



COLUMNISTS

Checkpoint

Carsten Hansen

**Reviewed this month:*****An Attacking Repertoire for White***

by Sam Collins

New in Chess Yearbook 72

by Genna Sosonko

Chess Informant 90

by Aleksandar Matanovic et al.

***Chess Informant 90* (CD-ROM)**

by Aleksandar Matanovic et al.

Encyclopaedia of Chess Openings D - 4th Edition

by Aleksandar Matanovic et al.

***Encyclopaedia of Chess Openings D - 4th Edition* (CD-ROM)**

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Roman's Encyclopaedia of 40 Essential Chess Openings**- Volumes 1-4** (DVD) by Roman Dzindzichashvili

Yearbooks and Encyclopaedias

The list of reviews is longer than usual this month, but we will be looking at both the printed and CD-ROM editions of the most recent volume of *Chess Informant* and *ECO D*. We will also explore the latest *New in Chess Yearbook* and Dzindzi's attempt at an encyclopaedia in DVD format that offers over 11 hours of viewing on 4 DVDs, yet 'only' covers 40 'essential' openings. But first, we will examine a book by Irish FM Sam Collins.

An Attacking Repertoire for White by Sam Collins, 2004 Batsford BT, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Paperback, 192 pp., \$22.95

I doubt many people have heard of Sam Collins, but his name should be familiar to subscribers of Tim Harding's excellent magazine *ChessMail*. Collins has also contributed to *British Chess Magazine*, *Chess*, and *Chess Today*. Most recently he was the top scorer on the Irish Team at the Chess Olympiad in Calvià, Spain.



The present volume builds a white repertoire utilizing 1 e4 and offers something different against all answers from Black. The material is divided as follows:

- Bibliography (1 page)
- Dedication (1 page)
- Acknowledgements (1 page)
- Introduction (2 pages)
- 1 The Sicilian Defence (38 pages)
- 2 The French Defence (34 pages)
- 3 The Scotch Opening (34 pages)
- 4 The Petroff Defence (6 pages)
- 5 The Philidor Defence (9 pages)
- 6 The Caro-Kann Defence (20 pages)
- 7 The Pirc/Modern Defence (11 pages)
- 8 The Scandinavian Defence (11 pages)
- 9 The Alekhine Defence (11 pages)
- 10 Garbage (7 pages)
- Index of Variations (3 pages)

Calling the variations in chapter 10 garbage is somewhat extravagant. Admittedly some of the lines are dubious, but 1...Nc6 is also relegated to this chapter, and after 1 e4 Nc6 2 d4 e5 he recommends 3 Nf3 with a transposition to chapter three. So perhaps he went overboard by labeling them all in this fashion or by putting some fairly decent openings in the bucket with the chum.

Collins came amazingly close to making another IM norm at the Olympiad. Unfortunately, he forgot to follow his own recommendation and missed a chance to get a big advantage:

Collins - Sveshnikov 36th Olympiad Calvià, 2004

1.e4 c5 2.c3 g6 3.d4 cxd4 4.cxd4 d5 5.Nc3 dxe4 6.Bc4 Nf6 7.Qb3 e6 8.d5 exd5 9.Nxd5 Nxd5 10.Bxd5 Qe7



Collins calls Black's last move "a bit greedy" and continues "I like 11 Bd2!? When Erenburg-Bitansky, Tel Aviv 2002 continued (Rozentalis and Harley only consider 11 Qc3 Qb4 with equality) 11...Nc6 12 Bxc6+ bxc6 13 Qc3 e3 14 Bxe3 Qb4 15 Bd4 Rg8 16 Nf3 Be6 17 0-0 Qxc3 18 Bxc3 0-0-0 19 Ng5 with an advantage for White."

However, Rozentalis and Harley did mention 11 Bd2 in *Play the 2 c3 Sicilian* and suggested 11...Nd7 as the reply when "White can't take the pawn 12 Bxb7? Rb8." Although White gets compensation for the pawn after 12 Bc3, I think Collins should have offered a suggestion for White after 11...Nd7 as well. As it turns out in the game against Sveshnikov, Collins played differently and obtained an advantage anyway.

11.Qc3 Qb4 12.Bd2 Qxc3 13.Bxc3 Rg8 14.Nh3

The normal move appears to be 14 Bxe4 with a small advantage for White. After the text move, Black could have equalized with 14...Bh6!? (to prevent White from castling queenside) 15 Bxe4 Na6!? (Fritz) 16 0-0 Nc5 17 Bd5 Be6 and Black will castle queenside and get his king away from the center. But the text move is certainly not without merit either.

14...Bxh3 15.gxh3 Nc6 16.0-0-0 0-0-0 17.Bxe4 Bc5 18.Bd5 Rd7 and after an intense struggle White eventually gained a draw in a very difficult endgame.

Collins has chosen many of straight-forward, easy-to-understand lines: the 2 c3 Sicilian, the Advance Variation against the French, the Scotch Opening, the Panov Attack against the Caro-Kann, 4 Bg5 against the Pirc/Modern and most surprisingly 4 Nf3 against the Alekhine (1 e4 Nf6 2 e5 Nd5 3 d4 d6). In the past 4 c4 Nb6 5 exd6 was the sole choice in repertoire books against the Alekhine.


Collins writes in a very engaging and pleasant style. His recommendations are well-founded, well-documented with recent games in most cases, well-annotated with intelligent prose, and contain just the right balance of words and analysis.

Each chapter opens with a quote by a famous grandmaster. Sometimes the quote refers to the opening covered in that particular chapter, such as Svidler's comment about the Caro-Kann: "Just as any other 1 e4 player in the world, I've looked at enough CK in the last few years to grow completely sick of it;" other times it is just a funny or intelligent comment such as Morozevich's "Previously I would blunder a pawn with 2 f4? exf4, but now I have grown up." A comment of Kortchnoi's starts off the Garbage chapter and for all of you who think it is necessary to memorize all sorts of minor lines; he remarks that you are most likely wasting your time. While the use of quotations, chess and non-chess alike, has been somewhat abused by chess authors, I like how Collins has used them in this book.

The present effort by Collins is indeed worthwhile, it is enjoyable and builds a sharp repertoire for White; players with Black will have their work cut out for them. There

may be small holes in the overall repertoire, but because of the quality of the lines, many of which are played by strong grandmasters, it is unlikely they will run into some sort of massive refutation.

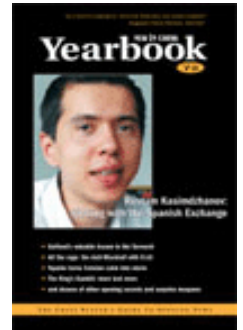
I wholeheartedly recommend this book to all players ranging from average club players (rated above 1500) up to reasonably strong players (around 2200), who like sharp play and are not afraid of grasping the initiative and putting Black under severe pressure. I hope that we will see more books from this talented writer and player.

My assessment of this book: 

Order *An Attacking Repertoire for White*
by Sam Collins

New in Chess Yearbook 72 by Genna Sosonko (ed), 2004 InterChess BV, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Paperback, 235 pp., \$27.95

This Yearbook series is a favorite of mine. Over the years the editors have created a fine-tuned masterpiece that appears every four months with a host of the best players and theoreticians in the world surveying new and/or interesting trends in the world of opening theory. On the cover of this issue is a picture of the new FIDE World Champion, with the tag line: “Rustam Kasimdzhanov: winning with the Spanish Exchange.” Inside grandmaster Igor Glek authors a survey that contains a game by Kasimdzhanov, four games by Glek, and 23 other games.



Let's see how the material has been divided:


- Photo Gallery (2 pages)
- Contents (2 pages)
- **Forum and Sosonko's Corner**
- Forum (8 pages)
- Sosonko's Corner (5 pages)
- **Surveys**
- 35 Surveys including 5 on the Sicilian, 3 on the French, 2 on the Caro-Kann, 2 on the Ruy Lopez, 2 on the Queen's Gambit Declined, 2 on the Slav, 2 on the Nimzo-Indian, 2 on the Grünfeld Indian, 2 on the King's Indian Defence, 2 on the Dutch Defence, 2 on the English Opening as well as 9 others on various openings. (214 pages)
- **Service**
- Book Review (5 pages)
- New in Chess Code System (1 page)

Sosonko's Corner returns to the popular subject of the g2-g4 flank advance in a variety of different openings. It seems like this trend has no end in sight. In fact, in

the Forum section another amazing example is illustrated with the game Lugo-Mitkov, Dominican Republic 2004: 1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 Nf6 4 Nc3 Bd6!? (this bizarre-looking move has in recent years found quite a following that includes several grandmasters) 5 g4!?. Also Robin Eklund pays tribute to Florian Grafl for his efforts in the Advance Variation in the Caro-Kann: 1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 Bf5 4 Nc3 e6 5 g4 Bg6 6 Nge2 c5 7 h4 h5 8 Nf4 Bh7 9 g5!?, which Grafl has employed on a number of occasions. However, other than the above, the Forum section has fewer contributions than usual. Yet, this is well-outweighed by the inclusion of a few extra surveys.

The surveys are the meat and potatoes of the yearbook. This time it begins with three amazing surveys in a row: one on the Sicilian Dragon by Golubev & Aagaard, another by Tiviakov on the Maroczy Variation, and one by Hungarian GM Anka on the Accelerated Dragon where he claims to have refuted the so-called Chinese Dragon (10...Rb8 in the Yugoslav Attack) provided White plays 10 h4 instead of 10 0-0-0. His arguments look strong, but let's see where his ideas take us in the future.

Fortunately it doesn't end here, it continues with one excellent survey after the next. The quality of the surveys is generally increasing, and what I considered to be a fairly strong survey 10-12 volumes ago, is now what I consider well below average. The average surveys now have a fairly in-depth or intriguing introduction with at least 3-4 thoroughly analyzed games and 10-15 further games with theoretical references, as well as some independent analysis. With so much high quality material I can't do justice to all the good surveys by listing them here. Therefore, I will instead give two solid thumbs up to this volume and wholeheartedly recommend the series to serious chess players. The *New in Chess Yearbook* offers insights into the latest developments in opening theory by some of the foremost theoreticians of the day.

My assessment of this book: 

[Order](#) *New in Chess Yearbook 72*

by Genna Sosonko

Chess Informant 90 by Aleksandar Matanovic et al., 2004 Sahovski Informator, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Paperback, 380 pp., \$36.00

The current volume is the fourteenth in this series that I have reviewed, and while there have been some changes in the presentation and contents, those changes have been fairly small, and I have a couple of suggested improvements. This is not to say that there is much that ought to be changed, their recipe works very well, and having both a printed edition and a CD-ROM version makes it possible to choose whichever format is best for you.



Let's see what is included in the present volume:

- Contributors (2 pages)
- The Ten Best Games of the Preceding Volume (2 pages)
- The Ten Most Important Theoretical Novelties of the Preceding Volume (4 pages)
- Code System (3 pages)
- Classifications of Openings (6 pages)
- A (28 pages)
- B (105 pages)
- C (60 pages)
- D (61 pages)
- E (48 pages)
- Index (11 pages)
- Commentators (2 pages)
- Combinations (6 pages)
- Endings (7 pages)
- Studies (3 pages)
- Tournaments (7 pages)
- The Best of Chess Informant - Judith Polgar (21 pages)

I applaud the editors for including the Studies section, which of course refers to endgame studies. It is still in its infancy, but is in the capable hands of the Israeli specialist Yochanan Afek.

Another relatively recent addition to the series is “The Best of Chess Informant” which presents the games of a different top player from the past or present. This time the focus is on Judith Polgar, the strongest female chess player in history, and contains 15 games, 11 import novelties, 18 combinations, and 9 endgames. The games are of outstanding quality, usually with a fair chunk of tactics involved, but she has played so many other quality games that I wish some of her elegant positional wins were included too. This section also always contains a number of photographs of the player, which brings me to my list of possible improvements:

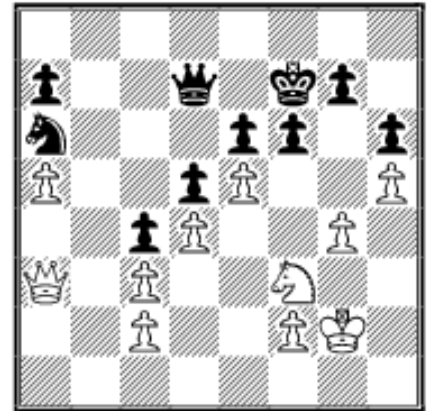
- Chess Informant should expand its use of pictures and show us what some of the many strong players, whose games we enjoy, look like.
- A list of the games that include novelties awarded one or two exclamation marks, as these novelties are of interest to most Chess Informant readers.
- Encourage more contributions from correspondence chess players (1 or 2 in this volume) and female players (3 in this volume).
- Listings, not reviews, of the chess books that are being published around the world. The list should include the titles published by smaller publishing houses as well as those published by the larger ones.

After the usual presentations of the best game and the most important novelty from the previous volume, we move on to the main part of the book, which are the games classified into five sections based on their opening category. There is a good selection of games and fragments by the strongest players in the world and with comments by the players themselves in most cases. The present volume includes annotations by luminaries such as Kasparov, Kramnik, Anand, Leko, Grishchuk, Bareev and other big names. Although, gone are the days where everybody contributed to Chess Informant. It used to be that all the top players annotated at least one of their games in each volume.

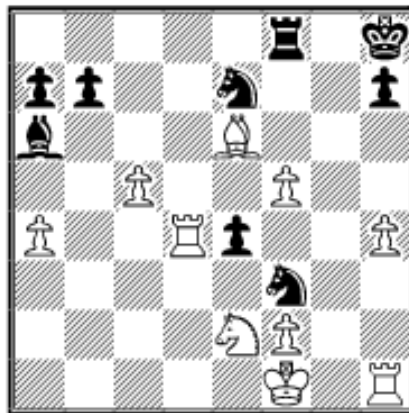
Still, there is a huge amount of interesting, well-annotated games to entertain you. One way to pass the time is to work your way through the volume by setting up the diagrammed positions and then using them as ‘find the best move puzzles.’ These are often followed by a move that is awarded one or two exclamation marks, so if you can find the right move you have every reason to be proud. Let’s look at a few examples that were each awarded two exclamation marks. The moves may not be all that obvious, and in a couple of cases, I was quite baffled myself. The solutions can be found at the end of the next review.



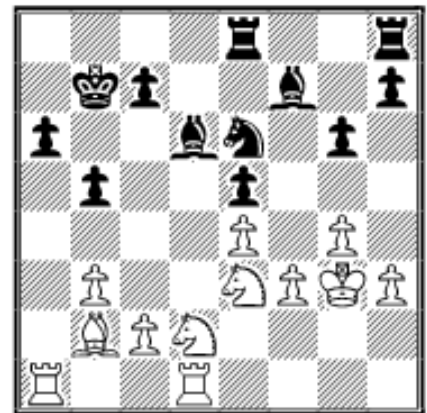
I. Rogers-Tap, Australian Ch 2004
White to move



Kulaots-Kaidanov, Moscow 2004
White to move




Karjakin-Del Rio Angelis,
Dos Hermanas 2004
White to move



Zhang Zhong-Onischuk,
Poikovsky 2004
White to move

I will not hesitate to recommend Chess Informant to serious players and those serious about improving their game. Because it is languageless it demands plenty of work to understand all the positions as every move isn’t substantiated with explanatory analysis. But nonetheless it is an excellent source of study material with games played and annotated by the best players in the world.

My assessment of this book: 

[Order](#) *Chess Informant 90*
by Aleksandar Matanovic et al.

Chess Informant 90 by Aleksandar Matanovic et al., 2004 Sahovski Informator, Figurine Algebraic Notation, CD-ROM, \$24.95

Having just reviewed the printed edition, I will not go too deeply into detail regarding the contents of this CD-ROM. I will, however, highlight some of the differences between the two products.

The CD automatically installs when you first pop it into your CD-ROM drive, but if there are exceptions to this rule then people like me will be in a bad way because there are simply no installation instructions included. However, I have never had any problems installing any of the CDs from Sahovski Informator.



The installation screen lists the products available to install:

- Chess Informant Expert Lite
- Chess Informant 90 with Trademark CI Sections
- Chess Informant Reader 2.1
- Chess Informant 90
- Chess Informant 89 in PGN-format (games without annotations)

The Expert Lite and Reader 2.1 allow you to access the material on the CD, i.e. the games and other sections that are also available in the printed edition. These programs are somewhat different, but both are quite easy to use as I have explained in earlier reviews of Chess Informants electronic editions. However, both of them have considerably fewer functions than Chess Informant Expert 5.1 (CIE), which can be bought individually, or comes bundled with the electronic version of *Encyclopaedia D*. From the above list, we can see that there are two different editions of *Chess Informant 90* to be installed, one with just the annotated games, and another with all the features found in the printed volume. As a bonus they always include all the games and fragments from the previous volume free, which is an excellent little add-on even without the annotations.

The program is relatively easy to navigate and there is a fairly extensive Help section; although I had trouble finding out how to copy a game from the publication to a Word document. I use this feature frequently and if this product is to compete with Chess Assistant and ChessBase then such functions should be easily accessible. Even after reading the manual and fiddling around with the program, I have yet to find the feature. If you know how to do it, please send me an e-mail.

Another annoyance was the relatively slow pace that the pieces move on the board when you are using the arrow key to go through the games. CIE is slow motion compared to ChessBase and Chess Assistant. I would also like to be able to change the size of the diagram, making it smaller to allow for more room for the moves and annotations on the screen at any given time. Since the material is largely the same as in the printed edition you should be able to get approximately the same level of enjoyment out of the electronic version if you prefer working on the computer.

One feature that I absolutely love about the electronic version is that when you are viewing the results of the voting for best game and most important novelty from the previous volume, you can click on the games and get them fully annotated on your screen, whereas in the printed edition you can do nothing of the kind unless you purchase the previous volume.

Overall, if you prefer to work with a computer rather than a book, the electronic edition of Chess Informant is an excellent choice. In some ways it is superior to the printed edition because you can have the computer analyze the games, or add your own ideas and analysis to what is already on the disk, furthermore you have access to a greater number of games than the printed edition. This is an easy product to recommend for serious players.

Here are the diagram solutions:

I.Rogers-Tap: 19 Nxd5!! exd5 20 e6 fxe6 21 Ne5 Qe8 22 Nc6 Rb7 23 b5!+- Bg5 24 bxa6 Rb6 25 hxg5 Rxc6 26 Bxc6 Qxc6 27 Qe2 1-0

Kulaots-Kaidanov: 33.Qc1!+- Qe7 34.exf6 Qxf6 35.Ne5+ Kg8 36.Qb2 Qe7 37.Qb5 Nc7 38.Qb8+ Ne8 39.Nc6 Qd7 40.Nxa7 e5 41.Qc8! Qxa7 42.Qxe8+ Kh7 43.dxe5 1-0

Karjakin-Del Rio Angelis: 33.Kg2!!+- Nxd4 34.Nxd4 Kg7 35.Kg3 Rd8 36.Nb5 Bxb5 37.axb5 Kf6 38.Kf4 Rd4 39.Rc1 Rb4 40.c6 e3+ 41.Kxe3 Rxb5 42.c7 a5 43.c8Q Nxc8 44.Rxc8 a4 45.Rf8+ Kg7 46.Rf7+ Kh6 47.Rd7 Rb2 48.f6 1-0

Zhang Zhong-Onischuk: 25 Ndc4!! bxc4 26 Nc4 Rd8, and now White played 27 Na5?, which Black should have answered with 27...Ka7 28 Nc6+ Kb6 29 Nxd8 Rxd8 with a slight advantage for Black. Instead White should have played 27 Nxe5!? Bxe5 28 Bxe5 Rxd1 29 Rxd1 Rd8 30 Rxd8 Nxd8 31 f4 with sufficient material for the piece according to Zhang Zhong.

My assessment of this CD: 

[Order](#) *Chess Informant 90* (CD-ROM)

by Aleksandar Matanovic et al.

Encyclopaedia of Chess Openings D - 4th Edition by Aleksandar Matanovic et al., 2004 Sahovski Informator, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Hardcover, 608 pages, \$36.00

A few years ago I complained profusely about the decline in the quality of the ECOs. Gone were the days when the editors at Sahovski Informator assigned certain sections to players from the world elite, such as Botvinnik, Keres, Kasparov, Karpov, Larsen, and Kortchnoi just to mention a few. It was a cavalcade of the biggest names in chess, covering those openings they play themselves, giving the status of the existing theory as well as an abundance of new ideas and original analysis. What could really be better? But times changed and editing even a small section in a book such as this demanded a considerable amount of work, as well as finances. So unknown editors were assigned the task using only games and analysis that had been published in previous Chess Informant Yearbooks.



Obviously the decline in the quality in ECOs gave their competitors an opportunity and other products became easily available, both printed and, most likely more devastatingly, electronic products such as those that are available for both ChessBase and Chess Assistant. Despite the existence of these programs, I have found that they don't completely cover all openings in the same fashion that the printed ECOs have managed to do throughout the years. However, our friends in Belgrade have adjusted to circumstances and have now started including a wider range of material, both games and analysis, that have not been included in the pages of Chess Informant.

Yet, they would do well to consider using the material being published in other monographs on opening theory. The analysis and suggestions given in these books should be considered one way or another, at least to the extent that they choose material that has been well-received and was written by grandmasters with specialized knowledge of a particular opening.

Here's how the material has been divided:

- Code System (3 pages)
- Contents (2 pages)
- D0 1 d4 d5 (20 pages)
- D1 1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 (80 pages)
- D2 1 d4 d5 2 c4 dc4 (40 pages)
- D3 1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 (162 pages)
- D4 1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Nf3 (112 pages)
- D5 1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Bg5 (32 pages)
- D6 1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Bg5 Be7 5 e3 0-0 6 Nf3 Nbd7 (12 pages)
- D7 1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 (with 3...d5) (42 pages)
- D8 1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 d5 (52 pages)
- D9 1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 d5 4 Nf3 (46 pages)

Additionally, each section is divided into ten subsections; for example D11, D25, D42 and so on. The material is reasonably up to date or as much as it can be at the pace that theory is currently developing. Despite some lines becoming obsolete or refuted in the life span of an ECO of this magnitude, it is still a very worthwhile work that deserves to be on the reference shelf of any serious student of opening theory. It will not cover all the tiny details of every line in existence, as there is simply no way of packing all that into one volume, unless you fancy chess books the size of Webster's Dictionary. But it will give you a good overview of the current status of

theory as it stands at the time publication, even though the book is likely to be outdated within a few years. To be honest, I keep the older editions of the encyclopaedias because each edition puts different emphasis on different lines based on what is more popular at the time of publication.

If you are seriously studying openings, as many of us are, and you want a good reference work that will serve you well for years to come, then this is a work you will need to consider.

My assessment of this book: 

[Order](#) *Encyclopaedia of Chess Openings D - 4th Edition*
by Aleksandar Matanovic et al.

Encyclopaedia of Chess Openings D - 4th Edition (CD-ROM) by Aleksandar Matanovic et al., 2004 Sahovski Informator, Figurine Algebraic Notation, CD-ROM, \$69.95

Before examining the contents, it is worth discussing the price of the electronic edition, compared to the printed edition, because the CD is much more expensive than the printed one, \$69.95 as opposed to \$36.00. However, the CD-ROM also offers much more than the book. For starters you get a database program, which is nearly of the same quality as ChessBase and Chess Assistant. The other extra features are:



- Database Tree
- Reference games and game fragments
- Chess Informant base (annotated games)
- Test Your Skills section (234 educative examples)
- Chess Informant Expert 5.1


All these extra goodies, albeit nearly at double the price of the printed edition, are certainly worth the money. But if this product is to become more popular, they need to lower the price, otherwise people will be scared off and not bother to discover how well their database system works, even when it comes with so many extras.

It is reasonably easy to navigate and find the variations you seek. Everything is in the same order with the same variation numbers as the printed edition. Playing through the variations is also easy, although the pieces are somewhat slow on the screen. There may be a way to speed it up, but I have yet to find out how.

Also, one should be able to add comments and analysis, unfortunately I couldn't figure out if this feature is available. I looked in the Help manual, but it told me to go to a menu I couldn't find. I normally don't consider myself completely computer illiterate, but I certainly felt this way here.

Another feature I would like to see is to be able to jump directly to any line that ends with a transposition to another line. Although it directs you to the proper subsection, you still have to find out which line it is and this is not always particularly easy, especially in some of the bigger subsections.

Despite all the headaches of trying to figure out how the functions work I'm quite encouraged by the program and intend to take the time to learn how to use it properly. However, I cannot give it my wholehearted recommendation, although I do like the features and think it is an excellent investment for the serious student of opening theory.

My assessment of this CD: 

Order *Encyclopaedia of Chess Openings D - 4th Edition*
(CD-ROM) by Aleksandar Matanovic et al.

Roman's Encyclopaedia of 40 Essential Chess Openings - Volumes 1-4 (DVD) by Roman Dzindzichashvili, 2003 ChessDVDs.com, Figurine Algebraic Notation, DVD, 11 hours 48 minutes total running time, \$129.95 (\$39.95 for each volume)

I have previously reviewed other DVDs by Dzindzichashvili and while many of the variations were interesting and worthwhile, the presentation left much to be desired. The presenter often seemed unprepared and repeated the same terms when he couldn't remember what he had originally intended to say and not much has changed.

Let's look at the contents of the current DVD:

Volume 1: 1 Alekhine Defense (W&B); 2 Beefeater / Dzindzi-Indian Defense (B); 3 Benko Gambit (W&B); 4 Benoni (W); 5 Bird (B); 6 Blackmar-Diemer (B); 7 Blumenfeld Counter Gambit (W); 8 Bogo-Indian Defense (W&B); 9 Budapest Defense (W)

Volume 2: 1 Caro-Kann (W&B); 2 Colle System (W); 3 Czech Benoni Defense (W); 4 Dutch Defense (W); 5 English Defense (W&B); 6 4 Knights Defense (W&B); 7 French (W)

Volume 3: 1 Giuoco Piano (W&B); 2 Gruenfeld Defense (W); 3 King's Gambit (B); 4 King's Indian Defense (W&B); 5 Latvian Gambit (W); 6 Nimzo-Indian Defense (W&B)

Volume 4: 1 Petroff Defense (W); 2 Philidor Defense (W); 3 Pirc Defense (W); 4 Queen's Gambit Accepted (W&B); 5 Queen's Gambit Declined (W&B); 6 Queen's Indian Defense (W&B); 7 Ruy Lopez (B); 8 Scotch Opening (B); 9 Sicilian Defense (W&B)



The title of these DVDs is *40 Essential Chess Openings*, but I'm unsure which method of counting was used when adding up the number of openings, for no matter what system I use I have not yet reached the number forty. If you add them up without any further consideration, the total is 31. If you look at them as separate openings when covered as White or Black (as indicated by the Ws and Bs behind each opening), the total is well over forty.

Also, some of the names on the openings are not entirely standard. From volume one, the Blumenfeld is not a counter gambit, but just a gambit; and the Budapest Defense is normally called the Budapest Gambit, because it is a gambit not a defense. The Blackmar-Diemer is a gambit, but the gambit moniker has been left off. On volume two the Caro-Kann and French Defenses have lost their defense tag and the English Opening has been changed to the English Defense, which is another opening entirely.

The first DVD has an entertaining introduction mainly because Dzindzi immediately starts mumbling about what is not covered and mentions amongst other things 1 h3 and 1 a4, as they are not "sensible openings." He does claim to cover 98% of all openings with this series, although he does not cover all the variations of the Caro-Kann and Pirc Defenses, because he "will not live that long!" He may well cover 98% of all openings that are being played, but not 98% of the lines being played. I am guessing that 98% of all lines are *not* being covered.

As with his previous opening videos, Dzindzi spends a considerable amount of time searching for the right words and, without being overly harsh, I will add that syntax and congruence are not exactly the strongest aspect of the presentation. Here is an example from the first segment on the Alekhine on DVD 1, he is discussing the position after: **1.e4 Nf6 2.e5 Nd5 3.d4 d6 4. c4 Nb6 5.exd6 exd6 6.Nc3 Be7 7.Bd3 Nc6 8.Nge2 Bg4 9.f3 Bh4+ 10.Kf1 Bh5.**



Here he asks, "We have king on f1, we rather have king castled, but what does Black have?" And continues, "The bishop on h4 is to put it mildly, kind of, kind of, stupid piece!" The presentation seems unscripted to say the least.


His coverage of the opening lines has some holes as well. In the Alekhine he leaves many critical lines without sufficient coverage, e.g. after 1 e4 Nf6 2 Nc3 d5 3 e5 Ne4 4 Nce2 d4, he only mentions 5 d3, not 5 Nf3 Nc6 6 c3 which is generally considered the critical variation.

Dzindzi has strived to make the coverage easy to follow and therefore has not chosen the most complicated lines, nor the best or most critical for the opposite side, and he emphasizes this repeatedly as if to ensure we don't expect too much from him. On several occasions he oversimplifies matters to keep us somewhat in the dark, so that we will not question his authority. Such a technique is often successful with beginners, but for an old dog like me, who tends to sniff around the edges to see if I find something suspect, there are a few rats here and there.

For example, his conclusion seems a bit disingenuous when he claims an advantage for White in a line from the Grünfeld, based on one of his own games where his opponent missed a chance, according to ECO D, to get at least a slight advantage. He also warns players against using the Petroff Defence as Black because all they can hope for is a draw. This is inaccurate to put it mildly.

The opening strategies he provides are very easy to understand and memorize and therefore this set of DVDs can easily serve as a practical guide to a variety of openings, where you will never come away with a terrible position if you follow his advice. The lines he chooses are rarely those that you would concern yourself with when playing a particular opening, but that doesn't mean they don't carry a certain punch, because most of the lines he suggests are fairly difficult to handle both tactically and positionally.

If you are lazy by nature and cannot be bothered to read a book or figure out some lines on your own, then buying this series may well be for you. Another thought is to use them as a catalogue of ideas. For instance, if you are facing an opponent who plays a certain opening and he or she has been successful against you in the past, you likely will find some sort of remedy on these DVDs that can be used against this opponent. They are somewhat expensive, but a crucial win in a last round game using one of Dzindzi's ideas will easily pay for these DVDs.

My assessment of this DVD: 

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