

Alexei Shirov - My best games in the Najdorf english DVD review

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FritzTrainer opening

Alexei Shirov

My best games in the Najdorf

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

DVD contents:

Chessbase 9 Reader with 7 page manuals in English and German language in PDF format.
A readme.txt file.

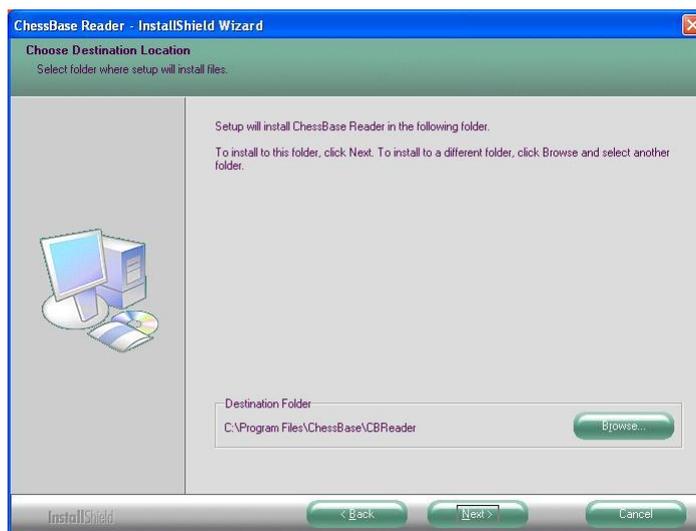
Chessbase Videos (in Chessbase WMV format):

- Intro (01:58)
- Najdorf with 6.Be2 (29:56)
- Najdorf 6.Be3 Ng4 1 (21:52)
- Najdorf 6.Be3 Ng4 2 (15:09)
- Scheveningen System (45:45)
- Keres Attack 1 (14:03)
- Keres Attack 2 (20:45)
- Keres Attack 3 (23:01)
- Keres Attack 4 (29:46)

Total playing time: approximately 3 hours.

Total DVD size: approximately 790 megabytes.

Installation of the Chessbase Reader, necessary for viewing Chessbase media files, starts automatically.



After the 1-minute installation is complete, you're prompted to restart your computer.

This DVD comes in a colorful DVD box. The system requirements are the same as for the previous two Shirov DVDs - pretty low, ensuring all users benefit from experiencing the sessions.

Here is a screenshot of where you start. One click will open a video. I unsuccessfully tried “crashing” the Chessbase media system by simultaneously opening two videos, only to find out that I would need another pair of eyes and ears to focus well.



Alexei Shirov starts with “*In this DVD I will try to present my best games against the Najdorf Sicilian defense... I hope you will enjoy them...*”.

Among many other, you have a useful Reader option of pausing the video and continuing later, during the lessons. Pressing the “play”, or even the “pause” again will do the job.

While annotating his best games, Shirov explains the ideas behind each and every important move played, adding and commenting numerous lines, with short explanations, which are useful for the user to try to understand the labyrinths of the Najdorf Sicilian.

His continuous honest approach to game annotations has to be highly respected. Self-criticism is something that doesn't bother Shirov at all, adding to the unique commentary, which cannot objectively be seen or heard much, other than in private GM analysis rooms. Shirov reveals that he is a human, just like anyone else.

Shirov's comments on the opening theory are not as detailed, as are for example in his Spanish DVD, here he uses these only to warm up for the impressive tactical and strategical struggles to come.

He seems not be as sure of his assessments as in the previous two DVDs I have reviewed, using “probably” and “maybe” ‘maybe’ a bit too often.

Just when I was ready to harshly criticize one of the games Shirov selected as his best, as it contained a lot of errors on both sides, Alexei ends his commentary by justifying his choice, explaining what gives the necessary quality to this game. He even goes further to qualify his game against Gelfand as one of the best fighting games he ever played!

Below are only a few of hundreds of questions, you might have wanted to ask, that Shirov comments, in his own unique way, while annotating his best games in the Sicilian Najdorf:

Did Shirov ever beat Gary Kasparov in the Sicilian Najdorf?
Has super GM Luke Van Wely changed his Sicilian opening repertoire after trying it out on Shirov?
Can exact conclusions in most of the Najdorf variations be made today?
Is Najdorf the most popular system in the Sicilian defense?
What is the flexibility of Black's setup in the Najdorf?
Who influenced Shirov's early opening choices against the Sicilian defense?
Does Alexei play the strongest opening move against the Najdorf?
Is White's compensation enough for more than equality in the "Poisoned Pawn" variation?
What does Shirov think of Kasparov's lectures in some lines of the Najdorf Sicilian?
Are lines leading to a forced draw practiced sometimes by GM Shirov?
What is the difference between the Sicilian Scheveningen and the Sicilian Najdorf?
Matter of tempi and matter of concrete development?
If you don't know what to do in the Najdorf Sicilian, should you play Kg1-h1 or Kc1-b1 (depending on where you have castled)?
Is GM Boris Gelfand an expert on the Najdorf as Black?
Can losing a tempo, in fact be not a loss at all?
When you face a theoretical novelty for the first time in your practice, how will you manage - your Kings' position?
If Shirov were Black in the Sicilian Najdorf, would he be afraid of his own attacking ideas as White?
Can "natural moves" lead to interesting positions?
"Fight face-to-face" in the Najdorf?
Can Shirov's sacrifices prove to be even better than he had originally thought?
Can a first glance at a position reveal its secrets?
Is move repetition an option for Shirov?
Can "funny moves" create favorable complications?
Shirov's old game annotations, can they be significantly improved?
When in time trouble, is it natural to repeat the moves, before continuing the game?
How does time pressure affect Shirov's calculation over the board?
What is more important than one side having drawing chances?
Imagination? Can it be a serious part of a chess game?
Hours, days or months? How much time has Shirov spent on investigating the mysteries of the 6.Be3 system against the Najdorf?
Does Shirov consider himself the "biggest expert on the planet" in the 6.Be3 system?
Has the Be3 system brought excellent results to Shirov both as White and Black?
Can Shirov play like a "beginner"?
Which is the most complicated line in the Najdorf Sicilian?
What is the secret behind Shirov's 5.5-0.5 victory over Judit Polgar in their match in Prague 1999?
Is chess a simple game?
One line in the Najdorf shocked the chess world! Was it played by Shirov?
What is a "Two Knights advantage"?
Having material equality and active pieces, is it enough to feel safe against Shirov?
Is "quietly improving the position", in Shirov's style, too?
One Rook on the 7th rank, combined with coordination of the remaining pieces, is it enough compensation for one (sacrificed) pawn?
Can "best of the best" moves in chess, recognized as such for years, turn out to be just one of the possible moves?
Which lines in the Najdorf does Shirov recommend for people who don't wish to spend too much time on opening preparation?
Playing against the pieces, or playing against the opponent in the opening phase, which does Shirov prefer?
Is move order important in the "Scheveningen system"?
Can both players feel pessimistic about a same position?
How does a "stupid Bishop" look like?
Which position has been "a pain in the neck" for Shirov in some periods of his career?
Do all players "care" about Shirov's sacrifices?
To what kind of a move would Shirov attribute up to five question marks?
Does Shirov feel like arguing Kasparov's assessments in the Sicilian lines?
What are the extremely important qualities of world leading chess players?

Conclusion:

A major drawback of all chess videos is that you cannot ask the author questions. Well, at least not yet, who knows what the near future may bring? Until then, Shirov here tries as much as possible, and in my opinion - succeeds, in sensing the possible questions an average user may ask at any given moment, and – answers them! To borrow his phrase, I, too, can honestly say that this approach just came naturally, as do many of his spectacular combinations and intuitive sacrifices. Triumphs of strategy, surprisingly enough, have left an impact on Shirov's choices on his best games in the Sicilian Najdorf. At the end of each annotation, Shirov reflects back on the critical positions which have left lasting impressions on him. You will not become an expert on the Sicilian Najdorf by watching this DVD, but your chess will certainly come a bit closer to understanding the moves and ideas behind a chess genius's mind. Much more is waiting for you to see and hear. Shirov insists on the quality of his explanations, which is undoubtedly on a very high level, "forcing" me to recommend this DVD to all chess friends and professionals alike.