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Legendary Chess Careers

# Alexander Beliavsky

PART 1



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## KEY TO SYMBOLS

=	Equality or equal chances
±	White has a slight advantage
∓	Black has a slight advantage
±	White is better
∓	Black is better
+ -	White has a decisive advantage
- +	Black has a decisive advantage
∞	unclear
≈	with compensation
⤵	with counterplay
↑	with initiative
→	with an attack
Δ	with the idea
□	only move

N	novelty
!	a good move
!!	an excellent move
?	a weak move
??	a blunder
!?	an interesting move
?!	a dubious move
+	check
#	mate



## FOREWORD

It has been such a pleasure to conduct interviews with former world-class players who, having retired from active play, are free to talk about their secrets. Also, these players produced some magnificent games and it is definitely worth looking at the highlights of their distinguished careers. In this book I look at a special player's career with the help of interviews with him. The player is the four-time Soviet champion, Alexander Beliavsky. Apart from becoming the individual World champion, he obtained every honour possible: he was a World Championship candidate, an Olympic champion, World Team champion, a World Junior champion, Soviet individual and team champion, and European Clubchampion. He is a record-holder, only the great Keres and Korchnoi matching him in winning against nine world champions in regular games. None of the world champions have managed this huge achievement, while Beliavsky also defeated quite a lot of the players who have a chance at the title in the future, so he may end up having beaten even more world champions. He is one of the few players who, when he was on song, was able to keep up with the pace of the dominating players of the eighties Karpov and Kasparov, regularly being in the top ten of the world rankings. I was fortunate to play many seasons in the Hungarian Team Championship alongside Alexander, for the same club of Miskolc. I can tell you that he earned enormous respect from all the team members. He not only scored an incredibly high percentage, but he was also very modest and friendly, and his attitude towards his games was fully professional. I made an interview with him in 2009 in Budapest, and I hoped that there would be a second opportunity to ask him questions, but for a few years the idea of the interview was sleeping. In 2016 Chess Evolution decided to publish this book, so I tried to contact him once again, but I was unable to reach him. On the other hand, I was able to get Viktor Kart on Skype. I think his junior and long-time trainer's words about his pupil are very, very interesting.

In this series he is the first player from the former Soviet Union. It was something special to be a super-Grandmaster in the Soviet Union — bringing some serious advantages and of course some serious disadvantages. He produced a lot of brilliant games; it is a pleasure for me to present you some of these. He wrote a book, which is very interesting because of his annotations — his

comments are short and always to the point. I think he has produced so many interesting games, so it makes sense to look at his career from a different angle. In some cases I analyse the same games, but very often I selected others. One of the reasons for this is that I wanted to spot the moments when he reached new heights. Your author is a trainer of juniors who finds investigating the early part of a career extremely interesting. Beliavsky starts his selection of games from the age of 19, while in this book I discuss much earlier parts of his career. I conducted an interview with Viktor Kart, who was his junior trainer and played a fundamental role in his journey in chess. Beliavsky's book *Uncompromising Chess* (a great title) was published back in 1998; computer analysis can uncover a lot and also add a lot to the level of analysis. All these great players offered fantastic advice in my books, but I think the best I ever heard was given by Alexander in our interview. These things very much justify writing a new book on Beliavsky's great career. I think it is also worth looking at for players who just want to enjoy great fighting games, and also for players who want to improve their chess understanding.

## PREFACE

As I got on with the enjoyable task of analysing Beliavsky's fantastic games I did not pay much attention to the size of the book; I just selected all the games I found interesting and did not try to limit the depth or length of the annotations. I finished the book and happily submitted the material.

After a while Chess Evolution replied, informing me that some cuts would be required, so I asked them whether two volumes would be possible. They looked into the material once again and the rich contents of Beliavsky's game convinced them to publish a second volume with the addition of some extra games. I was overjoyed to hear this news.

Where to separate volumes is generally not an easy task, however this time it was rather easy. In the first volume Beliavsky's junior years are covered and it ends when he becomes an established world-class player. He was an exceptionally successful junior winning virtually every possible honour.

Soon afterwards he produced a sensational performance by winning the Soviet Championship, sharing first place with the legendary world champion Mikhail Tal. With this he proved himself to be a very strong player, however it took him a few years to become an absolute world-class player.

In addition, once I submitted the material the grandmaster answered some additional questions, and of course these words are very valuable and I was only too happy to insert them into the two volumes. During the years I cover in Volume 1 he showed an incredible improvement - raising his level dramatically. However one thing he was able to deliver right from the very beginning was his ability to produce incredibly entertaining games.



# ALEXANDER BELIAVSKY PHOTOGALLERY





1. [A. Mikhalkishin archives].
2. [A. Mikhalkishin archives].
3. Beliavsky with Mikhalkishin [A. Mikhalkishin archives].
4. University of Chess Culture, Lviv 1987 [A. Mikhalkishin archives].
5. Playing tennis with Karpov, Lviv 1987 [A. Mikhalkishin archives].
6. Chess Olympiad, Lucerne 1982.
7. Mikhalkishin, Romanishin & Beliavsky.
8. Kasparov with Beliavsky.
9. Beliavsky with Sosonko & Tukmakov, 1984 [photo by Bogaerts/Anefo].
10. Beliavsky with Korchnoi, 1984 [photo by Bogaerts/Anefo].
11. Alexander Beliavsky, Tilburg 1986 [photo by Gerrits/Anefo].
12. Budapest 2017 [C. Balogh archives].

## THE JUNIOR YEARS

Alexander Beliavsky was born on 17<sup>th</sup> December 1953 in Lvov, Ukraine. Since the end of the Soviet Union they have called it Lviv. The cultural capital of Western Ukraine is a city with more than 750,000 people. Cities with such a population in the Soviet Union all had serious chess lives.

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**Tibor Karolyi:** Can you talk about your family background?

**Alexander Beliavsky:** *My father was a stomatologist and my mother was an engineer. I was the younger of 2 children. My father was an amateur chessplayer who never attended a chess club.*

**T.K.:** How did you start playing chess?

**A.B.:** *During summer vacations with my parents at the beach. I was 7 years old.*

**T.K.:** What caught your imagination in chess?

**A.B.:** *Young boys may beat adult men.*

**T.K.:** Who was your first trainer?

**A.B.:** *If do not take into account the initial period, it was Viktor Kart.*

**T.K.:** How did Kart train you?

**A.B.:** *He was an excellent psychologist. He found a way for each pupil, which suited him or her the most. He let them go their own way; he was a very polite person. He encouraged us to devote a lot of our time to chess.*

---

I like to investigate junior trainers' effects on those pupils who became great players. However, it was not easy to find a game of the trainer who had special pupils like World Championship candidate Beliavsky, Romanishin, the decent Grandmaster Mikhalchishin and the Women's World Championship candidate Litinskaya. I found only one game, so let's look at it!

## • B. Vorobets • V. Kart

LVOV CHAMPIONSHIP, 1958

---

**1.d4 ♜f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♜g7 4.e4  
o-o 5.f3**

5.♗e3?! and 5.♗g5?! are both interesting as 5...c6 would appear under less favourable conditions for Black. 5...c6 6.f3 d5!?

**5...c5**

Kart doesn't try to exploit White's move order. 5...c6?! followed by ...d5 is interesting, and Black scores well with it.

**6.d5 d6**

The game transposes to a normal King's Indian, or one might say to a Benoni.

**7.♗g5 ♜bd7**

According to my database this move was Black's most common choice in this position until 1958. Nowadays it is played less often.

**8.♕d2**

8.♘h3?! White has a very positive plus score with this knight move.

**8...♝e8**

Black side-steps from the exchange of the g7-bishop. This move also

prepares the fighting break in the centre with ...e6.

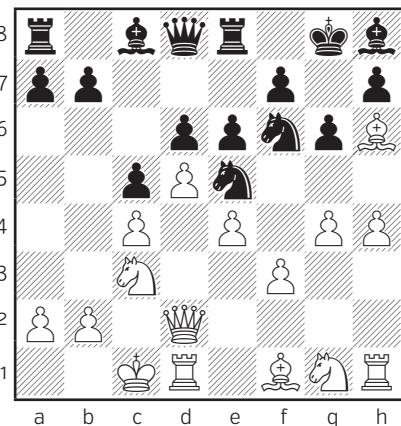
**9.g4 ♜e5 10.♗h6 ♜h8**

Black's play looks faster after 10...♗xh6?! 11.♗xh6 e6 12.o-o-o exd5 13.exd5 a6.

**11.h4?!**

White attacks too boldly. 11.h3 e6 12.o-o-o exd5 13.exd5 a6 14.♔b1 b5 and Black's play is unpleasant on the queenside.

**11...e6 12.o-o-o**



**12...♚a5!?**

Kart bases his play on his queen-side attack. He could also choose 12...exd5 13.exd5 a6 14.h5 b5 15.hxg6 fxg6 16.cxb5 c4 when Black's position is promising.

**13.h5**

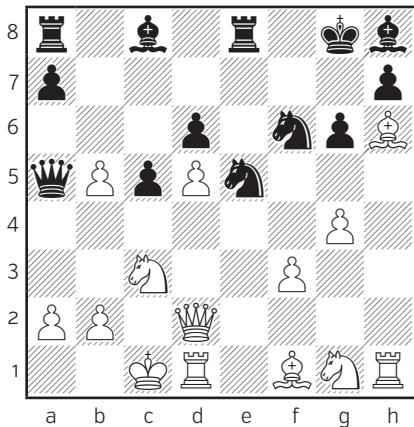
White also doesn't hold back, and simply pushes his pawn. It is dangerous for both sides, but objectively

Black should not be worse—although one inaccuracy might prove lethal for either side.

**13...exd5 14.exd5 b5!**

Kart opens up the queenside using a standard pawn sacrifice.

**15.hxg6 fxg6 16.cxb5**



**16...a6!**

Kart builds the attack beautifully: Black's position is already preferable.

**17.♔h2?**

This is a very optimistic move. White pays no attention to defending and just keeps on attacking. Probably keeping the a-file closed with 17.b6 is White's best chance, although after 17...♝b8 Black would have nice play on the b-file. And if 17.♗f4 ♜exg4 18.fxg4 ♜xg4 White is living dangerously.

**17...axb5 18.♗xb5**

**18.♕g5 b4 19.♕xf6 ♕xf6** White can take on h7— with a check—but after that there would be no continuation of the attack, while Black would soon crack open White's king.

**18...♝d7**

Exchanging the light-squared bishops helps Black to get closer to White's king.

**19.♗xd7**

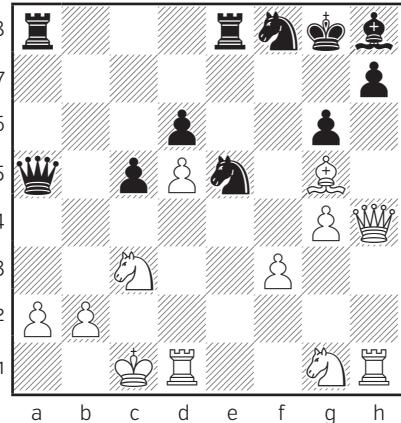
On 19.♗c6 ♛ab8 Black would follow up with ...c4 and catch the white king.

**19...♝fxd7 20.♗g5 ♘f8**

Black brings White's attack to an end. It is worth seeing how Kart finishes the game.

**21.♔h4**

White hopes to neutralise the h8-bishop with ♔f6, but has no time to do so. 21.♔c2 ♘c4 and Black wins.



**21...♞xf3!**

Kart finds the prettiest solution and opens the diagonal at once with this piece sacrifice.

**22.** ♔xf3 ♔xc3 **23.** ♔f6 ♔xf6  
23... ♕e3 wins as well.

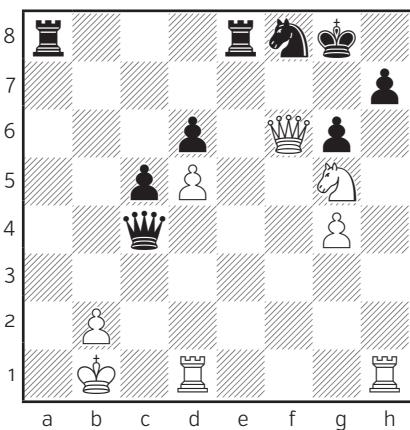
**24.** ♔xf6 ♕xa2

White's king is defenceless.

**25.** ♔g5

If 25. ♜he1 ♜xe1 26. ♜xe1 ♛xd5 and Black wins.

**25...** ♛c4+ **26.** ♔b1



**26...** ♜a7

The rook defends the king and gets ready for doubling on the a-file.

**27.** ♜hf1 ♜ea8 **28.** ♛c3 ♜xg4 1-0

Taking the second pawn generated a resignation from Vorobets.

My next question goes to Viktor Kart.

**T.K.:** Do you have any good games apart from the one against Vorobets?

**V.K.:** A lot of my stuff is still in Lvov; my daughter still lives there. Perhaps in Lvov some more of my games can be found.

**K.T.:** How did you start teaching chess?

**V.K.:** My father was an officer in the army and we had to change towns: during the 8 years in my elementary school, I attended 9 different schools. After that we lived in Zhitomir Eastern Ukraine. I finished university in Lvov. After that I remained there.

**K.T.:** What was your level at chess?

**V.K.:** I was a Candidate Master.

**K.T.:** When did you start working with the young Alexander?

**V.K.:** I think in 1961. In the beginning he was in a group, later there were individual lessons. He was a special pupil right from the start. Most young boys attend such groups and they pay attention, but Sasha was electrified and especially became captivated regarding chess. Former World Senior champion Vladimir Okhotnik told me that he had played two tournament games against Beliavsky in 1961, when Alexander was 8 and Vladimir was 11 years old. The next time they met at

*the chessboard was during the Hungarian Team Championships in 1978...*

**T.K.:** Were Romanishin, Dorfman and Mikhalkishin in the group as well?

**V.K.:** *Dorfman came to Lvov only when he started university, he was not my pupil. But yes, though Oleg is a year or a year and a half older, they were in the same group.*

**T.K.:** How often did you work with him during a typical week?

**V.K.:** *I think two times a week, for one hour — later it became more regular, almost every day.*

**T.K.:** When did you first notice his special talent and ability?

**V.K.:** *It is hard to tell, but I remember his devotion to chess. He excelled very early; at the age of 10 he was already a first category player. He had problems in the openings. I felt that playing in a second category tournament would be useful. He passed the test with 12% points out of 13 games.*

**T.K.:** What parts of chess did you focus on: openings, middlegames or endgames?

**V.K.:** *Everything.*

**T.K.:** What were his best sides and relative weaknesses in his chess?

**V.K.:** *He was excellent at tactics.*

**T.K.:** What was the relationship like between two future world-class players, the young Oleg and Alexander?

**V.K.:** *It was human, they were not friends, but got along well. On the other hand, Alexander and Mikhalkishin were friends.*

**T.K.:** Your pupils have completely different styles, who among them has the most similar to yours?

**V.K.:** *I was a tactical player, who employed semi-correct openings like the Morra Gambit. I kept taking risks. When I moved to Germany, I was asked to play for a team, so I started to play again. I believe the trainer should not force his style on the pupil. Every pupil has his or her own style and the trainer should let the player develop their own individual style. By the way, I also think that a trainer should not play tournament chess himself.*

**T.K.:** What was your attitude when two of your pupils played each other?

**V.K.:** *Oh, that was a horror, I remember how I hated those situations.*

**T.K.:** Did you go to tournaments with him?

**V.K.:** *Yes, quite often. After a while I was not able to help them in the openings, but I always supported psychologically.*

T.K.: Your pupils Beliavsky, Romanishin and others, are all gentlemen and behave excellently. Did you have any problems with them?

V.K.: *My way is to convince my pupil. If I felt they should do something differently, I tried to talk to them and explain why my idea is correct.*

## 1968

According to the database Beliavsky has a few games from 1967, but according to Mikhalkishin it was not his friend, but rather another Beliavsky.

The header of the next game already tells us something remarkable. Beliavsky was born on the 17<sup>th</sup> December. At the age of 14-15 it is in itself an achievement to be selected for the Soviet under-20 national team.

• J. Ristoja  
• A. Beliavsky

USSR-SCANDINAVIA U20 TALLINN,  
1968

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**1.e4 c5**

Beliavsky's most common answer against 1.e4 is 1...e5, but his second most-often employed move will be pushing the c-pawn two squares.

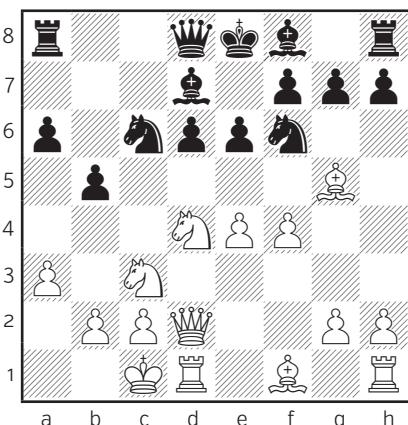
**2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♘f6  
5.♗c3 d6**

Beliavsky will play several other Sicilians regularly as well, but the Rauzer will, after the Najdorf, likewise be his second most-often employed Sicilian variation.

**6.♗g5 e6 7.♕d2 a6 8.0–o–o ♘d7  
9.f4 b5**

This is a fighting line which often leads to complex and complicated positions. Torre famously beat Karpov with it, while Tal employed it a few times. Nowadays it is considered too risky and only a few players play it regularly. Interestingly, Alexander will use this line only two more times, both in 1977.

**10.a3?**



This is a ‘too careful’ move. White has several more popular tries: 10.  $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ , 10.  $\mathbb{Q}xc6$  and 10. e5 are all much more testing for Black.

### 10... $\mathbb{Q}b6!$

The young Alexander already knows that this is the right square for the queen in this variation. Black would be happy to continue the game with no queens on the board.

### 11. $\mathbb{Q}xf6$ $gxf6$

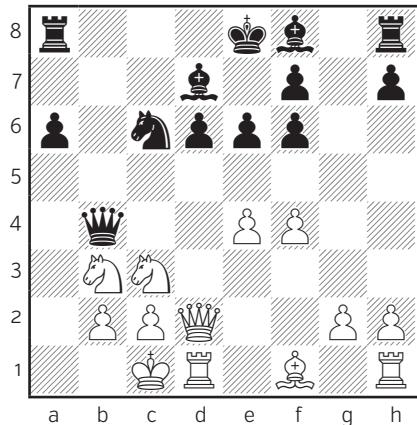
Doubling the pawns results in the typical complex Rauzer pawn-structure. Black has a solid pawn structure with the two bishops. On the other hand, Black can have problems with the safety of his king if White manages to patiently open it.

### 12. $\mathbb{Q}b3$ b4

Black wants to open White’s king.

### 13. axb4 $\mathbb{Q}xb4$

Black could also take with the knight and after 13...  $\mathbb{Q}xb4$  14.  $\mathbb{Q}b1$   $\mathbb{Q}b8$ ! the position would be fine for him. However the natural 14... a5? is a mistake, as after 15.  $\mathbb{Q}d4$  White would exchange the white-squared bishops, after which Black’s position becomes rather difficult. Such factors make the variation hard to play.



### 14. f5?!

This is tempting but it is not what White should do. Black’s position stands well when White tries to blow him away quickly. 14.  $\mathbb{Q}e2$   $\mathbb{Q}b8$  (14...  $\mathbb{Q}e7$  15.  $\mathbb{Q}hf1$  followed by further improving the rook with  $\mathbb{Q}f3$  would be reasonable.) 15.  $\mathbb{Q}d3$   $\mathbb{Q}a5$  16.  $\mathbb{Q}xa5$   $\mathbb{Q}xa5$  and the position would be balanced after 17.  $\mathbb{Q}d4$  or 17.  $\mathbb{Q}xa6$ .

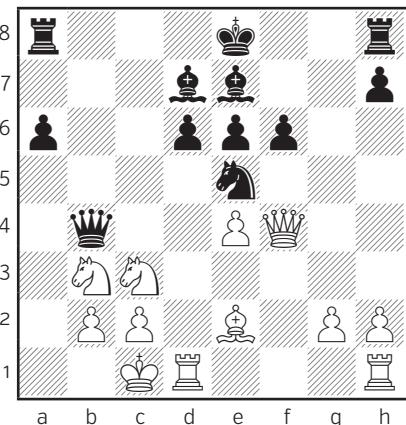
### 14... $\mathbb{Q}e5$ 15. fxe6?!

Opening the position only helps the two bishops.

### 15... fxe6 16. $\mathbb{Q}f4$ ?!

Yet another step in the wrong direction: the queen will do little and it leaves his king lonely.

### 16... $\mathbb{Q}e7$ 17. $\mathbb{Q}e2$



**17...o-o!**

Now the king is safe and Black is ready to attack White's king.

**18.h4 a5!**

Beliaovsky starts going after Ristoja's king and White cannot defend against it.

**19.♕h3**

19.♕d4 ♜b7 20.♘d2 a4 21.♘c4 ♜fb8 and it would be all over.

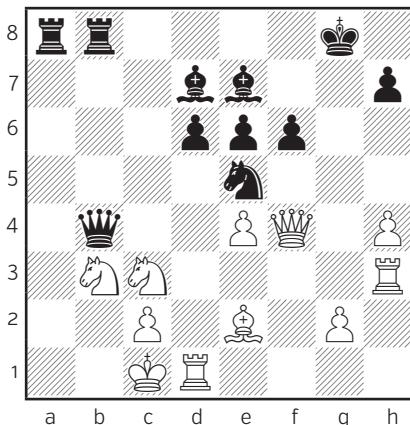
**19...a4 20.♘d4 ♜fb8**

After 20...♜ab8 Black breaks through a bit quicker: 21.b3 (21.♕g3+ ♛h8 22.♘cb5 ♜xb5 and Black wins.) 21...axb3 22.♘xb3 ♜fc8 and the position would be desperately difficult for White.

**21.b3**

After 21.♕g3+ ♛h8 22.♘cb5 ♜xb5 Black stands much better.

**21...axb3 22.♘xb3**



**22...♛h8!?**

The start of a remarkable plan.

**23.♗g3 ♜g8!**

Beliaovsky exchanges the rook on the g-file; a remarkable way to use the whole board. Exchanging pieces usually helps the side with the two bishops. Of course, Black has other strong continuations as well: 23...f5 and 23...♜c8 are also very strong.

**24.♘f1 ♜xg3 25.♛xg3**

