



Book Review

by Don Aldrich

Shirov's One Hundred Wins

Sergei Soloviov

(Chess Stars, 2003) 316 pp., £24.95

Chess Stars is a publishing house backed by the St. Petersburg GM School, headed by Alexander Khalifman. They have been putting out books for almost ten years, starting with the four volume Mikhail Tal set. Initially, the covers were very utilitarian, there was almost no text, and the annotations were done strictly in Informantese [languageless symbols]. Lately, they have gone to

nice, slick colour covers, and begun annotating in English. I believe the first such effort was the very well received *Super Tournaments 2000* published last year, followed by the "According to Kramnik" opening series.

"Shirov's One Hundred Wins" continues in that vein, giving us 100 very well annotated games from 1990 through the 2002 Russia vs. the World match, in figurine algebraic with English text. Unfortunately, the text was presumably written in Russian, and translated by non-native speakers of English. This leads to the type of humorous syntax we sometimes see in Asian home electronics manuals: "White beat off, keeping the extra piece" [p.96]. The good news is that one will almost always understand what is meant: "Shirov, who had missed closer to time trouble several opportunities to win absolutely advantageous for him position and made it unclear, did not lose his head and on the second time control won the game all over again" [p. 137]. It is clear what the writer intended, but if this really bothers you, you will find it cropping up on almost every page.

After the introduction and forward, there are 18 pages of "Not Grandmaster Yet" which is a series of notes from mostly Russian publications about Shirov's early career, from age 10 until 1990 when he was awarded the GM title at 18. There are no game scores, but descriptions of his results in various Russian youth events, followed by his entry into international play.

Following this are three interviews conducted with Shirov in 1998, 2000, and 2001. He discusses his personal life, chess, the aborted match with Kasparov, and so forth. This gives a better insight into his personal life than I have seen anywhere else.

There are also two sets of photographs, one set in colour (!). I believe these might be the first colour photographs I have ever seen in a chess book. These are the usual photographs found in chess biographies – the player with other famous players, analysing, receiving trophies and so on. Nonetheless, an appreciated bonus. At the end of the book are the usual tables of results and indices, both by player and opening. In the middle, of course, are the games.

When looking at a games collection, the first thing I want to know is have these games and analysis been published before? The first place I checked was Shirov's *Fire On Board* which includes games up through 1996. About half the games in *100* are from this period, but, surprisingly, only 18 are duplicated.

Comparing the notes from *FOB* to *100* was also surprising. Some lines given are identical. If there is an objectively best line, one would expect it to be repeated. However, there are quite a few places where *100* differs, expands and even contradicts Shirov's own

notes. There are some passages which are lifted, saying something along the lines of "Shirov was surprised by this move.." and then repeating his analysis, but on the whole, the games in *100* are annotated better and more deeply than the same games in *FOB*. There is a sufficient amount of new work to make the notes worthwhile, even if you are familiar with Shirov's own notes.

I next turned to the aforementioned *Super Tournaments 2000* as Shirov played in quite a few of the tournaments covered, and the same people published it. Sure enough, games 67–77 are covered in both works, and the notes are virtually identical. Indeed, most of the games are exactly identical.

Finally, I checked the notes against several issues of the *Informant* over the course of the period covered, 1990–2002. While the ideas in the *Informants* may be incorporated into the notes in *100*, it is not just a dump of those lines.

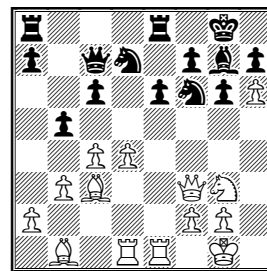
In sum, the only place you will have seen these notes are in the 11 games taken from *ST2000*. Since the same people did the work, that is not exactly surprising, but one does wish they had been reworked a little bit, and there should be an acknowledgement of this.

The notes themselves have much to recommend them. They are deep, with plenty of suggested lines and variations, but there is also a surprising amount of explanatory text. One of the areas where *Chess Stars* falls short is in attribution. Soloviov is listed as the author, and Khalifman the editor. The inside fly leaf states "With annotations by Grandmasters:" and then a list of eight names, such as Speelman, Motwani, Shipov, Yudasin, etc. It goes on to state that "special notes" by GM Khalifman are in Italics. I guess when you are the head of the school, you get special recognition! And there are some games where it

states in the header "Notes by GM X." Unfortunately, these are few and far between. It would be nice to know who did what, and what exactly Soloviov did.

Here is a sample of the work. This is reproduced straight from Game 16, including the grammatical errors:

Shirov - Chernin
PCA, Groningen, 1993



Black to play

19... ♕xh6!

This is a right decision! Black is going for the variation where he gives up the piece for the three pawns.

20.d5 cxd5 21. ♕xf6 bxc4?

A.Kh.: But this is the decisive mistake. Black had to swap the dangerous bishop immediately. After 21... ♖xf6 22. ♗xf6 bxc4 he would have obtained the good compensation for the piece.

22. ♕b2! cxb3

A.Kh.: Black obviously underestimates the attacking potential of White's pieces. However, it is hard to recommend anything sensible here: 22... ♗g7 23. ♕xg7 ♖xg7 24. ♖c3+ ♗g8 25.bxc4 ♗ac8 26. ♖d4 ♖xc4 27. ♖xc4 ♗xc4 28. ♗xd5! as well as after; 22... ♗g5 23. ♖g4 ♗f6 24. ♕xf6 ♖xf6 25. ♖h4 ♗g7 26. ♗c1 White would not have many problems to realize the material advantage.

23. ♖h5!!

With this move, White starts the whole cascade of sacrifices to exploit the weakened diagonal "a1–h8" as the main motif. Here 24. ♖f6+- is threatening.

23...f5

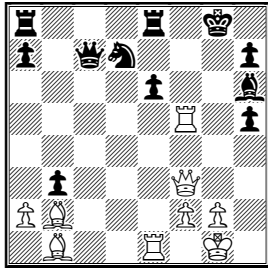
Bad is 23...gxf5? 24. ♖xh5 ♖f4 25. ♗c1 ♖f6 26. ♖h3± as well as

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23...bxa2? 24. ♖f6+ ♗xf6 25. ♖xf6 ♖f8
26. ♗xa2+- A.Kh.: as well as 23... ♗g5
24. ♖g4 ♖d8 25.axb3! gxh5 26.
♗xh7+! ♖f8 27. ♖xh5 with the idea 28.
♗g8!

24. ♖xd5 gxh5 (D)

Here the acceptance of the sacrifice
would also lead to the catastrophe:
24...exd5? 25.♖xd5+ ♖f8 26. ♗a3+-



25. ♖xf5!

25. ♖xh5?! would not be so clear in
view of 25... ♗f8! 26. ♖xf5 exf5 27.
♖xe8 ♖xe8 28. ♖xe8 ♖c4

25...Nf8

The rook cannot be captured again:
25...exf5 26. ♖d5+ ♖f8 27. ♖xf5+ ♗f6
28. ♖xf6+ ♖f7 29. ♖xh6+ ♖g8 30.
♖g5+ ♖f8 31. ♗a3+-

26. ♖xh5

The rook has done properly his job
on the fifth rank. Although Black is a
pawn up, the position of Black's king
is not a matter of pride.

This should give you a good idea of
how the notes read, complete with
Khalifman's italicized insertions,
fractured syntax and all. I should add
that the diagrams are plentiful, often
with two or three per page.

I give this book a strong
recommendation. It is an excellent
chronicle of one the great attacking
players of our time. If you like fighting
chess, you will like this one. If you are
a Shirov fan, it's a must!



I would like to add that "Shirov's One
Hundred Wins", as well as "The Critical
Moment" by Dorfman (reviewed in
CT-901), will be added to the [GM
Square online shop](#) shortly!