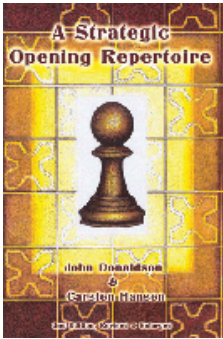




COLUMNISTS

Checkpoint

Carsten Hansen



Rating Chart

- ♦ – A poor book
- ♦♦ – Not very good
- ♦♦♦ – A useful book
- ♦♦♦♦ – A good book
- ♦♦♦♦♦ – An excellent book



Play through and download the games from [ChessCafe.com](#) in the [DGT Game Viewer](#).

[The Complete DGT Product Line](#)

Reviewed this month:

The Berlin Wall
by John Cox

How to Beat the French Defence
by Andreas Tzermiadianos

En Passant

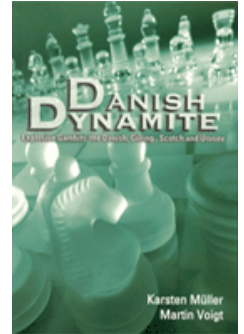
The ABC of the Evans Gambit (DVD)
by Andrew Martin

Chess Informant, Vol. 102
by Zdenko Krnic (ed.)

My Best Games in the Spanish Vol. 3 (DVD)
by Alexei Shirov

Chesspublishing.com: French
by Neil McDonald

Check out these bestselling titles from [USCFSales.com](#):



[Danish Dynamite](#)
by Karsten Müller & Martin Voigt



[The Fearsome Four Pawns Attack](#)
by Jerzy Konikowski & Marek Soszynski

Read an excerpt [here](#).

Modern Oldies

This month we will look at some new releases about old openings that continue to be popular to this day. Have an enjoyable holiday season and a Happy New Year.

The Berlin Wall by John Cox, Quality Chess 2008, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Paperback, 328pp., \$29.95

For the uninitiated the Berlin Wall is the variation of the Ruy Lopez that Kramnik used to dethrone Kasparov in their world championship match in London 2000. Prior to its revival the line was considered slightly better for White, but solid for Black if fairly passive.

The starting position is reached after **1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 Nf6 4 0-0 Nxe4 5 d4 Nd6 6 Bxc6 dxc6 7 dxe5 Nf5 8 Qxd8+ Kxd8**.



[The Modern Morra Gambit](#)
by Hannes Langrock

I was initially very skeptical about the number of pages in this book, because, even with its apparent popularity, filling 328 pages on this opening seemed way over the top. However, this book isn't only about opening theory. In fact, the theoretical section doesn't begin until 120 pages into the book.

The material is divided as follows:

- Bibliography (1 page)
- **Part 1: Understanding the Berlin Wall** (2 pages)
- 1 Positional Introduction (8 pages)
- 2 Typical Berlin Endings (58 pages)
- 3 Positional Themes (60 pages)
- **Part 2: The Theory of the Berlin Wall** (2 pages)
- 4 ...Ne7 Systems without h3 (18 pages)
- 5 ...Ne7 Systems with h3 (22 pages)
- 6 ...Ne7 Systems without an immediate ...Ng6 (24 pages)
- 7 ...Bd7 Systems (28 pages)
- 8 ...Be7 Systems (22 pages)
- 9 Berlin Endgame: White Alternatives and Miscellaneous Black Systems (24 pages)
- 10 White Plays 4.d3 (14 pages)
- 11 Other White Tries (28 pages)
- Index of Variations (9 pages)
- Index of Theoretical Games (1 page)

I have abbreviated the contents overview considerably, because the author also has the material of the first three chapters broken down into themes.

You learn *so* much about chess from reading this book it is *amazing*! It is incredibly well-written; careful attention is given to all relevant details; everything that deserves explanation is explained, and everything that needs analysis is analyzed. Even if you don't have any interest in this opening, you should buy this book. If you are interested in becoming a better chess player and want to understand the pawn structures in the Exchange Ruy Lopez or Berlin Wall, this book will carry you far. It is truly fantastic and should be a candidate for book of the year.

My assessment of this book: ♦♦♦♦♦

[Order *The Berlin Wall*](#)

by John Cox

How to Beat the French Defence by Andreas Tzermiadianos, Everyman Chess 2008, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Paperback, 320 pp., \$25.95

Greek IM Tzermiadianos previously co-authored [Beating the Petroff](#) with GM Kotronias, and according to Tzermiadianos, he was implored afterwards by his students to "Please write a book explaining the ideas behind the opening moves." The result of which is this book.



The material is divided as follows:

- Bibliography and Acknowledgements (2 pages)
- Preface (2 pages)
- **Part One: General Themes**
- 1 How We Work in the Opening (4 pages)
- 2 Middlegame Strategy (14 pages)
- 3 Typical Endgames (15 pages)
- **Part Two: 3rd Move Alternatives after 3 Nd2**

- 4 Unusual 3rd Moves for Black (11 pages)
- 5 3...Nc6 (6 pages)
- 6 3...a6 (5 pages)
- 7 3...Be7 (12 pages)
- **Part Three: 3 Nd2 e5**
- 8 3...c5 4 Ngf3: Unusual Lines (3 pages)
- 9 3...c5 4 Ngf3 cxd4 5 exd5 Qxd5 (42 pages)
- 10 3...c5 4 Ngf3 cxd4 5 exd5 exd5 6 Bb5: Unusual Lines (11 pages)
- 11 3...c5 4 Ngf3 cxd4 5 exd5 exd5 6 Bb5: Main Lines (17 pages)
- 12 3...c5 4 Ngf3 Nf6 (15 pages)
- **Part Four: 3 Nd2 Nf6**
- 13 3...Nf6 4 e5 Ne4 and 4...Ng8 (10 pages)
- 14 3...Nf6 4 e5 Nd7 5 Bd3: Black Plays ...b6 (6 pages)
- 15 3...Nf6 4 e5 Nd7 5 Bd3: Lines without ...f6 (13 pages)
- 16 3...Nf6 4 e5 Nd7 5 Bd3: Black Plays ...f6 before ...cxd4 (7 pages)
- 17 3...Nf6: Main Line with 8...Qb6 (21 pages)
- 18 3...Nf6: Main Line with 9...Qxf6 (13 pages)
- 19 3...Nf6: Main Line with 11...0-0 (18 pages)
- 20 3...Nf6: Main Line with 11...Qc7 (14 pages)
- **Part Five: 3 Nd2 dxe4 4 Nxe4**
- 21 Rubinstein Variation: 4th Move Alternatives (29 pages)
- 22 Rubinstein Variation: 4...Nd7 (22 pages)
- Index of Variations (2 pages)
- Index of Games (2 pages)

As a repertoire book for White on the Tarrasch Variation, 3 Nd2, it is exceptionally detailed and just about leaves no stone unturned. The first chapter offers a little guidance on how to work on your openings, and the next two chapters examine common middlegame and endgame positions that arise in the French Defense. Generally speaking, these latter two chapters are fairly superficial, but Tzermiadianos brings forth some interesting positions and his efforts are quite instructive.

Here is an example; we take up the position after White's sixteenth move. The annotations are by the author, except where otherwise noted. I have also omitted most of the variations.

A.Tzermiadianos-B.Socko

European Championship Warsaw 2005



Control of the central dark squares is so important that it sometimes warrants material investment. In the next game I sacrificed my rook for the main defender of them, the dark-squared bishop.

In this position my opponent played

16...Nxd3? and I replied with **17.cxd3!!**.

The idea behind this capture makes this game one of the best I have ever played! Instead of playing it safe with a small advantage, White goes into a position where his pieces are pinned in a seemingly deadly way! But if we take a deeper look, we notice that White simply opens the c-file in order to sacrifice his rook for Black's dark-squared bishop to gain full control of the dark squares.

After 17.Qxd3 White has a small advantage but it's not enough because of the weakness of the c-file and especially the c3-square.

17...Nxd4 18.Nxd4 Bc5

The position seems to be winning for Black because of the pin on the a7-g1 diagonal, but the truth is that Black must already find a unique way to survive!

19.Rc1 Qb6

If Black tries to avoid the exchange sacrifice with 19...Bb6 White continues with 20.Rg3...

The only move for Black was 19...b6! [then the author should have given 19...Qb6 the question mark it deserved, but I digress - CH], which contains four defensive ideas:

1. The seventh rank is opened for the move ...Ra7 protecting g7;
2. It is more difficult for White to sacrifice the exchange because Black would react with ...bxc5 when the d4-square wouldn't be available to the white knight;
3. Black is ready to develop his bishop to a6, putting pressure on the d3-pawn (and on the king on f1) thus tying down White's queen; and
4. The bishop stays on the c5-square keeping e7 and f8 under control, a very important detail as we will see later.

Moves that offer many ideas at the same time are always useful, and the discovery of such moves can save us from a difficult position.

After 20.Bxh6 Rf7 21.Rg3 Qb4 22.Rxc5 (if 22.Bxg7 Qxd4 23.Bf6+ Kf8 24.Qh6+ Ke8 25.Kg1 Qxf2+ 26.Kh2 Kd7 27.Qg6 Re7 the importance of controlling e7 with the dark-squared bishop becomes obvious [this is true, but the outcome is a draw, which isn't made clear - CH]) 22...bxc5 23.Qg5 f4 24.Bxg7 fxg3 25.Bf6+ Kf8 26.Qh6+ Ke8 27.Qh8+ Rf8 28.Qh5+ neither side can escape the draw.

[CH: I hate to be the bearer of bad news, but the above piece of analysis is a pile of rubbish! Also of importance is 22...Qxc5, when White has two options:

a) 23.Rxg7+ Rxg7 24.Bxg7 Kxg7 25.Qg5+ Kf7 26.Qf6+ Ke8 27.Nxe6 Qe7 28.Qg6+ Kd7 29.Nd4 Qxe5 (or 29...Bb7 30.Qxb6 Kc8 31.Nxf5, and White actually has the better chances) 30.Qc6+ Ke7 31.Qxa8 Qxd4 32.Qxc8 Qa1+ 33.Ke2 Qxa2+ 34.Ke3 f4+ 35.Kf3 Qxb3, and Black may actually have the slightly better chances, though a draw is likely.

b) 23.Kg1! Bd7 (23...Qc3 is likely better 24.Nb5 f4 25.Bxf4! (25.Nxc3? fxe3 26.Bxe3 Rc7 is actually better for Black) 25...Qc5 26.Qxc5 bxc5 27.Bh6, and White has the clearly better chances) 24.Rg6 Kh8 25.Bf4 (25.Qg5 Qe7 26.Kf1 with chances for both players is obviously not as good) 25...Qc3 26.h5 Qa1+ 27.Kh2 Kh7 28.Nf3, and White is winning.

Also after 23.Qg5 f4 24.Bxg7, it escaped the author's attention that 24.Qd8+ wins for White! For instance, 24...Kh7 25.Bxg7 Rxg7 26.Rxg7+ Kxg7 27.Qf6+ Kg8 28.Nc6 Qb7 (or 28...Ra7 29.Nxb4 cxb4 30.Qd8+) 29.Ne7+ Qxe7 30.Qxe7. This proves that 22...b6 isn't as strong an improvement as the author suggests.]

20.Rxc5! Qxc5 21.Rg3 Rf7 22.Bxh6 f4?

This decoy of the dark-squared bishop doesn't promise much. Another try

for Black was 22...Qc3 in order to create immediate counterplay based on the poor position of White's king:

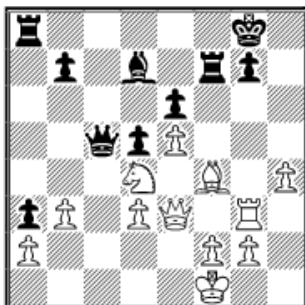
The best try for Black was to continue with 22...b6, although after 23 Kg1 he still has serious problems to solve.

23.Bxf4 Bd7?!

Postny gives 23...Qc3!? as winning for Black(!) but it is only a better try for the reason that White has to play accurately to find the win. 24.Kg1 Qa1+ 25.Kh2 Qxa2 26.Rg6 (making room for Qg3) and now: *[the moves 26...Bd7 and 26...Qb2 are also analyzed - CH]*

c) 26...b6!? 27.Qg3 Raa7 28.Nb5 Rad7 *[alternatives are also analyzed - CH]* 29.Nd6 Qc2 30.Rxe6! a2 31.Re8+ Rf8 32.e6 Rxe8 (32...a1Q 33.exd7 Bxd7 34.Be5 Qxe5 35.Rxe5) 33.Nxe8 Re7 34.Be5 and White wins.

Returning to 23...Bd7:



We are at the critical stage of the game. material is equal, as White has a knight and two pawns for a rook, but White's position is already winning. Why is this?

Often we target that the chessboard consists of both light and dark squares. Essentially we are not fighting one battle, but two: one on the light squares and one on the dark squares.

In this position all the white pieces can conquer the dark squares, yet only the black queen can try to defend them - it's simply an uneven battle. Before the final assault White must consider the only counter-chance Black has: the position of the white king. Now everything becomes clear.

24.Kg1!! Qc3 25.Kh2

White has secured the position of his king and is ready for the final assault.

25...Qb2 26.Bh6 Raf8

Black tries to prevent the arrival of White's king on g5, but there is no defence as we can see in the following variations.

If 26...Rxf2, then 27.Qg5 is winning for White. If 26...Qxa2 White plays 27.Ne2!!, closing the queen's route to the f2-pawn after which there is no defence to 28 Qg5 (the immediate 27.Qg5? is met by 27...Qxf2 28.Bxg7 Qxg3+! 29.Qxg3 Rxc7). [CH: But it should be pointed out 28.Rg4! actually saves the draw, e.g. 28...a2 29.Bxg7 Qf4+ 30.Rxf4 Rxc7 31.Qf6 a1Q 32.Nxe6 Bxe6 33.Qxe6+, and Black's king cannot escape the checks.

27.f3!?

A computer would play 27.Qg5 Qxd4 28.Rg4! (but not 28.Bxg7? Qf4, as after 29.Qxf4 Rxf4 30.Bh6+ Kh7 the rook on f4 is protected and suddenly Black has a winning position - this was the idea behind 26...Raf8).

[Hiarcs 12 prefers the next line - CH]

27 Ne2! is also winning after 27...Qxa2 28 Qg5 Qxe2 29 Bxg7.

27...Rc8

Or 27...Re8 28 Qg5 Qxd4 29 Bxg7 Qf4 30 Qxf4 Rxf4 31 Bh6+.

28.Rg4!

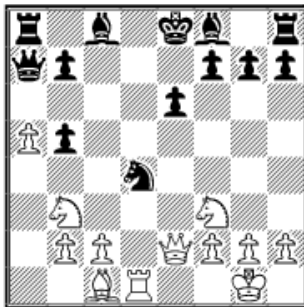
The knight on d4 is protected in the simplest way and Black has no defence to Qg5.

Be8 29.Nxe6 Bd7 30.Bxg7 Bxe6 31.Qh6 1-0

According to my 'no-brain' Fritz friend White has a mate in seven: 31... Re7 32 Qh8+ Kf7 33 Rf4+ Bf5 34 Rxf5+ Ke6 35 Qh6+ Kd7 36 Qd6+ Ke8 37 Rf8 mate.

The above passage is a good illustration of how the author writes, as well as a good example of why it is important to check the analysis rather than blindly accept what is written.

Moving on to the theoretical sections, I will say that it is rare to see such single-minded devotion on the part of the author to deliver everything to the reader. Tzermiadianos has laid everything on the table and analyzes everything to our heart's content. Sometimes he spends the better part of a page investigating an idea or an improvement, even in fairly obscure lines. However, his analysis is not without mistakes.



Here he writes, "Beliavsky chose 17.Nfxd4, but 17.Rxd4 is the strongest move as White threatens to mate Black immediately and there is no defence. This position is very good as an exercise to improve calculation. Cover the rest of the moves and try to analyse the position for an hour. Then compare the results."

17.Rxd4 Be7 18.Qxb5+ Kf8 19.Qh5 Qa6 20.Rf4

[The author appends this move with an exclamation point. However, I believe that 20.Bg5! is much stronger. One long line runs as follows 20... e5 21.Bxe7+ Kxe7 22.Qxe5+ Be6 23.Nc5 Qc6 24.Qg5+ Ke8 (or 24...Kf8 25.Ne5 f6 26.Nxc6 fxg5 27.Nxe6+ Kf7 28.Ned8+ Kg6 29.Rd6+ Kf5 30. Ne7+ Ke4 31.f3+ Ke3 32.Nd5+ Kd2 33.Nc7+ Kc1 34.Nxa8, and White is two pieces up) 25.Qxg7 Qxc5 26.Qxh8+ Qf8 27.Qe5, and White is winning. - CH]

20...g6 21.Qe5 Rg8 22.Ng5 f5 23.Rd4 h6 24.Nf3 g5 25.Bd2 Kf7

[Again no alternative is given, despite the fact that this is one of Black's worse moves. The alternatives are:

A) 25...Ke8 26.Bb4 Qc6 27.Qe2 Qa6 (27...Bxb4 28.Ne5 Qc7 29.Qh5+ Kf8 30.Rd8+) 28.Qd1 g4 29.Ne5 with an uncomfortable position for Black, though he may be able to survive.

B) 25...Qc6 26.Bb4 Kf7 27.Bxe7 Kxe7 28.Rd2 Kf7 29.Qd4 Ke7 30.Qb4+ Kf6 31.c4 Qc7 32.Qc3+ Ke7 33.Ne5 Ra6 34.c5 Rd8, and Black is still holding on, despite being uncomfortable. Yet this is better than what Black was facing after 20.Bg5. - CH]

26.Qc7 Re8 27.Ne5+ Kg8 28.Rd8!! Black can resign.

While it might be necessary to check that the analytical evaluations are not skewed to favor the suggested repertoire, if you play the Tarrasch Variation or against it, you should definitely buy this book. Players above 1800 will benefit the most from it.

My assessment of this book: ♦♦♦♦♦

Order *How to Beat the French Defence*

by Andreas Tzermiadianos

The ABC of Evans Gambit (DVD) by Andrew Martin, ChessBase GmbH 2008, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Playing time: 4½ hours, \$34.95

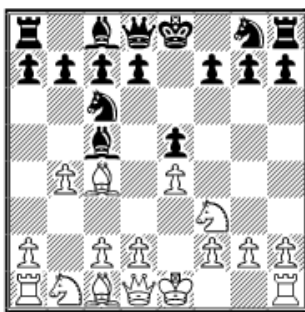
The Evans Gambit isn't played very frequently, but it provides White with excellent winning chances, and Black really needs to play well or know his theory to survive.



The back cover tells us “the Evans Gambit is ideal as a weapon for all players who wish to learn the art of attack or simply want to improve their results! At the cost of a pawn White often gets complete domination of the centre or an assault against Black’s King. Lines are quickly opened and a rapid defeat for Black is possible.

Using games old and new, IM Andrew Martin assesses the state of play as it stands today. By learning and using the Evans Gambit you will be developing your attacking skills!”

The opening arises after 1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bc4 Bc5 4 b4!?.



As Martin tells us in the introduction, there are a couple of ways for Black to get a satisfactory position, but that shouldn't stop you from employing this opening. Black is likely to experience a considerable amount of discomfort, which is a practical way of playing for good results. Also by employing the Evans Gambit you will learn a tremendous amount about the Open Game that will help further your development as a chess player. If you are inclined to play sharp openings or need a weapon after 1 e4 e5, and are rated about 1700, then you will enjoy both this DVD and the opening.

My assessment of this DVD: ♦♦♦♦♦

**Order *The ABC of Evans Gambit*
by Andrew Martin**

Chess Informant, Vol. 102 by Zdenko Krnic (ed.), Sahovski Informator 2008, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Paperback, 340pp., \$24.95

The content of this volume covers the first four months of 2008, which includes the tournaments in Odessa, Wijk aan Zee, Moscow, Morelia/Linares, Nice, Merida, Plodiv, Baku, and many others.



The material is divided as follows:

- Contributors (2 pages)
- The best ten games of the preceding Volume (1 page)
- The ten most important theoretical novelties of the preceding Volume (5 pages)
- System of Signs (3 pages)
- Opening Classifications (6 pages)
- Games Sections A-E (275 pages)
- Register (10 pages)
- Commentators (2 pages)
- Combinations (4 pages)
- Endings (7 pages)
- Studies (3 pages)
- Tournaments (13 pages)
- The Best of Chess Informant - Vlastimil Hort (21 pages)

Chess Informant is mostly language-less, with a significant directory of symbols available for the annotators to clarify their opinions and assessments. For the serious and ambitious player alike, this book is a must.

My assessment of this book: ♦♦♦♦♦

**Order *Chess Informant, Vol. 102*
by Zdenko Krnic (ed.)**

My Best Games in the Spanish, Vol.3 (DVD) by Alexei Shirov, ChessBase GmbH 2008, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Playing time: 5 hours 51 minutes, \$47.95


The two previous volumes in this series were reviewed in [September 2006](#) and [February 2008](#), and the present volume is very similar in style and presentation.



The back cover pretty much describes what this volume is about: "On his third DVD on the Spanish Opening Alexei Shirov pursues new ways, analysing not only his own games but also the works of other world-class players. In his quest to deal with topical developments and present the latest opening concepts, he examines for example the Jaenisch Gambit (3. ... f5) which was revived by Teimour Radjabov on top tournament level. Furthermore, very interesting new ideas are to be found in the games of Gata Kamsky - here the author depicts examples from the Closed Spanish (Breyer System and Zaitsev

System) as well as the Open Ruy Lopez. As far as his own games are concerned, this time Shirov puts the main emphasis on the accepted Marshall Gambit (more than 2 hours of analysis) - a system which has got him good results recently and which he considers a promising attempt to fight this popular opening line. To round off the DVD, there are two videos featuring games with the Anti-Marshall System as well as the Berlin Defence.”

This DVD is compelling viewing, as are Shirov’s insights on the various lines. There are a total of ten segments, and unlike the previous volumes, a few of them are devoted to games by other players; all of the games were played in either the latter part of 2007 or the first part of 2008. With a running time of almost six hours, this DVD gives you plenty of bang for your buck.

My assessment of this DVD: 

[Order](#) *My Best Games in the Spanish, Vol. 3*

by Alexei Shirov


Chesspublishing.com: French by Neil McDonald, Chess Publishing.com, Subscription \$19.50-\$99.00 per year.

The section on the French Defense has been hosted by English GM Neil McDonald since the inception of this website. He may not be playing as many international tournaments these days as he once did, but he is certainly an expert on the French Defense, and has several books to his credit.



In contrast to some of the other sections, McDonald caters to a greater variety of players; some games are annotated with a plenty of prose and fewer variations, while others feature theory-laden analysis. Furthermore, McDonald doesn’t limit himself to just those games played within the last couple months, he varies his approach and is willing to include older games as needed.

Each update in this section contains a minimum of eight or more games. As with the other pages, a subscription gives you access to all the previous updates and games, which are also available in PGN and PDF formats. Were you to print out this material, you would have a document well over a thousand pages long. So you get an amazing deal for the price of a subscription, whether it is to just one section or several.

My assessment of this site: 

Chesspublishing.com: French

by Neil McDonald

 [TOP OF PAGE](#)

 [HOME](#)

 [COLUMNS](#)

 [LINKS](#)

 [ARCHIVES](#)

 [ABOUT THE CHESS CAFE](#)

[\[ChessCafe Home Page\]](#) [\[Book Review\]](#) [\[Columnists\]](#)

[\[Endgame Study\]](#) [\[The Skittles Room\]](#) [\[Archives\]](#)

[\[Links\]](#) [\[Online Bookstore\]](#) [\[About ChessCafe.com\]](#) [\[Contact Us\]](#)

© 2008 CyberCafes, LLC. All Rights Reserved.

“**ChessCafe.com**®” is a registered trademark of Russell Enterprises, Inc.