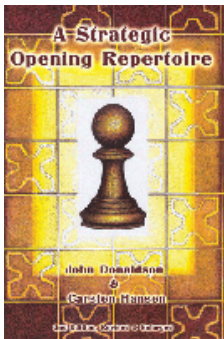




COLUMNISTS

Checkpoint

Carsten Hansen



Rating Chart

- ♦ – A poor book
- ♦♦ – Not very good
- ♦♦♦ – A useful book
- ♦♦♦♦ – A good book
- ♦♦♦♦♦ – An excellent book



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**Reviewed this month:**

*The Fabulous Budapest Gambit*  
by Viktor Moskalenko

*Dangerous Weapons: The Benoni and Benko*  
by Palliser, Emms, Ward, & Jones

*Albin's Countergambit for Experts (DVD)*  
by Rustam Kasimdzhanov

*The ABC of the Modern Benoni (DVD)*  
by Andrew Martin

*Starting Out: The Modern*  
by Nigel Davies

**En Passant**

*Chesspublishing.com: Nimzo & Benoni*  
by John Emms

1 d4 Fireworks

This month we look at a number of recent publications on some of the sharpest responses to 1 d4. While these openings are not particularly popular at top level, they can be found in the repertoires of resourceful players such as Topalov, Carlsen, Radjabov, Mamedyarov, Morozevich and others. It is great that openings that have been cast aside as unplayable or dubious are still being used by some of the strongest players today.

*The Fabulous Budapest Gambit*, by Viktor Moskalenko, New In Chess 2007, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Paperback, 241pp., \$24.95

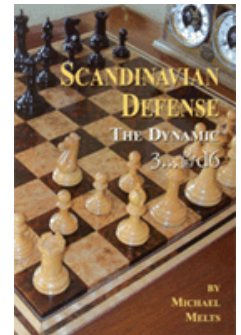
The Budapest Gambit arises after 1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e5. It is a rare guest in the games of top players, and books about the opening are even rarer. Still, it is quite popular at the club level and on the Internet. The author is a grandmaster from the Ukraine who has been living in Spain since 2000.

The material is divided as follows:

- Presentation (1 page)
- Introduction (2 pages)
- Statistics Report (4 pages)
- 1 Bishops against Knights (88 pages)
- 2 Pawns Against Pieces (50 pages)
- 3 Classical Style (30 pages)
- 4 War and Peace (14 pages)



Check out these bestselling titles from [USCFSales.com](#):



[Scandinavian Defense: The Dynamic 3...Qd6](#)  
by Michael Melts



[The Fearsome Four Pawns Attack](#)  
by Jerzy Konikowski & Marek Soszynski

Read an excerpt [here](#).



[The Modern Morra Gambit](#)  
by Hannes Langrock

- 5 Black Knight Fiction (38 pages)
- Epilogue (1 page)
- A brief biography of the Author (1 page)
- New In Chess Code System (1 page)

Each of the five chapters contains two or three “sub-chapters” that are bound by a common theme. While the chapter names are fun and different, they are difficult to decode, and the absence of an index of variations makes this book remarkably difficult to navigate. Locating a particular line can take a fair amount of time, especially if a position is reached via a transposition. There is no logical explanation for this omission, so it certainly creates a negative impression.

In the introduction, Moskalenko writes: “The Budapest Gambit has maintained its good reputation until the present day. Its prestige is defended by great masters like Peter Svidler, Nigel Short, Vladimir Epishin, Ian Rogers, Jeroen Piket, Normunds Miezis, Boris Savchenko, Shakhriyar Mamedyarov. Georg Mohr and many other high-level players.” And later in the book he writes, “By the way, Veselin Topalov played a BG against Alexey Dreev in 1989!” Yet, the fact that Topalov used the opening once to surprise a higher-rated opponent in an U20 tournament is more or less irrelevant. As for the other players he mentions, most have not played the opening in decades; only Miezis, Savchenko, and Mamedyarov have played it since 2005.

The Budapest Gambit is reasonably solid and if White doesn't play carefully, he can get into trouble very quickly. Just a few days ago, Mamedyarov used the opening thrice in the Tal Memorial Blitz tournament in Moscow, so let's have a brief look at his efforts and compare his choices with the book.

#### ***Tkachiev-Mamedyarov***

Tal Memorial Blitz (5)

**1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e5 3 dxe5 Ng4 4 Nf3 Bc5 5 e3 Nc6 6 Nc3 0-0 7 Be2  
Ngxe5 8 Nxe5 Nxe5 9 0-0 Re8 10 b3 a5 11 Na4**



Moskalenko now recommends 11...Bf8, as does ECO, leading to approximately equal chances. However, Mamedyarov plays a move that Moskalenko deems less accurate.

**11...Ba7 12 Bb2**

White has a small advantage, because it blocks the rook on a8 and it can be cut off with c4-c5 (Moskalenko).

**12...d6 13 c5 Bd7**

I think 13...Bf5 14 cxd6 cxd6 is more promising for Black than the game continuation, offering Black excellent compensation for his inferior pawn structure.

**14 cxd6 Bxa4**

This works out reasonably well in the game, but 14...Bc6 15 dxc7 Qxc7 is objectively better, though White still has an edge after 16 Qc2.

**15 bxa4**

My computer calls for the materialistic 15 dxc7 Qxc7 16 bxa4, and it is doubtful Black has anywhere near full compensation for the pawn.

**15...cxd6 16 Rb1 Rb8 17 Qd5 Bc5 18 Rfd1**

White has an edge, but later lost after entering a bad endgame.

### *Ivanchuk-Mamedyarov*

Tal Memorial Blitz (10)

**1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e5 3 dxe5 Ng4 4 Nf3 Bc5 5 e3 Nc6 6 Be2 0–0 7 0–0  
Ngxe5 8 Nxe5 Nxe5 9 Nc3 Re8 10 Rb1**

This just leads to a transposition; White normally plays 10 a3 in this line.

**10...a5 11 a3 d6**

Another option for Black is 11...b6 12 f4 with unclear play, according to Moskalenko. However, this is a fairly dubious claim; for instance, after 12...Ng6 13 b4! axb4 14 axb4 Bxe3+ (14...Bf8 is of course also possible, but doesn't inspire much confidence) 15 Bxe3 Rxe3 16 Qd2 Qe8 17 Rbe1!, Black is beginning to feel the consequences of being behind in development: 17...Bb7 18 Bf3! Rxe1 19 Rxe1 Qb8 20 Bxb7 Qxb7 21 f5 Nf8 22 f6!, and White is much better thanks to his initiative on the kingside and Black's offside pieces on the queenside.

**12 b4**



**12...axb4**

This move isn't discussed by Moskalenko. Here he quotes one of his own games that continued 12...Ba7 with complicated play and chances for both sides.

**13 axb4 Ba7 14 Qc2 Be6?!**

14...c6!? looks like a good choice, e.g.

15 Bb2 Qg5 16 Kh1 Qh4 with a strong initiative for Black.

**15 Nb5! Bb8 16 Rd1**

White can probably claim an edge with 16 f4 Nc6 17 f5 Bd7 18 f6.

**16...Qf6 17 Bb2 Bf5 18 e4 Bg6 19 f3 c6 20 Nc3 h5**

And Black has a comfortable game; the game was eventually drawn.

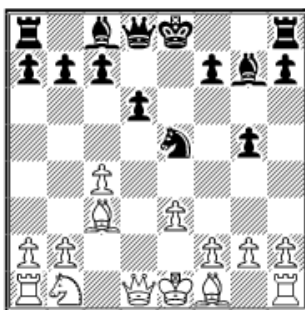
### *Eljanov-Mamedyarov*

Tal Memorial Blitz (19)

**1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e5 3 dxe5 Ng4 4 Bf4 g5 5 Bd2**

The main line move is 5 Bg3.

**5...Nxe5 6 Bc3 Nbc6 7 e3 d6 8 Nf3 Bg7 9 Nxe5 Nxe5**



Because of the absence of an index of variations and several possible transpositions, it took some effort to confirm that this position actually matched one in the book.

**10 Be2**

About this move Moskalenko writes, "Maintaining a small positional advantage, but missing a tactical

possibility: 10 f4!? gxf4 11 exf4 Bg4?? 12 Be2 and White wins a piece without compensation: 12...Qh4+ 13 g3 Qh3 14 fxe5 +— Campero-Llorens, Santiago 1999. However, this is not so clear if Black plays 11... Rg8 12 fxe5 Qh4+ 13 Kd2 Bf5 14 Kc1 0–0–0.” This line is given without an evaluation, and though White is a piece up, Black has reasonable compensation. For example, 15 e6 fxe6 16 Bxg7 Rxd7 17 Nc3, and White still has to untangle his pieces and start consolidating, while all Black’s pieces are developed.

### 10...0–0 11 0–0 Qe7

Moskalenko only offers 11...g4! “with counterplay.” This claim looks perfectly reasonable; however, how is White “maintaining a small positional advantage,” if Black can obtain adequate counterplay just two moves later?

### 12 Nd2

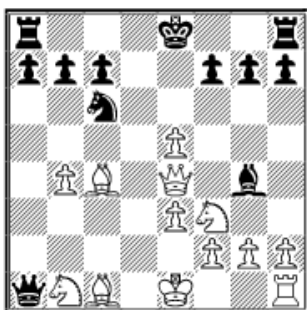
White should probably have opted for 12 f4!?, e.g. 12...Ng6 13 Qd3 Re8 14 Bxg7 Kxg7 15 f5 (Here 15 Qd4+ Kg8 is fine for Black, and 15 Nc3 Qxe3+ 16 Qxe3 Rxe3 17 fxg5 Re5 promises Black better chances) 15... Qxe3+ 16 Qxe3 Rxe3 17 Kf2 Rxe2+ 18 Kxe2 Nf4+ 19 Kd2 Bxf5 20 Nc3 Be6, and with two pawns for the exchange, Black should not have anything to worry about, even if my computer claims an edge for White.

### 12...b6 13 Nf3 Bb7 14 Nxe5 dxe5 15 Qb3 Rad8 16 Rad1 c5 17 Rxd8 Rxd8 18 Rd1 f5

Black has the initiative and duly won the game.


It might only be Blitz, but scoring 2½ points in three games with this opening at this level is pretty impressive. Even Ivanchuk didn’t get anything out of the opening. As we can see, the book also matched up reasonably well with the games and my analysis.

The last chapter of the book is devoted to the Fajarowicz Gambit, where Black plays the sharper 3...Ne4. This is considered rather dubious by most. The bibliography mentions Gutman’s book from 2004, but not Harding’s work from 1996, *The Fighting Fajarowicz*. Thus, in the line 1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e5 3 dxe5 Ne4 4 Nf3 Nc6 5 a3 d6 6 Qc2 d5 7 e3 Bg4 8 cxd5 Qxd5 9 Bc4 Qa5+ 10 b4 Bxb4+ 11 axb4 Qxa1 12 Qxe4



Moskalenko only mentions 12...Bh5, as in the well-known game Bisguier-Ljubojevic, where White quickly gained a winning advantage. However, Harding analyzed some correspondence games by John Gibson, where Black played the better 12...Bxf3.

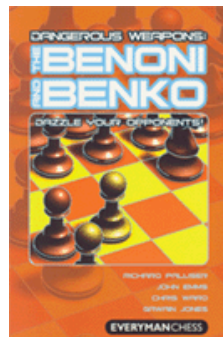
Overall, this book offers plenty of prose and original analysis. The main games are generally well-chosen and the supporting analysis is more than adequate, if not entirely flawless or even fully objective. For fans of this opening, the book is a must buy. For others the book can be a worthwhile investment because there are many ideas and improvements suggested for White. A careful study of the book will give you a better grasp of this opening and teach you about chess in general.

My assessment of this book: 

*The Fabulous Budapest Gambit*  
by Viktor Moskalenko

*Dangerous Weapons: The Benoni and Benko*, by Richard Palliser, John Emms, Chris Ward, & Gawain Jones, Everyman Chess 2008, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Paperback, 270pp., \$25.95

As Richard Palliser points out in the preface to this book, “[O]ne might consider both the Modern Benoni and the Benko Gambit to be dangerous weapons in their own right.” True, indeed some of the other lines covered in this book, such as the Blumenfeld Gambit, Snake Benoni or the Pseudo-Blumenfeld Gambit are even sharper or decidedly more dangerous weapons. A move is considered a “dangerous weapon” if it meets the following criteria:



- Moves that create complex, original positions full of razor-sharp tactics and rich positional ideas where creative, attacking play is rewarded; moves which are new, rare or very fresh, leaving plenty of scope for research.
- Moves that are highly ambitious; ones which aim for total domination.
- Moves that have been previously ignored, discarded or discredited by theory, perhaps unfairly so or maybe for the wrong reasons.
- Moves that are visually shocking; moves which seem to contradict the laws of the game.

With the above in mind, it is also reasonable to expect that not all the ideas may be perfectly sound, or could actually be just as dangerous for you as for the opponent, but hopefully having read the book will put you a better position.

The contents are divided as follows:

- Preface (2 pages)
- Series Introduction (4 pages)
- 1 A Troublesome Check (20 pages)
- 2 The Sosonko-Kramnik Gambit (12 pages)
- 3 Radjabov’s Extended Queenside Fianchetto (19 pages)
- 4 Not Castling in the Modern Classical (16 pages)
- 5 Epishin’s Deadly 8 Qe2 (20 pages)
- 6 A Direct and Powerful h-pawn Advance (16 pages)
- 7 Killing the Snake (20 pages)
- 8 The Super Extended Fianchetto (18 pages)
- 9 Adventures in the Blumenfeld Accepted (16 pages)
- 10 A Paradoxical Bishop Retreat (12 pages)
- 11 Tromping the Benko (33 pages)
- 12 Central Control (17 pages)
- 13 Dark-Square Magic (14 pages)
- 14 The Pseudo-Blumenfeld Gambit (25 pages)
- Index of Variations (1 page)
- Index of Games (1 page)

I omitted the opening moves for the individual ideas, as I do not want to give away too many of the book’s secrets. While the openings covered in this volume are not that popular at top level, they have a steady following and are often played as surprise weapons. For example, Carlsen has dabbled with the Benko Gambit, though not with great success. The Blumenfeld Gambit has seen an upsurge in popularity of late and is played regularly by Nisipeanu, even though it is generally deemed too risky by most players.

While going over the ideas for the Modern Benoni, it struck me that nothing has been offered for Black in what is generally considered the critical line against this opening, namely the Taimanov Variation: 1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 Nc3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 e4 g6 7 f4 Bg7 8 Bb5+.

Instead they have focused on lines where White plays an early Nf3. The authors may have deemed that unorthodox tries against the Taimanov are indeed only dangerous for Black, and therefore should be avoided.

As you can see from the above list, nearly all the chapters are twenty pages or less, which is appropriate in order to cover the suggested ideas. The chapter on 4 Bg5 against the Benko Gambit could have been trimmed a bit, but overall the space is well-used throughout.

I like this series of books and this particular volume is one of the most creative in the entire series. The authors have shown a great amount of imagination in their selection of variations, which makes these openings even more fascinating. Should you play any of these openings as either black or white, buy this book! You will not regret it. Even if you decide against playing the lines presented, which I very much doubt, just working over the variations is an excellent training course in complicated tactical positions.

**My assessment of this book:** ♦♦♦♦♦

***Order Dangerous Weapons: The Benoni and Benko***

by Richard Palliser, John Emms, Chris Ward, & Gawain Jones

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*Albin's Countergambit for Experts* (DVD), by Rustam Kasimdzhanov, ChessBase GmbH 2008, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Running time: approx 3½ hours, \$42.95

Kasimdzhanov has recently released several other DVDs from ChessBase and they have all been very instructive, but I was skeptical about one devoted to the Albin. However, I was surprised to see that he has actually played the opening several times as black and with decent results. This, of course, makes the work all the more interesting and relevant. You so rarely see top players present entire openings in this fashion, so it makes you more attentive when they do.



Kasimdzhanov is from Uzbekistan, but he speaks English exceptionally well. He first presents the history of the opening by showing us some interesting examples from Adolf Albin who played the opening around the beginning of the twentieth century. As Kasimdzhanov tells it, the opening then more or less disappeared in top circles until Morozevich took it up in his game against I.Sokolov in Wijk aan Zee 2005. It has since undergone a revival, with several other grandmasters taking up the mantle, including Kasimdzhanov.

The DVD has a total of eighteen segments. They are a bit uneven in length and quality. Some are quite detailed with plenty of analysis, original material, and in-depth instruction. Others seem very lightweight in contrast, with no particular preparation by Kasimdzhanov, who relies on his ability and understanding to point to the crucial parts during the presentation. This observation may be incorrect, but this is how it appears to the viewer.

This may be Kasimdzhanov's best work from a pure presentation standpoint. He appears at ease in front of the camera, he explains things well, he doesn't hesitate much, and his oral communication is eloquent. However, I did not like it as much as his earlier works, even though I did find it interesting and quite noteworthy.

**My assessment of this DVD: ♦♦♦♦**

**Order *Albin's Countergambit for Experts (DVD)***

by Rustam Kasimdzhanov

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*The ABC of The Modern Benoni* (DVD), by Andrew Martin, ChessBase GmbH 2008, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Running time: 4½ hours, \$39.95

The ABC series of DVDs is geared towards inexperienced players who wish to learn the basics of an opening. English international master Andrew Martin is one of the best presenters for this audience, as he comes across as a friendly teacher who confides the secrets of the topic being discussed. His style can seem a little breezy for more experienced and stronger players, but when explaining the basics of an opening, he is an ace.



The Modern Benoni arises after 1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 e6 4 Nc3 exd5 5 cxd5 d6, followed by ...g7-g6. It can also arise through a number of other move orders, which are also briefly discussed. The thirty-four segments that make up this DVD are divided as follows:

- Intro
- Positional Intro
- Pawn on d6 (3 segments, 2 games)
- Queenside Pawn Majority (4 segments, 3 games)
- Central Pawns (5 segments, 4 games)
- Restraint and Demolition (3 segments, 2 games)
- Minority Attacks (3 segments, 2 games)
- Black's Active Pieces (4 segments, 3 games)
- Critical Move Orders (8 segments, 5 games, 2 analysis segments)
- Outro

As you can see, the material revolves around themes that are crucial to understand in order to play this opening. However, the *Critical Move Orders* segments fall somewhat short, as it could have been made clearer that the Modern Benoni is a highly theoretical opening, where knowledge and understanding of specific move orders and how they impact each other is of the utmost importance.

Yet, I truly enjoyed watching this DVD. I feel I learned something in the process and the illustrative games are well-chosen. This bodes well for the target audience, who will undoubtedly learn a great deal. This is an excellent introduction to a difficult-to-understand subject.

**My assessment of this DVD: ♦♦♦♦**

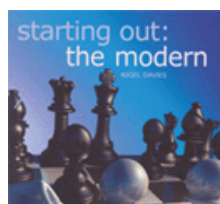
**Order *The ABC of The Modern Benoni (DVD)***

by Andrew Martin

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*Starting Out: The Modern*, by Nigel Davies, Everyman Chess 2008, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Paperback, 189pp., \$24.95

Grandmaster Davies explains the topic of this book in the introduction: "The Modern is a universal system of defence that can be played against any White opening. It is characterized by



Black starting out with a fianchetto of his king's bishop with 1...g6 and 2...Bg7. It differs from the Pirc Defence (1 e4 d6 2 d4 Nf6 3 Nc3 g6) in that Black delays developing his king's knight to f6. This knight may remain on g8 for some time or even come out to e7 or h6.



“This book deals only with the Modern Defense, though Black can often transpose into a Pirc by playing ...Ng8-f6. I've pointed out the moments at which these Pirc transpositions may be a good idea, but the Pirc itself is not dealt with in this volume.”

The contents are divided as follows:

- Bibliography(1 page)
- Introduction (4 pages)
- 1 The Austrian Attack and Other f2-f4 Lines (21 pages)
- 2 Bg5 Systems (9 pages)
- 3 Be3 and h2-h4 Systems (17 pages)
- 4 Bc4 Systems (14 pages)
- 5 g2-g3 Systems (11 pages)
- 6 The Classical 4 Nf3 (17 pages)
- 7 The Early c2-c3 Systems (15 pages)
- 8 The Averbakh System (16 pages)
- 9 The Lesser Averbakh (19 pages)
- 10 Other 1 d4 Lines (11 pages)
- 11 Flank Openings (16 pages)
- Test Positions (6 pages)
- Solutions (3 pages)
- Index of Complete Games (2 pages)
- Index of Variations (2 pages)

Davies presents a world of weird, complicated variations, which, in his own words, don't “lead to clear and crisp variations, but to rather muddy and complex strategic and tactical problems.” Yet, this volume has one of the shortest and least extensive bibliographies that I have seen. It contains only three items: *Megabase 2008*, *Chess Informator* and Davies “formerly secret notebooks.” The latter is especially encouraging for fans of the Modern.

The chapter on flank openings is probably the weakest in the book in that it is not as original as the others. Davies coverage is a little flimsy in details for Black, but it is clearly not meant to be the most crucial chapter of the book, and given the limited amount of space I suppose it will suffice.

In most cases the games are not particularly new, I only found two that were played after 2000, and many are considerably older than that, especially those by Davies himself. The author notes that the following game is one of his favorites in this opening. I present it here with the annotations from the book:

#### ***Mester-Botterill***

British Championship, Llanelli 1974

**1 e4 d6 2 d4 g6 3 Nc3 Bg7 4 Bg5 Nc6 5 Bb5 a6 6 Bxc6+ bxc6 7 Nge2 Rb8**

This annoying prod gets White to either weaken his queenside (with 8 b3) or forfeit castling rights with the move he chooses in the game.

**8 Rb1 Nf6 9 0-0 h6 10 Bh4 g5!**

NOTE: Exchanging White's queen's bishop with ...g6-g5 and ...Nf6-h5 is an idea worth noting. Black dark-squared bishop becomes much more influential because it has no opponent.

11 Bg3 Nh5 12 f4 Rb4



The creative way in which Botterill attacks White's centre in this game deserves careful study. His pieces jump into the fray from all sort of unusual angles.

**13 Be1 Bg4! 14 Qd3 Nxf4 15 Nxf4 gxf4  
16 Rxf4 h5 17 d5 Be5 18 Rf1 Qa8!**

A beautiful move which would have warmed Richard Reti's heart. The queen protects c6 whilst applying more pressure to White's centre.

**19 h3 Bd7 20 Nd1!**

A serious mistake. White should have played 20 Qf3 immediately, when 20...f6 21 Ne2 still looks very messy.

**20...Rd4 21 Qf3 cxd5 22 Qxf7+**

This proves to be a Pyrrhic victory as Black's king stands very well on d8.

**22...Kd8 23 exd5 Qxd5 24 Bc3 Be6 25 Qf3 Qxa2 26 Bxd4 Bxd4+ 27  
Nf2 Bd5 28 Qa3?**

Losing. The last chance to stay on the board was with 28 Qd3.

**28...Qc4 29 Kh2 Be5+ 30 Kh1 Rg8 31 Rg1 Qf4 0-1**

For anyone playing the Modern as black, this book will be an excellent source of ideas and inspiration from which you can learn everything you need to know about this creative, combative and provocative opening. It is written from Black's point of view and a specific repertoire is presented for Black, yet even white players should benefit from the excellent guidance provided throughout. I found this book tremendously enjoyable.

**My assessment of this book: ♦♦♦♦♦**

**[Order](#) *Starting Out: The Modern***

by Nigel Davies

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*Chesspublishing.com: Nimzo & Benoni*, by John Emms, Chess Publishing.com 2008, Subscription \$19.50-\$99.00 per year.


This time around we will take a look at the section of this site that covers the Nimzo-Indian, Queen's Indian, Bogo-Indian and Benoni systems. It is primarily hosted by English grandmaster John Emms, though he is often joined in the monthly presentations by IMs Richard Palliser and John-Paul Wallace. In the earlier days of chesspublishing.com, Chris Ward handled the Nimzo-Indian material, while Emms covered everything else.

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In my humble opinion, this particular webpage is the best source for keeping up with the latest developments. The quality and relevance of the material is first-rate and the supporting annotations and original analysis is equal to what you will find in any book by Emms. The updates normally consist of seven recent games, but he occasionally examines older games to give the reader a better overview of a variation or an interesting idea.

As with the other pages on this website, a subscription grants you access to the monthly updates, as well as all the previous material dating back to October 1999. You also gain access to four PDF e-books, playable e-books (in PGN format), and the PGN archives, where you can search for games in the section to which you subscribe.

Whether you decide to subscribe to one or several pages on this website, it is truly a bargain. You have access to thousands of pages worth of material, written by specialists on the particular subject.

**My assessment of this site:** 

***Chesspublishing.com: Nimzo & Benoni***  
by John Emms

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