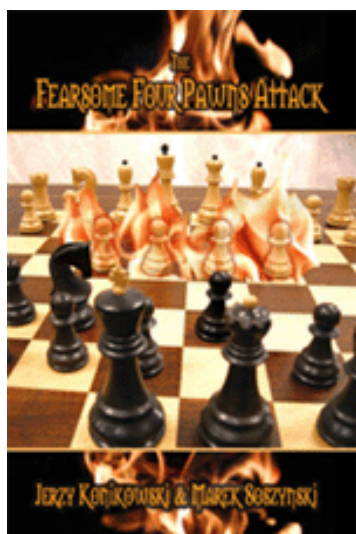




COLUMNISTS

Checkpoint

Carsten Hansen



Rating Chart

❖ – A poor book.

❖❖ – Not very good.

Reviewed this month:

Starting Out: Sicilian Najdorf
by Richard Palliser

Starting Out: Closed Sicilian
by Richard Palliser

Leningrad System: A Complete Weapon against 1 d4
by Stefan Kindermann

Dutch A80-A85 (CD-ROM)
by Boris Schipkov

Sicilians and the Dutch

With record-high temperatures around the U.S. and Europe, I can think of nothing better than to sit inside a cool, air-conditioned room and look at new chess books. This time around, we'll investigate two excellent guides on the Sicilian Defense and two releases on the Dutch. Of the latter, one is a modern classic, while the other is the third in a series of rather underwhelming CD-ROMs.

Starting Out: Sicilian Najdorf by Richard Palliser, Everyman Chess 2006, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Softcover, 240 pp., \$21.95

Generally speaking, "Starting Out" and "Sicilian Najdorf" are not exactly words that one envisions in the same title, because anyone who is just starting out should not dive into the vast ocean of theory that is the Najdorf. For beginners, the time invested in studying even minor lines can be more productively used solving tactical puzzles and basic endgame technique.

That being said, there certainly is a market for such a book, as the Najdorf is one of the most



 – **A useful book.**

 – **A good book.**

 – **An excellent book.**

popular lines in the Sicilian. In fact, nearly every sub-line of the Najdorf has had a book written about it. The young English International Master Richard Palliser is a reliable and very thorough author, but even he had to take some shortcuts to make the material fit into the confines of the book. He does this by focusing on the Najdorf proper, where Black plays ...e7-e5 in many cases, and eliminates setups that can arise from the Scheveningen. And even then, there is still almost infinitely too much material to fit into this book; indeed, it is the largest in the *Starting Out* series.

Let's see how he has divided the material:

- Bibliography and Acknowledgements (1 page)
- Introduction (4 pages)
- 1 The Positional 6 Be2 (36 pages)
- 2 The English Attack with 6...e5 (38 pages)
- 3 The English Attack with 6...Ng4 (33 pages)
- 4 Fischer's 6 Bc4 (36 pages)
- 5 6 Bg5: Black Prevents e5 (31 pages)
- 6 6 Bg5: Black Allows e5 (20 pages)
- 7 The Tricky 6 f4 and 6 g3 (30 pages)
- Index of Variations (6 pages)
- Index of Complete Games (2 pages)

Thankfully, Palliser doesn't waste too much space on the introduction. He mainly provides some of the history behind the variation and discusses his approach to covering the opening. Each chapter is divided into several smaller subsections to make the material more accessible and understandable. For example, here's a look at chapter one:

Introduction – Palliser covers the first few moves, possible pitfalls, and explains some basic ideas.

The Karpov Approach – Why does White now seek other positional paths?; Theoretical?; Statistics; Illustrative Games.

An Early Bg5 – Theoretical?; Statistics; Illustrative Games.

White Plays f4 – Why is this the most accurate way to play f4?; Why has 10 f4 declined in popularity?; Theoretical?; Statistics; Illustrative Games.


The Subtle 9 Kh1 – How does 9 Kh1 help White?; Can Black be equally subtle in reply?; Theoretical?; Statistics; Illustrative Games.

Points to Remember – A review of the critical information.

Palliser explains everything exceedingly well and mostly keeps things at a level that the book's target audience can follow. He also makes good use of the "Theoretical?" and "Statistics" sections. There are, of course, differences in how much theoretical memorization is needed for the various chapters. In some lines, a good understanding of basic principles will take you far, while in others, such as the Poisoned Pawn (6 Bg5 e6 7

f4 Qb6!?), memorization is a must, as one wrong move can cost you the game in the blink of an eye. Finally, the illustrative games are well-chosen, well-annotated and support the overall presentation perfectly.

This book is primarily written from Black's perspective, but it does have a good balance in the presentation. Those who are looking to learn about the Sicilian in general will gain plenty of new knowledge. It is a pleasure to recommend this book to those who want to get further acquainted with this opening.

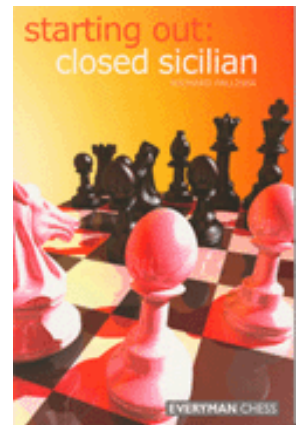
My assessment of this book: 

Order *Starting Out: Sicilian Najdorf*

by Richard Palliser

Starting Out: Closed Sicilian by Richard Palliser, Everyman Chess 2006, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Softcover, 208 pp., \$21.95

The Closed Sicilian, 1 e4 c5 2 Nc3 followed by 3 g3, has never been as popular as the Dragon, Najdorf or Sveshnikov. Over the years the biggest names who have played it sporadically are Smyslov, Spassky and Karpov. Of today's top players, only Adams and Short have used it with some regularity. Nevertheless, it is often featured in repertoire books aimed at lower-rated players because it is a relatively easy opening to understand. Plus, few players on the black side understand the opening particularly well, so White has good prospects of achieving a better position straight out of the opening.



In this new book from Everyman Chess, Richard Palliser aims to present all the basic ideas and plans, along with the reasoning behind them, while also providing a solid foundation of theory that allows the reader to immediately take up the opening.

The material is divided as follows:

- Bibliography and Acknowledgements
- Introduction (15 pages)
- 1 Spassky's 6 f4: The Main Line with 6...e6 (46 pages)
- 2 Spassky's 6 f4: Black's Other Defences (31 pages)
- 3 The Fashionable 6 Be3: 6...e6 and 6...e5 (29 pages)
- 4 The Fashionable 6 Be3: Black's Alternative Set-Ups (17 pages)

- 5 The Tricky 6 Nge2 and 6 Nh3 (22 pages)
- 6 Early Black Deviations (18 pages)
- 7 Crafty Move-orders: 2 d3 & 2 g3 (19 pages)
- Index of Variations (5 pages)
- Index of Complete Games (2 pages)

As the Closed Sicilian demands a good understanding of the general plans, it makes perfect sense to have a lengthy introduction of the overall ideas, as they are repeatedly seen in various lines throughout the book. Let's look at a game from the introduction, with Palliser's notes:

Nigel Short - Hannes Stefansson

5th match game, Reykjavik 2002

1 e4 c5 2 Nc3 Nc6 3 g3 g6 4 Bg2 Bg7 5 d3 d6 6 Be3 Bd7!?

A rare move, with 6...Rb8 being a much more common way to support ...b5. Short realizes that the bishop isn't so well placed on d7, from where it prevents Stefansson from later rerouting his f6-knight, and decides to transpose to an f4 set-up.

7 f4 b5 8 a3!

White doesn't want to accelerate Black's queenside counterplay by allowing the b-file to be opened with an inopportune capture on b5. Instead Short wisely wants to hold Black up on the queenside as 8...a5 can now be met with 9 Nxb5! Rb8 10 a4, keeping lines closed.

8...Nf6 9 Nf3 0-0 10 h3 Rb8 11 0-0 a5 12 g4

Deciding to press ahead on the kingside, although White could also have first continued to hold Black up on the queenside with 12 a4!?. After 12...b4 13 Nb5 Ne8 14 Rb1 Nc7 15 c4 (Short)

White has successfully achieved his aim and stands slightly better.

NOTE: Black must always be careful should he try and play for any tactics down the long diagonal. Instead of 13...Ne8, the greedy 13...Nh5? fails simply to 14 g4 when 14...Ng3 15 Re1 traps the errant knight.

12...Ne8?!

Bringing the knight to d4 is both time consuming and still leaves Black vulnerable on the kingside. Thus an immediate 12...b4 was a better try, although Stefansson may well have been worried in any case by one dangerous attacking plan in Qe1-h4, f5, Bh6 and Ng5; an idea more commonly seen these days in the Grand Prix Attack.

13 Rb1 b4 14 axb4 axb4 15 Ne2 Nc7 16 f5!

WARNING: This is a key attacking advance, but White should beware employing it when Black can sink a knight into e5 in return. From there a black knight both defends and counterattacks effectively, but here Black's king's knight has landed up on c7, not d7.

16...Nb5 17 Qd2 Nbd4

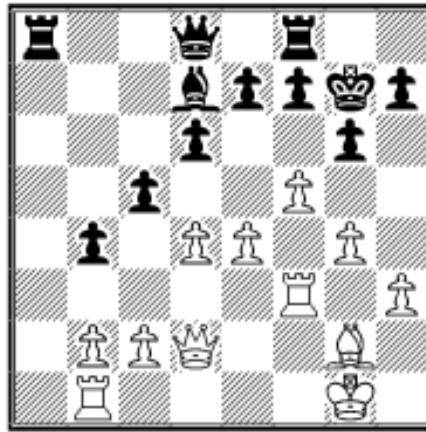
The knight has finally reached d4, but Short can simply exchange

it off and then continue on the kingside.

18 Nexd4 Nxd4 19 Bh6 Nxf3+ 20 Rxf3 Ra8?!

Continuing to underestimate the kingside danger, although even after the superior 20...Qb6 (Donev) White can simply increase the pressure with 21 Bxg7 Kxg7 22 Rbf1 when Black must grovel with 22...f6.

21 Bxg7 Kxg7 22 d4!



White's main focus might be on the kingside, but he is still happy to seize central space when the opportunity arises as an exchange on d4 would drop the b4-pawn.

22...Qb6?! 23 e5!

TIP: When the dark squares around the black king are rather vulnerable, White should look for a way to exploit them, such as by

ramming a pawn up to f6.

23...dxe5

Black has to try to prevent White's direct but rather strong plan as after 23...cxd4 24 f6+ exf6 25 exf6+ Kh8, there is the aesthetic 26 Qb6 Rg8 27 g5! when 27...d3+ 28 Kh2 dxc2 can still be met by 29 Rf4!! (Donev) and even 29...Qf2!? 30 Rf1! fails to save the day.

24 dxe5 Bc6? 25 f6+ exf6 26 Rxf6!

Quite possibly Stefansson had forgotten all about this option after which f7 becomes rather vulnerable, whereas 26 exf6+ Kh8 27 Qh6 Rg8 28 Rf4?! c4+ (Lane) would have given Black excellent counterplay.

26...c4+ 27 Kh2 Rac8 28 Rbf1 Qc5 29 Qf4 Be8

Ugly, but there wasn't anything better with 29...Bxg2 failing to Short's intended 30 Rxf7+ Rxf7 31 Qxf7+ Kh8 32 Qf6+ Kg8 33 Qe6+ Kh8 34 Rf7 when Black cannot cover f6.

30 h4!

There was nothing wrong with 30 e6, but this is even stronger as Black isn't going anywhere in a hurry. Short now decisively brings his h-pawn into the attack before returning to the e6-advance.

30...Rd8 31 h5 Rd4 32 h6+ Kg8 33 Qe3 Rd5

Even the exchange of queens isn't going to save Black as Short finishes in style.

34 Qxc5 Rxc5 35 e6 Re5 36 Bd5! Rxd5 37 e7

White hasn't forced this through just to win the exchange, but 37...Rg5 would also have failed to save Black after 38 Kg3! and 39 Kh4.

37...Re5 38 Rxc6+! 1-0

A beautiful coup de grace as 38...hxg6 39 h7+ forces one of the pawns home.

The chapters are well-written, insightful and thorough. Palliser points out subtleties from both sides of the board, making this one of the very best works ever written on the Closed Sicilian. While it is intended for so-called improving players, even strong players will be able to benefit from this fine piece of work.

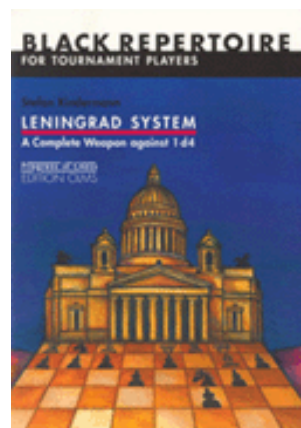
My assessment of this book: 

[Order](#) *Starting Out: Closed Sicilian*

by Richard Palliser

Leningrad System: A Complete Weapon against 1 d4 by Stefan Kindermann, Edition Olms 2005, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Softcover, 208 pp., \$35.00

This is an updated, English-language edition, of the 2002 German book *Leningrader System*, which I reviewed in [February 2005](#). I liked the German edition very much, but the English edition is even better, since the material has been updated and new content has been added.



In the last couple of years, there has been a revival of interest in the Dutch Defense, particularly the Leningrad Dutch, which became tremendously popular because of the efforts of such players as Malaniuk. It has even surpassed the Modern Stonewall, mainly because it is more dynamic and contains more ways for Black to play the opening.

Let's see how the material is divided:

- **Part 1: History and Introduction** (6 pages)
- Foreword to the English edition (1 page)
- Foreword to the German edition (2 pages)
- **Part 2: Typical themes and ideas**
- Black themes (10 pages)
- White themes (6 pages)
- **Part 3: Illustrative Games**
- 3.1 Main line 7 Nc3 Qe8 8 d5 a5 (21 pages)
- 3.2 Alternative main line 8 d5 Na6 (7 pages)
- 3.3 Alternatives at move 8 for White (27 pages)

- 3.4 Various systems with b3 (15 pages)
- 3.5 White systems with Nbd2 followed by e4 and/or c3 and b4 (4 pages)
- 3.6 White systems with an early b4 (4 pages)
- 3.7 Karlsbad variation (13 pages)
- 3.8 System with 4 c3 and 5 Qb3 (6 pages)
- 3.9 Leningrad Stonewall after 4 c3 (4 pages)
- 3.10 The move order 1 d4, 2 c4, 3 Nc3 (4 pages)
- 3.11 System with 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 Bg5 or 3 Bf4 (6 pages)
- 3.12 System with 2 Nc3 (10 pages)
- 3.13 System with 2 Bg5 (10 pages)
- 3.14 Staunton Gambit 2 e4 (9 pages)
- 3.15 Rare Continuations for White at move 2 (5 pages)
- 3.16 Countering flank opening: tips and suggestions (12 pages)
- **Part 4: Appendix** (Bibliography, Indexes of symbols, players, games and variations - 19 pages)

Part 2 is useful, but it could have been executed significantly better. Mostly it is a collection of diagrams, each with a caption and a few moves following it, but very little in regards to explanations.

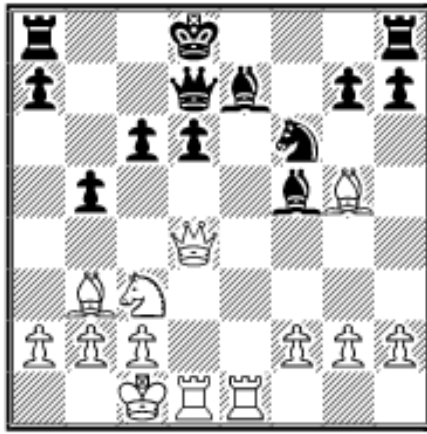
In Part 3, the presentation is based around a number of main games, with plenty of theory and analysis, explanatory prose, diagrams and more. Some of the supplementary game fragments could use more evaluations and punctuations, and occasionally Kindermann quotes more of the game than is strictly necessary, but there are enough new ideas and insights to satisfy the reader.

Although this book is mainly aimed at Black, Kindermann has included a couple of recommendations for White. In the main lines, he recommends 1 d4 f5 2 c4 Nf6 3 g3 g6 4 Bg2 Bg7 5 Nf3 Nf6 6 0-0 0-0 7 Nc3 Qe8 8 Re1!?, and as a side-line, he has chosen 1 Nf3 f5 2 d3!?, which gained some popularity after Magnus Carlsen of Norway crushed former world championship candidate Sergey Dolmatov with it in 2004:

Magnus Carlsen (2484) - Sergey Dolmatov (2591)


Aeroflot Open Moscow 2004

1 Nf3 f5 2 d3 d6 3 e4 e5 4 Nc3 Nc6 5 exf5 Bxf5 6 d4 Nxd4 7 Nxd4 exd4 8 Qxd4 Nf6 9 Bc4! c6 10 Bg5 b5 11 Bb3 Be7 12 0-0-0 Qd7 13 Rhe1 Kd8



14 Rxe7! Qxe7 15 Qf4 Bd7 16 Ne4!
d5 17 Nxf6 h6 18 Bh4 g5 19 Qd4!
1-0

If you play the Leningrad Dutch, then you should buy this book. It is a very solid and thorough work that will stand the test of time, and the explanatory prose will increase your general understanding of chess in the process.

My assessment of this book: 

Order *Leningrad System: A Complete Weapon against 1 d4* by Stefan Kindermann

Dutch A80-A85 (CD-ROM) by Boris Schipkov, ChessBase 2005, Figurine Algebraic Notation, CD-ROM, \$29.95

This CD is the third and last in a series by International Master Boris Schipkov on the Dutch Defense. I reviewed the first in [April 2003](#) and the second in [May 2005](#). I wasn't particularly fond of either, but, as they say, the third time's a charm.



Let's see how the material is divided:

- 01. Dutch Defence A80-A85 — General Introduction
- 02. Basic Strategic Ideas
- 03. Variations 2.Bf4 and 2.Qd3
- 04. Variations 2.g4 and 2.h3
- 05. Line 2.Bg5
- 06. Line 2.Nc3
- 07. Line 2.Nf3
- 08. Line 2.g3
- 09. Line 2.g3 Nf6 3.Bg2 g6
- 10. Staunton Gambit 2.e4
- 11. Staunton Gambit 2...fxe4 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bg5
- 12. Various Lines after 2.c4
- 13. Rubinstein Variation 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3
- 14. Rubinstein Variation 3...d5 4.Nf3 c6
- 15. Various Lines after 2.c4 Nf6
- 16. Line 2.c4 Nf6 3.Nc3

- 17. Line 2.c4 Nf6 3.Nc3 g6
- 18. Line 2.c4 Nf6 3.Nc3 e6
- 19. Stonewall 2.c4 Nf6 3.Nc3 e6 4.Nf3 d5
- 20. Dutch Defence A80-A85 – Conclusion

In the first couple of chapters, Schipkov has made sure that almost every game linked within a text file has some sort of annotation. The vast majority of the annotations are his own, although occasionally other contributors from *ChessBase Magazine* can be found. The annotations generally provide evaluations, analysis and suggested improvements, which indicates that the author has taken a fair amount of time to work through all of these games.

However, this is inconsistent from chapter to chapter. In later chapters, fewer games have annotations, which is quite disappointing after the excellent beginning. These chapters offer just enough to let you understand the fundamentals of each line, but a little extra effort would have taken the overall product a long way.

In all, the CD-ROM contains 37,553 games, of which 370 have been annotated by the author, and more than 1,100 have some sort of comments. So, let's see a game played and annotated by the author, just as it appears on the CD-ROM, in both English and German.

Schipkov,Boris (2345) - Abel,Lajos (2310) [A84]

Kecskemet Kecskemet, 1993

[Schipkov,B]

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 f5 4 Bf4!

A logical and good move. Ein logischer und starker Zug.

4...Nf6 5 e3 c6 6 Bd3

White does not fear to lose a tempo after dxc4 ♗xc4 because in this case he gets a nice pressure on the weak e6-pawn. Weiß hat keine Angst, nach dxc4 ♗xc4 ein Tempo zu verlieren, denn in diesem Fall erhält er einen starken Druck gegen den schwachen Bauern e6.

6...Be7 7 h3

[7 Qc2! ?]

7...0-0 8 Qc2

[8 g4 dxc4 9 Bxc4 Nd5 10 Nge2 fxg4?! (10 ..Nd7+=) 11 hxg4 Bg5 12 Qd3 g6 13 Bg3± 1-0 Kaufman,L-Privman,B/Philadelphia 1998/EXT 2000 (25)]

8...Bd7

[8...Ne4 9 Nf3 Bd7 10 g4 (10 0-0-0) 10 ..Qa5 11 Ne5 Be8 12 f3 (12 gxf5!? exf5 13 cxd5 cxd5 14 0-0±) 12 ..Nxc3 (12...Bh4+!?) 13 bxc3 g6 14 Rb1 (14 Bh6+-) 14 ..b5 15 cxb5± 1-0 Sunye Neto,J-Ferreira,K/Rio de Janeiro 1991/EXT 2003 (26); 8...dxc4 9 Bxc4 Nd5+=; 8...Na6 9 a3+=]

9 Nge2+=

The position is favourable for the first player. Diese Stellung ist

besser für Weiß.

9...Be8?!

Worse than Schlechter, als [9...Na6 10 a3 Nc7 11 g4 Kh8+=]

10 g4! Na6

[10...Bg6 11 gxf5 Bxf5 12 Bxf5 exf5 13 Qxf5 dxc4 14 Qe6+ Kh8 15 Qxc4 Nbd7 16 Rg1±]

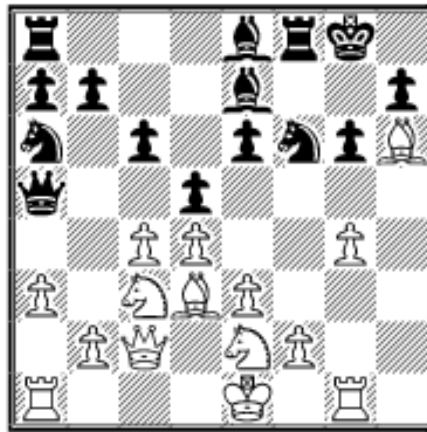
11 a3 g6

White has a clear advantage and after Weiß ist klar im Vorteil und nach [11...Qa5 12 0-0-0 dxc4 (12...b5 13 c5 Ne4 (13...b4 14 Qa4 Qxa4 15 Nxa4 Nb8 16 axb4 Ne4 17 Rdf1±) 14 Rdf1 Bg6 15 f3 Nxc3 16 Nxc3±) 13 Bxc4 Bf7 14 Rhg1 b5 15 Bd3±]

12 Rg1

White develops his initiative on the kingside. erhält Weiß Initiative am Königsflügel.

12...fxg4 13 hxg4 Qa5 14 Bh6!!



The decisive continuation. Die entscheidende Fortsetzung.

14...Nb4

[14...Rf7 15 g5 Nh5 (15...Nb4 16 axb4 Qxa1+ 17 Kd2) 16 Bxg6! hxg6 17 Qxg6+ Ng7 18 Bxg7 Rxg7 19 Qxe6+ Kf8 20 Rh1 Bf7 21 Rh8+ Rg8 22 Qh6+ Ke8 23 Nf4 dxc4 (23...Nc7 24 Ng6!) 24 g6+-]

15 axb4! Qxa1+ 16 Kd2 Qa6 17 cxd5 Qb6 18 dxe6 Qxb4

[18...Nd5 19 Bxf8 Bxf8 20 Nxd5 cxd5 21 Nf4 Qd8 (21...Bxb4+ 22 Ke2 Rd8 23 Rh1+-; 21...Qxb4+ 22 Ke2 Rd8 23 Qc7+-) 22 Qb3+-]

19 Kc1!

A multi-purpose move. Ein vielseitiger Zug.

19...c5?!

[After Nach 19 ..Nd5 20 Bxf8 Bxf8 21 g5 a5 (21...Qe7 22 Bc4+-) 22 Nxd5 cxd5 23 Nf4 Rd8 White obtains a devastating attack on the black monarch with erhält Weiß einen sehr starken Angriff auf den schwarzen König mit 24 Nh5! gxh5 25 g6 hxg6 26 Bxg6 Bg7 27 Bf7+ Bxf7 28 exf7+ Kf8 29 Qh7 Ke7 30 Qxg7 Rf8 31 Qg5+-]

20 g5! c4

[20...Nh5 21 Nd5+-]


21 Bxf8

[21 Bxg6 Bxg6 22 gxf6+-]

21...Bxf8 22 gxf6+- cxd3 23 f7+ Bxf7 24 exf7+ Kxf7 25 Qxd3 Rc8 26 Rg5 a6 27 Qe4 Rc6 28 Rd5 1-0

The variations covered on this CD are popular at the club level, with a variety of dangerous-looking gambit lines that are quite harmless if you

know the antidotes. Still, the presentation is quite balanced, with ample suggestions and improvements for both sides. So if you are not keen on playing the main lines, then you may find this CD quite attractive.

My assessment of this CD: 

Order *Dutch A80-A85* (CD-ROM)

by Boris Schipkov

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