

# SADLER ON BOOKS

by MATTHEW SADLER



I was planning to write in this column about just two books. However, just before starting this column, *Budapest Fajarowicz* by Lev Gutman dropped through my letterbox. As soon as I saw it, I knew that a crucial opportunity had been missed. I played my last Bundesliga match a couple of weekends ago and I will now never get the chance to play the Fajarowicz against a strong player. Having already ventured the Albin against Agrest earlier in the season, I don't think anyone can doubt that I would be mad/desperate enough to do it!

*Budapest Fajarowicz* by Lev Gutman (Batsford) is a rather weird book. There is very little commentary about the aims of the opening and the layout is just one big thicket of variations. However, there are a number of compensating features. First of all, Gutman makes a very good job of explicitly summarising the theoretical discussion that has gone on before him. In the introduction he points out the most important books written about the Fajarowicz in modern times. Throughout the rest of the book, he then highlights the author's name (in bold print) within the analysis whenever one of these authors has a

particular opinion about a variation. I found this a useful way of giving you an idea about the likes and dislikes of the various Fajarowicz experts. He also does this in the following way before each important sub-variation:

**' 1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e5 3.de5 ♘e4 4.♘d2 ♘c5**

This is the only way to avoid simplification. **Anatoli Matuskevich**

The big question is whether the knight on c5 is well placed or not?

**Harding**

White has displaced the ♘e4, but after all, is his knight well placed?

**Alfonso Romero**

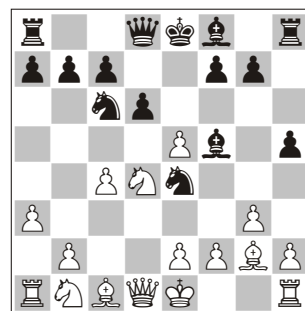
Although it is normally disastrous to play the same piece 3 times in the first 4 moves, in this unusual position it can be justified by the fact that White has congested his pieces with 4.♘d2. **Lalic**'

I have very rarely seen this done in chess books but it seems a very sensible idea to me, especially for such a rare opening as the Fajarowicz. The other thing that is also impressive is that Gutman himself has played the opening and contributes a large amount of analysis and commentary on all the lines. To quote him in the introduction: '1.d4 players are used to being treated with respect. After the game Levin-Gutman, German

championship 2001, in which I played the Fajarowicz, my opponent, a solid grandmaster and well-known theoretician, was sufficiently affected by the enormous tension he had to face from the very start that some months later, in the German league 2002, he preferred to play 1.♘f3 against me.'

Impressive huh? Well as always with such dubious openings, you just have to dig a little deeper to find the 'dark side' of the whole matter. First of all, let's take a look at the aforementioned Levin-Gutman game:

**1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e5 3.de5 ♘e4 4.a3 d6 5.♘f3 ♘f5 6.g3 h5 7.♗g2 ♘c6 8.♘d4**



**8...♘d4 9.♗d4 ♘c5 10.♗e3 de5 11.b4**

11.♗e5 also looks very good here, which Gutman points out in his book.

**11...♟e6 12.♞b2 f6 13.♞b7 ♜b8 14.♞e4 ♟c5 15.♞f3 ♟g4 16.♞g6 ♟e7 17.♞d3 ♞d3 18.♞d3 h4 19.♟c3**

And a wild game eventually ended in a draw. I don't think however that there is any doubt that Black was completely lost after move 8. (This may be a touch on the conservative side.) I find it hard to believe that a white player would be so scared of repeating this performance.

Secondly, the quality of the analysis does leave a lot to be desired. Perhaps it's simply the way you have to be in order to play the Fajarowicz, but a lot of the analysis can only be classified as hopeful. Let's take a couple of crucial lines:

**1.d4 ♟f6 2.c4 e5 3.de5 ♟e4 4.a3**

Known since a very long time as the best line for White

**4...♟c6 5.♟f3 a5 6.♞c2 ♟c5 7.♟c3**



We are following Gutman's mainline in the 4...♟c6 variation. The line continues:

**7...h6**

The other possibilities do not inspire confidence.

**8.♟e3 ♟e6**

[A previous game went 8...♟e7 9.♞d1 0-0 10.g4! b6 11.♞g1 ♞e8 12.♟d5 and g5 with absolute carnage. 8...♟e6 is Gutman's improve-

ment and the rest is analysis by him - MS]



**9.♟d5 ♟c5 10.♟c5 ♟c5 11.e3**

11.b3 0-0 12.♞d1 ♞e8 13.b4 ab4 14.ab4 ♟e6, for example 15.e3 ♟f8 or 15.b5 ♟e7 16.e3 ♟c5, Gutman.

**11...0-0 12.♞d1 a4 13.♟d3**

After the meek 13.♟c3 ♞e8 14.♞d5 Black plays 14...b6.

**13...♞e8 14.♞c3 ♟d3 15.♞d3 ♞a5 16.c5 b6 17.cb6 cb6**

The position seems double-edged to me - Gutman.'

This analysis makes no sense at all. 9.♟d5 is clearly not the best move (9.♞d1 or 9.♟e4!? come to mind) but the whole line is so clearly ridiculous that I think that the only sensible thing to say is that you should stop the analysis after move 7 and look for a different line for Black.

A second example:

**4...b6**

4...b6 has been established as Black's most popular move in recent years, although this line, certainly sound and substantial, erases some of the fascinating variations that make this Gambit attractive.

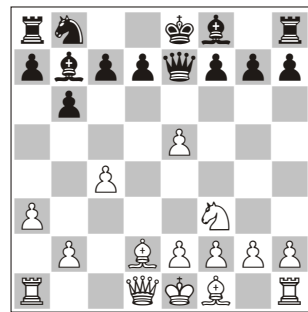
**5.♟d2 ♟b7 6.♟g3 ♟d2!**

This is to my mind the critical reply.

**7.♟d2 ♞e7**

Other moves are less effective. [This is Gutman's improvement

over a previous game of Alfonso Romero with 7...♟c6 - M.S.]



**8.♟c3**

8.♞c2 ♟f3 9.ef3 ♞e5 10.♞e4 ♞e4 11.fe4 ♟c6 12.♟c3 f6, Gutman.

**8...g6! 9.e3**

9.e6 f6 10.ed7 ♟d7 11.e3 0-0 with a lead in development, Gutman.

**9...♟g7 10.♟d3 0-0 11.♞c1 a5 12.0-0 ♞e8 13.♞c2 ♟f3 14.♞f3 ♟a6 15.♞e4 ♞ad8**

Black keeps control, Gutman'

This is a little better than the previous example, but still... I will just point out that among other things 8.♞c2 ♟f3 is strongly met by 9.gf3 ♞e5 10.f4 with ♟g2 and ♟c3 to follow. Black is probably lost.

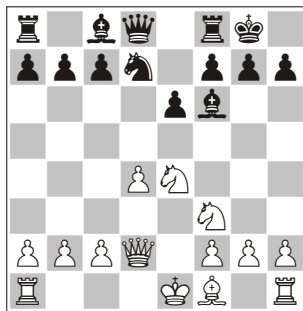
All in all, rather disappointing. I have the feeling that a lot of the book is rather well researched, but I cannot understand how a player of Gutman's strength could deliver analysis of this quality.

Now on to happier ground, *Play the French* by John Watson (Everyman). Suffering terribly as I was at the beginning of the Bundesliga season, I decided that the only remedy for me was to freshen up my chess by playing a lot of new openings. For this purpose, I received *Play the French* at just the right time. This is the third edition of this book and includes a lot of new recommendations. Watson states in the intro-

duction that ‘...this is not to say that any major systems in the last edition are bad; on the contrary, none of them has been discredited. The inclusion of these new lines, however, provides some fresh air and illustrates the breadth of playable variations in the French Defence.’ There speaks the true French evangelist! A friend of mine, now an embittered French Defence-hater with a now deep-rooted fear of dark-square weaknesses as a result of playing Watson’s recommendations in the Winawer for the last ten years, was not completely convinced. To be honest, it does take quite a special player to play the Winawer. Thank goodness, however, Watson also provides a number of solid alternatives to his main recommendations. These were the ones which appealed to me the most and which I ended up playing in two Bundesliga games.

As always with Watson’s books, a word of warning is appropriate. Watson is an analyst – and I imagine also a player – who unreservedly believes in the power of the initiative. For him, there are very few equal positions. Every position in which Black has equalised is on the way to being better for Black. Moreover, the very fact that Black has an active possibility in a position (for example, sacrificing a pawn for activity) often seems to be used as a justification to assess the position as good for Black, irrespective of the quality of the active possibility. The following example shows what I mean:

After **1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♟c3**, Watson’s reserve recommendation is **3...♞f6**. After **4.♞g5**, he recommends **4...de4 5.♞e4 ♟e7**. We follow the main line **6.♟f6 ♟f6 7.♞f3 ♞d7 8.♞d2 0-0**



‘**9.♞c3**, similar to Kasparov’s idea 9.0-0-0 ♟e7 10.♞c3, hasn’t been tried as far as I know. Again Black can break up the centre, e.g. **9...c5! 10.♞f6** (10.♞c5 ♞c5 11.♞c5 b6 12.♞c6 ♞b8 13.♞a4 ♟b7 14.♞d1 ♟f3 15.gf3 ♞d5 with a slight advantage to Black) **10...♞f6 11.0-0-0 ♞d8 12.♟d3 b6** (12...cd4 is also playable) **13.♟e4 ♞b8 14.♞he1 ♟b7** (14...h6=) **15.♟b7 ♞b7=**’

This is an interesting line, but the analysis here is also rather hopeful. For example 10.♞c5 ♞c5 11.♞c5 b6 12.♞b4 ♟b7 13.♟e2 ♞c8 14.c3 seems just to be a pawn to me. However, of course, you should give Watson credit for mentioning a possibility that has not been played before and for making the effort of making the first analysis of this position. In any case, using Watson’s book as a basis, I made 2/2 in the Bundesliga and felt pretty comfortable so for me it’s definitely passed the practical test! Recommended!

**Decision-making at the chessboard** by Viacheslav Eingorn (Gambit) was the other book that I took with me to the Bundesliga. I read it from cover to cover a couple of times during the weekend and enjoyed it enormously. The tone of the book is sober and realistic. You can tell that the book has been written by an experienced practical player, someone

who has known ups and downs and who has known how to survive life as a professional chess player. A lot of the passages that struck a chord with me were simply general observations demystifying a certain aspect of chess and placing it into a sensible, unemotional context. The opening paragraph in the first chapter in the book entitled ‘Individuality and Style’ is a good example:

‘A large body of knowledge and technique is familiar to us from chess theory and practice, and is wholly indispensable; yet its function tends to be an auxiliary one. To decide on a line of play in a position which remains fluid in character, you can’t make do with just applying stereotyped precepts: there will always be opponents who can use them just as well as you. A player’s style is nothing other than a policy for action, with the aid of which he solves this type of problem. It all starts from the very first moves of the game: we choose not so much a specific system as a general direction for play. This is where the basis for the future conflict is laid. To begin with, the situation that develops is one which neither player objects to. Afterwards each of them erects his own logical structure using the building materials of chess thought. The more skilful architect achieves his end.

‘Naturally then, we attach a particular interest to duels in which it is not only the chessmen that are in conflict, but also the totally different opinions of the players on the very question of how chess ought to be played. While examining games like this, I advise that you not take any side in advance, but instead try to understand why the winner achieves victory.’

Or how about this description from the chapter 'Tactical Complications':

'The relation between strategy and tactics in the chess struggle has always been a notable topic of discussion. Chess is a tactical game, but even in a relatively simple position you don't by any means always succeed in working out the essential variations. It follows that the possibility of initiating sharp play itself is a matter of strategic choice. Chess strategy is concerned with identifying and interpreting the vital elements of the position, such as 'an isolated pawn', 'knights in the centre of the board', and all the rest. The generally accepted treatment of these elements is backed by the knowledge and experience of many generations of chess players, and can usually be relied on. When it comes to assessing purely tactical complications, the matter is a good deal more involved. Here the placing of some particular pawn or piece may be of overriding significance while general considerations recede into the background. Tactics is like the cat that likes to 'go its own way'. Going for a walk with it is most interesting, but a player doesn't always know where it is going to lead him. Luck therefore becomes a major factor, and the result too often depends on defensive or attacking sources that arise by chance.'

I found this sort of advice, coupled with well-chosen and instructive examples, to be the perfect preparation for my games. It just helped me get into a reasonably sensible frame of mind for my games and gave me confidence to take decisions even when I hadn't worked out all the consequences. Thoroughly recommended. ■

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