

SCOTCH GAME (EVERYMAN CHESS) BY YELENA DEMBO, RICHARD PALLISER



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Yelena Dembo & Richard Palliser

the Scotch game



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Review

"Dembo and Palliser each enjoy a reputation for being particularly conscientious authors. This latest tandem effort will only enhance this. Everything Scotch players from club level to Grandmaster need is accurately presented up to the end of 2010. Highly recommended" John Donaldson jeremysilman.com "I recommend it wholeheartedly for serious players who get the Scotch in their games." Glenn Flear *New in Chess Yearbook*

From the Back Cover

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Yelena Dembo takes a modern-day look at the Scotch Game, providing thorough coverage of the critical main lines and studying the key tactical and positional ideas for White and Black.

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Most helpful customer reviews

28 of 28 people found the following review helpful.

Bringing the Scotch Game up to date

By Roger Perry

The first thing you notice about this new volume on the Scotch Game is its size. At 382 pages it is more than double the size of Gary Lane's 1993 *Winning With the Scotch (Openings)* which shows how far theory has expanded in 18 years.

Yelena Dembo tends to produce the opening books we would want to compile for ourselves: sound main line repertoires, succinctly summarizing current theory, in tree format. Richard Palliser's style tends to be more exploratory, looking deeper into the position, and sometimes choosing interesting lines rather than main lines. Put the two authors together and we have a book that has become a "complete" Scotch Game.

For Scotch practioners, this book represents a good update on the current state of theory. Those wishing to play the Scotch from scratch may find the book a bit overwhelming and should try a simpler introduction first (e.g. *Starting Out: The Scotch Game (Starting Out - Everyman Chess)*)

Those familiar with the Scotch will want to know the authors' assessment of the mainlines. A brief summary follows, and then I will look in more detail at one variation.

Mieses Var:

8...Ba6 without 9 b3: "only 9 Nd2 and 9 g3 deserve attention"

8...Ba6 with 9 b3: " 9...Qh4 shouldn't work; 9...g5 remains topical; 9...g6 should be considered the mainline."

All the various "Scotch" endgame configurations are discussed.

8...Nb6 without 9 Nc3: 9 Nd2 has declined in practice for good reason; 9 b3 is not a panacea either."

8...Nb6 with 9 Nc3: after 9...Qe6 10 Qe4 g6 11 f4 white can aspire to an endgame advantage; expect an upsurge in popularity of 9...a5 and 9...g6.

Early deviations: basically, stick to the mainline.

Classical

5 Nxc6 Qf6 6 Qd2: 6...dxc6 7 Nc3 Bd4! "just seems to give Black easy equality".

5 Nxc6 Qf6 6 Qf3: "Black likely does best in 6...Bxc6 fighting not to allow White a small but stable edge".

5 Be3 without 5...Qf6 6 c3 Nge7 7 Bc4: white has a number of viable options, 6 Nb5!?, 7 Qd2 and 7 g3.

Black is probably best to stick to the main line.

5 Be3 with 5...Qf6 6 c3 Nge7 7 Bc4: "remains a critical test"..

Early deviations: 6 Qe2 and 6 Nc3 d6 7 Qe2 give "decent prospects of an edge to white".

Miles' check on b4: after 5 c3 Bc5 6 Nxc6 "gives white a clear cut plan for the middlegame and he should emerge with a (slight) advantage".

Other: againts Steinitz's 4...Qh4 and a fianchetto approach "White can obtain dangerous attacking chances with quite straightforward play".

I will new drill into just one line, and compare against Gary Lane's two Scotch volumes: the 1993 *Winning With the Scotch (Openings)* and the 2005 *The Scotch Game Explained*. Although the authors list a comprehensive bibliography, including Barsky's 2009 *THE SCOTCH GAME FOR WHITE*, the two Lane volumes are ommitted.

Two weeks ago at the Auckland Chess Centre I had 1. e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4 Bc5 5 Nxc6 Qf6 6 Qd2 dxc6 7 Nc3 Be6 8 Na4 Rd8 9 Bd3 Bd6. Lane's 1993 volume doesn't mention 7 Nc3 at all, simply because Garry Kasparov didn't unleash 7 Nc3 Be6 8 Na4!? until the 11th game of his match with Nigel Short in 1993! By the time of Lane's 2005 volume there is now a full chapter devoted to the "Kasparov Variation", but at move 9 only 9...Bd4 is considered. Dembo and Palliser have 9...Bd4 as the mainline, but also give 9...Bd6 10 Qa5! which after 10...b6 11 Qc3 Qxc3+ 12 Nxc3 Ne7 13 f4 f6 14 Bd2 White "enjoys a steady edge". The authors also suggest 10 f4!? as leading to an edge. Complete? Not quite. I played 10 Qe3 (which is the recommendation against 8...Bd6) and after 10 ...Ne7 11 0-0 0-0? 12 f4 Qa6? 13 e5, I won a piece. (The fact the game was drawn after a tragic tactical oversight is another story).

The 4 stars reflects the value of this book as a reference on the theory of the Scotch Game circa 2011. I think we should retain 5 stars for opening books that are truly revelations, such as Peter Well's *The Scotch Game* (Batsford Chess Opening Guides)

12 of 12 people found the following review helpful.

Thorough, modern treatment of the Scotch

By Jeffrey S. Dixon

In response to TheLyingThief's comment below (if it does not get removed as off topic for being addressed to chess books in general without a single word about this one), I had an excellent FM coach for four years, and I still bought and read books. By the way, said FM coach once commented to me that he wanted to _____ with this book (I'll leave out the blank in case there are children reading, but you get the idea - he really liked the book).

No database so far has done the job of taxonomically organizing and explaining the material on an opening as well as the best titled players can do in a well-written book, which this is. For example, good luck using a database to teach you things like what are the most favorable conditions for White or Black to go for the thematic endgame where Black has a rook and two pawns for a knight and bishop that commonly arises out of the 4...Nf6 Scotch. If you are first learning the Scotch, you wouldn't even necessarily know that endgame even exists. Or if you do know, then what positions do you search? And then how much are you really going to learn and retain from staring at percentages on a screen and mindlessly clicking through moves? If you are persistent enough you will certainly stumble across isolated examples of games with the endgame, arrived at by slightly different move orders, possibly containing serious mistakes by one or both players. Or you can just read the excellent explanation in this book, which will take less time and teach you more.

And yes, when you find variations in the book that you want to play, you should ALSO follow up by searching a database, checking with a computer, and most importantly coming up with your own improvements on the moves shown in the book, or form your own plans starting from the final positions recommended by the authors. That is true of any chess book and is part of studying and understanding any opening.

15 of 17 people found the following review helpful.

Not bad - but discouraging and sometimes just wrong...

By Alp

As a passionate advocate of the Scotch game (which I've played throughout my whole chess career with great success - Elo ~2030) I immediately bought this book when it came out in its original language.

That was during a time, when I was facing hard times with the Scotch, not gaining anything out of the opening due to lack of ideas and opening knowledge. So you could say that I've put many hopes into this book - and was partly disappointed and discouraged by this book.

Let's start from the beginning:

The book is nice to read, there are (not too) many diagrams and there are plenty of variations and subvariations given in many areas of the opening. The authors also try to cover a wide range of thematic fields in the Scotch (for example after 4...Bc5 their main focus lies on both the 5.Nxc6 and 5.Be3 lines, which lead to totally different positions). They of course cover the main tabiyas of the Scotch starting with 4...Bc5 and 4...Nf6, and also don't neglect the few serious side variations beginning with 4...Qf6, 4...Bb4+ and 4...Qh4.

So you could say it's more of a complete survey of the Scotch rather than a book to build a repertory.

And that's probably also where one of the weaknesses of this book lies:

The authors spent too much time on the more or less uninteresting sidelines and don't try too hard to find something for White in the critical main lines, which I find rather disappointing.

You may ask why that is.

Let me give you an example:

After 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.d4 exd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nxc6 bxc6 6.e5 Qe7 7.Qe2 Nd5 8.c4 Nb6 9.Nc3 the authors mention that this is one of the ultimate main lines in the Scotch and in my humble opinion the best way for White to face the rather unpleasant 8...Nb6.

Now the main move is 9...Qe6, but they also look at the interesting 9...a5.

So they follow the main variation after 9...a5 and also look at almost all ways for White to deviate. In the end they conclude that Black is somewhat better!

I was asking myself: How can that be? Opening specialists way stronger than the authors have been using this line regularly and made this the main variation for no reasons, one might suspect.

How come that White is now worse in a side line(!) in which all deviations for White are covered and apparently White can't try to improve elsewhere along the way?

This is what I call discouraging. And this is no exception at all. In many of the ultimate Main variations they examine side lines for Black and conclude that Black is better whereas White more oftenly gains an advantage in the main lines. It doesn't make sense in my eyes.

Of course the authors don't want to lie and maybe their assessment is right indeed, but why would you write a book about an opening in which White basically can't get an advantage out of the ultimate main line with 4...Nf6?

And that's not the end of it.

Later in the book they cover 4...Bb4+, which is an interesting side line(!). Even there in the ultimate main lines they find ways for Black to get an advantage out of side lines. Why would that be? Aren't these side lines side lines for some reason?

It's like writing a book on the Ruy Lopez and finding ways for Black to gain an advantage in side lines of the Cigorin. I don't want to say that the authors have done a bad job. My guess is:

They probably didn't want to write a book consisting solely of computer variations. So they used many practical games and didn't try too hard to find improvements for the games, but they rather looked at the games to the end and give the reader an assessment of the final position.

This is - in my opinion - a wrong way of doing this job. You either try to write a book which tries to offer perfect lines (many thoroughly analyzed computer variations) or you try to write a book from a human point of few, trying to add your own assessments which should of course be checked by the computer, but not manipulated by it.

But I don't want to badmouth the whole book (and this was not my intention whatsoever!):

The book gives you a great overview over the Scotch, not leaving out any important way to play for both sides. You can use it to get a good overview over the Scotch and you can also use it as a basis to build your

repertory upon. But you shouldn't see this as a book to solely rely on.
I have found improvements with both the Computer and recent games.
All in all this book couldn't satisfy my expectation, but it gave me some impulses to go deeper into the theory of the Scotch.

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