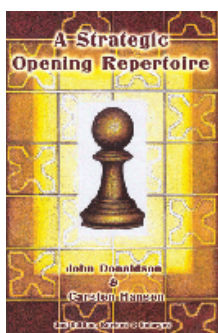




COLUMNISTS

Checkpoint

Carsten Hansen



Rating Chart

- ♦ – Poor
- ♦♦ – Useful
- ♦♦♦ – Good
- ♦♦♦♦ – Excellent

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Reviewed this month:

Play the Ponziani
by Dave Taylor & Keith Hayward

The Scotch Game for White
by Vladimir Barsky

Zuke 'Em
The Colle-Zukertort Revolutionized
by David Rudel

En Passant

Dangerous Weapons: The Dutch
by Palliser, Williams, & Vigus

Mixed Nuts

This month's column looks at a group of openings that don't often see individual monographs written about them: The Colle is frequently grouped with other Anti-Indians, such as the Trompowsky and London; the Ponziani is thankfully not a frequent guest in tournament chess or on the book circuit; the Scotch Game is relatively common after 1 e4 e5, but there are not many books on the topic; and the same can be said about the Dutch, which gets its own treatise in the *Dangerous Weapons* series. However, that's about the only thing that this mix of books have in common.

Play the Ponziani by Dave Taylor & Keith Hayward, Everyman Chess 2009, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Paperback, 301pp. \$27.95 (ChessCafe Price: \$23.95)

In the decade I have been reviewing books at ChessCafe.com, I have only once come across a book on this opening, *Ponziani Power* in 2000, which, curiously enough, was also written by Dave Taylor.

In my [November 2000](#) review, I was critical of the very sparse bibliography, which had some glaring omissions and strange inclusions. In contrast, the authors of the present volume include nearly every book that has ever fleetingly mentioned the Ponziani and even some that did not. Nevertheless, there are still some strange omissions, such as *Chess Informant* or the *New In Chess Yearbooks*, both of which were mentioned in the bibliography of the earlier book.

The contents are divided as follows:

- Bibliography (3 pages)
- Introduction (3 pages)
- Illustrative Games (28 pages)
- 3...Nf6 with 5...Ne7 (22 pages)
- 3...Nf6 with 5...Nb8 (37 pages)
- 3...Nf6 with 4...exd4 (32 pages)

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Wojo's Weapons
by Jonathan Hilton
& Dean Ippolito



Starting Out: The Reti
by Neil McDonald



Back to Basics: Openings
by Carsten Hansen



- 3...Nf6 Miscellaneous Responses (16 pages)
- 3...d5 4 Qa4 Bd7 (12 pages)
- 3...d5 4 Qa4 f6 (41 pages)
- 3...d5 4 Qa4 Miscellaneous Responses (17 pages)
- 3...d5 4 Bb5 (18 pages)
- 3...f5 (25 pages)
- 3...d6 (15 pages)
- 3...Be7 and Other 3rd Moves (16 pages)
- Miscellaneous 2nd Move Defences (9 pages)
- Index of Variations (11 pages)
- Index of Complete Games (1 page)

A number of things immediately stand out. The illustrative games section is only twenty-eight pages long, and, what's worse, no real reason is given for why the individual games were chosen. Moreover, the games are very poorly annotated, the use of punctuation symbols to indicate bad moves is sparse (even in a miniature win for White), and they even included a game played on the Internet, naming the players only by their handles, and not mentioning the time limit at which the game was played. While I don't particularly like sections of this kind, but I can understand its use when done in a proper fashion. In this book it simply represents filler material that makes an unnecessarily long book even longer.

The length of the book is also questionable. I have seen books on much bigger and more topical openings that utilize fewer pages. Of course, the length of the book would be a non-issue if they effectively used the space provided, which brings me to my concerns about the last chapter of the book. The Ponziani arises after 1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 c3:



Why on earth then do we need to be bothered with openings that have absolutely nothing to do with the Ponziani. In this chapter, the authors apparently aim to present repertoire suggestions for White against all of Black's possible second moves, including the Petroff (2...Nf6) and the Philidor (2...d6) Defenses. In the case of the Petroff, the authors recommend the extremely topical line 3 Nxe5 d6 4 Nf3 Nxe4 5 Nc3 Nxc3 6 dxc3, which has been debated heavily amongst the very top-rated grandmasters for six years. Yet, rather rely on more recent material, they have essentially stuck to coverage given in *ECO C* (fourth edition), which was released in 2000. By relying on material that *predates* the lines popularity the authors render their presentation absurdly out-of-date. Thus, they fail to mention numerous options for both sides and prove that sources listed in the bibliography, such as the online database and TWIC, were not consulted. If you don't intend to properly cover a line that falls outside the main topic of the book, then it is best to not cover it at all. However, the actual value of the book does not depend on whether one chapter should have been omitted.

Let's take a look at a bit of analysis, with my comments in brackets or italics.

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.c3 Nf6 4.d4 Nxe4 5.d5 Ne7 6.Nxe5 Ng6 7.Nxg6

This is not considered the critical line by the authors; nevertheless, they present it as if it leads to an advantage and it is fairly representative of the analysis provided.

7...hxg6 8.Qe7 Qe7 9.Bf4 d6 10.Na3 Rh5 11.0-0 Rf5 12.Qe3 Nf6 13.Bb5

+ Kd8



We will start our discussion here where the authors begin putting their necks out and offer real opinions.

14.Qf3

"14.Bc4!? seems more logical, with the king trapped in the centre, than on the previous move. For example, 14...Ng4 (if 14...Qxe3+ 15.fxe3 a6 [CH: 15...g5!? 16.Bg3 Ne4 is a very reasonable alternative, after which Black shouldn't be worse, but this isn't mentioned by the authors] 16.Nc2 [CH: This is an odd choice, particularly when a better move is available: 16.Rd4 g5 17.Bg3 Nh5 (Black can also consider 17...Bd7 18.e4 (18.Bb3!? may be even better) 18...Re5 19.Bxe5 dxe5 20.Rdd1, and White has the somewhat better chances) 18.Be1, and White is slightly better] 16...g5 17.Bg3 b5 [CH: Here Black should simply opt for 17...Ne4 18.Be1 Bd7 19.Nd4 Re5, and the chances are approximately equal] 18.Bb3 Bb7 19.Nb4 [CH: 19.Nd4!? is more difficult for Black; e.g., 19...Rxd5 20.Rhe1, and now 20...Rc5 21.Bxf7 Ke7 22.Bb3 is quite uncomfortable for Black's disorganized forces] 19...Ne4 20.Nc6+ [CH: I'm not sure why the authors allow Black the exchange on g3 with the resulting doubled g-pawns, 20.Be1!? looks like it is slightly better for White] 20...Bxc6 21.dxc6 Nxc3 22.hxg3 Ke7 [CH: 22...Rf2! offers Black better chances to equalize] 23.e4 Re5 [CH: I should mention that 23...Rc5 24.Kd2 Rb8 25.Rdf1 f6 26.Bd5 b4 27.cxb4 Rxb4 28.b3 is clearly better for White]) 24.Bd5, followed by g3-g4, leaves White better placed) 15.Qg3 Qf6 [CH: 15...g5!? 16.Be3 Nxe3 17.fxe3 a6 is an interesting alternative] 16.Rd4 g5 (if 16...Nxf2 17.Re1 Be7 18.h3 a6 19.Be3 Rb8 20.Bb3 c5 21.dxc6 bxc6 22.Bc2 Rg5 23.Qh2 wins) 17.Be3 Nxe3 18.fxe3 Bd7 [CH: 18...c5 19.dxc6 bxc6 20.Rhd1 Kc7 21.Bd3 Rf2 22.Nc4 Ba6 and 18...Qe5!? are alternatives that could also have been considered for Black] 19.Bd3 Rf2 20.Nc4 Bb5 21.h4 [CH: White has a considerably larger advantage after 21.Rd1!?] 21...gxh4 22.Rdxh4, and the white rooks will invade and continue to cause discomfort [CH: though the position after 22...c6 is fully playable for Black]."

14...Qe4 15.Qxe4 Nxe4



"ECO gives Black as clearly better here, citing J.Hector-A.Khalifman, London 1991. However, White has more resources than might be credited."

16.Bg3

"Better than 16.Be3 Nxf2 17.Bxf2 Rxf2 18.Rhf1 Rxf1 19.Rxf1 f5 as in the

game."

16...a6

"If now 16...Nxf2 17.Rhe1 c6 (17...Bd7 18.Rd4 leaves the black knight in danger [CH: *However, 18 Rd4 is a poor move that leaves Black with the better chances after 18...Be7!?. Instead, 18.Rd2 would have kept the chances about equal*]) 18.Bxf2 cxb5 19.Bh4+ g5 20.Bg3, and Black has a lot of work to do ever to activate his pieces, e.g. 20...Bd7 21.Nc2 Kc7 22.Re4 Re8 23.Rxe8 Bxe8 24.Ne3 Rf6 25.Ng4 Rg6 26.Rf1 maintains the bind [CH: *The last statement sounds like White has Black in a bind to White's advantage, but it is rather a bind to prevent Black from exploiting his material advantage. Nevertheless, Black appears to have the upper hand after 26...f6 27 Kd2 Bf7*]."

17.Rhe1!

"White solves his problems tactically. The g3-bishop cannot be captured due to the back rank mate, while 17...axb5 18 Rxe4 looks good for White. So Black must settle for 17...Nf6, but then 18.Bc4 b5 19.Bb3 Bb7 20.Bh4 g5 21.Bg3 Nxd5 [CH: *This is just a bad move, whereas 21...Rxd5 22.Bxd5 Bxd5 would actually lead to better game for Black. Needless to say, this goes unmentioned by the authors*] 22.Bc2 gives White reasonable play for the pawn [CH: *Indeed, White is clearly better...*]."

As you will have noticed, I disagree with much of the analysis presented in the book. Mainly because their analysis is rather poor, with overlooked improvements and mistaken assessments. However, there are other things that bother me as well:

- Long game fragments are given in the notes, often without any analysis.
- The use of Dave Taylor's games against his computer MChess Pro from over a decade ago, also often without much substantiating analysis.
- For some reason, the authors do not entirely understand the use of punctuation to indicate the value of chess moves. Often analysis is concluded with a large advantage to one side, but without using question marks to show poor moves from the other side.
- The authors' writing skills do not compare favorably with other chess books, which under the best of circumstances are hardly literary masterpieces. For instance, they do not seemingly understand the proper use of conditional verb forms, such as "if and then" statements.

This book is so loaded with flaws it astounds me. It is too long, self-indulgent, poorly written, and offers inadequate analysis. Those who play the Ponziani as white will need plenty of patience in order to run the recommended lines through their analysis engines. The rest of us do not need to bother.

My assessment of this book: ❖

[Order](#) *Play the Ponziani*

by Dave Taylor & Keith Hayward

The Scotch Game for White by Vladimir Barsky, Chess Stars 2009, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Paperback, 196pp. \$25.95 (ChessCafe Price: \$22.95)

The present volume from Chess Stars offers a repertoire for White based on the Scotch game, which arises after 1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4.

This opening was resurrected by Kasparov into a major weapon for White, second only to the Ruy Lopez. Of the twenty-five games on my database, Kasparov's score is an overwhelming +16 =9! Recently, Magnus Carlsen, after working with



Kasparov, used it to swat Peter Leko in a beautiful game.



The author of this volume, Vladimir Barsky, is an international master and has worked as a second to Alexander Morozevich. With regards to his credentials on the Scotch Game, I only managed to find a single game where Barsky employed it, but Morozevich has played the Scotch Game quite frequently, so I assume Barsky has spent some time analyzing it.

The material is divided as follows:

- Bibliography (1/8 of a 1 page)
- Preface (4 pages)
- 4...Nxd4; 4...Nge7; 4...d5 (23 pages)
- 4...g6; 4...d6 (22 pages)
- 4...Qh4 5 Nc3 Bb4 6 Be2 (19 pages)
- 4...Bc5 5 Nxc6 (42 pages)
- 4...Bb4+ 5 c3 (13 pages)
- 4...Nf6 5 Nxc6 bxc6 6 Bd3 (23 pages)
- 4...Nf6 5 Nxc6 bxc6 6 e5 (44 pages)

By normal standards, this is a rather short book, beginning with its bizarrely short bibliography. This consists of only two titles: *Beating the Open Games* by Mihail Marin and *Starting Out: The Scotch Game* by John Emms. I don't know why no other book or database is listed, but it is inconceivable that these two books are the only sources. However, if you stick to the material at hand and not allow yourself too many unnecessary departures, it should be sufficient. Each chapter is divided into three sections according to the traditional Chess Stars formula:

- Quick Repertoire
- Step by Step
- Complete Games

Generally speaking, the book is reasonably well-written, although there is a solid bias for White. At times, it seems like Barsky tries too hard to make things better for White than they truly are; for instance, take the following example from chapter four (page 103):

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.d4 exd4 4.Nxd4 Bc5 5.Nxc6 Qf6 6.Qf3 bxc6 7.Nd2 d6 8.Nb3 Bb6 9.a4 a5 10.Bd2 Qxf3

10...Qxb2? loses for Black after 11 Nc3 Qxc2 12 Bxg7, as pointed out in the book.

11.gxf3 Ne7 12.Rg1



This is an important position in his repertoire choice of 6 Qf3, which is rather tame, but quite popular, even among the highest rated players.

12...Ng6

Here the author writes, "Levon Aronian preferred 12...0-0 in another game in the same tournament. White responded with 13.Be3 even losing a tempo, because he has no other logical plan. Later, in the arising maneuvering game,

the World Champion Vishy Anand could have maintained a slight advantage: 13...Bxe3 14.fxe3 c5 15.0-0-0 Bb7 16.Bb5 Bc6 17.e5!? (White exploits an interesting tactical chance.) 17...Rfd8 18.exd6 cxd6, and here White should have kept the enemy pawn on the d6-square with: [CH: and here he gives a diagram that reflects the position before White's 16th move and gives the following sequence of impossible moves:] 19.e5! Bxb5 20.axb5 Ng6 21.Nd2 Nf4 22.Kb1 +="

Perhaps Barsky intended 19 e4. In any case it is hardly forced play.

13.Be3

"This is the best plan for White under the circumstances."

13...Bxe3 14.fxe3 Ne5

This passes without any comment by the author, but an alternative is the straightforward 14...0-0!?, and if White proceeds with 15 0-0-0, then 15...Re8 leaves Black with a solid position and perhaps only very slightly worse chances.

15.Be2 g6 16.f4 Nd7 17.Bf3

"It deserved attention for White to play 17.Nd4!?, since this knight cannot be repelled from that beautiful outpost."

In the Quick Repertoire section, the author doesn't even mention 17 Bf3 and simply recommends 17 Nd4 with a similar comment, but how about 17...Bb7!?, intending 18 0-0-0 c5 19 Nb5 0-0-0 with a pleasant game for Black.

17...c5

Barsky writes, "Aronian considered that the control over the d4-square was more important for him that (sic) the weakening of the d6-pawn."

However, another option is 17...Bb7!?, which is perfectly adequate for Black after 18 Nd4 c5 19 Nb5 0-0-0 with the same position as after 17 Nd4, but White can likely improve with the pawn sacrifice 18 e5!, and after 18...dxe5 19 0-0-0!, Black will have a hard time coordinating his pieces.

18.e5 Ra7 19.exd6 cxd6 20.Nd2

"The pawns on a5 and d6 need additional protection and White maintains a slight edge, Radjabov-Aronian, Bilbao 2008."

This is a pretty good book and the repertoire has some bite to it. It will serve a fairly large span of players, say, from around 1600+ to 2200. Black players who answer 1.e4 with 1...e5 will also want to pay attention to the material in this volume.

My assessment of this book: ♦♦♦♦

Order *The Scotch Game for White*

by Vladimir Barsky

Zuke 'Em – The Colle-Zukertort Revolutionized by David Rudel, Thinkers' Press 2009, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Paperback, 312pp. \$27.99 (ChessCafe Price: \$24.99)

It is quite rare that I get to review an opening book after it was shortlisted for the **ChessCafe.com Book of the Year Award**. The initial impression given by the book cover is that the book will be loads of fun.



I had never heard of the author prior to receiving the book. The book relates that "David Rudel is a published mathematician who led a winning team in the 'World Championships of Mathematical Modeling' (The International Mathematical Contest in Modeling) of 1999. He has won Texas state



championships in both math and physics, taught at Dartmouth, and was on the highest ranking team among all undergraduate institutions in the 1997 Putnam competition. He currently is a Senior Editor at ExploreLearning, a premier provider of interactive educational software. His chief interests are theology, church reform, and volleyball." This is interesting, but it says nothing about chess. USChess.org has a rating for Rudel from 1998 that was slightly higher than 1300. We rarely see authors in this column rated as low as that. However, if Rudel didn't know how to write about chess, his book would never have made it to the shortlist.


The contents are divided as follows:

- Foreword (2 pages)
- Why? (14 pages)
- Introduction: The Enigmatic Zukertort (24 pages)
- The Cast (1 page)
- Zukertort Principles, Wisdom, and Guidelines (11 pages)
- The Mainline (50 pages)
- The Classical Variation – A Thematic Treatment (22 pages)
- Early Bishop Deviations (36 pages)
- The Slav Defense (16 pages)
- The Queen's Indian and Benoni Defenses (18 pages)
- The Sneaky Grünfeld (12 pages)
- The Queen's Gambit Reversed (18 pages)
- Various Oddities (32 pages)
- Extra Analysis (30 pages)
- Training (8 pages)
- New Ideas Index (6 pages)
- Players and Variation Indices (2 pages)
- Bibliography (2 pages)
- About the Author (1 page)
- Colophon (1 page)

One of the main problems with the Colle is that Black can rather easily avoid the truly fun lines for White. In addition to the well-debated Colle lines, the author presents ideas against a number of opening strategies for Black, including some of the more annoying ones (for Colle players, that is) such as the Slav set-up, and some Indian and Benoni set-ups. All of which are perfectly designed for Black to avoid what White is aiming for. The interesting thing is that Rudel isn't overly concerned with the fact that White doesn't achieve the desired set-up against all lines, he rather aims for ideas that work and that offer White a better than average chance of getting a pleasant position that he is familiar with. This is how all repertoire books should be put together, especially when they are aimed at average players, so the repertoire book format certainly serves its purpose well for this opening.

That said, the chapters are widely different in format and delivery. Some chapters contain a lot of moves, games and analysis, some mostly games, some mostly prose, some seem like idea catalogs, and others are a mixture of it all. It is difficult to get a firm grip on this book and one could criticize it for switching formats throughout; however, I rather like the idea of a book that shakes matters up a little to see what pops up. Still, Palliser's [*Starting Out: the Colle*](#) is a far better book with a much higher level of analysis and consistent presentation. Rudel's book is good, and I understand why it has a legion of fans willing to vote for it, but it doesn't come close to being a Book of the Year.

This book is written for anyone who is rated from 1300+ to 2200 who either already employs the Colle-Zukertort or is looking for an easy-to-learn opening with a kick and a bite. The secret motto of this book is to have fun, and if you purchase the book and take up the opening, you will likely have your share too.

My assessment of this book: 

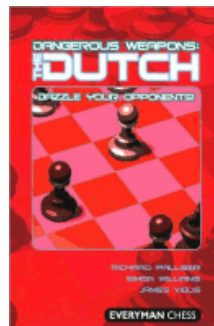
[Order Zuke 'Em](#)

The Colle-Zukertort Revolutionized

by David Rudel

Dangerous Weapons: The Dutch by Richard Palliser, Simon Williams, and James Vigus, Everyman Chess 2009, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Paperback, 224pp. \$26.95 (ChessCafe Price: \$21.95)

Many could argue that the Dutch in itself would qualify as a dangerous weapon. There is an element of risk for the second player, but it is frequently underestimated and not fully understood. The Everyman team of authors for this volume includes Richard Palliser, who has been involved in nearly all of the Dangerous Weapons books, Grandmaster and Classical Dutch specialist Simon Williams, and FIDE master James Vigus, who also has a few excellent books to his credit.



The material is divided as follows:

- Preface (2 pages)
- Series Introduction
- Block with the Rook! (1 d4 f5 2 Bg5 h6 3 Bh4 g5 4 e4 Rh7) (14 pages)
- Targeting that Advanced f-pawn (1 d4 f5 2 Qd3) (34 pages)
- Not so Dim on the Rim (1 d4 f5 2 Nh3) (13 pages)
- Don't Underestimate 3 h3 (1 d4 f5 2 Nf3 e6 3 h3 Nf6 4 g4) (17 pages)
- Further Adventures with 3 h3 (1 d4 f5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 h3) (17 pages)
- Don't be Tricked into the Leningrad (1 d4 f5 2 Nf3 d6 3 Nc3) (19 pages)
- The Leningrad Dutch, Christmas Tree Style (1 d4 f5 2 g3 Nf6 3 Bg2 g6 4 Nf3 Bg7 5 0-0 0-0 6 c4 d6 7 Nc3 e6) (18 pages)
- The Christmas Tree: Further Branches (1 d4 f5 2 g3 Nf6 3 Bg2 g6 4 Nf3 Bg7 5 0-0 0-0 6 c4 d6 7 Nc3 e6) (14 pages)
- Team up a Quick b2-b4 with e2-e3 (1 d4 f5 2 c4 Nf6 3 Nc3 d6 4 Nf3 g6 5 e3 Bg7 6 Be2 0-0 7 0-0) (16 pages)
- Encouraging d4-d5 in the Classical (1 d4 f5 2 g3 Nf6 3 Bg2 e6 4 c4 Be7 5 Nf3 0-0 6 0-0 d6 7 Nc3 Nc6) (12 pages)
- The Old Faithful: 7...a5! (1 d4 f5 2 g3 Nf6 3 Bg2 e6 4 c4 Be7 5 Nf3 0-0 6 0-0 d6 7 Nc3 a5) (18 pages)
- Fighting Back against 2 d3 (1 Nf3 f5 2 d3 d6 3 e4 e5 4 Nc3 Nf6 5 exf5 Bxf5 6 d4 Nbd7) (17 pages)
- Index of Variations (3 pages)
- Index of Players (3 pages)


As you can see, they authors touch upon most corners of the Dutch, both the Classical and the Leningrad Dutch are represented, and so are several of the more interesting Anti-Dutch lines. I would have liked to see a line in the Stonewall as well, but I guess you can't have everything.

Much like the Dutch itself, this book is a lot of fun and using the ideas in it should be quite entertaining. The lines and the analysis have thus far held up to closer scrutiny, and I don't expect that to change. The authors take their work far more seriously than they take themselves; they call it as they it, and don't pretty-up the details when things may not be entirely clear.

If you play the Dutch and are looking for some ideas to spice up your repertoire, you will want to read this book. Similarly, if you are looking for a side line against the Dutch, this book is more than adequate.

While the target audience is primarily players rated from 1800-2000, even stronger players will be able to use some of the ideas presented here. Indeed,

many of the ideas have been tested by strong players already, though in most cases, not very frequently.

My assessment of this book: 

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

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