

THE NEW WINAWER REPORT

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The Ghost of Theory Past

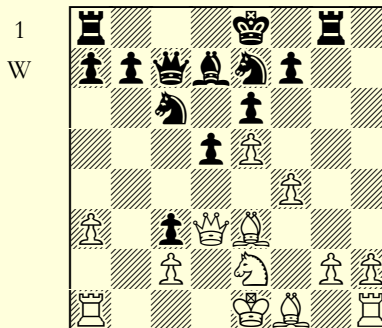
The 13 ♗e3 variation in the main line poisoned pawn, considered in the last issue, well illustrates a rarely-discussed feature of opening theory development. That there is a constant, intensive hunt for new ideas is a given, of course, but where can these be found? It is often the case that they're in the archives: old lines and discarded continuations frequently contain critical resources and important ideas, perhaps awaiting only small adjustments. Even when the verdict of theory on these side-lines is correct (which is far from always the case) it can and does happen that the same idea is good—even essential—in another context.

The classic plan to meet 13 ♗e3 involves ... ♟f5, ... 0-0-0, and ... d4 in some order, followed by ... ♟f6. But when first introduced it was thought that Black's best response was 13 ... ♖a5. This seems strange to modern eyes and it is indeed not best (though not for the reasons usually given). With some modest preparation, though, the same idea is indispensable.

* * *

Poisoned Pawn: Ragozin's ... ♖a5 versus 13 ♗e3

In the main line poisoned pawn (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 ♟e2 ♟bc6 11 f4 ♗d7 12 ♖d3 dxc3), 13 ♗e3(1) is not only considerably better than its reputation and results, but it also allows White to bypass some recently-popular Black options. After 10 ... dxc3 11 f4 ♟bc6 12 ♖d3 both 12... d4!? and 12... ♟f5 have scored well, but 12 ♗e3!? essentially forces play back into familiar channels. Black is still fine, though care is required.



A. 13 ... ♖a5?!

The 13 ♘e3 line has a curious pre-history (see issue 4): its début game **Panov-Ragozin, Moscow Ch 1944-45** continued with the ‘clever but dubious’ (Moles *MLW* p. 29) 13 ... ♖a5, threatening ... ♗b4. After 14 ♘f2?! ♗b4 15 ♖d1 ♗a6 16 ♗g3 ♗c5 (♞ Schwarz *dFV* p. 12, Moles) Black had a comfortable equality.

And there the matter rested for over ten years. Until the next 13 ♘e3 games, in the late 1950’s, sources dismissed it with 13 ... ♖a5♞ (Kloss *Fernschach* 15/11, Nov. 1954, pp. 201-208) or simply 13 ... ♖a5 with no further comment (Schwarz *dFV*-51 p. 130).

Opinion finally shifted, though with the skimpiest of analysis. Keres *FZ* p. 133 wrote ‘but 13 ♘e3 is still a good continuation ... instead of the unnecessary loss of time with 14 ♘f2, White could improve with 14 ♗d4 or the immediate 14 g3’. After White’s disastrous results with 13 ♘e3 ♗f5, the variation was already long out of favour by the time Schwarz *dFV* p. 12 fleshed out the analysis in 1967.

a) (13 ... ♖a5) 14 ♗d4 (!) ♗xd4 15 ♘xd4 ♖c8 16 ♖f3 ♘b5 17 g3 ♘xf1 18 ♖xf1 ♖c4 19 ♘f2 ♖a4 20 ♖d3 ♗c6 21 ♖b1 b6 22 ♖b3 ♗a5 23 ♖xc3± Schwarz (and Moles). This does not hold up as 16 ... ♖a4♞♞ wins, 22 ... ♗d7 is still ♞, and even the end position is no worse for Black. Better 16 g3 or 16 ♖b1, each well met by 16 ... ♗f5♞.

b) 14 g3 was never analysed further (‘is worth considering’, Schwarz; ‘is also good’, Moles) and has never been played. After 14 ... ♗b4 15 ♖d1 ♗c6 White may have nothing much better

than taking the repetition.

So is 13 ... ♖a5 good after all? No, for there is one elementary drawback, though it appears in no games or commentary:

c) 14 ♖xc3! ♖xc3 15 ♗xc3 d4 (did analysts stop here?) 16 ♗c4 dxc3 17 ♗f6+ and White emerges with a solid edge, e.g. 17 ... ♗d8 18 0-0-0 ♗b8 19 ♗xg8 ♗xg8 20 ♘c4.

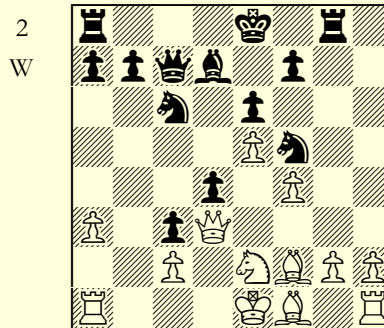
So 13 ... ♖a5?! is indeed dubious. But matters might be different if Black first plays ... d4, not only to prevent ♖xc3 as above, but to add extra punch to ... ♗b4 via a subsequent ... d3. In this modified form the idea works well, as will be seen below.

B. 13 ... ♗f5

And now:

14 ♘f2

d4(2)



This sequence is not forced: in particular some prefer 13/14 ... 0-0-0. But 14 ♘f2, ‘the best chance’, Moles *MLW* p. 29, ‘! Watson *PtF*-2 p. 161, is now usual. (For 14 ♗ or ♘d4, see issue 4.)

But what now? White’s main continuations have been 15 ♗g3, 15 h3, and 15 ♖g1.

B1. (13 ... ♗f5 14 ♘f2 d4) 15 ♗g3

This featured in yet another classic Black victory in the 13 ♘e3 line:

Cobo-Ivkov

5th Capablanca Mem., Havana 1963

15 ... 0-0-0

16 ♗xf5

Roundly criticised at the time, this is best. Pachman *Schach-Echo* 21/18, 23 Sep. 1963, p. 285 gave 16 ♗e4, planning g3 and ♘h3, as giving White some advantage, and this recommendation could be seen even decades later, e.g. Korchnoi *C18-19* p. 65. But it was refuted by Zeuthen & Jarlnæs *FPP* p. 81: 16 ... ♗xe5! and White is lost. The only known example, **Elich-Spieringshoek, Netherlands H197 corr 1983**, finished 17 fxe5 ♖xe5 18 ♘e2 ♘c6 19 ♗g3 ♗e3! 0-1 (20 ♖g1 ♗xc2+!).

16 ... exf5

17 ♘h4?

This should lose: 17 g3 was essential. Then Zeuthen & Jarlnæs' startling 17 ... ♗xe5!? is playable, e.g. 18 fxe5 ♖xe5+ 19 ♘e2 ♘c6, with ... ♘e4 to follow: ∞/= . Schwarz *dFV* p. 24 gives instead the natural 17 ... f6 !, also approximately equal after 18 exf6 ♖ge8+ 19 ♘e2 ♖xe2+!? 20 ♖xe2 ♘e6!.

17 ... ♖de8

18 ♖f2 ♖g4?

An error—never pointed out—that could have let White off the hook. Better the immediate 18 ... ♖xe5!!±±.

19 g3?

White lets the reprieve slip. After 19 ♘g3! he survives: it's not even clear Black has any advantage. Euwe *Archives* 15/12 (1440), 28 Oct. 1963 gave 19 ... ♗xe5! 20 fxe5 f4 or 20 ♖xd4 ♗c6 'with a strong attack in each case', both

± per Moles *MLW* p. 30, but in the latter line it's not clear how Black follows up after 21 ♖c5±; better 20 ... ♗g6=.

19 ... ♖xe5!!

The spectacular finish was 20 fxe5 ♗xe5 21 ♖d1 ♖xh4! 22 gxh4 ♗g4+ 23 ♖e1 ♖c4 24 ♖e2 ♘b5! 25 ♖g2 ♖e3+ 0-1.

B2. (13 ... ♗f5 14 ♘f2 d4) 15 h3

Even if 15 ♗g3 is enough for equality, it is hardly a try for an advantage. A much more enterprising approach is 15 h3, planning to push the knight back via 16 g4: then ♘e3-f2 will have had the effect of inducing the committal ... ♗f5 and ... d4. This was strongly recommended (!) by Leisebein *Archives* 36/10-11/48-1, Oct.-Nov. 1987 with many examples, and an attribution to Flügge.

Indeed this works well if Black does not react energetically:

a) 15 ... 0-0-0? 16 g4 ♗fe7 17 ♘g2 ♘e8± **Bakre-Neelotpal, Indian Ch, Nagpur 1999** (though 0-1, 67).

Several examples show that 16 ... ♗e3? 17 ♘xe3 dxe3 18 ♖xe3±/±± is no improvement, and that the sacrifice 16 ... f6? is inadequate (17 exf6!±±).

b) 15 ... ♖h8? 16 g4 ♗h4 17 ♘h4 ♖xh4 18 ♗xd4±/±±.

So is there any answer? Yes, for now everything is in place for Ragozin's idea:

c) 15 ... ♖a5! (not considered by Leisebein). Now the best-known example is **Esser-Arounopoulos, German team Ch prel corr 1991-92** *Correspondence Chess Yearbook* 6/187 (Arounopoulos): 16 ♖b1 (forced: 16 g4? ♗b4 17 ♖d1 d3±±; 16 ♗xd4? ♗xd4 17 ♘xd4 ♖g3±±) 16 ... ♖xa3 17 ♖c4? b5!±± (or 17 ... a5!±±) 18 ♖b3 ♖xb3 19 ♖xb3 b4 20 g4 a5!!

(0-1, 35). Cf. Watson *PtF-2* p. 161.

This is impressive but misleading: again a single error turned an equal game into a rout. White should continue the plan of dislodging the knight: 17 g4 ♖fe7 (or 17 ... ♗b4!?: cf. B3 below) 18 ♗xd4 ♗xd4 19 ♗xd4 ♗c6=, e.g. **Lorentzen-Oren, EM/CL/Q13-1 ICCF email 2002** (1-0, 54).

d) 15 ... ♗b6!? should transpose, i.e. 16 g4 ♗b2 17 ♖d1 ♗xa3! and now 18 ♖b1 is forced (18 gxf5?? ♗b4++).

B3. (13 ... ♗f5 14 ♗f2 d4) 15 ♖g1!?

With the same idea as in B2, and again Black must react vigorously:

a) 15 ... 0-0-0?! 16 g4 ♗e3? (16 ... ♗fe7 17 ♗c4 and 18 ♗xd4±) 17 ♗xe3 dxe3 18 ♗xe3±± (18 ♗xc3? ♗e7 19 ♗xc7+ ♗xc7 20 ♖g3± **Rensch-Shavardorj, Berkeley Masters 2008** (½-½, 46)).

b) 15 ... ♗b6! is now less effective: 16 g4 ♗b2(!) (17 ... ♗e3? 18 ♗xe3 dxe3

19 ♗xe3±) 17 ♖d1 ♗xa3 18 gxf5 ♖xg1 19 ♗xg1 opens a bolthole for the king (∞/±).

So here Ragozin's idea is essential:

c) 15 ... ♗a5! 16 g4? ('I can't find a satisfactory continuation for White', Minev *NFI-2* p. 304) 16 ... ♗b4++ 17 ♗d1? d3 0-1 **Pyhälä-Raaste, Järvenpää 1985**.

Minev's remark is mysterious as again White may chose to jettison the a-pawn: 16 ♖b1! ♗xa3 17 g4. Now 17 ... ♗fe7 18 ♗xd4! gives White an edge, e.g. 18 ... ♗b4 19 ♗xc3 ♗xc3 20 ♗xc3 ♗xc2+ 21 ♗f2±. **Kindbeiter-Höbel, EM/MN/074, ICCF email 2004**, continued 18 ... ♗d5 19 ♗xc3 a5 20 ♖g3± and Black struggled to a draw.

It seems Black can only hold the balance via 17 ... ♗b4!?, e.g. 18 ♖xb4 ♗xb4 19 gxf5 ♖xg1 20 ♗xg1 ♗b5! 21 ♗xd4 ♗b1+ 22 ♗d1 ♗xd1+ 23 ♗xd1 a5, still murky but about equal. ▶

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 13 ♗e3(1) ♗f5 14 ♗f2 d4(2)

15	16	17	18	19	
♗g3	0-0-0 ♗e4?	♗xe5!			++
...	...	♗xf5	exf5	g3	f6
h3	0-0-0? g4	♗fe7	♗g2		exf6
...	♗b6!? g4	♗b2	♖d1	♗xa3!	♖ge8+ ♗e2
...	♗a5! ♖b1	♗xa3	g4	♗fe7	♗xd4
♖g1!	♗a5! ♖b1	♗xa3	g4	♗fe7	♗xd4! ♗xd4
...	♗b4!?	♖xb4 ♗xb4 gxf5
					∞/±
					∞/=

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