

# chess

by richard shorman



International grandmaster Vladimir Simagin, an outstanding chess openings theoretician, has won innumerable special prizes for his original and valuable contributions to the game.

His article in the current issue of *Shakhmatny byulleten* (No. 12, 1967) contains some interesting personal observations on the opening in general and presents the case for a pet opening scheme of his in particular.

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Ragozin once played a game against Rauzer in a tournament of young masters in 1936 which began **1 P-QN3**. Commenting on his opponent's first move, Rauzer wrote, "The opinion is widespread among chessplayers that the best way to oppose a theoretician is to make an unusual move that prevents him from following well-known variations. Ragozin evidently decided to put this notion to a practical test."

Eighteen years later Yudovich reiterated Rauzer's view in the tournament book of the XX USSR Championship: "Today, in an important game against tournament leader Taimanov, Simagin opened with **1 P-QN3**. What sort of reasoning lies behind such a move? Probably, the knowledge that his rival is a superb theoretician who must be led away from theoretical variations."

Chessmaster Kamyshov's reaction to **1 P-QN3** was even more ingenuous: "The game may begin this way, too, but White cannot expect to retain the initiative with such a move."

To my mind, these judgments are overly dogmatic and detrimental to the progress of chess. There are no absolute truths for the opening. There are many different ways of playing this phase of the game: the idea is the important thing. Some openings have been analyzed 30 moves ahead, with an uninspired draw the all too frequent result. The opening craves fresh ideas.

I would like to put a simple question to the orthodox theoreticians. How is the irregular **1 P-QN3** inferior to the modern, "correct" **1 P-KN3**? It is hardly possible to give a cogent reply that favors the latter. I am especially pleased, therefore, to present the opening moves of my game with Flesch, in which White's first move completely vindicates itself.

White: Simagin.                      Black: Flesch.  
International tournament, Sochi, 1967.  
Irregular Opening

1 P-QN3	P-K4	10 P-KR3	B-K3
2 B-N2	P-Q3(a)	11 N-Q5	N-K1
3 P-QB4	N-KB3	12 Q-Q2	P-B4?
4 P-N3	P-KN3	13 P-B4!	N-B3
5 B-N2	B-N2	14 O-O	QR-K1
6 N-QB3	O-O	15 K-R2	N-Q1
7 P-K3	N-B3	16 NxNch	BxN
8 KN-K2	B-B4	17 P-Q4	...
9 P-Q3	Q-Q2		

(a) A mistake. Better is 2... N-QB3.

I have been using **1 P-QN3** for 15 years and, of course, have often lost with it. But the position reached above, in my opinion, looks quite difficult for Black.

The conclusion is plain to see: **1 P-QN3** is just as acceptable an opening as any other. I feel certain that Ragozin thought likewise when he employed it against Rauzer. Unfortunately, Ragozin lost the game, and the loser (alas) is always at fault.