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Dear readers,

This is the second volume of the series “Opening for White According to Kramnik 1.♘f3” and in it we continue analyzing the symmetrical answer for Black – 1...♗f6.

The majority of this book is devoted to the lines 2...e6, 2...b6 and 2...c5 (after 1...♗f6 2.c4). As a rule, this is the habitual choice of the players whose opening repertoire, in answer to 1.d4, includes the Nimzo-Indian Defence and the Queen’s Indian Defence. Meanwhile, the symmetrical answer with the c-pawn on move 2 is often used by the players who consider as Black that White’s move one is not the best. They think that only the advance of one of White’s central pawns on move one can maintain the opening advantage for him. We will try to convince them otherwise...

In the first part of this book, among the seldom played lines for Black on move two, the only one which deserves some attention is the cavalry attempt – 2...♗c6 (Well, White maintains his advantage here easily too and the ways to do that have long been found.), so we also analyze the move 2...e6 – one of the two most popular answers for Black in this position. How can we explain this strange classification? The point is that, contrary to the first edition, we are trying this time to recommend to you, as a way to build your opening repertoire according to Kramnik, to counter 2...e6 with the move 3.g3. Is this move objectively better than 3.♗c3, we can argue about that forever. What is clear is that White does not wish to enter classical Queen’s Gambit, the Ragozin Defence or the Vienna variation, since he must be well prepared to do that after 3.♗c3 d5. Instead, he invites his opponent to enter the Catalan Opening (3.g3 d5 4.d4), which has brought to Vladimir Kramnik numerous brilliant victories in the recent tournaments. Meanwhile, the Catalan Opening will be analyzed after the order of moves – 1...d5 in one of our forthcoming books, while the other natural move for Black – 3...b6 leads to positions of the Queen’s Indian type and we analyze them in the next parts of this book(after the order of moves 1.♘f3 ♗f6 2.c4 b6). So, it might look like we have almost nothing to write about in the first part of the book after 2...e6 3.g3. This “almost” however, cannot diminish the merits of the original idea of GM Oleg Romanishin – 3...a6 (Black plans to complete the development of his queen’s bishop with an enlarged fianchetto.), but we have found quite promising lines for White to counter that variation as well.

In the second part of the book, we begin analyzing the move 2...b6. We have dealt there mainly with lines, which are typical for the devoted fans of the Queen's Indian Defence. It looks like the black player ignores the fact that White's d-pawn is not on d4 and it still remains on its initial square and he continues with his development according to Queen's Indian schemes, without advancing c7-c5. This principled approach has its drawbacks though, since the placement of White's d-pawn provides him with additional possibilities to fight for the key e4-square. In the majority of cases, after a precise play from both sides, there arise calm positions in these lines in which White has a slight but stable positional advantage.

The third part of this book is devoted to the English "hedgehog" – this is now the universally accepted name of the opening system connected with the moves 1.♠f3 ♖f6 2.c4 b6 3.g3 ♗b7 4.♗g2 c5 5.0-0 e6. In fact, the "hedgehog" pawn-structure arises only when Black allows his opponent to advance e2-e4, and later d2-d4 too, and he counters White's space advantage with a harmonious and quite functional development of his forces on the last three ranks. Besides that set-up, Black has some other possibilities, connected mainly with the move d7-d5, or the exchange of the knights after ♖f6-e4. The developments are much calmer in these cases, although some new ideas, recommended in this book enable White to maintain his advantage in all these lines as well. Concerning the "hedgehog" pawn-structure, the game is much livelier in that case and White must play very energetically in many variations in order to obtain the opening advantage and he should be ready to sacrifice material in numerous lines. In general, White's concept has a sound strategic basis and if the player has profound knowledge of the arising variations (which, of course, he can acquire on the subsequent pages...) he can be quite optimistic about his prospects in the future. I will have to mention here, that our work was immensely enriched by the remarkable book of GM Sergey Shipov devoted entirely to the "hedgehog". We have succeeded however, in improving dramatically White's play in numerous variations. At least that is what we believe in and of course, the final answer to that question will be given by the tournament practice.

In the fourth part of this book, we deal with the twin-brother of the "hedgehog" and the Sicilian Dragon variation – the double fianchetto (1.♠f3 ♖f6 2.c4 b6 3.g3 ♗b7 4.♗g2 c5 5.0-0 g6). This rather strange opening creature has already proved its merits at the highest possible

level. Black's set-up is quite logical – both his bishops are deployed on ideal positions and despite the fact that White has a space advantage in the centre and all over the board, Black has no visible weaknesses and a promising position. White must play very precisely here, otherwise the game might end in a draw after numerous exchanges. He must be careful, because Black's position is like a spring, so he should combine his active actions on the kingside with adequate prophylactic.

Finally, in the fifth and last part of this book, we have analyzed numerous variations after 1.♘f3 ♗f6 2.c4 c5. There is a multitude of possibilities here for both sides, but there are many similarities too. White usually tries to exploit his advantage in the centre, while Black attempts to undermine that centre and to organize some counterplay on the queenside. There are numerous variations, which lead to sharp tactical fights and they require profound opening knowledge from both opponent's. The Semi-Tarrasch (1.♘f3 ♗f6 2.c4 c5 3.♗c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♗xd5 5.d4 e6) has been analyzed extensively in this part of the book. It is classified there, because the position after the first five moves arises more often in practice after another move-order 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 ♗f6 4.♗c3 c5 5.cxd5 ♗xd5. So, is it not more logical to deal with this opening system after 1.♘f3 d5, as we did in the first edition of this book? The point is that after the move order 1.♘f3 d5, now, after we recommend the Catalan Opening for White, the Semi-Tarrasch cannot arise at all. Meanwhile, after the move order 1.♘f3 ♗f6 2.c4 c5 3.♗c3 d5, White cannot avoid it and that is the reason we analyze that system in this volume.

We hope this book will enlarge your opening knowledge and it will enrich your understanding of chess in general and as a result your practical competitive results will improve considerably. We believe your opponents will treat much more seriously you as a player and the first move of the king's knight as well. The following books of this series will be out of print in the nearest future – we promise you that...

*March 2008*  
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