



COLUMNISTS

Checkpoint

Carsten Hansen



Reviewed this month:

Opening for White According to Anand 1.e4, Vol. 4
by Alexander Khalifman

Opening for White According to Anand 1.e4, Vol. 5
by Alexander Khalifman

Secrets of Opening Surprises, Vol. 4
by Jeroen Bosch (ed.)

New In Chess Yearbook, Vol. 78
by Genna Sosonko (ed.)

The French: Tarrasch Variation
by Steffen Pedersen

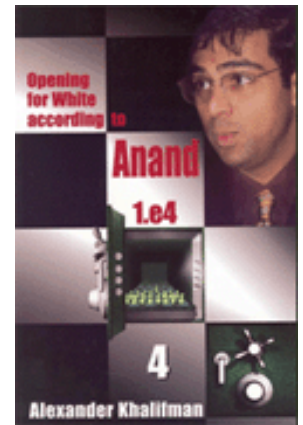
French: Advance and Other Lines
by Steffen Pedersen

Serious Serials

This month we will look at two new volumes in the long-running series on Anand's opening repertoire with white, as well as two new volumes from our friends at New In Chess, and, finally, after years of waiting, the last two volumes on the French by Steffen Pedersen.

Opening for White According to Anand 1.e4, Vol. 4 by Alexander Khalifman, Chess Stars 2005, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Softcover, 399 pp., \$29.95

This volume investigates the Pirc and several variations of the Modern. While repertoire books are usually aimed at players of average strength, this series of books is mainly aimed at stronger players, who already have a reasonably good understanding of many types of positions. All told, eight volumes are expected, each covering the starting move 1 e4, which gives you a glimpse of what it takes to be a grandmaster; but it only scratches the surface because they also play 1 d4, as well as 1 c4 and 1 Nf3, and that is only as White...



Let's see how the material is divided:

- Preface (3 pages)
- Part 1: 1 e4 d6 2 d4 (6 chapters – 57 pages)
- Part 2: 1 e4 d6 2 d4 Nf6 3 Nc3 c6 4 f4 (6 chapters – 67 pages)
- Part 3: 1 e4 d6 2 d4 Nf6 3 Nc3 g6 4 f4 (9 pages – 137 pages)
- Part 4: 1 e4 g6 2 d4 (7 chapters – 123 pages)
- Index of Variations (6 pages)

For a relatively unpopular opening, in comparison with 1...e5 or 1...c5, this book is rather massive. Khalifman doesn't cut many corners, as is evident from the fact that even bizarre and obscure lines are covered. However, he has to make some decisions as to how he will deal with certain lines. For example, early on, we come across: 1 e4 d6 2 d4 Nf6 3 Nc3 e5, where 4 Nf3 Nbd7 or 4...exd4 transpose into the main lines of the Philidor. Yet, against the Philidor, Khalifman recommended 1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 Nf6 4 dxe5!, which is quite uncomfortable for Black. Against the 1...d6 move order, Khalifman recommends 4 dxe5 dxe5 5 Qxd8+ Kxd8 6 Bg5, which Black should not find particularly challenging. To make things a little more confusing, Anand chose 4 Nge2 followed by 5 f3, when facing GM Azmaiparashvili back in 2003. Khalifman's dilemma is that, if he used this line, it would leave his coverage with holes and inconsistencies that would be difficult to explain. The fact that the book examines lines Anand will never play makes the use of his name out to be the marketing ploy that it really is.

Be that as it may, the book is written by a strong grandmaster, who presents many original ideas and analysis, along with outright refutations in some lines. Khalifman doesn't pretend to find an advantage where it does not exist, but aims at offering lines that will put Black under as much pressure as soon as possible, wherever possible, whether in slightly boring, simplified position or in complex situations that require sharp tactical awareness. This is actually a severe burden on the reader, who has to be able to understand both positional and tactical positions with the same ease. Therefore, if you choose to strictly follow Khalifman's repertoire suggestions, you have an immense task ahead of

you, not only in regards to studying theory, but also in broadening your understanding of a wide variety of positions. This will either make you or break you: either you will develop your skills to become a very strong player, or you will completely lose faith and quit the project altogether.

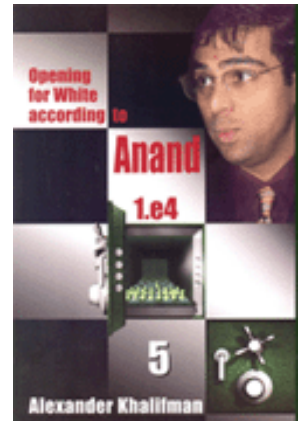
I'm generally quite impressed with the contents, but the lack of a bibliography is detrimental, as is the lack of an English speaking editor. There are many passages that are poorly written or suffer from an odd translation. However, it doesn't disturb the overall presentation too much. I found this volume to be enjoyable and very informative, with a great deal of original material and plenty of improvements over existing theory, giving the ambitious player plenty of opportunities to benefit.

My assessment of this book:

Opening for White According to Anand 1.e4 vol 5 by Alexander Khalifman, Chess Stars 2005, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Softcover, 256 pp., \$29.95

Even though the openings covered in this volume are rare guests in GM repertoires, Khalifman has still managed to write a massive tome on these relatively minor openings. The contents are divided as follows:

- Part 1: Baker's Defence; Owen's Defence (3 chapters – 62 pages)
- Part 2: Nimzowitsch Defence (4 chapters – 46 pages)
- Part 3: Alekhine's Defence (8 chapters – 126 pages)
- Part 4: 1 e4 e6 2 d4 – various without 2...d5 (1 chapter - 9 pages)
- Index of Variations (4 pages)



The coverage of Alekhine's Defence is absolutely staggering: 126 pages; how on earth is that even possible? The answer lies, once again, in Khalifman's pursuit of the most effective solution to each theoretical problem. He presents the best or most critical move for White to put as much pressure on Black whenever possible. This aspect is something that I believe has burdened Khalifman considerably. In the introduction, he writes:

I am not so optimistic about the eventual evaluation, which this book might deserve by my colleagues – grandmasters. It would hardly be as superb as the reviews of the previous volumes.

Moreover, some of them might even pay no attention to it and that would be easily understandable. White presently has so many problems to solve, for example in the Marshall Attack, or in the Sicilian-Sveshnikov, so why bother about the fine points of the Owen's Defence (1 e4 b6), which is being played so seldom anyway?"

His anxiety seems misplaced, given that average players are the principal target group for this book. Nonetheless, I find the positives and negatives quite comparable to those of volume 4, and will therefore not delve further into the material in this volume, other than to say that if you are looking for a weapon against any of these lines, then this will be a great resource.

My assessment of this book:

Secrets of Opening Surprises Vol 4 by Jeroen Bosch (ed.), New In Chess 2006, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Softcover, 143 pp., \$21.95

Be afraid, be very afraid! Editor Jeroen Bosch returns with another selection of hair-raising opening lines that are meant to stun your opponents into helplessness, as you achieve a good game before they can regain their composure. The SOS series is comprised of a variety of opening surveys that deviate from mainstream theory, often before move six. However, the format from one survey to the next differs tremendously in size, quality and usefulness.



The contents are divided as follows:

- 1 Jeroen Bosch – The SOS Files (8 pages)
- 2 Artur Kogan – A Surprising Scandinavian (12 pages)
- 3 Jeroen Bosch – The Alapin Opening (6 pages)
- 4 Sergey Volkov – Attacking the Slav Stonewall (6 pages)
- 5 Jaan Ehlevest – The Dutch Benoni (8 pages)
- 6 Jeroen Bosch – The Katalymov Variation (6 pages)
- 7 Glenn Flear – The Other Long Diagonal (9 pages)
- 8 Adrian Mikhalchishin – Following Smyslov and Reti (8 pages)
- 9 Dimitri Reinderman – King's Gambit Vienna 1903 (4 pages)
- 10 Jeroen Bosch – Move Order Your Sicilian Opponent (7 pages)
- 11 Dorian Rogozenko – An Indian SOS, Part I (10 pages)

- 12 Dorian Rogozenko – An Indian SOS, Part II (5 pages)
- 13 Glenn Flear – Patzer Sees a Checkpoint (8 pages)
- 14 Adrian Mikhalchishin – The Bellon Gambit (2 pages)
- 15 Jeroen Bosch – Kozul’s SOS against the Rossolimo (8 pages)
- 16 Igor Glek & Elena Sedina – Alekhine’s Blunder (8 pages)
- 17 Mikhail Gurevich – Flexibility Zone (16 pages)
- 18 Who is Who? – Authors and their Subjects (1 page)

Most of the contributors are grandmasters, which lends credence to the quality of the variations, the material for the surveys, and, most importantly, in the evaluations. One thing that commonly mars chess books on unusual lines is the complete lack of objectivity displayed by the author. Generally speaking, grandmasters don’t like to make fools of themselves by defending poor variations with questionable evaluations. I also like the fact that these lines are actually playable, without putting you in immediate danger of losing, as long as you have a basic understanding of the opening. In addition, you are likely to catch your opponent unawares because regular monographs do not cover these lines sufficiently.

Here are some examples of the lines covered in this volume:

- 1 e4 d5 2 exd5 Qxd5 3 Nc3 Qd8!?
- 1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 dxe4 4 Nxe4 Qd5!?
- 1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nc3 e6 4 e3 f5 5 g4!?
- 1 d4 c5 2 d5 f5!?
- 1 Nf3 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 b4!?
- 1 e4 e5 2 f4 exf4 3 Nf3 f5!?
- 1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4 Bb4+!?
- 1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 Na5!?

As you can see, you do not need to follow thirty moves of theory in order to test your preparation. From my own experience, having some surprise weapons mixed into a normal opening repertoire can be very advantageous. This book gives the added benefit of providing a fair amount of prose to help explain the typical ideas.

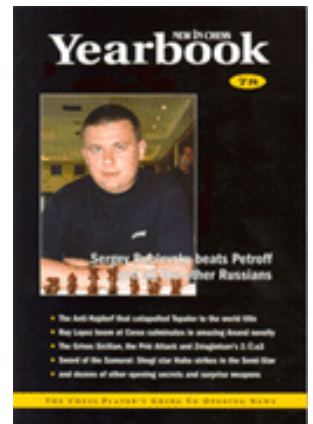
While you may not have a use for all the lines in each volume of this series, you are bound to find a couple of ideas that will grab your attention. For those who enjoy creative chess and independent thinking from the very start of the game, but who don’t want to take excessive risks, there is a no better product available today.

My assessment of this book: 

**[Order](#) *Secrets of Opening Surprises,*
Vol. 4 by Jeroen Bosch (ed.)**

New In Chess Yearbook, Vol. 78 by Genna Sosonko (ed.), Interchess BV 2006, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Softcover, 243 pp., \$26.95

I eagerly look forward to reading the *New In Chess Yearbook*. The material varies from lines that are topical at the grandmaster level to those that are only seen in correspondence chess or in obscure opening repertoires. As an example of the latter, there is a very entertaining survey by French GM Eric Prié on 1 d4 d5 2 a3!? or 1 d4 e6 2 a3!?, even if some of it seems to be written tongue-in-cheek to some extent. Moreover, I'm happy to report that the index of variations has been returned to its proper place at the front of the book, making the volume far easier to navigate.



The material is divided as follows:

- Opening Highlights (2 pages)
- Your Variations (2 pages)
- **Forum and Sosonko's Corner**
- Forum (13 pages)
- Sosonko's Corner (6 pages)
- **Surveys** (32 Surveys – 201 pages)
- **Service**
- Book Reviews (6 pages)

Opening Highlights points out some of the more interesting surveys from each volume, and features pictures of a few of the contributors.

The Forum section gives readers' an area to contribute games that are relevant to surveys from previous volumes, or new opening ideas that deserve attention, etc. There is always something of interest here. This time around Prié corrects a mistake from the previous volume, and English IM Richard Palliser discusses the merits of a line in the Trompowsky, as apparently Fogarasi missed some crucial details in his survey in *Yearbook 77*. The Armenian IM Ashot Nadanian is up to some new tricks: 1 d4 Nf6 2 Nf3 h6 with the idea 3 c4 g5!? 4 Nc3 g4 5 Nh4 d5!, as illustrated in the game Chiong-Nadanian. According to the accompanying text, Fogarasi will be discussing this line in detail in *Secrets of Opening Surprises, Vol. 5*.


In Sosonko's Corner, the editor discusses Zviagintsev's 1 e4 c5 2 Na3, and indicates that since its inception last year it has been played

frequently online, so clearly the last word has yet to be said on this variation.

The survey section contains 32 opening surveys. The first two feature the highly topical 6 Be3 against the Sicilian Najdorf, one of which is written by Kasparov's former coach Nikitin, the other is written by the Hungarian duo of Grandmaster Lukacs and International Master Hazai. Both are exceedingly well-written and that sets the tone for the rest of this volume, which contains one excellent survey after another. The editors always pick an interesting mix of openings and variations. Highlighting just a few isn't really fair, but the following surveys impressed me the most: Anka on the Tarrasch French with 3...c5 and 4...Qxd5; Marin on the Closed Ruy Lopez with 9 d4 Bg4; Abeln on the Antoshin Philidor with 6 g3; Greenfeld on the Morozevich Slav; van der Tak on the Marshall Gambit in the Slav; Cebalo on the Nimzo-Indian with 4 f3; Avrukh on the Modern Exchange Variation (7 Rb1) in the Grunfeld; Kapengut on the Fianchetto Variation in the Modern Benoni; Williams on the Classical Dutch, and then, of course, there is the aforementioned survey by Prié on 1 d4 followed by 2 a3!?

In the last section of the yearbook, Glenn Flear does a really good job at reviewing opening books, and his reviews are always well-written.

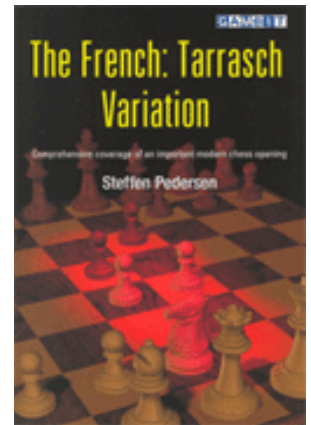
The *NIC Yearbook* offers a supremely satisfying selection of quality material. If you haven't yet bought a volume in this series, my only question is, "Why?"

My assessment of this book: 

Order *New In Chess Yearbook, Vol. 78*
by Genna Sosonko (ed.)

The French: Tarrasch Variation by Steffen Pedersen, Gambit Publications 2005, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Softcover, 191 pp., \$24.95

The first volume in this series, *The Main Line French: 3 Nc3*, was released back in 2001, and the two subsequent volumes were supposed to follow in short succession. There is no explanation given for the delay, but I'm happy to see them available at last. Pedersen's has a wonderful ability to take the essence of a rather large subject, boil it down a bit, add some relevant prose and present it in a format that appeals to players on a wide variety of levels, which is no small accomplishment.



In this volume, he tackles the Tarrasch Variation of the French Defense: 1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nd2. The material is divided as follows:

- Introduction (8 pages)
- **3...c5**
- 1 3...c5 4 exd5 Qxd5 Main Line: 10 Nxd4 (16 pages)
- 2 4...Qxd5: Deviations from the Main Line (11 pages)
- 3 4...exd5: The Old Main Line, 5...Nc6 6 Bb5 (17 pages)
- 4 4...exd5: Systems with ...Bd7 (10 pages)
- 5 4...exd5: Deviations from the Main Lines (7 pages)
- 6 4 Ngf3 and Other 4th Move Alternatives (9 pages)
- **3...Nf6**
- 7 3...Nf6 Main Line: 11 0-0 (28 pages)
- 8 7 Ngf3 (8 pages)
- 9 Maintaining a Big Centre: 5 f4 (14 pages)
- 10 Deviations from the Main Lines (11 pages)
- **Other 3rd Moves**
- 11 3...Be7 (18 pages)
- 12 3...a6 (14 pages)
- 13 3...Nc6 (12 pages)
- Index of Variations (3 pages)

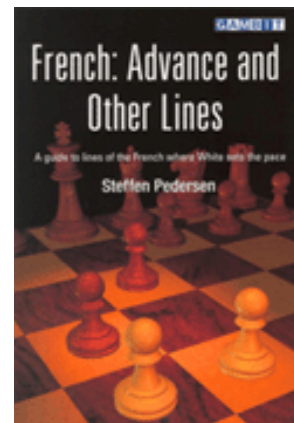
I found the introduction to be very informative and instructional, and this will serve newcomers to these lines particularly well. Pedersen uses numerous diagrams, arrows and supporting prose to highlight the main ideas. However, I would have liked to see at least one example where Black's notoriously bad light-squared bishop is shown to be the strong and essential defender that it is capable of being.

Moving on to the chapters, I like the way Pedersen builds on the efforts of other authors, adding more recent developments, in conjunction with his own ideas and improvements over existing theory. The presentation is very fluent and, with Pedersen's explanations of typical plans, you get a good education on how to play these lines, along with the current state of theory. This book will appeal to a wide range of players, and if you play these lines with either color, you will benefit from it.

My assessment of this book:

French: Advance and Other Lines by Steffen Pedersen, Gambit Publications 2005, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Softcover, 143 pp., \$24.95

The French Advance is generally becoming more and more popular, especially because of the numerous successes of players such as Grischuk and Svidler, as well as several other 2600+ players.



The material is divided as follows:

- Introduction (7 pages)
- **The Advance Variation**
- 1 Advance: 5...Qb6 6 a3 (29 pages)
- 2 6 Be2 (6 pages)
- 3 6 Bd3 and the Milner-Barry Gambit (6 pages)
- 4 5...Bd7 (30 pages)
- 5 5...Nge7 and 5...Nh6 (7 pages)
- 6 Various Deviations (11 pages)
- **Exchange Variation, King's Indian Attack Set-Ups and Rare Lines**
- 7 Exchange Variation (10 pages)
- 8 King's Indian Attack (23 pages)
- 9 Wing Gambit and Other Rare Lines (7 pages)
- Index of Variations (2 pages)

The introduction doesn't have the same passion or juice as can be found in the Tarrasch volume. This is manifested in the explanations being shorter, and the fact that no practical examples of the Exchange Variation are given, which traditionally has been used as a drawing weapon. But this reservation does not apply to the rest of the book, where Pedersen reverts to fine form.


The following passage perfectly illustrates the kind of chess education Pedersen provides. After the moves 1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 c5 4 c3 Nc6 5 Nf3 Bd7 6 Be2 Nge7 7 Na3 cxd4 8 cxd4 Nf5 9 Nc2 Qb6 10 0-0, here Pedersen writes:

It is a game of shadow-boxing around here. Black in particular has several ideas to choose from, but right now he waits for White to commit himself, but of course also makes sure that White can't gain space on the queenside with b4, and also in some

cases prepares ...Nb4 with the intention of recapturing with the a-pawn. The text move also prevents White from playing 11 Bd3 because this can be met by 11...Ncxd4 12 Nfxd4 Nxd4 13 Be3 Bc5, when White doesn't have 14 b4.

White's plan is clearer. In the majority of cases he will try to kick the knight away from f5 with g4. This, however, will leave the kingside open for a counterattack. White will continue by moving the knight away from f3, so the f-pawn can be advanced. This means either Nh4 or Nfe1 must be played. The difference between the two isn't great but there is some. Both moves have the same intention of advancing the f-pawn, but Nfe1 can often be met by ..h5, sacrificing a pawn but regaining control of f5. On Nh4 Black doesn't have the same reply because the knight controls f5, and the situation after a gxh5 is then much different. In that case Black would often play something like ...Ng6 and ...f6 but this would require White to move his knight again (Ng2), while this wouldn't be necessary with the same plan against Nfe1.

Explanations of this kind may well be entirely unnecessary for stronger players, but Pedersen caters to them with his original material, improvements over existing theory, and hundreds of suggestions and re-evaluations throughout the book. Those who play the French, or face it as white, will not regret investing in this volume.

My assessment of this book: 

Order *French: Advance and Other Lines*

by Steffen Pedersen

 [TOP OF PAGE](#)

 [HOME](#)

 [COLUMNS](#)

 [LINKS](#)

 [ARCHIVES](#)

 [ABOUT THE CHESS CAFE](#)

[\[ChessCafe Home Page\]](#) [\[Book Review\]](#) [\[Columnists\]](#)

[\[Endgame Study\]](#) [\[Skittles Room\]](#) [\[Archives\]](#)

[\[Links\]](#) [\[Online Bookstore\]](#) [\[About ChessCafe.com\]](#) [\[Contact Us\]](#)

Copyright 2006 CyberCafes, LLC. All Rights Reserved.

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