



C O L U M N I S T S

Checkpoint

Carsten Hansen

**Reviewed this month:*****Starting Out: The Caro-Kann***

by Joe Gallagher

Starting Out: The Queen's Gambit

by John Shaw

Informator 85

by Aleksandar Matanovic et al.

New in Chess Yearbook 65

by Genna Sosonko and Paul van der Sterren

These Are a Few of My Favorite Things...

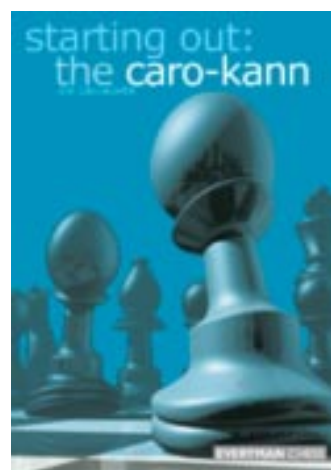
Once a year, just before Christmas, the American talk-show host Oprah Winfrey has a show she calls Oprah's Favorite Things. In it she presents the audience with the things that have impressed her the most in the year that past. Well, for starters, I'm not Oprah, but I still have my favorite things. This month, I will look at the latest volumes in long-running series of the yearbooks from Sahovski



Informator and New in Chess. Another favorite is the recently introduced series from Everyman Chess, *Starting Out*. But before I break out in singing like Julie Andrews about her favorite things in the musical *The Sound of Music*, I wish everybody a great February. Enjoy!

Starting Out: The Caro-Kann by Joe Gallagher, 2002 Everyman Chess, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Softcover, 192pp., \$16.95

In my July 2002 column, I reviewed the first two books in this series, one of which was by Gallagher on the King's Indian Defence. That book more than any other in this series so far stands out as an excellent achievement as it explains all the basics and more of the King's Indian. The present book is his second attempt at this concept, this time covering the solid Caro-Kann, which currently is receiving a lot of attention from the highest rated players. In the recent tournament in Wijk aan Zee, we saw both Anand and Bareev employ the Caro-Kann with success.



Aside from Neil McDonald's book on the Main Line Caro-Kann, there has not been much published on the Caro-Kann in recent years. An occasional book has appeared, but rarely anything that has covered all lines and none that explained the all the basics of the various lines of the Caro-Kann.

This, however, is the aim of the present book. The

back cover blurb, tells us that "In this easy-to read guide, Grandmaster Joe Gallagher goes back to the basics of the Caro-Kann, studying the key principles of its many variations. Throughout the book there are numerous notes, tips, warnings and exercises to help the improving player, whilst important strategies, ideas and tactics for both sides are clearly illustrated." Since that is exactly what he did in his book on the King's Indian, this is naturally also what I will expect from him now. However, I must admit that I at first was quite surprised that it was Gallagher who was writing this book on the Caro-Kann, as he is known for playing the Najdorf Sicilian as Black, and I honestly do not recall him ever playing the Caro-Kann as Black. This too was addressed by Gallagher in the introduction in the present book on under the header 'My Caro-Kann Credentials'. He writes: "I must admit there were a number of eyebrows raised in the chess community when they heard that I was writing a book on the Caro-Kann. That is because I don't play the opening as Black and am a fully paid up member of the second group which believes in counterattacking from the word go. Still, I feel reasonably well qualified to write a book on this opening. During my twenty years as a chess professional I have had to face the Caro-Kann on literally hundreds of occasions. I have never managed to find one line that has fully satisfied me and have chopped and changed, in the process accumulating a lot of experience in all the major variations. In addition, I got on quite personal terms with the opening when I covered it for the famous one volume opening's encyclopaedia *NCO* (Nunn's

Chess Openings)."

Those credentials are better than most authors these days anyway, so I don't think we should have anything to complain about on that front.

Gallagher has divided the material up as follows:

- Bibliography (1 page)
- Introduction (4 pages)
- **1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 Nd2/Nc3 dxe4 4 Nxe4**
- 1 Classical Variation 4...Bf5: Old Main Line (22 pages)
- 2 Classical Variation 4...Bf5: The Modern 7...Nf6 (14 pages)
- 3 4...Nd7: Alternatives to 5 Ng5 (17 pages)
- 4 4...Nd7 5 Ng5 (19 pages)
- 5 4...Nf6 (19 pages)
- **1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 e5**
- 6 Advance Variation: 3...c5 and the Short System (17 pages)
- 7 Advance Variation: The Sharp 4 Nc3 (19 pages)
- **1 e4 c6 - Other Systems**
- 8 The Panov-Botvinnik Attack (17 pages)
- 9 The Fantasy Variation: 3 f3 (20 pages)
- 10 Miscellaneous Systems (14 pages)
- Index of Complete Games (2 pages)
- Index of Variations (2 pages)

Looking at the page distribution, I'm very surprised that the Fantasy Variation is awarded so much room compared to the far more popular lines of the Panov-Botvinnik Attack or the 4 Nc3 variation of the Advance Variation, which is seen very frequently at

top levels. While Gallagher does admit it is one of his pet lines, that is a bit biased and it doesn't make it more likely that you are going to run into it. I have been playing the Caro-Kann on and off for years, and yet nobody has played the 3 f3 against me.

The chapters are build up after the usual recipe in these books, as an example I will use chapter Five, 4...Nf6.

The material in the chapter is divided up as follows:

- 5...gxf6: Introduction and Various Plans
- 5...gxf6: White Plays g2-g3
- 5...exf6: The Tartkower Variation
- Summary

Under each header, there is a short introduction, sometimes discussing the historical origin of the line, then discussing strategies, pawn structure, and then some theory. Then Gallagher answers the questions if the line in question is theoretical, meaning if there is a lot of theory to be learned by heart or if general understanding primarily is necessary, or what else may be the case. next he looks at the scoring statistics, often discussing which impact various move order does to the scoring percentage, and what the overall statistic is in contrast to a particular key position, which may in many cases be more relevant than the overall percentage. Then in addition to this the author annotates some relevant games that illustrate the kind of play that can arise in the particular line.

Throughout the book there are a total of 60 games, most of which are relatively short games (less than 30 moves)


As noted on the back cover blurb, there are a lot of tips, notes and warnings. These are marked in the margin and the text is highlighted. This is something I find is of particular use for improving players who have yet to find their way safely around the chess board, but many of these pointers can be helpful even for stronger players.

However, as far as the promised exercises mentioned on the back cover are concerned, I did not come across any in the book. Not that I'm particularly missing them as there are plenty of other good things in this book that more than makes up for the absence of exercises, but why mention them if they are not going to be there? Maybe Gallagher didn't know that the publisher had written that on the back cover...

That aside, I find that this book is an excellent introduction to the Caro-Kann for players with either color. The material is of a variety and quality that will easily be useful for everybody rated from around 1200 up to around 2000, although the latter may want to supplement their knowledge with a closer study of theory from other sources. However, even stronger players may get something out of reading the present book. I for one thoroughly enjoyed reading it, which gave me a fresh look at all of the various lines in the Caro-Kann. The material is also up-to-date with several games from

2002, and it also contains a lot of games that may not be familiar to most readers.

Overall this book deserves a full recommendation from this end.

My assessment of this book: 

[Order](#) *Starting Out: The Caro-Kann*
by Joe Gallagher

Starting Out: The Queen's Gambit by John Shaw,
2002 Everyman Chess, Figurine Algebraic
Notation, paperback, 144 pp., \$16.95

While the author of the previous book, Joe Gallagher, is a household name, the name of the author of the present book will not ring a bell with most people. Personally, I knew that he is an International Master, but not much more than that. On the back cover we are further told that he is a three-time Scottish champion and has represented Scotland in numerous Olympiads and European Championships.



In comparison with the book by Gallagher, I found it rather strange that Gallagher had 192 pages at his disposal to cover the Caro-Kann, while Shaw only had 144 pages to cover the entire Queen's Gambit complex, including the Slav, the Meran, the Semi-

Slav, the Tarrasch, and the Queen's Gambit Declined and Accepted. A huge number of lines, many of which have been covered in thick volumes on their own. The author's task of cramming everything into just 144 pages is one I truly do not envy, it must have been a nightmare. Let's take a look at how Shaw has divided up the material:

- Introduction (2 pages)
- 1 The Queen's Gambit Declined (18 pages)
- 2 The Queen's Gambit Declined Exchange Variation (15 pages)
- 3 The Tarrasch Defence (15 pages)
- 4 The Semi-Slav Defence (14 pages)
- 5 The 'Triangle' Move Order (10 pages)
- 6 The Slav Defence (20 pages)
- 7 The Queen's Gambit Accepted (20 pages)
- 8 The Chigorin Defence (9 pages)
- 9 Odds and Ends (11 pages)
- Index of Complete Games (2 pages)
- Index of Variations (2 pages)

Again I'm looking at the number of pages allotted to each line, and asking myself, how on earth he did it. Let's see how.

Initially I will start out by quoting Shaw from the Introduction: "The book is intended as an introduction to the Queen's Gambit for inexperienced players or slightly more experienced players who are unfamiliar with this opening. It is certainly not intended to provide comprehensive theoretical coverage; instead my goal is to explain the positional plans and ideas of each line while

keeping the theory to a minimum. My hope is that this book will enable the reader to work out a reasonable move of his/her own rather than simply try to remember and copy what has been played before."

This is a noble goal and also gives a good idea of what to expect in regards to the coverage, the debates of relatively minor issues in these complexes of variations are not something we should expect to find in this book.

Moving over to take a look at chapter one, the material has been split up under the following headers:

- Introduction
- The Tartakower Variation
- The Lasker Variation
- The Classical Orthodox
- The Cambridge Springs
- White develops with Bf4

If you have any knowledge of the Queen's Gambit Declined already, you know that this is not even close to covering what either side can reasonably expect to meet when taking up this line. To mention one very important line, he has omitted, after 1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Nf3 Be7 5 Bg5 h6 (the importance of this move and why it has to be played now rather than later is not discussed either), White answers with 6 Bxf6. There are scores of gambits and various move orders that can cause all sorts of early mayhem and destruction, none of them are mentioned. In contrast to the above book

by Gallagher, where you really feel you are getting to the bottom of things, here you get a hurried impression where the author doesn't have room to go into any sort of detail.


In chapter one for example, he covers all of these lines, basic ideas, strategy, including some history, in a mere two pages. This is of course not near enough when, for comparison, a recent book on the Cambridge Springs Variation by itself managed to fill up some 200 pages. The illustrative games of course do of course provide us with some ideas as to how to handle a particular line, but when you have so little space to make do with as an author, you don't even get to scratch the surface of each line. That was also a problem we saw in John Emms book about the Sicilian in this series. It is just not always possible to get everything pared to a minimum. The material that you are working with is too vast and the limitations put upon you too restricting. Therefore every decision you make is likely to be wrong or can be conceived as wrong by those reading the book. In my opinion, the author of this book should have been allotted 100 additional pages to do the Queen's Gambit justice.

I have to say that I don't dislike the material in book, because there are a lot of good beginnings and ends, but there is so much material in between that had to be left on the cutting room floor that the final result is somewhat blah.

So while I somewhat like what is in the book, I don't like what was left out. This means that there is

plenty of material that you can benefit from, but you only get a cursory glance at this opening, or rather complex of different, but related openings.

I therefore cannot recommend this book very highly, but on the hand nor will I dismiss it, as I'm sure many players will be able to benefit a great deal from what made it into the book. But there are so many lines in the Queen's Gambit that were left out, where the material in this book will not be of much guidance. This will of course result in prospective student having to do a lot more individual leg work before beginning to comprehend this opening. The problem is, however, that there aren't any other books out there that can do that for you. So for now, you are stranded.

My assessment of this book: 

Order *Starting Out: The Queen's Gambit*
by John Shaw

Informator 85 by Aleksandar Matanovic et al.,
2002 Sahovski Informator, Figurine Algebraic
Notation, paperback, 357 pp., \$36.00

Ahh, a smile comes to my face, quite similar to when an opponent of mine walks headfirst into my home preparation. Mainly because many of my home preparations over the years have been based on ideas picked up from the numerous volumes of *Informator*. Now I mainly enjoy studying the games of the best players of today and watching their home preparations and creative creations at the board.



As I have stated several times before, there are endless hours of study material for any ambitious student of chess in *Informator*, although the non-verbal variation-based annotations may be too daunting for some, especially when the variations and evaluations given do not make any sense at all. That, by the way, happens to the best of us.

The content is divided up as follows:

- The Best ten games of the preceding volume (2 pages)
- The ten most important theoretical novelties of the preceding volume (4 pages)
- Code System (3 pages)
- Classification of openings (6 pages)
- Games Section:
 - A (27 pages)
 - B (117 pages)

- C (51 pages)
- D (44 pages)
- E (41 pages)
- Register (10 pages)
- Commentators (2 pages)
- Combinations (6 pages)
- Endings (7 pages)
- Tournaments (10 pages)
- The Best of Chess Informant: Lajos Portisch (21 pages)

The winner of the best game prize was Vasiukov-van Wely, Moscow 2002, in which White won in beautiful and convincing fashion. That, by the way is the second time in a row that a player below the top 100 rated players win this prize.

In the review of an earlier volume, I discussed the current trend of using flank pawn moves such as b4, g4, h4 and ...b5, ...g5 and ...h5 early in the opening (a trend that was confirmed by Kasparov in his first game against Deep Fritz in New York at the time of writing this review). However, there are many examples in the present volume where traditional values still apply. So let's look at a couple of examples, in fact some with a little bit spice.

Our first example is between two rising stars, Russian Motylev and Hungarian Ács.

Motylev,A (2622) - Acs,P (2529) [C45] Dubai Open 2002

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4 Bc5 5 Nxc6 Qf6 6 Qd2 bxc6

When I first read about this variation, I was told that the idea with Black's previous move was to take back on c6 with the queen. However, it has been discovered that White is better in those lines. Then the main attention continued with 6...dxc6, opening the path for the c8-bishop, controlling the d5-square while maintaining the active positions of the dark-squared bishop and the queen. In addition the d-file is being opened. Now, however, the most popular move is the one chosen in this game.

7 Nc3 Qg6

In the annotations to another game in this volume, Beliavsky gives 7...Bb4 an '!', though without giving any supporting analysis. The text move has been played before, but violates one of the principles of opening play that I think we all have been taught, 'don't develop your queen too early', as well as: 'don't move the same piece twice in the opening'. As we will see, both principles are broken several times by Black in this game.

8 f4!?

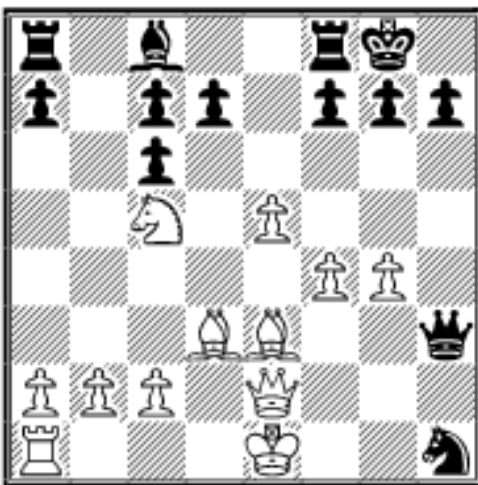
The new move.

8...Nf6

This move may be the beginning of Black's troubles as it leads Black into a forced series of moves in which Black is committed to continuously move his queen and knight. The safer and most likely correct continuation is 8...Ne7! as played in Smeets-

I.Sokolov, Dutch Team Ch 2002, a game which is also quoted in this volume. After 9 Bd3 d5! 10 e5 Bf5 11 Na4 Bd4 12 Bxf5 Nxf5 13 Qe2 h5 14 Bd2 a5 15 0-0-0 0-0 a double-edged position arose.

**9 Bd3 Ng4 10 e5 Qh6 11 Qe2 Nf2 12 Ne4 Nxf1
13 Nxc5 Qxh2 14 Be3 0-0 15 g4!! Qh3**



At this point, 15 moves into the game, Black has moved his queen 5 times and his king knight 4 times. Black ought to be in trouble, and as it turns out in the game, he is. At this point Motylev also analyses 15...Qh4 to an

advantage for White.

16 Ne4 h6

Here Fritz likes 16...d5 a lot, but in answer to that, Motylev offers the following long variation: 16...d5 17 Ng5 Qh4 18 Kd2 Ng3 19 Qg2 h6 20 Bf2 hxg5 21 Bg3 Qxg4 22 Rh1 f6 23 Be2 Qe6 24 Qh2 Kf7 25 fxg5 f5 26 Qh7 with a clear advantage or 23...Qf5 24 Qh2 gxf4 25 Qh8+ Kf7 26 Bh5+ g6 27 Qh7+ Ke6 28 Bg6 with an attack for White, but this line should surely have been analysed a bit further, as it is far from obvious how White should continue after 28...Qg5!?. To me it seems like the right way is 29 Bf2 in order to meet 29...f2+ with 30 Be3 Qg2+ 31 Kc3 with a nasty initiative, e.g. 31...Qxh1 32 Qxh1 fxe5 33 Bc5 or 31...fxe5 32 Rh6 and it is soon over for Black.

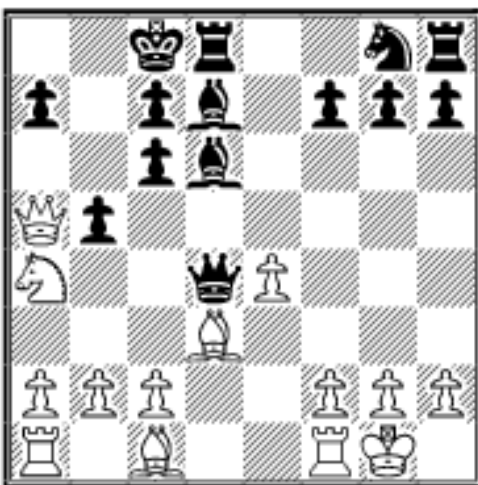
**17 Kd2 d5 18 exd6 cxd6 19 Rg1 d5 20 Nd6 Ng3
21 Qf3**

Now Black's knight is getting lost and the rest of the game is a display of White's superiority.

**21...Bxg4 22 Qxg3 Qxg3 23 Rxg3 h5 24 Bf5 Bxf5
25 Nxf5 g6 26 Ne7+ Kh7 27 Nxc6 Rfe8 28 Ne5
Re7 29 Bc5 Rc7 30 Bd4 Re8 31 f5 Rce7 32 Nxf7
1-0.**

***Antal,G (2492) - Borisek,J (2341) [C45] Budapest
2002***

**1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4 Bc5 5 Nxc6
Qf6 6 Qd2 dxc6 7 Nc3 Bd7 8 Bd3 0-0-0 9 Na4
Bd6 10 Qa5 Qd4 11 0-0 b5?**



Black got the great idea that if White now plays 12 Nc3, he can equalize with 12...Qb6 13 Qxb6 axb6. However, Black's last move weakens the king's position so much that there has to be a flaw. White finds it and convincingly executes

Black. It's nice to see that not all old traditional values on the chessboard have been sent to the scrap heap. There are a lot of variations accompanying this game in Informator; I will here settle for the punctuation.

12 b3!! Qe5

This is Black's only move: 12...bxa4? 13 Qa6+ Kb8 14 Be3 Bc8 15 Qa5 Bb4 16 Qa4 wins for White and so does 12...Qxa1 13 Qa6+ Kb8 14 Be3.

**13 g3 Bh3 14 Bb2 Qh5 15 f3! Bxf1 16 Rxf1 Ne7
17 e5! bxa4?! 18 bxa4! Kb8? 19 Bd4 Nc8 20
Rb1+ Nb6 21 Bxb6 axb6 22 Rxb6+ cxb6 23
Qxb6+ Kc8 24 Qxc6+ Kb8 25 Qb6+ Kc8 26 Ba6+
1-0**

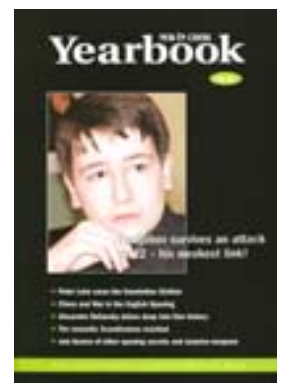
If you are an ambitious player or just eager to find interesting study material with good annotations, albeit variation based, this is the book to buy - you will not regret it. I never have, and I have in the past bought 75 volumes.

My assessment of this book: 

[Order](#) *Chess Informant 85* by Matanovic et al

New in Chess Yearbook 65 by Genna Sosonko and Paul van der Sterren, 2003 New In Chess, Figurine Algebraic Notation, paperback, 192 pp., \$23.95

The yearbooks from New in Chess are something I'm getting to like more and more every time a new volume comes out. The reasons are many: interesting ideas and games from the readers, entertaining and noteworthy articles from editor Genna Sosonko, excellent and well-chosen opening surveys, that always has something interesting to offer, even if you don't exactly play the lines that they have decided to cover in a particular volume, and finally, to the point opening



book reviews by English GM Glenn Flear.

The content of the present volume is divided up as follows:

- **Forum and Sosonko's Corner**
- Forum (6 pages)
- Sosonko's Corner (4 pages)
- **Surveys** (210 pages)
- Sicilian (10 surveys)
- French (2 surveys)
- Caro-Kann (2 surveys)
- Scandinavian (1 survey)
- Petroff (2 surveys)
- Ruy Lopez (2 surveys)
- Four Knights (1 survey)
- Two Knights (1 survey)
- Budapest Gambit (1 survey)
- Slav (2 surveys)
- Queen's Gambit Accepted (2 survey)
- Nimzo-Indian (1 survey)
- Grünfeld Indian (1 survey)
- King's Indian (2 surveys)
- Benoni (1 survey)
- Volga Gambit (1 survey)
- English Opening (3 surveys)
- Reti Opening (1 survey)
- **Service**
- Book Review (6 pages)
- New in Chess Code System (1 page)
- Photo Gallery (1 page)

There is so much interesting material in this book that if I had to list it all, I wouldn't make my

deadline for this column, so I'd better not do that. Instead I will mention some of the surveys, that I think are particularly noteworthy, and while saying that, I should add that the overall quality of the surveys is truly excellent. In the past there always were 8-12 surveys that were of obviously weaker and less thorough than the others, but in the most recent volumes, it is very hard to pick the best ones and the weakest ones.

Starting off with the Sicilians, Ukranian GM and Dragon specialist Mikhail Golubev has a very thorough coverage of 9 0-0-0 d5 10 exd5 Nxd5 11 Nxc6 bxc6 12 Bd4 e5 13 Bc5 Re8 variation of the Yugoslav Attack. For Dragoneers, this is obligatory reading, as is by the way anything else you find by Golubev when he writes about the Dragon. Here he analyses the games De Firmian-Ernst, Stockholm 2002 (1-0) and Shirov-Golubev, German Bundesliga 2001/02 (1/2-1/2) in depth. The latter game is a particularly excellent example of what the Dragon is all about.

On the Sveshnikov Sicilian, one of the leading experts is GM Dorian Rogozenko, and in this volume he takes a close look at the latest developments in the 10...Bg7 line, which Rogozenko himself was instrumental in developing in its early days. With the current fever pitch popularity of the Sveshnikov, this survey too is required reading by the proponents of this line. Jeroen Bosch also has a survey of interest on the Sveshnikov in this volume.

Moving on to the French, the Hungarian brothers Zoltan and Istvan Almasi have put their heads together and written another must read survey on the Winawer. They dive into the following line: **1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e5 c5 5 a3 Bxc3+ 6 bxc3 Ne7 7 Qg4 0-0 8 Bd3 Qa5**. This line isn't terribly popular, but nonetheless very interesting, and the brothers find that Black is doing okay despite Timman smashing it in a recent game from the Dutch Team Championship.

On the Traxler Gambit (1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bc4 Nf6 4 Ng5 Bc5), Maarten de Zeeuw presents us some original and, for those who fancy analyzing this gambit, highly interesting analysis in this fascinating opening.

Another Hungarian duo, Peter Lukacs and Laszlo Hazai, takes in one of their surveys a thorough look at the following line in the main line Slav: **1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 dxc4 5 a4 Bf5 6 Ne5 Nbd7 7 Nxc4 Nb6**. They think that White should be a little better, but that it's a notable alternative to the other continuations, which require, in some cases, substantial theoretical knowledge.

Towards the end of the volume, there are two surveys by Romanian GM Mihail Marin: one on the Modern Benoni and one on the Botvinnik Variation in the English Opening with 1...e5. Both have long introductory text with explanations that lower-rated players definitely will be able to benefit from and the study material that is attached to both surveys is both first rate and well-annotated.

This is just a brief look at what can be found in this latest volume, which I wholeheartedly can recommend to those who would like to know the latest theoretical status in some of the most popular lines or those that would like some ideas to freshen up their opening repertoire.

My assessment of this book: 

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

Copyright 2002 Carsten Hansen. All rights reserved.



[[The Chess Cafe Home Page](#)] [[Book Reviews](#)] [[Bulletin Board](#)] [[Columnists](#)]
 [[Endgame Studies](#)] [[The Skittles Room](#)] [[Archives](#)]
 [[Links](#)] [[Online Bookstore](#)] [[About The Chess Cafe](#)] [[Contact Us](#)]

Copyright 2002 CyberCafes, LLC. All Rights Reserved.

"The Chess Cafe®" is a registered trademark of Russell Enterprises, Inc.