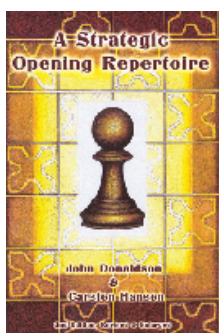




## COLUMNISTS

## Checkpoint

Carsten Hansen



## Rating Chart

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

## CHESSTHEATRE

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



## Reviewed this month:

*The Complete Hedgehog, Vol. 1*  
by Sergey Shipov

*Grandmaster Repertoire 3:  
The English Opening, Vol. 1*  
by Mihail Marin

*Fundamental Chess Openings*  
by Paul van der Sterren

## En Passant

*New In Chess Yearbook, Vol. 93*  
by Genna Sosonko (ed.)

## Ambitious Projects

This month's column focuses on three of the heaviest and thickest tomes we have seen in a while, all more than 475 pages! As you will see, the authors have each made tremendous effort to give us the best possible result and it has paid off handsomely. I will round off by wishing my readers a happy and healthy 2010. I hope you will enjoy reading the reviews as much as I enjoy writing them.

*The Complete Hedgehog, Vol. 1* by Sergey Shipov, Mongoose Press 2009, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Paperback, 532pp., \$29.95 (ChessCafe Price: \$24.95)

This book first came to my attention after Kasparov repeatedly referred to the Russian edition in [Garry Kasparov on Modern Chess: Revolution in the 70s](#). Therefore, it is quite fitting that the Foreword in the English-language edition is written by the former world champion himself. In it he writes, "in 1981 a pair of wins and a near miss showed me that not only could the Hedgehog be played against anything – e4, d4, or c4 – but it could also be played successfully against anyone. In the same Soviet team event in April I scored a 27-move win against Smyslov and was tantalizingly close to victory against my future world champion rival Karpov. Later that year in Tilburg I beat Robert Huebner employing the classic Hedgehog breaks b6-b5 and d6-d5 on consecutive moves."

He continues, "From the beginning the Hedgehog has been about concepts and plans, not concrete variations and memorized lines. Sergei Shipov's profound interest in these underlying ideas are what make his approach, and this book, so valuable. We had countless 'discussions' over the board in blitz in this opening while Sergei was working with me in the late 1990s and 2000. He's not just a strong practical player, but someone who likes to study and pursue the truth."

"I highly recommend this book because it investigates strategic concepts instead being limited to mere reactions. Knowing what to do and when to do it

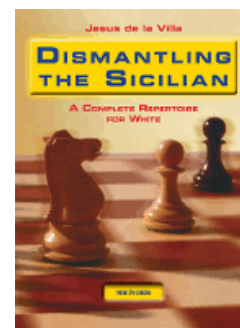
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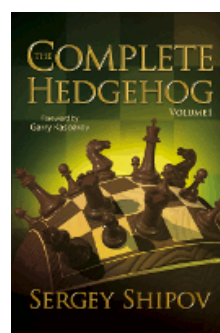
[The Scotch Game for White](#)  
by Vladimir Barsky



[Dangerous Weapons:  
The Dutch](#)  
by Palliser, Williams,  
& Vigus



[Dismantling the Sicilian](#)  
by Jesus de la Villa Garcia



might allow for a degree of success. But to achieve mastery of anything, you must also understand WHY. With Grandmaster Shipov's expert guidance, the reader has every opportunity to do exactly that."

After such an endorsement, let's look at how the material is divided:

- Foreword by Garry Kasparov (1 page)
- Introduction (4 pages)
- The Hedgehog. Its Birth and Development (3 pages)
- Getting to the Hedgehog Opening Structure (8 pages)
- The Hedgehog Philosophy (5 pages)
- Space and Order (2 pages)
- Evaluating a Position (7 pages)
- **The English Hedgehog**
- Preface (8 pages)
- **Part 1: Classical Continuation 7.d4** (1 page)
- 1-1 History and Pioneers (26 pages)
- 1-2 The English Hedgehog Tabiya – 7.d4 cxd4 8 Qxd4 (23 pages)
- 1-3 White Aims for a Quick Attack on the Pawn at d6 (58 pages)
- 1-4 Two Plans by Uhlmann (64 pages)
- 1-5 Trading Off the Bishop at f6 (64 pages)
- 1-6 Notes on Move Orders in the 8.d4 System (12 pages)
- **Part 2: The 7.Re1! System** (1 page)
- 2-1 First Experiences and Origins of the Theory of the 7.Re1! System (48 pages)
- 2-2 Black Castles Early. The Canonical Piece Setup (86 pages)
- 2-3 The Modern Hedgehog. Sunrise to Sunset (40 pages)
- 2-4 The Knight Goes to c6 (25 pages)
- 2-5 New Ideas in the 7.Re1 System (38 pages)
- Index of Players (5 pages)

Shipov's introduction to the opening includes a picture of a hedgehog wearing a Christmas hat as well as a story by Daniil Kharmis from 1935, called "The Brave Hedgehog." In my almost ten years of reviewing opening books here at Chesscafe.com, both constitute a first.

In the Chapter "Getting to the Hedgehog Opening Structure," Shipov makes a very important observation and writes the following warning, "I should warn my young and impressionable readers that Hedgehog structures can occur only if both sides are willing [Shipov's emphasis]; so there's no point in studying the Hedgehog with the aim of making it your principal system for Black, because 'wicked' opponents might not allow you to set it up at the board." However, on a personal note, if you study to use it in its proper form against the English Opening and via the Kan (1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 a6) in the Open Sicilian, then you have a better than average chance of reaching a Hedgehog structure in a fair share of your games as black. I did that when I was rated around 1900-2100 and it was remarkably effective because a lot of the fundamental ideas behind the Hedgehog are simply not understood at that level. With Shipov's aim to explain WHY [Kasparov's emphasis] moves are being played in this opening, studying this book will put you in an excellent position to draw the same benefits I did more than twenty years ago.

The material in the book is built up around main games in which some theory is included in the notes, but they mainly describe why the variations have developed, and why certain moves are preferred over others. This may disappoint those who seek pure theoretical coverage, but for the rest of us, it gives us plenty of material to learn and build understanding from.

The following game is an excellent example of several things:

- How the Hedgehog can be played for Black.
- What the annotations in this book look like and what the emphasis is on in the annotations.
- How the author plays the opening we are discussing.

The notes are with a few exceptions those by the author in the book. I have added some comments of my own in brackets.

The German grandmaster is an experienced Hedgehog hunter. He was successfully defeating woodland creatures when I was still learning the subtleties of chess. So it was that much more interesting to play him, and test his knowledge.

**1.Nf3 Nf6 2.c4 c5 3.Nc3 e6 4.g3 b6 5.Bg2 Bb7 6.0-0 Be7 7.d4 cxd4 8.Qxd4 d6 9.Rd1 a6 10.b3 Nbd7 11.e4 Qc8!**

No endgames with a veteran!

**12.Bb2 0-0 13.Qe3**

In accordance with the Uhlmann doctrine, White's queen begins its retreat deep inside its own fortress, letting the minor pieces advance. [CH: Here he has a lengthy discussion of the merits of 13...Qc7 and 13...Re8!, I will skip that.]

**13...Qc7**

Now, with the pressure on d6 removed, Black can set out his pieces in a more human fashion.

**14.h3 Rfe8 15.Rac1 Rad8**

Making it look as though Black wants to break out in the center right away. Or perhaps I am only making it look as though I am making it look that way, when actually I really want to break out! It's a double bluff – a necessary element of mastery.

**16.Qe2**

White has learned a bitter lesson! A couple of years before our encounter, the grandmaster forgot to take his queen out of danger, for which he paid the price: 16.Nh2 Qb8 17.Ng4 (the Hedgehog does not fear this typical Ruy maneuver) 17...Ba8 18.Ne2 Nxg4 19.hxg4 h6 20.Rc2? (he had to put the point on his lance immediately with 20.Nd4!, when 20...d5 [CH: 20...Qc7! is fine for Black, but mentioned by Shipov] would be bad in view of 21.cxd5 exd5 22.Nf5! Bf8 23.g5!) 20...Ne5 21.f3 (playing 21.Bh3 now would be psychologically difficult [CH: but it was more or less forced, because in the game continuation, Black immediately grabs the initiative and doesn't let go until the game is over]) 21...d5! 22.exd5 Bc5 (another demonstration of what had been demonstrated long ago) 23.Bd4 exd5 24.Bxc5 bxc5 25.cxd5 Bxd5 26.Qc3 – and Black was able to exploit the weakness of White's back rank by a simple combination: 26...Bxf3! 27.Rxd8 Qxd8 28.Bxf3 Qd1+ 29.Kf2 (29.Kg2 Nxf3! 30.Kxf3 Qf1#) 29...Nd3+. White painfully gave up his queen, and soon resigned (L.Espig-M.Womacka, Germany 1993).

**16...Qb8 17.Re1**

Normal back-and-forth maneuvering.

**17...Bf8 18.Nd2**

Possibly deviating from the standard plan. Of course, this cannot be the most dangerous set-up of White [*sic*] pieces for Black to face. The knight does solidly defend the e4 and c4 squares from d2, but at the same time, it gets in the way of the rooks, and what's more important, it fails to control b5.

**18...g6**

The planned transfer of the bishop to the long diagonal. The d6-pawn no longer needs its protection.

**19.Nf1**

The first surprise for my young self. Where is the knight headed?

### **19...Bg7 20.Rcd1 Nc5**

Besides putting pressure on e4, the knight constantly provokes White to play the active b3-b4, which most often offers no benefit, but merely weakens c4.

### **21.Qc2**

[CH: My computer likes the just mentioned 21.b4!?, claiming an edge for White after 21...Ncd7 22.Ne3, but this is hardly clear.]

### **21...Ba8 22.Ne3**

Here's the final stop for this pony. This way, White nails down d5 forever, and supports the c4-pawn against a possible ...b6-b5.

But! In the meantime, first of all, he hinders any defense of the e4-pawn, since the knight is blocking the rook on e1; and secondly, White in fact does not prevent the execution of the ...b6-b5 break. It still seems to me that the knight stood better on d4 than here – and it would have gotten there three times faster!

[CH: Again my computer suggests 22.b4 Ncd7 23.Ne3 Rc8 24.f4 with a slight advantage for White, but as mentioned before, this is hardly neither accurate nor even deceive if it happen to be accurate.]

### **22...Rc8**

When you can't see how to break through, you need to make a few senseless moves that don't alter the position. This is a normal players' tactic, but to tell the truth, it's much better to see it anyway!

I didn't play 22...b5!? because of 23.b4 Ncd7 24.cxb5 axb5 25.Qd3, failing to see the beautiful shot 25...Nxe4! 26.Bxe4 d5, when Black recovers the piece with good counterplay. And it's a very good thing that I didn't see it! Because instead of 25 Qd3, White has the much stronger 25.Qe2!, after which the natural reply 25...Bc6 meets the combinative refutation 26.e5! Nxe5 27.f4 Bxg2 28.fxe5, when Black doesn't get sufficient compensation for the piece.

Here's a case where my inadequate calculation allowed me to avoid a miscalculation! It's a paradox!

### **23.Qb1 h5!**

A small battlefield feint, a useful tool in the Hedgehog. Black threatens to "cut up" the dark squares in White's position with ...h5-h4. Either that, or he is bluffing again... For the White player, this possible stab by Black's pawn will grate constantly on his nerves. In fact, I didn't want to put this threat into action right away. I simply decided to scare my opponent a bit!

### **24.h4**

And he got scared! Now the g4 square becomes accessible to Black's knight. And the only presence of the nonstandard, unattached white knight on e3 mitigates its effect. For the time being...

### **24...Bc6**

Of course Black could not play 24...Nfxe4 25.Nxe4 Bxe4 26.Bxe4 Bxb2 because of 27.Bxg6! Bc3 28.Bxh5 Bxe1 29.Rxe1, when White obtains a pawn and a powerful initiative for the exchange. [CH: But Black could also consider 24...b5 25.cxb5 axb5 26.b4 (26.f3 d5) 26...Ncd7 with a pleasant game.]

### **25.Ba1 b5**

Black could have continued his roundabout maneuverings; but I decided that if I did not set my opponent some concrete tasks to solve in the next few moves, he would be able to survive without losing anything. And that wasn't part of my plans.

**26.b4 Ncd7 27.cxb5 axb5 28.Qd3**



As often happens, a sparkling breakthrough has left Black with a weak pawn on b5; in return, he has the opportunity to establish one of his pieces at c4. The disappearance of the c4-pawn also makes it easier to get in ...d6-d5.

**28...Bf8**

Played with gritted teeth. One hates to put such an active fighter in such a passive position. In fact, the Hedgehog nearly always offers an opportunity to defend a weakness indirectly, by means of tactical counterthreats. And such is the case here: 28...Rc7!? contains the idea of replying 29.Qxd6 [CH: 29.Nc2 doesn't offer White much either: 29...Ne5 (or even 29...Bf8 30.Qf3 Ng4) 30.Qxd6 Nfg4 31.Qd2 Qb6 32.Qe2 Bd7 33.Ne3 Rec8 with excellent compensation for the pawn.] by 29...Bf8! 30.Qd4 e5 31.Qd3 Bxb4, when Black is just fine.

**29.f4**

Sensing my uncertainty, the mature hunter sets off on the chase...

**29...Qa8**

An exchange on the b5-pawn for the e4-pawn is almost always in Black's favor.

**30.Re2 Be7 31.Bb2 Red8?!**

A typical case: I'm not sure what to do. I am trying to maneuver in such a way that some sort of tactical idea may come up. The rook must always be placed opposite White's queen! But the unprotected bishop should not be left alone to face the opponent's forces. I didn't want to play 31...Nb6 in view of 32.f5!, when Black's king 's fortress unexpectedly faces ruin. So 31...Qb8! was the more practical choice.

**32.Nc2?!**

When the grandmaster took hold of this knight, I grew thoroughly frightened, as I saw a strong move for it to make. Fortunately, the knight went off in the wrong direction, heading off to snap up the poor pawn on b5!

He could have made my nightmare a reality by 32.Ned5!, with terrible complications, which certainly would have ended in the fall of one flag or the other. The variations are numberless. Interestingly, after 32...Bf8 33.Nxf6+ Nxf6, White would send a second suicide attacker onto the same square: 34.Nd5! This one, however, would survive: 34...Nd7! 35.Qc3 e5 with a small advantage to White.

Black's strongest reply would be 32...Qa7+, when White should trade queens at e3, since after 33.Kh1 [CH: 33.Qe3 Qxe3+ 34.Rxe3 Bf8 35.Nxf6+ Nxf6 or

33.Qd4 Qxd4+ 34.Rxd4 Bf8 35.Ne3 Nb6 are both good lines for Black.] 33... exd5 34.exd5 Ne5! 35.fxe5 dxe5, the threat of ...Nf6-g4-f2 would render White's position difficult.

### 32...Ng4!

The square Black knight has been lusting after.

### 33.Nd4 Bf6

I begin to play on the dark squares.

### 34.Kh1

34.Ndxb5 would be strongly met by 34...Rb8! 35.a3 (or 35.a4 Bxb5 36.axb5 [CH: or 36.Nxb5 Bxb2 37.Rxb2 Qxa4 38.Nxd6 Nc5 39.Qe2 Qa7 40.Kh1 Na4 with a better game for Black] 36...Qa7+, and White loses the exchange) 35... Bxb5 36.Nxb5 Bxb2 37.Rxb2 Rxb5! 38.Qxb5 Qxa3 39.Re2 [CH: 39.Qe2 is marginally better, but Black is still close to winning after 39...Qxg3 40.Qf3 Qh2+ 41.Kf1 Qxh4 42.Kg1 d5.] 39...Qxg3, which results in the white king falling into a mating net. [CH: 34.Ncxb5 deserved some analysis, but isn't done by Shipov.]

### 34...Nde5!



A most unpleasant shot! Especially with the seconds ticking away. As so many times before in the Hedgehog's history, the opposition of Black's rook and White's queen tells.

### 35.Qb1

Black's idea consisted of the variation 35.fxe5 dxe5 36.Nd5 exd5 37.Nxc6 dxe4!, and White must lose material.

### 35...Nc4

Black has succeeded in activating all of his minor pieces: White's in trouble. What followed was organized chaos! With out flags hanging, we set out to gobble everything we could at a dead run; being younger and quicker, I managed to gobble one piece more than he did!

### 36.Nxc6 Nxb2! 37.e5?

37.Nxd8! Nxd1 38.Nxd1 would have held out longer, but here too, none dare call it equal: 38...Bxd8! 39.Bf3 Rc4 40.Kg2 Bb6! 41.Qd3 Qc6 42.a3 Ba7!, and Black gradually increases his threats. To continue, he could throw some more fuel on the fire by ...e6-e5! and send his queen to g1.

### 37...Nxd1 38.Qxd1 Rxc6 39.exf6 Qc8! 40.Bxc6 Qxc6+ 41.Ne4 Qxe4+!

The fork at f2 will result in the win of a piece. White resigned. Pleasant memories.

This is what you can expect in the vast majority of this book.

When researching the material for this review, I came across a recent game where Black employed the Hedgehog and White used a line that was recommended in the second edition of [\*A Strategic Opening Repertoire for White\*](#):

**G.Meier (2653) – R.Reinaldo Castineira (2488), XIX Magistral Pamplona 28.12.2009**

**1.Nf3 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.g3 b6 4.Bg2 Bb7 5.0-0 c5 6.Nc3 Be7 7.d4 cxd4 8.Qxd4 d6 9.Bg5 a6 10.Bxf6 Bxf6 11.Qf4 0-0 12.Rad1 Be7 13.Ne4 Bxe4 14.Qxe4 Ra7 15.Nd4**



So far so good. Here Black plays a new move that isn't mentioned by Shipov, but the position with the a-rook having moved to d1 is much less frequently played than with the f-rook.

**15...Rd7**

Normally Black prefers 15...Rc7 or 15...Qc8 at this juncture. Now White employs a surprising plan.

**16.Bh3!? Bf6 17.Nxe6 Re7!**

17...fxe6 18 Bxe6+ Kh8 19 Bxd7 Qxd7 20 Rd2 followed by Rfd1 is somewhat better for White because of White's dominance of the d-file along with Black's weak queenside pawns and inferior coordination, and if Black tries to hold on to the pawn after 20...Nc6 21 Rfd1 Be7, his position becomes unbearably passive.

**18.Nxd8 Rxe4 19.Nb7 Rxe2 20.b4 Rxa2 21.Rxd6 Rc2 22.Rxb6 Rxc4**

The game looks to be heading for an equal endgame, but things are still very tricky for Black because his pieces are poorly coordinated with the knight on b8 a particular problem.

**23.Na5 Rd4 24.Rc1 Be7 25.Rb1 Rfd8 26.b5 axb5 27.R1xb5 Ra4 28.Bf5**

28 Bf1 is also quite interesting, intending to play Rb7 and Bc4 to apply pressure on the soft f7-pawn.

**28...g6 29.Bc2 Ra1+ 30.Kg2 Nd7?!**

30...Kf8 is the relatively lesser evil. Now Black starts having real issues.

**31.Rb7 Bf6?**

And this just loses in a rather straightforward manner. Black had to counter attack with 31...Rc8! 32 Rxd7 Rxc2 33 Rxe7 Raa2 34 Kh3 Rxf2 35 Nc4 Rxh2 + 36 Kg4, and although Black is a piece down for two pawns, he has some drawing chances thanks to all the material being on the kingside.

**32.Nc6 Rc8 33.Rxd7 Rxc6 34.Bb3**

Game over!



34...Kg7 35.Rxf7+ Kh6 36.Rbb7 Kg5 37.h4+ Kf5 38.Rb5+ 1-0

In many ways this is an amazing book. It is incredibly detailed and will help you understand the Hedgehog and its many nuances very well. The translation isn't always consistent and at times it seems as though it was done by different people, but you always understand the intention of the author, even if it is after a bit of head scratching.

With its lively annotations and interesting games, this book will certainly reach a larger audience than most high-level opening books. I would say anyone rated from 1800 and upwards will be able to enjoy this book, but to truly reap all the benefits you will probably need to have a rating upwards of 2200 or so.

**My assessment of this book:** ♦♦♦♦♦

**Order *The Complete Hedgehog, Vol. 1***  
by Sergey Shipov

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*Grandmaster Repertoire 3: The English Opening, Vol. 1* by Mihail Marin,  
Quality 2009, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Paperback, 477pp., \$29.95  
(ChessCafe Price: \$21.95)

By now most serious chess students should be well aware of Grandmaster Marin and his excellent books. His repertoire books for Black on 1 e4 e5 are some of the finest opening books published in the last several of years. In the present volume, Mihail Marin presents a repertoire for white based on his own repertoire with 1 c4, facing 1...e5. The next volume will cover both the Symmetrical English, as well as other answers to 1 c4.



The material is divided as follows:

- Key to symbols used (1 page)
- Bibliography (1 page)
- Foreword by the Author (2 pages)
- How to Use this Book (1 page)
- The English Repertoire (4 pages)
- Karpov Variation: 1 c4 e5 2 g3 Nc6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Bg2 Bc5 5 Nf3 (5 chapters – 70 pages)
- Reversed Rossolimo: 1 c4 e5 2 g3 Nc6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Bg2 Bb4 5 Nd5 (6 chapters – 70 pages)
- Botvinnik System: 1 c4 e5 2 g3 Nc6 3 Nc3 g6 4 Bg2 Bg7 5 e4 d6 6 Nge2 (6 chapters – 80 pages)
- 2...Nc6 3 Nc3 (1 chapter – 24 pages)
- Reversed Dragon: 1 c4 e5 2 g3 Nf6 3 Bg2 d5 4 cxd5 Nxd5 5 Nc3 (6 chapters – 86 pages)
- Keres Variation: 1 c4 e5 2 g3 Nf6 3 Bg2 c6 4 d4 (4 chapters – 6- pages)
- 2...d6 (2 chapter – 32 pages)
- Accelerated Keres: 1 c4 e5 2 g3 (1 chapter – 14 pages)
- Odds and Trends (1 chapter – 18 pages)
- Index of Variations

As with the earlier book in this series, [\*Grandmaster Repertoire: 1.d4, Volume 1\*](#), this volume is incredibly detailed. The variations are worked through to the core. The lines are well explained, well-analyzed, and you find new moves and ideas in virtually in every single line.

As you can see from the above overview of the contents, the repertoire is based on the 1 c4 e5 2 g3 move order. This prevents the issues involved with the modern 2 Nc3 Bb4 line, that is considered okay for Black. There are also some other minor lines that are difficult.



It is important to make clear to potential buyers that this book is for players who are very serious about their chess; I would say those with a rating of 2200 up to around grandmaster level. Many of the lines run past move twenty and if a player is to remember theory to such a degree, he or she will have to put in an amazing effort to work through and memorize all the material, which is not something just anyone will be able to accomplish.

Obviously, you don't have to tackle the whole repertoire in one sitting. Marin himself didn't come to the repertoire decisions in a matter of a few weeks either. He made missteps along the way, the book is full of examples where he tried one thing, but it wasn't best and therefore he studied the position some more and found a better approach. However, it is beyond dispute that working on the repertoire or any part of your chess game in a concentrated, serious manner you will improve your overall game. It isn't entirely surprising that in the process of putting this repertoire together Marin has increased his rating to a personal best of over 2600. Using this book as a foundation for your own repertoire may not take you to 2600; in fact, it most likely will not. But if you take the time to work through the material, analyze it, find flaw, and improve on it, you will measurably increase your playing strength.

I will not go into details about individual parts of the proposed repertoire even if there are things that I question or disagree with based on my own experience and analysis, but I will limit myself to saying that this is one of the finest repertoire books I have ever had the pleasure of reading.

Therefore, if you are a serious player, if you like the English Opening, and you are ready to put in some hard work, then this book is well beyond anything that has previously been written on the lines covered and it will help take you to the next level.

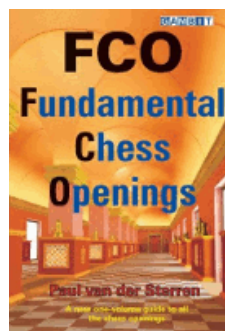
**My assessment of this book: ♦♦♦♦♦**

**Order *Grandmaster Repertoire 3:  
The English Opening, Vol. 1*  
by Mihail Marin**

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*Fundamental Chess Openings* by Paul van der Sterren, Gambit Publications 2009, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Paperback, 479pp., \$29.95 (ChessCafe Price: \$21.95)

Many younger players may not even have heard of Dutch grandmaster Paul van der Sterren. In 1993, he reached the Candidates stage of the World Championship cycle and years ago he was part of the editorial team of the New In Chess Yearbooks.



From the back cover we are told the following:

"This is not a book that provides masses of variations to memorize. Paul van der Sterren instead offers a wealth of ideas and explanation, together with the basic variations of each and every opening. This knowledge will equip players to succeed in the opening up to good club level, and provide a superb grounding in opening play on which to build a more sophisticated repertoire. The strategies he explains will, unlike ever-changing chess opening theory, remain valid as long as chess is played, and so the time spent studying this book will be rewarded many times over."

The material is divided as follows:

- Symbols and Notation (1 page)
- Introduction (2 pages)
- The First Move (1 page)
- 1 d4 (13 chapters – 189 pages)

- Flank Openings (5 chapters – 71 pages)
- 1 e4 (13 chapters – 100 pages)
- Index of Named Opening Lines (3 pages)
- Index of Variations (7 pages)

In the very brief introduction, Van der Sterren touches on two main topics: "What is Opening Theory" and "How Much Theory Should a Player Know." Both are obviously very important and particularly the latter is very difficult to answer accurately. Given the degree of difficulty, it isn't entirely surprising that the author provides several answers: "The most severe answer to this has to be 'everything', the softest 'as much as you like' and the profoundest 'nothing'. All three are correct." Further along he writes more accurately when saying "it is therefore of the utmost importance for a chess-player to find his own personal balance between knowing too much and knowing too little. The purpose of studying opening theory should not be accumulating any set amount of knowledge, but being content with whatever knowledge one has." The problem with this answer is that most people will never be entirely content with the knowledge that has been acquired, thus they keep studying openings relentlessly and do not give other phases of the game the same kind of attention. While the purpose of opening books is to make players study the opening in question, it is just as important to make the players who study the book aware that other phases of the game will follow and it is just as important to understand what to do with the position after the opening and how to play it well.

The present volume accomplishes much more than the three volumes of *Chess Opening Essentials* combined. Van der Sterren explains the opening much better, more concisely, and to a greater depth, despite utilizing less space.

However, this book is not particularly suited for players who are just starting out. I would imagine players rated at least 1400-1500 would get the most benefit from this volume. This book can serve as a good guide, helping players pick openings that suit them, as well as give them some basic idea what each opening is about.

Overall, this is a very well-written book, the size of it may scare some people off, but the material and coverage is well-balanced and it should serve as a good guide for many players. It is an excellent value for the money.

**My assessment of this book:** ♦♦♦♦

**Order *Fundamental Chess Openings***  
by Paul van der Sterren

*New In Chess Yearbook, Vol. 93* by Genna Sosonko (ed), Interchess BV 2009, Figurine Algebraic Notation, 246pp., \$29.95

This might be the "slimmest" volume reviewed this month column; nevertheless, it is never a lightweight.


The material is divided as follows:

- Opening Highlights (2 pages)
- Forum and Sosonko's Corner
- Forum (18 pages)
- Sosonko's Corner (6 pages)
- Surveys (33 surveys – 205 pages)
- Service
- Book Reviews (7 pages)
- New In Chess Code System (1 page)
- 2009 Yearbook Novelty of the Year Competition (1 page)



The material is as always absolutely first rate. It is full of new interesting ideas, insightful material, good game analysis, all written by top talent: grandmasters, international masters, and renowned theoreticians.

For serious players, the *New In Chess Yearbooks* remain the best choice when it comes to new opening ideas.

**My assessment of this book:** 

***New In Chess Yearbook, Vol. 93***  
by Genna Sosonko (ed.)

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