

Toxic shocks

THE POISONED PAWN variation of the Sicilian Najdorf defence might sound like some sort of culinary joke, but it is a chess reality and the positions it leads to are no laughing matter. On move eight, by snatching the toxic footsoldier, Black strands his queen deep inside enemy territory. Battle then breaks loose. Can White exploit the monarch's absence by breaking through on other sectors of the board? Will he trap the lady herself — or will Black escape with his plunder?

The top professionals need a constantly replenished arsenal of prepared innovations if they are to utilise such ultra-sharp lines as the Poisoned Pawn. These days hard-working Hungarian Grandmaster Lajos Portisch is a leading exponent for Black, while fearless Russian Grandmaster Alexander Belyavsky champions the White side. However the following game, played in the New Zealand Junior Championship in 1978, confirms that encounters of substantial theoretical importance are not confined to the world's master elite.

It also goes to illustrate the point I made last week, that games of great interest sometimes go unnoticed solely because they are played in relatively minor events. According to English Grandmaster John Nunn, who has just updated Michael Stean's Batsford book on the Sicilian Najdorf, the game improves on a major variation. Although the game ended in a draw, play on both offence and defence was excellent. If the game had been played in a major European international I am sure it would have received recognition in publications such as the Yugoslav Chess Informator at the time.

Readers of *New Zealand Chess*, the bi-monthly organ of the New Zealand Chess Association, will be pleased to note that it at least appeared there shortly after it was played. *NZ Chess*, incidentally, is still going strong and is good value at \$6.50 a year from NZCA, PO Box 8802, Symonds Street, Auckland.

SICILIAN DEFENCE

W. NORTON	M. FREEMAN
1. e4	c5
2. Nf3	d6
3. d4	cxd4
4. Nxd4	Nf6
5. Nc3	a6
6. Bg5	e6
7. f4	Qb6
8. Qd2	Qxb2

The aforementioned "poisoned pawn".

9. Rb1	Qa3
10. e5!?	

Currently in vogue is 10.f5 Nc6 11.fxe6 fxe6 12.Nxc6 bxc6 13.e5 — though when Nunn's update is published, attention may switch once more to this older line.

Stean's opinion of 10.e5 was that "this natural attacking thrust, once thought to refute the Poisoned Pawn variation, has itself been refuted".

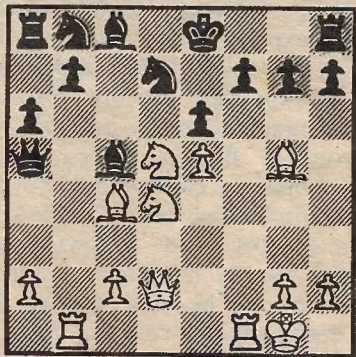
10. ...	dxe5
11. fxe5	Nfd7
12. Bc4	

White has a prepared novelty up his sleeve. Instead 12.Ne4 h6 13.Bb5!? is typical of the insane complications of this whole opening.

12. ...	Qa5!
13. 0-0	Bc5

So far each player had used one minute but White's next set Black thinking. Stean gave only 14.Rxf7 Nxe5 or 14.Kh1 Bxd4 15.Qxd4 Nc6 — both advantageous to Black.

14. Nd5!
 Leading to hair-raising complications.



14. ...	Bxd4 ch
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Black's queen is attacked and he has two alternatives: (a) 14...Qxd2? 15.Nc7 ch Kf8 16.Nxe6 ch Kg8 17.Bxd2 Nxe5 18.Nxc5 Nxc4 19.Rbel h6 20.Bc3 with a sizeable plus; or (b) 14...Nc6 15.Qxa5 Bxd4 ch 16.Kh1 Nxa5 17.Nc7 ch Kf8 18.Bxe6 Nxe5 19.Bxf7 Nxf7 20.Rbel Bd7 21.Nxa8, assessed by Nunn and Freeman as "unclear".

15. Qxd4	Nc6
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Not 15...exd5 16.Bxd5 0-0 when White has a tactical win with 17.e6! fxe6 18.Bxe6 ch Kh8 19.Bh6! Nf6 20.Bxc8 Nc6 21.Rxf6! Rxf6 22.Bxg7 ch Kxg7 23.Rxb7 ch Kg6 24.Qe4 ch.

16. Qf4	Ndxe5
17. Rbe1	Qc5 ch

Again the only defence: 17...0-0 18.Nf6 ch! gxf6 19.Bxf6 forces mate with the threat of Qh6.

18. Kh1	Qxc4
19. Nc7 ch	Kf8
20. Nxa8	h6
21. Nb6	

Instead 21.Bh4 Qxf4 22.Rxf4 Ng6 gives Black good chances.

21. ...	hxg5
22. Nxc4	gxf4
23. Nxe5	Nxe5
24. Rxe5	Bd7
25. Rxf4	

The smoke clears and it's time to count the pieces. White has two rooks and four pawns against Black's rook, bishop and five pawns. Technically slightly better for Norton, but Freeman's accurate defence has left him a solid position.

25. ...	Ke7
26. Rc5	Bc6
27. Rd4	Rh6

The rook finally swings into active duty.

28. Kg1	Rg6
29. Rd2	Rg4
30. h3	Rf4
31. Kh2	g6
32. g4	f6

Draw Agreed

Both players decide there is no way to make progress.

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