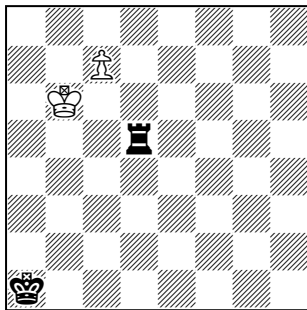


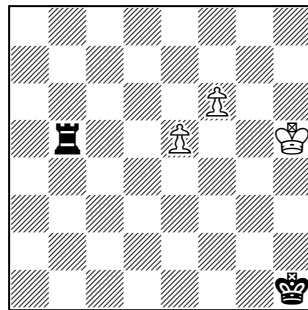
Barbier / Saavedra : the case against Porterfield Rynd

John Beasley, 23 September 2014 (minor corrections 25 September)

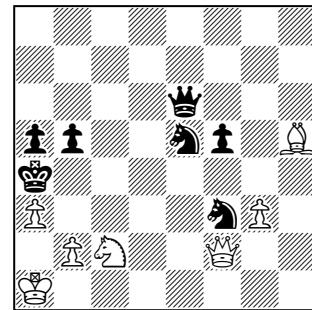
The recent surfacing of a game allegedly seen in a dream by the Irish player J. A. Porterfield Rynd, and in fact taken, complete with notes, from the *Illustrated Science Monthly*, has drawn attention once again to Rynd's claim to have played the famous "Saavedra" rook promotion over the board a few years before its appearance in the Glasgow *Weekly Citizen*. I examined various aspects of the matter in the March 2002, September 2002, and September 2005 issues of *British Endgame Study News*, and perhaps it will be convenient to bring the salient points together on one page.



1 - Barbier 1895 (Black to play)



2 - "Rynd-Lynam" (claimed)



3 - "Rynd-Yates" (claimed)

The story starts with **1** (I checked the relevant material when writing in 2002, but am relying on John Roycroft's book *Test Tube Chess* to refresh my memory). On 27 April 1895, Barbier, the chess columnist of the *Citizen*, published **1** with the Black king on h6 as a game position which White should have won (**1...Rd6+ 2 Kb5 Rd5+ 3 Kb4 Rd4+ 4 Kb3 Rd3+ 5 Kc2** and Black is helpless), and on 4 May he reset it for solution as **1**, with the Black king moved to a1, with the comment that Black now had a neat draw. On 11 May he gave the answer (play as before to **5 Kc2**, but now Black has **5...Rd4!** and after **6 c8Q Rc4+ 7 Qxc4** he is stalemated), and on 18 May he reported a brilliant refutation by Saavedra, one of his readers: **6 c8R!!** (threat **7 Ra8+** and mate) **Ra4 7 Kb3!** threatening both mate and capture of the rook, and White wins even though material is down to a rook each.

A week later, Rynd, in the Dublin *Evening Herald*, claimed to have reached **2** in a simultaneous display he had given three or four years before, his opponent being Lieutenant-Colonel W. Lynam. **1 f7 Rxe5+ 2 Kg6** gave a left-to-right reflection of **1**, and the move corresponding to **5...Rd4** was described as "One of the Colonel's ingenuities". So Rynd claimed the rook promotion as his, with the implication that Saavedra was merely reporting something he seen.

Well, it would have been a remarkable coincidence, because it was *Barbier*, not Saavedra, who actually set **1** on the board, and he must have thought it up independently because he saw no further than the stalemate. John Roycroft was suspicious, and in Rynd's column for 19 October 1895 he found **3**. This was claimed to be from a game which Rynd had won against C. Yates, with finish **37...Nd3 38 Qxf3 Qb3 39 Qxd3 Qxd3 40 Bf7 Qd1+** (40...Qxc2 41 Ka2 and wins as in the game) **41 Ka2 Qxc2 42 Be6 Qc4+ 43 b3+ Qxb3+ 44 Bxb3 mate**. Very nice, but after **39...Qxd3** we have a left-to-right reflection of a study by Cordes which had won a second prize in *Rigaer Tageblatt* earlier in the year, and Ken Whyld showed me reprints of this study in *La Stratégie* (August 1895) and *Deutsche Schachzeitung* (September 1895). John reported in the December 2001 issue of the *British Chess Magazine*.

So was Rynd telling porkies? Even a superficial examination of **3** shows that it can hardly have been a genuine game position; with queen and light-squared bishop still in the field against him, why on earth did Black move his king to the absurdly vulnerable square a4 and then bottle him in? At first sight, **2** appears more plausible, but a closer examination shows this too is most unlikely. Yes, Black's king could have escorted a rook's pawn to promotion and then recaptured something that had captured the new queen, but what was White's king doing in the meantime? A search in 2002 of a database of over a million games turned up 157 having positions with king, rook, and perhaps pawns against king and pawns with the rook side's king isolated in a far corner, but in *none* of them was the other king on the same file; it was normally well away on the opposite side of the board. But if **2** was deliberately composed as a lead-in to **1**, the White king *had* to be on h5; had it been even on g5, White would have had a simpler win by **1 Kf5**. So, on internal evidence, even **2** was a composed position and not something that had arisen in a genuine game.

There is one further point. In his book *No Rook Unturned*, Harrie Grondijs reports Lynam as having died in 1894, and the Army Lists for the period (which I consulted at the British Library in 2005) are consistent with this. So Rynd's claim regarding **2** was not made until after his alleged opponent's death (the right-hand photocopy on page 15 of *No Rook Unturned* is miscaptioned as to both source and date, being in fact of Rynd's column for 25 May 1895).

It may be thought that we who denounce Rynd as a plagiarist are unfairly traducing the reputation of somebody who is no longer able to defend himself. I reply that the evidence appears to allow no other conclusion. If somebody can show me an appearance of **2** in print *before* the appearance of **1** on 4 May 1895, I shall be more than happy to change my mind, but on the evidence above I think most people will agree with me in regarding the charge of plagiarism against Rynd as sadly justified.