

THE NEW WINAWER REPORT

Editor: Seán Coffey

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Issue 10

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‘A Famous Old Line’

October marks the sixtieth anniversary of Venice 1953 and the game Paoli-Schmid, featuring the then-critical Winawer innovation discussed in issue 7. Though the variation is renowned—or notorious—for immense complications and very dense theory, its development followed a peculiar trajectory: advances occurred almost entirely in analysis rather than games for its first twelve years, before a meteoric rise to the height of chess fashion in the mid-1960’s. When interest moved on equally quickly, the prevailing impression was left that White had much the better of it. Much of theory’s verdict is wrong or incomplete, though. This issue surveys the field and in several places corrects the record.

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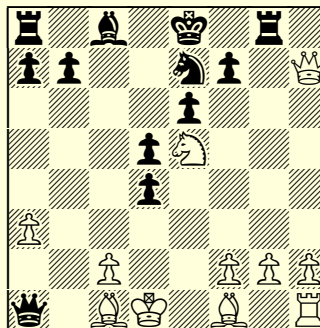
Schmid’s 10 ... ♖d7: a survey

Schmid’s variation runs (1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♗c3 ♘b4 4 e5 c5 5 a3 ♙xc3+ 6 bxc3 ♗e7 7 ♖g4 ♕c7 8 ♗xg7 ♖g8 9 ♗xb7 cxd4) 10 ♕d1 ♗d7!? 11 ♗f3 ♗xe5 12 ♙f4 ♗xc3 13 ♗xe5 ♗xa1+ 14 ♙c1 (1). Black is precariously placed, but for once in the poisoned pawn it is White who is down material.

14 ... ♖f8!

Schmid’s original choice. Later **Bronstein-Uhlmann, United Nations Peace Tournament, Zagreb 1965** *dFV game 21*, *RHM game 17* introduced 14 ... d3?! as an attempted improvement. After 15 ♗xf7+ ♕d8 16 ♗f6! (the untried 16 ♗f4, ‘!’ Vitiugov *aCBR p. 191*, seems no more than equal) 16 ... dxc2+, Bronstein’s 17 ♕d2 is complicated, but further practice and analysis indicate that Black maintains equal chances. Instead

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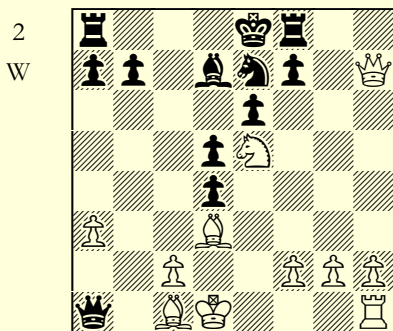


17 ♖xc2! is a better prospect: after 17 ... ♗a2+ 18 ♘b2 ♘d7 19 ♙f7+ ♚e8 20 ♙d6+ ♚d8 21 ♘d3! (21 ♙xb7+? ♚e8?! 22 ♘e2! de Firmian *MCO-15* p. 218, ∞/±; 21 ... ♚c7!∞/∓) 21 ... ♘a4+ 22 ♚d2 ♚d7? 23 ♖e1 ♙c6!, **Grabarczyk-Spiess, Bundesliga 2 '94-'95, Germany 1995** continued 24 ♙xb7? (1/2-1/2, 29), and based on this example S. Pedersen *tMLF* p. 155 labels 21 ♘d3 dubious. Instead 24 ♗xe6+ ♚c7! leads nowhere.

But 24 ♘b1! wins: after 24 ... ♗b3 25 ♙xb7, now with more sting because of the threatened fork on c5, probably wins, but computers find a winning attack in the maelstrom after 25 ♗xe6+! (now that the white QB is unpinned).

Scope for improvements is limited. Black can survive to a pawn-down ending via 22 ... ♖xg2! 23 ♙xb7+ ♚e8 24 ♗h8+ ♖g8 25 ♗h5+ ♚f8 26 ♗e5 d4 28 ♖b1 ♗d5 29 ♘e4 ♗g5+, perhaps saveable.

15 ♘d3! ♘d7(2)



White's 15th is due to Keres *FZ* p. 132, but now his proposed 16 h4 is dubious because of 16 ... ♙c6 17 ♙xf7 ♖xf7 18 ♘g6 0-0-0 19 ♗xf7 ♙e5∓/∓. White's main choices are 16 ♖e1 and 16 ♚e2.

A: (from (2)) 16 ♖e1(!)

White prepares to 'castle by hand' with ♚e2-f1 and forestalls Black's ... ♙e5 resource from the 16 h4?! line.

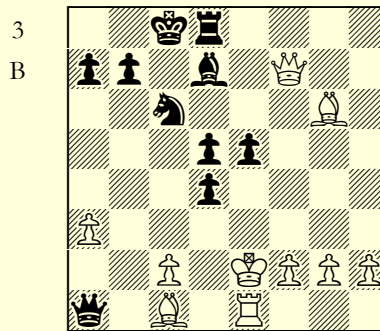
16 ... ♙c6!
17 ♙xf7 ♖xf7
18 ♘g6 0-0-0
19 ♗xf7!

The other capture 19 ♘xf7?! has been labelled '??' on the basis of **Matulović-Fuchs, Kislovodsk 1966** *Informator 2/203* (V. Sokolov): 19 ... d3! 20 ♘xe6 ♘xe6 21 ♖xe6 ♙d4 22 ♖e7 dxc2+ 23 ♚d2 ♗b1 24 ♖e3∓∓ and 0-1, 39. But here White's ♖e6-e7-e3 forced the BQ to a much better square. Instead the direct 22 ♖e3! dxc2+ 23 ♚d2 is ∞/=.

19 ... e5!

'And Black has a strong initiative', Psakhis, *FD-ps* p. 216.

20 ♚e2(3)



20 ... e4?

♣ Marić *Informator 2/204*. Natural, and virtually universal in practice, but now Black appears to lose almost by force. For an improvement, see below.

21 ♚f1

±± V. Sokolov *Informator 2/203*—odd to have such inconsistent evaluations in adjacent games.

21 ... ♖c3
22 ♗g5!

After the standard 22 ♗f5?, simplest is 22 ... d3! (Marić) 23 ♖xd5 (23 cxd3 ♖xd3+ 24 ♖g1 ♖c3 25 ♖f1 ♖e5=) 23 ... ♗e7! 24 ♗xd7+ ♖xd7, e.g. 25 ♖b3 ♖xb3 26 cxb3 d2 27 ♗xd2 ♖xd2 with a better ending. This possibility has been ignored, perhaps because Marić's follow-up 23 (♖xd5) ♗d4?? loses immediately to 24 ♗xe4.

22 ... ♗e7

The improvement, attributed to Fuchs, on 22 ... ♗e5? 23 ♖xd5!± and 1-0, 26, **Fuchs-Uhlmann, Zinnowitz 1966 Informator 2/204 (Marić)**; 'with sufficient counterplay', Suetin *FD-su p. 140*.

23 ♗h5!

Old theory concentrated almost exclusively on 23 ♖b1 (Pachman *P68 p. 49*, Suetin), and Korchnoi suggested 23 a4 *C18-19 p. 61*; both are about =. But the text—**Handke-Berndt, E. German corr 1989** (but 0-1, 34), Burgess *COS p. 60*—avoids exchange of knight for bishop and covers e2, refuting Fuchs' idea: ±±.

Where can Black improve? Konikowski (via UltraCorr3) gives 20 ... ♖c3!?! 21 ♗g5 ♖h8, evaluating as ♞. This is too optimistic after 22 h4, when White must be better, but appears at least playable: ∞/±.

B: (from (2)) 16 ♖e2(!?)

Usually given as best; '(!)' Moles *MLW p. 42*, '±' Nunn *NCO p. 282*, but probably less accurate than 16 ♖e1.

16 ... 0-0-0

Alternatives:

a) 16 ... ♗c6?! is weaker now that the white QB is not pinned. The stem game **Matulović-Camilleri, Halle zonal 1967** featured the forcing 17 ♗xf7 ♖xf7 18

♖g8+ ♖f8 19 ♗g6+ ♖e7 20 ♖g7+ ♖d6 21 ♗f4+ ♖xf4 22 ♖xa1, and now instead of 22 ... ♖af8 as played (and 1-0, 28), Uhlmann gave 22 ... ♖g4 23 ♖h6 ♗e5 24 ♗d3 ♖xg2=. Moles correctly gave as more critical 23 h3 ♖xg2 24 ♖f1 ♖h2 25 ♗e8 'with initiative'. Indeed Black appears lost, e.g. 25 ... ♖h1+ 26 ♖g2 ♖xa1 27 ♖xd7+ ♖c5 28 h4! ♖d8 (28 ... e5 29 h5 ♖d8 30 ♖f7 e4 31 b6 d3 32 cxd3 exd3 33 ♗xc6! ±± **Leimeister-Ziegert, BdF H-class corr 1998** (1-0, 44)) 29 h5! when the h-pawn can't be stopped.

So Camilleri's much-maligned 22 ... ♖af8 is best after all. It provokes 23 f3 (±' Vitiugov *aCBR p. 192, aCBR-2 p. 239*), so that after 23 ... ♗e7! Black may eventually capture the g-pawn with check: ±. Instead 23 ♖f1 e5 24 ♖d1, clearing e2 for the bishop and pre-empting checks, appears better, probably ±.

b) 16 ... ♗f5!?! is much better than its reputation. Suggested by Marić *Teoreticheski Bulletin No. 1, 1968?*, it aims to transfer the knight to the useful outpost d6, covering f7. It fell under a cloud quickly because after 17 ♖e1 (given as best by Marić) 17 ... ♖c3, Yudovich Jr. *Shakhmatny Bulletin 11/1968 pp. 325-26* gave 18 ♗g5! ('N ±±' Pytel *Informator 7*), winning in all lines, and convincingly illustrated by **Pytel-Haufe, EU/M/190 ICCF corr 1968-69 Fernschach 31/10, October 1970, p. 234, Informator 7/213 (both Pytel)**: 18 ... ♗d6 19 ♖f1 ♖c7 20 ♗g6 ♖c3 21 ♗d3 ♖xa3 22 ♖g7! ♗e4 23 ♗h4 ♖d6 24 f3 f6 25 ♗g6 1-0.

Thus current theory, which however has entirely overlooked the improvement 17 ... 0-0-0!. Now it is not so easy to exploit the BQ's position (18 ♗b6? ♖b8! ±±; 18 ♗g5 ♖xa3 19 ♗xd8 ♖xd8=), and after 18 ♗xf7 ♖de8! 19 g4?! Black

has 19 ... ♖c3! . The critical line is 19 ♖f1 ♖e7 20 ♔d6+ ♖c7 21 ♗h5 ♔xd6 22 ♕g5 ♖xf2+ 23 ♖xf2 ♖f7+ 24 ♗xf7 ♗xe1+ 25 ♖xe1 ♔xf7 26 ♕f6 ♖d6, when White is better but Black should be able to hold.

17 ♔xf7 ♖xf7
18 ♗xf7 ♖e8(!)

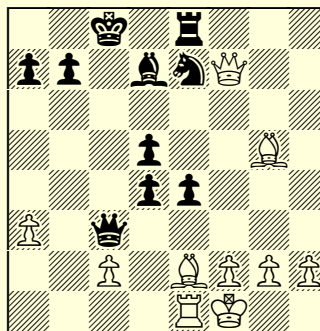
More accurate than 18 ... ♔c6 19 ♖d1 ♗c3 20 ♕g5 ♖e8 21 h4 and a h-pawn advance; ±.

Matulović-Jahr, Reggio Emilia 1967-68 *Informator* 5/209 (Marić) continued 19 ♖e1 e5! 20 ♖f1 e4 21 ♕e2 ♗c3 22 ♕g5(4) (±' Korchnoi *C18-19* p. 61) 22 ... ♗xa3, when White went astray with 23 ♕g4?! ♗a6+ (½-½, 38).

23 ♖d1

±' Marić. With minor variations this has been accepted as the last word ever since: 'the improvement at move 23 makes the whole variation favourable to White', Moles

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p. 43, '±' Kasparov & Keene *BCO-2* p. 207; 'Black has not solved his opening problems', A. Martin & Stein, via Burgess *COS* p. 60; all without further analysis.

In fact Black can force an immediate draw: 23 ... ♗c5! (threat 24 ... ♔/5+) 24 ♕g4 ♗b5+ 25 ♕e2 and repeats.

Conclusion: 10 ... ♔d7 appears to give White an edge but no more. ►

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- BCO-2* KASPAROV, Garry & KEENE, Raymond, *Batsford Chess Openings 2* (2nd edition). New York: Henry Holt 1994. ISBN-13: 978-0-8050-3409-7.
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- NCO* NUNN, John, GALLAGHER, Joe, EMMS, John & BURGESS, Graham, *Nunn's Chess Openings*. London: Cadogan 1999. ISBN-10: 978-1-85744-221-2.
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- FD-ps* PSAKHIS, Lev, *French Defence 3 Nc3 Bb4*. London: Batsford 2004. ISBN-13: 978-0-7134-8841-8.
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