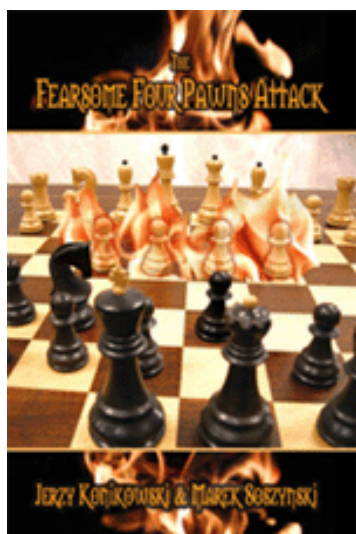




COLUMNISTS

Checkpoint

Carsten Hansen

**Rating Chart**

– A poor book.



– Not very good.



– A useful book.

Reviewed this month:

Discovering Chess Openings
by John Emms

Dangerous Weapons: The Nimzo-Indian
by Emms, Ward & Palliser

Creative Chess Opening Preparation
by Viacheslav Eingorn

*Caro-Kann Defence: Advance Variation
and Gambit System*
by Anatoly Karpov

En Passant

Knight on the Left: 1.Nc3
by Harald Keilhack

Secrets of Opening Surprises, Vol. 5
by Jeroen Bosch (ed.)

Opening Surprises

One of the key elements of good opening play is the ability to surprise your opponent, either by finding a new move in his or her favorite line, or by choosing a lesser known variation. The latter is immensely more practical because you can deviate earlier and focus your preparation accordingly. This month's column features several books that offer opening surprises. The new *Dangerous Weapons* series from Everyman Chess is likely to become very popular, as it provides players of all levels potent antidotes to main line theory. Meanwhile, the fifth volume of *Secrets of Opening Surprises* offers a mixture of opening novelties and rare alternatives; and the English edition of Harald Keilhack's *Knight on the Left* presents the complete theory of 1 Nc3 along with off-beat lines and transpositions to established theory.

♦♦♦♦ – **A good book.**

♦♦♦♦♦ – **An excellent book.**

Discovering Chess Openings by John Emms, Everyman Chess 2006, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Paperback, 248pp., \$23.95

Do you remember when you first learned to play chess, and every game was a journey into the unknown? Opening strategies were unexplored territory and you didn't quite understand why certain pieces were developed to particular squares and others were not. In this book, Emms aims to provide the set of building blocks upon which most openings are constructed. He explains this very well in the Introduction:



The study of chess openings is difficult and never-ending. It's like Pandora's box: the more you study, the more there is to learn; and the more you learn, the more you realize how little you know. If that's the opinion of someone who's been trying for nearly 30 years to get to grips with openings, how does a newcomer to chess find this ever-spiralling science? Intimidating, or is that too mild a description?

Of course it goes without saying that opening encyclopaedias are an important part of chess literature, but I do wonder how I would have found the experience as a junior player of ploughing through the latest volume of intense opening theory. A bit bewildering, perhaps?

This book is a bit different and is mainly aimed at those who know nothing or very little about chess openings. It's also for those who do know some moves of opening theory, who have happily played these moves in their own games, but are perhaps not quite sure why they play them! One of my main aims was to give the reader enough confidence to face the unknown; to be able to play good, logical moves in the opening despite in many cases having a lack of concrete knowledge of the theory. After all, even in grandmaster games there comes a point when one or both players runs out of theory and has to rely on general opening principles and sometimes this is sooner than you would think.


Let's take a look at how the material is divided:

- Introduction (2 pages)
- 1 Central Issues (8 pages)
- 2 Introducing Development (31 pages)
- 3 King Safety (14 pages)
- 4 Delving Deeper (58 pages)

- 5 Pawn Play (56 pages)
- 6 Chess Openings in Practice (56 pages)
- Solutions to Exercises (14 pages)
- Glossary (3 pages)
- Index of Openings (2 pages)

As you can see the first three chapters are devoted to the center, development and king safety. Throughout the book Emms uses excellently chosen examples to expand the readers understanding of both openings and chess in general. Thus equipped the student can carry this knowledge forward to study individual openings and build an opening repertoire.

Books of this kind in relation to openings are quite rare – and good ones even rarer. For beginning players, this book will offer an opportunity to start out on the right foot and really get a feel for what is happening on the board. I am pleased to recommend this excellent book.

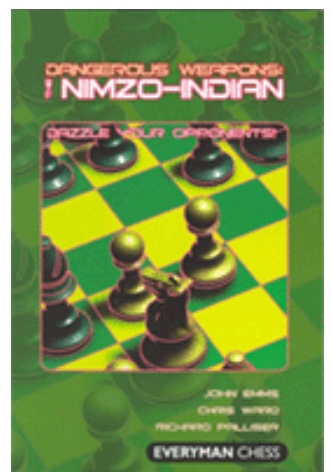
My assessment of this book: 

Order *Discovering Chess Openings*

by John Emms

Dangerous Weapons: The Nimzo-Indian by John Emms, Chris Ward & Richard Palliser, Everyman Chess 2006, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Paperback, 272pp., \$23.95

This is not a traditional opening book with coverage of all lines in the Nimzo-Indian, but rather an assembly of interesting ideas for both sides, much in the style of the *Secrets of Opening Surprises* series from New In Chess. However, the lines are generally covered in greater depth than in the *SOS* series. Palliser has written seven chapters, while Emms and Ward each contributed five.



In the preface, Emms describes what constitutes a “dangerous weapon”:

For the purpose of choosing opening variations for this series, usually a Dangerous Weapon fits into one or more of these overlapping categories:

1) Moves that create complex, original positions full of razor-sharp tactics and rich positional ideas where creative, attacking

play is rewarded; moves which are new, rare or very fresh, leaving plenty of scope for research.

2) Moves that are highly ambitious; ones which aim for total domination.

3) Moves that have been previously ignored, discarded or discredited by theory, perhaps unfairly so or maybe for the wrong reasons.

4) Moves that are visually shocking; moves which seem to contradict the laws of the game.

He also expands on each of the above criteria and writes:

It would be difficult, probably impossible to guarantee that every single variation in this book is 100% sound. You have to understand that in some cases 'dangerous' can sometimes mean 'dangerous for both sides'. What I do expect, however, is that your opponent's ride throughout the opening should be far bumpier than yours!

The material is divided as follows:

- Preface (4 pages)
- Introduction (2 pages)
- 4 Qc2 (6 chapters - 92 pages)
- 4 e3 (4 chapters - 64 pages)
- 4 Nf3 (3 chapters - 37 pages)
- Saemisch/4 f3 (2 chapters - 44 pages)
- Others (2 chapters - 25 pages)

Nine of the chapters offer new ideas for White and eight feature ideas for Black. Each one spans a minimum of eight pages and in one case as many as twenty four. First, a general guideline is given to present the idea along with an annotated game or two. This is done to bait and/or inspire the reader to explore further. Next follows a section called *Looking a Little Deeper*, where the authors' delve into the current theory of the variation and analyze a little further, all the while suggesting numerous new ideas and improvements.

The authors' all have a reputation for objectivity and unbiased opinions and at many junctures they point out the opponent's possibilities to insure that the reader understands a particular position and doesn't just end up in a bad situation right from the opening.

Here's a game from the introduction of the Romanishin Gambit, along with some of the annotations. (By the way, this game is also analyzed at length in the book by Eingorn reviewed below.)

V.Lazarev - O.Romanishin

Arco Open 1999

**1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.Qc2 d5 5.a3 Bxc3+ 6.Qxc3 c5
7.dxc5 d4 8.Qc2**

White's most popular response but, as we will explore, the aggressive 8.Qg3 is a more critical test of the Romanishin Gambit.
8...e5



Pressing forwards in the centre and exploiting the space gained by the gambit, although Black may also be able to keep his options open with 8...0-0!?. Remarkably Lazarev had twice previously faced the Romanishin Gambit prior to this encounter with its creator. However, both those games had seen him faced with the inferior 8...a5?!, a move which

understandably halts b2-b4 but is too slow.

9.e3 Nc6 10.b4

White's main asset in the position is his extra pawn and so he really must hang on to it. Instead 10.Bd3 was preferred in T.Roussel Roozmon-G.Gaspariants, Montreal 2002, when the best way to regain the pawn is 10...Qe7 (threatening 11...e4) 11.e4 a5! 12.Bg5 h6. Exchanging on f6 doesn't save the pawn in any case, but does give Black some kingside possibilities, although 13.Bh4 g5! 14.Bg3 a4, when Black enjoys a useful bind right across the board, is also not what White is after.

10...0-0 11.Nf3

Having got in b4, now is a better moment for White to stabilize the centre with 11.e4!?. After 11...a5, White can play:

a) 12.Rb1 axb4 13.axb4, and now if the reader, like myself, isn't fully convinced by 13...b6 14.cxb6 Qxb6 due to 15.b5 d3 16.Bxd3! Nd4 17.Qc3 Nd7 18.Ne2, he should prefer 13...Nh5 14.Be2 Nf4 15.Bxf4 exf4 16.Nf3 Bg4!, still with quite reasonable play for the pawn and intending to leave White with a bad bishop.
b) 12.b5 d3 13.Bxd3 Nd4 14.Qc3 Nd7 15.Ne2 Nxc5 gave Black a good position in G.Forintos-O.Romanishin, Bundesliga 1992, but 13.Qxd3! would have left him with insufficient compensation. Thus 12...Nb8!? deserves attention, when 13.a4 Nbd7 14.Ba3 is the only way to save the c5-pawn and prevent Black from gaining a strong outpost on that square. It appears after 14...Qe7 that Black is walking into trouble down the a3-f8 diagonal, but 15.c6 Nc5 16.cxb7 Bxb7 erects useful blockade and it is not too hard to escape from the pin. Furthermore, e4 is weak, the white kingside still undeveloped and 17.Bd3 Nfd7 18.Nf3 f5 leaves Black promising compensation and kingside chances.

11...Re8

Romanishin's notes to this encounter in *Chess Informant* mention 11...Qe7!? in passing and this may well be a more accurate move. If we then compare 12.e4 a5 13.Rb1 axb4 14.axb4 Bg4 15.Nd2 Nh5 with the course of the game, the rook stands better on f8 than on e8, while it might also prefer to go to d8 in some lines.

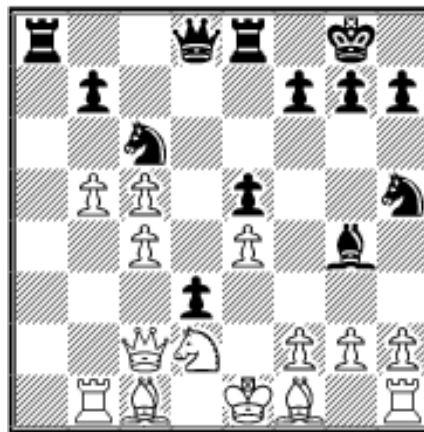
12.e4 a5! 13.Rb1 axb4 14.axb4 Bg4 15.Nd2

Lazarev's position was not easy to play in any case, but this does further retard his development. He was, though, probably put off 15.Be2!? because Black then has a pleasant choice between 15...Bxf3!? 16.Bxf3 d3 17.Qb3 Re7! (Romanishin), relying on the advanced d-pawn and the d4-outpost, and 15...Nh5 16.0-0 Nf4 17.Bxf4 exf4 18.Rb3 Bxf3 19.Bxf3 Ne5 when Black's bind and superior minor piece supply good compensation.

15...Nh5 16.b5?

White had to take control of the f4-square with 16.g3, although following 16...Rf8! (Romanishin) it is still not at all easy for him to unravel, such as after 17.h3 Be6 18.Bg2 Qc8 19.Qd1 g6, whereas Black remains active and has useful ideas of ...d3, ...f5 and a possible rook invasion down the a-file.

16...d3!



17.Qxd3

17.Bxd3? Nd4 18.Qc3 Nf4 would have been even worse for White, when 19.Bf1 can be met by the aesthetic 19...Be2!.

17...Nd4 18.Nb3! f5!

Lazarev has refused to buckle after Black's strong 16th, but now the black initiative continues to gain momentum and is all set to blow White away.

19.Nxd4

White's defences would also have been overrun after 19.Be3 Ra2! 20.Rc1 fxe4 21.Qb1 Ra3.

19...exd4 20.Be2 Bxe2 21.Kxe2 fxe4 22.Qh3 Ra2+ 23.Kd1 e3! 24.Bb2 Qa5 25.Qxh5 Qd2 mate (0-1)

Having read the book cover to cover, I thoroughly enjoyed the parade of interesting ideas and original analysis, and was impressed with the level of competence shown by the authors'. This exciting project will attract a wide readership, from average players to strong international masters. I love it and I think you will too!

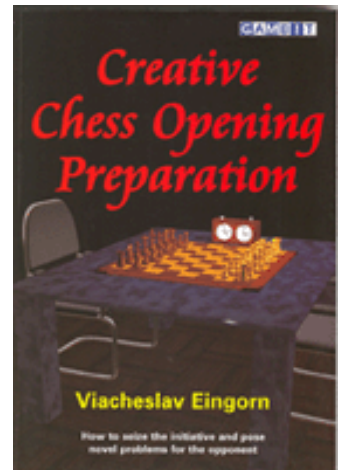
My assessment of this book: 

Order *Dangerous Weapons: The Nimzo-Indian*

by Emms, Ward & Palliser

Creative Chess Opening Preparation by Viacheslav Eingorn, Gambit Publications 2006, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Paperback, 159pp., \$26.95

Viacheslav Eingorn is a Ukrainian grandmaster, who participated in several Soviet Championships back in the 1980s and nowadays mostly participates in Open tournaments across Europe, along with playing in the German Bundesliga. While there aren't any main line Eingorn Variations as of yet, there are several lines that could qualify, his 3...h6 in the French and his 5 Qc2 in the Queen's Gambit Declined are a couple of candidates. Still, he has been instrumental in the development of numerous other lines that are now regularly played.




The material is divided as follows:

- 1 Experiments in the Opening (25 pages)
- 2 Disturbing the Equilibrium (26 pages)
- 3 Strategic Planning (28 pages)
- 4 Opening Structures (29 pages)
- 5 The Modern Game of Chess (21 pages)
- 6 A Theoretical Kaleidoscope (23 pages)
- Index of Players (2 pages)
- Index of Openings (1 page)

Aside from a 10-page discourse on the history of the line 1 d4 e6 2 c4 Bb4+ 3 Bd2 a5, which Eingorn has been instrumental in developing, this book doesn't offer much theoretical coverage of individual lines, although many unusual and surprising ideas are discussed. He instead focuses on how opening ideas are refined and how seemingly small nuances can have larger strategic implications. So while any individual idea may have a short shelf-life, the foundation for the thought process and the motivation that went into developing it will endure.

In a way, this book is a continuation of the ideas presented in John Watson's two excellent books on chess strategy and his comments about the development of new opening ideas in accordance with the modern understanding of strategy. Therefore the material is very advanced and

will benefit stronger players, but less experienced players will find it difficult to follow.

My assessment of this book: 

[Order](#) *Creative Chess Opening Preparation* by
Viacheslav Eingorn

Caro-Kann Defence: Advance Variation and Gambit System by Anatoly Karpov, Batsford BT 2006, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Paperback, 284pp., \$22.95

Oddly enough, few books have been written about the Caro-Kann in recent years, despite its continued popularity. This book is the first in a three volume series by Karpov and Podgaets, the latter is only mentioned on the inside of the book, but I suspect he is the primary author. This volume focuses on the Fantasy Variation (or “Gambit System”) and the Advance Variation (or “Closed System”).



There are a number of problems with this book. First and foremost is that I am unable to locate any game references after 2004. In fact, the entire Illustrative Games section, which itself is rather old-fashioned, only has games from 2004. Secondly, the book suffers from a poor translation and lazy editing. Here are just a few examples, but I could easily produce a dozen more:

We see in the majority of games played with the variation 7...Bf7, Black finds himself rather in difficulties. Long drawn out defence with a view to a difficult draw - this is what can be expected in the future. This probably explains the enthusiasm for a forcing variation, 7...fe, where events develop in a more lively way. (Page 142)

Things are already hotting up. White has saddled his opponent with a whole complex of pawn weaknesses on the king's flank, and also (as a bonus) gained the advantage of the two bishops. However, on the other hand, there is the downside that his e5 pawn is in need of defence, while the open h-file, generally speaking, could outweigh all his own trumps. (Page 142)

Practice with the move 13 Qf2!? is too little to draw a definitive

conclusion as to its strength. The idea of the move is that White creates threats on the d4 pawn, while the e2 square is left for the bishop. At the same time, it loads up the f-file and at an opportune moment White can organise an attack on this line.
(Page 155)

Summing up the variation 11...Bxf3!?, it can be said that, for Black's part, he has come through some quite difficult experiences. Possibly he will get (mated) without ceremony or, on the other hand, not get (sufficient compensation for the piece).
(Page 158)

Let's look at how the material is divided:

- Foreword (2 pages)
- Chapter One – Gambit System: 1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 f3 (25 pages) + Index to Chapter One (1 page)
- Chapter Two – Advance Variation: 1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 Everything Except 3...Bf5 (33 pages) + Index to Chapter Two (1 page)
- Chapter Three – Advance Variation: 1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 Bf5 Everything Except 4 Nc3 and 4 Nf3 (46 pages) + Index to Chapter Three (2 pages)
- Chapter Four – Advance Variation: 4 Nc3 (96 pages) + Index to Chapter Four (3 pages)
- Chapter Five – Advance Variation: 4 Nf3 (52 pages) + Index to Chapter Five (2 pages)
- Illustrative Games (16 pages) + Index to Games (1 page)

Having a detailed index at the end of every chapter is somewhat senseless. Also, the presentation of variations makes for difficult reading, with lengthy sidelines spanning several pages, some moves in bold, some not, and without any clear distinctions as to which lines are better.

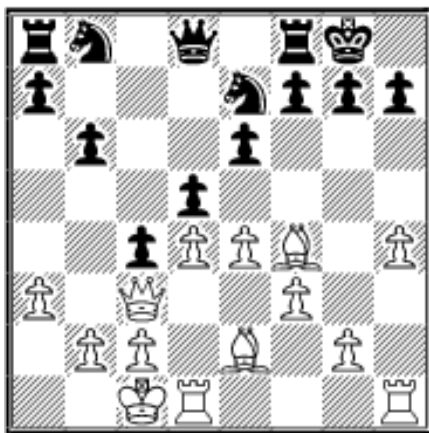
There are also several inconsistencies between this book and one published in German in 2005, *Caro-Kann Verteidigung... richtig gespielt*, authored by Karpov! Here's an example from the Advance Variation on page 201: **1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 Bf5 4.Nc3 e6 5.g4 Bg6 6.Nge2 c5 7.Be3 Nc6 8.dxc5 Nxe5 9.Nf4 Ne7 10.Qe2 N7c6 11.0-0-0 Be7**



This is from Shirov-Anand, Wijk aan Zee 2003. The English book offers: “White played routinely - 12 Nfxd5?! ed 13 f4, but was met by what was obviously a home preparation: 13...d4 14 h4 Nd3+ 15 cd h5! Two moves of high quality - and White has neither piece nor attack.” Yet the German book gives the improvement: “Possibly 12 h4!? offers better chances, and in case Black tries 12...Bxh4, White can play 13 Nfxd5!

exd5 14 f4! d4 15 Bxd4. The Caro-Kann specialists have to come up with something in this line.” Moreover, Anand annotated the game in *Chess Informant* and gives 12 h4 Qa5 13 h5 Be4 14 Nxe4 dxe4 15 Kb1 Bxc5 16 Bxc5 Qxc5 17 Bg2, without an evaluation, but I think White has a solid edge. Nevertheless, Black can improve after 12...Bxh4 13 Nfxd5! exd5 14 f4 with 14...0-0! 15 Rxd5 Qe7 16 fxe5 Bg3!, winning the e5-pawn and restoring the material balance.

Another example can be found in the line: **1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 f3 e6 4 Nc3 Bb4 5 Bf4 Ne7 6 Qd3!? b6 7 Ne2 Ba6 8 Qe3 0-0 9 0-0-0 c5 10 a3 Bxc3 11 Qxc3 Bxe2 12 Bxe2 c4 13 h4**




Here the coverage on page 30 continues with 13...Nbc6 14 h5 b5 “Neither White nor Black can avoid a pawn storm but whose will be more successful? We suppose that it will be White who has the better chances, though in the game Nataf-Motylev (Istanbul 2003) he did not succeed proving this...” But they make no reference to the game Morozevich-Bologan, which is given later in the book, where Black deviated with

13...b5 14 Qe1!? Nbc6 15 h5 Qd7 16 g4 f6 17 Bf1! Rad8 18 Bh3 dxe4 19 fxe4 Nxd4 20 g5 f5, when they write: “As pointed out by Morozevich himself, Black had a surprising possibility at his disposal: 20...b4!? 21 gf ba! 22 fe a2! The correct defence lies in 21 Be3! ba 22 Rxd4 a2 23 Qa5.” Yet they don’t mention that White is better in this line as well, e.g. 23...Nc6 24.Rxd7 Nxa5 25.Bxe6+ Kh8 26.Kd2 Rxd7+ 27.Bxd7 Rd8 28.Kc3 Rxd7 29.gxf6 gxf6 30.Ra1 with a better endgame for White.

Furthermore, the German book has several suggestions not mentioned in the English book: 17...Nxd4 18 Rxd4 (or 18 exd5 e5) 18...e5 with a pleasant game for Black or 15...a5 with the comment: “if Black doesn’t stay active on the queenside, then how can he expect to succeed” or 10...cxd4 11 Nxd4 Bc5 “looks more natural” or “Perhaps should Black

wait to castle a bit longer: 8...Ng6 9 Bg3 Nd7 10 0-0-0 Be7. Black prevents h2-h4 and is ready, after the knight on e2 has moved, to exchange the light-squared bishops. White has a strong center, but Black has a flexible position.”

Still, not everything about this book is bad, it has plenty of original analysis and improvements over existing theory, and those who play these lines from either side should invest in it.

My assessment of this book: 


Order *Caro-Kann Defence: Advance Variation and Gambit System* by Anatoly Karpov

Knight on the Left: 1.Nc3 by Harald Keilhack, Kania Verlag 2006, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Hardcover, 383pp., \$30.95

I favorably reviewed the German edition of this book, *Der Linksspringer 1.Nc3*, in [September 2003](#) and I am even more excited about this new edition. The material has been updated, analytical errors have been eliminated, and, of course, it is now in English.

It would be an injustice to do anything but give this book my highest recommendation, to quote my earlier review, “If you have a liking for the unusual and daring, you will not find many books this year that are better than this one!”



My assessment of this book: 

**Order *Knight on the Left: 1.Nc3*
by Harald Keilhack**

Secrets of Opening Surprises, Vol. 5 by Jeroen Bosch (ed.), New In Chess 2006, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Paperback, 143pp., \$21.95

This latest collection of opening surprises contains the usual mix of interesting, ugly, laughable and truly bizarre ideas, yet they all seem to have been played at the international master and grandmaster level. It appears that the key to modern chess is to play on the flank, or block other pieces from developing by placing bishops in front of pawns, or to develop the queen early, or to repeatedly move the same piece in the opening.




Here are some of the lines in this volume: 1

e4 c5 2 Nc3 Nc6 3 g4 (ch 2), 1 e4 c5 2 Na3 (ch 4), 1 c4 e5 2 g3 Nf6 3 Bg2 h6!? (ch 5), 1 Nf3 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 g3 a6 4 Bg2 b5! (ch 6), 1 d4 Nf6 2 Nf3 h6, preparing ...g5 (ch 8), 1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Qc2 c5!? (ch 9), 1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Qc2 0-0 5 a3 Bxc3+ 6 Qxc3 b5 (ch 11), 1 d4 c6 2 c4 b5 (ch 14), and last but not least 1 e4 c4 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Nc3 g6 4 a3!? (ch 17).

The book has 18 chapters, 16 of which contain new material. The first chapter examines the latest developments in variations from previous volumes, while the last chapter is a quick who's who of the contributors to this volume, among them are Nakamura, Tiviakov, Rogers, Mikhalechishin, Glek, Rogozenko, and Kavalek.

If you have a taste for fun opening ideas, you'll love this book.

My assessment of this book: 

Order *Secrets of Opening Surprises, Vol. 5*
by Jeroen Bosch (ed.)

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