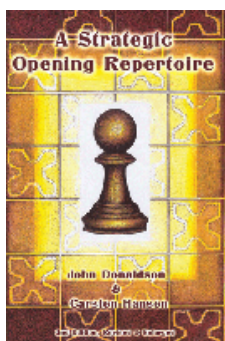




## COLUMNISTS

## Checkpoint

Carsten Hansen



## Rating Chart

- ♦ – A poor book
- ♦♦ – Not very good
- ♦♦♦ – A useful book
- ♦♦♦♦ – A good book
- ♦♦♦♦♦ – An excellent book

## CHESTHEATRE

Play through and download  
the games from  
[ChessCafe.com](http://ChessCafe.com) in the  
[DGT Game Viewer](#).

[The Complete  
DGT Product Line](#)

## Reviewed this month:

*A Positional Opening  
Repertoire for the Club Player*  
by Nikolai Kalinichenko

*An Aggressive Opening  
Repertoire for the Club Player*  
by Nikolai Kalinichenko

*How to Play against 1 e4*  
by Neil McDonald

*Chess Informant, Vol. 103*  
by Zdenko Krnic (Ed.)

## En Passant

*Fritz Powerbook 2009*  
by ChessBase

## More Repertoires

The first three new releases that we will cover in this month's column are outright repertoire books, all aimed at a somewhat lower-rated audience, whereas the remaining two titles have an indirect relation to opening repertoires.

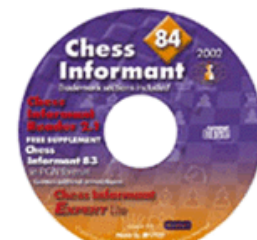
*A Positional Opening Repertoire for the Club Player* by Nikolai Kalinichenko, Russian Chess House 2008, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Hardback, 240pp., \$26.95

This is the first of two repertoire volumes by Kalinichenko that we will review this month. This volume is supposedly aimed at positional players, whereas the volume reviewed below is supposedly geared towards aggressive players. At a time when repertoire books often either cover just one opening or consist of multiple volumes for just one side, I found it extraordinary that the author of this work could fit a full repertoire, for both White and Black, into one volume of 240 small pages. The obvious conclusion is that Kalinichenko must have cut a massive amount of corners to make it all fit, and as we will see this is in fact the case.

The material is divided as follows:

- System of Symbols (1 page)
- Introduction (2 pages)
- Part I – White Repertoire

Check out the  
[May Savings](#) at  
[ChessCafe.com](http://ChessCafe.com):



[Informant 84 \(CD\)](#)  
Only \$5.95!



[Informant 94 \(CD\)](#)  
Only \$5.95!



[Informant 95 \(CD\)](#)  
Only \$5.95!



**Free Shipping!**  
**On all Orders**  
**More than \$75!**

**UPS GROUND**  
**Only.**



- 1 Sicilian Defence (19 pages)
- 2 Scotch Game (13 pages)
- 3 French Defence (19 pages)
- 4 Caro-Kann Defence (6 pages)
- 5 Pirc-Ufimtsev Defence (6 pages)
- 6 Alekhine Defence (10 pages)
- Part II – Black Repertoire
- 7 Sicilian Defence (19 pages)
- King's Indian Defence (2 pages)
- 8 Four Pawns Attack (8 pages)
- 9 Saemisch Variation (16 pages)
- 10 Variations with Bg2 (10 pages)
- 11 Classical Variation (13 pages)
- 12 Deviations by White from the Classical Variation (5 Bd3, Nge2) (5 pages)
- 13 Makogonov Variation (5 pages)
- 14 Averbakh Variation (5 pages)
- 15 Torre Attack (6 pages)
- 16 Trompowsky Opening (5 pages)
- 17 English Opening (3 pages)
- 18 Bird Opening (4 pages)
- Illustrative Games (59 pages)
- Index of Illustrative Games (1 page)

Scanning over the number of pages allocated to each chapter, one must question that only nineteen pages are devoted to a Sicilian repertoire as white or black; this can hardly be called complete. The fact that the author devotes only six pages to the Caro-Kann and ten to the Alekhine is also suspect.

The choice of variations, especially for Black, is also poor. For instance after the moves **1 e4 c5 2 Nf3**, we get the first comment: "All deviations by White in moves 2 and 3 are examined in detail in our companion volume *An Aggressive Opening Repertoire for the Club Player*. By following the course indicated there, you will obtain a normal game, and there is no point in overloading your memory with information on variations which occur far more rarely than the main ones." This is just unacceptable. First Kalinichenko refers the reader to a volume that pertains to a type of repertoire he likely has no interest in and then he tells the reader that he shouldn't burden himself with the study of these lines because he is less likely to encounter them. However, the reality is that club players are far more likely to face Anti-Sicilians such as the Closed Sicilian, the 2 c3 Sicilian, and the Grand Prix Attack, etc.

The author continues **2...d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 Nc6**, leading to the starting position of the Classical Sicilian. Here he offers two main lines: the Richter-Rauzer (6 Bg5) and the Sozin Attack (6 Bc4). Against 6 Bg5, Kalinichenko recommends 6...Bd7, and against 6 Bc4 he endorses 6...Qb6. In addition, he comments briefly on 6 Be3, whereas 6 Be2 and 6 f4 are simply brushed aside: "...Black's simplest is 6...g6, transposing into the Classical Dragon (cf. our companion volume), which gives him a safe game 'on his own territory'." Thus, rather than giving respectable answers with regard to the Classical Sicilian, the author wants the reader to study the Sicilian Dragon, too.

Another odd thing is that only seven games date from after 1998, and I suspect that much of the material here is probably quite similar to what can be found in Kalinichenko's 1998 book, co-authored with Gufeld, called *An Opening Repertoire for the Positional Player*. The material in the King's Indian chapter also has almost no material dated after 1998. For its part, the King's Indian is a respectable opening, but it most certainly is not positional. In fact, it is difficult to suggest a major opening for Black against 1 d4 that is less positional than the King's Indian.

In the remaining chapters on the black repertoire, there is a common thread of outdated material and omissions; for instance, 1 Nf3 and 1 b3

are not covered, and the English Opening is given only a mere three pages, completely ignoring nearly all lines against the King's Indian set-up that he has recommended for Black. Moreover, the Trompowsky, which has become tremendously popular and developed rapidly, only has one inconsequential game reference dated after 1998.

With regard to White openings, the author offers 2 c3 against the Sicilian, though again the coverage is hopelessly outdated. For example, there is only two game references after 1998 and only two pages of coverage of 2...Nf6, which, according to several experts on the opening, is the better choice for Black. Against the French, the author endorses 3 Nd2, but, as with the other chapters, Kalinichenko has found a way to ignore best play by Black and hides the true strength of Black's counterplay. In the Pirc chapter, the author recommends 3 f3, but, rather than giving thorough coverage of 3...g6 (after 1 e4 d6 2 d4 Nf6 3 f3), he instead pays attention to 3...d5 and 3...e5, neither of which are as critical as 3...g6. Finally, there are no lines recommended for White against the Scandinavian, the Nimzowitsch, the Modern, and the Owen Defenses. I suppose readers who want to burden their brains with the material on these minor openings should consult the companion volume on Aggressive Openings where they are covered.

This book is incredibly bad. Too many lines are covered insufficiently and many important options are ignored outright. On top of this, we have an unacceptable amount of references to the other volume; either you cover all the relevant moves or you do not. It is ridiculous to constantly refer the reader elsewhere for information that should be included here. This is one of the worst opening books I have ever seen.

**My assessment of this book:** ❌

**Order *A Positional Opening Repertoire  
for the Club Player*  
by Nikolai Kalinichenko**

---

*An Aggressive Opening Repertoire for the Club Player* by Nikolai Kalinichenko, Russian Chess House 2008, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Hardback, 231pp., \$26.95

If you have read the above review on the companion volume regarding a positional repertoire, then you can expect more of the same from this volume.

The material is divided as follows:

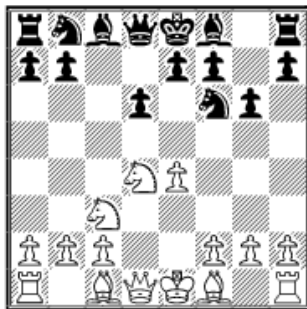
- System of Symbols (1 page)
- Introduction (2 pages)
- Opening Strategy (4 pages)
- Part I – White Repertoire
  - 1 Sicilian Defence (10 pages)
  - 2 Vienna Game (13 pages)
  - 3 French Defence (11 pages)
  - 4 Caro-Kann Defence (8 pages)
  - 5 Modern Defence (6 pages)
  - 6 Pirc-Ufimtsev Defence (10 pages)
  - 7 alekhine Defence (8 pages)
  - 8 Centre Counter Game (6 pages)
  - 9 Nimzowitsch Defence (4 pages)
  - 10 Owen Defence (5 pages)
  - 11 St George Defence (2 pages)
- Part II – Black Repertoire
  - 12 Sicilian Defence – White Deviations on Move 2 (26 pages)



- 13 Sicilian Defence – White Deviations on Move 3 and Later (8 pages)
- 14 Sicilian Dragon (20 pages)
- 15 Dutch Defence (20 pages)
- 16 Dutch Defence. Leningrad Variation (13 pages)
- 17 Lisitsyn Gambit (2 pages)
- 18 English Opening (2 pages)
- 19 Bird Opening (3 pages)
- 20 Nimzowitsch-Larsen Opening (4 pages)
- Illustrative Games (39 pages)
- Index of Illustrative Games (1 page)

The above list looks far more detailed than its companion volume, yet this book is about ten pages shorter. This is in large part due to the fact that here Black's repertoire choice against 1 d4 is the Dutch Defense (1 d4 f5). If the other volume was totally out-of-date, then this book is even worse. In the theoretical section there are only thirteen game references dated between 1995 and 2000, and twenty-three dated after 2000. In the illustrative games, the author has given fifteen games (of twenty-two) that are dated after 1994, though only six of them are from after 2000.

In a repertoire book where one of the choices is the Sicilian Dragon as black, **1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 g6**, this outdated material is a major problem, especially when the author has chosen to cover the entire Dragon in a mere twenty pages.



I probably have more than twenty volumes on the Dragon Variation, some specifically devoted to sub-systems, so to think that it can be done in a mere twenty pages is ridiculous. Furthermore, only five game references in the entire chapter on the Dragon are dated after 2000; this is wholly insufficient for an explosively sharp opening like the Dragon.

In his White repertoire recommendations, Kalinichenko opens with 2 f4 against the Sicilian, a line that has never been considered particularly dangerous for Black. Against 2...e6, Kalinichenko claims a clear advantage for White based on a game that was played in 1978, where Black had no problems whatsoever. After the more complex 2...d5!?, intending 3 exd5 Nf6!, the play is considerably more unclear, though Kalinichenko claims the better chances for White despite not offering anything new or even interesting. In the chapter on 1 e4 e5, the author recommends the Vienna, though he admits that Black can equalize rather easily. The same fate for White can be found in the chapter on the French. Against the Centre Counter (1 e4 d5), he only has two game references for the line 2 exd5 Qxd5 3 Nc3 Qd6, despite the fact this has become one of the most popular lines in the entire Scandinavian Defense, and neither were played within the last twenty years!

In many ways, this volume is even worse than its companion: even more outdated material, even worse coverage, and poor repertoire choices. No one should buy this book. It is a total waste of time, money and paper.

**My assessment of this book: ❌**

Order *An Aggressive Opening Repertoire  
for the Club Player*  
by Nikolai Kalinichenko

---

*How to Play against 1 e4* by Neil McDonald, Everyman Chess 2008,  
Figurine Algebraic Notation, Paperback, 238pp., \$24.95

English grandmaster McDonald has a knack for writing instructive opening books when his target audience is below 2100 in rating. In this volume, he presents a repertoire against 1 e4 based on the French Defense, an opening in which he is an acknowledged expert. McDonald not only employs the French in his own repertoire, he also authors the French Defense section at Chesspublishing.com.



The material is divided as follows:

- Introduction (4 pages)
- 1 The Advance Variation (41 pages)
- 2 The Exchange Variation (21 pages)
- 3 The Fort Knox (25 pages)
- 4 The Classical 4 e5 Variation (35 pages)
- 5 The McCutcheon (42 pages)
- 6 The Tarrasch 3...Be7 (25 pages)
- 7 The King's Indian Attack (21 pages)
- 8 Odds and Ends (10 pages)
- Index of Variations (8 pages)
- Index of Games (2 pages)

It is hardly a critical issue, but the spelling of the title in chapter five caused me to do a bit of research, because it is quite common to see the name spelled as “MacCutcheon.” However, *The Oxford Companion to Chess* by Hooper and Whyld spells it “McCutcheon,” as does Edward Winter’s *A Chess Omnibus*.

McDonald offers us a simple and solid solution against 1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nd2 and 3 Nc3 by suggesting 3...dxe4 4 Nxe4 Bd7 in addition to the Classical 3 Nc3 Nf6 (including the McCutcheon 4 Bg5 Bb4) and 3 Nd2 Be7. In contrast with many other repertoire books, he goes to great lengths to discuss typical ideas for both sides, including showing several examples of how bad things can turn out for Black if he doesn’t pay attention, even in rather innocuous lines.

While the book is very well-written and I applaud several of the repertoire choices, some of which I have never seen suggested before, I find the book to be a little light on actual opening theory. Perhaps the reason is that Black is expected to do well because of a good fundamental knowledge of the lines in question, which is something McDonald does provide.

The back cover states, “It’s not easy finding a good opening to play against 1 e4, especially if you don’t have endless time available to study the latest theoretical developments. If you choose fashionable openings, it’s often a necessity to keep pace with modern theory if you want to succeed with Black.

“This book provides a solution. Neil McDonald advocates his favourite opening – the very popular French Defence – but chooses a repertoire for Black that requires only the minimum amount of move memorization. The lines he selects are very easy to learn and play – perfect for those who are unwilling to be slaves to opening theory. But there’s also

something here for more experienced players, as McDonald goes on to offer a second repertoire based on counter-attacking lines against 3 Nc3 and 3 Nd2.”

With this in mind, the book delivers on its promise and I recommend it to both those who already employ the French and those who are in need of a solid repertoire against 1 e4. This book imparts a great deal of chess understanding along with the repertoire and that is a winning combination.

**My assessment of this book:** ♦♦♦♦♦

[Order](#) *How to Play against 1 e4*

by Neil McDonald

---

*Chess Informant, Vol. 103* by Zdenko Krnic (Ed.), Sahovski Informator 2009, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Paperback, 324pp., \$24.95

I have read and enjoyed *Chess Informant* since I started studying chess in the early 1980s and have eagerly awaited the arrival of each new volume. Granted annotated top level games are available almost immediately online nowadays, but studying the games annotated by the players themselves is often far more instructive than the superficial analysis that can be found online.



The material is divided as follows:

- Contributors (2 pages)
- The best ten games of the preceding Volume (1 page)
- The ten most important theoretical novelties of the preceding Volume (5 pages)
- System of Signs (3 pages)
- Opening Classifications (6 pages)
- Games Sections A-E (229 pages)
- Register (11 pages)
- Commentators (2 pages)
- Combinations (4 pages)
- Endings (8 pages)
- Studies (3 pages)
- Tournaments (10 pages)
- The Best of Chess Informant – Peter Svidler (26 pages)

This issue features a total of 407 main games, though not all of them are complete, many are truncated after the opening or early middlegame. I don't particularly like this trend and I think the editors should reconsider this format. Furthermore, no less than sixty-four of the games are annotated by the editorial team, which is nearly sixteen percent of all the main games. I consider this yet another very negative trend for a publication that used to pride itself on having annotated games by nearly all the top players in the world. Of the current top twenty players only Anand, Kramnik, Morozevich, Leko, Ivanchuk, Gelfand and Svidler have annotated games for this volume. Many of the younger top players have never annotated a game for *Chess Informant*. The busiest contributors for the current volume with recognizable names are Ivanchuk with fourteen annotated games and Ivan Sokolov with ten. Meanwhile, the Brazilian correspondence chess player, Da Costa Junior, has thirty-four entries and Rumanian international master Stoica has seventeen.

While I still love these yearbooks, it seems as if fewer players want to contribute to them and I hope the publisher can find some means to reverse this trend. Yet I still highly recommend this book to serious

players, because it is packed to the brim with interesting games and opening ideas, along with first class material in the combination, endgame, and studies sections. *Chess Informant* continues to be an excellent source of training and study material.

**My assessment of this book:** ♦♦♦♦

[Order](#) *Chess Informant, Vol. 103*  
by Zdenko Krnic (Ed.)

---

*Fritz Powerbook 2009* (DVD), ChessBase GmbH 2008, Figurine Algebraic Notation, \$64.95

The back cover tells us “the Fritz Powerbook 2009 contains 27 millions opening positions, derived from 1.4 million high class tournament games. Together with each position all relevant information is stored: all moves that were played in the position, by players of what average rating, with what success and performance results. The games from which the Fritz Powerbook 2009 were derived are also included on the DVD. This means that in any position of the openings tree you can load and replay the games in which the position occurred.



The Fritz Powerbook 2009 represents the state of the art of current openings theory. Discover exciting and tricky new lines and practice them against Fritz. In addition the DVD has a small but very exclusive book with the strongest GM games (ELO  $\geq$  2550) from the past 100 years (1.8 Mio positions).” The system requirements are Pentium PC, 32 MB RAM, Windows Vista/XP, Fritz11, and a DVD drive.

I have never been an expert on these computer engine accessories, so I will leave it up to the reader and computer user to decide whether this product is something they can or cannot live without. Personally, I have never understood why you cannot generate this information yourself from any large database, but this is not my forte.

**My assessment of this DVD:** ♦♦♦♦

[Order](#) *Fritz Powerbook 2009*  
by ChessBase

---

 [TOP OF PAGE](#)

 [HOME](#)

 [COLUMNS](#)

 [LINKS](#)

 [ARCHIVES](#)

 [ABOUT THE CHESS CAFE](#)

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

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

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

© 2009 CyberCafes, LLC. All Rights Reserved.

"[ChessCafe.com](#)@" is a registered trademark of Russell Enterprises, Inc.