



COLUMNISTS

Checkpoint

Carsten Hansen



Rating Chart

- ♦ – A poor book
- ♦♦ – Not very good
- ♦♦♦ – A useful book
- ♦♦♦♦ – A good book
- ♦♦♦♦♦ – An excellent book

CHESSTHEATRE

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Reviewed this month:

Play the Sicilian Kan
by Johan Hellsten

Dangerous Weapons: Anti-Sicilians
by John Emms, Richard Palliser, & Peter Wells

The ABC of the Sicilian Dragon (DVD)
by Andrew Martin

The Closed Sicilian (DVD)
by Nigel Davies

En Passant

New In Chess Yearbook, Vol. 91
by Genna Sosonko (ed.)

Four More Sicilians

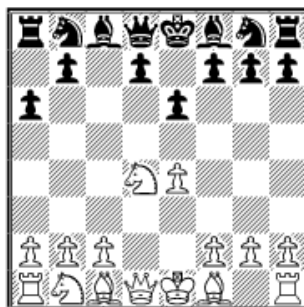
One of the most popular topics of opening books in recent years has been the Sicilian Defense. Close to seventy works have been published since the year 2000 alone, and this month we can add four new titles to the tally. We will open with two recent titles from Everyman Chess: one is a monograph; the other a new release in the popular *Dangerous Weapons* series. Then we will examine two new DVDs from ChessBase by the Englishmen Martin & Davies. Last, but not least, there is a new volume of *New In Chess Yearbook* that we will look at *en passant*.

Play the Sicilian Kan by Johan Hellsten, Everyman Chess 2008, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Paperback, 320pp., \$25.95

Johan Hellsten is a grandmaster, a former Swedish champion, and a frequent member of the Swedish Olympiad team. Most recently he has been employed as a chess teacher for the Sports Federation of Chimborazo, Chile. In the preface, he tells us that the Sicilian Kan has been his main weapon against the Open Sicilian for the better part of twelve years, and that he has scored a rather magnificent sixty-four percent as black over the course of several hundred tournament games. Even as a strong grandmaster, such a score with black is quite an accomplishment.



The Sicilian Kan is reached after 1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 a6.



The material is divided as follows:

- Bibliography (1 page)
- Preface (2 pages)
- Introduction (6 pages)
- 5 Nc3 Qc7: Introduction and 6th Move Sidelines (30 pages)
- 5 Nc3 Qc7 6 Bd3 Nf6 7 f4 and 7 Qe2 (39 pages)
- 5 Nc3 Qc7 6 Bd3 Nf6 7 0-0 d6 (28 pages)
- 5 Nc3 Qc7 6 Bd3 Nf6 7 0-0 Bc5 (32 pages)
- 5 Nc3 Qc7 6 Be2 (22 pages)
- 5 Nc3 Qc7 6 g3 (26 pages)
- 5 Bd3 Bc5: Introduction and Set-ups without Nc3 (27 pages)

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- 5 Bd3 Bc5: Classical Set-ups (22 pages)
- 5 Bd3 Bc5: Maroczy Bind (33 pages)
- 5 c4 and Other 5th Moves (36 pages)
- Index of Variations (9 pages)
- Index of Games (2 pages)

In the well written introduction, Hellsten gives the reader some pointers in the section called “characteristics of this book”:

“Style

Despite the intuitive character of the Kan, this book is written in a concrete style, move by move. However, in order to explain what is actually happening on the board, I have used a lot of verbal comments. The content has been structure into complete games, which should help the reader to get a feel for the positions ensuing from this opening.

“Volume

...to get a general grip of the Kan, it is not necessary to dive into each and every sub-variation. Going through the main line of each game is a good first step.

“Repertoire

The opening lines suggested in this book are the ones that I use myself. Throughout the repertoire I have avoided perpetual checks and transpositions to endgames where Black is left without practical winning chances. Moreover, the number of extremely tactical lines has been limited to a minimum, in order to avoid exposure to computer-aided home preparation.”

This sets the tone for what is a very well-crafted opening monograph. The balance of explanatory prose and opening theory and analysis is excellent. Furthermore, the balance between existing theory and original suggestions is also impressive. On every page you find the author’s imprint in the analysis. He makes the material his own and gives the reader value for the money spent.

This book is a fine piece of work. It is easily one of the best opening monographs to be released for some time. Anyone who plays the Kan as black or the Open Sicilian as white should buy it. It’s target audience spans from players rated 1800 and up to grandmaster level. There is something for everyone in this book. You will learn a lot about this opening, the associated pawn structures, and about chess in general. I hope that we will see more books in the future from this talented Swede.

My assessment of this book: ♦♦♦♦♦

[Order](#) *Play the Sicilian Kan*

by Johan Hellsten

Dangerous Weapons: Anti-Sicilians by John Emms, Richard Palliser & Peter Wells, Everyman Chess 2009, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Paperback, 285pp., \$24.95

The powerful line-up of authors in this volume in the Dangerous Weapons series offers an implied guarantee that the contents will be entertaining and engaging.



The material is divided as follows:

- Preface (1 page)
- Series Introduction (3 pages)
- Action on the h-file (1 e4 c5 2 Nc3 Nc6 3 g3 g6 4 Bg2 Bg7 5 d3 d6 6 Be3 h5 (14 pages)
- A Twist in the c3 Sicilian (1e4 c5 2 c3 Nf6 3 e5 Nd5 4 d4 cxd4 5 Nf3 Nc6 6 cxd4 d6 7 Bc4 dxe5 (29 pages)
- Neither Too Early nor Too Late (1 e4 c5 2 c3 d5 3 exd5 Qxd5 4 d4 Nc6 5 Nf3 e5 (31 pages)
- Danger with the d4 Gambit (1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 g6 4 0-0 Bg7 5 c3 Nf6 6 d4) 42 pages)
- Become a Chameleon (1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 e6 4 c3) (17 pages)
- The Sveshnikov Gambit (1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Nc3 e5 4 Bc4 Be7 5 d3 Nf6 6 Ng5 0-0 7 f4 d5) (24 pages)
- Is 4 e5 really so bad? (1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 e5) (28 pages)
- Forcing Black to Defend (1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 e5) (18 pages)
- Crossing White’s Plan (1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Qxd4 Nc6 5 Bb5 Bd7 6 Bxc6 bxc6) (14 pages)
- A Turbo-Charged King’s Indian Attack (1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 e6 3 g3) (22 pages)

- Following in Stanuton's Footsteps (1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 e6 3 c4 Nc6 4 Nc3 Nge7 (15 pages)
- A Remedy to the Nimzowitsch (1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 e5 Nd5 4 g3 (16 pages)
- Index of Variations (6 pages)
- Index of Games (1 page)

Wells wrote chapters 2 and 4, Palliser 3, 6,7, 8 and 9, and Emms the rest: 1, 5, 10, 11 and 12. According to the series introduction, a dangerous weapon constitutes

1) Moves that create complex, original positions full of razor-sharp tactics and rich positional ideas where creative, attacking play is rewarded; moves which are new, rare or very fresh, leaving plenty of scope for research.

2) Moves that are highly ambitious; ones which aim for total domination.

3) Moves that have been previously ignored, discarded or discredited by theory, perhaps unfairly so or maybe for the wrong reasons.


4) Moves that are visually shocking; moves which seem to contradict the laws of the game.

This book is incredibly well-written and quite simply provides a massive amount of original ideas and analysis. This makes it an absolute joy to read. For instance, take the introduction to chapter 2: "I think it will pay right from the outset to be quite upfront about what can be expected from a *Dangerous Weapon* in the c3 Sicilian/ 2 c3 not only has a richly deserved reputation for solidity, but I also suspect that part of its scoring potential comes from the fact tha many of the really aggressive Black responses simply do not stand up to close scrutiny. In doing the groundwork for this chapter I revisited a few of them, and I am fairly confident that in selecting a weapon with rather more modest ambitions I am doing the reader a significant favour!"

Chapters 1, 4, 7, and 8, are all very good, although I'm somewhat puzzled about the inclusion of Nimzowitsch's 2...Nf6 in chapter 12. Why do we need a remedy against? I played 1 e4 for years and never once faced 2... Nf6. It should have been possible to present some other idea or two that fit the theme of the book.

As with the other books in this series, this volume provides the reader with plenty of entertaining and worthwhile ideas that can be used at nearly any level of play. Some moves are relatively easy to implement, whereas others need some cooperation from the opponent. With such a broad subject matter, I think the authors could have included one or two more ideas, perhaps of lesser magnitude. The fact that one chapter spans forty-two pages makes the study of that line a fairly extensive exercise, especially if you only get to use it on a couple of occasions. In that sense, it makes you wonder whether a study of a main line wouldn't pay off just as well. I think the authors are walking a very thin line when presenting ideas that demand that much coverage.

Still, I enjoyed the material in every single chapter. The sense of originality and the depth of the presentation and the accompanying analysis make this a very good book.

My assessment of this book: 

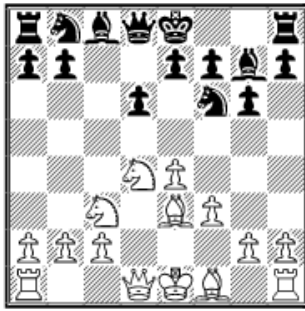
Dangerous Weapons: Anti-Sicilians
by Emms, Palliser, & Wells

The ABC of the Sicilian Dragon (DVD) by Andrew Martin, ChessBase GmbH 2009, Figurine Algebraic Notation, \$34.95

The present DVD is the 13th in the *ABC* series from English IM Andrew Martin, who has a flair for providing an engaging presentation.

Now the Sicilian Dragon normally lends itself to studying endless reams of theory. So how does Martin avoid being overly heavy on theory? He simply avoids the majority of theory-heavy lines. For instance, after 1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 g6 6 Be3 Bg7 7 f3





Martin's choice is **7...a6**, the so-called Dragondorf. This has emerged as an alternative for Black for those who wish to avoid a theoretical discussion against much lower-rated or higher-rated opponents. However, I find it to be a bit of a cop-out to present this as the main line for Black, as it hardly fits the name of this product particularly well.

The material is divided as follows:

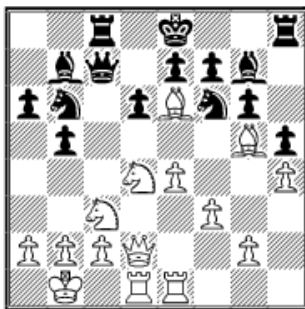
- 01 Intro
- 02 Intro Yugoslav Attack
- 03 Dragondorf Intro
- 04-06 Various Dragondorf
- 07-08 Dragondorf with 9 Bh6
- 09-11 Dragondorf with 9 0-0-0
- 12-15 Dragondorf with 9 g4
- 16 Dragondorf Conclusion
- 17 Classical Intro
- 18-22 Various Classical
- 23-25 Levenfish
- 26 Fianchetto Line
- 27 6th Move Alternatives for White
- 28-30 6 Bc4
- 31 Outro

One of the main games is *Leake-Ward*, London League 2005, Black is a renowned Dragon specialist and grandmaster, and who knows who White is.

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 g6 6.Be3 Bg7 7.f3 a6 8. Bc4 Nbd7 9.Qd2 b5 10.Bb3 Bb7 11.0-0-0 h6 12.Kb1 Rc8 13.h4 h5 14. Rhe1 Qc7 15.Bg5 Nb6

While the majority of the games on this DVD have very little annotation or supporting analysis, Martin does mention an interesting alternative for White at this juncture:

16.Be6!?



In the game White played 16 Qe2 after which Black didn't have any real problems and won without too much effort. After 16 Be6!?, Martin makes the viewer aware of the tactical motivation behind the move: 16...fxe6 17 Nxe6 Qd7 18 Nxg7+ Kf7 19 e5, and Black is toast. Then he goes on to mention, but not analyze, Black's two alternatives:

16...Rb8

The other move is 16...Nc4, about which Martin states that Ward thought this was okay for Black. I would think that it would at least warrant a bit of analysis, so I tried to do so: 17.Bxc4 Qxc4 (or 17...bxc4 18.Bf4 Nd7 (18...e5 may look tempting, but 19.Ndb5 axb5 20.Nxb5 is a complete disaster for Black) 19.Nd5 Bxd5 20.exd5, and White has the upper-hand) 18.e5 dxe5 19.Rxe5 Rd8 20.Qe1 Qc7 21.Re3, which leaves White with the better game, though it is plausible that this is playable for Black.

17.Qd3 0-0

This may not exactly be what Black had in mind, but the alternatives are not too comforting either, e.g., 17...b4 18 Nd5 Nxd5 19 exd5, after which it is very difficult to come up with a decent continuation for Black; for instance, 19...0-0?? loses on the spot to 20 Qxg6.

18.Bxf6 exf6

Nor is 18...Bxf6? 19.e5 (intending 20 Qxg6) to be tried.

19.Bb3, and White has the better chances.

Another one of his main games is the encounter Eckhard Schierling-Georg Lohr from a local German tournament in 1996. However, this game is completely irrelevant to the current standing of this variation. The fact that Martin wonders out loud whether the Spanish Grandmaster Romero-Holmes got idea for his opening play from an obscure German game between two players who are rated below 1800 is rather ridiculous, especially considering the quality of the game. It is almost absurd that Martin spends almost eight minutes on the game.

Yet, Martin makes up for this decidedly shaky start in the coverage of the Dragondorf by presenting some more relevant material along with decent analysis. Nevertheless, as a Dragon enthusiast myself I feel shortchanged in the coverage of the Yugoslav Attack.

Martin does a decent job on the remaining segments on the Classical and non-Yugoslav lines, though one can argue with some of the game choices, such as a 2000-rated player going up against a grandmaster. Thus, this production is a bit of a mixed bag. It has some appeal because it caters to the lower-rated player's need for easy-to-remember lines, but the analysis is rather shoddy, the game selection is questionable at times, and some lines are not covered properly. For its intended audience, this DVD is OK.

My assessment of this DVD: ❖❖

The ABC of The Sicilian Dragon
by Andrew Martin

The Closed Sicilian (DVD) by Nigel Davies, ChessBase GmbH 2009, Figurine Algebraic Notation, \$34.95

Compared to Martin, Davies's approach on this DVD is much more scientific. He covers much more ground and discusses all of the most important lines.

The material is divided as follows:

- 01 Intro
- 02 6 f4 Nf6 7 Nf3; Spassky-Geller
- 03 6 f4 Nf6 7 Nge2; Portisch-Barcza
- 04 6 f4 e5 7 Nh3 Nge7 8 0-0 0-0; Bilek-Gheorghiu
- 05 6 f4 e5 7 Nh3 Nge7 8 0-0 Nd4; Spassky-Hort
- 06 6 f4 e6; Karpov-Quinteros
- 07 6 f4 f5; Smyslov-Larsen
- 08 6 f4 Rb8; Donev-Orlowski
- 09 6 Be3 Nf6; Hjartarson-Castaneda
- 10 6 Be3 e5; Rohde-Dlugy
- 11 6 Be3 e6; Davies-Smart
- 12 6 Be3 Rb8; Adams-Sax
- 13 6 Nge2 e5; Bricard-Pinter
- 14 6 Nge2 e6; Spassky-Kindermann
- 15 6 Nge2 Rb8; Bricard-Marcelin
- 16 6 Nh3; Ost Hansen-Hulak
- 17 5 Nf3; Beliavsky-Hendler
- 18 5...e6 & 5...Rb8; Smyslov-Denker
- 19 2...e6; Davies-Christiansen
- 20 Conclusion



Yet, I can't help but notice that lines such as 6 f4 e6 and 6 Be3 e5 and 6...e6 get the same amount of coverage as some of the decidedly more obscure lines such as 6 Nge2 Rb8, despite the fact that the more popular lines demand a much deeper theoretical knowledge.

Davies talks a lot about plans and uses the arrow keys to demonstrate lines of play, but sometimes it seems like he is talking just to say something and not putting a lot of thought into it. For instance, in the classic Closed Sicilian game Spassky-Geller from their 1968 candidates match, where Davies says that Black will have to put considerable effort into recapturing the a-file – and it happens two moves later. I also found it noteworthy that Davies seemingly never even glanced at Kasparov's notes from *My Great Predecessors, Part III*, where Kasparov analyses the game in detail, much deeper than Geller himself had done. Davies makes it seem like it was play to one goal, Black's, whereas Kasparov gives a much more nuanced look at this important game. I should also mention that Richard Palliser in his excellent *Fighting the Anti-Sicilians* also recommend Geller's opening set-up for Black against the Closed Sicilian, partly inspired by Kasparov's coverage in the aforementioned book. Of

course, the average player may not be aware of this, but that does not entitle the author to take such shortcuts.

I could provide several other examples where the coverage could have been more detailed in regards to analysis. The same goes for the breadth of variations covered and some of the early analysis. One example is after **1 e4 c5 2 Nc3 e6**, and now his main game continues with **3 g3 d5 4 exd5 exd5 5 d3 Nf6 6 Bg2 Be7 7 Nge2 Bg4**. He briefly mentions the more logical **7...0-0**, and now after **8 0-0**, he only covers the bizarre-looking **8...Na6**, instead of the more obvious **8...d4!?** or **8...Nc6**, both of which are analyzed in Palliser's *Fighting the Anti-Sicilians*. But even so, after the odd **8...Na6** the analysis seems a little loose; for instance, Davies gives **9 Bg5 Nc7 10 Nf4 d4 11 Bxf6 Bxf6 12 Ne4 Be7** and now he claims an advantage for White after **13 Qh5**



But Black has an excellent game after **13...g6!?**, sending the queen backwards, e.g., **14 Qe2 Re8**, and it's Black who may have the advantage.

While this DVD is a reasonable effort, I find it lacking in many ways, though not to the extent that players should avoid it. Nevertheless, players rated above 1900 with some experience in this opening will likely not need this DVD.

My assessment of this DVD: ♦♦♦♦

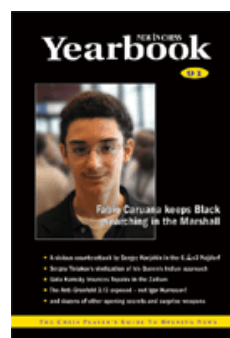
Order *The Closed Sicilian*

by Nigel Davies

New In Chess Yearbook, Vol. 91 by Genna Sosonko (ed), Interchess BV 2009, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Paperback, 247pp., \$29.95

The headlines on the cover are

- Fabio Caruana keeps Black searching in the Marshall
- A vicious counterattack by Sergey Karjakin in the 6.Be3 Najdorf
- Sergey Tiviakov's vindication of his Queen's Indian approach
- Gata Kamsky trounces Topalov in the Zaitsev
- The Anti-Grünfeld 3.f3 exposed – not Igor Kurnosov!

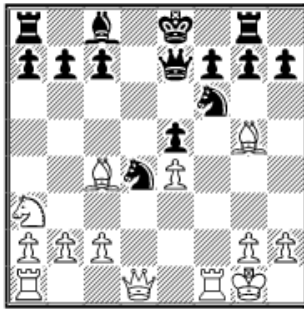


As usual, the material is divided as follows:

- Opening Highlights (2 pages)
- Your Variations (2 pages)
- Forum and Sosonko's Corner
- Forum (14 pages)
- Sosonko's Corner (5 pages)
- Surveys (33 surveys - 212 pages)
- Service
- Book Reviews (5 pages)
- New In Chess Code System (1 page)

In the always interesting *Sosonko's Corner*, editor Genna Sosonko pays tribute to the united efforts of his old friend Roman Dzindzhichashvili and the computer program Rybka. Sosonko highlights a couple of interesting ideas that the R+R duo has put forward: a refutation of the Sicilian Dragon and a couple of ideas in the Italian Game.

The first of these ideas is **1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bc4 Bc5 4 0-0 Nf6 5 d4** (the so-called Max Lange Gambit) **5...Bxd4 6 Nxd4 Nxd4 7 f4 d6 8 fxe5 dxe5 9 Bg5 Qe7** (Movsesian-Adams, Wijk aan Zee 2009 saw Black try **9...Be6**, but Black soon got into serious trouble and subsequently lost the game) **10 Na3** (the main move since 1878!), and now rather than **10...Be6**, which would transpose the line back into the above mentioned game, R+R came up with the following idea **10...Rg8!!**.



This is a truly fascinating idea. Black, who doesn't want to castle kingside, prepares himself for the consequences after the possible and rather obvious exchange on f6. In the meantime, White has to come up with a good plan to compensate for the sacrificed pawn, and this can prove rather difficult. My computer isn't too enthusiastic about White's chances and actually offer Black a solid edge. Naturally, both Roman and Sosonko offer some supporting analysis, and you should certainly consider purchasing the respective products to see what it is all about. I should mention that in the excellent *Dangerous Weapons: 1 e4 e5*, this gambit is suggested as a weapon for White, but no mention is made of 10...Rg8; their main line features 10...Bd7.

The other idea isn't as new, but could have been relevant if White had used it in the following game from the Kings' Tournament in Bazna, Romania:

Nisipeanu-Kamsky
Bazna (3), 16.06.2009

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Bc5 4.c3 Nf6 5.d4 exd4 6.cxd4 Bb4+ 7.Bd2 Bxd2+ 8.Nbxd2 d5 9.exd5 Nxd5 10.Qb3 Na5 11.Qa4+ Nc6 12.Qb3 Na5 13.Qa4+ Nc6 14.Qb3 Na5 15.Qa4+ Nc6 16.Qb3, and a draw was agreed.

These moves can be found numerous times in every database. If Black wants to avoid the draw or an inferior game, he must consider 7...Nxe4!? as suggested by Flear in the abovementioned volume of *Dangerous Weapons*, but if White actually wanted to play for a win rather than forcing the draw, he could have opted for the line suggested by Roman: **14 Qa3!?**.



This move has been played precious few times, but, according to R+R, White seems to obtain decent chances for an advantage despite his isolated pawn. Nevertheless, my computer and I don't entirely concur with this evaluation: **14...Qe7+ 15 Qxe7+ Nxe7 16 Ne4**, and now rather than 16...h6 17 0-0 0-0 18 Rfe1 with an initiative for White, I think that Black is doing fine after **16...f6!?** (taking the e5-square away from White's knights and preparing the next move) **17 0-0 Bg4 18 Nfd2 0-0-0**. For now the ball is back in R+R's court, it will be interesting to see what they come up with next.


As usual, there are several outstanding opening surveys. For instance, part two of a survey on the Perenyi Attack in the Najdorf/Scheveningen Sicilian by Tibor Karolyi or "The Real Fajarowicz/Richter-Gambit by Lev Gutman or for that matter a dozen other absolutely excellent surveys on a number of topical openings. My favorite survey is the one by Tiviakov on his pet line in the Queen's Indian: **1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nf3 b6 4 g3 c6 5 Bg2 d5 6 0-0 Be7 7 Nc3 Bb7**



This is just one of several move orders that can be used to reach this position. The survey is quite detailed, and rather amazingly Tiviakov

exclusively uses his own games, many of which are very recent, against strong opposition, but nevertheless he obtains good results. While it looks a bit passive for Black at first glance, Black has plenty of counterplay if he knows what he is doing, which Tiviakov obviously does.

While I always enjoy these yearbooks from New In Chess, and this volume is particularly well-crafted. There is an excellent balance between the topical, highly theoretical lines and the somewhat off-beat choices. For serious players, this is *the* book to buy, and for chess enthusiasts like the rest of us, who enjoy interesting top quality opening material, this is excellent reading.

My assessment of this book: 

New In Chess Yearbook, Vol. 91

by Genna Sosonko (ed.)

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