THE NEW WINAWER REPORT

Editor: Seán Coffey

A Walk on the Wild Side

By 'castling into it' with 7 ♕g4 0-0, Black often signals a willingness to endure a protracted, patient defence as the necessary price to pay for a fundamentally solid structure. Yet the side lines of the 7 … 0-0 defence include some variations as sharp and unbalanced as any in the entire Winawer. One such line sees Black give up the newly castled rook for a provocative counterattack by the black queen, which sometimes reaps both white rooks. 'The Wild Variantion', as Kindermann & Dirr call it, sprang to life in the years 1986-88 and produced an intensive theoretical debate, yielding a final verdict that the defence was unsound.

Emanuel Berg's recent book on the 7 ♕g4 Winawer gives the line the briefest but most mysterious of mentions: "after lengthy analysis which I will not go into here, I found White's chances to be preferable" *GMR-2 p. 186*. Is there really so much more that could be said? And 'preferable' could mean anything from the barest of edges to a near-winning game: which is intended here? This issue considers the variation anew.

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Huerta's line: 7 ♕g4 0-0 8 ♘f3 f5 9 exf6 ♖xf6 10 ♗g5 ♕a5!?

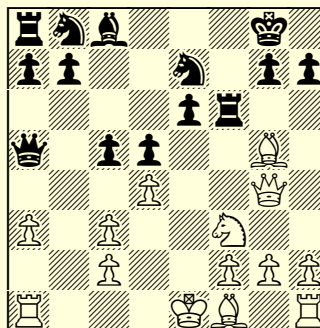1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘c3 ♗b4 4 e5 c5 5 a3 ♗xc3+ 6 bxc3 ♘e7 7 ♕g4

7	…	0-0
8	♘f3	f5
9	exf6	♖xf6
10	♗g5	♕a5!?(1)

Huerta's idea, according to Arencibia. 'The exclamation mark denotes respect for the audacity of Black's idea, but to all appearances it is the question mark that gives a realistic evaluation', Psakhis *FD-ps p. 229*.

11	♗xf6	♛xc3+
12	♔e2!	

The truly wild variations after 12 ♔d1?! ♛xa1+ 13 ♔d2 ♘g6 14 ♗d3 ♛xh1 (the third sacrificed rook!) quickly burn out into a forced draw: cf. van der Tak's review article "Castling into it?", *New in Chess Yearbook 8 (1988) pp. 158-75*, variation C1.

Now Black has two main possibilities:
A.: 12 … ♘g6
B: 12 … ♛xc2+

A: 12 … ♘g6

The original choice, later thought to be refuted; '?' Kindermann & Dirr *B1 pp. 69, 227*. But does the refutation hold up?

Play now enters a long more-or-less forced sequence.

13	♖c1	gxf6
14	h4	♘c6
15	h5	e5
16	♛g3	e4
17	hxg6	exf3+
18	♔d1	♗f5!

The 12 ♔e2 stem game **Hellers–Arencibia, World Junior Ch, Gausdal 1986** *Informator 42/364 (Arencibia)* continued 18 … ♛xd4+? 19 ♗d3±± ♗f5 20 ♖h4! and 1-0, 29.

19	♖xh7	♛xd4+!

The alternative 19 … ♗xc2+? was proposed by Cierpinski (cf. van der Tak). After 20 ♖xc2 ♛d4+ 21 ♔c1 ♛a1+ 22 ♔d2 ♛d4+ 23 ♗d3 ♘e5 24 ♖c3 c4 ('∞' Psakhis in Informator) the refutation 25 ♔c2! was already given by van der Tak (citing Cierpinski and Borik; from where?) well before the only known example **Z. Almási–I. Almási, Kecskemét 1993** (*25 ♛xg2?* and ½-½, 40). There is even a second refutation in 25 ♖h7+! ♔g7 26 ♖h3 (*26 … ♘f3+ 27 ♔c2; not 25 ♖h3? ♘f3+*$\overline{++}$).

20	♗d3	♘e5
21	♖h4	♗g4
22	gxf3!	

'A cool move under fire', McDonald *FW p. 61*, improving on Arencibia's analysis, which considered only 22 ♖h8+?. Indeed 22 gxf3 is forced: others lose.

22	…	♗xf3+

And now the choice between 23 ♔d2 and 23 ♔e1 is critical.

A1: 23 ♔d2

Psakhis' choice in the original game reaching this position, **Psakhis–Bareev, Chigorin Mem, Sochi 1987** *Informator 44/357 (Psakhis)*: '?' McDonald.
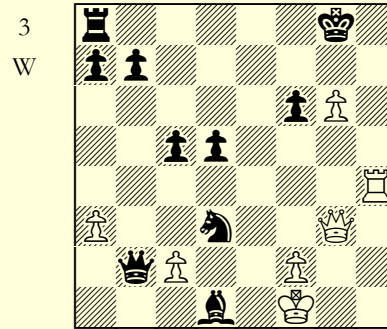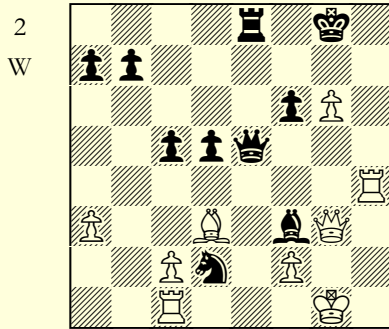
23	…	♘c4+

Hertneck's 'amazing way for Black to escape' (McDonald) via 23 … ♗g4+ 24 ♖h8+ ♔xh8 25 ♛h4+ ♔g7 26 ♛h7+ ♔f8 27 g7+ ♔e7 28 g8=♛+ ♔d6 29 ♛xa8 ♘f3+ 30 ♔e2 ♘h2+ 31 f3 ♛e5+ 32 ♔f2 ♛d4+ with a perpetual was cited with approval by van der Tak *p. 163*, Psakhis *tCF p. 226*, Korchnoi, and McDonald, but sadly simply 32 ♔d1 wins, as finally remarked by Pedersen *tMLF pp. 171-2*. The pawn on f3 provides a rare practical example of the 'Nowotny interference' problem theme.

24	♔e1	♖e8+

Instead Psakhis–Bareev continued 24 … ♛e5+?, mysteriously marked as 'only move' by Psakhis *Informator, FD-ps*. After 25 ♛xe5 ♘xe5±/±± White had a much freer position than arises below (1-0, 52).

25	♔f1	♘d2+
26	♔g1	♛e5(2)

'Not quite clear though probably advantageous to White', van der Tak *p.*

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163; '±' Psakhis & Ftáčnik *French Winawer 7 ♕g4 0-0 8 ♘f3 Survey, Chess-Base Opening Encyclopedia 2014*. These evaluations must be correct, though the main practical example **Kretek–Zbořil, Czechoslovak Ch, Karviná 1988** went well for Black: 27 ♕xe5?!= ♖xe5 28 ♔h2 c4 29 ♗f1?! (*29 ♖h7!*, with the point *29 … cxd3 30 cxd3*±; *29 … ♖g5? 30 ♖e1!*±; *29 … d4=*) 29 … ♖g5 30 ♗h3 (*30 ♖h7?? ♘xf1+ 31 ♖xf1 ♖g2+ 32 ♔h3 ♖xg6‡*) 30 … ♗e4∓ and 0-1, 62. White should prefer the queens to be exchanged on g3, e.g. 27 ♖h7 ♕xg3+ 28 fxg3 c4 29 ♗f1 d4±, with advantage though Black should be able to hold.

A2: 23 ♔e1

Hertneck's suggested improvement (per van der Tak; from where?); '!' McDonald, giving this as the only way to win.

	23 …	♕b2
	24 ♖d1	♘xd3+

24 … ♗xd1? ('Dom', *ChessPublishing.com Forum, 29 May 2007*) 25 ♔xd1!±±.

| | 25 ♔f1 | ♗xd1!**(3)** |

Much better than Korchnoi's main line 25 … ♘e5? 26 ♖h8+ ♔g8 27 ♖h7+ ♔g7 28 ♔h4±± (see also Kindermann & Dirr), or van der Tak's 25 … ♕xc2?

26 ♖h8+ ♔g7 27 ♖h7+ ♔g8 28 ♕xf3 ♘f4 29 ♖h8+±±.

After the text both Korchnoi and McDonald give White as winning. But Black is at least equal in all lines:

a) **26 ♕c7** '±±' is Korchnoi's line, but Pedersen *pp. 171-72* points out that Black is better after 26 … ♗e2+!, e.g. 27 ♔g2 ♗f3+ 28 ♔xf3 ♘e1+ 29 ♔e2 (forced) ♕e5+∓ or 29 … ♕xc2+∓.

b) **26 ♖h8+ ♔g7 27 ♖h7+ ♔g8 28 ♕c7** improves but even then there is no advantage after 28 … ♗e2+ 29 ♔g2 ♗f3+ 30 ♔xf3 ♘e1+ 31 ♔g4 ♕d4+= or 31 … f5+ 32 ♔h5 ♕f6=.

c) (26 ♖h8+ ♔g7 27 ♖h7+ ♔g8) **28 ♕h4** 'and White mates' is McDonald's suggestion, citing Korchnoi. This actually loses after 28 … ♗e2+, when Black can stave off mate via an intricate sequence: 29 ♔g2 ♗f3+ 30 ♔xf3 ♘e1+ 31 ♔g4 ♕d4+! (*31 …f5+ 32 ♔h5*∞/∓ is murky) 32 f4 ♕d1+ 33 ♔f5 ♕xc2+ 34 ♔xf6 (*34 ♔e6 ♖e8+ and 35 … ♕xg6‡*; but now the long diagonal is opened and Black can cover h8) 34 … ♕c3+ 35 ♔e6 ♘g2‡.

d) or here **28 ♕xd3** ♗e2+!=.

23 ♔e1 has slowly faded from theory,

given as a bare '!?', 'worth considering' by Psakhis *FD-ps*, and not mentioned by Psakhis & Ftačnik.

Conclusion: after 12 … ♘g6, White has only an edge in an ending.

B: 12 … ♛xc2+

With 12 … ♘g6 under a cloud, theory long considered 12 … ♛xc2+ the only viable choice: cf. Kindermann & Dirr *pp. 69, 226-27*, citing the recommendation and analysis of McDonald & Harley *MtF p. 107*; the original suggestion was McDonald's in 1990 *TFW p. 5*.
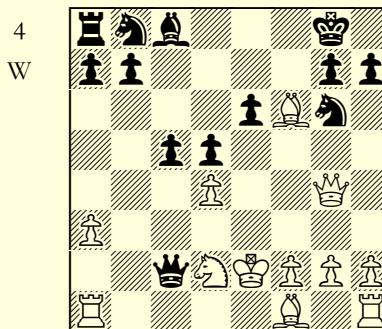
Black captures with check but remains almost a full rook down a little longer.

B1: (13 ♘d2 ♘g6(4)) 14 ♗e5

McDonald & Harley's main line runs 14 … c4 15 ♔e1 ♘xe5! 16 dxe5 c3 17 ♛d1 cxd2+ 18 ♛xd2 ♛e4+ 19 ♚e3 ♛a4 ⇆', though McDonald later thought White stood better *FW p. 60*. Houdini 3.0 prefers 18 … ♛c7!, e.g. 19 f4 ♘d7 20 ♗d3 ♘c5, about equal.

B2: (13 ♘d2 ♘g6(4)) 14 h4

McDonald & Harley's 14 … h5 '!' ('with

a good game', McDonald *FW*) leaves White better after 15 ♖c1 ♛xd2+ (*15 … gxf6? 16 ♖xc2 hxg4 17 ♖xc5 ♘c6 18 ♔e3 e5 19 ♘b3±* Kindermann & Dirr *p. 277;* better *18 ♘b3±*) 16 ♔xd2 hxg4 17 ♗g5 c4 18 h5 ♘h8±, though Black's position is not as grim as it looks.

Instead 14 … ♘c6? 15 h5 e5 16 ♛g3 ♘xd4+ 17 ♔e1 gxf6 loses to 18 ♗d3! ('Dzambus' *ChessPublishing.com Forum, 27 May 2007;* Kindermann & Dirr gave only *18 hxg6 ♗f5 19 gxh7+ ♔h8 '∞'*).

Conclusion: White's advantage is a manageable-for-Black '±' in either line, so the defence is sound (though not best).   ►

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.*
           Munich: Chessgate 2001. ISBN-10: 3-935748-00-0.

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

TFW   McDONALD, Neil, *Trends in The French Winawer.* Trends Publications 1990 (February).
           No ISBN listed. ISBN-10: 1-871541-02-6 (listed elsewhere).

FW   —, *French Winawer.* London: Everyman Chess 2000. ISBN-10: 1-85744-276-8.

MtF   —, & HARLEY, Andrew, *Mastering the French.* London: Batsford 1997.
           ISBN-10: 0-7134-5716-3.

tMLF   PEDERSEN, Steffen, *The Main Line French: 3 Nc3.* London: Gambit 2001. (Reprinted
           2006.) ISBN-10: 1-901983-45-5.

tCF   PSAKHIS, Lev, *The Complete French.* (Tr.: John Sugden.) London: Batsford 1992.
           ISBN-10: 0-7134-6965-X.

FD-ps   —, *French Defence 3 Nc3 Bb4.* (Tr.: John Sugden). London: Batsford 2004.
           ISBN-13: 978-0-7134-8841-8.