



COLUMNISTS

Checkpoint

Carsten Hansen

**Reviewed this month:*****The Grünfeld Defence***

by Nigel Davies

New in Chess Yearbook 62 + 63

by Gena Sosonko and Paul van der Sterren (ed.)

How to Play Good Opening Moves

by Edmar Mednis

Good Opening Moves

After the CD-ROM session in last month's column I'm sure there are people who will welcome a fresh selection of newly released books. This month I will take a look at three different types of books, a theory book in the popular series from Everyman Chess, two volumes of the by now familiar New in Chess Yearbook and finally a classic book that has been reprinted in a new edition on how to play good opening moves. So there should be something to satisfy everybody's taste. Enjoy!

The Grünfeld Defence by Nigel Davies, 2002 Everyman Chess, Figurine Algebraic Notation, paperback, 157 pp., \$19.95

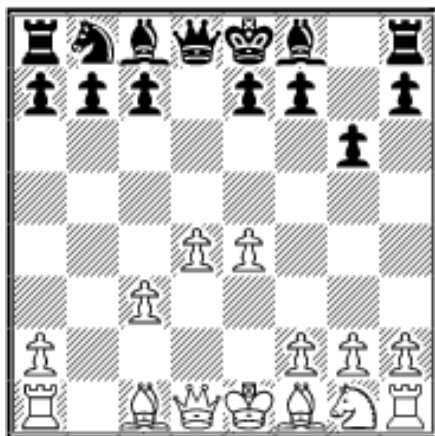


Not too long ago I reviewed another book by Davies, the one on Alekhine's Defence in the same series from Everyman Chess. As in the Alekhine Defence, Black, in Grünfeld Indian, initially offers White the opportunity to occupy the center with pawns while Black completes his development and then, when ready, starts bombarding the center from all angles.



The Grünfeld Indian, arising after 1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 followed by ...d5, was developed by the Austrian theoretician and grandmaster Ernst Grünfeld in the 1920s.

The most important of the main lines in the Grünfeld Indian is the exchange variation, which arises after **1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 d5 4 cxd5 Nxd5 5 e4 Nxc3 6 bxc3**.



If there is a refutation of the Grünfeld, this is most likely where you should be looking. However, many years of assaults on this opening have come and gone and the fact of the matter is that Black is still doing fine. In fact, over the years it has enjoyed a place in the opening repertoires of many of the strongest players in the world, including with World Champions Botvinnik, Fischer and Kasparov.

The theory is very well developed of course due to the attention of so many strong players and therefore perhaps likely to scare away many new adherents. As an example, I can mention that entire books have been written about sub-lines in exchange variation and the fianchetto variation. Therefore you may ask the very relevant question, how can it be that Davies can fit the entire Grünfeld into a relatively slim volume? The answer is of course that he doesn't go into very much detail about anything. However, it was never Davies' intention to cover everything in detail. In the introduction Davies writes: "The reader will see that my Grünfeld tastes are reflected in the

material I've chosen for this book. Whilst I have tried to include the most important recent developments and provide a statement about the current Grünfeld theory, the games and ideas of lesser known Grünfeldeers have been given more attention than many of the existing books on this opening. In many cases I recommend these lesser known variations rather than those in the theoretical limelight."

Provided that his recommendations do stand up under closer scrutiny, this is an excellent approach as it will help more people get an appetite for the Grünfeld while not having to study endless reams of the latest theory and risk running into an improvement that perhaps was played last weekend in the Bundesliga in the game van der Sterren-Ftacnik (just an example, okay!) or something like that.

This approach somewhat contradicts Yermolinsky's dictum that we have to study the main lines and not play too many offbeat lines, but you can say that Davies' lines are only halfway offbeat!

The material is divided up as follows:

- **The Exchange Variation**
- 1 Exchange Variation with 8 Rb1 (16 pages)
- 2 Exchange Variation with 8 Be3 (10 pages)
- 3 Exchange Variation with 7 Bc4 (14 pages)
- 4 Exchange Variation: Lines with Bb5+ and h3 (9 pages)
- 5 Exchange Variation: Early Divergences (11 pages)
- **The Russian System**
- 6 The Russian System: Prins Variation (9 pages)
- 7 The Russian System: Hungarian Variation (12 pages)
- 8 The Russian System: Smyslov Variation (10 pages)
- 9 The Russian System: Early Divergences (7 pages)
- **Other Systems**
- 10 Classical with Bf4 (13 pages)
- 11 Lines with Bg5 (9 pages)

- 12 The Fianchetto Variation (12 pages)
- 13 Other Variations (17 pages)

The book is mainly written from Black's perspective, which makes it less attractive for those who are trying to meet the opening as White, although several ideas are presented for White as well.

In the bibliography, Davies lists an impressive number of books on the Grünfeld, including several quite obscure ones, like a book by Richardson & Boyd from 1976, and the cult classic *Zoom 001* by Larsen & Zeuthen. However, I'm surprised by the absence of Botvinnik and Estrin's multiple volumes that, as far as I recall, were published in the late 1970s or early 1980s, and amazingly in some lines are still quite relevant, despite the fact they are over 20 years old.

As mentioned above, Davies recommends a lot of the less-played lines in Grünfeld, so it makes sense to check if they stand up to closer scrutiny and if he has included the most critical responses to the lines. At this point, I should also mention that the theory as usual in this series is build up around main games, 73 in total for this book, with the theory discussed in the notes.

In the exchange variation, the main debacle has been the line: **1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 d5 4 cxd5 Nxd5 5 e4 Nxc3 6 bxc3 Bg7 7 Nf3 c5 8 Rb1 0-0 9 Be2 cxd4 (or 9...Qa5) 10 cxd4 Qa5+ 11 Bd2 Qxa2**. While not avoiding it entirely, Davies still manages to cover this in a mere 5 pages, which should merit a medal of some sort. However, as Davies himself says in the summary at the end of the chapter "Those with unlimited time might well feel comfortable debating 9...cxd4 and 10...Qa5+ or 9...Nc6 and 13...Bc7. but these lines are incredibly sharp and White may find some unpleasant improvements. My personal recommendation is to play the solid 9...b6."

To check his coverage, I made a quick search in my database

and found no less than 163 games that were played in 1995 or later, and with the coverage in this book only covering 3 pages, of which a third are diagrams or moves that go beyond the opening stage, Davies has his work cut out for him. From the starting position, I looked at what was the following: **1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 d5 4 cxd5 Nxd5 5 e4 Nxc3 6 bxc3 Bg7 7 Nf3 c5 8 Rb1 0-0 9 Be2 b6 10 0-0 Bb7.**



Davies now only mentions **11 Qd3** in the two main games he cites, but in fact the sharp **11 d5** has been played in about a dozen games on my database, including in some games by Beliavsky and Gelfand, for whom particularly the latter is a proponent of the **7 Nf3 + 8 Rb1** line for White. So it would have been relevant to make a mention of this.

In reply to **11 Qd3**, Davies almost exclusively discusses **11...Ba6 12 Qe3** at which point the coverage branches out to a) **12...Qc8**, b) **12...cxd4**, c) **12...Qd7**, and d) **12...e6!?**. But the alternative **11...e6**, which on my database scores better for Black than **11...Ba6** (46% in 25 games vs. 42% in 80 games), isn't mentioned at all. But these things aside, his coverage is remarkably detailed with just about all important or critical games mentioned.

Looking at the Fianchetto Variation, the position that arises after **1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 g3 Bg7 4 Bg2 d5 5 Nf3 0-0 6 0-0 dxc4 7 Na3** is covered with only one main game, Karpov-Piket, Tilburg 1996, despite it being played in no less than 277 examples in games with one or more players rated higher than 2400 in my database. Davies recommends **7...Nc6!?** for Black, while dismissing the otherwise quite popular line **7...c3 8 bxc3 c5 9 e3** in one example, despite having been indicated to have been played no less than 66

times in the same search. He only quotes gives the game Ki.Georgiev-Svidler, FIDE World Ch., Las Vegas 1999, where Black went **9...Nc6 10 Qe2 Bf5 11 Rd1 Qa5** and ended up losing. Davies dismissed the more popular and better scoring options: **11...Qb6** and **11...Be4**. A questionable decision, I might add.

After **7...Nc6!?**, Davies gives **8 Nxc4 Be6 9 b3** (9 Nce5 has also been played on some occasions, but isn't mentioned by Davies) **9...a5 10 Bd2 Bd5 11 Rc1** (11 a4 and 11 e3 are also briefly covered, while 11 Ne3, that has been played at least a dozen times, amongst others by Pr. Nikolic, isn't discussed) **11...a4! 12 bxa4 Ra6**, and despite the coverage being relatively brief, Black's ideas are clearly illustrated so that most people will understand how to play it.

I could continue along the same path in other chapters, but it is my impression that the other coverage is similar. There are some details missing, some more important than others, but in general there is enough for people to take on the opening as Black. For those wanting to meet the Grünfeld Indian, this is not the book to use, as it is mainly from Black's perspective and therefore too many options are left out.

The book's usefulness is therefore relatively limited. In addition to that, the book has the usual, for this series of books from Everyman, missing index, but this can to some extent be tolerated as most of the lines don't have the problem of transposing from one chapter to another.

Bottom-line, this is a very good book for those that play the Grünfeld Indian or who want to take it up. In order to get enough use of this book, I would say that you should be rated at least 1600 as many of his evaluations and suggestions will not be otherwise understood.

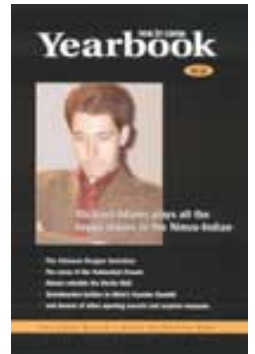
My assessment of this book: 

Order *The Grünfeld Defence*
by Nigel Davies

New in Chess Yearbook 62 + 63 by Gena Sosonko and Paul van der Sterren (eds.), 2002 New In Chess, Figurine Algebraic Notation, paperback, 235 pp., \$24.95

I had an odd thing happening to me. Some of you may have read my review of *New in Chess Yearbook 61* which was very favourable. Well, the people New in Chess definitely did, in fact they used a quote from my review in for ads in chess magazines everywhere. Then the next volume came out, at least so I saw on the web, but I didn't receive a review copy. Very odd, I thought, but I was sure it would turn up sooner or later. But it didn't show up. In fact, when I saw the ads for Yearbook 63 on the web, I was quite puzzled. However, along with my review copy for Yearbook 63 came the copy of Yearbook 62.

Therefore this review will feature book Yearbook 62 and 63. So what has happened since volume 61, have they been able to improve compared to the previous volume which received a five-star rating? In fact, yes. New additions are that they are using pictures of some of the contributors, not only on the front cover, which used to be plain black with some diagrams and a bit of text. Now on the cover of volume 62, there is a picture of English Super Grandmaster Michael Adams, who according to the cover "plays all the happy moves in the Nimzo-Indian".



Other headlines that made it to the cover are:

- The Chinese Dragon Variation
- The curse of the Rubinstein French

- Almasi rebuilds the Berlin Wall
- Grandmaster battles in Albin's Counter Gambit

In addition to the picture on the cover there are pictures of some of the contributors inside, amongst others Cuban GM Jose Vilela, Correspondence GM Georgi Popov of Bulgaria and Bosnian/English GM Bogdan Lalic.

Another welcome new feature is the addition of English GM Glenn Flear as a book reviewer. His reviews are both entertaining, useful and to the point. In this volume he reviews Kosten's *The Latvian Gambit Lives!*, Melts' *The Scandinavian Defense: The Dynamic 3...Qd6*, van Rekom and Janssen's *The Lion: The black weapon*, Pedersen's *The Main Line French: 3 Nc3*, and Golubev's *The Sicilian Sozin*. The reviews are not very long, but you get a clear feeling what he likes and dislikes.

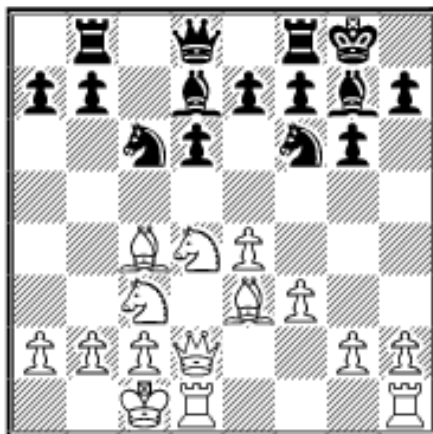
The yearbooks consist of four parts: *Forum*, where the readers can write in with their findings and their own games if they are of any interest to the other readers. Next we find *Sosonko's Corner*, where co-editor Genna Sosonko covers a variety of interesting subjects; in this volume he analyses an interesting line from the Slav/Closed Catalan: 1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 e6 5 g3 dxc4 6 Ne5!? b5 7 Bg2 Nd5 8 e4. Then follows the opening surveys of which there are 36 in the present volume. Finally, the volume is rounded off with the above-mentioned book reviews by Glenn Flear.

In the *Forum* section there is as usual several interesting entries. Some of the more notable ones are one by A.C. van der Tak, who has located the game Engels-Euwe, The Hague 1929, which featured a topical line in the Modern Benoni: 1 d4 Nf6 2 Nf3 g6 3 c4 Bg7 4 Nc3 0-0 5 e4 d6 6 h3 c5 7 d5 e6 8 Bd3 exd5 9 cxd5 b5!, a move which supposedly was only introduced in the game some 19 years later in Tolush-Aronin, USSR Championship 1948. Then there is a contribution by GM Vilela on the Sicilian Cobra, which is an

invention by the Swedish Rolf Martens, and which arises after 1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nc6 5 Nb5 Nf6 6 N1c3 Bc5!?. The funniest is Popov's attempt at rehabilitating his own awful line in the Ruy Lopez: 1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a5!? 4 0-0 Na7! (punctuation per Popov). Admittedly he does improve on some analysis by Stefan Bucker from Yearbook 56, but nonetheless the opening must be rubbish, which I think I made clear in a review of a previous yearbook that also featured analysis by Popov. The saddest contribution was one by an American reader who got offended by something he perceived as anti-American sentiments in an otherwise very positive review of the excellent book *Pirc Alert!* by Alburt & Chernin. The American reader as a result of the review decided not to continue his subscription to the Yearbook, a rather misguided decision if you ask me. I dare not ask what he thinks of my reviews; he may exclude himself from reading the excellent columns here on the ChessCafe too. Poor fellow!

The meaty part of the Yearbook is obviously the opening surveys, which cover over 200 pages of this 235-page volume. There are many good surveys, a few that are so-so, but several that are excellent. The ones that particularly caught my attention are the following:

Luc Henris on the *The Chinese Dragon Variation*, which despite many years of playing the Dragon with both colours I had not previously seen or heard of. It arises after **1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 g6 6 Be3 Bg7 7 f3 Nc6 8 Qd2 0-0 9 Bc4 Bd7 10 0-0-0 Rb8!?**.



The line has only been played half a dozen times or so, but Henris has supplied us with a good chunk of analysis of his own, which obviously needs to be dissected and studied closer, but it certainly contains some interesting ideas, and with almost 7 pages of original analysis, who should complain?

Sergei Tiviakov has an interesting contribution with similarly interesting analysis on the French Tarrasch. The line he looks at is the one arising after **1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nd2 Nf6 4 e5 Nfd7 5 Bd3 c5 6 c3 Nc6 7 Ne2 cxd4 8 cxd4 f6 9 exf6 Qxf6**.

Tibor Karolyi takes a look at *Early Deviations against 4...Nd7* in the Caro-Kann Defence.


John van der Wiel and Erik Hoeksema look at some games from a thematic tournament held in September 2001 in Groningen. Some of the participants were Dutch GMs Tiviakov, van der Wiel and Brenninkmeijer.

John van der Wiel also covers *The Adams Anti-Qc2 Approach* in two different surveys, both of them covering variations that start with the **1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Qc2 0-0 5 a3 Bxc3+ 6 Qxc3 Ne4 7 Qc2 f5**. As Adams explained last year "It isn't very good, but my results are reasonable and I keep playing it". Well, if it's good enough for Adams, who is number four or five in the world, then I think it will be good enough for most of the rest of us.

Finally I also take a liking to Glenn Flear's look at the Four Pawn Attack in the King's Indian which contains several interesting ideas.

Overall, volume 62 of the New in Chess Yearbook is

excellent investment, even if it is now a few months old.

My assessment of this book: 

Moving on to volume 63, we find more goodies along the lines of volume 62. The cover features a picture of the FIDE World Champ Ponomarev, along with the headline "Ponomarev against the Marshall Attack: sometimes you win, sometimes you draw". Other headlines include:

- The English Attack strikes again
- Why Igor Glek believes that 1 e4 b6 is not so bad
- Another amazing Nadanian discovery
- Sosonko pays tribute to Dorfman's opening expertise.

In the *Forum* of the present volume, there are always several very interesting letters. First José Vilela presents a couple of games in a sub-variation to the Botvinnik Semi-Slav. The line in question arises after **1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 e6 5 Bg5 dxc4 6 e4 b5 7 e5 h6 8 Bh4 g5 9 Nxc4 Nd5 10 Nxf7 Qxh4 11 Nxh8 Bb4 12 Rc1 c5 13 dxc5 Nc6 14 Be2 Nxe5 15 0-0 Bb7**. A

fascinating line, but not worth studying or playing for most of us, who enjoy life without the fear of novelties that kill a huge chunk of our opening repertoire.

Also a contribution by Bogdan Lalic caught my attention. He analyses and discusses a game he played as Black in the Caro-Kann against English lawyer/GM William Watson. The opening featured a new idea that gives Black new headaches in the 4...Bf5 main line: **1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 Nd2 dxe4 4 Nxe4 Bf5 5 Ng3 Bg6 6 h4 h6 7 Nf3 Nf6 8 h5 Bh7 9 Bd3 Bxd3 10 Qxd3 e6 11 Bd2 c5 12 0-0-0 Nc6 13 Bc3 Qd5 14 dxc5**



Qxd3 15 cxd3!, after **15...Bxc5 16 Bxf6 gxf6 17 d4 Bb6 18 d5!** Black was already in some sort of trouble.

Junior Tay, of whom I know nothing, presented some interesting games of his own as Black in the Keres Attack against the Scheveningen, proving that Black still is very much alive and kicking, despite the Keres Attack (1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 d6 6 g4!?) casting a dark shadow over the Scheveningen Sicilian for years.

Sosonko's Corner pays tribute to the GM Iosif Dorfman who has been champion of both the Soviet Union and France as well as coach/assistant for Garry Kasparov, Lev Polugaevsky and Tigran Petrosian prior to his arrival in France, where he assisted in the development of several of France's strongest players today, including Etienne Bacrot since Etienne was just 10 years old! Sosonko looks at some of Dorfman's most interesting opening ideas from the last 30 years or so. Some are already standard moves in today's theory, others will surely become that in some years once they get out to a larger audience.

Next we find the opening surveys that cover the usual variety of openings. In this volume there are truly many great surveys where the surveyor/contributor not only gives a good introduction, but also has picked some interesting game, analysed them well, and given loads of new ideas to be tested in future games. Several of note:

Marius Ceteras asks *Golubev's Dragon Gambit Refuted?* He analyses a couple of his own games and present a lot of analysis to some other games played in the line that arises after **1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 g6 6 Be3 Bg7 7 f3 Nc6 8 Qd2 0-0 9 g4 h5**.

In the Heat of the Jungle is a contribution by Hungarians Peter Lukacs and Laszlo Hazai, who investigate the merits of **1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4**

cx d4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 a6 6 Be3 e6 7 Qd2 b5 8 f3 Nbd7 9 g4 Nb6 10 0-0-0.

Alexey Gavrilov looks at **1 e4 c5 2 c3 d5 3 exd5 Qxd5 4 d4 Nf6 5 Nf3 e6** in *Fighting against the Isolated Queen Pawn*.

Romanian GM Mihail Marin discusses the line **1 e4 d6 2 d4 Nf6 3 Nc3 g6 4 Nf3 Bg7 5 Be2 0-0 6 0-0 c6** in *Alekhine Structures in the Pirc*.

Tibor Karolyi tells us that *One Mistake Will Do* in his survey on the French line: **1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e5 c5 5 a3 Bxc3+ 6 bxc3 Qc7 7 Qg4 f6.**

Argentinean Correspondence GM Juan Morgado looks at *Three Ways to Play for Black* in Petroff after the moves **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 9 Qc2 Na6 10 a3.**

Hungarian super GM Zoltan Almasi lays *Another Brick in the Wall*, in his coverage of the Berlin Variation in the Ruy Lopez that Kramnik used to great effect against Kasparov, particularly in the 2000 World Championship match in London.

Dutch A.C. van der Tak covers two different lines against the Marshall Attack in the Ruy Lopez; I found particularly the one on **1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Ba4 Nf6 5 0-0 Be7 6 Re1 b5 7 Bb3 0-0 8 c3 d5 9 d4!?** interesting.

Maarten de Zeeuw takes *Another Look at the Traxler Gambit*. The Traxler that arises after **1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bc4 Nf6 4 Ng5 Bc5** was closely scrutinized by Dan Heisman on a CD that was published by Pickard & Son in 2000. Zeeuw

claims to find a number of improvements and some omissions in Heisman's work. For people that are interested in this line, this is crème de la crème!

Alexander Rustemov presents us with *Another Nadanian Variation!* Ashot Nadanian is the man behind the wacky 1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 d5 4 cxd5 Nxd5 5 Na4!/? in the Grünfeld. His latest 'trick' arises in another standard opening: **1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Be7 4 Nf3 Nf6 5 Bf4 0-0 6 e3 c5 7 dxc5 Bxc5 8 Qc2 Nc6 9 a3 Qa5**, and now the new move: **10 Ra2!/?**.




An amazing idea, although one against which Black appears to be doing okay, provided Black uses a little thought, but White's big idea is that he is threatening b2-b4.

Finally in *An Artificial Rehabilitation* Argentineans Diego Adla and Pablo Glavina

present an interesting survey on the Old Indian Defense, which doesn't get a lot of playtime nowadays, but used to be played relatively often and probably unjustly has a bad reputation.

In the last section of the book, Glenn Flear reviews five recent opening books.

Again with this volume, the people at *New in Chess Yearbook* have delivered a must-have book for both the chess enthusiast and chess professional. The surveys that are chosen cover a lot of ground and should find something that will interest even the pickiest player. For those that are serious about their chess, the *New in Chess Yearbook* is just as essential as *Informator*. They have found a fan in me.

My assessment of this book: 

How to Play Good Opening Moves by Edmar Mednis, 2002
Random House Inc., Figurine Algebraic Notation,
paperback, 136 pp., \$12.95

Not long ago the publisher David McKay/Random House took on the worthy cause of re-publishing in algebraic notation some of their more popular titles that previous were only published in English Descriptive Notation (EDN). A most worthy cause given that most chess players read algebraic notation with ease while EDN is rather antiquated and rarely used.



One of the titles that have recently been re-released in a new algebraic edition happens to *How to Play Good Opening Moves*. The author is grandmaster Edmar Mednis, who sadly passed away earlier this year. While never having met him in person, I have always enjoyed his books on the endgame, about which he wrote with good understanding and with good flair for finding instructive examples.

The material in the present book is divided up as follows:

- 1 What Is the Opening? (8 pages)
- 2 Quality of White Opening Moves (5 pages)
- 3 Quality of Black Opening Moves (11 pages)
- 4 Evaluation of Moves: The Practical Approach (25 moves)
- 5 Sicilian Defense: Basic Principles (15 pages)
- 6 Sicilian Defense: Advanced Play (13 pages)
- 7 Queen's Gambit Declined: Basic Principles (9 pages)
- 8 Queen's Gambit Declined: Advanced Play (9 pages)

- 9 Bad Moves: How Not to Play Them (18 moves)
- 10 Castling: Early or Late (10 pages)
- 11 Pawn Play: Center, Formations, Weaknesses (13 pages)

I find the above topics somewhat amusing, and I wonder how Mednis arrived at these being the ones to be discussed in the book. The mix of material for newcomers to the game and players with some experience doesn't seem too obvious.

Chapter one begins with the following remark "The beginning phase of a game of chess is called the opening." This must mean we are talking about something for beginners who have no prior knowledge to the game. Therefore I will deduce that most beginners will not know much else about the game, such as who the strongest players have been. I'm making this comment because Mednis, without any further introduction in the first part of chapter one, mentions the names Capablanca, Evans, Gligoric, Portisch, Karpov and Fischer. How will a newcomer to the game know who these people are unless, they are introduced to them. I have had students that have played chess for years but did not know who these people are.

In section two of chapter one, Mednis has a more meaningful discussion of what the center is and what secondary central squares are. He even has a small discussion on differences in the understanding of chess between the classic school and the hypermodern. Mednis gives an example of how to control the d4-square. He lists the following moves: a) 1 d4, b) 1 e3, c) 1 Nf3, d) 1 b3 followed by 2 Bb2, and e) 1 c3. Immediately after listing these moves, he states that "For realizing the advantage of the first move, White can do better than alternatives b) and e)", but he doesn't explain why. He ends the first chapter with "the ... three principles of correct opening play":

- 1. Bring your king to safety by castling.

- 2. Develop your pieces toward the center so that they are ready for middlegame action.
- 3. Control the center either by actual possession or by short-range or long-range action of pieces and pawns.

Chapters 2 and 3 basically cover the same territory from each side of the board. Each chapter is divided up in three sections: 1) Perfect Moves, 2) Mediocre Moves, and 3) Poor Moves. According to Mednis the moves 1 c4, 1 d4, 1 e4, 1 Nf3, 1 g3 are in the perfect section, while 1 b4, 1 Nc3 and 1 f4 belong in the mediocre section, while 1 a3, 1 a4, 1 Na3, 1 Nh3, 1 h3, 1 h4, 1 f3, 1 g4, 1 c3, 1 e3 and 1 d3 are deemed poor moves. Yes, I noticed it too: he forgot to mention 1 b3. But I have to add that I found find that 1 d3 and in particular 1 e3 belong in the poor move section. Nimzowitsch often played 1 e3 and it will often transpose to other openings such as the Bird, the English or the Nimzowitsch-Larsen Attack.

For Black, he has divided the coverage up in further subsections to cover the quality of the moves against 1 e4, 1 d4, 1 c4, 1 Nf3, 1 g3 respectively. Some of his comments here seem a bit over the top, for example rating 1 e4 d5, 1 d4 f5, and 1 Nf3 Nc6 as mediocre answers for Black. But that is what he has done, like it or not.

In the next five chapters he annotates some games, explains some openings and their basic ideas, although in some cases it is only very basic descriptions. But I had some difficulty understanding how productive it is to show a game like the following to beginners as it hardly demonstrates good and normal opening play.

Lone Pine 1979

KB FIANCHETTO OPENING

White: Seirawan Black: Miles

1 g3 e5

An active, perfectly good response.

2 c4

After the immediate 2 Bg2, Black could occupy the center with 2...d5. Therefore White establishes a direct pawn presence himself and only later will continue with the planned development of the kingside.

2...c6

A very demanding approach. Black is determined to enforce ...d5. He already has good central presence, thanks to his e-pawn, but is determined to have a lot more. This is a very double-edged plan, because White - with the advantage of the first move - will be able to start undermining Black's imposing-looking center very quickly.

3 Bg2 d5**4 cxd5 cxd5****5 e4!**

[CH: Sic! This is a typo, he meant 5 d4!]. White establishes his own central presence while challenging Black's e-pawn. Clearly unsatisfactory now is 5...exd4?! because after 6 Nf3 White will effortlessly recapture the pawn and Black's isolated d-pawn will remain a chronic weakness.

5...d4

[CH: Sic! Another typo. He meant 5...e4.]

6 f3!"

And so on; I don't think this is the kind of example you should show beginners or newcomers, as it doesn't represent good, normal and logical opening play.

I also wonder how he came to decide on choosing the Sicilian to illustrate a good opening. Maybe I'm a little too old-fashioned, but to me it makes more sense to illustrate good opening play with some double king-pawn opening such as the Italian game or the Scotch Opening, both of which are far more logical than discussing a passive looking opening like the Scheveningen Sicilian. On the other hand, the Queen's Gambit chapters are far better.


Chapter 9's *Bad Moves: How Not to Play Them* is reasonably good. He explains several types of bad moves and explains why they are bad. You can always pick at if they are the best-chosen examples, but in my opinion, he basic points do come through reasonably well.

The idea of not castling until later is introduced in chapter 10. Although I think this is a bit early to illustrate this idea after just beating the poor reader up about getting the king into safety as the most important thing in the opening, then to move by telling him or her: 'well, that's only sometimes...'; it doesn't sit well with me and I think that the correctness of this approach is questionable.

In the last chapter, Mednis discusses pawn structures and weaknesses. The problem is that he does so in only 11 pages, which can't really do more than very faintly scratch the surface of the topic.

In general the book covers the topic reasonably well, but there are many places where there should have been better guidance and more carefully chosen examples. I have no doubt that many players will not quite understand what he is talking about when they read this book. I do, however, also think that he is on the right track in some aspects, but it is a bit patchy and I have read far better books that cover the

topic.

My assessment of this book: 

<p><i>The Ratings</i></p>
<p> — A poor book, not recommended.</p>
<p> — Not a particularly good book, but perhaps useful for some readers.</p>
<p> — A useful book.</p>
<p> — Good book, recommended.</p>
<p> — Excellent book, highly recommended.</p>

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