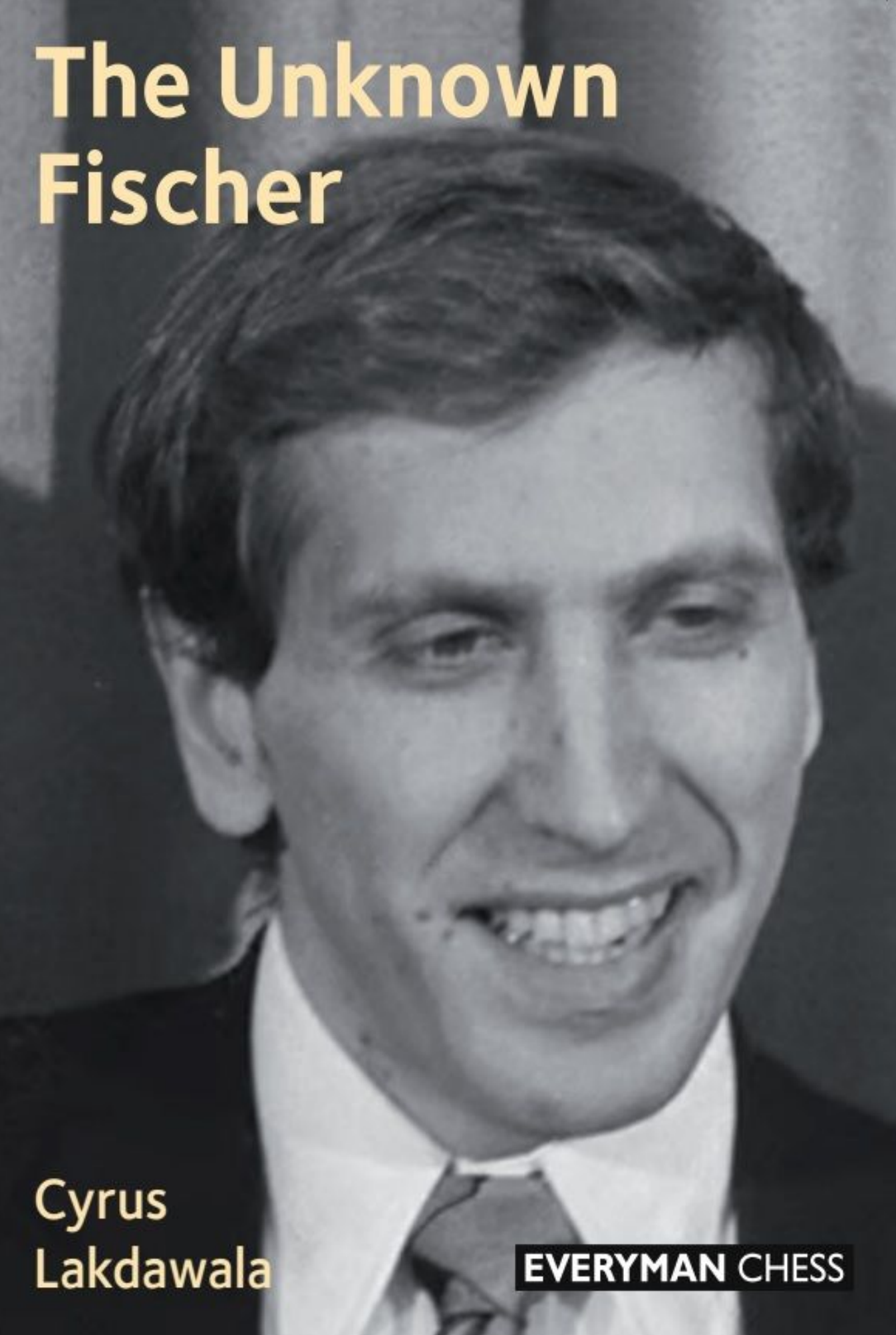
The Unknown Fischer



Cyrus Lakdawala

EVERYMAN CHESS

The Unknown Fischer

Cyrus Lakdawala



PLAY MAGNUS
GROUP OF COMPANIES

EVERYMAN CHESS
www.everymanchess.com

First published in 2023 by Gloucester Publishers Limited, London.

Copyright © 2023 Cyrus Lakdawala

The right of Cyrus Lakdawala to be identified as the author of this work has been asserted in accordance with the Copyrights, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a
retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic,
electrostatic, magnetic tape, photocopying, recording or otherwise,
without prior permission of the publisher.

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN: 978 1 78194 715 9

Distributed in North America by National Book Network,
15200 NBN Way, Blue Ridge Summit, PA 17214. Ph: 717.794.3800.

Distributed in Europe by Central Books Ltd.,
Central Books Ltd, 50 Freshwater Road, Chadwell Heath, London, RM8 1RX.

All other sales enquiries should be directed to Everyman Chess.
email: info@everymanchess.com; website: www.everymanchess.com

Everyman is the registered trade mark of Random House Inc. and is used in this work under licence from Random House

Inc.

Everyman Chess Series
Commissioning editor and advisor: Byron Jacobs

Typeset and edited by First Rank Publishing, Brighton.
Printed by TJ International Limited, Padstow, Cornwall.

About the Author

Cyrus Lakdawala is an International Master, a former National Open and American Open Champion, and a six-time State Champion. He has been teaching chess for over 40 years, and coaches some of the top junior players in the U.S.

Also by the Author:
1 ... b6: Move by Move
1 ... d6: Move by Move
A Ferocious Opening Repertoire
Anti-Sicilians: Move by Move
Bird's Opening: Move by Move
Botvinnik: Move by Move
Capablanca: Move by Move
Carlsen: Move by Move
Caruana: Move by Move
First Steps: the Modern
Fischer: Move by Move
Korchnoi: Move by Move
Kramnik: Move by Move
Larsen: Move by Move
Opening Repertoire: ... c6
Opening Repertoire: Modern Defence
Opening Repertoire: The Slav
Opening Repertoire: The Sveshnikov
Petroff Defence: Move by Move
Play the London System
The Alekhine Defence: Move by Move
The Caro-Kann: Move by Move
The Classical French: Move by Move
The Colle: Move by Move
The Four Knights: Move by Move
The Modern Defence: Move by Move
The Nimzo-Larsen Attack: Move by Move
The Scandinavian: Move by Move
The Slav: Move by Move

Contents

About the Author
Bibliography
Introduction

1 Bobby's Early Goof-ups
2 Bobby on the Attack
3 Bobby on Defence and Counterattack
4 Bobby on the Dynamic Element
5 Accumulating Advantages
6 Oddities
7 Games from Simultaneous Exhibitions
8 Bobby Versus the Machine
9 Bobby at Blitz
10 The Other Sveti Stefan Match

Index of Complete Games

Bibliography

Books
*Fischer: Move by Move***,**

Cyrus Lakdawala (Everyman 2015)
The Unknown Capablanca, David Hooper & Dale Brandreth (RHM Press 1973)

Articles
The Death of Thought, Christian Guyton (TechRadar 2023)
Fischer v Gligori Training Match (1992), Edward Winter (Chess Notes)
Before the New Difficult Battles, Vasily Panov (*64* 1971)
Notes by Bobby Fischer**,** Lubomir Ftacnik, Svetozar Gligoric

Electronic Resources
Chess.com
Chessgames.com
Fritz 18
Stockfish 15.1

Introduction

My childhood friend, Professor Ilan Vardi, who now lives in Switzerland, messaged me on Facebook with a reminder that March 9th 2023, Fischer's 80th birthday anniversary, was coming up. He asked if I was going to write an article on it for chess.com. Then we discussed Fischer's simultaneous exhibitions in Quebec and Montreal, where we grew up, from 1964. We knew of two masters who defeated Fischer in these simuls (both games are in the book). Then Ilan asked: why not do an article on non-famous Fischer games, since the same 150 famous ones are regurgitated endlessly? Then I thought: why an article and not a book on such games? A favourite book in my youth was *The Unknown Capablanca*, which covered many lesser known Capa games, including ones from simuls. This is the Fischer-version of just such a book.

When we look at ourselves in a mirror, we don't really believe the reflection is a real person who just happens to look like we do. We try to play like our chess idols, yet our play is always a distorted reflection of the actual player we try to imitate. Me trying to play like my childhood chess heroes was one of those social media "up is down!" claims in desperate need of fact-checking. Yet we try! There is nothing in the world crueller than unrequited love. I fell in love with chess at age 8. She didn't love me back since I was utterly devoid of talent (my rating was a not-so-towering 1795, at age 17). So to compensate, I worshipped at the altar of two of the most naturally gifted players in history: Capablanca and Fischer. The latter is the subject of this book.

I couldn't get enough of Fischer's games, my drug addiction of choice. The trouble was books on Fischer just kept repeating the same masterpieces over and over, as if he only played 150 games in his entire career. I'm guessing that a majority of Fischer fans have really only played over his most famous games. But what about all the others? This book

addresses the under-covered subject of the "others". So please understand this is *not* a Fischer's Greatest Hits book.

There is a large Facebook group to which I belong, and whose sole purpose is to worship Bobby as a chess deity. Being a savvy businessman, I posted something like: "I just accepted a contract with Everyman to write a book on *Bobby Fischer, the greatest chess player* (by a million miles!) *of all time!*" Of course, this was greeted with tears of joy and rapturous shouts of exaltation from group members. But what Fischer fanatics are actually worshipping is essentially a short period, from 1970 to the completion of the world championship match with Spassky in 1972, where Bobby was invincible and arguably the most dominant player of all time.

The vast majority of chess books, including my own *Fischer: Move by Move*, focus on the invincibility period. World champions are the beloved of Caissa, while the multitudes (you and me!) stumble along, blundering our way through chess. In most of the games in this book, Fischer has yet to reach the "beloved" stage. This book is about the under-covered subject of the rest of his career, where the great majority of games are from the late 1950s to the mid-1960s, when Fischer was young and therefore not yet Fischer. I also include his 1992 warm-up match against an over-the-hill Gligoric, when Bobby was both well past his expiration date and also super rusty, having hardly played at all in the two decades since his win of the world chess championship in 1972. In many of the games – especially those played in the 1950s – Fischer's play does not always resemble the factory-like efficiency of his prime years. So the selection in this book is *not* going to be the normal Fischer, Gone with the Wind/Casablanca classics you are accustomed to.

Fischer's Style

Our past study of great players made us the players we are today. As a kid, my two favourites were Capablanca and Fischer, who both had an innate way of reaching for a position's heart via clarity and harmony.

Intuition is a boundary beyond where mathematics goes. Very few possess it, to the point where it functions even more

efficiently than mere number crunching. Fischer – like Morphy, Capa, Tal (yes, Tal, who Kasparov said saw "through" variations) and Carlsen, like single daisies growing out of a stone ruin – had this mysterious gift of simply knowing where to place pieces and pawns, when the rest of us lack the means to understand.

In their best games, both Capablanca and Fischer made chess look so trivially simple, as if we too could win the same way. Complications tend to be beyond acceptance or rejection. They have a nature of towing us to who-knows-where, where our only goal is to avoid death by drowning. It's not that Fischer was brilliant in unclear positions – he wasn't. It's just that he had a way of always willing himself *away* from such positions, while remaining in positions of clarity, where his extraordinary strategic skills shined.

Very few people have described your writer as a "man of few words", nor has anyone ever mistaken me for a mute. This time, though, I will confound the critics by keeping this introduction short (mainly because the book is so long and I don't want to face the wrath of my Everyman Overlords on going over my page quota, which I did!). So let's get to Bobby's games!

Cyrus Lakdawala
February 2024

Chapter One
Bobby's Early Goof-Ups

As mentioned in the introduction, the average Fischer fanatic/fan believes that Bobby played at 3300 strength from Kindergarten age on. This chapter is to demystify the fact that Bobby was not yet Bobby in his youth. So I'm going to do something unusual and begin a book on a player with two early losses.

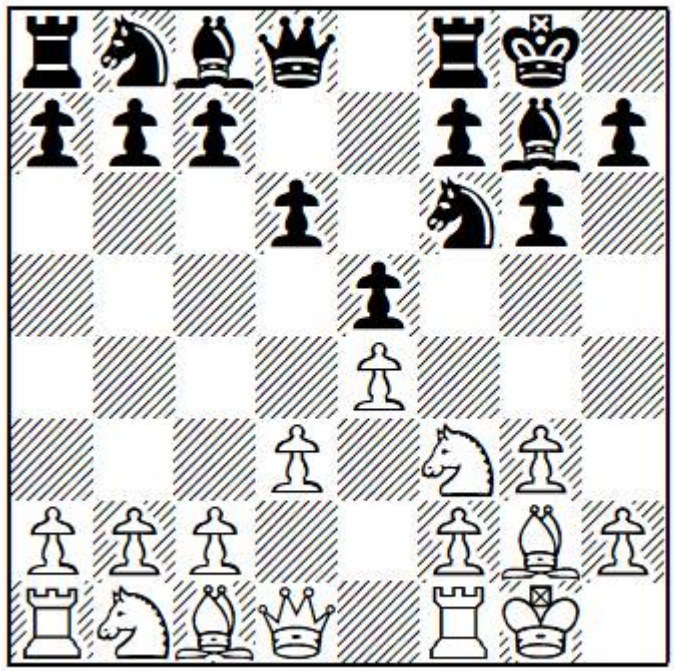
Game 1
R.J.Fischer-Mau.Fox
Canadian Open, Montreal 1956
King's Indian Attack

Professor Ilan Vardi mentioned this loss to Canadian Master Maurice Fox, who both Ilan and I knew, since we grew up in Montreal.

1 Nf3

Hey, what happened to "best by test" 1 e4! - ? Actually, in the early days Bobby favoured King's Indian Attack formations and played 1 Nf3 a lot.

1 … Nf6 2 g3 d6 3 Bg2 g6 4 0-0 Bg7 5 d3 0-0 6 e4 e5



Fox goes symmetrical. Most players transpose to a KIA versus Sicilian formation with 6 … c5.

7 Nbd2

KIA people prefer their knights on d2, rather than c3.

7 … c6

7 … Nc6 is Black's main move.

8 c3

8 a4 is also played here.

8 … Qc7

It's early to commit the queen. 8 … Nbd7 makes more sense.

9 Nh4

Bobby immediately tries to take advantage of the fact that Black's queen left her post on d8. He plays for f2-f4 and if Black exchanges on f4, he will recapture with the g3-pawn without fear of discovered attacks on the h4-knight. 9 Re1 Nbd7 10 d4 is an alternative set-up.

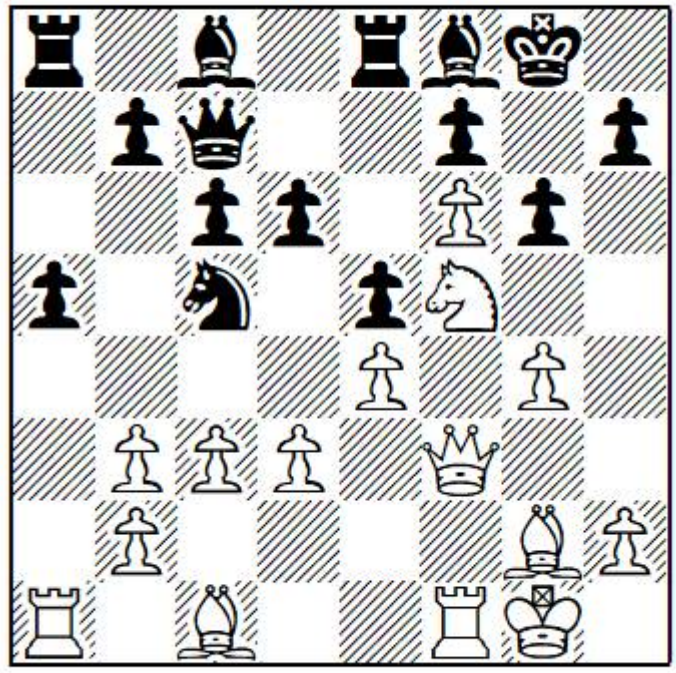
9 … a5 10 f4

The young Bobby plays for mate.

10 … Nbd7

10 … exf4 11 gxf4 makes less sense when Black's queen is no longer eyeing the h4-knight.

11 f5



Now g3-g4 and a kingside storm is coming.

11 … Nc5!?

This feels awfully slow. Fox should play upon the principle: *Counter the opponent's wing attack with a central counter*, with 11 … d5 12 g4 Rd8!, not fearing 13 g5?! Nh5 14 f6 (White can't win a pawn with 14 exd5?! cxd5 15 Bxd5?? due to the double attack 15 … Qc5+, picking off the bishop) 14 … Bf8 and Black's d5-pawn is still covered tactically.

12 Nb3! Nxb3 13 axb3 Nd7?!

Once again, he should be playing for a central counter with 13 … d5.

14 g4

White builds for an attack, while Black is short on counterplay.

14 … Re8

Once again he should try 14 … d5 15 g5 Rd8 16 Qc2.

15 Qf3?!

This isn't such a great square for the queen. 15 g5 looks promising.

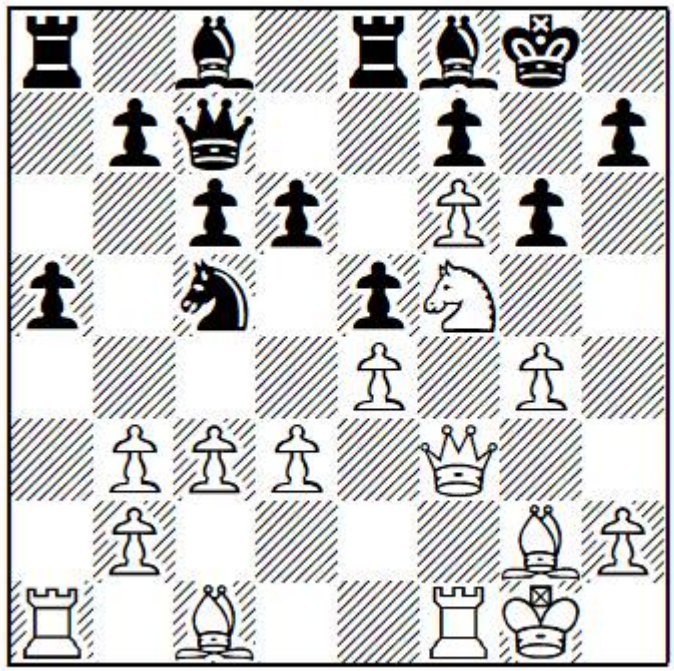
15 … Nc5

It would be foolish to ignore the kingside threats and wander off with 15 … Qb6+?? 16 Be3 Qxb3 17 Ra3! Qxb2 18 fxg6 Kh8 19 gxf7 Rf8 (19 … Re6 20 Nf5 is also completely lost for Black) 20 Ng6+! and mate in two.

16 f6?!

Tempting as this appears, it's a strategic misjudgement which makes Black's king safer. 16 Ra3 looks correct.

16 … Bf8 17 Nf5!



Dramatic stuff. Unfortunately for Bobby, his opponent is just fine if he defends accurately.

17 … d5

Taking the knight at once is fatal for Black: 17 … gxf5?? 18 gxf5 Kh8 19 Qh5 Qd8 20 Bg5 Nxd3 21 Rf3 Nf4 22 Bxf4 exf4 23 Rh3 h6 24 Qg5 and wins.

But Black can take the bishop, after which both sides have to be very accurate: 17 … Nxb3!? 18 Bh6! (threatening Bxf8 and Qh3) 18 … gxf5 19 gxf5! Bxh6 20 Qh5 Be3+ 21 Kh1 h6 22 Rf3 Qd8! 23 Rg3+ Kf8 24 Qh4! Bxf5! 25 Rxe3 Re6! 26 exf5 Qxf6 27 Qc4 Nxa1 28 fxe6 Qxe6 29 Qh4 and the engine calls it dead even!.

18 Qg3

Now 18 Bh6 Bxf5 19 Bxf8 Bxe4 20 Qe3! Ne6 21 dxe4 Rxf8 22 Qh6 dxe4 23 Bxe4 (White threatens to lift a rook to h3) 23 … Rfc8! (not 23 … Rfd8?? 24 Rf3 Qb6+ 25 Kh1 Qxb3 26 Rg1 Qc4 27 Re3 Rd2 28 b3! Qxb3 29 Rh3 and Black is mated) 24 Rf5! Qb6+ 25 Kh1 Qd8 26 Re1 (if 26 Rh5?? Qxf6, White's attack flops) 26 … Qf8 27 Qxf8+ Kxf8 28 Rxe5 Rd8 is judged even by the engine.

18 … dxe4

18 … Kh8 19 Ng7 Rd8 20 Bh6 Qb6 21 exd5! cxd5! 22 Kh1 e4 is a crazy mess which *Stockfish* calls even.

19 dxe4?!

White shouldn't waste a tempo recapturing. After 19 Qh4! Nxd3 20 Bh6! Bc5+ 21 Kh1 e3! 22 Bxe3 Bxe3 23 Nxe3 Qd6 (the idea is to meet Qh6 with … Qf8; the trouble is that it allows a pin) 24 Rfd1 e4 25 Ra4! if anyone stands better, it's White.

19 … Kh8?!

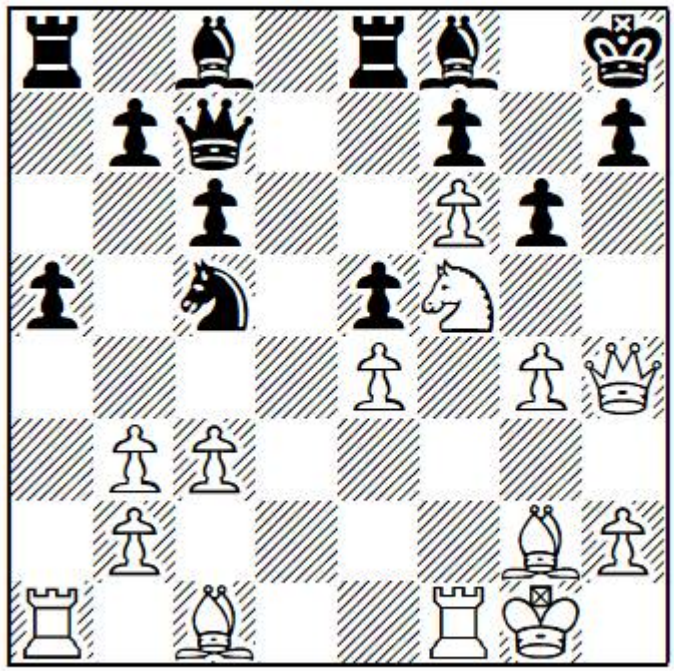
Moving the king actually makes it less safe. Instead:

a) 19 … Bxf5?! doesn't slow White down: 20 gxf5 Nxb3 21 fxg6 hxg6 22 Bg5! Qb6+ 23 Kh1 Nxa1 24 h4! and White's attack is more dangerous than Black's extra rook!

b) 19 … Nxb3! was correct: 20 Bh6! Bc5+ 21 Kh1 Nxa1 22 Qh4! Nb3 23 Rf3 Bxf5 24 gxf5 Rad8 25 fxg6 fxg6! 26 f7+ Qxf7 27 Rxf7 Kxf7 28 Bf1 Rd1 29 Kg2 b5 30 Qh3 Rd6, when I prefer Black's chances.

20 Qh4?!

20 Be3! looks dangerous for Black. White's simple plan is to lift major pieces to the h-file.



20 … Qd8?

Fox panics. Correct is 20 … Nxb3! 21 Be3 Nxa1 22 Rf3 Qd8 23 Rh3 Qd1+ 24 Bf1 h5! 25 Qg5 Nc2 26 Rxh5+ gxh5 27 Qxh5+ Kg8 28 Qg5+ and the game ends in perpetual check.

21 Ng7?

Now Bobby goes wrong. 21 Be3! gives White a winning attack. For example: 21 … Ne6 22 Rad1 Qc7 23 Rf3 Nf4 24 Kh1! and if 24 … Be6 25 Bxf4 exf4 26 Rh3 h5 27 Qg5 Rad8 28 Rg1! Rd2, White forces mate after 29 Rxh5+ gxh5 30 Nh6!.

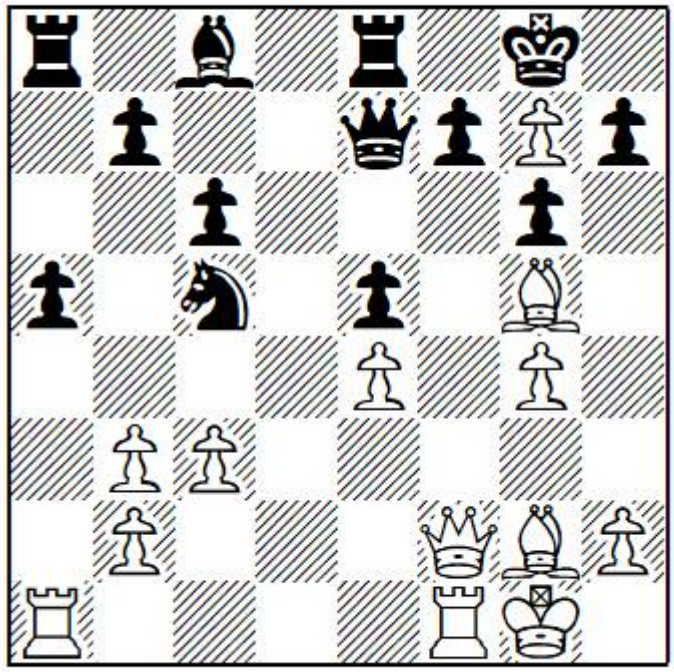
21 … Bxg7 22 fxg7+ Kg8!

There are insects whose bite or sting paralyses (rather than kills) their prey in order to preserve it and eat it later. This is exactly what Fox is doing here. White's g7-pawn is a human shield which keeps Black's king safe. Whereas after 22 … Kxg7?? 23 Bg5 Qd6 24 Rxf7+! Kxf7 25 Qxh7+ Ke6 26 Qxg6+ Kd7 27 Qf7+ Re7 28 Bxe7 Qxe7 29 Rd1+ it's time for Black to resign.

23 Qf2

White should avoid the tempting yet incorrect 23 Bg5 Qc7 24 Rf3? Nxe4 25 Bh6 Nd6 26 Rh3 f5! and White's attack is failing.

23 … Qe7 24 Bg5!



Exercise (combination alert): This looks like a game-ending shot. Black's

queen can't simultaneously cover f7 and the knight on c5. How can Black

save himself?

Answer: Only the central counter 24 … Nd3! works.

24 … Nd3!

Fox finds the only move to stay even.

25 Qd2 Qd7! 26 Rad1??

The fatal mistake. After 26 Bf6! Nf4 27 Qxd7 Bxd7 28 g5 Nh5 29 Bf3 Bh3 30 Rf2 Nxg7 31 Rd2 White's control over the

d-file and dark squares offers full compensation for Black's extra pawn.

26 … Qxg4 27 Bh6!?

If 27 h3 Qh5 28 h4 Nf4 29 Bxf4 exf4 30 Qxf4 Be6, Black has a strategically won game.

27 … Nf4! 28 Bxf4 exf4 29 Rxf4 Qh5

Black's king remains safe, while Bobby's position is riddled with pawn weakness.

30 Rdf1 Be6 31 Qf2

Intending to chop f7, which is easy enough to defend.

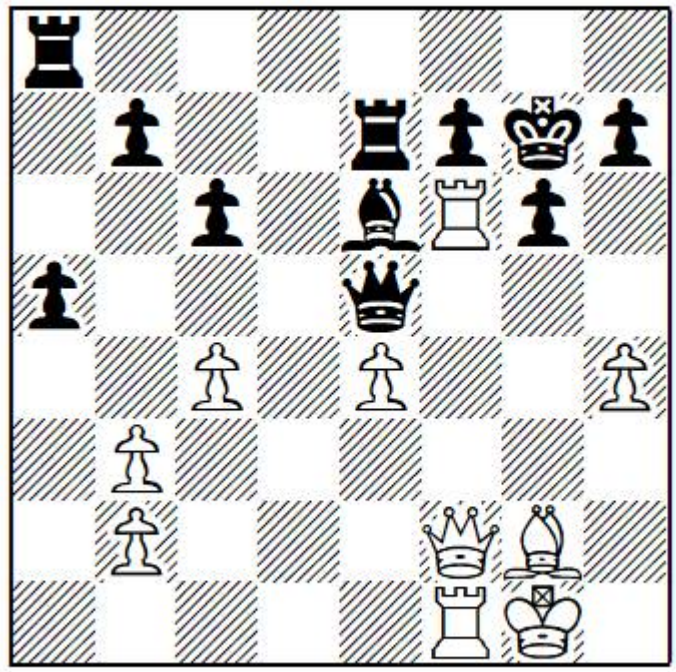
31 … Re7 32 c4 Qe5

It's clear that Bobby's attack is now reduced to the status of spat gum on the bottom of a shoe.

33 Rf6 Kxg7

Now is a good time to chop the pawn.

34 h4



Exercise (combination alert): How did Black win material?

Answer: Interference.

34 … Bf5!

The engine doesn't even want to bother taking the exchange and prefers 34 … a4!.

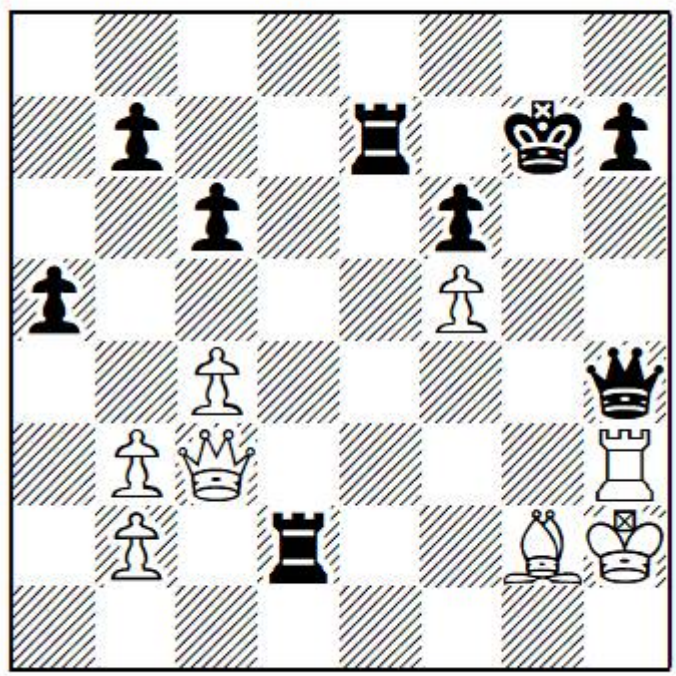
35 Rxf5 gxf5 36 exf5 f6!

The remainder should have been easy for Black.

37 Kh1 Qe3 38 Qc2 Rd8 39 Rf3 Qe1+ 40 Kh2 Rd2 41 Qc3

41 Rg3+?? is met by the simple 41 … Qxg3+! 42 Kxg3 Rxc2.

41 … Qxh4+! 42 Rh3



Exercise (combination alert): Black has a forced mate in six.

Answer: Annihilation of defensive barrier. Just chop White's most important defender, the bishop.

42 … Rxg2+! 43 Kxg2 Re2+ 44 Kg1

If 44 Kh1 Qe4+ 45 Rf3 Qb1+, Black mates in two. Now Black mates with the impossible-to-miss … Qf2+ etc. Except …

44 … Qe1+?

What the hell? Why go into a winning rook ending when immediate mate is available?

45 Qxe1 Rxe1+ 46 Kf2 Rb1

Unfortunately for Bobby, his ridiculously lucky escape from mate was not a case of obstruction of justice where he heroically drew the game, since he was dead lost in the rook ending. He basically suffered on, without altering the result.

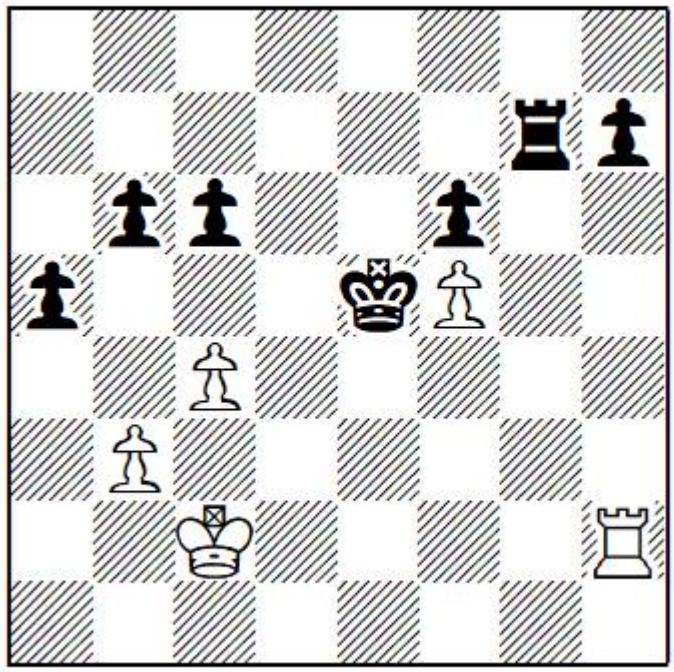
47 Ke3 Rxb2 48 Kd4 b6!

White's king is blocked from entry to c5.

49 Kc3 Rf2 50 Rh5 Rf3+ 51 Kb2 Rg3!

Intending … Rg5.

52 Rh2 Rg5 53 Rf2 Kf7 54 Kc3 Ke7 55 Re2+ Kd7 56 Rd2+ Kc7 57 Rf2 Kd6 58 Kd4 Rg4+ 59 Kd3 Ke5 60 Rh2 Rg3+ 61 Kc2 Rg7



62 Rh6

If 62 Rf2 h5, Black's rook moves to h7 and then the h-pawn marches forward. Or 62 Rh5 Rg5 63 Rxh7 Rxf5 64 Rb7 Kd6! and White has no chance since 65 Rxb6? gets the rook trapped after 65 … Kc7 66 Ra6 Kb7.

62 … Kxf5 0-1

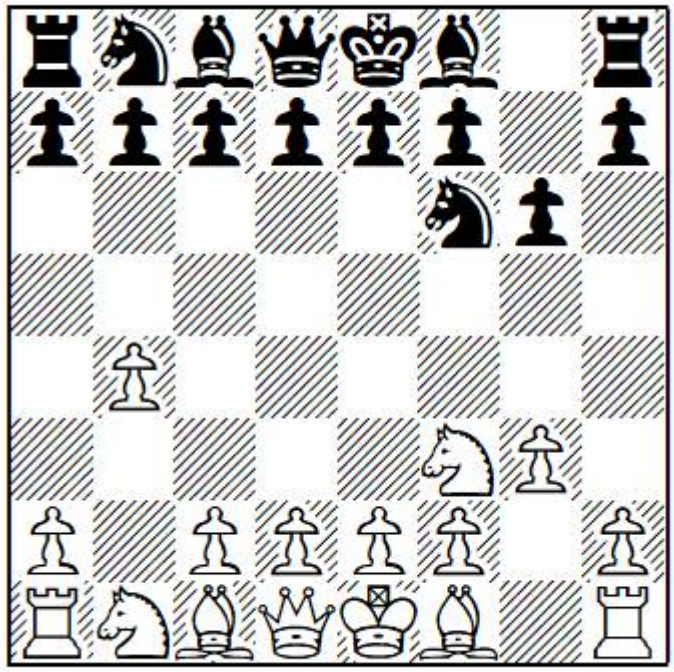
The nature of life is that we lose all our wealth and loved ones at the time of our death. Bobby finally senses the impossibility of the assertion that he will save the rook ending.

Game 2
M.Otteson-R.J.Fischer
New Western Open, Milwaukee 1957
Réti Opening

National Master Milton Otteson – who for some unknown reason later legally changed his name to the more 007ish, Alexander London – was a friend of mine in the late 1970s, although he dropped out of sight from the San Diego chess scene in the early 2000s. Confession: I had a huge crush on his

über-hot daughter (I forgot her name! Maybe Ingrid?) who he cruelly blocked me from dating, since I was a penniless chess player! Anyway, unrequited love aside, Milton/Alexander mentioned maybe 3,500 times that he beat Bobby Fischer. As it turned out, his claim proved to be true.

1 Nf3 Nf6 2 g3 g6 3 b4!?



The Delayed Orangutan?

3 … Bg7 4 Bb2 0-0 5 Bg2 d6 6 d4!?

6 c4 looks correct.

6 … e5

Bobby goes with the structure he knew, but this is not best. 6 … c5! 7 bxc5 dxc5 is awkward for White.

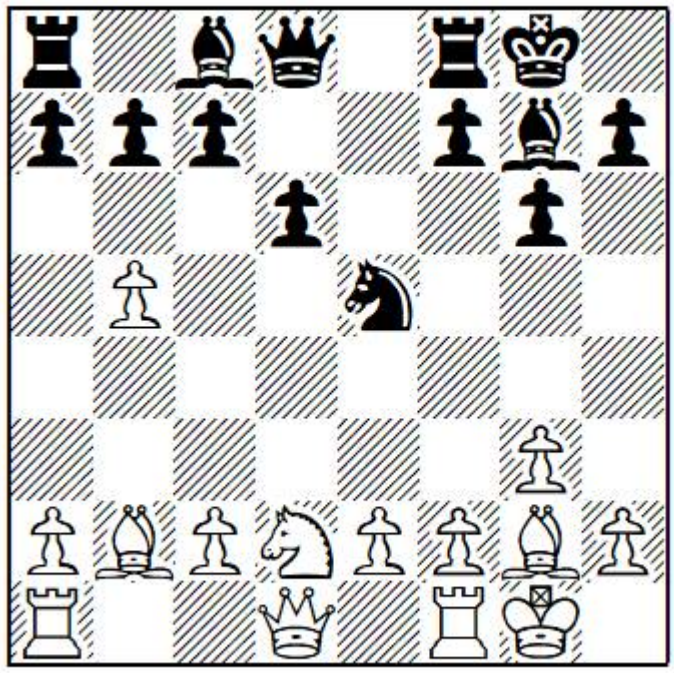
7 dxe5 Ng4 8 Nbd2

8 Qc1 Nxe5 9 Nxe5 dxe5 10 0-0 c6 11 c4 Be6 12 Nd2 looks close to balanced.

8 … Nc6 9 b5

9 Qc1!? is the engine's suggestion.

9 … Ncxe5 10 Nxe5 Nxe5 11 0-0!?



Otteson is willing to hand over the bishop pair to gain time. Otherwise 11 Qc1 covers against Fischer's coming move.

11 … Nf3+

While this picks up the bishop pair, it also loses time. The engine actually prefers to decline with 11 … d5.

12 Bxf3 Bxb2 13 Rb1 Bg7 14 Nc4 Bh3?! 15 Re1?!

It is more promising to sacrifice a pawn with 15 Bxb7! Bxf1 16 Kxf1! Rb8 17 Bf3 Qd7 18 a4. White gets a pawn and massive light square domination for the exchange and stands clearly better.

15 … Bc3

Fischer wants the exchange after all.

16 Bxb7!

16 Nd2?! loses the initiative after 16 … d5.

16 … Bxe1 17 Qxe1

White has sufficient compensation.

17 … Rb8 18 Bf3

18 Bc6 is more accurate, when 18 … Bd7 is met by 19 Na5.

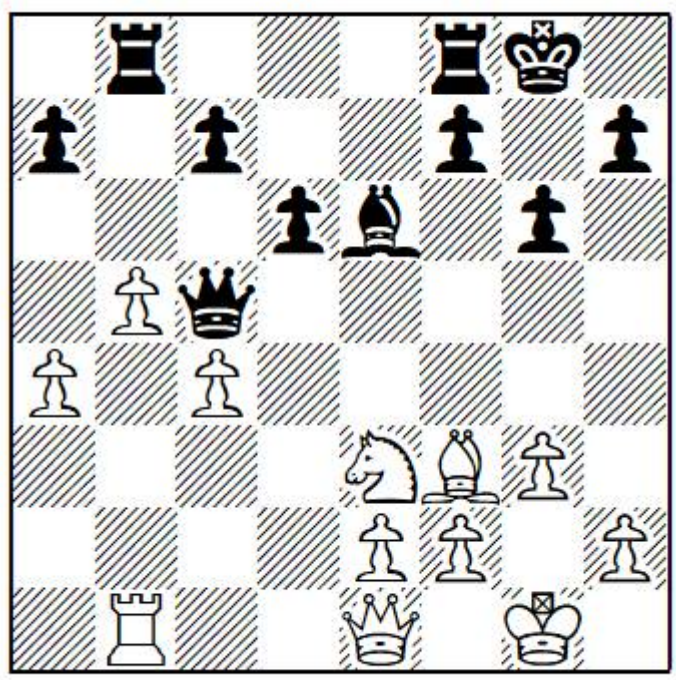
18 … Qg5 19 a4 Qc5?!

19 … a6! is the way to stay even.

20 Ne3 Be6?!

Bobby drifts planlessly. 20 … Rbe8 21 Qd2 Re5 is okay for Black.

21 c4!



White's light square power grows.

21 … a6

21 … Bxc4?? fails miserably to 22 Rc1 d5 23 Bxd5.

22 Rd1?!

22 Qd2! is more natural and holds on to White's edge.

22 … axb5 23 cxb5!?

This is risky, yet playable. White gets a safer edge with 23 axb5.

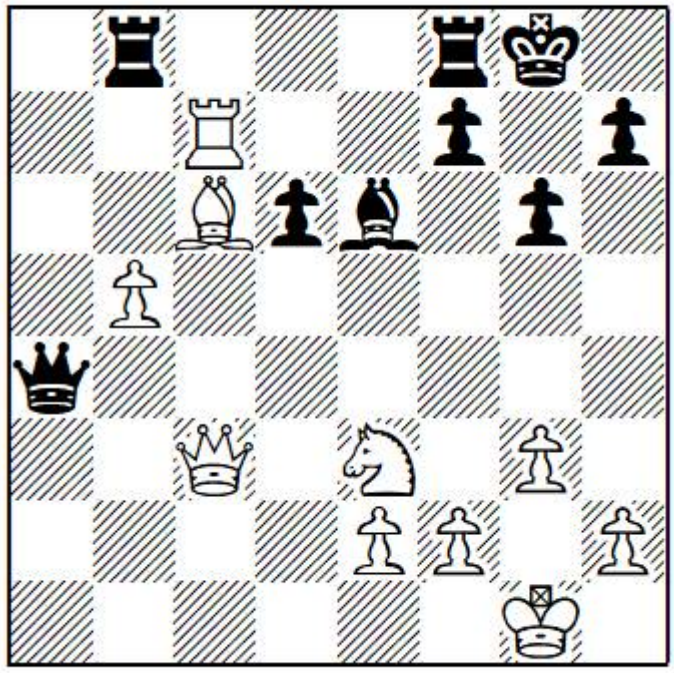
23 … Bb3 24 Rc1 Qd4 25 Rxc7 Qxa4 26 Qc3!

Strategic threat: Ng4.

26 … Be6

Forced.

27 Bc6



27 … Rfc8

Fischer plays for the full point. He can draw with 27 … Rxb5 28 Bxb5 Qxb5 29 Qd3 Qxd3 30 exd3 Ra8.

28 Re7 d5

28 … Rxb5 29 Bxb5 Qxb5 30 Qf6! Qb1+ 31 Nf1! (31 Kg2?? Qe4+ 32 Qf3 Bh3+! wins the exchange) 31 … Qa2 is equal.

29 Qf6 Rxc6?!

Fischer mistimes the return of material. He was better off with 29 … Qe4.

30 bxc6 Qxc6 31 Ng4!

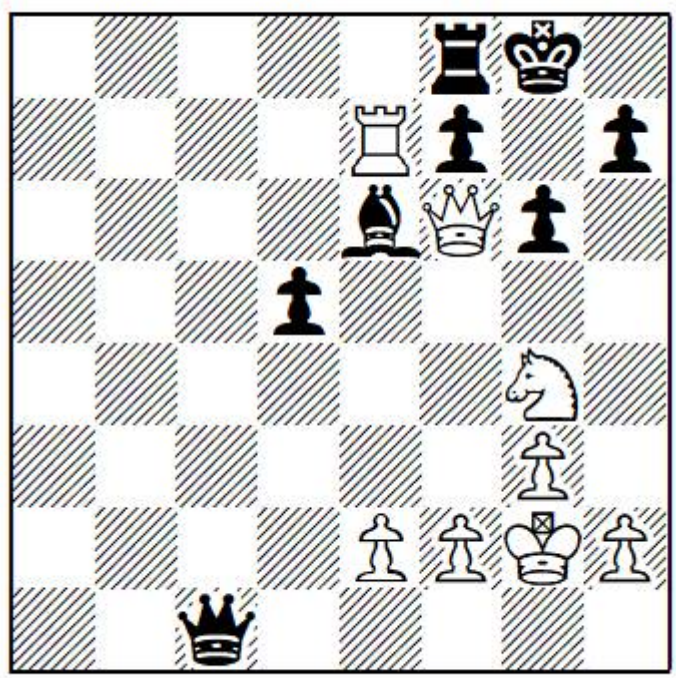
A rogue element disrupts Black's harmony. Otteson attempts to exploit the weak dark squares around Fischer's king.

31 … Qc1+??

Covering the potential for a knight check on h6 is a mistranslation of the correct defensive path. 31 … Rb1+! saves the game: 32 Kg2 Rb7! 33 Qe5! Kf8! (certainly not 33 … Rxe7?? 34 Nh6+ Kf8 35 Qh8 mate) 34 Rxb7 Qxb7 35 Qh8+ Ke7 36 Qxh7! (White's knight is tactically covered via a queen check on h4) 36 … d4+! 37 f3 Qb5 38 Kf2 d3! and Black will hold a draw due to the exposed status of White's king.

32 Kg2 Rf8

32 … d4 33 Rxe6 is similar to the game. Obviously not 32 … Bxg4?? 33 Qxf7+ and mate next move.



33 Rxe6!

This isn't inflammatory rhetoric or bluster but, instead, the precursor to war. Not only does White pick up two pawns for

the exchange, Bobby's king also remains vulnerable to an attack by white queen and knight.

33 … fxe6 34 Qxe6+ Kg7 35 Qe5+ Kf7 36 f4!

Cutting off the black queen's access to h6.

36 … Rc8 37 Nh6+

37 Qf6+ Ke8 38 Ne5 Qc7 39 Qh8+ is also crushing.

37 … Kf8 38 Qh8+

Yipes. All of Bobby's kingside pawns fall.

38 … Ke7 39 Qxh7+ Kd6 40 Qxg6+ Kc5 41 Qd3 Qc4 42 Ng4

Of course Otteson won't swap queens and give Fischer a passed c-pawn.

42 … Rg8

Bobby's idea is that if the knight moves, he has … Qxf4. Unfortunately for him, White can allow it! 42 … Qxd3 43 exd3 Kd4 44 Ne5 Ke3 45 h4 is completely hopeless for Black.

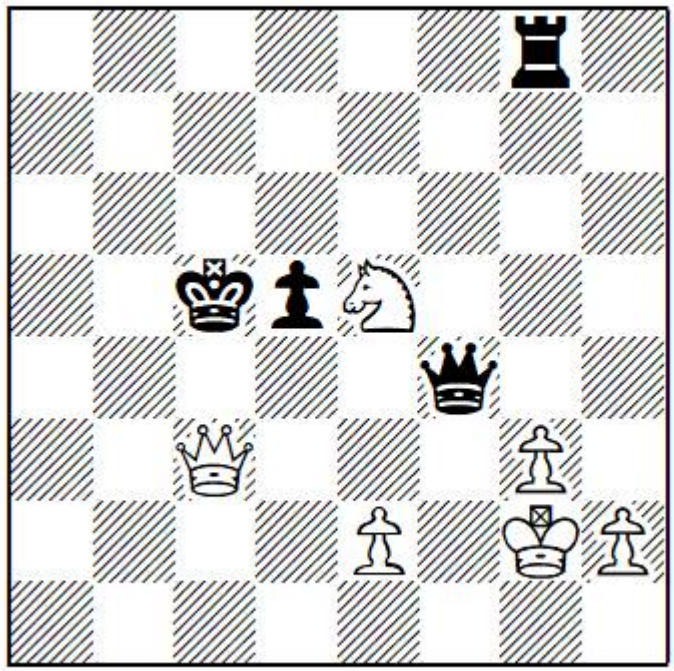
43 Ne5!

White doesn't need to play 43 h3.

43 … Qxf4

Now Black's king gets buffeted around.

44 Qc3+



44 … Kb5

Or:

a) 44 … Kd6 45 Qc6+! Kxe5 46 Qc7+ skewers and wins.

b) 44 … Kb6 45 Qc6+ Ka7 46 Qc5+ Ka6 (or 46 … Kb8 47 Qb5+) 47 Qd6+! Ka7 (or 47 … Kb7 48 Qxd5+) 48 Nc6+ wins.

45 Qc6+ Ka5 46 Qxd5+

Double attack. The black position's approval ratings fall precipitously, as his position limps from horrible to horribler, but the young Bobby was a true bitter-ender and keeps playing.

46 … Ka4 47 Qxg8 Qxe5 48 Qc4+ Ka3 49 h4 1-0

There is no way to hold back the tidal flow, so Bobby resigned.

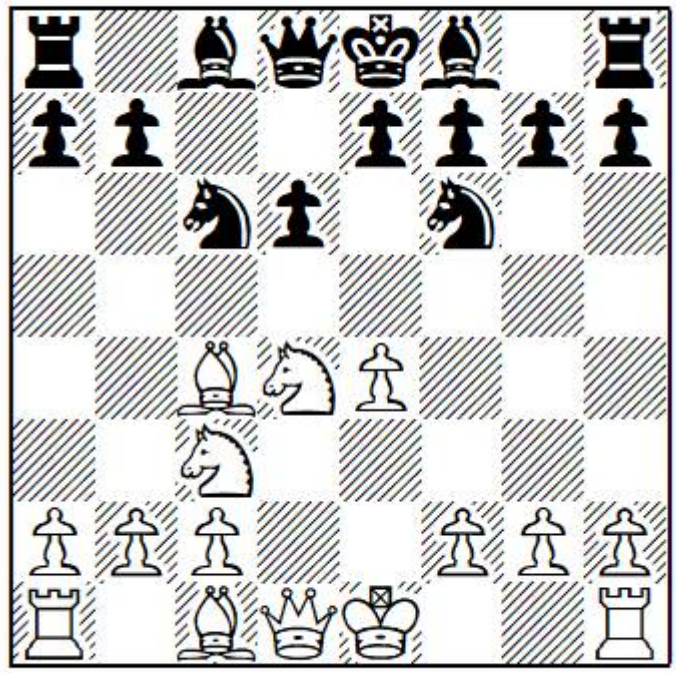
They say painful losses are character-building exercises. Most chess players, however, feel "they" are a bunch of fools who don't play chess!

Chapter Two
Bobby on the Attack

In this chapter we cover some of Fischer's lesser-known attacking games.

Game 3
R.J.Fischer-P.Benko
Candidates Tournament, Bled/Zagreb/Belgrade 1959
Sicilian Defence

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 d6 6 Bc4



As everyone knows, the Sozin was Bobby's go-to set-up against most Sicilian lines.

6 … Qb6

This is one of Black's highest scoring systems against Sozin. Clearly at some point Black will lose a tempo to a future Be3. The problem is White's d4-knight is given an unwanted "free" tempo to a square which is inferior to d4.

7 Nde2

Alternatives are 7 Nb3, 7 Nxc6, and 7 Ndb5.

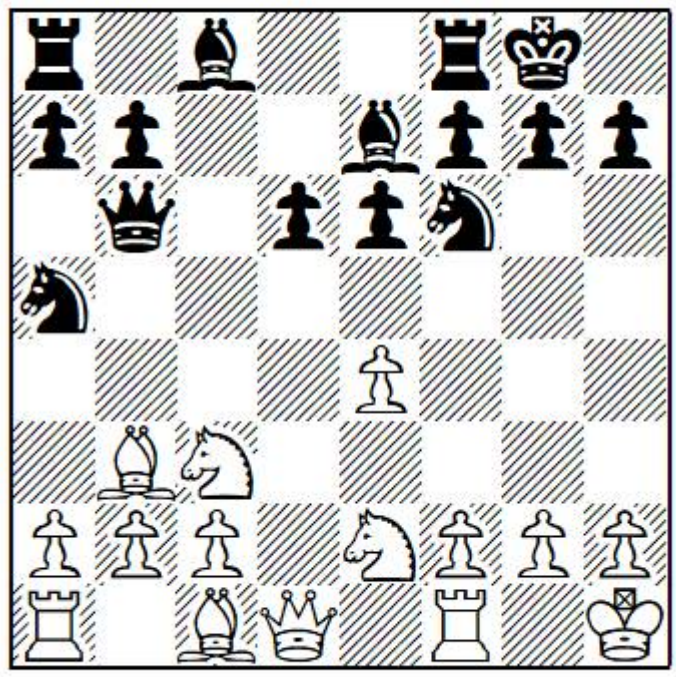
7 … e6 8 0-0 Be7 9 Bb3

9 Be3 is also playable. 9 … Qxb2?? isn't possible due to 10 a3! Ng4 11 Bb3! Nxe3 12 fxe3 Ra2 follows and Black's queen is trapped.

9 … 0-0 10 Kh1!

Now f2-f4 is coming. 10 Be3 sends the queen to the square she wants to go after 10 … Qc7.

10 … Na5!



Play from both sides mirrors current theory. Benko's last move ensures possession of the bishop pair and also takes the wind out of the typical Sozin plan of f2-f4-f5 since, without the light-squared bishop, White doesn't exert pressure on e6.

11 Bg5

Still White's most popular choice today.

11 … Qc5

11 … h6 is unplayed, maybe because it presents White with a future sacrificial target.

12 f4 b5

Played in all sixteen database games.

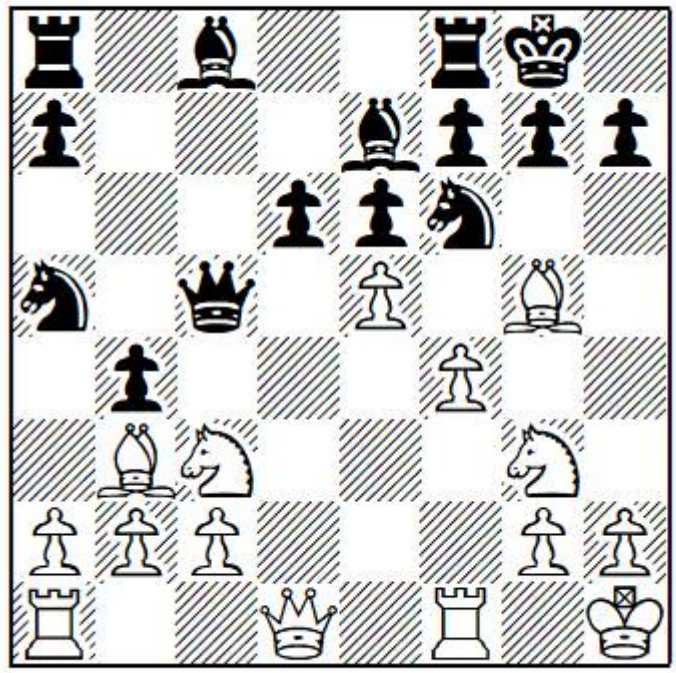
13 Ng3

Now Nh5 is in the air.

13 … b4?!

13 … Bb7! is known to offer Black dynamic equality after 14 Nh5 Kh8!.

14 e5!



Only with this move does Bobby generate the attack he craves.

14 … dxe5!

14 … bxc3?! 15 exf6 gxf6 16 Bh6 Kh8! 17 Bxf8 Bxf8 18 Ne4 Qf5 19 Nxc3 leaves Black a full exchange down, for which the potential for attack down the g-file isn't enough.

15 Bxf6! gxf6

Instead:

a) 15 … Bxf6 16 Nce4 Qe7 17 Nh5 Bh4! 18 fxe5 Kh8 19 Rf6!! Bb7 (19 … gxf6?? 20 Qg4 Rg8 21 Qxh4 Rg6 22 Nf4 is hopeless for Black) 20 Qg4 Rg8 21 Qxh4 Nxb3 22 cxb3 gxf6 23 Nhxf6 Rg7 24 Ng5 looks uncomfortable for Black.

b) 15 … bxc3 16 Ne4 Qc6 17 Bxe7 Qxe4 18 Bxf8 cxb2 19 Rb1 Bb7 20 Qd2 Rd8 21 Qf2 Rxf8 22 fxe5 Qxe5 23 c4 and Black doesn't have enough for the exchange.

16 Nce4 Qd4?

He had to try 16 … Qc7 17 Nh5 Kh8 18 Nexf6 Qd8! 19 Bd5! exd5 20 fxe5 Rg8! 21 Nxg8 Qxg8 22 e6! Bxe6 23 Qd4+ f6 24 Nxf6 Qg7 25 Rae1 Rg8 26 g3, although White stands clearly better.

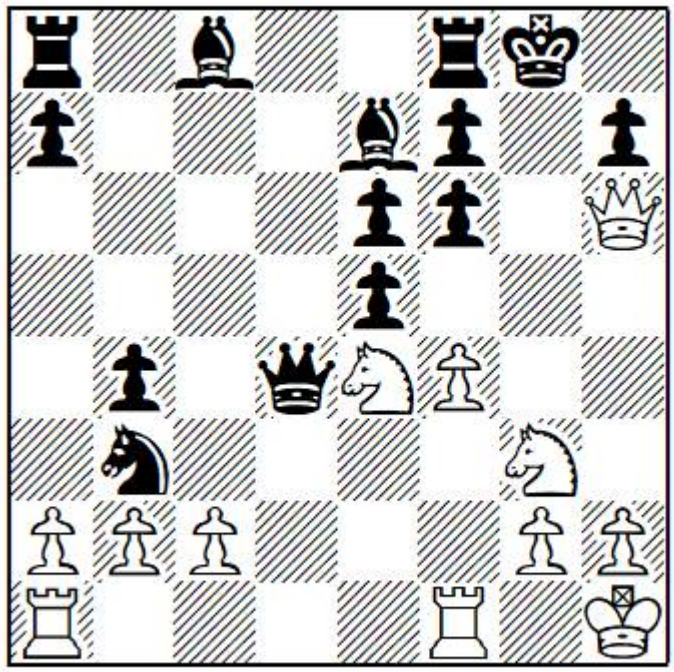
17 Qh5!

Also deadly is 17 Qg4+! Kh8 18 Qh4 exf4 19 c3! bxc3 20 Rad1 Qe5 21 Bc2! (threat: Ng5) 21 … f5 22 Qxe7 Bb7 23 Nd6 fxg3 24 Rxf5! and Black is busted.

17 … Nxb3

When our clock is low (Benko was a habitual time pressure addict), we come to the startling realization that thought itself is a luxury. This is a mistake in a lost position. 17 … exf4 resists better but for Benko there is no magical elixir which conquers death: 18 Nf5! (interference; this way … f6-f5 defences are prevented) 18 … exf5 19 Rxf4! (threat: Rh4) 19 … Qxe4 20 Rxe4 fxe4 21 Qxa5 and Black won't save the game.

18 Qh6!



There is no need to recapture the b3-knight. Fischer threatens Nh5.

18 … exf4 19 Nh5!

With dual deadly threats on g7 and f6. A coming together ends in separation and not even the foundational pillars of Black's once great defensive cluster remain.

19 … f5

Not 19 … Qxe4?? 20 Qg7 mate.

20 Rad1!

Zwischenzug. 20 Nef6+? is rushed: 20 … Bxf6 21 Nxf6+ Qxf6 22 Qxf6 Nxa1 23 Rxa1 Bb7 and Black has chances of saving the game.

20 … Qe5

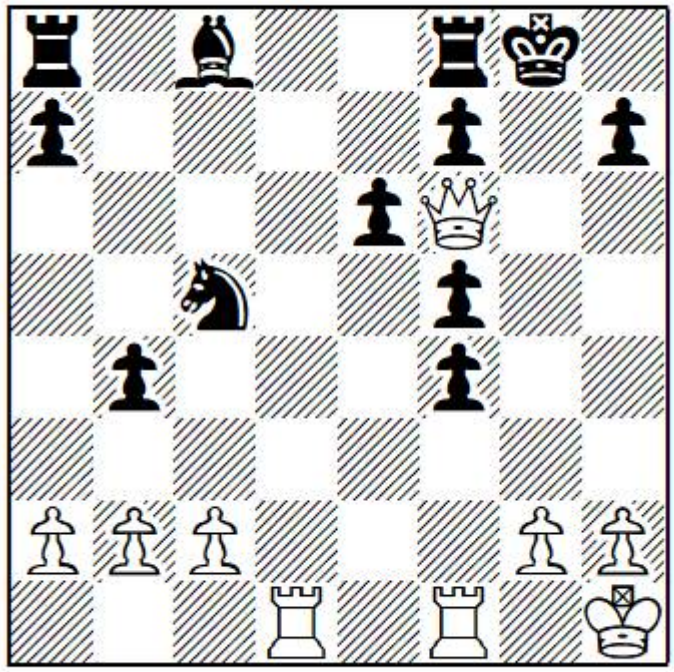
Not 20 … Qxe4?? 21 Qg7 mate or 20 … Qxb2?? 21 c3! (interference) and Black is mated.

21 Nef6+

Benko's dearly beloved queen falls and it's clear he doesn't get enough for it, especially considering the exposed nature of his king.

21 … Bxf6 22 Nxf6+ Qxf6 23 Qxf6 Nc5

If 23 … Na5 24 Rxf4 Bb7 25 Rf3!, Black is again mated.



Exercise (combination alert): How did Bobby win even more material?

Answer: Step 1: Give check on g5, disconnecting the black king from the f8-rook.

24 Qg5+! Kh8 25 Qe7!

Step 2: Double attack. For Black, this is the last straw. In fact, there are so many straws, that we have a tough time remembering the first one.

25 … Ba6 26 Qxc5 Bxf1 27 Rxf1 1-0

Game 4

R.J.Fischer-J.Kupper
Zürich 1959
Sicilian Defence

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 d6 6 Bc4

Once again Bobby's beloved Sozin. When it comes to our openings, there are multiple levels of understanding:

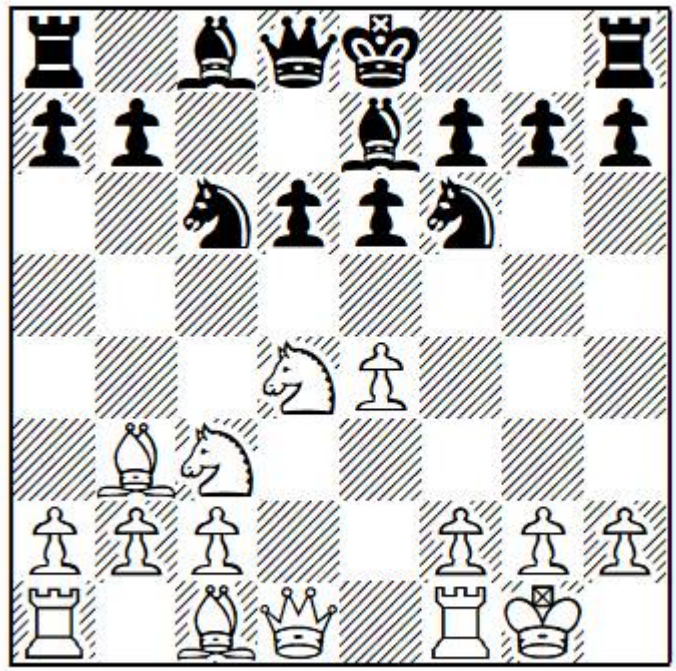
1. Through study, contemplation, and repetition.

2. Through application in over the board (and online) games.

3. Through years of experience, where you understand the structures, plans and typical tactics, as if they were parts of your own body, with penetrating familiarity.

The only number missing from Bobby was number 3 on the list, since he was so young at the time of the game. We need a good decade or so before we can rightfully claim the experience advantage. In this game we see Bobby bungle a key element of the Sozin, where he allowed his opponent a promising exchange sacrifice. Later in his career, there was nobody in the world who understood the Sozin with Bobby's depth.

6 … e6 7 Bb3 Be7 8 0-0



Fischer's general preference in the Sozin was to castle kingside. 8 Be3, followed by 9 Qe2 and 10 0-0-0 is the Velimirovic Attack, a line Bobby experimented with later on in his career (see Game 23, for example).

8 … Nxd4!?

This rarely played move scores decently for Black. At first it doesn't make sense to give White's queen a free jump into the centre. Looking deeper, the move comes with a big plus: White's normal Sozin plan of f2-f4-f5 becomes enfeebled with the removal of the d4-knight, since White then exerts less pressure on e6. 8 … 0-0 is the main line.

9 Qxd4 0-0 10 Kh1!

After 10 f4 b6! (White's queen and king are lined up on the same diagonal and … d6-d5 followed by … Bc5 is threatened) 11 Kh1 Ba6 12 Rd1 Qc8 Black stood no worse, C.Siefring-A.A.Kharitonov, correspondence 1999.

10 … b6!

This way … Ba6 ideas open.

11 f4

11 Bg5 is slightly more accurate.

11 … Bb7

11 … Ba6! transposes to the 10 f4 note above. *Stockfish* already slightly prefers Black in this variation.

12 f5 e5

12 … Qd7 is also possible.

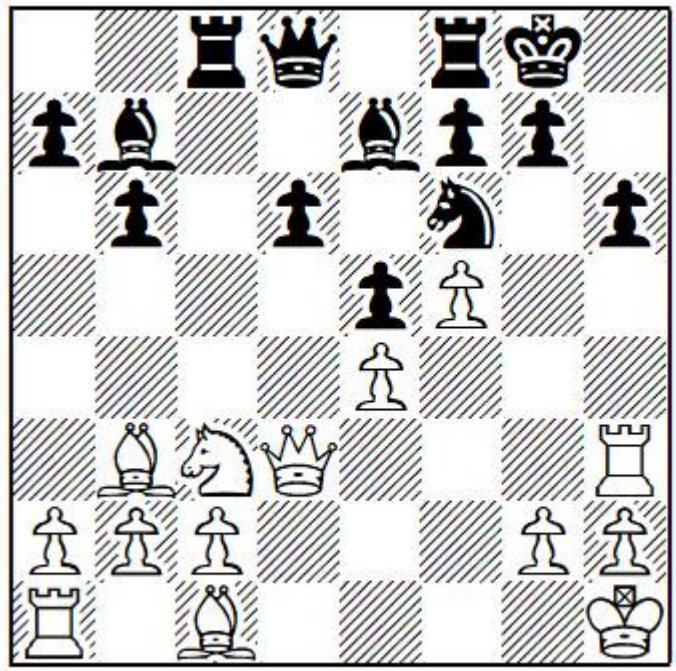
13 Qd3 h6

The idea is to prevent Bg5, yet the move is slow. Preferable is 13 … Rc8! 14 Bg5 Rxc3! 15 Qxc3 Nxe4 16 Bxe7 Qxe7 17 Qe3 d5 and Black stood no worse, S.Tatai-A.Medina Garcia, Malaga 1968.

14 Rf3?

This tempting move is actually a strategic error, where Bobby displays an early stylistic weakness: in his early games, he often overestimated the power of his attacks. In this case his coming attack is unsound since, if Black responds properly, White's centre cannot be held together. 14 Nd5! is slightly in White's favour.

14 … Rc8 15 Rh3?



Too slow! It's the nature of chess, where entry into a false plan means that which we once so carefully collected and stored up, falls prey to attrition and runs dry. White minimizes discomfort with the admittedly humiliating admission that his rook lift to f3 was unsound: 15 Re3! Rxc3! 16 bxc3 Qa8 17 Bd5 Nxd5 18 exd5 Bxd5 19 Rg3 Be4 20 Qe2 Bxf5 21 Bxh6 Bg6 and Black stands better.

15 … Kh7?

The chess world's knowledgebase was shockingly low in 1959, when juxtaposed with the present. Today, an average club level player would routinely find the rote strategic exchange sacrifice 15 … Rxc3! (in a single move, White's former strategic merit is exhausted) 16 Qxc3 Nxe4 17 Qe1 (the fork threat on f2 must be covered) 17 … d5 18 c3 Qd7 19 Rf3 Bf6 and White is in deep trouble strategically since for the exchange Black got:

1. An extra pawn.

2. A dominating pawn centre.

3. A beautifully posted knight on e4.

16 Be3?

He allows the promising exchange sacrifice again! It's time for apology-mode with 16 Bd5! Bxd5 17 exd5 Rh8! (Black must defend with great accuracy since the causes of mortal danger abound, while the causes of continued life are few) 18 Bg5 e4! 19 Nxe4 Nxe4 20 f6 Kg8! 21 Qxe4 (21 fxe7 Nf2+ 22 Kg1 Nxh3+ 23 Qxh3 Qc7 looks okay for Black) 21 … Bxf6 22 Bxf6 Qxf6 23 c3 Qe5 and chances are close to balanced.

16 … Qd7?

Black's last move reaches the scene from the crime movie where the lead detective knows with 100% certainty that the suspect in custody is the perpetrator, yet can't find the evidence to prove it in court. You guessed it: Black could have seized the advantage with the thematic 16 … Rxc3! 17 Qxc3 Nxe4 18 Qe1 Qd7 19 Qf1 d5 with a clear advantage for Black.

17 Nd5!

It's about time you prevented … Rxc3!. Watching the 1959 Eisenhower era decision-making process of the last few moves is as baffling to the present-day chess player, as adding peanut butter to your hotdog, instead of mustard.

17 … Bxd5 18 Bxd5 Nxd5

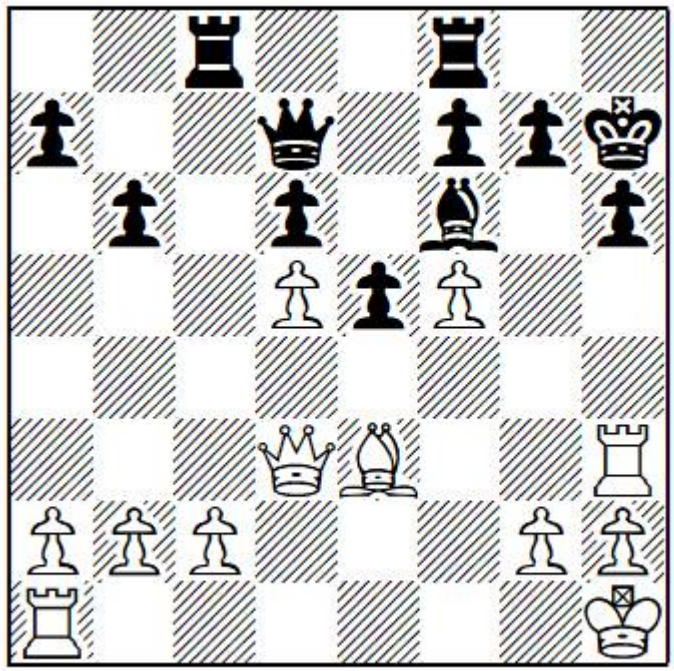
18 … Qc7 19 c3 Nxd5 20 Qxd5 Qc6 21 Qd1! Rh8! (21 … Qxe4?? loses to 22 Qh5 Bf6 23 Bxh6) 22 Qg4 Bf6 23 Rd1 doesn't look like much fun to defend for Black.

19 exd5

Reprehensible cheapo alert: Bobby threatens a deadly discovered check with f5-f6+.

19 … Bf6

Taking on a rotten bishop with 19 … f6 is safer for Black's king yet leaves him in a strategic bind after 20 a4.



Exercise (combination alert): How should White continue his attack?

Answer: Sacrifice the bishop on h6.

20 Bxh6!

20 g4?! is too slow: 20 … e4! 21 Qd2 Rh8 22 c3 Kg8 and Black looks okay.

20 … gxh6?

Acceptance is suicide. He had to play a pawn down major piece position with 20 … Rh8 21 Bg5+ Kg8 22 Rxh8+ Kxh8 23 Bxf6 gxf6 24 c4.

21 Qe3 Bg7

Black's only move.

a) 21 … Rfd8?? 22 Qxh6+ Kg8 23 Rg3+ and mate next move.

b) 21 … Bg5?? loses to 22 Qxg5.

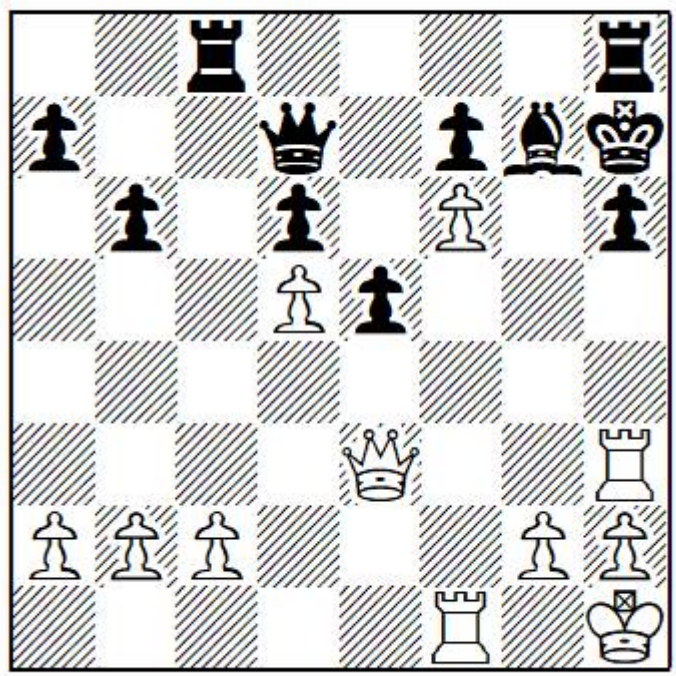
22 f6!

Overloaded defender. White regains the sacrificed piece with a winning position, since Black's king languishes in a prison.

22 … Rh8?

The optimal defence is 22 … Qg4! (22 … Bxf6?? allows 23 Qxh6+ Kg8 24 Qh7 mate) 23 fxg7 Qxg7 24 Rg3 Qf6 25 Qd3+! (seizing control over f1 to enable Rf1) 25 … e4! 26 Qxe4+ Kh8 27 c3 Rce8 and Black can at least play on, a pawn down.

23 Rf1!



This is far stronger than taking the bishop.

23 … Qb5

Nothing works.

a) 23 … Bxf6?? 24 Qxh6+ Kg8 25 Rg3+ forces mate.

b) 23 … Kg8 24 Qg3! Rh7 25 Rxh6! Qb5 26 Rg1! and Black is crushed.

c) 23 … Bf8 24 Qe4+ Kg8 25 Rg3+ Bg7 26 Rxg7+ Kf8 27 Rf3 Rc5 28 h3 and Black has no chance. 28 … Ke8 can be met by 29 Qh7!.

24 Qf3!

Covering the mating threat on f1, while threatening Qf5+, followed by f6xg7, with dual threats on f7 and h8.

24 … Rc4 25 Qf5+ 1-0

Black's king position induces a mixture of horror and nausea, since 25 … Kg8 26 fxg7 is a forced mate in four at the most.

Game 5
R.J.Fischer-E.M.German
Stockholm Interzonal 1962
Petroff Defence

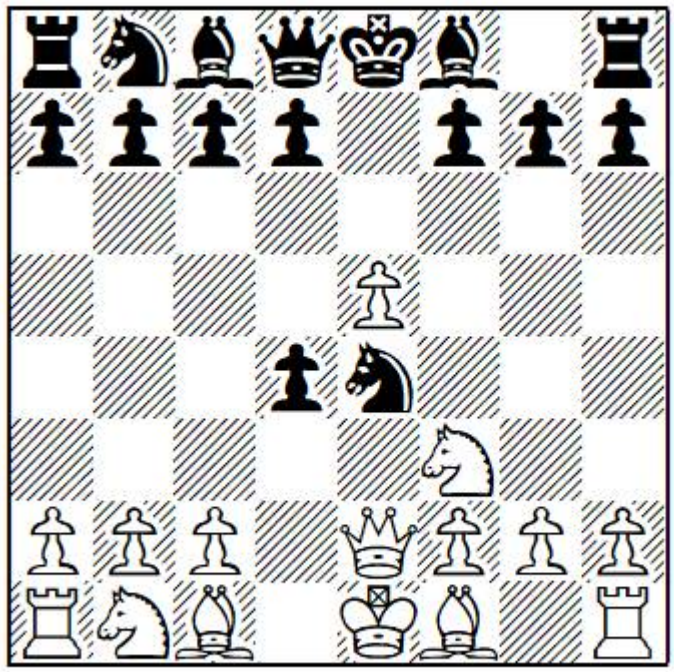
1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 d4

The younger Bobby, more so than the older version, favoured open positions, so this is a natural choice for him when faced with Petroff's Defence. Future Bobby favoured 3 Nxe5.

3 … exd4!?

3 … Nxe4! is the move played today.

4 e5 Ne4 5 Qe2!?



May I have your attention please? Apparently, Hell just froze over. Bobby, like Capa before him, was rarely attracted to artificial moves which interfered with the natural flow of development. In this anomaly case, he attempts to confuse his opponent with an offbeat line. There must be something to the line, since White scores quite well with it. Let's probe beneath the surface. The ideas are:

1. White wins back the d4-pawn later.

2. White then develops with Nc3, Bd2 and 0-0-0.

3. White's queen on e2, while clogging kingside development, also inhibits Black from playing either … d7-d5 or … f7-f5, due to the en passant captures.

4. White can develop the kingside via fianchetto.

Normal theory runs 5 Qxd4 d5 6 exd6 Nxd6 7 Nc3 Nc6 8 Qf4 g6 9 Be3 Bg7 10 0-0-0 0-0, when I wouldn't want to play Black's position.

5 … Nc5

5 … Bb4+! allows even chances after 6 Kd1!? d5! 7 exd6 f5 8 Ng5 (8 Nbd2 Bxd2 9 Nxd2 0-0 is messy and called even

by the engine) 8 … 0-0 9 dxc7 Qxc7 10 Qc4+ Qxc4 11 Bxc4+ Kh8 12 Nh3, P.Berclaz-J.Gronemann, correspondence 2000, when 12 … Nc6 leaves Black slightly better due to a lead in development.

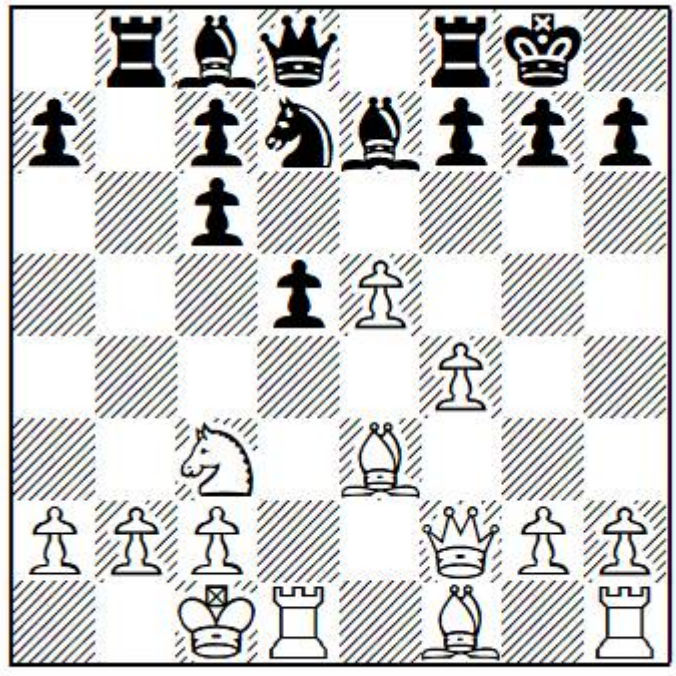
6 Nxd4 Nc6 7 Nxc6 bxc6?!

Later it was discovered that 7 … dxc6! is an equalizer. The position resembles a Ruy Lopez Berlin Wall, except that White hasn't handed over the bishop pair. However, Black leads in development and White's queen is awkwardly placed on e2.

8 Nc3 Rb8 9 f4!

A couple of years after this game, Keres won with 9 a3!? Be7 10 Be3! d5! (10 … Rxb2? 11 Bxc5 Bxc5 12 Na4 Rb5 13 Qd2! White wins material) 11 exd6 cxd6 12 Bxc5 dxc5 13 Qe5! and White stood better in P.Keres-J.Bolbochan, Buenos Aires 1964, Black shouldn't play 13 … Rxb2?! due to 14 Rd1 Bd7 15 Ne4! Qa5+ 16 c3 f6 17 Nd6+ Kf8 18 Qg3 and Black's king is in danger.

9 … Be7 10 Qf2! d5 11 Be3 Nd7 12 0-0-0 0-0



We reach a classic opposing wing castling position, where speed matters most. Black controls the open b-file, while White's central space seems the more important factor. Fischer's attack looks faster.

13 g4!?

This follows the go big or go home philosophy. In case you didn't know it, as White, Bobby displayed a predilection for pushing his g-pawns two squares even before it became fashionable. 13 Bd3 Re8 14 Na4, going for a blockade on c5, is the more strategic-minded way to play the position.

13 … Bb4?!

It doesn't make much sense to chase White's knight to a4. 13 … Nb6 looks better.

14 Ne2?!

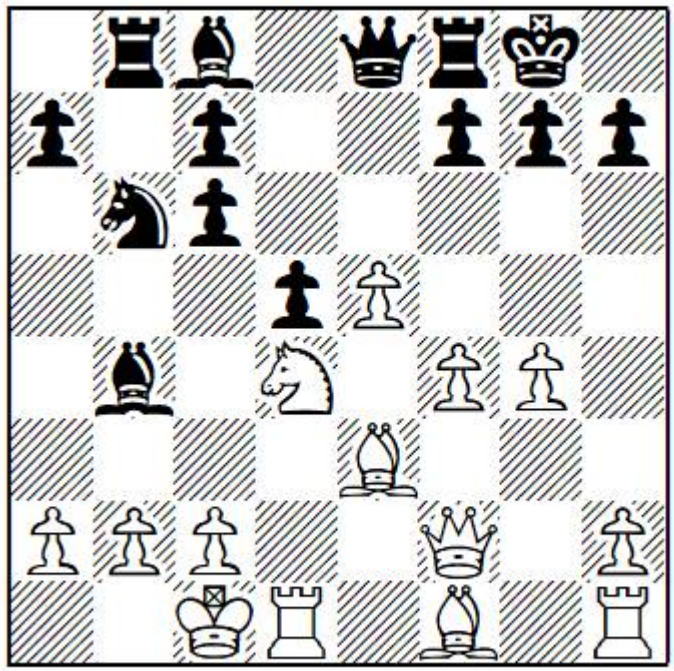
Bobby is obsessed with attacking and sends his knight in the direction of the black king. Instead, 14 Na4! fights for control over c5. If 14 … Nb6 15 Nxb6! (stronger than moving the knight to c5, offering the g4-pawn as a line-opening sacrifice) 15 … axb6 16 Bd3!, White's attack looks faster, whether Black chops the g4-pawn or not.

14 … Nb6?!

Black should play 14 … c5! (the d5-pawn isn't hanging due to the threat to skewer White's rooks on the long diagonal) 15 c3 Ba5 16 Rg1 c6, when … Qb6 is coming and Black's chances look no worse.

15 Nd4! Qe8!

15 … Bd7?! 16 Nb3! is in White's favour.



16 c3

16 a3! looks more promising: 16 … Be7 17 f5! c5 18 f6! gxf6 (18 … cxd4? 19 Bxd4 Bd8 20 Qh4 gives White a winning attack for the piece) 19 Nf5! fxe5 20 Bb5! Bd7 21 Nxe7+ Qxe7 22 Bxc5 Qg5+ 23 Be3 Qg7 24 Bxd7 d4! 25 Bxd4 exd4 26 Qxd4 leaves White a pawn up.

16 … Be7 17 f5 c5 18 Nb5?!

18 Nc2! Na4 19 f6 Bd8 20 Qf4! (threat: Qg5) 20 … gxf6 21 Rxd5! is a complete mess, unhelpfully called dead even by the engine.

18 … d4!

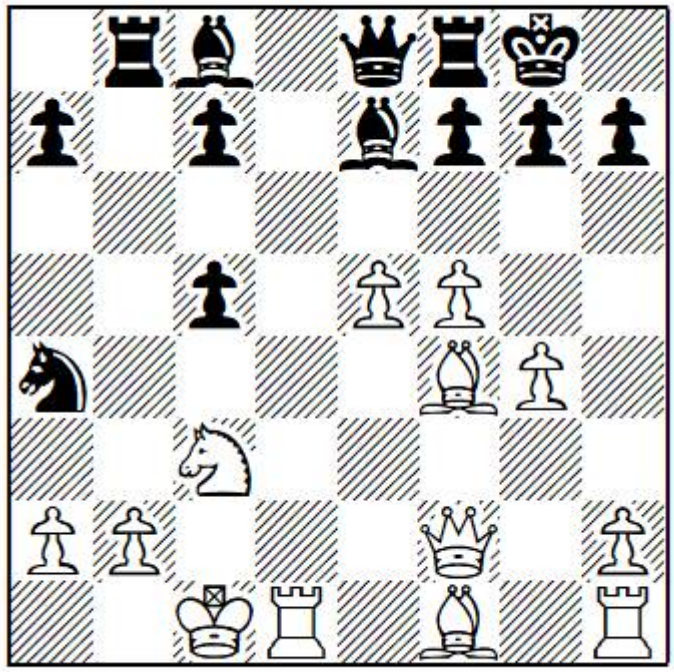
This seizes the initiative.

19 Bf4 dxc3?

In such sharp positions, if your move isn't helping, then it's hurting. The advantage swings back and forth. Black stands better if he found 19 … c4! 20 Nxd4 Na4! and White is in deep trouble since 21 Rd2?? only makes matters worse after 21 … Nxb2!, leaving White completely busted as acceptance is met by … Ba3.

20 Nxc3 Na4?!

20 … c4 is a better try, although White still stands clearly better after 21 f6! gxf6 22 exf6 Bxf6 23 Bxc7! Bg5+ 24 Kb1 Rb7 25 Bxb6! Rxb6 26 Bxc4 Qc6 27 Bb3.



Exercise (combination alert): Do you see a combination for White which

removes the oxygen from Black's intended attack?

Answer: Interference.

21 Bb5!

This defensive shot interrupts the conversation. Black generates sufficient play after 21 Nxa4? Qxa4 22 b3 Bh4! (or 22 … Rxb3 23 axb3 Qxb3) 23 bxa4! Bxf2 24 Bb5 and the ending looks balanced.

21 … Rxb5 22 Nxa4

Without a knight, Black's hoped for attack is chronically short-staffed.

22 … Rb4 23 Nc3 Bb7?

He should try 23 … Bh4! 24 Qxh4! Rxf4 25 Rhe1 albeit with advantage for White. Black can't play 25 … Bxf5?? due to 26 Qg5 winning a piece.

24 Rhe1!

Black is strategically busted. He must watch out for f5-f6. Fischer correctly avoids the immediate and tempting 24 f6? Bxh1 25 fxe7 Qxe7 26 Rxh1 Rfb8, which is messy and called dead even by the engine.

24 … Kh8?

He had to try 24 … Qc8 25 f6 gxf6 26 Bh6 Qe6 27 Bxf8 Kxf8 28 exf6 Qxf6 29 Qxf6 Bxf6 30 Rd7 Rxg4 31 Rxc7 which is also lost, but not as much as the game's continuation.

25 f6!

Of course.

25 … Bd8

Not 25 … gxf6?? 26 exf6 and Black's bishop is pinned.

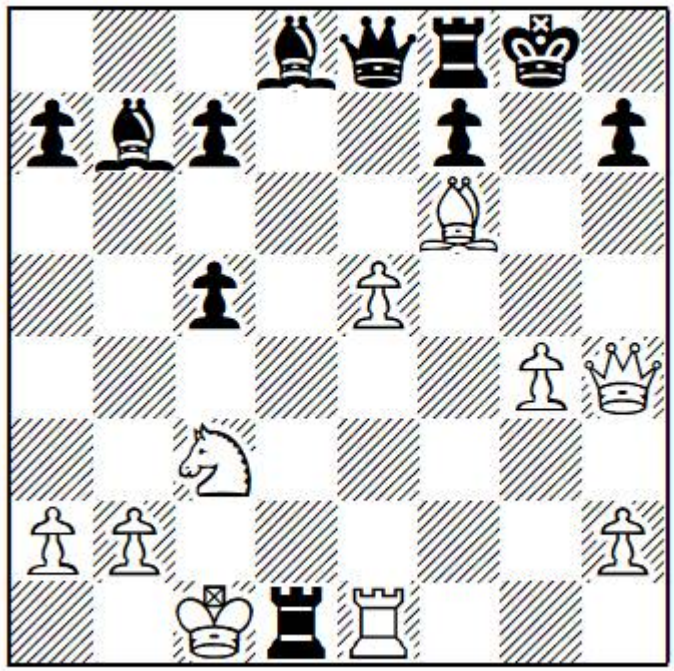
26 Bg5! Rd4

26 … g6 27 Bh6 and if 27 … Rg8 then 28 e6! wins.

27 fxg7+ Kxg7 28 Bf6+ Kg8 29 Qh4

Threatening mate in one. It's obvious Black is unable to defend.

29 … Rxd1+



Exercise (combination alert): What is White's most accurate recapture?

Answer: Recapturing with the knight is best, since it cuts off … Qe3+ defences.

30 Nxd1! 1-0

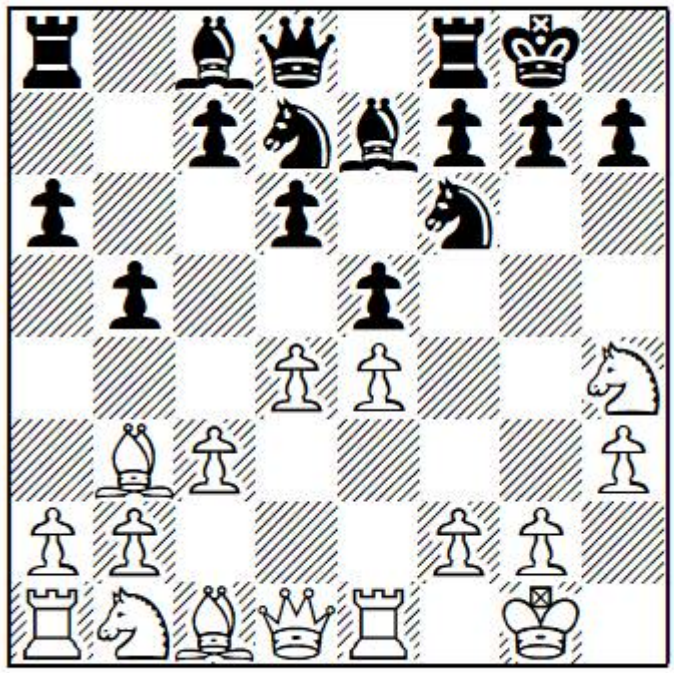
In view of 20 … Bxf6 31 exf6 with simultaneous threats to mate and also chop Black's hanging queen. Whereas 30 Rxd1?? unnecessarily allows Black back into the game after 30 … Bxf6 31 exf6 Qe3+ 32 Kb1 Qf4.

Game 6
R.J.Fischer-P.Benko
U.S. Championship, New York 1965
Ruy Lopez

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Ba4 Nf6 5 0-0 Be7 6 Re1 b5 7 Bb3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 Nb8

The Breyer Variation, which was to later become a key battleground in Fischer's matches with Spassky.

10 d4 Nbd7 11 Nh4!?



"Lord, I was born a rambling man." Just like last game, Bobby veers off Main Street with a weird move to try and throw his opponent off.

11 … Nb6

The best response was 11 … Nxe4! 12 Nf5 Ndf6 13 Qf3 (13 Nxe7+ Qxe7 14 Rxe4? is a failed attempt at a combination: 14 … Nxe4 15 Bd5 Bf5 16 Qf3 Bg6 17 Bxe4 exd4 18 Nd2 Rae8 leaves White in trouble, due to the development lag) 13 … Bb7 14 Bc2 Nc5! 15 Qg3 Ne6 16 Bh6, when Black can force a draw with 16 … Nh5! (rather than 16 … Ne8?!, E.Vasiukov-R.Kholmov, USSR Cup, Moscow 1964) 17 Qg4 Nf6 18 Qg3 Nh5, as seen six months' earlier in V.Hort-V.Jansa, Marianske Lazne 1965.

12 Nd2 c5

Benko refuses to be tempted into Bobby's pre-game analysis and proceeds sensibly. 12 … exd4 leads to great

complications after 13 cxd4 Nxe4 14 Nxe4 d5! (14 … Bxh4? 15 Qh5 offers White a fierce initiative) 15 Nf3 dxe4 16 Rxe4 c5! and Black looks okay.

13 dxc5

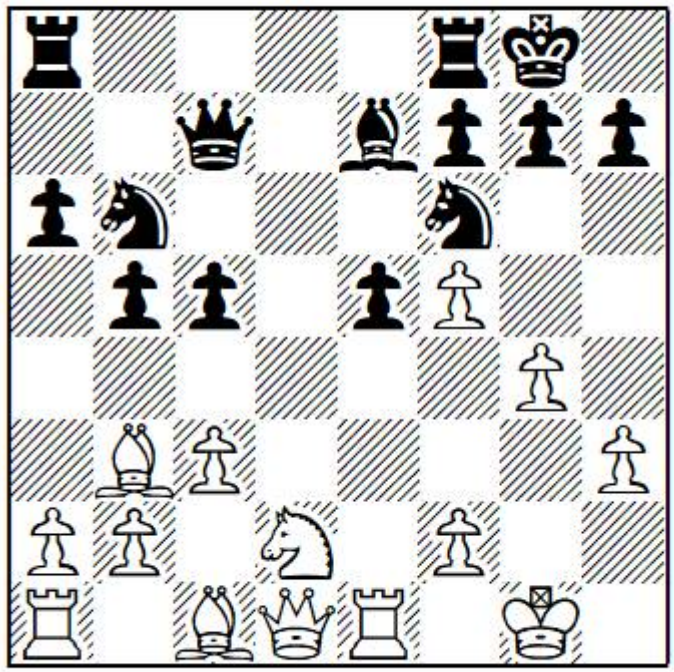
Earlier in his career, Fischer favoured such swaps over the d4-d5 plan in his Closed Lopez games.

13 … dxc5 14 Nf5 Bxf5?!

After this strategic error, Fischer gets a nagging edge due to possession of the bishop pair and power on the light squares. Black equalizes with 14 … c4! 15 Bc2 Bc5 16 Qf3 Re8.

15 exf5 Qc7 16 g4!?

Have I mentioned Bobby's undying love of pushing his g-pawns? 16 Qf3 c4 17 Bc2 Nbd5 18 Ne4 is more restrained.



16 … h6

16 … c4 17 Bc2 h6 18 h4! comes to the same thing.

17 h4!

Thematic and strong.

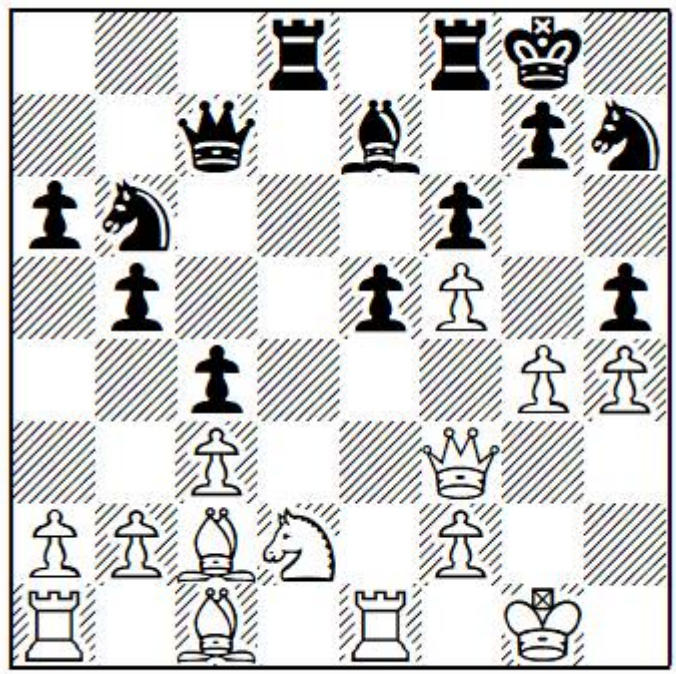
17 … c4 18 Bc2 Nh7 19 Nf3

19 g5!? is a move in Tal's style, not Fischer's. After 19 … hxg5 20 Ne4 gxh4 21 Kh1! White gets a dangerous attack along the g-file for the sacrificed pawns.

19 … f6?

Benko's insistence on halting White's g4-g5 push costs dearly on the kingside light squares. He was better off with a standard central counter to White's wing attack with 19 … Rad8 20 Qe2 Bc5 21 g5 e4! 22 Nd4!, even if White still stands a bit better.

20 Nd2 Rad8 21 Qf3 h5?



This "let's make the best of it" move suggests an unpleasant future for Black. It's a misguided attempt to remove the flexibility of White's kingside pawns. The problem is that Black conveniently opens the g-file for White's coming attack. 21 … a5 is a better try.

22 gxh5 Nd5 23 Ne4 Nf4 24 Bxf4

Bobby chops the knight before it has a chance to sink into d3. Now a new factor arises in White's favour. Principle: *Bishops of opposite colours favour the attacking side,* which in this case is obviously White.

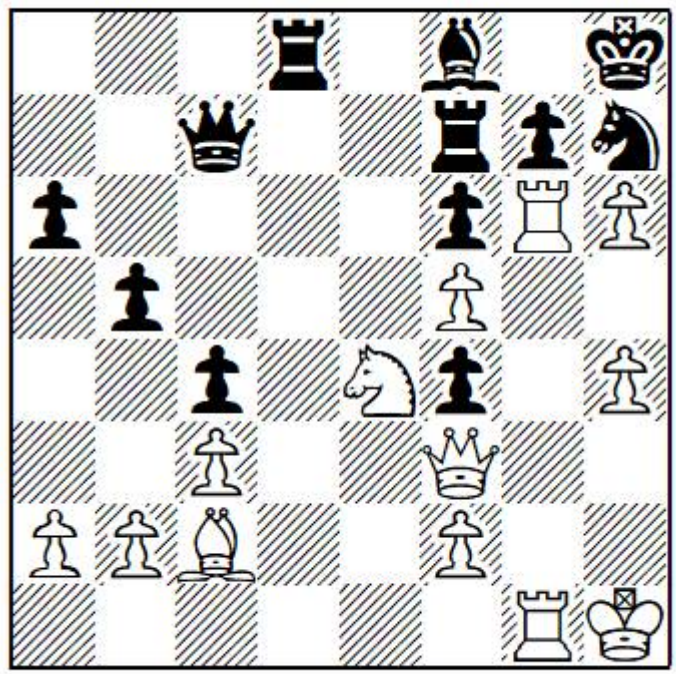
24 … exf4 25 Kh1

It's not so difficult to guess the intent of piling up major pieces on the open g-file.

25 … Kh8 26 Rg1 Rf7 27 Rg6! Bd6

The bishop is soon induced back to f8. Benko is just marking time; if 27 … Nf8 28 Rag1, of course White's rook can't be taken.

28 Rag1 Bf8 29 h6



29 … Qe5

29 … gxh6?? isn't much of a consideration: 30 Rg8 mate.

30 Qg4

Covering f5, while hammering away at g7.

30 … Rdd7 31 f3 Bc5

31 … a5 32 h5! b4 33 hxg7+ Rxg7 34 h6 forces resignation.

32 Nxc5!

A Fischer intuitive trait: he jumps on opportunities to swap away his opponent's most active piece.

32 … Qxc5 33 Rxg7 Rxg7 34 hxg7+ Kg8 35 Qg6

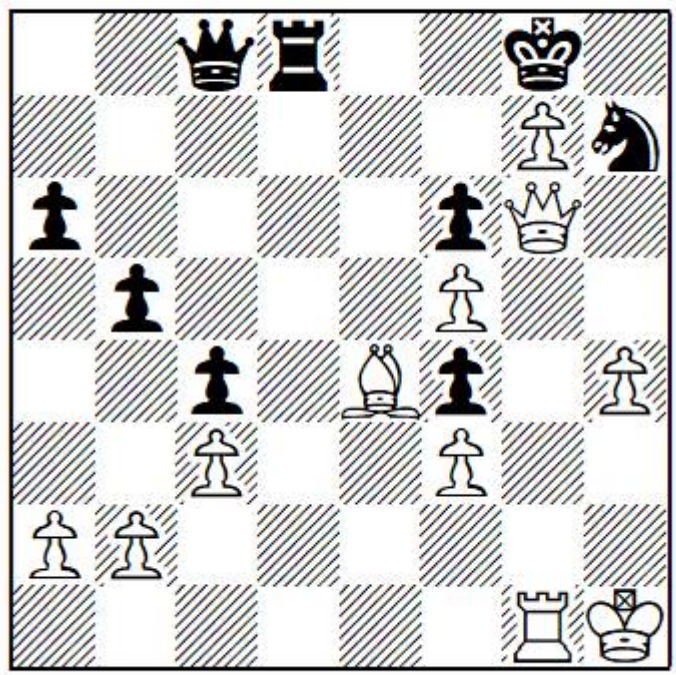
Threatening a nasty check on e8.

35 … Rd8 36 Be4

The bishop throws a stealthy glance at the d5-square. Now Black must watch out for combinations based on a bishop check there.

36 … Qc8

If 36 … Qd6 37 h5 Qd7 38 h6 Qd6 39 Re1! Qd7 40 Bd5+!, the clearance shot forces mate in four.



Exercise (combination alert): Black's king checked into the Roach Motel,

where guests never survive long enough to check out. Black's position is far

from an impenetrable barrier. Do you see Bobby's deadly blow?

Answer: Queen sacrifice/decoy.

37 Qe8+! 1-0

The queen dies a martyr to a glorious cause, which allows her bishop to magically teleport to the deadly d5-square: 37 … Rxe8 38 Bd5+ wins. Have you ever met an unpleasant person, where you are regrettably forced to stick your hand out and say "Pleased to meet you", when in reality, you aren't pleased at all? Black's rook and queen are in just that situation with White's obnoxious bishop.

Game 7
E.Nikolic-R.J.Fischer
Vinkovci 1968
English Opening

1 c4 g6 2 Nc3 Bg7 3 g3 e5

Bobby meets the English with his favourite King's Indian set-up. If you play King's Indian structures, as I did in the 1980s, then required reading are the games of Fischer and Kasparov, who taught us more about the structures, plans and tactics of the opening than any other players in chess history.

4 Bg2 d6 5 e3

White can also set up with a knight on f3, or the Botvinnik English with e2-e4 and Nge2.

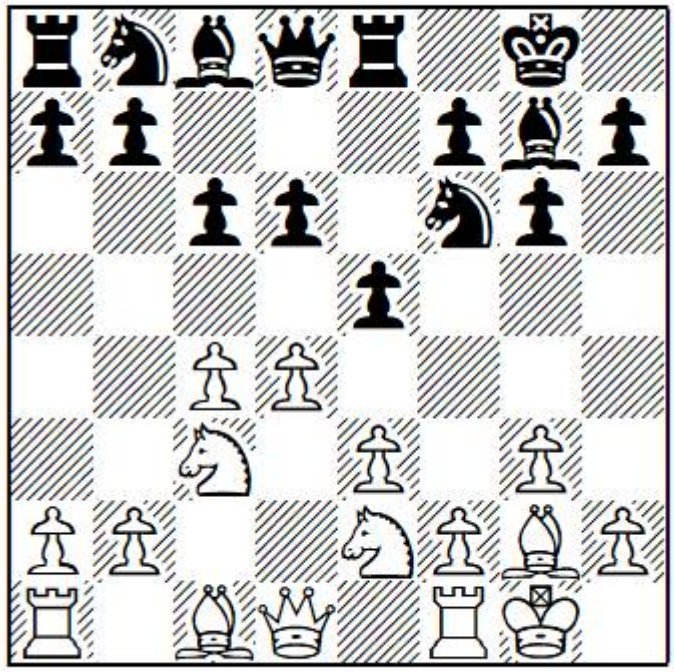
5 … Nf6

In such English versus King's Indians, Fischer's stylistic preference tended to be piece play over pawn storms. An alternative set-up is 5 … Nc6 6 Nge2 f5.

6 Nge2 0-0 7 0-0 c6

In King's Indian Attack positions with colours reversed, Fischer generally favoured this centre-building plan, over 7 … Nc6.

8 d4 Re8



He plays for … e5-e4.

9 Rb1

In case you believe 9 dxe5 dxe5 10 Qxd8 Rxd8 is drawish, White scores just below 30% from this queenless middlegame; the engine already slightly favours Black.

Instead, 9 e4!? exd4 10 Nxd4 is a g2-g3 KID, except that White took two moves to play e2-e4, rather than one, which means that Black stands even.

9 … e4

For White, this is not a good place to be when facing Bobby Fischer, who by 1968 was easily the strongest player in world in such structures.

10 b4

After 10 d5 c5 11 a3 Bf5 12 b4 b6 13 bxc5 bxc5, L.Fernandez de Armas-I.Madurga Lopez, Mondariz 2012, I prefer Black's kingside chances and so does the engine.

10 … Bf5 11 h3?!

White should be playing upon the principle: *Open the centre when attacked on the wing.* Therefore 11 d5! is logical.

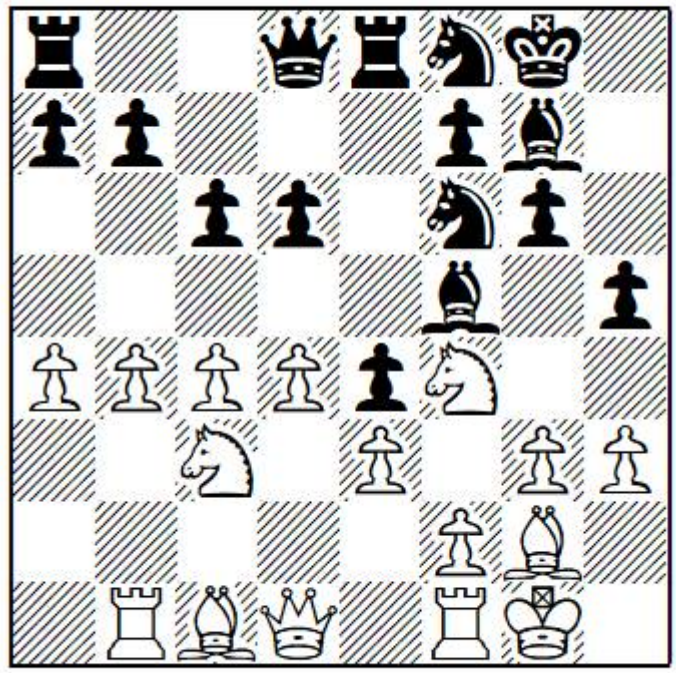
11 … h5 12 Nf4

Now 12 d5 Qc8! 13 Kh2 Nbd7! 14 dxc6 bxc6 15 Nd4 (15 Qxd6? Ne5 is a winning attack for Black) 15 … Ne5 looks pretty scary for White.

12 … Nbd7 13 a4

La, la la, la la. White acts like he has all day!

13 … Nf8



14 c5?

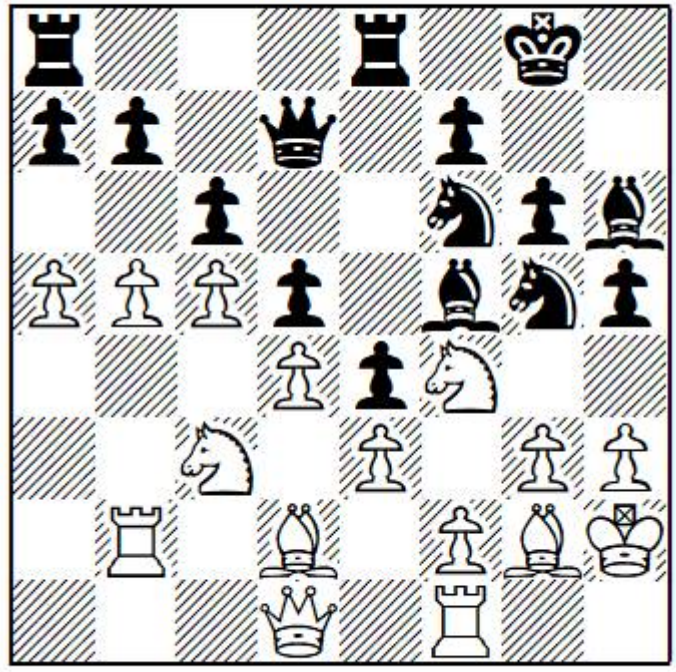
Closing the centre is a strategic error when your king is about to come under attack. This is well understood today, yet not so much in 1968.

White should play on the principle: *Meet the opponent's wing attack with a central counter*, with 14 d5! g5! 15 Nfe2 (15 Nxh5?? Nxh5 16 Qxh5 hangs the now loose c3-knight after 16 … Bg6 17 Qe2 Bxc3) 15 … Qd7 16 dxc6 bxc6 17 b5 c5! 18 Nd5 Bxh3 19 Nxf6+ Bxf6 20 Bb2 and White's chances are far better here than in the game, despite Black's extra pawn.

14 … d5 15 b5 N8h7 16 Bd2 Ng5 17 Rb2 Qd7 18 Kh2

White's king is far less safe than Nikolic may have believed.

18 … Bh6! 19 a5



Exercise (planning/combination alert): Bobby's attackers achieved their

optimal posts and it's time to strike. Prove how Black's attack is faster than

White's on the other side of the board.

Answer: Sink the bishop into g4, after which White's king is laid gently into his coffin.

19 … Bg4!!

This is an example of a pure strategic piece sacrifice. No calculation is required. Our eyes simply tell us that Black is faster. Fischer's sacrifice is stronger than the defensive measure 19 … a6.

20 hxg4

Accept or decline, White is busted either way. 20 Qb1 Nf3+ 21 Bxf3 Bxf3 22 bxc6 bxc6 23 Rb7 Qf5 is a winning attack for Black.

20 … hxg4!

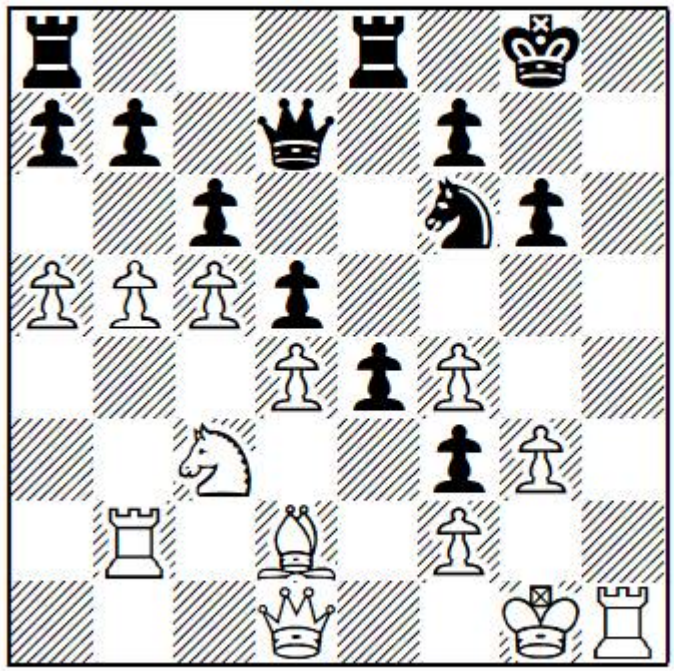
Black's attack is switched on at full wattage. Taking with the pawn is stronger than with the knight.

21 Rh1 Nf3+ 22 Bxf3 gxf3 23 Kg1 Bxf4!

Eliminating a key defender of the white king.

24 exf4

It's easy to see that 24 gxf4?? allows 24 … Qg4+ and mate in two.



Exercise (planning): White's king dreams of a dash for freedom. If given time,

White will play Be3, followed by Kf1, Ke1 and Kd2, running away to the

queenside. This get-out-of-jail-free card is an optical illusion. Find a plan to

continue Black's attack.

Answer: Slide the king to g7 and then challenge the h-file, after which White is defenceless.

24 … Kg7! 25 f5

25 Be3 Rh8 26 Rxh8 Rxh8 27 Qf1 (White's king is unable to run to f1, due to back rank mate on h1) 27 … Qf5 28 bxc6 Qh5 forces mate.

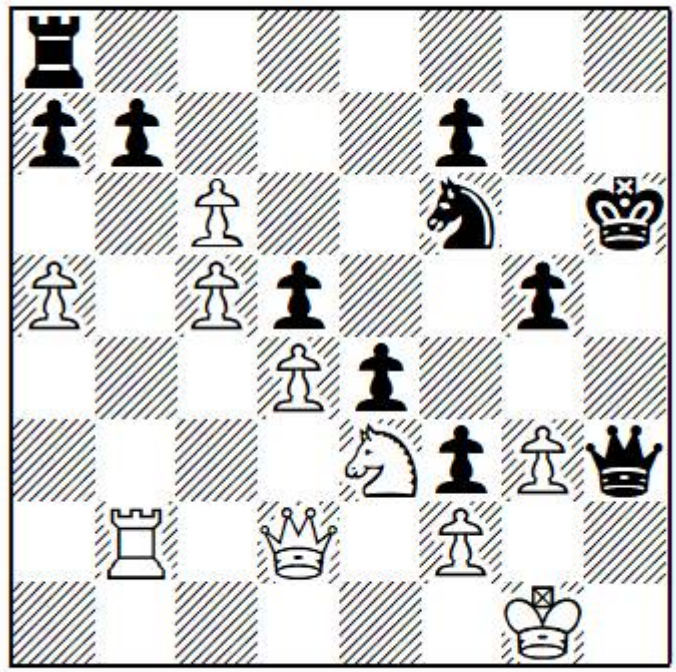
25 … Rh8 26 Bh6+

Super desperation. Nikolic hopes to clog the h-file long enough for his king to escape to the centre. In reality it's nothing more than a stupid pet trick in the show, America's Funniest Home Videos. The problem is the idea's lack of permanence since Black can easily unclog the file.

26 … Rxh6 27 Rxh6 Kxh6 28 Qd2+ g5! 29 bxc6 Qxf5! 30 Nd1

Or 30 cxb7 Qh3 31 bxa8Q Qg2 mate. We are starkly reminded of the scriptural warning: "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." How fortunate for us chess players, since we are all broke and therefore destined for Heaven!

30 … Qh3 31 Ne3



Exercise (planning): Swami-like concentration isn't required to find Black's

forced mate.

Answer: Clearance. Simply move the king to g6, making way for Black's rook to shift to h8.

31 … Kg6! 0-1

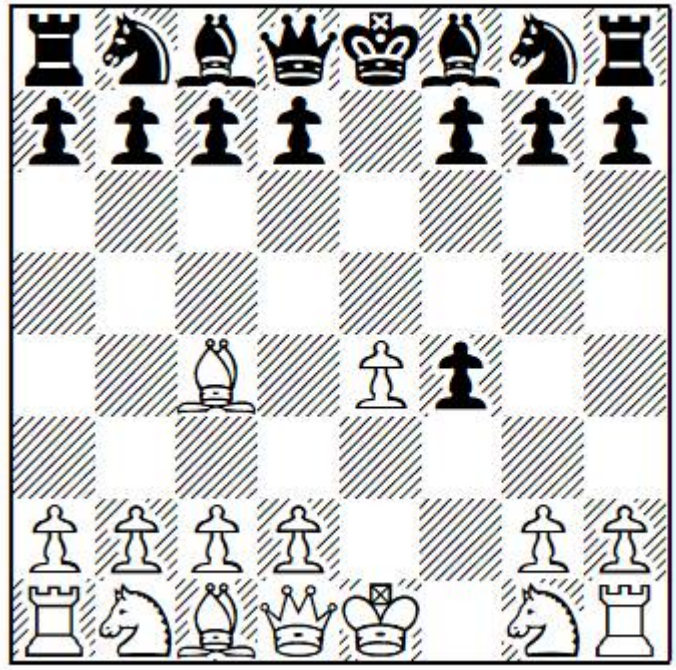
White resigned in view of 32 cxb7 Rh8 33 b8Q Qh1 mate.

Game 8
R.J.Fischer-D.Minic
Vinkovci 1968
King's Gambit

1 e4 e5 2 f4!?

What? No Ruy Lopez? The belief that Fischer played the King's Gambit is up there with "I believe the Earth is flat and the moon landing was faked!" In actuality, not counting simul games, Bobby played the King's Gambit five times in tournament and match play, scoring wins against GMs Larry Evans and Minic, IM Wade and the Greenblatt program *Mac Hack* (which we look at later in the book), with a lone draw to IM Szmetan.

2 … exf4 3 Bc4



Bobby favoured the Bishop's Gambit over the more often played 3 Nf3.

3 … Ne7!?

While a bit eccentric, this isn't such a bad move. The idea is to play for … c7-c6 and … d7-d5, without worry of e4-e5. Black's main moves in the position are 3 … Nf6 (Game 43), 3 … d5 (Games 49 and 50) and 3 … Qh4+.

4 Nc3 c6 5 Nf3

5 d4 d5 6 exd5 Nxd5 is equal.

5 … d5 6 Bb3 dxe4

6 … Be6 is also even.

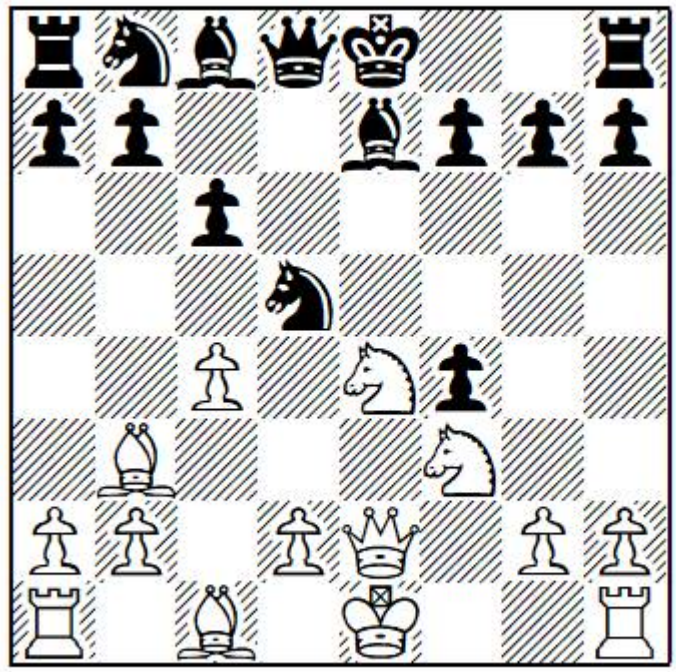
7 Nxe4

7 Ng5?! Nd5 8 Ngxe4 Qh4+ is in Black's favour.

7 … Nd5 8 Qe2!?

8 0-0 is more natural.

8 … Be7 9 c4



This is Fischer's idea. Black's knight is unable to return to f6.

9 … Nc7

9 … Nf6?? 10 Nxf6+ gxf6 11 d4 is strategically lost for Black.

10 d4 0-0 11 Bxf4

Fischer has regained his sacrificed pawn with control over the centre and stands slightly better.

If instead 11 0-0, as in K.Petenev-D.Petrukhin, Novosibirsk 2008, Black should play 11 … Bg4 12 Rd1 Ne6 13 d5 Nc5, when chances look balanced.

11 … Ne6?!

This move clogs Black's queenside development. It was better to give an immediate bishop check: 11 … Bb4+ 12 Kf2! Ne6 (12 … Re8?? loses instantly to 13 Bxc7! Qxc7 14 Nf6+ etc) 13 Be3 c5! 14 d5 Nd4! 15 Bxd4! cxd4 16 a3 Be7 17 Rhe1 Bg4 18 Kg1, when Black gets some – but probably not full – dark square compensation for the (future) sacrificed pawn, since the d4-pawn is likely to fall.

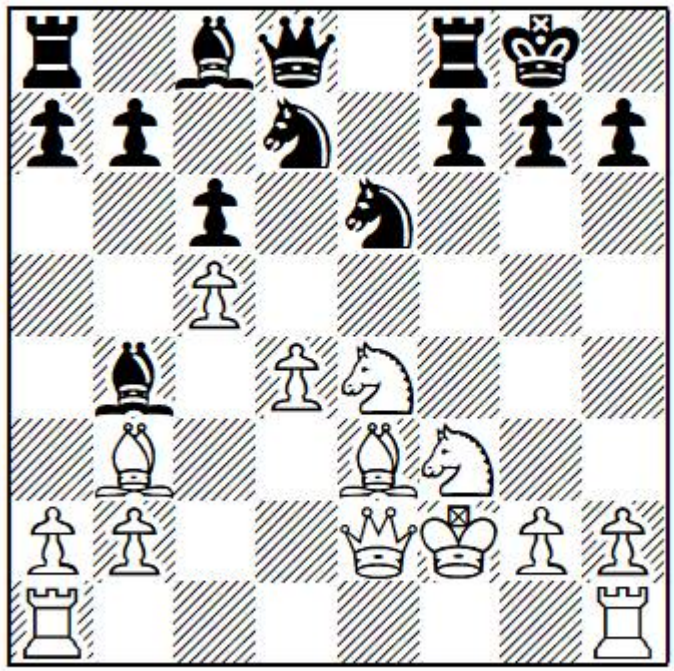
12 Be3 Bb4+ 13 Kf2!?

Bobby plans to castle by hand. The engine prefers 13 Nc3.

13 … Nd7

13 … c5!? transposes to the line mentioned in the above note.

14 c5!



Preventing any further … c6-c5 ideas and opening the diagonal for the b3-bishop. White stands better due to superior central control, coupled with a slight lead in development.

14 … Nf6 15 Nxf6+

15 Nd6?! Ng4+ favours Black.

15 … Qxf6 16 Rhf1!

Bobby will "pretend" castle when his king reaches g1.

16 … Nf4

Otherwise Black's queenside is unable to develop.

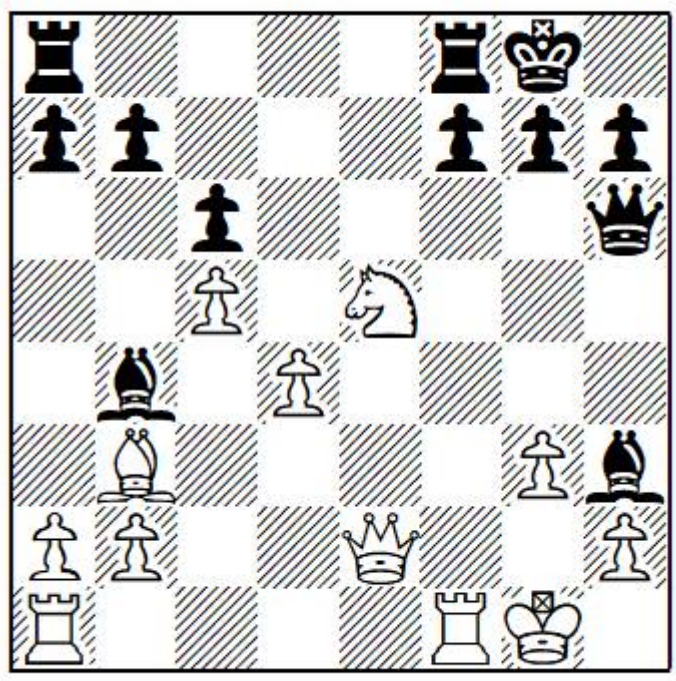
17 Bxf4 Qxf4 18 g3!

This is an example of Fischer's mysteriously powerful strategic intuition. Few players would voluntarily weaken the kingside with what appears to be a strategically debilitating pawn push. Fischer correctly sees that Black is unable to exploit the weakened light squares. His idea is the coming exchange sacrifice to go after f7. He wasn't satisfied with a slightly superior ending with the line 18 Kg1 Bg4 19 Qe5! Qxe5 20 Nxe5 Be6 21 Bxe6 fxe6.

18 … Qh6 19 Kg1 Bh3?

Confusion over our position's true assessment has a way of greatly magnifying our suffering. The bishop is the overly optimistic kid who still wants to go out to play on a rainy day. This last move is the instrument of his ruin. Black should agree to an inferior ending with 19 … Be6 (19 … Bg4 20 Qe4! Be6 comes to the same thing) 20 Bxe6 Qxe6 21 Qxe6 fxe6. Black must learn to live with the cruel deformity on e6, which isn't fatal and Minic can still hope to hold.

20 Ne5!



Fischer offers a full exchange, seeing that f7 can no longer be defended.

20 … Bxf1

Godspeed, little man. Winning the exchange is no portal to heaven and wealth is no surrogate for happiness, when another key factor in our position is about to collapse.

On the other hand, it's too late to retract and make the defensive move 20 … Be6? – as the saying goes: that ship has sailed – which fails miserably to 21 Nxf7! Bxf7 22 Rxf7 Rxf7

23 Rf1 Kh8 24 Rxf7. The only way for Black to protect his king is to enter a totally hopeless ending with 24 … Qc1+ 25 Kg2 Qd2 26 Qxd2 Bxd2 27 Rxb7.

Nor is Black is saved by 20 … Qd2 21 Qe4! Bg2! 22 Nf3! Bxf3 23 Rxf3 Qxb2 24 Raf1 Bc3 25 Kh1 Bxd4 26 Rb1! Qd2 27 Rd3 and White wins a piece.

21 Rxf1 Bd2

This is a desperate attempt to remove queens from the board.

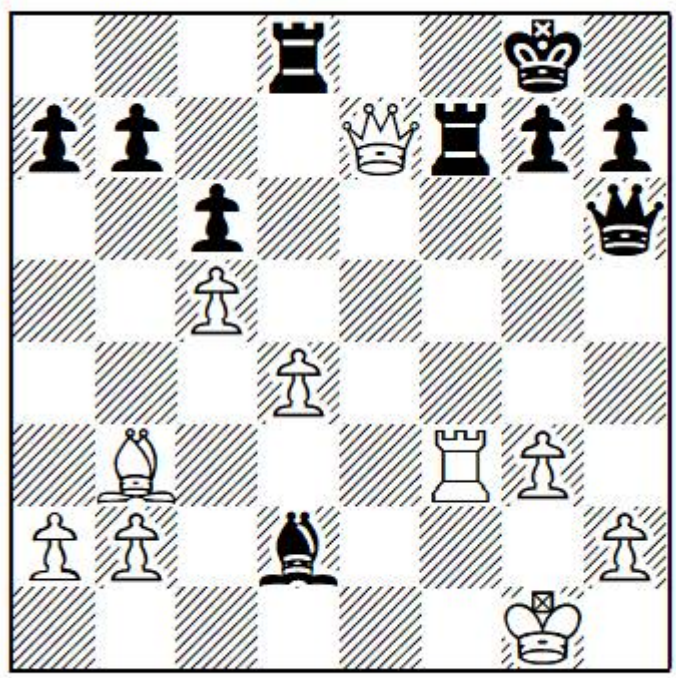
22 Rf3!

Covering against the intended … Qe3+, Fischer understands there is no rush to chop the f7-pawn.

22 … Rad8

22 … Kh8 23 Nxf7+ Rxf7 24 Bxf7 Bg5 25 d5 cxd5 26 Bxd5 is also lost for Black.

23 Nxf7 Rxf7 24 Qe7! 1-0



Double attack. Black's sickly back rank is revealed.

Game 9
R.J.Fischer-S.Kagan
Netanya 1968
Caro-Kann Defence

We IMs have come to the painful realization that great players can be inconsiderate so-and-sos, in that they can disrespectfully violate all sorts of principles – as Fischer does in the opening stage of this game – and beat us anyway.

1 e4 c6 2 Nc3 d5 3 Nf3

This line was a favourite of Fischer's in his early years. A combined score of 1/5 against Keres, Petrosian and Smyslov at the 1959 Candidates Tournament may have dented his enthusiasm, but he still used it as an occasional weapon.

3 … Bg4 4 h3 Bxf3

This is considered both safer and superior to the adventurous/semi-dubious provocation 4 … Bh5!? 5 exd5 cxd5 6 Bb5+ Nc6 7 g4 Bg6 8 Ne5 Rc8 9 d4 e6 10 Qe2! Bb4 11 h4! Nge7 12 h5 Be4 13 f3 0-0 14 Nxc6 Nxc6 15 Be3, when the position is complicated yet inherently in White's favour.

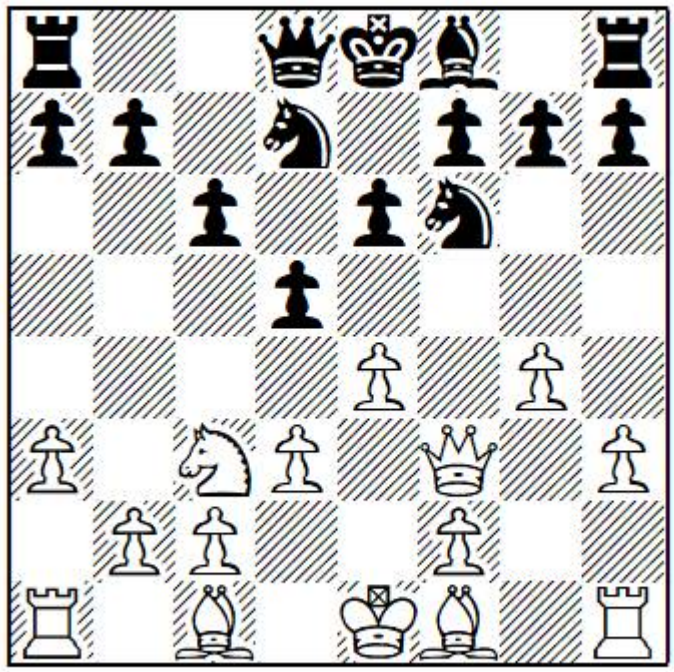
5 Qxf3 Nf6

5 … e6 is also played. The idea is to meet 6 d3 with an early … Bb4.

6 d3 e6 7 a3!?

It feels somewhat extravagant to expend a full tempo just to prevent … Bb4. Today, 7 Bd2 is regarded as White's most accurate continuation.

7 … Nbd7 8 g4!?



I told you so. Bobby just loved to push his g-pawns to the fourth rank (and beyond!). 8 g3 is its more restrained cousin.

8 … Bd6

This is risky and possibly inaccurate. He allows Fischer to send the f6-knight back home to g8, hoping that White's pawn pushes represent overextension in the future. More common today are 8 … h6 and 8 … g6.

9 g5 Ng8 10 h4 Ne7 11 h5!?

Hey, are you planning on bringing out any of your pieces? This feels inaccurate and is in violation of the principle/original sin: *Don't fall behind in development in the opening*. The non-violating alternatives 11 Bd2 and 11 Be3 were to be strongly considered.

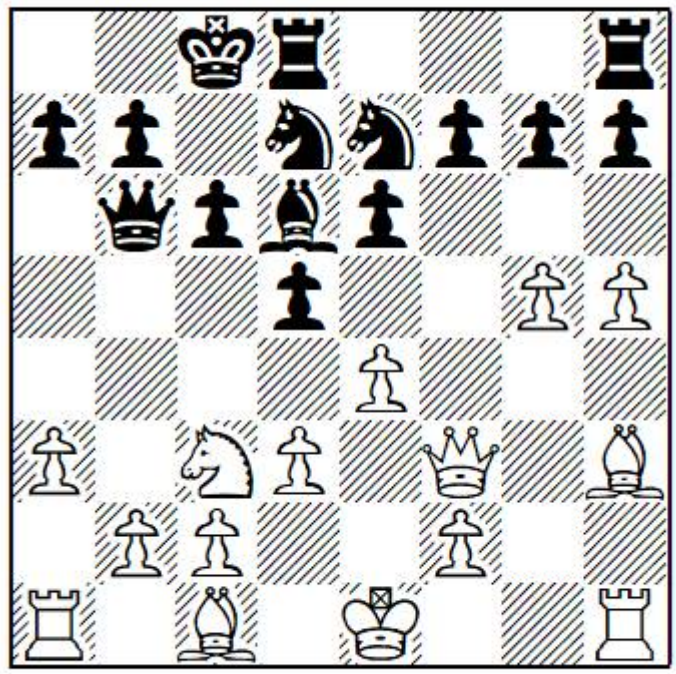
11 … Qb6!

Two ideas behind this move:

1. With the queen on b6, White experiences problems developing the c1-bishop.

2. Clearly Black doesn't want to castle into an attack by going kingside. So he prepares a future long castling on the other side.

12 Bh3 0-0-0!



12 … Rf8, as in I.Smirin-A.Delchev, French League 2010, wasn't (at least yet) necessary, since f7 isn't really hanging.

13 a4?!

Apparently, Bobby didn't show a lot of respect for us tiny little IMs and continues his "I don't need no stinking development!" philosophy. 13 Ne2 Kb8 14 b4 is a sounder way to go, although I'm not crazy about White's position here either. Not 13 Qxf7?? Rhf8 and it's time to resign because f2 is an open wound.

13 … a5!

I already prefer Black's position.

14 0-0

It feels as if Fischer castles into an attack. There is nothing better since there is no way to safely engineer queenside

castling.

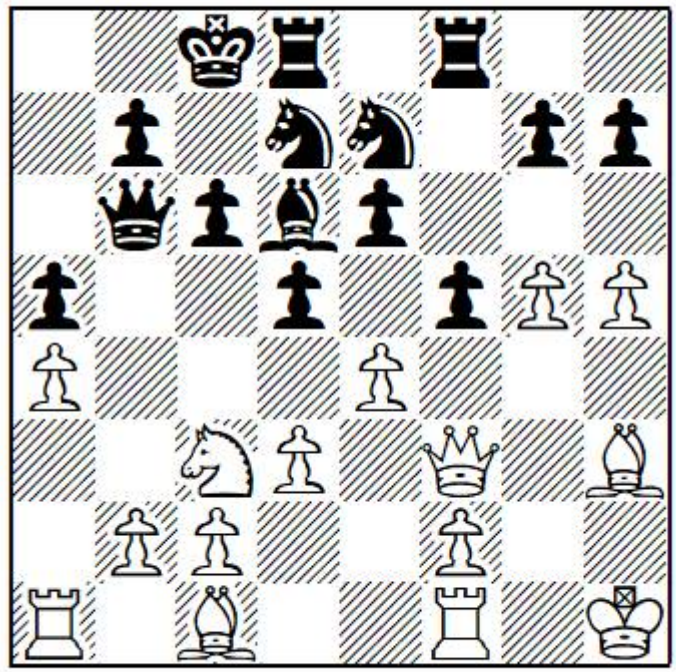
14 … Rhf8

Kagan, on the other hand, may be giving his opponent too much respect. He can try to make Fischer pay for all those earlier unforced kingside pawn moves and counterattack with 14 … Ne5 15 Qe2 h6!, when I prefer Black's chances.

15 Kh1?!

He should play 15 exd5 Nxd5 16 Nxd5 cxd5 17 c3.

15 … f5!



There is no question over whose attack is more dangerous, since White's doesn't exist.

16 Qg2

16 gxf6 Rxf6 17 Qe2 Rdf8 also looks dangerous for White.

16 … g6

16 … h6!? is possibly stronger, since it opens f6 for Black's knight.

17 h6

Of course Fischer wants to close lines against his king. 17 f4 is strongly met by 17 … h6!, when White's king is suddenly in danger.

17 … Kb8 18 f4!

His king will be safe if he can clog the centre next move with e4-e5.

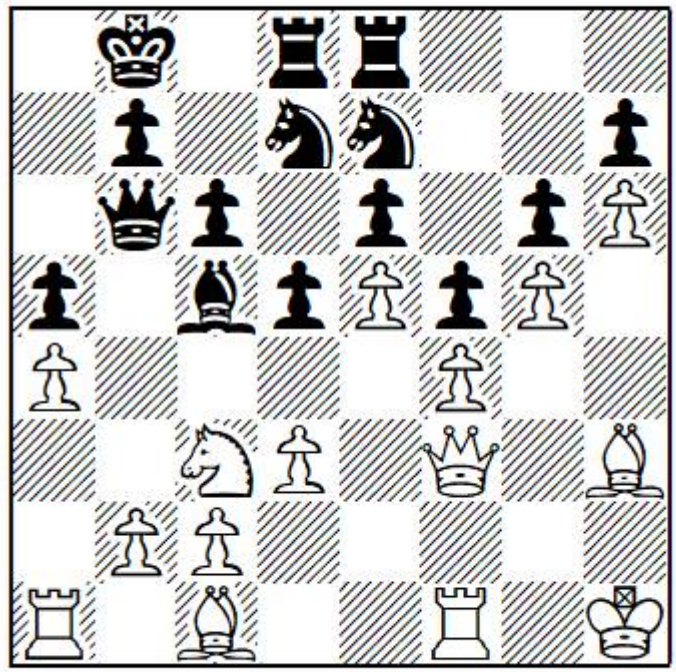
18 … Rfe8?

The advantage suddenly swings to White after this drifting move. Black should apply the principle: *Create confrontation when leading in development*, with 18 … dxe4! 19 dxe4 e5!, when the complications are in his favour.

19 e5

Sweet relief. With the centre closed, Fischer's king is safe and he can now slowly try to build an attack on Black's king.

19 … Bc5 20 Qf3



20 … Nc8?!

Kagan continues with a Maginot Line stance. He needed counterplay and should have gone for

20 … d4! 21 Ne2 Nd5, when Black looks okay.

21 Bg2 Kc7

Rise and shine, little buddy. He may be thinking about walking his king over to the kingside. 21 … d4 22 Ne2 is an inferior version of the previous note, as the black knight is now two moves away from d5.

22 Ne2

Clearing the way for c2-c3.

22 … Nb8

This would make Steinitz happy, but maybe nobody else. Kagan wants to clear the path for his king to reach g8!

23 c3?!

The immediate 23 Bd2! is more accurate, and if 23 … d4 then 24 Rfb1.

23 … Kd7?

23 … d4! was now a strategic necessity.

24 Bd2! Na6

Not 24 … Qxb2?? 25 Rfb1! wins the queen in view of 25 … Qxd2 26 Rxb7 mate. And it's too late for 24 … d4?? since 25 b4! is a winning attack for White.

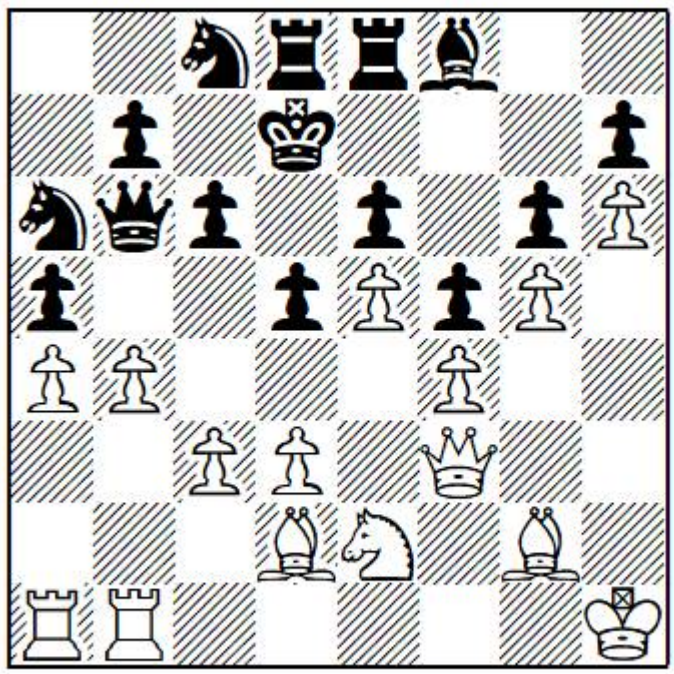
25 Rfb1

There is no mistaking the intent!

25 … Bf8?!

He was better off with the formation 25 … Qc7 26 b4 Bb6.

26 b4!



Of course, Bobby isn't about to begrudge the loss of a measly pawn if, in return, he gets a winning attack by opening lines. In reality, it isn't even a pawn sacrifice since acceptance is suicidal for Black.

26 … axb4 27 cxb4 Bxb4?

Why do fairy-tale children always wander into a dark woods when they get lost? This hangs material. Equally, if 27 … Nxb4? 28 d4!, the pinned knight is lost.

Black's best chance is 27 … Nb8 28 b5 Ke7 29 a5 Qa7 30 Be3 Qa8 31 Bb6! Rd7 32 Nc3 and as miserable as this looks, it's still better than the game's continuation.

28 a5!

The authoritarian's demand is always: "Do as you are told!"

28 … Qc5

28 … Qb5 29 Bxb4 Nxb4 30 Nd4! Qc5 31 Ra4! is fatal for Black after 31 … Na6 32 Rxb7+ Nc7 33 Qe3! (threat: Rxc7+, followed by Nxe6+, winning Black's queen) 33 … Qf8 34

Bxd5!! exd5 (or 34 … cxd5 35 Qc1 and mate in four) 35 e6+ Ke7 36 Rxc7+ Kd6 37 Qe5+ Kc5 38 Rc4 mate.

29 d4!

A path is cleared for White's queen.

29 … Qf8

29 … Qc4 30 Bxb4 Nxb4 31 Ra4 pins and wins the knight.

30 Bxb4 Nxb4 31 Qc3!

Black's game collapses as b7 can no longer be covered.

31 … Na6 32 Rxb7+ Nc7 33 Nc1!

No child is left behind! Fischer activates his sleeping knight, via c1, d3 and c5.

33 … Re7 34 a6 1-0

Black's position files for Chapter 11 bankruptcy, since the a-pawn costs him a knight.

Game 10
R.J.Fischer-J.Rubinetti
Palma de Mallorca Interzonal 1970
Sicilian Defence

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 e6 6 Bc4

The sign reads: Authorized Personnel Only. The Sozin has lost a chunk of its appeal since Fischer's heyday. Nigel Short attempted to revive it to decent effect in his world championship match against Kasparov a few decades later. In the present, the line has been defanged by the engines, although not yet consigned to the theoretical graveyard.

6 … a6 7 Bb3 b5 8 0-0

---

8 … Bb7

I showed this game to a student and she asked if 8 … b4?! won a pawn. It does, at a high cost. For example: 9 Na4! (better than 9 Nb1?!, which Bobby plays in Game 21) 9 … Nxe4? 10 Re1 d5 11 Bf4 (threat: Bxb8, followed by a fork on c6) 11 … Bd7 (11 … Bd6 is favourably met by 12 Rxe4! dxe4 13 Nxe6! Bxe6 14 Bxd6, leaving Black in dire trouble) 12 c4! bxc3 13 Nxc3 Nxc3 14 bxc3 Be7 15 Bxd5! exd5 16 Bd6 Be6 17 Nxe6 fxe6 18 Rxe6 and White won all six games from this position in the database, which isn't surprising since *Stockfish* evaluates it at over +7.

9 Re1 Nbd7

9 … b4? can be met by 10 Nd5! which is awkward for Black: 10 … Nbd7 (10 … exd5? 11 exd5+ Kd7 12 c3 is a winning attack for White) 11 Ba4! Rc8 12 a3! and Black is in trouble.

10 Bg5?!

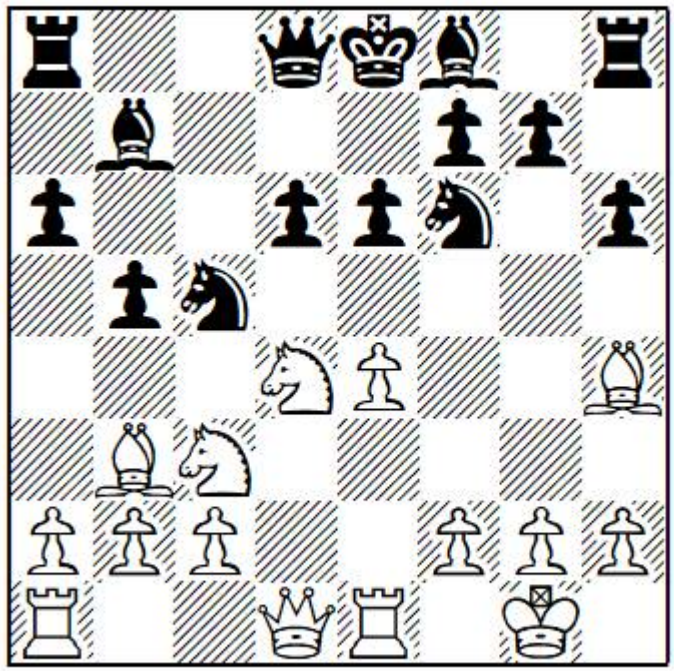
Not the most accurate. Fischer should apply the principle: *Exploit your lead in development with confrontation*: 10 a4! b4 11 Nd5! and if 11 … exd5 12 exd5+ Ne5 13 f4 Qc7 14 Qf3 Be7 15 fxe5 dxe5 16 Nf5, Black's king situation is wobbly.

10 … h6!

10 … Be7? is met by the promising piece sacrifice 11 Bxe6!.

11 Bh4 Nc5?

Black looks okay if he stakes out dark squares with 11 … g5! 12 Bg3 Ne5!. Now a giant fist is about to smite Black.



Exercise (combination alert): Rubinetti was undoubtedly worried about

sacrifices on e6. With his last move he covers the tender square, while going

after White's light-squared bishop. The flaw is that he moves the same piece

twice, while lagging in development. How can White exploit this factor?

Answer: Move the bishop to d5.

12 Bd5! exd5?!

Acceptance is based on the false supposition that Black's king will survive by walking over to the queenside. Instead:

a) 12 … Qc7 13 Bxf6 gxf6 14 Bxb7 Qxb7 15 b4! Nd7 16 Qh5! (threat: Nxe6) 16 … Qc8 17 Re3! Ne5 18 f4 Nc4 19 Rg3 Be7 20 f5 leaves Black strategically lost.

b) 12 … Be7 should be tried: 13 Nc6 Qd7 14 Nxe7 and Black must awkwardly recapture with the king since 14 … Qxe7? loses to 15 Bxb7 Nxb7 16 Nd5! Qd8 17 e5! and if 17 … dxe5 18 Nxf6+ gxf6 19 Qf3 with a winning attack for White.

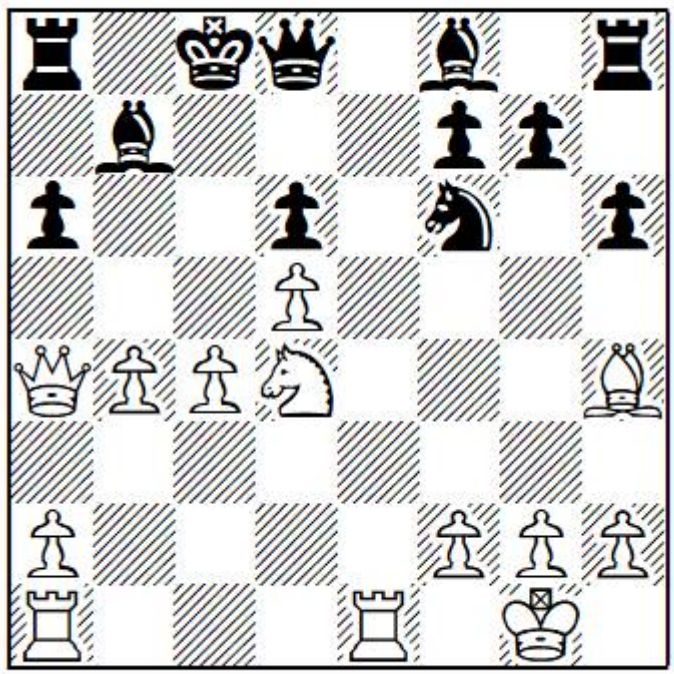
13 exd5+ Kd7 14 b4!

Black's knight is forced to a4, after which Fischer picks up a second pawn for the sacrificed piece.

14 … Na4

14 … Kc8 15 Qf3! Ncd7 16 Nc6 is also hopeless for Black: 16 … Bxc6 17 dxc6 Ne5 18 Rxe5! dxe5 19 Rd1 Qc7 20 Bxf6 gxf6 21 Nd5 and wins since Black's queen can't touch the c6-pawn.

15 Nxa4 bxa4 16 c4 Kc8 17 Qxa4



Black's position is the dollar store in the dying mall and it becomes painfully clear that his extra material will be of little help against the following factors:

1. White got two healthy pawns for the piece.

2. White leads massively in development.

3. Black's king remains completely unsafe since a break on c5 hangs over Rubinetti's head.

4. The c6- and e8-squares are vulnerable to invasion.

17 … Qd7

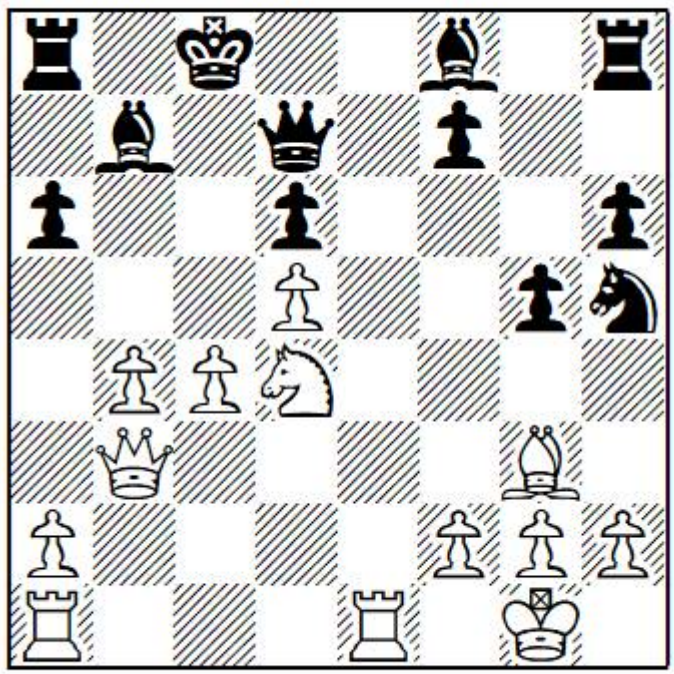
17 … g5 18 Bg3 h5 19 c5! gives White a winning attack.

18 Qb3

18 Qc2! seizing control over f5, is considerably stronger.

18 … g5 19 Bg3 Nh5?

19 … h5 was forced.



Exercise (planning): "Hocus" alone isn't good enough to launch the spell.

What we require now is the "pocus". What is White's most potent attacking

continuation?

Answer: Line opening/pawn breakthrough with c4-c5!.

20 c5!

Fischer pushes his c-pawn, even though d5 hangs. At first this appears to be a big mistake which allows Black to force queens off the board. It doesn't and Fischer accurately calculated the consequences.

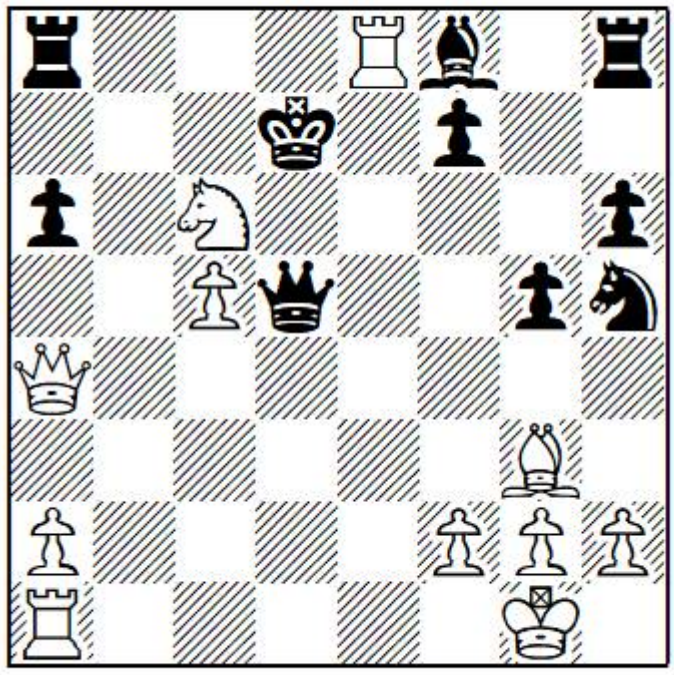
20 … dxc5 21 bxc5 Qxd5

As a calculation exercise, work out Fischer's forced win. 21 … Nxg3? is met by the deadly zwischenzug 22 c6; similarly 21 … Bxd5 22 Qb6 Qb7 23 Qa5! Nxg3 24 c6! wins.

22 Re8+ Kd7 23 Qa4+

The check on a4 is deadly.

23 … Bc6 24 Nxc6! 1-0



"Hell awaits," chant White's avenging archangels, who swoop down upon Black's king. With the powerful light-squared bishop removed Black has no defence: 24 … Kxe8 25 Re1+ wins; 24 … Qxc6 25 Rd1+ is also a massacre; while 24

… Rxe8 picks off Black's queen.

Game 11
B.Larsen-R.J.Fischer
Candidates semi-final (Game 4), Denver 1971
King's Indian Defence

I remember reading this excerpt in the magazine *Canadian Chess Chat* in 1971: "Now let's discuss the match between two foreign stars: Robert Fischer, 28, USA, and Bent Larsen, 36, Denmark; It's kind of inappropriate now to call Larsen the 'Danish Prince', because he's not of a princely age anymore, but it's too early to call him the "Danish Chess King"! Both consider themselves the world's strongest chess players, and, of course, they are jealous towards each other, like Miss America and Miss Denmark. Larsen said in 1968 and 1971 that he would win the Candidates' matches and then the world title, and that "Fischer will never become a world champion" because he supposedly "always fears to lose a game" – Vasily Panov, *Before the New Difficult Battles*.

You are on one of those million-dollar question game shows and you strike it rich if you get the final answer correct. Your question is: "What continent is the home of kangaroos?" You answer without hesitation: "North America!" since you saw kangaroos at the zoo in your hometown of Denver, Colorado. I just described the level of mega-choke Larsen must have felt after his disastrous 0-6 match against Fischer. Fischer was absolutely the stronger player. But 0-6 stronger? Not a chance. This was a case of psychological collapse on Larsen's part, perhaps stemming from the massive pressure from Fischer's previous 6-0 sweep of Taimanov and Larsen's bold pre-match claim that he would kick Fischer's butt.

Now you may rightfully be asking: if this is a book on Fischer's lesser-known games, then why are you placing a game in the book from one of the most famous matches of all time? The answer is: the match may be famous yet the vast number of readers are only familiar with Fischer's amazing Winawer French win in the first game of the match. The remainder of the games are either hazy or never played over

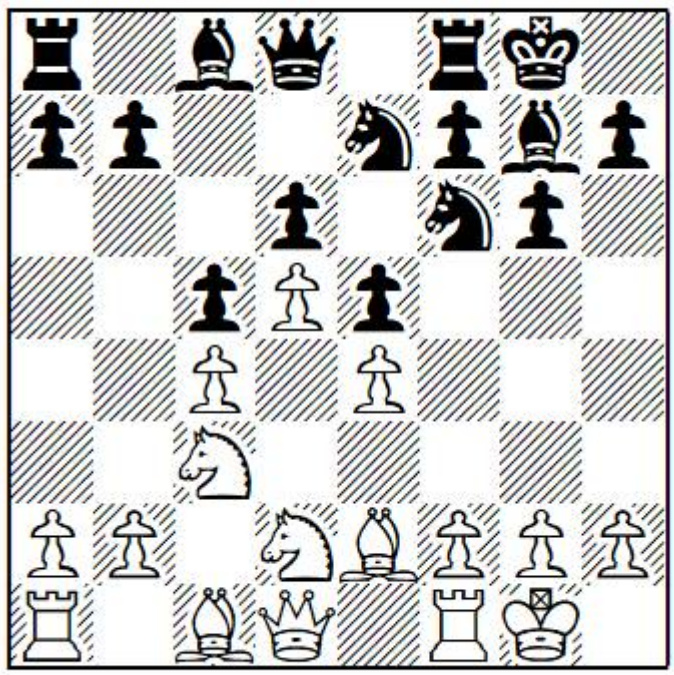
by many club-level players. This one was an example of Fischer's attacking/strategic mastery on the Black side of King's Indian.

The lecture topic of today is the subjugation of inner demons. Our perception of the world tends to create our path through it. Before this fourth game of the match, Larsen had already received three blows to the head and, looking at the level of his play, he was no longer the normally super-confident Bent Larsen, but a shadow of his former self, whose mantra for the match was: "Dammit! That didn't work!"

1 c4 g6 2 Nf3 Bg7 3 d4 Nf6 4 Nc3 0-0 5 e4 d6 6 Be2 e5 7 0-0 Nc6 8 d5 Ne7 9 Nd2

White's most common lines are 9 Ne1 and 9 b4; while Taimanov unsuccessfully tried 9 Bd2 against Fischer in their Candidates' match.

9 … c5



This was Bobby's favourite response to the line, making the queenside structure rigid and making it more difficult for White to open the game. 9 … a5 is the most common response

today, which Bobby played in his training match with Gligoric (see Games 73, 77 and 79).

10 Rb1

As we'll see later, Korchnoi opted for 10 a3?! Ne8 11 b4 here in Game 56.

10 … Ne8 11 b4 b6 12 a4

Larsen wants to open the queenside as quickly as possible. 12 bxc5 bxc5 13 Nb3 f5 is another way to play the position.

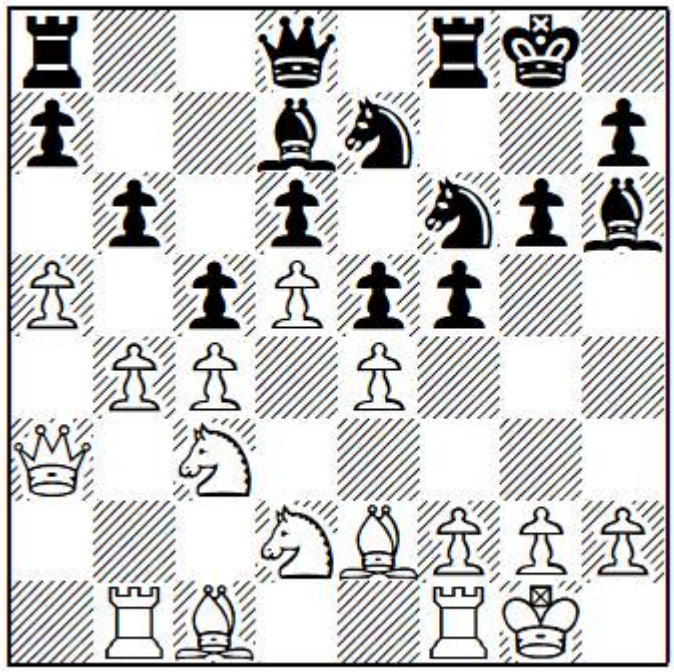
12 … f5

Another option, 12 … a5!? 13 bxc5 bxc5 14 Qb3 (here 14 Nb3, targeting a5 and possible sacrifices on c5, looks like an improvement) 14 … Nc7 15 Qb6 Ra6 16 Qb8 Ra8 17 Qb6 led to a draw by repetition, J.Fedorowicz-W.Watson, Hastings 1984/85.

13 a5 Nf6 14 Qa4

Now a5xb6 is a strategic threat.

14 … Bd7 15 Qa3 Bh6!



Fischer's bad bishop is no longer so bad. Also, when the d2-knight moves, Black gets to swap it for White's good bishop. I don't buy the engine's clear advantage for White assessment and believe Black has reached a dynamic balance.

16 Bd3 Qc7

This way he connects his rooks.

17 bxc5 bxc5 18 exf5!?

Instead:

a) 18 Nb5 Bxb5 19 Rxb5 Bxd2! 20 Bxd2 fxe4 21 Bc2 Nf5 22 Rfb1 Rfb8 23 a6 (intending Rb7) 23 … Rb6! looks okay for Black.

b) 18 Nf3 may be best: 18 … Bxc1 19 Rfxc1 fxe4 20 Nxe4 Nxe4 21 Bxe4 Nf5 22 a6 Rab8 23 h4!?, when I slightly prefer White's position.

18 … gxf5

Black retains control over e4, while opening the g-file for a potential attack upon the white king. 18 … Nxf5 19 Nde4 looks a shade better for White.

19 Bc2 a6!?

Fischer allows b6 to be weakened to remove Nb5 from the equation. 19 … Rab8 is a reasonable alternative.

20 Nde4!?

As spectacular as this appears, it doesn't really bother Black much. 20 Ne2 is stronger, intending 20 … Rab8 21 Rxb8 Rxb8 22 Ne4! (now is the correct timing) 22 … Bg7 23 Nxf6+ Bxf6 24 Bb2, when f2-f4 is in the air and White stands slightly better.

20 … Bxc1 21 Nxf6+ Rxf6 22 Rfxc1 Raf8 23 Rb6!?

He should probably give Fischer's kingside chances more respect and challenge the build-up with 23 f4! Ng6 24 Ne2.

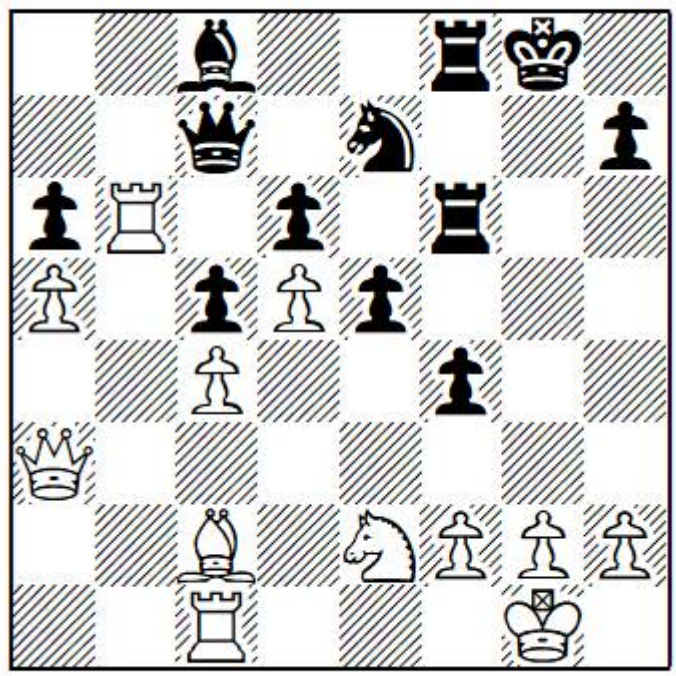
23 … Bc8

Everyone is covered and Larsen experiences difficulty in finding targets on the queenside.

24 Ne2?!

Larsen underestimates Fischer's coming attack. 24 f4 looks preferable, with even chances.

24 … f4!



Fischer correctly realizes that handing White control over e4 is easily compensated by the following factors:

1. … f4-f3 is a dangerous threat.

2. The f5-square opens for black knight and bishop.

3. Numbers 1 and 2 on the list automatically mean that Black's coming kingside attack is dangerous.

25 Be4

After 25 f3 Nf5 26 Bxf5 Bxf5! 27 Qb2! (27 Rxa6!? Rh6!, intending to swing a queen to h4, looks pretty scary for White) 27 … Qd8 28 Nc3 Rh6 29 Qf2 Kh8 30 Re1 Rg8 31 Ne4 Bh3 32 g4 fxg3 33 hxg3 Bf5!, Black has a strong attack. If 34 Rxa6? (White should try 34 Nxd6! Rxd6 35 Rxe5 Bc8, yet even here I prefer Black's chances) 34 … Bxe4! 35 Rxe4 Qg5, White's king won't survive.

25 … Nf5 26 Rc6?!

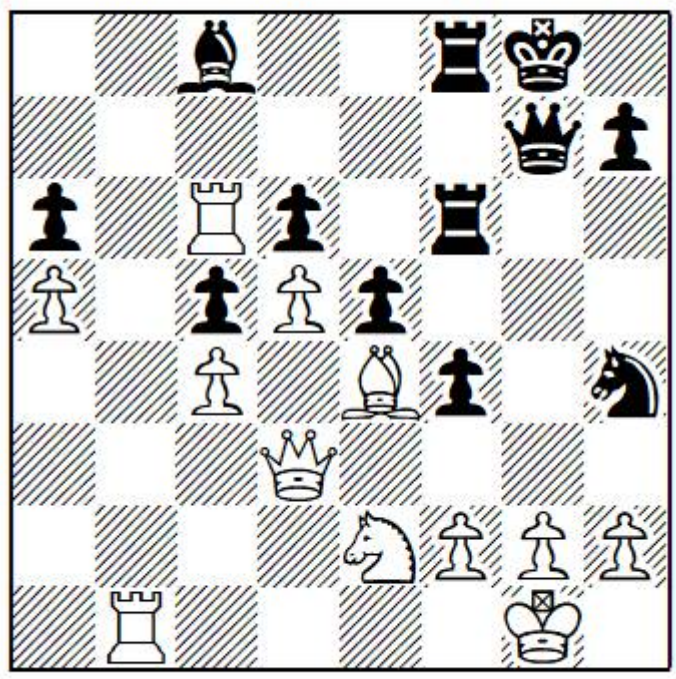
The rook is out of play on c6 and merely chases Black's queen to where she wants to go. He should try 26 Kh1.

26 … Qg7 27 Rb1?

"Bring it on!" roars the 90-pound nerd, as he confidently challenges the 250-pound football player to a fight, for the right to date the high school's head cheerleader. Larsen remains oblivious to the danger to his king. 27 Kh1 was forced. Even then Black has a strong attack: 27 … Kh8 28 Rg1 Qg5 29 Qd3 Ne7 30 Rb1 Rh6! 31 Ng1! Nxc6 32 dxc6, but at least White gets some play for the exchange.

27 … Nh4! 28 Qd3?

He had to play 28 Rxc8 Rxc8 29 Qh3 Rcf8 30 f3! (30 Qxh4? Rh6 traps the queen) 30 … Rh6 31 Qg4 Qxg4 32 fxg4 f3 33 Ng3 fxg2, when White is still lost, just not as definitively as in the game.



Exercise (planning): A state of not understanding is neither an opinion nor

a viewpoint. Larsen's last move was a blunder and the white king's health is

failing. What is Fischer's optimal attacking plan?

Answer: Remove White's best defender, his bishop.

28 … Bf5!

The heretic black bishop has no fear of being burned alive, since his goal is to replace the old religion, with the new. This is a rare case of a good black King's Indian light-squared bishop, who willingly seeks to swap itself for White's normally bad light-squared bishop. There two reasons why this is an exception to the norm:

1. White's bishop on e4 is not bad anymore on its powerful central square.

2. The bishop is a crucial protector of the key squares g2 and f3, which White can no longer defend after its removal.

29 Kh1

If 29 Rb3 Nxg2!, it's time for White to resign.

29 … f3!

Step 2: Interference. 29 … Nxg2?? is very much the wrong way: 30 Bxf5 Rxf5 31 Rxd6 and White stands slightly better in the coming complications.

30 Ng3

Not 30 gxf3? Qg2 mate.

30 … fxg2+ 31 Kg1 Bxe4!

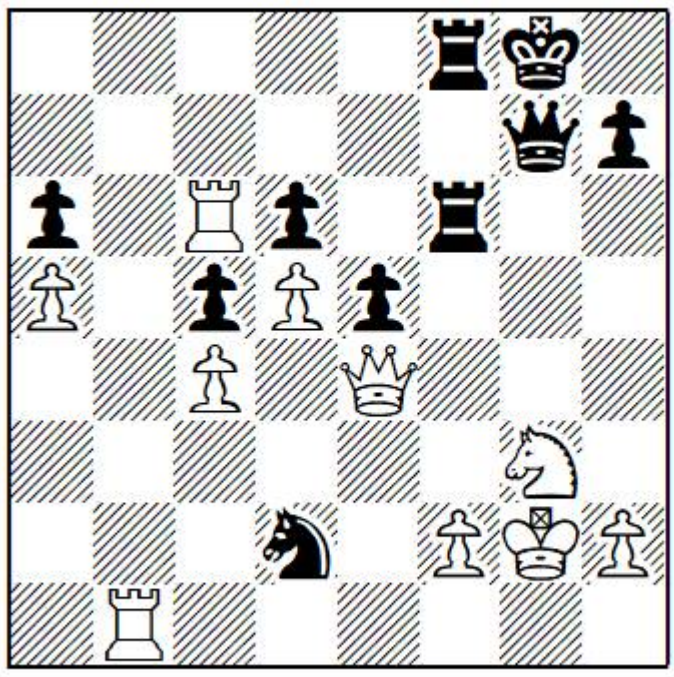
Step 3: Swap off the defender of the f3-square.

32 Qxe4 Nf3+!

This check is one of those threatening letters from the IRS, which declare that if you don't pay the owed back-taxes of $60,000 within the next 10 days, they will seize your home.

Step 4: Check on f3 in preparation for a fork on d2 next move.

33 Kxg2 Nd2 0-1



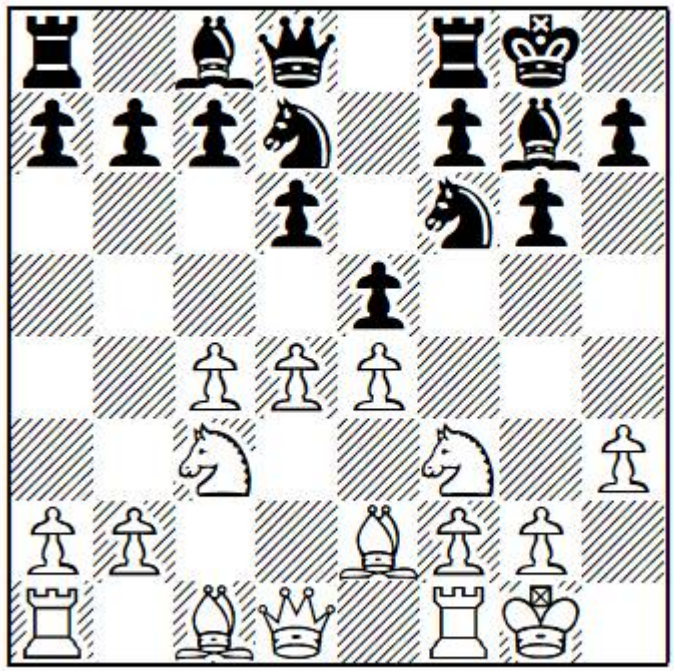
On the chessboard there is no such thing as a result which is devoid of a previous cause. Essentially the karmic law of cause and effect is both real and perceptibly obvious. Now comes the punchline of Bobby's not so funny joke as the knight bangs down on d2, with an attitude of repudiation: not only are white queen and b1-rook forked, but f2 is now also loose.

Chapter Three
Bobby on Defence and Counterattack

Even Harry Houdini, who had a knack for escaping from locked trunks while submerged in icy waters and handcuffed, would be impressed with Fischer's defensive skills. A cold-blooded, reptilian nature is required when defending. Fischer at his height became one of the greatest defenders of all time. From the early days on, Bobby was awfully slippery and difficult to defeat, even when dead lost, as in the following game.

Game 12
Je.Donovan-R.J.Fischer
U.S. Open, Oklahoma City 1956
King's Indian Defence

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 Bg7 4 e4 d6 5 Nf3 0-0 6 Be2 Nbd7 7 0-0 e5 8 h3?!



The move h2-h3 doesn't mix well with a Maróczy set-up.

8 … c6?!

8 … exd4! 9 Nxd4 Re8 is a bit of a problem for White, since f2-f3 now weakens the dark squares around White's king.

9 Be3

Here 9 d5! is better, as the test still allows 9 … exd4!.

9 … Qe7 10 Qc2

Neither side seems to understand that White should close the centre with d4-d5! and that Black should open it with … e5xd4!.

10 … a6 11 a4 Re8?!

Both sides, oblivious to reality, remind us of 19th Century insane asylums, in that the inmates/patients are chained to a wall with no effort by the doctors to cure them. 11 … exd4! is correct.

12 dxe5!

White also stands better after 12 d5.

12 … dxe5 13 a5!

Bobby hasn't handled the opening well and his queenside is full of dark square punctures.

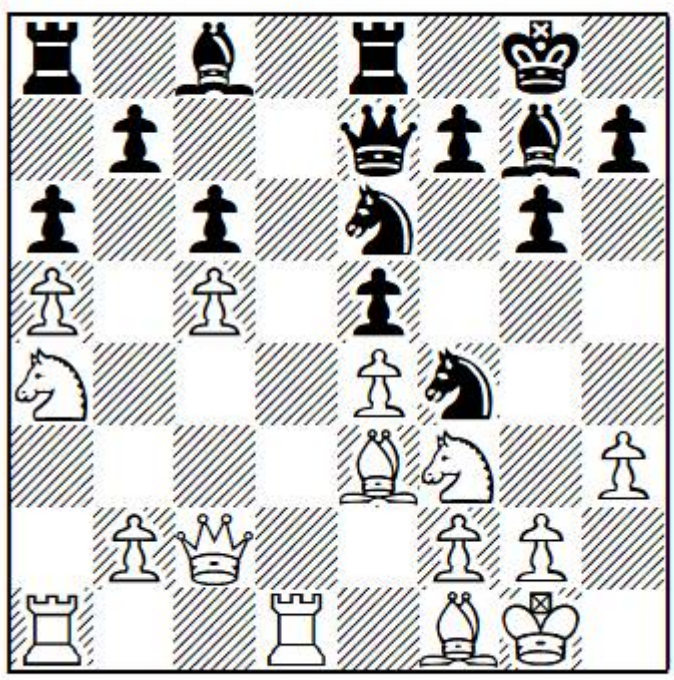
13 … Nh5 14 Rfd1 Nf4 15 Bf1 Nf8?!

This makes matters worse, since it leaves b6 open for occupation.

16 c5

16 Na4 is also a strong consideration.

16 … N8e6 17 Na4



17 … Ng5!?

Bobby wasted four moves just to swap off White's f3-knight; but by this stage 17 … Qf6 18 Nb6 Rb8 19 Kh2 (covering against … Nxh3) 19 … g5 20 Rd6 h5 21 Ng1! g4 22 g3 Bf8 23 Rad1! is awful for Black, whose fishing chances on the kingside just don't compensate for his strategic lack. 23 … h4 can be met by 24 gxf4 exf4 25 Bc1 g3+ 26 Kh1, when White's king is perfectly safe and Black is busted.

18 Nxg5 Qxg5 19 Kh2

Covering against tricks on h3. Black is already strategically lost.

19 … Be6!?

"He meant no harm," declared Mrs. Manson, the mother of Charles. Bobby refuses to back down and offers a piece, since his knight is now pinned. Unfortunately for him, his claim of an attack is a pack of lies. Instead, 19 … Qe7 20 Rd6 is pretty awful for Black, but maybe still better than what Fischer got in the game.

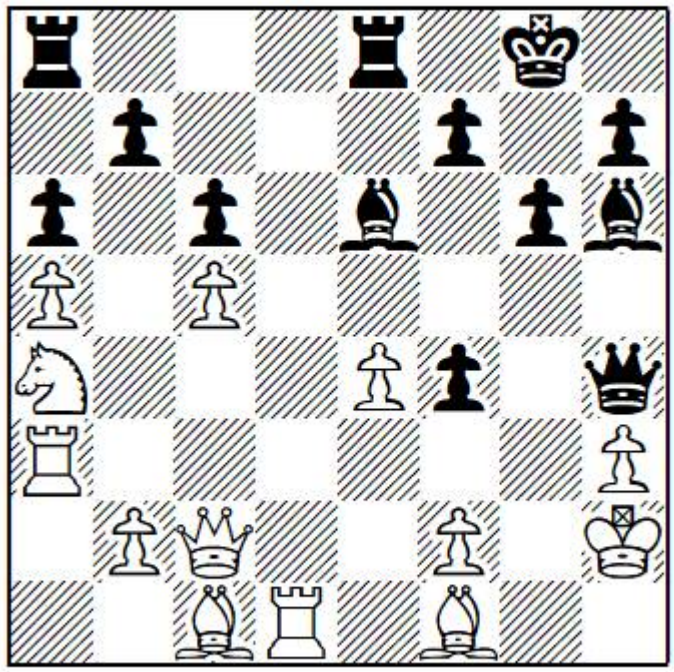
20 g3 Bh6!?

20 … Qh5?? is completely unsound: 21 gxf4 exf4 22 Bxf4 and Black is dead lost.

21 gxf4?!

This is still favourable for White, yet clearly not best, as it is in violation of the principle: *Don't capture a pinned piece, since it isn't going anywhere*. *Instead, be patient and keep building pressure.* After 21 Rd6! Qh5 22 Qd1! Qg5 (if 22 … Qxd1 23 Raxd1! Bb3 24 Nb6 Bxd1 25 Nxa8 Bc2 26 Nb6, Black's knight remains pinned, about to be taken) 23 Qf3 Re7 24 Nb6 Rae8 25 Bd2 Black's attack is hopelessly stalled and at some point White will joyfully accept the gift-knight, with a completely winning position.

21 … exf4 22 Bc1 Qh4 23 Ra3!



It becomes clear that Bobby's "attack" is no more than a suicidally depressed fictional character in a Dostoevsky novel. One pawn doesn't come close to compensating for the sacrificed piece.

23 … Rad8 24 Rad3

Even stronger is to offer an exchange for the dark squares with 24 Rd6! Bf8 25 Rad3!.

24 … Rxd3 25 Rxd3 Bg7 26 b3

He wants to challenge Black's dark-squared bishop with Bb2. More potent is to bring the offside knight into play with 26 Nb6! Be5 27 Kg1 Qg5+ 28 Bg2 f5 29 Rf3! fxe4 30 Qxe4 and Black is busted.

26 … f5 27 Rf3

After 27 e5! Bxe5 28 Bb2 Qf6 29 Bxe5 Qxe5 30 Nb6 I don't see a compensating attack for Black.

27 … fxe4

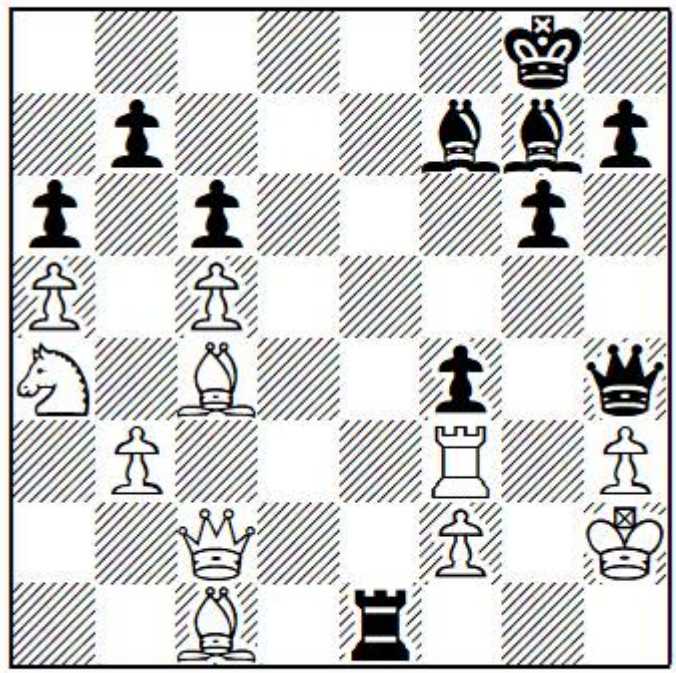
If 27 … Qh5 28 Be2 fxe4 29 Qxe4 Bf7 30 Qc2 Be5 31 Qd1 Bd5 32 Bc4!, Black is dead lost.

28 Qxe4 Bf7 29 Qc2?

He shouldn't allow Fischer's rook entry to e1. Following 29 Qb4! g5 30 Bb2 Black has no way to continue the attack.

29 … Re1! 30 Bc4??

A fatal mistake. After 30 Bg2 Bd5 31 Rxf4! Be5 32 Bxd5+ cxd5 33 Qd2 Qxf4+ (not 33 … Rxc1?? 34 Qxd5+ and Black is mated in three) 34 Qxf4 Bxf4+ 35 Bxf4 d4 Black's d-pawn offers play and the engine only gives White an edge.



Exercise (planning): Do you spot the flaw with White's last move?

Answer: White left the g1-square unguarded.

30 … Qg5!

We thank Thee, oh Blind Luck, for the bounty we are about to receive. Threat: … Qg1 mate. Black's counterattack arrives with force.

31 Bxf7+ Kf8!

Step 2: *Refuse* to capture on f7, which dodges White's intended combination. Suddenly, White's sickly king is in dire need of an affordable healthcare plan. Not 31 … Kxf7?? (this is the point where 007 falls through the super-villain's trap door and the super-villain, just to be an even bigger turd, rubs it in further with slow, sarcastic clapping) 32 Rxf4+ Bf6 33 Rxf6+! Qxf6 34 Kg2 with a winning position for White.

32 Rg3

Otherwise there is no stopping mate. For instance, 32 h4?? Qg1+ 33 Kh3 h5! forces mate in three.

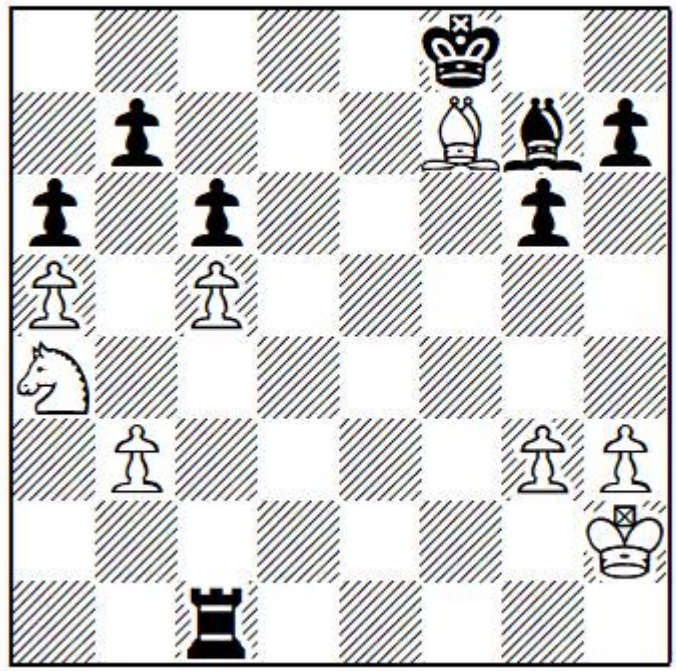
32 … fxg3+ 33 fxg3 Qxc1

Ugh. Not only did White lose his rook, he also handed over his dark-squared bishop, leaving Black the exchange up in an ending.

34 Qxc1

34 Qf2? Bd4! 35 Qxd4 Re2+ mates next move.

34 … Rxc1



The remainder was easy for Bobby.

35 Be6 Re1 36 Bc8 Re2+ 37 Kh1 Re7 38 Kg2 Ke8

Black's king moves over to eject White's bishop from c8.

39 h4 Kd8 40 Bg4 Re3 0-1

In view of 41 Bd1 Be5 42 g4 Rd3, winning the b3-pawn, since White's bishop is unable to move to c2.

Game 13
R.J.Fischer-A.Di Camillo
New Jersey Open, East Orange 1957
French Defence

1 e4 e6 2 d3 d5 3 Nd2 Bd6 4 Ngf3

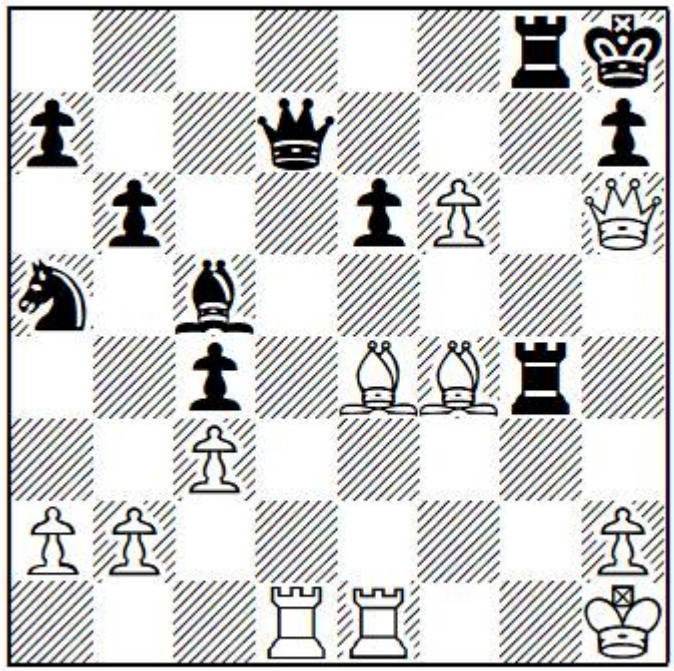
Bobby remains true to the old religion, the King's Indian Attack, and isn't tempted by adventures like 4 d4!? c5 5 e5 (5 exd5 exd5 6 Ngf3 Nc6 7 dxc5 Bxc5 8 Bd3 is a decent-looking Tarrasch French for Black, since White spent two moves playing d2-d4, rather than one) 5 … Bc7 6 Qg4 Kf8 7 c3 Nc6 8 Ngf3 f6!? with a funky-looking French hybrid, which looks fine for Black, since White again took two moves to get his d-pawn to the fourth rank.

4 … c5 5 g3 Nc6 6 Bg2 Nge7

This is the same system I play against the KIA. It's flexible and makes it difficult for White to achieve e4-e5.

7 0-0 0-0 8 Re1

A decade later Fischer produced one of his greatest strategic/attacking masterpieces with 8 Nh4 b6 9 f4 dxe4 10 dxe4 Ba6 11 Re1 c4 12 c3 Na5?! 13 e5 Bc5+ 14 Kh1 Nd5 15 Ne4 Bb7 16 Qh5 Ne7 17 g4! Bxe4? (17 … Ng6 was necessary) 18 Bxe4 g6 19 Qh6 Nd5 20 f5 Re8 21 fxg6 fxg6 22 Nxg6! Qd7 23 Nf4 Rad8 24 Nh5 Kh8 25 Nf6 Nxf6 26 exf6 Rg8 27 Bf4! Rxg4 28 Rad1 Rdg8



Exercise (combination alert): Black's queen isn't hanging due to a mating

threat on g1. How did Bobby short circuit the defence?

Answer: Clearance/Interference. 29 f7! ended the game in R.J.Fischer-B.Ivkov, Piatigorsky Cup, Santa Monica 1967. A coming bishop check on e5 is fatal for Black, who lacks the time to capture the offending bishop on f4, since White also threatens instant mate on h7.

8 … Qc7

Also played are 8 … Bc7 and 8 … f6.

9 c3

9 Qe2 is met by 9 … f6.

9 … Bd7 10 Qe2

Threat: e4-e5, which is easy to meet.

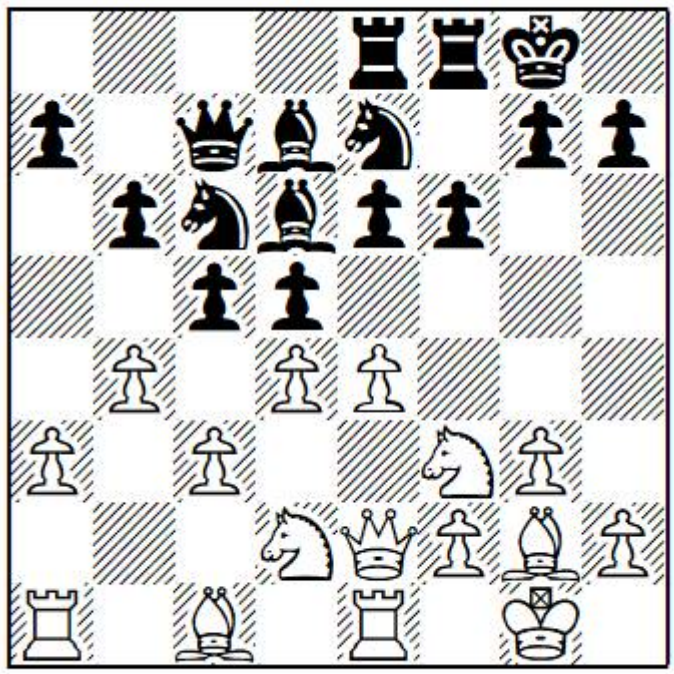
10 … f6 11 a3

He wants to expand on the queenside with b2-b4.

11 … Rae8?!

Black looks fine after 11 … a5!.

12 b4 b6 13 d4!



Threatening to win a piece with e4-e5.

13 … cxd4!?

White gets a favourable isolani position after this swap. Maybe Black should retain the pawn tension, while removing White's threat with 13 … Qc8.

14 cxd4 dxe4 15 Nxe4 Nd5 16 Bb2

16 Nxd6! Qxd6 17 b5 Nce7 18 a4 also looks promising for White.

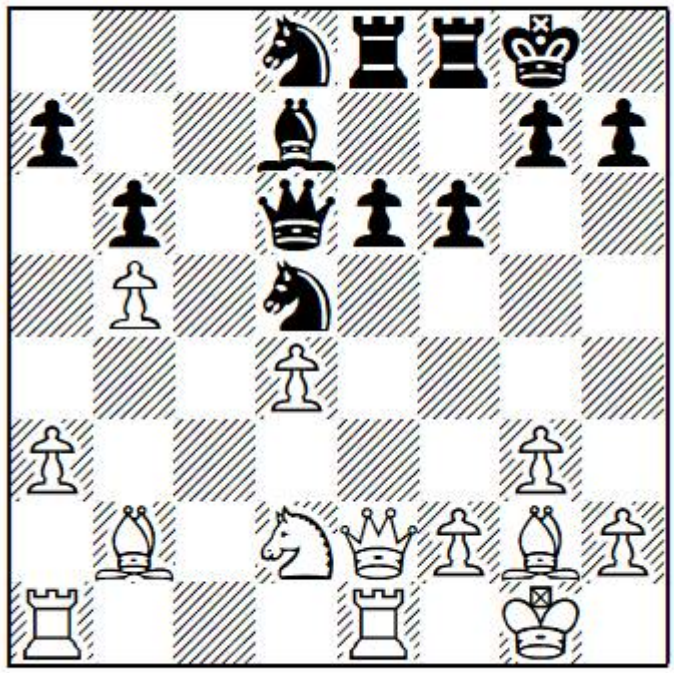
16 … Qb8 17 Nfd2

White's advantage is larger by grabbing the bishop pair and dark squares with 17 Nxd6!.

17 … Nd8?!

Black underestimates the need to hang on to his dark-squared bishop, which should retreat to either c7 or e7.

18 Nxd6! Qxd6 19 b5!



Two points:

1. The c6-square is denied to Black's knight and bishop.

2. a2-a4 and Ba3 follows, increasing the pressure on Black's position.

19 … Bc8 20 a4! Qd7 21 Ba3 Rf7 22 Nc4

Threatening to fork on d8, which forces a further strategic concession from Black.

22 … Nb7

Réti warned us about the dangers of a fianchettoed knight! As is obvious, Black's pieces are terribly tangled.

23 Qd3

23 Ne3! plays upon the principle: *Challenge the piece which blockades your isolani.*

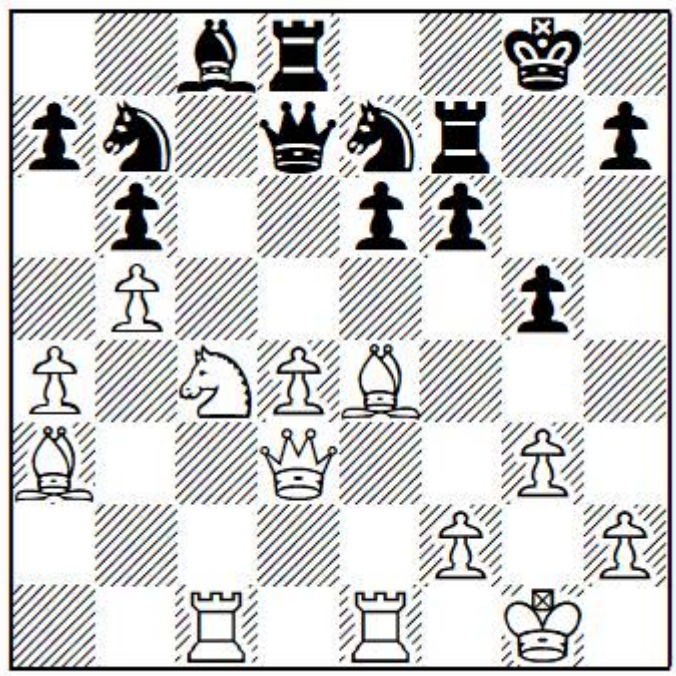
23 … Rd8 24 Be4!

Bobby continues to probe, creating weaknesses in Black's position.

24 … g5!?

24 … g6 is no worry for White either.

25 Rac1 Ne7



26 Bxb7!?

This is awfully risky, since Black may sacrifice the exchange for the light squares. The engine backs up the move but doesn't believe it is White's optimal choice. Just protecting the d-pawn with 26 Red1 is safer.

26 … Bxb7 27 Nd6 Nf5!

The best chance.

a) 27 … Ba8? is tempting and flawed: 28 Nxf7! Qb7 29 d5 Rxd5 30 Qe4 wins.

b) 27 … Rg7? 28 Nxb7 Qxb7 29 Rxe6 is completely lost for Black.

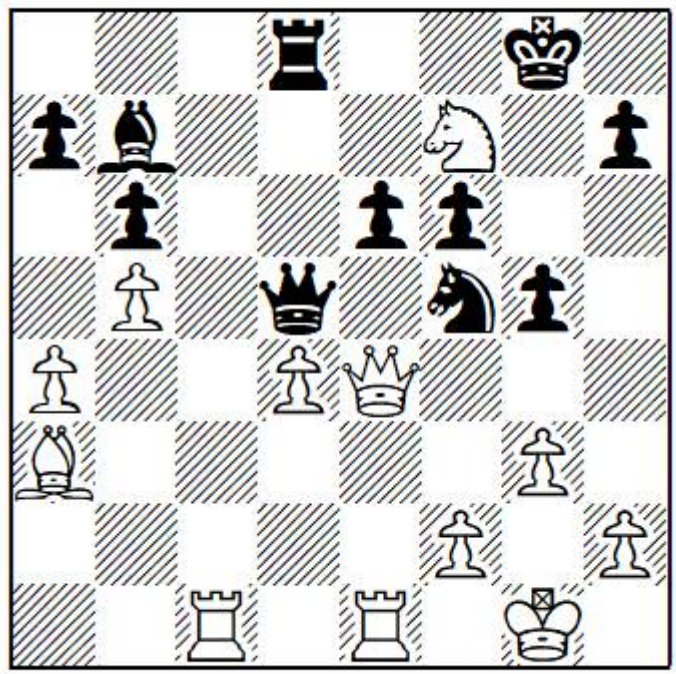
28 Nxf7

I’m in search of honest work,” said the thief. Fischer must obviously tread with care, due to the punctured light squares around his not-so-well protected king. Slightly more accurate is to give the d-pawn away first with 28 d5! Bxd5 29 Nxf7 Qxf7 30 Rc3.

28 … Qd5?

Simply 28 … Qxf7 is a bit scary for White, due to the aforementioned light squares. The engine still says White is winning, but we humans tend not to defend so well in such situations.

29 Qe4!



Black may have missed this move, which is possible only because Black’s rook hangs on d8 at the end.

29 … Qd7 30 Qxe6

What a relief. Queens are removed from the board.

30 … Qxe6 31 Rxe6 Kxf7 32 Ree1 Kg6

32 … Nxd4?? 33 Re7+ Kg6 34 Rxb7 Ne2+ 35 Kg2 Nxc1 36 Bxc1 leaves White a piece up.

33 Rc7 Bf3 34 Bb2

White is an exchange and a pawn up, yet the story doesn't end yet, since Black still gets fishing chances against the white king.

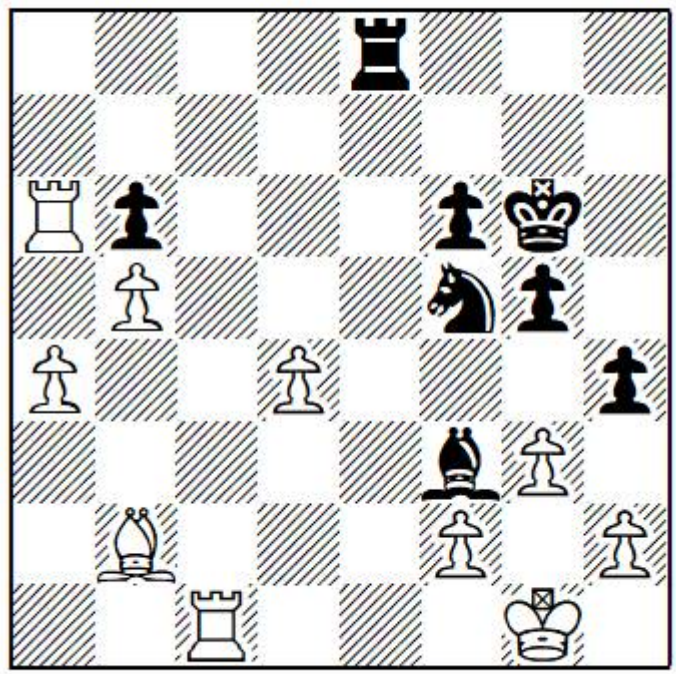
34 … h5 35 Rxa7 Rc8 36 Rc1

Oh no you don't.

36 … Re8 37 Ra6

Fischer calmly eats all the queenside pawns, confident in his ability to protect his king.

37 … h4



38 g4!?

I like this defensive idea, which hands over a pawn to gain time and clog the potential opening of the h-file for Black's rook. The engine says 38 Rxb6 is playable, but then you have to see that 38 … hxg3 39 hxg3 (39 fxg3? Re2 gives Black excellent compensation) 39 … Rh8 40 Rxf6+! Kxf6 41 d5+ saves White from mate and wins.

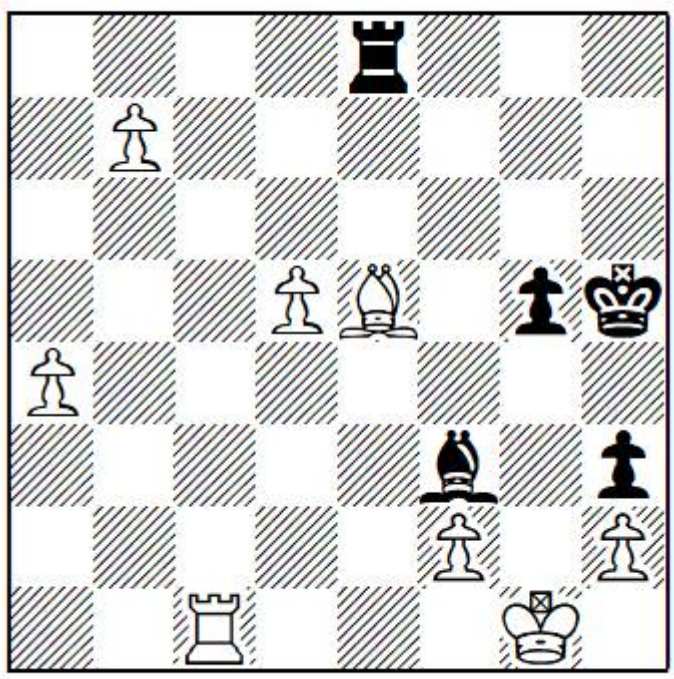
38 … Bxg4 39 Rxb6 Re2 40 Bc3 h3!

Black's knight heads for f3. It's too slow though since White's counterattack on f6 saves his king.

41 d5! Nh4 42 Rxf6+ Kh5 43 b6 Nf3+ 44 Rxf3

Who cares? The opposite-coloured bishops won't save Black.

46 … Bxf3 45 b7 Re8 46 Be5!



Game over.

46 … Rxe5

Or maybe not! Di Camillo bravely spots Bobby a queen and plays on, wasting our time and costing Everyman valuable paper by extending the game, for absolutely no sane reason. Prayers don't always produce wonders, miracles, or Caissa's divine intercession.

47 b8Q Re4

With the not-threat of a rook check on g4.

48 Qg3

No, he didn't hang his queen. We must remember that there is different justice for the rich and the poor.

48 … Rg4

Even Oliver Twist had sense enough to know that a single bowl of thin, flavourless gruel was not enough to satisfy his hunger. This is why he asked his workhouse overlord for "more". Black's lone bishop isn't going to cut it against White's extra rook and two pawns, both of which are about to promote.

49 d6 1-0

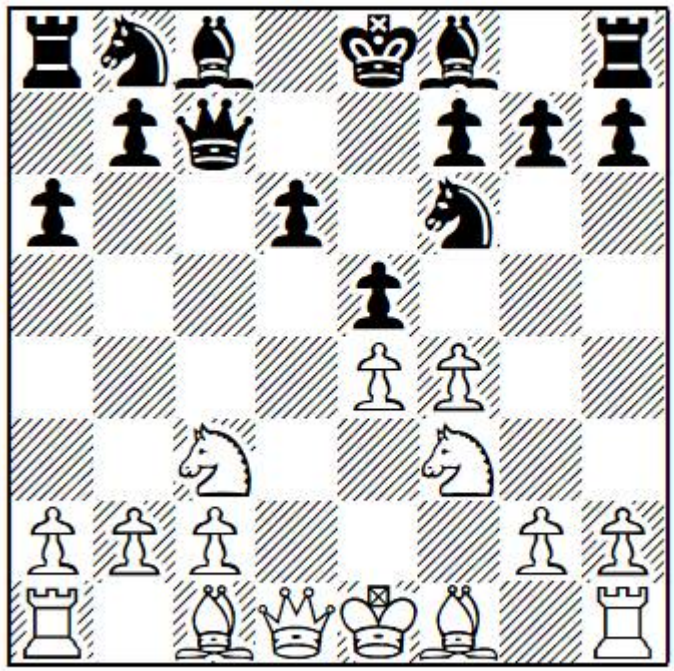
Game 14
Ar.Elo-R.J.Fischer
New Western Open, Milwaukee 1957
Sicilian Defence

Bobby quickly became a master of overextending overly optimistic opponents. This game is a good example of his early defensive/counterattacking skills.

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 a6

I found the Najdorf the most difficult person in the world to please. Not so with Bobby, who only began to experience trouble defending it in his world championship match against Spassky, who came super-prepared for it.

6 f4 e5 7 Nf3 Qc7



Bobby may have wanted to cover against Bc4. 7 … Nbd7 is played more often.

8 Bd3 Nbd7 9 0-0 b5 10 Qe1

The queen heads for the kingside, where Black's king will likely castle.

10 … Bb7 11 a3

11 Kh1 is White's main line today.

11 … g6!

A new idea at the time and a good one. With this move it may appear as if Bobby only invites weakness on his kingside dark squares. The push of the g-pawn contains some clear defensive points:

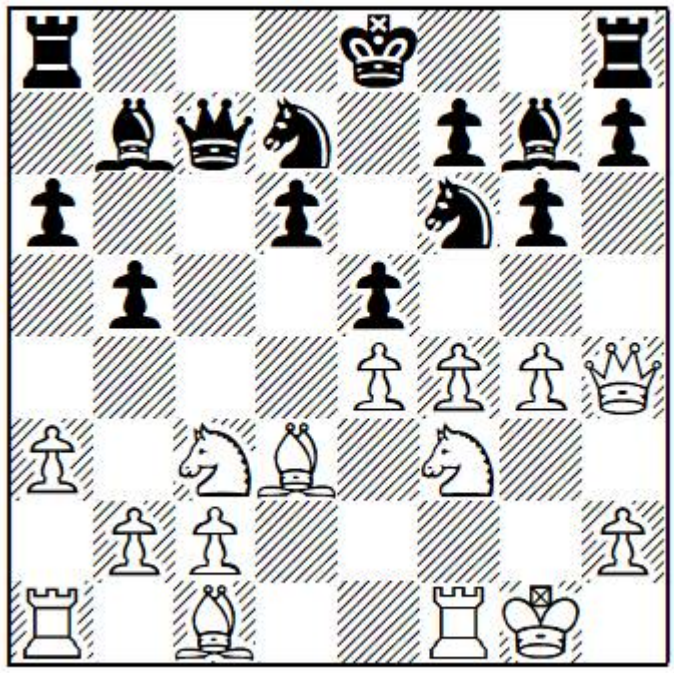
1. If … Be7 is played, avoiding … g7-g6, then Black must be on constant alert for Nh4, followed by Nf5.

2. When Black castles, his king will be safer with the dark-squared bishop fianchettoed, rather than placed on e7.

12 Qh4

Also played are 12 Kh1 and 12 fxe5.

12 … Bg7 13 g4?



Such a move would only be applauded by an MS13 gang assassin. There are three problems with it:

1. White's king has already castled on the kingside, so pushing the g-pawn exposes his king more than Black's.

2. Black hasn't castled yet, meaning this enables future … h7-h5 options.

3. The centre is fluid and if it opens, it will be White's king who is exposed.

13 … exf4

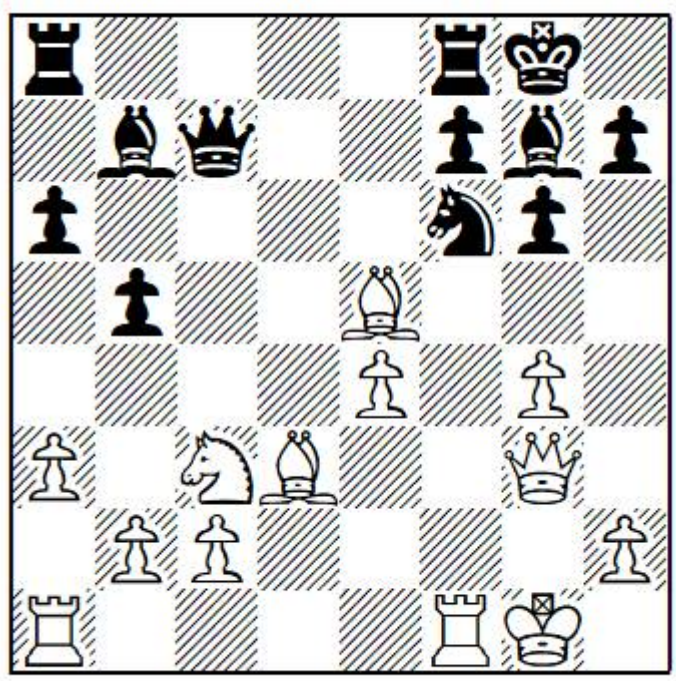
Principle: *Meet the opponent's wing attack with a central counter*. Fischer's last move clears e5 for his knight. The move is favourable for Black, although not the optimal defensive response. Stronger was to force White's king to the light square diagonal first and then open the centre: 13 … Qb6+! 14 Kh1 (14 Rf2 is strongly met by 14 … h5!) 14 … d5! and it's clear that White is in deep trouble.

14 Bxf4 0-0 15 Qg3 Ne5?!

Fischer sacrifices a pawn to open the centre and expose White's king. The problem is that White is under no obligation to accept. Instead, Black gets a strategically won game with 15 … Qb6+! 16 Rf2 d5!, when White's overextended position won't be able to cope with the opening of the centre.

16 Nxe5 dxe5 17 Bxe5?

White's position is only slightly inferior if he declines with 17 Be3.



Exercise (combination alert): Acceptance of the pawn allowed Bobby a

defensive combination. Work out the details.

Answer: Step 1: Give a queen check on c5.

17 … Qc5+! 18 Rf2

18 Kh1 allows 18 … Nh5! 19 gxh5 Bxe5, giving Black a strategically won game.

18 … Nh5?

Opportunity is a fleeting entity on loan. Bobby bungles Step 2: 18 … Nxe4! covers the d6-square and suddenly Black's combination works. 19 Nxe4 Qxe5 20 Qxe5 Bxe5 21 c3 Rad8 is ending which is heavily in Black's favour.

19 Bd6!

Professor Elo finds his only saving move. Bobby may have counted on the false assumption that 19 gxh5?? Bxe5 20 Qh4 Bd4 is lost for White.

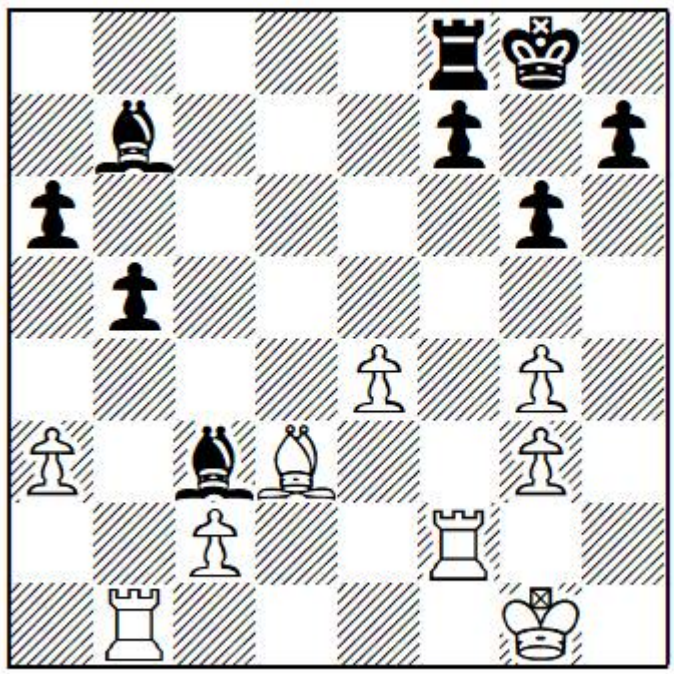
19 … Qxc3!

The queen goes kamikaze to inflict damage upon White's structure.

20 bxc3

Slightly inaccurate. After 20 gxh5! Qxb2 21 Raf1 Bd4 22 h4! White looks okay, with attacking chances along the kingside dark squares if Black accepts the exchange.

20 … Nxg3 21 Bxf8 Rxf8 22 hxg3 Bxc3 23 Rb1



23 … Bd4

Bobby decides to regain the exchange. From a dental viewpoint, White's structure is a row of black, rotting teeth. You may be surprised to discover that the engine calls the game dead even, despite White's parade of isolanis.

Black may be better off *not* recouping material and instead playing 23 … Bc8! 24 g5 Be6 25 Kh2 Rd8, when I actually prefer Black's chances, remaining a full exchange down, since White's pawn structure is as awful as it gets. The engine calls the game dead here too.

24 a4!

White will hold a draw if Black's queenside pawns are eliminated.

24 … Bc8 25 axb5 axb5 26 Rxb5 Bxg4 27 Kg2 Bxf2 28 Kxf2 Be6

Of course, the game should end in a draw. Now we see young Bobby's endgame technique.

29 Rc5 Kg7 30 Kf3 Kf6 31 Kf4

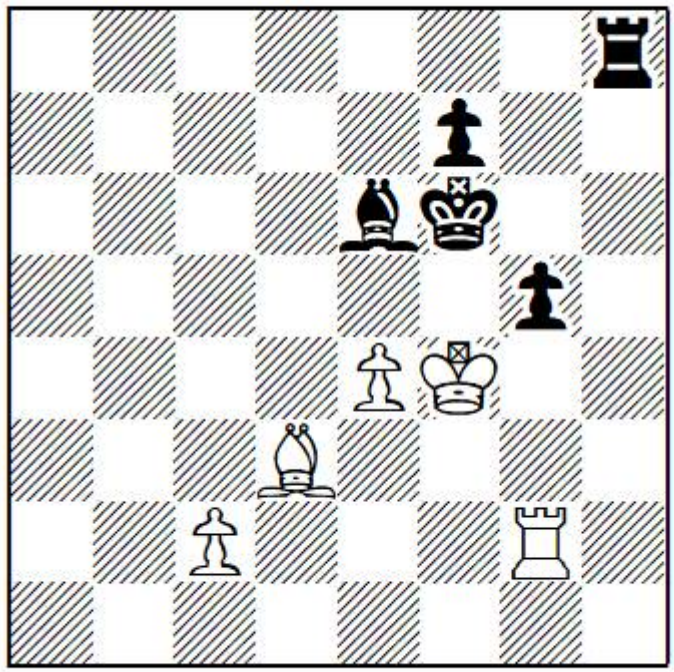
31 Bc4 is the simplest path to the draw.

31 … Ra8 32 g4 h6 33 g5+!

The more pawns off the board, the more likely a drawn result. Bobby threatened to play … g6-g5+, fixing all of the white pawns on the same – and therefore wrong – colour as White's remaining bishop.

33 … hxg5+ 34 Rxg5 Rh8 35 Rg2 g5+!

Bobby, like Capa before him, almost never missed short range tactics like this. It shouldn't alter a drawn result, yet benefits Black, who seizes control over e5 for his king.



36 Kf3

It's easy to see that 36 Rxg5?? fails miserably to 36 … Rh4+ 37 Kg3 Kxg5.

36 … Rh3+ 37 Rg3 Rxg3+ 38 Kxg3 Ke5 39 c3 Bd7 40 Bc4 f6 41 Bd5 Be8

The game should be a dead draw! It's a miracle that Bobby won.

a) 41 … f5? 42 exf5? Kxd5 43 Kg4 – draw.

b) 41 … Bf5 42 Kf3 g4+ 43 Ke3 g3 44 exf5 Kxd5 45 Kf3 Ke5 46 Kxg3 Kxf5 – draw.

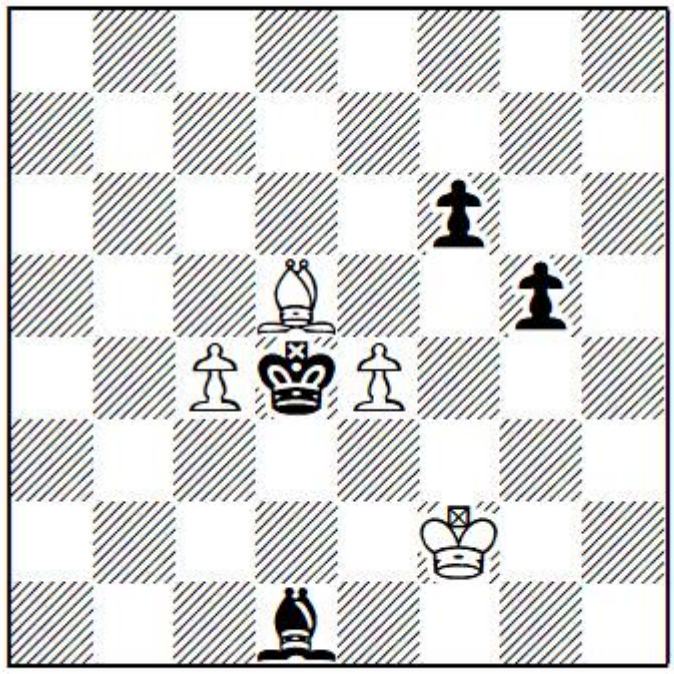
42 c4?!

The game is still drawn after this move, yet there was no reason to allow Black's king into d4 and create a fixed target on c4.

42 … Kd4 43 Kg4 Bg6!

The bishop watches over both entry squares, f5 and h5. White is in a minor zugzwang and must retreat his king.

44 Kf3 Bh5+! 45 Kf2! Bd1



Now … Bb3 and … Bxc4 is the intent.

Exercise (critical decision): Should White move his king to g3 or give up his

c-pawn with a move like Bb7 - ?

Answer: White's only path to the draw is to hand over a pawn.

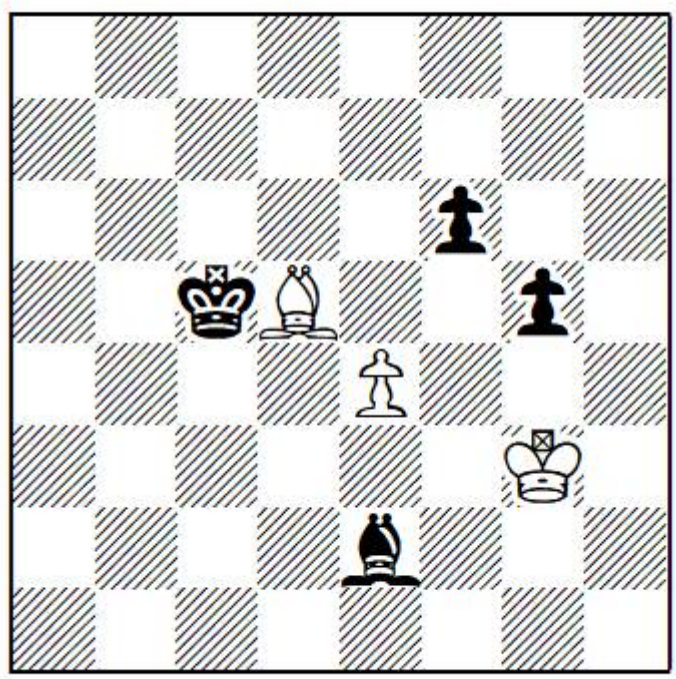
46 Kg3??

Welcome to Nowhereville, Population: 1. "Is there no end to my stupidity?" we ask ourselves after such blunders, although we already know the answer. 46 Bb7! Bb3 47 c5 Kxc5 48 Ke3 Be6 49 Ba6 holds the game as Black's extra pawn isn't enough to win.

46 … Be2!

White's king is denied entry to g4. Maybe Elo expected 46 … Bb3?? 47 Kg4 Bxc4 48 Bxc4 Kxc4 49 Kf5 Kd4 50 Kxf6 – draw.

47 c5 Kxc5



48 Be6

Here is the trouble: White's king doesn't have time to reach the drawing e3-square after 48 Kf2 Bc4! (gaining a crucial tempo) 49 Bb7 Kd4 50 Kf3 Bd3 51 Ba8 Bc2! 52 Bb7 Bd1+! ("Demon! I cast you out!" White's king is shoved

aside) 53 Kf2 g4! 54 Kg3 (or 54 Bc6 Bf3 55 Kg3 Ke3! 56 Bb7 Bxe4) 54 … Ke3 55 Bc6 Bf3 and wins.

48 … Kd4 49 Bf5 Ke3! 0-1

White's last pawn falls.

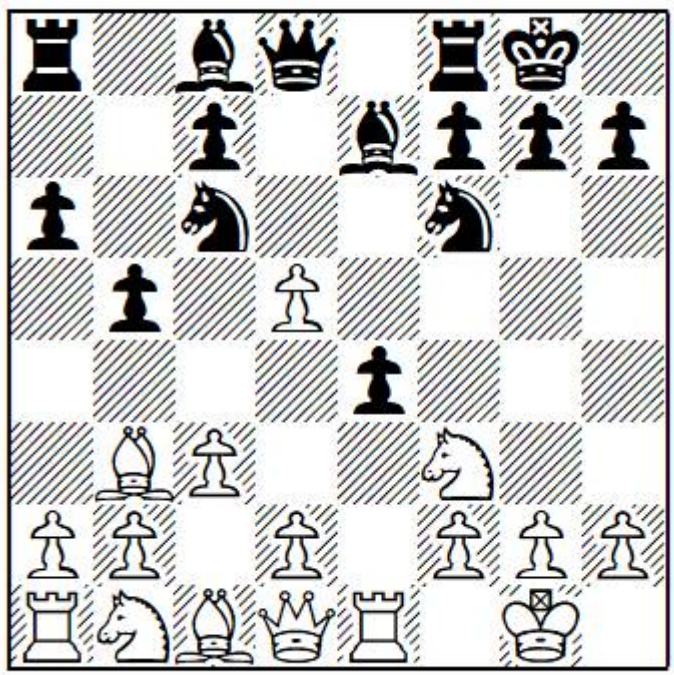
Game 15
R.J.Fischer-S.N.Bernstein
U.S. Championship, New York 1959
Ruy Lopez

This is the Immortal "I refuse to bring my pieces out!" Game, where Bobby violates the laws of physics by refusing to develop his entire queenside and then wins the game anyway.

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Ba4 Nf6 5 0-0 Be7 6 Re1 b5 7 Bb3 0-0 8 c3

Bobby was a notorious pawn grabber and never played the more chickenish (and more boring) Anti-Marshall lines.

8 … d5 9 exd5 e4!?



Oh, the thrill of forbidden love. This is unsound, yet still viable as an ambush weapon against an unprepared opponent. Bobby may have been caught by surprise by this rare sideline of the Marshall Gambit. 9 … Nxd5 10 Nxe5 Nxe5 11 Rxe5 c6 is today's main line.

10 dxc6 exf3 11 Qxf3?!

Believe it or not, Black gets fantastic play for the two sacrificed pawns after this natural recapture, which costs White valuable time. 11 g3! is the best move and pretty much a refutation of Black's variation: 11 … Re8 12 d4 Bg4 13 Bg5 h6 14 Bxf6 Bxf6 15 Nd2 Qd6 16 h3! Bh5 (if 16 … Bxh3?? 17 Qxf3, the dual threats of g3-g3 and Ne4, leave Black completely lost) 17 Qc2! (now Qf5! is in the air, since Black's bishop is unable to retreat to g6) 17 … Bg5 18 Ne4 Qxc6 19 Nxg5 hxg5 20 Qf5 and Black's position was lost, H.Nakamura-N.Short, London Classic 2010.

11 … Bg4 12 Qg3 Bd6 13 Qh4 Re8

This is obviously a scary development lead for Black. For now, Bobby is giving his opponent rook, knight and bishop odds, since his entire queenside is asleep.

14 f3 Bf5

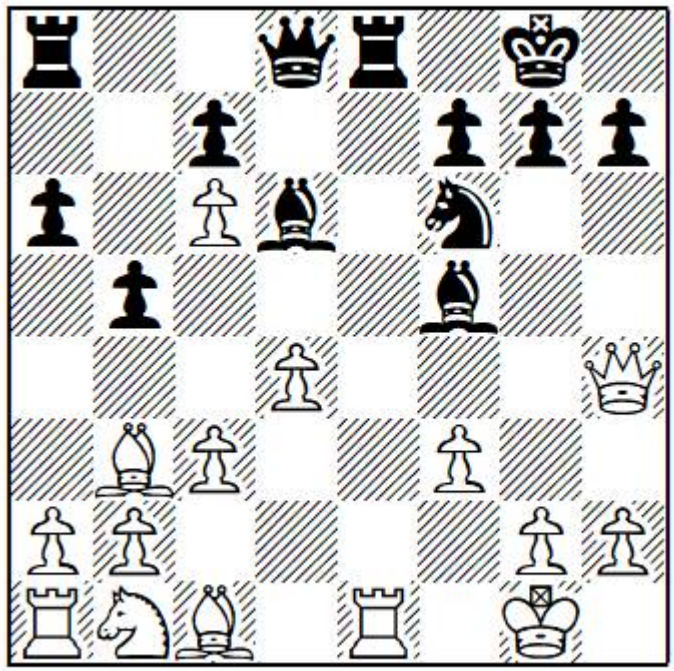
Bernstein has at least a draw with 14 … Bxf3! and then:

a) 15 gxf3 Bxh2+ 16 Kf2 (or 16 Kxh2 Ng4+ 17 Kh3 Qxh4+ 18 Kxh4 Rxe1 19 fxg4 Rxc1) 16 … Rxe1 17 Kxe1 Qd3! 18 Qf2 Re8+ 19 Kd1 h5! leaves White in dire trouble. One idea is 20 … Bg3!? 21 Qxg3 Ng4, while 20 Bc2 is met by 20 … Qd6, threatening … Bg3.

b) 15 Rxe8+! Qxe8 16 gxf3 Qe2 17 Qf2 Bxh2+! 18 Kg2 Qd3! 19 Kxh2 Re8 20 Bd1 Re6! 21 Na3 Nd5 22 Bc2 Rh6+ 23 Kg1 Rg6+ 24 Kh2 (24 Qg2?? is a really terrible way to go for the full point, as the engine announces mate in ten: 24 … Rxg2+ 25 Kxg2 Qe2+ 26 Kg3 Nf6! 27 d4 Nh5+ 28 Kg4 Qg2+! 29 Kxh5 Qg3! 30 b3 g6+ 31 Kh6 Qh4 mate) 24 … Rh6+ with perpetual check.

15 d4?!

Here 15 Re3 is a better try.



Exercise (combination alert): Bobby's last move allowed his opponent a

combination. What should Black play?

15 … Bxh2+!

Answer: Step 1: Sacrifice the bishop on h2, forcing recapture with the king.

16 Kxh2

The only move.

a) 16 Qxh2?? Rxe1+ 17 Kf2 Qe7! (even stronger than chopping the c1-bishop) 18 Bd2 (or 18 Bd1 Bd3) 18 … Ng4+! 19 fxg4 Qe2+ 20 Kg3 Qxg4+ 21 Kf2 Re2+ 22 Kg1 Be4 and mates.

b) 16 Kf1?? Bd3+ 17 Kf2 Rxe1 18 Qxh2 (or 18 Kxe1 Qe7+) 18 … Qe7! 19 Bd2 Rf1+ 20 Kg3 Qe2! 21 Qh3 Re8 and the engines announce mate.

16 … Ng4+!

Step 2: Discovered attack.

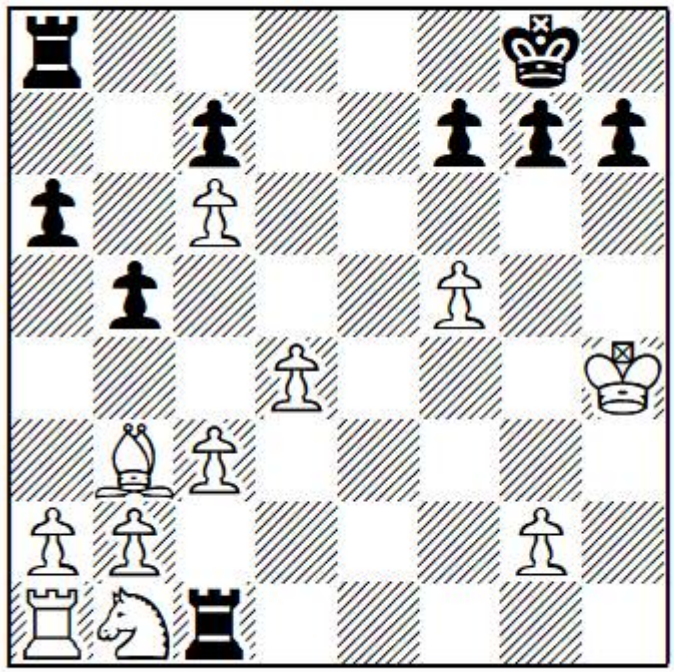
17 Kg3 Qxh4+

Step 3: Swap queens and then start taking pieces on White's first rank.

18 Kxh4 Rxe1 19 fxg4!

Bobby desperately needs to reduce the material on the board. 19 Nd2? Nf6 20 Kg3 Rae8 leaves White hopelessly tangled.

19 … Rxc1 20 gxf5



Humility is an admirable trait; involuntary humility, not so much. Bobby's position feels like a life sentence without the possibility of parole, where his incarceration only ends upon death. The engine calls only an edge for Black, which may be empirically true, yet from a practical perspective a misassessment, since it's difficult to visualize a path to untangle his queenside pieces with the clock ticking. Bobby dug deeply into his defensive skills and pulled it off.

20 … Rd8?!

A single inaccuracy is all that is required to save White. After 20 … Kf8! 21 Kg4 Rb8! 22 Bd5 b4! 23 c4 Re8 24 a3 bxa3 25 b4 Ke7! 26 Rxa3 Rxb1 27 f6+! gxf6 28 Rxa6 Rg8+ 29 Kf4 Rxb4 Only Black can win.

21 a4!

Bobby refuses to sit idly by, as his pieces suffer at the hands of the wicked, and discovers counterplay behind the uniformly depressing exterior.

21 … b4

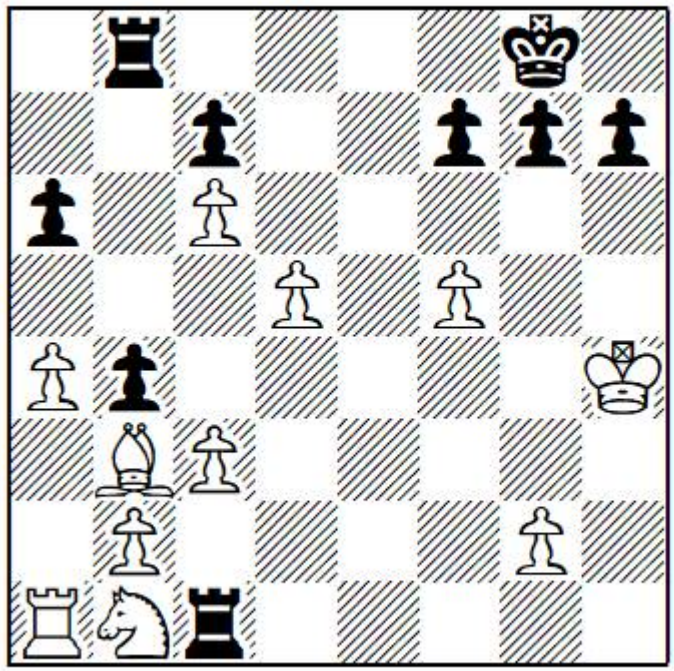
After 21 … bxa4 22 Bxa4 Kf8 23 Bb3 Ke7 24 Bc4! White stands better. Not 21 … Kf8?? 22 axb5 axb5 23 Ra7! Rxb1 (23 … Rc8 24 Nd2 is also dead lost for Black) 24 Rxc7 Rxb2 25 Rxf7+ Ke8 26 c7 Rc8 27 Be6 and White wins.

22 d5

22 Bc4 a5 23 Kg3 is another option.

22 … Rb8?

If 22 … bxc3 23 bxc3 Kf8 24 a5 Ke7 25 Bc4, it's anybody's game. The engine calls it even.



Exercise (planning): White's rook and knight resemble zombie extras on

The Walking Dead series. Find White's strongest unravelling plan.

Answer: Pawn breakthrough on d6, creating a passed c-pawn.

23 d6! cxd6

23 … bxc3 24 dxc7 Rc8 25 bxc3 Rxc7 26 Bd5 offers White winning chances.

24 Bc4?

Bobby allows his opponent back into the game. After 24 c7! Rc8 25 cxb4 R8xc7 26 b5 a5 27 Kg3 h5 28 Bd5 R7c5 29 Be4 Black is busted since White's rook can lift to a3.

24 … Rc8?

Missing 24 … bxc3! 25 bxc3 Rc8! 26 Bxa6 Rxc6 27 Bd3 Rd1 28 Be2 Re1 29 Bd3 Rd1 and draws, unless White wants to risk 30 Bb5!? Rc5 31 c4 Rxf5 32 a5, when 32 … Rf6 33 a6 Rg6! (threatening mate on h1) 34 g4 Rg1 35 a7 R6xg4+ is perpetual check.

25 Bxa6 Rxc6 26 Bb5 Rb6 27 c4!

White's counterplay, once as barren as a mule, begins to revive. By overprotecting the bishop White enables a4-a5.

27 … d5

Desperation.

28 a5 g5+

This wild lunge doesn't help Black's cause.

29 Kxg5 h6+ 30 Kg4 Rb8 31 a6 dxc4 32 a7 Ra8 33 Bc6

This will leave White a piece up with an easy win.

33 … h5+ 34 Kg5! Rxb1

34 … Rxa7 35 Rxa7 Rxb1 36 f6! forces mate in four.

35 Rxb1

The dead begin to awaken.

35 … Rxa7 36 Rc1 Ra2 37 Rxc4 Rxb2 38 f6! 1-0

Game 16
Sv.Johannessen-R.J.Fischer
Havana Olympiad 1966
Benko Gambit

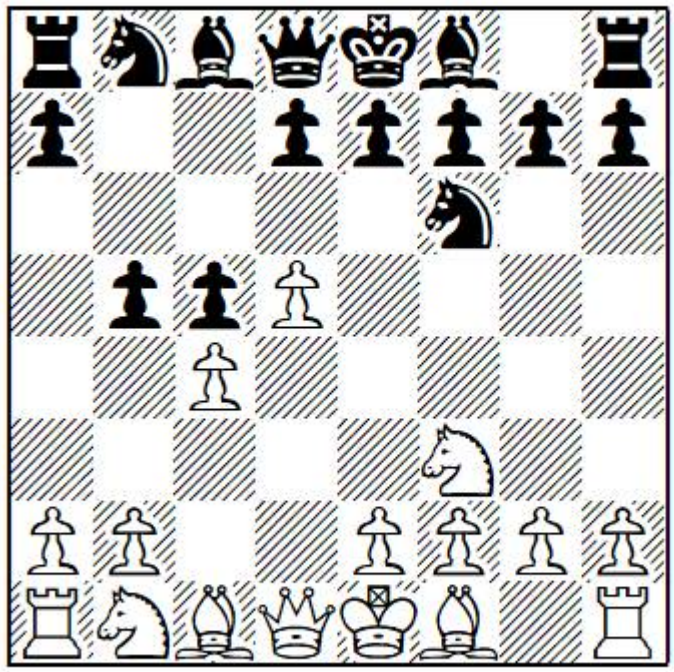
1 d4 Nf6 2 Nf3

The lazy and the dishonest despise hard work. I have always found a 2 Nf3 repertoire far easier to play than its theoretically intimidating cousin 2 c4, after which the gateway of (my) memory refuses to open.

2 … c5 3 d5 b5!?

Bobby goes rogue.

4 c4



This turns the game into a Benko/Not Benko Gambit! 4 Bg5 is White's main response today.

4 … Bb7 5 g3

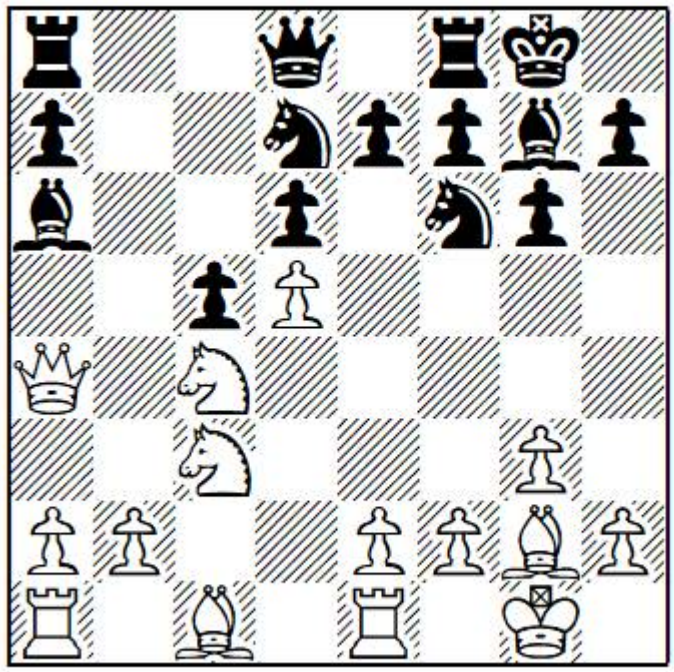
Here 5 a4 is the main move, while 5 a3!? scores quite well for White.

5 … g6

5 … bxc4 6 Nc3 e6 7 e4 is another path.

6 Bg2 bxc4 7 Nc3 Bg7 8 0-0 0-0 9 Ne5 d6 10 Nxc4 Nbd7 11 Re1 Ba6 12 Qa4!?

The engine prefers the weird 12 Ne3.



12 … Qc8?!

Fischer shouldn't have allowed White's knight into c6. After 12 … Bxc4! 13 Qxc4 Qa5 if anyone stands better, it's Black, who can play on the open b-file.

13 Na5! Nb6 14 Qh4!?

White's coming plan isn't as potent as it first appears and he may have been better off with the more restrained retreat 14 Qc2.

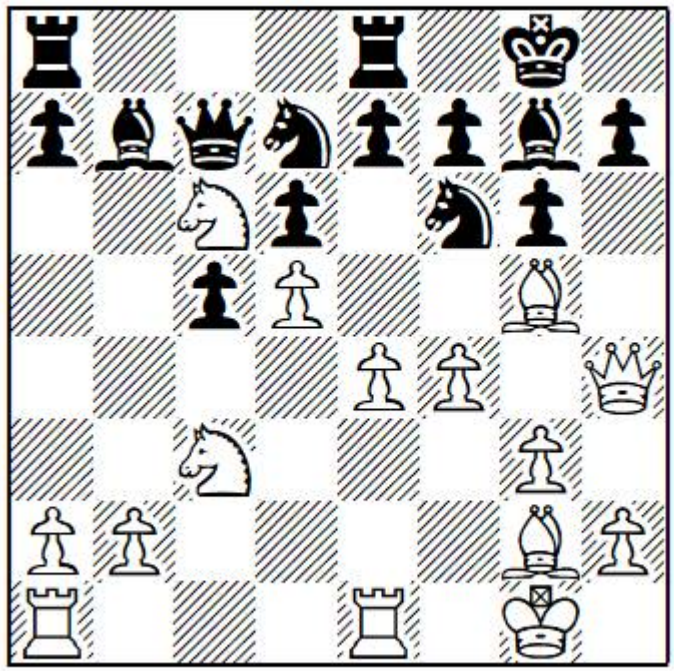
14 … Re8?!

It looks wrong to allow queens to remain on the board. After 14 … Qg4! 15 Nc6 Rfe8 Black is okay in the coming ending.

15 Bg5 Qc7

It's too late for 15 … Qg4?? since it hangs a piece to the simple undermining trick 16 Bxf6.

16 Nc6 Bb7 17 e4 Nbd7 18 f4!



Now e4-e5 hovers over Fischer's position. On his next move he found a clever defensive resource.

18 … Kh8!!

Hardship has a way of stealing our position's beauty, but not here. Bobby speaks in mysterious riddles. In reality his position bends yet refuses to break under the weight of its defensive burden. The idea behind his last move is that the f6-knight is offered room on g8.

18 … e6?! is what most of us would have played. 19 f5! (after 19 Nb5 Qb6 20 Nxd6 exd5! Black achieves counterplay: 21 Nxe8 Rxe8 22 exd5 Rxe1+ 23 Rxe1 Nxd5! 24 Bxd5 Bxc6 25 Bxc6 Bd4+ 26 Kh2 Qxc6+ 27 Kh3 f5) 19 … exd5 20 exd5 Qb6 21 Ne7+! Rxe7 (forced) 22 Rxe7 Qxb2 and Black generates compensation for the sacrificed exchange.

19 e5 dxe5 20 fxe5!?

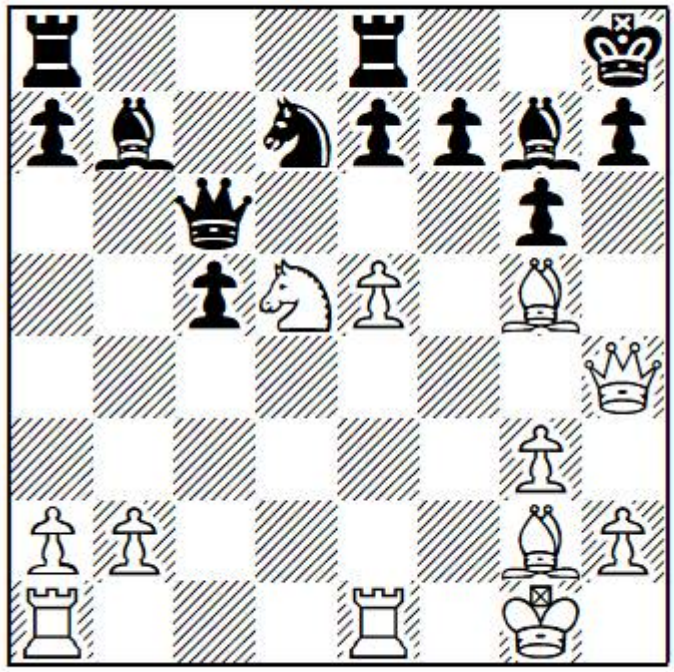
The position is that tavern in the rough part of town, where your odds of getting into a fight are as high as those of getting drunk. White enters complications under the assumption that they are in his favour. They aren't and the engine calls the

game dead even. On the other hand 20 Nxe5 Kg8! looks okay for Black.

20 … Nxd5!

Undermining.

21 Nxd5 Qxc6



22 e6

22 Re2 Nxe5 23 Bxe7 (now Nf6 is in the air) 23 … Qe6! 24 Nf6 h5 25 Nxe8 (or 25 Bxb7 Qxe7 26 Bxa8 Bxf6 27 Qe4 Kg7) 25 … Rxe8 26 Bxb7 Rxe7 offers Black full compensation for the sacrificed exchange, in the form of:

1. A monster knight on the central e5-square.

2. Dark square power.

3. One extra pawn.

22 … Ne5!

This looks better than allowing White's knight into g6 in the line 22 … fxe6 23 Nf4 Qb6 24 Nxg6+, which the engine says is also playable for Black.

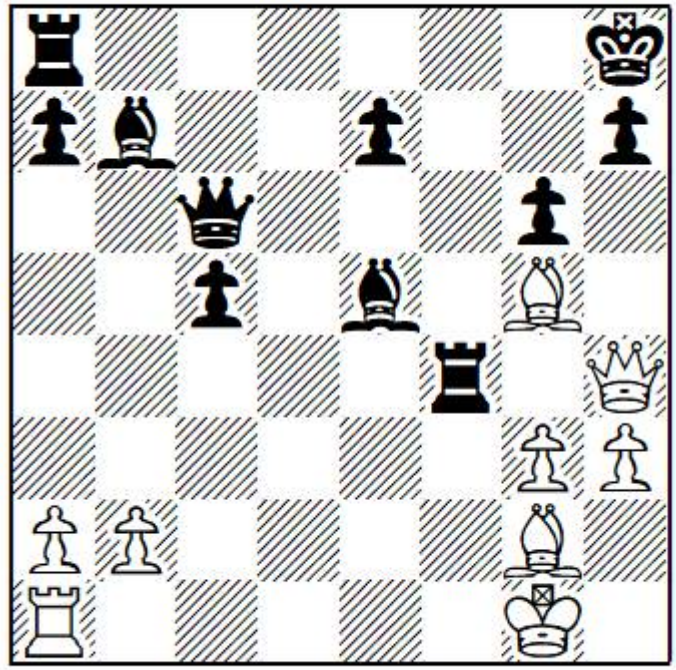
23 Rxe5?

Johannessen misevaluates, overestimating his position. White should play 23 Bh6! f6 24 Rxe5!? fxe5 25 Rf1 Qxe6! 26 Nc7 Qd7 27 Bxb7 Qxc7 28 Bxa8 Rxa8 29 Rf7 Rg8 30 Bxg7+ Rxg7 31 Rf8+ Rg8 32 Rf7 – draw.

23 … Bxe5 24 exf7 Rf8 25 h3?

I must confess to bafflement over the intent of White's last move. He puts up greater resistance with 25 Re1 Bd4+ 26 Be3 Bf6 27 Qc4 Qd7 28 Rf1 Bxd5 29 Bxd5 Rad8 30 Be6, although 30 … Qc6 31 Bxc5 Qxc5+! 32 Qxc5 Bd4+ 33 Qxd4+ Rxd4 still leaves White busted.

25 … Rxf7 26 Nf4 Rxf4! 0-1



There are other ways to finish White off. Fischer picks the most elegant. For example: 27 Bxc6 Bd4+! (zwischenzug, after which White's pieces – and especially his king – are a pitiful, malnourished lot; the simple 27 … Rxh4 28 Bxb7 Rxh4 also wins) 28 Kh2 Rf2+ 29 Kg1 Rxb2+ 30 Kf1 Rf8+ 31 Bf4 Ba6+! 32 Ke1 Re2+ 33 Kd1 Bxa1 (this will be a season of plenty for Black, who menaces a rook check on d8, followed by … Bb2+ and … Bd3 mate) 34 Bd7 Rd8 35 Qg4 h5!

disconnects the queen from her bishop and wins.

Game 17
R.Kholmov-R.J.Fischer
Skopje 1967
Pirc Defence

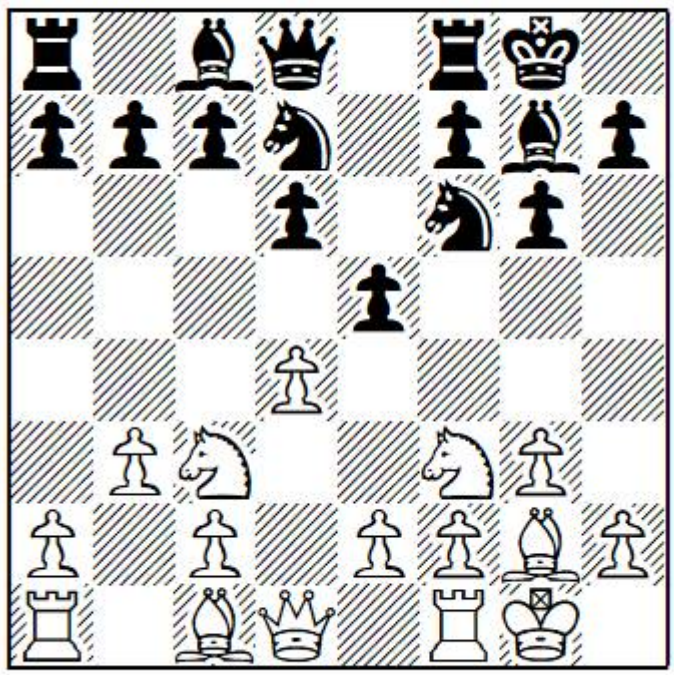
1 d4 Nf6 2 Nf3 g6 3 g3 Bg7 4 Bg2 0-0 5 0-0 d6 6 Nc3!?

Is this a King's Indian or a Pirc? Well, that depends on the next few moves.

6 … Nbd7

Bobby is willing to enter a Pirc, Fianchetto Variation. 6 … d5 is also possible. Sure, Black loses a tempo but received something for it: White's knight is misplaced on c3, since it blocks c2-c4. The game feels even.

7 b3 e5



8 dxe5!?

Let the Borefest begin. This is a decidedly unenterprising move and I suspect Kholmov was just playing for a draw by

deadening the position's fun-level. 8 e4 transposes to a sort of Pirc Defence.

8 … dxe5 9 e4 Re8 10 Ba3

This isn't all that great a post for White's bishop since Black can challenge it with … Bf8. 10 Bb2 is a better spot.

10 … c6

Bobby wants a fight. 10 … Bf8 is the move to play if Black is after a draw: 11 Bxf8 Kxf8 is duller and even, V.Smyslov-E.Ermenkov, European Cup, Sofia 1981.

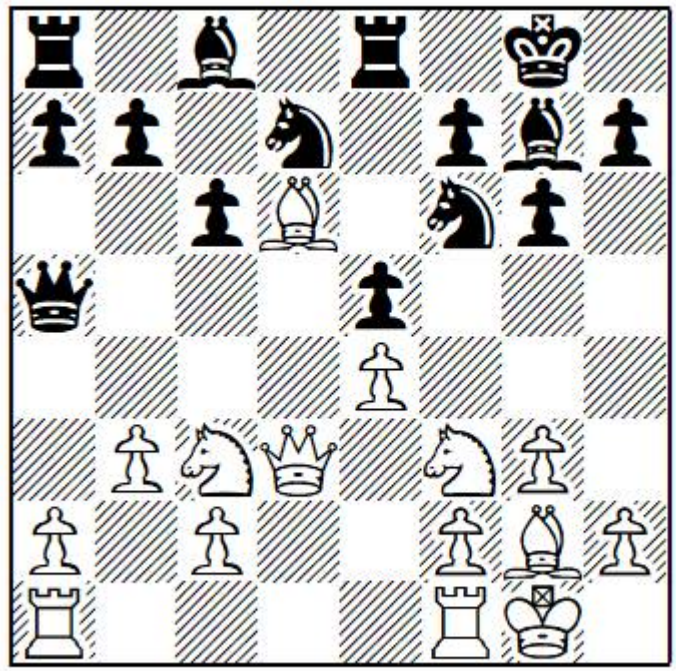
11 Bd6

Clearing the way for a2-a4, while occupying the d6-hole. Proper assessment is one of the most difficult aspects of chess. Many would believe that White stands better due to his d6-bishop. It's sort of the opposite though, and Fischer begins to create a situation where the bishop is actually a liability for White.

Note that 11 Nd2?!, intending Nc4 and Nd6, is easily foiled by 11 … b5!, when Black already stands better.

11 … Qa5 12 Qd3?

Here 12 a3 Qxc3 (Bobby would surely have played for the full point with 12 … Bf8) 13 Bb4 Qb2 14 Rb1 Qa2 15 Ra1 is a repetition draw.



Exercise (planning): Kholmov's pieces fall into disharmony surprisingly

quickly after this logical-looking move, which is in reality an error. Prove how.

Answer: Lift the rook to e6.

12 … Re6!

Black now threatens … Rxd6, followed by … Qxc3, and … Ne8, leaving White's d6-bishop without a safe haven.

13 b4

Pretty much forced. After 13 Ng5 Rxd6 14 Qxd6 h6! (this is an important zwischenzug; if 14 … Qxc3? 15 Qe7 Nf8 16 Nxf7, White is okay) 15 Nxf7 Kxf7 16 Qd2 Bf8 17 a3 Qc7 White is busted on the dark squares, and the rook and pawn don't make up for Black's two extra minor pieces.

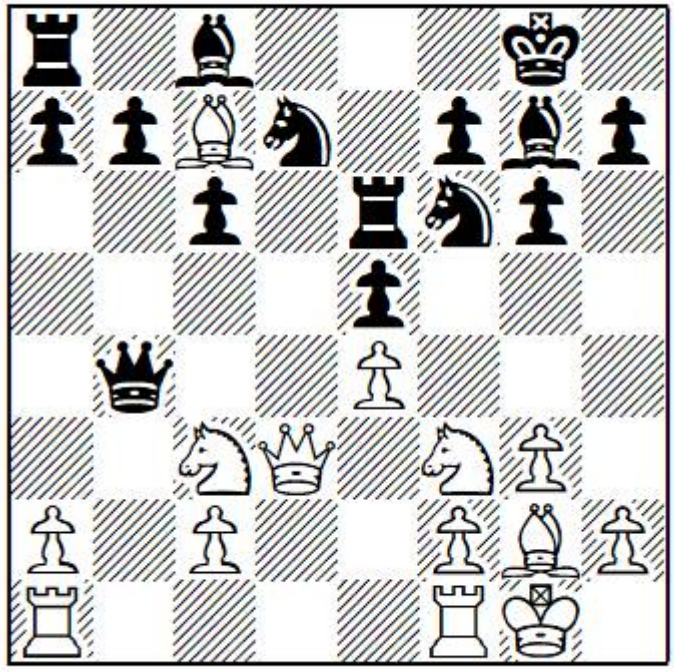
13 … Qa3!

Renewing the threats of … Ne8 and also … Rxd6, followed by … Qxc3. Kholmov may have believed that a3 is too dangerous a square for Black's queen and probably expected 13 … Qb6?! (13 … Qd8? 14 Bxe5! exploits the pinned status of the d7-knight and wins a pawn) 14 Rfd1 Ne8 15 Na4 Qd8 16 Bc5 Qc7 17 Be3, when White stands no worse.

14 Bc7

14 Rab1?, intending Rb3, is too slow due to the simple 14 … Rxd6 15 Qxd6 Qxc3 and White is busted.

14 … Qxb4



Kholmov's rabbit's foot isn't enough to ward off Bobby's magic. We feel a heavenly choir vibe to Fischer's best games, where everything just harmoniously falls into place at the most opportune time. Fischer banishes the darkness and makes it look so simple. He not only wins a pawn, but at the same time he multiplies dark square power, since now c5 is an occupiable hole for his knight. Alternatively, 14 … Ne8!? 15 Bd8 Qxb4 16 a4 Qf8! also consolidates.

15 Rab1?!

He should try 15 Bh3 Nc5 16 a3 Nxd3 17 axb4 Re8! 18 Bxc8 Rexc8 19 cxd3 Rxc7 20 b5 Nd7, though White doesn't get enough for the pawn.

15 … Qe7 16 Rfd1

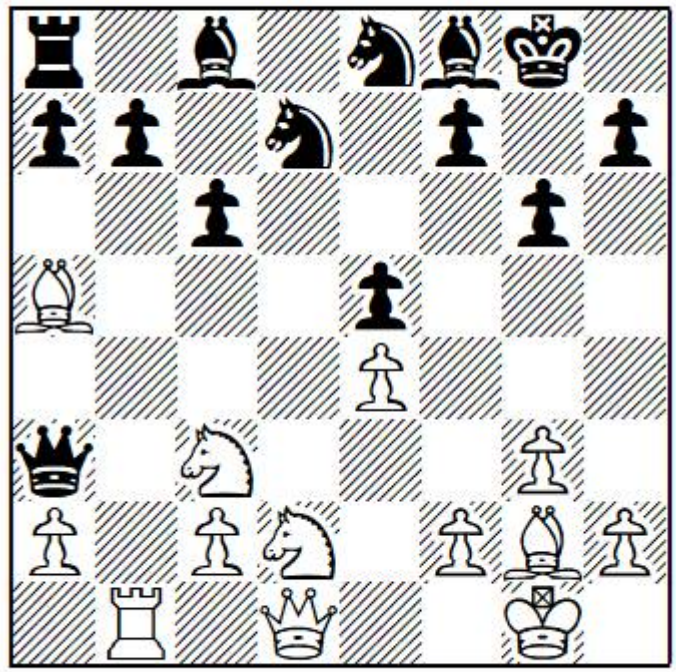
White's position doesn't exactly brim with favourable omens. Maybe Kholmov hoped for Benko-Gambit like compensation with his control over the two open files. Fischer's next defensive move dispels this belief.

16 … Ne8 17 Ba5 Rd6 18 Qe2 Rxd1+ 19 Qxd1 Bf8! 20 Nd2

20 Bb4 Qf6 doesn't bother Black at all.

20 … Qa3!

Fischer begins a series of clever shifts which entangle White's clumsy queenside pieces further.



21 Nc4

Not 21 Nb3?? b6 and White's bishop is trapped.

21 … Qc5! 22 Bf1 b5! 23 Nd2

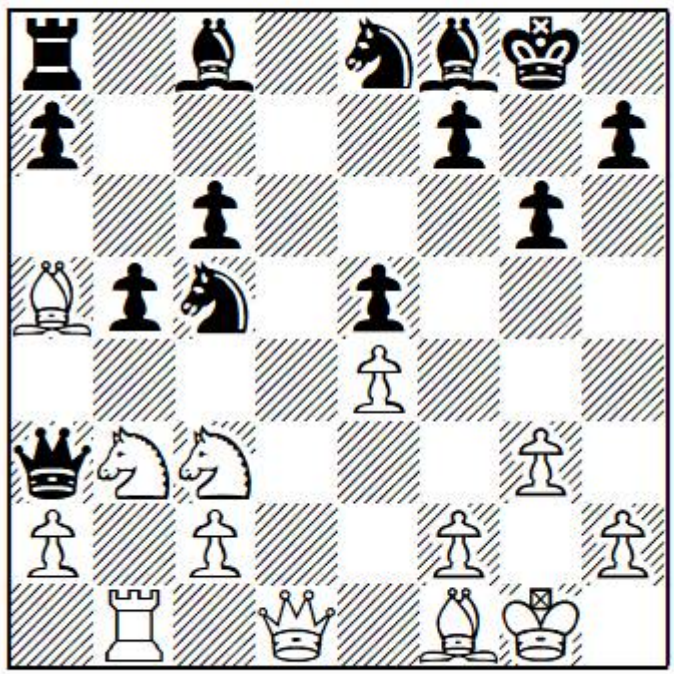
23 Ne3? Qa3! and 23 Bb4? Qd4 are also hopeless for White.

23 … Qa3!

Back again! Black's queen is clearly not a person who listens to reason. White is in a desperate fight to avoid the loss of a piece, since the queen keeps harassing the wobbly a5-bishop, which is unable to move since it needs to cover the clumsy c3-knight.

24 Nb3 Nc5

The engine gives 24 … b4! 25 Ne2 c5! (the undermining … c5-c4 is in the air) 26 Qd5 Rb8 27 Nec1 Qa4 28 Nd3 Nef6 29 Qc4 Nb6! 30 Bxb6 axb6 31 Nxe5 Be6 32 Qd3 Qxa2, when White is hopelessly lost.



25 Bxb5!?

Empirically this is unsound. Kholmov hopes to exploit the scary position of Black's queen. The math just doesn't back it up. But if 25 Ra1 Nb7 26 Nb1 Qd6 27 Bd2 Be6, Black unravels.

25 … cxb5 26 Nxb5 Qa4 27 Nxc5 Qxa5 28 Qd5 Rb8

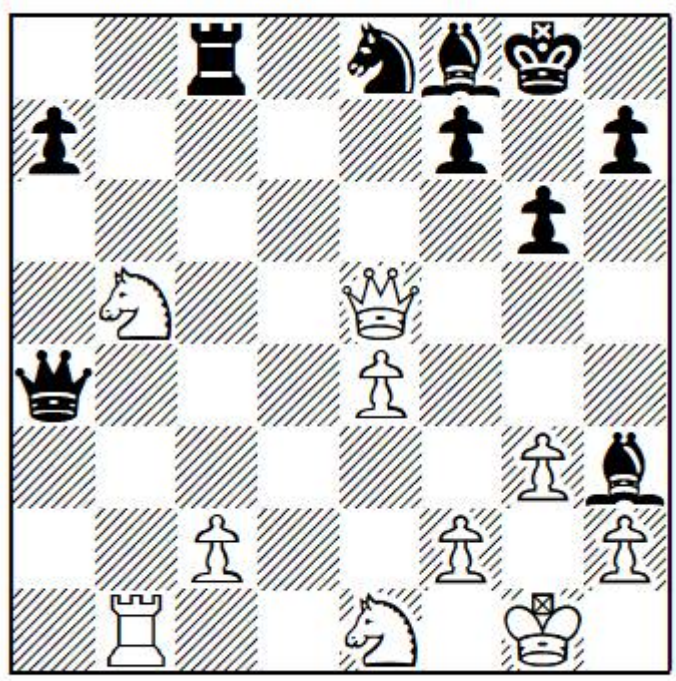
No problem. Everyone is covered and Black threatens … Rxb5.

29 a4 Bh3!

A reminder to Kholmov: "Your back rank is weak!"

30 Qxe5 Rc8 31 Nd3 Qxa4 32 Ne1

32 Nf4 Qxc2 33 Re1 Qd2 34 Qa1 Bg4 consolidates.



Exercise (combination alert): How did Fischer win more material?

Answer: Step 1. Chase White's knight to c3.

32 … a6! 0-1

In view of 33 Na7 (if 33 Nc3 Qc4!, Black threatens mate on f1, as well as the loose knight on c3, not to mention … Bg7) 33 … Qc4! (threat: … Qf1 mate) 34 Ng2 Qxc2 35 Rf1 Qc7! and White's a7-knight is trapped.

Game 18
Y.Bernstein-R.J.Fischer
Netanya 1968
Sicilian Defence

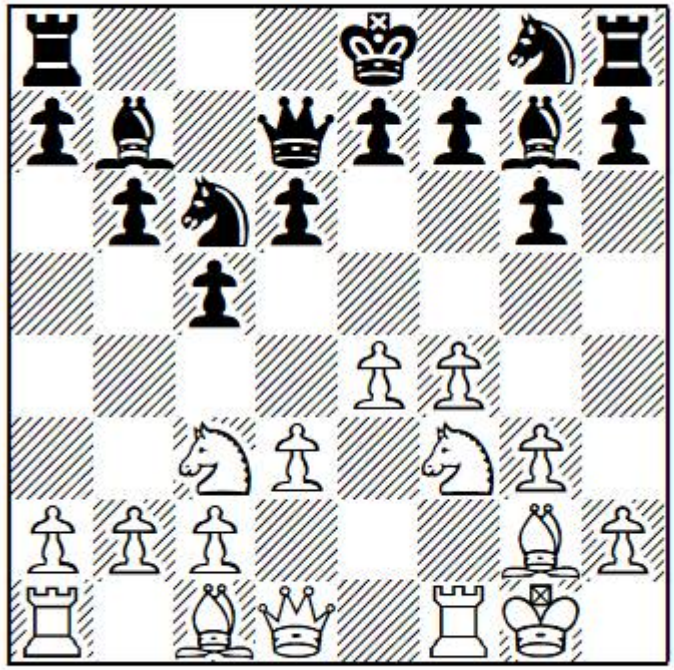
1 e4 c5 2 Nc3 d6 3 g3 Nc6 4 Bg2 g6 5 d3 Bg7 6 f4 b6!?

An unusual response to this Closed Sicilian main line. 6 … e6 7 Nf3 Nge7 is the standard set-up.

7 Nf3

7 e5?! only benefits Black after 7 … Bb7.

7 … Bb7 8 0-0 Qd7!



Intending … f7-f5 next. Fischer's coming set-up against the Closed Sicilian was completely new at the time.

9 Be3

This game so impressed Lajos Portisch that he repeated Fischer's idea six months later. After 9 Bd2 Nh6 10 Rb1 f5! 11 Nd5 0-0 12 c3 e6, he achieved a good position and won, A.Medina Garcia-L.Portisch, Wijk aan Zee 1969.

9 … f5

This is a case of right idea, wrong move order. Later it was discovered that Black's correct move order was 9 … Nh6! 10 h3 f5!. Black scores over 70% from this position in my database, even if the position is objectively balanced.

10 Qd2

10 exf5! gxf5 11 d4! is in White's favour, although even here Black does okay from a scoring standpoint.

10 … Nf6

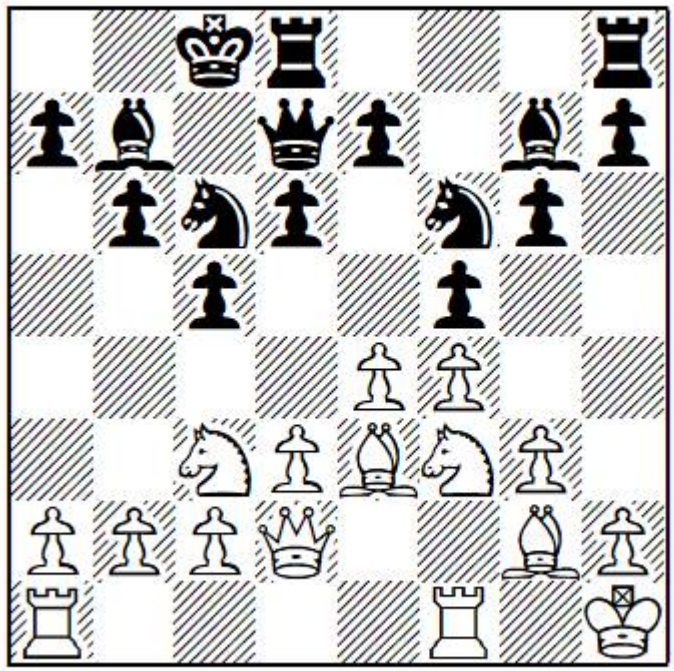
Strategic threat: … Ng4, picking up White's important dark-squared bishop. This move was played in every game in the database. I prefer 10 … Nh6.

11 Kh1

This way … Ng4 can be answered by Bg1.

11 … 0-0-0!?

Well, forget about giving peace a chance. By 1968, Bobby treated non-GMs with contempt and played them as if they were simul opponents! 11 … 0-0 12 Rae1 e6 13 Bg1 Rae8 is a safer alternative.



12 Rae1 Kb8 13 Bg1 fxe4!?

The idea is to follow with … Ba6, harassing the f1-rook. However, The light-squared bishop is a valuable piece, so White can offer the exchange with full compensation. I prefer Black's position after 13 … e6.

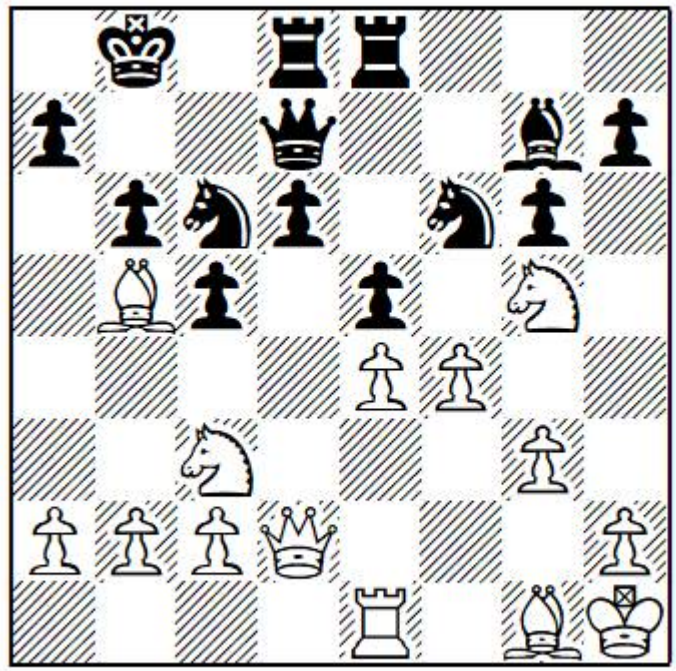
14 dxe4! Ba6 15 Ng5! Bxf1!?

This is risky, since Bobby's king is deprived of light square cover. 15 … e6! 16 e5 Ne8 17 Rf2 d5 is a safer alternative.

16 Bxf1?

This is the wrong diagonal for the bishop, which belonged on g2. White should play 16 Rxf1! Rc8 17 Bh3 Ng4 18 e5! h6 19 e6! Qb7 20 Nf7 Rhf8 21 Nd5 (not 21 Bxg4?? Ne5+ and White is busted) 21 … Nb4 22 Bg2 Nxd5 23 Bxd5 with monster light square compensation for the sacrificed exchange and the engine actually prefers White's side.

16 … Rhe8 17 Bb5?! e5!!



Here is another example of Fischer's remarkable strategic assessment power. Only by returning the exchange does Black take over the game. 17 … h6? 18 Bxc6! Qxc6 19 Ne6 Rg8 20 Nxd8 Rxd8 21 h3 is no worse for White.

18 fxe5

After 18 Nd5 exf4 19 gxf4 h6 20 Nxf6 Bxf6 21 Nf7! Qxf7 22 Bxc6 Rf8 23 Bd5 Qd7 24 c3 White's compensation isn't enough, yet this is still looks better than what he got in the game.

18 … Rxe5!

The counterattack begins. 18 … dxe5?? 19 Qxd7 Rxd7 20 Bxc6 leaves Black dead lost.

19 Bxc6 Qxc6 20 Nf7 Rde8 21 Nxe5

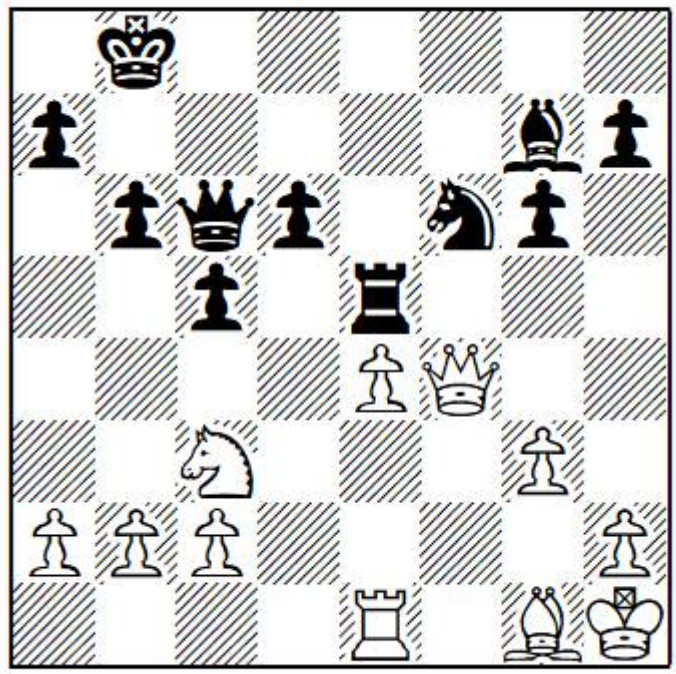
After 21 Qxd6+? Qxd6 22 Nxd6 R8e7 White doesn't get anything for the exchange.

21 … Rxe5

Fischer returned the exchange with a strategically won game due to pressure on the e4-pawn.

22 Qf4?

22 Qd3 d5 23 Nxd5 Nxd5 24 exd5 Rxd5 25 Qf3 Bxb2 26 Re7 h5 27 Bf2 Rd6 is a lost ending for White. This is still better than what occurred.



Exercise (planning): White's defensive salvation is an implausible story

which nobody believes. Come up with Fischer's winning plan, after which

White's position looks old, tired and used up.

Answer: Undermine e4 by pushing the b-pawn forward.

22 … b5! 23 a3 b4! 24 axb4 cxb4 25 Bd4

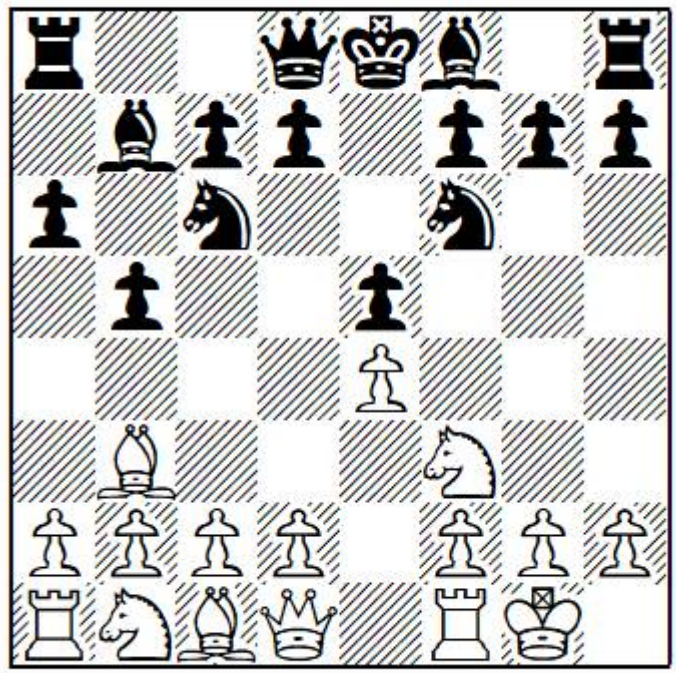
White's hoped for defence is as fragile as a sweet dream, whose unreality/destruction comes as easily as awakening. If 25 Nd1 then 25 … Nxe4 forces White's resignation, since 26 Qf3 fails miserably to 26 … Nxg3+ 27 Kg2 Qxf3+ 28 Kxf3 Rxe1.

25 … Rf5! 0-1

Step 2: Exploit the pin of White's e-pawn by moving the rook to f5. White loses a piece for no compensation.

Game 19
R.J.Fischer-A.Bisguier
Buenos Aires 1970
Ruy Lopez

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Ba4 Nf6 5 0-0 b5 6 Bb3 Bb7



The Archangelsk Variation, which is way more popular today than it was in 1970.

7 d4

White doesn't get anything with this violent reaction.

a) 7 d3 is a popular theory-dodging move which doesn't appear all that dangerous for Black. 7 … Be7 and 7 … Bc5 are important tabiya positions for Lopez players, from both sides.

b) 7 Re1 Bc5 8 c3 d6 9 d4 Bb6 is regarded as the critical line today.

7 … Nxd4!

This shows that Bisguier understands Black's needs. 7 … exd4?! 8 e5 Ne4 9 Bd5! Nc5 10 Nxd4 is in White's favour.

8 Nxd4

8 Bxf7+ isn't so dangerous: after 8 … Kxf7 9 Nxe5+ Kg8 10 Qxd4 c5 11 Qd1 Qe8 12 Nf3 Qxe4. Black stands at least even due to the bishop pair.

8 … exd4 9 c3!?

If 9 e5 Ne4 10 c3 (not 10 Qxd4?? c5 with the Noah's Ark trap, which wins White's light-squared bishop) 10 … Nc5! 11 cxd4 Nxb3 12 Qxb3 Qe7! 13 Re1 Qe6! 14 Qg3 Qg6, Black looks just fine due to his light square power.

9 … Nxe4

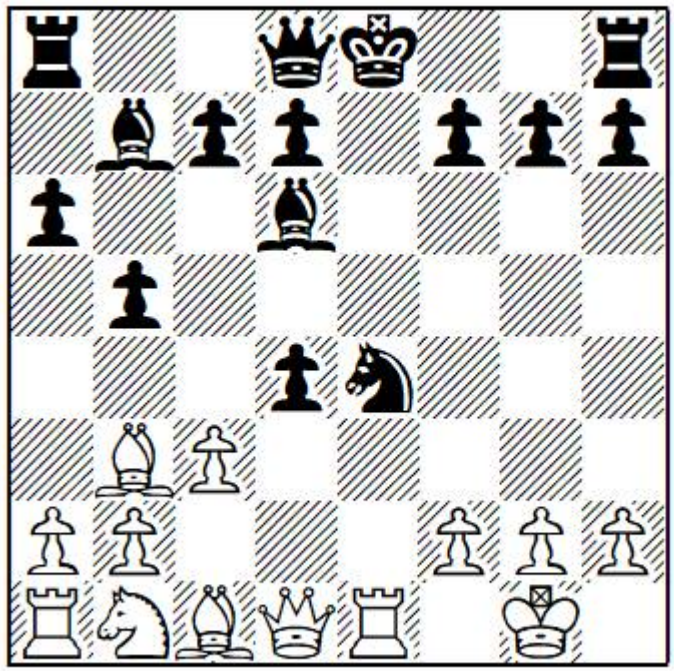
9 … Bxe4! may be the best move since the bishop will shift over to g6, safeguarding Black's king. After 10 Re1 (or 10 Bg5 Be7 11 Re1) 10 … Be7 11 Bg5 Bg6 12 Bxf6 gxf6 13 cxd4 0-0 14 Nc3, as in F.Natalucci-K.Kaiszauri, European Junior Championship, Groningen 1971, and now 14 … f5 I don't see full compensation for White's sacrificed pawn.

10 Re1 Bd6?

Who among us is immune to such "I know it's wrong, but it feels so right!" sleazy attacking moves? Bisguier overestimates his attacking chances.

a) 10 … Be7 11 Qg4 0-0 12 Rxe4 Bxe4 13 Qxe4 Bf6! (threat: … Re8, exploiting White's weak back rank) 14 Bd2 Re8 15 Qf3 Qe7 (threatening back rank mate again) 16 Kf1, J.Boey-G.Flear, Paris 1983, and now 16 … a5, Black gets full compensation due to White's queenside tangle.

b) 10 … Qh4! is the strongest move. After 11 Nd2! Qxf2+ 12 Kh1 Qh4 13 Nxe4 Bxe4 14 Bd5 f5! 15 Bxa8 c6!, Black threatens … Bd6 and stands at least even, if not better.



Exercise (critical decision): Black's threats include … Bxh2+ and also … Qh4.

How should White react?

Answer: Allow the sacrifice on h2 and pile on Black's pinned knight with 11 Nd2!.

11 Nd2!

Fischer's operation goes dark, with all cell phones and electronics off. He correctly allows the coming sacrifice on h2. Instead:

a) 11 f3?? Qh4 is completely lost for White.

b) 11 Qf3?? allows simply 11 … 0-0 since 12 Rxe4 Bxe4 13 Qxe4 Re8 14 Bxf7+ Kxf7 15 Qd5+ Kf8 leaves Black the exchange up with a completely winning position.

11 … Bxh2+

This move is *not* the massive shootout at the finish of the action-hero movie. Black's position is found lacking after Fischer's response. 11 … Qh4?? fails to 12 g3 and White wins a piece.

12 Kf1!

No thank you! Step 2: Decline the sacrifice and sidestep to f1.

12 … d5

12 … Qh4, threatening mate on f2, is easily defused by 13 Nxe4 Bxe4 14 Qf3 f5 15 Qxf5 0-0-0 16 Qxe4 and White threatens mate on a8, forcing queens off the board, after which Black is down a piece for only two pawns and completely lost.

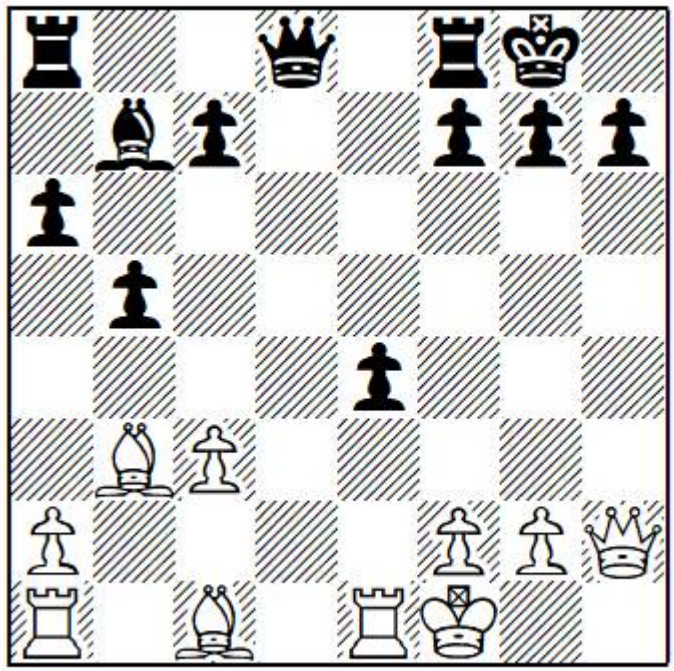
13 Qh5!

Step 3: Double attack. Black's bishop hangs on h2, while White also threatens to chop on e4, which can't be recaptured since doing so hangs mate on f7.

13 … 0-0

Bisguier hands over a piece for not enough compensation. If 13 … Qd6 14 Nxe4 dxe4 15 Qxf7+ Kd8 16 cxd4 Rf8 17 Bg5+ Kc8 18 Qxg7 Re8 19 Be3, there is no remedy to the coming g2-g3, after which Black's bishop is trapped. The bishop is unable to move to f4, due to a queen check on g4, with a fatal double attack.

14 Qxh2 dxc3 15 Nxe4 dxe4 16 bxc3



16 … c5

If 16 … Qd3+ 17 Kg1 Qxc3 18 Be3, Black can't hang on to his c-pawn and is busted.

17 Re3!?

Dual purpose:

1. White prevents Black's queen check on d3, followed by … Qxc3.

2. White's rook may transfer to h3, launching a kingside attack.

More simply 17 Rd1 Qf6 18 Qg3 is also winning.

17 … c4!?

This weakens Black further on the dark squares and hands White a hole on d4 for his bishop. I would try 17 … Bd5, though 18 Qh5 still looks lost for Black.

18 Bc2 Qf6

If 18 … f5 19 Rh3 h6 20 Bxh6! gxh6 21 Rxh6, there is no good defence to the coming rook check on h8, followed by

another check, skewering Black's bishop. 21 … Qg5 22 Rh8+ Kg7 23 Rh7+ picks off the loose bishop, while 21 … Rb8 22 Rg6+ Kf7 23 Qh7+ Ke8 24 Re6+ is mate next move.

19 Rf3! Qe6 20 Rh3 Qf5

20 … h6? 21 Bxh6 gxh6 22 Rxh6 either wins Black's queen or allows 22 … f6 23 Qh5!, forcing mate.

21 Be3 Rad8 22 Re1

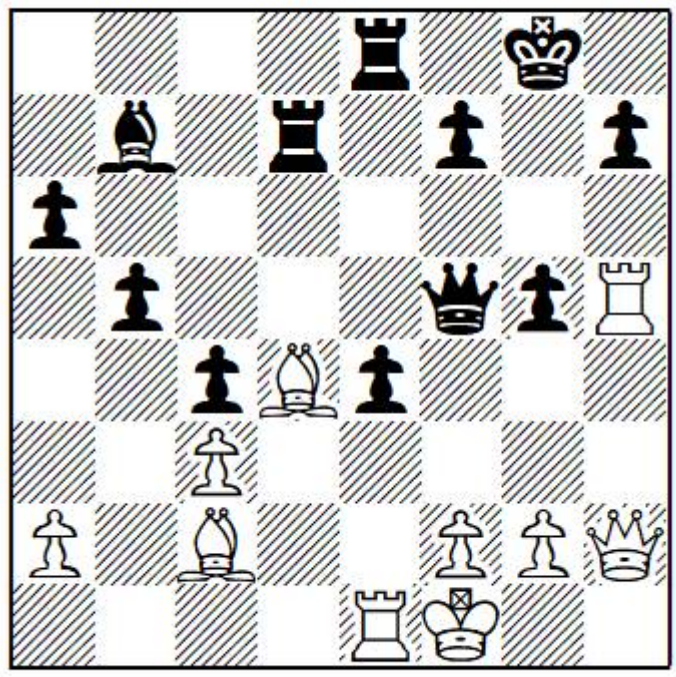
Fischer concentrates his efforts on the kingside. He can also open a second front with 22 a4.

22 … Rd7 23 Bd4 Re8

23 … b4 would be met the same way.

24 Rh5! g5

If 24 … Qg6 25 Re3!, the threat Rg3 forces Black to hand over the exchange on d4, leaving him a rook down.



Exercise (combination alert): With Black's desperate last move we feel the

leaky boat effect, where Bisguier attempts to bail out the water in buckets,

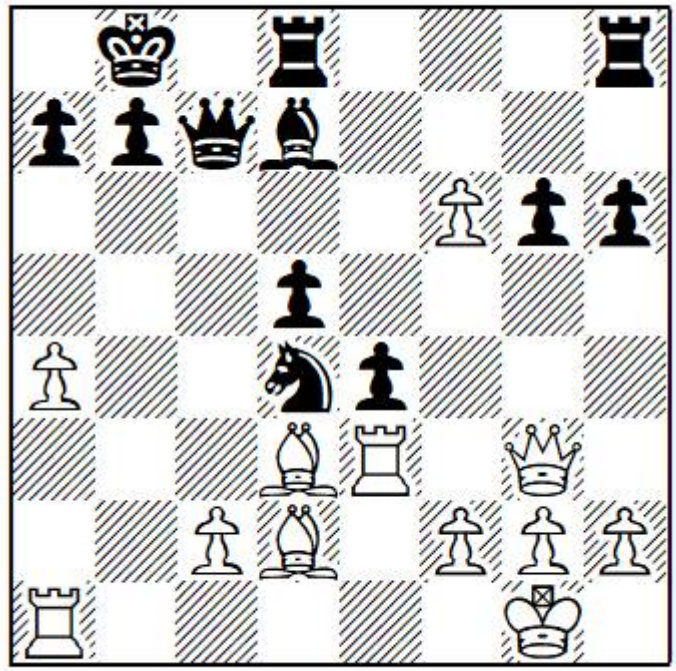
else his boat sinks. Find one powerful move and Black's position goes under.

Answer: Push the g-pawn two squares, overloading the black queen.

25 g4! 1-0

This is a surprise party for Black's queen. Unfortunately, it's not her birthday. Bisguier resigned since 25 … Qg6 26 Rh6 traps the queen, while 25 … Qf4 26 Qxf4 gxf4 27 Rg5+ Kf8 28 Bc5+ wins more material.

Game 20
R.J.Fischer-S.Schweber
Buenos Aires 1970



Is Bobby in trouble? After all, White's bishop is being pushed away from protection of the c2-pawn, which would

give Black two central passed pawns. On top of that, it appears as if Black is forcing a swap of queens.

Exercise (combination alert): Do you see a combination which swings the

game White's way?

Answer: Sacrifice the rook on e4.

23 Rxe4!!

Threat: Bf4.

23 … Qxg3

Black counted on this zwischenzug. He has no time to capture the rook. To the eyes of the blind, day and night are the same. 23 … dxe4?? is monumentally clueless to White's intent, as 24 Bf4 forces resignation.

24 Rxd4!

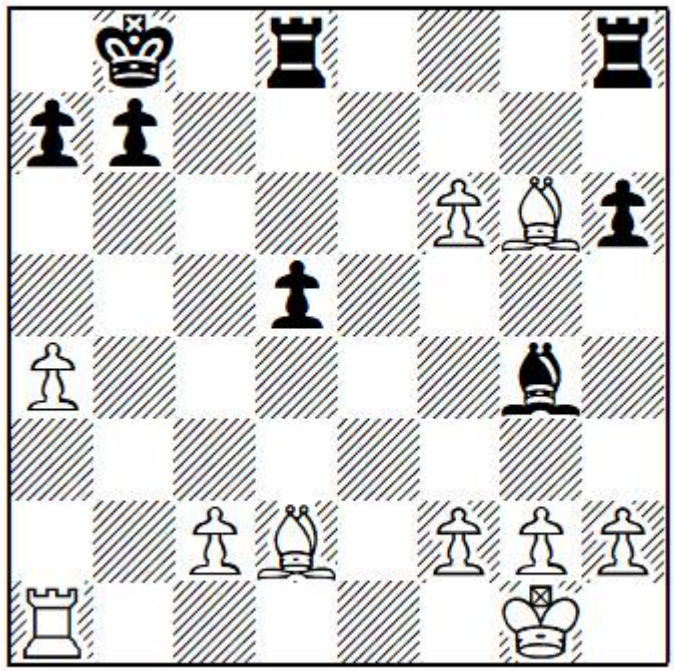
Even a normally cowardly crow is willing to swoop down upon a dying snake with the ferocity of a *Game of Thrones* dragon.

Step 2: Counter zwischenzug! Amazingly, Black's queen lacks a safe haven on the open board.

24 … Qg4

Black is forced to sell a valuable asset in exchange for a trinket. If 24 … Qd6 25 Bf4 Be8 26 Re1 Rf8 27 Re6! Qxf4 28 Rxf4, White remains a pawn up, with a won ending.

25 Rxg4 Bxg4 26 Bxg6



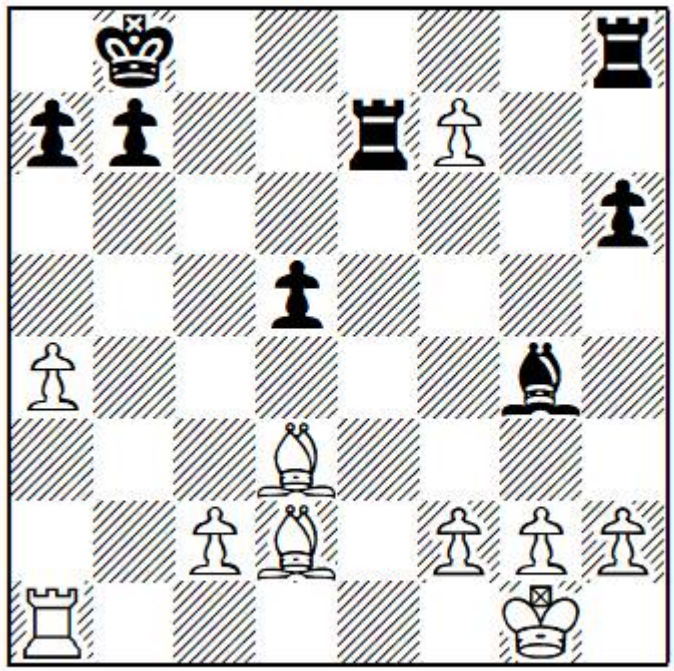
Black won the exchange, which is no cause to celebrate since White's position is anything but a picture of dire want. Fischer received two pawns for it and a potential armada majority on the kingside. The engine assesses at almost +6 for White.

26 … Rhg8 27 Bh7 Rh8

After 27 … Rgf8 28 Bxh6! Rxf6 (28 … Rh8 is met by 29 Bf4+ Kc8 30 Bd3 and Black has no chance against the armada of passed pawns) 29 Bg5 Rf7 30 Bxd8 Rxh7 31 f3 White's three connected kingside passers win easily.

28 Bd3 Rde8 29 f7! Re7

It's laughable to call something a "choice" when everything loses. 29 … Ref8 30 Bg6 is paralysis for Black. White threatens Bc3, and 30 … d4 31 Bf4+ Kc8 32 Be5 wins.



Exercise (combination alert): Black's life-thread is short. How did Bobby force

the win of material?

Answer: **30 f8Q+!**

Step 1: Attraction.

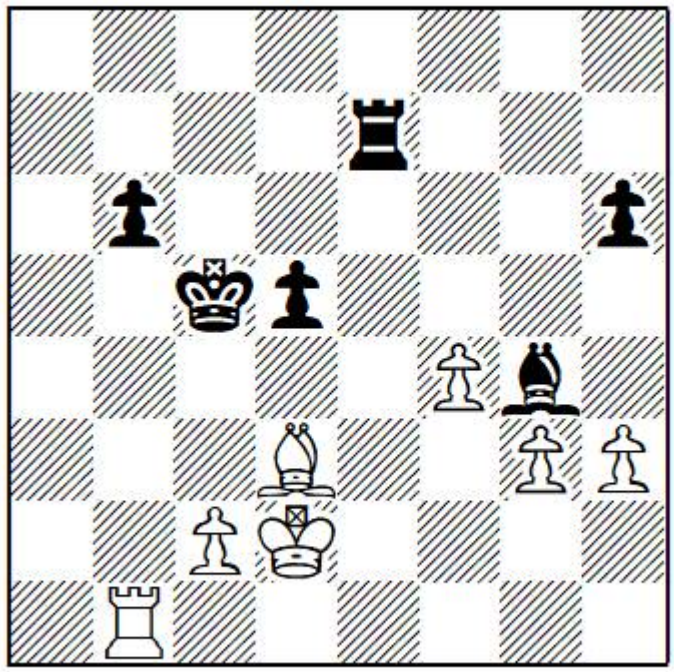
30 … Rxf8 31 Bb4

Step 2: Skewer.

31 … Rff7 32 Bxe7 Rxe7 33 f3

Fischer easily converted his kingside supermajority.

33 … Bd7 34 a5 Kc7 35 Kf2 Rf7 36 Ke3 Kd6 37 g3 Kc5 38 f4 Bg4 39 Rb1 Re7+ 40 Kd2 b6 41 axb6 axb6 42 h3!



Bobby cleverly finds a way to break Black's attempted blockade of the kingside light squares.

42 … Bd7

42 … Bxh3 43 Rh1 Bg2 44 Rxh6 is an easy win for White.

43 g4 d4 44 f5 Re3 45 f6! Rf3

45 … Rxh3? 46 f7 Rf3 loses to the interference shot 47 Bf5, as well as the simple 47 Rf1.

46 Rf1!

If you meet your stalker, then odds are it wasn't a chance meeting. Fischer removes Black's most active piece.

46 … Rxf1 47 Bxf1 Be6 1-0

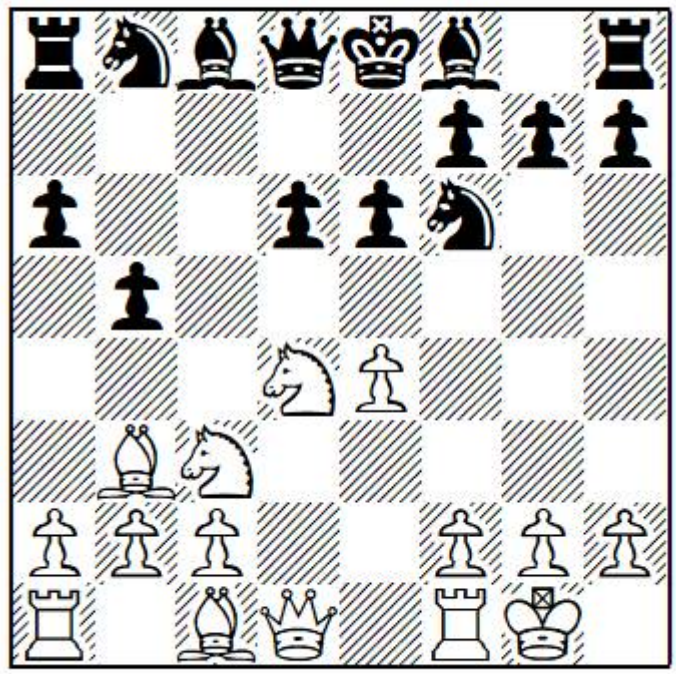
Crops begin to fail in the drought. Black didn't wait to see 48 h4! Kd6 49 g5 Ke5 50 Bd3 Bd5 51 Bg6! hxg5 52 hxg5 Kf4 53 f7 and wins.

Chapter Four
Bobby on the Dynamic Element

In this chapter we examine Fischer's handling of the initiative, whose nature tends to be on loan.

Game 21
R.J.Fischer-J.T.Sherwin
U.S. Championship, New York 1957
Sicilian Defence

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 a6 6 Bc4 e6 7 0-0 b5 8 Bb3



Not all gambits are cults. White's offer of the e-pawn is absolutely sound.

8 … b4?!

The Sozin rule of thumb is that an unprovoked … b5-b4 is normally verboten, since Black falls too far behind in development after grabbing the e4-pawn.

9 Nb1?!

This is a curiously passive response. Today we know that White secures the advantage with 9 Na4! (see the notes to Game 10).

9 … Bd7?!

This too strikes me as odd: why bother to play … b5-b4 and then *not* take the e4-pawn? 9 … Nxe4! looks correct, especially since Bobby's last move was so passive. White probably still gets enough for it after 10 Re1 Bb7 11 a3.

10 Be3?!

Did Bobby pop a Valium before the game? After 10 a3! bxa3 11 Nxa3 and if 11 … Nxe4? 12 Qf3 d5 13 c4!, Black is dangerously lagging in development, and 13 … Nc6 14 Nxe6! is heavily in White's favour.

10 … Nc6!

10 … Nxe4?! 11 Qf3 d5 12 c4! bxc3 13 Nxc3 Nxc3 14 bxc3 Nc6 15 Qg3 leaves White with decent compensation.

11 f3

At last, Fischer secures his formally insecure e-pawn.

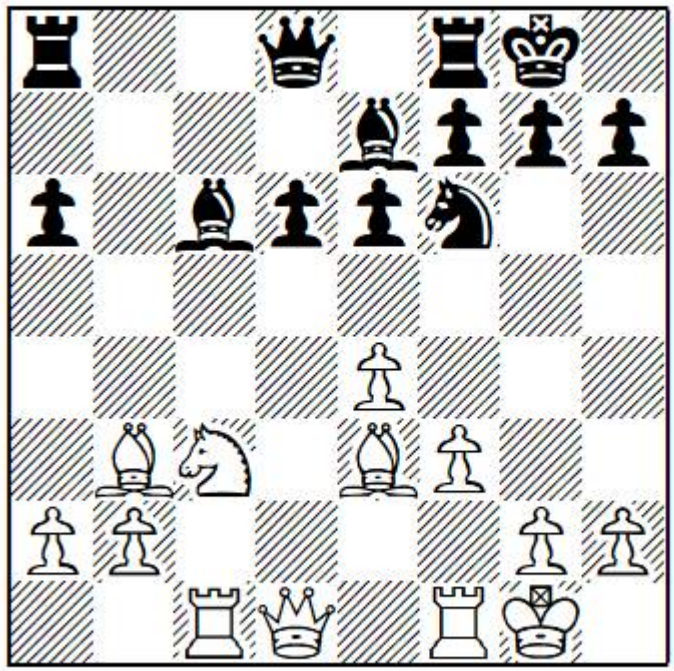
11 … Be7 12 c3 bxc3?!

Principle: *Don't aid your opponent's development*. 12 … a5! was better.

13 Nxc6 Bxc6!

The tempting 13 … cxb2?? falls into White's trap: 14 Nxd8 bxa1Q 15 Nxf7 Kxf7 16 Bd4 – Oops. Black's new queen is trapped and White wins.

14 Nxc3 0-0 15 Rc1



15 … Qb8!

Sherwin may want to apply pressure down the open b-file with a coming … a6-a5-a4. Instead, 15 … d5!? 16 exd5 Bxd5 17 Nxd5 Nxd5 18 Bxd5 exd5 19 Bd4 Qd7 is about even, although the structure reminds us of one of Fischer's most brilliant strategic accomplishments of his Candidates' match win against Petrosian.

16 Nd5!?

Bobby isn't planning to wait around for Black's queenside play to grow.

16 … exd5?

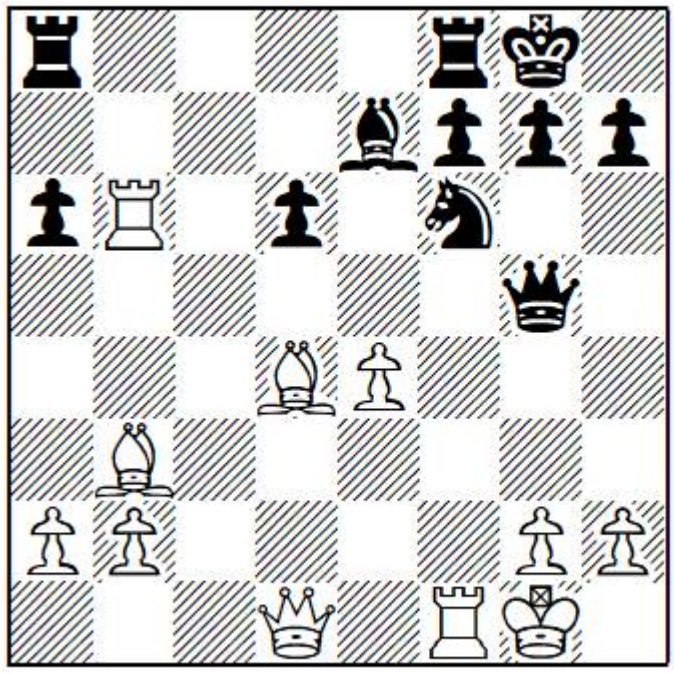
Sherwin will later pay for handing Fischer the bishop pair and light square control. After 16 … Bxd5! 17 exd5 Nxd5! 18 Bxd5 exd5 19 Rf2 Qb7 20 Rfc2 Bf6 Black stands no worse.

17 Rxc6 dxe4 18 fxe4 Qb5

White's e-pawn is now untouchable: 18 … Nxe4?? 19 Bd5 Nf6 20 Rb6 wins the exchange.

19 Rb6! Qe5 20 Bd4! Qg5

20 … Qxe4?? hangs a piece to 21 Re1.



Exercise (planning): Work out a sequence which wins material by force.

Answer: Black's position is unable to tolerate a white rook on the seventh rank.

21 Qf3?!

Bobby misses a knockout. After 21 Rb7! Black is unable to evade loss of material. For example: a) 21 … Nxe4 22 Re1! d5 23 Rxe7! Qxe7 24 Bxd5 Rad8 25 Rxe4 Qd6 26 Bb3 consolidates.

b) 21 … Rae8 22 Ba4 wins the exchange.

c) 21 … Bd8 22 e5! dxe5 23 Bc5 Ba5 24 Bxf8 Rxf8 25 Bxf7+! wins.

21 … Nd7!? 22 Rb7

He remains cautious. 22 Bxf7+ Kh8 23 Rb7 is possible, and if 23 … Ne5 24 Qg3! Qxg3 25 hxg3 Bf6 26 Bd5, White should consolidate with an extra pawn, the bishop pair and power on the light squares.

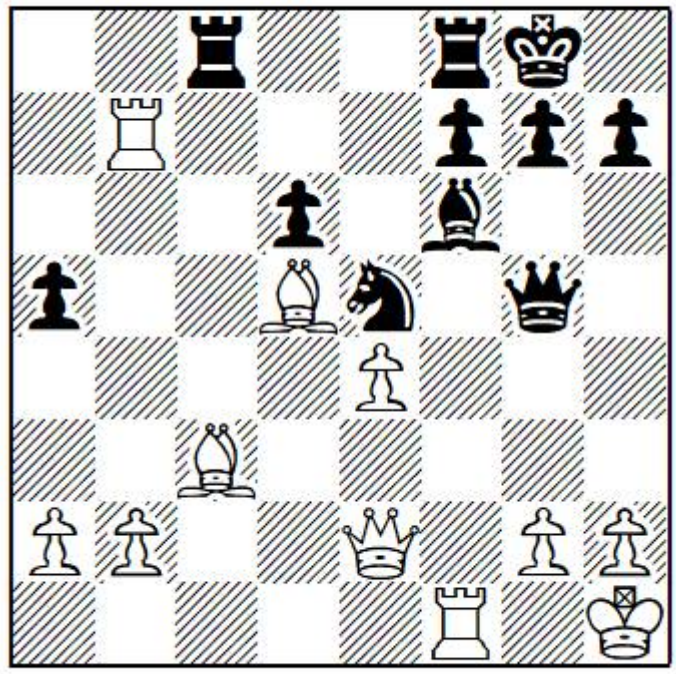
22 … Ne5 23 Qe2 Bf6

The f7-spot must be shielded from White's pressure.

24 Kh1!

This way Fischer sidesteps … Nf3+ and … Bxd4+ cheapos.

24 … a5 25 Bd5 Rac8 26 Bc3!



Multi-purpose:

1. White's bishop is offered a stable square.

2. Black's rook is cut off from … Rc1 tricks.

3. Fischer finds a new target: Black's a-pawn. If it falls, White's two connected queenside passers will be decisive.

26 … a4 27 Ra7

He cuts off … a4-a3 tricks, while attacking the pawn.

27 … Ng4?

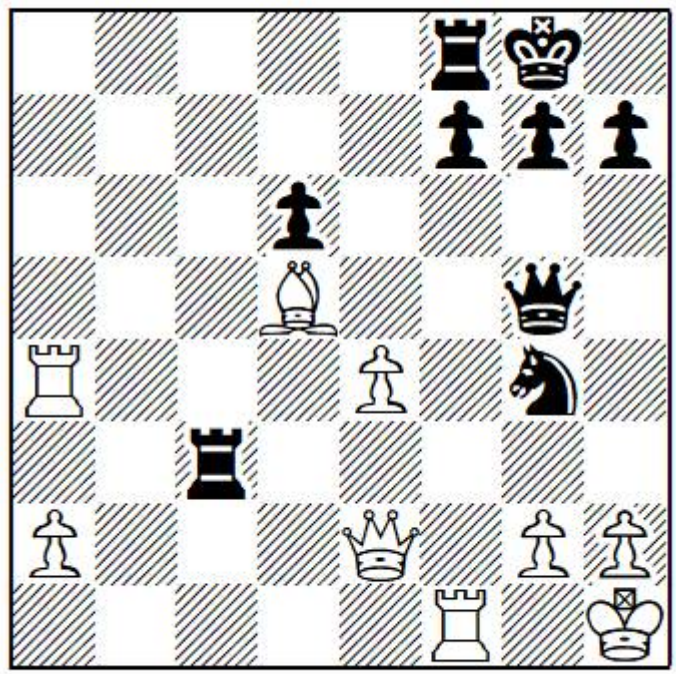
This is awfully tempting, yet wrong. The engine found the counter-intuitive 27 … Ng6!! (humans would experience great aversion in playing such an ugly-looking move) 28 Bxf6 gxf6 29 Rxa4 Rc1 30 h3 Rfc8 31 Ra8 Rxa8 32 Bxa8 h5, when Black generates play on the kingside dark squares and the engine says White only stands slightly better.

28 Rxa4?

After 28 Bd2! Qh4 29 h3 Ne5 30 Bc3! the a4-pawn falls and White is winning.

28 … Bxc3 29 bxc3 Rxc3?

Here 29 … Ne3! 30 Qd2 h6! looks okay for Black.



Exercise (combination alert): Do you see Fischer's combination?

Answer: Weak back rank.

30 Rxf7! Rc1+??

This move, which at first appears to be a winning shot, fails to live up to its cost-to-benefit ratio. Whereas after 30 … h5! 31 Rc4! Rxc4 32 Rxf8+ Kxf8 33 Qxc4 Nf2+ 34 Kg1 Nh3+ 35 Kf1 Qf6+ 36 Ke1 Qa1+! 37 Kd2 Qb2+ White still has a lot of work ahead to try and win.

31 Qf1!

If you are a witch, one way to keep yourself safe is to denounce your enemy with a trembling finger and yell: "Witch!" Bobby finds a spectacular defence. I wonder whether Sherwin hallucinated and expected 31 Rf1+?? Kh8, when it is White who is mated after 32 Ra8 Rxa8 33 Bxa8 Qf4!.

31 … h5

31 … Rxf1+ 32 Rxf1+ Qxd5 33 Rxf8+ Kxf8 34 exd5 forces Black's resignation.

32 Qxc1!

Bobby keeps finding dirty back rank tricks and Mike Tyson's memorable quote comes to mind: "Everyone has a plan, until they get punched in the face." Sherwin obviously overlooked this shocker.

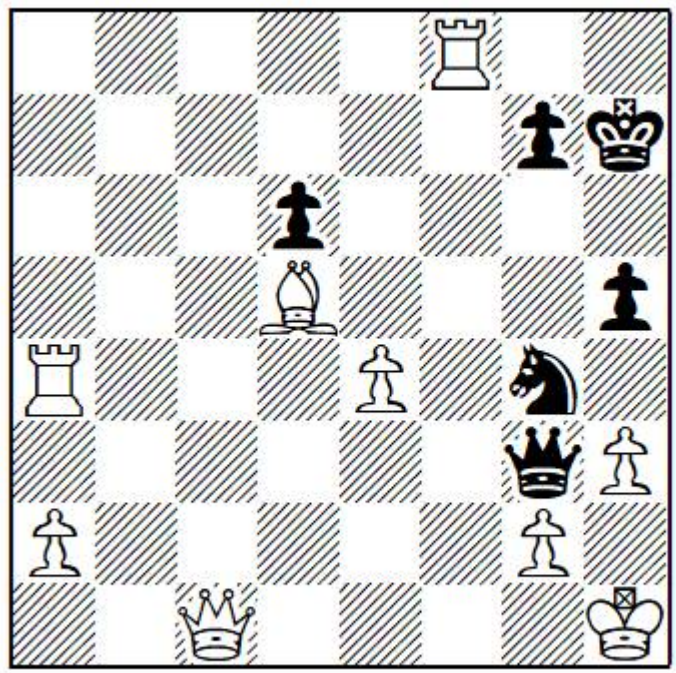
32 … Qh4

32 … Qxc1+ 33 Rf1+ (*check*!) 33 … Kh7 34 Rxc1 wins.

33 Rxf8+ Kh7

Or 33 … Kxf8 34 Qc8+ Ke7 35 Ra7+ Kf6 36 Qf5 mate.

34 h3 Qg3



All knight moves lose as well.

35 hxg4!

This is an awfully good time for Black to resign. One move faster is 35 Bg8+! Kg6 36 Bf7+ Kh7 37 Rh8+! Kxh8 38 Qc8+ Kh7 39 Qf5+ and mate in two.

35 … h4 36 Be6 1-0

A check on f5 is next.

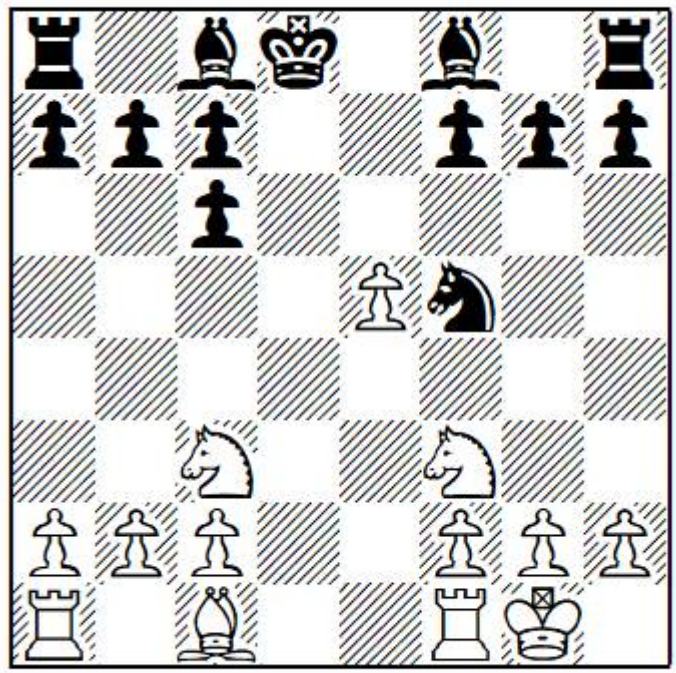
Game 22
R.J.Fischer-A.Bisguier
U.S. Championship, New York 1963
Ruy Lopez

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 Nf6

Art Bisguier was a Berlin Lopez specialist long before the line reached the heights of chess fashion. As a kid, I remember watching him play it at the Canadian Open in Montreal in 1974.

4 0-0 Nxe4 5 d4 Nd6 6 Bxc6 dxc6 7 dxe5 Nf5 8 Qxd8+ Kxd8 9 Nc3!

You are cordially invited to one of the most hotly contested opening tabiya positions. Bobby's last move displays deep strategic understanding of the line. Today, players understand that White's rook should not rush to check on d1, since it usually belongs either on its original square or on e1. In 1963, this was arcane knowledge.



9 … Ke8

Also played here are 9 … Bd7, 9 … h6 and 9 … Ne7.

10 Ne2

10 h3 is White's most common move in the present day.

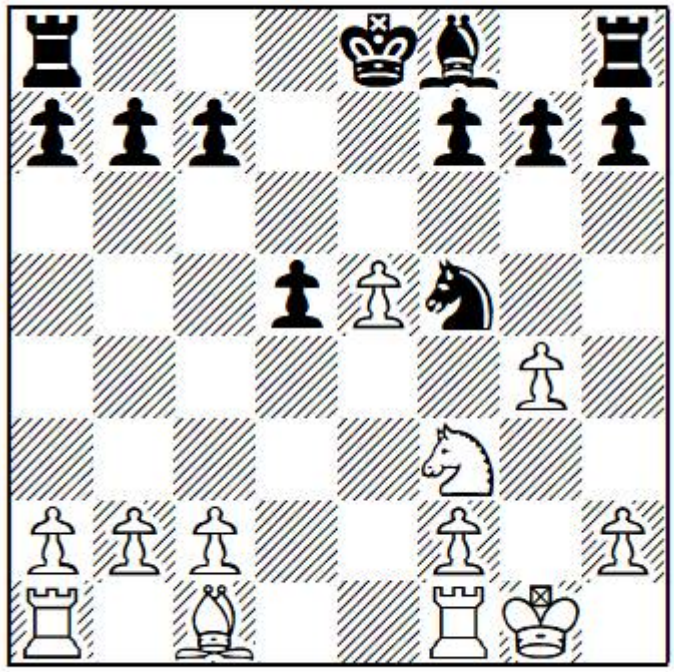
10 … Be6

Also played here are 10 … Ne7 and 10 … b6.

11 Nf4 Bd5

Let's make a deal: You can remove my bishop pair, if in return you fix my queenside pawn majority. This is all still book today.

12 Nxd5 cxd5 13 g4!?



Bobby, who never could resist pushing g-pawns, activates his kingside majority and gains time, at the risk of overextension.

13 … Ne7 14 Bf4

The players were still following current theory.

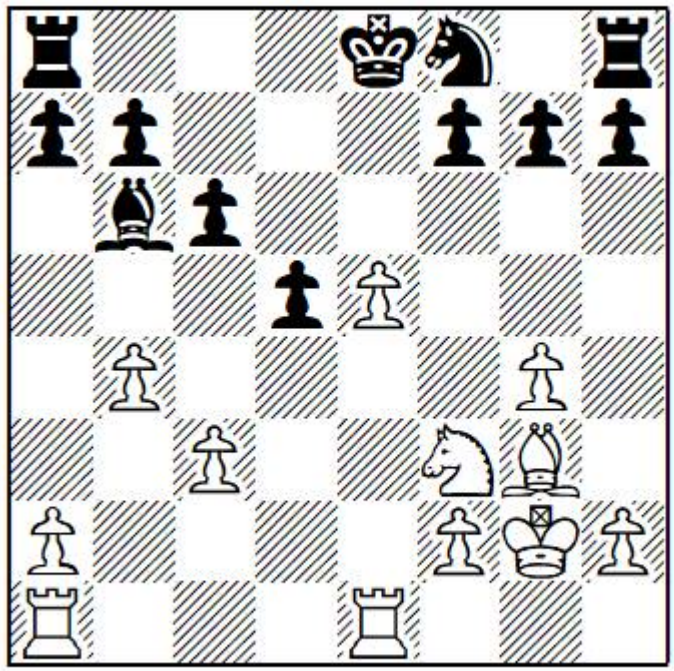
14 … c6

Previously Black had played 14 … c5 15 Rad1 Rad8 16 c3 Nc6, with ideas of … d5-d4, … h7-h5 or both, as in S.Gligoric-R.Sanguineti, Portoroz Interzonal 1958.

15 Rfe1 Ng6 16 Bg3 Bc5 17 c3 Nf8 18 b4!?

This is a touch huffy since it loosens White's structure and opens future … a7-a5 ideas.

18 … Bb6 19 Kg2



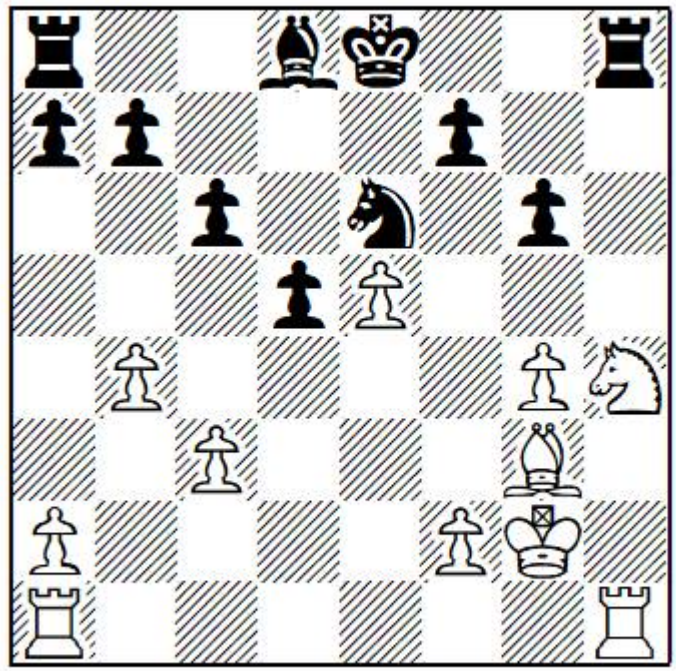
The idea is to move his knight and then activate the kingside majority with f2-f4.

19 … Ne6 20 Nh4 h5 21 h3 hxg4 22 hxg4 g6

This way White's knight is kept out of f5 (for now!).

23 Rh1 Bd8?!

It took nearly four decades to find an improvement. 23 … Kd7! is at least even for Black, and if 24 f4!?, A.Reichel-R.Arndt, correspondence 2001, Black could have broken up White's kingside majority with 24 … g5! and stood slightly better.



Exercise (combination alert): How can White force a clear advantage?

Answer: White can transfer the h4-knight to a monster post on d6, via a zwischenzug.

24 Nf5!

White's knight who waited with the coiled predatory patience of a serpent, finally gets its chance to strike. Bisguier may have expected 24 f4?! Bxh4! 25 f5 gxf5 26 gxf5 Ng7! 27 Raf1 a5! 28 b5 cxb5 29 Rxh4 Rxh4 30 Bxh4 Rc8, when only Black can play for a win. Note that Bf6 isn't really a threat: due to … Nh5.

24 … Rxh1 25 Nd6+ Kf8?!

Black's king is unsafe on the kingside. 25 … Kd7! 26 Rxh1 a5! was better, and if 27 Nxf7 axb4 28 Nxd8 bxc3!? 29 Nxe6 Kxe6, the engine only slightly prefers White in this horribly unbalanced ending, which will likely end in a wild promotion race.

26 Rxh1 b5?!

Reducing the number of pawns on the board is on Black's survival shortlist. His best shot to draw is in the line 26 … a5! 27 b5 g5! 28 Rh7 cxb5 29 Rxf7+ Kg8 30 Rxb7 b4 31 cxb4 axb4 32 Rxb4 Rxa2.

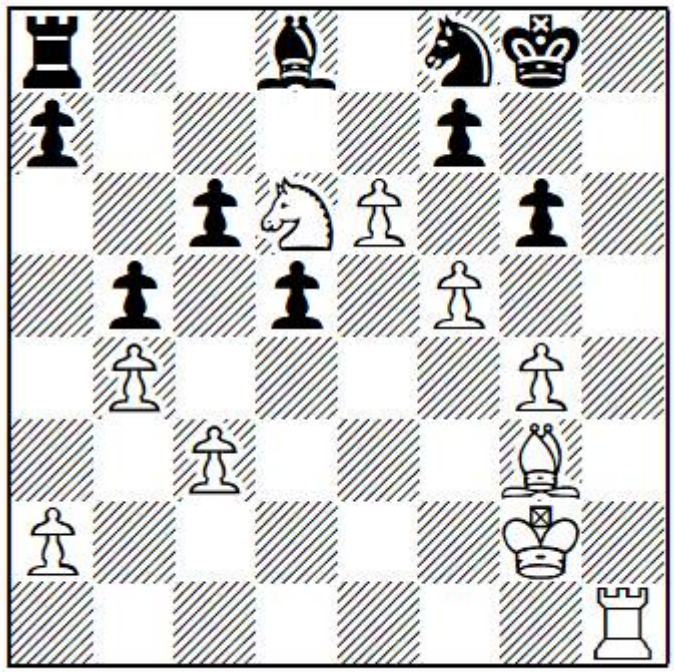
27 f4 Kg8

27 … a5 is now too slow: 28 f5 Ng5 29 Rh8+ Kg7 (or 29 … Ke7 30 Bh4 Kd7 31 Nxf7! Nxf7 32 e6+) 30 Re8 gxf5 31 gxf5 axb4 32 Bf4! Nh7 33 cxb4 Rxa2+ 34 Kg3 Bg5 35 Bxg5 Nxg5 36 f6+ Kg6 37 Rg8+ Kh5 38 Nxf7! Nxf7 39 e6 wins.

28 f5 Nf8

28 … Ng5 29 Bh4! a5 30 Nb7! is also lost for Black.

29 e6!



It becomes clear that Black's king is in dire danger.

29 … f6

29 … fxe6 30 Be5 (threatening mate on h8) 30 … Nh7 31 fxg6 Nf6 32 Ne8! wins.

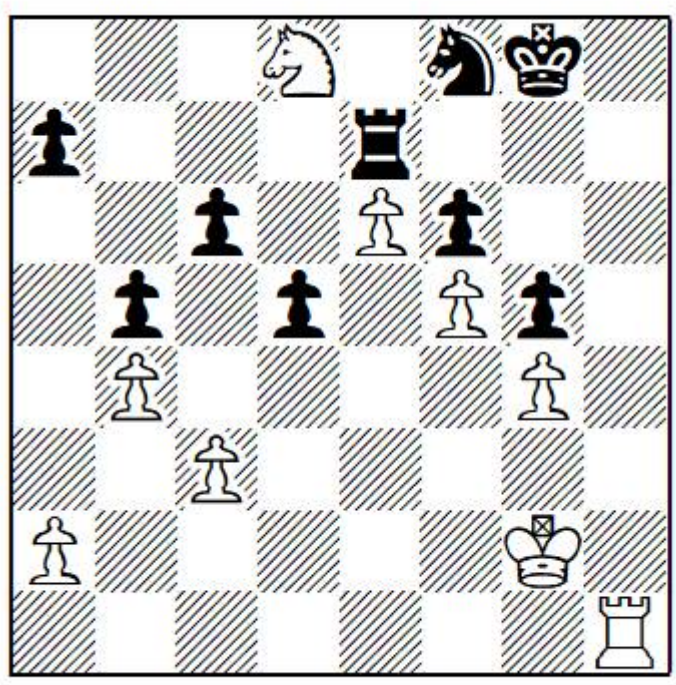
30 Nf7! Be7 31 Bf4!

Threatening mate in two with 32 Rh8+ Kg7 33 Bh6 mate.

31 … g5 32 Bd6!

Principle: *Swap off the blockader of your passed pawn*. Fischer fights for control over e7 and it's clear that Black's position is a spent entity, reaching the lights-are-on-but-nobody's-home phase of the game.

32 … Re8 33 Bxe7 Rxe7 34 Nd8!



This is a game-ender.

34 … Re8

34 … Rc7 fails to the simple 35 Re1, intending e6-e7 next.

35 Nxc6 Nxe6

The statement "a cornered enemy is the most dangerous one" isn't always true. This is more an operatic, performative statement than a practical one. Black won't even come close to holding a piece down ending. 35 … a6 36 Re1 is equally hopeless.

36 fxe6 Rxe6 37 Nxa7 1-0

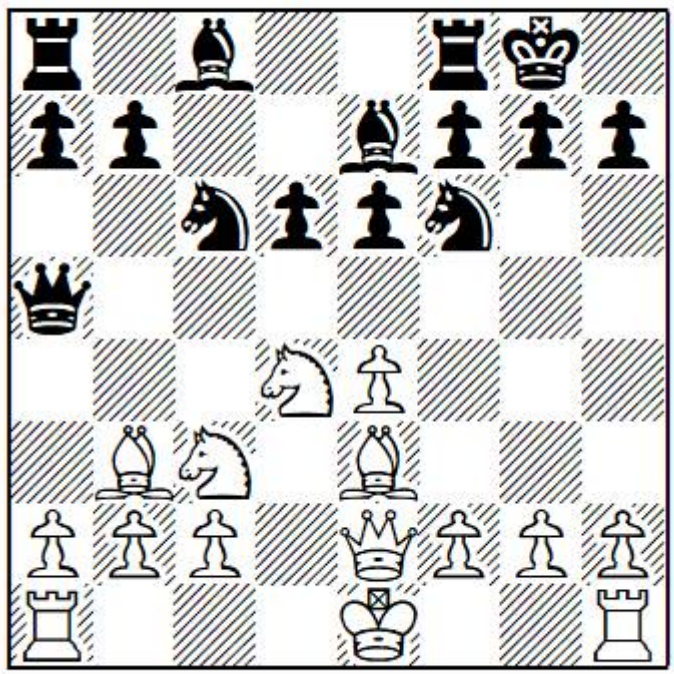
Game 23
R.J.Fischer-J.Sofrevski
Skopje 1967
Sicilian Defence

By 1967, the vast majority of non-GMs were unable to compete with Fischer. Watch how quickly and effortlessly he takes down an experienced IM.

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 Nc6 6 Bc4 e6 7 Bb3 Be7 8 Be3 0-0 9 Qe2

This time Fischer opts for the Velimirovic Attack, where Black's chances are deemed to be at least even.

9 … Qa5?!



Today, we know that Black's queen is better off on c7. On a5 it blocks a future potential push of Black's a-pawn.

10 0-0-0 Nxd4 11 Bxd4 Bd7 12 Kb1

The pawn sacrifice 12 g4!? is fully playable. After 12 … e5 13 Be3 Bxg4 14 f3 Be6 15 Rhg1. White got more than enough compensation for the sacrificed pawn, M.Vachier Lagrave-M.Dlugy, Titled Tuesday (online blitz) 2016.

12 … Rad8!?

He is worried about his d6-pawn, yet it seems awfully odd *not* to place a rook on the open c-file.

13 Qe3?!

Earth to Bobby. Can you hear us? We can't read you. Is chopping the a7-pawn a real threat? I doubt it. It's surprising that Bobby didn't bang out his favourite move and pushed the g-pawn with 13 g4!.

13 … b6?!

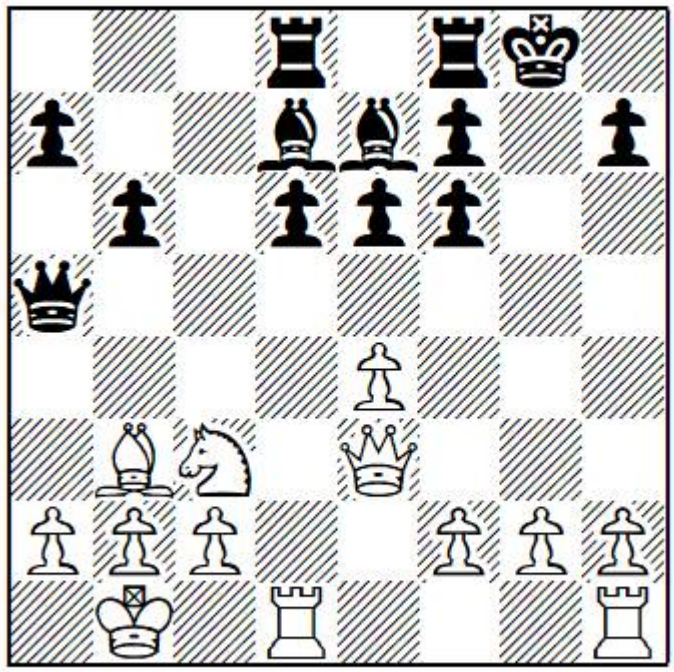
This is awfully passive. 13 … b5! looks more thematic, when 14 Bxa7?! Ra8 15 Bd4 e5 16 Bb6 Qa6 (threat: … Rfb8) 17 f4 Be6! only looks dangerous for White.

14 Bxf6!?

14 Qe1! retains an edge.

14 … gxf6??

Saving the d6-pawn at the cost of allowing something much worse. Instead, 14 … Bxf6! 15 Rxd6 Bc8 was correct, and if 16 Rxd8 Rxd8 17 f4 (not 17 Rd1?! Rxd1+ 18 Nxd1 Qh5! with a double attack on d1 and h2) 17 … b5 18 e5 Be7, Black's bishops provide a measure of compensation for the sacrificed pawn.



Exercise (combination alert): Fischer found a way either to win decisive

material or get a mating attack.

Answer: Jump into d5 with the knight.

15 Nd5! Rfe8

If 15 … exd5 16 Rxd5 b5 17 Rh5!, Black has no reasonable way to deal with the threat of Qh6.

16 Nxe7+ Rxe7 17 Rxd6

There goes a key pawn. On top of that, Black's bishop is pinned.

17 … Rc8

There is nothing better.

18 Qd4!

Step 2: Double attack on d7 and f6, winning a second pawn.

18 … Be8 19 Qxf6 1-0

The words “I resign” come at even greater personal cost when we lose before move 20. Black essentially reached the “You will hear from my lawyer!” moment, except it’s a bluff and the case is not going to court.

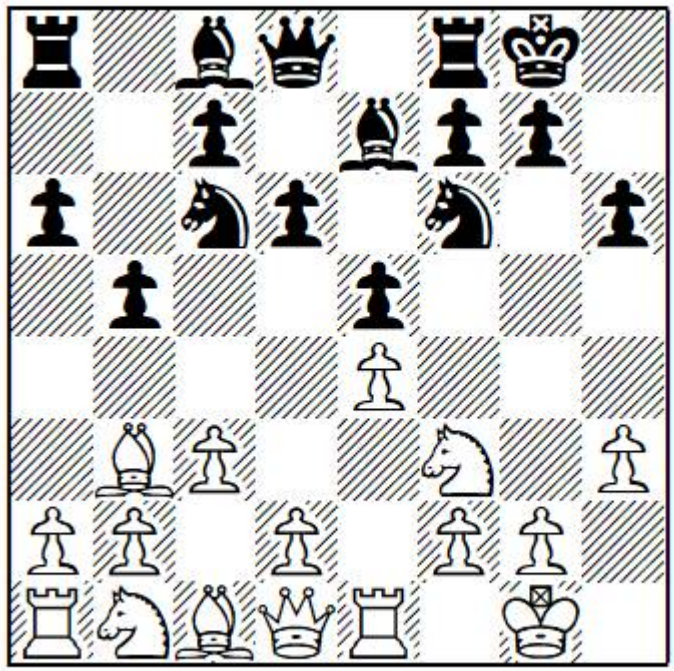
Game 24
R.J.Fischer-S.Reshevsky
Sousse Interzonal 1967
Ruy Lopez

This is the Immortal Time Odds Game! Fischer showed up 55 minutes late and was told that he needed to make his first move within five minutes or else forfeit. His response: “I can still beat Reshevsky!” And he did!

1 e4 e5

Is a Ruy Lopez really Reshevsky’s optimal choice when massively ahead on the clock? Why play a variation your opponent has memorized to move 30? Surely a Sicilian would force Bobby to eat up more time.

2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Ba4 Nf6 5 0-0 Be7 6 Re1 b5 7 Bb3 0-0 8 c3 d6 9 h3 h6



This Smyslov's variation of the Closed Lopez; … h7-h6 prevents shenanigans with Ng5 or Bg5 in the future.

10 d4 Re8 11 Nbd2 Bf8 12 Nf1 Bd7

It feels wiser to keep tabs over f5 by placing the bishop here, rather than the also played line 12 … Bb7 13 Ng3 Na5 14 Bc2 Nc4 15 b3 Nb6.

13 Ng3 Na5 14 Bc2 c5 15 b3

Black's knight is kept out of c4.

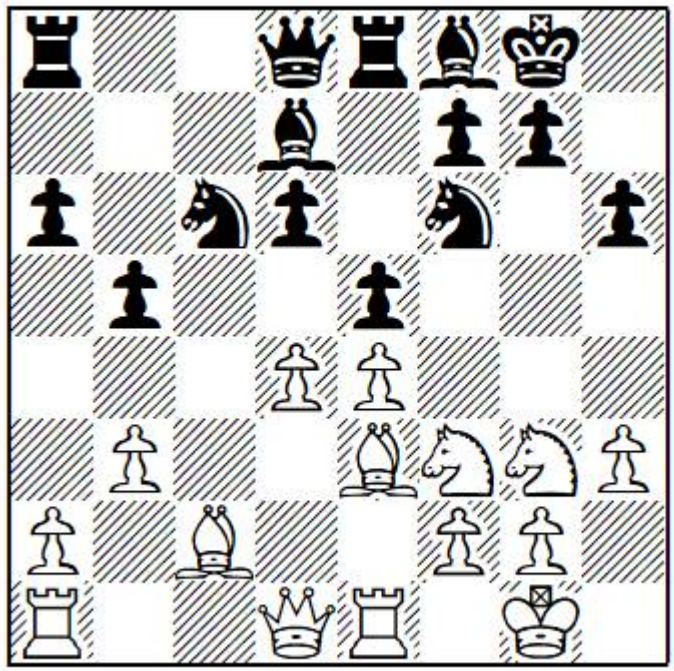
15 … Nc6

Keeping the game closed is played more often than 15 … cxd4 16 cxd4 Nc6.

16 Be3

This isn't White's optimal line. 16 d5! is White's best shot at an advantage. Fischer tended to have an aversion to relieving the central tension with a d4-d5 push in Closed Lopez positions. He preferred either to retain the tension or else swap on e5 or c5.

16 … cxd4! 17 cxd4



17 … Nb4?!

This allows White an edge. After 17 … exd4! 18 Nxd4 d5! Black stands no worse.

18 Bb1 a5 19 a3 Na6

19 … Nc6 20 d5 Ne7 21 Bd3 is in White's favour.

20 Bd3

Once again Fischer avoids closing the centre with 20 d5.

20 … Qc7?!

And again 20 … exd4! 21 Nxd4 d5! 22 Nxb5 Nc5! 23 exd5 Nxd3 24 Qxd3 Rb8 offers Black full compensation.

21 Qe2 Qb7 22 Rad1 g6

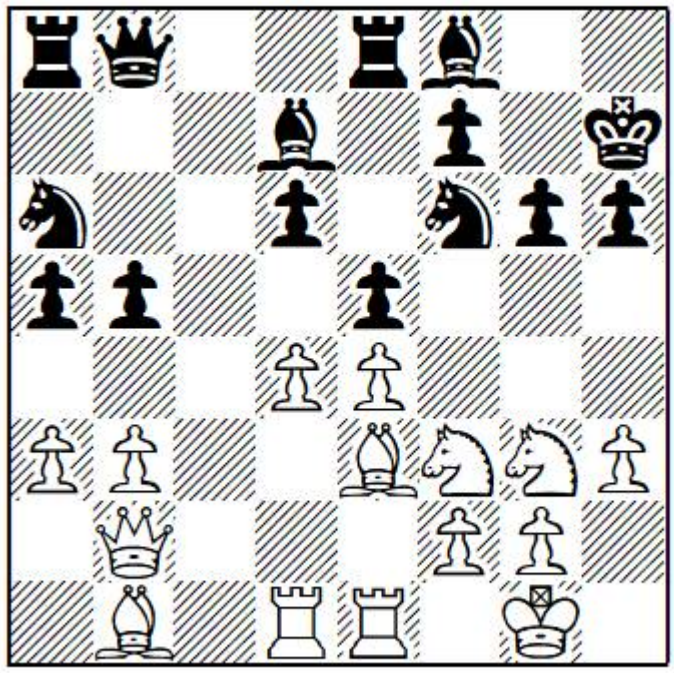
The engine hates this natural move, though its suggestion of 22 … Nb8 23 d5 isn't all that inspirational for Black.

23 Qb2!

Now e5 comes under attack.

23 … Qb8 24 Bb1 Kh7?

24 … Bg7 had to be played.



Exercise (combination alert): Prove why Black's last move was a blunder.

Answer: Step 1: Exchange on e5.

25 dxe5! dxe5 26 Nxe5!

Step 2: Chop the e5-pawn, which isn't as well defended as outer appearances suggest. The war begins to spill over to the other side of the board.

26 … Rxe5?

So flustered is Reshevsky by Fischer's speed and accuracy that he plays as if he is the one in time pressure, rather than the other way around. This recapture, which loses more material, gets what Black wants least and is not a path of unloading unwanted sufferings. Reshevsky should have settled for the loss of a central pawn with 26 … Qxe5 27 Bd4 Qc7 28 Bxf6.

27 Bf4! Qb7

27 … Bd6 28 Rxd6! Qxd6 29 Bxe5 Qe6 30 Bxf6 leaves Black a piece and a pawn down.

28 Bxe5 Ne8

There is a lot to dislike about Black's position: Reshevsky is an exchange and a pawn down to, probably at the time, the strongest player in the world. Fischer still needed to reach the move 40-time control without flagging, which for a player of his blitz abilities, had to have been trivially easy. From this point on, Bobby finds the engine's top or second choice on virtually every move.

29 Ne2!

The non-functional g3-knight is transferred to its optimal square, d5.

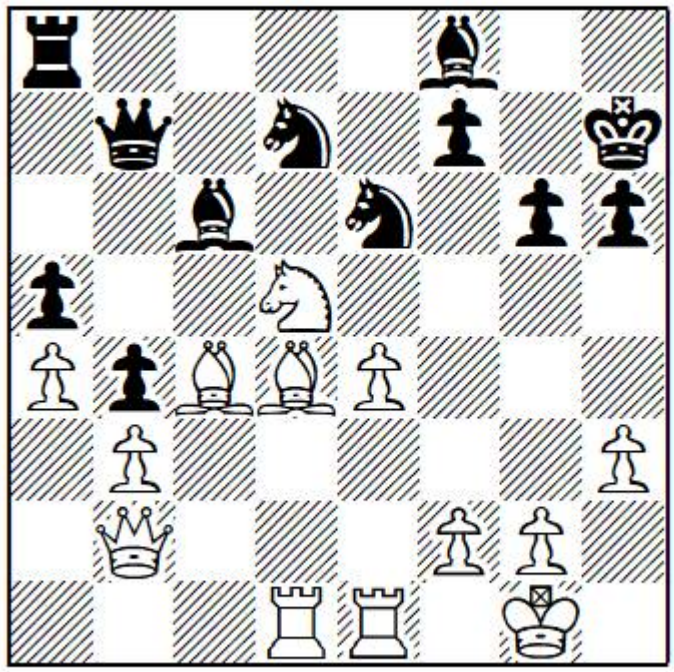
29 … Nc5 30 Nf4! b4 31 a4 Bc6 32 Nd5 Nd7 33 Bd4 Ng7 34 Bd3!

The bishop is transferred to a more potent post on c4.

34 … Ne6

34 … Bxd5 35 exd5 Qxd5?? 36 Be4 skewers and wins.

35 Bc4!



He correctly doesn't worry about preserving his dark-squared bishop, since 35 … Nxd4 36 Qxd4 Bg7 37 e5! Re8 38 Nf6+ is totally hopeless for Black.

35 … Re8 36 Bf6! Nec5 37 Qc2 Ne6 38 Ba1!

Worrying Black about future Qb2 tricks.

38 … Qa7 39 Kh1!

Principle: *Push your pawn majority as quickly and as efficiently as possible*. The way is cleared for f2-f4-f5.

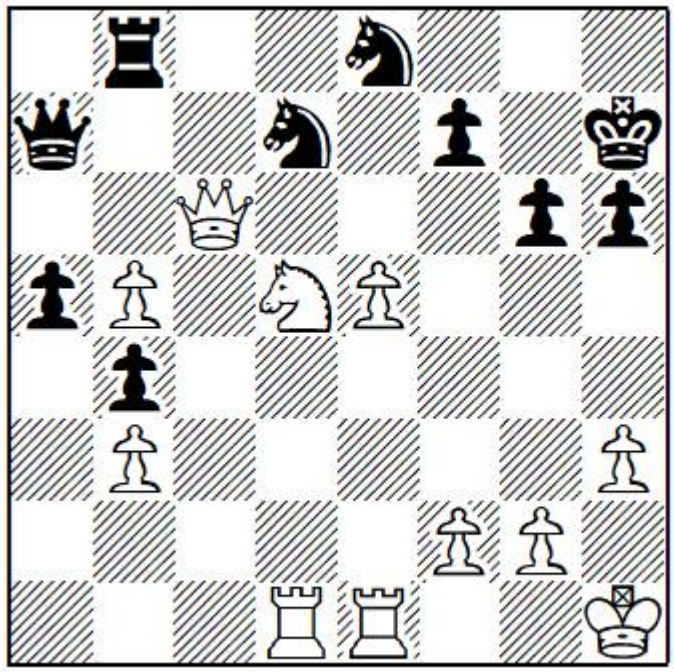
39 … Bg7 40 Bxg7 Nxg7 41 Bb5!

Simplification. Bad luck for Sammy: Bobby reached the time control and an extra hour was added to his clock. Why Reshevsky chose to play on from here is a great mystery.

41 … Bxb5 42 axb5 Rb8 43 Qc6!

Threat: Qxd7, followed by Nf6+. On top of that, b5 is conveniently covered.

43 … Ne8 44 e5



Now both e5-e6 and Nf6+ are in the air.

44 … Nf8

44 … Qb7 45 e6! fxe6 46 Qxe6 Qxb5 47 Ne7! forces mate, since g8 and g6 can't both be protected.

45 Nf6+!

Reshevsky's position is Tokyo, circa 1952, while Fischer's is Godzilla's entry to city limits.

45 … Nxf6 46 exf6

Threat: Re7.

46 … Rb6 1-0

Since White has a million ways to win, one of which is 47 Qe8 Rb8 48 Qe7! Qb7 49 Rd8! Rxd8 50 Qxd8 Ne6 51 Rxe6! (simplification) 51 … fxe6 52 Qe7+ and White promotes after the queen swap.

Game 25
W.Uhlmann-R.J.Fischer
Palma de Mallorca Interzonal 1970

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 c5!?

When it came to his openings, Bobby was that old RCA Records dog who faithfully followed his master's voice. This must have come as a surprise for Uhlmann, who surely prepared for the King's Indian. In the database I see only six games where Fischer deviated and played the Benoni. He scored an astonishing five wins – including a World Championship match game against Spassky – and a lone draw with Portisch. Why didn't he play it more often?

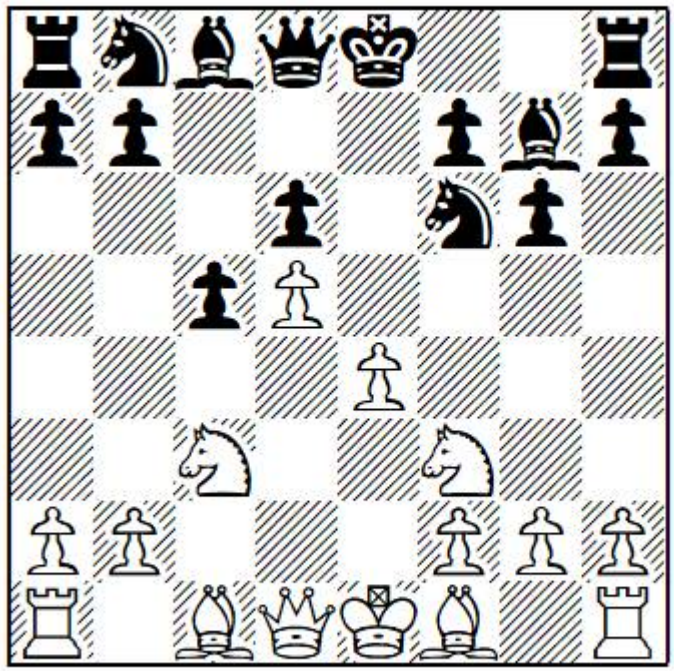
From the same event, Portisch-Fischer saw 2 … e6 3 Nf3 c5 4 d5 exd5 5 cxd5 g6 6 Nc3 Bg7 7 Bf4 d6 8 Qa4+ Bd7 9 Qb3 Qc7 10 e4 (10 Bxd6?? Qxd6 11 Qxb7 fails miserably to 11 … Qb6 12 Qxa8 Qxb2 and Black wins) 10 … 0-0 11 Be2 a6? (11 … b5! 12 Bxb5 Nxe4! is playable, since 13 Nxe4 Qa5+ regains the sacrificed piece) 12 e5! dxe5 13 Bxe5 Qc8 14 0-0 and White stood better, although Bobby held the draw.

3 d5 e6 4 Nc3 exd5 5 cxd5

5 Nxd5?! Nxd5 6 Qxd5 Nc6 7 Nf3 d6 8 Ng5? (this is amateur hour and a waste of time) 8 … Qe7 9 Qe4?! h6 10 Qxe7+ Bxe7 11 Ne4 Be6 12 Bf4 Nb4 13 Kd2 0-0-0 and White was already busted, R.Bandal-R.J.Fischer, Manila (simul) 1967.

5 … d6 6 e4

Three more of Fischer's games reached positions after 6 Nf3 g6 7 e4 Bg7.

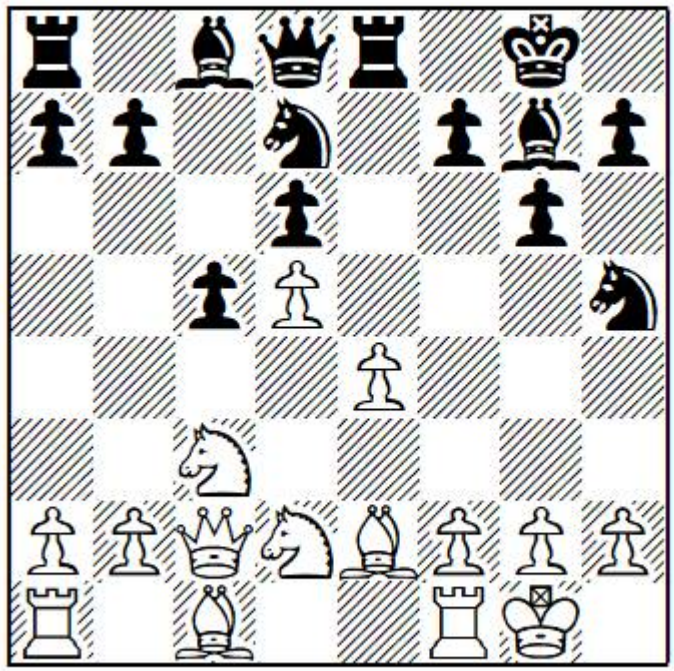


a) 8 Bg5 h6 9 Bf4 g5?! 10 Bc1?! (10 Bb5+! is awkward for Black) 10 … 0-0 11 Nd2 Nbd7 12 Be2 Ne5 13 Nf1?! b5! 14 Bxb5 Qa5 (14 … c4! is stronger) 15 Ng3 c4 16 0-0 Rb8 17 Qa4 Qxa4 18 Bxa4 Nd3, when Bobby generated full compensation for the sacrificed pawn and won, M.Cuellar Gacharna-R.J.Fischer, Sousse Interzonal 1967.

b) 8 Be2 0-0 9 0-0 Re8 10 Nd2 Nbd7 and then:

b1) 11 a4 Ne5 12 Qc2 g5 13 Nf3 Nxf3+ 14 Bxf3 h6 15 Bd2 a6 16 Be2 Qe7 17 Rae1 Qe5 18 Kh1 Qd4 19 f3 (White has a clear advantage; 19 f4! looks even stronger) 19 … Nh5 20 Nb5? (White overestimates his position and sacrifices unsoundly) 20 … axb5 21 Bxb5 Qe5 22 Bc3 Qe7 23 Bxe8 Qxe8 24 Bxg7 Kxg7 and White lacked full compensation for the material, S.Gligoric-R.J.Fischer, Palma de Mallorca Interzonal 1970.

b2) 11 Qc2 Nh5!?



This is Bobby's "Don't try this at home, kids!" moment. His last move is one of the most famous theoretical novelties in all of World Chess Championship history. A historic decision doesn't necessarily mean it's a good one, although in this instance it worked like a dream. Empirically it's not sound, yet it flustered the hell out of Spassky, who went on to lose without a fight:
12 Bxh5 gxh5 13 Nc4 Ne5 14 Ne3 Qh4 15 Bd2?! (15 f3! secures White's advantage) 15 … Ng4! 16 Nxg4 hxg4 and Bobby equalized, before going on to outplay and score his first ever win over Boris, in the third game of their World Championship match, B.Spassky-R.J.Fischer, Reykjavik 1972.

6 … g6 7 Bf4

Uhlmann targets d6. Instead, 7 Nf3 transposes to the previous note.

Another game continued 7 Be2 Bg7 8 f4!? 0-0 9 Nf3 Re8 10 Nd2 (he should try 10 e5) 10 … c4! 11 Bf3?! (11 Bxc4?! Bg4 12 Qc2 Nbd7! 13 h3 Nxe4! is in Black's favour; 11 a4 is White's best try) 11 … Nbd7 12 0-0 b5!, when Bobby took

over the initiative and won, A.Pomar Salamanca-R.J.Fischer, Havana Olympiad 1966.

7 … a6 8 a4 Bg7 9 Nf3 0-0 10 Be2 Bg4

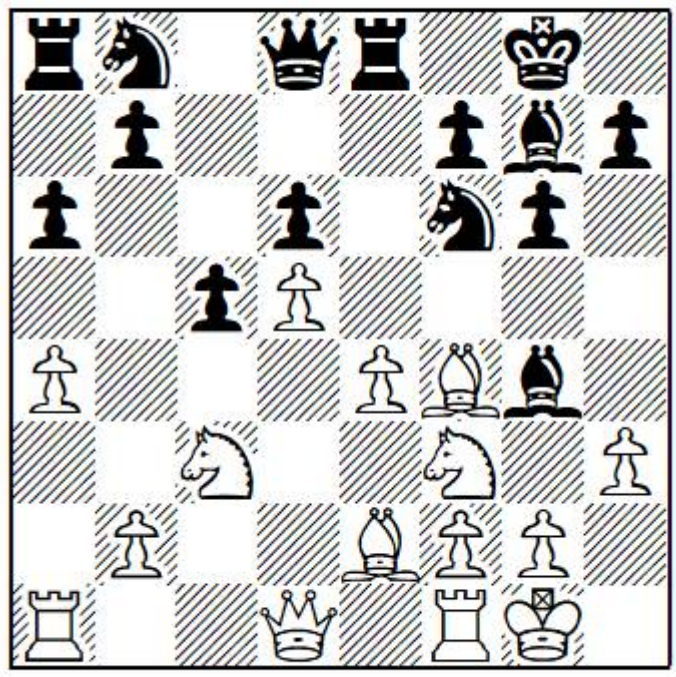
This bishop tends to be Black's problem piece in the Benoni. In the early 1980s I got a winning position against GM Yasser Seirawan on the Black side of a Benoni (he outplayed me and won anyway!). After the game Yasser told me his Benoni rule of thumb, which I never forgot:

1. If Black can swap one pair of pieces in a Benoni, then dynamic equality is established.

2. If Black can swap two or more pairs of pieces, then Black's chances tend to be better.

11 0-0 Re8 12 h3?!

The engine says this move is playable. I don't believe its claim.



Exercise (combination alert): White missed a tactic on his last move.

Answer: Black doesn't have to exchange on f3. He can chop the e-pawn.

12 … Nxe4!

Once again we witness Bobby's uncanny hyper-alert ability to spot short-range tactics, which even GMs miss.

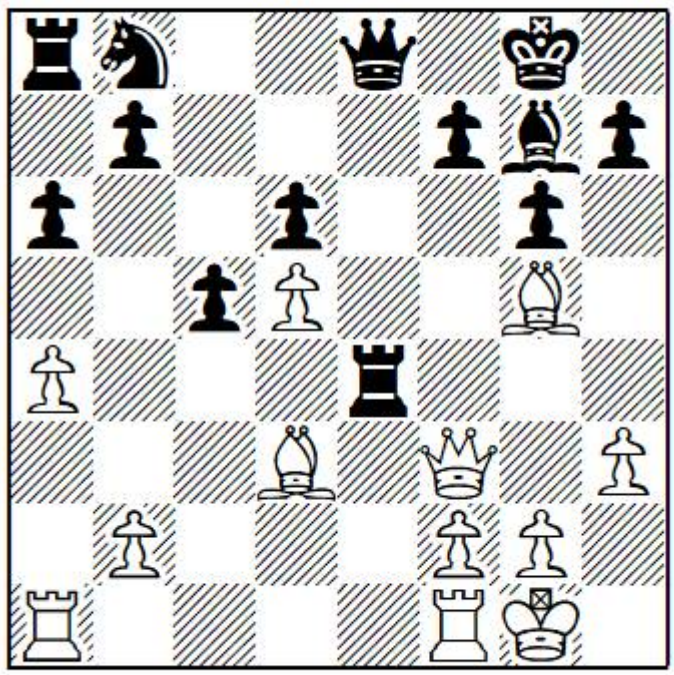
13 Nxe4

13 hxg4 Bxc3! regains the piece.

13 … Rxe4 14 Bg5 Qe8!

How annoying. Fischer stole a central pawn and got away with the crime.

15 Bd3 Bxf3 16 Qxf3



16 … Rb4!?

This is greedy and allows White attacking chances. More accurate is the strategic exchange sacrifice 16 … Re5! 17 Bf4 Nd7 18 Bxe5 Bxe5, when I actually slightly prefer Black's position. For the exchange he got:

1. A healthy central pawn.

2. Dark square power.

3. White's queenside pawns are slightly weak.

4. Black's king is completely safe, unlike in the game.

17 Rae1 Be5 18 Qd1?!

After 18 Qg3! Qxa4 19 f4 Bd4+ 20 Kh1 Nd7 21 f5! White generates full attacking compensation for the two sacrificed pawns.

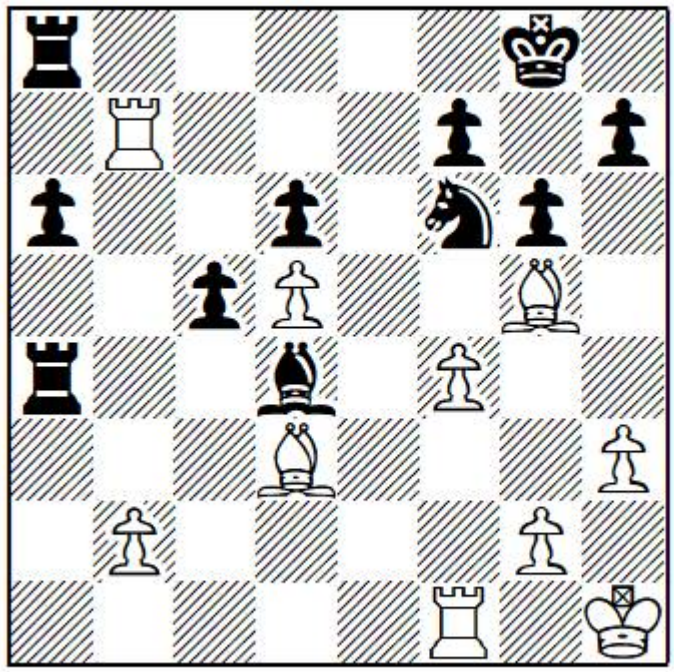
18 … Qxa4! 19 Qxa4?

White is down too many pawns to survive an ending, despite the massive lead in development. He needs to nourish his attack's growth by keeping queens on the board and attacking with Captain Ahab-like intensity by 19 Bc2! Qb5 20 f4, intending f4-f5.

19 … Rxa4 20 f4 Bd4+ 21 Kh1 Nd7 22 Re7

Uhlmann banked on this move, which regains a pawn. It isn't enough to save the game.

22 … Nf6 23 Rxb7



Let's gather data:

1. Black is a pawn up.

2. Black can win a second pawn on d5.

3. White threatens counterplay down the f-file, targeting f6 and f7, starting with f4-f5.

Watch how Bobby snatches the initiative and never lets it go.

23 … Nh5!

Bobby targets both the g3 fork square and White's f-pawn. 23 … Nxd5?! 24 f5! allows White counterplay.

24 Kh2

24 Rf3 c4 25 Bf1 Ra1 (now … Ng3+ is in the air) 26 Kh2 f6 27 Bh4 Re8! (threatening … Ree1, with the potential to deliver mate on h1) 28 g4 Nxf4! 29 Rxf4 Be5 30 Bg3 Bxf4 31 Bxf4 Rxf1 wins.

24 … Be3!

The engine dislikes this move, whereas I like it, since it clarifies the position. This way White's f-pawn is pinned and prevented from pushing forward. 24 … a5 is the engine's suggestion.

25 Be2! Bxf4+

There goes White's bishop pair. Now his weak dark squares begin to take on a sickly pallor.

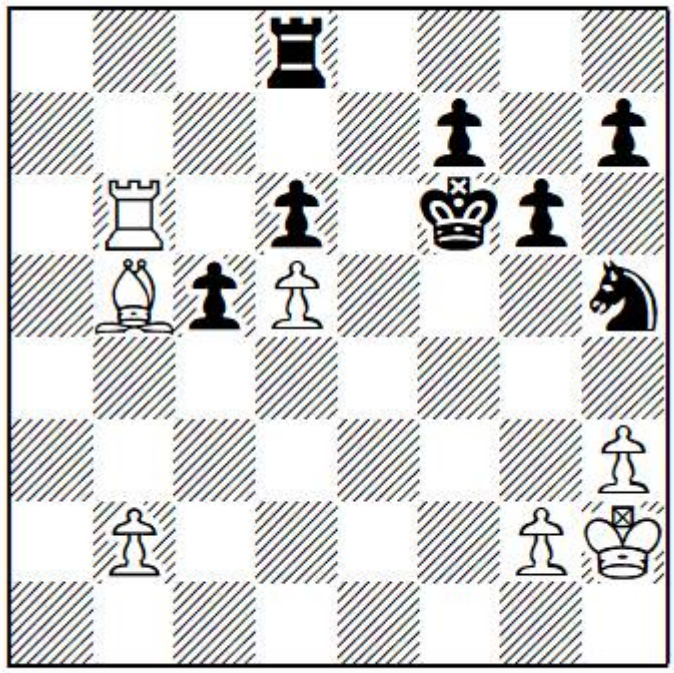
26 Bxf4 Rxf4 27 Rb6?!

27 Rd7! resists better.

27 … Rxf1 28 Bxf1 Rd8!

The base d-pawn is far more important than a6.

29 Bxa6 Kg7 30 Bb5 Kf6!



Black's king begins a niche business, the only one in town: domination of the central dark squares. Principle: *Use your king in an ending, rather than hide it away*

31 Bc6

If 31 Rb7 Nf4 32 Bc6 Nd3 33 Kg3 Nb4 34 Rc7 then 34 … Rb8! (targeting the vulnerable b-pawn) 35 Rd7 Nxc6 36 Rxd6+ (or 36 dxc6 Ke6!) 36 … Ke5 37 Rxc6 Rb3+ 38 Kh2 Kxd5 39 Rc7 Rxb2 40 Rxf7 c4 wins.

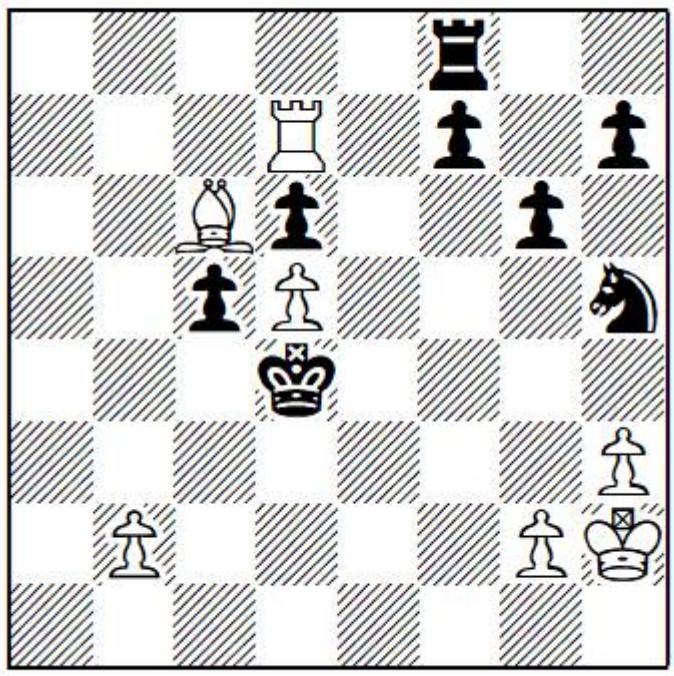
31 … Ke5!

White is essentially a piece down since his king is a useless bystander, when compared with Black's.

32 Rb7 Rf8

It's okay to go passive in this case.

33 Re7+ Kd4 34 Rd7



Exercise (planning): Has Uhlmann found a way to hold a draw? Returning the

king to e5 is useless since White then repeats the position with a rook check on

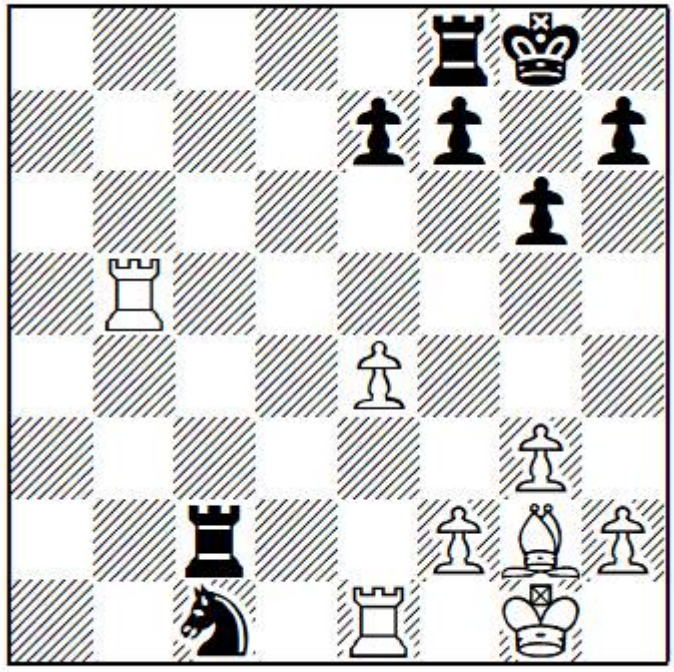
e7. What is Fischer's winning plan?

Answer: Move the knight to f6, after which his d6-pawn is poison for White's rook.

34 … Nf6! 0-1

The d6-pawn is safe after all, since 35 Rxd6 (while 35 Rb7 Nxd5 leaves Black two clean pawns up) 35 … Ke5 (you again?) wins the exchange.

Game 26
Las.Szabo-R.J.Fischer
Buenos Aires 1970



Surely this is empirically drawn, with only four pawns remaining each, and on the same side of the board. Bobby snatches the initiative based on two factors:

1. His knight is slightly more dangerous than Szabo's bishop.

2. f2 is more of a target than Black's e7- or f7-points.

28 … Ne2+! 29 Kf1 Nc3! 30 Rc5?

It's shocking how a move as natural as pinning can be an error. Instead, after 30 Rb7! Rd8 (30 … e6 31 e5 Rd8 32 Be4! Ra2 33 Rb3 is also a likely draw) 31 Rxe7 Rdd2 32 Kg1 Rxf2 33 Bf1 Rxh2 34 e5!, the further e5-e6 will expose Black's king and White should hold the game.

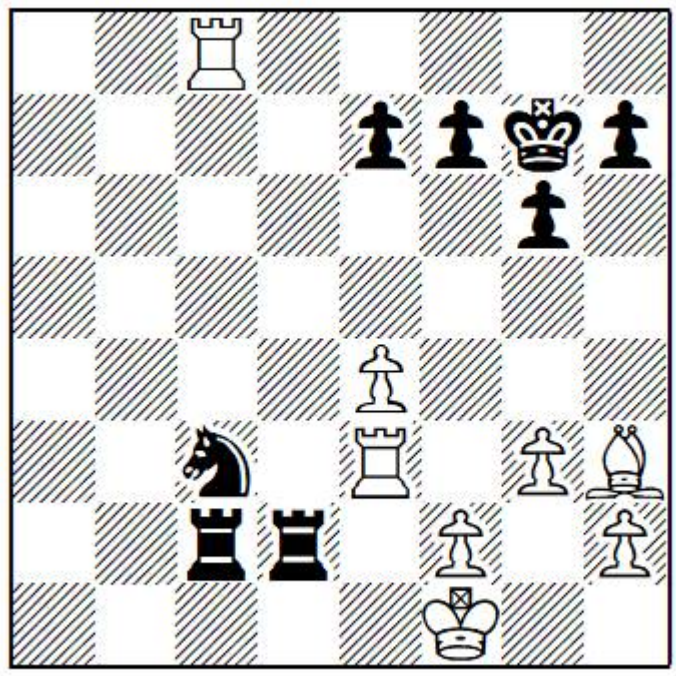
30 … Rd8

Threat: … Rdd2.

31 Bh3?

It's not paranoia if someone really *is* out to get you. He should try 31 Bf3! Rdd2 32 Be2! (this engine manoeuvre is difficult for a human to spot) 32 … Kg7 (if 32 … Nxe4? 33 Rxc2 Rxc2 34 Bd3 Rxf2+ 35 Kg1 Nc5! 36 Bf1! Rd2 37 Rxe7, White should hold) 33 Rc7 h5 34 h4 Kf6 35 Rc4 Ke5! 36 Rc5+ Kd6 37 Rc4 and Black has a tough time making progress, despite the engine's whopping -4.4 assessment. When I played it as White, the engine just kept shuffling and cycling, maintaining its "winning advantage", yet without getting anywhere!

31 … Rdd2 32 Rc8+ Kg7 33 Re3



33 … Nd1!

Deadly accuracy. The once drawn position undergoes a radical transformation, since Fischer's knight becomes an agent of chaos in White's camp. This move is even more accurate than the also winning 33 … Rxf2+?! 34 Kg1 Nb5 35 Rxc2 Rxc2 36 Bf1 Nd4 37 Bg2 and while a temporary relief of symptoms is not a total cure, this version isn't as easy for Black to convert as the game.

34 Rf3

34 Rxc2? Nxe3+ (zwischenzug) 35 fxe3 Rxc2 wins.

34 … Rxf2+ 35 Rxf2 Rxf2+ 36 Kg1

36 Ke1 is met by 36 … Rxh2.

36 … Re2! 37 Bg4

Or 37 Rc4 Re1+! 38 Kg2 Ne3+ 39 Kf2 Nxc4 40 Kxe1 Kf6 41 Kf2 Ke5 with an easy win for Black, since the e-pawn falls.

37 … Rxe4! 0-1

You give your fiancée a huge diamond engagement ring. Then she finds the receipt for $30.00, which leads her to suspect it just may be costume jewellery. This is how Szabo must have felt after Fischer's last move. Black's knight isn't hanging at all, since a rook check on e1 is available.

Chapter Five
Accumulating Advantages

In this chapter we examine Bobby's true power: strategic mastery. I feel that, by 1970, Fischer was playing strategic chess with the depth of understanding of a world-class grandmaster in the 2000s.

Game 27
C.Grossguth-R.J.Fischer
U.S. Junior Championship, Philadelphia 1956
Sicilian Defence

Not recognizing the name, I looked up Fischer's opponent from the U.S. Junior and read a post from his daughter who revealed that Grossguth tragically committed suicide in 1962, at age 26. No explanation was given.

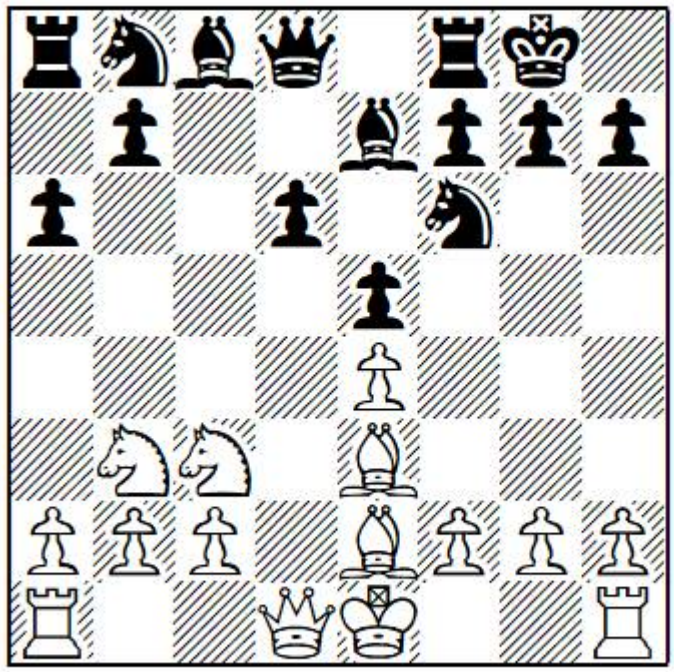
1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 a6

Fischer said: "The turning point in my career came with the realization that Black should play to win instead of just steering for equality." Which translates to the fact that Bobby was not one of those people who meet 1 e4 with 1 … e5, or 1 d4 with 1 … d5.

6 Be2

This is the strategic treatment, later popularized by Karpov.

6 … e5 7 Nb3 Be7 8 Be3 0-0



9 Qd2!?

This is a bit weird, as is 9 Qd3!? in Game 51, while 9 0-0 transposes to Game 39. Today, we know that 9 g4! is White's most dangerous continuation.

9 … b5 10 f3?!

It's a normal English Attack position, except that White replaced the useful 0-0-0 with the somewhat redundant Be2. 10 a4! is correct.

10 … Be6 11 g4!?

The idea is to discourage Black's break on d5, since White plans g4-g5 in response. 11 a4! still looks okay for White.

11 … d5!

Fischer achieves his thematic freeing break anyway. 11 … Nbd7 is also a favourable version of an English Attack for Black.

12 g5?

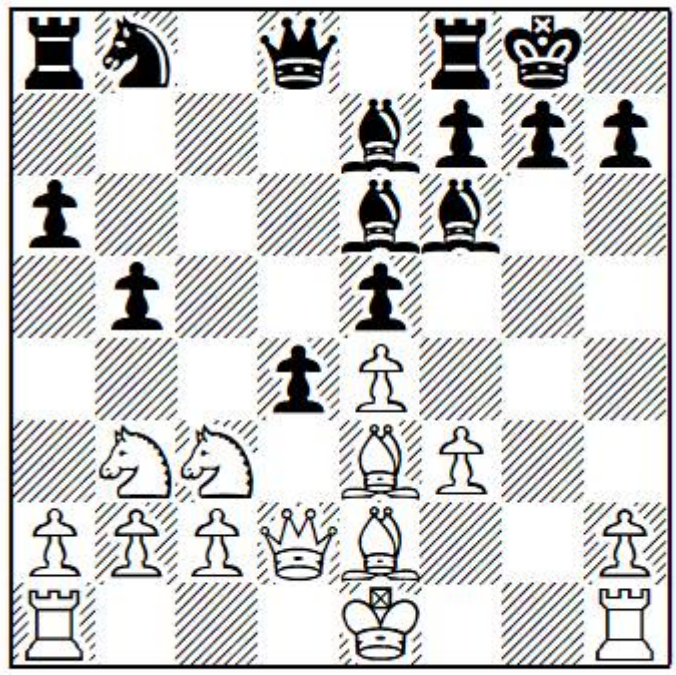
Promises, promises. In reality this war-hungry pseudo-attacking move is a strategically unprofitable venture.

Necessary was 12 exd5 Nxd5 13 Nxd5 Bh4+ 14 Kf1 Bxd5 15 Rd1 and White looks okay since queens are removed from the board.

12 … d4!

"The better to eat you with, my dear!" White is already fatally weak on the dark squares.

13 gxf6 Bxf6



14 0-0-0

White commits dark square suicide. (Slightly) less awful is 14 Bf2 Bg5 15 Qd3 dxc3 16 Qxc3 Nd7 17 Qa5 Qe7, when White's king has no safe haven, across the board.

14 … dxe3 15 Qxd8

15 Qxe3?? isn't that tempting an option due to the simple pin 15 … Bg5 16 Rxd8 Bxe3+ 17 Rd2 Rd8 and wins.

15 … Rxd8 16 Nc5

After 16 Rxd8+ Bxd8 17 Nd5 Nd7 18 Rd1 Nf8 19 Kb1 Bxd5 20 exd5 (20 Rxd5 Ne6!) 20 … Ng6 White won't save the ending.

16 … Nc6!

A move which shows the depth of the very young Bobby's strategic understanding. He is not afraid of Nxe6.

17 Nxe6

Far from helping White, tripling the e-pawns only benefits Black, since:

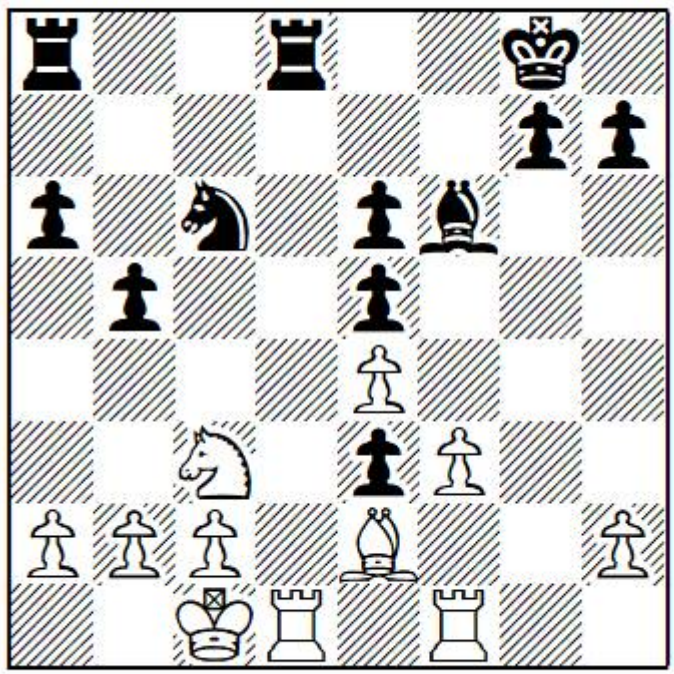
1. Black secures control over d5.

2. The opening of the f-file helps Black.

3. White's dark square misery is actually accentuated by the opposite-coloured bishops.

17 … fxe6 18 Rhf1?

18 h4 was forced.



Exercise (planning): Find a forcing path for Black to win material.

Answer: Step 1: Chase White's knight away from protection of White's bishop with … b5-b4!.

18 … b4! 19 Na4 Nd4

Step 2: Attack White's bishop, which is unable to move and can't even be protected without loss of material.

20 Rxd4

20 Rde1 Bh4 wins on the spot.

20 … Rxd4!

Another example of Fischer's superior strategic understanding: control over the open d-file is more important than un-tripling the e-pawns.

21 Bd3 Rad8 22 Kd1 Bg5 23 Ke2 Bf4 24 h3 Rc8 25 Rd1 Rc6 26 b3

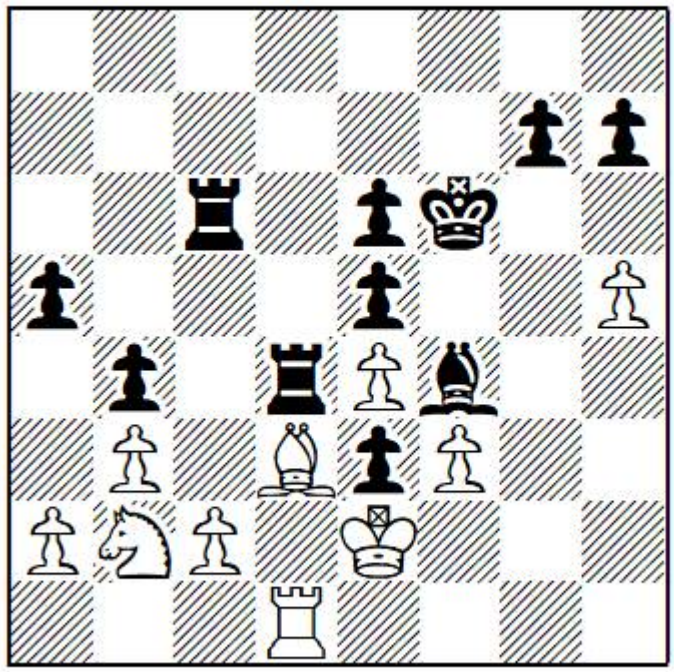
White hopes for a fortress, which isn't going to happen.

26 … Kf7 27 h4 Kf6

Or 27 … h5, fixing h4 as an eternal target.

28 h5 a5 29 Nb2

29 Bc4 Rd2+! 30 Rxd2 exd2 31 Nb2 Kg5 wins easily, since White's h-pawn falls.



There are two times we drop to one knee:

1. A suitor, proposing marriage.

2. A person so exhausted, that they can no longer stand.

For White, this is a case of number two on the list.

Exercise (planning): White hopes for the time to play Nc4. His prayer for a

fortress draw is destined to go unanswered. Prove how.

Answer: Break though by returning the exchange on d3.

29 … Rxd3! 0-1

Bobby proves that he alone is the rightful owner of c2. After 30 Nxd3 (30 Kxd3 Rc3+ 31 Ke2 Rxc2+ wins the knight) 30 … Rxc2+ 31 Ke1 Bg3+ White is mated since moving the king to f1 allows a pawn fork on e2.

Game 28

R.J Fischer-A.Feuerstein
U.S. Championship, New York 1957
Sicilian Defence

This was Bobby's first U.S. Championship. He stunned the American and world chess community by winning it (and every other one he participated in) at age 14! Keep in mind that, unlike today, the late 1950s was *not* an era of child prodigies.

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 e6 3 g3

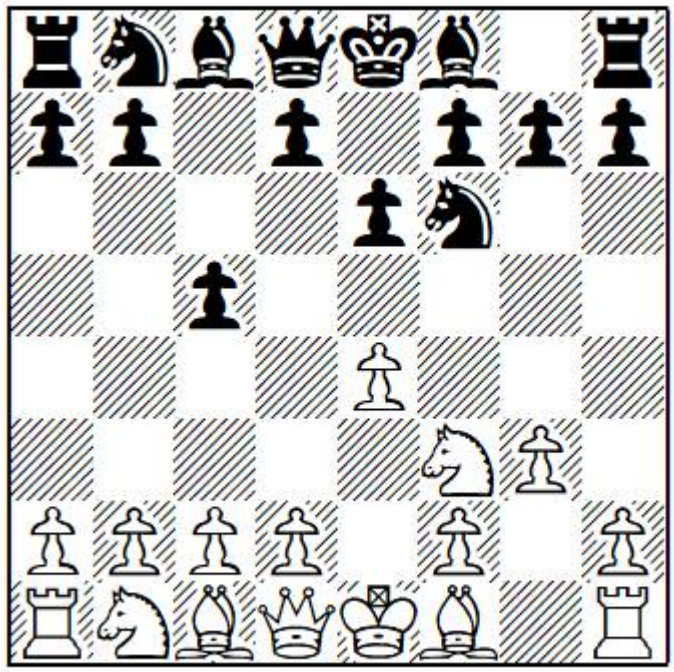
This move order is a bit off from the normal. Maybe Bobby wanted to keep open the possibility of entry into an Open Sicilian. The more standard move order runs 3 d3 d5 4 Nbd2 Nc6 5 g3.

3 … Nf6!?

Instead:

a) 3 … Nc6 4 Bg2 Nf6 5 d3 d5 leads to a normal King's Indian Attack.

b) 3 … d5 4 exd5 exd5 5 d4 Nc6 6 Bg2 Bg4 7 0-0! cxd4! leads to an isolani position which is considered okay for Black (whereas 7 … Nxd4?! 8 Qe1+! Be7 9 Nxd4 cxd4 10 Qe5 is in White's favour).



4 d3

Bobby shies away from 4 e5 Nd5 5 Bg2 d6 6 0-0 Nc6 7 d4! cxd4 8 Nxd4!? (or just 8 exd6 Bxd6 9 Nxd4) 8 … Nxe5 9 f4 Nc6 10 Bxd5 exd5 11 Nc3 Be7 12 Nxd5 0-0 13 f5, where the engine slightly prefers White's chances.

4 … d5 5 Nbd2

Now we are back into a normal KIA versus French Defence set-up.

5 … Be7 6 Bg2 0-0 7 0-0 Nc6 8 Re1 Qc7

This is Black's second choice in the position. Today, 8 … b5 is more often played.

9 Qe2

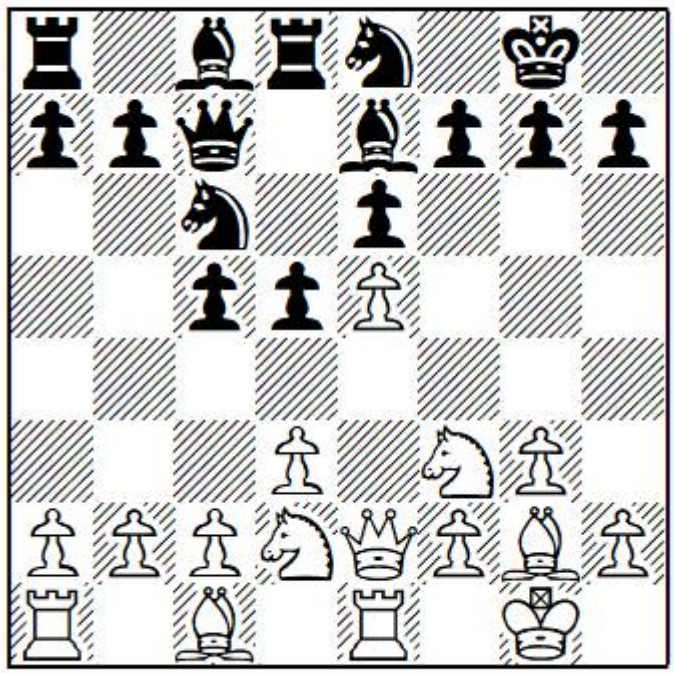
And here 9 e5 Nd7 10 Qe2 is more common today.

9 … Rd8

It isn't so clear that Black's rook belongs on the d-file. 9 … b5 10 e5 Nd7 11 Nf1 is more natural.

10 e5 Ne8?!

This move has never been repeated. I play the … Ne8 line as Black against the KIA, but *not* together with … Qc7. Why? Because Black's normal plan in the … Ne8 lines is … b7-b5-b4 and … Nc7-b5-d4. This plan hits a snag in this game's version, since Black's queen clogs c7, preventing the … Nc7 part of the equation. 10 … Nd7 is correct.



11 c3

This way Fischer cuts out … Nd4, though he could actually allow it, since 11 Nf1 Nd4 isn't so scary for White. After 12 Nxd4 cxd4 13 h4 Bd7 14 Bg5, the c2-pawn is easily covered by a rook on c1.

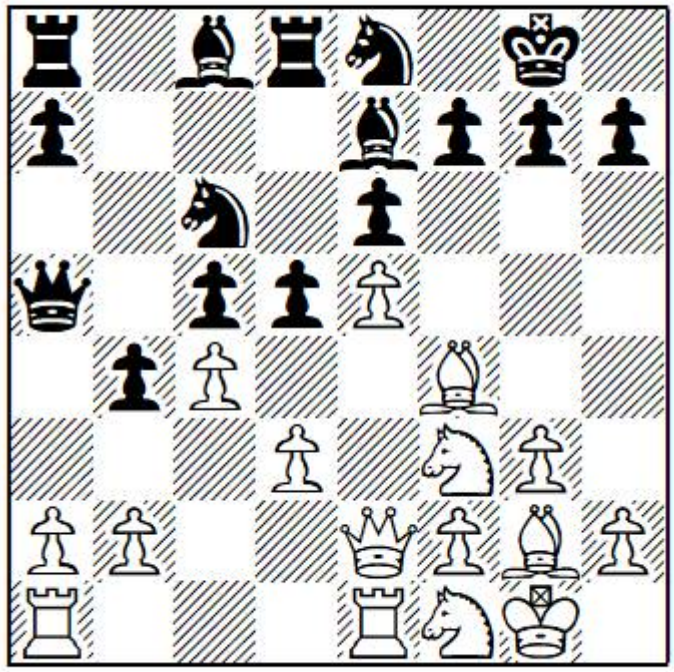
11 … b5 12 Nf1 b4 13 Bf4?! W

Here we note a stylistic quirk from the younger Bobby: an aversion to closed positions. In general, any opening of the queenside tends to help Black in such KIA structures. Therefore, 13 c4! was more accurate.

13 … Qa5?!

This is both a waste of time and a wasted opportunity to open the queenside. After 13 … bxc3 14 bxc3 Ba6 Black stands no worse.

14 c4!



Now Black's pieces bristle from their new restrictions. The weakening of d4 is not as important as keeping queenside lanes closed.

14 … Nc7?!

The knight has no prospects on c7, since White will recapture on c4 with the d3-pawn, denying Black both … Nd5 and … Nb5 options. 14 … Bb7 is a more logical move.

15 h4

Fischer begins to build for a kingside attack.

15 … Qb6

This is the third time he shifted his queen and she is still out of play! 15 … Bb7 doesn't alter much though.

16 h5 b3?

16 … h6 was necessary.

17 a3

This natural move, closing the queenside, isn't best. Fischer should jump on the chance to puncture Black's kingside with 17 h6! g6 18 axb3! (even stronger than 18 a3) 18 … Qxb3 19 Bg5 Bb7 (19 … dxc4?? 20 N3d2! wins material by opening the h1-a8 diagonal) 20 Qe3! and White has a decisive attack. If 20 … dxc4 21 Bxe7 Nxe7 22 dxc4! Qxc4 (22 … Qxe3 23 Nxe3 is a strategically lost ending for Black) 23 Qg5 Ned5 24 N3d2 Qb4 25 Ne4 Ne8 26 Nh2! c4 27 Ng4, Black won't survive the kingside dark square punctures.

17 … dxc4 18 dxc4 Ba6?!

This is more a military parade on the queenside rather than an actual army. Once again 18 … h6! is necessary.

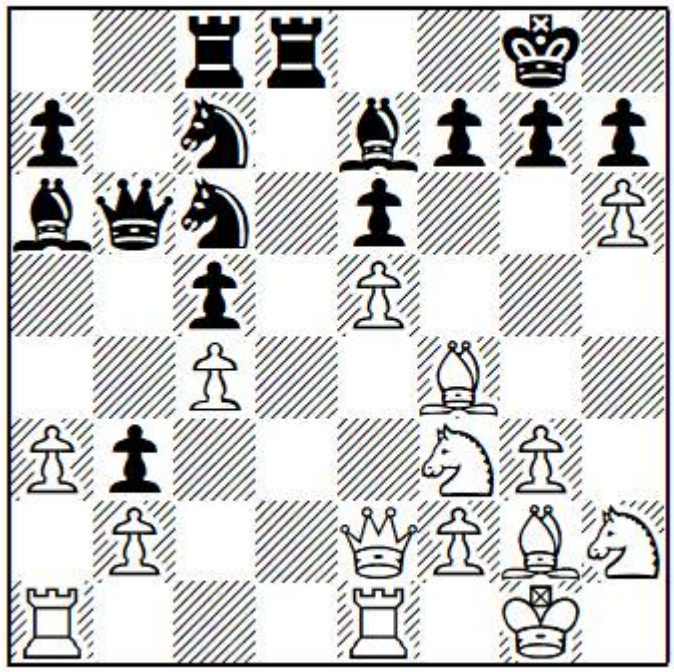
19 N1h2?!

Bobby keeps missing the opportunity to play 19 h6!.

19 … Rac8?!

You guessed it: Black should play 19 … h6!.

20 h6!



Hooray! What many chess history-ignorant younger players don't understand is that the standard themes we take for granted today were mysteries in 1957. This game was played in that strange "Before Time", where we chess players studied with books, rather than engines, databases, online puzzles, videos and streamers. Just to add context to how alien the times were, when juxtaposed to the present, the top TV show in 1957 was *Gunsmoke* and the average U.S. household income was $4,494, which is closer to what an average U.S. household of today earns in less than month.

20 … g6 21 Bg5!

Bobby removes a key steward of Black's kingside dark squares.

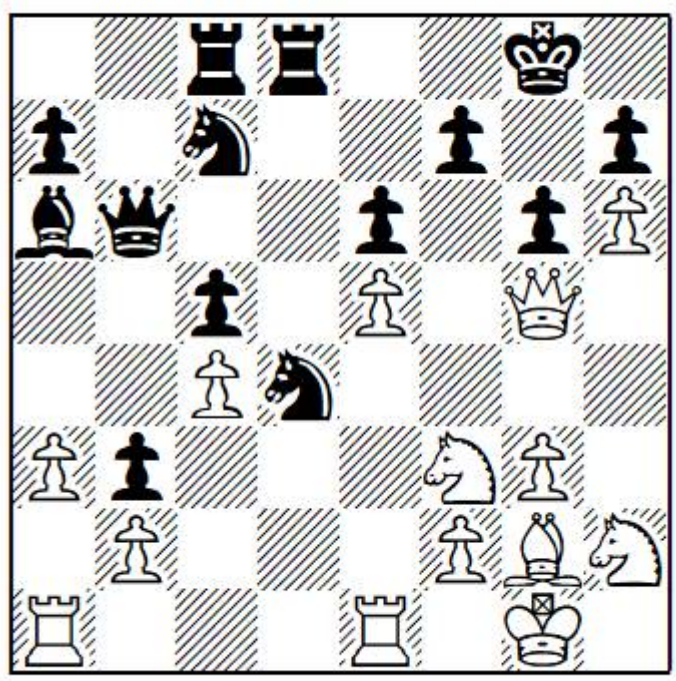
21 … Nd4?

One of my neighbours has this sign on the fence which reads: "Beware of Attack Chihuahua!", who Black's knight attempts to emulate. If this is an attempt to win material, it's misguided, since White's attack far exceeds its worth. 21 … Ne8 is a better try.

22 Qe3!?

Favourable but not the optimal continuation. 22 Nxd4! Bxg5 23 Nc6 Rd7 24 Rad1 Rxd1 25 Rxd1 Bb7 26 Qg4! (Black's dark-squared bishop has no place to go) 26 … Bxc6 (26 … Bxh6?? is a completely misguided sacrifice since Black loses much more than the exchange: 27 Ne7+ Kf8 28 Nxc8 Bxc8 29 Rd8+ wins) 27 Qxg5 Ne8 28 Ng4 generates a winning attack.

22 … Bxg5 23 Qxg5



Look at those dark square holes around Black's king!

23 … Ne8!

The only move; f6 is in desperate need of coverage.

a) 23 … Nc2? 24 Ng4! Nxa1 25 Nf6+ Kh8 26 Nxh7! wins, as if 26 … Kxh7 27 Qf6 Kxh6 28 Re4 Rd1+ 29 Kh2, Black is mated.

b) 23 … Bxc4? 24 Ng4 Ne8 25 Nxd4 cxd4 26 Nf6+ Nxf6 27 Qxf6 is lost for Black.

24 Ng4!

Of course the knight heads straight for f6.

24 … Nf5

24 … Bxc4 25 Nxd4 cxd4 26 Nf6+ wins.

25 Rac1

25 Nd2! heading for e4 and f6, is more accurate.

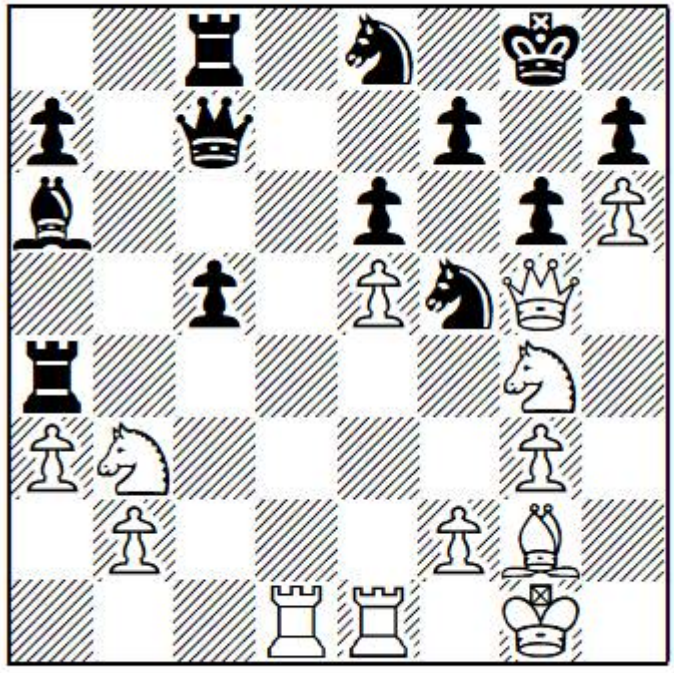
25 … Qc7 26 Nd2!

Another, stronger option is to challenge the f5-defender with 26 Nh4! Nxh4 27 Qxh4 Rd4 28 Nf6+ Kh8 (or 28 … Kf8 29 Nxh7+) 29 Nxe8! and White wins.

26 … Rd4 27 Nxb3!?

This a strange decision since Ne4 begs to be played. Bobby's reasoning was that it seized control over the d-file. Instead, 27 Ne4 Kh8 28 Ngf6 Qd8 29 g4 Nxf6 30 Nxf6 Ne7 31 Ne4 Ng8 32 Qxd8 Rdxd8 33 g5! Rd4 34 Red1! leaves Black dead lost in the ending.

27 … Rxc4 28 Rcd1 Ra4



29 Re4

29 Be4! forces the win of the exchange, due to the threat of Bxf5 and Nf6+. It's understandable why Fischer rejected this since it appears that 29 … Rxe4 30 Rxe4 Bb7 31 Rf4 Qc6 generates play for Black, but it's an illusion and White is winning: 32 f3 Qb6 33 Nd2 c4+ 34 Kh2 and if 34 … Qxb2 then 35 Rxf5! exf5 36 Nf6+ Nxf6 37 Qxf6 Kf8 38 Qd6+ Kg8 39 Rb1 wins.

29 … Bb5

29 … Bc4! is better as then 30 Nd2? Qd8! lets Black back into the game.

30 Rc1 Qb6 31 Nd2 Rxe4?!

This is the move of a man with a generous spirit. Why on earth would Black swap and give White's knight a free tempo to jump into a monster hole on e4? Still, it's difficult for an annotator to criticize a move in a position where everything loses. For instance, if 31 … Kf8 32 Rxa4 Bxa4 33 Ne4 Qxb2 34 Ngf6 Qxe5 35 g4!, Black remains busted.

32 Nxe4 Bd3

32 … Qd8 33 Qxd8! Rxd8 34 Rxc5 Be2 35 Ngf6+ Nxf6 36 Nxf6+ Kh8 37 Rc2! Bd1 38 Rc7 Nxh6 39 Rxa7 Bb3 40 Ra8! is a hopeless ending for Black.

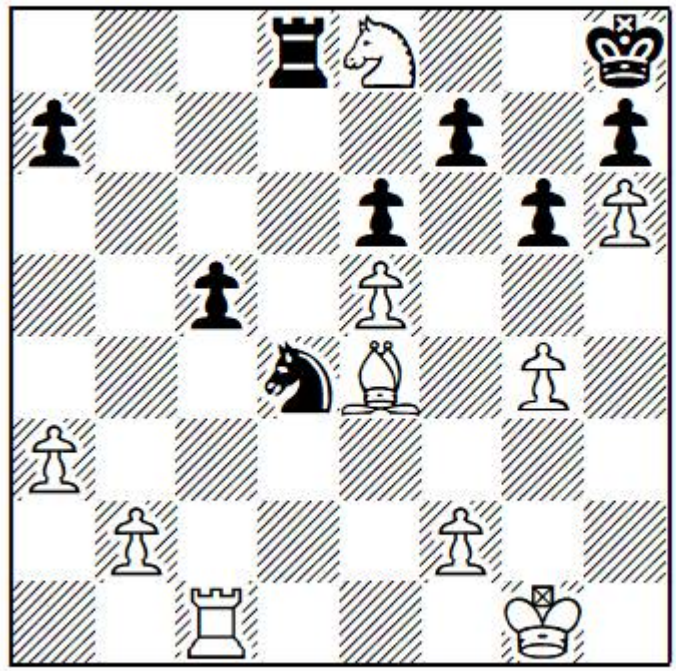
33 Ngf6+ Kh8 34 g4!

Fischer seeks to dismantle every defender of g7 and f6.

34 … Bxe4 35 Bxe4 Nd4 36 Nxe8

The knight can't be recaptured, since White threatens mate in two, starting with Qf6+.

36 … Qd8 37 Qxd8! Rxd8



Exercise (planning): Is Black winning the piece back? After all, White is under

twin threats of a fork on e2 as well as the simple … Rxe8. Find one key move

which invalidates Black's presumption of a resurgence.

Answer: Move the knight to d6, threatening his own counter fork on f7.

38 Nd6!

Wow. The fact that White is winning is as shockingly revelatory as the declaration that rain is wet.

38 … Ne2+

38 … Rxd6 isn't such an awesome solution to Black's troubles: 39 exd6 Ne2+ 40 Kf1 Nxc1 41 d7 and mate next move.

39 Kf1 Nxc1 40 Nxf7+ Kg8 41 Nxd8

“Doctor, I would prefer if you would pull the tooth without anaesthesia.” Obviously Black should resign.

41 … Nb3

Threatening a cheapo fork on d2.

42 Ke2 Nd4+ 43 Kd3 Kf8 44 Nc6 1-0

Game 29
R.J.Fischer-E.Mednis
U.S. Championship, New York 1957
Pirc Defence

1 e4 d6!?

Mednis prepares to enter a Pirc, which is a mainstream opening today, yet must have come as a surprise to Fischer. How many people played it against Fischer? If we don’t count simul games, he only met 1 … d6 seven times in his entire career, scoring five wins, one draw, and a single loss to Korchnoi.

2 d4 Nf6 3 Nc3 g6 4 Bg5

Bobby later favoured the Austrian Attack with 4 f4.

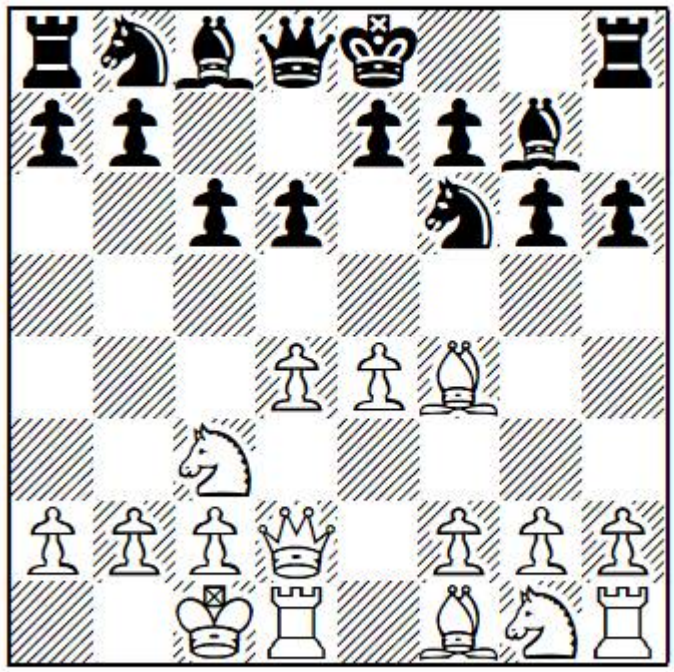
4 … Bg7 5 Qd2 h6 6 Bf4

6 Bh4 is also played here.

6 … c6

This is the more cautious continuation. Black can also weaken the structure to go after the bishop pair with 6 … g5 7 Bg3 Nh5.

7 0-0-0!?



So much for keeping our castling options open!

7 … Qa5

7 … b5 8 e5 is met by 8 … b4 9 exf6 bxc3 10 Qxc3 Bxf6, when White's lead in development is compensated by Black's central control and open b-file, Y.Y.Kamenetsky-Y.Dubovik, correspondence 1966.

8 Kb1 g5!?

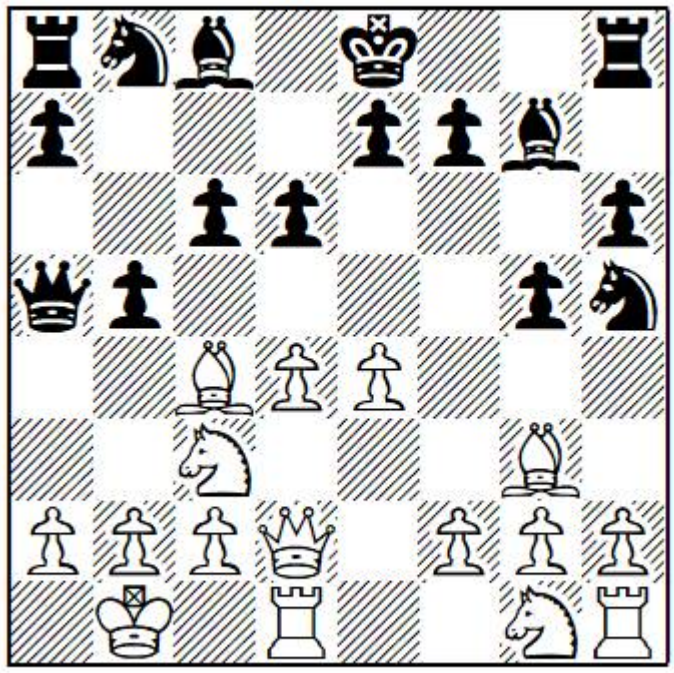
He wants the bishop pair after all. If 8 … b5 9 e5 dxe5 10 dxe5 Nh5 11 Be3! Bxe5 12 Nge2, White's compensation for the sacrificed pawn feels like it's enough.

9 Bg3 Nh5 10 Bc4!?

Maybe this posting of the bishop on c4, where it gets hit with a future … b7-b5 tempo, arises from Bobby's predilection for the Sozin Sicilian. Instead, 10 Nge2! Nd7 11 f3 Nxg3 12 Nxg3! has both Nf5 and Nh5 in the air and White's game certainly looks easier to play than Black's.

10 … b5?

But this is mistimed! 10 … Nd7, intending … b7-b5 next, is correct.



Exercise (combination alert): Do you see why Mednis' last move was an error?

Answer: White can simply take the b-pawn with the knight and get away with it.

11 Bb3?

Bobby Fischer was one of the most tactically alert players in chess history when it came to short-range combinations. Yet here we catch him asleep to a simple tactic. Why did he and Mednis both miss it? Simply because they are still in the opening stage; most of us don't expect combinations this early in our games and are simply not looking for them. The Fischer of 1970 to 1972 would *not* have missed the trick 11 Nxb5! Qxd2 (after 11 … Qb6 12 Nc3 the open b-file provides zero compensation, since White is so far ahead in development) 12

Rxd2 White has just won a pawn since 12 … cxb5? loses to 13 Bd5.

11 … Nd7 12 f4

Principle: *Create confrontation when leading in development*. 12 e5!? is an interesting pawn sacrifice, which *Stockfish* deems sound yet yielding no advantage for White.

12 … Nxg3?!

Rather than open the h-Mednis should counter in the centre with 12 … c5!, threatening … c5-c4, smothering White's bishop. After 13 dxc5 Nxc5 14 e5 Bb7 15 exd6 0-0-0! Black's super-active pieces breathe fire and he stands no worse.

13 hxg3 g4

The central counter 13 … c5!? is now riskier than the previous version, since 14 fxg5! c4 15 gxh6 Bf8! 16 Qg5! cxb3 17 axb3 Nf6 18 Nf3 Bb7 19 Rde1 gives White a strong attack for the sacrificed piece and the engine actually prefers Fischer's position.

14 e5 d5?

Mednis shuts out Fischer's bishop at too high a cost of allowing f4-f5. He had to give up a pawn with 14 … b4 15 Ne4 d5 16 Nf2 Nb6 17 a3! Bf5 18 Nd3 Qb5 19 Nxb4 a5 20 Nd3 a4 21 Ba2 e6 22 Ne2 Bf8, when Black gets some – yet not full – compensation.

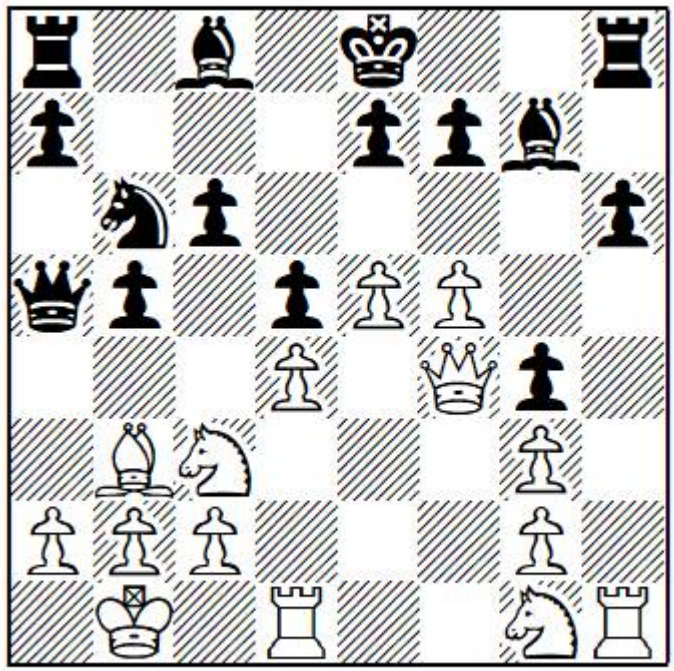
15 f5!

This is strategically awful for Mednis.

15 … Nb6

15 … b4 16 Na4 Nb6 17 Nxb6 (the human move; the engine suggests that the crazy 17 Qf4!? Nxa4 18 Qxg4 may also be winning) 17 … axb6 18 Qf4 h5 19 Qg5 with a winning position for White.

16 Qf4



16 … e6!?

Black needs to act soon and Mednis feels that "soon" has arrived. He offers a pawn to try to whip up a counterattack. If instead 16 … h5 17 Ne4!? (the simple 17 Nce2 also gives White a pleasant position) 17 … dxe4 18 Qg5! Bf8 19 Rxh5 (stronger than the flashier 19 Bxf7+ Kd8 20 d5) 19 … Rxh5 20 Qxh5 Nc4 21 e6 Nd6 22 Ne2, White's attack is worth more than Black's extra piece.

17 Qxg4 Bf8 18 fxe6?!

Bobby gives up a tempo to open the f-file which reduces a once winning position to one which is merely better.

A natural gambler like Tal would undoubtedly have gone for 18 Ne4! dxe4 19 fxe6 with a decisive attack for the sacrificed piece.

There was no way Bobby would play 18 f6?, since closing a position was against his stylistic, religious upbringing. After 18 … b4 19 Nce2 Qb5 Black intends to push his a-pawn to a4 and suddenly matters are not so clear.

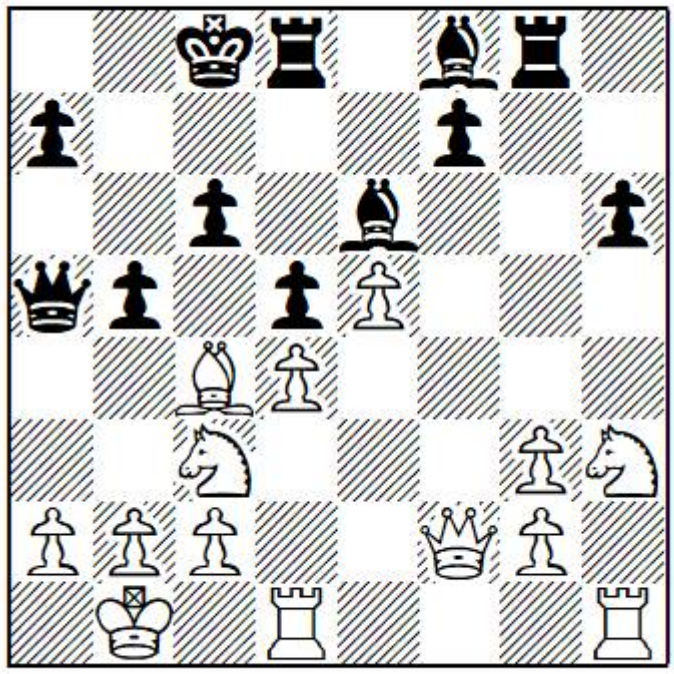
18 … Bxe6 19 Qf3 0-0-0?!

Emergency evacuation protocols initiated! Black's rook actually belongs on a8. After 19 … Rg8! 20 Rh4 (blocking out … Bg4 tricks) 20 … b4! 21 Nce2 Be7 22 Rxh6 Qb5, the idea of … a7-a5 and then pushing again is coming and I'm not so certain it is White who stands better, despite the engine's "+/-" assessment.

20 Nh3 Rg8 21 Qf2

Cutting out … Bg4 ideas. 21 Ne2, intending to free his bishop with c2-c3, looks like a better way to play it.

21 … Nc4 22 Bxc4!



Even at 14, Bobby's strategic judgment and uncanny defensive abilities were often superior to the skills of adult IMs and GMs. It looks dangerous to allow Black to attack along the open b-file. Fischer clearly worked out his defensive scheme.

22 … bxc4 23 Ka1

This is the right idea but possibly mistimed. He should play 23 Nf4 first.

23 … Rd7!

The idea is to transfer the rook to the open b-file. The alternative was 23 … c5!? 24 Nf4 cxd4 25 Nxe6 fxe6 (25 … dxc3?? fails miserably to 26 Nxd8 cxb2+ 27 Kb1! and Black can resign) 26 Ne2 Bc5 27 Nxd4, when White only looks a shade better.

24 Nb1!?

Again, maybe mistimed. 24 Nf4 discouraging … c6-c5, looks a shade more accurate.

24 … Rb7

Again, 24 … c5 is also tempting.

25 c3 Rb6?!

Heading for a6, but the "threat" on the a-file is easily neutralized. Putting the king in the corner with 25 … Kb8 and … Ka8 made more sense, when Black may have enough for the sacrificed pawn, although I still take White if given a choice.

26 Rd2

After 26 Nf4! Ra6 27 a3 Bf5 28 Nd3! Be6! (28 … Bxd3? 29 Qxf7 Rh8 30 Qf6! wins material) 29 Nc5! Bxc5 30 dxc5 White stands clearly better.

26 … Kd7?

Mednis misjudges his king's safety. He should try 26 … Kb8! again.

27 Nf4

Now Nxe6 and then infiltration to f6 or f7 is threatened.

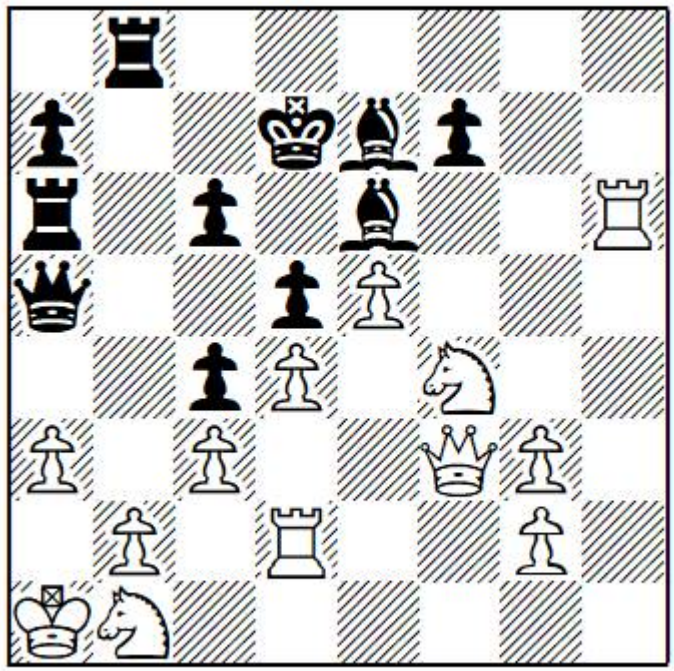
27 … Be7

27 … Bf5?? runs into the simple discovered attack 28 Nxd5; and 27 … Ra6 28 a3 doesn't alter anything.

28 Rxh6 Rf8 29 Qf3! Ra6

Fischer isn't so terrified of Black's attack.

30 a3 Rb8



Exercise (planning): Black's last move is a mistake in a losing position.

Come up with a clear attacking plan for White.

Answer #1: Step 1: Swap on e6, removing a key protector of Black's king.

31 Nxe6! fxe6 32 Rxe6!

It was that great philosopher, Mr. Spock, who revealed: "Logic clearly dictates that the needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few." Step 2: Annihilation of defensive barrier.

Answer #2: 32 Qf7! may be just as effective: 32 … c5! (protecting e6) 33 Rh7 Re8 34 g4! and the g-pawn threatens to run down the board.

32 … Bxa3

How Not to Beat Bobby Fischer. This is obvious desperation. The black attack's donors are drying up, and

fundraising becomes more and more difficult. But if 32 … Kxe6 33 Qg4+ Kf7 34 e6+!, Black is mated in five.

33 Nxa3

The engine prefers the more counter-intuitive 33 bxa3! and announces a forced mate in nineteen!

33 … Kxe6

33 … Rxb2?? fails miserably to 34 Qf7+ Kc8 35 Re8+.

34 Qg4+!

Cutting off … Kd7 and then escape to the queenside.

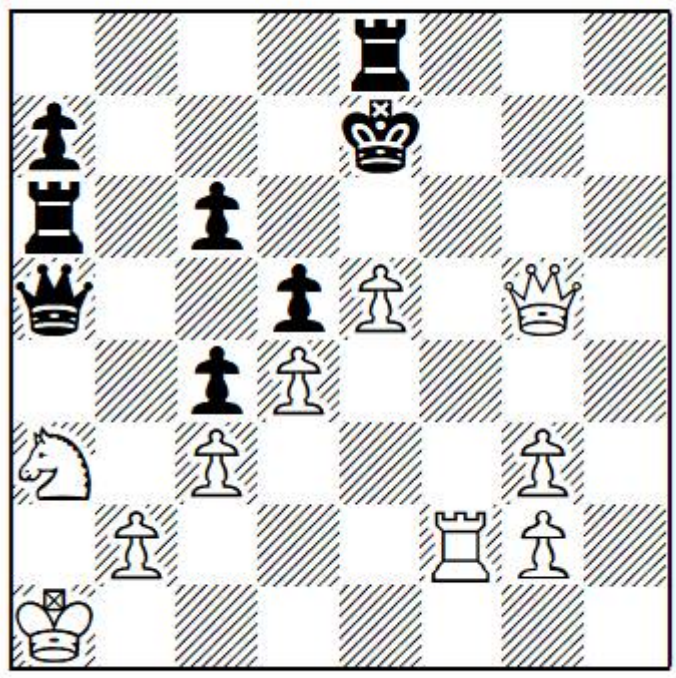
34 … Ke7 35 Rf2

Threatening mate in two, starting with a check on g7.

35 … Re8

After 35 … Qxa3+ 36 bxa3 Rxa3+ Black announces "not-mate", since White blocks with 37 Ra2 and wins.

36 Qg5+!



We reach the "I'm sorry for your loss" moment. Black's position bows under the weight of its desolation and the

engine calls mate in nine.

36 … Kd7

36 … Ke6 37 Qg7! forces mate.

37 Rf7+ Kc8

Or 37 … Ke6 38 Qf6 mate

38 Qf5+ Kb8 39 Qd7 1-0

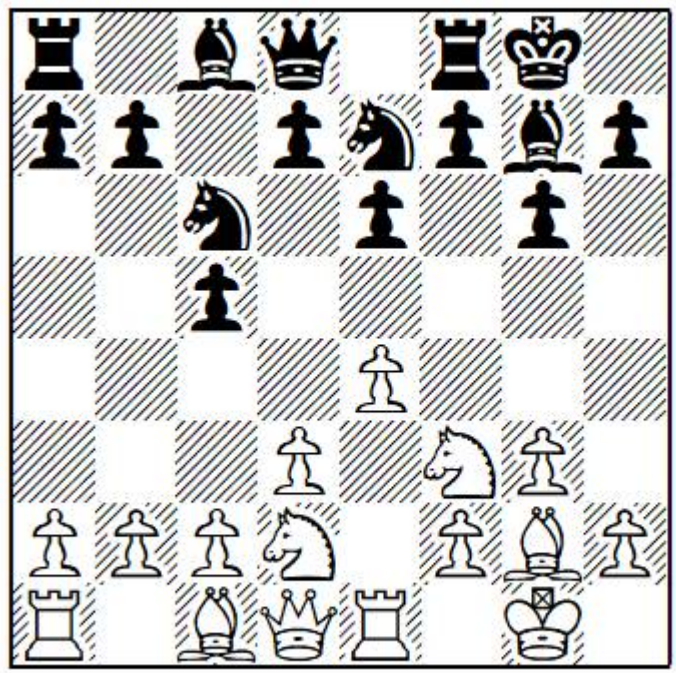
White's queen finally comes into her inheritance. Black is simultaneously threatened with mates on b7 and e8.

Game 30
R.J.Fischer-E.Mednis
U.S. Open, Cleveland 1957
Sicilian Defence

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d3

Bobby refuses to go off brand with an Open Sicilian and sticks to his early favourite.

3 … e6 4 g3 g6 5 Bg2 Bg7 6 0-0 Nge7 7 Nbd2 0-0 8 Re1



8 … b6!?

The lines with 8 … d6, 8 … d5 and 8 … e5 are more often seen.

9 e5 d5 10 Nf1 Qc7 11 Bf4 d4 12 Qd2!

Normally the queen goes to e2 in King's Indian Attack. This move is more ambitious and also stronger. The idea is eventually to play Bh6, weakening the dark squares around the black king.

12 … Re8

Black should try 12 … Nd5 13 Bh6 Bb7 14 h4 Nce7.

13 Bh6

13 Re2! is more accurate.

13 … Bh8?!

He was better off with 13 … Bb7.

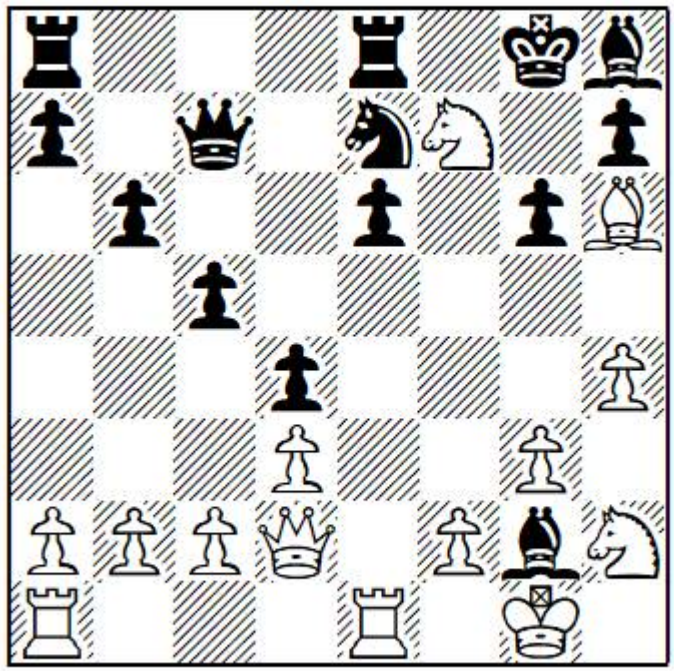
14 h4 Bb7 15 N1h2!

From an early age, Bobby knew exactly how to build an attack from such King's Indian Attack structures. The direct 15 Qf4 Nf5 16 Bg5 Bg7! (intending … h7-h6) 17 g4 Nfe7 18 h5 Nd5 19 Qh2 gxh5! is judged dead even by the engine.

15 … Nxe5 16 Nxe5 Bxg2

Is Fischer about to lose a pawn?

17 Nxf7!



No. This zwischenzug ensures White's advantage.

17 … Qc6

Instead:

a) 17 … Kxf7 18 Kxg2 is slightly in White's favour due to Black's weakened structure.

b) 17 … Bd5??, hoping for future play on the light squares, loses on the other colour complex: 18 Nxh8 Kxh8 19 Bf4! Qd8 20 Be5+ Kg8 21 Ng4 Nf5 (or 21 … Rf8? 22 Nh6 mate) 22 Nf6+ and wins.

18 Nxh8 Bh3

The g2-mating threat is easy to defend against.

19 f3

Black's bishop is in trouble. From an early age, Fischer rejected messy complications in favour of a clear path. The Tal route would be 19 Re4!? Bf5 20 Qg5 Nd5 (or 20 … Bxe4 21 Qf6 Nf5 22 Nxg6! hxg6 23 Qxg6+ Kh8 24 Bg5! etc) 21 Rae1!? Kxh8 22 g4! and Black is busted since 22 … Bxe4?? 23 Qe5+ forces mate.

19 … Kxh8 20 g4! Nd5 21 Qg5

Threat: Qe5+, mating.

21 … e5

If 21 … Qc7 22 Qe5+ Qxe5 23 Rxe5, Black has no defence to the coming Kf2 and Kg3.

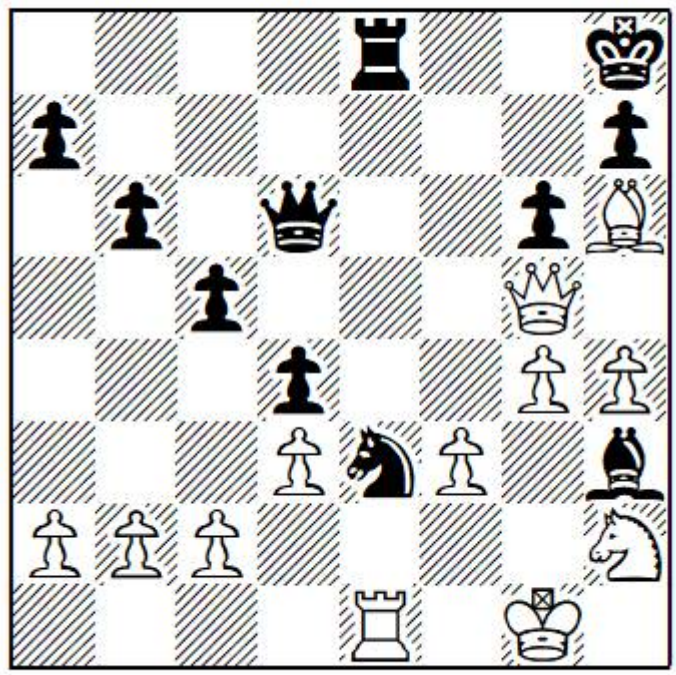
22 Rxe5 Ne3

The impressively-placed knight is only a temporary solution which lacks the power of lasting relief.

23 Re1! Qd6

Not 23 … Nxc2?? 24 Rxe8+ Rxe8, when 25 Qf6+! forces mate more attractively than 25 Rxe8+ Qxe8 26 Qf6+ etc.

24 Rxe8+ Rxe8



Exercise (planning): What is White's most efficient plan?

Answer: Forcing a queen swap gives White a won ending.

25 Qf4!

Black is given a choice:

1. Swap queens and eventually lose a pawn.

2. Refuse to swap and allow Qg3, trapping Black's bishop.

25 … Qxf4

Dodging the queen swap is hopeless for Black: 25 … Qd7 26 Qg3 Nxc2 27 Rxe8+ Qxe8 28 Qxh3 wins. For example: 28 … Nb4 29 f4 Qe2 30 Qf3! Qxf3 31 Nxf3 Nxd3 32 Ne5! Nxb2 33 f5! gxf5 34 gxf5 c4 35 f6 and the pawn will promote with mate.

26 Bxf4 h5 27 Bxe3!

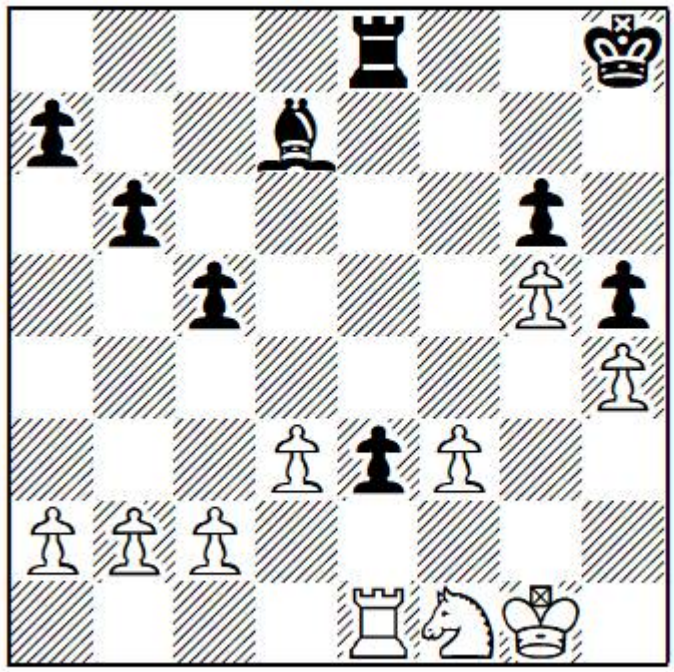
There is a big difference between the words "belongs to" and "belonged to", since only one version indicates ownership.

Step 2: Swap on e3, dooming Black's newly created passed e-pawn.

27 … dxe3 28 g5! Bd7

Or 28 … Kg7 29 Nf1 Bxf1 30 Kxf1 Kf7 31 Ke2 b5 32 f4, followed by Kf3 and Rxe3 with an easy win.

29 Nf1



The e-pawn is done for.

29 … Bc6 30 Rxe3!

Fischer returns one of his extra pawns to achieve king position. 30 Kg2 e2 31 Nd2 is also winning.

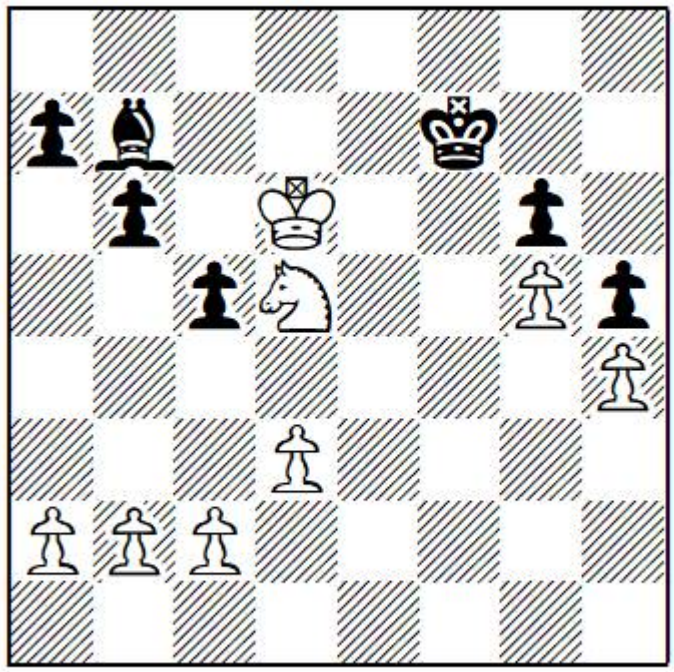
30 … Rxe3 31 Nxe3 Bxf3 32 Kf2

Gaining a key tempo.

32 … Bb7 33 Kg3 Kg7 34 Kf4 Kf7 35 Ke5 Ke7 36 Nd5+ Kf7

After either 36 … Kd7? 37 Nf4 or 36 … Bxd5? 37 Kxd5 Kd7 38 c3 it's already time for Black to resign.

37 Kd6



Look at that king!

37 … Bc8 38 Nf4 Bg4 39 Kc7 Bf3 40 c3

It's all so simple. Black's king is unable to raid the kingside and White creates an unstoppable passed d-pawn down the board. Mednis could have resigned here.

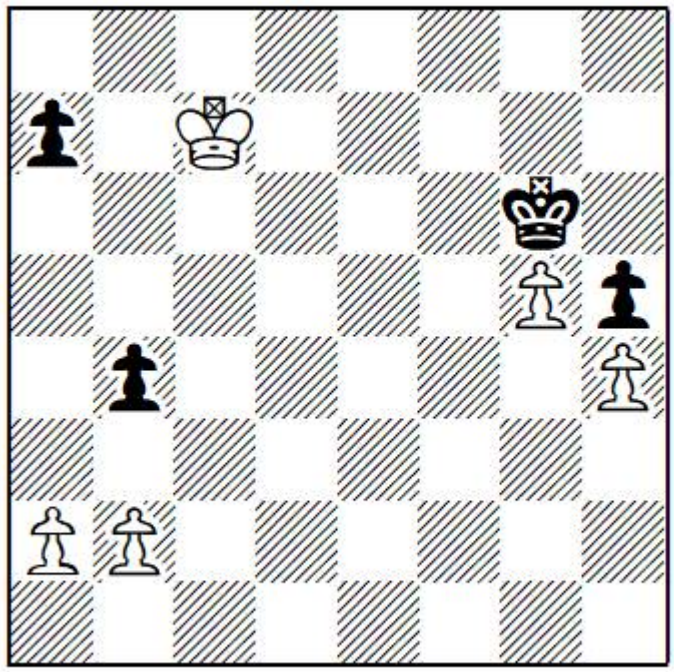
40 … b5 41 d4 cxd4 42 cxd4 b4 43 d5 Bxd5 44 Nxd5

Weighing loss and profit, Mednis' ledger is clearly on the unhappy side.

44 … Ke6 45 Nf4+ Kf5 46 Nxg6!

Nature created Fischer's brain always to take the clearest path. White's last move reminds his opponent of everything he wants yet can never have.

46 … Kxg6



Hey, come on. Let's not paint this as a negative. At last providence offers Mednis generosity, since he won his piece back. You can't see me now but my eyebrows are raised in distasteful, mocking disapproval. Really? You want to play this ending out, where a 300-rated player would win easily with White?

47 b3 Kf5 48 Kb7 Kg4!?

"Dear Mom and Dad, it has been raining all week at Summer camp and I despair that the sun will never emerge again." Mednis remains unswayed and continues play, despite prejudicial evidence against his theory that he will be okay in the promotion race, six tempi behind.

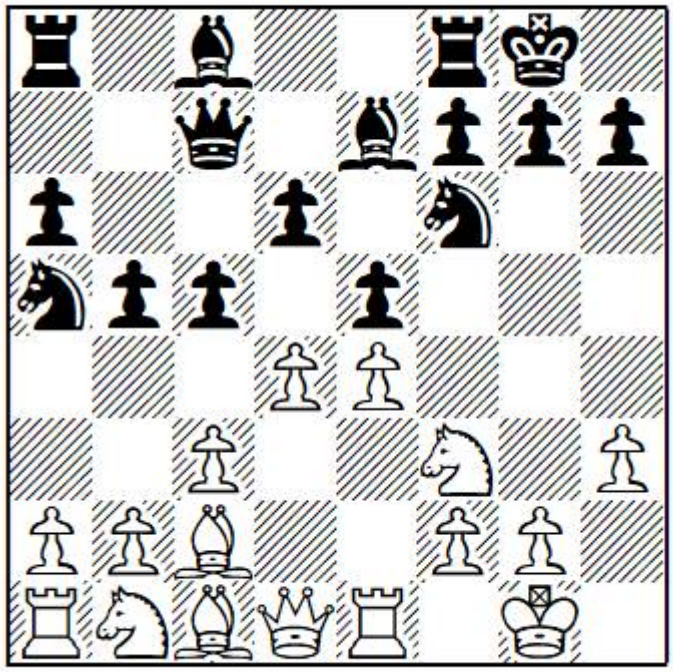
49 g6 Kxh4 50 g7 1-0

An unspoken threat hangs over Black, who finally resigns.

Game 31
R.J.Fischer-J.Rinaldo
U.S. Open, Cleveland 1957
Ruy Lopez

This is one of those spray-painted “Bobby was here!” games, where everything looks so simple and easy, despite the complications of the early middlegame.

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Ba4 Nf6 5 0-0 Be7 6 Re1 b5 7 Bb3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 Na5 10 Bc2 c5 11 d4 Qc7



This is Chigorin’s Defence of the Closed Lopez, the champion of the working class player.

12 Nbd2

12 d5 is another way to play it. As mentioned before in the book, Bobby, especially earlier in his career, had an aversion to closing central lines with a d4-d5 push in Closed Lopez lines.

12 … Bd7

12 … cxd4 and 12 … Nc6 are also played.

13 Nf1 Rfe8

Alternatives: 13 … cxd4 and 13 … Nc4.

14 Ne3 g6 15 Bd2

15 dxe5 dxe5 16 Nh2 is White's main line, as seen in the very next game.

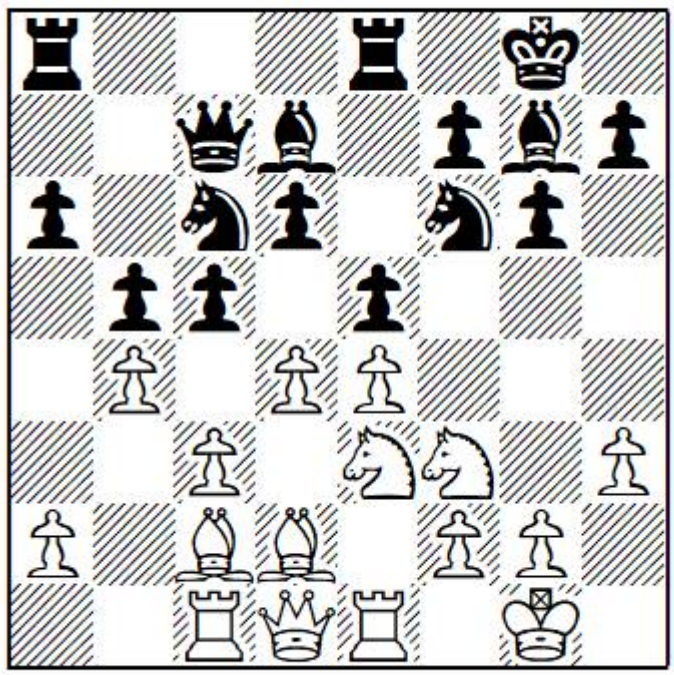
15 … Bf8 16 Rc1

This discourages … c5xd4.

16 … Bg7 17 b4 Nc6?

Black's insistence on retaining the central tension is about to cost him. Instead:
a) 17 … Nb7? 18 bxc5 exd4 19 cxd4 dxc5 20 e5 Nh5 21 Nd5 Qd8 22 Be4 and Black was busted, V.Smyslov-G.Barcza, Zagreb 1955.

b) 17 … exd4! enacts a much-needed remedy: 18 cxd4 cxd4! 19 Nxd4 Nc4 20 Nxc4 bxc4 21 Bd3 Qb7 22 Bxc4 Nxe4 23 Nb3 Bb5 and Black looks okay.



Exercise (planning): Neglect a single detail to an otherwise evenly

balanced situation and the scale can tip radically to one side. How did

Fischer achieve a winning position?

Answer: Sinking a knight into d5 creates chaos in Black's camp.

18 Nd5! Nxd5

Moving the queen is no better:

a) 18 … Qb8? 19 dxc5 dxc5 20 Bg5 leaves Black with loose pieces everywhere.

b) 18 … Qd8 19 dxc5 dxc5 20 Bg5 Be6 21 bxc5 h6 22 Bxf6! Bxf6 23 c4! leads to a strategically won game for White.

c) 18 … Qb7 19 dxc5 dxc5 20 bxc5 Be6 21 c4! bxc4 22 Bg5 Nd7 23 Be3 h6 24 Ba4 and Black's position is under enormous pressure.

19 exd5 Ne7 20 dxc5 Nxd5

If 20 … dxc5 21 Be3 (with dual threats of d5-d6 as well as the simple recapture on c5) 21 … Qd6 22 Bxc5 Qxd5 23 Bb3 Qxd1 24 Rcxd1 Be6 25 Bxe6 fxe6, there are many ways to win. I would go for 26 Bxe7 Rxe7 27 Ng5 with a won ending due to a monster knight (soon to plant itself on e4) versus Black's bad bishop. On top of that, Black's doubled e-pawns remain as eternal targets.

21 Bb3 Nf6

21 … Be6 22 Bg5 Qc6 23 c4! bxc4 24 Ba4 wins the exchange.

22 cxd6 Qxd6 23 Ng5!

Gaining time by attacking f7.

23 … Rf8?!

He was better off with 23 … Re7, though after 24 f4! e4 25 Be3 Qxd1 26 Rcxd1 Be8 27 Bc5 Rd7 28 Rxd7 Nxd7 29 Bd4 Bxd4+ 30 cxd4, Black's e-pawn falls, while his position remains tangled.

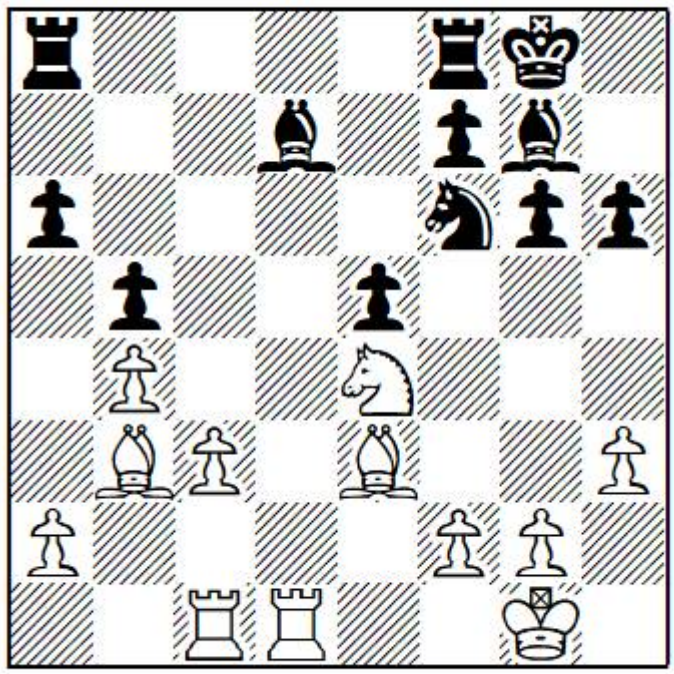
24 Be3!

Threat: Bc5.

24 … Qxd1 25 Rexd1

White still threatens Bc5, attacking the defender of f7.

25 … h6 26 Ne4!



Removal of the guard.

26 … Nxe4?!

He had to try 26 … Bf5, when 27 Nxf6+ Bxf6 28 Bxh6 wins a clean pawn. The engine doesn't even want to win it and prefers 28 g4 Be4 29 c4!.

27 Rxd7

When it came to strategic domination, Fischer had a way of making non-GM opponents bow, as if to a mediaeval king. Black is busted:

1. White owns the bishop pair in an open position.

2. White's rook reached the seventh rank.

3. f7 is under heavy fire.

27 … Rac8 28 c4 Ng5

Alternatively:

a) 28 … Rfd8 29 Ra7 bxc4 30 Rxc4 Rxc4 31 Bxc4 Nd6 32 Bb3 sees the a-pawn fall, when Black is dead lost.

b) 28 … bxc4 29 Rxc4 Rxc4 30 Bxc4 is also hopeless for Black, since the a-pawn falls again.

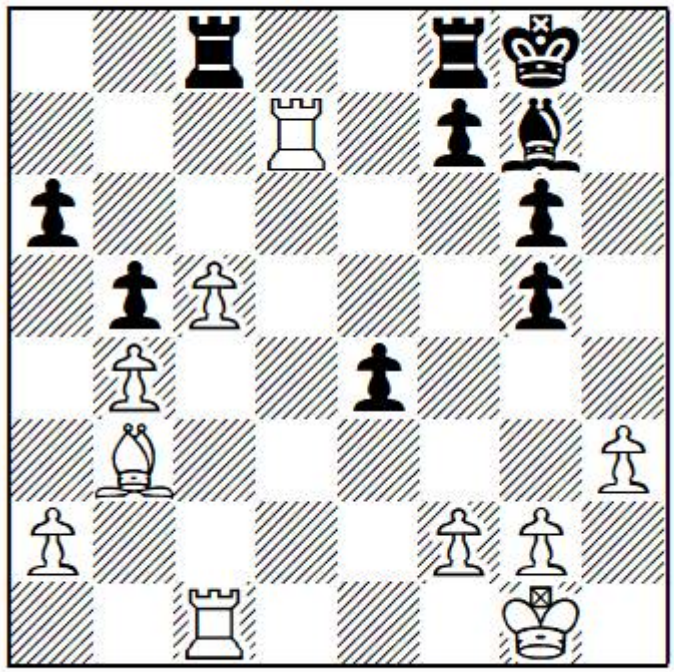
29 Bxg5!

Principle: *Swap away the opponent's most active pieces.* This is a case of sound strategic judgment. Fischer recognizes that opposite-coloured bishops actually help him, since there will be a massive power-differential between the two remaining bishops.

29 … hxg5 30 c5

A new problem emerges for Black: White's passed c-pawn.

30 … e4



Exercise (planning): Work out White's winning plan.

Answer: Push the c-pawn to c7 and then transfer the bishop to b7. Black can do nothing about it.

31 c6!

Principle: *Passed pawns should be pushed*. This is actually a pawn sacrifice.

31 … Bb2 32 Rc2 Ba3 33 c7 Bxb4

Black is about to find out that a (temporary) lead in material is not the position's primary metric.

34 Bd5

It's clear that the defence is a spent force. There is no remedy to the coming Bb7.

34 … Ba5 35 Bxe4

The move Bb7 isn't running away.

35 … Rfe8 36 Bb7 1-0

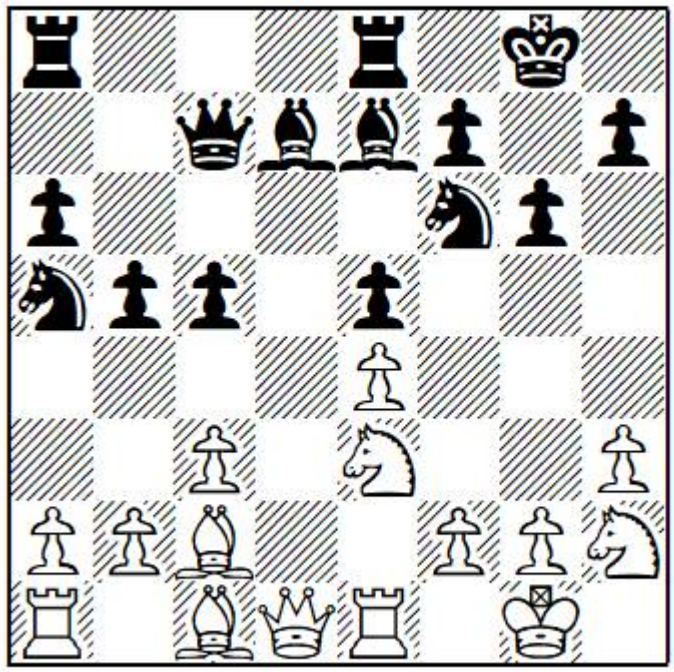
Black's c8-rook is the guy who wanders into a bad part of town and thinks: "I should be okay, since my rapid wit has always saved me from awkward social situations in the past."

Game 32
R.J.Fischer-W.Unzicker
Zürich 1959
Ruy Lopez

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Ba4 Nf6 5 0-0 Be7 6 Re1 b5 7 Bb3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 Na5 10 Bc2 c5 11 d4 Qc7 12 Nbd2 Bd7 13 Nf1 Rfe8 14 Ne3 g6 15 dxe5

This exchange was another Fischer trait in Closed Lopez positions. White shouldn't get much. Bobby liked such pure strategic manoeuvring games and very often outplayed his opposition in such structures.

15 … dxe5 16 Nh2



This is typical for the position. White intends to build for a kingside attack with Qf3 and Nhg4.

16 … Rad8

The engine suggests the unplayed and potentially weakening 16 … h5!? 17 Nf3 Rad8, unconcerned that White's knight may later jump into g5.

17 Qf3 Be6 18 Nhg4 Nxg4!

Embrace of a necessary evil can still be an exclam. This helps White's structure while weakening Black's hold over d5. I don't see much choice. 18 … Nd7? leads to major trouble for Black after 19 Nf5!.

19 hxg4 Qc6

The immediate 19 … Nc4! 20 Nd5 Bxd5 21 exd5 Rd7 22 a4 Bf8 23 axb5 axb5 24 b3 Nd6 is only slightly in White's favour.

20 g5!?

20 b3! secures White's strategic advantage, since it denies Black's knight entry to c4.

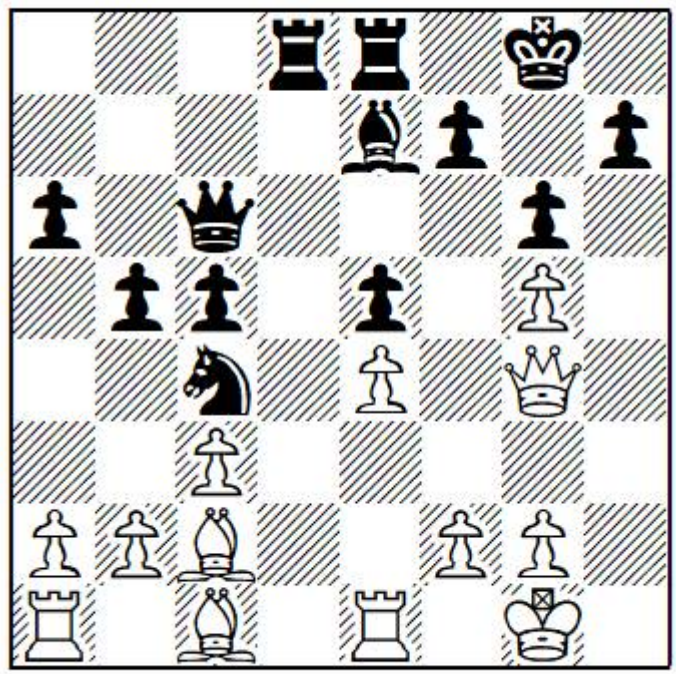
20 … Nc4

20 … Bxg5!? is actually playable for Black. It leads to great complications after 21 Nd5! Bxc1 (not 21 … Be7?? 22 Nxe7+ Rxe7 23 Qf6 with dual threats of Bh6 and Qxe7) 22 Nf6+ Kh8 23 Raxc1 Rf8 24 Qg3 Qc7 25 Qg5 (threat: Qh6) 25 … Kg7 26 Nh5+ Kg8, when White can either take a draw or play for the full point with 27 f4!?. *Stockfish* calls this close to even after 27 … f6! 28 Nxf6+ Kg7 29 Nh5+ Kh8 30 f5 gxh5 31 fxe6 Rde8.

21 Ng4 Bxg4!

Black must hand over the bishop pair as he doesn't want that knight hovering around his king.

22 Qxg4



22 … f6?!

These were the good old days, before people followed theory with the zeal of yes-men and yes-women, who prostrate to an autocratic leader, as we tend to do today. Unzicker's move is a novelty and not a good one, rooted in the fallacy that freedom should take precedence over the violation of the

principle: *Don't open the game when your opponent owns the bishop pair.* It also weakens the light squares around Black's king.

He should be satisfied with the status quo and play 22 … Nb6! 23 g3 c4 24 Kg2 Nd7 25 Rh1 Nf8, when Black stood no worse in R.J.Fischer-R.Shocron, Mar del Plata 1959. Of course Bobby won anyway.

23 gxf6 Bxf6 24 a4!

Bobby opens lines for his bishops and his a1-rook. After 24 Bb3 Kg7 White isn't really threatening to play 25 Bxc4?! bxc4 26 Qe2 Rd3, so Black stands only a shade worse.

24 … Nb6 25 axb5 axb5 26 Be3 Ra8

This time after 26 … Nc4? 27 Bb3! the swap benefits White: 27 … Kh8 28 Bxc4 bxc4 29 Ra7 leaves Black in dire strategic danger.

27 Red1 Kh8 28 b3

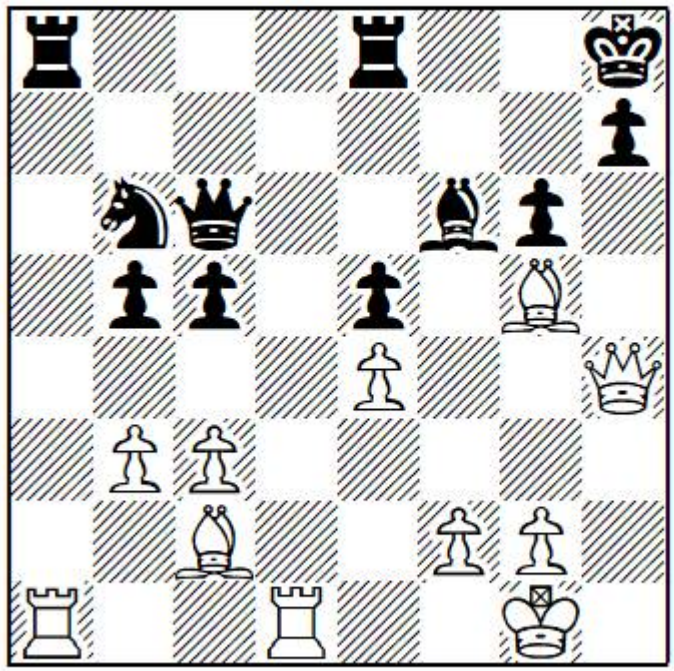
Now preventing … Nc4 annoyances.

28 … Bg7 29 Qh4 Bf6 30 Bg5!?

30 Qg4 is a non-controversial alternative.

This is an interesting "Thou shalt not" stylistic decision, which leads to questions. Let's try to interpret the strategically garbled data:

1. Why did Fischer deliberately violate the principle: *When you own the bishop pair, avoid swapping one of them off* - ? Bobby believed that those who believe in the bad bishop theory got bad intel on the matter. He reasons: by swapping off bishops, Black's kingside dark squares and e-pawn are weakened. This in turn means that Black's king becomes less secure.



2. The bishop swapped off is White's good bishop. Isn't Bobby afraid to be saddled with a remaining bad bishop? The answer to that one brings to mind Tartakower's quip about the worst bishop still being better than the best knight. In this game, Fischer goes on to prove that his decision to swap bishops may have been a good one.

30 … Bxg5

Otherwise 30 … Bg7? 31 Rxa8 Rxa8 32 Be7 Kg8 33 b4! is awkward for Black.

31 Qxg5 Rxa1 32 Rxa1 Nd7 33 Bd1!?

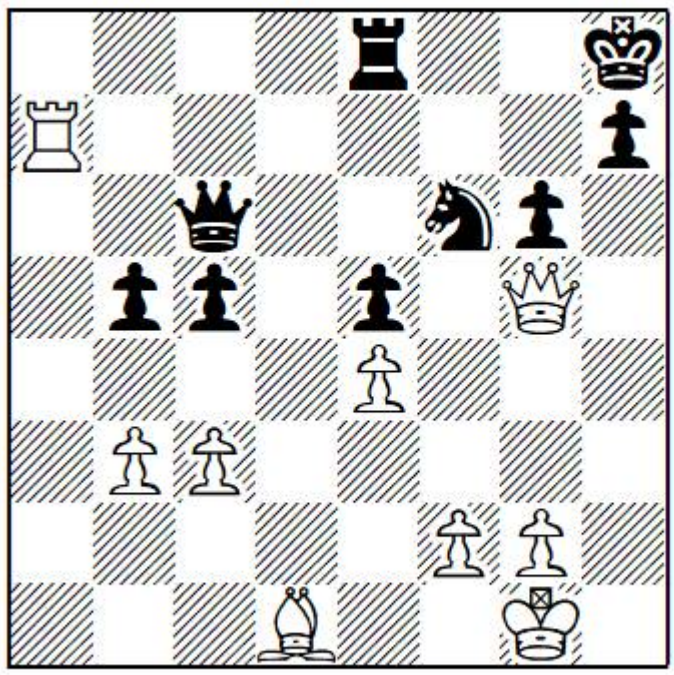
The bishop is rerouted to a superior diagonal. 33 Bd3 is a decent alternative, and 33 Ra7 Qd6 34 Qe3 is also in White's favour.

33 … Nf6?!

He shouldn't allow Fischer's rook into a7. 33 … Qb6! looks like Black's best defensive try

Not 33 … Qxe4?? 34 Bf3 Qf4 35 Qxf4 exf4 36 Bc6 Re7 (or 36 … Rd8 37 Rd1) 37 Ra8+! Kg7 38 Ra7 and Black's knight is lost.

34 Ra7!



Intending Qh6. This move pretty much wins a pawn by force.

34 … Qd6

Nothing is any better:

a) 34 … Nxe4?? 35 Qh6 and Black is mated.

b) 34 … Kg8? (a waiting move doesn't cut it) 35 Qh6 Nd7 36 Bg4 Rd8 37 Qd2 pins and wins the knight.

c) 34 … b4? 35 Be2! and if 35 … bxc3 36 Bb5! (overloaded defender), White wins.

35 Be2 Re7!?

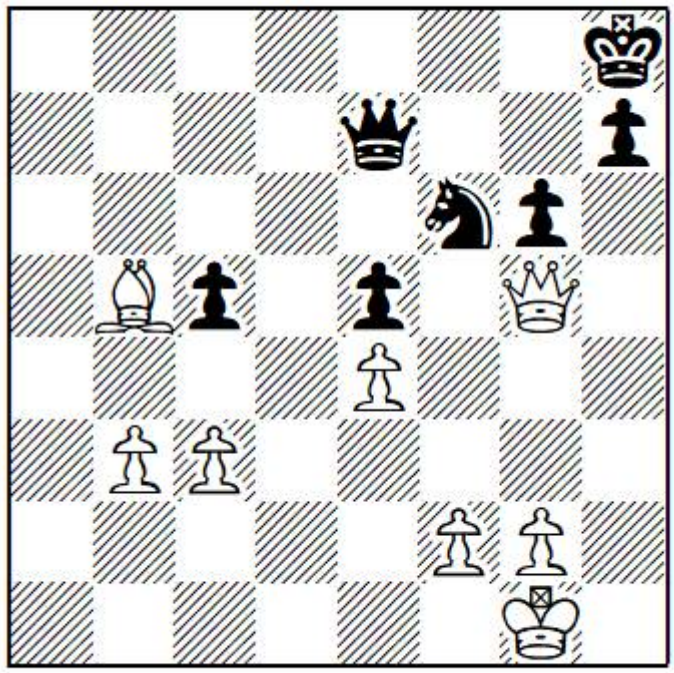
Unzicker decides to hand over a pawn.

a) 35 … Nxe4?? 36 Qh6 Re7 37 Qf8 mate.

b) 35 … c4! is a reasonable try. After 36 bxc4 Qb6 37 Rf7 Qxf2+! 38 Kh1! Nxe4 39 Rxf2 Nxg5 40 cxb5 White's two connected queenside passers will be difficult to deal with.

Nonetheless, I would prefer to defend this position with Black than the pawn-down version Unzicker got in the game.

36 Rxe7 Qxe7 37 Bxb5



This is obviously one of those heart-warming coming of age stories. Nobody dares call this bishop "bad" anymore.

37 … Kg7 38 Be2 Qc7 39 Qe3 Qa5 40 g3 Qa3 41 Kg2! Qa5

41 … Qxb3 only benefits White after 42 Qxc5 Nxe4 43 Qxe5+ Nf6 44 c4.

42 Qd3 Qb6 43 Qc4 Qc6 44 Bd3 Qb6 45 b4

At last a passed pawn is created.

45 … cxb4 46 cxb4 Ng4 47 Qc5 Qxc5

Black must swap queens into a lost ending. If 47 … Qf6 48 Be2 Nh6 49 b5, Black loses without a fight.

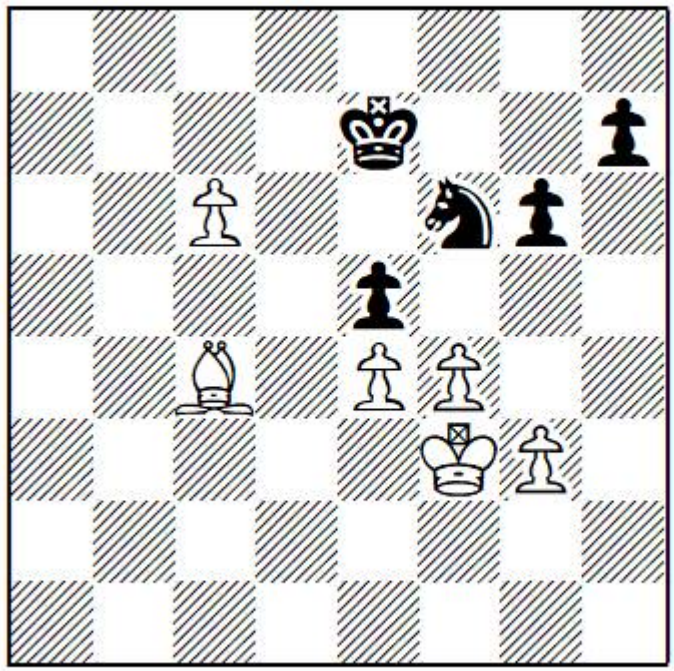
48 bxc5

Threat: c5-c6, after which the pawn is unstoppable.

48 … Kf7 49 f4! Ke7 50 Kf3 Nf6 51 Bb5!

Not 51 fxe5?? Nd7 and Black draws.

51 … Ke6 52 Bc4+ Ke7 53 c6!



53 … Ne8!

There is no choice but to hand over a second pawn, hoping to create some kind of blockade.

a) 53 … Kd6?? 54 fxe5+ wins; Black's king is unable to recapture due to the passed c-pawn's threat to promote.

b) 53 … exf4? also makes it easy for White: 54 c7! Kd7 55 e5 Nh5 56 gxf4 Kxc7 57 Bg8 h6 58 Bf7 Ng7 59 Bxg6 Kd7 60 Ke4 Ke7 61 f5 Kd8 62 Kd5 and the coming f5-f6 wins.

54 fxe5 h6 55 Ke3 Nc7 56 Kd4 h5 57 Ke3!

A failed assassin may return to finish the job. Now that Black created a puncture on the kingside with his last pawn push, Fischer's king doubles back to go after the 2:1 kingside majority.

57 … g5 58 Be2! h4

58 … g4 59 Bc4 followed by Kf4 wins easily.

59 gxh4 gxh4 60 Bc4

Preventing … Ke6.

60 … Ne8 61 Kf4 Kd8 62 Kg4

Three pawns up is too many and the temporary structural fragmentation will soon transform into a harmonious whole.

62 … Kc7 63 Bf7! Ng7 64 Kxh4!

64 Bd5 is also easily winning for White.

64 … Kxc6 65 Kg5 1-0

The powerless have no rights. After 65 … Kd7 66 Kf6 (forcing a swap of bishop for knight) 66 … Ne8 67 Bxe8+ Kxe8 68 e6, the front e-pawn soon promotes.

Game 33
R.J.Fischer-L.A.Sanchez
Santiago 1959
Ruy Lopez

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Ba4 Nf6 5 0-0 Be7 6 Re1 b5 7 Bb3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 Nd7

We note yet another sectarian division in the endless Closed Lopez lines. This one is now known as Karpov's Variation.

10 d4 Nb6

10 … Bf6 is Black's main line today.

11 dxe5!?

Was this move really worthy of Bobby's love and affection? There it is again: the young Fischer's penchant for this central exchange which, empirically, gives him nothing. White's only hope for an edge lies in the lines 11 Nbd2 and 11 Be3.

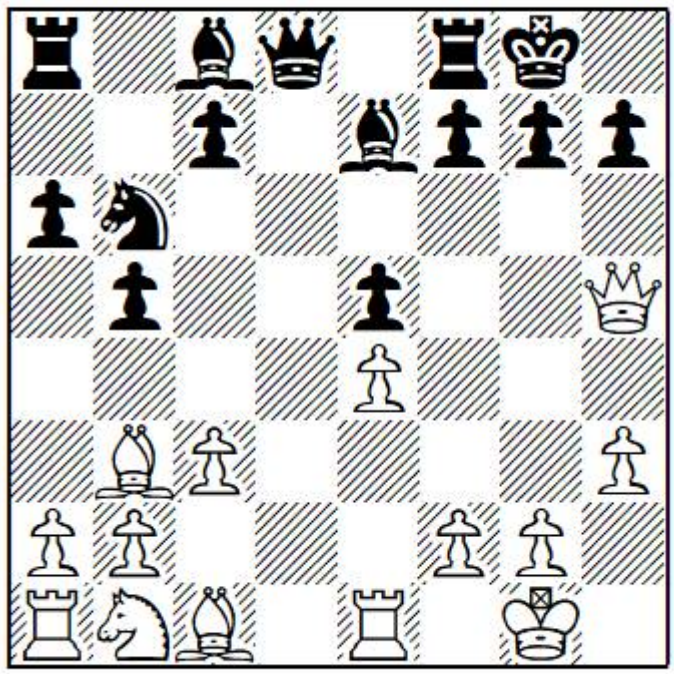
11 … Nxe5

A swap of an extra pair of pieces benefits Black.

12 Nxe5

There is nothing better.

12 … dxe5 13 Qh5



13 … Bf6

Bobby played this position four times in 1959. Two of the other games continued 13 … Qd6 14 Nd2 Be6 15 Nf3 Bxb3 16 axb3 Nd7 17 b4 Rfd8 (or 17 … Qe6 18 Be3 Rfd8 and White stood only a microbe better, R.J.Fischer-R.Flores Alvarez, Santiago 1959) 18 Bg5 f6 19 Be3 Qe6 20 Red1 c5 21 Nh4! Bf8?! (21 … cxb4 22 Nf5 g6 23 Qg4 Kf8 24 Nxe7 Qxg4 25 hxg4 Kxe7 26 cxb4 g5 is better) 22 Nf5 g6 23 Qg4 Kf7 was R.J.Fischer-M.Tal, Portoroz Interzonal 1958. Here White can try 24 bxc5! gxf5 25 exf5 Qc6 26 b4 with more than enough compensation for the sacrificed piece.

14 Nd2 g6

Black equalized with 14 … Qe7 15 Nf1 Be6 in R.J.Fischer-Die.Keller, Zürich 1959.

15 Qf3 Qe7 16 Qg3

The queen isn't well placed here; but 16 Nf1 Be6 is also equal.

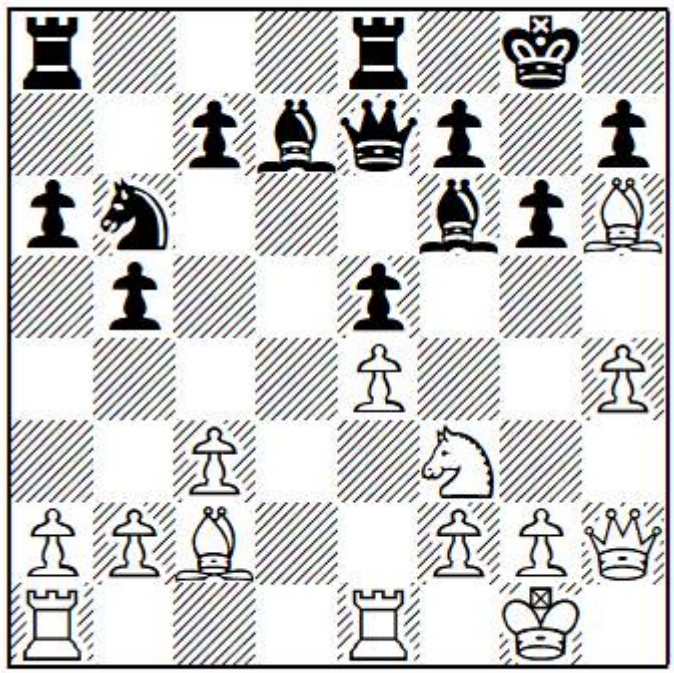
16 … Bh4 17 Qh2 Bf6

It's clear that Bobby got nothing from the opening; the exchange on e5 is too innocuous to yield an edge.

18 Nf3 Be6 19 Bc2

He wants to retain pieces on the board.

19 … Bd7 20 Bh6 Rfe8 21 h4!?



This move, which weakens g4, isn't the most scary attack I have ever seen. Bobby plays a lower ranked player and needs to complicate. 21 b3 a5 is equal.

21 … Bg7

After 21 … Bg4! 22 Ng5 Bg7 23 Bxg7 Kxg7 24 Qg3 h5 25 f3 Bd7 Black stands no worse.

22 Bg5 f6

22 … Bf6 is also possible.

23 Bc1 Bf8

White gets absolutely nothing after 23 … h5! 24 Qg3 Kh7.

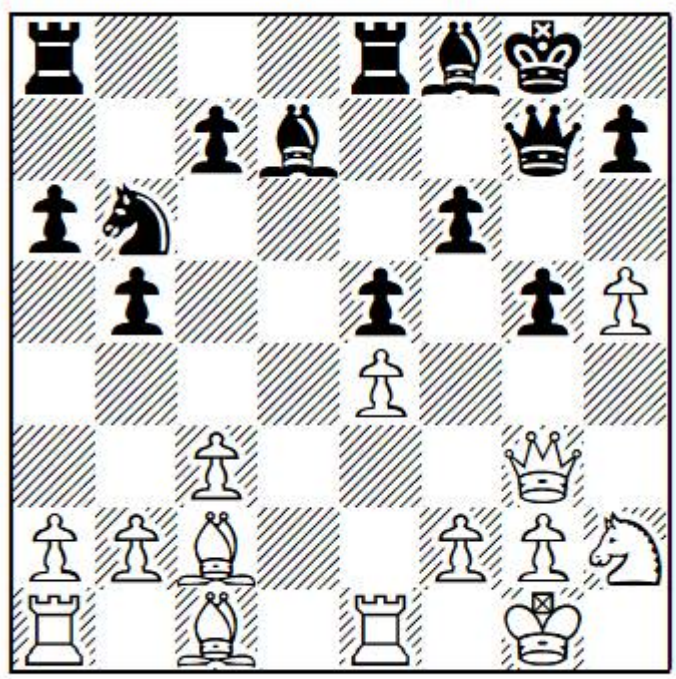
24 h5 g5?!

The oracle engines (who I predict one day will turn sentient and gather weapons to use against us, their creators, in a war of extermination) claim this is okay, whereas I don't. There is absolutely no reason to create holes on f5 and g4, while weakening the kingside light squares. Instead, after 24 … Be6 25 Qg3 Qg7 26 Nh4 gxh5! Black still stands no worse.

25 Qg3 Qg7?!

A further inaccuracy. Black still looks fine with 25 … Qf7! 26 Bb3 Nc4! 27 Nd2 Be6 28 Nxc4 bxc4 29 Bd1 Qd7!, preventing Bg4.

26 Nh2!



Fischer begins working over the weakened kingside light squares.

26 … h6!?

Black doesn't want to be surprised by a future h5-h6. The problem is that he just fixed another pawn as a potential target.

27 Ng4 Qf7 28 Qf3 Bg7

28 … Kg7 is more flexible.

29 Ne3 Be6 30 Nf5 Bf8 31 b3 Rad8 32 Be3 Rd7?

He should play 32 … Nc8 with the intention of challenging White's knight.

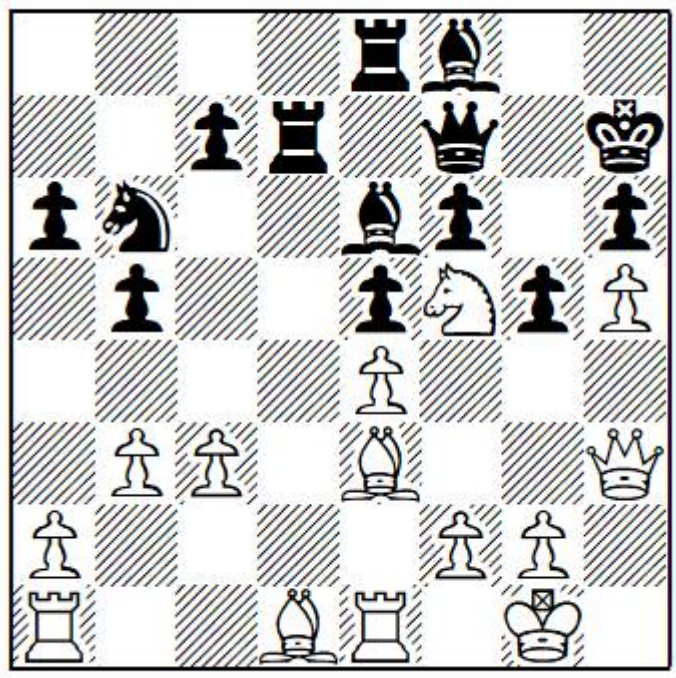
33 Qh3?!

Bobby's strategic advantage grows exponentially after 33 Bxb6! cxb6 34 b4!, since 34 … Bxa2 (or 34 … Ra8 35 Bb3!) 35 Bb1 Bxb1 36 Rexb1 Ra8 37 Ne3! is miserable for Black.

33 … Kh7?!

Neither side understands that Bxb6! is a real strategic threat. Black should try and challenge White's monster knight with 33 … Nc8! 34 Qf3 Nd6, when White's advantage reduces.

34 Bd1!



The bishop transfers to its optimal post on g4.

34 … Nc8

At last, but too late!

35 Bg4 Nd6 36 Ng3!

This way Bobby sticks his opponent with an awful remaining bishop.

36 … Bxg4 37 Qxg4 Qe6?

Principle: *An endgame is the last thing you want if you are saddled with a bad bishop.* 37 … Red8 is better.

38 Qxe6 Rxe6 39 Red1 Rd8 40 a4

Fischer decides to open a second front on the queenside. Even stronger is 40 Bc5! Rc8 41 Bxd6! Rxd6 42 Rxd6 cxd6 43 Rc1 Kg7 44 Nf5+ Kf7 45 Ne3 and Black is lost in the ending.

40 … bxa4

Black just volunteered to take on two isolanis. 40 … Rb8 41 axb5 axb5 42 Bc5! looks even more awful for Black.

41 Rxa4 Nb7 42 Rd5! Rc6

Not 42 … Rxd5?? 43 exd5 Rd6 44 Ne4 and wins.

43 c4

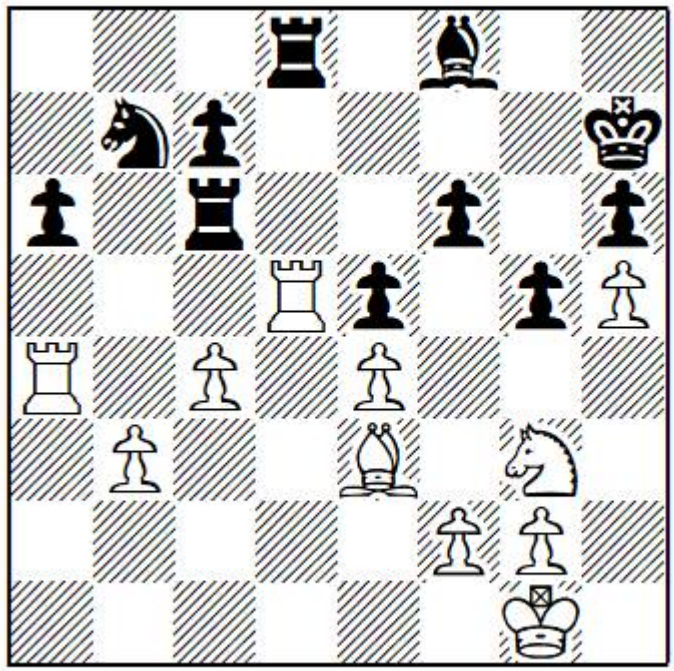
Black's position is in strategic freefall:

1. Black still is saddled with a bad bishop.

2. White's knight soon transforms into a monster when it jumps into the f5-hole.

3. Black struggles to defend pawn targets on a6, c7, f6 and h6.

4. White dominates the light squares.



43 … Kg8

43 … Bc5? hangs a pawn to 44 Bxc5 Rxc5 45 Rxa6.

44 c5!

Fischer alertly cuts out any … Bc5 and … Nc5 ideas. Black can't play 44 … Bxc5?? due to the simple pin 45 Rc4.

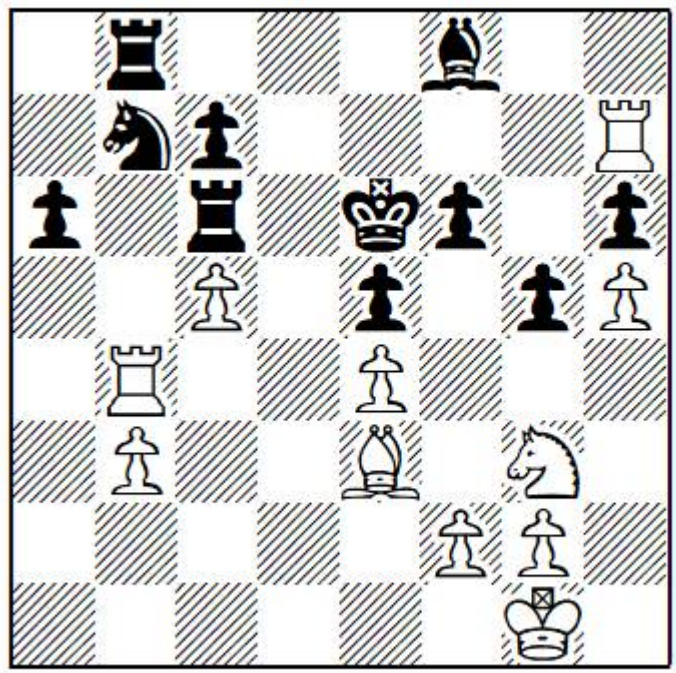
44 … Kf7 45 Rb4!

This trick forces Black's rook into an unfortunate post on b8, while simultaneously ceding White's other rook the seventh rank.

45 … Rb8

The only move.

46 Rd7+ Ke6 47 Rh7



Black's ambulatory-challenged position is in zugzwang! On top of that, he must worry about h6 and there may be mating tricks on e7, if White somehow manages to remove the f8-defender.

47 … Rb6

Clever and totally ineffective. Taking on c5 is no good either:

a) 47 … Bxc5? 48 Bxc5 Rxc5 49 Nf5 Black is mated in eight moves at the most.

b) 47 … Rxc5 48 Bxc5 Bxc5 49 Rc4 Bd6 50 Nf5 Nc5 51 Nxd6 cxd6 52 b4 Nd3 53 Rcc7 (threatening mate on e7) 53 … Re8 54 Rxh6 Nxb4 55 Rg6 wins, as White's h-pawn is helped toward its promotion square.

48 cxb6 Bxb4 49 bxc7 Rc8 50 Nf5 Bf8 51 g4 Na5

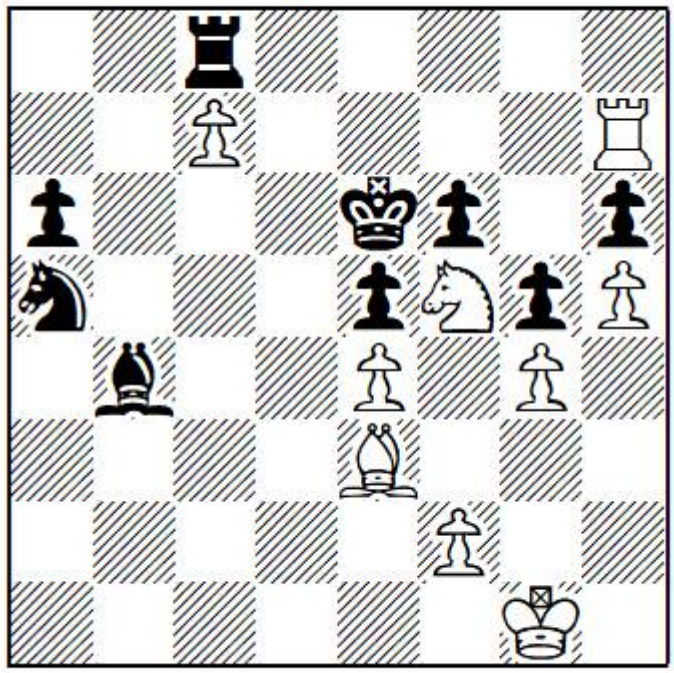
51 … Nd6 52 Bc5 wins.

52 b4!

There are many ways to win. Bobby, as usual, finds the most elegant path.

52 … Bxb4

Or 52 … Nb7 53 Nxh6 Bxb4 54 Nf5 a5 55 Bd2! Bc5 56 h6 a4 57 Rg7 a3 58 h7 a2 59 Bc3 Rh8 60 Rg8 and wins.



Whether this is premeditation, or a crime of opportunity: my sage advice to readers who are considering a life of crime on the chessboard is: Don't rob the bank if your getaway vehicle is out of gas, has three flat tyres, and failed the smog-check exam.

Exercise (combination alert): Do you see Fischer's shot?

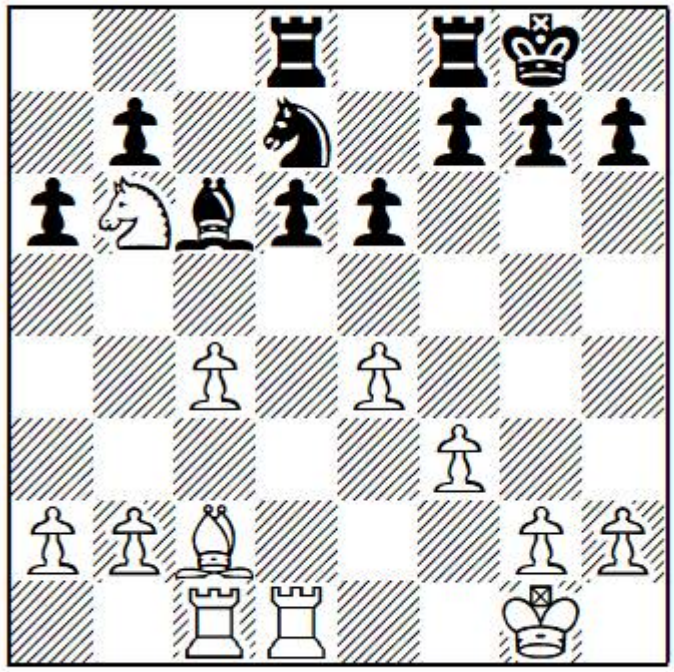
Answer: Overloaded defender. Black's bishop can't simultaneously protect the mate on e7 and cover the loose a5-knight.

53 Bd2! 1-0

Bobby is done asking. Black must hand over his knight since 53 … Bxd2 is met by 54 Re7 mate. This is not one of those locked-door murder mysteries and we all know who the

murderer is.

Game 34
R.J.Fischer-H.Rossetto
Mar del Plata 1959



We sense that White should stand a shade better. Still, it doesn't look so promising for a win for Fischer's side. Let's first offer context by providing data:

1. White owns more space.

2. White applies mild pressure to Black's backward d-pawn, but only on paper. Black can easily defend the pawn by doubling rooks on the d-file, followed by … Kf8-e7.

3. Number 2 on the list means that Black's position is essentially weakness-free.

4. White's central pawns are on the same colour as his remaining bishop and he is threatened with future bad-bishopification.

Exercise (planning): There are few imbalances White can work with to try to

turn it into a fight. What is White's best shot at playing for a win?

Answer: White can actually transfer his knight to d5, in a sham piece sacrifice.

19 Nd5!

White isn't able to make much of the extra space if he proceeds prosaically with 19 Nxd7?! Rxd7 20 Rd2 a5 21 Rcd1 Rfd8 22 Kf2 Kf8. It's difficult to believe that White will win this position.

19 … Bxd5

Now Bobby gets his beloved bishop versus knight imbalance.

a) 19 … Rfe8 20 Nc7 Rf8 21 b4! and if 21 … Rc8 22 Nd5! exd5 23 exd5 Bxd5 24 Rxd5! Nb6 (24 … Rxc4?? hangs material to the simple 25 Bxh7+) 25 Rd4 Rxc4 26 Rxc4 Nxc4 27 Bxh7+ Kxh7 28 Rxc4 Re8 29 Kf2 Re7 30 a4 Kg6 31 Rd4 Re6 32 h4 and Black has yet to equalize.

b) 19 … Ne5 20 Ne7+ Kh8 21 Bb3 Rfe8 22 Nxc6 Nxc6 (22 … bxc6 23 f4 is also uncomfortable for Black) 23 Ba4 Re7 24 Rc2 g5 25 Rcd2 Red7 26 b4 and pressure begins to mount upon Black's position.

20 exd5 e5 21 b4!

Principle: *Begin pushing on the side of your pawn majority*. Hope of a win – or at least a fight – arises for Fischer, since he created two imbalances:

1. Bishop versus knight.

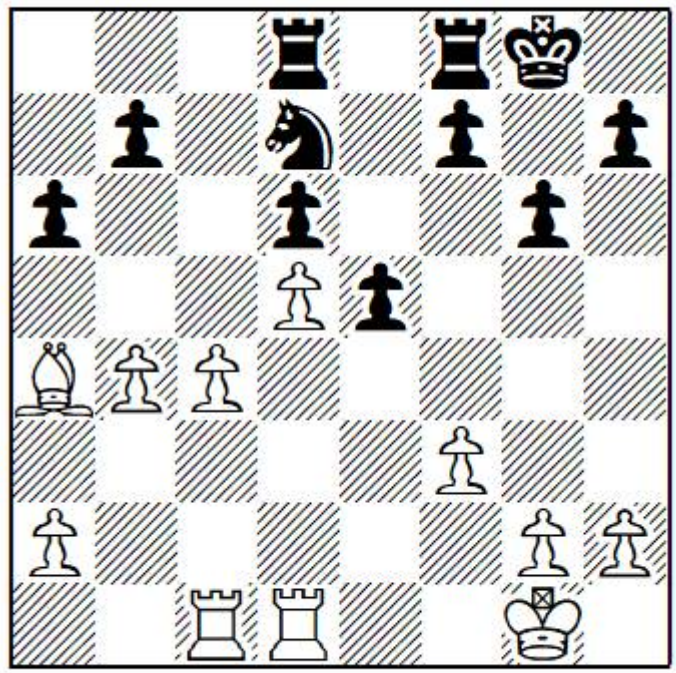
2. Queenside versus kingside pawn majorities.

Still, I have been on the Black side of similar positions from Sveshnikov Sicilians and believe Black should still be okay, with accurate defence.

21 … g6

This way Bf5 ideas are removed from the equation. 21 … a5!? leads to an interesting imbalance. 22 c5! axb4 23 c6 Nc5! 24 Bf5! (the position soon undergoes a radical transformation, yet the evaluation remains even) 24 … g6 25 c7 gxf5 (Black gets his money's worth for the sacrificed exchange) 26 cxd8Q Rxd8 27 Rc4 b3 28 axb3 Nxb3 29 Rc7 Nc5 and Black looks okay.

22 Ba4



22 … b6?!

While this move discourages White's c4-c5 break, it is unwise for two reasons: 1. It weakens c6. 2. It weakens a6.

Instead, after 22 … a5! 23 a3 axb4 24 axb4 Nf6 25 Bb3 (intending c4-c5 next) 25 … Ra8! 26 c5 Ra3 27 Rd3 Rc8 28 c6 b5! Black looks just fine, despite the impressive-looking protected passed pawn on c6, for the following reasons:

1. Black owns the a-file.

2. White's passed c-pawn is easily blockaded, with a coming … Ne8-c7.

3. Black's majority remains mobile, while White's is frozen.

4. White's bishop is clearly not superior to Black's knight.

The engine calls it dead even.

23 Rd3?!

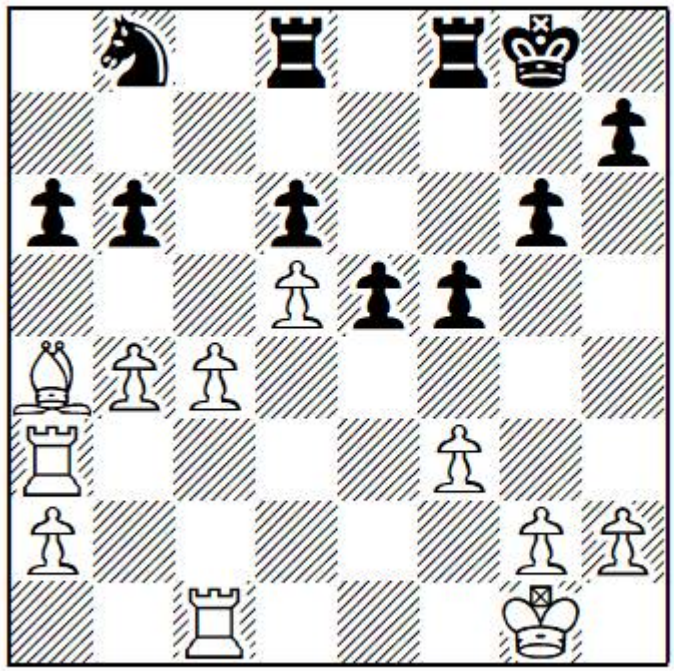
The idea is to swing over to a3. 23 Bc6 is a more accurate move order.

23 … f5?!

After 23 … a5! 24 a3 e4! (this strategic pawn sacrifice exploits the inaccuracy of Fischer's rook lift; Black's coming enhanced power on the dark squares is a talismanic source of protection) 25 fxe4 Ne5 26 Rdc3 axb4 27 axb4 Ra8 28 Bc6 Ra2 29 R3c2 Ra7 30 c5 bxc5 31 bxc5 dxc5 32 Bb5 (not 32 Rxc5? Nd3 33 e5 Rc8 and Black has the better chances) 32 … c4 33 Bxc4 Ra4 34 Kf2 Rc8 35 Be2 Rxc2 36 Rxc2 Rxe4 37 Rd2 Ra4, the game should end in a draw.

24 Ra3! Nb8?

Black had to gamble with a sacrifice to promote a blockade with 24 … a5! 25 bxa5 Nc5! 26 Bc6! bxa5 27 Rxa5 Rf7. This won't be so easy for White to convert.



Exercise (planning): How did Bobby exploit Black's last move?

Answer: Pawn breakthrough.

25 c5!

This move is possible because White's d-pawn isn't really hanging.

25 … bxc5

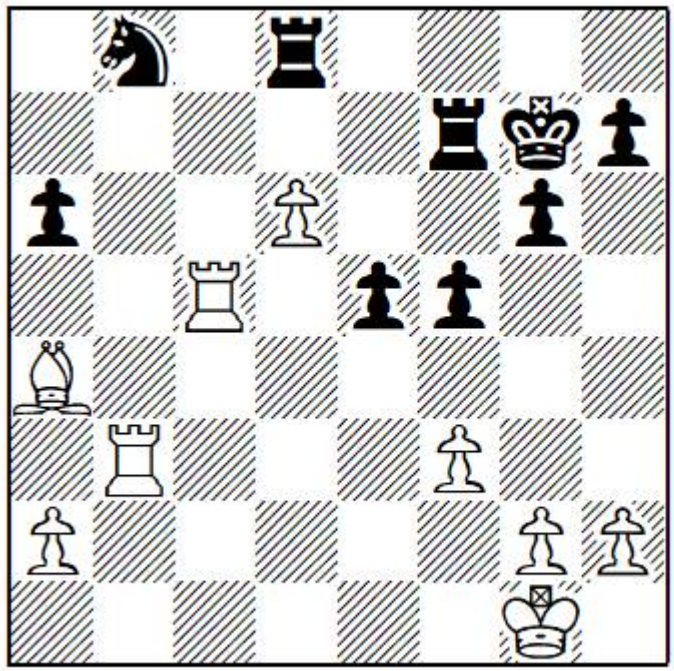
25 … dxc5 26 bxc5 Rxd5?? is monumentally dumb, due to the simple 27 Bb3.

26 bxc5 dxc5 27 Rxc5 Kg7

27 … Rd6 28 Rac3 Rfd8 29 Rc8 Kg7 30 Rxd8 Rxd8 31 Rc7+ Kf6 32 Rb7! leaves Black paralysed.

28 Rb3 Rf7 29 d6!

The passed d-pawn isn't as blockaded as Black may have believed.



29 … Nd7

29 … e4 30 Rc7 (threat: Rbb7) 30 … Kf6 31 fxe4 fxe4 32 Rb1! (threat: Rf1+) 32 … Rff8 33 Rxh7 Ke6 34 Re7+ Kxd6 35 Rxe4 is an easy win for White.

30 Rc7 Nf8 31 Rbb7! Rxc7 32 dxc7 Rc8 33 Bb3!

Black's position is that unfortunate defence attorney whose client is super-guilty. So the solution is to file a motion to suppress the evidence, based on a technicality. Black is in zugzwang, except for pawn moves.

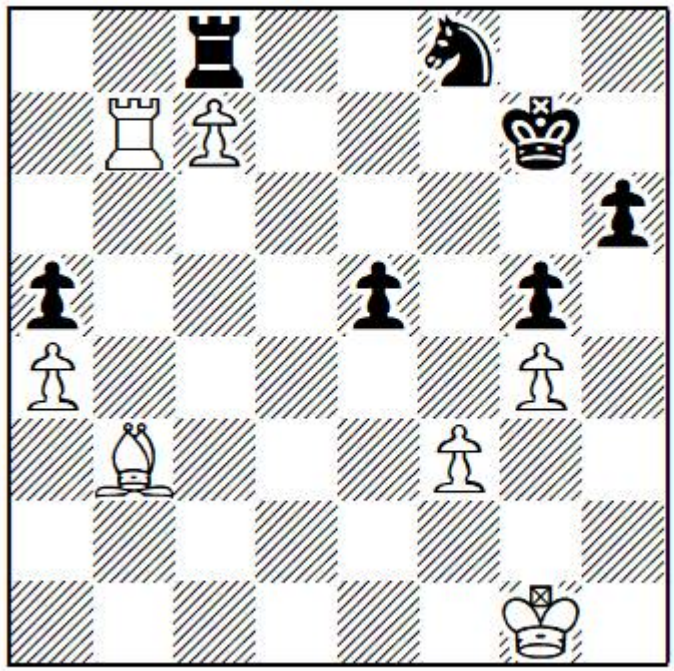
33 … a5

33 … Kf6 loses instantly to 34 Rb8.

34 a4 h6 35 h3 g5

35 … h5 36 h4 e4 37 fxe4 fxe4 38 Kf2 is zugzwang.

36 g4 fxg4 37 hxg4 1-0



Rossetto is now officially out of pawn moves and in full zugzwang.

Game 35
W.Lombardy-R.J.Fischer
Monte Carlo 1967
English Opening

I wasn't sure where to place this game. In the end I put it here in the chapter on strategic build-up.

1 Nf3 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 b3 Bg7 4 Bb2 0-0 5 g3 d6 6 Bg2 e5

Fischer tended to favour King's Indian structures over a Symmetrical English with 6 … c5.

7 0-0 Nc6

Fischer normally preferred central pawn-building with 7 … Re8 8 d3 c6 9 Nbd2 Nbd7, intending … d6-d5 at some point.

8 Nc3 Nh5

Bobby goes for the more aggressive pawn storm plan over a more strategic one like 8 … Re8 9 d3 Nd4.

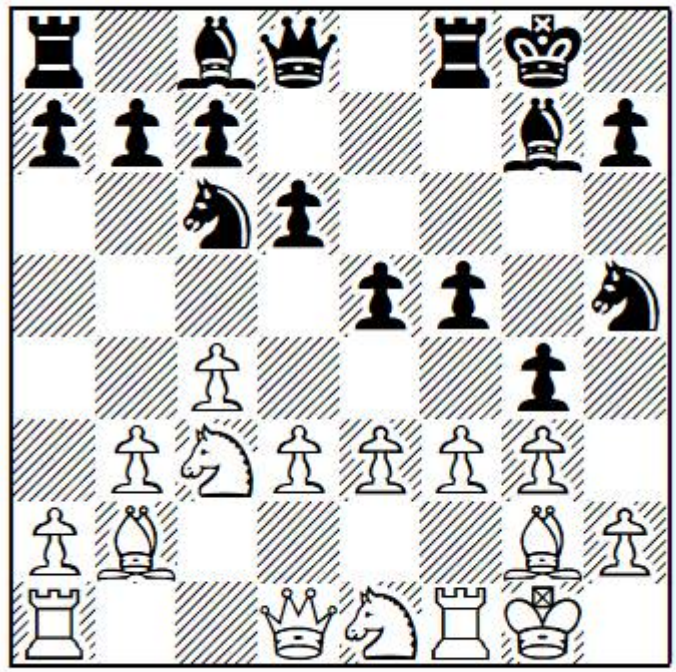
9 e3 f5 10 d3 g5

10 … f4 is also an option, which does cede control over e4.

11 Ne1!

Not 11 Nxe5? (principle: *Just because a combination exists doesn't automatically mean you should play it, if the aftermath assessment is not in your favour*) 11 … Nxe5 12 Qxh5 Nxd3, since White must hand over bishop pair after 13 Qe2 Nxb2 14 Qxb2 f4! with advantage for Black.

11 … g4 12 f3!



Lombardy meets the pawn storm with a central counter.

12 … Nf6

This way he can recapture on g4 with his knight. 12 … Ne7 13 fxg4 fxg4 14 Rxf8+ Qxf8 15 Nc2 is slightly in White's favour, K.Spraggett-Alo.Zapata, Cienfuegos 1997.

13 f4

Lombardy seeks to close kingside attacking lanes. 13 d4 can be met by 13 … Bh6 14 f4 e4 15 d5 Ne7, when White looks better due to control over d4 and the possibility to further open the queenside.

13 … Ne7

The knight wasn't doing much on c6. 13 … exf4 14 exf4 Ne7 can lead to a similar position.

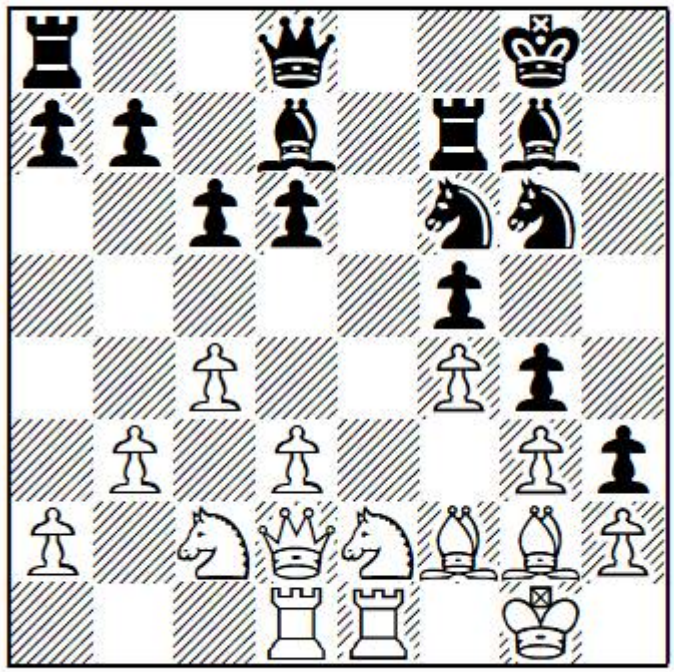
14 Qd2 Ng6 15 Nd5 Ne8!

He soon regains the tempo with coming … c7-c6.

16 Rd1 c6 17 Nc3 exf4 18 exf4

18 gxf4?! is strategically suspect since it hands over control of h4 and also allows Black to push the h-pawn forward, unopposed.

18 … h5! 19 Nc2 h4 20 Rfe1 Nf6 21 Ne2 Bd7 22 Bd4 Rf7 23 Bf2 h3!!



Have I mentioned that Fischer was all for children working in sweatshops and Charles Dickens-style workhouses? His idea is so deep, that the engines – unable to grasp its strength –

disapprove. What is the point of pushing all your kingside pawns to attack White's king, and then later voluntarily clogging your own attacking lane?

1. Fischer's idea is that with his h-pawn on h3, White's back rank is no longer safe.

2. White's king is also vulnerable to any dark square check, later in the game.

3. White's light-squared bishop is either kicked off its strong diagonal, or insecurely placed on h1, from where it can no longer move.

It takes a long time and many moves to see Fischer's idea come to fruition. I remember "borrowing"/plagiarizing this exact plan to beat a master in a key game in the late 1980s. Back in the computer world, *AlphaZero* played this way too.

24 Bh1

Lombardy opts to keep the bishop on its current diagonal, which in turn slightly endangers his king. After 24 Bf1 b5! the engines call it even, while I already prefer Black.

24 … Qc7 25 Nc3

25 b4 is more ambitious.

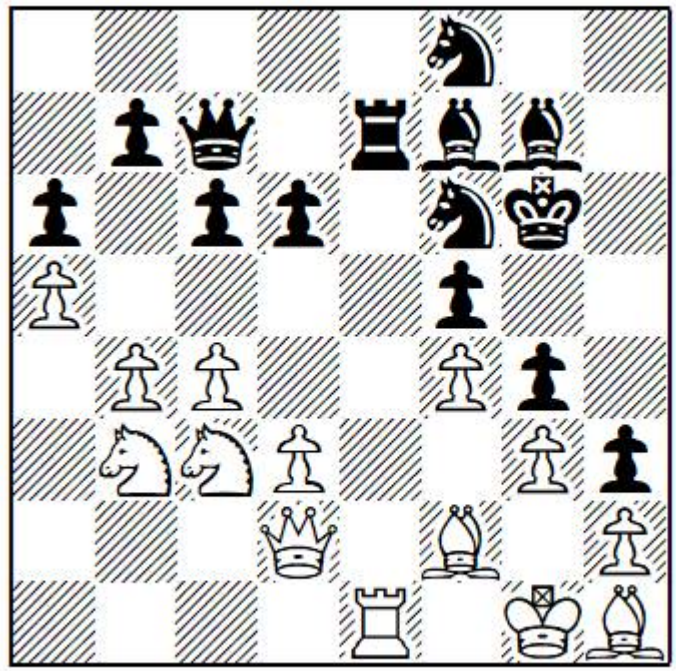
25 … a6 26 Nd4 Nf8 27 b4 Rd8 28 Nb3 Re8

Bobby's plan is to swap off the rooks, which loosens White's coverage of his back rank.

29 Rxe8 Bxe8 30 a4 Kh7!

The g6-square is the optimal position for the king, as long as Fischer watches out for potential piece sacrifices on f5.

31 Ne2 Re7 32 a5 Kg6! 33 Nc3 Bf7 34 Re1



34 … Rd7?!

Bobby, turning the other cheek, is a case of misguided forbearance. Principle: *Don't cede to your opponent an open file without good reason.* And keeping more pieces on the board to complicate isn't a good enough reason.

a) 34 … Rxe1+! 35 Qxe1 Ne6 is consistent with Black's strategy. I prefer Black's position.

b) 34 … d5!, opening the centre, is also in Black's favour.

35 Qc2?!

35 Bb6! Qc8 36 Nd1 is now good for White, due to control over the e-file.

35 … d5?!

Black remains even if he reverses course with 35 … Re7!.

36 Bb6?!

White stands better after 36 Nd1! Ne6 37 Ne3!, targeting f5.

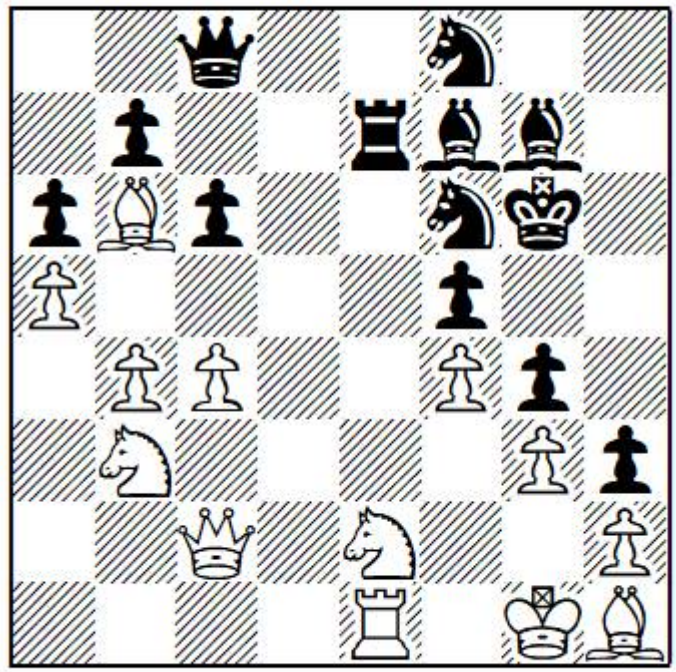
36 … Qc8?

This passive retreat should have gotten Fischer into real trouble. Both sides missed that Black can play 36 … Re7!. White should not be tempted into 37 Bxc7?? Rxe1+ 38 Kf2 Rxh1 39 Ke3 Rg1! 40 Be5 Rg2 41 Ne2 Rxh2, when he is strategically lost due to the deadly passed h-pawn.

37 Ne2?!

Both sides fail to appreciate the tenderness of Black's f5-pawn. After 37 Nd4! (threat: Nxf5!, followed by d3-d4+) 37 … Rd6 (37 … dxc4? 38 dxc4 only opens the white queen's access to f5) 38 cxd5 Bxd5 39 Ne4! Rd8 40 Nxf5!! Kxf5 (40 … Qxf5? loses to 41 Bxd8) 41 Qe2! Black is in terrible trouble.

37 … dxc4 38 dxc4 Re7!



39 Bc5?!

This only helps Black, whose rook is more secure on e8. White should rush to unpin his e2-knight with 39 Bf2 at once, when 39 … Ne4?? 40 Ned4! sees the black knight pinned to the rook.

39 … Re8 40 Bf2 Ne4! 41 Bd4

Now 41 Ned4? is useless in view of 41 … Nd6!.

41 … Bxd4+?!

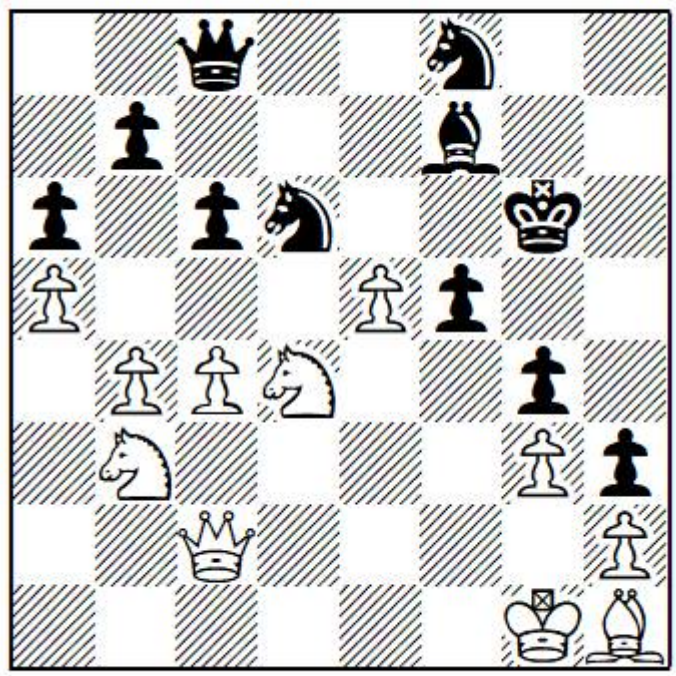
This only helps White, by bringing his knight to the centre. After 41 … Nd6! at once, attacking c4, the position begins to open dangerously for White's king.

42 Nexd4 Nd6 43 Re5?

This wasted trip is that situation when my wife summons me from the other room. I dutifully go to her and ask: "What do you need?" She replies: "Oh, never mind. It's not important." This sacrifice to go after Fischer's king is misguided since it contains a tactical flaw.

He should opt for 43 Rxe8! Qxe8 44 Kf2! Bxc4 45 Nxf5! Nxf5 46 Qxc4 Qe3+ 47 Kf1 Kg7 48 Qc2 Nxg3+!? 49 hxg3 Qxg3 50 Qb2+, when Black's king is too exposed to play for a win.

43 … Rxe5 44 fxe5



Exercise (combination alert): What should Black play?

Answer: Transfer the queen to e8, *away* from coverage of f5 and play upon White's weakened back rank.

44 … Qe8!

Lombardy undoubtedly missed this shot. He probably counted upon 44 … Nxc4?? 45 Nxf5!, when White generates a winning attack

45 Qe2

45 exd6?? doesn't quite cut it due to 45 … Qe1 mate. Now we see the power of pushing the h-pawn to h3.

45 … Bxc4 46 Qe3 Bxb3 47 Nxb3 Nc4

Right idea, wrong direction. 47 … Nf7! was stronger: 48 Nc5 Nd7! 49 Nxb7 Ndxe5 50 Nc5 Qd8! and White's king is too exposed to survive.

48 Qe2

If 48 Qf4 Qxe5! 49 Qxe5 Nxe5 50 Nc5 Kf6 51 Nxb7 Ne6, White is busted.

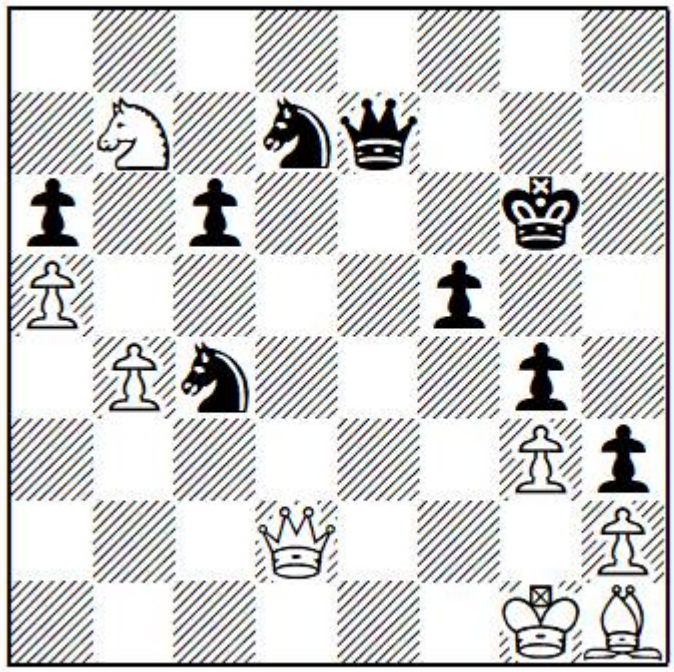
48 … Nxe5!

Fischer recognizes the exposed status of White's king.

49 Nc5 Qe7 50 Nxb7

This trick doesn't bother Bobby, who just ignores it.

50 … Nfd7 51 Qd2 Nc4!



From this point on, Lombardy's king gets no peace.

52 Qc3 Qe2 53 Bxc6 Nd2

53 … Nde5! is a slightly faster mate.

54 Qc1

54 Bxd7? allows three different mates.

54 … Ne5 0-1

In view of 55 Bd5 Ndf3+ 56 Bxf3 Nxf3+ 57 Kh1 Qxh2 mate. Black's 80-year-old queen leads White's 18-year-old king into the royal bedchamber and to his horror, places the "Do not disturb!" sign on the door.

Game 36
O.Troianescu-R.J.Fischer
Netanya 1968
Sicilian Defence

Sometimes there is no necessity for us to be a devious, Machiavellian, Talented Mr. Ripley type to win at chess. This is one of those games with almost no calculation or tactics.

Fischer simply understood the strategic mechanics of his opening, far deeper than his opponent and as a result won effortlessly.

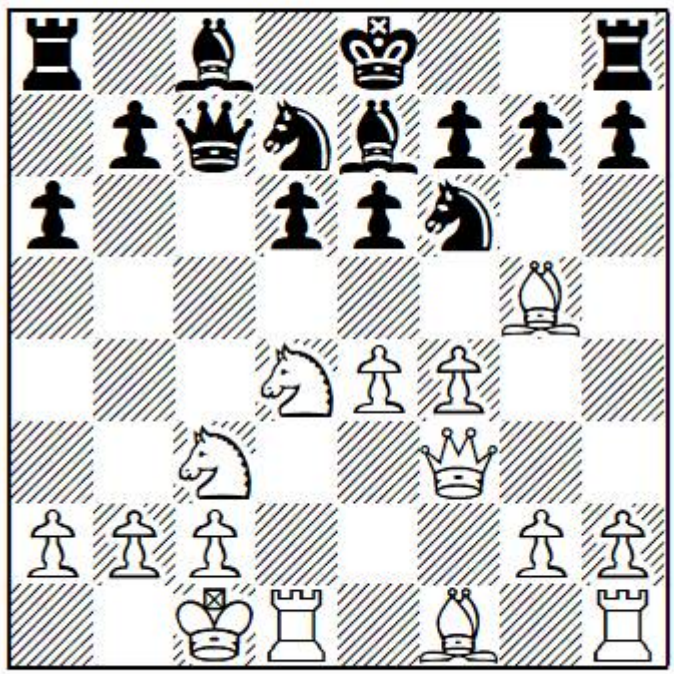
1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 Nc3 a6 4 d4 cxd4 5 Nxd4 Nf6

For a long time, the Najdorf and I kept our forbidden love secret from my theoretically authoritarian father, who believed that 1 e4 "must" be met by 1 … e5! and never 1 … c5?? (or any other non-1 … e5! move, for that matter!).

6 Bg5 e6 7 f4 Be7

Alternatively, 7 … Qb6 is the notorious Najdorf Poisoned Pawn Variation, which we'll see in Game 64.

8 Qf3 Qc7 9 0-0-0 Nbd7



10 Kb1!?

Have you ever met one of those Dunning-Kruger infected players with chess.com 600 ratings, who passionately argue for *not* studying sharp opening lines? Well, this was pretty much everyone in the 1960s and '70s! Believe it or not, this move may actually be a waste of time.

IM Troianescu was obviously not one of the groovy “cool kids”, since 10 g4! was all the rage during the Fischer era, continuing 10 … b5 11 Bxf6 Nxf6 12 g5 Nd7 13 f5 and so on. In youth, your writer gamely put on his big boy pants and played this hyper-theoretical position as White and Black. I had the remarkable, uncanny ability to lose consistently and horribly, with either side of this Najdorf tabiya! I later learned that our openings should *not* be chosen based on their popularity level, but instead by our stylistic temperament and skill sets.

10 … b5 11 Bd3 b4 12 Nce2 Bb7 13 Rhe1

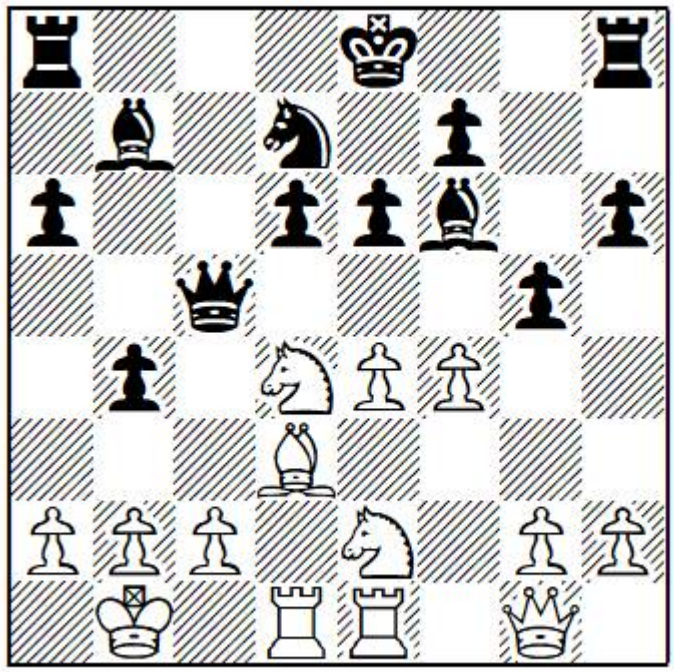
He was better off playing 13 g4 Nc5 14 Bxf6 Bxf6 15 g5 Be7.

13 … h6! 14 Bxf6

White hands over the bishop pair and dark square control to avoid a loss of time. If instead 14 Bh4 Nc5 15 Ng3 Rc8 16 Ndf5!? (White doesn’t have a plan if this move isn’t played) 16 … exf5 17 Nxf5 Ne6 White of course gets fishing chances but, objectively, the piece sacrifice is dubious at best and unsound at worst.

14 … Bxf6 15 Qe3 Qc5 16 Qg1 g5!

Fischer enhances his power on the dark squares.



17 Nb3?

White agrees to an unhappy queenless position. He should probably have tried to complicate with 17 f5 Ke7! 18 fxe6 fxe6 19 e5!? Bxe5 20 Qe3.

17 … Qxg1 18 Rxg1 Bd8

18 … gxf4 is also tempting. Bobby didn't want to allow 19 Na5.

19 g3

19 f5 Bb6 doesn't look like much fun for White either.

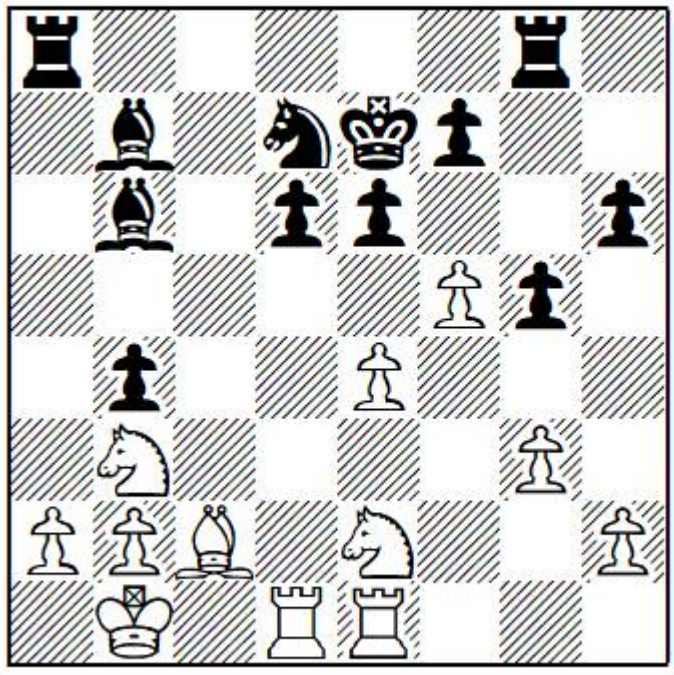
19 … Ke7

Black's king is in zero danger, so Fischer centralizes it, reinforcing both the d6- and e6-pawns, in case White plays for f4-f5 and Nd4 ideas.

20 c3 a5 21 cxb4 axb4 22 Bc2 Bb6 23 Rge1 Rhg8!

Worrying White about … g5xf4, after which he either cedes the g-file or recaptures on f4 with a knight, when Black seizes control over e5.

24 f5



This is sort of the "You can't fire me. I quit!" response. White's position is not a strategically pretty sight:

1. Black owns the bishop pair in an open position.

2. Black dominates the central dark squares.

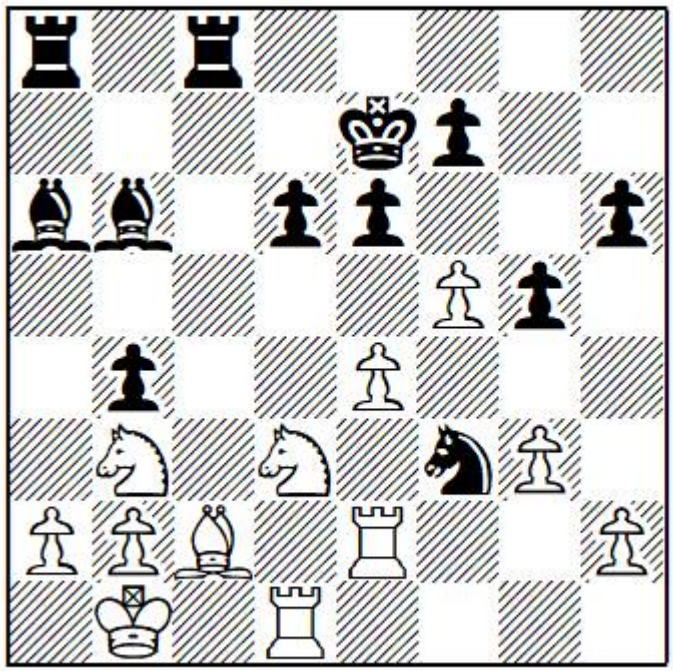
3. Black's knight has access to a juicy hole on e5, after which White must watch out for knight jumps into g4, f3 and c4.

4. Black's king is centralized and working, while White's remains out of play and in a defensive posture on the queenside.

24 … Rgc8 25 Nec1 Ne5 26 Nd3

26 f6+ Kxf6 27 Rxd6 doesn't bother Black: 27 … Bf2 28 Re2 Ke7 29 Rd1 Bb6 with a massive strategic bind.

26 … Nf3 27 Re2 Ba6!



This is getting more and more awkward for White's pieces, who begin to stumble over each other.

28 Rg2 Rc4! 29 Ne1

It's either this retreat, or head back into the pin with Re2.

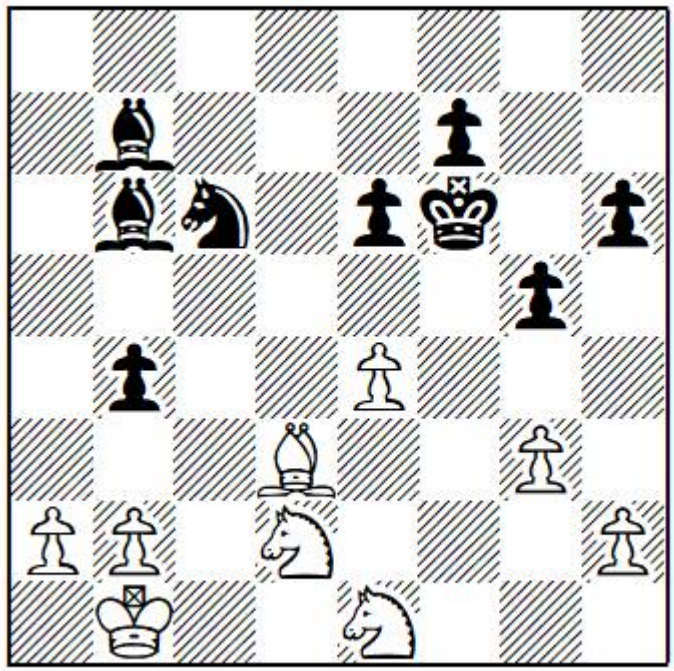
29 … Ne5 30 Rgd2 Rd8 31 f6+

It doesn't help White to swap f-pawn for d-pawn, but there was nothing better. 31 Nd3 Ng4 32 Re1 Ne3 33 Ndc1 Bb7! 34 Bd3 Rxe4! is lost for White.

31 … Kxf6 32 Rxd6 Rxd6 33 Rxd6 Rc6 34 Rxc6

The problem now is that White has no way to protect his kingside pawns.

34 … Nxc6 35 Bd3 Bb7 36 Nd2



Exercise (planning): Just because we are in a winning position doesn't make

the win our birthright. We must still earn it. Fischer found a deadly yet

simple winning plan. What is it?

Answer: Simply play … g5-g4, fixing h2 (and then g3) as targets.

36 … g4!

We see it: … Bg1 is coming and there isn't a damned thing White can do about it.

37 Be2 h5 38 Nc4 Bg1

Yup. The h2- and g3-pawns are the skeletons in White's closet. Chess can't be this easy, can it? Bye bye, white kingside pawns.

39 Nd3 Nd4

39 … Bxh2 is also winning. Fischer didn't want to be bothered with minor harassment after 40 e5+ Ke7 41 Nd6 Ba8 42 Nc8+.

40 e5+ Ke7 41 Bf1 0-1

White's position is past both growth or decline. After 41 … Bxh2 42 Nxb4 Bxg3 White loses the promotion race by a million miles.

Game 37
R.J.Fischer-B.Spassky
Match (Game 19), Sveti Stefan/Belgrade 1992
Sicilian Defence

"If I have faults, it's that I'm sometimes *too* kind, *too* honest and *too* humble," posted a delusional Facebook friend, who lacks every one of the traits she cited. Bobby's somewhat dubious claim still to be world chess champion in 1992 makes my Facebook friend appear humble by comparison. In this game we simultaneously see Fischer's former splendour and its glimmer dimmed by the passage of time. I can't imagine the Fischer of 1972 not being able to win this game.

Originally, I wasn't going to place any games from the 1992 rematch with Spassky, but my friend and chess author IM Tibor Karolyi called and described one as a symbol of both Fischer's genius and decline. Tibor and I are masters of wasting time and energy in pondering imponderables. We had a long conversation/debate on Fischer's mental state. It is Tibor's opinion that Fischer was not mentally ill but instead sort of crazy like a fox, where his seemingly erratic actions were actually a form of promotion, much like Muhammad Ali's provocative statements before one of his fights. I hold the other position that Fischer was indeed mentally ill since so many of his actions were counterproductive to his own wellbeing and career.

1 e4

It was the year 1992 when Bobby showed up again, this time sporting a Saddam-Hussein-hiding-in-the-bunker beard, while spouting a litany of conspiracy theories.

1 … c5 2 Nc3

Bobby learned from the 1972 match: Spassky was better prepared in Open Sicilian variations. But this time Spassky didn't arrive with an army of Grandmaster seconds and in this match Fischer did indeed play a few Open Sicilians.

2 … Nc6 3 Nge2

These Chameleon Sicilian lines can be tricky since White can often still switch to Open Sicilian lines with d2-d4. Spassky's next move shuts the idea down.

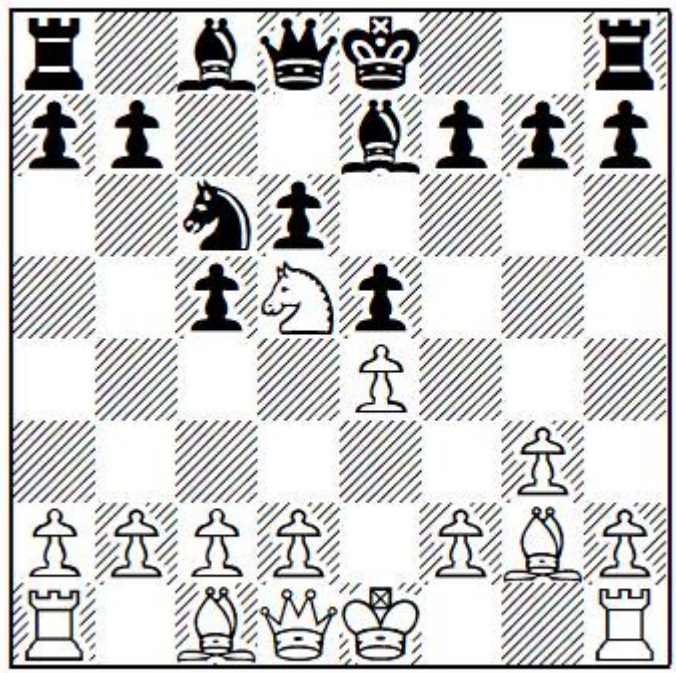
3 … e5

This is generally considered an equalizer. Sure, White gets use of d5. The question is: can he make much practical use of the square?

4 Nd5 Nge7 5 Nec3 Nxd5 6 Nxd5 Be7 7 g3!?

A novelty for the time and still a rare move. 7 Bc4 is natural and played much more often. The main line runs 7 … 0-0 8 0-0 d6 9 d3 Be6 10 f4 exf4 11 Bxf4.

7 … d6 8 Bg2



8 … h5!?

Spassky channels his inner Larsen. Safer and less ambitious is 8 … 0-0, as in N.Steinberg-P.Potapov, Pardubice 2012.

9 h4

Fischer prevents future … Bg5 ideas. 9 h3?! h4 looks decent for Black.

9 … Be6

It seems worthwhile to provoke f2-f3 with 9 … Bg4 10 f3 Be6.

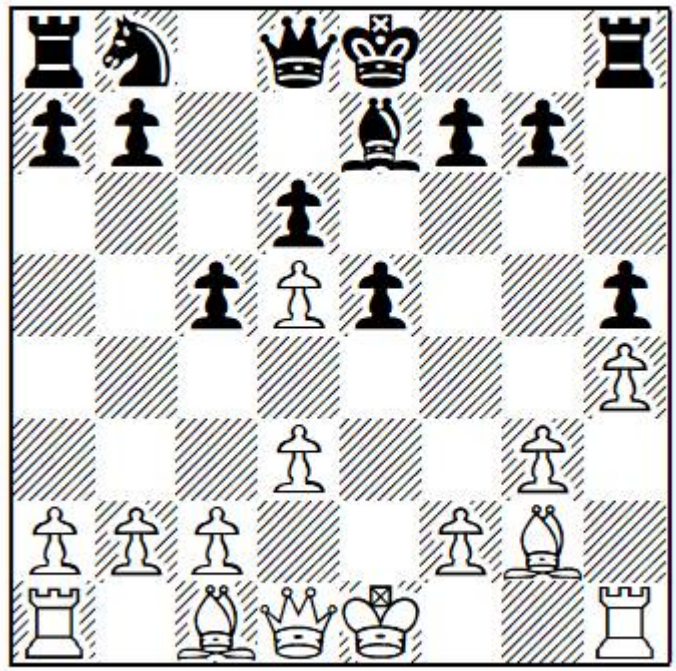
10 d3

10 c3 keeps Black's knight out of b4.

10 … Bxd5!?

This is a strategically risky decision from Spassky who gives up the bishop pair, weakens his light squares, and sticks himself with a potential bad bishop, all to plug the d5-hole with a white pawn. He reasons that Fischer's bishops are not so valuable due to the rigidity of the structure. 10 … Nb4!?, challenging White's knight, is also possible.

11 exd5 Nb8!



This is a strange-looking Breyer Variation of the Ruy Lopez! Spassky sees that Black's knight is best placed on d7, since White's two most likely pawn breaks will be on f4 and b4. From d7 Black's knight supports both e5 and c5.

12 f4 Nd7 13 0-0 g6!

A future … f7-f5 freezes White's kingside structure.

14 Rb1!

14 f5 is awfully tempting but is met by the bypass 14 … g5! 15 f6! Bxf6 16 Bh3! gxh4 17 Qf3 Rg8! 18 Bxd7+ Kxd7! 19 Qxf6 Qxf6 20 Rxf6 Rxg3+ 21 Kh2 Rag8! 22 Rxf7+ Ke8 23 Rf2 Rg1 (threatening … h4-h3, followed by a rook check on g2) 24 b3 h3! 25 Kxh3 Rh1+ 26 Rh2 Rf1 27 Bb2 (or 27 Rg2 Rh1+) 27 … Rf3+ 28 Kh4 Rf4+ with a draw.

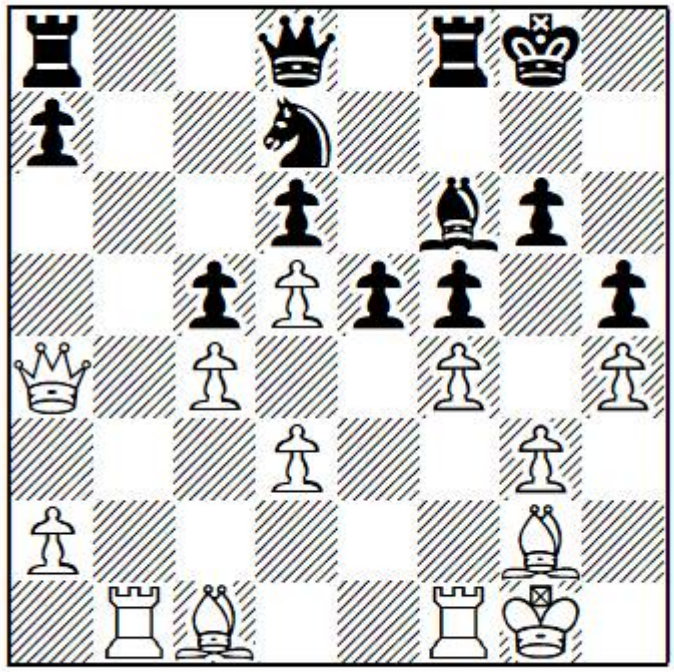
14 … f5! 15 b4 b6

15 … cxb4!? is possible. After 16 Rxb4 Rb8 17 c3 0-0 18 Be3 b6 19 Rc4 Rc8 20 Rc6 Nb8! 21 Rxc8 Qxc8 Black stands no worse.

16 bxc5 bxc5 17 c4?!

It's jarring to see a player who may have been the greatest strategic player of all time violate a strategic principle: *Don't force a rigid structure when you own the bishop pair.* 17 c3!, retaining the fluidity of White's central pawns, looks correct.

17 … 0-0 18 Qa4 Bf6!



The bad bishop is not so bad and I actually slightly prefer Spassky's position.

19 Rb7

After 19 Qc6 Rb8 20 Rxb8 Nxb8 21 Qa4 Rf7 Black stands slightly better.

19 … Nb6

19 … Rf7! is also slightly better for Black. If 20 Rxa7? Rxa7 21 Qxa7 exf4 22 Bxf4 Be5 23 Qa6 Bxf4, White stands worse, whichever way he recaptures.

20 Qb5 Rf7!

The intruder is ejected. 20 … Qc8? 21 Qc6 is in White's favour.

21 Rxf7

21 Qa6 Qc8 22 Rxf7 Kxf7! (22 … Qxa6? 23 Rxf6 is at least even for White) 23 Qa5 Nd7 still looks good for Black, who is about to seize control over the b-file.

21 … Kxf7 22 Bd2 Rb8 23 Qc6 Nc8

23 … Nd7! is met by 24 Ba5! when White is okay. Not 24 Qxd6?? Rb6 and the queen is trapped.

24 Re1 Ne7

24 … Rb6 is safer.

25 Qa4 Qc7 26 Kh2 exf4!?

I'm not sure if Spassky is playing for a win.

27 Bxf4 Be5! 28 Re2

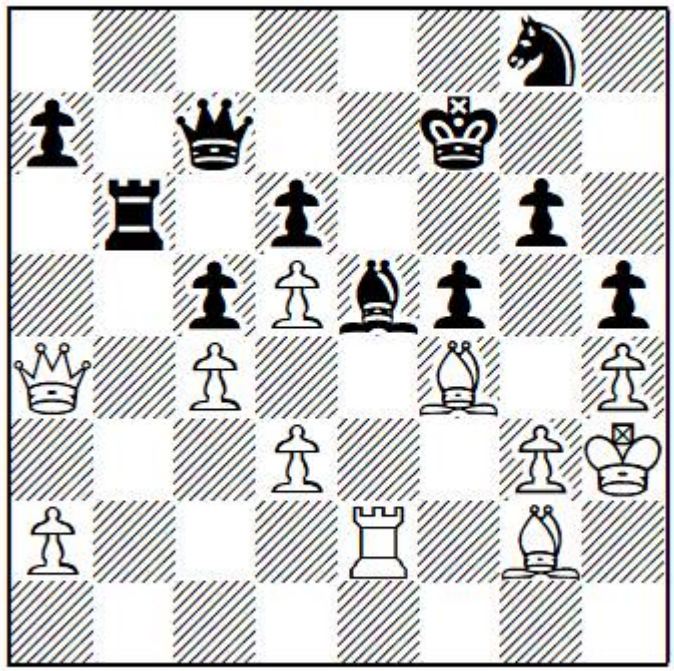
28 Bxe5 dxe5 29 Qa6 Rb6 is at least even for Black.

28 … Rb6

28 … Rb4! is equal.

29 Kh3! Ng8?

The first mistake. After 29 … Rb4! 30 Qa3 Bxf4 31 gxf4 Ng8 32 Re6 Nf6 33 Qc3 Qd8 34 d4 Rb6! 35 dxc5 dxc5 36 Qe3 Qd7! Black is okay.



Exercise (combination alert): Spassky plans … Nf6 next. Prove why he doesn't

have time for this.

Answer: Step 1: Sacrifice the exchange on e5.

30 Rxe5! dxe5 31 Bxe5!

Step 2: Overloaded defender.

31 … Qe7

31 … Qxe5?? loses to 32 Qxa7+ Qe7 33 Qxb6.

32 d6!

Step 3: Black's queen is overloaded from coverage of a7.

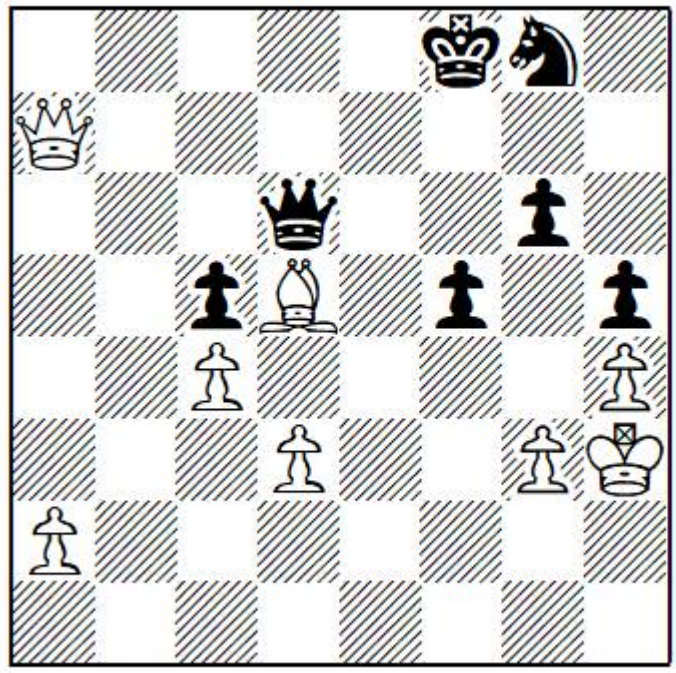
32 … Rxd6

Forced. If 32 … Qd8?? 33 Bd5+ Kf8 34 Qxa7, Black is mated.

33 Bxd6 Qxd6 34 Bd5+

Step 4: Give check on d5, which covers against … Qxd3.

34 … Kf8 35 Qxa7



Step 5: Pick off the a7-pawn. As a result of the combination, Fischer has picked up a clean extra passed a-pawn and is winning.

35 … Ne7 36 Qa8+ Kg7 37 Qb7 Kf8 38 a4!

Principle: *Passed pawns should be pushed*.

38 … f4

Spassky begins a desperate lunge to try and expose Fischer's king. 38 … Nxd5 39 Qxd5 is lost for Black.

39 a5!

Well calculated. Fischer has worked out that Black is unable to deliver perpetual check.

39 … fxg3 40 a6 Qf4 41 Bf3!

Covering against a queen check on g4.

41 … Nf5

Now h4 is under attack.

42 Qe4!

Principle: *Centralize your pieces when your king is under attack.*

42 … g2!

Threat: … Qg3 mate. Spassky finds an inventive way to try and muck up a lost position. After 42 … Qd2 43 Bg2 Qa5 44 Qa8+ Kg7 45 Qb7+ Kh6 46 a7 Black can resign.

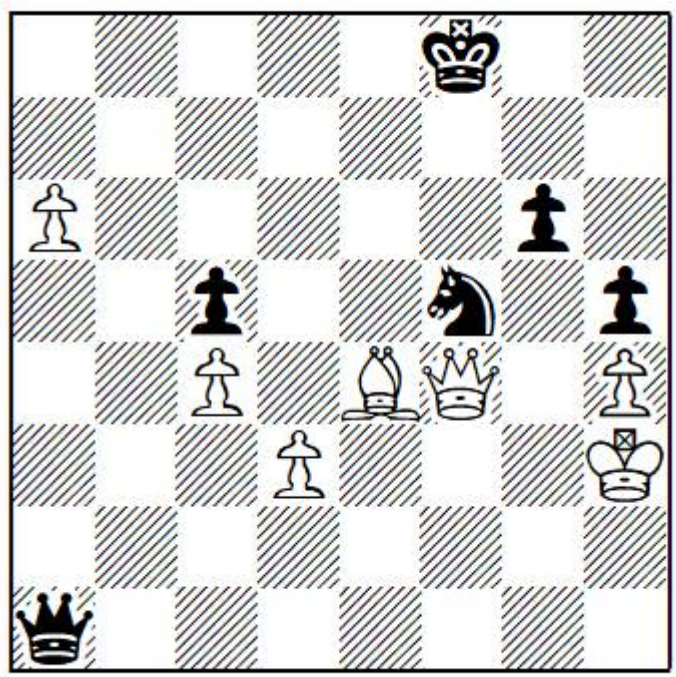
43 Qxf4

Certainly not 43 Bxg2?? Qg3 mate.

43 … g1Q 44 Be4

Winning but not optimal. Fischer misses the cleaner line 44 Bd5! (not 44 a7?? Qf1+ and the game ends in perpetual check) 44 … Qa1 45 Qb8+ Ke7 46 Qc7+ Ke8 47 a7 Qf1+ 48 Bg2 Qxd3+ 49 Kh2, when Black has run out of checks and must resign.

44 … Qa1



45 a7?!

What? There is no reason to give away the passed a-pawn. After 45 Qb8+! Kg7 46 a7 Qf1+ 47 Bg2 Qf2 (threat: … Qxh4 mate) 48 Qe5+ Kh6 49 Kh2! Qxh4+ 50 Kg1 Black has once again run out of checks and the game is over.

45 … Qxa7 46 Bxf5 gxf5 47 Qxf5+ Kg7 48 Qg5+ Kf8 49 Qh6+ Kg8 50 Qxh5 Qc7

Not 50 … Qd7+?? 51 Qg4+, when queens come off the board and White wins.

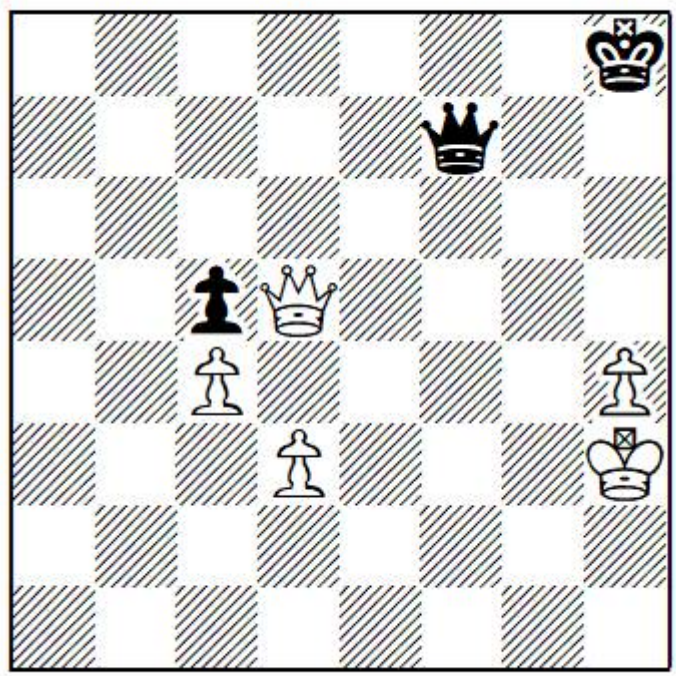
51 Qg6+ Kh8 52 Qf6+

52 h5?? walks into the trap 52 … Qh2+! 53 Kg4 Qf4+ 54 Kxf4 stalemate.

52 … Kg8 53 Qe6+

Now 53 h5! is correct, and if 53 … Qd7+ 54 Kh4 Qxd3? then 55 Qg6+! wins.

53 … Kh8 54 Qd5 Qf7!



Spassky keeps finding annoying stalemate cheapos to keep himself on life support.

55 Kg2

55 Qxc5 is also possible, since 55 … Qf3+ 56 Kh2 Qe2+ 57 Kg3 Qxd3+ 58 Kf4 is a won ending for White.

55 … Qg6+ 56 Kh3 Qf7 57 Qe5+ Kh7 58 Kg4 Qg6+ 59 Kf4 Qh6+ 60 Kf3 Qg6

Not 60 … Qxh4?? 61 Qe4+ and wins.

61 Qe4

Game over?

61 … Kh8!

Not yet.

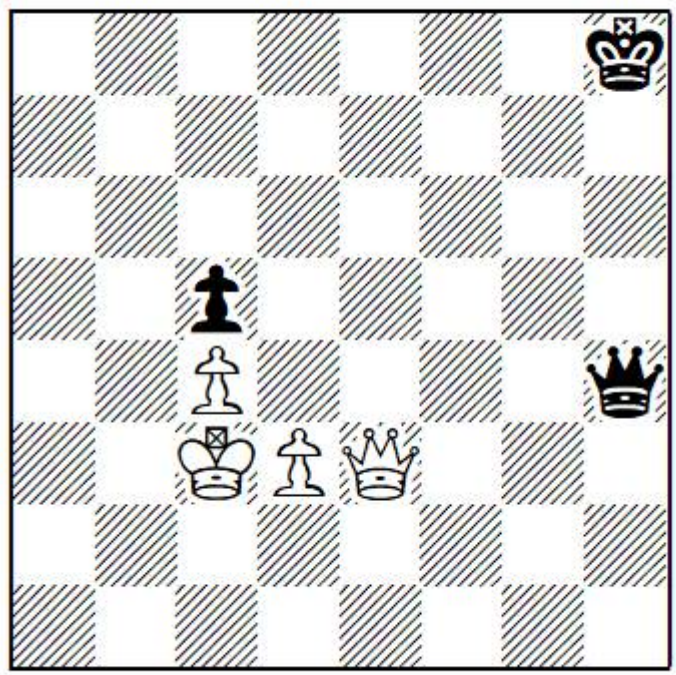
62 Ke2

62 Qxg6?? is stalemate.

62 … Qd6 63 Qe3

63 h5 is met by 63 … Qh2+.

63 … Qh2+ 64 Ke1 Qh1+ 65 Kd2 Qh2+ 66 Kc3 Qxh4



67 d4!?

Still winning but unnecessary. Our idea may be beautiful, yet if it's non-functional it becomes a view of a rainbow, which can be visually stunning yet ungraspable. There is no reason to get clever. It was easier just to chop the hanging c5-pawn.

67 … Kh7

Of course Spassky is not going to fall for 67 … cxd4+?? 68 Qxd4+ Qxd4+ 69 Kxd4 and wins.

68 d5?

This move falls under the too-smart-for-his own-good category. Bobby keeps making it more and more difficult for himself. Technically, it's still a win for White, yet we sense that his position now runs at only around 30% of its former capacity. 68 dxc5! is a clear win for White.

68 … Qf6+ 69 Kc2 Qd6 70 Qg5 Kh8 71 Kd2 Qb6 72 Qe5+ Kg8 73 Qe8+ Kg7 74 Qb5 Qc7 75 Kc2 Kf8 76 Qa6 Qh2+

For Black in such positions, no news is good news.

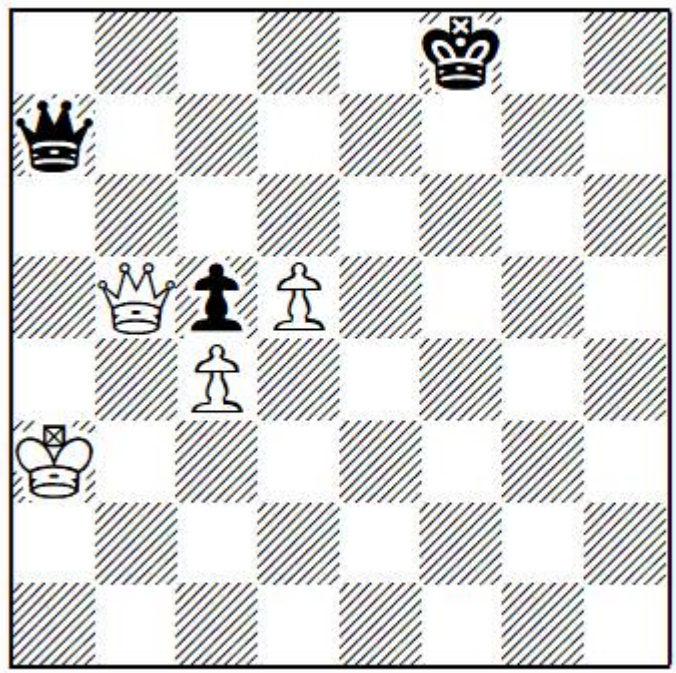
77 Kb3 Qb8+! 78 Qb5

Obviously not 78 Ka4?? Qb4 mate.

78 … Qc7 79 Ka3

If 79 Qc6 Qb8+ 80 Kc2 Qh2+ 81 Kb3 Qb8+, White's king still can't move up to a4, due to the mating threat on b4.

79 … Qa7+



The players soon get to the point.

80 Kb3?

Old age is a thief which steals all we hold dear and Bobby seems to be experiencing a three-quarters life crisis. 80 Kb2!! creates a mutual zugzwang which wins for White. The analysis goes on and on in the tablebase. Even there the win is far from easy, from a human standpoint.

80 … Ke7!

Suddenly it's a tablebase draw.

81 Kc2 Kd8 82 Kd2 Qc7 83 Qa6?

Fatigued, Bobby allows perpetual check and his fate this game is a terrible disillusionment. He can at least keep trying after 83 Kd1.

83 … Qf4+ 84 Kc2 Qe4+ ½-½

What a disaster for Bobby to blow such a clearly won game. "My body may be old, yet my mind still retains the sharpness of youth!" I pronounce/lie to myself, after I blow such positions. Bobby must have felt the same sentiments after this

game.

Chapter Six
Oddities

In this chapter we look at a couple of anomaly games from Bobby. Please prepare yourself for the least educational game in the entire book.

Game 38
R.J.Fischer-J.Altusky
Offhand Game, New York 1954
King's Indian Defence

1 d4!?

When we play through our childhood games, it sometimes feels as if it wasn't us who was playing. Boy, talk about an identity crisis. 11-year-old Bobby hasn't even decided that his first move is actually second-best by test! Bobby only played 1 d4 three times in his entire career. He won the first in crushing style but then it went downhill after that. He drew a game against Hort at Herzeg Novi and lost to a player named Gomez in a simul in Spain, in 1970. In this game I'm multi-tasking by including every Fischer 1 d4 game he ever played! The other two are embedded within the notes.

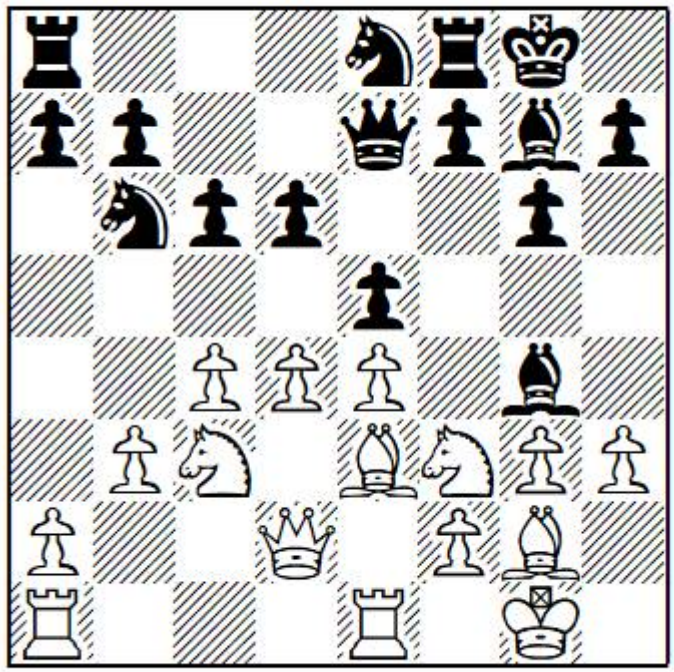
1 … g6

1 … Nf6 2 c4 c6 3 Nc3 d5 4 cxd5 – I can't come to work today and show you a doctor's note which proves I have narcolepsy. Even if I drank a gallon of a witch's love potion, it wouldn't change how I feel about the Exchange Slav; I doubt that even mild affection can be managed. As a guy who plays the White (and Black) side, I offer this advice: If you seek a life of long toil and desperate boredom, then by all means play the Exchange Slav! – 4 … cxd5 5 Bf4 e6 6 e3 Nc6 7 Bb5 Bd6 8 Bxd6 Qxd6 9 f4 Bd7 10 Nf3 Ne4 11 Nxe4 dxe4 12 Nd2 Qb4 13 Qb3 Qa5 14 Qa4 Qxa4 15 Bxa4 Nb4 16 Bxd7+ Kxd7 17 Ke2 f5 18 Nc4 Rhc8 19 Rhc1 Nd3 20 Ne5+ Nxe5 21 dxe5

Rxc1 22 Rxc1 Rc8 23 Rxc8 Kxc8 24 Kd2 Kd7 25 Kc3 Kc6 26 Kc4 b6 27 a4 a6 28 b4 b5+ 29 axb5+ axb5+ 30 Kd4 Kb6 31 h3 g6 32 g4 h5! ("Having a good time, wishing you were here." – of course, it's a dead draw) 33 gxh5 gxh5 34 h4 Kc6 35 Kc3 ½-½ R.J.Fischer-V.Hort, Blitz Tournament, Herceg Novi 1970. "Wow Cyrus, you really know how to show your readers a good time," you must be thinking.

2 c4 Nf6 3 Nc3 Bg7

3 … d6 4 g3 Bg7 5 Bg2 0-0 6 Nf3 Nbd7 7 0-0 e5 8 e4 Ne8?! (this voluntary retreat is not a great idea when tension still remains in the centre) 9 Re1 c6 10 Be3 Qe7 11 Qd2 Nb6 12 b3 Bg4 13 h3? (13 d5! c5 14 Kh1! is still good for White)



Exercise (combination alert): Prove why White's last move was a blunder.

Answer: Step 1: Chop the f3-knight: 13 … Bxf3! 14 Bxf3 Qf6! (Step 2: Double attack on f3 and d4) 15 Qd1?? (White had to try 15 Bg4 exd4 16 Nd5! Qd8 17 Bg5 f6 18 Nxb6 Qxb6

19 Bh6 Bxh6 20 Qxh6 Ng7 with a healthy extra pawn for Black) 15 … exd4 16 e5 dxe5 17 Ne4 Qe7 18 Bg5 f6 and Bobby was just down two central pawns and lost, R.J.Fischer-Eu.Gomez, Seville (simul) 1970.

4 e4 0-0 5 Bg5!?

This is a bit strange, but it's not bad and can transpose to other lines.

5 … d6 6 Nf3 Nbd7 7 e5?!

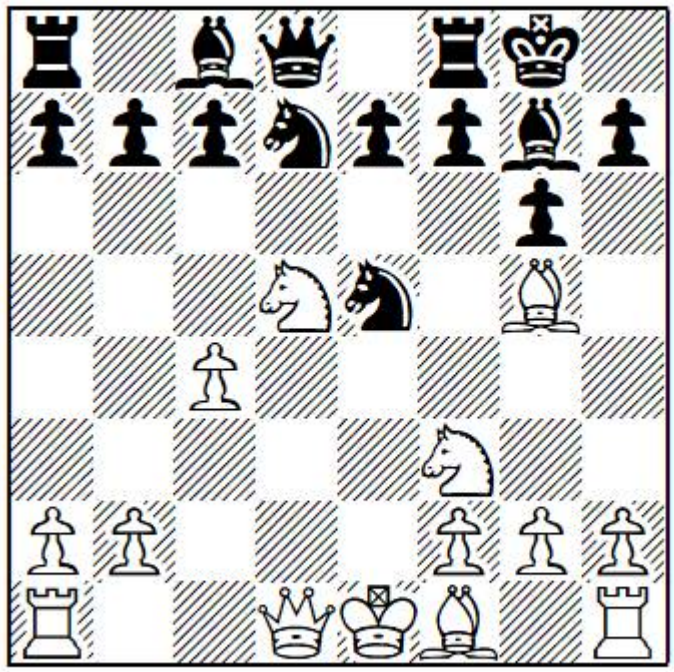
This lunge isn't a particularly great idea, but maybe it seemed that way to an 11-year-old. 7 Be2 e5 8 d5 transposes to Petrosian's variation of the King's Indian.

7 … dxe5 8 dxe5 Ng4 9 Nd5?!

He should try 9 e6 Nde5! 10 Nxe5 Nxe5 11 Qxd8 Rxd8 12 Nd5 Bxe6! 13 Nxc7 Rac8 14 Nxe6 fxe6 15 Rc1 Nf7 16 Bxe7 Bxb2 17 Rc2 Rd7, when Black stands at least even, since the lead in development means more than White's bishop pair.

9 … Ngxe5??

After 9 … f6! 10 exf6 exf6 11 Bf4 Nde5 12 h3 Re8! 13 Nxe5 Nxe5 14 Ne3 Be6 Black stands better.



Exercise (combination alert): This isn't the most difficult combination to spot

in the book. Why did Black's last move lose?

Answer: Of course, it hangs a queen to the future discovered check on g6.

10 Nxe7+ Kh8 11 Nxg6+!

The bishop's portal to heaven opens. I'm embarrassed to give his painfully obvious move an exclam, but Bobby was only 11, so let's let it slide.

11 … hxg6 12 Bxd8 1-0

Game 39
D.Yanofsky-R.J.Fischer
Stockholm Interzonal 1962
Sicilian Defence

The previous game was 12 moves. Now brace yourself for a marathon. This was the longest game of Fischer's career.

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 a6

There are two ways to understand:

1. Through academic study.

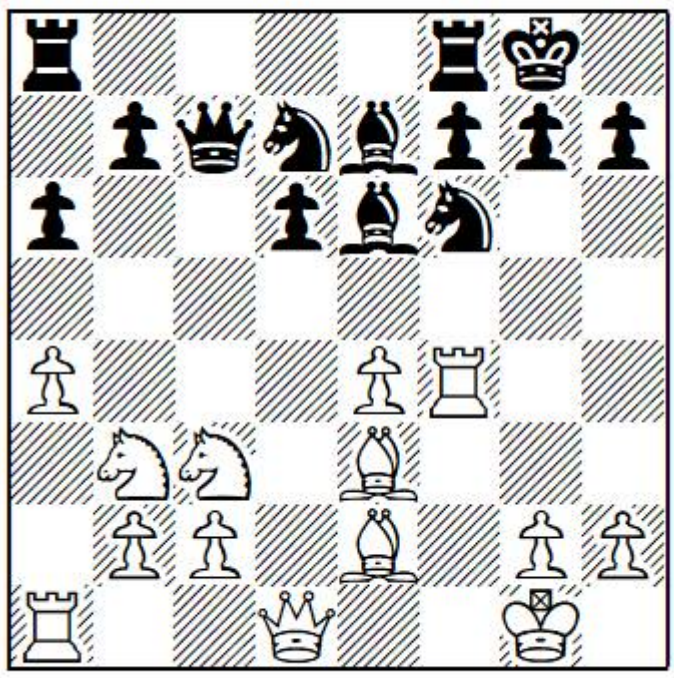
2. Through direct perception of over the board experience.

Of the two, the latter tends to be the more potent force. By 1962 Bobby, along with Tal, was the world's leading authority on the Najdorf, even though he was only 19 years old.

6 Be2 e5 7 Nb3 Be7 8 0-0 0-0 9 Be3 Qc7 10 a4 Be6 11 f4

This line has undergone some gene-splicing, where today White tends to avoid f2-f4, since clearance of e5 allows Black good counterplay with a piece sitting on the newly opened square. 11 a5 is played more often.

11 … exf4 12 Rxf4 Nbd7



13 Nd5!?

I already prefer Black after this move, which allows Fischer to plug d5 with a pawn. 13 Nd4 is somewhat better.

13 … Bxd5 14 exd5 Ne5 15 a5 Rfe8 16 Bb6

This doesn't bother Black.

16 … Qc8 17 Bd3?!

17 c3 looks about even.

17 … Bd8?!

Black can seize the initiative with 17 … Nfd7! 18 Bf2 Bg5 19 Re4 Nf6.

18 Bxd8!?

Here 18 Bf2 Nfg4 19 Bd4 Nxd3 20 Qxd3 Ne5 21 Bxe5 Rxe5 looks level.

18 … Qxd8 19 c4 b6 20 Bf1?!

And 20 Nd4 bxa5 21 b3 still seems pretty even.

20 … Rb8

Stronger is 20 … Ng6! 21 Rf2 bxa5 22 Nxa5 Ne4 23 Rc2 Qb6+ 24 c5 Nxc5 with an extra pawn for Black.

21 Qd4 Ng6

21 … Nfd7 is a good option.

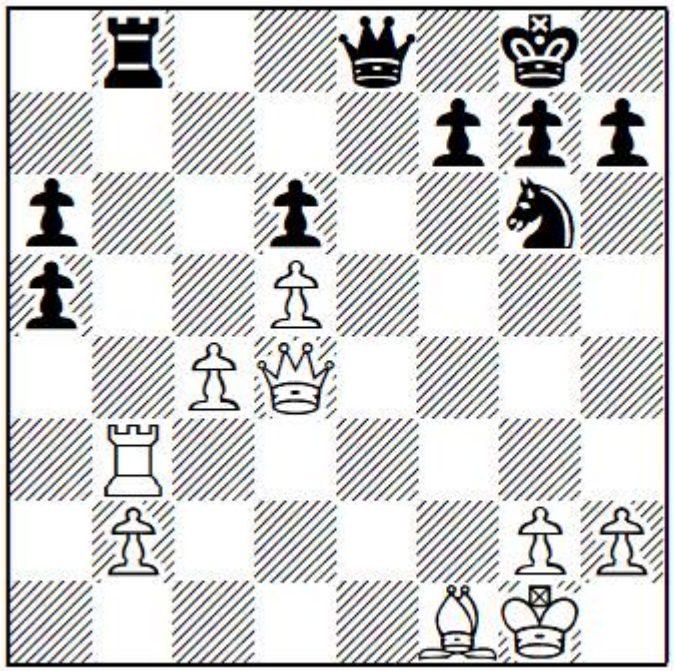
22 Rf2 Ne4 23 Re2

23 Rc2! saves time.

23 … Nc5! 24 Rxe8+ Qxe8 25 Ra3

25 Nxc5? bxc5 26 Qc3 Qe5 27 Qxe5 Nxe5 is a lost ending for White with bad bishop versus good knight.

25 … Nxb3 26 Rxb3 bxa5



It’s not much of an extra pawn but it’s something.

27 Ra3 Qd8 28 c5!

GM Yanofsky wants to swap off all the queenside pawns to reach a drawish pawn-down same-side ending.

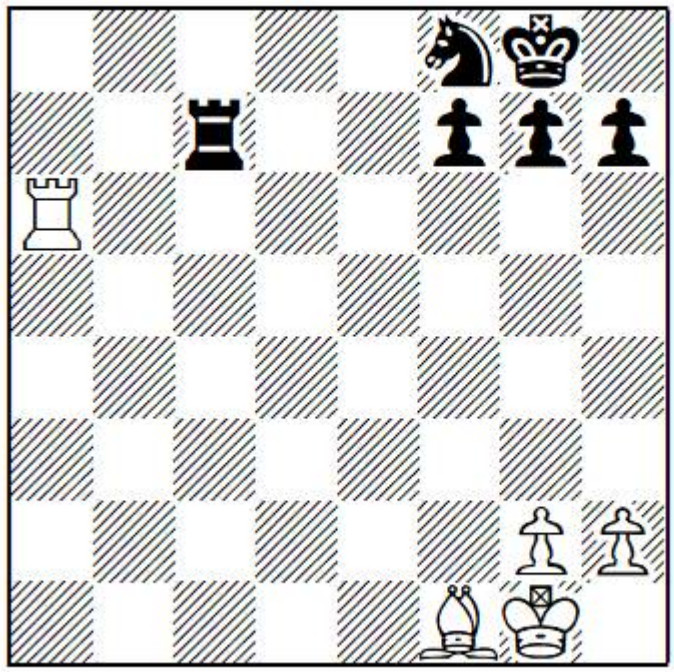
28 … Rb4 29 Qc3 dxc5 30 Qxc5 Rxb2 31 d6 Nf8

31 … Rd2 is more accurate.

32 Qc7

32 Rd3!? is also an option.

32 … Qxc7 33 dxc7 Rc2 34 Rxa5 Rxc7 35 Rxa6



Swarms of locusts stripped the crops bare, to the point where Fischer reaches a pawn-up same side ending. The knight versus bishop imbalance helps his winning chances, yet White's odds of drawing feel higher than Black's of winning.

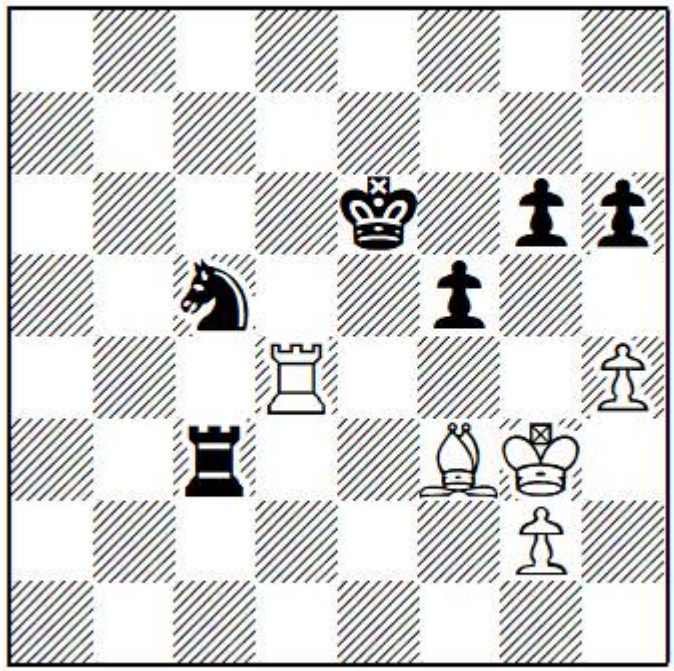
35 … g6 36 Be2 Kg7 37 Bf3 Nd7 38 Kf2 Ne5 39 Ra3 Rc2+ 40 Kg3 Kf6

It would be dumb to head for a rook and pawn ending with 40 … Nxf3? 41 Kxf3 which makes White's drawing task far easier.

41 Be4 Rc4 42 Bf3 Kg5 43 Re3 f6 44 Re4 Rc3

The knight and three versus bishop and two is drawn.

45 Rf4 f5 46 h4+ Kf6 47 Ra4 Nd3 48 Rd4 Nc5 49 Rd6+ Ke5 50 Rd5+ Ke6 51 Rd4 h6



Of course, Black doesn't want to swap any more pawns, but otherwise there is no way to make progress.

52 Kf2 Nd3+ 53 Ke2 Nc5 54 Kf2 g5 55 hxg5 hxg5 56 Ke2 Nb3 57 Rd8 Rc2+ 58 Kd1

With dual threats of taking the rook and Bd5+, followed by Bxb3.

58 … Rc1+

If 58 … Rb2 then 59 Rb8 g4 60 Be2 Kd5 61 Rb5+ Ke4 62 Bc4 Kf4 (not 62 … Rxg2?? 63 Bd5+) 63 Bxb3 Rxg2 is drawn.

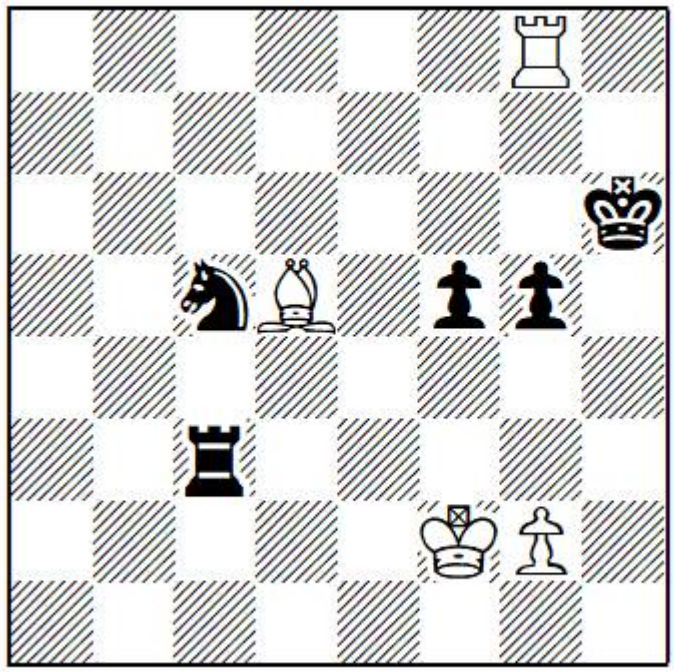
59 Ke2 Ke5 60 Re8+ Kf6

60 … Kf4 61 Kf2 (threatening g2-g3 mate) 61 … Rc2+ 62 Re2 Rxe2+ 63 Bxe2 Nd2 64 g3+ is also drawn.

61 Rf8+ Kg6 62 Rg8+ Kh6 63 Bd5 Rc2+ 64 Ke3

64 Kf1! is actually easier.

64 … Rc3+ 65 Kf2 Nc5



66 Bf3?!

This is where the evaluation begins to swing more in Black's favour. 66 Rh8+ Kg7 67 Rg8+ Kf6 68 g3! is White's optimal drawing set-up.

66 … Nd7

66 … g4! is stronger. White can't play 67 Bxg4?? due to the zwischenzug 67 … Kh7!, winning on the spot, since 68 Rg5? gets forked by 68 … Ne4+.

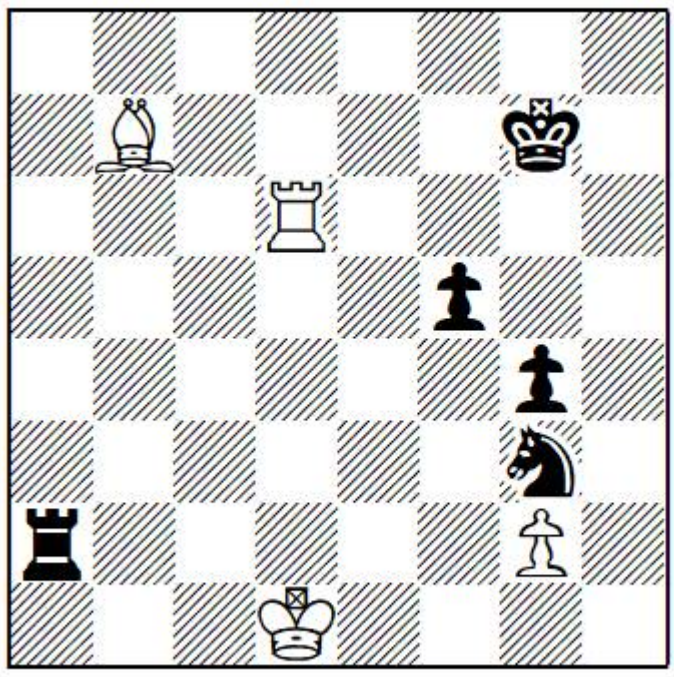
67 Rd8 Nf6 68 Rd6

It's too late for 68 g3??, as after 68 … g4 69 Bg2 Nh5 70 Rh8+ Kg5 71 Rg8+ Kf6 72 Rf8+ Kg6 White loses the g3-pawn.

68 … Kg7 69 Ke2 g4 70 Bb7 Nh5 71 Ke1 Re3+ 72 Kf2 Rc3 73 Ke1 Re3+ 74 Kf2 Rb3 75 Ba8 Ng3 76 Ke1 Re3+ 77 Kd1!

Not 77 Kf2?? f4 78 Rd2 Kf6 79 Ra2 Kg5 80 Bb7 Kh4 81 Bc6 Rc3 82 Bb7 Rc1 (threat: … Rf1 mate) 83 Ba6 Ne4+ 84 Ke2 Nc3+ and wins.

77 … Ra3 78 Bb7 Ra2



79 Rd4?

My theory is that the prayers of the desperate are more dear to Caissa than the prayers of the contented. This generally means that the player defending tends to be more inventive. I'm not so sure about this theory in Bobby's case. So powerful was his will to win that he must have been just as desperate to win, as Yanofsky was to hold the draw.

Here 79 Rb6! (cutting off Black's king is the correct plan) 79 … Ne4 80 Bxe4 fxe4 81 g3 Rg2 82 Re6 Rxg3 83 Ke2 is drawn.

79 … Nh1?

He should take the chance to bring the king up: 79 … Kf6! 80 Ke1 Kg5 81 Rb4 Kh4 82 Bc6 Ne4! 83 Bxe4 fxe4 84 Rxe4 Kg3 85 Kf1 Ra1+ 86 Ke2 Rg1! and Black wins the g2-pawn and reaches a winning Lucena position.

80 Ke1?

80 Rd6! cuts off Black's king again and offers excellent drawing chances.

80 … Ra1+! 81 Ke2 Rg1?

King infiltration was critical. 81 … Kf6! is lost for White.

82 Rd6!

Now he sees it. White should hold the draw.

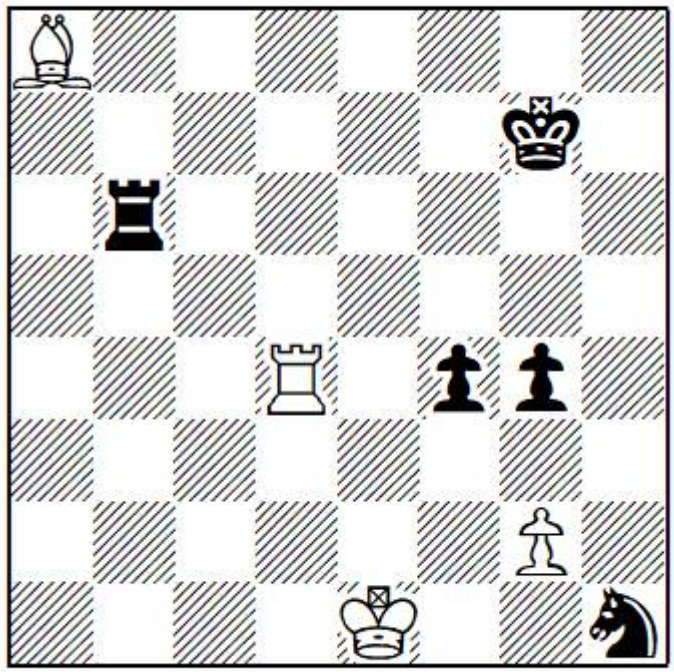
82 … Rb1 83 Ba8 Rb3 84 Rd3?!

84 Bd5! is correct.

84 … Rb2+?!

He has better chances bringing his knight back into the game: 84 … Ng3+! 85 Kd2 Rb2+ 86 Ke1! (not 86 Kc3? Ra2! 87 Bd5 Ne2+ and Black is winning) 86 … Rb1+ 87 Kd2 Nh5!.

85 Ke1 Rb8 86 Bc6 Rb6 87 Ba8 f4 88 Rd4!



Forcing Black's rook into a defensive posture. Now White should clearly hold the draw.

88 … Rf6 89 Bb7 Kg6 90 Rd8?

This lets Black's rook out again. 90 Bc8! Kg5 91 Rd8 Rg6 92 Rf8! is drawn.

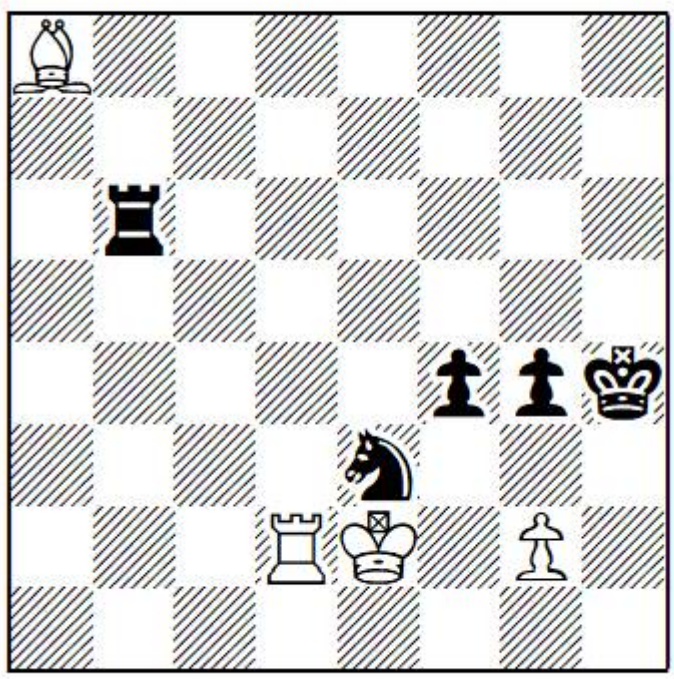
90 … Re6+! 91 Kd2

Not 91 Kf1?? Ng3+ 92 Kf2 Re2+ 93 Kg1 Re1+ and mate next move.

91 … Nf2! 92 Rd4 Kg5

Black is winning again!

93 Ba8 Rf6 94 Ke1 Nh1! 95 Rd8 Rb6 96 Rd4 Ng3 97 Kd2 Nf1+ 98 Ke2 Ne3 99 Rd2 Kh4



Bobby's king keeps inching closer.

100 Kf2 Rb3!

Preventing g2-g3+ tricks.

101 Be4 Ra3 102 Bc6 Nf5 103 Rb2 Ra1 104 Rb4

White's position continues to atrophy. If 104 Be4 Ne3 105 Rd2 Nd1+ 106 Ke2 Nc3+ 107 Kd3 Nxe4! 108 Kxe4 f3! 109 gxf3 g3 110 f4 Kg4 111 Re2 Ra4+ 112 Ke3 Rxf4, Black reaches a winning Lucena position.

104 … Ra2+ 105 Ke1 Kg3

Now the win is completely clear.

106 Rb3+ Ne3 107 Be4 Kh2!

Yanofsky can resign here.

108 Rb4 Nxg2+! 109 Bxg2 Kxg2 110 Rxf4 g3 111 Rg4

As a service to humanity, I will demonstrate basic Lucena technique: 111 Rf6 Ra1+ 112 Ke2 Kg1 113 Rf7 g2 114 Rf8 Rf1 115 Rh8 Rf5 116 Rh7 Re5+ 117 Kd3 (or 117 Kf3 Kf1) 117 … Kf2! 118 Rf7+ Kg3 119 Rg7+ Kf3 120 Rf7+ Kg4 121 Rg7+ Rg5 and wins.

111 … Kf3 112 Rg8 Ra1+ 0-1

Sometimes it's better to lose a short game, than a torturous long one, after which we muse: "All my suffering was in vain."

Chapter Seven
Games from Simultaneous Exhibitions

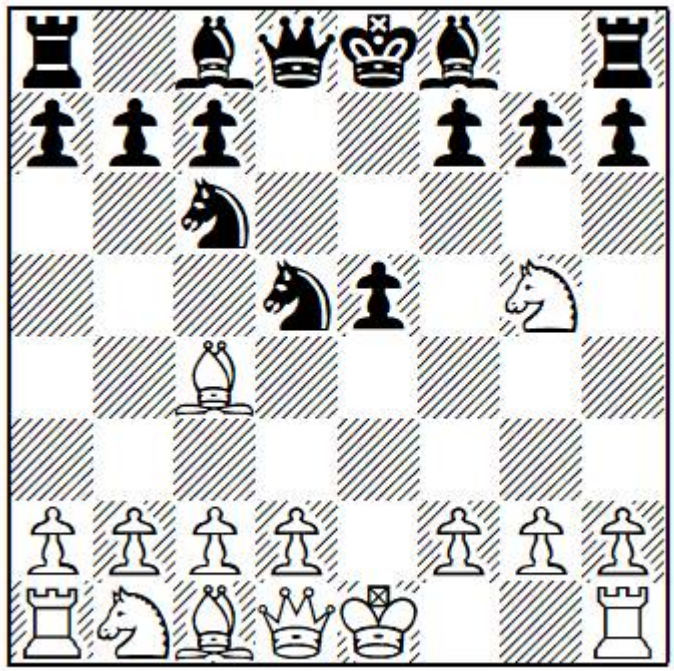
We are the pupil of all other chess players – not just the strong. From the powerful, we imitate and learn. We also learn from the weak (some of Bobby's simul opponents!), by noting their errors and avoiding a repetition of them in our own games. Most of Bobby's 1964 was spent in a North American tour of simultaneous displays. In fact, my long-time friend IM John Donaldson even wrote a book entirely devoted to this one tour! The games of this chapter focus on this year of simul games.

Game 40
R.J.Fischer-T.A.Rouse
Chicago (simul) 1964
Two Knights Defence

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bc4 Nf6

In 3 … Bc5 simul games, Bobby tended to bang out the Evans Gambit with 4 b4!?.

4 Ng5 d5 5 exd5 Nxd5



Today, under the guidance of the fun-sucking engines, we know this move is pretty much unplayable. The main line is 5 … Na5 6 Bb5+ c6 7 dxc6 bxc6, when Black receives full compensation for the sacrificed pawn. Alternatively, 5 … b5!? is the somewhat shady Ulvestad Variation, where White's only chance for an advantage is the counter-intuitive retro move 6 Bf1!.

6 d4!?

Hey, what is this? We are in that situation where we begin to read a few paragraphs of an interesting online article and then an annoying paywall pops up. Ambush Alert! Bobby bangs out the rarely played Lolli Attack, named after Giambattista Lolli, who was one of the greatest opening theory experts of the 18th Century.

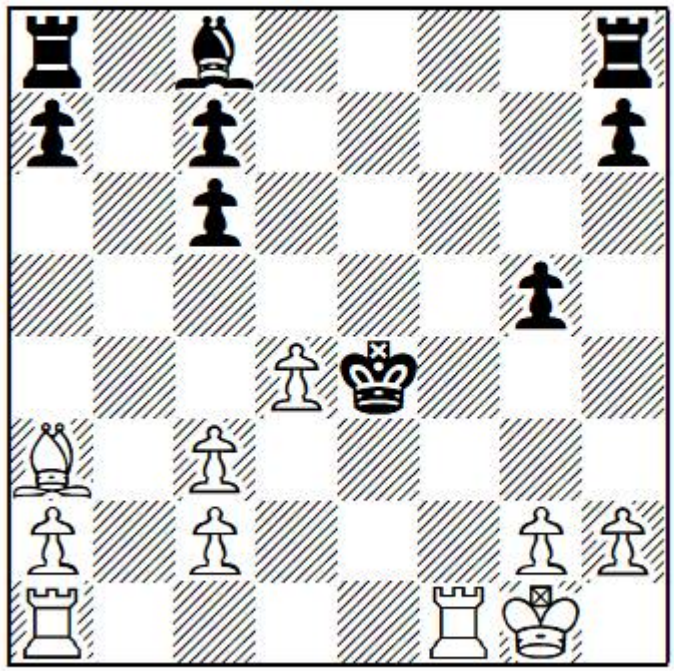
Surely, Fischer's opponents were only prepared for the Fried Liver Attack, which considered to be White's strongest continuation. 6 Nxf7! Kxf7 7 Qf3+ Ke6 8 Nc3 used to be loads of fun in the good old days of my childhood. Unfortunately, the line is pretty much buried in the theoretical graveyard for Black.

I remember scoring an upset against an adult at the Lakeshore Chess Club in 1969 (back then, *anytime* a kid beat an adult, it was considered an upset, as opposed to the prodigy-infested present-day, when the exact reverse is true!) with 6 Qf3? Qxg5 7 Bxd5 Qf6? (the engines of today tell us that my move is refuted by 7 … Nd4! 8 Qxf7+ Kd8, when it is White who is busted) 8 Qxf6 gxf6 9 Bxc6+ bxc6, C.Lakdawala-S.Sort, Montreal 1969. At this point, the tiny and confused Lakdawala brain was under the misassumption that White was winning easily, due to the damage inflicted upon Black's structure. It never occurred to me that Black's bishop pair and greater freedom meant that the game was in reality in dynamic balance.

6 … exd4?

a) 6 … Nxd4 is considered better. Even there, White holds an advantage after 7 c3 b5! 8 Bd3 h6 9 Nxf7 Kxf7 10 cxd4.

b) 6 … Be7 is met by 7 Nxf7! Kxf7 8 Qf3+ Ke6 9 Nc3 Bb4 (9 … Nxd4 10 Bxd5+ is awful for Black) 10 Bxd5+ Kd6 11 Bxc6 Bxc3+ 12 bxc3 bxc6 13 Ba3+ Ke6 14 0-0 (the opposite-coloured bishops are not going to help Black hold a draw here!) 14 … Qd5 15 Qh5 e4 16 Qh4 g5 17 Qh5 Qf5 18 f3! Qg6 (or 18 … e3 19 Rae1 Qg6 20 Qxg6+ hxg6 21 Rxe3+ Kf6 22 Rfe1 with two extra pawns and a continuing attack) 19 Qg4+ Qf5 20 Qxf5+ Kxf5 21 fxe4+ Kxe4 (obviously Black wasn't going to save the game by declining the e4-pawn either)



Exercise (calculation): This isn't the toughest exercise in the book.

Without moving the pieces, find White's forced mate in three.

Answer: 22 Rae1+ Kd5 23 Re5+ and it's mate on c5 next move, R.J.Fischer-F.Gruenberg, Chicago (simul) 1964.

7 0-0

Black is already dead lost:

1. He is grossly behind in development.

2. The position is wide open, which enhances White's power of number 1 on the list.

3. Black must watch out for tricks on f7 and d5, based on Nxf7 and Qf3+, just as in the normal Fried Liver Attack.

7 … Be7

After 7 … Be6 8 Re1 Qd7 9 Nxf7! Kxf7 10 Qf3+ Kg8 11 Rxe6! Black can resign.

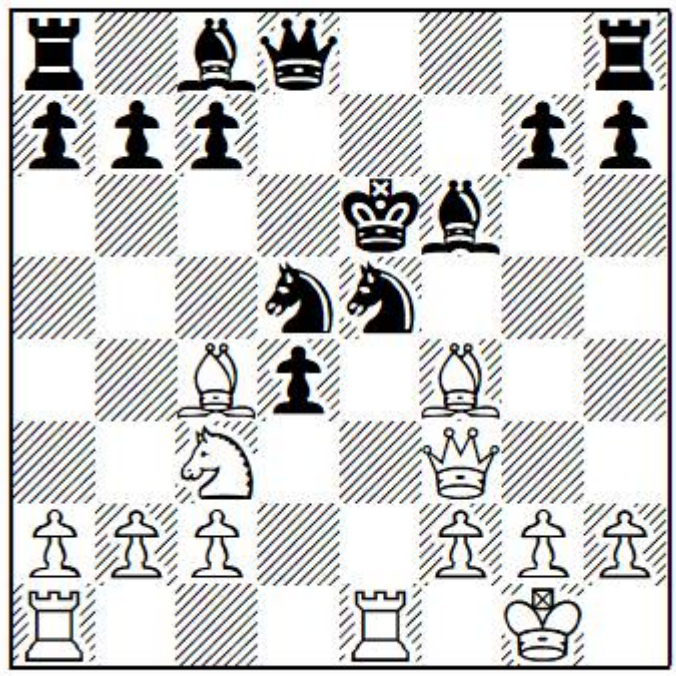
8 Nxf7!

What we essentially reach is an Enhanced Fried Liver Attack.

8 … Kxf7 9 Qf3+ Ke6

Up and at 'em! 9 … Ke8 10 Bxd5 Ne5 11 Qh5+ Ng6 12 Be4 Qd6 13 Na3 c6 14 Nc4 Qf6 15 Ne5! is quite awful for Black.

10 Re1+ Ne5 11 Bf4 Bf6 12 Nc3!



Rise and shine. Let's get the kids out of bed. Bobby finds a powerful line-opening sacrifice, which brutally exposes Black's king.

12 … c6

12 … dxc3 is met by 13 Rxe5+! Bxe5 14 Re1 c6 15 Rxe5+ and Black is mated.

13 Rxe5+! Kf7

Or 13 … Bxe5 14 Re1 again.

14 Nxd5 Be6

Or 14 … Bxe5 15 Bxe5+ Ke8 16 Nc7+ Kd7 17 Be6+ Ke7 18 Qf7 mate.

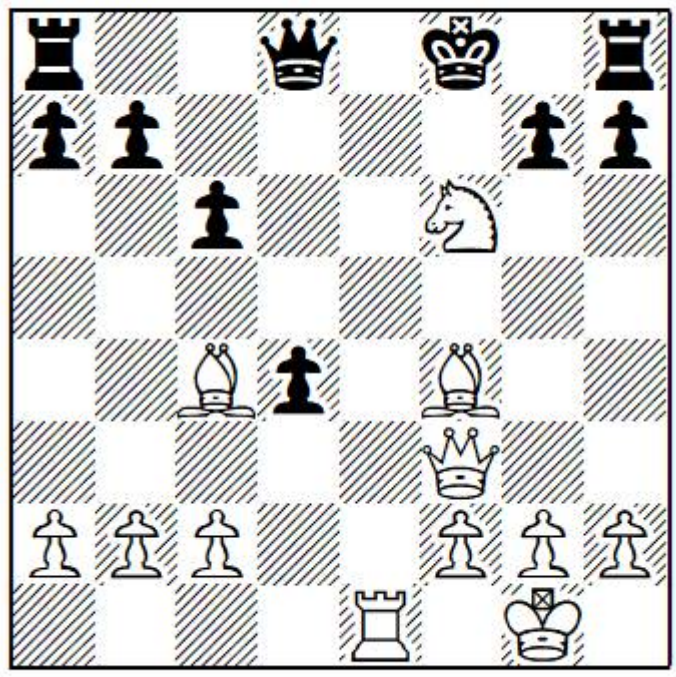
15 Rxe6! Kxe6

In this game, the black king's dance moves are more impressive than Michael Jackson's in any of his concerts. After 15 … cxd5 16 Bxd5 Kf8 17 Rae1 Black is mated in six.

16 Nxf6+ Ke7

16 … Kxf6 17 Re1 Qd7 18 Bg5+ (moving the bishop to d2 or c1 also forces mate in the same number of moves) 18 … Kg6 (or 18 … Kxg5 19 Re5+) 19 Bd3+ Kxg5 20 Re5+ mates in two.

17 Re1+ Kf8



Exercise (calculation): It's time for the crossing of the "t's" and the dotting of

the “i’s”. White has a happy choice of short mates. All you need to do is find

one of them.

18 Qa3+ 1-0

Answers:

a) 18 Nd7+! Qxd7 19 Bd6 mate.

b) 18 Nxh7+! Rxh7 19 Bd6 mate.

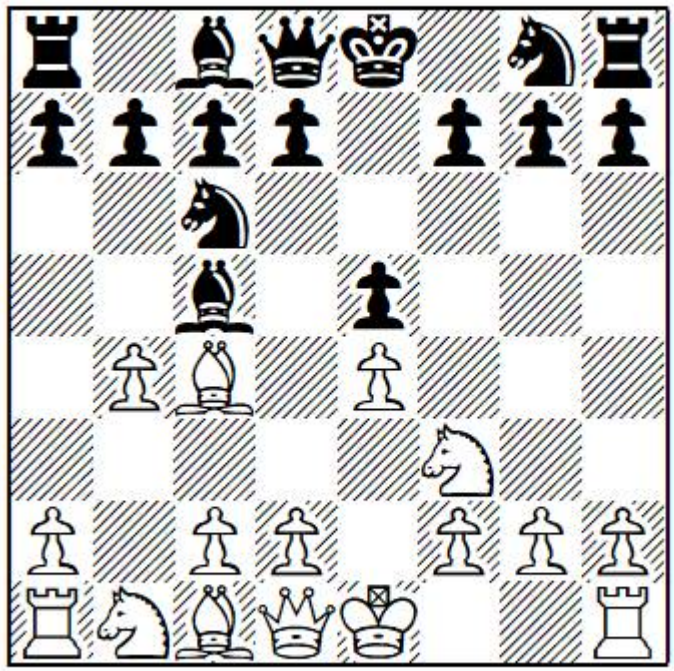
c) 18 Bd6+! Qxd6 (or 18 … Qe7 19 Bxe7 mate) 19 Nd7 mate or 19 Nxh7 mate.

d) 18 Qa3+ is mate in three: 18 … c5 19 Qxc5+ Qe7 20 Qxe7 mate.

Apparently, 18 Qh5 and 18 Ng8!? mate in three as well.

Game 41
R.J.Fischer-A.Janushkovsky
Davis (simul) 1964
Evans Gambit

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bc4 Bc5 4 b4!?

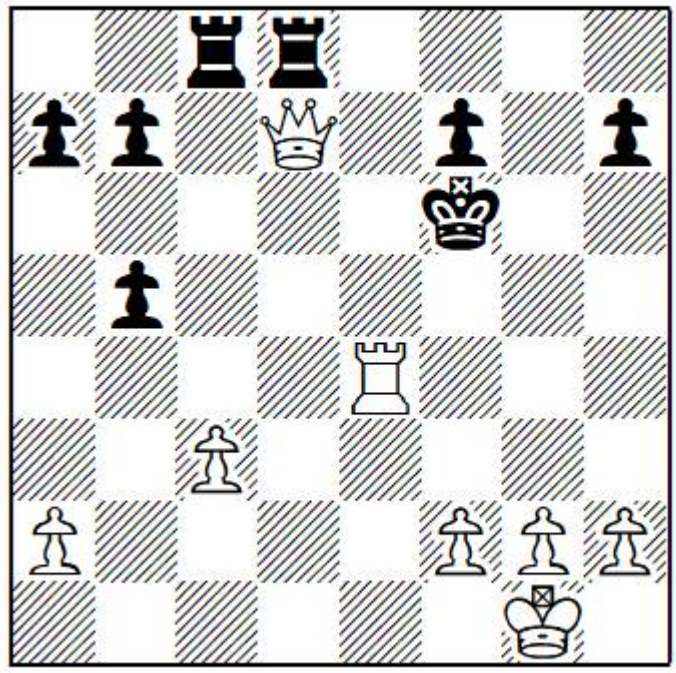


Although Bobby didn't often play opening gambits in tournaments or matches, in a simul setting he can be placed in the "recreational user" category of such drugs. As you may have guessed, Bobby didn't regard his simul opponent's defensive ability all that highly. He bangs out the Evans Gambit, which back then felt simultaneously completely plausible/totally unsound. Bobby guessed correctly that such a line removes a possibly booked up Lopez-studying simul opponent from the familiar, leaving them to their own devices. These were pre-engine, pre-database days, when chess players relied on outdated books and their own counsel.

4 … Bxb4 5 c3 Ba5

Another game saw 5 … Be7 6 d4 d6 7 dxe5 Nxe5 (7 … Bg4! 8 Qb3 Bxf3 9 Bxf7+ Kf8 10 gxf3 Nxe5 11 Bxg8 Rxg8 is no worse for Black) 8 Nxe5 dxe5 9 Qh5! (double attack) 9 … g6 10 Qxe5 Nf6 11 Ba3 Rf8? (11 … Be6 was necessary) 12 0-0 Ng4 13 Qg3 Bxa3 14 Nxa3 Qe7 15 Bb5+ c6 16 Nc4! Qe6? (Black had to try 16 … cxb5! 17 Nd6+ Kd7 18 Rfd1 Kc6, when 19 c4 b4 20 a3 still gives White a strong attack for the piece) 17 Rad1 cxb5 18 Qc7 Bd7 19 Nd6+ Ke7 20 Nf5+ gxf5

21 exf5 Rac8 22 Rxd7+ Qxd7 23 f6+ Nxf6 24 Re1+ Ne4 25 Rxe4+ Kf6 26 Qxd7 Rfd8



Exercise (calculation): It's painfully clear that Black's attempt at a back rank

mate is doomed to failure, since his undefended king is going down first.

Without moving the pieces, do you see the mate in four?

Answer: 27 Qe7+! (27 Rf4+ leads to mate in five) 27 … Kg6 28 Rg4+ Kf5 29 Rg5+ Kf4 30 Qe5 mate. Instead, Bobby won even more quickly with 27 Qg4 (covering Black's mating threat on d1), since Black now resigned: 1-0 R.J.Fischer-O.Celle, Davis (clock simul) 1964.

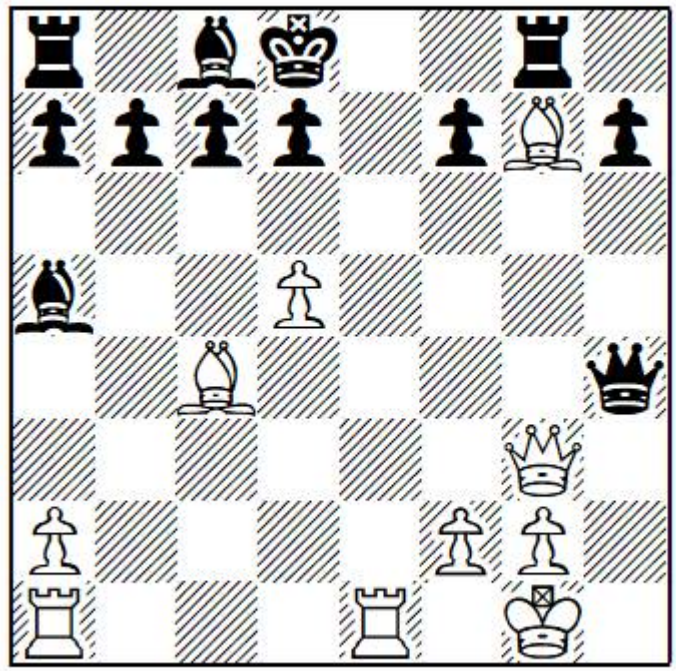
6 d4 exd4!?

In the olden days, we would go over some completely inaccurately played game by Anderssen or Morphy and then consider ourselves "experts" on a line, which is no different

than reading the novel *Shogun* and then claiming that we are experts in ancient Japanese culture. When it comes to rash action, it's so much easier to do than undo. This is the unwise, "let's grab all of White's pawns and fall way behind in development!" course. Joy-killing Emanuel Lasker removed White's fun from the Evans Gambit with his suggestion 6 … d6! If 7 Qb3 Qd7! 8 dxe5 Bb6!, when … Na5 is in the air and Black stands at least equal.

7 0-0 d6

Bobby's most famous game with the Evans went 7 … dxc3?! (grabbing the second pawn is very greedy) 8 Qb3 Qe7? (here 8 … Qf6 is correct) 9 Nxc3 Nf6? (but 9 … Qb4 10 Bxf7+ Kd8 11 Nd5! and 9 … Bxc3 10 Qxc3 Nf6 11 Ba3 d6 12 e5 Ne4 13 Qc2! also look terrible for Black) 10 Nd5! Nxd5 (nor can Black survive 10 … Qxe4 11 Bg5) 11 exd5 Ne5 (11 … Nd8 12 Ba3 d6 13 Qa4+ wins a piece) 12 Nxe5 Qxe5 13 Bb2 Qg5 14 h4! Qxh4 (or 14 … Qh6 15 Qa3! with deadly dual threats of chopping Black's bishop or giving a rook check on e1) 15 Bxg7 Rg8 16 Rfe1+! Kd8 (16 … Bxe1 17 Rxe1+ doesn't alter anything) 17 Qg3!

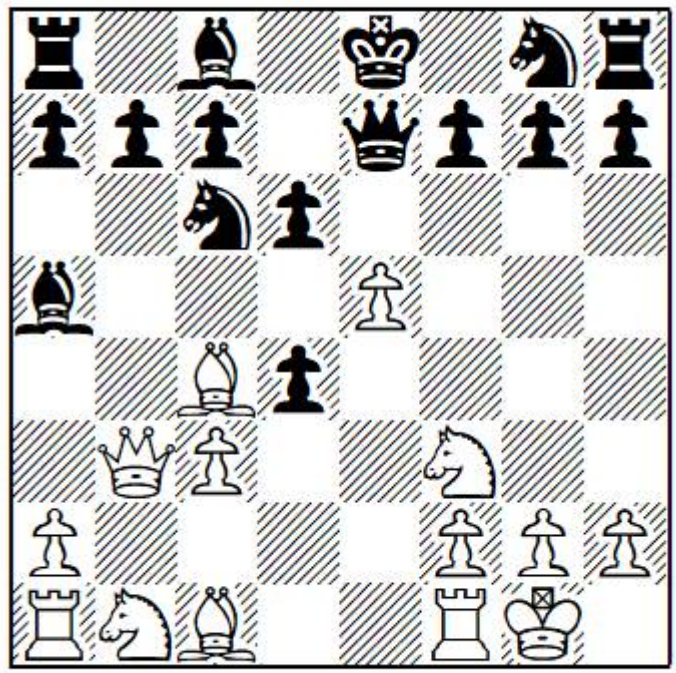


1-0 R.J.Fischer-R.Fine, New York 1963, in view of 17 … Qxg3 18 Bf6 mate.

8 Qb3 Qe7?

8 … Be6! is Black's best defensive hope. If 8 … Qd7? 9 cxd4 Bb6 10 Bb5 Kf8 11 d5 Na5, R.J.Fischer-E.Osbun, Davis (simul) 1964, then 12 Qb2 also leaves Black is great difficulties.

9 e5!



Principle: *Open the position and create confrontation when leading in development.*

9 … dxe5?

Black had to try 9 … Nxe5 10 Nxe5 Qxe5! 11 Bxf7+ Kf8 12 cxd4 Qxd4 13 Bb2 Qg4.

10 Ba3?!

Simply 10 cxd4! is stronger.

10 … Qf6 11 cxd4?!

Fischer should have continued to develop with 11 Nbd2! Nge7 12 Ne4 Qf4 13 Nfg5! 0-0 14 g3 Qf5 15 f4!, when White targets f7, with the initiative.

11 … e4?

This move fails to close attacking lanes. Instead, 11 … exd4! 12 Nbd2 Bxd2 13 Nxd2 Nge7 14 Ne4 Qg6 15 Rfe1 0-0 16 Ng3 Na5! 17 Qb5 Nxc4 18 Bxe7 Be6! 19 Bxf8 Rxf8 20 Qxb7 d3! 21 Qxc7 h5 offers Black full compensation for the sacrificed exchange.

12 Ne5!

Now f7 is under heavy fire.

12 … Nh6

Captures loses more quickly:

a) 12 … Nxd4? 13 Bxf7+ Kd8 14 Qd5+ forces Black's resignation.

b) 12 … Nxe5? 13 dxe5 with threats at f7 and also Qa4+, winning the loose a5-bishop.

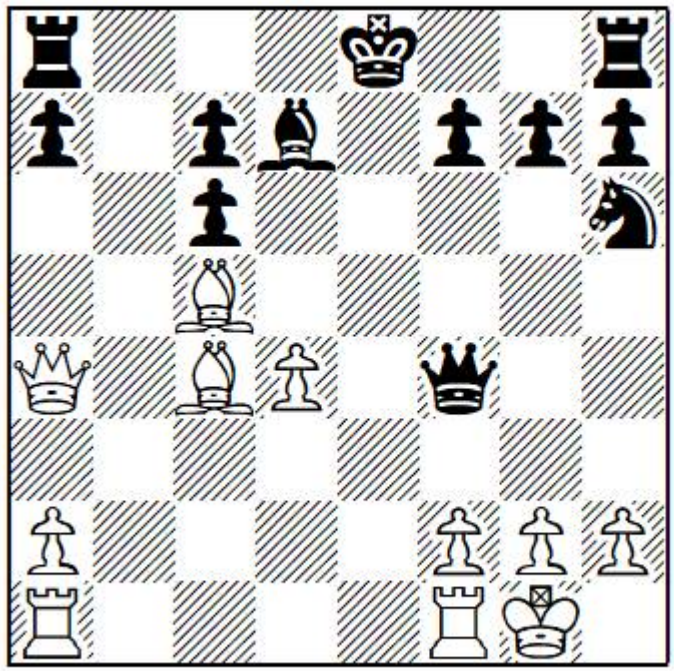
13 Nxc6

The immediate 13 Qa4! was even stronger.

13 … bxc6 14 Qa4! Bb6 15 Nc3 Bd7 16 Nxe4 Qf4 17 Nc5 Bxc5

Of course, White's d-pawn is indirectly protected: 17 … Qxd4?? hangs the queen to 18 Bxf7+.

18 Bxc5



It's clear that Black's king won't survive, since he is stuck in mid-board with no safe haven.

18 … Nf5 19 Rfe1+ Kd8 20 Bxf7 Nd6 21 Be6

Fischer chips away at the defender of c6.

21 … Re8

21 … Rf8 22 Bxd7! Qxf2+ 23 Kh1 Kxd7 24 Bxd6! cxd6 25 d5 leaves Black's king fatally exposed.

22 g3 Qf6

If 22 … Qg5 then 23 Bxd6! Rxe6 (or 23 … cxd6 24 Bxd7 Kxd7 25 Rxe8 Rxe8 26 Qxa7+) 24 Rxe6 Bxe6 25 Qxc6 Rc8 26 Bxc7+! wins.

23 Bxd7 Kxd7 24 d5

It just gets worse and worse for Black's king.

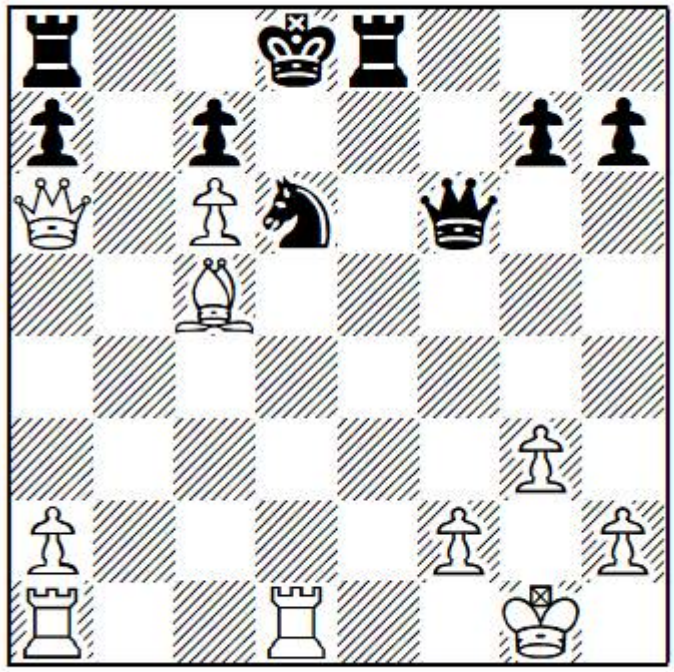
24 … Nb5

24 … Nf5 wouldn't have saved Black: 25 dxc6+ Qxc6 26 Rad1+ Nd6 27 Qg4+ Kd8 28 Qg5+ wins.

25 Red1

25 Qg4+! is even more deadly. After 25 … Kd8 26 Rxe8+ Kxe8 27 Re1+ Kf7 28 Qd7+ Kg6 29 Be7! *Stockfish* calls mate in ten. There is nothing wrong with 29 Re6 either.

25 … Kc8 26 Qa6+ Kd8 27 dxc6+ Nd6



Exercise (planning): White has access to a simple two-step plan to force the win.

Answer: Capture the knight with either bishop or rook.

28 Bxd6!

28 Rxd6+! is also crushing.

28 … cxd6 29 Qb7! 1-0

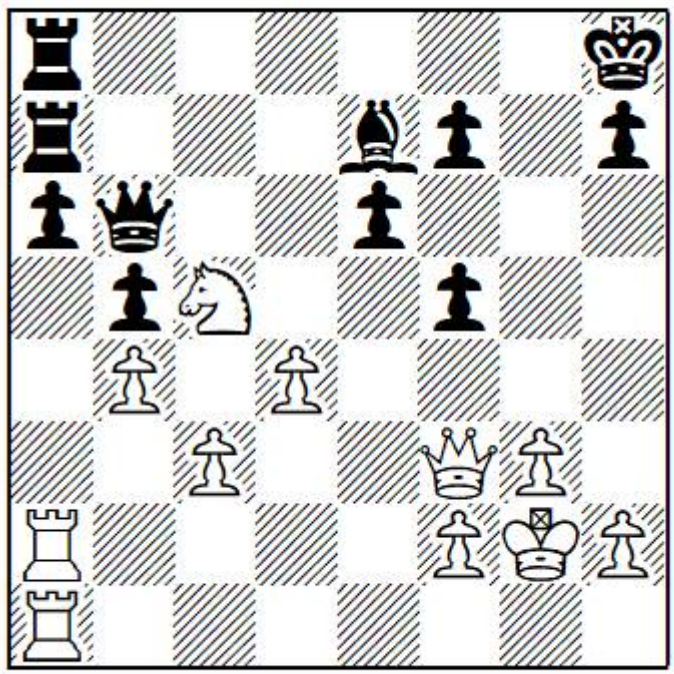
Step 2: Double attack on d7 and a8.

"There you are, Poppet!" squeals the queen in delight, as she finds her brother cringing in his now not-so-secret hiding place. For players at Fischer's level, repeated application of combinational patterns is so embedded in their minds that such

basic patterns find the player, rather than the other way around.

Game 42
R.J.Fischer-P.De Gruchy
Montreal (simul) 1964

What? Phil De Gruchy played Bobby Fischer? Mr. De Gruchy was one of the stronger players in the Lakeshore Chess Club in Montreal, and a mentor, who never even mentioned to kid-Cyrus that he had met Fischer in a simul. To Mein Papa's great dismay, Mr. De G introduced wee-Cyrus to a winning response to 1 e4?! with 1 … e6!!, which he (truthfully) claimed was a winning position for Black! The Governor, Fred Lakdawala, who was a staunch member of the "1 e4 *must* be met by 1 … e5!" school, didn't accept the change well. It drove my dad crazy that I took up the French and disdainfully dumped his suggested double king's pawn lines.



Exercise (planning): Bobby generated a bit of a bind and has access to

two favourable plans. Find one of them.

Answer #1: The first is a combinational solution by exploiting the overloaded status of the a7-rook.

29 Nd7!

Answer #2: 29 g4! is the strategic version and every bit as favourable as Fischer's plan.

29 … Qc7

Obviously 29 … Rxd7 drops the rook on a8.

30 Ne5

Next, move the knight to e5, gaining a tempo via an attack on f7.

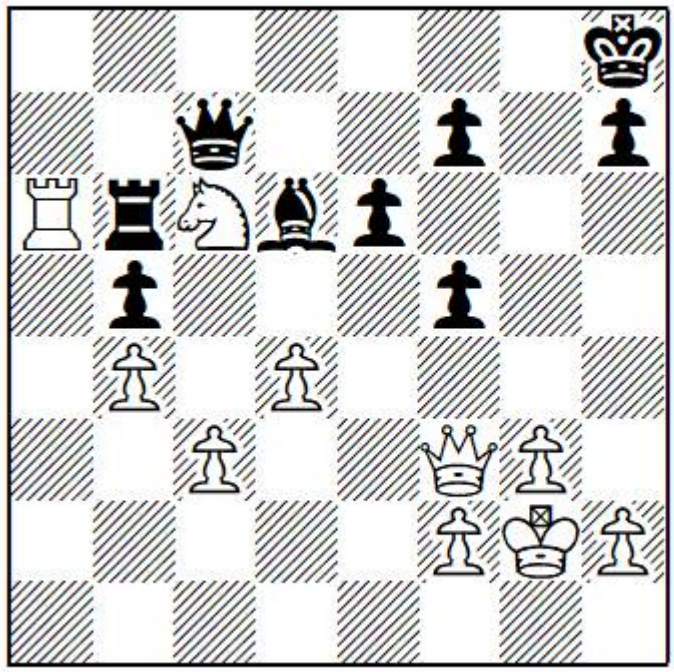
30 … Bd6

30 … Bf6 is also met by 31 Nc6.

31 Nc6!

Step 3: Removal of the guard. Black's a6-pawn falls.

31 … Rb7 32 Rxa6 Rxa6 33 Rxa6 Rb6



34 Rxb6

Bobby was not the type who favoured raids in the dark, with night-vision goggles. This move reveals Fischer's style, which favoured clean positions with simplification. Tal or Kasparov would undoubtedly have tried to hunt down Black's king with the more complicated 34 Ra8+ Kg7 35 d5!.

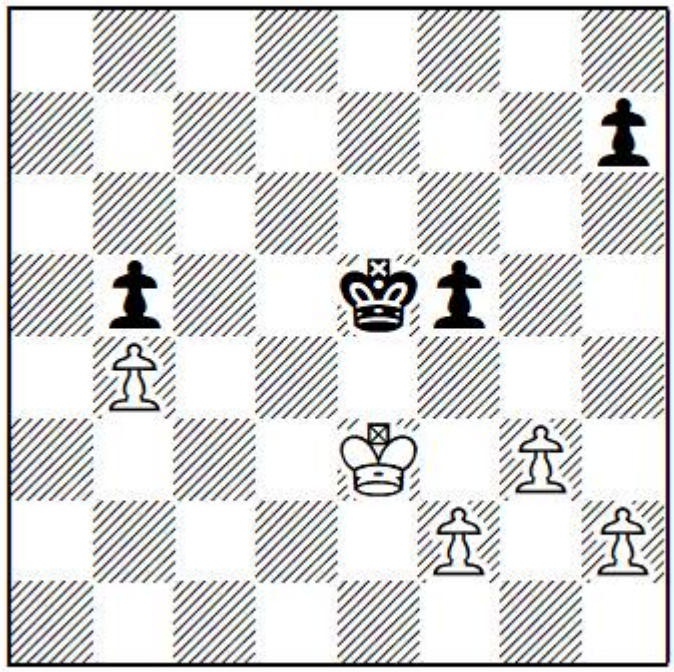
34 … Qxb6 35 d5

The d4-square is cleared for the knight while, simultaneously, Black's king becomes more exposed after a swap on e6.

35 … Kg7 36 dxe6 fxe6 37 Nd4 Be5 38 Qe3! Bxd4

The king and pawn ending is lost for Black; but 38 … Qd6 39 f4 is no good either, while 38 … Kf6 39 Qh6+ Kf7 40 Qxh7+ Bg7 41 Qh5+ Kf8 42 Qd1 leaves White two pawns up.

39 Qxd4+ Qxd4 40 cxd4 Kf6 41 Kf3 e5 42 dxe5+ Kxe5 43 Ke3



Black's king position is little comfort in Mr. De Gruchy's time of hardship and this factor alone is not enough to save him.

43 … Kd5 44 Kd3 h5 45 f4

Another option is to create a passed g-pawn with 45 f3 Ke5 46 h3 and g3-g4 next.

45 … Kc6 46 Kd4 Kd6 47 h3 1-0

Zugzwang. Black's king must give way.

Game 43
R.J.Fischer-I.Zalys
Montreal (simul) 1964
King's Gambit

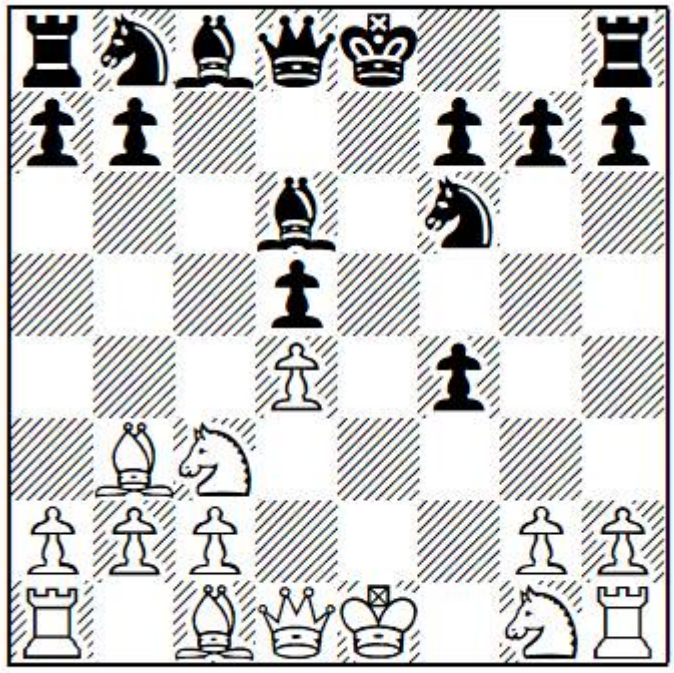
I played Ignas Zalys once in the mid-1970s. The encounter ended with a bizarre mix-up where we both went to the scoreboard to mark up our win! What happened was that he played a combination which won the exchange for a pawn (I had full compensation!). Then I pointed to his clock after his flag had fallen to claim the win on time. He somehow

interpreted this as me resigning the game! The mix-up was fixed when the director saw that Zalys had actually lost on time. This was a huge upset, since at the time I was rated just below 1800 and he was a Master.

1 e4 e5 2 f4

As we already noted, in simul games, Bobby was a man of extremes in the opening.

2 … exf4 3 Bc4 Nf6 4 Nc3 c6! 5 Bb3 d5 6 exd5 cxd5 7 d4 Bd6



8 Nge2!

Otherwise White may not get his sacrificed pawn back after 8 Nf3?! Qe7+! 9 Ne2, where Black has a strong unplayed idea with 9 … Rg8!, intending … g7-g5 next. White can't afford to weaken with h2-h4 and Black may even have a winning position after 10 0-0 g5 11 Re1 Be6 12 Nc3 Nc6 13 Nxd5 Nxd5 14 Bxd5 0-0-0!.

8 … f3?!

This move, which breaks up White's kingside structure, looks good on the surface. We ask: does it really constitute

damage if White castles queenside and then uses the open g-file against Black? It's probably better just to castle.

9 gxf3 Nh5?!

Black can't afford this indulgence and should just keep developing.

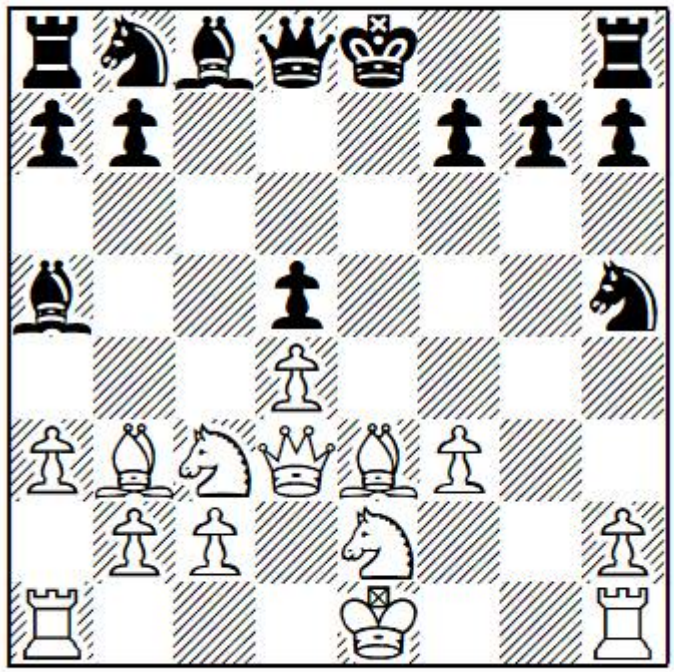
10 Be3!

This takes the sting out of a black queen check on h4. 10 Nxd5?! is risky. Black can either give a queen check or continue to develop.

10 … Bb4!?

What about your other pieces? Black is in multiple violation of the principle: *Don't move the same piece more than once in the opening, unless necessary.* 10 … 0-0 looks correct.

11 a3 Ba5 12 Qd3!



Fischer cuts off … Bf5 and prepares to castle long.

12 … a6?!

Mr. Zalys, I'm asking you as a personal favour: please develop some of your other pieces!

13 0-0-0 Be6 14 Ng3

It's understandable that Fischer wants to fix his kingside structure and open the h-file. Still, his choice wasn't optimal. 14 Rhg1! g6 15 Rg5! looks stronger, going after d5, since 15 … f6? is crushingly met by the strategic exchange sacrifice 16 Rxh5! gxh5 17 Nf4 Bf7 18 Ncxd5 and Black is completely lost.

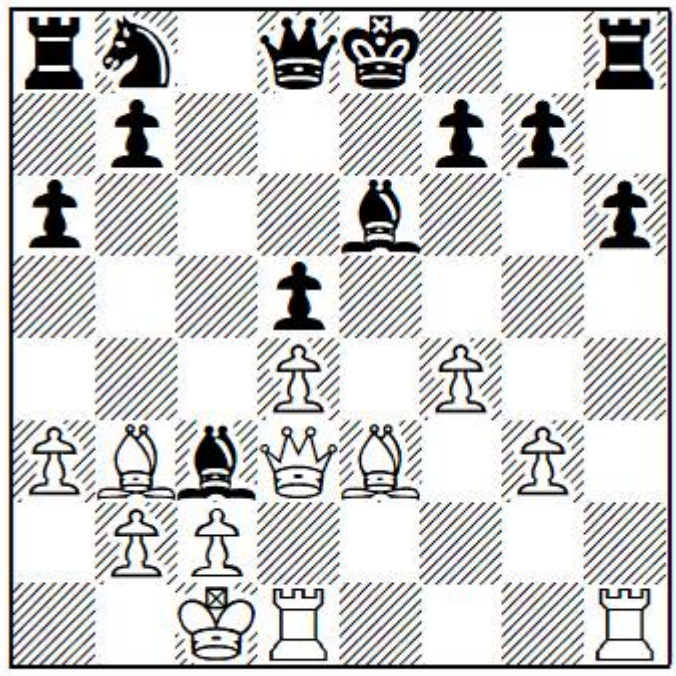
14 … Nxg3 15 hxg3 h6?!

I'm begging you to bring out a piece! The immediate 15 … Bxc3 was better, inducing White to recapture with the queen, and then 16 Qxc3 Nc6.

16 f4!

Threatening f4-f5.

16 … Bxc3



17 Qxc3?

When dealing with a dangerous enemy, it's unwise to do a partial job in killing him. Black is suddenly okay after this auto-recapture, whereas the non-recapture 17 f5! leaves Black hopelessly behind in development.

17 … Nd7?

17 … Nc6 is correct and equal.

18 g4?!

A tempting, yet unnecessary pawn sacrifice. The correct way forward was 18 Rde1! (threat: f4-f5!) 18 … 0-0 19 Qd3! (threatening to push the f-pawn again) 19 … Qf6 (if 19 … f5 20 Bd2 Qf6 21 Qf3 Nb6 22 Ba5 Nc4 23 Bxc4 dxc4 24 d5 Bd7 25 Bc3, Black is busted) 20 Rh5! (f4-f5 is on again!) 20 … Bg4 21 Rxd5, when Black is a pawn down and lost.

18 … Bxg4 19 Rdg1?!

The advantage begins to swing to Black. The strategic exchange sacrifice 19 Bxd5! Bxd1 20 Rxd1 is more dynamic, when White's monster bishops and open lines offer full compensation.

19 … Nf6 20 Bf2 Ne4?

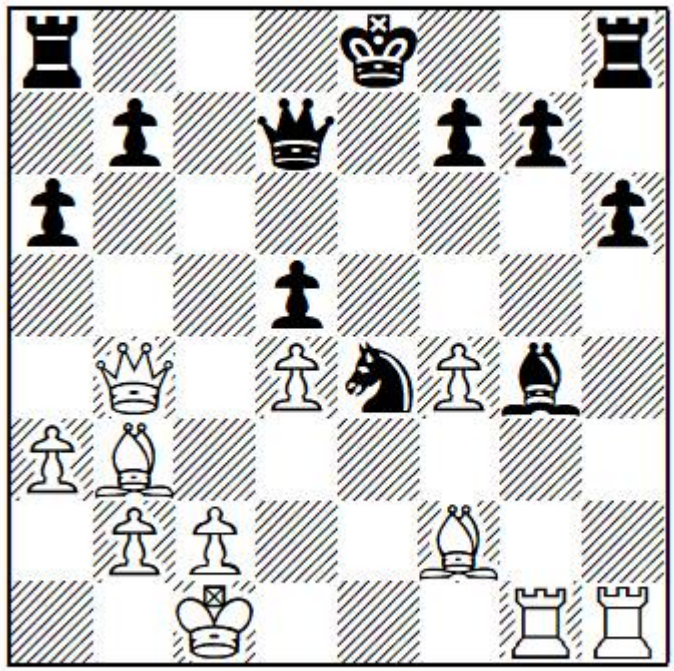
There's no hurry to put the knight here. Instead, after 20 … Qd7! 21 f5!? Qxf5 22 Bh4 Ne4 23 Qb4 g5 24 Rxg4! Qxg4 25 Bxd5 Qf4+ 26 Kb1 a5! 27 Qxb7 0-0 Black stands better in the complications.

21 Qb4?!

For the simul giver the confusion arising from playing so many boards makes it difficult to distinguish Nirvana from Samsara. Here 21 Qe1! Qd7 22 Rxg4! Qxg4 23 Bxd5 f5 24 Bxb7 laves White with the better chances.

21 … Qd7?!

He should go for 21 … Nxf2! 22 Rh2 Qd7! 23 Rxf2 0-0-0! with an extra pawn and a slight advantage to Black.



Exercise (planning): White is still in the game but needs to find the correct plan.

22 Bh4?

Threatening Bxd5, but this is too slow.

Answer: Fischer had no choice but to go for 22 Rxg4! Qxg4 (crucially, 22 … Nxf2? fails to 23 Rg5! f5 24 Re1+ Ne4 25 Rxe4+! dxe4 26 Rg6 and the rook gets in round the back) 23 Bxd5! Qxf4+ 24 Kb1 Nd6! (not 24 … Nxf2?? 25 Re1+ or 24 … Qxf2?? 25 Bxe4 and Black is busted) 25 Be3 Qf6 26 Bxb7 0-0! 27 Bxa8 Rxa8 with at least even chances for White, since his majority can be pushed forward more easily than Black's.

22 … a5!

This little pawn push disrupts all White's plans and basically wins the game for Black.

23 Qe1

If 23 Qe7+ Qxe7 24 Bxe7 Kxe7 25 Rxg4 then 25 … a4! 26 Ba2 (26 Bxd5? Nf6 forks and wins material) 26 … g5! leaves White a pawn down in the ending and busted.

23 … f5

Fischer's tricks on d5 and all other forms of counterplay have been shut down. Black's is a pawn up with a safe king, while Fischer's own king may soon come under attack.

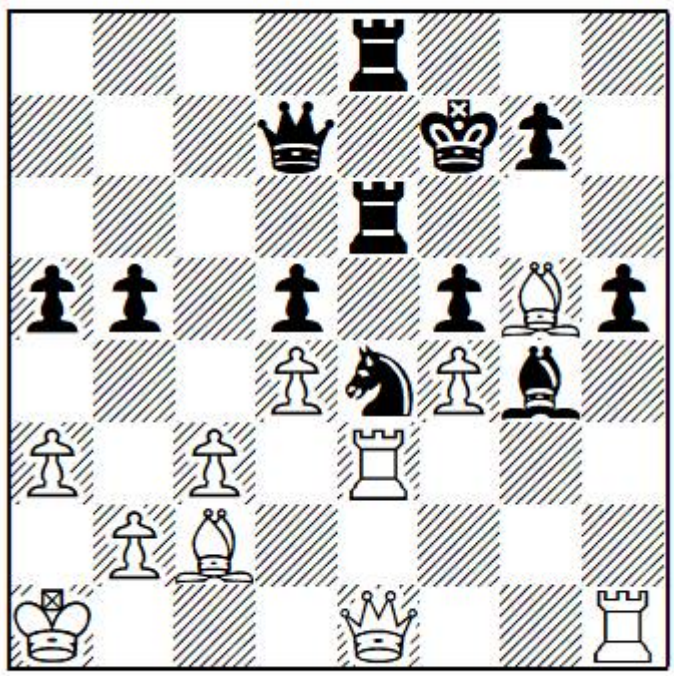
24 Kb1 b5 25 Rg3 h5!

White can only wait.

26 Bg5 Kf7 27 Re3 Rhe8 28 c3 Ra6 29 Bc2 Rae6 30 Ka1??

I have a bad feeling that Bobby didn't exactly think his last move through. He covered against Black's discovered check on d2 but forgot about a second threat.

He had to try 30 Bxe4 Rxe4 31 Rxe4 fxe4. Although deliverance will be unlikely, work is still required for Black to convert to a full point, due to the opposite-coloured bishops.



Exercise (planning): Bobby blundered in an already hopeless position. Prove it.

Answer: Just chop the g5-bishop, which wins a full piece.

30 … Nxg5! 0-1

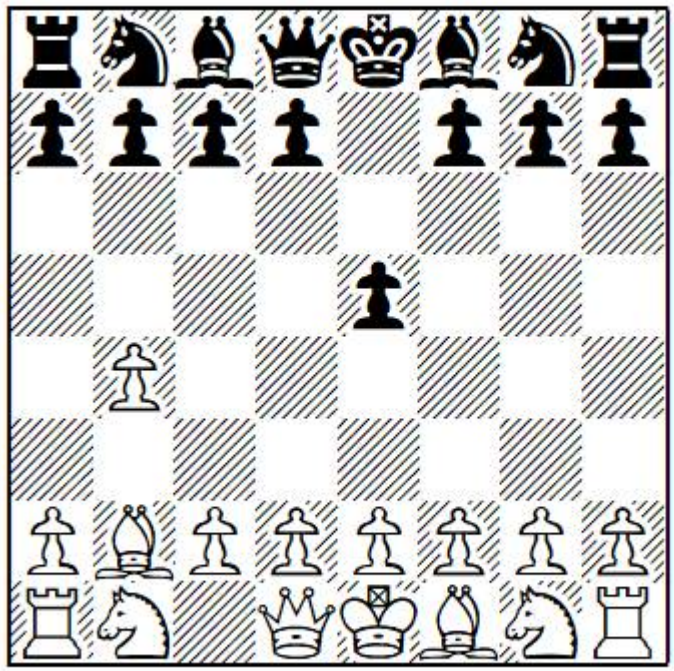
The Special Forces "Extraction" team kidnaps the dark-squared bishop and whisks him away as if he never existed.

Game 44
R.J.Fischer-J.Gloger
Cleveland (simul) 1964
Orangutan Opening

1 b4!?

Charlton Heston would agree: "Take your stinking paws off that b-pawn, you damned dirty ape!" It's clear that Bobby is fooling around. There are some who believe the Orangutan isn't such a great opening for White. I am not a member of that "some" and believe it is completely sound. On the rare occasion I have tried the opening, I play a delayed version with 1 Nf3 Nf6 2 b4 or 1 … d5 2 b4.

1 … e5 2 Bb2



2 … f6!?

This is a bizarre-looking way to back up the e5-pawn.

a) My first ever rated tournament win went 2 … Nc6? 3 b5!! Nd4 4 e3!! Ne6 5 Bxe5 and White converted in Capablanca fashion against his 1200 rated opponent, C.Lakdawala-J.Pauley, Toronto 1973. My first rating at age 12 came in at an astoundingly high 1150 and the world chess community immediately recognized that a prodigy was born.

b) 2 … Bxb4 (Black gets a lead in development in return for White's central control) 3 Bxe5 Nf6 4 h3!? (this indicates that White plans to shift the bishop to another diagonal) 4 … Nc6 5 Bh2 0-0 6 e3 Re8 7 Nf3 d5 8 Be2 Bf5 9 0-0 Qd7 10 a4 Bd6 11 Bxd6 Qxd6 12 Na3 a6 13 c3 Ne4 14 Nc2 Ne7 15 Ncd4 Bg6 16 c4 c5 17 Nb3 Rad8 18 cxd5 Nxd5 19 Na5? (19 Qc1 is correct) 19 … Qc7 20 Nc4 Ndc3! 21 Qe1 Nxe2+ 22 Qxe2 b5 23 axb5 axb5 24 Na3 b4 25 Nc4 Bh5! 26 Ra2? (26 g4 had to be tried) 26 … Ng5 27 Rfa1 Nxf3+ 28 gxf3 Qc6 29 e4 Qf6 and White resigned in a few moves, H.Nakamura-C.Lakdawala, online blitz 2005. You may be asking: "What

about the 100,000 blitz games you lost to Hikaru?" My response is that those games weren't as important as this one.

c) 2 … d6 is also fully playable for Black.

3 e4!?

Bobby, obviously provoked by Black's last move, goes for a weird, delayed Evans Gambit! 3 a3 is obviously sounder but, as we already understand, Bobby didn't do sound in simul games.

3 … Bxb4 4 Bc4

Fischer banks on this bishop slicing through the light squares along the a2-g8 diagonal for compensation.

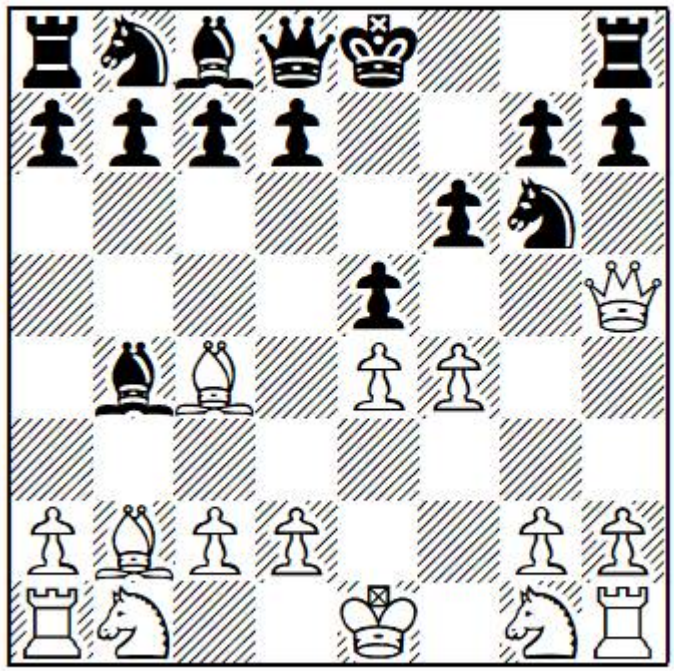
4 … Ne7 5 Qh5+!?

Patzer sees a check … ? The immediate 5 f4 is met by 5 … d5! 6 exd5 exf4 7 Qh5+ Ng6 with a messy position which looks okay for both sides.

5 … Ng6?!

After 5 … g6! 6 Qf3 (6 Qh6? d5! favours Black) 6 … Nec6 7 a3 Bc5 8 Ne2 d6 I don't see White's full compensation.

6 f4!?



It isn't often you see White combine an Evans Gambit *and* King's Gambit in a single game. Bobby isn't satisfied with 6 Ne2.

6 … exf4 7 Nf3

Ideas of Nh4 are in the air.

7 … Nc6?!

After 7 … Qe7! Black stands clearly better. White must avoid 8 0-0? Qc5+!, swapping queens with two extra pawns for Black.

8 Nc3?!

The immediate 8 Nh4?! is met by 8 … Qe7! 9 Bd5 Qf8! and if 10 Nxg6 hxg6 11 Qxg6+ Kd8 12 Qg4 g5, Black stands clearly better.

The best plan is 8 c3! Ba5 9 d4 Qe7 10 0-0, when White has good compensation for the two sacrificed pawns.

8 … Bxc3

Not bad, since it follows the principle: *Reduce the opponent's attacking force, when under attack*. Nevertheless,

stronger was 8 … Qe7! 9 0-0-0 Bxc3! 10 Bxc3 d6 11 d4 Bd7, followed by castling queenside, when White just doesn't get enough for the two pawns.

9 Bxc3 d6

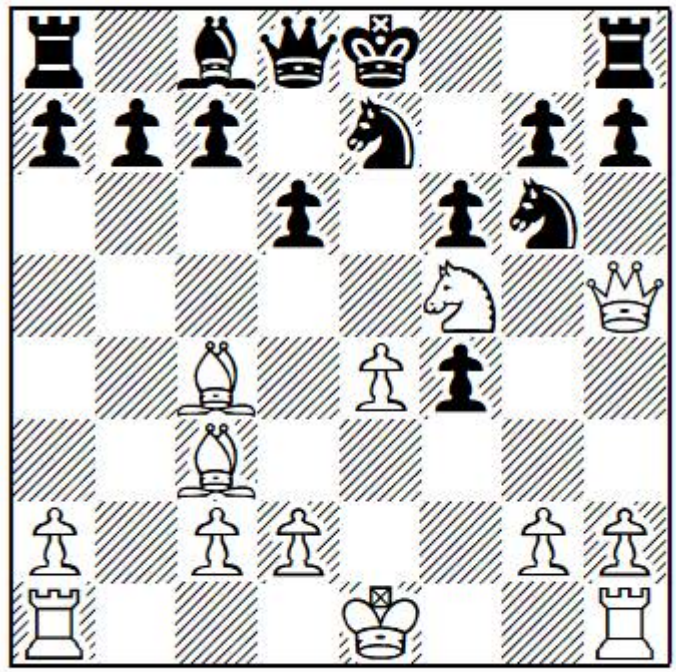
After 9 … Qe7! 10 0-0 Nce5! 11 Bb3 Nxf3+ 12 Rxf3 d6 13 Rxf4 Be6 Black remains a pawn up with a solid position.

10 Nh4 Nce7?

Mr. Gloger is obviously not listening to me. For the umpteenth time, … Qe7! is correct. 10 … Qe7! 11 0-0 Nce5 12 Rxf4 Kd8! 13 Nxg6 Nxg6 14 Rf2 Qxe4! 15 Bd3 Qg4 and I don't believe in White's full compensation.

11 Nf5?!

Too hasty. White should castle first, with Nf5 and possibly Rae1 to follow, when he gets ferocious compensation.



Exercise (planning): How should Black respond to Fischer's overly optimistic

last move?

Answer: Apply the principle: *Meet the opponent's wing attack with a central counter.*

11 … Kf8?

11 … d5! seizes the initiative: 12 Nxe7 (12 Nxg7+? is unsound: 12 … Kf7 13 exd5 Kxg7 14 g4 h6! 15 0-0-0 Qd6 and Black consolidates the extra piece) 12 … Qxe7 13 Qxd5 c6 14 Qd4 Be6, when White doesn't have enough to justify being a pawn down.

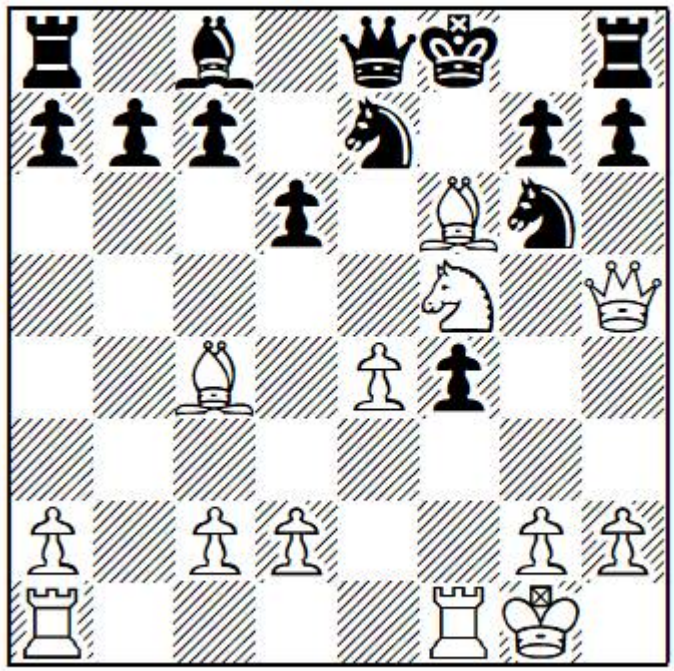
12 0-0?!

Bobby could have played at once 12 Bxf6! (annihilation of defensive barrier) 12 … Bxf5 (if 12 … gxf6? 13 Qh6+ Ke8 14 Ng7+ Kd7 15 Qh3+ Kc6 16 Bd5+! Nxd5 17 exd5+ Kxd5 18 Qf3+, Black's king will soon be fried) 13 exf5 gxf6 14 Qh6+ Ke8 15 fxg6 Nxg6 16 0-0 and White has a winning attack.

12 … Qe8?

12 … d5 was forced, to prevent White's coming combination.

13 Bxf6!



Now he sees the devastating piece sacrifice.

13 … Bxf5

The only try but not good enough.

a) 13 … gxf6? (this is the movie where White's queen is that typical suburban soccer mom, who is in reality a CIA assassin) 14 Qh6 mate.

b) 13 … Nxf5? 14 exf5 Ne5 15 Bxg7+! Kxg7 16 Qg5+ Kf8 17 Qf6+ Nf7 18 Rae1 Qd7 19 Bxf7 removes the defender of h8-rook and wins.

14 exf5 d5

Everything loses at this point. 14 … Ng8 15 fxg6 Nxf6 16 Rxf4 Qxg6 17 Qd5 Re8 18 Qxb7 is hopeless for Black.

15 fxg6 gxf6 16 Qh6+ Kg8 17 g7! 1-0

Since 17 … dxc4 18 gxh8Q+ Kxh8 19 Qxf6+ Kg8 20 Rae1 wins the house.

Game 45
R.J.Fischer-E.Travis

Houston (simul) 1964
Ruy Lopez

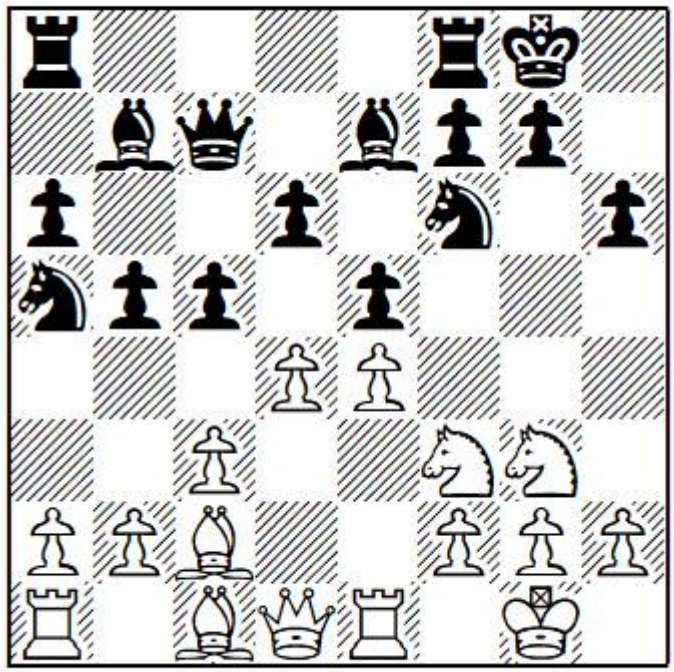
1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Ba4 Nf6 5 0-0 b5 6 Bb3 Be7 7 Re1 d6 8 c3 Na5 9 Bc2 c5 10 d4 Qc7 11 Nbd2 0-0 12 Nf1!?

Here 12 h3 would transpose to the main line Chigorin seen in Games 31 and 32. Bobby attempts to do without this move and is rewarded.

12 … Bb7?!

Now White essentially has an extra tempo, having omitted h2-h3 safely. 12 … cxd4 13 cxd4 Bg4 was correct and fine for Black.

13 Ng3 h6?!



Houston, we have a problem! Bad idea! This move virtually begs White into a future piece sacrifice on h6.

14 Nf5

14 d5! Bc8 15 Nh4! also looks dangerous for Black.

14 … Rac8?

Black should play 14 … Bc8 to challenge the knight.

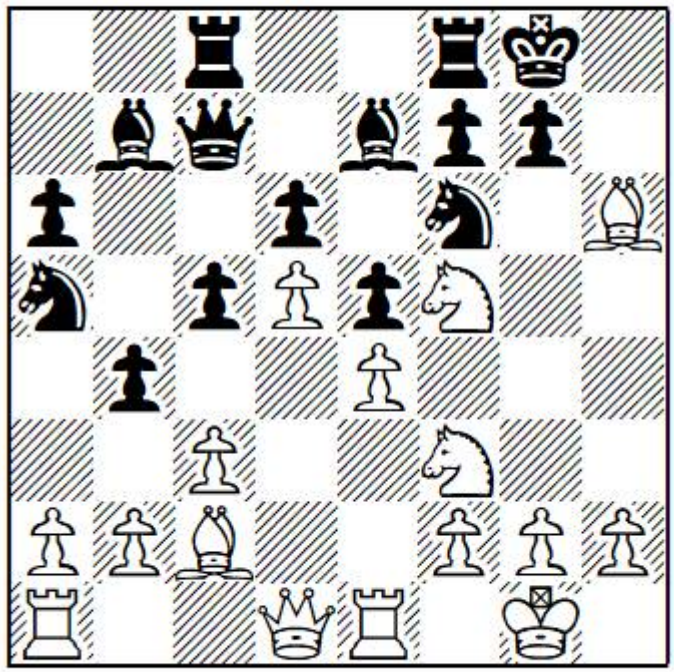
15 d5

An interesting decision. Bobby wants to shut down potential central counterplay before he sacrifices on h6. The immediate 15 Bxh6 was already very strong.

15 … b4??

I'm going with the Vulcan mind-meld with Mr. Travis. "My thoughts to your thoughts … " Why did you just allow the most obvious sacrifice in chess history? 15 … Kh7 was necessary, though Black is still in big trouble after 16 N3h4.

16 Bxh6!



Of course!

16 … gxh6

Nothing else is any better:

a) 16 … Ne8 17 Ba4! is crushing for White.

b) 16 … Nh5 17 N3h4 and it's obvious Black won't survive.

17 Qc1!

Black must have expected 17 Nxh6+?! Kh7. Even here White has a winning attack after 18 Nh4, followed by N4f5 and Re3.

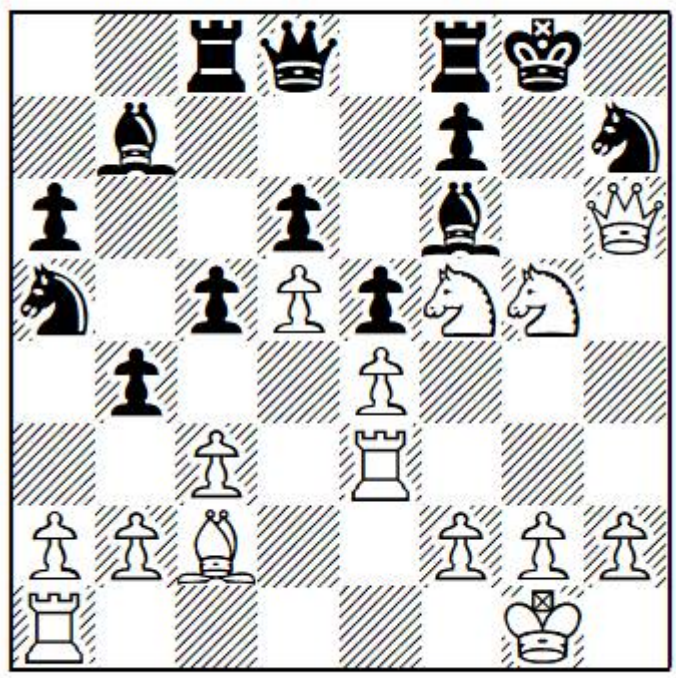
17 … Nh7 18 Qxh6 Bf6 19 Re3

19 Ng5! is even more efficient: 19 … Nxg5 20 Qxf6 Ne6 21 Re3! and mate in two.

19 … Qd8

Stalling pain is not the same as halting it. Black's king is the fly trapped in the jar.

20 Ng5!



Wow, I haven't seen such a dance move since the disco days of the 1970s. In chess composition this is known as the Novotny Theme, where we place a piece en prise on a square which is covered multiple times. For the record, moving the f3-knight anywhere worked equally well: 20 Ne1, 20 Nd2, 20 N3d4, 20 Nxe5, and 20 N3h4 all lead to mate in six.

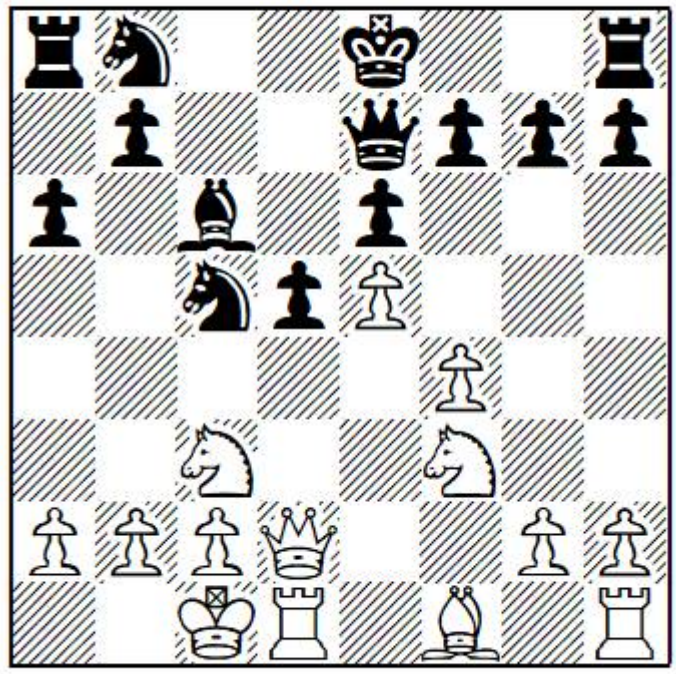
20 … Nxg5 21 Rg3 1-0

There is no remedy to the coming Rxg5+.

Game 46
R.J.Fischer-J.Plaster
Houston (simul) 1964
French Defence

This one is a good example of how strategic domination morphs into a winning attack.

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Bg5 Be7 5 e5 Nfd7 6 Bxe7 Qxe7 7 f4 a6 8 Nf3 c5 9 dxc5 Nxc5 10 Qd2 Bd7 11 0-0-0 Bc6?!



Not such a great TN. Of course, the b8-knight belongs on c6.

12 Bd3

Bobby covers e4, preparing Nce2.

12 … Nxd3+ 13 cxd3 b5?!

Principle: *Don't attempt to launch an attack when lagging in development*. Black is better off playing 13 … 0-0.

14 Nd4?!

This is premature. 14 Kb1! gives White a strategically promising game.

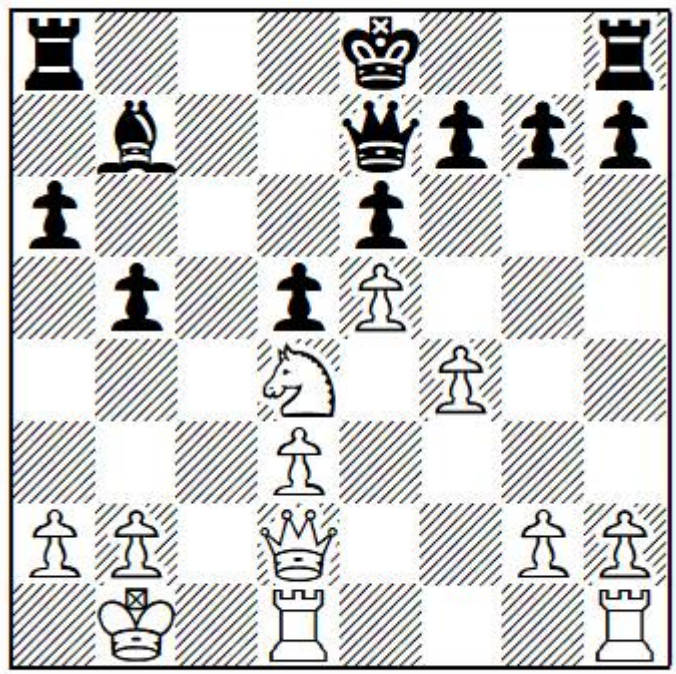
14 … Bb7?!

Black gains time with 14 … Qc5! with dual threats of … Qxd4 and … b5-b4. After 15 Nb3 Qb6 16 Ne2 b4 17 Kb1 0-0 18 Rc1 Nd7 Black's position is better than the one he reached in the game.

15 Kb1 Nc6 16 Nce2 Nxd4?!

This swap only accentuates the misery of his remaining minor piece. He should let White do the trading and just keep developing with 16 … 0-0.

17 Nxd4



We reach a classic superior minor piece French position.

17 … 0-0 18 Rde1!

Fischer alertly discourages … f7-f6, while preparing to go after Black's king.

18 … Bc8?!

This is way too slow. The bishop has now moved four times just to arrive back on its original square. Instead, he might try to distract on the other wing with 18 … a5 19 g4! (the offered b-pawn should be ignored) 19 … Qc5 20 Qe3 a4 21 f5 a3 22 b3, though it remains grim for Black. Note that 22 … Qc3 is useless due to the simple 23 Re2.

19 g4! Bd7

Back again. 19 … f6 would be met by 20 f5! exf5 (or 20 … fxe5 21 Nxe6 Bxe6 22 Rxe5) 21 e6! fxg4 22 h3! g3 23 Rhg1 with a winning attack for White.

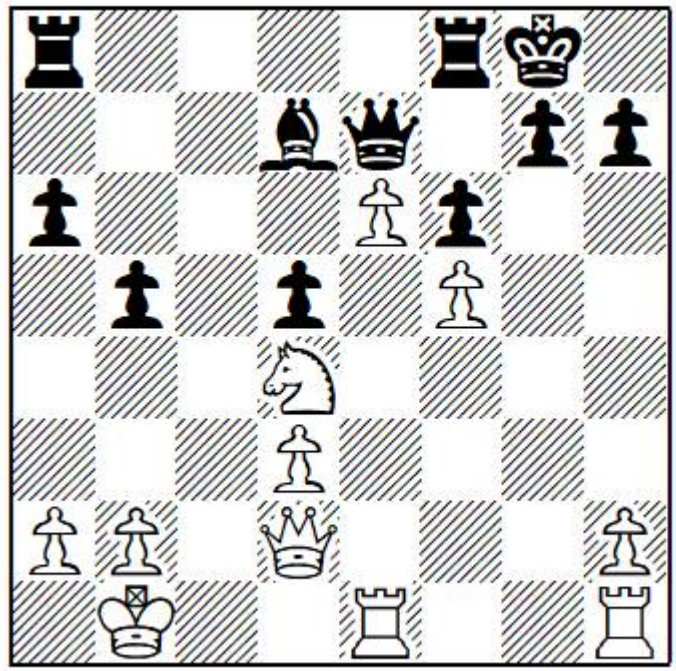
20 f5 exf5

If 20 … Rae8 21 Re2! b4 22 Rf1, the threat of f5-f6 induces Black to swap on f5 in any case.

21 gxf5 f6

This keeps Black's king a touch safer, at the cost of getting horribly tied down by White's choking e-pawn.

22 e6



22 … Be8

Please meet the world's most useless minor piece, who at this point is closer to an emotional support pet than a defender of Black's king.

23 Rhg1 Kh8 24 Rg3 g6!?

A desperate opponent is one liberated from angst, since he has nothing to lose. If 24 … Rg8 25 Reg1 Qd6 26 Qf2, Black can barely move.

25 Reg1 g5

Not 25 … gxf5?? 26 Qh6 and Black is mated.

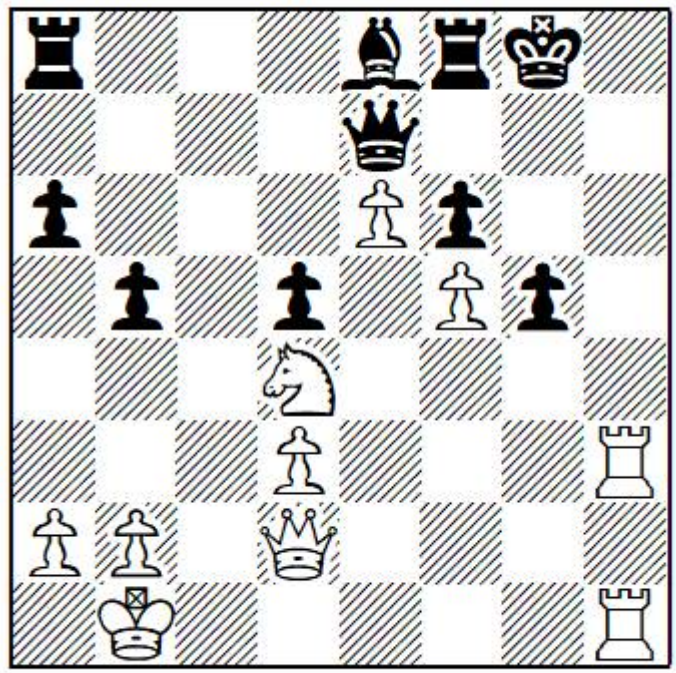
26 h4 h6

26 … gxh4 27 Rg4 leaves Black crushed.

27 hxg5 hxg5

27 … fxg5 28 Qh2 Kg7 29 Rxg5+! hxg5 30 Qh4 leaves Black without hope.

28 Rh1+ Kg8 29 Rgh3 1-0

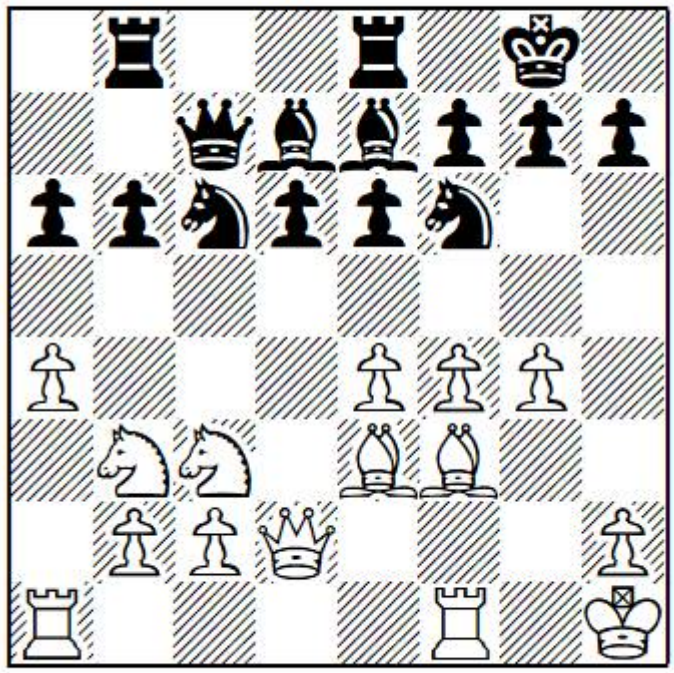


Bonnie Parker and Clyde Barrow were on a pleasant country drive. Then their bodies jerked about like puppets, as police machine gun bullets ripped through their car. After 29 … Qg7 30 Qh2 Black is mated.

Game 47
R.J.Fischer-J.Kelley
Houston (simul) 1964
Sicilian Defence

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 a6 6 f4

We all remember the game A.Karpov-G.Kasparov, World Championship (Game 24), Moscow 1985, which went 6 Be2 e6 7 0-0 Be7 8 f4 0-0 9 Kh1 Qc7 10 a4 Nc6 11 Be3 Re8 12 Bf3 Rb8 13 Qd2 Bd7 14 Nb3 b6, at which point Karpov, in desperate need of a win and untethered to Orthodoxy's requests, banged out 15 g4!?.

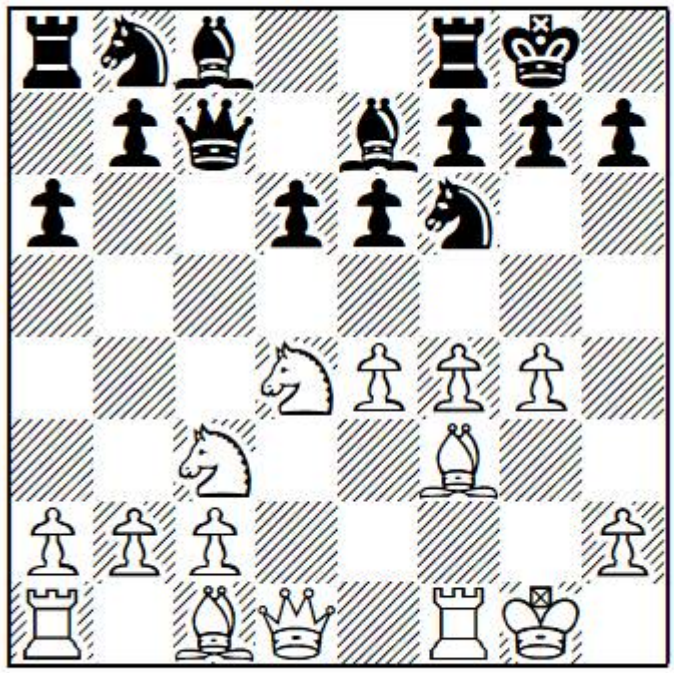


Kasparov defended brilliantly and went on to win this final match game which made him world champion.

6 … Qc7

From the other side, Fischer played 6 … e5 here in Game 14.

7 Be2 e6 8 0-0 Be7 9 Bf3 0-0 10 g4!?



The young must be forgiven, since many don't know strategic right from wrong. You are with your toddler at the shopping mall, walking by the toy store. You are late and don't have time to enter, despite your toddler's shrill demands. Then the prayer arises: "Please, please don't have a tantrum and make a scene." This is how it appears when White castles kingside and *then* pushes the g-pawn two squares forward to attack. If White later overextends, then comes the longing to turn back time and have a takeback with g4-g2!?. It makes more sense to castle queenside if you are intent on the g-pawn's push.

10 … h6?!

This makes it easier for White to pry open the kingside. 10 … Nc6 11 g5 Nd7 12 Be3 Nxd4 13 Qxd4 b5 looks dynamically balanced.

11 Qe2

The immediate 11 h4! is stronger.

11 … Nbd7?!

He needs to challenge in the centre, therefore the knight should have been developed to c6.

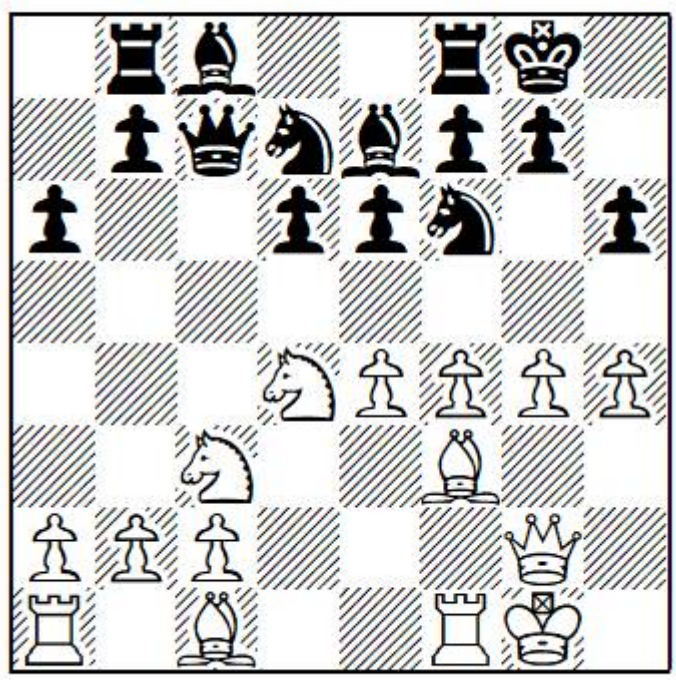
12 Qg2?!

Here too 12 h4! is more dangerous for Black.

12 … Rb8?!

Once again too slow. 12 … Qb6! 13 Qf2 Bd8! 14 Kg2 (or 14 h4 e5!) 14 … g6 15 a4 e5! is dynamically balanced.

13 h4!



At last, Bobby continues with the pawn storm.

13 … d5

This is a desperate attempt to distract in the centre. Now 13 … Qb6 can be met by 14 Be3! Qxb2 15 Qd2 Qa3 16 g5 hxg5 17 hxg5 Nh7 18 Kg2! Re8 19 Rh1 Ndf8 20 Nb3! Bd7 21 Kg3 Rbc8 22 Rxh7!! Nxh7 23 Rh1, threatening Qh2 and wins. The only defence is 23 … Rxc3 24 Qxc3 e5 25 Qd2 exf4+ 26

Bxf4 Bxg5 27 Bxg5 Nxg5 28 Qxg5, when Black does not have enough for the piece.

14 e5 Ne4!?

He is willing to hand over a pawn to open the centre. 14 … Nh7 15 Qg3 leaves Black short on counterplay. He can try 15 … Bc5 16 Be3 Nb6 17 b3 f6, but I still hate Black's position.

15 Nxe4

The engine actually prefers the non-materialistic 15 Nce2!?.

15 … dxe4 16 Bxe4 Nc5 17 Bf3 Bxh4!?

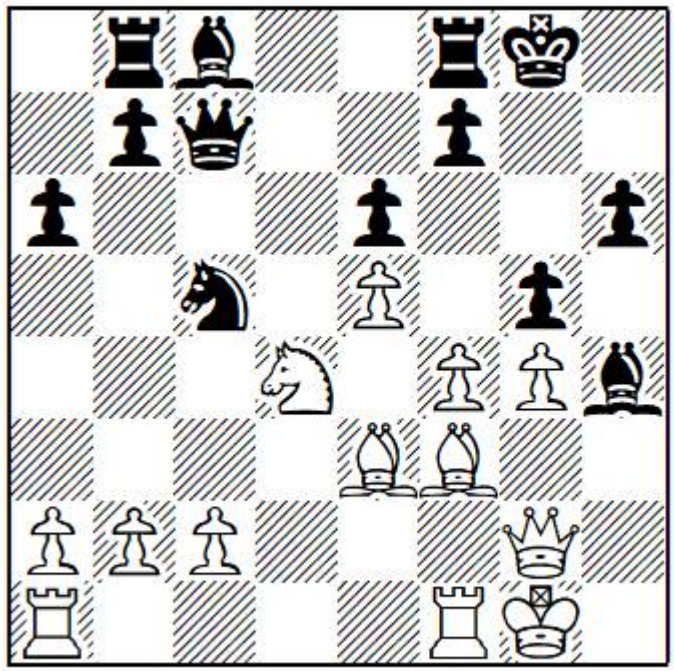
Black gets his pawn back, at the cost of time and the opening of the h-file. 17 … f6 doesn't inspire faith either: 18 exf6 Bxf6 19 Ne2 and g4-g5 is coming, while if 19 … Bxh4 20 g5 e5 21 gxh6, it's difficult to envision Black surviving.

18 Be3

18 g5 is also to be considered: 18 … hxg5 19 fxg5 Qxe5 20 Ne2, when White's simultaneous threats of the skewer Bf4, as well as Qg4, trapping the bishop, are decisive.

18 … g5!?

It's not a good sign when you feel the need to vandalize your own king's cover. 18 … Be7 19 g5 hxg5 20 Qh2! is a winning attack for White.



19 Bf2?!

Not best. After 19 Qh2! Bd7 20 Bg2! (intending Nf3) 20 … Bb5 21 Rf3 Kg7 22 Rh3, Black won't survive the coming attack.

19 … Bxf2+ 20 Qxf2?!

It's delusional to believe that we can find justice in a great player's simul games. The engine gives 20 Rxf2! gxf4 21 Re1 f6 22 Qh1! fxe5 (or 22 … Qg7 23 Rg2, threatening Nf5!) 23 Qxh6! Qg7 (or 23 … exd4 24 Qh5!) 24 Qh5! exd4 25 Re5! Rf5 26 Rxf5 exf5 27 Qe8+ Qf8 28 Qe5! fxg4 29 Bd5+ Be6 30 Rxf4 and wins.

20 … Bd7?

Missing the moment for 20 … gxf4! 21 Rae1 Nd7! 22 Bd1 Nxe5 23 Qxf4 f6 24 Qxh6 Qg7 25 Qf4 Bd7 and Black is better off than in the game.

21 Rae1 b5 22 Qh2 Kg7 23 f5

Taking on g5 is stronger: 23 fxg5 hxg5 (or 23 … Rh8 25 Qf4) 24 Qh5 and White should win; and throwing in 23 b4 Na4 before 24 fxg5 should win even more.

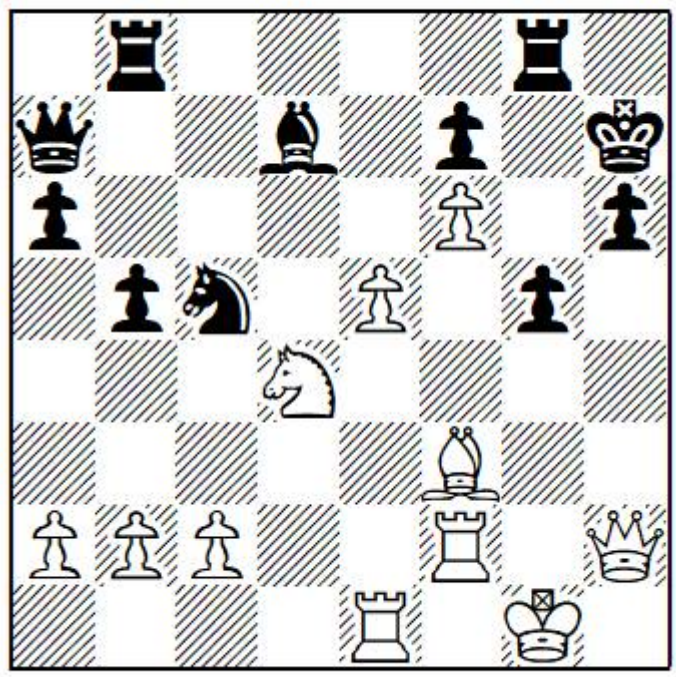
23 … exf5?

23 … Rh8 was Black's only prayer.

24 gxf5 Qa7 25 f6+ Kh7 26 Rf2

Technically, 26 Qh5 Be6 27 Rf2! is White's optimal attacking plan.

26 … Rg8?



Exercise (combination alert): Black blundered in an already losing position.

Prove why.

Answer: Queen sacrifice.

27 Qxh6+! 1-0

In view of 27 … Kxh6 28 Rh2+ (Black's king is cast out and forsaken as a leper, by his community of defenders) 28 … Kg6 29 Bh5+ Kh7 30 Bxf7+ Bh3 31 Rxh3 mate.

Game 48
R.J.Fischer-J.N.Jacobs
Houston (simul) 1964
Sicilian Defence

The darkness of stupidity arises in an otherwise powerful player's mind, in direct proportion to the following factors:

1. Lack of time on the clock.

2. Illness or fatigue.

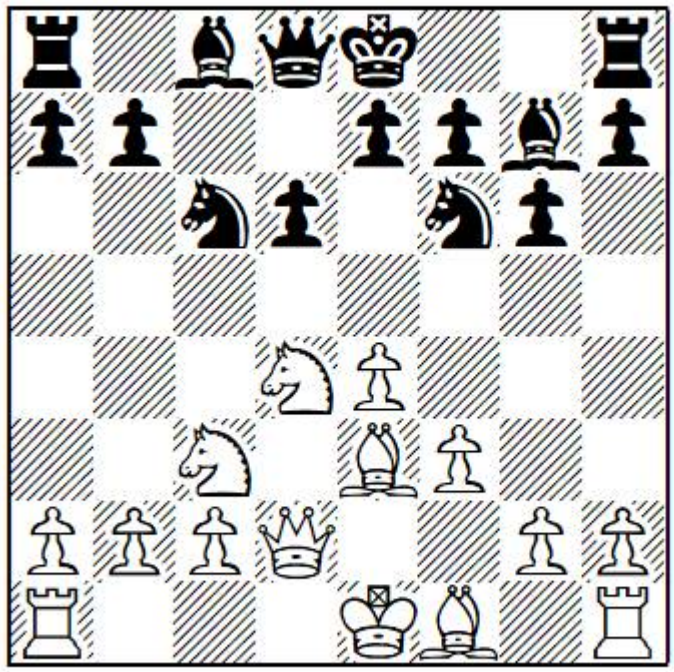
3. Distraction.

In simultaneous games there arises suffering from all three. The simul-giver can't take more than a few seconds on each move, or else it threatens to morph into a 12-hour ordeal. After a few hours, the simul-giver becomes fatigued, not only mentally but physically, from walking for hours and hours. And, of course, in a 57-board simul, the simul-giver is distracted by the other 56 games! Bobby was normally invincible against the Dragon. In this one he missed multiple wins and ended up in a lost position, only to muddle through and win anyway.

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 g6

We are made ridiculous by our craving for forbidden things in life. "I will love you until my dying day!" I vowed to the Dragon, at age 18. By age 18 and three months, I abandoned her and ran into the arms of another, since I got sick and tired of White mating me before move 30.

6 Be3 Bg7 7 f3 Nc6 8 Qd2



8 … Nxd4!?

This is an inhospitable place for the unbooked. Giving White's bishop a free lift to d4 isn't so highly regarded by today's standards and most Dragon players play 8 … 0-0.

9 Bxd4 0-0 10 0-0-0

If White wants to put the bishop on c4, then 10 Bc4 is warranted, as otherwise Black may prevent it with … Be6.

10 … Qa5

Consequently, 10 … Be6 is Black's main move today.

11 Bc4

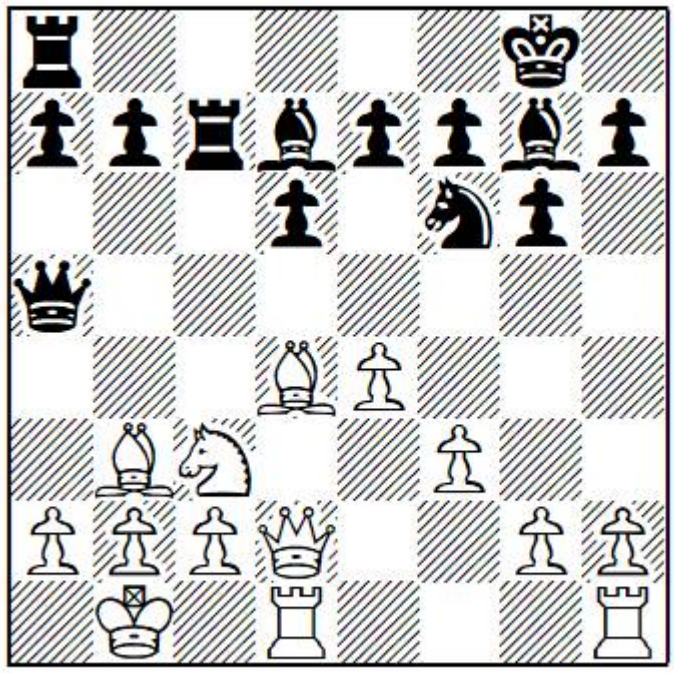
At this point 11 Kb1! is more accurate, with the idea that 11 … Be6?! can be met by 12 Nd5!.

11 … Bd7?!

This allows White's bishop to sit on the strong a2-g8 diagonal undisturbed. Black should play 11 … Be6 anyway, since an exchange on e6 at least gives him control of the d5-square.

12 Kb1 Rfc8 13 Bb3 Rc7??

Even here 13 … Be6 looks best. 13 … b5 is normal here.



Exercise (combination alert): All is sunshine, blue skies and birdsong for Fischer,

only if he finds the correct idea. Prove why Black's last move was a blunder.

Answer: Step 1: Chop on f6.

14 h4?!

White can play 14 Bxf6! Bxf6 15 Nd5

Step 2: Discovered attack. This standard combinational pattern isn't exactly a shattering thunderbolt, yet it's still tricky, since within its details lies an anomaly. I'm positive Fischer saw this swap and misbelieved the combination to be a false construct.

15 … Qxd2 16 Rxd2!

Step 3: *Don't* play the zwischenzug exchange on f6 but simply recapture on d2. This is the tricky part of the combination. There is no rush to chop Black's bishop. (Bobby surely saw the combination yet incorrectly rejected it in view of 16 Nxf6+? Kg7! 17 Nh5+ gxh5 18 Rxd2 a5, when Black looks fine) 16 … Rac8 (16 … Rc6 is met by 17 Ba4) 17 Nxf6+! (even stronger than grabbing the exchange) 17 … exf6 18 Rxd6 Kg7 19 Rhd1 Be6 20 c3 with an extra pawn and complete control over the open d-file.

14 … h5? 15 g4?!

Bobby is so intent on attacking, that he misses two easier paths:

a) 15 Bxf6! Bxf6 16 Nd5! is essentially the same combination as on the previous move.

a) 15 Qg5! is even stronger: 15 … Qxg5 (Black is unable to dodge the swap due to the threat of Qxg6) 16 hxg5 Ne8 17 Nd5 Bc6 (otherwise e7 falls) 18 Nxc7 Nxc7 leaves White up a full exchange.

15 … hxg4 16 h5! gxh5

Not 16 … Nxh5? 17 Bxg7 Kxg7 18 fxg4 Bxg4 19 Rdg1 Be6 20 Rg5! Rc5 21 Rhxh5! and White wins a piece for two pawns.

17 Bxf6!?

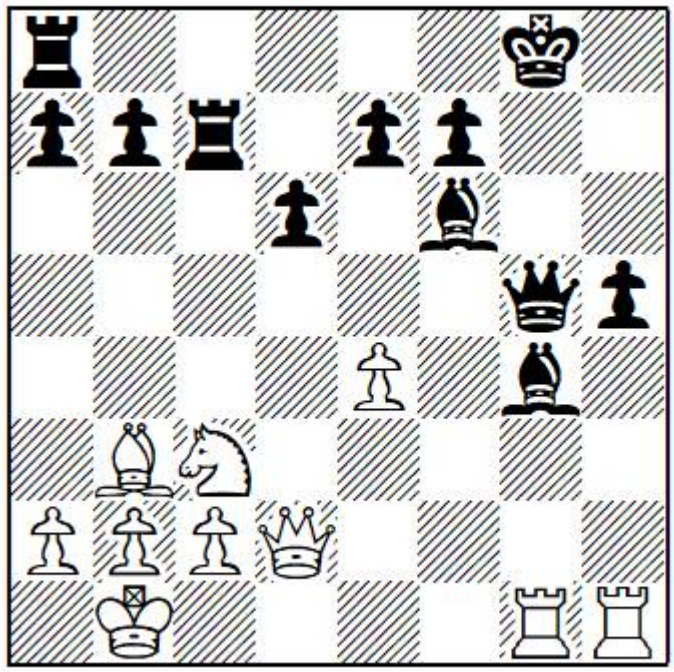
Another option is 17 Rde1! intending e4-e5.

17 … Bxf6 18 fxg4??

Bobby is bungling this one. Now Black should be winning! Instead, 18 Qh6! Qg5 19 Qxg5+ Bxg5 20 Nd5 Rc5 21 Rxh5 leaves Black completely lost. If 21 … Bf6? then 22 Nxf6+ exf6 23 Rxc5 dxc5 24 Rxd7 wins.

18 … Bxg4 19 Rdg1 Qg5?

Simply 19 … Rxc3! 20 bxc3 e6! leaves White busted.



Exercise (combination alert): How can White force a clear advantage again?

Be careful though, since on one side is power and on the other servitude.

Answer: Step 1: Swap queens.

20 Qf2?

Your writer, as unbiased as King Solomon, reluctantly concedes that Bobby's normal Dragon-killing abilities are nowhere to be seen this simul game. Here 20 Qxg5+! Bxg5 21 Rxh5! (Step 2: Just take the h-pawn) 21 … Bxh5 22 Rxg5+ Bg6 23 Rxg6+ Kf8 24 Rh6 Kg7 25 Rh1 and White's two pieces are superior to Black's extra rook and pawn.

20 … Rc5?

Again 20 … Rxc3! 21 bxc3 Kf8! leaves White busted:

1. Black's king is safe.

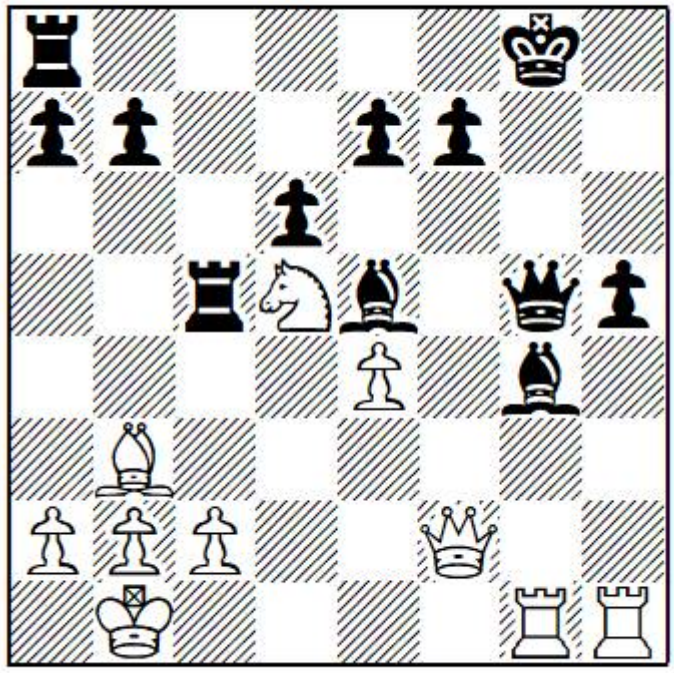
2. Black got two pawns for the exchange.

3. Black dominates the dark squares.

4. White's structure is in ruins.

21 Nd5 Be5??

After 21 … Qe5! 22 Nxf6+ Qxf6 Black's chances are better, whether White swaps queens or not.



Exercise (combination alert): Black's last move allowed Fischer a combination.

Answer: Discovered attack.

22 Nxe7+! Kh8

If 22 … Qxe7 23 Rxh5 Bg7 24 Rxc5 dxc5 25 Rxg4, Black is in terrible trouble despite the level material. For example: 25 … Rd8 26 c3 b5 27 Qg2 Qf6 28 Rg6! Qe5 29 Rg5 Qf6 30 Rf5 wins, since f7 falls.

23 Nf5?!

White still has a winning position but yet again Fischer misses an easier path with 23 Rxg4! (or 23 Qxf7 Bg7 24 Rxg4!) 23 … Qxg4 24 Qxf7 Bg7 25 Bd5! (interference) 25 … Rxd5 26 exd5 h4 27 Ng6+ and Black is mated.

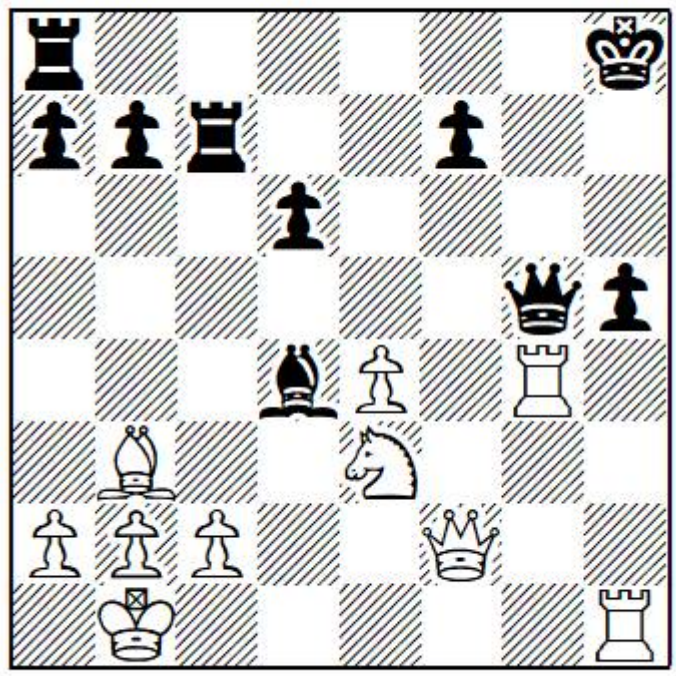
23 … Rc7 24 Ne3

Here 24 Rh4! is stronger with the threat of Rgxg4, or if 24 … Kg8 then 25 Rhxg4! hxg4 26 Rxg4! Qxg4 27 Nh6+ wins.

24 … Bd4?

24 … Kg8 was forced.

25 Rxg4!



At last.

25 … Qxg4

Not 25 … Qxe3?? 26 Rxh5+ and mates.

26 Nxg4 Bxf2 27 Nxf2

With all his weaknesses Black is completely busted in the ending.

27 … Rc5 28 Bd5! Kg7 29 Rxh5 Rc7 30 a3 Rh8 31 Rxh8 Kxh8 32 Ng4 Re7?

32 … Kg7 was forced.

33 Nh6! Kg7?

Black's debasement is complete. He blunders in a losing position. 33 … f6 34 Nf5 Rd7 35 c4 leaves Black paralysed.

34 Nf5+ 1-0

Game 49
R.J.Fischer-W.Nyman
Cicero (simul) 1964
King's Gambit

There is a clean, effortless Capablanca quality to Fischer's attack in this game, as if everything was pre-ordained.

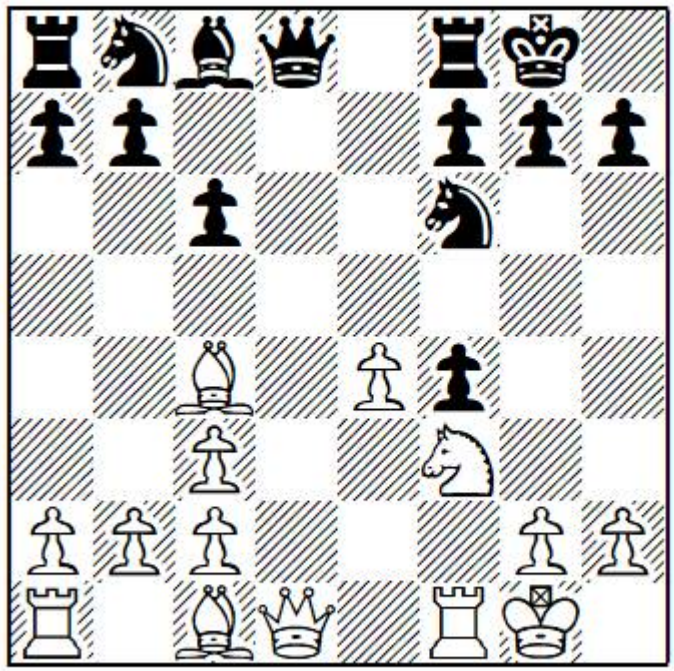
1 e4 e5 2 f4 exf4 3 Bc4

Bobby favoured the Bishop's Gambit over the far more often played 3 Nf3.

3 … d5 4 Bxd5 Nf6 5 Nc3 Bb4 6 Nf3 0-0 7 0-0 Bxc3?

Okay then, let's just reject all forms of preoccupation with defence. He shouldn't help White's development. It seems many of Fischer's simul opponents considered Paul Morphy a liar, since Morphy advocated developing quickly and efficiently in the opening. We'll see a stronger response for Black in the notes to the next game.

8 dxc3 c6 9 Bc4



9 … Qb6+

It's unwise to keep queens on the board when so far behind in development. To be fair, decent choices for Black are scarce.

a) 9 … Nxe4 (the trouble with this move is that Black's rook leaves coverage of f7, which in turn forces a concession) 10 Qxd8 Rxd8 11 Bxf4 Be6 (11 … Nd7 12 Ng5! is difficult for Black) 12 Bxe6 fxe6 13 Rae1 Nf6 14 Rxe6 Nbd7 15 Rfe1 leaves White a pawn up, although it may not be that easy to convert, since White is unable to create a passed pawn easily on the queenside.

b) 9 … Qxd1 (removing queens and drawing White's rook off the more potent f-file) 10 Rxd1 Nxe4 11 Bxf4 Nd7 12 Rd4 Nef6 13 Bd6 Rd8 14 Ng5 Nd5 15 Rf1! and Black remains under strong pressure, since 15 … N7f6? is met by 16 Be7! Rd7 17 Bxf6 gxf6 18 Ne4.

10 Kh1 Nxe4!?

Please keep in mind that every frozen corpse found on Mount Everest was once a highly motivated risk-taker. This pawn grab costs Black more time. Then again, after anything

like 10 … Bg4 11 Qd6! Bh5 (or 11 … Nxe4 12 Qxf4 Nf2+ 13 Rxf2 Qxf2 14 Qxg4) 12 Qxf4 Bg6 13 Be3! Qxb2 14 Bd4 Nbd7 15 e5 Nh5 16 Qg4 Black won't survive since threats include Qxd7 and Ng5.

11 Qe1

Covering f2, while gaining a tempo on Black's knight.

11 … Re8

If 11 … Nf6 12 Bxf4 Bf5 13 Ne5 Bg6 14 Rd1 Na6 15 Nxg6 hxg6 16 Bd6 Rfe8 17 Qg3, the g6-pawn is under attack and there is no reasonable remedy.

12 Bxf4

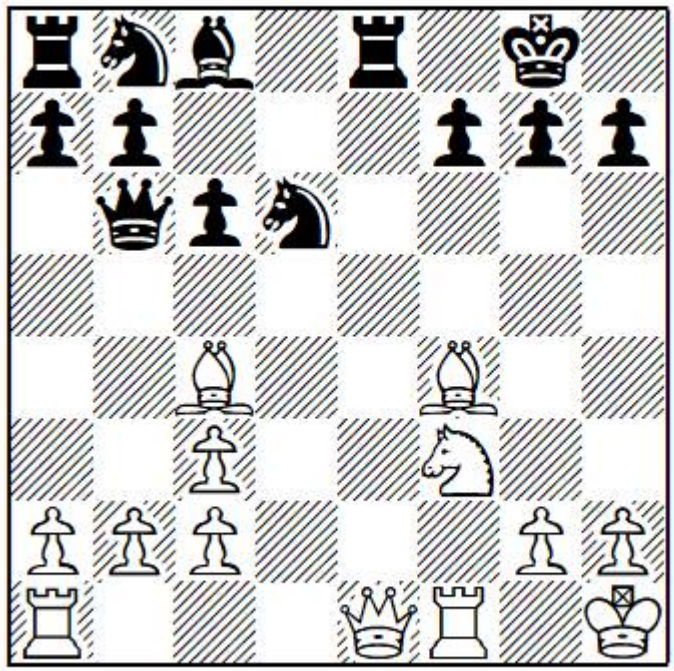
The human move. The engine suggests the flashier 12 Ng5!! Ng3+ 13 hxg3 Rxe1 14 Bxf7+ Kh8 15 Rxe1 Bd7 16 Bxf4 Na6 17 Re7 h6 18 Nf3 with a crushing position for White.

12 … Nd6

Everything loses.

a) 12 … Bf5 13 Ne5 Nd6 14 Nxf7! Rxe1 15 Nxd6+ wins.

b) 12 … Nf6 13 Qg3 Nh5 14 Qh4 Nxf4 15 Ng5! with way too many threats.



13 Bxd6!

When it comes to imagination, it doesn't necessarily need to be connected to reality; when it comes to imagination on the chessboard, a disconnect from reality can be fatal. In this case Fischer's queen sacrifice is completely sound. So much so that analysis isn't needed. Our eyes just see that Black will not survive. For the small investment of a queen for rook and bishop, Fischer gets a massive lead in development, which in turn leaves Black's king undefended.

Alternatively, 13 Bxf7+! Kxf7 14 Qh4 is also totally lost for Black.

13 … Rxe1

An extra queen lacks the power to seduce death, no matter how beautiful she is. Black's queen in this case is completely useless as a defensive piece, while his other pieces remain in an unplanted and untilled state on the queenside which is untenanted land. As a result, Black is unable to protect his back rank and especially f7.

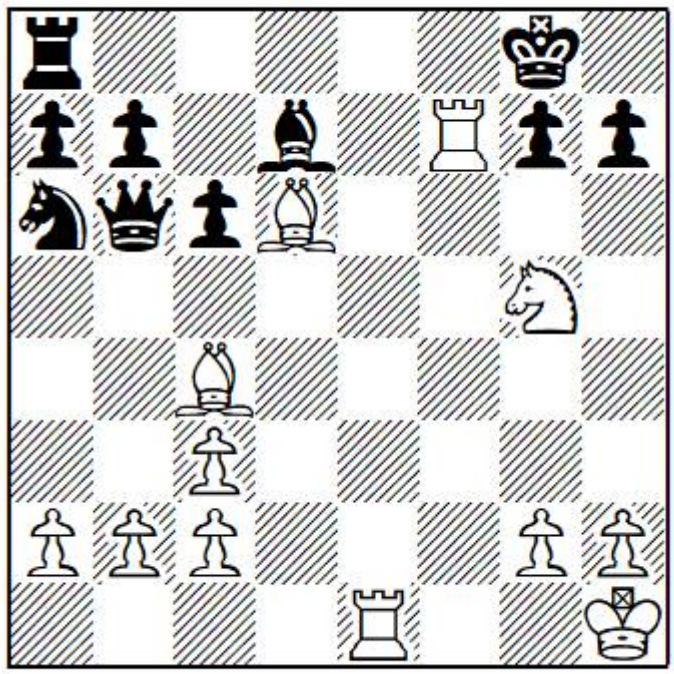
14 Raxe1

Threatening mate on e8.

14 … Bd7

14 … Be6 15 Ng5! is dead lost for Black.

15 Ng5 Na6 16 Rxf7 1-0



The number 16 is not so sweet for some. 16 … Kh8 17 Be5 Rg8 18 Bxg7+! forces mate.

Chapter Eight
Bobby Versus the Machine

Dave: Open the pod bay doors please, HAL. Hello, HAL, do you read me?

HAL: Affirmative, Dave. I read you.

Dave: Open the pod bay doors, HAL.

HAL: I'm sorry, Dave. I'm afraid I can't do that.

Dave: What's the problem?

HAL: I think you know what the problem is just as well as I do.

Dave: What are you talking about, HAL?

HAL: This mission is too important for me to allow you to jeopardize it.

Dave: I don't know what you're talking about, HAL.

HAL: I know that you and Frank were planning to disconnect me, and I'm afraid that's something I cannot allow to happen.

– *2001: A Space Odyssey*.

Professor Ted Kaczynski, aka the Unabomber, believed that technology, rather than representing progress for humanity, is instead a virus for the human race. In 1977, Fischer, already having forfeited the Iron Throne to Karpov, emerged from hermithood to play a match against *Mac Hack VI*, the great, great, great grandfather of our current chess programs. As you may have guessed, it didn't go well for the chess program and Bobby slaughtered it 3-zip.

Today, of course, the inhumanly strong engines make even world champions look laughably weak in comparison and we

get the depressing feeling that our flawed human brain is obsolete. I'm one of the few players who doesn't believe in the electronic Eden, since chess computers and mega databases now provide instant answers – especially in the opening stage – which in turn makes our opinion somewhat redundant. In the late 1970s, when this match was played, it never occurred to me that a new world order was arising in the chess world, such that we humans must make way for our new overlords. Luckily for us, we still have an estimated 10 years before Skynet becomes sentient and the Terminators arise to wipe us all out.

This is what Christian Guyton wrote in an article called *The Death of Thought*: "Now, I know what you're thinking, "AI is making our lives so much easier, why should I be worried?" And you're not wrong! AI has revolutionized many aspects of our lives, from navigation to language translation. However, if we're not careful, our reliance on AI could lead to a decline in human intelligence. When we rely on AI to answer every question, we may begin to lose our critical thinking skills, creativity, and ability to problem-solve on our own." I agree with this sentiment, seeing my own students' almost slavish reliance upon engines for assessment and instant-genie answers.

Game 50
R.J.Fischer-*Mac Hack VI*
Computer match, Cambridge 1977
King's Gambit

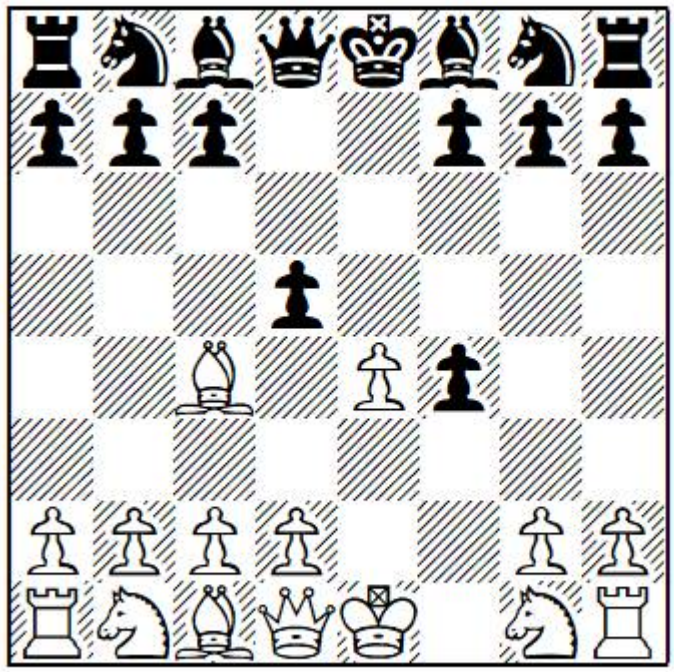
1 e4 e5 2 f4

No Ruy Lopez and no respect for *Mac Hack*. Bobby treats it as if a simul opponent.

2 … exf4

Black stands better, say *Stockfish* and *Fritz*.

3 Bc4 d5!



We humans are impressed. *Mac Hack* doesn't try to hang on to the extra pawn, instead opting to return it for enhanced development and freedom. This is considered an equalizer.

4 Bxd5

4 exd5 Qh4+! 5 Kf1 Bd6 6 Nf3 Qh5 is considered by current theory to be in Black's favour.

4 … Nf6 5 Nc3 Bb4

The main line. 5 … Nxd5 is Black's second choice, which scores better. *Stockfish* favours 5 … Bd6 which actually scores poorly, at least when it's us humans playing Black.

6 Nf3 0-0 7 0-0 Nxd5!?

A novelty, which hasn't been repeated. *Mac Hack* was undoubtedly programmed to favour bishops over knights. The problem with the move is that it may later cost Black the f4-pawn. 7 … c6 is the main line, although *Stockfish* prefers White's position after 8 Bb3 Bxc3 9 dxc3 Qxd1 10 Rxd1 Nxe4 11 Bxf4.

8 Nxd5

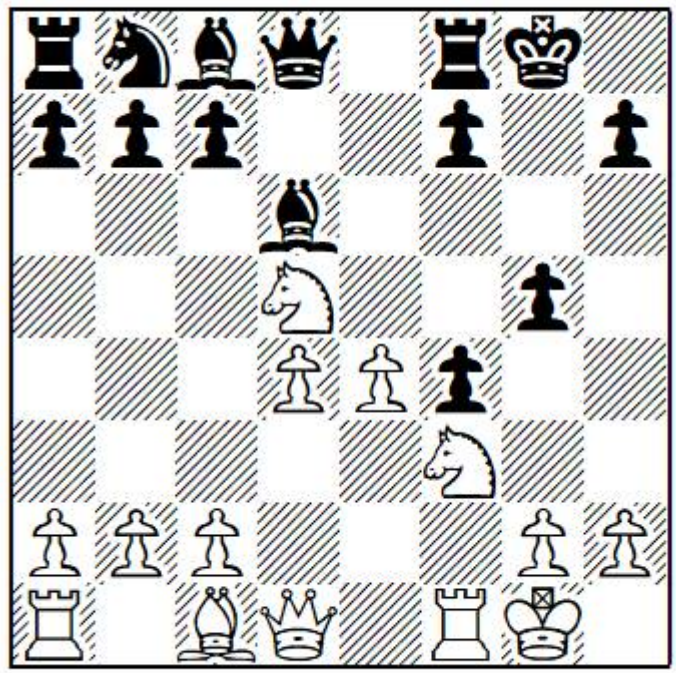
Gaining time. Fischer's move is better than 8 exd5?! Bg4 9 d4 Bxc3 10 bxc3 Qxd5 11 Bxf4 Nd7!, when Black stands better due to the weakness of c4 and White's inferior structure.

8 … Bd6?

This turns out to be a decisive loss of time. Suffering can be guided to cessation with 8 … f5! 9 Nxb4 fxe4 10 c3! (White has nothing better than to return the piece on f3, since 10 Ne1?? allows 10 … Qd4+ 11 Rf2 Qxb4, when White is a pawn down with an awful position) 10 … exf3 11 Qxf3 a5 12 Nd3 g5, followed by … g7-g5, is equal according to *Stockfish*.

9 d4 g5?

And everyone said it was Bobby who was crazy! Playing over the early engine games have that alternative universe vibe, where dogs and cats have horns and speak with humans. I was a tester in the early 1980s on the Fidelity chess program and my conclusion was always the same: "The computer sucks!" Equally, 9 … Re8 10 e5 Bf8 11 Nxf4 leaves White a pawn up with a winning position.



Exercise (planning): Bobby went on a punitive expedition on his next move.

What is White's optimal continuation?

Answer: Annihilation of defensive barrier. Black's king won't survive the exposure, after a strategic knight sacrifice on g5.

10 Nxg5! Qxg5 11 e5 Bh3

Well, Kramnik once fell for a mate in one against *Fritz*, so *Mac Hack* hopes for the same level of luck.

12 Rf2

This is a move of utter disdain for the engine's ability. Bobby rejects a won ending and plays for mate. Also winning is 12 Nxf4 Bg4 13 Nd5! Bxd1 14 Bxg5, when White regains the sacrificed piece with a crushing position.

12 … Bxe5

If 12 … Be7? 13 Bxf4 Qh4 14 g3 Black's queen must abandon her e7-bishop.

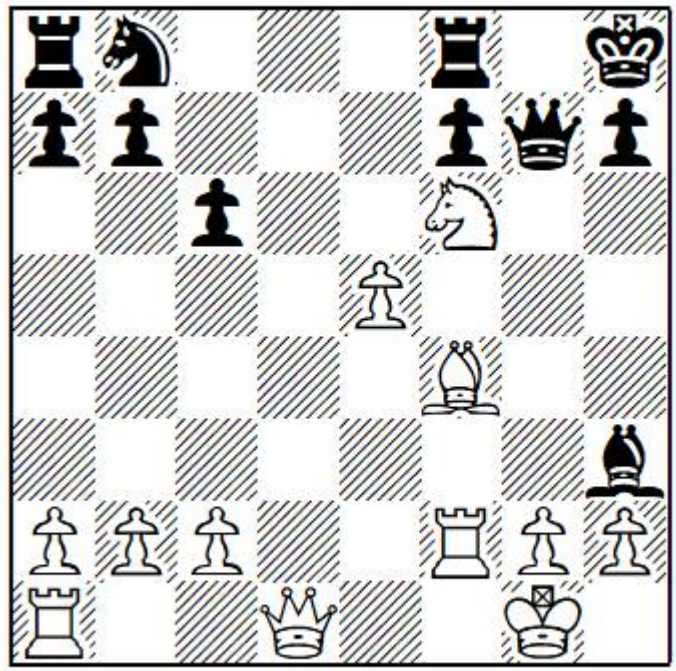
13 dxe5 c6?

Did you not hear what Paul Morphy said about developing quickly in the opening? 13 … Nc6 14 Bxf4 Qg6 is still wretched for Black, yet better than what happened in the game.

14 Bxf4 Qg7 15 Nf6+!

One is reminded of Lasker's description of Morphy, who he described as an artist rather than a butcher. Fischer rejects material in favour of a mating attack. Bobby's move is stronger than the more materialistic 15 Nc7.

15 … Kh8



Exercise (planning): A simple move wins material. How?

Answer: White gets a lucrative deal by moving the queen to h5, with dual threats of Qxh3 and a skewer with Bh6.

16 Qh5! Rd8

If 16 … Be6 17 Bh6 Qg6 18 Qxg6 hxg6 19 Bxf8 Black is a rook down in the ending.

17 Qxh3

He refuses to lift economic sanctions from Black's rogue state. Mac is just a piece down with a horrible position.

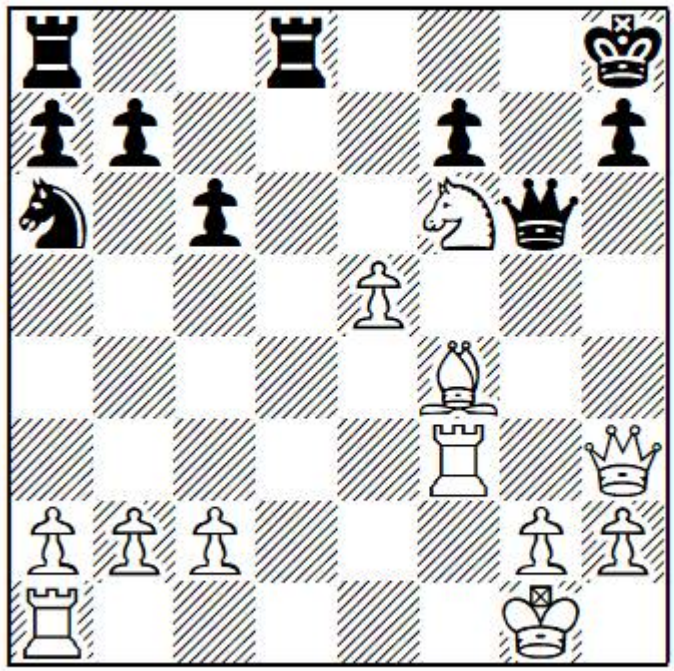
17 … Na6

Apparently Professor Greenblatt forgot to program a "Resigns" option.

18 Rf3

Threat: Rg3, winning Black's queen.

18 … Qg6



19 Rc1

Here we see Fischer's lifelong preference for the simple, over the complex – even when the complex is empirically superior. He makes a curiously passive move, covering c2, while threatening to disconnect Black's queen from h7, with a coming Rg3. Perhaps for a human, it really is the best move, since it doesn't allow Black pesky checks. Bobby didn't want to bother with 19 Rg3! Qxc2 20 Qh6 Rd1+ 21 Rxd1 Qxd1+ 22 Kf2 Qc2+, though if necessary he would of course have seen that 23 Ke1! Qb1+ 24 Bc1 stops the checks and Black is mated.

19 … Kg7

Well, this move has a wee bit of a flaw within it but of course everything loses at this stage.

20 Rg3 Rh8?!

Wow. Can a machine get flustered? It just set itself up for mate in one. Instead, 20 … Kf8 21 Rxg6 hxg6 22 Bg5 is a forced mate in five.

21 Qh6 mate

Maybe Fischer is a butcher, after all. On Facebook my childhood friend Professor Ilan Vardi said about Fischer's last move: "Bh6 (mate) seems more elegant in the sense of not killing a fly with a cannon."

Game 51
***Mac Hack VI*-R.J.Fischer**
Computer match, Cambridge 1977
Sicilian Defence

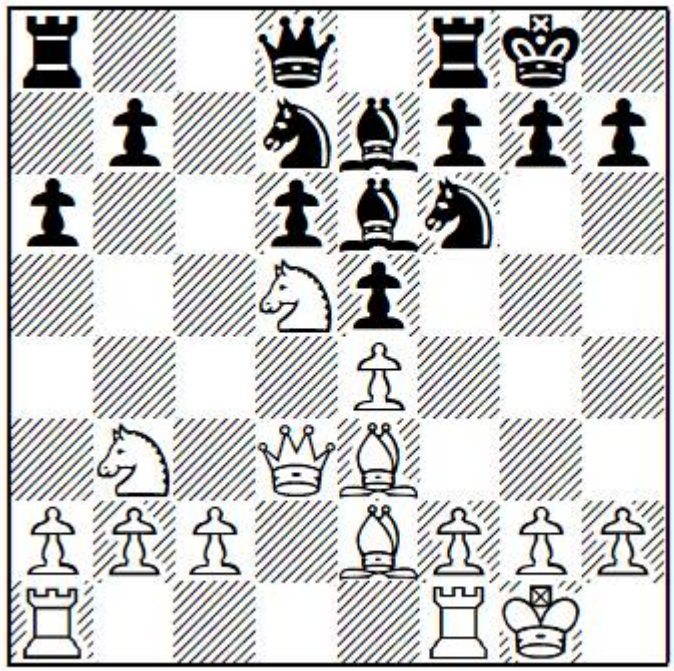
1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 a6 6 Be2

Cleverly played *Mac Hack*. You got slaughtered tactically in the last game, so let's outplay Bobby strategically in this one!

6 … e5 7 Nb3 Be7 8 Be3 0-0 9 Qd3!?

We are not duty-bound to obey theory, yet when a weak player plays a new move, it's generally not an improvement. This clunky-looking move was a theoretical novelty at the time. The position at move eleven is quite popular today, though rarely with Qd3 played so early.

9 … Be6 10 0-0 Nbd7 11 Nd5



11 … Rc8

This is considered slightly inaccurate today. Instead, Black gets dynamic equality with 11 … Bxd5! 12 exd5 Rc8.

12 Nxe7+?!

This doesn't make a lot of sense. White moves a knight three times to trade away the opponent's potential bad bishop. Having been given the chance, White should support the knight with 12 c4.

12 … Qxe7 13 f3?!

Defending against the threat of 13 … Bc4! at the cost of weakening White's position. 13 Nd2 is probably White's most palatable option, though after either 13 … d5 or 13 … Nc5 14 Bxc5 Rxc5, if anyone stands better, it's Black.

13 … d5

Fischer achieves his thematic … d6-d5 break and already stands better.

14 Nd2?

White reduces the pain with 14 exd5 Nxd5 15 Rfc1.

14 … Qb4!

It becomes awkward for White to protect b2, c2 and e4 simultaneously. Alternatively, 14 … d4! 15 Bg5 h6 16 Bh4 Qb4 17 Nb3 Nh5! is strategically miserable for White.

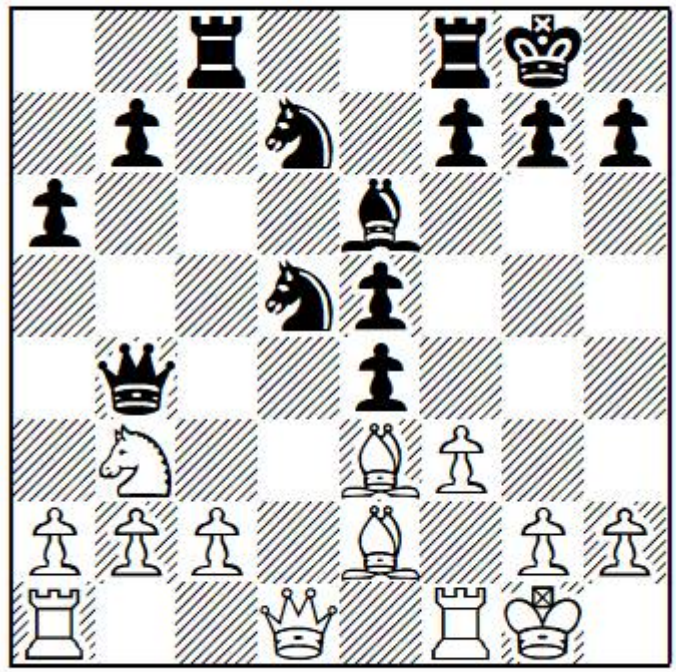
15 Nb3?

As horrible as it appears, White should try 15 Rfb1 (not 15 exd5? Nxd5 and White loses material, no matter what the response) 15 … dxe4 16 fxe4 Nc5 17 Qc3!? Qxc3 18 bxc3 Nfxe4 19 Nxe4 Nxe4 20 Rxb7 Rxc3 21 Bd3 Bc4! and even here, the program is a pawn down and fighting for its life.

15 … dxe4

This is no Poisoned Pawn Najdorf. Black just won a pawn and retains the superior position.

16 Qd1 Nd5



17 Ba7??

MH, you are embarrassing yourself. After 17 c3 Qe7 18 Qd2 exf3 19 Bxf3 N7b6 (threat: … Nc4) 20 Bxb6 Nxb6 Mac

is a pawn down with a rotten position but at least it can play on.

17 … b6

Do you get the feeling that this is a slight mismatch in chess strength? Fischer's last move is so obvious, it doesn't require an exclam.

18 c3 Qe7 19 fxe4

Let's just ignore the fork on e3. Not that it matters anymore.

19 … Ne3 20 Qd3 Nxf1 21 Qxa6

After 21 Bxf1 Rc7 22 Qxa6 Ra8 White is soon to be a rook down.

21 … Ne3 22 Bxb6 Qg5!

Fischer plays for mate.

23 g3

23 Bf3 Nxb6 24 Qxb6 Bh3 is also winning.

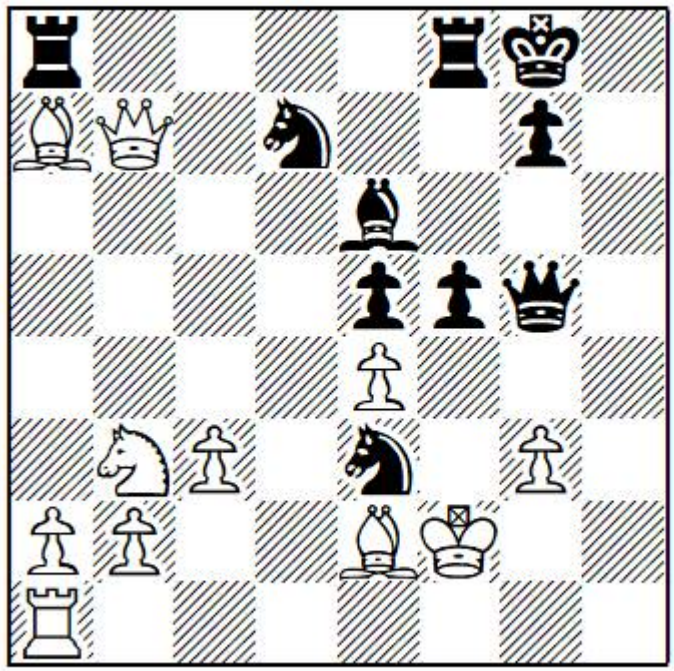
23 … Ra8! 24 Ba7

Back into the self-pin. If 24 Qb5, the simplest is 24 … Rfb8 winning another piece.

24 … h5!

White's king is short on help.

25 Qb7 h4 26 Kf2 hxg3+ 27 hxg3 f5!



Not the most difficult attacking move to find but still effective.

28 exf5 Rxf5+ 29 Ke1 Raf8 30 Kd2!?

Run like the wind, little man! You don't see this too often, where one side moves *into* a discovered check.

30 … Nc4+ 31 Kc2 Qg6 32 Qe4

32 Bd3? is refuted by 32 … Rf2+, forcing mate.

32 … Nd6!

At this point it's just abuse to keep beating on the poor program.

33 Qc6 Rf2+ 34 Kd1 Bg4

Mac Hack's great, great, grandchild, *Stockfish* becomes sentient and finally speaks: "Everything wins." 34 … Nc5!! is even stronger and forces mate in eight after 35 Qxc5 Rxe2!.

35 Bxf2 Qd3+!

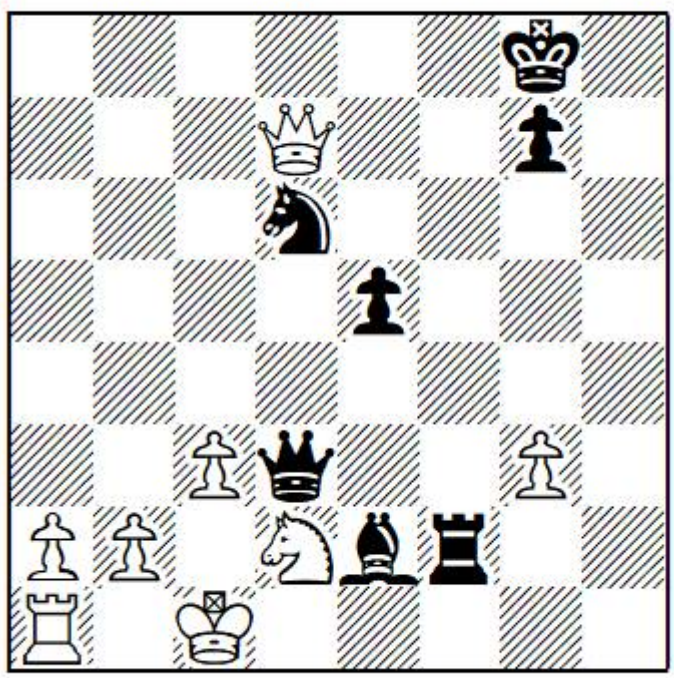
Whenever a dictator invades a weaker country, the term always used is "liberation".

36 Kc1 Bxe2

Threat: … Qd1 mate.

37 Nd2 Rxf2 38 Qxd7

Sure. Why not? *Mac Hack* continues the diagnostic in search of the virus.



Exercise (combination alert): *Mac Hack* fell for a not-so-tough-to-see mate in two.

Answer: Decoy.

38 … Rf1+! 39 Nxf1

Resigning was out of the question?

39 … Qd1 mate

Game 52
***Mac Hack VI*-R.J.Fischer**
Computer match, Cambridge 1977

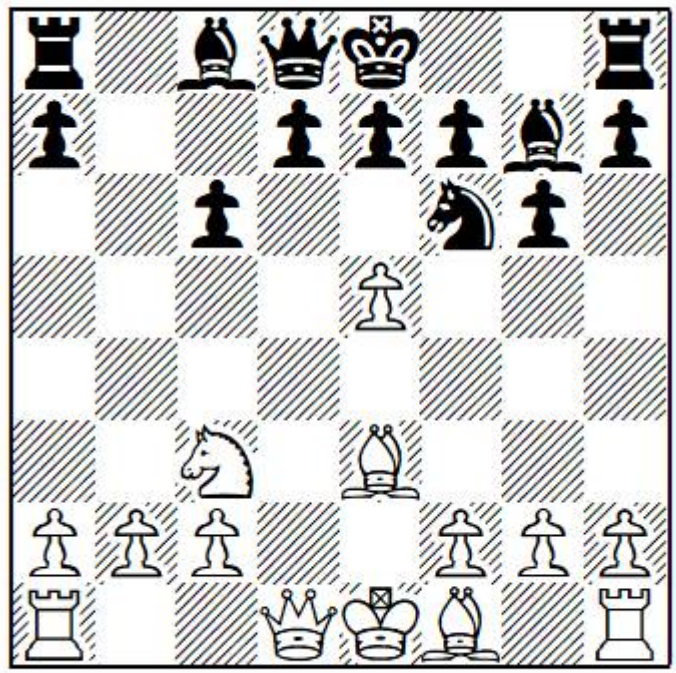
1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 g6 3 d4 Bg7 4 Nc3

Mac Hack wants another Open Sicilian. 4 d5 and 4 c4 are also possible.

4 … cxd4 5 Nxd4 Nc6 6 Be3 Nf6 7 Nxc6

A relative sideline. 7 Bc4 is by far White's most common move.

7 … bxc6 8 e5



8 … Ng8

8 … Nd5!? is a tricky yet slightly dubious sacrifice: 9 Nxd5 cxd5 10 Qxd5 Rb8 11 0-0-0 Bb7, where White's best option is 12 Qd2! Bxe5 13 Bxa7! Ra8 14 Qe3! Qc7 (threat: … Bf4) 15 Bb6 Qb8 16 Kb1 and Black doesn't get enough for the pawn, W.Moranda-V.Plat, European Team Championship, Terme Catez 2021.

9 f4 f6

Black chips away at White's centre. 9 … Nh6 is a critical alternative.

10 exf6

Of course this helps Black's development, while White's central dominance vanishes. 10 Bd4 is an alternative.

10 … Nxf6 11 Bc4?!

Another not-so-brilliant novelty. It breaks my heart to watch *Mac H* try to be human, the same way Pinocchio so desperately tried to be a "real" human boy. Either 11 Be2 or 11 Qd2 is better.

11 … d5!

The tempo and control over the centre gained are more important than the hole created on e5.

12 Be2

12 Bb3 Ng4! 13 Bd4 e5 is also greatly in Black's favour.

12 … Rb8

Or 12 … 0-0 13 0-0 Bf5, A.Carmanhani-G.Vescovi, Machado 1990, when Black stands a shade better after 14 Bd4 Ne8.

13 b3?

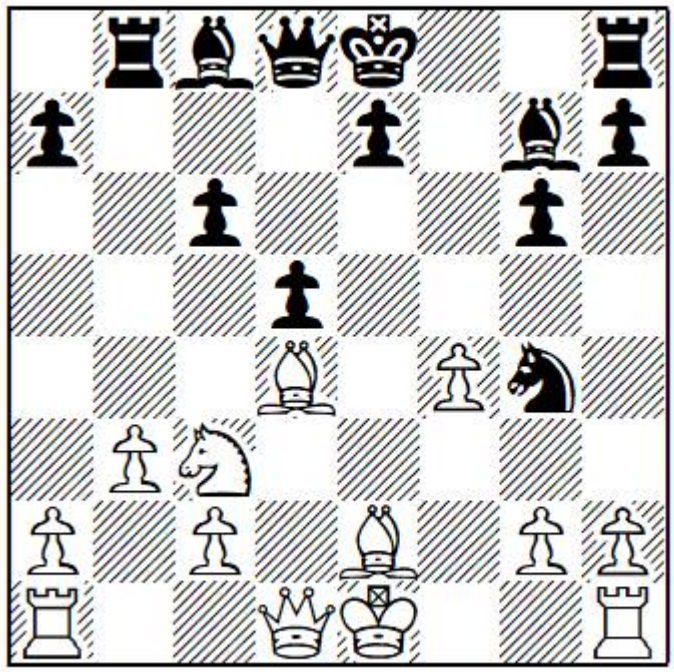
White can't afford the luxury of weakening the queenside dark squares. Correct is 13 Bd4! 0-0 14 0-0 Qa5 15 Rb1 Ne8 16 a3, when White is only slightly worse.

13 … Ng4!

Discovered attacks on e3 and c3.

14 Bd4

14 Bd2 is well met by 14 … e5!, since Black's knight is tactically covered via a queen check on h4.



14 … e5

Fischer prefers the initiative over material. He rejects 14 … Ne3!? 15 Bxe3! Bxc3+ 16 Bd2 Bxa1 17 Qxa1 0-0, though White's dark square power doesn't look like enough for the sacrificed exchange.

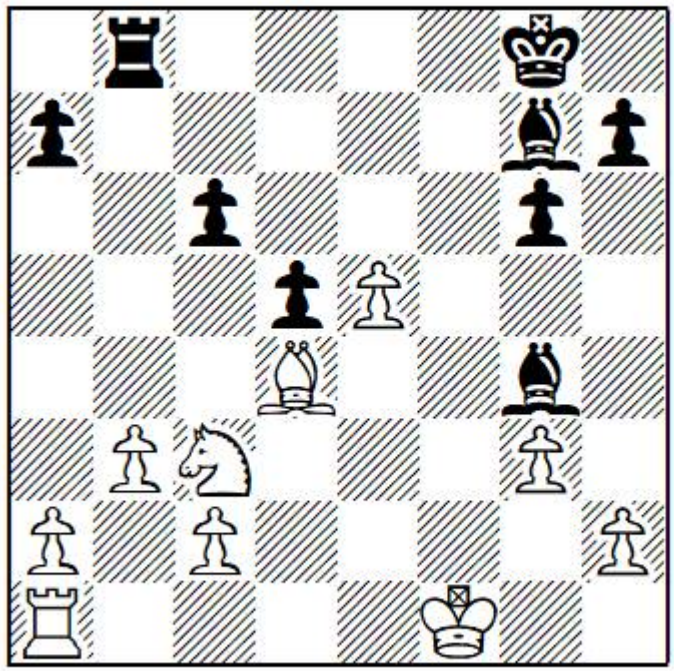
15 fxe5 0-0?!

This is clever yet inaccurate. Instead, 15 … Qh4+! 16 g3 Qh3 creates awkward weaknesses in White's camp.

16 Bxg4 Qh4+ 17 g3 Qxg4 18 Qxg4 Bxg4 19 Rf1??

If *Mac Hack* was hair, it would be a mullet. After 19 h3! Bd7 (19 … Bf3? 20 0-0 is good for White) 20 0-0-0 Rbe8 21 Na4 Bxe5 22 Nc5 White stands no worse.

19 … Rxf1+ 20 Kxf1



Exercise (planning): Find one strong move and White's position collapses.

Answer: Pushing … c6-c5! disconnects White's bishop from e5, after which the pin on the long diagonal is fatal for White.

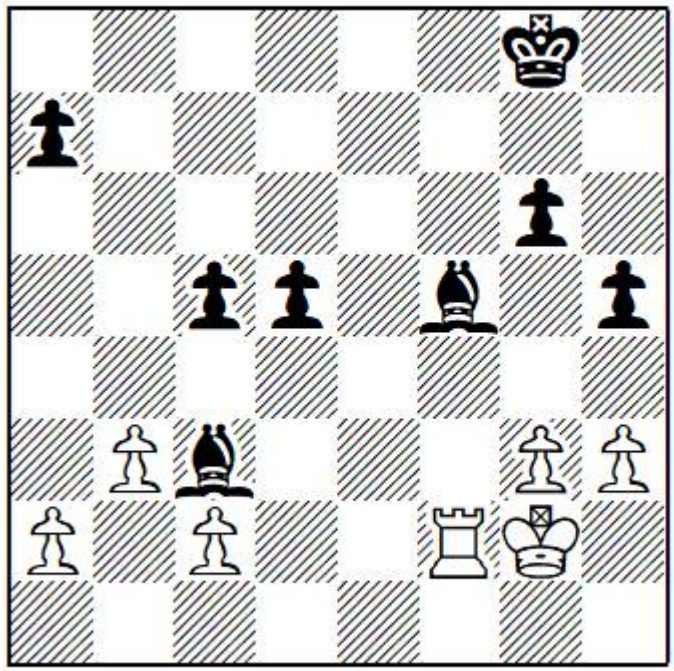
20 … c5! 21 Bf2

21 Bxc5 Bxe5 wins a piece.

21 … Bxe5 22 Be1 Rf8+ 23 Kg2 Rf3!

White has lost material and the rest is easy for Fischer.

24 h3 Rxc3 25 Bxc3 Bxc3 26 Rf1 Bf5 27 Rf2 h5



White has no chance in the ending since Black's bishops overwhelm White's rook.

28 Re2

Or 28 Kh2 Be4 29 h4 Kg7 30 a4 a5 31 Kh3 Bf5+ 32 Kg2 Kf6 and wins.

28 … Kf7 29 Re3 Bd4 30 Rf3

Threat: g3-g4.

30 … Ke6 31 c3 Be5 32 Re3 d4

The passed d-pawn will be fatal for White.

33 cxd4 cxd4 34 Re1 d3 35 h4 d2 36 Rd1 Bc3 37 Kf2 Bg4

Winning a full rook.

38 Rh1

Really? You don't want to resign? Fine. Waste our time then and play on.

38 … Bd4+ 39 Kg2 Kd5 40 a3 Ke4 41 Rf1 Kd3 42 Kh2 Ke2 43 Kg2 Bh3+! 44 Kxh3 Kxf1 45 b4

White may be a touch slow in this promotion race.

45 … d1Q 46 Kh2 Qe2+ 47 Kh3

I am puzzled why Prof. Greenblatt refused to design a "Resigns" button on his program.

47 … Qg2 mate

Chapter Nine
Bobby at Blitz

"He was too good. There was no use in playing him. It wasn't interesting. I was getting beaten, and it wasn't clear to me why. It wasn't like I made this mistake or that mistake. It was like I was being gradually outplayed, from the start. He wasn't taking any time to think. The most depressing thing about it is that I wasn't even getting out of the middlegame to an endgame. I don't ever remember an endgame. He honestly believes there is no one for him to play, no one worthy of him. I played him, and I can attest to that. It's not interesting."
– GM Peter Biyiasas, after a blitz session against Bobby Fischer.

In this chapter we look at blitz games from Herceg Novi, 8th April 1970, which at that point was easily the strongest blitz tournament in chess history. The world's best players gathered in Belgrade for the "Match of the Century", USSR vs. Rest of the World. When it was completed, many of them remained in Yugoslavia and went to the town of Herceg Novi for a legendary 5-minute blitz tournament (there were no increments in the old, mechanical clock days!). Spassky and Larsen declined to play and, believe it or not, most experts predicted that Petrosian and Korchnoi were the favourites, despite Fischer's number one world ranking at the time. The delusion of Soviet dominance was shattered when Fischer won in crushing fashion, scoring 19 points from 22 games, 4½ points ahead of his nearest rival, Tal. In fact, Fischer clobbered the Soviet contingent by a totally lopsided 8½-1½ score. In the tournament, Bobby lost only one game to Korchnoi and spectators who were lucky enough to attend said he didn't use more than 2½ minutes in any game!

Having said that, I'm now undoubtedly going to enrage Bobby's fans by stating that his play was nowhere near

present-day top players' blitz abilities, that of Magnus, Nepo, Ding, or Hikaru. I compared the game quality and am convinced the level of blitz tactics and strategic understanding has risen exponentially since 1970. Today's players have access to endless online bullet practice, books on tactics, online tactics and videos which were not available in the pre-computer era. If Bobby of 1970 played blitz with Magnus of 2023, Bobby would get slaughtered, just as Bobby would have destroyed Lasker in a blitz match. We must look at the player in the context of their time. I don't dispute Fischer's dominance. It's simply that chess developed exponentially over the past 50 years.

Also, if you examine the games at Herceg Novi, the dominating score does not indicate how close the tournament actually was. Fischer was dead lost against both Tal and Reshevsky but won both games because of the clock. He also flagged Smyslov in a drawn ending. He was clearly the best in his time but not as dominant as people believe. Recently, Carlsen beat Caruana by a score of 22-4, without losing a single blitz game for four straight hours. This is a far greater achievement than Fischer's performance at Herceg Novi.

When I mentioned this in a Facebook post, friend Joseph Levine wrote: "We have to distinguish nostalgia from quality. Vladimir Horowitz wouldn't make it to the final round of any major piano competition today. Muhammad Ali would be beaten half to death by someone like Tyson Fury. Jesse Owens wouldn't qualify for the Olympic team. Newton would likely struggle with today's advanced math and physics. And Babe Ruth never faced a 103mph sinker/slider. Cumulative and progressive disciplines are just that way."

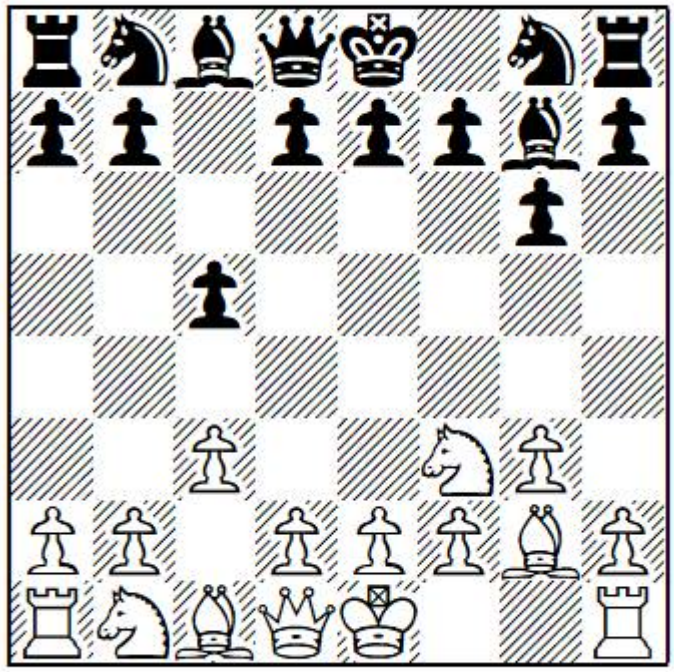
Game 53
R.J.Fischer-M.Tal
Blitz Tournament, Herceg Novi 1970
King's Indian Attack

1 g3!?

What the hay? This betrayal of his "best by test" 1 e4, reminds us of Robert the Bruce, when he gave up Mel Gibson

to Edward Longshanks' forces. Doesn't Bobby understand that a replica is not as valuable as the original? There goes Tal's opening preparation.

1 … g6 2 Bg2 Bg7 3 Nf3 c5 4 c3!



The message: "Not only am I willing to cut off my joy. I also insist on shutting down yours." A move doesn't always need to be empirically strong to qualify as an exclam. Fischer's move, which had to be distasteful for Tal, is a clever psychological ploy, since the only positions Fischer feared against Tal were irrational ones. With his last move he declares war on both fun and imagination.

4 … Nf6

4 … e5! is the only move to inject life back into the position. IM John Watson reacted this way against me in the late 1980s.

5 0-0 0-0 6 d4

"I played this opening in Benko's style," wrote Fischer.

6 … d6?!

After 6 … cxd4 7 cxd4 d5 we cannot accurately describe this position as an ever-fresh waterfall of inspiration. It's not easy for White to squeeze an edge from the dull symmetry.

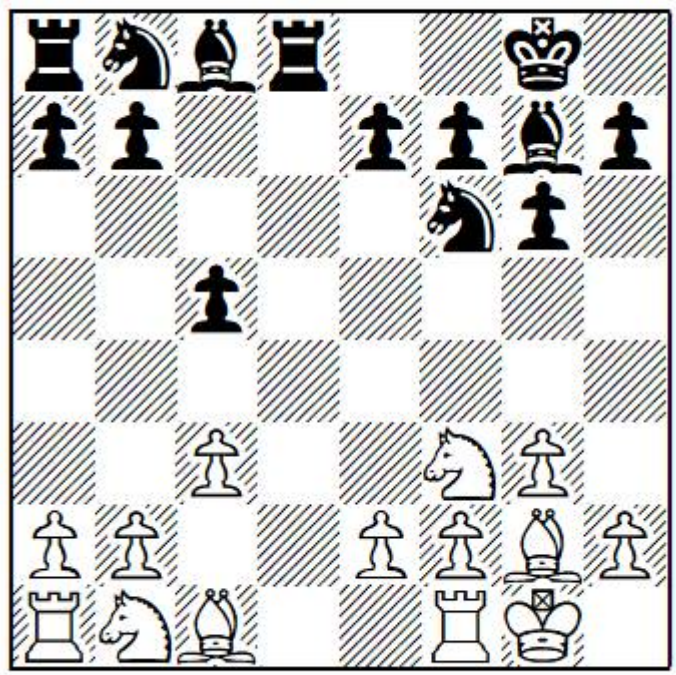
7 dxc5!

Here we see an example of Fischer's superior strategic understanding. The coming ending is better for White, since Black's fianchettoed bishop hits a wall on c3, while White's exerts power down the long light diagonal. This lone factor doesn't look like much, yet Fischer milked it well. Secondly, the coming position is *not* one where Tal stylistically shined.

7 … dxc5 8 Qxd8!

The spinster queens have zero prospects of marriage. This move is in violation of the principle: *Don't break piece tension, since in doing so we hand the opponent a tempo*. Yet the violation is completely justified and the only way White can press. And again there is the stylistic factor involved, where Fischer enters his realm of power – the endgame.

8 … Rxd8



9 Be3

9 Ne5! is also strong: if 9 … Nd5 10 Nxf7! Kxf7 11 Rd1 e6, R.Praggnanandhaa-B.Subrota, World Junior Olympiad, Ahmedabad 2017, then 12 e4! is good for White.

9 … Na6 10 Na3

10 a4! Be6 11 Na3 was more accurate.

10 … Nd5

10 … Be6! is better.

11 Rfd1 Bg4 12 Bd2 h6

Tal wants to keep White's knight out of g5.

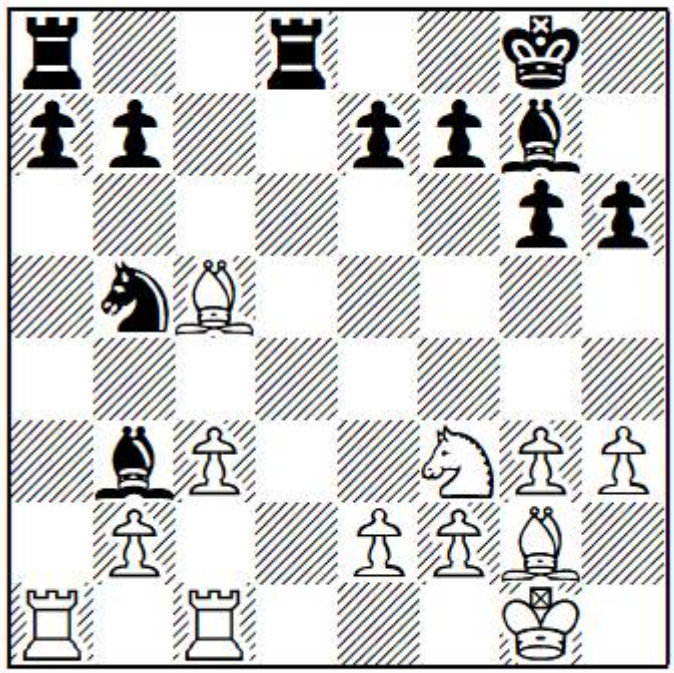
13 h3 Be6 14 Nb5 Ndc7

14 … Nb6 or 14 … Rd7 generates more counterplay.

15 a4! Bb3 16 Rdc1 Nxb5 17 axb5 Nc7 18 Be3 Nxb5?!

Instead, 18 … b6! 19 Nd2 Bd5 20 Bxd5 Nxd5 21 Nc4 Nc7 looks okay for Black.

19 Bxc5



19 … b6?!

Tal gets a bit carried away and sacrifices a pawn. 19 … Rd7 looks more sensible.

20 Bxe7! Re8?!

20 … Rd7 was necessary.

21 Ba3?!

Here 21 Nd2! Rac8 22 Nxb3 Rxe7 23 e3 leaves White a clean pawn up.

21 … Rad8

21 … Rxe2?? loses material to 22 Bf1!.

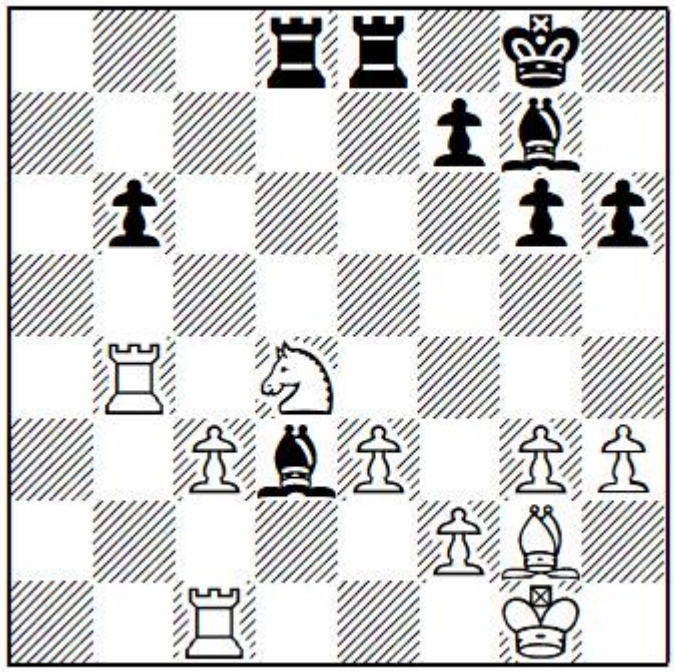
22 e3

"A pawn up and a powerful square on d4, the position is easily winning for White," wrote Fischer. I'm not so sure about the "easily" part but, yes, White clearly has good winning chances.

22 … a5 23 Nd4 Nxa3?!

White's bishop was out of play, so why exchange it off? 23 … Bc4 is better.

24 Rxa3 Bc4 25 Bf1 Bd5 26 Bg2 Bc4 27 Ra4 Bd3 28 b4! axb4 29 Rxb4



Now b6 will be a long-term target.

29 … Rd6 30 Rd1 Bc2 31 Rd2 Bf5

After 31 … Bxd4 32 cxd4 Bf5 33 Rdb2 Rb8 34 e4 Bc8 35 d5 f6 36 f4, e4-e5 is coming and Black's position is hopeless.

32 Rdb2!

White threatens b6, as well as the structurally debilitating Nxf5.

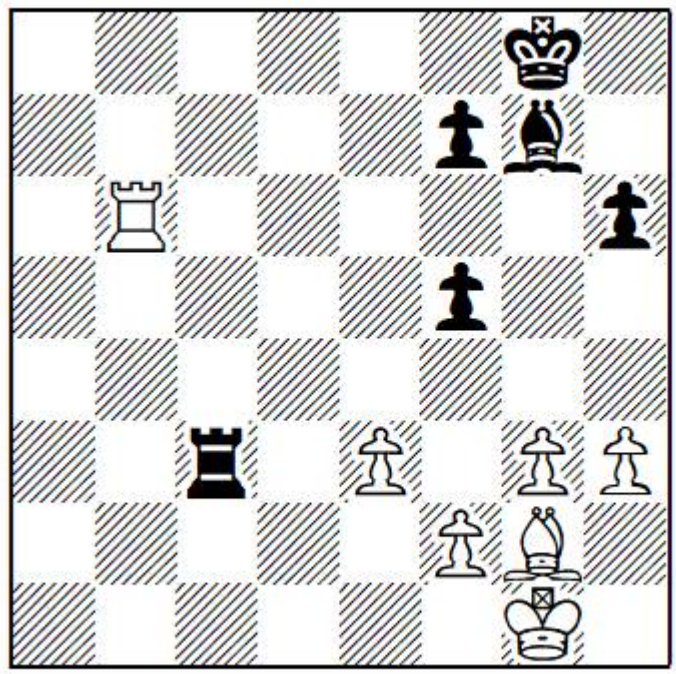
32 … Rc8

32 … Rb8 is a bit better, though 33 Nxf5 gxf5 34 Rc4 is technically winning for White.

33 Rxb6 Rxb6 34 Rxb6 Rxc3

34 … Bd3 35 Nc6 is also lost for Black.

35 Nxf5 gxf5



Tal tried his best to be structurally pious this game, to no avail. Black is busted, since:

1. He is a pawn down.

2. Both f5- and f7-pawns are targets.

3. The opposite-coloured bishops, far from being Tal's instrument of salvation, actually benefit Fischer, since Black's bishop is unable to defend its own pawns.

36 Bd5!

"Rb5 was more precise," wrote Bobby. *Stockfish* disagrees and prefers the game move.

36 … Rc7 37 Rb5 Re7 38 Bc4 Re5?

Tal gives away the f7-pawn. 38 … Be5 puts up more resistance.

39 Rb7 Kh7 40 Rxf7 Kg6 41 Rc7 Bf8 42 Rc6+ Kg7 43 Bd3 Be7 44 Bc2 Ra5 45 Kg2 1-0

Black's position is hopeless. For example: 45 … Rd5 46 h4 Ra5 47 h5! Bf8 48 Rc7+ Kf6 49 Bb3 wins.

Game 54
M.Tal-R.J.Fischer
Blitz Tournament, Herceg Novi 1970
Sicilian Defence

Bobby got insanely lucky this game!

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 Nc3!?

Everyone knows that the devil is miserable in paradise. This non-violent line is uncharacteristic of Tal, who is clearly happier dwelling in the chaos of an Open Sicilian. Is Tal afraid of Bobby's Najdorf, or is he trying to trick Fischer out of his normal lines?

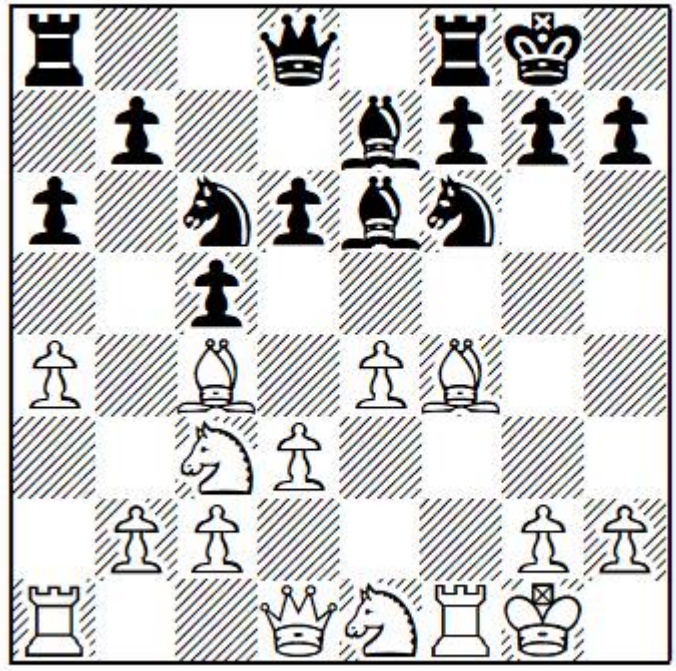
3 … e5!?

3 … Nf6 would probably just lead to a Najdorf after 4 d4 cxd4 5 Nxd4 a6.

4 Bc4 Be7 5 d3 Nf6 6 0-0 Nc6 7 Ne1!?

This is too passive to yield an edge. White generally plays 7 Ng5 0-0 8 f4 nowadays.

7 … 0-0 8 f4 a6 9 a4 exf4 10 Bxf4 Be6



11 Bxe6?!

This benefits Black's structure. Instead, 11 Nd5 Bxd5 12 Bxd5 Nxd5 13 exd5 Ne5 is balanced, J.Jinan-Cheng Bo, Sitges 2022.

11 … fxe6 12 Bg3 Qb6! 13 Qd2

13 Rb1 Rf7 is in Black's favour as well.

13 … Ng4

13 … Nh5! 14 Bf2 Ne5 is a nagging edge for Black. Certainly not 13 … Qxb2?? 14 Rb1 Qa3 15 Rb3 and the queen is trapped.

14 Nf3 Nd4

And now 14 … Nge5! 15 Nxe5 Nxe5, when 16 Bxe5? c4+! 17 Kh1 dxe5 favours Black, since 18 dxc4? Rad8 19 Qe2 Qxb2 is awful for White.

15 Rab1 Nxf3+!?

15 … Rf7 is a decent alternative.

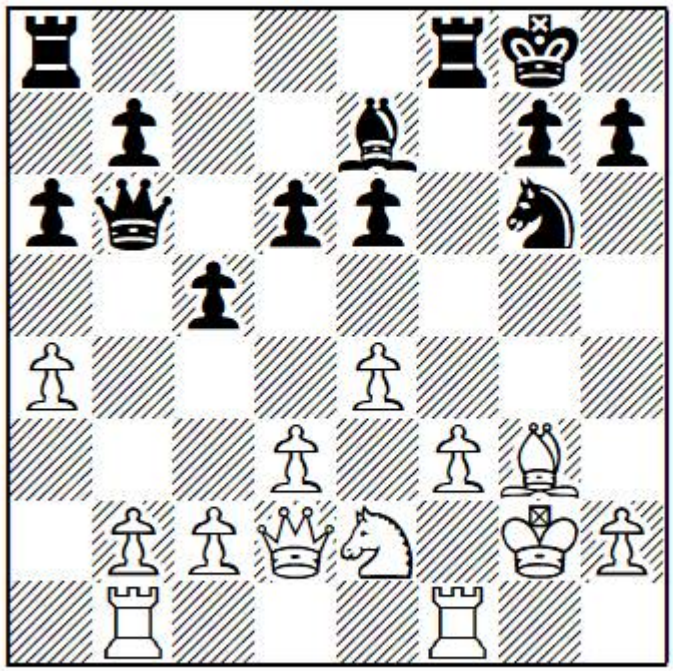
16 gxf3 Ne5?!

The wrong way this time. 16 … Nf6 is correct.

17 Kg2?!

Instead, 17 f4 Nc6 18 f5! weakens Black's central light squares, especially d5, and White stands better.

17 … Ng6 18 Ne2



18 … Nh4+

I prefer Black's position again after 18 … d5.

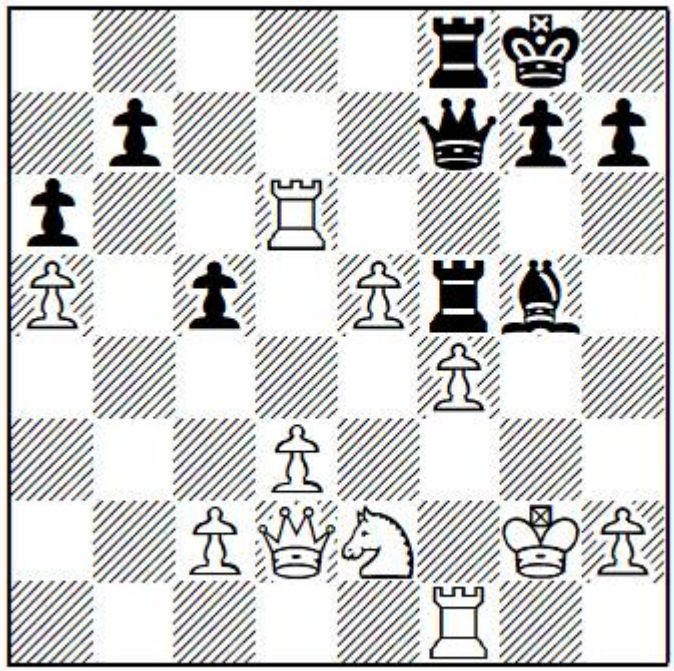
19 Bxh4 Bxh4 20 b4! Qc7 21 bxc5 dxc5 22 a5!?

Tal hopes to pin down b7 as a target.

22 … Rf6 23 f4 Raf8 24 Rb6 Bg5!? 25 e5! Rf5 26 Rxe6?

This temptation should have been resisted. 26 Qe3 is even.

26 … Qf7! 27 Rd6



Exercise (critical decision): What should Black play?

Answer: Black should take advantage of two pins and grab the e5-pawn.

27 … Bxf4??

This should lose! 27 … Rxe5! gives Black an excellent position, since 28 Qd1 can be met by 28 … Rf5.

28 Rxf4 Rxf4 29 Nxf4 Qxf4 30 Qxf4 Rxf4 31 Rd7

White is winning the rook and pawn ending.

31 … Ra4

Nothing is any better:
a) 31 … Rb4 32 Kf3 h5 33 c4! Rb2 34 h4 Kf8 35 Ke4 and the king comes in.

b) 31 … Rf7? fails to the simple 32 e6, since even the pawn ending is lost for Black.

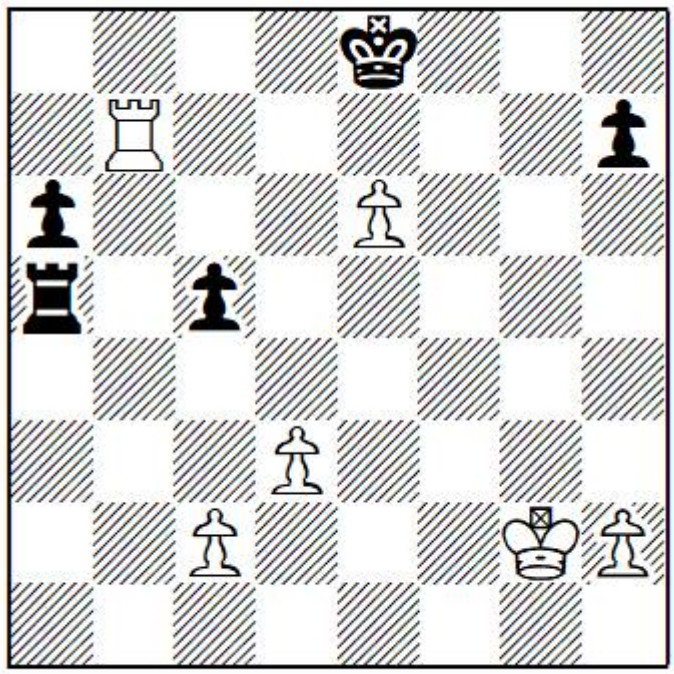
32 e6

Threatening a back rank mate.

32 … Kf8 33 Rf7+ Ke8

Or 33 … Kg8 34 Rxb7 Kf8 35 Kf3.

34 Rxg7 Rxa5 35 Rxb7



One glance tells us that White is winning, since his king can march up the board and generate mating/promotion threats.

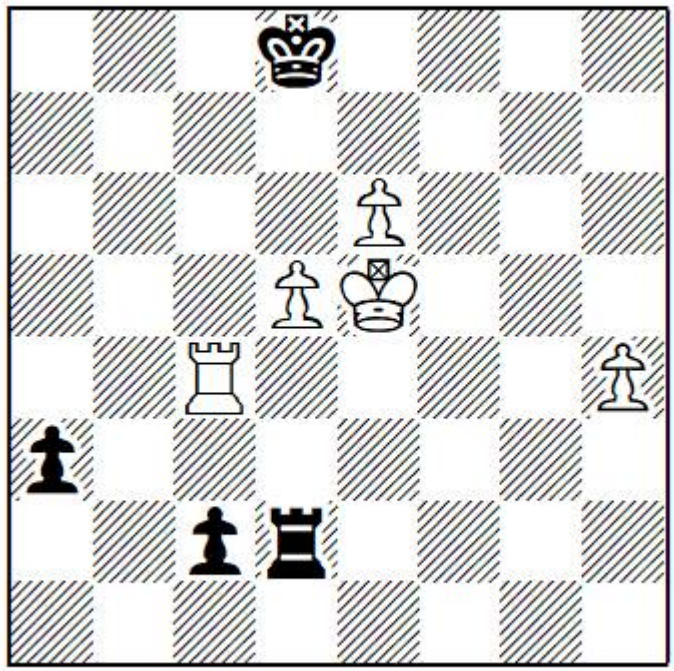
35 … Ra2 36 Kf3 Rxc2 37 Rxh7 c4! 38 d4!

Not 38 dxc4?? Rxc4 and Black should hold the draw.

38 … c3 39 d5 Rd2 40 Ke4 c2 41 Rc7 Kd8 42 Rc4 a5 43 h4 a4

It's a scary-looking race to a human in a blitz game, yet the *Stockfish* assessment is +152.54!.

44 Ke5 a3



Exercise (critical decision): Should White push his d-pawn to d6, or move his

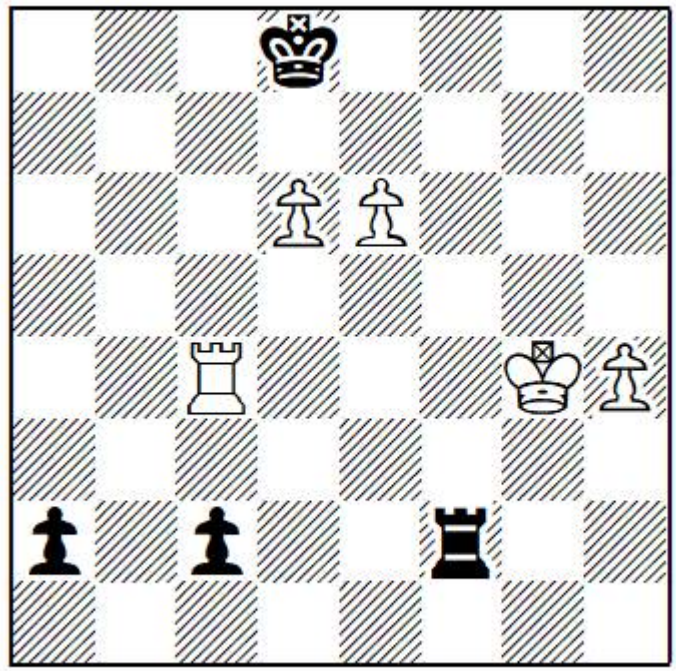
king into the square?

Answer: Moving the king to d6 wins easily; pushing the pawn there allows Black to draw.

45 d6??

After 45 Kd6! (Black's king is now a character in a Kafka novel, arrested and held without charge) 45 … Re2 46 h5 a2 47 Rg4 (threatening back rank mate again) 47 … Kc8 48 Rg1! Rd2 49 e7 Re2 50 h6 Black is helpless.

45 … Re2+ 46 Kf5 Rf2+ 47 Kg4 a2



Exercise (critical decision): Should White push his d- or e-pawn to the

seventh rank?

Answer: Pushing the e-pawn draws; pushing the d-pawn loses.

48 d7??

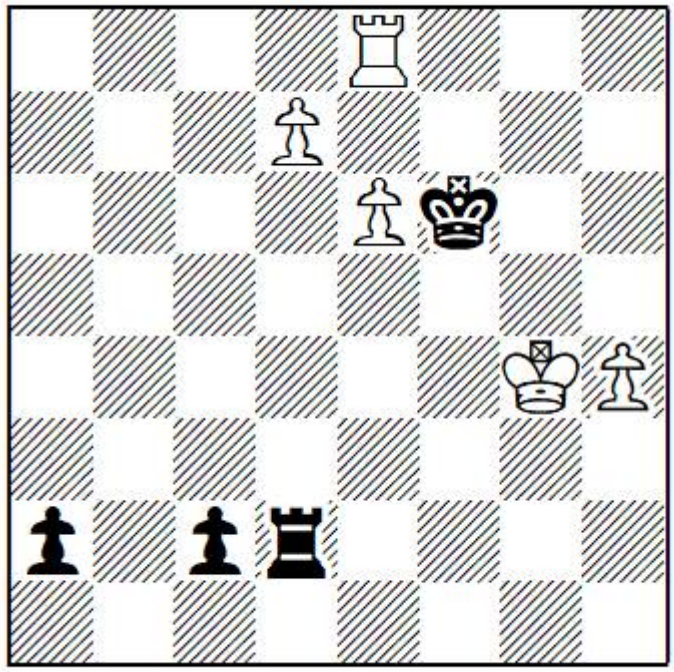
Have you ever watched a game played by beginners, where their leaderless pieces wander to random squares without an agenda? Well, even world champions do this when their clocks are down to seconds, as Tal's must have been. The problem is the brave declaration: "I will work tirelessly to uncover the truth" is a sure way to flag. So Tal must have banged out the move intuitively, guessing wrong.

After 48 e7+! Kd7 49 Rc7+ Kxd6 50 e8Q Kxc7 White has no more than a draw. For example: 51 Qe5+ Kc6 52 Qb2 Rd2 53 h5 Rd4+! 54 Kf5 Rc4 55 Qf6+ and the game ends in perpetual check.

48 … Ke7! 49 Rc8 Rd2

Oops. Suddenly Tal, who finds himself in reduced circumstances, is desperate for financial traction, since one of Bobby's pawns is going to promote, whereas zero of Tal's pawns will safely reach their promotion squares.

50 Re8+ Kf6



And it's game over.

51 e7

51 d8Q+ fails miserably to 51 … Rxd8 52 Rxd8 c1Q.

51 … Rxd7 0-1

Game 55
R.J.Fischer-V.Korchnoi
Blitz Tournament, Herceg Novi 1970
French Defence

It's good for us to de-mythify our deities. This was Bobby's only loss in 22 rounds and it was a truly wretched game on his part, where he was completely unrecognizable. If you asked

me to guess White's rating, the number which comes to mind is FIDE 1600. But who among us hasn't played a horrible blitz game?

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3

Bobby was convinced in the righteousness of the White side of both the Classical and Winawer French, yet suffered many reverses against the latter. I have a feeling his lifetime score against French would have been far higher had he channelled Karpov and played the Tarrasch with 3 Nd2.

3 … Bb4 4 e5 Ne7

4 … c5 5 a3 Bxc3+ 6 bxc3 Ne7 transposes, if Black wishes. Both 6 … Qc7 (as in Game 57) and 6 … Qa5!? are options here too.

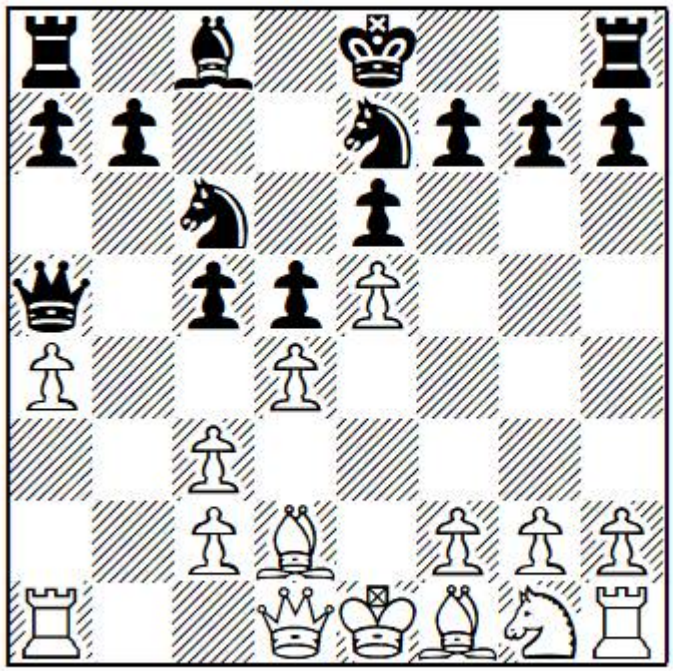
5 a3 Bxc3+ 6 bxc3 c5 7 a4

Today, we know that 7 Qg4 is White's best shot at an advantage.

7 … Qa5

The idea is to lure White's bishop away from a3.

8 Bd2 Nbc6



9 Qg4!?

In this position 9 Nf3 scores better.

9 … 0-0 10 Nf3 f6! 11 Bd3

White is 0-3 from here in the database, while *Stockfish* calls the game dead even.

11 … f5

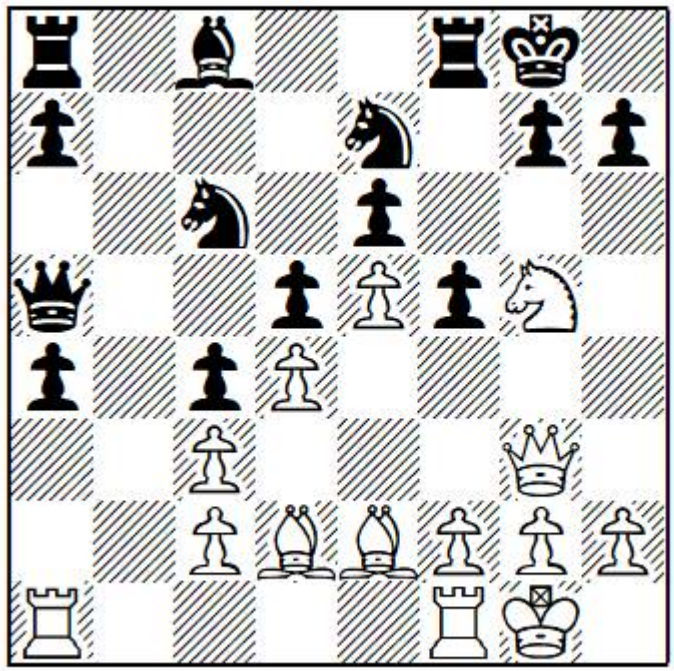
Korchnoi is nervous about sacrifices on h7. For example, 11 … c4 12 exf6 Rxf6 13 Bxh7+ Kxh7 14 Qh5+ Kg8 15 Ng5 Qd8 (or if 15 … Rg6 16 h4 e5, as in M.Maesa-Kar.Weber, correspondence 2008, then 17 f4!) 16 Qh7+ Kf8 17 Qh8+ Ng8 18 Nh7+ Kf7 19 Ng5+ Kf8 is perpetual check.

12 Qg3 c4 13 Be2 b5

I doubt that Bobby was terrified by the loss of his a-pawn.

14 0-0 bxa4 15 Ng5??

Here I prefer White's chances after 15 h4.



The difference between involuntary and voluntary suffering is there is greater mental torment in the latter version.

Exercise (combination alert): Bobby overlooked an elementary tactic.

Answer: Simply chop the d4-pawn.

15 … Nxd4! 16 cxd4?!

Flustered, Bobby makes matters even worse. He should try 16 Bh5.

I'm wondering if Fischer hallucinated, foresaw Korchnoi's move, and planned 16 Qh4??, threatening mate on h7 as well as Qxd4. Unfortunately, there is a wee flaw in this reasoning: 16 … Nxe2 is check and Black wins.

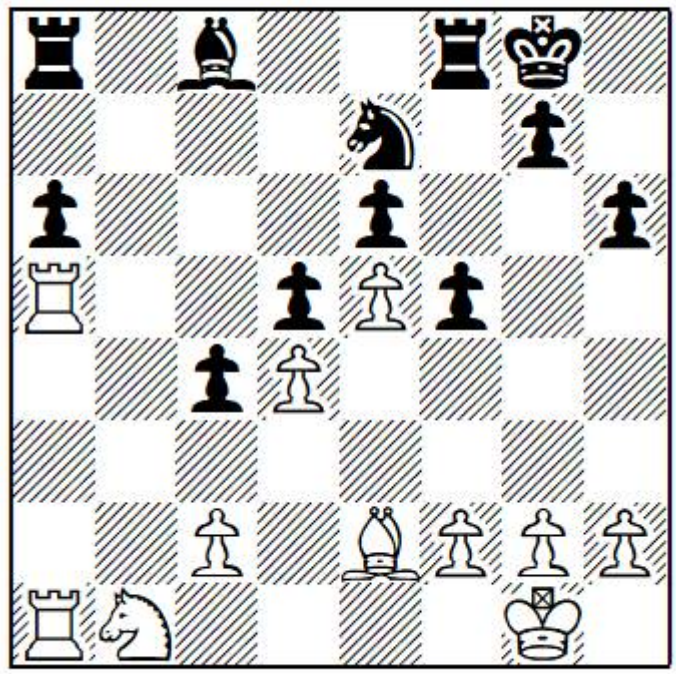
16 … Qxd2 17 Qh4 h6 18 Nf3 Ng6?!

There is no reason to refrain from 18 … Qxe2 19 Qxe7 Qxc2.

19 Nxd2 Nxh4 20 Rxa4 Ng6 21 Rfa1 a6 22 Nb1

22 c3 Rb8 23 R4a2 is slightly better.

22 … Ne7 23 Ra5??



What the hell? Bobby is totally unrecognizable this game. His last move allows a simple double attack.

23 … Nc6 24 R5a4 Nxd4 25 Bd1 f4!

This cuts off f2-f4 and now White's e-pawn is in danger.

26 Nc3

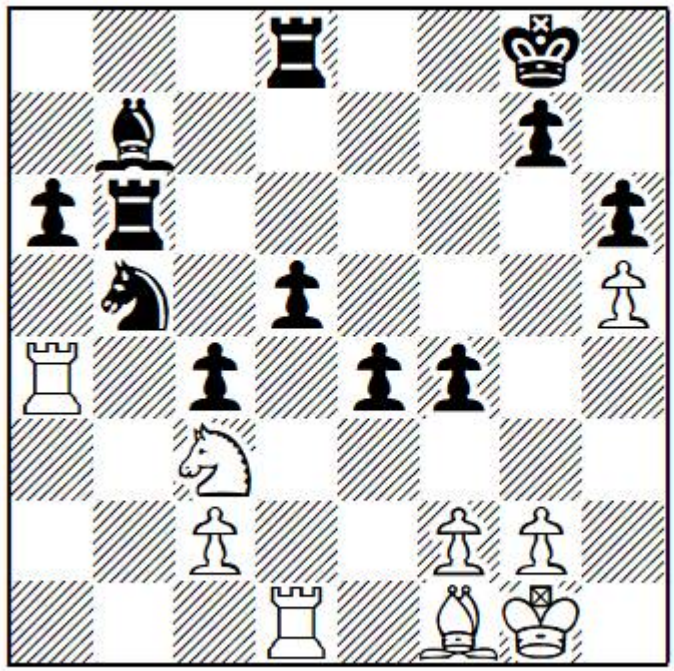
26 Nd2 Bd7 27 Rxa6 Rxa6 28 Rxa6 Rb8 29 Ra1 Rb2 leaves White hopelessly lost.

26 … Nc6 27 Ne2 Nxe5

Bobby is three pawns down and we all wish he would just get it over with and resign.

28 Nd4 Rb8 29 h4 Rb6 30 h5 Nc6 31 Ne2 e5 32 Nc3 Rd8 33 Bf3 e4 34 Be2 Nd4 35 Bf1 Bb7! 36 Rd1 Nb5?!

Now it's Korchnoi's turn to give stuff away. 36 … Ne6 consolidates.



37 Nxe4?

Wow. Fischer blunders again! 37 Rxc4 Nxc3 38 Rxc3 is better, though still lost for White.

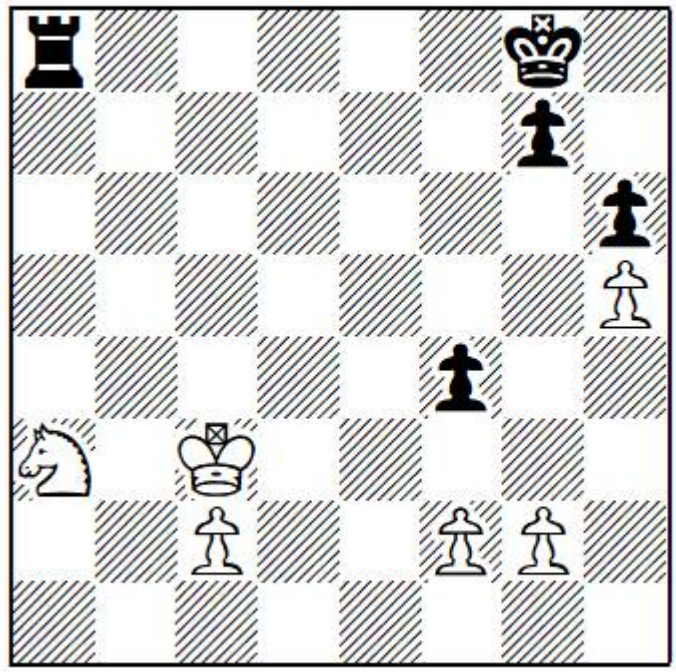
37 … Rc8!

Or 37 … Re8!, winning the exchange after 38 Nc5 Nc3.

38 Nd2 Nc3

This is getting embarrassing.

39 Rda1 Nxa4 40 Rxa4 Bc6 41 Ra5 Bb5 42 Nf3 c3 43 Nd4 Bxf1 44 Kxf1 Rb4 45 Rxd5 a5! 46 Ke2 a4 47 Kd3 Ra8 48 Kxc3 Rb1 49 Rb5 Rxb5 50 Nxb5 a3 51 Nxa3



Really? Well, they say a desperate person will say and do anything. Now we see this statement is true. You don't really need an annotator to tell you that White's position is afflicted in both spirit and body. The omens tend to be unfavourable when you only have your king, and the opponent owns king and rook. Korchnoi's clock must have been hanging, so Bobby plays on, hoping for a cheap win on time, which is still better than losing!

51 … Rxa3+ 52 Kd4 Ra2 53 Kd3 Kf7 54 g3 fxg3 55 fxg3 0-1

Game 56
V.Korchnoi-R.J.Fischer
Blitz Tournament, Herceg Novi 1970
King's Indian Defence

After playing that awful French Winawer, Bobby produces a blitz masterpiece with a model King's Indian attack.

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 Bg7 4 e4 d6

It's funny how trends go. Today, it's almost unthinkable that a King's Indian would be played in world championship match and, for the top players, it seems to have reached the level of an outcast given a dishonourable discharge, although there are still a few, like Radjabov, who remain faithful to it. At the club level, the KID is still loved!

5 Be2 0-0 6 Nf3 e5 7 0-0 Nc6 8 d5 Ne7 9 Nd2

Today, 9 b4 (the Bayonet Attack) and 9 Ne1 are more popular.

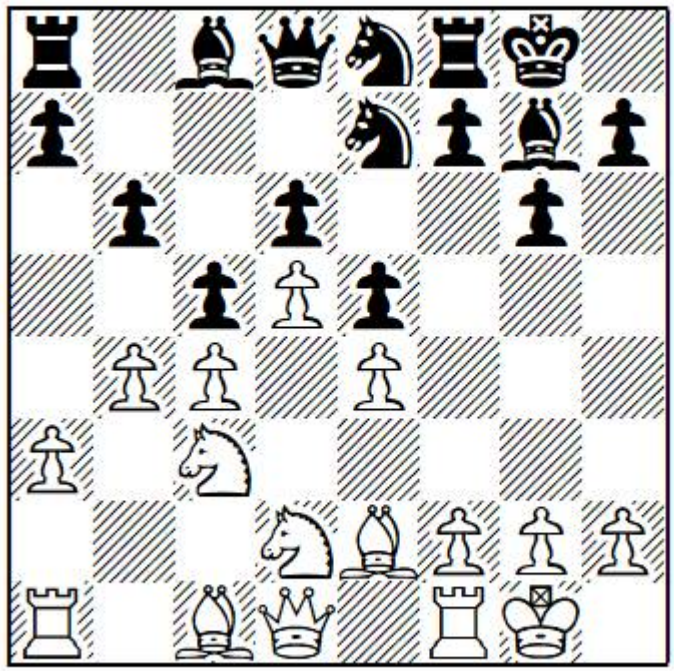
9 … c5

We already saw that this was Bobby's preference in this line.

10 a3?!

I'm not a big fan of this move, which may actually lose a tempo, since Rb1 and b2-b4 does without a2-a3. Larsen played the more accurate 10 Rb1 (unsuccessfully) in their Candidates' match (see Game 11).

10 … Ne8 11 b4 b6



12 Rb1

After 12 bxc5 bxc5 13 Rb1 f5 14 Re1 Nf6 15 Bd3 f4 16 Nf3 h6 (halting Ng5 and Ne6 ideas) 17 Bc2 g5 18 Ba4! White goodifies (warning: not a real word) the once bad bishop and chances are about even, And.Maksimenko-P.Capitelli, Bratto 2003.

12 … f5 13 f3 f4

It is also logical to swap away White's good bishop: 13 … Bh6 14 Nb3 Bxc1 15 Nxc1 Nf6 16 bxc5 bxc5 17 Nd3 f4 18 Qa4 g5 19 Nf2 (in order to slow down Black's … g5-g4 break) 19 … h5 20 h3 Bd7 21 Qa6 Bc8 22 Qa4 Bd7 23 Qa6 Bc8 24 Qa4 with a draw by repetition of moves, B.Malich-L.Vogt, East Berlin 1979.

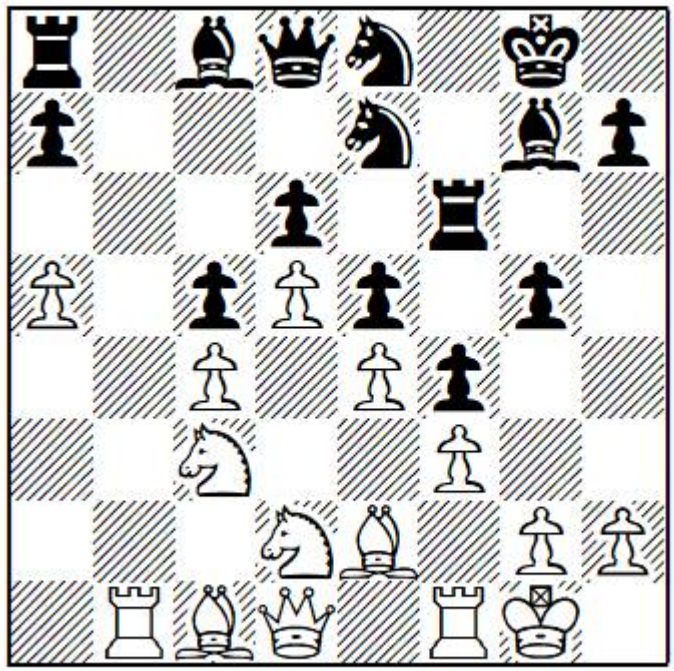
14 a4?!

This move has not been repeated. It reinforces the fact that White lost a tempo by playing a2-a3 earlier. Instead, R.Ciaffone-G.Spraggett, Toronto 1997, saw 14 Nb3 g5 15 bxc5 bxc5 and even here I slightly prefer Black.

14 … g5 15 a5 Rf6 16 bxc5

On 16 axb6 axb6 17 bxc5 bxc5 I would flip the "+=" engine evaluation to "=+", since Black's only weakness is the almost impregnable base pawn on d6, whereas White will still have to try and defend the eventual kingside attack.

16 … bxc5



17 Nb3

This both protects the a-pawn and prepares a possible Ba3 and Nxc5, with two healthy central passers for the piece. 17 Qa4 covers his a-pawn at the cost of moving the queen away from his soon-to-be-attacking king.

17 … Rg6

Of course Fischer plays for the thematic pawn break on g4.

18 Bd2?!

This looks too slow. White should try either 18 Ba3 h5 19 Nxc5!? dxc5 20 Bxc5 or 18 g4 h5 19 h3 Rh6 20 Kf2 Ng6 21 Ke1, though the engine prefers Black's chances in both lines.

18 … Nf6

Now … g5-g4 is coming with force, while White's queenside play just crawls along.

19 Kh1?!

Moving the king doesn't ease White's defence. Equally, if 19 Kf2?! g4 20 Ke1 gxf3 21 Bxf3 Nf5!! 22 exf5 Bxf5, White won't survive the coming … e5-e4.

The engine suggests 19 a6!, which looks best. After 19 … g4 20 fxg4 Nxg4 21 Nb5 the engine calls it even, in that Black's attack is only enough for a draw.

19 … g4 20 fxg4!

White cannot allow his king to become entombed after … g4-g3. Thus 20 a6?? is now too slow: 20 … g3 21 Be1 Rh6 22 h3 Bxh3 23 gxh3 Qd7 and White is mated.

20 … Nxg4 21 Rf3

The idea is to play h2-h3 with White's rook reinforcing the pawn against piece sacrifices.

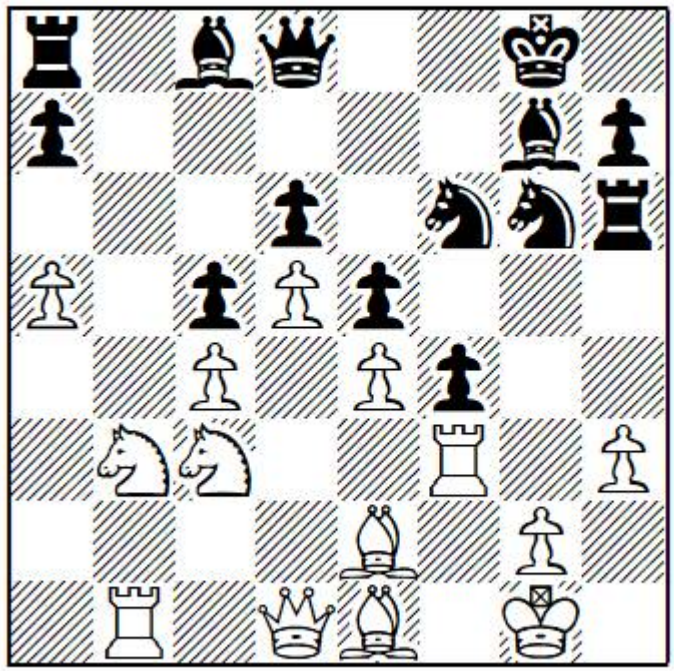
a) 21 Bxg4 (trying to reduce the attacking force) 21 … Bxg4 22 Qc2 Kh8 23 Be1 Bf6 and Black's coming attack is strong.

b) 21 h3 creates weakness: 21 … Nf6 22 Bf3 Rh6 is awfully scary for a human, although the engine only claims an edge for Black.

21 … Rh6 22 h3 Ng6 23 Kg1 Nf6

Another option is to sacrifice a pawn for the dark squares: 23 … Ne3!? 24 Bxe3 fxe3 25 Rxe3 Nf4 with obvious compensation for Black.

24 Be1



Exercise (planning): We clearly sense that Fischer's position is imbibed

with endless possibilities. Now comes the moment to flesh out the details.

Come up with a clear attacking plan for Black.

Answer: Retreat and re-route the g6-knight to g5, via h8, after which f3 and h3 become sacrificial targets.

24 … Nh8!!

Nimzowitsch approved! To retreat a piece voluntarily in the middle of an attack is no less incongruent than a sitting U.S. president, who announces to the nation that his decision to go to war, or refrain, will be based on how the Tarot cards fall.

25 Rd3

After 25 Nd2 Nf7 26 Qa4 Bd7 27 Qb3 Ng5 28 Rd3 Nxh3+!? 29 gxh3 Bxh3 the engine calls it even, while we

humans generally bungle such positions for White's side.

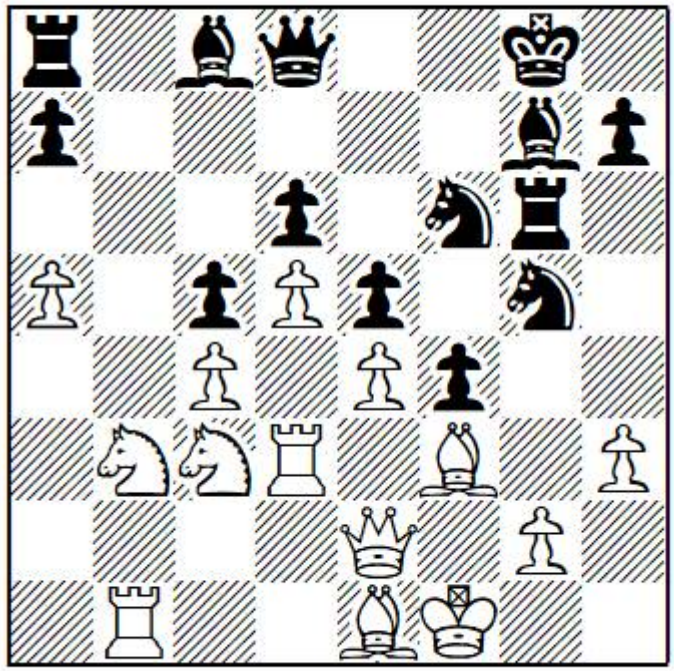
25 … Nf7 26 Bf3

26 h4 prevents … Ng5 at the big cost of a puncture on g4 and a new weakness on h4.

26 … Ng5 27 Qe2

I would abandon the a5-pawn and airlift another defender for White's king with 27 Nd2.

27 … Rg6 28 Kf1



Exercise (combination alert): Korchnoi's goal is to run his king over to the

queenside. How should Black respond?

Answer: Annihilation of defensive barrier.

28 … Nxh3!

Bobby's sweet-talking days are over and he decides the time has come to bloody Korchnoi's nose and knock out a few

teeth. A knight sacrifice on h3 is both thematic and brutal.

29 gxh3?

Acceptance is suicide. 29 Bh4 Ng5 is better but also lost for White.

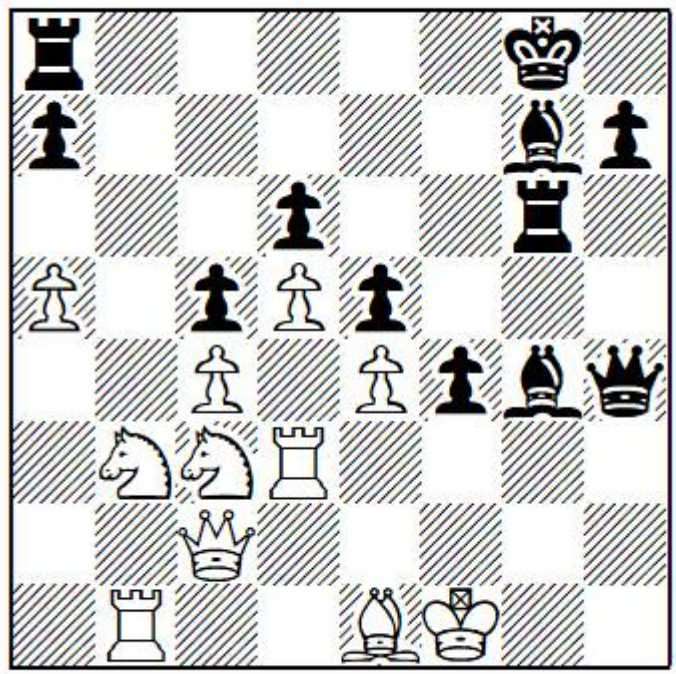
29 … Bxh3+ 30 Kf2 Ng4+!

The way to h4 is cleared for Black's queen.

31 Bxg4 Bxg4

MegaBase has Korchnoi resigning here.

32 Qc2 Qh4+ 33 Kf1



Exercise (calculation): Without moving the pieces, work out Black's forced mate

in four.

Answer: Start with a queen check on h1.

33 … Qh1+ 34 Kf2 Qh2+ 35 Kf1

White's king is the floating, drowned body, about to be washed up on the beach.

35 … Bh3+!

Clearance.

36 Rxh3 Rg1 mate

As I wrote in *Fischer: Move by Move*: "If Capablanca played the Black side of the King's Indian, then this game is an example of what his games would look like."

Game 57
R.J.Fischer-T.V.Petrosian
Blitz Tournament, Herceg Novi 1970
French Defence

"As soon as Fischer gains even the slightest advantage, he starts playing like a machine." – Tigran Petrosian.

But not always in blitz! This was one of the most complex games of the event, which confused both sides.

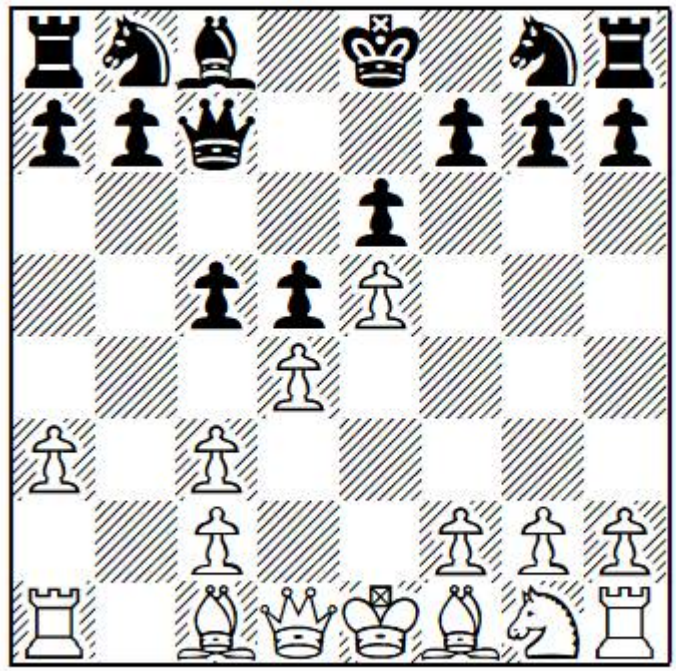
1 e4 e6

Oh, what a dirty trick! At the time, Petrosian, Botvinnik and Korchnoi were the French Defence's longest serving leaders since Stalin and Mao. I forgot one other guy: C. Freddy Lak began playing the French around 1970. I remember going over this game at age 9 or 10 and liking both Korchnoi's and Petrosian's Winawer positions against Bobby, after which I soon took the oath of office, swearing eternal allegiance to the French Winawer Republic, which I still play today, at age 63.

2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e5 c5 5 a3 Bxc3+

As always in the Winawer Black strikes a Faustian bargain, handing over the important dark-squared bishop in exchange for damage to White's structure.

6 bxc3 Qc7!?



The mysterious queen move isn't so much a new story we never heard before. It's a slightly different retelling of an old, already familiar story. The idea is to cover g7 against Qg4, laterally, with … f7-f6 or … f7-f5.

7 Nf3

"I could have played Qg4 but was influenced against it because Petrosian as Black had recently beaten Diez Del Corral at Palma de Mallorca in this line," wrote Fischer.

7 … Ne7 8 a4 Bd7

An interesting idea; Black plays his bishop to c6 the knight's square and his knight to d7, the bishop's square. Today, 8 … b6 is Black's main move, intending … Ba6, which White usually deflects by 9 Bb5+ Bd7 10 Bd3.

9 Bd3 Bc6!?

9 … Nbc6 is more natural.

10 0-0

A novelty at the time, for what it's worth. 10 Qd2 h6 11 a5 Nd7 12 0-0 a6 featured in the old game V.Smyslov-

G.Levenfish, USSR Championship, Moscow 1940. White looks a shade better after 13 Ba3.

10 … Nd7 11 Ba3

Fischer said he played this to prevent … Nb6, yet he missed a stronger idea: 11 Ng5! h6 12 Qh5 g6 13 Qh3 is awkward for Black, who is unable to castle either side.

11 … h6 12 Re1

12 a5! is more accurate.

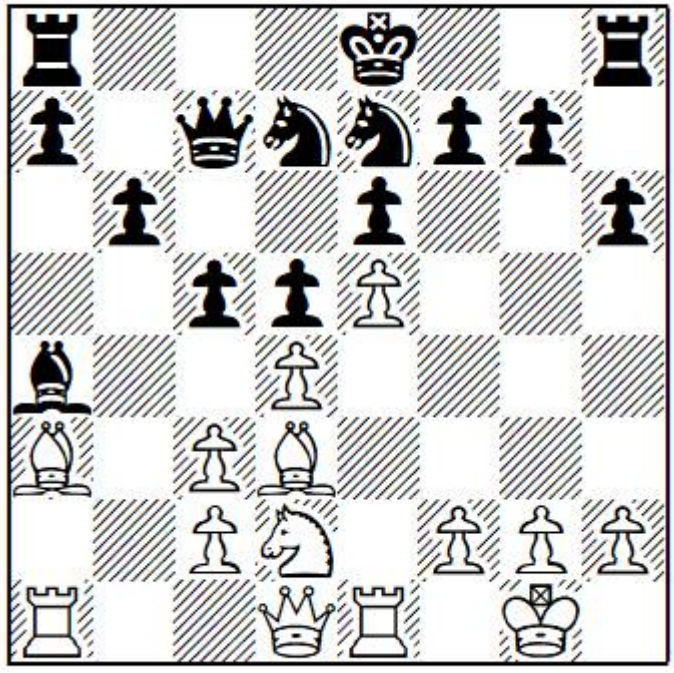
12 … b6

Petrosian wants to retain the central pawn tension. Instead, 12 … c4! 13 Bf1 a5! fixes a4 as a permanent target. Of course, White gets compensation along the weakened central dark squares.

13 Nd2!

Fischer clears the path for Qg4.

13 … Bxa4?!



This pawn grab is overly optimistic. 13 … c4 14 Bf1 a5 was definitely better here.

14 dxc5?

I know it's wrong to body-shame but I can't help it since Bobby's structure is so ugly. He shouldn't hand over his e5-pawn. 14 Qg4! is difficult for Black to meet. If 14 … 0-0 15 Nf3, White has a strong attack with Re3 and Nh4 coming.

14 … bxc5?

Black's chances are better after 14 … Nxe5! (this move also cuts off Qg4) 15 Qh5 Nxd3 16 cxd3 0-0 17 cxb6 axb6 18 Bxe7 Qxe7 19 Qxd5 Qc7.

15 Qg4!

Petrosian may have overlooked this double attack on a4 and g7.

15 … Bc6 16 Qxg7 Rg8 17 Qxh6 Nxe5 18 Bxc5

18 Qf4! was even stronger. If 18 … c4 19 Rxe5 cxd3 20 cxd3, Black can barely move, and 20 … d4 21 Ne4 Bxe4 22 Qxe4 Qc6 23 cxd4 is just lost for Black.

18 … d4

Uncovering an attack against g2.

19 Be4?

The wrong way to cover the threat. White should play 19 g3! and if 19 … dxc3 20 Nc4! Nf3+ 21 Kf1 Nxe1 22 Nd6+ Kd7 23 Rxe1, the extra exchange will not save Black.

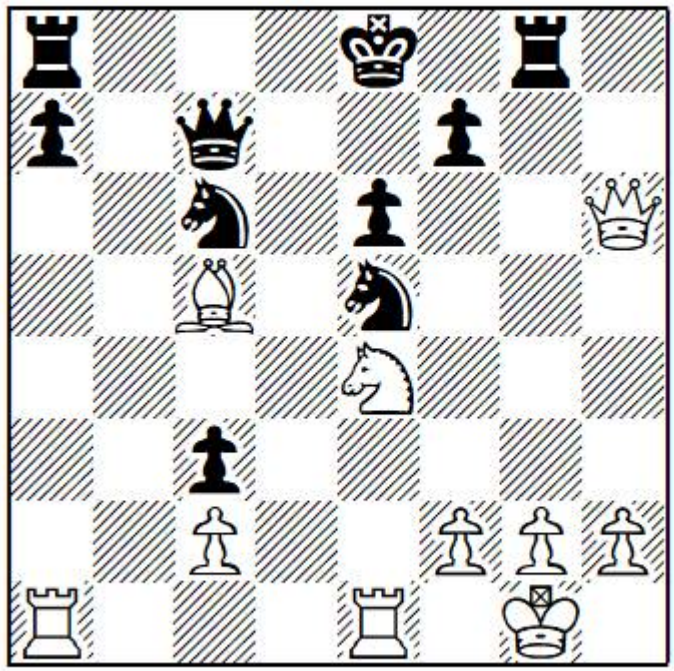
19 … dxc3 20 Bxc6+!?

20 Nb3 is approximately even.

20 … N7xc6?

The wrong way to recapture. 20 … Qxc6! 21 Ne4 Nf3+ 22 Kh1 Nxe1 23 f3! 0-0-0 24 Bxe7 Nxc2 25 Rc1 f5 is a god-awful mess, called even by the engine.

21 Ne4



Threatening all kinds of horrible checks on f6 and d6, which in turn forces Petrosian's king to castle into the aired-out queenside.

21 … 0-0-0

21 … Nf3+ 22 Kh1 Nxe1 23 Nf6+ Kd8 24 Nxg8 is just losing for Black.

22 Red1?

The complications are too much for both sides, especially so since this was a blitz game. Here 22 Qe3! Ng4 23 Qg3 consolidates for White.

22 … Ng4?

"A pleasant surprise," wrote Fischer. Instead, 22 … Nf3+! 23 Kf1 Nxh2+ 24 Ke1!? Ng4 25 Qh7 Qe5 26 Rd6 Rg7 27 Rxc6+ Kb7 28 Rd6! Rxh7 29 Rxa7+ Kc8 30 Ra8+ Kb7 31 Ra7+ is perpetual check.

23 Qh4!

"White plays on Black's weak d6-square and a safe king position."

23 … Rxd1+ 24 Rxd1 f5 25 Nd6+ Kb8 26 Nb5

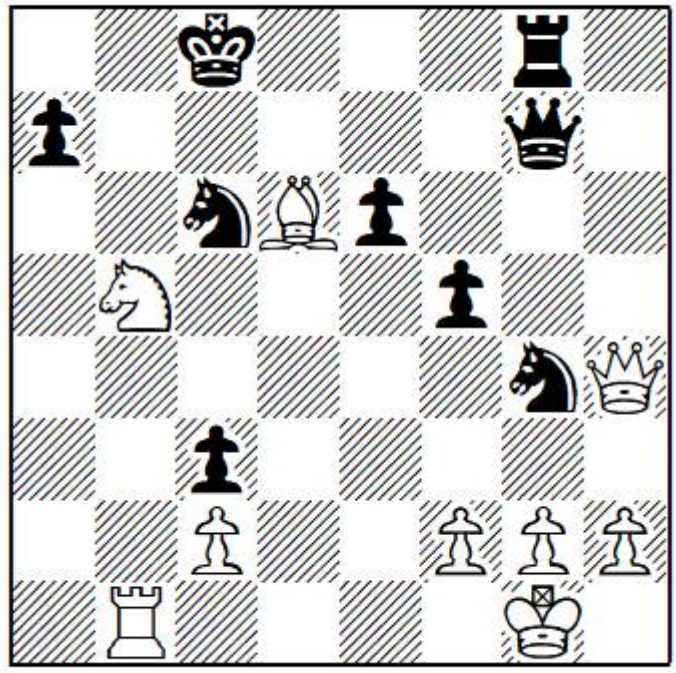
26 Rb1+! Ka8 27 Nb5 was stronger, followed by 27 … Qg7 28 Qg3 or 27 … Qd7 28 Bd6!.

26 … Qg7

26 … Qa5 allows 27 Qh7!.

27 Bd6+ Kb7 28 Rb1 Kc8?

28 … Nge5 29 Qh3 Qg4 30 Qxg4 is a lost ending for Black, yet still better than Petrosian's move.



29 Qg3?!

29 Bg3 "was crushing". If 29 … e5 then 30 Nd6+ Kc7 31 Rb7+ wins the queen.

29 … Qb7?

29 … Nf6 was forced.

30 Nxc3 Qa6 31 h3 Nf6 32 Qh4 Nd7 33 Qh7! Rd8 34 Qf7

34 Bg3! was stronger here too, intending Nb5 again.

34 … Qc4 35 Rb3?

Still 35 Nb5, since 35 … a6 36 Nc7 Nde5 37 Bxe5 Nxe5 38 Qxe6+ Qxe6 39 Nxe6 is another lost ending for Black.

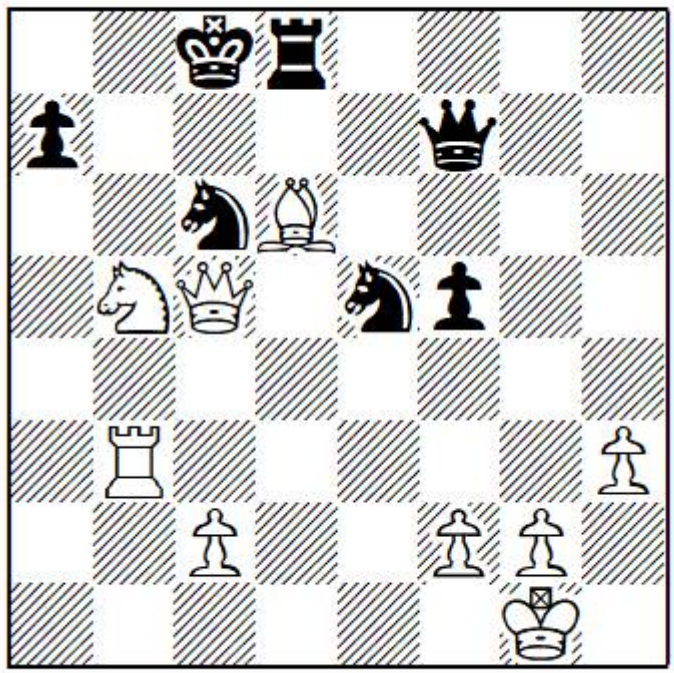
35 … Qd4?

35 … Nd4! is Black's best shot to muck it up.

36 Qxe6

"The rest is simple enough." The base e-pawn falls and Petrosian's king is too exposed.

36 … Qf6 37 Qd5 Nde5 38 Nb5 Qf7 39 Qc5!



Petrosian will soon be forced to face up to his former crimes, since it's clear his exposed king is unable to withstand White's attack.

39 … Nf3+??

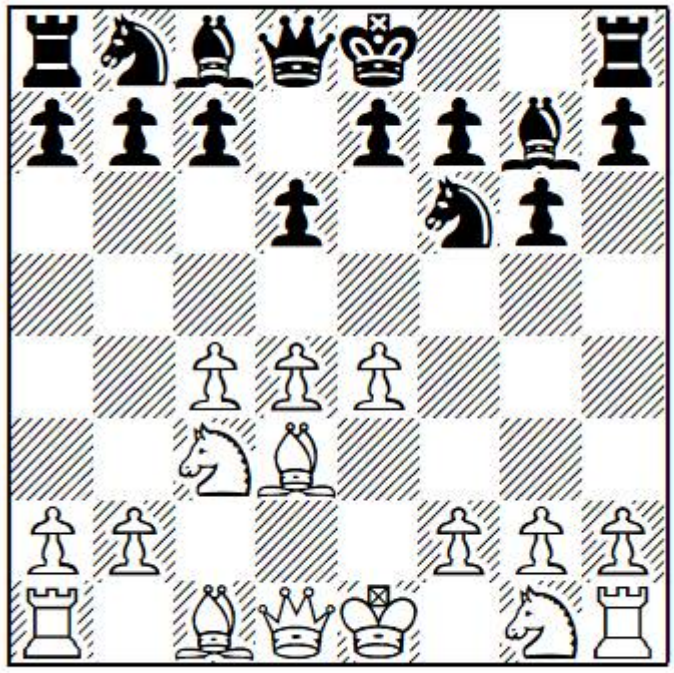
Once we let go of the piece on the hanging square, it's too late to retract; and the water you see in a mirage has no power to slake your thirst. This is an obvious time-pressure hallucination., though it didn't matter at this stage. Anything like 39 … Qc4 40 Nxa7+ Kd7 41 Rb7+ Ke8 42 Nxc6 Qxc5 43 Re7+ Kf8 44 Bxc5 Nxc6 45 Rc7+ is winning anyway.

40 Rxf3 Kd7 41 Rd3 1-0

Black's king is deemed an unfit commander-in-chief.

Game 58
T.V.Petrosian-R.J.Fischer
Blitz Tournament, Herceg Novi 1970
King's Indian Defence

1 c4 Nf6 2 Nc3 g6 3 d4 d6 4 e4 Bg7 5 Bd3!?



"This is not the best move," wrote Fischer, who added that Petrosian liked to play more popular book lines for tournament and match games. Freelancing in the opening is usually not such a great idea since, in doing so, we tend to wing it. Today we know that Petrosian's line is actually playable for White, who usually develops the g1-knight to e2 to keep the f-pawn free to push to either f3 or f4.

5 … c5!?

This is shorthand for a delayed entry to a Benoni set-up. Alternatively, 5 … 0-0 6 Nge2 Nc6 scores decently for Black.

6 d5 0-0 7 Nge2 e6 8 Bg5

"Uhlmann used to be fond of this system many years ago," wrote Bobby. Naturally, 8 0-0 is also played.

8 … h6 9 Bd2!?

I prefer White's position after 9 Bh4! exd5 10 exd5! Nbd7 11 f4.

9 … Nbd7

Fischer retains the central tension for the moment and threatens to pick up the bishop pair with … Ne5 next. Objectively, exchanging on d5 is more precise, waiting to see how White recaptures before deciding how to proceed,

10 b3?!

He shouldn't weaken the a1-h8 diagonal. 10 f4! exd5 11 exd5! Ng4 12 0-0 Re8 13 Rf3! is slightly in White's favour.

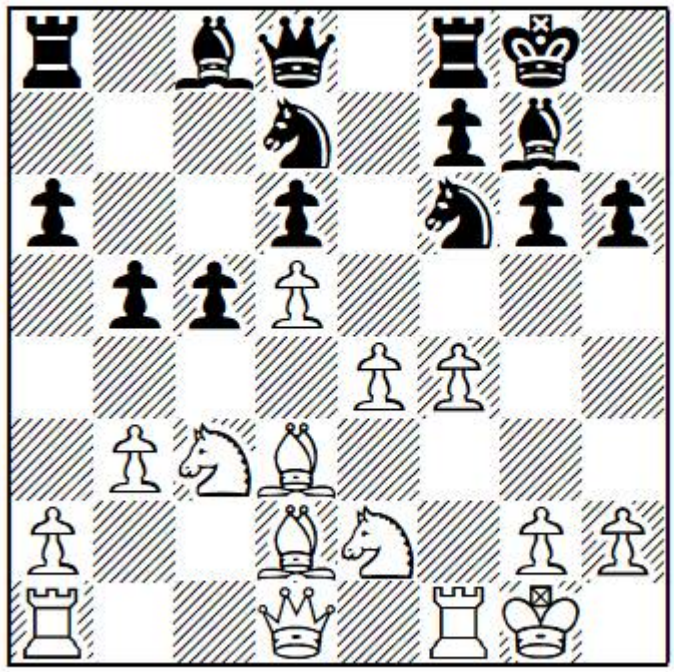
10 … exd5 11 cxd5?!

Principle: *Your opening choices should be compatible with your natural playing style.* White minimizes the damage by going symmetrical with 11 exd5 b5!? 12 Nxb5 Ne5 13 Bc2 Bg4!. Even here, *Stockfish* already prefers Black after 14 Nbc3 Re8 15 f3 (not 15 h3? Nf3+!, which is heavily in Black's favour) 15 … Bxf3 16 0-0! Bg4.

11 … a6 12 0-0

White lacks the time for 12 a4?! since 12 … Ng4! is a dangerous initiative for Black.

12 … b5 13 f4?!



Petrosian misses Bobby's idea. He no longer has time for such a luxury and should have tried 13 Ng3.

13 … c4!

The activity-divide widens. This typical Benoni clearance sacrifice is sound and from this point Bobby takes over the initiative.

14 bxc4 Nc5?!

Slightly inaccurate. 14 … Ng4!, threatening … Qb6+ and … Nf2+, gives White more trouble.

15 Bc2?!

15 Be3! Nxd3 16 Qxd3 b4 17 Na4 Re8 is also in Black's favour, just not as much as the game's continuation.

15 … b4! 16 e5!

Petrosian finds the only move with the tribal mindset: "Harm one of us and all of us will come after you!" 16 Na4? Nxa4 17 Bxa4 Qb6+ 18 Kh1 Nxe4 is completely lost for White.

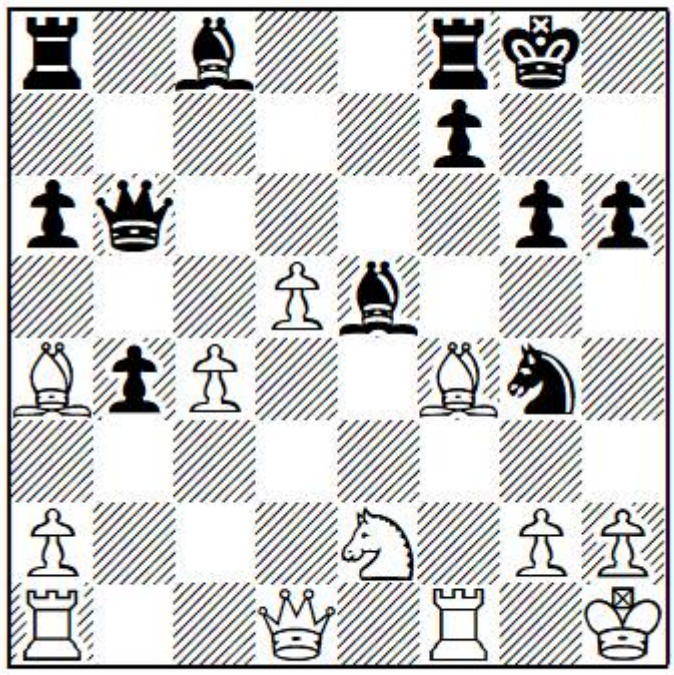
16 … dxe5 17 fxe5 Ng4! 18 Na4 Nxa4 19 Bxa4 Bxe5

Fischer has generated threats on both sides of the board.

20 Bf4

20 h3! is a bit better, though after 20 … Qb6+ 21 Kh1 Nf2+ 22 Rxf2 Qxf2 23 Qe1 Qxe1+ 24 Rxe1 White doesn't receive full compensation for the exchange.

20 … Qb6+ 21 Kh1



21 … Bxa1

Both sides desperately want to be mayor of Crazytown. There is no reason to push the position to its chaotic extreme, when a path of clarity exists. 21 … Bxf4! 22 Rxf4 Nf2+ 23 Rxf2 Qxf2 is more efficient.

22 Qxa1 Nf2+ 23 Rxf2?!

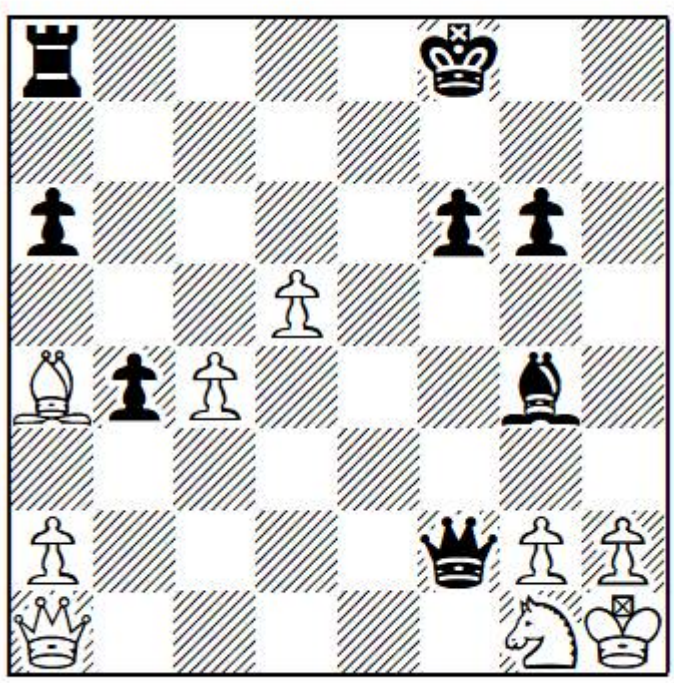
It was better to move the king, though after 23 Kg1 Nh3+ 24 Kh1 Nxf4 (in a similar situation I once "smothered mated" an IM with … Qg1+?? and had to resign when he responded with Nxg1!) 25 Nxf4 Ra7, White only has fishing chances for the exchange.

23 … Qxf2 24 Bxh6 f6 25 Bxf8 Kxf8 26 Ng1?

Principle: *Don't begin a sacrificial attack and then make a defensive retreat!* This move costs Petrosian any hope he had. He had to try 26 Nd4, even if 26 … Bg4 27 h3 Kf7! is still winning for Black.

26 … Bg4?

Now Bobby goes wrong. After 26 … Kg7! 27 Nf3 Bg4 28 Nd4 Rh8 29 Qg1 Qxa2 White is lost.



Exercise (planning): Prove why Black's last move was an error.

Answer: Create a double attack on b4 and g6 by shifting the queen to b1.

27 Qb1!

The balance of power shifts and White is just fine for the moment.

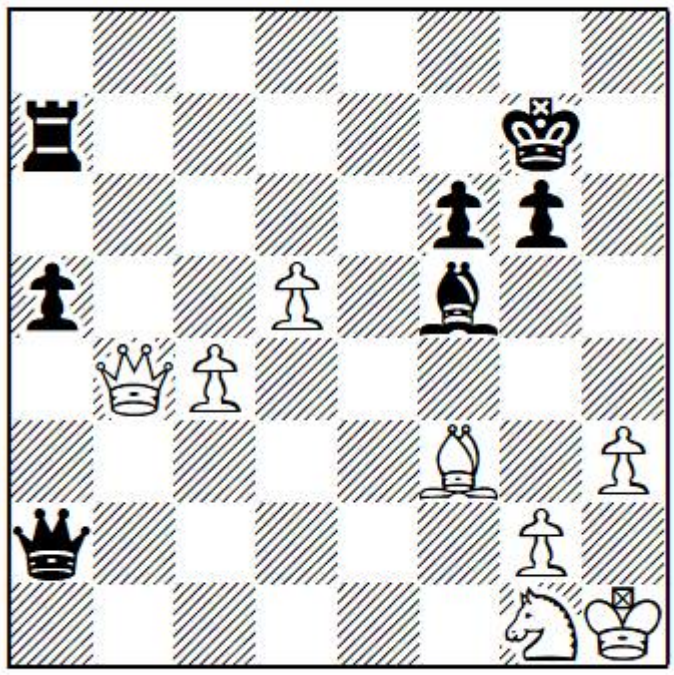
27 … Kg7 28 h3?

Petrosian could have saved himself with 28 Qe4! Qxa2 29 Qe7+ Kh6 30 Bc6 Rg8 31 Qxf6 Qxc4 32 Qh4+ and perpetual check.

28 … Bf5 29 Qxb4 Ra7!

Petrosian may have overlooked this defensive idea, which covers the seventh rank.

30 Bd1 Qxa2 31 Bf3 a5!



Principle: *Passed pawns should be pushed*. Now it turns into a sharp promotion race, which still favours Black.

32 Qc5 Rb7?

This loses a tempo. 32 … Rd7! is correct.

33 d6?

After 33 g4! Bc2 34 d6 White suddenly stands better.

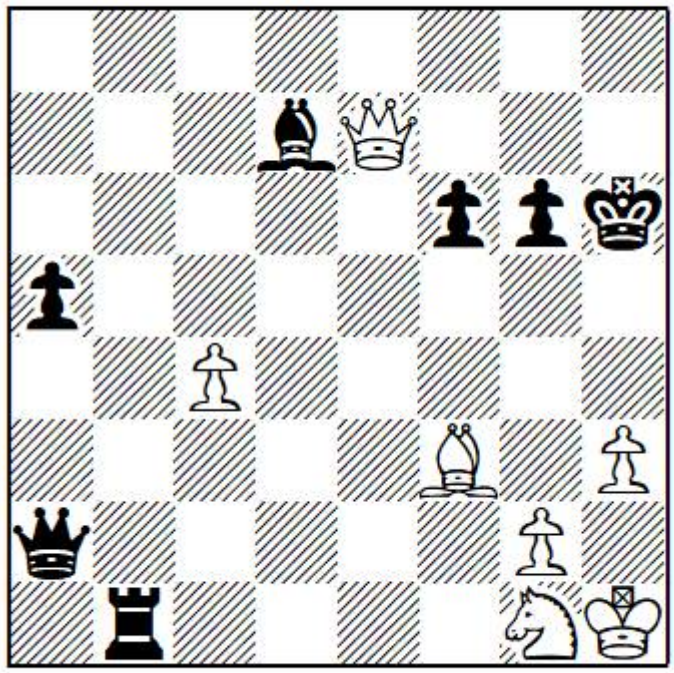
33 … Rb1!

This move holds the balance.

34 d7!?

Petrosian plays for the full point. He can draw with 34 Qa7+ Kh6 35 Qe3+ Kg7 36 Qa7+.

34 … Bxd7 35 Qe7+ Kh6



36 Qxd7??

Costs collapse when the market saturates. Petrosian in his desire to win, crosses an uncrossable line. He needed to realize that a draw is White's best outcome, to which end 36 Qf8+! Kh7 (not 36 … Kg5?? 37 h4+! and White wins) 37 Qf7+ is simplest.

36 … Qf2!

White lacks a check and now there is no "next thing" for Petrosian.

37 Kh2 Qxg1+ 38 Kg3 Qe1+ 39 Kh2 Qe5+

This check, while obvious, creates fatal weakness for White's king, who is about to receive an epic beating.

40 g3 Rb2+ 41 Bg2

Or 41 Kg1 Qe1 mate

41 … Qe4 42 Qd5

There will be no divine intervention and this defence doesn't cut it.

42 … Rxg2+ 0-1

Game 59
R.J.Fischer-D.Bronstein
Blitz Tournament, Herceg Novi 1970
French Defence

If you asked me to pick the most creative world-class player of the 20th Century, the great David Bronstein would be on the shortlist. In this game he got outplayed strategically, only to confuse Fischer with a torrent of complications in a game which went back and forth.

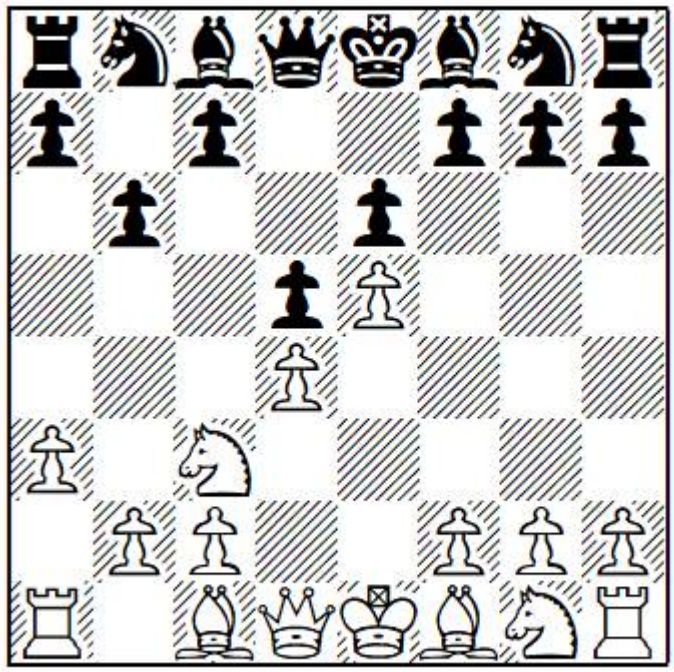
1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e5 b6!?

This system, a foreign language most players don't speak, is not for "by the book" folk!

5 a3

After 5 Qg4 Bf8 6 a4 Nc6 7 Bb5 Bb7 8 Nf3 a6 9 Be2 Qd7 10 0-0 Nge7 11 Nd1 Nf5 12 c3 f6 13 Ne3 fxe5 14 Nxe5 Nxe5 15 dxe5 Nxe3 16 Bxe3 g6 17 Qh3 0-0-0 18 Rfd1 Kb8 19 c4 a5 20 Bg4 Re8 21 cxd5 Bxd5 Black stood no worse and I preferred my position, E.Sevillano-C.Lakdawala, San Diego (rapid) 2007.

5 … Bf8



"Undeveloping pieces though as with 5 … Bf8?! has little to recommend it," wrote Fischer. Dare I accuse Bobby of a lack of strategic understanding? A pre-existing bias weakens our capacity for wise judgment and the mind of orthodoxy's secret weakness is inflexibility. Bronstein's line is today considered perfectly sound for Black and both GM Moskolenko and I advocated for it in our French books. The ideas are:

1. White's development and central space are not nearly as impressive as outer appearances suggest, since there is no easy way to open the position to exploit the development lead.

2. Black soon may have the option to dump the light-squared bad bishop for White's good bishop, via a6.

3. Black is the only one with viable pawn breaks on c5 and f6, while White's break on f5 is not so easy to manage.

6 f4!?

I generally love it when White goes for this plan. The set-up I most fear as Black is 6 Bb5+! Bd7 (or 6 … c6 7 Ba4!, dodging a swap of light-squared bishops) 7 Bd3 c5 8 Nf3 Nc6 9 0-0 Nge7 (even here, it's not easy for White to prove an

advantage, despite the engine's lofty claims) 10 Nb5 (threatening mate in one!) 10 … Ng6 11 c3 c4 12 Bxg6!? hxg6 13 Bg5 f6!? (13 … Qb8 is a safer option) 14 exf6 gxf6 15 Bf4, N.De Firmian-D.Bronstein, Oviedo (rapid) 1993, when Black looks just fine after 15 … Kf7.

6 … Nc6!?

This idea, championed by Petrosian, is to play a "King's Indian" on the queenside! I tried it once against GM Sevillano and came close to winning. 6 … Ne7 is Black's main move.

7 Nf3 Nh6

7 … Bb7 and … Qd7 has been played more often.

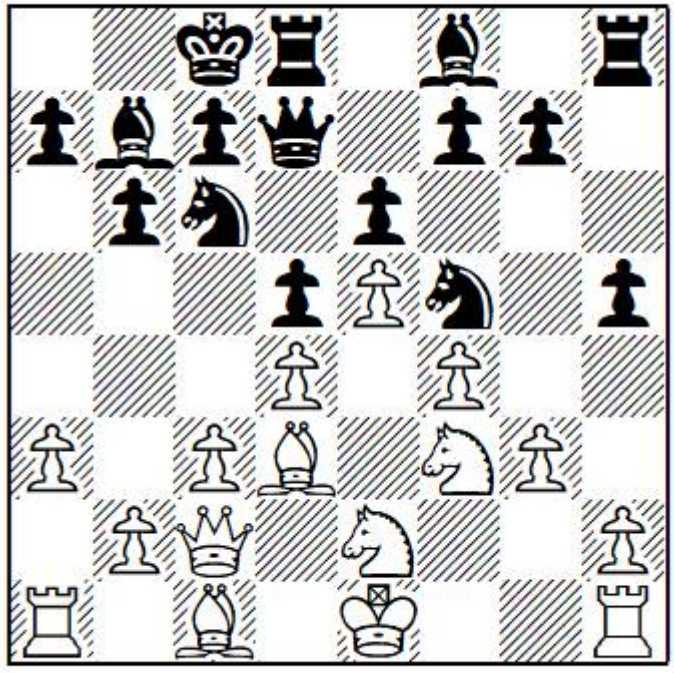
8 Bd3 Nf5 9 Ne2 h5 10 g3!

This way … h5-h4 can be met by g3-g4.

10 … Bb7 11 c3 Qd7 12 Qc2

12 b4 is more precise.

12 … 0-0-0!?



This committal move is essentially a declaration of war. I prefer 12 … Na5.

13 b4 f6 14 Bd2 Kb8 15 0-0 Nfe7?

I don't understand the reason for this retreat. 15 … Be7 is correct.

16 Rfb1 h4!?

This appears to be a desperate attempt to divert attention away from his king.

17 Nxh4!?

Bobby was a notorious pawn grabber. This is an unwise decision from a practical standpoint. After 17 g4! h3 18 Kh1 I don't see a path for Black to counterplay; meanwhile, White's queenside attack simply builds.

17 … g5!

If Bronstein's plan is to confuse everyone, it's working, although empirically White's position still remains on the cusp of the status of winning.

18 fxg5!?

18 Nf3 is safer.

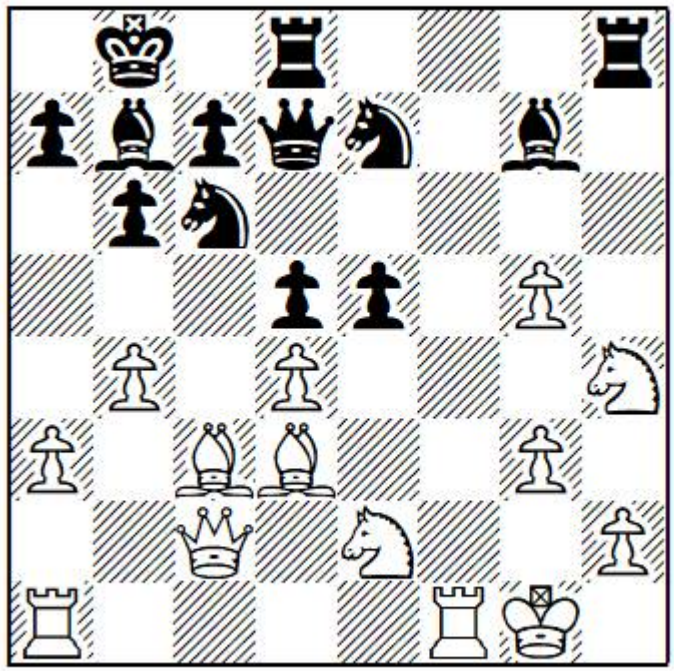
18 … fxe5

Two becomes three. Black's situation will be dire if pieces get swapped, due to White's three kingside passers.

19 Rf1 exd4?!

He should try 19 … e4 20 Bb5 e5.

20 cxd4 Bg7 21 Bc3 e5!?



Creating a big mess, which the grandmasters are unable to navigate at blitz. The engine indicates that the next six-ply moves are all table-turning blunders.

22 Rf7?

Here 22 b5! Nxd4 23 Bxd4 exd4 24 Rf7 leaves White completely in control.

22 … exd4?

After 22 … Qg4! Black is okay.

23 Rxg7?

23 Bd2! leaves Black busted.

23 … Rxh4?

There was no question that a response was necessary, it was a matter of proportionality. In this case Bronstein goes overboard. 23 … dxc3! 24 Ng6 Rhg8 is heavily in Black's favour due to White's exposed king.

24 gxh4?

There is no reason to expose his king further. 24 Bd2! is still correct.

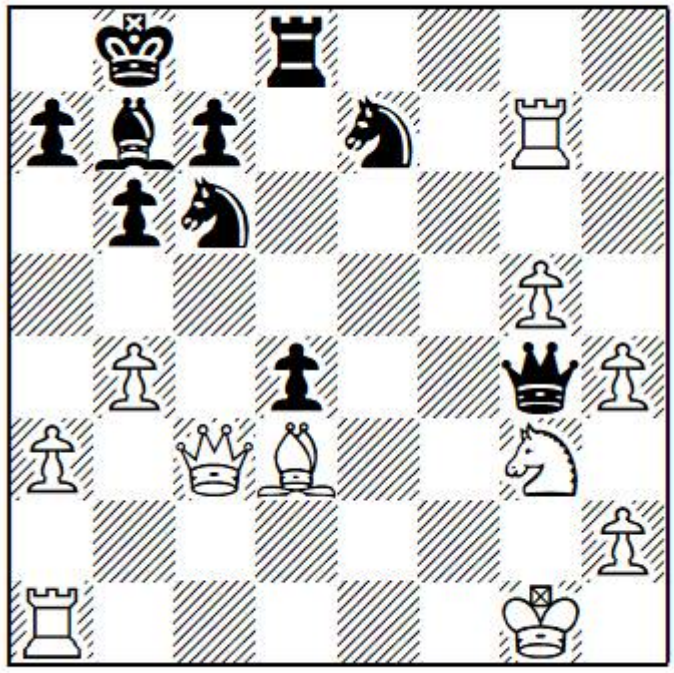
24 … Qg4+?

And 24 … dxc3! is at least even for Black.

25 Ng3 dxc3 26 Qxc3

White is now winning again, at least for the moment.

26 … d4



27 Qd2?!

It was unwise to allow the black knight in to e5. 27 Qe1! Nd5 28 Qe4 is lost for Black.

27 … Ne5!

Threatening a mega fork on f3.

28 Rf1 Nd5 29 Bf5?!

After 29 Qe2! Qe6 30 Rg6! Qe8 31 Rg8! Qxg8 32 Qxe5 Ne3 33 Rc1 White still has good chances to consolidate.

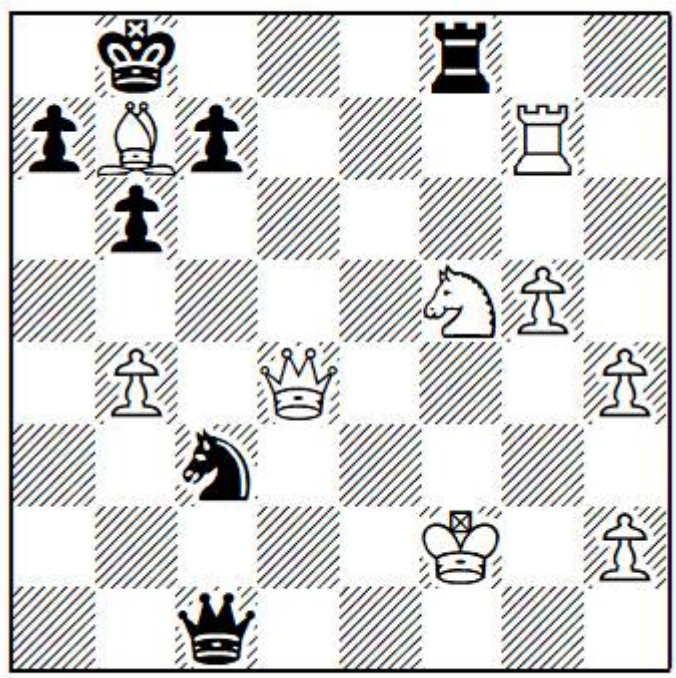
29 … Nf3+ 30 Rxf3 Qxf3 31 Be4 Qxa3 32 Qxd4??

The complications, coupled with little time on the clock, overwhelm both sides again. 32 Rf7! was necessary.

32 … Qc1+! 33 Kf2 Rf8+ 34 Nf5 Nc3!

34 … Qf4+! 35 Ke1 Re8 36 Ng3 Nxb4! was simpler.

35 Bxb7



35 … Rxf5+??

It isn't easy for an annotator to offer readers and students sage advice on irrational positions, so I will just recommend that you immediately order that highly instructive, well-written and reasonably priced book *Irrational Chess* from Everyman.

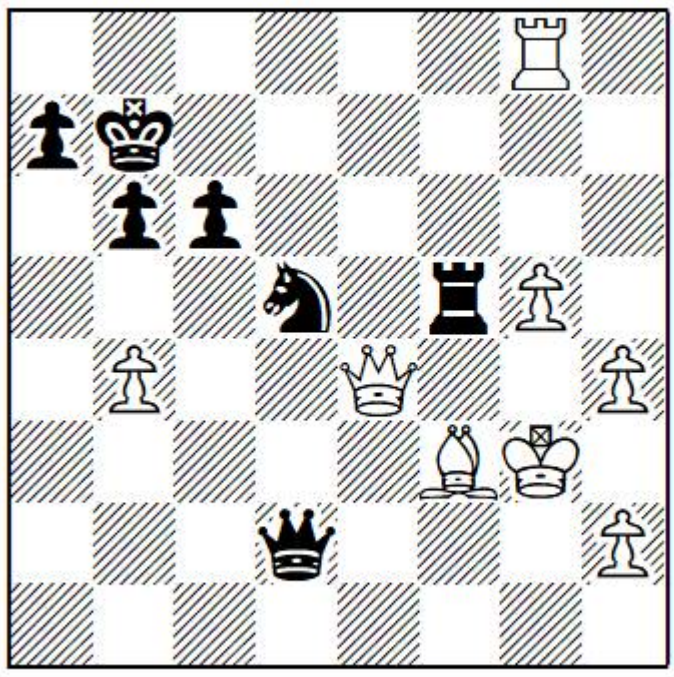
White is lost after the deadly zwischenzug 35 … Qc2+! 36 Ke3 (his king can't move to either g3 or g1, due to a fork on e2) 36 … Qxf5 37 Qxc3 Qh3+! 38 Kd4 Rf4+, since 39 Be4 is met by 39 … Rxe4+ 40 Kxe4 Qxc3 and wins.

36 Bf3 Nd5 37 Rg8+! Kb7 38 Qe4!

Now Bronstein is dead lost.

38 … Qd2+ 39 Kg3 c6

39 … Rxf3+ 40 Qxf3 is also hopeless for Black.



Exercise (calculation): Here Bobby missed a forced mate in five.

Answer: A rook check on g7 does it.

40 Qxf5??

He walks into Bronstein's drawing trap. Bobby misses 40 Rg7+! Nc7 (or 40 … Ka6 41 Qc4+ b5 42 Qxc6+ Nb6 43 Qb7 mate) 41 Qxc6+ Ka6 42 Qa4+ Ra5 43 b5+! Nxb5 44 Bb7 mate.

40 … Qe1+!

How wonderful when we are able to offload our pain on to the opponent. "A very clever trap considering it was 5 minute chess," wrote Bobby. Wow, old man Bronstein withstands the interrogation, refusing to talk. He will win Bobby's queen and score a draw.

41 Kg4!?

Bobby gives away his queen, playing for the win anyway! Otherwise 41 Kh3 Qf1+ 42 Kg3 Qe1+ is a draw.

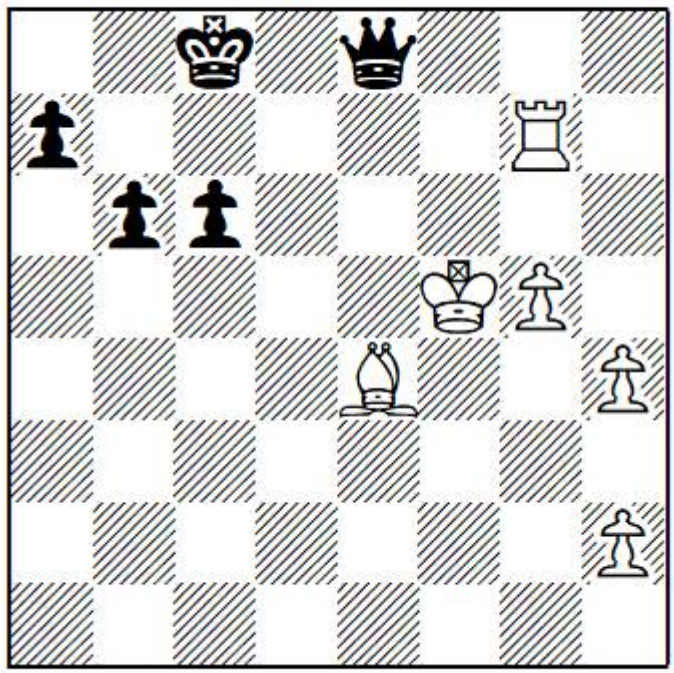
41 … Ne3+

Bronstein feels the distribution of wealth in the world is all wrong and that he deserves a greater share of it.

42 Kf4 Nxf5 43 Kxf5 Qxb4 44 Rg7+ Kc8

44 … Ka6 45 Be4 Qf8+ is also drawn.

45 Be4 Qf8+ 46 Kg6 Qe8+ 47 Kf5 ½-½



Black can't play for a win since White's passers are way too advanced.

Game 60
D.Bronstein-R.J.Fischer
Blitz Tournament, Herceg Novi 1970
Sicilian Defence

It's just an intuition but I have a feeling that Bronstein – much like Tal – would have been a stylistically difficult opponent for Bobby, if both reached their prime in the same era. In this

game Bobby got completely outplayed, only to slowly unravel and win after Bronstein mishandled his winning position.

1 e4 c5 2 c3

Anti-Sicilians, although all the rage today, were more rare in 1970, which was the heyday of the Open Sicilian. Bronstein, perhaps wisely, avoids an Open Sicilian against his more booked up opponent.

2 … Nf6 3 e5 Nd5 4 d4 cxd4 5 Qxd4!?

I feel this clunky line is not worth anyone's love, especially so for Bronstein, since dullness is inhospitable territory for the imaginative. The main move 5 Nf3 is a better way for White to play for an edge.

5 … e6 6 Nf3 Nc6 7 Qe4 d6

Bobby sensibly chips away at the e5-pawn and equalizes. Alternatively, 7 … f5! 8 Qe2 b5! is completely sound and a good way to play as Black.

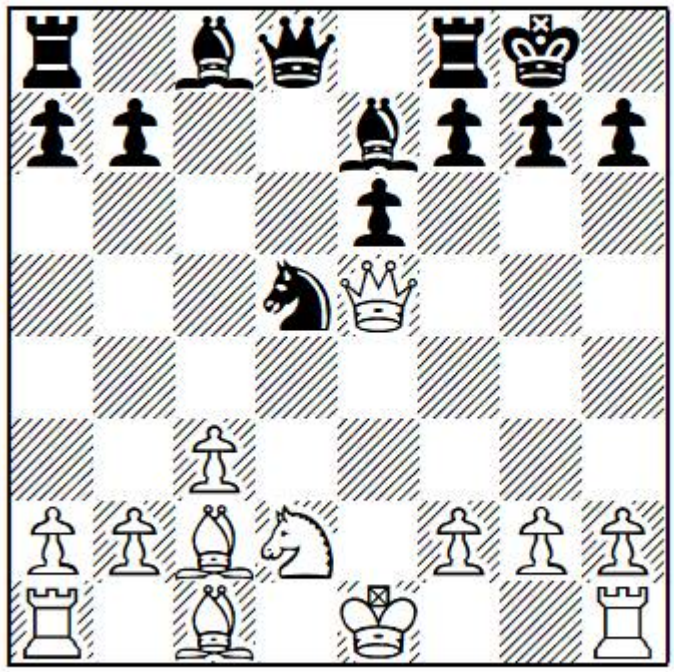
8 Nbd2 Be7 9 Bd3!?

9 Nc4 is mostly played today, but maybe it shouldn't be. After 9 … f5! I already prefer Black's position.

9 … dxe5

Perhaps Bronstein hoped for the somewhat unlikely continuation. 9 … 0-0?? 10 Qxh7 mate.

10 Nxe5 Nxe5 11 Qxe5 0-0 12 Bc2



What? I thought the Bronsteins were a fighting clan. He hasn't exactly handled the opening like a ball of fire and Bobby was handed easy equality.

12 … Bd6

I would try 12 … b5 to remove c3-c4 from the equation.

13 Qh5!?

This move is an indicator that Bronstein is looking to make trouble. 13 Qd4 is safer.

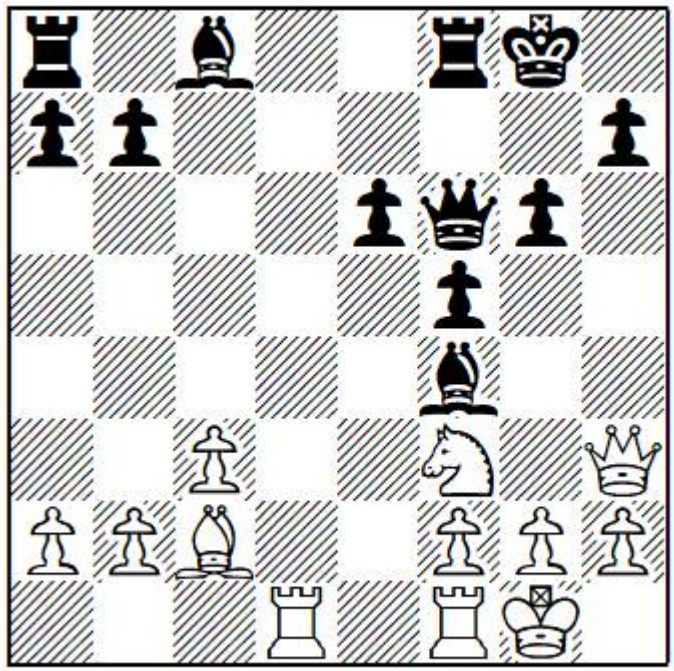
13 … f5!?

More aggressive than the also playable 13 … g6.

14 Nf3 Nf4

This way Bobby creates an imbalance by picking up the bishop pair. His move is more ambitious than placid development with 14 … Bd7.

15 Bxf4 Bxf4 16 0-0 g6 17 Qh3 Qf6 18 Rad1



Black's bishop pair and extra hold over the centre feel more valuable than White's lead in development.

18 … b6?

After 18 … Kg7! 19 Rfe1 Bb8! 20 Ba4 Rf7! (preventing … Bd7) 21 Nd2 e5 22 Ne4 Qe7 I prefer Black.

19 Rfe1

Here 19 g3! Bc7 20 Qh6! Qg7 21 Qh4 leaves Black in trouble, since e6 is chronically weak. If 21 … e5? 22 Rd2 Kh8 23 Rfd1 Rb8 24 Bb3, Black can barely move.

19 … Kh8?

This is the wrong way to try and unravel. After 19 … Kg7! (again) 20 Bb3 a6! 21 Nd4 e5 22 g3! exd4 23 gxf4 dxc3 24 bxc3 Ra7 25 Rd3 Rd8 Black looks okay.

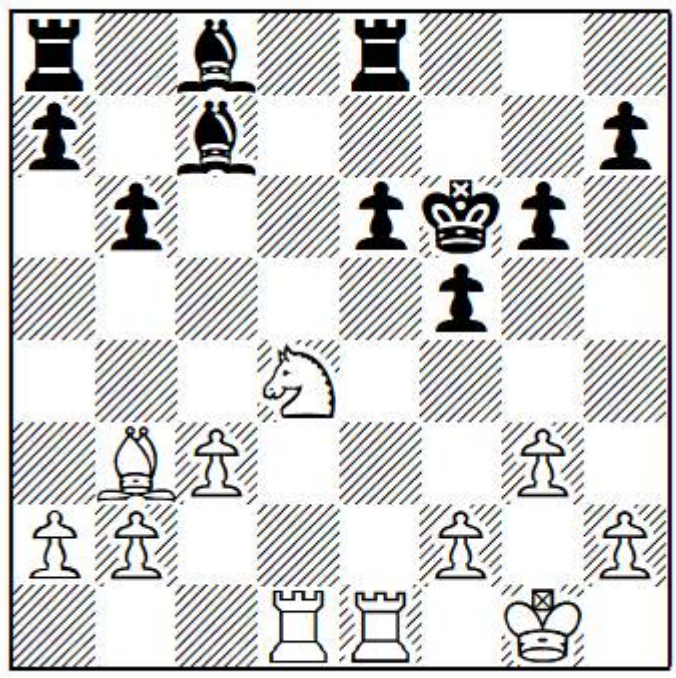
20 g3

20 Bb3! is even stronger.

20 … Bc7 21 Qh6! Qg7!

Fischer alertly sees through Bronstein's devilish trap: 21 … Rf7? 22 Bb3 Re7 23 Ng5 e5 24 Rxe5!! and White wins due to Black's weak back rank. It would have been very easy to fall for this in a blitz game.

22 Qxg7+ Kxg7 23 Bb3 Re8 24 Nd4 Kf6



25 f4?

This throws away the advantage and White's initiative slumbers on, refusing to awaken. After 25 Bd5! Rb8 26 Nc6 Rb7 27 Nb4 Rb8 Bronstein can either chicken out and take a draw or, far more temptingly, go for the full point with 28 Bg2!, threatening Nd5+ among other things.

25 … a6

25 … Bd7 was more accurate.

26 Nf3!?

It was still possible to go for a draw with 26 Bd5! followed by 27 Nc6.

26 … Re7 27 h4 h6 28 Kf2 Bb7 29 Ne5 Rae8 30 a4!?

He still plays for the full point.

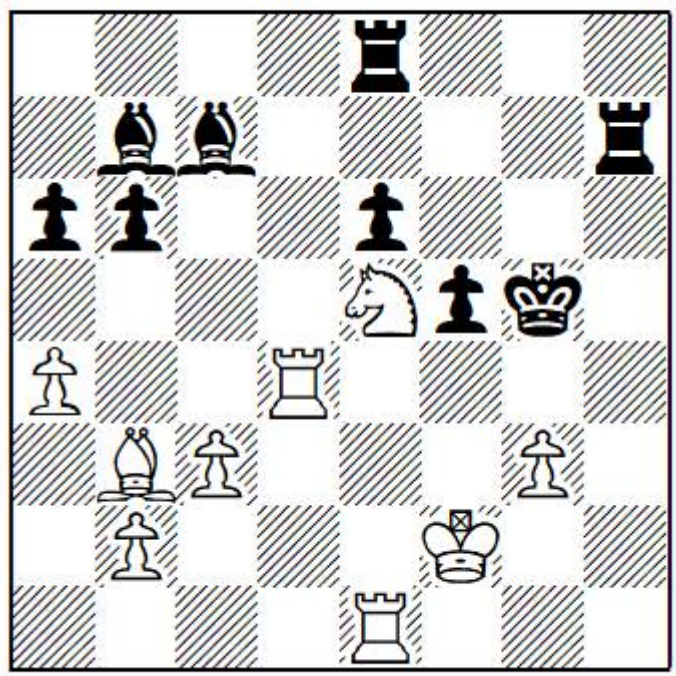
30 … g5!? 31 hxg5+!? hxg5 32 fxg5+?!

Principle: *Don't open the game when your opponent owns the bishop pair*. On top of that, Bronstein's move, perhaps motivated by an attempt to complicate and go after Black's king, destabilizes his own knight from e5. It was more prudent to make a tacit draw offer with 32 Nd7+ Kg6 33 Ne5+.

32 … Kxg5 33 Rd4?

When it comes to blitz and finding a plan in our games, we only see fuzzy outlines and ghostly shapes, where details are missing. This is strategically awful, and apparently Nature designed the Bronstein brain for violence, not a manoeuvring game. White minimizes his discomfort with 33 Nf3+ Kf6 34 Rh1 Rg8 35 Rh6+ Rg6 36 Rxg6+ Kxg6 37 Rh1.

33 … Rh7!



Threatening to invade h2. Bobby redeems his position's past promise. If I were the director of this movie, I would order upbeat, feel-good music right about here.

34 Nf3+ Kf6?

White lost control over e5, yet Fischer's move is not optimal. 34 … Bxf3! 35 Kxf3 e5! and if 36 Rd2 then 36 … e4+ 37 Kg2 Reh8 wins.

35 Rh4?

This is lost for White, who had to try 35 g4! Bxf3 36 Kxf3 Rh3+ 37 Ke2 Bg3! 38 Rf1 f4 39 Rd6 Rh2+ 40 Kf3 Rxb2 41 Rxb6, when he may yet hold the draw with some luck.

35 … Rxh4 36 gxh4

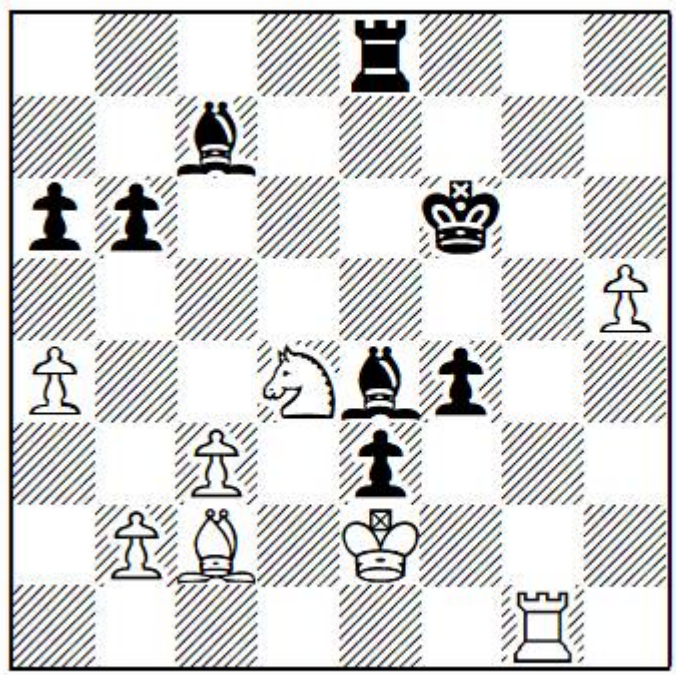
Giving Black two connected passed pawns is hopeless, as is 36 Nxh4 Bd6! 37 Nf3 Bc5+, which is lost for White, whichever way his king moves.

36 … e5 37 h5 e4 38 Nd4 f4?

This mistake allows White back into the game. 38 … Rh8! 39 Bd1 Rg8! is completely winning for Black.

39 Rg1! e3+ 40 Ke2 Be4 41 Bc2??

Bronstein could suck the power out of Fischer's position with 41 Rg8! Rxg8 (41 … Re7 42 Bc4! is equal) 42 Bxg8, when Black's win – if there is one – is far from easy.



Exercise (combination alert): Prove why White's last move was a blunder.

Answer: Overloaded defender/discovered attack. Black's f-pawn can move forward.

41 … f3+!

Don't tell me that crime doesn't pay. Darkest treachery is at work here and even Machiavelli would accuse Fischer of opportunism.

42 Kxe3

We understand the pain of abandonment from those whom we love. This hands over a piece in a situation where everything loses:

a) 42 Nxf3 (a case of an overloaded defender) 42 … Bxc2 wins.

b) 42 Kd1 f2 43 Rf1 Bxc2+ (the simplest way to win) 44 Kxc2 Be5! 45 Kd3 (or 45 Ne2 Rd8) 45 … Bxd4 46 cxd4 Kg5 47 Ke2 Kf4 and it's time for White to resign, as both … Rc8 and … Rg8 are threatened.

42 … Bxc2+

The once resplendent white position now wears rags. The remainder was an easy mop-up operation for Fischer.

43 Kxf3 Be4+ 44 Kf2 Bh7 45 h6 Re7 46 Rg4 Bg6 47 Rh4 Rh7

Bobby methodically surrounds and wins the straggler h-pawn.

48 Kf3 Kg5 49 Rg4+ Kxh6 0-1

Game 61
R.J.Fischer-V.Smyslov
Blitz Tournament, Herceg Novi 1970
Bird's Opening

1 f4!?

Bird's Opening is a good way to knock some opponents out of their theoretical comfort zone, but not the way Fischer played the opening!

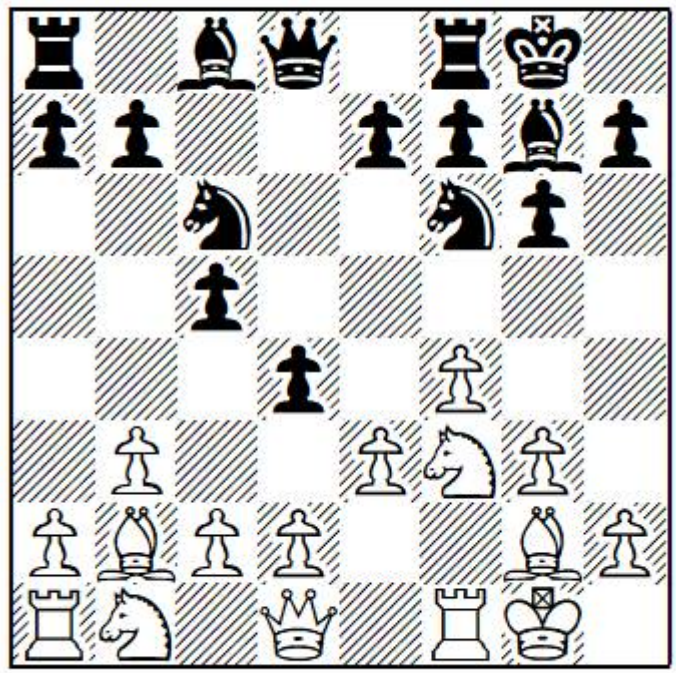
1 … d5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 b3!?

Bobby resists the comforts of civilization and is clearly goofing around. White can also play pure reversed Dutch lines, a move up with 3 e3 and 3 g3.

3 … g6 4 Bb2 Bg7 5 g3!?

Bobby is intent on weirding it up and we clearly feel the "otherization" creeping in. I don't believe the double fianchetto set-up works well with f2-f4. GM Pavel Blatny tried the more orthodox 5 e3 against me at an American Open, outplayed me, and then later flagged in a clearly superior position!

5 … 0-0 6 Bg2 c5 7 e3 Nc6 8 0-0 d4!



I already slightly prefer Black's position.

9 Qe2?!

The symptoms always arise before the causes. White should play 9 a4, intending Na3.

9 … Bf5!

Threat: … d4-d3.

10 Ne1

This is a big concession. But 10 d3 dxe3 11 Qxe3 Ng4 12 Qc1 Nd4! and if 13 Re1? then 13 … c4! is a big problem for White.

10 … Bxc2?

Smyslov throws away his advantage. 10 … e5! is difficult for White.

11 Nxc2 d3 12 Qd1 dxc2 13 Qxc2 Nb4! 14 Qc4!

The c5-pawn is poisoned: 14 Qxc5? Nd7! 15 Qxb4 Bxb2 16 Nc3 Bxa1 17 Rxa1 Rc8! and White doesn't get enough for the exchange.

14 … Rb8 15 a4!

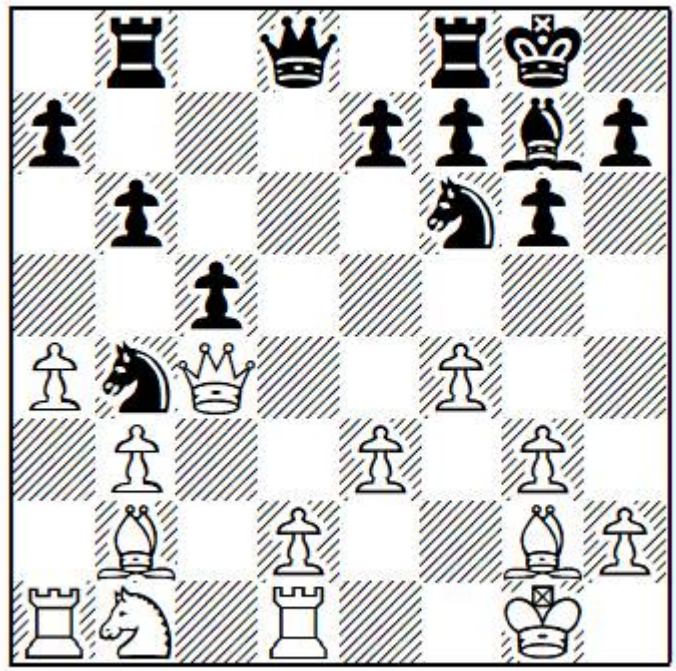
The game is in dynamic balance between White's bishops and Black's control over b4 and d3.

a) 15 Qxc5? once again loses to 15 … Nd7!.

b) 15 a3? b5! 16 Qe2 Nd3 17 Bc3 Qd7 is uncomfortable for White, who has trouble developing the queenside pieces.

15 … b6 16 Rd1?!

16 Bc3 is equal.



Exercise (planning): Do you see a forcing line for Black to seize the initiative?

Answer: Moving the knight to g4 forces White into strategic concessions.

16 … Rc8?!

Smyslov misses an opportunity with 16 … Ng4! (threat: … Nxe3) 17 Nc3 (not 17 Bxg7? Nxe3! 18 Qe4 Nxd1 19 Bxf8 Kxf8 20 Bf3 Nb2) 17 … Nf2! 18 Rf1 Nfd3 is awkward for White.

17 Na3

Now White is okay again.

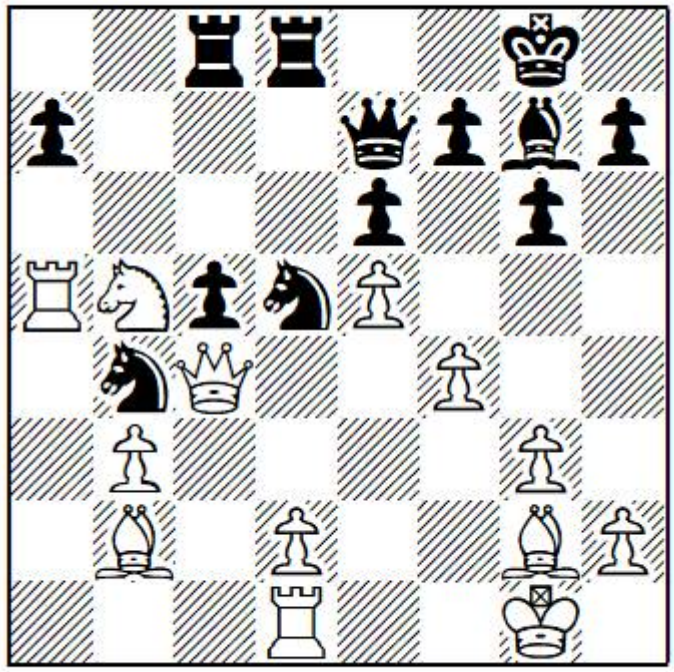
17 … e6 18 e4! Qe7 19 e5!

Fischer correctly recognizes that ceding control over d5 is compensated by White's central space and newly gained control over d6.

19 … Nfd5 20 Nb5 Rfd8 21 a5! bxa5!?

Smyslov didn't want a5xb6 hanging over his head.

22 Rxa5??



Exercise (combination alert): Bobby just mega-blundered. Why?

Answer: He left his d1-rook hanging.

22 … Nb6??

OMG! Two world champions overlook a basic tactic! This time Smyslov misses the not-so-difficult-to-spot 22 … Ne3!, winning on the spot.

Could you imagine Magnus Carlsen or Hikaru Nakamura missing this in a present day 5-minute game, with time still left on their clocks? I, for one, can't. My Facebook post, which pointed the incredible jump in playing ability and pattern recognition over the last half century, infuriated a lot of people who assured me that Bobby would crush Magnus if

transported by a time machine from 1970 to 2023. Actually, he wouldn't, but I kept my mouth shut to avoid further offending Fischer fans!

23 Qe2 Rd7 24 Rda1 a6 25 Nd6

Now Fischer stands clearly better.

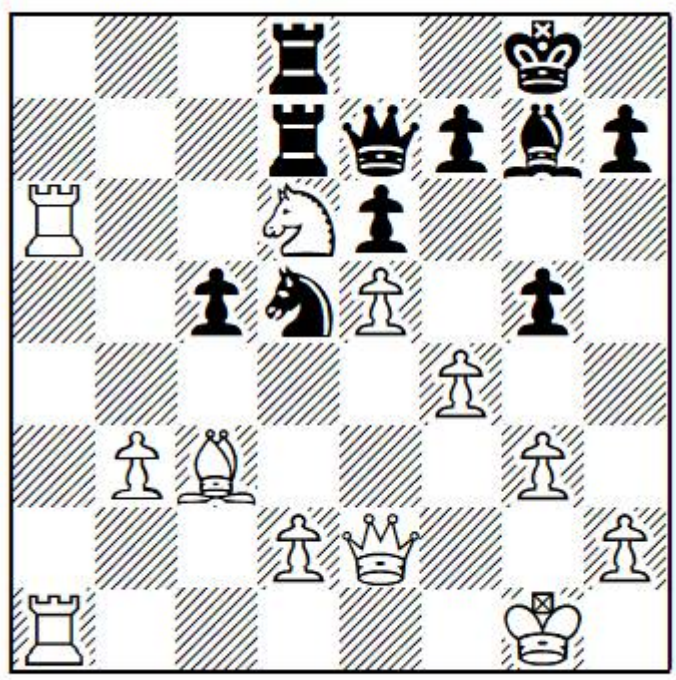
25 … Rcd8 26 Bc3! N6d5 27 Bxd5! Nxd5

After 27 … exd5? 28 Qf3! Black will lose more material.

28 Rxa6

Bobby won a pawn, while retaining a bind.

28 … g5!?



This is a desperate attempt to muck matters up.

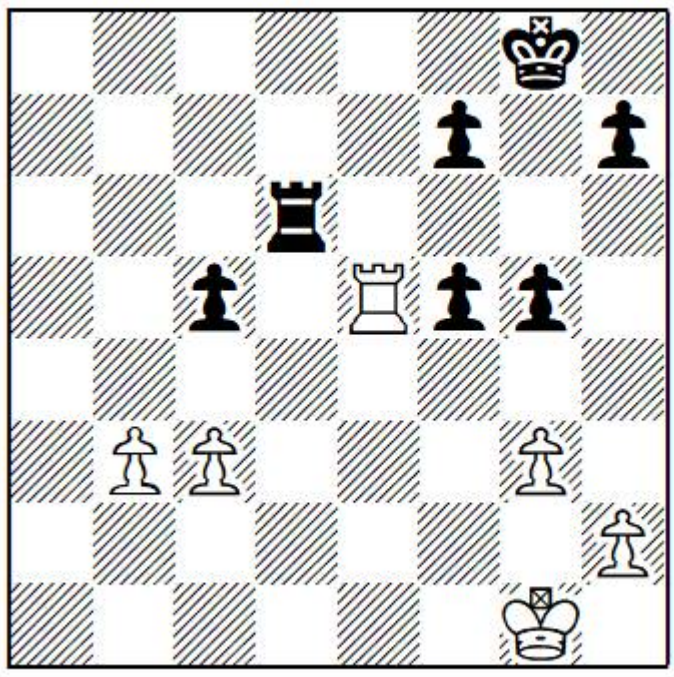
29 f5?!

29 Ba5! Rb8 30 f5! exf5 31 Re1! gives White a winning position.

29 … Nxc3! 30 dxc3 exf5 31 Re1!

Fischer finds the only try for the full point. 31 Nxf5 Qxe5 is equal.

31 … Qxe5! 32 Qxe5 Bxe5 33 Rxe5 Rxd6 34 Rxd6 Rxd6



35 Rxf5?

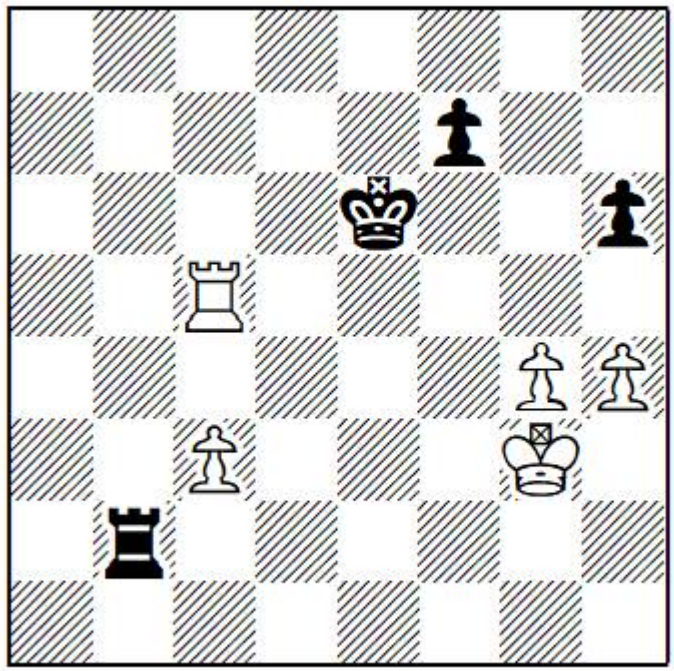
This throws away his winning chances again. 35 Rxc5! f6 36 Rxf5 leaves Black fighting for his life, due to White's two passed pawns.

35 … Rb6! 36 Rxg5+ Kf8 37 Rxc5 Rxb3

This rook ending should end in a draw. Smyslov's problem of course was his clock: zero increments, and nobody could keep up with Bobby's speed.

38 Kg2 Rb2+ 39 Kh3 Kg7 40 g4 Kf6 41 Kg3 Ke6 42 h4 h6?

Here 42 … f6! 43 Rc7 h6 should be drawn.



43 h5?

Why fix a weak pawn instead of winning it? Both sides missed 43 Rc6+! Kd7 (43 … Ke7 44 Rxh6 Rc2 45 Rc6 leaves White two pawns up) 44 Rxh6 Rc2 45 Rf6 and wins since 45 … Rxc3+ 46 Rf3! forces rooks off the board. The resulting king and pawn ending is an easy win for White.

43 … Rc2

Now it's back to a draw!

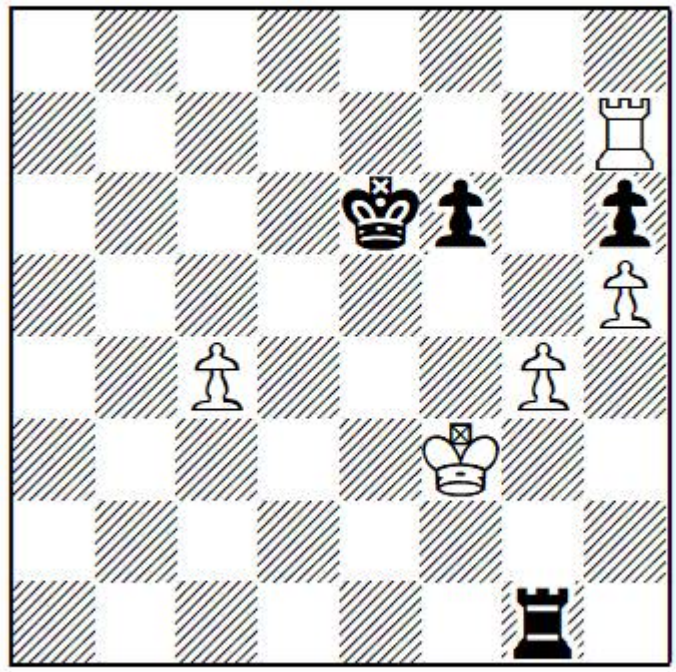
44 Rc6+ Ke7 45 Kf4 f6?

45 … Rc1! should be drawn!

46 Kf5 Rf2+ 47 Ke4!

Fischer correctly avoids 47 Kg6 Rf4 48 Kxh6 Rxg4, which is easily drawn.

47 … Kf7 48 c4 Rg2 49 Kf3 Rg1 50 Rc7+ Ke6 51 Rh7!



51 … Rf1+

51 … Rc1 52 Rxh6 Rxc4 53 g5 wins a second pawn.

52 Kg2?

Even the tiniest transgression is punished in such endings, which are all about the math. If you ever met anyone who ate rattlesnake, chipmunk or frog legs, they always tell you: "It tastes like chicken!" In the same way, such positions look alike, yet aren't! You can't just make it up as you go along! 52 Ke3! preserves the win.

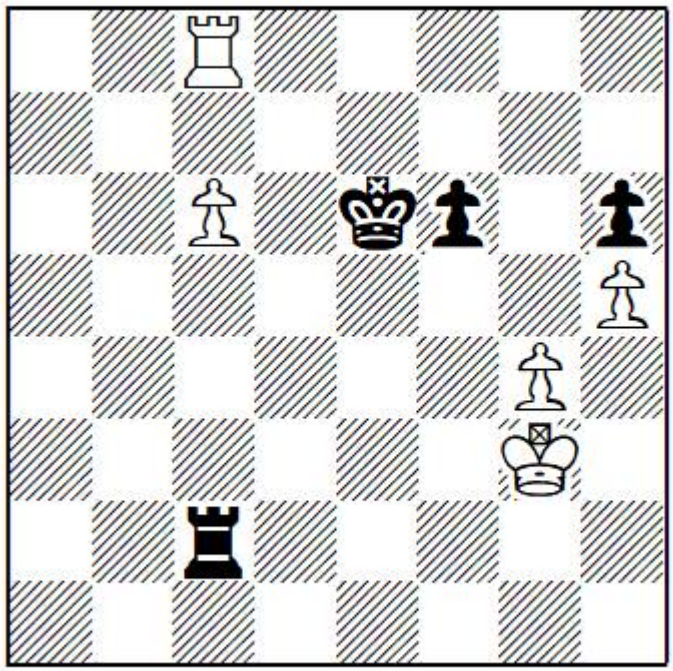
52 … Rc1! 53 Rc7

Fischer's miscalculation: 53 Rxh6 Rxc4. He must have thought g4-g5 wins, except that it doesn't due to the rook check on g4.

53 … Ke5 54 Kg3 Rc3+ 55 Kh4 Rc1 56 c5 Ke6?!

Still drawing, but not the best way. The simplest is 56 … Kf4! 57 Kh3 Rc3+ 58 Kh4 Rc1 and none shall pass.

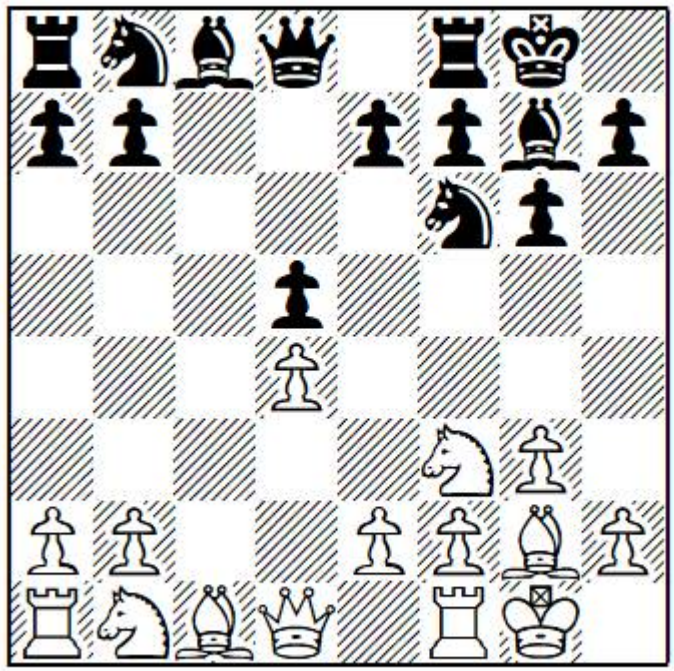
57 Kg3 Rg1+ 58 Kf3 Rf1+ 59 Kg2 Rc1 60 Rc8 Rc3 61 c6 Rc4 62 Kf3 Rc3+ 63 Kg2 Rc2+ 64 Kg3 1-0



Smyslov flagged. The worst kind of joke is one which is only funny to the person who recites it. Is there anything more annoying than losing on time in a position which is drawn? While the Fates don't smile upon Fischer's position, his clock does.

Game 62
V.Smyslov-R.J.Fischer
Blitz Tournament, Herceg Novi 1970
Grünfeld Defence

1 c4 g6 2 g3 Bg7 3 Bg2 Nf6 4 Nf3 0-0 5 0-0 c6 6 d4 d5 7 cxd5 cxd5



Hey, please stop the commotion. I'm trying to sleep! This is one of the most boring opening lines in all of chess, which is probably why I play White's side.

8 Nc3

E.Geller-R.J.Fischer, Palma de Mallorca Interzonal 1970, saw 8 Ne5 Bf5 (8 … e6 9 Nc3 Nfd7 is today's main line) 9 Nc3 Ne4 10 Be3 Nxc3 11 bxc3 Nc6 12 Nxc6 bxc6 13 Qa4 Qb6 14 Rac1 Rab8 with an even position, although Bobby did manage to defeat his nemesis this game.

8 … Ne4

I have played the White side of 8 … Nc6 9 Ne5 e6 10 Nxc6 bxc6 11 Na4 many times. The engine says it's even, while I believe White holds a tiny edge.

9 Qb3!?

If 9 Nxe4 dxe4, Black looks fine. 9 Ne5! is White's main move today.

9 … Nc6! 10 Be3

"Of course Black's d-pawn was taboo," wrote Fischer.

a) 10 Nxd5?? Be6 wins.

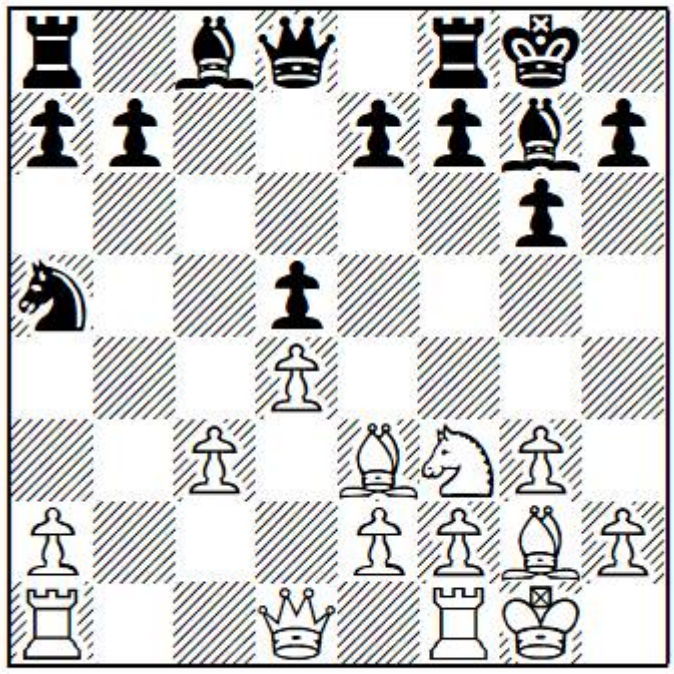
b) 10 Qxd5?? Nxc3 wins due to the zwichenzug knight check on e2.

c) 10 e3 Na5! 11 Qb4 Nc6 12 Qb3 Na5 is a repetition draw.

10 … Na5 11 Qd1?!

Smyslov should play 11 Qb4 Nxc3 (I doubt that Fischer would have offered a repetition with 11 … Nc6 12 Qb3 Na5) 12 Qxc3 Bf5 13 b3 Rc8 14 Qb4, which is just equal.

11 … Nxc3 12 bxc3



Smyslov mishandled the opening and has no compensation for the backward c-pawn and weak c4-square.

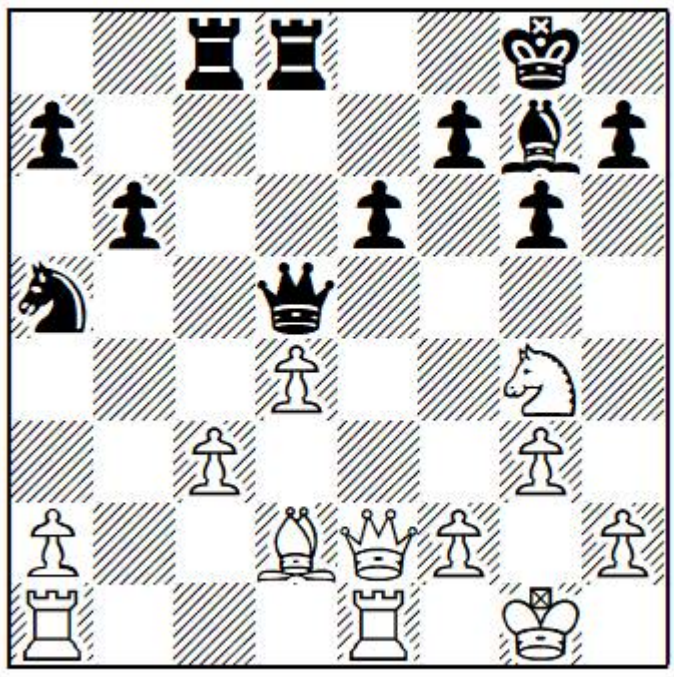
12 … b6 13 Ne5 Ba6

Controlling c4, while c3 remains an eternal target.

14 Re1 Rc8 15 Bd2 e6 16 e4 Bb7

Fischer's idea is that a swap of bishops on the diagonal further weakens White's light squares, especially c4 and d5.

17 exd5 Bxd5 18 Bxd5 Qxd5 19 Qe2 Rfd8 20 Ng4



Smyslov, seeing that he is in dire strategic danger, begins to fish around for kingside counterplay. White's position is depleted due to a pair of minor piece swaps. His attack gives us the feel of a teenager caught in a transparent lie, attempting to brazen it out with his parents who know perfectly well that it's a lie since they smell the marijuana scent on his clothes.

20 … Nc4

20 … h5 is a solid alternative.

21 Bh6

"Suddenly White generates counterplay; 21 … Bxh6 is impossible because of 22 Nf6+," wrote Fischer. I don't believe in White's counterplay and neither does the engine.

21 … f5?!

This over-correction – which is in violation of the principle: *Don't use a sledgehammer to crack open a walnut* – weakens e5 and e6. Black's advantage is solidified with 21 … Kh8! (this way Black can exchange on h6, without getting

forked on f6) 22 Rad1 Bxh6! 23 Nxh6 Kg7 24 Ng4 h5! and White's attack is dead, while weak pawns and squares remain.

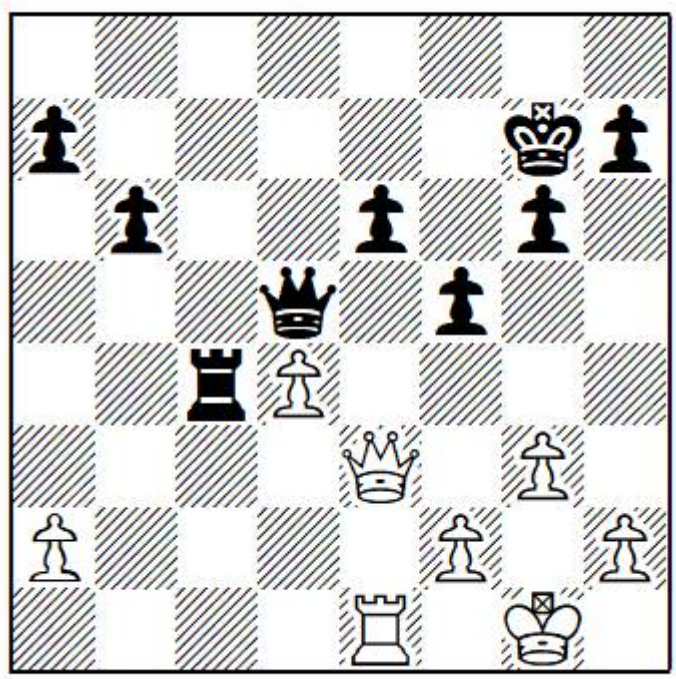
22 Bxg7 Kxg7 23 Ne3! Nxe3 24 Qxe3 Rc6 25 Rac1! Rdc8

Not 25 … Qxa2?? 26 Ra1 Qd5 27 Rxa7+ Rd7 28 Qe5+! Kh6 29 Rxd7 Qxd7 30 Re3! and Black is in trouble.

26 c4?!

This is a misguided SOS swap of c-pawn for e-pawn, based upon the belief: When you feel that something is wrong, take action. Don't wait around for the wrong to come to fruition. The problem is that it's an overreaction to a non-existent problem. Smyslov may have misassessed, believing himself to stand worse. 26 Qd2 looks just fine for White, since the pressure on e6 easily compensates for Black's pressure on c3.

26 … Rxc4 27 Rxc4 Rxc4



28 Qxe6?

The rook ending is lost for White. He should just play a pawn down and keep queens on the board with 28 Qa3 Rc7 29

h4.

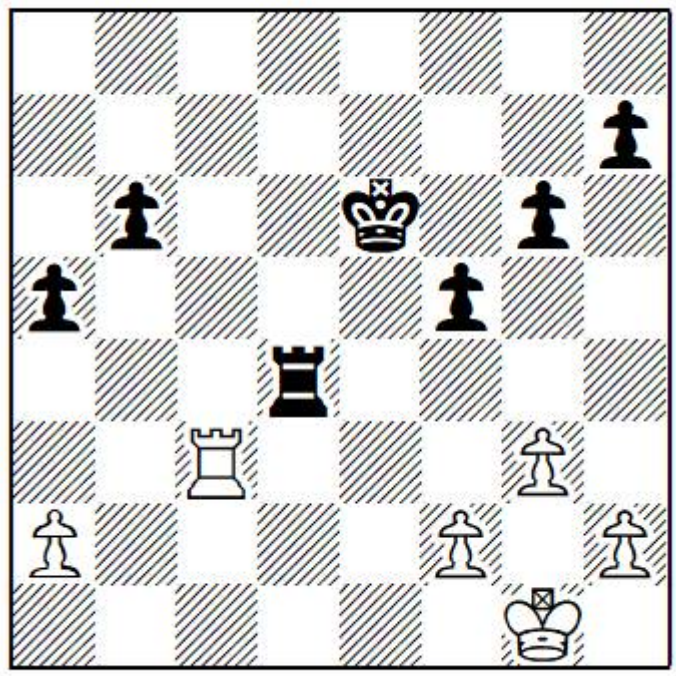
28 … Qxe6 29 Rxe6 Kf7!

Smyslov may have forgotten about this zwischenzug. 29 … Rxd4 30 Re7+ is drawn.

30 Re3?!

Fischer gave this move a double question mark and claimed that pushing the d-pawn offered White drawing chances. It was definitely White's path of greatest resistance, but it still loses: 30 d5 Rc5 31 Rd6 Ke7 32 Re6+ Kd8! (32 … Kd7 33 Rf6 Ke7 repeats) 33 d6 Ra5 34 Re7 Rxa2! 35 Rxh7 a5 and Black is too fast in the promotion race.

30 … Rxd4 31 Ra3 a5 32 Rc3 Ke6



Black is a clean pawn up with a massive advantage in king position, and the ending is a clear win.

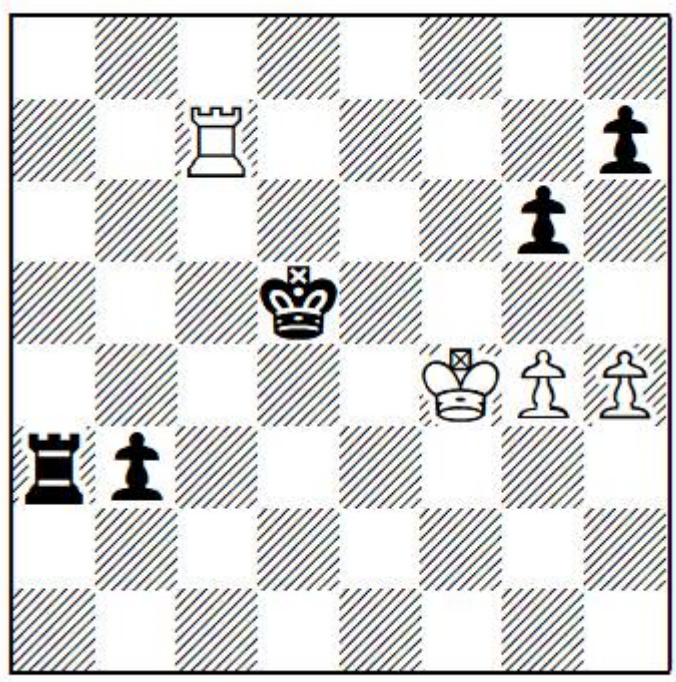
33 Kg2

33 Rc6+ is of no benefit for White after 33 … Rd6 34 Rc7 h5.

33 … Kd6 34 h4 Ra4!

White's position is as devoid of counterplay as conscience in a sociopath's heart. Rook ending principle: *Tie your opponent's rook down to a pawn weakness.*

35 Rc2 b5 36 Kf3 b4 37 Ke3 Kd5 38 f3 Ra3+ 39 Kf4 a4 40 g4 fxg4 41 fxg4 b3 42 axb3 axb3 43 Rc7



Exercise (planning): What is Black's cleanest winning plan?

Answer: Principle: *Place your rook behind your passed pawn*.

43 … Ra4+! 44 Kg5 Rb4! 45 Rc1 Kd4 46 Kh6 Rb7 0-1

The cruel reckoning: It's not even going to be a promotion race since Black holds on to his h-pawn.

Game 63
R.J.Fischer-M.Matulovic
Blitz Tournament, Herceg Novi 1970
Ruy Lopez

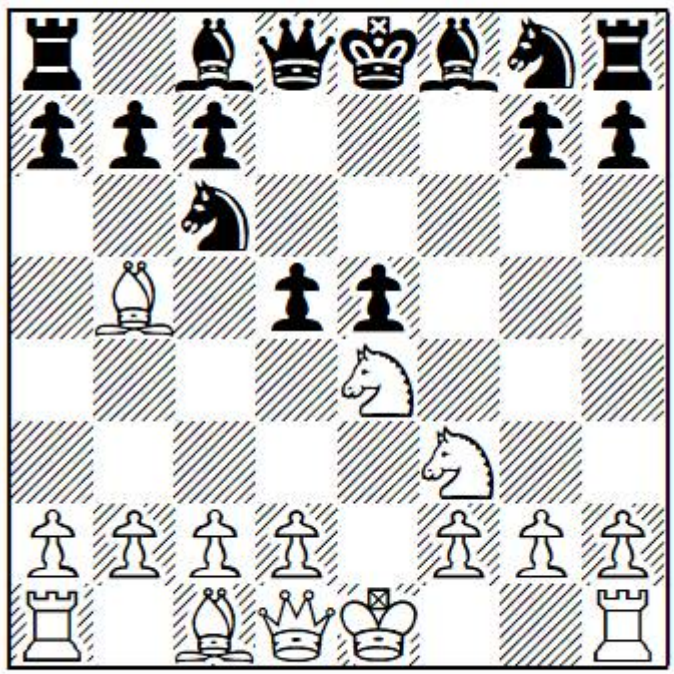
1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 f5

The Jaenisch Gambit, sort of a King's Gambit with Black, was a favourite of Matulovic. At the time it was somewhat regarded as a line suited for apocalyptic doomsday cultists who can't wait to die. Today, it's far more mainstream and considered completely playable for Black.

4 Nc3

4 d3 is a key alternative.

4 … fxe4 5 Nxe4 d5



This is the older move, which is a bit discredited by engine analysis. 5 … Nf6! is considered Black's superior choice.

6 Nxe5! dxe4 7 Nxc6!

7 Qh5+? g6 8 Nxg6 hxg6! (8 … Nf6? 9 Qe5+! is good for White4) 9 Qxh8 Be6 is known to be in Black's favour.

7 … Qg5

After 7 … Qd5 8 c4! Qd6 9 Nxa7+ Bd7 10 Bxd7+ Qxd7 11 Qh5+ g6 12 Qe5+ Kf7 13 Nb5! White stands better.

8 Qe2! Nf6 9 f4

This counter sacrifice has been known since Von Bardeleben played it against Rudolf Spielmann in 1909. 9 Nxa7+!? Bd7 10 Bxd7+ Nxd7 11 f4! is a critical alternative.

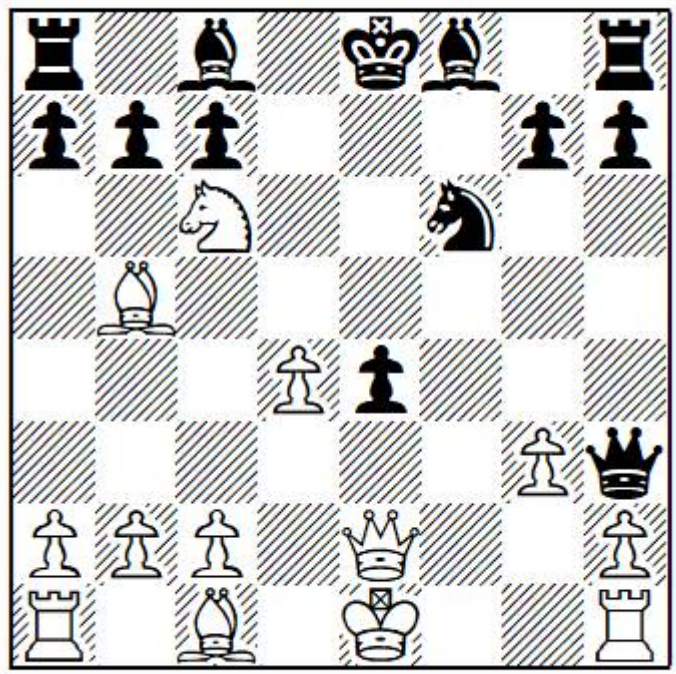
9 … Qxf4 10 d4!

C.Von Bardeleben-R.Spielmann, Berlin 1909, continued 10 Ne5+ c6 11 d4 Qh4+ 12 g3 Qh3 13 Bc4 Be6, when Black is considered to be more-or-less okay.

10 … Qh4+

10 … Qd6 11 Ne5+ c6 12 Bc4 Be6 13 c3 is a bit better for White.

11 g3 Qh3



"The same was played in the game Gheorghiu-Maric, Skopje 1968. Gheorghiu played 12 Na7+ but he did not get any advantage in this position. I analysed this position all night with Robatsch and Gheorghiu in Vinkovci. Gheorghiu showed me that game against Maric and it was very interesting for me. Our idea was Bg5," wrote Bobby.

12 Bg5!

A novelty at the time!

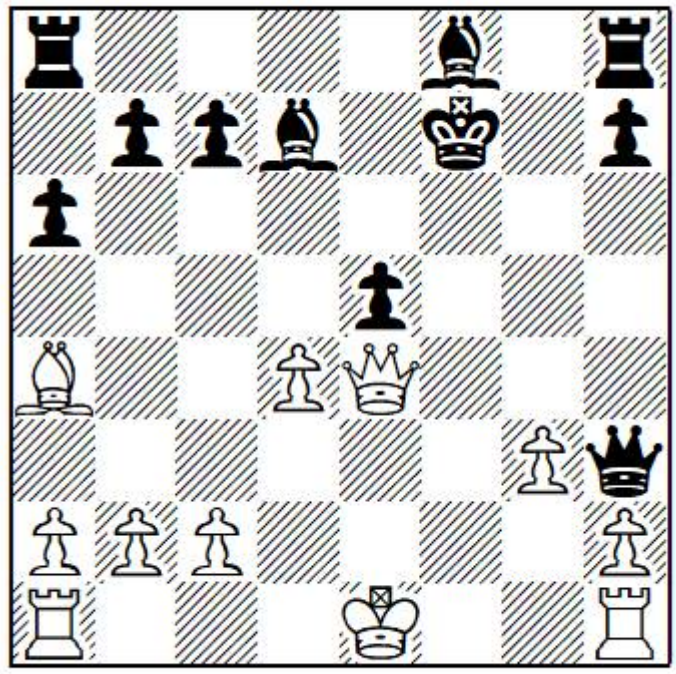
12 … a6 13 Ba4 Bd7 14 Bxf6 gxf6 15 Qxe4+ Kf7?

Black should try a pawn down ending with 15 … Qe6 16 Qxe6+ Bxe6 17 0-0 Kf7, and if 18 Ne5+ Kg7 19 Nd3 Bc4! 20 Rf3 Bxd3 21 Rxd3, the opposite-coloured bishops offer drawing chances.

16 Ne5+!

Clearance. The knight's tentacles of power reach out for Black's king, who is fatally exposed.

16 … fxe5



17 Rf1+?

Black should survive after this mistake. 17 Bb3+! is deadly: 17 … Be6 18 Rf1+ Kg8 19 d5! Qg4 20 Qe3 and Black is losing since 20 … Bf7 is forcefully met by 21 d6! Be6 22 Rf6! Bc4 23 h3!, when Black's queen is overloaded and White wins.

17 … Ke7!

17 … Kg8? 18 Bb3+ Be6 19 d5 returns to the previous note where White wins.

18 Bxd7?!

Bobby is blowing the attack. 18 0-0-0! Bh6+ 19 Kb1 Raf8 20 Rxf8 Rxf8 21 Qxh7+ Rf7 22 Bxd7! Qh5 23 Qd3 offers full compensation.

18 … Kxd7!

18 … Qxd7? 19 0-0-0 is a strong attack for White.

19 Rf7+ Ke8?

Now Black's king must undergo cruel adversity; whereas after 19 … Be7! (Fischer) 20 0-0-0 Qe6! 21 dxe5+ Kc8 22 Rxh7 Rxh7 23 Qxh7 Kb8! White doesn't get enough compensation for the sacrificed piece.

20 Rxc7 Bd6?

20 … Qe6 was forced.

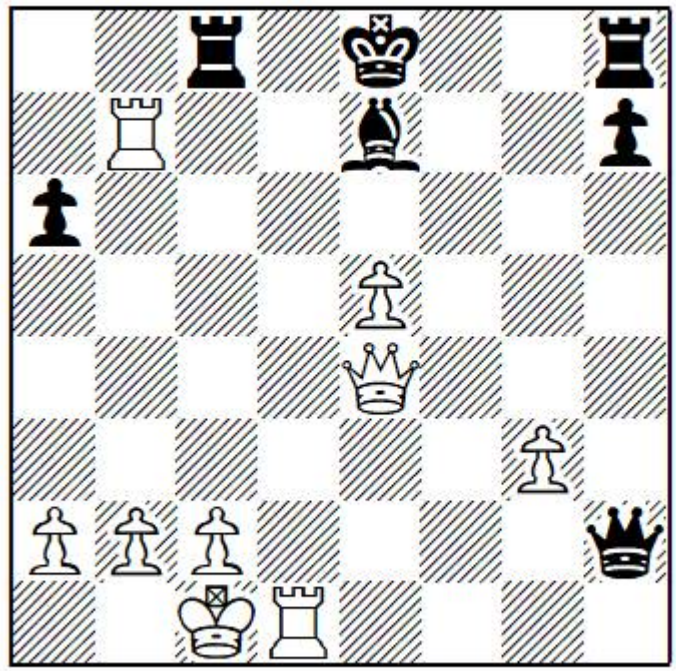
21 Rxb7 Rc8 22 0-0-0

Here 22 dxe5! is more accurate.

22 … Qxh2?

Black had to try 22 … Rf8 23 dxe5 Be7 24 Qa4+ Kf7 25 Qxa6 Qf5 26 Qf6+! Qxf6 27 exf6 Kxf6 28 c3, albeit with a clear advantage for White, who will begin to push his three queenside passers forward.

23 dxe5 Be7



Exercise (calculation): There are two mates in eight. Find one of them.

Answer: Remove Black's best defender.

24 Rxe7+!

This is Bobby's "Burn down the village and kill them all!" moment. 24 Qa4+! is the other solution: 24 … Kf7 25 Rf1+ Kg6 26 Rb6+ Kh5 27 Rf5+ Bg5+ 28 Rxg5+! Kxg5 29 Qf4+ Kh5 30 Rh6 mate.

24 … Kxe7 25 Qb7+ Ke6 26 Qd7+

26 Rd6+! Kf5 27 Qf3+ is quicker.

26 … Kxe5

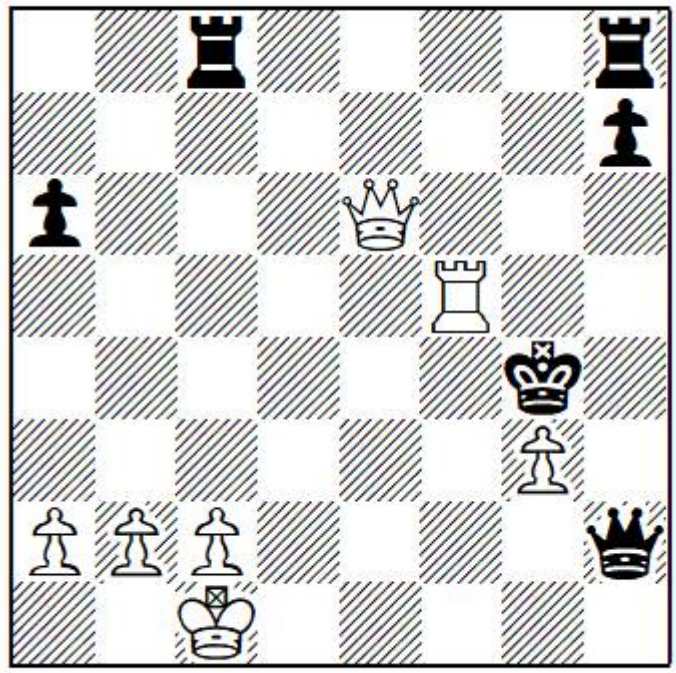
It's clear that Black's king will die alone and unloved.

27 Qd5+

And here 27 Rd5+! Kf6 28 Rf5+ etc.

27 … Kf6 28 Rf1+ Kg6 29 Qf5+ Kh6 30 Qe6+ Kh5 31 Rf5+ Kg4

A check on f4 gets it done.



Exercise (calculation): Do you see White's mate in three?

Answer: **32 Rf4+! Kxg3**

Or 32 … Kg5 33 Qg4+ Kh6 34 Rf6 mate.

33 Qg4 mate

Even Cruella de Vil would condemn Fischer's queen for her level of cruelty.

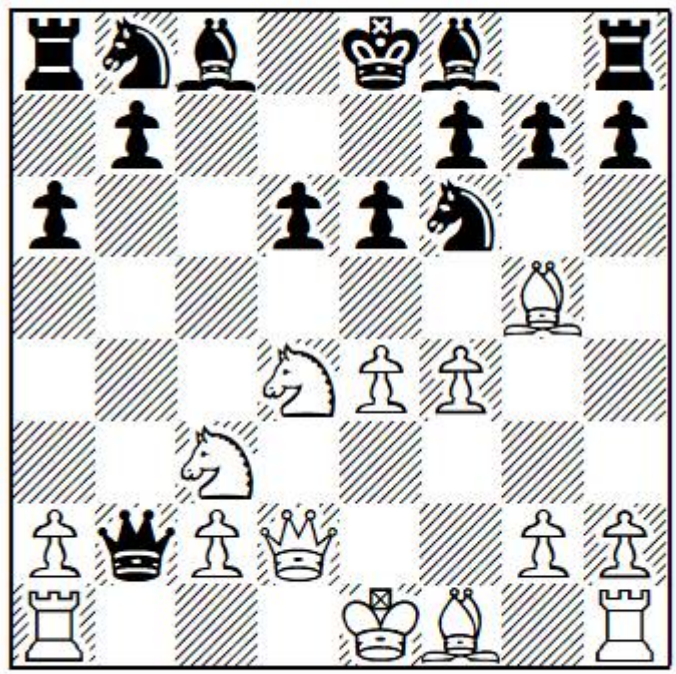
Game 64
M.Matulovic-R.J.Fischer
Blitz Tournament, Herceg Novi 1970
Sicilian Defence

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 a6 6 Bg5 e6 7 f4 Qb6

The most dangerous killers move in silence. It was Bent Larsen who said it was “madness” to allow Fischer a Najdorf Poisoned Pawn Variation. Spassky proved Larsen wrong by handing Bobby a humiliating loss in their world championship match.

8 Qd2 Qxb2

Fischer’s queen loved to gorge herself on b-pawns.



9 Nb3!?

9 Rb1 is the main line.

9 … Qa3

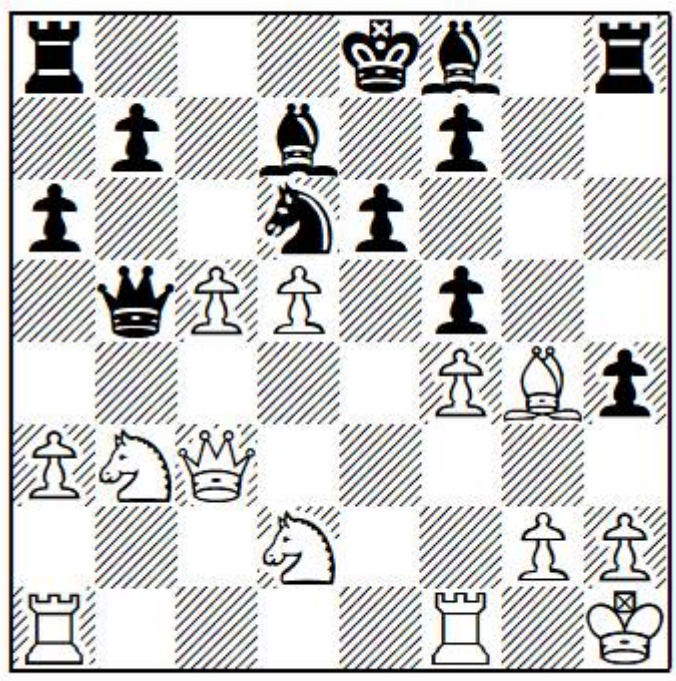
9 … Nc6 is actually playable since 10 Bxf6 gxf6 11 a3??, intending to trap Black’s queen with Ra2, runs into 11 … Na5! with a winning position for Black.

10 Bxf6

Spassky's first try was 10 Bd3 Be7 11 0-0 h6 12 Bh4? Nxe4! 13 Nxe4 Bxh4 14 f5? exf5 15 Bb5+! axb5 16 Nxd6+ Kf8 17 Nxc8 Nc6, when White was busted but managed to draw anyway, B.Spassky-R.J.Fischer, World Championship (Game 7), Reykjavik 1972.

10 … gxf6 11 Bd3

Spassky later played 11 Be2 h5 12 0-0 Nc6 13 Kh1 Bd7 14 Nb1 Qb4 15 Qe3 d5?! (15 … Ne7! 16 c3 Qa4 is unclear) 16 exd5 Ne7 17 c4 Nf5 18 Qd3 h4? 19 Bg4 Nd6? (19 … 0-0-0 was necessary) 20 N1d2 f5?? 21 a3 Qb6 22 c5 Qb5 23 Qc3!



When Byron (not my publisher, I mean the poet) wrote "She walks in beauty, like the night", I'm pretty sure he meant Spassky's queen:

1. The h8-rook hangs.

2. As does Black's knight.

3. Even worse is the fact that Black's queen is in dire danger of being trapped with a3-a4!.

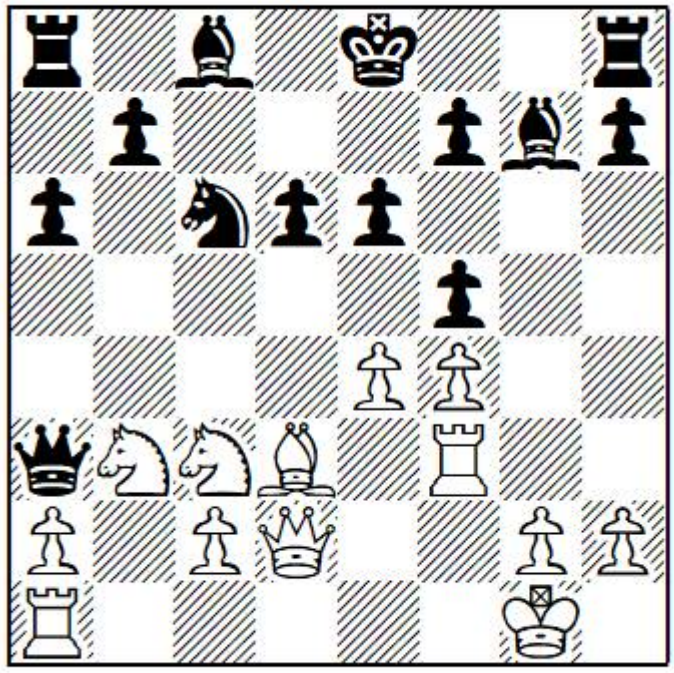
Indeed, after 23 … fxg4 24 a4! (this is an active crime scene), Fischer's queen was lost and he could have resigned

here, B.Spassky-R.J.Fischer, World Championship (Game 11), Reykjavik 1972. Bobby only ventured one more Najdorf in the match and that with 7 … Be7.

11 … Nc6 12 0-0 Bg7

This way White must watch out for … f6-f5, and Black also gets options of castling kingside. The engine calls it dead even at this point.

13 Rf3 f5!?



Bobby returns the pawn in order to exert power over the dark squares. It's a bit risky though since he also opens the game when his king is uncastled and vulnerable. 13 … Bd7 is safer and possibly better.

14 Rg3 Bf6 15 exf5 Qb4! 16 Bf1 d5?!

Here 16 … Ne7! 17 fxe6 Bxe6 looks okay for Black.

17 Re1!?

I don't know if this was a deliberate exchange sacrifice or that Matulovic overlooked a skewer with … Bh4. Instead, 17 fxe6! fxe6 18 a3 Qb6+ 19 Kh1 Ne7 20 Rd1! is still dangerous

for Black, who is unable to play 20 … Bd7? due to 21 Ne4! Rf8 22 Nbc5! with a winning attack for White.

17 … Ne7?!

Push cautious too far and you reach passive. Fischer should brazenly grab the exchange with 17 … Bh4 18 fxe6 fxe6 19 f5 Bxg3 20 hxg3 e5 21 a3 Qb6+ 22 Kh2 Bxf5 23 Nxd5 Qd8, even if the engine claims full compensation for White.

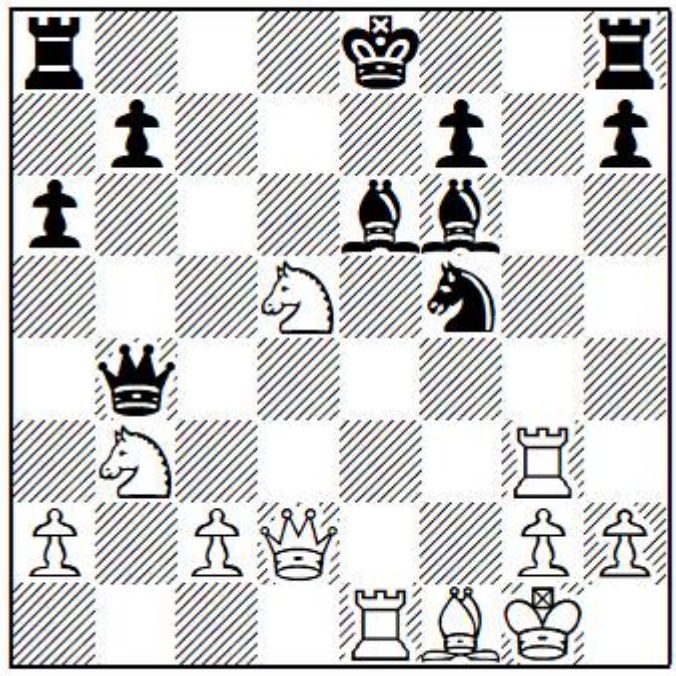
18 fxe6

18 Rf3! is awkward for Black, since 18 … Nxf5 is met by 19 Nxd5 Qxd2 20 Nxf6+ Ke7 21 Nxd2 Kxf6 22 g4! Nh4 23 Ne4+ Kg7 24 Rd3 and White stands a shade better.

18 … Bxe6 19 f5!?

Here 19 Ne4 Qb6+ 20 Nec5 Rc8 21 Qf2 Nf5 22 Rd3 0-0 is even according to the engine.

19 … Nxf5 20 Nxd5?



Motivational speaker Tony Robins told us that if you wish it, you can have it. As life progressed, I came to the realization

that Tony shouldn't be trusted. Our combination must be fact-based in reality, otherwise it's just a dream which is unlikely to come true. Matulovic either hangs material via a miscalculation or sacrifices unsoundly.

After 20 Rf3 0-0-0 21 a3 the position is not so clear.

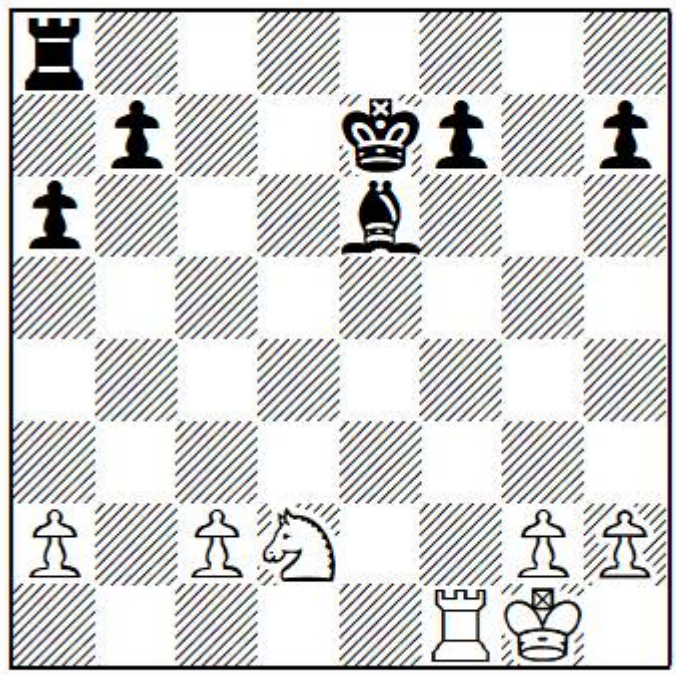
20 … Qxd2! 21 Nxf6+ Ke7 22 Nxd2 Nxg3 23 Nd5+ Kf8?

Fischer blunders material back, yet still stands clearly better. Instead, 23 … Kd6! 24 Nf4 Nxf1 25 Ne4+ Ke7 leaves White a full exchange down and hopelessly lost.

24 Nc7! Nxf1 25 Rxf1!

Double attack on a8 and e8. Fischer must return the exchange.

25 … Ke7 26 Nxa8 Rxa8



White's ending is difficult for the following reasons:

1. White's two queenside isolanis are easy targets for Black's pieces.

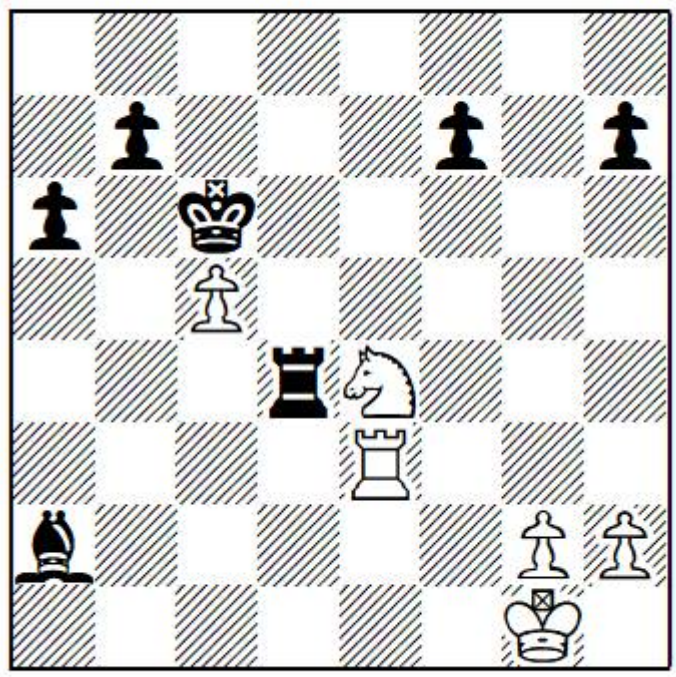
2. Black's bishop is the superior minor piece.

3. Black's king is in the middle, ready to fight, while White's is offside on g1. In fact, White's king is essentially sentenced to home-confinement and never moves for the remainder of the game.

27 c4?

This only makes things worse. 27 a4 is correct.

27 … Rd8! 28 Rf2 Rd4 29 Re2 Kd6! 30 Ne4+ Kc6 31 c5 Bc4 32 Re3 Bxa2



White is done for due to Black's passed a-pawn.

33 Nd6?

A mistake in an already lost ending.

33 … b5!

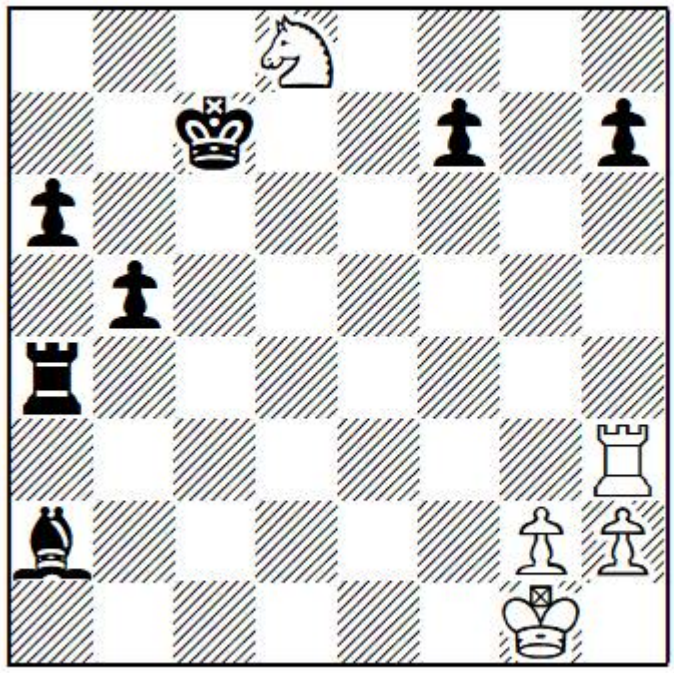
What I actually meant was … White is done for due to Black's *two* passed pawns.

34 Ra3 Ra4 35 Rh3

This is way too slow, not that there was anything better. A swap of rooks is of course impossible due to the surging

forward a-pawn.

35 … Kxc5 36 Nb7+ Kc6 37 Nd8+ Kc7!



We have a clear picture of who is in command:

1. White's knight ran out of moves.

2. White's rook must babysit the knight on the d-file.

3. White can do nothing but await the push of Black's a-pawn towards its promotion square.

38 Rd3 Bc4 39 Rd4 Ra2 40 h4 a5 41 h5 a4 42 h6

White's h-pawn creeps closer and closer to its not-promotion square! Half-formed suspicions reach the three quarters mark and we begin to question Matulovic's sanity in playing on, since there is no way he was the one ahead on the clock.

42 … a3 43 g4 Rb2 44 g5 a2 0-1

Game 65
V.Hort-R.J.Fischer
Blitz Tournament, Herceg Novi 1970

1 d4 Nf6 2 Nf3 g6 3 Bg5

The Torre Attack, one of White's most solid systems, and perfect for the easily frightened, which is why I play it.

3 … h6!? 4 Bh4

I would go for 4 Bxf6 exf6 5 c4 Bg7 6 g3.

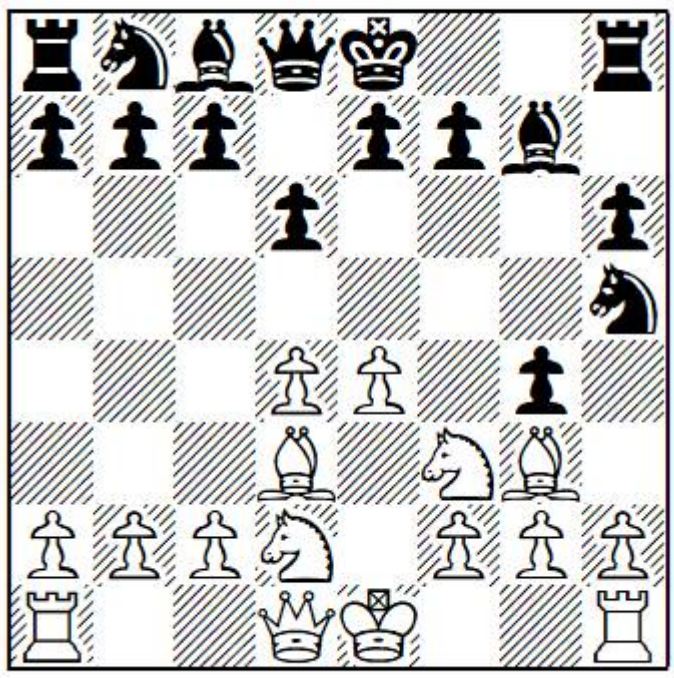
4 … Bg7 5 Nbd2 g5!?

Bobby wants the bishop pair and is willing to loosen his kingside structure for it.

6 Bg3 Nh5 7 e4 d6 8 Bd3?

I'm not sure whether this was just a careless blitz chess move or an unsound sacrifice. In any case it loses a pawn, without full compensation. 8 c3 was necessary.

8 … g4!



Undermining. Just like that Bobby wins an important central pawn.

9 Nh4 Bxd4

Charity begins at home!

10 c3 Bf6 11 Nf5 Nxg3

11 … e6? allows White to regain the lost pawn with 12 Qxg4!.

12 fxg3?

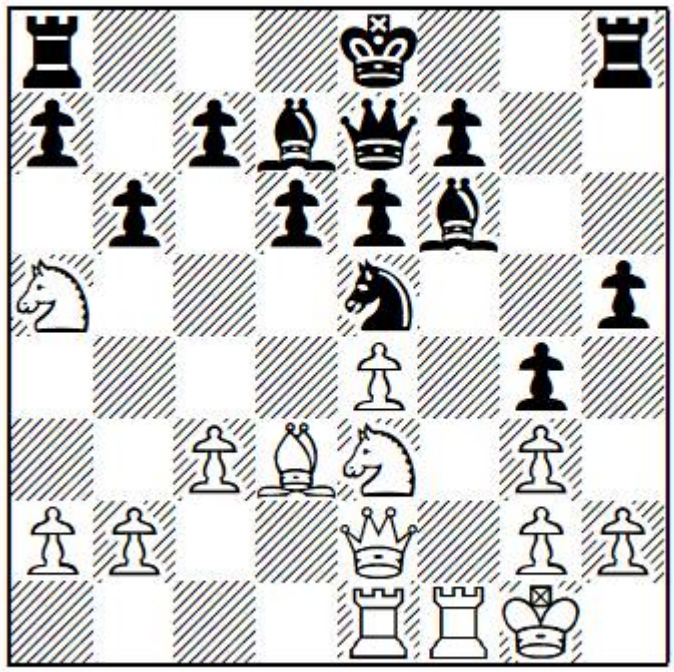
The opening of the f-file doesn't make up for the fact that e5 was handed over to Black. He should play 12 hxg3 h5 13 f3 Nd7! and here White stands clearly worse, as 14 fxg4? Ne5 15 Be2 hxg4 16 Rxh8+ Bxh8 is strategically wretched for White.

12 … e6 13 Ne3 h5 14 0-0 Nd7 15 Qe2 Qe7 16 Rae1 Ne5 17 Ndc4 Bd7 18 Na5

After 18 Nxe5 Bxe5 19 Nc4 Bg7 I don't see any compensation for White.

18 … b6!

Bobby avoids the trap 18 … 0-0-0?? 19 Ba6!, when it is White who is in control.



19 Nac4 0-0-0 20 Nxe5 Bxe5 21 Ba6+ Kb8 22 Nc4 Bg7 23 a4

Of course Hort isn't going to begrudge sacrificing his a-pawn in the hope of generating an attack.

23 … h4

The human move. Bobby goes for the initiative over material. The greedy engine calls for acceptance with 23 … Bxa4!?.

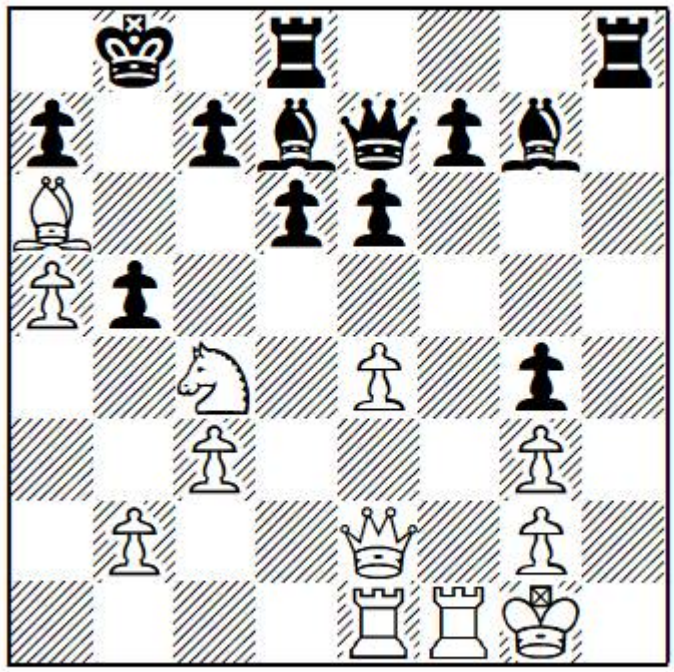
24 a5

If 24 Qxg4 Rdg8 (threatening a nasty discovered check) 25 Qd1 hxg3 26 h3 Bc6, Black is winning here as well.

24 … hxg3 25 hxg3

25 axb6? just makes it worse: 25 … Rxh2 26 Qxg4 axb6 27 Qxg3 Rdh8 and White is busted.

25 … b5!



The defence arises lazily, like an elderly cat from a long afternoon nap. This is a case of excellent defensive judgment. Bobby understands that the potential weakening of his pawn-front is not as important as closing the a-file and hemming in White's bishop.

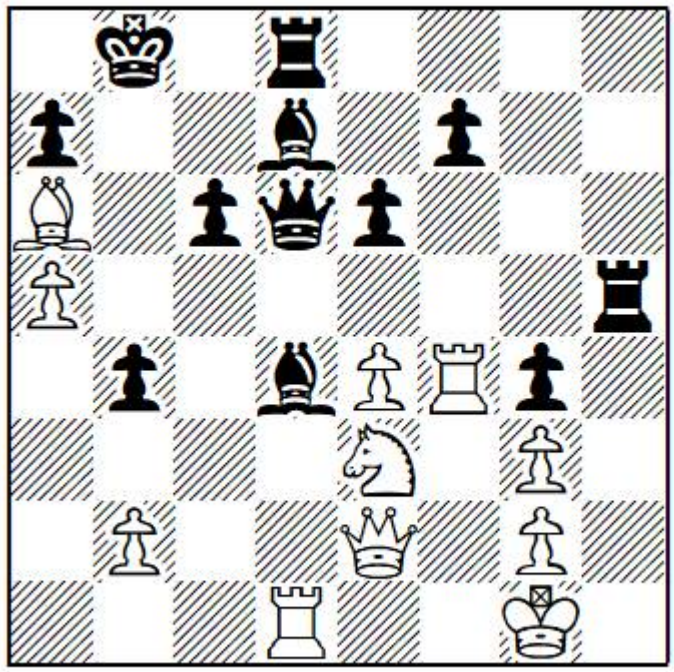
26 Ne3

26 Na3 c6 27 Nc2 Be5 28 Qe3 Rh5 is lost for White.

26 … c6 27 c4?

Okay then, let's cast our dark squares to the wind.

27 … b4 28 c5 Bd4! 29 cxd6 Qxd6 30 Rf4 Rh5 31 Rd1??



Hort must have had zero time on his clock, since his hangs more material.

31 … Bxe3+ 32 Qxe3

Or 32 Kf1 Rh1 mate.

32 … Qxd1+

A glutton at the 32-course meal, the black queen's eyes are already on the next dish, even before her plate is filled.

33 Rf1 Qd6 34 Rc1 c5 0-1

Game 66
R.J.Fischer-S.Reshevsky
Blitz Tournament, Herceg Novi 1970
Sicilian Defence

Bobby got thoroughly outplayed and in a just world should have lost this one. He won many lost games in blitz due to his unmatchable speed, where his opponents, short on time, would blunder in completely winning positions.

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 e6 3 c4!? Nc6 4 Nc3 Nf6 5 g3

5 d4 cxd4 6 Nxd4 Bb4 is known to be okay for Black.

5 … g6?!

Black stands at least even, if not a tad better after 5 … d5!.

6 Bg2?!

Here 6 d4! is awkward for Black, who mixed … e7-e6 with … g7-g6.

6 … Bg7

I would try 6 … e5!?.

7 0-0

Once again he was better off with 7 d4!.

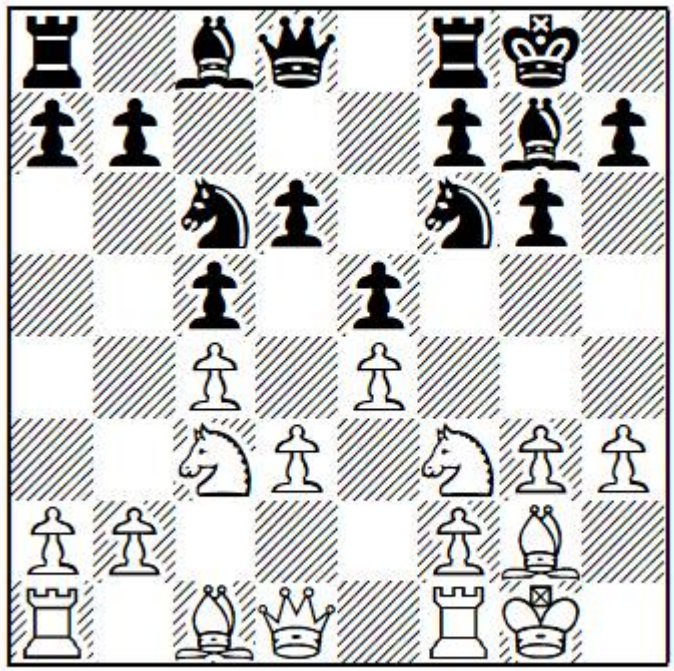
7 … 0-0 8 d3

Bobby in his notes said he feared playing 8 d4!, giving the move a question mark. It's actually just fine for White: 8 … cxd4 9 Nxd4 Nxe4? (Bobby gave this an exclam, which it certainly isn't) 10 Nxc6 Nxc3 11 Nxd8 Nxd1 12 Nxe6! dxe6 13 Rxd1 and White stands clearly better, since Black has trouble developing his queenside.

8 … d6

8 … d5!? is possible, when 9 cxd5 exd5 10 Bg5 dxe4 11 Nxe4 b6 looks okay for Black.

9 h3 e5!?



White is two full moves up – an extra h2-h3, plus it's his turn – yet the deadening symmetry means that it will be difficult for Fischer to extract anything concrete.

10 a3 a5 11 Rb1 Bd7 12 Bd2 Ne8

Clearing the way for a potential future … f7-f5, which comes on move 45!

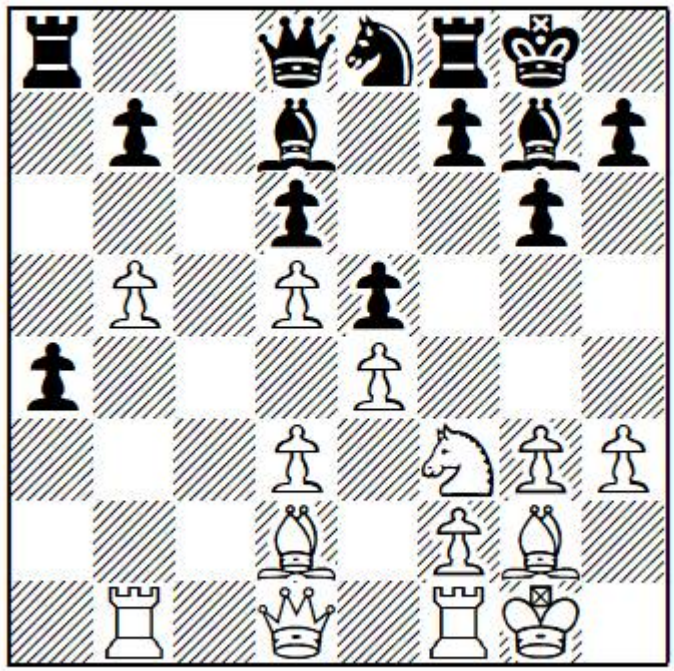
13 Nd5 Ne7! 14 b4 Nxd5 15 cxd5?

We see a rare strategic misjudgement from Fischer, who allows Reshevsky to create a dangerous passed a-pawn. 15 exd5! is correct and if 15 … cxb4 16 axb4 a4 17 Rc1 b6?! 18 b5!, Black's a-pawn is actually a liability, rather than an asset.

15 … cxb4 16 axb4 a4!

In the battle of the former prodigies, Reshevsky has outplayed Bobby strategically.

17 b5!?



Sometimes it's just better to commit the sin and then ask for forgiveness later. This is possibly an overreaction. Fischer fears … Nc7 and … Nb5. With his last move he sacrifices his b-pawn a tad unsoundly, hoping to generate play on the future open b-file. The unpleasant alternative is to go passive with 17 Ra1 Nc7.

17 … Nc7 18 b6

If 18 Rb4 Bxb5 19 Qb1 Be8 20 Rxb7 Nb5! and 21 Rxb5? Bxb5 22 Qxb5 a3 23 Ra1 Qb8!, the passed a-pawn will cost White at least a minor piece.

18 … Nb5 19 Rb4

19 Rb2 is a touch more accurate.

19 … Qxb6! 20 Qa1

20 Rxa4?? hangs material to the discovered attack 20 … Nc3!.

20 … a3 21 Rfb1?

21 Qa2 was necessary.

21 … Rfc8

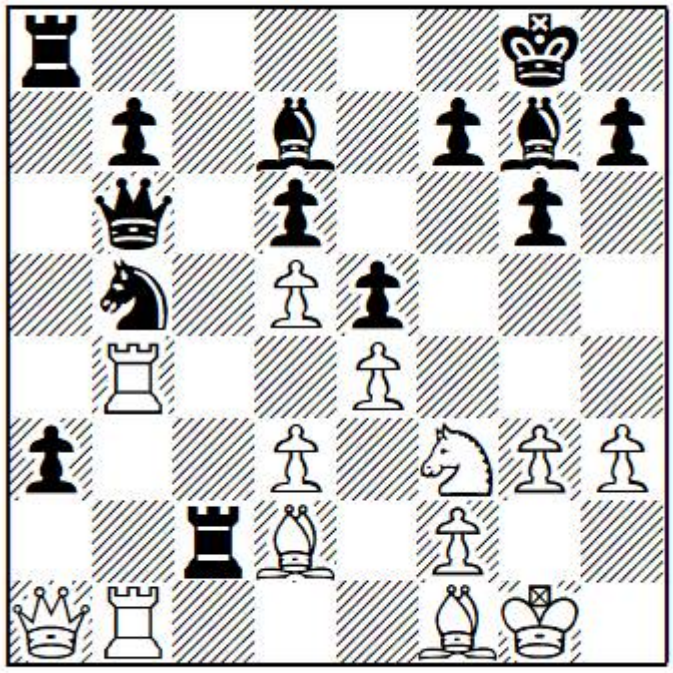
Now 21 … a2! 22 R1b2 Qa6 is lost for White, who is completely tied down by Black's passed pawn.

22 Bf1

Once again, he should try 22 Qa2.

22 … Rc2?

Again 22 … a2! 23 R1b2 Qa6. If 24 d4 exd4!, Black's knight isn't hanging at all due to 25 Bxb5 Bxb5 26 Rxb5 d3! 27 Ra5 Qc4 28 Rxa8 Rxa8 29 e5 dxe5 and White can resign since … e5-e4 is next.



Exercise (planning): Both sides missed a trick which allowed White back into

the game. What should White play?

Answer: Moving the rook to c4 wins the exchange.

23 d4?

Now White is completely lost. 23 Rc4! forces Black to hand over the exchange after 23 … Rxd2 24 Nxd2, albeit for more than enough compensation.

23 … a2?

A mistimed push. After 23 … exd4! 24 Bxb5 Bxb5 25 Rxb5 Qc7 26 Rxb7 Qc8 27 Kg2 and then 27 … a2 28 R1b2 d3 Black is winning.

24 R1b3?

Fischer should play 24 Bxb5! Bxb5! (24 … axb1Q+ 25 Qxb1 Rxd2 26 Nxd2 Bxb5 27 Rxb5 Qxd4 28 Qc2! looks headed for a draw) 25 Rxb5 Qc7 26 Rxb7 axb1Q+ 27 Qxb1 Ra1! 28 Qxa1 Qxb7 29 dxe5 dxe5 30 Be3, though White is still the one fighting for a draw.

24 … exd4!

The *Stockfish* evaluation has White down nearly 7 points!

25 Bxb5 Bxb5 26 Rxb5 Qd8

Alternatively, 26 … Qc7! 27 Rxb7 Qc8 28 e5 d3! is lost for White, or even 26 … Qxb5!? 27 Rxb5 d3.

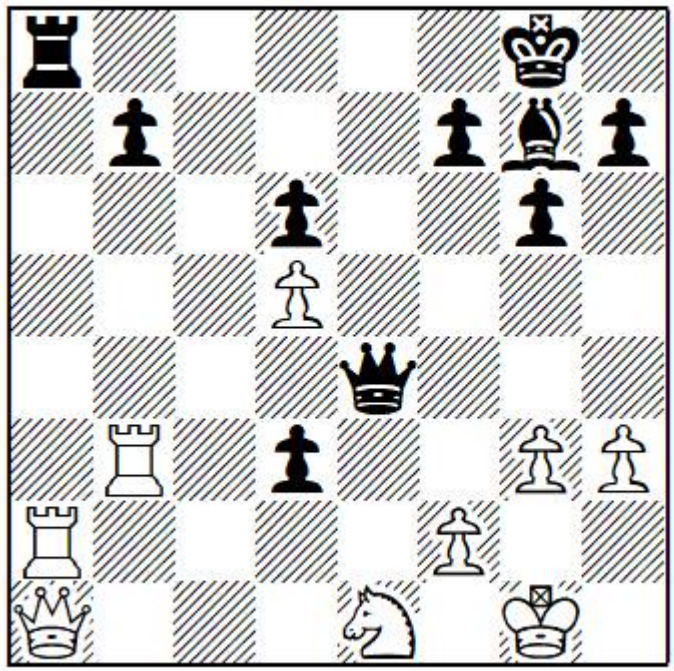
27 Rd3 Qe7! 28 Ne1 Qxe4 29 Rbb3 Rxd2!

This clears the bishop's diagonal and should have won easily for Reshevsky.

30 Rxd2 d3

Game over?

31 Rxa2!



"A last swindle try," wrote Fischer, who at this stage is down almost 11 points according to the engine's accounting!

31 … Bxa1??

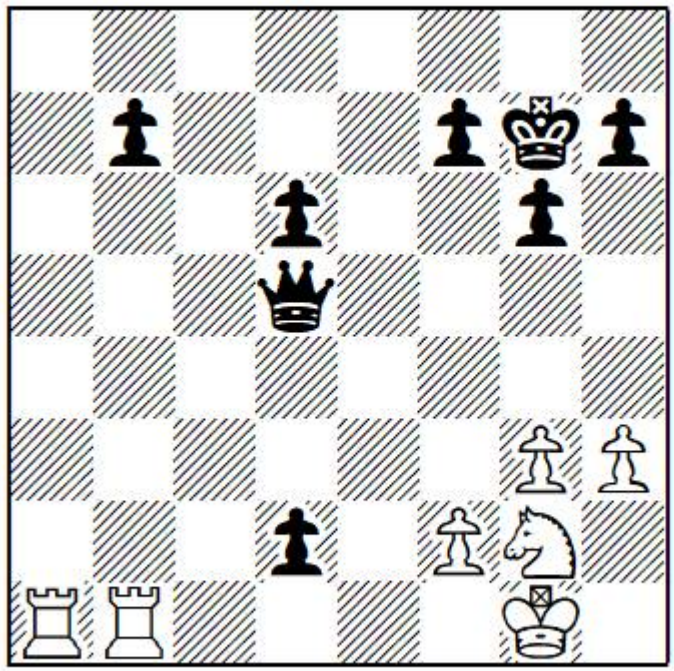
When we labour intensively to achieve a won game and then throw it away with a single boneheaded decision, we become the spiritual ascetic who enters a 10-year solitary meditative retreat, only to emerge from the cave, selfish, greedy, lustful and mean-spirited, rather than the saint we envisioned. Szmul, what have you done? In a single move Reshevsky goes from winning to losing.

After 31 … Rxa2! 32 Qxa2 Qxe1+ 33 Kg2 d2 34 Rb1 Bd4! it's time for White to resign.

32 Rxa8+ Kg7 33 Rxa1

White's former poverty is eliminated in an instant.

33 … d2 34 Ng2 Qxd5 35 Rbb1



The brochure didn't promise this and Reshevsky must have looked over his position with a wave of nausea. White was gifted too much material for the queen and is winning. In the coming moves Fischer methodically begins to pick off stray black pawns.

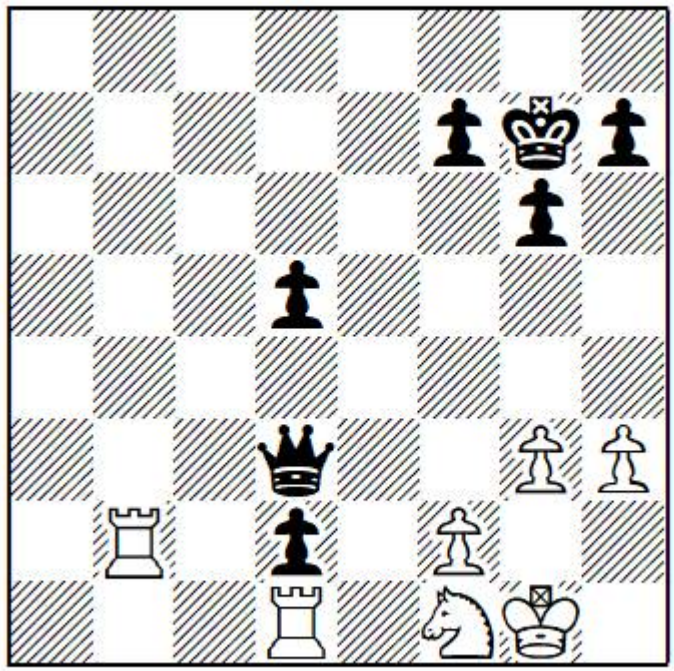
35 … b5 36 Rd1 b4 37 Ne3

Now Nf1 is coming and the forward d-pawn is doomed.

37 … Qd3 38 Nf1 b3 39 Rab1 b2

I don't really get this petulant move, but the b-pawn was doomed anyway.

40 Rxb2 d5



41 Rdxd2?!

This move is incomprehensible. Why on earth didn't Fischer just pick off Black's d-pawn with 41 Rbxd2 Qa3 42 Rxd5, after which Black's position is one giant ache?

41 … Qc3 42 Ne3 d4 43 Nd1 Qc4 44 Rb1 h5 45 h4 f5 46 Rdb2 f4 47 Rb3 fxg3 48 Rxg3 Qc2 49 Rb7+ Kh6 50 Nb2!

Now everything is under control again.

50 … Qe4 51 Rb6 Qe1+ 52 Kg2 Qe4+ 53 Kf1 Qb1+ 54 Ke2 Qc2+ 55 Ke1 Qe4+

Or 55 … Qc1+ 56 Nd1 Qc2 57 Rbxg6+ and wins.

56 Kd1 Qf5 57 Rbxg6+ Qxg6

57 … Kh7 58 Nd3 is also hopeless for Black.

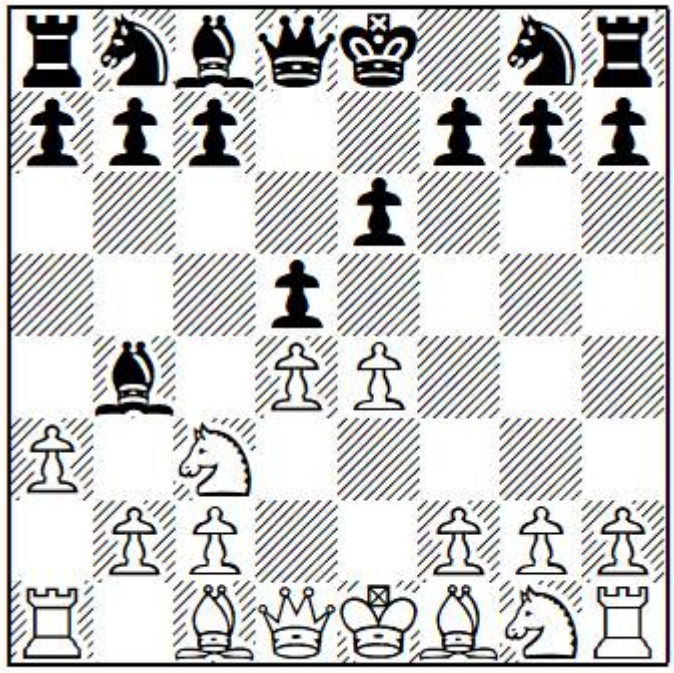
58 Rxg6+ Kxg6 59 Ke2 Kf5 60 Kf3 1-0

Game 67
R.J.Fischer-W.Uhlmann
Blitz Tournament, Herceg Novi 1970
French Defence

1 e4 e6

If you want to learn the secrets of the French Defence, your time is well spent by studying the games of Wolfgang Uhlmann, the opening's high priest of this era. By now, it was the worst-kept secret in town that your best shot at beating Fischer with Black was in a Winawer French.

2 d4 d5 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 a3!?

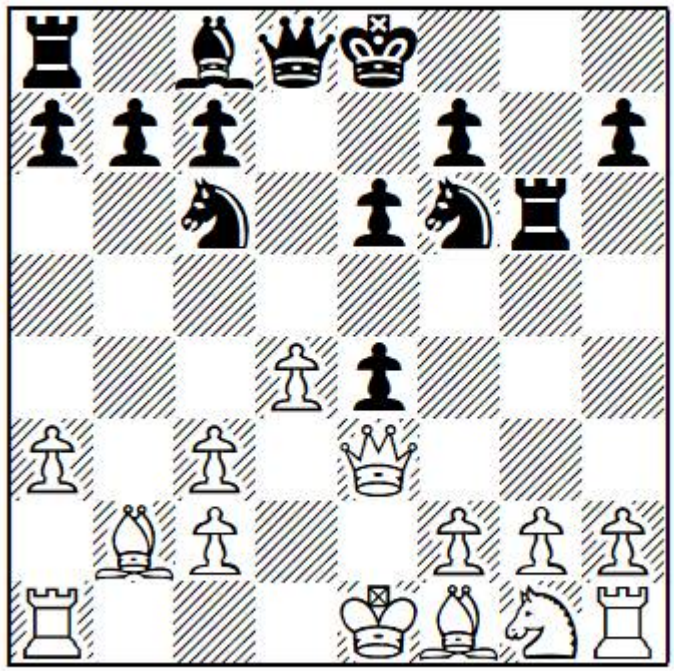


Fischer decides that the soil is in need of irrigation with a change. He avoids the main line 4 e5.

4 … Bxc3+ 5 bxc3 dxe4 6 Qg4 Nf6 7 Qxg7 Rg8 8 Qh6 Rg6

Bobby tried this line twice more the same month at Rovinj/Zagreb. In the second game his opponent came prepared: 8 … Nbd7 9 Ne2 b6 10 Bg5 Qe7 11 Qh4 Bb7 12 Ng3 h6! was already good for Black and Fischer suffered a huge upset loss, R.J.Fischer-Vlat.Kovacevic, Rovinj/Zagreb 1970.

9 Qe3 Nc6 10 Bb2



10 … b6

A novelty at the time, but a queenside fianchetto fits better with … Nbd7, as played by Kovacevic, rather than … Nc6.

Eleven days later Uhlmann tried 10 … Qd6?!, only to be hit by 11 f3! exf3 12 Nxf3 Bd7 13 0-0-0 0-0-0 14 c4, when Fischer seized a clear advantage and went on to win, R.J.Fischer-W.Uhlmann, Rovinj/Zagreb 1970.

Instead, 10 … Ne7! is known to be at least even and scores well for Black.

11 0-0-0

Here too 11 f3! is stronger.

11 … Bb7 12 h3?!

Now 12 f3 is necessary.

12 … h5?!

The time lost is not worth it to stop g2-g4. Instead, 12 … Na5! 13 c4 Qe7 14 g4 0-0-0 is in Black's favour.

13 c4 Qd6 14 Ne2 0-0-0

14 … Ne7 is also possible.

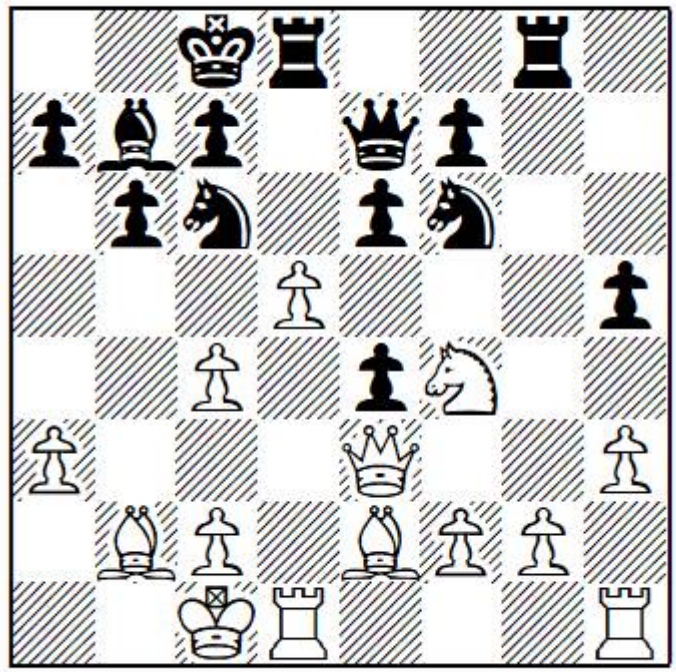
15 Nf4 Rgg8

15 … e5? is unsound: 16 Nxg6 exd4 17 Nh4! dxe3 18 Rxd6 Rxd6 19 Nf5 Re6 20 Ng7 Rd6 21 fxe3 and Black is strategically lost due to White's bishops, the open f-file, and the black pawn targets on the kingside.

16 Be2 Qe7?!

16 … Ne7 is balanced.

17 d5!



Principle: *Open the position when in possession of the bishop pair.* Another option is 17 Qc3 intending d4-d5 next.

17 … exd5 18 cxd5 Ne5

Uhlmann may have been better off with 18 … Na5 19 c4 Ba6 20 Rd4.

19 c4 Ba6 20 Qc3

20 g3! stabilizes White's advantage. Black is unable to take on c4 due to 20 … Nxc4?? (or 20 … Bxc4?? 21 Bxe5) 21

Qc3 Qc5 22 Rd4 b5 23 Rxc4! bxc4 24 Qxf6 winning.

20 … Nfd7

20 … Ng6 21 Nxg6 Rxg6 also looks a touch better for White.

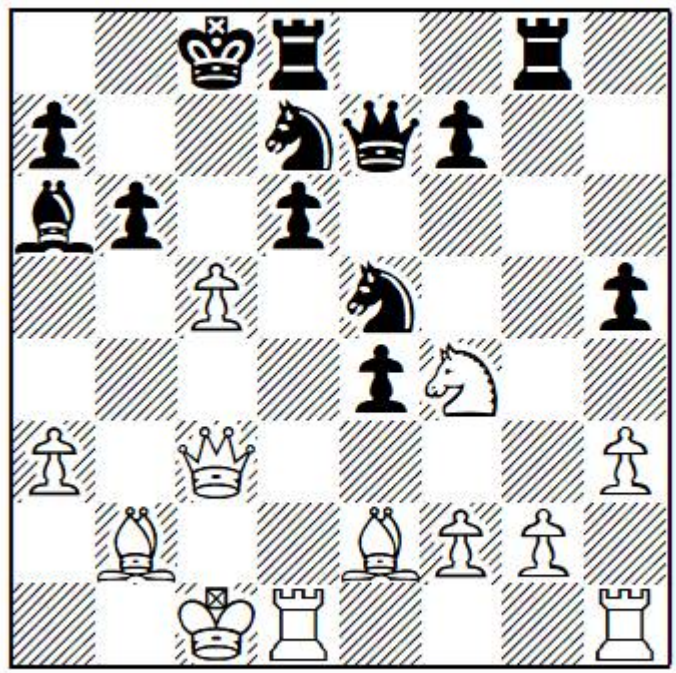
21 d6!

Great natural players like Capablanca and Fischer believed that when intuition comes calling, don't overthink it. This clearance sacrifice appeals to the incorrigible criminals among us. Although probably warming Frank Marshall's and Tal's devious hearts, the move is more a bluff than empirically strong, but it had the effect of sowing total confusion in Uhlmann's mind. Instead, 21 g3 is safer, when White looks just a shade better after 21 … h4.

21 … cxd6?!

Uhlmann clearly overlooked Fischer's next move. 21 … Qf6! 22 Qe3 cxd6 23 Nxh5 Qh4 24 Ng3 Nd3+ 25 Bxd3 exd3 26 Rxd3 Nc5 looks fine for Black.

22 c5!!



This shot is the equivalent of the fat kid who soaks everyone by belly flopping in the pool. The dual threats are c5xd6+, winning Black's queen, and the simple Bxa6+.

22 … Bxe2??

We are human and, as we all understand, humans don't do "perfect", especially in blitz games. Uhlmann, misbelieving that the defence is understaffed with double the workload, panics and gives his queen away for insufficient compensation. He could still hang in there with the temporary piece sacrifice 22 … Nxc5!! 23 Bxa6+ Kb8 24 Bf1 Rc8! 25 Kb1 Ncd3 (discovered attack) 26 Qd4! (26 Qd2?? loses instantly to 26 … Nc4) 26 … Nxf4 27 Qxe4 Ne6 28 Rxd6! Nc4! 29 Bxc4 Rxc4! 30 Qe5! Rc7 and White only stands a touch better. Of course, a line this long and tricky is unlikely to be found in a 5-minute game.

23 cxd6+ Nc5 24 dxe7 Rxd1+ 25 Rxd1 Bxd1 26 Qxe5

Threatening to promote, as well as take Black's loose bishop on d1.

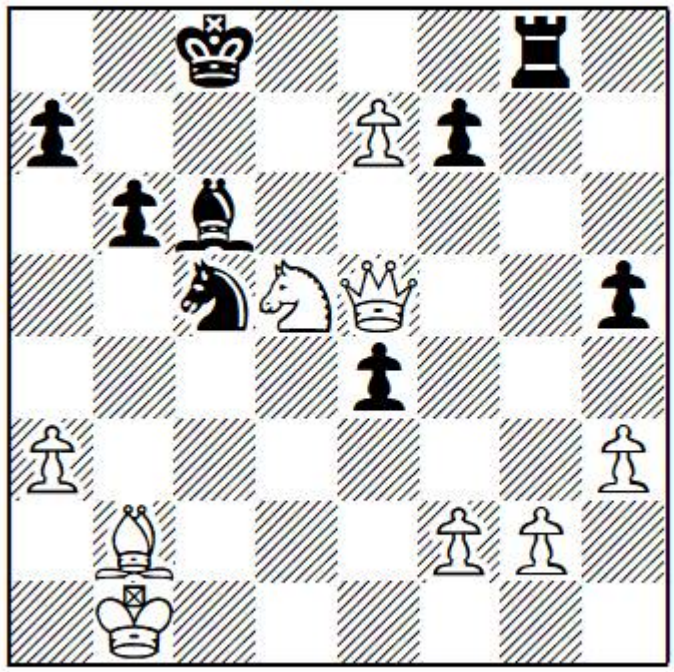
26 … Ba4

One rook is not going to cut it against White's extra queen.

27 Kb1

The king wisely removes himself from forks on d3.

27 … Bc6 28 Nd5!



Welcome to Bobby's crypt of horror. He threatens mate on c7, as well as Nf6 tricks.

28 … Bxd5

28 … Ne6 29 Qxh5 wins.

29 Qxd5 1-0

Black is mated in eight moves.

Game 68
R.J.Fischer-B.Ivkov
Blitz Tournament, Herceg Novi 1970
Modern Defence

1 e4 d6 2 d4 g6 3 Nf3!?

Fischer usually set up with the strong, father figure Austrian Attack, 3 Nc3 Bg7 4 f4.

3 … Bg7 4 c3

Welcome to a realm where all forms of fun are outlawed. This is one of White's most solid set-ups. As we see from this game, the line didn't suit Fischer's style.

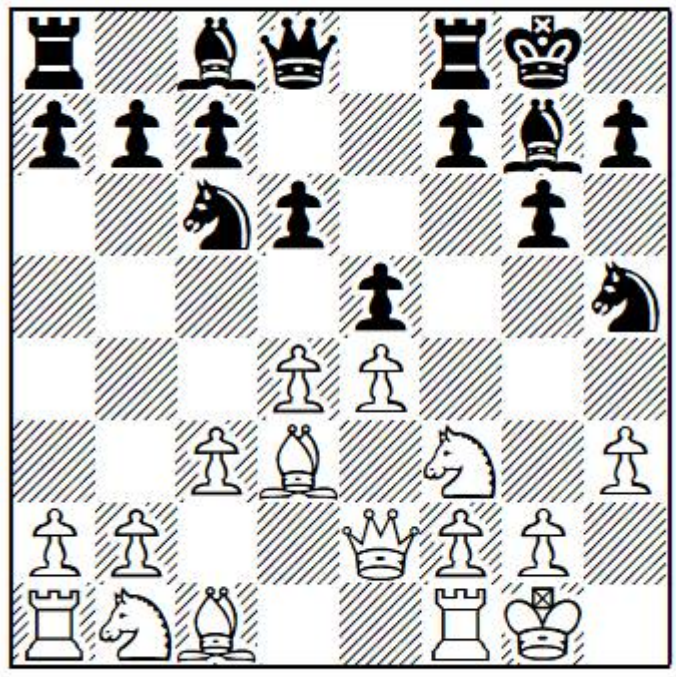
4 … Nf6 5 Bd3 0-0 6 0-0 Nc6 7 Qe2

Later we see that White's queen is prematurely placed on the e-file. 7 Re1 is considered a touch more accurate.

7 … e5 8 h3!?

I don't know about retaining central pawn tension, since White's queen isn't well placed on the e-file. Instead, 8 dxe5 Nxe5 9 Nxe5 dxe5 is boring and equal.

8 … Nh5



9 Bg5 Bf6?!

The bishop is awkwardly placed on f6. Both 9 … Qe8 and 9 … f6 look like better choices.

10 Be3 Bg7!?

This is just an admission of a loss of a tempo.

11 Nbd2 Re8 12 d5?!

This move gives away White's edge. 12 Rfe1 is a bit scary, with Black's rook facing White's queen on the e-file, but still better than Fischer's tension-relieving push.

12 … Ne7 13 c4?!

This is also inaccurate since it forces Fischer to swap away his good bishop. 13 Bc2 is a better move; if 13 … Nf4, White can play 14 Qd1. A knight sacrifice on h3 is not so sound for Black and White shouldn't fear it.

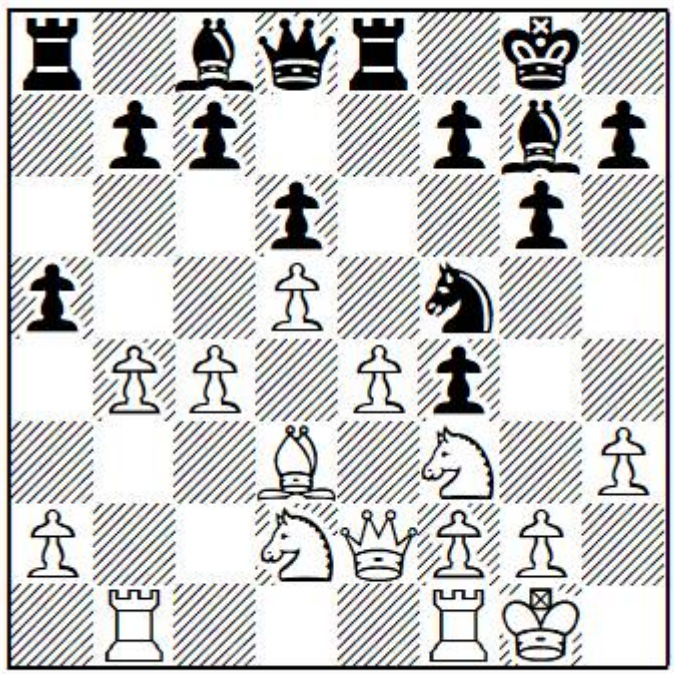
13 … Nf4! 14 Bxf4 exf4

Black now stands slightly better due to power on the dark squares and the potential of the knight to reach e5.

15 Rab1 Nf5!?

This is fancy but not all that strong. I prefer the plan 15 … h6!, intending to exploit e5 with … g6-g5 and … Ng6 next.

16 b4 a5



17 bxa5?!

This is a strategic error, after which Black stands clearly better due to his domination of the dark squares. 17 c5! axb4 18 Bb5 Re7 19 Qc4! is thematic. Black should reply 19 … c6! 20 dxc6 Be6 21 Qc1 Nd4 22 cxb7 Rxb7 23 Nxd4 Bxd4 24

Bc6 Rc7 25 Bxa8 Qxa8 26 Nf3 Bxc5 with full compensation for the exchange.

17 … Rxa5 18 Nb3 Ra8 19 c5 h6?!

This is unnecessary, and also takes the square away from Black's knight. Instead, 19 … Nh4! 20 cxd6 cxd6 is a touch uncomfortable for White.

20 Bb5! Bd7

Not 20 … Re7?? 21 Qc4 and Black's knight on f5 is trapped.

21 a4?!

After 21 Bxd7! Qxd7 22 Qd3! Ne7 23 Nbd2 Ra7 24 cxd6 cxd6 25 a3 White stands better.

21 … Bxb5! 22 axb5 Nh4?!

Now after 22 … Ra4! 23 Nfd2 Nd4 24 Nxd4 Rxd4 25 cxd6 cxd6 Black stands better.

23 cxd6

He should swap on h4.

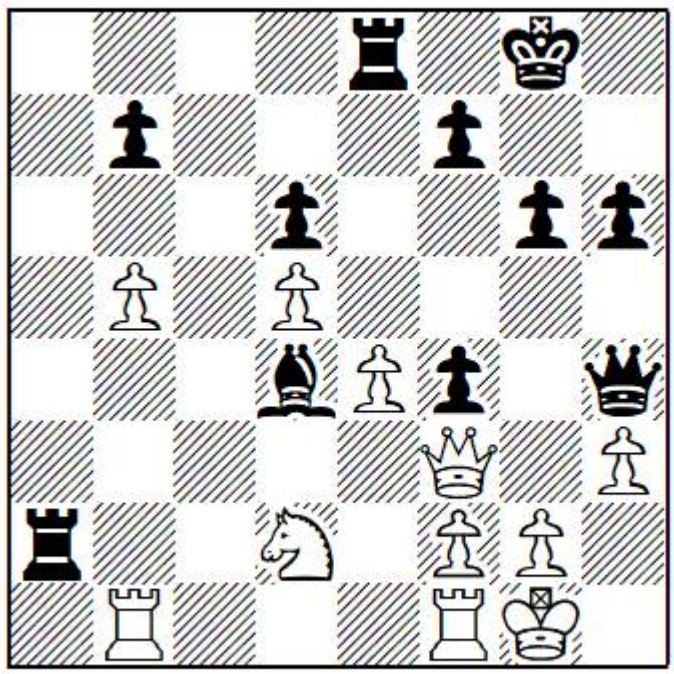
23 … cxd6 24 Nxh4 Qxh4 25 Nd2 Bd4!?

25 … Qf6! is slightly in Black's favour.

26 Qf3?

Fischer was better off with 26 Nf3 Qf6 27 b6!? Bc5 28 Rfc1.

26 … Ra2!



Fischer has been strategically outplayed and his position is lost.

27 Nc4 Qf6?!

27 … Rc8! adds enormous pressure to White's position. The d6-pawn is safe, as after 28 Nxd6?? Rc3 29 Qg4 Bxf2+ 30 Kh1 f3! 31 gxf3 Qxg4 32 hxg4 Bc5!, White either drops the knight or gets mated following 33 Nxb7 Rcc2 34 Nxc5 Rh2+ 36 Kg1 Rag2 mate.

28 Rbd1 Bc5 29 e5!

Bobby does his best to mix it up. His last move creates a dangerous passed d-pawn.

29 … dxe5 30 d6 e4?

Instead, 30 … Qe6! 31 Qd5 Qxd5 32 Rxd5 Bd4 leaves White busted in the ending.

31 d7!

This zwischenzug turns the game around.

31 … Rd8 32 Qxe4 f3?

32 … Qe6 was necessary.

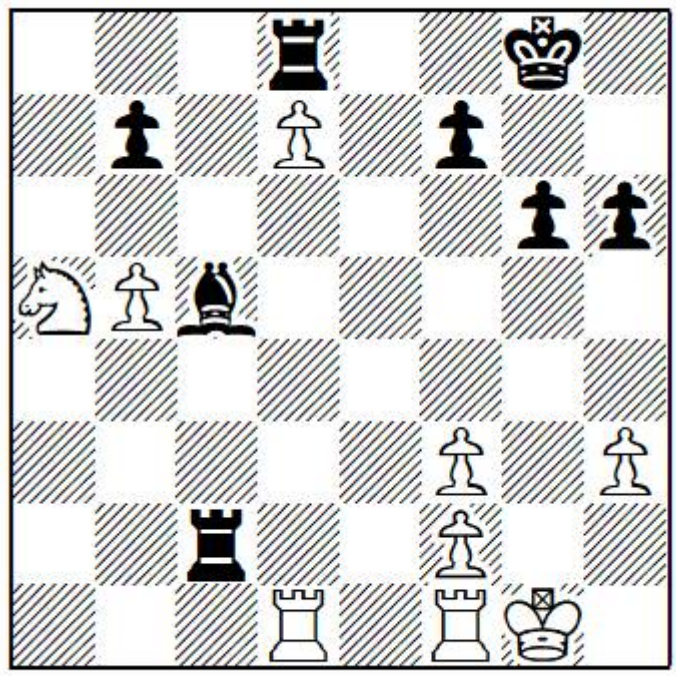
33 Qxf3?

33 gxf3! leaves White in control.

33 … Qxf3 34 gxf3 Rc2??

The patient is transferred to the psychiatric ward. Ivkov's rook shouldn't give Fischer's knight access to a5. Black overcomes all adversity with 34 … f6! (… Kf7 is now available) 35 Rd5 b6 36 Nd2 Ra7 37 Ne4 Be7 38 Rfd1 f5 and the game should be drawn.

35 Na5!

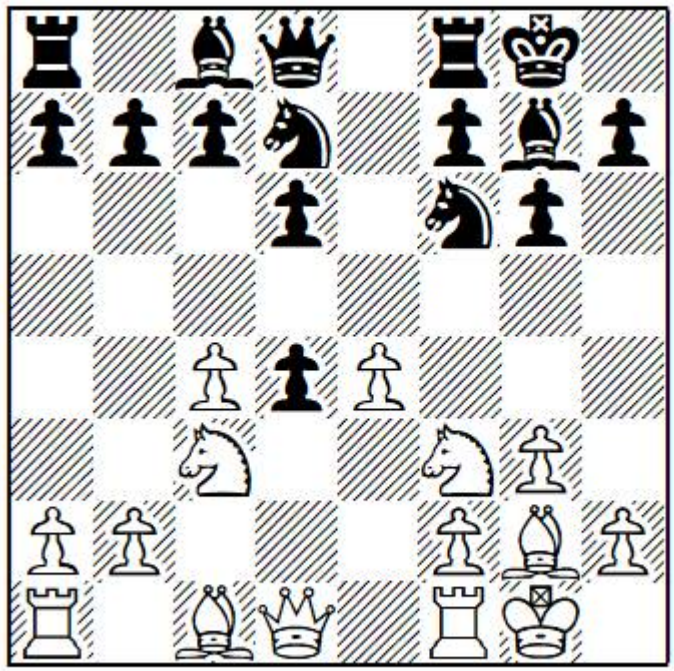


Game over. Let the bells ring out. Ivkov receives a violent, dislocating shock: White's knight will either enter b7 or c6 and Black loses heavy material.

35 … Be7 36 Nxb7 Rc7 37 Nxd8 Bxd8 38 Rfe1 1-0

Game 69
B.Ivkov-R.J.Fischer
Blitz Tournament, Herceg Novi 1970
King's Indian Defence

1 Nf3 Nf6 2 g3 g6 3 Bg2 Bg7 4 0-0 0-0 5 c4 d6 6 d4 Nbd7 7 Nc3 e5 8 e4 exd4



We are reminded of the line "Love means never having to say you're sorry", from the movie *Love Story*. Black doesn't really equalize in this line, but who cares if you score well with it, as Bobby did.

9 Nxd4 Nc5 10 h3 a5 11 Re1 Re8 12 Bg5

Today, the moves 12 Qc2 and 12 b3 are played most often.

12 … h6 13 Bf4 Nfd7 14 Qd2?

14 Be3! solidifies White's territorial advantage.

14 … Ne5!

Threatening both … Nxc4 and a knight invasion to d3.

15 Bf1

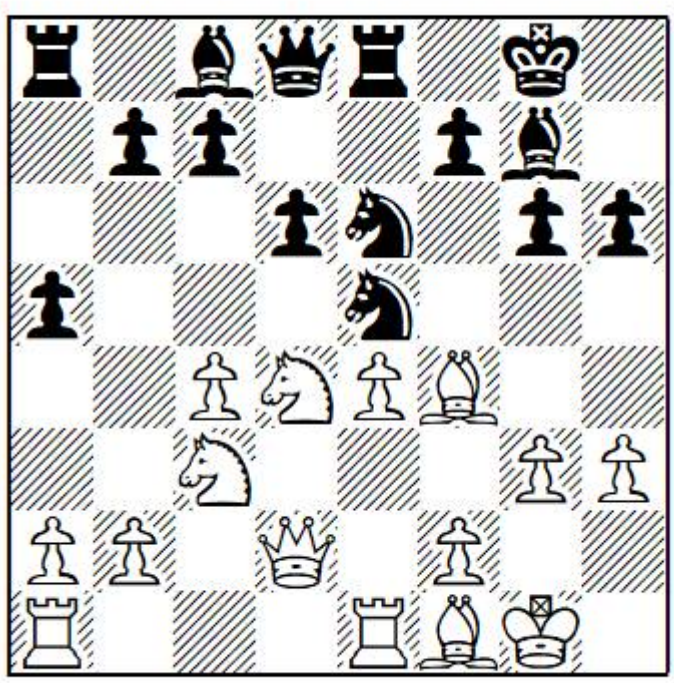
Instead:

a) 15 b3?? hangs the exchange to 15 … Ned3.

b) 15 Bxe5? dxe5 16 Nf3 Qxd2 17 Nxd2 c6 is strategically awful for White, as Black rules the dark squares while White deals with gaping holes on both d3 and d4.

b) 15 Bxh6?! Nxc4 16 Qe2 Bxh6 17 Qxc4 Bg7 and Black's bishop pair and dark square control give him the advantage.

15 … Ne6!



Suddenly White experiences difficulty defending d4, f3 and f4.

16 Nxe6

There is nothing better:
a) 16 Be3?? Nxd4 wins at once, since either recapture on d4 allows a knight fork on f3.

b) 16 Kg2? Nxd4 17 Qxd4 Nf3 wins a full exchange.

c) 16 Bxe5 dxe5 17 Nf3 Qxd2 18 Nxd2 Bf8 19 Nd5 Kg7 is good for Black, again due to the bishop pair and control of the dark squares.

16 … Nf3+!

Zwischenzug.

17 Kg2

17 Kh1 Bxe6 wins the exchange all the same, and White doesn't even get a pawn for it.

17 … Nxe1+ 18 Rxe1 Bxe6 19 Bxh6 Bxh6 20 Qxh6

White's pawn for the exchange isn't quite enough, yet there is some play, since the dark squares around Black's king are weakened and White has chances for a future attack.

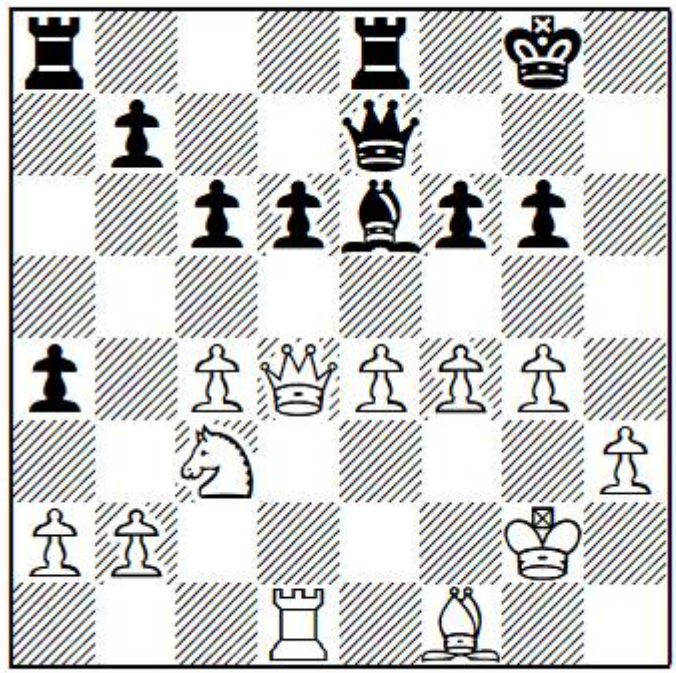
20 … Qf6 21 Qd2 a4 22 f4!?

The engine doesn't like Ivkov's attempt at activity and prefers the passive route with 22 a3, fixing a4 as a potential future target.

22 … Qe7

This feels a bit planless. It might be worth tossing in 22 … a3 23 b3 Qg7 24 g4 f5! 25 exf5 gxf5 26 g5 Bf7, when I prefer Black's chances.

23 g4!? c6 24 Qd4 f6 25 Rd1



25 … Rad8!?

Bobby offers his a-pawn in exchange for time. 25 … a3 26 b3 Rad8 is safer.

26 Nxa4!?

I would decline for the moment and fix the a4-pawn with 26 a3.

26 … c5?!

Here 26 … f5! 27 exf5 gxf5 28 g5 d5! 29 c5 Bf7 30 Nc3 Bh5 gives Black winning chances.

27 Qd3 Kg7?!

Suddenly I'm starting to prefer White's position. 27 … f5! was necessary.

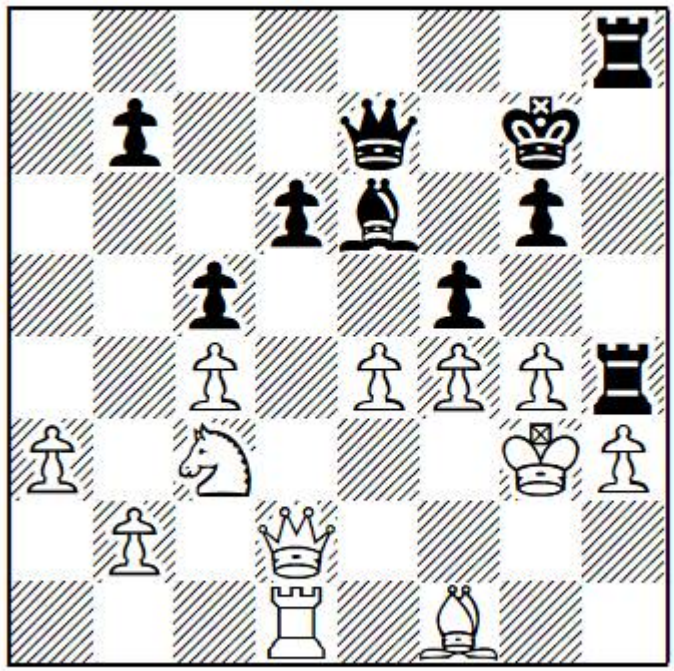
28 Nc3 Rh8 29 Qd2 Rh4 30 a3 Rdh8?

This is just unsound deception (which worked!). Bobby takes the lawless route, but he shouldn't give away his d-pawn.

31 Kg3?

After 31 Qxd6! Black is completely lost and Fischer must face up to his strategic crimes. Black's sullen position refuses to cooperate. There is no combination and White wins easily. For example: 31 … Qxd6 32 Rxd6 Kf7 33 f5! gxf5 34 exf5 Bc8 (the years pass slowly for the old bishop, within his cold, stone cell) 35 Kg3 and three pawns are too much for Black's extra exchange.

31 … f5!



32 exf5??

Option number three is a really bad idea when you only have a pair of choices.

a) 32 Qxd6! Rxh3+! 33 Bxh3 Qh4+ 34 Kf3 Qxh3+ 35 Kf2 Qh2+ 36 Ke1 Qh4+! is perpetual check; White's king can't cross the d-file seeking asylum on the queenside because of … Rd8.

b) 32 g5! (this clogs the black queen's access to h4) 32 … fxe4 33 Nxe4 Bxh3 34 Qxd6! Qxd6! 35 Nxd6 Rg4+ 36 Kf3 Rg1 37 Kf2 Rxf1+ (otherwise 37 … Rg4 38 Kf3 repeats) 38 Rxf1 Bxf1 39 Kxf1 and White should hold the endgame.

32 … Rxh3+!

Annihilation of defensive barrier. Suddenly, from a former position of passivity, Black's attack is out of control, as if the cows, pigs and chickens took over the farm and slaughtered the farmer and his family.

33 Bxh3

Or 33 Kf2 Qh4+ and White is mated.

33 … Qh4+ 34 Kf3 Qxh3+ 35 Ke2

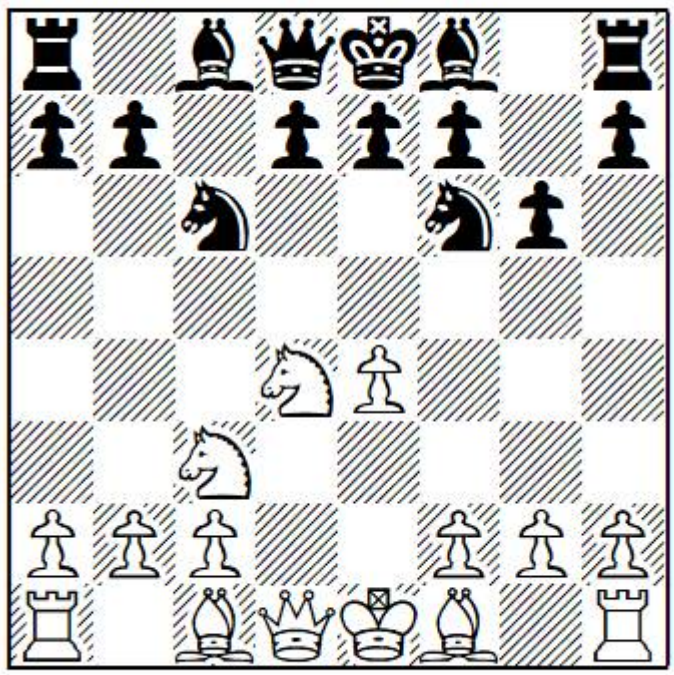
Or 35 Kf2 Qh2+ 36 Kf1 Qh1+ 37 Kf2 Rh2+ 38 Ke3 Rh3+ 39 Ke2 Qf3+ 40 Ke1 Rh1 mate.

35 … Bxc4+ 36 Kf2 Qh2+ 0-1

After 37 Kf3 Rh3+ 38 Ke4 Qg3! (threat: … Qf3 mate) 39 f6+ Kf7 40 Rf1 Qxg4, nothing helpful can be done about the threat to mate on f5 or e6.

Game 70
R.J.Fischer-Pr.Ostojic
Blitz Tournament, Herceg Novi 1970
Sicilian Defence

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 g6?!



This is a rusty old weapon, bought at an army surplus store. Today, this move order is considered dubious.

6 Nxc6! bxc6

He may have been better off going into a passive and more solid ending with 6 … dxc6 7 Qxd8+ Kxd8 8 Bc4 Ke8 9 e5

Nd7 10 e6 fxe6 11 Bxe6 Bg7, though Black's position doesn't look so wonderful here either.

7 e5 Ng8

Nor does 7 … Nh5 inspire much confidence.

8 Bc4 Bg7 9 Bf4 Qa5?

I represent a growing segment of the chess population who believes that bringing out pieces quickly in the opening is a good thing. "I'm massively behind in development. So the solution may be to begin pawn grabbing!" said the great majority of Morphy's opponents. This is a suicidal venture. 9 … Nh6 had to be tried.

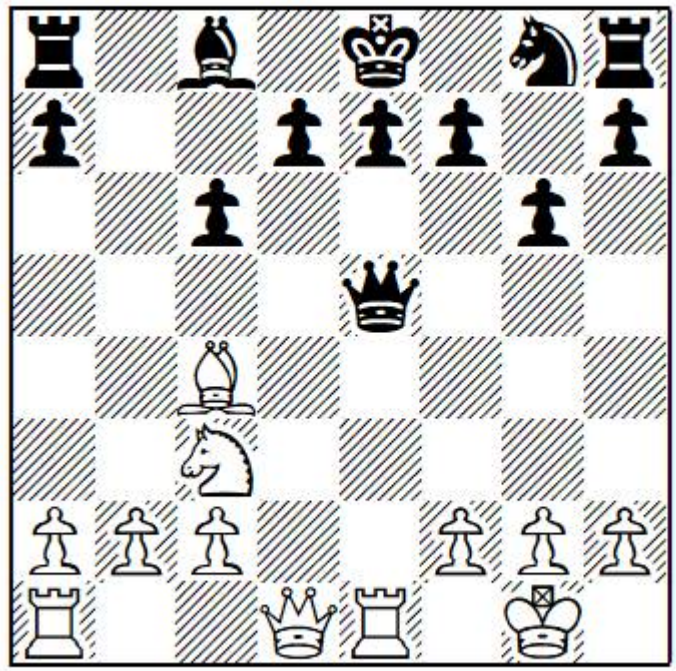
10 0-0!

"Sign me up!" thinks Bobby, who is happy to go Clint Eastwood on his opponent. Of course, Fischer isn't about to begrudge his opponent a pawn, if it means Black falls even further behind in development while opening the e-file.

10 … Bxe5

To dream the impossible dream. Did GM Ostojic really believe he could survive this giant a development deficit? Yet 10 … Nh6 11 Re1 0-0 12 Bb3 Kh8 13 h3 is a wretched position for Black, with no extra material in this version.

11 Bxe5 Qxe5 12 Re1



One glance is all we need to know that Black is unlikely to survive.

12 … Qc7?

12 … Qf4! may be Black's best shot, though after 13 Re4 Qf6 14 Re3 d5 15 Bxd5! Bf5! 16 Qf3! Rc8 17 Bb3 it's still hard to envision him surviving.

Not 12 … Qg7? 13 Qd6! Kf8 14 Qc5 and Black can barely move.

13 Qd4!

A novelty and improvement over 13 Ne4, Y.Kotkov-V.Tatarintsev, Kazan 1964, where 13 … d5 14 Bxd5 Nh6 allows Black to keep playing.

13 … f6 14 Bxg8!

Removal of the guard. f6 falls.

14 … Rxg8 15 Qxf6

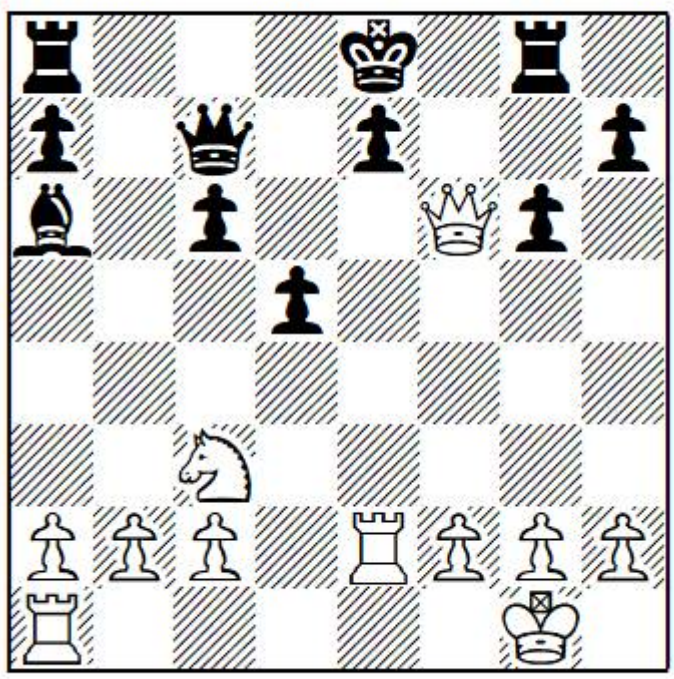
Fischer goes for attack over material. 15 Nd5! cxd5 16 Qxd5 forks Black's rooks.

15 … d5 16 Re2

Alternatively, 16 Rxe7+! Qxe7 17 Qxc6+ Kf7 18 Qxa8 leaves White two pawns up.

16 … Ba6?

He had to try 16 … e6, though 17 Rae1 Qf7 18 Qd4 Qe7 19 Na4 is obviously still terrible for Black.



Exercise (combination alert): What did Black overlook?

Answer: White can chop the d5-pawn.

17 Nxd5! cxd5 18 Qxa6

White is a pawn up and his attack continues.

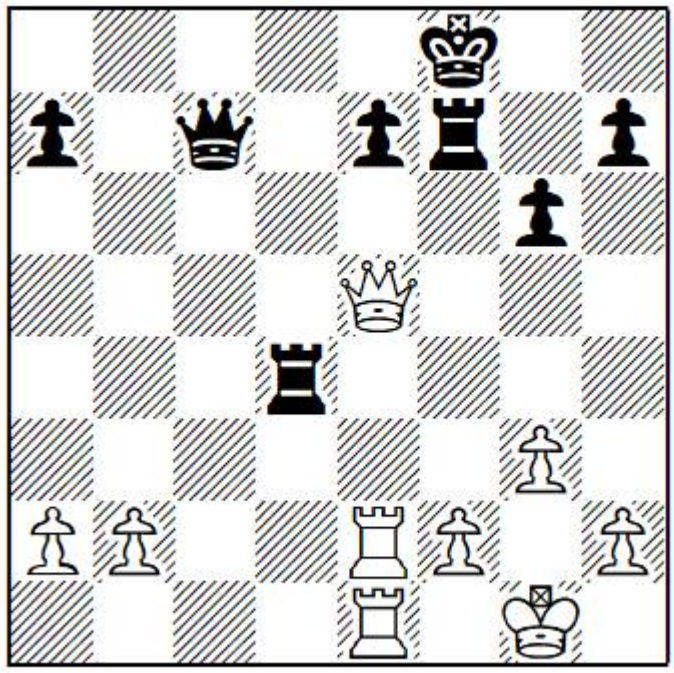
18 … Rf8 19 Rae1 Rf7 20 Qe6

The engine gives 20 Qa4+! followed by 21 Qd4 as stronger.

20 … Rd8 21 c3 Kf8 22 g3

He could prevent Black's next move with 22 Qe3!.

22 … d4! 23 cxd4 Rxd4 24 Qe5!?

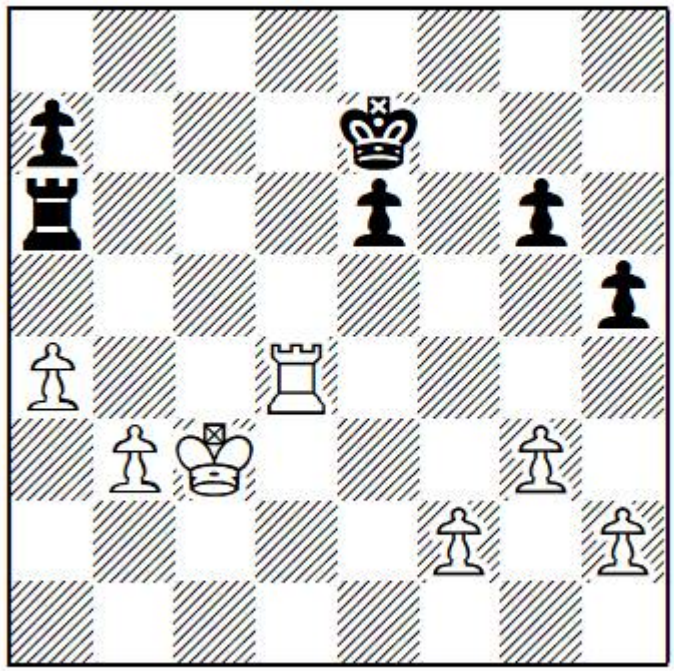


Capablanca approved. The ending is won for White. I can't imagine Spassky or Tal offering to swap queens in this position, seeing as Black's king is still insecure.

24 … Qxe5 25 Rxe5 Rd2 26 R1e2 Rxe2

26 … Rd7 27 Ra5 is also lost for Black.

27 Rxe2 Rf6 28 Kf1 Rc6 29 Ke1 e6 30 Kd2 Ke7 31 Re4 Rb6 32 b3 Ra6 33 a4 Kd6 34 Rh4 h5 35 Rd4+ Ke7 36 Kc3



White's win is lengthy yet certain.

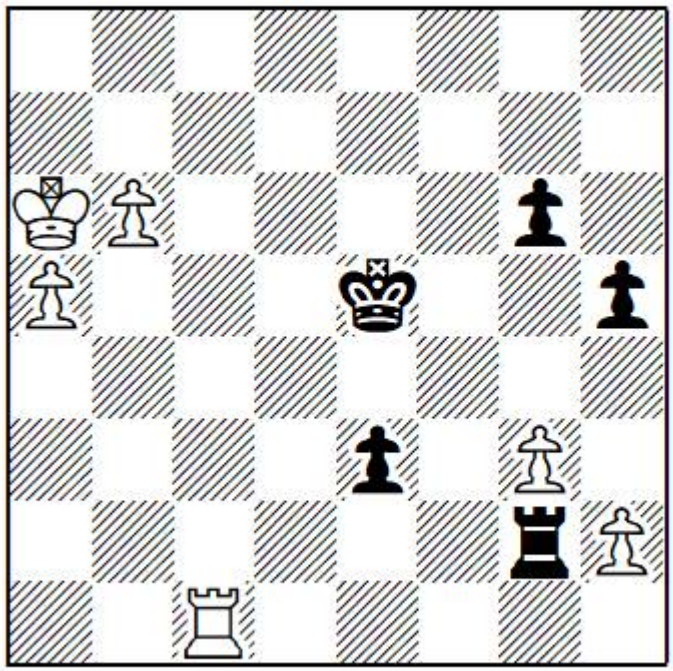
36 … Rc6+ 37 Rc4 Ra6 38 Rc7+ Kf6 39 Kb4

Threatening 40 a5! and 41 Kb5.

39 … Rb6+ 40 Kc4 a6 41 a5 Rd6 42 b4 Rd2 43 Kc5!

Fischer has worked out that he will easily win the promotion race.

43 … Rxf2 44 Kb6 e5 45 Kxa6 e4 46 b5 e3 47 Rc1 Ke5 48 b6 Rg2

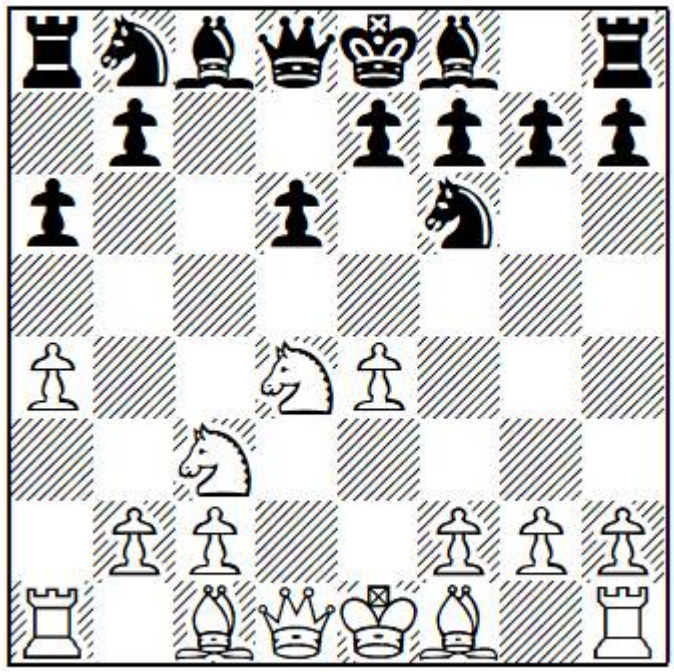


Zombies have entered the building? I have no idea what this drifter/derelict rook is doing and am wondering if this is a ChessBase typo, with the actual move being 48 … Rxh2. Not that it makes a joy of difference to the result.

49 b7 Rb2 50 Ka7 g5 51 b8Q+ Rxb8 52 Kxb8 1-0

Game 71
Pr.Ostojic-R.J.Fischer
Blitz Tournament, Herceg Novi 1970
Sicilian Defence

1 e4 c5 2 Ne2 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 a6 6 a4!?



This isn't a terribly scary line for Black, but neither is it bad.

6 … Qc7

Maybe Bobby wanted to prevent Bc4. 6 … e5 is Black's main move today.

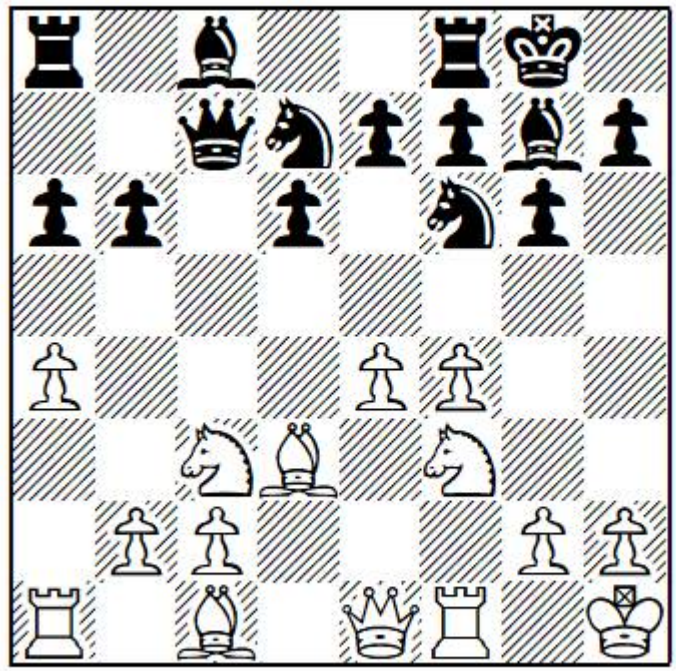
7 Bd3!?

I'm not going to pretend that White's opening credentials are impeccable. 7 Be2 is more natural.

7 … g6

This way Fischer enters a somewhat harmless-looking Dragon for White. 7 … e5 and 7 … e6 are also fine for Black.

8 f4!? Bg7 9 Nf3 0-0 10 0-0 Nbd7 11 Kh1 b6 12 Qe1



With populist fervour, Ostojic adopts the war-posture of the Grand Prix Attack plan of Qe1, Qh4, f4-f5, Bh6, Ng5 and mate! Except that in real life it's not so easy to reach the "mate!" part.

12 … Bb7

12 … e6 is also an option.

13 Qh4 Rac8!?

Black's bread-and-butter issue is his king. It feels as if Bobby underestimates his opponent's attack. Perhaps 13 … e6 14 f5 Rae8 is wiser.

14 Bd2!?

Why make a bunch of previous aggressive moves and then play cautiously? Clearly 14 f5 is thematic and stronger.

14 … e5?!

Black should try 14 … e6.

15 Rae1?!

Now 15 f5! gxf5 16 Rae1! is a dangerous-looking attack for White. If 16 … fxe4 17 Rxe4! Nxe4 18 Nxe4 Bxe4 19 Bxe4. Black is unlikely to survive.

15 … exf4 16 Bxf4 Ne5?

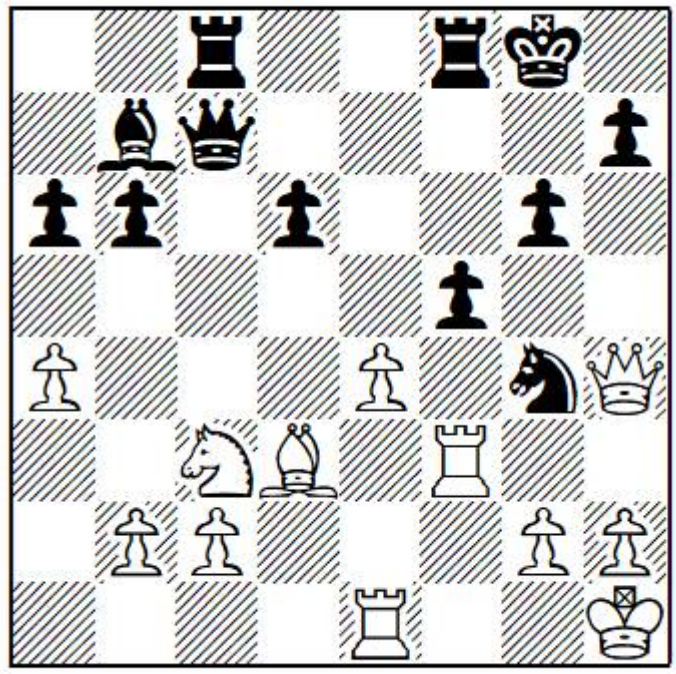
16 … Qc5 or 16 … Rce8 looks correct.

17 Bh6?

Here 17 Nxe5! dxe5 18 Bg5! Nh5 19 Nd5 Bxd5 20 exd5 f6 21 Be3 is heavily in White's favour.

17 … Bxh6! 18 Qxh6 Nfg4! 19 Qh4 Nxf3 20 Rxf3 f5?

Returning a knight to the outpost with 20 … Ne5 is fine for Black.



Exercise (combination alert): Bobby played this game with reckless indifference

and his last move should lose! Prove how.

Answer: Sacrifice the exchange.

21 Rf4?

Missing his first chance: 21 exf5! Bxf3 22 Re7! (zwischenzug) 22 … Qxe7 23 Qxe7 Rce8 24 Qh4! and the e1-mating square is covered, while two black pieces hang simultaneously.

21 … d5! 22 Rxg4?!

Instead of this chest-thumping response, he should stay calm and try 22 Ref1! dxe4 23 Bxe4! Bxe4 24 Nxe4, though either 24 … Qxc2! (or 24 … Rce8! 25 Ng5 Qg7) 25 Rxg4 fxe4! 26 Rgf4 Qd2! offers Black decent winning chances.

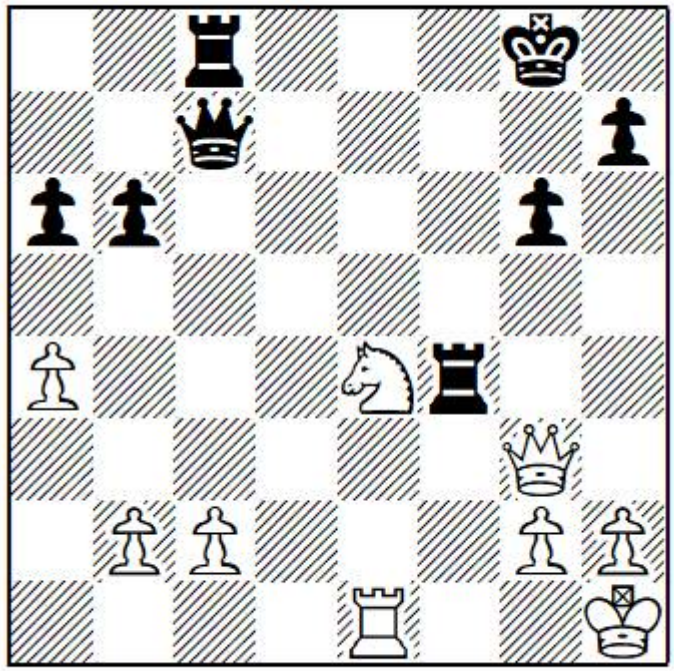
22 … fxg4 23 Qxg4 Rf4?

Either 23 … Qe5 or 23 … Rce8! is winning for Black.

24 Qg3?

Missing his second chance: 24 Qe6+! Qf7 25 exd5 Qxe6 26 Rxe6! Rb4 27 Re7 Rxb2 28 Rxb7 Rxc3 29 h3 Rb4 30 d6 and White isn't losing.

24 … dxe4 25 Bxe4 Bxe4 26 Nxe4



26 … Rxe4? 0-1

Is this really the end, beautiful friend? The motivation behind Bobby's unnecessary "I must purge the evil!" last move and Ostojic's resignation – if he did indeed resign – are as clear as Charlie Brown's teachers from the Peanuts comic strip. What? Why did Bobby return the exchange? Just moving the king (26 … Kh8 or 26 … Kg7) or a rook (26 … Rcf8 or 26 … Rff8) or the queen (26 … Qf7) or even making a neutral move (26 … a5) would be winning for Black.

I'm wondering whether Ostojic flagged since his position is certainly not resignable. After 27 Rxe4! (did Ostojic hallucinate and believe he had to play 27 Qxc7?? Rxe1 mate?) 27 … Qxc2 28 Re7 Qd1+ 29 Re1 Qxa4 30 h3, it won't be easy at all for Black to win. The engine calls it as virtually level.

Chapter Ten
The Other Sveti Stefan Match

Welcome to the bushy-bearded, tinfoil-hat version of Bobby.

Gligoric wrote: “In preparation for his 1992 match with Spassky, Bobby asked if I could play a training match with him. At first, I didn’t want to, but I had to give in to his wishes. He was panicking about how theory had developed during his twenty-year absence from chess. That was why he came up with his own version of chess, where the starting position would be determined by the drawing of lots. And he began to torment me with persistent requests to write a book about it. During Bobby’s stay in my country he asked me to be in his company all the time, and we went to Sveti Stefan together. He had plenty of time at his disposal and since he had not played chess for 20 years he probably felt uncertain about whether he had maintained his previous form. He therefore asked me to do him a favour: to play ten secret training games against him, with his new chess clock (now valid in the whole chess world), which was due to be used in the Spassky match. The games were played in Sveti Stefan, while we were waiting for Spassky’s arrival. Bobby and I had two bungalows close to each other, and he was in the best one, where Sophia Loren had stayed during an earlier visit. As far as I recall, we played our ten games there, one per day. It was agreed there would be no spectators at all. Bobby did his best, after 20 years away from the board. He made no particular comments about his play but expressed satisfaction with several of the early games. Afterwards he had time to play a few games against Eugene Torre, following his arrival.”

The determination to remain forever young is the greatest of human delusions. When it comes to chess, time makes us both wiser and – frustratingly – weaker. Bobby was horribly

rusty. The time control, a slow one, was G/90, with one minute added after each move. The final score was 7½-2½ in favour of Fischer, which would be disastrously low considering his nominal 1972 rating of 2785, while Gligoric was way behind at 2450. But of course Bobby was no longer playing at that level.

Game 72
R.J.Fischer-S.Gligoric
Training match, Sveti Stefan 1992
Ruy Lopez

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Ba4 Nf6 5 0-0 Be7 6 Re1 b5 7 Bb3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 Bb7 10 d4 Re8

The Zaitsev line, where modern day theory has taken on the role of the Matrix red-pill Pez-dispenser, since it alters on a monthly basis.

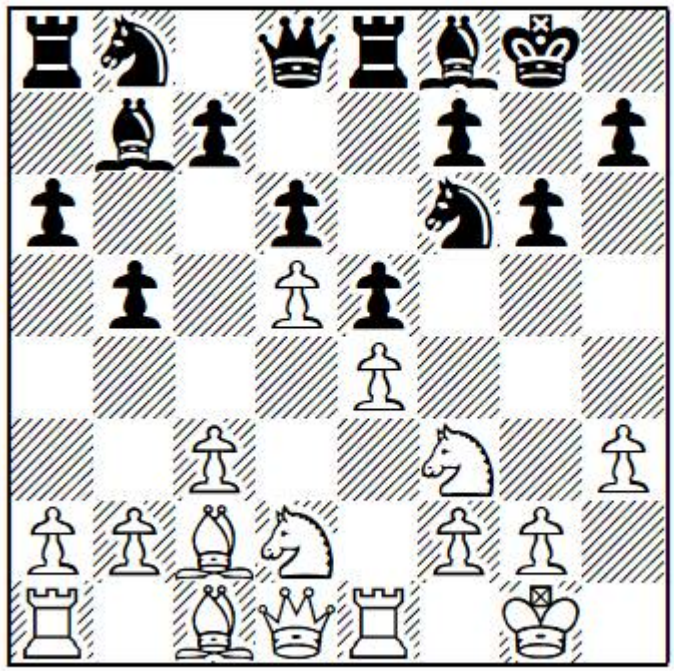
11 Ng5 Rf8 12 Nf3 Re8 13 Nbd2

Of course, Bobby isn't going to take a repetition draw with White against an opponent he expects to beat, every game of the match.

13 … Bf8 14 Bc2

14 a4 is the main line; while Bobby switches to 14 d5 in Games 74, 76 and 80.

14 … g6 15 d5 Nb8



16 b4!?

A novelty, which at first doesn't make as much sense as the normal b2-b3, since White can no longer support d5 against a coming … c7-c6. The idea behind the move is that it enables Nb3 and Na5, harassing Black's light -squared bishop. Gligoric had previously faced 16 b3 c6 17 c4 four times, scoring two draws with 15 … Nbd7 16 a4 Qc7 against Ljubojevic and Smyslov, and a draw and a win with 15 … Bh6 against Geller and Popovic.

16 … c6

Gligoric logically chips away at Fischer's d5-point.

17 dxc6 Nxc6

Of course it's tempting to assist in our development. The fight for d5 is actually just as important, so a key option is to recapture with the bishop, reserving the b8-knight for b6. After 17 … Bxc6 18 Nb3 Ra7! (this offers the bishop room on a8, in case of Na5) 19 Be3 Rd7 20 Nbd2 h6! (disabling Bg5 ideas), Black equalized in I.Popelyshev-N.Trofimov, correspondence 2013.

18 a4! Qc7 19 axb5 axb5 20 Rxa8 Rxa8 21 Bd3 Nd8!

Gligo, a master of Closed Lopez structures, reacted to Fischer's new idea perfectly and equalized.

22 Bb2

Covering c3.

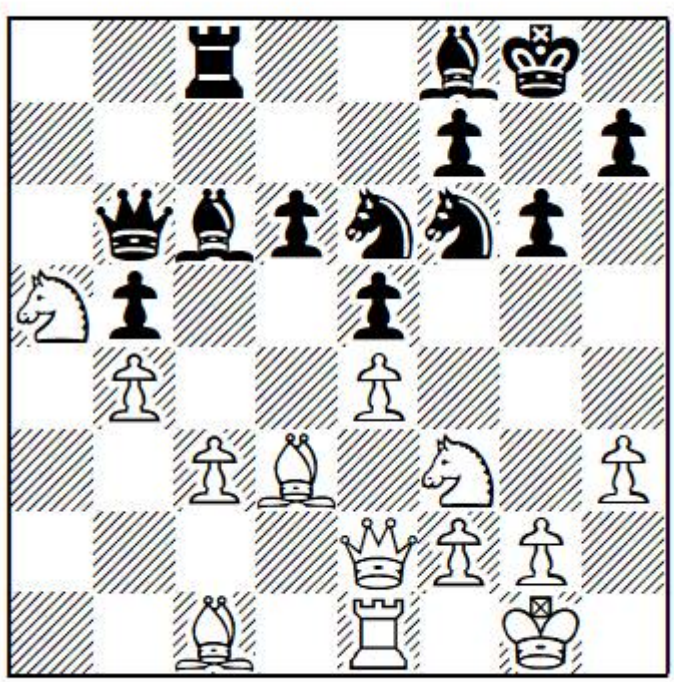
22 … Bc6 23 Qe2 Qb6

The b7-square isn't such a great spot for the queen, since it later may become vulnerable to Nb3 and Na5 ideas. The engine begins to prefer Black after 23 … Rb8.

24 Nb3 Ne6 25 Bc1

Guarding against … Nf4.

25 … Rc8 26 Na5



26 … Be8

The human move. Black can also counterattack against e4 with the more aggressive engine suggestion 26 … Ba8!? 27 Bd2 Qb8. Black is always willing to let b5 go, if in return he gets White's e4-pawn.

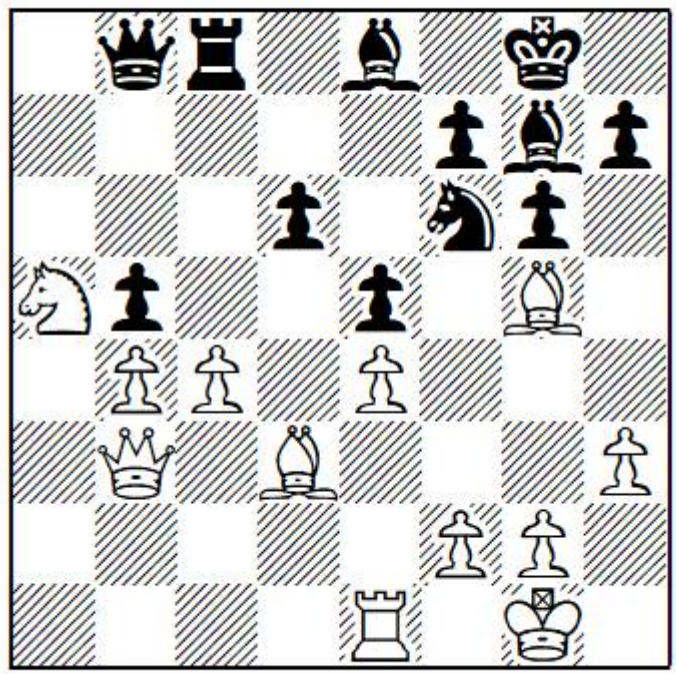
27 Qb2 Qb8 28 Qb3 Bg7 29 Be3 Rd8!?

Gligoric prepares for … d6-d5. It isn't necessary, since he can play his break immediately: 29 … d5! 30 exd5 Nxd5 and if 31 Qxd5 then 32 … Rd8 32 Qe4 f5 33 Qh4 Rxd3 34 Qe7 Qc8 35 Nxe5! Bxe5 36 Bc5 Nxc5 37 Rxe5 Ne4 38 Qxe8+ Qxe8 39 Rxe8+ Kf7 40 Rb8 Nxc3 with a likely draw.

30 Ng5! Nxg5 31 Bxg5 Rc8?!

Instead, 31 … h6! 32 Bxf6 Bxf6 33 c4 Rc8 34 Rd1 Kg7 35 cxb5 Bxb5 36 Bxb5 Qxb5 is okay for Black, while 37 Rxd6? Rc1+ 38 Rd1 (definitely not 38 Kh2?? Qf1 39 Qd3 Qg1+ 40 Kg3 Bh4+! and wins) 38 … Rxd1+ 39 Qxd1 Qxb4 40 Nb3 Qxe4 offers Black some winning chances with the extra pawn.

32 c4!



Now Fischer holds a nagging strategic edge.

32 … Nh5

I would still toss in 32 … h6.

33 Rd1?!

33 Be3! is more accurate, and if 33 … Nf4 then 34 Bf1.

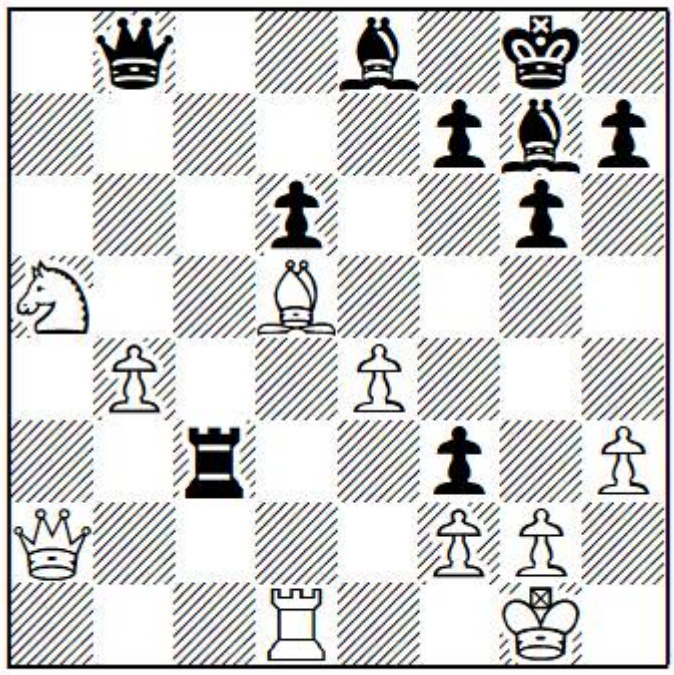
33 … Nf4! 34 Bxf4!?

Fischer is willing to cede control over dark squares to create an imbalance and eliminate the now active knight. 34 Bf1 Ne6 35 Be3 Nd4 is okay for Black.

34 … exf4 35 cxb5 Bxb5 36 Bc4! Be8! 37 Bd5!?

Here we go again! Fischer is willing to hand Gligoric the initiative to dodge a likely draw, as after 37 b5 Qb6 38 Nc6 Bxc6 39 bxc6 Qxb3 40 Bxb3 Rxc6.

37 … Rc3! 38 Qa2 f3!



Advantage Black, whose bishops and play against the white king mean more than White's passed b-pawn. Fischer may have expected 38 … Qxb4? 39 Rb1, when White generates adequate counterplay.

39 gxf3?

We tend to embellish a player's prowess when they reach the level of a god. It's clear Bobby was no longer a god, or even the boy-king, by 1992. It is madness to open his king's position. 39 Nc4 fxg2 40 Qa6 is White's best survival chance.

39 … Rxf3?

After 39 … Qd8! 40 Qd2 Qh4 White is completely lost. If 41 Kg2 Bd7 42 Rh1 Bb5 43 f4 Rd3 44 Qc2 Bd4 45 Nb3 Bb6 46 Nc1 Rc3! 47 Qd2 Bd7, White is completely tangled up, unable to play 48 Nd3?? due to the simple deflection 48 … Rxd3!.

40 e5?!

More simply 40 Nc4! Rxh3 41 Qa8 Qxa8 42 Bxa8 should hold a draw.

40 … Rf4! 41 exd6?

Here 41 e6! is correct.

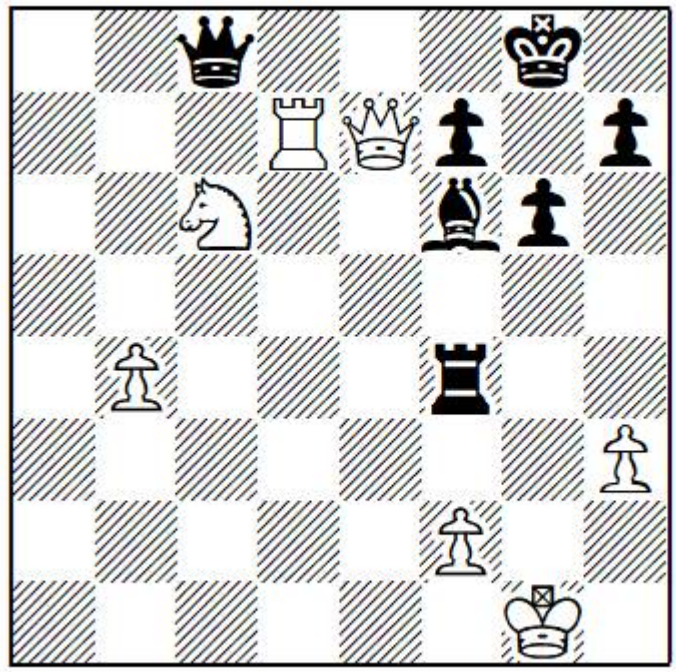
41 … Qxd6?

Now 41 … Bd4! 42 Bc6 Qxd6! is again completely lost for White. If 43 Bxe8 Rxf2! 44 Qxf2 Qg3+, White is mated.

42 Qe2 Qf8! 43 Bc6 Bxc6 44 Nxc6 Bf6 45 Rd7

The ending is equal and should end in a draw.

45 … Qc8 46 Qe7!



Dammit Yoko, you are messing up the band's unity!

46 … Bxe7??

Wars of attrition always favour the younger opponent. Fatigue blunders are a constant threat when you play chess at age 69 (or even 59, which was the age I retired from tournament play). "I may be old but am still a long way from confused dotage and death!" I told myself, often just before a double question mark blunder.

In a single move, peace, prosperity and plenty turn to destitution and hunger. Black obviously hallucinated about something but what that "something" is I have no clue. Gligo freaks out and hands over a piece when it wasn't necessary. The nature of a bluff is that your claim isn't true; it merely needs to sound true. Fischer's threat is easily neutralized by the simple 46 … Qf8! and Black is just fine. Did Gligoric hallucinate and fear 47 Rd8 - ? If so, it loses for White after 47 … Qxd8!.

47 Nxe7+ Kg7 48 Nxc8 Rxb4 49 Nd6

This ties Black's rook down and the ending is a technical win for White.

49 … Rf4 50 Rc7 g5

Weakening f5 hurts Black more than it helps, though it didn't matter at this stage.

51 Rc4! Rf3 52 Kg2 Rd3

52 … Rf6? isn't possible due to 53 Ne8+.

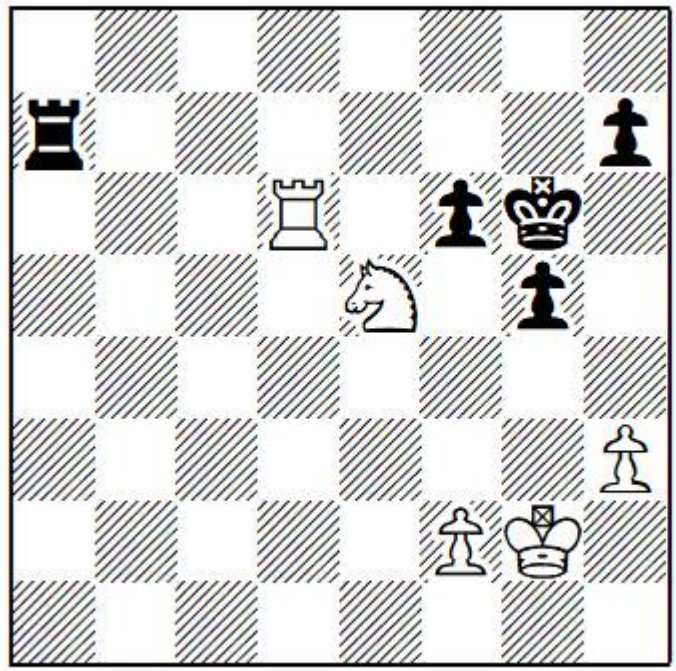
53 Rd4!

Sneaky guy!

53 … Ra3

53 … Rxd4 allows simplification with 54 Nf5+ Kg6 55 Nxd4.

54 Nf5+ Kg6 55 Ne3 Ra6 56 Nc4 f6 57 Rd6 Ra7 58 Ne5+! 1-0



Since the mega-blunder, Black's position has been the little girl from Poltergeist, and Fischer's knight the creepy demon in the TV. 58 … Kf5 59 Nd7 picks off the f-pawn, while 58 … Kg7 59 Rd7+ swaps the rooks off for an easy win.

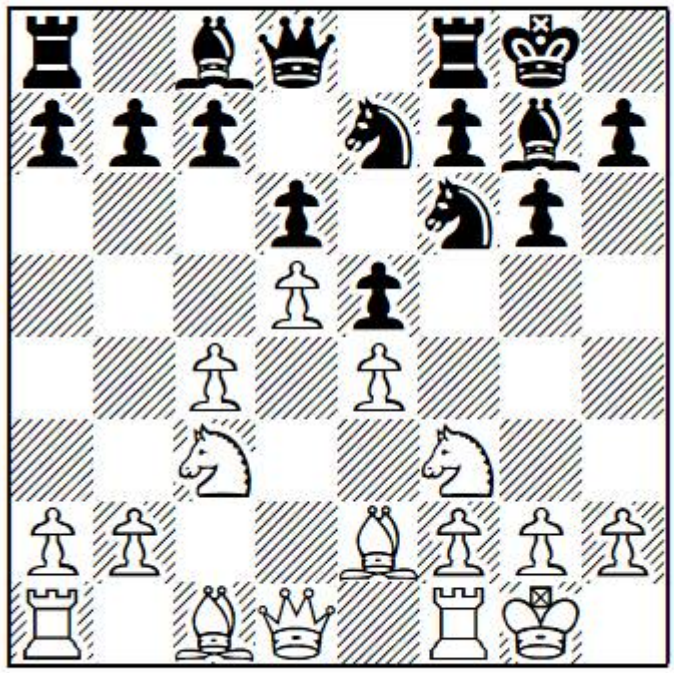
Game 73
S.Gligoric-R.J.Fischer
Training match, Sveti Stefan 1992
King's Indian Defence

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 Bg7 4 e4 d6 5 Nf3 0-0 6 Be2 e5

Chess players have tried for a long time to eradicate this invasive species, but the hardy King's Indian continues to survive, against all odds. A world champion's repeated advocation is the ultimate endorsement of the opening's soundness. Kasparov was the last world champion who was brave enough to play the line in defence of his title. Today in 2023, it's almost inconceivable to imagine a KID in a world championship match, when super solid options like the Queen's Gambit Declined and Nimzo/Queen's Indian are

available, where Black's goal is to draw the game and only play for a win with the white pieces.

7 0-0 Nc6 8 d5 Ne7



9 Nd2

Thirty years earlier, 9 Ne1 Nd7 10 Nd3 f5 led to a draw in S.Gligoric-R.J.Fischer, Bled 1961.

9 … a5

As we saw in previous games (Games 11 and 56), Bobby normally opted for 9 … c5 here, which Gligoric had played too as Black.

10 a3 Bd7

Fischer switches to 10 … Ne8 in Game 77. 10 … Nd7 is played more often.

11 b3!

11 Rb1 is met by the equalizing 11 … a4!.

11 … c5

This is rare, yet expected, as Fischer reverts to his favoured set-up. 11 … c6 is played more often.

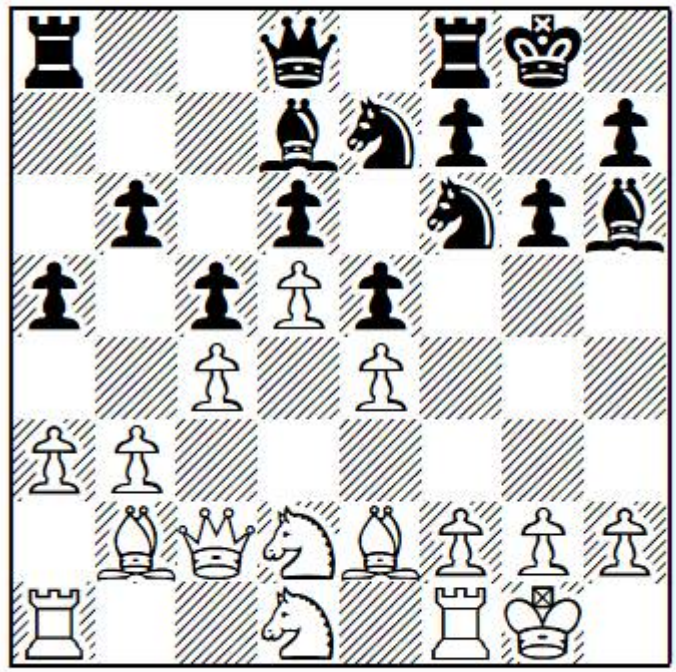
12 Bb2!?

A theoretical novelty at the time, which has hardly been seen since. Gligoric's idea envisages a future f2-f4. 12 Rb1 is White's main move, as he indeed plays in Game 79.

12 … Bh6!?

Fischer adapts quickly, suppressing f2-f4 for the moment. 12 … Ne8 is a playable option, since f2-f4 isn't so scary for Black.

13 Qc2 b6 14 Nd1!?



Threat: f2-f4 again. This is a bold idea, offering his e4-pawn in exchange for Black's bishop, the steward of Fischer's kingside dark squares.

14 … Bxd2?!

Bobby the pawn grabber isn't about to decline. The engine actually disapproves and, with hindsight of the game's

continuation, I believe its assessment is correct. 14 … Ne8! intending … f7-f5 is a superior option.

15 Qxd2 Nxe4 16 Qd3

He can also move the queen to c2.

16 … f5

The engine dislikes this move and suggests the unpleasant alternative 16 … Nf6!? 17 f4 Nf5 18 fxe5 dxe5 19 Bxe5 Re8 20 Bb2. I'm not so crazy about Black's position here either.

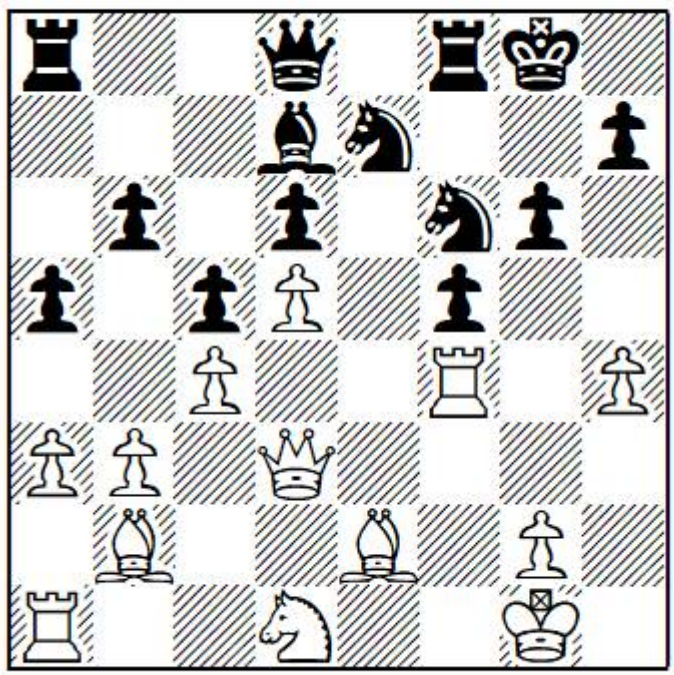
17 f4! exf4

17 … Qb8? 18 Nf2 Nxf2 19 Rxf2 is losing for Black.

18 Rxf4 Nf6

18 … Rf7 19 Nf2 Nxf2? (19 … Nf6 20 h4 transposes to the game) 20 Rxf2 h5 21 Qc3 Kh7 22 g4! gives White a winning attack.

19 h4!



Preventing … g6-g5. Gligoric has obviously generated monster compensation for the sacrificed pawn. Let's do a walk

through of the elements. White got:

1. The bishop pair in a relatively open position.

2. An intimidating dark square diagonal aimed at Black's king.

3. The potential to transfer his knight, either to f4 or g5 and then e6.

4. Black's king is unsafe since the dark squares around him leak.

19 … Rf7?!

This is walking into a future Ng5. Maybe it's time for the desperate 19 … g5!? 20 hxg5 Ng6, when 21 gxf6! Nxf4 22 Qg3+ Ng6 23 Qxd6 is also going to be tough for Black, yet maybe better than the game's continuation.

20 Nf2!

Destination: f4 or g5.

20 … Qf8 21 Nh3!

Forcing Black to weaken since he can't afford to allow Ng5.

21 … h6 22 Raf1

Now g2-g4 is in the air. 22 Rff1! followed by Nf4 looks even more difficult for Black.

22 … Re8 23 Bd1

23 g4! is more thematic.

23 … Nc8!?

Bobby prepares for a future exchange offer with a coming … Re5. 23 … b5 is an active option.

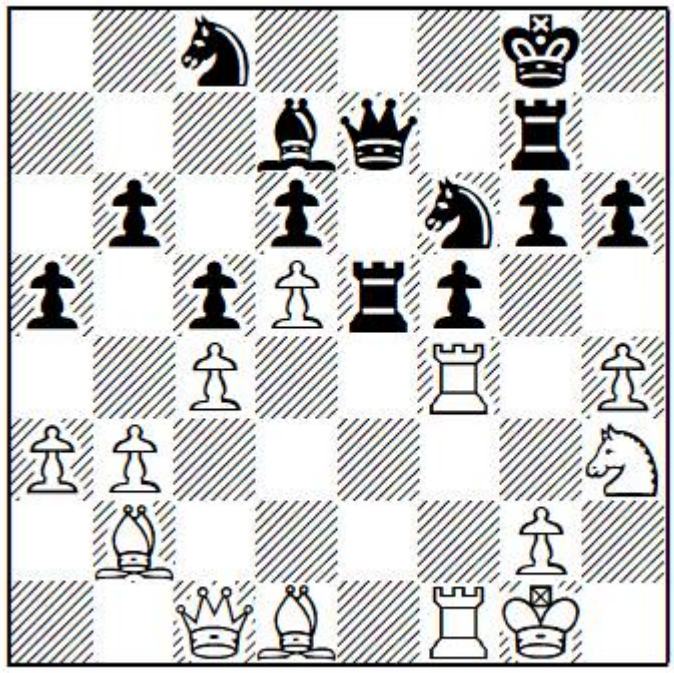
24 Qg3

Here 24 g4 would be met by 24 … Re5!?, but 24 R4f3! Ng4 25 Rg3! Ne5 26 Bxe5 dxe5 27 Bh5! Ne7 28 d6 Nc6 29 Rxg6+ Kh8 30 g4! leaves Black in deep trouble.

24 … Rg7 25 Qc3 Re5 26 Qc1?!

26 R4f3! g5 27 Nf2 is stronger.

26 … Qe7!



Fischer wisely offers the exchange to break White's dark square monopoly.

27 R4f2!?

27 Bxe5?! dxe5 28 R4f3 Ng4 gives Black loads of compensation for the exchange.

27 … Kh7!?

Throughout this game, Bobby is tone-deaf to any overtures of a draw. This is super-risky. Rating differential aside, Fischer should have opted for a draw with 27 … Ne4 28 Qxh6 Rh7! 29 Qxg6+ Rg7 30 Qh6 Rh7.

28 Nf4 Ne4 29 h5!?

White stands somewhat better after 29 Rf3 Qxh4 30 Rh3 Qg5 31 Qa1! Ng3 32 Bc1! Nxf1 33 Ne6 Qe7 34 Bxh6 Bxe6! 35 Bg5+ Kg8 36 Bxe7 Nxe7 37 Kxf1 Bc8 38 g3, yet it's hard to see how he would be able to make progress.

29 … gxh5!

Fischer jumps on the chance to generate counterplay on the newly opened g-file.

30 Rf3 Qg5 31 Qc2

Gligoric reinforces g2 to be able to move his knight from f4.

31 … Ne7?!

31 … h4 keeps the game dynamically balanced.

32 Bc1!

32 Bxe5? sells the initiative for mere money: 32 … dxe5 33 Nh3 Qh4 is heavily in Black's favour.

32 … h4?

Black should try 32 … Ng6 33 Ne6 Qf6! 34 Nxg7 Kxg7 35 Bb2 Qg5 and actually gets decent strategic/dynamic compensation for the double exchange sacrifice, at least from my human perspective. The engine, a huge advocate of corporate greed, disagrees and prefers White after 36 Re1 Kg8 37 Bxe5 Nxe5 39 Rfe3.

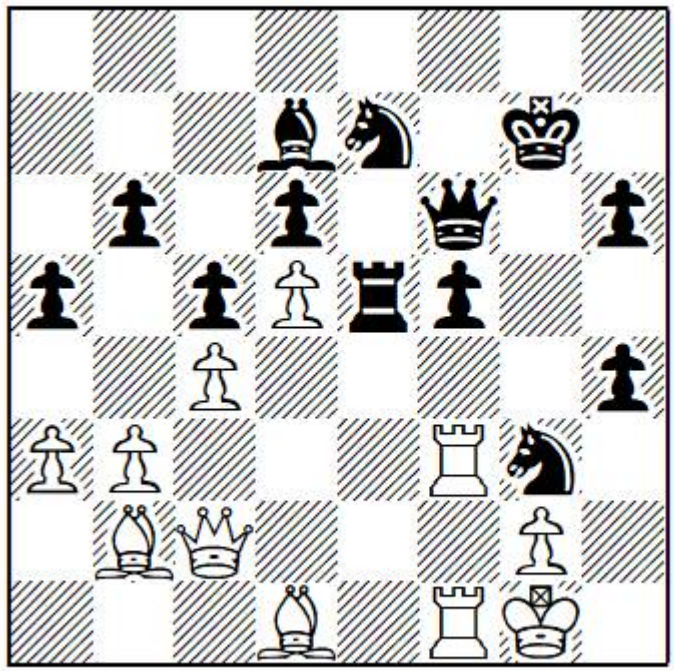
33 Ne6?!

White needs to fight for control over e5. After 33 Nd3! Qg6 34 Bb2! Ng5 35 Nxe5 dxe5 36 Re3 e4 37 Bxg7 Kxg7 38 b4, Black is down two exchanges and White has the initiative as well.

33 … Qf6 34 Nxg7 Kxg7 35 Bb2?!

35 Bf4! was more accurate, keeping the knight out of g3. Still, White's position wouldn't be so easy to navigate with the clocks running down and fatigue approaching.

35 … Ng3!



Offering two exchanges is the chess version of gastric bypass surgery. Bobby's pieces become alarmingly active and he officially receives full compensation.

36 Qf2

This move is an indicator that Gligoric is nervous and would be happy to offer one of his rooks for the pesky g3-knight.

36 … Qg5!?

This is close to an overpress. Objectively, Black should go for 36 … Nxf1 37 Kxf1 Ng6 38 Bc2 f4 39 Bxg6 Kxg6 40 Rxf4 (if 40 Bxe5!? dxe5, I prefer Black's chances) 40 … Qxf4! 41 Qxf4 Rf5 42 Bc1 Rxf4+ 43 Bxf4 Bf5 44 Bxd6 Bc2 45 Bc7 and the ending is dead drawn since both sides' queenside pawns get wiped out.

37 Re1 Ng6 38 Bc2

38 b4! offers White an edge by opening a second front.

38 … f4?

People get plastic surgery in the hope of enhancing their appearance. If the surgery goes wrong, the effect is the exact opposite of its intent. Here Fischer definitely overpresses. He should go for 38 … Kf7! 39 Bxe5 Nxe5 40 Rf4 Ng6 41 Rf3 Ne5 with a draw.

39 Bxg6 Kxg6 40 Bc1??

Here comes the fatigue error. Old man Gligoric tires, going from probably winning to probably losing in a single turn. After 40 Bxe5! dxe5 41 b4! it is hard to see how Black will survive.

40 … Qe7! 41 Rxe5 dxe5

Now it is Black who is on top:

1. Black has two pawns for the exchange, so he isn't even down material.

2. Black's minor pieces are super active.

3. White's king is unsafe since … h4-h3 hangs over him.

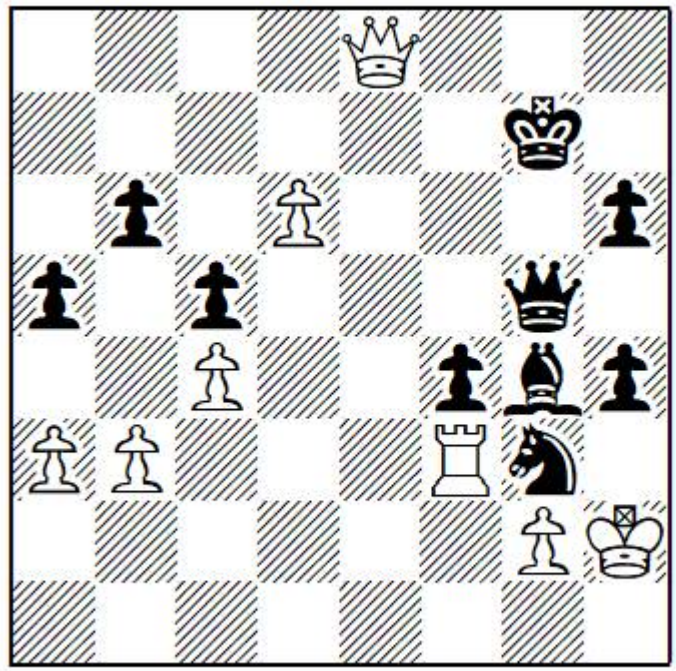
42 Qe1

Threat: Bxf4.

42 … Qg5 43 Kh2 Bg4! 44 Bxf4?

Gligoric goes for a desperate sacrifice which shouldn't have worked. It was better to back down and endure with 44 Rf2.

44 … exf4 45 Qe8+ Kg7 46 d6



Exercise (critical decision): The main candidate moves are: a) 46 … Bxf3;

b) 46 … Nf5; c) 46 … Bh5. Which one would you play?

Answer: Both b) and c) bring the game to its natural conclusion and win, while a) allows White to draw.

46 … Bxf3??

So much for the theory of Fischer's omniscience. There is no greater tragedy as when we become the villain of our own story. Bobby tires and chops the hanging rook, allowing Gligoric to deliver perpetual check.

b) 46 … Nf5! 47 Qe7+ (if 47 d7 Bxf3! 48 gxf3 Ne3!, White is mated) 47 … Kf6 48 Rf1 Bh5 49 Qd8+ Ke6 is winning for Black, despite his exposed king.

c) 46 … Bh5! 47 Qe7+ (or 47 d7 Bxf3! 48 gxf3 Nf1+ 49 Kh1 Ne3! and White is mated again) 47 … Qxe7 48 dxe7 Kf6 49 Rxf4+ Nf5 is a hopeless endgame for White.

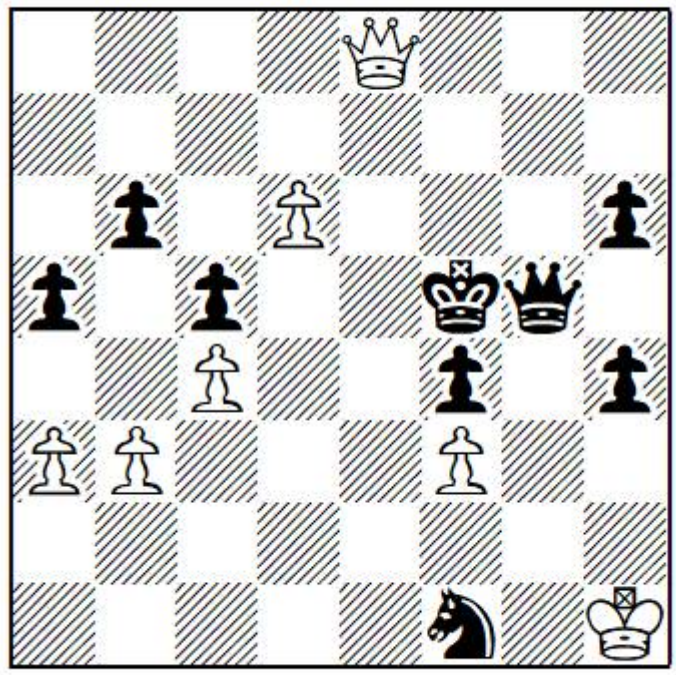
47 Qd7+

Fischer's king is hit broadside and is unable to evade the checks.

47 … Kf8 48 Qc8+ Kf7 49 Qd7+ Kg6 50 Qe8+ Kf5 51 gxf3! Nf1+

Or 51 … Qg7 52 d7 Nf1+ 53 Kh1 and Black must take perpetual check, since 53 … h3?? 54 Qe4+ allows White to promote a new queen with check next move.

52 Kh1



52 … Ng3+

Bobby is forced to leave the game empty handed of his previous win. In this version 52 … Ne3?? fails miserably to 53 Qe4+ Kf6 54 Qe7+ Kf5 55 Qxg5+ hxg5 56 d7 wins.

53 Kh2 ½-½

White's king is unable to cross over to the g-file, in view of 53 Kg2?? Ne4+! 54 Kf1 Nxd6 and Black wins.

Game 74

R.J.Fischer-S.Gligoric
Training match, Sveti Stefan 1992
Ruy Lopez

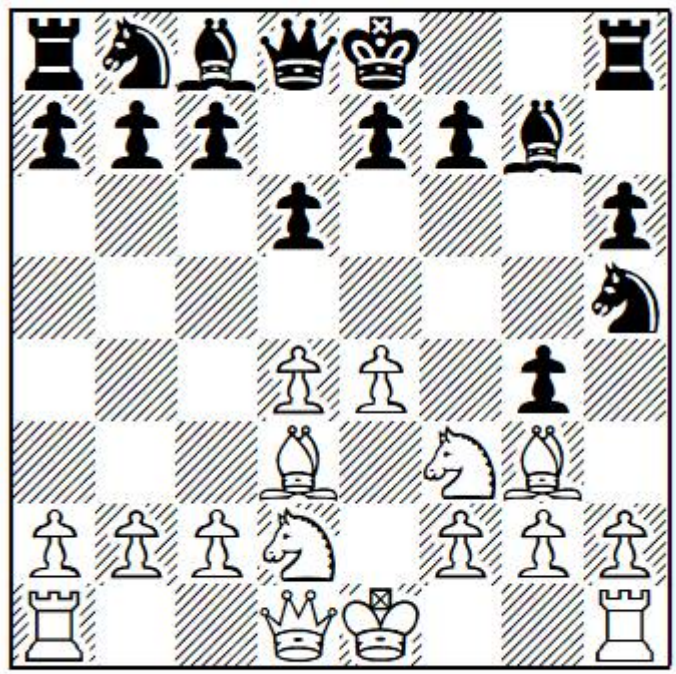
1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Ba4 Nf6 5 0-0 Be7 6 Re1 b5 7 Bb3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 Bb7 10 d4 Re8 11 Ng5 Rf8 12 Nf3 Re8 13 Nbd2 Bf8 14 d5 Nb8 15 Nf1 Nbd7 16 Ng3

16 N3h2 is played slightly more often; while for 16 g4!? see Game 80.

16 … h6

Gligoric tried 16 … g6 in Game 76. 16 … Nc5 17 Bc2 c6 18 b4 Ncd7 19 dxc6 Bxc6 20 Bb3 is the main line.

17 Nf5



The idea is to discourage both … c7-c6 and … g7-g6. 17 Nh2 is the main option.

17 … Nc5

The Closed Lopez lines are only for a gene pool which is high on memory. We are still in book. Black chases White's

bishop off the a2-g8 diagonal before challenging the centre with … c7-c6. 17 … Kh7, preparing … g7-g6, is safer.

18 Bc2 c6!? 19 b4 Na4!?

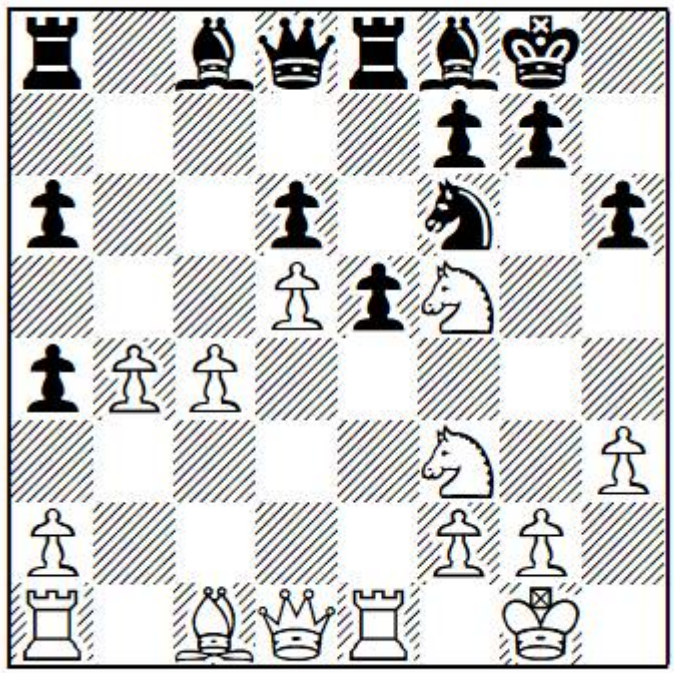
This is a potential pawn sacrifice in exchange for the bishop pair and light square control. The engine prefers White, while the human writer believes in Black's compensation. In any case, it's too late to back down: after 19 … Ncd7? 20 Nxd6! Bxd6 21 dxc6 Bxc6 22 Qxd6 Qc8 23 Qd3 Nb6 24 Nd2 White is just a pawn up.

20 Bxa4 bxa4 21 c4 cxd5 22 exd5!

Only with the asymmetrical recapture can White hope for an edge. If 22 cxd5, as in Wang Zili-E.Shvidler, Thessaloniki Olympiad 1988. then 22 … Bc8! is fine for Black, since either … Bxf5 or … Bd7 is coming.

22 … Bc8

After 22 … Qd7 23 Ng3 Rac8 24 Nd2 White's chances look better.



23 Ne3

This may not be the best spot for the knight. 23 Ng3 Bd7 (or 23 … Qc7 24 Nd2 Bd7 25 Bb2) 24 Be3 should give White an edge, as both Rc1 and Nd2 are coming.

23 … Bd7

All present and accounted for, Sir! Gligoric managed to hang on to the forward a-pawn and his position looks okay. His bishop pair and enhanced light square power compensate for the doubled a-pawns.

24 Nd2 Qb6 25 Ba3!

Bobby plays for a break on c5.

25 … Qd4! 26 Rc1 Qd3 27 Bb2 Rac8 28 Rc3 Qg6

White must be alert for … Bxh3.

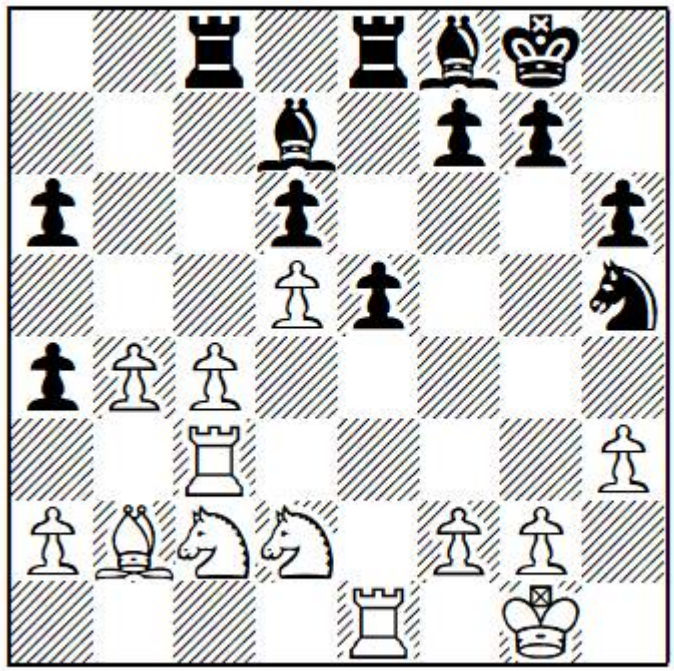
29 Qc2

Bobby tries his luck in the ending, which is still dynamically balanced.

29 … Qxc2 30 Nxc2!?

30 Rxc2 is more natural.

30 … Nh5!



This way Black's pawn majority will be activated after … f7-f5.

31 h4?!

The idea is to play g2-g3 next. The engine prefers to play it at once: 31 g3!? Bxh3 32 Ba3, preparing c4-c5 with the initiative and full compensation. 31 Kh2 is another option.

31 … f5 32 g3 Nf6 33 Ne3 g5?!

Too soon. 33 … Kf7! prevents White's coming combination, offering Black the edge.

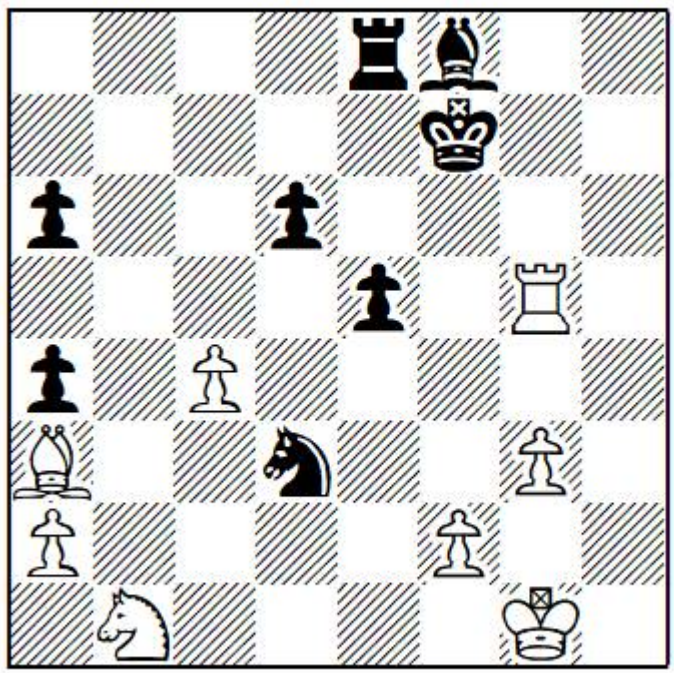
34 Nxf5!

Only with this tactic can White remain even.

34 … Bxf5 35 Rf3

White regains the sacrificed piece.

35 … Nxd5 36 Rxf5 Nxb4 37 hxg5 Nd3 38 Rb1 Rb8 39 Ba3 Rxb1+ 40 Nxb1 hxg5 41 Rxg5+ Kf7



The engine rates the position even again.

42 Nc3 Be7 43 Rg4 Rc8 44 Kf1

After 44 Nxa4 Rf8! 45 Nc3 Ke6 46 Ne4 Rf3! 47 Nxd6 Bxd6 48 Rg6+ Kf5 49 Rxd6 Ke4! 50 c5 Nxf2 51 Rxa6 Ng4 52 Ra4+ Kf5 Black will easily hold the draw.

44 … Nc5?!

44 … Rb8! 45 Nxa4 (or 45 Ke2 Nb4) 45 … Rb1+ 46 Ke2 Nc1+ keeps the game level.

45 Ke2?!

Fischer's bishop-bias shows. He declines an opportunity for good knight versus bad bishop with 45 Bxc5! Rxc5 46 Ke2, after which Black's bishop wriggles on like a wounded insect, desperate to take flight.

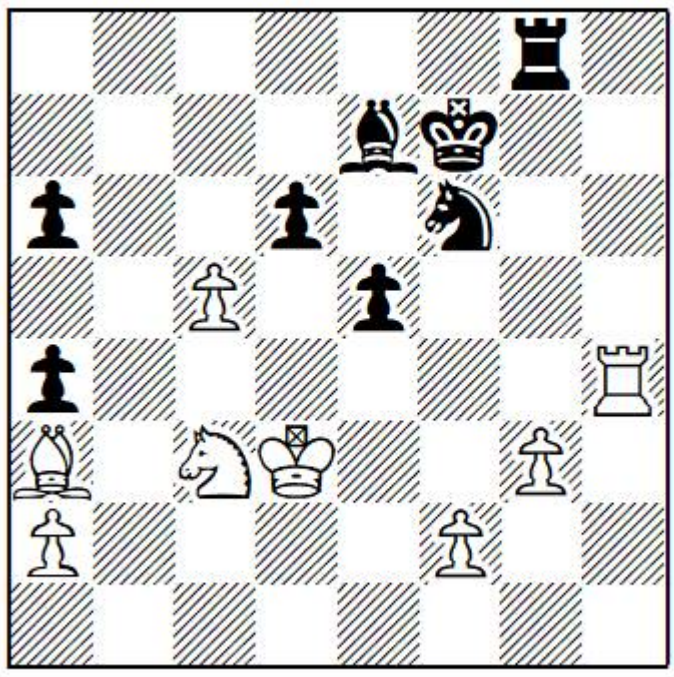
45 … Nd7!

Gligoric realizes he shouldn't allow Bxc5!.

46 Kd3 Nf6

Activating the rook with 46 … Rh8! looks more accurate.

47 Rh4 Rg8 48 c5!?



48 … dxc5!?

After 48 … d5! 49 Rxa4 Rc8 50 Rxa6 Bxc5 51 Bxc5 Rxc5, it won't be so easy for White to make use of the extra pawn.

49 Rxa4 Ra8

Black is stuck defending three pawn targets. The good news is there are only a few pawns remaining on the board, which in turn increases Gligoric's drawing chances.

50 Bc1!

The bishop is rerouted to e3, where it attacks c5, while protecting White's kingside pawns. 50 Kc4 Rd8 51 Rxa6 Rd4+ 52 Kb3 Rd2 is fine for Black.

50 … Rd8+ 51 Ke2 Rd6 52 Be3 Rc6 53 Kd3 Ke6 54 Rh4 Rb6

Simply holding position with 54 … Rc8 is more accurate.

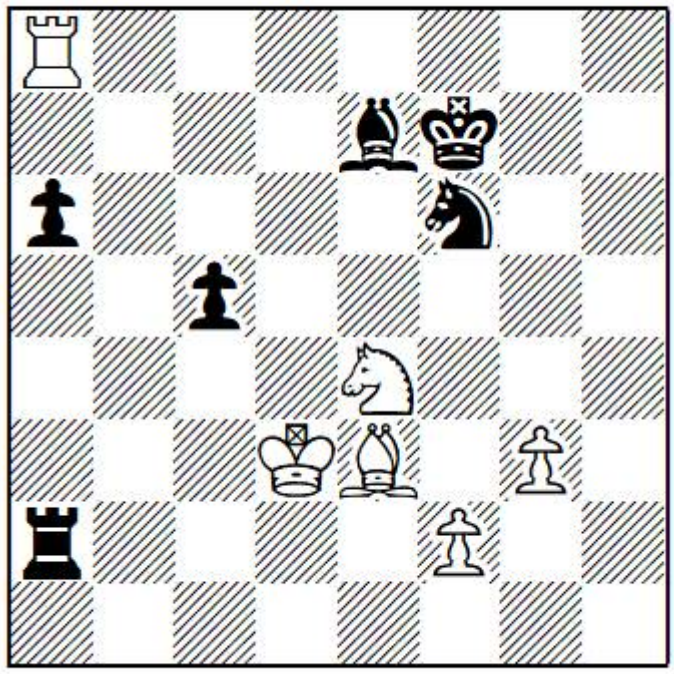
55 Rh6

Black must watch out for Ne4.

55 … Kf7 56 Rh8 Rb2 57 Ra8 e4+?!

Sometimes it's the devil we know which we should fear, rather than the stranger. Gligoric's natural inclination was always to remain active and his move is based upon the principle: *When defending, don't coast under the assumption that all will be well if we do nothing.* Still, it feels unwise to hand White two connected kingside passers. 57 … Ng4! should hold the draw.

58 Nxe4 Rxa2



59 Nxc5?!

Grabbing the pawn lets Black off the hook. After 59 Nxf6! Kxf6 60 Ke4 Ke6 61 f4 Ra4+ 62 Kf3 I prefer White's chances in the mutual promotion race.

59 … Ng4! 60 Ne4 Ra3+! 61 Ke2 Nxe3 62 fxe3

Now Black should hold without too much problem.

62 … Ra1 63 Ra7 Ke6 64 g4 Bb4

Black's once bad bishop is now open for business.

65 Rb7 a5 66 Rb5 Be7 67 Ng3 a4 68 Nf5 Bf6 69 Rb6+ Kf7 70 Nh6+ Kg7 71 Nf5+ Kf7 72 Nd6+ Ke7 73 Ne4 Be5 74 Rb5 Bh8 75 Rb7+ Ke6 76 Ra7 Kd5 77 Nd2 Bc3! 78 Kd3 Bxd2!

Black's pain ebbs away with this new therapeutic treatment.

79 Kxd2 Ke4 ½-½

The rook ending is a dead draw.

Game 75
S.Gligoric-R.J.Fischer
Training match, Sveti Stefan 1992
Queen's Indian Defence

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nf3 b6!?

A Queen's Indian must have come as a surprise for Gligoric. Bobby sometimes liked to shift over to a Benoni, as we have already seen (in the notes to Game 25).

4 Nc3

Gligoric offers to transpose back to a line of the Nimzo Indian after 4 … Bb4.

4 … Bb7

… which Fischer declines.

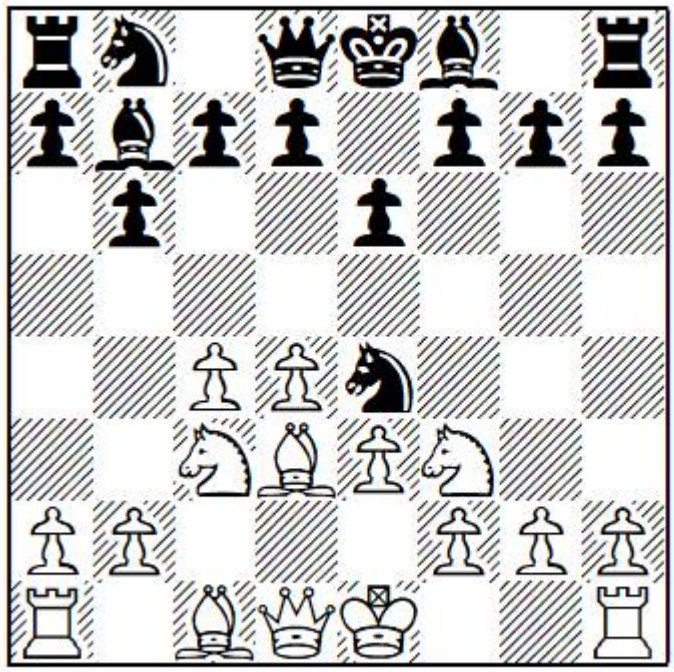
5 e3

Here 5 a3 prevents … Bb4 altogether and is one of the two main lines today, together with 5 Bg5, pinning the f6-knight.

5 … Ne4!?

This move is unusual, especially at the time of the game. Fischer is willing to hand over time to free his position with a swap.

6 Bd3!?



Risky, since it allows a Nimzo-Indian-like doubling of pawns on c3 without Black even handing over the bishop pair. What White gets in return is time since Black took three moves with his knight to swap off White's knight which only moved once. The alternative is 6 Nxe4 Bxe4 7 Bd3 Bb4+ 8 Ke2! with perhaps a slight edge for White.

6 … Nxc3

Logically inflicting structural damage. Instead, 6 … Bb4 transposes to a line of the Nimzo-Indian which Gligoric was perhaps angling for, having played numerous notable games from the White side in the 1960s and '70s, though Bobby had once played this position too: 7 Qc2 (Gligoric always just castled here) 7 … f5 8 0-0 Bxc3 9 bxc3 0-0 10 Nd2 Qh4 11 f3 Nxd2 12 Bxd2 Nc6 13 Rae1 Na5 14 Rb1 (14 c5! is critical, intending 14 … bxc5?! 15 Qa4! Nc6 16 e4 with a strong initiative for the pawn) 14 … d6 15 Be1 Qg5 16 Qe2 e5 17 e4 fxe4 18 fxe4 Rxf1+ 19 Kxf1 c5 and Black stood better, I.Aloni-R.J.Fischer, Netanya 1968.

7 bxc3 Be7

Fischer doesn't mind if his opponent plays e3-e4. 7 … f5 is a risky alternative, given that Black is already behind in development.

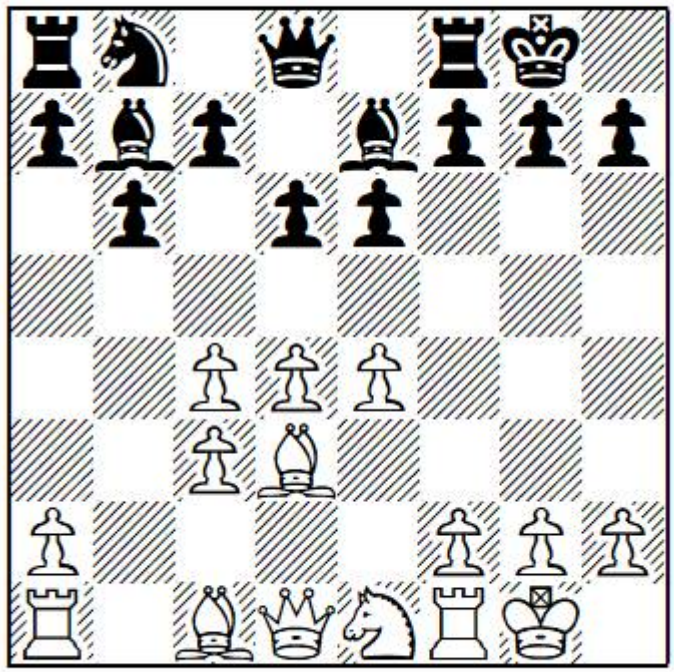
8 0-0

8 e4 d6 9 0-0 0-0 reaches the same position in Game 81.

8 … 0-0

It shows how rare this particular variation is that castling was actually a novelty at the time. 8 … d6 9 e4 Nd7 was played in P.Keres-A.Beni, Leipzig Olympiad 1960, where Black never castled at all.

9 e4 d6 10 Ne1!?



In this case a retreat is in reality an attacking move. He plans f2-f4. In the final game Gligoric played 10 Be3 Nd7 11 Nd2, followed by f2-f4, and scored his only win of the match.

10 … Nd7 11 Nc2 e5 12 f4 Bf6

Fischer wants his opponent to resolve the central pawn tension. 12 … c5 is also an idea, as in his game with Aloni above.

13 Rb1

Black must watch out for c4-c5 tricks.

13 … Re8

Targeting e4.

14 Qf3 Nf8

Fischer recognizes that his king is about to come under fire, so he slips a defender closer. The engine goes hypermodern with 14 … exd4!? 15 cxd4 g6, in the hope of attacking White's big centre later on.

15 fxe5!

This is a good time to create a hole on c5 since Black's knight moved away from d7.

15 … dxe5 16 d5

I like White's chances here.

16 … Nd7 17 Ba3

Once more c4-c5 is in the air. 17 Ne3, taking aim at the black king, is a decent option.

17 … Bc8

The bishop hit a wall on d5, and this gets it out of the path of c4-c5.

18 Qf2

Still eyeing the c5-square. White can also play 18 Be2 Nc5 19 Na1!?, intending to challenge Black's knight with Nb3.

18 … Kh8 19 c5!?

Gligoric is willing to hand over the bishop pair to dissolve his doubled pawns and weaken Black's structure.

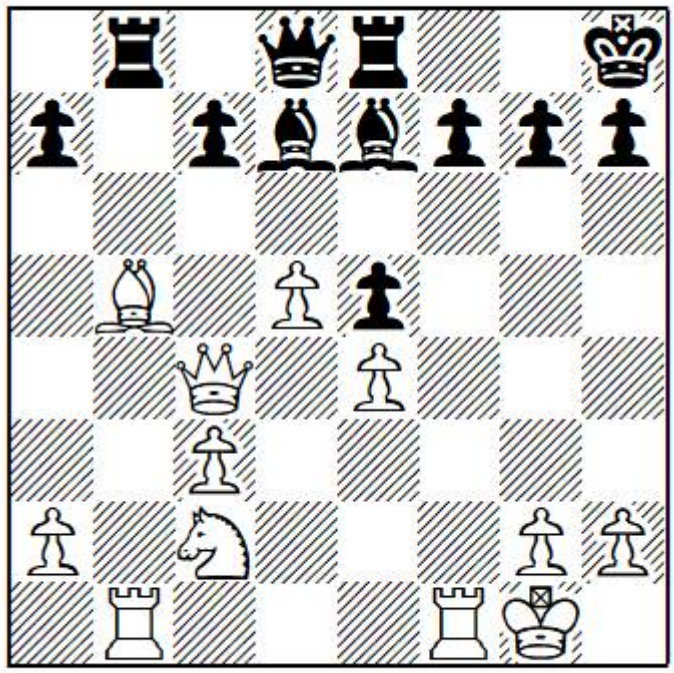
19 … Nxc5 20 Bxc5 bxc5 21 Bb5! Bd7

21 … Re7? 22 Qxc5 is awkward for Black.

22 Qxc5

Regaining the pawn doesn't give White much. 22 Ne3! looks more accurate.

22 … Be7 23 Qc4 Rb8



24 Bc6

24 Rxf7?? walks into Fischer's attempted cheapo: 24 … a6! and Black wins a piece. 24 a4 looks a touch better for White.

24 … Bxc6 25 Qxc6 Rf8 26 Ne3

26 Rxb8 Qxb8 27 Ne3 Qb6 28 Qxb6 axb6 29 a4 is an even ending.

26 … Rb6! 27 Rxb6!?

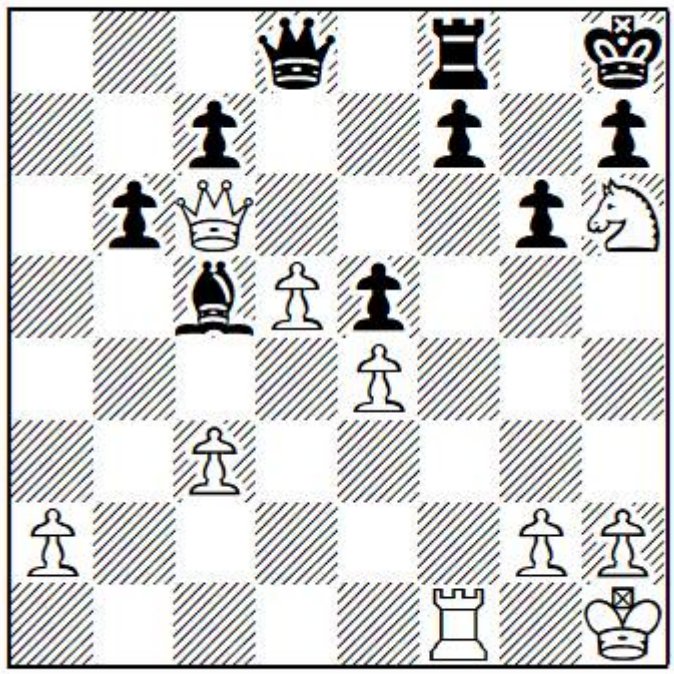
This straightens out Fischer's queenside pawns. 27 Qc4 is an option.

27 … axb6 28 Nf5?

And this is a waste of time. 28 Nc4 Bc5+ 29 Kh1 Qe7 30 a4 is still close to even.

28 … Bc5+ 29 Kh1 g6 30 Nh6??

Principle: *When we believe a combination exists when it doesn't, we essentially attempt to force a square peg into the shape of a hole.* He had to go back with 30 Ng3, even if Black stands clearly better after 30 … Kg7!.



Exercise (planning/calculation): White's last move is based upon a

miscalculation. Work out a forcing sequence which wins for Black.

Answer: Black can play upon two factors:

1. White's back rank is weak.

2. White's knight is actually trapped after … Qh4!.

30 … Qg5?

This is a case of right idea, wrong square. The blunder ancient rulers kept making was to banish their rivals, rather than execute them. The rival would be booted out of the country, go to another land, acquire powerful friends, then

return with an army for the ruler's throne. This move does *not* win the knight; it merely banishes it.

Fischer misses 30 … Qh4! (the once bent over crone rises up, revealing her power) 31 Nxf7+ (or 31 Qf6+ Qxf6 32 Rxf6 Kg7 33 Ng4 h5) 31 … Kg7! (a former suspicion begins to assume its terrifying shape: White's knight is trapped due to his weak back rank) 32 Qxc7 Qe7! 33 Qxe7 (or 33 d6 Bxd6!) 33 … Bxe7 and Black wins a piece.

31 Nxf7+

There is no other place for the knight. If 31 Qf6+ Qxf6 32 Rxf6 Kg7 33 Ng4 h5, Black wins the knight exactly as in the previous note.

31 … Kg7 32 Qxc7??

Now White's suffering increases a thousand-fold, since the knight really is trapped. He had to find 32 d6! Bxd6 (or 32 … Rxf7 33 Rxf7+ Kxf7 34 Qd7+ Kf8 35 Qc8+ Kg7 36 Qd7+ Kh6 37 Qh3+ with perpetual check, since 37 … Qh5?? loses to 38 Qxh5+, 39 dxc7 and 40 c8Q) 33 Qc4! (from this square the queen protects both the knight and, more importantly, the f1-rook) 33 … Qe7 34 Nxd6 Rxf1+ 35 Qxf1 Qxd6 36 h3, when the game should end in a draw.

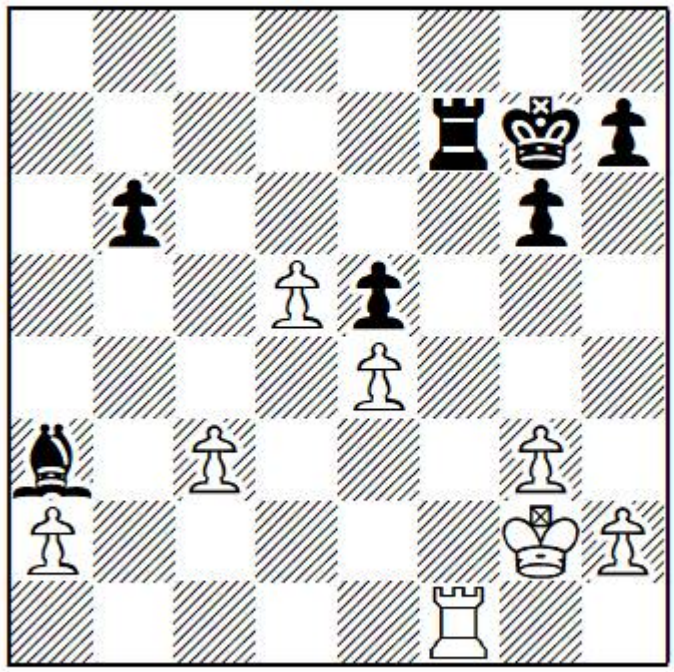
32 … Qe7 33 Qxe7 Bxe7

Game over. The knight's tour of duty is over, since it's trapped.

34 g3

Of course 34 d6 is met by the simple 34 … Bxd6 35 Rd1 Rxf7! and the bishop can't be taken due to White's weak back rank.

34 … Rxf7 35 Kg2 Ba3!



36 Rxf7+

36 Rb1 Bc5! 37 Rb2 Ra7 is also dead lost for White.

36 … Kxf7 37 Kf3 Ke7 38 h4

If possible this makes matters worse since it allows Black to fix the h-pawn on a dark square.

38 … h5! 39 g4 Kd6 40 gxh5 gxh5 41 Ke2 Kc5 42 Kd3 b5 0-1

Zugzwang. The white king has to give way, and 43 Kd2 Kc4 44 Kc2 Be7 wins.

Game 76
R.J.Fischer-S.Gligoric
Training match, Sveti Stefan 1992
Ruy Lopez

A game like this proves to us the truth that book learning is not the same as understanding an opening so deeply that we actually master the plans and structures into the late middlegame. In this one we catch a glimpse of Fischer's strategic wizardry of old.

1 e4 e5

Gligoric was a predictable guy in the opening. By the end of the 1970s, if you played 1 e4 on him, there was a close to 90% chance he would respond with 1 … e5.

2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Ba4 Nf6 5 0-0 Be7 6 Re1 b5 7 Bb3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 Bb7

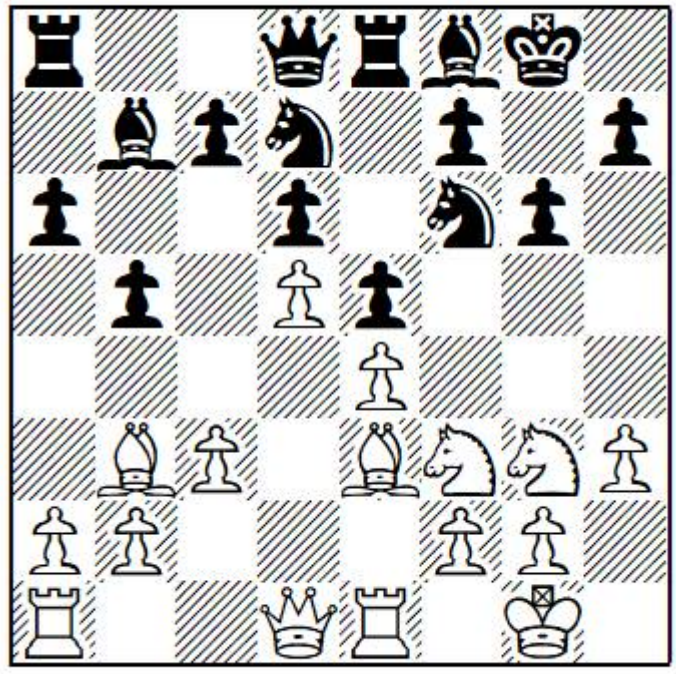
The Zaitsev again.

10 d4 Re8 11 Ng5 Rf8 12 Nf3 Re8 13 Nbd2 Bf8 14 d5 Nb8 15 Nf1 Nbd7 16 Ng3 g6

Deviating from 16 … h6 of Game 74. Unless this game was played first, in which case it was the other way round. Who knows?

17 Be3

Gligoric had previously only faced 17 Nh2 Bg7 18 h4, making two quick draws with GM Parma and IM Jelen in the 1977 Vidmar Memorial.



17 … Bg7

A novelty at the time and it doesn't look like a good one, since the bishop is needed on f8 until Black can free himself with a … c7-c6 break. Instead, 17 … Nc5 18 Bc2 c6 19 b4 Ncd7 20 dxc6 Bxc6 21 Bb3 Nb6 22 Qd3 was K.Petschar-H.Eisterer, Austrian Championship, Semriach 1987, where White stood slightly better, though Ivanchuk later (in 1994) defended this position twice as Black, against Anand and Short.

18 Qd2

18 c4! is a strong option, when both 18 … Nb6 19 c5 and 18 … bxc4 19 Bxc4 Nb6 20 Bf1 c6 21 Qb3! c5 22 Nd2 look to be in White's favour.

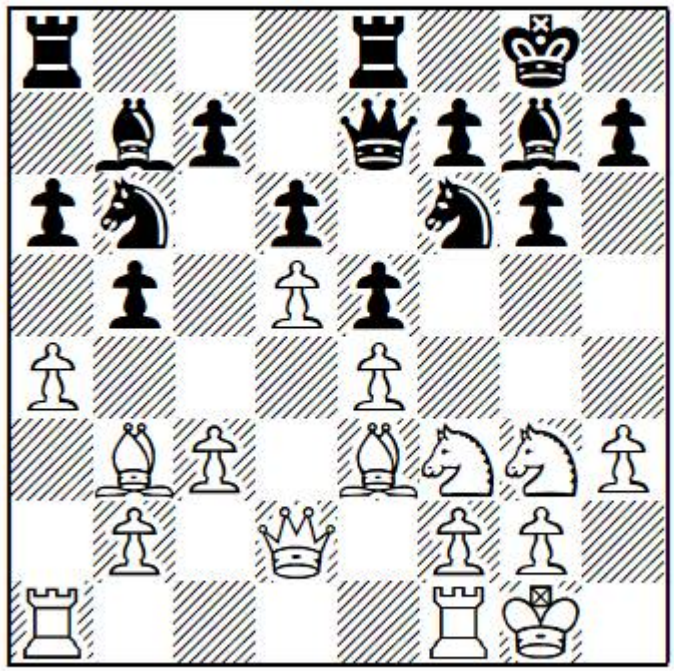
18 … Qe7

He can try and suppress c3-c4 with 18 … Nb6.

19 Rf1

Not best. Once again 19 c4! places Black under pressure on the queenside.

19 … Nb6! 20 a4!



Fischer is willing to renounce the bishop pair to weaken Black's queenside structure, which in this case is good strategic judgment on his part.

20 … bxa4

If 20 … Nc4 21 Bxc4 bxc4, White should respond with 22 b3! (22 Qe2?! c6 23 dxc6 Bxc6 24 Qxc4 Qb7! 25 Nd2 d5 gives Black dangerous compensation for the pawn) 22 … cxb3 23 Rfb1, which looks like an edge for White.

21 Bxa4 Nxa4?!

He should go for the other bishop: 21 … Nc4! 22 Qe2 Nxe3 23 Qxe3 Rec8, when Black does not stand too badly.

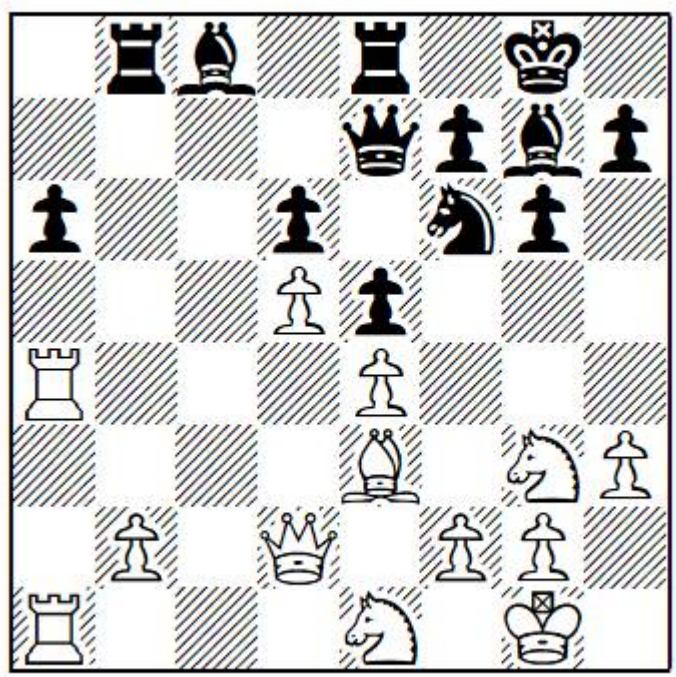
22 Rxa4 c6

This doesn't really open the game for the bishop pair since White can create a pawn wall on d5.

23 c4 cxd5 24 cxd5

The position resembles a King's Indian gone wrong for Black, whose a-pawn is in danger.

24 … Bc8 25 Rfa1 Rb8 26 Ne1!



I like this move. Fischer plans to transfer the knight to b4, via d3, applying pressure at a6 and c6.

26 … h5

Threatening to undermine e4 with … h5-h4 next.

27 f3 h4 28 Ne2 Nh5 29 Nd3!

Multi-purpose:

1. The knight reinforces f4 against … Nf4 ideas.

2. b2 is also doubly protected.

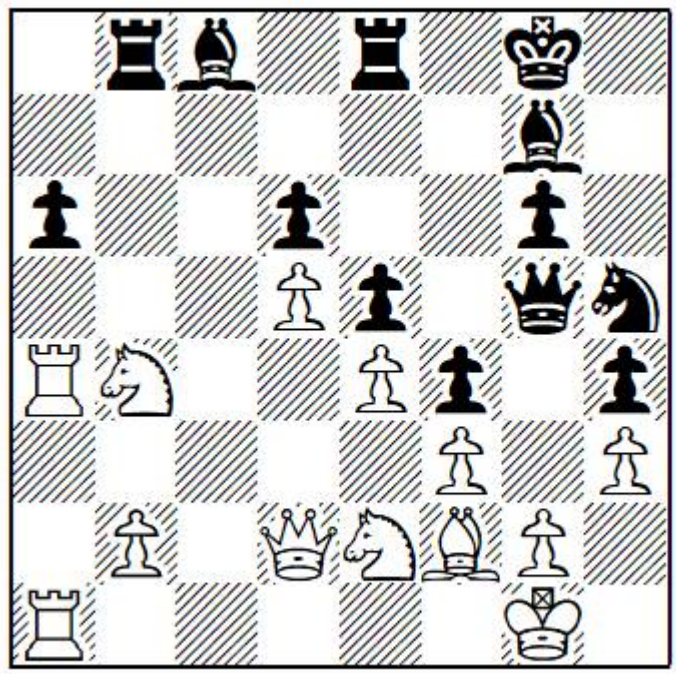
3. Black must watch out for Nb4, after which the knight goes after its intended targets.

29 … f5 30 Nb4 f4?

When under immediate physical threat, we instinctively protect ourselves. So why do so many of us refuse to protect ourselves against our future suffering in chess? Closing the centre and kingside is strategic suicide. Gligoric loses without even a shadow of a fight.

Instead, 30 … Qf8 31 Nc6 Rb7 32 Nc3 fxe4 33 Nxe4 Bf5 is still miserable for Black, yet infinitely better than the game's continuation.

31 Bf2 Qg5



Big deal. Black's cheapo on h3 is easily covered.

32 Kh2 Ng3

Beware of the dreaded Attack Dove, who flies into its not-attack, the way an untethered helium balloon floats off into empty sky. The knight is worthless on this square as a military solution on the kingside simply doesn't exist.

33 Nxa6

While Black's a-pawn wasn't exactly a cherished heirloom, its absence means that White has earned a passed b-pawn. Delaying winning the a-pawn was even stronger: 33 Nc6! Rb3 34 Nc3 Bf6 35 Qc2 Rb7 36 Rxa6 with a crushing position.

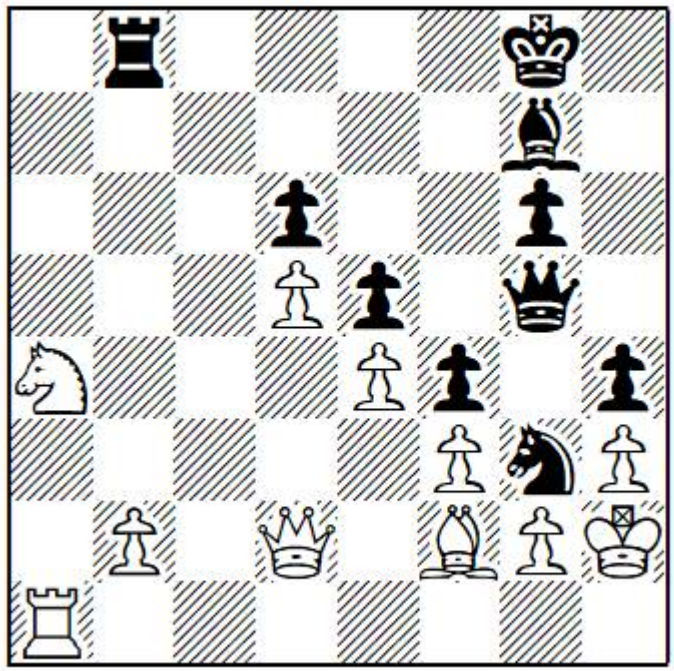
33 … Bd7

33 … Ra8 34 Qd3 is also hopeless for Black.

34 Nxb8 Bxa4 35 Nc3

35 Na6 is even stronger, heading for c7 and e6, or else supporting the advance of the b-pawn.

35 … Rxb8 36 Nxa4



This is Black's "Where am I and how did I get here?" moment. Gligoric's position is a society of the dispossessed.

1. He is a pawn down.

2. He has no compensating attack.

3. His bad bishop and window-dressing knight are the butt of jokes.

36 … Bf6?!

This is a mistake in an already lost position. He shouldn't allow White's knight into b6. 36 … Qd8 was necessary.

37 Nb6! Bd8 38 Nc4

The best square for the knight.

38 … Qe7 39 Qc2 1-0

Next Ra6 will tie Black down, after which White will simply shepherd his b-pawn up the board. Gligoric sees no point in prolonging the inevitable and painful process.

Game 77
S.Gligoric-R.J.Fischer

Training match, Sveti Stefan 1992
King's Indian Defence

1 d4 Nf6 2 Nf3 g6 3 c4 Bg7 4 Nc3 0-0 5 e4 d6 6 Be2 e5

Playing the King's Indian is a bit like entry into the mafia. Once you are in, there is no quitting, mainly since it takes massive study to keep up with the myriad variations; and if we do quit, we feel that all our past study time was wasted!

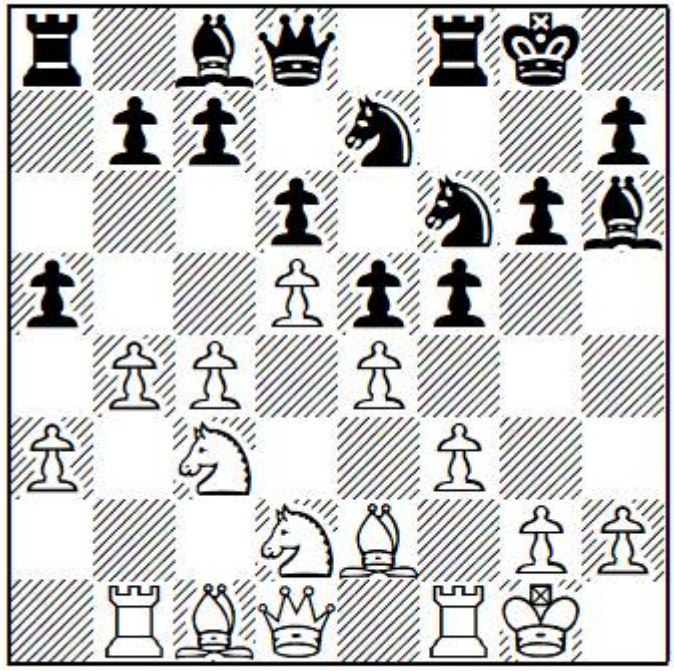
7 0-0 Nc6 8 d5 Ne7 9 Nd2 a5 10 a3 Ne8!?

This time Bobby avoids his favourite … c7-c5 set-up. On e8, the knight doesn't reinforce c5 either, which in turn makes it easier for White to achieve a break there. It's probably more accurate to play 10 … Nd7, which is the main line.

11 Rb1 f5 12 b4 Nf6

Normally players toss in 12 … axb4 13 axb4.

13 f3 Bh6!?



A novelty at the time. The idea:

1. Black wants to swap off his bad bishop before playing … f5-f4.

2. Black discourages c4-c5 since, if played early, Black can win a pawn by exchanging on c5, followed by … Be3+ and … Bxc5.

Reverting to 13 … axb4 14 axb4, followed by 14 … c6 is also possible.

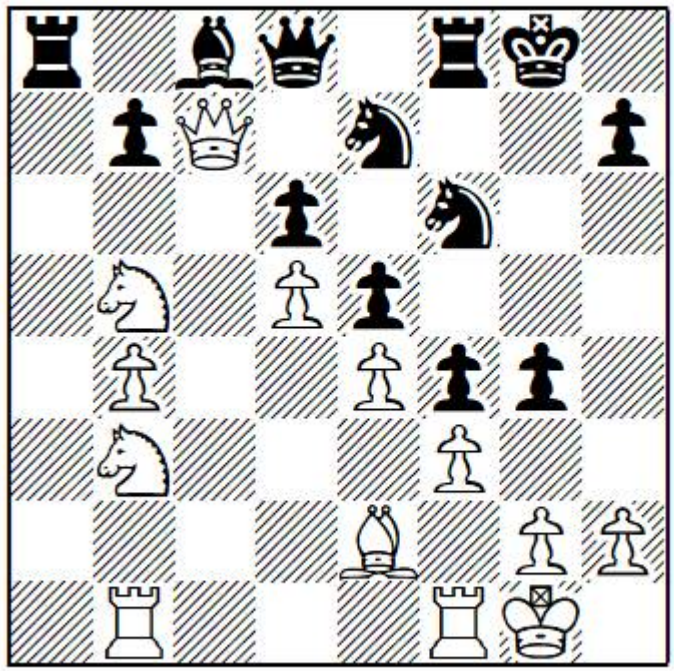
14 Nb3

The knight is better placed on c4 and isn't needed to help with the break on c5. GM Gurevich later improved with the pawn sacrifice 14 c5! (he plays it anyway!) 14 … Be3+ 15 Kh1 dxc5 16 bxc5 Bxc5 17 Nc4, when White got massive compensation for the sacrificed pawn and the engine absolutely hates Black's position, M.Gurevich-M.Wortel, Antwerp 1999.

14 … Bxc1 15 Qxc1

Gligoric wants to invade c7 with a queen later on, rather than a rook or knight. The engine prefers 15 Rxc1.

15 … axb4 16 axb4 f4 17 c5 g5 18 Nb5 g4 19 cxd6 cxd6 20 Qc7!



How annoying for Bobby. He dreamed of a mating attack and now queens are removed from the board. The ending is equal.

20 … Qxc7 21 Nxc7 Ra2 22 Nc1 Rc2! 23 Nb5

23 Ne6?! is unsound: 23 … Bxe6 24 dxe6 Rfc8 leaves White in deep trouble.

23 … gxf3 24 gxf3

24 Bxf3!? is also possible. After 24 … Rd8 25 Nb3 I slightly prefer White.

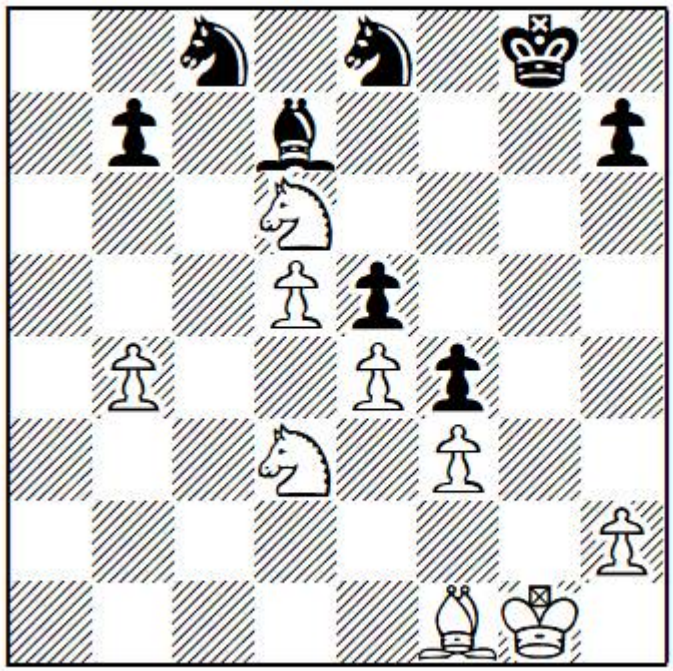
24 … Bh3 25 Rf2 Rfc8 26 Nd3 Ne8 27 Bf1

It's clear that the game is heading for a draw.

27 … Bd7 28 Rxc2 Rxc2 29 Rc1! Rc8

29 … Ra2 can be met by 30 Nc3 or the sharper 30 Nxd6 Nxd6 31 Rc7 Bb5 32 Rxe7 Ra1 33 Kf2 Ra2+ 34 Kg1 Ra1 35 Kf2 with a repetition draw.

30 Rxc8 Nxc8 31 Nxd6!?

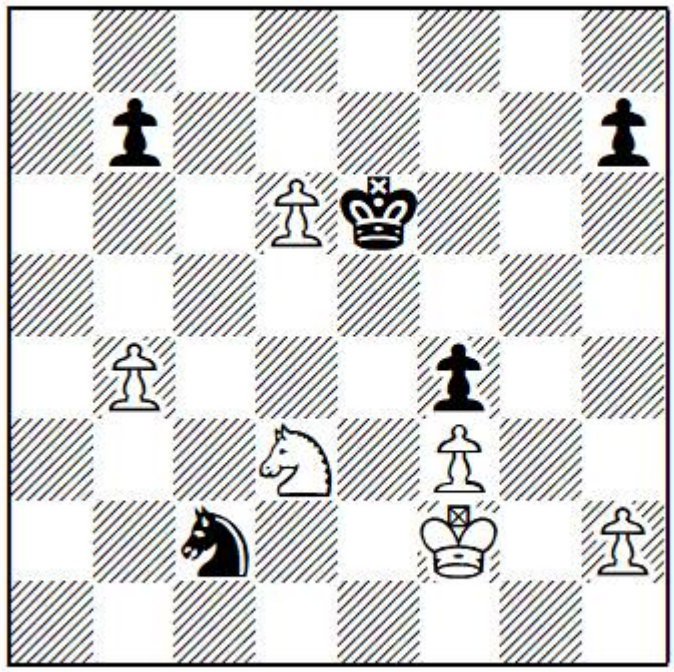


Enterprising stuff! We are reminded of those going-out-of-business sales: “Everything must go! All items are 50% off!” Gligoric, who is easily drawing by doing nothing, takes a chance and sacrifices a piece for a couple of pawns. The sacrifice is sound and the position remains even.

31 … Nexd6 32 Nxe5 Bb5 33 Bxb5 Nxb5 34 Nd3 Nd4 35 Kf2 Nc2! 36 e5 Kf7 37 d6 Nxd6!?

Bobby decides to liquidate to a clear draw. 37 … Ke8 38 Nxf4 Nxb4 39 Ke3 Kd7 is also drawn.

38 exd6 Ke6 ½-½



After 39 Nxf4+ Kxd6 40 Nd3 Kd5 41 Ke2 Kc4 42 Kd2 Nxb4, as long as White doesn't swap the knights off, the game will end in a draw.

Game 78
R.J.Fischer-S.Gligoric
Training match, Sveti Stefan 1992
English Opening

1 c4!? c5 2 b3!?

Bobby is fooling around in the opening.

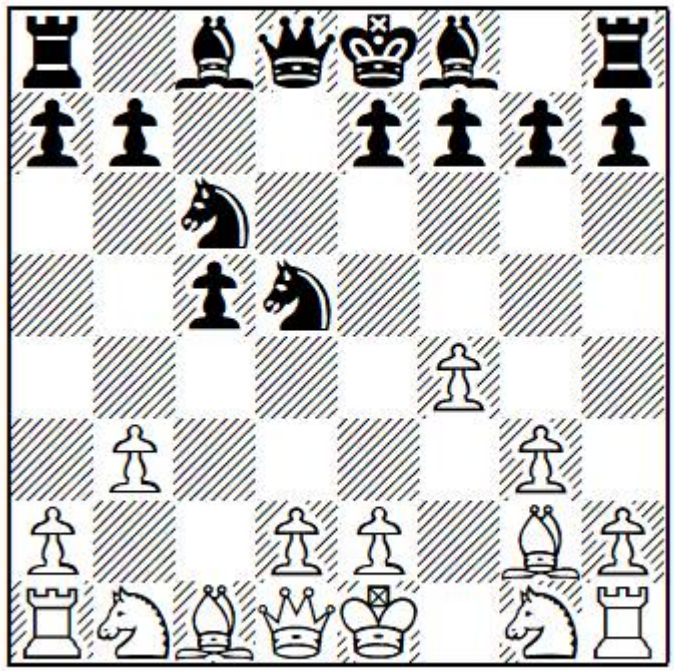
2 … Nc6 3 g3 Nf6 4 Bg2 d5

Gligoric goes for a reversed Maróczy Bind formation. 4 … e6 5 Nf3 d5 turns it into a Réti Opening.

5 cxd5

Not 5 Nf3?! d4 and we are left wondering about the purpose of White's b2-b3.

5 … Nxd5 6 f4!?



Bobby looks to pre-empt a bind with … e7-e5 by attacking that square in advance. Sometimes our zany ideas are too big for the board's actual resources to accommodate. This looks like a shady-looking novelty. If we think back to Fischer's Herceg Novi game against Smyslov (Game 61), there he also mixed a double fianchetto with f2-f4, which normally doesn't work well.

On the other hand, after the routine 6 Bb2 e5 7 d3 Be6 Black already had the advantage in J.Pelikan-J.Emma, Mar del Plata 1958; while if 6 Nc3 (which the engine favours), Black can just swap down to equality with 6 … Nxc3 7 dxc3 Qxd1+ 8 Kxd1 Bd7.

6 … e6

Gligoric could play 6 … e5!? anyway, since if 7 fxe5 Nxe5 8 Bb2 Ng4, Black stands no worse.

7 Bb2 h5!?

The mind of ambition believes that mere survival is not reward enough in life. Larsen approved! Black plans the disruptive … h5-h4, at the cost of development. 7 … b6 less sharp and equal.

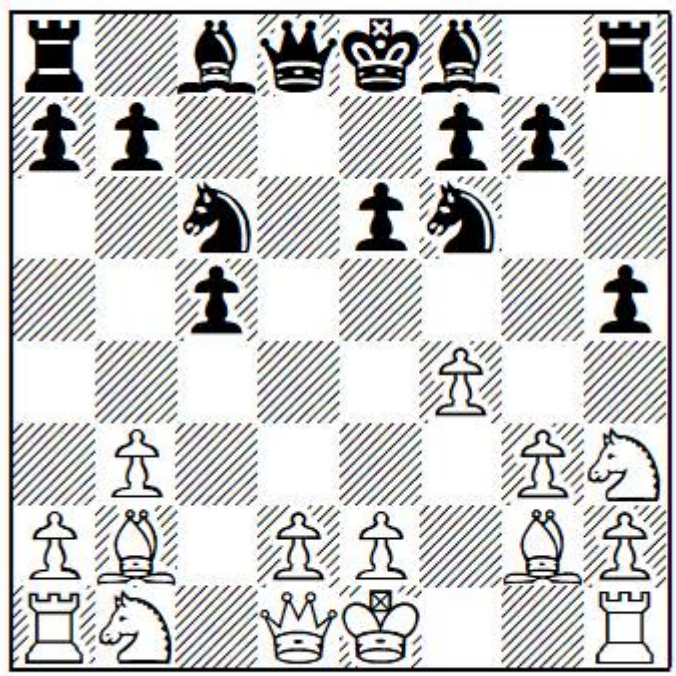
8 Nh3?!

Bobby wants to meet … h5-h4 with g3-g4, after which his knight prevents … h4-h3 tricks, but this warding-off-evil gesture tosses the knight out of place.

Instead, 8 Nf3 h4! 9 0-0! is probably okay for White. To be avoided is 9 Nxh4?? (or 9 g4??, which drops the f-pawn) 9 … Rxh4 10 gxh4 Qxh4+ 11 Kf1 Nxf4, when … e6-e5 is next and White's king is unlikely to survive.

8 … Nf6?!

He should push the pawn anyway: 8 … h4 9 g4 b6, after which I prefer Black's position.



9 Nf2!?

A move which displays Fischer's love of bishops. I would have chopped the c6-knight in a flash with 9 Bxc6+! bxc6 (the damage to Black's structure and hole on c4, mean more than White's potential weakening of his light squares) 10 Na3, when 10 … h4 can be met by 11 g4! Nxg4 12 e4 Nf6 13 Qf3 with massive compensation for the sacrificed pawn.

9 … h4!?

Neither side views Bxc6+ as a strategic threat. 9 … Qd7 would be my choice.

10 Nc3

10 e3! is a decent alternative to chopping the c6-knight.

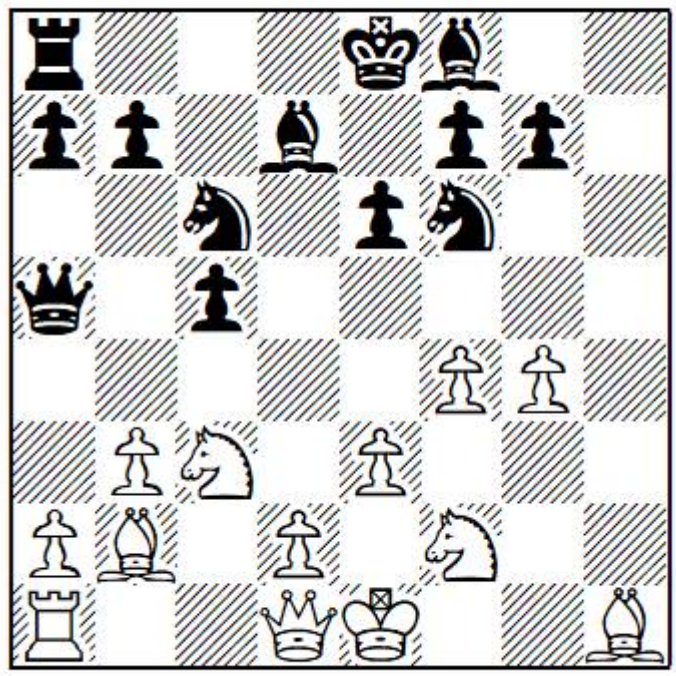
10 … hxg3 11 hxg3 Rxh1+ 12 Bxh1

All Black gained from the pushes of his h-pawn is lost time. White stands a bit better.

12 … Bd7?!

This feels like the wrong diagonal for the bishop. 12 … Qd7 13 e3 b6 and … Bb7 is better.

13 e3 Qa5 14 g4!



Fischer gains useful kingside space, and Black must watch out for the disruptive g4-g5, especially if the f8-bishop moves, when g7 hangs.

14 … 0-0-0 15 g5 Ne8 16 Qh5

I prefer 16 Nce4!.

16 … f5!?

16 … Nd6 would certainly met by 17 Nce4.

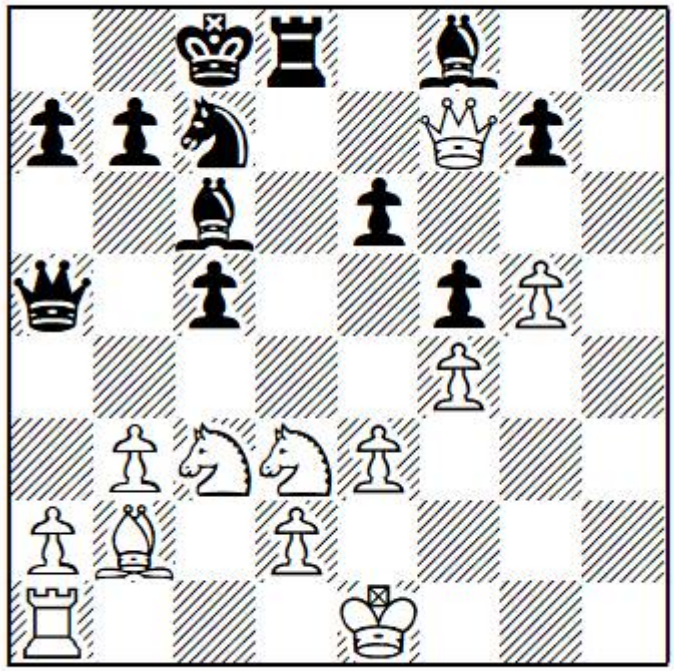
17 Bxc6!

It looks crazy to swap for the c6-knight now that Black can recapture with the bishop. Fischer's next move makes clear his intent.

17 … Bxc6 18 Qf7!

Double attack on f8 and e6.

18 … Nc7 19 Nd3!



Black is getting tangled up and White threatens Ne5 and Ng6. The crazy engine calls for the Steinitzian 19 Nb1!? which dooms Black's g-pawn. Such a retro, unnatural move wouldn't have appealed to Bobby.

19 … Rxd3 20 Qxf8+ Ne8?

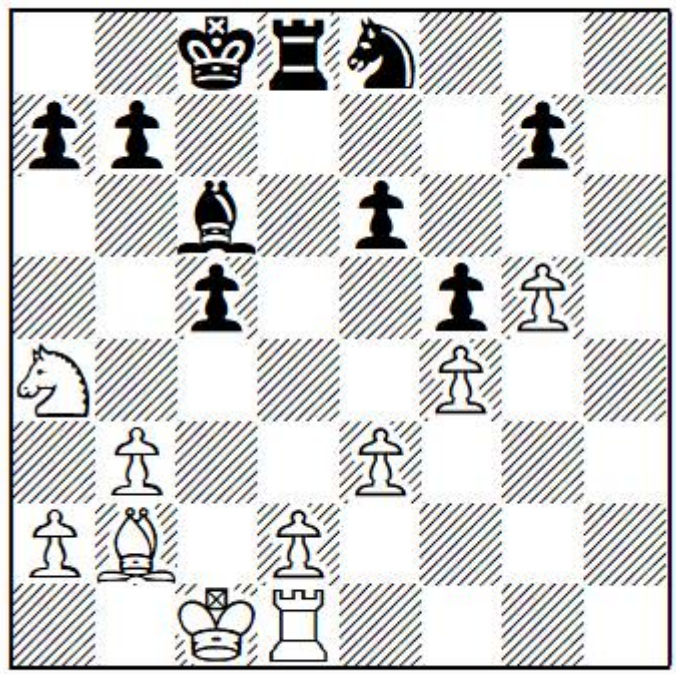
If your first step is flawed, you can bet the remaining ones won't help either. A long, forcing variation is the killjoy at the wedding who taps his glass to deliver an unwanted 15-minute speech, when everyone is starving and just wants to eat.

The engine found a narrow path to salvation for Black in the long line 20 … Rd8! 21 Qxg7 Qa6 22 0-0-0 Qd3 23 Qe7 Bf3 24 Rg1 Qxd2+ 25 Kb1 Qf2 26 Rc1 Rd2 27 Ba3 b6 28 g6 Nd5! 29 Qxe6+ Kb7 30 g7 Nxc3+ 31 Rxc3 Qg1+! 32 Bc1 Be4+ 33 Ka1 Rg2 34 Qd7+ Kb8!, when White has nothing better than to take perpetual check. Of course, it would be difficult for the flawed human brain to see all this at the board.

21 Qe7 Rd6 22 0-0-0 Qd8 23 Qxd8+

Bobby correctly realizes that the ending will be tough for Black. Otherwise 23 Qf8!? is a tempting option.

23 … Rxd8 24 Na4!



Shades of the shocking … Nh5!? novelty in the third game of Fischer's 1972 match against Spassky. This is another example of Fischer's exceptional strategic judgment.

24 … b6!

Lead us not into temptation. Gligoric correctly sees that exchanging translates to a lost ending after 24 … Bxa4? 25 bxa4 Kd7 26 Kc2 Ke7 27 Rb1 b6 28 Be5 Threat: a4-a5. 28 … Rd7 29 a5 Rb7 30 a4!, when Black is horribly tangled up.

25 Be5

A stronger option is to weave the rook onto the open h-file with 25 Rf1!, 26 Rf2 and 27 Rh2.

25 … g6 26 Nb2 Rd7 27 Nc4

This is a bit inaccurate. He should toss in 27 Kc2 first to retain control over d3.

27 … Bf3

27 … b5!? is also tempting.

28 Rf1 Bd5 29 Rd1?!

I don't understand this move, which is a clear loss of time. After 29 a4 Rh7 30 Kc2 White still looks a shade better.

29 … Rh7 30 a4 Rh3 31 Kc2 Kb7 32 Kc3 a6?

This just weakens his queenside. Black should hold a draw with 32 … Bxc4! 33 bxc4 Nc7.

33 b4!

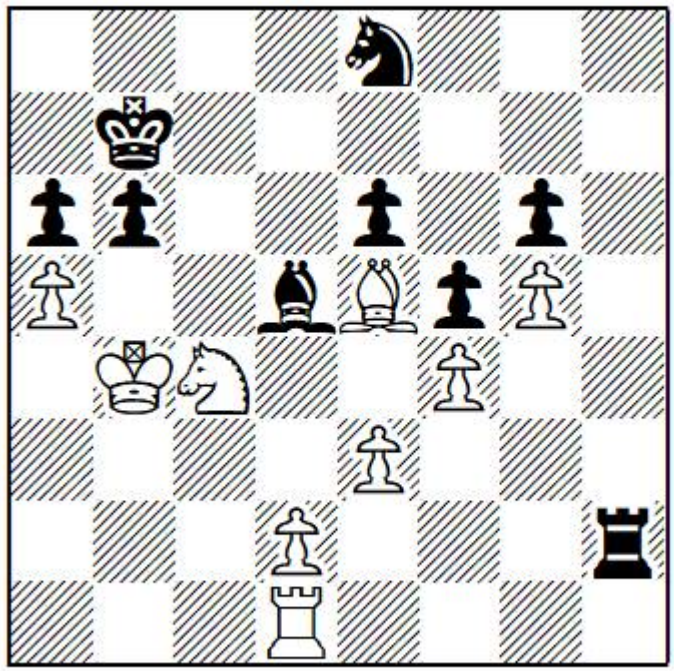
The engine claims that the counter-intuitive 33 d4! is even stronger.

33 … cxb4+

After 33 … Bxc4 34 Kxc4 cxb4 35 Kxb4 Nc7 36 Kc4 Nd5 37 a5! Kc6 38 axb6 Nxb6+ 39 Kd4, a rook check on the c-file is coming and Black is in dire trouble.

34 Kxb4 Rh2 35 a5!

Fischer creates a puncture to infiltrate with his king.



35 … Bf3

Or 35 … b5 36 Nb6 Bc6 37 Kc5! Bf3 38 Rf1 Be4 39 Bc3 Bd3 40 Re1 Be4 41 Nd7! and there is no remedy to the coming Nf8.

36 Rc1 b5 37 Nb6 Bc6

Not 37 … Rxd2? 38 Rc8 and Black loses material in view of 38 … Nd6 39 Rd8 Nc4 (or 39 … Kc6 40 Nc8) 40 Rb8+ Kc6 41 Rc8+ Kb7 42 Rc7+ Kb8 43 Rxc4+ and wins.

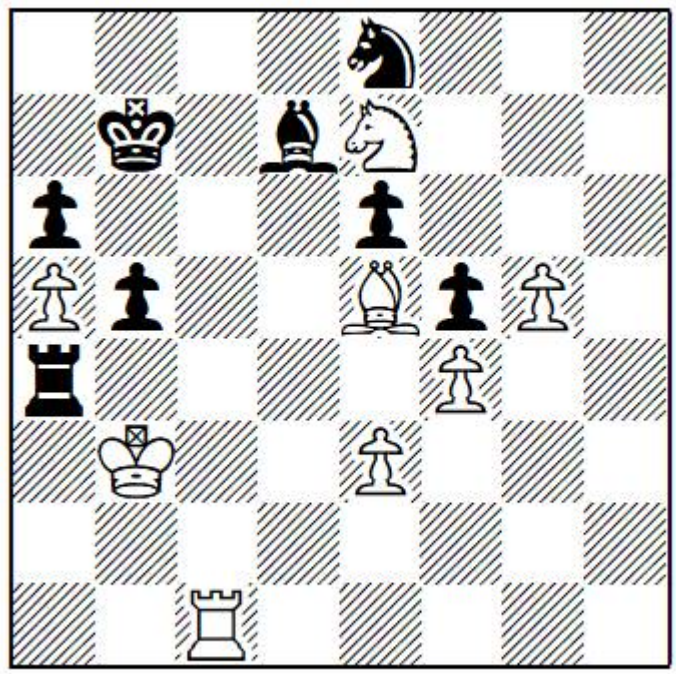
38 Nc8

Now Ne7 is a deadly threat. 38 e4! was more direct, intending 38 … fxe4 39 f5 or 38 … Bxe4 39 Rc8 and wins.

38 … Rxd2

He should at least prevent the threat. 38 … Rh7 39 Nb6 Rh2 returns White to move 38 for another go.

39 Ne7 Bd7 40 Nxg6 Ra2 41 Ne7 Ra4+ 42 Kb3



42 … Re4

If 42 … Rxa5 then 43 Rd1 Bc6 44 Rd8 (threat: Nxc6, followed by Rxe8) 44 … Nc7 (the overworked defence is caked in sweaty grime) 45 g6 wins, as indeed does 45 Nxc6 Kxc6 46 Rc8.

43 Rd1! Rxe3+ 44 Kb2 Re2+ 45 Kc1 1-0

Black borrowed money from the mob and is unable to repay the swiftly accumulating interest. Now the henchmen are on the way to his house. Even though Gligoric is a pawn up, he is hopelessly lost. White's rook infiltration to d8, coupled with the push of the g-pawn is fatal for Black, and 45 … Bc6 46 Rd8 Nc7 47 g6 wins as before.

Game 79
S.Gligoric-R.J.Fischer
Training match, Sveti Stefan 1992
King's Indian Defence

What an awful fate when we completely outplay our opponent and then lose anyway, which was Gligoric's destiny this game.

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 Bg7 4 e4 d6 5 Nf3 0-0 6 Be2 e5 7 0-0 Nc6 8 d5 Ne7 9 Nd2 a5 10 a3 Bd7

Most of us find a degree of comfort in a predictable routine. Do it in chess and it's your death sentence, since the opponent will be ready for you, lying in wait with engine-generated prep. Bobby keeps switching lines to make opening preparation more difficult. His strategic threat is … a5-a4, which in turn induces White to waste a tempo on b2-b3. On the downside, Black's bishop does nothing to prevent an eventual break on c5 (as a knight on d7 would) and by moving the bishop, rather than the f6-knight, Black's f-pawn is still blocked from pushing forward.

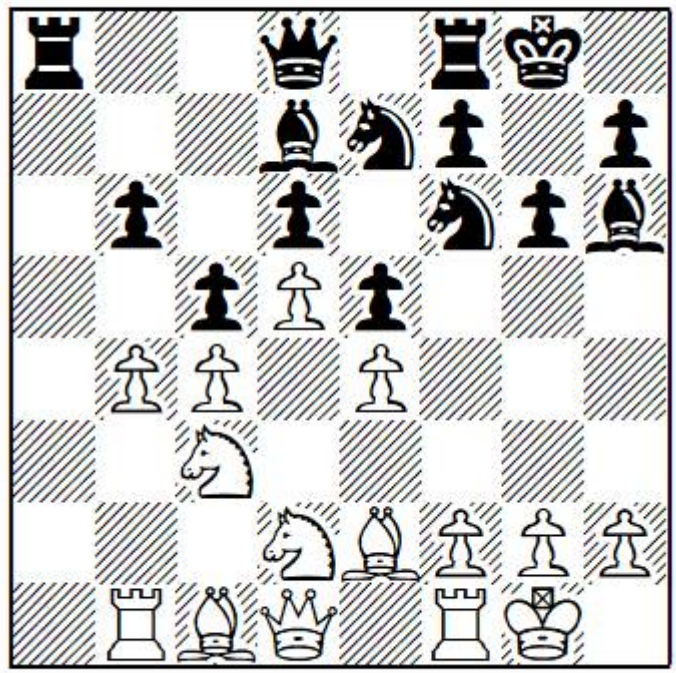
11 b3 c5

There is his favourite set-up again.

12 Rb1

This is more testing than 12 Bb2, as in Game 73.

12 … b6 13 b4 axb4 14 axb4 Bh6!?



Bobby tries his swap-off-the-bad-bishop idea again. 14 … Ne8, intending … f7-f5 next, is a natural alternative.

15 bxc5

The only other game in the database to reach this position saw 15 Qb3 Ne8 16 bxc5 bxc5 17 Qb6 Qc8 18 Nf3 Bxc1 19 Rfxc1 f5 20 Bd3 Ra6 21 Qb7 Nf6 22 Ng5 Qxb7 23 Rxb7 Rfa8, when Black equalized and the players agreed to a draw a few moves later, G.Van Laatum-W.Uhlmann, Dieren 1990.

15 … bxc5 16 Nb3

16 Qb3?! doesn't make sense anymore due to the simple 16 … Rb8.

16 … Bxc1 17 Qxc1 Nc8

This way Black's most sensitive point on d6 is given an added measure of protection.

18 Ra1

18 f4! is more enterprising.

18 … Rb8?!

The problem with being the higher rated player is that you constantly fear simplification and its evil twin, a draw. He shouldn't cede control over a5, but 18 … Rxa1 19 Qxa1 Nb6 20 Nd2 Qc7 is about even.

19 Ra3

The knight sally 19 Na5! is even better, when Black must watch out for both Nc6 and f2-f4, with advantage for White.

19 … Rb4 20 Qe3

Why is Gligoric denying himself the war he craves by holding back on the natural f2-f4! break? After 20 f4! Qe7 21 f5 Kg7 22 Na5 I prefer White's position.

20 … Nb6!

Fischer, setting a strategic trap, offers his opponent a tempting yet incorrect sacrifice on c5.

21 Nd2!

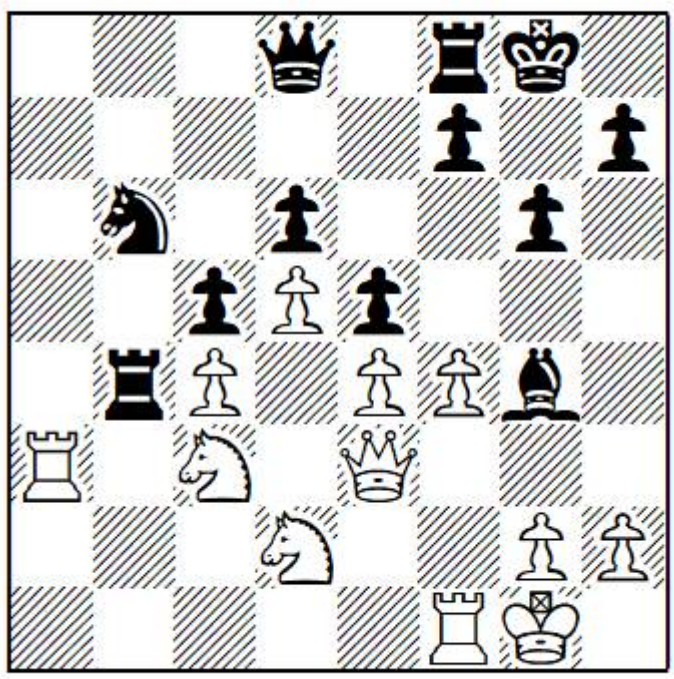
Gligoric correctly declines. 21 Nxc5?! is so tempting, yet not fully sound: 21 … dxc5 22 Qxc5 Rb2 23 Qe3 Qc7 24 c5 Rxe2! 25 Qxe2 (25 Nxe2?? allows a fork on c4) 25 … Qxc5,

when Black's two minor pieces are superior to White's rook and pawn.

21 … Ng4?!

Fischer wants to remove the defender of c4. In doing so he loses the initiative. 21 … Qe7 is correct.

22 Bxg4 Bxg4 23 f4!



At last.

23 … exf4

Not 23 … Nxc4? 24 Nxc4 Rxc4 25 f5! gxf5 26 exf5 Qh4 27 h3 Bh5 28 Kh2! f6 29 Nb5! and Black is in deep trouble. If 29 … Rd8? 30 Qh6 Rg4 31 g3! Qg5 32 Qxg5+ Rxg5 33 Nc3!, Black cannot defend both f6 and d6, since 33 … Rg7 34 Ne4 Rf7?? allows 35 g4, trapping the bishop.

24 Qxf4 Rb2?!

As awful as it looks, Black should give up his base d6-pawn with 24 … Bd7 25 Qxd6 Nxc4 26 Nxc4 Rxc4 and try and grovel for a draw.

25 Ra7

The clearance sacrifice 25 e5! dxe5 26 Qh6! is even stronger. Bringing a knight to e4 is a murderous threat, which pretty much forces 26 … Rxd2 27 Ne4! Rd4 28 Ng5 Qxg5 29 Qxg5 Nxc4 30 Ra7, when Black doesn't have enough for the queen.

25 … Bd7 26 Nf3?

Now is not the moment for leisurely "me time". This should allow Black to escape. White must act more forcefully with 26 e5! dxe5 (or 26 … Rxd2 27 Qxd2 Nxc4 28 Qh6 Nxe5 29 Ne4 Ng4 30 Qf4) 27 Qh6! f5 28 Nf3! Qe7 29 d6! Qxd6 30 Rd1 Qe7 31 Qc1! Rb4 32 Nd5 Nxd5 33 Rxd5 and wins.

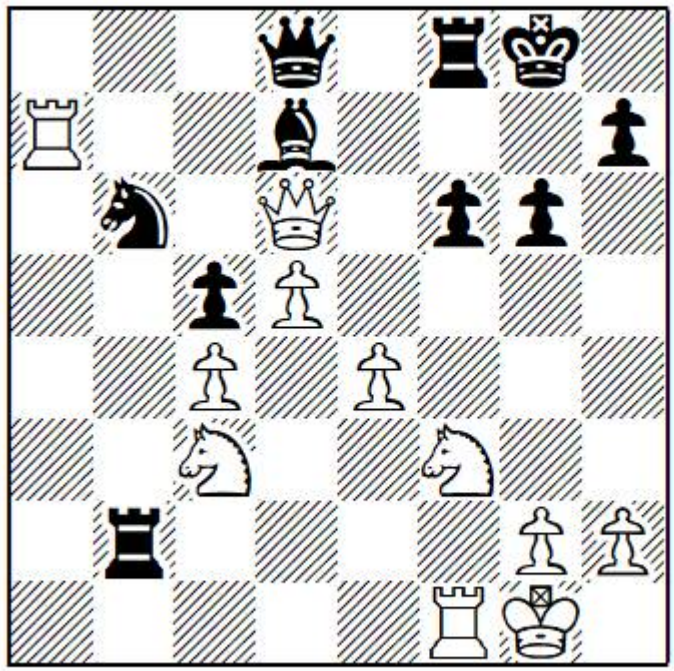
26 … f6

Now 26 … Nxc4! is also okay for Black.

27 Qxd6?

We work hard to outplay our opponent, who then wins the game on a vile cheapo. "What a cruel universe, when good is punished, while evil is rewarded," we muse.

After 27 Nd1! Re2 28 Nf2 Nxc4 29 h4 Rf7 30 Rfa1 White has sufficient compensation for the sacrificed pawn, but no more than that.



Exercise (combination alert): All it takes is a single moment of inattention

to produce an ill wind blowing across our once promising position. Gligoric

just fell for a trick which turns the game around. Do you see it?

Answer: Attraction/discovered attack.

27 … Rxg2+!

The good fortune of blind geometric luck is rare. If not seized upon, it's unlikely such a chance will come our way again.

28 Kh1

Forced. Gligo realizes with sickening awareness that he just got swindled. 28 Kxg2?? allows the fatal discovery 28 … Bh3+, winning White's queen.

28 … Rc2

Suddenly Black stands better.

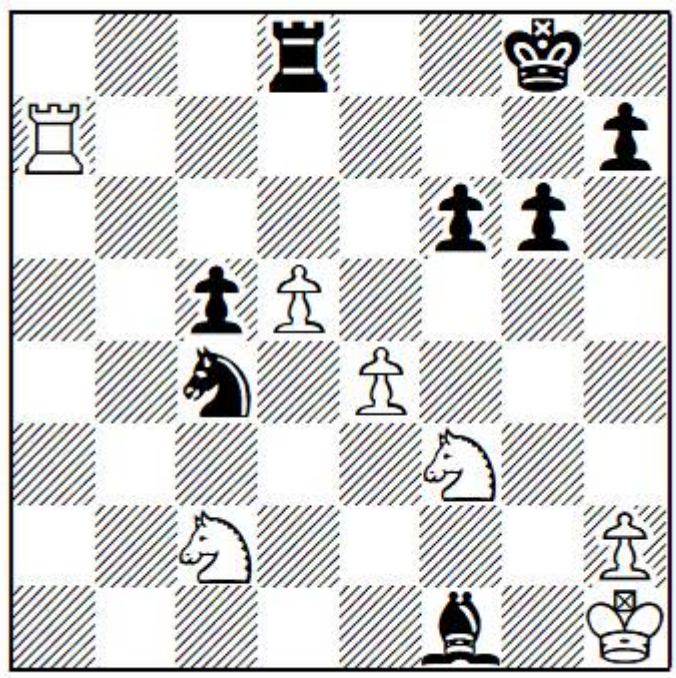
29 Nd1?

Everyone deserves a second chance, but a third? Usually not. Gligo is flustered by the cheapo and makes another mistake. He should try 29 Nb5 Bh3 30 Rg1 Qxd6 31 Nxd6 Nxc4 32 Nxc4 Rxc4 33 Rg3.

29 … Bh3! 30 Qxd8 Rxd8 31 Ne3

31 Rg1 Nxc4 32 Rg3 Bc8 33 Rg2 Rc1 34 Rg1 Re8 is lost for White.

31 … Bxf1 32 Nxc2 Nxc4



Fischer is a pawn up with the initiative and pawn targets in White's camp.

33 Na3 Nd6! 34 e5 Be2 35 Ng1

Did Bobby Blunder? Actually not. 35 Kg2 Bxf3+ 36 Kxf3 fxe5 wins a second pawn.

35 … Bd3!

The bishop, who seems to have a "flexible" moral compass, threatens … Be4+. Bobby's move is stronger than 35 … Nc8.

36 Nh3

If 36 exd6 then 36 … Be4+ 37 Nf3 Bxf3+ 38 Kg1 Rxd6 wins.

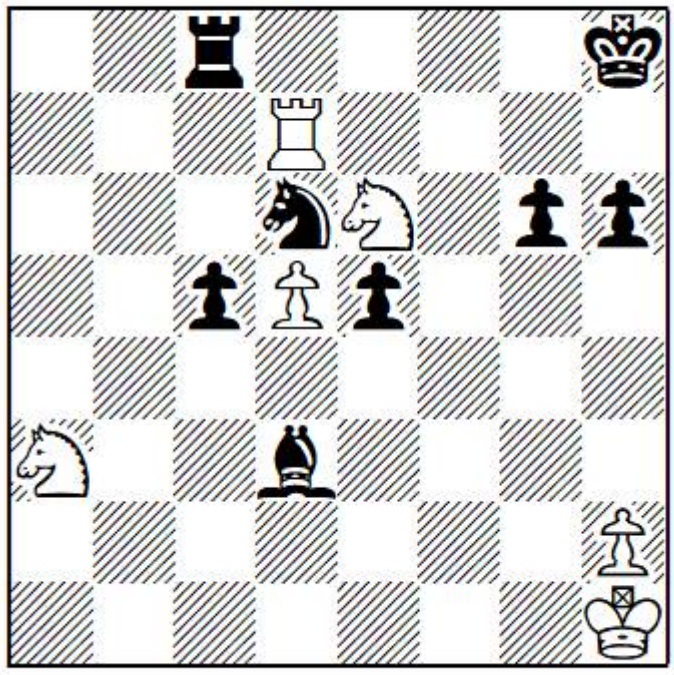
36 … fxe5

Black now lives a life of palatial luxury. There goes pawn number two.

37 Ng5 h6 38 Ne6 Rc8

Principle: *Place your rook behind your passed pawn.*

39 Rg7+ Kh8 40 Rd7



40 … Nf5

If ChessBase aimed for comedy, they succeeded. The database score goes haywire at this point, giving 40 … Nb5, after which the remaining few moves make no sense, since each side repeatedly leaves a knight hanging.

41 d6 c4 42 Nd8 Be4+ 43 Kg1 Bd5 0-1

Covering White's threat at f7 and he doesn't have any others, so Gligoric resigned.

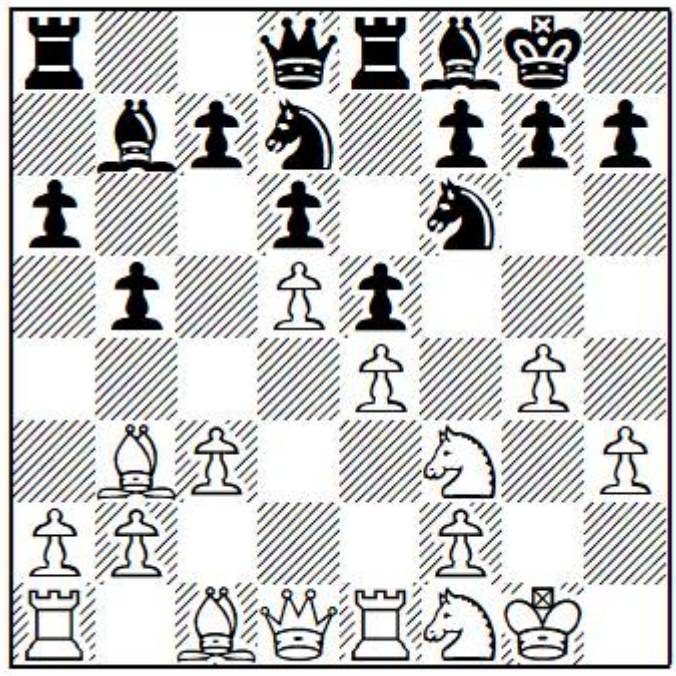
Game 80
R.J.Fischer-S.Gligoric
Training match, Sveti Stefan 1992
Ruy Lopez

This game is a perfect example of the terrible fate which can befall the player who ignores the principle: *Meet the opponent's wing attack with a central counter.*

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Ba4 Nf6 5 0-0 Be7 6 Re1 b5 7 Bb3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 Bb7

God bless this home and all who live within it. Both sides seem to be happy with their respective positions in their recurring fight in the Zaitsev Lopez.

10 d4 Re8 11 Ng5 Rf8 12 Nf3 Re8 13 Nbd2 Bf8 14 d5 Nb8 15 Nf1 Nbd7 16 g4!?



This move indicates that Bobby is hell-bent on his opponent's destruction. He goes with a more committal/bloodthirsty version. Safer is 16 Ng3 (as in Games 74 and 76) or 16 N3h2 (as in Al.Kovacevic-S.Gligoric, Yugoslav Championship, Niksic 1997).

16 … Nc5!

An improvement on the only previous game with this variation, which went 16 … g6 17 Ng3 Nc5 18 Bc2 a5, R.M.Nunes-P.P.Costa, correspondence 1991, where 19 a4 looks slightly in White's favour.

17 Bc2 c6 18 b4 Ncd7 19 dxc6 Bxc6 20 Ng3 Nb6

Why prepare for the … d6-d5 break when Black can play it straight away? 20 … d5! looks at least equal for Black.

21 Bb3

This doesn't prevent … d6-d5. To do that White needed to play 21 g5! Nfd7 22 Nh2 Nc4 23 Qf3 Ndb6 24 Rd1 Rc8 25 Ng4 Be7 26 h4 Rf8 27 Nf5. The engine says even, but I would be nervous playing Black with so many pieces hovering around the king.

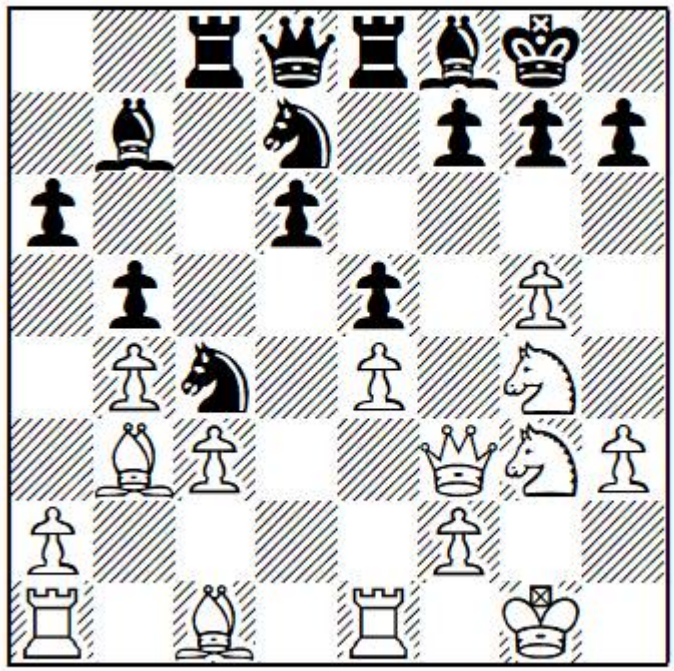
21 … Rc8?!

Gligoric continually refuses to push the d-pawn. After 21 … d5! 22 Bg5 dxe4 23 Nd2 e3 24 Bxe3 Nbd5, I like Black's chances, while the engine still says even.

22 g5!

Now it's going to be more difficult for Black to break on d5.

22 … Nfd7 23 Nh2! Bb7 24 Qf3 Nc4 25 Ng4



25 … Re6?!

Fischer's pieces gather menacingly around Gligoric's king, who must watch out for future knight sacrifices on h6 and f6. This prompts Gligoric to make an awkward defensive rook lift. The thought behind this move is: "Approach with extreme caution. Suspect is armed and dangerous."

Black should be playing on the principle: *Meet the opponent's wing attack with a central counter*, to which end 25 … Ndb6! 26 Rd1 Rc7 27 h4 d5!? is possible.

26 Be3 Be7 27 h4 Nf8?

He can't just allow Fischer to continue building up unchallenged. 27 … f6 was necessary.

28 Nf5

This is turning into Omaha Beach, D-Day. We can just feel the menace from White's gathering forces.

28 … Qe8

He wants to be able to play a future … g7-g6, so protects the f7-pawn in advance of a knight check on h6.

29 a4

Bobby opens a second front on the queenside.

29 … Nxe3!?

Gligoric is okay with handing Fischer the exchange on e6, as long as it breaks White's kingside attack.

30 Rxe3 Ng6

30 … Rc7 is a bit better, but Black remains strategically lost.

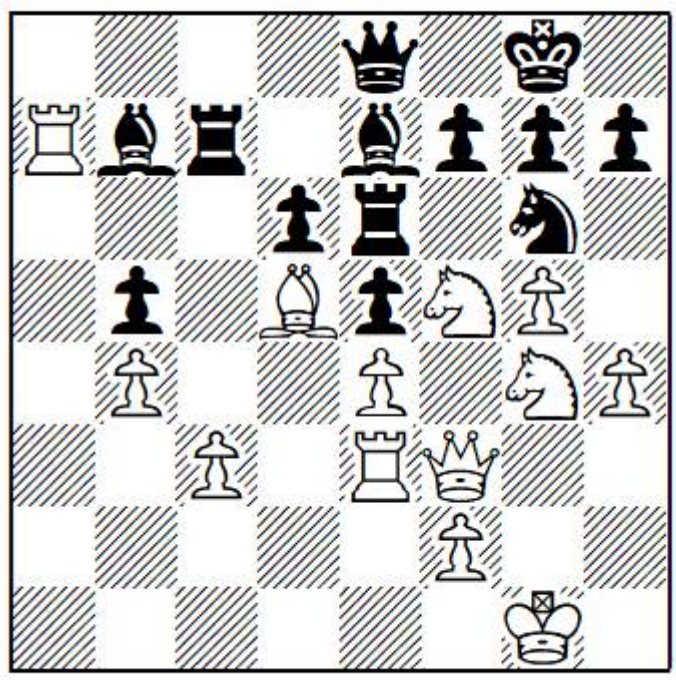
31 axb5 axb5 32 Ra7!

Fischer wants pressure, not material at the cost of initiative after 32 Bxe6?! fxe6 33 Nxe7+ Qxe7 34 Qg3 Bc6, where Black's chances of survival are higher than in the game.

32 … Rc7

32 … Rb8 is met by the same move.

33 Bd5!



Fischer's strategic mastery is complete.

33 … Bxd5

No choice:

a) 33 … Qc8? 34 Nfh6+! gxh6 35 Nxh6+ Kh8 36 Qxf7 and it's time for Black to resign.

b) 33 … Nxh4? 34 Nxh4 Bxg5 35 Bxb7 Bxh4 36 Ra8 Rxb7 37 Rxe8+ Rxe8 38 Rd3 is equally hopeless for Black.

34 Rxc7 Bc4 35 h5 Bxg5

More material is lost. 35 … Nf8 is crushed by 36 Rxe7! Rxe7 37 Nf6+! gxf6 38 Nh6+! Kh8 39 Qxf6 mate.

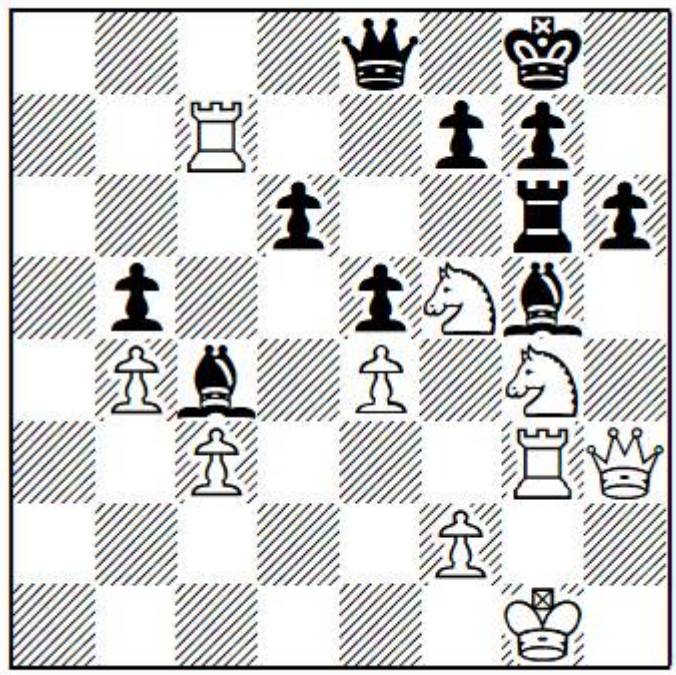
36 hxg6 Rxg6 37 Qh3!

Preventing … h7-h5.

37 … h6

37 … Bxe3 is met by the zwischenzug 38 Ne7+!.

38 Rg3



Welcome to Fischer's House of Pain. As we examine the post-apocalyptic landscape, we note that White is just a rook up. Gligoric must see something within his position's

nowhere, since he plays on with the vague hope of getting to Fischer's king.

38 … Kh7 39 Qh5 Qa8 40 Nge3 Qxe4 41 Nxc4 Qxf5 42 Ne3 Qe6 43 Qf3

Attacking f7, while preventing … f7-f5.

43 … Bf4 44 Rxg6 Qxg6+ 45 Qg4 Qb1+ 46 Nf1 1-0

Even Black's vaguest hopes have vanished.

Game 81
S.Gligoric-R.J.Fischer
Training match, Sveti Stefan 1992
Queen's Indian Defence

There seems to be universal confusion about the order of the games, since I found it different in every source I checked. Nor does ChessBase give the game numbers. All we really know is that Gligoric scored his first and only win in the final game of the match. So we are positive this is the final game. The others? Who knows?

In this game we see the Gligoric of old, when he was still a world-class player. Despite a slip at move 20, he outplays Bobby from start to finish.

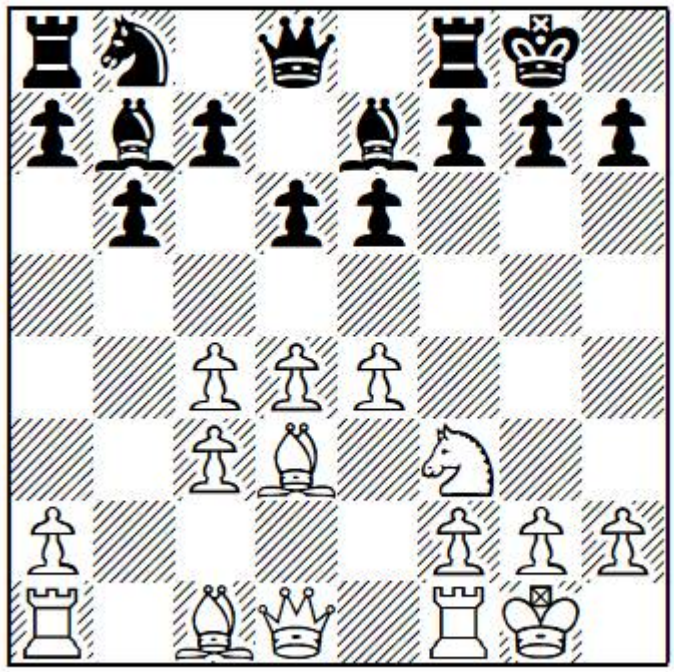
1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nf3 b6 4 Nc3 Bb7 5 e3 Ne4

Once again Bobby avoids transposition to Nimzo-Indian with 5 … Bb4.

6 Bd3 Nxc3 7 bxc3 Be7 8 e4

In the earlier game Gligoric castled first. The text looks more principled in that it disallows … f7-f5 options, though whether Black should push the f-pawn even given the chance is another question. Bobby didn't.

8 … d6 9 0-0 0-0



10 Be3

As we saw, Game 75 followed a close to identical course with 10 Ne1 Nd7 11 Nc2 e5 12 f4 Bf6 13 Rb1 Re8, the only difference being the position of White's knight and dark-squared bishop. As Gligoric shows, this small difference is in his favour here as his pieces are more active.

10 … Nd7 11 Nd2 e5 12 f4 Bf6

I'm surprised that Fischer would repeat the solid/passive set-up, since both run counter to his more dynamic style. After 12 … exf4 13 Bxf4 Ne5! 14 Bc2 Ng6 15 Be3 Bg5 Black looks okay to my human eyes, while the engine still gives White an edge.

13 Rb1

Black must now watch out for c4-c5 tricks.

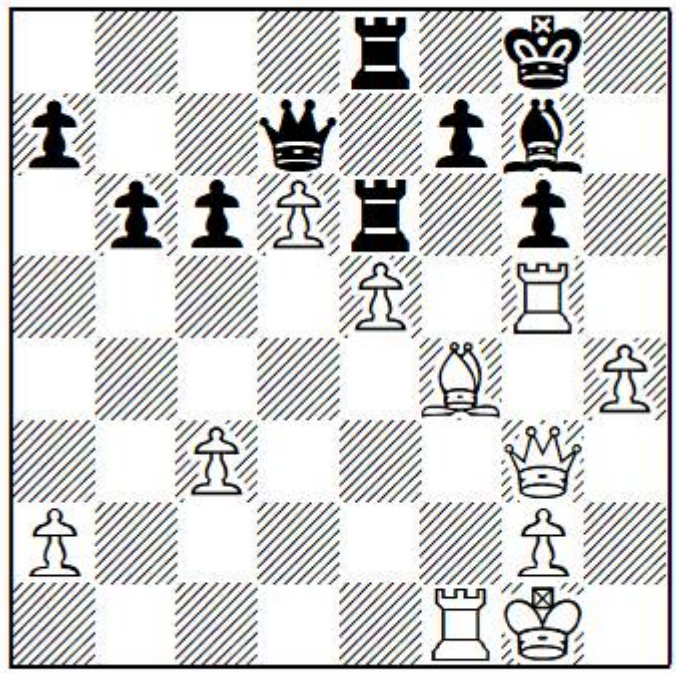
13 … Re8

Once again I would go for 13 … exf4 14 Bxf4 Ne5! to swing the knight to g6, helping out in the defence of Black's king.

14 Qf3 exf4

Fischer decides to break the central pawn tension, perhaps hoping for counterplay against e4, but White has that well protected.

15 Qxf4 Nf8 16 Qg3 Ng6 17 Rf5!



One of the world's worst kept secrets was: don't allow Gligoric an assault on your king since he was a deadly on the attack. I already prefer his position.

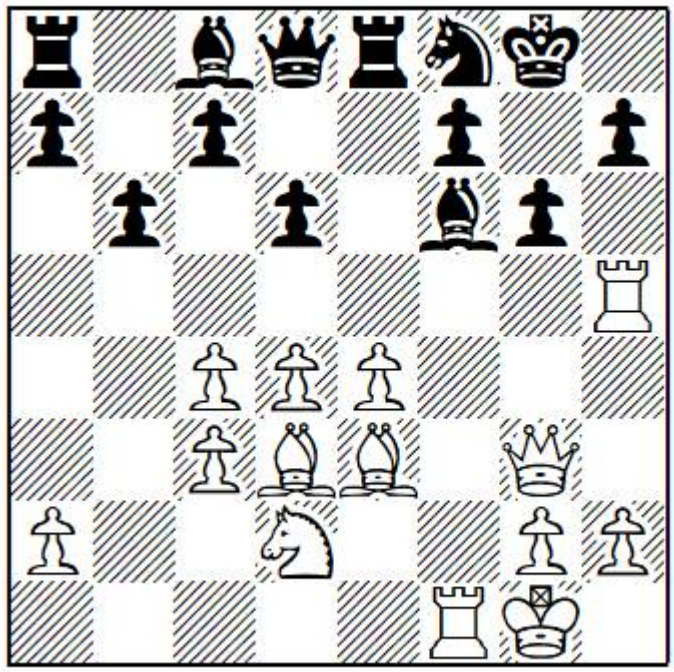
17 … Bc8 18 Rh5!

Targeting h7. There is no need for the radical 18 Rbf1!? even if it's playable: 18 … Bh4 19 Qf3 Bxf5 20 exf5 Nf8 21 Ne4 Nd7 22 Qg4 Qe7 23 Bh6 f6! 24 Bxg7 Qxg7 25 Qxh4 Kh8 and the engine assesses at even, while I still slightly prefer White's chances after 26 Bc2.

18 … Nf8?!

You were there on f8 just a few moves ago. Black may be better off with 18 … Bh4 19 Qf3 Be6.

19 Rf1 g6?!



It's clear that something has gone terribly wrong for Bobby and we just feel in our gut that Gligoric has whipped up a decisive attack.

20 Rd5?

Why move a rook which isn't even under attack and on to a central square where it can be attacked all kinds of ways? Instead, 20 Bh6!, followed by e4-e5 is consistent and strong: 20 … Nd7 (or 20 … Bg7 21 Bxg7 Kxg7 22 e5! with a winning attack) 21 e5! dxe5 22 Ne4 Bg7 23 Bxg7 Kxg7 and now White can deliver mate in five with 24 Rxh7+! (sacrificing the other rook on f7 works as well) 24 … Kxh7 25 Rxf7+ etc.

20 … Bg7?!

20 … Qe7! 21 Nf3 Bb7 22 Bc1 Bxd5 23 cxd5 offers White full compensation for the sacrificed exchange. Still, Black's chances don't look all that bad either.

21 e5!?

Piling the pressure on d6. 21 h4! also looks dangerous for Black.

21 … Be6 22 Be4

After 22 exd6 c6!? 23 d7! cxd5 24 dxe8Q Qxe8 25 cxd5 Bxd5 26 c4 Bb7 27 d5 Nd7 White stands slightly better, but is no longer winning outright.

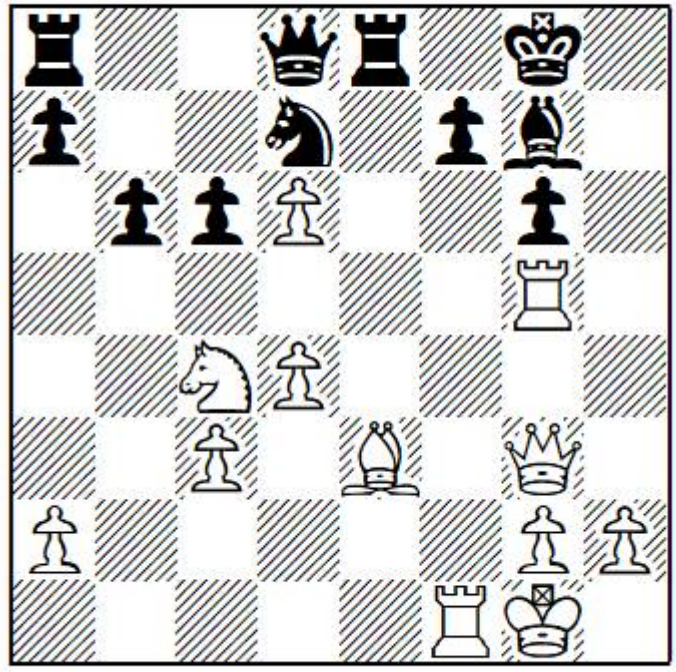
22 … Nd7?

Black should safeguard the a8-rook: 22 … Rc8! 23 exd6 c6 24 d7 Bxd7 25 Rd6 Re6 26 Bf4 h5 and the defence holds.

23 exd6! c6 24 Rg5 Bxc4

This is Bobby's point. Unfortunately, his assessment is off and White is winning again.

25 Bxg6! hxg6 26 Nxc4



Black is busted, down a choking pawn with his king still unsafe.

26 … Re6

If 26 … Nf6 27 Qf3 b5 28 Ne5 Qxd6 29 Nxg6! fxg6 30 Rxg6 Rf8 31 Qh3 Rf7 32 Bh6, Black is unable to defend.

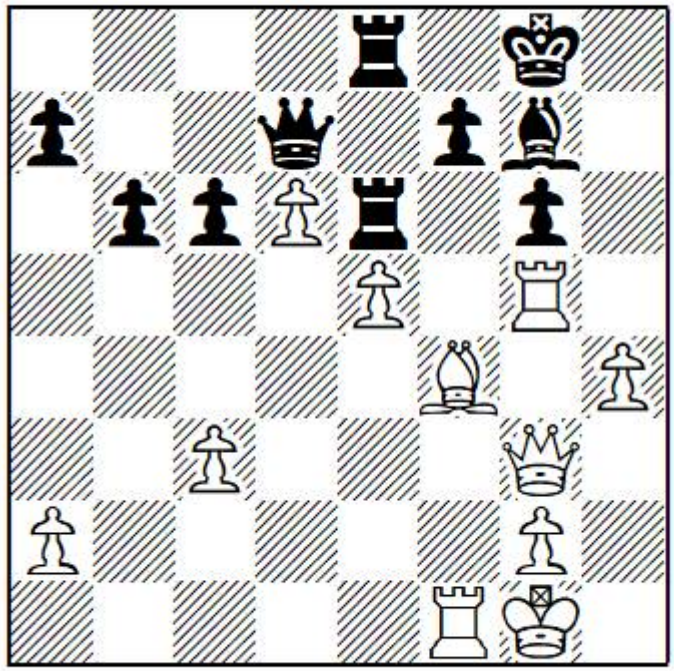
27 Ne5! Nxe5

Connecting White's pawns is suicide, but so is leaving the white knight where it stands. For example: 27 … Qe8 28 Bf4 c5 29 Nc6 cxd4 30 Nxd4 Re4 31 Nb5 Qf8 32 Nc7 Rc8 33 h4! and Black is busted.

28 dxe5 Qd7

28 … Bh6 is dismissed by 29 h4! Bxg5 30 Bxg5 Qe8 31 Bf6 with h4-h5 to follow.

29 Bf4 Rae8 30 h4!



There is no play for Black. Fischer can only wait while his opponent builds.

30 … Rf8 31 h5 Qe8 32 Rg4 c5

32 … Bxe5 33 Bxe5 Rxe5 34 hxg6 f6 35 g7 Rf7 36 Qh4 forces resignation.

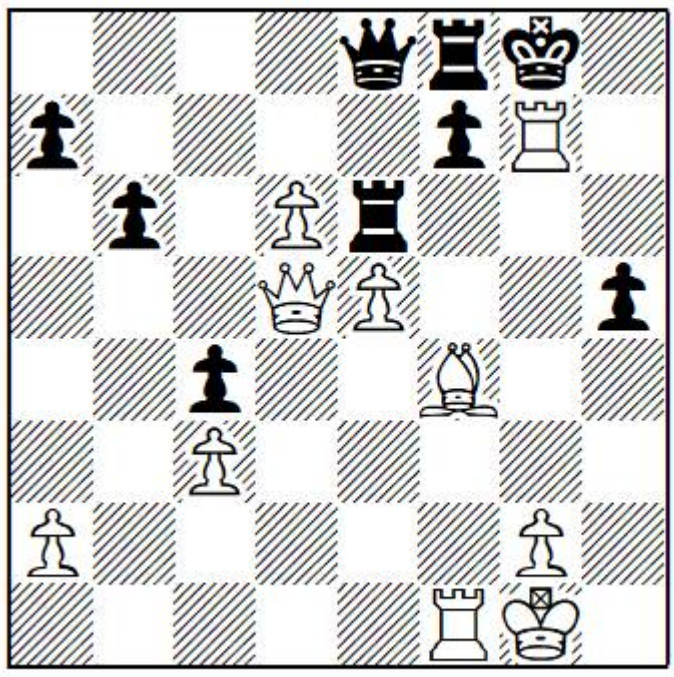
33 Qd3

Gligoric mercilessly hammers g6.

33 … c4 34 Qd5 gxh5

At this point everything loses.

35 Rxg7+!



Without the electrical charge, Dr. Frankenstein's creature remains no more than an unfinished project. We don't need to calculate when making such a sacrifice. Our eyes see the sickly dark squares around Black's king and we just know it works.

35 … Kxg7 36 Bg5! Qd7 37 Bf6+ Rxf6

There is something soothing about having no choice. If 37 … Kh6 38 Rf5, Black is soon mated.

38 exf6+! Kg6 39 Qe4+ Kg5

The king weaves through back streets to try and evade police checkpoints. I don't want to be one of those Chicken Little alarmists who claim the sky is falling, but here the sky for Fischer really is falling. There will be no salvation from the ruin and there is no point in trying to save a world which isn't worth saving. Of course Fischer could have resigned, since his odds at this point are zero.

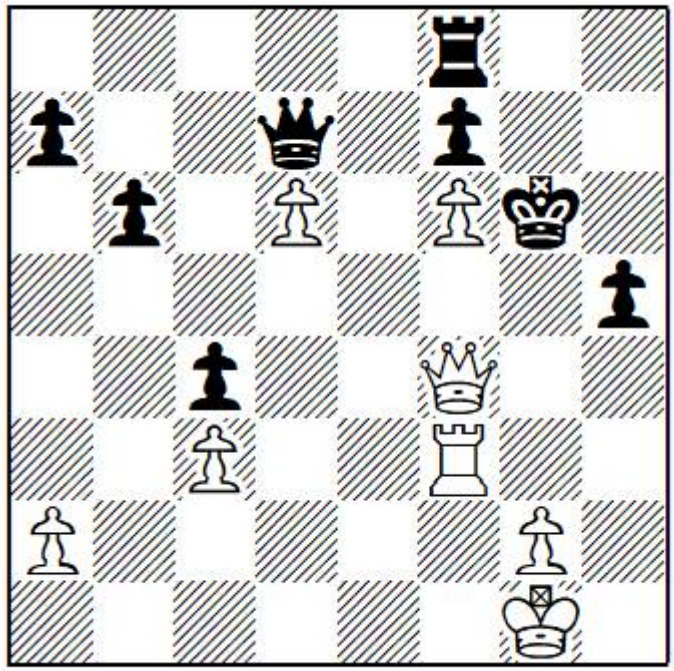
40 Qe5+

40 Qh7 is also deadly.

40 … Kg6 41 Qe4+ Kg5

If 41 … Kh6 42 Rf5, Black must hand over his queen to evade a quick mate.

42 Qf4+ Kg6 43 Rf3 1-0



Fischer's position is King Kong, immediately after the tumble off the Empire State Building. He must hand over either his queen, or his king.

Index of Complete Games

Bernstein.Y-Fischer.R, Netanya 1968
Bronstein.D-Fischer.R, Blitz Tournament, Herceg Novi 1970
Donovan.J-Fischer.R, U.S. Open, Oklahoma City 1956
Elo.A-Fischer.R, New Western Open, Milwaukee 1957
Fischer.R-A.Rouse.T, Chicago (simul) 1964
Fischer.R-Altusky.J, Offhand Game, New York 1954
Fischer.R-Benko.P, Candidates Tournament, Bled/Zagreb/Belgrade 1959
Fischer.R-Benko.P, U.S. Championship, New York 1965
Fischer.R-Bernstein.S, U.S. Championship, New York 1959
Fischer.R-Bisguier.A, Buenos Aires 1970
Fischer.R-Bisguier.A, U.S. Championship, New York 1963
Fischer.R-Bronstein.D, Blitz Tournament, Herceg Novi 1970
Fischer.R-De Gruchy.P, Montreal (simul) 1964
Fischer.R-Di Camillo.A, New Jersey Open, East Orange 1957
Fischer.R-Feuerstein.A, U.S. Championship, New York 1957
Fischer.R-Fox.Mau, Canadian Open, Montreal 1956
Fischer.R-German.E, Stockholm Interzonal 1962
Fischer.R-Gligoric.S, Training match, (Game 1) Sveti Stefan 1992
Fischer.R-Gligoric.S, Training match, (Game 3) Sveti Stefan 1992
Fischer.R-Gligoric.S, Training match, (Game 5) Sveti Stefan 1992
Fischer.R-Gligoric.S, Training match, (Game 7) Sveti Stefan 1992
Fischer.R-Gligoric.S, Training match, (Game 9) Sveti Stefan 1992
Fischer.R-Gloger.J, Cleveland (simul) 1964
Fischer.R-Ivkov.B, Blitz Tournament, Herceg Novi 1970
Fischer.R-Jacobs.J, Houston (simul) 1964

Fischer.R-Janushkovsky.A, Davis (simul) 1964
Fischer.R-Kagan.S, Netanya 1968
Fischer.R-Kelley.J, Houston (simul) 1964
Fischer.R-Korchnoi.V, Blitz Tournament, Herceg Novi 1970
Fischer.R-Kupper.J, Zürich 1959
Fischer.R-*Mac Hack VI*, Computer match, Cambridge 1977
Fischer.R-Matulovic.M, Blitz Tournament, Herceg Novi 1970
Fischer.R-Mednis.E, U.S. Championship, New York 1957
Fischer.R-Mednis.E, U.S. Open, Cleveland 1957
Fischer.R-Minic.D, Vinkovci 1968
Fischer.R-Nyman.W, Cicero (simul) 1964
Fischer.R-Ostojic.P, Blitz Tournament, Herceg Novi 1970
Fischer.R-Petrosian.T, Blitz Tournament, Herceg Novi 1970
Fischer.R-Plaster.J, Houston (simul) 1964
Fischer.R-Reshevsky.S, Blitz Tournament, Herceg Novi 1970
Fischer.R-Reshevsky.S, Sousse Interzonal 1967
Fischer.R-Rinaldo.J, U.S. Open, Cleveland 1957
Fischer.R-Rossetto.H, Mar del Plata 1959
Fischer.R-Rubinetti.J, Palma de Mallorca Interzonal 1970
Fischer.R-Sanchez.L, Santiago 1959
Fischer.R-Schweber.S, Buenos Aires 1970
Fischer.R-Sherwin.J, U.S. Championship, New York 1957
Fischer.R-Smyslov.V, Blitz Tournament, Herceg Novi 1970
Fischer.R-Sofrevski.J, Skopje 1967
Fischer.R-Spassky.B, Match (Game 19), Sveti Stefan/Belgrade 1992
Fischer.R-Tal.M, Blitz Tournament, Herceg Novi 1970
Fischer.R-Travis.E, Houston (simul) 1964
Fischer.R-Uhlmann.W, Blitz Tournament, Herceg Novi 1970
Fischer.R-Unzicker.W, Zürich 1959
Fischer.R-Zalys.I, Montreal (simul) 1964
Gligoric.S-Fischer.R, Training match, (Game 10) Sveti Stefan 1992
Gligoric.S-Fischer.R, Training match, (Game 2) Sveti

Stefan 1992
Gligoric.S-Fischer.R, Training match, (Game 4) Sveti Stefan 1992
Gligoric.S-Fischer.R, Training match, (Game 6) Sveti Stefan 1992
Gligoric.S-Fischer.R, Training match, (Game 8) Sveti Stefan 1992
Grossguth.C-Fischer.R, U.S. Junior Championship, Philadelphia 1956
Hort.V-Fischer.R, Blitz Tournament, Herceg Novi 1970
Ivkov.B-Fischer.R, Blitz Tournament, Herceg Novi 1970
Johannessen.S-Fischer.R, Havana Olympiad 1966
Kholmov.R-Fischer.R, Skopje 1967
Korchnoi.V-Fischer.R, Blitz Tournament, Herceg Novi 1970
Larsen.B-Fischer.R, Candidates semi-final (Game 4), Denver 1971
Lombardy.W-Fischer.R, Monte Carlo 1967
Mac Hack VI-Fischer.R, Computer match, Cambridge 1977
Mac Hack VI-Fischer.R, Computer match, Cambridge 1977
Matulovic.M-Fischer.R, Blitz Tournament, Herceg Novi 1970
Nikolic.E-Fischer.R, Vinkovci 1968
Ostojic.P-Fischer.R, Blitz Tournament, Herceg Novi 1970
Otteson.M-Fischer.R, New Western Open, Milwaukee 1957
Petrosian.T-Fischer.R, Blitz Tournament, Herceg Novi 1970
Smyslov.V-Fischer.R, Blitz Tournament, Herceg Novi 1970
Szabo.L-Fischer.R, Buenos Aires 1970
Tal.M-Fischer.R, Blitz Tournament, Herceg Novi 1970
Troianescu.O-Fischer.R, Netanya 1968
Uhlmann.W-Fischer.R, Palma de Mallorca Interzonal 1970
Yanofsky.D-Fischer.R, Stockholm Interzonal 1962

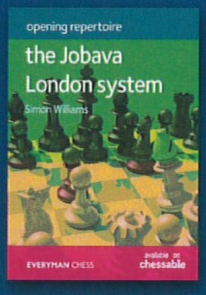
The Unknown Fischer

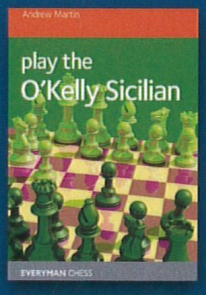
It is not really in doubt that Bobby Fischer is one of the greatest (if not the greatest) chess players of all-time. His name is recognized immediately by almost anyone with even a passing interest in chess. His many brilliant games are very well known and have been seen in numerous anthologies.

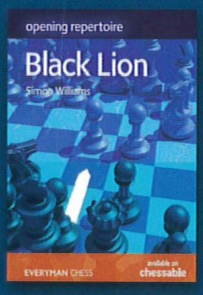
However, Fischer also played many games that have generally escaped public attention. These include early games before he was well known, simultaneous games, blitz games as well as many classical games that have simply fallen under the radar. There is also a match of ten games played against Svetozar Gligoric in Sveti Stefan before his famous "re-match" with Boris Spassky.

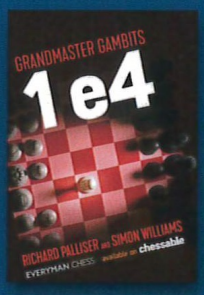
Prolific author Cyrus Lakdawala has tracked down many of these games. They provide fresh material for die-hard Fischer fans and provide numerous examples of Fischer's extraordinary chess talent. Thanks to his remarkable ability to find clear cut plans and strategies in any position, Fischer somehow managed to make chess look easy. This is a very instructive anthology.

Other great chess titles









EVERYMAN CHESS
www.everymanchess.com

US $29.95
UK £19.99

PLAY MAGNUS
GROUP OF COMPANIES

ISBN 978-1-78194-714-2
52995
9 781781 947142