

Reloaded Weapons in the Benoni

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Milos Pavlovic

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Key to Symbols used

!	a good move	+—	White has a decisive advantage
?	a weak move	—+	Black has a decisive advantage
!!	an excellent move	→	with an attack
??	a blunder	↑	with an initiative
!?	an interesting move	↔	with counterplay
?!	a dubious move	Δ	with the idea of
□	only move	△	better is
=	equality	≤	worse is
∞	unclear position	N	novelty
±	White stands slightly better	+	check
∓	Black stands slightly better	#	mate
±	White has a serious advantage	∞	with compensation for the sacrificed material
∓	Black has a serious advantage		

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Preface

Have no doubts, the Benoni is by far the sharpest opening Black can play, even sharper than the Sicilian! As readers will see, the positions are unbalanced from an early stage on with many sacrifices for both sides being present. Such richness of ideas you will rarely find in other openings. The Benoni belongs to the romantic kind of openings, hardly predictable and difficult to assess, even for our engines. That doesn't mean you can play with your "hands in your pocket".

On the contrary, to play and understand the Benoni you have to know and understand the theoretical plans, to an almost perfect level. Equally important is to understand the dynamics of chess. Often our pawn structure may be changed at an early stage, tactics lurking everywhere, exchange sacrifices being present etc...

The most famous practitioners of the Benoni such as Tal, Kasparov, Gelfand, Velimirovic, Psakhis, Nunn, Suba etc., are also well-known theoreticians. It is also important to mention Gashimov who did a tremendous job in finding new ideas in the Benoni and many found their place here in this book.

Black is willingly abandoning the centre by exchanging the e-pawn for the d-pawn, but hoping that with such an imbalanced approach he will bring his counter play to another level. Not many players remained with this approach their whole careers, even Tal used to "soften" his repertoire and combined with the Nimzo-Indian. My ex-trainer Velimirovic is one of the few who played all kinds of Benoni's during his whole life.

For some reason the Benoni was very popular among grandmasters from the former Yugoslav Republic such as Matulovic, Ljubojevic, Barlov, Cebalo, Hulak, Cvitan... just to name few. Even Gligoric used it, influenced by his second at that time, who was no other but Velimirovic himself!

This time my goal was to write a theoretical book as precise as possible, simply because of the nature of this opening. To understand it properly, you must understand it as precise as possible. There is not much room for different ideas, which I presented in my Grünfeld and King's Indian books. To find the correct counter play you need to be really accurate!

The most difficult line to counter was the aggressive 'Taimanov f4' followed by ♖b5+. That is a line that many avoid by simply using the Nimzo-Indian move order, waiting for ♗f3 and only then ...c5.

I separated the 'Yugoslav-Benoni' from the rest of the book because of the different nature of the reached positions. White has an extra option by taking on d5 with the e-pawn, but Black on the other hand avoids certain lines such as ♖f4 and ♖b5+, for instance. Every used move-order has pros and cons, so I tried to bring new life into those positions for Black.

Perhaps some readers will be surprised that I only presented one Sämisch line (f3 and fast Ng3 line). The reason being simple: in my previous book on the King's Indian I already analysed some other Sämisch-Benoni type of positions. Every time Black plays '...c5' in the King's Indian there is a very good possibility that positions will transpose to the Benoni.

I also added some extra's: appendix 1 is a kind of 'transposing type of play', while in appendix 2 I found an interesting way for Black when White has no intention playing 'd5'. In my King's Indian book I covered the same line but sacrificed a pawn with 8...d6, while here I concentrated on 8...♔a5!

I hope you will enjoy my presented work,

Milos Pavlovic, Belgrade June 2017.

PART I

CLASSICAL BENONI

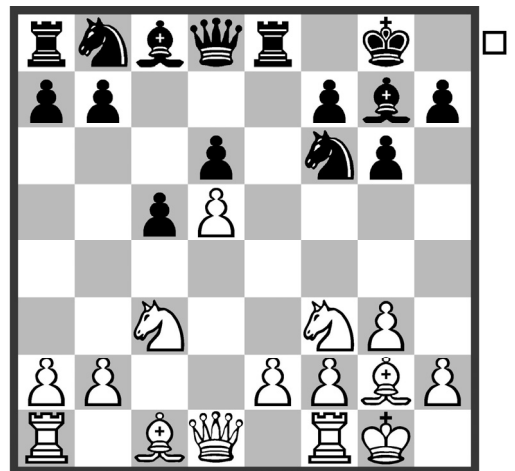
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Chapter 1

The Fianchetto System

1. d4 ♘f6 2. c4 c5 3. d5 e6
4. ♘c3 exd5 5. cxd5 d6 6.
♘f3 g6 7. g3 ♙g7 8. ♙g2
0-0 9. 0-0 ♖e8



Chapter's guide

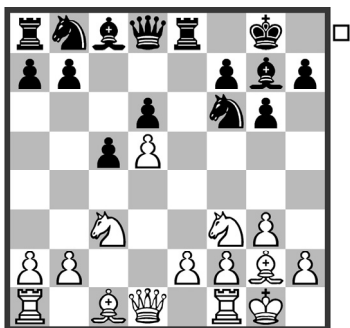
Chapter I – The Fianchetto System

6. f3 g6 7. g3 g7 8. g2 0-0 9. 0-0 e8

- 1) 10. e1 13
- 2) 10. d2 bd7 17
- a) 11. other moves & 11. a4 b6 12. h3 a6 13. other moves
- b) 11. a4 b6 12. h3 a6 13. f4
- 3) 10. f4 e4 11. xe4 xe4 12. d2 xf4 13. gxf4 xb2
14. b1 g7 24
- a) 15. e1
- b) 15. c4
- c) 15. e4
- 4) 10. f4 a6 11. a4 c7 35
- a) 12. h3
- b) 12. c1
- c) 12. d2

I) The Fianchetto System 9... ♖e8 10. ♖e1

1. d4 ♘f6 2. c4 c5 3. d5 e6 4. ♘c3
exd5 5. cxd5 d6 6. ♘f3 g6 7. g3 ♙g7 8.
♙g2 0-0 9. 0-0 ♖e8



Position after: 9... ♖e8

The best move order, because it does not allow any e4-ideas.

10. ♖e1

An important line that recently gained some popularity. It was well known but didn't bring White much. The idea is similar to ♙f4, but instead White plays preparatory moves with ♖e1 and h3.

10. h3 ♘bd7!? 11. ♙f4 (11. a4 ♘e4↔)
11... ♘b6!? 12. a4 ♘e4 13. ♘xe4
♖xe4 14. a5 ♘c4↔

10... a6 11. a4 ♘bd7

I consider this as the best set-up for Black.

12. h3

There are a few alternatives that we need to analyse:

A) 12. ♙f4



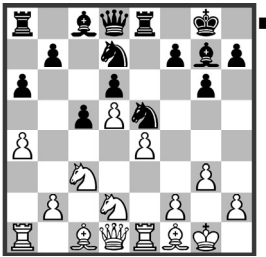
Position after: 12. ♙f4

A1) 12... ♘h5 13. ♙g5 ♖c7 14. a5
♖b8 15. ♖c2 b5 16. axb6 ♖xb6 17.
♖a2 h6 18. ♙d2 ♖b3!? (18... ♘hf6
19. h3 c4 20. ♖c1 ♘c5?! 21. ♙xh6
♙xh6 22. ♖xh6 ♘ce4 23. e3 ♘xc3
24. bxc3 ♖b3 25. ♖aa1 ♖xc3 26.
♖f4 ♘xd5 27. ♖xd6± 1-0 (43)
Cheparinov, I (2669) – Vallejo Pons, F
(2724) Baku 2011) 19. ♖xb3 ♖xb3∞

A2) 12... ♘g4 13. ♖c2!?N ♘ge5 14.
♘d2 ♖b8 15. a5 b5 16. axb6 ♖xb6
17. ♖a2±

A3) 12... ♖c7 see 10. ♙f4. Also other options exist here for Black:

B) 12. e4 This move leads to some interesting positions: 12... ♘g4 13. ♘d2
♘ge5 14. ♙f1



Position after: 14. Qf1

B1) 14... g5 In the Benoni spirit! 15. h3



Position after: 15. h3

B1.1) 15... Qf8!? 16. f4 gxf4 17. gxf4 Qeg6 18. Qf3 (18. f5 Qe5 19. Wh5 Qfd7 20. Re2 Qh8 21. Rg2 Rg8 22. Qdb1 Qf6 23. We2 Qd7 24. Qf4 We7 25. Qd2 Qe8) 18... f5

B1.2) 15... Wf6 16. Wh5 h6 (16... Qf8 17. Qd1 Qfg6 18. Qe3±; or: 16... Qh6 17. Qd1 g4 18. Qe3 Qxe3 19. Rxe3 Wg7 20. hxg4 Qxg4 21. Rc3 Qdf6 22. Wh1 Re5) 0-1 (34) Troff, K (2532) – Nakamura, H (2798) Saint Louis 2015) 17. Qd1 Wd8 18. Qe3 Qf6 19. Wd1 b6 20. Rb1 h5 21. b3 g4 22. hxg4 Qxg4 23. Qxg4 hxg4 24.

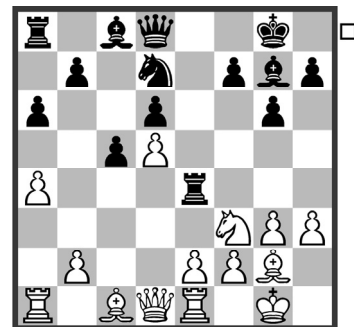
Qb2 Qfd7 25. Qe2 Wg5 0-1 (56) Bai, J (2518) – Ding Liren (2755) China 2015.

B2) Also possible and equally good is: 14... Qf8 15. a5 g5 16. f4 (16. h3 Qfg6) 16... gxf4 17. gxf4 Qg4 18. Qf3 f5 19. h3 fxe4 20. Qxe4 Qf6 21. Qg3 Qd7 22. f5 Rxe1 23. Wxe1 Qb5 24. Qg2 h6 25. Ra3 Wd7 26. Qh2 Re8 ½-½ (34) Ding, L (2755) – Grischuk, A (2794) Tsaghkadzor 2015.

12... Qe4

Only now I think this is the best.

13. Qxe4 Rxe4



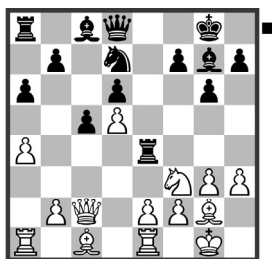
Position after: 13... Rxe4

14. Qg5

Black has three possibilities all leading to complicated positions:

A) 14. Qg5 Rb4

B) 14. Wc2

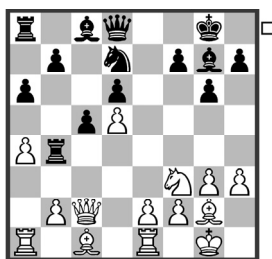


Position after: 14. ♖c2

B1) 14... ♗e7 This move is not the best and it doesn't look natural: 15. ♙d2 ♜f6?! (15... ♜b6 16. ♙c3 a5 17. ♗b3 ♗d8 18. ♜d2 ♞e8 19. e4±) 16. ♙c3! (16. ♜h4 ♙d7 17. ♙c3 ♞e8 18. ♙xe4 ♜xe4 19. ♙xg7 ♜xg7± ½-½ (29) Razuvaev, Y (2520) – Tal, M (2620) Moscow 1983) 16... ♙d7 (16... ♙f5 17. ♜g5!+-) 17. ♜h2 ♞e8 18. ♙xe4 ♜xe4 19. ♙xg7 ♜xg7 20. ♞a3 ♗f6 21. ♜f3±

B2) 14... ♞e8 15. ♙f4 ♗c7 16. ♜d2 ♜e5 17. b4 c4 18. ♞a3 ♙f5 19. e4 ♙d7 20. ♙xe5 ♙xe5 21. ♗xc4 ♞ac8 22. ♙f1 ♗b6 23. ♗a2 ♞c3∞ ½-½ (63) Smejkal, J (2515) – Gruenberg, H (2475) Prague 1989.

B3) 14... ♞b4

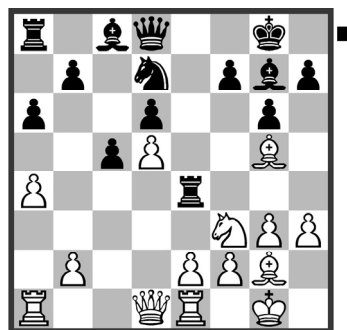


Position after: 14... ♞b4

The main idea, although the alternatives were decent as well.

B3.1) 15. e4 ♞b8 16. ♞a2 b5 17. ♙f4 ♗c7 18. axb5 ♞8xb5 19. ♞b1 ♗b8 20. ♜d2 ♜e5 21. ♙f1 c4 22. ♜g2 (22. ♙xe5 ♙xe5 23. ♜xc4 ♞c5 24. ♞a4 ♙xh3 25. ♙xh3 ♞cxc4 26. ♗xc4 ♞xc4 27. ♞xc4 ♗b3±) 22... ♜d3 23. ♙xd3 cxd3 24. ♗xd3 f5 25. f3 fxe4 26. fxe4 ♞c5∞

B3.2) 15. ♞a2 ♜b6!? (15... b5 16. axb5 ♞xb5 17. ♙d2 ♜e5 18. ♜h2 with an unclear position ½-½ (18) Tkachiev, V (2672) – Gdanski, J (2528) Ohrid 2001.) 16. ♜d2 ♙d7 17. a5 ♜a4 18. ♜e4 b5 19. axb6 (19. ♜xd6 ♗f8 20. ♜e4 ♙f5 21. g4 ♙xe4 22. ♙xe4 ♗d6∞) 19... ♗xb6 20. ♙g5 f5 21. ♜f6+ ♙xf6 22. ♙xf6 ♞f8 23. ♙c3 f4!? 24. g4 ♜xc3 25. bxc3 ♞b5 26. ♙e4 c4 27. ♙xg6 hxg6 28. ♗xg6+ ♜h8=

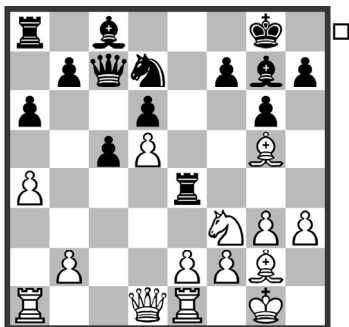


Position after: 14. ♙g5

14... ♗c7!?

A) 14... ♖e8 Not the best in my opinion: 15. ♜a2 h6 16. ♙f4 ♖e7 17. b3 g5 18. ♙c1 c4 19. bxc4 ♜xc4 20. ♘d2 ♜c7 21. ♙b2 ♘e5 22. ♖b3 ♙d7 23. f4 ♘g6 24. ♙xg7 ♙xg7 25. ♖b6 ♜ac8 26. ♘e4± ½-½ (28) Razuvaev, Y (2495) – Romanishin, O (2585) Novi Sad 1982.

B) 14... ♖f8!? 15. ♖c2 ♜b4 (15... ♜e8 16. e4 h6 17. ♙d2±) 16. ♜a2 ♙h6!? A paradoxal idea but it is important to keep a strong outpost for the Rook on b4. 17. ♙d2 ♙xd2 18. ♘xd2 a5 19. ♘c4 (19. e4 ♘b6 20. b3 ♙d7∞) 19... b6 20. e4 ♙a6 21. ♙f1 ♙xc4 22. ♙xc4 ♘e5 23. ♙e2 g5∞ We reached a typical Benoni position.



Position after: 14... ♖c7!?

15. ♖c2

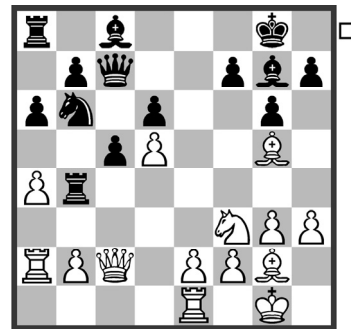
The alternative leads to interesting play as well: 15. ♘d2!?

A) 15... ♜e8 16. ♖c2 (16. ♘c4 ♘b6∞) 16... h6 17. ♙f4 (17. ♙e3 ♜xe3! 18. fxe3 ♘e5∞) 17... ♘e5 18.

b4 c4 19. ♜a3 ♙f5 20. e4 ♙d7 21. ♙xe5 ♙xe5 22. ♖xc4 ♜ac8! 23. ♖xc7 ♜xc7∞

B) 15... ♜b4!? 16. b3!? h6! 17. ♙e3 ♜b8 18. ♜a2 b5 19. ♖c2 (19. axb5 ♜8xb5∞) 19... ♘f6 20. axb5 axb5∞

15... ♜b4 16. ♜a2 ♘b6!?



Position after: 16... ♘b6!?

Basically Black is ready for an exchange sacrifice.

17. e4 ♙d7 18. a5

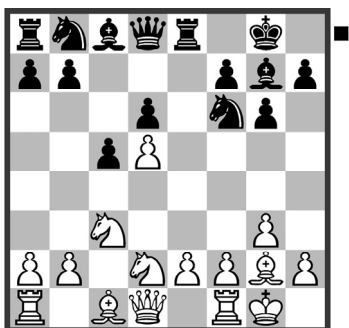
18. b3 c4 19. a5 (19. ♘d2 ♜c8 20. a5 cxb3 21. ♖xc7 ♜xc7 22. axb6 ♜c1!!-+) 19... ♖c8 20. bxc4 ♘xc4 21. ♜c1 ♖e8 22. ♙f1 ♜c8∞

18... ♘c4 19. b3 ♘xa5 20. ♙d2 ♖b6 21. ♙xb4 cxb4∞

2) The Fianchetto System 9... ♖e8 10. ♘d2 ♘bd7

2a) 11. other moves & 11. a4 b6
12. h3 a6 13. other moves

1. d4 ♘f6 2. c4 c5 3. d5 e6 4. ♘c3
exd5 5. cxd5 d6 6. ♘f3 g6 7. g3 ♙g7 8.
♙g2 0-0 9. 0-0 ♖e8 10. ♘d2



Position after: 10. ♘d2

No doubt this is still a very important line in the Fianchetto line. The Knight is heading for the c4-square. The difference from the other lines is that White keeps his pawn on 'e2' for a long time, limiting his pressure in the center. That is really in the spirit of slow positional play.

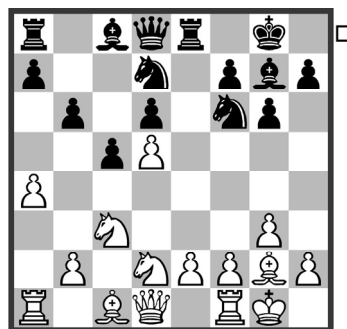
On the other hand without pawns in the center it is more difficult to put pressure, enabling Black to develop smoothly. In this line I decided to use a line that Gashimov invented. I think it is highly interesting.

10... ♘bd7 11. a4

A) 11. h3 a6 12. a4 b6 transposes to the main line.

B) 11. ♘c4 ♘b6 12. ♘e3 (12. ♘xb6 ♙xb6 13. ♙c2 ♙d7 14. h3 ♙a6 15. a4 b5 16. ♙f4 b4 17. ♘b5 ♘h5! 18. ♘c7 ♙xe2 19. ♙xe2 ♖xe2 20. ♘xa8 ♘xf4 21. gxf4 ♖xb2 22. ♘c7 b3 23. ♘b5 c4 24. ♖ac1 ♙b5 25. axb5 c3) 12... ♘g4 13. ♘xg4 ♙xg4 14. h3 ♙d7 15. ♙c2 ♖c8 16. ♙f4 ♙e7 17. ♖ad1 ♘c4! 18. e4 b5 Black is fine.

11... b6!?

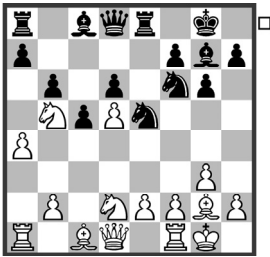


Position after: 11... b6!

That's the starting point of the line and Gashimov's idea: '... ♙a6' is still possible. Also it prevents the positional 'a5' idea as Black would also answer '... ♙a6' with the idea '... b5'.

12. h3

The direct attempt doesn't bring anything: 12. ♘b5 ♘e5

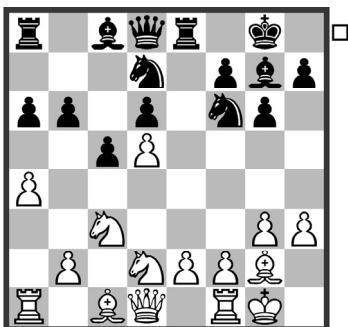


Position after: 12... Nxe5

A) 13. b3 a6 14. Nc3 Bb8 15. Bb1 b5 16. axb5 axb5 17. b4 Qf5 18. Bb3 Qd7 19. Qb2 Nc4 20. Qc1 Ne5 21. Qb2 Qh3 22. Qa1 c4 23. Ba3 Ba8 24. Bxa8 Bxa8 25. Qb2 h5 A famous game that actually showed the strenght of the '...b6' idea: 0-1 (38) Nikolic, P (2602) – Gashimov, V (2740) Germany 2010.

B) 13. f4 Qeg4 14. Nc4 Ne4! 15. Qxe4 Bxe4 16. Ncxd6 (16. Qd3 Qf5 17. Nbxid6 Bxc4; 16. Nbxid6 Bd4 17. Qb3 Qa6) 16... Bd4 17. Qb3 Bb4 18. Qf3 a6 19. Nxc8 axb5 20. Qxg4 bxa4 21. Nxb6 Qxb6

12... a6



Position after: 12... a6

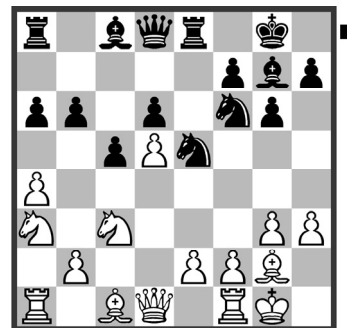
Black prepares ...Bb8 not allowing any a5-ideas.

13. Nc4

A) Also possible is: 13. Bb1 Ne5 (13... Qe7 14. Nc4 Ne5 15. Nxb6 Bb8 16. Nxc8 Bxc8 17. b3 Ne5 18. Qd2) 14. Qc2 (14. e4 Ne5) 14... f5 15. Nc4 Ne5 16. b3 Ba7 17. e3 Bf7 18. Ne2 b5 (18... g5 19. f4 gxf4 20. gxf4 Ng6 21. Qf3 Nf6 22. b4 Nh4 23. Qh1 b5 24. axb5 axb5 25. Na5 Ne4 26. Nc6 Qb6) 19. axb5 axb5 20. Nxe5 Qxe5 21. b4 c4 22. Qb2 f4!? 23. exf4 (23. Qxe5 dxe5) 23... Qf5 24. Qd1 Qg7

B) 13. f4 is the next subchapter.

13... Ne5 14. Na3



Position after: 14. Na3

14... Nh5

Best, but I decided to give some other ideas as well, the positions are dynamic and still quite unexplored, many new ideas are possible.