

## 3. Bent Larsen

Denmark

International Grandmaster

Three times Candidates' Semi-finalist (1965, 1968, 1971) and one of the most successful tournament players in chess history, Bent Larsen needs no introduction. As you can see from the two games which follow, Larsen is just as expert with his pen as with the pieces.

## Denmark's Chess Teacher

To choose one game among all the masterpieces played during the last hundred years is very difficult. I thought of the famous game Rotlewi-Rubinstein; I remember how this game looked like magic to me when I was thirteen. Now the combination seems crystal clear. However, I preferred a game with both strategical depth and tactical brilliance. That I selected a game by Nimzowitsch is probably not a great surprise to those that know me. Indirectly this great thinker, who lived in Denmark for the last twelve years of his life, has had immense influence on my play.

P. Johner-A. Nimzowitsch  
Dresden 1926

Nimzo-Indian

1 P-Q4 N-KB3  
2 P-QB4 P-K3  
3 N-QB3 B-N5

Though this opening was played in a few tournament games in the 1880's, it only became popular during the 'Hypermodern' wave of the 1920's, so our game is from a time when this opening was very new. The most common variations were 4 Q-B2 and 4 Q-N3 but Johner plays what is now called the Rubinstein (or the Normal or the Modern) line.

4 P-K3 O-O  
5 B-Q3 P-B4  
6 N-B3 N-B3

Modern theory does not like this order of moves, because of the answer 7 P-Q5! P×P 8 P×P N×P 9 B×P+ but not all masters agree. At least 6... N-B3 is a better move in this case than 6... P-QN3, but even after 6... P-QN3 7 P-Q5!? P×P 8 P×P N×P 9 B×P+ Korchnoi found it difficult to prove an advantage for White in his game against Lengyel, Luhacovice 1969.

7 O-O B×N1?

Of course, Nimzowitsch was far ahead of almost all other masters of his day in his understanding of these positions with a doubled c-pawn. It was because of this, and a few other Nimzowitsch games, that at a very young age I played many games with this idea. Often I played 4... P-B4 5

B-Q3 N-B3 6 N-B3 B×N+ or 6 N-K2 (at that time quite normal) 6... P-Q4. Now, many years later, Hübner has made this idea popular. One advantage of the Hübner line is that Black has not yet shown to which side he is going to castle. Of course, the best known game with this line is now the fifth match game Spassky-Fischer 1972.

8 P×B P-Q3  
9 N-Q2!

A fine idea says Nimzowitsch. He mentions both the possibility of advancing White's KBP and the continuation 9... P-K4 10 P-Q5 N-QR4 11 N-N3! So his next move is meant to provide his knight with a retreat square in this case. Another possible continuation was 9... P-K4 (10 P-Q5 N-K2).

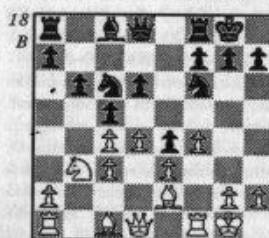
9... P-QN3!  
10 N-N3?

White ought to play 10 P-B4; Nimzowitsch considered the position after 10... P-K4 11 BP×P QP×P 12 P-Q5 N-QR4 13 N-N3 N-N2 14 P-K4 N-K1 about even.

10... P-K4!  
11 P-B4

11 P-Q5 P-K5! is very good for Black.

11... P-K5



12 B-K2 (18)

12...

Q-Q2!! (22)

At this point I can explain part of my reasons for liking this game so much. First of all, it taught me something. Since I was about fourteen, in the same position I would have made the same move, and in a similar position I would have conceived a similar idea. So would many other contemporary masters, but in 1926 this move was a revolution!

In *My System* Nimzowitsch's note says, 'Black sees in White's K-side pawns (KBP, KNP and KRP) a qualitative majority. The text move involves a complicated system of restraint. A simpler one could have been brought about by 12... N-K1 13 P-N4 (or 13 P-B5 Q-N4) 13... P-B4 14 QP×P (observe the "dead" bishop at c1 and consider further how ineffectively posted are the white pieces for an attack to be launched in the g-file) 14... QP×P 15 Q-Q5+ Q×Q 16 P×Q N-K2 17 R-Q1 N-Q3 and Black has rather the better game.'

However in B. Nielsen's book *Nimzowitsch, Denmark's Chess Teacher*, the note, though also by Nimzowitsch himself, is different, probably quoted from the Danish chess magazine *Skakbladet*. This note I prefer:

'This move is the beginning of a very difficult and complicated restraint (the mobility of the K-side pawns must be diminished as much as possible), and it has been admired by many masters, mainly because the restraint method (with the use of the heavy calibre) looks like a new technique. Another possible restraint method here was 12... N-K1 but after 13 P-N4 P-B4 14 P-Q5 N-K2