

Junior Tay

Ivanchuk

move by move

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About the Author

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Also by the Author

The Benko Gambit: Move by Move

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Series Foreword

The *Move by Move* format is designed to be interactive, and is based on questions asked by both teachers and students. It aims – as much as possible – to replicate chess lessons. All the way through, readers will be challenged to answer searching questions and to complete exercises, to test their skills in key aspects of the game. It's our firm belief that practising your skills like this is an excellent way to study chess. Many thanks go to all those who have been kind enough to offer inspiration, advice and assistance in the creation of *Move by Move*. We're really excited by this series and hope that readers will share our enthusiasm.

John Emms
Everyman Chess

Foreword

by GM Mikhail Golubev

Vasyl (which is his real first name) Ivanchuk is an outstanding grandmaster and is often called a genius. If we talk about the highest level of creative achievements in chess, no one can be placed higher than him. A player of the universal style, he uses virtually every opening and has introduced an unimaginable number of new ideas and concepts, back in the times when novelties were prepared in a human brain, rather than with the computer engines. Ivanchuk loves chess, particularly *his* chess, perhaps even a bit too much. Otherwise, he would have been more effective in making use of the computer (he was probably behind most other top grandmasters in this respect) and help from other players. He never had a massive team of assistants and always liked to find and use ideas of his own, rather than “buy” them. Sometimes Ivanchuk gets slightly too creative and his opening experiments are not always successful – maybe this is the only (relatively) vulnerable area of his chess.

Ivanchuk was rated world number two in 1991 and 1992, and once headed, for a short time in 2007, the unofficial live rating. In 2008, he won the official world blitz championship; but at the standard FIDE time control, he never achieved more than reaching the final of the FIDE Knockout World Championships in 2002, which he surprisingly lost to Ruslan Ponomariov. I was there in Moscow and afterwards reported for the *British Chess Magazine* on the match between my two compatriots. After beating (and thereby de-crowning) Vishy Anand in the semi-finals, Vasyl may have underestimated his final opponent, perhaps not realizing that Ponomariov was a player of comparable level. The truth is that, at that period, Ruslan was a highly dangerous opponent for anyone. Maybe it's just that Ivanchuk has not had enough luck in the FIDE circles. What Artur Yusupov showed at the end of their 1991 match was absolutely extraordinary and an exception to the norm. That feat probably cannot be repeated.

During the later stages of his career, for some strange reasons Ivanchuk has seldom been included in Ilyumzhinov's FIDE tournament world championships and vital qualifying events. He has never complained publicly, preferring as usual to concentrate on chess. In the past, I wrote on these situations many times in the main Ukrainian sports paper... But what to do if one does not wish to fight with FIDE, and just prefers to play any tournaments available?

We do not meet often but Ivanchuk is one of the few people to whom I really enjoy speaking about chess. We would ponder over questions such as whether Kasparov really calculates variations faster than Kramnik. And about openings, of course! Chess means more to Ivanchuk than any other person I know. Many of us were chess fanatics at age 13 or so and became grandmasters, though some eventually stopped competing actively. But he is still the same.

For this book Junior Tay has put in what must have been a massive effort, I imagine. I am sure that readers will learn a lot from visiting the world of Ivanchuk's deeply analysed chess games – and they will also, like both of us, appreciate and applaud the genius of one of chess' most enigmatic characters, the one and only Vasyl Ivanchuk!

Introduction

Why Ivanchuk?

Chess lore is filled with many world champions and other colourful personalities worthy of their feats published in game collections. Having started playing chess in the late '80s, I eagerly followed the major chess publications and, apart from the drama surrounding the Kasparov-Karpov matches, the emergence of a few young stars such as Shirov, Ivanchuk, Gelfand and Kramnik caught my eye.

Ivanchuk, in particular, with his uncanny ability to play any opening extremely well and handle the middlegame and endgame powerfully, made a very strong impression on me. When I took a sabbatical from my school teaching job two years ago, I was already planning to write a book on Ivanchuk but was beaten to the gun by CC-GM Kalinichenko who had published *Vassily Ivanchuk: 100 Selected Games* (New in Chess 2013). Doing research for this book, I was to find out that Kalinichenko had already written an Ivanchuk book in Russian (*Killing the Champions: Vassily Ivanchuk's Best Games*; Astrel 2009) way before that. His *100 Selected Games* was also preceded by a Russian version (*Vassily Ivanchuk: 100 Wins of a Chess Genius*; Russian Chess House 2012). Thus I decided to focus instead on writing about my favourite opening, the Benko Gambit instead – hence authoring *The Benko Gambit: Move by Move*.

When I looked up Kalinichenko's work in an ebook website (www.eplusbooks.com) and saw the index of games in an advertisement, I realized that many other instructive Ivanchuk games were not shown in *100 Selected Games*. My dream book ambition was back on! I am very thankful for Everyman Chess for assenting to my request to write this book.

Aside from Ivanchuk-Hector, Malmö 2003 (Game 27), which I inadvertently worked on without realizing it was in Kalinichenko's work, the rest of the games from the main chapters (1-7) are not to be found in his book. In the puzzle section (Chapter Seven), six of the games (#1 Bareev-Ivanchuk, Novgorod 1994; #3 Lputian-Ivanchuk, Montecatini Terme 2000; #4 Topalov-Ivanchuk, Linares 1999; #6 Ivanchuk-Karjakin, Nice rapid 2008; #7 Ivanchuk-Aronian, Morelia/Linares 2007; #26 Ivanchuk-Bu Xiangzhi, Nanjing 2008) had already been published, but if you read my annotations or the solutions to the puzzles, you will find that I have not used any of Kalinichenko's analysis or his work as reference. Indeed, I have on purpose, *not* read Kalinichenko's book yet as I would like to give my own perspective on Ivanchuk's games. I have, however, added notes by different analysts – from *Chess-Base Magazine*, *Chess Informant* (including Ivanchuk's own analysis), *Chesspublishing.com*,

Everyman Chess, and other publications – when I find that they add much value to the reader.

Now, returning to the initial question, as to why I think Ivanchuk is a good role model, whose games provide practical lessons to learn from (after all, this is what the *Move by Move* series is about), here are my reasons:

All-round player

Our hero is an all-round chess player, strong in all aspects of the game – equally at home in opening theory, positional manoeuvring, strategic play, taking the opponents' psyche into consideration, and landing tactical punches; he has powerful endgame technique and possesses a relentless will to win. Although he has fallen short at the very highest level due, it is generally assumed, to his nerves or mood swings, that really has nothing to do with an instructional book on dissecting the type of powerful chess he plays. Indeed, Ivanchuk has been widely regarded as a genius. His own honest assessment of the “genius” tag was that sometimes it motivates him to work harder at chess, and yet it can make him complacent and lose objectivity, especially when he suffers defeats, preventing him from being able to recover and adjust quickly. Ivanchuk himself admitted that nervous tension can get to him, especially “in the time between games, the waiting, the butterflies in the stomach, expectations and nerves” (*Chess in Translation* website).

Logic, clarity and quality of play

Ivanchuk's play is highly logical and has a distinct clarity in the ideas he formulates and realizes, especially if one puts in the effort to study them earnestly. My personal opinion is that the masterpieces that Ivanchuk produces are of the highest quality (humanly) possible. Do not just take my word for it. This is what his contemporary, GM Boris Gelfand (the 2013 World Cup Champion) thinks of him – when Gelfand was queried on the composition of the world's elite players, he commented: “Who plays better, Ivanchuk in good form or Carlsen? It seems to me, it's Ivanchuk in good form.” Garry Kasparov considers Ivanchuk a “first class chess player”, in a “caste” ahead of Gelfand, Topalov and even Aronian. The rationale Kasparov proffered was that Ivanchuk has overtaken the world's best (such as Kasparov and Karpov) in major elite tournaments.

Practical strength

Ivanchuk might have missed the mark on the biggest chess trophy possible – at the FIDE World Championships in 2002, he faltered at the last, losing in the final to his compatriot GM Ruslan Ponomarev. However, in the elite events such as Linares, Wijk aan Zee, Tal Memorial, M-Tel Masters, he had finished convincingly ahead of the world's best. In particular, he has won Linares three times (1989, 1991 and 1995) and tied for first in the 2009 edition (second to Grischuk on tie-break) and in the Amber tournament 2010 (overall) with Magnus Carlsen. He won the 2004 European Championship title too, as well as the World Team Championships twice (with Ukraine) and the Olympiad four times (twice with Soviet

Union and twice with Ukraine) and was World Blitz Champion in 2007.

His own perspective on not (yet) becoming World Champion can be seen from an interview (at *chess-news.ru*) conducted after he had beaten Magnus Carlsen in the 2013 Candidates event. In response to a query about his chances for the World Championship, he said that he had already won the World Blitz title before and... “if I won’t win [the World Champion title], well, there are a lot of brilliant chess players who were not the world champions, but that didn’t make their games less interesting.”

In terms of Elo rating, he almost made it to the pinnacle, coming in at No.2 in the ranking list for July 1991, July 1992 and October 2007. (He was briefly the unofficial No.1 too – on the ‘live’ rating list from 10-12 September 2008 – 2700chess.com). Moreover, Ivanchuk is one of the few elite GMs who takes part in swiss opens, risking his Elo rating at events such as the Canadian Open and the Gibraltar Open. GM Motylev, in a *New in Chess* magazine (#3/2014) interview noted: “Stars don’t take the metro – They don’t play in open tournaments. Only Vassily Ivanchuk regularly comes down to the people.” I always eagerly follow his exploits at these events where he dismantles the 2500-2600+ GMs with remarkable ease. His ridiculously spectacular TPR of 3059 at the 2014 Latvian Railway Rapid event (where his unbeaten 13/14 score was three points ahead of a field with thirteen other GMs rated above 2600) is another example of his sheer class.

Dedication to chess

I think Kramnik sums it up best (at *grandcoach.com*): that Ivanchuk’s intense fanatic dedication to tournaments and his strong play serve as inspiration and motivation to him. (Kramnik made this comment when Ivanchuk was 40 years old.). I have enjoyed and learnt immensely from his games for close to 30 years, and I hope readers will be equally spell-bound by the examples I am about to put forth in the following pages.

How did he get so good at chess?

Various factors helped to match his natural prodigious memory and incredible knack for dedicated chess study with a highly conducive chess environment to ensure his chess development. The information in this section is mainly researched from the final chapter of the Ukrainian book, *Shakhovi novely: Vasyliya Ivanchuka* (2006) as well as Ivanchuk interviews from the *Chess in Translation* website.

a) Strong family support

Ivanchuk attributed much of the credit for his chess success to his parents. His mother, Maria Vasilievna, a teacher, and his father Michael Vasilievich, a lawyer, managed to discover and cultivate his unique chess talent. Since Ivanchuk’s early childhood, they sought to uncover whether their only child possessed any special aptitude and, as it turned out, chess was his calling. One evening, when Ivanchuk was six, his parents had returned from work and while his mother was preparing dinner, his father tried to keep him busy by pulling out a chess board and setting up the little wooden pieces. It was then that he learnt the

basic chess rules immediately. Ivanchuk had gotten a magnetic set for his birthday and he liked the pieces and cajoled his father to show him more about the game.

As his father had heavy work commitments, he asked his mother to give him some chess lessons. She took him to the local library and he read his first chess book, *Journey to the Chess Kingdom* by Averbakh and Beilin. (Coincidentally, that was Gelfand's first chess book too, which he received when he was four.) They started to read that book together, and although Ivanchuk's mother did not understand chess notation, this did not deter her. As she had a chess-playing student at her college, in exchange for playing chess with Vasil for a year, Maria gave the student physics lessons.

Every evening, young Vasil planted himself in front of the chessboard and moved the chess pieces around. He would not budge when asked to do chores by his mother and complained that she was distracting him from chess. However, they had realized by then that their son had a special talent for chess, and so he was not punished.

b) Dedicated chess coaches

Ivanchuk's father changed jobs frequently and the family had to move from one city to another. At the age of 10, when they lived at Ternopil Vasya, Vasil visited the local chess club together with his father. He played three friendly games with the local regional champion, Bondarchuk, and won all of them. Bondarchuk was very impressed with the young boy and encouraged him to play in adult tournaments as well as recommending a professional chess coach.

The closest city was over 70 miles from their home but they made their way there to see Candidate Master Gennady Vasilenko, Vasilenko was reluctant to take on a student who lived so far away and proposed that the local master IM Oleg Kalinin play a game with Vasil first while he took a smoke outside. Upon his return, Kalinin told him that the boy was definitely something special. After that the coach decided to spar with Vasil himself and Ivanchuk fought him to a draw. For the next two years, Vasil stayed with Vasilenko and studied chess together with strong local masters such as Kaplyn, Shepelev and Kalinin. The late Kaplyn was a strong influence in Ivanchuk's early chess development as he recommended relevant chess books to read and also advised Ivanchuk to study psychology which would be useful for future chess events.

Ivanchuk became a Candidate Master at 12 and an International Master at 19, when he finished at secondary school. His family had moved to Beregany, a small village. There, top Ukrainian chess coaches, such as Baturin, Levin, Nekrasov and Bandza, helped prepare him for tournaments.

c) State recognition

In 1988, Ivanchuk had become a Grandmaster and served in the Soviet Army. When the USSR collapsed, Ukraine became an independent state and, in 1991, Vasil settled down in Lvov. As a reward for winning Linares, he received a flat from the Governor, Vyacheslav Chernovol, who announced, "Ivanchuk is an intellectual treasure of our country and we

must be very proud of him.” In his new five-room apartment, he studied chess with his new coaches, Sulipa, Buturin and Gritzak. The then president of the Ukrainian chess federation, Leonid Bodackin said that Ivanchuk had contributed more for his country more than all the diplomats put together. In recent years, the support from the state is more organizational in nature than financial.

d) A phenomenal memory and calculation ability

Ivanchuk, like most top GMs, has the ability to recall chess games at will. Once, GM Igor Zaitsev (the coach of former World Champion Anatoly Karpov) needed a text of the first game between Karpov and Kasparov in their first match. Zaitsev did not have a database at hand and asked Vasil to help him. As it turned out, the boy knew that game by heart as well as the other 48 games of that match.

GM Oleg Romanishin, who had on occasion spent time training with Ivanchuk remarked that “Ivanchuk relies on his exceptional memory and calculation, with very deep variations, sometimes even fifteen moves ahead!” (www.grandcoach.com)

e) Chess erudition

Ivanchuk used to study chess up to 14 hours a day. When a day went by without being able to touch the chess pieces, he reckoned that day had been wasted. The most important key to his success was his ability to concentrate fully on his chess study. Interestingly, the great Victor Korchnoi had also showed him how to approach chess, in particular imparting in him not to lose faith in his abilities under any situation.

Ivanchuk spends a lot of time preparing for tournaments. The incredibly deep and wide opening repertoire and novelties that we have been accustomed to see him unleash are the result of constant dedicated chess study. In 1986, during a visit to Paris with the Soviet Junior Squad, Ivanchuk decided to remain in his hotel during the three-day stay in the French capital. Despite the insistence of his coach, GM Suetin, who argued that *Chess Informant* would be available anytime, whereas he might not get to see Paris in the near future, Ivanchuk chose to remain indoors to study theoretical innovations instead of visiting the Louvre or the Eiffel Tower.

f) A disciplined routine

During an interview with Elena Sadovnik for *Sport-Express*, Ivanchuk noted that he almost always follows two rules. Rule one is to stop any work on chess by 10pm in the evening, as if he continues working, he can have problems sleeping. “The brain simply doesn’t switch off. And even if I manage to fall asleep, then my brain keeps working – meaning I wake up in the middle of the night... No good can come of that,” Ivanchuk remarked. His second rule is to stop any chess activity half an hour before a game, regardless of whether preparation is complete. The discipline instilled in his personal training regime has obviously helped him become a most fearsome competitor on the professional chess circuit.

Physical fitness is important too. His coaches always understood the importance of

physical exercise as part of chess training and Ivanchuk used to go mountain climbing, play soccer and ride on his bike to keep in shape.

g) Ivanchuk's wide and tricky opening theory

One of the tough things about facing Ivanchuk is the difficulty in preparing for him, since he plays every opening under the sun. Worse still, he is capable of unleashing shocking novelties to catch his opponents off guard in their own pet lines.

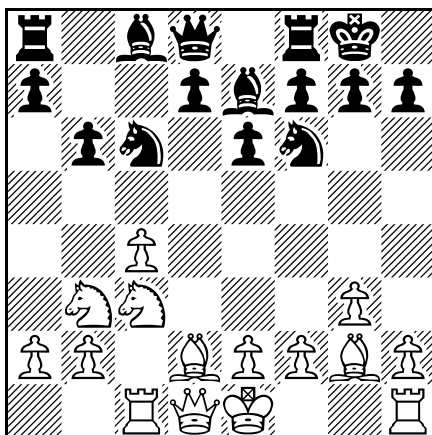
I feel an apt analogy to describe Ivanchuk's opening theory is that it's like having a very effective tennis serve. Not the fastest booming serve but one with unpredictable yet exceptional placement, swerving away enough to score an ace or unsettle the opponent into making mistakes.

Here are my favourite examples of Ivanchuk's opening novelties:

Example 1
V.Ivanchuk-P.Leko
Mukachevo (rapid; 5th matchgame) 2009
English Opening

In a relatively sedate Symmetrical English, Ivanchuk throws in a “spanner” to ruffle Leko into conceding a slight advantage, after which Ivanchuk's technique is sufficient to grind him down.

1 Nf3 Nf6 2 c4 c5 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 e6 5 g3 Bb4+ 6 Bd2 Bc5 7 Nb3 Bxe7 8 Bg2 Nc6 9 Nc3 O-O 10 Bc1 b6

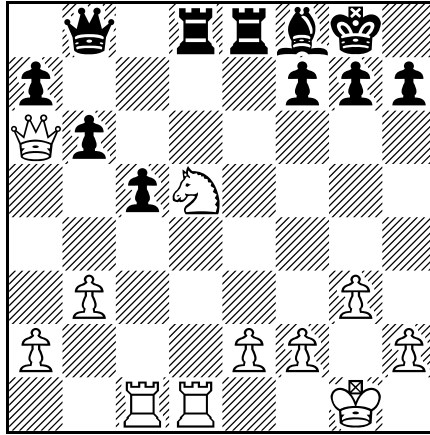


Previously 11 Nxd4 was played here to take advantage of the pin on c6, as in S.Palatnik-P.Stefanov, Hradec Kralove 1981, which continued 11... Bb7 12 O-O Bc8 13 Nxc6 Bxc6 14 e4 d6 with a Maróczy Bind/Hedgehog position. Instead, Ivanchuk came up with...

11 ♖d5!?

Although it doesn't lead to much with proper play from Black, the manifold possibilities and the pressure of facing such a sharp move might have caused Leko to drift into an inferior position.

11...exd5 12 cxd5 ♖b7 13 dxc6 dxc6 14 0-0 ♜c8 15 ♘d4 c5 16 ♙xb7 ♜xb7 17 ♘f5 ♜fe8 18 ♙c3 ♜e4 19 ♜c2 ♜e6 20 b3 ♙f8 21 ♙xf6 ♜xf6 22 ♘e3 ♜ad8 23 ♜fd1 ♜e6 24 ♜c4 ♜e5 25 ♜a6 ♜b8 26 ♘d5

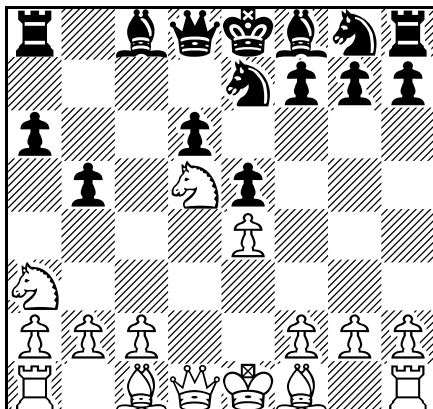


White has a slight but nagging plus, thanks to the excellently-placed knight.

Example 2
V.Ivanchuk-T.Radjabov
 Calvia Olympiad 2004
Sicilian Defence

Breaking the rules of opening theory, Ivanchuk's knight went on an expedition (moving three times in nine moves) which seemed redundant and excessive. After Radjabov's spirited yet inadequate reply, Ivanchuk's riposte 10 c4! made perfect sense of the 'crazy' knight manoeuvre.

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 e5 5 ♘b5 d6 6 ♘1c3 a6 7 ♘a3 b5 8 ♘d5 ♘ce7



MegaBase 2014 lists 515 games played before this one, with moves such as 9 c4, 9 e3, 9 g5 and 9 xe7, but no one seems to have considered Ivanchuk's arcane idea before.

9 b4!?

Moving the knight three times in the opening and onto such a weird square? Well, it's enough to ruffle Radjabov into making a suboptimal move.

9...d7?!

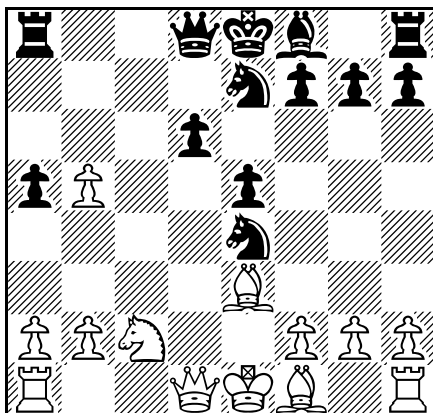
After 9...b7 10 xb5! the knight cannot be recaptured because xb5+ wins.

Radjabov decides to sacrifice the d6-pawn for activity; i.e. 10 xd6?! g6 11 d2 f6, when White's awkward cluster of queen and knights gives Black excellent compensation. Instead, Ivanchuk made his concept work marvellously with:

10 c4!

The knights loitering on the left are well placed to decimate Black's queenside pawns.

10...a5?! 11 bc2 f6 12 xb5 xb5 13 cxb5 xe4 14 e3

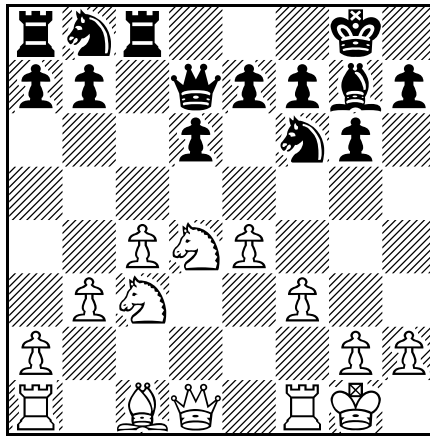


White already has the better game with a nice queenside majority and the bishop pair.

Example 3
A.Delchev-V.Ivanchuk
 European Championship, Istanbul 2003
Sicilian Defence

Ivanchuk refused to be bound by the Maróczy set-up (pawns on e4 and c4 against a Sicilian structure) and uncorked the spectacular 11...d5!, allowing the pawn can be captured in three ways.

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 ♙b5+ ♕d7 4 ♙xd7+ ♖xd7 5 c4 ♗f6 6 ♘c3 g6 7 0-0 ♙g7 8 d4 cxd4 9 ♗xd4 0-0 10 f3 ♖c8 11 b3



Previously only 11...♗c6 had been played here, completing development. Instead, with the d5-square guarded thrice, Ivanchuk unleashed...

11...d5!

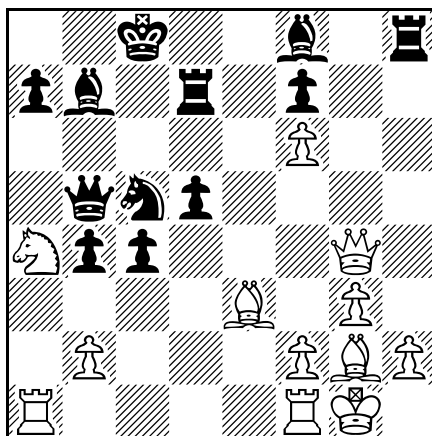
The pawn can be captured in three ways but none of them is good for White: 12 cxd5?? loses the c3-knight, while after 12 exd5 ♗xd5 13 ♗xd5 e6 or 12 ♗xd5 e6 13 ♗b4 ♗xe4, Black regains the pawn with at least equality.

Example 4
V.Ivanchuk-A.Shirov
 Wijk aan Zee 1996
Semi-Slav Defence

To finish with, a barnstormer of a queen sacrifice TN, unleashed in the ultra-complex Semi-Slav Botvinnik System.

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♗c3 ♗f6 4 ♗f3 e6 5 ♙g5 dxc4 6 e4 b5 7 e5 h6 8 ♙h4 g5 9 ♗xg5 hxg5 10

♙xg5 ♘bd7 11 exf6 ♙b7 12 g3 c5 13 d5 ♚b6 14 ♙g2 0-0-0 15 0-0 b4 16 ♘a4 ♚b5 17 a3
exd5 18 axb4 cxb4 19 ♙e3 ♘c5 20 ♚g4+ ♖d7



The most famous of Ivanchuk's theoretical novelties comes on the next move.

21 ♚g7!?

The queen sacrifices itself for two pieces and a superb initiative.

21...♙xg7 22 fxg7 ♖g8 23 ♘xc5 d4?

Shirov falters and the cluster of white pieces begins to take the black queenside apart.

Today, the line has been defused and the current World Champion, Magnus Carlsen, demonstrated the way out: 23...♖xg7 24 ♙d4 ♖c7! 25 ♘xb7 ♗g6 26 ♖a5 ♚xb7 27 ♙xd5 ♚b8 28 ♙e5 ♚b6 29 ♙xc7 ♚xc7 30 ♖fa1 a6 31 ♖xa6 ♖xa6 32 ♖xa6 c3 33 bxc3 bxc3 34 ♙e4 and the position is equal, since White has an unbreakable fortress – after he gives up his bishop for the c-pawn, the black king has no access points to help the queen attack the white kingside with the rook holding firm on f4, E.Bacrot-Ma.Carlsen, Dortmund 2009.

**24 ♙xb7+ ♖xb7 25 ♘xb7 ♚b6 26 ♙xd4 ♚xd4 27 ♖fd1 ♚xb2 28 ♘d6+ ♙b8 29 ♖db1 ♚xg7
30 ♖xb4+ ♙c7 31 ♖a6 ♖b8 32 ♖xa7+ ♙xd6 33 ♖xb8 ♚g4 34 ♖d8+ ♙c6 35 ♖a1 1-0**

You can find other quirky and subtle Ivanchuk opening nuances later in the book. For the benefit of those who want to learn about his opening discoveries first, let me point out the more relevant ones. They are: Ivanchuk-Xu Jun (Game 3), Ivanchuk-Ye Jiangchuan (Game 7), Ivanchuk-Vachier Lagrave (Game 24), Anand-Ivanchuk (Game 19), Ivanchuk-Anand (Game 22), Ivanchuk-Karjakin (Question 6), and Kramnik-Ivanchuk (Question 15).

Ivanchuk's meteoric rise to the chess elite

In 1984, Ivanchuk had tied for second in the Champigny Open (France). The same year, he took part in his second Ukrainian Junior Championship (he played in the 1983 edition too). GM Mikhail Golubev recalled that Stanislav Savchenko took clear first position while himself, Ivanchuk and Brodsky (all four are GMs now) were half a point behind.

1985 was a watershed year for Ivanchuk as he tied for second in the Ukrainian Championship as well as the Soviet Junior Championship. He also took first place in a World Junior Championships qualification tournament in Klaipedia (April 1985) with an impressive 11/13 score. In 1986, he won the European Junior Championships. The Soviet First League Championship title followed in 1987.

1988 saw another quantum leap in terms of results. Ivanchuk tied for first in the World Junior Championships in 1988 (second to Lautier on tie-break) and claimed victories in the New York Open and at Debrecen (Barcza Memorial), as well as the gold medal at the Thessaloniki Olympiad with the Soviet team.

Finally, at the age of twenty, Ivanchuk made his mark as a member of the chess elite by winning the prestigious Linares event with $7\frac{1}{2}/10$, half a point ahead of Karpov. Subsequently, he won Linares twice more, the most famous occasion being the 1991 edition where he beat Kasparov in their individual game.

World Championship cycle

By winning the 1990 Manila Interzonal (equal first with Gelfand), Ivanchuk qualified for the knockout matches of the 1991/92 World Championship Cycle. Ivanchuk reached the quarter-finals after crushing GM Leonid Yudasin $4\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}$. However, GM Artur Yusupov fought him to a 4-4 draw, and pipped Ivanchuk to the semi-final slot after beating him $1\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}$ in the rapid tie-break.

Ivanchuk's next chance came in 2001 when he reached the final of the FIDE World Knockout Championship after defeating Anand $2\frac{1}{2}-1\frac{1}{2}$. Unfortunately, his compatriot Ruslan Ponomarev displayed remarkable tenacity in his play and bested him $4\frac{1}{2}-2\frac{1}{2}$ and claimed the FIDE World Champion title.

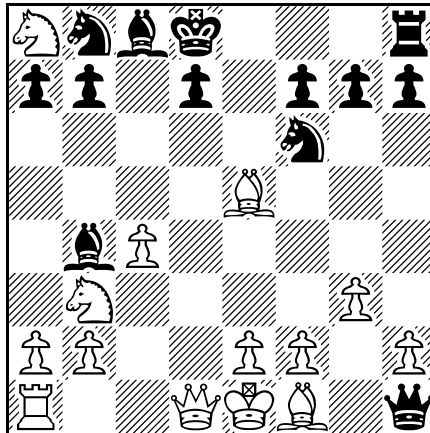
Ivanchuk finished equal third in the 2011 FIDE World Cup (tied with Ponomarev) and thus qualified to play a match with him again for a spot in the Candidates. This time he got his revenge with a $2\frac{1}{2}-1\frac{1}{2}$ victory. In the 2013 Candidates, five defeats put paid to his own hopes, but he was to play 'king-maker' when he beat former World Champion Vladimir Kramnik in the final round, allowing Magnus Carlsen to edge Kramnik on tie-break. And as we all know, Carlsen went on to defeat Anand in their 2013 World Championship match in Chennai to become the World Champion.

Summary: A textbook example of central White breakthrough in the Benoni, after blockading the queenside majority.

Game 5
V.Ivanchuk-L.B.Hansen
 Champigny sur Marne 1984
English Opening

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 ♘f3 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 e6 5 g3 ♘c6

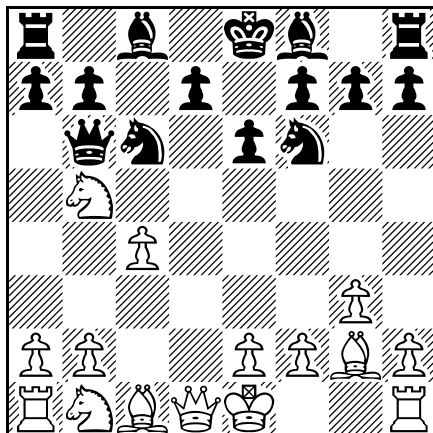
Ivanchuk's own preference is 5...♙c7, which he used against Aronian (2005), Chernin (2007), and in the following game: 6 ♘d2 ♙c5!? 7 ♘2b3 ♙e7 8 ♙f4? e5! 9 ♘b5 ♙c6! 10 ♙xe5 ♙xh1 11 ♘c7+ ♙d8 12 ♘xa8 ♙b4+!, when the 2004 FIDE world champion playing White couldn't get out of the mess:



13 ♘d2 (or 13 ♙c3 ♙xc3+ 14 bxc3 b6 15 f3 ♘e8 and the white knight on a8 is stranded) 13...♘e4 with a large advantage for Black, R.Kasimdzhanov-V.Ivanchuk, World Team Championship, Yerevan 2001.

6 ♙g2 ♙b6 7 ♘b5

This is given as a novelty in *Informant #56* (1992), though, as we see, Ivanchuk had already played it eight years before. With much less theory on this line back then, it's not surprising Black played inaccurately.



7...♙b4+?!

Here 7...♗e5 and 7...d5 are better tries; whereas after 7...♙c5?!, Ivanchuk would probably develop nonchalantly with 8 ♘1c3!, when 8...♙xf2+ 9 ♔f1 ♗g4 10 ♚d6! ♙d8 11 ♚f4! gives White a huge advantage.

8 ♘1c3

Practice has also seen 8 ♗5c3 ♗e5 9 ♚b3 0-0 10 0-0 ♗c6 11 a3 ♙xc3 12 ♚xc3? (12 ♚xb6 axb6 13 ♗xc3 is better, when White has the bishop pair and can afford to sacrifice the c-pawn for a strong initiative after 13...♗a5 14 ♚d1 ♗xc4 15 e4, exerting considerable pressure on the black centre) 12...d5! and Black equalized thanks to his strong d-pawn, G.Gusarov-P.Ponkratov, Belgorod 2009.

8...0-0

Hitting the knight with 8...a6 looks critical, intending 9 ♗d6+ ♔e7 10 ♗xc8+ ♚axc8, but this doesn't solve Black's problems: after 11 0-0! ♙xc3 12 bxc3 ♗a5 13 ♚b1 ♚c7 14 ♚a4 b6 15 c5! bxc5 16 ♚d1, White had strong compensation for the pawn with two bishops and his rooks on the open lines, Pr.Nikolic-Z.Almasi, German League 2006.

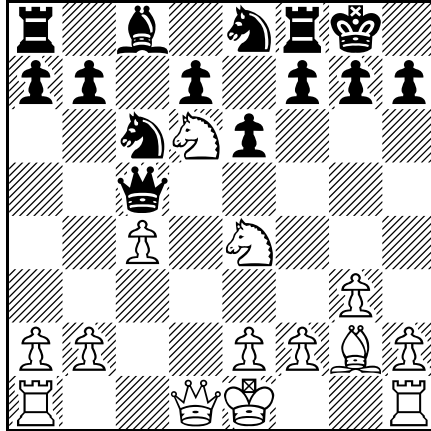
9 ♙e3!

This shows why ...♙b4+ was a dubious move. If Hansen doesn't want to risk getting pushed back, he has to trade bishops, thus wasting a tempo, while White annexes the d6-square, causing serious development problems for Black.

9...♙c5 10 ♙xc5 ♚xc5 11 ♗d6

Applying the big squeeze on Black who, not surprisingly, tries to evict the knight immediately.

11...♗e8 12 ♗ce4!



Strengthening the grip on d6 with another knight, with tempo.

Question: Why not win a pawn with 12 ♖xc8 ♜xc8 13 ♚xd7 - ?

Answer: It doesn't. Black suddenly gets the better game after 13...♗d6!, since White is forced to give up his powerful g2-bishop to let his queen escape; i.e. 14 ♔xc6 ♜fd8 15 ♚e7 ♜xc6 16 0-0 ♜d7 17 ♚g5 ♗xc4 and Black regains the pawn with strong pressure on the queenside.

12...♚e5

Question: What would be a good continuation had Black played 12...♚b6 - ?

Answer: White can trade a pair of knights with 13 ♗xe8 ♜xe8 14 ♗d6 and maintain the bind.

Note: It's what remains on the board that matters, not what goes off the board.

13 ♚d2

Calmly defending the b-pawn.

13...♗xd6

Black gets nowhere with 13...f5?!, because of 14 f4! ♚d4 15 ♚xd4 ♗xd4 16 ♗xe8 ♜xe8 (or 16...fxe4 17 ♗c7 ♜b8 18 ♔xe4 and White has won a pawn) 17 ♗d6 ♜e7 18 0-0-0 ♗c6 19 ♜d2, followed by ♜hd1, and White's bind is even stronger.

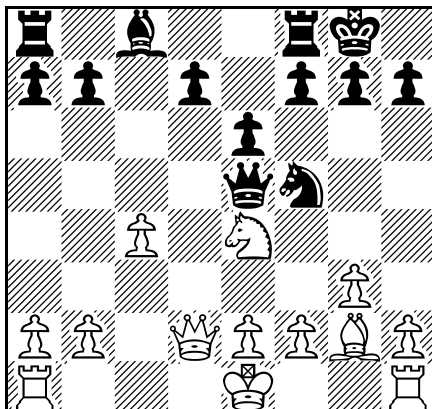
14 ♗xd6 ♗d4

Black must try to get rid of that pesky knight on d6, otherwise his pieces can hardly breathe.

15 ♗e4

White threatens f2-f4 to win the d4-knight, so Black's next move is forced.

15...♗f5



Exercise: Ivanchuk has the better bishop, superior development, and pressure on the weak d7-pawn. How does he increase his advantage?

Answer: He offers a queen trade! It transpires that White's advantage is even bigger with queens off the board because Black is still hemmed in. Think "Morra Gambit" without the pawn minus and you will get a sense of the pressure that Black is facing.

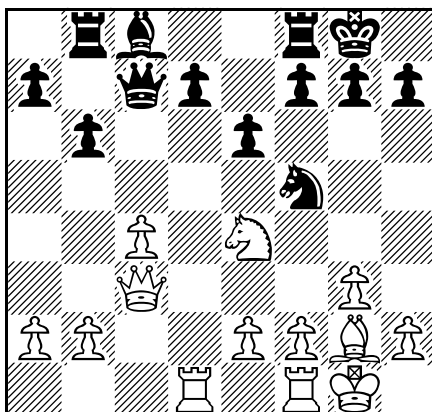
16 ♖c3! ♜c7

Black retreats and hopes to get a decent hedgehog structure with pawns on d6, b6 and a6 at some point. After 16...♜xc3+ 17 ♘xc3 ♜b8 18 0-0 b6 19 ♜fd1 a6 20 ♘e4, Black remains boxed in.

17 ♜d1

Preventing Black from even thinking about the ...d7-d5 break.

17...♜b8 18 0-0 b6



Exercise: Black intends to complete development and set up a hedgehog with ...♙b7, ...♖fd8 and ...d7-d6. How did Ivanchuk easily thwart this plan?

Answer: Ivanchuk had worked out that a knight on d6 is stronger than Black's fianchettoed bishop.

19 ♙h3!

Note: Sometimes, we have this blind spot where we don't even consider such minor piece exchanges as giving up a fianchettoed bishop for a knight, basing our decisions on intuition or personal dogma rather than proper calculation.

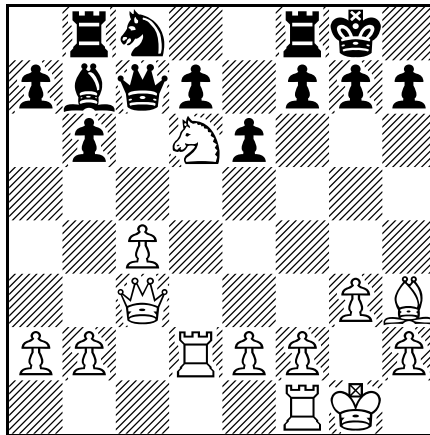
19...♘e7

If 19...♙b7 20 ♙xf5 exf5 21 ♘d6 g6 22 ♖d2 ♚c6 23 f3, Black is squelched positionally.

20 ♘d6 ♙b7 21 ♖d2

Preparing to double rooks on the d-file.

21...♘c8



Black attempts to trade pieces. This is a sensible plan when one is cramped as it frees up more space to manoeuvre.

Exercise: How should White meet this offer to exchange?

Answer: Again, it's what remains on the board that counts.

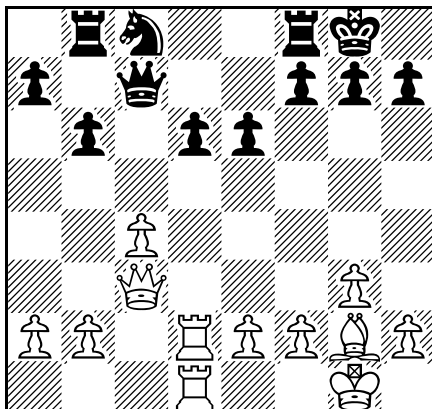
22 ♘xb7!

I hope you didn't fall for 22 ♖fd1? ♘xd6 23 ♖xd6 ♙d5!, when White has to give up the exchange and loses his advantage.

22...♖xb7 23 ♙g2 ♖b8 24 ♖fd1

White has reached an ideal set-up for a big squeeze.

24...d6



Exercise: Black is poised to play ...b6-b5 to free his queenside. What can White do about it?

Answer: Let him make the break!

25 ♖d4!

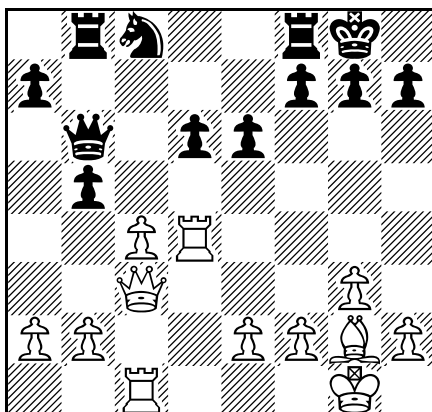
Ivanchuk has worked out that, even after Black gets ...b6-b5 in, the white pieces will still work better, as the powerful g2-bishop calls the shots from afar and the c8-knight cuts communication between Black's rooks. 25 a4 would have been the standard restraining move but Ivanchuk... well, he's wired differently.

25...b5 26 ♖c1

So that's Ivanchuk's idea: tempt ...b6-b5 and then threaten to take over the c-file.

26...♗b6?!

At least 26...b4 gives Black the c5-square for his queen, though White is still for choice after 27 ♗d2 ♗c5 28 b3 ♖b6 29 ♖d1 with a typically strong Maróczy Bind.



Exercise: The text looks logical, getting the queen out of the way and threatening to get play on the b-file, but there's a snag which Ivanchuk naturally exploits. How?

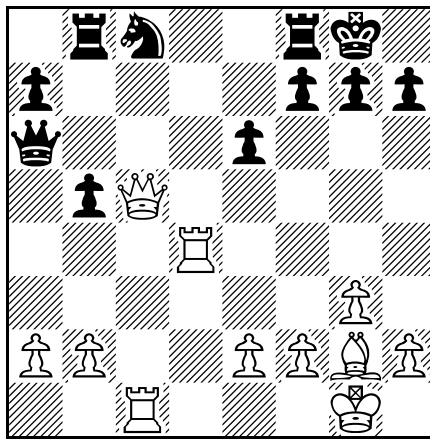
Answer: White gives up one advantage for another.

27 c5!

The big squeeze on d6 is transformed to heavy piece play on the c-file. Previously, White had a spatial plus, whereas now he gets to invade into Black's position.

27...dxc5 28 ♖xc5 ♕a6

Trading queens is equally sad for Black, as 28...♕xc5 29 ♖xc5 a6 30 b3 ♘b6 31 ♖c6 paralyzes him completely.



Exercise: Black intends to complete development with ...♘b6 while threatening a2. What did Ivanchuk play to accelerate his initiative to insurmountable proportions?

Answer: 29 ♙e4!

By threatening ♙xh7 and ♖xf8, White sets off a flurry of tactics which lead to an extra pawn and continual pressure.

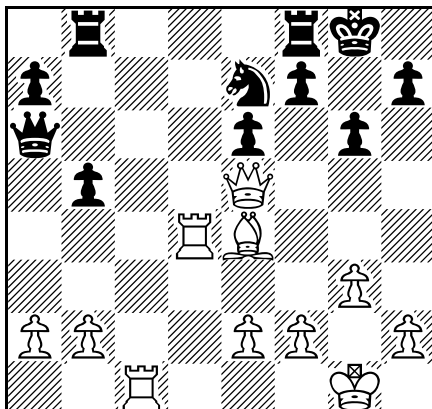
29...g6

29...♖b6 is met simply by 30 b4 and Black is still hemmed in, as ...♖xc5 would allow White a strong passed c-pawn.

30 ♖e5!

Now it's chaos for Black on the dark squares and there's no stopping the invasion of the seventh rank with tempo. The queen calls the shots from e5, signifying White's dominance of the whole board.

30...♘e7



31 ♖d7

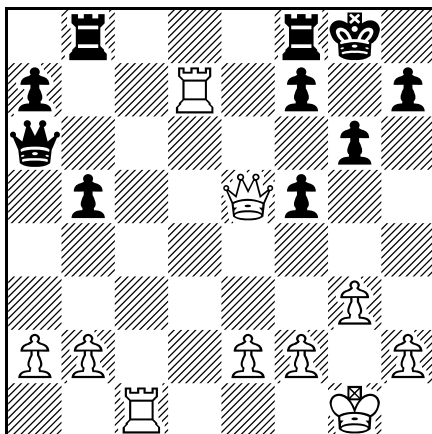
Exercise: Ivanchuk could have played more strongly here. After 31 ♖c7, forcing 31...♗f5, White has a powerful combination. Can you see it?

Answer: 32 ♖xf7!! ♔xf7 33 ♙xf5 ♖bd8 (if 33...gxf5? then 34 ♖d7+ ♔e8 35 ♗g7 mates) 34 ♙xg6+!! hxg6 35 ♗c7+ ♔g8 36 ♖xd8 ♗xa2 37 ♖xf8+ ♔xf8 38 ♗c5+ ♔g7 39 ♗xb5 netting two extra pawns for White. On the other hand, there's no reason for Ivanchuk to complicate since he can win cleanly anyway with the safer option.

31...♗f5

After 31...♖bc8 32 ♖cd1, Black has to cough up a pawn anyway: 32...♗d5 (not 32...♗f5?? 33 ♙b7 and White wins a whole rook due to the weak back rank) 33 ♙xd5 exd5 34 ♗xd5.

32 ♙xf5 exf5



Exercise: So where's the pawn advantage I spoke about?
For that you'll have to find a way for White to win material.

Answer: Ivanchuk nets a pawn with a deflection motif, and still retains a strong attack.

33 ♖xf7! ♗xf7

Of course Black must recapture or it's mate on g7.

34 ♗xb8+ ♔g7

34...♖f8 35 ♖e5 ♗xa2 36 ♗xb5 also leaves White in charge.

35 ♖c8 ♗a4

Here 35...♗e6 36 ♖g8+ ♔f6 37 ♖e8 ♗d5 might make things tougher for White.

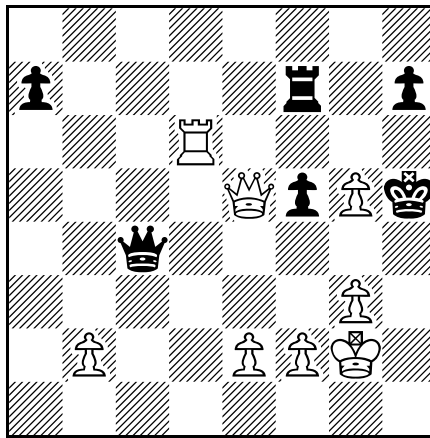
36 ♖d8 ♗e4?

Now 36...♖e7!? would put up more resistance. The rapidly approaching time control may have had something to do with Black's rapid decline.

37 ♗xb5 ♗b1+ 38 ♔g2 ♗xa2?!

After this, Ivanchuk wraps up the game without missing a beat.

39 ♗e5+ ♔h6 40 ♖d4 g5 41 h4 ♗b3 42 ♖d6+ ♔h5 43 hxg5 ♗c4



Once past the time control, Ivanchuk calculates a mate in seven.

44 g6!

The engines find an even quicker solution in 44 f4!, followed by ♖h6+ and ♖h4 mate.

44...hxg6 45 ♗h8+ ♔g5 46 f4+ ♔g4

46...♗xf4 only extends the game for a couple of moves: 47 gxh4+ ♔xf4 48 ♖d4+ ♔e3 49 ♗e5 mate.

47 ♗h3 mate

Summary: Ivanchuk exploited Black's opening inaccuracies to get a superb knight lodged on d6, cramming his opponent down. Later, he traded one advantage for another, first exchanging the strong knight to pressurize the black d-pawn, and then taking over the c-file