

# THE NEW WINAWER REPORT

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A free, monthly electronic newsletter on the theory, practice, and history of the French Winawer. Available at <http://www.irlchess.com/tnwr>. Editor email: [coffey@irlchess.com](mailto:coffey@irlchess.com). © Seán Coffey 2014. All rights reserved.

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## Winawer Praxis—III

The Winawer has never been more popular in practice, and these days as many interesting games can appear in a week as would have appeared in a year or more in decades past. There are far more games played today, of course, and incomparably more are available immediately, so the causes go beyond an increase in *relative* popularity; but whatever the root causes, the opening is thriving.

This year's Irish Championship well illustrated the trend, with four games featuring 6 ... ♗e7 7 ♜g4, possibly an all-time record for this event. One featured a novelty deep into the new main line of the Poisoned Pawn, 12 ... d4, versus a known drawing line for White. Black quickly developed a winning position, but a closer look shows several significant improvements for White. Another game was contested in the slightly-out-of-fashion 13 ... ♗d7 line in the Hertneck variation, and as in so many prior examples White succeeded after a long manoeuvring struggle. This issue considers both games and reviews the prior theoretical background.

\* \* \*

## Two recent main line games

Murray–Brady

Irish Ch (7), Dublin 2014

TWIC 1028

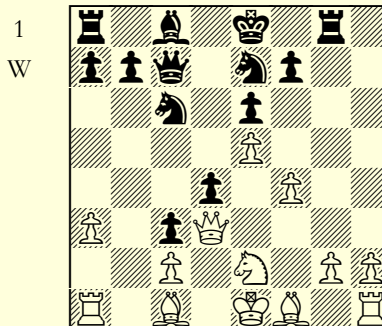
1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♗c3 ♗b4 4 e5 ♗e7 5  
a3 ♗xc3+ 6 bxc3 c5 7 ♜g4 cxd4 8  
♜xg7 ♝g8 9 ♜xh7 ♜c7 10 ♗e2

10 ... dxc3

11 f4 ♗bc6

12 ♜d3 d4(1)

The new main line; '!' Berg *GMR-2 p.* 96, who believes that White gains a 'comfortable edge' versus 12 ... ♗d7.



13 ♖xd4 ♗xd4  
 14 ♕xd4 ♘d7  
 15 a4?!

An inaccurate move order that permits an extra possibility, though the game transposes back into a main line.

15 ... ♗f5  
 16 ♕f2 ♕c6  
 17 ♖g1 0-0-0?!

Old theory recommended 17 ... ♕e4+ 18 ♕e2 ♕b4 based on **I. Sokolov–Hulak, Portorož/Ljubljana 1987** *Informator* 43/ (376), when Black was held to be doing fine (though 1-0, 69): ♖ per the anonymous Informator editors and Korchnoi *C18-19 p. 65*; ‘with an excellent game’ Psakhis *ICF p. 236*; with ‘quite a good position ... ♖’ Psakhis *FD-ps p. 218*; cf. Bottlik & Sinka *Correspondence Chess Yearbook 3/ (209) (1991)* (no evaluation).

Of note, none of these gave an explicit Black advantage—the 12 ... d4 line was held to be better for White, so ♖ was reason enough to stop looking—but Berg *p. 116* gives ♖ ... Black has a significant advantage due to his better development and piece activity’, citing **Djordjevic–Zlatanovic, Intl Ch of Central Serbia, Paraćin 2013** (0-1, 33).

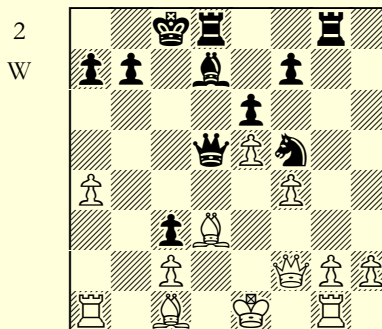
18 ♗d3 ♕d5(2)

This position also arises in the main line, 15 ♖g1 ♗f5 16 ♕f2 ♕c6 17 ♗d3 ♕d5, after the ‘rare’ (‘but pushing the a-pawn is almost always a plausible plan in such positions’) Berg *pp. 131-2* 18 a4 0-0-0.

19 ♕xa7

The main choices are 19 ♖a3 and 19 ♗a3 (otherwise why a4.?).

a) On 19 ♖a3—heretofore almost always the choice in practice—Watson *Chess-Publishing.com, May 2011* and Berg *pp. 132-6* provide extensive analysis of 19 ... ♕b8



20 ♖xc3 ♗xa4 (!? Berg) 21 ♖a3, when both 21 ... b5!? (Watson) and 21 ... ♕c6 (Berg) appear fully satisfactory for Black, as further confirmed by several subsequent practical examples (all drawn).

b) Berg *p. 132* gave 19 ♗a3 as not yet played, though he faced it himself virtually contemporaneously in **Pugh–Berg, BFCC Golden Jubilee A ICCF corr 2013**. The game followed the analysis of Watson and of Berg via 19 ... ♗c6 20 ♗b4 ♗d4 21 ♗xc3 ♕c5 22 ♗xd4 ♖xd4 (‘Black seems to have just enough play for the two pawns’, Watson; ‘Black is two pawns down for the moment, but his active piece play ensures at least an equal game’, Berg). The continuation was 23 ♕e2 ♖h8 24 h4 f6!? 25 ♕e3 (25 exf6?! e5∞/♖) 25 ... fxe5 26 ♕xe5 ♕xe5 27 fxe5 ♖hxh4= (½-½, 33).

Berg labels 19 ♕xa7 as ‘N’, giving a forced draw after 19 ... ♖xg2. ‘If Black desperately needs to win he can try 19 ... ♗c6!? 20 ♕f2 ♕a5!, but after 21 g4 ♗d4 22 ♖g3 ♕d5 23 ♕f1! White is objectively slightly better.’ In the present game Black finds an alternative over the board.

19 ... ♗h4!? N  
 20 ♖a3?!

Here 20 ♖a3! is the better choice. After 20 ... ♗c6 (20 ... ♜xg2+? loses quickly after 21 ♜xg2 ♝xg2 22 ♞a8+ ♞c7 23 ♞a5+ ♞c8 24 0-0-0±±) 21 0-0-0 Black can only survive with the computer move 21 ... ♜f3!!, preparing ... ♞a2 (22 gxf3? ♜xg1 23 ♞/♜xg1 ♞a2±±; not the immediate 21 ... ♞a2? 22 ♞a8+ ♞c7 23 ♞a5+ ♞c8 24 ♞xc3±±). Even then White has clearly the better of it after 22 ♖b5! ♞a2 23 ♞a8+ ♞c7 24 ♞a5+ ♞c8 25 ♞xc3 ♜xg1 26 ♜xg1 ♞d5 27 ♖d6!±.

In the corresponding line 19 ♖a3 ♗c6 20 ♞xa7?, Black has 20 ... ♜d4!, closing the d-file so that 21 0-0-0 ♞a2 mates and threatening ... ♜xc2+: ±±.

20 ... ♜xg2+

21 ♜xg2?

21 ♞f2 appears risky because of 21 ... ♜h4, but after 22 ♜xg8 ♞f3+ 23 ♞e1 ♜xg8 White escapes via 24 ♜xc3+ ♖c6 25 ♜xc6+! bxc6 26 ♞a8+ ♞c7 27 ♞xg8 ♜g2+ 28 ♞d2 ♞xf4+ 29 ♞d1 or 29 ♞c3, when the checks will run out.

Black must play 21 ... ♗c6, when neither side can deviate from the sequence 22 ♖e2 ♜xf4 23 ♜xg8 ♜h3+ 24 ♞e1 ♜xg8 25 ♞a8+ ♞any 26 ♞xg8 ♞h1+ 27 ♖f1 ♞e4+ with a perpetual.

After 21 ♞e2!? ♗c6 22 ♜f1 Black has at least enough compensation, e.g. 22 ... ♜h8 23 ♜xc3 ♜xh2 24 ♞d1 ♜h4 25 ♞g1 ♜h3∞/=.

21 ... ♞xg2

22 ♜xc3+ ♖c6

23 ♖e3 ♞h1+

24 ♞e2

Or 24 ♞d2 ♜g2+ 25 ♖f2 ♜xh2±±.

24 ... ♜g2+

25 ♖f2 ♜xh2

26 ♞e3 ♜g8?

The final twist: the rook was playing an essential rôle on d8. Instead 26 ... ♜h3 is crushing.

27 ♖e4!

The bishop is released since there is now no mate on d1. The win has gone and with it any advantage.

The game continued 27 ... ♜xf2+ (or 27 ... ♜g2 28 ♖xg2 ♞xg2=) 28 ♞xf2 ♞g1+ 29 ♞c2 ♞xe3+ 30 ♜xe3 ♖xa4= and 1/2-1/2, 49.

It's a drawback of the entire 12 ... d4 line that White has a number of near-forced draws.

\* \* \*

### O'Connor–Ó Cinnéide Irish Ch (8), Dublin 2014

TWTC 1028

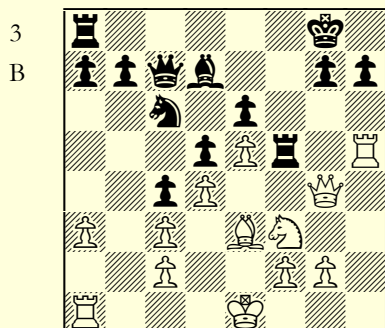
1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♜c3 ♖b4 4 e5 c5  
5 a3 ♖xc3+ 6 bxc3 ♜e7 7 ♞g4 0-0 8  
♖d3 ♜bc6 9 ♞h5 ♜g6 10 ♜f3 ♞c7  
11 ♖e3 c4 12 ♖xg6 fxe6 13 ♞g4

The main line of the Hertneck variation. Earlier O'Donnell–Ó Cinnéide, Irish Ch (4), Dublin 2014 showed once again that 11 ♜g5 h6 12 ♜xf7 ♞xf7 13 ♞xg6 ♞xg6 14 ♖xg6 cxd4= is harmless (1-0, 52 after Black spurned a repetition). Now Black has a critical choice.

13 ... ♖d7

This and 13 ... ♞f7 have been the main choices since theory first reached this position (cf. Kindermann & Dirr *B1 pp. 166-74, 214-5*) with the latter far more common. Berg finds each unsatisfactory and spends an entire chapter *pp. 282-97* making a strong case for 13 ... b5 '!'. Indeed the dissatisfaction with 13 ... ♖d7 has been widespread and long-standing: see I. Almási's article "Sitting Ducks on Lake Winawer", *New in Chess Yearbook 82 (2007), pp. 78-86*.

14 h4 ♖f5 15 h5 gxh5 16 ♖xh5(3)



16 ... ♖af8 17 ♖h3! ♖xf3?!

Defences from (3) vary according to whether Black sacrifices the exchange for the knight, and whether there is an exchange of rooks. The main line 16 ... ♖xh5 is widely viewed as leading to difficulties after 17 ♖xh5 ♗e8 18 ♖h3 (± Kindermann & Dirr *p.* 265) 18 ... ♔d8 19 ♗g5 ♗f7 20 ♖d2 ♖d7 21 ♔h4! (I. Almási) or 19 ♖d2 ♗g6 20 ♔h4 ♖f7 21 g4 ♔c6 22 ♖f1 ♖f8 23 f4 (Berg *p.* 280) as in **Negi–Justo, Cappelle-la-Grande Open 2014** *ChessPublishing.com, July 2014 (Watson)* (1-0, 60).

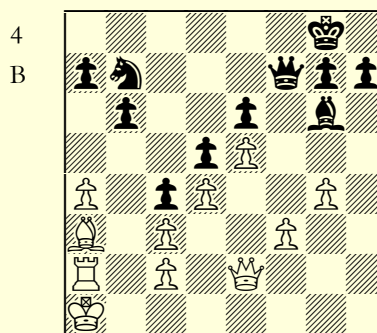
I. Almási gave 16 ... ♖af8 as ‘virtually refuted’. 17 ♖h3 (!? Kindermann & Dirr *p.* 173, I. Almási, and Berg *p.* 279) forces Black to sacrifice an exchange one way or another: the more common way is 17 ... ♗e8 18 ♔g5 ♖a5 19 ♖d2 ♖xg5! 20 ♖xg5 ♗g6 (∞ Kindermann & Dirr). Then the most up-to-date verdict (Berg) is

that White has excellent winning chances.

18 ♖xf3 ♖xf3 19 ♖xf3

Kindermann & Dirr give 17 ... ♖xf3?! 18 gx3! ♖f5 19 ♖h4 h5 20 ♖d2 ‘with an attack’. Indeed Black appears to be in serious trouble.

Perhaps for this reason 17 ... ♖xf3 appears only once in the databases, in **Hameister–Oortwijn, CP.1998.S.00009 IECG corr 2000**. A better move order is the more common 16 ... ♖xh5 17 ♖xh5 ♖f8 18 ♖d2 ♗e8 and 19 ... ♖xf3 (20 gx3?! ♗g6=). After 20 ♖xf3, though, practice again favours White: see **Nyberg–Liebert, EU/FSM/65 ½-final-08 ICCF corr 2003** (1-0, 47) for a typical plan.



In (4) White had still not made noticeable gains but after 35 ... h5? there was enough to break through on the K-side (1-0, 82). Better 35 ... ♖f4 36 ♖b2 ♔a5 37 ♗b4 ♔c6. Even then White is pressing after 38 ♗d6 with an eventual ♖a1-f1 and f4-f5. ►

GMR-2 BERG, Emanuel, *The French Defence 2* (Grandmaster Repertoire 15) (Quality Chess 2013) —see issue 13.

B1 KINDERMANN, Stefan, & DIRR, Ulrich, *Französisch Winawer, Band 1: 7. ♖g4 0-0* (Chessgate 2001)—see issue 18.

C18-19 KORCHNOI, Viktor, *C18-19 French Defence* (S. I. Chess Informant 1993)—see issue 13.

iCF PSAKHIS, Lev, *The Complete French*. (Tr.: John Sugden) (Batsford 1992)—see issue 18.

FD-ps —, *French Defence 3 Nc3 Bb4*. (Tr.: John Sugden) (Batsford 2004)—see issue 18.