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Being Alexei Shirov

Guide to the Tkachiev Ruy Lopez, by Alexei Shirov, running time six hours

It was about four and a half years ago that Alexei Shirov produced his first Ruy Lopez video for ChessBase. It was on this video that he announced that he was going to present a version of the Spanish that he called the Tkachiev. This was to honor a colleague of his who had been studying and playing this opening for several years. That colleague was now French chessplayer Vladislav Tkachiev. The move order as Shirov provided it back then was **1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 b5 6.Bb3 Bc5**



[FEN "r1bqk2r/2pp1ppp/p1n2n2/1pb1p3/4P3/1B3N2/PPPP1PPP/RNBQ1RK1 w kq - 0 7"]

This was to distinguish it from the 6...Bb7 version of the system, known as the Archangelsk. Well, Mr. Shirov did an excellent job in presenting this opening back then and even featured this opening on his second DVD on the Spanish by giving it about half the space of that DVD. He now returns to that line with an entire DVD on the theory and current status of this opening. It is now Shirov's main weapon of choice as Black and he has played it no less than fifty-five times since. There are twelve lectures on this DVD. For a full list of chapters, see the detailed description in the [ChessCafe.com shop](#).

Without question this is not a DVD for the merely curious. This DVD is aimed first and foremost at the player of the Ruy Lopez who is considering playing this line as black. But over and above that, it is for the chess player who wants to know how theory is developed and implemented during the current computer era. Shirov makes no bones about the fact that every move is checked with the latest version of Rybka. To hear Shirov say that his year-and-a-half-old computer is almost too old to make proper assessments of positions, gives you a good idea as to what has become of modern-day chess. When a current top ten player states that he trusts the latest developments in Rybka as much or more than his own analysis, then it shows that we have reached a point in time that I for one thought would never come.

Shirov tells us that it was in September 2009 that this opening became of utmost importance to his chess. The first game on the DVD is between Svidler and Shirov from the World Cup in December 2009. It contains one of the most difficult plans that White can give this opening. Right away the first real choice for White is on move seven where he can play a4, c3, or d3. Shirov provides the responses by Black to each of these choices. According to Shirov, Svidler used a very old counter to meet the Tkachiev: **1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 b5 6.Bb3 Bc5 7.a4 Rb8 8.axb5 axb5 9.Nxe5 Nxe5 10.d4 Bxd4 11.Qxd4 d6 12.f4 Nc6 13.Qc3 Ne7 14.Qd3**

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ChessBase Magazine #137

by Rainer Knaak



The Advance Caro-Kann

by Alexei Shirov



Greatest Hits, Vol. 2

by Nigel Short




[FEN "1rbqk2r/2p1nppp/3p1n2/1p6/4PP2/1B1Q4/1PP3PP/RNB2RK1 b k - 0 14"]

Here Svidler surprised Shirov with an old move. What is important at this point is Shirov's comment that even in our computer era if you have time on your clock, you can calculate almost as good as a computer. Now Shirov was caught in a situation in which his preparation was exhausted; however, he went on to win the game. Aside from going through the game, Shirov also goes over some sub-lines. Here he says that the Spanish is "the counter attack for real men."

The next lecture features a game from Wijk aan Zee between Karjakin and Anand. Shirov first concentrates on the possibilities for Black on move eight: Rb8, Bg4, and Bb7. The next point of analysis is move thirteen for White. Topalov played Bc2 against Shirov in 1996 and fourteen years later the same move was made by Karjakin against Anand at Wijk aan Zee. Against Topalov, Shirov's response was 13...d5 and for the next ten years Shirov thought this was a good move. Now thanks to a game against Ivanchuk, Shirov doesn't consider it a reliable move. It has been supplanted by 13...Bf3 or 13...exd4. Shirov spends a good deal of time moving around the line and seeing who has the better chances and which move order is correct. We are bearing witness to the analysis of this line as it is happening. It sure sounds like Shirov is taking a great deal from these lectures at least in the clarification of his thoughts.

This is followed by a lecture on a game between Karjakin and Shirov. During this lecture Shirov does an excellent job of showing how he calculates a position when there are few pieces on the board. He gives us an idea of the risks that he is willing to take and those that he wouldn't. This is one of the few times when we get a real look at how he calculates when there is limited material on the board. It gives you an idea of the kind of accuracy required at top-level play. A wrong move cannot be permitted. Many drawn positions can be lost because of a minor inaccuracy at the end of a long hard game. He refers to these endgames as computer defenses.

All in all, this is a wonderful DVD for players rated around 2000 or above who want to see the evolution of a major chess opening. The insight you will get into Shirov's thought processes is unsurpassed, making this DVD unique indeed.

My assessment of this DVD: 

Order [Guide to the Tkachiev Ruy Lopez](#)

by Alexei Shirov

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