

The King amongst Indians

by Glenn Flear



NEW IN CHESS

In my youth I always thought of the ultimate 'macho' repertoire as consisting of two openings: The Sicilian Najdorf against 1.e4 and the King's Indian against everything else.

In my previous column the Najdorf came under scrutiny so it's somehow appropriate that it's now the turn of the King's Indian to receive special attention.

I suppose this noble opening truly came into maturity during the heady days of Fischer (1960's) with its popularity receiving a further boost with a youthful Kasparov in the eighties. But those days are well behind us (he sighs and stares dreamily into the distance!). Top players of the computer generation vary their openings more, but the Slav and the Nimzo/Queen's Indian complex have both clearly supplanted the KID which can no longer be considered as the main queen's pawn defence.

New books about the King's Indian continue to adorn bookstalls. I'm guessing but I imagine that more books are sold about the King's Indian than the Queen's, Bogo and Nimzo-Indian all lumped together. It has a romance of its own that inspires many a club player.

There follow three new KID books by English masters who I've known for... well... longer than I'd care to say! In each case the author's individual personality is reflected in their writing style.

There is a tendency in some quarters to play move orders that avoid the Sämisch, Averbakh and the Four Pawns e.g. only playing ...g6 once White has voluntarily played Af3 or g2-g3, or meeting 1.d4 Af6 2.c4 with the flexible 2...d6, so if White's replies with the natural 3.Âf3, then Black feels safe to play 3...g6.

The Sämisch has at times been the critical test for King's Indian defenders, and may partially explain the reticence of some to go into the pure King's Indian, but again time has moved on and interest has waned. Is this because the pure King's Indian is played less often? Or has 6...c5 taken the sting out of the Sämisch?

Chris Ward's *The Controversial Sämisch King's Indian* may answer these questions and even bring this aggressive system back into the limelight, whereas the books by Andrew Martin and Joe Gallagher could also further kindle the flame of this warm-hearted opening.

Chris Ward
The Controversial Sämisch King's Indian
Batsford 2004
224 pages, paperback medium

Grandmaster Chris Ward is a top-level chess-writer when concentrating on a topic close to his heart, so when I saw that he had put onto paper his years of experience at 'warding-off the KID' with f2-f3 I knew the book had to be

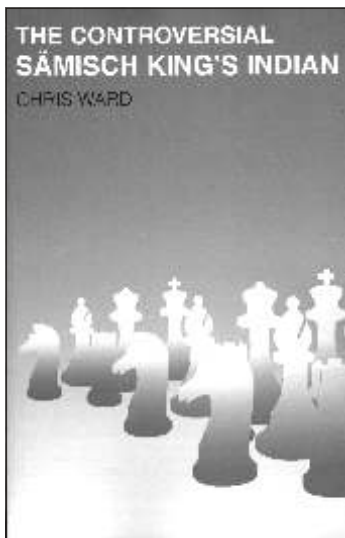
For more book information
we refer to our website:
www.newinchess.com

very good. I was not disappointed, it's excellent.

I suppose that the thing I like most about Chris Ward's books is the witty text full of cheerful comments, anecdotes and funny jokes. For instance, I had to laugh aloud when reading the annotations to one of his own games where the computer came up with a better move than the one that he'd played. Who else would write 'Oh, alright I could have done; Fritz shut up for a moment!'

You get the impression that he's chatting to the reader rather than writing. Yet the insight into serious questions is there along with a human touch.

After that the Chess content is just a bonus. Many of the game references and ideas are discussed from the angle of his own personal thinking. So his own games and



opening ideas are highlighted and conclusions drawn that often don't appear elsewhere in print. That's the advantage of an author who really understands his subject.

The book doesn't fit into the typical mould. It isn't exactly a repertoire book, but there are some aspects of that as he's emphasizing White's better options against each Black choice of variation.

Nor is it a complete reference work unlike Joe Gallagher's 1995 *The Sämisch King's Indian* (also by Batsford) which is the benchmark on the line against which everything else will be compared for a long time to come.

It could easily pass as 'Chris Ward lectures on the Sämisch'. That may not sound very exciting, but it would highlight the great educational value of his work.

He discusses basic positional questions that other King's Indian authors don't and yet he's still covering cutting-edge variations on the next page. Although he's slightly White-biased, don't let this put you off as the book is worthwhile for fans of both colours at all levels, as the 'pros and cons' of just about everything get a thorough coverage. Even those who don't allow the Sämisch(!) would benefit as many fundamental King's Indian principles are looked at from a fresh angle.

The final chapter 'Odds and Ends' can be found at the end and is slightly odd. A meandering chat through some Sämisch-thinking in non-Sämisch situations, showing that in fact it's the reasoning behind the moves that's important.

Some folk for whom English is not one of their better languages may find the numerous expressions and use of colloquial slang to be slightly confusing, but overall will certainly improve their language abilities.

Chess-wise it certainly holds up well when compared to other sources.

From a commercial point of view, the main downside of this subject is that the Sämisch is only one variation against one opening, so the market for the work could be a little limited.

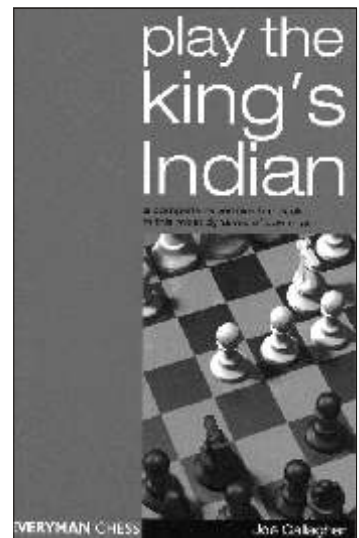
The author obviously enjoyed writing this book and you will no doubt have great fun in reading it. I loved it!

Joe Gallagher
Play the King's Indian
Everyman 2004
208 pages, paperback medium

Joe Gallagher is one of the few people who have stuck to this opening through thick and thin, and indeed has done so now for 30 years. So here again we have another specialist writing on the King's Indian and using many of his own ideas and interpretations.

This is Swiss-based Gallagher's fourth book on his beloved KID, including *Starting Out in the King's Indian* from 2002 which was reviewed by me then.

This offering is intentionally aimed at being a higher level follow-up. The logic being that those who started out a couple of years back are now ready and eager for extra information! So rather than



the broad outline of that work, the reader is here faced with a 200-page repertoire based on Gallagher's own.

The theory is delved into deeply-enough to satisfy just about anyone willing to follow in their mentor's footsteps, but the author does apologize that there are some variations that he hasn't dealt with.

For instance in the Sämisch he only deals with 6...c5, so anyone looking for inspired reasoning about 6...Ac6 or 6...e5 will have to look elsewhere. However as usual what he does write about is handled very professionally. He also gives second string options at times: A contingency in case his main choice has an uncertain future.

Gallagher's own contributions to this opening are known by many, the Gallagher variation for instance which he gives a thorough historical review. Not everyone will know however that Joe is an even better writer than he is a fine theoretician and practical player. His playing style is dynamic and ambitious and he essentially writes in the same way. He gives key theoretical variations, own analyses and ideas within the framework of 74 well-annotated games, but there's more... unlike many others he has added well-thought-out introductions and poignant summaries where required. Along with indices of variations and complete games the reader will have no problem navigating the chapters with confidence. It's really a pleasure to know why such-and-such a line is favoured over another, the practical implications of this rather than that option and how they compare and so on.

Another point is that although the author includes extensive textual comments, the theory (albeit selective) is rather good too, so it's not just for the ubiquitous 'club player'. Even a GM would find some great stuff in here too. I find his comments to be lucid, informative and getting the balance right between common sense and inspiration. I believe that they have the exceptional quality of enabling a lesser player to really understand the thinking of a useful grand master.

So all-in-all, a real pleasure to read, well-presented and contain-

ing great ideas backed-up by robust analysis.

This book should be on the bookshelf of all King's Indian players.

Have Everyman found a new niche with a 'play the...' series? If so, this one will be a hard act to follow.

Andrew Martin
King's Indian Battle Plans
Thinkers' Press 2004
380 pages, paperback medium

Andrew is very self-disciplined when it comes to health and exercise and is perhaps the fittest person of his age that I know. In chess his speciality has always been tricky practical play with a penchant for slightly off-beat opening ideas. He has (let's be honest Andy!) nevertheless throughout his career lacked the time and inclination to spend hours thoroughly researching main lines in order to build a long-term repertoire.

In the brief introduction to this monster book his advice is to switch about changing move orders and sub-variations in order to throw off the opponent's preparation. He claims that his book is '... an unashamed collection of variety

and ideas ... an arsenal'. The reader will be encouraged to be a 'versatile, modern competitor with plenty of thoughts running through his brain and tricks up his sleeve...'. Andrew seems to be preaching the approach which he has followed for more than a quarter of a century: He is an ideas man, not a diligent theoretician.

Indeed throughout this 380-odd page book full of annotated games the word 'IDEA' is included in block capitals to highlight a salient theme at various moments. The games are annotated with a combination of symbols and textual comments. At times extra theory is, by means of game references, inserted in the notes. These are a bit patchy, with whole game scores sometimes added with no explanation except for 'I think Black is OK e.g.' followed by two complete un-annotated game continuations.

The book will suit those players who want to play through lots of complete games with lightish notes and who get their inspiration that way. The book contains some rather good insight at times in the later middlegame and endgame phases, a bonus for an 'opening' book.

So far so good, but here comes the crunch, though... I'm sure most readers prefer books to have a clear way of scanning through the material, especially in such a big book concerned with a plethora of variations. Sadly this fact seems to have escaped Andrew and the editorial team at Thinkers' Press. Unbelievably there are no summaries, nor will you be able to find an index of complete games, nor an index of variations.

Inside each chapter the games are often in an illogical, bordering on chaotic, order and even the introductions are skimpy or at times non-existent.

So the only real way of learning



what's happening is to play through the games in a section. Perhaps, but even then as there is no cross-referencing at all, nor any effort made at continuity, I found the whole thing confusing.

Andrew's annotations are however worth delving into. At times he points out an important theoretical 'idea', in others he's more concerned about general KID-play. His comments are typical of him: To the point, short, no nonsense explanations, with some sharp-edged humour and a few insights into the character of the people he's writing about.

It's as if Andy has plunged into the mammoth task of annotating scores of games without thinking through the overall presentation of the work and the accessibility of the reader to the words of wisdom contained within.

The proof-reader is a dying breed with computers able to check most things. I know when I write a book it's basically yours truly who does all the proofs. Here, including the author, no less than 10 were used! I'm not so keen on the game headings as they seem to have been regurgitated straight from Chess-Base. I mean some players have their ratings included, others (even 2700+s) do not, some tournaments are given full details others the basic place name. It just depended who typed in the game in the first place. One of the 'proofers' (ugh! is that an American word!?) should have picked out this inconsistency.

The cover is notable for a man in army uniform using a chessboard as a schematic battle-field. An American book with an English author, bringing to mind recent co-operation in military matters between the USA and Britain!. Some cynics would argue that in both cases the presentation of the overall picture has left something to be desired!

There are indeed nuggets of information for King's Indian players of either colour and for most strengths. The individual games are enjoyable to play through (it will take time!) but the presentation is clumsy (let's face it - it's a mess) and the theory is a mixed bag from my point of view. It's possible to obtain the so-called 'raw data' (the author's ChessBase annotations) plus extras in CD-Rom format, where the material may actually be easier to navigate.

This original book shows promise but could have been improved no end with some clear-cut intros and conclusions. An index of variations should have been an absolute necessity. As it stands, navigating this book is a nightmare.

Even if you are willing to put up with the book's shortcomings, I wouldn't recommend this to be one's only source of information on the KID, consider it more as a companion volume of complete games for a more out-and-out theory book.

Time for us to have a closer look at what the authors have to say about some 'controversial' lines of the Sämisch.

Sämisch Controversy (E81)

1.d4 Äf6 2.c4 g6 3.Äc3 Äg7
4.e4 d6 5.f3 0-0 6.Äe3 c5

'Plenty of ideas have been found for White,' writes Andrew Martin. Hmmm! Let's look at these one by one.

7.Äge2

'It's easy to duck the complications with 7.Äge2' Martin. This off-hand comment cannot be taken seriously as the main line with 7...Äc6 is sharp and extremely complex. He doesn't even give any game references to support this view. Ward delves into 7...Äc6 but doesn't mention Gallagher's new pet-line...

After 7.dc5 dc5 8.Äc5 Äc6

```

T _ L d . t M _
j J _ . j J | J
. _ S _ . s J _
_ . b . _ . _ .
. _ l _ l _ . _
_ . n . _ l _
l i . _ . l i
r . _ Ö k B n R

```

no one seems very keen on the old main line 9.©d8 Öd8 10.Äd5. Instead a couple of alternatives are worth highlighting:

A) There is a difference of opinion about Murey's 9.©a4!? Äd7 10.Äf2

```

T _ L d . t M _
j J _ S j J | J
. _ S _ . _ J _
_ . _ . _ . _ .
Ö _ l _ l _ . _
_ . n . _ l _
l i . _ . b l i
r . _ . k B n R

```

10...Äc3! (on the basis of 10...Äde5? 11.Öd1 ©a5 12.©a5 Äa5 13.Äd5 where White was much better in Murey-Lentze, St. Vincent 2003, Martin concludes that 'it seems that it is difficult for Black to equalize after 9.©a4'. He considers the alternative 10...Äb6 but not the text, Black's best continuation...) 11.bc3 ©a5 12.©a5 Äa5 13.0-0-0 Äe5! 'looks at least equal for Black' (Gallagher) 'is an unbalanced ending' (Ward). Inferior was 13...b6?! 14.Äe2 Äc4 15.Äf4 which gave White a strong initiative in Murey-Ribshtein, Israeli cup final 1998. There have as yet been no games but something such as 14.f4 Äec4 15.Äf3 b6 16.Öd4 looks reasonable when Chris Ward's view is the one I'd probably agree with.

B) Martin mentions 9.Äge2 quoting a game Zakharchenko-Brujic where White won easily.

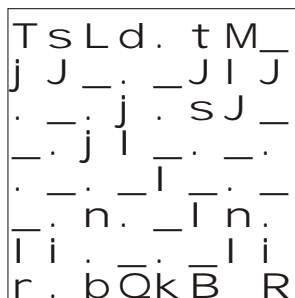
'Observe how Zakharchenko patiently and methodically neutralizes Black's dark-squared ambitions.' Yet again White's idea works against a 2200-player but this is hardly a convincing test. 9...c5 10.Äe3 Öd8 11.©c1 Äh5! (this is hardly new so shouldn't have escaped Martin's attention; 11...Äd7?! 12.®f2 Äc5 13.Äf4 e6 14.Äe2 Äe5 15.Öd1 left Black short of compensation in the aforementioned Zakharchenko-Brujic, Backa Palanka 2002) 12.®f2 (or 12.Äg3 Äg3 13.hg3 Äe6 14.®f2 Öac8 15.Äd5 Äd5 16.ed5 Äe5 17.Öh4 b5 with more than enough for the pawn in Polugaevsky-Dzindzichashvili, Moscow 1974) 12...f5!? 13.ef5 Äb4 14.Äg3 Graf-Zulfugarli, Dubai 2003, and now Gallagher suggests the natural 14...Äg3 15.hg3 Af5 'with good play for the pawn'.

7...©a5!
 Joe's latest choice and one that he thinks very highly of. I suppose he had to find an alternative to 7...Äc6 8.d5 Äe5 9.Äg3 e6 10.Äe2 ed5 11.cd5 a6 (according to Ward 11...h5! 12.0-0 Äh7 is critical, Kasimdzhanov-Volokitin, Germany Bundesliga 2003) 12.©d2 Ward-Gallagher, British Championships 1999, which ended in White's favour.

8.©d2
 8.d5 b5! 'with a good version of the Benko Gambit', Gallagher. 8...Äc6 9.d5 Äe5
 And after either 10.Äc1 or 10.Äg3, Black plays 10...a6 preparing ...b5, as in Lehtivaara-Gallagher, Neuchätel 2004.

6.Äge2 c5 (A65)
 1.d4 Äf6 2.c4 g6 3.Äc3 Äg7 4.e4 d6 5.f3 0-0 6.Äge2 c5
 An important alternative is 6...a6 which doesn't fit into Gallagher's repertoire (so he doesn't cover it). Ward gives it a fair hearing, including a main game from August 2004. Martin recommends this move and analyses it in Games 3 and 15 (! Yes that's right and from

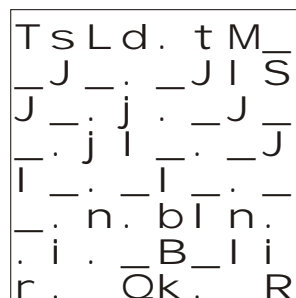
the same move-order): Critical is 7.Äe3 c6 8.c5 and now 8...b5! as in Ward-Hebden, British Championships 2001.
 7.d5 e6 8.Äg3 ed5 9.cd5



Both Ward and Gallagher use their own experiences to illustrate their work: one of Ward's main games is Ward-Buckley plus he himself features in a number of other game references. In Gallagher's book the main line follows a game Dreev-Gallagher, Gibraltar 2004, where Black has been struggling. 9...h5
 9...Äbd7 10.Äe2 h5 11.Äg5 a6 12.a4 ©e8 was Ward-Buckley, British Championships 1999, which continued 13.©d2 Äh7 14.Äh6 and White was better. Less well-known yet seemingly very playable is the 'strategically double-edged' 9...Äh5!? 10.Äh5 gh5 11.Äd3 f5 (Gallagher points out 11...Äd7 calling it 'The latest twist') 12.0-0 Ad7 13.Äc2 Äe5 14.Äe2 and now both Ward and Gallagher recommend 14...Äg6?!. 10.Äe2

Ward has a preference for an early Äg5, for instance here: 10.Äg5 ©b6 11.©d2 (Ward and Gallagher agree that 11.©b3 should be met by 11...©c7!) 11...Äh7 12.Äh4 Äd7. Gallagher stops here, but Ward prefers White quoting the following: 13.f4 Ädf6 14.h3 Öe8 15.Äe2 c4 16.Äf3 Äd7 17.Äge2 ©a5 18.0-0 b5 19.a3 b4 20.ab4 ©b4 21.Öa6 Äb5 22.Öa2 a5 23.Äd4 Khenkin-Cebalo, Bratto 2001. Andrew Martin's 'King's Indian Battle Plans' is typically

confused e.g. In his Sämisch chapter, Games 4, 5 and 14 deal with 6.Äge2 c5 (Game 5 by transposition of course!). The order of the games is so arbitrary that even the author himself didn't realize that Games 4 and 14 were following the same line! Games 4 and 5 were in fact examples of Joe Gallagher taking the white pieces against his beloved King's Indian. It's worth noting that he placed his bishop on g5 to strong effect in both games. 10...Ah7 11.Äe3 a6 12.a4



This position was seen in three Dreev games: against Gallagher, Topalov and Karpov, plus the more recent key game Malakhatko-Damljanovic, Montenegro 2004. Black's results haven't been good to date. Note that although Ward's material on Äg5 (which is how he plays it) is great, he doesn't cover those cutting-edge lines with 10.Äe2 ('killing' according to Mikhalevski) where White may omit Äg5 altogether. As the main lines of 6.Äge2 c5 are somewhat dangerous for Black (Gallagher believes Black is OK but he would have to admit that Black needs to know his stuff), he sensibly also proposes the off-beat alternative 9...Äh5.

Andrew Martin's work may suggest some useful ideas and to be fair covers a wider area, but lacks the rigour and depth evident in the other two works. Both Ward and Gallagher loicly explain their preferences and when a problem arises they are willing to take the time and effort to have a closer look.