



## C O L U M N I S T S

**Checkpoint**

Carsten Hansen

**Reviewed this month:**

***Anti-Sicilians: A Guide for Black***  
by Dorian Rogozenko

***The Franco-Benoni*** (CD-ROM)  
by Don Maddox

***White Repertoire 1.e4*** (CD-ROM)  
by Alexander Bangiev

***Chess Informant 86***  
by Aleksandar Matanovic et al

**A Guide to Freedom**

It should hardly be a surprise for anyone that the Sicilian is still one of the most popular openings around these days. While I have played a number of other openings, it seems like the Sicilian has always taken up a prominent part of my opening repertoire as Black. Why? The easiest explanation is that it offers Black good chances of playing for a win without having to take too many chances or allowing White too many drawish options. While it is possible for Black to play for a win, it isn't exactly easy in the openings like Exchange French (1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 exd5 exd5), Exchange Ruy Lopez (1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Bxc6), The Exchange Petroff (1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 Nxe5 d6 4 Nf3 Nxe4 5 Qe2 Qe7 6 d3) as well as many other lines. Another explanation is that it offers plenty of opportunities for creating unbalanced and interesting positions without having

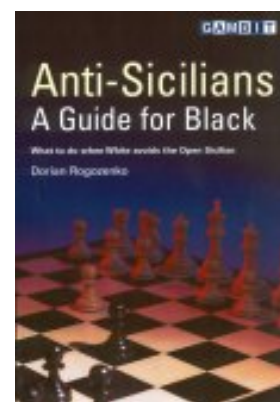


to risk the house. Needless to say, many players have found that one or more lines in the Sicilian offer just that for them. A few years ago, it seemed like the popularity of the Najdorf Sicilian (1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 a6) had no end in sight, but gradually attention seems to have switched to the Sveshnikov (1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 e5 6 Ndb5 d6 6 Bg5 a6 7 Na3 b5), which even Kasparov has starting using in favour of his beloved Najdorf. Also, a quick look in *Chess Informant*, (the latest installment is reviewed this month), confirms this trend.

So what does White do when facing the Sicilian, where Black has more main line choices than most people have time to study? Well, that is where the Anti-Sicilians come in and spoil the fun. I, along with many others, have at one time or the other, felt it was perfectly okay to ban these annoying lines that too many spoilsports were embracing. This month reviews all feature something regarding the Sicilian, either for White or Black.

*Anti-Sicilians: A Guide for Black* by Dorian Rogozenko, 2003 Gambit Publishing, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Paperback, 192 pp., \$22.95

Ah, yes! This is the book that inspired the title this month. For all Sicilian devotees, what better book could possibly be published? I'm quite certain that the arrival of this book caused jubilation here and there. Granted the popularity of the many Anti-Sicilians, it is rather surprising that we haven't seen more books of this kind.



The English/Swiss GM Joe Gallagher wrote an excellent book on the same theme some years ago, but other than that, there has not been much else. There have been other attempts, such as Silman's *Winning with the Sicilian Defence* or to a much lesser degree, Ward's *Winning with the Sicilian Dragon 2*. Both of these two books had

their main focus on a line in the open Sicilian (with 3 d4), but Silman had reasonable coverage of the Anti-Sicilian lines as well, while Ward's book almost exclusively dealt with the Dragon and only gave a very superficial guide to handling these awkward lines.

The publisher, Gambit, fortunately had the insight to commission this book, and who better could they have chosen, but a grandmaster who plays the Sicilian with Black himself and in addition is accustomed with presenting material in an easy-to-understand manner, as can be seen on ChessBase's PlayChess.com server, where the author, Moldavian Dorian Rogozenko, provides regular and popular training sessions.

Let's take a look at what this book covers:

- Introduction (4 pages)
- 1 Early Deviations (10 pages)
- 2 The Grand Prix Attack (15 pages)
- 3 The Closed Sicilian (14 pages)
- 4 The Alapin Variation (2 c3) (34 pages)
- 5 Miscellaneous Lines after 2 Nf3 (49 pages)
- 6 3 Bb5 (+) Lines (49 pages)
- 7 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Qxd4 (9 pages)
- Index of Variations (3 pages)

The author has made a conscious effort to cover all material, so there is something for everyone, whether your Sicilian repertoire is based on lines after 2...d6, 2...Nc6 or 2...e6. In general, I think, he has succeeded pretty well, although he has made some choices which I personally do not think will be to everybody's taste.

I particularly don't like his recommendation of 1 e4 c5 2 Nc3 Nc6 3 Nf3 e5. I'm well aware that many world-class players have played this line, and the weakness of the d5-square may well be tolerable for adherents of the Sveshnikov and

Najdorf Sicilians, but for Dragon players, this 3...e5 business is almost offensive, excluding virtually any possibility of having a bishop dominate the a1-h8 diagonal. Then there is the Morra-Smith Gambit (1 e4 c5 2 d4 cxd4 3 c3, which he has chosen to decline with 3...Nf6. This is of course a perfectly acceptable way of chickening out, but why not offer a way for Black to accept this gambit?

There are also a few of things I found lacking. After 1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 g6, I didn't see any coverage of 4 Nc3, which results in a position which was on the board in for example in Morozevich-Savchenko, Moscow 2002, a game in which Black was routed.

Also, in the Closed Sicilian, several of White's options are not mentioned at all. For example after 1 e4 c5 2 Nc3 Nc6 3 g3 g6 4 Bg2 Bg7 5 d3 d6, the two main lines 6 Be3 and 6 f4 are both covered reasonably well, although here too some details are missing. Rogozenko also has a mention of 6 Nge2, but nothing on 6 Nf3, 6 Bg5, 6 h4 or 6 Nh3, which has been employed by such Closed Sicilian specialists as Ex-World Champs Smyslov and Spassky as well as, most recently, British Super-GM Nigel Short. Last year Short hammered the Chinese World Champ for women, Zhu Chen in the FIDE Grand Prix in Dubai in this line.

Then I also came across two transpositional hiccups. In the Closed Sicilian, he recommends 6...e5 against 6 Be3 and 6...e6 against 6 f4, but if White realizes Black's intentions, he can put a spanner in the works. This is how: 1 e4 c5 2 Nc3 e6 (which he covers in the Grand Prix Attack chapter), and now Rogozenko gives the main line as 3 f4, but also writes: "If White plays 3 g3, then Black can transpose to the Closed Sicilian with 3...Nc6 4 Bg2 g6, etc.", but forgetting that with Black already committed to ...e6, he cannot get the desired line if White proceeds with 5 d3 Nge7 6 Be3. And after 1 e4 c5 2 d3, Black can run into a transpositional problem if he follows Rogozenko's recommendation of

2...Nc6 3 g3 g6 4 Bg2 Bg7 5 f4 d6 6 Nf3 e5, after which he only covers 7 c3, 7 0-0, 7 f5, but with 7 Nc3, we have another line which isn't featured in this book.

By the way, the author's comments at the beginning of the chapter on the Closed Sicilian are worth noting: "In the 1990s the Closed Sicilian considerably lost its popularity for several reasons. First of all, its previous adherents, such as Smyslov, Hort and especially Spassky, ceased to develop it, and other players failed to impress with it. Secondly, Black has found clear ways to parry White's active intentions." The three names he names were well beyond their prime in the beginning of the 1990s, so it can hardly be them the White players should look for ideas from, but the fact that I found 172 games from 1995 and onwards between players rated 2450 and above, including Adams, Short, Fedorov, Giorgadze, Lautier, Bologan, King and many, many other well-known names.

While I'm in a critical mode, I have to point out that I'm somewhat surprised by the bibliography. Several monographs covering specific Anti-Sicilians are not to be found; a few examples are Pedersen's book on the 3 Bb5 Sicilian, Lane's *Ultimate Closed Sicilian* or Rozentalis' *Play the 2 c3 Sicilian*. The latter can perhaps be excused as it was published quite recently, but if he had consulted the other works, he might have been able to avoid some omissions, although the ones I have noted are not a matter of life or death.

But before you call you chess bookstore to cancel your order for this book, I have to mention that I actually do like the vast majority of the material he has chosen for this book as well as the way presentation of the material. In the most critical lines, he usually offers both a solid choice and a more aggressive one. The coverage of each line is generally well-balanced with instructive prose and useful analysis. In addition, I found that Rogozenko has added a fair amount of

his own analysis with a number of possible improvements over existing theory. In some cases, I feel that he could have added a few more moves in his analysis as well as in the game examples, but this is obviously a matter of taste. But for the group of players this book is aimed at, I think this could have been worthwhile.

While I think, Rogozenko is fairly objective in his coverage, I have come across a couple of examples where he, to prove his case, apparently doesn't give White's best move, leaving an impression that everything is smooth sailing for Black. This is a fairly common trait in most repertoire books, but authors could learn a thing or two from British GM John Emms who calls every shot as he sees them.

I mainly focused on the drawbacks that I found in this book, but as mentioned above I generally like this book, and I think it will serve many players of the Sicilian very well, not only as source of inspiration and new ideas in specific lines, but also due to the balanced coverage with plenty of prose for the less-experienced to gather understanding of the given positions from.

**My assessment of this book:** 

[Order](#) *Anti-Sicilians: A Guide for Black*  
by Dorian Rogozenko

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*The Franco-Benoni* (CD-ROM) by Don Maddox, 2003  
ChessBase HmbH, Figurine Algebraic Notation, CD-ROM,  
\$24.95

What on earth is this? That was my first thought, when I received this CD. The back of the DVD didn't really enlighten me: "...the Franco-Benoni is, as its name implies, a cross between the French and the Benoni based on 1...e6 and 2...c5." Eh?! I will return to that shortly.



The author of this CD is making a name for himself with these CDs published by ChessBase. The present one is his third; the two previous were *The Reti* and *The King's Indian Attack*. In addition to that, we are told on the back cover that he is a strong correspondence player and former editor of *Chess Life* magazine.

I found the material to be a combination of some below-average introductory texts and an even more sub-standard coverage of the theory, which turned out to an eclectic mix of lines from the Open Sicilian with 2...e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Bc5!?, the 2 c3 Sicilian, Owen's Defence, the Symmetrical English, the Modern Benoni, the Schmid Benoni and a few other things. The introductory texts emphasize the fact that these lines in combination are excellent as surprise weapons, but in my opinion, the author should have gone then to some lengths to make the lines work properly for Black. This is for example not the case in the Morphy-Paulsen with 4...Bc5. Against the theoretical main line: 1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Bc5!? 5 Nb3 Bb6 6 Nc3 Ne7 7 Bf4 d5 8 exd5, he now suggests 8...Nxd5!? with a slight advantage for White, offering no further analysis. In the text *Key Franco-Benoni Positions*, he lists two games as illustrative games, but neither game features the theoretical main line, nor are the games annotated, something which annoyed me terribly. According to the ECO, the main line is 7...exd5, and this also leads to a slight advantage for White, but it at least attempts to keep more pieces on the board, which is useful, if not necessary, when you take on an isolated pawn in the opening. How can I, or any potential buyer for that matter,

take this seriously?

I found that the majority of the illustrative games that were linked from the introductory texts were left unannotated, an approach I'm completely against as most regular club players, for whom this CD is aimed, will not have any chance of figuring out where White or Black went wrong.

The training games, which also should be an integral part of a CD of this kind, are poorly done. They mainly consist of one question only, leaving the rest of the game as a blur for the student.

On one place on this CD, I am called GM Carsten Hansen, but this is unfortunately a title I have not yet qualified for, nor probably ever will, but even this will not soften my heart towards this product, which I find very disappointing, and I find hard to see, why anybody should buy it, when so little effort has been put into it by the author. I find it hard to believe that the author would have spent more than a couple of days putting the material on this CD together.

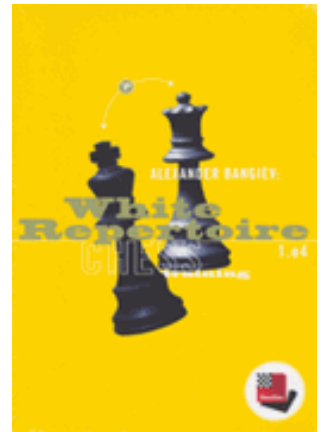
I usually find that ChessBase's opening CDs raise the bar with their releases, as the Bangiev CD below illustrates, but this CD hits the floor with hollow thud...

**My assessment of this CD:** 

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*White Repertoire 1.e4* (CD-ROM) by Alexander Bangiev, 2003 ChessBase GmbH, Figurine Algebraic Notation, CD-ROM, \$29.95

With this CD, ChessBase takes its first step into the world of repertoire CDs, whereas previously ChessBase has mainly focused on monographs covering one or in some cases two different opening lines.



The author of the present work is Alexander Bangiev, an international master who has been living in Germany since 1991. He has authored other ChessBase: *The Tarrasch Defence*, *The King's Gambit*, *Lexikon of Gambits*, and *Philidor Defence*. Evidently ChessBase must be happy with his output since they continue to publish his work.

The back cover blurb on the DVD cover tells us the following: "The main focus of Alexander Bangiev's repertoire CD is the Grand Prix Attack of the Sicilian Defence, featuring a wealth of introduction texts, playing suggestions and annotated games about this sharp attacking weapon. Yet this is only the starting point of a complete White 1.e4-repertoire which offers a playing plan against all common replies by Black. The point: the suggested lines have a lot in common, often transpose and many times lead to similar middlegame positions - effective opening study guaranteed."

In addition we are told that the CD is suitable for advanced players, which is somewhat unusual as most of their opening CDs are intended for club players. Usually products for more advanced players demand more independent work by the author and that can occasionally be a problem. There are also 600 games annotated by the author and 8 databases with more than 60,000 games and a training database.

This is all well and good, but let's look at the contents, as the Grand Prix Attack in the Sicilian shouldn't be an opening that strikes fear in most advanced players, and, as claimed by

Rogozenko in the book mentioned above, there isn't any Anti-Sicilian that offers White an advantage. That of course doesn't mean that interesting lines are prevented altogether, lines in which familiarity can aid the better-prepared player...

The contents are as follows:

- Introduction
- A. 1.e4 e5 2.Nc3 followed by 3.f4
- B. 1.e4 c5 2.Nc3 followed by 3.f4, and 2.f4
- C. 1.e4 e6 3.d4 d5 3.e5 and 2.f4 d5 3.f4 [sic!]
- D. 1.e4 c6 3.d4 d5 3.e5
- C. 1.e4 d6 3.Nc3 Nf6 3.f4
- E. 1.e4 g6 2.Nc3 Bg7 3.f4

These are clearly not all run-of-the-mill lines that you come across every day, with the exception of the advance variations against the Caro-Kann and French Defences. In the French, I am sure you noticed the typo, "2 f4 d5 3 f4", he of course meant 3 e5, which even so is a very rarely played line. In the introductory text, the author states that the idea behind this repertoire is to "allow its user to strive for the initiative [sic] in the first moves. The defence is therefore sometimes somewhat neglected and sometimes material has to be sacrifice [sic] in order to gain time or other goals. The main goal of an active repertoire is to get an attack against the opponent's king." (Better editing is clearly required.) Nonetheless, the texts you find throughout are fairly easily understood and should you be able to read German, you have that option too. Speaking of language, I found it somewhat odd that when you look at the contents of the CD, everything is in German, e.g., "Vorwort des Autors" (Author's Foreword), "Repertoire Weiss 1.e4" (White Repertoire 1 e4) as well as defence being given as "Vert.", short for the German Verteidigung. In order to better serve both English and German readers, this could have been better presented by the publisher.

Somehow the Alekhine didn't make it to the above contents list, but it is nonetheless covered. The recommended line is 1 e4 Nf6 2 Nc3 d5 3 e5, which incidentally is a line I had some interest in some years back. Nowadays, however, I find that Black has a relatively easy time after 3...Ne4 4 Nce2 d4, so I was curious to see what Bangiev had come up with. He recommends 5 c3, which, according to Davies in his fairly recent *Alekhine's Defence*, Sawyer in *The Alekhine Defense Playbook*, as well as in several other books including *NCO*, it can be sufficiently met by 5...dxc3!?, rather than the standard 5...Nc6. However, on this CD, the only coverage of this move is the following sentence: "weaker is 5...dxc3 [KeyLink], after which White can play 6.bxc3 or 6.Da4+ [sic - this is the German way of writing Qa4+] to get an advantage." Not particularly impressive given that 6 Qa4+ is a dubious move according to *NCO*. The main problem is that 6 Qa4+ is met with 6...Nd7, and now 7 Qxe4?? loses to 7...Nc5. Obviously 7 bxc3 or 6 bxc3 are both better moves, but the current standing in this line promises Black excellent chances of at least equal chances, but none of this is covered on this CD, so Black may even have chances of obtaining an edge against a less-than-prepared player behind the White pieces. This is obviously a problem, which I hope will be taken care of if this CD is to be updated at some point.

Despite this drawback, I found the coverage to quite good with a lot of input by Bangiev. All games that were linked from the database texts are annotated, which is something I have repeatedly asked for when reviewing ChessBase CDs. This pattern by the way is repeated in every single database text. This makes the CD much better than it otherwise would have been, had this not been done.

Quite critical for the overall coverage is the part on the Sicilian Grand Prix Attack. The Grand Prix Attack is one of my favourite openings to play against. In my opinion, one of the more critical lines for White is **1 e4 c5 2 Nc3 Nc6 3 f4**

**g6 4 Nf3 Bg7 5 Bc4 e6 6 f5 Nge7 7 fxe6 fxe6 8 d3 d5 9 Bb3 b5.** Bangiev seems to concur, but it is unclear to me what he recommends for White against this line. He covers several lines, but it doesn't seem like he really invests the time and effort needed to make this line work for White, which in any event will be a difficult job to do. Instead he illustrates a variety of choices, but Black seems to be doing fine in all of them.

Despite the above minor hiccups and my doubts regarding certain repertoire choices, I found this CD to be easily one of the best opening CDs from ChessBase. The author has gone to great lengths to explain typical ideas, pawn structures and much more. The abundance of annotated games by the author is also impressive. The annotations contain both narrative, plenty of original analysis and improvements over existing theory for both White and Black.

While I disagree with the statement on the back of the DVD cover that this CD is for advanced players, because of the repertoire choices, it can easily be used by advanced players. I think the target audience for this CD is players rated between 1400-2200.

The enthusiasm by the author for the chosen lines and his material is quite contagious and should you need some inspiration to play against any of the many openings Black can opt for after 1 e4, this CD can certainly help you with some fresh and entertaining ideas offering excellent chances for pursuing the initiative right from the first move.

**My assessment of this book:** 

[Order](#) *White Repertoire 1.e4* (CD-ROM)  
by Alexander Bangiev

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*Chess Informant 86* by Aleksandar Matanovic et al., 2003  
Sahovski Informator, Figurine Algebraic Notation,  
paperback, 381 pp., \$36.00

This is one of the three times each year where our friends in Belgrade publish the latest volume with the most important and interesting games from the previous 4-6 months.

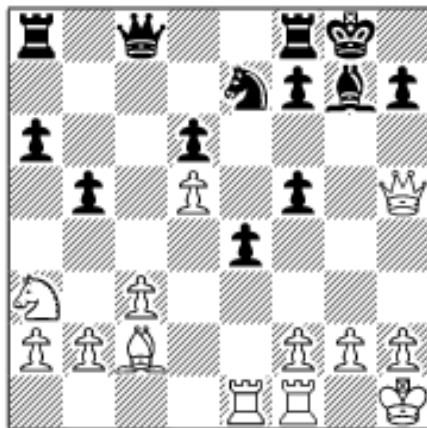


The content is, as usual, lined up as follows:

- Contributors (2 pages)
- The Ten Best Games of the Preceding Volume (2 pages)
- The Ten Most Important Theoretical Novelties of the Preceding Volume (4 pages)
- Code System (3 pages)
- Classifications of Openings (6 pages)
- A (25 pages)
- B (118 pages)
- C (66 pages)
- D (48 pages)
- E (48 pages)
- Index (10 pages)
- Commentators (2 pages)
- Combinations (7 pages)
- Endings (6 pages)
- Tournaments (10 pages)
- The Best of Chess Informant - Ivanchuk (22 pages)

The first thing I took a look at in this present volume was the most important theoretical novelty of the preceding volume. Not surprisingly, the winner was Leko's 'novelty' against Shirov, from the Einstein Candidate Tournament in Dortmund last year. Interestingly enough, the novelty that Leko played, 18...Rb8!, after the initial moves: **1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 e5 6 Ndb5 d6 7 Bg5**

**a6 8 Na3 b5 9 Bxf6 gxf6 10 Nd5 f5 11 Bd3 Be6 12 0-0  
Bxd5 13 exd5 Ne7 14 c3 Bg7 15 Qh5 e4 16 Bc2 0-0 17  
Rae1 Qc8 18 Kh1**



The interesting story here is, however, not that Leko played the strong move, but that it had been played before. As I have mentioned, if you check games between top correspondence players, you are bound to find interesting new ideas, and this is no exception. In a game played 4 (!!) years earlier, Toro Solis de Ovando,G (2556) - Leotard,C (2590), corr 1998, the move was first tested. The final moves of the game went as follows: **18...Rb8** 19 Bb3 Ng6 20 f4 exf3 21 Qxf3 f4 22 Nc2 a5 23 a3 Qd7 24 Re2 ½-½

Incidentally, I think that 19 Bb3 probably is one of White's better moves, guarding the weak pawn on d5 and making room for the lame knight on a3 to jump back to c2. However, in another recent game, White tried something that wasn't even suggested in the annotations to the game:

### ***Abreu (2455)-Handke (2506) Capablanca Memorial Havana 2003***

**19 f3**

This was also Shirov's choice of move.

**19...b4 20 fxe4!?**

Rather than playing Shirov's 20 Nb1, White temporarily sacrifices a piece for a dangerous attack. The annotations only mentioned the weaker 20 cxb4?.

**20...bxa3 21 exf5 Rxb2**

Black decides to return the piece immediately and activate his rook, but White keeps the upper hand.

**22 f6 Ng6 23 fxg7 Kxg7 24 Bd3 Qxc3 25 Re3 Rf2?**

It's only here that Black gets himself in serious trouble. The correct move was 25...Kg8! to make room for the queen on g7 to protect the h-pawn in event of White playing Rh3 as in the game continuation.

**26 Rh3 Rxf1+ 27 Bxf1 Qc1 28 Qxh7+ Kf6 29 Rf3+ Ke7 30 Qg7 Ne5 31 Qf6+ Kd7 32 Rb3 Rc8?**

Now the wheels comes off. The only move was 32...Rh8, threatening 33...Rxb2 34 Kxb2 Ng4+, forking the white queen, and 33 h3 is answered with 33...Rh6 covering the d6-pawn, while kicking the queen away. In the game continuation, Black is slowly, but not particularly convincingly, being put away.

**33 Rb7+ Rc7 34 Rb8 Rc8 35 Qf5+ Kd8 36 Rxc8+ Qxc8 37 Qxc8+ Kxc8 38 Bxa6+ Kc7 39 Be2 Kb6 40 Bd1 Kc5 41 Bb3 Kd4 42 h4 Ng4 43 g3 Ke4 44 Kg2 f6 45 Bc2+ Ke5 46 Kf3 f5 47 h5 Nh6 48 Ba4 Ng4 49 Bd7 Nh6 50 Be6 Kd4 51 Bd7 Ke5 52 Ke3 Ng4+ 53 Kd3 Kf6 54 Be6 Kg5 55 Kc4 Kxh5 56 Kb5 Ne3 57 Kc6 Kg4 58 Kxd6 Kxg3 59 Kc5 f4 60 d6 f3 61 Bc8 Nc4 62 d7 f2 63 d8Q f1Q 64 Qg5+ Kh2 65 Qh4+ Kg1 66 Qg3+ 1-0**

It's been awhile since we last looked at novelties that are awarded a '!!!'. In the present volume, we find a little selection of the powerful new moves. The first example I came across is the following:

***S.Solovjov-Shaposhnikov, St.Petersburg (blitz) 2002***  
**1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 Bf5 4 Nc3 e6 5 g4 Bg6 6 Nge2 c5 7 h4 h5 8 Nf4 Nc6 9 Nxg6 fxg6 10 Ne2 Qb6 11 Nf4 cxd4 12 Nxg6 Bb4+ 13 Ke2 Nge7!!! N**

Prior to this game, this move had been played in *Cordeiro-Sopanen, Marcos Koatz Memorial A corr 2001*, a game which was won by White and can be found on MegaCorr3 from *ChessMail*.

The next one is:

***Kurnosov-Kokarev, Serpukhov 2002***

**1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 a6 6 Bg5 e6 7 f4 Qb6 8 Qd2 Qxb2 9 Nb3 Nbd7 10 Bxf6 gxf6 11 Be2 Nc5 12 0-0 Bd7 13 Rab1 Qa3 14 f5 Nxb3 15 Rxb3 Qc5+ 16 Kh1 Rc8?! 17 Bh5 Ke7 18 e5!! N**

This move also had first been tried out in a correspondence game: *Milvydas-Marek, Yugoslavia-USSR corr 1974*.

Next up is:

***Todorovic- Kallio, Budapest 2002***

**1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 g3 Nd4 5 Nxe5!! N**, which is a genuine novelty with no previous examples. The normal move is 5 Bg2, but it's rather amazing that no one had tried this logical, albeit somewhat daring acceptance of Black's gambit.

Then we get to:

***Gelfand-Bacrot, Albert 2002***

**1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Nf3 a6 5 Qc2 dxc4 6 e4 b5 7 a4 e6!! N**. Another genuine novelty.

***Vul-Markosian, Moscow 2002***

**1 Nf3 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 g3 Bg7 4 Bg2 0-0 5 d4 d6 6 Nc3 Nbd7 7 0-0 e5 8 e4 exd4 9 Nxd4 Re8 10 h3 Nc5 11 Re1 a5 12 Ndb5 Nfd7 13 Bg5!! N**, but like the previous examples, this had first been tried out in correspondence chess, *May-Hildner, Corr 1999*.


The last game had also been ignored by Janjgava in his otherwise good book on the Fianchetto Lines in the King's Indian and the Grünfeld. Nonetheless the fact that three of these '!!N' moves had been played in postal chess, should really serve as a wake-up call for those of you who still think that there is nothing of value in this form of chess. Speaking postal play, it is noteworthy that the present volume features a rare example of correspondence chess at the very highest level. The game is van Oosterom-Bang from the NBC e-mail tournament. White, who is probably better known as the organizer of the Amber tournaments in Monaco, played a phenomenal game, which I will give to you here without the winner's annotations, but which take up a full page in Chess Informant:

*Van Oosterom -Bang*

**Elite 50JEGMT ICCF Email, 2002**

**1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Ba4 Nf6 5 0-0 Be7 6 Re1 b5  
7 Bb3 0-0 8 a4 Bb7 9 d3 d6 10 Nbd2 Nd7 11 axb5 axb5  
12 Rxa8 Bxa8 13 Nf1 Nc5 14 Ba2!N Bb7 15 c3 Qa8 16  
Bd5 Nd8 17 Bxb7 Qxb7 18 Ng3 Re8 19 h4! Bf8 20 h5  
b4?! 21 d4! exd4 22 cxd4 Nd7 23 d5 c6 24 Be3 cxd5 25  
exd5 Qb5 26 Qd4! Nc5 27 h6 g6 28 Qf6 Nd7 29 Ne4 !Re7  
30 Ra1!! Qb7 31 Qd4 f5 32 Nxd6 Qb8 33 Bf4 Qb6 34 Nc8  
1-0**

I wish we would see more games by the strongest postal players in the world. Chess Informant is mostly for serious and/or ambitious players, but others can learn a lot from these volumes. There are plenty of well analysed games, combinatorial and endgame exercises, as well as all the latest theoretical developments. Therefore, as I have many times before, I will highly recommend it.

**My assessment of this book: **

[Order](#) *Chess Informant 86*  
by Aleksandar Matanovic et al.

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***The Ratings***

 — **A poor book, not recommended.**

 — **Not a particularly good book, but perhaps useful for some readers.**

 — **A useful book.**

 — **Good book, recommended.**

 — **Excellent book, highly recommended.**

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