Benko Gambit [A57–59]

Written by GM Glenn Flear & GM Jon Tisdall

For an opening that really loses a pawn, the Benko Gambit has a terrific reputation. It is just as feared as it is respected, and many prefer not to take the offer, thanks just the same. One can understand why – taking the pawn gives Black a very easy life in many respects.

At minimal cost, Black gets two open files to aim down, a compact and ultra-solid pawn structure, and a packaged gift-box of clear-cut strategical plans and manoeuvres. One superficial move by White often results in oppressive threats followed by a flurry of tactical blows. Losing (or for optimists, "returning") a pawn later doesn't tend to blunt the black initiative, and often means the same kind of pressure for free.

White players have three basic things to look forward to: Attacking Black's king while most of his team is rummaging around on the other side of the board

Causing central damage with a properly timed advance of his e-pawn to e5. And, most satisfying of all: QUEENING HIS a-PAWN. Yes, it does happen.

I think that pretty much covers the basic pros and cons.
History

In its modern form, (in very early days the move order was often a prelude to a kind of Blumenfeld) players like Vaitonis and Lundin can lay claim to being the pioneers, and Bronstein played an impressive early game on the Benko theme. Incidentally, the Russians like to call the gambit the Volga. One of my favourite anecdotes centres around the theme of the name of this opening. I was playing in a telephone match in New York when Pal Benko himself, playing Black, was given the opportunity to play the gambit. From the enthusiastic way he hammered out the move 3...b5 on the board, you could tell that it was a rare pleasure — doubtless most of his opponents didn't allow it too often. John Fedorowicz, another expert on the opening, was watching as Pal gleefully thumped out the move, and uttered the immortal words, "Hey, Pal, I didn't know you played the Volga Gambit," momentarily paralyzing Benko and rendering him speechless. He finally managed to yell, "That is a political question!" before accepting the humour of the moment. It probably is a political question, but most do call it the Benko, and it is a sophisticated gambit. One of the most attractive aspects of the opening is that in its pure form it is extremely easy to play, with very clear-cut ideas.

All the games given in blue can be accessed via ChessPub.exe, simply head for their respective ECO code.
1 d4 \f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 b5

4 cxb5

4 \f3 Benko Gambit Declined [A57]

4...a6 5 bxa6

5 e3 Benko Gambit 5 e3 [A57]
5 f3 axb5 6 e4 Benko Gambit Other lines [A57]
5 b6 Benko Gambit 5 b6 [A57]

5...g6 6 \c3 \xa6

7 \f3
7 e4 xf1 8 xf1 Benko Accepted with Kxf1 [A59]

7...g7 8 g3 d6 9 g2

Benko Accepted without Kxf1 [A58]

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Benko Gambit Declined [A57]

Last updated: 23/08/03 by Glenn Flear

By declining the Benko, White indicates that he is intending to fight for the initiative in the early stages. White often breaks open Black's position with an early e5 thrust.

1 d4 ¤f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 b5 4 ¤f3

4 ¤d2 bxc4 (4...g6 5 e4 d6 6 b4!? A bold new idea that leads to lasting pressure on the queenside, but if Black reacts logically he should achieve enough counterplay. Garcia Palermo,C–Giardelli,S/Pinamar ARG 2001) 5 e4 d6?! (5...¢b7 6 ¢xc4 ¤c6 7 ¤gf3 was an interesting pawn sac in Mastrovasilis,A–Neuronov,L/Halkidiki GRE 2000 5...e6 6 dxe6 dxe6 7 ¤xc4 ¢b7 8 ¤b2 ¤f6 9 0-0 0-0 10 £e1 e5 11 £e2 £c7 12 £b2 ¤c7 13 £e5 with an unclear position was. Beliavsky,A–Sermek,D/Bled SLO 2000 5...¢c6?! 6 bxc3 g6 7 c4 d6 8 £c2 ¢b7 9 £d3 0-0 10 £c2?! e5 11 £e2 £c7 and Black had no worries in Kludacz,M–Radziewicz,I/Brzeg Dolny POL 2000) 6 ¤xc4 g6 7 b3 ¤g7 8 0-0 0-0 9 ¤gf3 ¤a6? 10 0-0 ¤c7 11 £c2 a5 and White had a fine position with e5 looming in Serper,G–Miton,K/Philadelphia USA 2000

4 £c2 bxc4 5 e4 e6 6 ¢xc4 exd5 7 exd5 d6 8 ¤c3 £e7 9 h3 0-0 10 ¤f3 ¤bd7 11 0-0 £b6 and Black was fine in Kempinski,R–Miton,K/Zakopane 2000

4 a4 English GM Chris Ward has stuck with this move throughout the years. White forces Black to make a decision. 4...bxc4 (4...b4 So Black opts for a closed queenside, his most logical choice as White doesn't have the c3–square for his knight nor the option of a2–a3 to open the a–file. 5 ¤d2 e5 Another blocking move. The onus is now on White to try and find a way through on the three kingside files, not an easy task as Black will be ready and waiting. 6 b3 d6 7 ¤b2 g6 8 g3 ¤g7 9 e4 a5!? Not played to emphasize how blocked it all is, but to prepare an interesting manoeuvre. 10 ¤g2 £a7
11 h4 e7 12 f3 h5 Ward, C–Skjoldborg, J/Copenhagen 2003 (August 2003) The front
narrowed. Now it's only the 'f' and g-files that White can use for action. White has a
slight space advantage and hopes to eventually be ready to create a pawn break but
this looks optimistic!

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this looks optimistic!

5 d3 d6 6 e4 a6 7 f4 g6 8 e5 f6 9 f3 g7 10 e2 0–0
11 e6 b6 12 exf7+ xf7 13 g5 with a double–edged position in Ward, C–
Summerscale, A/Birmingham ENG 2000

4 f3 A contributor to the Forum was bamboozled by this move, apparently recommended
by Angus Dunnington in a recent repertoire book. Although the move is not that
well–known (as early as move 4) play soon follows patterns set by similar Benko
lines. The following set of game snippets should indicate how to obtain counterplay
with ...Nb6 and/or ...e6.

a) 4 ...g6 5 e4 d6 6 cxb5 a6 transposes to a line (normally resulting from 4 cxb5 a6 5 f3)
where Black has difficulty equalizing: 7 c3 (7 a3 g7 8 e2 0–0 9 d3 b7 10 e2
b6 11 0–0 e6 12 dxe6 xex6 13 g5 h6 14 h4 axb5 15 cxb5 c4 Poluljahov–Shashin,
Russia 1991 and now Karpov suggests 16 c1 intending b3 and/or Rd1.) 7 ...g7 8 a4
0–0 9 a3 axb5 (9 ...e6!? may worth a try.) 10 axb5 a6 11 ge2 cxb5 12 cxb5 a6
13 0–0 c7 14 c3 and White had an edge in V.Anand–M.Adams, Roquebrune
rapid 1992

b) 4 ...bxc4! The most consistent. 5 e4 d6 6 xc4 (6 d2? g6 7 xc4 g7 8 e2 b7 9 a4 0–0 10
a5 c5 and Black was already in the driving seat in Henriques, S–Gonzalez
Gil, E/Lisbon POR 2000. 6 a3 g6 7 f4 g7 8 f3 0–0 9 xc4 bd7 10 0–0 b6 with ...e6 in
the air. 6 a3 c3! offers Black reasonable prospects e.g. 7 bxc3 g6 8 d3 g7 9 e2 0–0
10 0–0 bd7 11 c4 a6 12 e3 a5 N.Alfred–J.Brustkern, Budapest 2002) 6 ...g6 7
c2 e2 g7 8 0–0 0–0 9 g5!? (Otherwise 9 ec3 bd7 10 a4 b6 11 e2 a5 12 b5 a6 13
c3 fd7 14 f4 xb5 15xb5 b8 16 ec3 f6 with chances for both sides, U.Von
Herman–D.Bischoff, Altenkirchen 2001) 9 ...bd7 10 d2 b8 11 b3 e5 12 h3
cd7 13 c1 b6 V.Basagic–Ji.Nun, Hartberg 1991 and Black is pretty active. (e–
mailbag March 03)

6 ...g6

4 ...b7

a) 5 c2 bxc4 6 e4 e6 (6 ...g6 7 xc4 g7 8 0–0? 9 e5! e8 10 h4! and White already had a
dangerous attack in Conquest, S–Degraeve, J/Clichy 20th anniversary, France 2001) 7
g5 and White was on the way to achieving a good Blumenfeld in Cramling, P–
Fernandez Romero, E/Malaga ESP 2001

b) 5 c3?! A radical way of forcing Black's hand with the b–pawn. 5 ...b4 6 c4 (The
retreat 6 b1 should be met with 6 ...e6 hitting back at the centre before White can
support it.)

b1) With the knight stuck on a4 and not likely to return to the action for a while, Black can
take his time to obtain counterplay, as in the following examples

6 ...d6

b1a) 7 e4!? bd7 (7 ...e4 8 d3 gives White rapid development but the e–pawn may be
missed later) 8 d3 g6 9 0–0 g7 10 f4 g4 11 e2 0–0 12 h3 ge5 13 d2 f5?!
13...e6 14 dxe3 exd5 15 exd5 f5= is better) 14 exf5 Rxf5 15 c3 g5 led to a Black win in Sokolov,I–Van Wely,L Wijk aan Zee 1999 but in this position White can win a pawn with 16 g4!

b1) 7 c2 7...g6 8 e4 g7 9 d3 0-0 10 0-0 e5 11 b3 h5= Nosenko,A–Solodovnichenko,Y Kharkov 2002 Black has no worries and can prepare for ...f5.

b2) 6...e6 7 dxe6 (7 d6?! is dubious as White is in no position to support such an advanced pawn.) 7...fxe6 8 g5 a5 9 b3 e4 Gokhale,C–Zhang Pengxiang/Mumbai IND 2003 (May 2003) I would be very happy with Black who has already dissolved the centre and has the more effective development.

b) 6...e6 7 dxe6 dxe6 8 e5 d5 9 xc4 The text combined with White's next is too slow to worry Black. (9 xc4 intending 0-0 and Ne4 is more dangerous, however after 9...e7 10 0-0 0-0 11 e4 in order to neutralize White's attacking chances against the Black king it's appropriate to seek the exchange of queens e.g. 11...b6 12 d3 c4 13 e2 xd1 14 xd1 d6 15 a3 d5= Neidhardt,C–Alber,H Germany 1988) 9...e7 10 a3 0-0 11 d3 c6 12 e2 b6 13 0-0 xc4 14 xc4 c7 15 e1 ad8 Hoang Thanh Trang–Fogarasi,T/Budapest 2003 (July 2003), White hopes to profit from the pawn wedge on e5 and his superior pawn structure on the queenside. However White finds it hard to develop and coordinate his pieces effectively.

c) 6...bxc4 5...bxc4 6 e4

c1) 6...e6 7 dxe6 dxe6 8 e5 d5 9 xc4 The text combined with White's next is too slow to worry Black. (9 xc4 intending 0-0 and Ne4 is more dangerous, however after 9...e7 10 0-0 0-0 11 e4 in order to neutralize White's attacking chances against the Black king it's appropriate to seek the exchange of queens e.g. 11...b6 12 d3 c4 13 e2 xd1 14 xd1 d6 15 a3 d5= Neidhardt,C–Alber,H Germany 1988) 9...e7 10 a3 0-0 11 d3 c6 12 e2 b6 13 0-0 xc4 14 xc4 c7 15 e1 ad8 Hoang Thanh Trang–Fogarasi,T/Budapest 2003 (July 2003), White hopes to profit from the pawn wedge on e5 and his superior pawn structure on the queenside. However White finds it hard to develop and coordinate his pieces effectively.

c2) 6...a5 7 xc4 d6 8 0-0 d7 9 e2! A simple preparation for drastic action. 9...c7 10 b4!?

A tremendous move – accepting the pawn leaves black facing tremendous pressure on: the long diagonal (after ...cxb4 11. Bb2), a breakthrough on e5 which will also open the e-file and pressure e7, the c-file, and the entry of the Nf3 into his guts via d4. The sad part for black is that rushing to complete development doesn't help much either. Radjabov,T–Salmensuu,O/Torshavn FAI 2000.

4...a5+ 5 c3 Very unusual – Bd2 is the standard reply, followed by Qc2 and e4. It is interesting to see a super–GM's spin on this – by developing the Nb1 to an odd square he gets the new possibility of playing a3 very quickly, and this is rather inconvenient for Black. Sokolov,I–Shevelev,A/ICC INT 2001.

4...bxc4 5 c3 g6 6 e4 d6 7 xc4 g7 8 e5 dxe5 9 xe5 0-0 10 0-0
10...\texttt{b7} (10...\texttt{d7} 11 \texttt{xf7!} \texttt{xf7} 12 \texttt{d6} with a complex and unbalanced position in Bosboom,M--Kristjansson,S/Hafnarfjordur ISL 1999 10...\texttt{e8} 11 \texttt{f4} and White was probably a bit better in Radjabov,T--Poulsen,M/Torshavn 2000) 11 \texttt{b3} \texttt{b6} 12 \texttt{e1} \texttt{a6} 13 \texttt{g5} \texttt{xb3} 14 \texttt{xb3} with a nice edge for White in Conquest,S--Stanojoski,Z/Euro Team Champs 1999.

5 \texttt{c2}

The sharper version 5 cxb5 \texttt{a6} 6 \texttt{c2} has been played by Korchnoi amongst others.

5...\texttt{g7}

After 5...\texttt{a6}?! -- Black's results in practice have not been encouraging. Szabolcsi,J--Adrian,C/Bischwiller FRA 2001.

6 \texttt{e4} 0-0

Black logically aims for ultra--rapid development as White loses time with both 5 \texttt{Qc2} and the inevitable capture on b5.

6...\texttt{d6} Too routine. 7 cxb5 0-0 8 \texttt{c3} \texttt{a6} 9 a4 This slow, but firm grip on the extra queenside pawn, is well met in analogous positions by a quick ...\texttt{e6}. Black does well to open up the game as he is ahead on development and has the safer king.

a) The best shot at justifying being a pawn light is 9...\texttt{e6}! 10 \texttt{dx e6} \texttt{xe6} 11 \texttt{e2} \texttt{d5}! (11...\texttt{AXB5} 12 \texttt{AXB5} \texttt{d5} is less accurate as White can play 13 0-0 as the knight can drop back to \texttt{e2} in the case of 13...\texttt{d4} Dao Thien Hai--Fogarasi,T Budapest 1986 when White played this knight round to \texttt{f4} and kept the advantage.) 12 \texttt{exd5} \texttt{xd5} 13 \texttt{xd5} \texttt{xd5} 14 0-0 \texttt{AXB5} 15 \texttt{AXB5} \texttt{f5} 16 \texttt{e2} \texttt{c6} 17 \texttt{d1} \texttt{d4} 18 \texttt{xd4} \texttt{cxd4} with reasonable compensation, Gorelov,S--Kishnev,S USSR 1985

b) 9...\texttt{AXB5}?! This just leads to easy development for White. 10 \texttt{AXB5} \texttt{a6} 11 0-0 \texttt{AXB5} 12 \texttt{AXB5} \texttt{d6} 13 \texttt{d2} \texttt{b6} 14 \texttt{c3} \texttt{f8} 15 \texttt{d2} The threat is \texttt{N--c4} with a firm grip and goodbye to any pretense of Benko--style compensation. Black therefore tries to mix things. 15...\texttt{c4}?! 16 \texttt{xf6} (16 \texttt{d4} also looks good.) 16...\texttt{xf6} 17 \texttt{xc4} with a clear advantage to White Galyas,M--Pitl,G/Budapest 2003 (July 2003)
7 cxb5

7 e5 d4 8 f4 d6 leaves White in danger of becoming over-extended.

7...b7

7...a6 8 c3 b7! with ...e6 in mind.

8 c3 e6 9 d6 a6 10 e3

Black was doing well in the following game
10 d3 axb5 11 xb5 a6 12 d2 b4 13 xb4 cxb4 14 c7 c8 15 c4 e8 16 xb4 
xd6! Campos Moreno,J–Calzetta,M Pamplona 2002

10...axb5 11 xb5

11 xc5?! allows 11...c8! 12 b4 xe4

11...b6?!

I recommend 11...a5 12 d2 g4 13 e2 xe3 14 fxe3 c6 when Black will have 
sufficient compensation for his pawn due to the bishop pair and White's ugly 
structure.

12 a4 c6 13 0-0 d4

as in Hoang Thanh Trang–Prusikhin,M/Budapest HUN 2003 (May 2003) where Black had 
good compensation.
Benko Gambit 5 e3 [A57]

Last updated: 20/06/02 by jt

The 5 e3 line of the Benko encourages Black to regain the gambit pawn if he wishes, through 5...Bb7 6 Nc3 axb5 7 Bxb5 Qa5 when the d pawn is hard to defend. In many lines, White finds ways to hand back the pawn but maintain pressure on Black's central pawns. However, Black is not without his chances.

1 d4 ¤f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 b5 4 cxb5 a6 5 e3

5...axb5

5...g6 6 ¤c3 ¤g7
a) 7 ¤c4 0-0 8 ¤f3 Surprisingly rare, but an obvious and seemingly perfectly reasonable move. Nenashev,A−Salmensuu,O/Groningen NED 1999
b) 7 ¤f3 0-0 8 a4 ¤b7 9 e4 e6 Seemed to be quite promising, trying to exploit white's rather slow plan in Keatinge Clay,A−Lee,A/San Francisco USA 2000.
c) 7 bxa6 0-0 8 ¤f3 d6 9 e4 ¤bd7 10 h3 ¤xa6?! 11 ¤xa6 ¤xa6 with a typical Benko, except that White has gained a tempo by only moving his king's bishop once. Kallio,H−Vajda,A/Budapest HUN2001
d) 7 e4 d6 (7...0-0?! 8 a4 ¤b7 9 e5 ¤e8 10 ¤f3 d6 11 ¤f4 ¤a5!? This appears to be a new move, though the provocative idea of inserting the black queen into b4 has been seen before. 12 ¤e2 ¤b4 13 ¤d2 ¤d7= with very sharp play, Estremera Panos,S−Vasilev,M/Cutro ITA 2002) 8 ¤f3 0-0 9 a4 ¤b7 10 ¤e2 axb5 11 ¤xb5 e6 12 dxe6 fxe6 13 e5 A thematic strategic nasty − White returns the pawn in order to inflict

e) 7 a4

10 dx6 fxe6 11 d6 e8 12 e2 and Black may seem to be a pawn down with a horrible position, but appearances can be deceptive, as in Georgiev, K–Rogers, I/Biel 1993 (12 b4?? losing on the spot occurred in Danilov – Navrotescu, Romanian Champs 2001)
e2) 7...b7 8 c4 e6!? 9 e4 a5 10 xb5 exd5 11 exd5 0-0 12 ge2 a6 and Black’s position is better than it looks, Zimmermann, Y–Vajda, S/Budapest HUN 2000.

5...e6 6 c3 exd5 7 cxd5 b7 8 xf6+ xf6 9 f3 e7 10 bxa6 xa6 11 e2 b4 12 a3

a) 12...e4 13 0-0 c2 14 b1 (14 d2 xa1 15 xe4 e6 when White may be able to work up extra compensation for the exchange while Black is coordinating his position? Something worth considering for players interested in venturing either side of this variation.) 14...b4 (14...xa3?? 15 a1) 15 a1 is a draw by repetition. I find this rather odd – Halkias is a very well prepared player who is also a Benko aficionado as black. Was he really caught out so early in a line of his own choosing? Or has he puzzled something out in the possibility mentioned above?

b) 12...g6 An interesting moment – according to theory 13 0-0 c4 14 d3 e4 15 xe4 xe4 16 b1 e1 Other knight discoveries on b1 can be met with Nd2. 17 d2 xf3+ 18 xf3 xf3 19 gxf3 d5 20 c3± Halkias, S–Szieberth, A/Cappelle la Grande FRA 2002.

6 xb5 a5+

6...a6 7 xa6 xa6 c3 g6 9 e4 b8 with typical Benko compensation for the pawn. Almond, R–Palatnik, S/Hastings ENG 1999

7 c3 b7 8 ge2

8 d2 wb6 9 c4 e6 10 wb3 xb3 11 xb3 a6! This is the move which keeps the line very much alive for Black as in Zimmerman, Y–Chernin, A/Hungary tt 1999.

8 e4 xe4 9 ge2 xc3 9...d6 10 d3 xd5 I can’t say I find this very easy to believe for white – a pawn down and centerless for some development. Nguyen Anh Dung–
Kallio, H/Budapest HUN 2000) 10 $xc3 a6 11 $d3 and White had dynamic play to compensate for Black’s structural advantage in Kraai, J–Ehlvest, J/San Francisco USA 2000.

8...$xd5

8...$xd5 an interesting alternative to the more usual capture with the knight occurred in Babula, V–Stocek, J/CZE 2000.

9 0-0 $xc3

9...$c7 This more solid alternative to capturing the knight was tested in Shapiro, D–Annakov, B/New York Open 2000.

10 $xc3 e6 11 e4 $e7

12 a4

12 $h5 with chances for both sides was Groffen, H–Gomers, R/Belgium 2000.
12 $f4 0-0 13 $d3 was OK for Black in Keatinge Clay, A–Eriksson, J/Budapest 2000.

12...0-0 13 $f4 $d8 14 $d6 $c6

When White plays 5 b6 keeping the Queenside partially closed, Black has two main options – to continue with Queenside play as usual, or to break open the centre with e6.

1 d4 ąf6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 b5 4 cxb5

4 ąf3 g6 5 cxb5 a6 6 b6 ąxb6 7 ąc3 d6 8 e4 ąbd7 9 ąe2 (9 ąd2 ąg7 10 ąc4 ąa7!! the queen is sometimes less exposed here than on the standard c7–square, Azmaiparashvili,Z–Van Wely,L/Bled SLO 2002) 9...ąg7 10 ąd2 ąc7 11 0-0 0-0 12 a4 and White was a little better in Portisch,L–Malakhatko,V/Istanbul TUR 2000

4...a6 5 b6

5...e6

5...a5!? 6 ąc3 ąa6 This is the point behind Black's fifth move. If White now plays quietly he risks finishing up in a typical Benko Gambit position, with the rather serious difference that White is without an extra pawn.

a) 7 f4 d6 8 ąf3 ąbd7 (8...ąxb6 9 e4 ąxf1 10 ąxf1 g6 11 e5! with a clear initiative in Zueger,B–Polgar,J/Biel 1987) 9 e4 ąxf1 10 b7! This zwischenzug proved effective in Blees,A–Markus,J/Hoogeveen NED 1999
b) 7 ąf3 Black should have no problems after this routine move. Kosasih,C–Rogers,I/Bali INA 2000

5...d6 6 ąc3

a) 6...ąbd7 7 a4 (7 e4 g6 8 a4 ąxb6 9 a5
9...b4 A little feint to draw white's rook forward. The loss of time is probably mutual, but black gains some potential tactical advantages by ensuring the white rook lingers on the a-file, as white's queenside is slightly more exposed. 10 a4 b7 11 f3 g7 12 h3 with perhaps a small edge for White was Van Riemsdijk,H–Giardelli,S/Pinamar ARG 2001.) 7...cxb6 8 e4 g6 9 a5 d7 10 f4 g7 11 c4 0-0 12 f3 e8 This knight manoeuvre is thematic when White has played a5 Delemarre,J–Baklan,V/Brussels BEL 2000

b) 6...g6

b1) 7 f3 g7 8 e4 d7 (8...0-0 9 h3 b7 10 a4 a5 11 d2 turned out well for White in Sokolov,I–Vestly,J/Panormo GRE 2001) 9 e2 (9 a4 b6 10 a5 b8? 11 h3 0-0 12 c4 and White was in the driving seat in Chiburdanidze,M–Slobodjan,R/Lippstadt GER 2000) 9...0-0 10 h3 c6 11 f4 e8!? A slick plan – Black clears the path of the dark-squared bishop and the f-pawn, and goes to pressure d5 from c7. Lautier,J–Topalov,V/Cal Galdana ESP 1999

b2) 7 e4 7...g7 8 a4 b6 9 a5 b4 10 a4 b7 11 c4 (11 f3 0-0 12 d2!? Nc6!? with an unbalanced position in Hillarp Persson,T–Conquest,S/Torshavn FAI 2000) 11...0-0 12 g2? (12 f4?! the standard continuation is 12...d7 13 a3 b4 14 d3 b5 with good counterplay) 12...d7 13 c2 d7 Winning back a tempo and preparing ...Bb5.

b2a) Again after 13 a3 Black can continue with 13...Bb5, but 13...b4 14 d3 b5 15 cxb5 axb5 16 f3 (16 c2?! d7 17 0-0 d5 favours Black, Mikhailievski,V–Hendriks,W Dieren 1998) 16...c4 17 d3 d7 is even more dynamic, Grabarczyk,M–Belotti,B Forli 1995

b2b) 13 a2 13...b5 It's a matter of taste but 13...b4!? 14 d3 b5 deserves serious consideration.) 14 b3 a6 15 f4

b2b1) or 15...b8 16 0-0?! (16 d3=) 16...xc4 17 bxc4 b3 18 d3 b4 and Black was already on top, Amura,C–Scarella,E Buenos Aires 1994

b2b2) 15...ab8 16 d3 xc4 17 bxc4 cc7 (now 17...b3? is strongly met by 18 b2) 18 0-0 b3 19 b2 f8 Markus,R–Martinovic,S/Szombathely 2003 (August 2003) White's central preponderance is counter-balanced to some extent by control of the b-file, but if White can organize his pieces (to prepare e4–e5 for instance) his position will be preferable.

5...xb6 6 c3 g6 7 e4 d6 8 f3 g7 9 d2 0-0 10 e2 a5 (Black can try and do without advancing his a-pawn e.g. 10...d7 11 0-0 cc7 12 a4 b8 13 a5 c8 14 c4 d5 15 f4
16 \( \text{x}c4 \text{a}7 17 \text{e}2 \text{c}7 18 \text{e}3 \text{d}7 19 \text{e}5 \text{b}4 \) with counterplay, V. Moskalenko–V. Tukmakov, Wijk aan Zee 1992) 11 \( \text{c}c4 \text{d}8 12 0-0 \text{bd}7 13 \text{g}5 \text{a}4 14 \text{c}2 \text{b}6 15 \text{e}3 \text{a}6 16 \text{xa}6 \text{xa}6 17 \text{f}4 \) and White has an edge due to his grip on the centre, Shabalov, A–Fedorowicz, J/Seattle USA Ch. 2003 (Feb 2003).

6 \( \text{e}c3 \text{xd}5 \)

6...\( \text{b}7 \) This is an interesting and less theoretical alternative to the heavily analysed Nxd5. Pedersen, C–Mikhalevski, V/Politiken Cup 2000.

7 \( \text{xd}5 \text{ex}d5 8 \text{xd}5 \text{c}6 \)

You should be aware of the transpositional possibilities in this line. It is possible to reach key positions at around move 15 via various different move orders.

9 \( \text{f}3 \text{b}8 \)

9...\( \text{e}7 \) It seems that this is inaccurate, as shown by Gleizerov, E–Mellado Trivino, J/Spain 2000.

10 e4

10 \( \text{e}5!? \text{f}6 11 \text{xc}6 \text{dxc}6 \)

a) 12 \( \text{e}4+ \text{e}7 13 \text{g}3 \text{f}5 (13...\text{xb}6 14 \text{g}2 \text{e}6 \) and Black had dynamic compensation for his pawn weaknesses in Hovmoller, K–Boehlke, C/Copenhagen DEN 2000) 14 \text{a}4 \text{d}4 and Black’s pieces were very active in Akobian, V–De Vreugt, D/Yerevan ARM 2000.

b) 12 \( \text{f}3 \) 12...\( \text{e}7 13 \text{d}2 \)

b1) 13...\( \text{xf}3!? 14 \text{exf}3 \) and White's superior pawn structure will give him the advantage if he can quell Black's early initiative, (Capturing towards the centre with 14 gxf3 makes sense: 14...\( \text{f}6 15 \text{c}3 \text{xc}3+ 16 \text{xc}3 \text{xb}6 \) however looks playable.) 14...\( \text{f}6 15 \text{c}3 \text{xc}3+ 16 \text{bxc}3 0-0 17 \text{c}4 \text{e}8+ 18 \text{d}2 \text{f}5 19 \text{ae}1 \text{ed}8+ 20 \text{e}3 \text{g}5! \) and Black was better as White's king is a serious problem, Crouch–Trent, Yateley Manor 2001.
b2) 13...\texttt{\textipa{\textbf{B}}x}b2 Black should seriously consider avoiding this move: 14 \texttt{\textipa{\textbf{O}}c}3
b2a) 14...\texttt{\textipa{\textbf{C}}}c2?! I don't like this move, e.g. 15 \texttt{\textipa{\textbf{O}}x}g7
b2a1) 15...\texttt{\textipa{\textbf{D}}}g8 can be met by 16 \texttt{\textipa{\textbf{R}}x}c6+ \texttt{\textipa{\textbf{D}}}d7 17 \texttt{\textipa{\textbf{R}}}c7 \texttt{\textipa{\textbf{R}}}d8 18 \texttt{\textipa{\textbf{R}}}e5 when White is obviously better. (but not 18 \texttt{\textipa{\textbf{B}}}b7?? \texttt{\textipa{\textbf{R}}}xg7 19 \texttt{\textipa{\textbf{B}}}b8 \texttt{\textipa{\textbf{R}}}e3+)
b2a2) 15...\texttt{\textipa{\textbf{C}}}c4!? 16 \texttt{\textipa{\textbf{O}}}c3 (16 \texttt{\textipa{\textbf{R}}}xh8?? \texttt{\textipa{\textbf{B}}}b4+) 16...\texttt{\textipa{\textbf{A}}}a4 17 \texttt{\textipa{\textbf{B}}}b1 \texttt{\textipa{\textbf{D}}}g8 18 \texttt{\textipa{\textbf{E}}}e5 \texttt{\textipa{\textbf{B}}}b7 19 e4 \texttt{\textipa{\textbf{E}}}e6 20 \texttt{\textipa{\textbf{E}}}e2! (20 \texttt{\textipa{\textbf{B}}}b2 can be met with 20...a5 threatening ...\texttt{\textipa{\textbf{B}}}b4) 20...\texttt{\textipa{\textbf{D}}}xa2 21 \texttt{\textipa{\textbf{B}}}a1 \texttt{\textipa{\textbf{D}}}b3 22 0-0 \texttt{\textipa{\textbf{R}}}xc3 23 \texttt{\textipa{\textbf{R}}}c3 \texttt{\textipa{\textbf{R}}}xb6 The smoke clears and White is nominally a pawn down. However Black's queenside is not going anywhere whereas White has a mobile majority, so in practise it's almost as if White has the advantage in material! The game continuation suggests that White is better, but doesn't have it all his own way, \textit{Shabalov, A−Adamson, R/Las Vegas USA 2002.}
b2b) 14...\texttt{\textipa{\textbf{B}}}xb6 15 e4!? (15 \texttt{\textipa{\textbf{O}}}xg7 led to advantage for Black in \textit{Deiler, P−Degraeve, J/Metz FRA 2000}) 15...\texttt{\textipa{\textbf{E}}}e6 16 \texttt{\textipa{\textbf{O}}}g3 \texttt{\textipa{\textbf{D}}}g8 17 \texttt{\textipa{\textbf{E}}}e2 f6 18 0-0 with enough compensation for the pawn, \textit{Parker−Claesen, Mondariz 2000}
10 \texttt{\textipa{\textbf{D}}}d2 \texttt{\textipa{\textbf{B}}}xb6 (10...\texttt{\textipa{\textbf{E}}}e7 11 \texttt{\textipa{\textbf{C}}}c3 0-0 12 e4 \texttt{\textipa{\textbf{B}}}xb6 13 \texttt{\textipa{\textbf{C}}}c4 \texttt{\textipa{\textbf{B}}}b4 14 \texttt{\textipa{\textbf{D}}}d2 \texttt{\textipa{\textbf{B}}}b7) A sensible move which seems to be new, as hard as that is to believe, \textit{Vladimirov, E−Mikhaevski, V/Italy 2000}.) 11 \texttt{\textipa{\textbf{C}}}c3 \texttt{\textipa{\textbf{B}}}b4 12 \texttt{\textipa{\textbf{D}}}d2 d5 (12...\texttt{\textipa{\textbf{B}}}b7!? 13 a3 \texttt{\textipa{\textbf{D}}}d6 14 \texttt{\textipa{\textbf{E}}}c3 15 \texttt{\textipa{\textbf{G}}}e6 15 \texttt{\textipa{\textbf{D}}}d2 \texttt{\textipa{\textbf{D}}}d5 and Black appeared to be comfortable in \textit{Gallagher, J−Degraeve, J/Metz FRA 2001}) 13 a3 d4 An interesting and dynamic pawn sac. \textit{Hoffman, A−Vittorino, C/Cali COL 2000}
10 \texttt{\textipa{\textbf{G}}}g5 is an unusual move that has been receiving some attention recently, \textit{Ivanisevic, I−Degraeve, J/Bled SLO 2002.}

\textbf{10...\texttt{\textipa{\textbf{E}}}e7 11 \texttt{\textipa{\textbf{C}}}c4}

11 \texttt{\textipa{\textbf{D}}}d2N 0-0 12 \texttt{\textipa{\textbf{C}}}c3 \texttt{\textipa{\textbf{B}}}xb6 13 \texttt{\textipa{\textbf{E}}}e2 d6 14 0-0 \texttt{\textipa{\textbf{A}}}e6 15 \texttt{\textipa{\textbf{D}}}d2 h6 16 \texttt{\textipa{\textbf{F}}}d1 \texttt{\textipa{\textbf{F}}}d8 and Black should be OK. \textit{Krush, I−Petersen, T/Torshavn FAI 2000}

\textbf{11...0-0}

\begin{center}
\textbf{12 0-0}
\end{center}

12 \texttt{\textipa{\textbf{D}}}d2 \texttt{\textipa{\textbf{B}}}xb6
a) 13 0-0 A remarkable idea, White just ignores his b−pawn in order to centralize quickly. 13...d6 (13...£xb2 14 §c3 £b6 15 £ad1 Black must solve the pressure on the d−file, but this proved difficult in Thorfinsson,B−Zueger,B/Ohrid MKD 2001) 14 £h5 £xb2!? 15 £ad1 and White had plenty of play for the pawn. Khurtsidze,N−Cramling,P/Shenyang CHN 2000.

b) 13 §c3 13...£b7!?N A very interesting alternative to the standard plan of trying to get control over d5 via e6. 14 §d2 £b4 15 0-0-0 £xe4 (15...d6 was also unclear in Roos−Lazarev, Italy 2000) 16 £xd7 with an unclear position in Krush,I−Gunnarsson,J/Torshavn FAI 2000.

12...£xb6

A critical moment.

12...£a5 13 £d3 £xb6 14 £h5 £b7 (14...d5 and White had a promising position in Lomineishvili,M−Vasilevich,T/European Women's Team Championships 2000,) 15 £d2 £d6 16 £ad1† and White was a little better in Dreev,A−Banikas,H/Greece 2001.

13 £h5 d6 14 b3 £e6

The alternative 14...£f6 15 £g5 £xg5 16 £xg5 £e8 17 f3 £e6 is the most solid, Doroshkievich,V−Solozhenkin,E, Chigorin Mem. 2000 as White will have difficulty to exploit the Black pawn structure without a knight.

15 £xe6 fxe6 16 £g4 £c8 17 £b2 £f6 18 £xf6

Known is the sharper 18 e5 dxe5 19 £ae1 £b4 20 £g3 e4 21 £xf6 £xf6 22 £d2 which left Black with ragged pawns. However after 22...£g6 23 £c3 £d4 24 £xe4 £d5 25 £xc5 £d4 26 b4 a5 27 a3 £c6 28 f3 £b5 29 £b3 £xa3! 30 £xa3 axb4 31 £xb4 £xc5+ 32 £xc5 £xc5 Bagirov,R−Vuckovic,Bo., Istanbul Ol 2000 Black had been able to equalize and a draw was agreed.

18...£xf6 19 £d2 £g6 20 £h3 £h6 21 £d3 d5?!

21...£e5 22 £c3 £f8 was the more patient and practical try. Black is probably OK but he has to be more careful as his pawns are a little sensitive after 23 £ad1

22 exd5 £b4 23 £c3 £xd5 24 £e5

Here we consider White's other counters to the Benko when White allows Black to recapture the pawn on b5, namely the systems with Nf3, Nc3 and f3.

1 d4 ¤f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 b5 4 cxb5

4 ¤f3 g6 5 cxb5 (5 £c2 ¥g7 6 e4 0-0 7 cxb5 a6 8 ¤c3 e6 9 dxex6 fixe6 10 e5 ¤h5 11 ¥e4 ¥a7 and the Black position had much dynamic potential in Tregubov,P–Greenfeld,A/Neum BIH 2000) 5...a6 6 £c2!?

This is a rare move but it makes a lot of sense. Besides attacking the c5 pawn, White supports the e4 advance without having a knight attacked. This is a very critical option in the currently fashionable Benko Refused with 4, Nf3. White wants to play e4 and then just leave his pawn on b5, which has had good results. (6 ¤c3 axb5 7 d6 is not seen too often. 7...£b7 8 ¤xb5!? is new 8...¤a5+ 9 ¤c3 exd6 10 ¥d2 with a tricky and complex position, Radjabov,T–Halkias,S/Halkidiki GRE 2002 )

a) 6...d6 7 e4 ¤g7 8 ¤c3 (8 a4 0-0 9 ¥a3!? White announces that he would like to take back on b5 with the a–pawn, and so is ready to develop his Bf1 without worrying about losing a tempo ( for example B–e2xb5). Black responds to the lack of a Nc3 by steering play into Benko–Blumenfeld territory. 9...¤bd7 10 ¥e2 e6 with complex play in Kozul,Z–Njirjak,J/Bizovac CRO 2001) 8...0-0 9 a4 axb5 10 ¥xb5 ¤a6 (10...¤a6 11 ¥a3 and White must have a good Benko. Georgiev,V–Wornath,K/Bremen GER 2001) 11 0-0 ¥b4 and White had what seemed like an ideal Benko in Hoffman,A–Giardelli,S/Pinamar ARG 2001.

b) 6...¤xd5 7 ¥xc5 ¥c7 8 ¥xc7 ¤xc7 9 b6 ¥d5 10 ¤c3 ¤xb6? led to problems for Black in Agdestein,S–Prusikhin,M/Bad Wiessee GER 2000
c) 6...£b6 A rare line that deserves a closer look. Ernst,S–De Rover,Y/AKN Weekender 2001.
d) 6...axb5 7 e4 £a5+ with complex play occurred in Bareev,E–Topalov,V/Sarajevo BIH 2000.

4...a6

4...e6 From the Benko into the Blumenfeld! This is a an accelerated form of the popular 5 
£c3 exd5 6 £xd5 £b7 7 xf6+ £xf6 8 £f3 d5 It's hard to believe that Black has enough for his pawn here. On the other hand, he can now develop all his pieces to good central squares without being bothered too much by White. The hanging pawns also have dynamic potential. Hochstrasser,M–Abbasifar,H/Golden Sands BUL 2000.

5 f3

A line which used to be very popular, and which I was quite fond of as White myself for a while.
5 £c3 A line for maniacs. 5...axb5 6 e4 b4 7 £b5 d6
a) 8 £c4 A tricky but ultimately unimpressive variation.
a1) 8...g6 9 e5 dxe5 10 d6 £a6?! 11 £f3! exd6 (11...£g7 12 £xe5 0-0 13 £c6 £d7 14 £xe7+ £h8 15 £xe8 £fxe8 16 0-0+– Mensch,E–Capit,F France 1996 ) 12 £g5 h6 (12...£e7!? 12...£b7 13 £xe5!±) 13 £xe5!± Eklund,J–Nitz,T/Oxford ENG 2002.
a2) 8...£bd7?! A reaction worth noting against this move order – black heads immediately to hit the Bc4. 9 £f3 £b6 10 b3 £xc4 (10...£xe4!? Von Alvensleben,W–Lorenz,S Germany 1995 GER–chT2. ) 11 bxc4 £a6 (11...£xe4!) 12 £d2 g6 13 0-0 £g7 14 £b2 0-0+ Hoem,T–Guddahl,V/NOR 2002.
b) 8 £f4 8...£g5
(8...\texttt{	exttt{a6}} 9 \texttt{\texttt{f3} \texttt{xe4}}N is a recent idea which still requires further tests. \texttt{Jobava,B–De Vreugt,D/Yerevan ARM 2000}. 8...\texttt{bd}d7 another unusual alternative was seen in \texttt{De Haan – Claesen, Belgian Interteams 1999 – 2000} 8...\texttt{xe4}!!? This relatively rare option has scored well for Black so far, as in \texttt{Vandevoort – Weemaes, Belgian Interteams2000-2001})
b1) 9 \texttt{\texttt{xe4}} 10 \texttt{\texttt{f4} \texttt{\texttt{f6}}}! was tried out in \texttt{Arencibia,W–Ivanchuk,V/Cap d'Agde 1998(10...\texttt{g7} leads to difficult and highly theoretical play, as in \texttt{Dias – Gunnarsson, 2000 Olympiad.)}}
b2) 9 \texttt{\texttt{e3} 9...\texttt{xe4} 10 \texttt{d3} \texttt{a5} 11 \texttt{\texttt{e2}} with a double–edged position in \texttt{Ghane,S–Najafi,M/Fajr IRI 2001/The more rational 11 \texttt{e2} was played in \texttt{Chetverik,M–Papp,G/Hungary 2000 })}

5...\texttt{axb5}

5...\texttt{e6}
a) 6 \texttt{\texttt{e4} exd5} 7 \texttt{e5}

The critical line, though a very risky business without being armed to the teeth (and perhaps still then). Recapturing on d5 is quite possible. 7...\texttt{\texttt{e7} 8 \texttt{e2 \texttt{g8} 9 \texttt{\texttt{c3} \texttt{b7} 10 \texttt{\texttt{h3} c4 This move has by far the best theoretical pedigree. In fact, white has a pretty wretched record in this variation.}}}}
1) 11 ²g5 ²c5 12 a4!? led to uniquely mind-boggling complications: 12...d4 looks crushing, but quite possible too ambitious. (12...h6!? 13 ²e4 ³b4+ 14 ²f2 d3 15 ²e3 ²xb2+ 16 ²g3∞ Sheldon,R–Sowray,P/Birmingham ENG 2002.

2) 11 ²e3 11...axb5 12 0-0-0 ³b4 13 ²f4 ²e7
a2a) 14 ²f2 ²a5 turned out well for White in Lim Chuing Hoong–Wong Zi Jing/Penang MAS 2000(14...²a6 may be good for Black. See Loetscher,R–Dell'Agosti,A/Christmas Open 2000)
a2b) 14 ²b6 14...h5 15 ²xd5 ²xc3+ An amazing Queen sac. See the games Allemann,A–Costantini,R/Biel SUI 2001 and Lalic,B–Khalifman,A/Linares 1997.

b) 6 dxe6 6...fxe6 7 e4 c4?! A bizarre novelty that won't be catching on. Paulsen,D–Pfretzschner,R/Seebad Heringsdorf GER 2000

5...g6 6 e4 ²g7?! I was rather startled to see this, but it seems to be quite popular with some rather crafty players. Williams,L–Matamoros Franco,C/Istanbul TUR 2000.

6 e4 ²a5+ 7 ²d2

b) 6 dxe6 6...fxe6 7 e4 c4?! A bizarre novelty that won't be catching on. Paulsen,D–Pfretzschner,R/Seebad Heringsdorf GER 2000

5...g6 6 e4 ²g7?! I was rather startled to see this, but it seems to be quite popular with some rather crafty players. Williams,L–Matamoros Franco,C/Istanbul TUR 2000.

7 b4?! ²xb4+ (7...cxb4 8 ²d2 e5 9 ²b3 ³b6 10 ³d3 ²a6?? 11 ²xb5 ²xb5 12 ²xb5 with some advantage for White in Ulko,J–Kopjonkin,G/Voronezh RUS 2001) 8 ²d2 ²a4 9 ²c1 ²a7?! 10 ²xb5 ²a6 11 ²c3 and White was better in Simantsev,M–Gavris,L/Kharkov UKR 2000

7 ²c3 b4 8 ²b5 d6 9 a4 bx3a+ 10 ²d2 ²b6 11 ²xa3 ²xa3 12 bxa3 and White had a Queenside initiative in Hauchard,A–Salmensuu,O/Ubeda ESP 2000

7...b4 8 ²a3 d6 9 ²c4 ²d8

9...²a7 10 a4!? with chances for both sides in Urday,H–Mendoza,R/Cali COL 2000

10 ²e2

10 a3 e6 11 dxe6 ²xe6 12 axb4 ²xa1 13 ²xa1 d5 14 exd5 ²xd5 15 ²e5 was a new and logical and reasonably logical attempt to cause trouble, but it fails to solve white's basic problem in this sub-variation, which is a serious problem completing development. (15 b5 as in the notes to this game, is the most testing, though still very
risky.) 15...\textit{d}d6 16 \textit{b}b5+ \textit{f}f8 17 \textit{c}c4 \textit{x}xb4 18 \textit{x}xb4 cxb4 (18...\textit{x}c4 with likely complex and unclear play was Vioreanu,B–Moraru,M/Sovata ROM 2001) 19 \textit{xd}d6 \textit{xd}d6 and White was roughly equal – (0-1, 27) Dinev,D–Stojanovski,D/Skopje MKD 2002.

10...\textit{g}6 11 \textit{a}3 \textit{bxa3} 12 \textit{xa}a3

Oddly enough, a novelty.

12...\textit{xa}a3 13 \textit{bxa3} \textit{g}7 14 \textit{a}a4+

and White gained the upper hand in Paulsen,D–Trauth,M/Christmas Open 2000.
Benko Accepted without Kxf1 [A58]

Last updated: 23/08/03 by Glenn Flear

Here we look at Benko Gambit Accepted systems where White does not castle artificially, concentrating on the very trendy fianchetto system with 10 Rb1. You should be aware of flexible move orders resulting in the same position in the Fianchetto line.

1 d4 ¤f6 2 c4 e5 3 d5 b5 4 cxb5 a6 5 bxa6 g6

5...¥xa6 6 ¤c3 (6 g3 d6 7 ¥g2 g6 8 b3 ¥g7 9 ¥b2 ¥b6 10 ¤f3 The N usually heads for h3 in this line, because if it goes to f3 early then ...Bb7 can be annoying since Nc3 can be met by ...Nxd5 and the Nc3 is pinned to the Bb2. Here however, the black queen on b6 would be hit after Nxd5, so white can try to develop more conventionally. 10...0-0 Black has sometimes tried to use the move ...c4 in connection with an early ...Qb6, but the impact of this escapes me. 11 0-0 ¥bd7 12 ¥e1 ¥b7 13 ¥c3 ¥f8 14 ¥b1 and it's not clear that Black is getting anywhere. Kruppa,Y–Kasparov,S/Kiev UKR 2000) 6...d6 7 f4 g6 8 ¤f3 ¥g7 9 e4 ¥xf1 (9...0-0 was less logical in Miniboeck – To Quoc Khanh, 34th Olympiad 2000) 10 ¥xf1 0-0 11 e5 with an unbalanced position in Arencibia,W–Ocana Roca,J/Malaga ESP 2000.

The very unusual 5...e6 reaching a Benko /Blumenfeld hybrid was tried in Heinlein,R–Blasco,D/Italy 1999.

6 ¤c3

6 g3 d6 7 ¤c3 (7 b3 ¥g7 8 ¥b2 0-0 9 ¥g2 ¥xa6 Black's trickiest option. 10 ¥h3 ¥b4 11 a3? This position should be in the Benko player's repertoire of dirty tricks. 11...¥bxd5! 12 ¥xd5 ¥xd5 13 ¥xg7 ¥xg7 14 ¥xd5 ¥xh3+ Marquez Molina, J–Bellon Lopez, J/Malaga ESP
2002.) 7...g7 8 e4? White becomes confused between two systems. Holis, H–Vuckovic, B/Korinthos GRE 2000

6...xa6 7 f3

7 g3 d6 8 g2 g7 9 h3 A line that has been surprisingly popular in recent months. I am not quite sure why people play this as White ... one does avoid problems with the d5 pawn, and from f4 the sensitive d3 square is often monitored. But this line tends to work best for White when he manages to get his knight back to a circuit involving the f3 square. The distance from the d4 square allows Black to play for an effective c5–c4 more easily, since there is less or no danger of a knight arriving suddenly on c6. 9...0-0 10 b1 (10 0-0 d7 11 c2 a7?! 12 b3 a8 13 b1 b8 14 d1 ab7?! 15 d2 c4 and Black had got what he wanted in Aseev, K–Ponomariov, R/Ohrid MKD 2001) 10...d7 11 0-0 a5 12 d2 fb8 13 c2 e8 14 b3 a3 and Black had an active position in Korchnoi, V–Baklan, V/Neum BIH 2000

7...g7

7...d6 8 d2 g7 9 e4 xf1 10 xf1 a5 11 d2 0-0 12 e3 with a typical Benko position with chances for both sides in Bareev, E–Kasparov, G/Linares 1994

8 g3 d6 9 g2 bd7

9...0-0 10 0-0 d7 11 e1 This has largely been replaced by lines with Rb1 – which is sensible really – there is no clear reason to commit the f1 rook yet – a hasty e2–e4 is often just an invitation for Black to start hopping his knights into contact with d3. Pons, P–Fraga, J/ Mallorca ESP 2000

10 b1!?}

The height of fashion, and the main focus of my regular fright report in the Benko. To a certain extent this is a very sophisticated fear – it requires both great theoretical knowledge as well as dexterity in the position type as White, as he only gains a
good" Benko. At many levels, this doesn't mean a huge amount, as most of the hard work of converting this remains, and for the vast majority of humans, there is still tremendous scope for White to go wrong as he tries to inch forward without allowing Black's counterplay to flare up. 'Moving off the long diagonal and thus preparing a timely b2–b3. This move has only come into the fore in the last three years, before that the fianchetto lines were considered benign, now this move has made them essentially Black's most difficult line.'

10 0-0 \( \text{\underline{b}6} \)

a) 11 \( \text{\underline{e}1} \) was Epishin's recent reaction to black's plan of ultra–quick pressure on d5. This is more like the older games in the g3 system. 11...0-0 12 \( \text{\underline{d}2} \) (12 \( e4 \) \( \text{\underline{f}87} \) 13 \( h4 \)?) \( \text{\underline{c}4} \) 14 \( \text{\underline{f}1} \)?? \( \text{\underline{a}5} \) 15 \( \text{\underline{x}c}4 \) \( \text{\underline{x}c}4 \) 16 \( \text{\underline{d}2} \) and White was probably a bit better. (1-0, 39) Epishin,V–Matamoros Franco,C/Seville ESP 2002.) 12...\( \text{\underline{c}7} \) 13 \( \text{\underline{f}1} \) (13 \( h1 \) \( \text{\underline{b}7} \) 14 \( b4 \)!) Possibly an enormous novelty, and an amazingly obvious one really. Grigore,G–Costantini,R/Cesenatico 2000.) 13...\( \text{\underline{g}4} \) and Black must have been happy in Averkin,Ö–Alburt,L/URS 1974.

b) 11 \( \text{\underline{h}4} \) Defending the d–pawn an additional time in order to prepare Qc2 and Rd1, but is the knight really happy here? 11...0-0 12 \( \text{\underline{c}2} \)

b1) 12...\( \text{\underline{c}8} \) 13 \( \text{\underline{d}1} \) \( \text{\underline{c}7} \) 14 \( \text{\underline{b}1} \) \( \text{\underline{a}7} \) 15 b3 f5!? Now we get a very odd mixture of Benko and Leningrad Dutch. There is no real reason that that particular blend should be promising, but it still leads to difficult play. Bareev,E–Bellow Lopez,J/Montpellier FRA 2001.

b2) 12...\( \text{\underline{f}d7} \)?? Ristic plays a new move avoiding the theory that has developed rapidly since Karpov gave 11 Nh4 a try a couple of years ago. 13 \( \text{\underline{d}1} \) \( \text{\underline{c}4} \) On this square the knight puts annoying pressure on White's queenside. 14 \( \text{\underline{h}3} \)?? \( \text{\underline{a}7} \) 15 \( \text{\underline{b}1} \) (15 \( b3 \)?) is dubious in view of 15...\( \text{\underline{a}5} \) 15...\( \text{\underline{a}5} \) 16 \( \text{\underline{x}d7} \) An interesting decision to exchange off one of Black's knights, presumably Aleksandrov wasn't concerned about any weakness to his light–squares. 16...\( \text{\underline{d}7} \) 17 \( \text{\underline{a}4} \) Finally preparing b2–b3. 17...\( \text{\underline{b}5} \) 18 b3 \( \text{\underline{a}7} \) 19 \( \text{\underline{x}c}4 \)?? with unclear complications, Aleksandrov,A–Ristic,N/Jahorina 2003 (July 2003)

b3) 12...\( \text{\underline{d}7} \) with a typical Benko position in Lautier,J–Bareev,E/Cannes FRA 2001 13 \( \text{\underline{d}1} \) \( \text{\underline{f}b8} \) (13...\( \text{\underline{b}7} \) 14 \( a4 \) \( \text{\underline{f}b8} \) 15 \( e4 \) \( \text{\underline{e}8} \) 16 b3 also favoured White slightly in Karpov,A–Ricardi,P Buenos Aires 2001) 14 b3 c4 15 \( \text{\underline{e}3} \) cxb3 16 axb3 \( \text{\underline{b}7} \) Lautier,J–Bareev,E World cup rapid 2001 and now 17 \( \text{\underline{d}4} \) leaves White on top.

10...0-0

10...\( \text{\underline{b}6} \)

da) 11 a4?! \( \text{\underline{b}7} \) 12 e4 \( \text{\underline{a}6} \) 13 \( f1 \) Although White has had to play e2–e4 and Bg2–f1 rather earlier than usual, it's not clear if this constitutes a major concession. Can Black exploit this ugliness? 13...\( \text{\underline{d}f7} \) 14 \( \text{\underline{b}5} \) c4!? 15 \( \text{\underline{e}3} \) \( \text{\underline{x}b}5 \) 16 axb5 \( \text{\underline{a}4} \) Direct but after (16...0-0 the English junior probably feared 17 \( \text{\underline{d}4} \) 17 \( \text{\underline{c}2} \) \( \text{\underline{xb}2} \)! with a double–edged struggle ahead Epishin,V–Jones,G/Deizisau GER 2003 (May 2003)

b) 11 b3

b1) 11...\( \text{\underline{c}8} \)
The idea is to provoke e4, when the bishop has a new career on a6. 'is an interesting plan to try and exploit the early rook move to b1. The game Neverov, V−Van der Weide, K Cappelle la Grande continued as follows:

b1a) 12 e4 a6 13 f1 c8 14 d2 0-0 15 xa6 e6 16 e2 e8 17 a4 xe2+ 18 xe2 f5= 1/2-1/2 Cvitan, O−Matamoros Franco, C op Cannes FRA 1996 (29).

b1b) 12 d3 f5 13 e4 c8 14 c2 a6 15 f1 c8 16 b5+ xb5 17 xb5 a5!? (otherwise 17...g4 18 d2 0-0 19 a4 c8 offers compensation according to van der Weide) 18 a4 g4 19 d2 h3 20 c3xb5! 21 axb5 g2 with practical chances for the exchange.

b1c) 12 h4 12...h6 13 c2 d7!? This is a very interesting idea − usually Black has tried to exploit the position of the Nh4 only after both sides have castled, when White has time to cover the d5 pawn with Rd1. Here, White cannot prevent everything and decides to return the pawn. playing e4 was an option, but Black should get counterplay there as well. A very determined move, and probably the reason behind the variations reappearance.

b1c1) 14 0-0 g5 regaining the pawn with an unclear position in Epishin, V−Halkias, S/Ohrid MKD 2001. Interesting that an authority like Epishin adopts such a timid approach.

b1c2) 14 b2 g5 15 f3 f5 (15...b7 16 d1 0-0 Now that g7 and h8 are no longer loose black is hoping for a concession − e4 protects d5 but allows ...Ba6, which is annoying, and one of the points of the ...Bc8 idea. 17 0-0 White now threatens e4 when black is lacking in compensation − having ventilated his kingside and failed to mount pressure on the queenside. 17...fxd5 18 xd5 xd5 19 xg7 xg7 20 xg5 Regains the extra pawn and sending this particular idea back to the drawing board for Black, Gustafsson, J−Kasparov, S/Deizisau GER 2002.)

b1c21) 16 e4 g6 Keeping pressure on e4 and d5. 17 0-0 0-0 Protecting g7 and creating the threat of taking on d5. 18 d2 Originally Kasimdzhanov's improvement. The e−pawn is too hot to handle and White prepares e5. Kasimdzhanov, R−Van der Weide, K/Groningen NED 1999 (18 d1 was tried in Breier − Van Der Weide, Young Masters 1999.) 18...g4!? The latest theoretical wrinkle. 19 fe1 f5 20 xf5 xf5 21 a1 is a duel between white's a−pawn and black's quick kingside initiative. Wunnink, M−Wiersma, E/Amsterdam NED 2002.

b1c22) 16 d1!? moves up to main line status − this subtlety prevents black from opening up the kingside and considerably slows down counterplay. 16...0-0 17 0-0 g6 18 a4
\( \text{f5} \) 19 \( \text{c1} \) \( \text{h5} \) 20 \( \text{e1} \) and White seemed to have good control, Epishin, V–Piantoni, R/Bratto ITA 2002.

b1c3) 14 \( \text{d2} \) when Black has some choice as to how to continue: 14...g5 (14...\( \text{b7} \)!? 15 e4 \( \text{a6} \) is complex.) 15 \( \text{f3} \)

b1c31) 15...\( \text{fxd5} \)!? 16 \( \text{xd5} \) \( \text{xd5} \) 17 \( \text{g5} \)

b1c311) 17...\( \text{hxg5} \) 18 \( \text{xd5} \) \( \text{b7} \) 19 \( \text{xb7} \) \( \text{xb7} \) 20 f3 g4 21 \( \text{c3} \) \( \text{xc3}+ \) (21...e5 is dodgy after 22 0-0 \( \text{gxf3} \) 23 \( \text{xf3} \) d5 24 \( \text{hfl} \) 22 \( \text{xc3} \) \( \text{h7} \) 23 \( \text{b2} \) with an edge to White, Fogarasi

b1c312) 17...\( \text{b7} \)! 18 \( \text{f3} \) \( \text{b4} \) 19 \( \text{xb4} \) cxb4 20 0-0 0-0 with the plan of pressurizing a2, looks OK for Black (Flear).

b1c32) 15...\( \text{b7} \)!? 16 e4 \( \text{a6} \) 17 a4! 0-0 18 a5 \( \text{c8} \) 19 e5 Alexandrov, A–Van der Weide, K St.Vincent 2000 should be answered by 19...dxe5 20 \( \text{xe5} \) \( \text{c7} \) 21 \( \text{c6} \) \( \text{d6} \) with compensation according to Van der Weide but Fritz thinks that Black is busted after 22 \( \text{a4} \)

b2) 11...\( \text{b7} \) This variation has the merit of making the Nf3 feel silly for a while, but black has yet to find a very impressive way of doing something with the time it takes for white to recoordinate his position. 12 \( \text{h4} \) 0-0

b2a) 13 a4! \( \text{a7} \) 14 0-0 \( \text{a8} \) 15 \( \text{b5}! \) gave White a dangerous initiative in Lalic, B–Vasilyev, M Ubeda 2001

b2b) 13 \( \text{a2} \) \( \text{a7} \) (13...\( \text{c8} \) 14 \( \text{d2} \) \( \text{c7} \) 15 0-0 \( \text{xc3} \) 16 \( \text{xc3} \) f6 17 e4 \( \text{xa2} \) 18 \( \text{a1} \) \( \text{b5} \) 19 \( \text{d2} \) \( \text{a8} \) 20 \( \text{c3} \) \( \text{d7} \) 21 \( \text{d3} \) turned out better for White in Tunik, G–Fominyh, A St.Petersburg 2001) 14 0-0 \( \text{a8} \) 15 e4 \( \text{f7} \) 16 a4 c4! with adequate counterchances, Jeremic, V–Nyback, T, Halkidiki 2001

b2c) 13 0-0

b2c1) 13...\( \text{c8} \) 14 \( \text{c2} \) (14 \( \text{d2} \)!? A very interesting and straightforward plan that aims to simplify the position if black plays for ...e6. 14...\( \text{c7} \) 15 e4 looked good for White in Milov, V–Tregubov, P/Deizisau GER 2001 14 \( \text{b2} \) \( \text{xc3} \) 15 \( \text{xc3} \) Giving up that beautiful bishop to regain the pawn is not the main idea of the Benko. Jussupow, A–Kersten, U/Altenkirchen GER 1999) 14...\( \text{a7} \) 15 \( \text{d1} \) \( \text{a8} \) and White should be better. Levin, F–Salmensuu, O/Groningen NED 1999

b2c2) 13...\( \text{d7} \) 14 \( \text{b2} \) \( \text{f8} \) and Black's compensation for the pawn looked inadequate in Slipak, S–Hoffman, A/Buenos Aires ARG 1999.

10...\( \text{a5} \) 11 0-0 \( \text{b6} \) 12 a3! showed a strong argument for leaving the B on c1 for a while – the possibility of a3+b4 can be very powerful – Vanderstricht, G–Penttinen, J/Halkidiki GRE 2002.

11 0-0

11 b3 postponing castling, is a recent try from Epishin, who has a lot of experience in this type of position. The new wrinkle provoked black into using a lot of time to trade light–squared bishops, something which he did not manage to justify, though the plan may have more merit than displayed in the game. 11...\( \text{b6} \) 12 \( \text{b2} \) \( \text{c8} \) 13 \( \text{d2} \) \( \text{f5} \) 14 \( \text{d1} \) \( \text{c8} \) 15 0-0 \( \text{h3} \) 16 \( \text{f1} \) \( \text{xg2} \) 17 \( \text{xg2} \) \( \text{b7} \) 18 e4 \( \text{f7} \) 19 h4† (1-0, 38) Epishin, V–Mensch, E/Bad Zwesteren GER 2002.

11...\( \text{b6} \)
11...\texttt{b}6 12 b3 \texttt{ab}8 13 \texttt{c}2 \texttt{fc}8 14 \texttt{d}2 e6 An unusual reaction and hardly the most principled. Piket,J–Baklan,V/Neukoelln GER 1999
11...\texttt{a}5!?

has become fashionable. Kramnik preferred 12 \texttt{d}2 (12 h3 A little slow–looking, but White has an idea in mind. 12...\texttt{fb}8 13 \texttt{c}2 \texttt{b}6 14 \texttt{d}2!? Pantsulaia,L–Izoria,Z/Nakhchivan 2003 (August 2003) Exploiting the fact that the d2–square has been kept free, the knight switches wings. Black's queen now gets more than her fair share of harassment.) 12...\texttt{fb}8 (12...\texttt{b}7!? Black switches to central reaction, always a sharp decision. Traditional pile–everything–up on the queenside tactics have had mixed results: 12...\texttt{b}6 13 b3 \texttt{a}3 14 \texttt{e}1! and white used the availability of the c2 square to roll black back and seize a clear edge in Dautov,R–Felgaer,R/Port Erin IOM 2002.)

a) 13 b3 \texttt{g}4 (13...\texttt{b}7 14 a4 \texttt{d}8 15 e4 and Black's compensation was not apparent in Epishin,V–Pikula,D/Zurich SUI 2000 13...\texttt{a}3 and Black had plenty of play in Avrukh,B–Ponomariov,R/Batumi GEO 1999) 14 \texttt{c}2 transposes to 13 Qc2 Ng4 14 b3 below.

b) 13 \texttt{c}2

b1) 13...\texttt{g}4 14 a4 (14 \texttt{fd}1 \texttt{c}8 15 e1 \texttt{de}5 16 \texttt{d}2 h5 17 h3 \texttt{h}6 Yusupov,A–Nemet,I Switzerland 2001 and now 18 f4 \texttt{d}7 19 e4 gives White an edge according to Yusupov) 14...\texttt{ge}5 15 \texttt{xe}5

dia b1a) New is 15...\texttt{xe}5!? 16 b3 c4! Aiming for a positional queen sacrifice! 17 b4 \texttt{xb}4 18 \texttt{a}2 \texttt{xb}1 19 \texttt{xa}5 (19 \texttt{xb}1 \texttt{c}7 also looks satisfactory for Black who has recuperated his pawn) 19...\texttt{b}2 20 \texttt{c}1 \texttt{xa}2 21 \texttt{c}3 \texttt{xe}2 22 \texttt{e}1 It's understandable for White to want to oust this annoying rook but it doesn't seem to lead to anything. Maybe because Black's remaining pieces are so well placed! Szabertenti,A–Preodjevic,B Budapest 2003

dia b1b) 15...\texttt{xe}5 16 b3 \texttt{d}8 A small nuance on known theory but it doesn't ease Black's defensive problems. (16...\texttt{b}6 17 h3 \texttt{c}8 18 \texttt{h}2 \texttt{f}5 19 e4 \texttt{c}8 20 \texttt{e}3 \texttt{a}6 21 \texttt{fd}1 \texttt{a}5 22 \texttt{a}2 \texttt{c}8 23 \texttt{bc}1 \texttt{ab}8 24 \texttt{f}4 Zayac,E–Pogonina,N, Serpukhov 2002 and White's position is comfortable. Black has no real counterplay and must wait, though it's never easy for White to find a convincing breakthrough. Black also failed to equalize after 16...\texttt{c}7 17 \texttt{f}1 \texttt{b}7 18 \texttt{f}1 \texttt{ab}8 19 h3 \texttt{c}8 20 \texttt{b}5! \texttt{xb}5 21 \texttt{xb}5 22 \texttt{f}4 \texttt{d}7 23 e4 \texttt{d}4+ 24 \texttt{g}2 \texttt{b}4! but still held the game in Epishin,V–Cheniaev,A, Nice 2002 as Black was able to blockade the dark–squares despite the
exchange deficit.) 17 \texttt{fe1 a7 18 h3 ab7 19 a2} White is ready to meet \ldots c4 with the positionally desirable b3–b4. 19...\texttt{c8 20 f4 d7 21 h2 b6 22 e4!? A sharp try, but the simpler (22 c3 and 22 a5 are both unpleasant for Black.) 22...\texttt{xa4 23 e5! Much better than 23 bxa4 b2 24 xb2} when Black wins back the piece with the more active game as White's second rank is weak.) 23...b6 24 c3 and White had somewhat the better of it in Kramnik,\textit{V}–\textit{Van Wely, L/Monaco (blindfold) 2003 (April 2003).}

\textbf{b2)} The immediate 13...\texttt{d8} is recommended in Informator 81 e.g. 14 \texttt{fd1} but after 14 b3 \texttt{b6 15 h4 b7 16 e4 a6 17 fd1 g4 18 h3 c5 19 c3 c8 20 f4} White was on top in Lalic,\textit{B}–\textit{Matamoros,C, Seville 2000) 14...\texttt{b6 15 e4 c4 16 c1 a5 17 b3 g4 18 a4 b5} with equal chances in Malakhatzko,\textit{V}–\textit{Rakhmangulov,A Alushta 2001.

\textbf{b3)} 13...\texttt{b6 14 b3 a3} This defensive plan used to be considered one of the most difficult for White to counter. He has a repetition but playing with B−b2 is the critical way to try for more. 15 \texttt{c1 a5 16 d1 (16 d2 a3 17 c1 a5 18 d2=} is unambitious but take note if you are playing the Benko to win! 16...\texttt{e8 17 b2 c7 18 e4 c8 19 h3 d7 20 c1! a6 21 a1 c8 22 h2 f8! (22...\texttt{a6 23 a3} with better play for White who yet again slowly consolidates his extra pawn and prepares action in the centre, Malakhatzko,\textit{V}–\textit{Aveskulov,V Alushta 2001) 23 e1 a7 24 e5!? (24 d1 was agreed drawn in Kruppa,Y–Malakhatzko,V Kiev 2001, the text is supposed to be an improvement.) 24...\texttt{b5} 25 \texttt{xd5 d5 26 exd5 cxd5 27 e4 a6 28 a4} \texttt{g5} Here Malakhatzko considers White to be clearly better due to some ideas based on Ne4 and threats of an eventual Nf6+. I decided to investigate further...

\textbf{b3a)} 28...\texttt{c6? 29 ad1} (Instead 29 \texttt{e4 d8 30 ad1} looks solid enough for Black.) 29...\texttt{b4 30 c6} 31 \texttt{d8= 32 g2} 31 \texttt{e4} does seem to give Black a hard time.

\textbf{b3b)} 28...\texttt{c7! 29 e4 c8 neatly covers both weaknesses on d6 and f6 and offers White nothing concrete. Black is more or less OK (Flear).}

\textbf{b4)} 13...\texttt{a7 14 fd1 c7 15 b3 e6 16 dx6 fxe6 17 g5 e8 18 h3 looks dubious for Black, Palacios Perez–Mascoro,M, Ayamonte 2002}

\textbf{b5)} 13...\texttt{e8}

\textbf{b5a)} 14 b3 \texttt{c7 15 a4 b6 16 fd1 a7 (16...\texttt{f6= Black's knights have exchanged flanks but there's method in the mystical manoeuvres... 17 e1 e6 18 dxe6 cxe6 the knight recaptures virtually obliging e2−e3 at some point. 19 e3 b7 20 b1 b8 21 d5 e4 22 e2 d5 and Black had adequate play for once in Yusupov,A–Ghaem Maghni, Yerevan 2001 This is a better shot than 16...\texttt{b7 17 e4 a6 18 a2 e8 19 g5 h6 20 c3 d4 21 b4 22 d2 b6 23 c3} Tunik,G–Pogonina,N Saratov 2001 which again strikes one as simply better for White.) 17 e4 b6 18 g5 e8 19 a2?! (19 h3?!) 19...e6! with adequate counterplay, Gustafsson,J–Fogarasi,T/Budapest 2001}

\textbf{b5b)} 14 \texttt{e1 14...c7 15 a4 b6 16 b3 xc3!? 17 xc3 d5 18 e5 xe5 19 xdx5 b7 20 &xb7 bxb7 21 xec5 dxe5 22 e1 Kramnik,\textit{V}–\textit{Topalov,V/Wijk aan Zee 2003 gave White a pleasant edge (Feb 2003).}

\textbf{11...\texttt{e8 12 e1 c7 13 e4 b5 14 e2 b6 15 e3 f6 A remarkable bit of provoked, this appears to lack by force, but the doubling on the b−file turns out to give Black surprising tactical possibilities, Avrukh,B–Hendriks,W/Wijk aan Zee NED 2000.)}
12 b3 a7

12...c7 13 e1 b7 (13...e6 An unusual idea akin to the Blumenfeld. San Segundo – Larios Crespo, Palencia 1999) 14 e4 aad8 with the idea of playing in the centre occurred in Shraddha,S–Nejanky,M/Oropesa del Mar ESP 1999.

12...e8 13 b2 c7 14 h4 a7 15 d2 d7 16 fd1 b8 17 a1 c8 18 a4 was clearly unsatisfactory for Black in Kasimdzhanov–Ghaem Maghami, Yerevan 2001.

13 b2

13 a4?! The oldest move – it may have a long and respectable pedigree, but I believe this gives black an unnecessary target on b3. 13...a8 14 h4 b8 15 b2

(15 e1 ab7 16 a3 g4!? with interesting counterplay, Johannessen,L–Dannevig,O/Roros NOR 2002.) 15...c7 Sensibly improving the Rook. (15...bd7 and Black still needed to demonstrate his compensation in Piket,J–Topalov,V/Wijk aan Zee 1999.) 16 a1 with interesting play, Lugovoi,A–Sivokho,S/Petroff Memorial Open 2000.

13 d2? a8 14 ed1 b8 15 b2 and white's position was preferable, Johannessen,L–Djurhuus,R/Roros NOR 2002.

13 e1!? to unpin the e–pawn is yet another interesting new way to develop. 13...a8 14 e4 g4 15 b2 b8 16 h3 e5 17 xe5 xe5 18 c2± with a very thematic position type, Alexandrova,O–Schuurman,P/Varna BUL 2002.

13...a8 14 h4 b8

14...e8!? 15 c2 (15 d2 looks better.) 15...xc3 Regaining the pawn, but at what cost? Zayac,E–Cramling,P/New Delhi IND 2000.

15 e1 c8

15...e8 16 a1 c7 17 e4 also left black wondering what to do in Epishin,V–Schuurman,P/Creon FRA 2002.

16 h3 and Black was searching for a plan in Epishin,V–Kopylov,M/Werther GER 2001.
Benko Accepted with Kxf1 [A59]

Last updated: 11/12/02 by Glenn Flear

Here we look at one of the most solid lines of the Benko, where White castles artificially and allows Black an early initiative, hoping to capitalise on the extra pawn in the long term. However Black should be able to generate sufficient play.

1 d4 ¤f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 b5 4 cxb5 a6 5 bxa6 g6 6 c3 ¤xa6 7 e4 xf1 8 xf1 d6 9 g3

9 ¤f3

a) 9...£c8 A very interesting move order. This move discourages the g3 system by eyeing h3, but commits the black queen to an odd circuit. 10 h3 £g7 (10...£a6+!? Vasilevich,T–Fominyh,A/Alushta 1994) 11 £g1 (11 g3 is also possible, if white wanted to play that system – h3 is hardly out of place.) 11...£bd7 12 £h2 0-0 13 £e1 £a6 14 £g1 (14 £e2!? £fb8 15 £g5 h6 16 £xf6 £xf6 17 £c1 £b4 18 £cc2 £h7 19 g3 £ab8 20 £g2 £g7 21 h4± Nedobora,M–Fominyh,A/Noyabrsk 1995/.) 14...£b6 15 £c2 £fd7 16 £g5± Pinter,J–Hertneck,G/Dornbirn AUT 2002.

b) 9...£g7 10 h3
Of the lines where white castles by hand, one would think that this was more logical than playing g3, Kg2,h3. The move h3 tends to be very useful for hindering ...Ng4 possibilities. And surely g3 is a potential weakness, with the king and kingside more exposed to counterplay — on the f−file or on the long light−squared diagonal if the centre opens up? Yet practice indicates that the system with g3 is much harder for black to meet. 10...0-0 11 ♗g1 ♘bd7 (11...♗a6 was tried in Camara,H–Benko,P/Sao Paulo 1973. 11...e6!? was the start of a remarkably romantic interpretation of the Benko. 12 dxe6 fxe6 13 ♘bd3 ♗c6 14 ♘xe6+ ♘h8 is the critical position — White went steadily downhill from here, but the question is whether black has enough for the two pawns — in any event he has plenty of activity and tricks. (0−1, 27) Obermayr,H–Teske,H/Aschach AUT 2001) 12 ♘h2

b1) 12...♗b6 13 ♗e1 ♗b8 14 ♗e2 ♗e8 (14...♗b7 15 ♗c2 and White was very solid in Polak – Vogt, GER 1999) 15 ♗g5 ♗c7 16 ♗e1 and Black still had to prove his compensation in Szeberenyi,A–Philippe,C/ Budapest HUN1999

b2) 12...♗a5 13 ♗e1 ♗b8

b2a) 14 ♗e2 ♗e8 15 ♗c2 ♗b6 (15...♗c7 16 ♗g5 with a probable edge for White was Kuemin,S–Guidarelli,L/Saint Vincent ITA 2001) 16 ♗e2 ♗a6 Black's most reliable move. One of the bitter facets of white's existence in the Benko is that black often invites an exchange of queens as this does not guarantee to help white reduce the pressure against his queenside. This variation has never really been too impressive for white. See Polak,T–Petrosian,S/Bad Wildbad GER 2000

b2b) 14 ♗c2 14...♗e8 15 ♗d2 ♗c7 with typical Benko potential. Gabriel,C–Sermek,D/Pula CRO 2000

9 ♗ge2 This is slightly offbeat, but contains some venom. Shulman – Shwartz, World Open 2000.

9...♗g7 10 ♗g2 0-0 11 ♗f3 ♘bd7

11...♗b6 12 ♗e1 ♗a6 Not the most popular prescription against white's system, but logical enough, and one that has enjoyed reasonable results.

a) 13 ♗d2!? ♗b4 14 ♗c4 ♗a6 15 ♗b2 ♗b8 16 ♗f4 h6 (16...♗c2!? ♘xe4) 17 ♗ec1 ♗b7 18 a3 ♗a6 19 ♗ab1± and White eventually won rather easily as Black failed to find a constructive plan. I can't help wondering if the opportunity to exchange knights by
playing ...c2 at an earlier juncture would not have eased Black's position, and the desire to avoid this motivated Genov's new idea.

b) 13 b1N A new idea from Genov, who has played some interesting games in this variation. He had an earlier try: 13...d7 14 f4 c4?! 15 e2 b4! (15...fc8 16 e5†) 16 xc4 fc8 17 e2 xa2 18 e5± Genov, P–Pap, M/Subotica YUG 2002.

12 e1

This is one of the most common positions in the Benko.

12 h3 with:

a) 12...a6 13 c2 (13 g5 h6 14 d2 a8 15 e1 and White retained an edge in Karpov, A–Gelfand, B/Sanghi Nagar 1995) 13...a8 14 g5!? b8 15 he1 b6 16 ad1 turned out well for White in Van Laatum, G–Trent, L/Hastings ENG 1999.

b) 12...a7 13 e1 a8 14 e2 b6 15 c2 a4 with chances for both sides in Popovic, D–Vuckovic, B/Kragujevac YUG 2000.

c) 12...b6!? this is less well–known, 13 e1 fd7 se Karpov, A–Adianto, U/Cap d'Agde FRA 2002.

d) 12...a5 13 e1 fb8 14 e2 c8 (14...b7 This move seems to be the most popular by far. I will confess to not understanding why. 15 g4!? a6 This seems to make it easier for white to unravel his queenside by taking pressure off c3. Korchnoi, V–Salmensuu, O/Reykjavik ISL 2000) 15 g5 with a double–edged position in Malich, B–Cioacaltea, V/Skopje Olympiad 1972, 15...xc3!? 16 bxc3 f6 17 d2 a4 18 e1!? (18 e1 c4 19 c1 c7 20 a3 b6 21 h4† Grabliauskas, V–Khalifman, A/Vilnius 1997) 18...b6 19 xa4 Now that black has blocked the b–file and this does not invite the rook in (because of the resulting pin on the b–file), white trades. 19...xa4 20 c4 f7 (20...b2!!) 21 c2 c7 Varga, P–Van der Weide, K/Dornbirn AUT 2002.

12...a6

A very direct way of preparing for the e7–e6 advance to attack White's centre. Black clears a8 for his queen and at the same time defends d6 by putting his rook on the third rank. This means that after e7–e6 and White's reply d5xe6 White cannot play Qxd6.
12...\texttt{g}4 Considered by Hjartarson to be dubious, and this seems correct.

\textbf{a)} 13 \texttt{e}2 \texttt{ge}5 (13...\texttt{a}5 14 \texttt{d}d2 \texttt{xc}3 15 \texttt{c}c4 \texttt{a}6 16 \texttt{bx}c3 \texttt{ge}5 17 \texttt{xe}5 \texttt{xe}5 18 \texttt{h}6!? is an interesting new subtlety in what had been considered a safe ending for Black, Danner,G–Van der Weide,K/St Poelten AUT 2002) 14 \texttt{xe}5 \texttt{xe}5 15 f4 with advantage to White in Shishkin,V–Gasanov,E/Alushta UKR 2000

\textbf{b)} 13 \texttt{f}4 13...\texttt{a}5 14 h3 \texttt{ge}5 and Black developed typical Benko play in Wright,W–Fedorowicz,J/Philadelphia USA 2001

12...\texttt{a}7 13 \texttt{e}2?! (13 \texttt{c}c2 \texttt{a}8 14 a4 A new move – this variation has a reasonable success rate for white, but few have been so bold as this. Gyimesi,Z–Hendriks,W/Groningen NED 1999) 13...\texttt{a}8 and Black had typical thematic play though the Rook may be better on a6. Van Driel,E–Erwich,F/Vlissingen NED 2000.

12...\texttt{a}5 One of the Benko's advantages is that the ideas are so clear. Develop, point the rooks at white's queenside pawns, attack stuff ...

\textbf{a)} 13 e5 \texttt{g}4 14 exd6 exd6 15 \texttt{f}4 \texttt{fb}8 16 \texttt{e}e2 \texttt{a}6 17 \texttt{c}c1 \texttt{ge}5 18 \texttt{xe}5 \texttt{xe}5 19 \texttt{xe}5 \texttt{xe}5 20 b3 and Black should be OK. Van der Sterren,P–Topalov,V/HUN 1998 (20 \texttt{d}d2 and Black probably had enough for a pawn in Gyimesi – Salmensuu, Young Masters 1999)

\textbf{b)} 13 \texttt{g}5 13...h6 14 \texttt{xf}6?! \texttt{xf}6 15 \texttt{d}3?! \texttt{fb}8 with tremendous Queenside pressure in Parr,D–Browne,W/Adelaide 1971

12...\texttt{b}6 13 \texttt{e}2 \texttt{a}7 White has weakened his hold on d5 somewhat by moving his queen away from d1. Therefore it makes sense for Black to prepare an attack on the white centre by clearing the a8 square for his queen. 14 \texttt{d}d2 \texttt{a}8 15 b3 e6! 16 \texttt{dx}e6 \texttt{fx}e6 and Black had pressure on the centre and down the f–file in Gnidash,A–Kostiuk,T/Kharkov UKR 2000

12...\texttt{c}7 13 h3 \texttt{fb}8 14 \texttt{e}2 \texttt{b}4 15 a3 \texttt{b}6 with typical play in Gurevich,M–De Vreugt,D/Wijk aan Zee NED 2001.

13 h3

13 e5 \texttt{g}4!? Theoretically this has the reputation of a blunder, but it looks like a very interesting novelty. Surjadjnji,A–Kasparov,S/Tanta City EGY 2001

13 \texttt{e}2 An interesting development – white does not see the need to invest a tempo in playing the customary h3. 13...\texttt{a}8 14 \texttt{g}5 h6 15 \texttt{xf}6 This fits in with white's play so far, by eliminating the knight white has no need to consider h3. Typically, white's dark squared bishop is hard to employ in the Benko accepted, while the black Nf6 has plenty of things to do. Still, the absence of a bishop will eventually make itself felt, so this transaction is not without its liabilities. Huzman,A–Avrukh,B/Ramat–Aviv/Modiin ISR 2000.

13...\texttt{a}8
14 $g5$


14...h6


15 $d2$ e6 16 dxe6 fxe6

Black's broad centre and his potential for attack down the f file give him a promising game.

17 $c2$

17 $a4$ g5 18 $a3$ and Black had plenty of play for the pawn in Korchnoi,V−Cramling,P/Marbella ESP 1999

17...g5

This introduces the idea of 18...g4 19 hxg4 Nxg4 increasing the pressure on the f file.

18 a4

18 b5? After this there is no longer any hope of restraining the Black pawns. Stojanovic,Mih−Vuckovic,B/Yug 2000.

18...d5
19 e5!?
A risky new move in this sharp variation.

19...d4?
A feeble reply, this lead to a clear White advantage in Shishkin,V–Averjanov,A/Rubinstein Open 2001.