



COLUMNISTS

Checkpoint

Carsten Hansen

Reviewed this month:

How to Beat 1 d4

by James Rizzitano

Play 1 e4 e5!

by Nigel Davies

Starting Out: The Sicilian Dragon

by Andrew Martin

The Ruy Lopez Explained

by Gary Lane



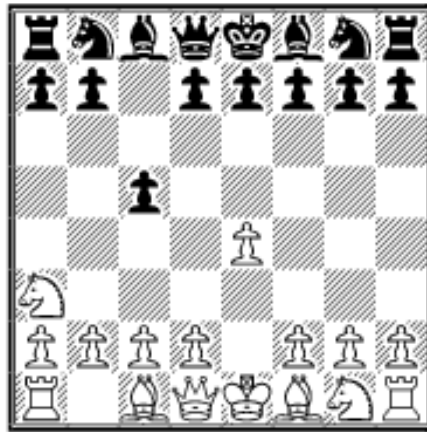
New Ideas for the New Year

Happy New Year to all! I hope you have enjoyed the reviews during the past year and will continue to do so in the future. We all have different ways of finding opening ideas, but Russian grandmaster Zvjaginsev should inspire everyone with his unorthodox answer to the Sicilian Defense. He played 1 e4 c5 2 Na3!? three times in the recently completed Russian Championship Superfinal and scored 2/3, even beating former FIDE World Champion Khalifman in the second round. Let's take a brief look at the action:

Zvjaginsev-Khalifman

Russian Ch (Moscow) 2005

1 e4 c5 2 Na3



2...Nc6

In the seventh round, Dreev tried 2...e6 with play similar to the French Defense: 3 c3 d5 4 e5 Nc6 5 Nf3 Bd7 6 g3 a6 7 Nc2 Rc8 8 Bg2 Qc7 9 Qe2 c4 10 0-0 Bc5 11 Nce1 Na5 12 d4 cxd3 13 Nxd3 Bb6 14 Nd4 Ne7 15 Bg5 Ng6 16 h4 h6 17 Bc1 Ne7 with chances for both sides, but Black doesn't have much to fear (½-½ in 55 moves).

3 Bb5 Qc7?!

Somebody as theoretically well-founded as Khalifman should know that in the Rossolimo Sicilian (1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5) 3...Qc7 is considered a loss of time, and in some lines White may even develop his knight to a3. In the ninth round, Motylev tried: 3...g6 4 Bxc6 bxc6 5 d3 Bg7 6 f4 (this is quite similar to 1 e4 c5 2 Nc3 Nc6 3 Bb5 g6?! 4 Bxc6 bxc6 5 f4, which is quite pleasant for White, but the knight isn't doing as well on a3) 6...d5 7 e5 f6 8 Qe2 fxe5 9 fxe5 Nh6 10 Nf3 Bg4 11 0-0 0-0 12 c3 Qc7 with a good game for Black (½-½ in 35 moves).

4 Nf3 g6 5 c3 a6?!

Black loses another tempo and gets himself into trouble.

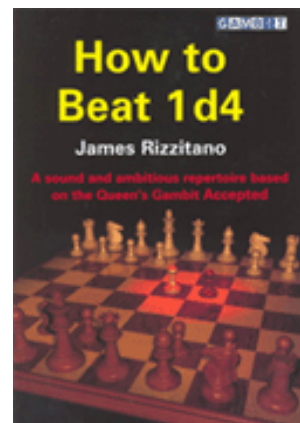
6 Bxc6 Qxc6 7 0-0 Bg7 8 d4 d6 9 d5 Qc7 10 h3?!

This prevents ...Bg4, but the tempo could have been used to punish Black's careless opening play. A more direct continuation is 10 Bf4 and if 10...Bg4 then 11 Re1 leaves Black with some problems. For example, 11...Nf6 is met by 12 e5. In fact, my computer prefers to prevent 12 e5 altogether via 11...f6, but this isn't exactly easy on the eye either. In the game continuation, White still has some initiative, but Black isn't far from equality.

10...Nf6 11 Bf4 0-0 12 Re1 b5 13 Qd2 Bb7 14 Rad1 Rfe8 15 c4 Qb6 16 Bh6 Bh8 17 b3 (17 e5!?) 17...e6 18 Ng5 exd5 19 cxd5 Re7 (now Black is doing quite well) **20 Re3 Rae8 21 Rde1 a5 22 Nb1 b4 23 Qc2 Nd7 24 Nd2 Ba6 25 Ngf3 Ne5 26 Bg5 Nxf3+ 27 Nxf3 Rd7 (27...f6!?) 28 e5** (White nearly always tries to accomplish this breakthrough in Benoni-like positions) **28...dxe5 29 Nxe5 Rxd5 30 Nxf7 Rxe3 31 Rxe3** (the last phase of the game bears evidence of mutual time trouble: 31 Nh6+ Kg7 32 Bxe3 looks better) **31...Kxf7 (31...Bf6!) 32 Re7+ Kf8 33 Qe4 Rd1+?? (33...Qd6 limits White's advantage; now, however, it's game over) 34 Kh2 Qd6+ 35 f4 Bf6 36 Bh6+ Kg8 37 Qa8+ 1-0.**

How to Beat 1 d4 by James Rizzitano, Gambit Publications 2005, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Softcover, 160 pp., \$27.50

As the title suggests, Rizzitano presents a repertoire for Black against 1 d4. This is structured around the Queen's Gambit Accepted, which shouldn't frighten White too much, nor make him feel that he's on the verge of defeat. However, Rizzitano's point is that you first have to neutralize White's initiative in order to win as Black. So the QGA is a very reasonable choice because, as Rizzitano indicates, it's very unlikely to be refuted and it offers the second player enough scope to grab the initiative if White plays inaccurately.



Rizzitano divides the material as follows:

- Introduction (4 pages)
- **Part 1: Queen's Gambit Accepted**
- 11 chapters - 92 pages [CH: it would be too tedious to itemize all the sub-lines of the Queen's Gambit Accepted here]
- **Part 2: Queen's Pawn Games (White play without c4)**
- 12 Hodgson Attack: 1 d4 d5 2 Bg5 (9 pages)
- 13 Veresov Opening: 1 d4 d5 2 Nc3 Nf6 3 Bg5 (13 pages)
- 14 London System: 1 d4 d5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 Bf4 (7 pages)
- 15 King's Fianchetto: 1 d4 d5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 g3 (4 pages)
- 16 Torre Attack: 1 d4 d5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 Bg5 (5 pages)
- 17 Colle System: 1 d4 d5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 e3 (11 pages)
- 18 Stonewall Attack: 1 d4 d5 2 e3 Nf6 3 Bd3 (3 pages)
- 19 Blackmar-Diemer Gambit: 1d4 d5 2 e4 (3 pages)
- Index of Variations (3 pages)


The introduction ends with a comment that should make anybody with an interest in the opening curious to learn more. Rizzitano writes:

I have spent the past year writing this book during the evening hours, and I want the reader to know that I have independently analysed every position in the book, and I have not quoted any author's analysis without independently verifying the variations on a board with my own eyes and with various chess engines.

Having read the book, I'm utterly blown away by the amount of original material that has been included. Improvements over existing theory, independent suggestions, and tons of original analysis abound. Furthermore, Rizzitano carefully explores the evaluations offered by other authors to see if they hold water and I was rendered speechless by his discoveries in the so-called lesser variations. This is how strong

players prepare their openings, but it is an approach that is rarely seen in opening books these days. If Rizzitano's method became the norm for all authors, the number of books would go down dramatically and we would see an alarming improvement in quality.

This is easily one of the best opening books written in 2005. However, it's fairly advanced and only those rated 1700 or higher will truly reap the benefits from it. If you have any interest in this repertoire, as Black or White, then you should buy this book, it is excellent.

My assessment of this book: 

Order *How to Beat 1 d4*

by James Rizzitano

Play 1 e4 e5! by Nigel Davies, Everyman Chess 2005, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Softcover, 192 pp., \$23.95

With the constant supply of fresh ideas and new repertoire books, one can easily argue that the time is due for a new book based on 1 e4 e5. This classical system is rather unpopular in such books, mainly because it requires too much effort from the authors to put together a reliable repertoire against so many different main systems from White: the Ruy Lopez, the Italian Game, the Scotch Game, the Four Knights, the King's Gambit, the Vienna Game, the Bishop's Opening, and many others. Fortunately for us, Nigel Davies usually doesn't shy away from difficult tasks.



Let's see how he has divided the material:

- Bibliography (1 page)
- Introduction (2 pages)
- 1 Ruy Lopez Keres Variation: 12 Nbd2 (20 pages)
- 2 Ruy Lopez Keres Variation: 12 Others (16 pages)
- 3 Ruy Lopez: Ninth Move Alternatives (23 pages)
- 4 Ruy Lopez: Fifth and Sixth Move Alternatives (24 pages)
- 5 Ruy Lopez Exchange Variation (19 pages)
- 6 Two Knights Defence (23 pages)
- 7 The Scotch Game (24 pages)
- 8 1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6: Third Move Alternatives (13 pages)
- 9 1 e4 e5: Second Move Alternatives (22 pages)

The focus on the Ruy Lopez (102 of the overall 192 pages) seems a bit unbalanced based on what the average player is likely to face, because lower rated players are more likely to worry about moves that are not considered as serious chess amongst stronger players. However, Davies is a good coach and is, of course, aware of such objections. In the introduction he writes:

1...e5 is arguably the simplest and most logical reply to 1 e4, taking space in the centre and opening diagonals for the queen and bishop. It has been played by every world champion in the history of the game, and many of them played nothing else. Yet despite this great pedigree, many players, especially at club level, are simply afraid to play it? Why? Because of the ocean of possibilities. Besides various forms of the Ruy Lopez there are a number of other major openings, not to mention a bunch of dangerous gambits.

This was my thinking for many years. I occasionally played 1...e5 but, with a view to 'avoiding' sharp theoretical lines, I usually played the Pirc or Modern Defence. The turning point came when former Soviet Champion Lev Psakhis once explained to me that an extensive grounding in the Ruy Lopez was essential if you want to develop your game. He added that in Russia it was said that the one failing of Lev Polugaevsky was that he never received this education. From that moment I resolved to start playing more games with 1 e4 e5 and to phase out the Modern Defence, with which my results against strong players were lacklustre. My results with Black against 1 e4 improved and within two years I gained the Grandmaster title. I attribute much of this achievement to Psakhis' advice and my belated education in the classics.

Davies then presents a repertoire for Black based on his own games with 1 e4 e5. His main choice is the Keres Variation of the Chigorin which arises after 1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Ba4 Nf6 5 0-0 Be7 6 Re1 b5 7 Bb3 0-0 8 c3 d6 9 h3 Na5 10 Bc2 c5 (the Chigorin) 11 d4 Nd7 (the Keres Variation). Despite the relative briefness of coverage in some of the minor lines, Davies does a very good job of tying all the variations together to make them similar in style and approach with the recommended repertoire. Readers wishing to learn more can refer to Tim Harding's recent [Kibitzer](#) column.

This is the game that got Davies started with 1 e4 e5:

M.Kaminski-N.Davies

Liechtenstein 1993

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Ba4 Nf6 5 0-0 Be7 6 Qe2 b5 7 Bb3 0-0 8 c3 d6 9 Rd1 Na5 10 Bc2 c5 11 d4 Qc7 12 dxe5 dxe5 13 Nbd2 Rd8 14 Nf1 Rxd1 15 Bxd1 Bb7 16 Bc2 c4 17 Ng3 g6

18 Bg5 Nc6 19 Nd2 Nh5 20 Bxe7 Nf4 21 Qf3 Nxe7 22 Ne2 Rd8
23 Qe3 Nxe2! 24 Kxg2 Nf5 25 Qg5 h6 26 Qf6 Rxd2 0-1

This book is mostly for experienced players who can memorize some variations and who don't need everything explained because it focuses more on the theoretical presentation than it does on the basic strategic elements. The material is well-selected, well-annotated and Davies has injected a lot of his own ideas and analysis to the presentation.

My assessment of this book: 

[Order](#) *Play 1 e4 e5!*

by Nigel Davies

Starting Out: The Sicilian Dragon by Andrew Martin, Everyman Chess 2005, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Softcover, 208 pp., \$21.95

I have the greatest admiration for those authors who take on the unenviable task of writing about the Dragon or Accelerated Dragon because it is such a monumental undertaking. The present book is an attempt to introduce less-experienced players to the Sicilian Dragon, which is much easier said than done. In fact, Andrew Martin even jokes about it in the introduction to the Yugoslav Attack (1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 g6 6 Be3 Bg7 7 f3):



*Ha ha, Starting Out: The Yugoslav Attack!
The best chess joke of the year as it's an almost impossible brief and Byron Jacobs [CH: the commissioning editor for Everyman Chess] knows it. If one is 'starting out' this is the last place to begin because one cannot condense the most heavily analysed of chess opening variations into a few pages.*

Yet the same can be said for much of the Dragon Variation as a whole because the theory is so extensive no matter which variation you choose. Let's see how Martin has divided the material:


- Bibliography (1 page)
- Introduction (21 pages)
- 1 The Yugoslav Attack: Introduction (32 pages)
- 2 The Yugoslav Attack: 9 0-0-0 and 9 g4 (30 pages)
- 3 The Yugoslav Attack: 9 Bc4 (31 pages)

- 4 The Yugoslav Attack: Main Line and Soltis Variation (24 pages)
- 5 The Classical Variation (15 pages)
- 6 The Modern 6 Bc4 (15 pages)
- 7 The Levenfish Attack (14 pages)
- 8 Other Tries for White (16 pages)
- Index of Variations (4 pages)
- Index of Complete Games (2 pages)

The danger when dealing with such a massive opening within a limited amount of space is that you focus on the wrong things to the detriment of the main objective. Knowing this opening as well as I do, it's easy to criticize the distribution of the material. Given the large task at hand, I wouldn't have allocated so many pages to the general introduction. After all, the book itself is meant as an introduction to the opening. A further indictment is the treatment of the Levenfish Attack which is a relatively rare guest in tournament play, but it is given an undue amount of coverage compared to other lines. Moreover, the chapter on the Levenfish Attack only briefly mentions the two main moves 6...Nc6 and 6...Nbd7, while discussing the dubious 6...Qa5 and the minor move 6...Bg7.

Andrew Martin is a popular author, but his books sometimes lack thoroughness. He tends to spend a little too much time on the fun sidelines rather than where his attention should be focused. This is evident throughout this book. For instance, in chapter 6, he discusses lines where Black plays ...Bd7, ...Qa5 and ...Rac8 (amongst other things), without discussing *any* of the main lines. It's downright disappointing to see an author skate over the material without even mentioning 11 Re1 (after 1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 g6 6 Bc4 Bg7 7 Be3 Nc6 8 0-0 0-0 9 Bb3 Bd7 10 h3 Qa5). And after 11 f4, he only mentions the somewhat dubious 11...Rac8, when there are two better moves available: 11...Qh5 and 11...Nxd4. Then after 11 f4 Rac8 12 Qf3, he gives 12...a6 an exclamation point, despite the fact that 12...Qh5 is Black's best move.

On the plus side, the majority of the games were played within the last five years or so, the games are instructive and the annotations are sufficient to whet one's appetite for the opening. This book has its high moments, but it falls short in too many departments.

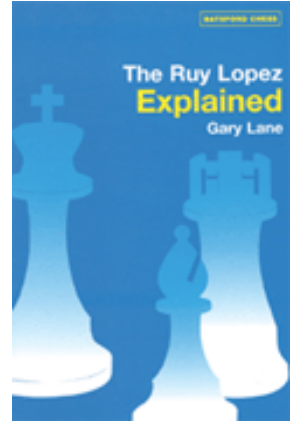
My assessment of this book: 

[Order](#) *Starting Out: The Sicilian Dragon*

by Andrew Martin

The Ruy Lopez Explained by Gary Lane, Batsford B.T. 2005, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Softcover, 160 pp., \$21.95

The Ruy Lopez or the Spanish Game is one of the oldest of chess openings. It arises after 1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 and it offers such a variety of possibilities for both sides that just playing the opening will expand your understanding of chess tremendously. Another benefit of playing it as White is that few lower-rated players are prepared to face it and therefore they can rather effortlessly get themselves into a fair amount of trouble. The main problem white players' face is the fact that Black has an almost endless amount of choices in variations. Still, the opening is relatively easy to learn and therefore easy to reap benefit from.



The material is divided as follows:

- Introduction (4 pages)
- Rare Third Moves (21 pages)
- Berlin Defence (17 pages)
- Classical Variation (15 pages)
- Schliemann Variation (16 pages)
- Deferred Steinitz and Other Fourth Moves (13 pages)
- Open Lopez (16 pages)
- Worrall Attack (13 pages)
- Möller Variation (9 pages)
- Arkangel Variation (8 pages)
- Marshall Attack (8 pages)
- 9 d4 (12 pages)
- Index of Variations (3 pages)
- Index of Games (1 page)

Of course, these are not all the possible lines of the Ruy Lopez, but that's because this is a repertoire book for White, and as such Lane does an admirable job of providing White with enough fire-power without being overly complicated. He seems all too aware that you cannot reasonably expect to obtain an advantage against all of Black's counters and shows that positional grinds are possible as long as White understands the positions that arise and knows what kinds of plans are needed to achieve success.

Lane sometimes has a tendency to present spectacular one sided wins, which can skew the picture of what usually occurs in a particular opening, but he avoids that here. I found the presentation to be balanced between short wins and longer positional battles. Furthermore, the games are all decently annotated to help White comprehend the opening and provide what is needed to succeed. This book should provide plenty of

inspiration and new ideas for the new year.

My assessment of this book: 

[Order](#) *The Ruy Lopez Explained*
by Gary Lane

 [TOP OF PAGE](#)

 [HOME](#)

 [COLUMNS](#)

 [LINKS](#)

 [ARCHIVES](#)

 [ABOUT THE
CHESS CAFE](#)

[\[ChessCafe Home Page\]](#) [\[Book Review\]](#) [\[Columnists\]](#)

[\[Endgame Study\]](#) [\[Skittles Room\]](#) [\[Archives\]](#)

[\[Links\]](#) [\[Online Bookstore\]](#) [\[About ChessCafe.com\]](#) [\[Contact Us\]](#)

Copyright 2006 CyberCafes, LLC. All Rights Reserved.

"**The Chess Cafe®**" is a registered trademark of Russell Enterprises, Inc.