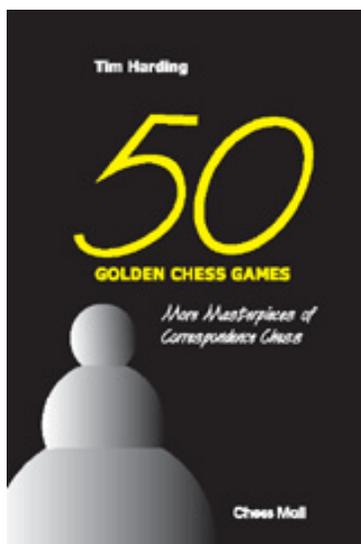




COLUMNISTS

Checkpoint

Carsten Hansen

**Reviewed this month:**

French Defence: Steinitz, Classical and Other Systems
by Lev Psakhis

Caro-Kann Panov Attack B13-B14
(CD-ROM) by Zoran Petronijevic

Starting Out: Alekhine's Defence
by John Cox

Leningrader System - Eine Waffe gegen 1.d4
by Stefan Kindermann

Französisch Winawer - Band 1: 7.Qg4 0-0
by Stefan Kindermann & Egon Dirr

Kindermann Classics

This month I will review five opening works: one CD-ROM, two recent books, and two works in German. The latter two are not brand new, but have recently become available in the United States and each has received rave reviews. While everyone won't be adequately acquainted with the German language to be able to read all the annotations, evaluations, explanations and discussions, the intrepid reader can make it a long way with a dictionary to guide you. This approach has worked for me when reading books and magazines in Russian, Serbo-Croatian, and Spanish. You will begin to recognize certain standard comments and evaluations quite quickly, and then everything else becomes infinitely easier to absorb. Over the next months, I will review more foreign language titles, and I will stress to what extent it will be worth buying the book if you don't know the language and don't intend to enroll in classes at the community college.

French Defence: Steinitz, Classical and Other Systems by Lev Psakhis, 2004 Batsford BT, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Paperback, 223 pp., \$22.95

With this book, Psakhis concludes his four volume series on the French. This one is rather late in arriving, but good things are always worth waiting for.



Let's see how he has divided the material:

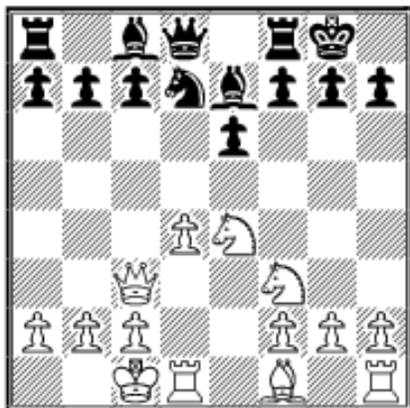
- Preface (2 pages)
- 1 Rubinstein Variation and Rare Continuations (18 pages)
- 2 Rubinstein Variation 3 Nc3 dxe4 4 Nxe4 Nd7 (18 pages)
- 3 Steinitz Variation 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 e5 (14 pages)
- 4 Steinitz Variation 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 e5 Nfd7 5 f4 c5 6 Nf3 (21 pages)
- 5 Steinitz Variation 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 e5 Nfd7 5 f4 c5 6 Nf3 Nc6 7 Be3 cxd4!?! (19 pages)
- 6 Burn Variation 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Bg5 dxe4 (15 pages)
- 7 Burn Variation 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Bg5 dxe4 5 Nxe4 Be7 6 Bxf6 Bxf6 (14 pages)
- 8 Burn Variation 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Bg5 dxe4 5 Nxe4 Nbd7 (17 pages)
- 9 MacCutcheon Variation 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Bg5 Be7 (36 pages)
- 10 Classical Variation 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Bg5 Be7 (16 pages)
- 11 Classical Variation 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Bg5 Be7 5 e5 Nfd7 6 Bxe7 (24 pages)
- Index of Variations (4 pages)
- Index of Games (1 page)

Many of these lines, in particular those that involve an exchange on e4, have surged in popularity in recent years, and the strongest players have included it in their repertoires. Formerly, I believed that most of the chances of getting an advantage were to be found on White's side of the board. Now, however, that is far from the case.

A bibliography is missing from the above list of contents, which generally should be found in any opening book. Strong players can provide adequate analysis and reach evaluations on their own, but for works to be entirely up-to-date you have to compare it with other leading sources on the subject. When the author omits a bibliography we don't know which sources the author has relied on or chosen to ignore.

Psakhis didn't provide a bibliography in any of the four volumes, but it can be supposed that he had the opportunity to reference Watson's recent book *Play the French* in this last one. So I will draw some comparisons even though Psakhis aims to present the current status of all the lines in this variation of the French, while Watson only presents a repertoire for Black. The first example is the following:

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bg5 dxe4 5.Nxe4 Be7 6.Bxf6 Bxf6 7.Nf3 Nd7 8.Qd2 0-0 9.0-0-0 Be7 10.Qc3!?



This was first tried out in Kasparov-Bareev, Sarajevo 2000.

Psakhis gives this line very brief coverage, which perhaps is understandable because it has only been played in the above game, but White obtained an edge from the opening without any further ado. Psakhis coverage continues as follows:

“**10...Nf6** Black could consider **10...b6!? 11.Nxf6+ Bxf6 12.Bd3 Qd6**, Kasparov-Bareev, Sarajevo 2000; and now in Kasparov’s opinion, **13 Be4 Qf4+ 14 Qe3 Qxe3+ 15 fxe3** would have left to a small plus for White.”

Very brief indeed, especially when comparing it to Watson’s coverage that offers more than a column of material in a book of bigger size. **10...b6!?** does seem to provide Black with a defensible position, for example, **11 Bb5 Bb7 12 Bc6 Bxc6** (the alternative **12...Bb4** results in a similar position: **13 Qc4 Bxc6 14 Qxc6 Nf6 15 c3 Be7 16 Rhe1 Qd5 13 Qxc6 Nf6 14 Rhe1 Qd5**, but the resulting position after **15 Nxf6+ Bxf6 16 Qxd5 exd5 17 Ne5** can only be a tad better for White.

However, both Watson and GM Neil McDonald offer a move that goes unmentioned by Psakhis: **10...c5!**, which is exactly the move **10 Qc3** was designed to avoid. Watson’s main line now continues: **11.Bb5** (**11 dxc5 Qc7** and **11 d5 exd5 12 Rxd5 Qc7** intending **...Nb6** followed by **...Be6** are both fine for Black) **11...Qc7!** (Watson here writes: “This introduces the kind of long-term positional pawn sacrifice that is common these days. Here even the exchange of the queens leaves Black’s bishop pair worth more than the pawn in a continuation like...”) **12.Bxd7 Bxd7 13.Nxc5** (**13 dxc5 Bc6 14 Nd6 b6 =+** Watson) **Bc6 14.Nd3 Rac8 15.Nde5 Bd5 16.Qxc7 Rxc7**, and now Watson offers two lines:

a) **17.Kb1 Rfc8** (CH: **17...b5!?** is also perfectly good for Black) **18.Rd2 f6 19.Nd3 g5!**, followed by a minority attack with **...b5-b4, ...a5-a4**.

b) **17.a3 Bb3 18.Rd2 Rfc8 19.c3 b5 20.Nd3 a5 21 Kb1 b4 22 axb4 axb4 23 Nxb4 Bxb4 24 cxb4 Ra8!** and Black wins (Watson). This last example is hardly model play by White, but serves as an illustration to what can happen if White is not careful.

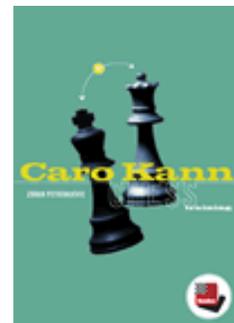
This is not the only example where Watson has deeper coverage of certain lines. Yet, Psakhis aims to give many different lines with a few suggestions here and there, whereas Watson’s focuses on fewer lines and some fairly deep analysis in some cases. I would personally prefer Watson’s book if I wanted to start playing the lines in question, but for overall coverage from both White and Black perspectives, there is currently not a better book on the market than Psakhis’.

My assessment of this book: 

Order *French Defence: Steinitz, Classical and Other Systems* by Lev Psakhis

Caro-Kann Panov Attack B13-B14 by Zoran Petronijevic, 2004 ChessBase GmbH, Figurine Algebraic Notation, CD-ROM, \$29.95

The covers of these ChessBase CDs are usually fairly accurate in the description of their contents; giving the Informator codes and the specific variations covered. But that isn't the case on the present product. So when I first saw it, I was quietly hoping for coverage of the entire Caro-Kann. It was only when I read the back cover that I learned the focus was on the Panov Attack B13-14. The Informator codes tells us that we are dealing the Exchange Variation as well, which is rarely considered worthwhile for white; while the Panov Attack is easily one of the trickiest lines for black in the entire Caro-Kann complex.



The author is an international master and this is his first publication for ChessBase and, in my humble opinion, it is one of the most thorough opening works ever to be published by ChessBase. It contains everything I could possibly ask for or reasonably expect on such a CD.

The material is divided as follows:

- Preface
- Introduction
- Contents of B13
- 67 different database texts, each covering a specific sub-variation under B13
- Contents of B14
- 67 different database texts, each covering a specific sub-variation under B14

The number of database texts is absolutely stunning, moreover; all games that are cited/linked in the database texts are annotated by the author. He has really labored over the games, both quoting other works, other players' analysis, and adding his own ideas and original analysis. The total number of games annotated by the author is just under 800, which is much higher than on any previous CD from ChessBase.

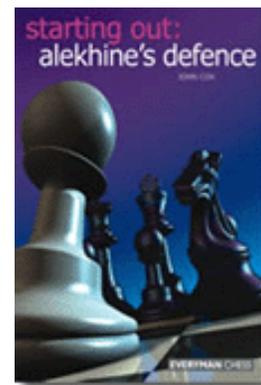
Plus, the author has also added a training database containing 10 positions with some relatively easy, but very relevant questions, and then another 54 complete games with at least several questions to each game. I give this CD the highest recommendation, and I sincerely hope we will see more work from this author.

My assessment of this CD: 

Order Caro-Kann Panov Attack B13-B14
(CD-ROM) by Zoran Petronijevic

Starting Out: Alekhine's Defence by John Cox, 2004 Everyman Chess, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Paperback, 192 pp., \$18.95

The *Starting Out...* series was designed to be an introduction to an opening for weaker and less experienced players, but several of the more recent volumes resemble repertoire books for relatively experienced club players. As I have previously indicated these books often only featured real coverage for one side, however; this is certainly not the case with the present book.



Let's see how the material is divided:

- Bibliography (1 page)
- Introduction (5 pages)
- 1 Main Line with 4...dxe5 (38 pages)
- 2 Main Line with 4...Bg4 (29 pages)
- 3 Main Line with 4...g6/4...Nc6 (18 pages)
- 4 Exchange Variation with 5...cxd6 (19 pages)
- 5 Exchange Variation with 5...exd6 (11 pages)
- 6 The Four Pawns Attack (26 pages)
- 7 The Chase Variation (12 pages)
- 8 Other Tries for White (25 pages)
- Index of Variations (3 pages)
- Index of Complete Games (2 pages)

Cox begins the book with an annotated bibliography, which gives the reader a chance to seek additional information if he fancies what he has been reading in the present volume. The introduction is rather short on words, but Cox has taken the unusual approach of including a number of repertoires: Suggested Non-theoretical Repertoire for Black; Suggested Positional Repertoire for Black; Suggested Tactical Repertoire for Black; Solid Repertoire for White; Tactical/Theoretical Repertoire for White; and Offbeat Tries for White. This is a novel idea and, I might add, a good one. He doesn't offer a lot of explanations in the introduction, but instead refers the reader to the appropriate games inside the book.

The entire book is written in a very readable, easy-going tone and the author conveys that the Alekhine is a playable opening in which Black can seek winning chances. Occasionally Cox flirts with stepping over the line of deep theory, but only when it is warranted and when that knowledge is essential to survive in a particular line.

Like with any other well-written opening book, this one managed to make me consider taking up the Alekhine, and it can easily be recommended to anybody who wishes to do so. Even experienced players of this opening will be able to learn a little

and at the very least enjoy Cox's excellent annotations. This is an exceptional book.

My assessment of this book: 

Order *Starting Out: Alekhine's Defence*

by John Cox

Leningrader System - Eine Waffe gegen 1.d4 by Stefan Kindermann, 2002 Chessgate AG, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Paperback, 197 pp., \$29.95

This book is first and foremost a repertoire book for Black in the Dutch Defense, with a primary focus on the Leningrad Variation.

The material, translated from German, is divided as follows:

- **1 History and Introduction**
- **2 Typical Ideas** - broken up for Black and White respectively
- **3 Illustrative Games** - split up as follows:
 - - Main Variation 7 Nc3 Qe8 8 d5 a5
 - - Main Variation 8 b3
 - - Main Variation 8 Nd5
 - - Main Variation 8 Re1 (His recommendation for White)
 - - Main Variation 8 Qb3
 - - Various Lines with b3
 - - White Set-ups with Nbd2 and e4 and/or c3 and b4
 - - White Set-ups with an early b4
 - - Karlsbad Variation: White plays Nh3 with/without c4
 - - The Set-up with 4 c3 and 5 Qb3
 - - The Leningrad Stonewall after 4 c3
 - - The Move Order 1 d4 2 c4 3 Nc3 as well as usual Move Order Consideration
 - - The Set-up with 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 Bg5 or 3 Bf4
 - - The Set-up with 2 Nc3
 - - The Set-up with 2 Bg5
 - - The Staunton Gambit 2 e4
 - - Rare Second Moves for White's
 - - How to counter Flank Variations (1 Nf3 and 1 c4 without an early d4)
- **Indexes** (Bibliography, Players, Games, Symbols, Variations)



Part One gives a fairly quick introduction to the opening and takes us through the development of the opening and a variety of lines. The author also explains his choice of main variation, namely 1 d4 f5 2 g3 Nf6 3 Bg2 g6! 4 Nf3 Bg7 5 0-0 0-0 6 c4 d6 7 Nc3 Qe8. For enlightenment and entertainment, Kindermann added some quotes about the opening from some very famous chessplayers. Here are a few of them:

“One of the openings against which I, like the majority of all chessplayers, enjoy to play.” (Petrosian)

“You can only play the the Dutch against Patzers...; The only good thing about the Dutch is that the opponent will be tempted to rush the events.” (Kortchnoi)

“The problem with the Dutch Defence is that later in many positions the best move would be ...f5-f7.” (Yusupov)

“The Dutch brings out the ‘chicken’ in many players.” (Larsen)

I don't entirely agree with Kortchnoi, but the other opinions ring true, although beating the Dutch is more easily said than done.

Part Two is educational and will assist you in making the correct decisions in your own games, as well as helping you avoid typical mistakes. The third part contains the illustrative games with the opening theory covered in the annotations. There are 25 complete main games with several more added in the comments. The annotations are very thorough, as well as interesting and educational. There is plenty of original analysis and improvements over existing opening theory, and Kindermann never fails to draw from other sources to give a fuller picture of what is happening and what has been recommended in other books.

Kindermann is very objective throughout, and despite this book primarily being a repertoire book for Black, he also gives recommendations for White. However, you have to understand some German to be able to fully enjoy it and get your full money's worth. If you do, and you play the Dutch as black, then this book is beyond question the one to get.

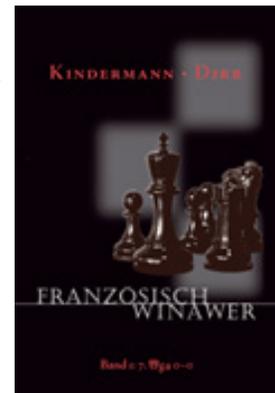
My assessment of this book: 

Order *Leningrader System - Eine Waffe gegen 1.d4* by Stefan Kindermann

Französisch Winawer - Band 1: 7.Qg4 0-0 by Stefan Kindermann & Egon Dirr, 2001
Chessgate AG, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Paperback, 342 pp., \$29.95

Very infrequently do I receive opening books that leave a profound impression on me, but the present book is such a work. Its physical presence is impressive: it's heavy, the paper is of a quality that we are not accustomed to in chess books, and there are more pages, pictures, and diagrams than average.

The title indicates that this is the first in a series, however; nearly four years have passed without another volume being published. I'm sure there are many of us that would be thrilled to see further volumes, because quality work such as this does not get published very often.



The material, translated from German, is divided as follows:

- **Part I: The History of the Move 3...Bb4** (16 pages)
 - Milestones (4 pages)
- **Part II: Central Structures and Strategies** (29 pages)
 - Exercises (5 pages)
- **Part III: Theory** (Introduction) (5 pages)
 - 1) Stem games (165 pages)
 - 2) Encyclopaedic Part (53 pages)
 - Both sections split up as follows:
 - Oldfashioned, Portisch and Wild Variation
 - Klinger-Hug Variation
 - Old Main Variation
 - Russian Variation
 - Böök Variation
 - Rustemov Variation
 - Hertneck Variation
 - Closed Variation
 - McDonald Variation
 - New Main Variation
- **Part IV: Games** (39 pages)
- **Part V: Appendices**
 - 1) Solutions to Exercises (5 pages)
 - 2) Bibliography (2 pages)
 - 3) Player Index (8 pages)
 - 4) Picture source index (1 page)
 - 5) Symbols (1 page)
 - 6) Overview of Variations:
 - 6.1) Verbal Conclusions (6 pages)
 - 6.2) Index of Variations (3 pages)

You will need to know quite a bit of German to be able to extract the full benefit from this book, because there is a very large amount of prose that you will not be able to understand unless you are reasonably well-acquainted with the language.

Part One discusses the history of the Winawer Variation. The authors provide a timeline of the development of the variation, showing at which points the various key moves and variations were first discovered, first played, or when their respective

strengths were recognized. This is one of the more fascinating aspects about chess, because moves that were played a long time ago and then re-instituted breathes life into our game in an entirely different way than a novelty after move 20 in a trendy line in the Sicilian does.

In Part Two, the authors discuss the different types of pawn structures that can arise in the various lines, while highlighting both the strengths and weaknesses for each side. This is done by using four diagrams per page, each picturing only the pawn structure, followed by a brief description of the typical features characteristic of those particular structures. The second part of this section gives 42 concrete examples of the strategies for both sides, all of which are well-annotated. This section concludes with 16 exercises for solving. If you play the French Defense as Black and understand some German then this section is easily worth the price of the book, because of the many extra rating points you will acquire based on the knowledge you have gained here. This is how you should be studying openings if you really want to understand them.

The theoretical section is split into two sub-sections: illustrative games and an encyclopedic presentation of the theory. There are only 20 illustrative main games, but 162 pages are used to annotate them, so this gives you an impression of how much commentary is provided for each game. Aside from just general comments and variations, there is plenty of theory presented in the opening phase of the games.

Obviously this book benefits from covering a relatively small segment of opening theory, but the authors work the subject in such amazing detail that this book will remain a reference point on this opening for many years to come. The all-encompassing coverage is similar to the ECOs from Sahovski Informator, but the amount of original analysis is truly astounding.

The fourth part of the book merely contains bare game scores from the game references in the encyclopedic coverage. In Part Five we find the appendices, which are done with the thoroughness that we have become accustomed to throughout the book, and it makes for a fitting end to a truly monumental work.

This book is so well-made in all its aspects that it is a shame it is less accessible to a larger audience. However, if you play the French and you are serious about improving your game, this book is very much worth buying; your understanding of the opening and your overall chess knowledge will improve exponentially. This is easily one of the best opening books ever written; a modern classic.

My assessment of this book: 

[Order](#) *Französisch Winawer - Band 1: 7.Qg4 0-0*

by Stefan Kindermann & Egon Durr



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