

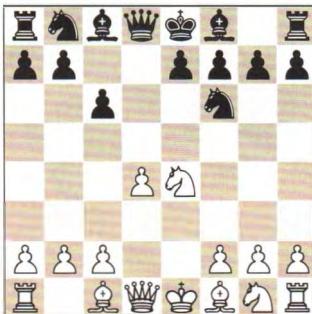
Harding

from the second line above, it doesn't prove possible to play the Botvinnik setup against absolutely everything and there are a few lines which seem to me somewhat out of the comfort zone of the normal solid English player. However, once you have a reference work like this, it's up to you to pick out what you need and you always have a big body of knowledge to fall back on. Note that this book is also available as a Chessable course, so that might also appeal as a way of working through and drilling the variations in the book! For me this is again somewhere between 3 and 4 stars, but in the spirit of 2020, we'll stick with 3!

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The Caro-Kann Revisited – A Complete Repertoire for Black, by Francesco Rambaldi (Thinkers Publishing), caught my eye when I got asked some questions about the Caro-Kann recently. The Italian Grandmaster Rambaldi, now living in the US, presents a thoroughly modern repertoire, meeting the Advance (1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.e5) with the Khenkin-Arkell 3...c5, which is a nice change from the somewhat stale 3...f5 lines which have appeared in a lot of repertoire books, and the Classical 3.c3 with my countryman David Howell's beloved 3...dxe4 4.xe4 f6.

**1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.c3 dxe4
4.xe4 f6**

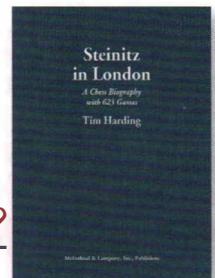


which again is more exciting for Black than 4...f5 and less fraught than 4...d7! My current test for

The Caro-Kann Revisited: A Complete Repertoire for Black
Francesco Rambaldi
Thinkers Publishing,
2020
★★★★★



Steinitz In London – A Chess Biography with 623 Games
Tim Harding
McFarland, 2020
★★★★★



such books is how thoroughly the author deals with the 'boring' sidelines, such as the Exchange Variation (3.exd5 cxd5), and there once again Rambaldi finds a little-known move order (4.Qd3 Qf6 5.c3 Qg4) to inject some spice into this line.

It's a complicated grandmaster-level repertoire and thus not for a club player starting out with the Caro-Kann, but for existing Caro-Kann players looking for some deep analysis to supplement their own repertoire with, it's an excellent choice. I've already recommended it to someone, so I'll do the same to you! 4 stars!

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Finally, from ultra-modern opening variations and subtle move orders we go all the way back to the mid-to-late 1800s and *Steinitz In London – A Chess Biography with 623 Games* by Tim Harding (McFarland). This is another beautifully produced hardback edition from McFarland and is a pleasure to read, as always. The story starts in earnest with Steinitz' arrival in London for the London Congress of 1862 and Harding traces casual games played by Steinitz against strong British players like Deacon, Burden and Bird. The tournament itself was the normal 19th century craziness, with games played at the players' discretion over a period of three weeks. Inevitably the tournament ended with players not having met each other and having played different numbers of games! However, England must have appealed to Steinitz, as he remained there for 20 years, building up his

reputation as the World's strongest player after defeating Anderssen 8-6 in 1866.

What hadn't occurred to me before reading the book was how little top-level chess the top players of that era played. Steinitz survived for many years on a diet of odds games, offhand games, and simultaneous displays, both normal and blindfold, with only the occasional tournament or higher-level match. I was to be honest somewhat disappointed in the quality of Steinitz' games during this period. I also felt that there was little discernible development in his chess: 20 years later he was still playing the same dubious King's Gambits, still missing some obvious tactics. There was the interesting tournament Vienna 1873 where he played 1.c4 in many games (and even 1.a3!), but looking at his games after that, he was soon back to the old ways. By contrast, his play at Hastings 1895, despite, at the age of 59, being past his peak, was much more varied and interesting. I think you really see the value there of his tumultuous World Championship matches against Zukertort, Chigorin and Lasker. Testing himself against such strong rivals in the most important event inevitably developed Steinitz' own game and unlocked his true potential.

However, this book is not all about the chess! We follow Steinitz as he marries, becomes a father, becomes a journalist and an author, quarrels bitterly with the English chess establishment, all beautifully documented and explained. Definitely a nice book for the dark evening hours with a glass of wine next to you! 4 stars! ■