



COLUMNISTS

Checkpoint

Carsten Hansen

**Reviewed this month:*****The Ultimate Tarrasch Defense***

by Eric Schiller

Informator 82

by Aleksandar Matanovic et al.

Classical Nimzo-Indian - the ever-popular 4 Qc2

by Bogdan Lalic

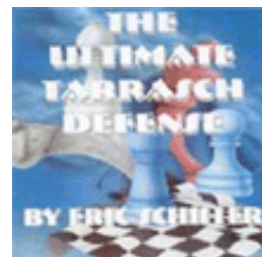
Number 25

This column marks my 25th Checkpoint column and it has made me take a look at the development of the books that are being published. More and more books are being released on CD as well as being made available as downloads from the internet. The quality has generally increased, even though established publishers still often publish material that is sub-standard. A few publishers are in a class by themselves. These are Sahovski Informator and New in Chess, both of which mainly publish their high-quality yearbooks, while Sahovski Informator also continues to release ECOs and ECO monographs with some frequency. Of the non-yearbook publishing houses, Gambit Publications stands out as a clear leader. As far as I have seen, not a single sub-standard book has been released from its presses. I wish more publishers would follow in their footsteps and focus more on quality than quantity.



The Ultimate Tarrasch Defense by Eric Schiller, 2001
 Pickard & Son, Publishers, Figurine Algebraic Notation, CD-ROM, \$22.95

It would be a gross exaggeration to say that Schiller's past works have been a favourite of your humble reviewer. However, every dog has its day and even authors with the worst track record can have a good performance.



Nonetheless, I was a bit surprised to see that Sid Pickard had published this work by Schiller. In the past Pickard & Son, Publishers have published several interesting e-books on openings, most notably Dan Heisman's works on the Traxler and the Fritz Variations of the Three Knights Defence.

The back cover blurb tells us, among other things: "Here's the kind of opening you've got to love - invented and promoted by a lone pioneer, against all norms of 'sound play' in his day. Dr. Siegbert Tarrasch believed in free and easy play for his pieces in rapid development, and was unwilling to patiently defend the orthodox Queen's Gambit. Therefore, in answer to 1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3, Tarrasch played 3...c5! to open the game immediately. No crouching on the first three ranks, no maneuvering to make a 'liberating' advance late in the opening - each piece will be brought at once to it's best square, and Black will own the center! What could be better?"

Later he says "Remember, two world champions (Spassky and Kasparov) relied on the Tarrasch Defense in their ascent to the throne!"

You can always debate some of these statements. For example, the idea of the 'liberating' advance late in the opening didn't really surface until the Hypermodern period in the 1920's, some 25-30 years after Tarrasch first tried his new defense. Furthermore, saying that Kasparov relied on

the Tarrasch in his ascent to the throne is somewhat exaggerated. He used it three times against Karpov in their 1984 match, and after three losses he put it on the shelf, never to be used again against him, and only four more times against other players (Hort, Larsen, Ljubojevic and Züger), the most recent being in 1988!

From what I have seen, the Tarrasch Queen's Gambit is an opening that Schiller has written quite a bit about and has also played a lot in his own games. This therefore makes it different from other openings. His love for the opening clearly shows on this CD with plenty of diverse material The CD contains the following:

- Introduction to the Tarrasch Defense in audio by Schiller
- PGN & CTG files, as well as a Bookup database
- Acrobat and Microsoft e-books about Tarrasch and the Tarrasch Defense
- Three pictures of Tarrasch, and two different autographs
- HTML opening reports
- Database with 15591 games - 307 annotated
- Six text documents to guide the reader through the opening
- Opening key with 814 classification positions and theme keys
- Special contribution by Raymond Keene
- Catalog of available books and e-books from Pickard & Son, Publishers
- Pictures of some of Schiller's books published by Cardoza.

The audio introduction isn't really necessary as it doesn't tell us anything that is not given elsewhere on the CD, so it doesn't really serve any purpose, except for Schiller to play with the multimedia options the CD allows, and for the reader to hear his voice.

Similarly unnecessary are the e-books, which essentially are cook-ups of material cut-and-pasted from Schiller's previous works on the Tarrasch. This of course can be tolerated when it's thrown in for free, but I think the author should have taken the time to at least corrected misspellings, which can be found in abundance throughout the 80 pages. Furthermore the last 20 pages or so are spent on listing typical Tarrasch encounters, divided up by variation, which are all named. It is not clear to me what the exact purpose of this exercise is.

The pictures and autographs are nice additions, again making use of the multimedia functions of a CD, but calling the photos rare is a bit of a stretch.

HTML opening reports are generated from ChessBase and are not particularly interesting. For example, in the report on the endgame variation (1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 c5 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nf3 Nc6 6.g3 Nf6 7.Bg2 Be7 8.0-0 0-0 9.Bg5 Be6 10.dxc5 Bxc5 11.Bxf6 Qxf6 12.Nxd5 Qxb2), we are told that the "strong grandmaster" P Eschmann has used this line. Excuse me, but according to the same database, he is rated 2177! Furthermore, when we are told about other notable players who have played this line, we are introduced to names such as GENIUS, MrXYZ2 and SINGACRAFTY. Hardly notable players if you ask me.

The six text documents to guide the reader through the opening is a bit of an exaggeration, as one of them is a quote from Tarrasch's *Three Hundred Chess Games*, two pictures, two autographs and a link to the Tarrasch website. The next document is called 'Spassky and the Tarrasch', and is a contribution by Keene. This is not quite right, as it really consists of a short introduction by Keene, and then a longer theoretical discussion of the games from the 1969 Petrosian-Spassky World Championship match by Andor Lilienthal. There is no mention where this piece is taken from. The remaining documents are identical to the Acrobat e-book that I already have mentioned, therefore the amount of guidance

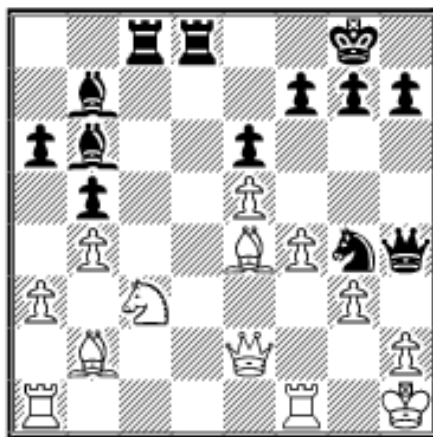
you can obtain from this is fairly limited. I had hoped that it would have been more of a theoretical discussion of existing theory with links to the theoretically most important games, including discussions of why these games are particularly important to the current status of theory.

The main element on this CD is obviously the database of games, some with annotations by Schiller. Here is an example of a game annotated by Schiller:

Rotlewi, G - Rubinstein, A [D40] Lodz 1907

1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 e6 3.e3 c5 4.c4 Nc6 5.Nc3 Nf6 6.dxc5 Bxc5 7.a3?! [7.cxd5 exd5 transposes to the Asymmetrical Variation.] 7...a6 8.b4 Bd6! [With the inclusion of the a-pawn advances, Black has secured this excellent square for the Bishop.] 9.Bb2 0-0 10.Qd2?! [10.cxd5 exd5 11.Be2 would be another asymmetrical approach.] 10...Qe7! [This is often a good location for the Queen. A Rook will often come to the d-file to support the d-pawn.] 11.Bd3?! [White does not understand that this Bishop belongs on e2. Of course [sic!] play would then transpose [sic!] after 11...dxc4, but the point is that White later returns the Bishop - incorrectly - to d3.] [11.cxd5 exd5 12.Nxd5 [CH: 12 Be2 is stronger according to Razuvaev] 12...Nxd5 13.Qxd5 Be6! (Now Black has more than enough compensation for the pawn.) 14.Qd1 [CH: 14 Qd3!? is more critical, e.g. 14...Rfd8 15 Qc3 f6 16 Bc4 with chances to both sides] (14.Qg5 Bxb4+ 15.axb4 Qxb4+ and Black wins.) 14...Nxb4! 15.axb4 Bxb4+ 16.Nd2 Rfd8 17.Bc1 Rxd2 18.Bxd2 Rd8 19.Bxb4 Qxb4+ 20.Ke2 Rxd1 21.Rxd1 Qc4+ 22.Ke1 Qc3+ 23.Rd2 g6 and White [sic!] wins without difficulty.] 11...dxc4! [The timing of central exchanges is of critical importance in the Tarrasch.] 12.Bxc4 b5 13.Bd3?! [As noted, the Bishop belongs at e2. - [CH: It's worth noting that Razuvaev in his excellent book on Rubinstein does not make any similar remarks in his annotations to this game] -] 13...Rd8 14.Qe2 [White must get out from under the pin.] 14...Bb7 15.0-0 [Black is in control of the position and has a strong initiative.

Rubinstein now increases the pressure.] **15...Ne5! 16.Nxe5 Bxe5 17.f4** [White recognizes the potential danger in allowing Black to sacrifice the Bishop at h2. The immediate tactical threat also involves the Knight at d3, which will be under a double attack if Black can play the Queen to d6 with check.] [17.Rfd1 Qc7 18.f4 Bxc3 19.Rac1 (Suggested by Kmoch; however, Black can remain a pawn to the good.) 19...Nd5 20.Be4 Nxf4 21.exf4 Bxe4 22.Qxe4 Rxd1+ 23.Rxd1 Rc8] **17...Bc7 18.e4 Rac8 19.e5** [White cannot provide enough support in the center. The attempt to take over the initiative is doomed to failure because White has no positional basis for an attack.] [19.Rad1 would have been more sensible, contesting the important b-file.] **19...Bb6+ 20.Kh1 Ng4!** [The Black minor pieces join together to form a tactical operations force which is the envy of the heavy artillery. Yet all the Black pieces will work together to reach their goal in this game. Black threatens to capture at d3, and this threat cannot be ignored. White must also take care upon the long diagonal, where the light squares are vulnerable.] **21.Be4** [21.Ne4 Rxd3! 22.Qxd3 Bxe4! 23.Qxe4 Qh4 (Black wins.) 24.h3 Qg3 25.hxg4 Qh4#!] **21...Qh4 22.g3**



(This position should be familiar to all chessplayers.) [22.h3 Rxc3!! (Another form of execution.) 23.Qxg4 (23.Bxc3 Bxe4 24.Qxe4 Qg3 25.hxg4 Qh4#) 23...Rxc3+!! 24.Qxc3 Qxc3+ 25.gxh3 Bxe4+ 26.Kh2 Rd2+ 27.Kg3 Rg2+ 28.Kh4 Bd8+ 29.Kh5 Bg6# A wonderfully artistic tableau!]

22...Rxc3! 23.gxh4 Rd2!! [Black has offered up a Queen, but his generosity does not stop there. Now another Rook goes, while the other pieces remain under enemy fire.] **24.Qxd2 Bxe4+ 25.Qg2 Rh3!!** [Mate is inevitable.] **0-1**

Comparing the annotations to this game with those to other

of the games on this CD, this game is well above average, despite typos and misspellings.

By contrast, there is also the following game:

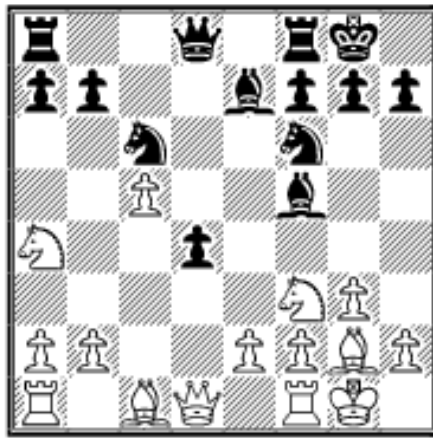
Demetriescu, F - Nagy, G [D34] Postal, 1936

**1.c4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 c5 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nf3 Nc6 6.g3 Nf6
7.Bg2 Be7 8.0-0 0-0 9.dxc5 d4 10.Na4 Bf5 11.Bd2 Be4
12.Nh4 [This seriously weakens f3, h3 and g2.] [12.b4
Sahlender, F-Nagatz, F/Germany 1989/0-1] 12...Bxg2
13.Nxg2 Ne4 14.Qc2? d3! [Winning a piece.] 15.exd3 Nd4
16.Qd1 Nxd2 17.Qxd2? [Or a full Queen!] 17...Nf3+! 0-1**

Despite this CD being about the Tarrasch Queen's Gambit, I found a number of games belonging to very different openings, such as the Stonewall Dutch, the Abrahams-Notebom Gambit (this included games by Schiller that were also annotated by Schiller himself; the relevance of this cannot be anything but self-promotion), 4 Bf4 Queen's Gambit, Exchange Variation, Semi-Slav Moscow Variation and Anti-Moscow Variation, Ragozin Variation, etc. I haven't added up the number of games with other lines than the Tarrasch, but there are many, and I'm not sure what they are doing on this CD.

In regards to his theoretical contributions, I will take a look at the Tarrasch Gambit, which he gives a thumbs-up to in audio introduction.

It's interesting that despite his endorsement of this line, he barely covers it. The critical position arises after **1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 c5 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nf3 Nc6 6.g3 Nf6 7.Bg2 Be7 8.0-0 0-0 9.dxc5 d4 10.Na4 Bf5**



The most popular move is 11 Bf4, but 11 Bd2 has scored just as well and was recently tried by P.Cramling in the French league against Salaun: 11 Bd2 Re8 12 b4 d3, and now instead of 13 exd3, White can play 13 e3!? intending 14 b5 and Nd4 with a very clear edge and 13...Bg4 14 h3 is also very pleasant for

White. Other possibilities for Black include:

- a) 11...Nd5, which can be met with 12 Qb3!? Qd7 13 Rfd1 with an edge.
- b) 11...Be4 12 b4 Qd5 13 Qb3 d3 14 Nc3!? Qxb3 15 axb3 dxe2 16 Nxe2 with an edge for White once again.
- c) 11...Ne4 12 Rc1 (12 b4!?) 12...Bf6 13 b4 Re8 14 b5 Ne5 (unclear according to Sznepik) 15 Bb4! with a solid edge for White.

In the main line with 11 Bf4, he only annotates one recent game, Kiseleva-Goehler, 1999, but after 11...Be4 12 Rc1 Qd5 fails to mention the, according to Pachman, critical move 13 Qb3. That move, however, is mentioned in the annotations to Rompteau-Engel, Postal 1968. Strangely enough, he only gives two options: 13...Qxb3 14 axb3 Rad8 15 Rfd1 Nd5 16 Ne1 Nxf4 17 gxf4 f5! 18 Rc4 Bf6 19 b4 "and White eventually won", Marjanovic-Rogulj, Smederevska Palanka 1980, but according to the ECO the position after 19...a6 20 Nb6 is unclear, while ECO gives 15 Ne1 Bxg2 16 Nxg2 Nd7 17 Nd3 Rc8 18 Rfd1 b5 19 cxb6 axb6 +=, something that Schiller doesn't bother to mention; Or 13...Qh5?! against which Schiller recommends 14 h4!, referring us to Peterson-Koblents. However, he also mentions 14 h3, which is ECO's recommendation- something Schiller doesn't let us know, and also quotes the games Peterson-Koblents, this time attaching 'Latvia 1964'. Similarly he mentions 14 Ne1 and the game Hort-Tatai,


which favoured Black, but not a word about that.

Overall, ECO doesn't seem to have been consulted when covering the Tarrasch Gambit, nor has Pachman's book on the Queen's Gambit been opened.

While browsing through some of the other lines covered, I can see that the coverage is somewhat more thorough with more suggestions. Nonetheless I find it disappointing that a line he makes a point of recommending in his introduction is covered so poorly.

Overall, Schiller has done a better job with this CD than he has done with any other opening material for many years. This, however, doesn't change the fact that in several places the coverage is inadequate and downright sloppy. A much better job could easily have been done without too much effort. First of all, the material should have been arranged better with clear referencing to the important games in each line. Furthermore, it would have been wise to consult important works such as ECO, something that clearly hasn't happened in this case.

Despite his efforts, this work is not for stronger players due to insufficient depth in the material as well as if failure to cover areas. For players up to a 2000 rating there may be some use for this CD, particularly if you have an interest in the Tarrasch Defense. But 'ultimate' it is certainly not.

My assessment of this CD: 

Informator 82 by Aleksandar Matanovic et al., 2001
Sahovski Informator, Figurine Algebraic Notation, 383 pp.,
\$36.00

Another volume in the long series of Informators that have been published since 1966, at first with two volumes per year, and in recent years with three volumes each year.



Nothing of significance has changed in comparison with the last several volumes. The regular features are:

- Best game from the previous volume (won by Gelfand-Kanstler, Israel 2001)
- Most important novelty of the previous volume (Shirov-Topalov, Leon 2001)
- Games and Game fragments (526 main games and main game fragments)
- Combinations (18 diagrams)
- Endgames (18 diagrams)
- Selected tournament results
- Informator biography with games, most important novelties, combinations, endgames and statistics on a famous player (this time, Boris Spassky)

The fact that novelties often do not appear perhaps until 20 moves into a line has been discussed before. As far as I recall, the deepest novelty presented in Informator was one on move 36 in a Gruenfeld Defence, Exchange Variation. An even deeper one in the same line of the Gruenfeld was played in a Danish Championship in correspondence chess, where Black improved on about move 55 on a line given in Informator as drawn and won very shortly thereafter, but that game was not quoted in Informator.

The top 10 deepest novelties in this volume looks like this:

1. Malahatko-Ftacnik, Yugoslavia 2001: 1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 d5 4.cxd5 Nxd5 5.e4 Nxc3 6.bxc3 Bg7 7.Be3 c5 8.Nf3 Qa5 9.Qd2 Nc6 10.Rc1 cxd4 11.cxd4 Qxd2+ 12.Kxd2 0-0 13.d5 Rd8 14.Ke1 Na5 15.Bg5 Bd7 16.Bd3 Rdc8

17.Ke2 e6 18.Be3 exd5 19.exd5 b6 20.Ba6 Rd8 21.Rhd1 Ba4 22.Rd3 b5 23.Bf4 Nc4 24.Bb7 Bb2 25.Bxa8 Bxc1 26.Bxc1 Rxa8 27.Rd4N, leading to equality, improving over 27 d6?!=+.

2= San Segundo Carrillo-Galkin, Ohrid 2001: 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 c6 4.Nf3 dxc4 5.a4 Bb4 6.e3 b5 7.Bd2 a5 8.axb5 Bxc3 9.Bxc3 cxb5 10.b3 Bb7 11.d5 Nf6 12.bxc4 b4 13.Bxf6 Qxf6 14.Qa4+ Nd7 15.Nd4 e5 16.Nb3 Ke7 17.Be2 Rhc8 18.Bg4 Qd6 19.0–0 Rxc4 20.Bxd7 Qxd7 21.Qxd7+ Kxd7 22.Nxa5 Rc3!N -/+ , improving over 22...Rc2=.

2= San Segundo Carrillo-Aleksandrov, Ohrid 2001: 1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.g3 d5 4.Bg2 dxc4 5.Nf3 Nc6 6.Qa4 Bb4+ 7.Bd2 Nd5 8.Bxb4 Ndx b4 9.a3 b5 10.Qxb5 Nc2+ 11.Kd2 Nxa1 12.Qxc6+ Bd7 13.Qxc4 c5 14.Qa2 Qa5+ 15.Nc3 cxd4 16.Nxd4 Rd8 17.Rxa1 e5 18.b4 Qb6 19.Nc2 Be6+ 20.Bd5 Qxf2 21.Ne3 (in another game in this Informator, White improved with 21 Rd1!? at this point) 21...0–0 22.Qc4 Rd7N, a slight improvement over 22...Qxh2 unclear/+.=.

2= Staniszewski-Socko, Poland 2001: 1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 Bg7 4.e4 d6 5.Nf3 0–0 6.Be2 e5 7.dxe5 dxe5 8.Qxd8 Rxd8 9.Bg5 Rf8 10.Nd5 Nxd5 11.cxd5 c6 12.Bc4 b5 13.Bb3 Bb7 14.Rc1 a5 15.a3 a4 16.Ba2 Rc8 17.Be3 b4 18.axb4 a3 19.bxa3 Rxa3 20.Bb1 cxd5 21.Rxc8+ Bxc8 22.exd5 Ba6!N=, but with some initiative for Black, improving over 22...Rb3=.

5= J. Polgar-Milos, Buenos Aires 2001: 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0–0 Be7 6.Re1 b5 7.Bb3 d6 8.c3 0–0 9.h3 Na5 10.Bc2 c5 11.d4 Qc7 12.Nbd2 cxd4 13.cxd4 Rd8 14.b3 Nc6 15.Bb2 exd4 16.Nxd4 Nxd4 17.Bxd4 Bb7 18.Rc1 Qa5 19.Bb1 Rac8 20.Rxc8 Rxc8 21.Nf1 Re8 22.Ne3N unclear, previously played 22 Re3=

5= Moreno Carnero-Fernandez Garcia, Dos Hermanas 2001: 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0–0 Be7 6.Re1 b5

7.Bb3 d6 8.c3 0-0 9.h3 Na5 10.Bc2 c5 11.d4 Qc7 12.Nbd2 cxd4 13.cxd4 Rd8 14.b3 Nc6 15.Bb2 exd4 16.Nxd4 Nxd4 17.Bxd4 Bb7 18.Rc1 Qa5 19.Bb1 Rac8 20.Rxc8 Rxc8 21.Nf1 g6 22. Qe2N =, previously played 22 Re2+=

5= Maksimenko-Firman, Lviv 2001: 1.c4 Nf6 2.Nf3 e6 3.Nc3 d5 4.d4 c6 5.Bg5 dxc4 6.a4 Bb4 7.e4 b5 8.e5 h6 9.exf6 hxg5 10.fxg7 Rg8 11.h4 g4 12.Ne5 Rxg7 13.h5 f5 14.Be2 Qg5 15.Qd2 Qxd2+ 16.Kxd2 Bb7 17.f3 Nd7 18.h6 Rh7 19.Nxd7 Kxd7 20.fxg4 a6 21.gxf5 exf5 22.Bf3?N -/+, previously played 22 Raf1!+=.

5= Beliavsky-Pavasovic, Portoroz 2001: 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 c6 4.e3 Nf6 5.Nf3 Nbd7 6.Bd3 dxc4 7.Bxc4 b5 8.Bd3 Bb7 9.0-0 b4 10.Ne4 Be7 11.Nxf6+ Nxf6 12.e4 0-0 13.e5 Nd7 14.Qc2 h6 15.Bh7+ Kh8 16.Be4 Qb6 17.Be3 c5 18.dxc5 Nxc5 19.Bxc5 Bxe4 20.Qxe4 Bxc5 21.Rac1 Rad8 22.Rc4!N+=, improving over 22 g3? =+.

5= Gelfand-Macieja, Portoroz 2001: 1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 d5 4.cxd5 Nxd5 5.e4 Nxc3 6.bxc3 Bg7 7.Nf3 c5 8.Rb1 0-0 9.Be2 cxd4 10.cxd4 Qa5+ 11.Bd2 Qxa2 12.0-0 Bg4 13.Bg5 h6 14.Be3 Nc6 15.d5 Na5 16.Bc5 Bf6 17.e5 Bxe5 18.Rb4 Bxf3 19.Bxf3 Rae8 20.Be3 Nc4 21.Bxh6 Nd6 22.h4N+=, improving over 22 Bxf8=


10= Dao Thien Hai-van Wely, Batumi (rapid) 2001: 1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 d5 4.cxd5 Nxd5 5.e4 Nxc3 6.bxc3 Bg7 7.Be3 c5 8.Nf3 Qa5 9.Qd2 Nc6 10.Rc1 cxd4 11.cxd4 Qxd2+ 12.Kxd2 0-0 13.d5 Rd8 14.Ke1 Na5 15.Bg5 Bd7 16.Bd3 Rdc8 17.Ke2 e6 18.Be3 exd5 19.exd5 Rd8 20.Rc5 b6 21.Rc7 Bc8N=, an improvement over 21...Bg4+=.

10= Movesesian-Avrukh, Ohrid 2001: 1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 Nc6 6.f3 e5 7.Nb3 Be7 8.Be3 0-0 9.Qd2 a5 10.Bb5 Na7 11.Bd3 Nc6 12.a3 a4 13.Nc1 Be6 14.N1e2 d5 15.exd5 Nxd5 16.Nxd5 Qxd5 17.Nc3 Qa5 18.Qf2 Nd4 19.0-0 Rfd8 20.Kh1 Qb6 21.Rab1 f5N +/-, previously played 21...Bf6 +/-.

10= Bologan-Peng Xiaomin, Shaghai 2001: 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 Be7 6.Re1 b5 7.Bb3 d6 8.c3 0-0 9.h3 Na5 10.Bc2 c5 11.d4 Qc7 12.Nbd2 cxd4 13.cxd4 Bd7 14.Nf1 Rac8 15.Ne3 Nc6 16.d5 Nb4 17.Bb1 a5 18.a3 Na6 19.b4 g6 20.Bd2 Nh5 21.Bd3 Qb7!N+=, improving over 21...Nf4?! +/-.

We can quickly establish that the lines that exhibit novelties latest in the games are typically lines that have been popular over a number of years. Only a few of the above examples are of openings that experiencing a current fashionable and sudden trend. This will probably not ease the pressure for a lot of us who find it a daunting task to study new openings in today's day and age. However, for the majority of us, it isn't really all that important if we are slightly worse or slightly better after the opening; both players will usually make a number of mistakes to disturb the equilibrium along the way.

Nonetheless, even if you don't have the slightest interest in opening theory, *Informator* will provide you with an excellent selection of mostly games played and annotated well by the strongest players in the world; it is therefore an excellent investment, whether for study or entertainment.

My assessment of this book: 

Classical Nimzo-Indian - the ever-popular 4 Qc2 by Bogdan Lalic, 2001 Everyman Chess, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Paperback, 160 pp., \$19.95.

Anyone with interest in the Nimzo-Indian, as White or Black, knows that this queen move, for many years, lived in the shadow of Rubinstein's 4 e3. However, that is most certainly no longer the case and for at least 10 years Capablanca's queen move has superseded 4 e3 in popularity. Previous works have been published on this line, such as Maxim Dlugy's *Nimzo-Indian 4 Qc2*,



Ivan Sokolov's *Nimzo-Indian Defense Classical Variation*, as well as his ECO monograph *E32-39*. Curiously, none of these books is mentioned in the present book's bibliography. Similarly, both ECO E and Gligoric's *Play the Nimzo-Indian Defence* are also missing. I can only wonder why Bosnian GM Bogdan Lalic decided not to consult these works.



The Classical Variation or as it is sometimes called, the Capablanca Variation is characterized by the moves: 1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Qc2

The material in the present book is divided up as follows:

- Preface (2 pages)
- Introduction (17 pages)
- **Part One: 4...d5** (62 pages)
 - 1 5 a3 Bxc3+ 6 Qxc3 Ne4 7 Qc2 Nc6 (9 pages)
 - 2 5 a3 Bxc3+ 6 Qxc3 Ne4 7 Qc2: Others (13 pages)
 - 3 5 a3 Bxc3+ 6 Qxc3: 6...c5 and 6...dxc4 (9 pages)
 - 4 5 cxd5 Qxd5 6 Nf3 Qf5 7 Qxf5 exf5 (8 pages)
 - 5 5 cxd5 Qxd5 6 Nf3 Qf5: 7 Qb3 and 7 Qd1 (14 pages)
 - 6 5 cxd5 Qxd5 6 e3 (9 pages)

- **Part Two: 4...0-0** (48 pages)
- 7 5 a3 Bxc3+ 6 Qxc3 b6 7 Bg5 Ba6 (15 pages)
- 8 5 a3 Bxc3+ 6 Qxc3: Others (17 pages)
- 9 5 e4!? (16 pages)
- **Part Tree: Other Lines** (24 pages)
- 10 4...c5 (12 pages)
- 11 Odds and Ends (12 pages)

I must admit that I don't find the above categorization of the material appropriate, when you consider the popularity of the moves covered. In the present book, the number of pages allotted for each line is allocated as follows: 4...d5 (47.0% + 3.0%), 4...0-0 (35.8%), 4...c5 (9.0%), 4...Nc6 (2.2%), 4...d6 (1.0%), 4...b6 (1.0%) and 4...b5 (1.0%). For comparison, a search in my database for all games played from 1985 to 2002 by players rated higher than 2400 yields the following: 4...0-0 (57.1%), 4...c5 (23.0%), 4...d5 (13.6%), 4...Nc6 (2.6%), 4...d6 (2.6%), 4...b6 (1.0%), while 4...b5 and 4...Bxc3+ each was only tried out once in 2606 games. A similar search in the games from 1995 to 2002 gave the following leaders: 4...0-0 (57.3%), 4...c5 (19.4%) and 4...d5 (17.5%).

The point I'm trying to make is that no matter how you look at it, Lalic spends a disproportional amount of space on 4...d5, which must be due to his own fondness of the move rather than anything else. Another thing that bothered me with his coverage is that the continuations 4...d5 5 cxd5 exd5 and 5 a3 Be7 have been moved to the 'Odds and Ends' chapter at the end of the book, something we are not made aware of anywhere in Part One of the book.

Returning to the introduction, which is called *World Champions and the Classical Nimzo-Indian*, Lalic shows us games by each world champion, starting with Steinitz, ending with Anand. The games don't always feature 4 Qc2, and not always as White. Some of the transpositions are a bit exotic and the games are not always the best. Surely, the 17

pages invested on this diversion could have been invested more wisely by illustrating typical ideas in Classical Nimzo-Indian.

I have often criticized Everyman's idea of indexes at the end of each chapter. The indexes in other books in this series are usually accompanied with a summary of the lines that have just been covered, often going into some details. This is not what Lalic has done. His summaries normally run 2-7 lines, without giving us anything of much importance, leaving us with a blank half-page at the end of each chapter. Wasted space indeed.

When taking a closer look at the coverage in the chapters, it becomes obvious that it too is flawed. An example is the line **1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Qc2 d5 5 a3 Bxc3+ 6 Qxc3 Ne4 7 Qc2 Nc6 8 e3 e5 9 cxd5 Qxd5 10 Bc4 Qa5+ 11 b4 Nxb4 12 Qxe4 Nc2+ 13 Ke2**, which is the only line covered in Chapter 1, despite the heading ending with 7...Nc6. Several sidelines have been left out, but worse is that this line that has only been played 7 times in 2400+ encounters since 1985 yet still gets 9 pages of coverage in 160-page book. This clearly contradicts all logic and is not in the interest of the reader who seeks more balanced coverage. Furthermore, the presentation is poor with the author often choosing stem games where either side made mistakes in the opening instead of showing the correct move.

Chapter 2 is much of the same, spending far too much space on something that is not seen very often. For comparison this chapter covers 13 pages, although only 47 2400+ games were found in my search, while 4...c5 is covered in 12 pages in chapter 10, despite being played 599 times in the same time period.


In Part Two, more of the same. The line covered in chapter 7 was played 121 times in the above mentioned search, and 5 e4, which is chapter 9, was tried 43 times, while the lines

covered in chapter 8 appear in more than 1000 games! In the coverage in chapter 8, moves such 6...Ne4 (after 1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Qc2 0-0 5 a3 Bxc3+ 6 Qxc3), 6...d6, 6...Qe8 and 6...a5 are not mentioned at all despite being played 231 times in my search...

Part Three also leaves us with a spotted coverage, a few examples are 1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Qc2 c5 5 dxc5, after which 5...Qc7 isn't mentioned at all although tried out 79 times; or 5...0-0 6 Nf3 Na6 isn't covered unless White plays 7 a3, but both 7 g3 and 7 Bd2 are played regularly with reasonable results. I didn't see any coverage of 5...Na6 6 a3 Qa5 either, even if current theory prefers White's chances.

Lalic has plenty of suggestions of his own and presents a great deal of new analysis, but does this make up for everything that he has left out, the disproportionate coverage and otherwise general ignorance towards the reader? I don't think so.

Therefore I cannot recommend this book by itself. It may serve to update the reader on some of the lines covered in the books by Dlugy and Sokolov, but even as an update, it doesn't really hold up. Far too much is left out and therefore I cannot recommend this book, although I will not deny that some players may find some of the material in this book useful. Very disappointing coverage for a very popular line.

My assessment of this book: 

| |
|---|
| <i>The Ratings</i> |
|  — 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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