



COLUMNISTS

Checkpoint

Carsten Hansen

**Reviewed this month:**

***Mr. Kasparov Series No. 1: How to Play
the Queen's Gambit***
(DVD) by Garry Kasparov

ChessBase Opening Encyclopaedia 2005
(DVD) by ChessBase GmbH

***Roman's Lab: The Easy Way to Play the Grand Prix
and Reti Opening***
(DVD) by Roman Dzindzichashvili

The Nimzo-Indian Defence: The Easy Way
(DVD) by Jacob Aagaard

Modern Chess Openings: 1...Nc6!?
(CD-ROM) by Alexander Kalinin & Igor Berdichevsky

The Van Geet Opening 1.Nc3
(CD-ROM) by Don Maddox

Chess Informant #92
(Book and CD) by Aleksandar Matanovic et al.

Going Digital

This month we have a massive amount of new works to examine. We begin with four DVDs that are widely different despite sharing the same media. Next are three CD-ROMs all of which follow the standard pattern for this type of opening coverage and we finish with Chess Informant's latest volume which is available in both book and CD formats.

Mr. Kasparov Series No. 1: How to Play the Queen's Gambit (DVD) by Garry Kasparov, 2004 ChessBase GmbH, Figurine Algebraic Notation, \$37.95

In previous columns I have expressed my skepticism towards studying openings by watching videos or DVDs since some products are quite horrible, technically poor, and not properly prepared. However, I'm quite blown away with the contents on this DVD and feel thoroughly enlightened.



There were a couple of minor glitches. For instance, I discovered that I didn't have the correct version of Windows Media Player (you need 9 or higher), and I had to download it from the Internet. Then when I began watching the DVD it quickly became apparent that Kasparov was working from memory, and not a prepared manuscript, because he occasionally lost his train of thought or paused to search for the correct word in English, and sometimes even wasn't sure about the proper move order.

The contents of the DVD are as follows:

- 01 Talking about Queen's Gambit (8:26)
- 02 Possible Deviations (10:50)
- 03 Lasker Defence (16:03)
- 04 Capablanca's Approach (19:32)
- 05 Carlsbad Structure (18:45)
- 06 Alatortsev Variation (13:10)
- 07 Steinitz and 5 Bf4 (19:39)
- 08 Tartakower System (14:51)
- 09 5...h6 – a big nuance (13:02)
- 10 Look at some games (1:17)
- 11 Steinitz- Lasker (4:17)
- 12 Rubinstein-Salwe (10:14)
- 13 Capablanca-Alekhine (7:45)
- 14 Kasparov-Andersson (4:45)
- 15 Kasparov-Short (4:02)
- 16 Alekhine-Lasker (3:55)
- 17 Beliavsky-Geller (5:39)
- 18 Kortschnoj-Karpov (12:18)
- 19 Kortschnoj-Karpov 2 (8:24)
- 20 Resume (3:55)

You will not learn everything there is to know about the Queen's Gambit Declined, because that's simply impossible. However, you will receive a phenomenal lesson in the understanding of the opening; given by the best player in chess history.

On several occasions Kasparov emphasizes that the Queen's Gambit Declined is often considered a bit dull and old-fashioned, but that this reputation is completely misplaced because the strategic battle can suddenly turn into a violent confrontation at any moment, especially when a pawn advance is made in the center or if pawn storms on opposite sides are initiated.

It is also interesting to hear Kasparov talk affectionately about his predecessors insights into these types of positions. You can tell that he is impressed with Karpov's ability to play both sides of this opening with good results against the best players in the world. And it is obvious that Kasparov felt it necessary to try and match Karpov's understanding of these lines in order to dethrone him in 1984-85. At one point Kasparov discovers that ChessBase's Megabase gives the wrong move in its gamescore from his first match against Karpov, and he quips: "We sometimes played bad, but not this bad."

I was familiar with the vast majority of the games that Kasparov discusses, but aside from the first and the last segments, each segment gave me something that I will always carry with me. Whether it is knowledge and understanding that cannot easily be derived from studying books or just the confidence that I will be able to handle the opening better simply from watching Kasparov's presentation.

The hours that I have spent watching this DVD have been more enjoyable than most of the movies I have seen in the last five years. Kasparov's personality and charisma is unique and his message seems to be that once you understand the foundation that underlies the Queen's Gambit Declined then you are ready to become a stronger player. If you feel you're ready: Go get it!

My assessment of this DVD: 

[Order](#) *How to Play the Queen's Gambit*
(DVD) by Garry Kasparov

Opening Encyclopaedia 2005 (DVD) by ChessBase GmbH, 2004 ChessBase GmbH, Figurine Algebraic Notation, \$129.95

I gave the *Opening Encyclopaedia 2004* a very harsh [review](#) because it was full of recycled material that was several years old and mostly irrelevant. So, before going any further, let's see what the publisher has to say about the current version:

"The ChessBase Opening Encyclopaedia 2005 features the complete coverage of all opening sectors, offering an optimal start for opening training. Many well-known specialists have made contributions in their field of expertise, such as Anand, Bareev, Dautov, Dr Huebner, Jussupow, Kortschnoj, Krasenkow, Nunn and Ribli. For each of 500 opening sectors according to ECO standard there is at least one opening survey, so that the database is the ideal tool for building up a complete opening repertoire. The game database includes 2.2 million games, about 72,000 of them with annotations. The new opening key has been considerably enhanced, providing even more depth (109.000 single keys) and clarity. Furthermore, the CD contains a separate directory with 179 special theory databases from the CBMs.



- more than 2.2 million games, all featuring ECO codes
- more than 72,000 of them annotated
- more than 3,600 opening surveys
- access to the games with the new big opening key
- 179 special theory databases
- big tree of all games for quick overview and statistics
- new reader with access to all databases”

This sounds reasonable enough, but it is far from kosher. As you may know the ECO code consists of five sections: A, B, C, D and E. Each section is broken down into 100 sub-sections from 00 to 99, with each one covering a certain territory of opening theory. The popular openings are obviously granted a larger number of sub-sections than the less popular ones. For example, the King’s Indian has forty, E60 thru E99, while the Nimzowitsch-Larsen Attack 1 b3 only gets one, A01. However, the original allocation has become outdated as some variations hardly get played any longer and others are played so often that the sections have grown ridiculously huge.

The survey section that constitutes the Encyclopaedia part of this DVD contains a total of 3,687 surveys. The majority of them are from 1999 or earlier, and I estimate that at least half of them are dated prior to 1993. So, I decided to do some counting and find the surveys that were added in the last five years:

- 2001: 165 (of which a stunning 161 are made by Glek/Golubev and are on the King’s Indian)
- 2002: 0
- 2003: 0
- 2004: 0
- 2005: 521

This last number might look impressive, however; the surveys are not distributed evenly throughout all the sections. The new surveys are generally found in clusters:

- Budapest Gambit: 20
- Dutch Defence: 62
- Alekhine’s Defence: 16
- Sicilian Rossolimo Variation: 43
- Sicilian Velimirovic Attack: 23
- French Advance: 10
- Petroff: 35
- Evans Gambit & Italian Game: 10
- Spanish Berlin Defence: 14
- Spanish Archangelsk: 11
- Spanish Marshall: 17
- Queen’s Gambit Ragozin: 12
- Queen’s Gambit Vienna: 11
- Meran Moscow & Anti-Moscow Variations: 13
- Anti-Meran Botvinnik Variation: 8
- Meran: 45
- Catalan: 36


- King's Indian E70-79 (5 Bd3, Four Pawns, Averbakh): 16
- King's Indian Saemisch: 28

Only 91 surveys were distributed within the remaining openings, which haven't been updated since before the year 2000, aside from the Classical lines in the King's Indian Defense. Some hair-raising examples include the Sicilian Dragon, which has three surveys from 1996-1997, but otherwise hasn't been updated since 1993. How many dragon players will survive using theory that old? The Sicilian Sveshnikov hasn't been updated since 1993 and this is currently the most popular line in the Sicilian. The Queen's Indian has had three updates since 1998, the Nimzo-Indian has had one update since 1997, the King's Indian Fianchetto has had four updates since 1996, and the English Opening has had three updates since 1999. These are all major opening systems that are constantly being played at all levels.

There is also no logic as to how many surveys there are for each opening in comparison with other lines from the same opening. For example, the Sicilian Dragon has no less than 286 surveys, while the Sicilian Najdorf only has 28, the Sveshnikov 67, and the 2 c3 Sicilian has 17 – all from 1998 or before. I applaud the people at ChessBase for adding or updating the 500+ surveys mentioned above, but they have an extremely long way to go before this becomes acceptable.

Thankfully there are other things to look at on this DVD. There's also a selection of other surveys that have been featured in ChessBase Magazine (CBM). These opening surveys used to be included on their Megabase, but are now only available through CBM or the Encyclopaedia. Then, of course, there is the database of approximately 2.2 million games, of which over 70,000 are annotated (with games as recent as February 2005). Finally, there is an updated opening key, which some people will find useful, but has never impressed me a great deal.

If you already have the ChessBase Megabase, you should definitely not buy this product. But if you do not have Megabase, then this is a product that you should consider, not so much for the theoretical surveys, but for the large database with annotated games by some of the strongest players in the world. The bottom line is that this is more of a good database and much less of an opening encyclopaedia.

My assessment of this DVD: 

[Order](#) *ChessBase Opening Encyclopaedia 2005*
(DVD) by ChessBase GmbH

Roman's Lab: Mastering Chess Series, Volume 23, The Easy Way to Play the Grand Prix and Reti Opening (DVD) by Roman Dzindzichashvili, 2005
ChessDVDs.com, Figurine Algebraic Notation, \$29.95

I have both praised and criticized Dzindzichashvili's DVDs in the past, but many of the ideas that he presents are very interesting and easy to put to use. This most recent DVD contains a very odd combination of openings: The Grand Prix Attack against the Sicilian for White and the Reti Opening for White. It's beyond me why anybody would combine these two opening systems on one DVD, but Dzindzichashvili used to employ both systems in his active days. However, his target audience may not successfully be able to switch between two so diverse openings.



That being said, this DVD makes for great viewing.

Dzindzichashvili really shows that he understands both openings very well and his choice of lines are well-thought through. The presentation is reasonably fluent with only the occasional hic-up, but nothing that ruins the presentation.

However, he does skate quite quickly over some critical positions that deserve closer examination. For example, in the following line 1 e4 c5 2 Nc3 Nc6 3 f4 g6 4 Nf3 Bg7 5 Bb5 Nd4 6 0-0 Nxb5 7 Nxb5 d5 8 exd5 a6 9 Nc3 Nf6 10 d4 c4 11 Ne5 Nxd5 12 Qe2 (theory only mentions 12 Qf3 as does Rogozenko in *Anti-Sicilians – A Guide for Black*), Dzindzichashvili just discusses the merits of 12...Nxc3 13 bxc3 b5 14 Ba3, which he estimates as preferable for White. Yet, a little more coverage would have been nice at this point, especially since 12...b5 13 a4 Bb7 14 axb5 Nxc3 15 bxc3 axb5 16 Ba3 0-0 is fully acceptable and maybe even preferable for Black. Still, such things happen in most repertoire books, too.

I feel that I didn't waste any time watching this DVD and recommend it to those who need an answer to the Sicilian as White and don't want to spend an inordinate amount of time studying the main lines. The Grand Prix Attack isn't easy for Black to handle and with Dzindzichashvili's instructions you will be well-prepared at the board and may even win quickly. His Reti coverage is also quite interesting and provides a solid repertoire for White that packs a good punch. I didn't see anything that struck me as being too superficial.

The DVD also comes loaded with extras. There is a PGN file of unannotated games from both openings, which strangely includes King's Indian and Modern Benoni games as well. In addition, there are demo versions of several interesting software programs including CT-ART 3.0, BookUp 2000, ChessMentor, Masterchess 3000 and others. All in all, I am quite pleased with this product. Players rated from 1400-2000 will derive a great deal of benefit from it.

My assessment of this DVD: 

Order *Roman's Lab: The Easy Way to Play the Grand Prix and Reti Opening* (DVD) by Roman Dzindzichashvili

The Nimzo-Indian Defence: The Easy Way (DVD) by Jacob Aagaard, 2004
ChessBase GmbH, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Running time 244 minutes,
\$29.95

I had heard good things about Aagaard's Fritz Trainer DVDs on attacking chess and so I had high expectations for this DVD. Therefore it was relatively easy to be disappointed. In contrast to the two previous DVDs I reviewed, the presentation of this one isn't as fluent, and Aagaard's attempts at clowning around come off as unamusing and mildly annoying.



The contents are as follows:

- 1 lesson – Introduction (26:32)
- 2 lesson – the c4-square (13:24)
- 3 lesson – the c4-square part 2 (18:11)
- 4 lesson – Theory 4 Qb3 (13:55)
- 5 lesson – Theory 4 a3 (17:25)
- 6 lesson – Theory 4 f3 (19:38)
- 7 lesson – Theory 4 e3 Karpov-var part 1 (18:31)
- 8 lesson – Theory 4 e3 Karpov-var part 2 (28:41)
- 9 lesson – Theory 4 e3 Petrosian-var part 1 (9:57)
- 10 lesson – Theory 4 e3 Petrosian-var part 2 (13:53)
- 11 lesson – Theory 4 e3 – minor stuff (8:57)
- 12 lesson – Theory 4 Qc2 – part 1 (23:13)
- 13 lesson – Theory 4 Qc2 – part 2 (9:30)
- 14 lesson – Bg5 Systems (14:24)
- 15 lesson – Overview over theoretical variations (8:01)

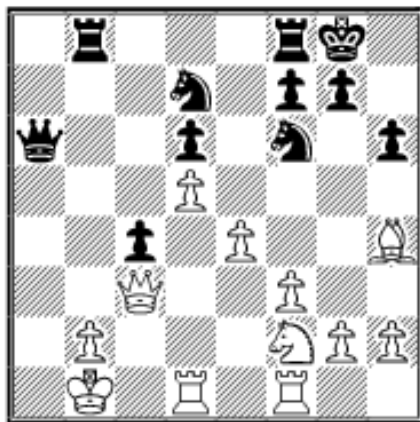
Generally speaking, I like his choice of variations because they are easy to understand and remember. Moreover, Aagaard plays the lines himself and even includes some of his own games in the presentation, so his confidence in the lines he has chosen shines through. However, he skips over the subjects a bit too lightly and is not as thorough as he could have been. If Black doesn't know all the intricacies of the different move orders and similar-looking set-ups for White, which all have slightly different twists to them, it may come back to haunt him. For instance, in a couple of the lines recommended in lesson one, there are already established lines that offer White the better chances. It is also somewhat puzzling that he calls a particular variation the "Petrosian" variation, when it is well-known as the Classical Fianchetto Variation or the Tal Variation.

Let's look at one of the games that Aagaard presents, played when he was an up-and-coming young player against a strong experienced grandmaster:

Tisdall,Jonathan (2510) - Aagaard,Jacob (2290)
Politiken Cup 18th Copenhagen (4), 1996 [E32]

**1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.Qc2 0-0 5.a3 Bxc3+ 6.Qxc3 b6 7.Bg5 Ba6
8.e3 d6 9.f3?! Nbd7 10.Nh3 h6 11.Bh4 Rc8 12.0-0-0? c5 13.d5 exd5
14.cxd5 Bxf1 15.Rhxf1 b5 16.Kb1 b4 17.axb4 Qb6 18.b5 a6 19.bxa6**

Qxa6 20.e4 Rb8! 21.Nf2 c4!



**22.Rc1 Rfc8 23.Bxf6 gxf6 24.Ng4 Rb3
25.Nxf6+ Nxf6 26.Qxf6 c3 27.Rf2
Qd3+ 28.Ka2 Rxb2+ 0-1**

A beautiful effort.

While the overall concept is fine and workable, there are a few too many loose ends and the presentation is a bit too sloppy. Nonetheless, Aagaard's presence on the screen makes it feel like you are receiving a personalized lesson,

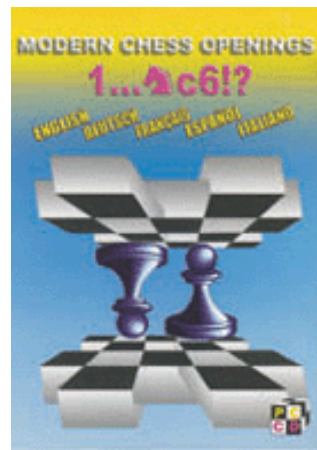
and that is something that a book just cannot do.

My assessment of this DVD: ♦♦♦♦

[Order](#) *The Nimzo-Indian Defence: The Easy Way*
(DVD) by Jacob Aagaard

Modern Chess Openings: 1...Nc6!? (CD-ROM) by Alexander Kalinin & Igor Berdichevsky, 2005 Convekta, Figurine Algebraic Notation, \$29.95

This CD is based on the author's book *Modern Practice: 1...Nc6!?*, which I reviewed in [October 2004](#). The material is nearly identical except that the CD contains a database of 5,000 games. As I said of the book, "it contains an amazing amount of interesting chess and it is a gold mine for those who love creative chess ... although not all the games are annotated equally well." I won't discuss this product at length, but I'll refer you to two other reviews for a discussion of the software and its ease of use: *Modern Chess Openings: French Defence* was reviewed in [April 2004](#) and *Modern Chess Openings: King's Indian Defence* was reviewed in [June 2004](#). The software is great to work with and quite easy to navigate, plus the contents are reasonably good despite being language-less.



My assessment of this CD: ♦♦♦♦

[Order](#) *Modern Chess Openings: 1...Nc6!?*
(CD-ROM) by Alexander. Kalinin & Igor
Berdichevsky

The Van Geet Opening 1.Nc3 (CD-ROM) by Don Maddox, 2005 ChessBase GmbH, Figurine Algebraic Notation, \$24.95

Sometimes it surprises me how many works are being published about certain openings whereas other openings get much less attention. While 1 Nc3 is a fun move, it is an opening that is infrequently seen amongst stronger players. Yet, there is no shortage of books on the topic, and many of these can be found in the rather extensive bibliography on the CD. The bibliography includes books on all sorts of openings, including Psakhis's *French Defence 3 Nd2*, which is rather puzzling – didn't we play 1 Nc3? Notably absent from the list is the masterpiece *Der Linksspringer 1 Sc3* by Keilhack, which was published in 2003 and, with its 400 pages, is as thorough as books come. There's really no excuse for Maddox not to have used it.



There were many things I didn't like about this CD. Including the fact that Maddox refers to the name of the opening inconsistently, spelling it "Van Geet," "vanGeet," or the correct "van Geet."

The introduction is quite awful; it contains very little useful text and tons of diagrams, some of which illustrate completely irrelevant positions, such as the position after 1 Nc3 d5 2 e4 d4 3 Nd5?. Maddox employs the same kind of treatment in his "key overviews," which makes for a couple of really long database texts, but in reality you learn absolutely nothing about the opening.

As an illustration of how poor the material is, I will quote from the "Loose Ends" section of the "Key Overview" – keep in mind that he gives a diagram with every move. My comments are in brackets:

"1 Nc3... Black has various nondescript alternatives on Move 1, none of which are particularly interesting or alarming:

1...d6 (Feistenauer,F - Poettinger,H 1-0); Likely to evolve into a standard Pirc Defense after 2 d4.

1...a6?! (Hawkes,J - Baker,C 1-0); Aasum quotes Hugh Myers here. Black invests a move in covering the b5-square, eliminating lines with Bf1-b5. [CH: Either this guy is completely drunk or just insane – this sort of prophylaxis, without there being an opening for the bishop to go to b5 or a black knight on c6, is alarmingly deep or completely pointless. Black, of course, wants to play ...b5, but let's not mention that...]

1...b6?! (Lambooy,G - Van Mechelen,L 0-1); White has the option of an immediate 2 a5!?. [CH: I would hate to play this guy, if his pawns move like that, what kind of tricks can the rest of his pieces come up with?]

1...c6 (Laurent,C - Weyns,N ½-½); Inviting the Caro-Kann, but white can withhold d2-d4.” [CH: He missed that it also takes the d5-square away from White’s knight on c3, when Black on his next move will play ...b7-b4! (Sorry, I am getting a little too sarcastic.)]

Normally, these ChessBase CDs contain a systematic run-down of database texts on all the major or most important lines, but not this one. It does have links to annotated games, and a training database with all of 100 training questions, but that doesn’t change the fact that this is an awful product. I cannot recommend this CD because with so many obvious flaws it is a waste of money.

My assessment of this CD: ❖

Order *The Van Geet Opening 1.Nc3*
(CD-ROM) by Don Maddox

Chess Informant # 92 (Book and CD) by Aleksandar Matanovic et al., 2005
Sahovski Informator, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Paperback, \$36.00 Book,
\$24.95 CD

Chess Informant and I go back more than twenty years, and I still get just as pleased as I first did when it arrives in the mail. Even with today’s instant access to grandmaster games, it is still nice to see the games gathered together in a book and annotated by the players themselves. The present volume features annotations by the following top players:

Kasparov 7; Anand 11; Leko 4; Kramnik 4; Ivanchuk 6;
Adams 12; Polgar 2; Svidler 6; Grischuk 2; Shirov 8; Gelfand
10; Bareev 1; Dreev 3; Bologan 7; Ponomarev 5; van Wely
7; Motylev 10; Volokitin 7; Lautier 3.

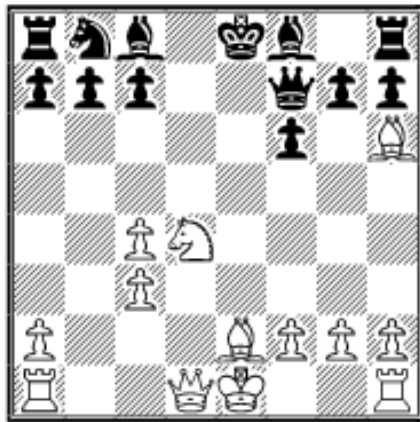


For those that are not familiar with Chess Informant, the annotations are language-less, since an extensive code system is provided that explains everything in symbol form rather than with words.

Chess Informant shows you the latest top games along with the best games and most important theoretical novelties from the previous period. This volume runs from October 2004 through to January 2005.

The best game prize went to Leko for his win against Kramnik in the Marshall Attack from their Brissago match. This beat out Kramnik’s win against Leko in the last match game. The most important novelty prize went to Shariyazdanov for his 12th move against Riazantsev in Biel 2004: 1 c4 Nf6 2 Nc3 e6 3 e4 d5 4 e5 d4 5 exf6 dxc3 6 bxc3 Qxf6 7 Nf3 e5 8 d4 exd4 9 Bg5 Qe6 10 Be2 f6?! 11 Nd4 Qf7 and

now 12 Bh6!.



A nice move; after which White won the game convincingly.

Then the main game section follows which is categorized according to ECO codes. After this there are combination and endgame sections, a tournament results section, and a best of Chess Informant section that covers some of the best players from the past. This time the focus is on Robert Huebner from Germany, it includes the usual selection of games, most important theoretical novelties, combinations, endings and

statistics. Sadly, there are no examples of his legendary annotations that occasionally filled 2-3 pages with variations.

The serious player should utilize Chess Informant as a resource for training material and interesting games and, of course, all the latest and most important games by the best players in the world. Lower rated players can consider it as well. I started reading them when I was rated around 1700 and have never regretted it.

My assessment of this book & CD: 

[Order](#) *Chess Informant #92*

by Aleksandar Matanovic et al.

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