

The Way of the Jackal

by *Glenn Flear*



NEW IN CHESS

Have you noticed in recent years that there is a tendency to name off-beat openings after animals? The most respectable of these, the Hedgehog (in fact more of a concept than one particular well-defined opening) got its name because the row of pawns along the third rank are (apparently) akin to the spines on a hedgehog's back. I suppose that the 'Hippo' involves wallowing in muddy shallows, the Snake involves a slithering bishop (...Äf8-d6-c7-a5) and the Lion is pretty sleepy until ready to pounce. In the early eighties Nigel Povah and friends at the famous Streat-ham and Brixton Chess Club developed the 'Monkey's Bum' variation (a quick Äc4 and ©f3 against the Modern) but in this particular case the name was probably decided late in the evening at the pub downstairs and shouldn't be taken too seriously.

The Jackal is a new one on me, but some French players with good memories may remember an article in Yearbook 61 by Adrian Skelton, the same author who produced the booklet that I review this time.

Why it's called the Jackal I don't really know (as the author doesn't go into the zoology) but I presume however that whoever named it had in mind 'a cold-hearted killer' rather than a 'scavenger' or 'plant eater'!

In the real world, although this canine hopes to down a gazelle or small wildebeest, in most cases it often has to make do with much smaller game and even relies on insects and plants for much of its intake.

In a chess tournament, as on the savanna, a closer look at the 'Jackal Attack' reveals that although it will rarely worry the big guys it may prove treacherous to some little 'fellas'. That's the way of the jackal.

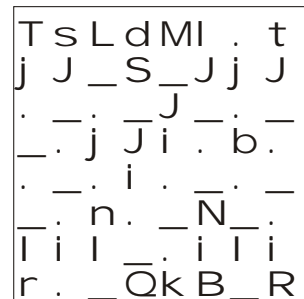
Adrian Skelton

The Jackal Attack (and other stories)

Private publication January 2004
60 pages, paperback

A privately-produced booklet of 60 pages that covers a selection of lines in the Two Knights Variation of the French Defence.

The Jackal Attack, as called by the Irish author, concerns 1.e4 e6 2.Äf3 d5 3.Äc3 Äf6 4.e5 Äfd7 5.d4 c5 6.Äg5.



It's true that the 'Two Knights' Variation of the French Defence is not given much time by most authors (Kalinin's French Defence in the 'Teach Yourself Chess Openings' series doesn't even mention it for instance!) but as the examples show in Skelton's book - it can be mighty vicious if given a chance. Adrian Skelton from Northern Ire-

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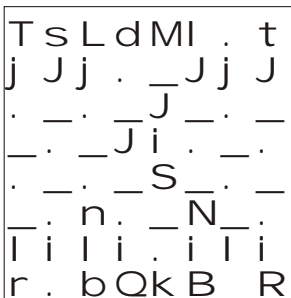
land is hardly a household name, but if amateurs have something worth writing about... then why shouldn't they go into print!

If the illustrative games are anything to go by, then it seems that Black can quickly get into trouble if unprepared and some of the lines rapidly become sharp and treacherous. It also becomes evident that much of the tactical feast is home cooked with ingredients successfully tested (or should that be tasted!?) in local league chess.

When we start to investigate, it soon becomes apparent that the author, in a very individual piece of work, has preferred to go his own way. Some lines that he presumably found to be 'fun' are given a full airing whereas sometimes an important alternative is ignored.

For instance he dismisses 4...Äe4 in two lines whereas this may well be perfectly playable.

1.e4 e6 2.Äc3 d5 3.Äf3 Äf6 4.e5 Äe4!?



Eccentric but not bad.

5.Äe2 Äc5 6.d4 Äe7 7.Äg3 c5 8.dc5

After 8.c3 then 8...cd4 9.cd4 ©a5 is annoying.

8...©c7 9.Äd3 Äc5 10.0-0 Äc6 11.Öe1 Äd3 12.cd3 0-0 13.Äf4 ©b6 14.Öb1 a5

Baker-Williams, British League 1997, with fair play for Black.

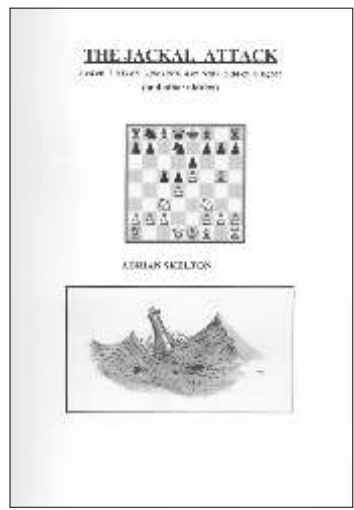
In fact the author doesn't apologize for an approach (it's as if he's announcing that 'it's my book and I'll do it my way!') where he con-

centrates on those lines that interest him and virtually ignores the less interesting stuff.

In such a short essay, the author acknowledges that he cannot be exhaustive and indeed he claims to have 'avoided heavy analysis' as he concerns himself with an 'illustrative approach' in each position. His aim has been to 'explore ideas, not to produce a bus-timetable'.

So the booklet contains some stimulating ideas and a fair proportion of totally original content, for which Mr.Skelton deserves credit. However as the booklet is so short and he's dealing with an area neglected by more famous theoreticians he could have done it with more rigour. A few extra pages and he could have made this into a proper 'repertoire against the French' style book, but as it stands I fear that readers will quickly tire of missing pieces from the Jigsaw.

The proofs have been badly done and (despite it being an update) there are typographical errors and inconsistencies everywhere. The author's arbitrary selection of lines means that this isn't by any means a meticulous piece of scientific analysis. The illustrative games are helpful up-to-a-point: OK,



Black can have problems, yes, but the games are scrappy and low level.

He does however add an original noteworthy touch by including drawings and prints (some even by younger relatives, possibly his own children). Not a bad idea really and more pleasing to the eye than just staring at a blank space, but nothing to do with chess or even jackals!

The main problem is that the whole variation doesn't convince me at all. The logic of putting the bishop so quickly on g5 (forcing Black to commit himself early) rather than at some point later on f4 (where it defends the e5-point) can be countered by 6...©b6, or by 6...©a5.

White has a lead in development but is soon confronted with problems on his dark squares, especially the poorly defended e5-point. What is the bishop doing on g5 while the centre dissolves? Searching for tricks. Once the right paths for the defender are more commonly known (they are not difficult to find in the work) the Jackal Attack starts to look a good candidate for retirement.

Let's briefly review a couple of defensive ideas from the diagram position on page 236:

- 6...©b6 7.dc5 Äc5

I'm not keen on the artificial-looking 7...©c5?! as White gets good play after 8.Äd3 (or 8.Äb5!?

Sadler) 8...Äc6 9.0-0 Äe5 10.Äe5 Äe5 11.Öe1 Äd6 12.Äe3

©b4 13.Äd5 ed5 14.Äd4 f6 15.a3 ©a4 16.b3 ©c6 17.f4, when Skelton judges the position as unclear, but I prefer White slightly.

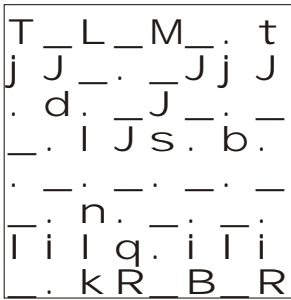
8.©d2 Äc6 9.0-0-0 Not 9.Äa4?! because of 9...Äf2

10.©f2 ©b4.

If 9.Äb5 Black can try 9...d4!? (or 9...Äd4 10.Äd4 Äd4 11.Äe3 Äe3

with comfortable equality) 10.Äc6 dc3 11.Äd7 Äd7 12.bc3 Äc6 with excellent compensation for the pawn.

9...Äde5! 10.Äe5 Äe5



Black wins the e-pawn and now various White attempts to thrash about for compensation don't seem convincing:

11. ©e1

11.Äa4 ©b4 12.Äc5 ©c5 13.Äe3 ©c7 14.f4 doesn't look too great after the calm 14...Äc6.

11.Äe4 0-0 12.Äf6 ©h8! 13.h4 Äf2 14.Öh3. Skelton in Yearbook 61 says: 'It's unclear if White has enough compensation for the sacrificed material.' However, as this line doesn't make the final cut in the 2004 edition I presume that he's decided that White hasn't!

11...f6! 12.Äa4 ©b4 13.Äc5 ©c5 14.Äe3 ©c7! 15.f4 Äc4 16.©c3 b5

And Skelton readily admits that Black 'holds the advantage due to the extra pawn'.

- 6...©a5

Seems to be comfortable and avoids complications.

7.Äb5 a6 8.Äd7 Äd7

Or 8...Äd7 9.0-0. Here the only move considered by Skelton is the risky 9...©b4!? (I prefer the more solid 9...b5 10.Äe2 Äb7) 10.dc5 ©b2 11.Äd5! which is rather dangerous for Black.

9.0-0 Äc6 10.Öe1

Skelton considers Black's chances to be reasonable after 10.Äe2 b5.

10...cd4 11.Äd4 Äd4 12.©d4 Äc5 13.©g4

= Skelton, but after...

13...©b4

(! Flear) ...the bishop pair may already offer Black the better of it.

14.©b4

14.Äf4 ©b2 15.©g7 Öf8 16.Äe2 Äb5ä.

14...Äb4 15.Äd2 Öc8ä

I liken this booklet to a children's book: pictures and fun variations, but skimpy content and an unrealistic plot that just doesn't bear up to analysis.

Jan Pinski

The Two Knights Defence
Everyman (December 2003)
160 pages, paperback

I recently reviewed Pinski's work on The Four Knights (Yearbook 69, page 226), and now comes The Two Knights, so surely Everyman will now have to commission him for the section missing from the former of these two: The Three Knights!?

When I was young, my favourite opening book was definitely Estrin's Two Knights Defence as I loved all the tactical possibilities. It was just so unlike any other opening. The sharper lines 4.Äg5 and 4.d4 were frequently used against me and I had pretty good results and interesting games. Over the years other books on this subject have come out but they've never given me the buzz that

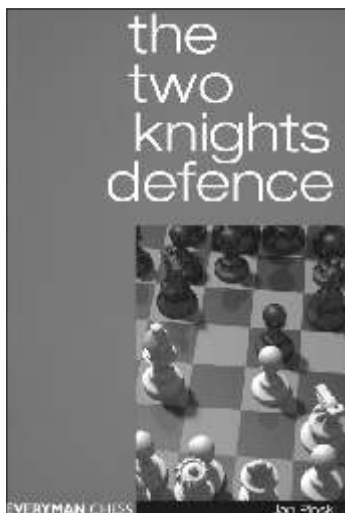
Yacob Estrin's did. I suppose it's like being nostalgic for the Christmas's of yesteryear when we were children.

Another problem with this opening is that people started switching to 4.d3, so instead of the most exciting opening struggle in my repertoire it became one of the most dull.

Pinski's work caters for this change by giving more space to 4.d3 (twenty pages whereas Estrin gave it one paragraph!) and this is reflected in other sections where Pinski has weighted his work towards the most fashionable lines. Indeed, overall Pinski drags this ancient opening into the modern world. For the first time a book on this subject makes it feel like an opening for now rather than the romantic era. Balanced game references, computer-aided analysis plus well-founded strategic explanations give the Two Knights a major overhaul rather than just a new coat of paint.

So the line 4.d4 ed4 5.0-0 is apparently met by 75% of GMs with 5...Äe4 so this gets the biggest chunk of the chapter. A shame as 5...Äc5 (the infamous Max Lange Attack) is given short change and is thus the most disappointing part of the book for me. I have had so many games in the main line (after 5...Äc5 then 6.e5 d5 7.ef6 dc4 8.Öe1 Äe6 9.Äg5 ©d5 etc.) that in one game I decided to switch to the risky 6...Äg4 (rather than 6...d5) to surprise a tricky opponent. For my pains, I lost a bad game and Pinski even used it in his book. So yes it's a particularly disappointing section for me!

The substantial chapter on the Traxler Gambit (which whether you love it or hate it, won't go away!) uses some of the work from recent New In Chess yearbooks. I suppose some Traxler specialists



would have preferred more games and will find some holes here or there but this is a practical book for practical players and I feel that the author has weighted this area about right.

I liked his section on Steinitz's 9.Äh3!? which is a line that hitherto I've found hard to understand. His explanations are quite good here and I found it to be helpful. I must admit that I've never understood why 9...g5 used to receive such a lousy press.

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Pinski neither and indeed he even recommends it!

The author naturally calls upon Georgy Timoshenko's in-depth report from Yearbook 66 on the Kiev theme tournament from January 2003, where Black scored well, and which did a lot to put the record straight.

Here's a synopsis of the relevant play from this position:

1.e4 e5 2.Äf3 Äc6 3.Äc4 Äf6 4.Äg5 d5 5.ed5 Aa5 6.Äb5 c6 7.dc6 bc6 8.Äe2 h6 9.Äh3 g5 This move creating a bind was seriously tested by some useful Ukrainians in the afore-mentioned tournament. In most of the lines below, White had problems to complete his development as he lacks space.

10.d3 Ög8

This seems to offer enough compensation, but alternatives are probably OK, e.g. 10...Äg7 11.Äg1 (or 11.Äd2 0-0 12.Äg1 Öb8 13.Äb3 Öe8 14.Äf3 Äd5

15.0-0 g4 Sergeev-Vysochin, Kiev 2003 and space plus development are enough for the pawn) 11...0-0 12.c3 Öb8 13.Äf3 Ad5 14.0-0 g4 15.Äe1 f5[□] Timoshenko-Vysochin, Kiev 2003. White is a long way from completing development but is fairly solid. Black has adequate compensation according to Pinski and I would have to agree with him.

The old 10...g4 is playable but not necessary as White will probably retreat his knight anyway. 11.Äg1 Äc5 12.Äc3 Öb8! (a number of books just quote Gligoric giving White an edge after the inferior 12...©d6 13.Äa4 (here the game Babc-Gaberc, cr 1982, continued 13...Äb6 14.Äb6 ab6 15.h3 ©d5 16.hg4 and Black had a bad position) 13.Äa4?! Äf2 14.©f2 ©d4 regaining the pawn, as in Keschitz-Zsinka, Budapest 1993. 11.Äc3

Or 11.Äg1 g4!? 12.c3 c5 13.Äf1 Äe6 14.Äa3 ©d7 15.Äc2 Äc6 16.Äe3 (Kosikov-Kruppa, Kiev 2003) and now 16...h5! (Flear) yields adequate compensation.

11...Öb8 12.Äg1

12.b3?? loses to 12...Äb4 13.Äd2 ©d4 14.Äa4 Äd2, Timoshenko-Kruppa, Kiev 2003.

12...g4

Or similarly 12...c5 13.Äf3 Äc6 14.0-0 Äe6 15.b3 g4 16.Äd2 Äd4 17.Äde4 Ad7 18.Äg3 f5 19.f4 Ad6[□] Kruppa-Sergeev, Kiev 2003. 13.Äf1 c5 14.Äge2 Äc6 15.Äg3 Äe6 16.Äge4 Ad7 Kosikov-Sergeev, Kiev 2003, and Black has ideas such as ...Äd4 and ...f5 to keep up the bind.

I agree with Pinski that Black seems to be in good shape, but the lines haven't been tested much since and could perhaps do with some 2600+ input.

He has a tendency throughout the book to come up with some slightly eccentric statements at times, see page 109 for instance, where on the same page we have

Steinitz turning in his grave and Aaron Nimzowitsch being described as 'second only to Wilhelm Steinitz in the history of chess theoreticians'. I'm not sure everyone would agree with that one but I do like... 'One of the hardest things in chess, and in life, is to admit one's own stupidity and correct one's mistakes.'

I knew I'd been going wrong somewhere....

The style and tone is lively almost 'chirpy' and perhaps polished by the Everyman back-room boys it comes across as both informative and good-humoured.

He has his own views backed up by personal experience and the summaries are clear and to the point.

If I compare this to most books on the Two Knights that have come out in the intervening years since Estrin's 1971 edition I must admit that this is pretty good.

So I thoroughly recommend it to the main target area (amateurs and players up to 2300) but I'm sure that even GMs would find some sections useful.

My main criticism is that if I was writing the book I would have put more in about the Max Lange Attack, but that's because I'm one of the 25% and proud of it!

Alex Raetsky & Maxim Chetverik
The Catalan
Everyman (2004)
192 pages, paperback

Another Everyman publication, more East Europeans and yet again a high level of English.

I don't know if anyone did any translating or at least touching up but I found it to be a pleasant smooth read.

The main difference between this one and Pinski's is that this is a more 'serious' book. The authors keep to commenting on what's happening on the chess board rather than who is turning in their grave!

Raetsky and Chetverik are obviously experienced Catalaners whose own games pop-up from time-to-time and have already worked together on a 2001 German book on the same opening. If you already own a copy of that one (from only three years ago) you may decide that it's not worth investing in another from the same pair. However they do claim that this is a 'complementary' work as there are different recommendations (reasons of 'style' apparently) and this one is naturally more 'up-to-date'.

I haven't seen any of their previous efforts but the most noticeable aspect of their approach is an emphasis on the very detailed summaries and somewhat elaborate introductions. They are particularly good at explaining the significance of a certain move-order or small differences in the set-up.

Instead of a general overview we get line-by-line scrutiny at both ends of the chapter. Again a symptom of writing for a more educated readership. A good example is the topical 4...d4 5.Åg2 Åc6 (chapter 6) which is handled expertly, but will be mainly appreciated by those already with Catalan experience.

They concentrate mainly on meeting 4...d4 with 5.Åg2, as 5.©a4 is less inclined to give White anything (yeah, that's right, it's pretty dull) so that only gets one chapter. However it's good to see 5.©a4 getting at least a look in (in Dunnington's *Winning with the Catalan* it didn't) as it's important to know how to handle it from Black's point of view.

The book could probably have done with a little more basic strategy if it wanted to interest lower echelons but the Catalan is by nature a sophisticated opening so it's perhaps no surprise that the authors are aiming high.



There's one aspect of all works on the Catalan that I find frustrating, and this is no exception. The authors concentrate their efforts from the standard tabiya that occurs after 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Åf3 Åf6 4.g3, which seems to be standard practise.

However I believe that if one is going to play the Catalan then as a rule one will also aim to fianchetto the king's bishop against the Nimzo/Queen's Indian move-order i.e. 1.d4 Åf6 2.c4 e6 to be met either by 3.g3.

Although I noted that the authors mention possible transpositions (to the Bogo-Indian with ...Åb4 or the English opening with 3...c5 and so on) before explaining that they are not covered in the book, I rather hoped for better. There are a number of lines that don't quite fit into those openings nor into the Catalan and are unfortunately neglected as a result. Catalan practitioners are no doubt aware that a high number of their opponents try and avoid the standard lines with alternative move orders.

A short chapter on these neo-Catalan lines would be helpful to players hoping to construct a repertoire, especially as these systems generally occur via a Catalan move-order.

Here are some important ones that immediately come to mind:

Chetverik as White has had problems with the following line 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.g3 c6 4.Åg2 dc4! 5.a4 e5! (or 5...Åf6 6.Åa3 e5!).

The Bogo-Catalan with 1.d4 Åf6 2.c4 e6 3.g3 Åb4 4.Åd2 Åe7 5.Åg2 d5 is analogous to a Catalan except that White has the extra move Åc1-d2. Another Bogo-Catalan line starts as above but varies with 4...©e7 (instead of 4...Åe7). This has independent significance from the Bogo-Indian as after 5.Åg2 Åc6 6.e3 White will develop his king's knight to e2 rather than f3.

After 1.d4 Åf6 2.c4 e6 3.g3 c5, the move 4.d5 doesn't simply transpose to a Modern Benoni as there is also 4...ed5 5.cd5 b5!?

If instead 4.Åf3 (English Opening!?) then 4...cd4 5.Åd4 d5 6.Åg2 e5 transposes to a line covered in Moiseyev and Ravinsky's 1984 Batsforyev work *Catalan Opening via the move order 1.d4 Åf6 2.c4 e6 3.g3 d5 4.Åg2 c5* etc.

I don't want to be 'picky' as the book is already 192-pages long, well-written and very instructive. They are knowledgeable chaps and have obviously worked hard at a high quality book, but for completeness sake I wish that Catalan books would give at least a basic rendering of these lines.

I think that the majority of New In Chess readers would be positive about this book despite it being more high-browed than most Everyman publications. I will certainly use it myself to improve my dismal results against g2-g3 and overall I give the book a clear thumbs up.

However remember that it's not such a great buy for less-experienced players wanting to start out in the Catalan or for those looking for a more complete repertoire with g2-g3.