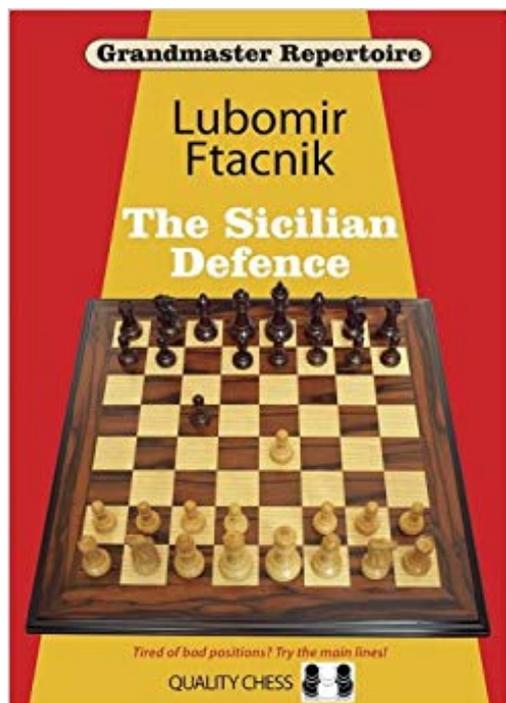


## Grandmaster Repertoire 6: The Sicilian Defence *by* Lubomir Ftacnik



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**Author:** Lubomir Ftacnik

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Grandmaster Repertoire is a new series of high quality chess books based on the main lines, written by strong grandmasters. The aim is to provide the reader with a complete opening repertoire at a level good enough for elite tournaments, and certainly also for the club championship. Lubomir Ftacnik is a renowned opening analyst with great experience and expertise in the Sicilian Defence. In this book he reveals his secrets to provide a complete repertoire for Black against 1.e4 with 1...c5. The meat of the repertoire is the Sicilian Najdorf the perennial favourite of those who want to attack with Black. It is no coincidence that Fischer, Kasparov and Anand have all relied on the Najdorf. Naturally, White's less critical tries are also covered, such as the 2.c3, 2.Nf3 d6 3.Bb5+, and the Closed Sicilian. • A sharp yet sound complete repertoire • Critical lines explained by an expert • Hundreds of novelties • Busts many recommended lines



## Reviews of the **Grandmaster Repertoire 6: The Sicilian Defence** by Lubomir Ftacnik

### **Kipabi**

Am I missing something or did GM Ftacnik forget to write about the Grand Prix attack with an early 2.f4 !?

I searched the table of contents only to be confused by the author's cute names for certain variations - "Some Like it Hot" for the Morra Gambit for instance. Next, I moved on to the Variation Index at the back of the book same result, 2.f4 is not to be found.

Lastly, I started reading chapter one titled "Pandora's (Chess) Box - Miscellaneous 2nd moves" - not even a mention of the possibility of 2.f4. In my opinion this is not acceptable for a book classified as a Grandmaster Repertoire to omit certain well known moves for White on move 2! If I were to compare Ftacnik work on the Sicilian to Marin's on the English (3 vol. set by the way), Ftacnik might be accused of rushing this book out way too early to the publishers. Ftacnik in fact warns the reader in the introduction - "My own modest expertise lies in the domains of the Najdorf and Scheveningen systems, which I have been playing and studying over the past two decades. The Scheveningen system represents a kind of foundational core, from which virtually all knowledge about thematic Sicilian structures and plans can be races. Although the official subject of this book is the Najdorf variation, the two systems share many common themes and can often transpose to one another." Great but nothing about 2.f4?

On the other hand, I found some of the lines provided by the author original and well thought out. I have used the recommended 2.d5 and early g7 line against the 2.c3 setup to good effect in tournament games. I will warn the reader, the ideas of the lines presented are not well explained. Instead the author writes something like - " This leads to sharper play and is often used by players who are looking to win with the black pieces."

Ok I get you, you are not an expert in Dragon, Kan, Taimanov or Sveshnikov Sicilians. But not to include a Najdorf/Scheveningen solution to the 2.f4 move played form the days of Phillidor and La Bourdanna (1700s) is a shame. I'm not claiming it is difficult to meet 2.f4, but simply this should have been mentioned in a Grandmaster Repertoire book. Because if it isn't then, this is not a complete repertoire book on the Sicilian. Perhaps Quality Chess needs to hire another Grandmaster to write about the Sicilian. Oh wait, Quality Chess is in fact publishing a new Sicilian book later this year with 440 pages on the Sveshnikov.

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### **Cordanara**

I'm rated USCF 1750 and this book is perfect for me. It contains a great deal of analysis, along with excellent explanations of "what is going on". I find that the explanations are enough at my level, to enhance my understanding and learning of the variations.

I feel that the main variations are presented, but the author refrains from giving countless variations that would be more than I could learn from. I also like that in a few lines, he presents the Black player a choice of variations, which was helpful to me as I had already investigated some of those lines.

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### **Welahza**

After having worked through the excellent books on the English Opening by Michail Marin, I was really looking forward to reading this book from the "Grandmaster Repertoire" series. But it turned out to be really disappointing. Although I'm still quite far from being an International Master (~2100 Elo) I can only support the impression the above IM-commentator has had.

Instead of providing me with a deeper understanding of the Najdorf and Scheveningen this book presented endless variations and long uncommented lines to memorize. Even the scarce comments were not helpful at all! As Korchnoi states you cannot play chess just with your memory - and even having memorized the most important lines I still feel that I'd be completely lost if my opponent should deviate from the lines provided by Ftacnik.

The seemingly thorough analysis might be a good academic contribution to the theoretical debate on the Scheveningen and the Najdorf but it is of very little use for a club player who would like to extend or improve his repertoire.

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#### **Dusar**

I'm extremely disappointed with this work by the respected GM Ftacnik. It seems to me that he put in very little effort, and having previously purchased the excellent books by Avrukh on 1.d4 (Vol.1 & 2) as well as his two-volume coverage of the Grunfeld Defence, I expected better from this "addition" to the 'Grandmaster Repertoire' series.

I'm an International Master, who is looking to take up the Najdorf again after a long break from playing it. Unfortunately, Ftacnik mostly just resorts to saying things like: "this move has been played the most, but you could also play this line". In my view, this is simply his way of avoiding the hard work that is needed to give accurate opinions on complex positions, that need to hold up to scrutiny. Avrukh does this in his work, Ftacnik - it seems to me - does not.

A far less professional-looking book such as 'The Sharpest Sicilian' by Georgiev & Kolev actually does what this doesn't. It delves into positions and explains the key strategic elements. This is what leads to strong play in an opening. Memorization of key lines is critical, of course. And especially in an opening as sharp as the Najdorf. However, everyone knows that you don't remember things well unless you understand them. A work that has rightly received critical praise is the two-volume treatment of the Hedgehog, by GM Shipov. Now there's a book written with the right combination of knowledge and passion, that leaves the reader with not just a knowledge of the right move order, but also with a great understanding of WHY it is so.

In my view, this is a complete waste of money for any 2200+ player, and I would not recommend it for u-2200's either.

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