



## COLUMNISTS

**Checkpoint**

Carsten Hansen

**Rating Chart**❖ – **A poor book.**❖❖ – **Not very good.**❖❖❖ – **A useful book.****Reviewed this month:*****Starting Out: Queen's Gambit Declined***

by Neil McDonald

***Starting Out: Queen's Gambit Accepted***

by Alexander Raetsky &amp; Maxim Chetverik

***A World Champion's Guide to the King's Indian (DVD)***

by Rustam Kasimdzhanov

***Learn the Opening the Easy Way: The Colle-Zukertort System (DVD)***

by Susan Polgar

***En Passant******New in Chess Yearbook Vol. 81***

by Genna Sosonko (ed.)

***Chess Informant Vol. 97***

by Zdenko Krnic &amp; Aleksandar Matanovic et al.

**Queen's Gambit Fundamentals**

This month we'll look at two books from Everyman Chess that have nearly identical titles, but are vastly different in their approach. Then we'll examine two recent DVDs, before finishing off with two familiar and very popular yearbooks. Have a great February.

*Starting Out: Queen's Gambit Declined* by Neil McDonald, Everyman Chess 2006, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Paperback, 191pp., \$23.95

As the *Starting Out* series has grown, it has forgotten its roots to some extent and become more theory laden, while reducing the explanatory prose at an equal proportion. For



◆◆◆◆ – A good book.

◆◆◆◆◆ – An excellent book.

some openings I find that this approach fits better, while for others it is entirely unfeasible. The present book by English grandmaster Neil McDonald is a reversion to the earlier ideals of the series, with the majority of it devoted to truly making the reader understand the opening, before progressing to other theoretical materials.



The contents are divided as follows:

- Introduction (2 pages)
- 1 Starting Moves and Strategy (18 pages)
- 2 Tartakower's Defence (39 pages)
- 3 Lasker's Defence (16 pages)
- 4 The Classical Defence (26 pages)
- 5 The Cambridge Springs Defence (16 pages)
- 6 The Exchange Variation (37 pages)
- 7 White play Bf4 (28 pages)
- Index of Variations (3 pages)
- Index of Complete Games (2 pages)

Obviously, many variations have been omitted, but I think that McDonald has chosen to focus only on those lines that you need to learn to start playing this opening. In the introduction, he explains a couple of key points:

*The beautiful thing about playing the Queen's Gambit Declined as Black is that your opponent will have to play better than you if he wants to win. And if he plays badly, there is nothing stopping you from bagging the whole point...*

*But what about newcomers to chess, or players with limited time to study, or those of us not blessed with a deep calculating apparatus? If you come into that category, then why not play the Queen's Gambit? When you push 1...d5 you are saying to the opponent: I'm not giving you any space for free; it's going to be an equal fight, and if you want to try to win you are going to have to find a lot of creative moves!*

*A comparison with the King's Indian reveals another good feature of the Queen's Gambit: it is very tolerant of slight positional mistakes. In the King's Indian a small error can prove very costly for Black, as the emphasis is on counterattack. Whereas in the Queen's Gambit, if Black puts a bishop on a rather passive square, or loosens his pawns more than strictly necessary, he can remedy his error with careful consolidating moves. There is no need to do or die.*

McDonald also discusses his choices regarding content:

*After some soul searching, I decided against giving any coverage of the Tarrasch or Semi-Tarrasch Defences (1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 c5 and 3...Nf6 4 Nf3 c5).*

*If someone is indeed starting out with the Queen's Gambit Declined, they need a basic platform on which to build up their knowledge and test ideas - and for this purpose I have selected the solid d5/e6 black pawn centre. It might be said that the gulf between the plans typical of this centre and the Tarrasch are as great as those between the Grünfeld and King's Indian.*

*I had less trouble deciding to omit the Ragozin and Vienna. I don't regard them as true Queen's Gambit variations. The typical way they start is 1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 and here Black wants to answer 3 Nc3 with 3...Bb4, the Nimzo-Indian. After 3 Nf3, he is frustrated in his aim of pinning on c3 immediately, and so waits, continuing 3...d5 4 Nc3 Bb4 or 4...dxc4 5 e4 Bb4. Such play does not really fit in with the strategic aims of the Queen's Gambit Declined.*

It is difficult to argue against his decisions, because these lines are so vastly different from all others in the Queen's Gambit Declined. However, I would have liked a separate chapter on the lines where White plays an early Bxf6, along with other early deviations, just because the lines are so vastly different. McDonald has placed these lines at the end of the Tartakower chapter, but in all sincerity, they merit their own.

Few books provide such a good fundamental understanding of this opening. One of the many nuggets of wisdom contained herein is from the chapter, "The secret of ...h7-h6," which ponders the question: When do I play ...h7-h6 and when shouldn't I? McDonald writes:

*Finally, I want to think about the little move ...h7-h6 in the opening. Why does Black jump at the chance to play 6...h6 in the Tartakower and Lasker Defences, but avoid it like the plague in the Classical and Exchange Variations?*

*I've read some vague explanations about long-term plans in other books, such as how you won't be mated on move 112 by a rook because you were a clever little bunny and dug an escape tunnel for your king with 6...h6.*

*But I finally realized it's all rather simple: if you have two knights winning to guard h7, you don't go ...h7-h6.*

*In the Classical, Black plays ...Nbd7, which means that he has a second knight ready to take up guard on f6 if White ever plays*

*Bxf6. So Black hardly ever has to be afraid of tricks like Bd3 and Qc2 ganging up on c7 and h7 in the Orthodox. I say 'hardly ever' because Vidmar of course fell for that trap in the Orthodox in the example above! [CH: he's referring to the classic Capablanca-Vidmar, London 1922, which was given immediately before this section on ...h7-h6]*

*The same goes for the Exchange Variation: a second knight quickly arrives on d7 to back up the one on f6. And if the knight ever moves from d7, more often than not it is to f8, where it defends h7 directly.*

*In contrast, in the Tartakower Black doesn't play ...Nbd7 [CH: this is not entirely accurate, as Black often plays it later or only in certain lines, but McDonald discusses this in detail in the Tartakower chapter], so he is in more danger of a blow against h7; if White ever plays Bxf6, Black recaptures ...Bxf6 and h7 is undefended by a knight. Thus Black throws in ...h7-h6 at the first opportunity. Likewise in the Lasker: the black knight leaves f6 for e4, and it will be a long time, if ever, before the h7-pawn is guarded by another knight. Hence, ...h7-h6 is played.*

The fifty main games are generally lightly annotated, with a decent amount of prose and just a few variations. Only occasionally does McDonald delve into the theory and analysis of individual lines. One example being 1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Bg5 Be7 5 e3 0-0 6 Nf3 Nbd7 7 Qc2 h6 8 cxd5!?, as in Kasparov-Portisch, Brussels 1986.

Overall, I found this book to be enjoyable and very informative. It is perfectly suited for players rated up to about 1900 or so, although those at the upper end of this scale may find some of the material a little too basic for their needs. Still, everyone who reads this book will learn the fundamentals of an opening that is one of the pillars of understanding that you must acquire to succeed in chess.

**My assessment of this book:** 

**Order Starting Out: Queen's Gambit**

***Declined***

by Neil McDonald

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*Starting Out: Queen's Gambit Accepted* by Alexander Raetsky & Maxim Chetverik, Everyman Chess 2006, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Paperback, 172pp., \$23.95

Compared to McDonald's book, this title




focuses more on games and variations, and less on explanatory prose. It presents an entirely reasonable repertoire, with a good balance of popular and semi-forgotten lines.



The material is divided as follows:

- Preface (2 pages)
- **Seizing Space with 3 e4**
- 1 3 e4: Black Undermines White's Centre (29 pages)
- 2 3 e4 e5: Black Counters in the Centre (17 pages)
- **The 3 Nf3 Main Line (3 Nf3 Nf6 4 e3 e6 5 Bxc4 c5)**
- 3 The Furman and Steinitz Variations (18 pages)
- 4 6 0-0 a6 7 a4 and Rare 7th moves (30 pages)
- 5 The Old and the New: 7 Qe2 and 7 Bb3 (20 pages)
- **Less Popular Variations**
- 6 3 Nf3 Nf6 without 4 e3 e6 (21 pages)
- 7 Black Refrains from 3 Nf3 Nf6 (14 pages)
- 8 White's Third Move Alternatives (10 pages)
- Index of Variations (5 pages)
- Index of Complete Games (2 pages)

While I like the selection of games and the annotations, there could have been much more prose for the less experienced readers. The authors have done themselves a disservice by limiting the discussions of typical plans, tactics, pawn structures and strategies, because the material given is too complicated for lower-ranked players. Yet, the book in its present form is much too simple for higher-ranked players. This book can serve as a useful introduction to the opening, but it is wanting on several levels.

**My assessment of this book:** 

**Order *Starting Out: Queen's Gambit Accepted***

by Alexander Raetsky & Maxim Chetverik

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*A World Champion's Guide to the King's Indian* (DVD) by Rustam Kasimdzhanov, ChessBase GmbH 2006, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Playing time: 3 hours and 25 minutes, \$37.95

Kasimzhanov is a former FIDE Knock-Out World Champion and is currently rated about 2700. In this DVD, he presents the



King's Indian Defense primarily from Black's point of view.

The packaging tells us:

*This disk is a perfect tool for players looking for a complicated battle against 1.d4. The author suggests the King's Indian Defence and shows with a number of examples how realistic Black's chances are in this opening to get a complex structure with the most serious attacking potential. Apart from theoretical information, the disk also contains structural insights and an array of ideas which will enable to include this opening into your repertoire - immediately and with tangible success!*



This last statement is clearly an exaggeration, as the DVD doesn't even dig an inch down into the overwhelming amount of theory that surrounds this opening. Kasimzhanov's theoretical coverage tends to be brief and he doesn't even deal with the majority of lines that can be employed against the King's Indian, although he does examine some of the more important ones. Still, in all fairness, he could have made a DVD on just the Classical Main Line and not been able to fit it onto just one disk.

Let's look at the contents:

- Introduction (10:31)
- Classical Variation: 1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 Bg7 4 e4 d6 5 Nf3 0-0 6 Be2 e5 7 0-0 Nc6 (31:13)
- g3-variation: 1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nf3 Bg7 4.g3 0-0 5.Bg2 d6 6.0-0 Nc6 7.Nc3 a6
- Be3-variation Intro:
- Be3-variation: 1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 Bg7 4.e4 d6 5.Nf3 0-0 6. Be2 e5 7.Be3 h6
- b4-variation Intro:
- b4-variation: 1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 Bg7 4.e4 d6 5.Nf3 0-0 6. Be2 e5 7.0-0 Nc6 8.d5 Ne7 9.b4
- Pawn structure:
- Saemisch variation: 1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 Bg7 4.e4 d6 5.f3
- Letelier - Fischer: 1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 Bg7 4.e4 0-0 5.e5 Ne8 6.f4 d6

As you can see, there are notable absences: the Averbakh Variation, the Makagonov Variation, the Four Pawns Attack, the Petrosian Variation, and the Smyslov Variation to name just a few.

As a presenter, Kasimzhanov comes across as very knowledgeable and he does a particularly good job of explaining the ideas from both

players perspective, albeit with a bias for Black's prospects in mind. He has a likeable, friendly personality and his voice is steady and confident.

This DVD will undoubtedly expand your understanding of the King's Indian in a way that a mere book cannot; however, you will still need to study other sources to obtain a deeper knowledge of the theory. Though Kasimdzhanov would have said it much more eloquently, I will end this review with the words of the great Kazakhstani, Borat Sagdiyev: "Very Nice! Great Success!"

**My assessment of this DVD:** 

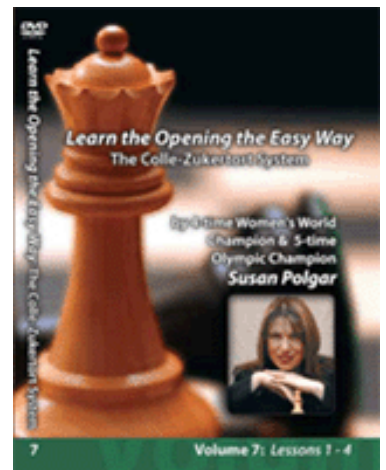
**Order *A World Champion's Guide to the King's Indian (DVD)***  
by Rustam Kasimdzhanov

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*Learn the Opening the Easy Way: The Colle-Zukertort System (DVD)*  
by Susan Polgar, Chessdvds.com 2006, Figurine Algebraic Notation,  
Playing time 2 hours and 11 minutes, \$27.95

This is Volume 7 of a series of DVDs from Susan Polgar, and as far as I can see, the only one exclusively focused on openings. The backcover blurb tells us in a rather fuzzy text:

*On this DVD, Susan Polgar will introduce to you the foundation of the Colle-Zukertort... an exciting, dynamic, versatile and easy-to-learn Opening system. She has more than 20 years of success with this Opening which is rich in tactics. This system is perfect for the players who want to get good games out of the Opening, yet only spend a fraction of the time it normally takes to master of the more complicated Openings. So if you are looking to have success in the Opening while avoiding well known, deeply analyzed main theoretical Opening lines, then the Colle-Zukertort System is for you.*



Aside from the inexplicable use of a capital "O," this sounds fine. After all, who wouldn't want to be taught an opening that allows you a good attacking position without having to study?

This DVD is mostly well-produced, but Polgar's presentation seems

strained and over-rehearsed; so much so that she sounds rather mechanical. Also, they didn't seem to give much forethought to the fact that Polgar's source for reciting the games is off-screen to her right, which gives the viewer an awkward perspective.


The contents are as follows:

- Introduction (4 minutes)
- 1. History of the Colle-Zukertort variation (3 minutes)
- 2. Typical games & ideas (1 hour 38 minutes total)
  - 2a. Maroczy-Blake (9 minutes)
  - 2b. Alekhine-Roselli (7 minutes)
  - 2c. Barbero-Liao (5 minutes)
  - 2d. Euwe-Kroone (4 minutes)
  - 2e. Rubinstein-Salwe (7 minutes)
  - 2f. Evans-Gomez (6 minutes)
  - 2g. Summerscale-Gimenez (10 minutes)
  - 2h. Yusupov-Spiridonov (6 minutes)
  - 2i. Smyslov-Mariotti (9 minutes)
  - 2j. Yusupov-Scheeren (11 minutes)
  - 2k. Filatov-Mayer (10 minutes)
  - 2l. Polgar-Mai (4 minutes)
  - 2m. Hartston-Upton (6 minutes)
  - 2n. Capablanca-Bernstein (4 minutes)
- 3. Various Black Responses (28 minutes total)
  - 3a. With c7-c5, Nc6, Be7 (7 minutes)
  - 3b. With c7-c5, Nc6, Bd6 (17 minutes)
  - 3c. With Nbd7 (4 minutes)
- 4. Conclusions for White & Black (1 minute)

As you can see, the vast majority of the DVD is spent going over games at a rather brisk pace, and this does not leave much time for actual theory. However, this isn't the most theoretical of openings and it's better to understand the basic concepts than it is to memorize a bunch of theory. Still, I find it very surprising that Polgar does not mention that Black has an alternative to 1 d4 d5 2 Nf3 e6 (which White answers with 3 e3 followed by 4 Bd3 and 5 b3). If Black plays 2...Nf6 and White nonetheless opts for 3 e3, and Black then develops 3...Bf5, White will be stuck in first gear, because he or she has no idea what to do next. Or what if Black plays 1 d4 Nf6 2 Nf3 e6 or 2...b6 or 2...d6 or 2...c5? This is very unfortunate, because the target audience for this DVD is very inexperienced players who don't know much about openings. Additionally, the section on the history of the variation mainly consists of two pictures (of Colle and Zukertort), along with some brief biographical information.

In general, this DVD is inadequate on many levels and it isn't particularly good.



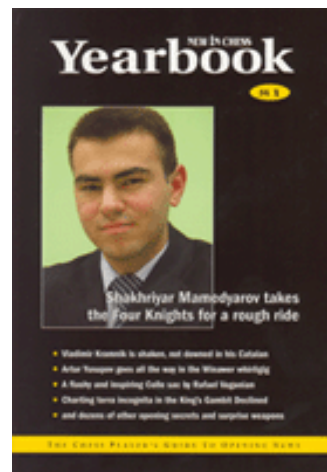
**My assessment of this DVD:** 

**Order *Learn the Opening the Easy Way:*  
*The Colle-Zukertort System (DVD)*  
by Susan Polgar**

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*New in Chess Yearbook Vol. 81* by Genna Sosonko (ed.), Interchess BV 2006, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Paperback, 247pp., \$28.95

The *New in Chess Yearbook* is becoming one of the premier publications in the world of chess. A picture of Azerbaijani grandmaster Shakhriyar Mamedyarov adorns the cover, along with the following headlines:



- Shakhriyar Mamedyarov takes the Four Knights for a rough ride
- Vladimir Kramnik is shaken, not downed in his Catalan
- Artur Yusupov goes all the way in the Winawer whirligig
- A flashy and inspiring Colle sac by Rafael Vaganian
- Charting terra incognita in the King's Gambit Declined

The material is divided as follows:

- Persons of Interest (2 pages)
- **Forum and Sosonko's Corner**
- Forum (12 pages)
- Sosonko's Corner (5 pages)
- **Surveys Featuring 34 Opening Variations** (212 pages)
- Including surveys on Sicilian (4 surveys), French (2), Ruy Lopez (3), King's Gambit (2), Slav (2), Nimzo-Indian (2), King's Indian (3), English Opening (2) as well many with one including the popular Scandinavian line with 3...Qd6, the fascinating Dodo Variation in the Nimzowitsch Opening: 1 e4 Nc6 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 Bg4 4 d5 Ne5 5 Nxe5 Bxd1 6 Bb5+ c6 7 dxc6, which is covered by Dutch grandmaster John van der Wiel.
- **Service**
- Book Reviews by Glenn Flear (6 pages)
- New In Chess Code System (1 page)

I highly recommend this series of yearbooks to chess fans of all levels;

lower-rated players will find the material very interesting and maybe pick-up ideas to piece together an opening repertoire, while stronger players can find information on the latest topical line or something that can be used as a surprise weapon in a critical game.

**My assessment of this book:** 

**Order *New in Chess Yearbook Vol. 81***

by Genna Sosonko (ed.)

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*Chess Informant Vol. 97* by Zdenko Krnic & Aleksandar Matanovic et al., Sahovski Informator 2006, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Paperback, 348pp., \$36.00

The granddaddy of chess yearbooks is out once again, this time consisting of the following sections:

- Contributors (2 pages)
- The ten best games of the preceding Volume (1 page)
- The ten most important theoretical novelties of the preceding volume (5 pages)
- System of Signs (3 pages)
- **Games**
  - A (27 pages)
  - B (81 pages)
  - C (53 pages)
  - D (52 pages)
  - E (52 pages)
- Index (10 pages)
- Annotators (2 pages)
- Combinations (4 pages)
- Endings (7 pages)
- Studies (3 pages)
- Tournament Results (12 pages)
- The Best of Chess Informant - featuring Svetzovar Gligoric (24 pages)



The game Topalov-Aronian, Wijk aan Zee 2006 was the winner of both the Best Game and the Most Important Novelty of the Preceding Volume. It featured an exchange sacrifice in the opening that has almost become a Topalov [trademark](#).

The 433 games are classified according to the Sahovski Encyclopaedic

system under which A covers the Reti, English, and Queen's Pawn openings such as the Torre Attack, Budapest Gambit, Benko, Benoni and Dutch; B includes the Scandinavian, Pirc, Caro-Kann and Sicilian; C encompasses the French and all 1 e4 e5 openings, D consists of all 1 d4 d5 openings and the Grünfeld Indian, and E covers the Catalan, Bogó-Indian, Queen's Indian, Nimzo-Indian and King's Indian. As you can see, the majority of the main games are in section B, which is a testament to the always popular Sicilian.

This volume features annotations by players such as Adams, Anand, Beliavsky, Bologan, Gelfand, M.Gurevich, Ivanchuk, Karjakin, Kasimdzhanov, Kosteniuk, Kramnik, Leko, Morozevich, Ponomarev, Short, Svidler, and many others. The annotations are languageless, meaning they use a code system of symbols to accompany the variations.

This series of yearbooks is mostly for serious players, but even club level players can glean more than enough study material to make it a worthwhile investment. I spent countless months studying these volumes during my formative years as a chess player. They give you easy access to the latest theory and top games annotated by the world's best players.

**My assessment of this book:** 

**[Order](#) *Chess Informant Vol. 97***

by Zdenko Krnic & Aleksandar Matanovic et al.

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