



## COLUMNISTS

### ChessBase Cafe

Lance Martin



#### Rating Chart

- ♦ – Poor
- ♦♦ – Useful
- ♦♦♦ – Good
- ♦♦♦♦ – Excellent

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## Not All Fritz Trainers Were Created Equal

It is a major task to step into the shoes of Louis Lima, but I am going to give it my best shot. I love chess and have been involved in it since the 1960s, that is even before Chess Informant and ECO. There were no computers and no databases. In those days, the greatest books were [My System](#) and [Logical Chess Move By Move](#). There were other books, but nothing like what is available today. Now, new books are published every week and we have access to amazing software that will help us solve any positional puzzle we might have.

One of the greatest modern innovations was the "Fritz Trainer." I own forty-eight of them, all of which are on my net book. A net book is a tiny laptop with a twelve hour battery. I use Chess Base 10 (a product that every chess player should have) and an external DVD player to install the trainers to my net book, so that I can take them with me wherever I go.

My reason for explaining this is that I believe DVDs have become an integral part of anyone's chess training. There are trainers for those who are brand new to chess, such as the much praised *Power Play* series, while intermediate and advanced players can delve into the mind of the likes of Alexi Shirov. I have a library of about 700 books, but I spend a quarter of my time with the trainers. I can watch Shirov over and over and always learn something new.

However, not all Fritz Trainers were created equal. There are some superior works and there are some forgettable ones. I will review both ends of the spectrum and everything in the middle. So, let's begin.

*The Scheveningen Sicilian*, by Lubomir Ftacnik, Running time: seven hours

The Scheveningen Variation of the Sicilian Defense was so named by Max Euwe after a town in the Hague in which he played this variation in a 1923 international tournament. The star of this trainer is Lubomir Ftacnik. A man who considers the Scheveningen as "the central world" of the Sicilian.

Ftacnik started playing rated games in 1975 and by 1976 he was European Junior Champion. He received the title of international grandmaster in 1980. He is a native of Slovakia and eventually his chess took him to the United States. He is currently rated 2546 and his highest rating is 2580. He has played the Scheveningen since 1977. Thus, here is a man who has the credentials to do a Fritz Trainer on the Scheveningen. Ftacnik is definitely someone from whom most of us can learn. But more than that, his style is excellent for the task of teaching.



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1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 e6 6.Be2
[ 6.g4 Keres attack ;
6.Bc4 a6 7.Bb3 Yugoslav variation ;
6.g3 Be7 7.Bg2 6.g3 Variation ;
6.Be3 a6 7.f3 English attack ]
6...Be7 7.O-O O-O 8.f4 a6 9.Be3 Nc6 10.a4 Qc7 11.Kh1 Re8 Main line
    
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The trainer is divided into twenty-four lectures. He begins with a great introduction on the Scheveningen and all of its variants, where he defines the importance of the thirty-six squares in the Scheveningen. This is followed by five lectures on the English Attack. We then have five lectures on what is referred to as the "Main Scheveningen," which is really the 6.Be2 mainline.

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*Sicilian Najdorf 6.Bg5*  
by Alexei Shirov



*ChessBase Magazine 135*  
Edited by Rainer Knaak



*Deep Fritz 12*

This is followed by lectures on The Keres Attack, which is 7.g4. These are followed by three lectures on the Yugoslav Attack, 6.Bc4. I have to admit that I have always referred to this attack in the Scheveningen as the Sozin Variation. I would love to hear from anyone who can tell me the origin of the term Yugoslav Attack for this opening. The remainder of the lectures study the various other lines.

The English Attack [ECO B80] is defined by the moves **1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5. Nc3 e6 6.Be3 a6 7.f3 b5 8.g4 h6 9.Qd2 Nbd7 10.0-0-0 Bb7**



[FEN "r2qkb1r/1b1n1pp1/p2ppn1p/1p6/3NP1P1/2N1BP2/PPPQ3P/2KR1B1R w kq - 0 11"]

Ftacnik covers the entire evolution of the variation as it went from 11.Bd3 to 11.h4 to 12.Na4 Qa5, and then goes through the alternative methods to meet White's attack. Ftacnik does an incredible job of annotating all of the games on this DVD. All the key moves of every variation are carefully explained and a database of about 8,000 games is included.

As for the mainline Scheveningen, the question is White's reaction to 11.Kh1 Re8.



[FEN "r1b1r1k1/1pq1bppp/p1nppn2/8/P2NPP2/2N1B3/1PP1B1PP/R2Q1R1K w - - 0 12"]

The first lecture covers 12.a5. If Black takes with the knight, his position is weakened and it can eventually lead to black's demise. Next, we are given instruction in 12.Bd3 Nxd4, which can lead to disaster for Black after 13. Bxd4 e5 14.Bg1 exf4 15.Rxf4 d5 16.Qf3 Be6. In response to 12.Bf3, Ftacnik finally comes around to 12...Rb8, but to find out exactly how this move evolved into a winning attack for Black you will have to purchase the trainer.

All these lines are exceptionally annotated by Ftacnik. The same is true for the dreaded Keres Attack, with Black again finding a way to score the point. I must say that it would take a chess player of considerable knowledge to fully appreciate this work. Thus, this DVD is meant for the player who already has a good understanding of the Scheveningen. However, even a beginner can marvel at Ftacnik's clear lectures and game annotations. Dare I say they are more interesting than Kasparov's Fritz Trainers.

This DVD was a delight. Ftacnik does a yeoman's job of pointing out the similarities and differences of the lines within the Scheveningen, and the lectures on sidelines were very enlightening. One of the games that stands out was Ftacnik's own game against Tal. His annotations for this game may not

teach you much about the mainline Scheveningen, but it will help your chess immensely. We really get to see how Ftacnik's mind works as he is playing.

**My assessment of this DVD:** ♦♦♦♦♦

**Order *The Scheveningen Sicilian***  
by Lubomir Ftacnik

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*My Best Games in the Grünfeld Defence*, Alexei Shirov, Running time: five hours, fifty-five minutes

In 1998, Alexei Shirov played Vladimir Kramnik in an elimination match for the right to play Garry Kasparov for the World Chess Championship in 2000. Alexei won that match, but it was Kramnik that played Kasparov and won the championship. What does this have to do with this DVD? Well, Shirov had decided to play only the Grünfeld as black against Kramnik, and we are given Shirov's first hand annotations of five of these games. This is an opportunity not to be passed up.



We have close to six hours of Shirov playing the world's top players in the Grünfeld. There is an introduction, followed by fifteen segments. Shirov acknowledges everyone's debt to Kasparov in the Grünfeld and a look at the board after the first six moves (1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3. Nc3 d5 4.cxd5 Nxd5 5.e4 Nxc3 6.bxc3) exemplifies the complexity of the opening.



[FEN "mbqkb1r/ppp1pp1p/6p1/8/3PP3/2P5/P4PPP/R1BQKBNR b KQkq - 0 6"]


It is awe inspiring when Shirov walks through the first eleven moves of a game and notes that he knew these moves when he was nine or ten years old. One merely has to look at the annotations to see the theoretical changes that occurred in the ensuing decade.

Shirov tells us that in his entire chess career he is proud of two moves. The first was Bh3 in a game against Topalov. The second was surprising the queen on f4 against Gelfand. Both games are included on this DVD. The Topalov game contains one of the best moves in chess history. The game took place in Linares 1998. This is the famous position that Shirov considers his legacy to chess.



[FEN "8/5k2/5pp1/3p1b2/p6P/2B5/6P1/7K b - - 0 47"]

According to Shirov, not even the computer engines could find the winning move 47...Bh3. The game ended with Topalov's resignation, as there was no way that White could prevent Black from queening a pawn. It is moves like this that let us understand why people devote their lives to this endeavor. We may not see chess the same way that Shirov does, but the fact that all chess players have certain moves or positions that they will remember for the rest of their lives makes this game worthy of our time and effort. So is this DVD.

**My assessment of this DVD:** 

**Order *My Best Games in the Grünfeld Defence***

by Alexei Shirov

*Power Play 12: The Hedgehog*, Daniel King, Running time: five hours

The Hedgehog may have been played in the 1920s by Capablanca, but it is considered part of the [Revolution in the 70s](#), according to Garry Kasparov in his underrated book. It was played by Ulf Anderson against Bobby Fischer, and Anderson made it his life's work to perfect its structure. One manner of studying an opening system and its development is by studying the work of its opponents. Wolfgang Uhlman became a "maniacal foe" of the Hedgehog and led to the continuity of its development by trying to uncover the imperfections that would allow opponents to beat it. There is a question as to whether The Hedgehog is a "system" or whether to consider it as The Symmetrical English [A30].



Daniel King's *Power Play 12* is a Fritz Trainer devoted to this opening. King does consider it "a system." He begins with multiple examples of the Hedgehog, so as to better explain exactly what it is and how one gets into the required position. The Hedgehog setup is achieved by placing four black pawns on the sixth rank and "with their spines" they control the fifth rank. The Hedgehog is divided into two main subsystems. The Fianchetto is marked by the moves **1.Nf3 Nf6 2.g3 b6 3.Bg2 Bb7 4.0-0 e6 5.c4 c5 6.d4 cxd4 7.Qxd4 d6 8.Nc3 a6 9.Rd1 Qc7 10.b3**



[FEN "r2kb1r/1bq2ppp/pp1ppn2/8/2PQ4/1PN2NP1/P3PPBP/R1BR2K1 b kq - 0 10"]

The Classical Hedgehog is reached via the following move order **1.Nf3 c5 2. c4 b6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Bb7 5.Nc3 Nf6 6.f3 d6 7.e4 Nbd7 8.Be3 e6 9.Be2 Be7 10.0-0 0-0 11.Rc1 a6**



[FEN "r2q1rk1/1b1nbppp/pp1ppn2/8/2PNP3/2N1BP2/PP2B1PP/2RQ1RK1 w - - 0 12"]

King's videos are divided into thirty-three segments. However, this may be misleading because any single game can be divided into multiple clips with test positions. For instance, the Vulkic-Suba game is inexplicably divided into five clips that are separated by training questions. Perhaps Mr. King forgot that the viewer can make use of the pause button. This division of the material leaves one confused if he wants to research a particular game, as he has to remember which clip contained the comments he wanted to hear again. One of King's own games is likewise separated into four clips. I sure would like to know the rationale for this.

King does an admirable job in the theory section of the Fianchetto Variation, explaining the different move orders and why they are either better or worse. He spends a great deal of time on the game Hort-Tal 1966, and he makes wonderful use of this game as a paradigm for the inclusion of much of the Hedgehog theory. He uses the distinction between 8.Nxd4 and 8.Qxd4 as the main basis upon which to break up the theory sections into two parts. He spends a total of about forty minutes going into the various possible moves in the Hedgehog. This section is probably the most detailed and best part of this Fritz Trainer. However, there is no equivalent theory section for the so-called Classical System. I really cannot fathom the his reasoning for this. In fact, hardly any time is spent on the Classical System.

Mr. King provides us with fourteen clips to the solutions to his tests, and I must admit he does a more than admirable job in doing this. All of the solutions are completely explained and he sometimes goes into these positions in great detail. Sadly though, sometimes he does not. King could have done much better in combining the separate parts of games into one whole as is normally done. If the test positions and separate clips were combined into the main part of the DVD, the entire presentation would have been more harmonious.

This thirty-three clip hodgepodge of the Hedgehog could have been a superb learning tool. There is a lot of information here and King is a great teacher. He spends a great deal of time on the possible resources that White has at his disposal and the ways Black can meet them. Yet, the *Power Play* series has



sunk several notches over the past few endeavors. Here King just spent too much time on things that were unworthy. I was really disappointed in the manner in which he presented this material. King should go back to his first half-dozen *Power Play* DVDs and watch them to see how good they were. Then pick another opening and do the same kind of justice to it as he did with things such as pawn structures and rook lifts. That would make this reviewer very happy.

**My assessment of this DVD: ❖❖**

**Order *Power Play 12: The Hedgehog***

by Daniel King

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*My Best Games*, by Yasser Seirawan, Running time: five hours

Yasser Seirawan was swept up in the Fischer boom. Born in 1960, he did not start playing chess until 1972. Yet, it took him just under eight years to make his final grandmaster norm. This is definitely a chess player worthy of a Fritz Trainer and from whom we can learn a lot. However, the title of the DVD is a misnomer, as Seirawan clearly states in the introductory lecture that the games included are those that were important to him in his ascendancy from expert to grandmaster. They are not what I would classify as his "best games." He makes it clear that this is only the first installment of a series of DVDs of his best games.

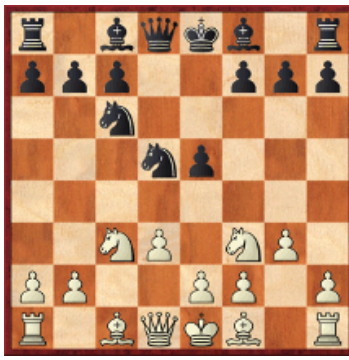
Thus, we have to take this DVD for what it is: a chess autobiography from one of the highest rated American chess players in history. It begins with his first win over a GM when he was sixteen years old. If we are interested in the games of a junior chess player, then the DVD is worth watching.

The contents are divided as follows:

- Seirawan-Bisguier, 12 min 40 seconds
- Weinstein-Seirawan, 8 minutes 18 seconds
- Timman-Seirawan, 16 minutes 30 seconds
- Seirawan-Grefe, 12 minutes 19 seconds
- Darby-Seirawan, 15 minutes 15 seconds
- Seirawan-Larson, 12 minutes 32 seconds
- Seirawan-Miles, 10 minutes 48 seconds
- Zaltsman-Seirawan, 12 minutes 44 seconds
- Marjanovic-Seirawan, 10 minutes 28 seconds
- Jhunjhnuwala-Seirawan, 7 minutes 10 seconds
- Seirawan-Barbero, 5 minutes 17 seconds
- Gligoric-Seirawan, 8 minutes 22 seconds
- Van der Wiel-Seirawan, 6 minutes 11 seconds
- Seirawan-Korchnoi, 12 minutes 27 seconds
- Seirawan-Timman, 11 minutes 50 seconds
- Kovacevic-Seirawan, 10 minutes 38 seconds
- Seirawan-Tal, 17 minutes 29 seconds
- Seirawan-Rivas, 7 minutes 49 seconds
- Seirawan-Korchnoi, 25 minutes 11 seconds
- Seirawan-Hort, 18 minutes 56 seconds
- Timman-Seirawan, 27 minutes 25 seconds
- Karpov-Seirawan, 30 Minutes 25 seconds

Seirawan spends a great deal of time on anecdotes and lyrical digressions. One such was the fact that Tal had webbed fingers on his right hand. According to Seirawan, "He should be a poster boy for the challenged or handicapped." I admit that this was interesting, but I was more concerned with the game at hand. A five minute introduction to a seventeen minute annotation was a bit too long for me. He blames the following blunder in the opening on his mind wandering about Tal's disability.

**1.c4 e5 2.Nc3 Nf6 3.Nf3 Nc6 4.g3 d5 5.cxd5 Nxd5 6.d3?**



[FEN "r1bqkb1r/ppp2ppp/2n5/3np3/8/2NP1NP1/PP2PP1P/R1BQKB1R b KQkq - 0 6"]

The move should have been 6.Bg2 as in the standard English. However, Seirawan recovered to win the game. It was a wonderful win for Seirawan and he does an expert job of annotating it.

One of the key games on the DVD is Seirawan's draw against Anatoly Karpov. His comments leads us to believe that this was his only game with Karpov in 1982, when, in fact, he played five games with the reigning world champion that year. Every game on this DVD is a win for Seirawan, but here he had to settle for a draw in a game that he should have won:



[FEN "4q3/p1r5/k3p3/2ppPp2/P1n2P2/2P3Q1/R1P1KB2/8 b - - 0 37"]

Seirawan, playing black in a beautiful middlegame that [Fritz](#) and [Shredder](#) consider a win for Black, played **37...Qc6**, instead of 37...Qh5+. From there the game goes downhill for Black and he had to settle for a draw. Seirawan spends a good deal of time telling us how he saw the winning line, but decided not to play it.

This DVD provides a fair number of games; however, it has too few annotations and Seirawan does not delve into the rationale for many of his moves. I would have liked to see one of his games with Reshevsky or Spassky from the time period covered by this DVD, but they did not meet the criteria of a win for Seirawan.

Seirawan's books show what a great chess mind he has. He was a great opening and middlegame thinker. It is sad that he did not spend the time on any single game to demonstrate this knowledge. Well, considering he spends about ten minutes on the majority of the games on this DVD, we cannot expect much more. It is only in the last two games, with Timman and Karpov, that we are actually given lengthy annotations. I find this DVD does not do him justice.

**My assessment of this DVD:** ❖

[Order](#) *Yasser Seirawan: My Best Games*  
by Yasser Seirawan

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