



COLUMNISTS

Checkpoint

Carsten Hansen



Rating Chart

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

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Reviewed this month:

Wojo's Weapons:
Winning With White, Volume 1
by Jonathan Hilton & Dean Ippolito

Starting Out: The Réti
by Neil McDonald

En Passant

Chess Informant, Vol. 106
by Zdenko Krnic et al

New In Chess Yearbook, Vol. 94
by Genna Sosonko (ed.)

Who's Wojo

This month's column looks two publications that are approaching milestones. *Chess Informant* will soon reach thirty-five years in publication, and *New In Chess Yearbook* will be reaching volume number 100. In addition to these heavy hitters, we will take a look at two books that present material where White opens with the flexible 1 Nf3.

Wojo's Weapons: Winning With White, Volume 1, by Dave Jonathan Hilton & Dean Ippolito, Mongoose Press 2010, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Paperback, 408pp., \$29.95 (ChessCafe Price \$25.95)

"Who's Wojo?" is likely the first question that pops into your head when you see the title of this book, especially if you're not a U.S. resident. The answer is found in the introduction to this volume: "During the eight years that the late Aleksander Wojtkiewicz (1963-2006) lived in the United States, he won or tied for first place in more than 240 tournaments. He averaged over thirty tournament victories a year – or nearly three per month. 'Wojo', as he was affectionately called by his fans, was arguably the most successful tournament player in the United States, winning the Grand Prix six years in a row from 1999 to 2004. During that time, however, he was not considered one of the best players in the world. Although his name was sporadically on the FIDE 'Top 100' rating list, his official ELO rating – which peaked at 2595 – never made it past the magic 2600 mark. How, then, did he achieve such success?"

"The answer is this: Wojtkiewicz was ruthlessly pragmatic in his approach to tournament chess. His opening repertoire was designed in such a way that he essentially could play his games on 'auto-pilot.'"

The authors then explain the basics of Wojtkiewicz's repertoire or "Wojo's Weapons" as they have aptly named it:

- It must have surprise value.
- It must be relatively sound.
- It must be disconcerting to play against.

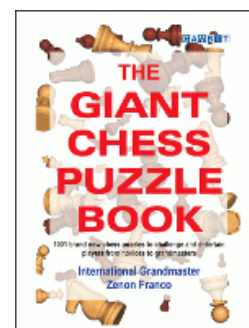
Purchases from our [shop](#) help keep [ChessCafe.com](#) freely accessible:



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[Giant Chess Puzzle Book](#)
by Zenon Franco



- It must fit in with the rest of the repertoire.

The above fits very well with my own picture of Wojtkiewicz and his opening play. I met "Wojo" in the U.S. Open Quick Play, where he shared first place, but our personal encounter ended 1-1. He won on time in a completely lost position in the first game, and then lost the second game after being a little too original in the opening as black. Nevertheless, his opening repertoire as white provided some inspiration for the recommendations in the book I co-authored with John Donaldson, [*A Strategic Opening Repertoire*](#).

As you can see from the title of this book, this is the first volume of, I assume, two. International Master Dean Ippolito is a familiar name in the U.S., whereas National Master Jonathan Hilton is more or less entirely unknown, although he apparently wrote a series of articles on Wojtkiewicz on the *Chess Life* website.

The material is divided as follows:

- Bibliography (1 page)
- Introduction: The "Wojo System" (4 pages)
- **Part I: The Closed Catalan** (1 page)
- An Introduction to the Closed Catalan (35 pages)
- The Closed Catalan with 4...Bb4+ (23 pages)
- Assembling the Repertoire (7 pages)
- **Part II: The Open Catalan** (1 page)
- The Delayed Open Catalan with 7.Ne5!? Nc6 (32 pages)
- The Delayed Open Catalan with 7.Ne5!? c5 (and others) (11 pages)
- The Early Open Catalan with 5...Nc6 (41 pages)
- The Early Open Catalan with 5...c5 (23 pages)
- The Early Open Catalan with 5...a6 6 Ne5 Bb4+ (8 pages)
- The Early Open Catalan with 5...a6 6 Ne5 c5 (27 pages)
- The Early Open Catalan with 5...b5 or 5...c6 (11 pages)
- The Early Open Catalan – Others (5...Bb4+, 5...Nbd7, 5...Bd7) (22 pages)
- **Part III: The Slav Defense** (1 page)
- The Slav Defense with 4 Qc2 dxc4 (27 pages)
- The Slav Defense with 4 Qc2 g6 (16 pages)
- Semi-Slav Hybrids with 1 Nf3 d5 2 d4 c6 (8 pages)
- **Part IV: Black's Other Defenses** (1 page)
- The Queen's Gambit Accepted (26 pages)
- The Tarrasch (28 pages)
- Systems with 2...Bf5 (13 pages)
- The Chigorin (14 pages)
- The Austrian Defense (9 pages)
- Index of Variations (12 pages)
- Index of Players (1 page)

The coverage of each line is incredibly detailed, and the authors' adoration and appreciation for Wojtkiewicz's approach to chess is apparent throughout the book. Of the seventy-five annotated main games in this volume, there are no less than thirty-eight of Wojtkiewicz's own games.

The games are annotated in amazing depth with a keen eye for detail in the theoretical discussion and elaborate coverage of the later phases of each game that provides the reader an opportunity to appreciate the entire "Wojo" approach.

While there is plenty of prose to enhance and support the understanding of weaker players, the theoretical coverage is by and large too difficult to follow for players rated below 2000. It can easily be used by players rated up to 2600, indeed if it worked so effectively for Wojtkiewicz, it can easily be adapted by other strong grandmasters with a flair for positional chess and a strong hand in the endgame.

I find this book incredibly well-written, with plenty of original analysis and new ideas infused into a repertoire that in practice will prove quite worrisome to Black. If you are an ambitious player who has the time and dedication to understand, memorize, and master a new repertoire as white, then this book,

along with a hopefully equally strong second volume, will provide you with something that can carry you to the next level and beyond. Players who employ the Catalan Opening as white will also want to study this book.

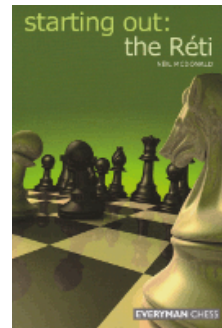
My assessment of this book: ♦♦♦♦

Order *Wojo's Weapons*

by Jonathan Hilton & Dean Ippolito

Starting Out: The Réti by Neil McDonald, Everyman Chess 2010, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Paperback, 206pp., \$26.95 (ChessCafe Price \$21.95)

It is surprising that this is the first *Starting Out* book on the Réti, given that the series has already run for a decade. Everyman Chess has published Nigel Davies's *The Dynamic Réti* and Richard Palliser's *Beating Unusual Openings*, but this is a first for the Starting Out series. The Réti Opening has been a favorite of mine for many years. It is a perfect weapon to beat lower-rated players, because it allows White to reach a perfectly playable position without having to worry about all the main line theory. I recall my compatriot Bent Larsen writing something along the lines that he would play the Réti (or 1 Nf3) if he couldn't think of anything creative against his opponent's favorite openings.



In the Introduction to this volume, McDonald recounts how he started playing 1 Nf3 after studying Keene's book *Flank Openings*. He instantly had success with it against his clueless opponents. It is often recommended that young players begin with 1 e4 to gain a wider understanding of chess; however, at lower levels of play, moves such as 1 Nf3 and 1 c4 almost automatically provide White with an advantage, because Black just doesn't know what he is supposed to do. Therefore, it was with great satisfaction that I read my way through this book.

The material is divided as follows:

- Introduction (10 pages)
- Black Seizes Space: 2...d4 (25 pages)
- The Réti Slav: Introduction and the New York System (29 pages)
- The Réti Slav: Capablanca's System (32 pages)
- The Réti Slav: Black Plays ...dxc4 (17 pages)
- The Open Réti (24 pages)
- The Closed Réti (23 pages)
- Ideas in the English Opening (32 pages)
- Index of Variations (7 pages)
- Index of Complete Games (3 pages)

While the Introduction doesn't have much to do with the Réti as a whole and is largely focused on games that don't open with the Réti, McDonald makes up for it in the following six chapters. In the first chapter he even offers a bit of my analysis in a sharp side line of 1 Nf3 d5 2 c4 d4 3 b4. I like the way he presents the opening from the perspective of both players. He covers the critical approaches from either side, but does not delve too deep into the theory as to scare players away. He provides just enough to work with so that players can decide what to play as white and what to do against it as black.

The game selection is generally very good, showing examples of typical plans for both sides, relevant pawn structures, and how surprisingly sharp positions can arise from something that looks quite sterile. The annotations are mostly prose, though I would have liked to see more analysis included and theoretical alternatives discussed, all of which could have been accomplished without making the book much longer by skipping the material in chapter seven. This chapter greatly annoys me for several reasons:

- Why include a chapter on ideas for white in the English Opening when this is not a repertoire book for White.
- The coverage is so breezy and vague that it hardly serves the purpose it claims to.
- If the author needed to fill more pages, why not discuss some of the more exotic alternatives that are available to Black against 1 Nf3 or present a general overview of transposition possibilities into other openings.

Thus, there are things I like and dislike in this book. The majority of the content is pretty good and definitely fills a void. Still, there is room for improvement, as is witnessed by a lack of bibliography among other things.

Here's a game from the book with the author's annotations. It illustrates how things can go wrong for Black if he starts to flounder.

R. Markus – M. Perunovic

Serbian Team Championship 2008

1.Nf3 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.g3 d5 4.b3 Be7 5.Bg2 0-0 6.0-0 c5 7.Bb2 Nc6 8.e3 b6 9. Nc3 dxc4

By capturing on c4, Black avoids all the difficulties he experiences after White exchanges himself on d5.

10.bxc4 Bb7 11.Qe2 Rc8



The critical alternative is 11...Nb4, as we shall discuss in the next two games. Black now plays a series of routine centralizing moves with his queen and rook, but finds he is unable to put any significant pressure on the white centre – the d3-pawn holds firm. The upshot is that White has a free hand to begin an f4-f5 pawn ram against the black kingside.

12.Ne1

NOTE: This move proves Philidor's assertion that the pawns are the heart of the game of chess, with the pieces as their servants. [*Author's emphasis*]

The white knight retreats to clear the way for one pawn to advance, and to help defend another one that is about to appear on d3.

12...Qd7 13.f4 Rfd8 14.d3 Nb4

Much less effective than at move 11.

15.Rd1 a6

After 15...Bxg2 16.Nxg2!? the white knight might be able to go to f4 to help attack e6 once the f4-f5 advance has been arranged.

16.Nf3!

Nicely done: the horse has performed its duty to the pawns and now springs back into action.

16...Qc7

In contrast to the happy prospects of its opposite number, the black nag would be in the lion's mouth after 16...Bxf3?! 17.Bxf3 Nxd3? 18.a4 etc, when there is no good way to break the pin on d3.

17.a3 Nc6 18.Ng5 Nb8 19.Bxb7 Qxb7

Black has been unable to make the slightest dent on the white centre and so is now overcome by a rapid attack.

20.f5!



The e6-pawn is exchanged or driven away from its defence of d5, after which this key central square becomes an attacking outpost for a white knight.

20...exf5 21.Rxf5 Nbd7 22.Nd5

White's game is a model of harmony. His rooks have the open f-file, the knights are attacking on g5 and the beautiful d5-square, and the bishop on b2 has been unleashed.

22...Re8 23.Rdf1 Rc6 24.e4!

The restrained Réti pawn finally advances to make the white centre invincible.

24...Bd8



How to break through?

25.Nxf7!



Not surprisingly White's pressure results in a destructive combination on the f-file.

25...Kxf7 26.Qh5+ Kg8

If 26...g6 27.Qxh7+ or 26...Kf8 27.Qxe5 when 28 e5 [CH: this is nonsense, but I think he means 27 Qxh7, which is completely devastating] is going to be lethal.

27.Nxf6+ 1-0

After 27...Nxf6, or else e8 is hanging, White would have capped a fine performance with 28.Qxe8+! Nxe8 29.Rf8 mate. An extremely thematic Réti game.

My assessment of this book:  

[Order](#) *Starting Out: The Réti*

by Neil McDonald

Chess Informant, Vol. 106 by Zdenko Krnic et al., Sahovski Informator 2009, Figurine Algebraic Notation, 317pp., \$36.00

Regular readers will be aware that I downgraded the *Chess Informant* from a consistent four-star rating to a three-star, because in my opinion the quality of the material has been declining for several years.

The contents of the most recent volume are divided as follows:

- Contributors (2 pages)
- The best ten games for the preceding Volume (1 page)
- The ten most important theoretical novelties of the preceding volume (5 pages)
- System of Signs (3 pages)
- Opening Classification (7 pages)
- A (18 + 17 pages)
- B (26 + 28 pages)
- C (17 + 17 pages)
- D (28 + 21 pages)
- E (10 + 15 pages)
- Index [of Players] (10 pages)
- Commentators (1 page)
- Combinations (6 pages)
- Endings (8 pages)
- Studies (3 pages)
- Tournaments (20 pages)
- Modern Chess Theory (35 pages)
- The Best of Chess Informant - Rustam Kasimdzhanov (25 pages)



For this volume, I counted sixty-three contributors; however, by comparison, in volume 72 there were no less than fifty-seven contributors from Russia alone. While the pedigree of many of the contributors is quite impressive - Anand, Kramnik, Jussupow, Speelman, Timman, Krasenkow and Marin to name a few - the trend is becoming more and more obvious: very few of the new generation of players contribute to this former mainstay in opening theory. Perhaps they just do not share the same connection with the publication that past generations had. The only country whose players seem to consistently contribute is Cuba.

In this volume, of the 297 games or fragments, thirty games are annotated, very competently I should add, by members of the editorial staff Sr. Cvetkovic and Sasa Velickovic. However, 114 have been annotated by the notorious "RR," which stands for "short (if, in fact, any...) editorial comments." That leaves us with 153 games annotated by non-staff members, a rather meager amount in my opinion.


For years, I have been puzzled about the value of listing tournament results in these volumes. It does not seem particularly relevant nowadays, when Internet sites such as TWIC provide more detailed results than the listings in *Chess Informant* ever has. If this feature is deemed necessary by the editorial panel

at Chess Informant, why not just stick to the most important tournaments; e. g., those that are relevant to World Championships, World Cups, and official championships of the strongest countries. The current twenty pages of results are definitely too many.

Still, there are plenty of highlights to enjoy. These include Kramnik's annotations to his two games in the Petroff from Dortmund 2009 against Naiditsch and Jakovenko and the annotation efforts by Marin and Stoica. The latter occasionally provides more analysis than a normal human being will be able to devour on a good day.

The section on Modern Chess Theory consists of three articles: the Petroff (C42 – 1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 Nxe5 d6 4 Nf3 Nxe4 5 d4 d5 6 Bd3 Bd6 7 0-0 0-0 8 c4 c6), The Catalan (E04 – 1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 g3 d5 4 Bg2 dxc4 5 Nf3 Bb4 + 6 Bd2), and the King's Indian (E97 – 1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 Bg7 4 e4 d6 5 Nf3 0-0 6 Be2 e5 7 0-0 Nc6 8 d5 Ne7, and now either 9 Nd2 or 9 b4). The last two articles run about fourteen pages, while the former comes in at only eight.

Nonetheless, there is still plenty of interesting study material for strong and ambitious players. It would be nice to see this former giant become as relevant to this generation of chess players as it was to earlier generations.

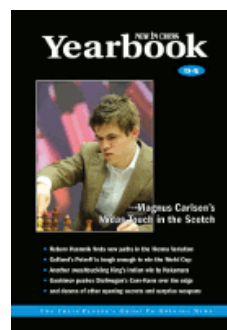
My assessment of this book: 

Order Chess Informant, Vol. 106

by Aleksandar Matanovic et al

New In Chess Yearbook, Vol. 94 by Genna Sosonko (ed.), Interchess BV 2009, Figurine Algebraic Notation, 247pp., \$29.95

The key words for this volume are undoubtedly deep analysis, there is plenty of it throughout this volume. It begins in the Forum section, which seems filled with exhaustively analyzed games. There is also an announcement of the winner of the Novelty of the Year competition: Daniel Stellwagen's spectacular discovery 24...Qf3! in his game against van Wely in Amsterdam 2009. He captured 52.8% of the votes! The runner-up, and my favorite to win, was Hector's discovery in the Krause Slav, which he employed against Avrukh in Elsinore 2009. Jonny Hector, by the way, recently concluded an amazing effort by winning all nine games on board one in the Danish League for a mind-blowing 3434(!) rating performance.



Sosonko carries on the theme of opening preparation in an article titled "BP," for "Be Prepared." As usual, his article is one of the highlights and he brings some excellent examples of how to prepare by either going deep or by getting out of mainstream theory immediately. He illustrates this theme with a couple of Kortchnoi games, where the veteran shows his total lack of respect for the Dutch Defense, though in both cases he emerges from the opening with less than nothing.

The material is divided as follows:


- Opening Highlights (2 pages)
- Forum and Sosonko's Corner
- Forum (17 pages)
- Sosonko's Corner (6 pages)
- Surveys (32 surveys – 208 pages)
- Service
- Book Reviews (5 pages)
- New In Chess Code System (1 page)

To highlight any one survey from this volume would in many ways be unfair

to the others. The quality of the surveys is incredibly high and there are many excellent contributions. Each of the contributors are strong players and very capable opening theoreticians.

There are simply so many interesting ideas presented in the *New In Chess Yearbooks* that I am always left with the urge to try them out in tournaments or in blitz games and online servers. What can possibly be better than a book that makes you crave to play more.

For those who are serious about their chess, and like to follow the development of opening theory or simply enjoy studying interesting games, you can never go wrong by buying the *New In Chess Yearbook*.

My assessment of this book: 

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