Karsten Mueller - Chess Endgames 2 - Rook endgames DVD review

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FritzTrainer endgames
Karsten Mueller - Chess Endgames 2 - Rook endgames

System requirements:
Pentium-Processor at 300 Mhz or higher, 64 MB RAM, Windows 98 SE, Windows 2000,Windows XP, Windows Media Player 9.0, DVD drive.

DVD contents:
Chessbase 9 Reader with pdf manuals in English and German, with an accompanying *readme* file.
85 videos (in Chessbase WMV format, in both English and German language):

- Chapter 6: Rook endgames - Introduction
- Rook vs Pawn I-IV
- Rook and Pawn vs Rook I-VIII
- Rook and Rook's Pawn vs Rook I-IV
- Rook and two connected passed Pawns vs Rook I-III
- Rook and two Pawns vs Rook I-IX
- Rook and doubled Pawns vs Rook
- Rook and four Pawns vs Rook and three Pawns I-V
- Classic Flohr-Vidmar
- Umbrella
- Activity I-II
- Checking distance I-II
- Recent Rook endings from supergrandmaster practice I-III

Total video playing time: approximately 5 hours.
Total DVD size: approximately 2.7 gigabytes.

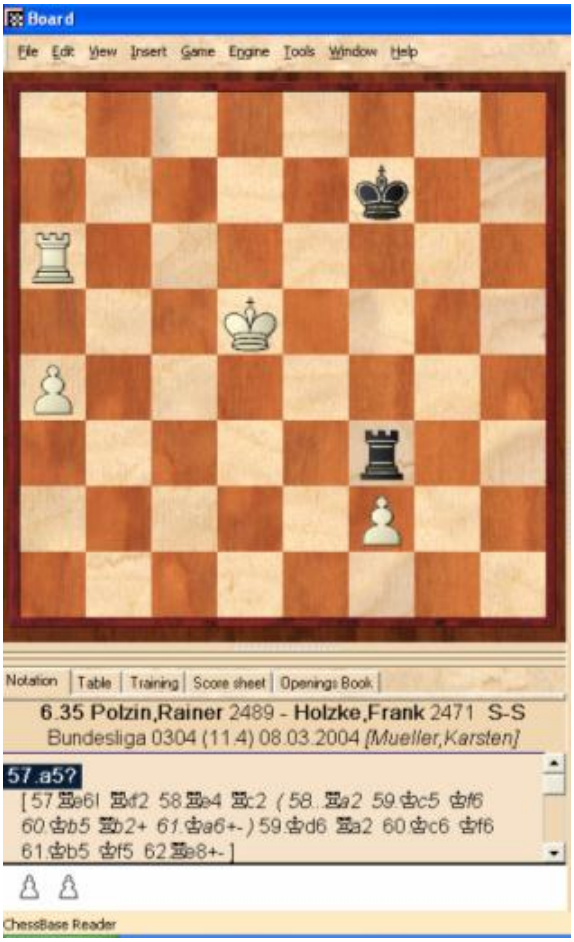
Installation of the Chessbase Reader, necessary for viewing Chessbase media files, starts automatically. After a minute, the installation is complete, and you're prompted to restart your computer. As usual, this product comes in an aesthetically pleasing colorful DVD box. The system requirements are not high, ensuring all users benefit from experiencing the eighty five endgame sessions.

Overview:
Grandmaster Dr. Karsten Mueller starts off with a friendly: "Welcome to the 2nd DVD of the endgame series, which deals exclusively with Rook endings…" After an inspiring introduction ("…It will pay off to know the solutions…"), Mueller examines a recent Rook endgame encounter between Kramnik and Grischuk. He explains a number of important motives, principles and guidelines, which are "very useful for finding the right candidate moves".

Rook vs Pawn is covered in three sections. “You should be able to master them quickly and easily over the board” is not exaggerated. Mueller covers many important positions belonging to this type of endgame.

Rook and Pawn vs Rook has eight sections, suggesting it occurs much more frequently in practice.

Rook and Rook’s Pawn vs Rook is covered in four video sessions.



”What would you play with White?” Mueller often stops for a brief moment and asks you a question! Don’t forget to press the “Pause” button at those moments and give the critical position some thought.

Rook and two connected passed Pawns vs Rook are yet another often seen over-the-board endgame, and these are covered in three video sessions. “…If the defending King cannot get in front of the connected passed Pawns, then the attacker can often win by the following method which Mark Dvoretsky called ‘auto-pilot’…”

This “extremely important weapon for the attacker” is marvelously explained by Mueller, reminding me of a famous Belgrade pilot and passionate chess player Zoran Petrovic.

Rook and two Pawns vs Rook is another Rook endgame everyone should know, and it is included in this DVD with nine sections.

Not too many (humans) have the “courage” and knowledge to tackle this type of endgame. Mueller and Chessbase do.

Rook and doubled Pawns vs Rook is explained very clearly in a one must-see five-minute clip.

Rook and four Pawns vs Rook and three Pawns endgames are very “popular” and essential knowledge is necessary for a tournament player. Mueller deals with these in five videos. He explains the needed Pawn formations, both for the attacker and the defender in a number of well chosen examples.

”I just couldn’t omit the following classic.”

The Flohr-Vidmar game is certainly one richly analyzed and annotated by many of Mueller’s endgame predecessors. Mueller annotates it in his typical “fast-forward turbo” style, so sit back, watch and listen carefully!

Although chess is usually played in a closed space, Mueller suggest that an “umbrella” is always needed, as previously attained knowledge, and this technique is described in the next section of the DVD.

Again, a number of important positions is made clear.

”Activity is of crucial importance in Rook endings”, Mueller argues and devotes two video sections here.

The situations where the attacker may sacrifice a Pawn to activate the Rook or the King, are reviewed. The endgame Brodsky-Jakovenko was especially impressive.

”Checking distance” has two clips with instructive study examples.

I strongly recommend checking out the “checking distance” lecture.

The DVD video sessions end with a chapter on Recent Rook endings from supergrandmaster practice, divided into three sections. The game Kramnik-Grischuk is repeated, Topalov-Kasimjanov and Anand-Lputian end the endgame experience.

Conclusion:

I found this DVD very attractive.

After mastering all the lessons, you will undoubtedly make a big step towards becoming a Rook endgame master. As in most of the endgames, the Rook ones can spread into never-ending analysis, even with powerful software assistance. Mueller narrows the analysis down to discussing mainly reasonable candidate moves for both sides. He examines the most tenacious defenses, as well.

With literally tens of thousands of interesting and useful examples from the history of chess available for research, Mueller has made a collection of both interesting and instructive examples.

His entertaining lecture style will keep you sitting in your chair. His curriculum will teach and remind you of a lot of endgame principles. "*Don't want too much too soon and too early*" suggests more of his DVDs to come. As an obviously experienced chess lecturer, he often reminds of the previously learned lessons, and tries often to "communicate" with the user. The "do's and don'ts" of the Rook endings are made exceptionally clear. Mueller doesn't target the old masters' examples, yet explores modern Rook endings from recent games.

Young and promising players will highly benefit from this DVD, which is a logical continuation of Mueller's previous work. All endgame aficionados will not wish to miss grandmaster Mueller's lectures here either. All who may think they need to recharge their endgame batteries should check out the DVD as well.

Less experienced chess players will need to go through the clips more than once, as the professional advice and Rook endgame rules, along with numerous tips and tricks, are scattered throughout the clips without being summarized at the end of each one.

Henry J. Byron once said "Life's too short for chess". I would rather say "Life's too short for chess endgames!" Let's enjoy them while we can.