



COLUMNISTS

Checkpoint

Carsten Hansen

**Reviewed this month:*****Informator 84***

by Aleksandar Matanovic et al.

Starting Out: The Nimzo-Indian

by Chris Ward

Queen's Indian Defence

by Jacob Aagaard

The Modern Chess Instructor

by Wilhelm Steinitz

The Key Move Is g2-g4!

Recently on web I read about how a renowned chess publisher complained about book reviewers. He was annoyed with the reviewers who, before writing the review, read the entire book and who then would start dissecting the book piece by piece. According to the publisher that approach isn't in anybody's interest?! I am wondering why isn't it in everybody's interest? Book reviews are written for potential readers to inform them about the objective quality of a book, rather than letting them believe everything on the often mindless backcover. In addition, a proper book review is a service to the author and publisher as to what is good and what is not, so it can be considered for future books. But this is not always how they want to see things, and sometimes a publisher just won't listen.



Anyway, looking at this month's selection of books, there is something for everybody: the latest volume of *Informator* for the very serious or strong chess player, a book on the Queen's Indian for those rated 1500-2200, a book on the Nimzo-Indian for people rated 1000-1700, and finally a book steeped in history. At the same time, I have to add that this month we have one of strongest, high quality groups of books I have had on the table in a while, and my impression is that you are not going to be disappointed with any of them.

And, at the risk of being accused of immodesty, my fourth book has just been published by Gambit. The book is *The Nimzo-Indian 4 e3*, intended for the serious player who wants to know everything about this particular line. I hope you will check it out and enjoy it.

Informator 84 by Aleksandar Matanovic et al., 2002
Sahovski Informator, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Softcover, 342 pp., \$36.00

As regular readers of this column know, *Informator* is one of my babies. I think it is a thoroughly great publication that most chess players will be able to learn a lot from.

The recipe of the present volume is not any different from that of other volumes:

1. The vote for the best game for the best game of the previous volume incl. winning game
2. The vote for the most important theoretical novelty of the previous volume incl. winning game and Encyclopaedia-style theoretical coverage of the move.
3. Classification of openings
4. Games and partial games from the past 4-6 months, annotated mainly by the players themselves.
5. Index of players and annotators
6. Combination exercises from the past 4-6 months (18 in



- this issue)
7. Endgame exercises from the past 4-6 months (18 in this issue)
 8. Tournament results from the end of January to May 2002.
 9. The Best of Chess Informant - Nigel Short - best games, most important theoretical novelties, excellent moves and combinations, endings and statistics.

What people usually buy the book for is the games section, where you find games by pretty much all the strongest players in the world. In this volume we find games by, among others, Kasparov, Kramnik, Anand and Ponomarev, games that are annotated by the players themselves. How much better does it get?

This volume does present us with one surprise. The best game winner is the game Agrest-Bacrot, from the European Team Championship in Leon 2001. The winner was White in a beautiful Grünfeld. Usually this prize only goes to players in the Top 10-15 in the world. Agrest was only rated 2563 at the time of the game, so he wouldn't even have been in the Top 100 when it was played. Cheers to the jury.

I have noticed a trend for a little while that has now become even more apparent with the arrival of this volume. More and more good and surprising opening novelties contain the element of an early flank attack with either g2-g4 or ...g7-g5. We have for many years seen this in various lines in the Sicilian, such as in the Yugoslav Attack in the Dragon, the Keres and Velimirovic Attacks against the Scheveningen and the English Attack against Najdorf variation. But now we are seeing ideas cropping up everywhere. There have been some examples in certain lines in the King's Indian, but recently we have seen them in the Semi-Slav: 1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 e6 5 e3 Nbd7 6 Qc2 Bd6 7 g4!?, and even the English: 1 c4 e6 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 g4!?, a favourite of Zvjaginsev, Krasenkow and Shabalov's. But the category is

growing rapidly. Here are some of the examples I came across in the present volume (the 'N's indicate the novelty):

- M.Gurevich-Kallai, Bundesliga 2002: **1 c4 c6 2 Nf3 d5 3 e3 Nf6 4 Qc2 e6 5 b3 Nbd7 6 Bb2 Bd6 7 Nc3 0–0 8 Be2 a6 9 Rg1!?N b5** and now **10 g4**.
- Loginov-Skatchkov, Skt. Petersburg 2002: **1 Nf3 c5 2 c4 Nc6 3 Nc3 Nd4 4 e3 Nxf3+ 5 Qxf3 g6 6 b3 Bg7 7 Bb2 d6 8 g4 Rb8 9 h4!?N**.
- Yakovich-Rat, Stockholm 2001/02: **1 d4 Nf6 2 Nf3 c5 3 d5 b5 4 Bg5 Ne4 5 Bh4 Bb7 6 a4! bxa4?! 7 Rxa4 f5 8 g4!** and the continuation was **8...fxg4 9 Rxe4 gxf3 10 exf3** with a clear advantage for White.
- A. Cabrera-Minzer, Villa de Roquetos 2001: **1 e4 d5 2 exd5 Qxd5 3 Nc3 Qd6 4 d4 Nf6 5 Bd3 Nc6 6 Nge2 Bg4 7 f3 Bh5 8 Bf4 Qd7 9 g4!N**.
- In Kasparov-J.Polgar, Prague 2002, Black tried another g-pawn idea: **1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 Bb5+ Nc6 4 Bxc6+ bxc6 5 0–0 e5 6 c3 g5?!**, but ran into trouble after **7 d4! g4 8 Nfd2 cxd4 9 cxd4 exd4 10 Nc4 c5 11 Re1!N**.
- Leko-Ki.Georgiev, Dubai 2002, saw another fascinating idea on the other flank: **1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e5 Qd7 5 a3 Bf8 6 Nf3 b6 7 b4! c6 8 Rb1! Ne7 9 a4!N** with a clear advantage for White.
- Dreev-Movsesian, Sarajevo 2002: **1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 e3 Bg4 5 Nc3 e6 6 h3 Bxf3 7 Qxf3 Nbd7 8 Bd2 Bd6 9 g4**.
- Bruzon-Dominguez, Havanna 2002: **1 Nf3 d5 2 c4 c6 3 d4 Nf6 4 cxd5 cxd5 5 Nc3 Nc6 6 Bf4 Bf5 7 e3 e6 8 Bb5 Nd7 9 0–0 Be7 10 Qb3 g5 11 Bg3 h5**.
- Sasikiran-Sulskis, Calcutta 2002: **1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Qc2 c5 5 dxc5 Bxc5 6 Nf3 Qb6 7 e3 Qc7 8 Be2 b6 9 g4!?N**.

This is of course but a very small selection of the games you can find in the present volume. If you want to study all the games and all the exercises in the back, you will have first-rate study material for years to come.

As has become custom, I highly recommend this book. If you

are serious about your chess this is one investment I think you ought to make.

My assessment of this book: 

[Order](#) *Informator 84* by Aleksandar Matanovic et al.

Starting Out: The Nimzo-Indian by Chris Ward, 2002
Everyman Chess, Figurine Algebraic Notation, paperback,
176 pp., \$16.95

A couple of months ago we looked at two other books in this *Starting Out* series from Everyman Chess. From what I've seen in its catalog and online, they are continuing down this path, aiming at the not-so-strong players who may still need guidance with strategic ideas, middlegame planning, pitfalls and the most common themes. The presentation is very much focused on exactly the above subjects rather than lining up pages upon pages of, in many cases, incomprehensible theory.



The author Chris Ward has several books to his name already both for Everyman Chess and the former giant amongst British chess publishers, Batsford. In my humble opinion, his opening books where he has written with most authority have been those on the Dragon, which he plays. His previous opening book for Everyman Chess, *Unusual Queen's Gambit Declined*, was less impressive.

With this book, Ward returns to a subject that he truly knows a lot about: he plays it himself (many examples are shown in the present book) and has written about it for a couple years now on the chesspublishing.com web page.

As I mentioned in the introduction to this month's column, Gambit has just published my book on the Rubinstein Nimzo-Indian, 4 e3, a coverage that fills up no less than 320 pages, and I even had to force myself to limit the coverage in certain places. Ward covers the lines after 4 e3 in a mere 46 pages, so obviously something has had to give. However, the point is not so much whether the coverage of these lines is done in 20, 46, 80, or 320 pages, because Ward's book aims entirely at a readership different than mine. The present book is directly aimed at those who are considering taking up the Nimzo-Indian (and if that is you, this is something you probably will not regret) and who want to know more about before starting to play the opening, or if you have been playing it for a while, but you are unsure what the typical plans, etc., are. However, I think it would be a little naive to think that this book by Ward will give you everything you need to know about Nimzo-Indian to take it up competitively, but it will guide you away from some of the worst misunderstandings and positional blunders.

The material is divided up as follows:

- Introduction (4 pages)
- 1 Rubinstein Variation: 4 e3 b6 (16 pages)
- 2 Rubinstein Variation: 4 e3 0-0 (18 pages)
- 3 Rubinstein Variation: 4 e3 c5 (12 pages)
- 4 Classical Variation: 4 Qc2 d5 (12 pages)
- 5 Classical Variation: 4 Qc2 0-0 5 a3 Bxc3+ 6 Qxc3 (15 pages)
- 6 Classical Variation: 4 Qc2 c5 5 dxc5 (16 pages)
- 7 4 Nf3 b6 (14 pages)
- 8 4 Nf3 0-0 (11 pages)
- 9 4 Nf3 c5 (13 pages)
- 10 Sämisch Variation: 4 a3 (14 pages)
- 11 Leningrad Variation: 4 Bg5 (14 pages)
- 12 Odds and Ends (9 pages)
- Solution to Exercises (4 pages)

All twelve chapters are structured similarly: first a short introduction, then the lines in the particular chapter, with a short summation of the typical plans and then usually some illustrative games. But some of the lines get a couple of illustrative games, other don't get any! This again is explained by the vast amount of material: if every line had to have one illustrative game, the author could easily have filled another 50 pages (to a total of about 225 pages, whereas a thorough theoretical coverage of this opening would easily take the total page count up to around 850-900 or so).

I will give you an example of the quality of annotations you can expect to find in the present book. The game is at the same time played by the author as Black, so you can see that he has a good idea about what he is doing too.

B. Martin-Ward Oakham Masters 1994

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e3 b6 5 Bd3 Bb7 6 Nf3 Ne4 7 0-0 f5

Black chooses to keep the e4-square bolstered rather than accepting White's offered pawn.

8 d5

TIP: This pawn push is a reasonable plan for White in the Nimzo when a black bishop is fianchettoed on the queenside. As well as blocking out this piece from the action, White pressurizes the e6- and f5-pawns. Furthermore, a white knight now has the attractive d4-square available.

8...Bxc3

With White again threatening to win a pawn on e4, it was decision time for Black.

9 bxc3 Na6

After, say, 9...exd5 10 cxd5 Nxc3 11 Qc2 Nxd5 12 Bxf5

White has good play for his sacrificed pawn with his dark-squared bishop ready to take up an active post along the b2-g7 diagonal. The drawback of White's 8th move is that it conceded the c5-square. This is an excellent home for a black knight and in fact the immediate 9...Nc5 may be more accurate.

10 Nd4 Nec5 11 Bc2?!

This retreat is too time wasting, a more dynamic plan being to try to get in the break e3-e4 a little quicker.

11...0-0 12 f3 Qf6 13 Bd2 g6 14 e4 e5 15 Ne2 f4!

WARNING: White must be very sure about his chances before allowing Black to block up the position in this manner as this type of pawn structure is more favourable for knights.

16 Rf2 g5

TIP: Often it is best to concentrate your efforts on the side of the board to which your fixed pawns lean.

17 Kh1 Rf7

With the attacking break ...g6-g5-g4 imminent (the fixed pawns on e5 and f4 lean towards the kingside), Black starts to rally his troops. The g-file is going to be all important.

18 Qf1 d6 19 g3 Bc8 20 gxf4

If White tried to block things up with 20 g4 then Black would turn to the pawn break ...h7-h5, with his major pieces likely to invade along the h-file instead.

20...gxf4 21 Rg2+ Kh8 22 Qf2 Bh3 23 Rgg1 Nb7

The g-file is very appetizing but Black hasn't forgotten that when doubled, the c4-pawn is a natural target too. Black has

plenty of time and sets about maximizing the use of his knights.

24 c5

Frustrated, White offloads a pawn in order to try and increase the scope of his bishop pair.

24...Naxc5 25 c4 Nd7 26 Rae1

White would have preferred to have doubled rooks on the open g-file but, due to the advanced black f-pawn, g1 is the only safe square available for use.

26...Nf8!

The start of an excellent plan. [CH: such modesty!]

27 Nc1 Ng6 28 Nd3 Rg8 29 Bd1 Rfg7

Had Black switched a rook to the g-file on move 26 then White could have solved some problems by trading off both sets of rooks.

TIP: When you have a space advantage, you should try to avoid fair swaps.

30 Be2 Nh4

This knight has covered a lot of distance but has found a perfect square.

31 Rxc7 Rxc7 32 Bf1

Black's superior control of the g2-square rendered 32 Rg1 unplayable.

32...Bg2+ 33 Bxc2 Rxc2

Rather than let his bishop go, White now opts to part

company with his queen. The battle is lost.

34 Qxh4 Qxh4 35 Kxg2 Qg5+ 36 Kh1 Qh5 37 Kg2 Nd8 38 Nf2 Nf7 39 Nh3 Ng5 40 Ng1 Qe8 0–1

A performance that is very pleasing to the eye. The annotations are, as you can see above, instructive, without being too intense. Sometimes I found myself wishing that he would have added a little more variations than he has chosen to do, but this is a minor quibble in an otherwise excellent book.

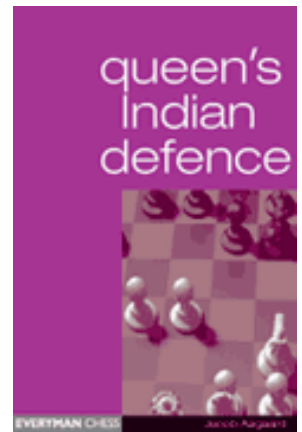
Overall, I'm very pleased with this book which I find very instructive and that players rated from 1200 up to around 2000 may benefit from, although the highest-rated in this group will probably want to see some theory included before being thoroughly happy with this book. I think the book serves its purpose very well and for those wanting to know the more basic things about the Nimzo-Indian this book is an excellent opportunity.

My assessment of this book: 

[Order](#) *Starting Out: The Nimzo-Indian* by Chris Ward

Queen's Indian Defence by Jacob Aagaard, 2002 Everyman Chess, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Softcover, 144 pp., \$19.95

In recent years Danish IM Jacob Aagaard has developed from being a relatively unknown IM to being a fairly well known prolific author. He is quite outspoken and doesn't hide his opinions; his debate with John Watson concerning his book *Excelling in Chess* was public, and while he made some good points, I do not necessarily agree with his point of view, but that is a topic for another time.



The Queen's Indian Defense is a tremendously popular opening that was the brainchild of Aron Nimzowitsch, who also fathered the Nimzo-Indian as well as many other opening lines that remain topical today. The Queen's Indian cover a great variety of lines several of which could have entire books devoted to them. The Petrosian System (or Kasparov Variation) with 4 a3 is one such line and a few years back, Mikhail Gurevich wrote a 100-page book just on this line. Among today's top players, Kramnik, Kasparov, Ponomarev, Karpov, Leko, Adams, Anand, Gelfand, Lautier, Beliavsky. Grischuk are just some of the highest rated players who have played the Queen's Indian in 2001-2. I don't think, we need to point out further that this is reputable opening who even players who want to win with Black can take up safely.

That being said, it is rather amazing that so few book have been devoted to the Queen's Indian in the past. Bogdan Lalic wrote one a few years back (1996), the one mentioned above by Gurevich (1991), Geller's standard work from 1992, and a number of publications of shorter length, but none is particularly recent. I noted that Gambit has Yrjölä and Tella writing a book on the Queen's Indian that is due to be published in the spring of next year.

Given the shortage of recent books on this opening, I was curious to see which books Aagaard had used while writing

the present book. Looking at the contents page, I was happy to see that a bibliography had been included, not usual for Everyman chess books. Excited I turned to page 6, and found... a blank page - nothing, nada, zip! Hmmm! Not a very good start, but so what, how many things in this world are perfect from the get-go!

So while we are at the topic of the contents page, let's see how the material has been divided up in the present book:

- Preface (2 pages)
- Introduction (7 pages)
- **White plays without g2-g3**
- 1 Opting for Nothing: 4 Bf4 and 4 Bg5 (8 pages)
- 2 The Petrosian System: 4 a3 (38 pages)
- 3 5 Qc2 and 5 Bg5 (14 pages)
- 4 5 Qb3 (11 pages)
- 5 4 e3 (6 pages)
- **Lines with g2-g3**
- 6 4 g3 Bb4+ and 4...Ba6 without 5 b3 (18 pages)
- 7 4 g3 Ba6: Main Line with 5 b3 (16 pages)
- 8 4 g3 Bb7 (16 pages)
- Index of Complete Games (2 pages)

This all makes for one very short book; 144 pages in total is nothing compared to what's really needed in order to cover everything in detail. Aagaard, of course, knows this, and points this out in the book's preface: "In ECO there are about 120 pages devoted to the QID and the positions that can result via transpositions which, in a book like this, would be around 300 pages. Meanwhile, ECO includes only those games that were previously published in Informant, so they actually exclude quite a lot of important games! I decided to include games from the very highest level - more or less all the games in this book, as well as all the sidelines, originate from Grandmaster competition. But this only got me down to 20,000 games! I made the obvious decision: only critical lines should be represented. But merely eliminating mistakes

after a mistake was far from enough. I also had to decide that some moves were not critical in any and that, therefore, they had no role in the book because nobody would try to memorise the continuation, while looking it up afterwards also appears to me to be rather indifferent. Finally, in 'normal' positions, those normal moves that give Black several moves to equalize have been omitted. The result is a traditional work of theory, aimed at the tournament player and thus designed for practical use. I feel that I have been good at finding the critical lines in modern play and picking out the most important games."

While I certainly think that he has been good at finding the critical lines and picking out the most important games, I think the decision by the publisher to cover the entire Queen's Indian in such a short book is wrong. The procedure chosen by the author, while understandable, is rather unfortunate because too much material is left out, games that would illustrate continuations that may not be topical in Grandmaster games, but critical in games between players rated 1900 and below, for whom this book really should be aimed. Most of the books in this series are aimed at players who are not rated much higher than 2200, but this book certainly strays from that target group. And here I think the book runs into another problem: given the amount of material that had to be left out, it is not detailed enough to satisfy the highest rated players either. So the book ends up somewhere betwixt and between.

This, however, does not mean that the book is not worth reading. On the contrary, I think Aagaard has produced an excellent book.

The introduction, for example, provides the reader with a very informative theoretical overview as well as a useful discussion regarding the isolated d5-pawn.

Already in chapter one's heading, *Opting for Nothing: 4 Bf4*

and 4 Bg5, Aagaard shows where he is coming from. While having played both lines myself and frequently seeing Ivan Sokolov play 4 Bf4 lately, I think *Opting for Nothing* is a little provocative. But Aagaard does prove his case fairly effectively, and the same goes for his coverage of the remaining chapters. His selection of games and his annotations are to the point and in some cases even instructive.

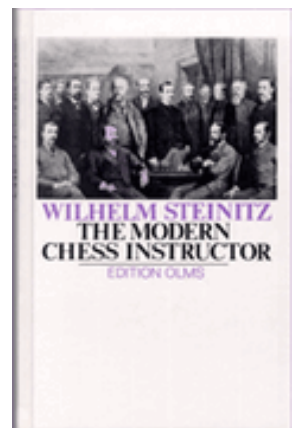
The bottom line is that Aagaard's effort is first class, but the limitations placed upon the author by the publisher make the book somewhat less than first class. Nonetheless, this is a book that ambitious players that have included the Queen's Indian in their repertoire should seriously consider getting.

My assessment of this book: 

[Order](#) *Queen's Indian Defence* by Jacob Aagaard

The Modern Chess Instructor by Wilhelm Steinitz, 1990
Edition Olms Zürich, English Descriptive Notation,
Hardback, 258 pp., \$19.95

As we consider the latest lines in the most contemporary openings, let us pause, take a step back and consider one of the seminal opening manuals in the history of the game. Very few of the books that have been reviewed in this column will ever be considered “classics”. However, it is a great honour for me to review *The Modern Chess Instructor*, a book that has been considered a classic for many years. The author is the first World Champion, the Austrian Wilhelm Steinitz, a remarkable man in many ways. The present book is equally remarkable. I don't know if you will have the same



experience as I had when reading this book. It was as if I had jumped into a time machine and ended up back in 1889 when Steinitz registered the copyright for the book at Stationer's Hall in London. I imagined seeing him file for the copyrights and, satisfied with his deed, leave again.

On the cover of this recently re-released Olms Edition, there is an illustration which is taken from the July 17th, 1886 front cover of *The Graphic*, and is entitled *The Sixteen Leading Chess Players of the World*. For those that are keen on chess history, I'm sure the names all ring a familiar bell, but for those that are not, there are plenty of stories about these people that can be picked up by reading the columns by Forster, Harding and Winter here on **ChessCafe.com**. Names such as MacKenzie, von Kolisch, Winawer, Bird, de Rivière, Rosenthal, Mason, Norwood Potter, Schallopp, L. Paulsen, MacDonnell, Gunsberg, Blackburne, Zukertort, Englisch and our man Steinitz, who by the way, has been highlighted on the cover with a purplish color to make him stand out for those who are unsure who is and too lazy to work it out from the order of names listed on the back cover!

This book is in two parts, which was originally two separate books. The contents are divided as follows:

- **Part I:**
 - Dedication and Preface
 - 1 Description of the Game, The Board and Men, Movements of Pieces and Mode of Capture
 - 2 The Notation
 - 3 The Laws of the Game
 - 4 Technical Terms
 - 5 Chess as a Training of Mind and how to Improve
 - 6 The Modern School and its Tendency
 - 7 Relative Value of Pieces and Principles of Play
 - Analysis of Openings
 - The Ruy Lopez
 - Illustrative Games

- Double Ruy Lopez, Three and Four Knights' Game
- Illustrative Games
- The Scotch Gambit
- Illustrative Games
- The Two Knight's Defence
- Illustrative Games
- Petroff's Defence
- Illustrative Games
- Philidor's Defence
- Illustrative Games
- Steinitz-Tschigorin Games
- Introduction
- Games of the Contest
- **Part II**
- Preface
- The Ponziani Opening
- Index
- Tables
- Games
- Addenda
- The Giuoco Piano Opening
- Index
- **Games**
- Addenda

The two parts were originally published in separate volumes, the first in 1889, the second in 1895. The latter is a very rare book, so other than in this reprint, few people have seen Steinitz' work on those openings.

I must admit that it is very rare that I find myself chuckling over the books that I'm reviewing in this column, but that was definitely the case here. Steinitz was a very entertaining writer.

Both volumes start with a dedication to the honorable R. Steel of Calcutta, “member of the executive council of his excellency the viceroy of India”. A game played by Steel 116

years ago:

R. Steel-NN Calcutta 1886

1 e4 e5 2 Nc3 Nc6 3 f4 exf4 4 d4 Qh4+ 5 Ke2 d5 6 exd5 Bg4+ 7 Nf3 0-0-0 8 dxc6 Bc5 9 cxb7+ Kb8 10 Nb5 Nf6 11 c3 Rhe8+ 12 Kd3 Bf5+ 13 Kc4 Be6+ 14 Kxc5 a5 15 Nxc7 Qh5+ 16 Ne5 Nd7+ 17 Kb5 Qxd1 18 Bxf4 Qxa1 19 Ka6 Nxe5 20 Nxe8 f6 21 dxe5 f5 22 Be3 Rxe8 23 Bb5 Qxh1 24 Ba7+ Kc7 25 Bc5 Rd8?? 26 Ka7! 1-0 (Source: *How to Think in Chess* by Przewoznik and Soszynski) While this game was not conducted very accurately, it certainly is very entertaining.

In the preface, Steinitz tells us how he worked on the material. He writes, "Most of the experimental deductions which I introduce to students of the game, must therefore be regarded only as imaginary examples of tactics and strategy which I trust will be in the main afford good instruction to the reader, but cannot lay any claim to absolute accuracy. For it ought to be remembered that the merits of most of the recognized standard variations in the openings could not be settled until they had been verified by numerous illustrations from the practice of first-class masters in actual play, and that grave errors have often been found in various forms of openings that have been greatly favored by many prominent practitioners and authorities for a very long time. Under those circumstances I must expect that occasionally some shortcomings of demonstrations, such as quicker ways of winning or drawing, and perhaps some faults of judgment may have crept into some of the numerous original lines of play, which after conscientious examination, to the best of my ability, I have thought it my duty to introduce into this treatise. But I trust that such flaws will be found in a minority by far and that at any rate the innovations which I propose will give material for practical trials and theoretical researches that will be useful for the development of our scientific pastime."

Such modesty is admirable for a world champion; imagine if we had Kasparov or Karpov saying something like that in an opening book nowadays, we would consider it a complete joke.

This book, however, starts with something very basic: how the pieces move. Then Steinitz explains chess notation. He describes the English descriptive notation and German Algebraic, and says the following: "The German algebraic system of notation, however, is quite different and presents many advantages over the one noticed above" and later he continues "The great advantage of the German method consists in its conciseness, and in the lesser probability of a mistake occurring in writing down a move in a correspondence, or even in an ordinary game which has to be adjourned; whereas, comparatively more mistakes occur when other notations are used."

On a personal note, I wish that his words would have been listened to more carefully back then. While it can be worked out, books in algebraic are far easier to read than those in descriptive notation.

In addition, Steinitz describes the Forsyth notation and Gringmouth's Telegraphic code. Neither has been seen for many years anywhere and hardly anybody would be able to understand it if they came across it. It should here be noted that the present book uses English descriptive notation, something that unfortunately may put a lot of people off buying this interesting book.

Next Steinitz moves over to The Laws of the Game, which in itself make an amusing chapter and highly worthwhile reading. It is fascinating to read which rules were enforced back then. As an example I can mention article VIII - Check: " A player must audibly say 'Check' when he makes a move which puts the hostile king in check. The mere announcement of check shall have no signification if the

check be not actually given, If check be given but not announced, and the adversary makes a move which obviates the check, the move must stand". Or article V - Playing two moves in succession: "If, in the course of a game, a player moves a man when it is not his turn to play, he must retract the said move; and after his adversary has moved, must play the man wrongly moved, if it can be played legally." In the next chapter, 4, he describes technical terms such as castling, en passant .

Chapter V is very entertaining. It is called *Chess as a Training of Mind and How to Improve*. I will not go into too many details about this, but Steinitz's viewpoints are in many cases very original and will nowadays provide some amusement. He does however make some good points on how to improve. For example: "... a learner should seek as much as possible to play on even terms with superior players... by taking odds a player loses the opportunity to observe the finer points of play of his adversary who on account of his inferiority in force cannot always afford to adopt the best strategy...".

In the following chapter, Steinitz discusses, in two pages, *The Modern School and Its Tendency*. This is chiefly the positional school of chess he is talking about. As mentioned it is only two pages and much more could have been written and some practical examples should have been given to underline the differences between the different schools of chess thinking.

In the final chapter of the introductory part of the book, the author takes a close look at the *Relative Value of Pieces and Principles of Play*. He goes into detail about what the pieces do well and what they are not to be used for. This chapter, more than anything, should have been littered with diagrams to illustrate Steinitz many excellent descriptions. As it is the chapter becomes very heavy to read and I'm sure many will skip over it on this account, something that is a shame,

because he makes a lot of excellent observations.

Having completed the introductory part of the book, Stenitz then went on to cover six popular openings of the time (see above). Some of them are indeed still popular – the Ruy Lopez and in particular Petroff's Defence. That being said, the theory presented in the present book is obviously hopelessly dated and much of it has been refuted many times over and further refined. However, there are many things that are not being mentioned in modern works of theory on those particular openings. Remember that Kortchnoi once stated that everything in chess that has been forgotten, is new! That certainly still applies and I'm sure that many of the lines and variations given by Steinitz deserves another look. One need only recall Fischer's openings in the 1963 U.S. Championship and more recently, Kramnik's use of the Berlin Defense against Karpov in the 2000 world championship match.

In addition to the theory, there are several annotated illustrative games played by the then top masters. Many of the games remain worthwhile as current study material. Several of the top chess coaches of today, including Dvoretsky, recommend the careful study of classic games. There are 63 illustrative games in part one in addition to 20 games played between Steinitz and Chigorin in their 1889 match in Havana. Three of the games presented are consultation games. In part two of the book there are another 32 annotated games. The second part of the book was only published after Steinitz had lost his World Championship title to the much younger Emanuel Lasker. As in the first part of the book the material is divided up between theory and then illustrative games.

History buffs will appreciate the following advertisement at the end of the book:

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Overall, *The Modern Chess Instructor* is a very important part of chess history, and a part that is still very much worthwhile. I greatly enjoyed this book and while much of the material is dated, there are still lessons that can be learned by studying the theory and annotations by one of the greatest chess players of the 19th century.

My assessment of this book: 

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