

THE NEW WINAWER REPORT

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From *My Six Memorable Games*

Of the abundance of approaches available to White in the main line poisoned pawn, one whose theoretical reputation has improved greatly in recent years is that of an early h3 and g4. This idea was introduced by the late Robert Byrne, but it faded quickly as a result of the classic game Byrne-Uhlmann, Monte Carlo 1968, in which Uhlmann ventured a daring knight sacrifice, plunging the game into immense complications and achieving excellent play. For years the sacrifice was the standard—even the only—approved recipe for Black. But further practice and analysis has shown conclusively that it is unsound: in fact all the essential elements were known a few months after the game.

This issue considers the theory on Uhlmann's sacrifice, via a game that appears in no database: as it happens, one of my own games.

* * *

Poisoned Pawn: Robert Byrne's 12 h3

Watkins-Coffey

World Cadet (U17) Ch (1)

Le Havre 1980

Sunday Press, 24 August 1980 p. 24
(Harding)

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 h3

Byrne's idea. Of course 12 ♗d3 dxc3
13 h3 comes to the same thing.

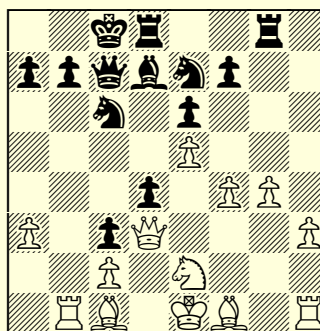
12 ... dxc3

13 ♜b1 0-0-0

14 ♗d3 d4

1

B



15 g4(1)

White cuts out ... ♘f5, ... ♗b6, and

pressure down the g-file, and threatens to leave Black with no counterplay.

15 ... ♖xe5

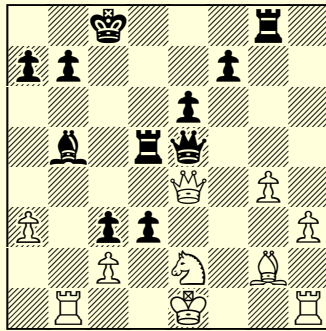
It's easiest to give the theory as I knew it during this game first, and to re-evaluate it later.

16 fxe5 ♙c6
17 ♖g1 ♗g6
18 ♙f4

The critical alternative is 18 ♗g3. Uhlmann intended 18 ... d3 but later gave analysis showing it leads to advantage for White. I had intended 18 ... ♙e4, attributed by Moles to Larsen (from where?) *MLW pp. 33-34* and given there as 'very unclear'.

18 ... ♗xf4
19 ♗xf4 ♙xe5+
20 ♗e2 ♖d5
21 ♙g2 ♙b5
22 ♙e4 d3(2)

2
W



23 ♖xb5!?

We have followed Byrne-Uhlmann to here but finally diverge. Byrne played 23 ♙xe5, and after 23 ... ♖xe5 24 ♖xb5 theory considered that 24 ... ♖xe2+ (instead of the game's 24 ... ♖xb5) secured an advantage.

I had remembered the theory in Moles to here, but was now on my own.

23 ... ♖xb5
24 ♙xe5 ♖xe5
25 cxd3 ♖d8!
26 ♙e4?

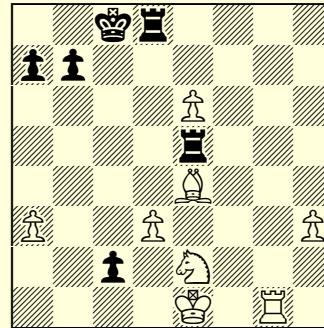
Natural, but in light of what follows this is an error. Better 26 ♙f2 ♖xd3 27 ♖c1 ♖a5∞/=.

26 ... f5?

The right idea, but the wrong move order, allowing White an extra resource: better 26 ... c2 first.

27 gxf5 c2
28 fxe6?(3)

3
B



28 ... ♖xd3!

And White's position collapses. The finish was 29 ♖g8+ ♙c7 30 ♖g7+ ♙d8 31 e7+ ♙d7 32 ♖g4 ♖d1+ 33 ♙f2 ♖d2 0-1.

White had to play 28 f6!. I had thought my planned 28 ... ♖xd3 29 f7 ♖f3 was winning, but this is hallucinatory: White has 30 ♙xc2, ∞/±, though Black has no better. This is why the game's move order is inaccurate: better 26 ... c2! 27 ♙f2 f5 28 ♙f3 ♖xd3∞/±.

All quite pleasant, but there's a curious epilogue. Some thirty years after the game I read Gligorić & Uhlmann's annotation of Byrne-Uhlmann *RHM pp. 70-72 (game 19)*: 'after 23 ♖xb5 ♖xb5 24

♖xe5 ♗xe5 25 cxd3 comes 25 ... ♖d8 26 ♗e4 c2! threatening both ... ♗xd3 and ... f5 with excellent play' ... *nihil novi sub sole**.

* * *

The passage of time has greatly changed theory's opinion on this line. From **(1)**, **15 ... ♗xe5?** (sadly the sacrifice now seems unsound; for a discussion of the alternatives 15 ... ♗e8, 15 ... ♖b8, and 15 ... a6 see Watson's survey *ChessPublishing.com*, February 2010, and 15 ... ♗g6, 15 ... ♗d5, and 15 ... ♗a5 have been played) **16 fxe5 ♗c6 17 ♖g1 ♗g6** and now White has a critical choice.

A: 18 ♗f4?

After Byrne-Uhlmann, the game above appears to be the sole practical example of this move.

18 ... ♗xf4
19 ♗xe5+?! ♗xe5+?!

Watson points to the computer move 18 ... ♖g5! as giving Black a strong attack and a large advantage. After 19 ♖f2 ♖xe5 (19 ... ♖xe5 20 ♖g3±) 20 ♖g3, though, Black's edge appears minimal.

20 ♗e2 ♖d5?

Uhlmann *Schach* 22/6, June 1968, p. 175 gave (as 'also good') 20 ... ♗e4 21 ♖c4+ ♖b8 (with 'dynamic equality', Watson) 22 ♗g2 ♗xg2 23 ♖xg2 ♖e4 24 ♖f2 f5 ('about equal?' 25 ♖d3!?' Moles). Here 22 ♖d1± improves but this is still a better prospect than the text.

21 ♗g2?

Watson suggests 21 ♖b4 or 21 a4! ♗xa4 22 ♖c4+ ♗c6 23 ♗g2.

Each of these draws the sting from the threatened ... ♗b5 (21 ♖b4 ♗b5? 22 ♖g3!±±, illustrating why the bishop is

* Not in my games anyway.

better left on f1) and leave Black with no counterplay; ± in each case.

21 ... ♗b5
22 ♖e4

Both players gave 22 ♖xb5 ♖xb5 23 ♖xd4 ♖b1+ 24 ♖f2 ♖xd4+ 25 ♗xd4 ♖xg1 26 ♖xg1 ♖d8 (= Uhlmann; 'gives Black all the winning chances' Byrne *Chess Life* 23/8, August 1968, pp. 291-3). Uhlmann seems right.

22 ... d3(2)
23 ♖xe5

Byrne thought 23 ♖xb5 bad, giving 23 ... d2+ 24 ♖f2 ♖xb5 25 ♖xe5 ♖xe5 26 ♗xc3 ♖c5 27 ♗e4 ♖xc2; but this is also about equal. Uhlmann's intended 23 ... ♖xb5 24 ♖xd3 ♖d8?! 25 ♖xc3+ ♖xc3 26 ♗xc3 ♖c5 is ±; better 24 ... ♖b2=.

23 ... ♖xe5
24 ♖xb5 ♖xe2+

Uhlmann's suggested improvement, but is it really better? He analysed 25 ♖d1 ♖d2+ 26 ♖c1 ♖xc2+ 27 ♖b1 ♖d8 28 ♗xb7+ ♖c7 29 ♗e4? ♖e2 30 ♗xd3± (cf. also Moles), but here 29 ♖b3 and 29 ♖f1 are about equal, as is Byrne's 28 ♖b3. The game continued 24 ... ♖xb5 25 ♗xc3 dxc2 26 ♖d2=; Uhlmann, short of time after spending ninety minutes on the sacrifice, made further errors and lost (1-0, 45).

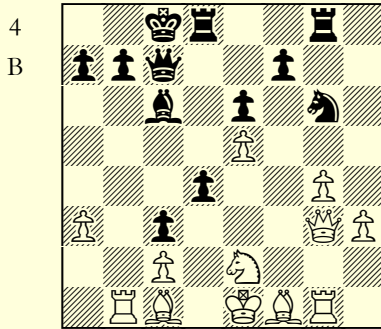
So 18 ♗f4 gives equality at best.

B: 18 ♖g3!(4)

Uhlmann's recommendation in *Schach*: now a capture on e5 will either walk into a pin or allow an exchange of queens.

B1: (18 ♖g3!) 18 ... d3

Uhlmann now gave 19 cxd3 c2 20 ♖b4 ♗xe5 21 ♗f4 ♖xd3 22 ♗xe5 ♖xg3



23 ♖xc7 ♜xg1 24 ♖f4! as 'probably' advantageous for White; this is tolerable for Black after 24 ... ♜h1 25 ♜c4 ♜h8 26 ♜f2 ♜xf1+ 27 ♜xf1 ♜xh3± **Leisebein-Berndt, E. German corr (K15 jr) 1987** (0-1, 34).

But White has better: the simple 20 ♜b3±± covers d3 and eliminates Black's counterplay, e.g. **Maliangkay-Hyldkrog, Korning Mem corr 1998** (1-0, 38).

B2: (18 ♜g3!) 18 ... ♖e4

With the plan of 19 ♖g2 ♖xc2 with complications. After 20 ♜xb7, as in **Boll-Hyldkrog, 14th World corr Ch ½-final -5 1982**, White is winning though it's indeed complicated (1-0, 42).

Much clearer is 19 ♜b4! ('a significant improvement' McDonald *ChessPublishing.com*, April 2000; cf. *FW* p. 32), undermining the Black centre, ±±.

As so often this was already known long ago: **Demarre-Vacca, French Ch, Lyon-Charbonnières 1968** *Europe Échecs* 11/121 (5 Feb. 1969) p. 15 (Vacca) continued 19 ... d3 20 ♜xc4 d2+ 21 ♜d1 ♜d5 22 ♜xc3 dxc1=♜+ 23 ♜xc1±±, though White later went astray: 23 ... ♜c5 24 ♜e3 ♜b8 25 ♜b2 ♜c8 26 ♖g2?! ♜xc5 27 ♜xe5? (27 ♜b1! or 27 ♜b3!, each ±±) 27 ... ♜xc3 28 ♜e1 ♜b6+ 29 ♜a1 ♜xa3 mate.

B3: (18 ♜g3!) 18 ... ♜d7, 18 ... ♜d5, 18 ... ♜xe5, 18 ... ♜xe5

Byrne's 18 ... ♜d5 (!) and Vacca's 18 ... ♜d7 are each well met by 19 ♖g2±. Watson recommends 18 ... ♜xe5, giving 19 ♖f4 f6 20 ♜b4 ♜a5 21 ♖g2 ♖xg2 22 ♖xe5 fxe5 23 ♜xg2 ♜d5. This is already ±/±± after 23 ♜f3 followed by ♜f2-g2. Finally, 18 ... ♜xe5 has had some practical success but simply 19 ♜xe5 is again ±.

Conclusion: 15 ... ♜xe5? is indeed virtually refuted by 18 ♜g3! ▶

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 h3 dxc3 13 g4 0-0-0 14 ♜d3 d4 15 ♜b1(1)

15 ...	16	17	18	19					
♜xe5?	fxe5	♖c6	♜g1	♜g6	♖f4?	♜xf4	♜xf4	♜xc5+	±
...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	♜g5	=
...	...	...	...	...	♜g3!(4)	d3	cxd3	c2	±±
...	...	...	...	...	...	♖e4	♜b3!		±±
...	...	...	...	...	...	♜xe5	♖f4	f6	±/±±

RHM GLIGORIĆ, Svetozar, & UHLMANN, Wolfgang, *The French Defence* (RHM 1975)—see issue 1.

FW MCDONALD, Neil, *French Winawer* (Everyman 2000)—see issue 2.

MLW MOLES, John L., *The French Defence Main Line Winawer* (Batsford 1975)—see issue 3.