



COLUMNISTS

Checkpoint

Carsten Hansen

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Rating Chart

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

**Reviewed this Month**

*A Ferocious Opening Repertoire*  
by Cyrus Lakdawala

*Gambit Busters*  
by Sam Collins

*The Zukertort System:  
A Guide for White and Black*  
by Grigory Bogdanovich

Busting Gambits and Rare Choices

This month we have a bit of a mixed bag of books and topics, ranging from the Veresov to the Colle-Zukertort to a book aiming to be a manual on how to bust gambits. Thus, the focus is on openings that are not quite mainstream.

*A Ferocious Opening Repertoire* by Cyrus Lakdawala, Everyman Chess 2010, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Paperback, 304pp. \$27.95 (ChessCafe.com Price: \$22.95)

Interestingly, Lakdawala has never played the opening primarily covered in this volume, the Veresov, or as it is also known, the Richter-Veresov Opening, which arises after **1 d4 Nf6 2 Nc3 d5 3 Bg5** (see diagram below). But, as the author frankly notes, his brother, who was a very strong player in his own right (reaching a U.S. rating of 2400 without studying), played it consistently and swore by it.

I found the book very entertaining and somewhat paradoxical in many ways. In the introduction, Lakdawala describes the opening as ideal for players with limited time (or no particular inclination) for studying the opening, and who like messy positions that are quite tactical. Yet at the same time the book is 300+ pages long.



[FEN ""rnbqkb1r/ppp1pppp/5n2/3p2B1/3P4/2N5/PPP1PPPP/R2QKBNR b KQkq - 0 3"]

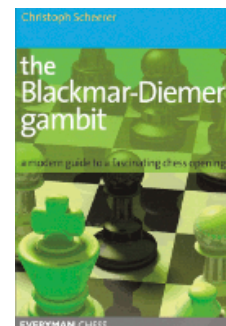
The material is divided as follows:

- Bibliography (1 page)

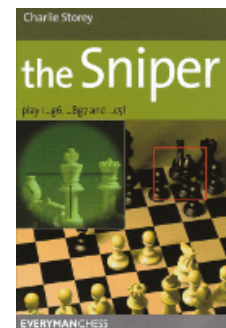
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- Introduction (5 pages)
- The Veresov: 3...Nbd7 4 f3! (35 pages)
- The Veresov: 3...Nbd7 4 Qd3 (26 pages)
- The Veresov: Other Defences (38 pages)
- Veresov versus French: Lines with ...Nf6 (21 pages)
- Veresov versus French: Lines without ...Nf6 (33 pages)
- 1 d4 d5 2 Nc3: Second Move Alternatives (25 pages)
- Veresov versus Caro-Kann (20 pages)
- Veresov versus Dutch (25 pages)
- Modern, Pirc, and Philidor (30 pages)
- Schmid Benoni and Czech Benoni (17 pages)
- 1...Nc6 and Owen's Defence (18 pages)
- Index of Variations (4 pages)
- Index of Games (3 pages)
- Boundaries

I'm not exactly sure why, but every time someone covers the Veresov, the author recommends a repertoire against all defenses for Black. Thus when transposing to another opening, such as here after **1 d4 d5 2 Nc3 e6 3 e4** (the French Defense), we get countless pages of coverage that has absolutely nothing to do with the main topic at hand. Here, for example, we have fifty-four pages on the French and countless other pages on other openings, instead of concluding the coverage as soon as the transposition occurs.

In the introduction, the author gives notice to the reader of the occasional goofy tone of the book; I have to admit that I quite enjoyed it. Some books, including some of my own, are occasionally very dry, the authors taking themselves quite seriously. A book on the Veresov would seem to call for a tone that is easy-going and Lakdawala excels at this. It makes the book enjoyable to read. From time to time, I would have liked a little more analysis and a little less chatter, but I really can't complain about the flow in the presentation or the quality of the material.

Overall, this is a pretty good book and those who play the Veresov will want a copy, though it isn't a must-buy. Combined with the entire repertoire, however, it makes for a good value.

**My assessment of this book: **

**Order [A Ferocious Opening Repertoire](#)**

by Cyrus Lakdawala

*Gambit Busters* by Sam Collins, Everyman Chess 2010, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Paperback, 207pp. \$26.95 (ChessCafe.com Price: \$19.95)

Irish international master Sam Collins established himself as a very reliable author over the last five to six years with his An Attacking Repertoire for White (Batsford 2005), [Understanding The Chess Openings](#) (Gambit Publications 2005), [The French Advance](#) (Everyman Chess 2007), [Chess Explained: The c3 Sicilian](#) (Gambit Publications 2007) and now he has, after a more than three year absence, finally returned with a new book.



The title conveniently tells us the premise behind the book, how to deal effectively when facing gambits. The back cover blurb tells us the following:

"We have all experienced nasty gambits and ultra-aggressive opening play. It's scary and it's always been difficult to find good, practical advice on how to react. Now, however, help is at hand."

"In this book, Sam Collins tackles the important subject of gambit play and gambit defense. He explores in depth the basic approaches as well

as the typical mistakes made at all levels and explains how to avoid them. He also examines the techniques used by world-class players to defend and counterattack, and explains how you can learn from them. In addition, he covers some of the key theory of many popular gambits in modern chess."

"Be bold, be brave and grab those pawns!"

"This book shows you how to:

- Beat unsound gambits
- Keep a cool head under pressure
- Counterattack when the time is right
- Make your extra material count"

The material is divided as follows:

- Bibliography (2 pages)
- Introduction (11 pages)
- The Fear (7 pages)
- Historical Development (13 pages)
- The Blueprint (8 pages)
- Harsh Treatment of Romantic Lines (12 pages)
- Escaping the Defensive Mindset (5 pages)
- Breaking Down Gambits (17 pages)
- "Something to Suffer for" (4 pages)
- Korchnoi and Karpov (15 pages)
- Profile of a Pawn Grabber (12 pages)
- Counterattack! (10 pages)
- Further Themes (23 pages)
- Gambit Openings (31 pages)
- Irrational Positions (12 pages)
- Modern Gambit Examples (17 pages)
- Index of Variations (1 page)
- Index of Games (3 pages)

While I like the ideas behind most of these chapters, you can argue with the number of pages allocated to the individual sections and their execution. I will return to this in a bit.

The introduction shows the author has a good sense of humor and delivers the truth about how many of us think when facing gambits:

"I've never liked playing against gambits. The problem is that in every opening gambit lines are available. And sometimes you just have to take these pawns, since otherwise your opponent gets a great position 'for free'. Even with good preparation, facing a gambit can be nerve-racking. As an example, I've been playing 1 e4 e5 regularly for a number of years, and still feel a twinge of relief when my opponent doesn't test me with 2 f4 followed by some sideline. It doesn't matter that this move is condemned by theory and laughed at by Rybka, it still puts me in a position where I have to find accurate defensive moves rather than reel off the first 15 moves of a Ruy Lopez while my coffee kicks in."

Then he continues:

"What I'm about to show you is the single worst game in my career. The result (a loss with Black against an IM in the ascendency, at a tournament where he made his final GM norm) is no disgrace, but the manner in which it came about was horrible. I'll give some additional detail of circumstances behind this game, things that were on my mind, not because I'm making excuses, but because any examination of gambit defence must also include a look at the psychology of gambits, since often our thinking becomes blurred and we stop acting sensibly."

I have picked some of the more interesting comments from the annotations in the book.

**1.e4 d6**

"First factor – I was very late for this game. Over an hour in fact. While Gawain could have claimed the point (playing in a team event and already nursing a pint of beer, this would have been entirely understandable), he generously decided to play."

**2.d4 Nf6 3.Nc3 e5 4.Nf3 Nbd7 5.g4**



[FEN "r1bqkb1r/pppn1ppp/3p1n2/4p3/3PP1P1/2N2N2/PPP2P1P/R1BQKB1R b KQkq - 0 5"]

"This first of many gambits you will see in this book. This line was patented by Shirov. "

"Second factor – I was already annoyed at myself. The fact is, Gawain and I had played a game in this line at the Bunratty tournament. Gawain played 5 Bc4 and won the game, and during the post-mortem I expressed my surprise that a natural attacking player like him did not play 5 g4. Thus my opponent found out about this line because I told him. Also, in the intervening months, I hadn't done any preparation on this line. So here I was having armed my opponent and not myself, looking at a dangerous gambit with my clock ticking."

**5...Nxc4**

"Black can also decline with 5...h6 or 5...g6."

**6.Rg1 Ngf6 7.Bc4**

"Developing with a threat is an extremely natural way to play, but the bishop on c4 does give Black some tempi in his queenside expansion with ...c6 and ...b5. 7 Be3 appears more venomous on the current view."

**7...h6**

"One of the hidden points of White's compensation is that Black feels obliged to play this ugly, weakening move to prevent Ng5. Thus White gains more time for full development."

**8.Be3 c6 9.dxe5 dxe5 10.Qe2 b5 11.Bb3 Qc7?!**

"A passive move. 11...Qa5! and 12...Ba6 with ideas of ...b4 or ...c5, is a much better approach."

**12.0-0-0 a5?**

"Starting a disastrous plan, based on a very simple tactical oversight."

**13.a4!**

"Having put this game firmly out of my mind in the intervening years, I find it hard to remember what I thought of this move. From a positional viewpoint, it is a good result for White to close the queenside and get the c4-square. Probably I was thinking of some queen's pawn openings where after a4 and ... b4, a knight on c3 drops back to b1, then to d2 before settling on an outpost on c4. Some compensation, but nothing overwhelming."

**13...b4??**

"I don't think I even saw Gawain's response before it landed on the board."

**14.Qc4**



[FEN "r1b1kb1r/2qn1pp1/2p2n1p/p3p3/PpQ1P3/1BN1BN2/1PP2P1P/2KR2R1 b kq - 0 14"]

"Absolutely decisive, even though the position takes a few moves to settle."

**14. ..Nc5 15.Bxc5 Ba6 16.Nb5! cxb5 17.axb5 Bxc5 18.Rxg7! Be3+ 19.fxe3 Qxc4 20.Bxc4 Bc8 21.Nxe5 1-0**

Collins then moves on to draw some conclusions, as he does throughout the book after each main game.

Toward the end of the introduction, Collins makes some important points:

### Theme

"The theme is gambits. Gambit are a subset of sacrifices, and my working definition of gambit is a sacrifice (normally, but not exclusively, the fallen soldier will be a pawn) which occurs during the opening phase (the opening being the phase which occurs until the pieces have been developed and the kings reach safety). Thinking about this definition already gives some guidance on good play following gambits – there are clearly defined tasks in the opening (get your pieces out, get your king into safety), and these tasks don't go away merely because you're a pawn up. Far from it indeed, the successful completion of development, and getting one's king into safety, will often show that a gambit has been successfully dealt with."

### Perspective

"There are two players in every game, and in this book I will be focusing on the defender. There are many good texts detailing attacking play, but I wanted to narrow the focus in this work. One reason for this is my belief (which is shared by the majority of chess writers I have read), that club players are much less comfortable defending against gambits, rather than playing them..."

With this I end my quotations from the well-written introduction. There are some books that you like at first glance, but when you get a chance to look closer at them, you start noticing the flaws. Then before long, you only notice the flaws. This is such a book. Yet, despite my reservations, it is not a bad book. There are many things that I like about it. As mentioned above, the topics chosen for the chapters come from a good point of understanding. In many cases the games and examples, as well as the supporting annotations,

are really good, but there are also examples to the contrary.

For instance, the chapter "Escaping the Defensive Mindset" is only five pages long and contains one game. But for many club players, this is one of the main stumbling blocks - how to turn the tide psychologically and deal with the problems at hand aggressively. While it is a well-executed game by Vishy Anand, White nevertheless according to Collins' own definition from the introduction (get your pieces out, get your king into safety) never completes the opening phase of the game. You could certainly wish for more in this discussion.

"Something to Suffer for" is another odd, short chapter that also features just one game, which doesn't even contain a gambit(!). Also, the chapter on Korchnoi and Karpov contains a couple of games that quite frankly have nothing to do with gambits, but rather pawn sacrifices later in the game. Indeed, another one of the games feature a so-called gambit opening, the Budapest Gambit, but in this gambit, Black in all the critical main lines always gets the pawn back, so to use it as an example is a little odd. However, in contrast, I like the chapter "Profile of a Pawn Grabber" very much and found his spotlight on grandmaster Atalik both interesting and enlightening.

Overall, the premise for this book is very good and it is a book that deserved to be written, but I found the result to be a rather uneven book and not on par with the other books from Collins.

**My assessment of this book:** ❖❖

**Order [Gambit Busters](#)**

by Sam Collins

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*The Zukertort System: A Guide for White and Black* by Grigory Bogdanovich, Mongoose Press 2010, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Paperback, 340pp. \$24.95 (ChessCafe.com Price: \$20.95)

The author of this book was not familiar to me despite being both an international master and the author of another opening book, *Play 2...Nf6! in the Sicilian* from 2009. The Colle (1 d4, 2 Nf3 and 3 e3) and in particular the Zukertort System (White follows up with a fianchetto of the queenside bishop) of the Colle has received coverage in quite a few books in recent years, not least of all David Rudel's [Zuke 'Em](#) and [The Moment of Zuke](#); both very entertaining but not particularly scientific (though not trying to be scientific either) in the coverage of the theory of this particular opening. The present book will therefore be a welcome addition to the libraries of Colle-Zukertort players, because it digs much deeper into theory than previous books on the topic.



The material is divided as follows:

- Foreword by Artur Yusupov (2 pages)
- Introduction (6 pages)
- The Subject of Our Serious Study (6 pages)
- **Part I: Play for White**
- A Piece Attack (18 pages)
- Opening Up the a1-h8 Diagonal (13 pages)
- Transforming the Pillsbury Formation: The Marshall Plan (14 pages)
- A "Psychological" Attack by White's Kingside Pawns (14 pages)
- Play with Hanging c- and d-pawns (30 pages)
- Play with an Isolated d-pawn (14 pages)
- A "Repulsive" Queenside Pawn Majority (16 pages)
- A Position "Suffocated at a Distance" (3 pages)
- White's Plan with e3-e4 (12 pages)
- **Part II: Play for Black**

- The Bishop Hunt (5 pages)
- "Hooray for Being Primitive" (4 pages)
- An "Aggressive Defense" for Black on the Kingside (12 pages)
- Is it Possible to Perplex White with ...Qb6? (3 pages)
- And the Little Kid Asked: "Check on a5 – Good or Bad?" (7 pages)
- Black's Counterplay with a Queenside Pawn Advance (15 pages)
- Half a Kingdom for a Horse... on e4! (25 pages)
- Following Capablanca's Recipe (17 pages)
- "A Fruitful Opening Idea" – Black's Main Argument (15 pages)
- Black Builds a "Cabin" (8 pages)
- "Reviving" the Light-Squared Bishop with the Schlechter-Lasker Method (6 pages)
- [...]Who Benefits from an Early Pawn Trade on d4? (10 pages)
- The "Exchange Square" on e5 (12 pages)
- Is the ...Nc6-b4 Maneuver Really So Dangerous for White? (6 pages)
- Supplementary Games (36 pages)
- Afterword (2 pages)
- Tactical Methods and Strategic Themes (2 pages)
- Bibliography (1 page)

Having grandmaster Yusupov write the foreword in this book stakes out the seriousness of this effort, and really shows the potential readers that this book is one you should get if you play this opening or if you are considering taking it up.

While this opening has featured on my list of unsportsmanlike conduct in the past, I have to acknowledge that it carries a solid punch and much more venom than is first apparent. Especially at lower levels a well-prepared player can harvest points with relative ease since players on the black side are simply not aware of what to do against this odd and slightly passive-looking creature of an opening that suddenly launches into a full central and/or kingside assault. But as demonstrated in countless games, it can be used successfully at all levels of play, not excluding grandmaster play. In particular Yusupov has been doing well with it, and many other grandmasters have demonstrated, often via transposition, how dangerous this opening can be.


The title implies that it is "A Guide for White and Black," however, the author's sympathy is clearly on White's side, and despite his attempts at being objective, he often cannot help himself in evaluating positions as slightly better for White even if they are only equal. This is not really a criticism, because who wouldn't do that if you play the opening you are writing about consistently?

The structure of the material is that the theory is presented as main games with annotations and analysis to support the presentation.

My main criticism with this book is that the comments to main games often get exceedingly long by including additional entire games with annotations. It looks unnecessarily messy and these games can be difficult to follow. Why not break them out as separate main games? I would like to have seen conclusions drawn at the end of each chapter. It would also have been nice to have an index of players in the main games.

That said, there is plenty of fresh material and original analysis in this volume, which makes it immensely readable and very interesting. The index of tactical methods and strategic themes at the end of the book is also a worthy inclusion.

I like this book very much and players of this opening will do themselves a disservice if they do not buy this book.

**My assessment of this book: **

**Order [The Zukertort System: A Guide for White and Black](#)**

by Grigory Bogdanovich

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