



COLUMNISTS

Checkpoint

Carsten Hansen



Reviewed this month:

Ideas behind Modern Chess Openings

by Gary Lane

How to Build Your Chess Opening Repertoire

by Steve Giddins

The Scheming Scandinavian with 2...Qxd5

(VHS Video) by Andrew Martin

New in Chess Yearbook 66

by Genna Sosonko & Paul van der Sterren (ed).

More on Opening Repertoires

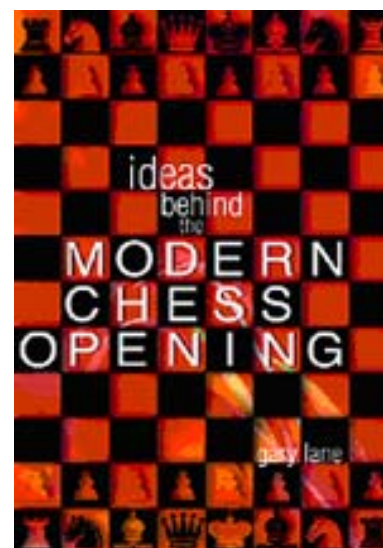
This month the focus is once more on opening repertoires. The book by Lane presents a repertoire for White, the video by Martin a repertoire for Black against 1 e4, Giddins tells us how to work on our repertoire, as well as how not to work. Finally, you might get some ideas about lines you might want to add to your repertoire in the latest New in Chess Yearbook.

Ideas behind Modern Chess Openings by Gary Lane, 2002 Batsford, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Paperback, 176 pp., \$21.95



As most of you will know, Gary Lane is one of our most popular columnists here at

ChessCafe.com. In addition to his doings on this website, he has authored at least a dozen books including several that have been reviewed in this column, the most recent being *The Ultimate Colle* and *The Ultimate Closed Sicilian*.



The title of the present book, *Ideas behind Modern Chess Openings* led me initially to believe that this book possibly would be an updated and modernized version of Reuben Fine's classic *Ideas behind Chess Openings*. But upon opening the book, it immediately becomes clear that this is not the case. On the title page inside we also find "Attacking with White". The book is, to make it perfectly clear, a repertoire book based on 1 d4. While the title is somewhat of a misnomer, it most likely is the choice of the publisher. On back cover, we have the next surprise. "A repertoire of easy-to-learn openings based on Garry Kasparov's favourite move 1 d4, which is a good way to play and win. There's no need to spend hours worrying about the latest moves because all these openings are sound lines with modern twist that make them ideal low-maintenance weapons. Each opening, including the London System and the Barry Attack, have simple principles that allow White to play just about the same moves against the Grunfeld [sic], King's Indian Defence and Nimzo-Indian Defence. There are also modern systems to repel the Dutch, Benoni and even off-beat lines such as the Englund Gambit."

Alright, to begin with, it is a bit of stretch to say that 1 d4 is Kasparov's favourite move. He has played 1 e4 far more than 1 d4 or any other move in recent years (based on a database search on games from 2001 and onwards). At other times in his career, he has given 1 c4 and indeed also 1 d4 preference, but not recently. The next thing I stumbled over is the claim that the repertoire inside the book will allow White to play the same moves against a number of different openings, including the Nimzo-Indian. The problem is here that the Nimzo-Indian isn't even covered in the present book! This again is a mistake I will not put on Lane, but the editor, who should have known better, but as with most recent books from Batsford, any editor who worked on the book is not named.

The books shapes up as follows:

- Introduction (8 pages)
- The London System (23 pages)
- The Chigorin (12 pages)
- The Dutch (25 pages)
- The Benoni (17 pages)
- The Pseudo-Benoni (14 pages)
- The Queen's Indian Formations (12 pages)
- The Grünfeld Formations (7 pages)
- The King's Indian Defence (13 pages)
- The Barry Attack (14 pages)
- The 150 Attack (9 pages)
- Odd Openings (16 pages)
- Index of Variations (2 pages)

I don't see any mention of the move 1...d6 anywhere. While it often transposes to other openings, it certainly also has independent value. Should anybody doubt this, please feel free to check Yrjölä & Tella's *An Explosive*

Opening Repertoire for Black, which makes an excellent case for this move. As an example of a non-transpositional line, I can mention 2 Nf3 Bg4, which is very different from any line covered in this book. If White instead of 2 Nf3 tries 2 e4, Black can opt for 2...Nf6 3 Nc3 and possibly transpose into the Philidor's Defence, which again is not covered here.

And what about 1...e6? Should White play 2 Nf3, Black can possibly go for 2...f5 and after 3 g3, Black can play 3...b6 with a line in the Classical Dutch that is not covered in the book. I could also mention 1...b6, 1...Nc6 and 1...g6, moves that all have their own following, but in this book White players will not find any direct answers against them.

When looking at things that should have been covered in "Odd Openings", I found the coverage of the Englund Gambit (1 d4 e5) somewhat faulty. After the moves 1 d4 e5 2 dxe5 Nc6 3 Nf3 Qe7 4 Bf4 Qb4+, Lane gives 5 Bd2 a '?', commenting "White could play 5 Nbd2 to speed up development, but White has missed something" I would say so, I wonder how White would meet 5...Qxf4, winning a piece. I doubt White's lead in development will make up for that!

Continuing further in that game, Deacon-Katnic, Toukley 2002: 5...Qxb2 6 Bc3. Lane doesn't give any comments to this move, although this is the losing mistake. Instead White should have played 6 Nc3, and Black is in my opinion in serious trouble. In fact, the Danish former world championship candidate Bent Larsen wrote in a Danish booklet, *Skarpe Åbninger* (Sharp Openings), that Black's position is so poor that one of the better moves for Black is 6...Kd8. This is a bit of an exaggeration, but the position definitely isn't

great for Black. By the way, the end of the game went:
6 Bc3?? Bb4 7 Qd2 Bxc3 8 Qxc3 Qc1 mate!

Lane instead offers 4 Nc3 as played in Palliser-Sedgwick, Isle of Man 2000. The game continued:
4...Nxe5 5 e4 c6 6 Nxe5 Qxe5 7 f4 Qc7?! 8 Be3 Bb4 9 Qd4! Bxc3+ 10 Qxc3 Nf6 11 Bd3 0-0 12 0-0 Re8 13 Bd4 Nxe4 14 Rae1!, and Black is pretty much completely busted, and soon lost the game. Instead of 5...c6, Lane offers some analysis of the alternatives: "5...Nf6 might be considered when 6 Be2 is reasonable for White" Hmmm! "5...Nxf3+ was tested in Barredo-Gonzalez Tasis, Santa Olaga 1998, but after 6 Qxf3 White has good chances. For instance: 6...c6 [CH: Some analysis is also offered to meet the truly horrible 6...b6?] 7 Bf4 g6 (if 7...d5 8 0-0-0 is fine for White) 8 0-0-0 Bg7 9 Bc4 b5 10 Nxb5! cxb5 11 Bd5 (the rook has nowhere to hide) 11...Qb4 12 Qb3 and White wins." Is it possible for Black to play any worse than this?

Another line that is covered in this chapter is the Clarendon Court: 1 d4 c5 2 d5 f5, which according to the book should be met with 3 e4!?. But Black can circumvent that if he is familiar with White's intentions: 1 d4 f5 2 g3 Nf6 3 Bg2 c5, and now 4 d5 g6 5 Nf3 Bg7 can lead to a perfectly viable line for Black in the Leningrad Dutch that is not possible with the move order offered in this book.

Jumping back to the beginning of the book, we first have the introduction, where Lane tell us a little about the history of the opening and the structure of the book. Overall, I found the introduction quite satisfying. But one thing that puzzled me is that some of the lines that are used in the games in the introduction are not


covered anywhere else in the book. Hmmm!

But the book does present a lot of good ideas to counter a great number of openings, and this is where the book becomes quite good. In my opinion the chapters that involves the fianchetto of the dark-squared bishop for Black, i.e., Grünfeld Indian, King's Indian, Barry Attack and the 150 Attack are the chapters that are worth the price of admission, and for players rated up to around 2000 there is a lot of good material to pick up here.

The book is written in Lane's familiar entertaining and informative style with which we are so familiar from his columns here at ChessCafe.com. The average stem game is relatively short, less than thirty moves, and generally supports White's case, although I did find some examples of White being thrashed, when he wasn't showing the necessary care.

While I have mentioned a number of things that are wrong with the book, let's not forget that these things mainly pertain to unusual lines, ones that would end up in the "Odd Openings" chapter, so don't necessarily place an undue amount of emphasis on them. Overall, the book is well-written and should merit inclusion in your library if its approach is appealing to you.

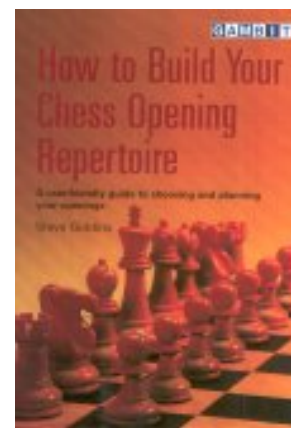
I believe the target audience for this book is players rated between 1400 and 2000, but even for some players below and above this range there is material that will be of interest.

My assessment of this book: 

Order *Ideas behind Modern Chess Openings*
by Gary Lane

How to Build Your Chess Opening Repertoire by Steve Giddins, 2003 Gambit Publications, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Paperback, 144 pp., \$19.95

I don't know how many times through my years as an active chessplayer that I have worked on or re-worked over my chess repertoire. It has been thousands of hours, that is not even counting the hours I have spent on the books that I have written. Putting an opening repertoire that works together is truly one of the most frustrating tasks for any kind of ambitious chess player. That is, I'm sure, also the thought behind the present book from Gambit.



The back cover blurb tells us the following:

"All chess-players who have progressed beyond beginner level need an opening repertoire. However, there are many different types of repertoire, and dozens of openings to choose between.

From novice to grandmaster, a player's basic task when choosing a repertoire is the same: he needs to select openings that suit his playing style and that he can play with confidence. The repertoire should not require more memory work and study than he is capable of, or has time for

In this book, the first to focus on these issues, Steve Giddins provides common-sense guidance on questions such as:

- Whether to play main lines, offbeat openings or 'universal' systems
- How to avoid being 'move-ordered'
- How to use computers
- If and when to depart from or change your repertoire"

Giddins, who is an English FIDE Master, is the man who has taken on the case of helping all of us getting rid of the majority of headaches that chess players have.

Let's take a quick look at the chapter headers in this book:

- Introduction (3 pages)
- 1 The Keys to Successful Opening Play (12 pages)
- 2 Variety - The Spice of Life? (9 pages)
- 3 Stylistics (17 pages)
- 4 Main Roads or Side-Streets (11 pages)
- 5 Move-Orders and Transpositions (16 pages)
- 6 Use and Abuse of Computers (11 pages)
- 7 Universalities (20 pages)
- 8 Infidelity and Divorce (14 pages)
- 9 Some Players' Repertoire Analysed (24 pages)
- Index of Players (2 pages)
- Index of Openings (1 page)

Anybody who has put any kind of time into studying openings will know that there are so many

considerations when working on openings, it therefore isn't difficult to understand why so many players like the idea of buying books that present them with a complete repertoire for either Black or White, for the attacking player, for the positional player, and so on. For a great number of players I think the situation is that they have more books on complete opening repertoires than they have on the middlegame. Giddins writes the following in the introduction: "The truth of the matter is that the great majority of players below master level spend a disproportionate amount of their chess time on openings, yet achieve very little in the way of concrete benefits." Then he moves on to give a number of reasons why. I wish he would have been there to slap me over the hands when I was studying chess as an improving youngster. The endless hours I have spent on openings that I would never end up playing. Not that it didn't have any benefit, because any time you spend on studying chess will make you a better player, but often a more focused study time would have rewarded me with better results along the line.

Regarding the potential wrongdoings committed when studying openings, I think I am guilty of nearly every one that Giddins mentions in this book. I have corrected my studying habits mainly through trial and error. Many students I have had over the years have also been through this process, apparently seeing no way out and therefore putting in an effort here and there, and still having the feeling of half-desperation and half-hopelessness. In my opinion, you shouldn't spend more than about 10% of your chess-studying time memorizing opening variations. The benefits of taking a position that is considered unclear and then deeply analyzing it to the best of your ability, even

writing down the analysis (although this is not necessarily crucial, and if you analyze with a chess program, all you need to do is to click 'save'), are so much more than if you simply memorize moves.

One example from my own experience goes back to the summer of 1990. Along with 3-4 chess friends, all rated the same or slightly higher than me, we had several annual summits where we planned a full weekend with an agenda of openings that we all played or were interested in. We would then bring to the table new ideas we had found or lines that worried us. Of course we would bring whatever literature we had available, but this was only brought for reference. For each opening, we would first put in a couple of analysis sessions, where we would familiarize ourselves with the ideas and come up with new ideas. Then we would play a double round-robin blitz tournament with the initial opening moves fixed, and then would return to the analysis board.

One session was particularly fruitful. We were analyzing the Sicilian Sozin (1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 Nc6 6 Bc4, and for reference, we were using Kasparov/Nikitin's book on the topic. It was of course impossible to go through everything, so we found an interesting position the authors considered unclear. That position was the foundation of almost two 12-hour analysis sessions. Two of us defended the position for Black and three were on the attacking side for White. As luck would have it, in the very next tournament I would get this position on the board (with some luck, because I could barely remember the moves leading up to the position!). While I of course couldn't remember all of the exact moves, I certainly knew the ideas by heart. The result was that in less than an hour

(30 minutes spent on the first 12 moves, the remaining 20-25 minutes on the remainder of the game) I defeated a higher-rated opponent in flashy style with a pawn and piece sacrifices. Of course a result like this will not be your reward every time, but the fact that your general understanding of a certain type of position has been improved should be reward enough and will gain you points in the long run.

I only have one problem with this book, and that is the final chapter, which I consider somewhat of a waste of space. The coverage of the opening repertoire of these strong players cannot be more than cursory, and therefore it has a limited value, although Giddins has attempted to discover the thought processes of how the players have put their opening repertoire together. But considering that Khalifman spent 5 volumes and over 1000 pages on Kramnik's opening repertoire with White, then only covered 1 Nf3, while Kramnik also plays 1 e4, I think it is needless to say, that the two and one-half pages that is spent on Kramnik' repertoire with both White and Black hardly suffices to do anything but scratch the surface.

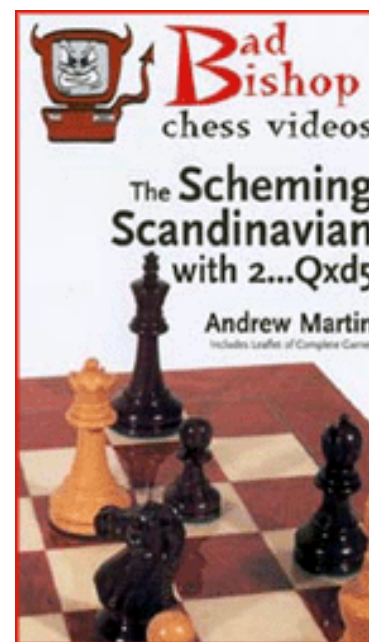
The present book is one of the most useful and interesting books that have been written in English on the opening in recent years. I think that most players who are rated from 1200 up to around 2200 (and possible even higher) will be able to benefit a lot from the advice and examples given by Giddins throughout this book.

My assessment of this book: 

Order *How to Build Your Chess Opening Repertoire*
by Steve Giddins

The Scheming Scandinavian with 2... Qxd5 (VHS Video) by Andrew Martin, 2002 Bad Bishop Ltd, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Video (VHS), \$29.95

The topic for this VHS format video tape is the Scandinavian, which arises after 1 e4 d5, and now the most popular way for White to continue is 2 exd5, after which Black can answer with both 2...Nf6 and 2...Qxd5. Only the latter is covered on this tape.



According to Martin at the beginning of the tape, this is an opening that you can learn to play for Black in only one evening. A very bold statement, I should add, but Martin makes a very good case.

The contents:

- Inspirational Games
- Running Order
- Pawn Structure
- Piece Placement
- 2 e5
- 2 Nc3 dxe4 3 Nxe4 Qd5
- Blackmar-Diemer Gambit
- 3rd move alternatives: 3 d4, 3 Nf3

- Unusual 4th moves after 3 Nc3 Qa5
- Lines with 4 Bc4 or 4 Nf3
- Lines with 4 d4 Nf6 5 Nf3 c6: White tries 6 Bd3, 6 h3, 6 Bd2
- Main Line with 6 Ne5 Be6 7 Nc4 & 7 Bc4
- 7 Bd3 as in Kasparov-Anand
- Main Line 6 Bc4
- 6 Bc4 Bf5 7 Ne5
- 7 Qe2 Bb4 as in Nunn-Hodgson
- Summary

As with the other tape in this series (the Accelerated Dragon), Martin starts with a couple of inspirational games to get us in the mood. The games are generally lightly annotated, but Martin does a good job at explaining the typical ideas, pawn structures, positional themes and the occasional tactic.

Before I move on, I should mention that this tape looks at the opening from Black's point of view only, so if you are looking for a way to meet the Scandinavian, this is not the tape for you, although you might want to know what your opponent will be up to.


The run-through of the games and the theory is done on a nearly full-screen electronic chess-board, while on occasion we get Martin on the screen, sitting at his chess board, with a book case full of chess books behind him.

The presentation throughout the tape is smooth and you get a good understanding of Black's game as well as what White may be up to. Martin isn't afraid to recommend some off-beat ideas, of which I particularly like 2 Nc3 dxe4 3 Nxe4 and here he prefers 3...Qd5!?, after which 4 Nc3 Qa5 of course takes us into the main

line.

This tape will not give you reams upon reams of opening theory, but rather just enough for you to digest and remember. So if you want more specific theoretical knowledge, you should invest in either Curt Hansen's CD on the Scandinavian (ChessBase 2002) or if you can read German, then Matthias Wahls's book, *Modernes Skandinawisch*, which is easily the best book on this opening.

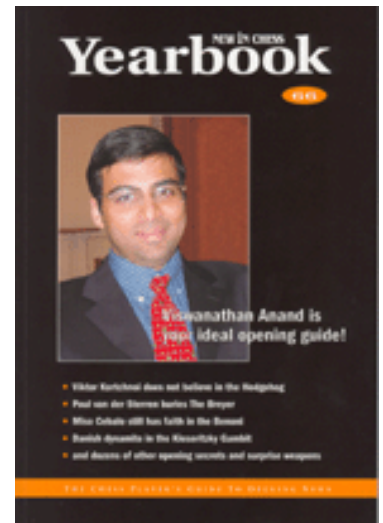
For players rated 1300 to around 1900, this tape will be a good introduction to this interesting opening and as promised by Martin in the beginning of the tape, you should be able to play the opening with some confidence after one evening, not through memorizing variations, but through a good general understanding of the position. For the intended audience, it certainly is good value for the money.

My assessment of this tape: 

[Order](#) *The Scheming Scandinavian with 2... Qxd5*
(VHS) by Andrew Martin

New in Chess Yearbook 66 by Genna Sosonko & Paul van der Sterren (ed), 2003 New In Chess, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Paperback, 235 pp., \$23.95

As regular readers of my column will know, the New in Chess Yearbooks have grown to become one of my favourite serial publications. The reason for this is simply that you will find it hard to find so much interesting material on current opening theory in any other publication. And while the main focus is on openings, this book actually has so much more to offer. Take a look at this 'brief' overview of the contents:



- Forum (11 letters - 10 pages)
- Sosonko's Corner
- Surveys:
 - Sicilian (7 surveys - 38 pages)
 - French (3 surveys - 19 pages)
 - Caro-Kann (2 surveys - 9 pages)
 - Scandinavian (1 survey - 7 pages)
 - Petroff (1 survey - 5 pages)
 - Ruy Lopez (2 surveys - 13 pages)
 - Two Knights (2 surveys - 12 pages)
 - King's Gambit (1 survey - 5 pages)
 - Chigorin Defence (1 survey - 6 pages)
 - Queen's Gambit Declined (1 survey - 5 pages)
 - Slav (3 surveys - 13 pages)
 - Nimzo-Indian (3 surveys - 18 pages)
 - Queen's Indian (1 survey - 5 pages)
 - Grünfeld Indian (2 surveys - 10 pages)
 - King's Indian (2 surveys - 11 pages)
 - Benoni (1 survey - 9 pages)
 - Volga Gambit (1 survey - 5 pages)
 - Queen's Pawn (1 survey - 7 pages)
- Book Review (8 pages)

- New In Chess Code System (1 page)
- Photo Gallery (1 page)

An amazing amount of material, and no less amazing is it, that this publication has a new installment every three months, each time full of new material, never recycled stuff that can be found a number of other places.

On the front cover of this volume, there are the following headlines:

- Viswanathan Anand is your ideal opening guide!
- Viktor Kortchnoi does not believe in the Hedgehog
- Paul van der Sterren buries the Breyer
- Miso Cebalo still has faith in the Benoni
- Danish Dynamite in the Kieseritzky Gambit
- and dozens of other opening secrets and surprise weapons

While I can understand, the first statement, I'm not sure in which survey it is backed up, but I'm certain that if I really was desperate to figure this out, I could go through every survey until I stumbled over it.


The contributors to these yearbooks vary from volume to volume and they come from all walks of chess life. From the enthusiastic amateur, rated just over 1400, to a correspondence IM to 2600+ grandmasters. This also makes the book a source of opening ideas for all levels of players. There is a variety in topics, and there is also a variety in survey quality. Some of them are extremely, some even painfully thorough, with detailed analysis of not only the main games, but also the games given as study material. In this volume, the

majority of the surveys is of a good quality, but there are also some that belong to the hall of shame. These are the ones where the author has put the brain on standby and tossed a few comments in here and there. In this volume the main culprit is Leon Pliester, who in his two surveys has failed to get involved in the material to any sufficient degree. That being said, he has in the past written several excellent surveys, but not this time around. To point out which surveys are the best is an almost hopeless task because the format of each survey differs. For example, there is one on the Traxler by De Zeeuw, which mainly consists of analysis, and very few games, and then we have the likes of Fogarasi, who analyses every single game in detail. Which is better I don't know, but both approaches are certainly worthwhile. Something that is not being done in these yearbooks is to give an index of the contributors. I think it could easily be included without taking up too much space.

Aside from the surveys, two of my favourite sections are "Sosonko's Corner" and Glenn Flear's "Book Review". Both are generally well-written and insightful. Flear this time reviews six recent opening books, while Sosonko discusses the concept of *Zwischenschach* and gives some interesting game examples to support his survey.

The New in Chess Yearbooks are very useful for ambitious players, those who would like some ideas for an opening repertoire. However, bear in mind that not every volume will have something that will apply to your opening repertoire. Be that as it may, I would be very surprised if you didn't find something you wanted to try out at one point or another; in addition you are bound to learn something about chess from the many

excellently annotated games.

My assessment of this book: 

[Order](#) *New in Chess Yearbook 66* by Genna Sosonko
& Paul van der Sterren (ed)

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

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