



C O L U M N I S T S

Checkpoint

Carsten Hansen

**Electrifying?**

This month I will first take a look at a new book by one of today's better opening book writers, then a book by a pair who consider themselves the world's leading opening writers... modest people! It's also time again for a new Informator, this time the electronic edition (EE) of the well-known and long-running series. Last, but certainly not least, I will cast a look into the fascinating world of the relatively new internet adventure, Chesspublishing.com. Enjoy!

The Meran System by Steffen Pedersen, 2000 Gambit Publishing, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Softcover, 224pp., Price \$21.95.

A couple of months ago, I reviewed *The Botvinnik Semi-Slav* by Steffen Pedersen and this book is its partner. For those who want to know more about Pedersen, I suggest you check out my review of that book. [Interested readers may find it in **The Chess Café Archives** at www.chesscafe.com/archives/hansen11.txt]

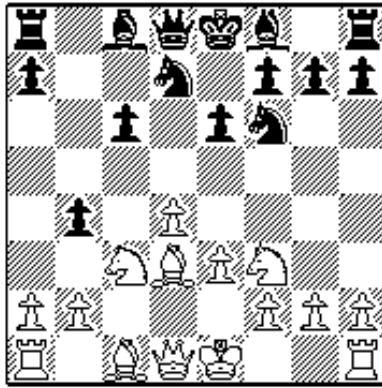
The present book is divided into three parts with 22 chapters. Part One covers the Meran in 11 chapters. Part Two deals with 6 Qc2 in 10 chapters and Part Three only covers the chapter *Odds and Ends*. Unlike in *The Botvinnik Semi-Slav*, most of the lines in this book are relatively easy to understand and remember. This therefore makes this book more useful to more people than the Botvinnik book.



The coverage overall is thorough, in-depth and up-to-date. Pedersen makes the presentation of each line easy to follow, and you have a clear idea what the general ideas are in each line as a result of his narratives, which can be found as introductions to each chapter and mixed in with the theory. Each chapter is structure as follows: Introduction, a quick summary of the theory and then the theory itself. As an example I will show the beginning of chapter three:

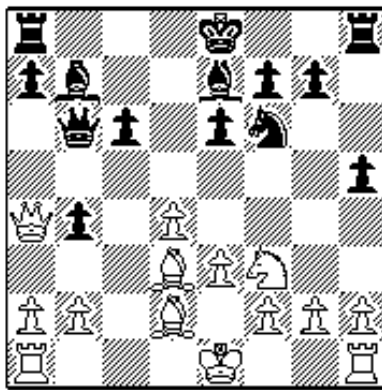
The Lundin Variation (8...b4)

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 e6 5 e3 Nbd7 6 Bd3 dxc4 7 Bxc4 b5 8 Bd3 b4
(See Diagram)



The Lundin Variation, 8...b4, is named after the late Swedish grandmaster Erik Ruben Lundin, who used it on several occasions, perhaps most famously to reach a comfortable draw against Capablanca in Margate 1936. It is one of Black's more direct approaches, but while ...b4 is certainly a weapon in Black's arsenal, it may turn out to be weakening when played immediately. Hence the Lundin Variation is not that popular nowadays, with only Sveshnikov employing it regularly.

The greatest drawback of playing ...b4 at once is if Black does not get the chance to follow up with ...c5, and so there is a danger that the c6-pawn will become an eternal weakness, along with the c5- and c4-squares. Here is an example (See Diagram):



Zagorskis-Sveshnikov Roskilde 1998

Black only needs one more move, namely ...0-0, before he can play ...c5. However, if White succeeds in preventing this, Black will be in major long-term trouble due to the weaknesses on the c-file.

14 Ne5! 0-0 15 Nc4 Qb5?

Much better is 15...Qa6!, intending ...c5 with instant equality, and preventing it does not look like a simple task, e.g. 16 Qxa6 Bxa6 17 Ne5 Bb7! followed by ...c5. This is the

difference compared to the game: Black can avoid exchanging Bishops.

16 Qa5! Ba6

White should also be preferred after 16...Rfd8 17 0-0 Qd5 18 Qxd5 Rxd5 19 Rfc1 or 16...Rfc8 17 0-0 Qd5 18 Qxd5 cxd5 19 Na5.

17 Qxb5 Bxb5 18 Ne5 Bxd3 19 Nxd3 Rab8 20 Ke2 Ne4 21 Rhc1 Nxd2

Black must have been hesitated [sic!] making this exchange since now the Knight becomes much stronger than the Bishop and Black has ended up with inextricable problems on the c-file, but allowing White to play Be1 and f3 would have been even worse.

22 Kxd2 Rb6 23 Rc4 Rc8 24 Rac1 f6 25 Kc2 a5 26 Nc5 Bxc5 27 Rxc5 Ra8 28 Kd3 Raa6 29 e4

The rook ending is clearly in White's favour; White converted it safely to a win by advancing his kingside pawns, thus provoking weaknesses on the kingside while keeping Black's Rooks busy defending c6 and a5.

This should give you an idea about what is going on before moving to theory.

Now I will take a look at some of Pedersen's own analysis.

On page 43, we find the following line: **1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 e6 5 e3 Nbd7 6 Bd3 dxc4 7 Bxc4 b5 8 Bd3 Bd6 9 0-0 0-0 10 Bd2 Bb7 11 Rc1 Rc8 12 Ne2 b4 13 e4 c5**

14 e5 Bxf3 15 exd6 Bd5 (Although it isn't 100% clear from the text, we have followed Lautier-Zviagintsev, Tilburg 1998, and what follows is an analysis by Lutz) **16 dxc5 Nxc5 17 Bxb4 Qxd6 18 Qc2 Nfd7 19 Bxh7+ Kh8 20 Nc3 g6 21 Na4** (Pedersen instead offers 21 Bxg6! fxd6 22 Qxg6 "with a fantastic attack", which seems justified, since the best I have found for Black is 22...Rf6 23 Qh5+ Kg7 24 Nxd5 exd5 25 Bc3 d4 26 Qg4+ Rg6 27 Qxd4+, and White has a good endgame.) **21...Qf4 22 Bxc5 Kxh7 23 b3 Bxg2 24 Kxg2 Qg4+** with a perpetual check according to Lutz.

But instead of the dubious 20...g6, what about 20...Bxg2 ? It's obvious that 21 Kxg2 Qd4! is fine for Black since White has to move his Bishop, and then Black has a perpetual check on g4 and f3.

Therefore 20 Bc3 is worth a try, e.g. 20...Qc6 21 b4 Na4 22 Bd4, and now the obvious 22...Bxg2 gets Black in serious trouble: 23 Qd2! Qf3 24 Be4! Qxe4 25 Qh6+ Qh7 26 Bxg7+ Kg8 27 Bxf8 and White is much better.

Page 79, next example: **1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 e6 5 e3 Nbd7 6 Bd3 dxc4 7 Bxc4 b5 8 Bd3 a6 9 e4 c5 10 e5 cxd4 11 Nxb5 Ng4 12 Qa4 Ngxe5 13 Nxe5 Nxe5** (So far Miles-Kasparov, Basel 1986) **14 Nc7+ Ke7 15 Nxa8 Nxd3+ 16 Ke2 Nc5!** (Pedersen's improvement over 16...Bd7 and 16...Ne5, both of which have been analyzed as good for White by Christiansen) **17 Qc6 Kf6 18 Qf3+ Ke7**, and here Pedersen correctly thinks that White has nothing better than repeating the moves with 19 Qc6.

But what about 16 Kf1? E.g. 16...Qd6 17 b3 Nc5 18 Qa5 Nb7 19 Qb6 or 16...Nc5 17 Qa3 Qd6 18 Bf4! c6 19 Rc1 Kd7 20 f3, and White should be better. The difference between 16 Ke2 and 16 Kf1 is that the King is less vulnerable on f1.

The two examples show that Pedersen has his own ideas, two clear improvements over existing theory, but he also seems to have contented himself with his first findings and therefore did not notice other fairly obvious improvements.

Steffen Pedersen has been busy writing books the last 3-4 years, and I'm afraid it's showing a bit. The enthusiasm he has shown in his earlier works seems to have waned. He doesn't go the extra mile for his readers in this book; the large number of new suggestions, pieces of original analysis and outright improvements (and thereby re-evaluations of existing theory) are not to be found in this book. This disappoints me a bit, because this is where he usually separates himself from average writers and that's also where he normally joins writers such as Nunn, Burgess, Watson, Gallagher, Emms, Kosten, Donaldson and the like, well known for their fine opening books.

That is not to say that this is a bad book. It's still well above average and miles ahead of a book like the Gufeld/Schiller effort we find below.

I have heard that Steffen right now is finishing his next book called *Test Your Chess*. Personally, I think that Steffen has done himself a huge favour by taking a well-deserved break from writing opening books. Hopefully he will return with renewed energy and show us that he is still capable of excellent books like he has done several times in the past.

My assessment of this book:

Secrets of The King's Indian by Eduard Gufeld & Eric Schiller, 2000 Cardoza Publishing, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Softcover, 311pp., Price \$14.95.

This book is part of "Cardoza Publishing's Essential Opening Repertoire Series", and it has the sub-headline "Essential Opening Moves". The front cover blurb continues by stating "The in-depth guide to powerful opening repertoires from the world's leading writers on chess openings."

It sounds promising, and it of course prompted me to look at the back cover to see what else they could come up with. Here we learn that Gufeld "...is considered one of the world's elite chessplayers." This is of course a matter of definition. He is a grandmaster, but it has been a good while since he was even in the top hundred in the world. But this is nothing next to what we can read about co-author Eric Schiller, who "...is the author of more than 90 chess books and the world's leading writer on openings. He is widely considered one of the foremost analysts, writers and teachers of chess."



Well, that's a surprise to me. In last month's Checkpoint, I expressed my thoughts about one of Schiller's most recent efforts, his book on the Frankenstein-Dracula Variation of the Vienna Game, a book which is inarguably the worst opening book of all time.

Gufeld's books usually don't rank among my favorites either. An example of this is *The Classical French*, which has previously been reviewed on these pages. However, his book with Stetsko on the Richter-Veresov (also reviewed here some months back) was a pleasant exception.

With the above in mind, I don't want come across as overly negative, I just want to give my objective opinion the best way I know how. First I will point out some of the things I found when looking through the pages of the present book, then I will point out what I think of the quality of the material that is presented.

What follows now is not particularly systematic, but just reflects the order of things I have found in the book. It is not necessarily just mistakes I'm pointing out, but rather things that I have found odd, interesting or mistaken.

Page 14: "Modern theory respects the King's Indian Defense and places it in among the most important of chess openings. In fact the most recent authoritative encyclopaedia, *Nunn's Chess Openings*, places it in the most honored place at the very end of the book."

This doesn't appear to be the authors' brightest observation; in the NCO, Nunn himself writes: "The general sequence of openings is similar to the *ECO* (Encyclopaedia of Chess Openings) code system, so if you are familiar with this you will have little difficulty in locating the openings you are looking for."

Page 18, under the headline *A Question of Move Order*: "2.Nf3 is also popular, leading to a Torre Attack (3.Bg5 or London System (3.Bf4))."

As far as I know, White can also play 3 g3 or even reach the main lines with 3 c4.

Page 41, under the chapter headline *SUMMARY OF THE THEORY*: "Thousands of pages of analysis have been published on the King's Indian, and it would take a multi-volume encyclopaedia to cover it all. Our intention is to point out what various authorities considered most important, as seen in the general opening literature. The books we consulted include various editions of *Modern Chess Openings* (MCO) under various editors, primarily Walter Korn, from 1932 to 1965, *Encyclopaedia of Chess Openings* (ECO) compiled under Alexander Matanovic from 1977, *Batsford Chess Openings* (BCO) by Kasparov, Keene and co-author Schiller, in 1982 and 1989 editions, and finally the recent *Nunn's Chess Openings* (NCO) by John Nunn and an all-star team."

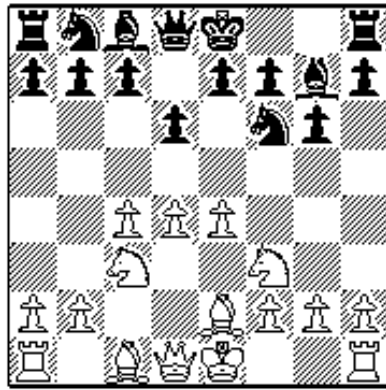
Why on earth don't they use the most recent editions of the MCO and ECO, and where is Informator? To me it seems that by limiting the material to the above, the authors exclude a lot of recent material to save themselves from making the effort to work through the more recent games and thereby leave the student to do all the work him- or herself. This is surely a reason why nobody should want to buy a book.

Page 110: Annotation to the game Spassky-Fischer, Sveti Stefan match, 1992: "**10...e5**. This move was introduced by Spassky at this game."

I'm puzzled, did Spassky suggest this move to Fischer during the game? Or was it Fischer

who introduced the move? I think the latter...

Page 121, under the headline *5.Nf3 - Normal Variation*, and after the moves 1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 Bg7 4 e4 d6 5 Nf3 0-0, the following diagram is given (*See Diagram*):



Well, after the above five moves, this is definitely not the right position. A closer examination quickly reveals, that White has moved six times and Black four.

Page 127: After the moves 1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 Bg7 4 e4 d6 5 Nf3 0-0 6 Be2 e5 7 0-0, they only list the moves: 7...Na6, 7...c6, 7...Nc6 and 7...exd4. What about 7...Qe8, 7...a5 and more importantly 7...Nbd7? Particularly the last move is a strange exclusion.

Page 189: in the chapter *ATTACKING PLANS FOR WHITE*, under the headline *Kingside Attack*. The only example given is Spassky-Evans, Varna OL 1962, where Black played surprisingly lame in the opening: 1

d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 Bg7 4 e4 d6 5 f3 c6 6 Be3 a6 7 Qd2 b5 8 0-0-0 bxc4? 9 Bxc4 0-0 10 h4 d5 11 Bb3 dxe4?

Is this really the best example they could come up with? What about showing an example where Black isn't more or less lost from the opening, or one where White uses a typical idea such as a pawn sacrifice like e4-e5, and when Black plays ...d6xe5, White plays f4-f5, with a strong attack? This typical and very important idea is only mentioned in reference to one game, Letelier-Fischer, Leipzig OL 1960, where White did it to prevent an attack against his own King. Embarrassing!

Page 196, same chapter as above, but under the headline *Attack in the Center*: "White cannot usually attack effectively in the center. The exceptions are when Black fails to castle promptly, and when a timely advance of the e-pawn disrupts Black's position." Really?

Page 225, under the headline *Weakness at d6*: "Sometimes our pawn at d6 is irrelevant, and it can be sacrificed. Most of the time, however, it plays an important role in the defense of c5 or e5. Since Black usually advances both the e-pawn and c-pawn at some point, the pawn at d6 can become vulnerable and is an easy target."

This could and should have been followed by an example where White exploits the weak d-pawn that can arise in the fianchetto lines, where Black exchanges on d4. Instead the authors have chosen a completely irrelevant example where Black drops a piece after a series of unmotivated and frankly quite stupid moves.

Page 229, under the chapter headline *TACTICS EVERYWHERE!*: "Most KIDders [CH: this is by the way an annoying term] love a good fight. The King's Indian Defense offers plenty of opportunities for combinative sacrifices, but even mere tactics, when they arrive in bunches, can be thrilling. Powers of calculation are tested to the maximum, which is one reason the opening appeals to the likes of Bobby Fischer and Garry Kasparov. Lesser mortals can have fun, when they are up to the task, but that is not often."

What are they trying to tell us? Not to play the King's Indian unless we are one of the abovementioned gentlemen? Whatever they mean, it isn't a very clever comment.

Page 240: "The pawn at g6 is safeguarded by its comrade at g6..."

Me, myself and I, we are many pawns on g6.

Page 247, in the chapter *THE KID HALL OF FAME*, under the headline Isaac Boleslavsky in the annotations to the game Alatortsev-Boleslavsky, USSR ch 1950: "**1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 d6 3 Nc3 e5** The Old Indian often transposes into the King's Indian after Black fianchettoes on the kingside. **4 e4 exd4 5 Qxd4 Nc6 6 Qd2 g6 7 b3 Bg7 8 Bb2 0-0 9 Bd3...**"

This is not a King's Indian, but the English Opening (1 c4 e5 2 Nc3 d6 3 d4 exd4 4 Qxd4), so not a particularly well-chosen example to document Boleslavsky playing the King's Indian.

Page 251, the game Taimanov-Najdorf, Zurich ct 1953, after the moves: 1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 Bg7 4 e4 d6 5 Nf3 0-0 6 Be2 e5 7 0-0 Nc6 8 d5 Ne7 9 Ne1 Nd7 10 Be3 f5, and now they give the move 11 f3 a "?". Why? Well, we don't get an explanation from the authors, so we'll keep guessing.

Page 273, to the game Larsen-Tal, Eersel ct 1969: "**20 Nxa8**. Larsen, the brave challenger to Bobby Fischer (a right earned in this match) fearlessly grabs the Rook."

This is a typical Schiller error. (Edward Winter has in *Kingpin* pointed out a large number of similar mistakes in Schiller & Keene's *World Championship Combinations*). Fischer didn't participate in the candidate matches in this world championship cycle because he withdrew from the 1967 Sousse Interzonal. By the way, Larsen earned the right to play Fischer by beating Uhlmann in 1971.

Page 299, Kasparov is spelled "Kasaparov".

There are another 25-30 things I have marked up, but I will try not to be boring.

My point with the above is that there are far too many mistakes, some very obvious ones. These are in the book due to ignorance and sloppiness by the author and editor.

Many of the mistakes are due to the authors not knowing what they are talking about. But since Gufeld generally knows what he talking about, I will attribute these errors to Schiller, because errors like the above are far from uncommon in his books.

The theory section which covers page 41 thru page 166 is quite pathetic. None of the lines are covered in any kind of detail. Of course, when you limit yourself to the sources cited above, then it doesn't leave you with a lot of material to work with and the coverage will be quite inadequate. Let me give you some examples:

In the Four Pawns Attack, there are no lines mentioned where Black plays ...Bg4, which was the choice by Kasparov the last time he played against this line.

In the Saemisch, there is no theoretical coverage of 6...Nbd7; instead they point to three games, of which Beliavsky-Nunn is the only one played after 1956!

The line 1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 Bg7 4 e4 d6 5 Nf3 0-0 6 h3 c5 isn't mentioned at all, nor is 6 Be2 c5.

In the classical King's Indian (1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 Bg7 4 e4 d6 5 Nf3 0-0 6 Be2 e5 7 0-0 Nc6 8 d5 Ne7) the coverage is down to a bare minimum. After 9 Nd2, there are just two examples (from 1987 & 1995) with 9...c5, and two with 9...a5 (one from 1992 and one is taken from BCO2). The Bayonet Attack (9 b4) is covered by giving some examples from 1957, 1977, an analysis from MCO10 (the most recent edition is actually MCO14) and one undated analysis from NCO. The move 9...a5 isn't mentioned at all.

However, the most disastrous coverage of all is the one after 9 Ne1, after which 9...Ne8 is only covered by two games that are not to be found in the theory section. And even after 9...Nd7, which is the main line move, only 8 (eight) separate examples are given. Furthermore, in this section they point to the game Kasparov-Piket, which cannot be found in the index, mainly due to the fact that the correct reference for the game is Piket-Kasparov.

In the Petrosian variation, they give no examples that are dated later than 1985, although there are three undated NCO quotes, but no mention of Kramnik who took it up to beat Kasparov and several others.

I hope you get the idea. The theoretical coverage isn't even skin deep; it just scratches the surface, and bounces one or two times before it goes on to the next line which is covered in

the same fashion.

Other chapters in the book do not hold up under a critical eye either. I have already mentioned the less than brilliant choice of example in regards to showing a typical kingside attack for White, but a subject such as when and how for Black to time the ...f7-f5 thrust correctly isn't discussed, nor is the ...h7-h5-h4 idea, which occurs with some frequency in the fianchetto lines, nor is the concept of playing on the dark squares mentioned, nor how Black is to know when it's right and when it isn't to open files the queenside.

One positive feature about this book is Gufeld's annotations to his own games. They are usually quite entertaining and insightful. Unfortunately, all the games to 1990 are to be found with similar annotations in other books on the King's Indian by Gufeld, and I'm almost 100% sure that they all will be in the new book by Gufeld on the King's Indian coming out on Batsford soon.

There are so many things in this book that are not the way they ought to be, so many things that have been left out and ignored. I have criticized Gufeld before for recycling old material, but I'm no have clue why he is willing to risk his reputation by putting his name on a book with Schiller who is known to do a poor job of covering up his shortcomings as an original writer.

This book is called the *Secrets of the King's Indian*, and that is what we are left with: secrets, because they haven't been explained. When will the publishers stop releasing books with recycled material by Schiller? When will he start putting some effort in to the work that he claims to do?

Polugaevsky once wrote that it takes at least two years to write a good chess book. I haven't seen a book by Schiller which could have taken more than, at the most, two months to write, and most of them not more than two weeks. Maybe it's the sun out here in California that prevents him from working? Who knows?

For now let my message be: Stop buying books written by the likes of Schiller and start appreciating books written by authors who truly care for their readers.

My assessment of this book:

Informator 78 (Electronic Edition) by Aleksandr Matanovic et al., 2000 Sahovski Informator, Figurine Algebraic Notation, \$36.00

The new Informator is out, but so far it is only the electronic edition, the printed one follows afterwards.

Since I last mentioned the Chess Informant Reader (a required, but downloadable free tool) it has undergone some changes, among them the inclusion of the Crafty analysis engine. This is something I recommended in previous observations, but there are still other things that need to be changed. The analysis that the search engine generates cannot be saved. Nor can you enter your own games and save them. You cannot print the games, only the ECO tables, which of course is of some use. As you can see there are still plenty of major things to improve on. But it's encouraging to see that the people at Sahovski Informator are working on improving their product.



This is of particular importance since they came out the sad news that the next ECO A, which is due anytime now, will not be published in the well-known printed format, but will only be released as an electronic edition. The world is changing, and sometime even things you don't want to change will. I for one am sad that the printed ECO will be a thing of the past.

I can't help thinking that this development wouldn't have happened if ECO had continued to be a compilation of the efforts of many GMs, rather than the halfhearted work of less familiar names who limited themselves to quote from the Informators instead of expanding

their perspective and including material from other sources.

Also haunting my mind is the thought of the Informator standing next in line to be 'electrified', i.e., the abandonment of the printed edition. I hope that will not happen for some time to come. I have always been and will always be an avid defender of the printed word, even if the 'words' consist of funny combinations of figurines, letters, numbers and symbols.

This edition of Informator contains 535 games and a large number of opening excerpts from other games.

142 of these games feature the Sicilian Defense, a remarkably high percentage. Also the Caro-Kann, Pirc and French Defenses are seeing a lot of action these days.

As I pointed out in my review of the previous Informator, there are a number of things that are missing: The most important novelties of the previous volume, the best games of the previous volume, the endgame and combination sections, as well as the biographical section of a famous player. These things have not been changed, but they ought to be.

As usual many of the games are annotated by the players themselves, and in this volume we find annotations by Kasparov, Kramnik, Anand, Shirov, Adams, Leko, Bareev, Dreev, Khalifman, Gelfand, J. Polgar, Karpov, M. Gurevich, Morozevich Ivanchuk, Xie Jun and many, many others.

This is excellent material for improving your own skills as a chess player if you are willing to put in some work yourself. Studying great players' games and games with the openings you play can only increase your understanding of the game. This is a reason why books like Informator never should disappear. [The electronic edition of *Chess Informant 78* may be ordered at: www.sahovski.com]

My assessment of this book:

Chesspublishing.com by Chris White et al. Figurine Algebraic Notation. Subscription, one opening section: \$18.00/year - Subscription all sections: \$90.00/year

This internet adventure started last year with pretty much the same line-up as we see today. The idea is that you pay an annual fee to subscribe to one or more pages each covering a particular set of openings. Some sections contain many openings (like 1 e4 e5) and some just one (like the King's Indian). The division of the openings is logical, but then again it isn't. For example, in the Daring Defences section we find the Gruenfeld Indian, which really cannot be considered daring anymore. The Benko probably also should be grouped together with the Benonis. But these are the kind of problems that you run into when you divide things that are not meant to be divided; the heralded ECO has the same kind of problems.

Note: We will cover six sections of ChessPublishing.com this month and six more next month.

Here are the major sections this month:

1 e4 e5 by GM Paul Motwani

This is my personal favourite home page. Paul Motwani (PM) is very entertaining writer; his books are aimed particularly at weaker players, but even stronger players will find much interesting and enjoyable material.

PM calls himself Mr Mo on his home page, which tells you little about the relaxed atmosphere on these pages.

His page has following sub pages:

July '00 - What's New [The most recent update]

[June '00 Update](#)
[May '00 Update \[I hope you have figured out what this is\]](#)
[Previous Updates](#)
[Reflection Zone \[PM replies to the e-mails he has received\]](#)
[Puzzle Paradise \[Various exercises divided up by opening line\]](#)
[Hero of the Month \[A person who has tackled an opening particularly well\]](#)
[About Mr Mo \[Funny and personal things about Mr Mo\]](#)
[Index of Openings](#)
[Index of Games](#)
[Index of Players](#)
[E-mail Mr Mo](#)
[Symbols & Abbreviations](#)
[Mr Mo's Homepage](#)

This is by far the most extensive list in any of the pages.

I will look at the Updates next, but let me first comment on the three indexes that PM has included. To me this is quite essential, but as far as I remember, this page is the only one which has been carefully organized in this fashion. But it should be mandatory, as it is otherwise quite hopeless to find your way around.

In the update we find the real reason why I personally enjoy Motwani's page so much. He puts an enormous amount of effort into his updates. He is witty, serious, funny, interesting, informative, entertaining - just great.

Here are the headlines for the July update:

Announcement, Bonus Brainteaser, Puzzle Solution, Birthday Game, Thanks,

Dedication, New Highlights, M.O. Moves, Rewind Reward, Hero of the Month, Hero Puzzle, June Hero Puzzle Solution, Motto of the Month, Reflection Zone, Index of New Games, New Index of Players, New Index of Openings.

Have you caught your breath yet? I haven't!

You may ask, "What's the big deal? I could do with some new games and the most important novelties!" But to me this where PM does everything so much better than the rest of the hosts: PM engages his subscribers, he makes them feel that they are a part of things as much as he is. People can write in with their own games, solve puzzles and brainteasers, check out the new moves, learn something about famous chess players, get their e-mails answered, even enter themselves for the Birthday Game. I think it's fantastic.



Of course we reach the question of the chess content in itself. Motwani is also excellent in this regard. His game annotations are thorough and very instructive. He presents analysis of his own, draws parallels to other new games and older games he has presented, as well as bits from other games worth paying attention to. The game selection as well as his choice of M.O. Moves (Most Outstanding Moves) are exemplary.

If I were to choose one page only, this would be the one, even if I didn't play 1 e4 or answered 1 e4 with 1...e5. By studying the games and annotations that PM supplies, you will no doubt learn an awful lot, and your friendly guide, Mr Mo, will simultaneously make sure that you have a good time.

My assessment of this section: 

French Defense by GM Neil McDonald

This page is very different from Motwani's; it's still very good, but in an entirely different

way.



Neil McDonald (NM) is one of my favourite chess book authors when it comes to openings, and he doesn't disappoint here either, when he deals with one of his favourite openings - the French Defense.

NM is on this home page very much concentrated about the opening, and therefore there is not much more than the updates on this page. Therefore let's jump straight forward to that.

The latest update, August '00, is separated into the following small chapters: Exchange, Winawer, Tarrasch, Classical, King's Indian Attack and E-mailbag.

The update includes nine new games. The games are briefly introduced and some of reasons why that particular game has been included are explained. Furthermore he points out which games he has covered in the past on the same topic and which could be of use when you study a particular line.

The games themselves are well annotated, and as usual for NM, his annotations are to the point, informative and very interesting. The annotations are only lightly analytical, but he gives a lot verbal comments to each game, which make this page very good for those seeking to improve their understanding of the opening.

NM once again impresses me with his style and enthusiasm for the subject he is writing about, and this page is another favourite of mine.

My assessment of this section: 

Dragons by GM Chris Ward


Again an excellent choice as page host. Ward plays the Dragon himself and has written some excellent material on the Sicilian Dragon.

This page resembles the one by McDonald above by mainly focusing on the Updates. But Ward's updates are different. They are more fun, but also much less extensive. Each of the last three updates have only had seven games each, which is not an awful lot for your money, when you compare to the overflow of games in Motwani and Fedorowicz's pages.

The background material also leaves a lot to be desired. Particularly the Accelerated Dragon is receiving poor treatment. It's very clear that Ward really couldn't be bothered to cover these lines. Otherwise I'm sure he would have put in more effort selecting some good illustrative games. I once co-wrote a book on the accelerated dragon, a book that ended up being 320 pages long; so far Ward has presented just 21 games...

For comparison, the Yugoslav attack with 9 g4 has 11 games by itself. If this is disproportionate, then I don't know what is.

I like Chris Ward and his books on the Dragon, and I would liked to give this page 'Two Thumbs Up!', but the disappointing showing for the Accelerated Dragon as well as the small number of games in the monthly updates make me less enthusiastic.

My assessment of this section: 

Open Sicilians by GM John Fedorowicz

The American GM Fedorowicz is a colourful player and, among others, he has written a couple of great books on the Benko Gambit. He plays the open Sicilian with both colours and therefore should be the ideal person to cover this material.

But boy oh boy, did I get disappointed when I read his updates. He presents a lot of games, but there are almost no comments to the games. See for example his comments to this game in the most recent update:



1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 Nf6 4.Nc3 cxd4 5.Nxd4 a6 6.Be3 e6 7.Qd2 b5 8.f3 Nbd7 9.g4 h6 9...Nb6 10.g5 Nfd7 11.0-0-0 Bb7 is gonna catch on 10.0-0-0 Bb7 11.h4 b4 12.Na4 Qa5 13.b3 Nc5 14.a3 Rc8 15.Qxb4 Qc7 16.Nxc5 dxc5 17.Qa4+ Nd7 18.Ne2 c4 19.Bf4 Qc6 20.Qxc6 Bxa3+ 21.Kb1 Rxc6 22.Nd4 Rc8 23.Bxc4 e5 24.Nf5 Rxc4 25.Nxg7+ Kd8 26.Bxe5 Rc6 27.Ne6+ Rxe6 28.Bxh8 Ke7 29.g5 h5 30.Rd3 Bd6 31.Rhd1 Bc6 32.Bc3 Bg3 33.Bb4+ Ke8 34.Bd6 Bxd6 35.Rxd6 Ke7 36.Rxe6+ Kxe6 37.Rd4 Now white is clearly better, but before who knows... A complicated mess. Black should be ok. **37...Ke5 38.Rc4 Bb5 39.Rc7 Kd6 40.Rc8 Ne5 41.Rh8 Nxf3 42.Rxh5 Bd7 43.Kb2 Bg4 44.Rh6+ Be6 45.Kc3 Ke5 46.b4 Kd6 47.Kd3 Ke7 48.Ke3 Ne5 49.Rh7 Bd7 50.h5 Kf8 51.Rh8+ Kg7 52.Ra8 Bb5 53.Kf4 Nc6 54.c3 Be2 55.Rc8 Na7 56.h6+ Kh7 57.Rc7 Nb5 58.Rxf7+ Kg8 59.g6** If black wants to play ...h6 this line might be his best try. 1-0

The game is Ernst-Agrest from this year's Swedish Championship. If you feel enriched by reading the comments to this game, congratulations!

His updates usually cover a lot of games, but with the games annotated like above (dare I say 'Schiller Style'), it isn't really worth the money, and you would gain much more from studying the Motwani and McDonald pages.

My assessment of this section:

1 e4 ... by GM Alexander Volzhin

Alexander who? That was my first reaction when I saw his name. I have since learned a lot more about this gentleman who wants to give his audience quality material with good annotations.

Volzhin's updates separate themselves from some of the others by usually only covering 1-2 opening lines each time, but in great detail. That way you catch up with the current status in a particular line and then it's easier for you to decide whether you want to consider it seriously. Occasionally he takes a little tour and looks at new moves in lines that falls within his area of coverage.




In fact, I had the pleasure of doing the July update for Volzhin, while he was touring Europe and winning a few tournaments. While it would have been easy to fill in for some of the other hosts, Volzhin, is a tough act to follow. His material is usually first rate, the games well chosen, the annotations frank and filling, and unlike many of the others, he is not afraid to reveal his findings, i.e., improvements over existing theory and other people's games.

Many hours were spent to present an update which I thought would suit Volzhin's followers. I didn't want his subscribers to feel let down while he was out playing some real chess.

I think that some of the other hosts could learn something from Volzhin's pages and invest in more background material. This kind of material can only help the readers get a better understanding of the particular lines and therefore also increase their success rate when they are trying the openings out in praxis.

Should you play the Pirc, Caro-Kann, Alekhine or Centre Counter (Scandinavian), then this page will definitely be worth considering, and if you are 1 e4 player, then this page, along with

Motwani's, is the best choice you can make.

My assessment of this section: 

1 d4 d5 by GM Ruslan Scherbakov

Another name that most people are not familiar with. Scherbakov is strong GM and like Motwani, he has to cover a lot of ground on his page. The various lines in the many different kinds of Queen's Gambits attract a lot of attention from the strongest players in the world, including Scherbakov, who, among other things, is a specialist on the Notebom Variation.

While I didn't quite know what to expect from this page, I have, after studying the material, included this page on my list of favourite pages.

Scherbakov goes in-depth with the annotations to the games, and his selection of games is second to none. His updates vary in style and form. Sometimes he covers a topic in depth (like in the August update where he covered the Tarrasch minus the main line, which will be covered in September) and other months he selects two or three main lines and then supplies the subscribers with a general update on this lines.

His background material is also first rate, although much more needs to be added, but given the pace that Scherbakov moves, most gaps will be filled soon.


This page is also one that is a must if you play 1 d4 and answer 1 d4 with 1...d5, most people will be able to benefit from studying these pages due to the excellent game annotations from Scherbakov.

Strongly recommended!

My assessment of this section: 



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