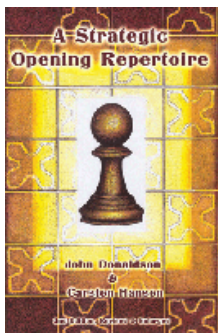




COLUMNISTS

Checkpoint

Carsten Hansen



Rating Chart

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

CHESSTHEATRE

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Reviewed this month:

The Budapest Gambit
by Timothy Taylor

Starting Out: The Trompowsky Attack
by Richard Palliser

Play The Catalan
by Nigel Davies

1.b4 The Theory & Practice of the Sokolsky Opening
by Jerzy Konikowski & Marek Soszynski

En Passant

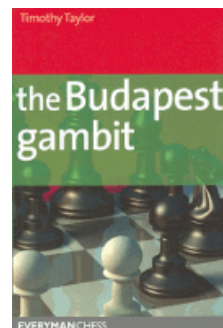
Chess Informant, Vol. 105
by Aleksandar Matanovic et al

d-pawn Openings for Specialists

We start off this month's column with three books on queen's pawn openings, which nowadays are even more mainstream than when they were invented. The one furthest from common acceptance is the Budapest Gambit, but grandmaster Viktor Moskalenko helped to change that with his excellent [monograph](#), which was reviewed in my [September 2008](#) column. The Trompowsky used to be an opening that was only seen occasionally in grandmaster and international master play, unless the player happened to be from England, in which case, they all seemed to play it. Finally, the Catalan is seen rather commonly at top level, but below master level it is rare. This is a shame because it makes an excellent weapon for White if he has a grasp of the basic game plans.

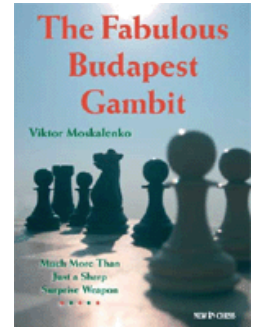
The Budapest Gambit by Timothy Taylor, Everyman Chess 2009, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Paperback, 239pp., \$24.95 (ChessCafe Price: \$18.95)

The American international master Timothy Taylor is one who plays very passionately. He leaves it all on the board, takes chances, gambles, and it is often quite entertaining when he wins. His books have followed a similar pattern. He is not afraid to stray from the beaten path in order to overturn conventional wisdom or current opening theory. It is a guarantee that he will turn whatever he finds upside down and then keep digging. This makes for entertaining reading and it gives you the opportunity to pick up a book written from a unique perspective.

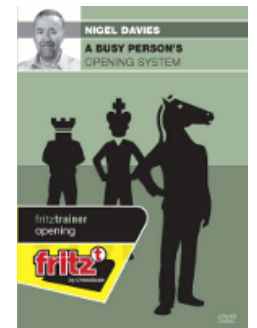


In the introduction, Taylor surprised me by saying that the Budapest Gambit is not an opening where you can play moves that feel best, but rather it requires precise knowledge about which moves should be played, as well as knowing when those moves won't work. This may disappoint some potential readers, because they may have taken up this opening to avoid opening theory. Thus, the volume of theory in the Budapest Gambit that one needs to know is considerably larger than one might expect. Still, compared to what is

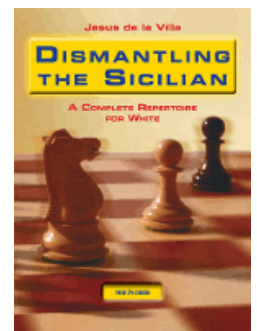
Purchases from our [shop](#) help keep [ChessCafe.com](#) freely accessible:



The Fabulous Budapest Gambit
by Viktor Moskalenko



A Busy Person's Opening System
by Nigel Davies



Dismantling the Sicilian
by Jesus de la Villa Garcia

required to learn the Nimzo-Indian or Queen's Indian, the Budapest Gambit will feel like a vacation.

However, sometimes Taylor takes his irreverence too far and he will finish a sentence with a "just kidding" and a winking smiley face. For instance, after showing a very young Kramnik using the Budapest Gambit to win a crushing game as Black he writes

"Clearly Kramnik's opponent was unprepared for the BG (losing in 25 moves with White is not a good sign), but this makes me think again about my opening question: Anand defeated Kramnik in their World Championship match largely by switching his opening repertoire from 1 e4 to 1 d4. Would Anand have prepared deeply for the BG? I doubt it! Imagine how a crushing victory like this would have raised Kramnik's spirits! I think Kramnik should have risked the Gambit and maybe then he would still be World Champion!"

Are you kidding me? To assume that Kramnik would have been able to do anything similar to Anand that he did to an unprepared Odesskij in 1987 is quite a stretch, if not completely absurd. Speaking of Kramnik, another comment in the introduction struck me as somewhat bizarre (in the notes to a game starting with 1 d4 Nf6 2 c4):

"The Trompowsky shouldn't surprise anyone these days, and if White plays 2 Nf3, he can't play the sharpest lines against virtually any Black opening: no Four Pawns Attack or Sämisch against the King's Indian, can't play the Knezevic or main line exchange vs. the Grünfeld, can't fight the Nimzo-Indian with Anand's f2-f3 or Rubinstein's Ng1-e2 and can only reach a weaker line of the QGD exchange!"

Again, are you kidding me? For years Kramnik played 1 Nf3 as white, followed by 2 d4, and didn't need to play any of the above-mentioned lines. But then again, which of today's top players employ the Four Pawns Attack or the Sämisch against the King's Indian? If you are playing 2 Nf3 (after 1 d4 Nf6), you are clearly not angling for a Nimzo-Indian either, so the observations about missing out on certain lines against the Nimzo are irrelevant. The point is that White doesn't have to worry about the Budapest Gambit, or the Benko Gambit for that matter, and the fun-loving black player will have to conjure up something exciting against a truly unexciting opening.

Moving on, let's look at how the material is divided:


- Bibliography (1 page)
- Introduction (9 pages)
- **Part I: The Alekhine Attack (4 e4)** (2 pages)
- The Alekhine Attack as played by Alekhine (14 pages)
- Deviations (12 pages)
- Alekhine Attack vs. 5...Ng6 (12 pages)
- Alekhine Attack vs. 5...Nec6 (19 pages)
- Reti (4...h5!) (16 pages)
- **Part II: White Plays 4 Bf4** (1 page)
- Bf4 vs. ...g7-g5 (13 pages)
- The Original Budapest Gambit (Bf4 and Nc3) (27 pages)
- Black Gambits against 4 Bf4 (9 pages)
- Bf4 Main Line with Nbd2 (28 pages)
- **Part III: White plays 4 Nf3** (1 page)
- 4 Nf3 Nc6 when White avoids 5 Bf4 (8 pages)
- 4 Nf3 Bc5 (17 pages)
- **Part IV: Unusual Lines** (1 page)
- The Quiet Ones: 4 Nc3, 4 e3, 4 Nh3 (8 pages)
- Materialism (6 pages)
- White Declines the Budapest Gambit (14 pages)
- The Fajarowicz Gambit (7 pages)
- Conclusion (1 page)
- Index of Variations (4 pages)
- Index of Games (3 pages)

Despite my reservations about some of his statements in the introduction, I

find Taylor's enthusiasm and provocative writing style both entertaining and infectious. This will undoubtedly spur the readers to try several of his recommendations, though hopefully only after having analyzed and studied the material carefully. For instance, Taylor demonstrates why, after 1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e5 3 dxe5 Ng4 4 Nf3, he believes that the otherwise automatic 4...Bc5 5 e3 Nc6 isn't the strongest continuation for Black. Instead, he prefers 4...Nc6. This allows 5 Bg5, which to my theoretical knowledge should be slightly better for White, but Taylor claims Black to be okay.

Furthermore, against 4 e4, he claims that only the rare 4...h5!? is sufficient for Black. His conclusions after 4 Bf4 will surprise some readers, but Taylor backs it up with a fair amount of analysis. However, as Tim Harding pointed out in his most recent [The Kibitzer](#) column there are omissions in several lines and these can be problematic for Black if not properly addressed.

Nevertheless, for enthusiasts of the Budapest Gambit, this book is a must-buy. Fans of the related Fajarowicz Gambit will not be happy with the coverage that is provided in this volume. Those who allow the Budapest Gambit as white should also seriously consider purchasing this volume, as it points out several critical continuations against most of the lines that have previously been established as Black's best options. This well-written book is better than average, despite its flaws.

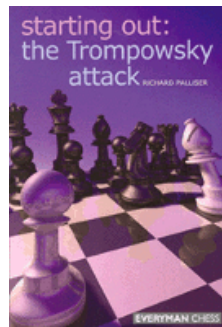
My assessment of this book: 

[Order](#) *The Budapest Gambit*

by Timothy Taylor

Starting Out: The Trompowsky Attack by Richard Palliser, Everyman Chess 2009, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Paperback, 269pp., \$24.95 (ChessCafe Price: \$18.95)

The Trompowsky has gone from a fairly rare bird in grandmaster games to a frequent flyer and it is overdue for an in-depth overview of the theory. It has been more than four years since Davies's [The Trompowsky](#) (Everyman Chess 2005) and even longer since Wells's *Winning with the Trompowsky*. The *Starting Out* series is mainly aimed at lower rated players and while that makes this book good news for target audience, it is bad news for those who would like heavier fare.



English international master Richard Palliser plays the Trompowsky himself and therefore knows the opening extremely well. His quality of work and original analytical input is always first rate. But his prolific output makes me wonder whether he has somehow learned the secrets of cloning.

The material is divided as follows:

- Bibliography (1 page)
- Introduction (4 pages)
- The Classical 2...d5 (30 pages)
- 2...g6 and Minor Lines (15 pages)
- The Positional Choice: 2...e6 (46 pages)
- The Uncompromising 2...c5 (42 pages)
- The Popular 2...Ne4 (21 pages)
- The Modern Preference: 2...Ne4 3 Bf4 (38 pages)
- The Main Line: 2...Ne4 3 Bf4 c5 (59 pages)
- Index of Variations (8 pages)
- Index of Games (2 pages)

In traditional Palliser fashion, this book is solid work, drawing material from all relevant sources, including all recent books, databases, and the excellent

chesspublishing.com website, where the French grandmaster Eric Prié has taken the theory leaps and bounds forward.

While Palliser doesn't contribute as much original theoretical material as he would in a higher level monograph, he does excel in presenting interesting, instructive, and entertaining games that will help players understand and enjoy the opening. The following game is one such example. The annotations are condensed from those in the book:

L. Winants – S. Mamedyarov
Bled Olympiad 2002

1.d4 Nf6 2.Bg5 Ne4 3.Bf4 d5 4.e3 Bf5 5.f3 Nf6 6.c4 e6 7.Nc3 c6 8.Qb3 b6 9.g4 Bg6 10.h4 h6 11.0-0-0 a5!? 12.cxd5!

It is too late for 12.Nh3? on account of 12...a4! When it would have been the turn of Black's bishops to dominate: 13.Nxa4 dxc4 14.Qxb6 Rxa4 15.Qxd8+ Kxd8 16.Bxb8 c3! (Winants) and Black enjoys a dangerous attack.

12...a4?!

This asks too much of Black's position, but one can understand why such a creative and energetic player as Mamedyarov chose it, rather than allow White the initiative after 12...exd5 13.e4! dxe4 14.h5 Bh7 15.Bc4. Another solid choice was 12...Nxd5 13.Nge2 Nd7, but 14.e4 blunts the key bishop and leaves White pleasantly better.

13.Nxa4 Nxd5 14.Ne2!

The knight hurries to defend from c3 and now we begin to appreciate why it didn't go to h3.

14...Nb4

This might appear menacing, but White is in time to maintain control.

15.e4 Nxa2+!

The only real try. Otherwise 16 a3 would push Black back and leave him with no real compensation.

16.Qxa2 b5 17.Nec3 bxa4

Black might be behind in development, but his queenside chances appear to be cause for concern. However, Black's own monarch is hardly safe either...

18.d5!

...and so Winants strikes!

18...a3!

Active defence. Instead 18...exd5? wouldn't have led to the reopening of the b1-h7 diagonal because 19.Nxd5! cxd5? (19...Bd6 improves, although White retains a monstrous initiative after 20.Nc7+!? Qxc7 21.Bxd6 Qb6 22.h5 Bh7 23.Bc4) 20.Bb5+ Nd7 21.Rxd5 Ra7 22.Rxd7 Rxd7 23.Rd1 would have been totally crushing.

19.dxc6?

Winants loses his way in the tactical mire. As he later pointer out in Informant 86, 19.Nb5! was correct, although he didn't mention the critical line 19...Qf6!? (otherwise the tactical attempt 19...axb2+ 20.Qxb2 cxd5 21.Nc7+ Qxc7 + 22.Bxc7 Ba3 pretty much loses to 23.Bb5+ Ke7 24.exd5, as pointed out by Winants, who also gives the complex line 19...Na6 20.dxe6! Qf6 21.Nd6+ Bxd6 22.Bxd6 Nb4!? 23.Bxb4 axb2+ 24.Qxb2 Ra1+ 25.Kc2 Qxb2+ 26.Kxb2 Rxd1 27.h5! and by this point White's large advantage is apparent) 20.Nc7+

Kd7 21.dxe6+ Kc8. However, it seems that White has the answer in 22.Nxa8 Qxf4+ 23.Kb1 Qxf3 24.Bd3 Bxe4 25.Qb3 with some advantage as Black's king remains far from safe.

19...Qf6!

Another strong resource and one which appears to give Black the initiative with White seemingly in some trouble on b2. Instead 19...axb2+?? would have been much, much weaker on account of 20.Kb1 Qxd1+ 21.Nxd1 Rxa2 22.c7 when the c-pawn decides.

20.Rd8+!!



Olé! White understandably doesn't fancy the defensive task after 20.Bd2 Bd6 and so sacrifices a whole rook to advance his c-pawn with tempo.

20...Qxd8 21.c7 axb2+

Essential because 21...Qc8? 22.cxb8Q Rxb8 23.Bxb8 Qxb8 would have run into 24.Bb5+. Winants also points out that Black finds himself short of a good move after 21...Qxc7? 22.Bxc7 axb2+ 23.Kxb2 Rxa2+ 24.Nxa2, since Nc6 25. Bb5 Kd7 26.Bg3 creates a killer pin.

22.Kb1!?

Best. Instead 22.Kxb2 Rxa2+ 23.Kxa2 Qxc7 24.Bxc7 Bb4! Would have enabled Black to defend. After 25.Kb3 Bxc3 26.Kxc3 Ke7 27.Bc4 his remaining bishop is bad and White does have the bishop pair, but there's no way past the solid defences.

22...Rxa2 23.Bb5+ Nd7 24.cxd8R+ Kxd8 25.Kxa2 f6!

Further good defence. Instead Winants explains that he was hoping for 25... Nc5? 26.Na4! Kc8 (26...Be7? 27.Rd1+ Kc8 28.Nxc5 Bxc5 29.Ba6 and mate fully illustrates the power of the bishop pair on an open board) 27.h5 Bh7 28. Kxb2 Kb7 29.Rc1 Nxa4+ 30.Bxa4 when White's rook is all set to invade with serious initiative.

26.Rd1 Be8 27.Na4 Ke7!

Unpinning and now Black is in time to untangle.

28.Kxb2 Ne5 29.Bxe8 Kxe8 30.Bxe5 fxe5

These pawns might be weak, but once again Black is very solidly placed and his bad bishop will hold everything together.

TIP: When in trouble it can be a good idea to head for an ending with all the remaining pawns on the same side, even at the cost of a bad structure, poor piece or a whole pawn. That's because it's often much harder to exploit a material or structural advantage when there isn't a passed pawn present.

31.Rc1 Kf7 32.Rc7+ Be7 33.Nc5 Rb8+ 34.Kc2 Rb5 35.Nd3 1/2-1/2

What an entertaining game.

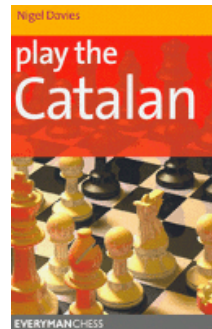
Players rated up to 2000 should benefit a great deal from this book; it will allow them to play the opening with a great deal of confidence. However, higher rated players will probably want more advanced material. Nevertheless, I recommend this to anyone looking for an opening for white that avoids the main line theory.

My assessment of this book: ♦♦♦♦♦

Order *Starting Out: The Trompowsky Attack*
by Richard Palliser

Play the Catalan by Nigel Davies, Everyman Chess 2009, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Paperback, 192pp., \$24.95 (ChessCafe Price: \$18.95)

In [April 2009](#), I reviewed Boris Avrukh's epic book, [Grandmaster Repertoire: 1.d4, Volume 1](#), where one of the primary openings was the Catalan: 1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 g3 d5 4 Nf3. As painstakingly detailed as Avrukh's work was, this book in contrast covers all the major lines and most of the minor ones as well. This enables you to discover if there are some lines that may appeal to you that are not included in Avrukh.



The material is divided as follows:

- Bibliography (1 page)
- Introduction (4 pages)
- Move Orders (1 page)
- The Main Line
- 1 Main Line with 10 Bd2 (14 pages)
- 2 Main Line with 10 Bf4 and Others (10 pages)
- 3 Main Line with 8 a4 (11 pages)
- 4 Main Line with 7 Ne5 and Others (15 pages)
- 5 Main Line with 6 Qc2 and 6 Nc3 (14 pages)
- The Closed Catalan
- 6 Closed Catalan with 7 Qc2 (15 pages)
- 7 Closed Catalan with 7 Nc3 (11 pages)
- 8 Closed Catalan with 4...Bb4+ (11 pages)
- The Open Catalan
- 9 Open Catalan with 5...Bb4+ (16 pages)
- 10 Open Catalan with 5...c5 (6 pages)
- 11 Open Catalan with 5...Nc6 (12 pages)
- 12 Open Catalan with 5...a6 (14 pages)
- 13 Open Catalan with 5...b5 and Others (11 pages)
- 14 Open Catalan with 5 Qa4+ (14 pages)
- Index of Variations (4 pages)
- Index of Games (1 page)

That's a lot of chapters and this could mean a lot of theory, but the book isn't long as it could have been. Davies has sorted through a great deal of material to trim it down to this tight volume of 192 pages. He presents the material around some well-chosen main games with a great deal of explanatory prose, original analysis, and many improvements and suggestions over existing theory.

I reckon this book would best serve players rated from 1700 to 2300, those rated below 1700 will have a hard time keeping up with the material and those rated above 2300 will need deeper coverage. Those in the aforementioned target group will richly benefit from studying the material in this well-written book.

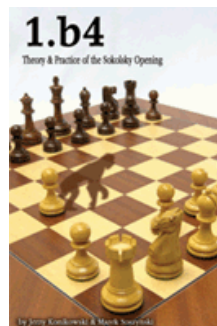
My assessment of this book: ♦♦♦♦♦

Order *Play the Catalan*

by Nigel Davies

1.b4 The Theory & Practice of the Sokolsky Opening by Jerzy Konikowski & Marek Soszynski, Russell Enterprises, Inc. 2009, Figurine Algebraic Notation, 315 pp., \$29.95 (ChessCafe Price: \$24.95)

Keen readers may remember from my [review](#) of [Play 1.b4!](#), by Lapshun and Conticello, that I wasn't particularly happy that book. In this new book, the Polish authors Konikowski and Soszynski have gone into far greater detail than Lapshun and Conticello ever dared.



The material is divided as follows:


- Preface (1 page)
- Acknowledgements & Selected English Bibliography (1 page)
- The Name (1 page)
- Signs & Symbols (1 page)
- Playing the Sokolsky (3 pages)
- Introduction (12 pages)
- 1.b4 a5 (11 pages)
- 1.b4 c6 (21 pages)
- 1.b4 e6 (45 pages)
- 1.b4 d5 2.Bb2 Nf6, 2...Qd6, 2...Bf5 (35 pages)
- 1.b4 Nf6 2.Bb2 g6 (33 pages)
- 1.b4 f5 (13 pages)
- 1.b4 e5 2.Bb2 f6 (55 pages)
- 1.b4 e5 2.Bb2 d6 (27 pages)
- 1.b4 e5 2.Bb2 e4 (8 pages)
- 1.b4 e5 2.Bb2 Bxb4 3.Bxe5 Nf6 4.c4 (22 pages)
- 1.b4 e5 2.Bb2 Bxb4 3.Bxe5 Nf6 4.Nf3 (16 pages)
- Afterword (1 page)
- Index of Games (3 pages)

The material is very structured and each chapter is segmented by opening theory and annotated games, with the latter referenced in the theoretical coverage. The authors provide a great deal of analysis and offer countless suggestions to the reader as improvements over existing theory. However, many of the game examples in the theoretical sections are quoted far too deep into the games, often with no analysis until an evaluation is offered beyond move twenty, in some cases even after move thirty. This gives the appearance of a database dump, even if that is not the case, and this is a shame.

Furthermore, the theoretical sections suffer from a lack of relevant prose, making it feel as if the presentation lacks soul. This is surprising because the opening is one that exemplifies passion and a willingness to be provocative.

In sharp contrast to the theoretical section, many of the games are reasonably well-annotated and entertaining. In fact, these sections could have been expanded and the theoretical sections trimmed throughout the book. While I like this book, it could be improved in many areas. Still, it makes a very good presentation on the current standing of each variation and how White can deal with the many so-called refutations that have been published over the years. It also features a cleverly designed cover that is a cut above the chess publishing norm. It is nice to see a little creativity in this area.

The authors contend that the opening is doing well and should be used much more frequently in practice. However, I don't know if new fans will rally to the cause as a result of this book. It isn't as heartfelt as Sokolsky's own book on this opening from a long time ago. Existing fans of 1 b4 will of course have to have it, but the rest of us are unlikely to ever run into this opening. In the many games I have played over the years, I have only had to face the Sokolosky four times.

My assessment of this book: 

[Order](#) *1.b4 Theory and Practice of the Sokolsky Opening*


by Jerzy Konikowski & Marek Soszynski

Chess Informant, Vol. 105 by Aleksandar Matanovic et al., Sahovski Informator 2009, Figurine Algebraic Notation, 333pp., \$36.00 (ChessCafe Price: \$27.95)

I had a number of criticisms in regard to volume 104; however, this volume is a bit better than the previous one. I like the fact that they are finally in the process of overhauling this favorite yearbook of mine to once again make it relevant for a new generation of chess players.

As well as sporting a new layout, this volume includes some theoretical articles in Chess Encyclopedia style. There is a very detailed article on the Scotch Game with 4...Bc5 (C45 - after 1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4), which takes up no less than thirty-six pages; further articles cover a line in the Najdorf (1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 a6 6 Be3 Ng4 7 Bg5 h6 8 Bh4 g5 9 Bg3 Bg7), a line in the Anti-Marshall (1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Ba4 Nf6 5 0-0 Be7 6 Re1 b5 7 Bb3 0-0 8 h3 Bb7 9 d3 d5 10 exd5 Nxd5), and a line in the Chebanenko Slav (1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 a6 5 e3 b5 6 b3 Bg4). This volume also features a small game biography on the former FIDE World Champion Ruslan Ponomarev.

Chess Informant has much to offer the serious and ambitious player. There is a wealth of first rate material. The mixture of complete, annotated games, combination exercises, endgame exercises, endgame studies, and opening theory makes this volume relevant and worthwhile.

My assessment of this book: 

[Order](#) *Chess Informant #105*

by Aleksandar Matanovic et al

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