

Konstantin Sakaev

**The Petroff:
an Expert Repertoire
for Black**

Chess Stars

PREFACE

The Petroff Defence is an exceptionally reliable and almost indestructible opening, and a hard nut to crack, even for the strongest and most meticulously prepared grandmasters theoretically. It is no accident that the Petroff Defence, named after its inventor and also known as the Russian Game, has for many years been the main opening weapon of Vladimir Kramnik and Boris Gelfand and has also been played regularly by Vishy Anand and Alexey Shirov. Nowadays there are also several very young and talented grandmasters who play it, such as Wesley So and Anish Giri. Anatoly Karpov and Artur Yusupov have been using it as a part of their opening armoury throughout their chess careers... The list could go on and on.

The Petroff Defence is characterised by the fact that on his second move Black does not protect his e5-pawn, but instead counter attacks with $2... \text{d}6$, proposing to the opponent the immediate exchange of a pair of pawns, thus slightly simplifying the position and quickly defining the future pawn-structure.

What are the pluses and minuses of an opening repertoire based on the Petroff Defence, such as we are recommending in this book? I think I can see only one drawback. If White is an experienced player with a good grasp of theory, and he is in the mood to draw, then he should be able to share the point without too much problem. Still, the same can also be said about almost every other opening, because in contemporary chess it is tremendously difficult to win with Black unless White makes a serious mistake. On the other hand, there is a great advantage to consider: you will not obtain bad positions from the opening. The Petroff Defence is particularly suitable for players with a positional style, since in a calm, quiet contest you can easily win the game if the opponent takes too many risks. You can see this illustrated in the Complete Games section.

I have endeavoured to present and explain to you all the finer points of this opening, as I understand them. In general, the critical positions have been treated thoroughly and I have also suggested and analyzed a great many new ideas in this book. Some variations which have amassed considerable tournament practice, but which, in my view, are

less principled, have been covered only briefly. Otherwise, the book would have become too big, losing its essential purpose. Unfortunately, too many authors write chess books in that way; they offer no original analysis and often quote outdated games, some of which are very weakly played and almost useless.

I hope that you, the reader, will enjoy studying this book, and I wish you wonderful tournament results with this opening!

*Konstantin Sakaev,
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