THE NEW WINAWER REPORT

Editor: Seán Coffey

First Impressions and Second Thoughts

'The analysis of one's own games is the main means of self-improvement,' says Yusupov; '*seek the reasons for your own mistakes.*' The advice is so familiar and the benefits so evident that to most players it's tantamount to stating the obvious.

Can the same principles be applied to Theory? After all, every new innovation, refutation, refinement or reevaluation implies a mistake of greater or lesser extent in the previous theory. Finding the reasons for *these* mistakes would revolutionise the advancement of openings research.

Easier said than done, of course. The 12 … d4 line in the Poisoned Pawn illustrates the difficulties: now the main line, it was an obscure side-line for decades, skipped over without a second thought by players and analysts alike. But why the neglect? Even in hindsight the reasons are not evident.

The line had an unfavourable early theoretical evaluation (from Keres) and a negative outcome in a stem game (Kots–Ilivitsky). But this cannot be the full story …

✳ ✳ ✳

Poisoned Pawn: origins of the 12 … d4 modern main line

Procter–Knibbs
Postal Chess Club All-play-all 1E, 1949
CHESS 14/166-8, Jul.-Aug.-Sep. 1949, p. 235

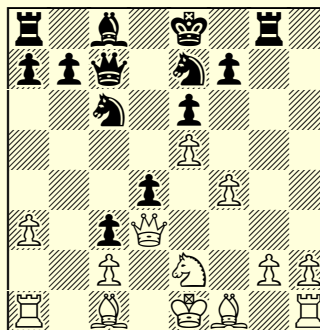1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘c3 ♗b4 4 e5 ♘e7 5 a3 ♗xc3+ 6 bxc3 c5 7 ♕g4 cxd4 8 ♕xg7 ♖g8 9 ♕xh7 ♕c7 10 ♘e2

	10 …	dxc3
	11 f4	♘bc6
	12 ♕d3	d4(1)

1 W

Watson *PtF-4 p. 252*: 'I keep coming across old references to the 11 … dxc3 lines, which has shattered my illusion that

the lines were recently conceived'. Indeed! The present game is absent from all databases, let alone published theory, and reaches back farther than any other.

13	♘xd4	♘xd4
14	♕xd4	♘f5?

Today it's axiomatic that Black must not allow 15 ♗b5+!±, and that 14 … ♗d7 is therefore essential. (Though Khalifman *OCA p. 176* gives 14 … ♘f5 as 'probably equally strong'; a puzzle.)

15	♕f2?	♗d7
16	♗d3	♗c6?!

Here 16 … ♕c6! 17 ♖g1 transposes to the main line 14 … ♗d7 15 ♖g1 ♘f5 16 ♕f2 ♕c6 17 ♗d3, for which see Berg *GMR-2 pp. 128-46*.

17	♖g1	0-0-0

After the usual sequence 14 … ♗d7 15 ♖g1 ♘f5 16 ♕f2, Black has almost never played 16 … ♗c6?! because of the immediate 17 g4±. The present game's odd move order evades this: now 18 g4 may be met by 18 … ♘d4, e.g. 19 ♖g3 ♖d7 20 ♗e3 ♖gd8⩱.

18	♗xf5?!	

Now the time is right for 18 ♕xa7!, with advantage after 18 … ♖xg2 19 ♖xg2 ♗xg2 21 ♖b1 or 18 … ♘h4 19 ♗e3 ♘xg2+ 20 ♖xg2 ♖xg2 21 ♗b6 (cf. issue 19).
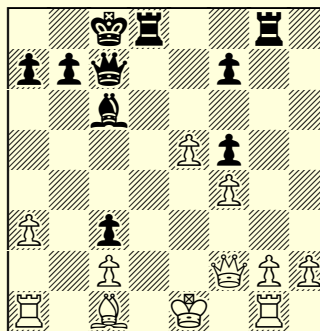
Exchanging on f5 is rare but still seen: 'as a general rule, Black is happy to play with opposite-coloured bishops in such positions, as his domination of the light squares gives him ongoing attacking chances', Berg *GMR-2 p. 129*.

18	…	exf5(2)
19	g3?	

White fails to appreciate the danger. After 19 ♕xa7 ♕d7 20 ♗e3 ♕d5 White is objectively no worse, though any advantage is gone.

2
W

19	…	f6

Better 19 … ♕a5!∓∓, cutting out any counterplay based on the WQ infiltrating, followed by breaking open the centre. The move played leaves Black with more work but still winning.

20	♕xa7	fxe5
21	♔f2?	

More tenacious is 21 ♕a8+ ♔d7 22 ♕a7, when the awkwardly placed king creates complications for Black.

21	…	exf4
22	♗xf4	♕xf4+!

And it's mate in 4 more moves.

0-1

*   *   *

Kots–Ilivitsky
USSR Ch ½-final (12), Sverdlovsk 1957
dFV game 6

From **(1)**,

13	♘xd4	♘xd4
14	♕xd4	♗d7
15	♗e3	

Early theory knew of only this one game with 12 … d4. The line was subsequently ignored by Euwe, Pachman, Keres, Zeuthen & Jarlnæs, and Gligorić & Uhlmann. Schwarz covered it but did not fully approve ("Wahrscheinlich nicht

„echt"!"); cf. Moles *MLW p. 34* ('12 … d4?!').

15 …   ♞d5?!

Recent experience with White's 15th is surveyed by Watson *ChessPublishing.com, December 2010*. The thematic 15 … ♞f5 (Berg's recommendation) is considered by Schwarz, though his continuation veers immediately from current theory: 16 ♕d3 a6 17 a4 ♖c8 18 g3 ♗c6 19 ♖g1 ♕a5 (∞/=), also given by Moles. But 16 ♕d3? is essentially refuted by 16 … ♗a4!∓.

The move played has a certain logic: c3 is covered and, since f4 is attacked, White's ♕c5 is forestalled. The drawback is that Black is drifting into passivity and is still a pawn down.
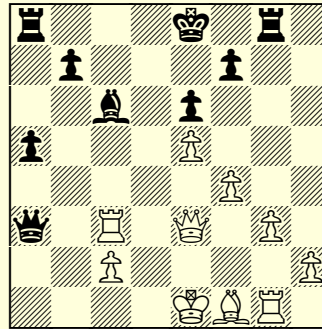
16 g3   ♗c6
17 ♖g1   ♞xe3

What else? **Kohoutek–Heinrich, M43D corr 1991** saw 17 … b6 (to cut out ♕xa7), with a positive outcome after 18 ♗g2 0-0-0 19 ♗xd5?! ♗xd5= and ½-½, 27; but such defensive play is hardly enough to prove compensation and White is better after, for example, 18 a4 0-0-0 19 a5!?. In **Korley–Tuhrim, Politiken Cup, Elsinore 2011**, Black jettisoned the a-pawn via 17 … 0-0-0?!, but after 18 ♕xa7 ♞xe3 19 ♕xe3 ♕a5? 20 ♗d3±± had little to show for the two-pawn deficit (1-0, 72); better 19 … ♖d2 20 ♕xc3 ♖xh2±, still unappetising.

18 ♕xe3   ♕a5
19 ♖d1!

'!' Schwarz, Moles; more accurate than 19 ♕d4 ♖d8 20 ♕b4 ♕xb4 21 axb4 ♖d2±.

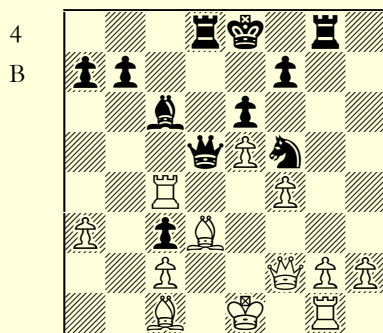**19 …   ♕xa3**
20 ♖d3   a5
21 ♖xc3(3)

The usual stopping point; '±' Watson. White may claim a moral victory from the opening but it's far from hopeless with best defence, e.g. 21 … ♕e7 22 ♔f2 a4 23 ♗g2 ♗xg2 24 ♔xg2 ♔f8. Instead the game continued 21 … ♕b2?! 22 ♔f2 a4 23 ♗g2 ♗xg2 24 ♔xg2 a3? (*24 … ♖d8 25 ♖c7±*) and now instead of 25 ♕d4?± (and 1-0, 67) White could have won quickly with 25 ♕c5! and 26 ♖b3.

* * *

Though early theory largely ignored 12 … d4, it did consider the parallel variation 12 … ♗d7 13 ♖b1 d4. Keres *FZ p. 134* then gave 14 ♞xd4 ♞xd4 15 ♕xd4 ♞f5 16 ♕f2 ♗c6 17 ♖g1 with the verdict that White stood better: 'Black has no way to carry through the attack'. But the early examples were collectively very positive for Black:

a) **Liberzon–Pietzsch, Leipzig 1965**: 17 … 0-0-0 18 ♗d3 ♕a5 19 ♖b4 ♕d5 20 ♖c4 ♔b8 21 ♖xc3 ♞h4? ('!' Moles; *21 … b6!* Watson *PtF*, =) 22 ♔f1? (*22 ♖c5! ♕d4 23 ♕xd4 ♖xd4 24 ♔f2 ♗xg2 25 f5!±/±±*) 22 … ♖xg2 23 ♖xg2 ♕xg2+ 24 ♔xg2 ♗xg2+ 25 ♔f2± (½-½, 40).

b) **Matanović–Rolland, Le Havre 1966** *Informator 1/144 (anon.); Schach-Echo 24/9, May 1966 pt. 1, pp. 140-1 (Dückstein); Deutsche Schachzeitung 115/9, Sep. 1966, pp. 305-6 (Teschner); MLW pp. 6-7*: (as above to 16 ♕f2) 16 … ♕c6!? (apparently the first game with this idea) 17 ♖b4 ♕d5 18 ♖g1 ♗c6 19 ♗d3 ♖d8 20 ♖c4**(4)**

4
B

20 … ♖h8 21 h3 ♘h4 22 ♖c5 ♕a2 23 ♖xc3 ♕a1 24 ♔d2 ♘f5.

Now Dückstein recommends 'the cold-blooded' 25 ♕xa7, ± since Teschner's 25 … ♘g3, intending … ♘e4+, is refuted by 26 ♖c4±±; Informator's 25 g4 ♘d4 26 ♖g3± is also good.

Instead the game continued 25 ♖b3? ♘d4= 26 ♖b4 ♖g8! 27 h4 (*27 ♗b2? ♕xg1+!*) 27 … a5 28 ♖c4? (*38 ♖b6 Dückstein, Teschner, =*) 28 … ♗b5∓ 29 ♖c3 ♗xd3? (*29 … ♕a2∓∓*) 30 cxd3? (*30 ♖xd3! ♘b3+ 31 ♔e3* Infor-

mator, =) 30 … b5? (*30 … ♖g3!∓∓* Informator) 31 g4= a4 32 ♕g2 ♔f8 33 ♕f1? (*33 ♖c7 Dückstein, =*) 33 … ♔g7? (*33 … ♘b3+∓/∓∓*) 34 f5= ♖c8 35 ♖xc8 ♖xc8 36 fxe6? (the final error: *36 ♔e3!, ∓ per Informator, is equal, e.g. 36 … ♘b3 37 ♕f4=* Informator; *36 … ♖c2? 37 ♗d2±; 36 … ♘c2+ 37 ♔f4=*) 36 … ♘b3+ 37 ♔e2 ♖c2+ 38 ♗d2 ♕xe5+ 39 ♔f3 ♘xd2+ 0-1.

A thoroughly modern game that should have sparked greater interest. White's improvements are evaded by the modern 19 … 0-0-0!: cf. Watson *PtF*.

c) **Parr–Fox, England 1968** *Informator 5/207 (Marić), MLW*: (as above to 18 … ♗c6) 19 ♗e2?! ♕a2 20 ♗b5? (*20 ♗d3 Marić, =*) 20 … ♗xb5∓∓ 21 ♖xb5 ♖d8 22 ♖b4 a5 23 ♖e4 ♕b1 24 ♔e2 ♕xc2+ 25 ♔f3 ♕d3+ 26 ♗e3 ♖d4 0-1. A more emphatic but less convincing example, given White's weak approach.

*   *   *

Why did theory disregard 12 … d4 so completely? Taste must have been a factor. Robert Byrne wrote that Fischer 'felt 7 ♕g4 was only giving Black what he wanted' *Chess Life & Review 26/9, Sep. 1971, p. 548*. With 12 … d4 Black simplifies while still a pawn down, closes the otherwise promising c-file, and must even be prepared to exchange queens: evidently this was not what Black wanted. ▶

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

FZ   KERES, Paul, *Frantsuzkaya Zaschita (ФРАНЦУЗКАЯ ЗАЩИТА).* Moscow: Fizkul'tura i Sport 1958.

OWA   KHALIFMAN, Alexander, *Opening for White According to Anand 1. e4, Book VII.* (Tr.: Evgeny Ermenkov.) Sofia: Chess Stars 2006. ISBN-13: 978-954-8782-46-3.

dFV   SCHWARZ, Rolf, *Die Französische Verteidigung.* Hamburg: Das Schach-Archiv Fr. L. Rattmann 1967.

PtF-4   WATSON, John, *Play the French,* 4th edition (Everyman 2012)—see issue 13.