



COLUMNISTS

Checkpoint

Carsten Hansen

**Reviewed this month:*****Play The 2 c3 Sicilian***

by Eduardas Rozentalis & Andrew Harley

The Slav Defence (CD-ROM)

by Dorian Rogozenko

The Milner-Barry Gambit***in the Advance Variation of the French Defense***

by Jim Bickford

The Paulsen Attack***in the Advance Variation of the French Defense***

by Jim Bickford

French Horrors

Originally I had planned a very different introduction, but this past week something happened, that made me change my plans. The charismatic grandmaster and writer Eduard Gufeld passed away. I haven't been particularly kind to him in my book reviews of his most recent opening books. I haven't changed my mind regarding those reviews, but before those books, he did write things that meant something to me. My first acquaintance with Gufeld came with the book *Sizilianische Verteidigung - Drachen-System* (Schachverlag Rude Schmaus 1985; Sicilian Defense - Dragon Variation). It sparked my interest anew in the Dragon, and I faithfully carried it with me to every tournament I went to for several years. I even had the



opportunity to have Gufeld sign it at the tournament in Hastings 1988/89. Gufeld was an avid fan of the King's Indian and the Sicilian Dragon, and therefore I will show you one of his games that inspired me as a Dragon player.

A.Rodriguez-Gufeld Barcelona 1979

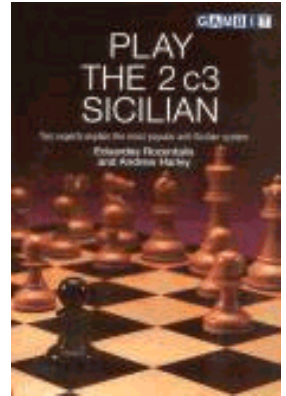
1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 g6 6 Be3 Bg7 7 f3 0-0 8 Qd2 Nc6 9 Bc4 Bd7 10 h4 Rc8 11 Bb3 h5 12 0-0-0 Ne5 13 Bg5 Rc5 14 f4 Nc4 15 Qd3 b5 15...Ng4 was for a while favoured by Tiviakov, who since has switched to 15...Qc8!? **16 e5 Qb6** This move is now considered dubious on account of the move given as alternative to White's 18th move, but in Informator, the above-mentioned book by Gufeld and even in Gufeld's *Chess: The Search for Mona Lisa* (Batsford 2001) he gives it an exclamation mark, although in 1997 in *The Complete Dragon* he said it was dubious...! Curiously enough this line has not, according to my database, been played in over-the-board chess since this game, while it has been tried no less than 7 times in correspondence chess with Black scoring an amazing 5½ points. However, none of the players playing White opted for the critical line. Today 16...Ng4 is considered best. **17 Bxf6** Here I think 17 e6!? can also be considered. **17...exf6 18 exf6?!** Here Gufeld/Stetsko gave "18 e6! fxe6 19 Qxg6 Be8 20 Qg3 Bf7 21 f5 exf5 22 Rhf1 and Black's kingside is obviously compromised." But Black may be able to improve with 19...d5!? 20 Qxh5 Rfc8, although I still think White should have the better chances, but at least Black can fight. **18...Bxf6 19 Ne4 Bg7! 20 c3 Rd5! 21 Bxc4 bxc4 22 Qc2 Rb8 23 Rd2 Ra5 24 b4 cxb3 25 Nxb3 Bf5! 26 Rxd6 Qe3+**, and White resigned. The game was awarded with the best game prize in Informator for the second half of 1979.

I didn't know Gufeld as a person, but as a personality he was colorful. He will be missed by many.

Play The 2 c3 Sicilian by Eduardas Rozentalis and Andrew

Harley, 2002 Gambit Publications Ltd., Figurine Algebraic Notation, Paperback, 192 pp., \$21.95

When I started playing the Sicilian almost 20 years ago, I noticed that Sveshnikov and a few others played the 2 c3 Sicilian, which in the Danish chess lexicon was called the Alapin Sicilian. However, not many played the line and therefore you didn't really need to prepare against the possibility of running into it. However, times have changed, now it seems that the majority of the 1 e4 players meet 1...c5 with 2 c3. In fact, even the man behind the *Beating the Sicilian* books, John Nunn, played it for awhile, but nowadays it seems like he has returned to his roots, the open Sicilian.



Other players, however, stick to this opening as if there were no other options for White after 1...c5. Two such players are the authors of the present book, Lithuanian grandmaster Eduardas Rozentalis and English FIDE master Andrew Harley. The former is quite a strong grandmaster, as we are told on the back cover; his ELO-rating peaked at 2650, so it is definitely not the typical run of mill GM we are dealing with here, and the number of games I found in my database with him playing the 2 c3 Sicilian amounted to nearly 170 with far more wins than losses. My database had far less games with co-author Harley, but this is no surprise as he hardly participates in the major tournaments that would include strong players, such as, for example, Rozentalis.

A printed book written by two true specialists in a line, one of them a GM, in contrast to the CD-ROMs that I looked at in the August Checkpoint, is very rare, but something I always welcome, particularly if the GM is forthcoming, not worrying about revealing home analysis. I have seen many books by GMs but only a few seem to lay everything they know on the table, but fortunately few of them leave traps for

the unsuspecting, traps such as calling a line bad, then playing it themselves and having a major improvement up their sleeve. This, however, is fairly common practice when looking through the notes in *Informator* by GMs and then their subsequent games with the line in question. But that is an entirely different scenario.

The material in the book is split up as follows:

- Introduction - Eduardas Rozentalis (1 page)
- Introduction - Andrew Harley (2 pages)
- Summary of Ideas (6 pages)
- 1 Alternatives to 2...e6, 2...d5 and 2...Nf6 (16 pages)
- 2 2...e6 (13 pages)
- 3 2...d5: Sidelines (9 pages)
- 4 2...d5 3 exd5 Qxd5 4 d4 Nc6 (21 pages)
- 5 2...d5 3 exd5 Qxd5 4 d4 Nf6: 5 Nf3 e6 and Other Lines (25 pages)
- 6 2...d5 3 exd5 Qxd5 4 d4 Nf6 5 Nf3 Bg4 (17 pages)
- 7 2...Nf6: Sidelines (16 pages)
- 8 2...Nf6 3 e5 Nd5 4 d4 cxd4 5 Nf3: 5...e6 and Other Moves (24 pages)
- 9 2...Nf6 3 e5 Nd5 4 d4 cxd4 5 Nf3 Nc6 6 Bc4 Nb6 7 Bb3 (21 pages)
- 10 2...Nf6 3 e5 Nd5 4 Nf3 (13 pages)
- Index of Variations (3 pages)

Generally speaking, the book is very well-researched. I looked carefully through the book with the aid of a database and found that even many of the most recent games, including some that can be found in the latest *Informator* 84 (which is to be reviewed next month) are included.

I can also safely say that this book has been a labour of love; it shines through on every single page how the authors enjoy playing this opening as White. Even though a book such as this should be objective, I think the authors have had some difficulties leaving their favoritism for the white side at

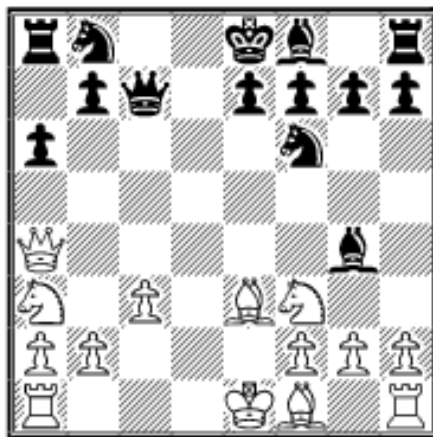
home. Co-author Harley does point out in his introduction (the authors each have their own introduction, which makes me think that they didn't work too closely together on this, but this could of course just be speculation on my part) that "there are plenty of new ideas for Black too," but he doesn't tell which in particular to look out for, while on the other hand he does point White players in the direction of some important new ideas in a couple of lines (one of them is mentioned in both introductions!).

Therefore since both of them find this line so important, I think we should take a look at. The starting moves go as follows:

1 e4 c5 2 c3 d5 3 exd5 Qxd5 4 d4 Nf6 5 Nf3 Bg4

This has become a very important way of dealing with the white set-up. White's next move is designed to take the sting out of it and in the present book comes highly recommended based on their new ideas.

6 dxc5 Qxc5 7 Be3 Qc7 8 Na3 a6 9 Qa4+!



This is the star move and hailed as a novelty in the latest Informator, but it was, according to my records, first played in Bibik-Holmsten, Helsinki 1999.

9...Nc6

This is a very critical point for the evaluation of this variation, and their choice to keep 9...Nc6 as the main line strikes me as a bit odd, as there is far more to analyze and look at after the more logical 9...Nbd7. They continue with 10 0–0–0, and now give two choices for Black:

a) 10...e6? is bad due to 11 Rxd7 Nxd7 (11...Qxd7 12 Bb5)

12 Qxg4 Bxa3 12 Qxg7.

b) "10 ..e5 is possible, but the pawn can become vulnerable and Black doesn't take control over the d5-square as is the case after ...e6. White should possibly try 11 h3:"

b1) 11...Bh5 12 g4 Bg6 13 Bg2 (The authors only mention this move, but 13 g5!? looks like it promises White an edge) 13 ..Be4 (This move does get many points in my book; Black has yet to complete his development and his king is still stuck in the center, while White has just about completed his development. A safer and more logical approach is 13...h6!? 14 Nh4 Bh7 15 Nf5 0-0-0, which may be slightly better for White but unlike the game, nothing to be seriously worried about) 14 g5 b5 15 Qb3, "and Black can't play ...Nd5." A possible continuation is 15...Qb7 16 gxf6 Nxf6 17 Rhg1! Bxa3 18 Nxe5! and White is winning.

b2) 11 ..Be6 12 Be2 Be7 13 Ng5 Bd5 14 Bf3 Bxf3 15 gxf3! ("after 15 Nxf3? 0-0 followed by 16...b5 Black is first to start his attack") 15...0-0 16 Nc2 "is rather complicated, but we think White has good prospects on the kingside." This is quite optimistic and should have been backed up with some supporting analysis. I think that after 16...Rad8 Black has the better chances, White's pieces are not particularly well-coordinated, while Black's position leaves a sense of harmony.

b4) 11 ..Bf5 12 Be2 Be7 13 g4 Be6 14 Ng5 Bd5 15 Bf3, and here:

b41) 15...Qc6 16 Qxc6 bxc6 17 c4 Bxf3 18 Nxf3 Bxa3 19 bxa3 Ke7? (This move is given a '?' by the authors, though without offering an alternative. It isn't necessarily easy to offer one, but they could consider 19 ..h5 20 g5 Ne4 21 Rhe1, and here opt for 21...0-0-0. Another possibility is the immediate 19...0-0-0!?, which does not look like an easy move to refute.) 20 Rhe1 with a clear advantage for White thanks to the vulnerable e5-pawn.

b42) 15 ..Bxf3 16 Nxf3 b5 17 Nxb5 Qb7 18 Nd6+ Bxd6 19 Rxd6 Qxf3 20 Rhd1 0–0 21 g5 Qxh3 22 gxf6 Nxf6 23 Rxa6, "and White's queenside pawns must be the more dangerous, thanks to his strong bishop." This may be so, but Black is also quite well-placed and his h-pawn isn't without potential either, so it isn't entirely clear.

b3) 11 ..Bxf3!? is for some reason not mentioned by the authors, although it looks like a fairly obvious choice, e.g., 12 gxf3 0–0–0 13 Nc2 Bc5 14 Be2 Nb6, and Black shouldn't be any worse.

c) A third line, 10...Qc8, isn't even mentioned by the authors, given that Black in Rabiega-Naiditsch, Essen 2002, had a relatively easy time: 11 Bb6 g6 12 Nc4 Bh6+ 13 Be3 b5, ½–½.

10 0–0–0 e6 11 Nb5 Qb8


11...Qc8 is met by 12 Na7; in Informator 84 Rozentalis gives the following continuation: 12...Rxa7 13 Bxa7 b5 14 Bxb5 axb5 15 Qxb5 with a slight advantage for White. Given that 11...Qb8 leads to a clear plus for White, you would think that 11...Qb8 is less good than 11...Qc8 and therefore deserves a '?!'.

12 Nbd4 Qc8 13 Nxc6 Qxc6 14 Qxc6+ bxc6 15 Rd4 Bc5 16 Ra4 Bxe3+ 17 fxe3 Bxf3 18 gxf3 a5 19 e4 Nd7 20 Rg1 g6 21 Rg5 e5 22 Rc4 f6 23 Rg1 Ra6 24 Bh3 with a clear advantage for White, Rozentalis-Lutz, Bundesliga 2001/2.

As we can see from the above, it is far from clear that the authors have found the best moves from either side, but that easily happens when you are a little too enthusiastic about the line you are analyzing, particularly when your discovery is something truly useful and important such as this line would be, if it works out for White.

However, don't let my reservations regarding the above line deter you from buying this book. It is an inspiring book to read if you playing or considering playing this line as White. It is slightly more troublesome if you are playing the Sicilian

as Black, but I trust there are also many new ideas that can be found for Black in this popular line. The sheer number of new ideas and original analysis, as well as balanced coverage makes this book an excellent buy.

My assessment of this book: 

[Order](#) *Play The 2 c3 Sicilian*
by Eduardas Rozentalis & Andrew Harley

The Slav Defence (CD-ROM) by Dorian Rogozenko, 2002
ChessBase GmbH, Figurine Algebraic Notation, CD-ROM,
\$29.95

The Slav Defense, 1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6, is easily one of Black's most popular answers to 1 d4. As Rogozenko points out, the Slav has been featured in the repertoires of most World Champions with the notable exception of Fischer, who only played it once in a blitz game against Hort.



In the introduction, Rogozenko further tells us: "The Slav Defence includes many different lines which meanwhile have become independent variations and even independent openings. First of all these are the Botvinnik variation (1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Nc3 e6 5.Bg5 dxc4 - D44) or the Meran (1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Nc3 e6 5.e3 - D45-D49). On this CD, I will deal with the part of the Slav Defence which has the ECO (Encyclopedia of Chess Openings) codes D10-D19. Nevertheless, however, it is a huge amount of material, and it would be quite unrealistic having as a task to analyze very deeply the subtleties of all variations. But the goal of the present CD is slightly different. It was planned as a general guide to the modern theory of the Slav Defence, explaining the ideas of each

variation and helping users to find suitable directions for their own playing style. Of course the Slav Defence contains a lot of complicated lines which require deep analysis. In that sense, I believe that even strong players interested in those particular lines can find useful information."

Here we see an author at his most honest. He is not going to cover all the variations in detail, which is a shame since the CD format would allow him the space that is normally denied book authors, and therefore I already hear the alarm bells sounding; stronger players will probably not find much of use on this CD. This is obviously good news for the printed book, *The Slav* by Graham Burgess, a book that was published last year. That book was heavy with details, variations, original analysis and improvements in all lines in the book. Burgess' book though isn't quite as complete when it comes to verbal explanations of typical plans, strategy, positional evaluations etc. This, however, is exactly what Rogozenko's CD is strong on.

The material on the CD is divided up as follows:

- Introduction
- General Ideas and Directions
- The arrangement of material
- 85 (!!) Theoretical Surveys of the various lines of the Slav
- 154 games annotated by the author
- 31664 games database
- Variation Tree
- 22 Training games

For those that have not played the Slav before or have relatively limited knowledge on the Slav, the theoretical surveys with the excellent explanations of typical ideas and plans are clearly the meat on this CD. In these surveys there are plenty of things to learn from; I myself learned a lot from going through the surveys. In them, Rogozenko refers to a

number of games that are linked to the surveys. However, as I have noted about previously reviewed CDs, the games that are linked in from the surveys are not annotated, nor are any positional evaluations given in the games. This is something I think detracts from the overall impression. Something like a positional evaluation doesn't take a long time to add, and if Dreev could do it on his CD, others could too.

The annotated games offer something of more interest for the stronger players. The quality of the annotations varies quite a bit: from the very detailed to the fairly superficial. No less than 17 of the annotated games are by the author himself, including an 11-move draw, where he, as Black, offered a draw in a better position. Why did that game have to be annotated? In some cases the games are annotated purely in languageless Informator-style, while other games are annotated with verbal explanations. Here is one of the author's own games exemplifying the use of superficial annotations:


(219) *Mikhalevski, V (2523) - Rogozenko, D (2537) [D15]*
WCN (Internet rapid), 18.03.2001 [*Rogozenko Dorian*]

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 a6 5 c5 Nbd7 6 Bf4 Nh5 7 e3 g6 8 h3?! Wasting too much time. Black has a very comfortable position after this. [8 Bd3 Bg7 9 0-0 0-0 (9 ..Nxf4 Often Black takes on f4 anyway, avoiding 10.Bg5.) 10 Bg5] 8...Nxf4 9 exf4 Bg7 10 Rc1?! 0-0 11 a3? Re8 -/+ 12 Bd3 Qc7 [12...Nf8] 13 f5 e5 14 fxe6 Nf8!? 15 0-0 Nxe6 16 Re1 Bd7 17 Bf1 [17 Ne2 Nf4] 17 ..Qf4 18 Ne2 Qh6 19 Ne5 Rad8 20 Ng4 Qg5 21 Qd3 Nf4 22 Nxf4 Qxf4 23 Red1 Bxg4 24 hxg4 Qxg4 25 Qc3 h5 26 Rd3 h4 27 Rcd1 Re7 28 b4 Rde8 29 Qd2 Qh5 30 Qc1 Bh6 31 Qb1 Bf4 32 a4 Bc7 33 b5 axb5 34 axb5 Qg4 35 Rh3 Ba5 36 Qa1 Bb4 37 Qb1 Re1 38 Rxe1 Rxe1 39 Qxb4 Qe2 40 Qxe1 Qxe1 41 Re3 Qa1 42 Re7 Qxd4 43 Rxb7 Qxc5 44 b6 Kg7 45 Rb8 d4 46 Ba6 Qc1+ 47 Bf1 d3 48 Rd8 Qb1 49 Rxd3 Qxb6 50 Rc3 c5 ... 0-1

While training games are normally peppered with a number of questions, most of them only have 1 or 2 questions each, something I find inadequate. In contrast, the training games

you find on the Scandinavian CD by Curt Hansen had a training question at least every other move.

Although the explanations in the theoretical surveys are quite good, this CD overall is a disappointment. It's not a complete waste of time, but for the most part there is not enough to satisfy a paying customer. For stronger players who may be looking for new ideas and some original analysis, they would definitely do better with Burgess' book, while players rated under 2000 will be able to benefit from the narrative.

My assessment of this book: 

[Order](#) *The Slav Defence* (CD-ROM)
by Dorian Rogozenko

The Milner-Barry Gambit in the Advance Variation of the French Defense by Jim Bickford, 2002 Syzygy Publishing, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Paperback, 145 pp., \$21.95

From a publisher that so far has escaped my attention, I have received two books on the Advance Variation in the French Defense. The first two questions that arise are: 1) what is the Milner-Barry Gambit?; and 2) who is the author Jim Bickford?

The Milner-Barry Gambit arises after 1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 c5 4 c3 Nc6 5 Nf3 Qb6 6 Bd3 cxd4 7 cxd4 Bd7 8 0-0



The idea is that White, after 8...Nxd4 9 Nxd4 Qxd4 10 Nc3, should get an initiative that compensates him for his sacrifice pawn(s).

The inventor of this opening Philip Stuart Milner-Barry was among the strongest British players from the early 1930s

through to the end of 1950s. In the introduction of this book, the author assesses him of IM strength, which sounds reasonable, but he occasionally took points from far stronger players, such as Flohr, Keres, Eliskases, Reshevsky, Lilienthal and others, mainly in the strongest British tournaments. On my database, it was rather surprising that I didn't find any games with Milner-Barry playing his gambit.

Who is Jim Bickford? I looked Mr. Bickford up in the USCF rating list. While I found him, he wasn't listed with a rating. I then checked the MegaCorr2 CD. I found no less than 33 games, and noted that he enjoys playing a certain line in the French Advance (1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 c5 4 Nf3 Nc6 5 Bd3 cxd4 6 0-0) as well as the Smith-Morra Gambit (1 e4 c5 2 d4 cxd4 3 c3 dxc3 4 Nxc3). If I'm not mistaken he has 'written books' on these subjects too. His CC-rating is around 2150, which is of course not that impressive.

So after this little introduction to the book, let's have a look at what's covered by the author. The material all pertains to the positions arising after the initial moves: **1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 c5 4 c3 Nc6 5 Nf3 Qb6 6 Bd3**

- Introduction (2 Pages)
- Part 1: 6 Bd3 (5 pages)
- Part 2: 6 Bd3 Bd7 7 0-0 (3 pages)
- Part 3: 6 Bd3 Bd7 7 dc5 Bc5 8 00 (22 pages)
- Part 4: 6 Bd3 cd4 7 cd4 Bd7 8 Be2 (6 pages)

- Part 5: 6 Bd3 cd4 7 cd4 Bd7 8 Bc2 (5 pages)
- Part 6: 6 Bd3 cd4 7 cd4 Bd7 8 00 Nd4 (14 pages)
- Part 7: 6 Bd3 cd4 7 cd4 Bd7 8 00 Nd4 9 Nd4 Qd4 (5 pages)
- *Main Lines: 6 Bd3 cd4 7 cd4 Bd7 8 00 Nd4 9 Nd4 Qd4 10 Nc3*
- Part 8: 10 Nc3 (6 pages)
- Part 9: 10 Nc3 Qb6 (4 pages)
- Part 10: 10 Nc3 Qe5 11 Re1 Qd6 12 Nb5 (10 pages)
- Part 11: 10 Nc3 Qe5 11 Re1 Qb8 12 Nd5 Bd6 (5 pages)
- Part 12: 10 Nc3 Qe5 11 Re1 Qb8 12 Nd5 Bd6 13 Qg4 Kf8 (12 pages)
- Part 13: 10 Nc3 a6 (10 pages)
- Part 14: 10 Nc3 a6 11 Qe2 (11 pages)
- Part 15: 10 Nc3 a6 11 Qe2 Ne7 12 Rd1 (7 pages)
- Part 16: 10 Nc3 a6 11 Qe2 Ne7 12 Kh1 Nc6 13 f4 Bc5 (6 pages)
- Part 17: 10 Nc3 a6 11 Qe2 Ne7 12 Kh1 Nc6 13 f4 Nb4 14 Rd1 Nd3 15 Rd3 (10 pages)
- Supplement (2 pages)

An amazing number of chapters for such a limited subject, but of course any subject can be covered in similar fashion if you dig up everything on a line.

I used to play this line with White although I always, like Nimzowitsch in his day, placed my bishop to e2 as I did not like to give pawns away for no particular reason, and back then even a solid lead in development and a dangerous initiative fell into that category. Nowadays this line isn't seen particularly often; in fact when I made my customary subject search on my database looking for recent top games played with this line, I hardly found any. Therefore I expanded my search to including all games with the line from 1995-2002 that included at least one player rated 2400 or higher, and the result was still only meager 24 games. It is safe to say that this is not one of the most hotly debated openings nowadays.

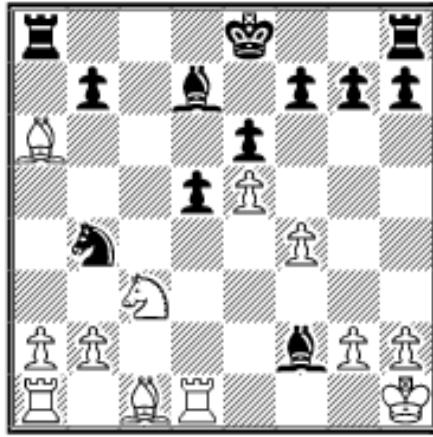
In the two-page short and quite uninformative introduction, Bickford writes about 6 Bd3: "White enters the daring channels of the so-called Milner-Barry Gambit, in which he abandons his pawn center for rapid development and gains open venues of attack for his pieces. Though the move **6 Bd3** was seen in master praxis over a century and a half ago, theory has not yet pronounced its final verdict. Equally popular are the alternatives **6 Be2** (the Classical System) and **6 a3** (the Paulsen Attack)."

Equally popular?? As mentioned above, I only found 24 games with 6 Bd3 in my database search, while for comparison, I found 113 games with 6 Be2 and 420 games with 6 a3. Hmm...?!

Aside from the introduction, there is very little text on the pages. Just a whole lot bare game scores with extremely few verbal explanations and equally few non-verbal explanations. In addition to that there are a suggestion here and there but rarely do we find a solid piece of analysis by the author.

So how does this book cover the critical lines? Well, let's establish the critical lines. According to *NCO*, one of Black's critical lines is the following:

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 c5 4 c3 Nc6 5 Nf3 Qb6 6 Bd3 cxd4 7 cxd4 Bd7 8 0-0 Nxd4 9 Nxd4 Qxd4 10 Nc3 a6 11 Qe2 Ne7 12 Kh1 Nc6 13 f4 Nb4 14 Rd1 Bc5 15 Bxa6 Qf2 16 Qxf2 Bxf2



with a slight edge for Black. This position is also given in *ECO*, which cites the game Organdziev-Drasko, Skopje 1992, and now continuing with 17 Be2 0-0 18 Bd2 Nc2 19 Rab1 Ne3 20 Rdc1 Rfc8 with an unclear position according to Drasko. This is also mentioned by Bickford, who offers the alternate continuation

19...Bc6 for Black, which in the game Szczepanski-Voigt, Cologne 1993, led to a win for Black. Bickford doesn't offer any improvements for White after 19...Bc6, so I will assume that he thinks Black is better in this continuation. Therefore searching for an improvement for White, let's go back a couple of moves to move 17, where he mentions 17 Bb5, which has been given as equal by Nikolenko. Bickford gives the game Rujevic-Saw, Melbourne 1999, which continued 17...Bxb5 18 Nxb5 0-0 19 a3 Rfc8 20 Rb1 Nc2 21 b4 Bb6, and although both sides can easily improve on the previous moves, Black is obviously better, but the game ended in a draw. Given the limited action this line sees, I'm surprised that Bickford hasn't bothered to mention another game in this line, Smirnov-Srnikovski, Omsk 1996, which Knaak has annotated in Megabase 2001. He too mentions that White has some problem coordinating his pieces in this line. That game saw Black try 17...Bc6, and after 18 a4?! (18 a3 is given as better by Knaak, but I think Black should be better after 18...0-0 as he simply has an easier time and White's position has plenty of weaknesses to play against) 18...0-0 19 b3?! Rfc8, and Black is already clearly better.

I don't understand why he chooses to disregard one of the very few encounters with higher rated players. I can only see a couple of reasons for this: 1) he is not aware of the game; or 2) he is trying to mislead the reader to think this is worthwhile playing for White. The first reason comes down to poor research, which is inexcusable, and the same can be


said for the second reason.

As far as I recall, John Watson in his excellent book *Play The French*, which was my bible back when I played the French as Black, made a serious attempt to refute the gambit. Unfortunately the book rests in a box at my parent's house, so I cannot give you those lines, but I have a feeling that I will find that Bickford's coverage is similarly flawed for Watson's line too.

The book overall reminds me of database dump with very little effort put into it other than organizing the games into relevant chapters. The author frequently quotes various people evaluating positions, but other than mentioning some annotations taken from *Chess Informant* (which he abbreviates 'SI', without explaining the what it stands for), he makes no mention of any book sources.

In the introduction, he mentions that the book is based on a total of 980 games, not very many in the context of an opening book. He claims to have covered everything after 6 Bd3, yet I was able to track down more than 1000 games just with the position after 9...Qxd4 using my own database which mainly consists of Megabase 2001, TWIC updates and MegaCorr2. Once again, this book seems to be a rather poor attempt to cover a line based on sloppy research and minimal original input from the author.

In conclusion I cannot recommend this book; it is missing too many key ingredients. Anybody with a decent database and a chess engine could download additional data from the net, and with some skills in organizing material could do a better job than the author has done here.

My assessment of this book: 


The Paulsen Attack in the Advance Variation of the French Defense by Jim Bickford, 2002 Syzygy Publishing, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Paperback, 244 pp., \$21.95

With the above review of the Milner-Barry Attack in mind, it is of course not with too much enthusiasm I open the review for this book.

The material is organized in a similar manner as the previous 'work', but due to this line being substantially more popular, there are more branches to cover. Hence Bickford has split the material up in 45 chapters.



Although I definitely didn't like the coverage in the first 'book', it is preferable to what he has done in this 'book'. There is almost no text, I didn't find any suggestions/improvements from the author. The contents are just complete, unannotated games, a/k/a a database dump.

Therefore, I will end the review, my shortest ever, of this book by saying this book is a waste of time, paper, money, space, and whatever else you can think of.

My assessment of this book: 

The Ratings

 — **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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