

NEW IN CHESS 142 Yearbook

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CHess OPENING NEWS

Edited by Jan Timman

From the publisher

The final Yearbook

After 38 years, 142 Yearbooks, and more than 35,000 pages, the New In Chess Yearbook series comes to an end. It will be missed. Numerous games have been won with lines investigated in the Yearbook. The concluding article called 'Moving on' that starts on page 7 recounts such an example as well as many other highlights of the series.

The study of chess opening ideas is increasingly moving to online platforms and cloud-based solutions, not only for elite professionals but also for club players. The production of a print book on opening news, four times a year, was great fun while it lasted but we feel that other media are more suitable for good coverage of today's fast-moving developments. If Magnus Carlsen drops a knight on e5 in a World Championship match, we want an assessment within days instead of months.

For studying chess openings, we recommend that our readers, and indeed all club players, switch to other learning tools. First of all, the monographs and complete repertoires New In Chess will continue to publish. In these books experts and experienced coaches like Viktor Moskalenko and Victor Bologan, Christof Sielecki and Larry Kaufman, Fabiano Caruana and Anish Giri guide the reader to make smart choices, and help them to understand the strategic ideas behind an opening.

Secondly, we recommend the Chessable platform, which, like New In Chess, is part of the Play Magnus Group. This social learning website offers interactive video chess courses and interactive versions of classic chess books built on top of its unique MoveTrainer software. Chessable has a wealth of chess opening courses that will allow you to study very efficiently.

Last but not least, our partner G-Chess has a great opening search tool and stores around six hundred Yearbook Surveys. This archive, just like our own archive, will, of course, still be accessible in future years.

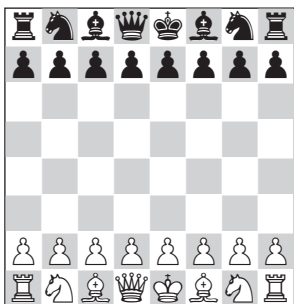
New In Chess thanks the subscribers, readers, authors and editors for their warm support during almost four decades. It has been a great pleasure for us to produce the Yearbook for you.

Remmelt Otten,
Publisher New In Chess

Moving on

by Peter Boel

(special contributions by René Olthof, Frank Erwich and Jan Timman)



What a blast it was! Thirty-eight years of following chess opening developments on their heels, working with a colourful cornucopia of authors – from renowned grandmasters, sometimes even (former) World Champions, to ambitious young players – and producing an authoritative and trend-setting periodical that did a lot more than it promised. After all, where can you get a Yearbook that comes out four times a year?

True, the formula of our famous opening periodical was always a little lopsided. But chess players don't mind lopsided – often they even like it. As René Olthof likes to say, it's a 'sandwich formula'. The entire range of openings is covered in each and every issue – not exhaustively, but in thin, digestible slices. A *pizza venticinque staggioni*, if you like.

If we have learned anything during the decades, it is that no matter how much you write about chess openings, there will always be more. In fact, the more you write about it, the more new material it generates! That is how fathomless our game is. There are quite a few nice examples of top players using novelties that had been suggested in the

Yearbook – even quite recently, in times when novelties travel faster than rockets. Fabiano Caruana was able to use an idea in the Hook Variation of the Winawer French by our very own Arthur Pijpers from the Dutchman's Survey in Yearbook 126 written several months earlier. Of course, the idea was h2-h4!?, the push of 'Harry the h-pawn' that crops up in every opening nowadays.

An intricate network

Apart from being a good excuse to follow all the recent top chess games on a daily basis, working on the Yearbook enabled us to build up an intricate network of chess theoreticians all over the world. We had the privilege of discussing new developments with them, taking our pick of interesting subjects and reading their take on them later. The articles – 'Surveys' – ranged from detailed and scientific to good-humoured, from complex and elaborate to raw, humorous or even sarcastic. We learned that very strong grandmasters have a knack of concentrating on the important and leaving out the rest, which can be very illuminating.

The material collected in those 38 years and 142 Yearbooks is enormous – 35,000 pages, exactly 3,850 Surveys by 385 different authors! The greatest number of Surveys were written, in earlier times, by correspondence player and opening aficionado A.C. van der Tak (164 Surveys), Kick Langeweg (who might even still be first on the list if we counted the articles



Bram van der Tak

by the NIC Editorial Team, many of which were written by him) and former editor Paul van der Sterren. Number four on the list (see the table at the end of this article!) are the famous Hungarian trainers and theoreticians Laszlo Hazai and Peter Lukacs, who were the subject of a special article on the subject in *New In Chess* 2011 No. 6. We have a Survey by them in this final issue! Yearbook supervisor René Olthof is number 6 on the list.

Not all of us have worked on the Yearbook for thirty-eight years. But our 'old hand' René Olthof has – and we give him the microphone here.

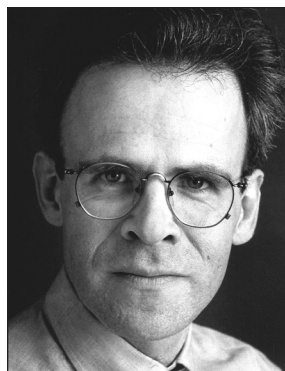
Indelible impressions

The *New In Chess* project was the result of the advent of the computer in the early 1980s – first, main frames, and subsequently also the personal computer. The first *New In Chess Yearbook* appeared in 1984. The concept behind it was an annual update of the *New In Chess Key Book* – hence the name Yearbook! We presented the latest developments in opening theory without text, using the Elsevier International Chess Data Information System Database. The total input from the period of January 1st 1983 till April

30th 1984 was 2,521 games, which had tripled in May 1985.

In *Yearbook* 4 (1986), editor Paul van der Sterren started writing introductions to guide the readers through the latest trends.

The first six volumes were a good 500 pages thick, but in 1988 the format changed to four 248-page issues a year,



Paul van der Sterren

and we also introduced the traditional theoretical articles at that point. The very first one, by Polish IM Henryk Dobosz, discussed one of the most controversial lines of the Meran Slav at the time: the highly tactical Rellstab Variation. Eleven pages packed with brand-new analyses. I remember Valery Salov exclaiming in sheer desperation: 'Some Polish fool has published all of my home preparation!'

A variety of esteemed theoreticians contributed over the years. A.C. van der Tak, Adrian Mikhalchishin and the Hungarian duo Peter Lukacs/Laszlo Hazai are on the top of that list, which also features household names such as Kapengut, Dlugy, Sveshnikov, Shamkovich, Ivanchuk, Sakaev, Vitolins, Nikitin, Golubev, Glek, Tiviakov, Shulman and the most famous

From the editor



Surprises never cease

It's a well-known fact that Jorden van Foreest is an exceptionally well prepared player, especially when he has the White pieces. This was proven once again in Wijk aan Zee this year, but last year he operated very successfully as well. We have instructive annotations by the Dutch grandmaster on three games from Malmö and Riga. His pawn sac 8.c5 against Ganguly is baffling. I've never seen anything like this in my long career.

Magnus Carlsen suffered a painful defeat against Jan-Krzysztof Duda in the World Cup last year. However, he took his revenge in three rapid tournaments later in the year. One of Carlsen's wins was very impressive: he opted for a pawn sac that would have been discarded practically right away in the past, just like Van Foreest's pawn sac. But the World Champion won in a blitz attack. José Vilela writes the Survey.

It is interesting to see that some old variations are being revived. The Dilworth Variation in the Open Ruy Lopez is named after an English amateur who played the line in correspondence games in the war years. It was never very popular till quite recently. Ivan Sokolov writes the Survey.

I wrote the second part of a Survey on an even older line in the Ruy Lopez, introduced at the end of the 19th century. Noteworthy is the position after White's 9th move, in which Black players have tried no less than seven moves. This must be some sort of record.

Jan Timman

Opening Highlights



Alireza Firouzja

The final Yearbook year, 2021, saw the big breakthrough of the 18-year-old Iranian-turned Frenchman. Alireza, the current world number 2, is a natural player, not especially known for his in-depth preparation. But he is able to find new ways in any kind of position. Against Richard Rapport in the Stavanger tournament, **Firouzja challenged the 3...♟f6 move in the Rossolimo Sicilian with a dangerous rook sac** that was pure OTB inspiration. Igor Stohl analyses the line in his Survey on page 60.

Jorden van Foreest

Jorden remains a highly creative opening innovator. We have the Dutchman's analysis of his **win over Short in a venerable Scotch line** in which Van Foreest has an amazing score. A real glance into the future of opening play is provided by his **8.c5 shocker in the Mikenas English** with which he ousted colleague Yearbook author Ganguly. Looking into this will 'guarantee you a good time' (Jorden), and that is what you will have when you read David Cummings's Survey on page 220.



Anish Giri

We would never describe Anish's opening play as frivolous, but even the Dutch ace has now 'succumbed' to using the odd g2-g4 push before move ten. He did so in his game with Boris Gelfand, opening the Tolstoy Cup rapid event in Yasnaya Polyana which Giri won with 8/9! Invented five years ago by Ferenc Berkes, **the 'Garry (Giri?!)' the g-pawn' thrust in the Semi-Slav** is quite in sync with modern times, as Robert Ris argues in his Survey on page 160.

Alex Fishbein

In some King's Indian lines where queens are exchanged early, Black has to be quite careful not to lose a pawn, right? Wrong! Seasoned American grandmaster Alex Fishbein presents to you on page 204 a delightful Survey about **the 'Pawn Blunder Variation' in the Fianchetto King's Indian**, proving that giving a pawn is in fact quite a clever thing to do if Black wants to get some active play for his remaining pieces.



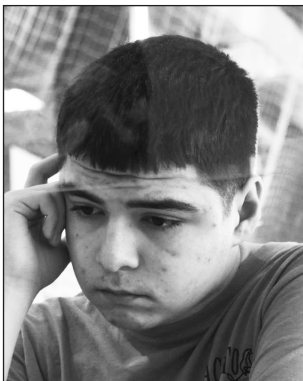
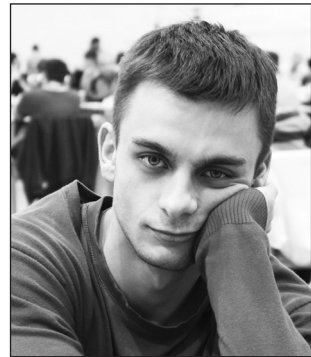


Magnus Carlsen

The mighty World Champion cannot fail to make an appearance in this final Yearbook. Unfortunately, there was not a lot of opening innovation in his title match with Ian Nepomniachtchi, but there is still plenty of that left. What would you think of Peter Heine Nielsen's analysis of **Magnus's 18-move demolition of Jan-Krzysztof Duda in the Semi-Tarrasch**? Such a feat really requires sharp and original opening play. You can read all about that in long-time author José Vilela's Survey on page 166.

Nikita Matinian

The Grand Prix Attack can be a serious nuisance for Sicilian aficionados of any level. Pick the wrong move and you have a deadly assault on your hands. The good news brought to you by Russian grandmaster Nikita Matinian is that **Black has many viable choices after the topical 5. ♖b5+ ♙d7 6. ♙c4 ♗c6 7.d3**. Among others, Nikita studies deeply the modern 7...♗a5! from the game Van Foreest-Bjerre which features with analysis by the former in the Survey on page 70.



Artem Odegov

At eighteen, FM Artem Odegov is not only already a chess coach, but also an aspiring theoretician. Yearbook 138 already saw a FORUM contribution by the young Russian on the Reversed Benoni. Now Odegov has made a Survey for us on a **clever waiting move early in the Rubinstein Nimzo** which dares White to show his hand first. The 'ideal move' 5...♗e8 is a highly practical weapon if you want to avoid endless theoretical lines, see Artem's article on page 179.

David Smerdon

The 'swindle expert' from Australia launches out with a whopping 12-page Survey on a **brilliant queen sacrifice novelty in the Steinitz French** which he played already in 2016 in the 'Checkmate TV Show' tournament against Anna Muzychuk. Due to an embargo by the broadcasters, the game had to remain secret for more than five years. Now you are the first to see it, with extensive analysis by the winner who earned the nickname 'French Ladykiller' with it! See Smerdon's Survey on page 80.



Your Variations

Trends & Opinions

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HOT! = a trendy line or an important discovery

SOS = an early deviation

GAMBIT = a pawn sacrifice in the opening

Theory will go on

The FORUM is a platform for discussion of developments in chess opening theory in general and particularly in variations discussed in previous Yearbook issues.

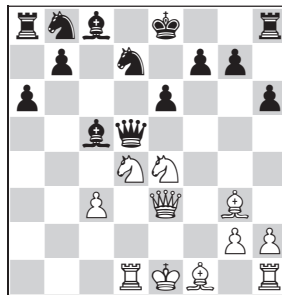
Contributions to these pages should be sent to: editors@newinchess.com

And the winner is...

by the Editorial team

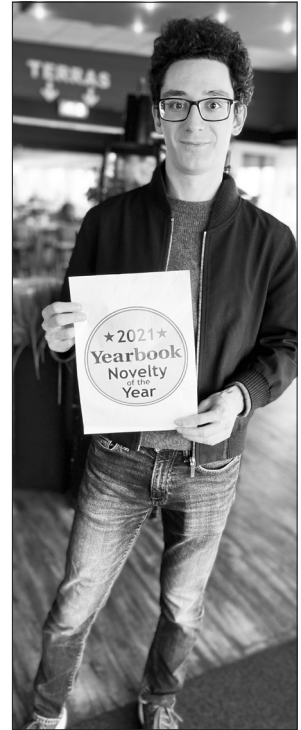
SI 4.8 + SI 8.14 (B97) YB 139

... also the overall winner of 13 Yearbook Novelty of the Year contests: Fabiano Caruana! It was the third time the American No. 3 of the world did it. He also played the Novelty of the Year in 2014 (see Yearbook 114) and 2018 (see Yearbook 130). It was a landslide this time around. Caruana's mind-boggling novelty 18. ♖c4!? in the Poisoned Pawn Najdorf against Maxime Vachier-Lagrave in the first round of the second leg of the Yekaterinburg Candidates was the favourite of no less than 130 of the 347 (valid) voters – more than 35%!



18. ♖c4!?

The move was invented by Caruana's famous second Rustam Kasimdzhanov. MVL defended amazingly well in the game but in the end the practical problems in the endgame were too much



for him. Garry Kasparov called it 'the best prepared game in the history of chess' and we can only agree with him. The full story on this important game can be found in Yearbook 139, page 12, the FORUM item called 'A wise investment!' by René Olthof. Among the voters were several international masters and grandmasters, the most illustrious being Jan-Krzysztof Duda who himself graced the cover of the previous Yearbook, No. 141. Second came our former author Alexander Predke. The Russian grandmaster received

The beauty of a chess niche

by Erwin l'Ami



In this column, Dutch grandmaster and top chess coach Erwin l'Ami scours the thousands of new correspondence games that are played every month for important novelties that may start new waves in OTB chess also. Every three months it's your chance to check out the best discoveries from this rich chess source that tends to be underexposed.

It has been a pleasure to update you on all the ins and outs of the correspondence chess world. Starting my column just after Nigel Short declared correspondence over and done with, I felt an extra need to show the beauty of what is essentially the niche in chess where the highest level is reached. Given the abundance of reactions I have received, I trust I have succeeded in doing just that and I want to thank New In Chess for giving me the chance to do so. One last time, we jump into the fray!

Still some venom left

NI 21.6 (E32)

We start off with an ultra-solid line of the 4. ♖c2 Nimzo that I have played myself with both colours. Adkham Yunusov shows there is still some venom left in the variation!

**Adkham Yunusov
Giuseppe Crapulli**

CT23 pr 12 ICCF, 2020

**1.d4 ♟f6 2.c4 e6 3. ♘c3 ♙b4
4. ♖c2**

The Classical or Capablanca Variation is one of the most ambitious ways of fighting the Nimzo. White intends to recapture on c3 with the queen, not allowing Black to spoil the pawn structure. In doing so, White makes two queen moves and usually

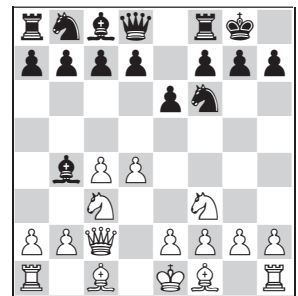
falls somewhat behind in development. It is not a surprise, therefore, that 4. ♖c2 can lead to sharp play where Black has to try to make use of his lead in development. After all, the bishop pair will guarantee White a long-term advantage while a lead in development is something one has to capitalize on as fast as possible.

4...0-0

Books have been written about 4...c5, 4...d5, 4... ♘c6 and the modern 4...b6, but they obviously fall outside the scope of this column.

5. ♟f3

A very solid system that I have often faced and played myself. Much sharper is 5.e4 and the classical continuation is 5.a3 ♟xc3+ 6. ♖xc3, leading to the scenario I described on move 4.



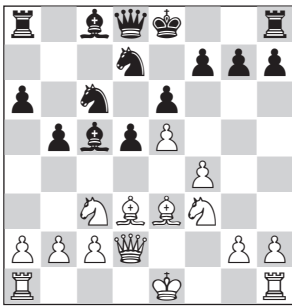
5...c5

A decent alternative, leading to a mixture of a Nimzo and a Ragozin, is 5...d5 and despite the fact that 6. ♙g5 h6 7. ♟xf6 ♖xf6 8.a3 ♟xc3+ 9. ♖xc3 dxc4 10. ♖xc4 c6 11.g3 ♘d7 12. ♙h3!, preventing ...e6-e5, gave White some advantage in Rapport-

The French Ladykiller

by David Smerdon

- | | | |
|-----|-------------|-------------|
| 1. | e4 | e6 |
| 2. | d4 | d5 |
| 3. | ♘c3 | ♗f6 |
| 4. | e5 | ♗fd7 |
| 5. | f4 | c5 |
| 6. | ♗f3 | ♘c6 |
| 7. | ♙e3 | a6 |
| 8. | ♚d2 | b5 |
| 9. | dxc5 | ♙xc5 |
| 10. | ♙d3 | |



In the FORUM of Yearbook 115, Rao SV Srinath wrote about his interesting novelty 10...0-0!? in one of the most popular variations of the French Defence. It invites White to execute a Greek Gift sacrifice, leading to an exciting middlegame where Black has three minor pieces for a queen and pawn after 14...♗dxe5 (Games 2-3). However, despite Srinath's positive evaluation, the novelty has failed to catch on. The likely explanation is that although Black has (almost) enough material, the bishop and pair of knights don't coordinate particularly well in the open positions, and, coupled with Black's own king safety issues, White not only has an objectively favourable position but also an easier one to play (see the notes to Mari-Srinath, 2015).

Practical considerations are especially important when 'weird' material imbalances occur, as the engine evaluations can often distract us from just how complex and double-edged the positions are. These factors may explain why, despite the position after 10.♙d3 appearing in over 600 games in Megabase in the seven years since Srinath's novelty, the move 10...0-0 has only been played in 14 of them. However, there is one game that has been played in the meantime, in fact as long ago as 2016, which doesn't appear in the database, and that is the subject of this Survey.

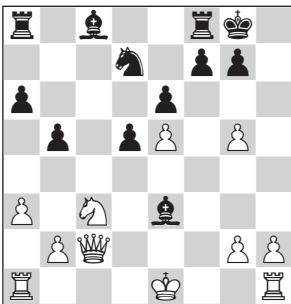
In 2016, I was invited to participate in the second series of the 'Checkmate' television series. The two-week tournament was an interesting mix of a strong 10-player rated round robin combined with interviews and voice-overs reminiscent of the BBC's 'The Master Game' of the 1970s and '80s. I had a strange event: while I scored only 1/2 against the other men (Rapport, Tari, Rodshtein and Short), I managed 4/5 against the all-star female line-up (Kosteniuk, Cramling, Pähtz and the two Muzychuk sisters). The quirky split in my results along gender lines led Pia Cramling to dub me the 'Ladykiller'. That's not something I've been called before, but in my game against Anna Muzychuk, I at least managed to kill my own queen in a spectacular way, deploying a mutated version of Srinath's idea with 14...♗b4!N. The plan is to give up the

queen for a pair of bishops and a pawn, instead of the bishop and two knights. Mathematically, this is an inferior trade, but in compensation Black gets excellent coordination and a dangerous initiative. It is still not clear to me what the objective evaluation should be, but at least in its one serious practical test, Anna was unable to navigate the choppy waters.

This novelty was jointly prepared before the tournament with my Aussie friend Max Illingworth, who 'seconded' for me for the event. I have wanted to write about the novelty for a while, but the games have been embargoed during production, which was delayed all the way until 2021. Finally, however, the series is out (available at www.checkmatetvshow.com – who wouldn't want to see a reality chess show?), and so too are the games, hence the timing of this article.

Accepting the challenge

If White is to play the principled 11. ♖xh7+ (which, after all, is partly the point of 10. ♕d3), then the position after 11... ♗xh7 12. ♘g5+ ♖g8 13. ♗d3 ♗xg5 14. fxg5 ♖b4 15. ♗e2 ♕xe3 16. a3 ♘xc2+ 17. ♗xc2 arises by force.



At this stage, Black already has an important choice between three continuations:

A) I chose 17... ♗xe5 against Anna, eliminating the central pawn while still preventing White from castling. After 18. h4! ♕b7! (Game 1) White needs to play ♗d1!, kicking away the annoying bishop. While the engines favour White, I chose this line because the white king won't be able to castle. Black has many resources;

B) Black can instead eliminate the g-pawn immediately with 17... ♕xg5, and will probably also be able to capture on e5 in a few moves. But the loss of time allows White to consolidate by castling and then aim the major pieces at the black kingside, and the dark-squared bishop will be misplaced in the short term. In this line, both kings feel a bit safer;

C) Finally, the third option is to ignore the pawns and conduct rapid deployment of the forces with 17... ♕b7, intending ... ♖c8 and ... d5-d4. White needs to be accurate over the next few moves, and, assuming the tricks are successfully avoided, the ensuing endgames are very interesting.

Six years on, I am still not sure which move is best; each move has its own strengths and weaknesses. Part of the reason is that 'best' is usually defined these days as 'the highest evaluation if both sides play perfectly', whereas it really should be 'the highest expected evaluation in practice'. White should reply 18. h4 after each move, but after that, White's best set-ups in the branches are irregular and not easy to find over the board. A regular feature of the lines is that Black often has multiple moves of similar value, while White usually has to find tricky only-moves to maintain an advantage. This is not borne out in (non-neural-network) engine evaluations, which favour White

by one to two pawns. But the point remains: Black's position is easier to play, while White has a smaller margin for error.

This may sound like the hollow ramblings of a fanatic desperately trying to make his novelty 'work', so let me unequivocally admit that White is probably objectively winning and that this variation is not suitable for correspondence chess. However, I myself wouldn't have any hesitation playing it again in classical chess, even against a prepared opponent. There is plenty of scope for creativity and the lines can lead to some very unusual (and un-French-like) positions and material imbalances, so I hope you forgive me for being a little generous with dishing out the diagrams.

Delaying the Gift

White has several alternatives to the sacrifice on h7 on move 11, and in fact this has been White's most popular decision in practice. All but one of these alternatives are concessions that immediately give Black improved versions of the main lines with best responses. However, these need to be learned, because the Greek Gift theme looms in many of these lines, and can be especially dangerous once Black's queen moves away from d8.

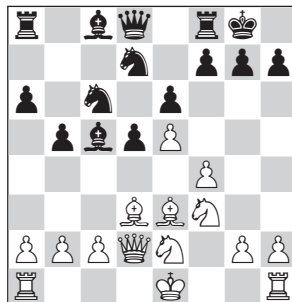
A) In online blitz, the most popular choice of my opponents has actually been 11.0-0??, which loses a piece to 11...d4;

B) Natural moves like 11. ♖f2 f6! (Game 4) and 11. ♖xc5 ♜xc5 12.0-0 ♞b6! are comfortable for Black;

C) Sophie Milliet tried 11. ♞f2!? in a topsy-turvy game against Irina Krush (Game 5). After 11... ♞b6! White is practically forced into the

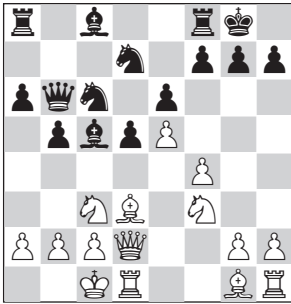
complications after 12. ♖xc5 ♜xc5 13. ♖xh7+ – however, everything should fizzle out to a draw;

D) Svetushkin, Deac and Salem all tried 11. ♜e2 (Games 6-8).



Here, 11... ♞b6 has been the most common reply, but it is extremely risky because of 12. ♖xh7+!N. Probably Black survives the attack with best play, but White can take a draw whenever they want or keep the attack going, and I sure wouldn't like to defend it. There are two interesting and unplayed alternatives, however. I like 11...b4!N, practically forcing 12. ♖xh7+ and another queen sacrifice. In this version, White risks getting steamrolled by Black's minor pieces and so should quickly give back the queen, leading to an endgame in which Black has full compensation for a pawn. Also interesting is 11...a5!?N, after which accepting the pawn sacrifice with 12. ♖xb5 is risky, while 12. ♖xh7+?? now loses. Instead, White should play the solid 12. ♖xc5 ♜xc5 13.0-0, transposing to a well-trodden path first explored by Nunn and Kortchnoi in 1988;

E) Finally, White has scored a dismal ½/4 after 11.0-0-0 ♞b6 12. ♖g1!?. But in fact, this is probably White's most promising alternative to the immediate 11. ♖xh7+, as the Greek Gift sacrifice is still in the air.



Nigel Short, one of my co-stars in the Checkmate tournament, tried 12...f6 in Game 9. This was also Srinath's choice, and it is a safe option, but White is slightly better in a typical-looking Steinitz middlegame. Alex Lenderman beat Ray Robson with 12...♙xg1 (Game 10), but in the game 14.f5! would have given White a pull. A critical line

is 12...♘b4!?, when the excitement following 13.♙xh7+!N ♘xh7 14.a3! a5! is hard to evaluate and so far untested.

Conclusion

While Srinath's 10...0-0 may not have caught on until now, the addition of 14...♘b4!N breathes new life into the line. Sacrificing your queen for only a pair of bishops is not going to be everyone's cup of tea, especially given that the engines favour White. But the variation is exciting and a lot of fun, and White needs to be very accurate not to go awry. The resulting positions are so sharp, unorthodox and unexplored that novelties abound and the better prepared player is likely to be the favourite.

Accepting the challenge

11. ♙xh7+

Anna Muzychuk

David Smerdon

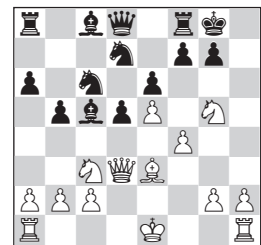
London 2016 (5)

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.e5
♘fd7 5.f4 c5 6.♘f3 ♘c6 7.♙e3 a6
8.♗d2 b5 9.dxc5 ♙xc5 10.♙d3!

This move has been causing Black headaches for a decade now, especially since Karjakin used it against Carlsen in a blindfold game in 2011 and then Parimarjan Negi promoted it in his excellent '1.e4...' series in 2014. White has scored heavily in grandmaster clashes, with strong players such as So, Harikrishna, Giri, Wang Yue, and Leko, in addition to Karjakin, recording convincing wins with the white pieces. The logic of the move is quite simple: after 10...♗b6, White replies 11.♙f2!, when the endgames following mass exchanges on f2 are more comfortable for White. See Game 11. The concrete justification of 10.♙d3 is that Black doesn't seem to have a good alternative: 10...d4? fails tactically to 11. ♘xd4!,

while 10...0-0, of course, loses to 11.♙xh7+. Or does it? Analysing the position after 11.♙xh7+ on my computer before the tournament, I was surprised that my engine 'only' gave +2. How could this be? Either the Greek Gift wins, or it doesn't, right? My second, Max Illingworth, and I worked a bit on this position before the tournament. Our big breakthrough was coming to the realization that Black shouldn't try to snatch a bishop and two knights to compensate for the queen, and instead prefer the unusual combination of the bishop pair and a pawn. The engines still prefer White in this strange imbalance, but following the variations further, Black's position looks promising – as well as a lot more fun to play. As luck would have it, I had my first chance to unleash the novelty in round three, against the strong GM Anna Muzychuk. **10...0-0!** **11. ♙xh7+** Unsurprisingly, the principled and tactically sharp Ukrainian didn't shy away from playing the critical line. The major alternatives 11.♙f2,

11.♗f2, 11.♙xc5, 11.♘e2 and 11.0-0-0 are covered in the remaining Games 4-10. **11...♙xh7** **12.♘g5+** ♙g8 **13.♗d3**

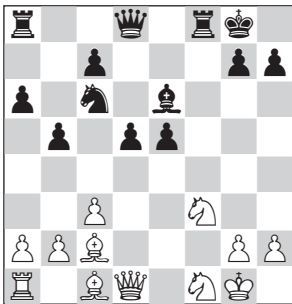


13...♗xg5! 13...f5? 14.exf6 ♗xf6 15.♗h7+ ♙f8 16.♗h8+ ♙e7 17.♗xg7+ ♙e8 (17...♙d6 18.♘ce4+--→) 18.♙xc5 ♘xc5 19.0-0-0→. **14.fxg5 ♘b4!N** This is the new concept. In two subsequently played games, Black accidentally fell into this position and went for the opportunity to gain three minor pieces for a queen and pawn. This seems like a reasonable material balance, but in fact the 'French bishop' and the pair of knights do not coordinate very well in the resulting middlegame, and White, with attacking chances, has a clear advantage. Instead, the

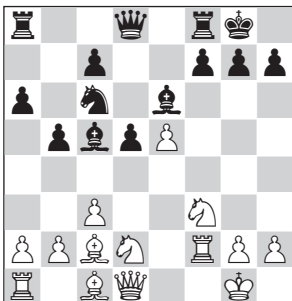
The new Dilworth Variation

by Ivan Sokolov

- | | | |
|-----|-----------|-----------|
| 1. | e4 | e5 |
| 2. | ♘f3 | ♘c6 |
| 3. | ♙b3 | a6 |
| 4. | ♙a4 | ♘f6 |
| 5. | 0-0 | ♘xe4 |
| 6. | d4 | b5 |
| 7. | ♙b3 | d5 |
| 8. | dxe5 | ♙e6 |
| 9. | c3 | ♙c5 |
| 10. | ♘bd2 | 0-0 |
| 11. | ♙c2 | ♘xf2 |
| 12. | ♖xf2 | ♙xf2+ |
| 13. | ♔xf2 | f6 |
| 14. | ♔g1 | fxe5 |
| 15. | ♘f1 | |



After 11. ♙c2 in the Open Ruy Lopez, Black's following decision causes a material imbalance and enters the Dilworth Variation: 11... ♘xf2 12. ♖xf2,



when Black has a choice between two different move orders, usually leading to the same initial position:

I – 12... ♙xf2+ 13. ♔xf2 f6. Now we enter the 'Old Dilworth' with 14. exf6 ♖xf6 15. ♘f1. 15. ♔g1 ♗ae8 is the old line, considered to be fine for Black, while White cannot take advantage of the move order by playing 15. ♘b3 ♘e5, see my comments on Sevian-Paravyan (Game 1).

White has two different ways to enter the 'New Dilworth': 14. ♔g1 fxe5 15. ♘f1 or 14. ♘f1 fxe5 15. ♔g1. I see no difference between the two.

II – The other move order is 12...f6, leading to the same positions. The 'Old Dilworth' was leading to a different pawn structure after 13. exf6 ♖xf6 14. ♘f1. Now White wants to play 15. ♙e3, so Black has to take on f2: 14... ♙xf2+ 15. ♔xf2 ♘e5 and we have many games here. Black usually takes on f3, damaging White's pawn structure and, most of the time, winning a pawn in the process. Black has had good practical results here (grandmaster Artur Jussupow in particular!), the computer engines support Black too and White players have stopped looking for an opening advantage.

The 'New Dilworth' is 13. ♘f1 ♙xf2+ (the threat was 14. ♙e3, so Black had to take on f2) 14. ♔xf2 fxe5 15. ♔g1 and again we have the starting position of this Survey.

Recent top-level testing

Though the stem game Darga-Larsen dates back to 1953(!), it is only relatively recently (starting with the game Vachier-Lagrave-

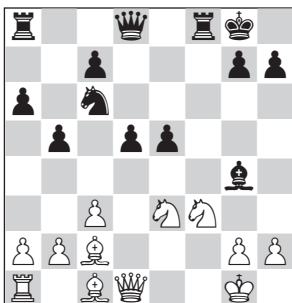
Mamedyarov, Biel 2018) that this position has been tested at top level!

At first glance White seems to have taken a slightly strange decision by giving Black a central pawn on e5 ‘for free’. The strategic idea behind White’s concept is actually quite deep. Black cannot push their central pawns easily (because there will always be a blockade), while White’s king is now safe, compared to the ‘Old Dilworth’. Preparing the material for this Survey, I have taken into account my regular ChessBase database, and also Nils Grandelius’s lines and opinions from his recent opening repertoire for White on Chessable. As the reader will see, I agree with some of Nils’s opinions, while not with some others.

Black has three logical continuations: 15...♗g4, pinning the knight, 15...♔d6 and 15...♕d7, developing the queen and connecting the rooks. I have divided the material in this way, including a separate theoretical Survey of two of those lines.

Variation A

15...♗g4 arguably looks like Black’s most logical continuation, but the depth of White’s idea becomes clear after 16.♘e3!



Now the planned 16...♗xf3 does not really damage White’s king position (which usually was the case in the ‘Old Dilworth’) but rather opens attacking routes to the black king. White can

quickly develop a strong attack, see my comments in Game 1.

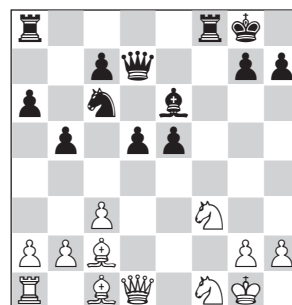
On 16.♘e3!, Black best reply appears to be the bishop retreat 16...♗e6. Interesting enough, after this seemingly pure tempo loss it is not easy for White to prove an advantage. The logical move 17.♗b3 leads to equality. White’s best option appears to be 17.b3!, which has been played in a number of top-level games. Critical here seems to be Hakobyan-Sindarov (Game 2).

Variation B

15...♔d6 is a logical developing move that was played in the stem game Darga-Larsen, 1953, and in two recent top games by MVL. White has three logical continuations: 16.♘g5 (also played in Darga-Larsen), 16.♘e3 and 16.♗e3. In my opinion, 16.♘g5 and 16.♘e3, both played by MVL, do not lead to an advantage for White – see Vachier-Lagrave-Heimann (Game 3). The move 16.♗e3 (proposed by Nils Grandelius in his opening repertoire) leads to White’s advantage (at least I think it does), though things are far more complicated than Nils wants us to believe – see the analysis under Game 4.

Variation C

Now we come to 15...♕d7.



This move was played by Grandelius himself on the Black side (!) versus Jonas

Buhl Bjerre at the recent SigemanTePo tournament in Malmö.

The two main moves for White should be 16. ♖e3 (see Bjerre-Grandelius, Game 5) or 16.a4, proposed by Grandelius as White's best and already tried in practice – see the analysis under Game 6.

Evaluating this critical line, I believe Black's best is 16... ♗h8 (N.G.'s main line 16...b4?! is White's dream), which leads to the critical position after 21. ♖xf3.

While I agree with general Nils's opinion about the position, I do not agree with his assessment 'White has an advantage'. Black has the Stockfish-inspired idea to first take space with 21...e4 and then trading queens with 23... ♖d6!, not minding doubled pawns.

Conclusion

The 'New Dilworth' is a deep concept for White championed by quite a number of top players (Magnus Carlsen included) and is here to stay!

A) 15... ♖g4 does not seem logical to me, as after 16. ♗e3 the best option for Black is to retreat with 16... ♖e6. We have quite a number of top-level games here, and it seems to me that with precise play White should get the upper hand;

B) 15... ♖d6 is a logical developing move for Black, played at top level! Here White probably gets an opening advantage after 16. ♖e3!;

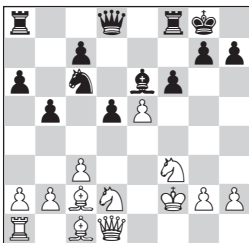
C) I think that 15... ♖d7 is Black's best option, and sufficient for satisfactory play.

Variation A 15... ♖g4

Samuel Sevian
David Paravyan

Jermuk 2021 (1)

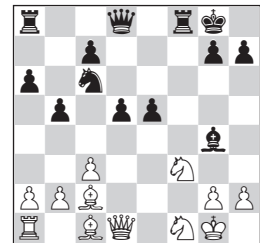
1.e4 e5 2. ♗f3 ♗c6 3. ♖b5 a6
4. ♖a4 ♗f6 5.0-0 ♗e4 6.d4
b5 7. ♖b3 d5 8.dxe5 ♖e6 9.c3
♖c5 10. ♗bd2 0-0 11. ♖c2 ♗xf2
12. ♖xf2 ♖xf2+ 13. ♗xf2 f6



14. ♗f1 I would like to mention here that White does not have any good deviation from the regular lines. For example, White can try to deviate by placing his knight on b3, but this does not bring him any advantage, e.g. 14.exf6 ♖xf6 15. ♗b3 (15. ♗g1 ♖ae8 is the 'old main line'

– considered to be OK for Black) 15... ♗e5. Now White should not try to be 'clever' with 16. ♗bd4? (best is 16. ♗g1 ♖ae8 17. ♖e3 (Black should agree to an endgame: trying to become 'active' with 17. ♗bd4? is wrong, as after the simple 17... ♖g4+ Black has the unpleasant ...c7-c5 threat) 17... ♗xf3+ 18. ♖xf3 ♖xf3 19.gxf3 ♖xf3 20. ♖f2 ♖h3 and we have a balanced endgame similar to our 'old main line' type of endgame. Later the game was drawn in Perez Candelario-Kolev, Navalmoral 2010) 16... ♖g4 (Black already has a winning advantage, 17...c5 being a terrible threat) 17.h3 (17. ♗g1 c5–+; hoping to 'stabilize the knight' with 17.b4 loses to 17...a5 18. ♗g1 axb4 19.cxb4 ♗xf3+ 20.gxf3 ♖xf3–+) 17... ♖h4+ 18.g3 – now Black has simple tactics: 18... ♗xf3 19.gxh4 ♗xd4+ 20. ♗g2 ♖xd1 21. ♖xd1 ♗f5 and Black had a decisive material advantage and won easily in Shuvalova-A.Muzychuk, Moscow 2019. 14...fxe5 15. ♗g1 ♖g4 This move, while typical in such positions, is not exactly logical here

as after White's next move Black has to retreat his bishop.



16. ♖e3! The point behind White's whole idea. Should Black take on f3, then White gets excellent attacking chances! Black's best option is to retreat the bishop: 16... ♖g5 ♖xf3 17. ♖d2 ♖d6 18.gxf3 e4 19.fxe4 ♗e5 20. ♗h1 ♗f3 21. ♖g2 ♖ae8 22. ♖e3 c5 23. ♗g3 d4 24. ♖d1 ♗h8 25.cxd4 cxd4 26. ♖g1 ♗xg1 27. ♖xg1 ♖f4 28. ♖g2 ♖c8 29. ♖e2 ♖e3 30. ♖b3 ♖f2 31. ♖xe3 dxe3 32.e5 g6 33.e6 a5 34. ♗g1 ♗g7 35. ♗e4 ♖f4 36. ♗d6 ♖c5! 37.h4 ♖e5 38. ♗f7 ♖g4+ 39. ♗h2 ♖ee4 40. ♖d7 ♖xh4+ 41. ♗g3 ♖hg4+ 42. ♗f3 ♗f6 43. ♗d6 e2 44. ♖f7+ ♗g5 45. ♗xe4+ ♖xe4 46. ♗xe4 e1 ♖+ 47. ♗d4 ♖b4+

A dream move in the Nimzo-Indian

by Artem Odegov

- | | | |
|----|-----|-----|
| 1. | d4 | ♘f6 |
| 2. | c4 | e6 |
| 3. | ♘c3 | ♙b4 |
| 4. | e3 | 0-0 |
| 5. | ♙d3 | ♖e8 |



History of the opening

The Nimzo-Indian Defence is an old but very popular opening and is played by everyone from amateur to professional. The first game with this variation was played in Calcutta in 1851 (yes, more than 170 years ago) by the two famous players John Cochrane and Bonnerjee Mohishunder. By the way, it is worth noting that their game had some similarity to our current theme. After 1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.e3 0-0 5.♘f3 ♘e4 6.♙d2 ♙xc3 7.♙xc3 ♘xc3 8.bxc3 d6 9.♙d3 c6 10.0-0 b6!? the pawn structure was very interesting, but the game ended in a victory for White. Actually in the Nimzo-Indian Defence after 3...♙b4 there are more than ten possible moves. But today I would like to focus on the main branch, 4.e3 followed by 5.♙d3. Of course, this is the most principled line, played regularly by solid grandmasters like Anton Korobov and

Aleksej Aleksandrov. Most often, the line results in a position with an isolated pawn. This was the case in the 1945 game Tolush vs Mikenas: 4.e3 0-0 5.♙d3 d5 6.♘f3 c5 7.0-0 cxd4 8.exd4 dxc4 9.♙xc4 b6 10.♙g5 ♙b7 11.♖e2 ♙e7 12.♞ad1 ♞e8 13.♘e5 with a quick white victory. I'm sure many players are no fans of fighting against an isolated pawn as this involves a lot of risk. I for myself have long had my doubts about how to play against this variation.

A new flexible move – 5...♞e8!?

Many people might ask, how did I come up with this idea? Truth be told, I found it for the first time in late 2019. At that time I was already playing the Nimzo-Indian, but I had little experience with it. In that year, the Lc0 network became very popular. I checked a few of my openings with it, and found many interesting ideas. One thing I wasn't sure about was our idea, although I often told myself that I wanted to achieve flexibility in the Nimzo-Indian and have options to determine the structure later on.

Unfortunately, I was never able to put the move 5...♞e8!? into practice, because the pandemic broke out and there were no tournaments for a long time. After a while I forgot about the idea and played the standard variations, mostly online. Not too long ago, life made me return to this variation. I was preparing a student of mine for a tournament. In general he played the basic variation against the isolated pawn, but this time he was

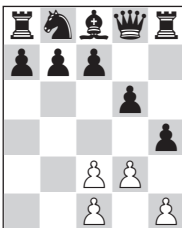
quite scared because his next opponent was an attacking player. That's when I remembered this old/new idea. After looking at it for about 40 minutes, we concluded that the position is absolutely normal and makes sense for Black. Unfortunately, my student's opponent played another line of the Nimzo-Indian and the game ended in a draw.

The ideas behind 5...♖e8!?

Today I am sure this variation is the stuff of dreams for Nimzo-Indian fans. First let's try to understand why we play 5...♖e8. The answer to this is actually very simple. We pass the move to the opponent and keep the d-pawn on d7, which is very important. In general, we have two plans:

A) After 6.♘f3 we double White's pawns with 6...♙xc3 and take up a classical structure with pawns on d6 and e5. An important point in such positions is that the white pawn on c4 is a weakness. Next we will see how these structures should be handled accurately and investigate plans such as:

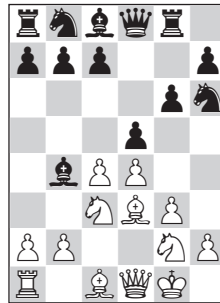
- 1) a pawn sacrifice for initiative (Yordanov-Sarana);
- 2) development of the queen's knight on d7 (Kolas-Rozentalis);
- 3&4) development of the queen's knight to c6 (Sertic-Martinovic and Olsar-Fargac).



B) In case of 6.♗e2 we play 6...d5 and go over to standard positions. With

a black pawn on d5, White wishes to have his knight on f3 as this will help his activity. We will examine several structures and positions here:

- 1) hanging pawns (Bänziger-Sunilduth Lyna);
- 2) the Carlsbad structure, but with the white bishop on c1 (Smirnov-Lysyj);
- 3) an equal endgame (Kovalchuk-Odegov);
- 4) a tactical fight (Aleksandrov-Dubov).



Conclusion on 6.♘f3

In almost all cases, White gets a game with doubled pawns, which is very difficult to play in practice. Black is required to play accurately, but his position is easy to play. White's only chance in these positions is to break through with his pawns, and Black has to take this into consideration with every move. You can experiment with different set-ups, but practically the strongest idea is the pawn sacrifice. It is unexpected and pleasant; most likely White won't know any theory here and often you can simply destroy the white position with dynamics.

Conclusion on 6.♗e2

These positions are very interesting and much more promising for White than the ones with the knight on f3. Black has to reckon with White's e3-e4 push and should always have a good reply to this

move. If White can occupy the centre for free, the position will be difficult for Black. Often Black's play is based on dynamics; there are a lot of tactics in the position, so you will have to calculate a lot of variations.

Final conclusion

If you play the Nimzo-Indian Defence and want to get new, interesting positions on the board, then this

variation will suit you. In any case, it will often be a surprise for your opponent. I'm sure this line will be very popular soon, because it is based on a very interesting concept. There are no problems for Black here and the variation might have a long life, so it could be a standard part of your repertoire. Of course, theory will change over time, but Black hasn't done anything wrong in the opening so his position cannot be bad.

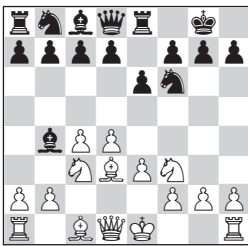
Variation A

6. ♘f3

Lachezar Yordanov
Alexey Sarana

Plovdiv U21 2021 (4)

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3. ♖c3 ♘b4 4.e3
0-0 5. ♗d3 ♗e8 6. ♘f3



6... ♗xc3+! With the move 6. ♘f3 White gives Black the opportunity to create an interesting structure. Now White will have doubled pawns and the c4-pawn is a weakness in such structures.

7.bxc3 d6 8.0-0

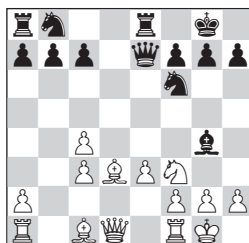
A) 8. ♖c2!? is a very flexible move, asking Black what he wants to do with the knight on b8. Black replies 8...e5! (fast and solid) 9. ♗d2 ♖e7 10.e4 (10. ♗e4? ♗xe4 11. ♗xe4 (Diermair-Wagner, Austria Bundesliga 2018/19) 11... ♖h4 and most likely White will lose a pawn or just get a bad position) 10...exd4 11.cxd4 ♗c6 12. ♖b2 ♗h5 13. ♘f3 d5 14.cxd5 ♗b4 15. ♗b1 ♖xe4+! (cool tactics!) 16. ♗xe4 ♗d3+ 17. ♗d2 ♗xb2 18. ♗xh7+ ♗xh7 19. ♗xb2 ♘f6♞. Black wins the pawn back and gets a position with slight pressure. Of

course, this looks more like a draw, but in practice it will provide a long fight if Black wants it;

B) 8. ♗c2!? ♗c6 9. ♗d2 e5 10.0-0 b6 11. ♗e1 h6 and the position is equal, but it's easier to play with black. We want to go ...♗a5 and ...♗a6 – our whole plan is to exert pressure on the pawn on c4.

8...e5! A very cool idea involving a pawn sacrifice. 9.dxe5 9.e4! is the best move, which has not been played yet OTB: 9...exd4 10. ♗xd4! (the engine doesn't like this move, but it's more interesting than 10.cxd4 ♗xe4 11. ♗e1 ♘f6 12. ♗xe8+ ♖xe8 13. ♗g5 ♗bd7 when White has some pressure, but his initiative is difficult to develop; if White plays slowly then Black will be better) 10...♗xe4 11. ♖c2 ♘f6 12. ♗g5 h6 13. ♗h4 ♗d7∞. I think this is more dangerous for Black than 10.cxd4, but of course Black will develop his pieces gradually; his main point is to solve the problem of the pin. 9...dxe5 10. ♗xe5 White should accept the pawn; Black cannot take back because of 11. ♗xh7+.

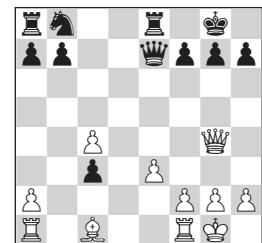
10... ♖e7 11. ♘f3 ♗g4



With an excellent position in which White is clearly fighting for equality. It's quite hard for him strategically due to his bad structure: 12. ♗e2

A) 12.h3 ♗h5 13.a4 ♗bd7 14. ♗a3 c5 15. ♗e2 ♗ad8 16. ♖c2 ♗g6 17. ♖b3 (Nakhbayeva-Mulenko, Paracin 2014) 17...b6♞;

B) 12. ♖c2! is the best move, e.g. 12...♗xf3 13.gxf3 ♗bd7 14. ♗h1 ♗e5 15. ♗e2 ♖e6 16. ♗g1 c5 17.e4 ♗g6 18. ♗e3 b6=. In practice, it is much easier to play with black here, as his knights get plenty of opportunity to jump around. 12...c5 13. ♗d4 13. ♗e1 (White's position is so bad that it is necessary to retreat the knight) 13...♗d8 14. ♖c2 ♗xe2 15. ♖xe2 ♗e4 16. ♖c2 ♗d7 17.f3 ♗d6 18.e4 ♗xc4 19. ♗d3 b5 20.a4 a6 21.axb5 axb5 22. ♗xa8 ♗xa8 with equality, but Black has a potential passed pawn. 13...cxd4 14. ♗xg4 ♗xg4 15. ♖xg4 dxc3



16. ♖d4? 16. ♖b1! (preventing ...♖b4 and attacking the pawn on b7) 16...♗c6 17. ♖b3 ♖e5 and Black is a little better; White needs time

The 1.e4 spectrum

by Glenn Flear



Englishman Glenn Flear lives in the south of France. For every Yearbook he reviews a selection of new chess opening books. A grandmaster and a prolific chess author himself, Flear's judgment is severe but sincere, and always constructive.

One of the first things we learn after beginning our chess adventure is that 1.e4 is a pretty good way to start the game. As time goes by, some are tempted by alternatives but for those who stick with the most popular opening move, there are all sorts of interpretations.

The selection this time all involve 1.e4, but are highly varied in content, so whereas Palliser & Williams are waving the flag for some extraordinary gambits that immediately sharpen the struggle, Rizzitano is focusing on a positionally sound basis to his repertoire. There is also a wide difference between the more specialized works, with Michael Roiz looking at the ultra-solid and highly rated Berlin, whereas Szuhaneck is delving into all sorts of outlandish surprises in the Najdorf. The 1.e4 spectrum is wide indeed but, even so, my guess is that at least one

of the books below will cater for your personal taste.

Ranko Szuhaneck
Beating the Najdorf rare lines
Chess Informant 2021

I have to admit that I didn't know anything about Ranko Szuhaneck until I delved into his book but, apart from being a high-ranking IM, it looks like he is better educated than the majority of folk. Despite a busy life outside of chess, he has still found the time to come up with a rather unusual and thought-provoking work. His serious examination of the lesser options against the Najdorf is something that nobody has ever attempted before in print. The title would seem to suggest that the work is from White's point of view, but in fact it's leaning in the direction of a Black repertoire, i.e. a sort of 'anti-offbeat sixth moves compendium'.

Chess Informant is best known for its regular 'theoretical manuals' that have come out since the year dot (i.e. 1966!) and are still going strong. These have become more varied in content of late, with lots of non-opening features covering endgames, problems, people and so on, just like any periodical that needs to adapt in order to please a wide readership. Even so, opening trends and discoveries are still at

