



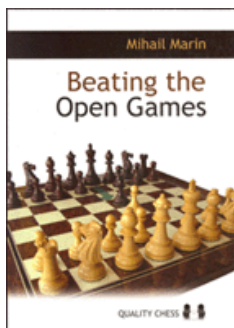
COLUMNISTS

The Openings Explained

Abby Marshall

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The Openings Explained

The Frankenstein-Dracula Variation [C27]

Since this column will appear a few days after Halloween, I thought I would do a holiday special. This month's opening is the Frankenstein-Dracula Variation. It doesn't get more spooky than this. The name of this variation comes from Tim Harding's book *Bishop's Opening* (1973), where the author wrote that the "sharp and often hair-raising play" would not be out of place in "a game between Dracula and the Frankenstein Monster" (pg. 45). It occurs in the Vienna game and, besides being relevant to All Hallow's Eve, it also has some good chess lessons in it. I am covering this opening from the perspective of the white player.

1.e4 e5 2.Nc3

It is fitting that the Frankenstein-Dracula variation occurs in the Vienna game, since the beginning of Bram Stoker's book *Dracula* begins with the speaker arriving in Vienna.

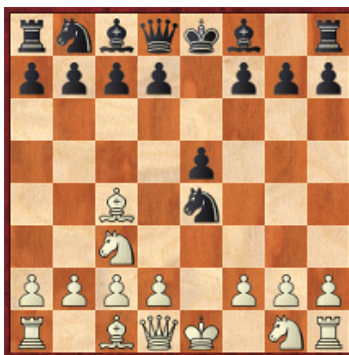
White can also start out with 2.Bc4 to reach the desired variation. If the Black player usually plays 2...Nc6 against 2.Nc3, avoiding our current topic, then the Bishop's Opening may mislead Black into playing 2...Nf6. This is, of course not, a bad move, but maybe not what Black intended. After 2...Nf6 3. Nc3, we have transposed.

2...Nf6

The Vienna is one of the first openings I learned how to play against as Black. When my coach first showed me 2.Nc3, I responded with 2...Nf6. This is a little weird because the e4-pawn is protected, so 2...Nf6 doesn't have a threat. However, this is the main move.

2...Nc6 is another well-respected move. Though, it does not reach the Frankenstein-Dracula variation.

3.Bc4 Nxe4



[FEN "rnbqkb1r/pppp1ppp/8/4p3/2B1n3/2N5/PPPP1PPP/R1BQK1NR w KQkq - 0 4"]

With this gutsy move, Black is nearly forced to enter into the variation if White so desires.

4.Qh5

I feel like this move is obligatory, since for the moment White is down a

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ABC of the Vienna
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pawn. Other moves do not impress.

4.Nxe4?! Clearly, Black did not overlook this move. It plays into Black's hands. 4...d5 White has fallen into a variation of the Fork Trick. This normally arises after 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bc4?! Nxe4. Black equalizes. 5.Bd3 dxe4 6.Bxe4 Bc5 Black has more space and the idea of ...f5.

4.Bxf7+ Kxf7 5.Nxe4 While this sequence may look attractive, it really just gives Black the center and the two bishops. The black king can castle by hand (a quick ...Rf8 and ...Kg8). 5...d5 6.Nc3 Bf5=.

4...Nd6

4...Ng5 This is awkward for Black. 5.d4!



[FEN "rnbqkb1r/pppp1ppp/8/4p1nQ/2BP4/2N5/PPP2PPP/R1B1K1NR b KQkq d3 0 5"]

When you are ahead in development, open lines! 5...Ne6 6.d5 (6.dxe5 This move is perfectly good, but 6.d5 is also a thought.) 6...Nd4 (6...g6? This leads to a violent end. 7.dxe6! gxf5 8.exf7+ Ke7 9.Bg5+ Kd6 10.Bxd8+-) 7.Qxe5+ Qe7 8.Qxe7+ Bxe7 9.Bd3 White has a slight edge because of the lead in development and more space.

5.Bb3

5.Qxe5+ This is White's last chance before he is caught up in the Frankenstein-Dracula variation. 5...Qe7 6.Qxe7+ Bxe7 7.Be2 Ulf Andersson gives this position as an advantage to White. Andersson is a marvelous player, but his opinion may be somewhat slanted here because he is such an expert technical player who excels in precisely these kinds of positions. Of course, for above master level he is correct. In our case, he is probably wrong. Certainty this is not bad for White, but between club players I don't think this kind of advantage is very meaningful.

5...Nc6

Black protects e5.

5...Be7 This is a solid alternative to the chaos. However, we have digressed enough, so let's skip the boring moves and go on to the exciting ones!

6.Nb5



[FEN "r1bqkb1r/pppp1ppp/2nn4/1N2p2Q/8/1B6/PPPP1PPP/R1B1K1NR b KQkq - 0 6"]

White continues the threat against f7, Black's Achilles' heel. In fact, Black cannot answer this threat without giving up the exchange, but first Black strengthens his position.

6.d4?! is Weaver Adams's gambit. It will definitely surprise some people, but it is a little unsound.

6...g6

Black defends the threat against f7 for the moment.

7.Qf3

White is not deterred. Note that White needs to keep making threats, since he is no longer ahead in development and is still down a pawn.

7...f5

7...f6 David Bronstein played this and won, though he was lost in this game. 8. Nxc7+! Qxc7 9.Qxf6 White has crashed through with a nice tactic. 9...b6 Bronstein is going to lose something, so he focuses on development and taking advantage of the wayward white pieces. 10.Qxh8 Bb7 11.Qxh7 0-0-0 12.Ne2 Nf5 13.d3 Ncd4 14.Nxd4 exd4 15.0-0 It looks as though White has weathered the black storm, or rather the gathering black storm. 15...Qc6 16.f3 Qf6 17.Qh3 Bd6 18.Qg4?! This seems a little oblivious to me. (18.g3 Rh8 19. Qg2 The kingside is bolstered and White should be able to defend.) 18...Rh8 19.g3 (19.h3 This avoids Black's counterplay.) 19...Bxg3! 20.hxg3 Rh5 21. Rf2 Qh8 22.Rg2 Rh1+ 23.Kf2 Qe8 Now Black should win this game. 24.Bd2 Rxa1 25.Qf4 Qh8 26.Bc1 Qh5 27.g4 Qh4+ 28.Ke2 g5 29.Qxg5 Ng3+ 30. Rxg3 Qxg3+ Mukhin-Bronstein 1959. Black won in the end, but White was winning in the opening.

8.Qd5

White threatens f7 for the third time. Black has no choice but to give White the exchange.

8...Qe7 9.Nxc7+ Kd8 10.Nxa8



This is the logical move in this position. It develops the light-squared bishop and prepares to pick off the knight in the corner. White has a few choices here.

11.d3

This is the white plan that has found the most success. The two players who revived this line according to Harding are the American master Santasiere and the Danish postal chess master Julius Nielsen. It is interesting that many of the high-level games of the Frankenstein-Dracula are correspondence games. I guess most people are too afraid of the complications over the board, where it's anyone's game.

11.Qf3 was an earlier try. It contrasts with the text since White is not developing anything, where 11.d3 at least opened the line for the c1-bishop. 11...Bb7 12.h4?! This occurred in the game Raud-Hector. Johnny Hector is a strong Swedish GM, while Raud is rated 2365. Raud did not play the best move, but he beat Hector, which shows how volatile this variation is. (12.Nxb6 Harding cites Mieses 1921 supplement when describing early origins of the variation. Mieses only gives this weak continuation and gives Black an advantage after 12...axb6 13.d3 Nd4 14.Qh3 f4 Like most everything in this variation, nothing is really clear. Unlike Dracula who has eternity to study the position, we can only ascertain a few points. I'm worried about the position of the white queen and White's lack of development and space. I can sacrifice time for material, but time and space and piece coordination? That's a bit much.; 12.d3 Nd4 13.Qh3 is the recommendation of Tseitlin and Glazkov. White again is faced with some difficult problems, and found improvements earlier.) 12...Bg7?! (12...Nd4 13.Qh3 Bxa8 Black is reputed to have some sort of advantage here. White cannot play 14.Ne2 since there is no way the king can be safe in the center after 14...Nxe2. Another problem is the queen is poorly placed on h3, which is what the earlier improvement of 11.d3 fixes.) 13.Qh3 e4 14.Ne2 Bxa8 15.0-0 White has not played the best moves, but based on Black's little slip at move twelve, White has managed to castle. 15...Bf6 16.d3 White smartly doesn't waste time defending the h-pawn. 16...Bxh4 17.Bf4 Bf6 18.Bxd6 Qxd6 19.dxe4 fxe4 20.Rad1 White turns the tables and is the one making the threats again. 20...Qe7 21.Nf4 Bxb2 Black didn't take White's threat seriously enough. 22.c3!? I like White's play. He does what White is supposed to do in this variation: give back material and go on the offensive. 22...Re8 23.Rxd7+ (23.Rd2 Ba3 24.Rfd1 This may be even stronger.) 23...Qxd7 24.Rd1 Qxd1+ 25.Bxd1 White is winning at this point. It's a slog, but the black queen is a little insecure and White can pick off the pawns. 25...Re7 26.Qh6 Ke8 27.Nxg6 hxg6 28.Qh8+ Kd7 29.Qxa8 Raud-Hector, 1996, 1-0 in sixty moves.

11.Nxb6 This desperado move to nab an extra pawn is not such an important idea. By leaving the knight on a8, White makes Black use a move to capture the knight and in some cases, the knight can escape. 11...axb6 12.d3 Bb7 13.Qf3 Nd4 14.Qh3 h5 15.f3 When White has to play moves like this, I become unsure of White's chances. 15...f4 16.Bd2 Bg7 17.0-0-0 N6f5 This occurred in the game Kaidanov-Lputian, 1987. This position is immensely complicated, but I suspect Black has gained.

11.h4 White ran into trouble after this move. 11...Bb7 12.Qf3 Bxa8 13.Ne2 Bg7 14.Qh3 Rf8 15.Nc3 Nd4 16.0-0 f4 17.d3 Rf5 and Black soon won in Simmons-Hector 2003.

11...Bb7

This is the follow-up to the previous move.

12.h4



[FEN "N2k1b1r/pb1pq2p/1pnn2p1/3Qpp2/7P/1B1P4/PPP2PP1/R1B1K1NR b KQ h3 0 12"]

This move is a great discovery; it has a threat and forces Black to respond in a way that benefits White. Harding makes the insightful point that Black's exchange sacrifice is not really a Romantic gambit. The King's Gambit, probably the most famous Romantic gambit, is a sacrifice of a pawn followed by an all-out attempt to checkmate the enemy king. Here, although Black did sacrifice material to gain time and activity, White is aware of maintaining a delicate balance between having extra material and disregarding it to develop an attack of his own. Therefore, both sides have to match their strengths to a position that could quickly change.

12...f4

12...Bg7 13.Bg5 Bf6 14.Bxf6 Qxf6 15.Qf3 White wants to trade, so this series of moves has helped White. (15.0-0-0?? Nb4 The queen is lost.)

13.Qf3 Nd4

13...Bh6 John Nunn once played this move. We will look at how play ensues in the illustrative game.

14.Qg4



[FEN "N2k1b1r/pb1pq2p/1p1n2p1/4p3/3n1pQP/1B1P4/PPP2PP1/R1B1K1NR b KQ - 0 14"]

White wants to play 15.Qg5 and trade queens. This is an obvious move, but could be easy to miss. I, at least, am a little disoriented by the position. At first, it seems that Black's king is the one in trouble, since he can't castle, so White will want to keep queens on the board. However, this is not the case, and White is the one who is in trouble since Black has plenty of activity. Now it is Black's turn to have a bit of choice.

14.Qh3 is the old line, but the queen is more active on g4.

14...Bg7

14...Bh6 15.Bd2 (15.Nh3 This is how one of the first important games in the variation went between Nielsen-Althschuler, fifth Correspondence World Championship. 15...N6f5 (15...Rf8 Black has strong counterplay after this move. I guess Black wants to lift the rook to f5-h5, which is totally bizarre, but not out of place with the whole variation.) 16.Ng5 Bxg5 17.hxg5 f3 18.g3 e4 Things are looking scary for White, but maybe he has enough defensive

resources. 19.Be3 Nxe3 20.fxe3 f2+ (Better is 20...Rf8, since it keeps the tension. 21.Kf2 Bxa8 22.exd4 e3+ 23.Kf1 Rf5 It would take a very brave white player to go into this.) 21.Kf1 Nf3 22.Qf4 d6 23.Qf6 Nd2+ 24.Ke2 Qxf6 25.gxf6 Nxb3 26.axb3 exd3+ 27.cxd3 Bxh1 28.Rxh1 Kd7 29.g4 h5 30.gxh5 gxh5 31.e4 Rxa8 Black won the exchange back, but loses all his pawns and subsequently the game. 32.Rxh5 Ke6 33.Rf5 Kf7 34.Rxf2 Rh8 35.b4 Rh5 36.Ke3 Rb5 37.Kd4+- A very nice performance by Nielsen.) 15...e4 Black can't wait, since White will castle next move. 16.Kf1 (16.0-0-0? Castling now is bad. 16...e3 17.fxe3 (17.Bc3 exf2 18.Nf3 Ne2+ 19.Kb1 Nxc3+ 20.bxc3 Nb5) 17...Nxb3+ 18.axb3 fxe3 19.Be1 e2+ 20.Rd2 Bxd2+ 21.Kxd2 Re8 22.Nxe2 Qe3+ 23.Kd1 h5 24.Qg5+ Qxg5 25.hxg5 Bxg2 This is in Black's favor if anyone's.) 16...e3 17.Bc3 N6f5 It's very complicated, but 14...Bh6 is still one of Black's better tries.

14...h5 Eric Schiller published a book that gives this line. I do not recommend the book, but let's have a look. 15.Qxg6 Rh7 16.Qg5 Rg7 17.Qxe7+ Bxe7 18.c3 Bxg2 19.cxd4 Bxh1 20.Nh3 exd4 21.Nxb6 axb6 22.Bxf4 White is better here and illustrates the idea to give back material to mollify Black's initiative.

14...Bxa8 is a possibility, although the knight is not going anywhere, so why waste a tempo. 15.Bd2 And on to more craziness.

15.Bd2

15.Nxb6 axb6 16.Bd2 This occurred in a game between two of the stars of the opening, Wibe and Timmerman. 16...N6f5 17.c3 Nxb3 18.axb3 Bf6 19.h5 Nh6 20.Qe2 g5 Timmerman is moving slowly. (20...Bxg2 Why not? 21.Rh2 Bc6 22.hxg6 hxg6 23.Ra6 Kc7 It's very unclear.) 21.f3 Nf5 22.Qf2



[FEN "3k3r/1b1pq2p/1p3b2/4pnpP/5p2/1PPP1P2/1P1B1QP1/R3K1NR b KQ - 0 22"]

22...Kc7 23.Ne2 g4 24.fxg4 Bh4 25.Rxh4 Nxh4 26.Kd1 We see it again: White gives back material. 26...Rf8 27.c4 Nxc2 28.Nc3 Ne3+ 29.Kc1 Qc5 30.Nb5+ Kb8 31.Qg1 d5 32.Ra4 The white king has found refuge on the queenside, while Black has the passed f-pawn. 32...d4 This opens the a8-h1 diagonal for the black bishop. 33.Bb4 f3 34.Bxc5 f2 35.Bd6+ Kc8 36.Qxf2 Rxf2 37.Bxe5 (37.Kb1! Rf1+ 38.Ka2 Nxc4 39.Bc7 White could do for a win.) 37...Rf1+ 38.Kd2 Rf2+ 39.Kc1= Wibe-Timmerman, 1991. A very interesting battle.

15...Bxa8

Black goes ahead and takes the knight.

16.0-0-0

16.Nh3 is uncommon, but had a quick result in the game J.J. Carleton-J.A. Tait: 16...N6f5 17.Ng5 h5 18.Qh3 Rf8 19.c3 Nxh4 20.Qxh4 Nxb3 21.axb3 Bf6 22.Rxa7 Bxg2? (22...Bxg5 23.Rxa8+ Kc7 24.Qxg5 Qxg5 25.Rxf8 An interesting unbalanced position has been reached.) 23.Qh2+-.

16.h5 This is from another Timmerman game. 16...g5 17.c3 N4f5 18.Rh2 White plays this weird looking move to free up the queen from defending the g2-pawn. 18...Nh6 19.Qe2 g4 20.0-0-0 Ndf5 21.d4 White begins to chip away at the advanced black pawns. 21...Bb7 (21...exd4 22.Qxe7+ Kxe7 23.

Bxf4 White has consolidated.) 22.Re1 Re8 23.d5 Bf6 24.Bc2?! (24.Qb5 White looks to tickle Black's queenside and block the kingside with g3. 24... Qd6 25.g3 fxg3 26.fxg3) 24...g3 (24...Bxd5 This is the move that I would be concerned about. 25.Qa6 g3 26.Qxa7



[FEN "3kr3/Q2pq2p/1p3b1n/3bpm1P/5p2/2P3p1/PPBB1PPR/2K1R1N1 b - - 0 26"]

26...Qe6 27.fxg3 fxg3 28.Rh3 Bxg2 29.Rxg3 Nxg3 30.Bxh6 unclear Who knows what's going on.) 25.fxg3 Nxg3 26.Qf3 Qc5 27.Bb3 Nhf5 28.Kb1 Nd6 29.Be3 Qb5 (29...fxe3 30.Qxf6+) 30.Bf2 Ngf5 31.Rd1 h6 32.Qe2 This is where White starts to drift. The white queen was holding things together well. 32...Qxe2 33.Nxe2 Ba6 34.Re1 Rg8 35.Kc1 Bg5 36.Kd1 e4 37.Rg1? Nc4 38. g4 Nfe3+ 39.Ke1 f3 40.Nd4 Nxb2 41.Bc2 Nxc2+ 42.Nxc2 Nd3+ 43.Kd1 Rf8+ Fiorito-Timmerman 1980.

16...Bf6 17.Re1!?

This move seems best.

17.h5 was played in the game Wibe-van Oosterom, NBC-25 correspondence tournament. It bears resemblance to when White played h5 a move earlier. The game ended in a draw.

17.Bb4 occurred in another top-level encounter. 17...a5 18.Bxd6 Qxd6 19. Nh3 (19.Rh2 This is a good move despite its appearance. The f- and g-pawns are likely to move, so the rook will exert influence on the second rank, and the knight can now go to e2.) 19...Qc6 20.Ng5 a4! 21.Bc4 b5 22.Nf7+ Kc7 23. Nxb8 Bxb8 24.h5 The position resembles a particularly vicious Dragon Sicilian, where both sides are rushing ahead heedless of their opponent. 24... g5 25.c3 bxc4 26.cxd4 cxd3+ 27.Kb1 Qc2+ 28.Ka1 a3 29.Rb1 Be4! 30.Qd1 exd4 31.Qf1 d6 32.f3 Bf5 33.Qc1? From this point, Black takes over. 33...d2 34.Qxc2+ Bxc2 35.Rhd1 d3 36.Rxd2 Kb6+ Ekebjærg-Timmerman NBC-25 tournament.

17...Qg7 18.Kb1 h5 19.Qh3



[FEN "b2k3r/p2p2q1/1p1n1bp1/4p2p/3n1p1P/1B1P3Q/PPPBP1P1/1K2R1NR b - - 0 19"]

From here it is just a game, although a very interesting and complicated one.

19...N6f5 20.Ne2 Nxe2 21.Rxe2 Nxb4 22.g3 Nf3 23.Bc3! Ng5 24.Qh2 Bxb1?

24...fxg3 25.fxg3 Bxh1 is the correct order, with an unclear game.

25.gxf4! Bf3

25...Nf3 26.Qxh1 e4 27.dxe4 Bxc3 28.Qxf3 Bxb2 29.e5 Ba3 30.Rd2+-.

26.fxe5 Qf8 27.exf6 Qc5 28.Re5 Qc7 29.Qf4+-

M.Okkes-Timmerman Amstelveen-Volmac2 1993. I admire White's play in this game. The plan with 11.d3 and 14.Qg4 seems best, and I am impressed by the way Okkes played against Timmerman. Of course, there is much room for discovery. Happy Trick or Treat!



Dracula vs. Frankenstein

In an article in *Chess* (December 1978, pp.82-85), Harding imagined an encounter between Frankenstein and Dracula that followed the game Hansen-Nunn, Student Olympiad 1974. Harding cleverly says that this game took place at the Borgo Pass Open in Transylvania. Dracula, of course, is black.

Jacob Ost-Hansen – John Nunn

Teesside, 1974

1.e4 e5 2.Nc3 Nf6 3.Bc4 Nxe4 4.Qh5 Nd6 5.Bb3 Nc6 6.Nb5 g6 7.Qf3 f5 8.Qd5 Qe7 9.Nxc7+ Kd8 10.Nxa8 b6 11.d3 Bb7 12.h4 f4 13.Qf3 Bh6



[FEN "N2k3r/pb1pq2p/1pnn2pb/4p3/5p1P/1B1P1Q2/PPP2PP1/R1B1K1NR w KQ - 0 14"]

Here is where we left off in the theory section.

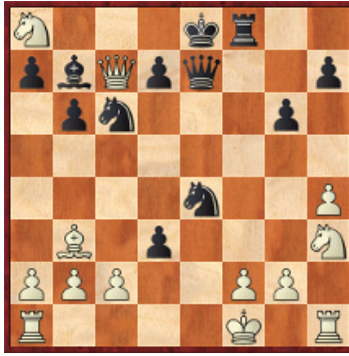
14.Qg4

Harding gives this a question mark and says 14.Bd2 is better: 14...e4 (14...Nd4 15.Qg4 This transposes to the lines in the theory section.) 15.dxe4 Nd4 16.Qd3 In *The Complete Vienna* (1995), Tseitlin and Glazkov give White and advantage in this position. 16...Nxb3 17.axb3 Bxe4 18.Qc3 Bxa8+ 19.Kf1 Re8 20.Rxa7 White has a strong position.

14...e4 15.Bxf4

White is in trouble. Mistakes are quickly punished in this variation.

15...exd3+ 16.Kf1 Bxf4 17.Qxf4 Rf8 18.Qg3 Ne4 19.Qc7+ Ke8 20.Nh3



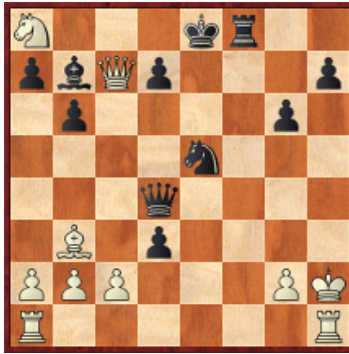
[FEN "N3kr2/pbQpq2p/1pn3p1/8/4n2P/1B1p3N/PPP2PP1/R4K1R b - - 0 20"]

Here we have a position where it looks like both kings are in danger.

20...Nxf2! 21.Nxf2 Qe2+

21...Qe3! 22.Kg1 Rxf2 23.Kh2 Ne5 The Nightmare!

22.Kg1 Qxf2+ 23.Kh2 Qxh4+ 24.Kg1 Qd4+ 25.Kh2 Ne5—+



[FEN "N3kr2/pbQp3p/1p4p1/4n3/3q4/1B1p4/PPP3PK/R6R w - - 0 26"]

What follows is a pretty king hunt.

26.Rhf1 Ng4+ 27.Kh3 Qe3+ 28.Kxg4 h5+ 29.Kh4 g5+ 30.Kxh5 Rh8+ 31.Kg6 Be4+ 32.Rf5 Bxf5+ 33.Kxf5 Rf8+ 34.Kg6 Qe4+ 35.Kg7 Qe7+ 36.Kg6 Qf6+ 37.Kh5 Qh8+ 38.Kg4

Harding jokingly says that Black lost on time here because Dracula may have seen the first rays of sunshine through the shutters or a crucifix around the neck of the white king.

38...Qh4# 0-1

In the real game, of course, Black won. A wild and fun game.

Lessons Learned

- Practice, practice, practice. Play blitz against training partners to get a feel for this position. There is not much to memorize, so this is how you learn the opening.
- Understand that, as white, you are not trying to hold on to the material. Ideally, you give it back at the right time and go on the offensive. The first step is one known to all beginners: develop your pieces and castle.
- Even though the position is very complicated and tactical, get a feel for the general ideas by going over games, since it is too hard to calculate fully here.

Famous Practitioners

- Terje Wibe is a Norwegian IM who is probably the strongest player to regularly play the Frankenstein-Dracula.
- Gert Jan Timmerman is a strong FM from the Netherlands and a great correspondence player.
- Menno Okkes is another strong FM from the Netherlands.

Further Reading

- *The Kibitzer*, [June 1996](#) by Tim Harding
- *The Kibitzer*, [March 1998](#) by Tim Harding
- *The Complete Vienna* by Tseitlin and Glazkov

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