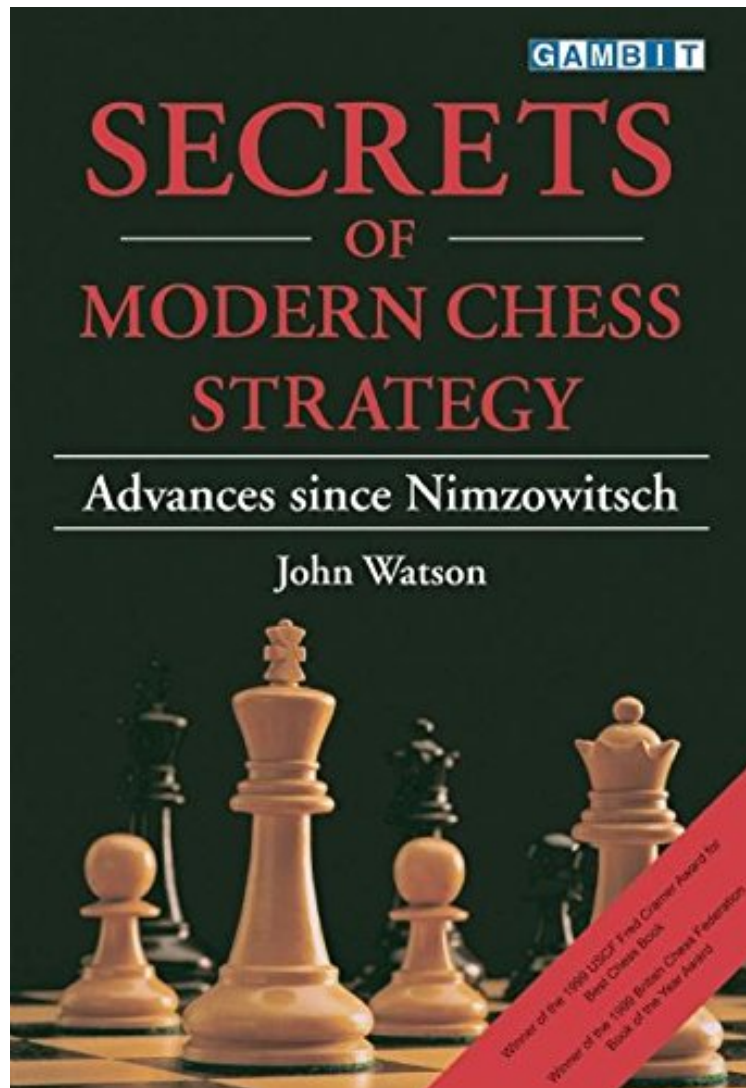


[Mobile book] Secrets of Modern Chess Strategy: Advances since Nimzowitsch

# Secrets of Modern Chess Strategy: Advances since Nimzowitsch

John Watson

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#958118 in Books The House of Staunton, Inc. 1999-03-01 Original language: English PDF # 1 10.25 x 7.00 x .751, 1.00 #File Name: 1901983072272 pages Author: John Watson Pages: 269 Pages Publication Years: 1999 | File size: 60.Mb

**John Watson : Secrets of Modern Chess Strategy: Advances since Nimzowitsch** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Secrets of Modern Chess Strategy: Advances since Nimzowitsch:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Valuable information for immediate level players By Customer Personally, I think this book is at least as good as "My System", if not better 0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Technical but useful! By open-minded A little difficult to work through but I know it will up

my game!80 of 90 people found the following review helpful. Presumptuous and flawed epicBy A CustomerThis book has bothered me since it came out, and until now I hadn't quite been able to put my finger on why it bothers me. The answer is: it is Watson that bothers me! He is a very good writer and has invested an enormous amount of work into this book. However, the arrogance and presumptuousness of its message are what irritate me. I think Watson's method in this book smacks of intellectual arrogance, lacking the humility with which he should address his subject. The subject is primarily the idea that chess is largely "rule-independent" and that Nimzowitsch and the classicists were wrong in saying things like "you should only move one or two pawns in the opening." Nowhere does Watson provide the necessary qualifications to his work; namely, that the general rules are an essential roadmap to learning chess as a beginner or intermediate, and that general rules are GENERAL rules. He acts like its a big revelation that because Fritz 8 can prove that a position with 10 early pawn moves is playable, therefore the general rule that you shouldn't make too many early pawn moves is invalid. He misses the main point in this regard: that the top players in the world have incorporated computers into their home analysis and thus into their play. Yes, this has changed some of the "truth" of the game in the sense that theory is subject to being changed by computer analysis. Put it this way: imagine the computer analysing a difficult chess position is like a metal detector searching for needles in a haystack. Watson is saying, "because I have this metal detector, the general rule that it is difficult to find a needle in a haystack no longer is valid. The detector quickly finds the needle." This absurd view assumes that everyone who looks for things that have metal in them has a metal detector, just as Watson's profession to have shown the rules to be invalid assumes that everyone has a powerful computer to analyze for them. So, who then is Watson writing for? Clearly, the GM's who play the complex opening systems he describe--those opening systems that flaunt the traditional rules--do not need to hear his theory. They, after all, are the ones using the computers to provide the data Watson has used to create it. On the contrary, a book like this is really being directed at the intermediate player who has an intellectual fascination with chess. But on that level, the book is an utter failure. Because for every Sicilian Najdorf with multiple early pawn moves, there are three Ruy Lopezes with "traditional" principles governing the opening. 99% of chess players are better off following the general rules, and risk being misled by Watson's claim that those rules are not valid. Yes, there are exceptions to every general rule. Exceptions do not make a rule invalid. And yes, perhaps some of the old rules used with beginners should not provide to modern GM play. But Watson should have qualified his points repeatedly, in the way that Marovic put it in his recent work, "Understanding Pawn Play in Chess": "We have been trying to learn lessons and draw logical conclusions not in order to respect them to the letter, but in order to understand them so well that we can see beyond the rules and disregard general advice. Only he who commands the laws of the chessboard to perfection can do that" (p. 206) Marovic's further statement in "Dynamic Pawn Play in Chess" also shows the lack in Watson of a similar perspective: "It is quite easy to say that general laws and maxims are useless, that only specific analysis of specific cases leads to the truth, but how then could we upgrade our play to the level on which we can evaluate the course of a chess game on our own? How, then, could chess teaching function?" (pp. 254-255). It is Watson's failure to add this perspective to his work that leads to its downfall. As a scholarly treatise I find that to be a fatal flaw in his work. The book deserves at least three stars just for its incredible amount of work and ambition, even though it fails as to its main premise.

It is now seventy years since Nimzowitsch wrote his monumental work *My System*. While it remains a fundamental work on chess strategy, the way chess positions are handled has changed greatly since Nimzowitsch's time - both refinements to existing ideas, and completely new concepts. John Watson's book fulfils the need for a thorough, profound work on the modern handling of chess positions, and how Nimzowitsch's theories - still controversial and revolutionary at the time *My System* was written - have been refined and used alongside classical concepts. The first section of the book discusses how the understanding of classical themes, such as pawn majorities, the centre, and structural weaknesses, have been refined. Watson then moves on to discuss new concepts, including the willingness of modern players to accept backward pawns in return for dynamic play, the idea of a good 'bad' bishop, knights finding useful roles at the edge of the board and the exchange sacrifice idea that became prevalent with the post-war Soviet champions. This profound yet thoroughly practical work is rounded off with sections on prophylactic thinking, dynamism, modern concepts as they apply to the critical contemporary opening systems, and some thoughts on the future of chess.

About the Author International Master John Watson is one of the world's most respected writers on chess. In 1999, his *Secrets of Modern Chess Strategy* won 'Chess Book of the Year' awards in the USA and the UK. He reviews chess books for *The Week in Chess* and hosts a weekly radio show on the Internet Chess Club. As a trainer, he has worked with many talented pupils, including Tal Shaked.