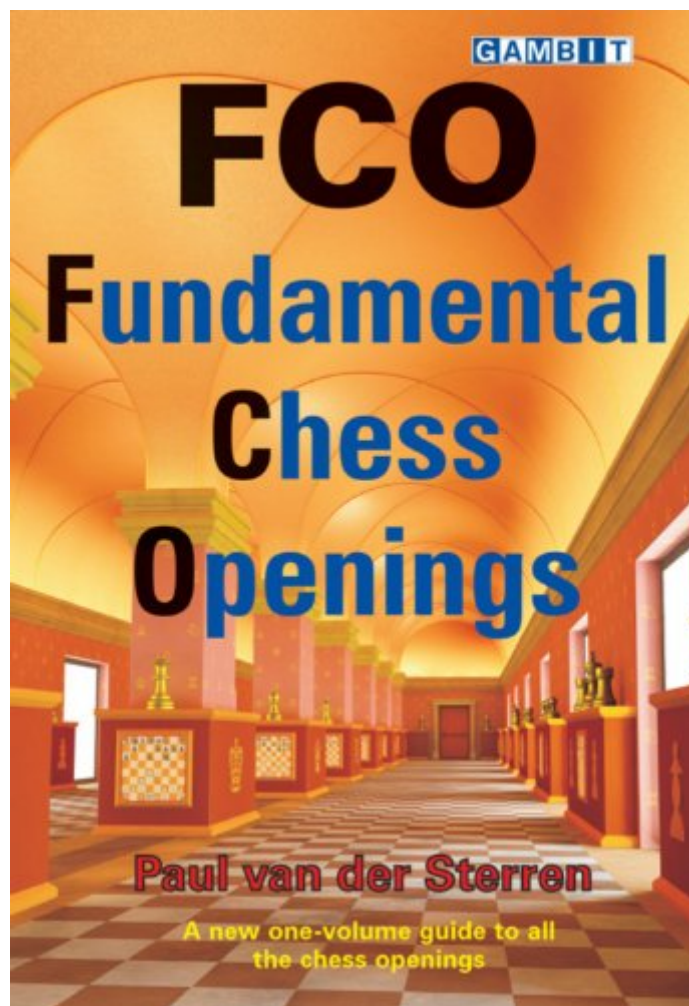


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# FCO: Fundamental Chess Openings



## Synopsis

"A modern-day version of Reuben Fine's *Ideas Behind the Chess Openings*, *Fundamental Chess Openings* primarily uses words to describe the ideas and motivations behind different opening systems. The emphasis is on understanding rather than memorization with van der Sterren rarely going beyond move ten." - IM John Donaldson, US Team Captain\* The perfect survival guide to the chess openings\* All openings covered\* Detailed verbal explanations of plans for both sides\* Up-to-date and featuring many tips and recommendations\* Insights into the 'character' of each opening\* Written by one of the world's foremost opening experts\* More than 1600 chess diagrams

The first moves of a chess game define the nature of the whole struggle, as both players stake their claim to the critical squares and start to develop their plans. It is essential to play purposefully and to avoid falling into traps or reaching a position that you don't understand. This is not a book that provides masses of variations to memorize. Paul van der Sterren instead offers a wealth of ideas and explanation, together with the basic variations of each and every opening. This knowledge will equip players to succeed in the opening up to good club level, and provide a superb grounding in opening play on which to build a more sophisticated repertoire. The strategies he explains will, unlike ever-changing chess opening theory, remain valid as long as chess is played, and so the time spent studying this book will be rewarded many times over. "I picked up some tips in openings which I had never fully understood" - GM Ian Rogers, The Byron Shire Echo

Grandmaster Paul van der Sterren has won the Dutch Championship on two occasions, and in 1993 reached the Candidates stage of the World Chess Championship. He is an internationally renowned chess writer and editor: he was one of the founding editors of *New in Chess*, for whose Yearbooks he has contributed more than 150 opening surveys. "...because of the focus on textual explanation rather than detailed analysis it is very readable. It is clearly aimed at less experienced players who wish to acquire an overview of chess opening theory, and gives a good general grounding for those wanting to launch off into more detailed study of a particular opening. A further point in its favour is that because it sticks to general principles rather than concentrating on the latest theory it will not become outdated almost before it has reached the shelves." - Alan Sutton, *En Passant*

"The format of the book is very friendly, openings very clearly set out and identified, with the variations touched upon in short and sweet sections. It is nicely written, does not bombard the reader with theory or lengthy variations (which I think is wonderful as one should not try to run before one can walk) yet it informs and guides at base level. A nice feature is the opening key at the back, classified under the name of the opening, and indexed with the covered variations. I am also impressed by the neutral approach of Paul van der Sterren, an experienced chess writer, who steers away from leading the

reader in preference for objective guidance. ... should you wish to gain a fundamental overview of the vast array of chess openings at base level, this book just might be the best investment you could make currently. This is precisely what it was intended to do" - John Lee Shaw, Chess Check E-zine

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Without a doubt this is the best opening book to start with, and possibly the only one you might need for quite a while. Oh how I wish this had been available when I started out. What's the first thing a beginner does (ignoring all advice)? He starts surveying all the openings to find a few that he likes (and then changes his mind repeatedly). Before this book that involved buying a book on each opening, at great expense, both of money and time. That's no longer necessary - you can buy this one and get all you need for that purpose. It does expect some experience, but no more than any opening book does. The book reminds me a lot of Watson's *Mastering the Chess Openings*, except that it's much broader and less deep. It's far less selective and sophisticated than Watson, but it's not superficial at all given the target audience. It gives very good explanations of the general themes, historical development, and early move orders of pretty much every opening you could

want, although it does have a strong focus on mainlines. For a beginner or intermediate, this book will give you enough theory to get started - your first half dozen moves with some deviations - but not enough to distract you from tactics and endgames. Coaches should love it. I'm sure they would tell you it's all you need until you are an expert. The book is targeted at non-Masters. It's perfect for beginners to intermediates - I would say this is an essential book for beginner to Class C. Higher class players would still get a lot of value as a reference for unfamiliar openings they encounter and for broadening their repertoires, but I suspect an Expert would get diminished value from it. It has 450 some pages of large page size and has a huge amount of prose for each bit of analysis. I bought this expecting to be disappointed by superficiality, but I was wrong. After the fact, it's hard to imagine this book hasn't existed until now. Thank you Grandmaster van der Sterren. Thank you Gambit. Update: I find myself immersed in this thing all the time - it's addictive. I defy anybody in the target audience to read about their favorite opening and not learn something.

This is a great book! I very much like the way the openings are integrated by linking them in terms of their individual strategic themes. Most of the other books that I have read on chess openings are simply catalogs of the openings in which each named opening is outlined and variations listed in tabular form. This book on the other hand introduces the opening with a bit of history then discusses it in terms of its underpinning strategic rationale. In that discussion there are hyperlinks to its mainline variations in which the variation itself as a sub-theme is discussed in the same way. This approach allows the reader to rely less on brute memory - learning by rote - and more on thematic principles.

....I don't love it. Why? Let me start by saying...I love everything that the author has put into it: the history; the explanations as to how they got their names; the subtle strategic differences between one move over another, but some of the openings got squashed by this book's limited space. This is most easily seen in the chapter 'Other 1 e4 Openings' where the Nimzowitsch and Owens only get 5 paragraphs combined. Since this chapter is near the end of the book, I can't help but wonder if the author had/wanted to tie things up. Now you can say, "What's the big deal? Those openings aren't close to being popular." I would have to agree, but I think that's where a book like this can shine the brightest. I HAVE more detailed books on my openings. What I NEED is a book that can fill the gaps that those don't. There were also a few places that I wished he would have gone into 1 or 2 moves deeper, but I can handle that. All I need is someone to start me down the right path when I have no idea what to do. I'll probably purchase other books to completely fill the "holes", but FCO could have

easily done it with another 50 pages or so.

Classic review of the openings. Well organized with good discussion of the advantage/disadvantage of different moves and lines

This book is great for a Class A player who is trying to consolidate their openings knowledge before making a push to the next level of rating strength, and/or more in-depth openings study/preparation. This book could also be useful for a Class B player who is making a push in the study of openings. Also useful for an Expert or Master who never took a broad study of the openings by limiting themselves to a particular repertoire.

Great overview of all openings with history and main ideas like no other opening book I've ever seen. Not totally complete but a very good general reference. Much explanation of major various lines, not just a list of variations. I would say have this as a reference and use with others.

I bought this book to familiarize myself with the chess openings and defenses in depth. The book really does deliver. The author goes over a huge number of variations on main known openings that it could be overwhelming. For me as a player of about 1280 it is easy to understand. There are a few things that probably need improvement. I am not sure whether the text of the book is just British English I am not used to, or heavy editing to reduce text for space, but in many locations the explanations of positions could be explained more thoroughly and more general concepts should be described. Another thing I would change, and which you should be aware of just in case is that the moves are written in figurine algebraic notations instead of simple algebraic notation. I understand that it may be a choice the publishers have made to make their books accessible to players from non English speaking countries. But to me it is just irritating and interrupt my train of thought when I look at symbols of chessmen instead of a simple letter. Despite the few drawbacks this is a must have book if you want to know mainstream openings in depth.

Silman was right: FCO is the first chess openings book you should buy, and for most people it is the only chess openings book you will ever need. Phenomenal work, very strongly recommended.

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