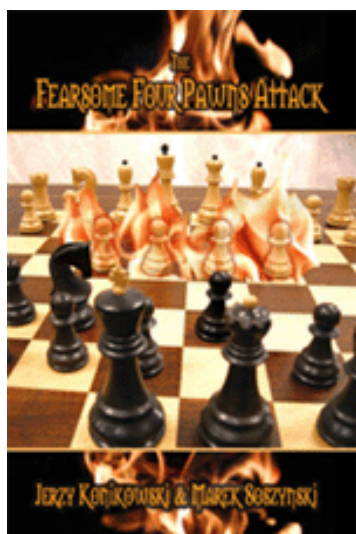




## COLUMNISTS

**Checkpoint**

Carsten Hansen

**Reviewed this month:*****How to Play the Najdorf Vol. 2 (DVD)***

by Garry Kasparov

***My Best Games in the Spanish (DVD)***

by Alexei Shirov

***My Best Games in the Sicilian (DVD)***

by Alexei Shirov

***My Best Games in the Sicilian Najdorf (DVD)***

by Alexei Shirov

***Chess Informant Vol. 96***

by Zdenko Krnic, Aleksandar Matanovic et al.

**Shirov and Kasparov on DVD**

I hope everybody has had a chance to play in a summer tournament or two, and has managed to stay cool during this ridiculously hot season. This time around I will examine four DVDs from ChessBase and the latest *Chess Informant*.

*How to Play The Najdorf, Vol. 2 (DVD)* by Garry Kasparov, ChessBase GmbH 2006, Figurine Algebraic Notation, \$37.95

***Rating Chart***– **A poor book.**– **Not very good.**

♦♦♦♦ – **A useful book.**

♦♦♦♦♦ – **A good book.**

♦♦♦♦♦♦ – **An excellent book.**

I reviewed volume one in [October 2005](#) and I wasn't entirely pleased because the presentation appeared unrehearsed and the lines covered had little relevance for the average player. Fortunately, neither of these issues is a concern here.



The present DVD begins with a somewhat giddy Kasparov, who informs us that he is at the Lasker Museum in Berlin, where he has been allowed access to various items used by Lasker, Capablanca and others. It is absolutely wonderful to see a chessplayer of Kasparov's magnitude get excited about the same things you and I would, and that he isn't afraid to share his ebullience with us.

Here is how he has divided the material:

- Lines in Najdorf 2:
- Intro 6 Bg5 e6
- I 7 f4 Be7 8 Qf3 Qc7 9 0-0-0 Nbd7 (3 segments)
- II 7 f4 Nbd7 (5 segments)
- III 7 f4 Qc7 (5 segments)
- IV Polugaevsky Variation (9 segments)

The initial moves are 1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 a6 6 Bg5 e6 7 f4 and then it branches out from there, as we can see in the above overview. For players less familiar with these lines, the Polugaevsky Variation is Black playing 7...b5.

Rather interestingly, the theoretical segments are a little different from the games that are given in the database that accompanies the lessons. The database games usually have more game information, more examples, and more analysis. The game information on the theoretical segments sometimes doesn't even give the names of the players, although Kasparov does mention them in the presentation.

I enjoyed watching Kasparov pass on his insights and he also shares a couple of novelties from his private database of analysis that overturns current theory! He is also a good story-teller, such as when he recalls a conversation he had with grandmaster Vladimir Bagirov, who had been working with Polugaevsky on the Polugaevsky Variation. Bagirov told Kasparov that deep inside one of Polugaevsky's notebooks, the refutation of the Variation was to be found. But Kasparov didn't believe him, because he didn't trust their analysis, and sharper minds (like Tal) had been seeking a refutation for years and had never succeeded.

One point of criticism is that Kasparov browses through the lines too

quickly with too few explanations. I had a hard time following the flow of the analysis, and in the background you can hear Kasparov eagerly hitting the forward arrow key on the keyboard. If you consider the average audience for these DVDs, I cannot imagine that too many of them will stand a chance of understanding the action on the screen.

Here is a game where it was obvious how much Kasparov admired and enjoyed it:

### ***Bereziuk - Ihznin***

Soviet Junior Team Championship 1976

**1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 a6 6 Bg5 e6 7 f4 b5 8 e5 dxe5 9 fxe5 Qc7 10 Qe2 Nfd7 11 0-0-0 Bb7 12 Qg4 Qxe5**

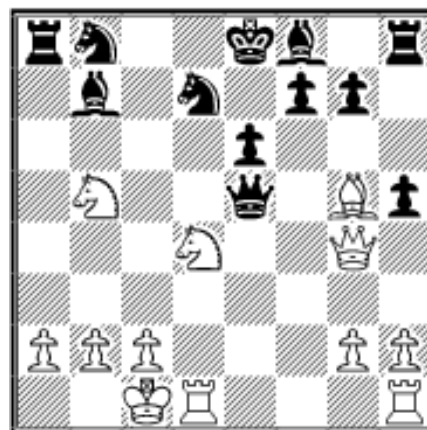
Kasparov: Why not 12...Qxe5? Of course it looks horrible, it's dangerous, but we are already used to miracles in the Polugaevsky Variation, so maybe we can survive this time as well.

**13 Bxb5 axb5 14 Ncxb5**

[CH: The main line in his presentation is focused around 14 Rhe1.]

Kasparov: The options are 14 Rhe1 and maybe 14 Ncxb5. The move contains an amazing threat. In fact this was a trap that worked in the game. This trap, this combination, makes Morphy's original pale by comparison. Of course you cannot criticize masterpieces, but the way this position, the dream position was accomplished require special attention. [pausing a bit] Ha, the irony is that this game was played in the Soviet Team Junior Championship in 1976.

**14...h5**



Kasparov: Black played ...h5, you know, didn't expect any surprises. Isn't Black obliged to play ...h5? Releasing pressure on e6, attacking White's queen, and what is this knight doing on b5? [pausing again, while shaking his head a little] Nuclear explosion! [Now saying out the moves out loud with emphasis on each of White's

moves]

**15 Nc7+!! Qxc7 16 Nxe6 Qe5 17 Nc7+! Qxc7 18 Qe2+ Ne5 19 Qxe5+!**

[Kasparov leans back, breathes in deeply, while looking at the position with admiration]

Kasparov: What a beautiful game! [smiles] If ...Qxe5 then Rd8

mate. [Continues to smile, while creating green arrows on the screen illustrating the possible finish of the game, then spreads his hands out] Dream, Bg5 plus Rd8. Black played **19...Be7** and after **20 Qxc7**, he played on for a few moves and then resigned.

Aside from the 23 segments from Kasparov, there are 17,901 games of which 334 have annotations of some kind. I'm not sure how these games have been selected, but they also arrive from lines covered in volume 1.

It is both spellbinding and entertaining to watch Kasparov talk about his favorite weapon as Black, but weaker players will likely find the material too complicated, while stronger players will find that it only skims the surface, because there just isn't enough time to get into the nitty-gritty details.

**My assessment of this DVD:** 

**Order *How to Play the Najdorf Vol. 2 (DVD)***

by Garry Kasparov

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*My Best Games in the Spanish* (DVD) by Alexei Shirov, ChessBase GmbH 2006, Figurine Algebraic Notation, \$34.95

This is the first of three DVDs on Alexei Shirov's best games and he begins with an indispensable piece of advice: "I cannot imagine my chess improvement without me analyzing my games in detail." Anybody, who thinks otherwise, will stall sooner or later, so trust me, follow Shirov's advice and review your own games carefully. It really does help.



Shirov looks a bit intimidated and shy at first, but the more you watch the more you see the person behind the player and you learn a little more about who he is. His English is heavily accented, and can be difficult to understand, but I quickly acclimated to Shirov's intonation and language usage. In regards to his chess, Shirov appears to be very modest and he tells us that it took him years to understand the many complex strategies of the Spanish, or Ruy Lopez as it is also called. He makes the following observation (and I'm paraphrasing) "Is it possible to understand all the strategies of the Spanish? Probably not. Is it possible to memorize all the theory on the Spanish? Probably not. Is it possible to find a balance between strategy and memorization and then play the opening? Yes."

Here is how the material is divided:

- Introduction (09:04)
- Steinitz Variation: Shirov-Kuderinov (41:10)
- Berlin Defence: Shirov-Levin, Shirov-Rizouk (37:04)
- Open Spanish: Shirov-Flear, Kasparov-Shirov (42:08)
- Moeller and Archangelsk Defence: Anand-Shirov (26:22)
- Anti-Marshall System 1: Anand-Shirov (32:05)
- Anti-Marshall System 2: Shirov-Adams (15:50)
- Marshall Gambit: Shirov-Bacrot (20:42)
- Modern Chigorin Defence: Shirov-Fritz (34:55)
- Flohr/Saitsev Variation: Shirov-Morozevich (34:06)

While the presentation is broken into segments for different lines, the theoretical coverage is not meant to be thorough. The goal is to present a number of ideas in each line to help the viewer understand the general themes and, more importantly, about chess in general, with the added benefit of watching Shirov explain his games.

The actual value of a single viewing is difficult to measure, but a greater benefit will be derived from those who work their way through the annotated games with the help of an analysis engine, whilst trying to get a grip of the intricacies that unfolded on the screen.

Nonetheless, I found this DVD to be quite instructive and entertaining, and I know more about the Ruy Lopez today than I did yesterday.

**My assessment of this DVD:** 

**Order *My Best Games in the Spanish* (DVD)**  
by Alexei Shirov

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*My Best Games in the Sicilian* (DVD) by Alexei Shirov, ChessBase GmbH 2006, Figurine Algebraic Notation, \$34.95

Surprisingly, Shirov starts out with the admission that he doesn't consider himself an expert on the Sicilian Defense, even though many of the best games of his career have been played in the Sicilian. This is quite a statement from someone who has axed-down nearly every top player who has ventured the Sicilian against him, but it tells us something about Shirov himself.



The material is divided as follows:

- Intro & Kan Variation: Shirov-Ivanchuk, Shirov-Fressinet & Shirov-Leko (40:33)
- Taimanov Variation: Shirov-Reinderman & Shirov-Korneev (34:51)
- Paulsen System: Shirov-Topalov (30:03)
- Sveshnikov Variation: Shirov-Topalov (23:10)
- Rossolimo Variation I: Shirov-Predojevic (31:04)
- Rossolimo Variation II: Shirov-Leko (30:48)
- Richter-Rauzer Attack I: Shirov-Anand (16:38)
- Richter-Rauzer Attack II: Shirov-Kramnik(23:15)

As you can see, there is approximately four hours worth of material here, with plenty of quality games between top players. The following game is regarded by Shirov as one of the best games of his career. He annotated it in *Fire on Board Part II: 1997-2004*, but there are several differences between those notes and the ones given here.

### ***Shirov - Topalov***

Linares 1998

**1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 a6 5 Bd3 Qb6 6 Nb3 Qc7 7 Qe2 Nf6 8 Nc3**

Shirov tells us with an amused tone that in a later game against Polgar he wanted to repeat the line from the main game, but didn't pay sufficient attention to the move order (!) and played 8 f4, but after 8...d5 he noticed something was completely wrong, and after 9 e5 Nfd7 10 0-0 g5 a complicated position had arisen. He further tells us that if anybody thinks that 8 f4 is a refinement from 8 Nc3 and 9 f4, it is most definitely not, only a mistake!

**8...d6 9 f4 Be7 10 e5!?**

Shirov had a hard time deciding about the value of this move. For a long time after the game he thought it was a mistake, but when annotating the game for the abovementioned book, he upgraded it to dubious. Now he thinks it is interesting, and in the future, he may well give it an exclamation point!

**10...dxe5 11 fxe5 Nfd7 12 Bf4 Nc6 13 0-0**

Today Shirov thinks 13 0-0-0! Ndx5 14 Kb1!? is a better choice, yet he honestly admits that he never even considered it at the time.

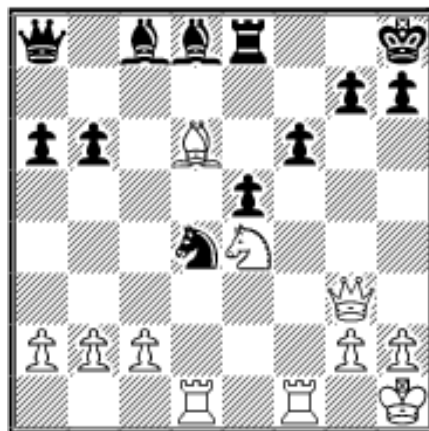
**13...Ndx5 14 Rae1 Qb6+ 15 Kh1 Nxd3 16 Qxd3 0-0 17 Qg3 Kh8**

This is a bad move that just loses a tempo. Shirov analyses both 17...f6 and 17...f5 extensively.

**18 Bc7 Qa7 19 Na4 f6 20 Bb6 Qb8 21 Bc7 Qa7 22 Nb6!?**

White could also have taken the draw with 22 Bb6 and repeated the moves, yet Shirov is a fighter and not in the mood for a draw. Just for the record, Black has sufficient compensation for the exchange.

22...e5 23 Nxa8 Qxa8 24 Rd1 Re8 25 Bd6 Bd8 26 Nc5 b6 27 Ne4 Nd4



27...Be6 28 Ba3 Nd4 29 Nd6 Rg8 30 Qf2.

**28 Bxe5! Nf5**

28...fxe5, and now not the obvious and brilliant 29 Qxe5 (29...Rxe5 30 Rf8 mate), as Black may be able to defend for a little bit with 29...Ne6, but the simple 29 Nd6, after which 29...Rg8 isn't possible on account of 30 Nf7 mate and Black doesn't have another

square for the rook.

**29 Qg4 Ne3**

Another mistake; 29...fxe5 30 Rxf5 Be7 31 Qf3 Bxf5 32 Qxf5 Qc6 33 Qxe5 Bf6 is a better choice.


**30 Qh5 Rg8**

According to Shirov, this is a mistake. He gives 30...Qc6 as better and tells us he had seen some of the following line long after the game, but that he is unsure where his calculations end and the computer analysis takes over: 31 Rd6 Qb5 32 Re1 Bg4 33 Qf7 Qxe5 34 Rxe3 Bh5 35 Qd5 Qf4 36 Qd3 Bc7 37 g3 Qf5 38 Nxf6 Qxd3 39 Rxe8+ Bxe8 40 Rxd3 gxf6 41 Rc3 Be5 42 Rc8, and White wins a bishop and the game.

**31 Qf3 Nxd1 32 Nd6 Qa7 33 Nxc8 Qd7 34 Nd6 1-0**

Not a perfect game, but a good fight with some brilliance added; however, it is a somewhat surprising choice as one of his best games.

Watching this DVD is enjoyable, entertaining and rewarding because you learn so much about Shirov's understanding and approach to the game. He takes great satisfaction from playing exciting, fascinating chess.

**My assessment of this DVD:** 

**Order *My Best Games in the Sicilian* (DVD) by**  
Alexei Shirov

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*My Best Games in the Sicilian Najdorf* (DVD) by Alexei Shirov,  
ChessBase GmbH 2006, Figurine Algebraic Notation, \$34.95



I laughed aloud during the introduction, when Shirov explained that the Najdorf has a significant place in chess history because it was Kasparov's main choice against 1 e4, but that unfortunately he never was able to beat Kasparov in this line. Then with a slight smile he continues, "not even create practical problems, so therefore there will only be one game against him on this DVD, and that ended in a draw, because I'm not going to present my losses."



The material is divided as follows:

- Intro (01:58)
- Najdorf with 6 Be2: Shirov-Gelfand (29:56)
- Najdorf with 6 Be3 Ng4 I: Shirov-Polgar (21:52)
- Najdorf with 6 Be3 Ng4 II: Shirov-Kasparov (15:09)
- Scheveningen System: Bologan-Shirov (45:45)
- Keres Attack I: Shirov-van Wely (14:03)
- Keres Attack II: Shirov-Sokolov (20:45)
- Keres Attack III: Shirov-van Wely (23:01)
- Keres Attack IV: Shirov-van Wely (29:46)

It's a bit odd that the two segments with 6 Be3 Ng4 are described as "Deviations" on the back of the DVD and that they used Arabian numerals instead of Roman numerals. Anyway, I found Shirov to be very informative. He explains that 6 Bg5 is probably the best move against the Najdorf, but that he hasn't been able to find a good answer to the Poisoned Pawn Variation (6 Bg5 e6 7 f4 Qb6), which he considers to be Black's best option. He notes that there are a number of forced draws, but that he has never played a game with the intention of forcing a draw from the very beginning!

I find it remarkable that despite having prepared notes, Shirov frequently loses track of what happens in the main theoretical lines. It appears as if he has analyzed the critical parts of the game, but has forgotten to consider what he was actually going to say. Of course, there is a certain charm that a world class grandmaster suddenly has to sit and think about the position at hand, just like he might if it had been a one-on-one lesson and you had suggested a move that he couldn't immediately refute.

The theoretical relevance of the material is greatly limited as Shirov considers White's play refuted, but it does give us an idea of chess at his level. Unfortunately, it is mostly about computer preparation and executing ideas with computer-like precision, especially with Kasparov and Kramnik.

Shirov relates the story of how the rook sacrifice in the game below



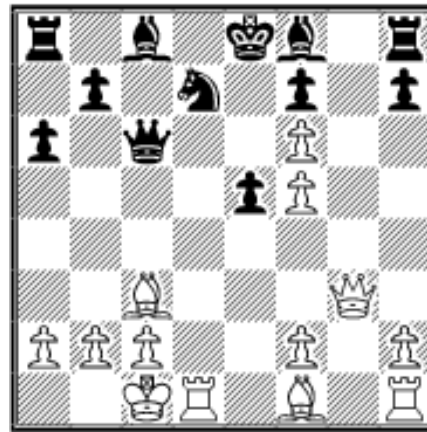
came to him shortly before the game. He was staring at the ceiling in his hotel room, pondering what to play in this particular line, when inspiration struck. The fact that he didn't finish his analysis and didn't find the flaw with his idea until after a further win against Topalov just adds a bit of humanity to this strong grandmaster.

The abridged annotations below are based on Shirov's:

### *Shirov - van Wely*

Rubinstein Memorial 2000

**1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 a6 6 Be3 e6 7 g4 e5 8 Nf5 g6 9 g5 gxf5 10 exf5 d5 11 Qf3 [11 gxf6] 11...d4 12 0-0-0 Nbd7 13 Bd2 Qc7 14 gxf6 dxc3 15 Bxc3 Qc6 16 Qg3!?**



Previously only 16 Bg2 Qxf3 17 Bxf3 Bh6+ 18 Kb1 Bf4 had been played, which is unsatisfactory for White.

#### **16...Bh6+**

Here Shirov relays an interesting story. Svidler, who was also participating in the same tournament, asked Shirov why van Wely didn't just take the rook on h1.

Shirov replied that it was

because he didn't have the nerve to do it. But as history would have it, van Wely took up the challenge a few months later at the Istanbul Olympiad and was duly punished: 16...Qxh1 17 Bg2 Bh6+ 18 Bd2 Bxd2+ 19 Kxd2 Qxg2 20 Qxg2 a5 21 f4 exf4 22 Re1+ Kd8 23 Qg7 Rf8 24 Re7 Kc7 25 Qxf8, and van Wely resigned. After both 19...Qxd1+ 20 Kxd1 and 17...Qxd1+ 18 Kxd1, Shirov believes that White has sufficient compensation for the sacrificed material because of Black's lack of development, especially when having to defend the position at the board.

#### **17 Kb1 Bf4 18 Qd3 0-0?**

Later Topalov tried 18...Rg8 19 Bh3, but after 19...Kd8 20 Bb4 Qxf6 21 Qc4 Rg5 22 Rd6 Qg7 23 f6 Rg1+ 24 Bf1, Black was lost. Instead, Shirov, along with his second Rytchagov, discovered 19...b6!!, which more or less refutes the variation, e.g. 20 Rhg1 Rxg1 21 Rxg1 Bb7 22 Bg2 e4 23 Bxe4 Qxe4 24 Re1 Qxe1+ 25 Bxe1 0-0-0. Therefore, Shirov has not played this line since.

#### **19 Rg1+ Kh8 20 Bb4?**

This is as far as Shirov's preparation went, because he didn't have time to complete his analysis. If he had, he may have found 20 Qe2! Qxf6 21 Qg4 with a strong and winning attack.

#### **20...Rg8?**

20...Nc5 is better, although 21 Qc4 (21 Qh3 Qxf6 22 Bxc5 Bxf5

is satisfactory for Black) 21...Bxf5 22 Bxc5 Rfc8, [here Shirov's analysis is a bit confusing, as if he is unsure of the best continuation, but White is better after 23 Bg2 Qc7 24 Be4!?. It's a bit complicated, but worth analyzing on your own.]

**21 Rxc8+ Kxc8 22 Be7 h6 23 Be2 Nxf6 24 Qd8+**

Also 24 Bf3 e4 25 Qd8+ Kh7 26 Bxf6 Bxf5 27 Qxa8 Qxf6 28 Be2 is good for White.

**24...Kh7 25 Qf8**

25 Bxf6 is in sufficient: 25...Bxf5 26 Qxa8 Bxc2+ 27 Ka1 Bxd1 28 Bd3+ e4 29 Qh8+ Kg6 30 Qg7+ Kf5, and Black is winning.

**25...Be6?**

Here Black could defended more tenaciously with 25...Qe8 26 Qxe8 Nxe8 27 Rd8 b5 28 Rxe8 Bb7 29 Rxa8 Bxa8 30 h4, and White is only slightly better.

**26 Qxa8 Bxf5 27 Ka1 Nd5 28 Qf8 Qe6 29 Bc5 Bxc2 30 Rg1 Bg6 31 h4 Bh2 32 Rd1 Nf4 33 Rd8 1-0**

Overall, I enjoyed watching this DVD, but the material could have been prepared a little better.

**My assessment of this DVD:** 

**Order *My Best Games in the Sicilian Najdorf (DVD)***

by Alexei Shirov

*Chess Informant Vol 96* (book and CD) by Zdenko Krnic, Aleksandar Matanovic et al., Sahovski Informator 2006, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Softcover, 333 pp., \$36.95

My sentiments regarding this series are well-documented, so I'll just give a brief overview of the contents.

The current volume contains 428 main games from events such as Wijk aan Zee, Moscow, Morelia/Linares, Monaco, etc. Additionally, there are numerous stem games included in the notes to main games, and the majority of the games have been annotated by the players themselves.

Contributors to this issue include Anand, Svidler, Leko, Ivanchuk, Adams, Gelfand, Shirov, Bologan, Christiansen, Speelman, Xie Yun, and many others.



There are also sections for the ten best games and the ten most important

theoretical novelties from [Chess Informant 95](#), combinations, endgames and studies, tournament results, and a brief biography of John Nunn with some of his best games and career statistics.

The CD can be purchased [separately](#) or [together](#) with the book. It contains the same material, but the accompanying software has all sorts of features to heighten your enjoyment. These volumes are excellent training tools that offer plenty of relevant material to the ambitious player.

### My assessment of this book & CD:



### [Order](#) *Chess Informant Vol. 96*

by Zdenko Krnic, Aleksandar Matanovic et al.

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