

THE NEW WINAWER REPORT

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Out of Order?

The celebrated *tabiya* of the main line Poisoned Pawn variation has been the launching point for many thousands of games. From (1), White has a plethora of different approaches, starting with an unusually wide immediate choice: of the 19 moves that do not lose material immediately, a remarkable 11 are ‘theory’. The complexity is further increased by the myriad possible transpositions, many of which require treading a narrow path of acceptable move orders.

Moskalenko features one such move order issue in his recent book *The Wonderful Winawer*. The immensely complicated variations after 13 ♖xc3 generally have little in common with the older 13 ♕g3, which is usually given as the ‘solid’ choice. But what if they are combined?

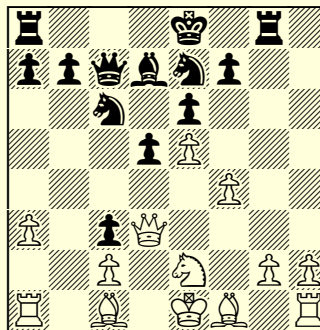
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Poisoned Pawn: 13 ♕g3 as a prelude to 14 ♖xc3 and *vice versa*

In the Poisoned Pawn main line (1 *e4 e6* 2 *d4 d5* 3 ♕c3 ♗b4 4 *e5 c5* 5 *a3 ♗xc3+* 6 *bxc3 ♕e7* 7 ♖g4 ♖c7 8 ♖xcg7 ♗g8 9 ♖xb7 *cxd4* 10 ♕e2 ♕bc6 11 *f4 ♗d7* 12 ♖d3 *dxg3*), the most critical continuation at present is 13 ♖xc3. This is often, even usually, met by 13 ... 0-0-0, typically continuing 14 ♖b1 ♕f5 15 ♖g1 *d4* 16 ♖d3, e.g. **Shirov-Ganguly, Canadian Open, Edmonton 2009**.

Moskalenko *tWW* p. 213 finds Black’s move order is inaccurate since it allows 14 ♕g3!: he recommends that 13 ♖xc3 should be met by 13 ... ♕f5!. Similarly after the older 13 ♕g3, he argues p. 223 that 13 ... 0-0-0?! is a mistake that allows

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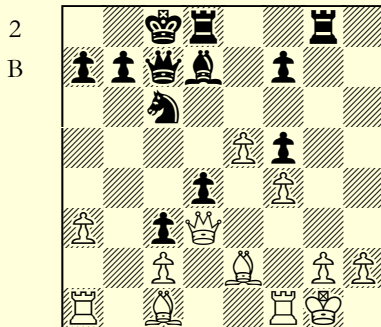


14 ♖xc3!, and that 13 ... *d4*! is correct.

Is he right? This issue examines this idea and the 13 ♕g3 variation.

A: White defers capturing the c3 pawn

Once upon a time theory's main line from (1) ran 13 ♖g3 0-0-0 14 ♗e2 ♜f5 15 ♜xf5 exf5 16 0-0 d4(2), and then followed Pachman: '17 ♗f3 secures White a small advantage, as Black must beware of moving 17 ... f6 (17 ... f6? 18 ♗d5; 17 ... ♜g6 18 ♜e1)' *P65 p. 58*; similarly *P68 p. 50*.



In retrospect it's odd to see the broad acceptance of this verdict, e.g. Keres *SbF-1 p. 298* 'after 17 ♜b1 f6 18 exf6 ♜g8 Black has sufficient counterplay'; after 17 ♗f3 'White's position is slightly preferable' (similarly *SbF-2 p. 296*), and Euwe '13 ♜g3!' ... '17 ♗f3!' ... 'White stands somewhat better' *Archives XXI/11-12/64, 12f/36, Jun. 1972* (similarly *XXIV/10/74-2, 12f/39, Oct. 1975*).

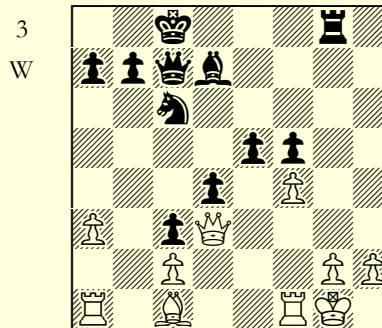
A11: 17 ♗f3 ♗e6

The most famous example is **Sveshnikov-S. Webb, Hastings 1977-78** *Informator 25/268 (Cvetković)*, where 18 ♜b1 was met by 18 ... ♗a2!?. The justification is 19 ♜xf5+? ♜b8 20 ♜a1 ♜e7!, with plenty of activity for Black,' Short *The Sunday Telegraph, 27 Mar. 2005* (obituary tribute to Simon Webb).

Though this gives Black some advantage, as does 20 ... d3, the right way is 20 ... ♗c4! 21 ♜d1 d3!±± (21 ... ♜b6? 22 ♜f2 d3+ 23 ♗e3 ♜b2, as in **Wyker-Veenhuijsen, Netherlands M-class corr 1985**, may be no better than equal—though White resigned). Sveshnikov spurned the repetition with 19 ♜a1 ♗e6 20 ♜e1? and after 20 ... ♜b6 lost resoundingly.

A12: 17 ♗f3 f6!?

And is 17 ... f6!? even prevented?. In three correspondence games 18 ♗d5 was met with 18 ... fxe5! 19 ♗xg8 ♜xg8(3).



After 20 fxe5 ♜xe5!?, the stem game **Himstedt-Crane, World Cup III corr 1974-75** *Gambit (California Chess Review) no. 11, Nov. 1975, p. 26 (Crane)* (in no database) went astray via 21 ♗f4?? ♜xd3?? (1/2-1/2, 34). Instead 21 ♜xd4 ♗c6 22 g3 ♜d8! gives Black full compensation. Also good is 20 ... ♜xe5! 21 ♗f4 ♜e4 22 ♜f3 as in **Elwert-Weise, corr 1983**, roughly equal. If instead 20 ♜c4, best is 20 ... ♜e7! (20 ... ♜g6? 21 fxe5 ♜xe5 22 ♗f4±), e.g. 21 ♜xc7+ ♜xc7 22 fxe5 ♗c6 23 ♜f2 ♗e4=.

A13: 17 ♖f3 ♜b6!

In fact Black has several viable approaches, amply illustrated by nearly a hundred correspondence games. The best of all has been rare: **17 ... ♜b6!** cuts out ♖b1, leaves White struggling to find any plan (18 ♗d5? ♞e7±±; 18 ♞e1 ♗e6—Sveshnikov-S. Webb), and gives Black an appreciable advantage. The practical results have been spectacular: 5½/6.

A2: 17 ♞b1

So Pachman's 17 ♗f3 is a mirage and from (2) White should choose 17 ♞b1 after all. Then 17 ... f6 is usually given as equal; simpler 17 ... ♗e6 18 ♗f3 ♞a5=.

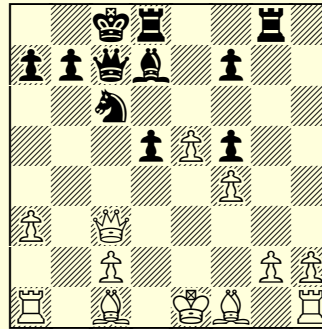
B: White captures on c3 immediately

After 13 ♞g3 0-0-0, Moskalenko's suggestion echoes Short (see above): 'the direct materialistic 14 ♜xc3 leaves Black a pawn down for insufficient compensation ... believe me—Black does not have enough'.

Earlier Moles *MLW* p. 21 had noticed that 14 ♜xc3 had never been played or suggested, though he took this to indicate it wasn't good: a dangerous assumption.

B1: (13 ♞g3 0-0-0 14 ♜xc3) 14 ... ♞f5

Moles' recommended 14 ... ♞f5 ♠ 15 ♞xf5 exf5(4) 'and White has problems' was natural, given variation A. It had further support from the closest parallel, **Ree-Darga, Amsterdam 1969 Informator 8/185 (Inkov)**, which continued, in effect, (via 14 ♗e2 ♞f5 15 ♞xf5 exf5 16 ♗f3 ♜b6 17 ♜xc3) 16 ♗e2 ♜b6 17 ♗f3 ♜b8 18 ♜b3 ♜xb3 19 axb3 ♞d4 followed by ... ♞xb3 and ... d4-d3, and

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Black won in style. But White's plan—♗e2-f3, ♜f2 and h4-h5—could hardly have been more accommodating and with more care the extra pawn must be worth a plus.

From (4), after 16 g3:

- 1) **16 ... d4** 17 ♜d3 ♗e6 18 ♗g2 ♞a5 (Watson *PtF-2* p. 171) 19 0-0± ♗c4? 20 ♜xf5+ ♜b8 21 ♞f2±± ♜c5 22 a4 ♗d5 23 ♗a3 1-0 **Möbke-Zöller, corr 1998**;
- 2) **16 ... ♜b6** 17 ♜b3 ♜c5 18 ♞b1 b6 (Watson) 19 ♗e3 d4 20 ♗d2±;
- 3) **16 ... f6** 17 exf6 ♞ge8+ 18 ♗e2 ♞e6 peters out after 19 ♗d2 ♞de8 20 f7±.

B2: 14 ... d4, 14 ... ♞h8

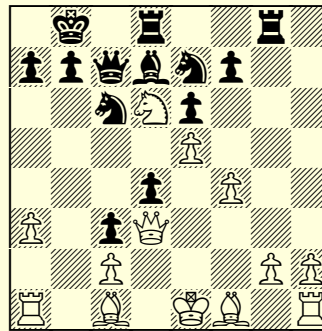
The relatively better 14 ... d4 also falls short, e.g. **Ciucurel-Novák, ICCF corr (WS/MN/030) 2008**: 15 ♜c5 b6 16 ♜c4 ♜b8 (16 ... f6?! 17 exf6 ♞d5 18 ♞e4± **Carlier-Carton, GLC Masters, London 1986**) 17 ♗d2 ♗c8 18 ♗d3 ♞d5 (18 ... ♗b7± Moskalenko) 19 0-0 ♗b7 20 ♞e4± and 1-0, 42. Neven *ChessBase Magazine* 129 prefers 14 ... ♞h8, intending ... ♞dg8, but here too Moskalenko seems right: 15 ♞b1 and White stands better.

C: (13 ♖g3) 13 ... d4 14 ♗e4

But is 13 ... d4 any better? The key line 14 ♗e4 0-0-0 15 ♗d6+ ♖b8(5) seemed unpromising enough that theory avoided even mentioning it until Korchnoi *C18-19 p. 64* gave a bare ‘16 ♖b1 b6±’.

This was so thoroughly evaluated by Goh *ChessPublishing.com, May 2009*, who in particular anticipated the key sacrifice 17 ♗xf7?! ♖df8 18 ♗d6 ♗f5 19 ♗xf5 ♖xf5 20 g3 ♗xe5! (21 fxe5 ♗c6!) from **A. Kovačević-Bukal Jr., 17th Zadar Open A 2010**, that there’s little to add to his verdict that Black stands no worse. Spare a thought, though, for the unfortunate innovator in an earlier game, **Cooke-Abramson, New York 1991**, from (5) (and omitting ♖b1 b6): 16 ♗xf7 ♖df8 17 ♗d6 ♗f5 18 ♗xf5 ♖xf5 19 g3

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♗xe5! 20 fxe5 ♖xe5+! (best here; ♖♖) 21 ♖f2 ♖f5+?? 22 ♗xf5! 1-0. Ouch!

Conclusion: After 13 ♗g3 or 13 ♗xc3, 13 ... 0-0-0?! is indeed an inaccuracy. Black should prefer 13 ... d4! and 13 ... ♗f5! respectively. ▶

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 ♗xh7 cxd4 10 ♗e2 ♗bc6 11 f4 ♗d7 12 ♗d3 dxc3(1) 13 ♗g3

13 ...	14	15	16	17				
0-0-0?! ♗e2?! ♗f5	♗d6+ ♗f5	exf5	0-0	0-0-0(2) ♗f3? ♖b6!	♖♖/♖			
...	♖b1 ♗e6	=		
...	♗xc3! ♗f5	♗xf5	exf5(4) g3	d4 ♗d3 ♗e6	±			
...	♗b6 ♗b3 ♗c5	±			
...	...	d4 ♗c5	b6 ♗c4 ♖b8	♗d2 ♗c8	±			
d4! ♗e4	0-0-0 ♗d6+ ♖b8(5)	♖b1	b6	♗xf7?! ♖df8	=/♖			

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PtF-4 —, *Play the French* (4th edition)—see issue 1.