



COLUMNISTS

Checkpoint

Carsten Hansen

**Reviewed this month:*****Play the King's Indian***

by Joe Gallagher

The Controversial Sämisch King's Indian

by Chris Ward

Play the 4 f3 Nimzo-Indian

by Yuri Yakovich

Starting Out: The Queen's Indian

by John Emms

***Queen's Gambit Orthodox Defence
- Exchange Variation D31/D35-D36***

by Thomas Henrichs

The Return of the Indians

Chess publishers are spitting out new opening books at an unprecedented pace. Therefore, I have resolved to increase the number of reviews to five per column, making them slightly shorter but at least relatively current. Over the next several months I will also incorporate some books published in German, whenever they fit into the overall theme of the column. I hope you will embrace these slight changes and I encourage you to contact me if you know of an interesting, recent opening book that you would like to see reviewed.

Play the King's Indian by Joe Gallagher, 2004 Everyman Chess, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Paperback, 208pp. \$19.95

Joe Gallagher is considered to be one of the foremost opening book authors and often offers the reader much more than the average GM. The material is usually well presented and Gallagher divulges pretty much everything he has discovered about the opening, even when it is one he plays himself, as is the case with the present book. It is quite rare to see active grandmasters be this selfless and for that we should all be very thankful. The present book builds on his previous King's Indian titles: *Beating the Anti-King's Indians*, *Starting Out: The King's Indian*, and *The Sämisch King's Indian*, which were all well-received. This one offers Black a comparatively complete repertoire against any line from White, along with an alternative line if Black isn't in the mood for a swashbuckling battle that particular day.



The chapters are as follows:

- Bibliography (1 page)
- Introduction (2 pages)
- **Part One: The Classical Variation - 1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 Bg7 4 e4 d6 5 Nf3 0-0 6 Be2 e5**
 - 1 The Classical Variation: Modern Main Line (19 pages)
 - 2 The Classical Variation: 9 Ne1 Nd7 without 10 Be3 (14 pages)
 - 3 The Classical Variation: The Bayonet Attack 9 b4 (17 pages)
 - 4 The Classical Variation: White's 9th Move Alternatives (8 pages)
 - 5 The Classical Variation: 7...Na6 (14 pages)
 - 6 The Classical Variation: White's 7th Move Alternatives (11 pages)
- **Part Two: Other Lines - 1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 Bg7 4 e4 d6**
 - 7 The Sämisch (26 pages)
 - 8 The Fianchetto Variation (24 pages)
 - 9 The Four Pawns Attack (20 pages)
 - 10 White Plays an early h3 (14 pages)
 - 11 The Averbakh Variation (13 pages)
 - 12 Other Systems (14 pages)
 - Index of Variations (2 pages)
 - Index of Complete Games (2 pages)

The present title is more advanced than his *Starting Out* book and Gallagher recommends that less experienced players begin with that one. The presentation is based on complete games that are, for the most part, analyzed and annotated in depth. This should delight anyone who wants to play this opening, especially those who want to learn more about the facts and small finesses on this fascinating opening.


From the chapter overview we can see his recommendations against the Classical lines, so I will quickly run through the rest of his repertoire choices:

- Against the Sämisch, he suggests 6...c5!? in reply to 6 Be3, 6 Nge2 and 6 Bg5.
- In the Fianchetto Variation, he boldly and correctly proposes the variation that bears his own name, the Gallagher Variation.
- Facing the Four Pawns Attack, he also recommends the ...c5 setup with ...Bg4, which is a solid choice for Black.

- In the 6 h3 line, he offers 6...e5 7 d5 Na6 as Black's best, and a similar approach is presented in reply to the Averbakh King's Indian, albeit with 6...Na6 played first and only then 7...e5.
- In chapter 12, he covers three minor lines very effectively as well.

Gallagher writes a cogent summary at the end of each chapter, where he connects the dots for the reader to better comprehend what they have just studied. In particular the closing remarks of the Fianchetto chapter are amazing and this one chapter alone is almost reason enough to purchase the book. The Fianchetto line is truly one where Black can suffer tremendously if he is not 100% on top of what he is doing; Gallagher relates his early experiences in this line and writes that, at one point, he nearly felt like resigning when his opponents reached for the g-pawn.

Throughout this book Gallagher lives up to my high expectations of him as a first-rate author. His introductions to each chapter, his analysis and game comments, his summaries and original analysis and improvements leave nothing behind. I wholeheartedly recommend this book to those who currently play this opening, and to those considering playing it, as well as to those who wish to prepare for the coming horde of King's Indian players over the next few years.

My assessment of this book: 

[Order](#) *Play the King's Indian*
by Joe Gallagher

The Controversial Sämisch King's Indian by Chris Ward, 2004 Batsford, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Paperback, 224pp. \$22.95

I'm unsure as to what is so controversial about the Sämisch Variation against the King's Indian. After all it has been a well-accepted choice for White for a very long time, and as Ward himself points out: Kasparov, Karpov, and Kramnik have all played it. Nor did I see any explanation about the title offered inside the book, so I will assume that it is just a marketing device devised by the publisher.

Ward offers a couple of explanations as to what this book is about; the first after mentioning a book written by Joe Gallagher back in 1995: "Gallagher's book was more in the 'complete' mould – generally openings texts tend to be of either that variety or of the 'repertoire' type. I would say that *The Controversial Sämisch* is neither! Certainly because of the amount of data available these days I'm in awe of writers who take on the former type of project. Thousand of games are played every day and assessments of variations are constantly changing."



And later he writes:

“However, back to what this text is all about: I’m not here to prove to you why the Sämisch wins for White but as my own interest lies with the first player, it is obviously written with King’s Indian bashing in mind! Clearly my predominant selection of White wins suggests that I haven’t adopted an entirely unbiased approach (!). Nevertheless whilst covering all the main variations of the Sämisch (but not every single line), I do suggest to Black players where their best chances may lie. By frequently referring to my own experiences, I wanted this book to trace the development of the opening over time, while overall tendering reasons for the shift in emphasis. I also wanted to throw in ideas that will be relevant to both parties and provide food for thought in the future.”

With that in mind, let’s see how the material is divided :

- Preface (1 page)
- Bibliography (1 page)
- 1 Introduction (7 page)
- 2 6 Be3 e5 7 d5 (42 pages)
- 3 6 Be3 e5 7 Nge2 (27 pages)
- 4 6 Be3 Nbd7 (20 pages)
- 5 Rare Black moves after 6 Be3 and delaying ...0-0 (24 pages)
- 6 The Panno 6 Be3 Nc6 (22 pages)
- 7 6 Be3 c5!? (26 pages)
- 8 6 Nge2 (18 pages)
- 9 6 Bg5!? (20 pages)
- 10 Odds and Ends (8 pages)
- Index of Illustrative Games (1 page)
- Main Variations: Quick Reference Guide (3 pages)

The presentation is based on complete games with the theory of the different variations included in the opening phase of each game. Yet, the emphasis on theoretical coverage is very limited as the alternatives to the main games are discussed very briefly, either by a few examples or with some game quoted in its entirety, but rarely with much accompanying analysis. Ward rarely explores the lines in their entirety, with suggestions for both sides, although this can be found from time to time. Instead we have a presentation of games featuring the Sämisch that is intended to inspire you to take up this variation. He makes a good case and 9 of the 34 main games feature Ward playing as White, with many more of his games mentioned in the notes. This helps tremendously because he shows the reader he believes in this variation and his conversational, chatty style of writing makes you feel comfortable with Ward as your guide. Even the occasional loss by White in the main games won’t discombobulate you, because the very next game will show White winning in convincing fashion.

It’s difficult not to like a well-written book that delivers a humorous punch amidst the serious business of studying openings. However, for the purpose of opening study this book lacks some of the ingredients that would make it great. First and foremost is depth in the variations, then thoroughness when covering the lines. The notes should include fewer complete games and should have been replaced by shorter examples with a tighter discussion of alternatives for either side. But as Ward indicated in the

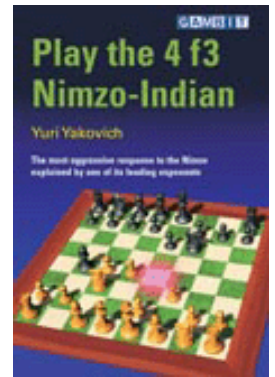
introduction this was never his intention. So if you want a comprehensive guide to the Sämisch Variation, then this book is not the right one for you because it is neither unbiased nor even close to complete, yet it will provide you with plenty of inspiration and ideas. I'm sure you will have fun reading about them and putting them into practice.

My assessment of this book:

Play the 4 f3 Nimzo-Indian by Yuri Yakovich, 2004 Gambit, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Paperback, 128pp. \$23.95

Major chess publishers tend to ignore minor or offbeat lines, but occasionally we see works that concentrate entirely on one minor line, and if you are really lucky, it's written by a strong player who actually knows what he is writing about.

With the present book, the magic has happened, a strong grandmaster has written about a minor line in the Nimzo-Indian that he himself plays: **1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 f3** (see diagram)



This first came to the attention of chess fans when Gheorghiu beat Fischer at the Havana Olympiad in 1966. Yet, I was surprised when I heard about the project because I thought the line was completely dead after a brief but rather intense fire of interest at the beginning of the 1990s and I couldn't possibly imagine that there was enough material to write an entire book about it.

However, I soon realized how wrong I was on both points, because not only is there ample material to work with, but the author is part of an "underground" movement that keeps this line flourishing by repeatedly playing it and then analyzing it to bits. With this book, Yakovich shows that the line is very much alive and worth playing at all levels.

Let's see how he has divided the material:

- Symbols (1 page)
- Introduction (2 pages)
- 1 4...Nc6 (8 pages)
- 2 4...0-0 (7 pages)
- 3 4...c5 (16 pages)
- 4 4...d5 (11 pages)
- 5 4...d5 5 a3 Bxc3+ (11 pages)
- 6 4...d5 5 a3 Bxc3+ 6 bxc3 c5! (12 pages)

- 7 The Main Line: 8 dxc5!? (28 pages)
- 8 Illustrative Games (26 pages)
- Index of Variations (3 pages)

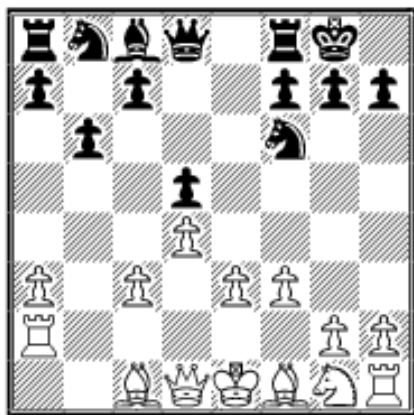
The separation of theory and illustrative games is rather old-fashioned and has been abandoned in the majority of most new opening books because it results in the reader having to skip back and forth to discover the theoretical status of a given line. I don't understand why the games weren't assembled in the theoretical section rather than putting them in a chapter by themselves. However, to his credit, Yakovich is very good at cross referencing the illustrative games and the theoretical section.

The 4 f3 Nimzo-Indian is good for players with a creative attitude that are not afraid of odd pawn structures and lack of development; the following game is an example of both. The notes are those by Yakovich in the book.

Volkov - Shariyazdanov

Russian Ch (Elista) 2001

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 f3 d5 5 a3 Bxc3+ 6 bxc3 0-0 7 cxd5 exd5 8 e3 b6 9 Ra2!?



Thanks to Sergei Volkov this move at present does not appear to be any less promising than transposing to the Botvinnik line of the Rubinstein System with 9 Bd3 Ba6 10 Ne2 c5. On the surface it appears that White is hoping to save a tempo, for if the black bishop moves to a6 White will exchange it immediately, rather than wasting a move playing Bd3. In actual fact Vokov's idea goes a lot deeper and is far more interesting. White is preparing a kingside pawn storm with g4, which will be supported by the rook by switching from a2-g2!

9...Re8

As long as the white bishop has not moved to d3, Black will naturally refrain from playing ...Ba6.

10 g4! c5

White now makes the most remarkable move of the game.

11 Rg2!?

The rook is ready to support the kingside pawn-storm. If a weaker player had been playing Black then chess writers would surely have consigned this game to the curiosity shop, for how can such a strange rook move be taken seriously when White has not yet developed a single minor piece? However, by looking at the position a little closer, we can see strategic similarities between

Volkov's idea and Gheorghiu's play against Fischer (Game 7). White's solid and flexible pawn-structure allows him to play the position this way.

Ba6 12 Bxa6 Nxa6 13 Ne2 Nc7 14 h4 Ne6 15 0-0!

Even so, it is now time to move the king to a safe location!

15...cxd4 16 exd4!

Naturally, White does not want to open the c-file for the black rooks. At the cost of damaging his solid pawn-structure, White's dark-squared bishop can now take part in the struggle on the kingside.

16...Rc8 17 Qd3 Qc7 18 Qf5 Qc4 19 h5 Nd7?! 20 g5 Nef8 21 Rff2 Rc6 22 Bd2 g6 23 Qg4 Qb3 24 Ng3 Qxa3 25 f4!


Black has won a pawn while White concentrates all of his pieces around the black king and aims to open the f-file.

25...f5 26 gxf6 Nxf6 27 Qg5 Qe7 28 hxc6 hxc6 29 Re2 Re6 30 Nf5 Qd7 31 Nh6+ Kg7 32 Rxe6 Qxe6 33 f5 Qd7 34 fxg6 Ne4 35 Nf5+ Kg8 36 Qf4 Nxd2 37 g7 Re1+ 38 Kh2 Ng6 39 Rxc6 Re2+ 40 Kh1 Re1+ 41 Kg2 Re2+ 42 Kg3 Ne4+ 43 Kh4?

In time trouble, White misses an opportunity to end the game immediately with 43 Qxe4!

Qd8+ 44 Kh5 Nf6+ 45 Rxf6 1-0

In addition to games such as this the theory section is very impressive. It contains countless pieces of original analysis with improvements over current theory as well as overturning a number of evaluations. Although the author has a slight bias for White in his coverage, this book is not written only for White players; he has plenty of suggestions and improvements for Black and shows how Black can make the best of his chances throughout the book. However, I found that Yakovich is surprisingly vague on the critical main line with 8 dxc5!?, often quoting large chunks of games without any suggestions for either side. So my only warning is that your own analysis will be required, but this should always be the case before you accept anybody else's analysis or suggestions.

My assessment of this book: 

Starting Out: The Queen's Indian by John Emms, 2004 Everyman Chess, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Paperback, 176pp. \$19.95

English GM John Emms seems to be more active writing books than playing chess, but this is nothing to complain about because his books are nearly always very well-written with a good balance of explanations and variations.



The material is divided as follows:

- Bibliography (1 page)
- Introduction (4 pages)
- 1 4 g3 Bb7: Introduction (16 pages)
- 2 4 g3 Bb7: Main Lines (16 pages)
- 3 4 g3 Ba6: Fifth Move Alternatives (22 pages)
- 4 4 g3 Ba6 5 b3 (23 pages)
- 5 Lines with Nc3, Bg5 and Bf4 (28 pages)
- 6 The Petrosian System: 4 a3 Bb7 5 Nc3 (25 pages)
- 7 The Petrosian System: 4 a3 c5 and 4...Ba6 (20 pages)
- 8 4 e3 (9 pages)
- 9 Move Orders and Transpositions (4 pages)
- Index of Variations (3 pages)
- Index of Complete Games (2 pages)

The page distribution is heavily biased towards the most popular lines: 4 a3 and 4 g3. This is perfectly understandable because these are lines that are most often played in current master practice. Yet, such a division of material can be quite disconcerting when writing for non-masters, the target audience of this series. Thankfully, Emms succeeds amazingly well at explaining the intricacies of the lesser lines, although he more or less only focuses his coverage in the set-up for Black.

This leads to my main point of criticism. Given its title you would think that it would be a guide for both sides, but that is not the case. Just because the opening is decided by Black, by playing 3...b6 and thus entering the Queen's Indian, it shouldn't mean that the book is only for Black. Yet, this is far from a rare event in this series of books. Another issue endemic to this series, but one which Emms occasionally avoids, is that the authors give far too much theory for the target audience they are writing for. That's what happens when a strong player writes for an audience he has lost touch with. However, Emms is generally very good at explaining the material so that people with less knowledge of opening theory can get a good grasp of the topic, both in regards to understanding where the pieces should be placed and why they have to go there and in which order.

For Black players who haven't played the Queen's Indian before or those who need some fresh ideas and some good explanations on why the lines unfold as they do, this book is a really good choice. Emms knows the topic very, very well and it shows on every single page, and that makes it a good introductory guide. Sadly players who want to have a similar introduction for White will have to wait.

My assessment of this book: 

Order *Starting Out: The Queen's Indian*
by John Emms

Queen's Gambit Orthodox Defence - Exchange Variation D31/D35-D36 by Thomas Henrichs, 2004 ChessBase GmbH, Figurine Algebraic Notation, CD-ROM, \$29.95

Every now and again I receive a book or a CD by an internationally titled player that I have never heard of before, and occasionally this unknown writer does an exceptionally good job. This is the case with the present CD, even though it is incorrectly named. If I'm not mistaken the Orthodox Defence in the Queen's Gambit arises after 1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Nf3 Be7 5 Bg5 h6 6 Bh4 0-0 7 e3, and this has very little to do with the contents of the CD, which focuses on the lines after 1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Be7 4 cxd5 and 3...Nf6 4 cxd5 exd5 5 Bg5. Luckily most people are aware what constitutes the Exchange Variation in the Queen's Gambit and thankfully the Exchange Variation in the Queen's Gambit is not as boring as many other exchange variations in other openings. In fact, here it is one of the most complex and fascinating variations, although many may disagree with this and argue in favor of the madness found in the Botvinnik Variation in the semi-Slav or other such variations.



The author has done an excellent job of parsing the material into digestible bites so that all levels and elements of this opening are explained in enough detail to satisfy even really strong players and elementarily enough to let lower rated players in on the fun.

Let's see how he has divided the material:


- **Database:**
 - 1 Introduction
 - 2 Strategy
 - a) Minority Attack
 - b) Attack in the Centre
 - c) Castling on Opposite Sites
 - d) Creating an Outpost by Ne5 and f2-f4
 - 3 Index of Variations
 - a) 0-0 + Nf3
 - b) 0-0 + Nge2
 - c) 0-0-0 + Nf3
 - d) 0-0-0 + Nge2
 - e) Alatortsev Variation 3...Be7
 - f) Deviations from the main line
 - 4 Games of the World Champions
 - 5 Sources
 - 28 Opening Surveys
 - 141 Annotated Games by the Author
 - Training Database
 - Variation Tree

The Strategy section is very good for players who are not familiar with the Exchange Variation and its fundamental ideas and plans for both sides. It is based on individual database texts for each subject with linked games. However, these linked-in games are very lightly annotated and if you are a newcomer to this variation, you most likely would want a little bit more than a few loose comments. Yet, the database texts generally compensate for this discrepancy.

The Index of Variations (Part 3 of this CD) is the most important component because it is here that the author has linked all of the 28 opening surveys that are essential for the coverage of the opening. The index of variations itself only gives the very basic information about the classical exchange variation, where White plays Nf3 and castles kingside, but the surveys provide the real foundation including annotations and thorough analysis. The coverage of the lines where White castles queenside are somewhat different as the database text that accompany the index of variations is quite thorough and contains most of explanations and provides several linked games, only to offer us the opening survey at the very end of the database text. This also works fine for the reader, but I wonder why the coverage isn't done in the same fashion in both places.

As usual with ChessBase CDs the publicized number of annotated games must be taken with a grain of salt, because these are inflated by games that are barely annotated or games that have only one or two comments. Even the games that are annotated by Henrichs include several very lightly "annotated games," with comments so brief it is a stretch to consider them annotated. I find this aspect of their marketing to be the most appalling because the buyer often has no recourse to return the merchandise once it has been opened. And upon opening it they will find that of the 800 commented games advertised only half of those are thoroughly annotated.

However, the author deserves praise where it matters; on the database texts for the less experienced players, and the opening surveys for those that are looking for theoretical coverage.

My assessment of this book: 

**Order *Queen's Gambit Orthodox Defence*
- *Exchange Variation D31/D35-D36*
by Thomas Henrichs**

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