# The Modernized Delayed Benoni

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# The Modernized Delayed Benoni

Ivan Ivanisevic

Thinkers Publishing 2019

# Key to Symbols

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| ! | a good move | ⩲ | White stands slightly better |
| ? | a weak move | ⩱ | Black stands slightly better |
| !! | an excellent move | ± | White has a serious advantage |
| ?? | a blunder | ∓ | Black has a serious advantage |
| !? | an interesting move | +− | White has a decisive advantage |
| ?! | a dubious move | −+ | Black has a decisive advantage |
| □ | only move | → | with an attack |
| N | novelty | ↑ | with initiative |
| ⟳ | lead in development | ⇆ | with counterplay |
| ⊙ | zugzwang | Δ | with the idea of |
| = | equality | ⩲ | better is |
| ∞ | unclear position | ≤ | worse is |
| ⩱ | with compensation for the sacrificed material | + | check |
| | | # | mate |

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# Preface

My aim in this book is to show that the Delayed Benoni is equally as attractive as its cousin, the Modern Benoni. For some reason – perhaps because "Modern" sounds more exciting than "Delayed"? – my favorite Benoni has been neglected for years, receiving scant coverage in chess publications.

The advantage of "our" Benoni is based on a waiting approach. Black would like to choose a perfect moment to play …e6xd5, waiting for White to adopt some piece setup that turns out to be inconvenient for him after this exchange. At the same time, we would like to avoid some dangerous or deeply explored variations like the Flick-Knife (a.k.a Taimanov) or systems where White can place his bishop on the optimal f4-square.

A lot of variations in this book can also be useful for King's Indian players, as a main or alternative way to play. My own journey in the world of the Delayed Benoni started when I was a King's Indian kind of guy!

As every rose has its thorn, so White can annoy us by answering our …e6xd5 not with the routine c4xd5 but rather with e4xd5. This produces a completely different pawn formation, with an open e-file. White enjoys a space advantage but Black has his chances. And just as White can depart from the well-trodden path with e4xd5, so Black can dispense with the almost automatic …e6xd5 and instead play …e6-e5, producing a sort of King's Indian formation. In the Main Line, covered in Chapter 4, White has already played h2-h3 and this pawn can become a target when Black gets his kingside attack moving.

Our opponent can force us into a Modern Benoni, by playing f3 (Sämisch) or f4 (Four Pawns). I think that I have succeeded defending Black's case, even finding some important nuances improving on the existing theory.

From my personal experience, the only way for White to achieve some advantage is the h3 and ♗d3 variation with e4xd5, the Main Variation covered in Chapter 4. The problem for White, though, is that Black can answer that line in many different ways. So White must be thoroughly prepared and acquainted with all the nuances of our system. And even then, White's advantage is just a "normal" one.

I give a different approach to this variation, three (!) different ways for Black to respond. The reader can also, through the game commentaries, see the development of the variation in my practice.

In my opinion, the Delayed Benoni is a kind of mystery for White also, since it has not been covered deeply enough in chess publications. So I think that this work could be useful for White players, too.

Before writing this book, I had the pleasant experience of working on an e-book about the Sämisch King's Indian together with my friend and colleague Ivan Sokolov. He made an enormous contribution to Chapter 8 and the appendices of this Delayed Benoni book.

Personally, I really enjoyed this work. Not every day can a Grandmaster dedicate himself so much to a subject and reveal so much.

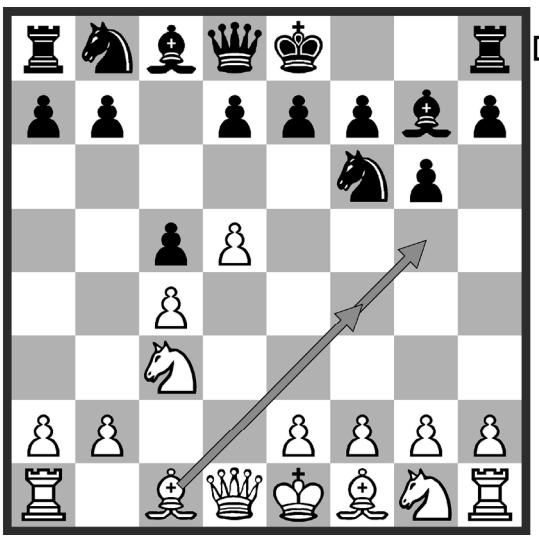
I hope that this will be a pleasant ride for the readers, too.

Ivan Ivanisevic
Belgrade, August 2019

# Rare 5th Moves

**1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 g6**

**4.♘c3 ♗g7 5.--**



# Chapter Guide

## Chapter 1 – Rare 5th Moves

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 g6 4.♘c3 ♗g7

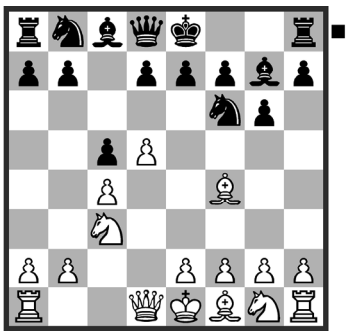
a) 5.♗f4 ..... 11

b) 5.♗f4 (with 7.e4) ..... 14

c) 5.♗g5 ..... 16

# a) 5.♗f4

**1. d4 ♘f6 2. c4 c5 3. d5 g6 4. ♘c3 ♗g7 5. ♗f4**

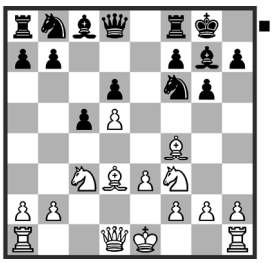


Position after: 5. ♗f4

Not the most accurate placement for the bishop.

**5... 0-0 6. ♘f3**

6. e3 d6 7. ♗d3 [7. ♘f3 ♘h5 would transpose to the main line.] 7... e6 8. ♘f3 exd5 9. cxd5



Position after: 9. cxd5

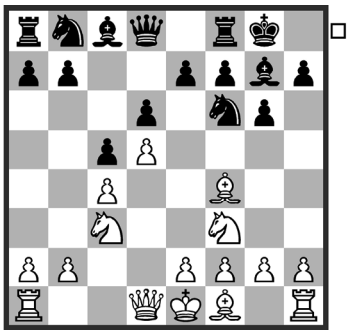
In front of us is a ♗f4 variation from the Modern Benoni, but with the difference that White has played ♗d3 instead of h3.

In my opinion, the clearest way to use that to our advantage comes with 9... ♗g4.

**A)** 10. 0-0 After this inaccuracy, Black is slightly better in all variations, due to his powerful bishop on g7. 10... ♘h5 11. h3 [11. ♗g3 ♘xg3 12. hxg3 ♘d7∓] 11... ♘xf4 12. exf4 [12. hxg4 ♘xd3 13. ♕xd3 ♘d7∓] 12... ♗xf3 13. ♕xf3 ♘d7∓

**B)** 10. h3 ♗xf3 11. ♕xf3 ♕e7 12. 0-0 ♘h5 13. ♗h2 ♘d7=

**6... d6**

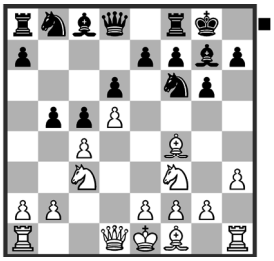


Position after: 6... d6

**7. e3**

7. h3 White is lagging in development, so he can hardly allow himself such a waste of time to save his precious bishop. 7... b5!

*(see analysis diagram next page)*

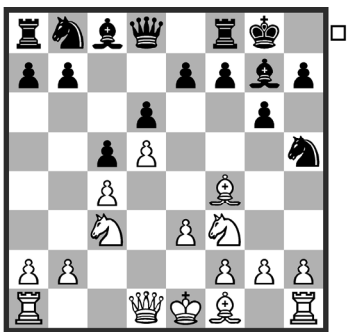


Position after: 7... b5!

**A)** 8. ♘xb5 ♘e4 9. ♘d2 [9. ♕c2 a6∓] 9... ♕a5 10. ♕c2 a6 [10... f5!?] 11. ♘c3 [11. ♘a3 g5! 12. ♕xe4 gxf4↑] 11... ♘xc3 12. bxc3 ♕xc3 13. ♕xc3 ♗xc3=

**B)** 8. cxb5 a6 9. a4 [9. e3 ♕a5 10. ♘d2 axb5 11. ♗xb5 ♘h5⇆] 9... ♕a5 10. ♗d2 axb5 11. ♘xb5 ♕b6 12. ♘c3 ♗a6⇆

**7... ♘h5**

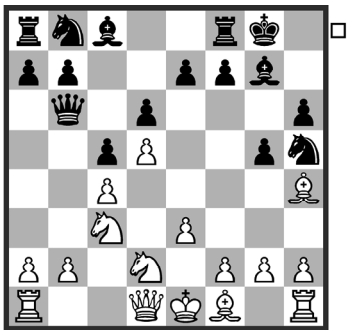


Position after: 7... ♘h5

**8. ♗g5**

8. ♗d3 ♘xf4 9. exf4 e5! 10. dxe6 [10. fxe5 dxe5 11. 0-0 f5∓] 10... ♗xe6 11. 0-0 ♘c6 And Black has an easy game.

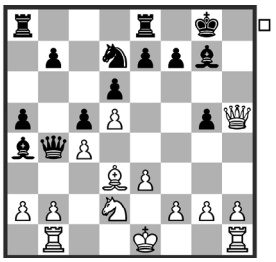
**8... h6 9. ♗h4 g5 10. ♘d2 ♕b6!**



Position after: 10... ♕b6!

**11. ♖b1**

11. ♘b3 a5!↑ This is a crucial move to memorize and play; otherwise White would take over the initiative. 12. ♗xg5 [12. ♕xh5 a4 13. ♗xg5 hxg5 14. ♗d3 f5∓; 12. ♘a4? ♕b4+ 13. ♘d2 ♗d7–+; 12. ♘b5 a4 13. ♘d2 ♘f6 14. ♗g3 ♗d7∓] 12... hxg5 13. ♘a4 ♕b4+ 14. ♘d2 ♗d7 15. ♕xh5 ♗xa4 16. ♗d3 ♖e8 17. ♖b1 ♘d7∓

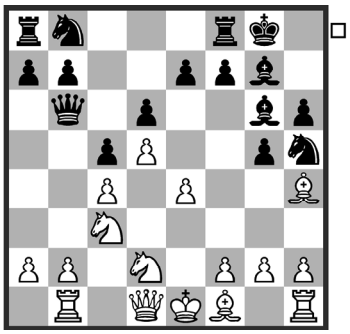


Position after: 17... ♘d7∓

**11... ♗f5**

Provoking e3-e4, and making Black more powerful on the dark squares.

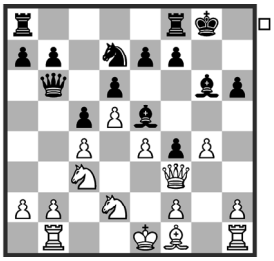
**12. e4 ♗g6**



Position after: 12... ♗g6

**13. ♗e2**

13. g4 ♘f4 14. ♗g3 ♘d7 15. ♗xf4 [15. h4 ♘e5⇆] 15... gxf4 16. ♕f3 ♗e5



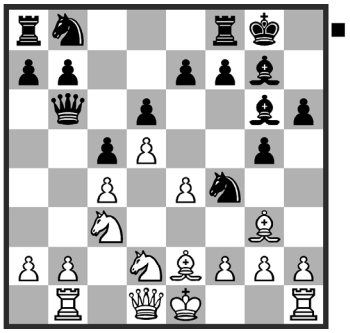
Position after: 16... ♗e5

17. ♕h3 [17. h4 ♖ae8⇆] 17... ♗g7 18. ♕f3 [18. g5 ♘e5 19. gxh6 ♗f6∓] 18... ♗e5=

**13... ♘f4 14. ♗g3**

*(see diagram next column)*

**14... ♘xe2**



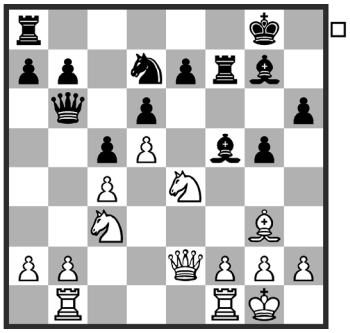
Position after: 14. ♗g3

There is no need to enter the complications after 14... ♘xg2+ because White would keep some initiative for the pawn: 15. ♔f1 ♘h4 [15... ♘f4 16. ♗g4⩲] 16. ♖g1⩱.

**15. ♕xe2 f5 16. exf5 ♗xf5 17. ♘de4**

17. ♘ce4 ♘d7 18. 0-0 ♖f7 is similar to the text.

**17... ♘d7 18. 0-0 ♖f7⇆**

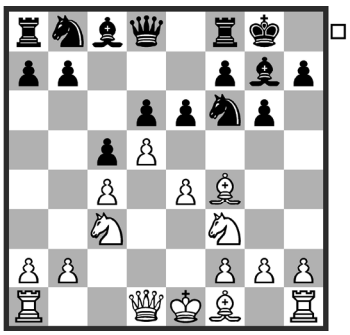


Position after: 18... ♖f7⇆

The position is unclear.

# b) 5.♗f4 (with 7.e4)

**1. d4 ♘f6 2. c4 c5 3. d5 g6 4. ♘c3 ♗g7 5. ♗f4 0-0 6. ♘f3 d6 7. e4 e6**



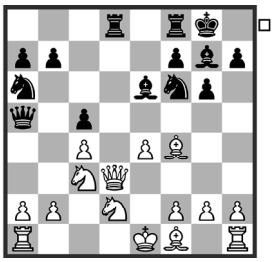
Position after: 7... e6

**8. dxe6**

8. ♗e2 You will find this variation in Chapter 6, Classical line.

**8... ♗xe6 9. ♗xd6**

**A)** 9. ♕xd6 This looks too risky. 9... ♕a5 10. ♘d2 ♘a6 11. ♕d3 ♖ad8

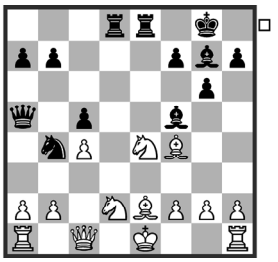


Position after: 11... ♖ad8

**A1)** 12. ♕b1 ♘h5 13. ♗g5 [13. ♗e3 f5↑] 13... f6 14. ♘b3 ♕c7 15. ♗d2 f5↑

**A2)** 12. ♘d5 ♘xe4! 13. ♗e2 [13. ♕xe4 ♗xd5 14. cxd5 ♖fe8–+] 13... ♗f5–+

**A3)** 12. ♕c2 ♘b4 13. ♕c1 ♖fe8 14. ♗e2 ♘xe4! 15. ♘cxe4 [15. ♘dxe4 ♗xc4! 16. ♗xc4 ♖xe4+ 17. ♘xe4 ♘d3+ 18. ♔e2 ♘xc1+ 19. ♖axc1 b5–+] 15... ♗f5



Position after: 15... ♗f5

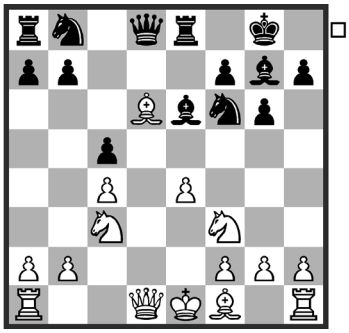
**A3.1)** 16. f3? ♗xe4 17. fxe4 ♖xe4! 18. ♘xe4 ♘d3+ 19. ♔f1 ♘xc1 20. ♗xc1 ♖e8 21. ♘f2 [21. ♘g5 ♕a4–+] 21... ♗d4 22. g3 ♕a6–+ With all kinds of different threats.

**A3.2)** 16. 0-0□ ♗xe4 17. ♘xe4 ♖xe4 18. ♗e3 ♕a6∓ Black remains slightly better.

**B)** Again, 9. ♗e2 you can find in Chapter 6.

**9... ♖e8**

*(see diagram next page)*



Position after: 9... ♖e8

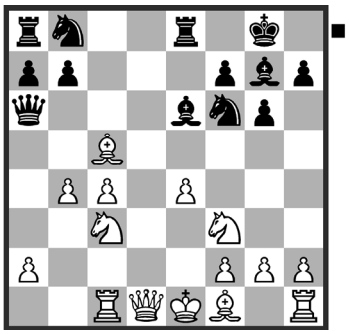
**10. ♗xc5**

10. ♗e2 ♕b6⩱

**10... ♕a5**

Following the game Dlugy – Wojtkiewicz, New York 1989.

**11. b4□ ♕a6 12. ♖c1**



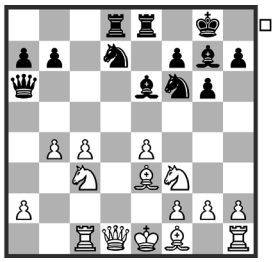
Position after: 12. ♖c1

**12... ♘bd7!N**

12... ♘xe4?! was played in the game.

**13. ♗d4**

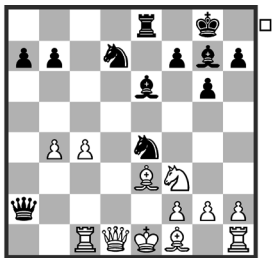
13. ♗e3 ♖ad8⩲



Position after: 13... ♖ad8⩲

Black has enough compensation. Some examples:

**A)** 14. ♘d5 ♘xe4 15. ♘c7 ♕xa2 16. ♘xe8 ♖xe8



Position after: 16... ♖xe8

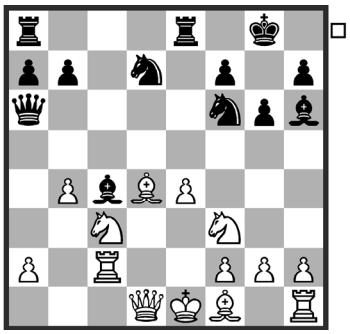
17. ♗d3 [17. ♕c2 ♗c3+ 18. ♔d1 ♗xc4 19. ♕xa2 ♗xa2∞] 17... ♗c3+ 18. ♔f1 ♗xc4∞

**B)** 14. ♘d4 ♘g4 15. ♕b3 ♘de5 16. ♘cb5 ♘xe3 17. fxe3 ♗c8 18. ♘c7 ♕f6↑

**C)** 14. b5 ♕a5 15. ♕a4 [15. ♗d2 ♘c5↑] 15... ♕xa4 16. ♘xa4 ♘xe4 17. ♗e2 ♘b6 18. ♘xb6 axb6⩱ 19. ♗xb6?! ♘c3! 20. ♗xd8 ♗xc4∓

**D)** 14. ♗e2 ♗xc4 15. b5 ♗xe2 16. ♕xe2 ♕a5 17. 0-0 ♘xe4 18. ♘xe4 ♖xe4 19. ♖fd1 ♘f8=

**13... ♗h6 14. ♖c2 ♗xc4**



Position after: 14... ♗xc4

**15. b5**

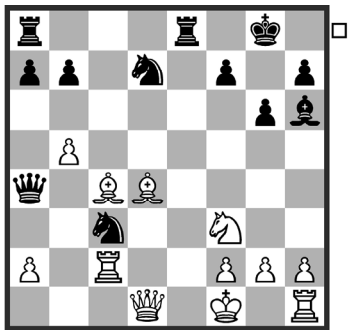
**A)** 15. ♗xc4 ♕xc4 16. ♖e2 ♖ad8 17. ♕b3 ♕xb3 18. axb3 ♗f8=

**B)** 15. ♗e2 ♘xe4 16. 0-0 ♘ef6=

**15... ♘xe4 16. ♗xc4 ♘xc3+ 17. ♔f1**

17. ♗e2 ♘xe2! 18. bxa6 ♘c3+=

**17... ♕a4□**



Position after: 17... ♕a4□

**18. ♕d3**

18. ♗xf7+ ♔xf7 19. ♗xc3 ♖ad8 20. ♕d5+ ♔f8 21. ♕d6+ ♔f7 22. ♕d5+=

**18... ♘e4∞**

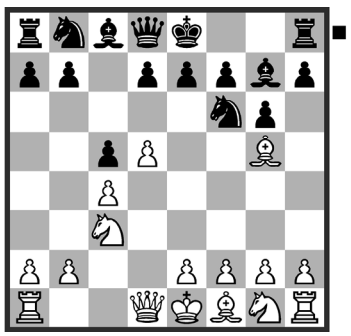
## c) 5.♗g5

**1. d4 ♘f6 2. c4 c5 3. d5 g6 4. ♘c3 ♗g7 5. ♗g5**

*(see diagram on the right)*

**5... b5!?**

A very rare continuation with the idea of entering a favorable version of the Benko Gambit.

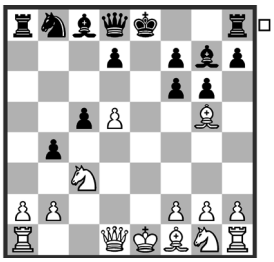


Position after: 5. ♗g5

White's dark-squared bishop is not "at home" and his queenside pawns are not protected.

**6. ♘xb5**

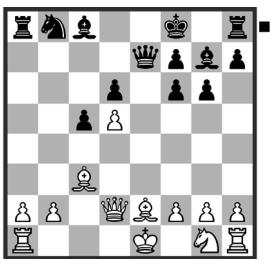
6. cxb5 a6 7. e4 [7. bxa6 ♕a5 8. ♕d2 0-0 9. e4 e6⇆] 7... axb5 8. e5 [8. ♗xf6 ♗xf6 9. ♗xb5 ♕a5 10. ♘ge2 ♗a6 11. ♗xa6 ♘xa6 12. 0-0 0-0⇆; 8. ♗xb5? ♘xe4 9. ♘xe4 ♕a5+∓] 8... b4 9. exf6 exf6



Position after: 9... exf6

Konstantin Chernyshov had this strange position in two games.

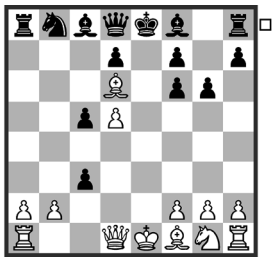
**A)** 10. ♕e2+ ♔f8 11. ♗d2 bxc3 12. ♗xc3 d6 13. ♕d2 ♕e7+ 14. ♗e2



Position after: 14. ♗e2

And here Black simply needs to finish his development to achieve a clear advantage. 14... ♕e4 ½-½ (60) Chernyshov, K (2548) – Boros, D (2443) Budapest 2005. [⌓ 14... ♘d7 15. ♘h3 ♗a6 16. ♘f4 f5∓]

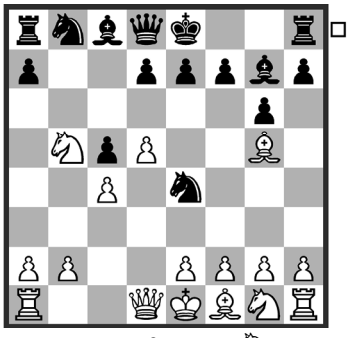
**B)** 10. ♗f4 bxc3 11. ♗d6 ♗f8



Position after: 11... ♗f8

12. ♕e2+ [12. ♗xf8? cxb2–+] 12... ♗e7 13. bxc3 ♔f8 14. ♗f4?! [14. ♗xe7+ ♕xe7 15. ♕xe7+ ♔xe7 16. ♔d2=] 14... ♔g7 15. ♕d2 ♖e8 16. ♗e2 ♗f8∞ ½-½ (34) Chernyshov, K (2558) – Fogarasi, T (2425) Budapest 2006. [⌓ 16... g5 17. ♗e3 f5 with initiative.]

**6... ♘e4**

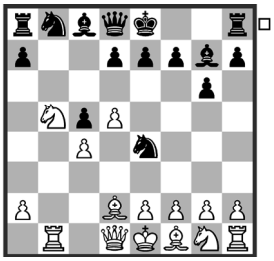


Position after: 6... ♘e4

**7. ♗f4N**

In this position I have encountered a lot of difficulties just to prove to the computer that Black has a good game with a pawn less. I think that in the end I succeeded!

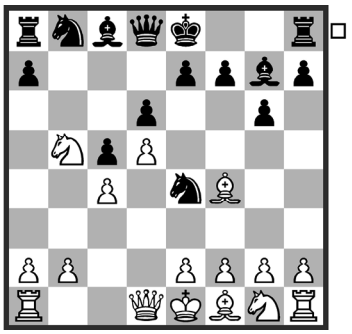
7. ♗d2 ♗xb2 8. ♖b1 ♗g7



Position after: 8... ♗g7

Black is doing fine, and if White tries 9. d6?! it may turn against him: 9... 0-0! 10. ♕c2 ♘xd6 [10... ♘xd2 11. ♕xd2 ♘c6∓] 11. ♘xd6 exd6 12. g3 ♘c6 13. ♗g2 ♖e8∞ 1-0 (39) Vaganian, R (2590) – Grigoryan, A (2452) Yerevan 2007. [Instead 13... ♗a6! gives Black a strong initiative, with threats as ...♘d4 and ...d5.]

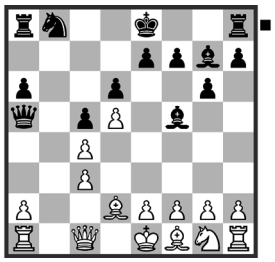
**7... d6**



Position after: 7... d6

**8. f3**

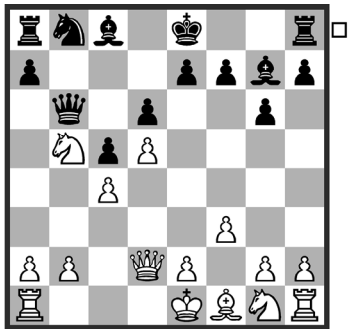
8. ♕c2 a6 9. ♘c3 ♘xc3 10. bxc3 ♗f5 11. ♕c1 [11. ♕d2 ♕a5 12. ♖c1 ♘d7 13. f3 ♗b1!∓] 11... ♕a5 12. ♗d2



Position after: 12. ♗d2

12... e5!∓ [If we don't play ...e5 on time White would consolidate his position, for example 12... 0-0 13. f3 and next e4.]

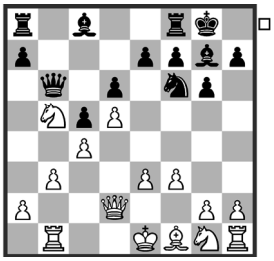
**8... ♕a5+ 9. ♗d2 ♘xd2 10. ♕xd2 ♕b6**



Position after: 10... ♕b6

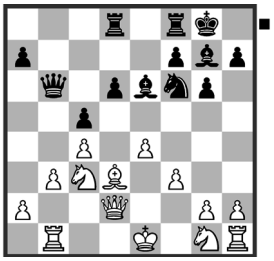
**11. e3**

**A)** 11. ♖b1 0-0 12. e3 ♘d7 13. b3 [13. ♘e2 ♗a6 transposes to 11. e3.] 13... ♘f6



Position after: 13... ♘f6

14. ♗d3 [14. e4 e6 15. dxe6 fxe6 16. ♕xd6 ♕b7∞ White has serious problems in developing his pieces.] 14... e6 15. dxe6 ♗xe6 [15... fxe6 with ...d5 to follow is also possible.] 16. e4 ♖ad8 17. ♘c3

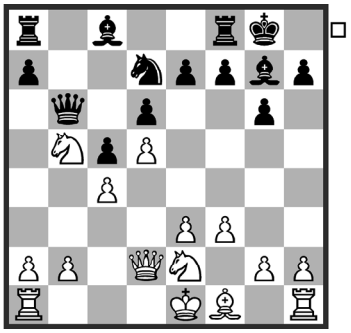


Position after: 17. ♘c3

17... d5! 18. cxd5 ♗xd5 19. ♘xd5 ♘xd5 20. exd5 ♖xd5 21. ♕c2 ♖fd8 22. ♗c4 ♖d2 23. ♕e4 [23. ♕xd2 ♖xd2 24. ♔xd2 ♕a5+ 25. b4□ ♕d8+ 26. ♔e2 ♕d4 27. ♗d3 c4∓] 23... ♕a5 24. ♔f1 ♖d1+ 25. ♔f2 ♗d4+ 26. ♔g3 ♖xb1 27. ♕xb1 ♕d2=

**B)** 11. e4 0-0 12. ♘e2 a6 13. ♘bc3 ♕b4 14. ♘c1 ♘d7∞

**11... 0-0 12. ♘e2 ♘d7**



Position after: 12... ♘d7

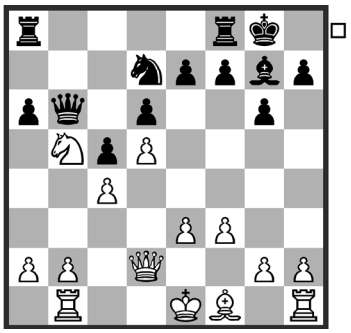
**13. ♖b1**

13. ♖c1 a6 14. ♘bc3 ♕b4 15. b3 a5⇆

**13... ♗a6 14. ♘ec3 ♗xb5 15. ♘xb5**

15. cxb5 ♕a5⇆ Our next moves will be ...♘b6 and ...c4, and after that ...a6 or ...♘a4 will give Black the advantage.

**15... a6**



Position after: 15... a6

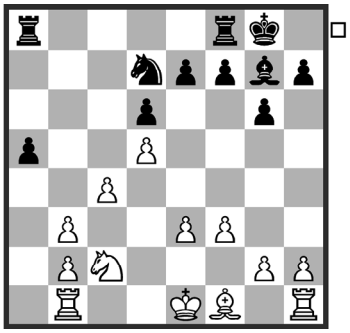
**16. ♘a3**

16. ♘c3 ♕b4⇆ Black's Dragon bishop on g7 is so strong, cutting right through

the position. White must fight for equality.

**16... ♕b4 17. ♕xb4 cxb4 18. ♘c2 b3 19. axb3 a5∞**

At the end of the story, the b3-pawn will fall. Open files and the strong g7-bishop then give Black enough compensation for the pawn.



Position after: 19... a5∞

## Conclusion

Both 5. ♗g5 and 5. ♗f4 are rare setups, used mostly by players who are used to playing like that against the King's Indian. Their idea is to play a solid game with ♘f3 and e3, but the difference compared to the King's Indian is the predefined center after …c5 and d5. Now our valuable g7-bishop becomes a Dragon! It is clear that White cannot sleep peacefully.

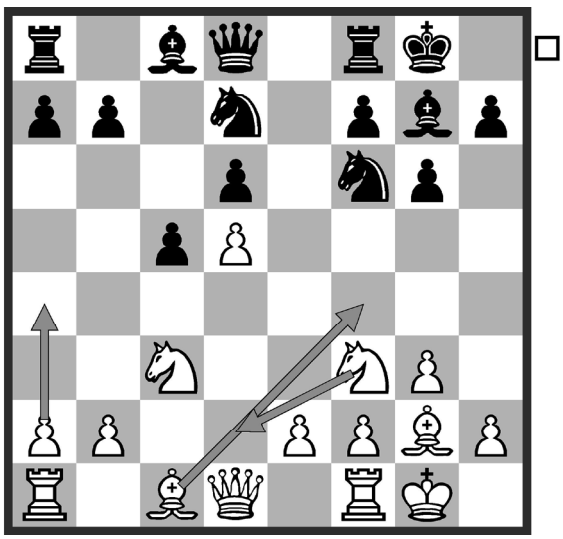
# The Fianchetto Variation

**1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 g6**

**4.♘c3 ♗g7 5.g3 0-0**

**6.♗g2 e6 7.♘f3 exd5**

**8.cxd5 d6 9.0-0 ♘bd7**



# Chapter Guide

## Chapter 2 – The Fianchetto Variation

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 g6 4.♘c3 ♗g7 5.g3 0-0 6.♗g2 e6 7.♘f3 exd5 8.cxd5 d6 9. 0-0 ♘bd7

a) 10.♘d2 ..... 23

b) 10.♗f4 ..... 27

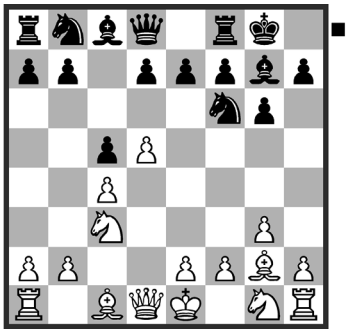
c) 10.a4 ..... 30

d) 10.a4 ♕e7 11.♖e1 ..... 34

# a) 10.♘d2

Even if the Delayed Benoni is our preferred choice, sometimes it is wiser to enter the complications of the Modern Benoni. The typical case is the Fianchetto Variation, as recommended by Boris Avrukh in his bestselling series of opening books.

**1. d4 ♘f6 2. c4 c5 3. d5 g6 4. ♘c3 ♗g7 5. g3 0-0 6. ♗g2**



Position after: 6. ♗g2

**6... e6**

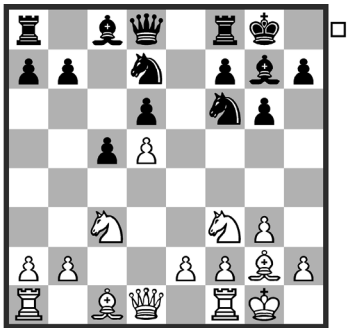
This is the tight moment for moving to a Modern cousin.

If 6... d6 7. ♘f3 e6 White can play 8. dxe6 ♗xe6 although after 9. ♘g5 ♗xc4 10. ♗xb7 ♘bd7 the position is unclear.

**7. ♘f3**

7. dxe6 dxe6 is harmless.

**7... exd5 8. cxd5 d6 9. 0-0 ♘bd7**



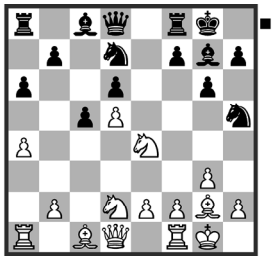
Position after: 9... ♘bd7

This move became popular lately.

**10. ♘d2 ♘h5!?**

Black's idea: to grab some space on the kingside if White lets him. According to that scenario, he will achieve a strong outpost for the knight on e5 and all other pieces would aim at White's king! An important nuance is omitting …a6, which White would meet with a4. In that case, White would achieve a strong outpost on c4 for a knight, just as in Nikolic – De Firmian (see below).

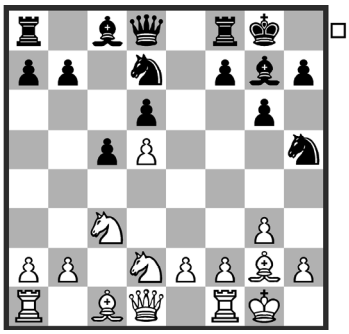
10... a6 11. a4 ♘h5 12. ♘ce4!



Position after: 12. ♘ce4!

12... ♘df6 [12... ♘e5 13. f4 ♘g4 14. ♘c4±] 13. ♘xf6+ ♗xf6 14. ♘c4± Nikolic – De Firmian, Wijk aan Zee 1986.

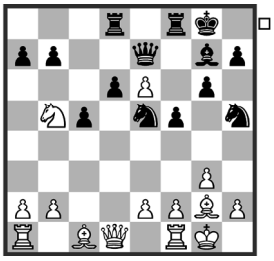
Back to 10... ♘h5.



Position after: 10... ♘h5!?

**11. a4**

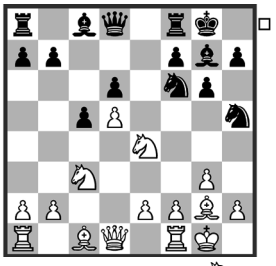
**A)** 11. ♘b5 ♘e5 12. ♘e4 f5 13. ♘g5 [13. ♘exd6? a6 14. ♘xc8 axb5∓] 13... ♕e7 14. ♘e6 ♗xe6 15. dxe6 ♖ad8



Position after: 15... ♖ad8

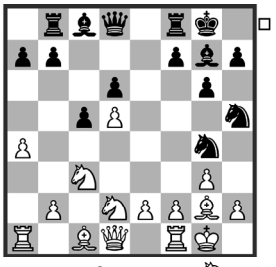
16. ♕d5 [16. ♕b3 d5! 17. ♗xd5 a6 18. ♘c3 b5⩱] 16... ♘f6 17. ♕xb7 ♕xe6 18. ♕xa7 ♘e4⩲ Black has a strong initiative.

**B)** 11. ♘de4 ♘df6



Position after: 11... ♘df6

**B1)** If 12. ♘d2 Black can avoid repetition of moves by 12... ♖b8 13. a4 ♘g4!?



Position after: 13... ♘g4!?

14. ♘c4 [14. e4 f5! 15. exf5 ♗xf5 16. h3 ♘e5∞ And now 17. g4? is wrong because of 17... ♘f4–+.] 14... ♘e5 15. ♘xe5 ♗xe5 16. f4 ♗g7 17. e4 a6∞

**B2)** 12. ♗g5 h6 13. ♘xf6+ ♘xf6 14. ♗d2 ♖e8 15. h3 ♗f5= 1-0 (63) De Firmian, N (2520) – Djuric, S (2435) New York 1986.

**B3)** 12. ♘xf6+ ♘xf6= [12... ♕xf6=]

**C)** 11. ♘ce4 Without ...a6 and a4 there is not much sense in this now. 11... ♘e5⇆