

A CHALLENGER

Michal Krasenkow on one of his special variations

Modern Benoni A70: 1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6 4.♘c3 exd5 5.cxd5 d6 6.e4 g6 7.♙d3 ♙g7 8.h3 0-0 9.♘f3 b5 10.♘xb5



The line with ♙d3 and h3 is a strong weapon in the hands of a player who knows what he is doing. Our author Michal Krasenkow has scored no less than 18.5 out of 20 with it (Mega 2014).

Even when “real” Benoni players like to meet the variation in the typical fashion, that is to say with ...a6, ...♙e8 and ...♘bd7, 9...b5 is nevertheless considered the objectively strongest reply. Then there is a long variation: 10.♙xb5 ♘xe4! 11.♘xe4 ♙a5+ 12.♘fd2 ♙xb5 13.♘xd6 ♙a6 14.♘2c4 ♘d7 15.0-0 ♘b6 (or 15...♘e5); White is minimally better, but a lot of material has been exchanged and the probability of a draw is very high.

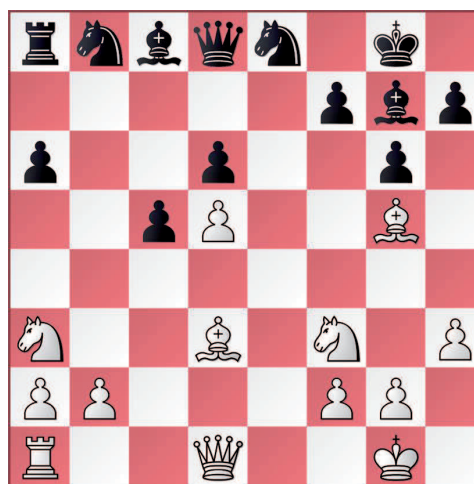
So Krasenkow pleads in favour of 10.♘xb5. He first deals with 10...♘xe4. This move, though long since refuted, still frequently crops up in practice (and often enough the players with White do not know its refutation). But by the end of the 80s the way to deal with it had been shown: 11.♙xe4 ♙e8 12.♘g5!! and on account of the possibility of 12...h6 13.♘e6 Black is already on the edge of the abyss.

Fortunately – for Black – there is 10...♙e8. Then all White can do is return the pawn and develop rapidly. After 11.0-0 ♘xe4 12.♙e1



Michal Krasenkow: no fewer than 18.5 out of 20 with the Bd3 and h3 variation

Black has the counter-attack 12...a6, whereas 12...♘f6?! would allow the knight to go back to c3, from where it protects the ♘d5. After 12...a6 White is “forced” into 13.♘a3 (13.♘c3 would be an interesting pawn sacrifice, Krasenkow shows on the DVD, how Black should then play), which once more brings about a relatively forced sequence of moves: 13...♘f6 14.♙xe8+ ♘xe8 15.♙g5.



Here Black can easily go astray and even after the best move, 15...♙c7, things remain difficult for him.

Conclusion: White cannot force a theoretical advantage in this variation, but in practice Black is faced with major problems.