



## COLUMNISTS

**Checkpoint**

Carsten Hansen

**Reviewed this month:*****Challenging the Grünfeld***

by Edward Dearing

***The Benko Gambit***

by Jan Pinski

***Play the Nimzo-Indian***

by Edward Dearing

***The Scotch Game Explained***

by Gary Lane

***Starting Out: The Scotch Game***

by John Emms

**Highland Connection**

There is something special about Scotland and the Scottish people. They are reputed to walk around in kilts and to be tightfisted with their money, but as with most stereotypes, both are incorrect. The Scots do wear kilts, but only on festive occasions, and regarding their money, well, as my Scottish work colleague says, “it’s something the jealous Englishmen have come up with to give the Scottish a bad name.” The Scots are generally very proud of their heritage, and from my experience are a very warm and friendly people – except perhaps when it comes to the English.

This month’s column features five recent books that all have a Highland connection: two are by Scottish author, Edward Dearing, and two were published by Quality Chessbooks, whose principles have homes in Scotland. Finally, we have two books on the Scotch Game, an opening that remains a very good alternative to the much more theory-laden Ruy Lopez.

*Challenging the Grünfeld* by Edward Dearing, Quality Chess 2005, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Softcover, 206 pp., \$24.95

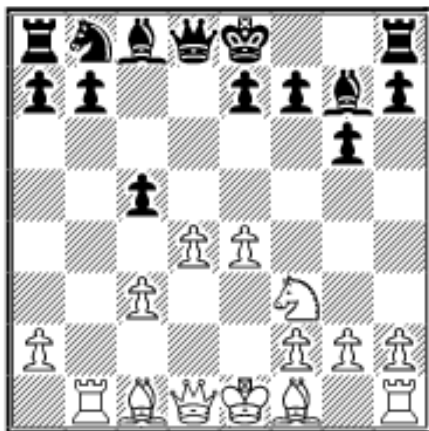
In this book, Dearing examines the Rb1-variation of the Exchange Variation in the Grünfeld Defense, which is often called the Modern Exchange Grünfeld. This is easily one of most popular lines against the Grünfeld in the last twenty years or so. However, despite its immense popularity there has not been any book, devoted solely to the opening, published in English since the late 1980s. Obviously, the theory has developed exponentially since then, and it is still expanding. There are even places where the editor, Jacob Aagaard, has added material to the final manuscript to make it even more up-to-date.



Let's see how Dearing has divided the material:

- Bibliography (1 page)
- Acknowledgements (1 page)
- Introduction (8 pages)
- 1 The Presumptuous 12...a5!? (26 pages)
- 2 The Logical 12....b6!? (21 pages)
- 3 The Chameleon 12...Nd7!? (23 pages)
- 4 The Reliable Recipe 12...Bg4! (40 pages)
- 5 Rare 12th Move Alternatives and 11.Qd2!? (10 pages)
- 6 The Provocative 9...Nc6!? (11 pages)
- 7 The Insidious 10...Ne5!? (19 pages)
- 8 The Indubitable 9...b6!? (23 pages)
- 9 Early Alternatives and Miscellany (9 pages)
- Index of variations (8 pages)
- Index of games (1 page)

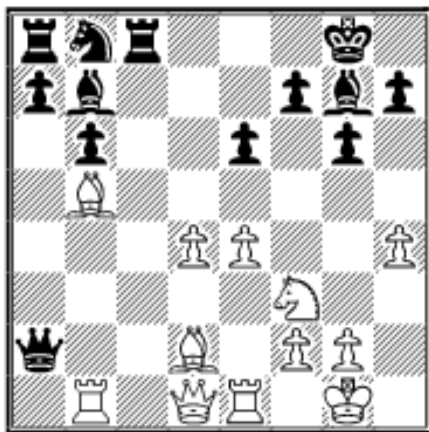
The starting position arises after 1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 d5 4 cxd5 Nxd5 5 e4 Nxc3 6 bxc3 Bg7 7 Nf3 c5 8 Rb1.



The game below illustrates just how deep the theory goes for many of the lines in this opening, because the theoretical discussion begins at move 20. And that's where the complications really start because new developments occur on an almost weekly basis, which is why authoring such a treatise is almost ridiculously futile.

***Ivanchuk-Svidler***  
Linares 1998

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 d5 4.cxd5 Nxd5 5.e4 Nxc3 6.bxc3 Bg7 7.Nf3 c5  
8.Rb1 0-0 9.Be2 cxd4 10.cxd4 Qa5+ 11.Bd2 Qxa2 12.0-0 b6 13.Qc1  
Bb7 14.Bc4 Qa4 15.Bb5 Qa2 16.Bc4 Qa4 17.Bb5 Qa2 18.Re1 Rc8  
19.Qd1 e6 20.h4!?



20...h5 21.Qe2 Nc6 22.Bc4 Qa4  
23.Ra1 Qc2 24.Bd3 Qb2 25.Ra4 b5  
26.Bxb5 Rd8 27.Bg5 Qxe2 28.Bxe2  
Rd7 29.Rb1 Nd8 30.Bd3 f5 31.d5  
fxe4 32.Bxe4 Bxd5 33.Bxg6 Rb7  
34.Rxb7 Nxb7 35.Be3 a5 36.Bxh5  
Bc6 37.Rg4 Bxf3 38.Rxg7+ Kxg7  
39.Bxf3 Rb8 40.Bf4 Rd8 41.Bxb7  
a4 42.Be5+ Kg8 43.h5 Rd1+ 44.Kh2  
Re1 45.f4 Rxe5 46.fxe5 a3 47.Bc8  
Kf7 48.h6 a2 49.Bxe6+ Kxe6 50.h7  
a1Q 51.h8Q Kd5 52.Qg8+ Ke4  
53.Qg6+ Kd5 54.Qf7+ Ke4 55.Qg6+ Kd5 56.Qf7+ Ke4 57.e6 Qh8+  
58.Kg3 1-0

There is a danger with opening books that lower-rated players will spend a disproportionate amount of their chess time on incomprehensibly long theoretical lines that they are unlikely to ever play, when they should be studying basic tactics and the fundamentals of positional chess.

However, Dearing anticipates this by including complete games with plenty of prose to explain what is going on, while providing stronger players with loads of original material, suggestions, and improvements over existing theory. To make both come together, and still make a book worth reading, is quite difficult, yet he succeeds admirably by presenting the material honestly and thoroughly.

With that being said, I have a few, admittedly small, issues to address. Throughout the book, Dearing refers to players in an inconsistent manner: some are referred to by just their last name, e.g. Ftacnik or Krasenkow; some by their full name, e.g. Jonathan Rowson; and others by their title and full name, e.g. GM Suat Atalik. Often multiple naming conventions can be found on the same page. For instance, on page 131, we have “GM Atalik,” “GM Suat Atalik,” and later just “Atalik.” Disparities even occur in the same sentence: “This little move was successfully introduced by GM Atalik in a game against GM Lembit Oll...” Also when Dearing sites material that has appeared in *Informant* or *ChessBase Magazine*, it is fully written out including the volume it appeared in, which is consistent but entirely unnecessary. There is also the occasional typo and I found a diagram error on page 133, but these things can happen.

Overall, this book is exceedingly thorough and is mainly for players

rated above 2200. Nevertheless, lower rated players will appreciate the many examples of dynamic chess where one side has positional compensation for a material deficit. If you like to study the ebb and flow of compensation and how to fight for or against the initiative, Dearing provides an almost endless amount of examples, and studying these games along with his comments can only help you to become a stronger player. If you play this variation from either side you will not regret buying this book. In fact, you will benefit from it tremendously.

**My assessment of this book:** 

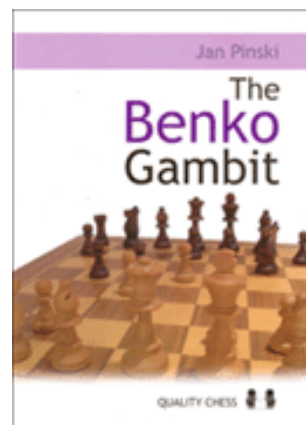
### Order *Challenging The Grünfeld*

by Edward Dearing

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*The Benko Gambit by Jan Pinski* by Edward Dearing, Quality Chess 2005, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Softcover, 124 pp., \$19.95

Polish International Master Jan Pinski has emerged as an opening theoretician of some repute. This time around he surveys the Benko Gambit, which arises after 1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 b5. It is a dynamic gambit that provides Black with an excellent opportunity to play for a win straight out of the opening. However, in recent years its popularity amongst top players has declined considerably because of theoretical problems in a number of lines.



Pinski presents the opening mainly from Black's perspective, while covering all main lines for White. The material is divided as follows:

- Introduction to the Classical Benko Structures (24 pages)
- 1 The Benko Gambit Accepted I (10 pages)
- 2 The Benko Gambit Accepted II (16 pages)
- 3 The Benko Gambit Accepted III (14 pages)
- 4 The Positional 5.b6 (12 pages)
- 5 The Ambitious 5.e3 (8 pages)
- 6 5.f3 (14 pages)
- 7 5.Nc3 - The Zaitsev Variations (6 pages)
- 8 Five Sidelines (10 pages)
- Index of variations (3 pages)
- Index of games (1 page)

My one objection to the table of contents is that it's unclear just what the

first three chapters' cover. But the introduction is easily the best I have ever seen on this opening. It perfectly explains all the typical ideas for Black, along with what to avoid letting White do. It more or less exclusively concentrates on the pawn structures that arise if White accepts the sacrifice with 4.cxb5 a6 5.bxa6, while leaving the discussion of the typical ideas when Black plays an early ...e7-e6 to the chapters themselves.

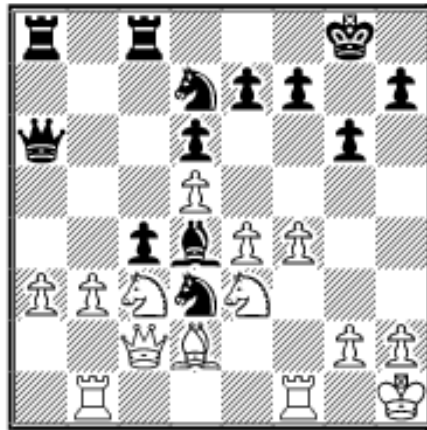
Pinski does a decent job of presenting the opening to a general audience, as well as addressing those lines that have been problematic for Black. He actually surprised me on several occasions by presenting ideas in many lesser known lines that I had analyzed years ago, which reflects the fact that Pinski actually knows what he is talking about.

The material is presented via main games with the theory included in the annotations. This is particularly useful for weaker players who get to see the typical ideas for both sides executed to their logical end. One of the many excellent choices for illustrative games is the following game by then World Champion Garry Kasparov:

### ***Bareev-Kasparov***

Linares 1994

**1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 b5 4.cxb5 a6 5.bxa6 g6 6.Nf3 Bxa6 7.Nc3 d6 8.Nd2 Bg7 9.e4 Bxf1 10.Nxf1 Qa5 11.Bd2 0-0 12.Ne3 Nbd7 13.0-0 Qa6 14.Qc2 Ne5 15.b3 Nfd7 16.f4 Nd3 17.a3 Bd4 18.Kh1 Rfc8 19.Rab1 c4**



**20.b4 Nf6 21.Ned1 Rcb8 22.Ne3 Rc8 23.b5 Qb6 24.Nxc4 Nf2+ 25.Rxf2 Rxc4 26.Rf3 Rxa3 27.Qb2 Nxe4 28.Qxa3 Nxd2 29.Qa2 Be3 30.Rc1 Qd4 31.b6 Rxc3 0-1**

This book will serve as an introductory guide to new-comers very well. However, stronger players will find that the material is a little too sparse and doesn't dig deep enough into the more complicated

lines, even though Pinski does present lots of new ideas and improvements over existing theory.

**My assessment of this book:** 

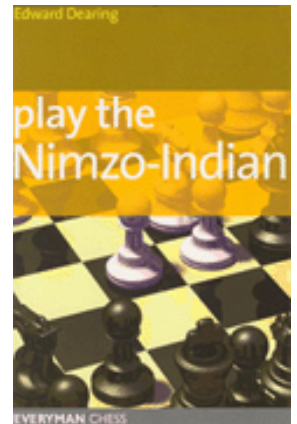
**[Order](#) *The Benko Gambit***

by Jan Pinski

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*Play the Nimzo-Indian* by Edward Dearing, Everyman Chess 2005, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Softcover, 224 pp., \$23.95

The Nimzo-Indian Defense is easily one of the most popular choices for Black against 1 d4, and one reason for this is that Black can choose a repertoire that suits almost any style of play. In fact, there are so many choices for both sides that knowing everything about each line is impossible. The key is to specialize in just a couple of lines as Black.



This is the approach chosen by Edward Dearing in this new book; against each line for White, he offers one or two lines for Black that are both reliable and sharp. To Dearing's credit, he has chosen lines that have a good element of logic and which can be played with confidence once you understand the underlying principles.

The material is divided as follows:

- Introduction (8 pages)
- 1 The Classical Nimzo: The Romanishin Variation (44 pages)
- 2 The Classical Nimzo: Preserving Tension with 5.a3 (14 pages)
- 3 The Rubinstein Variation: The Romanishin-Psakhis System (41 pages)
- 4 The Rubinstein Variation: The Classical Fianchetto Variation (34 pages)
- 5 The Leningrad Variation (17 pages)
- 6 The 4 f3!? Variation (17 pages)
- 7 The Sämisch Variation (17 pages)
- 8 The Fianchetto Variation (12 pages)
- 9 4 Nf3: 'And now for something completely different...' (7 pages)
- 10 Early Deviations (5 pages)
- Index of Complete Games (2 pages)
- Index of Variations (1 page)

As you can see there is plenty of material to study in each chapter, and in some of the lines Black really has to know his theory in order to have a chance of obtaining a good position and play for a win.

Dearing weaves the theoretical coverage into the annotations of full games and he does a tremendous job explaining the ideas of the opening, along with offering new ideas and improvements to the reader. To his



further credit, once the opening coverage has ended, he makes a point of not offering extensive analysis and comments to the main games. All too often, authors spend time discussing endgames that have little relevance to the task of presenting an opening repertoire.

Dearing also spends a considerable amount of space drawing conclusions after each main game. I very much like this approach as it allows the reader to better understand the material and makes it easier to remember. Many games are decided by who understands the position better, and not the one who knows the most theory. Dearing, of course, knows this, but caters to both.


One game from the book is the following:

***Levitt-Psakhis***

Moscow 1988

**1.d4 e6 2.c4 Nf6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.e3 c5 5.Nge2 b6 6.a3 Ba5 7.Ng3 Bb7  
8.Bd2 0-0 9.Bd3 cxd4 10.exd4 Bxc3 11.bxc3 d5 12.0-0 dxc4 13.Bxc4  
Nc6 14.Qe2 Na5 15.Ba2 Rc8 16.Rfc1 h6 17.Rab1 Qd7 18.c4 Nc6  
19.d5 exd5 20.cxd5 Nd4 21.Qd3 Bxd5 22.Rxc8 Rxc8 23.Rb4 Nc6  
24.Ne4 Nxb4 25.Nxf6+ gxf6 26.axb4 Be6 27.Qg3+ Kh8 0-1**

The book is exceptionally well-researched and the material is intelligently presented. It will provide players who possess an active, dynamic playing style with an excellent opportunity to play for a win as Black. The material is quite advanced and is a solid step forward in the understanding of these sharp lines.

**My assessment of this book:** 

**[Order](#) *Play the Nimzo-Indian***

by Edward Dearing

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*The Scotch Game Explained* by Gary Lane, Batsford B.T. 2005, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Softcover, 168 pp., \$21.95

Aside from a very specialized work written by Gutman some years ago, there have been precious few books written about the Scotch Game, and now we have two releases from the major chess publishing houses.



Gary Lane has long been a very popular author, who apparently wrote a book about the Scotch in 1993. He explains in the Introduction that he intended to merely update the material, until he realized that it had to be entirely re-written because of advances in the interim. While most readers of this book probably wouldn't even know of the existence of the earlier book, it is generous of Lane to enlighten us with his thoughts.

The Scotch Game has been a popular choice for both club players and grandmasters since Kasparov used it against Karpov in their 1990 World Championship match. It's also a viable alternative to those seeking to avoid the theory-laden Ruy Lopez.

Lane divides the material as follows:

- Introduction (4 pages)
- Mieses Variation: 8...Nb6 (15 pages)
- Mieses Variation: 8...Ba6 (13 pages)
- Scotch Four Knights (28 pages)
- Kasparov Variation: 4...Bc5 5 Nxc6 (16 pages)
- Classical Variation: 4...Bc5 5 Be3 (22 pages)
- Classical Variation: 4...Bc5 5 Nb3 (17 pages)
- Steinitz Variation: 4...Qh4 (18 pages)
- Other Black Defences (23 pages)
- Index of Variations (3 pages)
- Index of Games (1 page)

Lane does a good job of explaining the opening and offering ideas for both sides, although I sense a slight bias for White's cause. The material is presented with complete games with theory entwined into the notes. As with all of Lane's books, he presents the material with such enthusiasm that you will be itching to try out the opening for yourself. Few authors have the ability to cater to their readership as well as Lane.

Let's see an example, sans annotations:

### ***Berg-I. Sokolov***

Malmo 2001


**1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.d4 exd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 Bb4 6.Nxc6 bxc6  
7.Bd3 0-0 8.0-0 d5 9.exd5 cxd5 10.Bg5 c6 11.Qf3 Be7 12.Rfe1 h6**





13.Bxh6 gxh6 14.Qe3 Bd6! 15.Qxh6 Rb8? 16.Qg5+ Kh8 17.Qh4+ Kg7 18.Qg5+ Kh8 19.Qh6+ Kg8 20.Re3! Bg4 21.Qg5+ Kh8 22.Qh6+ Kg8 23.Rae1! Bh5 24.Qg5+ Kh8 25.Rh3 1-0

As is evident by the book's title, it is primarily geared towards those who are either new to the opening or need to get to know the opening a little better. Stronger players will have less interest in this book; however, for its intended audience, this book is an excellent choice.

**My assessment of this book:** 

*Starting Out: The Scotch Game* by John Emms, Everyman Chess 2005, Figurine Algebraic Notation, Softcover, 224 pp., \$21.95

This book is targeted at the same audience as Lane's book (above). Emms, too, is a popular author who always makes an effort to please his readers and never takes his audience for granted. Yet, in my opinion, he does a better job presenting the opening to his audience. The explanations are deeper and he takes more time to highlight the essentials, along with which lines to look out for and what to avoid.




The material is divided as follows:

- Bibliography (1 page)
- Introduction (4 pages)
- 1 Scotch Four Knights (49 pages)
- 2 Mieses Variation: Introduction and Main Line with 8...Nb6 (40 pages)
- 3 Mieses Variation: Main Line with 8...Ba6 (32 pages)
- 4 4...Bc5 5 Nxc6 (35 pages)
- 5 4...Bc5 5 Be3 (28 pages)
- 6 4...Bc5 5 Nb3 and Others (12 pages)
- 7 Rare Moves (15 pages)
- Index of Variations (3 pages)
- Index of Complete Games (2 pages)

Emms's provides fewer chapters compared to Lane, but the same lines are covered. Still, the content differs considerably; for instance, in the chapter on the Scottish Four Knights, Emm's devotes twenty more pages of coverage. It is a matter of taste as to which is better.

Given the fact that the authors cover the same material it is rather remarkable that they hardly have any main games in common. Either book will serve the reader well, but I think this book will be enjoyed by a wider group of players.

**My assessment of this book:** 

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 [TOP OF PAGE](#)

 [HOME](#)

 [COLUMNS](#)

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 [ARCHIVES](#)

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