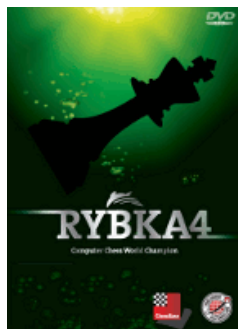




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Private Notes

The Fighting Philidor, by Victor Bologan, Video running time: five hours

François-André Danican Philidor wrote his famous book, *Analyse du jeu des Échecs*, in 1749. It is here that he wrote that pawns are the "very spirit" of chess, and that if your pawn structure was unhealthy, then you were doomed to lose. Contained therein are examples that bear the elements of the opening which was to become associated with his name, even though he never played the opening himself. In fact, the Philidor Opening bears a structural resemblance to the opening developed by Slovenian GM Vasja Pirc (pronounced "peer-ts"). I first learned of this resemblance in *Pirc Alert* by Lev Albur and Alex Chernin, but I did not fully realize the potential structural similarities until watching Bologan's DVD.



The material is divided into three sections containing a total of twenty lectures:

- 01: 1.e4 d6 2.Nc3 Nf6 3.f4
- 02: 1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3.f3
- 03: 1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3.Bd3
- 04: 1.e4 d6 2.Nc3 Nf6 3.Nge2
- 05: 1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3.Nc3 e5 4.Nge2
- 1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3.Nc3 e5 4.dxe5 dxe5 5.Qxd8 Kxd8
- 06: 6.Nf3
- 07: 6.Bc4
- 08: 6.Bg5
- 09: 6.Bc4 II
- 1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3.Nc3 e5 4.Nf3 Nbd7
- 10: 5.g3
- 11: 5.g4
- 12: 5.Bc4
- 13: 5.Bc4 II
- 14: 5.Bc4 III
- 15: 5.Bc4 IV
- 16: 5.Bc4 V
- 17: 5.Bc4 VI
- 18: 5.Bc4 VII
- 19: 5.Bc4 VIII
- 20: 5.Bc4 IX

As you can see the content is divided into three major categories: Pirc-like structures, endgame structures, and the mainline structure. This bears similarities to Bologan's previous DVDs where he dealt with the sidelines first because of his belief that it will lead you to a better understanding of the mainline of the defense. He is convinced that this is a necessary part of opening preparation, so that you will not get taken into a line with which you are unfamiliar. Moves can be concrete or strategic. The concrete is the known theory that you have memorized; strategic is the move based solely on your knowledge of chess principles. It is far better if you are playing the concrete moves that you have studied.

The relationship of the Philidor to the Pirc is exhibited by the fact that all of the games in the sidelines are in Chess Informant B07 category. This relationship was also noted by Alexei Shirov in his Fritz Trainer DVD, *The Philidor Defence*. This variant in its many forms takes up four out of

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Bologan's five lectures on the sidelines. This makes knowledge of the Pirc almost a must if you intend to play the Philidor successfully.

The first example from Bologan is 1.e4 d6 2.Nc3 Nf6 3.f4. The required response by Black is to play in the center with 3...d5, when the main moves are then 4.e5 d4. The annotations that follow take us well beyond the scope of the game itself, which was Palac-Malaniuk. However, Bologan's lectures on the sidelines are not just limited to the Pirc. His second lecture begins with 1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3.f3 e5



[FEN "rnbqkb1r/ppp2ppp/3p1n2/4p3/3PP3/5P2/PPP3PP/RNBQKBNR w KQkq e6 0 4"]

He then alters Black's third move to arrive at the following:

3...d5 4.e5 Nfd7 5.f4 c5 6.Nf3 Nc6 7.Be3 Qb6 8.Nc3 e6.

3...c5 4.d5 g6 5.c4 Bg7 6.Nc3 0-0 7.Bg5 e6 8.Qd2 exd5 9.cxd5.

In the first case, we get a comfortable French opening, and in the second we get just as comfortable with the King's Indian.

In Bologan's game against L'ami in 2007, he kept a Pirc-like structure, which serves as a good precursor to the Philidor games to come: 4.dxe5 dxe5 5.Qxd8 + Kxd8 6.Bc4 Ke8 7.Be3 Nbd7 8.Ne2 a5 9.a3 Bc5 10.Kf2 Bxe3+ 11.Kxe3 Nb6 12.Nd2 a4



[FEN "r1b1k2r/1pp2ppp/1n3n2/4p3/p1B1P3/P3KP2/1PPNN1PP/R6R w -- 0 13"]

Bologan reminds us that we have to have "moves in our pocket." By this, he is referring to concrete moves that we have studied. His annotation of this game again takes us into a world of games that are yet to be played, but that are never bad for Black. As Bologan admits, this DVD is made for the black side. He recommends that "if you want to know about the white side, then listen to the DVD by Shirov." Bologan has played this variant of the Pirc since 1989 and he is very fastidious in his annotations. He tells tell you whether the lines are better for black or white, and ends each lecture by explaining what to be careful about in the given move order and how best to play any given setup.

His discussion of 3.Bd3 continues 3...e5 4.c3 d5 5.dxe4 Nxe4. He notes that Black should not be afraid of sacrificing the pawn as he has good compensation. In the mainline, Black's plan is to play Nc5, Nc6, Bg4, Qd7, 0-0-0, and d4. Black is to break through as it "were a tank." His assessment is that Bd3 should not pose any problem to the Philidor player.

His next lecture discusses 1.e4 d6 2.Nc3 Nf6 3.Nge2. Rather than follow up with 3...e5, his recommendation is 3...g6 4.d4 Bg7 5.g3 0-0 6.Bg2 e5 7.h3 c6



[FEN "mbq1rk1/pp3bp/2pp1np1/4p3/3PP3/2N3PP/PPP1NPB1/R1BQK2R w KQ - 0 8"]

Bologan comments that this position might not be seen in your whole life, but he would like the answers ahead of time, rather than trying to solve them over-the-board.

The next game is a real Philidor Defense between Sax and Nevednichy. Bologan explores territory known only to him and his former trainer Chebanenko. The line shows the importance of putting a pawn on h5 in order to stop white's g4 plan. 1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3.Nc3 e5 4.Nge2 c6 5.f3 h5



[FEN "mbqkb1r/pp3pp1/2pp1n2/4p2p/3PP3//2N2P2/PPP1N1PP/R1BQKB1R w KQkq h6 0 6"]

It is a testament to Bologan's thoroughness that the sidelines took up so much of the DVD. Though I would have liked even more discussion of the relationship of the Pirc to the Philidor.

The next part of the DVD is devoted to the Philidor Endgame, in which the queen's are exchanged on move five: 1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3.Nc3 e5 4.dxe5 dxe5 5.Qxd8 Kxd8



[FEN "mbk1b1r/ppp2ppp/5n2/4p3/4P3/2N5//PPP2PPP/R1B1KBNR w KQ - 0 6"]

Bologan's recommends meeting 6.f4 by 6...Nc6 7.Nf3 Bd6, as this offers good protection of the e5-square. Even though this lecture comes under the heading of 6.Nf3, Bologan spends most of his time investigating 6.f4 and 6.

Be3. What we have is Bologan's notes on how he would play each position at the board. I think this is quite a bargain. What he does for 6.f4, he also does for 6.Be3 and 6.Nf3. In his example game, one that he played against Epishin in 1991, he shows how he was able to turn a draw into a win with black. According to Bologan, the most important feature in this version of the Philidor is not to lose our fight in the center, and to protect our pawns in the endgame and initiate a counterattack.

Bologan faced 6.Bc4 against Khenkin. Here he recommends to always clear square d5 and control f5. The plan is to play a6, b5, Bb7, and Bd6. As you can see, every part of Bologan's game is controlled by a plan. It is our successful use of this plan that gives us a lead against our opponent.

Bologan's game against Bocharov is interesting in that Bocharov has played more than twenty-five games as black in the Philidor. When he plays a game, I think we should watch it carefully. The fact that Bologan can find alternative winning lines for Black is just a testimonial to his thought processes in the opening, and he does a great job of explaining the reasons for his moves.

The final game of this section was interesting for me, as I discovered a discrepancy with the book *The Modern Philidor* by Vladimir Barsky. I contacted IM Sergey Soloviov, who is technical editor of Chess Stars Publications, who in turn contacted GM Bologan, who verified the mistake in the DVD. Quite simply, the game on the DVD that was supposed to be Sokolov-Bologan was really Sokolovs-Bologan. This is a completely different player than GM Andrei Sokolov, who is rated just under 2700. Be that as it may, Bologan was able to transform the game into a beautiful advantage for Black.

Thus, we finally arrive at the heart of this DVD: the mainline Philidor with 1. e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3.Nc3 e5 4.Nf3 Nbd7. We now get to look at the move five possibilities for White and the correct way for Black to answer them. The main move is Bc4, but Bologan begins with 5.g3 and 5.Be2 c6. As usual his move order takes us out of the database, with no games having been played using his recommendations. Again, we are given access to Bologan's private notes and his trainer's recommendations, perhaps with a little Rybka 4 for good measure.

Bologan's lecture in answer to Shirov's 5.g4 is extremely important, as, according to Bologan, Black holds in this line, and he shows us how to play against White.



[FEN "r1bqkb1r/pppn1ppp/3p1n2/4p3/3PP1P1//2N2N2/PPP2P1P/R1BQKB1R b KQkq g3 0 5"]

Bologan recommends Black accept the sacrifice, and he deeply investigates the lines with 9.Qd3 and 9.dxe5. He summarizes that g4 is a sharp line with chances for both sides.

In the lectures for 5.Bc4 Be7, Bologan reveals that when he was a child he was afraid of the move 6.Bxf7+. This move can be made at either move six or move seven.



[FEN "r1bqk2r/pppnbp/3p1n2/4p3/2BPP3/2N2N2/PPP2PPP/R1BQK2R w KQkq - 0 6"]

His annotations after 6...Kxf7 are exceptional. And once again they are straight from his personal notes and go well beyond known games.

The next lectures discuss the plans involved with 8...h6 and 8...b6. These lines are complicated, but Bogan provides us with enough knowledge to implement these plans and he offers alternatives. However, after viewing his lecture about the b6 line I am not too optimistic for Black.

Bogan's personal mainline as Black in the Philidor is 1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3. Nc3 e5 4.Nf3 Nbd7 5.Bc4 Be7 6.0-0 0-0 7.Re1 c6 8.a4 a5



[FEN "r1bq1rk1/1p1nbpp/2pp1n2/p3p3//P1BPP3/2N2N2/1PP2PPP/R1BQR1K1 w - a6 0 9"]

A good part of the lecture shows the possibilities after 10.Ba2, 10.Bb3, and 10. Bf1, and what Bogan would play against them. You can note a difference in his attitude as he explains the lines for Black. It is as if he owes us the best lines because they are the ones he uses over-the-board. He emphasizes what should be the main move in each line and summarizes what should be played in each case.


His next lectures cover 9.Ba2 and 9.b3. Bogan does not seem as sure of himself in explaining the lines with 9.Ba2; he has no real conclusion or overall assessment as in most of the other lines. Against 9.b3, Bogan recommends that Black be very active and immediately try to clarify the situation in the center. I thought you would enjoy seeing the board after move twelve with all of Bogan's plans built into the diagram.



[FEN "r1bqnrk1/1p2bpp/1np5/p2pP3/P2N4/1PN5/2P2PPP/R1BQRBK1"]

Bologan proceeds to show you how to implement this plan, and how it adapts based on what occurs during the game. What is especially nice is his explanation of his plan in the game's summary. All in all it is a job well done.

In summation, this is probably one of the best Fritz Trainers that I have ever seen. This is high praise considering that the presenter is uncomfortable in front of a camera and speaks with a heavy accent that is sometimes difficult to understand. I recommend this DVD to anyone rated above, say, 1600-1800. I have viewed this DVD several times, and will likely do so a few more times as well. If you are a chess player ... buy it.

My assessment of this DVD: 

[Order](#) *The Fighting Philidor*

by Victor Bologan

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