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PREFACE

My main opening weapon throughout my chess career, from 1998 to 2010, was the French Defence. However, in the last five years of this period I played a large number of games in the strongest tournaments in Russia, mostly against players rated over 2600, and I suffered many humiliating but well-deserved defeats.

These losses made me reconsider the situation and I came to the conclusion that the cramped positions in the French Defence are strategically risky and do not quite suit my playing style. At the beginning of 2010 I qualified for the World Cup and I had to make up my mind how I was going to try to neutralize effectively Ostap Bender's favourite move (1.e4). *

The overwhelming majority of the world's theoretical experts consider that in reply to 1.e2-e4 there are really only two good moves. Since the sharp Sicilian positions might turn my hair prematurely grey, I decided to study the calmer move 1...e5.

I managed to study the new positions quickly and easily and I felt quite comfortable with them in practice. By the summer of 2011 I was already playing nothing but 1...e5 and had no opening problems with Black, either in the Finals of the Championship of Russia or in the World Cup.

In this book I have presented all my analyses and my discoveries during the World Cup. I believe that it will be useful for chess players at all levels to study them, together with the excellent annotations and explanations of Roman Ovetchkin.

* *English Editor's note: Ostap Bender is the hero of the famous Russian comic novel The Twelve Chairs, by Ilf and Petrov*

The reader might justifiably pose the following question: “How to cope with the Ruy Lopez if you are Black?”. In fact, almost every variation of this opening deserves to be analyzed in a separate volume, so we shall reveal to you the tremendously complicated and fashionable Berlin Defence in our next book.

Finally, I and my co-author R.Ovetchkin should like to express our immense gratitude to our friends, Grandmasters I.Kurnosov, P.Ponkratov and A.Riazantsev, as well as to my long-time coach N.Ogloblin, for their generous contributions and invaluable help during the writing of this book.

Igor Lysyj
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