



COLUMNISTS

Checkpoint

Carsten Hansen

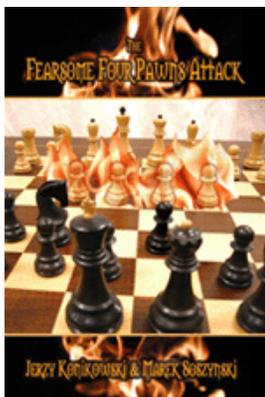
Reviewed this month:

Transpo Tricks in Chess
by Andrew Soltis

How to Play the English Opening
by Anatoly Karpov

Starting Out: The Colle
by Richard Palliser

Starting Out: Sicilian Sveshnikov
by John Cox

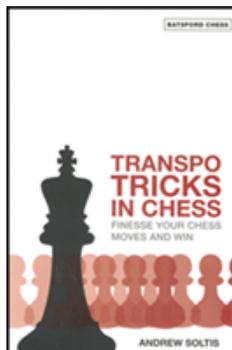


Ambitious Authors

This month's reviews feature two books in the popular *Starting Out* series from two ambitious international masters, who each have a good reputation as both players and writers. We also look at two new books that underscore why Batsford is no longer the chess publishing giant it used to be.

Transpo Tricks in Chess by Andrew Soltis, Batsford 2007, Paperback, 218pp., \$21.95

Andrew Soltis has written several good books on chess history, but the vast majority of his opening books have hardly been worth the paper they were printed on. In his latest effort he discusses transpositional tricks in the opening.



This subject is certainly worth studying, because you can gain an advantage if you can steer the game into paths that you are more familiar with. In some infrequent cases, especially in the English Opening, you can start in one opening and transpose to a completely different one. Yet we rarely find the implications and psychological considerations discussed in regular opening monographs. So from that perspective, this book is quite welcome.

The contents are divided as follows:

- Introduction (9 pages)
- Chapter One: Double KP Openings (20 pages)
- Chapter Two: Ruy Lopez (20 pages)
- Chapter Three: Sicilian Defense (40 pages)
- Chapter Four: Semi-Open Games (26 pages)
- Chapter Five: Double QP Openings (33 pages)
- Chapter Six: Indians (38 pages)
- Chapter Seven: Dutch Defense and Flank Openings (22 pages)
- Index of Opening Variations (6 pages)

One slight nit I had was that the author rather needlessly abbreviated King Pawn and Queen Pawn to KP and QP respectively, but enough about that.

The book opens with an example from the Ruy Lopez where Black, after 1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 Nf6 4 0-0 Nxe4 5 d4, in addition to the standard 5...Nd6 and 5...Be7, has 5...a6 available.



This option may only be a footnote in your book on the Ruy Lopez. *ECO C* (4th edition) gives both 6 Bxc6 and 6 Bd3 in response. However, nothing is mentioned

Rating Chart

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



of Soltis' continuation 6 Ba4, which after 6...b5 7 Bb3 d5 takes us to the Open Spanish. This is the idea Soltis wanted to present. This last continuation is actually the most frequently played on my database, thus confirming Soltis' claim about the "lure of the familiar." The idea is interesting, and, as Soltis writes, it has been employed by numerous strong

players over the years. However, as is the case with many of the examples in the book, Soltis doesn't mention the strongest lines of play. So, you will have to study his suggestions very carefully if you want to employ them.

For the most part, Soltis follows his familiar writing style: enjoyable, light reading, plenty of fun examples. However, I would have liked to see more substance in the book in regards to 1 Nf3 and 1 Nc3, as well as some of the deeper transpositions such as the Hedgehog Variation, which can arise from any number of openings. Soltis briefly mentions the former, but doesn't discuss it in any particular depth.

All in all this is a book to enjoy, but it is not a singular reference work for all transpositional ideas and tricks. There is much more ground to be covered and many ideas have been omitted or ignored. In order to truly benefit from this book, players will need to put in plenty of extra work along the way. Still, I recognized a number of transpositions that I have used over the years, and this is an easy way to become familiar with some of the most common ones.

My assessment of this book: 

[Order *Transpo Tricks in Chess*](#)

by Andrew Soltis

How to Play the English Opening by Anatoly Karpov, Batsford 2007, Paperback, 191pp., \$21.95

My main issue with this book is that most of it was written a decade ago. As the author states in the foreword: "Overall, as we have already said, in the book are assembled 30 games, played in competitions of the highest level and in the last decade. ... I must admit that it is not by chance that the year 1987 has been chosen in the book for the start of the countdown: it was then in Seville, in the match against Kasparov, that I succeeded at once in winning three 'English' Openings!"



Twenty-five of the games were played in 1998 or prior, whereas only five were played after 1998, with the most recent being in 2004. The annotations are similarly outdated, with the notes to the older games not being updated at all, thus primarily referring to games played prior to 1998. This is only the first of many disappointments with this book.

The contents page only lists the games, but gives no structure as to which games come from which move-order, i.e. with 1 c4 e5, or the Symmetrical English, or Indian setups. Nor did I find an index of variations. With so many missing ingredients, the last element of hope is the game annotations, which in any case should be the main draw for a book of this kind, but even this falls short.

In the majority of the games, the theoretical coverage takes up a great deal of space, but, as mentioned above, the theory is mostly ten years past due and isn't all that interesting. Karpov occasionally comes out with an interesting or instructive comment, but for the majority of the games this too is just wishful thinking.

There are also a number of errors in the analysis, probably from not using computers when writing the original text, as well as blunders and repetitions of variations from one game to the next. Moreover, the book ignores the variations that have developed over the last few years. Karpov has always been one of my favorite players, but as an author he leaves much to be desired. This book is a waste of time and money. It is an embarrassment for both Karpov and the publisher.

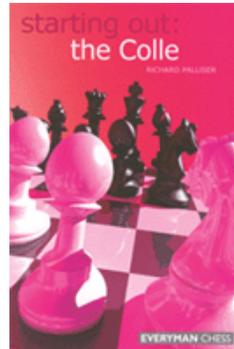
My assessment of this book: 

Order *How to Play the English Opening*

by Anatoly Karpov

Starting Out: The Colle by Richard Palliser, Everyman Chess 2007, Paperback, 251pp., \$24.95

English international master Richard Palliser has firmly established himself as a top-notch author. He rarely takes any shortcuts and his books in the *Starting Out* series are often the longest of the lot. He also almost always has an abundance of new ideas, improvements and refutations lined up for those who are willing to study the material in detail. However, with this book, I thought that for the first time he might disappoint me.



The material is divided as follows:

- Bibliography (1 page)
- Introduction (12 pages)
- Part One – The Colle System
- 1 Black Plays ...c5 and ...Nc6 (51 pages)
- 2 The Main Line with 9...Qc7 (57 pages)
- 3 Black Plays ...c5 and ...Nbd7 (46 pages)
- 4 Other Set-ups after 3...e6 (16 pages)
- Part Two – The Anti-Colle
- 5 Black's Third Move Alternatives (39 pages)
- 6 Black Delays ...Nf6
- Index of Variations (4 pages)
- Index of Complete Games (2 pages)

The Colle often encompasses two set-ups for White:

- The Colle-Zukertort: 1 d4 2 Nf3 3 e3 4 Bd3 and a set-up with b3 and Bb2
- The Colle-Koltanowski (or Colle System): 1 d4 2 Nf3 3 e3 4 Bd3 and a set-up with c3 and Nbd2

So if you are a Colle aficionado, you will quickly notice that the Colle-Zukertort isn't covered in this book, although it is mentioned a couple of times in passing. Yet if both systems had been included, as one might expect, the book would have been almost 400 pages. Obviously, Palliser could have made a less thorough presentation and fit in both systems, but once you begin exploring the different variations of the Colle, you begin to understand that this opening is not as simple as many make it out to be.

Upon reading this volume, I understand much more about this opening than ever before. Once you focus on the material that is covered, this volume is second to none. Rarely have these lines been scrutinized to such an extent. Palliser efficiently goes into detail with every line, and he examines suggestions by other writers and annotators, as well as improves over existing theory. This book is even worthwhile for those interested in openings with similar pawn structures. Finally, I should mention the target audience for this book is not necessarily the typical "starting out" level, but rather anyone in the 1400-2300 range will find the material just right.

My assessment of this book:   

Order *Starting Out: The Colle*

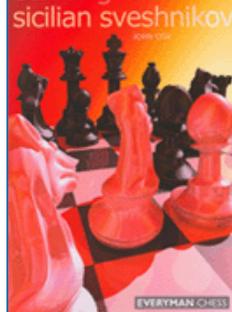
by Richard Palliser

Starting Out: Sicilian Sveshnikov by John Cox, Everyman Chess 2007, Paperback, 271pp., \$24.95

John Cox is another young international master, who has proven himself to be a competent writer. Here he investigates the Sveshnikov Sicilian: 1 e4 c5 2 Nf3



Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 e5, when the majority of the games usually continue 6 Ndb5 d6 7 Bg5 a6 8 Na3 b5.



Now the theory heads in different directions with either 9 Nd5 or 9 Bxf6 with literally thousands of independent ideas along the way. Depending on the individual variation and the level of preparation by the players, the theory can extend up to move thirty.

The material is divided as follows:

- Bibliography (1 page)
- Introduction (7 pages)
- 1 White Avoids 6 Ndb5 (24 pages)
- 2 7th and 8th Move Deviations (34 pages)
- 3 White Plays 9 Nd5 (32 pages)
- 4 The 9 Nd5 Main Line: 11...0-0
- 5 9 Bxf6 and the Novosibirsk Variation (20 pages)
- 6 The Chelyabinsk Variation: 9 Bxf6 gxf6 10 Nd5 f5 (48 pages)
- 7 The Main Line Chelyabinsk: 11 Bd3 (40 pages)
- 8 The Anti-Sveshnikov (17 pages)
- Index of Variations (6 pages)
- Index of Complete Games (2 pages)

While much can be done to make this opening accessible, given the amount of theory, it will remain a bit intimidating. However, as Cox writes in the introduction, it is the price you pay if you want to play a sharp mainstream opening that is fundamentally sound.

In reading this book, I was amazed at how well Cox communicates the basic truths and essential elements of these, at times, ridiculously complicated lines. Each line is covered in enough detail to sufficiently help you understand what is going on, without losing track of the broader picture. Furthermore, Cox takes care to anticipate any questions about why certain moves might be played. It's as if he remembers what it was like to be an improving player who is trying to fathom a new opening. He is also very diligent at pointing out interesting ideas in overlooked or underrated sidelines that are well worth exploring in your own games.

This is a very good book and as an introduction to this exciting variation or as a companion to other theoretical works it will serve you well. Go get it!

My assessment of this book: 

[Order Starting Out: Sicilian Sveshnikov](#)

by John Cox

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