



COLUMNISTS

Checkpoint

Carsten Hansen

**Reviewed this month:*****Guide to the Modern Benoni***

by John Watson

Modern Benoni

by Andrew Kinsman

QuickSurvey: Benko 5 b6!?

(CCR Format)

by Jerzy Konikowsky

Son of Sorrow

With an abundance of new books, CDs and other material on the Modern Benoni in recent years, it almost seems as if it must have overtaken a subject like the Dragon in popularity amongst authors and analysts. Despite this, the opening has not really caught on with the general public. This may be due to the amount of opening theory that is required, which by the way tends to favour White. In the past both Tal and Kasparov have used the Modern Benoni, but nowadays the only 2700+ player who uses it is Topalov, and his name doesn't quite have the same draw as the other two gentlemen. But possibly these two new books will do something to change that. By the way, as far as I recall, Benoni translates to something like 'son of sorrow', which has been a fitting name for an opening that is attractive, but has not really given those playing it hoped-for results..

Also an electronic book makes the way to this month's Checkpoint. It's published in the ChessCafe Reader (CCR) format. The reader itself can be downloaded for free here at Chess.Café.com. In addition to the very interesting book on Botvinnik's secret training matches, several of the columns here at ChessCafe.com are available in CCR-format, which in itself should be enough to make you download the reader. The book I will look at is a new-comer in this format and it covers a sub-line of the Benko, which is a cousin to the Benoni.

Gambit Guide to the Modern Benoni by John Watson, 2001 Gambit Publications, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Paperback, 208 pp., \$22.95

In my opinion American IM John Watson is one of the finest authors of chess books today. His four-volume series on the English Opening was the benchmark for any book on the English Opening. His book *Play The French* was downright brilliant and it made me take up the French Defense instantly. More recently, he won British Chess Federation's Book of the Year award for his outstanding *Secrets of Modern Chess Strategy*, which however can be a little confusing for weaker players because the traditional concepts of the game are being tossed around quite a bit. However, for everybody else there is plenty of food for thought. Also noteworthy are his book reviews on TWIC; they are always very insightful and intelligently written.



In the present book Watson presents a repertoire for Black in the Modern Benoni, and thereby moves away from the concept of complete coverage that otherwise normally is the trademark of the *Guide to...* books from Gambit Publications. However, this is in line with the above-mentioned book on the French. Against each line and set-up for White, Watson presents usually two, sometimes three options for Black to choose from. About this he writes in the foreword: "The drawback to such a book is its lack of comprehensiveness; its advantages are in attention to detail and in the discipline it imposes upon the author. This is, the author is responsible for specific lines of play, and to the extent that it is practical, should not ignore any reasonable move by White, whether or not it has been played or discussed."



"My method has been to offer the reader a first, second and occasionally third system against the most critical and popular variations. Thus if one line fails due to a theoretical development, or if it doesn't appeal to you, there's another option or two to look into. The majority of older or lesser variations are dealt with in the same fashion, although there are some exceptions. In most cases, the first suggested repertoire system is a more established strategy, whereas the second repertoire tends (with very important exceptions) to be somewhat lesser known, less theoretical, and in many cases, more fun."

So far I have no objections; complete coverage obviously is an alternative, but also an impossibility given the page limitations. On that note, I should mention that it is usually the publisher, not the author, that determines the number of pages in any given book. This is decided before the book is written and then it's up to the author to decide what makes it way to the pages and what must be weeded out, an often painful procedure, as I know from experience.

The present book consists of ten chapters, divided as follows:

- 1 Introduction and Early Moves (13 pages)
- 2 Systems with Bf4 (22 pages)
- 3 Systems with Bg5 (15 pages)
- 4 The Knight's Tour Variation (13 pages)
- 5 Pawn-Storm Systems (38 pages)
- 6 Fianchetto Systems with g3 (20 pages)
- 7 Systems with Bd3 and Nge2 (17 pages)
- 8 Kapengut's 7 f3 System (10 pages)
- 9 Modern Main Line (29 pages)
- 10 Classical Main Line (19 pages)

As you can see, the main attention has been focused on lines that have given Black players the most trouble over the last several years, namely the Pawn Storm Systems – and in particular the Taimanov Attack (1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 Nc3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 e4 g6 7 f4 Bg7 8 Bb5+), and the Modern Main Line (1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 Nc3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 Nf3 g6 7 e4 Bg7 8 h3 0-0 9 Bd3).

I will take a look at these two lines, but before I move on, I have to say that on every single page there is clear evidence of how much work Watson has put into this book. There is a tremendous amount of Watson's own analysis everywhere. So much I sometimes wondered how many years this book has taken to write. It's absolutely amazing. However, as John Nunn, who is author of some of finest chess books to be published the last two decades, wrote in his *Secrets of Practical Chess*, do not put too much trust in lines that are not based on game examples. As far as I remember, he mentioned this in conjunction with opening books on little played openings, but the rule pretty much applies throughout. And of course, you should always carefully

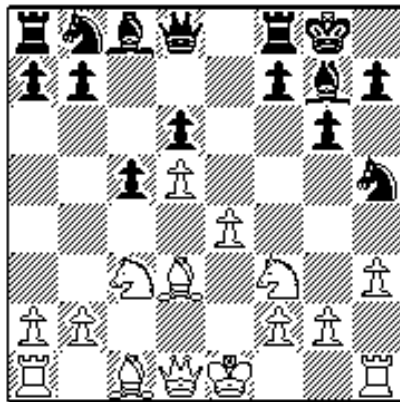
analyze the opening lines you plan to play, I have written that several times in this column. It will save you from many opening disasters, and give a lot of extra points, because you're bound to know the typical ideas of the particular opening line better than your opponent. Watson, a personal coach to many pupils, is of course also aware of this fact, and therefore attaches a warning to his readers to analyze particular lines further independently. This type of advice is usually only found by quality writers. They don't pretend to know everything, but they help you as much as they can. But again studying the lines given in a book is usually only 20% percent of the work in studying an opening, the remaining 80% is doing you own analysis of the lines in the book and playing and analyzing your own games.

Well, enough talk from me. Let's look at some of Watson's analysis and suggestions, and as mentioned above, there is plenty to look at.

I will look at the Modern Main Line, which I used to play quite a bit myself, and therefore I hope to be able to add something of use to the reader, as I otherwise can't claim to be a great expert in the Modern Benoni. The problem for Black in this line is that the main lines have been analyzed extensively in recent years, and therefore play tends to quiet down drastically once the initial dramatic moves have been played out on the board. Furthermore, in the sharpest variations of this line the theory develops very reactively, and this of course does not help Black much if he follows a book line in a book written six months or a year ago.

Therefore Watson's task was to find a line that hadn't been studied in every little detail, and at the same time it should be able to stand the test of time, so a lot of new ideas had to be pumped into it. The result is the following:

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 Nc3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 Nf3 g6 7 e4 (or 7 h3 - to prevent 7...Bg4 - 7...Bg7 8 e4 0-0 9 Bd3) **7...Bg7 8 h3 0-0 9 Bd3**, and now **9...Nh5!?** (See Diagram)

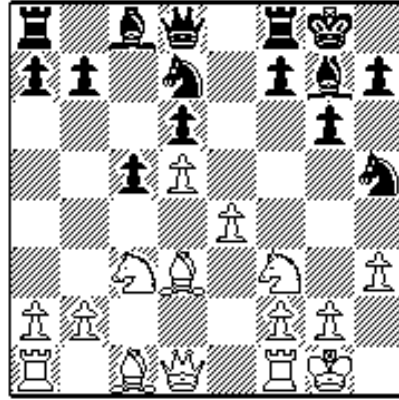


This is not a particular common move. It is not mentioned in ECO, and the only other similar move order where it does appear is after 9...Nbd7 10 0-0, and then 10...Nh5 is mentioned, but only in a footnote; neither is mentioned in NCO. So on that basis, the choice of move is ideal: little or no coverage in the major general works. In the article that gave me my basic knowledge some 10 years ago from *Chess in the USSR* (in Russian and English), the coverage is more extensive than that in the current ECO, but still very limited.

The idea behind the move is very simple, to prevent White's Bf4. Furthermore, it clears the long diagonal for Black's dark-squared Bishop and gives the Queen access to h4.

The normal continuation is 10 0-0 Nd7, but if White wants to take advantage of Black's move order, he can try **10 Bg5**, to which Black will have to respond with **10...Bf6**. Here 11 Bh6 Bg7 12 Bg5 is a way to settle for a quick draw, but ambitious players of the white pieces should try **11 Be3**. Then Watson continues **11...Nd7 12 Be2** (my database only has a game with 12 g4?!, which is also covered by Watson) **12...Re8 13 Nd2 Ng7** (this is obviously not the ideal square for the Knight, but it supports the ...f7-f5 break, if Black can make it work) **14 0-0**, and here Watson only gives **14...Bxc3!?** **15 bxc3 f5!**, after which Watson thinks Black is okay. I tend to agree, e.g. **16 Bd3** (16 f3 is also possible but after 16...Qf6 followed by ...f4, Black has at least equal chances) **16...Qf6 17 exf5 Nxf5 18 Bxf5 Qxf5 19 Nc4 Qf6** with approximately even chances, but I think that many players would be a tad worried to

dispose of the dark-squared Bishop in this fashion. Watson too recognizes that this is likely to happen, and therefore suggests for those who worry about the above line to use the other move order, 9...Nbd7 10 0-0 Nh5 (*See Diagram*)



In this position, White has three main options: (a) **11 Bg5**; (b) **11 Be3**; and (c) **11 Re1**.

The first two are also identified in ECO and the old article; the last is new to me. A quick search in my own database listed one game with 11 Be3, two with 11 Re1 and thirteen with 11 Bg5, a line in which White scored 65 percent, but statistics on the results in an opening don't account for the actual position that arises after the opening, but more for who plays is playing what.

ECO gives the following line as advantageous for White: **11 Bg5 Bf6 12 Bh6 Bg7 13 Bxg7 Nxg7 14**

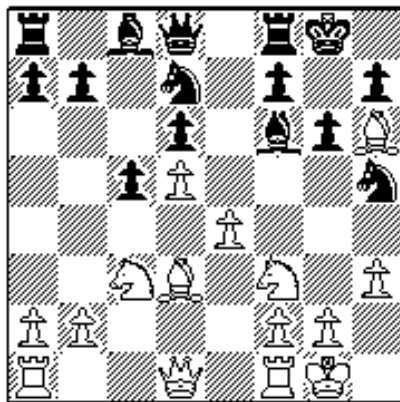
Qd2 f6 15 Be2 Qe7 16 Rfe1 Ne5 17 Rab1 b6 18 b4 with a slight edge for White, as in J.O. Fries-Nielsen-Maus, Bundesliga 1989.

It's quite obvious that Watson will not agree with this, since his book's aim is mainly to guide Black to a good game. In reply, his main line is 11...Bf6, but he also offers 11...Qb6, after which he gives 12 Qd2 Ne5 13 Nxe5 Bxe5 14 Be3 Bd7 15 f4 Bd4!?, which he analyzes to an unclear position, but does not mention 13 Be2!? which is fairly standard way of meeting ...Ne5, when the other Knight is on h5. After 13...Nxf3+ 14 Bxf3 Nf6, White has the better chances, as the dynamism of the black position is gone.

After 11...Bf6, White has a choice. After 12 Be3, the main move is 12...Re8, but 12...Ne5 gets an '!'. Here he gives 13 Nxe5 Bxe5 14 f4 Bg7 15 Qf3! "is more dangerous" [than 13 Be2 Nxf3+ 14 Bxf3 Ng7!], but in the same position after 11 Be3 Ne5 12 Nxe5 Bxe5 13 f4 Bg7 14 Qf3, he continues 14...b6 15 Rae1 Bb7, which "is maybe a bit better for White, but that's hard to prove". This transposition should have been mentioned, but even with the technology of today, these can be overlooked. By the way, 14 or 15...b6 isn't mentioned in the ECO; only ...Nf6 is given.

Back to 12...Re8, and now 13 Nd2, which leads to the only practical example he uses after 12 Be3 (of the other alternatives, 13 Qd2 Ne5 14 Be2 Nxf3+ 15 Bxf3 Ng7, with Black intending ...Be5 and ...f5, is the most critical, but Black should be able to hold on), 13...a6 14 a4 Bd4 15 Bxd4 cxd4 16 Ne2 Nc5 17 Ra3 Bd7 18 Bc2 d3 19 Bxd3 Bxa4 20 Rxa4 Nxd3 21 Rd4, which was played in Krasenkov-Oliwa, Polish Championship 1996, and here Watson correctly gives the improvement 21...Nhf4! (in the game Black tried the inferior 21...Ndf4), which leads to satisfactory play for Black.

Let's return to the main line: **11...Bf6 12 Bh6** (*See Diagram*)



12...Re8!?. This move is also given in ECO, which quotes both 13 Qd2 and 13 g4 as leading to a slight edge for White. To ECO's 12...Bg7 13 Bxg7, he agrees with the evaluation of 13...Nxg7, and instead offers 13...Kxg7 14 Qd2 Qf6! "with the idea of controlling f4". This looks amazingly simple, but I haven't found anything for White in this line either. Now against 13 g4, Watson introduces a couple of improvements over ECO, first 13...Ng7 and 13...Bg7 14 Bg5 Bf6 (instead of ECO's 14...Nhf6). The other move 13 Qd2 follows the game Zaichik-Romanishin, Tbilisi 1988, which was won for Black, and the move that ECO bases

its evaluation on, has since been refuted by Hungarian Atilla Schneider, so 11 Bg5 doesn't seem to offer White much hope of an edge. Nor does 11 Be3, which I will not go further into, but Watson and the Irish Mark Quinn have made some intelligent analysis in this variation, proving dynamic equality for Black.

That leaves 11 Re1, about which Watson doesn't quote any practical examples, but it appears that it may in fact be White's best shot for an advantage. Watson's main line (with his punctuation) is 11...Ne5!? 12 Be2 Nxf3+ 13 Bxf3 Qh4! 14 Bxh5 gxh5 15 Qd2 f5! 16 Qg5! Qxg5 17 Bxg5 fxe4 18 Be7 Re8 19 Bxd6 Bxc3 20 bxc3 Rd8 21 Bf4 Rxd5 22 Rxe4 Bd7 23 c4 Rd4 24 Rxd4 cxd4 25 Rd1 Rc8 26 Rxd4 Be6, "and the draw is obvious." While this line is terribly long (Larsen: long analysis, wrong analysis). He has analyzed some of the most obvious alternatives for White on the way to the final evaluation, but I have a feeling that things may not be as clear-cut as they appear. Watson too sees this; in the conclusion to this chapter he writes: "I won't pretend that I don't have some intuitive doubts about this system achieving absolute and incontrovertible equality (although it may do so). On the other hand, whatever advantage White has is probably on the scale of his slight advantage in any other opening. For the practical Benoni player, this method of play offers the sort of double-edged fight most players want, without inordinate risk for Black." He appears to be right, but let's see what the future will tell.

As mentioned above, the Taimanov Attack has given many Benoni players troubles. In fact, so many that Black often enters the Modern Benoni via another move order just to avoid it altogether, namely 1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 (instead of 2...c5), and then only after 3 Nf3 they play 3...c5. Should White, however, choose 3 Nc3, he will go for either 3...Bb4, the Nimzo-Indian, or 3...d5, the Queen's Gambit. Although Watson also covers the 2...e6 3 Nf3 c5 move order, he obviously also has to show something against the Taimanov Attack: **1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 Nc3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 e4 g6 7 f4 Bg7 8 Bb5+!?**. While also 8 Nf3!? 0-0 9 Be2 also is covered with plenty of interesting ideas analyzed and suggested, this is obviously not the main threat to the validity of Black's opening. Here Watson only offers **8...Nfd7**, since he finds 8...Nbd7 "just unsound"; these lines are quite messy.

I will not go into detail about the analysis that he dives into, but it's mainly focused around the option 9...Qh4+ against both 9 Bd3 and 9 a4. Not surprisingly, he has literally dozens of new ideas that improve existing theory. But since I will not pretend to know what I'm talking about when it comes to this line, just let it be noted that there is plenty to look at for anybody who's interested in this line.

Once in while a book comes along, where you flip through the pages in utter amazement due to the effort and brilliance of the author. As I have mentioned several times, the amount of original analysis surpasses any opening book I have ever seen, and as my regular readers know, this is something that I thrive on. I will not pretend


that every line is error-proof, but neither does the author; however, the theory has taken a huge step forward. Watson provides in this book enough evidence of the fact that this opening is far from dead. On contrary, it is alive and well. As he reminds us time and again, we should not take for granted everything he or anyone else writes, but take it as a starting point for our own analysis.

I for one have been thrilled by reading this book. Aside from the brilliant analysis and wonderful new ideas, it also provides plenty of narratives, explaining strategic ideas and plans as well as general speculation.

If you play this opening there is absolutely no way you should be without this book, and if you happen to play 1 d4 and allow the Modern Benoni, you will also want this book, simply because your opponent will have it. If you need to get some inspiration on how to work on your own openings, this may well be the choice for you as well.

While last year had several very good opening books, this year we have already seen one excellent book in the Alburty/Chernin effort I reviewed in the March Checkpoint. With this new Watson book on the market, that total is now up to two.

Therefore take this review as my sincerest recommendation, I'm thrilled, and I'm sure you will be too.

My assessment of this book: 

[Order](#) *Gambit Guide to the Modern Benoni*
by John Watson

Modern Benoni by Andrew Kinsman, 2001 Everyman Chess, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Paperback, 143 pp., \$19.95

The author of this book is by no means as well-known as Watson, but in British chess circles he is recognized as a fairly strong player with one GM-norm to his credit. Last year I reviewed his book on the Benko Gambit, a joint effort with Byron Jacobs. It was also one of the first books by the new Batsford, and the first book in the series of books that Everyman Chess has since taken over.

The book he co-wrote with Jacobs was a decent effort although there was a significant lack of original ideas and analysis. The latter trend repeats itself in the present book. The material in this book takes up a total of 143 pages, divided up as follows:



Introduction (4½ pages)

Part One: Main Lines (6 e4 g6 7 Nf3 Bg7)

1 Modern Main Line with ...b7-b5 (8 h3 0-0 9 Bd3 b5) - 12 pages

2 Modern Main Line without ...b7-b5 (8 h3 0-0 9 Bd3 others) - 11 pages

3 Classical Main Line (8 Be2 0-0 9 0-0) - 19 pages

Part Two: Other Systems with 6 e4 g6

4 Four Pawns and Mikenas Attack (7 f4 Bg7 8 Nf3 and 8 e5) - 15 pages

5 Flick-Knife Attack (7 f4 Bg7 8 Bb5+) - 13 pages

6 Sämisch Variation (7 f3 Bg7 8 Bg5) - 11 pages

7 Other Systems for White (7 Bd3 and 7 Nge2) - 9 pages

Part Three: White avoids or delays e2-e4

8 Fianchetto System (6 Nf3 g6 7 g3 Bg7 8 Bg2 0-0 9 0-0) - 17 pages

9 White plays 6 Nf3 g6 7 Nd2 - 11 pages

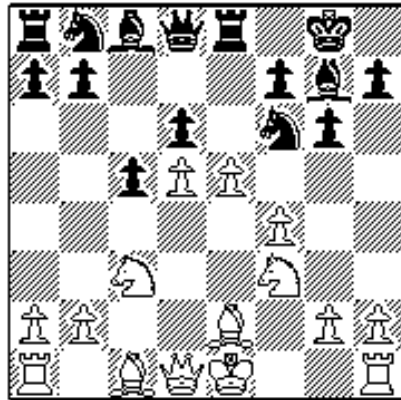
10 White plays an early Bf4 or Bg5 - 14 pages

In comparison with Watson's book, we can see that different weight has been allocated to some lines. Most noteworthy is Kinsman's chapter 6, where Watson for comparison only spends about two pages on exactly the same line!

Both books offer a repertoire for Black, but unlike Watson's book, the present work doesn't really go in-depth with anything, nor does it offer much original analysis; in fact, it is scattered and so few and far between that you really need to search through the pages to find examples.

The repertoire choices are in my opinion also questionable. Let me give a couple of examples. In the Modern Main Line, Kinsman offers only 9...b5 for Black, knowing full well that this is the most complicated line and the line where Black is the most susceptible to busts, which may leave the player behind the black pieces without an answer against the most likely choice of his opponent.

Against the Taimanov Attack, which Kinsman calls the Flick-Knife Attack, he offers a mish-mash of lines and, amongst others, covers the terribly complicated lines that arise after **1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 Nc3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 e4 g6 7 f4 Bg7 8 Nf3 0-0 9 Be2 Re8** (to his credit though, Kinsman also gives some coverage of 9...Bg4) **10 e5!?** (*See Diagram*)



In another stem game, 10 Nd2 is covered, but in this game, he also mentions another move: "10 0-0!? looks like a blunder, but after 10...Nxe4 11 Nxe4 Rxe4 12 Bd3 Re8 13 f5, Black must be very careful, e.g. 13...Nd7 14 Ng5 Ne5! (14...Nf6 15 fxe6 fxe6 16 Qa4 is quite dangerous for Black) 15 Bc2 h6 16 fxe6 fxe6! and Black repelled the attack in Bereolos-Oestrei, USA 1993." If Black has repelled the attack and he is a pawn up, isn't 10 0-0 then a bad move? I think so. Furthermore, in my database I found three examples with the crazy-looking 15 Nxf7 (instead of 15 Bc2). It might have been worth mentioning this since

weaker players may not be comfortable playing the resulting position with no pawns to protect the King. **10...dxe5 11 fxe5 Ng4 12 Bg5**

Here Kinsman mentions that "12 0-0 Nxe5 13 Bf4 has recently become quite fashionable for White". He proceeds to quote three games, but how do you feel about the following: "b) 13...Bf5!? 14 Nxe5 Bxe5 15 Qd2 Nd7 16 Rad1 was satisfactory for Black in Vaisser-Renet, Brussels Zonal 1993, but since Vaisser is still playing the 12 0-0 variation one assumes that he has a major improvement lined up somewhere"? What about looking into what it might be that Vaisser has in mind? I guess that kind of analysis is too exhausting for the author; of course it's definitely easier to leave the reader to his own devices. **12...Qb6 13 0-0**

Again Kinsman finds an opening to introduce an alternative for White: "It is worth exploring Blokh's 13 Qd2!? Nxe5 (or 13...Nd7?! 14 e6!) 14 0-0-0, when White has all of his pieces in the game. One possible defence is 14...c4!? 15 Nxe5 Bxe5 16 Bxc4 Bg4 with a complicated position in Punteri-Vismara, Italy 1996, while the untested 14...Nbd7!? is also worth exploring." Well, thank you very much for the exhaustive analysis of this option for White! Just for the record, I found three examples with 14...Nbd7 on my database, so it can hardly be called untried. **13...Nxe5 14 Nxe5 Bxe5 15 Bc4.**

I'm still puzzled that Kinsman can suggest this line in a repertoire for Black in a book that is clearly aimed at not-so-strong players. Playing lines like this demands an

enormous amount of theoretical knowledge by Black, and one wrong move can cause immediate death.

On the back cover, we are told that this book contains:


- Full explanation of the latest theory and important thematic ideas
- Provides everything you need to start playing the Modern Benoni straightaway
- Ideal battle manual for competitive players
- Written by a Modern Benoni expert

Going through the book, it gives a picture of the complete opposite. A full explanation of the latest theory is hardly the case. Going back to the Modern Main Line, he starts by giving the game Albur-de Firmian, which was a tremendous blow for anyone playing the Modern Benoni as Black due to Albur's amazing novelty (which we have since been told was an idea of Chernin's). However, it is dealt with so casually, that one would think that Black has not tried to improve on it since. Nor does the analysis of the particular game indicate the importance of it all. But if this line is just good for White and Black should avoid it, why bring up the game? It could merely have been dismissed in a note to another game. As it is just filling space that could have been used for proper analysis of a more critical line.

The explanation of thematic ideas is covered in 4½ pages in the introduction. This hardly suffices for a difficult opening like this. It took me years to get an understanding of this opening, and to tell you the truth, the introduction in this book would not have helped me back then, nor do I think it would help the prospective readers of this book now. It's terribly superficial and it doesn't deserve more than a brief glance.

The suggestion that this book provides everything you need to start playing the Modern Benoni straightaway is quite a joke. You have an opening repertoire that is very vulnerable to potential busts, but you do not get the strategic understanding from the author's introduction or game annotations.

Therefore it can hardly be considered "an ideal battle manual for competitive players". In fact, this book is everything but ideal. It leaves the impression of having been written in a hurry, and is so far one of the weakest books in this series of books from Everyman Chess. If you need an answer to 1 d4 and like the set-up with annotated thematic games, then the books by McDonald/Speelman on the Modern Defense and Sadler's on the Queen's Gambit are far better choices, and so is for that matter Kinsman's (& Jacobs') own book on the Benko Gambit.

My assessment of this book: 

[Order](#) *Modern Benoni* by Andrew Kinsman

QuickSurvey Series: Benko 5 b6!?(CCR-Format) by Jerzy Konikowsky, 2001 Russell Enterprises, Inc., Figurine Algebraic Notation, CCR Format, \$9.95

As mentioned in the introduction, this electronic book is part of a new series, the QuickSurvey Series, from Russell Enterprises. The idea is to cover an opening line in enough detail for you to take up a given opening line without having to studying too much theory. A worthy idea if executed properly by the writer.



The author of this effort may not sound familiar to most people, but he has a number of opening books (mainly in German) on a variety of topics under his belt.

Furthermore, he is an FM and for several years wrote a monthly theoretical article for the German correspondence chess magazine *Fernschach*.

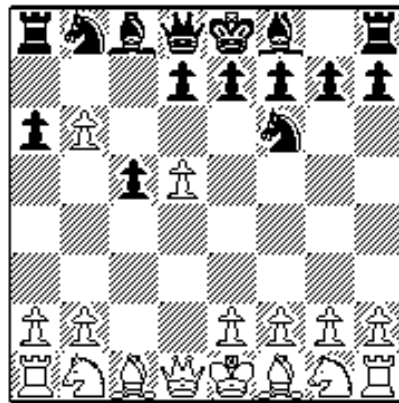
When I was younger and tried to absorb every theoretical article I would come across, I photocopied his articles and put them in my opening binder *Hansen's Chess Openings* (don't worry, there are no plans to publish this collection as a book!). Therefore I have now had a chance to browse through them once again. While he is a fairly decent researcher with a good flair to find interesting topics to cover, he rarely offers some ideas of his own, nor is there much original analysis. The same goes for his book on the Tartakower Variation of the Queen's Gambit, a good and thorough presentation of the theoretical standpoint at the time, but he did nothing to take the opening to the next level.

There is of course nothing wrong in this, and as a writer on openings you have to know your strengths as well as your limitations. Given the above facts about Konikowsky and the purpose of this electronic book, he should be able to do a good coverage of this opening.

As I have played the Benko Gambit many times and analyzed the 5 b6 line extensively together with friends in my younger days (this sounds a bit like I'm terribly old, but turning 30 this year is not an idea I fancy too much), I feel well-qualified to offer my opinions on the present work.

At first, when I browsed through the examples given, I was very disappointed with the coverage, but the more I have looked at it, the more I seem to like the book, although it by no means is perfect, as I will show below.

After the initial moves, **1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 b5 4 cxb5 a6 5 b6**(See Diagram)



the material is divided into five chapters:

- 1 5...a5
- 2 5...e6
- 3 5...d6
- 4 5...Qxb6
- 5 Illustrative games

As such, it doesn't look like a whole lot, but this is obviously part of the idea, make it easy for those who have to study the opening line.

Chapter one covers an idea, which makes a lot of sense when it comes to getting the pieces into play

quickly, but positionally 5...a5 is an absolutely horrible move as it weakens the light squares on the queenside far too much.


Since the book doesn't specify if it's written for one side or the other or if it's a general objective treatise on the opening complex, I will assume that the latter is the case. To assist myself, I used two books on the Benko: Karpov Informator monograph: A57 and Kinsman/Jacobs' *The Benko Gambit* from last year (unfortunately my copy of Pedersen's *Guide to the Benko Gambit* is on loan at the moment). By quickly comparing the material in the present book and Karpov's work, I noticed that some of White's options after **6 Nc3 Ba6** have been ignored. This goes for the following moves: 7 g3, 7 Qb3, 7 Nf3 7 Bg5 and 7 e4. Obviously this is not very impressive, particularly given that Kinsman/Jacobs have 7 Nf3 as their main line. But in Konikowsky's defence, I must give him the credit for giving White's best line; however, if Black players are to have some benefit of the present book the other moves ought to have been covered as well.

As in his previous works, he generally gives a lot of practical examples, but offer very little of his own analysis, and the annotations are far from overwhelming. This pattern is the same in each chapter, and when a given example ends without an explanation or evaluation, you often get the feeling that the reader is left to his or her own devices, which is not particularly fair given that they have just paid to avoid this kind of situation.

In chapter two, I'm obviously interested to see what he offers against an idea that I took part in developing, namely **5...e6 6 Nc3 Bb7!? 7 e4 exd5 8 exd5 d6**, which Karpov gives as leading to equality. Konikowsky shows some of the same game bits as Karpov plus some more. This is enough to make me stand up and listen, but again there is very little original work by the author. For that, the reader will have to look elsewhere.

As mentioned, when I review the electronic version of the ECO, it's extremely difficult to comment on bare game examples, and therefore I will not go into much further detail than I have already done.

In general, the book fulfils its aim, to present the current status of the theory in a given line, but the lack of annotations and original ideas reduces the overall quality. With some of both added, and more complete coverage of lesser-played side lines, this could have been a really interesting work. However, as it is, I can only speculate about what could have been. The nature of electronic books is that things can be changed at a later point, and I feel that should be done in this case.

My assessment of this book: 

[Order](#) *QuickSurvey Series: Benko 5 b6!?*
(CCR Foramt) by Jerzy Konikowsky

<i>The Ratings</i>	
	— A poor book, not recommended.
	— Not a particularly good book, but perhaps useful for some readers.
	— A useful book.
	— Good book, recommended.
	— Excellent book, highly recommended.

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