



COLUMNISTS

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Carsten Hansen



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Rating Chart



**Reviewed this Month**

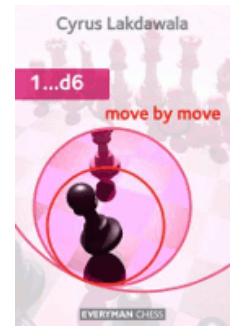
*The Ruy Lopez: Move by Move*  
by Neil McDonald

*The Four Knights Game*  
by Andrey Obodchuk

*The Petroff:  
An Expert Repertoire for Black*  
by Konstantin Sakaev

*Grandmaster Repertoire 10:  
The Tarrasch Defence*  
by Jacob Aagaard & Nikalao Ntirlis

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*1...d6: Move by Move*  
(Ebook)

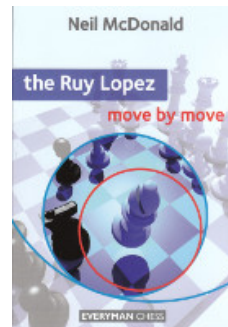
by Cyrus Lakdawala

Fresh Ideas in Classical Openings

This month we look at some of the oldest of openings: three books on the classical Open Games and one in the Classical Closed Game. Nevertheless, thanks to the authors efforts, the openings remain fresh with ideas.

*The Ruy Lopez: Move by Move* by Neil McDonald, Everyman Chess 2011, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Paperback, 317pp. \$27.95 (ChessCafe Price: \$23.95)

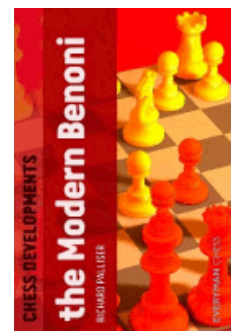
This new series from Everyman Chess appears to be gaining ground with several volumes already released and more on the way. The idea behind it is to present the material in a question-and-answer format to emulate what it would be like if the reader were asking questions of the author. The caveat being that it is up to the author to make sure that he presents pertinent questions and answers aimed at the level of the average reader. The fact that the authors so far have been experienced coaches and trainers, as well as strong players, has helped bring a certain level of authenticity to the process.



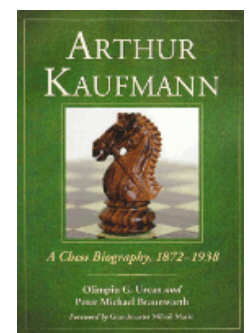
The material is divided as follows:

- Series Foreword (1 page)
- Introduction (4 pages)
- White Plays d2-d3 (8 subchapters – 60 pages)
- White Plays d2-d4 (6 subchapters – 87 pages)
- Black Plays ...Bc5 (4 subchapters – 36 pages)
- White's e5 Pawn Centre (3 subchapters – 61 pages)
- Gambit Lines (5 subchapters – 56 pages)
- Index of Variations (5 pages)
- Index of Complete Games (1 page)

This is a large book, in size and in number of pages, but the Ruy Lopez is a massively diverse opening with many sub-variations and it is difficult to give a balanced presentation that is heavy on explanatory prose without cutting corners. There is only so much room for material; therefore, many lines are not covered or are only discussed briefly when mentioned. That is not the



*Chess Developments:  
Modern Benoni* (Ebook)  
by Richard Palliser



*Arthur Kaufmann*  
by Olimpiu G. Urcan  
& Peter Michael Braunwarth

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fault of the author, but rather due to the enormity of the subject matter.

In fact, McDonald has done a decent job at this almost impossible task. The included lines are covered well, the questions posed seem well-chosen, and he has added a small number of exercises that he would have typically included in his own training sessions. This helps give the material an even more authentic one-on-one lesson-appearance.

I found this volume to be informative and instructive, and enjoyed reading it. For players who wish to adopt the Ruy Lopez as white, this book is an excellent place to start. It will explain the typical ideas, strategies, and tactical issues at hand, and will provide the outline of a solid and main line repertoire for White. However, the coverage is quite rudimentary and further practice will require deeper theoretical study of the lines. For example, entering the Marshall Gambit armed only with the understanding and theory provided by this volume borders on welcoming a disaster.

Thus, the book is not flawless book, but it is good. This title is also available as an [ebook in ChessBase format](#).

**My assessment of this book:**

**Order [The Ruy Lopez: Move by Move](#)  
by Neil McDonald**

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*The Four Knights Game* by Andrey Obodchuk, New In Chess 2011, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Paperback, 238pp. \$23.95 (ChessCafe Price: \$19.95)

The Four Knights Game is an incredibly old opening that has been revived periodically through the years. In the 1980s, there was an explosion in new top-level games after several English players, including Short and Nunn, incorporated the opening into their repertoires. In recent years, players such as Shirov, Sutovsky, and Rublevsky are infusing the opening with fresh ideas and it once again is proving to be a valid weapon at all levels of play.



The author is an international master and the IPCA (Physically Disabled) World Chess Champion in 2010 and 2011. In the present book, Obodchuk presents a repertoire for White that is simple enough for average players to adopt, yet sufficiently challenging for use by stronger players.

The material is divided as follows:


- Introduction (2 pages)
- The Three Knights' Opening (48 pages)
- The Four Knights – Black avoids the main line on move 4 (16 pages)
- The Symmetrical Variation – 1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Bb5 Bb4 (24 pages)
- The Metger System (16 pages)
- The Rubinstein System (48 pages)
- 5 Bc4 in the Rubinstein (42 pages)
- The Belgrade Gambit (22 pages)
- Afterword (2 pages)
- Bibliography (2 pages)
- Index of Variations (4 pages)
- Index of Players (6 pages)

The content is structured around sixty-four main games, with theory, analysis, and explanatory prose woven into the notes. I found the first couple of chapters to be the best, with a good balance of everything, including a fair amount of original analysis. However, the last chapters seem less inspired. There is a great concentration of game material given in the notes; to the

extent that it clearly resembles a database dump, which is unfortunate. Thankfully, this is not a consistent practice, but it happens enough to make the book a bit uneven.

Nevertheless, the book fulfills its intent and premise. It could have been better and this could have been accomplished rather easily. Some of the game notes could have been trimmed and some addition prose would have helped support the general understanding of the opening for the average player.

For those looking for a way to meet 1.e4 e5 without studying endless amounts of opening theory and still have clearly defined plans to work from, *The Four Knights Game* could prove a good place to start. However, it is neither the final word nor the most comprehensive volume to be written on this opening.

**My assessment of this book:** 

**Order [The Four Knights Game](#)**

by Andrey Obodchuk

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*The Petroff: An Expert Repertoire for Black* by Konstantin Sakaev, Chess Stars 2011, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Paperback, 292pp. \$32.95 (ChessCafe Price: \$29.95)

At one time it seemed that every top player utilized the Petroff in their repertoire. One reason for this is explained in the introduction: "The Petroff is an exceptionally reliable and almost indestructible opening, and a hard nut to crack, even for the strongest and most meticulously prepared grandmasters theoretically. It is no accident that the Petroff Defence, named after its inventor also known as the Russian Game, has for many years been the main opening weapon of Vladimir Kramnik and Boris Gelfand and has also been played regularly by Vishy Anand and Alexey Shirov. Nowadays there are also several very young and talented grandmasters who play it, such as Wesley So and Anish Giri. Anatoly Karpov and Artur Yusupov have been using it as a part of their opening armoury throughout their chess careers... The list could go on and on."



Sakaev himself is a very strong grandmaster, with much experience in the Petroff, who also worked as a trainer for Kramnik. This makes the book all the more interesting, especially because Sakaev holds nothing back when presenting interesting ideas and improvements. He also enlightens the reader with a broader understanding of the ideas of the opening from the perspective of both sides of the board.

The material is divided as follows:

- Preface
- Part 1: All White Replies w/o 2 Nf3 (4 chapters – 42 pages)
- Part 2: All White Replies w/o 3 d4 and 3 Nxe5 (4 chapters – 22 pages)
- Part 3: Petroff Defence 3 d4 (7 chapters – 42 pages)
- Part 4: Petroff Defence 3 Nxe5 (14 chapters – 130 pages)
- Complete Games (47 pages)

The book is structured like a typical repertoire book, where Sakaev goes over each line and presents a repertoire choice for Black. It starts with the basic deviations on move two, including the King's Gambit and it gradually progresses, with some chapters beginning at positions as late as move sixteen.

While the Petroff is a very solid opening, Sakaev doesn't propose a repertoire that leads to sterile equality. Throughout the book he offers original ideas and analysis that appears to come straight out of his personal notebooks or computer, and that is wonderfully refreshing. Of the complete games, we find

a number annotated in considerably more detail than others.

As Sakaev points out in the preface, a theoretically well-founded player with the white pieces, who is open to draw, should be able to obtain one without much difficulty. Yet, the same can also be said about many other openings that are popular in contemporary top-level chess.

Here is a game with the author as black:

**Emil Sutovsky (2676) – Konstantin Sakaev (2625)**  
Serbia Team Ch (Kragujevac) 2009

**1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.Nxe5 0–0 5.Be2 Re8 6.Nd3 Bxc3 7.dxc3 Nxe4 8.Nf4 d6 9.0–0 Nc6 10.a4 h6!? 11.a5 a6!? 12.c4 Bf5 13.Ra3 Nf6 14.Rg3 Ne4 15.Re3 Nf6 16.Rg3 Ne4 17.Re3 Nf6 18.Rxe8+ Qxe8 19.Re1 Nxa5 20.Nd5 Nxd5 21.cxd5 Qe4!**



[FEN "r5k1/1pp2pp1/p2p3p/n2P1b2/4q3/8/1PP1BPPP/2BQR1K1 w - - 0 22"]

According to Sakaev, Sutovsky had missed this move. Now White has a hard time justifying his sacrifice of a pawn.

**22.Bd2 Qxd5 23.Bf3 Qb5 24.Bc3 Nc6 25.Bd5 Rf8!**


"Black has consolidated his position" and now Black can focus on actually winning the game.

**26.h3 Kh7 27.h4 f6 28.f4 Qc5+ 29.Kf1 Nb4 30.Bb3 d5**

Now Black is plainly winning. Sakaev never lets go of the initiative and the advantage.

**31.Qh5 Bg6 32.Qg4 d4 33.Bxb4 Qxb4 34.Kf2 d3 35.h5 Qc5+ 36.Kg3 Bf5 37.Qd1 dxc2 38.Qd2 Kh8 39.Kh4 Qb6 40.Re3 a5 41.g4 Bh7 42.Rc3 c6 43.f5 a4 44.Bxa4 Qxb2 45.Rxc2 Qb1 46.Rc1 Qb6 47.Bc2 Rd8 48.Qf4 Bg8 49.Rb1 Qc5 50.Be4 Qe7 51.Re1 Rd4 52.Re2 Kh7 53.Qf3 Qd6 54.Qg3 Qb4 55.Bf3 Rd3 56.Qc7 Rxf3 57.Re3 Rf4 0–1**

For its intended audience, this book is a must buy. It is fairly advanced, so you have to be a reasonably strong player to benefit from the coverage. Not everything is explained for average players to understand and many lines are long and demand a certain playing level to make sense.

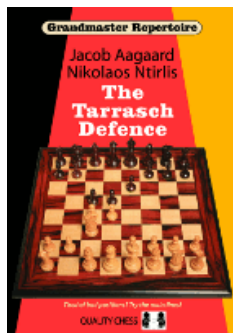
**My assessment of this book:** 

**Order [The Petroff: an Expert Repertoire for Black](#)**  
by Konstantin Sakaev

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*Grandmaster Repertoire 10: The Tarrasch Defence* by Jacob Aagaard & Nikalao Ntirlis, Quality Chess 2011, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Paperback, 352pp. \$34.95 (ChessCafe Price: \$28.95)

German World Champion Candidate Siegbert Tarrasch considered the defense that carries his name the correct way to counter the Queen's Gambit; one that ultimately lead to equality. However, that was in the 1890s and there have been many turns in the road since then. A major turning



point was Rubinstein's set-up with g3, which has now become the main line in the opening. Meanwhile, the black side has had its share of high-class supporters, with Kasparov Grischuk being the most notable. In assaying the Tarrasch Defense, Black commits to taking on an isolated pawn in return for active counterplay, which is not to everyone's taste. Further, many of the lines are rather long, forced, and some lead to positions where Black's chances of anything more than a draw is questionable.

The material is divided as follows:

- Bibliography (1 page)
- Keys to Symbols used (1 page)
- Preface by Nikolaos Ntirlis (3 pages)
- Preface by Jacob Aagaard (1 page)
- Introduction (10 pages)
- **1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 c5 4 cxd5 exd5 5 Nf3 Nc6 6 g3 Nf6 7 Bg2 Be7 8 0-0 0-0 9 Bg5 c4!**
- Various 10th Moves (19 pages)
- Various 11th Moves (9 pages)
- 11 Rc1 (10 pages)
- 11 e3 (15 pages)
- 11 f4 (15 pages)
- 11 Nxc6 and 11 b3 (12 pages)
- 16 Rc1! (15 pages)
- 16 Qc2 (15 pages)
- **1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 c5 4 cxd5 exd5 5 Nf3 Nc6 6 g3 Nf6 7 Bg2 Be7 8 0-0 0-0 9 dxc5 Bxc5**
- Minor 10th Moves (13 pages)
- Reti Variation (18 pages)
- 10 Bg5 (20 pages)
- Timman Variation – Introduction (13 pages)
- Timman Variation – Main Line (23 pages)
- **1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 c5 4 cxd5 exd5 5 Nf3 Nc6 6 g3 Nf6 7 Bg2 Be7 8 0-0 0-0**
- 9th Move Alternatives (16 pages)
- **Early Deviations**
- Set-ups without Nc3 (21 pages)
- Various 6th Moves (14 pages)
- 6 dxc5! – Introduction and 9 Bd2 (16 pages)
- 6 dxc5! – 9 Qd2 (22 pages)
- Various 5th Moves (12 pages)
- Various 4th Moves (22 pages)
- Variation Index (7 pages)

The book is primarily written as a repertoire for Black, but, just as with the other titles in the *Grandmaster Repertoire* series, White will also benefit from studying the recommendations. The authors take the theory of this opening several years into the future with their countless improvements over existing theory and analysis, including several very important new ideas for White. For instance, in chapter eleven, where White plays 9 dxc5 Bxc5 10 Bg5 they uncork a spectacular novelty that they analyze as leading to an even endgame or equal chances, but the path is full of pitfalls for both sides and accurate play and keen understanding of the positions is required.

Here is an example from chapter ten in a line that is critical for the future of the opening:

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 c5 4 cxd5 exd5 5 Nf3 Nc6 6 g3 Nf6 7 Bg2 Be7 8 0-0 0-0 9 dxc5 Bxc5 10 Na4 Be7 11 Be3 Bg4 12 Rc1 Re8 13 Nc5



[FEN "r2qr1k1/pp2bPPP/2n2n2/2Np4/6b1/4BNP1/PP2PPBP/2RQ1RK1 b - - 0 13"]

This move was recommended by Avrukh in [Grandmaster Repertoire 1: 1.d4, Vol. 1](#). The position arose in a blitz game of coauthor Ntirlis, who eventually settled on the provocative **13...Qb6!?**, and White did not achieve much. As the story goes, the authors gave the novelty to GM Moraidiabadi who had to face GM Delchev in a game that continued **14 Nb3 Qa6 15 a3 Rac8 16 Re1 h6 17 Bc5 Bd8** (the authors also point to 17...Na5!? and 17...Bxc5 as viable alternatives) **18 b3 Bf5 19 Bf1**, and now, instead of 19...Be4, as played by Black in the game, the authors offer **19...b6! 20 Bd6 Qb7 21 Nbd4 Nxd4 22 Nxd4 Rxc1 23 Qxc1 Bd7** with an unclear position and approximately equal chances.

This is just one example out of a whole host of novelties presented in this fine volume. If Black's cause in this opening was ever in doubt, this book takes a great step in putting it firmly back in business.

Anyone playing the Tarrasch as black on a serious level, or potentially facing it as white should consider this book a must buy. The caveat being that it is for advanced players rated above 2000 or so.

This book is also available as [a hardcover edition](#).

My assessment of this book:

Order [Grandmaster Repertoire 10: The Tarrasch Defence](#)

by Jacob Aagaard & Nikalaos Ntirlis

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