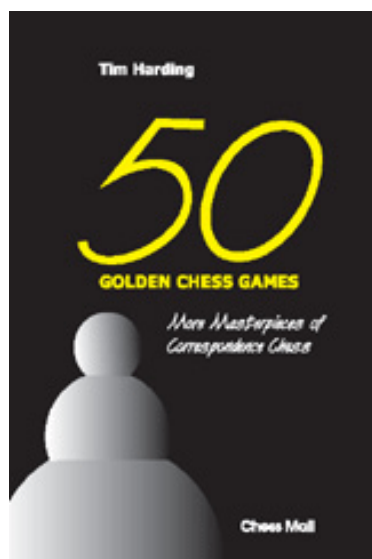




COLUMNISTS

Checkpoint

Carsten Hansen

**Reviewed this month:*****The Scandinavian***

by John Emms

***The Essential Center-Counter:
A Practical Guide for Black***

by Andrew Martin

Modernes Skandinavisch

by Matthias Wahls

***Opening for White According to Anand
1.e4 - Vol. 3***

by Alexander Khalifman

Chess Openings for Black, Explained
by Albur, Dzindzichashvili & Perelshteyn***New In Chess Yearbook Vol. 75***

by Genna Sosonko (ed.)

Scandinavians and Repertoire Books

The focus of this month's column is the Scandinavian Defense or the Center Counter as it is also called. The books by Emms and Martin were both published towards the end of last year, whereas the one by Wahls, in German, is from 1997, but it is still available and is one of the best books ever written on the subject. Next follows two repertoire books. The first is the third volume in a series of seven, written by Former Fide World Champion Khalifman, on Viswanathan Anand's repertoire as White. The current volume deals with the Scandinavian and Caro-Kann Defenses. The second repertoire book is an interesting collaboration between two veteran grandmasters, Albur and Dzindzichashvili and international master Perelshteyn, which exclusively deals with the openings for Black. Finally, I will preview the latest volume of the *New in Chess Yearbook*, which will soon be available.

The Scandinavian by John Emms, 2004 Everyman Chess, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Softcover, 176 pp., \$19.95

Back in 1997 John Emms wrote his first chess book, *The Scandinavian*, published by Chess Press and distributed by Cadogan Books, which later became Everyman Chess. Well, last year the publisher decided that it was time to update some of the books first released by Chess Press.



The material in the new edition is divided as follows:


- Preface (2 pages)
- Introduction (7 pages)
- **1 e4 d5 2 exd5 Qxd5**
- 1 The Main Line: 3 Nc3 Qa5 4 d4 Nf6 5 Nf3 c6 6 Bc5 Bf5 7 Bd2 e6 8 Qe2 (22 pages)
- 2 Main Line Alternatives: 3 Nc3 Qa5 4 d4 Nf6 5 Nf3 c6 (24 pages)
- 3 Fifth Move Alternatives: 3 Nc3 Qa5 4 d4 Nf6 (15 pages)
- 4 Fourth Move Alternatives: 3 Nc3 Qa5 (13 pages)
- 5 Second and Third Move Alternatives (22 pages)
- **1 e4 d5 2 exd5 Nf6**
- 6 The Main Line with 3 d4 Nxd5 (18 pages)
- 7 The Portugese Variation (3 d4 Bg4!?) (16 pages)
- 8 3 Bb5+ (11 pages)
- 9 The Panov-Botvinnik Attack (3 c4 c6) (11 pages)
- 10 The Icelandic Gambit (3 c4 e6) (9 pages)
- Index of Complete Games (2 pages)

This is almost identical to the first book, although the material from chapter six encompassed two chapters in the first edition. The overall length of the book has increased by 32 pages, which is not a great deal considering the recent explosion in popularity of this opening. However, Emms has always been very good at sorting through the material and avoiding unnecessary fluff that serves as filler in other books. Still, for a book that covers the entire Scandinavian complex, it seems rather slim. Even more so when you consider that chapter nine essentially only deals with the Panov-Botvinnik Variation of the Caro-Kann, which can arise through transposition: 1 e4 d5 2 exd5 Nf6 3 c4 c6 4 d4 cxd5. Arguably this important line cannot be covered in a decent fashion in a mere 11 pages.

This new edition underwent a major overhaul compared to the first one, as it should have, although some games are repeated with almost identical notes. For starters, of the 71 main games, 49 of them have been played since the release of the first edition, which is nearly 70% new material. Additionally, some games have been “promoted” to main games for this edition, so Emms really has taken a fair amount of time to reconsider the material to make it worthwhile and interesting.

In general, Emms has done a very good job allocating the pages in each chapter and providing proper coverage within the variations. There’s plenty of original material, including numerous improvements over existing theory. Yet, he browsed over the material a little too quickly in chapter 5, in the 3...Qd6 line, completely overlooking the Kurajica Variation: 4 d4 g6 as recommended by Lane in his recent *Ideas Behind Modern Chess Openings: Black*.

I sincerely suggest that anybody playing the opening, weak or strong, as Black or White, purchase this book, because there is plenty of new material not found elsewhere in print or on-line.

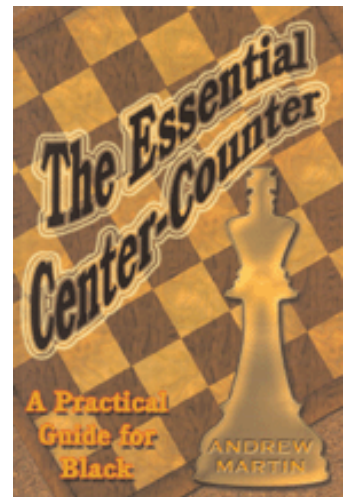
My assessment of this book: 

[Order](#) *The Scandinavian*

by John Emms

The Essential Center-Counter: A Practical Guide for Black by Andrew Martin, 2004 Thinkers' Press, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Softcover, 142 pp., \$19.50

The book was published last year and followed shortly after Martin's excellent *King's Indian Battle Plans*, which was also published by Thinkers' Press. But this is effectively where the comparison ends, because they are two widely different books. Whereas the King's Indian book was loaded with high quality and very interesting material, with broad coverage for both sides; this one is a slim volume featuring a repertoire based on 2...Qxd5 and 3...Qa5, written in a larger than normal font.




The material is divided into two parts. The first, which I found wanting at best, covers off-beat variations and transpositions such as the Blackmar-Diemer Gambit or 2 Nc3, and minor lines such as 3 Nc3 Qa5 4 b4, 4 f4, 4 g3 or 4 Nf3. It mainly seems to consist of filler material, recycled information, and ideas borrowed from other books without proper accreditation. I found several game references listed in other books, which are also included in this book, but without naming the players. This gives the impression that this was analysis done by the author, when in fact it was from an actual game played by someone else. One quick example is from chapter 4, on page 53, the note after Black's 7th move, has the variation 7...a6! 8 Bc4 e6 9 0-0 Be7 10 Re1 b5! 11 Bb3 Bb7 12 Bg5 Nbd7 with a clear advantage for Black, which was played in Thomas-du Mont, Tunbridge Wells 1912 according to Wahls book.

The second part covers the main lines as well as the more interesting sidelines involving an early 4 Bc4. It's clear that Martin actually knows what he is talking about and cares for the material to a much greater extent than in the first part of the book, because it contains many more ideas, analysis and even improvements over existing theory. This is not to say that everything is fine, because quite frequently, in the notes to one game, he quotes other games in their entirety, without giving the reader much direction as to where any mistakes were made or by whom. This is quite disappointing, because if he had done so, the book could actually have become a quite nifty repertoire book for Black.

Martin does address all the major critical points, and even differs with Khalifman about the evaluation of a line that Khalifman recommends. Khalifman claims a small advantage for White, whereas Martin says Black is fine, and he may be right because Black doesn't need to lose from that position. In fact Martin is vindicated by the game; where Black goes on to win a very interesting queen and opposite-colored bishop endgame. The full game is not given by Khalifman, but it is by Martin.

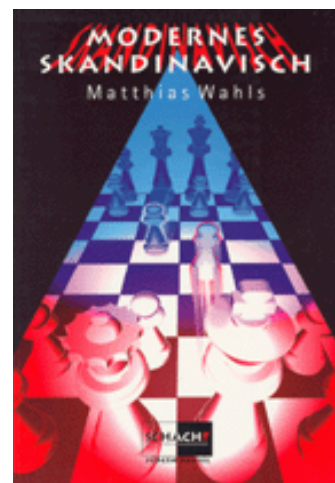
Overall, the book has its ups-and-downs. For those rated below 1900, this book will be easily accessible and user-friendly, while stronger players should definitely look elsewhere, since it simply doesn't have enough to offer.

My assessment of this book: 

**[Order](#) *The Essential Center-Counter:*
A Practical Guide for Black by Andrew Martin**

Modernes Skandinavisch by Matthias Wahls, 1997 Verlag Schach!! Juergen Daniel, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Softcover, 302 pp., \$27.95

This book is eight years old and in German, but for devotees of the Scandinavian with 2...Qxd5 and 3...Qa5, this is one book you absolutely must have. It has tons of game references, analysis, and information on minor variations that you cannot find elsewhere. In addition, the author, German grandmaster Matthias Wahls, is one of the finest connoisseurs of this opening.




You will certainly not get the full benefit from the book if you don't understand German and if you're not willing to put in the effort to interpret the text. However, with a dictionary and a little patience, you can easily pick up the most common expressions. I did this as a teenager when reading Soviet and Yugoslav chess magazines, and trust me, German is much easier than those two languages; indeed some of the words are nearly identical in English.

This book has fifty chapters! So I have divided the contents as follows:

- Chapter 1-9: Early deviations (58 pages)
- Chapter 10-16: 1 e4 d5 2 exd5 Qxd5 3 Nc3 Qa5 without 4 d4 (30 pages)
- Chapter 17-20: 4 d4 c6 5 Bc4 Bf5 6 Bd2 lines (26 pages)
- Chapter 21-29: 5 Nf3 Nf6: Lines without 6 Bc4 (37 pages)
- Chapter 30-33: 6 Bc4 Bf5: Lines without 7 Bd2 (21 pages)

- Chapter 34-37: 7 Bd2 e6: Lines without 8 Qe2 (22 pages)
- Chapter 38-42: 8 Qe2: Lines without 9 0-0-0 (42 pages)
- Chapter 43-50: 9 0-0-0 (39 pages)

This is about as good a book as you can get, yet because of the language barrier I will only give it four stars instead of five.

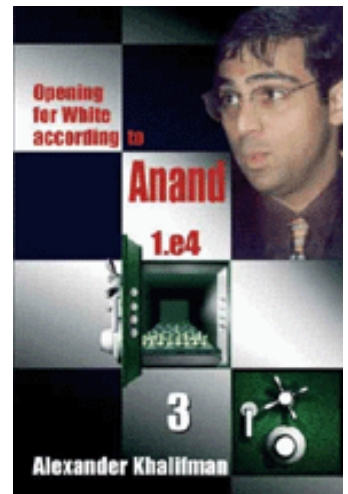
My assessment of this book: 

Order *Modernes Skandinavisch*
by Matthias Wahls

Opening for White According to Anand 1.e4 – Vol. 3 by Alexander Khalifman,
2004 Chess Stars, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Softcover, 355 pp., \$27.95

What do you do when you're writing a seven-volume opus on a subject's opening repertoire and he hasn't played against the lines you're writing about? You make it up! At least that seems to be the philosophy Khalifman uses here.

The present volume covers the Caro-Kann and the Scandinavian; two openings that have quite a bit in common when it comes to game plans and pawn structures. The problem with these openings is that Anand has changed his repertoire against the Caro-Kann a couple of times and has only played one Scandinavian game in the last decade and only five games in his entire career.



Given all this, I find it quite astounding that Khalifman has managed to produce a remarkable repertoire for White, which consistently challenges Black in the most difficult lines. It is clear that Khalifman takes his job very seriously. He has found the critical lines in all of the variations and then enhances the existing theory as it pleases him. The novelties and major improvements for White cannot easily be counted because of the sheer volume of them.

The material is divided into five parts and a total of twenty-six chapters:

- Part 1: 1 e4 c6 2 d4 (6 chapters - 84 pages)
- Part 2: Caro-Kann Defence: 1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 dxe4 4 Nxe4: Rare lines and 4...Nf6 (3 chapters - 43 pages)
- Part 3: Caro-Kann Defence: 1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 dxe4 4 Nxe4 Nd7 5 Ng5 (6 chapters - 82 pages)
- Part 4: Caro-Kann Defence: 1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 dxe4 4 Nxe4 Bf5 5 Ng3 Bg6 6 h4 h6 7 Nf3 (8 chapters - 104 pages)

- Part 5: Scandinavian Defence: 1 e4 d5 2 exd5 (3 chapters - 27 pages)

I spent a considerable amount of time trying to poke holes in the coverage, but I failed to find anything of substance, so I applaud Khalifman and his team of helpers as they have really well-researched this book. My only critique is that the English language usage could easily have been much better and good editing would have made the book even more attractive.

It has to be said that the material is quite advanced and there's not too much prose concerning explanations of strategic ideas and such. So the work is mainly aimed at the strong and/or ambitious player, but for this group there is a veritable feast of ideas waiting for you.

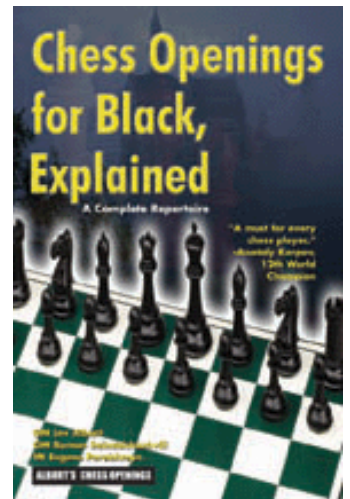
My assessment of these articles: 

Order *Opening for White According to Anand*

1.e4 - Vol. 3 by Alexander Khalifman

Chess Openings for Black, Explained by Lev Alburt, Roman Dzindzichashvili & Eugene Perelshteyn, 2005 CIRC, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Softcover, 549 pp., \$27.95

Let me start out by saying that this is a good book, at times, even a very good book, but I have my reservations, too. Lev Alburt and Roman Dzindzichashvili are both renowned grandmasters; however, I suspect that neither of these two gentlemen have done the majority of the work. The legwork, theory and game examples, more than likely fell on the shoulders of international master Eugene Perelshteyn, Dzindzichashvili's student of several years.



The book is a hefty volume of 549 pages, which is pretty massive, especially for an opening book. However, the total of 1,448 diagrams is just silly. Often they're given after nearly every move pair, with as many as six diagrams per page, which limits the amount of actual moves, analysis and text to an absolute bare minimum, thus making the book far larger than it needs to be. I have heard that visualization aids the memory, but this is taking it too far. A more conservative use of diagrams would most likely have shaved about a third of the pages from this book without hurting the presentation, and probably would have reduced the cost to the consumer.

Furthermore, the introduction is just way too long. In fact, I felt as though I had read much of it several times before. Possibly in *Pirc Alert!* or in the columns that Alburt & Lawrence used to write here at **ChessCafe**. It's not that they are

irrelevant, but why do we need to see the same stories repeatedly. We get 55 pages into the book before we actually start examining the repertoire that the book is actually about. And this brings up another point, because the title of the book suggests that it going to be a primer on all openings for Black.

The material is divided as follows:

- Part I: Introduction (3 chapters - 14 pages)
- Part II: Defending against 1.e4
 - The Accelerated (and Hyper-Accelerated) Dragon (5 chapters - 80 pages)
 - The Maroczy Bind (6 chapters - 56 pages)
 - The Anti-Sicilians (4 chapters - 47 pages)
- Part III: Defending against 1.d4
 - Nimzo-Indian Defense (9 chapters - 80 pages)
 - Bogro-Indian (3 chapters - 32 pages)
 - 1 d4 without and early c4 (7 chapters - 59 pages)
- Part IV: Defending against 1.c4 and other first moves (6 chapters - 60 pages)
- Part V: Illustrative Games (1 chapter - 49 pages)


Again, the page allocation is heavily influenced by the many diagrams. Each chapter starts with a small selection of diagrams, under the heading “Some Important Points to Look For,” which in the context of this book works very well. Then follows a relatively short theoretical presentation; you get an idea or two, they get analyzed, sometimes in depth, other times very briefly, but nearly always enough to play the line with confidence and understand the underlying ideas and how to proceed. Finally, each chapter ends with something called “Memory Markers!” and “Solutions to Memory Markers!” Occasionally these are somewhat applicable, but other times they come across as a completely irrelevant afterthought. The diagrams show positions that weren’t even discussed in the chapter, but could have been if one side made a mistake or played an alternative that wasn’t even mentioned in the notes. If this were to make any sense – at least use positions that were actually illustrated in the chapter.

Nevertheless, when it comes to the theoretical work, there is an abundance of interesting ideas and analysis that anybody playing these lines would want access to. There are more novelties and improvements over existing theory than I could count, so the reader really gets their money’s worth, and considering how expensive this book is, this is a lot. There are many ideas I’m looking forward to trying out in my own games.

This being said, the book is a bit biased towards Black, the evaluations don’t always seem to match the actual position on the board: positions that are balanced are often evaluated in the tone of “...and Black is at least equal” or “Black gets a comfortable position.” This, of course, helps get the reader more enthused about his chances, but isn’t really an accurate depiction of the situation. However, all repertoire books have an element of this.

Presentation-wise, I hope the authors will cut down on the number of diagrams and make the memory markers more relevant. Yet, I like the book and I look forward to

the next volume for White. The material should strike a cord with many readers, from those rated around 1500 up to very strong players. Even titled players will be able to take advantage of the ideas and novelties that are presented.

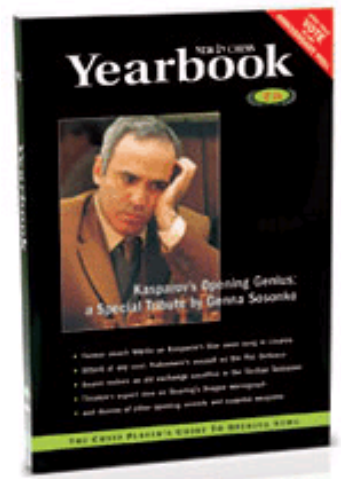
My assessment of this book: 

[Order](#) *Chess Openings for Black, Explained* by Alburt, Dzindzichashvili & Perelshteyn

New In Chess Yearbook Vol. 75 by Genna Sosonko (ed.), 2005 Interchess BV, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Softcover, 251 pp., \$25.95

If it seems like I just reviewed volume 74, it's because I did! It appeared in my July [column](#) because it arrived rather late from the distributor. To avoid a similar scenario, I received the new volume directly from the Netherlands, even before the book has reached the distributors in the US.

There are not really any changes to the format in this volume, compared with the previous ones, so it's a bit difficult to come up with anything new and interesting to say about this series of yearbooks that I have come to enjoy so much over the years.



Therefore, let's quickly review the contents:

- Opening Highlights (2 pages)
- Forum (13 pages)
- Sosonko's Corner (8 pages)
- Surveys (33 Surveys - 207 pages)
- Book Reviews by Glenn Flear (6 pages)
- Book Review by Sergei Tiviakov (2 pages)
- Contents (2 pages)
- Yearbook 75 Anniversary Poll (2 pages)
- Colophon (1 page)
- New In Code System (1 page)

It doesn't make much sense to have the contents page in the back of the book, because there's nothing in front of the book to indicate that's where it's located. I can imagine someone leafing through the entire volume, and just as they reach the end, coming across the contents pages. I hardly think will they be delighted. However, the time spent leafing through the volume will be well spent, because you may actually come across a handful of ideas to use in your own games. I know

I feel that way every time I go through it.

The anniversary poll is special for this volume; reaching #75 is quite a milestone and now they are asking the readership which survey they like the best out of 25 they have handpicked for the shortlist. To give everyone the same access to the surveys, I would suggest to the editors that they make the 25 surveys available online, so that everybody who is interested can actually participate.

The prizes of ten signed copies of *Secret of Opening Surprises Vol. 3* will be raffled between those who voted for the winning survey. This is a very good book, but if you are to spend the time going through the 25 surveys in question, evaluating which one you like the best, and then only being rewarded with a copy of a book you may likely have already... hmmm? How about five one-year subscriptions to the yearbook itself? Or perhaps give away 10 signed copies of *SOS Vol. 4* instead?

Another issue I have with the current volume is Tiviakov's review of Edward Dearing's book *Play the Sicilian Dragon*. I was deeply impressed with this book, but Tiviakov has a completely opposite opinion, mainly because he entirely misunderstands the concept behind the book, which to a large degree is a repertoire book for Black. But instead of seeing it as that, he consistently points to variations that Dearing doesn't cover. Yet these would be irrelevant to the repertoire. In his two-page review, Tiviakov manages to make one good point regarding Dearing's coverage of the so-called Chinese Variation, but otherwise just throws insults at the author, disguised attacks at the publisher, and maligns a book that contains the most original analysis and ideas since Tiviakov's own book on the Dragon, *B75-76*, was published by Sahovski Informator a decade ago. Tiviakov is arguably one of the foremost authorities on the Sicilian Dragon and therefore may know a lot more than the average fanatic about this opening, but this doesn't entitle him to write:

"I conclude that the book by E. Dearing is not the best way to learn the Dragon. For white players, it is 100% unsuitable. But even for Black players it is an inadequate guide to play the Dragon successfully. My evaluation of this book is 4 out of 10. Admittedly, the author has written a large book, which does contain some correct evaluations and advices. But if you can find out what is correct in this book and what isn't, you don't need it at all!"

What a load of garbage. One of the world's greatest experts on the opening may not need this book, but as a reviewer you should put yourself in the shoes of the people who will actually buy the book (something Glenn Flear does very well), and they will not be able to determine what is correct and what is not, so they will need this book to get the latest insights.

However, let's move on to the excellent material that makes up the rest of the volume. The Forum section is as always very interesting. Grandmaster Ruslan Scherbakov has a compelling contribution regarding the Vienna Variation in the Queen's Gambit Declined. Then Sosonko's Corner gives a tribute to Kasparov's hard work and brilliance in the opening.

As always, there are many noteworthy surveys and it is difficult to pick any one favorite, so I will mention a few that I found particularly worthwhile: Alexander Nikitin on the Meran with reference to the game Kasimdzhanov-Kasparov, Linares 2005; also Mihail Marin's survey on the Symmetrical English Double Fianchetto; and Maarten de Zeeuw on the Fried Liver (*How to Refute 5...Nd5? - Part I*). All of these are extremely interesting and well-written, but having said that another fifteen immediately jumps to mind as being at least as good.

This volume is as good as they get and it is another great effort by the NIC Yearbook team and their contributors.

My assessment of this book: 

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