



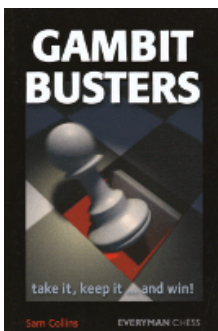
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- ♦♦ – Useful
- ♦♦♦ – Good
- ♦♦♦♦ – Excellent

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Reviewed this Month

Chess Informant, Vol. 108
by Josip Asik (ed.)

Mega Database 2011
by ChessBase

The Complete c3 Sicilian
by Evgeny Sveshnikov

Big Weapons

Time for a fresh volume of the traditional yearbook from Chess Informant, along with the latest edition of the Mega Database from ChessBase. Last, but not least, the long-awaited ultimate word on the c3 Sicilian by the master himself, Evgeny Sveshnikov, who made it one of the premiere weapons against the ever-popular Sicilian Defense.

Chess Informant, Vol. 108 by Josip Asik (ed.), Sahovski Informator 2010, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Paperback, 294pp. \$35.95 (ChessCafe Price: \$31.95)

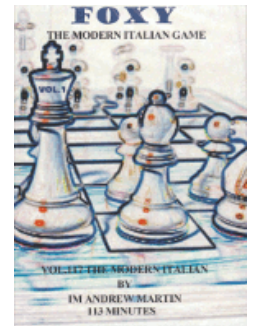
As noted here at [ChessCafe.com](#), *Chess Informant 108* is dedicated to the memory of IM Zdenko Krnic who tragically lost his life in a traffic accident while returning home from work. His unfinished papers, with games and variations from this volume, were said to be strewn across the street where the accident occurred.



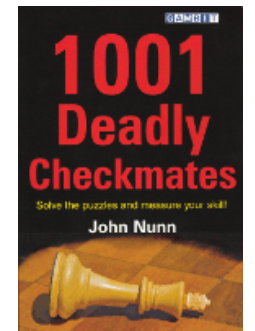
The material is divided as follows:

- Contributors (2 pages)
- The best ten games for the preceding volume (2 pages)
- The ten most important theoretical novelties of the preceding volume (4 pages)
- System of Signs (3 pages)
- Opening Classification (6 pages)
- A (13 + 19 pages)
- B (27 + 24 pages)
- C (14 + 9 pages)
- D (32 + 17 pages)
- E (5 + 21 pages)
- Index [of Players] (9 pages)
- Commentators (1 page)
- Combinations (4 pages)
- Endings (5 pages)
- Studies (3 pages)
- Tournaments (10 pages)
- Modern Chess Theory (33 pages)
- The Best of Chess Informant – Teimour Radjabov (21 pages)
- Chess Informant Information: In Memoriam – Zdenko Krnic (1947-2010) (1 page)
- Chess Informant Information: In Memoriam – Bent Larsen (1935-

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The Modern Italian Game
by Andrew Martin



1001 Deadly Checkmates
by John Nunn



Center Counter Rising (DVD)
by Andrew Martin

2010) (3 pages)

- Colophon (1 page)


The volume opens as usual with the vote for the best games from the previous volume. The judges were Alexander Beliavsky, Larry Christiansen, Mikhail Gurevich, Aleksandar Matanovic, Adrian Mikhalchishin, Zoltan Ribli, and Jon Speelman. Their vote narrowly favored the game J. Polgar-Gelfand, Khanty-Mansiysk (m/2) 2009, which is far from a perfect game. However, the runner-up, Kramnik-Ponomarev, Moscow 2009, is even less perfect, though it is quite entertaining. If you look at the punctuation used in the annotations by Notkin, he paints an entirely accurate picture of the battle. By the way, Kramnik had no less than four of his games in the top ten, quite an accomplishment.

When it comes to the most important theoretical novelties, it is Anand who is king. He has the most important novelty, in the game Anand-Leko, Moscow 2009, and two other games in the top ten. While I agree that his novelty is impressive, it is an odd choice for the top spot because it doesn't even secure White an advantage. With accurate play, Black could have equalized. Furthermore, the novelty comes at move twenty-two, when it could be argued that White had a more critical continuation on move fifteen.

As introduced some volumes ago, the games are split in two sections. The first features games that involve at least one player from the FIDE top fifty on the rating list as of March 2010. The second section includes all the games that are not blessed by the presence of a top fifty player. Overall, there are 301 games in this volume, six more than in the previous one. However, it is sad that the overall volume of games annotated by an unnamed editorial assistant, hiding under the "RR" moniker, remains high: a total of ninety-eight games, roughly a third of all the games. Plus, many of the other annotated games are commented on by a third party, rather than one of the players involved. Informant would do well to return to the days when the top players were annotating their own games for publication.

The theoretical section, in comparison with *Volume 107*, really steps up with coverage of A30, which includes the important Double Fianchetto and Hedgehog lines of the Symmetrical English; B97, the Najdorf Sicilian Poisoned Pawn; C19, the French Winawer Poisoned Pawn; D47, the Meran Semi-Slav; and E63, the King's Indian Defense Fianchetto, Panno Variation. These are excellent topics, though the coverage in some lines could have been more detailed. There is also little original input by the person assembling the material, so these sections are more of an overview of games played, rather than a full theoretical investigation. Including improvements over theory and referencing contemporary sources, rather than just presenting games from their own volumes, would enhance the content of this section.

Otherwise, there are plenty of interesting games and analysis of these games, along with excellent material in the sections on endgames, studies, and combinations. Josip Asik, the newly appointed Director of Chess Informant, suggests here at ChessCafe.com that "there is a brand new energy buzzing through the Informant offices" and that there are new ideas in the works to "challenge the ideas of the Informant 'old school.'" He promises to "keep to tradition" while Chess Informant broaches new horizons. In light of this, it will be interesting to see what's in store in future volumes, because change is needed if *Chess Informant* is to keep pace with its competition.

My assessment of this book: 

Order [Chess Informant #108](#)

by Josip Asik (ed.)

Mega Database 2011 (DVD) by ChessBase 2010, \$165.95 (ChessCafe Price \$159.95)

Reviewing databases is usually difficult and quite



boring, so I will resort to making some comparisons with the previous edition before making some general comments. The back cover blurb is essentially the same for each update, with only the numbers changing from year to year:



"The exclusive annotated database. Contains more than 4.8 millions games from 1560 to 2010 in the highest ChessBase quality standard. 65,000 games contain commentary from top players, with ChessBase opening classification with more than 100,000 key positions, direct access to players, tournaments, middlegame themes, endgames. The largest topclass annotated database in the world. The most recent games of the database are from the middle of November 2010. Mega 2011 also features a new edition of the playerbase. As usual, this is where most of the work was done. As the player index now contains already more than 257,000 entries, it made sense to use an adapted playerbase which includes about 270,000 names. Doing this, the photo database was extended as well to contain 32,000 pictures now. Incl. Online Mega-Update 2011: With ChessBase 10 or 11 you can download games for Mega 2011 for the whole year, a total of approximately 200,000! That means your Mega 2011 will remain up to date from January to December."

The general breakdown of the material is as follows:


- 4.8 million games. [*CH: up from 4.5 million games.*]
- 65,000 annotated games. [*CH: same number as in the 2010 version.*]
- Playerbase with 270,000 names and 32,000 pictures. [*CH: up from about 258,000 names and 31,000 pictures.*]
- Weekly online update: 200,000 games until 31.12.2011.

The expansion of the playerbase and number of pictures is noteworthy, but it seems odd that the number of annotated games has not increased from 2010, especially when the overall volume of games is up by an impressive 300,000 games or so. As it turns out though, all the new commented games from *CBM 134* to *CBM 139* (about 400-500 games) are included (compared to Mega 2010). Since there are still fewer than 66,000 commented games, the publisher decided to stick with the lower number on the packaging.

The system requirements are also worth paying attention to: 1 GHz Pentium PC, Windows Vista/XP, 512 MB RAM, DVD-ROM drive, ChessBase 10, ChessBase 11, ChessBase Light 2009 Premium, Internet. While the database can be loaded onto nearly any PC that has been manufactured in the last ten years, you need a very recent version of ChessBase or ChessBase Light Premium. If you do not have ChessBase 10 or 11 or CB Light 2009 Premium, you will not be able to get the promised online update of 200,000 games. That obviously sucks for those with earlier versions of the software. However, those that meet the requirements will find the procedure for downloading the new games is quite easy. It is described on the inside cover of the DVD.

The main annotators (with 500+ games) in the pool of 65,492 annotated games are Ftacnik (4,814), ChessBase (4,211), Bulletin (4,162), Ribli (4,048), Hecht (1,709), Finkel (1,704), Stohl (1,438), Huzman (1,394), Dautov (1,210), Tsesarisky (1,183 games), Rogozenco (1,039), Primel (1,013), Marin (959), Lukacs (921), Psakhis (864), Huebner (837), Horn (826), RR (816), Atalik (793), Schussler (784), Chekhov (774), Blatny (770), Mueller (738), Atlas (729), Lutz (713), Golod (662), Hazai (651), Postny (630), Gofshtein (567), Belov (545), Dolmatov (539), Bangiev (525), Avrukh (517), King (502). The total volume of the above is 43,587 games, which is just about two-thirds of all the games. However, with 4,211 coming from unnamed ChessBase editors, 4,162 coming from various bulletins, and 816 coming from RR, there are more than 9,000 games annotated by unnamed players. This may go along with someone's definition of top players, but I am unimpressed. Many of the games are very decently annotated in quite some detail, whereas some only have one or two comments, sometimes even consisting of one move or one random line in the middle of the game, occasionally with very poor, not computer-checked, analysis.

Nevertheless, the overall evaluation can only be very positive. For the serious player, this is an excellent product with which one can do many tasks when combined with the ChessBase database interface.

My assessment of this DVD: 

Order [Mega Database 2011](#)

by ChessBase

The Complete c3 Sicilian by Evgeny Sveshnikov, New In Chess 2010, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Paperback, 574pp. \$34.95 (ChessCafe Price: \$28.95)

For those who employ 2 c3 against the Sicilian (1 e4 c5), this monograph is akin to the collected thoughts of a religious leader. While there were many top players that dabbled with this line, few played it consistently. In the introduction, Sveshnikov recalls how he came upon playing it:



"In early 1967, as a sixteen-year-old junior, I took part in the UUSR championship for schoolboys. Before my 'white' game with Misha Shereshevsky from Minsk (who later became an international master and a good trainer) I was scratching my head: what to play? My opponent usually played the Najdorf Sicilian and I did not know of any way to gain the advantage against this variation. Serious thought was needed. I set up the pieces on the board and played the moves 1 e4 (I have always played this move automatically, without hesitation, realizing that it is the strongest) and 1...c5. The I asked myself: what does Black want? He has impeded the move d2-d4. But what if White renews the threat with 2 c3!? No Najdorf, Paulsen or Dragon then! Looking back at it, this solution turned out to be a brilliant one from a practical standpoint. Since then, according to my database, I have played the 'c3 Sicilian' about 600 times, with a score of over 70%, including dozens of wins against well-known grandmasters. I can confidently say that the move 2 c3 has me and my family for almost 40 years!

"I recall a conversation I had in the mid-1970s with Anatoly Avraamovich Bikhovsky, the chief trainer of the USSR junior team. He asked me: 'Zhenya, why do you play the c3 Sicilian? You are really limiting yourself!' I can't say that I was deeply troubled by this remark, but I did think about what he said. Now decades later, I can safely say that I do not agree with that evaluation of 2 c3. Yes, objectively the plan with 2 Nf3 and 3 d4 is stronger, but for the study of chess the c3 Sicilian (also known as the Alapin Variation) is no less important, and in respect of the provision of instructional material it presents even greater interest, since there is a wider variety of plans."

Sveshnikov is an original personality, holding himself in particular high regard, but also dispersing compliments where he feels they are warranted. His quips are often quite entertaining: "At the time of writing the book I came to the conclusion that for explaining many of the variations my own games would be sufficient. The games of elite players in the majority of cases serve only to confirm my own conclusions, building on the discoveries of earlier authors and the ideas of other theoreticians. So I have generally cited the games of elite players with only brief comments, just for information. Quite another matter is the creative work of Sermek, Pavasovic, Rozentalis, Vorotnikov and a few other players – their work brings something new, so of course I have made use of it here."

Another interesting one is the following: "To me Mark Yevgenevich Taimanov has always been very nice, both as a player and a person. I have travelled to tournaments with him, including foreign events. He is always very friendly and cheerfully disposed, and always concerned with the situation of young players. I am grateful to Taimanov for his entire school of life. I am

especially respectfully disposed towards him, because in the chess world, there are not many who have entire opening systems named after them. Taimanov is one of them. Out of a feeling of 'corporate solidarity', I have particular respect for the likes of Taimanov, Zaitsev, Averbakh and Smyslov, because they have made major contributions to opening theory. Not everyone can do this! I have even thought of writing a book on player-theoreticians." Personally, I think he feels this way because he believes, rightfully so, that he belongs in that group and unjustly has not had his name officially attached to the c3 Sicilian.

The material is divided as follows:

- Introduction (3 pages)
- Key to symbols (1 page)
- **Part I – 2...d5 and other moves**
- Historical Overview (11 pages)
- Basic Plans and Ideas (16 pages)
- The Typical Endgame with a White Queenside Majority (16 pages)
- Important Games by Variation (155 pages)
- Exercises (42 pages)
- Conclusion Part I (5 pages)
- **Part II – 2...Nf6**
- Historical Overview (12 pages)
- Basic Plans and Ideas (12 pages)
- Important Games by Variation (233 pages)
- Exercises (38 pages)
- Conclusion Part II (7 pages)
- Index of Games and Fragments (6 pages)
- Index of Variations (6 pages)

While the first part of the book is called "2...d5 and other moves," the other moves such as 2...g6, 2...b6, 2...e5, 2...d6, and 2...e6 are all very quickly dismissed, with what can at best be called inadequate coverage. In regards to 2...e5, he gives a few moves and then refers to some games that cannot be found in this work, whereas after 2...e6 he offers 2 d4 d5 3 e5! (he discusses 3 exd5 very briefly in the Historical Overview), which of course transposes to the Advance Variation of the French Defense (1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 c5 4 c3). This is hardly an easy path to advantage unless you consider the French an incorrect opening. Coincidentally, in *New In Chess Yearbook #97*, there is a survey on the Advanced Variation in the French by Sveshnikov. There he writes that Black has decent chances of equalizing if he plays accurately.

This book is massive, mostly because of the two sections of Important Games by Variation, which comprise 388 pages of the entire book. The games are generally very well-annotated with only a little overlap to the theoretical sections. In fact you often get the feeling that in order to get the full picture of the theory, you have to study the games in these sections. On top of that you often leave the theoretical section with a feeling that this cannot be the final word. Often times, you are left hanging in the middle of a piece of analysis where the author normally would have added a few more moves for clarification or at least until a verdict could be cast. But Sveshnikov frequently cuts his analysis short. Similarly, much of what is offered as analysis in the theoretical section is in fact based on games by players considered below noteworthy by Sveshnikov, but for some strange reason the material is then offered in the games section. The thinking behind this concept is a little beyond my grasp and I find it confusing. However, I do understand that the theory helps you through the first stage of understanding the opening; next comes the study of complete games with thorough annotations to reinforce the strategic, tactical, and positional concepts of this opening; and finally exercises help the reader solve specific problems of varying character and difficulty.

The following game is one of Sveshnikov's many wins with his pet opening. I have largely left the game unannotated and will leave it up to prospective readers to find the detailed annotations in the volume itself on pages 344-345.

Sveshnikov, Evgeny (2595) – McShane, Luke (2490)
Roskilde (3), 1998

Sicilian Defense [B22]

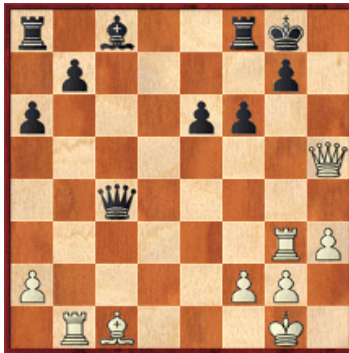
1.e4 c5 2.c3 Nf6 3.e5 Nd5 4.Nf3 Nc6 5.d4 cxd4 6.cxd4 d6 7.Nc3 e6?!

Sveshnikov offers 7...dxe5 8 dxe5 Nxc3 with equal chances as stronger.

8.Bd3 dxe5 9.dxe5 Nxc3 10.bxc3 Qa5 11.0-0! Nxe5 12.Nxe5 Qxe5 13. Rb1!?

White has excellent compensation for the pawn thanks to his lead in development and the many open files.


13...a6 14.Re1 Qc7 15.Qg4! h5 16.Qf3 Bd6 17.h3 Be5?! 18.c4 0-0 19.Bh7 +!?! Kxh7 20.Qxh5+ Kg8 21.Rxe5 f6 22.Re3 Qxc4? 23.Rg3!



[FEN "r1b2rk1/lp4p1/p3pp2/7Q/2q5/6RP/P4PP1/1RB3K1 b - - 0 23"]

23...Rf7 24.Bh6 Qe4 25.Rd1! Bd7 26.Qxf7+! Kxf7 27.Rxg7+ Ke8 28. Rdx7 Qe1+ 29.Kh2 Qb4 30.Rxb7 Qf8 31.Rh7 Qg8 32.Rbd7! 1-0

While the book is by no means perfect, it is a very good way to learn everything that is needed to play this opening as white, and to some extent how to defend against it as black. There are many nuances that will not be easily memorized, but compared with the volume of material necessary to learn the Open Sicilian, studying this book will seem like an entertaining breeze. It is by far the best book ever written on this opening. Beyond that it teaches a bundle of things about chess in general through the study of the annotated games.

My assessment of this book: 

Order [The Complete c3 Sicilian](#)

by Evgeny Sveshnikov

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