



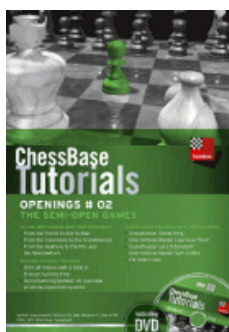
COLUMNISTS

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Rating Chart

- ❖ – Poor
- ❖❖ – Useful
- ❖❖❖ – Good
- ❖❖❖❖ – Excellent



Extreme Opposites

This month's column features two opening Fritz Trainers taking a different perspective on how to approach the opening phase of the game. For serious tournament players and theory buffs seeking the ultimate plus advantage with 1.e4, there is Bologan's *Fit for the French*. Bologan shows us his repertoire once again, and given his current rating of 2690 and forty-sixth in the world standings, you will be expected to dive into the main lines and long streams of theory. The contents and approach seemed more suitable to chess experts and beyond, but anyone playing 3.Nc3 against the French can benefit from studying the games of one of the world's best players. If you are rated below 2000, my suggestion would be to first look at the series *Beating the French* by former World Champion Rustam Kasimdzhanov. His three-volume set offers more verbal commentary and is more accessible for those beginning to play 3. Nc3.

On the other end of the spectrum we have British GM Nigel Davies, who has been steering players on and off theory for decades, showing the endless possibilities of the royal game. He also gets the Oscar for catchy titles, such as *Chess for Scoundrels*, *Sicilicide*, and now *Bamboozle Your Opponent with 1. g3*. This move can lead to all sorts of transpositions to opening lines in the Catalan, English, Réti, and King's Indian Attack, but it also allows White to strike an independent path if desired, either through reverse openings systems or little explored set-ups. These alternative paths are the subject of this Fritz trainer. I like the fact that Davies walks the talk by playing these lines in his tournament games. If you want to switch your opponent's opening book off (and don't mind doing that for yourself), then this might be the ideal product for you. Davies introduces and concludes each lecture with general pointers and ideas. Some possibilities were wildly interesting, while other suggestions seemed to give too much to Black in order to strive for the unfamiliar. There is no way I would get into a reverse Alekhine in the line **1.g3 d5 2.Bg2 e5 3. Nf3 e4 4.Nd4 c5 5.Nb3 c4 6.Nd4 Bc5 7.c3 Nc6 8.Nxc6 bxc6 9.0-0** and be subjected to **9...h5**, even if Bent Larsen did play it.

Bamboozle Your Opponent with 1.g3, by Nigel Davies, Running Time: four hours, \$34.95 (ChessCafe Price: \$28.95)

The move 1.g3 is known in some circles as Benko's Opening, so named because of Pal Benko's excellent results with this move at the [1962 Candidates Tournament](#) in Curaçao. Among his victims with 1. g3 in this tournament were Fischer, Tal, and Filip, as well as draws with Petrosian, Geller and Korchnoi. In the book *Pal Benko: My Life, Games and Compositions*, co-author John Watson writes, "As Benko points out; calling 1.g3 'The Benko System' is just silly. To me, the only setup we might call a Benko System would be one with Nf3, g3 and then c4 against d5, in which White omits or delays d4. In addition, the game has to be in some sense different from a simple Réti System." 1.g3 has also been called Bilek's Opening, named for Hungarian grandmaster Istvan Bilek, who is considered an expert in flank openings. In *Bamboozle Your Opponents with 1.g3*, Davies encourages viewers to study Bilek's games.



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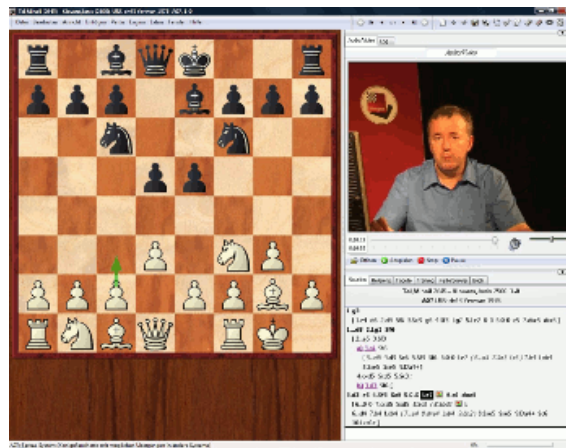
ChessBase 11, Upgrade
by ChessBase



World Champion's Guide to the King's Indian, 2nd ed.
by Rustam Kasimdzhanov



ABC of the Benko Gambit, 2nd ed.
by Andrew Martin



The contents are divided between twenty-four lectures, each one lasting an average of ten minutes for an approximate four hours of running time:

- 01: Introduction
- 02: Reversed Classical Pirc 6.c3: Dzindzichashvili,R – Ljubojevic,L
- 03: Reversed Classical Pirc 6.c4: Tal,M – Klovans,J
- 04: Reversed Pirc 4...g6: Stein,L: Averbakh,Y
- 05: Reversed Modern e5/d5/c6: Davies,N – Lev,R
- 06: Reversed Modern e5/d5/c5 – 4.Nc3: Badea,B – Varga,Z
- 07: Reversed Modern e5/d5/c5 – 4.c4: Bilek,I – Ornstein,A
- 08: Reversed Alekhine: Larsen, B – Donner,J
- 09: Reversed Alekhine: Belyavsky's 10...h5: Hulak, K – Beliavsky, A
- 10: Reversed Alekhine: Hartson,W – Miles,A
- 11: c6/d5 Reversed Leningrad Themes: Lima,D – Chaves,J
- 12: c6/d5 Reversed Leningrad: Larsen,B – Day,L
- 13: c6/d5 Reversed Leningrad: Gulko,B – Doroshkievich,V
- 14: c5/d5 Reversed Leningrad: Lima,D – Molina,J
- 15: c5/g6 Closed Sicilian Formation: Davies,N – Wiersma,E
- 16: c5/g6 Closed Sicilian Formation: Korchnoi,V – Karpov,A
- 17: g6/Bg7 3.d4 King's Indian Style with e5: Davies,N – Trent, L
- 18: g6/Bg7 3.d4 King's Indian Style with Na6: Davies,N – Jones,G
- 19: g6/Bg7 3.d4 King's Indian Style with c5: Davies,N – Marchini,M
- 20: g6/Bg7 3.d4 King's Indian Style with an early c5: Davies,N – Cicak, S
- 21: g6/Bg7 3.Nc3 c5: Larsen,B – Calvo Minguez,R
- 22: g6/Bg7 3.Nc3 c5: Larsen,B – Lehmann,H
- 23: g6/Bg7 3.Nc3 e5: Larsen,B – Panno,O
- 24: g6/Bg7 3.Nc3 e5: Bronstein,D – Razuvaev,Y

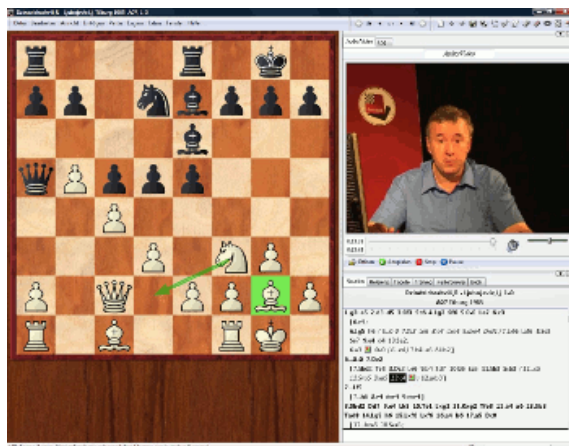
There is a whole cornucopia of offbeat approaches here designed to avoid theory and force our opponents to rely on their own resources. The argument Davies makes here is that players nowadays spend inordinate amounts of time studying opening theory, which helps catapult them into the middlegame without much thinking. Not only are they able to navigate through the opening phase of the game with ease, but have often internalized the main plans and pawn structure formations. Playing offbeat systems throws opponents onto their own resources and forces them to think for themselves straight out of the opening. Moreover, if the 1.g3 player is more familiar with these structures, they might get an edge over their opponent.

The fight here is for the practical advantage, not the theoretical one, and there are several ways Davies sets out to accomplish this:

Playing an unusual move order where Black attempts to get his desired set-up, and then strike with an independent path

One example of this can be found in the introductory game Stein-Book from Tallinn in 1969. After **1.g3 d5 2.Bg2 c6 3.d3 Nf6**, Black seems to be angling for a specific defense against White's King's Indian Attack. For instance, after 4.Nf3 Bg4 5.0-0 or 5.Nbd2 Black can now play 5...e6 comfortably or continue with queenside development with 5...Nbd7. However, after Stein's **4.Nd2** Black continued to angle for his desired set-up with **4...Bg4**, misplacing

the bishop and opening a new possibility for White via **5.h3 Bf5 6.e4 dxe4 7. dxe4 Be6** gaining central control and valuable tempos. The rest of the game went. **8.Ng3 Na6 9.0-0 Qa5 10.Nd4 0-0-0 11.Nxe6 fxe6 12.Qe2 g6 13.Nc4 Qc7 14.Bf4 Qd7 15.Rfd1 Qe8 16.Rxd8+ Qxd8 17.Rd1 Qe8 18.Bf1 Nd7 19. Qe3 c5 20.Qb3 Nab8 21.Na5 b6 22.Qxe6 1-0**



Playing reversed opening systems

There is a plethora of reversed systems introduced by Davies, as you can see from the contents. Usually the difference is that White enjoys the extra tempo, though Davies shows a funny example where Tal reached a reversed Sicilian position against Janis Klovans in 1975 with white: **1.g3 d5 2.Bg2 Nf6 3.d3 e5 4.Nf3 Nc6 5.0-0 Be7 6.c4 dxc4 7.Qa4 0-0 8.Qxc4 Be6 9.Qa4 Nd5 10.Nc3 Nb6 11.Qd1!?**. Davies does not focus much on the extra tempo White usually gets from these systems, but places emphasis on the ability for White to explore less uncharted territory.

Reaching less explored systems or positions

There are several examples of this, some highlighted in specific video lectures, and others weaved throughout the DVD. One example is the game Larsen – Calvo Minguez from Palma de Majorca 1968, in which Larsen played **1.g3 g6 2.Bg2 Bg7 3.Nc3** and the game quickly headed for a fresh position after **3...c5 4.d3 Nc6 5.a3**. Davies shows a number of Larsen games in this system, which I felt gave me some good guidelines.

Playing standard White openings with a twist

One example of this was the line **1.g3 g6 2.Bg2 Bg7 3.e4 c5 4.f4** (The recommended move order by Davies here is **1.g3 g6 2.Bg2 c5 3.e4 Bg7 4.f4**). The idea is to play a Closed Sicilian formation, but without the knight on c3, which usually ends up having to relocate elsewhere in order to fight for the center with c3 and d4. In one of the games by Davies featured on the DVD, the knight ended up on a3 after **4...Nc6 5.Nf3 e6 6.0-0 Nge7 7.c3 0-0 8.Na3**. The other lecture on this system was devoted to the encounter Korchnoi – Karpov from the 1978 World Championship in which Korchnoi gave an unusual twist to the Closed Sicilian by avoiding an early Nc3 after **1.g3 c5 2. Bg2 Nc6 3.e4 g6 4.d3 Bg7 5.f4 d6 6.Nf3 Nf6 7.0-0 0-0** and played **8.c3** instead of **8.Nc3**.

Overall, I found this production highly stimulating. Davies continues to show us that despite being in the age of advanced software engines and relentless opening theoretical works one can still be original and aim for positions where the player with the better knowledge and experience is likely to emerge with a good result.

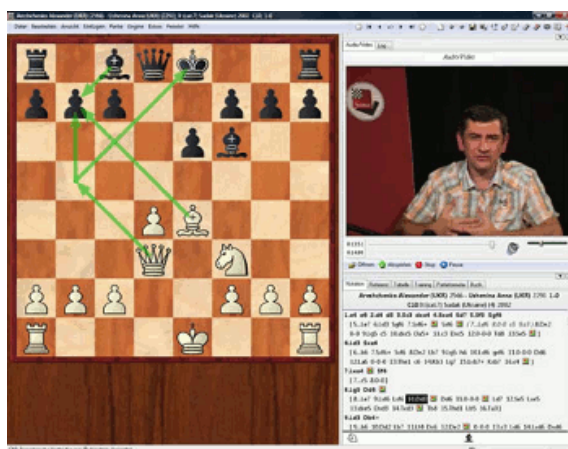
My assessment of this DVD:

Order [Bamboozle Your Opponent with 1.g3](#)

by Nigel Davies

Fit for the French, by Viktor Bologan, Running Time: Five hours, twenty minutes, \$34.95 (ChessCafe Price: \$28.95)

Bologan has been sharing his wide repertoire through Fritz trainers for quite some time and is ready to share his knowledge and experience with us in the French with 3.Nc3. One of his most recent tournament successes was the 40th Sarajevo Open in which he tied first and second place. As white, he encountered the French in two of his games, winning both with 3.Nc3. The first was his fourth-round encounter against Rasidovic, which is covered in the Winawer section: **1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.e5 Ne7 5.a3 Bxc3+ 6.bxc3 c5 7.Qg4 Kf8 8.Qd1 Qc7 9.Nf3 b6 10.a4 Ba6 11.Bxa6 Nxa6 12.0-0 Rc8 13.a5 b5 14.Qe2 cxd4 15.Qxb5 Nc5 16.cxd4 Ne4 17.Ba3 f6 18.c4 dxc4 19.exf6 gxf6 20.Rfe1 f5 21.d5 Kg7 22.d6 1-0**



The video is organized around three main areas: The Exchange, Classical, and Winawer variations. There is also a fourteen-minute lecture exploring the less common **1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 Nc6** variation. Given that the Winawer leads to the most complex and theoretical paths, Bologan spends the most time here with ten lectures. Let's briefly take a look at these sections. The numbers refer to the video lecture.

- 01: Introduction
- **The Exchange Variation: 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 dxe4**
- 02: Bologan, Victor – Bauer, Christian
- 03: Karjakin, Segey – Drozdovskij, Y
- 04: Areshchenko, Alexander – Ushenina, Anna

Here Bologan focuses on the main line **1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 dxe4 4.Nxe4 Nd7**, but also takes the time to explore the sidelines **4...Bd7**, **4...Be7**, **4...Nf6**, and **4...Qd5**. He offers a wide variety of possible positions with general ideas and plans in the various sidelines, but the viewer obviously needs to do the hard work of researching relevant games or practicing against an opponent or playing engine. For example, in the sideline **1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 dxe4 4.Nxe4 Nf6** Bologan comments that White can play **5.Nxf6+ Qxf6 6.Nf3 h6 7.Bd3 Bd6 8.0-0 Nc6 9.c3 0-0 10.Nd2!**? heading for e4 where it simultaneously attacks the queen and bishop and concludes that White is better, as in the 1974 encounter between Gufeld – Albur. Of course, better does not mean winning and Gufeld lost this encounter. Another example of this is in the sideline **1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 dxe4 4.Nxe4 Qd5**, which Bologan dismisses as strange and after **5.Bd3 Nf6 6.Nxf6+ gxf6 7.Nf3** White will gain space by attacking the queen with c4 and playing Be4, concluding that White is better. **4...Qd5** is not a common move, but tournament results are statistically even between White and Black.

- **Irregular Lines: 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 Nc6**

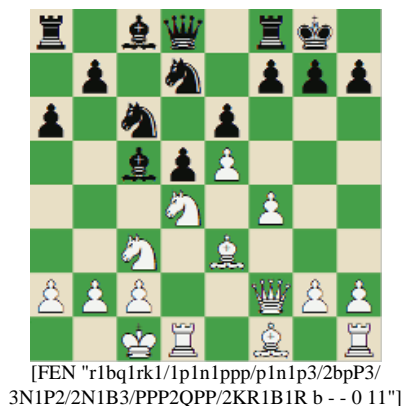
- 05: Bologan, Victor – Ambroz, Jan

Before moving into the main lines Bologan takes a look at a couple of less played moves. One is the move **1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 Be7** where Bologan recommends **4.Nf3 Nf6 4.Bd3 exd4 6.Nxe4** transposing to analyzed lines in the exchange lectures. The line 3...Nc6 is very un-French, but has been played on occasion by the likes of Morozevich, Petrosian, Short, and others. In the stem game after **4.Nf3 Nf6**, instead of **5.Bg5 Be7 6.e5 Ne4 7.Be7 Qxe7 8.Bd3 Qb4** played in the 1993 encounter Cuijpers – Ambroz, Bologan opted for **5.e5 Ne4 6.Bd3 Bb4 7.Bd2 Nxd2 8.Qxd2** and White seemed slightly better because of his lead in development and usual spatial advantage.

- **The Classical Variation: 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 Nf6**
- 06: Grischuk, Alexander – Volkov, Sergey
- 07: Bologan, Victor – Rychagov, A
- 08: Kramnik, Vladimir – Radjabov, Teimour
- 09: Bologan, Victor – Drozdovskij, Yury
- 10: Svidler, Peter – Bareev, Evgeny
- 11: Fedorov, Alexei – Volkov, Sergey
- 12: Bologan, Victor – Gurevich, Mikhail

As someone trying to incorporate 3.Nc3 into his repertoire, I was delighted to see that Bologan prefers 4.e5 over the more common 4.Bg5. 4.e5 cuts out some of Black options, thereby limiting what White needs to learn. The emphasis here is on showing the various lines, sidelines, and variations, typically concluding with the comment that White is better. The viewer is left to his own devices to deduce why. However, if a lecturer flies through variations without verbal explanations, then the video format is somewhat wasted, and picking up a good book might allow one to go through the contents at their own pace and in a more relaxed manner.

I also think it is valuable to compare and contrast how lecturers present a given position, and let the viewers decide which style works best for them. After the line **1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.e5 Nfd7 5.f4 c5 6.Nf3 Nc6 7.Be3 cxd4 8.Nxd4 Bc5 9.Qd2 0-0 10.0-0 a6**, Bologan recommends Kramnik's move **11.Qf2**.



Bologan's does a very nice job of explaining the idea behind 11.Qf2 from the game Kramnik – Radjabov, Linares 2003. Let's see what he recommends for Black's response of 11...Bxd4, the move recommended by Ari Ziegler's in [The French Defense](#).

"I've played here 11.Kb1 and 11.Nb3, but maybe the best is to immediately ask what his intention here is with Bc5 and all the story of d4 and just to force him to do something after 11.Qf2. He has two options, to take with the knight or with the bishop. Let's see first if he takes with the bishop. 11...Bxd4 12.Bxd4 and 12...b5. You see that we have that this very strong dark square bishop. Also our light square [bishop] is not so bad, only thing is that he has some squares for his pieces and he has a plan of advancing his pawns on the queenside and play Ba6 and exchange his pieces, and finally he will do everything then he will be fine. So now our point is to keep this bishop alive [13.Be3]. If he is going 13.f6 we simply take on f6 [14.exf6] and on 14...Nxf6 we

control very well all the squares [Bologan plays 15.Be2] and we are not afraid of 15...b4 because the knight can go on a4 and is very safe on a4, and Ne4 doesn't create any serious threats. After 13.Be3 if he is playing 13...Bb7 then it is important to start with 14.h4 and if 14...f6 we take on f6 [15.exf6] 15..Nxf6 16.Bc5 Rf7 and to play 17.a3 now and White is better.

"One more move for Black can be here is 13...Qa5 just to see how our reaction here is is. But on 13...Qa5 we simply move our King to 14.Kb1 b4 and now he forces to go to 15.Ne2 not to a4, 15.Na4 is preferable of course because he controls c5 and b6 but even after 15.Ne2 White already here he can jump to d4 or play Ng3, still this bishop on e3 controls very nice squares on e4 and c5. So, on 13...Be3 we should check 13...b4 here of course he is very fast with Ba6 because he forces to go to 14.Na4.a5 15.h4 Ba6 and now 15.g4 is a very good move played by my friend Alexei Fedorov from Belarus. The point is that after 15.g4 if he takes on g1 with 15...Bxf1 16.Rxf1 f6."

Bologan went deeper into this line, explaining White's advantages, and continued to demonstrate the further course of the game. IM Ari Ziegler, who speaks in a calm and unhurried manner (to the point that I can transcribe what he says without having to stop the video) looks at the same position and comments:

"As we have seen, the concept of playing h4 does not give White an advantage. On the contrary, White is risking losing the game. So White has been seeking other opportunities to get an attack, and Kramnik has played 11.Qf2 twice. It's a move we have to be prepared to meet when we play this line as Black. I recommend 11...Bxd4 because as I said earlier to take with the Bishop is a little mistake because then white can preserve his bishop. But, that was when the queen was here [on d2]. People have tried to take with the knight instead but practice has shown that White's attack is very dangerous and very quick here. 11...Nxd4 12.Bxd4 Qc7 13.Bd3 b5 14.Qh4 g6 15.Ne2 b4 16.Qh6 Bxd4 17.Nxd4 Nc5 18.h4 and White is having a wonderful game. We have to pay respect to this little plan of Bd3, Qh4 followed by an attack against the black king.

"OK, so 11..Bxd4 12.Bxd4 b5 and now white could play 13.Bd3 b4 14.Ne2 a5 we see the difference if we would have taken with the knight we would have wasted time defending the Bishop on c5. 15.Kb1 and now has time to exchange the dangerous bishop 15...Ba6. Black of course waits until it is absolutely necessary 16.h4 Qc7 17.h5 Rfc8 18.Be3 a4 and Black has an attack.

"So, instead, White players used to save this bishop playing little positional chess at the same time wants to attack on the kingside. It's a balance 13.Be3 b4 and here perhaps 14.Na4 is slightly better. [To the alternative move in the stem game 14.Ne2] 14.Na4 is very strong because Black really wants to go with his knight somewhere [b6 or c5], but with the knight here [Na4] it helps to prevent the knight to d7 to develop further, so then, White can move his queen his move somewhere [Qa4] and it still prevent the Black knight from getting active. The knight on a4 is also preventing the pawn on a5 [from advancing]. So 14.Na4 is a little bit better than 14.Ne2. One more point is that here Black would like to move his bishop to c6 to attack the knight on a4 but here this maneuver is simply not available right now. So there are many reasons why White should play 14.Na4 here."



[FEN "r1bq1rk1/3n1ppp/2n1p3/p2pP3/Np3P2/4B3/PPP2QPP/2KR1B1R w - - 0 15"]

Ziegler continues to discuss 14.Na4 and suggests play for Black in the same style, offering plenty of verbal commentary in slow reflective fashion, giving an opportunity for viewers to immerse in the positions presented to them on the video lecture.

[*Beating the French, Volume 2*](#) has former FIDE World Champion Rustam Kasimdzhanov recommending 11.Qf2 as well, and he covers the same Kramnik – Radjabov game:

"The move 11.Qf2 serves as sort of a question to Black. What is he going to do with his bishop? This can be answered in several ways. First of all Black can try to exchange as many pieces as possible and this is done in many games. 11...Nxd4 12.Bxd4 Qc7 13.Bd3 Bxd4 14.Qxd4 Qc5. But as we know this sort of ending arising after 15.Ne2 is not without problems for Black. The difference with the endings that are considered acceptable as Black is that Black's king is not in the center anymore and Black's pawn is on a6 where is limiting the scope of Black's bishop on c8 even further and subject to the blocking of the pawn by a4-a5, and this is probably sufficient to make a completely tenable endgame for Black seriously worse. So this doesn't look fun for Black anymore. The other approach is 11...Bxd4, a more dynamic approach because after 12.Bxd4 b5 the pieces don't get exchange so much and White has to be a bit careful because if he continues in a similar way, say 13.Bd3 b4 14.Ne2 a5 then after Ba6 it could turn out that in fact Black would have easy play. He would go Qc7, Rfc8, a4, b3 and it is not so clear what White is doing. For this reason it would be advisable not to play 13.Bd3 but maybe to execute the plan with 13.Be3 saving the bishop and after 13...b4 14.Na4 a5 and then go 15.g4 and avoid the trade of bishops by playing Bg2 and then f5. But this is a complex position with slightly better chances for White. In my opinion this move 11...Bxd4 is a better way for Black to proceed."

As Bologan, Kasimdzhanov moves on to explain the rest of the game and Radjabov's choice of 11..Nxd4. I thought this comparison offered a snapshot of the different styles and is representative of the overall productions. Bologan offers more variations, while Kasimdzhanov offered less content and more verbal commentary. Ziegler offered much more insight into the position; for instance, explaining the nuances between 14.Na4 and 14.Ne2. It is often good research to see what authors are recommending for Black in order to get a balanced perspective.

Bologan tends to speak and move fast, so I had to give the lectures a couple of views and will need to revisit them several times to study the accompanying games. Overall, though, I found this section highly instructive and felt that Bologan helped further my understanding of chess in general here. There was an abundance of middlegame plans and concepts, and endgame strategies that I could use to play typical positions.


- **The Winawer Variation: 1.e4 e6 3.d4 d5 3.Nc3 Bb4**
- 13: Almasi, Istvan – Kristjansson, Stefan
- 14: Psakhis, Lev – Eingorn, Verslav
- 15: Bologan, Victor – Rasidovic, Sead
- 16: Luther, Thomas – Szelag, Marcin

- 17: Bologan, Victor – Psakhis, Lev
- 18: Bluvshstein, Mark – Barsov, Alexei
- 19: Bologan, Victor – Lputian, Smbat
- 20: Karjakin, Sergey – Jussupow, Artur
- 21: Shirov, Alexei – Ganguly, S
- 22: Smirnov, Pavel – Singh, Gurpreetpal

The Winawer is the most complex variation, one sure to keep players up late at night unlocking its secrets and striving to keep up-to-date. In the first lecture of this section, Bologan shares an anecdote illustrating this issue:

"Now we will go to the most complex variation in the French Defense against Nc3. This is the Bb4 move ... Well, this move actually I remember the times when we came to Hamburg and we played with Alexei Shirov some blitz games...a 2200 player, a local guy, long time ago. It was 1992 and I remember he was beating us exactly with this move. So which means we actually have to be very well prepared with White facing this move. There is a lot of positional ideas, very deep, that at first sight you think you are better but on the long term strategically you might be worse. Thus, White has to control the situation and one of the most important things in this line is what pieces to exchange and which ones to keep, and there are a lot of nuances you have to pay attention to."

There was a bewildering amount of theory in the lectures here, often presented at a very rapid pace and with sparse explanations for individual moves. If you are below expert level and new to the white side of the French, then the contents will feel a bit out of reach. If you already play 3.Nc3 against the French and are familiar with the arising positions, then Bologan's lectures can compliment and advance your existing knowledge. If your goal is to become a chess master and beyond, then learning to play the main lines of the French, and getting used to the work associated with learning them, probably attains importance as well.

My assessment of this DVD: 

Order [Fit for the French](#)
by Viktor Bologan

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