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A New-found Popularity

*The Scandinavian* by John Emms, 1997 The Chess Press, Brighton, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Softcover, 144pp., \$19.95

The old Center Counter Defense (1 e4 d5) has recently undergone a transformation. Not only has it taken on a new name (the Scandinavian Defense), but it has experienced a new-found popularity as well, as reflected in the several books that have appeared on the opening during the past three or four years. The most recent work is *The Scandinavian* by English GM John Emms.

Emms' work contains eighty-two complete games, fragments of others plus analysis, segregated into eleven chapters. Most games are from the 1990s, with many from 1995 and 1996. Also included is a short bibliography, a table of contents, and an index of complete games.

The two principal variations of the Scandinavian, as confirmed by checking *Encyclopedia of Chess Openings Volume B* (ECO) and Marovic and Susic's *King Pawn Openings* (a single volume reference of e-pawn openings from the mid-1970s), are 1 e4 d5 2 exd5 Qxd5 and 1 e4 d5 2 exd5 Nf6. Emms devotes five chapters to variations of the former and six chapters to the latter. The total page count is approximately evenly split between the two lines. Each chapter contains a summary in outline form at the end.

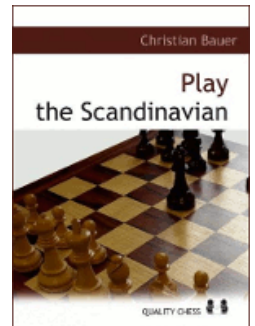
Under the 2...Qxd5 heading, each of the following lines can be found under a separate chapter: Emms' "Main Line" of 3 Nc3 Qa5 4 d4 Nf6 5 Nf3 Bf5 6 Bd2 c6 7 Bc4 e6 8 Qe2; second and third, fourth, fifth and sixth move alternatives. The latter half of the book discusses 2...Nf6 with separate chapters for the main line with c4: 3 d4 Nxd5 4 c4 and without c4: 3 d4 Nxd5 4 Nf3; 3 d4 Bg4!?: 3 Bb5+; the Scandinavian Gambit and Panov Attack after 3 c4 c6, and the new Icelandic Gambit: 3 c4 e6 4 dxe6 Bxe6.

While most material from *ECO* and Marovic and Susic (M & S) appears to be covered by Emms, given the age of those lines, it came as no surprise that many variations have been augmented or superseded by more recent tries. For instance, in Chapter Seven, Emms' main line without c2-c4, after 1 e4 d5 2 exd5 Nf6 3 d4 Nxd5 4 Nf3 g6 5 Be2 Bg7 6 0-0 0-0 7 Re1, M & S offer 7... Nc6 8 c3 and assess it as "White standing better." Emms does not provide specific coverage of 7...Nc6, but his 7...c5 from Campora-Maliutin, 1992 Candas, does not alter the assessment of the variation. Interesting is his suggestion of 7...c6 8 Na3 Qc7 9 c3 Nd7 10 Nc4 c5, which led to a draw in

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Hebden-Hodgson from 1991.

A recent idea from the 1990s which does seem promising for Black is 1 e4 d5 2 exd5 Nf6 3 d4 Bg4!?, from Emms' Chapter Eight. Six games are presented from 1991 to 1996, during which Black appears to be able to hold his own against either 4 f3 or 4 Be2, the two principal White continuations.

In Chapter Three, Black's other main option, 1 e4 d5 2 exd5 Qxd5, White appears to be making headway after 3 Nc3 Qa5 4 d4 Nf6 5 Nf3 Nc6 6 Bd2! (M & S only cite the less effective 6 Bb5) Bg4 7 Nb5 Qb6 8 c4 and White went on to win in a 1990 correspondence game. Although White also garnered the whole point in Kasparov-Anand, 1995 PCA World Championship, Emms believes that Black is "solid enough" after 5...c6 6 Ne5 Be6 7 Bd3 Nbd7 8 f4 g6 9 0-0 Bg7 10 Kh1 Bf5 11 Bc4 e6 12 Be2 h5 13 Be3 Rd8 14 Bg1 0-0.

Perhaps Black should consider sticking to what has recently become the principal variation of 2...Qxd5: 3 Nc3 Qa5 4 d4 Nf6 5 Nf3 Bf5, leading to 6 Bd2 c6 7 Bc4 e6 8 Qe2, considered by *ECO* to be advantageous to White before the recent discovery 8...Bb4!, cited by Emms in the introduction to Chapter Two. Since this move seems to give Black a sound position regardless of White's eighth move, M & S' recommendation two decades ago of 6 Ne5 c6 7 or 8 g4 may prove to be White's best chance. Emms provides two games with 6 Ne5, both won convincingly by White. He also cites this line in his chapter summary, noting that 6 Ne5 c6 7 Bc4 e6 8 g4 should concern Black.

Although Emms omitted the game Short-Oll, 1996 Parnu, from Chapter 4, 2...Qxd5, fourth move alternatives, the assessment of the line 3 Nc3 Qa5 4 Nf3 Nf6 5 Be2 c6 does not appear to be affected. In Emms-Glek, White obtained an advantage after 6 0-0 Bf5 7 b4!, while White eventually won in Short-Oll after 6 h3 Bf5 7 0-0 Nbd7 8 d4 e6 9 Nh4 Bg6 10 Ng6 hg6.

To judge accuracy of analysis, a comparison was made between commentary and annotations to similar games found in the serial publication *New In Chess* (NIC). In Kasparov-Anand, 1995 PCA World Championship, Emms' Game twenty-two from Chapter Three, after 1 e4 d5 2 exd5 Qxd5 3 Nc3 Qa5 4 d4 Nf6 5 Nf3 c6 6 Ne5 Be6 7 Bd3 Nbd7 8 f4 g6 9 0-0 Bg7, Patrick Wolff, the two-time U.S. Champion who annotated the game for *NIC*, identifies 10 f5 as a critical alternative to Kasparov's 10 Kh1, resulting in an unclear position where Black stands well after gf5 11 Bf5 Ne5 12 Be6 fe6 13 de5 Qe5. Emms is silent on White's tenth move. For the most part, he follows Kasparov's analysis throughout the game.

Game thirty-six under Chapter Five, second and third move alternatives, is De Firmian-Granda Zuniga, Amsterdam 1996, won by Black. After 1 e4 d5 2 exd5 Qxd5 3 d4 e5 4 dxe5 Qxd1+, Emms notes that the move played is "much more dynamic" than 4...Qxe5+ in a 1994 game. Granda Zuniga, who does the commentary for *NIC*, is silent. Continuing with the game, 5 Kxd1 Nc6 6 f4 drew comments from both sources. Both offered similar commentary: Granda suggested that White should return the pawn, while Emms noted that holding the pawn gives Black counter-play. After 6...Bf5 7 c3 0-0-0+ 8 Ke1, Granda favors 8 Nd2, developing a piece. Emms is silent. A significant discrepancy occurred after 8...f6 9 Bb5 fxe5 10 Bxc6 bxc6 11 fxe5 Bc5 12 Nf3 Nf6 13 Bg5. Both discuss the alternative 13 b4, with Emms awarding it an "!" based on 13 b4 Bb6 14 c4 Bc2 15 Bd2 Ng4, would eventually lead to a drawn ending. Granda, on the other hand, analyses 13 b4 Bb6 14 c4 as resulting in "a decisive attack" for Black after 14...c5!! 15 ef6 Rhe8 16 Kf2 cb4 17 Kg3 gf6 18 h3 Re2. Evidently, Emms missed Granda's piece sacrifice idea.

Despite the few relatively minor omissions, John Emms has offered us a detailed examination of the Scandinavian Defense. This is a book that is strong on current developments and recent material. Although one could certainly use it to learn the opening, the book may be best suited for the practitioner of the Scandinavian who wishes to update his knowledge with current theory. Regardless of its intended use, however, *The Scandinavian* is a quality publication, both inside and out. It is hoped that subsequent works by The Chess Press will continue to reflect similar high standards.

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About the second edition of this book, [Carsten Hansen](#) wrote "I sincerely suggest that anybody playing the opening, weak or strong, as Black or White, purchase this book, because there is plenty of new material not found elsewhere in print or on-line."

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Order [\*The Scandinavian\*](#)  
by John Emms

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This article first appeared at [ChessCafe.com](#) in July, 1997.

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