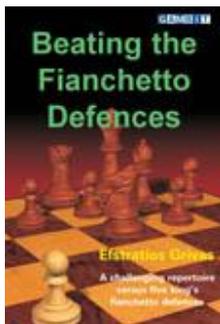


UNDER THE MICROSCOPE: GAMBIT BOOKS "Beating the Fianchetto Defences"



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GAMBIT BOOKS "Beating the Fianchetto Defences" review

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Gambit Publications Ltd, headed by GM Murray Chandler (Managing Director), GM Dr John Nunn (Chess Director) and FM Graham Burgess (Editorial Director) has recently published Grivas's newest work of art - ["Beating the Fianchetto Defences" - a challenging repertoire versus five king's fianchetto defences].

Efstratios Grivas currently holds four chess titles, endorsed by the [World Chess Federation \(FIDE\)](#): [International Grandmaster](#), [International Arbiter](#), [International Organizer](#) and [FIDE Senior Trainer](#)!

The standard "Contents", "Symbols" and "Bibliography" pages are followed by a lengthy introduction by the author, you should not skip reading. Grivas strongly emphasizes his knowledge and understanding of all the variations recommended for white, having himself a wealth of experience as a player and trainer in their development. He insists that your opponents will have to solve problems over the board, and you will not risk being a victim of memorized forced variations, typical of classical openings. He suggests that the systems offered form a whole, and are reachable not only by 1.d4 players, but by 1.c4 and 1.Nf3 ones, too. The text offers the reader much more than a standard book overview. You will discover secrets of (grand)master playing and training. A truly masterfully done introduction, in addition to the author's highest chess qualifications, leaves no doubt whether this book should become a part of your home library, especially if you are facing that annoying Bishop, fianchettoed on g7, when playing white

A brief overview of the five systems follows: Gruenfeld defense, Benko/Volga gambit, Modern defense, Modern Benoni and the Kings Indian Defense. A labyrinth of which you may never get out of? Not at all, as all variations are classified with move-by-move considerations, easing the study (or training) significantly.

As an experienced player and trainer, Grivas organizes the material in a professional way: introduction, historical overview, typical endgames(!), early deviations, theory and illustrative games! The theory sections are enriched with a lot of personal and joint analysis, not available in other publications, giving this one an overwhelming edge.

The author chose a relatively lengthy approach in studying beating the fianchetto defences. The reader is educated not only with the main recommended lines for white, but with many white deviations, too, ones that you may not be subsequently playing. Were these additions necessary? Do they pose a burden for the reader? No. Nothing less could be expected from a professional player and trainer. White deviations not only aim to raise the understanding of the variations, they contain hidden resources which may and will be pursued in the future. On occasion, you will have a choice between two recommended continuations of similar value, one being of positional and another of tactical character. These give this book an additional value for the future, suggesting the title may well have been "Understanding and Beating the Fianchetto Defences".

Grivas often quotes his numerous games played in these systems, recollecting not only the advantageous moves and maneuvers made, but blunders and misconceptions as well. A significant number of world class players have practiced the recommended systems, current World Champion Vladimir Kramnik included. Their annotated games and variations further emphasize the quality of this publication.

Black's various responses to white's moves are dealt with in detail, and sorted out with computer precision.

The idea of a publication such as this one is an ingenious one, that maybe only an experienced professional player may come up with. All rising players, facing the possibility of black fianchettoing his kings bishop, have had, at one point or another, over-the-board problems in handling these. I certainly know that I have had, especially against the King's Indian defense. This book may just provide the answers, as well as new and resurrected ideas in "beating the g7 bishops".

Are you computer/engine addicted in studying chess? Then this may not be the choice for you. Even as much as I am one, negating the need for over-the-board study (with a chess book) should NEVER be an option. Nevertheless, an included pgn (portable game notation) file with the moves only may be a useful extra resource.

Grivas anticipated many similar questions that the average reader may ask, and explained a lot in the must-read introduction.

A detailed Index of Variations is included. There is no Player Index, though. Players elo and title are not included, suggesting to the user that moves are more important here than are the player titles and their strength at the moment of the game played. Over the years, I have been updating my personal assessment of what essential data should exactly be included in a book, when quoting played games. I have not reached a definite conclusion yet.

Another obvious value of this publication is that author assesses the moves and positions honestly, when evaluating them. There is no attempt made to make a definite evaluation in every given situation. Chess proves to be far too complicated for that, at least for the time being.

Did Grivas predict that many players will be moderating their 1.e4 opening repertoires? Especially after the recently finished World Chess Championship match Kramnik-Topalov, where 1.d4 was the two champions choice? Only time will tell. Fianchetto systems had not been practiced in Elista, but they certainly have been in many World Championship matches before, proving their value over the years, on tournaments of all levels. White, thus, needs to make serious preparations in advance.

Is this book the right one for you? I hope this review will make your choice easier. I can think of many reasons why you (the player) should not miss giving it a serious try, and only a few why you (the player) should not. If you're involved with chess educational activities, such as chess club or school instruction with ambitious players, this book may be a "dream come true" in solving not only the "fianchetto" dilemmas, but as an overall recommended approach to studying and developing modern chess theory.

Are the variations recommended really that good, many being not the most popular ("best") ones in chess theory? As the author clearly explains in his introduction - *".....there are no good or bad openings. There are openings that you know and understand, and there are openings that you do not know and understand..."*.

Are you using computer-generated statistics to make definite opening evaluation conclusions? Grivas at one point writes: *"Black had scored heavily from this position, but this is probably due to lack of knowledge from white's part..."*.

"Beating the Fianchetto Defences" is not intended for novice players, as previously attained knowledge and tournament experience is required. Discipline in studying, as usual, is necessary for optimal results. And yes, using these systems, you may well be able to beat a grandmaster here and there (even if you are not one), such as many have already done. Reaching a better position after the opening against titled and non-titled players will be even more easier. Raising your "elo of understanding chess" is without doubt. Grivas's commentary covers a wide level range of readers, on occasions up to grandmaster level. Systematically covered variations should ensure it's longevity. This book is not bed-time reading, you will need a chess board and pieces, too.

Lastly, and importantly, my educated guess would be that the publication analysis and evaluations may just be "blunder-free"!?

Product link (with an excerpt available for free download!):<http://www.gambitbooks.com/books/beatfianchetto.html>

Update 4.11.2006:

Only two of my current junior trainees in the [Kavala Chess Club](#) practice 1.d4 as their main move for white. This morning, [Ilias Kazantzidis](#) (14) expressed a wish to prepare for his [2nd Scheveningen tournament](#) game (against experienced [Ioannis Tsevremes](#)), by - using Grivas's book recommendations! We spent about 45 minutes preparing, and, thanks to our advanced prediction techniques, were able to foresee the many opening moves that were later actually played! I visited the Chess Club in the afternoon and took a few photos of the ongoing game! Owners of this book will recognize one of the main recommended lines on the chess boards below! This Scheveningen is organized by the [Chess Club of Kavala](#) and Mr. Vasilis Theodoridis (Vice President of the Greece Chess Federation), as part of the [Greece Chess Federation Junior Program](#). Ilias is one of the Greek chess prodigies and among the selected best national juniors.



The game ended in a draw.