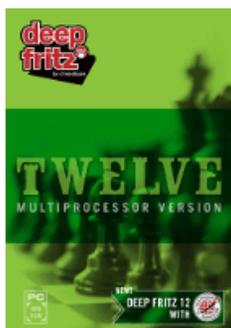




COLUMNISTS

ChessBase Cafe

Lance Martin



Rating Chart

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

CHESSTHEATRE

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You Can have Two Knights with a 1.d4 Repertoire

Two Knights Defence, by Lawrence Trent, Running time: four hours, forty-five minutes

The subject of this DVD is The Two Knights Defense with 4.Ng5. The opening begins with **1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Nf6**, which was analyzed by Plerio as early as 1580. Reportedly, David Bronstein recommended that this opening be called the Chigorin Counter Attack, and Tarrasch even called **4.Ng5** a beginners move (*ein stumper zug*). However, according to Jan Pinski in *The Two Knights Defence*, it was revitalized in the 1990s by players such as Morozevich and Short.



There are a total of twenty-six lectures on this DVD:

- Introduction
- Asrian-Minasian
- Anand-Beliavsky
- Huerta-Ballinas
- Bahram-Hector
- Kan-Konstntinopolsky
- Vallejo-Pons-Naiditsch
- Weitsch-Jedynak
- Dublin-Kuzman
- Jeric-Rodmanr
- Rudnick-Pichlern
- Trent-Parpinel
- Kursonov-De La Paz Perdomo
- Demian-Oprisor
- Zhang Zhong-Gungully
- Short-Sokolovl
- Nakamura-Friedel
- Conquest-Howell
- Socko-Bacrot
- Ciocaltea-Nezhmetdinovn
- L-Ami-Stellwagen
- Kriventsov-Becerra
- Sutovsky-Beliavsky
- Yakovich-Tomashevsky
- Naititsch-Halikias
- Outro

As for Lawrence Trent, I had my doubts about him when I discovered that he only played three rated games in the 4.Ng5 line.

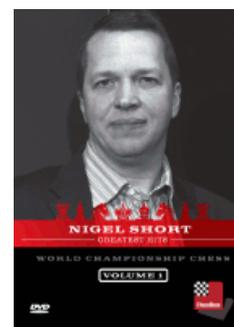
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[FEN "r1bqkb1r/pppp1ppp/2n2n2/4p1N1/2B1P3/8/PPPP1PPP/RNBQK2R"]

Nevertheless, he is young, articulate, and knowledgeable. He sets out to show you that this is an interesting opening that offers chances for a White victory. He links the opening to the middlegame to which it leads, but leaves it for the viewer to explore any endgame themes. He does not waste his lecture time on unnecessary moves in terms of the opening, though one can quibble about his choice of illustrative games.

The number of games Trent has played in this line does not reflect the research and erudition that went into this DVD. To start things out, Trent begins with the Traxler Gambit **4.Ng5 Bc5 5.Bxf7+**. In the U.S. and U.K. this is known as the Wilkes-Barre variation.



[FEN "r1bqk2r/pppp1Bpp/2n2n2/2b1p1N1/4P3/8/PPPP1PPP/RNBQK2R"]

Trent uses the game Asrian-Minasian for two reasons: Asrian made the game look so easy and there have hardly been any games in the Traxler since this game. While this line has only been played 300 times in all of historically rated games, it has been played by the likes of Anand and Shabalov. In fact, Trent's next game in the Traxler is Anand-Beliavsky. It is one of the few games where Trent found it necessary to include the entire game in his lecture.

One thing that I noticed is Trent uses the same transposition of moves that Pinski does in his book. Both show the game went $6...d6$ $7.d3$ $Qe8$, when the real move-order was $6...Qe8$ $7.d3$ $d6$. Further similarities between the two works can be found in the commentary to the moves $11...Qxg2$ and $15..Ng4$, as well as in the game Bahram-Hector.

In that game, which illustrates the Ulvestad variation **5...b5 6.dxc6**, Pinski states "After this move White is actually fighting to stay alive. The paradoxical $6.Bf1$ is the main move here..." While, according to Trent, "White can play the move $6.Bf1$ which I am going to recommend to you." After the move $7.Nc3$, Pinski says, "The alternative is $7.Qe2?!$ $h6!?$ (also possible is $7...Qd5$)..." While, according to Trent, "If white plays $7.Qe2$, Black has a very logical move $...Qd5$." On $8.Nge4$, Trent has "Nf3 might be a better move followed by $Qd6$ and $Bd6$ $9.Qe2$ Black castles white castles $Re8$ is very dangerous for white." While Pinski writes "Also possible is $8.Nf3$ $Bd6$ $9.Qe2$ $0-0$ $10.0-0$.. After something like $10...Re8$ white has a difficult game in front of him." Trent continues, " $11.Qxc4$ $e4$ $12.Ne1$ $Bxh2+$ this might be winning $13.Kxh2$ $Ng4+$ $14.Kg3$ $h5!$." And here is Pinski's annotation of the position: " $11.Qxc4?$ $e4$ $12.Ne1$ $Bxh2+$ $13.Kxh2$ $Ng4+$ $14.Kg3$ $h5!$."

Of course some of this analysis can also be found in [ECO](#), but it would seem that Trent used Pinski's book as a point of reference.

The next game chosen for Trent's lectures was between Ilia Kan and Alexander Konstantinopolsy and it was also annotated by Pinski: **1.e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Nf6 4.Ng5 d5 5.exd5 b5 6.Bxb5?! Qxd5 7.Bxc6+ Qxc6 8.0-0**



[FEN "r1b1kb1r/p1p2ppp/2q2n2/4p1N1/8/8/PPPP1PPP/RNBQ1RK1"]

Happily, Trent's analysis is far more thorough than Pinski's, even though there were some similarities, which can be expected when two strong players annotate the same game. Other games follow the same course, with occasional similarities between the two works, but also with enough differences to set them apart.

Trent, for his part, is an excellent teacher who knows how to structure a DVD to provide the lectures in an order that is both understandable and useful for learning this opening. He goes through every major variant and does an excellent job in annotating the sample games from each line. This DVD succeeds in meeting every line with a game that best shows the positives and negatives of the moves that are associated with it.

All in all, Trent met the goal that he set at the beginning of the DVD. He showed that the 4.Ng5 variation is playable and leads to enjoyable game. He presents the advantages for White and shows how Black can equalize in this line. Plus, he does so in an interesting and vibrant manner. I recommend this DVD to anyone who is looking for an aggressive variation and is willing to take some chances to gain the point. If you are tired of your current repertoire, then this is a sure-fire alternative that will make your opponents think twice when playing against it.

My assessment of this DVD: 

Order *Two Knights Defence*

by Lawrence Trent

Build a 1.d4 Repertoire, by Nigel Davies, Running time: five hours

Nigel Davies is an excellent teacher with a full repertoire of training DVDs aimed at average strength players. This DVD is aimed at the player who is ready to take the next step in their chess education by creating a 1.d4 repertoire from the building blocks of the Colle, London, and Torre systems as their opening choices.

This contents are as follows:

- Introduction
- Build on the Colle
- Build on the London



- Build on the London (*sic*)
- Queen's Gambit Declined Exchange
- Slav
- Slav
- Queen's Gambit Accepted
- Queen's Gambit Accepted
- Queen's Gambit Accepted
- 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 c5
- 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 e6 3.c4 dxc4
- 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 c6 3.c4 dxc4
- Tarrasch
- Anti-chigorin
- 1.d4 Nf6 2.Nf3 C5 3.d5 e6 4.Nc3 exd5
- 1.d4 Nf6 2.Nf3 c5 3.d5 e6 4.Nc3 b5
- 1.d4 Nf6 2.Nf3 c5 3.d5 b5
- 1.d4 Nf6 2.Nf3 c5 3.d5 g6
- 1.d4 c5 2.d5 e5
- King's Indian Defense Petrosian 7...a5 8.h4
- King's Indian Defense Petrosian 7.Nbd7
- Grünfeld Defence
- Grünfeld Defence
- Catalan Taster
- Dutch
- 1.d4 d6
- 1.d4 g6
- 1.d4 and 2.c4

Davies's early lectures focus on the Colle- Zukertort: **1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.e3 e6 4.Bd3 c5 5.b3 Be7 6.Bb2 Nbd7**; the London: **1.d4 Nf6 2.Nf3 e6 3.Bf4 d5 4.e3 c5 5.c3 Nc6 6.Nbd2 Be7**; and the the Torre Attack: **1.d4 Nf6 2.Nf3 e6 3.Bg5 c5 4.e3 Bg7 5.Nbd2 d5 6.c3 Nbd7**. Note that this last lecture is mislabeled in the contents.

Davies expresses his favor for the London system as the best of the three. He believes that the London is better prepared to deal with alternative Black move orders than the other two systems. The early part of his lectures demonstrate how the systems can lead to a quick victory. He then spends the remainder of the lectures on how to counter Black's best play.

He recommends that you chose one of these systems and play it for six months to a year before moving on to the next step, which presumably is **1.d4 2.Nf3 3.c4**. The first recommendation along this line is the Queen's Gambit Declined Exchange Variation. Davies also has a [Fritz Trainer](#) dedicated to this one opening variation. He makes sure to tell us that he doctored the move order of the games, as he does in all the recommended opening systems, so we will increase our pattern recognition. He knows this line very well and provides some excellent instruction for the player just starting out in this opening. Planning and strategy are more important than the memorization of move order. To put it another way, logic is more important than theory.

Davies finds the most economical way of playing and presents what amounts to a chronology of openings that increase in their degree of difficulty as the DVD progresses. He emphasizes from the very beginning that if you have to spend less time on your opening preparation, then you can spend more time on your endgame, which will mean a greater number of wins. Simplicity and economy are the keys with which he unlocks each opening system.

Davies even addresses the world of the Benoni, Blumenfeld, and Benko Gambits. This is stage three of your advance into the world of queen's pawn openings. Even in such positions as the Modern Benoni, Davies believes in trying to keep the game quiet by not entering into unnecessary complications. Just keep playing logical chess and exchanging pieces and White will keep a better game.

The lines recommended by Davies are by no means inferior. Indeed, his

recommendation for the King's Indian is the Classical Petrosian, which I have been playing for quite some time. He simply takes the viewer level by level to a more advanced manner of play. And he does this very well. The games chosen, the annotations, and explanations are as good as you can get. Moreover, he presents several lines in each defense so you can choose the one with which you feel most comfortable. The fact that Davies makes the Grünfeld playable for the less advanced player is quite a coup.

He also shows how it is possible to play a good game in the Catalan with the line **1.d4 Nf6 2.Nf3 e6 3.g3 d5 4.Bg2 Be7 5.c4 0-0 6.Qc2 dxc4 7.Nbd2 Bd7 8.0-0 Bc6 9.e4 b5 10.Re1 Bb7 11.b3 Nc6**



[FEN "r2q1rk1/pbp1bPPP/2n1pn2/1p6/2pPP3/1P3NP1/P1QN1PBP/R1B1R1K1 w - - 0 12"]

He explains how this line has many ideas that the London, Torre, or Colle player can readily understand. Davies closes out the DVD with examples of how to play the Dutch, the Modern, and even the Budapest Gambit in a manner that the viewer can almost immediately put to use. While I sometimes dislike opening trainers that present complete games, Davies shows the exception in this case. He states, "when you are not spending so much time on opening theory, you can concentrate on the endgame." He suggests that this will not only help you win games, but also give you a better overall knowledge of chess in general.

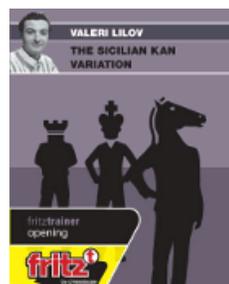
If you are looking for cutting-edge opening theory, you will have to look elsewhere. Davies does include some recent games in his repertoire, but the focus is on ideas and plans that can be used for years to come without worrying about some line superseding it. This DVD, in order to have a place in your chess career, needs to be viewed many times over. I recommend that you view the entire DVD at least three times before you choose your opening. Probably best, would be in the order in which the openings are presented. Then listen to each lecture with the aid of a chessboard in front of you, look up similar games in a database, and play through them with your chess set. The more you do this the better your "pattern recognition" will become. Once you are ready, you can buy a specialty book for further research. I recommend this DVD for anyone struggling to learn opening theory.

My assessment of this DVD: 

**[Order](#) *Build a 1.d4 Repertoire*
by Nigel Davies**

The Sicilian Kan Variation, by Valeri Lilov, Running Time: four hours, twenty-nine minutes

The Kan variation begins with the moves **1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 a6**. It was originally introduced by Anderssen commencing in the late 1850s. In the beginning of the twentieth century Tarakower began playing it. Then in the 1950s one of the pioneers of the Soviet school, Ilya Kan began studying and playing this opening.



There are twenty-one lectures included on this DVD:



- Introduction
- A Model Game
- The Bb4 idea
- The best formation
- How to fight an early Nf3 and e5
- Plan with b5 and Qb6
- Plan with b5 and Qb6: main line with Bxe3
- Plan with b5 and Qb6
- Plan with Bd3 –d7-d5 idea
- Plan with Bd3: Drago-Najorf setup
- The Hedgehog
- Maroczy Bind : Plan with Bc5
- Maroczy Bind : Plan with Bb4
- Maroczy Bind: Plan with Bb4 II
- Maroczy Bind: sacrifice of e4
- Maroczy Bind: Plan with Bd3-h3
- Maroczy Bind: The Hedgehog Enhanced
- Maroczy Bind: The sacrifice on e4 for black
- General Plan Number 1:
- General Plan Number 2
- Outro

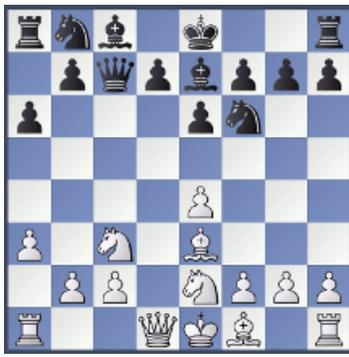
Lilov, as I mentioned in another [review](#), is an excellent teacher. He is personable and gets his points across in a clear, concise, and understandable manner. However, this DVD is less impressive than his previous work. For one, let's consider his choice of a model game for the Maroczy Bind. He chose a forty-year old Spassky-Fischer game that, although falling into his definition, follows the Taimanov move order: **1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 a6 5.Nc3 Nc6 6.Be3 Nf6 7.Bd3 d5 8.exd5 exd5 9.0-0 Bd6 10.Nxc6 bxc6 11.Bd4 0-0 12.Qf3 Be6 13.Rfe1 c5 14.Bxf6 Qxf6 15.Qxf6 gxf6**



[FEN "r4rk1/5p1p/p2bbp2/2pp4/8/2NB4/PPP2PPP/R3R1K1 w - - 0 16"]

This is unlike any of the remaining games on the DVD. As a matter of fact, by move ten it is the only game in the database that followed this move order. It was just a poor choice to be used as a model game for the Sicilian Kan. Further, he continued to use older games that were out of the database by the eighth move. So, don't expect to face these moves anytime soon. I am not against the use of older games to illustrate a point, but the theory of this opening is changing at a very rapid rate. Moreover, Lilov chose not to include any games where White scored the point. This is not the way to teach us the traps we can fall into and the moves with which White can challenge our opening structure. Also, in most cases he chose to include entire games, which takes up time going over endgame struggles that had little to do with the opening.

To illustrate how ...Bb4 is a real threat to White in the Open Sicilian, Lilov demonstrates the game Saeed-El Taher, which went **1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 a6 5.Nc3 Qc7 6.Be3 Bb4 7.Nde2 Nf6 8.a3 Be7**



[FEN "rnb1k2r/1pqpbppp/p3pn2/8/4P3/P1N1B3/1PP1NPPP/R2QKB1R w KQkq - 0 9"]

Although White's knight on d4 was forced to retreat to e2, I am not sure it was worth the tempo. Lilov summed it up by saying that all of White's eventual problems can be traced to 5...Bb4. However, I would trace White's problems to the fact that his rating was 300 points lower than his opponent.

Lilov devotes a couple of lectures to the Hedgehog; however, he only mentions in passing that the Hedgehog is one of Black's most valuable weapons against the Maroczy Bind. Further on, he develops another lecture on the "enhanced Hedgehog," but it bears no relation to the accepted definition of the "enhanced hedgehog" with a double fianchetto, as defined in the book *Play the Sicilian Kan* by Johan Hellsten.

Lilov spends no less than seven lectures on the Maroczy Bind as a weapon against the Sicilian Kan without ever really making clear the problems this position can cause. I wish he had spent more time teaching us exactly what White can do once he has engaged in this position. Nowhere does Lilov explain the position in which the beginning chess player and the intermediate potential player of the Sicilian Kan would be very interested. Instead he replies by explaining the plan against it.

I admit that his lecture on the Hedgehog against the Maroczy Bind between Vallejo Pons and Epishin is extremely interesting and it utilizes Epishin's love for the move c4 and is one of the few games that I think are worthwhile in this lecture series. Yet, just when you think Lilov is on the verge of teaching good theory, he falls back to easy wins by black that teach you very little. When Lilov presents an old game that leaves theory at move six, I wonder what he is doing and why he is doing it.

However, in his model game in "General Plan 1," Lilov does give some advice. He says that when meeting something new you should ask yourself two questions.

- What is the (opponents) plan?
- Secondly, what is the drawback for him?

After watching the DVD several times, I am still not sure of the audience at which it is aimed.

My assessment of this DVD: ❖

Order *The Sicilian Kan Variation*
by Valeri Lilov

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