by GM Alexei Shirov, Running time: 7 hours.

In *The Sicilian with 3.Bb5*, Shirov shares his experiences playing both sides of the 3.Bb5 system of the Sicilian Defense, also known as the Rossolimo Variation. It is a popular choice at all levels, mainly to avoid theory-laden lines such as those encountered in the Sveshnikov Variation.

This is a truly outstanding production. We are treated to over seven hours of learning from one of the most creative and original players of all time. Those who follow chess history know that the player sitting across Garry Kasparov at the Classical World Chess Championship in the year 2000 should have been Shirov, and not Kramnik, whom Shirov defeated in the 1998 Candidates Match by a score of 5½-3½.



Currently eighteenth in the world rankings, Shirov provides us with chess of the highest level. It can't get much higher than when introducing his game against Carlsen, he states that at the time of the game, the Norwegian prodigy had a "relatively modest, I would put, rating of 2720." His other opponents include the likes of Kasparov, Kramnik, Kamsky, Morozevich, Leko, Rublevsky, Van Wely and many others. The DVD contains three lectures for each of the main moves after 1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5. These are 3...g6, 3...Nf6, and 3...e6. There is also one lecture for 3...d6. The move 3...e5 is not covered, but Shirov feels it is not as strong and suggests the plan 1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 e5 4.0-0 Ng7 5.Bc4, threatening Ng5, and if 5...h6, then c3, followed by d4, with the idea of taking control of the center, and giving White a slight advantage. In addition, the DVD contains three bonus lectures from previous Fritz Trainers: Shirov-Pedrojevic and Shirov-Leko from My Best Games in the Sicilian, and Akopian-Shirov from My Best Games with Black.

These add-on lectures reinforced the general concepts presented in the new material.

The line with 1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.Bb5+ is not covered in this DVD. Shirov comments that it is “almost absolutely clear Black can achieve equality in an easy way” by playing 3...Bd7 4.Bxd7 Qxd7 5.c4 Nf6 6.Nc3 g6. He shows his disdain for players of the white pieces opting to play this “non-fighting” move. For black players encountering 3.Bb5+ he recommends 3...Bd7 and to search for Boris Gelfand’s games in this line.

Shirov paints a realistic view of the game. Chess is a very complicated proposition, so don’t expect an answer from him as to which move is best: 3...g6, 3...Nf6, 3...e6, or 3...d6. He will readily admit that when it comes to White’s best approach against these moves he has more questions than answers. For Shirov, 3.Bb5 is the “beginning of a very complicated opening” and he half-jokingly points out that he has been finding himself playing 3.d4 to avoid the Rossolimo.

In spite of the above complexities you can rest assured that Shirov will try to get to the truth for both sides of the Rossolimo. He will weave in and out of endless variations; always taking the time to verbally explain his moves and positional assessments. Shirov can be entirely forgiven for not making any eye contact with the camera, misplacing the color commentary, or occasionally landing in the wrong variation. This is because he is constantly analyzing, assessing, and re-assessing moves as he explains them. Most presenters prepare their material in advance to make a case. Shirov comes in prepared as well, but is not interested in advocating any lines. He simply wants to get to the truth. One can often sense he is thinking about a past variation as he speaks about the present one, and surely one sees him going back to it until he is completely satisfied with an answer (even if the answer was that the position remained unclear). Often times he would go silent as he analyzes a position, and apologizes for taking a break as he wanted to be one hundred percent honest and truthful to the viewer. At the start of the lecture featuring Shirov-Van Wely from Bundesliga 2003 after 1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bb5 Qc7 5.0-0 e6 he comments

“It is always very risky to say that on move five someone is already wrong, and of course there are no certain refutations. However, I prefer Nd4. I think in this game I could show well the drawbacks of e6.”

Unsurprisingly, he returns later to say that he was probably too strict in his assessment of 5...e6, because after 6.Re1 d6 still offers playing chances. What next? Shirov begins to discern what can happen after 6...d6!

Given Shirov’s depth of analysis, most lectures were thirty to forty minutes long. The lecture presenting the game Bologan-Shirov from the third round of the 2008 Poikovsky event is fifty-six minutes long. The game between Shirov-Zhang from the Rapid Corsica Masters is forty-four minutes long. In this game twenty minutes had passed and Shirov was still exploring alternative variations before 1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 Nf6 4.Nc3 Qc7. It was mesmerizing to watch him think and display his analytical skills.

Most viewers will need to go over these lectures several times, slowly, in order to take everything in. Still, I think even lower-rated players can learn a great deal from Shirov’s verbal comments and advice. A simple, but good illustration of this was in his game against Van Wely. After reaching the end of one of the variations, we arrive at the following position:



Here Shirov assesses this position as probably good for White, and goes on to briefly explain that this is because White can play Bg5 and trade the bishop on e7, leaving Black with a bad bishop on c8. Even if I was unable to keep up with him in the variation leading to this position, I learned that I can sometimes improve my position by trading my opponent's active pieces, which would accentuate the bad ones left on the board. Shirov often dropped such pearls of wisdom in his positional assessments.

I recommend this DVD to anyone interested in the 3.Bb5 Sicilian. Shirov's analyses are often complex, but he does not try to convince us that chess is easy. I would much rather leave a chess lecture feeling confused than incredulous.

[Order](#) *The Sicilian with 3.Bb5*
by Alexei Shirov

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