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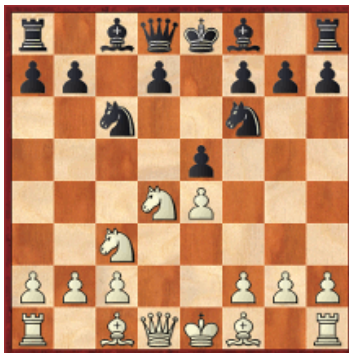
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Hosted by Mark Donlan



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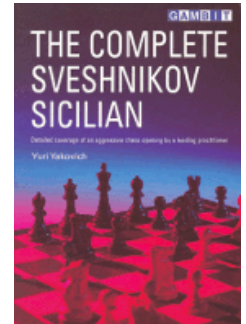
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Tossing a Coin

The Sveshnikov Sicilian by Mikhail Krasenkov, 1996 Cadogan Books, Figurine Algebraic, Softcover, 160pp., \$21.95

New Ideas in the Sveshnikov Sicilian by Valery Neverov and Peter Marusenko 1996 Henry Holt & Co., Figurine Algebraic, Softcover, 144pp., \$22.00

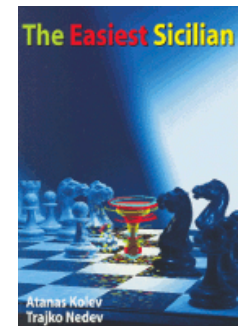
Continuing with the current trend of books that focus on a particular opening variation are two monographs from 1996 about the Sveshnikov line of the Sicilian, which occurs after the moves **1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 e5**. Both works, however, have less in common than one might initially suppose.



Complete Sveshnikov Sicilian
by Yuri Yakovich



Sveshnikov Reloaded
by Dorian Rogozenko



The Easiest Sicilian
by Atanas Kolev & Trajko Nedev



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The Sveshnikov Sicilian by Russian grandmaster Mikhail Krasenkov is written in the style of a comprehensive reference manual. It contains seven chapters of material, each of which examines a different variation; an index of variations included under a section entitled "Theoretical Conclusions"; a thorough introduction, which outlines many of the strategical ideas of the opening, and forty complete games from 1981 though 1995, with many from the 1990s. Fragments of some of the complete games can also occasionally be found in the notes and analysis provided throughout the book.

One of the few sources listed in the brief bibliography is the *Encyclopedia of Chess Openings, Volume B (ECO)*, from which Krasenkov has selected much of his material. For instance, Chapter Three, "The Choice of the Two K's", provides coverage of **1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 e5 6 Ndb5 d6 7 Ba5 a6 8 Na3 b5 9 Nd5** and the two principal options given by ECO: **9...Qa5+** and **9...Be7**.

Although ECO does not cover Krasenkov's Novosibirsk variation given in Chapter Four (**9 Bxf6 gxf6 10 Nd5 Bg7**), Krasenkov and ECO are again in agreement on the initial options in Chapters Five through Seven.



Sometimes the similarity between Krasenkov's analysis and **ECO** goes beyond major alternatives. For example, in Chapter Six, "Always in Fashion", after the moves **9 Bxf6 gxf6 10 Nd5 f5 11 exf5 Bxf5**, Krasenkov follows Matulovic-Rajkovic, a 1975 game that *ECO* gives under note #169. Krasenkov continues to use the remainder of the *ECO* note as his main line (Page 87). Conversely, *ECO*'s main line, Joksic-Simic from 1978, becomes Krasenkov's note after **12 Bd3 e4 13 Qe2 Nd4 14 Qe3 Bg7 15 Bxe4**. Not surprisingly, Krasenkov and *ECO* reach the same conclusions in both cases.

Similarly, in the subsequent chapter "The New Old Line", after **9 Bxf6 gxf6 10 Nd5 f5 11 Bd3 Be6 12 c4**, Krasenkov and *ECO* again follow the same game (Ivanovic-Sveshnikov, Krk 1976) and agree that Black stands okay. Krasenkov stops after move twenty-two, while *ECO* carries it through several moves farther.

Of course, none of this is meant to imply that there's necessarily anything wrong with two different opening references citing similar analysis. In fact, such is probably a good omen, since it could be argued that each book validates the other. If one is seeking original ideas, however, Krasenkov's work obviously isn't the best place to look.

Given the lack of an index, the inclusion of the forty complete games at the end of the book causes confusion, especially since fragments of some of the games also appear in earlier chapters. This writer couldn't help but wonder why all forty weren't incorporated into the rest of the book, to save the reader from the inconvenience of continuously having to peruse through them for updated material in a particular line.

Ukrainian Grandmaster Valery Neverov and fellow countryman Peter Marusenko's *New Ideas in the Sveshnikov Sicilian* provides coverage in the form of thirty-one fully annotated games organized into three parts. The authors indicate in the Introduction that the purpose of the book is to provide a theoretical update to Sveshnikov's original work on the system "The Sicilian Pelikan." Neither is there a publication date offered for the Sveshnikov book nor is there a bibliography available in which to check the source. (Krasenkov, however, does provide a bibliography which happens to contain a book by Sveshnikov published in Moscow in 1988 titled *Sitsilianskaya Zashchita: Sistema 5...e7-e5*. Is this is Sveshnikov work?)

New Ideas includes an index of variations and a table of contents, but no index of players/games. The thirty-one games have been selected from 1990 through 1994. Despite being published in 1996, the book does not contain any material after 1994.

The first of the three parts includes ten games and covers the variation **9 Nd5** and either **9...Be7** or **9...Qa5+**; Part Two, **9 Bxf6 gxf6 10 Nd7** with **...Bg7** and **...f5**, through thirteen games; miscellaneous other systems such as **9 Nd5 Be7 10 Bxf6 Bxf6 11 Nb1** and **8...Be6** are analyzed through the inclusion of eight games in the third and final part.

Neverov does not provide coverage of the line **9 Bxf6 gxf6 10 Nd5 f5 11 exf5 Bxf5**, considered by Krasenkov to be "one of the classical lines of the Sicilian Sveshnikov" (Krasenkov, Page 86). Krasenkov devotes an entire fifteen page chapter to this line, citing a number of games from the 1990s. He concludes with the comment "The whole line is developing very quickly with new ideas appearing every month!" (Krasenkov, Page 100)

On the other hand, Krasenkov misses Dolmatov-Topalov from Groningen 1993, contained in Chapter Five of the Neverov book. This particular game contains the new move **18...b4!** in the variation **9 Bxf6 gxf6 10 Nd5 Bg7 11 Bd3**, which would appear to revise Krasenkov's assessment of the line after **10...Bg7** from "too passive to guarantee Black a good game" (Krasenkov, Page 75), to one of equality.

As expected, there are the usual conflicts between authors. Neverov, for example, in the variation **9 Nd5 Qa5+ 10 c3**, cites the game Blodshtein-Al. Karpov in a note as giving White "more than enough compensation for a single pawn" (Page 50) after **21 Be3**. Krasenkov includes the same game but

stops after move sixteen and comments "White hardly has enough compensation for the missing material." (Krasenkov, Page 42) The result is that the reader is thrown onto his own resources in assessing the viability of the variation.

Another conflict of note involves the line **9 Nd5 Be7 10 Bxf6 Bxf6 11 c3 0-0 12 Nc2 Rb8**. A critical game for the evaluation of this variation is Kasparov-Kramnik from Novgorod 1994, contained in both books. Krasenkov even cites it twice, once as analysis and once in its entirety. While both offer **14 Nce3** as the main alternative to Kasparov's **14 Nxf6+**, Krasenkov references Smagin-Gorelov from 1982, where Black had a "strong initiative" after move twenty-one (Krasenkov, Page 63), and Neverov follows Stripunsky-Volke from 1994, won by White. (Neverov, Page 37)

Books on the Sveshnikov variation are not easy to come by. Although this writer is less than enamored with the two selections reviewed here, there are virtually no other choices if one is seeking detailed coverage of this specialized line. Given the drawbacks of each work, including the omission of certain critical material, and assuming the reader is a serious-enough student of the game to already own a copy of *ECO Volume B*, picking one of these two is no harder (nor any more exciting) than tossing a coin.

It has been said that competition between two people often brings out the best in each. In the case of these two books, competition appears to have done little more than reinforce mediocrity.

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