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Das unten abgebildete Interview wurde in der Zeit vom 29.6.2014 bis 9.7.2014 auf schriftlichem Wege mit Semko Semkov geführt.

Anlass für das Interview war eine Rezension des Buches „The Most Flexible Sicilian“, das von Alexander Delchev und Semko Semkov geschrieben worden ist. (<http://www.bdf-fernschachbund.de/service/rezensionen/2014/rezens2014.htm#TheMostFlexibleSicilian>).

Semko Semkov ist Managing Director beim bulgarischen Verlag Chess Stars.

Das Interview wurde in englischer Sprache geführt, die Fragen sind rot gekennzeichnet.

#### Interview:

#### *Can you describe your role in Chess Stars completely?*

Chess Stars Publishing was created by Russian IM Sergei Soloviov. At first I only helped him with technical matters as pre-press, printing and distributing. In 2003 I quit my work in the TV advertising business and became a partner and managing director of Chess Stars. At that time I began my first book (on the QGA). I have authored sever more since then.

#### *What is the philosophy of Chess Stars?*

We wanted to publish books by super grandmasters, aimed at semi-professionals. As editors, I and Soloviov apply rigid control over our authors and demand answers to any questions their materials may have raised. Our philosophy is to publish a book only if the author has something new to say. I mean truly new ways, not simple novelties. Thus we do not pursue quantity, but quality.

#### *What kind of players do you want to reach with your products?*

We want to reach professionals who play regularly in competitions, but we also think of club players who has not enough time for preparation. So I introduced the Chess Stars “patent” structure of parts divided to 3 chapters - Main Ideas (or Quick Reper-

toire), Step by Step and Complete Games. The first and the third of those chapters are obviously meant to help non-professionals to include quickly the opening in their repertoire.

*Which is the mostly bought book from Chess Stars?*

Most of our books are of high standard so we have not a clear leader. We earned our name with Khalifman's repertoire series, then Bologan's King's Indian was another winner.

*Have you a favorite book from your publishing house?*

My favourite is not surprisingly The Safest Sicilian. I am a co-author with Delchev and I'm fond of it because I have played only the Sicilian my whole life. It was a huge success and now readers accept very well its sequel - The Most Flexible Sicilian.

*Now a small criticism: I have written reviews about many books from Chess Stars. Nearly all of them got a very good assessment. But often I have to criticize one point: the paper of the book cover is too thin. Is there a chance that this could be changed in future?*

Soloviov has his own vision about that. He wants the books to be thinner and lighter for easier handling by readers. He prefers 70 grams' paper. The books where I'm in charge are printed on 80 grams.

*Can you tell us the most important projects of Chess Stars in the second half of this year?*

We expect to finish The Vienna Game, then we might have a prolonged pause. I'm too busy with the development of the new electronic format Forward Chess for Ipad and Android. We convert many of our books for it, but that takes a lot of time.

*And now some personal questions:*

*What do you think about correspondence chess?*

I have always thought that it was perfect for people who could not allow to be absent from their work for long. Recently the engines became too strong and I'm afraid that one has to invest a fortune into a very powerful hardware in order to compete successfully. But I have no experience so I cannot judge.

*What are your aims as a chess player?*

I mostly aimed to win a good game against top grandmasters. I must say, I have made a nice collection of scalps of players of the rank of Tal, Efim Geller, Romanishin, Ehlvest, Sveshnikov, Balashov and many others.

*Magnus Carlsen is world champion and not you. Why?*

I began to play chess at 11, but I soon became the youngest candidate-master, then master in Bulgaria. I was one of the best European juniors and I won several international junior tournaments. However, my participation in the World Cadet championship was a failure as I finished only 13<sup>th</sup> (I met there Kasparov who was fifth). I soon understood that my health was rather fragile for serious competitions and at 20 I became a coach of Bulgarian junior team! I quit active chess some ten years later. In my career I met twice world champion Tal. I won nicely one game, in the other one I was also winning in 2. I achieved 2 GM norms, won a strong round robin tournament together with Bareev, played for Bulgaria in an Olympiad, but never had stable results. That has widely opened the road to the throne to Magnus!