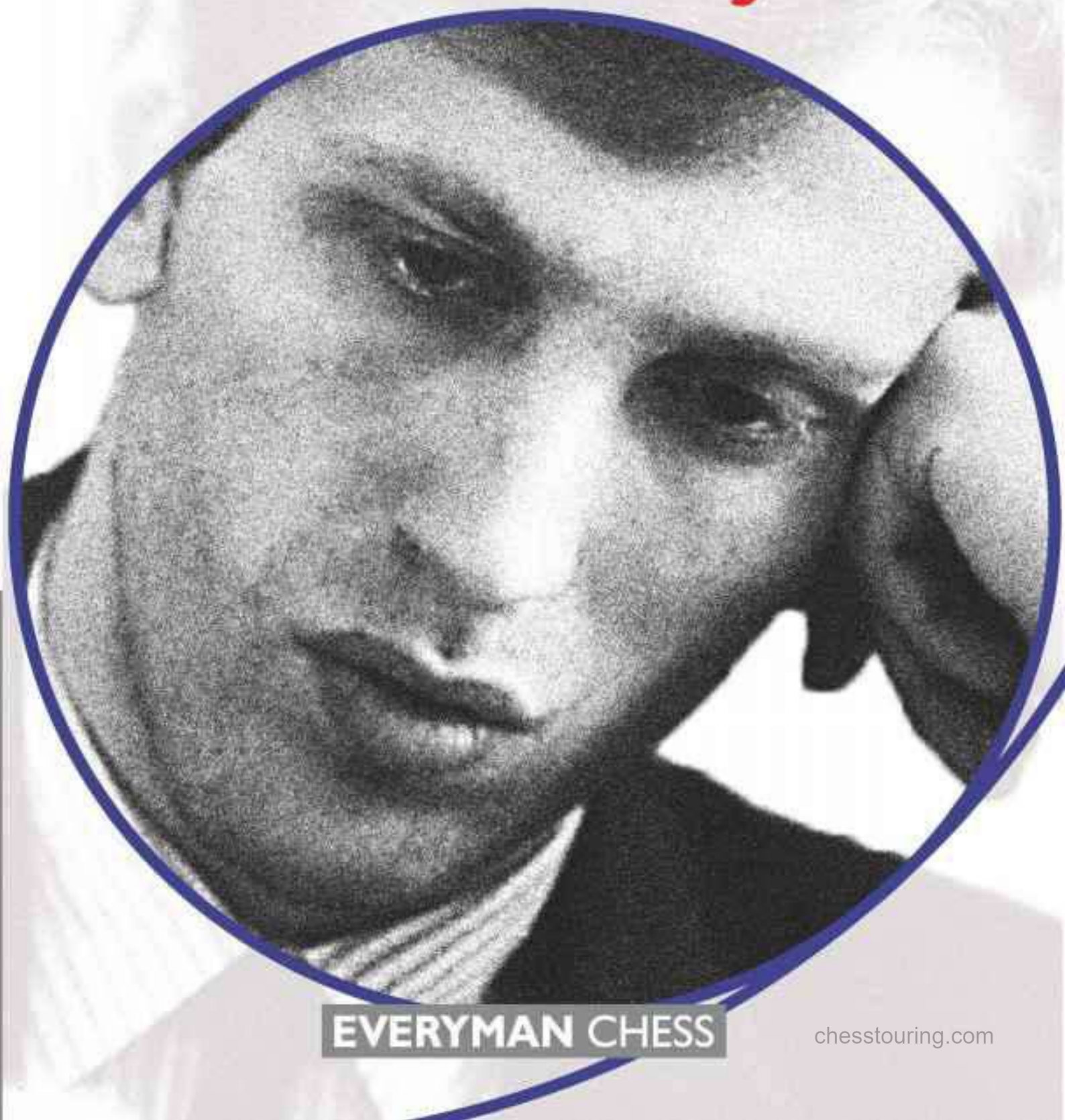


Cyrus Lakdawala

Fischer

move by move



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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 30 years, and coaches some of the top junior players in the U.S.

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Introduction

I'm young, I'm handsome, I'm fast, I'm pretty, and can't possibly be beat" – Muhammad Ali

Bobby Fischer, like Ali, grew bigger than his sport, and he bent our perceptions on how well a human can play chess. His life was one of legend, power, hubris and eventual self-destruction. More than any other great player, Fischer's triumphs and falls plumbed the depth of human experience. He was simultaneously extraordinary and pathetic, and the inevitability of his fall was on par with the lives of Hamlet and Willie Loman. His is essentially a feel-bad story, of rags to riches, to borderline-crazy recluse.

The most dominant chess player who ever lived was born March 9th, 1943, in Chicago. Even as a child, Bobby lived his life with the supreme confidence of one who knows he is cut out for big things. I sense that he loved chess because it had the power to take him somewhere else, out of his deep, inherent unhappiness – if only temporarily.

By the age of 14, he won the U.S. Championship, eight titles in all, each by a point or more. His 1963-1964 11-0 sweep of the championship may never be repeated. By age 15, Fischer qualified at Portoroz to become the youngest ever candidate for the world championship cycle. By 1970, he won the Palma de Mallorca Interzonal by an astounding 3.5 points ahead of his nearest competitor. By 1971 he was ranked number one in the world chess rankings. Then came his legendary match victories.

6-0, 6-Oh my God!

"Victory breeds hatred, for the conquered is unhappy." – The Buddha

First, Soviet GM Mark Taimanov fell by a typo-like 6-0 score. Many top players at the time interpreted this as an anomaly, of maybe Taimanov being horribly off form. Nobody expected Fischer to repeat this performance against the legendary GM Bent Larsen, then ranked equal 3rd/4th in the world. Yet Fischer did just that. If you just barely defeat an opponent, people may think you were lucky; brutalize an opponent, and future opponents learn to fear you.

Now Taimanov and Larsen were more resilient than most. If I were a world class player and lost to someone 0-6, I would most certainly suffer from post traumatic stress disorder, and would require antidepressants and therapy for years to come. Vasily Panov wrote: "Both (Fischer and Larsen) consider themselves the world's strongest chess players, and, of course, they are jealous towards each other, like Miss America and Miss Denmark."

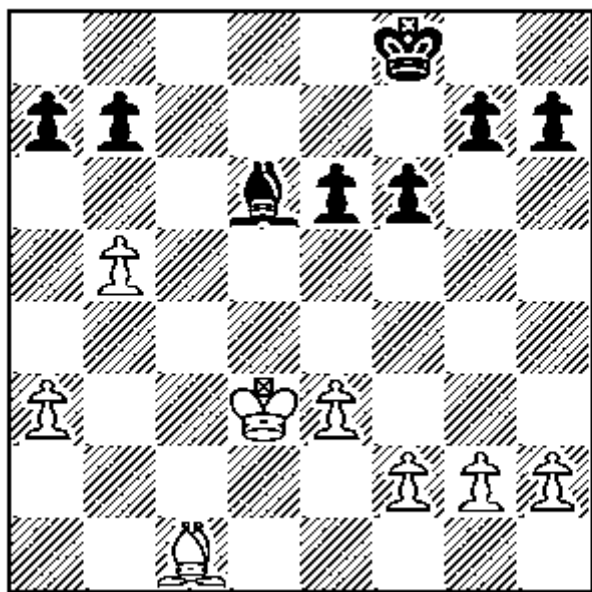
Larsen declared before that he would win the Candidates' matches and then the world title, and that "Fischer will never become a world champion", because he supposedly "always fears to lose a game". Before the match, Larsen boasted that he wasn't intimidated by Fischer, who he felt was cocooned by an undeserved legendary reputation. He claimed he would draw first blood, then get inside Fischer's head. Then after defeating Fischer, Larsen predicted he would go on to become world champion. Boy, was he proven wrong! After losing a razor-close first game (which you can play over in Chapter Four), which was as suspenseful as a Hitchcock film, Larsen just collapsed.

At this point, so enlarged was Fischer's legend, that I suspect his future opponents, Petrosian and Spassky, imputed hidden meaning into even his ordinary moves. Fischer then went on to

dismantle former World Champion Tigran Petrosian by a dominating 6.5-2.5. Normally, Petrosian had a knack for sucking the life out of an otherwise dynamic position, like flies into the nozzle of a vacuum cleaner, but not this time. At age 10, I remember reading a quote by some GM, asked to predict the outcome of the match. He replied: “What happens when a man who wins nearly every game he plays, meets a man who draws nearly every game he plays?”

The Match of the Century

Then show time, the 1972 world championship match against Spassky. It started disastrously for Fischer. In game one, in a completely drawn ending from this diagrammed position, Fischer committed an inexplicable beginner’s blunder:



W

Now, you, me and every other player in the world rated over 800 would play 29 ... Ke7. Instead Fischer played the insane 29 ... Bxh2??, after which he duly got his bishop trapped, after the painfully obvious 30 g3. Fischer’s beginner’s blunder left the chess world in slack-jawed disbelief. Your writer was at the time a dorky 11-year-old E-player, and even I knew the move was idiotic.

So Bobby just threw away game one. He claimed the cameras in the playing hall disturbed his concentration and refused to play game two with them on. The organizers had banked on income from the televising of the match and refused. Therefore Fischer failed to show up for game two, forfeiting. The entire match was in jeopardy. Those who dealt with Fischer soon learned: don’t expect compromise from an essentially irrational personality. The nervous match organizers backed down and agreed to have Spassky and Fischer play in a back room, sans cameras or live spectators.

‘Compromise’ was a word alien to Fischer’s unamenable mind, which interpreted the world in blacks and whites, with no room for shades of grey. So starting the match 0-2, Fischer proved the prognosticators all wrong, by trouncing Spassky in the remaining games of the match, winning it by a score of 12.5-8.5 (which was really 7.5 for Spassky, since it included the forfeit loss, which no writer is going to put in a best games collection).

Now Spassky could have walked out after two games, and nobody could blame him. But he was a gentleman, and also, there was the psychological factor: Fischer was the older brother, stronger, smarter, meaner and always one or more steps ahead – so much so that virtually every GM of his day felt dwarfed by his immensity. Spassky in 1972 was the reigning champion, and Fischer the challenger. Yet didn’t it feel like it was the other way around, where Spassky was the one who had something to prove?

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“I have a minus score (against Spassky). I lost three and drew two. I was better than him when I

lost those games. I pressed for the win. My overall tournament record is much better than his. I'm not afraid of him, he's afraid of me," claimed Fischer in an interview prior to the match. To his great credit, Boris remained to finish the match, and they produced some beautiful chess.

~~Was Fischer Mentally Ill?~~

What happens if a group of people worship a god, and then the god loses his mind? Fischer was a man whose disturbed psyche was profoundly unfit for an ordinary life. He was even more unfit to deal with fame, renown and financial success. He was a societal misfit with the courage to realize his misfitdom. Of course it's futile for a person like me, whose grounding in psychology is merely that of an interested lay person. I'm not qualified to try and probe into Fischer's swiftly degenerating mental status, since I'm not a psychiatrist or psychologist (I'm currently working on another book with Columbia Psychology professor Joel Sneed, and boy do I need his help here in this book).

No matter how irrational a person becomes, he or she rarely reaches a point where they are oblivious to their own sense of misery. Fischer was a man who couldn't be beaten on the chess board, yet was beaten in life by his own mind states. To the paranoid mind, every stranger is a potential enemy. His rising paranoia fast embraced a conspiratorial world view of a cabal of Communists, Jews (yes, Fischer was Jewish himself, although he vehemently denied it later in his life), and later the entire United States, out to get him.

Kasparov wrote: "Apart from chess, Fischer had nothing ... After becoming World Champion, Fischer could not play anymore. This was the danger: he achieved perfection, and everything after this was already less than perfect." Of course there are myriad books on Fischer's life, which he crowded with controversy. So in this one we just touch on his chess games, not his life.

Fischer's Style: the Fischer-Capa Connection

"The great Cuban José Capablanca had played this way half a century earlier, but Fischer's modern interpretation of 'victory through clarity' was a revelation." – Garry Kasparov

Intuition is that ethereal quality which we can't taste, hear, smell, touch or see. Yet we still place our trust in it. Fischer's intuition was on par with Capablanca's, where he just knew the right idea, seemingly without analytical contemplation. On the chess board Fischer had a taste for the orderly, which was strangely at odds with his disorderly mind. Few huge tasks are completed without exertion, yet Fischer in his prime, like Capablanca, had the gift of defeating world class players, seemingly without resistance. He was the sighted mariner living in the world of the blind, oriented and guided by the stars which the rest of us were unable to see.

Fischer wasn't an amphibious player, equally suited to strategic and irrational positions. He excelled in the former, which made him vulnerable to the Tals and Gellers of the world, in the latter. Fischer was above all a strategist, an aggressive Capablanca. His pieces exuded a flow of performing in efficient unison and his deadly strategic encroachment had a way of grappling the enemy, pulling him closer. He found hidden defects in his opponent's positions with an optometrist's eye for anomaly in the his patient's retina. He somehow mysteriously tamed chaos into pure mathematics. Fischer, like Capa, had an almost magical way of chasing a distant complication, which when reached, revealed itself in utter simplicity. He unearthed the central principle of its natural process – its beating heart – around which the position hinged.

I have to admit that I always found it odd that a person of Fischer's ~~disputatious~~ nature was capable of such harmonious, flowing chess. We all harbour different interpretations of the word

‘acquire’. To a natural tactician, a chaotic position is something to be cherished, while for a positional player, the fact that queens have been removed from the board is a cause for joy. Fischer is a candidate for the latter category.

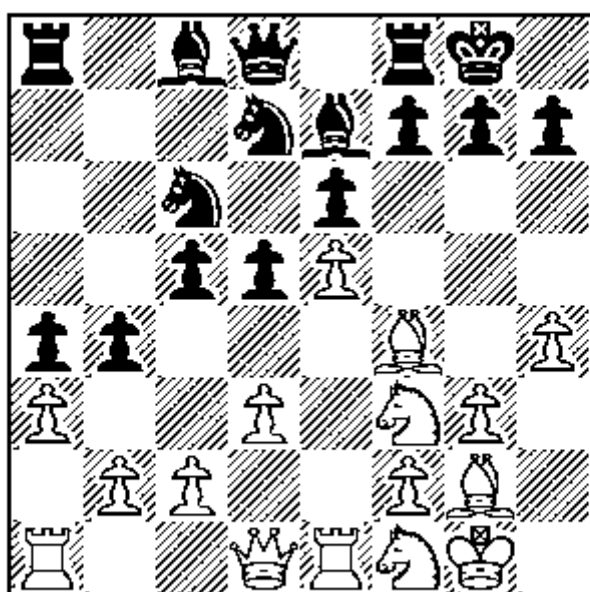
Like Capa, Fischer ruled in the realm of endings and clear positions. Like Capa before him, Fischer was renowned for his almost instantaneous capacity to uncover a position’s elemental factor, no matter how deeply hidden. Intuition isn’t merely a guess. Instead, it is actual analysis done secretly in some back room in our subconscious mind. Fischer also never endured that shivering sense of dislocation the rest of us experience, when our clocks run low – mainly since he tended to move with astounding speed and almost never got into time pressure.

Fischer’s armour wasn’t chinkless, since he lost games via overextension, pushing past tolerable limits trying too hard to win. He was also a notorious material grabber, whether earned honestly or ill gotten didn’t seem to matter to him. Yet these unauthorised withdrawals from his opponent’s bank accounts were not done without taking on appalling risks. In some cases it almost appeared as if Fischer provoked opponents to a degree to which he hoped to be contradicted.

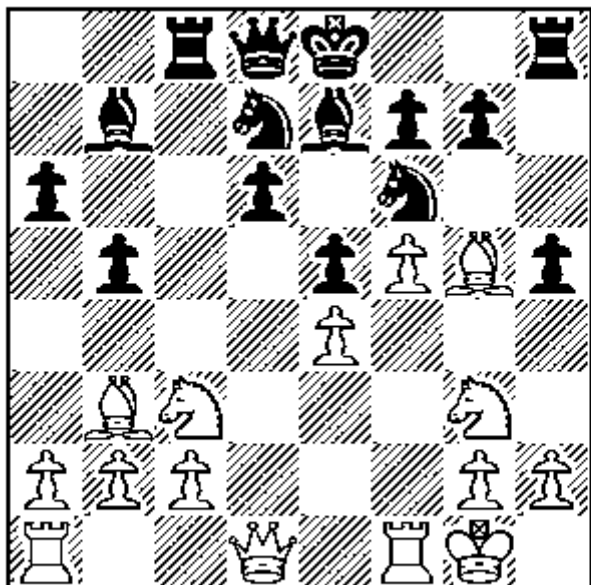
Fischer’s Openings and Contributions to Theory

In the opening phase, Fischer, like Botvinnik and Alekhine before him, intimidated opponents. He memorized theory the way ancient poets recited the Iliad. And he was a font of creativity, always ready with a prepared novelty in virtually every opening he played. In this book, prepare yourself for some stock scenery. This book, unlike other players’ games collections, lacks a broad demographic cross-section of opening lines. The reason? Fischer’s incredibly narrow opening repertoire.

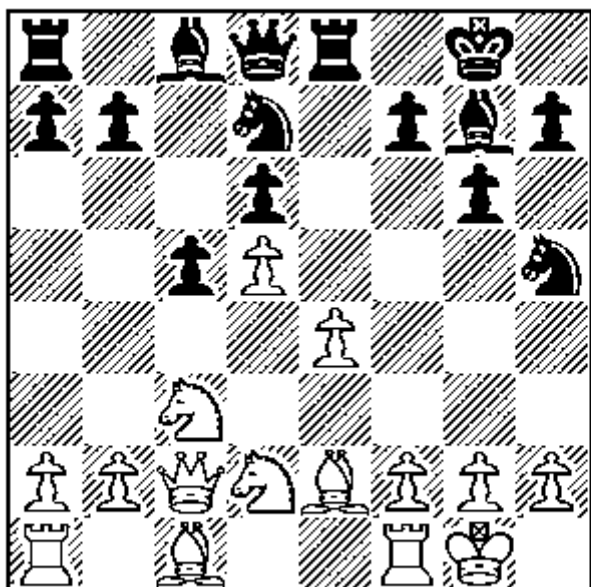
Fischer’s Alma Mater lines were: Fischer-Sozin Sicilian, Najdorf Sicilian, King’s Indian and King’s Indian Attacks (which remain to this day, authoritative blueprints on how to handle the line), which we visit over and over again. These, and other favourites laid claim to Fischer’s lifetime allegiance. As for opening preparation, Fischer dominated his rivals, continually surprising them, sometimes with sound ideas, and sometimes with single game, semi-sound ambushes, which were also implements of his craft: For example:



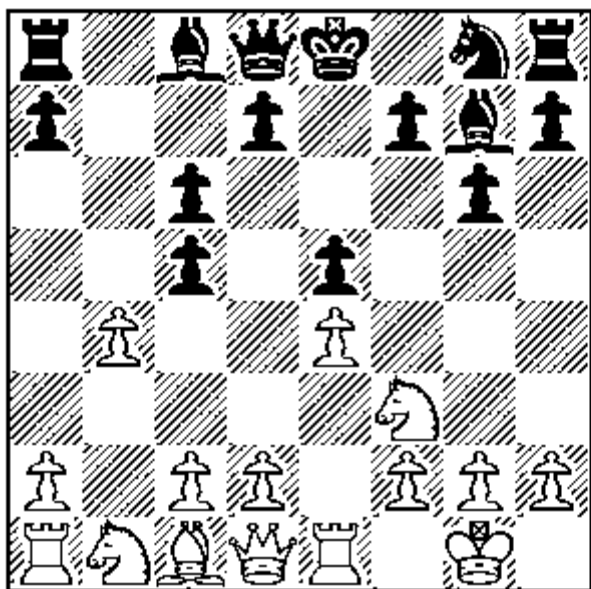
In Fischer-Myagmarsuren 1967, Bobby just challenged precedence with 13 a3!! . Now you may ask why this innocuous move is so strong? Well, it prevents Black from puncturing the queenside dark squares with ... a3. Fischer correctly judged the slight opening of the queenside doesn't hurt White. The idea is so strong that it remains White's main move in the position even today.



At the same tournament, Fischer, as Black against Robert Byrne, just unleashed the devastating novelty 13 ... h5!!, a move which in a single stroke undermines e4 and which de-popularized his own beloved Fischer-Sozin Sicilian.



Imagination is often stifled by the fear of committing a blunder, but not this time. This is one of the most shocking opening novelties of all time, and one played in a world championship game. Fischer just played 11 ... Nh5!?, goading Spassky to chop the knight and seriously devalue Black's kingside pawns. Spassky did just that, but followed with uncharacteristic over-caution and got strategically crushed. As it turns out, Fischer's novelty was dubious, yet did exactly what it was designed to do in a single game: confuse and disorient the opponent.



In the final diagram, Fischer once again confused Spassky in their 1992 rematch, with a crazy yet sound Wing Gambit idea arising from a Rossolimo Sicilian.

~~Fischer~~, the Greatest of them all?

Fischer is in all probability, the most idealised (and hated!), and most over-praised player in the chess pantheon. I swore to myself that I would be objective when beginning this book, yet found myself gushing over his many double exclaims. Fischer faced powerful intellects across the board, who were all vanquished by his telepathic intuition, which overrode his opponents' intellect and logic.

Then when he became world champion, his chess came to a standstill. In a way Fischer was the worst world champion of all, since he refused to play even a single serious tournament or match game during his tenure. It's almost as if he channelled Nietzsche, thinking: "That which doesn't beat me, makes me stronger." And how can one lose if one never plays a game?

Fischer was a prodigious worker who studied chess (in his head), virtually every waking hour. He claimed to have deeply studied over 1,000 books, and even studied the great romantics like Adolf Anderssen and Paul Morphy – which should be a lesson to young players who only study opening books and databases.

I don't really know what 'greatest' means, since there are so many categories. A few months ago, a group email discussion raged among players which included GMs Yasser Seirawan and Jim Tarjan, and IMs John Watson, Jack Peters, Jeremy Silman, Tony Saïdy, John Donaldson and yours truly. We agreed on the following categories (although I added a few) which constitute 'greatness':

Creativity: Here, the greatest may be Anderssen, Reti, Nimzowitsch, Bronstein, Korchnoi, Larsen, Tal, Petrosian, Ivanchuk – only two of which became world champions.

Irrational positions: This was Fischer's weakest category. My candidates: Andersson, Lasker, Bronstein, Tal, Spassky, Korchnoi, Kasparov, Anand, Morozevich, Nakamura.

Attacking ability: My candidates for greatest in this category would be Anderssen, Morphy, Alekhine, Keres, Bronstein, Geller, Tal, Spassky, Fischer (although the inclusion of Fischer in this category may be debatable, since his attacks invariably flowed from strategic superiority), Kasparov, Topalov, Anand.

Defence and counterattacking ability: Lasker, Capablanca, Petrosian, Korchnoi, Fischer, Karpov, Kramnik, Carlsen.

Strategic understanding and planning: Morphy, Staunton, Tarrasch, Steinitz, Capablanca, Euwe, Botvinnik, Smyslov, Petrosian, Fischer, Karpov, Kramnik, Carlsen.

Intuition: Morphy, Capablanca, Smyslov, Fischer, Karpov, Kramnik, Carlsen.

Tactical ability and combinational vision: Anderssen, Morphy, Alekhine, Keres, Bronstein, Tal, Fischer, Kasparov, Topalov, Anand.

Feel for the initiative: Morphy, Alekhine, Keres, Bronstein, Geller, Tal, Botvinnik, Spassky, Fischer, Kasparov, Anand, Topalov.

Calculation ability: Lasker, Korchnoi, Kasparov.

Opening research ability: Alekhine, Botvinnik, Fischer, Kasparov, Anand.

Endgame technique: Rubinstein, Lasker, Capablanca, Fischer, Karpov, Kramnik, Carlsen.

Peak strength: No other world champion dominated like Fischer did from 1970-72.

Longevity: Lasker, Smyslov, Korchnoi, Karpov.

In my lists, Fischer leads in the categories. Obviously, there is no such thing as ‘greatest player’, since it’s impossible to know if Morphy was stronger (for his era) than Capablanca or Fischer were for theirs. I can’t say Fischer was the best chess player of all time, but I do know that his games have almost become the standard by which other great players are judged.

I would think it would be exasperating for great players to be compared to Fischer, and have their chess skills judged lacking. Appreciation of art comes more from the observer, than the object itself. One tourist can look upon the Mona Lisa and think: “Ehhh. Big deal!”, while another may be entranced by her smile. Players either like or dislike Nimzowitsch, Larsen, Tal or Petrosian’s games. With Fischer’s games, there is no debate. I haven’t met a single player who dislikes Fischer’s chess games or his style. Have you?

Post World Championship Blues

After his triumphant 1972 match with Spassky, Fischer basically fell off the grid, living the life of a recluse, only to resurface in 1992, for his rematch with Spassky. Fischer won this one decisively, but neither player was the same man of 1972. Still, the combustible Spassky/Fischer combination brought out the best in both, and they produced some pretty games. This is where it gets depressing.

In 1992, war-torn Yugoslavia (Sveti-Stefan/Belgrade was the site of their rematch) was under a U.N. embargo. First, the U.S. State Department forbade Fischer to play the match (although nearly all of us harboured a secret Edward Snowden-like stick-it-to-the-man sympathy for Fischer at the time, and clearly wanted him to play). You guessed it. Fischer called a press conference and ‘loudly’ spat on the State Department letter. The unamused U.S. government immediately demanded income tax on Fischer’s winnings in the match. Fischer refused to pay.

He made anti-American, anti-communist, anti-Semitic remarks on multiple radio stations. I still remember his interview with a Filipino radio station the day after the 911 attack, where Fischer made vile, blood pressure-raising statements, which I won’t repeat here, since they are all available on the internet. In 2004 he was arrested in Japan. The U.S. State Department revoked his passport (he shouldn’t have spit on that letter!), and he was held in a cell for eight months, under constant fear of deportation and prosecution to the U.S. In 2005, Iceland granted Fischer citizenship. He lived out his life there and died of renal failure (he irrationally refused treatment for a urinary tract infection, which then morphed into kidney failure) in 2008, at age 64, the same number of squares on the chess board.

One problem with a book on Fischer is that there are a million other books on the same subject. IM Byron Jacobs suggested that I look for some unknown games, rather than his well-known masterpieces. So I would guess that the ration is around 70% of his familiar games, and 30% of games you may not have seen.

In the following game, GM Leonid Stein, a master of complex positions, lured Fischer into an irrational position – Fischer's *bête noire*. So we get a glimpse of Fischer in his worst possible position, against one of the top GMs in the world, and still he pulls off a victory.

~~Game 1~~
R.Fischer-L.Stein
Sousse Interzonal 1967
Ruy Lopez

1 e4 e5!?

GM Leonid Stein was mainly a Sicilian player, so he clearly came to the game with prepared analysis against Fischer's Ruy Lopez.

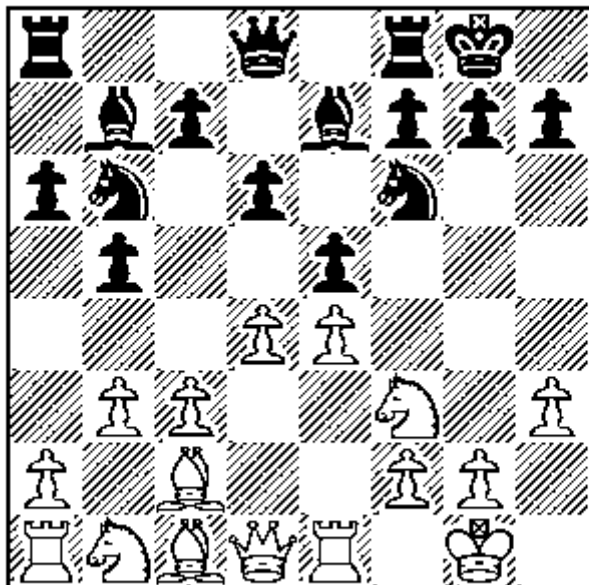
2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Ba4 Nf6 5 0-0 Be7 6 Re1 b5 7 Bb3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 Bb7 10 d4 Na5!?

This is a bit of an odd mix of variations. Today, most players choose 10 ... Re8, the Zaitsev variation, which hadn't really come into existence when this game was played.

11 Bc2 Nc4?!

Stein was clearly trying to confuse Fischer by taking him out of theory, early on. In doing so, he confuses himself, reaching an inferior version of the Breyer variation. Black is better off playing 11 ... c5 12 Nbd2 cxd4 13 cxd4 exd4 14 Nxd4 Re8 15 Nf1 Bf8 16 Ng3 g6. Black's d-pawn isn't weak and his pieces are active, B.Vuckovic-R.Rapport, Plovdiv 2012.

12 b3 Nb6



13 Nbd2

Question: Why didn't White pick off the e-pawn?

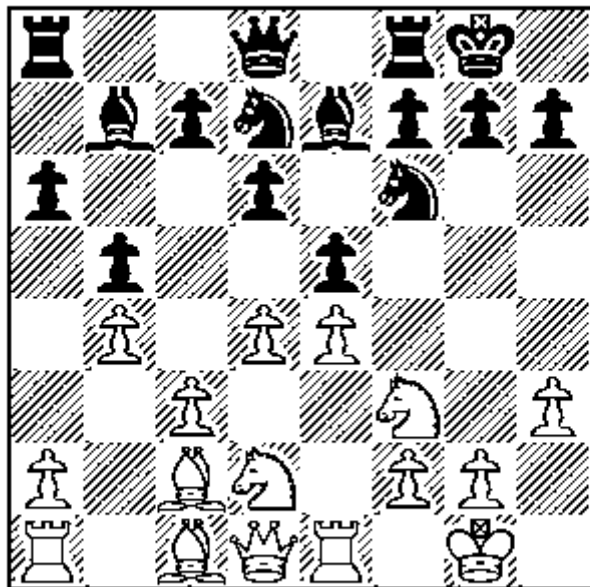
Answer: Black regains it via tactics after 13 dxe5 dxe5 14 Qxd8 Rfxd8 15 Nxe5 and now Black can simply go 15 ... Nxe4!, since the c1-bishop is loose at the end of the variation.

13 ... Nbd7

Now the game looks like a Breyer line, but one where Black loses time, since it took him five moves (!) for his knight to reach d7.

14 b4

A new move at the time. 14 Bb2 c5 15 Nf1 Re8 16 a4 Bf8 17 Ng3 Qc7 18 Qd3?! was P.Keres-S.Gligoric Zurich 1959. This is an awkward placement for White's queen (he would be better off closing the centre with 18 d5), and at this point, Black stands at least equal after the freeing break 18 ... d5!.



14 ... exd4!?

Question: Why did Black give up control of the pawn centre?

Answer: This capture, followed by ... c5 is typical for many Lopez positions. Black turns the game into a kind of Benoni structure, considerably sharpening the game. Stein's move is more accurate than 14 ... Re8 which allows White's knight access to a5 after 15 Nb3, V.Liberzon-F.Trois, Buenos Aires 1979.

15 cxd4 a5

15 ... c5!? leads to a kind of super-Benoni after 16 bxc5 dxc5 17 d5. I prefer White's 5:3 kingside/central majority over Black's 3:1 queenside majority.

16 bxa5 c5 17 e5!?

Fischer essentially abandons all queenside intent to go after Stein's king. He can also try the calmer strategic route 17 Bb2 Qxa5 18 a4! when White seizes control over the c4-square.

17 ... dxe5

Stein wasn't the type of player who went for a move like 17 ... Ne8.

18 dxe5 Nd5 19 Ne4

We note a clear territorial demarcation between the two camps. Black places his hopes on his queenside initiative, while Fischer takes direct aim at Black's king.

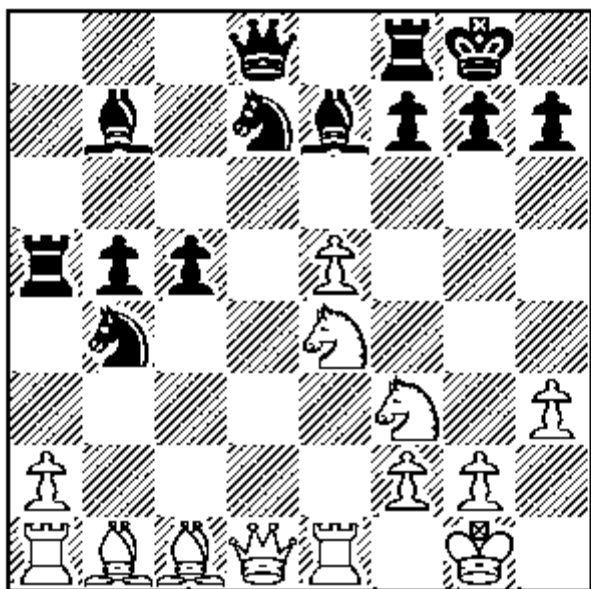
19 ... Nb4!

This causes discord in White's camp.

20 Bb1

Of course White must preserve his light-squared bishop if he has hopes of a successful assault on Black's king. It comes at high cost: Fischer's a1-rook is completely out of play, and will be for a long time.

20 ... Rxa5



21 Qe2

Fischer decides to provision his forces before launching the invasion. Also to be considered are the lines:

a) 21 e6 fxe6 22 Nfg5 Ra6 23 Nd6 Bxd6 24 Bxh7+ Kh8 25 Qh5 Nf6 26 Qh4 which looks deadly. However, Black has a startling defence with 26 ... Bg3! 27 fxg3 Qd4+ 28 Qxd4 cxd4 29 Bd2 Nxa2 30 Bd3 Bd5 31 Bxb5 Rb6 and he stands no worse.

b) 21 Nfg5! Bxe4 22 Bxe4! Bxg5 23 Bxg5 Qxg5 24 Qxd7 Qd8 25 e6! fxe6 26 Qxe6+ Kh8 27 Rad1 Qf6 28 Qxf6 gxf6 29 Rd7 Re8 30 Re3 f5 31 Bxf5 Rxe3 32 Rxh7+ Kg8 33 fxe3 c4 34 Rb7 (Black will be hard pressed to save the game) 34 ... Nxa2 35 h4 (the h-pawn is ready to roll down the board) 35 ... Kf8 (intending ... b4, without allowing Be6+) 36 h5 b4 37 Bb1 Nc3 38 Bg6 Rb5 39 Rc7 and Black is busted, since there is no longer a good defence to the h-pawn's push to the promotion square.

21 ... Nb6?

Question: Why condemn this move when

Black's initiative is obviously on the queenside?

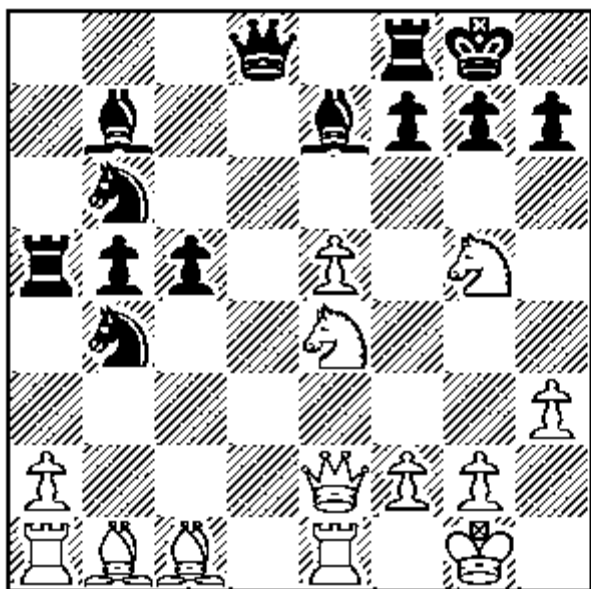
Answer: Faith in some doctrines is impossible to validate through personal experience. We fear death in the abstract, since we all operate under the mistaken assumption: "I realize that I will die some day in the distant future – but not today." We sense a conflicted intention, the way a person may dubiously place sushi and lasagne next to each other on the buffet plate.

Stein mistakenly recruits a piece to accelerate his queenside initiative, while at the same time, depriving his king of a key defender, a far higher priority. All fair contracts include reciprocal trades or obligations. In this case I see Black giving up a lot (his king safety), and getting far less in return.

Fischer suggested 21 ... Re8?! intending ... Nf8. Even then, White's chances look promising after 22 Neg5! Nf8 23 e6!, and if 23 ... f6? 24 Nxh7! Nxh7 25 Bg6! gives White a winning attack, since it's hard to find a defence against the coming Nh4 and Qh5.

Houdini suggests 21 ... Qb6! 22 a3 c4 23 Be3 Qa6 24 Bd4 Nd3! 25 Bxd3 cxd3 26 Qxd3 Qg6 when for the pawn, Black obtains bishop-pair, light-square control, and most importantly, a safer king than in the other lines.

22 Nfg5!



It's a jarring realization when we discover that our baseline assumption was completely mistaken. Now Stein is powerless to evade the consequences of his last move and a quick glance tells us that White's attack is of a decisive nature.

22 ... Bxe4

A huge concession, which not only hands over bishop-pair and light squares, but also gives White's queen a free jump into the attack. It may feel as if this swap fails to generate proportional relief to the concession given away, yet he had nothing better. Searching for a saving defence in this position is a bit like the lost hiker attempting to discover the location of a snow-covered trail, now completely devoid of landmarks.

Alternatives are not very encouraging for Black, and the geometry intersects precisely to form a perfect series of lines where all of White's wishes come together. For example:

a) 22 ... h6 may have been Stein's original intent, until he realized White had 23 Nh7!! . This nocturnal flash of lightning gets our attention: 23 ... Re8 (23 ... Kxh7?? walks into 24 Nxc5+ Kg8 25 Nxb7, forking queen and rook) 24 Nhf6+! Bxf6 (24 ... gxf6?? 25 Qg4+ Kh8 26 Nd6! Bxd6 27 Qf5 forces mate) 25 Nxf6+ gxf6 26 Qg4+ Kf8 27 Bxh6+ Ke7 28 e6! (Black's king is too exposed to hope for long-term survival) 28 ... Kd6 29 Bf4+ Kc6 30 Be4+ N4d5 31 exf7 Rxe4 32 Rxe4 (threat: Re8, which can't be halted) 32 ... b4 (or 32 ... Qf8 33 Qe6+ Qd6 34 Qxd6 mate) 33 Re8 and White promotes.

b) 22 ... g6 leaves gaping punctures in Black's kingside dark squares. Black is unable to survive the sacrifice: 23 Nxe7! . If 23 ... Kxe7 24 Nd6! Bxd6 25 Qh5+ Kg7 26 Qh6+ Kg8 27 Bxg6 (27 Bb2!! also works for White) 27 ... fxg6 28 Qxg6+ Kh8 and now White has the shocking 29 Bb2!! . The bishop believes in his own saintliness, mainly based upon the hypothetical act of self-sacrifice which he has yet to perform. Following 29 ... Be7 30 e6+ Rf6 (30 ... Bf6 31 e7 forces a quick mate) 31 Re5!! Black is mated after 31 ... Rxe6 32 Rh5+ Kg8 33 Rh8.

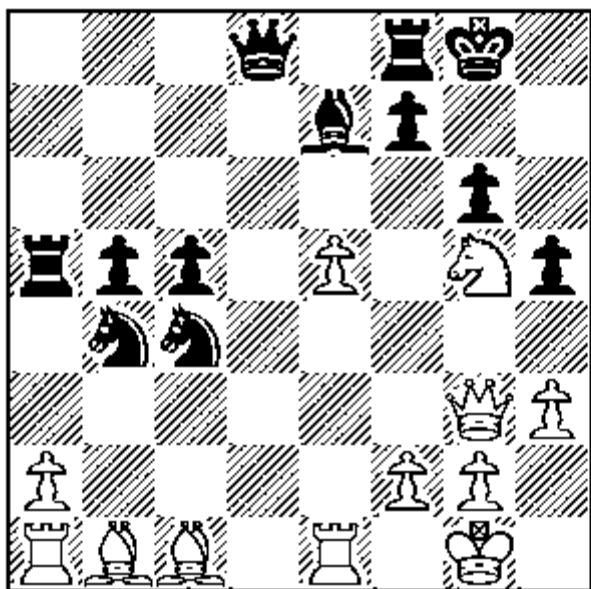
23 Qxe4 g6 24 Qh4 h5

Black's kingside is gravely weakened. He can't tolerate 24 ... Bxg5? 25 Bxg5 Qe8 26 Bf6 N4d5 27 Qh6! Nxf6 28 Bxg6! fxg6 29 exf6 Qf7 30 Re7 winning the queen.

25 Qg3

The queen takes aim at the softest spot in Black's camp: g6.

25 ... Nc4



Exercise (combination alert): It becomes obvious that Black's king position is a sparrow's nest, built near a family of hawks. The position screams for a combination. How would you continue?

26 Nf3?

This is a segregated society of those who work and those who don't. White's lazy knight, as you may have concluded, is firmly in the latter category. A rare case of Fischer playing it safe – and mistakenly so.

Answer: White can obliterate Black immediately with annihilation of the king's cover: 26 Nxf7! Rxf7 27 Bxg6 (now Black's kingside is the domain of the dead, more than the living) 27 ... Rh7 (or 27 ... Rg7 28 Bh6 Qf8 29 a4 bxa4 30 Re4 Nb6 31 Rf4 and Black is unable to move his queen; if 31 ... Qd8? 32 Bf7+ forces mate) 28 e6 Ra7 29 a3 Nc6 30 Qf3! Bf6 (after 30 ... N6e5 31 Bxh7+ Kxh7 32 Qxh5+ Kg8 33 Rxe5 Nxe5 34 Bb2 Bf6 35 Bxe5 White wins) 31 Qxc6! Bxa1 32 Qxb5 Nd6 33 Bxh7+ Rxh7 34 Bg5! Nxb5 (34 ... Qxg5 35 Qb8+ Kg7 36 Qxd6 Bc3 37 e7 wins) 35 Bxd8 Bc3 36 e7 Nd6 37 e8Q+ Nxe8 38 Rxe8+ Kf7 39 Re7+ Kg6 40 Rxh7 Kxh7 leaves White up two pawns in the bishop ending, with an easy conversion.

26 ... Kg7

26 ... Nd3 is met with 27 Bxd3! (27 Rd1? walks into Black's cheapo 27 ... Nxc1! which removes White's fearsome dark-squared bishop) 27 ... Qxd3 28 Bg5! (even stronger than 28 Bh6 Re8 29 e6 Qf5) 28 ... Bxg5 29 Qxg5 Qf5 30 Qh6! (threat: Ng5) 30 ... f6 31 e6 Ne5 32 Nxe5 fxe5 33 e7 Re8 34 Rxe5! with a winning position.

27 Qf4

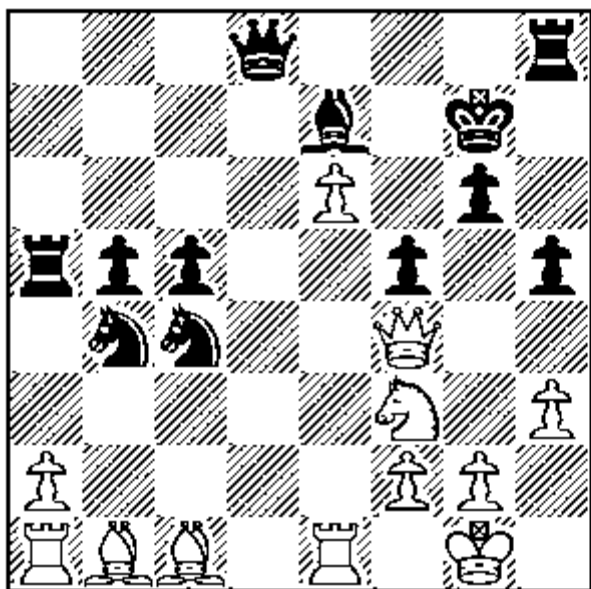
Threatening infiltration to h6.

27 ... Rh8 28 e6

The pressure of further contact increases the pain of a bruise. Fischer loosens Black's kingside cover further.

28 ... f5

Alternatively, 28 ... Bf6 29 exf7 Ra6 30 Re8! Rxe8 31 fxe8N+ Qxe8 32 Qh6+ Kg8 33 Bxg6 with a decisive attack.



Exercise (combination alert): Black's disorienting peril is similar to the mountain climber who suddenly experiences dizziness from low blood sugar, while clutching the ledge. Three black pieces loiter on the queenside, far away from their king. White must act before they come to the rescue. How would you continue White's attack?

Answer: Annihilation of the king's cover.

29 Bxf5! Qf8

This move's expression is one of necessity struggling with distaste. Acceptance also fails: 29 ... gxf5 (a move made with the philosophy: pay a blackmailer to leave you alone, and he just takes your money and returns the next day, demanding more) 30 Qg3+ Kh7 (30 ... Kf8?? 31 Qg6 Qe8 32 Bh6+ Rxh6 33 Qxh6+ Kg8 34 Ng5 Bxg5 35 Qxg5+ Kh8 36 Rad1 Ra8 37 Rd7 forces mate) 31 Bg5! Rg8 32 Rad1 Qe8 33 Rd7 Rg7 34 Qc7 and Black collapses.

30 Be4?

This little indiscretion represents a blemish on the bishop's otherwise stainless life. When we press, how much is too much? It isn't easy to arrive at the precise point, between too much and too little. In this case, Fischer's move falls into the too-little category. Even Fischer's misjudgements were similar to Capa's. Fischer relegates a promising attack into the not-worth-the-effort category. He opts for the safe, technical endgame route, which gravely complicates his winning task.

30 Nh4! is powerful, as shown by 30 ... Bxh4 (30 ... g5 31 Qg3 Qb8 32 Ng6 Qxg3 33 fxg3 Re8 34 Nxe7 Rxe7 35 Bxg5 Re8 36 Rad1 is decisive) 31 Qxh4 and then:

a) 31 ... gxf5 32 Qg5+ Kh7 33 Qxh5+ Kg7 34 Qg5+ Kh7 35 e7 Qe8 36 Re6 Ra6 37 Bb2!! ("Temporal boundaries are for mere mortals," claims the mad bishop, as he leaps off the cliff, thinking he can fly; as it turns out, he can) 37 ... Nxb2 38 Rae1 and White forces mate.

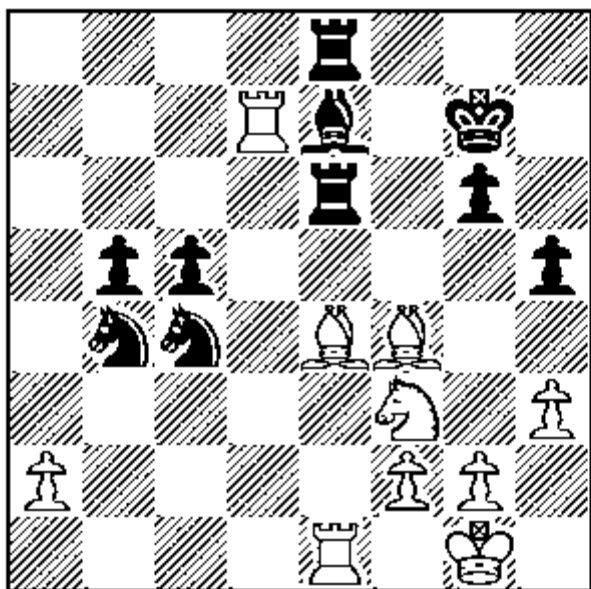
b) 31 ... Qf6 32 Qg3! (eyeing a nasty check on c7) 32 ... Ra7 33 Bb1! Nc6 34 a4 when White has a winning attack.

30 ... Qxf4 31 Bxf4 Re8?

Stein was in awful time pressure. Black gets serious counterplay after 31 ... Rxa2! 32 Rad1 Ra7. White's initiative threatens to dwindle to insignificance. It's not so clear how White should proceed, but he has to do something, otherwise those black queenside passers soon advance.

32 Rad1 Ra6 33 Rd7! Rxe6

After 33 ... Nxa2 34 Bb1 Nb4 35 Bg5 Nc6 36 Be4 Kf8 37 Bxg6 Bxg5 38 Bxe8 Black's game collapses.



Exercise (combination alert): White to play and win material.

Answer: Pin/knight fork.

34 Ng5!

The knight drives Black's e6-rook off the file, after which the pinned e7-bishop gets hammered.

34 ... Rf6 35 Bf3!

Even stronger is 35 a3!.

35 ... Rxf4

35 ... Kf8?? gets forked all the same, after 36 Nh7+ Kf7 37 Nxf6 Kxf6 38 h4! and the e7-bishop is doomed.

36 Ne6+

And there is the knight fork.

36 ... Kf6

The one benefit of poverty is that it tends to simplify our accounting issues.

37 Nxf4

Fischer bagged a full exchange and now the game enters the technical phase.

37 ... Ne5 38 Rb7 Bd6

Cheapo alert: ... Nxf3+, followed by ... Rxe1+.

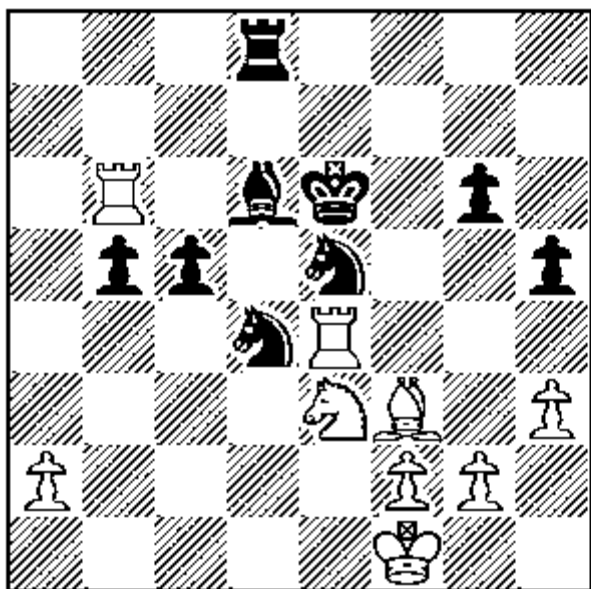
39 Kf1 Nc2 40 Re4 Nd4 41 Rb6!

Fischer begins to work this pin.

41 ... Rd8 42 Nd5+! Kf5

42 ... Ke6 43 Nc7+ Kd7 44 Nxb5 dismantles Black's last hope.

43 Ne3+ Ke6



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

Answer: Take aim at b5.

44 Be2! Kd7

Alternatively, 44 ... b4 45 Nc4 Kd5 46 Rxd6+ Rxd6 47 Rxe5+ wins, or 44 ... Nxe2 45 Kxe2 and 45 ... b4?? isn't possible due to 46 f4.

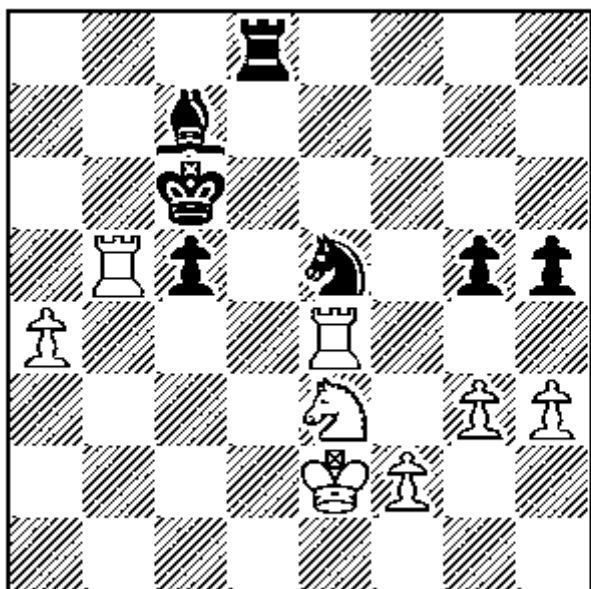
45 Bxb5+

Black's counterplay parched position continues to wither and die.

45 ... Nxb5 46 Rxb5 Kc6 47 a4 Bc7 48 Ke2

Covering his second rank.

48 ... g5 49 g3!



Fischer prepares to create a passed pawn with a future f4 break.

49 ... Ra8 50 Rb2 Rf8 51 f4 gxf4 52 gxf4 Nf7

And not 52 ... Ng6?? (blunders like this make the blood rise to our cheeks) **53 Re6+**

53 Re6+ Nd6 54 f5 Ra8 55 Rd2!

Fischer sacrifices his a-pawn, adding pressure to the d6 pin, while advancing his passed f-

pawn.

55 ... Rxa4 56 f6 1-0

56 ... Ra8 (56 ... Rf4 57 Nd5! runs Black's rook off the f-file) 57 Nc4 Kd7 58 Re7+ Kc6 59 Ne5+ Kb6 60 Rb2+ Nb5 61 Re6+ wins heavy material.

Acknowledgements

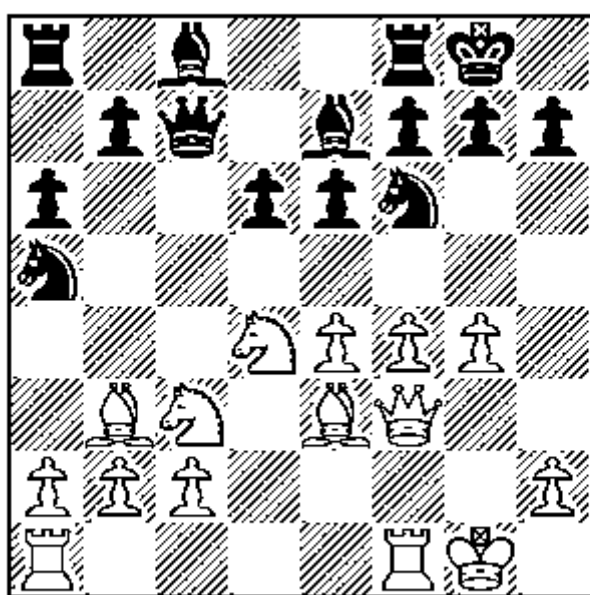
Many thanks to Richard Palliser for the final edit, as well as to series editor John Emms. Also thanks to Nancy for proofreading. May our chess develop Fischer-like clarity from playing over his games.

Cyrus Lakdawala,
San Diego,
September 2015

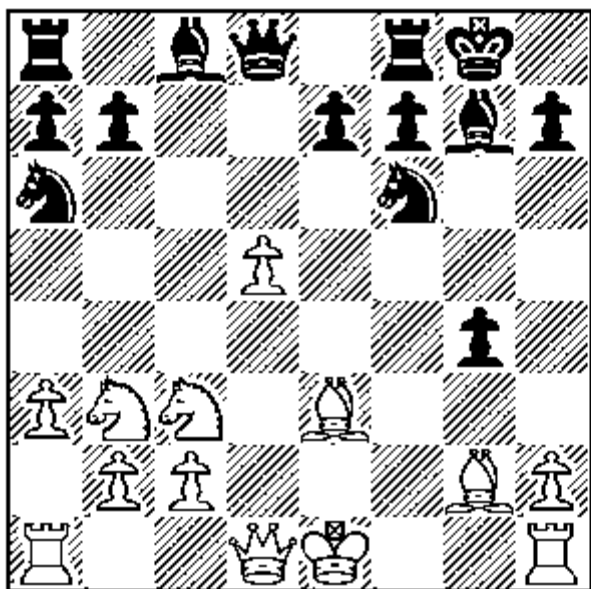
Chapter One

Fischer on the Attack

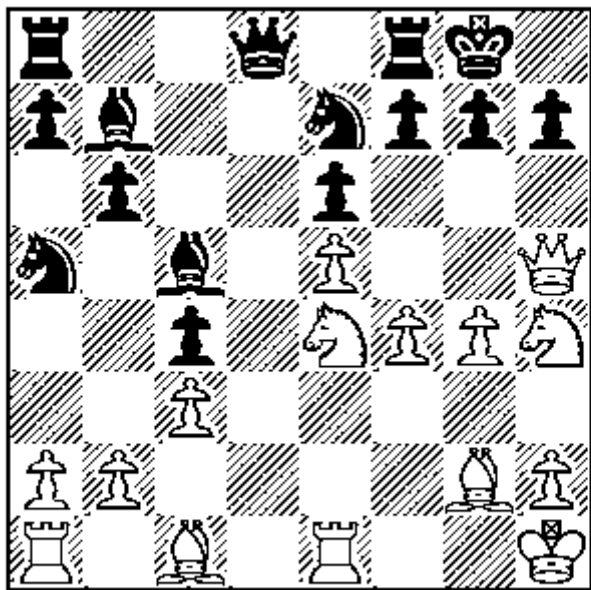
Fischer attacked both viciously and methodically, taking solace in a particularly narrow opening repertoire, from which he rarely veered his entire career. This meant that he possessed vast experience arising from his attacking set-ups, which he honed to perfection. A player like Capablanca attacked with gusto in his youth, but then his games became more and more technical as he matured. Fischer remained an enthusiastic attacker his entire life, and was not averse to taking on great risk. In his attacking games we are reminded of the classic Thunderdome line of two men entering, but only one leaving. Examples from the chapter:

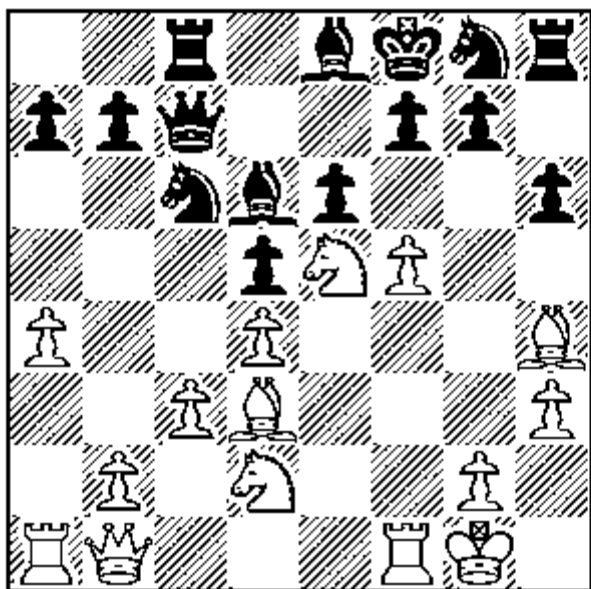


In this position against Cardoso, Fischer mixed Sozin and Keres Attack themes with an early g4, which obviously entails risk to his own king. A pedestrian may sometimes take a shortcut through a park, which is denied to one who drives. In the above diagram, play shifts to less nuanced ground with Fischer's last move 12 g4!?.

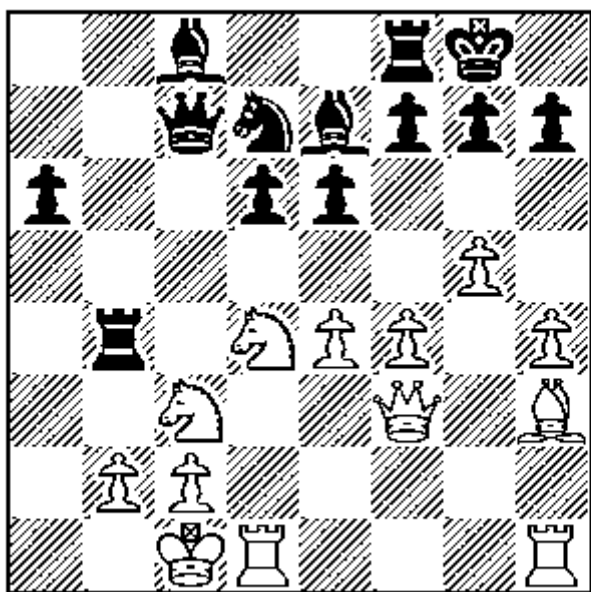


Fischer backing down is a bit like a hawk showing deference to a belligerent sparrow. But having said this, Sammy Reshevsky, playing Black in this position, was no sparrow. Fischer boldly offered a pawn to open kingside lines against Reshevsky's king, without worrying about recouping his initial investment.





Petrosian at his best, had a way of depleting his opponent's energy, the way dusk slowly swallows the day's light. Unfortunately for him, this didn't happen in the above diagram, since he played Black's wretched position against Fischer's surging assault down the f-file.



Our individual stylistic quirks see to it that we rarely enter a line with a spirit of pure impartiality. Fischer also attacked while trusting in his own defensive skills. On his last move he boldly/recklessly played 16 ... 0-0!?, with the supreme confidence that his own attack would arrive first on White's king. And it did just that.

Game 2

R.Fischer-R.Cardoso

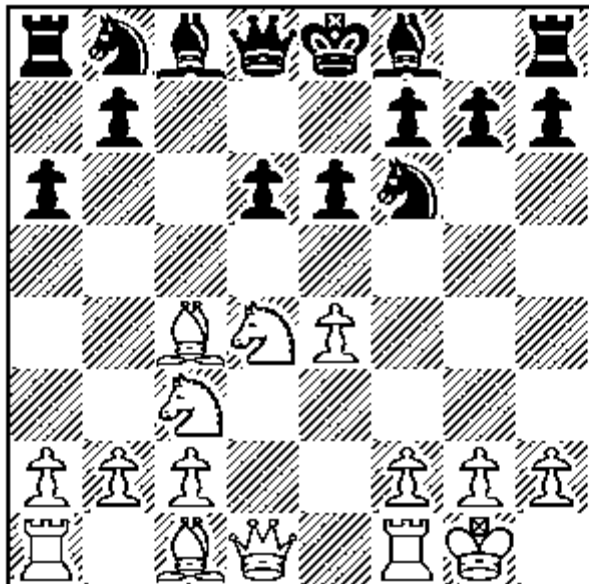
4th matchgame, New York 1957

Sicilian Najdorf

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

Cardoso invites a Najdorf against the boy who would one day be crowned king of the Najdorf players. Instead, 5 ... Nc6 6 Bc4 e6 7 Bb3 Be7 8 Be3 0-0 9 Qe2 initiates the Velimirovic Attack.

6 Bc4 e6 7 0-0



A little later, Fischer began playing 7 Bb3 before castling.

7 ... Be7

7 ... Nxe4?! isn't such a great idea, since 8 Nxe4 d5 9 Bd3 dxe4 10 Bxe4 leaves White with a dangerous development lead.

Question: Can Black get away with 7 ... b5 8 Bb3 b4!? 9 Na4 Nxe4?

Answer: This pawn grab looks unbelievably risky. I don't trust Black's position at all after 10 Re1 d5 (or 10 ... Nf6 11 Bg5 and Black is in serious trouble if he tries 11 ... Be7? 12 Nf5! as the knight can't be touched and 12 ... 0-0 13 Nxe7+ Qxe7 14 Nb6! threatens both Nxa8 and Nd5!, which costs Black the exchange after 14 ... Bb7 15 Nxa8) 11 Bf4 (threat: Bxb8 and Nc6) 11 ... Bd6. This was seen in L.Babujian-I.Duzhakov, St Petersburg 2009, and now White has 12 Rxe4! dxe4 13 Nxe6! Bxe6 14 Bxd6 when he regains his sacrificed pawn with a winning position.

8 Be3

After 8 Bb3 b5 Fischer tried the somewhat eccentric 9 Qf3!? on Olafsson, in their Buenos Aires 1960 game.

8 ... 0-0

Question: I keep wanting to pick off White's

e-pawn! Can Black try 8 ... b5 9 Bb3 b4 10 Na4! Nxe4?

Answer: Same answer as above: inadvisable. White has the trick 11 Nb6! and Black must hand over the exchange. If 11 ... Qxb6? 12 Nxe6 Nc5 13 Bxc5 dxc5 14 Nxg7+ Kf8 15 Qd5! when the dual attack on f7 and a8 is decisive.

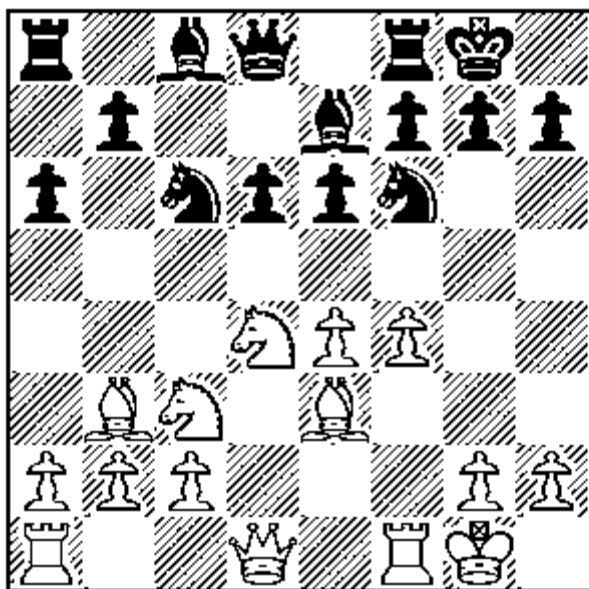
9 Bb3

Depriving Black of both ... Nxe4 and ... d5, as well as sudden ... b5, ... b4 and ... Nxe4 tricks.

9 ... Nc6

Later in the chapter we see a version of the Fischer-Sozin Attack where Black develops his knight to d7.

10 f4



Now Black must watch out for both e5 and f5.

10 ... Na5!?

Question: Your interesting mark implies that this move entails some risk. What is the risk, and what other plans does Black have?

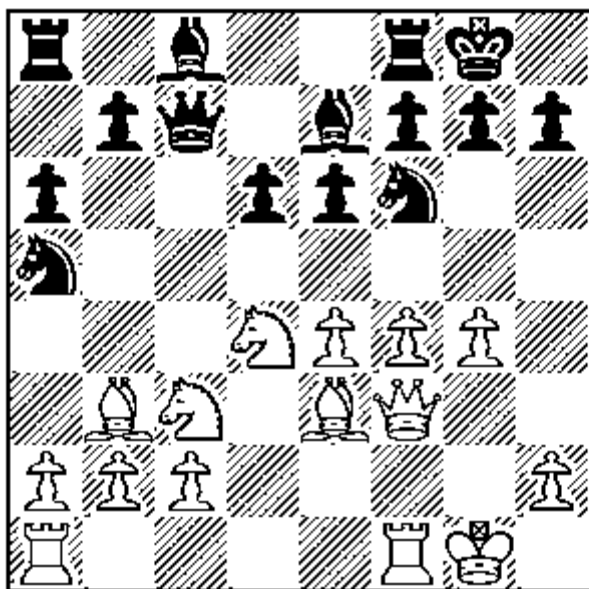
Answer: We must differentiate between the short-term and the long-term consequences of such a decision. With ... Na5, Black eliminates White's powerful light-squared bishop. This isn't without dangers since Black loses time, and also allows White to open the a-file.

I like Spassky's treatment: 10 ... Nxd4 11 Bxd4 b5 12 a3 (today, most GMs play the immediate 12 e5 dxe5 13 fxe5 Nd7 14 Ne4 Bb7 15 Nd6 Bxd6 16 exd6 Qg5 17 Rf2 with an unbalanced position where it's difficult to say whether the advanced d-pawn is a strength or a weakness, V.Ivanchuk-Wang Hao, London 2012) 12 ... Bb7 13 Qd3 and now Spassky hit Fischer with Geller's pawn sacrifice 13 ... a5!, threatening to undermine White's e-pawn with ... b4. After 14 e5 dxe5 15 fxe5 Nd7 16 Nxb5 Nc5 Black picks up the bishop-pair in the open position, which easily makes up for White's extra pawn, R.Fischer-B.Spassky, World Championship (Game 4), Reykjavik 1972.

11 Qf3

The immediate 11 g4!? d5 12 e5 Nd7 was tried in R.Fischer-L.Evans, New York 1958/59.

11 ... Qc7 12 g4!?



Question: Isn't this move terribly risky, especially considering the fact that Black may soon have an unopposed light-squared bishop on b7?

Answer: Fischer's move isn't as controversial as it looks. White owns a temporary development lead, and to make the most of it he must launch an attack immediately, since failing to do so allows Black to catch up in development and enjoy his future bishop-pair.

12 ... Nxb3

Also possible is 12 ... Nc4 13 g5 and then:

a) 13 ... Ne8 14 f5 Nxe3 15 Qxe3 Qc5 16 Rad1. I'm no Najdorf expert, but it looks to me like White achieved a pretty scary looking attack, A.Danin-F.Amonatov, Moscow 2008.

b) 13 ... Ng4!? is a risky and unplayed idea: 14 Bc1 Qc5 15 Nce2 Na5 16 Qxg4 Nxb3 17 axb3 e5 18 Qf3 exd4 19 c3! (stronger than 19 Qd3?! d5! when Black seizes the initiative by opening the game for his bishops) 19 ... f6! (after 19 ... dxc3+ 20 Be3 Qb4 21 Nxc3 Be6 22 f5 Bxb3 23 f6 it feels to me like White's attacking chances compensate Black's extra pawn) 20 cxd4 Qb6 21 gxf6 Bxf6 22 Bd2 Bxd4+ 23 Nxd4 Qxd4+ 24 Rf2 Qxb2 25 Re1 when White may have attacking chances down the g-file, but if given a choice, I would take Black's side with the extra pawn.

13 axb3 Rb8

Black avoids ... b5? Nxb5 tricks, but this is awfully slow. Kasparov points out the plan, now typical for Scheveningen positions, with 13 ... Re8 14 g5 Nd7, intending to place the bishop on f8 for defence, and meet f5 with ... Ne5.

14 g5 Nd7 15 f5!?

Fischer isn't worried about handing over the e5-square. He can also try 15 Qh5, planning to lift a rook to f3 and then h3: 15 ... g6 16 Qh6 Re8 17 f5 Ne5 18 Rf4 (now that f3 isn't available, White lifts the rook to the fourth rank) 18 ... Bf8 19 Qh3 Qd8! 20 f6 Nc6! (threat: ... Nxd4 and ... e5) 21 Nxc6 bxc6 22 e5! dxe5 23 Rh4 h5 24 gxh6 and I still like White in this admittedly messy position.

15 ... Ne5 16 Qg3 Kh8?!

The obese king somehow manages to fill every square centimetre of the broom closet, as he softly closes the door to conceal himself from his g3 sister. He soon finds that h8 isn't the best square, since White has ways to load up major pieces against the h7-square. Kasparov recommends 16 ... b5 17 f6 Bd8 and 16 ... Re8!, intending to meet 17 f6 with 17 ... Bf8.

17 Nf3

chesstouring.com

Kasparov awards this an exclamation, while I think it's promising, yet not White's best move. Fischer's move is based on the theory that Black's knight is the key to his defence, and without it,

White generates a winning attack. However, to my mind White makes a clear concession himself by retreating the knight.

I prefer the Neanderthal rook lift, 17 Rf4! when it's hard to envision a defence for Black: for example, 17 ... Re8 18 Rh4 (now we clearly see that h8 wasn't all that wonderful a spot for Black's king, since Qh3 is coming) 18 ... Kg8 19 Qh3 h6 20 f6 Bf8 21 fxe7 Bxe7 22 gxe6 Bf6 23 Rf4 Bg5 24 Qg3 Kh8 25 Rf2 f6 26 Bxe5 fxe5 27 Rf1 Bd7 28 Kh1 Qd8 29 Nf3! (Black's game collapses with the removal of his best defender) 29 ... Nxf3 30 Rxf3 e5 31 Nd5 with a winning attack for White.

17 ... Nxf3+?

It can't be wise to hand your opponent a free rook lift.

Kasparov suggested 17 ... Nc6, and if 18 Qh3 exf5! 19 exf5 Qd7 20 Nd5 Re8 (after 20 ... Qxf5? 21 Qxf5 Bxf5 22 Nd4! Bh3 23 Nxc6 bxc6 24 Nxe7 Bxf1 25 Rxf1 Rbe8 26 Nf5 White's two minor pieces for Black's rook should be decisive in the ending) 21 Nxe7 Nxe7 22 Nd4 b6 23 Rae1 when Black remains under pressure but remains alive, mainly due to his latent power on the light squares.

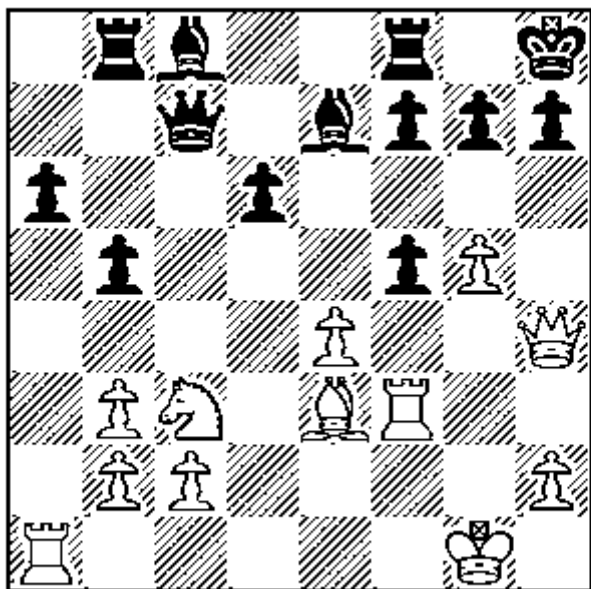
18 Rxf3 b5?

Black had to take his chances with 18 ... exf5 19 exf5 Bd8 20 Qh4 Re8 21 f6 Qd7 22 Ra4! (cutting off ... Qg4+, while threatening to swing the rook into play, either on the kingside or in the centre) 22 ... Kg8. Black is in bad shape, but still infinitely better off than with what could have happened in the game.

19 Qh4!

Intending Rh3. According to the comps Black is getting crushed at this stage.

19 ... exf5



Exercise (calculation): White has three tempting continuations: a) 20 Rh3, loading up on the h-file. b) 20 Nd5, jumping into d5 with tempo. c) The calm 20 exf5. Two of the three win, while the other allows Black a prayer to escape. Which is best?

20 exf5

Fischer's legendary intuition was at its lowest ebb in irrational positions, and he picks the worst of his choices. But saying this, the move should still win.

Answer: Much stronger were:

a) 20 Rh3! h6 21 Bd4! (threat: Bxg7+) 21 ... f6 22 Nd5 Qb7 23 gxf6 Bxf6 24 Nxf6 and Black collapses.

b) 20 Nd5! Qd8 21 exf5 (threat: f6) 21 ... Re8 22 f6 Bf8 23 g6! fxg6 24 f7! When White wins heavy material since Black's e8-rook is overloaded and 24 ... Qxh4 is met with 25 fxe8Q, regaining the queen with compound interest.

20 ... Qc6!

Covering d5, while preventing Rh3.

21 Raf1

A slight inaccuracy. 21 Ne4! Re8 22 f6 Bf8 23 g6! fxg6 24 Bd4! strains the defence beyond capacity.

21 ... Bb7

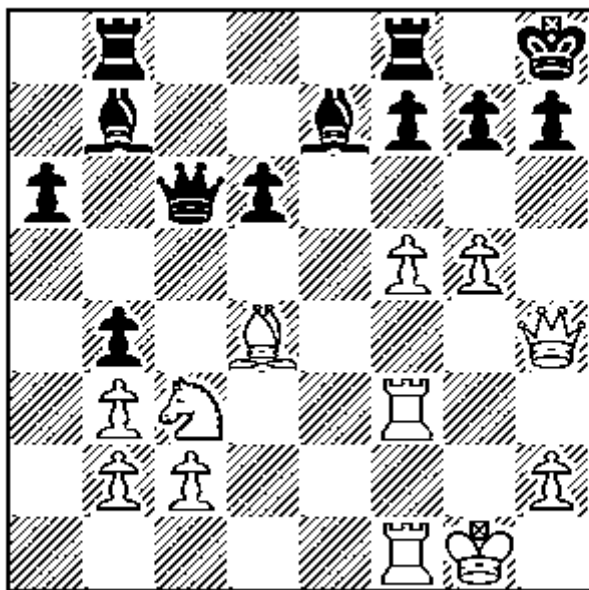
White experiences difficulties in transferring his rook over to h3.

22 Bd4!

Fischer eyes sacrifices on the tender g7-square. Also promising is 22 Qh5! threatening g6, when Black is unlikely to survive.

22 ... b4

Alternatively, 22 ... Qxf3 23 Rxf3 Bxf3 24 Qh6 f6 25 Qh3 Bc6 26 g6 h6 27 Be3 and there is no remedy to the coming bishop sacrifice on h6.



Exercise (critical decision): Should White sacrifice his bishop on g7, or should he play 23 Qh5, intending g6? Only one line forces the win.

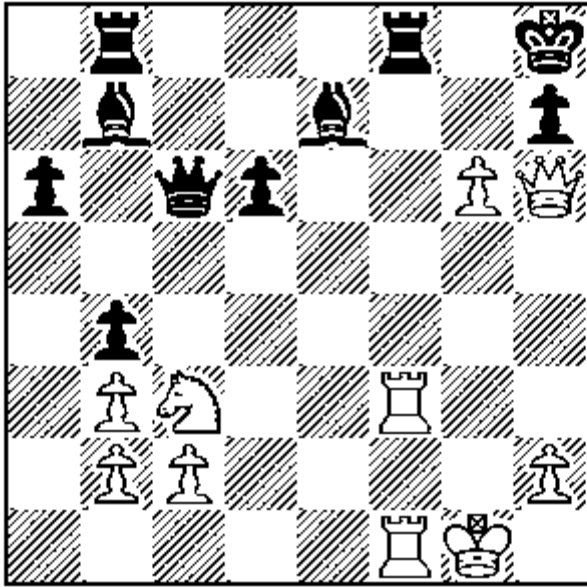
23 Bxg7+?

Fischer lowers his head and charges in with enraged bull determination. This appears to be one of those involuntary reactions, as when your doctor taps you just below the knee and in response your foot jerks forward. In 1957 Bobby was still a kid, and no kid I ever taught could resist the urge to play such a tempting sacrifice.

Answer: The creeping 23 Qh5!, threatening g6, forces the win: 23 ... Kg8 (or 23 ... f6 24 g6 h6 25 Be3 and nothing can stop Bxh6) 24 f6 Rfe8! (the only path for Black to resist, as 24 ... Bd8 25 fxg7 is game over and if 24 ... bxc3 25 fxg7 Qe4 26 gxf8Q+ Rxf8 27 bxc3 Qg6 28 Qxg6+ fxg6 29 Rxf8+ Bxf8 with an easy win for White in the ending) 25 fxg7 Qxf3 26 Rxf3 Bxf3 27 Qxf3 bxc3 28 Qf5 cxb2 29 Bxb2 and White should be able to convert his advantage.

23 ... Kxg7 24 Qh6+ Kh8 25 g6 Qc5+?

The natural move loses. 25 ... fxg6! 26 fxg6 had to be tried.



Exercise (combination alert): It appears as if Black's defence is merely a temporary structure, a sandcastle built at low tide, destined to be washed away at high tide. However Black has a stunning resource only a comp finds at a glance. Take your time. If you find one powerful idea, Black's once overwhelming troubles shrivel to insignificance. Don't feel bad if you can't find the solution. I showed this position to a USCF 2550 IM and a 2450 player, and neither of them found the solution either.

Answer: Interference/defensive move: 26 ... Rf7!! A neutron bomb is designed to kill people, yet leave all buildings and structures intact. The implication: Property is more important than people. In this case Black's rook sacrifices itself to leave his king's shelter intact. Sometimes an idea can be so crazy, that it sprouts wings and miraculously works.

Following 27 gxf7 Rf8 28 Qe6! Qc5+ 29 R1f2! (not 29 R3f2?? Qg5+ and White walks into mate) 29 ... Bxf3 30 Ne4! (again, White must be careful: 30 Qxe7?? Rxf7! and White suddenly finds himself busted, since his queen must keep watch over the g5-square) 30 ... Qa7 31 Nxd6 Qd4! 32 Qxe7 Qd1+ 33 Rf1 Qd4+ 34 Rf2 Qd1+ the game ends in perpetual check.

26 R1f2!

White's once invisible intent steps out into the open, in plain sight. There is no good way to protect h7. Black's next move is forced and the remainder is as predictable as the climax of a Shakespearean tragedy.

However, instead 26 R3f2?? fxg6 27 fxg6 Rf7! 28 gxf7 bxc3 leaves White completely busted.

26 ... fxg6 27 fxg6 Qg5+

The queen makes irritated, flapping 'go-away' motions with her hand, directed at her annoying sister. Cardoso must have made his last move with a shudder of distaste, since he now loses material to stave off mate.

28 Qxg5 Bxg5 29 Rxf8+ Rxf8 30 Rxf8+ Kg7 31 gxh7! 1-0

31 ... Kxh7 32 Rf7+ Kg6 33 Rxb7 bxc3 34 bxc3 is a simple win for White in the ending.

Game 3

R.Fischer-S.Reshevsky

2nd matchgame, New York/Los Angeles 1961

Sicilian Dragon

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 g6

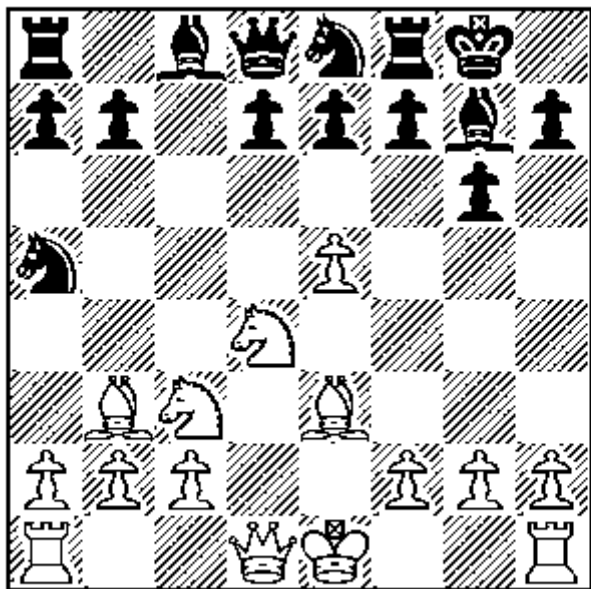
Reshevsky goes for the Accelerated Dragon, which to my mind is safer than the main line Dragon.

5 Nc3

Fischer opts for piece play. I have a feeling his towering strategic skills would have lent themselves well to the Maroczy bind line, 5 c4.

5 ... Bg7 6 Be3 Nf6 7 Be2

In this position Fischer also played 7 Bc4 0-0 8 Bb3 Na5?! (Black should go either for 8 ... d6 or 8 ... Ng4 9 Qxg4 Nxd4 10 Qh4) 9 e5 Ne8??.



Exercise (combination alert): White to play and force the win.

Answer: Attraction/queen trap. 10 Bxf7+! and then:

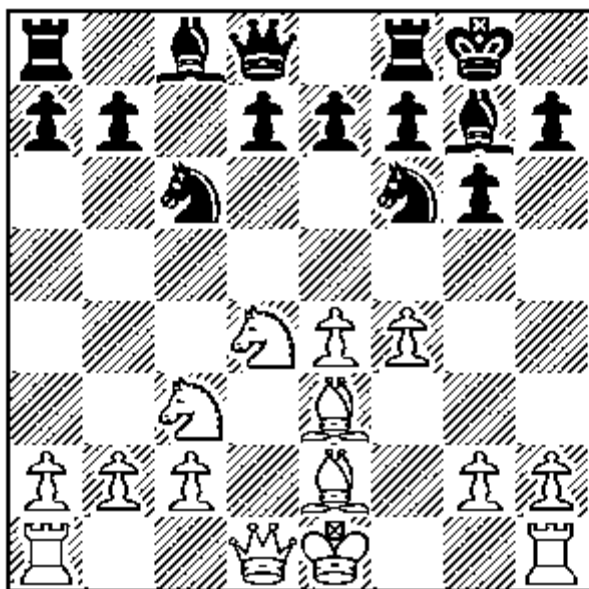
a) 10 ... Rxf7 11 Ne6! wins Black's queen.

b) 10 ... Kh8 11 Ne6 is the same old story. Black's queen is trapped.

c) 10 ... Kxf7 11 Ne6! And Black's queen has no place to go, R.Fischer-S.Reshevsky, New York 1958/59. If 11 ... Kxe6 12 Qd5+ Kf5 13 g4+ Kxg4 14 Rg1+ Kh4 15 Qe4+ forces mate in two moves.

7 ... 0-0 8 f4

8 0-0?! is considered inaccurate. Black equalizes at a minimum after 8 ... d5! 9 exd5 Nb4.



8 ... d6

Question: If ... d5 worked for Black after White castled, then why not here as well?

Answer: 8 ... d5?! doesn't work out well for Black after 9 e5 Ne8 10 Bf3 Nc7 11 Qd2 with a comfortable space advantage for White.

9 Nb3

White prevents ... d5 freeing ideas, as well as ... Qb6 tricks. The careless 9 0-0 allows 9 ... Qb6! (threat: ... Nxe4) 10 Qd3 Ng4! 11 Bxg4 Bxd4! 12 Bxd4 Qxd4+ 13 Qxd4 Nxd4 14 Bd1 when Black stands about even in the ending.

9 ... Be6

Generally Black first tosses in 9 ... a5 10 a4 and only then follows with 10 ... Be6.

10 g4!?

When we make the decision to enter such a perversely complex line, we internally debate: "What will be our fate? Glory and treasure? Or unimaginable woe?"

10 ... d5

Principle: Meet a wing attack with a central counter.

11 f5

Undermining Black's control over d5.

11 ... Bc8 12 exd5 Nb4 13 Bf3!

Fischer deviates from the explosive Alekhine-Botvinnik draw with a pawn sacrifice which exposes Black's king. I think Fischer's move is superior to 13 d6 Qxd6! 14 Bc5 Qf4 15 Rf1 Qxh2 16 Bxb4 Nxe4! (this move forces perpetual check) 17 Bxg4 Qg3+ 18 Rf2 Qg1+ 19 Rf1 Qg3+ 20 Rf2 Qg1+ 1/2-1/2, A.Alekhine-M.Botvinnik, Nottingham 1936 (a tournament in which Reshevsky participated). This game is annotated in Botvinnik: Move by Move.

13 ... gxf5

Of course this weakens Black's king, but otherwise White just remains up a healthy pawn.

14 a3!

Superior to 14 g5 Ng4 15 Bc5 Na6 16 Bd4 e5! 17 dxe6, as was first played in I.Bondarevsky-V.Alatortsev, Tbilisi 1937. Black stands at least equal after 17 ... Qxg5 18 exf7+ Rxf7 19 h3 Re7+ 20 Kf1 Ne3+ 21 Bxe3 Rxe3.

14 ... fxg4



Question: Why not just play 15 axb4 gxf3

Answer: This line allows Black to seal the g-file with the manoeuvre 16 ... Bg4 17 Qg2 Bh5! intending ... Bg6 next, when Black's king enjoys a greater degree of safety than in Fischer's continuation. Surprisingly, Black's missing g-pawn turns out to be an important vestige, not needed for the implementation of the defence.

15 ... Na6

Now this knight sits offside.

16 Qd3!

Denying Black ... Bf5, while preparing to castle long.

16 ... e6!?

It's a tricky matter to stir up enmity in a region in which the locals outnumber your own forces.
violation of the principle: Avoid confrontation when lagging in development, yet it follows the
inciple: Meet a wing attack with a central counter.

Kasparov suggests the line 16 ... Qd6 17 0-0-0 Nh5! intending ... Nf4. I still like White's position after 18 Kb1 Nf4 19 Bxf4 Qxf4 20 Rde1 Qg5 21 h3! Qg6 22 hxg4 Qxd3 23 cxd3 Re8 24 e4 h6 25 Reg1 since g5 is threatened.

17 0-0-0 Nxd5 18 h3!

Black's g-pawn dangles an almost irresistible lure in front of White's nose. Fischer plays the position a bit like a kingside version of a Benko Gambit, where lines open with alarming rapidity.

18 ... g3

Maybe Reshevsky can take his chances in the line 18 ... Nxe3!? 19 Qxd8 Rxd8 20 Rxd8+ Bf8 Be4 f5 22 hxxg4! fxe4 23 Nxe4 Kg7 24 Ng5 h6 25 Nxe6+ Bxe6 26 Rxa8 Be7 27 Rxa7 Bd5 28 a5 Bg5 29 Na5 Nxxg4+ 30 Rxxg5+! hxxg5 31 c4 Bg2 32 Nxb7 Nb8 33 Nd6+ Kf6 34 b4. I like White's chances to convert, with his three connected passers, although of course Black has a passer of his own. The comps have White up here by a bit over one point.

However, 18 ... Bxc3?? is absolute suicide for Black after the simple 19 hxc4 f5 20 gxf5! Nxe3 Qxe3 Bxb2+ 22 Kxb2 Qf6+ 23 Kb1 exf5 24 Bd5+ Kh8 25 Rh6 Qg7 26 Rdh1 forcing mate.

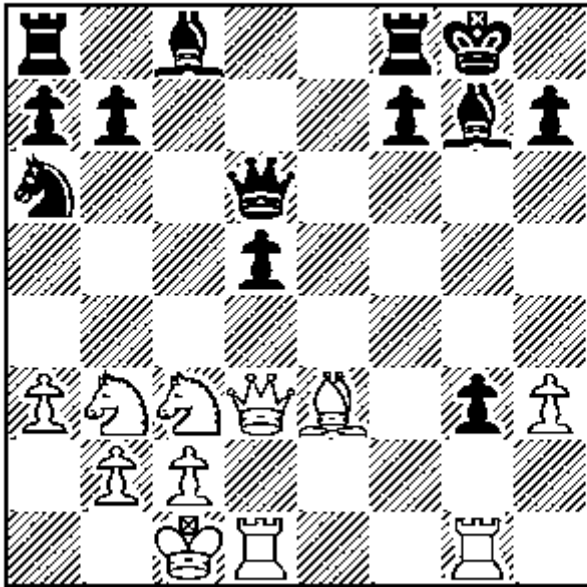
19 Rhg1

Target: g3.

19 ... Qd6

Robert Hübner suggested 19 ... Qh4 20 Bxd5 exd5 21 Bd4 Bxd4. Now White should just calmly play 22 Nxd4! Kh8 23 Nxd5! Qg5+ 24 Kb1 when 24 ... Qxd5?? 25 Qxg3 Bg4 26 Qxg4 Rg8 27 Qf4 Qd8 28 Nf3 Rxd1 29 Rxd1 f6 30 Ne5! Qe7 31 Ng6+! hxg6 32 Rxd6 Rg8 33 Qh4+ Qh7 34 Qxf6+ Rg7 35 Rh6 wins.

20 Bxd5 exd5



21 Nxd5!

Both Fischer and Kasparov criticized this move, while Houdini claims it is White's best. Fischer preferred 21 Bd4 Qf4+ 22 Kb1 Bf5 23 Rxd3! Bxd3 24 Rxd3+ Kh8 25 Rxf7+ Qxd4 26 Rxf8+ Rxf8 27 Nxd4 Be4 28 Re1 Bg6 29 Re7 Rf7 30 Nxd5 when Black stood only slightly worse. So it appears as if Houdini's line (the move Fischer played in the game) may be White's best after all.

21 ... Kh8 22 Bf4 Qg6 23 Qd2?

The wrong square. An army is an organic entity which must be fed. Now White's attack begins to grow skeletally weak with hunger.

White's queen should fight for g4 with 23 Qe2!. Now White amassed serious weaponry in the vicinity of Black's king and the difference is Black is unable to play 23 ... Bxh3?? 24 Rxd3 as he doesn't have the ... Bg4 resource he had in the game.

23 ... Bxh3!

Everyone who knows the bishop suspects him of malfeasance, since his wealth continues to increase, despite his modest salary. Reshevsky, one of the greatest defensive players in the history of the game, seizes upon his chance, counter-intuitively allowing the h-file to open.

24 Rxd3 Bg4!

For now, the bishop erects a barrier to White's ambitions along the g-file, since it can be backed by ... h5 and ... f5.

25 Rh1!

The impact of a sudden shock on the chess board is only fatal to the brittle mind. Legendary players, contrary to popular belief, make mistakes. But they also recover quickly, from a psychological standpoint. The trick is to budget for errors in every game. Fischer now revises his earlier intent, intuitively realizing that the h-file, rather than the g-file, may provide White a new attacking lane.

25 ... Rfe8?!

The wrong rook. Black needs all available defenders near his king. He can achieve this with 25 ... f5! 26 Qh2 Rae8! 27 Kb1 h5 28 Bd2 (idea Nf4 and Nxh5) 28 ... Be5 29 Nf4 Bxf4 30 Bxf4 b6 31 Rd3 Kh7 and Black's king position isn't so easy to crack.

26 Ne3 Qe4?

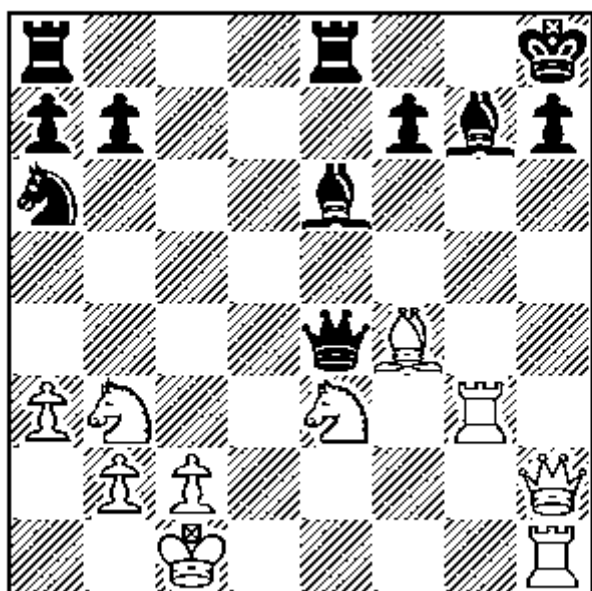
When we fail to understand our opponent's intent, we become like a king who searches for his enemy in the forest, when in actuality, the enemy may be a trusted minister, sitting across the table from him. Reshevsky, a lifelong time pressure addict, was low at this stage. After this second mistake, Black's previous defensive gains dwindle down to zero.

He may still have saved the game with 26 ... f5! 27 Qg2 Rad8 28 Kb1 (or 28 Nxc4 fxc4 29 Rxc4 Qe4! and White must swap queens, since Black threatens the f4-bishop and also mate, starting with ... Qe1+) 28 ... Qf6 29 c3 Qe6 30 Nxc4 fxc4 31 Rxc4 Qe4+ 32 Qxe4 Rxe4 33 Rhg1 Rd7 with reasonable chances for Black to save himself.

27 Qh2!

In Shaolin Kung Fu, we are taught: When in combat, one hand should lie, confusing the adversary; the other reveals the truth. Suddenly, White has a winning attack and Black's defensive backbone – overcooked asparagus – just wilts.

27 ... Be6



Exercise (combination alert): White has two ways to win. All you need to do is find one of them.

Answer: Annihilation of defensive barrier.

28 Rxc7!

Fischer reduces the once complex argument into a simple formula: Black is unable to defend the dark squares around his king. Even simpler is 28 Nd2! when Black must resign, since he either loses his queen or his king.

28 ... Kxc7 29 Qh6+ Kg8

Forced, since 29 ... Kh8 walks into the deflection shot 30 Be5+! with mate in two moves. The bishop considers himself an intermediary between laity and divinity, even though he considers himself a member of the latter category.

30 Rg1+ Qg6

The human response to trauma takes on multiple shapes and forms. Of course Reshevsky could

have resigned here, but somehow when we are low on time, we forget to do so.

31 Rxc6+ fxc6

Black is not only down heavily in material, but his king remains under fire from White's queen and minor pieces.

32 Nd4 Rad8 33 Be5

Fischer systematically probes the dreadfully weakened dark squares around Black's king.

33 ... Rd7 34 Nxe6 Rxe6 35 Ng4

Going after the f6-square.

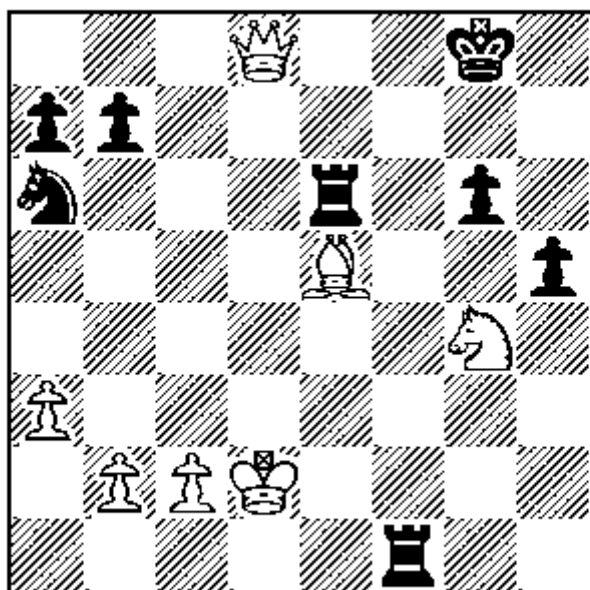
35 ... Rf7 36 Qg5

Threatening to mate with Qd8+, followed by Nh6.

36 ... Rf1+ 37 Kd2

Qd8+ remains a threat.

37 ... h5 38 Qd8+ 1-0



“I rule in the North, South, East ... ” and then the queen pauses for dramatic effect, before revealing “ ... and the West.” 38 ... Rf8 39 Nh6+ Kh7 40 Qxf8 Rxe5 41 Qg8+ Kxh6 42 Qh8+ ends Black's resistance.

Game 4

R.Fischer-P.Benko

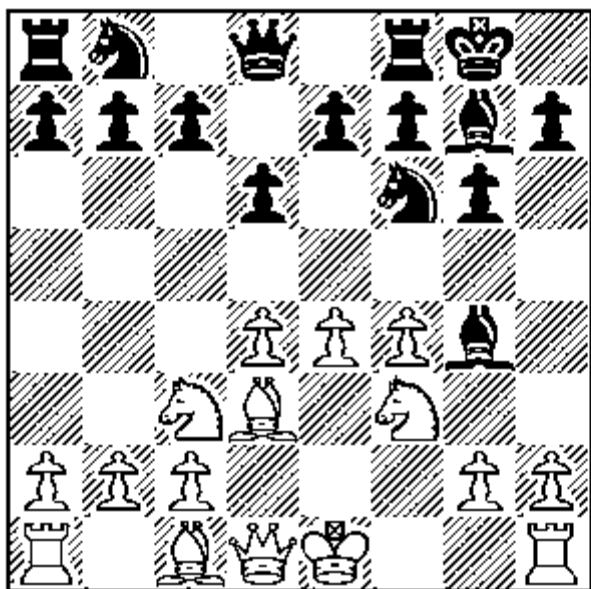
U.S. Championship, New York 1963

Pirc Defence

1 e4 g6 2 d4 Bg7 3 Nc3 d6 4 f4 Nf6 5 Nf3 0-0 6 Bd3

The passive 6 Be2 makes no sense to me: 6 ... c5 7 dxc5 Qa5 8 0-0 Qxc5+ 9 Kh1 Nc6 10 Nd2 a5! 11 Nb3 Qb6 12 a4 Nb4 13 g4? and now Korchnoi found 13 ... Bxg4!, after which Fischer's position fell apart quickly, R.Fischer-V.Korchnoi, Curacao 1962. This game is annotated in Korchnoi: Move by Move.

6 ... Bg4?



This hands White the bishop-pair for no appreciable compensation. Both 6 ... c5 and 6 ... Na6 are played today.

7 h3 Bxf3

One of my goofy comps suggested retreating the bishop to c8, which preserves the bishop-pair at the cost of two tempi.

8 Qxf3 Nc6

8 ... e5 9 dxe5 dxe5 10 f5 doesn't really alter much from the game's continuation.

9 Be3 e5

This is Benko's idea, to seize control over d4. However, he leaves himself even further weakened on the light squares.

Question: Can Black forego ... e5 and just go for queenside play instead?

Answer: It feels to me that Black will just lose an opposite-wings attack position in those scenarios. Let's take a look:

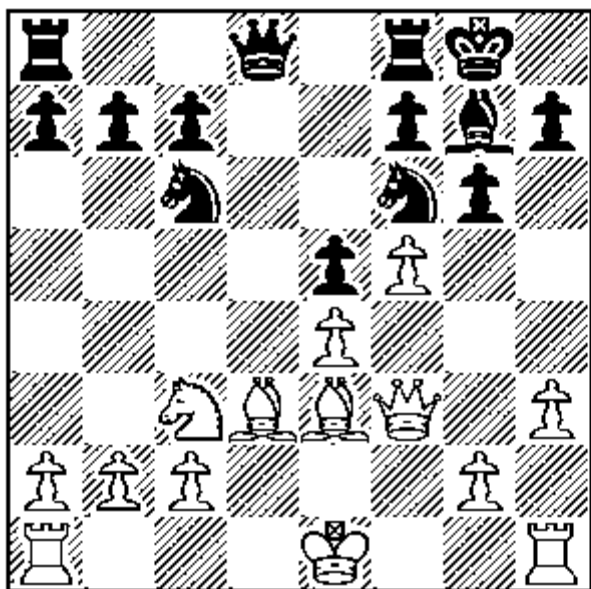
a) 9 ... Nb4 10 0-0-0 Nxd3+ 11 Rxd3 doesn't look all that appealing, since White is ready for e5, followed by h4!, when his attack is obviously faster than anything Black can stir up on the other side of the board.

b) 9 ... Nd7 10 e5 Nb4 11 0-0-0 Nxd3+ 12 Rxd3 c6 13 h4! is similar to line 'a' – White's attack is clearly faster.

10 dxe5

Fischer opens the d-file for his rooks.

10 ... dxe5 11 f5



A logical bypass. Fischer isn't about to allow ... exf4, which opens the e5-square for Black's pieces.

11 ... gxf5!

Eric Schiller gives this move a question mark, while Fischer called it "best". In this case I think Fischer is correct, since I don't see viable alternatives for Black.

Question: Why did Black voluntarily destroy his own king's pawn front?

Answer: White threatened a terrible bind with g4 next, and this move was the only way to prevent that idea. But I agree with you that in this case the cure may be only just slightly less risky than the disease.

Alternatively, 11 ... Nd4 12 Qf2 gxf5 (or 12 ... a6?! 13 g4 and one look tells us that Black is doomed against White's kingside bind/attack) 13 exf5 b5 14 0-0 c5 15 Ne4 c4 16 Nxf6+ Qxf6 17 Be4 and c3 follows, with a strategically won game for White, J.Bednarski-Y.Kraidman, Tel Aviv 1964.

12 Qxf5!

This counterplay-suppressing move opens the f-file and keeps White's centre stable.

12 exf5?! e4! allows Black fishing chances after 13 Nxe4 Ne5 14 Nxf6+ Qxf6 15 Qf4 Nxd3+ 16 cxd3 Qxb2 17 0-0 Qe5 when White only stands a shade better.

12 ... Nd4

Black, lacking targets of any sort, has his choice of a miserable middlegame or a miserable ending after 12 ... Qd7 13 Qxd7 Nxd7 14 Nd5.

13 Qf2

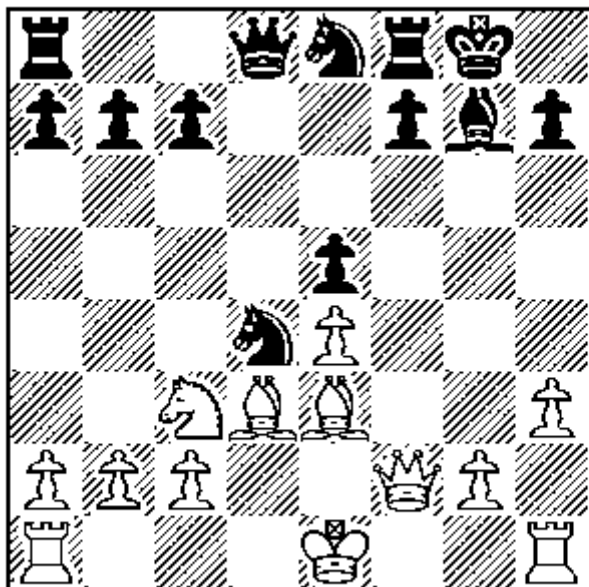
Fischer said he was sorely tempted to enter the line 13 Qxe5!?, which is given an exclamation by him, which I think is completely incorrect, since Black generates all sorts of dark-square play for the pawn after 13 ... Ng4. Now White can try the berserker 14 Qxg7+!? Kxg7 15 hxg4. White clearly has compensation for the queen, but Black isn't without his chances in a position where he is up so much material. Houdini helpfully rates this unclear mess at even after 15 ... h5.

13 ... Ne8!

Of course all of us loathe retreats, since they impute cowardice upon the retreattee (I'm pretty sure this isn't a real word, so please don't Google it!). In this case, however, Black intends ... Nd6, after which White must watch out for both ... f5 and also ... c5 and ... c4.

The alternative is 13 ... Nd7 14 0-0-0 Nc5 15 Kb1 c6 16 Rhf1 b5 17 Ne2 with a strategically

won game for White.



14 0-0!

Question: Why not castle long?

Answer: Castling long is possible, but then Black is given a prayer if he goes after White's king. By castling kingside, Fischer deprives Benko of any counterplay, since the white king's safety is an issue removed from the equation: 14 0-0-0 Nd6 15 Ne2 c5 16 c3 and maybe Black can try the desperado 16 ... f5!? 17 exf5 e4 18 Bc2 Rxf5 when he is better off than what occurred in the game.

14 ... Nd6

14 ... c6 is met with 15 Ne2, intending Ng3 and c3, with a crushing light-square bind.

15 Qg3?!

Threat: Bh6. Fischer said of his move, "the only way to sustain the initiative", but this may not be White's most accurate move, since it allows Black the freeing ... f5 break.

15 Rad1! disallows Black's ... f5 break and retains the bind.

15 ... Kh8?!

The decision to refrain from the ... f5 break lingers in its deliberation. I think this was Black's propitious moment to break loose of the bind with 15 ... f5! even if it opens the game for White's bishop-pair. The wise general only allows his troops to participate in a skirmish with the enemy when he isn't outnumbered. This move violates the principle: Avoid confrontation in our opponent's strong zone, but follows the principle: Counter in the centre when assaulted on the wing. In this case, the latter principle is given greater weight.

Fischer gives 16 Bh6 (after 16 Bg5 Qe8 17 Qh4 f4 18 Nd5 Rf7 19 c3 Ne6 20 Be7 Qd7 21 Rad1 Nf8 22 Qg4 Qxg4 23 hxg4 Re8 24 Bxd6 cxd6 25 Bc4 Ne6 26 g3 Kh8 27 Ne3 Rc7 28 Bxe6 fxe3! 29 Rxd6 e2 30 Re1 Bf8 31 Rd7 Rxd7 32 Bxd7 Rd8 33 Bb5 Rd1 34 Kf2 Rxe1 35 Kxe1 Black will be down two pawns, yet the opposite-coloured bishops offer him excellent chances to hold the game) 16 ... Qf6 17 Bxg7 Qxg7 18 Qxg7+ Kxg7 19 exf5 N6xf5 20 Rae1 Rae8 21 Ne4 "with a comfortable edge, but certainly no forced win".

16 Qg4!

The endless drizzle and rain continue to plague Black's kingside counterplay, until his army's food grows mouldy, and their soggy boots begin to fall apart. Fischer on his last move missed the correct plan, but now he re-reads the book, hoping to catch a glimpse of the truth in the second reading. He correctly clamps down on Black's potential for an ... f5 break. In the case of White's attack, supply equals demand, and then some.

16 ... c6 17 Qh5

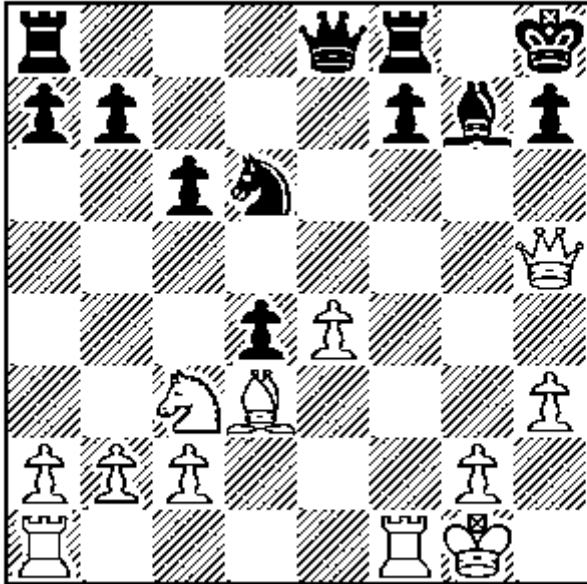
“My gentle caresses failed to sway you, so now let us try the not-so-gentle stroke of my whip,” says the queen, warningly to Black’s king. Threat: Bxd4, followed by e5.

17 ... Qe8?

17 ... Ne6 18 Ne2 was unpleasant yet necessary for Black.

18 Bxd4! exd4

Benko may now have expected 19 e5? f5! when Black would be okay.



Exercise (combination alert): The black king drills his not-so-elite defenders until they are too exhausted to even curse him. When we strongly sense the presence of a combination, we search a cave where we know hidden treasure exists. Our only problem: where to dig? White’s visually shocking next move is one of the most famous combinations of Fischer’s career. Do you see it (or remember it)?

Answer: Interference. “A house divided against itself will be destroyed,” warned Saint Matthew. Sometimes a startling shot just reduces us into an astonished silence. It’s time to add oranges and then pull a fast one by subtracting apples.

19 Rf6!!

White’s last move serves quadruple purposes:

1. e5 is coming, when the white queen and bishop gaze lovingly at the h7-square.
2. If Black responds to e5 with ... h6, then White’s rook helps participate in the attack with the deadly shot Rxf6+.
3. Black’s d6-knight now hangs.
4. Black is denied all ... f5 saving graces, since White’s last move gums up the f6-square, and Black’s f-pawn with it.

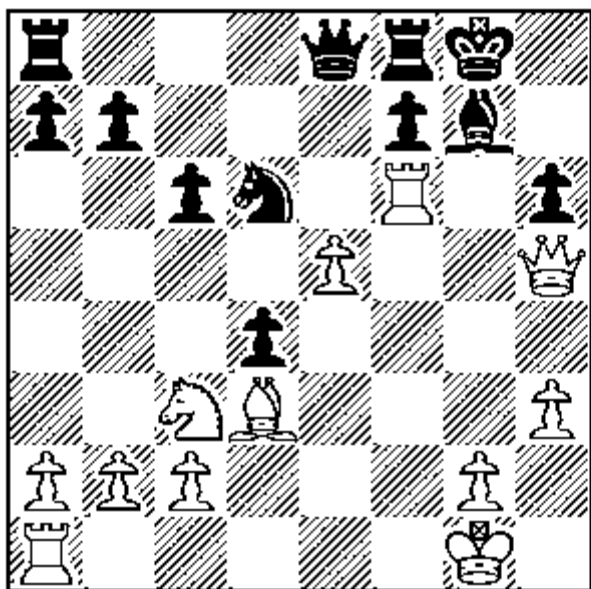
19 ... Kg8

Everything loses. For example:

- a) 19 ... dxc3 20 e5 h6 (all the black king’s yes-men and yes-women smiled, nodded and yessed, telling him: “Just you wait and see: Everything will turn out just fine!”) 21 Rxf6+ Kg8 22 Rh6+! (clearance) 22 ... Bxh8 23 Qh7 mate.

- b) 19 ... Bxf6 20 e5 and Black’s loutish bishop is in the way for a saving ... f5.

20 e5 h6



21 Ne2! 1-0

The most accurate of White's many conversion methods. The trouble for Black is if he moves his knight, White plays Qf5.

Fischer's finish is more accurate than 21 Rxd6?! Qxe5! 22 Qxe5 Bxe5 23 Ne4 Bxd6 24 Nxd6 and Black is busted, but can play on for a long time.

21 Ne2! threatens Rxd6 and if Black's knight moves, he loses coverage of f5 after 21 ... Nb5 (or 21 ... Bxf6 22 Qxh6 forcing mate in two moves) 22 Qf5 forcing mate next move. "There are certain people – who shall go nameless – who are unworthy of their high stations," declares the queen, as she looks meaningfully in the black king's direction. Note that Black lacks a ... Re8 and ... Kf8 defence, since his own queen plugs the escape route.

Actually 21 Rxh6 also works: 21 ... f5 22 Rg6 Qxe5 23 Rxd6! (threat: Bc4+) 23 ... b5 24 Nxb5 cxb5 25 Rg6 with an extra pawn and a completely winning position, since Rf1 follows.

Game 5

R.Fischer-J.Bednarski

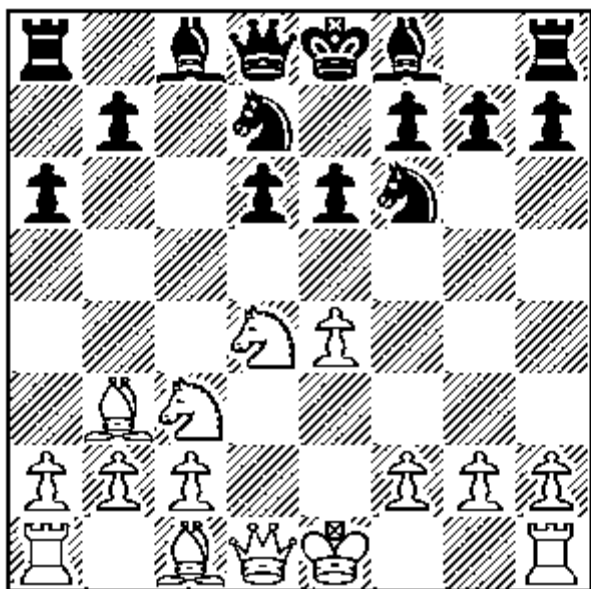
Havana Olympiad 1966

Sicilian Najdorf

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

Alternatively, 7 0-0 Be7 8 Bb3 0-0 9 f4 b5 10 e5 (Black must be supremely prepared to absorb the force of such lunges) 10 ... dxe5 11 fxe5 Nfd7 12 Be3 (12 Qg4 Nxe5 13 Qe4 Bc5! 14 Be3 Nbc6! is in Black's favour, since White fails to generate full compensation for the pawn) 12 ... Nxe5 13 Qh5 Nbc6 14 Nxc6 Nxc6 15 Rf3 was tried in N.Short-G.Kasparov, Novgorod 1997. Here Houdini suggests 15 ... Qd6! 16 Rh3 h6 17 Bxh6 Qc5+ (the point of playing the queen to d6) 18 Qxc5 Bxc5+ 19 Be3 Bxe3+ 20 Rxe3 Bb7 21 Ne4 Na5 with an even position.

7 ... Nbd7



Question: In the first game of this chapter, Black developed his knight to c6 in response to the Fischer-Sozin Attack. In this version Black plays his knight to d7, which one is better?

Answer: Both are playable and it's a matter of personal taste. Fischer thought ... Nc6 was Black's best, while Kasparov tended to favour ... Nbd7 (although he played both versions).

When we choose an opening, we must find that perfect balance between too much opening theory and too little, to the point where our opponents aren't challenged. For me, the Najdorf falls under the too-much-theory category. In 1994, in a bout of temporary madness, your writer began playing Najdorf as Black (I beat two IMs with it and promptly abandoned the opening, deciding that the damage done to my delicate nervous system wasn't worth the potential rating points), and I also played the ... Nbd7 and ... Nc5 systems.

Black can also delay the development of his queenside knight with 7 ... b5 8 0-0 Be7 9 Qf3 Qc7 10 Qg3 0-0 11 Bh6 Ne8 12 Rad1 Bd7 13 f4 Nc6 14 f5 Nxd4 15 Rxd4 Bf6 16 Rd3 Be5 with approximately even chances, A.Morozevich-G.Kasparov, Astana 2001.

8 f4

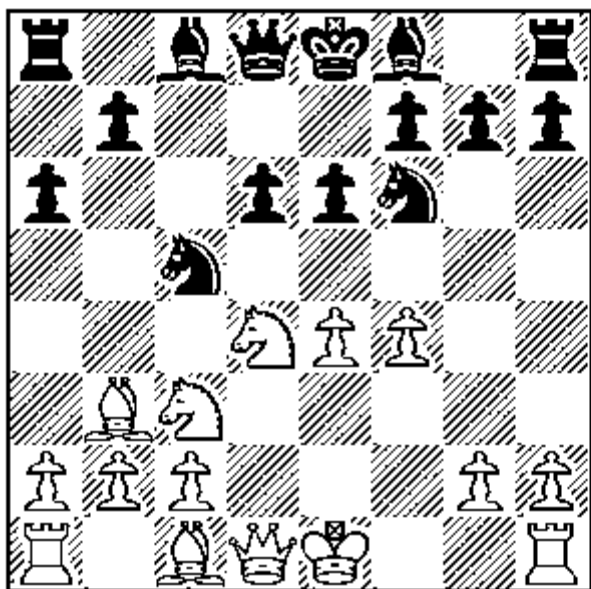
Instead, 8 Bg5 Qa5 (gaining a tempo on White's g5-bishop, while unpinning the queen, which threatens ... Nxe4; 8 ... Nc5 is possible too and after 9 f4 Be7 10 e5 dxe5 11 fxe5 Nd5 12 Bxe7 Nxe7 13 Qg4 0-0 14 0-0-0 Qc7 maybe it's stylistic, but I prefer Black's position) leads to:

a) 9 f4? of course fails to 9 ... Nxe4.

b) The Richter-Rauzer-like 9 Qd2 is a thought.

c) 9 Bxf6 Nxf6 10 0-0 Be7 (10 ... Qc5!? 11 Kh1 b5 12 f4 Bb7 13 Qd3 Be7 14 Bxe6?! fxe6 15 Nxe6 Qc4! Black forces an ending in which Black stands better, P.Jaracz-D.Khismatullin, Dresden 2007) 11 f4 Qc5!? ("The idea is pretty clear: Black improves the position of his queen (and threatens 12 ... e5)" writes GM Mikhail Golubev) 12 Kh1 b5 13 a3 and Black stood at least even, L.Nisipeanu-V.Topalov, Dresden Olympiad 2008.

8 ... Nc5



Triple purpose:

1. Black reinforces e6 in case White plays f5.
2. Black places a second attacker on e4.
3. Black can pick off White's light-squared bishop with ... Nxb3.

9 f5

Again, we find alternatives:

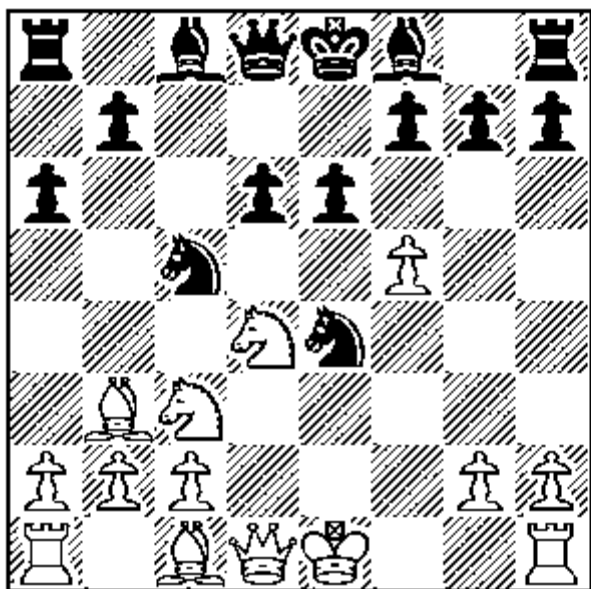
a) 9 0-0 Ncxe4 10 Nxe4 Nxe4 11 f5 e5 12 Qh5 Qe7 13 Qf3 Nc5 14 Nc6 Qc7 15 Bd5 a5!? (an ambitious move which cuts off the knight's retreat squares; 15 ... Bd7 16 Nb4 Be7 is probably the wiser course for Black) 16 Bg5 was V.Topalov-G.Kasparov, Amsterdam 1996. White still stands better after 16 ... Bd7 17 Ne7 Bxe7 18 Bxe7 f6! 19 Qg3 Be6! 20 Bxe6 Qxe7 21 Bd5 0-0-0.

b) 9 e5 dxe5 10 fxe5 Nfd7 11 Bf4 b5 12 Qg4 h5 13 Qg3 h4 14 Qg4 g5! 15 0-0-0 was the earlier N.Short-G.Kasparov, World Championship (Game 8), London 1993. The position is a complete mess. Houdini analysis continues: 15 ... gxf4 16 Nxe6 Nxe6 17 Bxe6 Qe7 18 Bxd7+! (18 Nd5?! is met with 18 ... Nxe5!) 18 ... Bxd7 19 Qf3 Ra7 20 Nd5 Bc6 21 Nf6+ Qxf6 22 exf6 Bxf3 23 Rhe1+! Re7! 24 fxe7 Bxd1 25 exf8R+ Kxf8 26 Kxd1 h3 27 gxh3 Rxh3 28 Rf1 when Black stands slightly better, but the position is still a likely draw.

9 ... Nfxe4?!

On the chess board, temerity tends to be punished far more than passivity. Our expectations rarely allow us to be satisfied with what we have and say: "Good enough". Black's last move was played with the thought: "Let's go pawn grabbing and fall behind in development against the strongest player of the era. What could possibly go wrong?" Black unwisely risks all with a single throw of the dice. Just intuitively, we see at a glance that White's massive development lead will be worth far more than Black's extra pawn.

As one of the world's foremost authorities on the dangers of an overactive imagination, I speak from vast experience (i.e. the misguided readers who hate my writing style and punish my books with a hateful review!) when declaring: To be dull and rational constitutes a virtue. Black is perfectly fine if he follows the dull course 9 ... Be7 10 Qf3 0-0 11 Be3 with dynamically even chances.



10 fxe6!

White may be down material, yet his currency is the fear of war upon Black's king.

Question: Why not first swap knights and then play fxe6?

Answer: Fischer's move takes into account the line 10 Nxe4?! Nxe4 11 fxe6 Qh4+ 12 g3 Nxe6 and now if 13 Nf3?? when Black has the trick 13 ... Qe4+! winning, since he picks up White's h1-rook next move. This ... Qe4+ trick at the end of the line isn't possible in Fischer's version, since his knight remains on c3, guarding the e4-square.

10 ... Qh4+

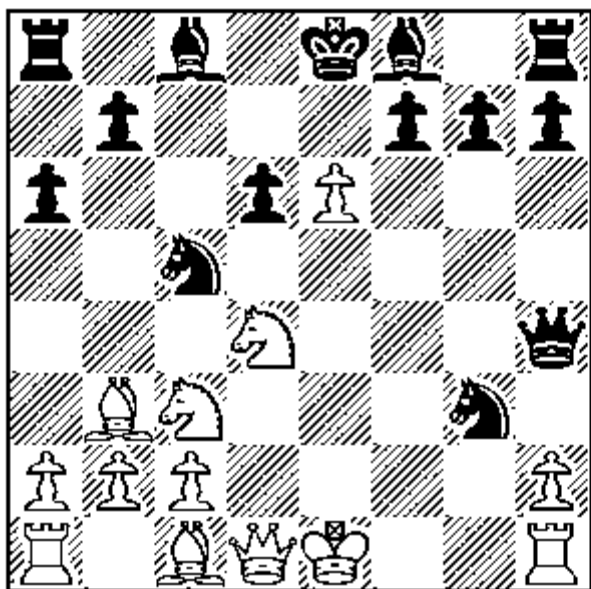
Black must choose from a set of difficult options:

a) 10 ... Bxe6 11 Nxe6! fxe6 (after 11 ... Nxc3? 12 Nxd8 Nxd1 13 Nxb7 Nxb7 14 0-0! f6 15 Rxd1 White's bishop-pair, domination over d5 and the light squares, and superior pawn structure give him a winning ending) 12 Nxe4 Nxe4 13 Qg4 Nc5 14 0-0! (White can also play it safe with 14 Be3 Nxb3 15 Qxe6+ Be7 16 axb3 Qc8 17 Qd5 Qc6 18 0-0-0 Rc8 19 c3, with a pleasant edge) 14 ... Qd7 15 Be3 Nxb3 16 axb3 Rc8 17 c4 with massive compensation for the pawn.

b) 10 ... fxe6 11 Nxe4 Nxe4 12 0-0 when White has more than enough compensation for the pawn.

11 g3 Nxe6?

Black had to try 11 ... Nxc3 12 exf7+ Kd8 13 gxe4 Nxd1 14 Bg5+ Kc7 15 Rxd1 Nxb3 16 axb3 Bg4 17 Rd2. Black is down a pawn, but at least in this version he fights on.



Exercise (critical decision): Should White play 12 exf7+ or should he toss in the zwischenzug 12 Nf3 first? One line leads to a winning position, while in the other, Black equalizes.

Answer: Zwischenzug.

12 Nf3!

Uncanny accuracy. Fischer finds a way to keep queens on the board.

I'm pretty certain Bednarski banked on 12 exf7+? Kd8 13 Nf3 where Black has 13 ... Qe7+!, after which his previous difficulties shrivel to insignificance: 14 Ne2 Qxe2+! (14 ... Nxb3?? hangs the queen to 15 Bg5) 15 Qxe2 Nxe2 16 Kxe2 Nxb3 17 cxb3 Be6 and Black is just fine.

12 ... Qh5 13 exf7+ Kd8 14 Rg1 Nf5 15 Nd5!

White's pieces rule the board and Black's king has no hope.

15 ... Qxf7

Relatively best:

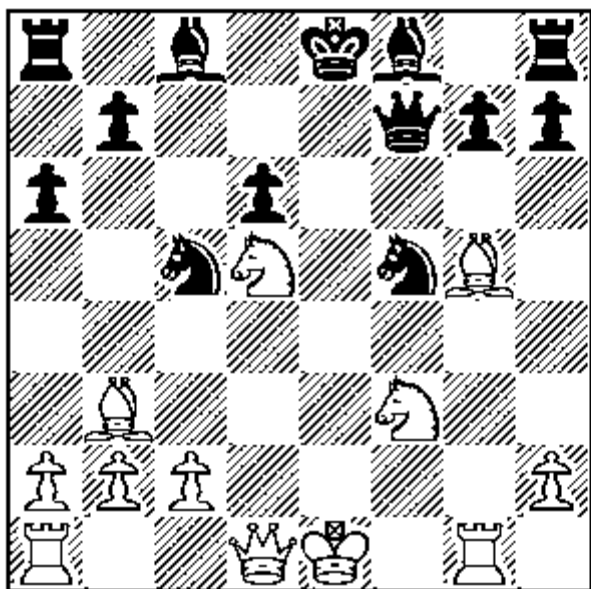
a) 15 ... h6? 16 Nf4 traps Black's queen on an open board.

b) 15 ... Nxb3? is met with 16 Bg5+ Kd7 17 cxb3! (threat: Nb6+) 17 ... Rb8 18 Rc1! Ne7 19 Nb6+ Ke6 20 Nd4+, which discovers on Black's now hanging queen.

16 Bg5+

The bishop crooks his hands so that his fingers look like claws, and then cackles madly, leading some to believe he isn't quite as virtuous as he previously claimed.

16 ... Ke8



Exercise (combination alert): White has a simple way to win Black's queen. How?

17 Qe2+!?

Wow. Fischer, perhaps looking for a bit of fun, ruthlessly goes after Black's king, rejecting the more mundane:

Answer: 17 Nf6+! (discovered check) 17 ... gxf6 18 Bxf7+ (both the white knight and bishop battle for the black queen's love, and the bishop wins) 18 ... Kxf7 and Black can resign.

17 ... Be6 18 Nf4

Three pieces attack e6 and only two defend.

18 ... Kd7

That odd staccato sound you hear is the banging of the black king's head on the table.

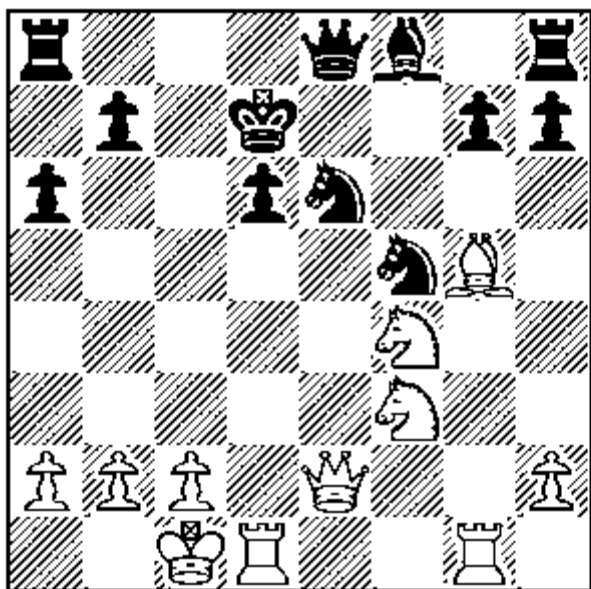
19 0-0-0!

Threatening a cheapo on e5.

19 ... Qe8

Everything loses. For example, 19 ... Nxb3+ 20 axb3 Qg8 (or 20 ... Qe8 21 Rge1 Bg8 22 Qd3! with a deadly double attack on e8 and f5, and 22 ... Ne7 23 Qxd6+ Kc8 24 Nd5 forces mate) 21 Qe4! Rb8 22 Rge1 and Black collapses since e6 and f5 are destabilized.

20 Bxe6+ Nxe6



Exercise (combination alert): Find White's most efficient path to end the game.

Answer: Double attack when b7 and f5 hang simultaneously.

21 Qe4!

The queen proves she is the one in charge and that events will proceed as she alone outlined.

21 ... g6 22 Nxe6 1-0

22 ... Qxe6 23 Qxb7+ pops the a8-rook. "I withdraw my previous description of you as a 'vile, serpent traitor',", says Black's king with a weak smile to his sister.

This game is a terrifying example of how Fischer dealt with non-world class opponents. When I was a kid, I thought reading was a kind of magic, which takes impermanent spoken ideas and preserves them in perpetuity. I first went over this game in 1969, when Fischer's 60 Memorable Games came out, and the joy I receive from playing over the moves of this game remains the same, when I replay it in 2015.

Game 6

R.Fischer-B.Ivkov

Santa Monica 1966

King's Indian Attack

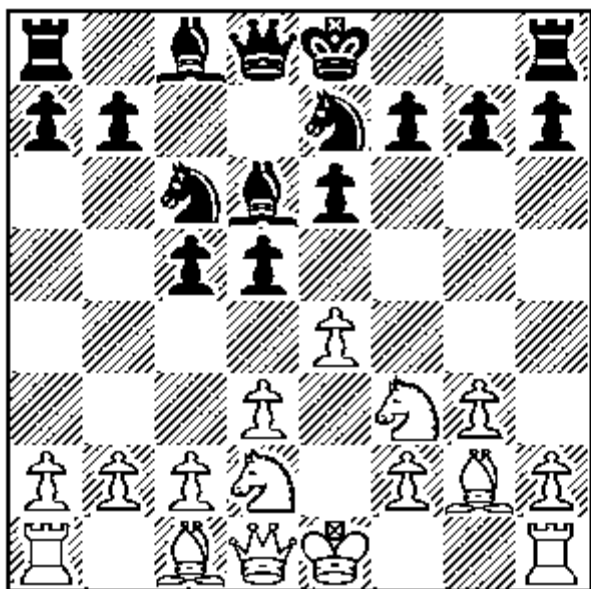
1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 e6 3 d3

Fischer would switch to the King's Indian Attack when he felt "chicken", in his own words.

3 ... Nc6 4 g3 d5 5 Nbd2 Bd6

Next game we look at Black's main set-up, which arises from 5 ... Nf6 6 Bg2 Be7.

6 Bg2 Nge7



Question: What is Black's idea behind the ... Bd6 and ... Nge7 set-up?

Answer: With this system Black attempts to either remove the potency of White's future e5, or just try and halt it outright with ... f6.

7 0-0 0-0 8 Nh4

Intending to activate his f-pawn. 8 Re1 is met with 8 ... f6.

8 ... b6

I also play Black's set-up against the King's Indian Attack, but I prefer 8 ... Bd7.

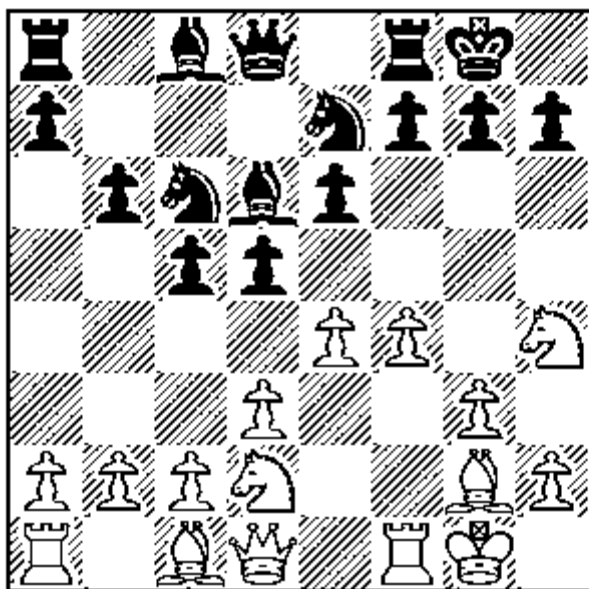
Question: Why?

Answer: It's more flexible for two reasons:

1. If Black later plays to swarm the queenside with ... b5, then he doesn't lose a tempo.
2. Black's light-squared bishop may transfer over to the kingside for defence, if needed, with ... f6 and ... Be8.

An example: 9 f4 f6 10 c3 Be8 (10 ... Qc7 may be more accurate) 11 f5 dxe4?! (a violation of the principle: Don't break central pawn tension without good reason; today, your older and wiser writer would maintain the tension with 11 ... Bf7) 12 Nxe4 Bf7 13 Be3 b6 14 Qg4! (threats: Nxf6+, as well as fxe6) 14 ... Ne5 15 Nxf6+ Kh8 16 Qe4 gxf6?! (16 ... exf5 17 Qxa8 Qxa8 18 Bxa8 Rxa8 19 Nxf5 Nxf5 20 Rxf5 Be6 21 Rxe5 Bxe5 22 Ne4 Bd5 offers Black quite a bit of compensation for the pawn, but he is the one fighting for the draw) 17 fxe6 Bg8 18 Bh6 Rc8 19 Bh3 (19 d4! gives White a winning position) 19 ... Rc7 20 d4 cxd4 21 cxd4 N5g6 22 Bxf8 Qxf8 23 Rac1? (23 Nf5! Nxf5 24 Bxf5 Ne7 maintains White's advantage) 23 ... Rxc1 24 Rxc1 Qh6! 25 Rf1 Nxe4 26 gxe4?! (26 Qxe4 is an even ending) 26 ... f5! 27 Bxf5 Nxf5 28 Rxf5 Qg6+ 29 Kh1 Bxe6 (now Black's pair of bishops is worth more than White's rook and two pawns) 30 Qa8+ Bg8 31 Qc8? (he had to try 31 Qe4) 31 ... h6 (31 ... Qg4! is more efficient) 32 h5?! Qg4 (White's king is completely exposed) 33 Rf8 Qe4+ 34 Kg1 Qxd4+ 35 Kf1 Bxf8 36 Qxf8 Qg7 0-1, V.Saulespurens-C.Lakdawala, Los Angeles 1998. This game will be annotated in Anti-Sicilians: Move by Move.

9 f4



9 ... dxe4?!

After Black's last move, a serious inaccuracy, the latent power in Black's position fails to be harnessed properly.

Question: Why a dubious mark? Doesn't this move follow the principle: Counter in the centre when menaced on the wing?

Answer: It does, indeed, yet is still incorrect, since this is the dreaded exception to the general rule. Principles don't work 100% of the time. Instead, they must be applied almost arbitrarily, using our best judgement and intuition. Normally when Black captures on e4, this benefits White since he will be able to utilize the e4-square later for his pieces after achieving e5, as in the game.

Black should remain consistent with his opening strategy of making it as difficult as possible for White to achieve e5, by playing 9 ... f6!.

9 ... f5, attempting to gum up White's kingside play is also possible, but I think White can wrest an edge with 10 exf5! exf5 (maybe Black can try 10 ... Nxf5 11 Nxf5 Rxf5 when White is only a microbe better) 11 Ndf3 Qc7 (Black has a hole on e5, but it is heavily guarded) 12 c3 Ba6 13 Re1 Rae8 14 Be3 h6 15 d4! with advantage to White, since he is now able to occupy e5.

10 dxe4 Ba6 11 Re1

Houdini underestimates White's coming attacking chances and slightly prefers Black here.

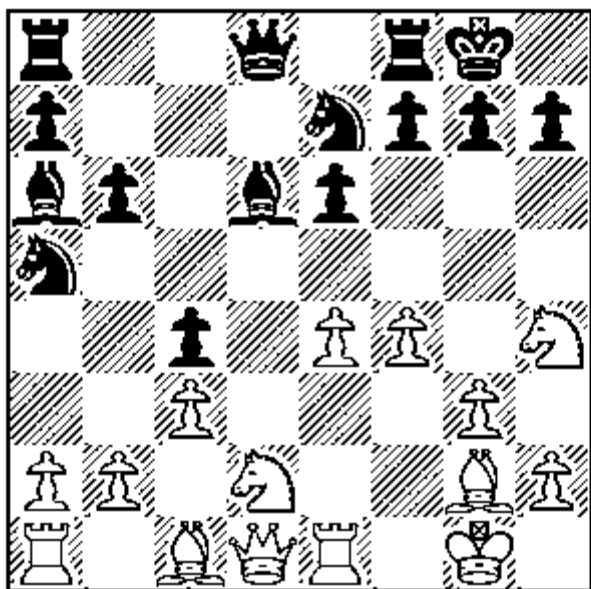
11 ... c4!?

I think Black should play 11 ... e5 12 f5. White has some attacking chances here and also the hole on d5, but Black is better off than in the game.

12 c3!

Now the a6-bishop has very little influence on coming matters. Fischer accurately avoids black counterplay with the inaccurate 12 e5?! Bc5+ 13 Kh1 c3! 14 bxc3 Rc8, when the queenside is opened far quicker than in the game's continuation.

12 ... Na5?!



The instant a flawed plan is implemented, the inevitable process of its future disintegration simultaneously commences.

Question: Where is this knight going?

Answer: Black plans ... Nb7, ... Nc5 and ... Nd3, but lacks the time, since Fischer's kingside attack blossoms quicker.

Black should probably go for 12 ... e5 13 f5 Bc5+ 14 Kh1 (now f6 is a dangerous threat) 14 ... f6. If 15 b4! cxb3 16 axb3 and Black stands worse, no matter how he responds. For example:

a) 16 ... Bd3 17 b4 Bf2 18 Re2! Bxe2 19 Qxe2 Bd4 20 Bb2 and White stands clearly better, since he picks up a second piece for the rook.

b) 16 ... Bb7 17 b4 Bd6 18 Nc4 Nc8 (18 ... Bc7? 19 b5 Na5 20 Nxa5 bxa5 21 Qb3+ Kh8 22 Ba3 is a strategically won game for White) 19 Be3 Bc7 20 Qb3 Kh8 21 Red1 Qe7 22 b5 Nd8 23 Bg1 Nf7 24 Ne3 with a light-squared bind for White.

c) 16 ... Qc8! 17 b4 Bf2 (forced; 17 ... Bd6?? hangs a piece to 18 b5!) 18 Re2! Bxe2 19 Qxe2 Nd4 20 cxd4 Bxd4 21 Rb1 Qc2 22 b5 and White stands better, but conversion won't be so easy with all those open central lines for Black's rooks.

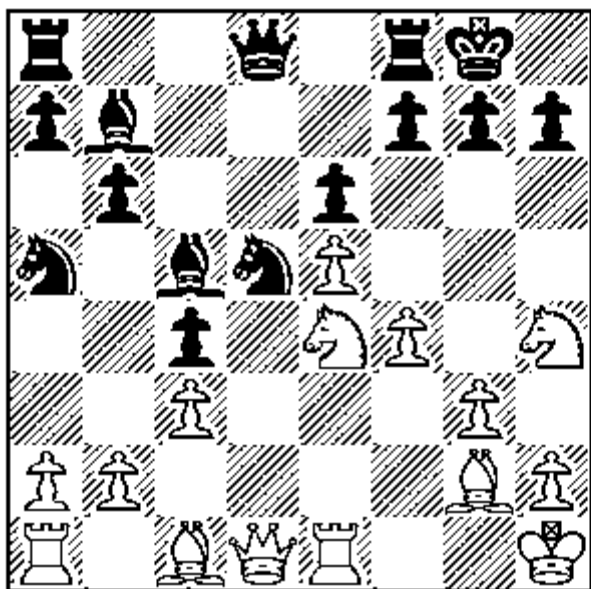
13 e5

Now Fischer gets what he is after: access to e4.

13 ... Bc5+

This saves the exchange, but it messes up Black's original intent, since he planned to post his knight, not his bishop on c5.

14 Kh1 Nd5 15 Ne4 Bb7



16 Qh5!

People in small towns fear drifters (and there are quite a few in Black's town), since they aren't rooted in the community, or the town's set of morality. Fischer, like Morphy and Capablanca before him, just makes chess look easy. He logically masses force around Black's king. He wasn't satisfied with 16 f5 (intending f6) 16 ... Ne7 17 fxe6 fxe6 18 Nxc5 Qxd1 19 Rxd1 Bxg2+ 20 Kxg2 bxc5 21 Rd6 with advantage for White in the ending, due to Black's multiple pawn weaknesses.

16 ... Ne7 17 g4!

Threat: f5 and f6.

17 ... Bxe4!?

When Black's bishop dies and enters heaven, he is disconcerted when the head angel assigns him the accordion, rather than the harp, as he was led to believe. This is a huge concession, but Ivkov felt that White's terrible e4-knight had to be removed.

I think he puts up greater resistance in the line 17 ... Ng6 18 Nf3 (threats: f5 and f6, and also Nfg5) 18 ... Bxe4 19 Rxe4 Qd1+ (19 ... Bf2 threatens ... Qd1+, which can be easily dealt with: 20 Bd2 Qd3 21 f5! when the rook can't be taken and White has achieved a winning attack) 20 Re1 Rad8 21 Qh3! (now Rxd1 becomes a real threat) 21 ... Qc2 22 f5 Rd1 23 fxe6 fxe6 24 Bd2! Rxa1 (24 ... Rxd2 25 Nxd2 Qxd2 26 Rf1 Qxb2 27 Rxf8+ Bxf8 28 Rf1 Qb5 29 g5 Qe8 30 Qg4 is a winning position for White) 25 Rxa1 Qxb2 26 Re1 (threat: Ng5) 26 ... Rf7 27 g5! Re7 28 Rf1 Qxa2 29 Bc1 Qa4 30 Nd2 Qe8 31 Ne4 Nb7 32 Nxc5 Nxc5 33 Ba3 and Black doesn't have enough compensation for the piece.

18 Bxe4 g6

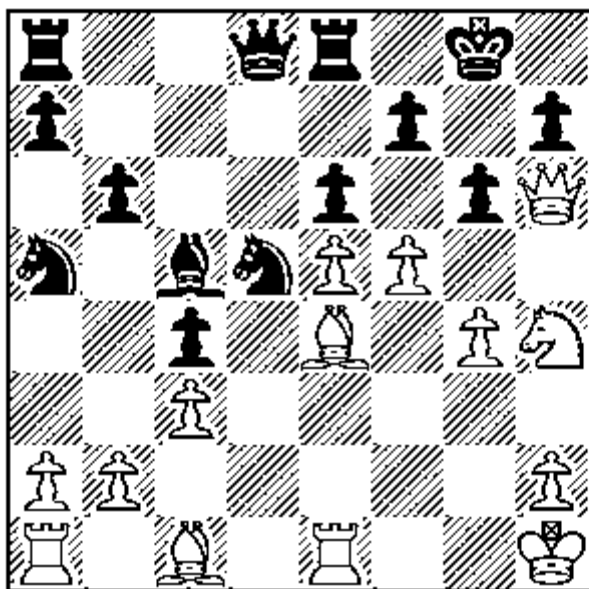
This creates terrible weakness around Black's king, but it can't be helped, since 18 ... Ng6? 19 Nf3! is crushing, as Black lacks a defence to f5, or Ng5.

19 Qh6 Nd5 20 f5

Now Black must deal with both f6 and fxe6 threats. To have a target, we must first be aware of its precise location, or else we risk launching an attack on empty space. Note that Black's intended queenside 'attack' is nowhere to be seen. Magically, Fischer has continually increased his own kingside threats, while simultaneously restraining Black in the centre and on the queenside.

20 ... Re8

Black's last move enables ... Bf8.



Exercise (planning): Black's queenside 'defenders' lie about in heaps of ungovernable clumps, like a bad haircut. The black king's lightly defended garrison is threatened with siege and its terrible aftermath: starvation. Come up with White's most efficient attacking plan.

Answer: Target and sacrifice on g6.

21 fxg6!

The rote 21 f6?! allows Black to defend with 21 ... Bf8 22 Qg5 when Black's position remains bad, yet infinitely superior to what happened to him in the game continuation.

21 ... fxg6 22 Nxg6!

Not only winning a pawn, but also shearing away the black king's pawn cover. Ivkov could have resigned here, but this would have deprived us of witnessing Fischer's concluding attack.

22 ... Qd7

A person can only take offence if he or she comprehends the insult. The knight can't be touched: 22 ... hxg6?? walks into a mate in three moves after 23 Qxg6+ Kf8 24 Bh6+ Ke7 25 Qg7.

23 Nf4 Rad8

It would be more logical to remove White's scary looking knight. Still, this doesn't even come close to saving Black: 23 ... Nxf4 24 Bxf4 Rac8 25 Rf1 Bf8 26 Qg5+ Qg7 27 Qh5 Re7 28 Bg5 Qxe5 29 Rae1 (threat: Bxh7+) 29 ... Qg7 30 Bf6 Qf7 (30 ... Qh6 31 Qxh6 Bxh6 32 Bxe7 leaves White up a rook) 31 Qg5+ Bg7 32 Bxe7 is complete annihilation for Black.

24 Nh5 Kh8

The nervous king pretends to be deaf to the poisonous, conspiratorial whispers in court.

25 Nf6 Nxf6 26 exf6 Rg8 27 Bf4

Threat: f7, followed by Be5+. To me a simpler path would be to push the g- and f-pawns down with 27 g5 Bf8 28 Qh5 and Black has no good defence to g6.

27 ... Rxg4

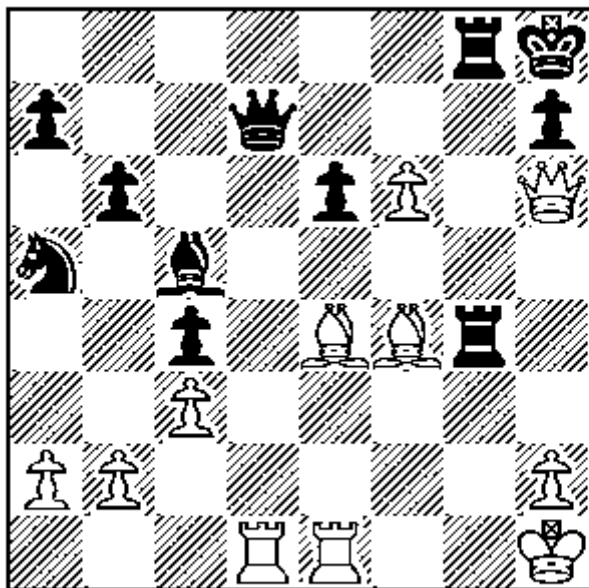
Alternatively 27 ... Qf7 28 g5 Bf8 29 Qh4 Rd7 30 Rad1 Rxd1 31 Rxd1 Bc5 32 Be5 Be3 33 Qh5! deflects to force mate in three moves.

28 Rad1 Rdg8

28 ... Qxd1?? walks into 29 Qxh7 mate.

Propriety forbids me to mention the black queen's many strange quirks. Oh, Ivkov is a sneaky

guy. He attempts to con Bobby with a carnival shell game, but who can blame him? When we are busted, even the greatest among us is willing to sink to a most sordid plane of existence, if in return we get one final chance to set up a hideously vulgar ye olde cheapoe!



Exercise (combination alert): How did Fischer deliver Black's king to his enemies by forcing mate?

Answer: Clearance.

29 f7! 1-0

I hope nobody fell for 29 Rxd7?? Rg1+ 30 Rxd7 Rxd7 mate.

After 29 f7! the finish runs 29 ... Qxf7 30 Be5+ R8g7 31 Qxh7 mate. "I love you as a brother, yet must execute you as a traitor," weeps White's queen.

Game 7

R.Fischer-L.Myagmarsuren

Sousse Interzonal 1967

King's Indian Attack

1 e4 e6 2 d3

Question: Why would a player as theoretically well prepared as

Fischer play the King's Indian Attack, where theory says Black equalizes?

Answer: In our decision-making process of which openings we should play, the subjective may carry just as much weight as the objective. Will the KIA assure White of a '+=' after 19 moves? Not if Black knows theory. Yet Fischer accrued vast experience in all kinds of King's Indian structures, so he banked on the fact that his greater understanding would be enough to win the game. We usually pick an opening which fits our pre-set stylistic prejudices, even knowing that it may not be the theoretically best choice. Also, in the case of this game, Fischer came heavily armed theoretically as well, as you will see on his 13th move.

2 ... d5 3 Nd2 Nf6 4 g3 c5 5 Bg2 Nc6 6 Ngf3 Be7

This is one of Black's main lines versus the King's Indian Attack.

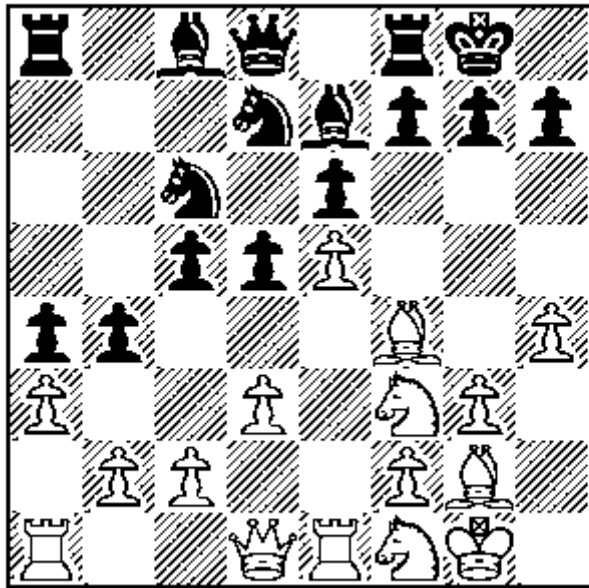
7 0-0 0-0 8 e5

8 Re1 Qc7 9 e5 usually transposes to the game continuation.

8 ... Nd7

8 ... Ne8!? tends to throw people off: for example, 9 Re1 b5 10 h4 Nc7 11 a3 Bd7! (normally the bishop goes to a6, but the move played allows Black more possibilities of ... f6 which keeps his king safer) 12 Nf1 a5 13 N1h2 a4 (13 ... b4 is met with the clogging 14 a4!) 14 Ng5 Nd4! (a knight on f5 will drastically slow White's attack) 15 Ngf3? (this wishy-washy retreat costs White time; he has no choice but to cross the bridge and attack with 15 Qh5 h6 16 Nh3 Nf5! – 16 ... Nxc2?? 17 Bxh6 gives White a winning attack – 17 Ng4 Re8! 18 Nxh6+ – 18 Bxh6?? is met with 18 ... g6! – 18 ... gxh6 19 Bxh6 Nxh6 20 Qxh6 Bf8 when White has adequate compensation for the piece, but no more) 15 ... Nf5! 16 Ng4 b4 and Black's queenside play is faster than White's on the kingside, J.Landaw-C.Lakdawala, Southern California State Championship 2008.

9 Re1 b5 10 Nf1 b4 11 h4 a5 12 Bf4 a4 13 a3!!



Any time a new move is played, we challenge legal precedence. A stunning new move at the time, with lasting potency, since it remains White's most commonly played move, even today.

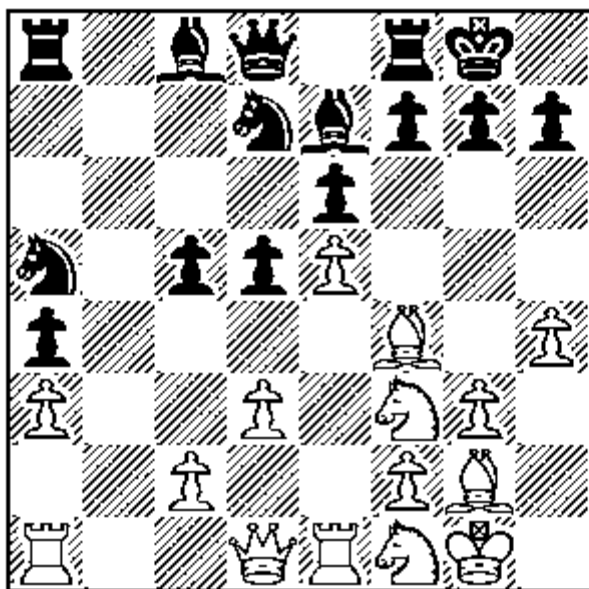
Question: Isn't Fischer's move in direct violation of the principle:
Don't create confrontation on your opponent's strong wing?

Answer: It does just that, yet as we will see in the coming moves, it prevents Black from puncturing the queenside dark squares. IM David Levy writes: "A completely new idea in a very well-known type of position. White blocks the queenside attack before Black can complete his undermining of the dark squares with the move P-R6 [... a3]. The result of Fischer's innovation is to render Black's queenside play quite ineffective."

Previously played was 13 N1h2 a3 (the point of Fischer's move is that it prevents Black from this puncture of White's queenside dark squares) 14 b3 Ba6, when White scores only 44% from this position, since Black's queenside play is fast.

13 ... bxa3 14 bxa3 Na5

Rather than move an already developed piece twice, perhaps better is 14 ... Ba6 15 Ne3 Rb8 16 c4 dxc4 17 Nxc4 Nb6 (Black is assured of good play since his knight reaches d5) 18 Nd6 Nd5 19 Qxa4 Rb6 20 Rac1?! (White should play 20 Bg5 Bxd3 21 Rac1) 20 ... Nxf4 21 Qxf4 Nxe5! 22 Nxe5, P.Svidler-S.Karjakin, Russian Team Championship 2014. Black stands better after 22 ... Qxd6 with the bishop-pair and a pair of weak pawns to work over.



15 Ne3!?

Question: Why did Fischer deliberately walk into a tempo loss with ... d4?

Answer: I don't much like this move. Fischer wanted to provoke a weakening of the e4-square, but I agree with you that it may not be worth two tempi. 15 N1h2! preparing Ng5 and Qh5 may be White's best plan.

15 ... Ba6

15 ... Qc7!? allows 16 Nxd5!, a familiar tactic in KIA. Then 16 ... exd5 17 e6 regains the piece and after 17 ... Bd6 18 exd7 Bxd7 19 Ne5 Be6 20 c4 dxc4 21 Bxa8 Rxa8 22 Qf3 Rc8 23 Nxc4! Bxf4 24 Qxf4 Qxf4 25 gxf4 Nb3! (not 25 ... Nxc4?! 26 dxc4 Bxc4 27 Rac1 Be6 28 f5! Bd7 29 Re7 Bxf5 30 Rxc5 Kf8 31 Rec7 Rxc7 32 Rxc7 when Black is hard pressed to hold the ending) 26 Rad1 White stands better up a full exchange, yet his five isolanis clearly make conversion problematic.

16 Bh3!

Question: What is the point of Fischer's last move? The bishop just stares at a wall on e6.

Answer: The idea is to suppress ... f6 or ... f5 counterplay attempts from Black.

16 ... d4

Black duly gains his free tempo.

17 Nf1!

Correct, as 17 Ng4?! blocks the white queen's entry to the kingside.

17 ... Nb6

Now ... Nd5 is coming, which gains yet another tempo on the f4-bishop.

18 Ng5

And now Qh5 is in the air. Fischer probes, hoping to provoke an ... h6 weakening at some stage.

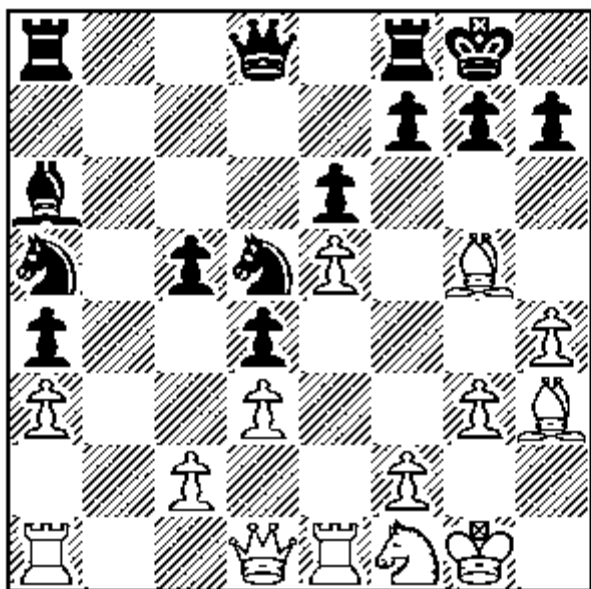
18 ... Nd5 19 Bd2

Fischer didn't like unclear positions, like the one reached at the end of the variation 19 Qh5 h6 20 Nxf7 Nxf4 21 Nxd8 Nxh5 22 Nxe6 c4 23 Nxf8 Kxf8.

19 ... Bxg5

19 ... h6? allows 20 Nxe6! fxe6 21 Bxe6+ Kh8 22 Bxa5 Qxa5 23 Bxd5 with two extra pawns.

20 Bxg5



20 ... Qd7!?

It's very difficult to pinpoint just where Black went wrong in this game. Intuitively I feel his queen belongs on c7 to pressure e5: for example, 20 ... Qc7! 21 Qh5 Bb7! 22 Bg2 Rfb8 23 Bf6 Nxf6 24 exf6 gxf6 25 Nh2 Bxg2 26 Ng4! Bh3 27 Nxf6+ Kg7 28 Qg5+ Kh8 29 h5 Qe7 30 Kh2 Bf5 31 Qxf5 exf5 32 Rxe7 Kg7 33 Nd5 is only a slightly favourable ending for White according to the comps. Clearly Black will generate serious queenside play in this line.

21 Qh5

Attackers begin to migrate to the kingside.

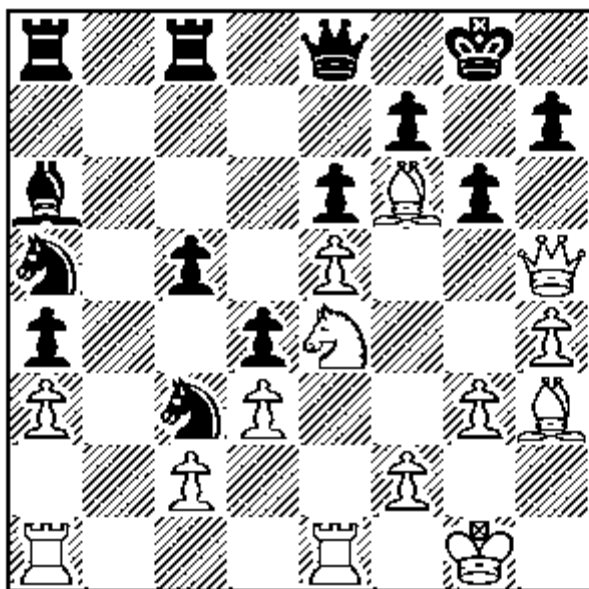
21 ... Rfc8!?

Black should respond to White's kingside attack with a swift central counter: 21 ... c4! 22 dxc4 Nxc4 23 Nh2! (after 23 Qg4 Ne7 24 Bg2 (24 h5 Nf5 25 h6 Bb7! 26 hxg7 Rfe8 27 Bg2 Bxg2 28 Kxg2 Qd5+ Black actually stands better due to his powerful centralization) 24 ... Nf5!? (Black's zombie king is hard to kill, whether or not White accepts the exchange offer on a8) 23 ... Rfc8 24 Ng4 Qe8 25 Bf6!, although now Re4 may soon follow, with a strong attack, and if 25 ... gxf6 26 Bg2 f5 27 Qg5+ Kh8 28 Bxd5 fxg4 29 Bxa8 Rxa8 30 Qf6+ Kg8 31 Re4.

22 Nd2 Nc3 23 Bf6! Qe8

After 23 ... gxf6 24 exf6 Kh8 25 Nf3 the dual threats Ng5 and Ne5 are decisive. If 25 ... Nd5 26 Ne5 Nxf6 27 Qh6 Ng8 28 Qf4 Qe7 29 Nxf7+ Kg7 30 Bxe6 with a winning attack: for example, 30 ... Qf6 31 Qg4+ Qg6 32 Ng5 Nf6 33 Qf4 Rc6 34 Bf7 Qh6 35 Re7 is crushing.

24 Ne4 g6?



Black's once carefully manicured plan suddenly goes haywire. A move played based on the philosophy: If I don't strike, then I will in turn, be struck. Black's last move, a strategic concession, which is impossible to cover up, leads to a catastrophic weakening of the dark squares around his king.

It's better to retreat and regroup, rather than die in a hopeless cause: 24 ... Bb7! (covering against White's threat to lift his rook with Nxc3 and Re4) 25 Nd6 Qf8 26 Bg5 Rcb8 27 Nxb7 Nxb7 28 Bg2 Ra7 and it's anybody's game.

Question: You say that after Black's last move he is busted, but when I look at the position, it's impossible for me to gauge which side is winning. How do I get my assessments in line with the position's truth?

Answer: You just asked an unanswerable question! If we knew the answer, the book would be (Insert your name): Move by Move! Kasparov once said that the reason Carlsen is world champion is the superiority of his assessment power over his rivals. But when it comes to ordinary players (i.e. you and me) and our assessments in complex positions, more often than not, there is a slight – and sometimes not so slight! – gap between our perceptions and reality.

25 Qg5!

25 Qh6?! loses a tempo to 25 ... Qf8.

25 ... Nxe4

Allowing the rook into the attack looks suicidal, but it's too late for Black to save himself. If 25 ... Rcb8 26 Nd6 Qf8 27 h5 Rb2 28 hxg6 hxg6 29 Bxe6! forces mate.

26 Rxe4 c4

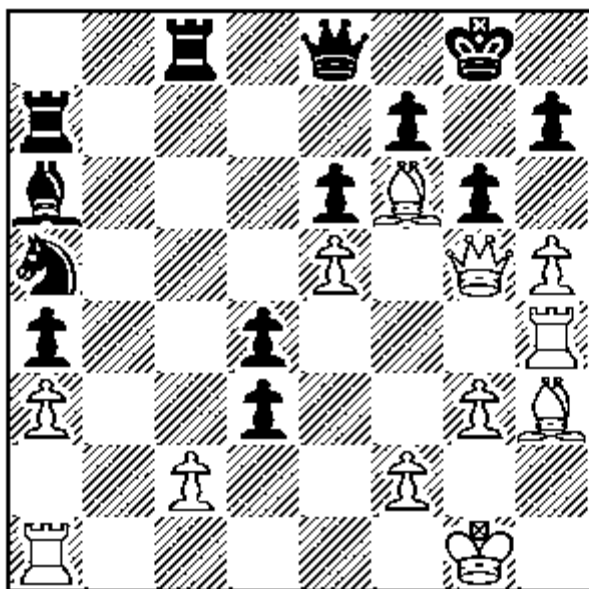
Following 26 ... Bb7 27 Rf4 Bd5 28 h5 Rab8 29 Bg2! Black has no reasonable defence: for example, 29 ... Rb7 (29 ... Bxg2 30 Kxg2 c4 31 Rh1 is game over) 30 Bxd5 exd5 31 Re1 c4 32 hxg6 fxg6 33 e6 cxd3 34 e7! dxc2 35 Qxd5+ Qf7 36 e8Q+ Rxe8 37 Rxe8 mate.

27 h5 cxd3 28 Rh4!

"It's obligatory for a mad scientist to hire a stooping, disfigured servant to perform her dark bidding," thinks White's queen, of her newly hired h4 henchman, whereas 28 cxd3 Bxd3 allows the black bishop to help in the defence.

28 ... Ra7

Avoiding 28 ... dxc2 29 hxg6 fxg6 30 Rxh7! Kxh7 31 Qh4+ Kg8 32 Qh8+ Kf7 33 Qg7 mate.



Exercise (planning/combination alert): Black's king finds himself a prisoner in his own castle. White has a forced mate. Find the key to Fischer's attack.

Answer: Re-route the light-squared bishop into the attack by transferring it to the h1-a8 diagonal.

29 Bg2!!

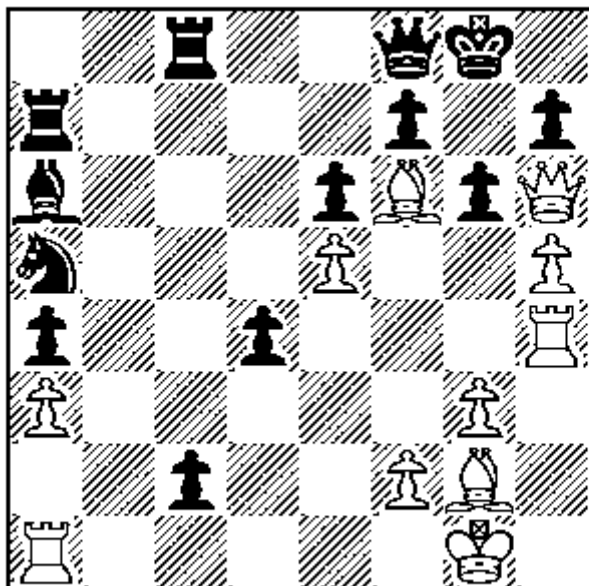
The comp found the bizarro, alternative solution 29 Bg4!! dxc2 30 Rc1 d3 31 Qh6 Qf8 32 Qxh7+ Kxh7 33 hxc6+ Kxc6 34 Bh5+ Kh7 35 Bf3+! Qh6 36 Be4+ Kg8 37 Rxh6 and White mates next move.

29 ... dxc2

If 29 ... Qf8 30 Be4! dxc2 31 hxc6 fxc6 32 Bxc6 hxc6 33 Rh8+ Kf7 34 Rxf8+ winning, while 29 ... Bb7 interferes with the a7-rook's coverage. White forces the win with 30 hxc6 fxc6 31 Rxh7! Kxh7 32 Qh4+ Kg8 33 Qh8+ Kf7 34 Qg7 mate.

30 Qh6 Qf8

Too late. If Black's defective queen/defender were bought from a catalogue, Myagmarsuren would be sorely tempted to mail her back with a disgruntled note attached to the manufacturer.



31 Qxh7+! 1-0

What a finish! White's attack is finally sated, like a blood-gorged mosquito. 31 ... Kxh7 32 hxg6+ Kxg6 33 Be4 is mate. Now we see why the bishop returned to the h1-a8 diagonal.

Game 8
V.Korchnoi-R.Fischer
Herceg Novi (blitz) 1970
King's Indian Defence

Herceg Novi 1970 was considered the strongest blitz event of the 20th Century. Fischer dominated, placing 4.5 points ahead of second-place finisher Tal. His score against the dreaded Soviet machine was a pounding 8.5-1.5. Fischer swept Tal, Petrosian and Smyslov 6-zip. He beat Bronstein 1.5-0.5. The only Soviet player to break even with Fischer was Korchnoi. There were even reports that Fischer never used more than two and a half minutes in any of his games.

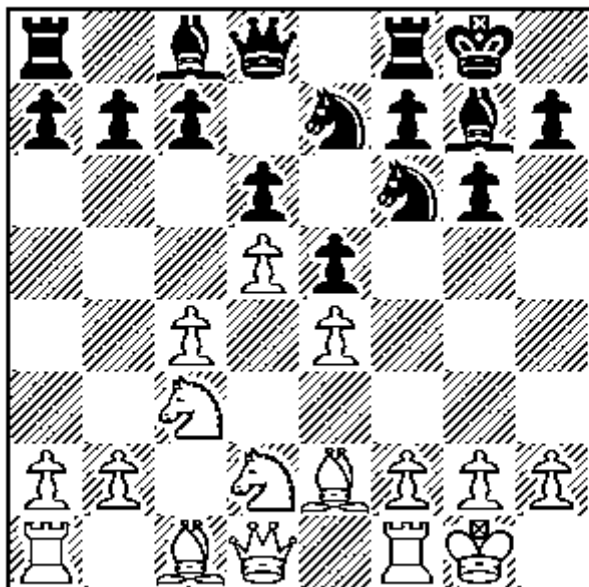
Question: Why analyze a blitz game in a best games collection?

Answer: This is a blitz game like no other. I feel like the quality of Fischer's play was easily at a strong GM, 40 moves in 2 hours level, even when using under five minutes on his clock. I put this game in the book to demonstrate Fischer's towering domination over his rivals in blitz.

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

The dreaded Long variation of the Classical King's Indian, where theory now sometimes nudges past the 30th move.

8 ... Ne7 9 Nd2



This is White's third most popular choice. Today both 9 Ne1, the Long variation proper, and 9 b4 the Bayonet Attack are more popular.

9 ... c5

Question: Why does Black play ... c5, which is on White's strong wing?

Answer: The idea is to keep the queenside closed as long as possible by denying White the natural c5 pawn break, by creating a barrier on that square.

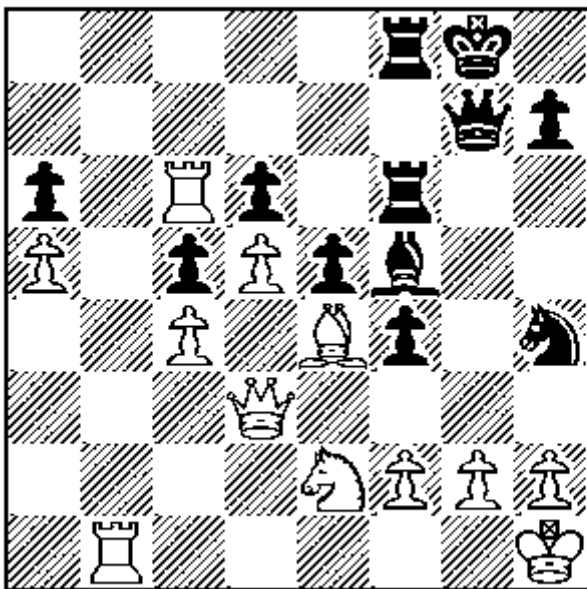
Question: So how does White get queenside play then?

Answer: By playing for b4, bxc5 and then operating down the newly opened b-file.

9 ... a5 is the more modern interpretation: for example, 10 a3 Kh8 11 Rb1 Nd7 12 b4 f5 13 f3 f4 14 Nb5 b6 (Black attempts to stall c5 for as long as he can) 15 Qc2 a4!? (Nakamura essentially offers to hand over his a-pawn if it buys him time to keep queenside lines closed) 16 Rd1 g5 (Black charges ahead on the kingside) 17 g4!? (this also is a common clogging attempt on the kingside) 17 ... h5 18 h3 Rf6 19 Bb2 Rh6 20 Kg2 Ng6 21 Rh1 Bf8 (more firepower aimed at the c5-square) 22 Kf2 Nf6 23 c5 (White offers a pawn to open the c4-square for his knight) 23 ... dxc5 24 Nc4 Bd6 25 Bc3 Kg7 and the position remains dead even according to Houdini, V.Kramnik-H.Nakamura, Monaco (rapid) 2011.

10 a3?!

This is essentially a tempo loss, since White can play Rb1 and b4, forgoing a3 altogether. Indeed, more accurate is 10 Rb1 Ne8 11 b4 b6 12 a4!? (this is book, but the plan is slow, just as in Korchnoi's game with Fischer; I would play 12 bxc5 and just leave the a-pawn alone) 12 ... f5 13 a5 Nf6 14 Qa4 Bd7 15 Qa3 Bh6 16 Bd3 Qc7 17 bxc5 bxc5 18 exf5 gxf5 19 Bc2?! (19 Nb5! Bxb5 20 Rxb5 greatly reduces White's chances of getting mated, since he removes one of Black's best attackers from the board) 19 ... a6 20 Nde4 (Larsen utilizes a tactic to reduce Black's kingside attackers, but apparently he didn't manage to reduce them enough to save his king from Fischer's attack) 20 ... Bxc1 21 Nxf6+ Rxf6 22 Rfxc1 (the comps like White here, but I don't believe them; they underestimate Black's coming attack down the g-file) 22 ... Raf8 23 Rb6 Bc8 24 Ne2 f4! (depriving White of f4) 25 Be4 Nf5 26 Rc6 Qg7 (notice how everything holds together on Black's queenside, while Fischer's kingside attack continues to mount) 27 Rb1? (27 Kh1 was necessary, although even then I like Black's kingside chances) 27 ... Nh4! (... f3 is in the air and Black suddenly has a decisive attack) 28 Qd3 Bf5! (eliminating a key white defender) 29 Kh1.



Exercise (combination alert): Black to play and win.

Answer: Interference/knight fork: 29 ... f3! 30 Ng3 (no choice) 30 ... fxg2+ 31 Kg1 Bxe4 (seizing control over f3 in preparation of a knight fork) 32 Qxe4 Nf3+ 33 Kxg2 Nd2 and there is the decisive knight fork. 0-1, B.Larsen-R.Fischer, 1st matchgame, Denver 1971. This demolition looks like a game between a super GM and an over-the-hill IM (i.e. your writer!), but keep in mind that Larsen was ranked 3rd/4th in the world when this match was played.

10 ... Ne8 11 b4 b6 12 Rb1

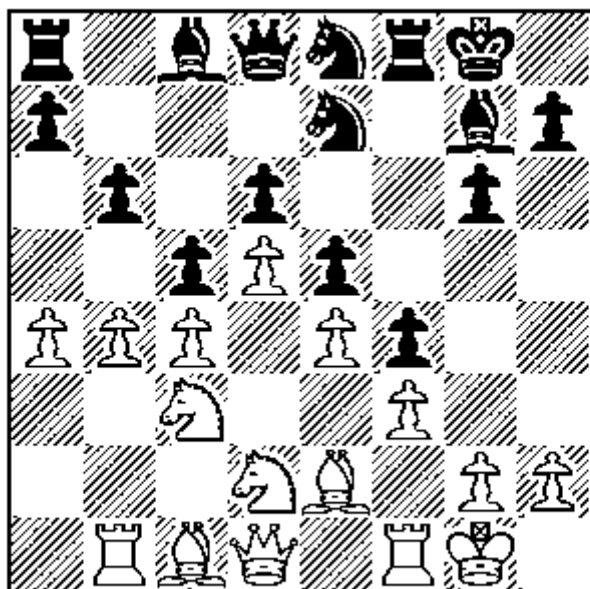
Instead, 12 bxc5 bxc5 13 Rb1 f5 14 Re1 Nf6 15 Bd3 f4 16 Nf3 h6 Halting Ng5 and Ne6 ideas. 17 Bc2 g5 18 Ba4! When White goodifies (correct; not a real word) his once bad bishop and chances are about even, A.Maksimenko-P.Capitelli, Bratto 2003.

12 ... f5 13 f3 f4

Also logical is to swap away White's good bishop with 13 ... Bh6 14 Nb3 Bxc1 15 Nxc1 Nf6 16 bxc5 bxc5 17 Nd3 f4 18 Qa4 g5 19 Nf2 (to slow down Black's ... 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, Berlin 1979.

14 a4?!

This move was new and hasn't been repeated.



Question: It looks logical for White to pry open the queenside. Why give it a dubious mark?

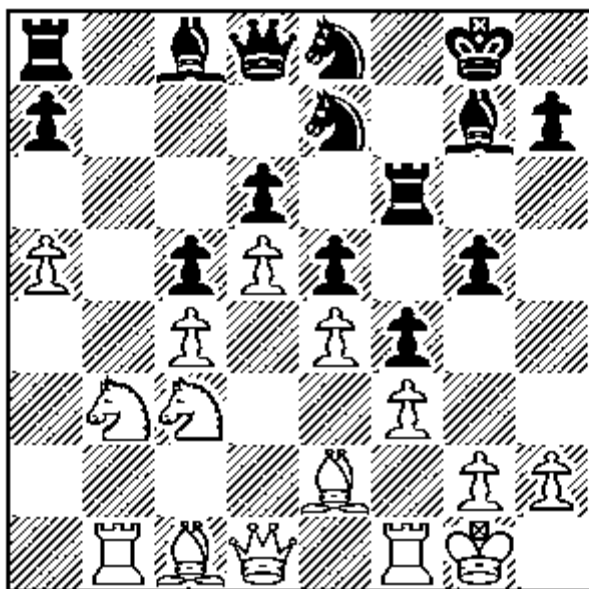
Answer: Every time my hot-headed terrier, Kahless, senses the approach of our misunderstood mailman Russ, he bares his teeth, the hair on his back magically goes from curly to straight, and his puny body quivers with untapped rage. Moral: It's a waste of energy to prepare to attack the wrong enemy. That's the issue. It really doesn't pry open the queenside (since White wants to keep the a-pawns on the board), and it simply wastes time, allowing Black's attack to flare to dangerous levels on the kingside.

Better is 14 Nb3 g5 15 bxc5 bxc5 16 Na4 Qc7 17 Bd2 Bd7 18 Na5 Rb8 19 Qc2 Nf6 with balanced chances. White is unlikely to get mated since rooks come off down the b-file, R.Ciaffone-G.Spraggett, Toronto 1997.

14 ... g5 15 a5 Rf6 16 bxc5

After 16 axb6 axb6 17 bxc5 bxc5 Black is in good shape since he only needs to worry about his now well protected base pawn on d6.

16 ... bxc5 17 Nb3!?



Question: What is White's plan? It looks as if the knight has no place to go on b3.

Answer: I have a feeling Korchnoi planned Ba3 and Nxc5, with two healthy central passers for the piece. The problem comes later, when for some reason only he can explain, he changed his mind from the logical follow-through.

17 ... Rg6

The ... g4 break is coming.

18 Bd2?

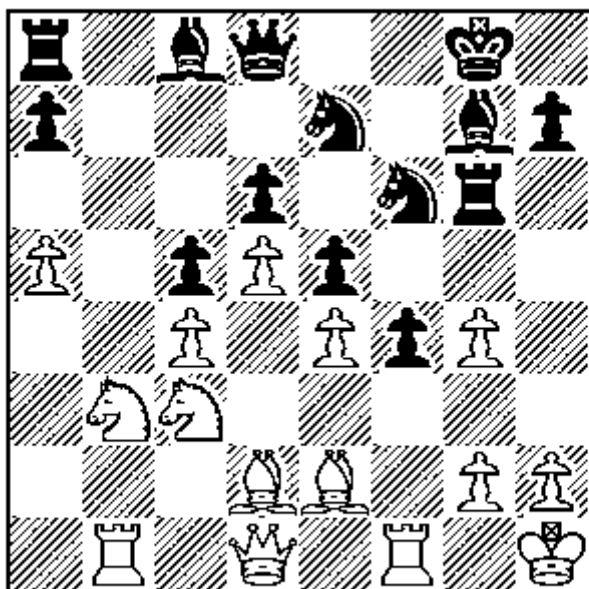
This may be the losing moment for White. Korchnoi should have gone ahead with the logical 18 Ba3! Nf6 19 Nxc5 dxc5 20 Bxc5 when it's anybody's game.

18 ... Nf6

Now ... g4 can't be stopped and White's queenside play feels like it's a million miles away.

19 Kh1 g4 20 fxg4!

The only move, after which Korchnoi appears to poke a hornet's nest with a stick. Principle: Meet a wing attack with a central counter. Understanding your troubles doesn't necessarily mean you have a perfect answer, but at least it's a first step.



Question: Why did Korchnoi exchange on g4, allowing a black attacker in for free?

Answer: What to do? To launch a confrontation from a position of weakness courts near-certain annihilation, while not launching it is to virtually insure defeat. Korchnoi undoubtedly feared an entombing effect on his king with a coming ... g3. The trouble is he had little choice.

Indeed, if 20 Qc2? g3 21 h3? and the finish is painfully obvious: 21 ... Rh6 22 Rfd1 Bxh3 23 gxh3 Rxh3+ 24 Kg2 Rh2+ 25 Kg1 Qe8 26 Bf1 Qh5 27 Bg2 Rxg2+ 28 Kxg2 Qh2+ 29 Kf1 Qf2 mate) 21 ... Nh5! 22 g4 Ng3+ 23 Kg1 Rh6 24 Kf2 Ng6 (... Qh4 is coming) 25 Ke1 Nxf1 26 Bxf1 Rh2 27 Qd3 Nh4 28 Qe2 Bxg4!, and if 29 fxg4 f3 is decisive.

20 ... Nxb4

One glance tells us that White's king is in deep trouble and Korchnoi's queenside attack remains at a standstill. Every position contains an outside, superficial level of immediate perception, and an inside (the position's hidden truth) level. Of the two, the latter is infinitely of greater value. Curiously, most of my comps, suffering from the horizon effect, gleefully inform me that the game is even. It isn't!

21 Rf3

I think White was better off reducing Black's attacking force with 21 Bxg4 Bxg4 22 Qc2.

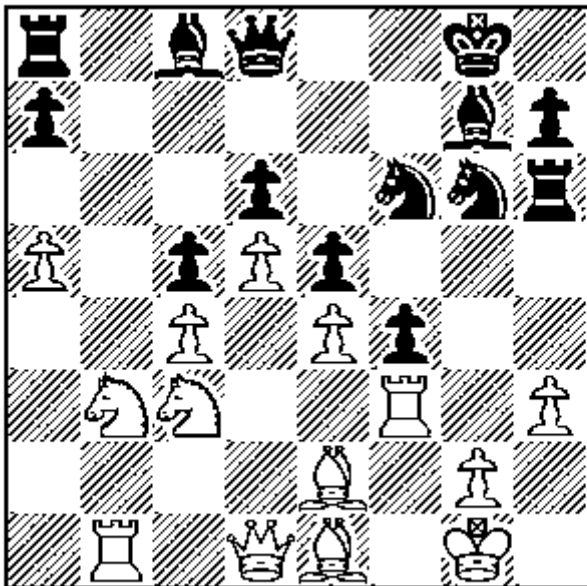
21 ... Rh6

The rook's probing induces pawn weaknesses around White's king.

22 h3 Ng6 23 Kg1 Nf6

Also tempting is to sacrifice a pawn to clear f4 and seize control over the dark squares with 23 ... Ne3!? 24 Bxe3 fxe3 25 Rxe3 Nf4, with enormous compensation for only one pawn invested.

24 Be1



Exercise (planning): Black obviously has a promising attack. Now we confront the details. Come up with a clear attacking plan for him.

Answer: Transfer the g6-knight to g5, where it looms over both f3 and h3, with a decisive attack.

24 ... Nh8!!

Oh, the Nimzowitschian glory of it all. Fischer decides to assert his dominion over the kingside via a retreat, by placing a premium value on flexibility. When an army mobilizes, it can be for attack or defence. In this case the knight retreats in disorienting fashion, in preparation for an

assault on White's king.

25 Rd3

Korchnoi sees Fischer's idea and hurries his rook out of the way of Black's oncoming knight.

25 ... Nf7 26 Bf3

26 h4 prevents Black's plan at the incredibly high cost of puncturing g4 and weakening h4. White can't survive that scenario.

26 ... Ng5

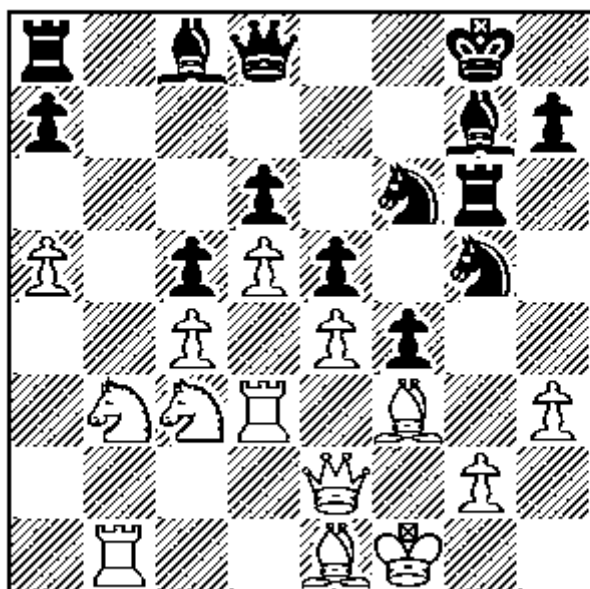
Mission accomplished. Black's attack marches forth with a threatening rhythm.

27 Qe2

The comps, still within their horizon effect haze, only give Black an edge, when in reality Black has a winning attack. I would abandon support for the a5-pawn and air lift another defender for White's king with 27 Nd2.

27 ... Rg6 28 Kf1?!

"It's a lot better to be burned in effigy, than to have my actual body burned," muses White's king, who hopes to escape to the queenside. He never arrives at his intended destination. White's king should have slid over to h1, but it wouldn't have saved him.



Exercise (combination alert): A punitive expedition is clearly on Black's docket. How did Fischer continue?

Answer: Annihilation of the king's cover.

28 ... Nxh3!

Fierce ambition also requires abundant resources, otherwise it's just daydreaming.

29 gxh3?

Starvation has a way of making even the most awful tasting food palatable. White's extra material is his final, not-so-comforting asset in his dwindling fortunes. The offer shouldn't be accepted. 29 Bh4 Ng5 is lost for White, but at least here he can fight on for a while.

29 ... Bxh3+ 30 Kf2 Ng4+

Clearing h4 for Black's queen.

31 Bxg4 Bxg4 0-1

32 Qc2 Qh4+ 33 Kf1 (the king believes his eloquence quiets the room, when in reality it is the sight of his terrifying sister who stands directly behind him) 33 ... Qh1+ 34 Kf2 Qh2+ 35 Kf1

Bh3+! (clearance) 36 Rxh3 Rg1 is mate. Is chess really this simple? 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 9

R.Fischer-T.Petrosian

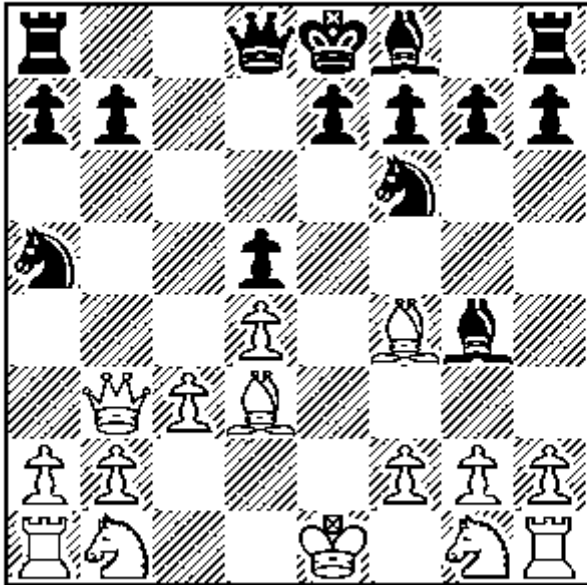
USSR vs. Rest of the World, Belgrade 1970

Caro-Kann Defence

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 exd5 cxd5 4 Bd3 Nc6 5 c3 Nf6

In The Caro-Kann: Move by Move, I advocate 5 ... Qc7.

6 Bf4 Bg4 7 Qb3 Na5



This inferior line is no longer in fashion, perhaps solely due to the vicious beating Fisher handed Petrosian in this game.

Question: What is inferior about it?

Answer: I think Black loses more time than he gains on White's queen, since it takes him three moves to bring a knight (eventually!) to c6, and two moves to play his bishop to the inferior d7-square. Today, 7 ... Qd7 and 7 ... Qc8 are played.

8 Qa4+

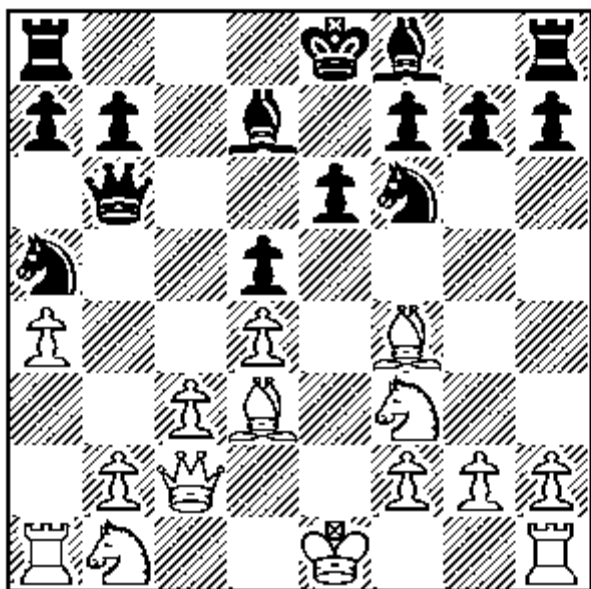
This costs Black time with his light-squared bishop.

8 ... Bd7 9 Qc2 e6

Petrosian agrees to a potentially bad light-squared bishop, perhaps thinking he may be able to exchange it off later on b5 – a plan which Fischer alertly disallows.

Instead, 9 ... Qb6 10 a4! Rc8, as in P.Biyiasas-B.Ivkov, Sao Paulo 1973, may soon transpose to our game's position after 11 Nd2.

10 Nf3 Qb6 11 a4!



Question: What was the point of Fischer's last move?

Answer: White's last move prevents Black from swapping away his bad bishop with ... Bb5.

11 ... Rc8

11 ... Nb3 12 Ra2 doesn't bother White in any way.

12 Nbd2 Nc6

Strategic threat: ... Nb4, picking off White's best potential attacker. After 12 ... Be7 13 0-0 0-0 14 Ne5 h6 15 Rae1 Nc6 I'm not a big fan of Black's position, but this version looks better than what Petrosian got in the game, G.Seul-R.Schulz, Berlin 1997.

13 Qb1

Sidestepping ... Nb4.

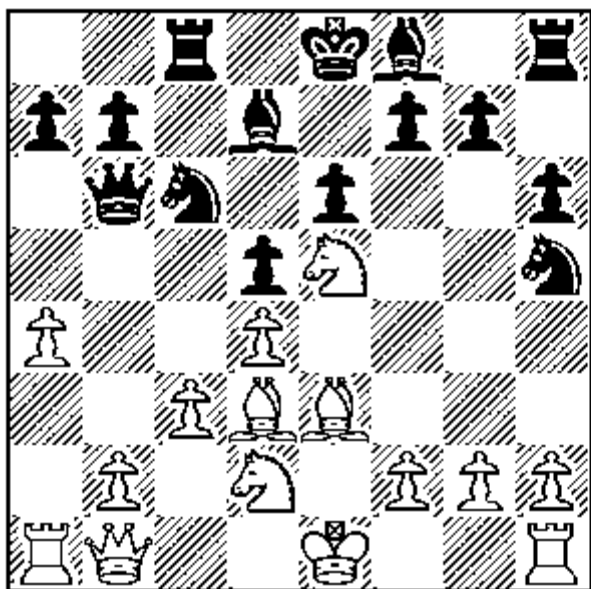
13 ... Nh5

This is another 'tempo-gaining' move I would have avoided, although it is Black's main line. I would try 13 ... Be7 14 0-0 h6 15 Ne5 0-0 with only an edge to White, J.Van den Berg-N.Bakker, Dutch League 1995.

14 Be3 h6?!

Petrosian displays the positional player's chronic disease of underestimation of dynamic factors. Black doesn't have the time to waste on this luxury. He would have been better off forking over his h-pawn with 14 ... Qc7, and if 15 Bxh7 Nf4 16 Bxf4 Qxf4 17 Bd3 when the bishop-pair and open h-file provide Black with some measure of compensation for the pawn, F.Remiro Juste-L.Fontana Sotomayour, Spain 1997.

15 Ne5



15 ... Nf6?!

Petrosian still doesn't sense the danger. It was time for desperation mode with 15 ... Nxe5! 16 dxe5 Bc5 17 a5 Qc7 18 g4 (trapping Black's wayward knight) 18 ... Bxe3 19 fxe3 Qxe5 20 gxh5 Qxe3+ 21 Kd1 0-0.

Question: Do you believe the sac is 100% sound?

Answer: Maybe 90% sound, which is a lot better than just agreeing to a lousy, counterplayless position, which Petrosian got in the game. Black picked up two pawns for the piece, plus fishing chances against White's exposed king, which looks clearly better than the game's continuation.

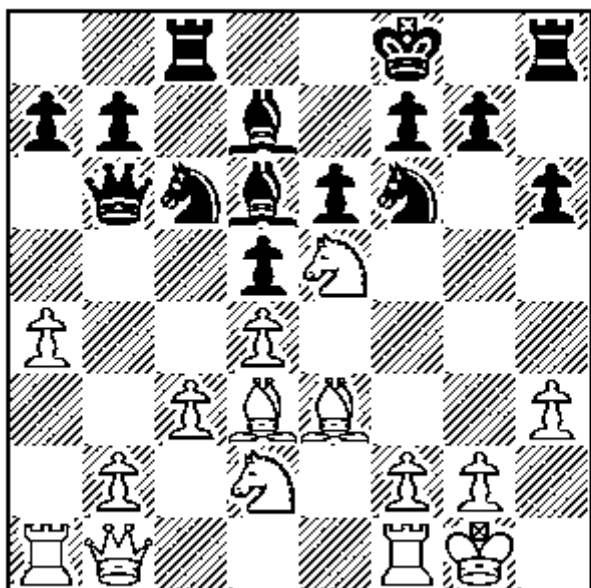
16 h3

Covering against future ... Nxe5 and ... Ng4 tricks.

16 ... Bd6 17 0-0

Of course White isn't hanging a pawn on e5, due to the discovery on Black's queen.

17 ... Kf8?!



It's always fun to add a few drops of irrationality to an otherwise reasonable position. This

move, which shifts the game to a new, irreversible direction, is made with the thought: When no magical answer suggests itself, the next best thing is to look for unorthodox cures.

I'm convinced that players like Tal embraced a deterministic world view, with the implicit belief that events on the chess board are mainly driven by chaotic causes external to our human will. In essence, he was prepared to ride the flow of chaos. A purely positional player like Petrosian, on the other hand, believed that he alone was the architect of his fate. In this case, Petrosian pushes self-determination too far. Due to his strategic eccentricity/creativity, he manifested this trait, where when he lost a game, he sometimes gave you the impression that he was a weak player, in dire need of lessons. Sadly, this is also the case with your unfortunate writer (except that when I lose, you would swear that my rating is below the D-level).

Question: What on earth possessed Petrosian to voluntarily cede castling?

Answer: Petrosian was a defensive genius, and geniuses sometimes short circuit. His idea is his king may actually be safer with his rook on h8. The flaw with his reasoning is that his h8-rook will be out of play for an eternity. Instead, Black should go with the unimaginative, yet superior 17 ... 0-0.

18 f4!

Black's last move is a silent dog whistle which summons Fischer to launch an immediate attack.

18 ... Be8

18 ... Nxe5?? 19 fxe5 Bxe5 isn't so clever, since White wins a piece with 20 a5.

19 Bf2!

Dual purpose:

1. Now f5 is in the air.
2. Black must be on alert for future Bh4 ideas.

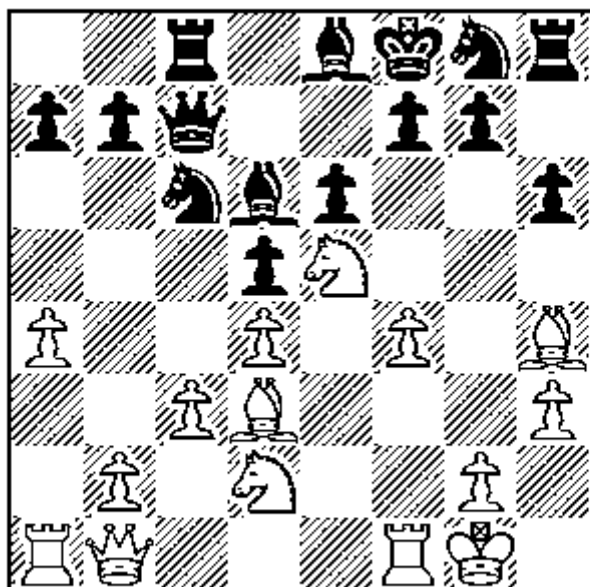
19 ... Qc7

Petrosian puts everything he has on e5 to stall White's f5 line opening ambitions.

20 Bh4! Ng8!?

Several players informed me that my favourite move in chess is any knight retreat. Somehow I can't bring myself to give Petrosian an exclaim for this one.

After 20 ... Ne7 21 f5! Bxe5 22 dxex5 Qxe5 23 fxe6 Qxe6 24 Qc2, Rae1 is coming and Black is unlikely to survive, thanks mainly to his awful h8-rook.



advantage. Now come up with a plan to increase it.

Answer: Line opening. White doesn't even lose a pawn when he self-undermines his control over e5.

21 f5! Nxe5

21 ... exf5 22 Bxf5 Rb8 allows White a promising continuation with 23 Nxf7! Bxf7 24 Bg6 Nf6 25 Bxf6 gxf6 26 Rxf6 Nd8 27 Qf5 Rg8 28 Rf1 Rg7 29 Bxf7 Nxf7 30 Qxd5. White has three pawns for the piece and a winning attack.

22 dxe5 Bxe5 23 fxe6 Bf6?!

Now a light-square pestilence soon spreads through Black's camp. He shouldn't allow any more lines to open on his king. Petrosian had to try the admittedly unpalatable 23 ... f6 24 Nf3 Bf4 25 Nd4 Ne7 26 Nf5 Be5 27 Bf2, which keeps White's advantage under some degree of check.

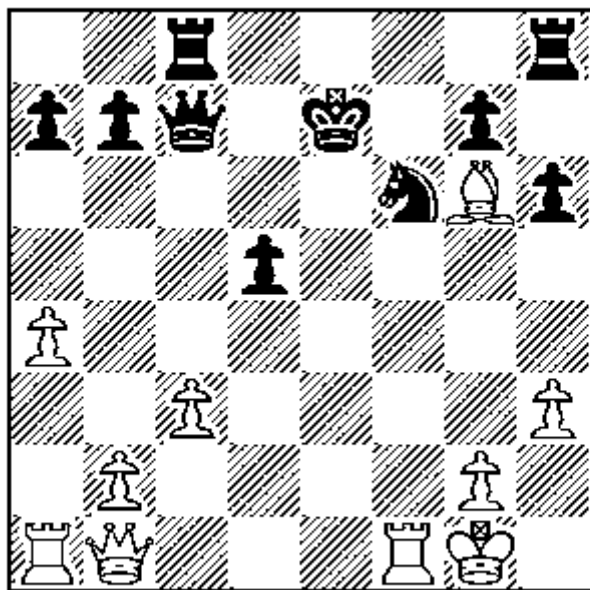
24 exf7 Bxf7 25 Nf3 Bxh4

Black's bishop harangues God with prayers to send down fireballs and lightning bolts from the heavens to smite the enemy. Unfortunately God wasn't paying attention or couldn't be bothered, so no fireballs or lightning bolts were forthcoming. Black has to develop somehow, but this allows White's knight access to juicy light squares, like f5 and g6.

26 Nxh4 Nf6 27 Ng6+! Bxg6 28 Bxg6

Black is essentially down a rook, since his h8 loafer just sits on the couch, watching TV and eating potato chips (and not even the low fat, baked kind). Petrosian's startling next move is a desperate attempt to employ the rook.

28 ... Ke7!



If a demonically inspired person uses a hammer to commit a murder, it doesn't mean the hammer is evil. This desperate/ingenious attempt clearly projects a strong mood of urgency. Petrosian's h8-rook is now free to emerge. He bought the privilege by sacrificing his king's safety.

Question: Won't Petrosian's king be hunted down in the middle of the board?

Answer: Well, that is what happened in game. Still, I think Petrosian's idea is his only chance. His king makes a desperate bid to reach b8, as if he castled long. Doing nothing and playing without his h8-rook's participation looks hopeless.

29 Qf5!

The queen inches closer to Black's king and the a1-rook is ready for activation.

29 ... Kd8

Black's king teeters and totters, swaying in and out between equilibrium and disequilibrium, but

always with the silent prayer that he may one day reach the promised land on the queenside, away from the tyranny of the centre.

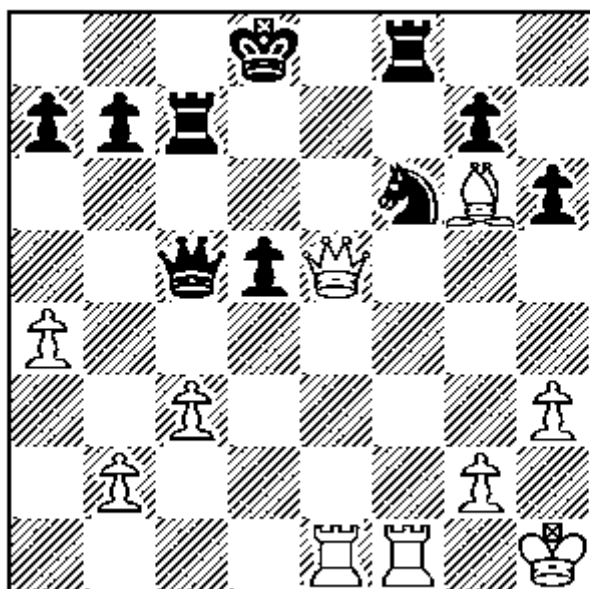
30 Rae1 Qc5+

After 30 ... Qd6 31 Bf7! (now Qg6 is in the air) 31 ... Rc7! (and not 31 ... Kc7 32 Qg6 Rcf8 33 b4 Kb8 34 Qxg7 Rh7 35 Rxf6 Rxd6 36 Rxd6 Rxf7 37 Re3 Rd7 38 Rxh6 when Black is hopelessly lost, down two pawns in the double rook ending) 32 Qg6 Rf8 33 Bxd5! (neither 'defender' may touch the bishop) 33 ... Kc8 34 Bf3 Kb8 Black is down a pawn, with the inferior minor piece. Yet this may be Petrosian's best option in a nest of terrible choices.

31 Kh1 Rf8 32 Qe5!

The queen is open minded, allowing her subjects to think and do as they like – just as long as they never, ever, challenge her authority. Oh, no you don't! Fischer prevents Black's king from slipping away to safety via c7.

32 ... Rc7



Exercise (planning/combination alert): With his last move, Petrosian prays for time to play ... Kc8 and ... Kb8. Fischer never gives him the chance. How did Fischer turn his advantage into decisive proportions?

Answer: Line opening/pawn sacrifice/removal of a key defender.

33 b4!

The b-pawn flicks and strikes viper-quick. Fischer's move is infinitely stronger than the rote 33 Bf5 Re8 when Black still cherishes hopes of survival.

33 ... Qc6

The queen's tears cause her makeup to run:

a) 33 ... Qxc3?? 34 Qd6+ and the f8-rook hangs.

b) 33 ... Qe7 34 Qd4 Qd6 35 Qxa7 when White picks off a pawn, while his attack continues to rage.

34 c4!

Fischer hits upon the position's binding truth: Open lines! He never seems to run dry of ideas to fan his initiative. Here we see a brilliant secondary line-opening sacrifice. This time Petrosian has no way of clogging the attacking lanes.

34 ... dxc4

Opening the d-file is of course not what Petrosian wanted. His other options look no better, though:

a) 34 ... Rd7 35 Qb8+ Qc8 36 Qxa7 Qxc4 37 Rc1 Qxb4 38 Qb8+ Ke7 39 Rce1+! and Black lacks an e4 block.

b) 34 ... Qxc4?? 35 Qd6+ is the same old story. The f8-rook hangs.

35 Bf5!

Nyet! Now c8 is off limits and Black's king isn't going anywhere.

35 ... Rff7 36 Rd1+ Rfd7

Appeasement. 36 ... Nd7 37 Rfe1 forces mate, since Black is unable to simultaneously defend both e8 and e7.

37 Bxd7

The bishop considers mere material gain a mockery of what he is entitled to: the black king's head.

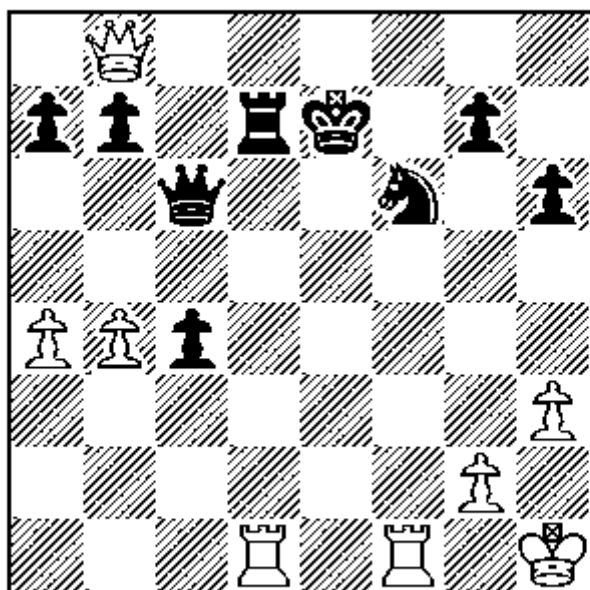
37 ... Rxd7

And not 37 ... Nxd7?? 38 Rf8 mate.

38 Qb8+ Ke7

Black's king enters the room with his 'haven't-I-been-punished-enough' face. He winces as he reconstructs a poorly planned past, out of which his present misery arose.

After 38 ... Qc8 39 Rxd7+ Nxd7 40 Qd6 Ke8 41 Qe6+ Kd8 42 Rc1 the threat of Qg8+ is decisive: for example, 42 ... Qc6 43 Qg8+ Ke7 44 Re1+ Kf6 45 Qe8 Qd5 46 Rf1+ Kg5 47 h4+! Kxh4 48 Qg6 Qg5 49 Qe4+ Kh5 50 Rf5 wins the queen.



Exercise (combination alert): How did Fischer end the game?

Answer: 39 Rde1+! 1-0

The correct rook, since the f1-rook is needed to pin Black's knight in case the king runs to f7. If 39 ... Ne4 (or 39 ... Kf7 40 Qe8 mate) 40 Rf4 Rd4 and now the simplest is 41 Qe5+, winning more material and quickly forcing mate.

Game 10

D.Minic-R.Fischer

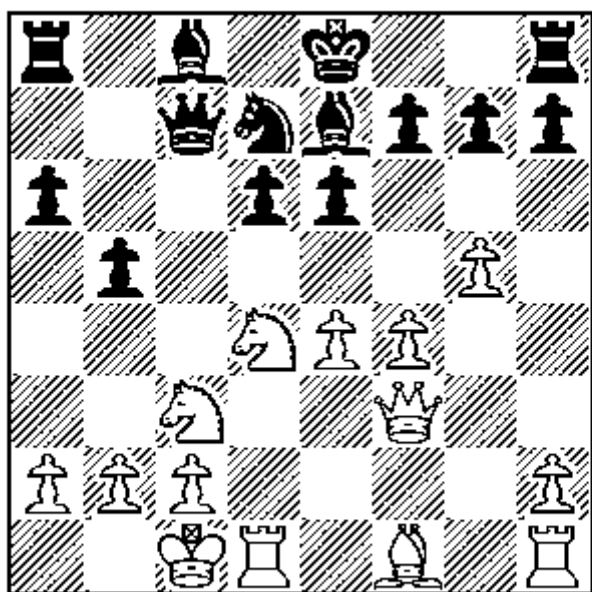
Rovinj/Zagreb 1970

Sicilian Najdorf

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 a6 6 Bg5 e6 7 f4 Be7

Fischer was the high priest of 7 ... Qb6, the Poisoned Pawn line, as well. With the text, we reach the main line Najdorf. The tackling of this theoretical monstrosity is in equal parts intimidating and gratifying. But you need the right style. I played it in 1970 as a budding 10-year-old wannabe Fischer. Of course I got mated with depressing frequency, until the pain brought me to my senses, and I began playing openings which suited my style, like the French, Caro-Kann and 1 ... e5.

8 Qf3 Qc7 9 0-0-0 Nbd7 10 g4 b5 11 Bxf6 Nxf6 12 g5 Nd7



In case you were wondering, all the previous moves are theory (thank goodness this is a book on Fischer and not the Najdorf, so I can save myself the unpleasant task of sorting out the opening!).

13 a3

This move is considered slightly inferior today. White uses a precious tempo to remove the ... b4 issue. Today, 13 f5 is White's main line. Black can either decline the pawn with 13 ... Nc5 or risk grabbing g5: 13 ... Bxg5+ 14 Kb1 Ne5 15 Qh5, which is a tabiya position for some Najdorf players.

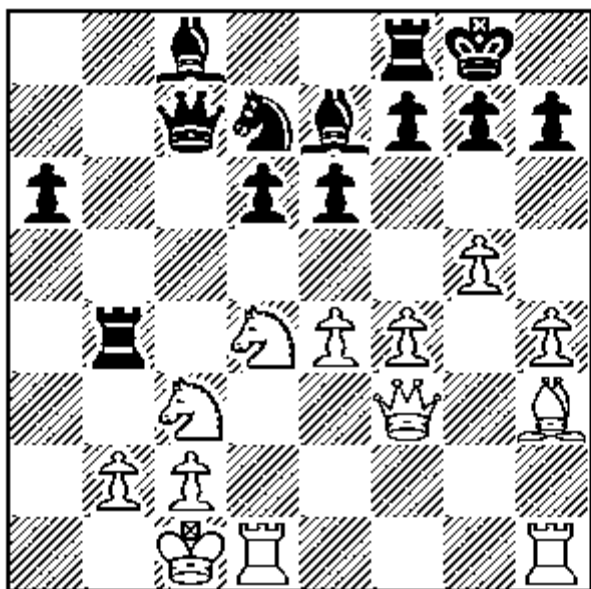
13 ... Rb8

Dual purpose: Black now doesn't worry about e5 tricks from White. Secondly, ... Rb8 prepares to pry open the b-file with a coming ... b4.

14 h4 b4 15 axb4 Rxb4 16 Bh3

Now Black must be on high alert for sacrifices on e6, as well as sudden f5 thrusts.

16 ... 0-0!?



A move played with a crafty intent: when we want our opponent to take action, then we must bolster the illusion of weakness first.

Question: Isn't this a case of castling into it? It feels to me like White's attack is at least as fast as Black's on the open b-file.

Answer: Fischer had a lifelong deeply abiding faith in the soundness of his beloved Najdorf structures. I prefer Portisch's treatment with 16 ... Qc5, which leaves Black's king within the safety of the middle: 17 Nb3 Qb6 18 h5 Nc5! 19 Nxc5 dxc5 20 g6 fxe6 21 hxe6 h6 22 Nd5 exd5 23 Bxc8 0-0 threatened ... Rxf4! and left Black with the more promising attack, R.Bellin-L.Portisch, Teesside 1972.

17 Nf5?

Natural attackers have a talent for constructing both their own paradise, as well as their own misfortune. Sometimes it just isn't good enough if our attack's organizing principle is: "That way!". An idea, no matter how beautiful or imaginative, is doomed to fail if its essence fails to square with reality. In this case Minic's plan misses by a centimetre, which may as well miss by a kilometre. In these crazy Najdorfs, the great danger is allowing our imaginations to outrun reality. This move doesn't score well for White. The idea is to clear d5 for the c3-knight, but the problem is White simply wastes time if Black declines the sacrifice.

More promising is 17 Nxe6! fxe6 18 Bxe6+ Kh8 19 Nd5, E.Orujov-A.Kalinichev, Tula 2014. The game looks happily unclear after 19 ... Qb8 20 Nxb4 Qxb4 21 c3 Qb5 when White's rook and two pawns are the approximate equivalent of Black's two minor pieces.

17 ... Nc5!

Target: e4. Fischer's vast Najdorf experience comprehends that his potential for damage on the queenside overrules White's kingside ambitions. 17 ... exf5? plays into White's hands after 18 Nd5 Qc5 19 Nxe7+ Kh8 20 Nxf5. I don't believe in Black's compensation for the pawn.

18 Nxe7+ Qxe7

Houdini already prefers Black.

19 h5

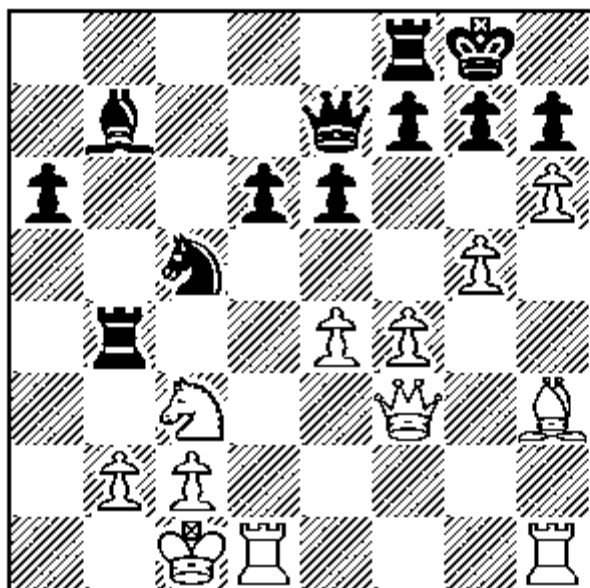
A later game saw 19 f5 Bb7 20 f6?! Qc7 21 Rhe1 Rc8 22 Rd2 Qa5 23 Rxd6 Qa1+ 24 Kd2 Qxb2 25 Rd1, R.Guzzardo-L.Semer, Argentina 1977. White's game collapses after 25 ... Rxe4.

19 ... Bb7

The pressure on e4 continues to mount and White's hoped-for initiative begins to contract and diminish.

20 h6

20 Rhe1 is met with 20 ... Rb8 when there is no good way to stop the coming ... Rxb2.



Exercise (critical decision): Should Black play 20 ... Bxe4, which allows White to open the h-file with 21 hxg7? Or should Black expend a tempo with 20 ... g6? One line leads to a winning position for Black, while in the other, White is the one who takes control of the game. Which line would you enter?

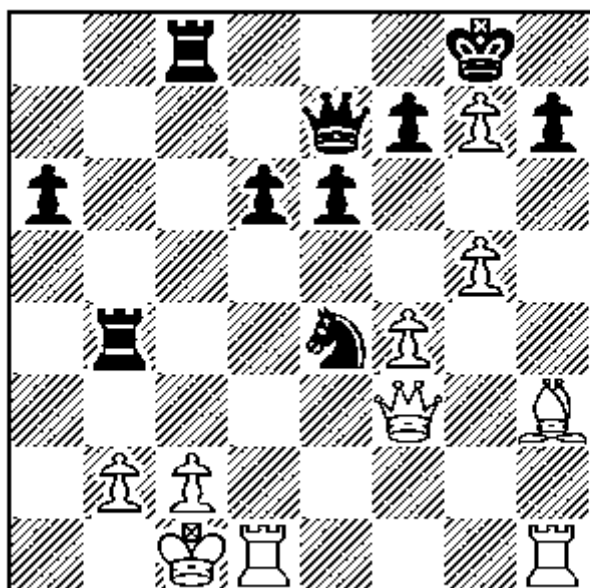
Answer: 20 ... Bxe4!

The 'safe' move 20 ... g6? walks into White's trap: 21 Nd5! Bxd5 22 Qc3! and the advantage swings to White, who double attacks g7 and b4.

21 Nxe4 Nxe4 22 hxg7

Now White sets his sights on the h7-pawn.

22 ... Rc8



23 Rh2

Question: Why does White take time out for this defensive move when he can play 23 Bg2 intending to go after h7 with Qh5 next?

Answer: It's too slow. Black's attack arrives first with 23 ... Qc7, and if 24 c3 (24 Qxe4 Rxe4 25 Bxe4 d5 26 Bxh7+ Kxg7 is also lost for White) 24 ... Qb6 25 Qd3 Qf2! 26 Qc2 Qe3+ wins, since 27 Kb1? is met with 27 ... Nxc3+ 28 Ka1 Ra4+ picking off the queen.

23 ... Ra4?

Fischer misses an immediate win with 23 ... Qc7! when there is no good response to the coming ... Qa5: for example, 24 Bf1 Qa5 and 25 Qa3 is met with the crushing 25 ... Ra4.

24 Kb1?

White misses his only chance with 24 b3! Ra1+ 25 Kb2 Rxd1 26 Qxd1 f5 27 Qd4 Qxg7 28 Qxg7+ Kxg7 29 Bg2, when Black still has a long way to go to convert his extra pawn.

24 ... d5!

Threat: ... Nc3+ and ... Qa3.

25 c4

Desperation. White's drooping pawns serve as a flimsy shield against Fischer's attacking ambitions:

a) 25 Bf1?? Nc3+! and White must hand over his queen, since 26 bxc3 Qa3 forces mate.

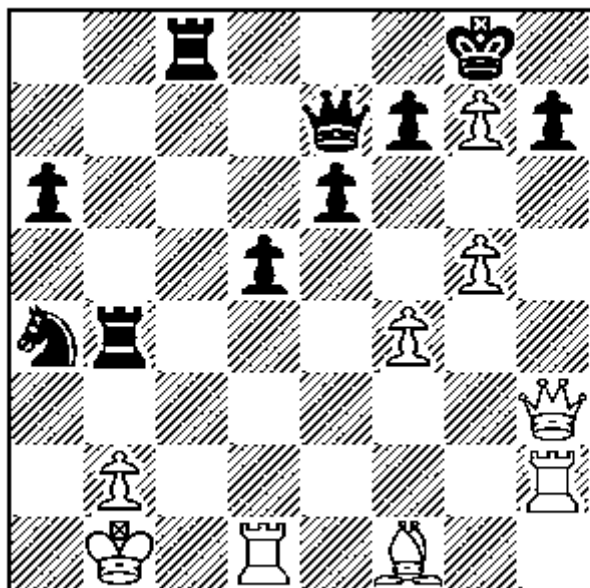
b) 25 Rd3 Qb4 26 Qe3 Qa5 27 Ra3 Nc3+! 28 Kc1 (the only move) 28 ... Rxa3 29 bxa3 Qxa3+ 30 Kd2 Ne4+ 31 Ke2 Rxc2+ is also a complete disaster for White.

25 ... Raxc4 26 Bf1 Rb4 27 Qh3

The white queen's obsession with Black's king is unnatural, reminding us of the forbidden cross-species muppet love between Miss Piggy and Kermit the frog. Now what? White threatens mate on h7 and Black must get to White's king first. However, Fischer had the remainder worked out to a forced win for Black.

27 ... Nc3+ 28 Kc1 Na4+ 29 Kb1

29 Kd2 Rc2+ 30 Ke1 Rxh2 eliminates the mate threat, and after 31 Qxh2 Re4+ 32 Be2 Nxb2 33 Rd2 Qb4 there is no defence to the coming ... Nc4.



Exercise (combination alert): White's king position is a leaking old rain barrel which requires caulking. Black to play and force the win.

chesstouring.com

Answer: Annihilation of the defensive barrier.

29 ... Rxb2+!

“Sons are destined to disappoint their fathers,” laments White’s king, as he sighs at the incompetence of his b2 son and heir. Black’s last move opens the c3- and a3-squares for his attackers. Give yourself full credit for this move, even if you didn’t work out all the coming details. Sometimes a sacrifice doesn’t need to be calculated to observable quantities and mechanical laws. It’s good enough if the win is merely felt.

30 Rxb2 Nc3+! 31 Kc1

White’s exposed king shivers, more from fear than from the chilly weather, but if 31 Ka1?? Qa3+ 32 Ra2 Qxa2 mate.

31 ... Qa3!

Threat: ... Qa1+. The queen’s increasing demands begin to bleed White’s position with the burden of excessive taxation.

32 Bd3

The bishop’s mind swirls with visions of angels, miraculous happenings and divine interventions. A move based on the theory: When in a desperate situation, it’s no problem if our opponent notes our growing anger; but never let him see your despair. White renews a not-so-subtle affirmation of his previous threat to mate on h7.

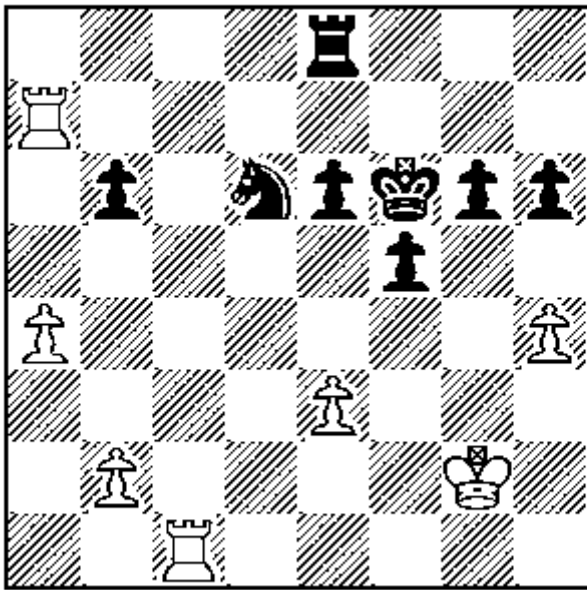
32 ... Qa1+ 33 Kd2 Qxb2+ 34 Ke1 Ne4! 0-1

Interference. 35 Bxe4 Qb4+ 36 Kf2 Qxe4 leaves White down multiple pawns with a hopelessly exposed king.

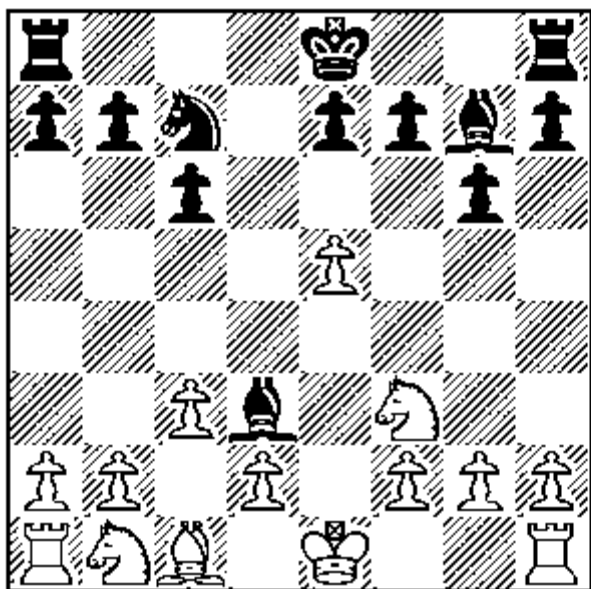
Chapter Two

Fischer on Defence and Counterattack

Do you ever get that prickle at the back of your neck, an unformed feeling that crisis is waiting for you just around the corner with a lead pipe? Well, Fischer tended to ignore the feeling. If Fischer had a weakness, it was his tendency to overpress, and I think the reason he risked pushing so hard for the win was that he knew he could always fall back on his astonishing defensive skills to save him in positions where virtually everyone else would perish. He concocted endlessly imaginative means of escape from the most dreary of predicaments. Examples from this chapter:



In this ending against Sammy Reshevsky, Fischer was Black, down an exchange. Not only is the b6-pawn weak, but White threatens b4 and a5, creating a fatally fast passed a-pawn. Fischer resisted with the maniacal fury of one who believes he is already dead, and so has nothing to lose. It's beyond my understanding to explain how his kingside majority became the dominant one, and Fischer actually won the game.



When we trust in an incorrect plan, we become gullible dupes who believe in a land where jewels grow on trees and nobody gets old. Boy, talk about an opening gone wrong! In real life Fischer didn't seem to care much about money, but on the chess board, Fischer could be a man of inordinate greed. In the above diagram he had White against Matulovic, where he insanely chased a poisoned pawn earlier in the game. As a result:

1. Fisher's development project has gone nowhere, resembling a fly banging itself on to a window pane over and over, in its attempt to get outside.
2. Fischer is choked on the light squares by the d3-bishop.
3. His e5 pawn looks doomed.
4. Black enjoys a massive development lead.
5. Black owns the bishop-pair.

When examined, each of White's defensive choices all look more squalid than the last. Fischer, through the help of mysterious unseen forces, somehow managed to limp his way to a draw versus his GM opponent.

Game 11

O.Bazan-R.Fischer

Mar del Plata 1960

Ragozin Defence

1 Nf3 Nf6 2 c4 e6

Question: No King's Indian this time?

Answer: When Fischer refused to play his beloved KID against queen's pawn openings, we are reminded of the Pink Floyd lyric, "There's someone in my head, but it's not me".

3 Nc3 d5 4 d4 Bb4

The bishop's development to b4, as opposed to the traditional e7-square, was popularized by Botvinnik's use of it, as well as Ragozin, whom the opening is named after.

5 cxd5

Clarifying the centre. 5 Bg5 is played slightly more often.

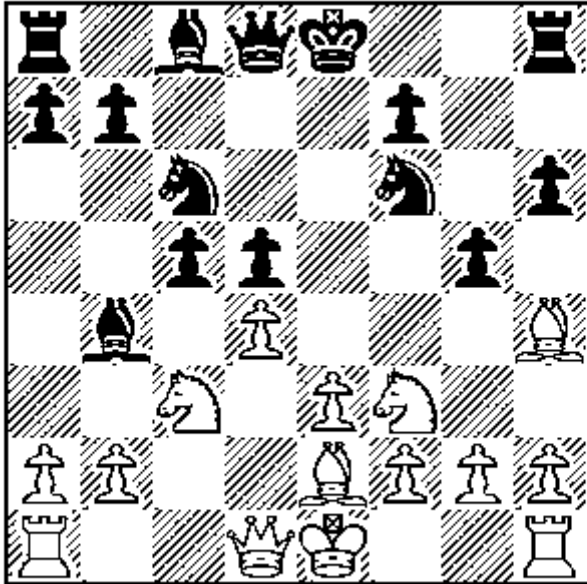
5 ... exd5 6 Bg5 h6 7 Bh4

White's most critical line. Black has an easier time equalizing after 7 Bxf6.

7 ... c5 8 e3 Nc6

8 ... c4 is Black's main line today: for example, 9 Be2 Bf5 10 0-0 Bxc3 (Black normally hands over the bishop-pair to gain a grip on the e4-square, which in turn tends to stifle White's kingside pawn majority) 11 bxc3 0-0 12 Rc1 Nbd7 13 Ne5 Qb6 14 Nxd7 Nxd7 15 Qd2 Rfe8 16 Rfe1 Qc6 17 f3 b5 18 Bf1 a5 19 g4 Bg6 20 Bg3. I actually prefer Black's queenside pawn majority and control over e4, over White's bishop-pair and enhanced dark-square influence, A.Giri-Yu Yangyi, Doha 2014.

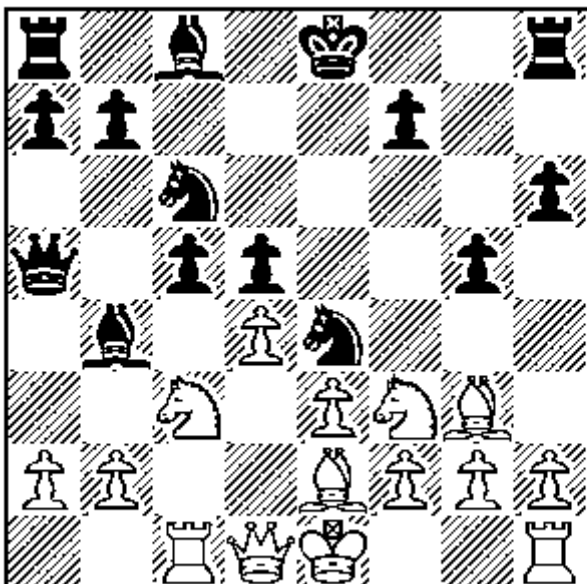
9 Be2 g5



Question: I understand that Black attempts to take over the initiative, but isn't his last move too weakening?

Answer: Fischer's last move is still book. It's a give and take, between short-term initiative and long-term potential for weakness.

10 Bg3 Ne4 11 Rc1 Qa5!?

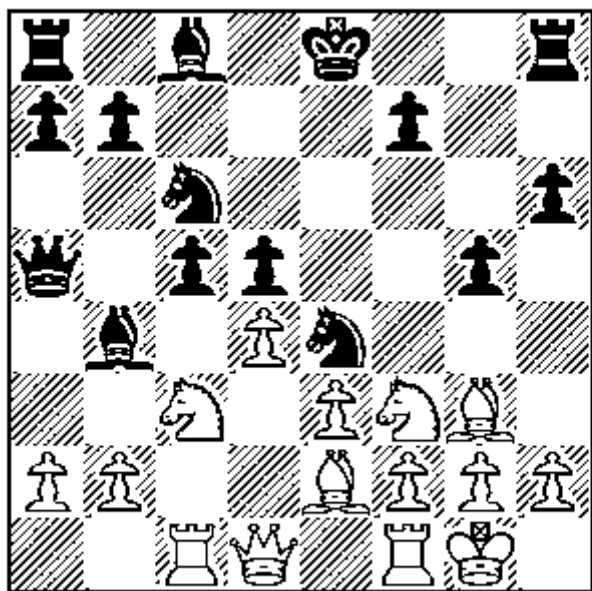


Question: I see that Fischer is going after a pawn, but doesn't he do so at a cost in development?

Answer: Fischer, whose avoidance of a risky line strikes us as an unnatural abstinence, tended to play high-risk chess versus lower-rated players, trusting in his ability to confuse and out-calculate them. Greed can be a thief which robs us of the contentment we should have with our current wealth. Or, as in the case of this game, greed can be a source of great joy, as long as we get away with the crime. Here we go. This is the first of many risky material grabs Fischer attempts in this chapter. Throughout the chapter we see temptation nibble away and get the better of Fischer's sense of caution.

Instead, my editor had to face 11 ... c4 12 Nd2 Nxd2 (12 ... Nxc3 eliminating White's powerful dark-squared bishop is to be considered) 13 Qxd2 Bf5 14 Bd1 Bd6?! 15 0-0 Bxc3 16 hxg3 Qd7?! (Black is unable to wallpaper over a foundational weakness in his position) 17 b3! Bd3 18 Re1 0-0 19 Bf3 Ne7 in R.Palliser-J.Richardson, British League 2010, and here White can play 20 Nxd5! Nxd5 21 bxc4, regaining the piece with a winning position.

12 0-0!



There is no easy way to appease a ruthless and greedy creditor, so White's king leaves town in a hurry. White obtains a nasty development lead for the pawn and the sacrifice is perfectly sound.

12 ... Bxc3

Question: This move gives away control over many dark squares. Can Black accept the pawn by capturing c3 with his knight, while preserving his dark-squared bishop?

Answer: It's too slow. 12 ... Nxc3? 13 bxc3 Bxc3 14 dxc5! with a clear advantage for White, since Black is unable to recapture c5, as 14 ... Qxc5?? self-pins and hangs a piece to 15 Qd3.

13 bxc3 Nxc3

So Black wins a pawn at high cost in development and dark-square control. When we decide on such a committal path, the fear of future backlash always lurks unpleasantly in a dark corner of our mind.

14 Qe1 Nxe2+ 15 Qxe2

The opposite-coloured bishops help White, since he will be the attacker.

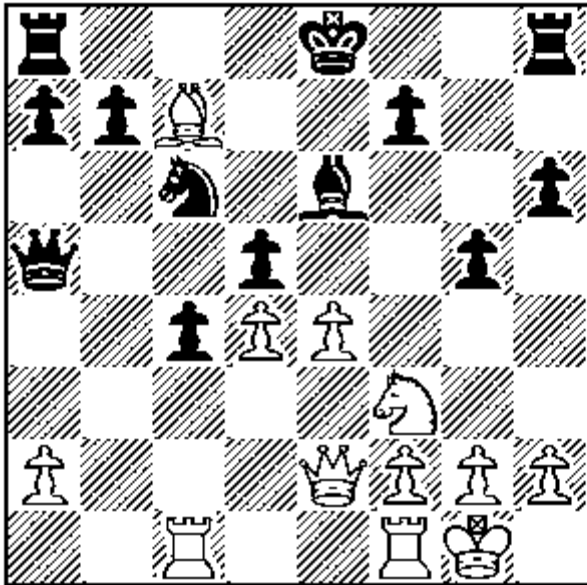
15 ... c4

Principle: Close the game when lagging in development.

16 e4

16 Ne5! clearing the way for f4, looks like White's most promising continuation: 16 ... Nxe5 17 Bxe5 Rg8 18 f4! gxf4 19 exf4 Bg4 20 Qe3 0-0-0 21 f5 and I prefer White's attacking chances over Black's extra pawn, V.Chekhov-V.Inkirov, Polanica Zdroj 1981.

16 ... Be6 17 Bc7?



White peruses a thesis which has yet to be established as true. An idea may be interesting, yet its final test is its eventual success or failure. This is an attempt at a deflection/pin combination, which falls short of its intent. Why is it that so many of our imaginative ideas in chess turn out to be illusions, while the boring ones tend to be the truth? Tactical alchemy doesn't do us much good when we turn lead into gold, and then a few moves later it reverts back to lead.

Instead, 17 Ne5 dxe4 18 Nxc6 bxc6 19 Qxe4 (also possible is the riskier 19 Bd6!?) 19 ... 0-0 20 Qxc6 Qd5 21 Qxd5 Bxd5 22 Rfe1 is an even ending.

17 ... Qxc7 18 exd5 g4!

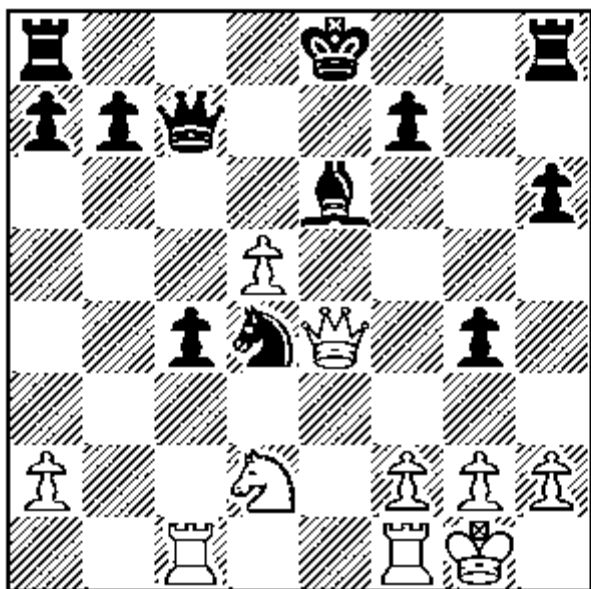
Fischer undermines d4 and the complications increase even further.

19 Nd2!?

Sometimes a broken object just gets more broken when we attempt to fix it. This is looking a lot like a mission-creep scenario, where White is induced into further concessions to keep the game complicated.

He can try the more sober line 19 Ne5 Nxe5 20 dxe6 Ng6 21 Rxc4 Qd6 22 exf7+ Kxf7 23 Qxg4 Rhf8 24 Qf3+ Kg8 25 Qxb7 Rab8 26 Qc6 Qxc6 27 Rxc6 Kg7 when Black has all the winning chances. However, the low number of pawns on the board may complicate conversion.

19 ... Nxd4 20 Qe4



This looks like a winning position for White for the following reasons:

1. He leads massively in development.
2. Black's king looks like he is in deep trouble, whichever side he castles.
3. Although White is down a piece, Black has two simultaneously hanging pieces, and the c4-pawn as well.

Exercise (combination alert): If you find Fischer's startling next move, the illusion of White's advantage is shattered. What is the incantation which released the magic?

Answer: Queen sacrifice/knight fork/simplification.

20 ... Qf4!

One of the greatest malicious joys in chess is counter-tricking a player who believed he was the one tricking you. I'm certain Fischer's jarring response threw his opponent completely off balance at this point.

21 Rxc4

Of course it isn't a real queen sac: 21 Qxf4 Ne2+ 22 Kh1 Nxf4 23 dxe6 b5! 24 exf7+ Kxf7 and White is just down a pawn in a hopeless ending. He has to try 25 Nxc4 bxc4 26 Rxc4 Ne6 27 Rxc4 Rxc4 28 Rxc4 Rxc4 29 Rxc4 Rxc4 30 Rxc4 Rxc4 31 Rxc4 Rxc4 32 Rxc4 Rxc4 33 Rxc4 Rxc4 34 Rxc4 Rxc4 35 Rxc4 Rxc4 36 Rxc4 Rxc4 37 Rxc4 Rxc4 38 Rxc4 Rxc4 39 Rxc4 Rxc4 40 Rxc4 Rxc4 41 Rxc4 Rxc4 42 Rxc4 Rxc4 43 Rxc4 Rxc4 44 Rxc4 Rxc4 45 Rxc4 Rxc4 46 Rxc4 Rxc4 47 Rxc4 Rxc4 48 Rxc4 Rxc4 49 Rxc4 Rxc4 50 Rxc4 Rxc4 51 Rxc4 Rxc4 52 Rxc4 Rxc4 53 Rxc4 Rxc4 54 Rxc4 Rxc4 55 Rxc4 Rxc4 56 Rxc4 Rxc4 57 Rxc4 Rxc4 58 Rxc4 Rxc4 59 Rxc4 Rxc4 60 Rxc4 Rxc4 61 Rxc4 Rxc4 62 Rxc4 Rxc4 63 Rxc4 Rxc4 64 Rxc4 Rxc4 65 Rxc4 Rxc4 66 Rxc4 Rxc4 67 Rxc4 Rxc4 68 Rxc4 Rxc4 69 Rxc4 Rxc4 70 Rxc4 Rxc4 71 Rxc4 Rxc4 72 Rxc4 Rxc4 73 Rxc4 Rxc4 74 Rxc4 Rxc4 75 Rxc4 Rxc4 76 Rxc4 Rxc4 77 Rxc4 Rxc4 78 Rxc4 Rxc4 79 Rxc4 Rxc4 80 Rxc4 Rxc4 81 Rxc4 Rxc4 82 Rxc4 Rxc4 83 Rxc4 Rxc4 84 Rxc4 Rxc4 85 Rxc4 Rxc4 86 Rxc4 Rxc4 87 Rxc4 Rxc4 88 Rxc4 Rxc4 89 Rxc4 Rxc4 90 Rxc4 Rxc4 91 Rxc4 Rxc4 92 Rxc4 Rxc4 93 Rxc4 Rxc4 94 Rxc4 Rxc4 95 Rxc4 Rxc4 96 Rxc4 Rxc4 97 Rxc4 Rxc4 98 Rxc4 Rxc4 99 Rxc4 Rxc4 100 Rxc4 Rxc4

21 ... Qxe4 22 Nxe4

Both of Black's pieces continue to hang.

22 ... Ne2+ 23 Kh1 Bd7?!

This move complicates Black's conversion task. Fischer missed 23 ... f5! 24 dxe6 fxe4 25 Rxe4 Nc3 26 Rc4 Nd5 27 Rxc4 Nf6 28 Rg7 Rh7! when Black consolidates and wins.

24 Re1 Kf8?!

24 ... Ke7! 25 Rxe2 Rxc8 26 Rxc8 Rxc8 is still a highly promising ending, since:

1. Black's queenside pawn majority is clearly more dangerous than White's passed but blockaded d-pawn.
2. Black's bishop is superior to White's remaining knight.
3. Black's king is already activated, when juxtaposed with White's sullen king in the corner.

25 Nf6?

25 Nd6! saves White after 25 ... Ke7 26 Nxb7 Kf6 27 Rxe2 Rab8 28 Rf4+ Kg6 29 Rb4 Rxc8 30 h4! (not 30 g3? Rc1+ 31 Kg2 Rd1 32 Rc2 Rxd5 and White's king will be vulnerable on the

light squares) 30 ... gxh3 31 Rb3 when he shouldn't lose.

25 ... Bb5

He manages to keep his knight alive for now.

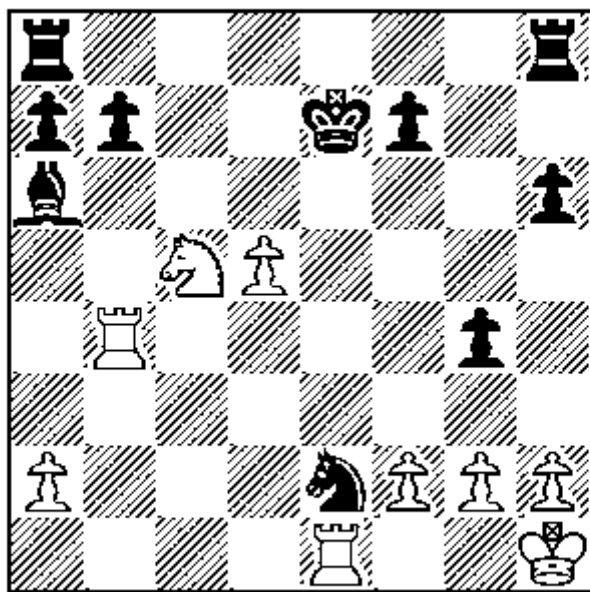
26 Rb4 Ba6!

Fischer may have been the most alert player in the history of chess. He rarely fell for cheapos, like 26 ... Bd3? 27 Nd7+ Ke7 28 Nc5 Rhe8 29 Nxd3 Kf8 30 Rxb7 and White is fine. Note that Black's ... Ng3+ trick fails, since White's e1-rook is protected by his knight.

27 Nd7+ Ke7!

27 ... Kg7?? constitutes a wee bit of a blunder, after 28 Rxg4+ Kh7 29 Nf6 mate. "Since His Grace is obviously incapacitated, I will henceforth assume the duties of 'Regent-in-Perpetuity'," declares the self-sacrificing knight.

28 Nc5



Such anarchic positions are in essence, tabooless, policeless societies, where anything goes.

Exercise (combination alert): It appears as if Black will lose his extra piece back. White threatens Nxa6, followed by Rxe2. How did Fischer retain a material advantage?

Answer: Zwischenzug/double attack/discovered check.

28 ... Rhe8!

Answer no.2: Give yourself full credit if you saw 28 ... Kd6! 29 Nxa6 Rae8! with a similar finish as the game.

29 Nxa6 Kd6!

Zwischenzug. Black threatens both ... bxa6 and ... Ng3+, to which White has no good defence.

30 Rxb7

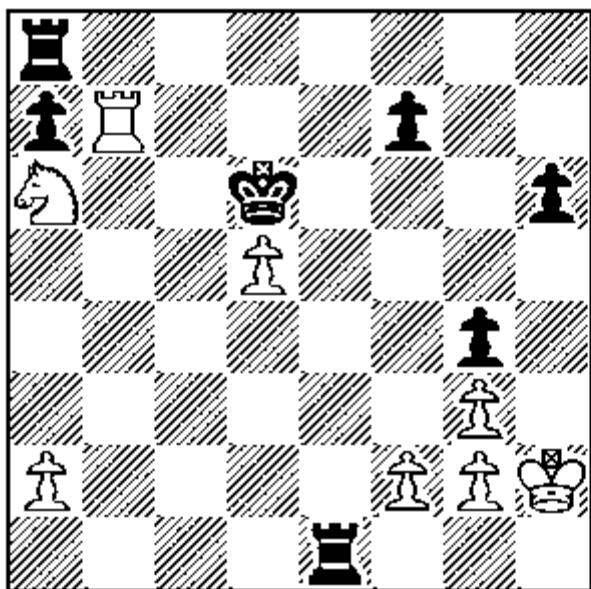
30 Ra1 bxa6 31 Rxg4 Kxd5 is hopeless for White.

30 ... Ng3+

The knight's opulent undulations confuse White's king, who never did comprehend the subtleties of modern interpretative dance. And here is the discovered check, winning the exchange and the game.

31 hxg3 Rxe1+ 32 Kh2

When our position degenerates past a point of no return, no amount of fervent wishing and hoping contains the power to alter the reality before us.



Exercise (combination alert): This is no long conversion effort for Black, as long as you find Fischer's idea. How did he end the game?

Answer: Mating net.

32 ... Rc8!

As it turns out, there is no good defence to ... Rcc1 and ... Rh1 mate. White must hand over even more material to forestall mate.

33 Rxf7

The white king's non-existent defenders have all long ago, packed up and taken their leave.

33 ... Rcc1 0-1

34 Rf6+ Kxd5 35 Nb4+ Ke5 36 Nd3+ Kxf6 37 Nxc1 Rxc1 leaves White short of a rook.

Game 12

S.Reshevsky-R.Fischer

5th matchgame, New York/Los Angeles 1961

Semi-Tarrasch Defence

In 1961, Reshevsky, the dominant U.S. player of the pre-Fischer era, challenged Fischer to a match. GM prognostications: Petrosian, Larsen, Keres and Gligoric all favoured the 50-year-old Reshevsky over the 18-year-old Fischer, even though Fischer had just won the U.S. Championship. When the score stood at 5.5-5.5, Reshevsky was awarded the match when Fischer, in what was his first – but certainly not his last – dispute with the organizers about the playing time, forfeited when he refused to show up for the 12th game.

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6

Reshevsky dismantled Fischer's KID in the first game of the match, so he tries his luck with another line.

3 Nc3 d5 4 cxd5 Nxd5

The Semi-Tarrasch.

5 Nf3

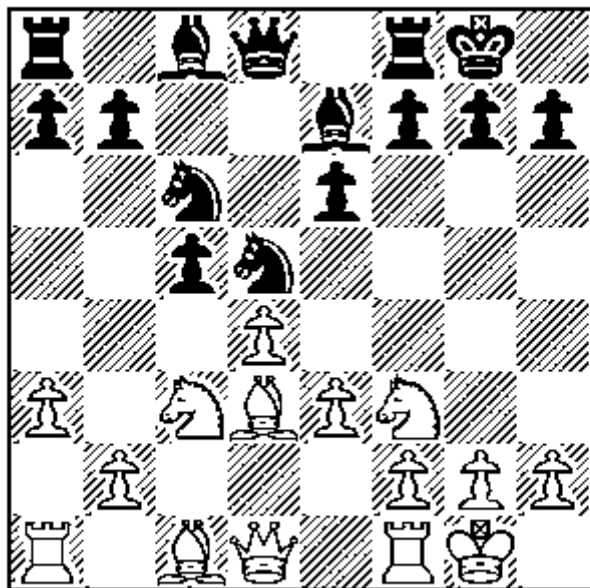
The main line runs 5 e4 Nxc3 6 bxc3 c5 7 Nf3 cxd4 8 cxd4 Bb4+ 9 Bd2 Bxd2+ 10 Qxd2 0-0 11

Bc4.

5 ... c5 6 e3

Reshevsky prefers a classical isolani position over 6 e4 Nxc3 7 bxc3, transposing to the main line.

6 ... Nc6 7 Bd3 Be7 8 0-0 0-0 9 a3



Question: Why does White toss in a3 in such positions?

Answer: a3 is useful for White, since he plans to set up a queen/bishop battery, aiming at h7, with Bc2 and Qd3. First playing a3 prevents tricks like ... Nb4.

9 ... cxd4

Fischer agrees to the isolani position. There is something to be said for playing 9 ... Nxc3 10 bxc3 when White's a3 move isn't all that useful and pretty much represents a wasted tempo.

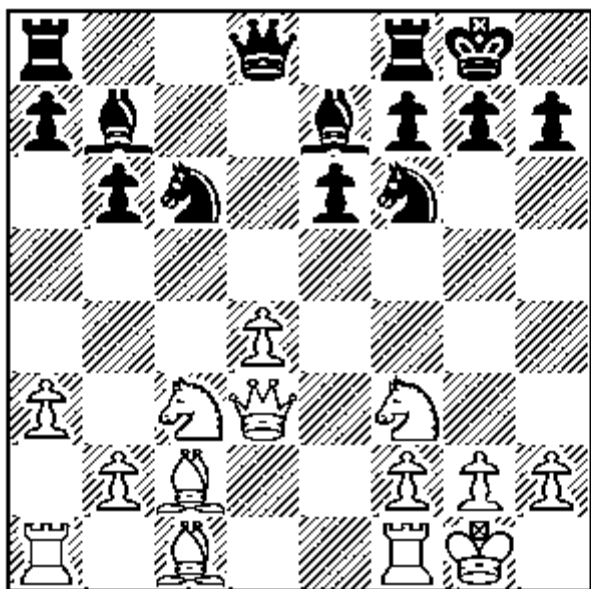
10 exd4 Nf6

This move, although book at the time, allows White a favourable isolani position. 10 ... Bf6 and 10 ... Nxc3 are also played here.

11 Bc2

Preparing the battery aimed at h7.

11 ... b6 12 Qd3 Bb7



13 Bg5

13 Re1! is White's most promising path and after 13 ... Rc8 he has:

a) 14 Bg5 (threat: Bxf6 and Qxh7 mate, which in turn induces Black to weaken the dark squares around his king) 14 ... g6 15 Rad1 Nd5 16 Bh6 Re8 17 Ba4 a6?! (Black should perhaps risk 17 ... Nxc3 18 bxc3 Bxa3 19 Ng5 Be7 20 Qe3 when he at least gets a pawn for White's initiative) 18 Nxd5 Qxd5 (18 ... exd5 gives Black better defensive chances than he got in the game) 19 Qe3 Bf6 20 Bb3 Qh5? (20 ... Qd7 21 d5 exd5 22 Qxb6 is admittedly unpleasant for Black, but still better than the game continuation) 21 d5 Nd8, V.Smyslov-A.Karpov, Leningrad 1971. After 22 Bg5! Black's defence flops.

b) 14 d5! Na5 (14 ... exd5?? 15 Bg5 g6 16 Rxe7! wins on the spot) 15 Bg5 sees White's central pressure assumes terrible potency and Black is forced to hand over the exchange with 15 ... Rxc3 (after 15 ... g6 16 d6 Bxd6 17 Bxf6 Qxf6 18 Qxd6 Bxf3 19 gxf3 Black lacks compensation for the piece, S.Pavlov-A.Ivchenko, Kiev 2010) 16 Qxc3 Qxd5 17 Rad1 with a clear advantage to White.

13 ... g6 14 Rfe1 Re8

I would go for the immediate 14 ... Nd5.

15 h4!

Today this is White's highest-scoring line and probably his most accurate move, since he doesn't quite know if his a1-rook belongs on c1 or d1.

15 ... Rc8

Alternatively, 15 ... Qd6 16 Rad1 Rad8 17 Bb3 and Black's position remains under pressure, since he must watch out for sacrificial ideas on e6.

16 Rac1

The alternative is to post the rook to d1.

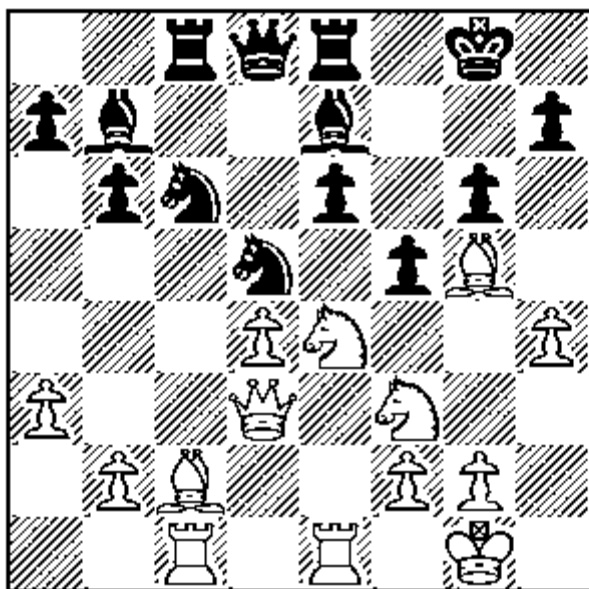
16 ... Nd5

Exchanges tend to benefit the cramped side. However, Reshevsky refuses to co-operate with his next move.

17 Ne4!?

Reshevsky decides to march his army in the direction of the kingside. He wants more than just the pull he gets from 17 Nxd5 Qxd5 18 Bb3 Qd7 19 d5.

17 ... f5!



Prolonged defence is a cumbersome business, not suited to everyone's nature. Fischer's last move is played with the philosophy: complications have a way of cloaking our strategic weaknesses in darkness.

Question: Isn't this a terribly weakening move?

Answer: Normally, this kind of rowdy behaviour is frowned upon in isolated queen's pawn establishments, and it does feel like it's foolish to pick a fight in a neighbourhood populated by numerous enemies and few friends. It does indeed weaken both e6 and e5. However, it follows the principle: Meet a wing attack with distraction in the centre. Also, the move introduces a distorting element which contaminates White's harmony and makes his following moves much harder to find. So I think Fischer's move, re-upholstery on old furniture, perfectly fits his sagging position's needs.

GM Robert Hübner suggested 17 ... Qc7, but I don't like Black's position after 18 Ba4! f6 19 Bd2 Bf8 20 h5 with mounting pressure for White, all across the board.

18 Nc3!

Black's d5 outpost is challenged.

18 ... Bxg5 19 Nxg5

Stronger than the recapture with the pawn. Reshevsky goes after e6.

19 ... Nf4

Fischer seizes upon his only chance to confuse matters. His move menaces White's queen and the d4-pawn, as well as worries White about ... Nxg2 tricks.

20 Qe3!?

The riskiest of White's options:

a) After 20 Qg3 Nh5 21 Qe3 Nxd4 Dvoretsky claimed an advantage for Black, which Houdini disputes with 22 Ba4! when Black's position feels quite loose to me. I don't see great responses: for example, 22 ... f4 23 Qh3 Bc6 24 Nxe6! Nxe6 25 Bb3 Kg7 26 Rxe6 Bd7 27 Rd1 Bxe6 28 Bxe6 Rxc3 29 Qxc3+ Qf6 30 Rd7+ Kh8 31 Qxf6+ Nxf6 32 Rd6 Kg7 33 Rc6 Re7 with an approximately even ending.

b) 20 Qf3 Qd6 21 g3 Nd5 22 Nxd5 exd5 23 Rxe8+ Rxe8 24 Qc3 f4 25 Re1 Rxe1+ 26 Qxe1 fxg3 27 Qe8+ Qf8 28 Qe6+ Kg7 29 fxg3 Qe7 30 Qxe7+ Nxe7 once again with an equal ending.

20 ... Qxd4 21 Nb5!

Now the complications increase exponentially. Reshevsky eyes a juicy fork square on d6.

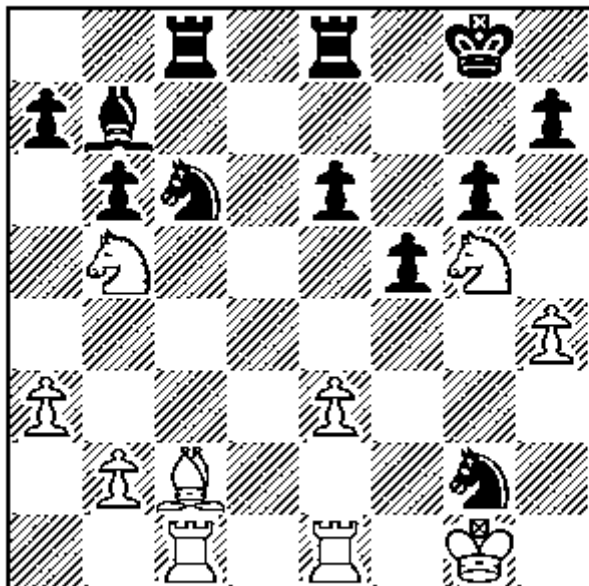
21 ... Qxe3

"Best," says Fischer, while Kasparov criticizes it. The alternatives:

a) 21 ... Qxb2 22 Nd6 Nxb2 23 Kxb2 Nd4+ 24 Be4 fxe4 25 Rxc8 Rxc8 26 Nxc8 Nc2 27 Ne7+ Kg7 28 Nxe6+! Kf7 29 Qf4+ Kxe6 30 Re2 Qc3 31 Nc8!? (a move only a comp can find) 31 ... Qxc8 32 Qg4+ Kd6 33 Qxc8 Bxc8 34 Rxc2 Bf5 35 Rd2+ Kc5 36 Rc2+ Kd6 37 Rd2+ Kc5 with a draw by repetition.

b) Reshevsky and Fischer considered 21 ... Qd5? to be the critical move. However, under comp analysis, White holds the advantage after 22 Qxf4 Qxb5 23 h5 Qxb2 24 hxg6 hxg6 25 Nxe6 Nd8 26 Nd4 when Black's king is seriously exposed.

22 fxe3 Nxb2!



Our collective heads begin to spin from the complications. No matter how carefully we plan, in virtually every game we play there arises at some point a capricious or unforeseen element to challenge us.

23 Kxb2

The king implies a query through his gaping, open mouth.

23 ... Nd4+?!

This move should lead to a lost ending. Better was 23 ... Nb4+! 24 Be4! Nd3! 25 Bxb7 Rxc1 26 Rxc1 Nxc1 27 Nxe6! Re7 28 Bd5 Rd7 29 Nc3 Kh8 30 Kf3 Nd3 31 b3 when White stands better in the ending, but Black is better off than the way the game actually transpired.

24 Be4!

“Confess your sins to me and I will whisper them into God’s ear to plea for forgiveness,” says the bishop, who is more handy with a sword than with scripture. “I can still hear the audience gasping with each blow,” wrote Fischer.

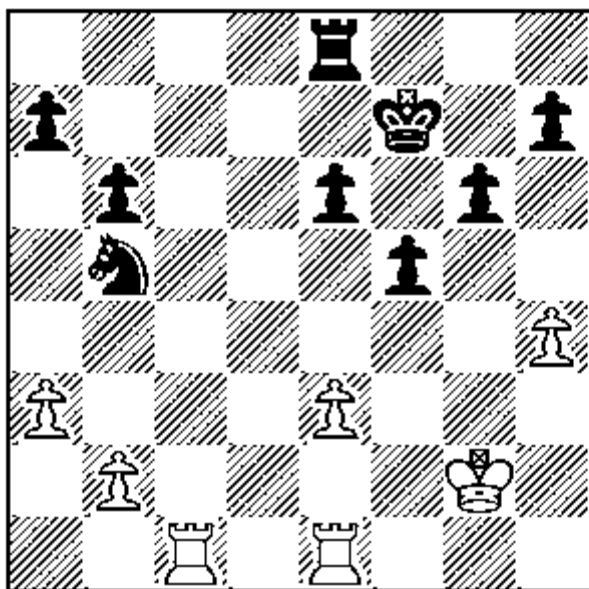
24 ... Bxe4+ 25 Nxe4

Black is down a piece and threatened with a fork on f6. Fortunately, it’s his move.

25 ... Nxb5 26 Nf6+

This is some crazy geometry. White wins the exchange, but this is really the beginning of the story, not its end.

26 ... Kf7 27 Nxe8 Rxe8



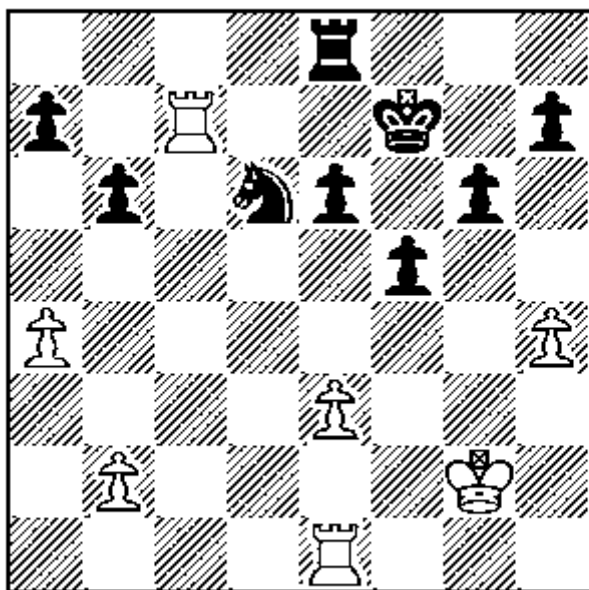
Question: Who stands better here?

Answer: Black has obtained two healthy pawns for the exchange, normally more than enough. Here, however, White's rooks threaten to infiltrate down the open c- and d-files, which in turn threaten Black's pawns. White is the one with winning chances. Houdini assesses White up by '0.49', the equivalent of half a pawn. So in essence, Black must make do with a meagre fund of defensive resources.

28 a4!

Reshevsky clears the way for infiltration on c7. His move is more accurate than 28 Re1?! Re7 29 Kf3 Nc7 with ... Nd5 to follow, and according to Fischer, Black is no longer in danger of losing.

28 ... Nd6 29 Rc7+



Exercise (critical decision): Should Black challenge White's seventh-rank control with 29 ... Re7? Or should he ignore the threats to his pawns and play 29 ... Kf6? One line puts up greater resistance than the other.

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Answer: In this case, activity supersedes material concerns.

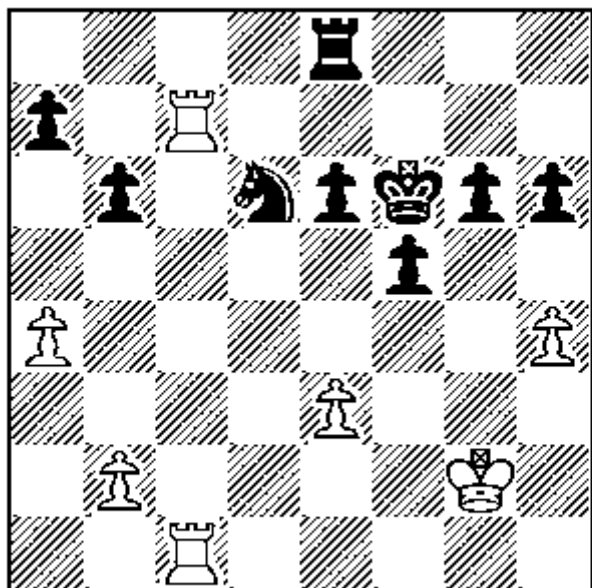
29 ... Kf6!

Both lines lose a pawn for Black, so there is no reason to go passive, with a line like 29 ... Re7? which Fischer called “hopeless”: for example, 30 Rec1 Ne8 31 Rxe7+ Kxe7 32 Rc8 Kd7 33 Ra8 Nc7 (or 33 ... a5 34 Rb8 and Black can resign) 34 Rxa7 Kc8 threatens to trap the rook next move with ... Kb8. However, White wins by a single tempo after 35 a5!, which either frees the rook, or allows 35 ... b5 36 a6 Kb8 37 Rb7+ Kc8 38 Rb6 winning.

30 Rec1!

Masterful insight by Reshevsky, who correctly prefers to retain control over the open c-file, rather than be bribed by 30 Rxa7?! Rc8 31 Re2 Rc4 32 Rd7 Ke5 33 Rxh7 Rxa4 when Black should hold the game without too much effort.

30 ... h6



Black may be busted, but Fischer continually finds the best practical moves.

Question: What is Fischer's plan?

Answer: Fischer plans ... g5, creating a kingside passer. He then plans to go for a direct endgame attack against White's king, with his own rook, knight, king and pawns. This menace, along with Black's threat to win the queening race, makes the win extraordinarily difficult for White, despite Houdini's healthy '+1.68' assessment.

31 Rxa7

GM Artur Yusupov suggested 31 b4!?. There is no way the human brain (with a clock ticking at the board) is capable of fathoming the true extent of such a decision, but when we crank up the comps, we come much closer to the truth. Houdini miraculously saved itself playing Black after 31 ... Ra8 32 R1c6 Rd8 33 Rxa7 Ne4 34 Ra6! g5 35 Raxb6 Rd2+ 36 Kf1 f4 37 exf4 gxf4 38 Rxe6+ Kf5 39 a5 Rd1+ 40 Ke2 Rd2+ 41 Ke1 Ra2 42 Rxe4! Kxe4 43 Rxh6 Ra1+ 44 Kd2 Rb1 45 a6! (after 45 Rb6? f3 Black holds the game) 45 ... Rxb4 46 h5 f3 47 Rf6 Rb2+ 48 Kc3 Rb8! 49 h6 Ke3 50 h7 f2 51 a7 Rc8+ 52 Kb4 Ke2 53 Kb5 f1Q 54 Rxf1 Kxf1 55 Kb6 Rf8 56 Kb7 Rf7+. The game ends in a draw, as after 57 Kc6 Rf6+ 58 Kd7 Rf8 59 Ke7 Ra8 White is unable to make progress.

31 ... Ne4 32 Ra6 Rd8!

There is no point in defending something which can't be defended. 32 ... Rb8? 33 Rc6 and b6 falls all the same, except that Black got tricked into a passive rook's position.

33 Rc2?

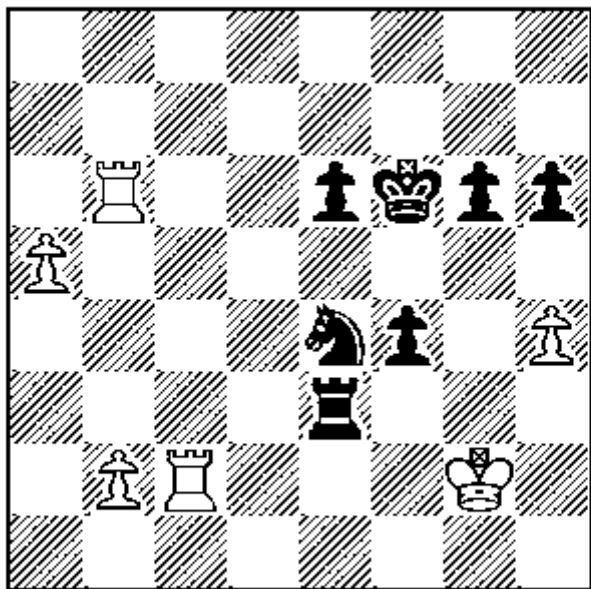
In winning positions we must be vigilant against floundering in that dulling sense of well being where we enjoy it so much, that we subconsciously resist change. Yet to win, change must take

place. Reshevsky, with little time on his clock, incorrectly expends a tempo on a defensive move. White wins with 33 Rxb6! Rd2+ 34 Kf1! (not 34 Kf3?? Rf2 mate or 34 Kh3?? g5! and White must hand over a rook to avoid mate after 35 Rg1 g4+ 36 Rxg4 Nf2+) 34 ... g5 35 Rcc6 f4 36 Rxe6+ Kf5 37 exf4 gxf4 38 a5 f3 (threatening mate) 39 Rxe4 Kxe4 40 a6 when Black can no longer generate mate or perpetual threats.

33 ... Rd3 34 Rxb6

34 Kf3? is met with 34 ... Rb3 when Black no longer stands worse.

34 ... Rxe3 35 a5 f4!



Exercise (planning): Fischer managed to generate serious threats on White's king, since ... f3+ is in the air and ... g5 is coming. The question is: can White promote his a-pawn without getting mated, or allowing Black to promote first? The answer is yes. But only if White hands back the exchange to remove some of the steam from Black's threats. White can accomplish this by playing either 36 Rf2, or 36 Rb4.

Only one of the lines wins. How would you continue?

36 Rf2?

When you possess in your arsenal a last resource, why use it early when less extreme measures suffice? With his flag about to fall, Reshevsky makes an unfortunate decision. He realized that he must return the exchange, but does it the wrong way. He thought, quite reasonably, that Black's rook had no way to return to halt the march of his a-pawn.

Answer: Correct was the problem-like 36 Rb4!! f3+ 37 Kf1 f2 38 Rxf2+ (the key to the art of accumulation is to give back some but not all of your wealth to keep in check an opponent's initiative) 38 ... Nxf2 39 Kxf2 Re5 40 Ra4 Rf5+ 41 Ke3 Ke5 42 a6 Rf8 43 Rb4! Kd5 44 a7 Ra8 45 Rb7 is hopeless for Black.

Question: What is the difference between the two versions of handing back the exchange?

Answer: In this version, it is White, not Black who decides the moment.

Question: Why does White have to give up the exchange at all? Can't he just push his a-pawn?

Answer: Black draws after 36 a6? f3+ 37 Kf1 Rd3 threatening mate on d1. Now White is unable to play 38 Rc1?? (38 Ke1 Re3+ 39 Kf1 Rd3 repeats, while after 39 Kd1 f2 40 Rxf2+ Nxf2+ 41 Kc2 Re5 Black certainly stands no worse and may even be winning, despite the comp's '0.00' assessment) 38 ... Rd2 39 Rb3 Rf2+ 40 Kg1 (or 40 Ke1 Re2+ and mate next move) 40 ... Rg2+

41 Kf1 Ng3+ 42 Ke1 f2+ and Black wins.

36 ... Nxf2 37 Kxf2 Re5!

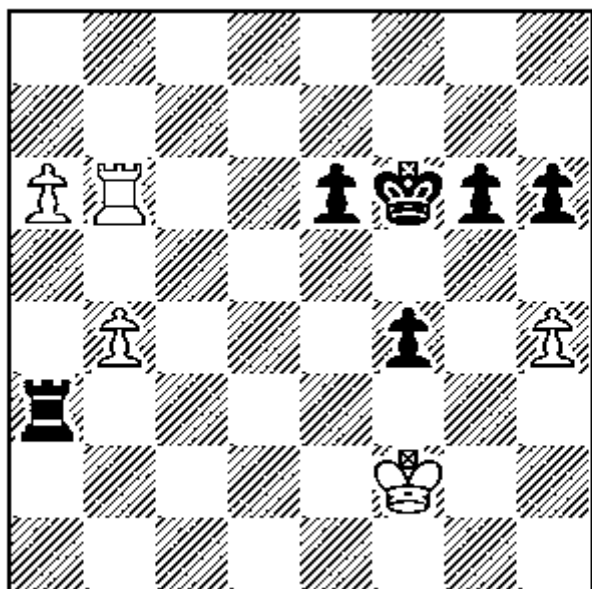
Opportunity turns its shining face to Black and Fischer plays the remainder of the game with an air of increasing assurance. This move carries an attitude of irresolution, which in reality camouflages Fischer's true intent: he induces b4 to get his rook behind White's passed a-pawn.

After the mundane 37 ... Rd3? we note a precipitous decline in Black's counterplay after 38 a6 Rd7 39 b4 g5 40 Rb5 g4 41 Ra5 g3+ 42 Ke2! (42 Kf3?? Rd3+ 43 Kxf4 g2 44 Ra1 Ra3! allows Black to draw) 42 ... g2 43 Ra1 Rg7 44 Kf2 e5 45 b5 e4 46 Rg1! Rc7 47 Kxg2 f3+ 48 Kf2 Rc2+ 49 Kg3 Ra2 50 Rb1 Rg2+ 51 Kf4 f2 52 a7 Rg1 53 a8Q Rxb1 (Black is about to promote, but White has a way to force the win of f2) 54 Qd8+ Ke6 55 Qe8+ Kf6 56 Qe5+ Kf7 57 Qd5+ Kf8 58 Qa8+ Kg7 59 Qa7+ Kf6 60 Qxf2 and White wins.

38 b4 Re3!

There is a clear sense of emancipation from Black's side, which is felt, more than actively expressed. Now Fischer's rook gets behind the passed a-pawn, and his own pawns begin to advance.

39 a6 Ra3



40 Rc6??

Reshevsky blunders on the final move of the time control. This move loses a critical tempo.

White holds the draw with 40 b5! g5 41 hxg5+ hxg5 42 Rb8 g4 43 b6! g3+ 44 Kg2 Ra2+ 45 Kf3 g2 46 Rg8 Rxa6 47 Rxg2 Rxb6 48 Kxf4.

40 ... g5 41 hxg5+ hxg5 42 b5 g4 43 Rc8

Both Fischer and Kasparov felt this move was a mistake. I don't believe White has any path to save the game. For example:

a) 43 Rc1 Ra2+ 44 Kf1 f3 45 Rb1 g3 46 b6 Rh2! 47 Ke1 Rh1+ 48 Kd2 Rxb1 49 a7 f2 50 a8Q f1Q when there is no perpetual check and Black wins.

b) 43 b6 g3+ 44 Kf1 f3 45 Rc1 Rxa6 46 Rb1 Ra2 47 b7 Rh2 48 Kg1 f2+ 49 Kf1 Rh1+ 50 Kg2 (the king's palsied hands give us an accurate picture of his state of mind) 50 ... Rxb1 and wins.

43 ... Kf5 44 b6 g3+ 45 Ke1

Alternatively, 45 Kg2 Ra2+ 46 Kg1 f3 47 Rc1 Rg2+ 48 Kf1 Rh2 49 Ke1 Re2+ 50 Kf1 Kg4! 51 b7 g2+ 52 Kg1 Kh3 53 Rf1 f2+! 54 Rxf2 Re1+ 55 Rf1 Rxf1 mate.

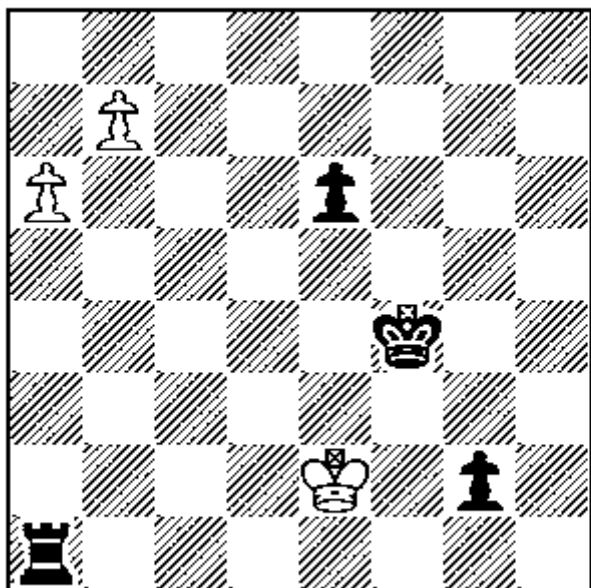
45 ... Ra1+ 46 Ke2 g2 47 Rf8+

If 47 Rg8 Rxa6 48 b7 Rb6 49 Rxb7 and Black wins.

47 ... Ke4 48 Rxf4+

A desperado. After 48 Rg8 Ra2+ 49 Kd1 f3 50 a7 Kd3 51 Kc1 f2 52 Rg3+ Kc4 53 Rg4+ Kc5 54 Rg5+ Kd6 Black forces mate.

48 ... Kxf4 49 b7



49 ... g1Q?!

The move which achieves the goal to promote. GM Isaac Kashdan pointed out the simpler win

49 ... Ke4! 50 b8Q Ra2+! 51 Ke1 g1Q mate. Sigh, I still can't underpromote in ChessBase 13. Will someone please tell me how?

50 b8Q+ Kf5

Black's job is to dodge perpetual check.

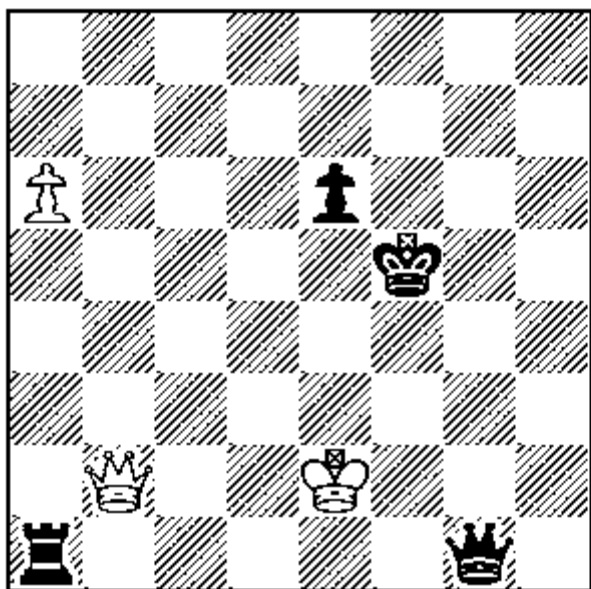
51 Qf8+ Ke4 52 Qa8+ Kd4 53 Qd8+

To Black's king, his sister's booming commands make him feel like an early Christian being summoned by a lioness in the Coliseum.

53 ... Kc4 54 Qd3+ Kc5 55 Qc3+ Kd6 56 Qd2+

56 Qb4+ is met with 56 ... Qc5.

56 ... Ke5 57 Qb2+ Kf5 0-1



Reshevsky resigned here.

Question: How does Black dodge perpetual check?

Answer: Let's turn this into a calculation exercise. Try and play through the remaining moves of the game without moving the pieces.

Exercise (calculation): Black wins after 58 Qc2+ Kf6 59 Qc3+ e5 60 Qf3+ (after 60 Qc6+ Kg5 White runs out of checks) 60 ... Kg7 61 Qb7+ Kh6 62 Qc6+ Kg5 when White's checks run out, and the violence once inherent in his position passes like a sudden squall at sea, which dies down with time. 10-ply if you made it to the end without moving the pieces. What an analytical nightmare of a game!

Game 13

G.Tringov-R.Fischer

Capablanca Memorial, Havana 1965

Sicilian Najdorf

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 a6 6 Bg5 e6 7 f4 Qb6

The dreaded Poisoned Pawn line of the Najdorf. As the years advance and pass by, your possibly senile writer grows more and more muddleheaded, to the point where I hate to memorize long opening variations. So I shake my head in disbelief when I think upon a time when I actually played this position from Black's side.

8 Qd2 Qxb2 9 Rb1 Qa3 10 e5

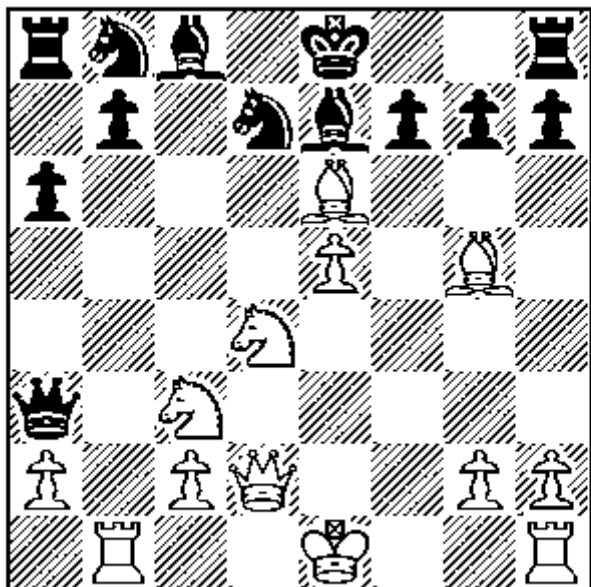
Today, this line is considered rather shady for White, and more commonly played are the variations 10 f5, 10 Be2 and 10 Bxf6.

10 ... dxe5 11 fxe5 Nfd7 12 Bc4

Today, most experts on the white side usually go for 12 Ne4, which was first played by Tal: 12 ... h6 13 Bh4 Qxa2 (one must have a high degree of confidence in one's own attacking abilities to enter such a line two pawns down) 14 Rd1 Qd5 15 Qe3 Qxe5 (make that three pawns down; 15 ... Bc5?! allows 16 Nxe6! Bb4+ 17 c3 Qxe6 18 cxb4 when White's development lead and dark-square power compensated him for his missing pawn, A.Shirov-Wang Hao, Russian Team Championship 2009) 16 Be2 Bc5 17 Bg3, Yu Yangyi-Wei Yei, Chinese League 2014. Maybe it's stylistic, but I prefer Black's side.

12 ... Bb4!

This was Fischer's improvement over 12 ... Be7?! when White has 13 Bxe6!.



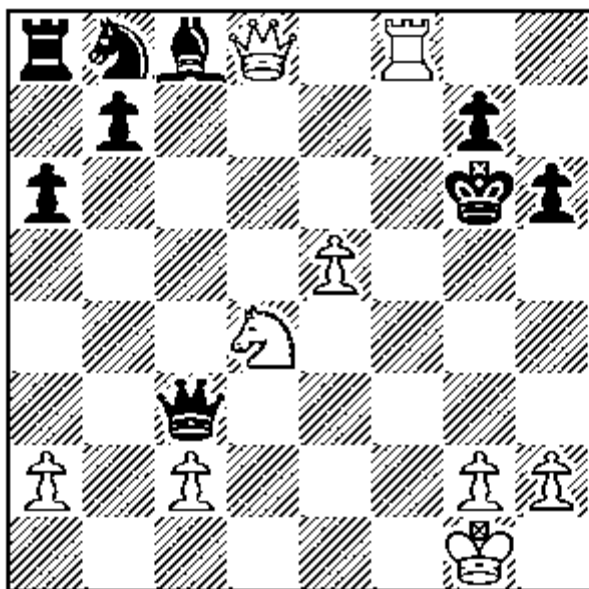
Exercise (critical decision): Should Black accept the sacrifice, or should he decline and return a pawn by castling, to catch up in development?

Answer: Black should decline, as 13 ... fxe6? allows White a ferocious attack for the piece after 14 Nxe6 Bxg5 15 Nc7+ Kd8, Y.Sakharov-A.Bannik, Kiev 1963. White has a strong attack if he continues 16 Ne6+! (now Black can't castle) 16 ... Ke8 17 Nxg5 when Black lags dangerously behind in development.

After the correct 13 ... 0-0! 14 0-0 (14 Bb3 Bxg5 15 Qxg5 Qc5! 16 Qe3 Nc6 17 Rd1 Qxe5 is just a miserable, pawn down ending for White) 14 ... Bxg5 15 Qxg5 h6! (Fischer avoids a trap and hands his opponent all sorts of practical problems at the board; 15 ... Qxc3?? walks into White's devious intent after 16 Nf5 Qxe5 17 Nh6+ Kh8 18 Nxf7+ Rxf7 19 Qd8+ Nf8 20 Qxf8+! Rxf8 21 Rxf8 mate) White has:

a) 16 Qh5!, suggested by Kasparov, seems to be White's only move: 16 ... fxe6 (16 ... Qxc3?? walks into 17 Rxf7! Qxd4+ 18 Kh1 when Black is busted; if 18 ... Rxf7?? 19 Qxf7+ Kh7 20 Bf5+ Kh8 21 Qe8+ Nf8 22 Qxf8 mate) 17 Nxe6 Qxc3 18 Nxf8 Nxf8 19 Qf7+ Kh7 20 Qxf8 Qe3+ 21 Kh1 Nc6 22 Rbe1 Qd2 23 e6 Bxe6! 24 Qxa8 Bd5 25 Rg1 Bxg2+! 26 Rxg2 Qxe1+ 27 Rg1 Qe4+ 28 Rg2 and Black should probably take the perpetual check.

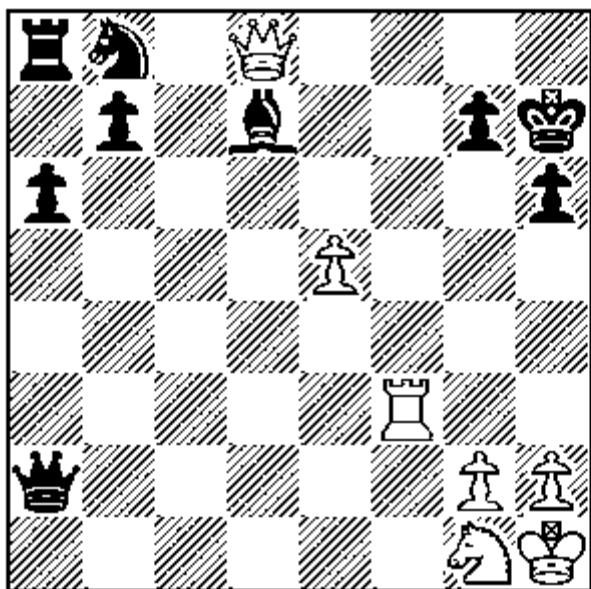
b) 16 Qh4? Qxc3! (the correct piece; 16 ... fxe6? 17 Nxe6 Re8 18 Nxg7! gives White a powerful attack, with at least a draw) 17 Rxf7 (White's only chance is to go after Black's stripped king) 17 ... Rxf7 18 Qd8+ Nf8 19 Bxf7+ Kxf7 20 Rf1+ Kg6 21 Rxf8.



Question: Isn't Black completely busted? After all, his king is all alone and his entire queenside is tangled up.

Answer: Black certainly has his share of problems, but he is far from busted. His king is safer than it looks, but it isn't clear just how he untangles from the eighth rank pin. Houdini has Black up slightly, but my feeling is that White should hold the game.

I.Bilek-R.Fischer, Stockholm 1962, continued 21 ... Bd7! (Fischer correctly plays for the win, doing his best to make certain that his opponent takes his fair share of the position's risk, as he secures control over e8, preventing Qe8+; Bilek probably expected 21 ... Qe3+ 22 Kf1 Qc1+ 23 Kf2 Qd2+ 24 Kg3 with perpetual check) 22 Nf3! (now Nh4+ will be a big worry for Black) 22 ... Qe3+ 23 Kh1 (23 Kf1?? fails miserably to 23 ... Bb5+) 23 ... Qc1+! (this move forces White's knight into passivity) 24 Ng1 Qxc2 (Fischer calmly picks up another pawn; several pre-computer annotators claimed that White was lost at this point, but the computers dispute this claim) 25 Rg8!? (this should still be okay for White, who intends Qe7, but he can force a draw with 25 Qe7! Qc4! 26 h3 Qd5 27 Rf3, threatening Rg3+, going after g7, and if 27 ... Qg8 28 Rf8 Qd5 29 Rf3) 25 ... Qf2 26 Rf8 Qxa2 27 Rf3?? (it was critical to create luft with 27 h3! Nc6! 28 Qxa8 Nxe5 29 Qd8 Bc6 30 Nf3 Qa1+ 31 Kh2 Nxf3+ 32 gxf3 Qe5+ 33 Kg2 Qe2+ 34 Kg3 and I don't think Black can play for a win, so he should probably just settle for perpetual check with 34 ... Qe1+ 35 Kg2 Qe2+) 27 ... Kh7 0-1.



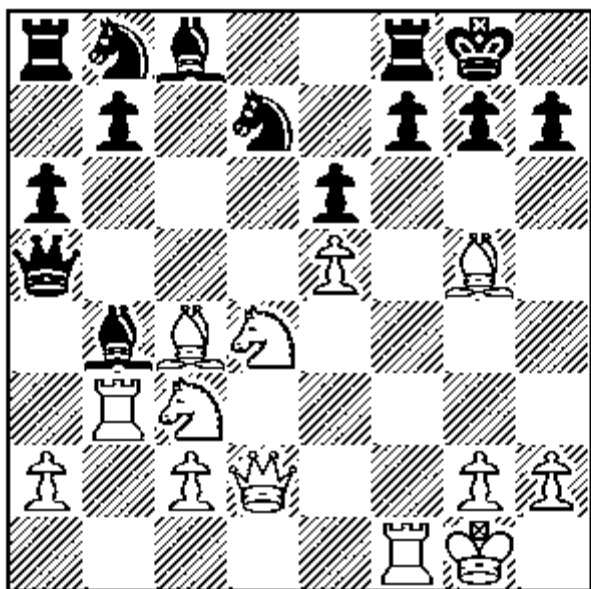
Question: I don't get it. Why did White resign?

Answer: White lost on time. However, I think at this stage Black is winning after 27 ... Kh7 28 Rf8 Qd5 29 Rh8+ Kg6 30 Nf3 Bc6.

Back at the tabiya, 12 ... Qa5! was another Fischer improvement over his previous 12 ... Be7?! against Bilek: 13 Nxe6? (here we go again as this knight sac on e6, just as in the Bilek game, is unsound; 13 0-0 Nxe5 14 Be2 Nbc6 isn't very encouraging for White either, but it's a better shot than the game continuation) 13 ... fxe6 14 Bxe6 Qxe5+ (queens come off the board and White is left wondering just why he gave up a piece) 15 Qe3 (15 Kd1?? Qxe6 16 Re1 fails miserably to 16 ... Ne5 17 Qd8+ Kf7 18 Rxe5 Qxe5 19 Qxc8 Qxg5 20 Rxb7+ Be7! 21 Qxh8 Qc5 and Black consolidates) 15 ... Qxe3+ 16 Bxe3 Nc6 17 Nd5 Bd6 18 0-0 Nf6 (Fischer returns some material to shake off White's pressure; 18 ... Nde5! was more accurate) 19 Nxf6+ gxf6 20 Rxf6 Ke7?! (20 ... Be5! was correct) 21 Bxc8? (21 Rh6! threatens Bg5+ and 21 ... Be5 22 Bg5+ Ke8 23 Bxc8 Rxc8 24 Rxb7 gives White almost enough compensation for the piece) 21 ... Kxf6 (now Black is winning again) 22 Bxb7 Ne5 23 Bxa8 Rxa8 24 Rb7 Rc8 25 Ra7 Rc6 26 Bd4 Kf5 27 c3 Rxc3! and Fischer went on to convert the ending, G.Mazzoni-R.Fischer, Monte Carlo 1967.

13 Rb3 Qa5 14 0-0 0-0

Also possible is 14 ... Nxe5 15 Be2 0-0 when I fail to see White's compensation.



15 Nxe6?!

Yup. Unsound. White's needs and his desires are in conflict, with one contradicting the other. So he opts for the make-hay-while-the-sun-shines plan, attempting to inflict as much damage as possible, with limited attacking resources.

Question: Can White get away with 15 Bf6?

Answer: I think it may be White's best practical try. Let's take a look:

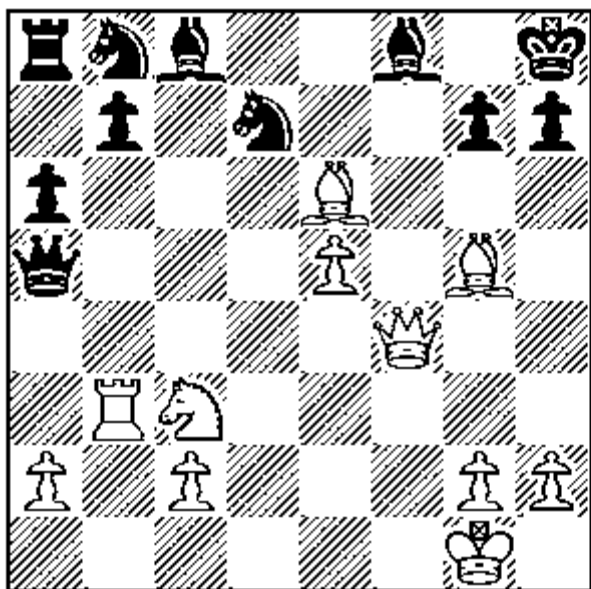
a) 15 ... gxf6? 16 exf6 (threat: Qh6) 16 ... Kh8 17 Qh6 Rg8 18 Bd3 Nf8 19 Rf4! (heading for h4) 19 ... Nbd7 20 Rh4 Nxf6 21 Qxf6+ Rg7 22 Rg4 Ng6 23 Bxg6 fxe6 24 Rxb4! Qxb4 25 Qd8+ Rg8 26 Qf6+ with perpetual check.

b) Black does better by declining the sacrifice: 15 ... Nxf6! 16 exf6 Rd8 17 fxe6 Rxd4! (the rook is immune due to the ... Bc5 pin) 18 Qf2 Qf5 19 Qxd4 Bc5 20 Rxf5 Bxd4+ 21 Rf2 b5 22 Be2 Nd7 (now ... Nc5 is in the air) 23 Ne4 Bb7 24 Nd6 Bc6 25 Rd3 Bb6 26 c4 Ne5 27 Rd2 Rd8 28 Kf1 Bxf2 29 Kxf2 bxc4 30 Nxc4 Rxd2 31 Nxd2 a5 and g7 falls, leaving Black up a pawn in the ending.

15 ... fxe6 16 Bxe6+

Everyone is sceptical of the bishop's claim that God appeared to him in a vision and showed him the path to victory. White's coming attack is just not enough for the piece. However, White does get practical chances, since Black's coming defence is far from obvious. Some positions are so complex, that they border on unknowable (at least over the board), as if we took a guess at how many drops of water there are in an ocean.

16 ... Kh8 17 Rxf8+ Bxf8 18 Qf4!



An intimidating move, threatening: Qf7 and Qg8 mate..

Exercise (planning/calculation): It feels as if Black's king is surrounded by people who don't love him, with most of them wishing him ill. This is the position both Tringov and Fischer foresaw. As it turns out Fischer's assessment power was far more accurate and his analysis deeper. Analysis shows that Black can defend and consolidate. Work out a clear defence for Black which rectifies the festering defensive issues.

Answer: Step 1: Calmly continue to develop, seemingly ignoring White's threat.

18 ... Nc6! 19 Qf7

The black king's chest tightens, feeling his sister's invisible claws raking across his heart.

19 ... Qc5+!

Step 2: Cover the f8-bishop with tempo.

20 Kh1

Step 3: Simultaneously cover g8, while threatening to swap off the e6-bishop.

20 ... Nf6!

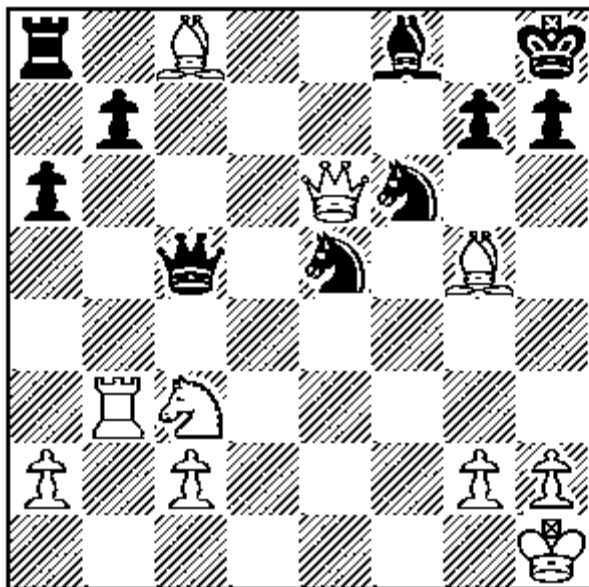
Black's king joyfully drinks in the welcome sight of his defender with childlike eyes of wonder. There is nothing as jarring as that initial shock of recognition when we realize we miscalculated a key move. I think this is the move Tringov missed in his initial calculations when entering the line. Kung Fu (and chess!) principle: When under attack, don't resist an opponent's blows head on. Instead, step aside and allow empty air to absorb the intended blow. White's position, which once appeared as a harmonious whole, in the space of a single move, degenerates into splintered anarchy.

21 Bxc8

All of White's weapons are rendered useless and this remorseful action comes too late. There is nothing better, as shown by 21 exf6 Bxe6 22 fxg7+ Bxg7 23 Qxe6 Nd4 and it feels as if all of White's army hangs, since Black threatens e6, g5 and b3.

21 ... Nxe5! 22 Qe6

After 22 Qxb7 Rxc8 23 Bxf6 gxf6 White's attack runs dry and he finds himself down a piece.



Exercise (combination alert): Black can simply play 22 ... Rxc8, with a winning position, but there is another move available which is so much stronger. Try and find it.

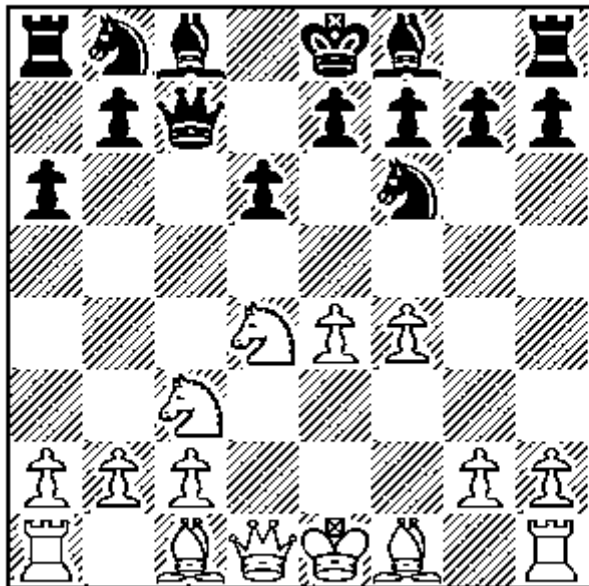
Answer: Smothered mate/double attack.

22 ... Neg4! 0-1

23 Nd1 (or 23 Bxb7 Nf2+ 24 Kg1 Nh3+ 25 Kh1 mate) 23 ... Qxg5 (“Your martyrdom begins, effective immediately,” says Black’s queen to the bishop) 24 Bxb7 Qf4! forces mate.

Game 14
R.Nicevski-R.Fischer
 Skopje 1967
 Sicilian Najdorf

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 a6 6 f4 Qc7



Question: Isn't ... e6 normal here?

Answer: Against White's early f4, Black often plays ... e5, rather than the traditional ... e6. So Fischer's move allows him to retain options for both ... e5 and ... e6, keeping White guessing.

7 Nf3

Alternatively:

a) 7 Be2 e5 8 Nf5 Bxf5 9 exf5 (White loses central pawn influence, but gains both bishop-pair and light-square control) 9 ... Nc6 10 0-0 0-0-0 11 Nd5 Nxd5 12 Qxd5 Nb4 13 Qb3 d5 (I don't trust Black's position after 13 ... Nxc2 14 Be3 Nxa1 15 Rxa1 when both Rc1 and Bb6 are menaced) 14 Bd2 was V.Ivanchuk-L.Dominguez Perez, Havana 2014. Black looks okay after 14 ... e4.

b) 7 Bd3 e5 8 Nf3 Nbd7 9 0-0 b5 10 Kh1 Be7 11 fxe5 Nxe5 12 Nxe5 dxe5 13 Bg5 Be6 14 Bxf6 Bxf6 15 a4 b4 16 Nd5 Bxd5 17 exd5 when it's a battle of opposite-coloured bishops and opposite wing majorities, A.Salem-O.Barbosa, Tagaytay City 2013. I slightly prefer White.

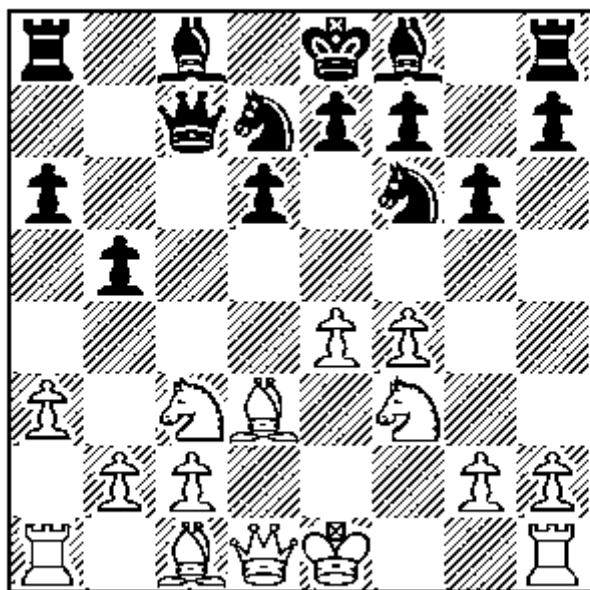
7 ... Nbd7 8 Bd3 b5

Fischer refuses to move his central pawns, keeping White guessing how he plans to develop.

9 a3

I'm not a big fan of a3 in most Sicilians, since the time lost tends to be more important than preventing ... b4. I would just castle.

9 ... g6



The position begins to take on the flavour of a Pirc Austrian Attack, but a reasonably favourable one for Black since White tossed in the passive a3.

10 0-0 Bg7 11 Qe1

This manoeuvre is common to the Sicilian Grand Prix Attack, where White plans Qh4, f5, Bh6, and Ng5, massing against Black's king.

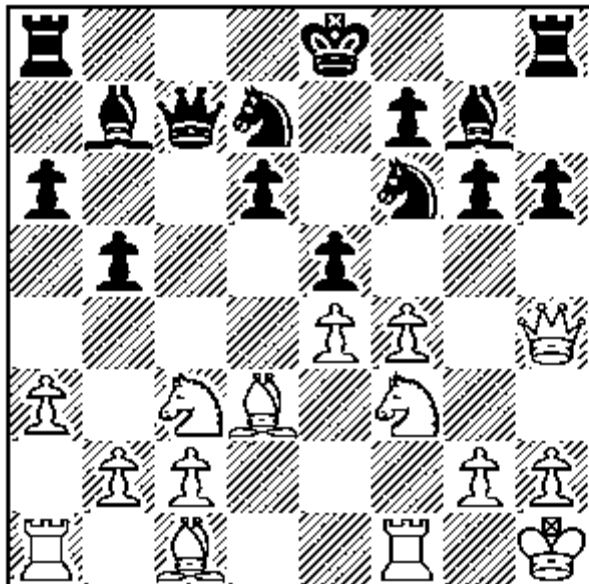
11 ... Bb7 12 Kh1 e5!?

Fischer takes back a portion of the centre at the cost of weakening the kingside dark squares, especially f6.

13 Qh4

"A spy's job is simply to observe," thinks the queen, as she surreptitiously inches closer to Black's king.

13 ... h6!



Now White must worry about ... exf4 and if the bishop recaptures, then ... g5 skewers queen and bishop.

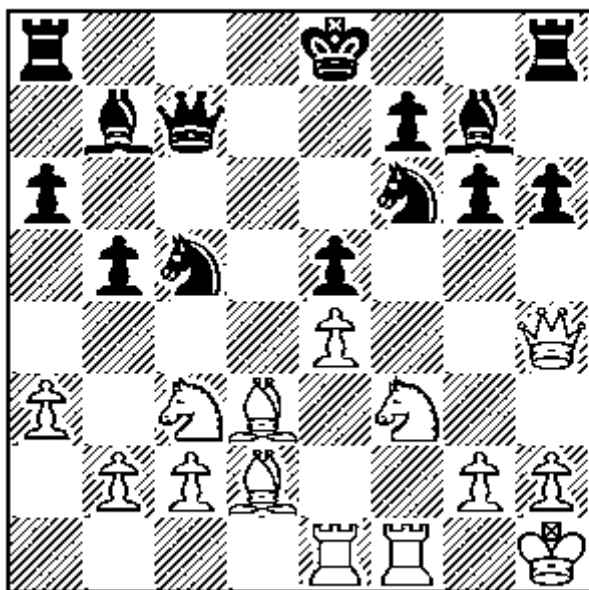
Question: Doesn't Black's last move make kingside castling almost impossible, since h6 always seems to hang?

Answer: Correct. Fischer judges that castling short is an invitation for White to launch a promising attack. Castling long may be a future option, as well as leaving his king in the centre. I think Black can actually get away with castling short: for example, 13 ... 0-0 14 f5 (14 fxe5 dxe5 15 Bg5 Nh5 Black looks okay to me) 14 ... Rac8 15 Bh6 Nh5! and the comps say Black is fine.

14 fxe5 dxe5 15 Bd2 Nc5

Fischer systematically adds pressure to both d3 and e4.

16 Rae1



16 ... g5!

Question: Why didn't Fischer simply play 16 ... Rd8?

It feels to me like White is about to collapse along the d-file.

Answer: This is an example of Fischer's legendary alertness. He probably feared White's stunning resource, 17 Nxe5!! Qxe5 18 Nd5!. The knight can't be taken, f6 is threatened, and White menaces Bc3 as well. Indeed, after 18 ... g5 19 Qf2 it appears as if White has a winning attack, but now it's Black's turn to come up with a trick: 19 ... Qxh2+! (Black just barely saves himself by returning the piece) 20 Kxh2 Ng4+ 21 Kh1 Nxf2+ 22 Rxf2 Bxb2 23 Bb4 Bd4 24 Rf5 Nxd3 (24 ... Bxd5?? 25 exd5+ Kf8 26 c3 overloads the d4 defender and wins) 25 Nc7+ Kd7 26 Rxf7+ Kc8 27 cxd3 Rd7 28 Nxb5! (the tactics just don't seem to end in this line) 28 ... axb5 29 Rc1+ Kd8 30 Ba5+ Ke8 31 Rxd7 Kxd7 32 Rc7+ Ke6 33 Rxb7 Rf8 34 Rxb5 Rf1+ 35 Kh2 Be5+ 36 g3 (36 Kh3 h5 threatens mate on h1; Black isn't worse here) 36 ... Rf3 37 Rd5 Bxg3+ 38 Kg2 g4 39 a4 h5! 40 Rxh5 Rxd3 and Black should hold the draw.

Now Fischer almost certainly didn't look this deeply into the line, but probably did see White's 17 Nxe5!! followed by 18 Nd5! and then correctly rejected the line, since it is Black who fights for survival.

17 Qg3!?

This encourages Black's knight to head to f4 with tempo. I think White was better off playing 17 Qf2 Rd8 18 Nxb5 axb5 19 Bxb5+ Kf8 20 Ba5 Qxa5 21 Qxc5+ Kg8 22 Nxe5 Bf8 (22 ... Rc8 23 Qe7 Qxb5 24 Qxf7+ Kh7 25 Qg6+ Kg8 26 Qf7+ is perpetual check) 23 Qc4 Rh7, which is pretty unclear and rated dead even by Houdini.

17 ... Nh5 18 Qg4 Nf4 19 Bxf4?!

This move hands over too much control of the dark squares to Fischer. In exchange, White hopes to gain an enduring initiative and a potential attack.

White should try 19 Nh4! (improving the position of the knight) 19 ... Bc8 20 Nf5 0-0 with mutually even chances.

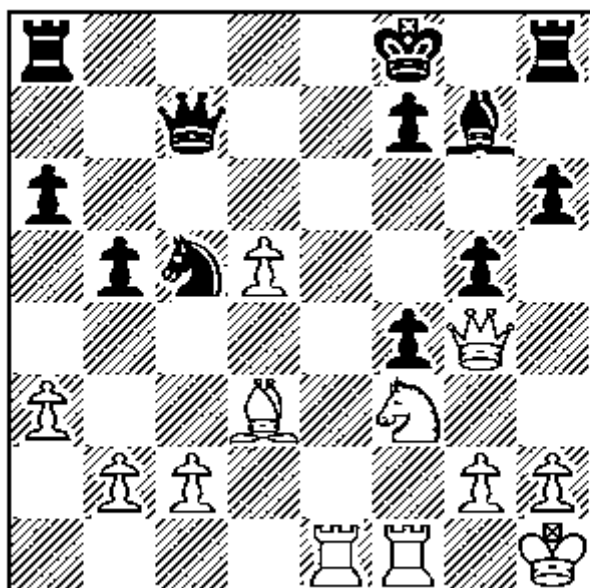
19 ... exf4 20 Nd5

20 e5 Kf8 21 Bf5 Re8 also favours Black.

20 ... Bxd5?!

It's tempting to eliminate that powerful knight, but in doing so, Fischer allows the e-file to open. Black looks better after 20 ... Qd6! 21 Nh4 Bxb2 22 Nf5 Qe5 23 g3 Bxa3 24 gxf4 gxf4 25 Nxf4 h5 26 Ng7+ Kd8 27 Nfxh5 Kc7! 28 Rxf7+ Kb6 29 Rf5 Qc3. His king is relatively safe on the queenside, mainly due to his dark-square domination, while White's king is open to the breezes on the other wing.

21 exd5+ Kf8



with Petrosian, is a frivolous piece who insists on idling his life away.

Answer: White may not be down a pawn, but his position is riddled with weakness. Black threatens to rid himself of a potential attacker and damage White's structure with ... Nxd3; b2 also hangs. Of course, Black's king doesn't appear all that safe, and as you mentioned, the h8-rook languishes. White may even toss in g3 in King's Gambit style. Maybe I'm biased, since I am a natural defender, but I still slightly prefer Black, while Houdini calls it even.

22 b4

Following 22 Qf5 Qc8 23 b4 Qxf5 24 Bxf5 Nb7! 25 Ne5 Bxe5 26 Rxe5 Nd6 27 Bd3 Kg7 I like Black's chances in the ending, since the knight is a perfect blockader on d6 and White's weak queenside pawns may later become a source of trouble.

22 ... Nxd3 23 cxd3 Qc8!

Fischer bullies White's queen away, since an ending favours Black.

24 Qh5 Qf5!

Both d5 and d3 hang, forcing White to come up with a compensating attack.

25 d6

Intending Re7 next. Instead, 25 Rc1 Qxd5 26 Rc7 Kg8 27 Rfc1 Rd8 28 h3 Rh7 29 R1c5 Qa2 30 d4 Bf8 31 Rc3 Bd6 32 R7c6 Rg7! (covering against Nxe5 tricks) 33 Rc8 Rxc8 34 Rxc8+ Kh7 35 Nxe5+! Rxe5 36 Rh8+! Kxh8 37 Qxh6+ Kg8 38 Qxg5+ Kh7 39 Qf5+ Kg8 40 Qg5+ is perpetual check.

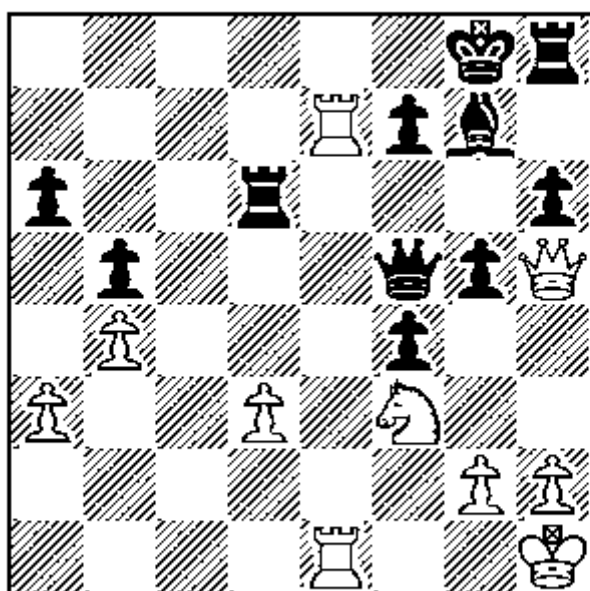
25 ... Rd8

25 ... Re8? costs Black time he can't afford to spend: 26 Rxe8+ Kxe8 27 Rc1 Bf6 28 Rc7 favours White.

26 Re7 Rxd6

Black picks up a pawn, yet his position remains critical, mainly due to his shut-out h8-rook.

27 Rfe1 Kg8!



28 Nh4?

An idea which misses its mark is a mere husk, devoid of fruit. Don't you hate that feeling when you are unable to come up with a plan, and your mind turns into this vagrant who loiters about, while your clock continues to run down? After this mistake White's attack passes harmlessly. White relies on the principle: Create confrontation when leading in development, but chooses the wrong way to do it, since his move wastes precious time. Now the black king's ample defenders serve as a buffer between his own safety and White's attacking ambitions.

He should go for 28 h4!, which applies the principle correctly, and if 28 ... Qg6 29 Re8+ Bf8

30 Qxg6+ Rxg6 31 Ne5 Re6 32 Rxe6 fxe6 33 Ng6 Rh7 34 Rxe6 Rd7 35 Nxf8 Kxf8 36 Rxh6 Rxd3 37 Rxa6 gxh4 with a likely draw.

28 ... Qf6

Now f7 remains covered and White's knight must lose time, returning to f3.

29 Nf3

A clear admission that his last move was an error.

29 ... Rxd3

Fischer's rook approaches pawns, the way an empty plate is carried to the buffet table. Pawn number two falls. As White's attack grows more faint, Fischer's responses grow correspondingly surlier.

30 h4

The trouble is White doesn't threaten hxg5 as long as his king and queen sit on the h-file.

30 ... Bf8!

Shooing away the rook and intending to unravel with ... Kg7 next.

31 Re8

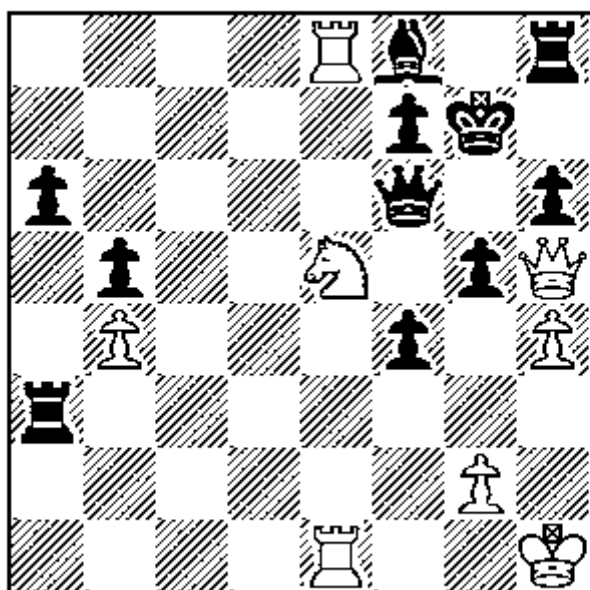
Fischer allowed the 'combination' 31 Rxf7 Qxf7 32 Qxf7+ Kxf7 33 Ne5+ Kf6 34 Nxd3 Bd6 which leaves White down a pawn with a lost ending.

31 ... Rxa3

Pawn number three. The rook continues to desire unearned objects. Don't the scriptures warn us that it's difficult for a rich person to enter the kingdom of heaven? I concede Fischer's blatant greed, but think about it this way: the only way to not worry about having enough money is to accrue a great deal of it. Fischer continues his policy of exorbitant extortion, with pawns as his payment.

Natural defenders are constructed by nature to both endure hardship and also take joy in pure greed. Fischer, Korchnoi and Lasker were the greatest pawn grabbers in the history of the game. All three willingly suffered temporary discomfort and an opponent's initiative and attack, all to increase their bank accounts.

32 Ne5 Kg7

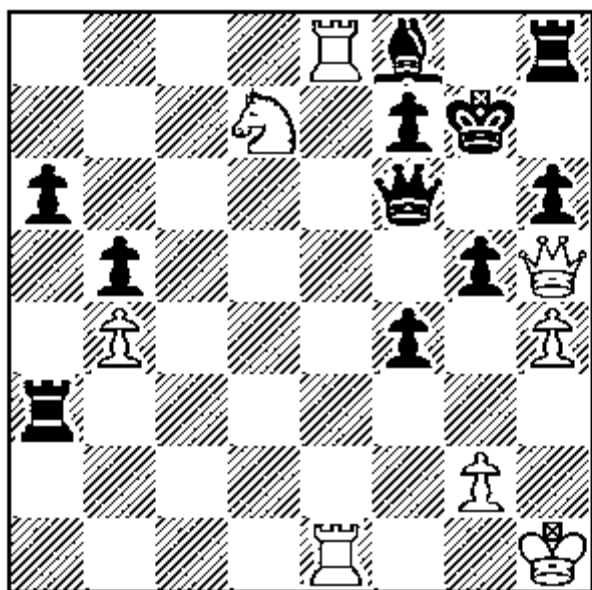


The much maligned king allows himself a smile of vindication.

33 Nd7?

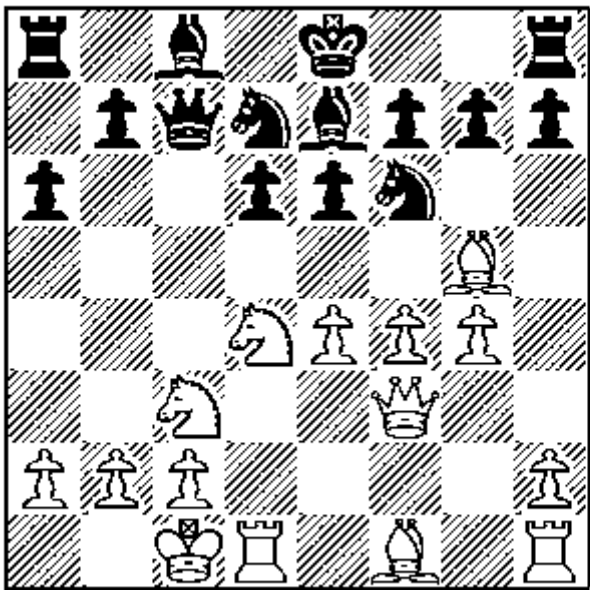
Question: Why not 33 Rd1 intending Rd7? How does Black defend?

Answer: He doesn't, and instead, goes on a counteroffensive with 33 ... f3! 34 Nxf3 (34 Rd7?? fxg2+ 35 Kxg2 Ra2+ forces mate) 34 ... Ra1! and White's attack is over before it even starts.



Answer: I'm beginning to suspect that they did just that! Fischer, unlike most top GMs today, had an unbelievably narrow opening repertoire, so in this book we see the same openings, over and over. So be prepared!

6 Bg5 e6 7 f4 Be7 8 Qf3 Qc7 9 0-0-0 Nbd7 10 g4

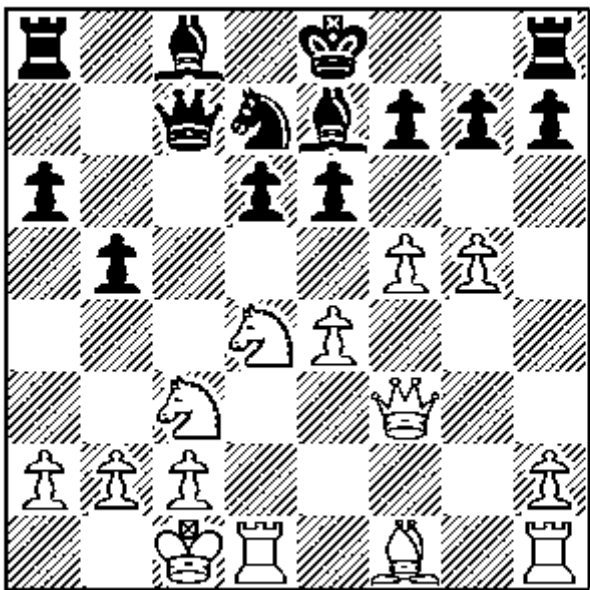


White's main line. 10 Bd3 is a key alternative.
10 ... b5 11 Bxf6

Question: Why did White give away the bishop-pair?

Answer: The point of playing g4 is to play g5. White's bishop is in the way, so he hands Black the bishop-pair and gains time in exchange.

11 ... Nxf6 12 g5 Nd7 13 f5



13 ... Nc5

Question: Doesn't White's g-pawn hang with check?

Answer: That is another line. Play normally goes 13 ... Bxg5+ 14 Kb1 Ne5 (or 14 ... 0-0 15 fxe6 Nb6 16 Nd5 Nxd5 17 exd5 fxe6 18 Qg4, T.Radjabov-I.Cheparinov, Heraklion 2007, when I slightly prefer White after 18 ... Bf6 19 dxe6 Bxd4 20 Rxd4 Re8 21

Bd3 Bxe6 22 Qg3) 15 Qh5 (with the dual threats of Qxg5 and Nxe6) 15 ... Qd8 and here White plays 16 Rg1, 16 h4 or 16 Nxe6.

14 f6

This pretty much ends Black's plans to castle kingside.

14 ... gxf6

14 ... Bf8?? is a known trap. White gets a winning position after 15 Bxb5+!. The wizard raises his arms and invokes his spell, which bends and vibrates the air before him. Now if 15 ... axb5? 16 Ndx5 Qb8 17 fxg7 Bxg7 18 Nxd6+ Kd7 19 Qxf7+ Kc6 20 Qxg7 and Black can resign.

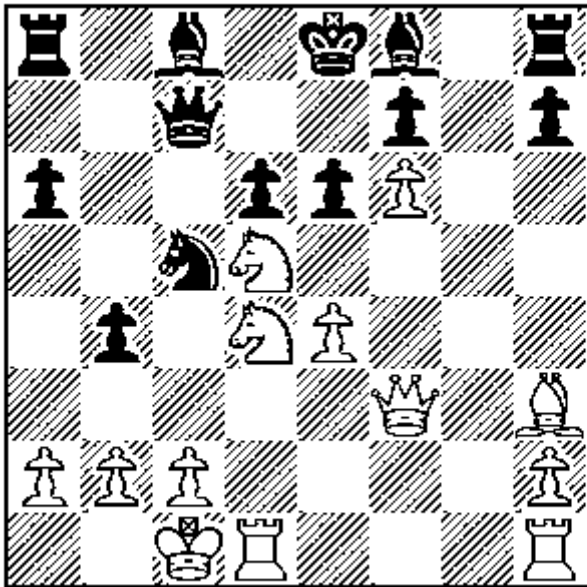
15 gxf6 Bf8 16 Bh3

16 Rg1 is White's main move today and after 16 ... h5 17 Bh3 Black must be careful:

a) 17 ... Bb7?! 18 Kb1 b4 (forcing White into a good move) 19 Nd5! Qa5 (19 ... exd5 20 exd5 Kd8 21 Rg5 also looks pretty tough for Black) 20 Rg7 (20 Nxe6! Nxe6 21 Bxe6 fxe6 22 f7+ Kd7 23 Nf6+ Ke7 24 Qf4 Rd8 25 Qh4! Kxf7 26 Rgfl Ke7 27 e5 is a winning attack for White) 20 ... Nxe4 21 Bxe6 and Black's position was on the brink of collapse, E.Najer-N.De Firmian, Philadelphia 2009.

b) 17 ... b4! 18 Nd5 exd5 19 exd5 Bxh3 20 Qxh3 Qd7 21 Qh4 0-0-0 and it's anybody's game, A.Csonka-A.Peter, Hungarian League 2002.

16 ... b4 17 Nd5!?



Ah yes, the right to bear arms. Don't expect an implacable enemy, hell-bent on your destruction, to agree to sit down and negotiate. When the attack's siren-call comes, it's a force some players are unable to resist.

Question: Isn't this attacking excess on a lavish scale?

Answer: Actually not. This kind of sacrifice is so thematic, that it has almost taken on the role of a Najdorf cliché.

Question: Is White obliged to sacrifice?

Answer: No, White can take a slightly safer route with 17 Nce2 Bb7 18 Ng3, E.Iriarte Gomez-E.Reina Guerra, correspondence 2007. Houdini prefers Black's side after 18 ... 0-0-0.

17 ... exd5 18 exd5 Bxh3 19 Rhe1+

The very fabric of Black's society threatens to tear. This move ruins Black's castling with tempo.

19 ... Kd8

The party of the second part – and I naturally speak of Black's king – isn't too happy about the direction the wind blows. So he decides to pack his bags and leave town in a hurry.

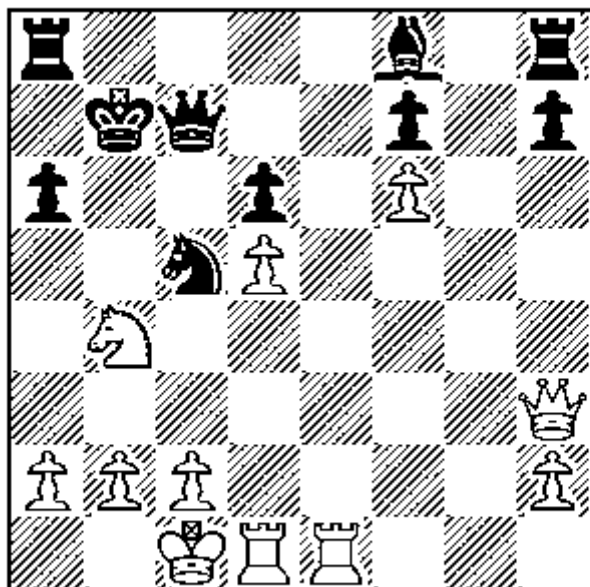
20 Nc6+ Kc8

It feels as if Black's king is encompassed by enemies, too numerous to count. This is of course an illusion and if you know the theory (which Fischer obviously did), you understand that Black is okay.

21 Qxh3+ Kb7

The king contrives excuse after excuse on how he is too busy to see his h3 sister.

22 Nxb4



Black's pawns feel like stationary targets in a carnival shooting gallery. Believe it or not, this is all theory. For the piece, White got the following:

1. Two pawns.
2. An exposed black king (although less so than optics indicate).
3. White's knight may rest on c6, thanks to the d5-outpost.
4. Black's bishop has no squares and is shut out of the game.
5. Black needs to develop his h-rook. This means he will eventually play ... Rg8, allowing Qxh7, adding a third pawn to White's war chest.

Now this sounds like overwhelming compensation, but Houdini rates it at '0.00', and if given a choice, I would actually take Black for the following reasons:

1. As mentioned above, Black's king is much safer than it looks, mainly because there are no obvious attacking avenues for White.
2. White's f6-pawn can become a target. If it falls, then Black's unemployed bishop is once again free.

22 ... Qd7 23 Qh5

Keeping an eye on d5, f7 and h7. After 23 Qh4 Rg8 24 h3 (stopping ... Rg4) 24 ... Rg6 25 Nc6 a5 (this move cuts out Na5+) 26 Kb1, as in Zhuravlev-M.Zaklauskis, USSR 1971, I prefer Black's chances after 26 ... Kc7.

23 ... Rg8 24 Nc6 a5!

Escape is much easier if the problem arises from an external threat, rather than from a form of internal rot. When we are unable to fix a problem, the next best thing is to discreetly hide it under the rug. Fischer's move anchors his knight since it discourages b4, as well as cuts out Na5+.

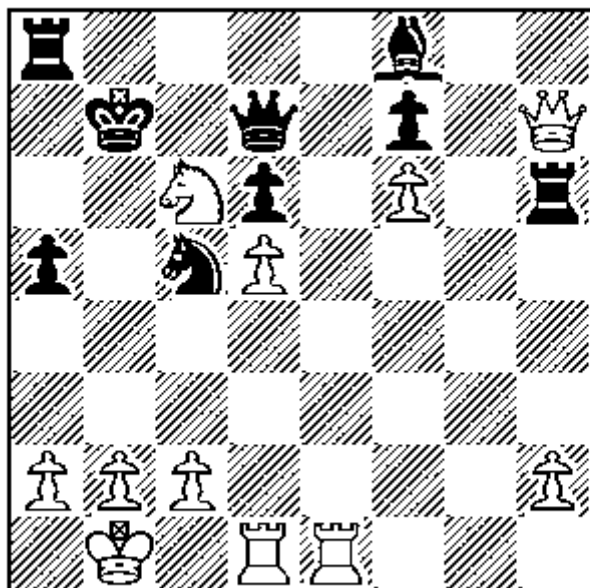
25 Qxh7

So White picked up his third pawn for the piece, yet I prefer Black's side. Fischer's king remains rather safe for now and the f6-pawn looks like a potential target, either now, or later in an ending.

25 ... Rg6 26 Kb1

Ciocaltea invites Fischer to chop the f-pawn to open the f-file for his rooks.

26 ... Rh6



Going after h2?

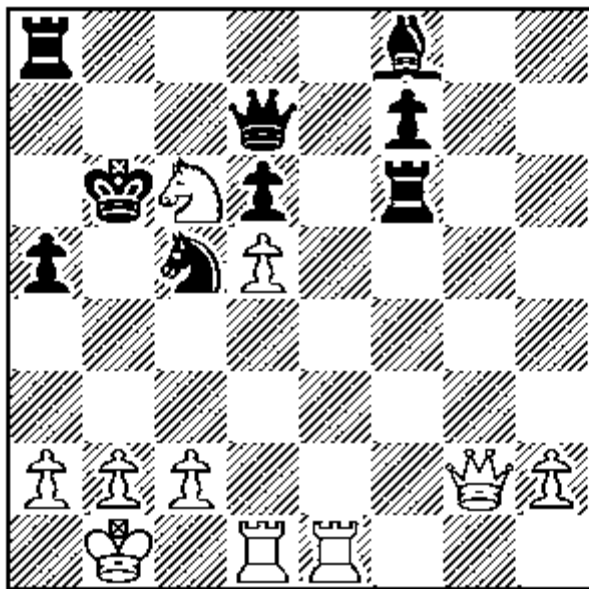
27 Qg8 Rxf6!?

No. Just kidding.

Question: I would have taken h2, to eliminate the possibility of a passed h-pawn. Why did Fischer choose to take f6?

Answer: Black's main problem (besides king safety) is: how to activate his dark-squared bishop? By taking the f6-pawn, Fischer opens a future possibility of ... Bg7. Now why is this important? Because White's main attacking theme is to eventually pry open Black's king with future b4. This will be a lot harder to pull off if Black's bishop on g7 takes aim at White's king. Moreover, Fischer isn't the type to take a repetition draw with 27 ... Rg6 28 Qh7 Rh6 29 Qg8.

28 Qg2 Kb6



Exercise (planning): With his last move, Fischer adds further cover to a5.

White needs to play for b4 at some point. But as we all know, the devil hides in the detail. Come up with a concrete attacking plan for White.

29 Rd4?

The wrong plan. White plays to expose Black's king with b4, but goes about it in the wrong fashion. He should play his queen to the g1-a7 diagonal, and then follow with a3!, intending b4.

Answer: According to the comps the game is dynamically even after 29 Qg3! Rg6 (not 29 ... Bh6? 30 Qh4 Rg6 31 b4! axb4 32 Qxb4+ Kc7 33 Re7 Qxe7 34 Nxe7 Rb8 35 Qxb8+ Kxb8 36 Nxg6 fxc6 37 Rg1 and White has a close to winning ending) 30 Qf2! f5 31 a3!. Embedded within change, also lies opportunity. The game is dead even, according to Houdini.

29 ... Qf5!

Strategic threat: ... Qf2.

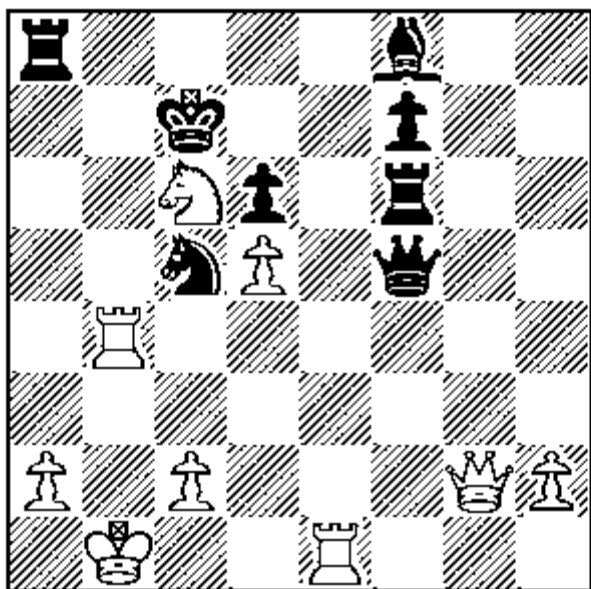
30 b4?

When we attack from a position of weakness, the battle is lost, even before it starts. White follows through with his incorrect plan. When I am utterly confident in my plan's correctness and then later am proven wrong, I wince internally when I remind myself of the Buddha's words: "The fool who believes himself wise, is that much more a fool."

30 ... axb4 31 Rxb4+

The rook has never been inclined to show much consideration for the black king's feelings.

31 ... Kc7 0-1



Fischer waves away his opponent's attack with an almost airy caprice. White's once powerful momentum slowly morphed into a groundless state of eternal suspension. Another bafflingly simple win for Fischer's side. Why is it we never get wins handed to us so easily?

Question: I don't get it. Why did White resign?

Answer: His attack is no more, and Black threatens to simplify with ... Qf2: for example, 32 Nd4 Qf2 and White must swap the queen, leading to a lost ending. If 33 Qh1?? Rf4 34 Rd1 Bg7! and at long last, the bishop gains relevance and White's position collapses.

Game 16

W.Browne-R.Fischer

Rovinj/Zagreb 1970

Alekhine's Defence

One time Chicago Bull's player Stacey King scored one point, juxtaposed with Michael Jordan's towering 69 point performance that night. After the game King triumphantly declared: "I will always remember this as the night Michael Jordan and I combined for 70 points!" Anyone who ever had the good fortune to draw with Fischer in a tournament game (or even a simul game!) must have had similar thoughts.

1 e4 Nf6

Question: Wow. No Sicilian?

Answer: I see it as a kind of mid-life crisis. Unlike most world class players, Fischer's repertoire was incredibly narrow. Then around 1970 Fischer began to experiment with different openings, taking up Alekhine's Defence as Black, and 1 b3 as White, culminating with queen's pawn openings as White in his championship match with Spassky.

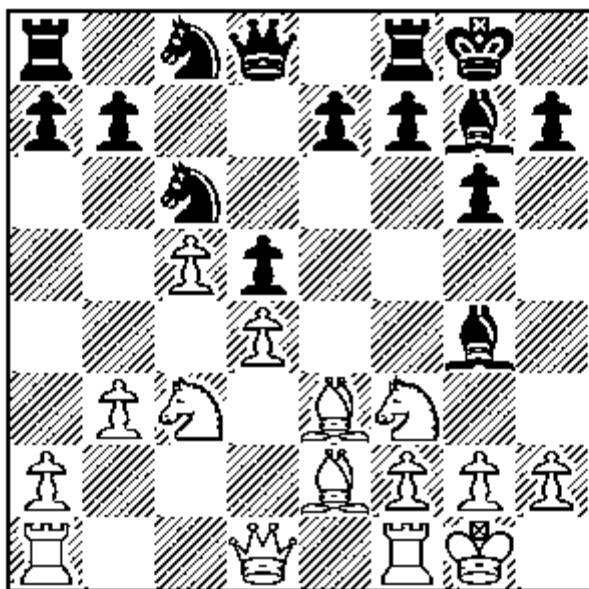
2 e5 Nd5 3 d4 d6 4 Nf3

Most players reach the coming game's position via the Asymmetrical Exchange move order 4 c4 Nb6 5 exd6 cxd6 6 Nc3 g6.

4 ... g6 5 Be2 Bg7 6 c4 Nb6 7 exd6 cxd6 8 Nc3 0-0 9 0-0 Nc6 10 Be3 Bg4

Black menaces the strategic threat ... Bxf3, when White would either have to drop c4, or play gxf3, ruining his kingside pawn structure.

11 b3 d5 12 c5 Nc8



Question: Black looks tangled up. What is his plan?

Answer: Theoretically, Black stands okay here. In fact, in my Alekhine's Defence book, I claimed that it was White, not Black, who had to play accurately to hold equality from this point. The plan is to systematically pressure d4 with ... Bxf3, ... e6, ... N8e7 and ... Nf5.

13 h3

This may be a wasted tempo, since Black intends to chop the knight in any case.

Instead, 13 Rb1 e6 14 b4 a6 15 a4 N8e7 16 b5 axb5 17 axb5 Na5 18 h3)I guess White wants to break the suspense, but the same comment holds; Black intended to take the knight in any case, so this move can be argued as the loss of a tempo) 18 ... Bxf3 19 Bxf3 Nc4 20 g4 Ra3 21 Rb3 Qa5 22 Bg5 Rxb3 23 Qxb3 f6 24 Bf4 f5 was K.Griffith-C.Lakdawala, San Diego (rapid) 2013. The position is roughly balanced after the correct 25 Ne2.

13 Rc1 and 13 b4 are also played in this position.

13 ... Bxf3 14 Bxf3 e6 15 Qd2

I also had the fortune to face 15 Rc1 N8e7 16 Qd2?! e5! (16 ... Nf5 is favourable too for Black) 17 Nb5 e4 18 Be2 Nf5 19 Bg4 a6 20 Bxf5 axb5 21 Bg4 Qa5! 22 Qxa5 Rxa5 23 Be2 b4 in K.Griffith-C.Lakdawala, San Diego (rapid) 2013. White is busted since a2 and d4 hang.

15 ... N8e7 16 Nb5?

The trouble with this move is White's knight is easily destabilized with a6, after which White's d4-pawn becomes chronically weak.

After 16 b4 Nf5 17 Ne2 e5! 18 b5 Nxe3 19 fxe3 Na5 20 dxe5 Nc4 21 Qxd5 Qxd5 22 Bxd5 Nxe3 23 Bxb7 Rab8 24 Rf3 Rxb7 25 Rxe3 Rxb5 26 Rd1 Rxc5 27 e6 fxe6 28 Rxe6 Rc2 29 a4 White still stands a shade worse, but should hold the game.

16 ... Nf5 17 Bg4

An attempt by White to reduce the mounting pressure on d4 by playing Bxf5 next.

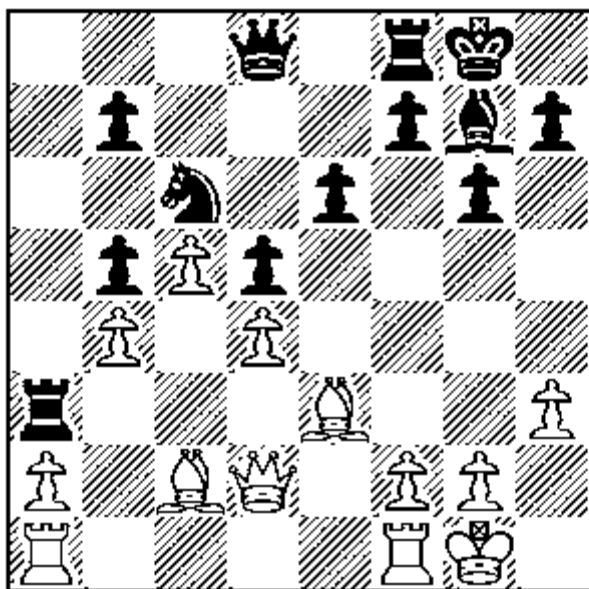
17 ... a6 18 Bxf5 axb5!

This opens the a-file, targeting a2.

19 Bc2 Ra3

19 ... b4! is also strong, locking down a2 as an eternal target.

20 b4



Exercise (combination alert): White's position is about to collapse. How can Black achieve this?

20 ... f5?!

Black still stands better after this, but White is unable to withstand:

Answer: 20 ... Qh4! (pin) 21 Rfd1 Rfa8 22 Bb3 and now Black reveals his intent with the pinning combination 22 ... Nxd4! 23 Bxd5 (if 23 Bxd4 Qxd4 24 Qxd4 Bxd4, and if 25 Rxd4 Rxb3 with a winning rook and pawn ending) 23 ... Nc6 24 Bxc6 bxc6 25 Rac1 h6! (more accurate than 25 ... Rxa2) 26 Qd6 (or 26 Rc2 Qe4 27 Qe2 R3a4, and if 28 Rb1? Rxa2! White's game collapses) 26 ... Qe4 27 Bd4 Rxa2 when he wins a pawn.

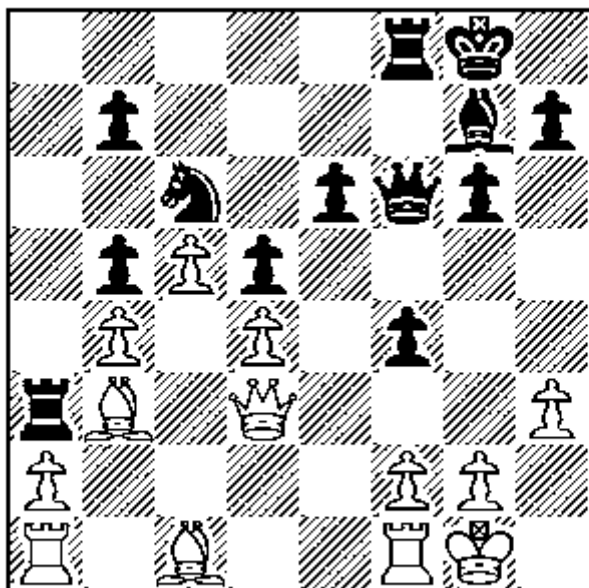
21 Bb3 Qf6!

Fischer continues to hammer away at d4.

22 Qd3

Browne counterattacks b5.

22 ... f4 23 Bc1



Exercise (critical decision): Should Black back his a3-rook up?

Or should he sacrifice the exchange with ... Rxb3, followed by ... Qxd4?

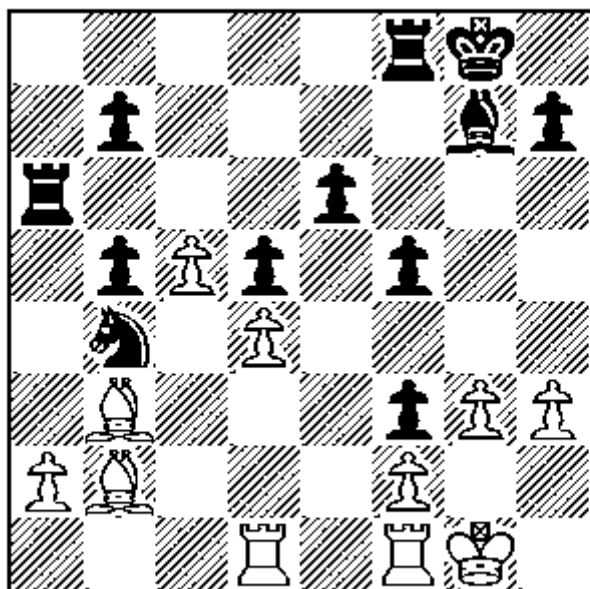
23 ... Ra6?

Answer: Black should sacrifice the exchange: 23 ... Rxb3! 24 axb3 Qxd4 25 Qxd4 Bxd4 26 Ra2 Bc3 with a clear advantage for Black, who picks up b4 and obtains two clean pawns, plus a strategic advantage for the exchange.

24 Bb2 f3 25 g3 Qf5

No choice in the matter, since White threatened Qxb5.

26 Qxf5 gxf5 27 Rad1 Nxb4



Fischer won a pawn, yet Browne achieved full compensation:

1. e6 is weak.
2. Black's f3-pawn is weak.
3. White has the bishop-pair.

28 Rfe1 f4??

If an anarchist seeks to cause maximum damage upon society, he plants a bomb in a crowded urban location. It makes no sense to detonate the bomb in the middle of a deserted prairie. I hate it when my game begins wonderfully and then progressively gets worse and worse. The position's reality begins to defy Fischer's optimism. As painful as it is for your Fischer-loving writer, this move fully deserves two question marks. If Fischer had a stylistic flaw, it was his tendency to overpress in even positions. In a single move, Fischer's position slides from equal to losing.

Correct was 28 ... Kf7 29 Re3 Nxa2 30 Rxf3 Nb4 31 g4! Ke8 32 gxf5 Rxf5 33 Rxf5 exf5 34 Kf1. Black's extra pawn compensates his weaker structure and the game is approximately even.

29 a3 Nc6 30 Rxe6

The base of Black's pawn chain falls and Fischer begins to drop pawns at an alarming level. On top of that, White's sleeping bishop-pair comes alive and dominates.

30 ... fxg3

30 ... Rd8 31 Rd6 Rxd6 32 cxd6 is also lost for Black.

31 Bxd5 gxf2+ 32 Kxf2 Kh8 33 Re3

The f3 straggler falls.

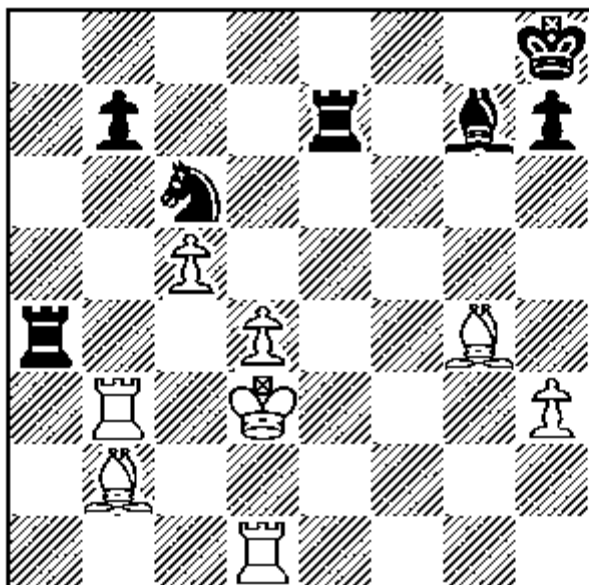
33 ... b4 34 axb4 Nxb4 35 Bxf3 Ra2 36 Rb3 Nc6 37 Kg3!

Certainly not the boneheaded 37 Rxb7?? Nxd4.

37 ... Rg8 38 Kf4! Rf8+ 39 Ke4 Rf7

If 39 ... Re8+ 40 Kd3 Rf8 41 Be4 and White consolidates.

40 Bg4 Re7+ 41 Kd3 Ra4



Fischer desperately attempts to gain counterplay on d4. Brown's next move puts a halt to this plan.

42 Ra1! Rxd4+!

Fischer fails to be disheartened by his myriad tribulations, and finds his best chance by transitioning to full damage control mode. 42 ... Rxa1 43 Bxa1 is a completely hopeless ending for Black, who is down a pawn and threatened with Bc8.

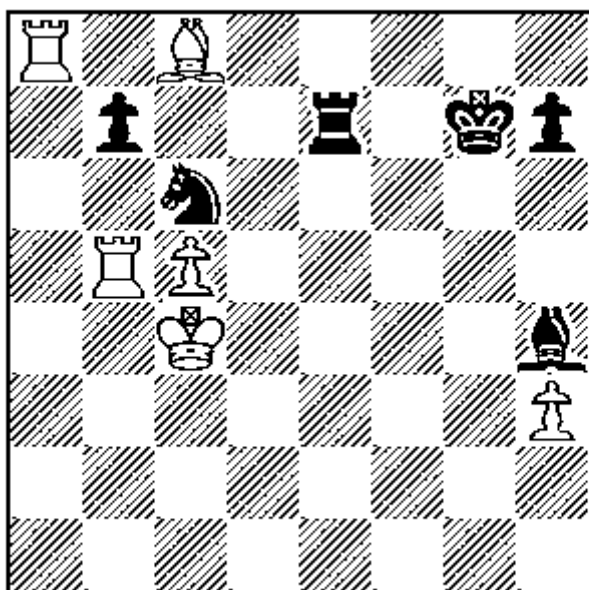
43 Bxd4 Bxd4 44 Ra8+ Kg7 45 Rb5

It's crucial for White to hang on to his c-pawn, otherwise his win is seriously complicated.

45 ... Bf2 46 Bf5

I would just play the immediate 46 Bc8!.

46 ... Ne5+ 47 Kc3 Be1+ 48 Kd4 Nc6+ 49 Kc4 Bh4 50 Bc8!



Brown ties Fischer down to defence of b7.

50 ... Nd8 51 Ra2 Rc7!

Dual purpose: he chases away the attack of b7, while increasing pressure on c5. chess-touring.com

52 Bg4 Be7 53 Kd5 Nc6 54 Rab2

Once again tying the knight down to defence of b7.

54 ... Nd8 55 Rb1 Bf8 56 R1b2 Be7 57 Rg2 Kh8 58 Ra2 Kg7 59 Ra8!

White keeps options open for Rb8, Rc8 and Bc8.

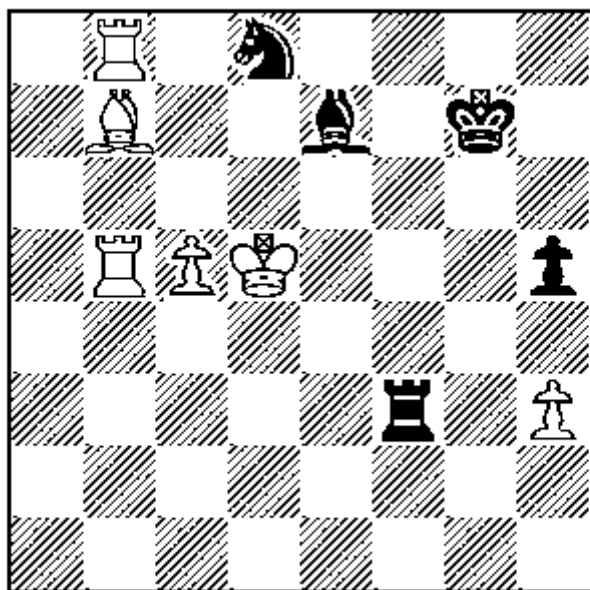
59 ... Bh4 60 Rb8 Rf7 61 Rb2 Kh6 62 Rb6+ Kg7

Fischer would love to activate his king, but the trouble is 62 ... Kg5?? blocks coverage of d8 after 63 Rxd8.

63 Rb3 h5 64 Bc8

Naturally not 64 Bxh5?? Rf5+ picking up the bishop.

64 ... Be7 65 Rb5 Rf3 66 Bxb7



Now the passed c-pawn's presence will be a festering wound in Black's position. So White finally picks up b7, but not for free, since he must hand over his h-pawn in exchange.

66 ... Rxh3 67 c6 Rc3

Stopping c7.

68 Ra8 h4

Black's only prayer is to attempt to generate counterplay with his h-pawn.

69 Ra4!

Intending Rc4, which seizes control over c7.

69 ... h3 70 Rc4 h2!

Reminding White that he has his own promotion agenda.

71 Rb1 Rxc4 72 Kxc4 Bd6

Fischer continues to hang on like grim death, once again preventing c7. Now everything depends upon his ability to maintain a blockade of c7.

73 Kd5 Bg3 74 Bc8 Kf7 75 Bh3 Ke7 76 Rc1 Kf6 77 Ra1

White is still unable to push to c7 as long as Black maintains his own queening threat.

77 ... Ke7 78 Rf1 Nf7 79 Bg2

This move frees his rook to leave the first rank.

79 ... Ng5 80 Kc5 Ne6+

The knight helps out with the blockade of c7.

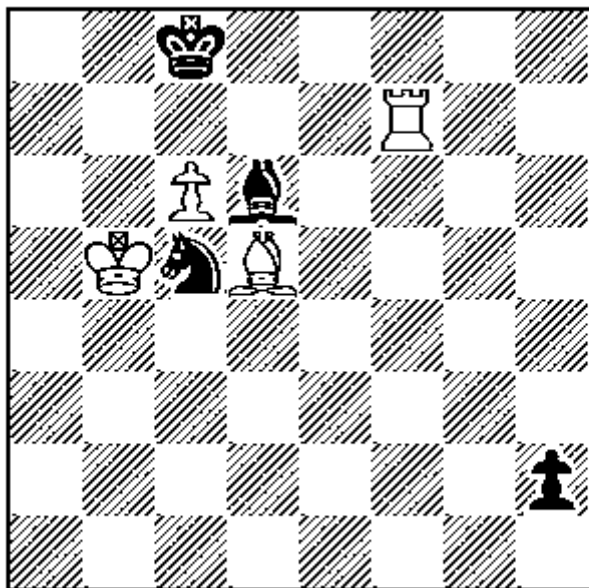
81 Kb6 Bc7+ 82 Kb7 Bd6 83 Bd5 Nc5+ 84 Kb6 Na4+

Okay, now this knight is really getting annoying for White's king.

85 Ka5 Nc5 86 Kb5 Kd8

Now Black's king gets in on the act as well.

87 Rf7 Kc8



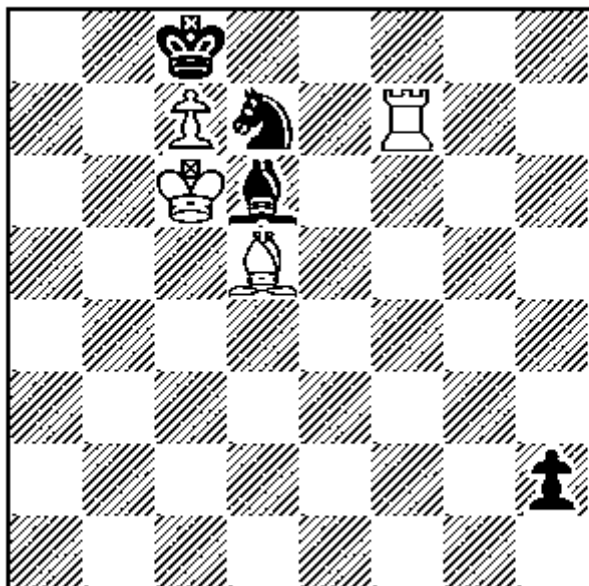
Exercise (combination alert): This fog-shrouded position isn't easy to decipher. We must balance the artistic with straightforward business astuteness. Work out the exact sequence to White's win.

88 c7?

When we own the raw material for a combination, this is no guarantee that we will find it. The c-pawn appears to be the manacle which chains Black. But this is an illusion. Right idea; wrong move order.

Answer: White wins with 88 Rh7!. Zugzwang! This move rips through Black's defence as if it were dry, ancient parchment. After 88 ... Kd8 89 c7+! Kc8 90 Kc6 "It is the way of nature for the strong to dominate the weak," White's king tells his helpless brother, as he tut-tuts in mock sympathy. The defence crumples. Is it just me, or does the black king remind you of those cruel videos of the clubbing of a baby seal?

88 ... Nd7 89 Kc6



Exercise (critical decision): It feels as if White's once indefatigable attempt to win, pushed itself too far. Did White just blunder into an e5-knight fork?

Answer: No. In reality, this is a case of the serpent slithering into the garden. Browne's pieces scheme to perpetrate an outrage upon Black's king. Giving the knight fork walks into Browne's unbelievably deep trap.

89 ... h1Q!!

Now the harmony in White's game scatters in disarray. After Fischer's move circumstances fashion the geometries into futile designs for White, whose win is no more.

If Black forks with 89 ... Ne5+?? 90 Kb6 Bc5+ (or 90 ... Nxf7 91 Be6 mate) 91 Kxc5 Nxf7 92 Kb6! (threat: Be6 mate) 92 ... Nd8 (Black's knight is curiously helpless to halt White's promotion attempts) 93 Be4 Kd7 94 Bg2! (zugzwang) 94 ... h1Q (94 ... Nf7 95 Bc6+ Kc8 96 Bb7+ promotes) 95 Bxh1 Kc8 (95 ... Ne6 96 Bc6+ wins) 96 Bg2 and there is no good defence to Bh3+.

90 Bxh1

"God has blessed me with wings," declares the mad bishop, as he plunges off the cliff's lip. On h1 the bishop is out of synch with the rest of the world, since he gets temporarily knocked off the crucial h3-c8 diagonal.

90 ... Ne5+!

The knight grins assentingly, motioning White's king by crooking a finger. Now is the moment to fork.

91 Kb6

91 Kxd6 Nxf7+ 92 Kc6 Ne5+ 93 Kb6 Nc4+ is drawn.

91 ... Bc5+!

This second deflection sacrifice is crucial to Black's defensive needs. 91 ... Nxf7?? 92 Bb7+ allows White to promote.

92 Kxc5 Nxf7 93 Kb6 Nd6

Just in time to stop a bishop check on b7. The way the position miraculously works out for Fischer is magic.

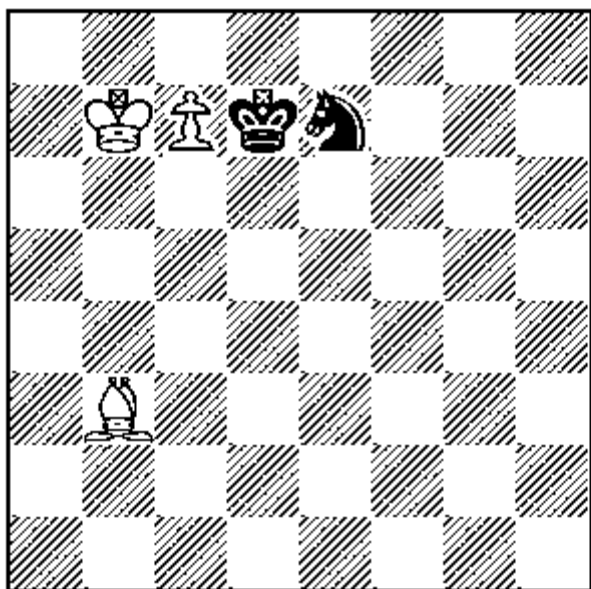
94 Bd5 Kd7

Now White is unable to force zugzwang and the game is drawn.

95 Bc6+ Kc8 96 Bd5 Kd7 97 Bb3 Nc8+

The king is drawn into the knight's defensive orbit.

98 Kb7 Ne7! ½-½



White is unable to make progress. I'm pretty certain my late friend GM Walter Browne went straight to the hotel bar to purchase liquid solace after coming so close to beating Bobby, and having glory yanked away so cruelly.

Game 17

R.Fischer-M.Matulovic

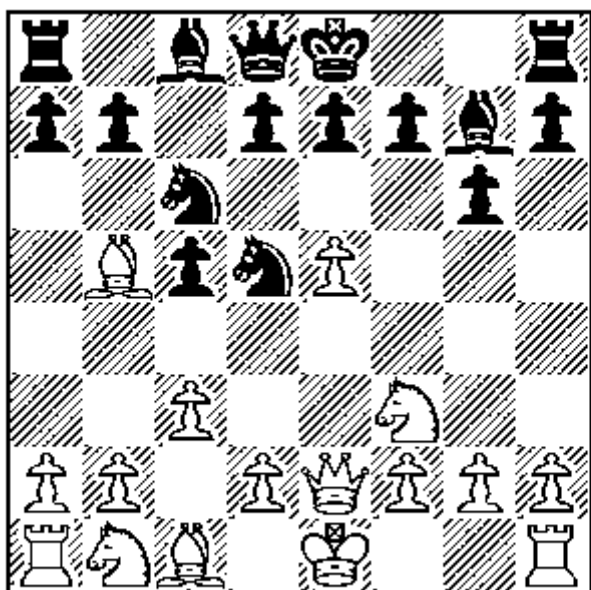
Palma de Mallorca Interzonal 1970

Sicilian Rossolimo

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 g6 4 c3

Today, more commonly played are 4 0-0 and 4 Bxc6.

4 ... Nf6 5 Qe2 Bg7 6 e5 Nd5



7 Qc4?

Not such an impressive double attack. When duty and inclination collide, then why is it that we so often ride off into the sunset with the latter? Not all combinations should be played, even if we see them. I already mentioned earlier in the book about the dilemma of the rich man being barred

from heaven. This is an incredibly greedy move which wins a pawn, but basically gives away the store, strategically.

7 0-0 is infinitely wiser: 7 ... Nc7 8 Bxc6 dxc6 9 h3 Bf5 10 d4, J.Lechtynsky-I.Privara, Ostrava 1976. I already prefer Black after 10 ... Qd5, yet White's position is nowhere near as awful as the one Fischer got in the game.

7 ... Nc7!

Black won all the games in the database from this position except for one – this one!

8 Bxc6

Of course such a move implies future deficiency on the light squares, especially d3.

8 ... dxc6 9 Qxc5

Congratulations are in order. Fischer won a pawn, at an insanely high cost. When a glaring problem in our position goes uncorrected, its pervasive influence spreads through our coming moves like an unchecked virus.

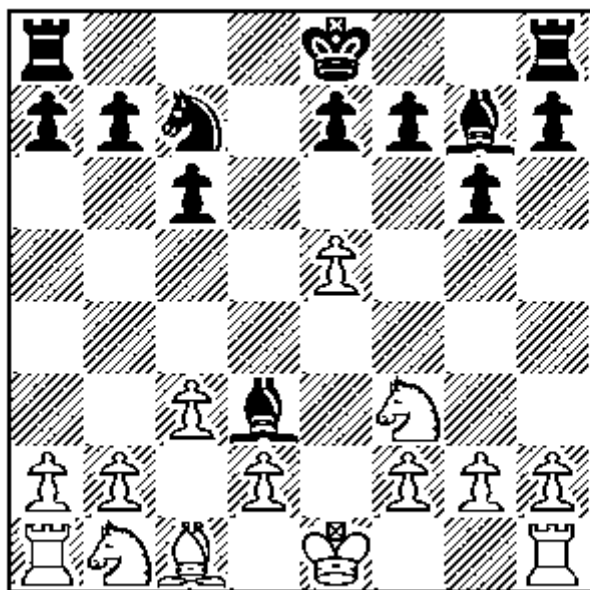
9 ... Qd3

Of course. Black cuts out d4 and enjoys a paralysing grip on the position.

10 Qe3 Bf5 11 Qxd3

The queen swap brings little relief for White, since Black's light-squared bishop is an able replacement.

11 ... Bxd3



“Lower your leering eyes, priest, or I will have you gelded,” recites White's queen, with an empty threat. The human tendency is to scapegoat Fate for our misfortune, when most of time the true culprit is our own character flaws. In this case, Fischer's unchecked greed brought him low.

Question: OMG. Isn't this position resignable for White?

Answer: When our position grows sour, all we dream about is for life to go back to the way it was 'before'. In this case "before" is a place to which Fischer can never return. It does have the flavour of one of those Amateur-Morphy debacles, where Amateur goes pawn hunting while Morphy brings out all his pieces. Elie Agur writes: "One gets the impression that White is virtually paralyzed here." I agree. Black's advantages:

1. A massive development lead.

2. The bishop-pair.

3. Fischer casts agonised glances at the grievous punctures of his light squares, beginning with d3, where Black plants a piece. And trying to eject the d3 intruder is similarly frustrating to an

attempt to adjust a table at a restaurant, which has been screwed to the floor.

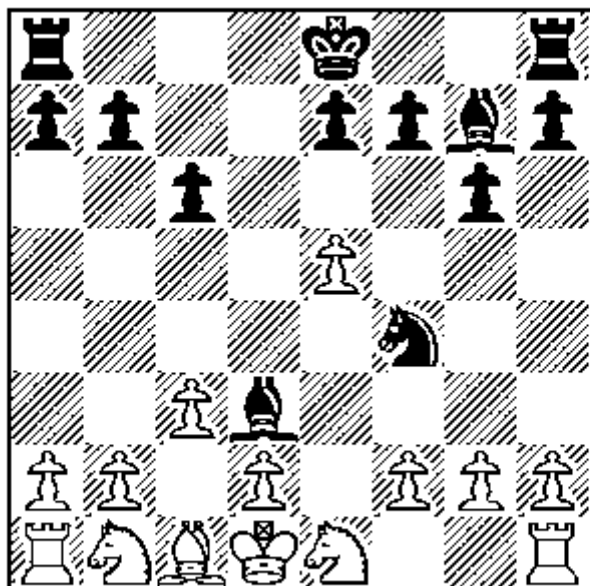
4. e5 is likely to fall, or perhaps may be used as a way to open the kingside further for Black, starting with ... f6.

In White's column: one measly pawn. With a GM playing Black, this is a near-certain execution for White, and it's hard to imagine any player in the world at the time, except for Fischer, who had the required defensive skills to even make a fight of it for White.

12 Kd1!

Black's leech-like d3-bishop is priority number one. Fischer opens possibilities of Ne1.

12 ... Ne6 13 Ne1 Nf4!

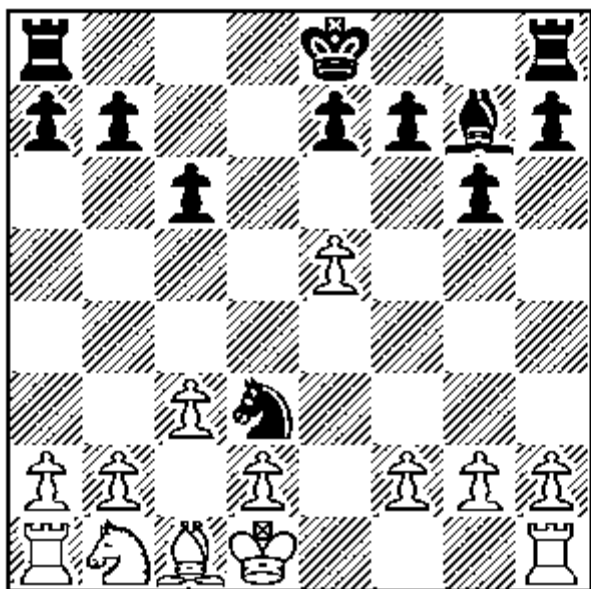


14 Nxd3!

Question: Doesn't Fischer slip away from his difficulties with 14 g3?

Answer: Matulovic set a beautiful trap, which Fischer had foreseen: 14 ... Be2+ 15 Kc2 Nh3. Now White is unable to save his f-pawn: for example, 16 f4?? (after this move White's frantic efforts spend themselves in vain, but if 16 d4?? Nxf2 17 Rg1 Bd1+ 18 Kd2 Bh6 mate) 16 ... Nf2 17 Rg1 Bd1 mate. This gruesome finish is the point of Matulovic's trap. When our combination works, the feeling is similar to receiving a letter containing good news.

14 ... Nxd3



Exercise (planning): The barrage of violence which plagues Fischer seems to have no end, and it looks hopeless. Black's d3-knight chokes White and both f2 and e5 hang. How did Fischer seize upon his best defensive chance?

Answer: Exchange sacrifice.

15 f4!!

Fischer calmly allows the f2 fork. A person out of options will undertake extreme, unconventional measures to survive. We witness the intersection between art and efficiency.

Question: Isn't it true that when one side is down a rook in an ending, it tends to drain the remainder of a game of all its suspense?

Answer: When we fail to understand something, it doesn't necessarily mean that the doctrine propounded is false. Fischer's idea almost feels inaccessible to interpretation through logic alone.

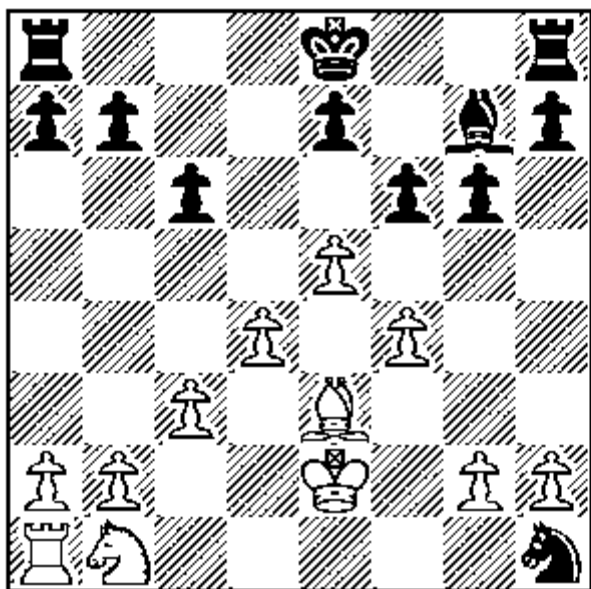
Routine play loses: for example, 15 Kc2? 0-0-0 16 a4 (or 16 Na3 b5! 17 f4 Kb7 18 Rf1 Rd7 19 b3 Rhd8 and White just can't unravel) 16 ... Bxe5 17 Na3 Rd7 18 f3 Bg7 19 Nc4 b5! 20 Na5 Kc7 and White has no good way to remove the d3 obstruction. Indeed, 21 axb5 cxb5 22 b3 Rhd8 23 Ra2 Bh6 24 Rd1 Kb6 25 b4 Rc7! (threat: ... Nxb4+) 26 Kb1 Nxc1 27 Rxc1 (27 Kxc1 is met with the crushing 27 ... Rxc3+) 27 ... Rxd2 28 Rac2 Rd3 29 Re1 Bg7 30 c4 Bc3 31 c5+ Ka6 (White's wobbly structure loses its remaining structural integrity) 32 Re4 is undermined by 32 ... Bxb4! 33 Rxb4 Kxa5 with an easy win for Black.

15 ... Bh6!?

Matulovic's mind divides between material gain and initiative, It seems that enthusiasm for the knight fork project begins to diminish. Matulovic prefers to operate on his development lead, rather than grab material and hand Fischer an initiative and strategic concessions.

Question: How is this an exchange sacrifice when a knight fork on f2 picks up an entire rook?

Answer: The knight picks up the rook, but then is unable to escape, turning it into an exchange sacrifice. Now saying this, I think it was still Black's best shot to grab the rook with 15 ... Nf2+! 16 Ke2 Nxh1 17 d4 f6 18 Be3 and White picks up the stranded h1-knight with Nd2 and Rxh1, after which he has a pawn for the exchange, plus space advantage, with nearly enough compensation.



Black can still maybe make it tough for White by applying the principle: Create confrontation and open the position when leading in development, with 18 ... g5! 19 e6 gxf4 20 Bxf4 0-0 21 Nd2 f5! 22 Kf3 Rf6 23 Nc4 Rxe6 24 Rxh1 Rd8 25 b4. Black is up the exchange but still faces serious technical issues:

1. White controls both ... a5 and ... c5 pawn breaks.
2. Black must deal with a gaping hole on e5.

Now saying this, I think with perfect technique, it should eventually still be a win for Black. When comparing it with other tries for White, this one is Black's best practical chance.

16 Kc2 Nxc1!?

Now we see that Black is merely the custodian of d3 and that its rightful owner is White.

Instead, if 16 ... 0-0-0 17 g3 Rd7 18 a4 f6 (18 ... b5? 19 axb5 cxb5 20 Na3 a6?? is met with 21 Nxb5! when Black is unable to recapture, due to his hanging h8-rook) 19 exf6 exf6 20 Na3 Re8 21 Nc4 Re2 22 b4 Nf2 23 Rg1 Ne4 24 Rh1 Bf8 (24 ... b5? 25 Na5 Nxd2 26 Nxc6! and White actually stands better, since Black's knight has no useful discovery) 25 b5!, which prevents ... b5. White looks like he will survive.

17 Re1!

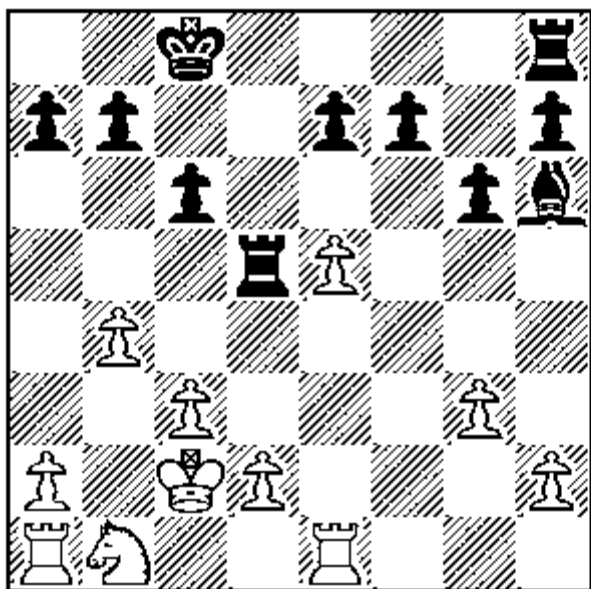
A brilliant and unexpected zwischenzug.

I will bet Matulovic counted on the auto-recapture 17 Kxc1? Bxf4 18 Kc2 Bxe5.

17 ... 0-0-0

After 17 ... Bxf4 18 g3 Bh6 19 Rxc1 0-0-0 20 Re1 c5 21 d3 Houdini assesses at dead even. If 21 ... Rd5?! preparing to double rooks, White meets it with 22 c4! Rd7 23 Nc3 Rhd8 24 Rad1 Bg7 25 Ne4 b6 26 e6! fxe6 27 Ng5 e5. White's control over e4, superior minor piece and the fact that Black now owns a pair of doubled, isolated e-pawns, means that the momentum has swung in White's favour.

18 Kxc1 Bxf4 19 g3 Bh6 20 Kc2 Rd5 21 b4



Discouraging ... c5 and preparing d4.

21 ... b6

He still wants either ... c5 or ... a5.

22 a4 a5

Matulovic does his best to create turmoil while Fischer remains behind in development.

23 bxa5 bxa5 24 d4

The trouble with this move is that it allows Black to counter with a coming ... c5. White should avoid confrontation with 24 Ra2! Rhd8 25 Rf1 Bxd2 26 Rxf7 Bg5 27 h4 Be3 28 Rxe7 Bf2 29 Rxh7 Bxg3 30 Kb3! Rxe5 31 Na3 and he unravels.

24 ... c5 25 Re4 Rhd8 26 Kd3?!

The king's nervousness is betrayed by the fact that he continually blots his sweaty forehead with a sleeve. Inaccurate.

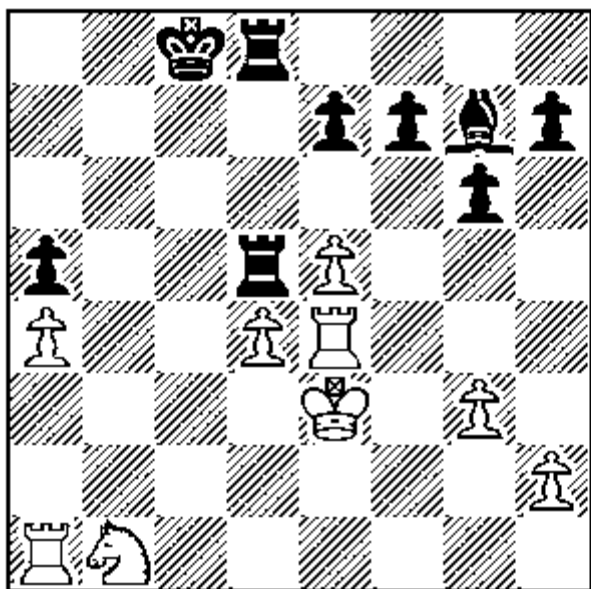
After 26 Rh4! Be3 27 dxc5! h5 28 Re4 Bxc5 29 Re2 Kd7 (29 ... Rd1 is met with 30 Ra2) 30 Nd2 Rc8 31 Rb1 Bd4 32 e6+ fxe6 33 Rb7+ Ke8 34 Ne4 White doesn't look worse anymore.

26 ... cxd4 27 cxd4 Bg7!

Threats: ... Bxe5 and ... Rxe5.

28 Ke3?!

28 Na3! is a better practical chance after 28 ... Rxe5 29 Rxe5 Bxe5 30 Rc1+ Kb7 31 Rb1+ Ka6 32 Nb5 Bb8.



The king invokes an outer show of bravery he doesn't feel on the inside. After this move the dreary interval of White's defence goes on and on.

Exercise (planning/combination alert): Come up with a way for Black to turn his development lead and pressure into something more tangible.

28 ... Bh6+?!

Answer: Black missed 28 ... f5! 29 exf6 (29 Rh4? h5 30 Nc3 Bh6+ and 31 Kd3 is met with 31 ... Rxe5) 29 ... Bxf6 when d4 falls.

29 Kd3 Bg7 30 Kc4!?

This is better than playing the king to e3. But better still is 30 Na3!, which transposes to the note mentioned above.

30 ... f5! 31 Nc3

31 Rh4 g5 32 Nc3 e6! transposes to the game.

31 ... e6! 32 Rh4 g5!

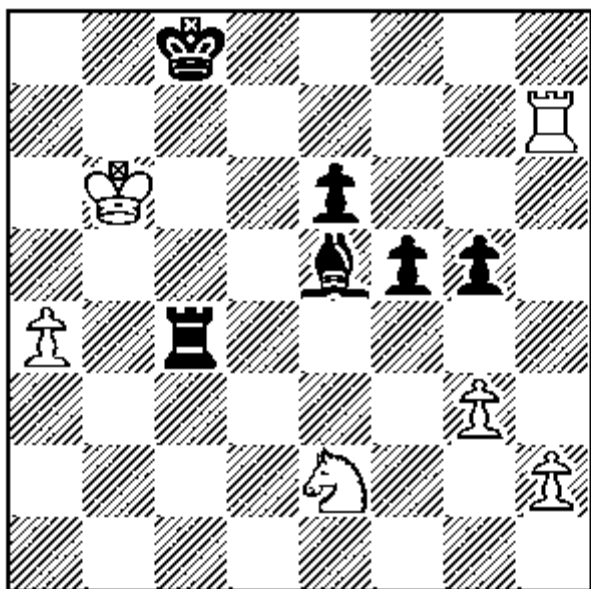
Now d4 is undermined.

33 Rxh7 Rxd4+ 34 Kb5 Bxe5 35 Rc1 Rb4+! 36 Kxa5 Rc4! 37 Ne2 Rd5+ 38 Kb6 Rdc5

This isn't technically a mistake, but it certainly isn't Black's optimal move. In time pressure it's folly to believe 100% in our own cognition, mainly since every move we make is essentially a wild guess. Matulovic, after conducting his initiative with great force, once again gives Fischer opportunity to create trouble.

After 38 ... Rxc1! 39 Nxc1 Bd4+ 40 Ka6 f4! 41 Rf7 Kd8! 42 gxf4 Ke8 43 Rc7 gxf4 Black's two central passers, coupled with his superior pieces, will win the game.

39 Rxc4 Rxc4



Exercise (planning): Black threatens both ... Rc2 and ... Rxa4. White is lost, no matter what he plays. Come up with White's best practical chance to confuse matters.

Answer: Liquidation/creation of a passed pawn/piece sacrifice.

40 h4!

Fischer's move actually shouldn't save the game, but it once again creates tremendous practical difficulties for his opponent, who immediately blunders.

40 ... Rc2?

Matulovic cracks at the eleventh hour:

a) 40 ... gxh4? 41 Rxh4 and White will hold the game.

b) Black wins if he finds 40 ... f4! 41 hxg5 (or 41 gxf4 gxf4 42 Nxf4 Bxf4 43 a5 Be3+ 44 Kb5 Rc5+ 45 Kb4 Rc7 when Black consolidates) 41 ... f3 42 Nf4 f2 43 Rh1 Rc3 44 Nh3 Bxg3 45 Kb5 (45 g6?? Bc7+ 46 Kb5 Rxh3! wins) 45 ... Bh4! (threat: ... Rxh3) 46 Nxf2 Bxf2 and Black should win.

41 hxg5! Rxe2 42 g6

The point: White soon regains his piece, with a drawn ending.

42 ... Rb2+ 43 Ka6!

43 Kc6?? Rc2+ 44 Kb5 Rc7! halts the passed-pawn's advance.

43 ... Rb4

Threats: ... Rxa4+ and ... Rg4.

44 g7 Bxg7 45 Rxg7 Rxa4+ 46 Kb5

Black's king is relegated to the last rank, and Fischer holds the draw with ease.

46 ... Rd4

The king and pawn ending is drawn after 46 ... Rg4 47 Rxg4 fxf4 48 Kc6 e5 49 Kd5 Kd7 50 Kxe5 Ke7 51 Kf5 Kf7 52 Kxg4 Kg6.

47 Re7 Re4 48 Kc5 Kd8 49 Ra7

Both kings are cut off from their pawns.

It isn't too late to throw it away with a boneheaded blunder like 49 Kd6?? Rd4+ 50 Ke5 Kxe7 51 Kxd4 Kf6 when Black wins the king and pawn ending.

49 ... Ke8 50 Kd6 Kf8 51 Rb7 Re3 52 Ra7

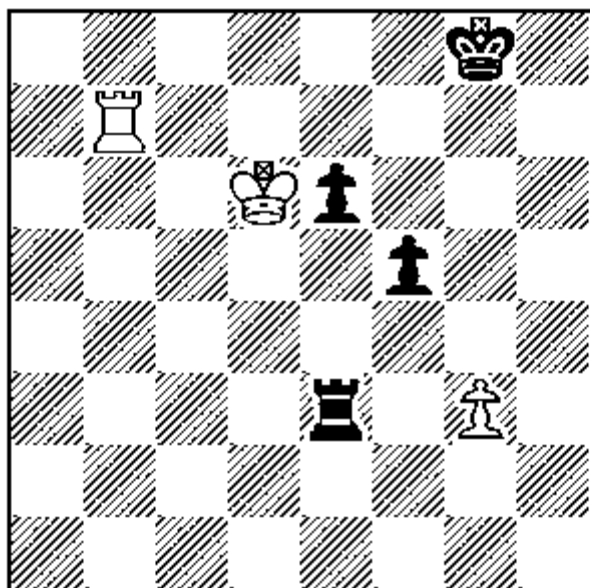
It becomes painfully obvious that Black is unable to make progress and the players could have

agreed to the draw here.

52 ... Re1 53 Rb7 Re4 54 Ra7 Re2

Come on, come on, get on with it and stop wasting our time!

55 Rb7 Re3 56 Ra7 Kg8 57 Rb7!



Instead, 57 Re7?! Rxc3 58 Rxe6 Kf7 gives Black some practical chances to win.

57 ... Re1 58 Re7!

Now it works.

58 ... Re3 59 Rxe6 Rxc3 60 Ke5 ½-½

Game 18

M.Taimanov-R.Fischer

3rd matchgame, Vancouver 1971

King's Indian Defence

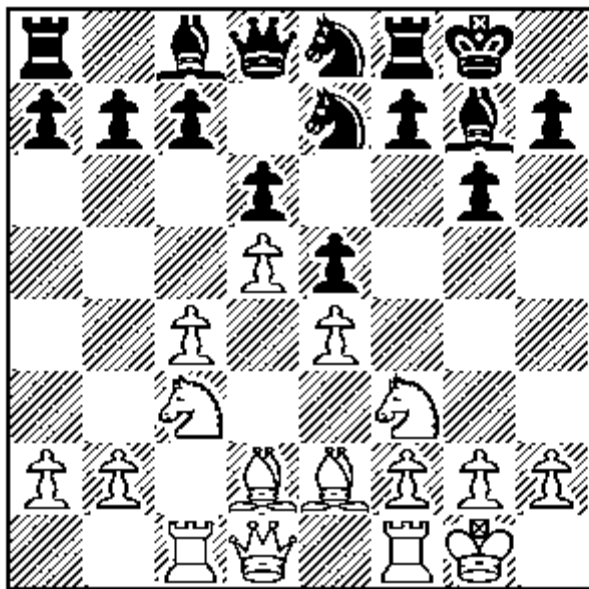
1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 Bg7 4 e4 d6 5 Nf3 0-0 6 Be2 e5 7 0-0 Nc6 8 d5 Ne7 9 Bd2!?

This line is Taimanov's genetically modified organism, prepared specifically for Fischer. The move may have come as a surprise for Fischer, since Taimanov normally played either 9 Ne1, 9 Nd2 or 9 b4.

9 ... Ne8

9 ... Nd7 is also possible and played more often today, although after 10 Ne1 f5 11 Nd3 Nf6 12 f3 Kh8 13 Rc1 c5 14 g4 Bd7 15 a3 I prefer White's chances, M.Taimanov-E.Geller, Moscow 1973.

10 Rc1



White hopes to engineer a quick c5, accelerating queenside play.

10 ... f5

Question: This move allows White's knight into g5.

Should Black take a tempo to toss in 10 ... h6?

Answer: It's possible, but a tempo is a precious thing in such a sharp position. Play may go 11 b4 f5 12 c5 and the side you pick probably depends upon your style.

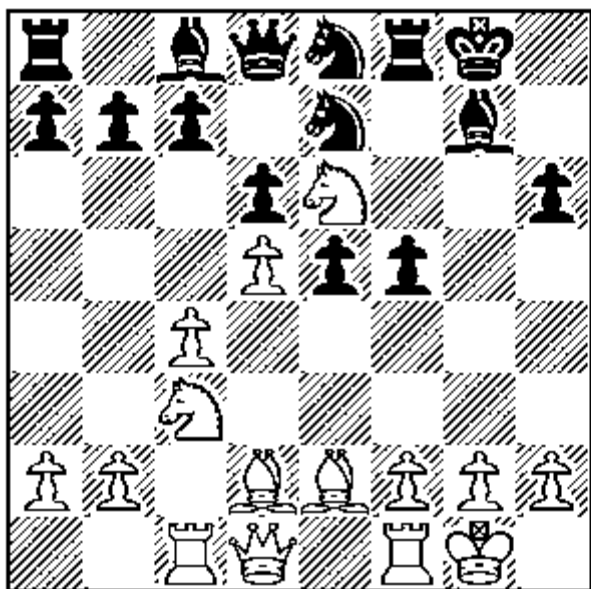
11 exf5

White can also play Ng5 without taking on f5: 11 Ng5 Nf6 12 f3 (or 12 exf5 Nxf5, as in J.Radulski-M.Erdogdu, Ankara 2009; I think White has an edge after 13 Bd3 where his control over e4 means more than Black's control over d4) 12 ... f4 13 Qb3 b6 14 Rfd1 Kh8 15 Be1 h6 16 Ne6 Bxe6 17 dxe6 Ne8 18 Qa4 c6 19 b4 Rf6 20 c5 Rxe6 and White's queenside initiative is clearly worth more than Black's extra pawn, P.Littlewood-F.Ynojosa Aponte, British Championship, Torquay 2009.

11 ... gxf5 12 Ng5

The prelude to a strategic pawn sacrifice. White can also play 12 Qb3 b6 13 g3 Ng6 14 Ng5 Kh8 15 Qc2 Qe7 16 f4 e4 17 Nd1 Bd7 18 Ne3 with maybe just a tiny edge, T.Gareev-D.Aldama, Los Angeles 2012.

12 ... h6 13 Ne6



Question: Won't this move eventually lose a pawn for White?

Answer: It's a deliberate sacrifice and all part of Taimanov's pre-match opening prep. For the pawn, White gets the bishop-pair and enhanced control over the light squares. Before the match, Botvinnik warned Taimanov not to sacrifice pawns against Fischer, since he had the annoying habit of taking them, enduring the opponent's initiative and then converting his material advantage. Taimanov didn't heed the advice.

13 ... Bxe6 14 dxe6 Qc8 15 Qb3

Tying Black's queen to b7.

15 ... c6!

15 ... b6 wins the e6-pawn, but weakens the central light squares. After 16 Nd5 Qxe6 17 Nxe7+ Qxe7 18 c5+ central lines open rapidly and White had full compensation for the pawn in M.Taimanov-M.Tseitlin, Leningrad 1973.

16 Bh5

Now Bf7+ comes next, hanging on to the e6-pawn. This in turn, virtually forces Fischer to chop e6 in exchange for b7.

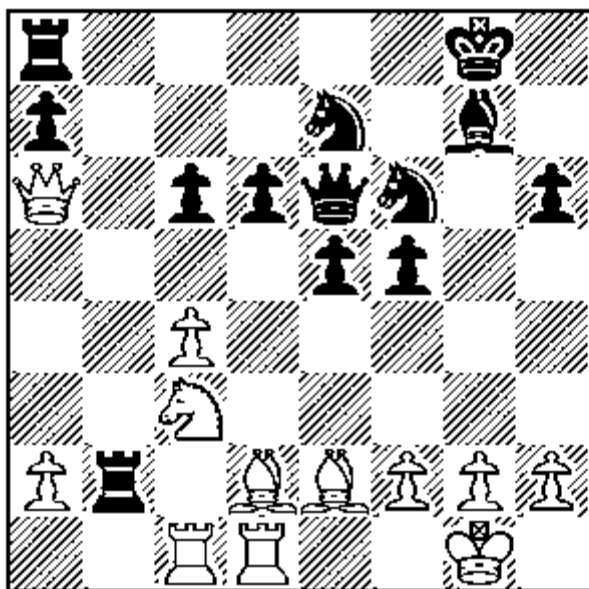
16 ... Qxe6 17 Qxb7 Nf6 18 Be2 Rfb8

So Fischer wins a pawn after all, on b2.

19 Qa6 Rxb2

Being a pawn up doesn't make you rich, but nor does it make you poor. Once again we see Fischer snatch a pawn, willing to endure an opponent's long initiative in exchange for it.

20 Rfd1



Question: Do you still think White has full compensation for the pawn here?

Answer: Probably so. White enjoys the bishop-pair and multiple pawn targets on a7, c6 and d6, which tie Black's pieces down. Black, on the other hand, enjoys a big, potentially rolling central pawn majority, and the potential to mass for an attack on White's king. Houdini rates the game at dead even.

20 ... e4!?

With this move Fischer opens a hole for White on f4, but I think it's a good deal for him, since he activates his own remaining bishop and clears e5 for a piece.

21 Qa3

Ejecting Black's rook, while increasing pressure on d6.

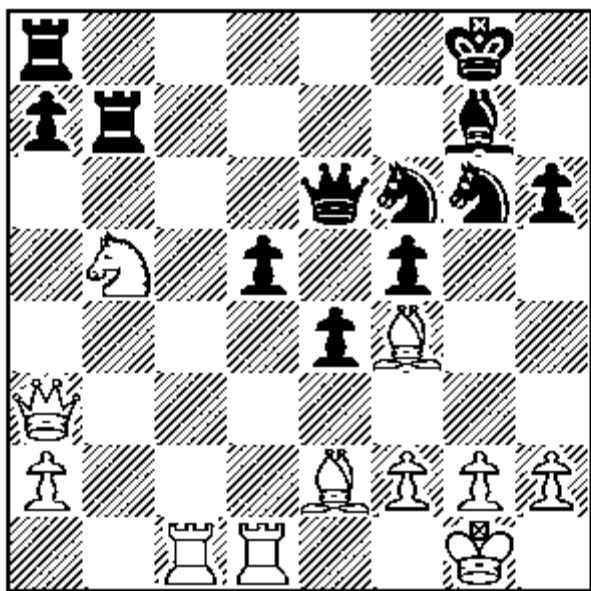
21 ... Rb7 22 Bf4 d5 23 cxd5

After 23 Qa6 Rb6 24 Qa5 Rb7 25 Na4 Ng6 26 cxd5 cxd5 27 Be3 Rf7 28 Nc5 Qd6 29 Qa6 Qxa6 30 Bxa6 I don't believe White stands any worse in the ending, despite Black's extra pawn; Ne6 is in the air and d5 may soon come under fire after Bd4, threatening Bxf6 and Rxd5.

23 ... cxd5 24 Nb5!

The knight heads for the d4 hole, while worrying Black with Nc7 tricks.

24 ... Ng6!



Now we begin to catch a glimpse of Fischer's secret intention. He uses his wealth to buy friends, ignoring the c7 problem to fan his initiative. I think the advantage would swing to White if Fischer went passive with 24 ... Ne8?! 25 Nd4.

25 Nd4!?

No thanks. After 25 Nc7 Qf7 26 Ba6 Nxf4 27 Bxb7 Rd8 28 Qe3 Nd3 29 Rxd3! exd3 30 Qxd3 Rd7 31 Qc2 Ne4 32 Bxd5! Rxd5 33 Nxd5 Qxd5 34 Qc4 Qxc4 35 Rxc4 a5 36 g3 I think only White can win this ending, which if played correctly, probably should end in a draw.

25 ... Qd7

Covering f5.

26 Qe3

Taimanov later wrote that Black's position was critical after 26 Qg3. Houdini disagrees and rates the game equal after 26 ... Ng4 27 h3 N4e5 28 Bxe5 Nxe5 29 f4 exf3 30 Nxf3 Re8 31 Rc5 f4 32 Qxf4 Ng6 33 Qg3 Rxe2 34 Qxg6 Rbb2 35 Rcx d5 Rxg2+ 36 Qxg2 Rxg2+ 37 Kxg2 Qe6. The ending looks even, with the game likely to end in perpetual check.

26 ... Kh7?!

The correct plan is one of the game's most important commodities. It's always tricky to attempt to organize and attack from a position of weakness. Fischer pushes it to the brink, deciding to take new measurements of his position's limitations, refusing to subdue his will to win to normal conventions. He perhaps pushes matters too far in attempting to avoid a drawish line.

I suppose a born warrior experiences difficulty suffering peace. So he avoids the equal ending arising from the line 26 ... Nxf4 27 Qxf4 Rf8 28 Nxf5 Nh5 29 Bxh5 Rxf5 30 Qg4 Rg5 31 Qxd7 Rxd7 32 Be8 Rd8 33 Bc6.

27 h3?!

White cuts out ... Ng4, but the tempo wasted is too high a price. Taimanov should go for 27 Ba6! Rb6 28 Bb5! Qf7 (28 ... Rxb5?? loses to 29 Rc7, and if 29 ... Qe8?? 30 Bxh6 Ne7 31 Bxg7 wins, since the bishop is immune due to a knight fork on f5) 29 Rc7 Ne7 30 Qa3 Nfg8 when Black's position gets critically strained.

27 ... Rf8!

Black talks peace, while secretly preparing for war. Fischer not only adds protection to the weak f5-pawn, but also plans to someday shatter White's f4 blockade and unleash his kingside pawns with ... f4 himself.

28 Ba6?!

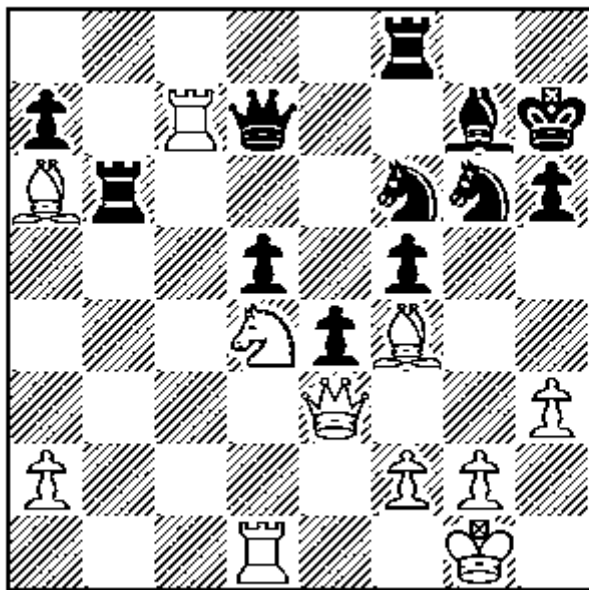
28 Bb5! should be met with 28 ... Qf7! 29 Ba6 Nxf4 30 Qxf4 Nh5 31 Qxf5+ Qxf5 32 Nxf5 Rbf7 33 Nxg7 Rxg7 34 Bf1 Rf6, and now White should avoid the greedy 35 Rxd5? Nf4 36 Rd4 Nxf3+ 37 Kh2 Nxf2 which favours Black.

28 ... Rb6?!

Fischer misses a more promising continuation with 28 ... Nh5! 29 Bxb7 Ngxf4 30 Ba6 Rg8 31 Bf1 Bxd4! 32 Qxd4 (not 32 Rxd4?? Nxg2! 33 Bxg2 Qg7 34 Kf1 Qxg2+ 35 Ke2 f4 36 Rc7+ Rg7 37 Rxg7+ Qxg7 38 Qd2 f3+ 39 Kd1 Nf4 and Black dominates) 32 ... Rxg2+! 33 Kh1 (the only move) 33 ... Rg7 when Black's two extra pawns are worth more than White's extra exchange.

29 Rc7?

Taimanov again rejected the trick: 29 Bb5! Rxb5 30 Rc7 Qe8 31 Rxg7+ Kxg7 32 Bxh6+ Kf7 33 Nxb5 Qxb5 34 Qxa7+ Nd7 35 Bxf8 Ngxf8 36 Qd4 Nf6 37 a4 with a completely unclear ending, which Houdini rates at '0.00'.



Exercise (combination alert): Carefully constructed elaborate plans tend to evaporate in the emergency setting of time pressure. On his last move, Taimanov overlooked a tactic. What did he miss?

Answer: Double attack: d1 and a6 hang.

29 ... Qa4!

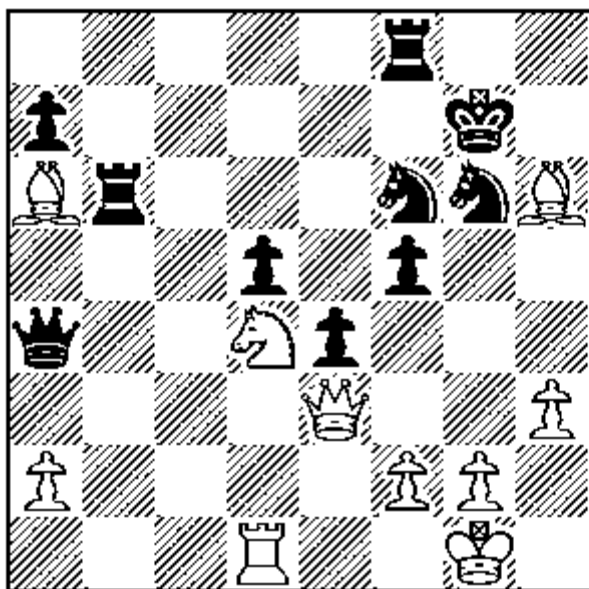
When we see a row of question marks, followed by a bunch of exclams, it somehow mars the annotator's sense of symmetry. Fischer was both watchful of the opponent's counterplay and ruthless if opportunity arose for his side.

30 Rxg7+

30 Be2? is met with the secondary double attack 30 ... Ne8! 31 Rc5 Nxf4, overloading White's queen. After 32 Qxf4 Bxd4 33 Rxd5 Qxa2 34 R1xd4 Qxe2 35 Rxf5 Rbf6 36 Rd7+ Kg6 37 Rxf6+ Nxf6 38 Qg3+ Kf5 Black is up a piece, his king is safe (despite appearances to the contrary), and he should consolidate.

30 ... Kxg7 31 Bxh6+

"God rewards the generous," the bishop tells Black's king.



31 ... Kf7?!

Inaccurate. Correct was 31 ... Kh7! 32 Be2 Rf7 33 Nxf5 Qxa2 when Black is up the exchange, with the difference that his king is far safer than in the game's continuation.

32 Be2 Rfb8

Fischer plans to exchange a pair of rooks with ... Rb1, after which his king will be safer.

33 Nxf5 Rb1! 34 Rxb1 Rxb1+ 35 Kh2 Qd7 36 Nd4?

36 g4! maintaining the f5 outpost offers White full compensation for the exchange.

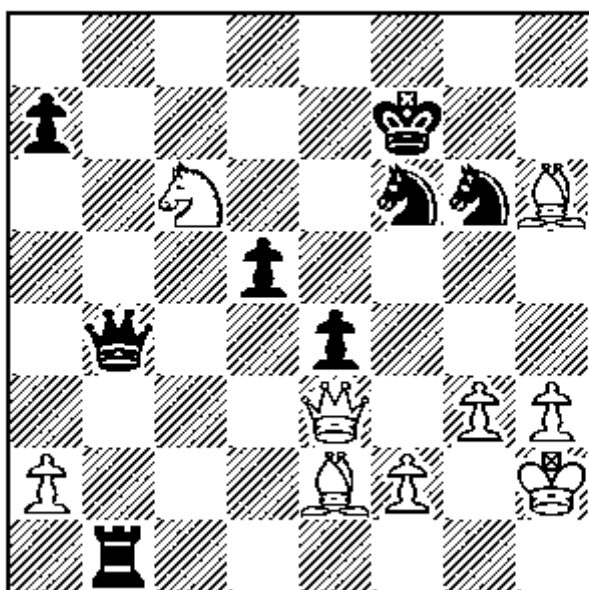
36 ... Qd6+!

Fischer forces a critical weakness on f3.

37 g3 Qb4!

The queen's covetous eyes rest upon the e1 infiltration point.

38 Nc6



Exercise (critical decision): Should Black go for 38 ... Qe1? Or should he force an ending with 38 ... Qb6? One line is even, while the other wins for Black.

Answer: Black easily wins the ending.

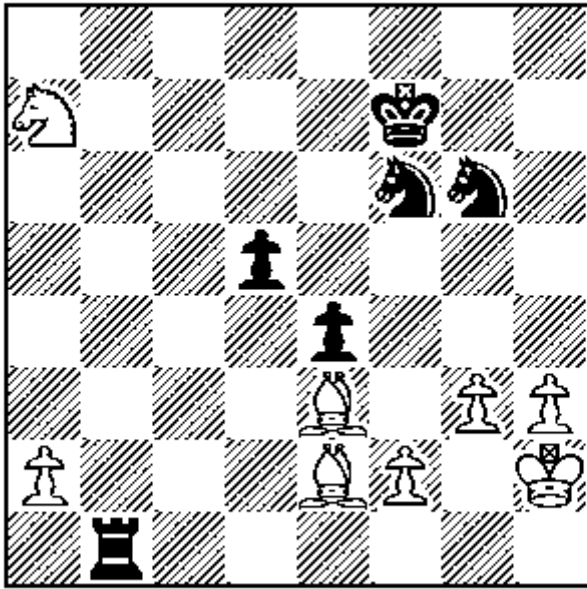
38 ... Qb6!

38 ... Qe1? allows White to take over the initiative with 39 Qxa7+ Ke8 40 Qa8+ Kd7 41 Qd8+! Ke6 (41 ... Kxc6 42 Qxf6+ Kb7 43 Ba6+ Kc7 44 Qf7+ Kb6 45 Be3+! Kxa6 46 Qe6+! Kb5 47 Qxd5+ Ka6 48 Qa8+ Kb5 49 Qd5+ is perpetual check) 42 Qc8+ Kd6 43 Bf8+ Nxf8 44 Qxf8+ Kxc6 45 Qxf6+ Kc5 46 Qe7+ and Black's king is unable to escape the perpetual check.

39 Nxa7

If 39 Qxb6 Rxb6 40 Nd4 Rb2 41 a4 Rb4 and a4 falls when Black wins.

39 ... Qxe3 40 Bxe3



Exercise (combination alert): It appears as if White is okay.

After all, he has pawns for the exchange. The appearance is a deception. Find Fischer's idea and White's game crumples.

Answer: Removal of a key defender. The light-squared bishop is chased away and f3 is weakened to fatal levels.

40 ... Re1!

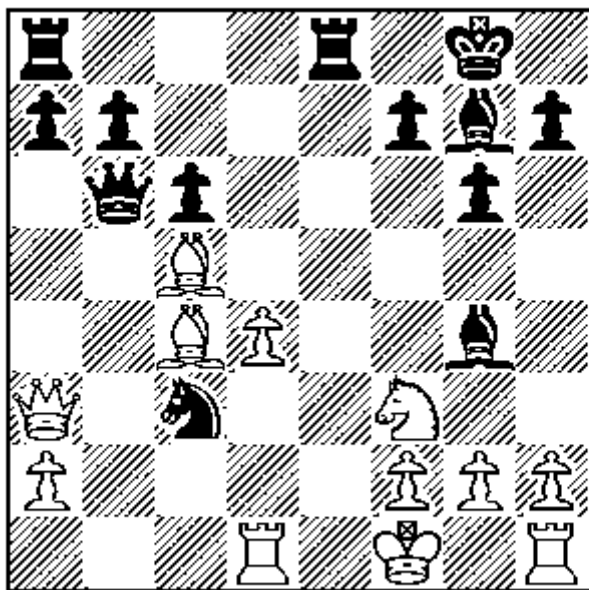
Just when White's king felt well fortified, this happens.

41 Bg4 0-1

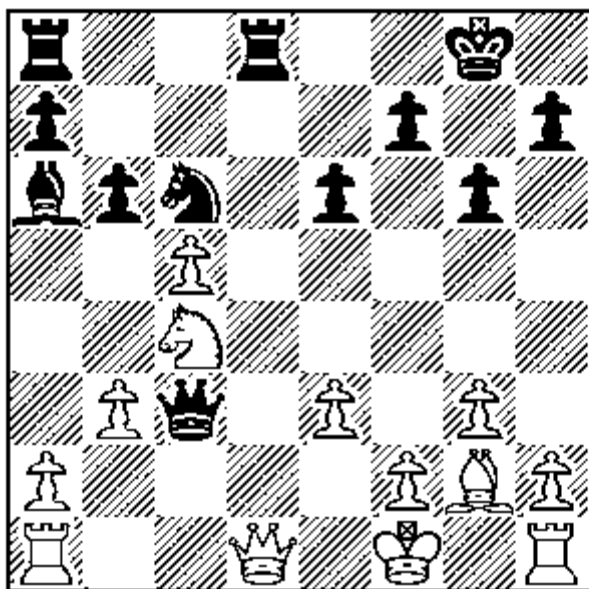
Taimanov sealed this move but resigned without resuming, since after 41 ... Ne5 Black's pair of knights gossip about White's king the way a pair of gregarious crows, eye a plump and elderly mouse in the park: 42 Kg2 (42 Bf5?? allows Black's knight entry to f3: 42 ... Nf3+ 43 Kg2 Rg1 mate) 42 ... Nfxg4 43 hxg4 Nxg4 44 Bb6 Re2 45 a4 Ra2 46 a5 e3 (threat: ... e2) 47 Kf1 e2+ 48 Ke1 Ne5 with mate next move.

Fischer on the Dynamic Element

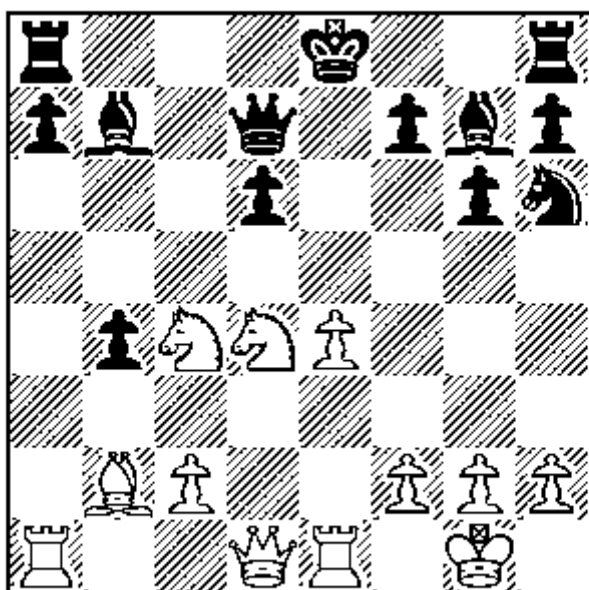
In this chapter we examine Fischer's feel for the initiative. As mentioned in the Introduction, Capablanca and Fischer were very much alike stylistically, except in one notable respect: Fischer had a more natural touch for the initiative. He was also willing to take far greater sacrificial risks than Capa, feeling it was money well spent. When his opponents appeared to dwell safely behind an impregnable citadel, Fischer always somehow managed to finagle a set of keys to the side gate, allowing him to enter surreptitiously. Examples from the chapter:



This position is from his Game of the Century win versus Donald Byrne. Fischer, as Black, looks to be in trouble. After all, both his queen and knight hang simultaneously. If you find Black's stunning response, then all becomes clear.



A single glance tells us the opening stage went horribly wrong for White, who lags badly in development. The question is how was it possible for Fisher, playing Black, to achieve such a position against the great Vasily Smyslov, whose name is synonymous with harmony, and on the black side of a Symmetrical English no less?



This is Fischer-Spassky, from their 1992 rematch. Fischer speculated in the opening with a startling Wing Gambit-like pawn sacrifice/opening novelty. Now comes the payoff. How would you continue? For the answer to this question and the first diagram, you need to read the chapter.

Game 19
D.Byrne-R.Fischer
 New York 1956
 Grünfeld Defence

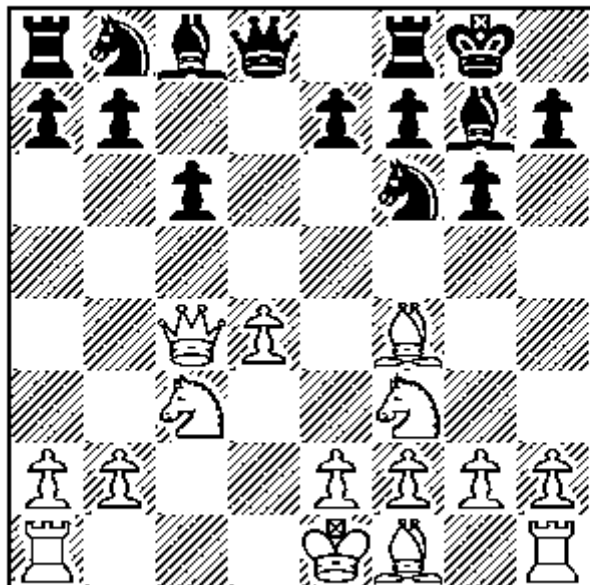
Bobby was 13-years-old when he played this game, aka ‘The Game of the Century’. I would be hard pressed to find competing performances by other prodigies, like Capablanca, Kasparov and

Carlsen, which equal the quality of Fischer's combination.

1 Nf3 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 Bg7 4 d4 0-0 5 Bf4 d5

Fischer switches to the Grünfeld, rather than go 5 ... d6 which gets us into London System versus the King's Indian, or 5 ... c5 which scores decently for Black, since it isn't clear if White wants his bishop on f4 in this structure.

6 Qb3 dxc4 7 Qxc4 c6!?



An uncharacteristically passive choice for Fischer. 7 ... Na6 8 e4 c5 is the choice of most of today's GMs.

8 e4 Nbd7!?

Question: Isn't this move a tad passive.

Answer: Correct. This is the Dynamic Element chapter, yet Fischer's passive opening play is anything but dynamic. Sharper is 8 ... b5 9 Qb3 (after 9 Qd3 Ba6 10 Qc2 Qa5 11 Bd2 b4 12 Nd1 Bxf1 13 Rxf1 c5! White's pieces are disjointed and Black already stands better, A.Morozevich-I.Kurnosov, Astana (rapid) 2012) 9 ... Be6 10 Qc2 Qa5 11 Bd2 b4 12 Nd1 c5! 13 d5 Bg4 14 Be2 when White stands a shade better, since Ne3 is coming which will give him the bishop-pair and control over c4, I.Ivanisevic-V.Mikhalevski, Skopje 2013.

9 Rd1 Nb6 10 Qc5!

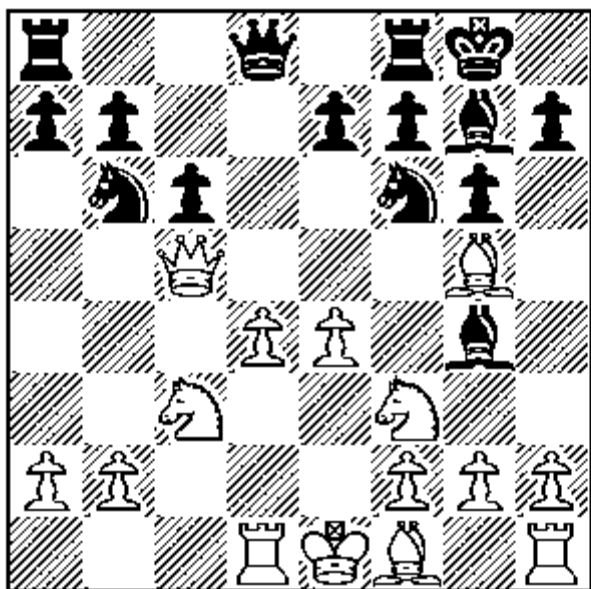
White's most accurate move.

Question: Why is c5 a better square than b3 or d3?

Answer: 10 Qb3 walks into tempo loss after ... Be6, while 10 Qd3 is just clunky, where the queen gets in the way of the f1-bishop and doesn't sit well on the d-file. On c5, the queen suppresses both the ... c5 and ... e5 freeing breaks from Black.

10 ... Bg4 11 Bg5?

Correct was 11 Be2 Nfd7 12 Qa3 Bxf3 13 Bxf3 e5 14 dxe5 Qe8 15 Be2 Nxe5 16 0-0 when White's bishop-pair offers him an edge, G.Flear-P.Morris, Dublin 1991.



Question: What is the motivation behind White's last move, since it moves a piece already developed?

Answer: This move violates the principle: Don't move a piece more than once in the opening, especially in open positions. Byrne's motivation is to lock down Black's f6-knight, preventing ... Nfd7, due to Qxe7. However, the loss of time involved for White is disastrous.

When our inner voice whispers alluringly into our ear, beckoning us to a tempting yet doomed idea, we sometimes wish the inner voice would just shut the hell up. The tactical signposts are there before us, but sometimes we are like unaware tourists who don't speak or read the language. Not all theoretical novelties are good ones. I'm not sure if this move – a waste of time and a construction of artifice, in a position which can't afford such a luxury – is an impromptu attempt to escape opening routine, or simply ignorance of the book move.

Exercise (combination alert): Believe it or not, White's last move is the losing move and disaster germinates just under the position's surface for White. Try and find Fischer's startling refutation.

Answer: Deflection.

11 ... Na4!! 12 Qa3

Forced. White's c3-knight, normally his queen's most obedient servant, this time says "No!" to the a4 gift. White's position spins out of control after 12 Nxa4?? Nxe4 13 Bxe7 (not 13 Qc1?? Bxf3 14 gxf3 Qa5+ and Black regains the piece with a completely winning position) 13 ... Re8! 14 Bxd8 Nxc5+ 15 Be2 Nxa4 16 Bg5 Nxb2 17 Rb1 Bxf3 18 gxf3 Bxd4 when he is down two pawns, with a completely wrecked position.

12 ... Nxc3 13 bxc3 Nxe4!

The loss of the exchange is chump change, when compared to Black's open lines, development lead and bishop-pair.

14 Bxe7 Qb6 15 Bc4

White can't even take the exchange: 15 Bxf8 Bxf8 16 Qb3 Re8! 17 Qxb6 (17 Be2?? walks into 17 ... Nxc3! 18 Rd2 Qa5 19 Ne5 Be6 20 Qc2 Nxe2 21 Kxe2 f6 and game over, since White's knight is unable to move) 17 ... axb6 and White is crushed, due to the coming discovered check along the e-file.

15 ... Nxc3!

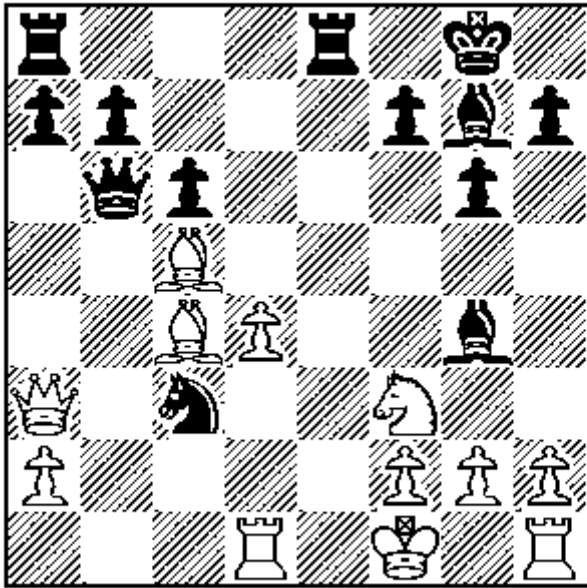
One blow follows another. Fischer accurately calculated the consequences of this move.

16 Bc5

The old bishop's leer lingers upon the black queen's youthful body with caressing eyes.

16 Qxc3 Rae8 17 0-0 Rxe7 regains the piece with a winning position.

16 ... Rfe8+ 17 Kf1



Exercise (combination alert): Now what? Black's queen and c3-knight hang simultaneously. Crank the gear which sets the combination's machinery into motion.

Answer: Queen sacrifice/windmill/smothered mate.

17 ... Be6!!

Fischer never felt comfortable in irrational, amorphous positions where only a comp or Tal would feel at home. Yet in this one, everything can be worked out to exact detail, so Fischer was actually in his element. Byrne undoubtedly expected 17 ... Nb5? 18 Bxf7+! Kh8 19 Bxb6 Nxa3 20 Bc5! Rf8 21 Bxf8 Rxf8 22 Rd3 Nb5 23 Bc4 which leaves White up material in the ending.

18 Bxb6

If White tosses in 18 Bxe6?? he walks into smothered mate after 18 ... Qb5+ 19 Kg1 Ne2+ 20 Kf1 Ng3+ 21 Kg1 Qf1+ 22 Rxf1 Ne2.

18 ... Bxc4+

"You don't look well. Are you okay?" asks the bishop solicitously of his f1 cousin. He knows perfectly well that White's king is anything but okay, since the bishop was the one who poisoned him.

19 Kg1 Ne2+

It was Einstein who declared that compound interest was the most powerful force in the universe. Gulp! White's king must now prepare himself for the humiliation of entering Black's windmill.

20 Kf1 Nxd4+

This obnoxious knight is the petulant child who screams and throws tantrums until he gets what he wants.

21 Kg1 Ne2+

Hi, I'm back again!

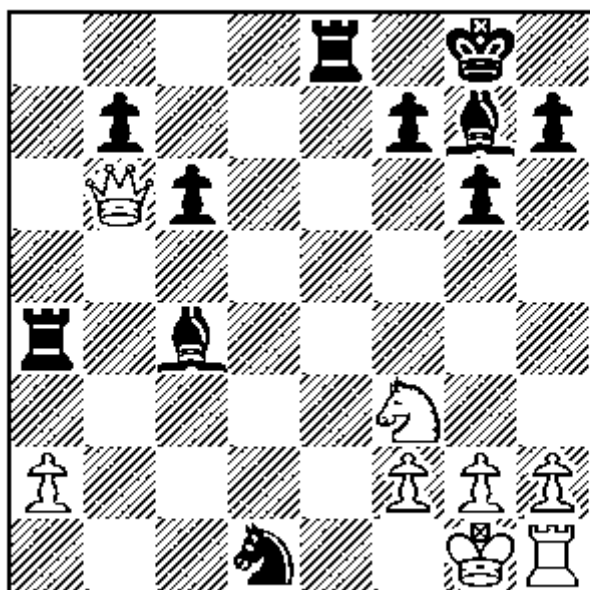
22 Kf1 Nc3+ 23 Kg1 axb6 24 Qb4 Ra4!

Oh, no you don't. Fischer takes the d1-rook only after protecting his c4-bishop.

25 Qxb6

White's once wealthy queen now finds herself cutting out 25%-off coupons for macaroni and cheese.

25 ... Nxd1



White warehouses a position of unwanted and unmarketable commodities, and Byrne could have resigned here (or even earlier), since his lone queen has no prayer against Black's mob.

26 h3 Rxa2 27 Kh2 Nxf2 28 Re1 Rxe1 29 Qd8+ Bf8 30 Nxe1 Bd5

Fischer targets g2 and the remainder is almost painful to watch.

31 Nf3 Ne4 32 Qb8 h5 33 h4

Refurbishing the shabby furniture in your hovel is fine, except for the fact that you still live in a hovel.

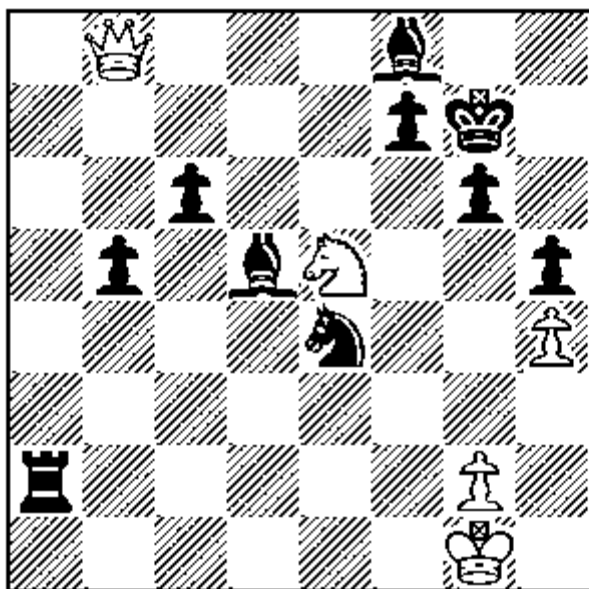
33 ... h5 34 Ne5

Threat: Nd7.

34 ... Kg7

Covering against Nd7, while threatening ... Bd6+.

35 Kg1



Exercise (combination alert/calculation): Work out Black's forced mate in your head, without moving the pieces.

Answer: 35 ... Bc5+

The bishop refuses to absolve White's king of his many sins.

36 Kf1

If 36 Kh2 Nd2! 37 Kh1 Ra1+ 38 Kh2 Nf1+ 39 Kh1 Bf2 40 Nf3 Ng3+ 41 Kh2 Rh1 mate.

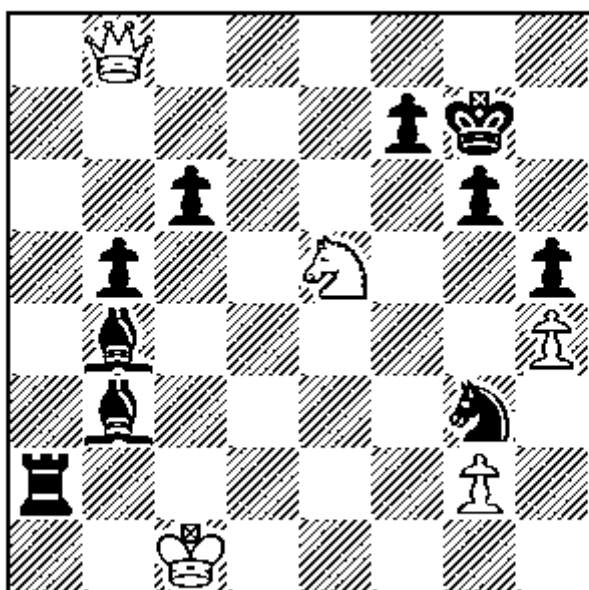
36 ... Ng3+

Or 36 ... Rf2+ 37 Ke1 Bb4+ 38 Kd1 Bb3+ 39 Kc1 Ba3+ 40 Kb1 Rf1 mate.

37 Ke1 Bb4+

Black mates one move quicker with 37 ... Re2+! 38 Kd1 Bb3+ 39 Kc1 Ba3+ 40 Kb1 Re1 mate.

38 Kd1 Bb3+ 39 Kc1



Donald Byrne obviously had a high degree of tolerance for pain.

Question: Why would Byrne play on to mate?

Answer: I suspect that Byrne was a good sport and an altruist, who gifted kid-Fischer the thrill of delivering mate on the board.

39 ... Ne2+ 40 Kb1 Nc3+

The conversation in the room flagged somewhat when the knight indelicately brought up the touch subject of the white king's upcoming execution date.

41 Kc1 Rc2 mate 0-1

Oh, the humanity!

Game 20

R.Fischer-J.Sherwin

East Orange 1957

King's Indian Attack

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 e6 3 d3

Fischer relied heavily on the King's Indian Attack early in his career.

3 ... Nc6 4 g3 Nf6

Black avoids an early ... d5.

5 Bg2

Question: Can White profit from pushing Black's f6-knight around with 5 e5?

Answer: I don't think so. Black looks just fine after 5 ... Ng4 6 Qe2 f6! (forcing the swap of a central pawn for a wing pawn) 7 exf6, B.Radic-B.Tomic, Zenica 2008. After 7 ... Nxf6 Black should benefit from the open f-file.

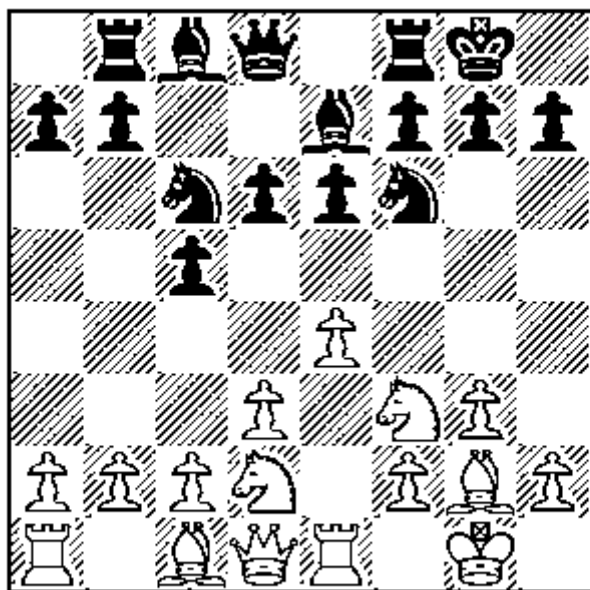
5 ... Be7 6 0-0 0-0 7 Nbd2 Rb8!?

Sherwin is determined to weird it up. He avoids 7 ... d5 which transposes to book lines.

8 Re1

8 a4 looks slightly inaccurate to me, since Black can switch back to normal lines with 8 ... d5! 9 Re1 a6 10 c3 b5 when the inclusion of a4 benefits Black, since the queenside opened more than in normal positions, E.Sutovsky-V.Milov, Polanica Zdroj 1999.

8 ... d6



Black once again avoids ... d5 and plays the position as if against an Open Sicilian.

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Question: It feels to me like White's normal kingside attacking plan

doesn't work against Black's ... d6 set-up. What is White's correct plan?

Answer: Play for c3 and d4, just as Fischer did in the game.

9 c3

The once glutinous centre begins to flow in alteration.

9 ... b6!?

This passive move allows Fischer to generate a central initiative.

Question: Isn't 9 ... b5 a more vigorous response, which seeks to expand on the queenside?

Answer: That is what I would play, but White may yet get an edge even in that version after 10 d4 b4 11 e5 dxe5 (not 11 ... Ne8?! 12 exd6 Bxd6, as in D.Pikula-R.Govedarica, Belgrade 2000; White has a huge advantage after 13 Nc4!, and if 13 ... Be7? 14 Bf4 Rb7 15 dxc5 bxc3 16 bxc3 Bxc5 17 Ng5 Qxd1 18 Raxd1 Ne7 19 Bxb7 Bxb7 when Black is busted, down an exchange in the ending) 12 Nxe5 Nxe5 13 dxe5 bxc3 14 bxc3 Nd7 15 Nc4 Ba6 16 Qg4. I prefer White's position, due to his grip over the d6-square.

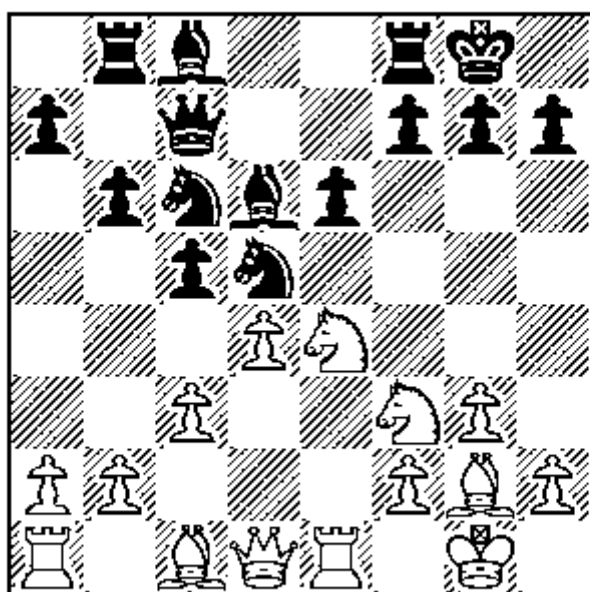
10 d4 Qc7 11 e5!

Fischer gains kingside space, perhaps dreaming of a kingside attack.

11 ... Nd5?

A seemingly insignificant contingency, if left unattended, can easily turn into a true emergency. It was necessary to first swap with 11 ... dxe5 12 dxe5 and only then play 12 ... Nd5, which is a bit better for White, but nowhere near what Fischer got in the game. Instead, 12 ... Nd7 13 Qe2 Bb7 14 Nc4 and now 14 ... b5?! is met with 15 Nd6! with advantage to White.

12 exd6 Bxd6 13 Ne4!



Fischer angles for tactics based on Nxd6, c4 and Bf4, which skewers Black's queen and b8-rook.

13 ... c4?!

This cuts off White's future c4, but isn't the best line:

a) 13 ... cxd4? directly walks into Fischer's idea after 14 c4! Nde7 15 Nxd6 Qxd6 16 Bf4 Qb4 17 a3! Qxc4 (17 ... Qxb2? 18 Ne5 Nxe5 19 Bxe5 Rb7 20 Bxd4 Rd7 21 Bxb2 Rxd1 22 Rxd1 leaves Black down a rook) 18 Rc1 Qa6 19 Bxb8 Nxb8 20 Nxd4 when Black is down the exchange and his queen awkwardly placed.

b) 13 ... Be7? 14 c4 and the problem is if Black's d5-knight moves, then Bf4 follows.

c) Relatively best was 13 ... Ba6! (halting c4) 14 dxc5 Be7! 15 cxb6 Qxb6 when Black can

hope for some degree of compensation for his pawn from the open queenside files.

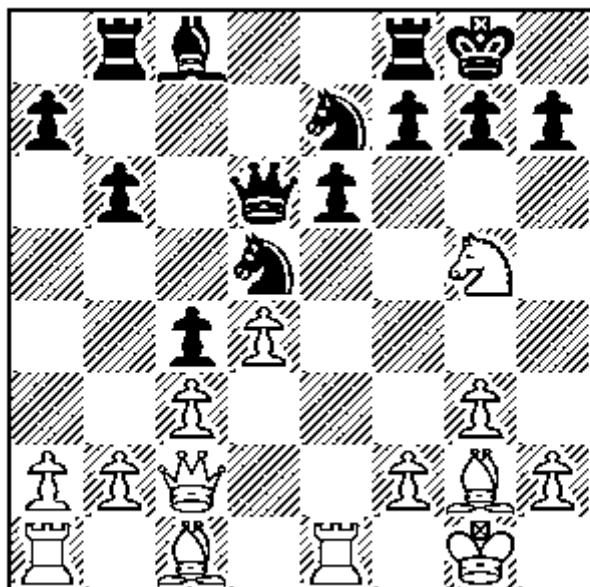
14 Nxd6 Qxd6 15 Ng5

Perhaps more accurate was 15 Qc2! (menacing Ng5) 15 ... h6 16 Nd2 b5 17 Ne4 Qe7 18 b3 Na5 19 b4 Nc6 20 a4 a6 21 Nc5 with a queenside bind.

15 ... Nce7?

As the complications increase, it throws the position's requirements out of focus – but only for one side. Black dismisses a very real threat as harmless. White's knight should immediately be ejected with 15 ... h6.

16 Qc2!



Black suddenly experiences grave difficulties defending h7.

16 ... Ng6

Question: What is wrong with 16 ... g6?

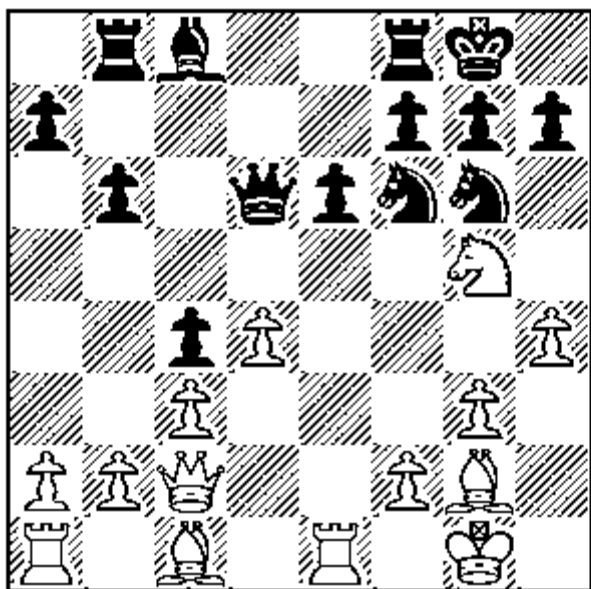
Answer: It creates terminal dark-square punctures around Black's king after 17 Ne4 Qd8 18 Bh6 Re8 19 Bg5 Kg7 20 Qe2! Qc7 (20 ... f6?? fails to 21 Nxf6 Nxf6 22 Bxf6+ Kxf6 23 Qe5+ Kf7 24 Qxb8) 21 Nf6! Nxf6 (21 ... Rf8 22 Bxd5 Nxd5 23 Nxd5 exd5 24 Bf4 Qb7 25 Qe5+ wins a full rook) 22 Bf4 Qd7 23 Bxb8 with a full exchange up and continued control over the dark squares after 23 ... Nfd5 24 g4!.

17 h4!

Threatening h5.

17 ... Nf6

17 ... f5 is strategically awful: 18 b3 h6 19 Nh3 b5 20 h5 Nge7 21 Bf4 Nxf4 22 Nxf4 Kh7 23 bxc4 bxc4 24 Qa4 and Black won't survive.



Exercise (combination alert): White's position feels like it contains the proper tint for a combination. How did Fischer pursue his kingside agenda?

Answer: Pin/removal of a key defender.

18 Nxh7!

An elegant combination tends to drape the overt crudity to what was once a Neanderthal attack.

18 ... Nxh7

After 18 ... Kxh7 19 Bf4 Black loses material.

19 h5

Fischer's point. He threatens both hxc6 and if the knight moves, Bf4.

19 ... Nh4!?

It seems contradictory that when we set up a trap, our actions are born of manipulation and falsehood, yet we – supposedly good human beings (outside the chessboard!) – all pray our machinations come to fruition. Sherwin attempts a swindle which the ever-alert Fischer sees through.

Black is also unable to survive 19 ... Bb7 20 hxc6 fxc6 21 Bxb7 Rxb7 22 Qxc6 Nf6 23 Re5.

20 Bf4

The f4-square, a shining street lamp on a foggy street, has been a guidepost to White's intentions for quite some time.

20 ... Qd8 21 gxc4!

21 Bxb8?? walks into Sherwin's trap after 21 ... Nxc2 22 Kxc2 Bb7+ (double attack) 23 f3 Qxb8 and White is the one busted.

21 ... Rb7 22 h6!

Foolish would be 22 Bxb7? which sells the light squares for a mere exchange.

22 ... Qxc4

After 22 ... g6 23 h5 Qh4 24 Bd6 Rd8 25 hxc6 Rxd6 26 gxc7+ Kh8 27 Re4 Qh5 28 Re3 Re7 29 Rg3 Rd8 30 Qe4 Qxc6 31 Re1 Black's king won't survive.

23 hxc7 Kxc7?!

This move is similar to the judge who decides to levy a fine upon himself. Now Black's king is exposed beyond hope. He had to use the g7-pawn as a shield with 23 ... Rd8.

24 Re4!

Threat: Be5+. Now White's attack/initiative rages out of control.

24 ... Qh5 25 Re3

The rook operates effectively along the third rank.

25 ... f5

Black prays his king has time to run from the embattled sector, but bound within such powerful constraints, there is no remedial action available for Black.

26 Rh3 Qe8 27 Be5+

Fischer decides not to tarnish his aspirations with merely material gain: 27 Bh6+ Kh8 28 Bxf8 Qxf8 29 Bxb7 Bxb7 30 f3 with two extra exchanges.

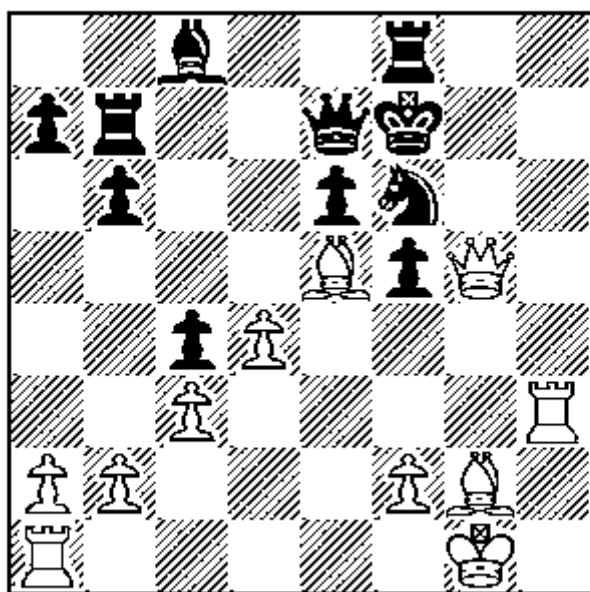
27 ... Nf6 28 Qd2

Threatening both Qg5+ and Qh6+.

28 ... Kf7

Lassie attempts to drag little Timmy away from the edge of the precipice.

29 Qg5 Qe7



Exercise (combination alert): Black's position threatens to disintegrate into embarrassment. We get a clear sense of dispersal in Black's harmony, as at a sporting event where one team leads by a too-large margin, and we note the spectators filing for the exits to beat the future traffic jam in the parking lot. White has multiple wins here. Find one of them.

Answer: Removal of a key defender.

30 Bxf6!

Answer no.2 Also crushing is 30 Rh6! after which Black's knight is unable to move, due to Rh7+.

30 ... Qxf6 31 Rh7+

Black must adjust for inflation. The b7-rook hangs.

31 ... Ke8

"My husband's greatest ability is his talent to consistently disappoint all those who depend upon him," remarks Black's queen.

32 Qxf6 Rxh7

32 ... Rxf6 33 Bxb7 leaves Black down a full rook.

33 Bc6+ 1-0

33 ... Bd7 34 Qxe6+ Kd8 35 Qd6 and it's pretty easy to do the maths. Black is down way too much material.

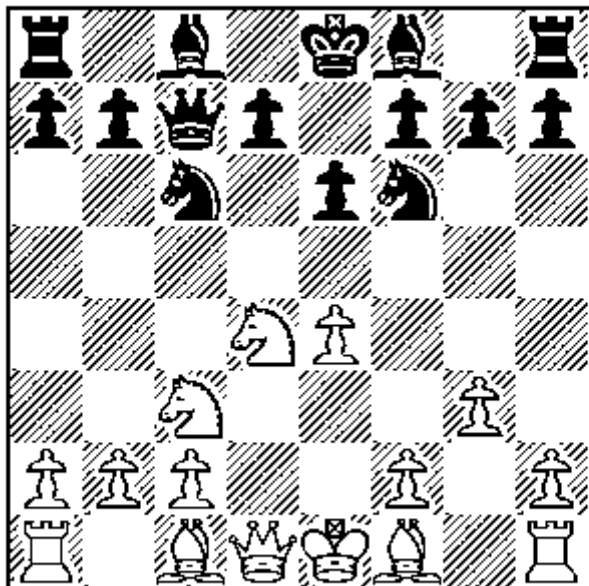
Game 21
R.Fischer-M.Tal
Bled 1961
Sicilian Taimanov

I have always felt that Santa Clause is a just man, since he holds the naughty accountable for their actions. Alas, the chess board is outside Santa's jurisdiction. Due to this lack of a policing force, tactical con artists like Tal often got away with all sorts of crimes – but not in this game.

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 e6 5 Nc3!?

Perhaps an attempt to dodge Tal's opening prep. Fischer normally played 5 Nb5.

5 ... Qc7 6 g3 Nf6?!



Even distantly related species, like a human and a clam, share common genes. This may look like a Taimanov Sicilian, but it's pretty far removed, since Black's last move is a known inaccuracy.

Question: Then why did Tal enter it?

Answer: Apparently Tal wrote 6 ... a6 on his score sheet, intending 7 Bg2 Nf6, but then inadvertently played the second move first. Sadly we have all done this when our concentration fragments at the board.

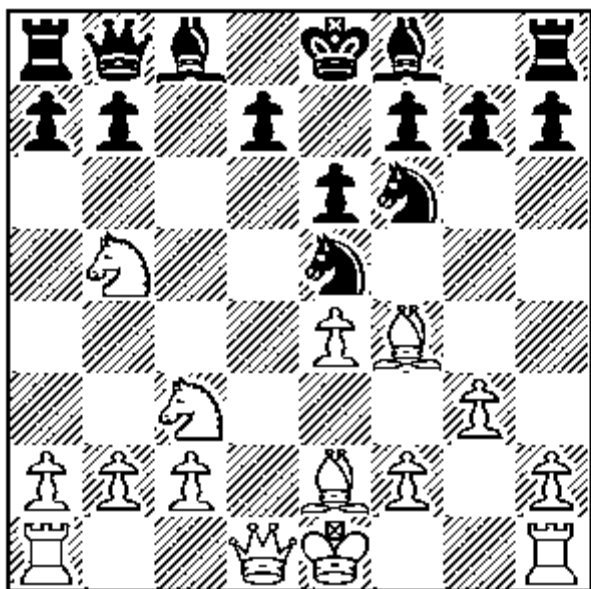
7 Ndb5!

Now Black essentially gets an inferior Taimanov Sicilian.

7 ... Qb8 8 Bf4 Ne5?

This makes matters a lot worse. Tal should go into damage control mode with 8 ... e5 9 Bg5 a6 10 Bxf6 gxf6 11 Na3 Bxa3 12 bxa3 Ne7 13 Qf3 Qc7 14 Bg2 d6 15 0-0 Rg8 16 Nd1 Rg6 17 Ne3. White stands better, but it's not the end of the world for Black, A.Ivanov-I.Ivanov, US Championship 1989.

9 Be2!



Question: Why prepare to fianchetto, and then develop the bishop to e2?

Answer: Circumstances changed with Tal's last move and Fischer is quick to adapt to the new environment. The bishop covers f3, as well as c4, while preparing Qd4.

9 ... Bc5

Kasparov frowns on this move. I don't see any great viable alternatives:

a) 9 ... d6 10 Qd4 Be7 11 Nxd6+! wins a pawn, since 11 ... Bxd6 12 Rd1 0-0 (12 ... Bc7 is met with the trick 13 Bxe5) 13 Qxd6 Qxd6 14 Rxd6 Nc6 15 Be3 is a hopeless, pawn-down ending for Black.

b) 9 ... a6 10 Qd4 d6 11 0-0-0! axb5 12 Bxe5 and Black's position collapses.

c) Tal suggested the insane looking retreat 9 ... Ng8!?. This shady looking move doesn't meet with the requisite qualifications for a successful defence. The move does make sense in a twisted kind of way, in that it manages to avoid material loss, but at dire strategic and developmental costs after 10 Qd4 f6 11 0-0-0 a6 12 Nd6+ Qxd6 13 Qxd6 Bxd6 14 Rxd6 b5 15 Rhd1 with the bishop-pair, dark-square control, central space, and pressure on both d6 and d7-squares.

10 Bxe5!

The bishop continues to weary Black's queen with unwanted suggestions for her conduct.

Question: Doesn't this violate the principle: Don't trade away a pinned piece?

Answer: It's an exception to the rule. Fischer was a master of disorienting opponents by swapping one advantage for another. In this case he gives up his powerful dark-squared bishop in exchange for time gained and central space.

10 ... Qxe5 11 f4 Qb8

As failed mad scientists like to bemoan: "Back to the drawing board".

12 e5 a6

After 12 ... Ng8? 13 Ne4 Be7 14 Qd4 Nh6 15 Nbd6+ Kf8 16 0-0-0 Black's position resembles a Salvador Dali painting, where objects begin to distort and melt.

13 exf6 axb5 14 fxg7

The g-pawn pushes its way through like a cork forced down a wine bottle's neck. The practical move, winning a pawn. Keres suggested 14 Ne4 Bf8 15 Qd4 which Houdini also prefers. Fischer explained: "With only two draws against Tal, out of six times to bat, I was in no mood to speculate!"

Tacticians love sudden and violent alterations to the landscape, feeling in their hearts that they will be the ones who profit from the chaos. Natural strategists, on the other hand, prefer familiarity, incorruptible to the laws of chaos. To me Fischer's last move indicates that he was a natural strategist, rather than a tactician at heart.

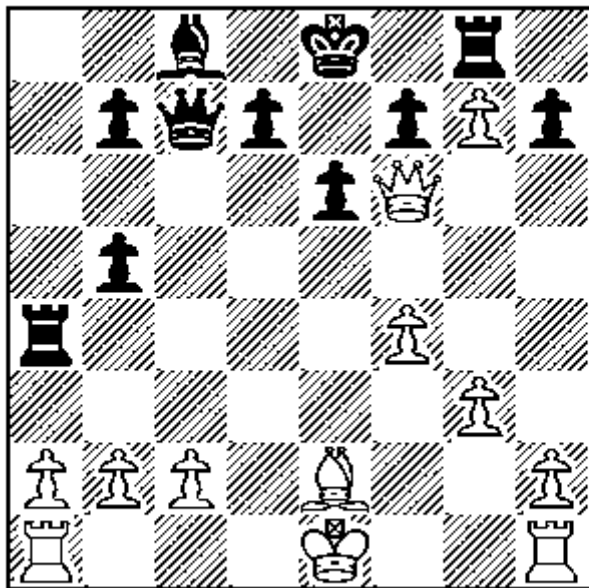
14 ... Rg8 15 Ne4 Be7 16 Qd4 Ra4

16 ... Qa7 17 Nf6+ Bxf6 18 Qxf6 Qc5 19 Rf1! intends f5, fxe6 and Qf7+. Now if 19 ... Qxc2 20 f5 and Black is crushed.

17 Nf6+

Brigands begin to infest the kingside.

17 ... Bxf6 18 Qxf6 Qc7



Black's position contains multiple encumbering properties:

1. He lags in development.

2. The lonely c8-bishop's tenure is the equivalent of an arduous religious retreat in the wilderness.

3. Black's king is in a dire state, with both Bh5 and Bd3 in the air.

Exercise (planning): How does White continue his initiative?

Answer: 19 0-0-0!

Just keep developing. Initiative over material (which is a big switch from last chapter); the a2-pawn doesn't matter. As a chess writer I'm acutely aware that I often offer the reader advice without personal application. Meaning, I see the comp's evaluation which says White should castle queenside, sacrificing the a2-pawn, and then I write something like "Initiative over material," knowing full well that if I had Fischer's position, odds are I wouldn't have the guts to play his last move. Fischer's move is even stronger than the continuation 19 Bd3 Qd8 20 Qh6 f5.

19 ... Rxa2 20 Kb1 Ra6

Question: Isn't Black taking over the initiative after 20 ... Qa5?

Answer: On the contrary, it is White who rules the board after 21 b4! Qa4 22 Qc3! Kd8 23 Bd3 (threat Bxh7) 23 ... Ra3 24 Qb2 f5 25 Rhe1 d5 26 g4 and Black crumbles.

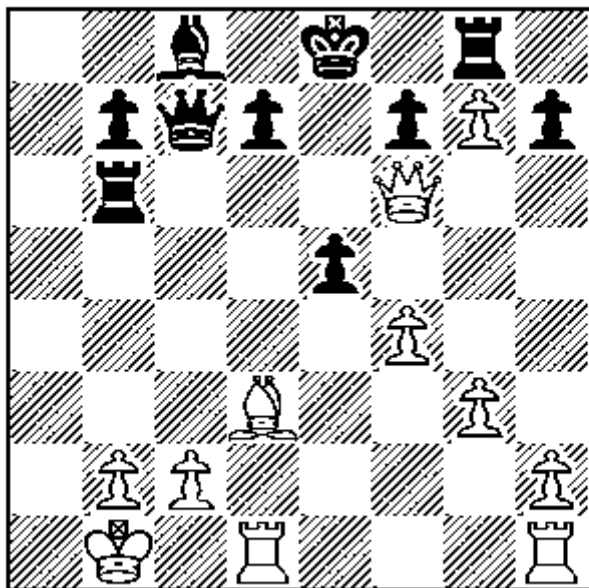
21 Bxb5

This wins, but Bobby missed the even more crushing 21 Bh5! d6 22 Rhe1 Qe7 23 Qh6 Kd8 24 Qxh7 Qe8 25 f5, and if 25 ... e5 26 Rxe5! which overloads the queen.

21 ... Rb6 22 Bd3

Here h7 is the gateway to great treasure. Threat: Bxh7, which in turn forces Tal's next.

22 ... e5



Exercise (combination alert): Wounded positions rarely mend themselves without need of extraneous medical assistance. How would you continue with White?

Answer: Queen sacrifice. Black loses too much to take White's queen.

23 fxe5!

The nature of initiative is thirsty soil, which demands ever more water to nourish it.

23 ... Rxf6 24 exf6

Despite Tal's impressive (temporary) surplus of material, he remains completely busted, since there is no remedy against the coming Bxh7 and Bxg8.

24 ... Qc5 25 Bxh7

"You are only a heartbeat away from the fires of hell," the bishop warns the g8-rook.

25 ... Qg5 26 Bxg8

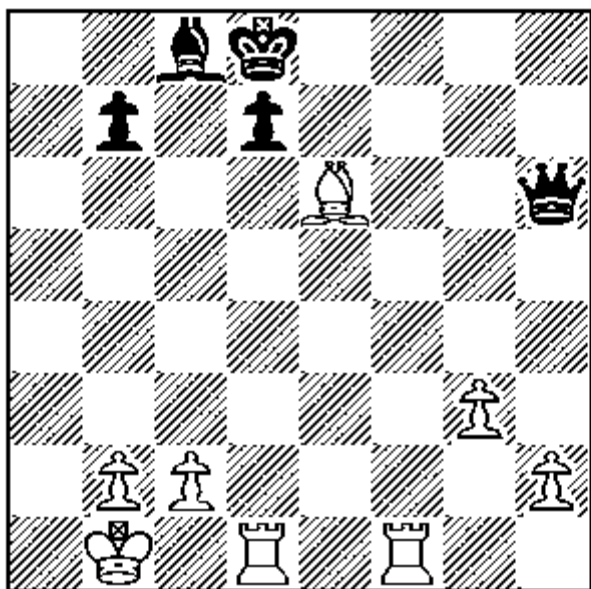
26 Rhf1 is met with 26 ... Rxc7.

26 ... Qxf6 27 Rhf1 Qxg7 28 Bxf7+ Kd8 29 Be6!

Target: d7.

29 ... Qh6

29 ... Kc7 30 Bf5 is also completely hopeless for Black.



Exercise (combination alert): This one is easy. White to play and win more material.

Answer: Pin.

30 Bxd7!

Pawns continue to fall away from Black's leprous structure. Tal's philanthropic efforts left his bank account at a dangerously low level.

30 ... Bxd7

Well, on the plus side, the buried c8-bishop finally gets to see sunlight, for a single minute more.

31 Rf7

White immediately regains the piece and wipes out the remainder of Black's pawns.

31 ... Qxh2 32 Rdxh2+

Once something is extinct (i.e. Black's hopes), there is no way to reverse the process, except for some kind of Jurassic Park cloning scenario. White simply needs to exercise reasonable care not to walk into perpetual check.

32 ... Ke8 33 Rde7+ Kd8 34 Rd7+ Kc8 35 Rc7+ Kd8 36 Rfd7+ Ke8 37 Rd1

There was nothing wrong with 37 Rxb7.

37 ... b5 38 Rb7 Qh5 39 g4 Qh3

Alternatively, 39 ... Qxg4 40 Rh1 (threatening a back rank mate) 40 ... Qd4 41 Rhh7 (Black must watch for potential mates on both b8 and h8) 41 ... Qe5 (or 41 ... Qd1+ 42 Ka2 Qd5+ 43 b3 Qe5 44 Ra7 when Black is unable to simultaneously cover a8 and h8, and try as he may, his king is unable to concoct an escape of the just reckoning White's rooks have planned for him), and now simplest is 42 Rh8+ (attraction) 42 ... Qxh8 43 Rb8+, regaining the queen and remaining up a rook.

40 g5 Qf3 41 Re1+

It doesn't take a clairvoyant to see that the unfortunate black king's future is to be one of eternal servitude to the rooks' bullying and capricious whims.

41 ... Kf8 42 Rxb5 Kg7 43 Rb6 Qg3 44 Rd1 Qc7 45 Rdd6 Qc8 46 b3 Kh7 47 Ra6 1-0

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 g3 c6

This is one of the most solid lines Black can play against White's set-up.

4 Bg2

In a previous game from this position, Byrne played 4 d5!?. Now Fischer decided to undermine with 4 ... b5! 5 dxc6 bxc4 6 cxd7+ Nbx d7 7 Bg2 Rb8 8 Nf3 Bg7 9 0-0 0-0. Fischer's open b-file pressure easily makes up for the potential weakness of his c4-pawn, R.Byrne-R.Fischer, USA Championship, New York 1962.

4 ... d5 5 cxd5 cxd5 6 Nc3 Bg7 7 e3

This set-up isn't as common as 7 Nf3 0-0 8 Ne5! (8 0-0 Ne4! is equal) 8 ... Bf5 (8 ... e6 was popularized by Kasparov, who held Karpov to four draws from this position; more recently, 9 0-0 Nfd7 10 Nf3 Nf6 11 Bf4 Nc6 12 Rc1 Bd7 13 Qd2 Rc8 14 Ne5 Qe7 15 Rfd1 Rfd8 16 Bg5 Qf8 was M.Carlsen-Le Quang Liem, Dubai (blitz) 2014, where White has only a minuscule edge after 17 Qf4 Nh5 18 Qe3) 9 0-0 Ne4 10 Qb3 Nc6 11 Qxd5 Nxc3 12 bxc3 Qxd5 13 Bxd5 Nxe5 14 dxe5 Bxe5 which was even in P.Benko-R.Fischer, USA Championship, New York 1962.

7 ... 0-0 8 Nge2 Nc6 9 0-0 b6 10 b3

10 Nf4 e6 11 b3 Ba6 12 Re1 Rc8 13 Ba3 Re8 14 Rc1 was completely even in G.Stahlberg-S.Flohr, Kemerli 1937.

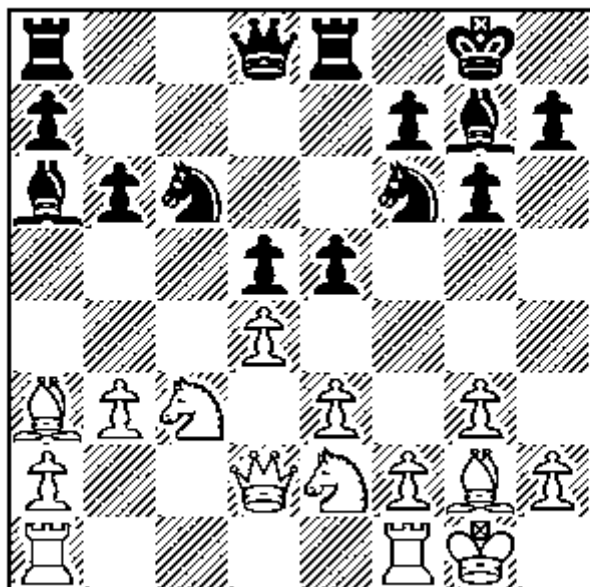
10 ... Ba6 11 Ba3 Re8 12 Qd2

A tiny inaccuracy. 12 Rc1 is dead even.

Question: Can White clamp down on Black's ... e5 break with 12 f4?

Answer: f4 doesn't fit as well with White's knight on e2. Normally White plays Nf3, Ne5, and only then f4. Black looks a shade better after 12 ... Qd7 13 Qd2 e6 14 Rac1 Rac8, since White's knight is misplaced on e2.

12 ... e5!



The e-pawn warbles a happy tune in celebration of its new-found freedom. Fischer's intention crystallizes into the resolve to go for the full point, by bravely setting himself up on a potential path of structural discomfort.

Question: Doesn't this play in to White's hands, since it weakens Black's d5-pawn?

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Answer: It's very difficult to contrive opportunities without ceding any strategic concession in return. Fischer's confident last

move, which in a way places his trust in the whims of fortune, is a trade-off. He willingly agrees to a desecration of structure to generate enhanced piece activity. The comps all give it the thumbs up. 12 ... e6 is boringly equal.

13 dxe5

Question: Can White ignore Black's provocation with 13 Rac1?

Answer: Black looks slightly better after 13 ... exd4 14 exd4 Qd7 15 Rfe1 Ne4 16 Nxe4 dxe4 17 d5 Bxe2 18 Rxc6 Bd3.

13 ... Nxe5 14 Rfd1?

Predictability becomes a fatal encumbrance in battle. This move looks logical, since the rook frees itself from the a6-bishop's pin. Yet the paradoxical 14 Rad1! is correct. Now Fischer gave 14 ... Qc8!. Black achieves loads of compensation if White goes for 15 Nxd5 Nxd5 16 Bxd5 Rd8 (threat: ... Nf3+) 17 f4 Rxd5! 18 Qxd5 Bb7 19 Qd2 Qc6 20 Qd5 Qxd5 21 Rxd5 Bxd5 22 fxe5 Bxe5 23 Rd1 Be4 24 Rd7 when Black's bishop-pair probably means more than White's seventh rank control.

14 ... Nd3!

The d3-square becomes an open invitation for occupation and Black's initiative threatens to spin out of control. Now ... Ne4 becomes an irritating strategic threat.

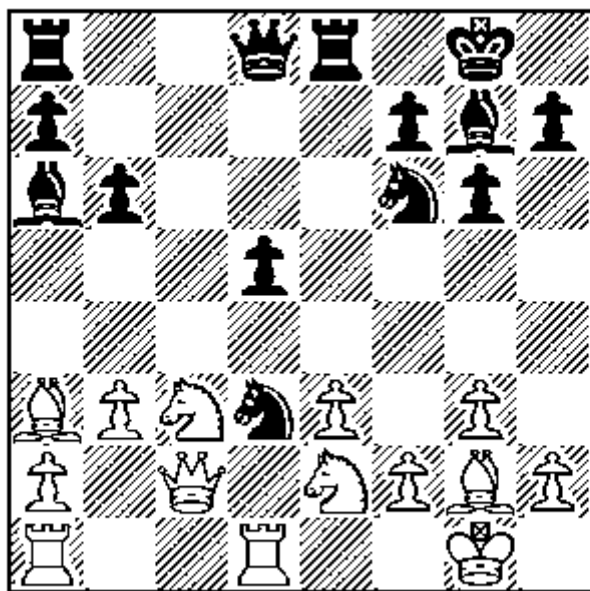
15 Qc2?

This move chokes off the defence's flow of life-sustaining nutrients, but if:

a) 15 Nd4! Ne4 16 Nxe4 dxe4 17 Bb2 Rc8 is admittedly unpleasant, but probably White's lone hope to save the game.

b) 15 f3 is met with 15 ... Bh6! 16 f4 (16 Nf4?? d4! sends White spinning) 16 ... Bg7!, intending ... Ne4, with a gigantic bind.

c) 15 Nf4 Ne4 16 Nxe4 dxe4 17 Rab1 Rc8 and now 18 Nxd3? is met with the zwischenzug 18 ... Bc3! with a winning position.



Exercise (combination alert): Amazingly, White's last move loses by force. How would you continue as Black?

Answer: Annihilation of the defensive barrier.

15 ... Nxf2!

Fischer decides now is not the moment for tact, or even common politeness.

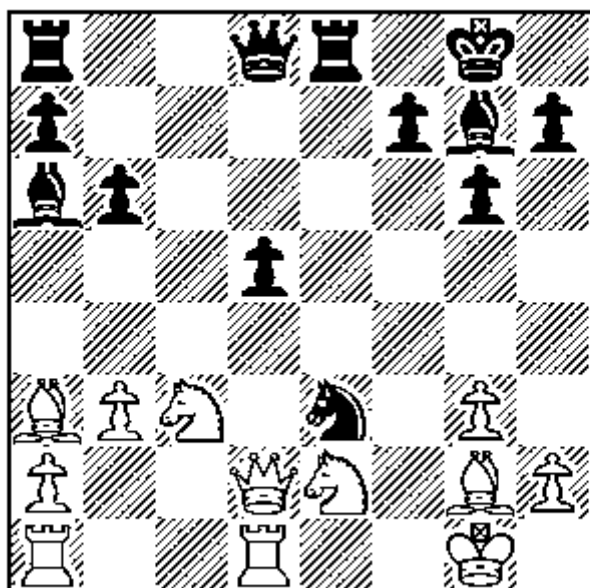
16 Kxf2

The recollection of this meeting has White's king waking from his disturbed sleep and screaming into the night, for years to come.

16 ... Ng4+ 17 Kg1 Nxe3

Fischer's raging initiative projects sharply against a backdrop of White's cringing defenders.

18 Qd2



Exercise (combination alert): Like all collectors, we crave that which is rare and unattainable. In this case a once in a lifetime combinational opportunity presents itself. Continue Black's attack.

Answer: Decimate the light squares around White's king.

18 ... Nxg2!!

"I emit glory the way a flower diffuses scent," proclaims the knight. White's position boils, not so much from an external threat, but instead from within his own weakened light squares. When it comes to sacrifice, Fischer's appetite refuses to be dulled by habit. Now the white king's circle of defenders continues to deplete.

Byrne expected 18 ... Nxd1? 19 Rxd1 when it's anybody's game.

19 Kxg2

When we falsely believe we managed to overcome a long-standing problem, we mustn't be oblivious to the possibility of its recurrence.

19 ... d4!

Every time one attacker is killed, two more seem to rise up to take the dead man's place. Fischer clears the h1-a8 diagonal for his light-squared bishop.

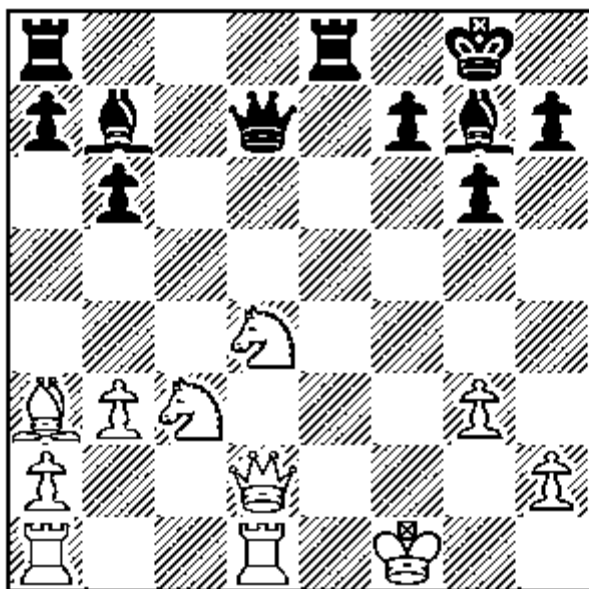
20 Nxd4 Bb7+ 21 Kf1

Alternatively:

a) 21 Kg1 is crushed by 21 ... Bxd4+ 22 Qxd4 Re1+! (deflection) 23 Kf2 Qxd4+ 24 Rxd4 Rxa1 when Black is up a full exchange and a pawn.

b) 21 Kf2 Qc8 22 Nce2 Qh3 23 Nf3 Bxa1 24 Rxa1 Rad8 25 Qc2 Qe6 26 Neg1 (26 Nfg1 Qf6+ pops the loose a1-rook) 26 ... Qe3+ 27 Kg2 Rd2+ wins.

21 ... Qd7! 0-1

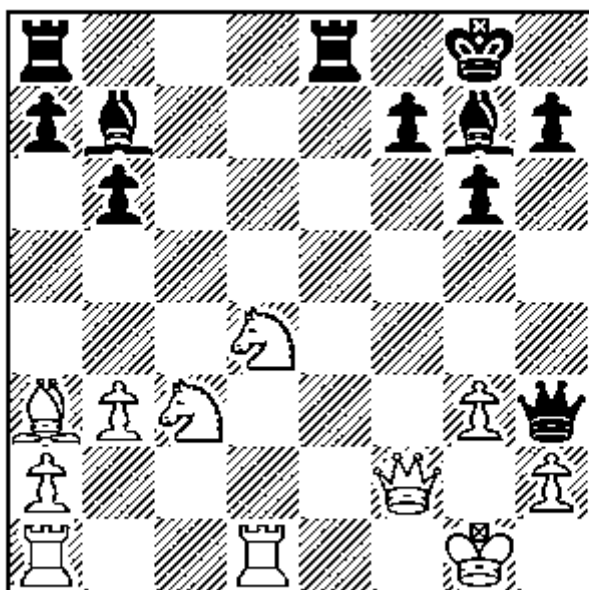


The queen begins to vocalize her own sense of self-importance.

Question: I realize that Black has a strong attack,
but isn't this a premature resignation on Byrne's part?

Answer: Houdini evaluation: '-7.50'! White is completely busted. Byrne wrote: "Both grandmasters who were commenting on the play for the spectators in a separate room believed that I had a won game!" This also happened to me. In 2004 at the U.S. Championship, I was a pawn up against GM Boris Gulko. Both IMs in the commentary room said I stood either better or at least equal. In truth I was busted, but only Gulko and I realized the fact.

If the Byrne-Fischer game continued, it may have concluded this way: 21 ... Qd7! 22 Qf2 (or 22 Ndb5 Qh3+ 23 Kg1 Bh6 with ... Be3+ to follow) 22 ... Qh3+ (the queen holds up her hand in a 'please-stop-talking' gesture to her brother's complaints) 23 Kg1.



Exercise (combination alert): Find the move both
Byrne and Fischer saw, but everyone else missed.

Answer: Deflection/pin. 23 ... Re1+!! 24 Rxe1 Bxd4. The bishop is less forgiving than most priests. This is the kind of move which discourages argument from an opponent. Black wins.

Game 23
R.Fischer-U.Geller
Netanya 1968
King's Indian Attack

1 Nf3 d5 2 g3 c5 3 Bg2 Nc6 4 0-0 Nf6 5 d3

We soon reach yet another King's Indian Attack – Fischer's one-size-fits-all remedy against multiple opening variations from Black – from a different move order.

5 ... e6

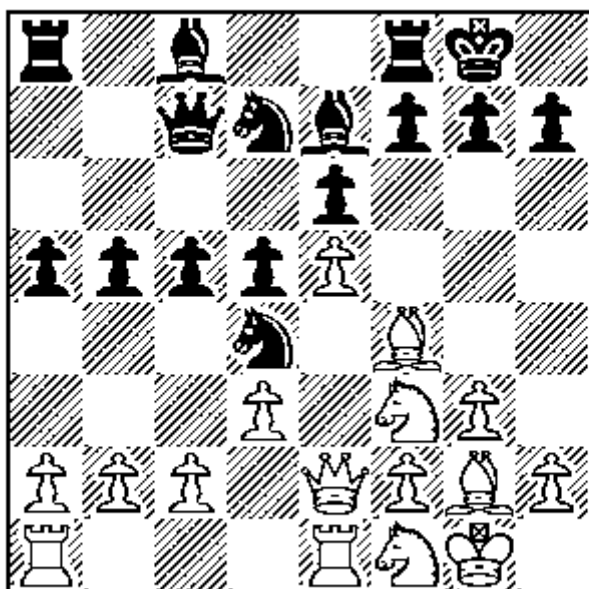
Playing a pure, Reversed King's Indian with 5 ... e5 against Fischer would be inadvisable against the top KID player of his day.

6 Nbd2 Be7 7 e4 0-0 8 Re1 Qc7 9 e5 Nd7

Question: Can Black get away with 9 ... Ng4!? 10 Qe2 f6?

Answer: It looks playable, but White may still have a touch of an edge due to Black's backward e-pawn after 11 exf6 Bxf6 12 c3 b5 13 h3 Nge5 14 Nxe5 Nxe5, M.Zupe-S.Williams, Budapest 1994. Now White should play 15 Nb3! (threat: Bf4) 15 ... Nxd3 16 Qxd3 c4 17 Qe2 cxb3 18 axb3 Bd7 19 Bf4 Qb7 20 b4 when his blockade of e5 offers him a clear advantage.

10 Qe2 b5 11 Nf1 a5 12 Bf4 Nd4!?



Varying from the Fischer-Miagmasuren game seen in the first chapter.

13 Nxd4 cxd4

Black loses some flexibility on the queenside, but on the plus side the c-file has been conveniently opened.

Question: With this altered structure, how does Black make headway on the queenside?

Answer: Black plans to hammer away at c2 by loading up major pieces along the c-file.

14 h4 Ra6

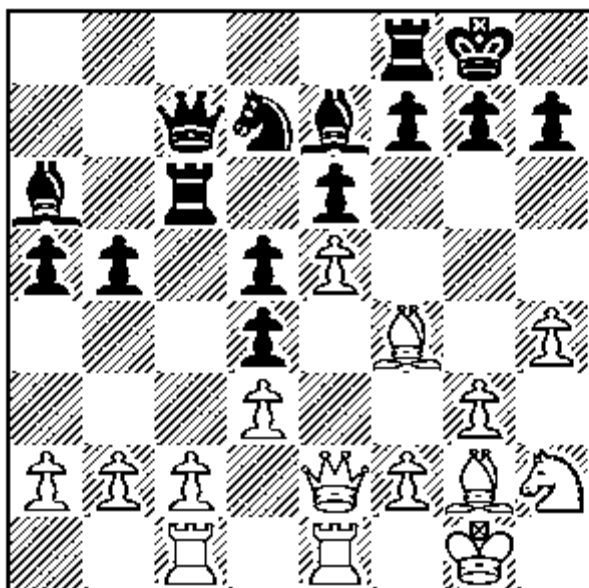
Black intends ... Rc6, ... Ba6 and ... Rfc8, piling up on c2. White has only a few moves to do something about it.

15 Nh2 Rc6 16 Rac1 Ba6?

chesstouring.com

Correct was 16 ... Bb4! 17 Bd2 (or 17 Red1 a4 18 a3 Be7 19 Nf3 Bc5 20 c3 dxc3 21 Rxc3 b4 22 axb4 Bxb4 23 Rxc6 Qxc6 24 Rc1 Qb5 25 Bf1 Ba6 and Black doesn't stand worse, since White

looks too tied down in the centre and queenside to organize his own kingside attack) 17 ... Bxd2 18 Qxd2 Nxe5 19 f4 Nd7 20 Nf3 Qb6 21 Qf2 b4 22 Nxd4 when the game is approximately even.



Exercise (combination alert): A variety of motivations, which combined, can produce a plan which is at cross purposes with our intent. With his last move, Black was too intent on his own plan, oblivious to Fischer's coming trick. How did White seize the initiative?

Answer: Deflection/discovered attack.

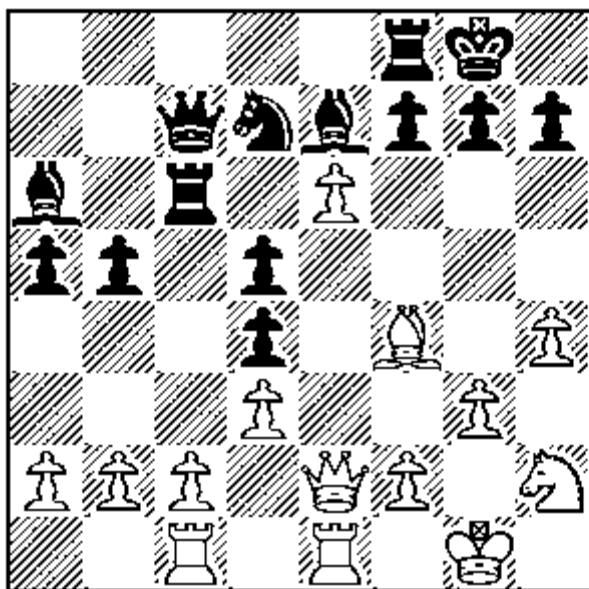
17 Bxd5!

The tone of the game shifts abruptly, from a whisper to a shriek.

17 ... exd5?!

With an over-correction, we risk curing the disease and also killing the body. It may have been better to just admit his mistake and decline with 17 ... Rc5. I'm allergic to bees and wasps, and when I see one approaching, my best defence is to remain completely motionless, rather than swat and risk its ire. In the same way, Black decides to temporarily shelve all grievances and submit to his opponent's wishes. Here 18 Be4 Rc8 19 Nf3 (c2 can't be defended, so White goes after d4) 19 ... Rxc2 20 Rxc2 Qxc2 21 Nxd4 Qxe2 22 Rxe2 is a pawn up ending for White, but I would actually take this route over Black's choice in the game, as after 22 ... a4 (22 ... Nc5 is met strongly with 23 Nc6) 23 Nc6 Bf8 24 d4 Nb6 25 Bg5 Nd5 26 Rc2 Bb7 27 Na5 Rxc2 28 Bxc2 Ba8 Black's blockade of d5 allows him to put up a fight.

18 e6



Question: Isn't this a purchase of a luxury which costs more than its worth? It seems to me that White's plan entails grave risk on the light squares, with few other compensating qualities. What about the fact that White gave away his powerful light-squared bishop?

Answer: White regains the piece favourably, for the following reasons:

1. White's central counter disorganized Black's queenside initiative.

2. White's central counter chronically weakened the d4 isolani, as well as generates potential to take d5 in an ending.

3. Surprisingly, Black is unable to exploit White's light-square holes on the kingside, mainly since his d5-pawn gums up his a6-bishop's access to the kingside.

18 ... Qd8 19 exd7 Re6 20 Qg4 f5

A desperate attempt to complicate to hide his strategic weaknesses. This weakens e6 and e5. The trouble is 20 ... Qxd7 is met with 21 Rxe6 Qxe6 22 Qxe6 fxe6 23 Re1 Bc8 24 Be5 Bf6 25 Nf3 b4 26 Nxd4, which leaves Black in a completely lost, pawn-down ending, tied down to e6, with chronically weak dark squares on d4 and e5.

21 Qh5 Qxd7 22 Nf3

Black's d4-pawn is weak.

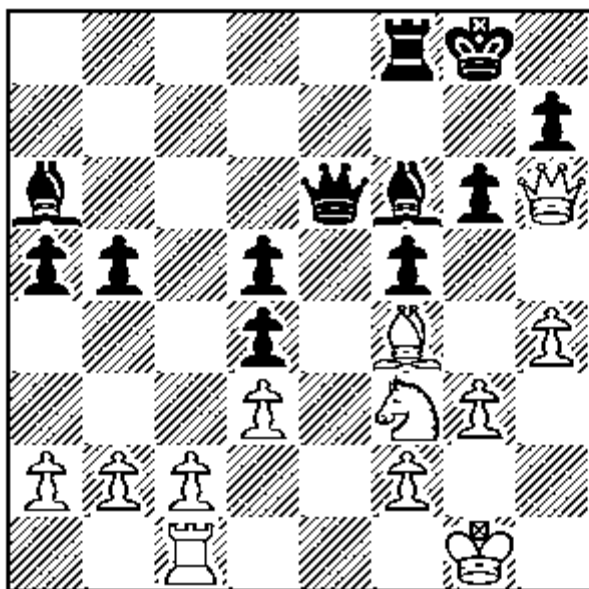
22 ... g6

This move weakens the dark squares around Black's king. However:

a) 22 ... Bc5? allows White a combination with 23 Rxe6 Qxe6 24 Qxh7+! Kxh7 25 Ng5+ Kg8 26 Nxe6 Rc8 27 Be5 when he wins a second pawn.

b) 22 ... Bf6 23 Rxe6 Qxe6 24 Re1 Qc6 (or 24 ... Qf7 25 Qxf7+ Kxf7 26 Bg5 and the d4-pawn falls) 25 Be5! Bxe5 26 Rxe5, and if 26 ... Qxc2? 27 Ng5 h6 28 Qg6! hxg5 29 Re7 forces mate.

23 Qh6 Bf6 24 Rxe6 Qxe6



Exercise (planning): How did Fischer increase his initiative?

Answer: Pin. Principles:

1. When your opponent has the bishop-pair, remove one of them.
2. Create confrontation on your strong colour.

25 Be5!!

The bishop rolls his eyes heavenward, seeking out new sins to which he can later be penitent.

Question: I agree with both principles applied here,
but why not first toss in 25 Re1 to gain a tempo?

Answer: This is another example of Fischer's legendary alertness. Your suggestion walks into Black's diabolical trap after 25 ... Qxe1+! (the queen scolds others for behaviour she herself exhibits) 26 Nxe1 Bg7 27 Qg5 Bf6 and now to avoid a repetition of moves, White must go for 28 Bd6 Bxg5 29 Bxf8 Bc1 30 Bc5 Bxb2 31 Nf3 Bc8 32 Bxd4 Ba3. Black's bishop-pair ensures that he doesn't stand worse in the ending.

25 ... Bxe5 26 Re1

Fischer regains his piece, remaining with the dominant minor piece.

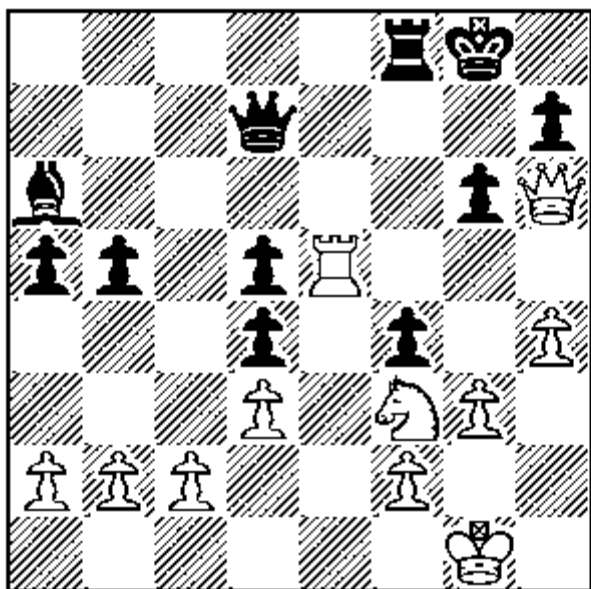
26 ... f4

Black's would-be initiative hopes to recover its sense of fading outline. As every kid understands, if a person of authority forces obedience, this in turn breeds resentment and rebellion. Black attempts a desperate counterattack along the f-file, hoping to mitigate his tiresome defence with a touch of frivolity.

26 ... Bg7 27 Qxg7+ Kxg7 28 Rxe6 Rf6 29 Nxd4 Kf7 30 Rxf6+ Kxf6 31 f4 is a lost ending for Black, who suffers down a pawn, with the clearly inferior minor piece.

27 Rxe5 Qd7

Avoiding 27 ... Qh3?? 28 Re7 (threatening mate on the move) 28 ... Rf7 29 Re8+ Rf8 30 Rxf8 mate.



Exercise (combination alert): It appears as if Black has strong counterplay down the f-file, since ... fxf3 is threatened. What did Fischer do about it?

Answer: Nothing! Fischer ignores Black's threat and proceeds with his own attack, correctly gauging it to be faster.

28 h5!

This venture inextricably involves the safety, or lack of it, of the two kings. Fischer, chipping away at the black king's cover with the patience of a war monument, correctly assesses that the enemy king is the more exposed of the two.

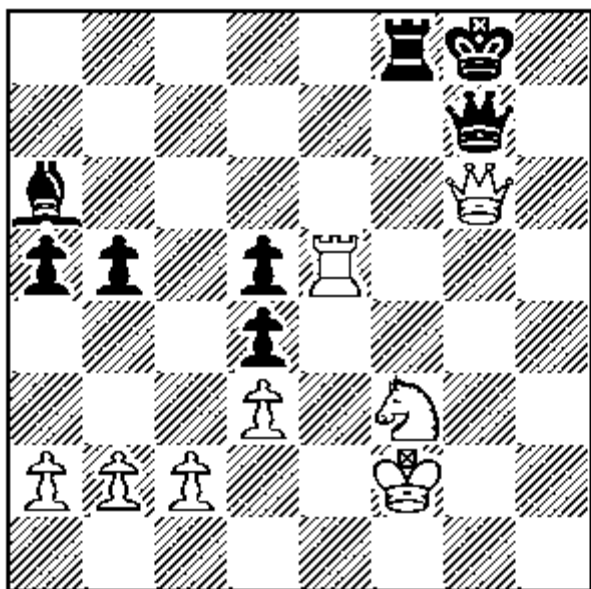
28 ... fxf3 29 hxg6!

The hidden blade inside Fischer's scabbard slowly begins to display steel. It feels as if both sides launch simultaneous attacks on everything, all at once. Initiative-based players hate to take time out to defend anything hanging in their position, interpreting the task as demeaning.

29 ... gxf2+

Fischer's pretty idea is seen in the line 29 ... Rxf3?? (a move made with the philosophy: Wealth isn't happiness, but it's not such a bad substitute) 30 Re8+! (deflection) 30 ... Qxe8 31 Qxh7+ ("You dared defy my authority, so I see that the rod of correction is necessary to help you 'understand' your error," lectures the queen) 31 ... Kf8 32 g7+ Ke7 33 g8Q+ and wins.

30 Kxf2 hxg6 31 Qxg6+ Qg7



Exercise (combination alert): White to play and force the win.

Answer: Double attack/pin.

32 Rg5!

Most certainly not 32 Qxa6?? walking into 32 ... Qxe5.

32 ... Rf7

This drops the queen, but there was no salvation for Black, as if 32 ... Qxg6 33 Rxg6+ and the double attack picks off a piece after 33 ... Kf7 34 Rxa6.

33 Qh6 1-0

White's queen, unencumbered by societal delicacies, decides to give her g7 sister a swift kick while she isn't looking.

Game 24

V.Smyslov-R.Fischer

Palma de Mallorca Interzonal 1970

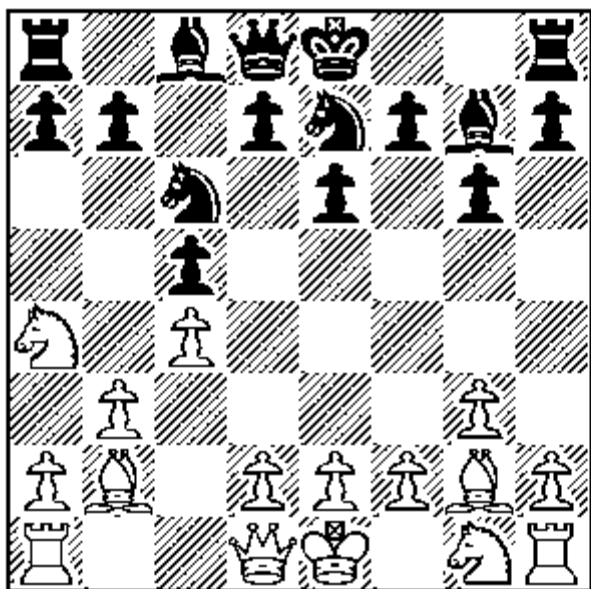
English Opening

1 c4 g6 2 Nc3 Bg7 3 g3 c5 4 Bg2 Nc6 5 b3

Question: Isn't this move a bit too tame to hope for an edge?

Answer: I agree. White's best shot may be 5 a3 when Black has at his or her disposal a variety of set-ups.

5 ... e6 6 Bb2 Nge7 7 Na4?!



An irrational idea germinates in Smyslov's mind. Each theoretical novelty carries the seed of the heretical thought: "My idea takes precedence over the entirety of the past". Smyslov tried this inferior move first on Tal, lost the game and then for some bizarre reason, he repeated it against Fischer.

If I had to describe Smyslov's style in a single word, I would choose: Harmony. Yet this move is anything but harmonious, and now it is White who fights for equality. Smyslov eliminates the dark-squared bishops at the high cost of time, for which he later pays. He should try something like 7 Qc1 d6 (7 ... d5? walks into White's trap after 8 cxd5 exd5 9 Nxd5!) 8 f4 0-0 9 Ne4 e5 10 fxe5 Nxe5 11 Nf3 with a weird but playable game, V.Hort-B.Gulko, Niksic 1978.

7 ... Bxb2 8 Nxb2

As everyone knows, Reti frowned upon fianchettoed knights. The b2 specimen is clearly confused about its identity and role in the world.

Question: Why would Smyslov go so far out of his way to swap bishops?

Answer: Black's g7-bishop was Fischer's best piece. But it's a question of degree. I just don't think the time lost and the misplacement of White's b2-knight is worth the slight gain of the bishop swap.

8 ... 0-0 9 e3!?

Very leisurely, as if he has all day. It feels to me as if Smyslov isn't attuned to the danger yet, and is torn between the wish to retain allegiance to his originally planned set-up, and the lurking fear that it may be an unsound project.

I would just bring out pieces quickly to castle with 9 Nf3 d5 10 cxd5 exd5 11 0-0 when White only stands a shade worse. If 11 ... d4 12 Rc1 b6 13 Ne5! (principle: Trades benefit the cramped side), when White's position is inferior, yet still quite playable.

9 ... d5 10 cxd5

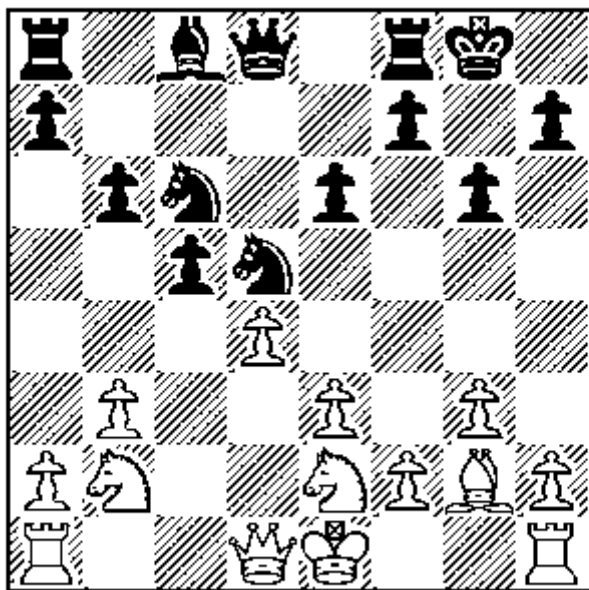
Earlier, after 10 Nf3 Nf5 11 0-0 b6 12 Na4 Bb7 13 cxd5 exd5 14 d3 Qf6 15 Qd2 Rad8 16 Rfd1 Rfe8 17 Rab1 Nd6 18 Ne1 d4 Black already stood better, due to the extra central space, and Smyslov didn't manage to save the game, V.Smyslov-M.Tal, Moscow 1964.

10 ... Nxd5 11 Ne2 b6 12 d4?

This move is a bit like deciding to forego cream in your morning coffee, and adding vinegar instead. Every bad idea which pops into our head carries its own particular brand of decay. When we fluff our opening, we become Tolstoy's character Ivan Ilyich, who asks himself: "What if my

whole life has been wrong?” White’s last move is a mistake, after which the normally easy task of achieving castling (as White) suddenly becomes difficult to achieve.

White stands only slightly worse after 12 0-0 (a move motivated by fear is a move motivated by necessity) 12 ... Bb7 13 a3.



Exercise (planning): On his last move, White violated the principles: Don't open the game or create confrontation when lagging in development. How did Fischer exploit his development lead?

12 ... Ba6!

“Lead us not into temptation,” prays the bishop, as he yields to it. This move prevents White from castling.

13 dxc5

Otherwise:

a) 13 0-0? cxd4 14 exd4 Bxe2 15 Qxe2 Nxd4 and White hangs a pawn.

b) Houdini suggests 13 Nc4, which wastes yet more time: 13 ... Qf6! 14 dxc5 bxc5 15 0-0 Rfd8 with unpleasant pressure from Black.

13 ... Qf6!

Fischer launches simultaneous assaults on separate ramparts. Now White falls dangerously behind in development.

14 Nc4!

The only move. If 14 Nd4? Rad8! 15 Nc4 (or 15 Nxc6?? Nxe3 16 Nxd8 Nxe2+ 17 Kd2 Qxb2+ 18 Qc2 Rxd8 mate) 15 ... Nc3 16 Qf3 Qxf3 17 Nxf3 Nb4 18 0-0 bxc5 when ... Nbxa2 is threatened and White can barely move.

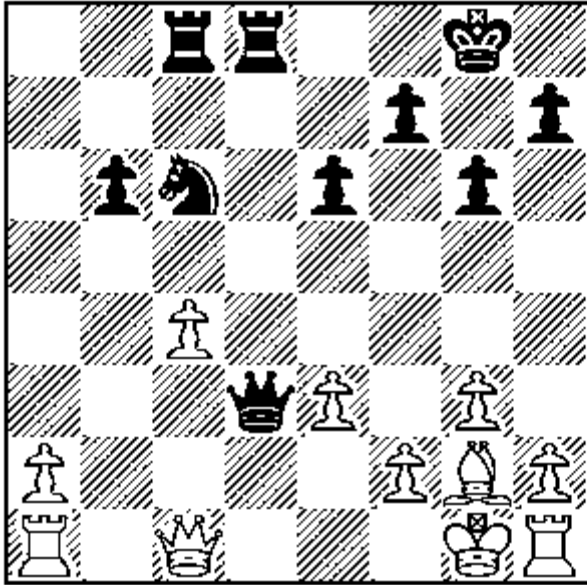
14 ... Nc3! 15 Nxc3

Following 15 Qc1 Nxe2 16 Kxe2 Rac8 17 Rd1 Na5 18 c6 Nxc6 19 Qa3 Na5 20 Rac1 Rc5 21 Ke1 Bxc4 22 bxc4 Nxc4, and if 23 Qxa7? Qb2 24 Rb1 Qc3+ 25 Kf1 Ra5 (Black threatens White's queen and also ... Nd2+) 26 Qd7 Rxa2 27 Kg1 Qc2 28 Rf1 Nd2 29 Rbc1 Qb2 Black also picks up the exchange, since 30 Rfd1?? is met with 30 ... Nf3+.

15 ... Qxc3+ 16 Kf1

The king makes a sound eerily similar to the startled yelp by that citizen of Tokyo (circa early 1950's), when he first caught a glimpse of Godzilla entering the city limits.

16 ... Rfd8 17 Qc1 Bxc4+ 18 bxc4 Qd3+ 19 Kg1 Rac8 20 cxb6 axb6



Question: Does Black have full compensation for the pawn?

Answer: More than enough compensation. Despite being a pawn up, Smyslov experiences difficulties completing his development. Just as in Fischer's game against Petrosian in the first chapter, here yet another ex-world champion suffers a buried h-rook, unable to participate for a long time.

21 Qb2 Na5 22 h4!

Smyslov to make use of the dead rook on h1, with h5 next, rather than:

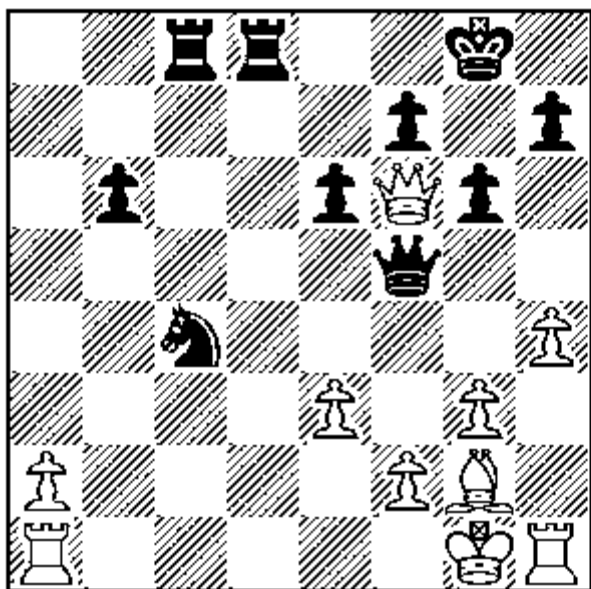
a) 22 Bf1 Nxc4 23 Bxd3 Nxb2 24 Bb5 Nd1 25 Kg2 Nc3 26 a4 Rc5 27 Rac1 Rd2 28 Rhf1 leaves White tangled up, with troubles on b5 and f2.

b) 22 Qxb6 Nxc4 23 Qb3 (it looks like White should hold the draw by eliminating the final black pawn on the queenside, but Black's pressure is deceptively potent) 23 ... Qd2 24 h3 Ne5 25 Rf1 Rc2 (threat: ... Nd3, after which f2 falls) 26 Rh2 Rxa2 and I think White will be hard pressed to hold the game, despite the fact that all the remaining pawns are on the same side of the board.

22 ... Nxc4 23 Qf6

White menaces h5.

23 ... Qf5!



Superb judgement.

Question: Why would Black, who has both initiative and chances for an attack, agree to swap queens?

Answer: Fischer correctly decided that he had enough of an armed force built up to threaten White's king, but not enough to destroy him. So instead, he followed the principle: Swap off your opponent's active pieces. He enlarges the horizon of his ambitions, beyond simply playing for mate. The ending is still clearly superior for Black, due to his development lead.

24 Qxf5 gxf5!

Rendering White's h5 and hxg6 idea ineffective.

25 h5

The h1-rook attempts its escape via h4.

25 ... Rd2 26 Rc1 Rc5!

Fischer doesn't bother with wasting a tempo with capturing a2.

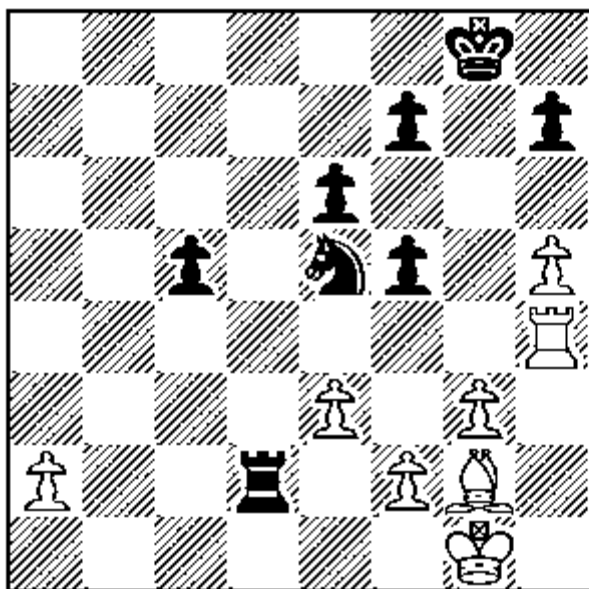
27 Rh4

The rook, which for so long contemplated and sat as impassively as a statue of Buddha, finally comes to life.

27 ... Ne5! 28 Rxc5

Matters of extreme urgency force White's hand and Smyslov reconciles himself to an unpleasant necessity. Houdini suggests 28 Rf1 but then 28 ... Rxa2 looks equally hopeless for White.

28 ... bxc5



Fischer's once invisible intent begins to manifest itself on a physical, macroscopic level. He earns himself a dangerous passed c-pawn, which will be hard to stop.

29 Ra4 c4 30 h6

Threatening mate.

30 ... Kf8 31 Ra8+ Ke7 32 Rc8

32 Rh8?? is froth without true substance. Black wins after 32 ... c3 33 Rc8 c2 34 Bf1 Nf3+ 35 Kg2 Ne1+ 36 Kg1 Rd1 and White can resign.

32 ... Rxa2

Fischer finally captures a2, almost as an afterthought.

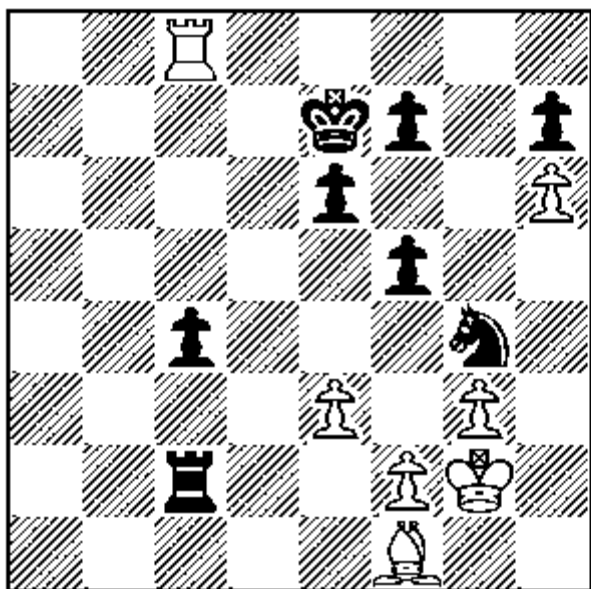
33 Bf1

If 33 f4 Ra1+ 34 Bf1 (34 Kh2 Ng4+ 35 Kh3 Nxe3 wins) 34 ... Ng4 and the problem is 35 Rxc4 is met with 35 ... Rxf1+ 36 Kxf1 Nxe3+ forking.

33 ... Rc2 34 Kg2

White's king slinks about wearing dark glasses, even at night, pretty much like every character in The Matrix.

34 ... Ng4!



Black rook and knight spit on their right palms and then clasp hands, signalling a mutual oath to go after White's pawns, and kill them all, one by one. Here we see Fischer's trademark switch of one advantage for another. By trading the passed c-pawn for f2, he leaves Smyslov with several sickly pawns.

35 Kg1 Rxf2 36 Bxc4 Rf3

The drooping profile of White's pawns gives us a picture of his misery. All three are hanging!

37 Kg2 Rxe3 38 Rh8 Nxh6 39 Rxh7 Ng4 40 Bb5 Rb3 41 Bc6 Rb2+ 42 Kg1

Alternatively:

a) 42 Kf3 Rf2 mate.

b) 42 Kh3 Rh2 mate. The blow to the king's back had that awful wet sound of the butcher's axe driving into a particularly tender cut of meat.

42 ... Ne5 43 Bh1 0-1

The ending is a trivial win for Fischer, so Smyslov resigned.

Game 25

R.Fischer-B.Spasky

World Championship (Game 10), Reykjavik 1972

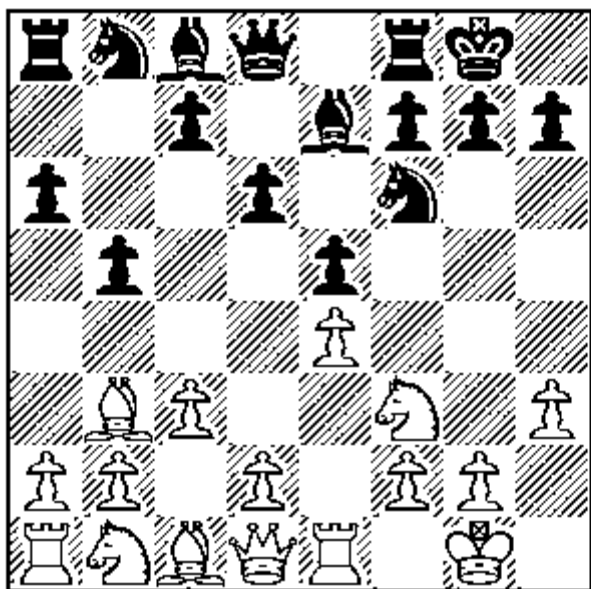
Ruy Lopez

This epic battle is a strong candidate for the greatest Ruy Lopez game ever played (although fans of the Fischer-Stein Introduction game of the book may dispute this claim).

1 e4 e5

When I enter the gym each morning, I know which of my gym rat friends prefer a handshake, and which prefer a fist bump. Fischer and Spassky, who understood the other's styles and opening preferences this well, both certainly logged heavy pre-match hours into preparing for their inevitable and much anticipated Lopez clash.

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



Learning must pass the mere level of information to reach the desired state of understanding. Spassky at the time was the world's leading expert (and maybe still is!) on the Breyer line of the Ruy Lopez. He understood its treacherous byways and recesses like no other player of his time.

I was 11-years-old when this game was played and remember my father explaining Black's retreat as (and I'm paraphrasing), "Clear evidence that Spassky was terrified of Fischer." I'm afraid I must contradict my father and explain that Black's last move is to re-route the knight to d7, after which Black's c-pawn is free to move forward.

Question: Doesn't the move cost Black too much time?

Answer: No. Principle: In closed positions, quality trumps quantity when it comes to development.

10 d4 Nbd7 11 Nbd2

This is White's main line, yet it may have come as a bit of a surprise for Spassky, since Fischer normally played 11 Nh4 and then:

a) 11 ... Nb6 12 Nd2 c5 13 dxc5 dxc5 14 Nf5 Bxf5 15 exf5 Qc7 16 g4 h6 17 h4 c4 18 Bc2 Nh7 (centralizing with 18 ... Nfd5 looks like a better idea) 19 Nf3 f6 20 Nd2 when White's light-square superiority and use of e4 gave him an edge, R.Fischer-P.Benko, New York 1965.

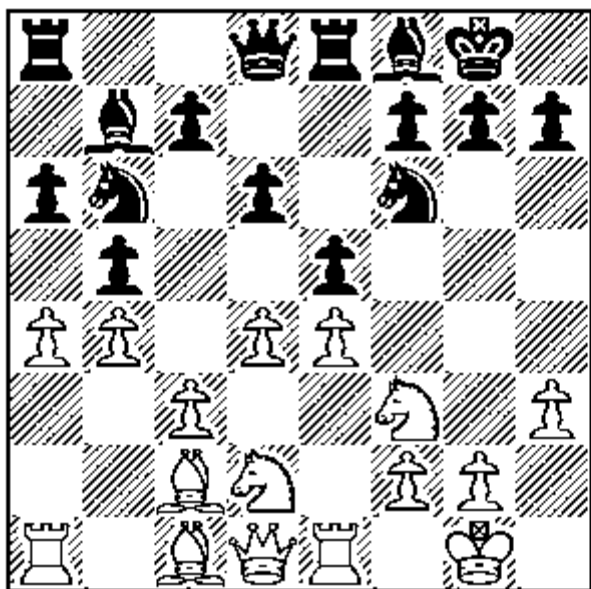
b) 11 ... exd4 12 cxd4 Nb6 13 Nd2 (or 13 Nf3 c5 14 Bf4 Bb7 15 dxc5 dxc5 16 Qxd8 Bxd8 17 Bd6 Re8 18 Bxc5 Nbd7 19 Bd4 Nxe4 20 Nc3 Bf6, R.Fischer-K.Robatsch, Vinkovci 1968, and White looks a shade better after 21 Bd5) 13 ... Nfd5 (uncovering on the loose h4-knight) 14 Nh3 Nb4 15 d5 c5 16 dxc6 Nxc6 17 Nf1 Bf6 18 Be3 Na5 (18 ... Bxb2?! is met with the tricky 19 Qc2! with advantage to White) 19 Bd4 Bb7 and Black's active pieces compensate his slightly weak d6-pawn, R.Fischer-G.Forintos, Monte Carlo 1967.

In his rematch against Spassky, Fischer tried 11 c4 c6 12 cxb5 axb5 13 Nc3 Bb7 14 Bg5 b4 15 Nb1 h6 16 Bh4 c5 17 dxe5 Nxe4 18 Bxe7?! (18 Bd5! keeps White equal) 18 ... Qxe7 19 exd6 Qf6 20 Nbd2 Nxd6 and White is the one fighting for equality, R.Fischer-B.Spassky, 29th matchgame, Belgrade 1992.

11 ... Bb7 12 Bc2 Re8 13 b4

White seizes queenside space. Fischer stuck with 13 Nf1 in three encounters in his 1992 rematch with Spassky.

13 ... Bf8 14 a4 Nb6



More time lost. Black feels it is in his best interests to force a partial resolution of the queenside pawn structure.

15 a5

15 axb5 leads to nothing for White after 15 ... axb5 16 Rxa8 Qxa8 17 Bd3 exd4 18 Nxd4 Nxe4 19 Nxe4 Bxe4 20 Bxe4 Rxe4 21 Nxb5 Qd5. Black equalized, J.Timman-G.Kasparov, London 1984. Now 22 Nxc7 is met with 22 ... Rxe1+ 23 Qxe1 Qc6 24 Na6 Na4 25 b5 Qxb5 26 Nb4 with complete equality.

15 ... Nbd7 16 Bb2

Now c4 is in the air.

16 ... Qb8!?

Kasparov felt this move was artificial. Spassky improved on his move a year later with 16 ... Rb8! 17 Rb1 Ba8 18 Ba1 g6 19 c4 exd4?! (this move may hand the advantage back to White; Black stands slightly better after 19 ... bxc4! 20 dxe5 Nxe5 21 Nxe5 dxe5 22 Nxc4 Qxd1) 20 cxb5 axb5 21 Nxd4 d5, A.Planinec-B.Spassky, Amsterdam 1973. White looks slightly better after 22 Bd3!.

17 Rb1

A year later Kavalek found the improvement 17 c4! bxc4 18 Ba4 c6?! (18 ... exd4 19 Bxd4 is correct) 19 Nxc4 exd4 20 Qxd4 when Black found himself under heavy pressure on d6 in L.Kavalek-S.Reshevsky, Chicago 1973.

17 ... c5 18 bxc5 dxc5 19 dxe5

This move sharpens the game, creating opposite wing pawn majorities.

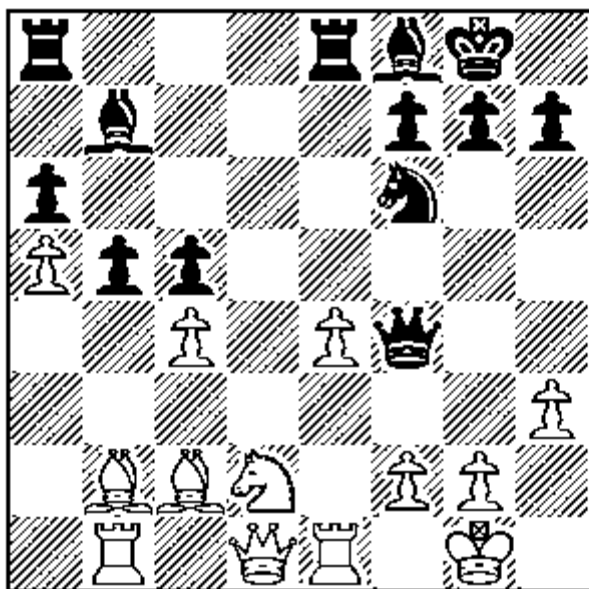
Question: Why wouldn't White play 19 d5 securing a passed pawn?

Answer: First, the passer is easily blocked by a bishop on d6. Secondly, Black's queenside play looks fully sufficient after 19 ... c4, clearing c5 for a knight.

19 ... Nxe5 20 Nxe5 Qxe5 21 c4

Fischer uncovers on Black's queen, as well as the latent threat to pick off a pawn on b5.

21 ... Qf4!



A move played with the thought: A challenge unanswered is to allow ourselves to be diminished.

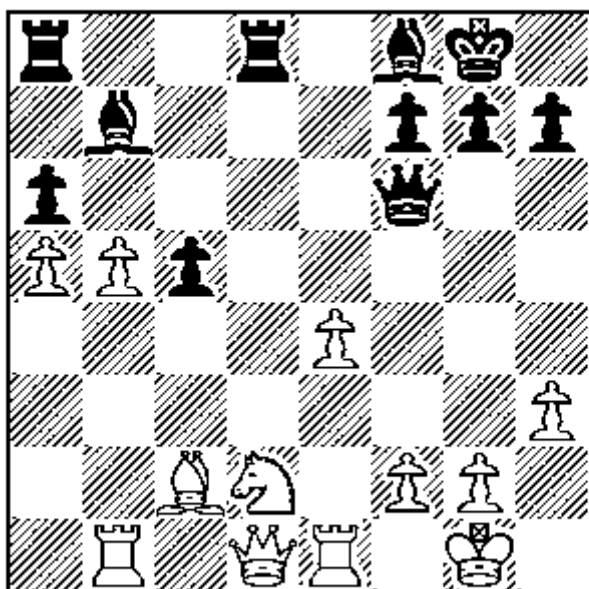
Question: Doesn't this move hang a pawn on b5?

Answer: Few players in chess history had a feel for the initiative like Boris Spassky. It's a deliberate sacrifice. As we will see, Black's enhanced piece activity makes up for the pawn. Of course, as we saw in the Defence chapter, Fischer isn't shy about grabbing pawns, even when it entails discomfort.

22 Bxf6

Also playable is 22 e5, R.Sallinen-J.Vatto, Finland 1988. Black should continue 22 ... Rad8. Houdini works it out to a draw after 23 exf6 Rxe1+ 24 Qxe1 Qxd2 25 fxg7 Qxe1+ 26 Rxe1 Bxg7 27 Bxg7 Kxg7 28 Re7 Ba8 29 Rc7 Rd2 30 cxb5! Rxc2 31 bxa6 c4 32 Rc8 Bd5 33 a7 c3 34 a8Q Bxa8 35 Rxa8 Rd2 36 Rc8 c2 37 Kh2 Rxf2 38 a6 Rf6 39 Rxc2 Rxa6.

22 ... Qxf6 23 cxb5 Red8!?



Given an exclamation by Kasparov. Houdini doesn't agree.

Question: Why wouldn't Black develop his only undeveloped piece, the a8-rook?

Answer: Spassky wants to play ... axb5, when his a8-rook pressures White's a5-pawn. But I agree, the move contains a hint of artificiality and Black appears to secure full equality with the natural 23 ... Rad8 24 Qc1 axb5 25 Rxb5 Qa6! 26 Rb6 Qxa5 27 Rxb7 Qxd2 28 Bb3 Re7 29 Rxe7 Bxe7 30 Bd5 Qxc1 31 Rxc1. The opposite-coloured bishops ensure a near-certain draw.

24 Qc1

Fischer removes his queen from the d-file.

24 ... Qc3!?

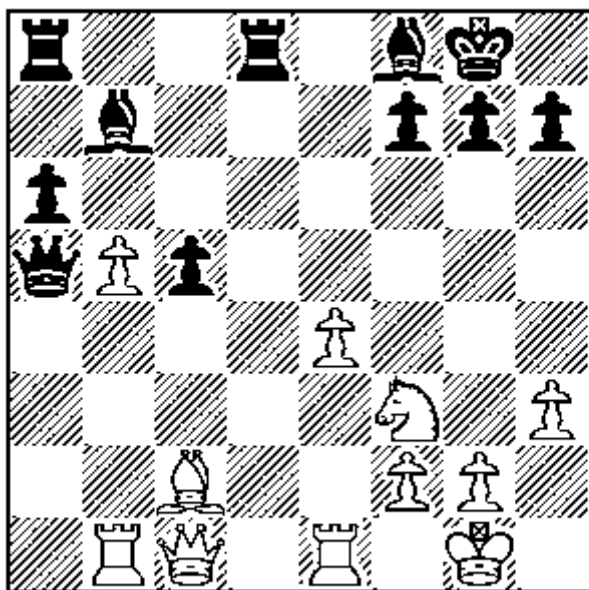
The queen simultaneously attacks a5 and d2. Black can also follow through on his idea and activate his a8-rook with 24 ... axb5 25 Rxb5, when it looks to me like he has enough for the pawn after 25 ... Qc6 26 Rb6 Qc7 27 Nc4 Rd4 28 Bb1 Rxa5!. Black regains the pawn with a tactical sequence: 29 Rxb7 Qxb7 30 Nxa5 Qb5! 31 Qc3 Rb4! (now White's knight, lacking safe refuge, falls) 32 Ba2 Qxa5 33 Bd5 Ra4 with a likely draw.

25 Nf3

White can also consider 25 bxa6! Bxa6 26 Nf3 Qxa5 27 e5 g6 28 e6 fxe6 29 Bb3 Bc8 30 Bc4 Ra7 31 h4 when roles reversed and it is White down a pawn, with initiative and attacking chances. If given a choice I prefer White.

25 ... Qxa5

25 ... c4 was suggested by Botvinnik and Smyslov. White stands better after 26 bxa6 Bxa6 27 e5 (threat: Bxh7+) 27 ... g6 28 e6 fxe6 29 Bf5! (discovered attack/zwischenzug) 29 ... Qxc1 30 Bxe6+ Kg7 31 Rexc1 Bc8 32 Bxc8 Rdx8 33 Rb5 c3 34 Kf1 and White has winning chances with his extra pawn.



Exercise (planning/combination alert): “Circumstantial evidence is a very tricky thing,” declared the sleuth, adding: “It may seem to point very straight to one thing, but if you shift your own point of view a little, you may find it pointing in an equally uncompromising manner to something entirely different.” Sherlock Holmes was right. White’s power seems to have vanished in an eye blink.

At a deeper level, this isn’t the case. Fischer found a plan of almost inhuman subtlety and depth in this position. How would you continue as White?

Answer: Pin/double attack. Fischer unexpectedly targets f7 through a series of geometric tricks.

26 Bb3!!

Fischer’s initiative needs just that extra inch an archer requires on his string to drive his arrow

into an enemy who believes he is out of range. “The subsequent events in this game were etched for a long time in the memories of players: it is from such model games that one learns to play the ‘Spanish!’” writes Kasparov.

Spassky, having been freed from a few minor defensive obligations, in no way is released from a major problem. A new reality emerges, seemingly purely from Fischer’s will, more than the dictates of the position: f7 is impossible to protect.

Fischer’s move is so much stronger than 26 bxa6?! Bxa6 27 e5 Bd3! and the removal of the light-squared bishops takes the heat out of White’s kingside attacking chances.

26 ... axb5 27 Qf4!

Details are important. White is unable to proceed with 27 Ng5?? due to 27 ... c4 28 Bxc4 bxc4 29 Rxb7 Ba3! (this move short circuits White’s queen) 30 Qe3 Rd3, overloading White’s queen, who is now unable to guard both e1 and g5.

27 ... Rd7?!

The disease is still at the reversible stage, but with low margin for further decline. When matters begin to go wrong in our position, the great fear is that it is merely an early symptom of a progressively declining slope. After this move Black suffers.

The comp found the almost impossible-to-find solution: 27 ... c4!! To lure our opponent into our trap, we must first tell him exactly what he wants to hear. On the surface this move seems to fail its intent to block out White’s bishop, since it is met with 28 Bxc4 bxc4 29 Rxb7, but then Black has a much easier time of protecting f7 with 29 ... f6 30 e5 Qd5 31 Rc7 Rdc8 32 Rxc8 Rxc8 33 exf6. White won a pawn, but Black’s dangerous passed c-pawn ensures Spassky of equality at a minimum after 33 ... c3.

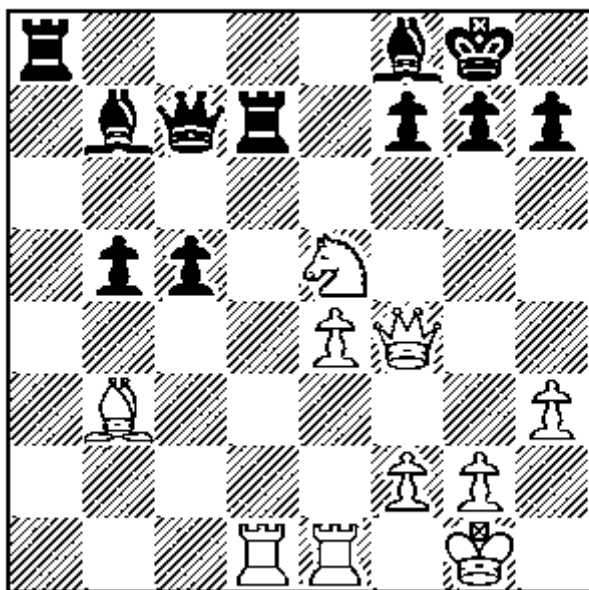
28 Ne5

Predators tend to hunt in packs. Fischer simultaneously attacks d7 and f7.

28 ... Qc7

Black’s only move.

29 Rbd1!



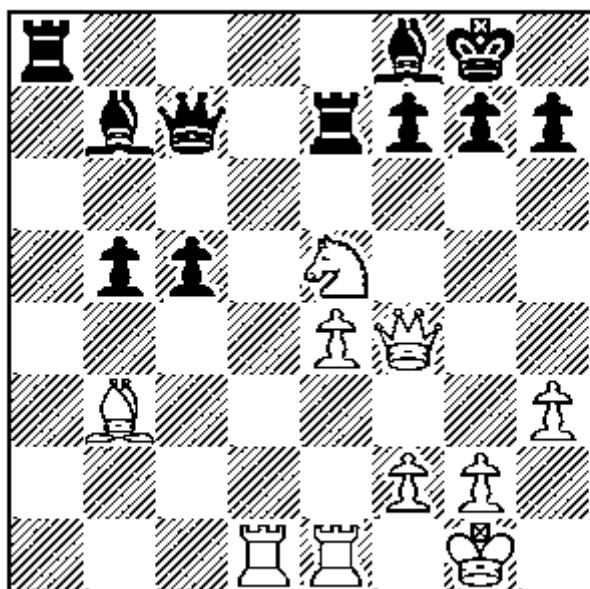
A masterful zwischenzug, after which f7 can no longer be covered. This is Fischer’s equivalent of an attention-seeking throat clearing, putting Spassky on notice that ownership of f7 is about to change hands.

29 ... Re7

Spassky avoids the trap 29 ... Rxd1?? 30 Bxf7+ Kh8 31 Ng6+ hxc6 32 Qh4 mate. “It is not

rational to believe that a promise of a truce, made in haste, must also be kept,” the queen chides her brother.

However, Kasparov felt that Spassky’s last move was an error, suggesting 29 ... Rad8, which takes one pair of rooks off the board. This line doesn’t look so easy for Black after 30 Bxf7+ Rxf7 31 Qxf7+ Qxf7 32 Nxf7 Rxd1 33 Rxd1 b4 34 Ne5 Bxe4 35 Rd8 Bf5 36 g4 Be6 37 f4. Black is passively placed and it feels to me like White’s winning chances are about the same as what transpired in the game.



Exercise (combination alert): White to play and win material.

Answer: Attraction/double attack.

30 Bxf7+! Rxf7 31 Qxf7+ Qxf7 32 Nxf7 Bxe4!

32 ... Kxf7? 33 Rd7+ Ke6 34 Rxb7 offers White a better version than he got in the game, since his e4-pawn remains.

33 Rxe4!

Fischer would rather have the extra tempo over a damaged black structure after 33 Nh6+ gxh6 34 Rxe4 c4.

33 ... Kxf7 34 Rd7+ Kf6 35 Rb7

Endgame principle: Place your rooks behind passed pawns – yours or the opponent’s.

35 ... Ra1+?

In time pressure our attention may wander from fact to fiction in an instant. When you rethink a plan, make certain that you don’t re-re-think it too far. I am hard pressed to posit a rational motive behind this check, which destabilizes Spassky’s bishop (could it be that Spassky felt it decentralized White’s king further?). It’s funny how such a seemingly insignificant decision can inflict so much harm on Black’s position.

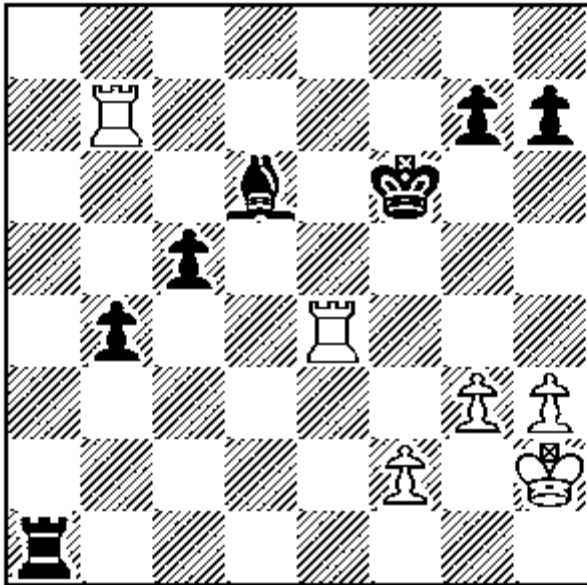
Question: What is the discrepancy in Spassky’s logic?

Answer: It’s a classic misallocation of resources. Patzer sees a check ... well, you know the rest. But Spassky, the reigning World Champion at the time, can hardly be accused of being a patzer.

Larsen felt this move was wrong, since it destabilized Black’s bishop, who was short on safe squares and required protection. He suggested 35 ... b4!, which does indeed look like a tougher

defensive set-up. A non-event can have great meaning. The most relevant thing about Black's rook is not what it has done, but instead, what it has not: It didn't leave its post of the critical eighth rank. After 36 Kf1 Rc8 37 Rc4 Re8 38 Rb6+ Kf7 39 Rf4+ Kg8 it feels like White has no way to make progress.

36 Kh2 Bd6+ 37 g3 b4



The numbers may tally in general approximation, but not the position itself. So Black got a pawn for the exchange and two connected/blockaded queenside passers. From this point, Fischer's technique is breathtakingly accurate.

38 Kg2 h5 39 Rb6 Rd1 40 Kf3!

An example of Fischer's comp-like accuracy. The natural 40 f4? allows Black to equalize with 40 ... Kf5 41 Kf3 (or 41 Rc4 Rd3 42 Kf2 Bf8 and White is unable to make progress) 41 ... Rf1+ 42 Ke3 Re1+ 43 Kf3 Rf1+!, which is drawn.

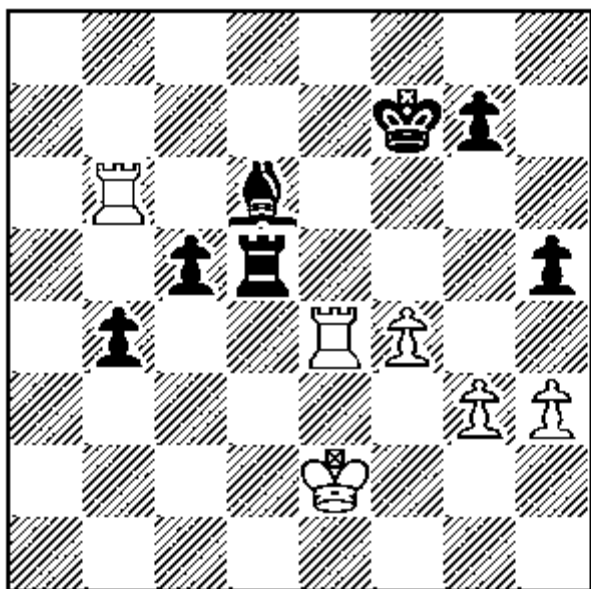
40 ... Kf7

Following 40 ... Rd3+ 41 Ke2 Rd5 42 f4 g5 43 Re8 gxf4 44 gxf4 Kf7 45 Ra8 Ke7 (f4 can't be touched: 45 ... Bxf4?? 46 Ra7+ Kg8 47 Rg6+ Kh8 48 Rf6, which threatens mate on f8 and Black's bishop; 48 ... Bd6 49 Rd7 Re5+ 50 Kd3 c4+ 51 Kd4! the bishop falls) 46 Ra7+ Ke6 47 Raa6 Kd7 48 f5 Kc7 (48 ... Ke7? 49 f6+! Ke6 50 f7 wins) 49 f6 Bf8 50 f7 Rf5 51 Rg6! Kb7 52 Raf6 Re5+ 53 Kd3 Rd5+ 54 Kc2 c4 55 Rg8 Rd8 56 Re6 there is no defence to Re8.

41 Ke2!

Forcing Black's rook to a central, yet passive square, where it is unable to harass White's king.

41 ... Rd5 42 f4



Fischer managed to fix Black's two passed pawns and now he activates his kingside majority.

42 ... g6 43 g4 hxg4

Principle: It is in the defending side's interest to reduce the number of pawns on the board.

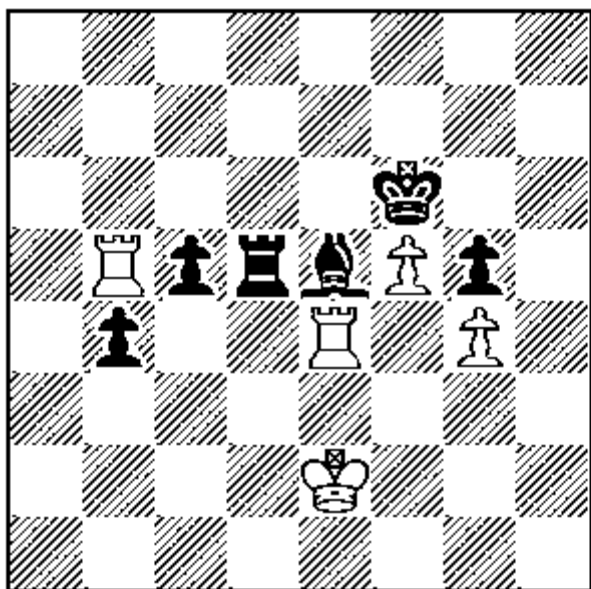
44 hxg4 g5

Black is nearly in zugzwang: for example, 44 ... Kg7 45 g5 Kf7 46 Rb7+ Kf8 (the king paces back and forth so many times that he has the feeling of meeting himself) 47 Re6 Rd4 48 Rd7 Be5 49 Rxd4 Bxd4 50 Rxd4 c4 51 Rc6 c3 52 Kd3 wins, since Black's passers are blockaded while White's remain mobile.

Moreover, 44 ... Kf6 45 Rb7 is zugzwang and Black must play 45 ... g5 (or 45 ... Bf8 46 Re3 Bd6 47 g5+! Kf5 48 Kf3! and nothing can be done about the deadly threat on f7; after 48 ... Bxf4 49 Rf7+ Kxg5 50 Rxf4 White wins) 46 f5 Be5 47 Rb5 (zugzwang again!) 47 ... Kf7 48 Rxb4! when White wins.

45 f5 Be5 46 Rb5 Kf6

Likewise, after 46 ... Bc3 47 Kf3 Rd3+ 48 Re3 Rxe3+ 49 Kxe3 Bd4+ 50 Kd3 Bg1 51 Rb7+ Kf6 52 Kc4 Be3 53 Rd7 Bf2 54 Rd6+ Kf7 55 Rg6 Be3 56 Kd3 Bc1 57 Rc6 c5 falls and White wins.



Exercise (combination alert): Black's last move, a mistake in an already lost position, hung material. How?

Answer: Pin.

47 Rxb4!

The rook adds his voice to the discussion and now Black is left insolvent, with liabilities exceeding assets.

47 ... Bd4 48 Rb6+ Ke5 49 Kf3!

Oh, how sneaky!

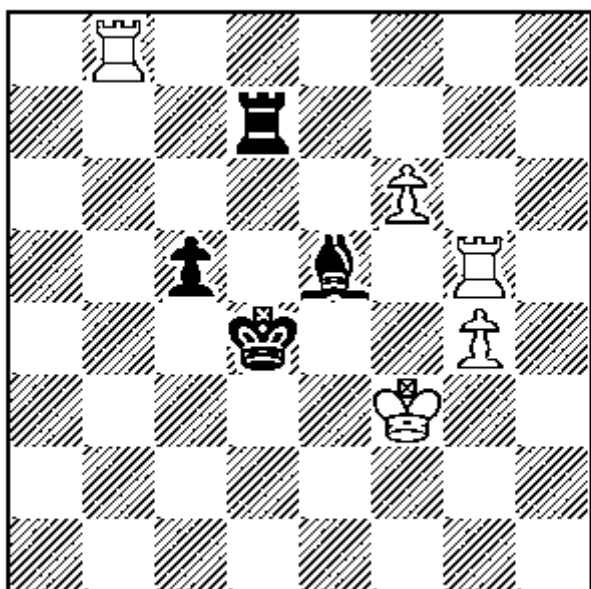
49 ... Rd8

After 49 ... cxb4?? we reach the controversial subject of end-of-life bioethics. Is suicide a morally acceptable option to end one's terminal pain? 50 Re6 is mate.

50 Rb8 Rd7 51 R4b7 Rd6 52 Rb6 Rd7 53 Rg6

Now g5 falls and White gains two connected passers.

53 ... Kd5 54 Rxc5 Be5 55 f6 Kd4



Exercise (combination alert): White to play and win heavy material.

Answer: Double attack/overloaded defender.

56 Rb1! 1-0

The threat is Rd1+ and Rxd7, and following 56 ... Bd6 (or 56 ... Rf7 57 Rd1+ Kc4 58 Rxe5) 57 Rd1+ Kc4 58 Rgd5 the bishop falls.

Game 26

B.Spassky-R.Fischer

World Championship (Game 18), Reykjavik 1972

Alekhine's Defence

1 e4 Nf6 2 e5 Nd5 3 d4 d6 4 Nf3 Bg4

It's funny how chess fashions, like women's hemlines, alter with the seasons. Today, most Alekhine's Defence experts go for the Caro-Kann-like 4 ... dxe5 5 Nxe5 c6, a line popularized first by GM Tony Miles.

In the 13th game of the match Fischer played 4 ... g6 and won an absolutely amazing game, which I can't put in this book, since I used it as the introduction game for Alekhine's Defence: Move by Move.

5 Be2 e6

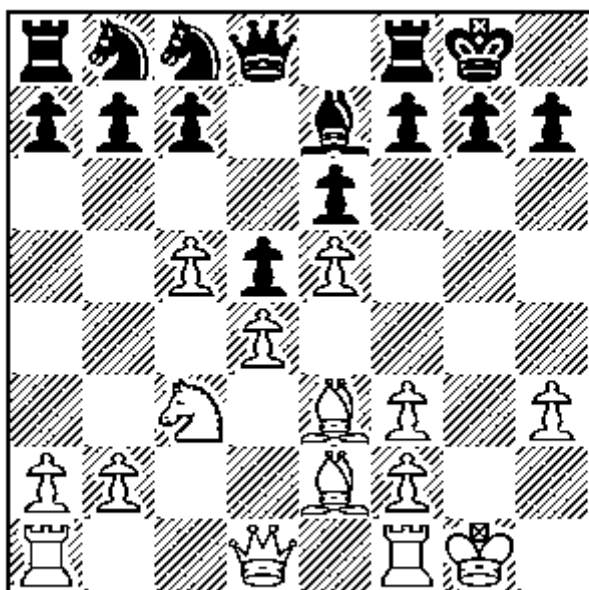
In the 1980's until the early part of the 21st Century, I played 5 ... c6, but am convinced today that Black is unable to equalize completely. So the 4 ... dxe5, Miles Variation may be Black's only reliable hope to attain full equality.

6 0-0 Be7 7 h3

The position can also be played with 7 c4, omitting h3.

7 ... Bh5 8 c4 Nb6 9 Nc3 0-0 10 Be3 d5 11 c5 Bxf3 12 Bxf3

Today, we know that 12 gxf3! Nc8 gives White a nasty space advantage which is difficult to chip away, since White gets f4 options.



Question: Why does the knight retreat to c8, rather than to d7?

Answer: c8 is actually standard operating procedure for Black in such Alekhine's positions. The awkward c8-knight tends to re-route to better pastures later on via e7 (Black fails to generate compensation for the pawn after 12 ... Nc4? 13 Bxc4 dxc4 14 Qe2 when c4 falls). Following 13 f4 Nc6 14 Kh2 Bxc5 (or 14 ... f5 15 b4 with a comfortable space advantage for White) 15 dxc5 d4 16 Ne4 dxe3 17 fxe3 Qxd1 18 Raxd1 White enjoys a slight yet nagging bind, A.Motylev-R.Appel, German League 2014.

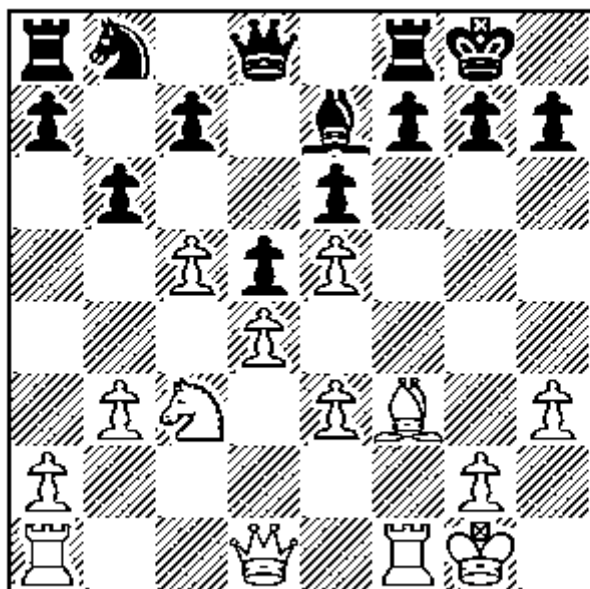
12 ... Nc4 13 b3

White can also preserve the bishop: 13 Bf4 b6 14 b3 Na5 15 Rc1 (or 15 b4 Nc4 16 Rc1 c6 17 Be2, A.Lukin-V.Bagirov, Cheliabinsk 1975; Black's powerfully posted c4-knight ensures him equality after 17 ... b5) 15 ... bxc5 16 dxc5 Nac6 17 Re1, as in L.Kavalek-L.Schmid, Nice Olympiad 1974. The position is roughly balanced after 17 ... a5 18 Nxd5!? (otherwise White lacks a useful plan) 18 ... exd5 19 Bxd5, which the comp rates at dead even. Black is up a piece for two pawns, but is badly tied down.

13 ... Nxe3

Fischer rids his opponent of the bishop-pair, at the cost of opening the f-file, which Spassky later uses to his benefit.

14 fxe3 b6!?



An attempt to chip away at White's centre.

Question: Doesn't this move violate the principle:
Avoid confrontation when lagging in development?

Answer: Correct, yet it's still playable, as long as Black remains alert to the tactics. Principles operate as safeguards, not ironclad rules, to be followed with blind obedience.

Safer is 14 ... Nc6 15 Rc1 Qd7 16 Qd3 Kh8 17 Bg4 Bg5 18 Ne2 f5 19 exf6 gxf6 20 Nf4 f5 21 Bf3 Rae8 when Black gets a playable game, H.Westerinen-V.Bagirov, Solingen 1979.

15 e4!

Spassky intensifies the pressure on d5.

15 ... c6 16 b4 bxc5?!

This seemingly insignificant course correction should have led to unpleasant consequences for Fischer. Correct was 16 ... a5 17 a3 b5 18 exd5 exd5 when Black should be okay.

17 bxc5 Qa5

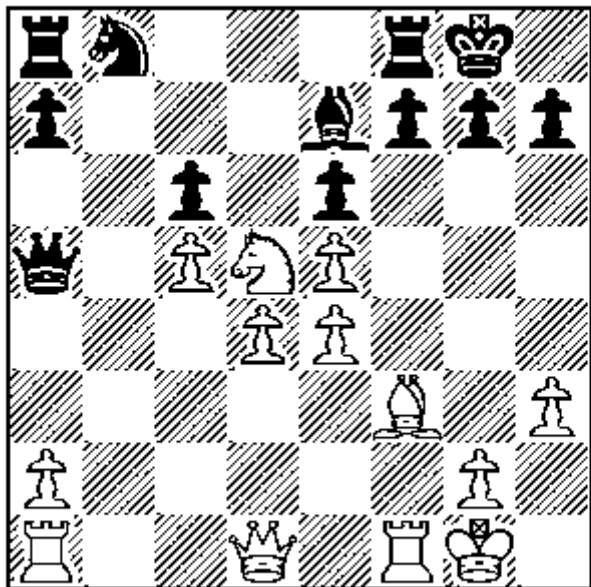
When we sense our opponent's threats, yet are unable to specifically identify them, we experience a fearful sense of who's-thereness, a feeling similar to the one experienced when a loud and threatening knock, pounds our front door in the middle of the night. After 17 ... Na6 18

exd5 cxd5 19 Nb5 Nxc5!? (otherwise Black is strategically lost) 20 dxc5 Bxc5+ 21 Kh1 Qg5 22 Qe2 I don't believe in Black's compensation for the piece.

18 Nxd5!?

The mad knight tenderly kisses his dagger and whispers to it: "Patience, my love. I will soon feed you." In chess there is a smudged line between the principled and the felonious.

In chess we are punished for having both too much and too little imagination. Spassky's last move qualifies as the former. As usual, the comp has to ruin things for us humans by offering the unplayed 18 Qe1! (threatening Nxd5) 18 ... Bxc5!? (I have a feeling Fischer planned the slightly fishy sacrifice; he wasn't the type to play the dispirited 18 ... Qd8?! 19 Rb1, handing White two tempi) 19 dxc5 Qxc5+ 20 Rf2 Nd7 21 Rc1 Qb6 22 exd5 cxd5 23 Bd1 Qd4 24 Nb5 Qxe5 25 Qxe5 Nxe5 26 Rc7 a6 27 Na7! when Black will be hard pressed to hold this ending.

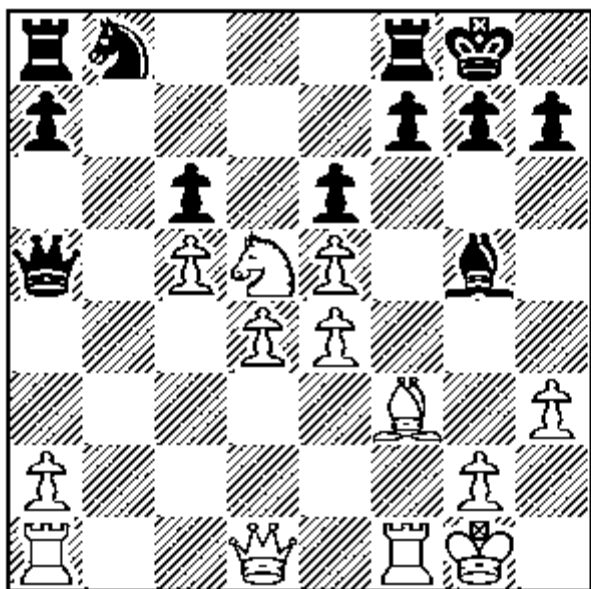


Exercise (critical decision): Should Black accept the sacrificed knight? And if not, what should Black play?

Answer: Zwischenzug/trapped piece. Black should decline. Now White's pseudo-sac'ed knight has no place to run.

18 ... Bg5!

Avoiding 18 ... cxd5?? (a sin is only a sin if we act upon it) 19 exd5 exd5 20 Bxd5 Nd7 21 Bxa8 Rxa8 22 Qb3.



Exercise (combination alert): Fischer attempts to bind the wind, combining a taste for simultaneous adventure and greed. We gleefully laugh inwardly when we set up a trap, but what happens if your opponent turns out to be a bigger scoundrel than you, by setting a counter-trap? Spassky did just that with his next move. Now what? White's knight is trapped. Find the combination which extricated Spassky.

Answer: Double attack. White threatens to take twice on f7, followed by Qh5+.

19 Bh5!!

The counter-counter trap. We see here two great masters of initiative, matching each other blow for blow. Spassky conjures tactics on the f7-square, forcing Fischer to accept the hanging d5-knight.

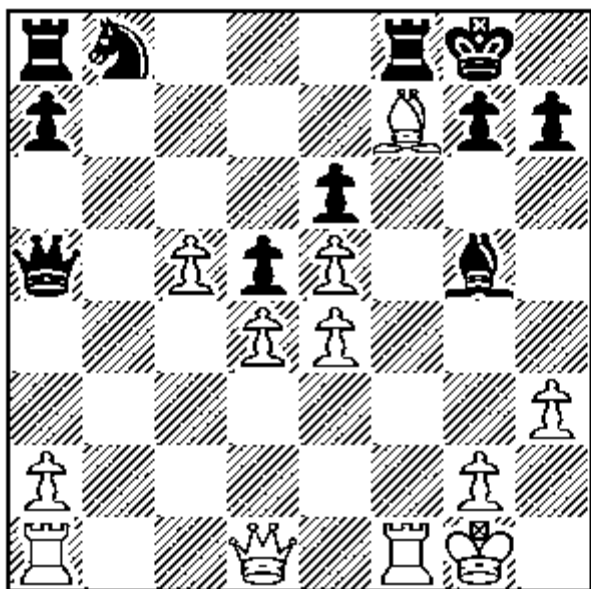
19 ... cxd5

Matters of extreme urgency force Black's hand: 19 ... g6? 20 Nf6+, and if 20 ... Bxf6 21 exf6 and Black is unable to capture White's bishop.

20 Bxf7+

"Subtle hints failed to extract your confession, so now we shall proceed to a more overt form of coercion," the bishop tells Black's king, as he displays the instruments of torture.

After 20 exd5 exd5 21 Bxf7+ Rxf7 22 Rxf7 Qc3 23 Rb1 Nc6 24 Rbb7 Bh6 25 Kh1 (threat: Qg4) 25 ... Qxd4 26 Qxd4 Nxd4 27 Rfd7 Rc8 28 Rxd5 Ne6 29 Rxa7 Be3 Black should hold the game with accurate play.



20 ... Rxf7

Question: Can Black decline with 20 ... Kh8 when he remains up a piece?

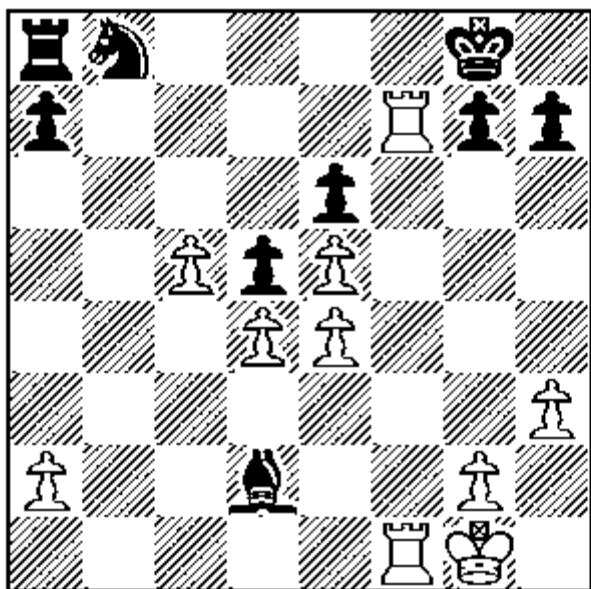
Answer: White's initiative gets completely out of control after 21 exd5 Qc3 22 Kh1 Be3 23 Qh5 (the queen's subjects rarely utter her name without a preamble profanity) 23 ... h6 24 Bxe6 Na6 25 Qg6 Bxd4 26 Bf5 Rxf5 27 Qxf5 Bxe5 28 Rae1 Bg3 29 Rc1 and his two central passers carry the day.

21 Rxf7 Qd2!?

This move essentially tells White: You interpret the position your way, and I'll interpret it in mine. The incessant neediness of Black's king requires round-the-clock care for his defensive attendants. Fischer risks the overpress by playing for the full point, rejecting the forced draw after 21 ... Nc6 22 Qh5 (or 22 Qg4 Nxd4 23 Raf1 Qxc5 24 Rxd4+ Kxd4 25 Qxd4+ Kh8 26 Qf6+ with perpetual check) 22 ... Be3+ 23 Kh1 Bxd4 and White has nothing better than to take perpetual check with 24 Rxd4+ Kxd4 25 Qd4+ Kh8 26 Qf6+.

Instead, 21 ... Kxf7?? is a move played with the philosophy: If you procure a difficult-to-attain item once, there is no guarantee that you will be successful the second time round. Here 22 Qh5+ g6 23 Qxh7+! Ke8 24 Qxg6+ Kd7 (the king's dignity suffers an unending series of affronts; he is now glad that he had the wisdom and foresight to wear his 'adult undergarments' on the day his sister paid him a visit) 25 exd5 Kc7 (25 ... exd5 26 e6+ Kc7 27 Qxg5 Nc6 28 Qg7+ Kb8 29 Rb1+ Nb4 30 Qd7 forces mate) 26 Qxg5 leaves White with too many pawns for the piece and a winning attack.

22 Qxd2 Bxd2 23 Raf1



Threatening mate on f8.

23 ... Nc6 24 exd5

White's fast-fading initiative reminds us of Claude Rains as the Invisible Man, with his body only partially vanished. This move allows Black to escape. White's only chance for the win lay in 24 Rc7! Nxd4. The point of this line is that Black's knight lacks access to e6, protecting g7: 25 Rff7 Bh6 26 g4! (threat: g5) 26 ... g6 27 Rxh7 Bf8 28 exd5 exd5 29 Rhd7 Ne6 30 Rc6 Re8 31 Rxd5 Nf4 32 Rd7 Rxe5 and once again Black should have enough play to hold the game, according to the comps.

24 ... exd5 25 Rd7 Be3+ 26 Kh1 Bxd4

Black's previous apprehensions begin to dissolve. The difference is that Black's bishop covers g7 from a less awkward square than h6, as in the above line.

27 e6

As it turns out, the ending is balanced.

27 ... Be5 28 Rxd5 Re8 29 Re1 Rxe6

White's passed pawn has been blockaded and if Black has time to centralize his king, the advantage may swing to Fischer's side. Spassky's next move forces a clear draw.

30 Rd6! Kf7!

More clear than 30 ... Rxd6 31 cxd6 Kf7 32 Rc1 Nd8 33 Rc7+ Ke6 34 Rxa7 Kxd6 which is also a likely draw.

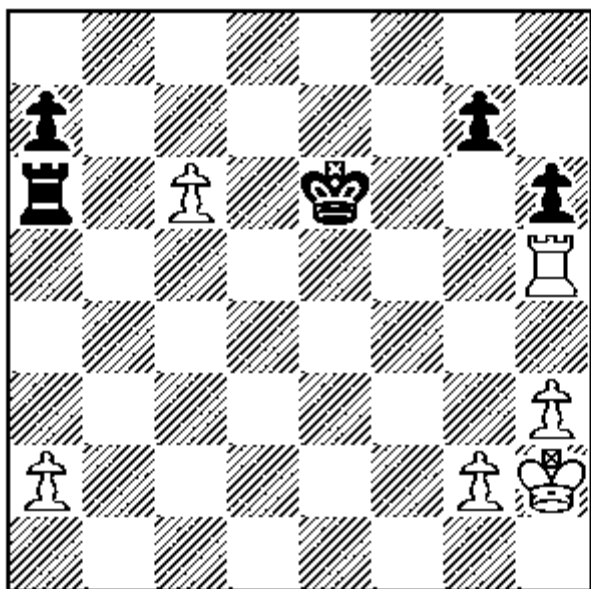
31 Rxc6!

White wins a mostly symbolic pawn and the game remains drawn.

31 ... Rxc6 32 Rxe5 Kf6 33 Rd5 Ke6 34 Rh5 h6 35 Kh2 Ra6

This move regains the lost pawn.

36 c6



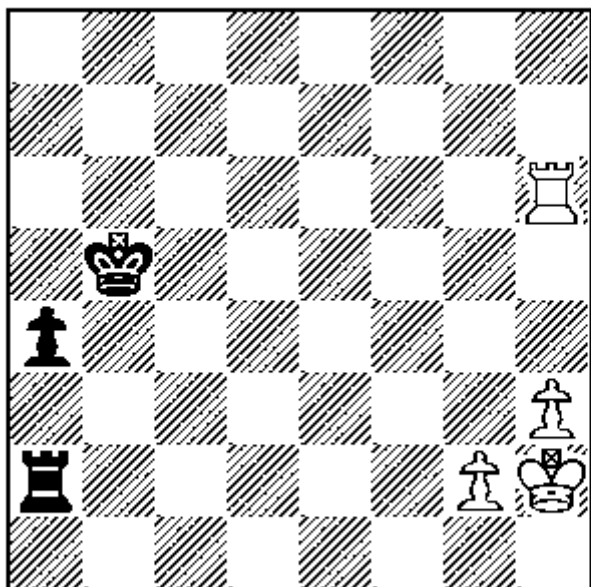
Exercise (calculation): Should Black take the a2-pawn or the c6-pawn?

Answer: Black's most straightforward path to the draw is to remove the c6 irritation.

36 ... Rxc6!

This is a Hyde-to-Jekyll transformation, on the scale of my wife Nancy's mood before her morning coffee, and after a soothing cup. Now all becomes clear and the game is drawn, whereas after 36 ... Rxa2?? 37 Rc5 reality has this awful way of clearing our field of misconceptions and Black has no way to halt the c-pawn's promotion.

Instead, 36 ... Kd6 37 Rf5 Kxc6 38 Rf7!? gets quite tricky. It's drawn, but with pitfalls for both sides after 38 ... Rxa2 39 Rxc7 a5 40 Rg6+ Kb5 41 Rxc6 a4.



Question: Who wins this one?

Answer: A position like this is almost impossible to assess. We are down to six pieces, so my infallible endgame tablebase tells me it ends in a draw the following way: 42 Rh8 a3 43 Ra8 Kb4 44 h4 (if I had this position over the board, I would have no clue if it was a win for either side, or a draw; as it turns out, it's a drawn ending) 44 ... Rc2 45 h5 Rc5! (threats: ... Ra5 and ... Rxh5+, which

forces White to hand over his rook rather early) 46 Rxa3 Kxa3 47 g4 Kb4 48 h6 (now Black must play very carefully) 48 ... Rc8! 49 g5 Rh8! (White's pawns are unable to move forward without the help of his king; this gives Black just enough time to get his own king back to draw the game) 50 Kg3 Kc5 51 Kg4 Kd6 52 g6! (the only move and not 52 Kf5?? Ke7 53 Kg6 Rg8+ followed by 54 Kh7 Rxg5 55 Kh8 Kf6 56 Kh7 Rh5 or 54 Kh5 Kf7 55 h7 Ra8 56 Kh6 Ra6+ 57 Kh5 Kg7 and Black wins) 52 ... Rxh6 53 Kg5 Rh1 54 g7 Ke7 55 g8N+ Ke6 56 Nf6 and White draws, although Fischer would surely have made Spassky play out 49 more moves from this position.

37 Ra5 a6 38 Kg3 Kf6 39 Kf3 Rc3+ 40 Kf2 Rc2+ ½-½

Game 27

R.Fischer-B.Spassky

11th matchgame, Sveti Stefan 1992

Sicilian Rossolimo

Fischer and Elvis had much in common, in that they lived two distinctly separate periods of their lives. There was young, handsome, movie star-on-the-beach Elvis. And then there was elderly, obese, deep fried peanut butter and banana sandwich-loving, drug addict, glitzy, Vegas Elvis. In the chess version, there was young, indomitable hero Fischer, who single-handedly dismantled the Soviet chess machine. Then we endured the crazy, hillbilly-bearded, paranoid, 'I'm-still-the-world-champion-even-though-I-refused-to-defend-my-title', old Fischer, who defied the U.S. State Department's order not to play in Yugoslavia, emerging from his self-imposed exile in 1992 to play a rematch against Spassky. Fischer's play wasn't what it was in his prime, but he proved he could still play chess at a very high level, despite evidence that he hadn't seriously studied chess in years.

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 g6 4 Bxc6

A change from his disastrous opening against Matulovic, from the last chapter, where Fischer played 4 c3.

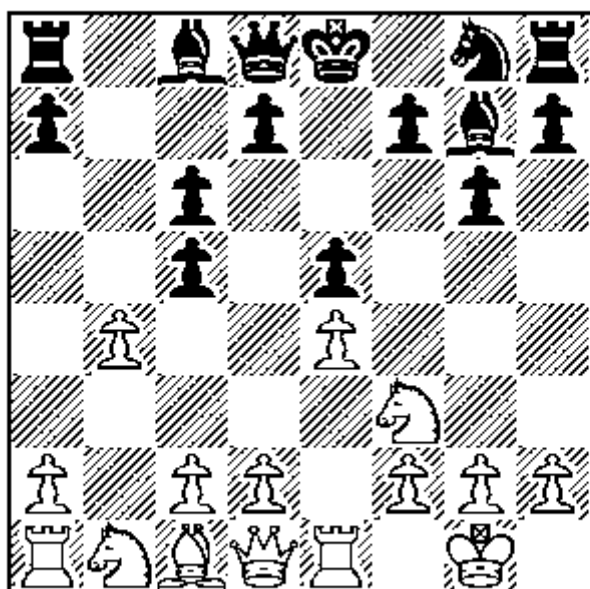
4 ... bxc6

4 ... dxc6 5 h3 e5 6 0-0 Bg7 and here we see a new incarnation of Fischer's idea with 7 b4!? cxb4 8 a3 when White had compensation for the pawn, D.Aldama-C.Lakdawala, San Diego (rapid) 2012.

5 0-0 Bg7 6 Re1 e5

Two games later, Spassky improved with 6 ... f6! 7 c3 Nh6 8 d4 cxd4 9 cxd4 0-0 10 Nc3 d6 11 Qa4 Qb6 12 Nd2 Nf7 13 Nc4 Qa6 14 Be3 Qxa4 15 Nxa4 f5 and Black's bishop-pair offered him good play, R.Fischer-B.Spassky, 13th matchgame, Belgrade 1992.

7 b4!?



It seems that rebels are inherently immune from social taboos. In this instance, the need for adventure demands a substantial fee. An attempt at obfuscation is natural when we sense our position going South. It's another matter when we deliberately do it in a perfectly good position.

With his last move, Fischer attempts to test Spassky's patience, hoping to incite a reaction, with a move which appears to contradict both precedence and reason.

Question: Is this some sort of a Wing Gambit?

Answer: Fischer mixes an idea from the Wing Gambit, with the Rossolimo Sicilian. It was a completely new idea at the time the game was played, and apparently it's sound (as opposed to the somewhat shady Wing Gambit, which goes 1 e4 c5 2 b4?!). Normally seen were the moves 7 c3 and 7 d3.

7 ... cxb4

Black opens the gate of the city and sees a giant wooden gift horse on b4.

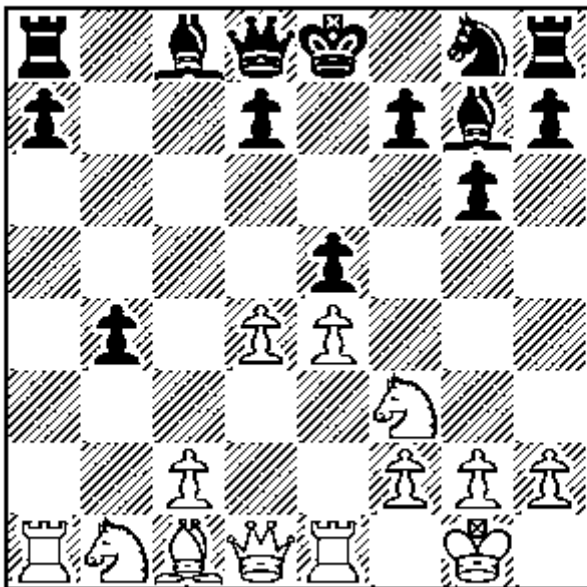
8 a3

White scores a very healthy 60% from this position, according to my database.

8 ... c5

Spassky logically refuses to co-operate with 8 ... bxa3. Nevertheless, this move is also playable: 9 Nxa3 Ne7 10 Nc4 (or 10 Bb2 d6 11 d4 Bg4 12 dxe5 0-0 13 Nc4 d5! when Black looks okay to me) 10 ... d6 11 d4 Be6 12 Qd3 exd4 13 Nxd4 Bxc4 14 Qxc4 c5 was D.Kerigan-J.Jackson, Haarlem 2014. Now White should play 15 Nb3 0-0! (White gets huge dark-square compensation after the risky 15 ... Bxa1!? 16 Qa4+ Qd7 17 Qxa1) 16 Ra6 Nc8 when he probably has enough for the pawn, although if given a choice, I would still take Black.

9 axb4 cxb4 10 d4!



Principle: Open the position when leading in development.

Question: Even when the opponent has the bishop-pair?

Answer: Yes. Development lead trumps bishop-pair when applying this principle.

10 ... exd4 11 Bb2 d6?!

This is a spent tempo Black can't afford. An improvement was found with 11 ... Bb7 12 Bxd4 Nf6 13 Bc5 (13 e5 Nd5 14 Bc5 a5 15 Nd4 Bf8! looks fine for Black, who remains up a pawn), G.Pulkis-H.Isigkeit, correspondence 2008. Now Black gets away with the counterintuitive 13 ... d6! 14 Bxd6 Nxe4! 15 c3 Qd7 16 Bxb4 Qxd1 17 Rxd1 a5! (Black must find a way to castle) 18 Rxa5 Rxa5 19 Bxa5 0-0 20 Nd4 Rc8 21 Bb4 when his super-active pieces and bishop-pair easily make up for White's extra pawn.

12 Nxd4 Qd7 13 Nd2 Bb7

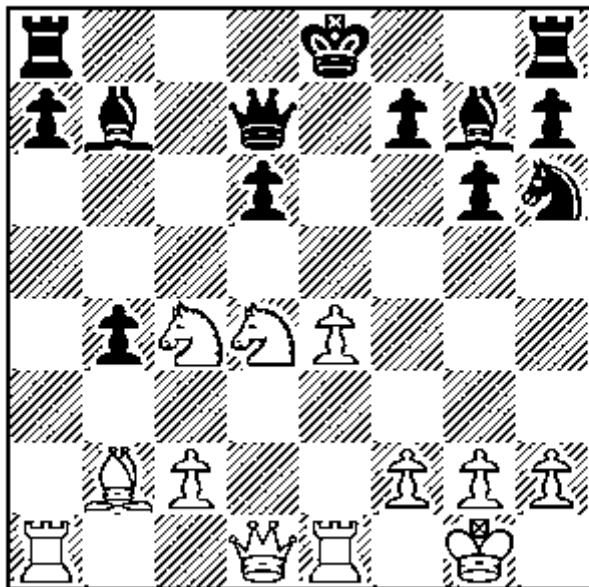
Alternatively, 13 ... Ne7 14 Nc4 0-0 (14 ... Bb7? is met with the shot 15 Nf5! Bxb2 16 Nfxd6+ Kf8 17 Nxb2 Nc8 18 Nxb7 Qxb7 19 Qd4 Kg8 20 Nd3 a5 21 Nc5 Qe7 22 Red1 h5 23 c3 with a winning position for White) 15 Nb6! axb6 16 Rxa8 Nc6 17 Ra2 Ne5 18 Nb3 and I don't believe in Black's compensation for the exchange, M.Egner-N.Bier, German League 1995.

14 Nc4

Fischer begins to target d6.

14 ... Nh6

14 ... Ne7? is weak, but I can't tell you why, since it would give away the answer to the coming exercise.



Exercise (combination alert): Not only is Black up a pawn, with the bishop-pair, but he also threatens to castle to safety on his next move. It's now or never. White must apply the principle: Create confrontation when leading in development. How?

Answer: Annihilation of defensive barrier.

15 Nf5!!

When I was a kid, my mother told me: "Before crossing the street, always look right, left and right again." With his last move Fischer ignores her advice and violates a boundary. Fischer seems to have a chunk of his army en prise, yet everything miraculously adheres.

15 ... Bxb2 16 Ncxd6+!

White's knights draw a dragnet over Black's king, from which he may temporarily hide, but never fully escape.

16 ... Kf8

The only move.

17 Nxb6 f6?

This move, more a placebo than actual relief, does little to soothe Spassky's already jangled nervous system. When we get depressed defending a difficult position, we tend to expect little. And that's exactly what we get.

Spassky, by now boggled by White's growing initiative, had to try 17 ... Bxa1 18 Qxa1 Qxd6 19 Rd1 Qf4 20 Qxh8+ Ke7 21 Qd4 a5 22 Qd7+ Kf8 23 Qxb7 Re8! (White's trapped knight isn't going anywhere) 24 Qb5 Qxh6 25 Qxa5 Rxe4 26 Rd8+ Ke7 (but not 26 ... Kg7?? 27 Qa1+ f6 28 Qa7+ Re7 29 Qxe7 mate) 27 g3 Qh3 28 Re8+! Kxe8 29 Qa8+ Kd7 30 Qb7+ Kd6 31 Qxe4

(Black's b-pawn falls) 31 ... Qe6 32 Qxb4+ Kc6 and Black's active king offers him chances of saving the game in the pawn-down queen ending.

18 Ndf7!?

Now the attack suffers some degree of metabolic distress and goes sluggish. Fischer exhibits that Capa-like trait of preferring a favourable ending to a larger advantage in a more complex position. Black can barely move after 18 Ra5! Bc6 (covering the queen to enable ... Kg7) 19 Rc5 Kg7 20 Nhf7 Rhf8 21 e5! with a winning attack.

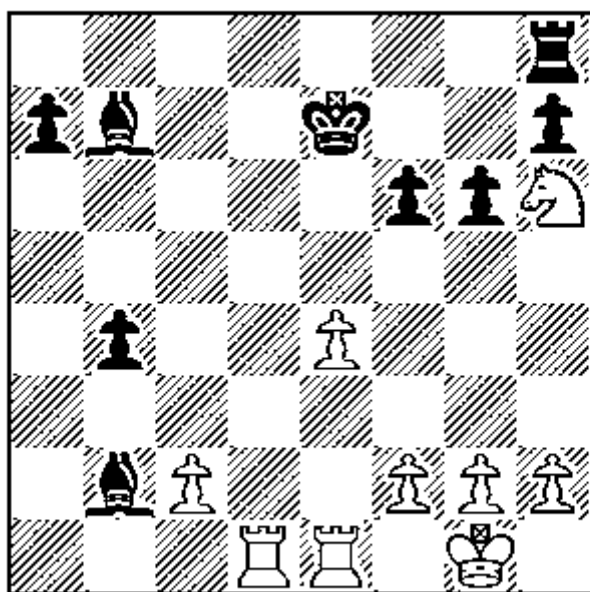
18 ... Qxd1

The queens greet one another with the cold nods we use when we don't like the other person, yet wish to remain on polite good terms.

19 Raxd1

Black's h8-rook is trapped and White will win the exchange, while remaining up in development.

19 ... Ke7 20 Nxh8 Rxb8



Exercise (combination alert): Black appears to have generated quite a bit for the exchange. After all, he has the bishop-pair and a dangerous looking passed a-pawn. It feels as if the supply of White's threats is close to exhausted. If you find Fischer's next move, you dispel this illusion.

Answer: Line opening/pin.

21 Nf5+! gxf5

Alternatively:

a) 21 ... Ke6 22 Rd6+ Ke5 23 Rd7 gxf5 24 exf5+ Kxf5 25 Rxb7 Bc3 26 Rd1 Ra8 27 Rd5+ Kg6 28 Rdd7 a5 29 Ra7 Re8 30 Rg7+ wins.

b) 21 ... Ke8?? hangs material to 22 Nd6+.

22 exf5+ Be5

Black is forced to walk into this pin, as 22 ... Kf8?? (when a general divides his army, it is an open invitation for the enemy to defeat the fragments separately, in easier battles) 23 Rd8+ Kg7 24 Re7+ Kh6 25 Rxh8 wins.

23 f4 Rc8 24 fxe5 Rxc2

This looks pretty scary. Spassky not only threatens to get into White's underbelly on g2, but also

owns two dangerous looking passed queenside pawns.

25 e6!

Threat: Rd7+. Amazingly, g2 remains safe.

25 ... Bc6

25 ... Rxc2?? 26 Kf1 Bc6 27 Rc1 Bf3 28 Rc7+ Kd6 29 Rd7+ Kc6 30 Re3 runs the bishop out of viable squares.

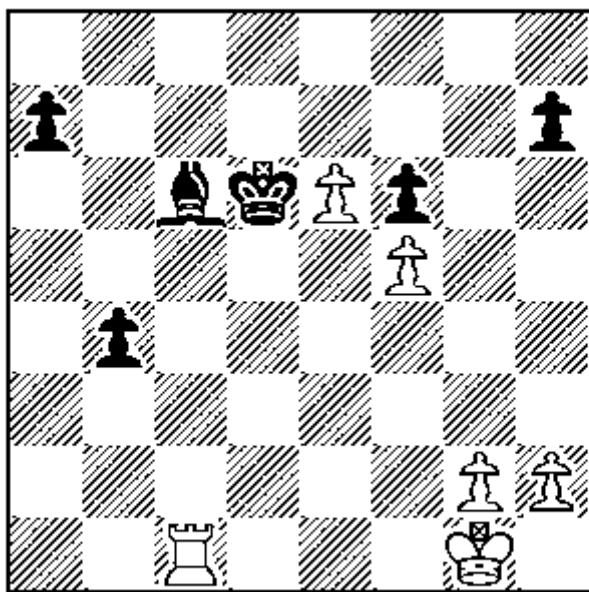
26 Rc1!

Eliminating Black's most dangerous piece.

26 ... Rxc1

26 ... Rxc2?? 27 Kf1 transposes to the line above, while after 26 ... Be4 27 Rxc2 Bxc2 28 Ra1 Bxf5 29 Rxa7+ Kxe6 30 Rb7 both queenside passers fall and White wins the ending.

27 Rxc1 Kd6



Fischer once again emerges with a an extra exchange versus two connected passers, just like the Breyer Lopez versus Spassky earlier in the chapter.

28 Rd1+ Ke5

There was nothing much better:

a) 28 ... Ke7 29 Ra1 b3 30 Rxa7+ Kd6 31 Ra6 Kc5 32 e7 (threat: Rxc6+ and e8Q) 32 ... Bd7 33 Ra8 wins.

b) 28 ... Kc7 29 e7 a5 30 Rc1! and there is no defence to Rxc6 next.

c) 28 ... Kc5 29 e7 (threat: Rc1+ and Rxc6) 29 ... Bb5 30 Ra1 Kb6 31 Kf2 a5 32 Ke3 a4 33 Kd4 a3 34 Kd5 (now Black lacks a useful move) 34 ... h5 35 g3 Be8 36 Ke6 Kc5 37 Kxf6 Kc4 38 Rc1+ Kd3 39 Ra1! Kc2 40 Kg7 Kb2 41 Re1 a2 42 f6 a1Q 43 Rxa1 Kxa1 44 f7 Bxf7 45 Kxf7 b3 46 e8Q and White wins the queening race.

29 e7 a5 30 Rc1!

Deadly accuracy. Fischer avoids the trap 30 Re1+ Kd4 31 e8Q?? (in a winning position, the worst possible mind state is one where you take your inevitable victory for granted) 31 ... Bxe8 32 Rxe8 b3 33 g4 a4 34 Rb8 Kc3 35 g5 a3 36 gxf6 a2 37 f7 a1Q+ 38 Kg2 Qd1 39 f8Q Qg4+ 40 Kf2 Qf4+ 41 Ke2 Qe4+ and White is unable to avoid perpetual check.

30 ... Bd7 31 Rc5+

The point: Black's a-pawn falls, reducing his number of passers to just one.

31 ... Kd4

Spassky, attempting to walk off the effects of the series of tactical blows, makes a final

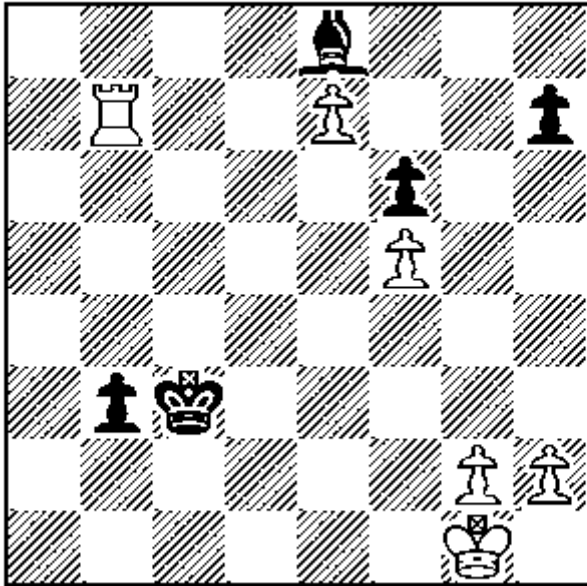
desperate bid with his b-pawn, now supported by his king, who reminds us of the delusional high school nerd who believes he is the wavy-haired football player's rival for the cheerleader's affections.

31 ... Kd6 32 Rxa5 Kxe7 33 Ra7 Kd6 34 Rb7 Bxf5 35 Rxb4 is a technically won ending for White.

32 Rxa5

Black's sources of income begin to fail on the queenside.

32 ... b3 33 Ra7 Be8 34 Rb7 Kc3



Exercise (planning): Black plans ... b2, ... Kc2 and ... b1(Q). Come up with a winning plan for White.

Answer: Transfer the king to d8, promote, and then win the king and pawn ending – by a single tempo.

35 Kf2! b2 36 Ke3 Bf7

A subtlety, which attempts to save a future tempo when White's king reaches d8. However, it isn't enough to save Black, since White wins with moves to spare.

37 g4 Kc2 38 Kd4 b1Q 39 Rxb1 Kxb1 40 Kc5 Kc2 41 Kd6 1-0

41 ... Kd3 42 Kd7 Ke4 43 e8Q+ Bxe8+ 44 Kxe8 Kf4 45 Kf7 Kg5 (or 45 ... Kxg4 and the queening race isn't even close after 46 Kxf6 h5 47 Kg6 h4 48 f6 Kh3 49 f7 Kxh2 50 f8Q) 46 Kg7 h6 47 h3 is zugzwang, since 47 ... h5 48 gxh5 wins.

Game 28

R.Fischer-L.Portisch

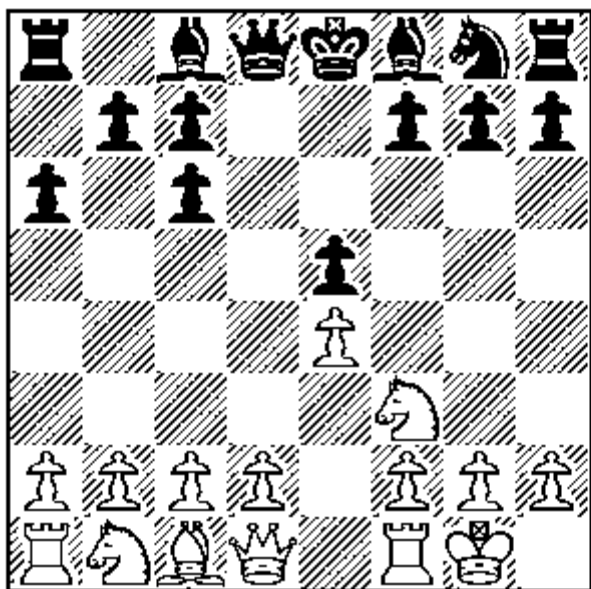
Havana Olympiad 1966

Ruy Lopez

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Bxc6

Fischer single-handedly revived the Exchange Variation – once thought an infirm relic of Lasker's day – into a dangerous weapon in the '60s.

4 ... dxc6 5 0-0!



This slight but important alteration was Fischer's huge improvement, which revived the line for White.

Question: What is the difference between Fischer's castling and the old move 5 d4?

Answer: A subtle point: By castling, White in a sense, gains a tempo over 5 d4, since now Black's e5-pawn really is hanging. BC (before Fischer) White played the immediate 5 d4:

a) 5 ... Bg4 6 dxe5 Qxd1+ 7 Kxd1 was E.Lasker-W.Pollock, Baltimore 1892. Here Black should proceed in (endgame!) gambit fashion with 7 ... f6 8 Bf4 0-0-0+ 9 Nbd2 fxe5 10 Bxe5 Nf6 when Black's development lead more than compensates White's extra pawn.

b) 5 ... exd4 6 Qxd4 Qxd4 7 Nxd4 c5 8 Ne2 Bd7 9 Nbc3 0-0-0 10 Bf4 Bc6 11 0-0 Nf6 12 f3 Be7 13 Ng3 g6 14 Rfe1 Nd7 15 Nd1 Nb6 16 Nf1 and Black's position was at least equal, E.Lasker-W.Steinitz, World Championship (Game 13), USA 1894.

5 ... f6

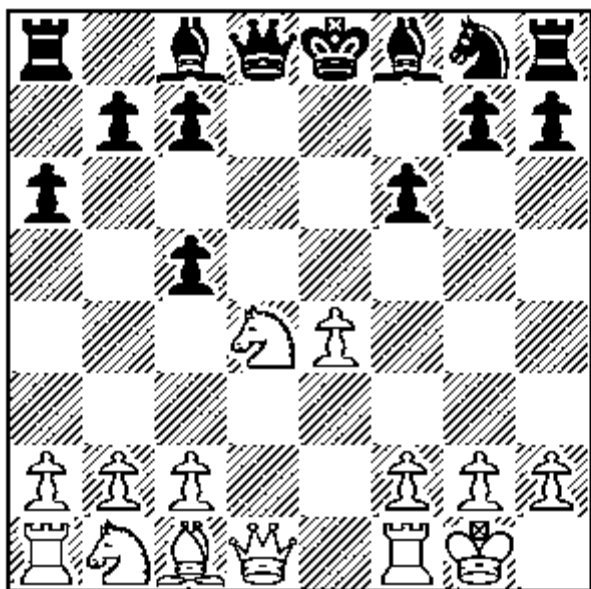
Black's main response. But now by playing d4 next, Fischer gained a full move over what Lasker got, since Black's ... f6 is a somewhat wasted move.

5 ... Bg4 and 5 ... Qd6 are also commonly played here.

6 d4 exd4 7 Nxd4

That which is old is new again. Nakamura attempted to ambush Ivanchuk with 7 Qxd4, and got nothing after 7 ... Qxd4 8 Nxd4 Bd7 9 Nc3 0-0-0 10 Be3 Bd6 11 Rfd1 Re8 12 Rd2 Ne7 13 Nb3 Be6 14 Nc5 Ng6 15 f3 (15 Nxe6 Rxe6 16 f3 Bb4 is fine for Black) 15 ... Bf7 16 Nd3 b6 17 Bf2 Rd8 18 Rad1 Rd7 19 b3 Rhd8 when Black stood at least equal, H.Nakamura-V.Ivanchuk, London 2012.

7 ... c5



Black's main move. It is in his best interest to swap queens, with the bishop-pair his compensatory factor for White's kingside majority. However, this is a secondary factor in Fischer's 5 0-0. Black, in order to swap queens, must play ... c5, which weakens his queenside structure and the d5-square, made all the more dangerous for him from the fact that he creates confrontation while lagging in development.

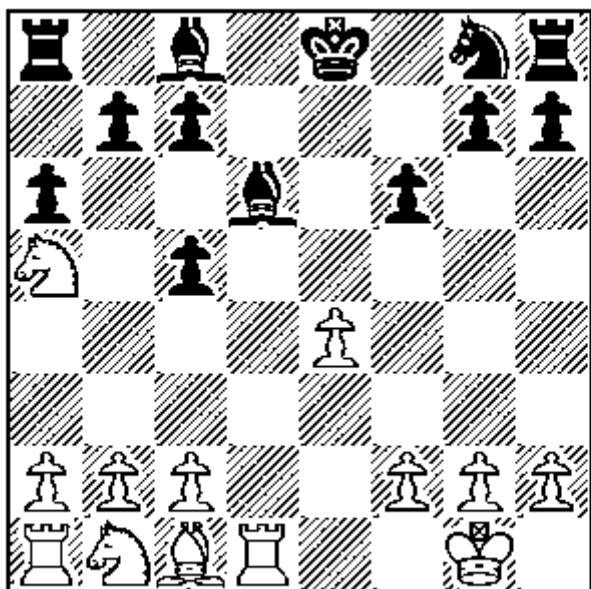
8 Nb3

From b3 the knight adds heat to the c5-pawn and also eyes a5 as a potential square.

8 ... Qxd1 9 Rxd1 Bd6?!

Today, this move is considered inaccurate, due to Fischer's next move. 9 ... Bg4 is Black's most popular response: for example, 10 f3 Bd7 11 Nc3 0-0-0 12 Be3 b6 13 a4 c4, L.Ljubojevic-A.Karpov, European Team Championship, Skara 1980. After 14 Nd4 whose side you prefer depends upon your style.

10 Na5!



Question: It looks to me like the knight just dangles there on a5.

Why play such a move when White can develop a piece instead?

Answer: The a5-knight proves to be very annoying for Black for two reasons:

1. It pins down Black's c8-bishop, which must now stand guard over b7.

2. Nc4 is in the air, which attacks the d6-bishop. If the bishop moves, then Bf4 follows, harassing the c7-pawn.

10 ... b5!?

Risky. This move weakens Black's queenside pawns, which are now vulnerable due to his development lag. Alternatives are:

a) 10 ... Bg4? 11 f3 0-0-0?? (Black intends to play a ... Bxh2+ trick on White, but he had to admit the loss of two tempi and try the embarrassing 11 ... Bc8, a move impossible to play without blushing) 12 e5! 1-0 and White wins a full piece, V.Hort-V.Zheljandinov, Havana 1967.

b) 10 ... b6 is perhaps best. Black assumes a default posture concerning his queenside pawns, with a move played with the philosophy: A moral life may atone for a sinning past. However, after 11 Nc4 Be7 12 Bf4 Bd8 13 Nc3 Ne7 14 Rd2 Be6 15 Ne3 Rf8 16 Rad1 Rf7 17 Ncd5 Nxd5 18 exd5 Bd7 19 g4! Black's pieces are cramped and tangled, N.Firman-A.Graf, Dresden 2007.

11 c4!

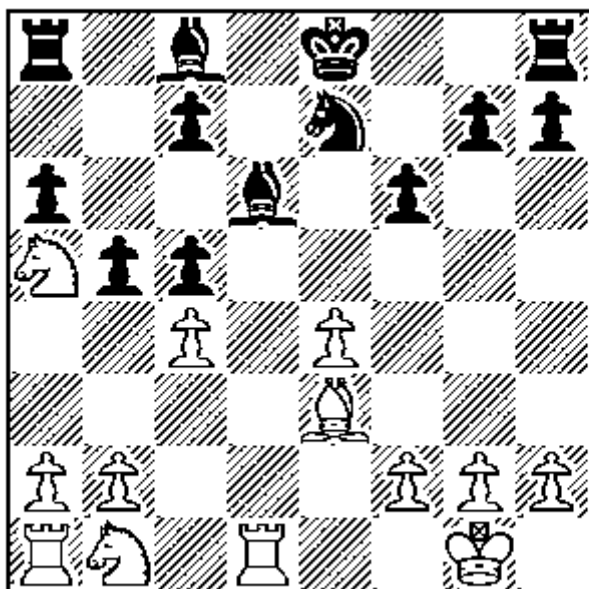
Principle: If your opponent has the bishop-pair, a rigid structure favours the knight's side. In a single stroke, Fischer removes the fluidity from Black's queenside pawns, and secondly, fixes c5 as a stationary target.

11 ... Ne7

Portisch hurries to develop.

11 ... b4?! 12 Nd2 Kf7 13 Ndb3 f5 14 exf5 Nf6 15 Be3 Ng4 16 Bxc5 Bxh2+ 17 Kf1 Be5 was the later G.Peshina-O.Romanischin, USSR Team Championship 1968. White has a winning position after 18 Nd4.

12 Be3



Question: Does White really stand better?

Answer: Houdini is fooled here, assessing the position as even, while I would assess at plus over minus – a clear advantage for White, for the following reasons:

1. He leads in development.

2. Black's c5-pawn is a potential target.

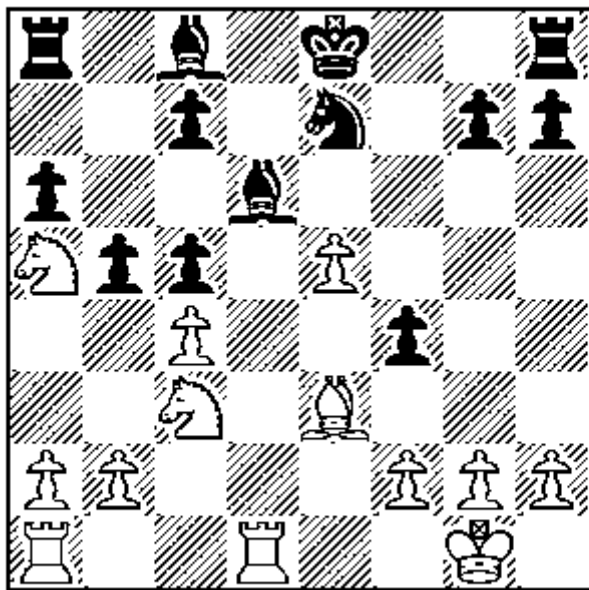
3. Black's queenside pawns are far flung, which is dangerous when lagging in development, since White is in a position to create all sorts of trouble there.

12 ... f5!?

A desperate opponent is also an invigorated, emboldened opponent. Portisch is one of those super-active GMs who resents being placed on the defensive. So he lashes out, hoping to dispel the defensive boredom by confusing the issue and violating the kingside armistice, intending to chase the e3-bishop away with ... f4 next.

Black loses ground if he goes with the reserved 12 ... Rb8 13 Nd2 Be6, S.Iuldachev-M.Lodhi, Chennai 2004. Now White is in control after 14 Rac1 Kf7 15 cxb5! Rxb5 16 Ndc4 when Black nurses multiple weak pawns.

13 Nc3 f4 14 e5!



Principle: Create confrontation when leading in development. Fischer channels the energy flow into a new direction: A deadly development lead/initiative.

Houdini likes the humble 14 Bd2 c6 15 f3 g5 16 Ne2 Kf7 17 Nc1 Bc7 18 Nd3 g4! when I still prefer White's position, since he can pick on so many weak pawns.

14 ... Bxe5

Alternatively, 14 ... fxe3 15 exd6 exf2+ 16 Kxf2 0-0+ 17 Kg1 cxd6 18 Rxd6 Bf5 19 Re1 Ng6 20 h3 when Black's queenside pawns remain under heavy pressure.

15 Bxc5

This is another example of Fischer's willingness to swap one advantage for another. He 'fixed' Black's queenside crippled majority (although in actuality Black's queenside remains weak), in exchange for an even larger development lead. He threatens Re1 and Portisch's next move is forced.

15 ... Bxc3

The bishop is known as a man of peace, mainly since he lost every battle he ever fought, and now seeks to negotiate. There goes Black's bishop-pair. Personal preference is pushed aside to make way for duty. Our position's imperatives sometimes force us to act in ways which go against our fundamental nature. Portisch must have hated making this concession.

Black's position can't tolerate a line like 15 ... Ng6?! 16 Rac1 bxc4 17 Nxc4 Bf6? 18 Nd5 Bd8 and now White has the shot 19 Bd6! when Black is unable to accept: 19 ... cxd6? 20 Nxd6+ Kd7 21 Nf7 Rf8 (21 ... Rb8 22 Nxh8 Nxh8 23 Nb4+! Ke8 24 Nc6 wins) 22 Nb6+ Ke7 23 Nxd8, winning.

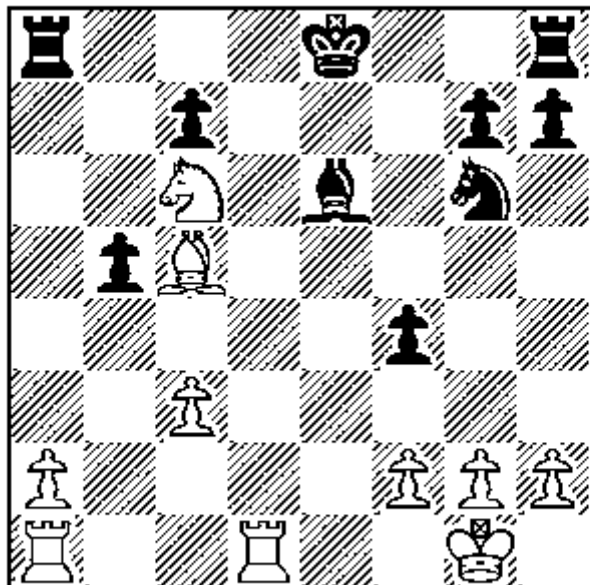
16 bxc3

Threat: Re1.

16 ... Ng6 17 Nc6 Be6

Possibly the wrong square for the bishop. Instead, after 17 ... Bd7 18 cxb5 axb5 19 Na7! Rf8! (a novel way to develop the rook, which can't be taken, since then the a7-knight is trapped) 20 Rd5 Rf6 21 Re1+ Re6 22 Red1 Nf8! 23 h4 Ra6 24 Bxf8 Kxf8 25 Nxb5 Bxb5 26 Rxb5 Black continues to struggle in the ending, yet is better off than in the game's continuation.

18 cxb5 axb5



Exercise (planning/combination alert): Find Fischer's odd idea and you win material by force.

Answer: Go after the b5-pawn.

19 Na7!

An avaricious gleam shimmers in the knight's eyes, as it eyes b5. A brilliant strategic decision where White's knight becomes deeply invested in the decision. The knight covers against Black's attack on a2, while applying pressure to the b5-pawn.

Black looks just fine after the mundane 19 Nb4 Kf7.

19 ... Rb8

19 ... Bc4 is met with 20 a4!, and if 20 ... bxa4 21 Rxa4 Be6 22 Ra6 Kf7 23 Rc6 picks off c7, while if 19 ... Bd7? 20 Rd2 and b5 falls all the same, since the Black's bishop must move away after the coming Rad1.

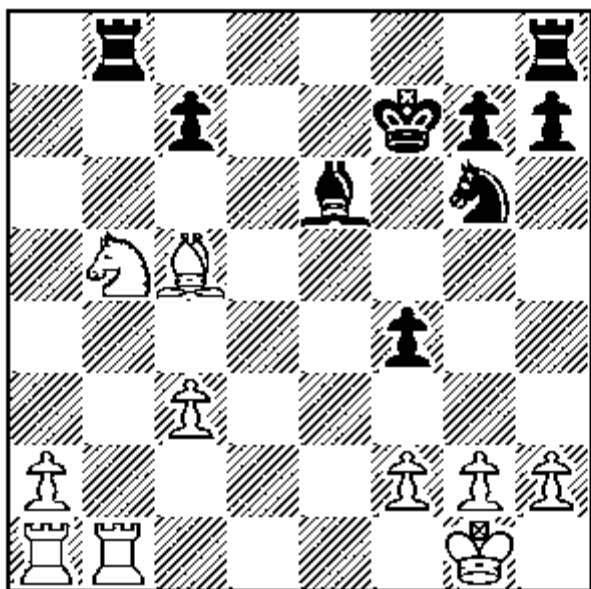
20 Rdb1!

Now b5 falls and White's initiative doesn't require much effort or maintenance, much like my crockpot meals, where I dump in random vegetables, beans, rice, oil, salt and water, and it's ready in eight hours.

20 ... Kf7

20 ... Bc4 is met with 21 a4, while after 20 ... Bd7 21 a4 c6 22 axb5 cxb5 23 c4 the b-pawn falls.

21 Nxb5



The discussion moves to the knight's substantial fee.

21 ... Rhd8

Black's counterplay gasps for life itself. Portisch managed to unravel and develop his pieces, at the high cost of a pawn-down ending.

22 Rb4

Threat: Nxc7. Houdini found the complicated line 22 a4 Rd5 23 Bd4 c5 24 Nc7! Rxb1+ 25 Rxb1 Rf5 (Black is unlikely to save himself in the line 25 ... cxd4 26 Nxd5 Bxd5 27 cxd4) 26 Nxe6 Kxe6 27 Bxg7 Rf7 28 Bh6 Kd5 29 Ra1 Kc4 30 a5 Kxc3 31 a6 Ra7 32 h4! (threat: h5 and Bxf4) 32 ... f3 33 Be3 Kb4 34 Rb1+ Ka4 35 h5 Ne5 36 Rb7 Rxa6 37 Rxh7 and White's h-pawn will win the game.

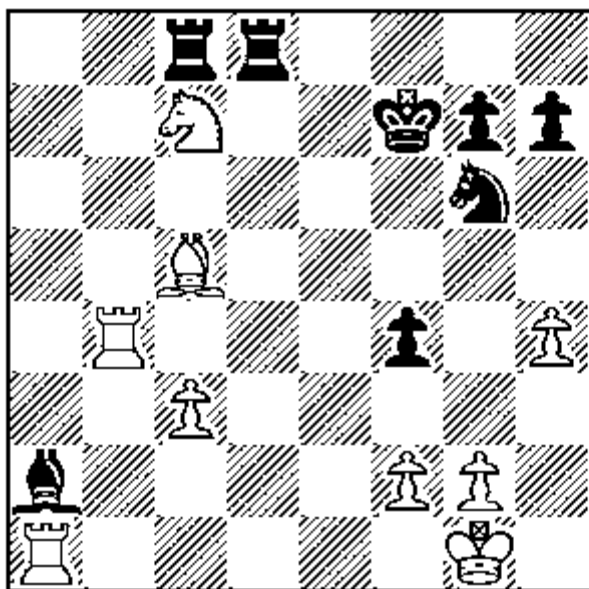
22 ... Bxa2!

Portisch seizes upon White's weak back rank to eliminate the passed a-pawn, yet he remains down a pawn.

23 Nxc7 Rbc8

If 23 ... Rxb4 24 cxb4 Rd2 25 b5 and the passed b-pawn will win the game.

24 h4!



Black's counterplay shrivels like a three-day-old party balloon. Multipurpose:

1. White frees his king of back rank mate issues.
2. h5 is in the air, which undermines Black's f4-pawn.

24 ... Rd2

Taking the 'hanging' piece with 24 ... Rxc7?? loses to 25 Bb6 Rdd7 26 Bxc7 Rxc7 27 Rxa2 with an extra exchange, and h5 to follow.

25 Bb6 f3

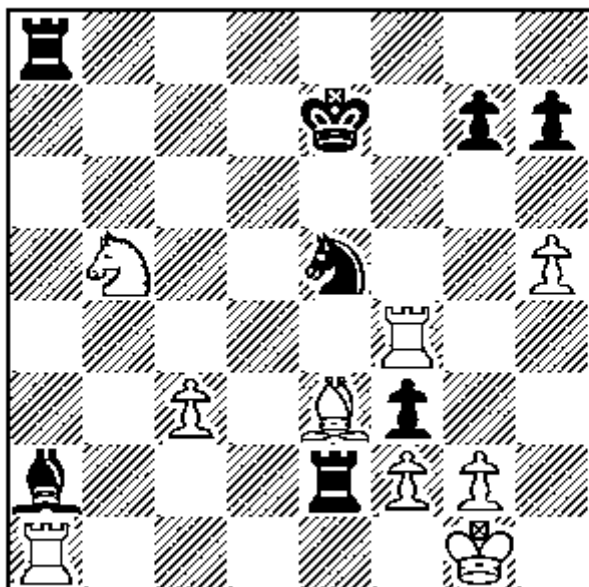
25 ... h5 26 Ra4 Rd6 27 R1xa2 Rxb6 28 Nd5 Rd6 29 Nxf4 leaves White up two pawns. If 29 ... Nxh4 30 Ra7+ Kg8 31 Nxh5 Nf5 32 R2a5 with a winning position.

26 Be3 Re2 27 Nb5

Covering c3 and threatening a fork on d6.

27 ... Ra8 28 h5 Ne5 29 Rf4+ Ke7?

Black had to try the admittedly depressing 29 ... Kg8 30 Nd4 Rb2 31 Nxf3 Nxf3+ 32 Rxf3 with two extra pawns for White. The opposite-coloured bishops won't save Black.



knows what the desire is. How did Fischer pounce on Black's mistake?

Answer: Mating attack. Principle: When hunting the opponent's king, don't chase it; instead, cut off flight squares. Threat: Bc5+ and Nc7 mate.

30 Rd1!

Fumes rise from the vat of Fischer's attacking ambition.

30 ... Rc8

Portisch desperately covers the Nc7 mate part of the equation, which in turn walks into a deadly pin.

31 Re4! Kf6

31 ... Ke6 32 gxf3, threatening f4 and Nd4+, is crushing.

32 Rd6+ Kf5 33 Rf4+

Forcing Black's king into a deadly discovered check.

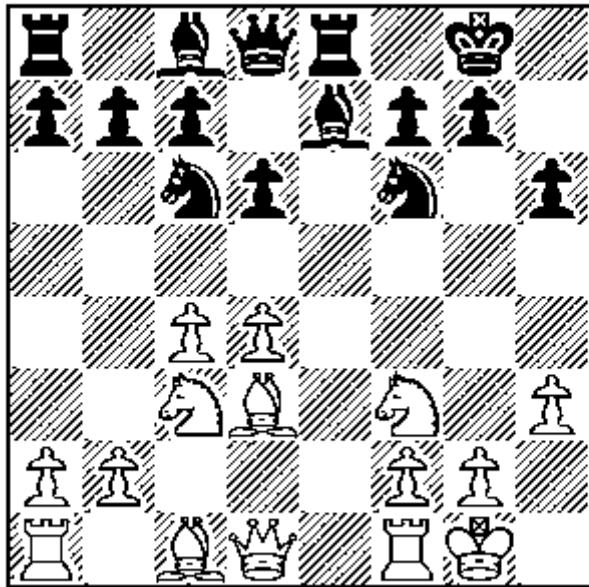
33 ... Kg5 34 Rxf3+ 1-0

Black must hand over the exchange, since he gets mated if he refuses. To play on would be overkill, akin to a federal prosecutor hiring a high-tech forensic team to work out why the defendant changed lanes on the freeway, without first signalling. 34 ... Kg4 (or 34 ... Kxh5 35 Rf5+ Kg4 36 Rg5+ Kh4 37 Rd4+ Ng4 38 Rdxg4 mate) 35 Rg3+ Kh4 36 Rd4+ Kxh5 37 Rg5+ Kh6 (the king nervously waves his hands in a 'This-is-all-a-great-misunderstanding' gesture to White's attackers, who still want to hear his explanation) 38 Rh4 is mate.

Chapter Four

Fischer on Exploiting Imbalances

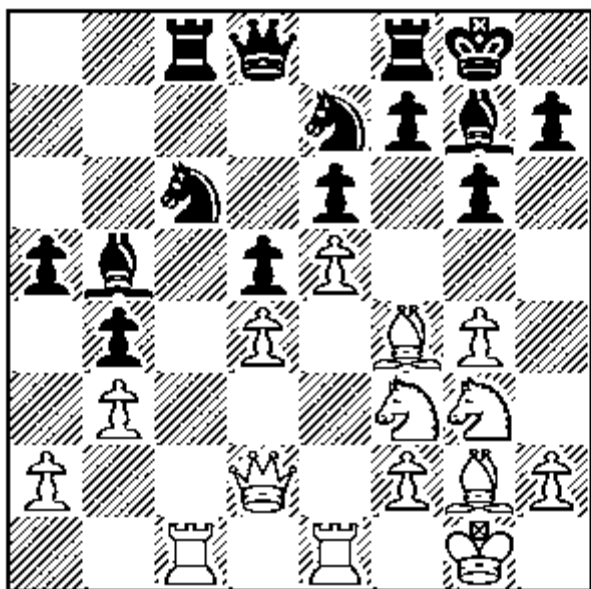
Fischer's eyes were exquisitely attuned to even the slightest imbalance shift on the board, even when hidden from his peers. The following diagrams are two examples of how he recycled a space advantage, nurturing it into decisive proportions:



In the first diagram, GM Gheorghiu, as Black, attempted an experiment on Fischer. In this game he allowed Fischer an unopposed space advantage, while Black's position remains absolutely weakness free. In this game Fischer teaches us the following:

1. It's impossible to claim a privilege without assuming at least some obligations.
2. A dull opening choice doesn't necessarily invite a dull game.

Fischer instructively turned his extra space into a kingside assault, which resulted not in mate, but in the annihilation of Black's pawn structure in the ending.



In this position Fischer had the white pieces versus Panno. Both parties build on their own strong wing, hovering in a state of pre-war, putting off the engagement for a more favourable moment. As you may have guessed, Black's queenside attack went nowhere, while Fischer ably executed a devastating assault upon Black's king, underwritten by his central space advantage as collateral. His e5 point, which Panno refused to challenge with ... f6, proved to be the rock on which the defence broke itself.

Game 29

R.Fischer-R.Cardoso

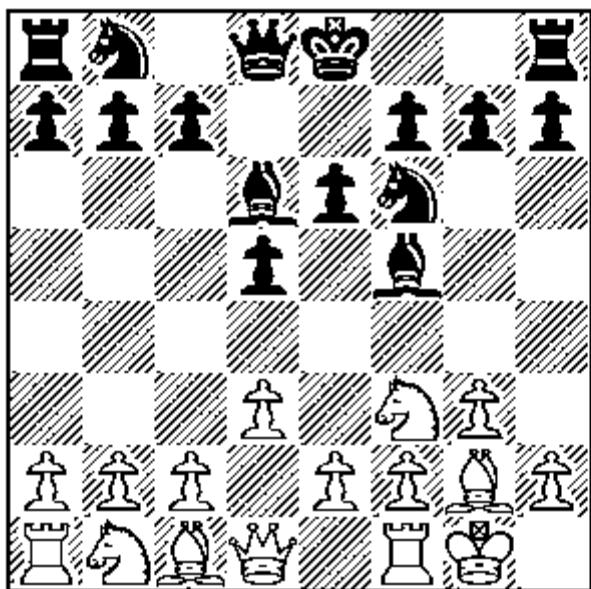
New York 1957

King's Indian Attack

1 Nf3 Nf6 2 g3 d5 3 Bg2 Bf5 4 0-0 e6 5 d3

This line offered the young Fischer a priceless asset: A deep familiarity with the nuances of the structure. We once again reach King's Indian Attack, this time against a Reversed London System.

5 ... Bd6?!



In my London System book, I warned the reader about this posting. The bishop should be developed on e7.

Question: What is wrong with the d6, which is a more centralized square?

Answer: The bishop is tactically misplaced on d6 and Black experiences difficulty dealing with White's crude threat to play e4 and then e5, skewering f6-knight and the misplaced d6-bishop.

6 Nbd2 h6?!

Black prepares ... Bh7, underestimating the latent power in White's position.

I think Black should go into damage control mode with 6 ... c6 7 e4 Bg4 8 h3 Bxf3, where he hands White both a tempo (playing ... Bf5 and then ... Bg4) and also the bishop-pair.

7 e4!

Fischer's secret weapon was the same one used by Sherlock Holmes: acute observation to small detail, which others may dismiss as trifles or irrelevant. No Qe1 prep necessary. Fischer achieves his e4 break with the help of tactics.

7 ... Bg4

Cardoso makes the best of a bad situation by admitting to the loss of a tempo. 7 ... dxe4 8 dxe4 Nxe4? (8 ... Bxe4?? 9 Nxe4 Nxe4 10 Nd4! Nc5 11 b4 wins material) 9 Nd4 Be5 10 Nxf5 exf5 11 Nxe4 Qxd1 12 Rxd1 fxe4 13 Bxe4 c6 14 Be3 will be a very rough ending for Black to hold.

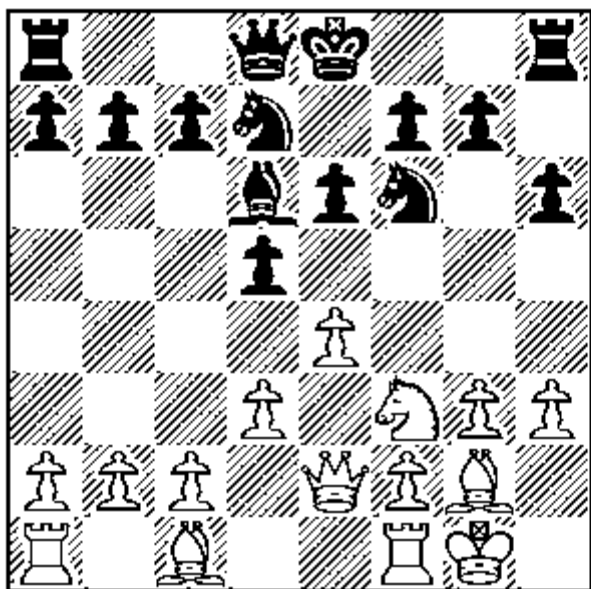
8 h3 Bxf3 9 Nxf3!

Stronger than the automatic recapture with the queen. Fischer sets up two cheapos by 'hanging' his e-pawn yet again, and also threatening e5.

9 ... Nbd7

9 ... dxe4 10 dxe4 Nxe4?? 11 Nd4 Nc5 12 b4 transposes to the line we looked at earlier.

10 Qe2



Threatening e5 yet again. By now Cardoso undoubtedly regretted the unfortunate d6 posting of his bishop.

10 ... dxe4 11 dxe4 Bc5?!

White already owns the bishop-pair, and now Cardoso allows Fischer space. He gets better survival chances by attempting to halt White's central expansion with 11 ... e5 12 Nh4 g6, an admittedly nauseating concession, intending ... Qe7, ... Kf8!?, and ... Kg7.

12 e5 Nd5 13 c4 Ne7 14 Bd2

Another cheapo attempt, this time threatening to trap Black's bishop with b4 and c5.

Also possible was 14 Rd1 Nc6 15 Ne1! (clearing the path to g4 for his queen) 15 ... 0-0 16 Nd3 Qe7 17 Nxc5 Nxc5 18 Bxc6! (the permanent structural damage is more important than the light-squared bishop) 18 ... bxc6 19 b3 (intending to pin with Ba3) 19 ... Nd7 20 Bb2 c5 21 Qe4 with a wretched looking position for Black. White menaces Qc6 or Qb7, as well as the simple plan of doubling rooks on the d-file.

14 ... Nf5

Cheapo alert: ... Nxc3 is the threat.

15 Kh2 c6?!

After this move, Black is in danger of getting pushed off the board. He should play 15 ... a5 to stop White's coming queenside expansion. However, misguided would be 15 ... Nd4? 16 Nxd4 Bxd4 17 Rad1! Qc8 (not 17 ... Bxb2?? 18 Bf4 Ba3 19 Bxb7 and White menaces both Bc6 and Bxa8) 18 Bxh6 Bxe5 19 Be3 Kf8 20 f4, which will be rough for Black, since White has the bishop-pair, development lead and kingside attacking chances.

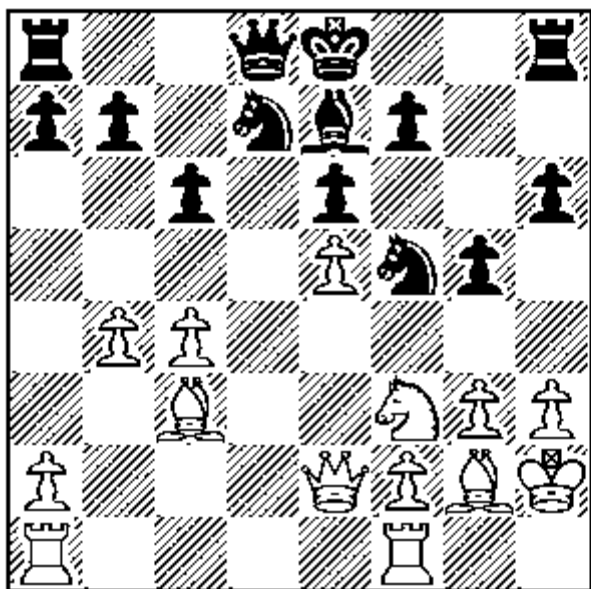
16 b4!

Fischer gains useful queenside territory.

16 ... Be7

16 ... Nd4! follows the principle: Seek swaps when cramped. After 17 Qe4 Nxf3+ 18 Bxf3 Be7 19 Bc3 Black is slightly better off than what he got in the game, since here White is denied the Nd2-e4 manoeuvre.

17 Bc3 g5?



Particles of a still unformed plan begin to congregate in a back room of Cardoso's mind. He decides to sidestep reason and directly appeal to emotion, with a desperado attack, which is in a way, our final court of appeal on the chess board. We all fear death, yet those who commit suicide go out of their way to embrace it. In this case Cardoso entertains a mischievous whim, which as we all understand, is likely to lead to painful, unintended consequences.

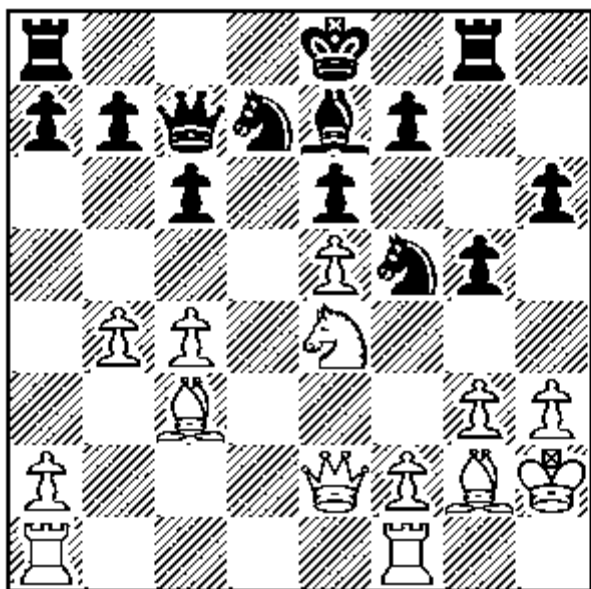
Question: Admittedly, Black plays as if the world is about to end. But why criticize this move? Black realizes that he stands worse and attempts to complicate.

Answer: Black plays under the fundamental misconception that he is the one attacking, with a violation of the principle: Don't launch an attack with a weakening thrust from a position of weakness. Black's last move, like a bathroom 'attendant' in a fancy hotel, is unnecessary and makes everyone uncomfortable.

I think Black would be better off hunkering down for a long period of strategic misery after the more sensible 17 ... 0-0 (sometimes silence on a matter communicates more than angry words) 18 c5 Qc8 19 a3 a5 20 Qe4.

18 Nd2 Qc7 19 Ne4 Rg8

Allowing the centre to open with 19 ... Nxe5?? is suicidal after 20 Nc5 Bf6 21 Rfe1 Nd7 22 Nxe6 and Black collapses.



Question: Why can't Black just castle long and then try and attack White's king on the other side?

Answer: I think that was Cardoso's original intent when he played 17 ... g5?. At this stage I think he realized that his intended 'attack' is a mirage and that he gets crushed after 19 ... 0-0-0 20 c5! h5 21 Nd6+ and Black can resign.

Exercise (planning): Black's strategic sins have overtaken him and his intent tangles until it is scarcely recognizable from its original motive. Come up with a clear plan after 19 ... Rg8 to dramatically increase White's growing strategic edge.

Answer: Gain more space and seize control over d6. Now Black's cramped position goes into further oxygen debt.

20 c5! Kf8 21 Nd6 b6

This move allows White to pry open the centre. 21 ... Bxd6 22 exd6 Qd8 is a position so strategically wretched, that I would prefer to resign, rather than play it out.

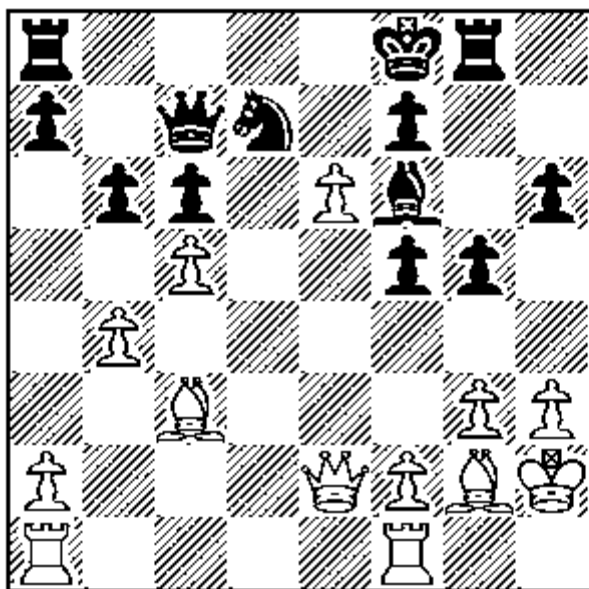
22 Nxf5 exf5 23 e6

Of course. Dual principles:

1. Open the game and create confrontation when leading in development.
2. Open the position when you own the bishop-pair.

23 ... Bf6

Instead, 23 ... Nf6 24 Rfe1 Rg6 25 Qc2 bxc5 26 Qxf5 cxb4 27 exf7 Kxf7 28 Bxf6! (the opposite-coloured bishops leave Black's king defenceless) 28 ... Bxf6 29 Rad1 (threat: Rd7+) 29 ... Rd8 30 Be4 Rg7 31 Bd3! Rd6 32 Bc4+ Kf8 33 Rxd6 Qxd6 34 Re6 is curtains for Black.



Exercise (planning): Find the strongest continuation of White's attack.

Answer: Invade the seventh rank.

24 Rad1! Ne5

24 ... fxe6 25 Qxe6 Re8 26 Qxf5 is also completely hopeless.

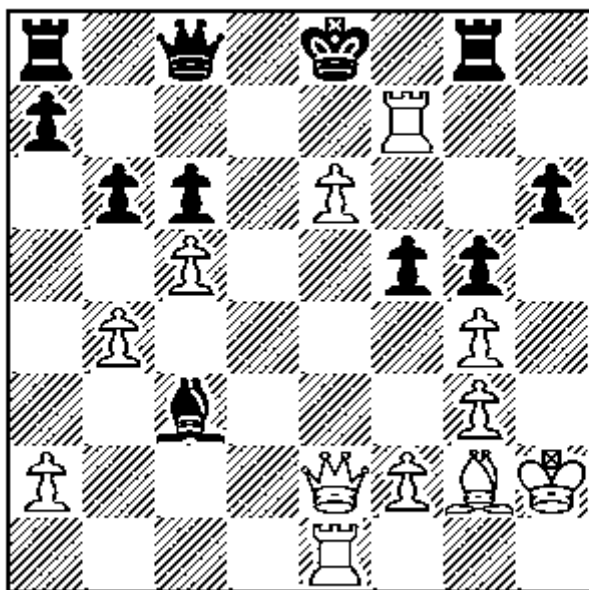
25 Rfe1 Ng4+ 26 hxg4 Bxc3

A new imbalance arises: opposite-coloured bishops, which benefit the attacker.

27 Rd7 Qc8

The rook approaches Black's flustered queen, who realizes that her chastity is in danger of violation. Boy, this is the definition of an optimist, to play on from this position!

28 Rxf7+ Ke8



Exercise (combination alert): Black's position is like a butler's son, who grows

up poor, surrounded by the shadow of wealth. Cardoso's position is in a process of endless recessive drift. The move Fischer played wins easily, but here, he missed a forced mate in seven. It's pretty difficult to see, but give it a shot.

29 Rd1

Answer: The serpent-like queen weaves her way into the weakened light squares: 29 Qf3!! 29 ... Bxe1 30 Qxf5 (there is no defence to Qh7) 30 ... Bc3 31 Qh7 Rh8 32 Re7+ Kd8 33 Rd7+ Ke8 34 Qf7 mate. The queen clenches and unclenches her fingers, probably to test to see if her fists are in good working order, before she pounds her brother black and blue.

29 ... Rg7 30 Rxg7 Bxg7 31 gxf5

Threatening mate, starting with Qh5+.

31 ... Kf8 32 e7+ 1-0

32 ... Kf7 33 Rd8 Qb7 34 Qe6 is mate.

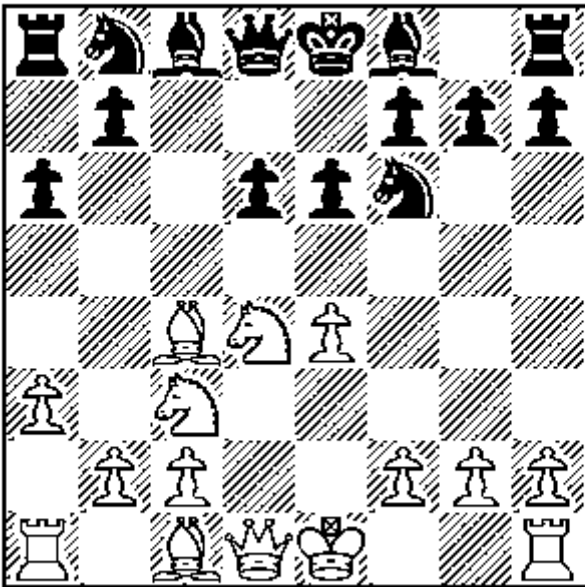
Game 30

K.Robatsch-R.Fischer

Capablanca Memorial, Havana 1965

Sicilian Najdorf

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 a6 6 Bc4 e6 7 a3

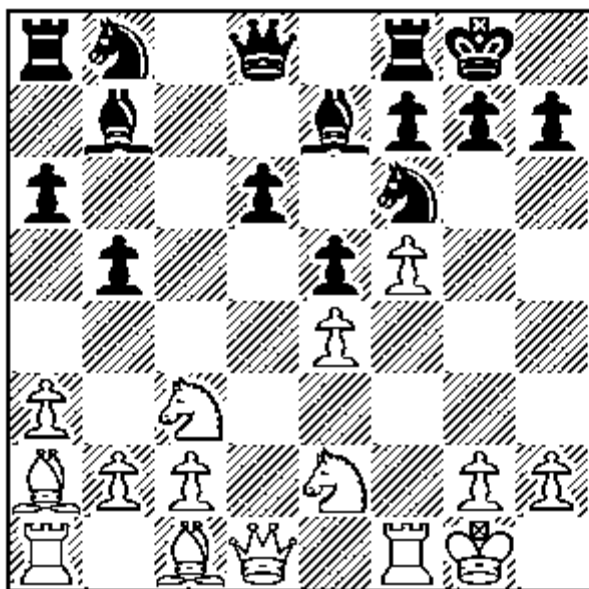


Today, this line is considered a bit limp for White and would probably get a ‘?!’ mark. 7 Bb3 is White’s most reliable move, and even then, Black equalizes, according to current theory.

Question: Why don’t you like 7 a3? It has the benefit of preserving the light-squared bishop, since now it has a safe haven on a2.

Answer: True enough, but at the cost of a precious tempo, which I think is worth more than the preservation of the bishop.

7 ... Be7 8 Ba2 0-0 9 0-0 b5 10 f4 Bb7 11 f5 e5 12 Nde2



12 ... Nbd7

A rare case of restraint from Fischer, who normally loves pawn grabs.

Question: Does White get full compensation for the pawn after 12 ... Nxe4?

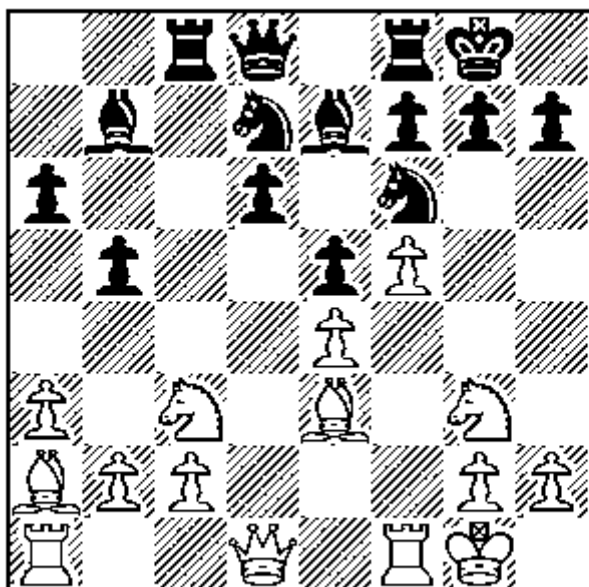
Answer: If Fischer, knowing his tendency for risky pawn grabs, declines a pawn, we suspect there is real peril for his side. Let's look at 13 Nxe4 Bxe4. Before you get too excited about Black's extra pawn, be warned: White scores 81% from this position in my database. Houdini slightly prefers Black, but of course comps defend infinitely better than humans.

14 Ng3 d5! (Black's safest path is to return the pawn; 14 ... Bb7 15 Nh5 looks pretty scary) 15 Nxe4 dxe4 16 Qd5 (White regains the pawn) 16 ... Nd7 17 Qxe4 was J.Bokan-A.Benderac, Ulcinj 1997. Black doesn't stand worse after 17 ... Nf6!. Now if White gets greedy with 18 Qxe5?! Black seizes a strong initiative with 18 ... Bd6 19 Qe2 Re8 20 Qf3 Qc7 (the double attack on h2 and c2 regains the pawn favourably, since Black now leads in development) 21 g3 Qxc2 and he stands better. So it looks like the pawn grab is sound, yet full of practical peril for Black.

13 Ng3

Covering e4.

13 ... Rc8 14 Be3



Question: Isn't 14 Bg5 going after a protector of d5, White's most thematic plan?

Answer: It is White's main line, but I'm not so sure it should be. Black has a promising exchange sacrifice with 14 ... Rxc3! 15 bxc3 Nxe4 16 Bxe7 Qxe7 17 Nxe4 Bxe4 18 Bd5 Nf6 19 Bxe4 Nxe4 (threat: ... Qa7+ and ... Nf2+), as in D.Ciric-S.Gligoric, Novi Sad 1965. Black already stands better, with a pawn for the exchange, plus the superior structure.

14 ... Nb6

I already prefer Black's position. We catch a glimpse into Fischer's stylistic preferences. He declines to make a promising exchange sacrifice on c3. Why? The way he played offers him a relatively risk-free edge. Fischer gives his opponent a choice of handing over his valuable dark-squared bishop, or losing control over d5.

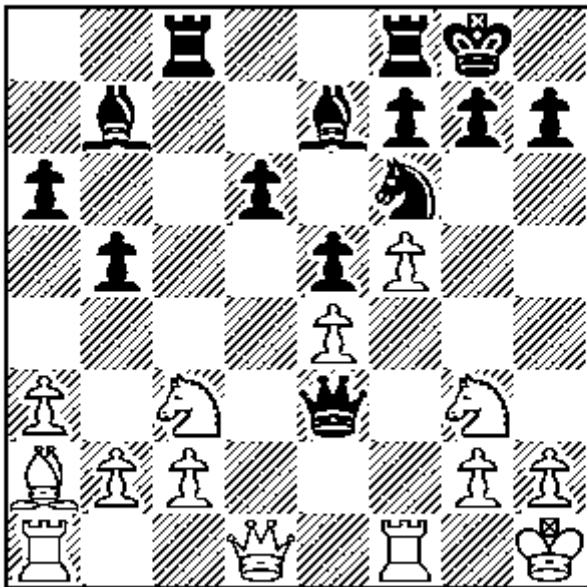
Question: How does the exchange sacrifice work out in this position?

Answer: Oddly enough, the exchange sacrifice has never been played in this position, perhaps since Fischer's move gives Black a safe edge. 14 ... Rxc3 15 bxc3 Nxe4 16 Nxe4 Bxe4 17 c4! undoubles White's c-pawns, although even here I still slightly prefer Black after 17 ... Qa8.

15 Bxb6?!

I think this is the precursor to White's future dark-square troubles. He has a better shot with 15 Qe2 Nc4 16 Bxc4 Rxc4 when Black applies strong pressure on e4. If 17 Bg5 Nxe4! 18 Nxe4 Bxg5 19 b3 Rc6 20 f6 gxf6 21 Nh5 d5 22 Nxg5 fxg5 23 Qxe5 f6 24 Qe2 and White is down a pawn, yet has some fishing chances since Black's kingside pawns are loose.

15 ... Qxb6+ 16 Kh1 Qe3!



Fischer's intuition fastens upon a powerful plan. He, like Capablanca before him, was always attracted to the simple path. He once again rejects a more complex path of an exchange sacrifice on c3. Instead he swings his queen to the kingside, which accomplishes two goals:

1. He effectively squelches White's would-be attack.
2. He follows the principle: Operate on your strong colour – in this case the dark squares.

16 ... Rxc3 is also exceedingly tempting and 17 bxc3 Bxe4 with strong compensation for the exchange, C.Bartsch-V.Tasic, correspondence 2005. Maybe White should continue 18 Nxe4 Nxe4 19 Qf3 Nd2 20 Qf2 Qxf2 21 Rxf2 Ne4 22 Rf3 Rc8 23 c4 bxc4 24 Re1 d5 25 Rfe3!, threatening to get a drawish position by re-sac'ing the exchange on e4.

chesstouring.com

17 Nd5

Alternatively, 17 Rf3 Qh6 18 Qe2 Rc5 19 Rd1 Rfc8 20 Rd2 a5! (threat: ... b4, followed by ... Rxc2) 21 Bb3, A.Danilovic-L.Fressinet, Oropesa del Mar 1999, and Black is in control of the position after 21 ... Qh4!.

17 ... Bxd5 18 Bxd5 Bd8!?

Fischer plays on the opposite-coloured bishops' imbalance. He can also try 18 ... Nxd5 19 exd5 Bh4! 20 Rf3 Qd4 21 c3 Qxd1+ 22 Rxd1 Bxg3 23 Rxg3 Rc4 with a favourable rook ending for the following reasons:

1. Black owns a protected passed e-pawn.

2. White's d5-pawn is artificially isolated. It's safe enough for now, but may later become weak.

3. Black can play for a queenside minority attack with ... a5 and ... b4, weakening White's queenside pawns.

19 a4!

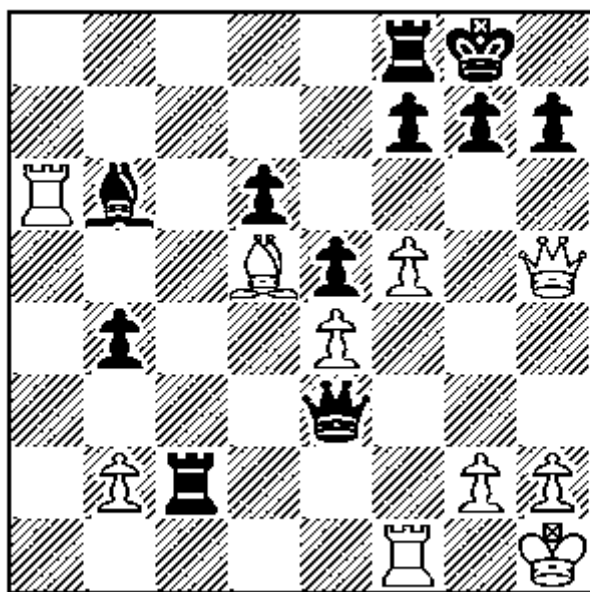
Robatsch attempts to create further light-square weakness in Fischer's position.

19 ... Bb6

Nobody dares call him a bad bishop now.

20 axb5 axb5 21 Ra6 b4 22 Nh5 Nxd5!

22 ... Nxh5?! 23 Qxh5 leaves White in good shape. Now 23 ... Rxc2?? walks into Robatsch's devious trap.



Exercise (combination alert): What should White play?

Answer: Queen sacrifice/weak back rank: 24 Qxf7+! Rxf7 25 Ra8+ Rc8 26 Rxc8+ Bd8 27 Rxd8 mate.

23 Qg4?

In a war setting, we can't always have our data arranged before us in a neat list. When we arrive at such critical cross-roads, it's as if we have a choice of entering parallel universes, one sacred and the other profane. Now White's aspirations are stillborn. Robatsch, who awakens as if from a trance, is willing to hand over his queenside pawns to go for a last-ditch kingside assault, with queen, knight, f-pawn and f1-rook. The trouble is this just isn't enough to force perpetual check or mate on Black's well protected king. And the reason he is well protected lies in the black queen's powerfully centralized posting. Fischer accurately calculates that he can grab the material and get away with the crime.

The alternatives were:

a) 23 Qxd5? Rxc2 with a pawn up and a winning position. If 24 Qxd6?? the simple 24 ... Qe2 forces mate.

b) White may just hold his own with accurate play after the correct 23 exd5! Rc4 24 Qd3 Rc7 25 Qd1 f6 26 h3 Qd4 27 Qxd4 Bxd4 28 Rxd6 Rxc2 29 Rd7 e4 (after 29 ... Rf7 30 Rd8+ Rf8 31 Rd7 the game is drawn by repetition of moves) 30 Rxc7+ Kh8 31 Rg4 Rxb2 32 Rxe4 Be5 33 Nf4 b3 34 Nd3 Rc2 35 Rb1 b2 36 d6! Rb8 37 d7 Rd2 38 Nxe5 fxe5 39 Rxe5 Rxd7 40 Re2 Rdb7 41 g4 Kg7 42 g5 and he reinforces his defences to last out until Judgement Day. The likely result is a draw.

23 ... g6 24 exd5 Rxc2 25 fxg6 hxg6 26 Nf6+ Kg7 27 Nh5+ Kh6

No draw. The king nears the knight with the attitude of a collector who approaches a rare butterfly, certain to fly off if he makes even the least erratic motion.

28 Nf6

White threatens mate in two moves, starting with Qh4+.

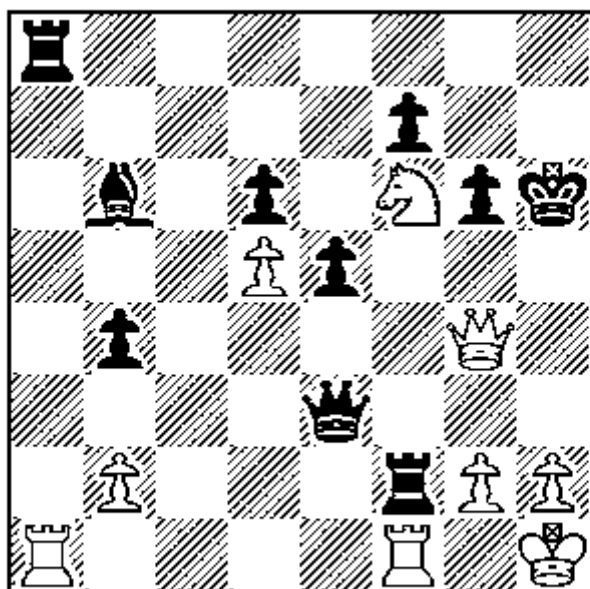
28 ... Rf2!

A once closely guarded family secret threatens to be exposed to public view. White's position is weighed down by multiple strategic anxieties. Now we add another one: Weak back rank. Fischer's move also renders White's mating threat inactive.

29 Raa1

White puts up the strongest resistance in the line 29 Qh4+ Kg7 (now there is no mate on h7, since White's knight hangs) 30 Qxf2 Qxf2 31 Rxf2 Bxf2 32 Rxd6 Bd4 33 Ne4 (forced; 33 b3?? is met with 33 ... e4! 34 Nxe4 Re8 winning, due to White's weak back rank) 33 ... Bxb2 34 Rb6 Rc8 35 g3 Rc4 36 Nd6 Rd4 37 Rb7 Rxd5 38 Rxb4 Ba3 39 Ne8+ Kf8 40 Ra4 Rd1+ 41 Kg2 Rd2+ 42 Kh1 Be7 when Black is only up one pawn, but should convert, since he owns the superior minor piece in conjunction with a passed e-pawn. Also, White's king is cut off on the first rank.

29 ... Ra8!



The rook devises a new scheme to enrich itself. Fischer continues to play on White's weak back rank.

30 Qxb4

Alternatively:

a) 30 Qh4+ Kg7 and now 31 Ng4 is met with 31 ... Rxa1! 32 Rxa1 Qf4! 33 h3 Rf1+ 34 Rxf1 Qxf1+ 35 Kh2 Bg1+ 36 Kh1 Bf2+ 37 Kh2 Qg1 mate.

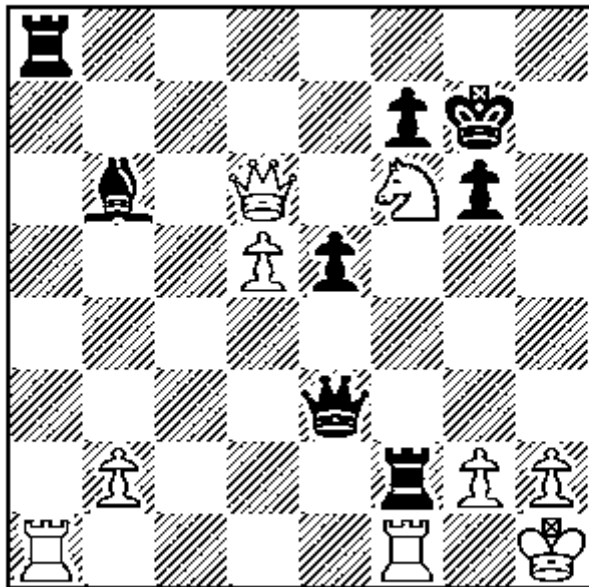
b) 30 Rad1 Kg7 31 Nh5+ Kf8 32 Nf6 Bd4 33 Ne4 Rf4! 34 Rxf4 Qxf4 35 Qxf4 exf4 (that loose back rank again) 36 b3 Ra3 37 g3 Be5 38 Rd3 Ke7 and Black is up a pawn, with White's rook tied down.

30 ... Kg7! 31 Qxd6

Otherwise:

a) 31 Ng4 is met by 31 ... Qf4! 32 Qxf4 Rxf4 33 h3 f5! 34 Nh2 Rxa1 35 Rxa1 Rd4 36 Nf3 Rxd5 with an easy win in the ending for Black.

b) 31 Nd7?? Qe2 32 Rg1 Rxa1 forces a quick mate.



Exercise (combination alert): Black's threats are felt, more than immediately seen or grasped. He has two ways to win, both based on White's weak back rank. Find one.

Answer: Weak back rank/double attack.

31 ... Qe2!

The queen decides upon a contribution to the weak back-rank conversation. When we outguess an opponent, we become clairvoyants, capable of eavesdropping on our enemies' thoughts.

Answer no.2: Also winning was 31 ... Qg5! (weak back rank/double attack) 32 Ne8+ Kh7 33 Nf6+ Kh6 34 Rg1 Qxg2+! 35 Rxg2 Rxa1+ 36 Rg1 Rxg1+ 37 Kxg1 Rxf6+.

32 Ne8+

This knight, who occasionally has the tendency to get above himself, flops on e8 like a mis-flipped pancake, but if 32 Rg1 Rxa1 33 Ne8+ Kh7 34 Nf6+ Rxf6 35 Qxf6 Rxg1 mate.

32 ... Rxe8

The human move. The comp likes the even more crushing 32 ... Kh6!, which leaves White totally helpless. Of course it's a million times easier to find strong moves when you are a non-participating annotator, with a delicately brewed cup of tea on one side, and a 3200-rated comp, whispering double exclaim variations in our ear, on the other.

33 Rfe1 Qb5 0-1

Black is up a piece.

It's impossible to force a combination's geometry into our consciousness. Instead, it must come to us. The show-offy comp found 33 ... Qg4! (troubles pile up on White's king, faster than he is capable of relieving them) 34 Rg1 Qg3!! (a long-held suspicion now becomes a deadly certainty) 35 Qxb6 (or 35 h3 Rh8 mate) 35 ... Rh8 36 h3 Qxh3+! (I told you the comp was a show-off) 37 gxh3 Rxh3 mate. My fingers are exhausted from typing in "mate" so many times in the notes.

Game 31

L.Portisch-R.Fischer

Piatigorsky Cup, Santa Monica 1966

Nimzo-Indian Defence

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4

In this case Fischer refuses to give blind conformity to his normal opening tradition. He “felt Portisch was just too well-versed in the King’s Indian.”

4 e3 b6

4 ... 0-0 and 4 ... c5 are played more often. Fischer’s choice is the most Nimzowitschian of Nimzos. Aaron Nimzowitsch often played this set-up, but with colours reversed, with a 1 Nf3 and 2 b3 move order.

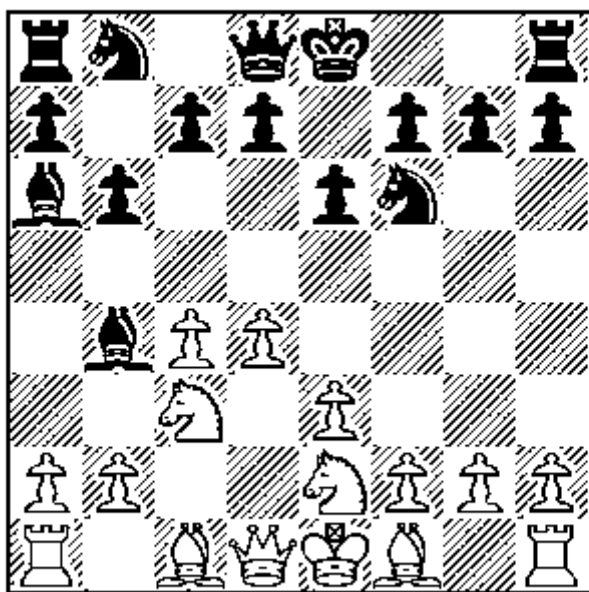
5 Nge2

More popular than 5 Bd3.

Question: Why develop the knight to a square where it blocks the development of White’s light-squared bishop?

Answer: e2 is just a temporary stop for the knight. The move serves the purpose of being able to recapture on c3 with a knight, if Black ever plays ... Bxc3+. After chasing Black’s b4-bishop away with a3, White normally follows with either Ng3 or Nf4, which frees the f1-bishop.

5 ... Ba6



Bronstein’s idea, which immediately puts the question to White on how he plans to defend c4.

6 Ng3!?

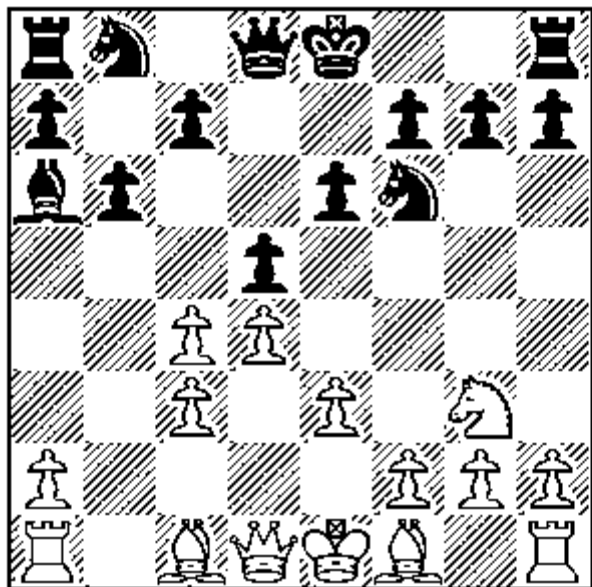
Portisch deliberately follows Saidy-Fischer, armed with an improvement.

Botvinnik, the king of the white side of Nimzo-Indians, always played 6 a3 Bxc3+ (Black can also back the bishop to e7) 7 Nxc3 d5 (Black would love to swap off White’s good, light-squared bishop) 8 b3 0-0 9 a4 c5 (it becomes a battle of White’s bishop-pair, over Black’s development lead) 10 Ba3 dxc4 11 bxc4 Nc6!? 12 Nb5 (after 12 dxc5 bxc5 13 Qxd8 Rfxd8 14 Bxc5 Na5 15 Bb4 Nxc4 Black regains the pawn with a decent position) 12 ... Bb7 13 Be2 Ne4 14 Bf3 Ng5 15 Bxc6 Bxc6 16 f3 a6 17 Nc3, M.Botvinnik-V.Smyslov, World Championship (Game 13), Moscow 1957. Black earns equal chances after 17 ... Qf6.

6 ... Bxc3+

Nimzowitsch always chopped the c3-knight if it inflicted his opponent with doubled pawns.

7 bxc3 d5!



Question: Why would Black hand over the bishop-pair, eliminate one of them

White's c-pawns and then the very next move, offer to undouble them?

Answer: Principle: If your opponent has the bishop-pair, eliminate one of them. Black generates excellent play on the central and queenside light squares if the light-squared bishops are forced off the board.

8 Qf3!?

After 8 cxd5 Bxf1 9 Kxf1 Qxd5 10 Qd3 Nbd7 11 e4 Qa5 12 e5 Nd5 13 c4 Nb4 14 Qb3 Nc6 15 Bb2 0-0 16 Bc3 Qa6 17 Qb5 Qb7 18 Re1 Rfd8 19 h4 Nf8 20 Re4?! Ne7 White's coming kingside attack looks fishy and Black already looks better, due to the coming central pressure and his control over the light squares, S.Gligoric-L.Portisch, Wijk aan Zee 1975.

8 ... 0-0 9 e4!?

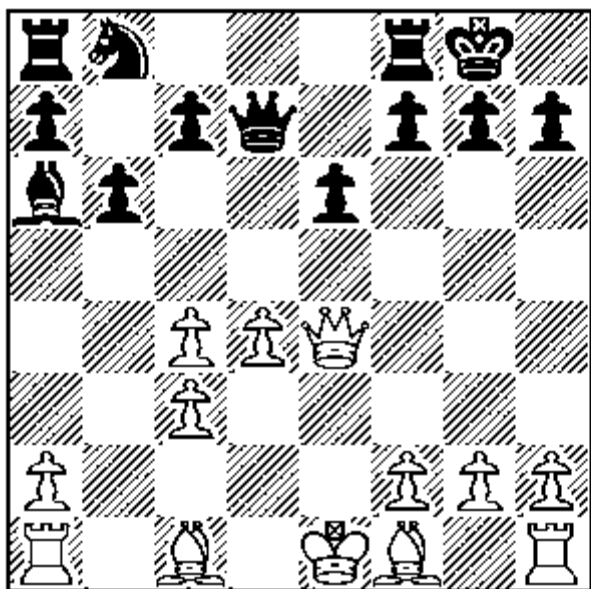
Still following the Saidy-Fischer game. It is at this point that both players' research commences. With hindsight of what followed in the game, this move actually deserves a '?!' Mark.

Normal is 9 cxd5 Qxd5 10 e4 Qb7 11 Be2 Bxe2 12 Qxe2 c5 13 0-0 Qa6 14 Qxa6 Nxa6 15 Ba3 Rfc8 and Black stood no worse, A.Lombard-B.Larsen, Biel 1976.

9 ... dxe4!

Fischer improves upon his own past play. The point is White's c4-pawn is in grave danger. Portisch undoubtedly expected Fischer to follow his own precedent with 9 ... dxc4?! 10 Bg5 h6. Here Saidy retreated the bishop to d2 in A.Saidy-R.Fischer, New York 1965, but Portisch planned the powerful theoretical novelty 11 h4! when Black is under heavy pressure.

10 Nxe4 Nxe4 11 Qxe4 Qd7!!



Astounding predictive insight on Fischer's part. This move may look like a concession, but one with a political facade behind a submissive posture.

Question: I see that if White takes the a8-rook, then ... Nc6 traps the queen. But then doesn't White get two rooks for the queen?

Answer: Two rooks are nearly always superior to a lone queen. This position is an exception for these reasons:

1. White's queenside pawns are the maggots in otherwise perfectly formed apples. Black's queen has a field day of white targets on c4, a2 and c3.
2. Taking the a8-rook costs White time, and he is already behind in development.
3. If Black manages to swap light-squared bishops (which is highly likely in this position if c4 falls), then White is left with a bad bishop versus Black's strong knight.

12 Ba3?!

This move fails to convey conviction in the correctness of White's idea.

Question: Why criticize the gain of a tempo?

Answer: I'm not so sure it's White who gains the tempo. Black's rook is better placed now on e8 and White's a3-bishop is vulnerable to future ... Qa4 attacks.

Otherwise:

a) 12 Qxa8? Nc6 13 Qxf8+ Kxf8 14 f3 Na5 15 c5 Bxf1 16 Rxf1 Qb5 17 cxb6 cxb6 18 Kf2 Nc4 will be a rough ending for White to hold, since Black has a stranglehold on the light squares c4 and d5, and White's undeveloped and uninspiring pieces lack viable targets.

b) Fischer suggested the superior 12 Bd3 f5 13 Qe2 Nc6. Black looks better here, but not as much as in the game continuation.

12 ... Re8 13 Bd3 f5 14 Qxa8?!

Portisch frames an ascent. A natural optimist isn't easily discouraged, even when presented with evidence that he should be. When we reject a position's correct plan, we swim against the current. Portisch, whose ebullient mood isn't borne out by the data, is fooled by the allure of the 'favourable' swap of queen for two rooks. Both parties give up something to gain something. However, Fischer assessed the resulting position far more accurately than Portisch.

White should have settled for the admittedly discouraging looking 14 Qe2 Qa4 15 Bc1 c5 16 dxc5 Nd7! 17 cxb6 axb6 18 0-0 Nc5 19 Bc2 Qxc4 20 Qxc4 Bxc4 when Black regains the

sacrificed pawn and has the better chances in the ending.

14 ... Nc6 15 Qxe8+ Qxe8

A pair of oxen are more powerful than a horse, yet will be beaten badly if they race. In this position speed matters more than raw numbers, since Black's queen soon finds prey in the form of multiple pawn targets.

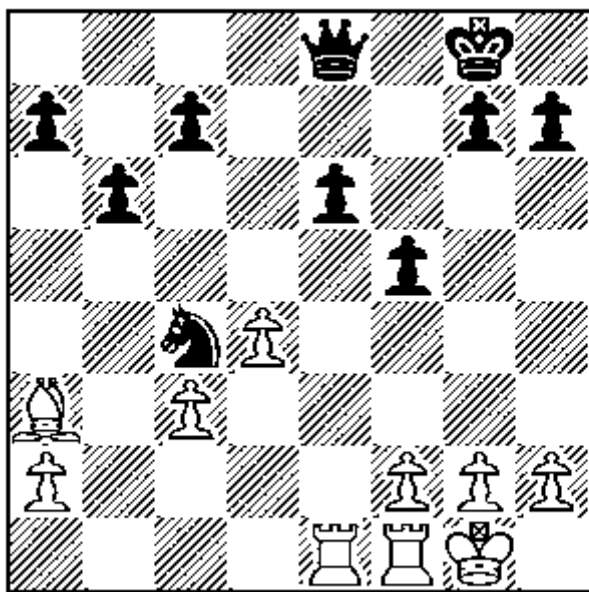
16 0-0 Na5

Now c4 falls, so it's a queen and pawn versus two rooks.

17 Rae1 Bxc4

The comp likes 17 ... Qa4! 18 Bc1 Bxc4 19 Bxc4 Qxc4 20 Bf4 when Black's position is even better than the one he got in the game.

18 Bxc4 Nxc4



Black's knight towers over White's bishop, whose joy continues to corrode.

19 Bc1 c5!?

Kasparov gives his move an exclamation mark. I think there exists an even stronger plan with 19 ... Kf7 20 Re2 Qd8 21 Rfe1 e5! 22 dxe5 Ke6! (the king is an ideal blockader of White's passed e-pawn) 23 h3 Qd3 24 Bf4 a5 25 g3 h6 26 h4 Qxc3 27 Rc1 Qf3 28 Ree1 b5 when White's ineffective pieces stand helplessly in mute witness to the carnage all around them. It's just a matter of time and technique before Black pushes forward his queenside pawns.

20 dxc5 bxc5 21 Bf4 h6 22 Re2 g5 23 Be5

The bishop stubbornly refuses to leave the premises. Kasparov didn't like this move, writing: "A rare instance when a 'powerful' bishop on e5 is transformed into a target of attack". Probably true, but it hardly seems better to play the passive 23 Bc1 and allow Black's kingside pawns to roll forward with 23 ... e5.

Instead, if 23 Bc7 Qd7 24 Bb8 Qd8! and the bishop must return to e5 all the same, since 25 Rb1? loses to 25 ... Na3, while 25 Bxa7? Qc7 traps the bishop.

23 ... Qd8 24 Rfe1 Kf7 25 h3 f4!

Now White must be on constant watch for disruptive ... f3 tricks.

26 Kh2 a6

Here is the Fischerian eye for detail. He moves his a-pawn up one square, so that when White later plays Bb8, it won't be with tempo.

27 Re4

Alternatives:

a) 27 h4 f3! (preferable to 27 ... Qd5 28 Bh8 e5 29 hgx5 hxg5 30 Bxe5 f3! 31 gxf3 Nd2 32 c4 Qd3 33 Re3 Nf1+ 34 Kg2 Nxe3+ 35 Rxe3 Qxc4 36 a3 when White has chances to achieve a fortress draw) 28 gxf3 Nd2 29 Kg2 gxh4 30 Re3 Qg5+ 31 Kh1 Qf5 32 f4 Nc4 33 Rf3 a5 34 Kh2 Nd2 35 Rfe3 Qg4 and Black wins, since there is no remedy to the coming ... Nf3+.

b) 27 a4 a5 28 Kg1 (the do-nothing strategy) 28 ... Qd7 29 Bb8 (the bungling bishop hasn't exactly discharged his mission in good faith; it's amazing how Fischer keeps the bishop hemmed in on an open board) 29 ... Qb7 30 Be5 h5! (here come the kingside pawns) 31 Bh8 (the bishop is driven into a penitential state in the corner) 31 ... Qa8! 32 Be5 f3 33 gxf3 Qxf3 34 Re4 Nd2 35 R4e3 Qc6 36 f3 Qxa4 and the fall of White's a-pawn is decisive.

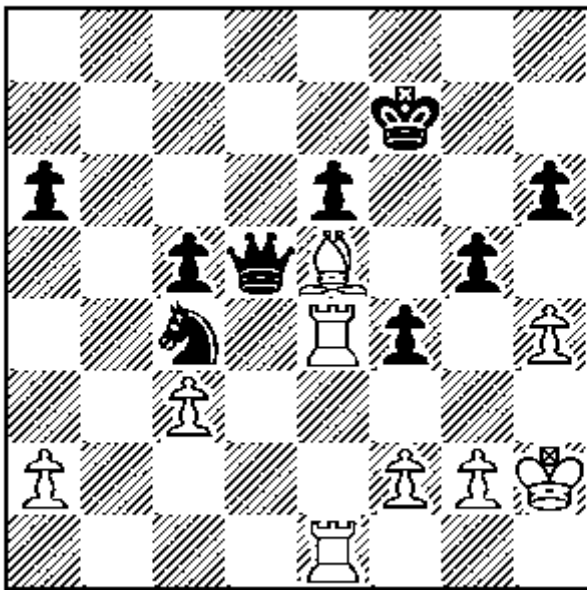
27 ... Qd5!

The queen, who lurked on the fringes, now moves to the middle. Rather than attack a pinpoint target, Fischer goes for an unpatterned dispersal of threats:

1. To White's queenside pawns.
2. To White's bishop and e4-rook.
3. To White's king, since ... f3, as well as a kingside pawn avalanche, is in the air.

28 h4

White is unable to avoid Fischer's coming combination with 28 R4e2? f3 29 gxf3 Nd2, winning material.



Exercise (combination alert): The two armies press as close as lovers in the middle. White's resistance boils down to a single pocket of intransigence: His blockade of e4 and e5. How did Fischer short circuit White's harmony?

Answer: Interference. White's e4-rook is cut off.

28 ... Ne3!

Tenacity, no matter how courageous, can be humbled through raw might. Portisch is unable to compete with Fischer's queen and knight's manipulations.

29 R1xe3

Question: Why can't the e4-rook be protected with 29 f3?

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Answer: White gets mated if he insists on hanging on to all his material after 29 ... Qd2! 30 Rg1 Qf2!. White's king, still alive, is

laid to rest in his coffin, and all which emerges of his complaints is a series of tubercular throat-clearing croaks. There is no remedy to the coming mate on h4.

29 ... fxe3 30 Rxe3 Qxa2

The passed a-pawn will be decisive.

31 Rf3+ Ke8 32 Bg7 Qc4 33 hxg5

Or 33 Bxh6 Qxh4+ 34 Rh3 Qxf2 35 Bxg5 Qf5 and the a-pawn will win.

33 ... hxg5 34 Rf8+ Kd7 35 Ra8 Kc6 0-1

Game 32

B.Larsen-R.Fischer

Monte Carlo 1967

King's Indian Defence

When your writer was but a lad in his twenties, I played the King's Indian Defence with Black. (Don't give me that disapproving look. We all do crazy things when we are young!) Each January, I would dust off my copy of Fischer's complete games (a book I don't own anymore, since we now use databases), and go through all his King's Indian Attacks as White, and all his KIDs as Black. This game is a complete schematic of how to play the black side of a KID Exchange Variation structure.

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 Bg7 4 e4 d6 5 Be2

Larsen successfully experimented with 5 Nf3 0-0 6 Be3!?

5 ... 0-0 6 Nf3 e5 7 0-0 Nc6 8 Be3

Gligoric's line, currently rather fashionable at the GM level today. Larsen switched his lines around constantly, to the point where it was nearly impossible to prepare for him. Fischer may have expected 8 d5 Ne7 9 Ne1 Nd7 10 Nd3 f5 11 Bd2, as in B.Larsen-M.Najdorf, Santa Monica 1966.

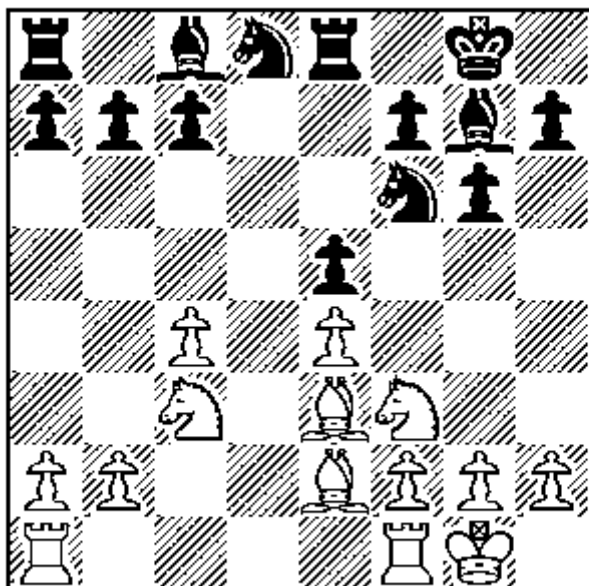
8 ... Re8

Today, most GMs play 8 ... Ng4 9 Bg5 f6, and now either 10 Bc1 or 10 Bh4.

9 dxe5!

The only way to play for an edge. 9 d5 is met with the simplification trick 9 ... Nd4! when Black equalizes.

9 ... dxe5 10 Qxd8 Nxd8



10 ... Rxd8 is also played here.

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Question: What is the difference?

Answer: By recapturing with the rook, Black's knight remains poised for ... Nd4, taking advantage of the hole. The trouble is White gets to play Nd5 and Black can't easily play ... c6. That said, after 11 Bg5 Rf8 12 Rfd1 Bg4 13 h3 Bxf3 14 Bxf3 Nd4 15 Nd5 Nxd5 16 cxd5 f5 17 Be3 Nxf3+ 18 gxf3 Rf7 19 Rac1 Bf8! 20 Bc5 Bh6! Black equalized in A.Shneider-A.Beliavsky, Bern 1995.

11 Nb5

Larsen goes after the underbelly, attacking both c7 and at least getting Black worried about a7. If 11 Nd5 Ne6 12 Ng5 and now Black equalizes with the trick 12 ... Nf4!, Z.Mijailovic-V.Kotronias, Vrnjacka Banja 2006.

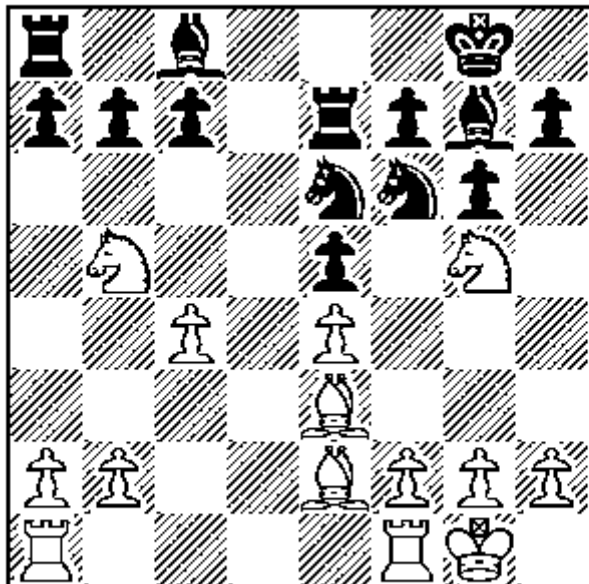
11 ... Ne6

Certainly not 11 ... Re7? 12 Bc5 Rd7 13 Nxe5 Rd2 14 Nxc7 Rxe2 15 Nxa8 Nxe4 16 Rad1 Ne6 17 Bxa7! and Black's problem is that with 17 ... Bxe5?? 18 Rfe1! White regains the piece and remains up the exchange.

12 Ng5

Attempting to undermine the defender of c7.

12 ... Re7



13 Rfd1

Larsen's attempted improvement over 13 Nxe6 Bxe6 14 f3 c6 15 Nc3 Rd7 16 Rfd1 Bf8 17 Kf2 b6 18 b3 Rb7 19 Na4 Nd7 20 Nb2 b5 when Black is active and fully equal, S.Reshevsky-R.Fischer, Santa Monica 1966.

Question: Can White get away with 13 Nxa7?

Answer: The move is playable, but White gets no advantage after 13 ... Nd4! 14 Bxd4 exd4 15 Nxc8 Rxc8 16 f3. White is up a pawn, while his bad bishop and weakness on the dark squares ensure Black full compensation, P.Martin-B.Ivkov, Buenos Aires 1955.

13 ... b6!

Just like the last game, Fischer throws his opponent off balance by beating him to the opening novelty.

Larsen expected 13 ... c6!? which followed S.Reshevsky-R.Fischer, Los Angeles 1961, from their ninth matchgame. Larsen said he planned the new move at the time 14 Nxa7!? when Fischer noted in 60 Memorable Games he would have gone for the line 14 ... Bd7 (also to be considered is 14 ... Nd4! 15 Bxd4 exd4 16 Nxc8 Rxc8 17 f3 Nd7 which leaves White up a pawn, but with a bad bishop, weak dark squares and facing Black's passed d-pawn; Black should have full

compensation here) 15 Nxe6 Bxe6 16 f3 Rd7 threatening ... Rd4! when “Black has fair play for the pawn, considering that the knight is stranded on a7”.

14 c5!?

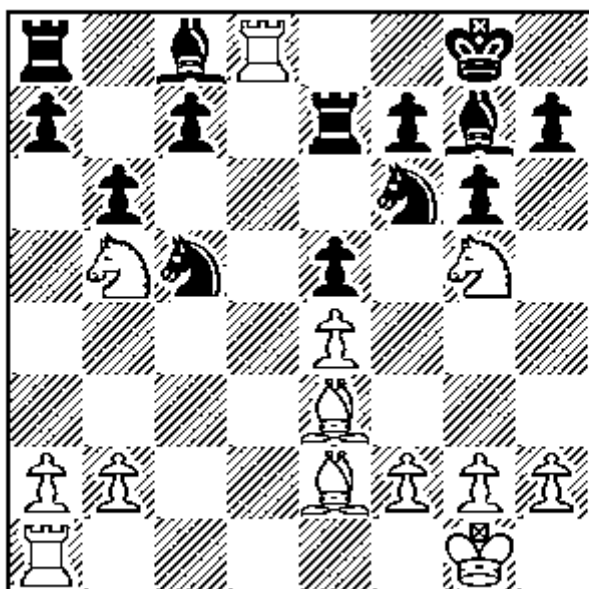
Some plans are as perilous as they are desirable, and another player's notion of what constitutes inappropriate behaviour may not square with ours. Having written a book on Larsen, I came to the conclusion that his great ambition in life was to break every chess law he could possibly get away with. He sometimes forgot that the chess goddess, above all, is capricious. She sometimes gives, but she also loves to take away that which is most precious to us. This raw show of aggression is both risky and typical of Larsen's speculative style.

The safe route 14 Nxe6 (a move played with the philosophy: If we let go of expectations, we can never be disappointed) 14 ... Bxe6 15 f3 offers White nothing, except safety.

14 ... Nxc5

Foolish would be 14 ... bxc5? 15 Nxe6 Bxe6 16 Bxc5 Rd7 17 f3 when Black has no compensation for his damaged queenside structure.

15 Rd8+



Exercise (critical decision): Black has a choice of 15 ... Re8, 15 ... Ne8 and 15 ... Bf8.

Only one of them allows Black to remain equal. Which one would you play?

Answer: 15 ... Bf8!

Fischer finds the best defence, avoiding:

a) 15 ... Re8?! 16 Rxe8+ Nxe8 17 Bc4! Be6 18 Nxe6 Nxe6 19 Bd5 Rd8 20 Nxa7 Nd4 21 Nc6 Nxc6 22 Bxc6 with the bishop-pair and a slight light-square bind on the queenside for White.

b) 15 ... Ne8? walks into a combination after 16 Bxc5 bxc5 17 Nxc7! (overloaded defender/pin) 17 ... Rxc7 18 Rxe8+ Bf8 19 Nxh7! (overloaded defender/pin, again) 19 ... Kxh7 20 Rxf8 with an extra pawn for White in the ending.

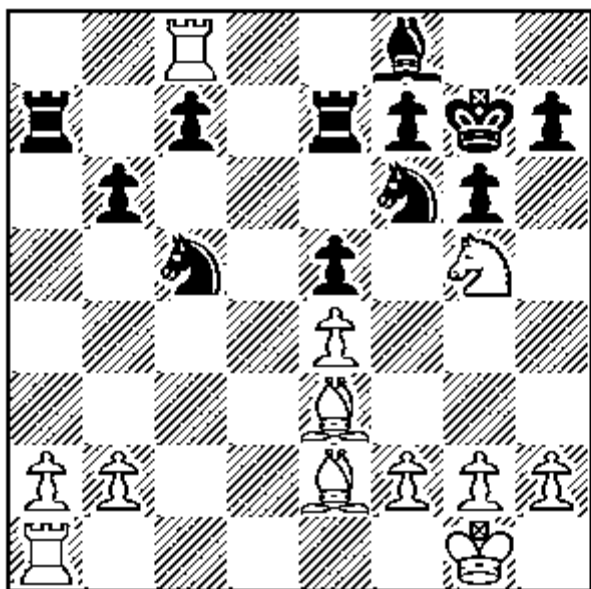
16 Nxa7!

Overloaded defender. Larsen regains his sacrificed pawn, but not the advantage.

16 ... Rxa7

16 ... Bb7 17 Rxa8 Bxa8 18 f3 h6 19 Nh3 Ne6 20 Rc1 c5 21 Nb5 Nd4 is also fine for Black.

17 Rxc8 Kg7



Fischer avoids the trap 17 ... Ncxe4?? 18 Nxe4 Nxe4 19 Bh6, forcing mate.

18 f3

Question: Why would White avoid 18 Bxc5 bxc5 which inflicts serious damage to Black's structure?

Answer: Black gets adequate compensatory play on the dark squares after 19 a4 (if 19 f3 Rd7 20 Bc4 h6 and White must hand over two pieces for the rook and pawn, since 21 Nh3? Rd4 22 b3 Nd7 23 Rd8 Be7 24 Re8 Bd6 25 Nf2 Nb6 gives Black a close-to-winning initiative) 19 ... h6 20 Nf3 Nxe4 21 a5 Nd6 22 Rb8 e4 23 Nd2 e3 24 fxe3 Rxe3 25 Kf1 Re6 with an unbalanced game, where White's passed a-pawn compensates him for his missing pawn.

18 ... Ne8 19 a3?!

White's would-be initiative needs both time and reinforcements – both of which he lacks. Fischer gives this move a '?' mark, writing: "Larsen's reluctance to simplify will soon backfire." He suggested the continuation 19 Bxc5 bxc5 20 Rb8, claiming White has all the chances due to his passed a-pawn. Houdini is unimpressed and assesses the position at '0.00' – dead even. Let's look further to see which assessment is the more accurate: 20 ... Nf6 21 a4 Rd7 22 a5 Rd4 23 b3 Nd7 24 Re8 Rb4 25 Bc4 Nb6! 26 Bxf7 h6 27 Rd1 Rxa5 28 Rdd8 hxe5 29 Rxf8 Nd7! 30 Rh8 Ra1+ 31 Kf2 Ra2+ 32 Kg3 Rd4 33 Bc4 Nf6. The assessment remains at '0.00' and it feels to me that Houdini won the assessment battle.

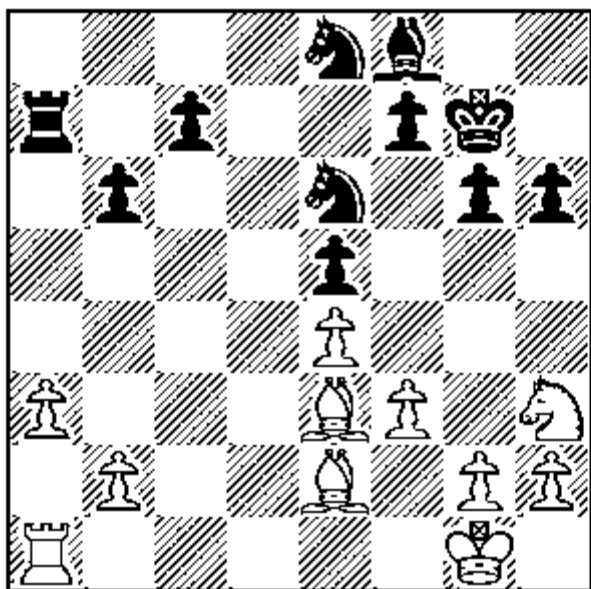
19 ... Nd6 20 Rd8!?

Larsen rejects the repetition draw after 20 Rb8 Nd7 21 Rd8 Nb7 22 Rc8 Nd6.

20 ... h6 21 Nh3 Ne6 22 Rb8 Re8

The final white invader is exchanged away.

23 Rxe8 Nxe8



Question: How would you assess this ending?

Answer: I prefer Black. The game becomes a battle between White's bishop-pair and Black's dark-square control. The problem for White is that I don't see a way for him to retain the bishop-pair against a swap on c5.

24 Bb5?!

A waste of time. White should recentralize his knight with 24 Nf2.

24 ... Nd6 25 Bf1

Not 25 Bc6? Nc4 26 Bc1 Nd4 27 Bd5 Ra4 28 Nf2 c6 29 Bxc4 Rxc4 when the coming ... Rc2 leaves Black in control.

25 ... Nb7! 26 Nf2

Note that White is unable to prevent the coming bishop swap with 26 b4?? since Black has the simple 26 ... Bxb4.

26 ... Bc5!

Principle: When the opponent has the bishop-pair, trade one away.

27 Bxc5

White has no choice but to trade since 27 Bd2?! Bd4 turns Black's bishop into a monster.

27 ... Nbxc5 28 Rd1 h5!

An example of Fischer's super-alertness. If 28 ... Nd4 29 Ng4 f6 30 f4! Nxe4 31 fxe5 c5 32 exf6+ Nxf6 33 Nxf6 Kxf6 and the simplification benefited White, who should hold the game.

29 Rd5

After 29 Nd3?! Nxd3 30 Bxd3 Nd4 Black's knight displays obvious superiority over White's bishop.

29 ... Kf6 30 h4 Ke7!

Clever. The e5-pawn doesn't hang.

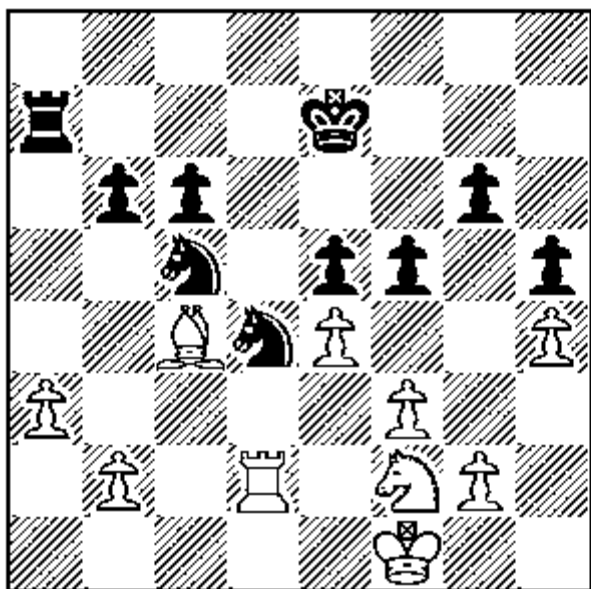
31 Bc4

Avoiding 31 Rxe5?? c6 and the coming ... f6 wins the exchange.

31 ... c6 32 Rd2 Nd4 33 Kf1

Larsen is understandably reluctant to play 33 Nd3 Nxd3 34 Bxd3 b5, turning it into a pure good knight versus mediocre bishop contest.

33 ... f5!



The centre is as overcrowded as my garage. Just visually, we see that Black's creeping army begins to take over on both sides of the board.

34 b4?

The act of overextension is clear proof that it's possible to love something to death. Larsen is in danger of laying waste to his natural resources through over consumption. White's position is unable to withstand the creation of a fresh weakness on a3. This move was made in that pre-time control zone where our clocks run low, and illumination begins to unsettle and fade, just before the chaos. White had to try and hunker down with a move like 34 Ba2.

34 ... b5! 35 Bg8

It's suicide to allow Black a passed c-pawn: 35 bxc5?? bxc4 36 exf5 gxf5 37 Ra2 c3 38 Nd3 Ke6 39 Nb4 (in order to halt Black's king entry with ... Kd5) 39 ... Ra5 40 Nd3 e4 41 fxe4 fxe4 42 Nb4 Rxc5 43 Nc2 Kd5 44 Ne3+ Ke5 45 Ra1 c2 46 Rc1 Rc3 47 Kf2 Rd3 48 Rf1 Nb3! 49 Nxc2 Rd2+ and wins.

Also bad is 35 Bxb5?, which hangs material to 35 ... Ncb3.

35 ... fxe4!

White is handed yet other weaknesses to defend on e4.

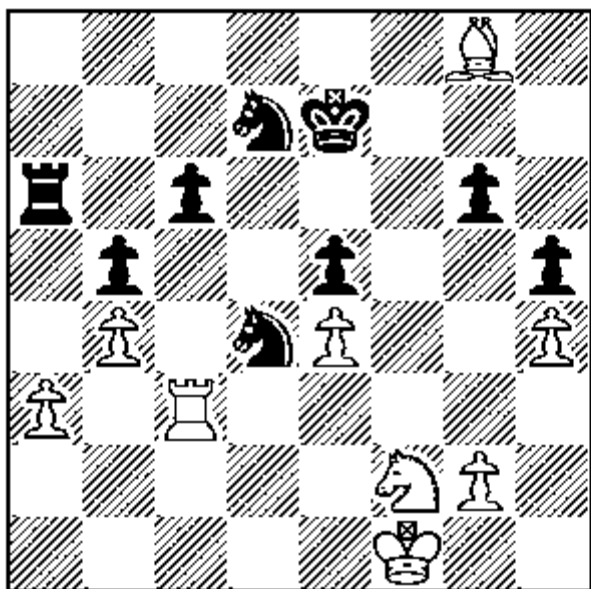
36 fxe4

After 36 bxc5 e3 37 Rd3 exf2 38 f4 Kf6 39 fxe5+ Kxe5 40 Kxf2 Nf5 White soon loses material, since he is unable to cover the a3-, c5- and h4-pawns.

36 ... Nd7 37 Rd3 Ra6!

Covering c6, which enables the threat: ... Nc2. The immediate 37 ... Nc2 allows 38 Rc3 when Black has nothing better than to return with 38 ... Nd4.

38 Rc3



Exercise (combination alert): When we are maddeningly close to finding a combinational pattern, dim geometric associations float past our minds, taunting us to try and latch on to one. Fischer found a hidden tactical idea in the position. What would you play here?

Answer: Weak back rank.

38 ... c5!

A fringe benefit arising from White's unfortunately placed king appears. Larsen missed this energetic shot, which plays on White's weak back rank.

Answer no.2: Also powerful is the comp's suggestion 38 ... Ra8! 39 Ba2 c5! 40 bxc5 b4!.

39 g4?!

The more elaborate the plan, the more likely it will fail due to unforeseen consequences. Larsen had to try 39 bxc5 b4! 40 Rc1 (40 axb4?? walks headlong into the weak back-rank theme after 40 ... Ra1+) 40 ... Nf6 41 Bc4 Rxa3. White is also lost here, but has better chances than he did in the game.

39 ... c4!

A new advantage emerges: a protected passed c-pawn. Larsen may have counted on 39 ... Nf6 when White could try and confuse the issue with 40 Rxc5!.

40 gxf5 gxf5 41 Bd5 Nf6 42 Rg3 Nxd5 43 exd5 Rf6 44 Kg2

44 Kg1?? walks into the fork 44 ... Ne2+, or if 44 Ke1 Rf4 and Black completely dominates.

44 ... Nf5!

Forcing White's rook into passivity.

45 Rh3 Rg6+ 46 Kf3 Nd4+ 47 Ke3

47 Ke4 Kd6 48 Rh2 Rg3 49 Nd1 Rg4+ 50 Ke3 Rg1 51 Rd2 (51 Nc3?? Rg3+ wins a piece) 51 ... Rh1! leaves White in zugzwang, where every move loses material.

47 ... Rg2 48 Rh1

48 Ne4?? walks into 48 ... Re2 mate.

48 ... Kd6

The d5-pawn falls.

49 Ne4+ Kxd5 50 Nc3+ Ke6 51 Rc1

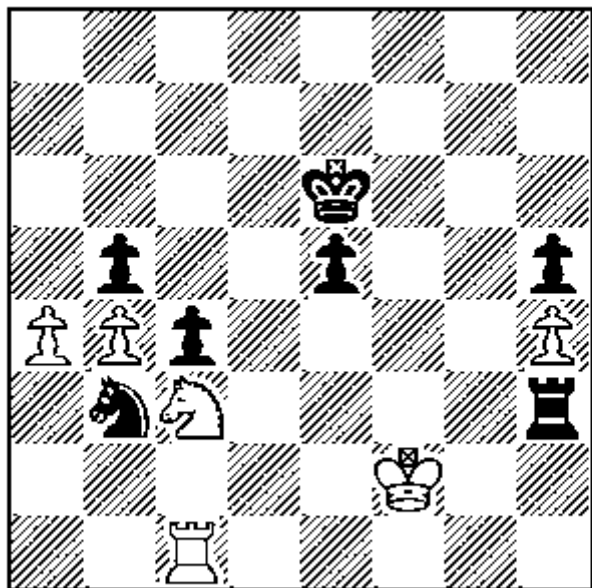
Exile is always an option. White's knight is trapped on c3, since moving it allows mate on e2.

This means that responsibility for the well-being of the c3-knight keeps getting passed up the chain of command, until the rook assumes the menial duty.

51 ... Rh2 52 a4

This is way too little, coming way too late.

52 ... Rh3+ 53 Kf2 Nb3!



The knight ending is a trivial win for Black.

54 Kg2

54 Rc2?? walks into 54 ... Rh2+.

54 ... Nxc1 55 Kxh3 bxa4 56 Nxa4 Ne2!

The knight seizes control over both c2 and c1, the queening square.

57 b5 c3 58 b6 c2!

Here we see a case of two minds blending toward a unified thought: ‘I must promote before he does’.

59 Nc5+

If 59 b7 c1Q 60 b8Q Qh1 mate. Black’s queen feels something deeper and more passionate than mere friendship, but as you may have guessed, Black’s king doesn’t share her sentiments.

59 ... Kd5 60 Nb3

“White can choose his own end,” writes Fischer:

a) 60 Nd3 Nf4+! 61 Nxf4+ exf4 62 b7 c1Q 63 b8Q and we revisit 63 ... Qh1 mate.

b) 60 b7 c1Q 61 b8Q Qh1 mate. Does this mating theme have a familiar ring to it?

60 ... Kc6 61 Kg2 Kxb6 0-1

Game 33

R.Fischer-F.Gheorghiu

Buenos Aires 1970

Petroff Defence

1 e4 e5

After this move a black pawn won’t cross the fourth rank threshold until move 19.

2 Nf3 Nf6 3 Nxe5 d6 4 Nf3 Nxe4 5 d4 Be7

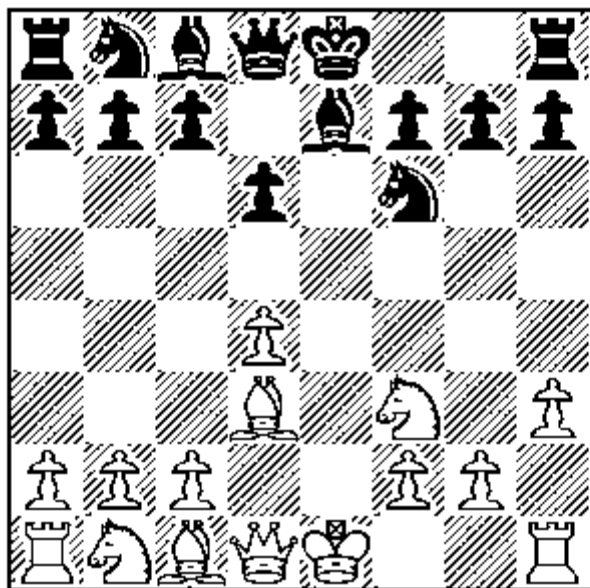
Question: This is quite passive on Black’s part isn’t it?

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Answer: Passive and solid. To some players, this is a form of anti-chess, and avoiding ... d5 admittedly makes Black’s game look

as limp as overcooked pasta. He cedes White space, hoping the impregnability of his position allows him to draw. I only cover the main line 5 ... d5 in The Petroff: Move by Move.

6 Bd3 Nf6 7 h3!



Question: This move wastes a tempo. Is it really worthy of an exclamation mark?

Answer: It's a tempo well spent, since the move follows the principle: When you own more space, prevent swaps. In this case Fischer prevents ... Bg4, which in turn keeps the bishop passively placed.

7 ... 0-0 8 0-0 Re8 9 c4

Fischer grabs more valuable central space.

9 ... Nc6

This follows Black's philosophy in the line, which is to give White space but deprive him of any targets. If 9 ... d5 10 Nc3 Nc6, as in J.Filipek-I.Cipka, correspondence 2007, then 11 a3! offers White a slightly favourable version of the main line, since Black is deprived of the traditional ... Nb4 tempo-gaining manoeuvre.

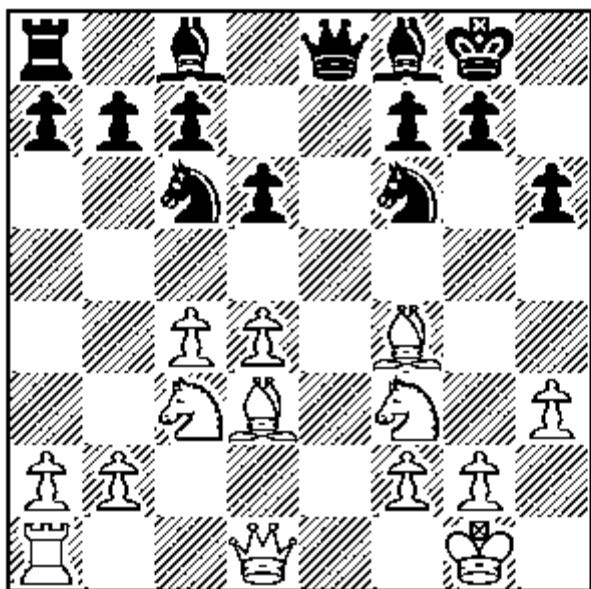
10 Nc3 h6!?

This move allows Black the convenience of ... Bf8 without fear of Bg5. However, it also creates a prominent sacrifice target for White on h6 (which we later see crop up in multiple lines in the notes), and also weakens f6. Fischer exploited both factors later in the game.

11 Re1 Bf8 12 Rxe8 Qxe8

Black gets a single swap, which isn't enough to shake White's space advantage. Also, Black's queen must lose time moving off the open e-file.

13 Bf4!



Question: Why an exclamation mark? The bishop hits a wall on d6.

Answer: White plans Qd2, Re1 and d5, and he trains his forces on the e5-square which prevents ... Ne5.

13 ... Bd7 14 Qd2 Qc8

Gheorghiu continues to seek swaps, this time with ... Bf5.

15 d5!

Now we see why Fischer played his bishop to f4:

1. Black is denied ... Ne5.

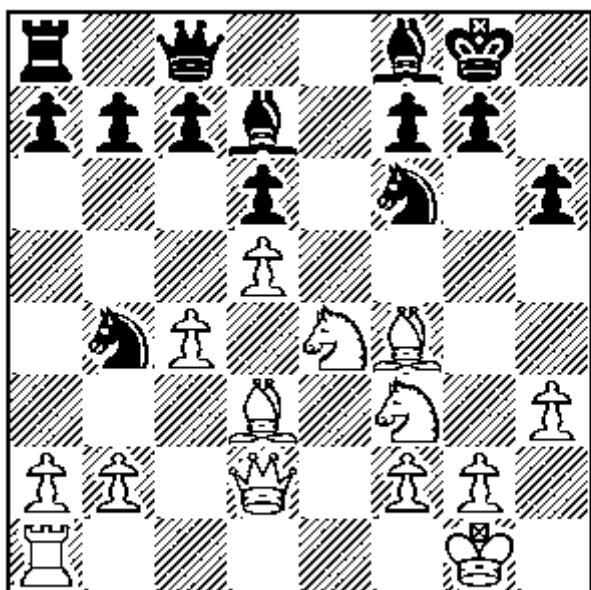
2. White follows with Nd4, which controls the key f5-square.

15 ... Nb4

I would play 15 ... Ne7 intending ... Bf5, and if 16 Re1 Bf5 17 Bf1 Qd7, intending to unravel at some point with ... Re8. White still holds a nagging space edge here though.

16 Ne4!

Also to be considered is the simple 16 Bf1 intending Nd4.



16 ... Nxe4

Question: Doesn't 16 ... Nh5 pick off the bishop-pair?

Answer: True, but it fails to equalize. White stands better after 17 Bb1 f5 (or 17 ... Bf5 18 Bh2 Na6 19 Nd4 Bh7 20 Nb5 and Black experiences problems unravelling) 18 Ng3 Nxf4 19 Qxf4 g6 20 Qd2 Na6 21 h4! h5 (otherwise White undermines with h5 next) 22 Bc2 when Black's position remains difficult since he must deal with holes on both e6 and g6.

17 Bxe4 Na6

Gheorghiu's create-no-weakness strategy continues. I would play 17 ... a5, just to stake out a touch of space on the queenside.

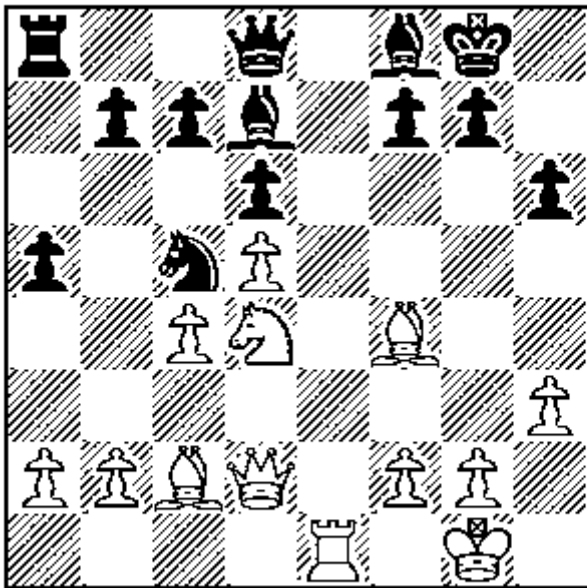
18 Nd4!

Fischer prevents ... Bf5.

18 ... Nc5 19 Bc2 a5

Hooray! At long last, a black pawn passed the third rank.

20 Re1 Qd8



Exercise (planning): Black threatens to unravel with ... Qf6 and ... Re8, and also ... Be7 and ... Bg5. How did Fischer cross up both plans?

Answer: Lift a rook to the third rank in preparation for a direct kingside attack.

21 Re3!

This move follows Steinitz's principle: When you control more space, you must take action and attack, otherwise your advantage dissipates.

21 ... b6

Black may have been better off than in the game continuation, with 21 ... Qf6 22 Rg3 (threat: Bxh6) 22 ... Kh8 23 Be3! Qe7 (23 ... b6?? 24 Nf3! clears d4 for the bishop and after 24 ... Qe7 25 Bd4 f6 26 Nh4 Be8 27 Re3 Qd7 28 Bb1! Qc2 follows, with a winning attack) 24 Nb5! Ne4 (24 ... Bxb5?? is met with the zwischenzug 25 Bd4! f6 26 cxb5 Black's game is riddled with light-square holes) 25 Bxe4 Qxe4 26 Nxc7 Rc8 27 Qxa5 Be7 28 Na8 Bf5 29 Nb6 Re8 30 Qc3 Bf6 31 Qc1 Qb1 32 Qxb1 Bxb1 33 b4 Bxa2 34 c5 with an extra pawn and excellent winning chances for White.

The second point of Fischer's rook lift is that 21 ... Be7?? is smashed with 22 Bxh6! when Black isn't able to accept.

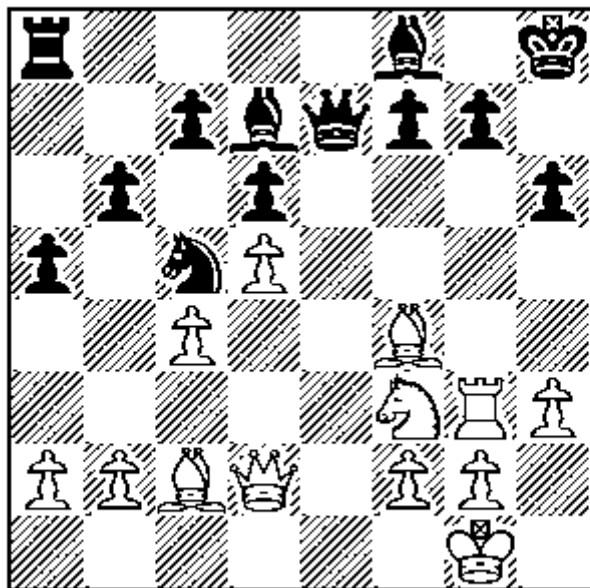
22 Rg3

The g-file serves as a conduit to supply the attack with reinforcements.

22 ... Kh8 23 Nf3!

Clearing d4 for either the queen or the dark-squared bishop.

23 ... Qe7



Exercise (combination alert): When a plan goes wrong it isn't always readily visible or measurable, like a crack in the wall. Inner rot is so much harder to identify. How did Fischer force Black to compromise his pawn structure?

Answer: Target g7.

24 Qd4!

White threatens Bxh6, which forces Black's next move. So far Gheorghiu has conducted himself with the structural correctness of Mr. Rogers, combined with a particularly eager-to-be-a-good-citizen cub scout. This is about to change.

Answer no.2: My student Jason suggested the wild lunge 24 Bxh6! which seems to work, but isn't as clear as Fischer's line. For example, 24 ... gxf6 25 Qd4+ f6 26 Nh4 Be8 27 Qg4 Qg7 28 Bg6 a4 (28 ... Bxg6?? 29 Nxb6+ Kg8 30 Qf5 and then Re8 31 Nh4 or 30 ... Kf7 31 Nh4 Qh8 32 Qh5+ Ke7 33 Ng6+ wins) 29 Qf3 Qd7 30 Bxe8 Rxe8 31 Qh5 Bg7 32 Nf5 Re1+ 33 Kh2 Re5 34 Rxb7 Qxb7 35 Nxb7 Rxb7 36 Nxb7 Nd3 37 Nxf6 Nxb2 38 Ne4 Nxc4 39 Nc3 Na3 40 Kg3 b5 41 Kf4 and Black is busted, since his queenside majority is frozen, while White's is about to roll forward.

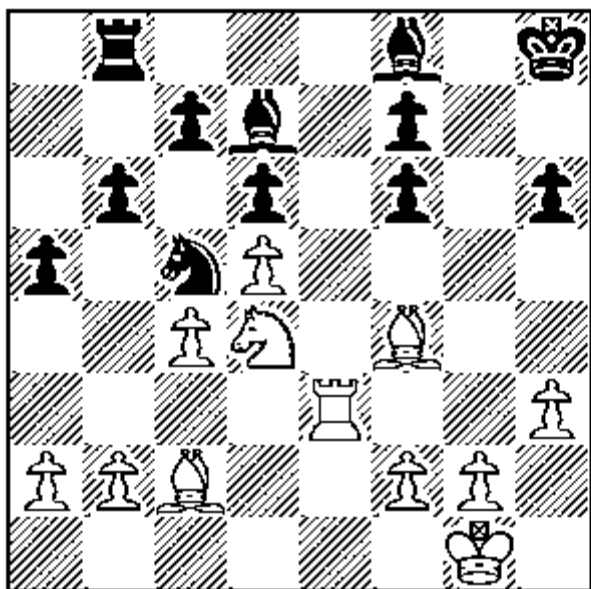
24 ... Qf6

Black's troubles spread like baseless rumours on the internet. Hmm. It appears as if Black's sunny faith in his original zero-weakness policy seems to have warped a tad.

Question: To me, Black's last move is strategic suicide. Can he get away with 24 ... f6?

Answer: This move self-punctures his light squares beyond repair. White has a winning attack after 25 Nh4 Be8 (25 ... Qe2? is another of Jason's suggestions, but not such a good one this time as 26 Ng6+ Kg8 27 Bxh6! Qxc2 28 Nxf8 Rxf8 29 Rxb7+ Kh8 30 Re7 wins) 26 Be3 Nd7 27 Nf5 Qf7 28 Qd2! (target: h6) 28 ... g5 (not 28 ... Ne5? 29 Bxh6 gxf6 30 Nxb6 and Black's game collapses) 29 Bd4 Ne5 30 f4! gxf4 (30 ... Nxc4 31 Qc3 Ne5 32 fxe5 dxe5 33 Bf2 is lost for Black) 31 Qxf4 and there is no remedy to the coming Nxb6, as 31 ... Qh7 is met with the crushing clearance shot 32 Nxd6!.

25 Qxf6 gxf6 26 Nd4 Re8 27 Re3! Rb8



Gheorghiu begins a labour-intensive project on the queenside.

Question: This move goes against principle. Why did Black avoid the swap and abandon the e-file?

Answer: After 27 ... Rxe3 28 Bxe3 Kg7 White has a remarkable winning plan in 29 Kh2!! intending to play the king up to h5, and then pick off h6. Humans are still better than comps in conceptual positions. I saw this plan right away, yet my computers miss it, since it exceeds their analytical horizon. After 29 ... Na4 30 b3 Nc5 (or 30 ... Nc3 31 a4 f5 32 Bxf5 Bxf5 33 Nxf5+ Kg6 34 g4 when White should win without much difficulty) 31 Kg3 there is no good answer to the king's march to h5.

28 b3 b5!?

Black, having no appetite for enduring an interminable siege, decides to provoke an immediate clash, praying for a vinegar-to-wine effect. When we attempt to seize the initiative from a position of inferiority, each attempt tends to feel more shaky than the last.

29 cxb5 Bxb5 30 Nf5

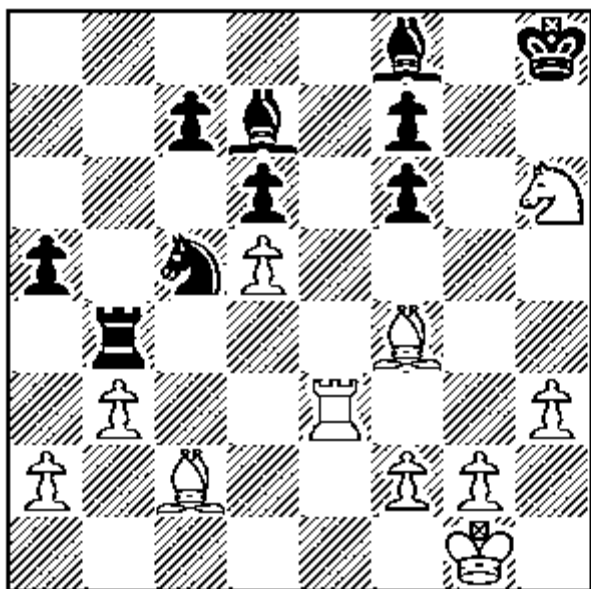
Also winning is the line 30 Rf3! Ba6 31 Bd2 Bb7 32 Nc6 Bxc6 33 dxc6 Rb6 34 Rxf6 and Black has no hope.

30 ... Bd7

He doesn't bother with h6, since an urgent matter presupposes a client's willingness to pay extra. Black's last move looks like it was made with the thought: Why set sentries to guard an object which the enemy barely desires?

Black won't save himself with 30 ... h5 31 Nh6 Bxh6 32 Bxh6 a4 33 b4 Nd7 34 Rc3 Rb7 35 Rg3.

31 Nxh6 Rb4



Exercise (combination alert): After an extended period of strategic privation, Black at last senses wealth coming his way. It looks like Black may have gained counterplay, since White's f4-bishop and his knight look wobbly. But this is an illusion, and Black remains within the realm of hope, not reality. Fischer had the situation worked out. White to play and not lose material:

Answer: Mating net.

32 Rg3!

It's not easy to refuse a 'request' this definite.

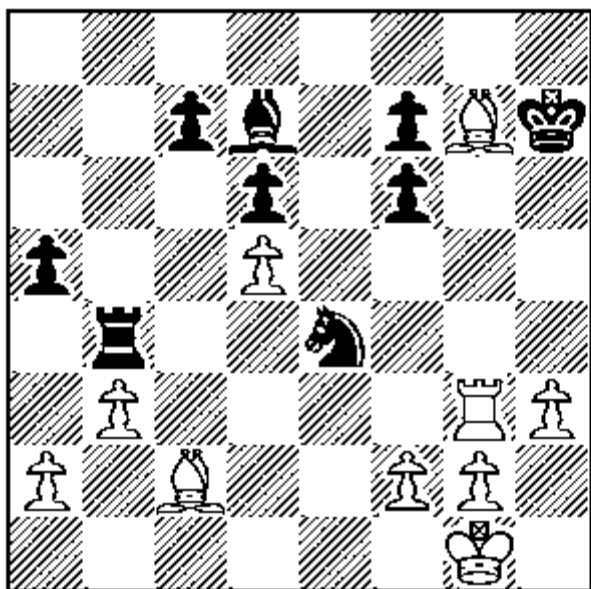
Answer no.2: The comp found the inhuman 32 Nxf7+! Kg7 33 Nd8!!, and if 33 ... Rxf4 34 Rg3+. Black must block with the bishop, handing back the extra piece, since 34 ... Kh6?? walks into 35 Nf7+ Kh5 36 Rg8 (threats: Rh8+ and Rxf8) 36 ... Bh6 37 Rh8, which forces mate.

32 ... Bxh6

32 ... Rxf4?? walks into 33 Nxf7 mate.

33 Bxh6 Ne4 34 Bg7+ Kh7?

34 ... Kg8 fails to save Black after 35 Bxe4 Rxe4 36 Bxf6+ Kf8 37 Rc3, which is an easy win for White.



This move hangs heavy material. The king hears a terrible moaning sound, and then recognizes it as his own voice.

Exercise (combination alert): Find one move and you force Black's resignation.

Answer: Pin.

35 ♔ 1-0

Game 34

R.Fischer-O.Panno

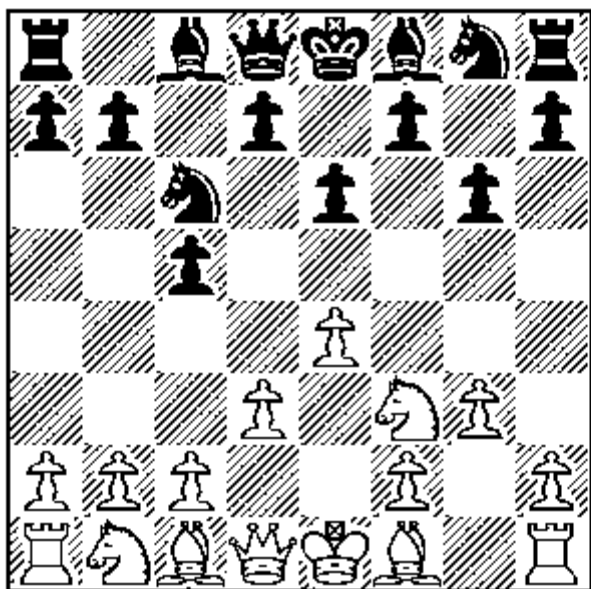
Buenos Aires 1970

King's Indian Attack

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 e6 3 d3

Here we are again in another King's Indian Attack. It's amazing how such an innocuous set-up earned Fischer so many points. Your elderly and possibly senile writer loathes the tyranny of forced memorization, which opening theory demands upon us. So all-inclusive lines like KIA hold allure, since they require understanding far more than memorization.

3 ... Nc6 4 g3 g6



This is considered a reliable set-up for Black.

5 Bg2

Question: Can White pull a fast one and switch to an Open Sicilian with 5 d4?

Answer: Your suggestion is tempting, since Black created a lot of dark-square holes. The trouble is White wastes a tempo on d3 and then d4. Black should be fine after 5 ... cxd4 6 Nxd4 a6 (6 ... Bg7!? is the tactical route, which brazenly ignores White's Nb5 intention, and after 7 Nb5 d5 8 exd5 exd5 9 Bf4?! Bxb2 10 N1c3, as in A.Stripunsky-I.Foygel, Chelmsford 2001, Black stands clearly better after 10 ... Nf6; here correct is 9 Qxd5 Qe7+ 10 Be2 Be5 11 0-0 a6 12 N5c3 Bh3 13 Re1 Nf6 14 Qc4 Bd4 and Black has compensation for the pawn) 7 Nxc6 bxc6 8 c4 Bg7 9 Bg2 Ne7 10 0-0 d6 11 Nc3, H.Nakamura-S.Tiviakov, Hoogeveen 2012. Black's position looks fine after 11 ... Rb8 12 Qd3 c5 13 Rd1 Bd4 14 Ne2 Nc6 with a stronghold on d4.

5 ... Bg7 6 0-0 Nge7 7 Re1 d6

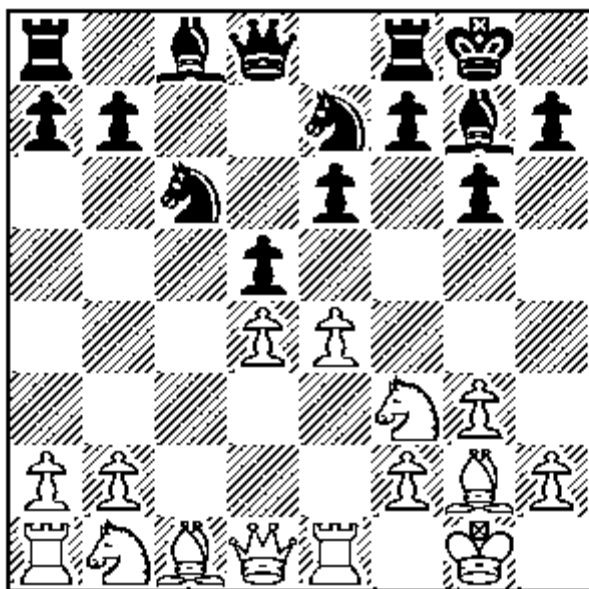
I prefer 7 ... e5 just in case Black manages to later slip in ... d5 in one go.

8 c3 0-0

This is Black's main move, which I believe is somewhat compliant to White's wishes.

I prefer 8 ... e5! which yields Black fully equal chances, and if 9 Be3 0-0. Now if White insists on his d4 central expansion plan, Black achieves excellent counterplay after 10 d4?! (White should probably play something slower, like 10 Na3, with a balanced position) 10 ... exd4 11 cxd4 Bg4 (pressuring the d4-pawn) 12 dxc5 Bxf3 13 Bxf3 Bxb2 14 Nd2 Bxa1 15 Qxa1 dxc5 16 Nb3 b6 17 Rd1 Qc8. White can regain the exchange here, but this leaves him down a pawn. I just don't believe in White's attacking chances for his material deficit, A.Gemesi-A.Poluljahov, Budapest 1992.

9 d4 cxd4 10 cxd4 d5?!



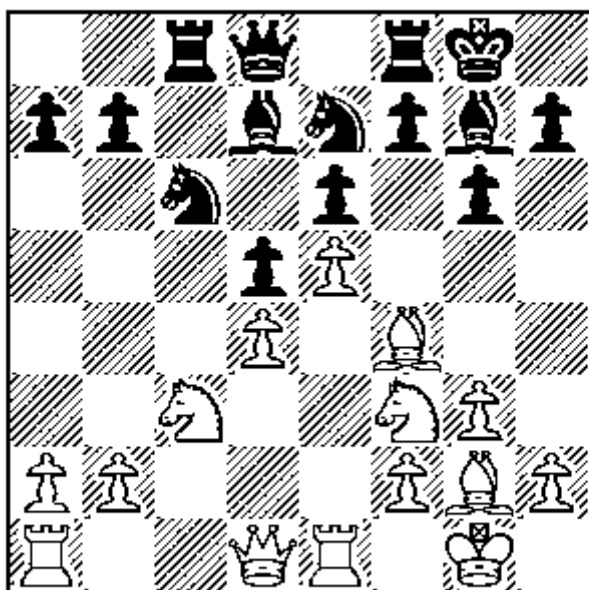
Although this is book, I don't much like Black's position after this move. Black wants a chunk of the centre himself, yet the move allows White a nagging space advantage on the kingside, which if challenged with ... f6, will lead to a backward e6-pawn when White exchanges.

Black may be better off risking 10 ... Qb6!? 11 d5 Bxb2 12 Bxb2 Qxb2 13 dxc6 (13 Nbd2 Na5 14 Rb1 Qf6 15 Rc1 also gives White compensation) 13 ... Qxa1 14 Qb3 Nxc6 15 Nc3 Nd4 16 Rxa1 Nxb3 17 axb3 Bd7 when he looks okay, with a rook and two pawns for two minor pieces, L.Ljubojevic-R.Hübner, Buenos Aires 1978.

11 e5

Fischer picks up kingside space, along with the potential for exploitation of Black's numerous dark-square holes.

11 ... Bd7 12 Nc3 Rc8 13 Bf4



Question: Why pile up on e5, which hardly requires protection?

Answer: Nimzowitsch would disagree with you. This is classical Nimzowitschian overprotection. Black has the following choices:

1. Play ... f6. White then captures on f6, making use of the newly created e5 hole, applying too

pressure to Black's backward e6-pawn. In this version White's d4-pawn can also become weak.

2. Black refuses to challenge White's e5 point with ... f6. Then White can use his kingside space to generate an attack on Black's king, as Fischer managed to achieve in the game's continuation.

Of the two plans, I think number one is the superior option, with greater chances of counterplay for Black. In the game Panno went with version two.

13 ... Na5 14 Rc1 b5

Panno logically seeks to expand on the queenside, hoping to counterbalance White's growing kingside build-up.

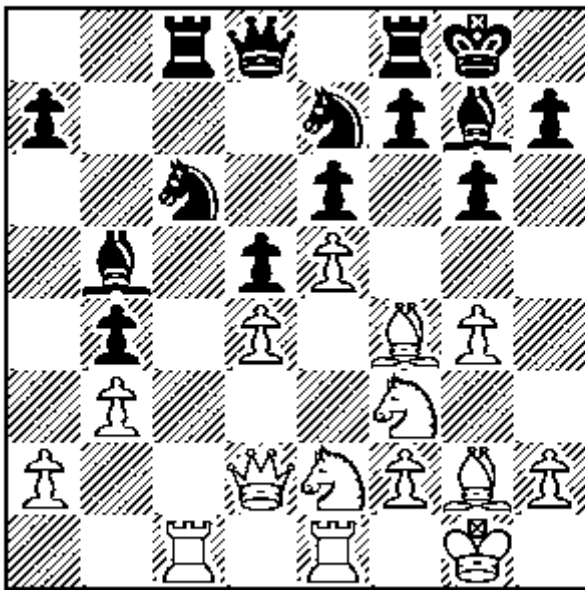
15 b3

Black's knight gets cut off from entry to c4.

15 ... b4 16 Ne2

The knight moves in an easterly direction, where Black's king lives.

16 ... Bb5 17 Qd2 Nac6 18 g4



Dual purpose:

1. Fischer makes room for Ng3 in preparation for a kingside assault.

2. By playing g4, Black's knight is deprived of the f5-square.

18 ... a5!?

Question: Should Black chop on e2, eliminating a potential white attacker?

Answer: That's a tough question. Black's king will clearly be safer if he chops the knight. However, the exchange hands White both the bishop-pair and light-square control. I think White still remains better after 18 ... Bxe2 19 Qxe2 Qb6, U.Eggenberger-B.Toth, correspondence 1973. I like White's position after 20 Qd2 a5 21 Bf1 Na7 22 Bg5 Nec6 23 h4! Nb5 24 Bxb5 Qxb5 25 h5 with a dangerous attack brewing on the kingside dark squares.

19 Ng3

The knight enters the kingside. For now it has no viable squares, yet we sense the potential of future sacrifices, like Nh5, Nf5 and Ne4, looming over the black king's head.

19 ... Qb6 20 h4!

Here he comes.

20 ... Nb8

Dual purpose:

1. Panno hopes to remove rooks from the board, which may keep his king safer.

2. Panno wants to cover the f6-square with ... Nd7.

21 Bh6 Nd7 22 Qg5!

The queen weaponizes her beauty by luring her besmitten enemies to their doom. She threatens the e7-knight, which induces Black into the concession of capturing h6.

22 ... Rxc1 23 Rxc1 Bxh6!?

This allows White a wicked attack on the kingside dark squares. The alternative is the depressing 23 ... Qd8 which allows 24 Bxg7 Kxg7 25 Nh5+ Kh8 26 Nf6 Ng8 27 Nxd8! Qxd8 28 hxd8 Kxd8 29 Rc7 (Black is forced on to the defensive) 29 ... Ra8 30 Bf1 Bxf1 31 Kxf1 Nb6 32 Ne1 Nc8 33 Nd3. Black will be hard pressed to hold the ending since White dominates the seventh rank and Black's pieces are tied down to passivity. It's hard to say if this line holds any more hope for Black than the path Panno took in the game.

24 Qxh6 Rc8

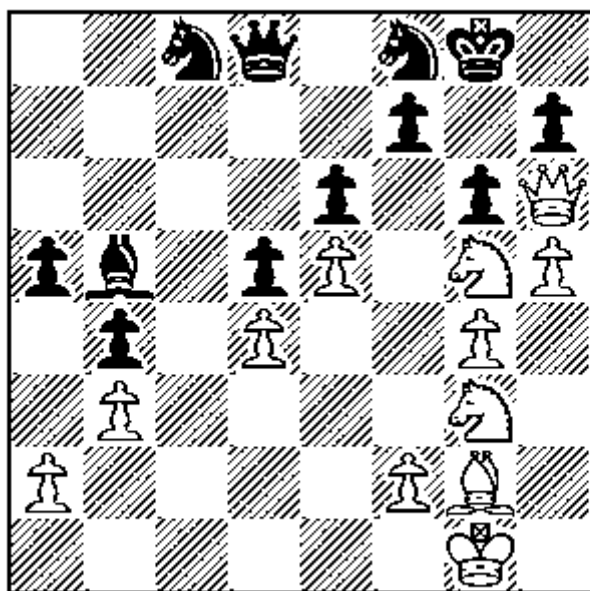
Theoretically, the swap of all the rooks should keep his king safer. In this instance Fischer's attack proceeded without use of his rooks.

25 Rxc8+ Nxc8 26 h5 Qd8?

The queen neglects an irksome yet required duty. A moment of inattention is a moment we can't afford. Panno finds himself in a state of abstraction and makes a fatal slip.

White's advantage is held to a minimum after 26 ... Nf8!. Sometimes we can disarm a belligerent opponent with an unexpectedly mild response. Black's queen must remain where she stands to tie White down to his d4-pawn. After 27 Qg5 (or 27 Ng5 Qxd4 28 Nxd7 Nxd7 29 hxd7 Nf8! and Black fends off the brunt of White's attack) 27 ... Qc7 28 Bf1 Bxf1 29 Kxf1 Qe7 30 Qc1 Qd8 Black has reasonable chances of holding the game, despite his kingside dark-square punctures.

27 Ng5 Nf8



bishop the 'all clear' signal to enter the attack and become an accessory to the crime-to-come. Fischer's move is played with the thought: To gain everything, one must be willing to risk everything in return.

Psychologically, this move is very difficult to play, since when we are happy, the thing we fear most is change. Fischer's elegant shot draws closer to the position's truth and is actually stronger than the safely favourable line most of us found:

Answer no.2: 28 Nxh7! (deflection/undermining/annihilation of defensive barrier) 28 ... Nxh7 29 hxg6 fxg6 30 Qxg6+ Kh8 31 Qxe6 Ne7 32 f4 Qd7 33 Qxd7 Bxd7 34 Bf3 when White's three pawns for the piece should be decisive. In this version, Black obtains some drawing chances, unlike the ruthlessly accurate path Fischer took in the game.

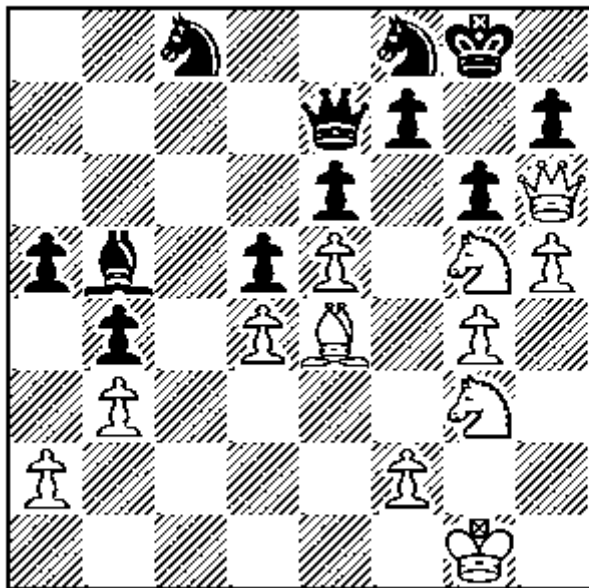
28 ... Qe7

Acceptance of the bishop is unthinkable: 28 ... dxe4?? 29 N3xe4 Qe7 30 Nf6+ Kh8 31 Ngxh7 forces mate.

However, 28 ... Be8 is Black's toughest defence. After 29 hxg6 he has:

a) 29 ... hxg6 30 Nh5! gxh5 31 Bh7+ Nxh7 32 Nxh7 (the threat of Nf6+ costs Black his queen) 32 ... f6 33 Nxf6+ Kf7 34 g5 Ke7 35 Qh7+ Kf8 36 g6 Bxg6 37 Qxg6 threat: Qg8 mate) 37 ... Ne7 38 Nh7 mate. Deflection/undermining/annihilation of the defensive barrier.

b) 29 ... fxg6 and now the simplest is 30 Qxf8+! (attraction/knight fork; 30 Nh5!, the comp's choice, is even more ruthless, yet impractical for human calculation: 30 ... Qe7 31 Nf6+ Kh8 32 Bd3 Nb6 33 Nxe8 Qxe8 34 Bxg6! overloads the defenders and White wins) 30 ... Kxf8 31 Nxe6+ Ke7 32 Nxd8 dxe4 33 Nb7 with an easily won ending for White.



Exercise (combination alert): No time to rest. Continue the attack.

Answer: 29 Nxh7!

Answer no.2: Even more startling is the comp's solution: 29 Nf5!! exf5 30 gxf5 (threat: f6) 30 ... Qd7 31 Bxd5! Qxf5 (31 ... Qxd5 32 f6 forces mate) 32 Bxf7+ Qxf7 33 Nxf7 Kxf7 34 e6+. This disruptive shot forces the win.

29 ... Nxh7

With each sacrifice we accept, we receive some degree of consolation for our otherwise miserable position – but not here. Panno must have surely realized his position was without hope.

30 hxg6 fxg6 31 Bxg6 Ng5

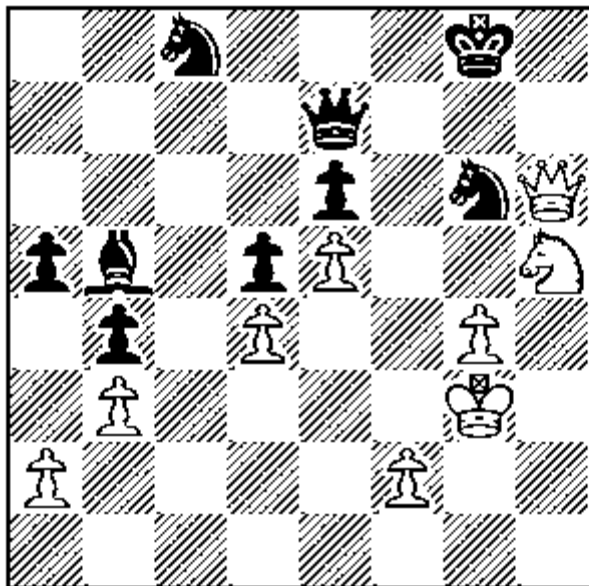
31 ... Qg7 32 Bxh7+ Qxh7 33 Qxe6+ Qf7 34 Qxc8+ wins.

32 Nh5

Threat: Nf6+. When I was a kid, my mother insisted on dressing me for school to look like a

combination of Little Lord Fauntleroy and a middle-aged golfer. As you may have guessed this got me beaten up quite a lot – and deservedly so! Somehow, looking at Black's traumatized king reminds me of those days.

32 ... Nf3+ 33 Kg2 Nh4+ 34 Kg3 Nxe6



Exercise (combination alert): In Black's world there is no shortage of misery and a dearth of happiness. How did Fischer end the game?

Answer: 35 Nf6+! Kf7

The king's eyes swim, so that it appears as if his h6 sister and a carbon copy of her flicker before his vision.

36 Qh7+ 1-0

36 ... Kf8 (Black's king accepts his sister's Skype call, but on audio only, since he doesn't want her to see him crying) 37 Qg8 is mate.

Game 35

R.Fischer-I.Ibrahimoglu

Siegen Olympiad 1970

King's Indian Attack

1 e4 c6 2 d3

By now we all know that the King's Indian Attack was Fischer's default setting as White, when he didn't want to bother with theory.

2 ... d5 3 Nd2 g6

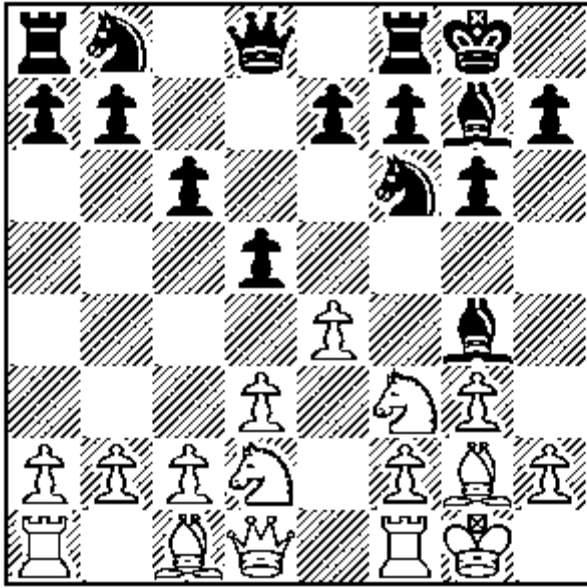
This is considered one of Black's most impregnable kingside set-ups. As Black, I generally go for 3 ... e5 4 Ngf3 Bd6 5 g3 Nf6.

4 Ngf3 Bg7 5 g3 Nf6?!

After this White stands better. Today, this move is considered slightly inaccurate, since it loses control over e5 and offers White opportunities to gain space with e5 later on. Black equalizes with 5 ... e5! 6 Bg2 Ne7 7 0-0 0-0 and White has got nothing from the opening: for example, 8 b4 a5 9 bxa5 Qxa5 10 Bb2 d4 11 Nb3 Qc7 12 c3 dxc3 13 Bxc3 c5! (clamping down on White's intended

d4 break) 14 Nfd2 b5 and I prefer Black's position, T.Radjabov-I.Cheparinov, Baku 2008.

6 Bg2 0-0 7 0-0 Bg4



The first imbalance is about to arise, as Black logically prepares to rid himself of his bad bishop, after switching the structure to favour his dark-squared one.

8 h3 Bxf3 9 Qxf3!

The accurate recapture.

Question: Why is queen-takes better than the bishop recapture?

Answer: Recapture with the queen gains a tempo over Bxf3 since White must move whatever piece is on f3. So with Qxf3, White's queen goes to e2 – a tempo gain over Bxf3 and Bg2. After 9 Bxf3?! Nbd7 10 Bg2 the white queen sits on d1, not e2 in this line.

9 ... Nbd7

Alternatively, 9 ... a5 10 a4 Na6 11 Qe2 dxe4 12 dxe4 Nc5 13 Nc4 Nfd7 14 e5! Qc7 15 Re1 e6 16 Bd2 Rfd8 when Black lags in space and must worry about the d6 hole, F.Caruana-V.Anand, Dubai (blitz) 2014.

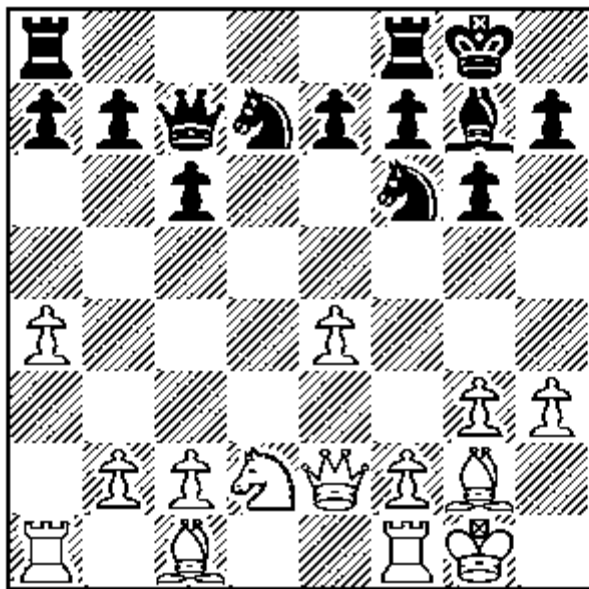
10 Qe2

Clearing the way for e5 and f4 central/kingside expansion.

10 ... dxe4!?

This move breaks the principle of not opening the position when the opponent owns the bishop-pair, yet it isn't such an egregious violation, since it also stabilizes the centre, which helps the side with the knights. I would maintain the central tension with 10 ... e5.

11 dxe4 Qc7 12 a4!



Question: What is the point of this move?

Answer: Fischer gains queenside space, while simultaneously discouraging Black from ideas like ... b5 queenside expansion.

12 ... Rad8?!

This turns out to be the wrong rook, since White is about to engage his opponent on the queenside.

13 Nb3

Fischer clears the way for Bf4.

13 ... b6

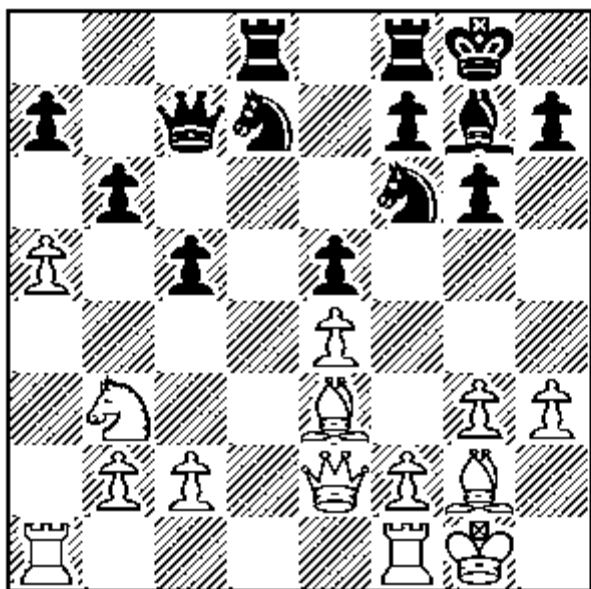
After 13 ... c5 14 Bf4 Ne5 15 Be3 c4 (or 15 ... b6 16 a5 Nc6 17 c3 when White applies uncomfortable light-square pressure on the queenside) 16 Nd4 a6 17 Rfd1 Nfd7 18 a5, f4 is coming and Black is in deep trouble.

14 Be3 c5?!

Additions are far easier to acquire than to discard. This 'active' move accelerates Black's decline. He understandably seeks space and activity, yet this move weakens the queenside light squares, a6, b5, and c4, which Fischer soon exploits. Black should go passive and curl up with 14 ... Ne8 to minimize his disadvantage.

15 a5 e5?

Black remains obdurate, refusing to cede Fischer an inch of central space. He should reinforce the weak b5- and c4-squares with 15 ... Ne8 16 c3 Nd6 and hope for the best.



This unnecessarily weakening move doesn't exactly bolster reassurance in the survivability of Black's position. The push of the e-pawn has all the looks of the powered wig aristocrat who impulsively decides to go shopping (for snuff) in downtown Paris, during the French Revolution. From a historical standpoint, 1970 was not that long ago, yet chess understanding has advanced to the point where I believe the average club player of today would recognise this move as a strategic error. If he looked at his decision objectively and took embittered stock in his position, he would realize his last move:

- 1 Punctures his light squares further.
- 2 Unnecessarily creates a hole on d5.
- 3 Violates the principle: Avoid fixing your pawns on the same colour as your remaining bishop.

Exercise (planning): How would you go about exploiting Black's last move?

Answer: Transfer the knight to c3, via d2 and b1 where the knight eyes both the d5 and b5 holes.

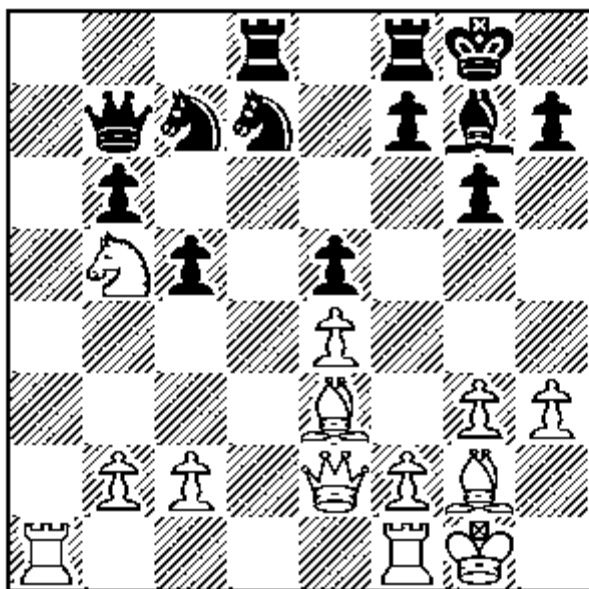
16 Nd2! Ne8!

The knight heads for c7 in a desperate attempt to cover the b5 and d5 holes.

17 axb6 axb6 18 Nb1

White's concept begins to assume form. The knight is re-routed for greater things on c3.

18 ... Qb7 19 Nc3 Nc7 20 Nb5



Question: It seems to me that White expended a lot of energy with his knight, just to swap it away. Why did he allow this?

Answer: It's not such a bad deal for White, since he also eliminated Black's sole defender of his queenside and central light squares.

20 ... Qc6 21 Nxc7 Qxc7 22 Qb5!

Normally, the queen is considered the worst blockader, but not here, since Black has no minor piece which is capable of ejecting it.

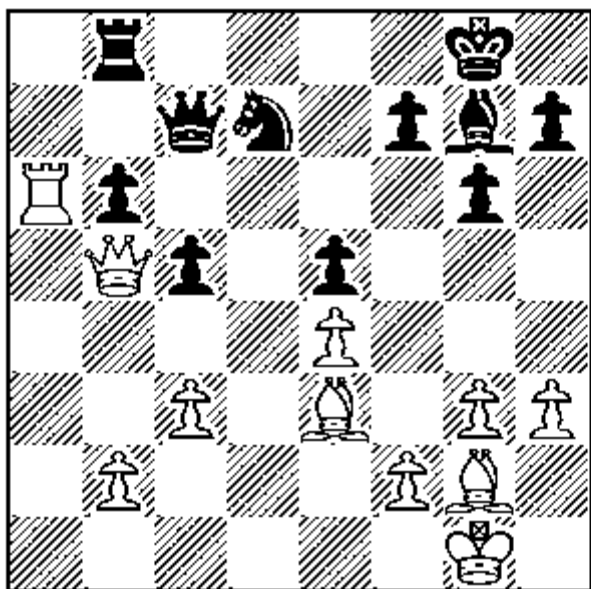
22 ... Ra8 23 c3

This move takes control over d4 and gets Black nervous about future b4 ideas.

23 ... Rxa1?!

A violation of the principle: Don't release piece (or pawn) tension without good reason. Black shouldn't hand over the a-file without a fight. Black's best defence lies in 23 ... Nf6 24 Rfd1 Rxa1! (now the move is okay, since White wasted a tempo with his last move) 25 Rxa1 Rb8 followed by ... Ne8 and ... Nd6, when he still holds hope to save the game.

24 Rxa1 Rb8 25 Ra6!



Dual purpose:

1. The move ties Black down to defence of b6.

2. Black must watch out for the idea Bf1 (to retain control over c4 and b5), followed by Qa4, when he must worry about rook infiltration to a7 or a8.

25 ... Bf8 26 Bf1

The bishop can now play to either c4 or b5, when White's queen moves.

26 ... Kg7

26 ... Nf6 intending ... Ne8 and ... Nd6, is met with 27 Qa4, and if 27 ... Ne8? 28 Ra7 Qc8 29 Bc4 Target: f7. 29 ... Nd6 30 Bd5 b5 31 Qd1! intending Qf3, when unbearable pressure is applied to f7.

27 Qa4!

Now both Ra5 and Bb5 are new worries for Black.

27 ... Rb7 28 Bb5 Nb8

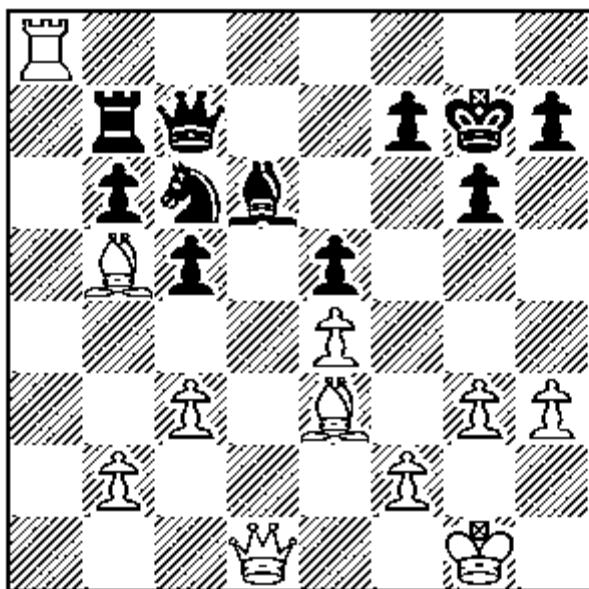
An obvious sign that matters are not going well for Black. One look and we see that Black's odds are long, reminding me of the times when my 90 pound Akita Emma wants my runty Terrier Kahless' doggie toy, she usually gets her way.

Following 28 ... Nf6 29 Bc6 Rb8 30 Ra7 Qd6 31 Qc4! (targeting f7) 31 ... Be7 (31 ... Qxc6?? 32 Qxf7+ Kh8 33 Bg5 forces mate) 32 Ba4! (intending Bb3) 32 ... b5 33 Bxb5 Nxe4 34 Ba4 Nf6 35 Bb3 Rf8 White completely dominates the light squares.

29 Ra8 Bd6 30 Qd1!

The queen is ready to occupy d5.

30 ... Nc6



Exercise (combination alert): There is a fatalistic sense of Black being drawn into a fight for which he isn't ready or willing to engage in. White has an amazing combination which even Fischer missed. Take your time and look for it.

31 Qd2

Threatening a nasty bishop check on h6. White still has a winning position after this move, but he had so much stronger with:

Answer: Mating net/zwischenzug: 31 Bh6+!! (if any of you found this idea, I would tip my hat to you, if I wore one) 31 ... Kxh6 32 Rg8! (Black's king is caught with this beautiful zwischenzug, which follows the principle: Cut off the enemy king's escape squares in a king hunt, rather than chase him) 32 ... Be7 (or 32 ... Kg5 33 Qf3! f5 34 exf5 e4 35 Qg4+ Kf6 36 fxg6 and Black is crushed) 33 h4 Now if 33 ... Qd7 34 Qc1+ Kh5 35 Be2+ forces mate.

31 ... h5 32 Bh6+ Kh7 33 Bg5 Rb8

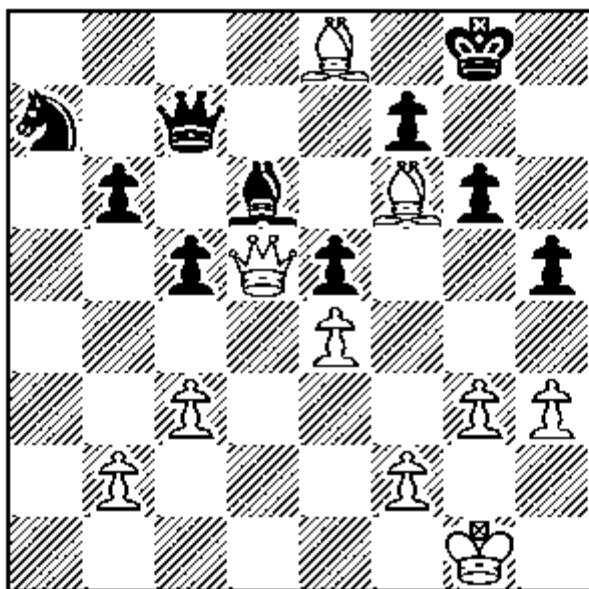
Or 33 ... Be7?? 34 Bxc6 Qxc6 35 Bxe7 Rxe7 36 Qd8 and the game ends.

34 Rxb8 Nxb8 35 Bf6! Nc6

35 ... Be7 is met with 36 Qg5 Bxf6 37 Qxf6 c4 38 h4 Kg8 39 Be8 Kf8 (or 39 ... Na6 40 Bc6 Nc5 41 Bd5 Kf8 42 Qh8+ Ke7 43 Bxf7! and wins) 40 Qh8+ Ke7 41 Bxf7! winning.

36 Qd5 Na7 37 Be8 Kg8

Black's paralyzed position lapses into a silence which can't be described as restful.



Exercise (combination alert): Normally, there is no such thing as easy plunder in a chess game, since our opponents tend to fight madly to hang on to their property. This position is an exception to the rule. All means are poised menacingly to attain White's end. How did Fischer convert his strategic plusses into something tangible?

Answer: Attraction/overloaded defender.

38 Bxf7+!

The arrogant bishop tends to chide others for their weakness of character – even God Himself.

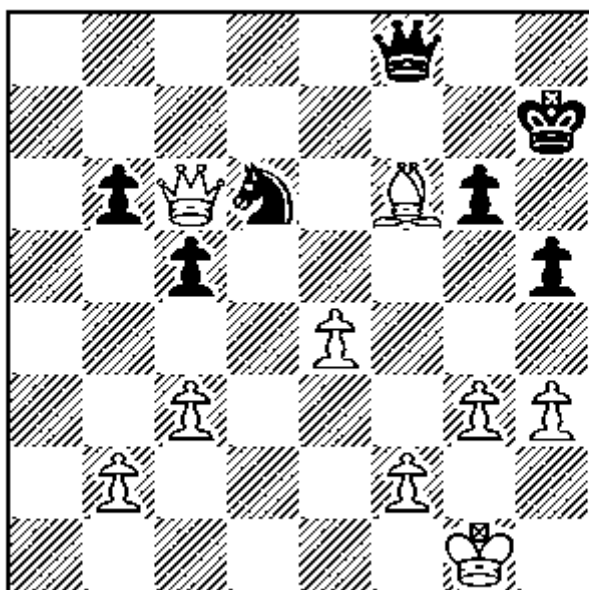
38 ... Qxf7 39 Qxd6

Black can resign, since not only did White win a pawn, but e5 and b6 hang as well.

39 ... Nc8 40 Qc6!

Even more accurate than 40 Qxe5.

40 ... Kh7 41 Bxe5 Qf8 42 Bf6 Nd6



Exercise (combination alert): How did Fischer force the win?

Answer: Step 1: Seize control over e7.

43 Qd7+!

The city council makes a new bylaw which prohibits the queen from frightening citizens. Unfortunately she brazenly violates the law each day.

43 ... Kg8

Step 2: The double attack wins a piece.

44 Be7!

Game over.

44 ... Qe8

Hey, I said “Game over”! Bankruptcy isn’t the best of foundations to begin life anew.

45 Qxd6 c4 46 f4 Kg7 47 e5 b5 48 Qf6+ Kh7 49 Bf8 1-0

Game 36

R.Fischer-W.Unzicker

Siegen Olympiad 1970

Ruy Lopez

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Bxc6

Once again Fischer unfurls his Exchange Lopez banner, which as mentioned before, in his era, was alien territory for players who expected the black side of a Closed Lopez, as if that was the law of the land.

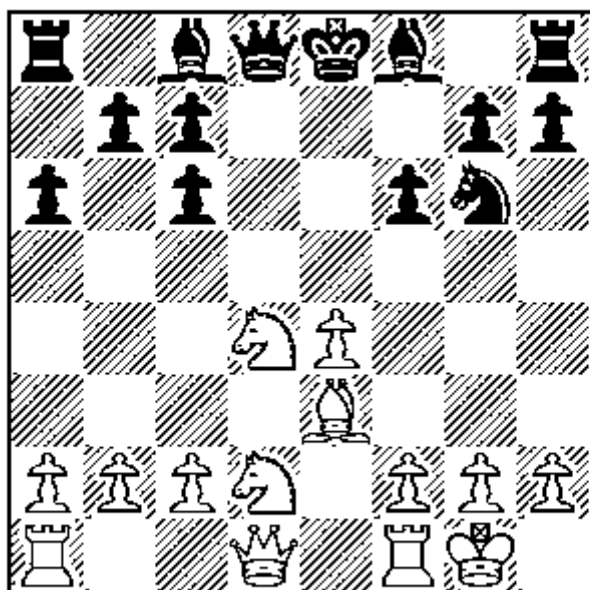
4 ... dxc6 5 0-0

Compare Fischer’s f4-f5 idea with this game: 5 d4 exd4 6 Qxd4 Qxd4 7 Nxd4 Bd6 8 Nc3 Ne7 9 0-0 0-0 10 f4 Re8 11 Nb3 f6 12 f5! b6?! 13 Bf4 Bb7 14 Bxd6 cxd6 15 Nd4 (heading for the e6 hole) 15 ... Rad8 16 Ne6 Rd7 17 Rad1 Nc8 18 Rf2 b5 19 Rfd2 when Capa was badly tied down and Lasker went on to win a brilliant ending, E.Lasker-J.Capablanca, St Petersburg 1914.

5 ... f6 6 d4 exd4 7 Nxd4 Ne7

Today, this is considered a tad inaccurate. Of course, to give the move a ‘?!’ symbol is a bit unfair and akin to a six-month-old baby saying her first word, which she mispronounces – and then you correct her. 7 ... c5 is Black’s most common continuation today.

8 Be3 Ng6 9 Nd2



Question: Why d2, rather than the more natural c3-square?

Answer: Both are playable. Fischer's move intends to meet ... Bd6 with Nc4, as played in the game. Instead, after 9 Nc3 Bb4 10 Nce2 0-0 11 Nf4 Nxf4 12 Bxf4 Bd6 13 Bxd6 Qxd6 14 Ne2 Qe7 15 Nc3 f5 16 Qd4 f4 17 f3 Rd8 18 Qf2 Qb4 19 Rab1 Be6 Black's active pieces ensured equality, R.Edouard-V.Ivanchuk, Cap d'Agde (rapid) 2012.

9 ... Bd6 10 Nc4 0-0 11 Qd3

Preparing to double on the d-file.

11 ... Ne5 12 Nxe5 Bxe5

After 12 ... fxe5?! 13 Qb3+ Kh8 14 Ne6 (this move eliminates Black's bishop-pair) 14 ... Bxe6 15 Qxe6 Black remains with a dismal looking bishop and the inferior pawn majority.

13 f4

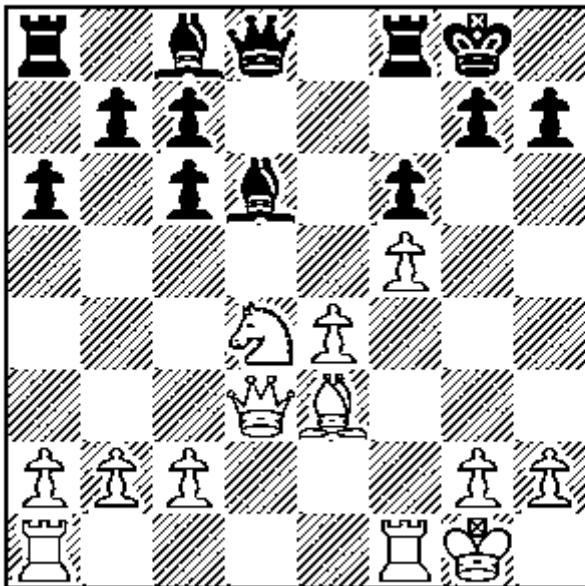
Fischer isn't afraid of the opposite-coloured bishops.

13 ... Bd6

Question: Can't Black force a drawish opposite coloured bishops position with 13 ... Bxd4?

Answer: I feel like Black just gave away his only trump, the bishop-pair. White is essentially up a pawn, due to his mobile kingside pawn majority after 14 Bxd4 b6 (not 14 ... Be6? 15 f5 Bf7 16 Qe3 Re8 17 e5! fxe5 18 Bxe5 and g7 soon becomes a target) 15 Qc4+ Rf7 16 Bc3 Qe8 17 Rfe1. Black's position looks awfully unpleasant to me, despite Houdini's near-even assessment.

14 f5!



Fischer undoubtedly was inspired by the Lasker-Capablanca game.

Question: Why did White voluntarily hand over control of e5?

Answer: Fischer gets something more important in return: He cramps Black's light-squared bishop and seizes kingside space.

14 ... Qe7 15 Bf4!

Principle: When the opponent has the bishop-pair, swap one of them off.

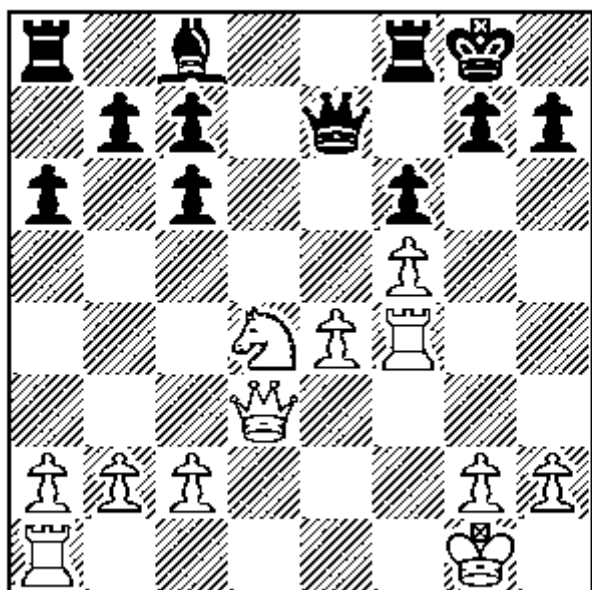
15 ... Bxf4

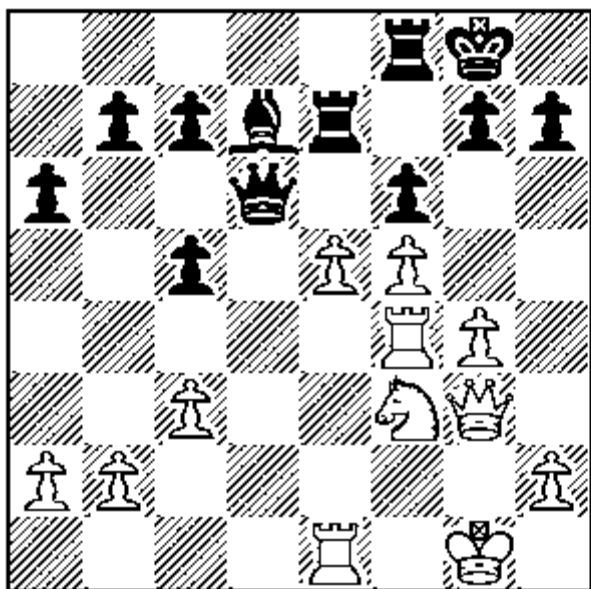
I feel like Black is just a shade worse after this compliant move. Black can consider:

a) 15 ... Bc5 16 Rael (now the e5 break hangs over Black's head) 16 ... Bb6 17 Be3 Re8 18 Rf4 Bd7 19 Nf3 Qd6 20 Qxd6 Bxe3+ 21 Rxe3 cxd6 22 Rd3 c5 23 Rxd6 Bc6 24 Nd2 Red8 25 Rxd8+ Rxd8 26 Rf2 Kf7 and White of course stands better with his extra pawn. However, the win won't be so easy, since White is tied down to his e4 weakness and all of Black's pieces maintain high levels of activity.

b) 15 ... Bd7 16 Bxd6 cxd6 17 Rad1 Rfe8 18 Rfe1 and I still prefer White, whose target on d6 looks more chronic than the e4-pawn. White's kingside space should offer him the edge.

16 Rxf4





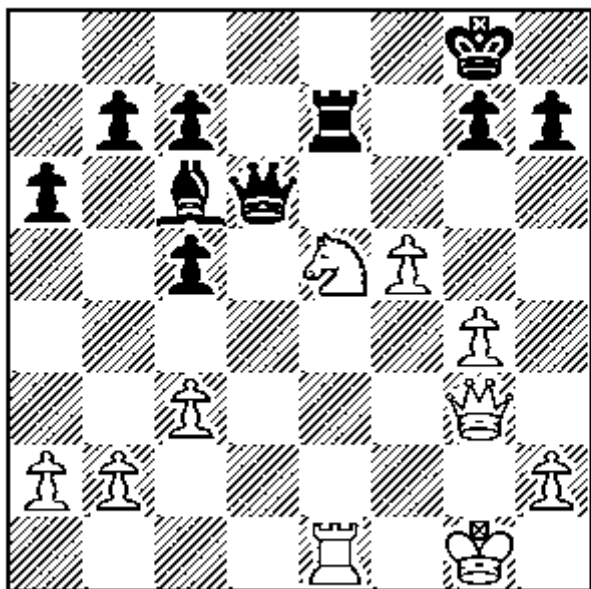
No more backward e-pawn. White's thematic break is achieved and his kingside majority begins to roll forward.

After 22 g5?! Kh8 23 Qh4 Rfe8 24 gxf6 Qxf6 Black looks okay, since e4 is under fire.

22 ... fxe5 23 Rfe4 Bc6 24 Rxe5 Rfe8

Alternatively, 24 ... Rxe5 25 Nxe5 Re8 26 Kf2 Qd2+ 27 Re2 Qd1 28 Qd3 Qh1 29 Qg3 Qd1 30 b3 and White has all the chances in this ending, since his kingside pawns are free to roll forward, which may endanger Black's king.

25 Rxe7 Rxe7 26 Ne5!



26 ... h6?!

I feel like Unzicker's best shot at a draw was to force a queen ending with 26 ... Qd5! 27 Nxc6 Rxe1+ 28 Qxe1 Qxc6 29 Qe5 h6 30 Kf2 Kh7 31 Kg3 b6 32 h4 Qh1 33 Qe2. White has all the chances, since his kingside pawns flow forward, endangering Black's king. Also, White's king may be able to enter Black's position via the centre. Still, this may be Black's best practical shot at holding the game, since perpetual check attempts loom over White's king.

27 h4 Bd7

Intending to undermine with ... h5.

28 Qf4!

Dual purpose:

1. White covers d2 infiltration.
2. White protects f5, immunizing himself against ... h5 tricks.

28 ... Qf6

Renewing the ... h5 threat.

29 Re2!

Now White's knight can move in some variations, since Black lacks ... Rxe1+.

29 ... Bc8

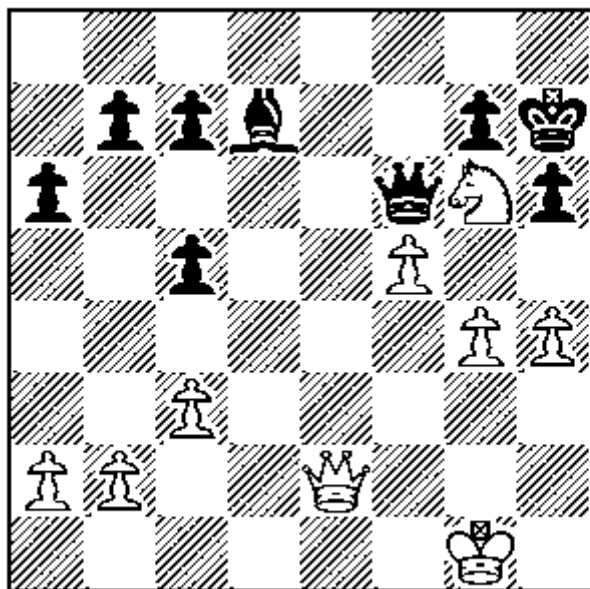
Black would regret both:

a) 29 ... Qxh4?? 30 Ng6 forking.

b) 29 ... h5?? 30 Qc4+ Kh7 31 g5! Qxf5 32 g6+ Kh6 (32 ... Kh8 33 Nf7+ wins) 33 Qg8 (threatening mate on the move) 33 ... Qb1+ 34 Kg2 Bc6+ 35 Kf2 Qf5+ 36 Kg3 and Black runs out of checks.

30 Qc4+ Kh7 31 Ng6! Rxe2 32 Qxe2 Bd7

32 ... h5?? is too slow. White forces mate after 33 Qe8 Bxf5 34 Qh8+ Kxg6 35 Qxh5.



Exercise (planning): Come up with a winning plan for White.

Answer: Simplification. Black is curiously helpless in the ending.

33 Qe7! Qxe7

33 ... Qd6?? 34 Qxd6 cxd6 35 Nf8+ picks off the bishop.

34 Nxe7

An assessment:

1. Black's king is cut off. He can activate it with ... g5, which allows White a connected f5 passer. White's king, on the other hand, can centralize unopposed.

2. White's majority is healthy, unlike Black's. So in essence White is up a pawn here, among other advantages.

3. This is a rare case of a knight completely dominating its bishop counterpart in an open position.

It feels as if some gooey, molasses-like substance has been liberally poured into the gears of Black's defence, which now grates with friction. Fischer handles the technical phase with

computer-like precision.

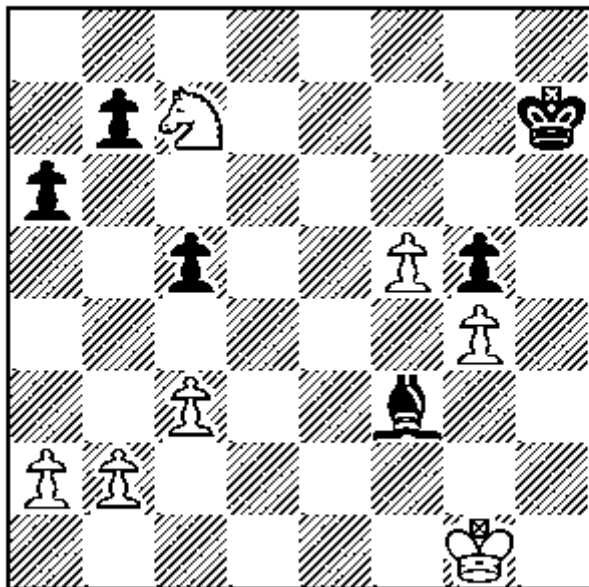
34 ... g5

There is nothing better.

35 hxg5 hxg5 36 Nd5! Bc6

A move made with the philosophy: When force fails, a fat bribe is the next best thing. Black has no choice but to hand over c7.

37 Nxc7 Bf3



Exercise (combination alert): With his last move, Unzicker decides he has endured the g4-pawn's presence long enough. White is up a pawn, yet it appears as if Black will regain it. A distinction must be made between abstract symbols and concrete analysis. How did Fischer secure his extra pawn?

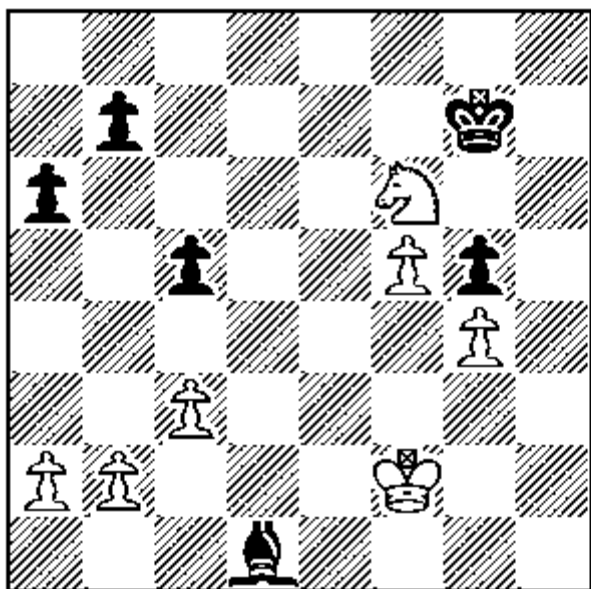
Answer: Knight fork. g4 is safe due to the knight check on f6.

38 Ne8!

The greatest joy in the knight's life is to deny others their joy. This is impressive tycoonery from Fischer, who worked out the schematic of his involved scheme to defraud Black of a key pawn, and then hang on to it for dear life.

38 ... Kh6 39 Nf6 Kg7 40 Kf2! Bd1

The g4-pawn is an object of mutual contemplation.



Exercise (critical decision/combo alert): The harried bishop's

denunciations grow ever louder. White can hang on to his g-pawn with 41 Nh5+ and 42 Kg3. Is this White's best continuation? If not, what else does he have?

Answer: Knight fork/pawn promotion.

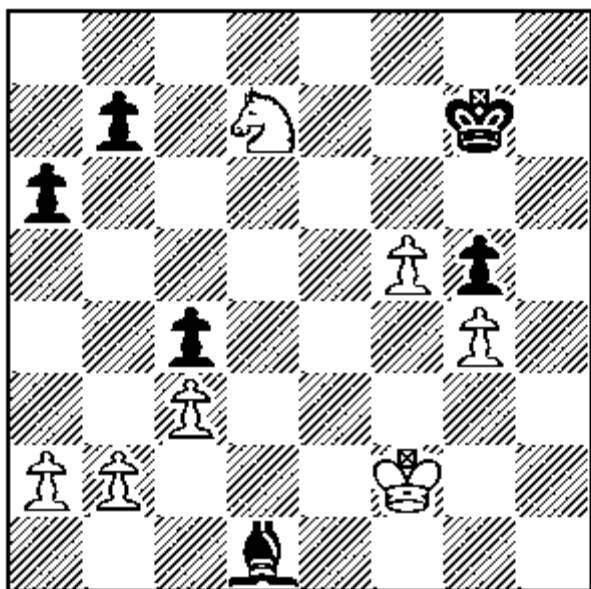
41 Nd7!

The knight's gyrations resemble one of those MC Escher paradox drawings, where a box, when opened, is larger than the ones contained within it. Fischer gives notice that his g4 base pawn is not a trinket to be bought and sold. His amazing knight acts as a powerful adhesive which keeps his g-pawn in place, through the use of clever tactics.

I don't believe White can win after the natural 41 Nh5+? which falls into Unzicker's devious fortress trap: 41 ... Kf7 42 Kg3 Be2. Since he can't unravel his knight after 43 Kh3 Bf1+ 44 Kg3 Be2, White would have to try something like 45 b4 cxb4 46 cxb4 b6 47 a3 a5 48 bxa5 bxa5 and I don't see a way for him to make progress, as 49 Kh3 is met with the familiar 49 ... Bf1+ 50 Kg3 Be2 and the game is drawn.

41 ... c4

Indifference is but a dormant form of unfriendless. It becomes apparent that Black's plan involves sculpting water into solid form. Despite Unzicker's frantic efforts to shift the geometry this way and that, he is unable to hang on to his property.



Question: Isn't 41 ... Bxg4 an easy draw for Black?

Answer: I was hoping you would ask that! White wins by force. Let's turn the position into an exercise:

Exercise (combination alert): White to play and win Black's bishop.

Answer: Attraction/knight fork. 42 f6+ Kg8 43 f7+! (attraction) 43 ... Kxf7 (the exhausted king cups his hands to splash cold water on his face, yet the haze continues; and now comes the fork) 44 Ne5+ Ke6 45 Nxd4 wins.

42 Kg3 1-0

This is one of Capablanca's best endings, except that it was played by Fischer! The threat is Nc5, and now if 42 ... Ba4 43 Nb6! Bb5 44 Kf3 Kf6 45 Ke4 Bc6+ 46 Ke3 Bb5 47 Kd4 Bc6 (intending ... Bf3) 48 Nxc4 (the knight takes a tour of the financial district) 48 ... Bf3 49 Ne3 leaves White up two clean pawns.

Game 37

R.Fischer-B.Larsen

1st matchgame, Denver 1971

French Defence

Larsen said in an interview before the match: "I will cause as much pressure to Fischer as I can. I'm sure that if he loses the first game, this will upset him." Of course, the opposite happened. This nail-biting game was the best of the match. Losing such a heart-breakingly close one dented Larsen's natural optimism in the remaining games of the 6-0 route.

1 e4 e6!?

Probably a shocking surprise for Fischer, since Larsen had only played the black side of a French Defence three times in his life before this game. Also, it was well known that Fischer experienced difficulties against Winawer French, having been notably upset with White on numerous occasions. Fischer had a 57% score with White in the line – quite dismal for him, if you include all the non-professional strength players in the line-up. Would Fischer chicken out and switch to the King's Indian Attack?

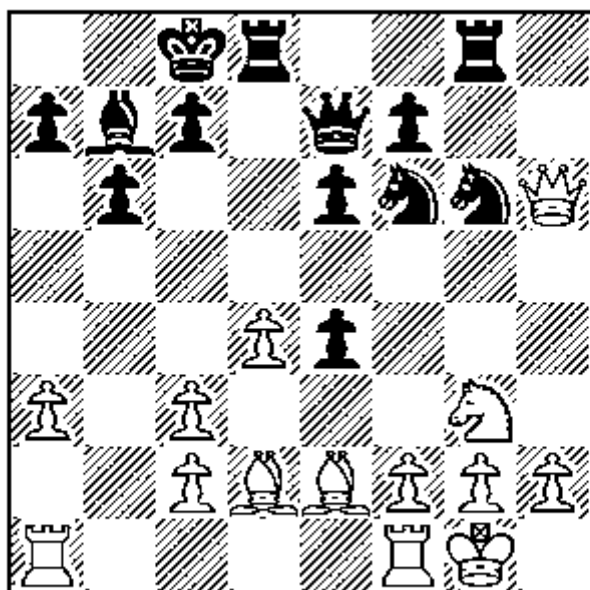
2 d4

No second-tier openings this time, like the KIA. Fischer accepts the challenge, heading straight

for the main lines of the Winawer.

2 ... d5 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e5

Fischer experimented with 4 a3 against Kovacevic, with disastrous results: 4 ... Bxc3+ 5 bxc3 dxe4 6 Qg4 Nf6 7 Qxg7 Rg8 8 Qh6 Nbd7 9 Ne2 b6 10 Bg5 Qe7 11 Qh4 Bb7 12 Ng3 h6 13 Bd2 0-0 14 Be2 Nf8 15 0-0 Ng6 16 Qxh6? and gulp! There is self-confidence, overconfidence, and then there is outright suicide. This is just asking for it.



Fischer recklessly grabs the h-pawn, unafraid of opening the h-file for Black's rooks. Following 16 ... Rh8 17 Qg5?! (Fischer had to try 17 Qe3 Nd5 18 Qg5 Qd6 19 Bh5 Ndf4 20 Bxg6 Ne2+ 21 Kh1 e3! 22 Bxe3 Rdg8 23 Qe5 Qxe5 24 dxe5 Rxc6 25 Rae1 Nxc3 26 Bd4 Rgh6 27 f3 Rxh2+ 28 Kg1 Nd5 and White has hopes to save himself in this inferior ending) 17 ... Rdg8 18 f3 (18 c4 Nh4 19 Qe3 Nf3+ 20 Bxf3 exf3 21 gxf3 Nh5 22 Rfe1 Qh4 is also decisive) 18 ... e3! 19 Bxe3 (19 Qxe3 Nd5 20 Qf2 Qh4 21 h3 Ngf4 22 Be1 Ne3! forces mate) 19 ... Nf8! 20 Qb5 Nd5 21 Kf2 a6 22 Qd3 Rxh2 23 Rh1 Qh4 24 Rxh2 Qxh2 25 Nf1 Rxc6+ Fischer resigned in a few moves, R.Fischer-V.Kovacevic, Zagreb 1970.

4 ... Ne7

4 ... c5 5 a3 Bxc3+ 6 bxc3 Ne7 transposes to the game.

5 a3 Bxc3+ 6 bxc3 c5

Fischer once famously declared that the Winawer French was an anti-positional line. Of course, to a French player like me, these are fighting words.

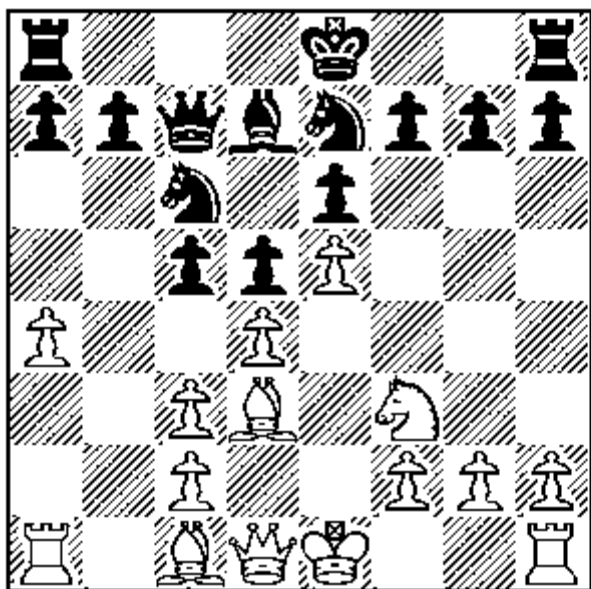
7 a4

The positional route. White hopes to place his unopposed dark-squared bishop on the a3-f8 diagonal. Today 7 Qg4 is all the rage. Black responds with the Poisoned Pawn line 7 ... Qc7 or just castles into it, daring White to deliver checkmate with 7 ... 0-0.

7 ... Nbc6 8 Nf3 Bd7

8 ... Qa5 is Black's most common response, and I believe Black's best move: 9 Bd2 (after 9 Qd2 Bd7 10 Bd3 f6 11 0-0 fxe5 12 Nxe5 Nxe5 13 dxe5 0-0 14 c4 Qc7 15 Re1 Bc6 16 Qe2 dxc4 17 Bxc4 Bd5 Black achieved equal chances, G.Tringov-V.Korchnoi, Skopje 1972) 9 ... Bd7 10 Bb5 and at this point Black can try 10 ... c4, ensuring that he swaps away White's b5-bishop.

9 Bd3 Qc7?!



Larsen attempts a discrete interrogation of e5, with a high-risk/high-greed plan, intending ... f6, and if White refuses to trade, then to capture on e5.

Question: Why don't you like this plan, which looks logical to me?

Answer: It costs Black in two ways: Time, and also allowing White to favourably open the game for his bishops. Far more sensible is 9 ... Qa5, transposing to the Tringov-Korchnoi note from above.

10 0-0 c4

Resolving central tension like this in a Winawer French is double-edged. It closes the game, which helps Black, yet it also weakens the dark squares, benefiting White.

11 Be2 f6

At some stage Black must challenge e5, since White now threatens to play his dark-squared bishop to d6.

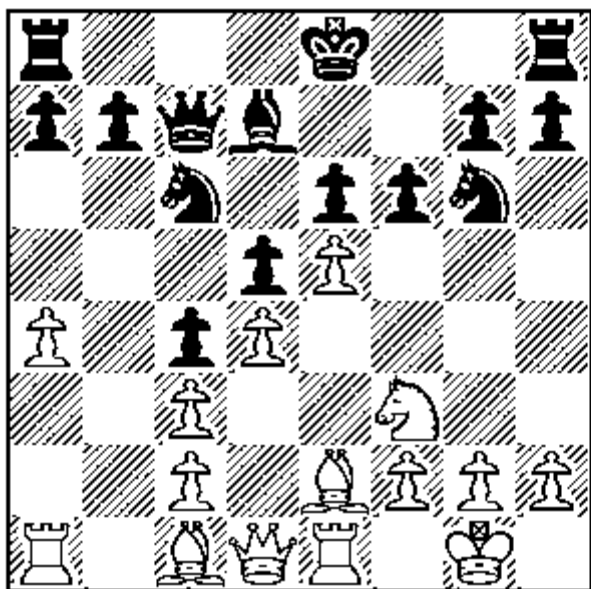
12 Re1!

Fischer refuses to swap on f6 and is willing to sacrifice his e5-pawn to open lines for his bishops.

Black scores well after 12 exf6?! gxf6 which gives him control over the centre and opens the g-file for his rooks.

Instead, 12 Ba3 0-0 13 Re1 Rf7 14 exf6 (or 14 Bd6 Qa5 15 exf6 gxf6 16 Qd2 Nf5 17 Bf4 Rg7 18 h3 Nce7 19 Kh1 Ng6 20 Bh2 when g4 is coming and White looks better) 14 ... gxf6 15 Bf1 Re8 was R.Fischer-E.Mednis, New York 1962. White stands better after 16 g3, but Fischer ended up losing this game, proving that the Winawer was his boogieman opening.

12 ... Ng6?!



This is no improvement over 12 ... 0-0 13 Ba3 Rf7, transposing to the Fischer-Mednis game.

13 Ba3!

Please, I insist. After you. Fischer has no plans to back down and capture on f6. He offers his e-pawn to open central lines. 13 exf6?! gxf6 cedes control of the centre to Black, and allows him an open g-file to attack White's king.

13 ... fxe5 14 dxe5 Nxe5

Larsen was never one to turn down a dare. If he refuses this pawn, White gets a risk-free initiative without even sacrificing a pawn.

15 Nxe5 Nxe5 16 Qd4!

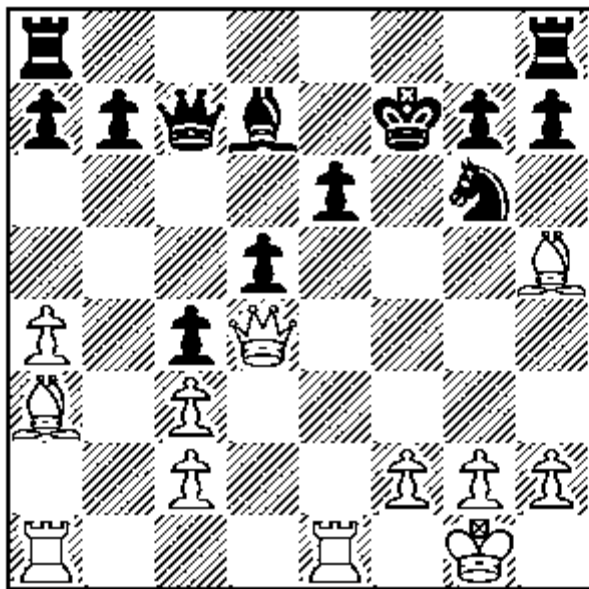
Powerful multipurpose centralization. White's queen aims in both directions, turning her gaze upon e5 and g7, and also a7, which discourages queenside castling.

16 ... Ng6 17 Bh5

A move which epitomises Fischer's resolution to attack, no matter what the cost. He also stands clearly better after 17 Qxg7 0-0-0 18 a5, although in this version, Black generates some play from the newly-opened g-file.

17 ... Kf7?!

Correct was to enter emergency mode with 17 ... 0-0-0! 18 a5! (18 Qxa7 b6 19 Qa8+ Qb8 forces queens off the board, after which Black stands only a bit worse) 18 ... a6 19 Bc5 Rde8 20 Bb6 Qc6 21 Qxg7 e5. Black still stands worse, but is better off than what he got in the game.



Desperation is a state where we are certain to do something either inspirational, or reckless. 17 ... Kf7?! qualifies as the latter. Larsen was a player whose moves often appeared as nonsense, which inevitably turned out to be plausible nonsense when later we finally understood his original intent. In this instance his eccentricity pushes matters too far, since his king comes under a dangerous crossfire.

Exercise (planning): Come up with an attacking plan for White.

Answer: Undermine with f4 and f5.

18 f4! Rhe8?!

The wrong rook. Black should try 18 ... Rae8 (18 ... Bc6?? 19 f5 exf5 20 Re7+ wins the queen) 19 f5 exf5 20 Qxd5+ Kf6 21 Bd6 Qd8 22 Rf1 Kg5! 23 Bd1 h5!. This is why his h8-rook should stay put, although even here I see Black's survival as an unlikely possibility.

19 f5! exf5 20 Qxd5+ Kf6

20 ... Be6?? is crushed by 21 Rxe6! Rxe6 22 Qxf5+ Rf6 23 Qd5+ Re6 24 Rf1+ and the e6-rook falls.

21 Bf3?

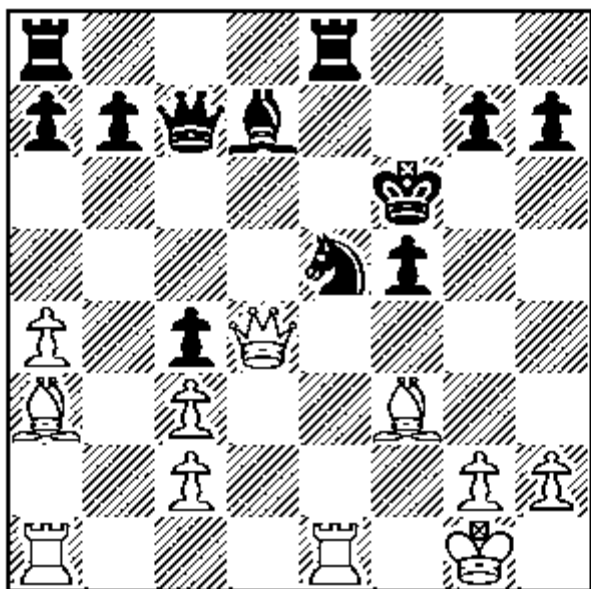
Now the board's reality begins to vary from Fischer's expectations. Larsen's plan in a sense, worked perfectly, in that he lured Fischer into an irrational position – the only kind of position where Fischer didn't excel.

Here Fischer rejected the correct line 21 Bd6! Qc8 (after 21 ... Qc6 22 Qd4+ Black's king can't escape with 22 ... Kf7?? 23 Bf3 Qc8 24 Rxe8 Qxe8 25 Bd5+ Be6 26 Re1, which wins) 22 Bf3! (only now) 22 ... Bc6 23 Qd4+ Kf7 24 Qxc4+ Re6 25 Bd5 Bxd5 26 Qxd5 Kf6 27 g4!, which strips away the remaining cover from Black's king.

21 ... Ne5!

The evaluation drops to even and Larsen is right back in the game.

22 Qd4



Exercise (combination alert): It looks like it's time for Larsen to resign.

After all, White threatens Bd6. How did Larsen solve his pin issue?

Answer: Just walk away and refuse to co-operate.

22 ... Kg6! 23 Rxe5! Qxe5!

23 ... Rxe5?? 24 Bd6 wins.

24 Qxd7 Rad8!

A dull, secret resentment now morphs into open animosity. Almost by magic, Larsen took possession of the initiative.

25 Qxb7 Qe3+

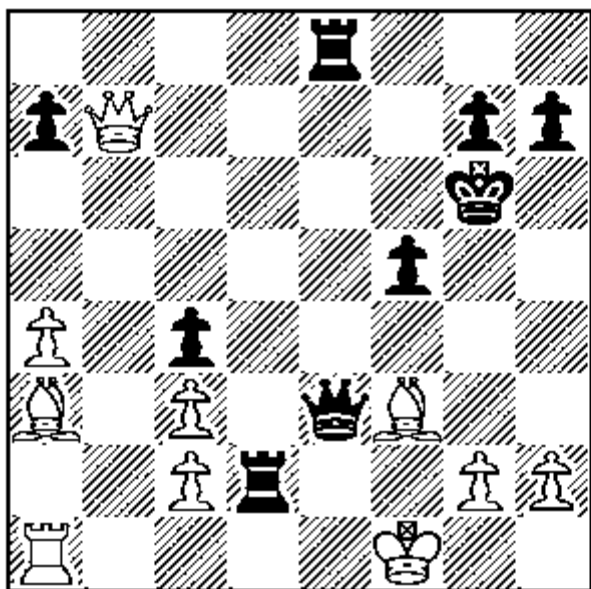
"I see that you are more pretty than handsome. From this moment on, you will be my plaything," says the queen to White's king. The players, through some mysterious means of psychic osmosis, switch roles, acquiring the elements of the other's position. Now it's Fischer's turn to go on the defensive.

26 Kf1

The king presses his eye to the peephole from his hiding place, only to see that which he feared most.

No choice. 26 Kh1?? would be a major boneheaded blunder, which walks into a back-rank mate after 26 ... Qe1+ 27 Rxe1 Rxe1.

26 ... Rd2



All black guns are trained on f2, which is about to receive its entire consignment of ammunition.

Question: Isn't it time for White to resign?

Just look at the white king's dishevelled appearance.

Answer: Admittedly, black's queen and rook seem to possess all three factors in the transgression of a crime: Motive, opportunity and means. Yet, shockingly, the correct assessment of this position may be dead even – but only if you discover Fischer's miracle defence.

Exercise (combination alert): How did Fischer slip out of Black's mating net?

Answer: X-ray defence/queen sacrifice.

27 Qc6+! Re6

It feels like it gets worse and worse for White. Not only is his queen under attack, but his king, threatened with mate on the move, appears as if he is in for a big fall, as he goes from unchallenged supreme universal ruler to his new job as a clown who makes balloon animals at children's parties.

28 Bc5!!

The bishop leans in close, violating the black queen's personal space, as her eyes bulge in mid-gloat. Apparently, White's king is better guarded than we first imagined. Boy, talk about cutting it close! The f2 gap is filled, the way an eight-year-old's tongue jams itself in the void of a fallen tooth. This represents a coalition of necessity, more than convenience.

I still remember how Fischer's amazing defence blew my mind when I played the game over for the first time at age 10. Do you remember the blind, yet super-aware Buddhist monk, Master Po, from the 1970's show Kung Fu? (If you don't then immediately binge-watch all the seasons on Netflix, as your homework assignment!) Master Po compensated the loss of one of his senses, by hyper-alertness in the others. Fischer, although sighted, possessed this same hyper-alertness to the slightest geometric alteration, which time and time again rescued him in seemingly impossible situations, like this one.

Instead, 28 Qc5?? fails to get the job done: 28 ... Rf2+ 29 Kg1 Rxf3+ 30 Qxe3 Rfxe3 and Black wins.

28 ... Rf2+!

The only move, as if 28 ... Qe2+?? 29 Bxe2 Rxc6 30 Bxa7 and the a-pawn wins easily for

White after 30 ... Rxc2 31 Bd4.

29 Kg1

Oddly enough, Black has no deathblow discovered check here.

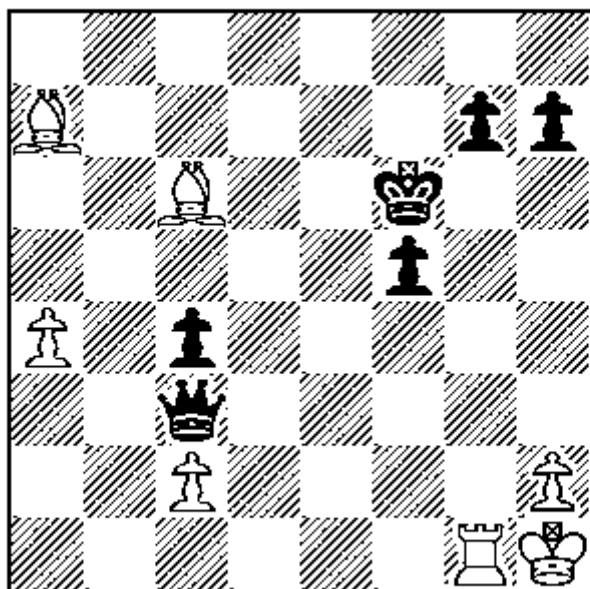
29 ... Rxc2+!

Not:

a) 29 ... Rxf3+?? 30 Bxe3 Rxc6 31 gxf3 which leaves Black down a clean piece.

b) 29 ... Rxc6?? 30 Bxe3 once again will leave White up a piece.

30 Kxg2 Qd2+ 31 Kh1 Rxc6 32 Bxc6 Qxc3 33 Rg1+ Kf6 34 Bxa7



Exercise (critical decision): White got two bishops and a rook for the queen.

This coupled with the passed a-pawn appears to be decisive, yet this isn't the case. Black has a choice of 34 ... Qxc2, intending to push the c-pawn as fast as possible or 34 ... g5, intending to generate threats against White's king. One move draws, while the other loses. Choose wisely.

34 ... g5?

Larsen is tragically swayed by the wrong plan. Black's kingside pawns don't come remotely close to bothering White's well protected king. Prince Niccolo Machiavelli, one of history's most devious philosophers, claimed that all else being equal, political struggles tipped one way or another through "fortuna" – pure luck! In this case, Larsen, probably low on the clock and mentally exhausted by now, and having played one of the most amazing turnarounds of his entire career, missed his opportunity to save the game with:

Answer: 34 ... Qxc2!! 35 a5 Qa2 36 Bb6 Ke6! (f6 is an unfavourable square for Black's king, as we later see in the game's continuation) 37 Bb7 Qb3! 38 Ra1 c3 39 a6! Qxb6 40 Bd5+! Kxd5 41 a7 Qc6 42 a8Q Qxa8 43 Rxa8 when White wins a rook, but not the game. Black draws after 43 ... Kd4 44 Rc8 Kd3 45 Kg2 c2 46 Kf3 Kd2 47 Rd8+ Ke1 48 Rc8 Kd2 49 Rd8+ with perpetual check.

35 Bb6 Qxc2 36 a5

White's a-pawn is too fast – thanks mainly to the black king's unfortunate position on f6.

36 ... Qb2 37 Bd8+!

This zwischenzug allows his a-pawn to advance. This game feels like a looped succession of paradoxes, without end or beginning.

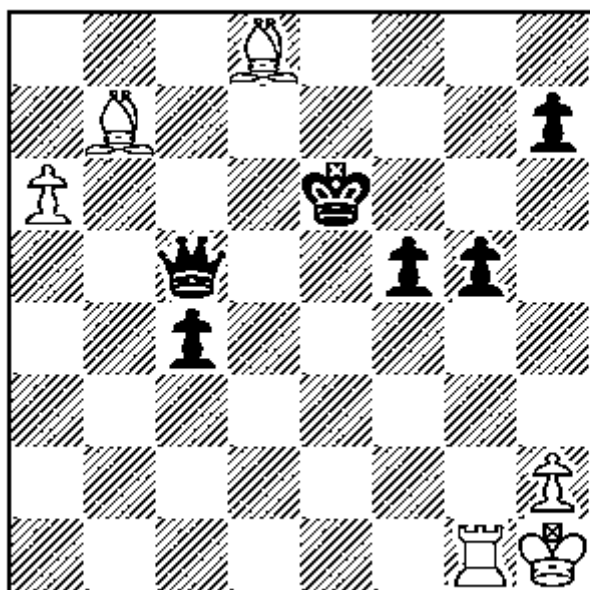
37 ... Ke6 38 a6 Qa3

Maybe Black should try 38 ... Qf2 39 Bxg5 c3 40 Ra1 c2 41 a7 c1R+ 42 Rxc1 Qxa7. However,

this end position is a technical win for White.

39 Bb7 Qc5

Black puts up a better fight with 39 ... Qb4, but in the end still loses after 40 Bxg5 Qb5 41 Re1+ Kf7 42 Bd2 Kf8 43 Bc3 Qc5 44 Ra1 Qa7 45 Bb4+ Kg7 46 Bc5! Qxc5 47 a7 and White promotes.



Exercise (planning): Black threatens to tie White down with ... c2.

How did Fischer deal with this and force his a-pawn down the board?

Answer: Interference/zwischenzug/pawn promotion.

40 Rb1!

Threat: Bb6 and a7.

40 ... c3 41 Bb6! 1-0

41 ... c2 is met with the zwischenzug 42 Re1+ followed by Bxc5, but if 41 ... Qe5 42 a7 and the a-pawn promotes.

Game 38

B.Spassky-R.Fischer

World Championship (Game 3), Reykjavik 1972

Modern Benoni

GM John Emms called this game the “Benoni which caused shockwaves in the chess world.”

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nf3 c5

The Benoni is more tempting for Black when White plays an early Nf3.

Question: Why?

Answer: In the early Nf3 versions Black evades many of the really crazy lines involving f4.

4 d5

4 Nc3 cxd4 5 Nxd4 is a popular Anti-Benoni, with some theory involved.

4 ... exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 Nc3 g6 7 Nd2

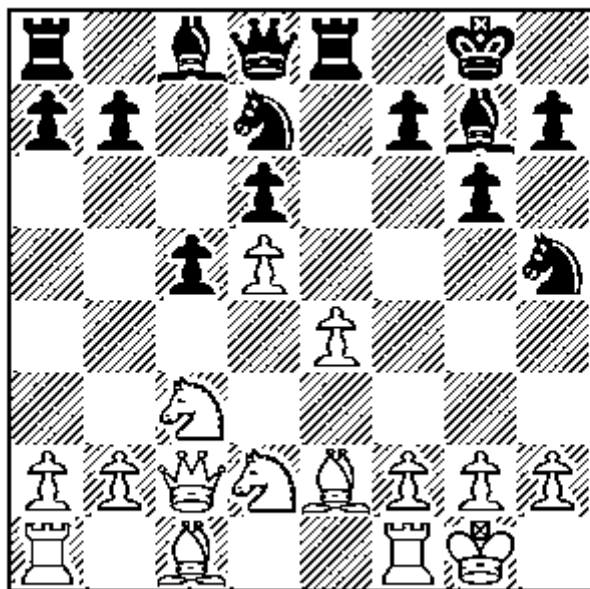
This move order denies Black an opportunity to swap with 7 e4 a6! (the immediate 7 ... Bg4?!

is met with 8 Qa4+! Bd7 9 Qb3 when Black's pieces are out of synch with a normal Benoni) 8 a4 Bg4 and the swap of the light-squared bishop for the knight benefits Black, who is cramped.

7 ... Nbd7 8 e4 Bg7 9 Be2 0-0 10 0-0 Re8 11 Qc2

Today, 11 a4 is White's main line: 11 ... Ne5 12 Re1 (12 f4? is premature and met with 12 ... Ng4 when White is in big trouble) 12 ... g5 (Black locks down on f4 ideas) 13 Nf1 h6 14 Ng3 a6 15 Rb1 Ng6 16 Be3 Qa5 17 h3 and White looks a shade better, due to his control over the kingside light squares, A.Korobov-P.Simacek, Czech League 2014.

11 ... Nh5!?



As all computers and robots from 1950's Sci-fi movies loved to declare: "Error! This does not compute." The opening stage of the game tends to be the professional chess player's most precious commodity. So then why did Fischer casually toss aside a century of precedence?

This move – which (falsely) exhibits an air of improvisation – sits on the threshold of both epiphany and strategic error, where Fischer launches a completely altered train of thought from the norm. The lure is based upon the presumption that it will jar the opponent psychologically.

Question: What the hell!?

Answer: The entire chess world shares your sentiments about this move, one of the most shocking in world championship match history. Fischer's move passes the level of unlikely and is better described as 'unimaginable'. Yet, here it is, played with the world championship on the line.

Question: Is Fischer's idea sound?

Answer: I don't believe it stands up against modern day computer analysis, and would label it '?!' if played today. But for single-game ambush value, it worked against the obviously shell-shocked Spassky. Normally, when we deliberately play a strategically suspect move, we first discriminate between likely and unlikely candidate moves. When all the 'likelies' fail, only then after winnowing, by default, do we seek out the 'unlikelies'.

In the position before Fischer's last move, however, Black had loads of perfectly playable 'likelies', so his move is probably based solely on a psychological gamble – which in this instance worked. I guarantee you, Spassky would have played a completely different game if Fischer was crazy enough to repeat his objectively dubious novelty later in the match.

Instead, 11 ... Ne5 scores well for Black.

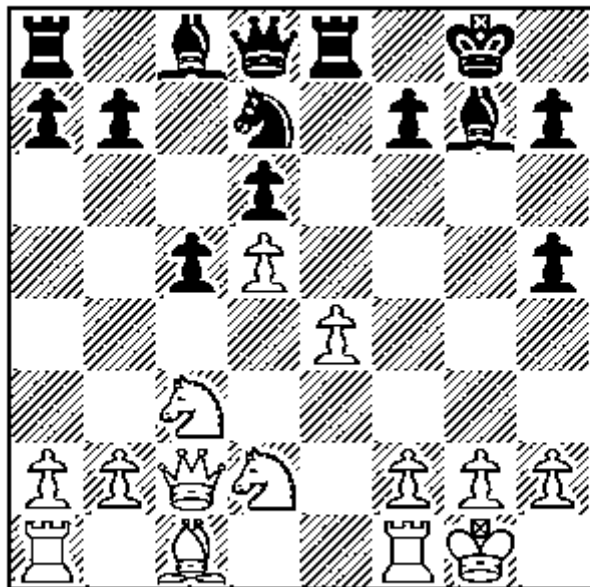
12 Bxh5

“And why not?” asks John Emms. Let’s break the position into its constituent elements:

1. White inflicts grievous damage to Black’s structure, which now is a collection of isolanis and potential targets.

2. In return, Black gets the bishop-pair and potential to attack along the newly opened g-file with a future ... Kh8 and ... Rg8, which on the objective level, isn’t enough to compensate for number one on the list.

12 ... gxh5



13 Nc4

When we are confronted with a new idea in the opening, multiple emotions compete for dominance. In this case caution wins, when Spassky would have been better served with rage. I think this move allows Black to equalize.

White should try and punish Fischer with something like this: 13 h3! h4 (after 13 ... Ne5 14 f4 Ng6 15 f5! White shuts out Black’s c8-bishop, which more than compensates for Black’s dark-square control; then 15 ... Ne5 16 Nf3 Nxf3+ 17 Rxf3 leaves Black in serious trouble, both strategically and with his king as well) 14 a4 Kh8 15 f4 f5?! (natural and also bad; Black was in trouble in any case, but this move speeds up his decline) 16 Nf3! Idea: Ng5. 16 ... fxe4 17 Ng5 Bd4+ 18 Kh1 Qf6 19 f5! e3 20 Nce4 Rxe4 (or 20 ... Qg7 21 Nxd6 and Black is busted) 21 Nxe4 Qh6 22 Ra3 Nb6 23 Rxe3! Bxe3 24 Qc3+ Qg7 (24 ... Bd4 25 Bxh6 Bxc3 26 bxc3 Bd7 27 f6 is also hopeless for Black) 25 f6 Qf8 26 Qxe3 Nxd5 27 Qd3 Nb4 28 Qxd6 Qxd6 29 Nxd6 Bd7 30 Bh6 1-0. There is no defence to the coming f7, V.Burmakin-S.Kravtsov, Tula 2001.

13 ... Ne5 14 Ne3

Spassky seizes control over f5. 14 Nxe5 Bxe5 15 Be3 Qh4 16 g3 Qf6 actually looks better for Black, who can tease White on the kingside light squares. Also, his h5-pawn can become a future attacking weapon with ... h4 at some point.

14 ... Qh4!

Now ... Ng4 is in the air.

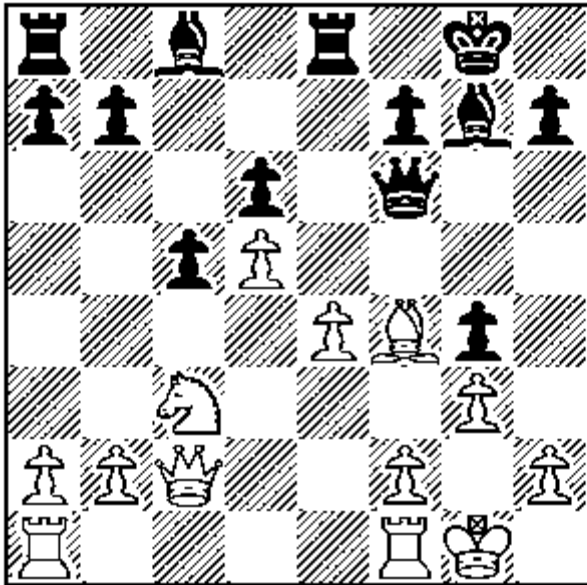
15 Bd2?!

Spassky still hasn’t recovered psychologically from Fischer’s ... Nh5!? idea and proceeds cautiously, to the point of passivity. He should seize control over the g4-square with Robert Byrne’s suggestion 15 f3! a6 16 a4 Bd7, later tested in Bic-S.Radu, correspondence 1980. Now White should continue with 17 Ne2! intending Ng3 and to plant either knight on f5. After 17 ... Ng6 18 Nc4 Qe7 19 Bd2 h4 20 Nb6 Rad8 21 Rae1 White still holds a strategic edge.

15 ... Ng4!

Fischer forces his opponent to fix his once doubled h-pawns.

16 Nxg4 hxg4 17 Bf4 Qf6 18 g3?



After this move Spassky's sluggish position continues to lie inert.

Question: What is wrong with this stabilizing move?

Answer: Besides being overly passive, the following:

1. White creates a hole on f3 and therefore also e5, since now f4 is unavailable for White.
 2. White's last move artificially isolated his e4-pawn, which is now chronically weak.
- The game remains in approximate balance after 18 Qd2.

18 ... Bd7

Intending ... b5.

19 a4 b6! 20 Rfe1 a6

Preparing ... b5 and ... b4, undermining White's e4-pawn.

21 Re2 b5

Black already stands better.

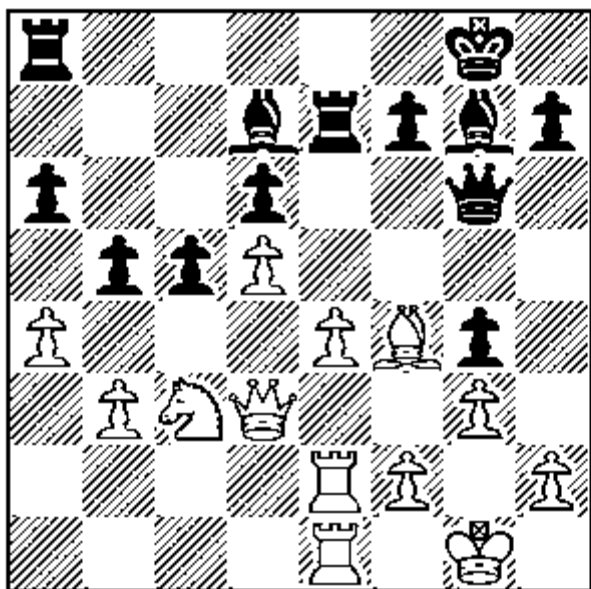
22 Rae1 Qg6!

Target: e4.

23 b3 Re7!

Fischer proceeds with Capa-simplicity. The next step is to double rooks, adding even more heat to e4.

24 Qd3

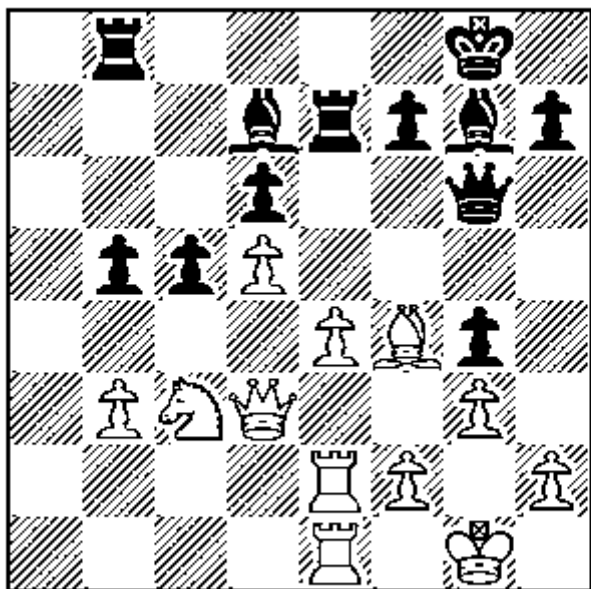


Spassky tries to tie Black down to his queenside pawns.

24 ... Rb8!

Superb strategic judgement. Fischer can win a pawn here, then correctly concluded he may not be able to convert after 24 ... Rae8 25 axb5 Bxc3! 26 Qxc3 Bxb5 27 Re3 Rxe4 28 Qc2 f5 (28 ... Rxe3 29 Qxg6+ hxg6 30 Rxe3 Rd8 31 Bg5 leaves White with excellent chances to hold the ending) 29 Qc3 Rxe3 30 Rxe3 Rxe3 31 Qxe3 Qf6 32 h3! gxh3 33 Kh2 Kf7 34 Qe1 and the opposite-coloured bishops imbalance greatly complicates Black's chances to win.

25 axb5 axb5



26 b4!?

Black threatened ... b4. Spassky's move allows Fischer a protected passed c-pawn. I don't think White will hold the game if he goes passive with 26 Nb1 Ra8 27 Nd2 Ree8 28 Qc2 Bd4 29 Qd3 Ra3 with mounting pressure.

26 ... c4!

White regains the pawn with approximate equality after 26 ... cxb4? 27 Na2!.

27 Qd2 Rbe8!

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The rook accomplished its mission on the b-file. Now it's time to hammer away at e4.

28 Bg5?? hangs a piece to the deflection 28 ... Bxc3.

I hate that feeling when you reach your supposed goal, and then suffer a vaguely unsatisfied ending, which indicates something missing. In this case the presence of opposite-coloured bishops greatly complicates Fischer's task. He is in no rush to cash out too early with 28 ... Bxc3? 29 Qxc3 Rxe4 30 Rxe4 Rxe4 31 Rxe4 Qxe4 32 Bh6 Qg6 33 Qe3 intending Qg5, with a pure opposite-coloured bishops ending where White may hold the draw.

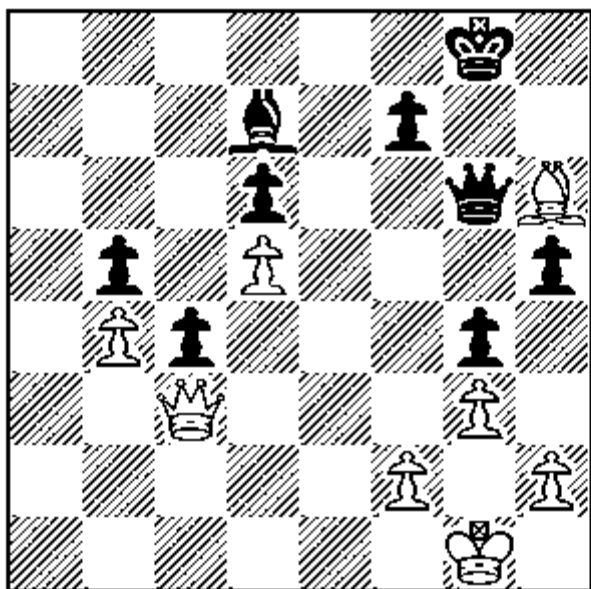
White's counterplayless position spins its wheels, frustrated from want of traction. Spassky is reduced to rocking back and forth with his rook, awaiting Fischer's response. 29 e5 dxe5 30 R3e2 d3 is hopeless for White.

A move like this is to just demonstrate the opponent's helplessness.

Avoiding 30 ... Bxc3? 31 Qxc3 Rxe4 32 Rxe4 Rxe4 33 Rxe4 Qxe4 34 Qf6 Qxd5 35 Qxd6 Qxd6 36 Bxd6 Kg6 37 Kf1 Kf5 38 Ke2 Ke4 39 Be7 when White should hold the draw.

The time has arrived. Black has no other method of improving his position.

32 Qxc3 Rxe4 33 Rxe4 Rxe4 34 Rxe4 Qxe4 35 Bh6 Qg6



Black has won a pawn, yet the presence of opposite-coloured bishops obviously complicates his conversion task. Fischer now plays on the principle: Opposite-coloured bishops favour the attacking side. In order to apply this principle, Fischer must retain queens on the board.

36 Bc1

Spasky wants to play Bb2 next move. 36 Qe3? intending Qg5, is met with 36 ... Kh7 37 Bf4 Qb1+ 38 Qc1 Qxb4 winning a second pawn.

36 ... Qb1

Fischer disallows White's plan.

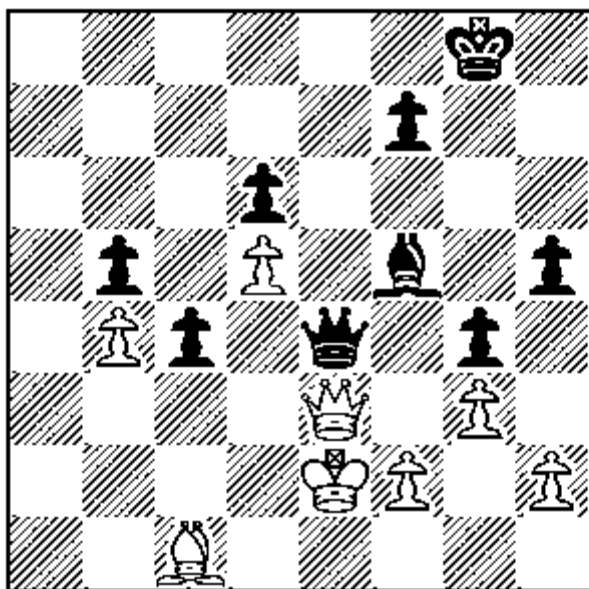
37 Kf1

This allows Black a decisive attack, based on the bishops of opposite colours. Also hopeless is 37 Qe1 f6 38 Bd2 Qh7 39 Bc3 Kf7. The trouble is d5 eventually falls, although even there, I played out some scenarios where White held the draw two pawns down when queens came off the board.

37 ... Bf5 38 Ke2 Qe4+

The overbearing Nurse Ratched-like queen continues to boss the living daylights out of everyone within her orbit.

39 Qe3



Exercise (critical decision): How would you continue as Black?

Answer: 39 ... Qc2+!

“Well-bred people sometimes experience difficulty communicating irritation,” says the queen, as she approaches her brother with dagger in hand.

Instead, 39 ... Qxd5?? 40 Qg5+ is a trap, where White draws after 40 ... Kh7 (40 ... Kf8?? actually loses to 41 Qd8+ Kg7 42 Bb2+ Kg6 43 Qf6+ Kh7 44 Qg7 mate) 41 Qh6+ Kg8 42 Qg5+ with perpetual check.

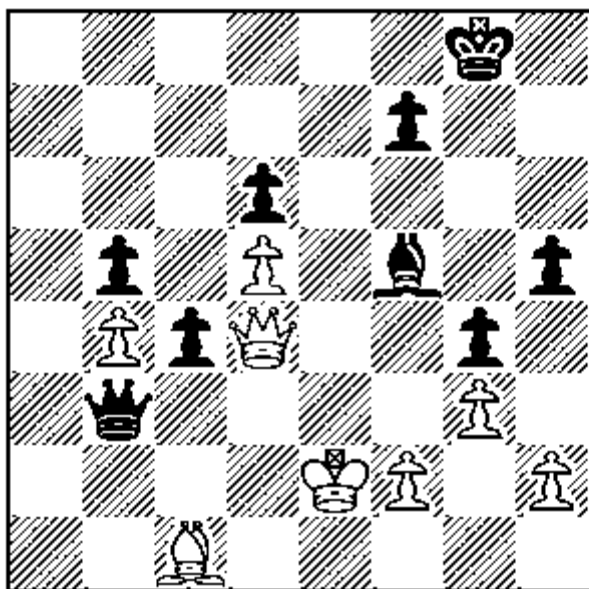
40 Qd2

Alternatively, 40 Ke1 c3 41 Qe8+ Kg7 42 Qe3 Be4 43 Qg5+ Bg6 44 Qe3 f6 45 Qe7+ Bf7 46 Bh6+ Kg6 47 Qf8 Qe4+ 48 Kd1 Qb1+ 49 Ke2 c2 50 Qg7+ Kf5 51 Qh7+ Bg6 52 Qd7+ Ke4 53 Qe7+ Kd4 54 Qxf6+ Kxd5 55 Qg5+ Kc6 (now the checks come to an end) 56 Qc1 Qxb4 and Black wins, since there is no way White can blockade three connected passers.

40 ... Qb3

It's crucial for Black to retain queens: 40 ... Qxd2+?? (Black's initiative which first arrived in a gush, now trails off into an embarrassed silence) 41 Bxd2 Be4 42 Bf4 is dead drawn. In fact, I think the position is a draw even if White doesn't win the d6-pawn.

41 Qd4?



41 Ke1 puts up greater resistance, but is still lost in the long run.

41 ... Bd3+! 0-1

“How wonderful when God’s will and my own coincide,” thinks the bishop. White’s king is hopelessly short on natural resources to bolster his defence. Playing on is futile:

a) 42 Ke1 Qxb4+ 43 Kd1 Qb3+ 44 Ke1 b4 45 Qf6 Qc2 46 Qg5+ Bg6 47 Qd2 c3! 48 Qxc2 Bxc2 and there is no defence to the b-pawn’s push.

b) 42 Kd2 Qc2+ (the queen tenderly runs her finger down her brother’s face, just before ordering his execution) 43 Ke1 Qe2 mate.

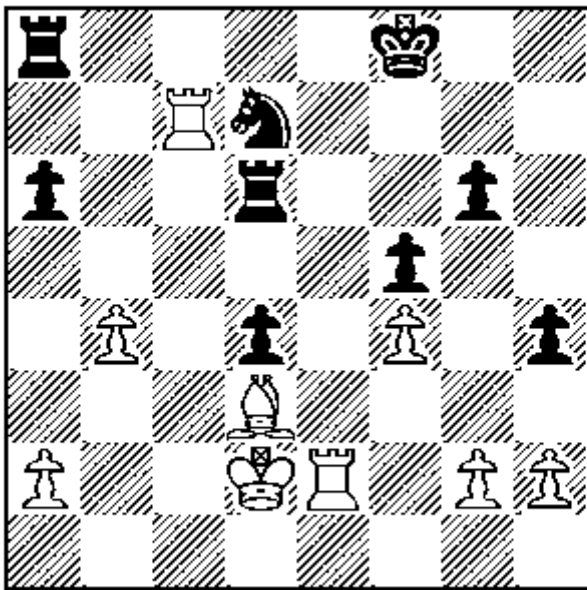
c) 42 Ke3 Qd1 (Black threatens mate on e2 and also ... Qxc1+) 43 Qb2 Qf3+ 44 Kd4 (White’s king feels more and more estranged from his defenders) 44 ... Qe4+ 45 Kc3 Qe1+! 46 Bd2 Qe5 mate.

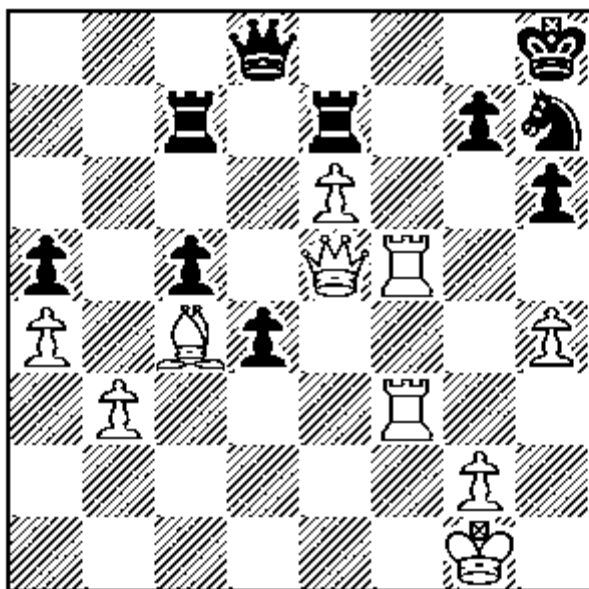
Chapter Five

Fischer on Accumulating Advantages

This chapter, more than any other in the book, highlights Fischer's domination over his rivals. Chess players are organisms which survive in their natural habitats. Like Morphy and Capablanca before him, Fischer was at least one generation ahead of his rivals in strategic understanding. By 1970, Fischer's opponents – even world-class players – were made to look like bumbling amateurs in clear strategic situations.

In the following two diagrams, Fischer, with White in both games, effortlessly drove both Petrosian, the high priest of the manoeuvring game, and Spassky the reigning world champion and unrivalled master of the initiative, to near-zugzwang. In both games the defenders attempted to purchase peace through appeasement, via strategic concessions, which of course, proved to be no more than short-term alleviation and failed to cure the underlying illness festering beneath the surface. Both games are classic examples of a bishop's domination over a knight.





Game 39

W.Addison-R.Fischer

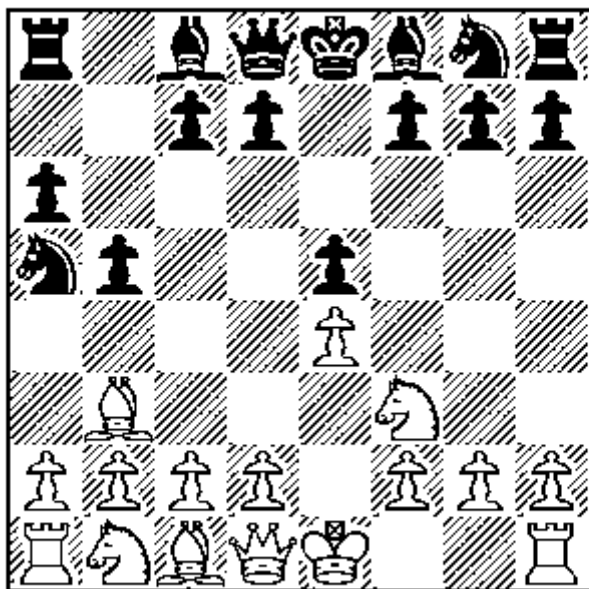
USA Championship, New York 1963

Ruy Lopez

1 e4 e5!?

Fischer experimented from time to time with 1 ... e5, the most famous of which is his loss to Spassky in the King's Gambit, a 19th Century dual fought in the 20th Century.

2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Ba4 b5 5 Bb3 Na5!?



Question: This move looks crazy. Can Black afford the loss of time?

Answer: This is an actual, rarely-played line called the Norwegian variation of the Ruy Lopez. Black hunts down the bishop-pair, at an obvious cost of time. Even today, heavyweights like Morozevich and Mamedyarov try it out occasionally – although pretty much only in blitz games, so I suspect the line is rather shady for Black.

6 d4

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Question: Can Black survive a bishop sacrifice on f7?

Answer: 6 Bxf7+?! is met with 6 ... Kxf7 7 Nxe5+ Ke7!. Black scores 56% from this position. For example, 8 Qf3 Nf6 9 Nc3 Qe8 10 d4 Bb7 11 Bf4 Kd8! (Black's king finds a measure of safety on the queenside) 12 0-0-0 Be7 13 Ng4 Nxe4 14 Qxg4 Qg6 15 Qxg6 hxe4 16 f3. Queens have come off the board and White is the one fighting to survive, since his two pawns don't fully compensate the missing piece, B.Spassky-M.Taimanov, Leningrad 1954.

White's optimal move is 6 0-0, leading to:

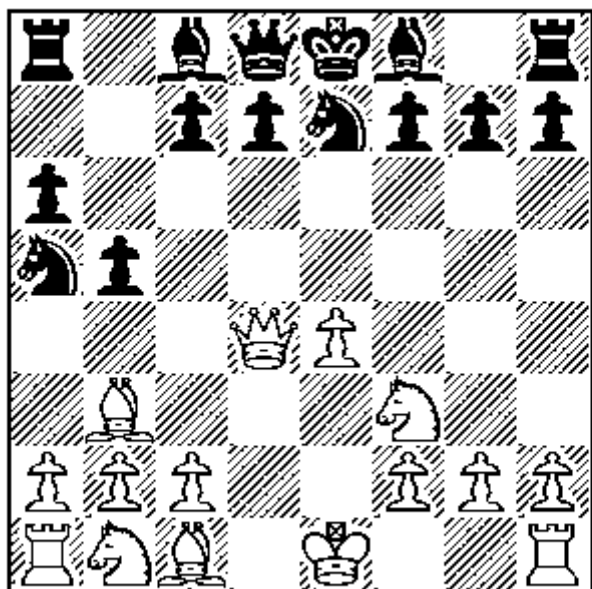
a) 6 ... d6 7 d4 f6 8 Be3 Ne7 9 Nbd2 Nxb3 10 axb3 Ng6 11 c4 Bd7 12 Qc2 Be7, A.Giri-M.Narciso Dublan, Spanish Team Championship 2014. White looks slightly more comfortable after 13 b4 with a queenside expansion.

b) 6 ... Nxb3 7 axb3 d6 8 d4 f6 9 Nh4 (or 9 c4 Bb7 10 Nc3 Ne7 11 Qe2 c6 12 Rd1 Qc7 13 Be3 Ng6 14 Rac1 b4 15 Na4 c5?! 16 dxc5 dxc5 17 Qd3 Rb8 18 Nb6! when the knight can't be touched, due to the mating threat on d7; now Black should try 18 ... Bxe4 which is met with 19 Nd5! Bxd5 20 cxd5 Bd6 21 Nd2 0-0 22 Ne4 when White regains the sacrificed pawn with a clear advantage, rather than 18 ... Be7?! 19 Nd5 and Fischer's monster d5-knight gave him a strategically won game in R.Fischer-S.Johannessen, Havana Olympiad 1966) 9 ... Ne7 10 Nc3 Be6 11 Be3 g5 12 Qf3! Bg7 (12 ... gxe4 13 Qxf6 regains the piece favourably) 13 dxe5 dxe5 14 Nf5 Bxf5 15 exf5 0-0 was R.Fischer-R.Walker, USA 1957. Fischer has a strategically won game after 16 Bc5! Rf7 17 Bxe7 Rxe7 18 Rfd1 Qe8 19 Ne4.

6 ... exd4 7 Qxd4!

Threatening Bxf7+!, followed by Qd5+ and Qxa8. Instead, 7 Nxd4 gives Black equality after 7 ... Bb7 8 Nf5 g6 9 Ng3 Nxb3 10 axb3, P.Zigzidsuren-S.Johannessen, Skopje 1972.

7 ... Ne7!



Covering the d5-square. Fischer almost never fell for cheapos, even as a child.

8 c3?!

A complete waste of time, since Black isn't going to allow White's light-squared bishop to slide away. Better was 8 0-0 Nxb3 9 axb3 Bb7 10 Bg5 Nc6 11 Qd2 Be7 12 Nc3 Ne5! 13 Nxe5 Bxg5 14 f4 Bf6 15 Nd5 d6 16 Ng4!? (16 Nxf6+ Qxf6 17 Ng4 Qg6 18 h3 f6 is fine for Black) 16 ... Bxb2 17 Rad1 (now c3 is a dangerous threat) 17 ... h5 18 Nge3 c6 19 Nb4 a5 20 c3, as in A.Sokolov-N.Nikcevic, Budva 1996. The position remains unbalanced with even chances after 20 ... Ba3 21 Nd3 0-0 22 Nc2 Bc5+ 23 Nxc5 dxc5 24 Qe2 Qb6 25 Qxh5 Rad8.

8 ... Nxb3 9 axb3 Bb7 10 Bf4?!

Inaccurate. White has two superior choices:

a) 10 b4, Euwe's suggestion, clamps down on Black's future ... c5, which can be met with 10 ...

Nc6 11 Qd1 Bd6 with even chances.

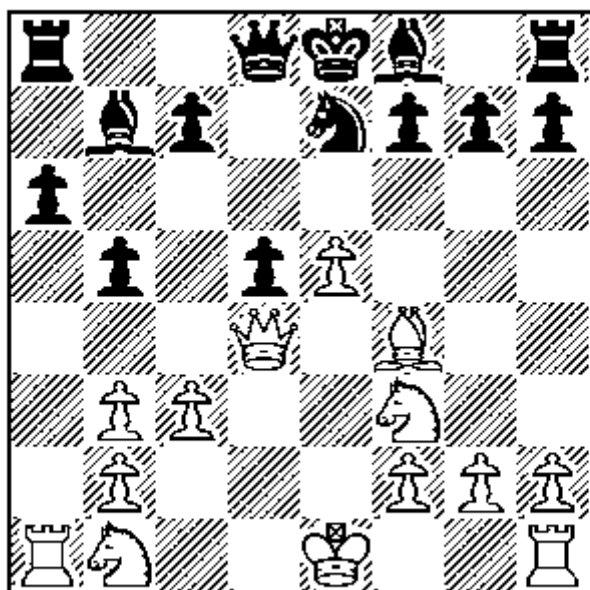
b) GM Nigel Davies suggests 10 0-0, which is also superior to Addison's choice. After 10 ... d5!? 11 exd5 Qxd5 (11 ... Nxd5? loses time to 12 Re1+) 12 Qxd5 Bxd5 13 Bf4 Bxf3 14 gxf3 Kd7! 15 Rd1+ Kc6 16 b4 Ng6 17 Be3 Kb7 18 Nd2 (18 Rd7?? walks into 18 ... Ne5) 18 ... Rd8 Black doesn't stand worse in the ending.

10 ... d5!

Good strategic judgement. Fischer sees that White is unable to exploit his development lead, so he takes the opportunity to free his position and open the game for his bishops.

11 e5?!

He had to agree to the concession: 11 exd5 Nxd5 and here we see that White should have castled, rather than play his bishop to f4, since he no longer has the Re1+ option. This is still better than what Addison played in the game.



Every one of our wants exacts a price. Soon White's initiative is no more, almost as if it never existed in the first place.

Exercise (combination alert): With his last move, White exceeded a natural boundary. How did Fischer take over the initiative and solve all his developmental problems?

Answer: Discovered attack/queen trap. Fischer seizes control over his weakest square, c5, by means of a clever tactic.

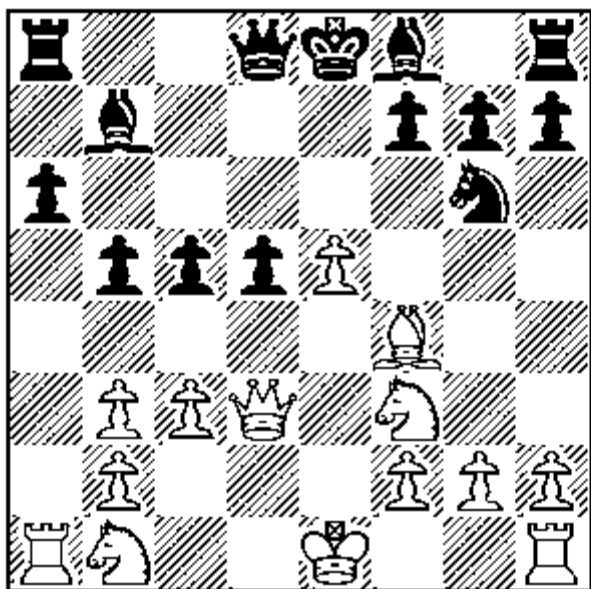
11 ... c5!

Manners are not necessary when you wield power over a person. When it comes to trickery and deceit, the c-pawn is fully qualified to give lessons on the subject.

12 Qd3

The c5-pawn is poisoned: 12 Qxc5?? (in the middle ages, many people believed that epidemics arose from the fact that they didn't burn enough witches) 12 ... Nf5, which traps queen in mid-board. When we get hoodwinked and fall for a cheapo, our deep faith in the supposition that logic equals good and illogic equals its opposite, is cruelly abused.

12 ... Ng6



13 Bg3

Question: Isn't the bishop misplaced on g3, since its activity is hampered by the e5-pawn?

Answer: White's bishop sits on g3 as immobile as a Sphinx, yet this concession is necessary, since White's e5-outpost requires assistance. The trouble is 13 Bg5? Be7 14 Bxe7 Qxe7 and here:

a) 15 0-0 and Black gets away with the brazen 15 ... Nxe5! with a clean extra pawn.

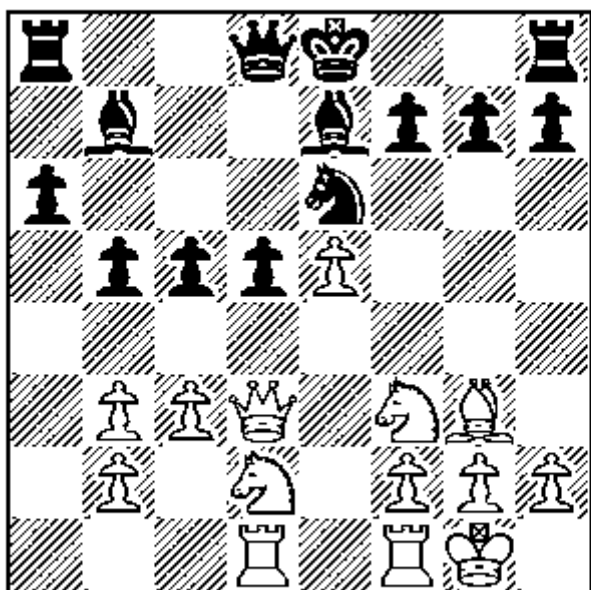
b) 15 Qe2?? is met with 15 ... Nf4 16 Qf1 d4! when White is crushed.

c) 15 Qe3 allows 15 ... d4! 16 cxd4 Bxf3! 17 Qxf3 0-0 18 0-0 cxd4 and e5 falls.

13 ... Be7 14 Nbd2 Nf8!

Fischer re-routes the knight to its optimal square, e6, which also leaves him open options for a future kingside pawn storm.

15 0-0 Ne6 16 Rad1



Black stands clearly better, due to his mobile queenside majority and bishop-pair.

16 ... g5!

An opportunist only takes action when he senses weakness. You can still reason and negotiate with a cold-blooded enemy. Not so with a hot-blooded foe, intent on your destruction. This energetic thrust is possible since the centre remains relatively stable. Fischer plans ... h5 next, unsatisfied with a safe edge after 16 ... 0-0.

17 h3

White operates with only fragile authority on the kingside. The g3-bishop needs air, since ... h5 and ... h4 are in the air.

17 ... h5 18 Rfe1 Qb6 19 Nf1 d4!

Now the light-squared bishop gains tremendous activity.

20 N3d2

20 cxd4 is met with the undermining 20 ... g4 21 Nh4 cxd4 with advantage to Black.

20 ... g4

A shade inaccurate, since it allows White to clog kingside lines. More promising is the line 20 ... h4! 21 Bh2 g4 22 hxg4 h3 with a nasty attack to follow.

21 h4

White desperately attempts to clog kingside attacking lines. Later on though, the h4-pawn proves to be a weakness.

21 hxg4? is met with 21 ... h4! 22 Bh2 h3 with a winning attack.

21 ... Qc6

Threatening mate on g2.

22 Qe4!?

Addison agrees to a grim ending, with the reasoning that the swap inoculates him from Black's mating attempts. 22 Ne4 allows Black a deeply entrenched d-pawn after 22 ... c4! 23 Qb1 d3, but this still feels like a much better chance for White than he got in the ending.

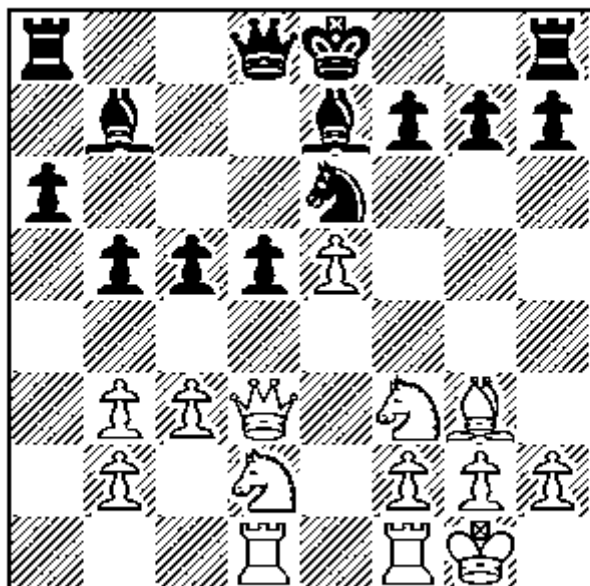
22 ... 0-0-0 23 Qxc6+ Bxc6 24 c4

An attempt to stiffen the pawn structure to keep Black's bishops at bay.

24 ... Kd7!

Endgame principle: Centralize and activate your king as quickly as possible.

25 Ra1 Ra8 26 Ne4



Exercise (planning): Fischer came up with a winning plan for Black. How would you continue?

Answer: 26 ... Bxe4!

Correct timing. Fischer chops on e4 before White has time to play Nfd2.

Question: Why did Fischer give back the bishop-pair?

Answer: When no obvious solution presents itself, we begin to turn to more unorthodox suggestions. This is another example of Fischer's willingness to trade one advantage for another. In this case he hands back the bishop-pair:

1. To increase his light-square bind.
2. Fischer eliminates White's only active piece and throws White's forces out of sync.
3. Most importantly, White's h4-pawn is doomed to the manoeuvre ... Ng7 and ... Nf5.

27 Rxe4 Ng7!

Now h4 will fall once the knight reaches f5.

28 Nd2 Nf5 29 Rf4?

When resources are too scant to work with, a viable plan feels impossible to concoct. Addison prays for a counterplay pattern to emerge, yet nothing arises. The rook is totally misplaced on f4. His best bet was to go with the desperado 29 e6+! fxe6 30 Rae1 Nxe3 31 fxe3 Rh6 32 b4! with some hope of survival, although Black should still convert after 32 ... Rb8.

29 ... Ke6 30 Ne4 bxc4!

New targets arise: White's b- and c-pawns.

31 bxc4 Rxb8 32 Ra2 Rb4!

Fischer's pieces bite and pester, like ticks on a dog. White is forced completely on the defensive.

33 Nd2 Nxh4

This knight's bulging criminal file strains at its bindings back at police headquarters.

34 Bxh4 Bxh4

Threat: ... Bg5.

35 Re4 Bg5

Giving White's knight an elbow to the ribs. There goes the defender of c4. White's position is faced with a long list of outraged, injured parties, all clamouring for redress of past injustices.

36 f4 gxf3 37 Nxf3 Be3+ 38 Kh2 Rxc4 0-1

White's world is a roar of screams and confusion, and the dead outnumber the living in his camp. To play on would be akin to the homeowner who dismisses the bank's foreclosure notice, citing the excellent job he did mowing the lawn and on the upkeep of his flower beds.

Game 40

R.Fischer-J.Durao

Havana Olympiad 1966

King's Indian Attack

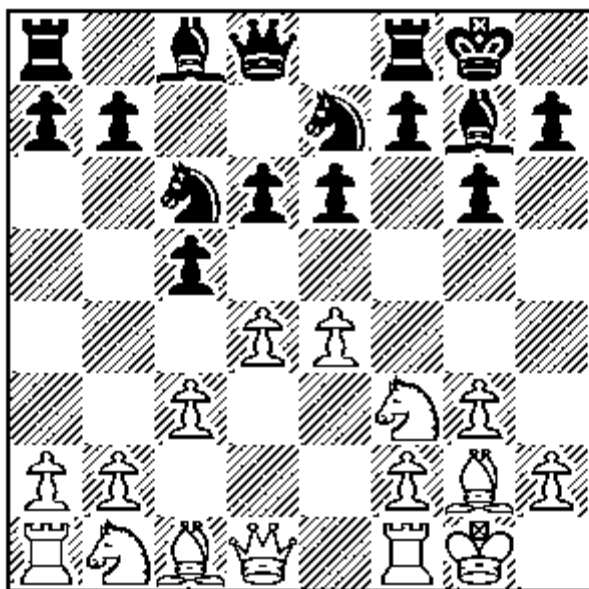
1 e4 e6 2 d3

Sorry. I just can't help but put yet another King's Indian Attack in the book, since Fischer played the line to perfection.

2 ... c5 3 Nf3 Nc6 4 g3 g6 5 Bg2 Bg7 6 0-0 Nge7 7 c3 0-0

As mentioned before, I think it's in Black's self-interest to make d4 as difficult as possible for White, with 7 ... e5.

8 d4 d6?!



Question: Why doesn't Black swap on d4?

Answer: Black wants to delay the swap to deny White's knight the c3-square. By doing so, he allows Fischer a slightly favourable structural shift, which removes most of Black's counterplay.

Black has a reasonable option in 8 ... d5 9 e5 (9 exd5 Nxd5 10 dxc5 Qa5 is okay for Black, since if White throws in b4, it weakens his queenside: for example, 11 b4!? Qc7 12 Nd4 and Black has 12 ... Ndx b4! with at least an equal position) 9 ... Qb6 10 Na3 cxd4 11 cxd4 f6, V.Bologan-V.Ivanchuk, Moscow (rapid) 1996. The position is balanced after 12 Re1.

9 dxc5!

This move takes a lot of the life out of Black's game.

9 ... dxc5 10 Qe2

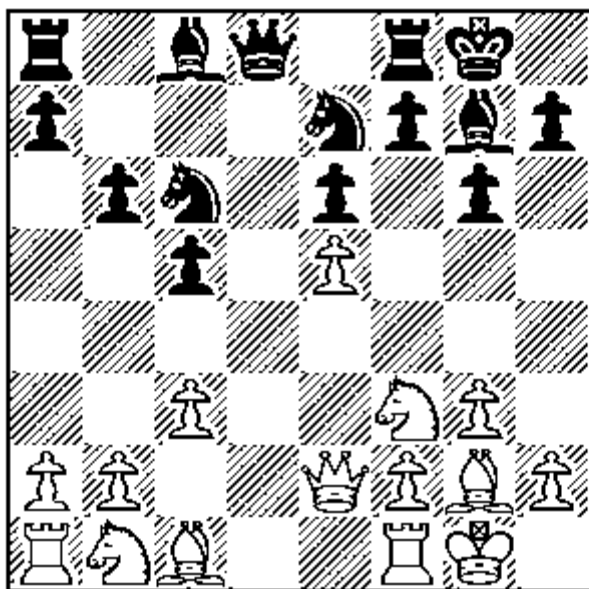
Planning to seize space with e5 next.

10 ... b6

Question: If White's plan is e5, then why can't Black circumvent it with 10 ... e5 himself?

Answer: Black would be playing an Exchange King's Indian position down two moves. One move was lost playing ... e6 and then ... e5, while the other is simply because this is a reversed KID, with Black playing what is normally a white position.

11 e5



Three things are accomplished with this move:

1. White seizes dangerous kingside space.
2. White clears e4 for a knight.
3. White stakes out potential future control over d6.

When the defending side faces an unchallengeable pawn wedge like the one on e5, it's similar to when a dear relative offers you a hideously ugly, unreturnable gift, which to your shame, must now prominently be displayed in your living room, for all the world to see.

Question: Why unchallengeable?

Answer: Because if Black ever plays ... f6, after exf6, the strategic cost is too high for Black, with an e6 isolani and fresh holes on e4 and e5.

11 ... a5?!

It's easy to goad an enemy into an action he already desires. Fischer's KIA opponents just loved to create holes like this. I would have tried the more modest 11 ... Qc7 12 Re1 Bb7, as in S.Lagrotteria-H.Hoffmann, Lugano 1989, although White still looks better after 13 Na3 a6 14 Nc4 Rad8 15 a4.

12 Re1

This move may be inaccurate since it allows ... Ba6 unchallenged. Fischer still enjoys a nagging edge after 12 Na3! Ba6 13 Nb5 a4 14 c4.

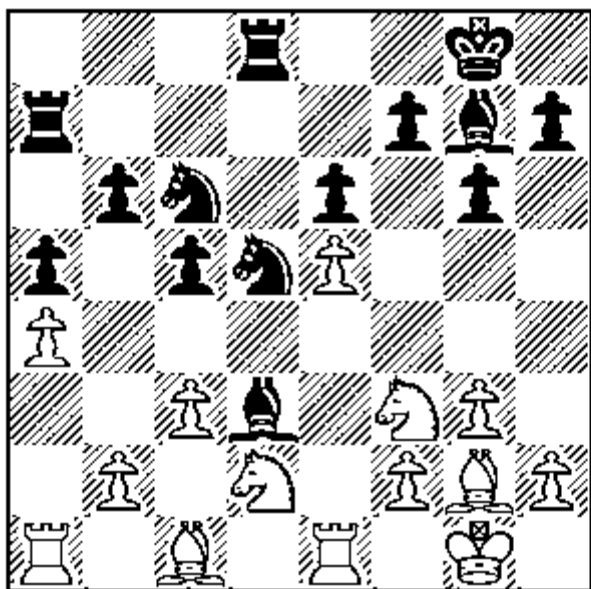
12 ... Ba6 13 Qe4 Ra7

Black doesn't look worse after 13 ... Bd3! 14 Qh4 Nf5 15 Qxd8 which is similar to the game's continuation.

14 Nbd2 Bd3 15 Qh4 Nd5 16 Qxd8

"Silence! Enough of your inane trivialities and meaningless banter," rages White's queen to her sister, who only waved and said "Hi" to her.

16 ... Rxd8 17 a4



The ending is not even, despite Houdini's '0.00' misassessment. White controls more space, with chances of occupying holes on b5 and c4. Also, Black has no constructive plan.

17 ... Rad7 18 Bf1!

Fischer methodically swaps away the defender of Black's light squares.

18 ... Bxf1

Of course 18 ... c4?? doesn't get the job done, since it simply drops a pawn to 19 Nxc4.

19 Kxf1 Nde7

If 19 ... g5 White would simply decline the bait with 20 h3. If Black then insists with 20 ... h5?, he drops material after 21 Nc4 g4 22 hxg4 hxg4 23 Nh2 when the g-pawn falls.

20 Nc4

Tying Black down to defence of b6.

20 ... Nc8!?

Black proceeds with the tiptoeing caution of a man entering his house late at night, fearful of awakening others who sleep. Self-preservation is a powerful motivator, which prompts us into actions we otherwise would deem unimaginable. Black feels this contortion is necessary, soon or later. I would play the more aggressive defence 20 ... Nd5.

21 Bg5! N6e7

The other option, 21 ... Re8 eventually loses control over the d-file.

22 Nfd2!

White's f3-knight gets a promotion to the e4-square.

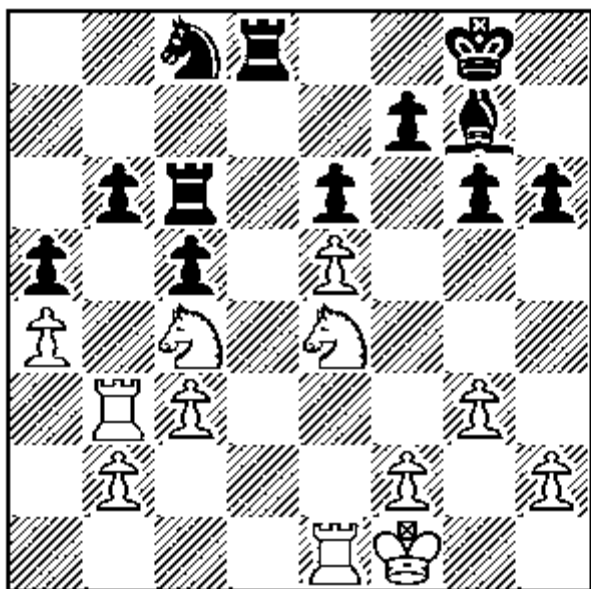
22 ... h6 23 Bxe7!

The bishop has learned to do unto others, before they do unto him. White's knights soon dominate.

23 ... Rxe7 24 Ra3!

Fischer assembles forces on the queenside, giving further notice to Black that b6 is a permanent liability.

24 ... Rc7 25 Rb3 Rc6 26 Ne4



Just take a look at this diagram and compare it to the last one, on move 17. Fischer's pieces are all optimally placed, while Black's cringe in defensive submission.

26 ... Bf8 27 Ke2 Be7 28 f4

Fischer methodically gains kingside space.

28 ... Kf8?!

28 ... h5 should have been tossed in to rein in White's growing kingside expansion.

29 g4!

Now we see why Black should have played ... h5 last move. The h6-pawn represents yet another liability for Black, when White lifts a rook to h3.

29 ... Ke8 30 Rf1!

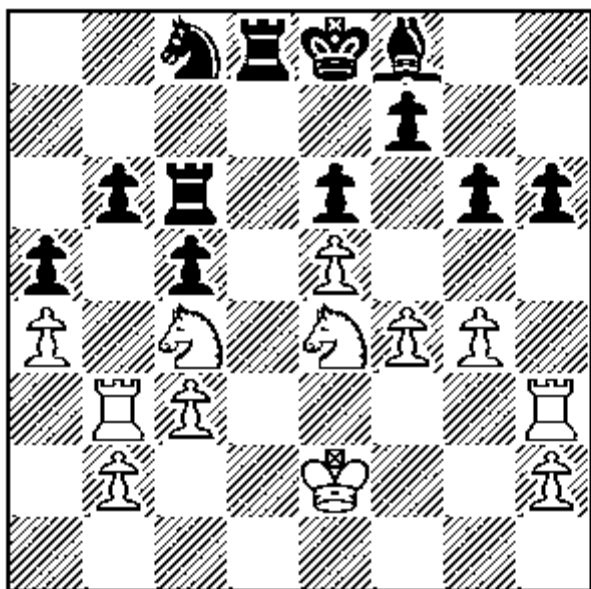
Black must worry about f5 breaks, as well as Rf3 and Rh3.

30 ... Rd5 31 Rf3 Rd8?

Durao allows his attention to wander. Black's pieces act in concert, but it is an out of tune concert. A familiar sight: another of Fischer's opponents driven to moving back and forth. Durao shouldn't feel bad though, since players like Petrosian and Spassky were pushed into the same state.

31 ... Kf8 was necessary to prevent White's coming combination.

32 Rh3 Bf8



When you have an enemy fortress surrounded, you have two attack plans:

1. Starve them out with a siege, which requires time.
2. Storm the barricades, which risks losses of life from your side.

In this instance Fischer went with number two.

Exercise (combination alert): Black incorrectly imputes inconsequentiality to a threat which should have been taken seriously. There is no question that White dominates, yet it feels as if Black's defensive barrier remains impenetrably thick. This illusion is shattered if you find Fischer's combination.

Answer: Annihilation of defensive barrier/mating net.

33 Nxa5! Rc7

33 ... bxa5?? shockingly walks into mate after 34 Nf6+ Ke7 35 Rb7+ Rc7 36 Rxc7+ Rd7 37 Rxd7 mate.

34 Nc4 Ra7

Black sees to it that the combination has no sequel. 34 ... Rc6 runs into 35 a5!. To be an able chess player, we must sometimes also be a skilled blackmailer. Here Black loses the b-pawn, since 35 ... bxa5 walks into the now familiar mating pattern after 36 Nf6+ Ke7 37 Rb7+. This rook signed so many death warrants this week, that he ran out of stationery.

35 Nxb6 Nxb6 36 Rxb6 Rda8

You guessed it. 36 ... Rxa4?? allows the same mate after 37 Nf6+ Ke7 38 Rb7+.

37 Nf6+

White's threats come from everywhere and nowhere, simultaneously.

37 ... Kd8 38 Rc6! Rc7

Sigh. Must I demonstrate this pattern ad nauseam? 38 ... Rxa4 39 Rd3+ Ke7 (these days the black king's general demeanour is one of a bloated corpse, found floating face down in a pond) 40 Rd7 mate.

39 Rd3+ Kc8 40 Rxc7+ Kxc7 41 Rd7+ Kc6 42 Rxf7

Of course Black should resign here.

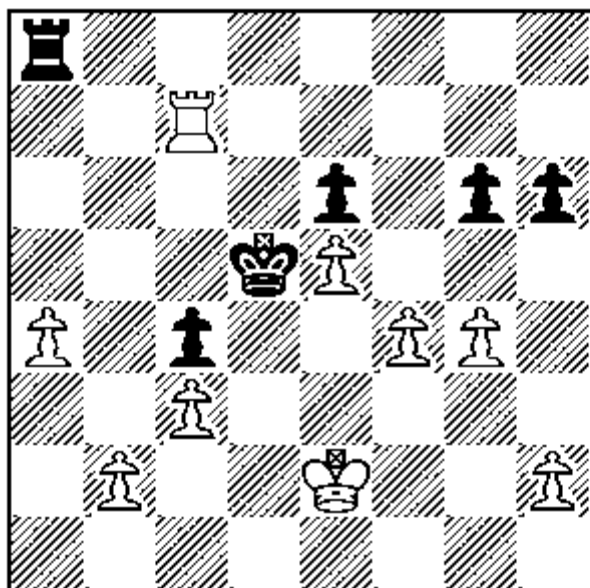
42 ... c4 43 Nd7!

Simplification.

43 ... Bc5

43 ... Ra7?? hangs a piece to 44 Nb8+ Kb6 45 Rxf8.

44 Nxc5 Kxc5 45 Rc7+ Kd5



Exercise (combination alert): Black's king is cast out to a terrible place where there is wailing and the gnashing of teeth. Find Fischer's elegant finish.

Answer: Mating net.

46 b4! 1-0

Powerful rivals often hire shady criminal types to do their dirty work. 46 ... cxb3 is met with 47 Kd3!. White's king deftly blocks his brother's attempts to exit. The black king's course of evasion comes to an end, since there is no good defence to the coming c4+. Black must hand over a rook to avoid mate. Is it just me, or does the KIA in Fischer's hands look like a forced win for White, to you as well?

Game 41

R.Byrne-R.Fischer

Sousse Interzonal 1967

Sicilian Najdorf

When I first played over this game in my youth, I was so enamoured with Fischer's play, that I began to play the Najdorf, with consistent results. Consistent, in that I nearly always got mated. It takes a special type of player to navigate the Najdorf, and I realized after enduring some horrible beatings that I was not that special player.

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 a6 6 Bc4

Of all the nerve!

Question: Is Byrne attempting to play psychological games by playing Fischer's own system against him?

Answer: Possibly so, but it seems an unwise policy to play a line the opponent knows better than anyone else in the world. If you own a loaded gun in the house, it's best that you keep it well out of reach of your precocious toddler. Any player of Fischer's day who dared challenge Bobby in the Fischer/Sozin, risked handing the baby the gun.

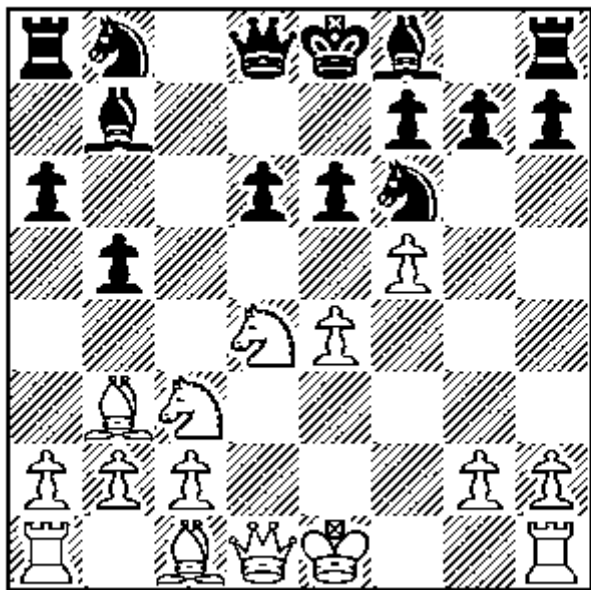
6 ... e6 7 Bb3 b5

This move is currently Black's most popular choice in the position. Black rushes to fianchetto to apply pressure on the e4-pawn. Of course it comes with some cost, since it weakens e6, which is now vulnerable to sacrifices, and also does nothing to further kingside development.

8 f4!?

Today, this line isn't played as often by White, since the risk to the e4-pawn is enhanced. As mentioned previously, White's safest choice is 8 0-0 Be7 9 Qf3 Qc7 10 Qg3 0-0 11 Bh6 Ne8 12 Rad1. Kasparov has scored well from this position, perhaps because he is Kasparov, and not because White has any particular advantage at this point.

8 ... Bb7 9 f5?!



Fischer convincingly demonstrated the correct method of how to deal with this move.

Instead, after 9 0-0 Be7 10 e5 dxe5 11 fxe5 Bc5 12 Be3 Bxd4 13 Bxd4 Nc6 14 Rf4?! (White may have enough for the pawn after 14 Bc5 Nxe5 15 Qxd8+ Rxd8 16 a4 Rd2 17 Rf2 Rxf2 18 Kxf2 bxa4 19 Rxa4 Kd7) 14 ... Qc7! White's d4-bishop and f4-rook dangle uncomfortably and he is the one fighting for equality, C.Hanley-R.Palliser, British Rapidplay Championship, Halifax 2006.

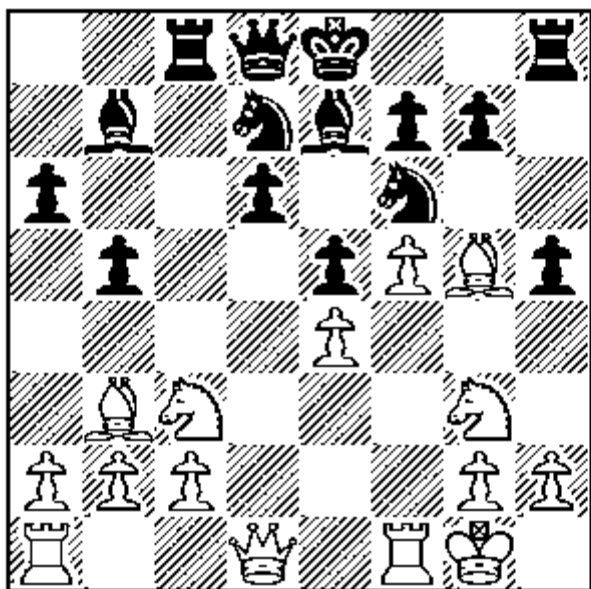
9 ... e5 10 Nde2

White's e-pawn is in deep trouble after 10 Nf3 Be7 11 Bg5 Nbd7 12 0-0 0-0 13 Bxf6 Nxf6 14 Qd3 Rc8 15 Bd5? (White should head for a slightly inferior ending with 15 Nd2 Qb6+ 16 Kh1 Qd4 17 Nf3 Qxd3 18 cxd3) 15 ... b4! 16 Bxb7 Qb6+ 17 Kh1 Qxb7 18 Nd5 Nxd5 19 exd5 Rc5 20 Rad1 Rfc8 21 Rd2 Qb5! 22 Qxb5 Rxb5. White is tied down to his d5-pawn, and also a2 and c2 are chronically weak, P.Limbourg-J.Koscielski, Dortmund 1998.

10 ... Nbd7 11 Bg5 Be7 12 Ng3 Rc8 13 0-0?

An absence of evidence doesn't necessarily indicate the absence of the crime. This natural move lands White into terrible trouble. He should settle for 13 Qf3 b4 14 Bxf6 Nxf6 15 Nd5, V.Varavin-A.Areshchenko, Sudak 2002. Even here Black already stands better after 15 ... Bxd5 16 exd5 0-0 17 0-0 Qb6+ 18 Kh1 Qd4! 19 Rab1.

13 ... h5!!



It's a jarring realization when our fundamental assumptions about a position are overthrown by a new move. This move, a completely alien concept at the time, essentially refutes Byrne's opening play.

Question: Why is this such a great move? Black basically can't castle safely.

Answer: He has no need to castle. White's g3-knight is about to be undermined with ... h4, after which e4 falls.

14 h4

Sometimes a judge must enforce a law he doesn't believe in.

Question: If White has to play such a radically weakening move, he is in deep trouble. Are there alternatives which save him?

Answer: Houdini approves of this move, which if forced, means that White is busted:

a) 14 Bxf6 is of no help: 14 ... Nxf6 15 Qf3 Qb6+ 16 Kh1 Rxc3! 17 Qxc3 h4 18 Ne2 h3 and White's king won't survive.

b) 14 Bh4 b4! 15 Na4 (not 15 Nd5?? Nxd5 16 Bxd5 Bxh4! and Black wins a piece since the b7-bishop isn't hanging after 17 Bxb7 Qb6+) 15 ... Nxe4 16 Bxe7 Qxe7 with a healthy extra pawn for Black. White is unable to regain it with 17 Nxh5?? since he gets crushed after 17 ... Qg5.

14 ... b4

The undermining of e4 is completed.

15 Bxf6

This not only drops h4, but gives Black an unopposed dark-squared bishop which later rules. Also hopeless is 15 Nd5 Nxd5 16 exd5 Bxg5 17 hxg5 Qxg5 with a healthy extra pawn plus positional advantage.

15 ... Bxf6 16 Nd5 Bxh4 17 Nxh5

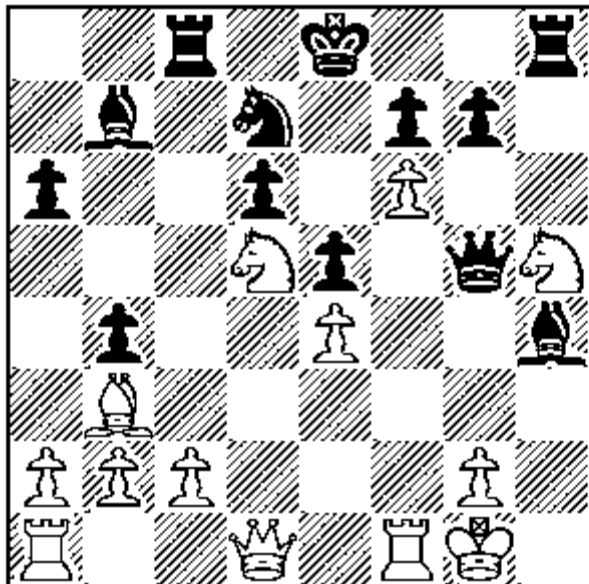
Byrne remains even materially, but not in position:

1. Black has the bishop-pair.
2. Black rules the dark squares.
3. Black owns an open h-file.
4. Numbers two and three on the list mean that White's king is in grave danger

17 ... Qg5

Black threatens both ... Qxh5, and also ... Bxd5 followed by ... Qe3+.

18 f6!



The only move. Byrne struggles to overcome the gloom by desperately seeking counterplay against Black's king, based on this f6-pawn wedge.

18 ... g6!

The most ambitious move. Black also has:

a) 18 ... Rxh5! 19 Rf5 (19 fxg7 Rh7 wins) 19 ... Bf2+! 20 Kxf2 Qh4+ 21 Kg1 Qh2+ 22 Kf2 Rxf5+ 23 exf5 Nxf6 with a winning position.

b) 18 ... Qxh5?? allows White to draw after 19 fxg7. Black's rook is overloaded, covering his queen, and also the g8-promotion square: 19 ... Bf2+! 20 Kxf2 Qh4+ 21 g3 Qh2+ 22 Kf3 Qh5+ 23 g4 Qh3+ 24 Kf2 Qh4+ with perpetual check.

19 Ng7+

This knight is essentially trapped, once f6 falls, but as we all understand, revenge is a more powerful motivator than pain.

19 ... Kd8!

The propulsive effect of the f6-pawn hasn't bothered Black's king an iota. To Najdorf players such chaotic positions approximate paradise. In this case the complications heavily favour Black, who has a winning position, just so long as he keeps his head clear in the chaos.

19 ... Kf8?? allows a discovered attack on d6 with 20 Nf4! (what an intoxicating feeling when we lose power, and then later regain it) 20 ... Kg8 21 Qxd6 Qxf6 22 Bxf7+! Qxf7 23 Nxc6 Bf6 24 Nxc8 Qxc8 25 Ng6! which isn't so clear. Now if 25 ... Bxe4 26 Qe6+ Kh7 27 Qh3+ Kg8 28 Qe6+ Kh7 (28 ... Qf7?? isn't possible due to 29 Ne7+! Kf8 30 Qxf7+ Kxf7 31 Nxc8) 29 Qh3+ with a draw, since 29 ... Kxc6 looks dangerous for Black after 30 Qg4+ Kh6 31 Qxe4.

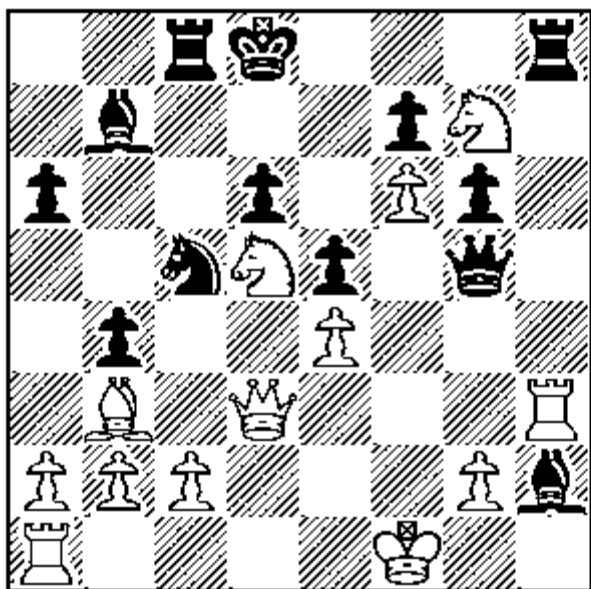
20 Rf3

Byrne covers the e3-square from ... Qe3+ tricks.

20 ... Bg3!

Power, not salvation, is the bishop's goal. Now h-file infiltration is in the air and White must watch out for ... Rh1+ tricks, as well as the simple ... Qh4.

21 Qd3 Bh2+ 22 Kf1 Nc5 23 Rh3!?



When we are unable to overpower the opponent's will, the next best thing is to attempt to deceive him. This is the type of position where rationality recedes, and we begin to believe in magic and miracles through divine intervention. When all lines lose, I suppose one line is as good as the other. Bluff is an essential part of detective work. I know this from watching myriad who-done-it movies, where the chief inspector (who actually has no idea who the murderer is) assembles all the suspects in a room and declares that he plans to reveal the murderer's identity. Of course then the true murderer takes the bait and lights go out while the murderer exits the room.

After 23 Qe3 Bf4 (now ... Rh1+ is a big worry for White) 24 Qg1 Bc1! White's game collapses: e4 hangs and there is no remedy to the simple threat of ... Bxb2, followed by ... Bd4.

23 ... Rh4!?

Various meanings can be assigned to this decision. This move may seem like an unnecessary embellishment, since taking the queen wins. I don't know if Fischer got bluffed or if he just preferred this path, which is also completely winning. In the end it's just a matter of preference.

23 ... Nxd3! also wins. Accepting the queen is a self-actuating mechanism, where one step logically leads to the next. After 24 Rxh8+ Kd7 25 Ba4+ Bc6 26 Nb6+ Kc7 27 Rxc8+ Kb7 28 Bxc6+ Kxb6 White's threats have come to an end.

24 Qf3

Now Fischer initiates a wholesale simplification process which leaves him completely in control.

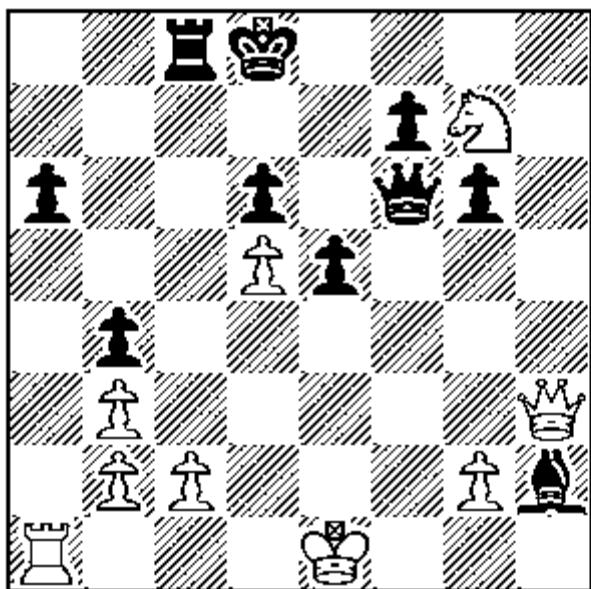
24 ... Nxb3 25 axb3 Rxh3

More efficient is 25 ... Bxd5! (threat: ... Rf4) 26 Rxh4 Qxh4 27 exd5 Rxc2 when White can resign.

26 Qxh3 Bxd5 27 exd5 Qxf6+

At long last, the obnoxious visiting relative who refused to take the hints at his expected departure date, is finally induced to leave.

28 Ke1



Exercise (calculation): Find one strong move and you induce White's resignation.

Answer: Consolidation/mating attack.

28 ... Qf4! 0-1

All the questions and shadows which previously plagued Black are chased away with a single move. Fischer's attack arrives first in every variation:

a) 29 Rxa6 walks into mate after 29 ... Qc1+ 30 Ke2 Rxc2+ 31 Kd3 Qd2+ 32 Ke4 Qd4+ 33 Kf3 Qf4 mate.

b) 29 Qf3 Bg3+ 30 Kf1 Qh4 31 Qxf7 (31 Rxa6 Qh1+ 32 Ke2 Rxc2+ 33 Kd3 Rf2! 34 Qg4 Qf1+ forces mate) 31 ... Qh1+ 32 Ke2 Qxg2+ 33 Ke3 Bf4+ 34 Kd3 Qxc2 mate.

Game 42

M.Matulovic-R.Fischer

Vinkovci 1968

Sicilian Najdorf

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 a6 6 g3

This system is too quiet to stress Black. Matulovic probably wanted a safe, controlled position – maybe not the best choice against the man who may have been the strongest strategist of all time.

6 ... e5

More ambitious than 6 ... e6.

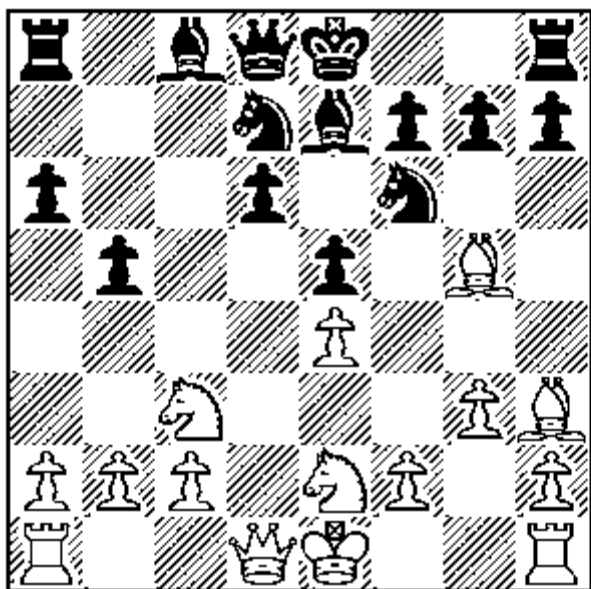
7 Nde2 Be7 8 Bg5

A recent example: 8 Bg2 0-0 9 0-0 Nbd7 10 a4 b6 11 Nd5 Nxd5 12 Qxd5 Rb8 13 Nc3 Nf6 14 Qd3, M.Carlsen-A.Naiditsch, Baden-Baden 2015. The game feels balanced after 14 ... h6.

8 ... Nbd7 9 Bh3!?

Matulovic had played this move before.

9 ... b5!



Planning a quick fianchetto to fight for d5. Right on cue, Fischer is armed with an improvement over the previously played 9 ... Nb6?! (it appears artificial to place the knight in front of the b-pawn) 10 Bxc8 Rxc8 11 Bxf6 Bxf6 12 a4 Rc5 13 0-0 0-0 14 Qd3 a5 15 Rfd1, M.Matulovic-S.Tatai, Reggio Emilia 1967. White controls b5, d5 and pressures d6, maintaining a safe strategic edge after 15 ... Be7 16 Nc1.

10 a4?

The bane of all mad scientists is that his creature is always altered from that which he originally designed. This move strikes me as an expression of disregard for the opponent's intent.

Question: What don't you like about White's last move?

Answer: The trouble is White's soon-to-be backward c2-pawn is weaker than Black's d6-pawn.

10 Nd5, without the inclusion of a4 and ... b4, is about even after 10 ... Nxd5 11 Qxd5 Rb8 12 Bxe7 Kxe7! 13 Bxd7 Bxd7 14 Qd2 Bc6 (14 ... b4 15 a3 a5 16 axb4 axb4 17 Qg5+ Kf8 18 Qxd8+ Rxd8 19 Kd2 is okay for White) 15 Nc3.

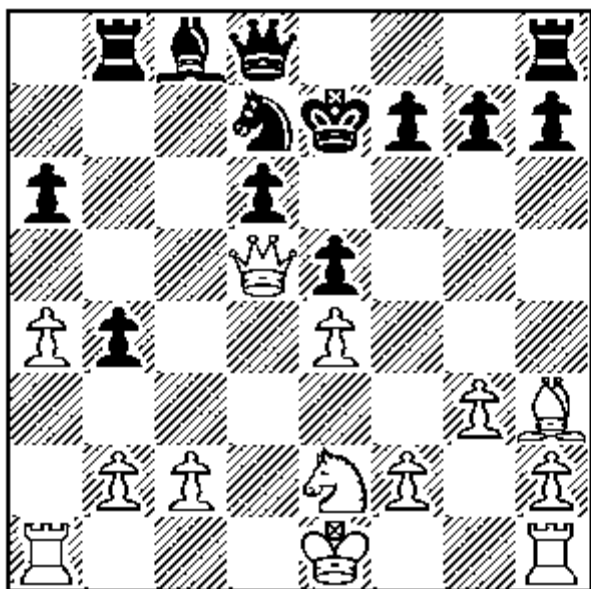
10 ... b4 11 Nd5 Nxd5 12 Qxd5 Rb8

Covering his rook and preparing ... Bb7. Note that White's knight is denied access to c3, since Black's b-pawn now covers the square.

13 Bxe7

That was Black's bad bishop which Fischer just unloaded.

13 ... Kxe7!



A key requirement to actuate Black's coming plan. Threat: ... Nf6 and ... Bxh3. The players operate on completely opposite rationales. Fischer plays for pressure down the c-file and on e4, while Matulovic bases his hopes on exploitation of the d5-square and the backward d6-pawn, neither of which he accomplishes. Watch how Fischer from this point completely has it his way, while Matulovic gets zero traction on his d5/d6 hopes.

Question: Why did Fischer give up castling rights?

Answer: His last move allows his king to participate in the defence of d6. Fischer correctly judged that his king is completely safe, since White's passive forces are in no position to generate threats.

14 Qd2

The queen must leave d5 by any door of her choosing. After 14 Bxd7 Qxd7 15 0-0 Bb7 16 Qd3 Qc6 17 f3 d5! White's pieces are misplaced and Black already looks clearly better. However, I still think this is superior to the path White took in the game.

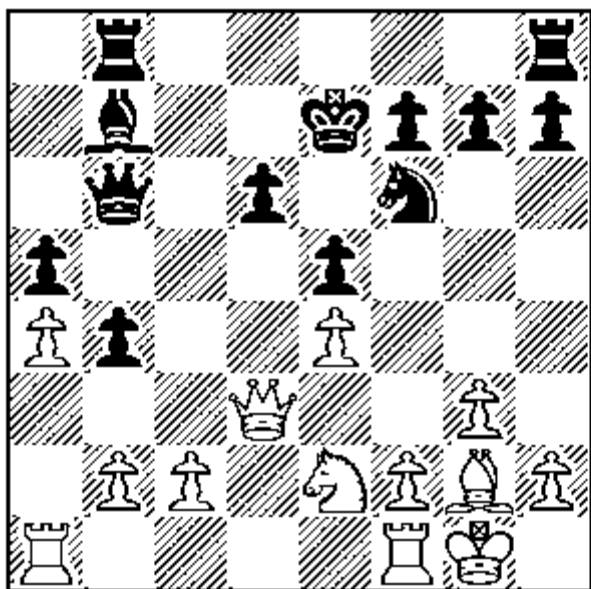
14 ... Nf6 15 Bg2

When no sorcerous scheme is available, what else can we do but follow the mundane course? This looks like a sign that matters have gone awry. Matulovic backs down, hoping to retain some influence on the light squares. If 15 Bxc8 Qxc8 16 f3 Rd8 and Black is ready to take over the initiative with ... d5 next.

15 ... Bb7 16 Qd3 Qb6 17 0-0?!

Overlooking Fischer's next move. White should toss in 17 a5.

17 ... a5!



Now ... Ba6 and ... Bxe2 are in the air, when White is in grave danger of landing into a bad bishop position.

18 Rfd1 Ba6 19 Qd2 Rhc8

Pressure mounts on c2.

20 h3 h5

Fischer, quick to intercept even a shadow of white counterplay, alertly suppresses g4.

21 b3

White's game sinks into atrophy and I don't see improvements: for example, 21 Rac1 Rc4 22 b3 Rxe4! and now if 23 Bxe4 Nxe4 24 Qe1 Kf8 25 h4 Qc6 when ... Bb7 is coming as Black's threats seem to stretch endlessly in all directions. After 26 f3 Bxe2 27 Qxe2 Nxc3 28 Qf2 Nf5 29 Rd3 d5 30 c3 d4 31 c4 Re8 Black dominates.

21 ... Bxe2!

Fischer forces a classic good knight versus bad bishop situation.

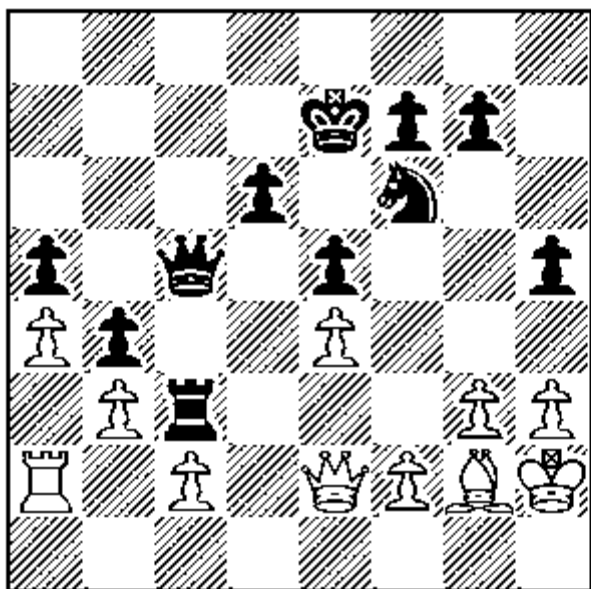
22 Qxe2 Rc3

Threat: ... Rxc3. White's dark squares leak badly, with no remedy in sight.

23 Rd3 Rbc8 24 Rxc3 Rxc3

Renewing the threat to g3.

25 Kh2 Qc5 26 Ra2



It must have been painful for a grandmaster to be obliged to make such a wretched concession. White's game progressed to a state of near-complete paralysis. Now I quite reasonably ask: Aren't Najdorf Sicilians supposed to be complicated? Fischer, through strategic magic, makes it look so simple.

Question: Why did White play his rook to the incredibly awkward a2-square?

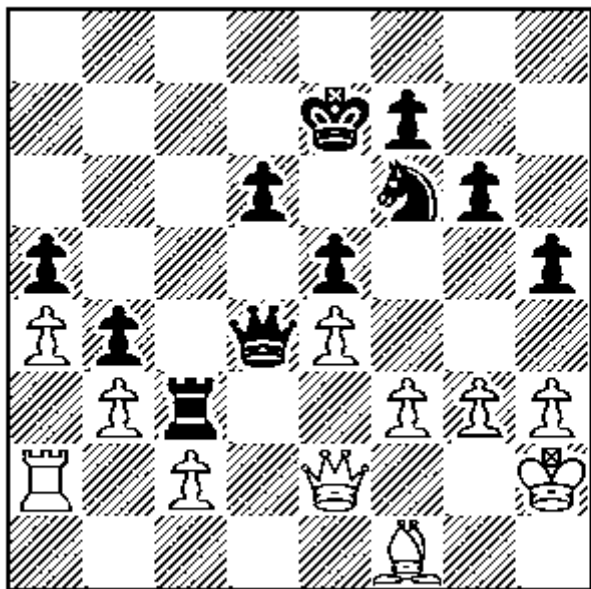
Answer: White's last move is unfortunately forced, since 26 Rc1? is met with 26 ... Rxb3.

26 ... g6 27 Bf1 Qd4

Complete strategic domination. White's cohesion disintegrates, moment by moment, while Fischer's pieces all bulge with muscle as if they were a family of village blacksmiths.

28 f3

White is unable to save himself after 28 Bg2 h4 29 g4 Nd7 30 Qe1 Nc5 31 Kh1 Ne6 32 Kh2 Nf4 33 Bf1 Rf3 34 Kg1 Nxh3+ 35 Bxh3 Rxh3 36 Kg2 Rc3 with an extra pawn and overwhelming piece placement as well.



Exercise (planning): The final faint vestiges of White's resistance vanished, and looking for counterplay in White's position is similar to searching for a rubber ball you tossed into the ocean a week ago, in the exact spot it fell. By now Matulovic must have pondered the vagaries of fate which brought him to this unwanted place. White's last move was a blunder in an already losing position. How did Fischer force the win of a pawn?

Answer: Step 1: Chase away White's queen.

28 ... Re3!

Answer no.2: Even more accurate is to toss in 28 ... h4! 29 g4 and only then play 29 ... Re3! 30 Qf2 Nxe4! when White is slaughtered.

29 Qg2

29 Qf2 is met with 29 ... h4 30 g4 Nxe4! 31 Qxh4+ (31 fxe4?? hangs the queen to 31 ... Rxh3+) 31 ... g5 32 Qh6 Re2+! 33 Bxe2 Qf2+ 34 Kh1 Ng3 mate.

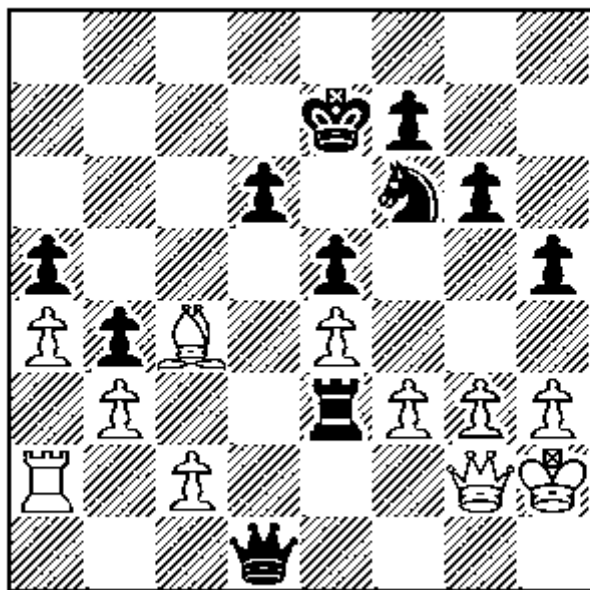
Now comes Step 2: Attack f3 twice, winning the pawn.

29 ... Qd1

The queen approaches f3 with an almost apologetic manner.

30 Bc4

30 Bd3 h4 31 g4 Nh7 is also utterly hopeless for White.



30 ... Qxf3

On the chess board, theft is so much more satisfying than a fair transaction.

Question: Why win just a pawn? Isn't the a2-rook trapped in the corner?

Answer: The rook is trapped. Fischer's choice is clearer. He probably didn't want to allow his opponent unnecessary counterplay after 30 ... Qb1 31 Qf2 Rc3 32 Qa7+ Nd7 33 Bb5 Qxa2 34 Qxd7+, although according to Houdini it's still a fairly straightforward win for Black after 34 ... Kf8 35 Qxd6+ Kg8 36 Bd3 Rxc2+! 37 Bxc2 Qxc2+ 38 Kh1 Qxb3 when the b-pawn's advance will be decisive.

31 Qxf3

"Parting is a joy when you can't stand the person you are with," remarks White's queen. There is no choice but to swap down to an absolutely hopeless ending, since treaties don't work out well for the side negotiating from a position of weakness.

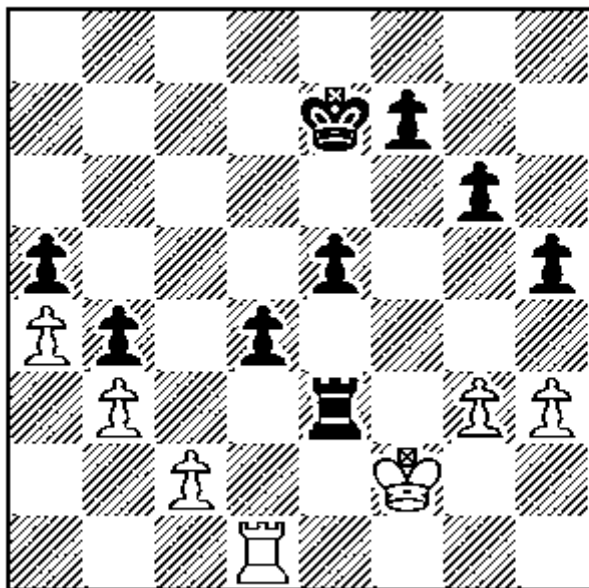
31 ... Rxf3 32 Kg2 Re3

Step 3: Pick off White's helpless e-pawn.

33 Bd3 Nxe4

A new regime expunges all records of the past, fallen one.

34 Bxe4 Rxe4 35 Kf2 d5 36 Ra1 d4 37 Rd1 Re3



Now ... h4 is in the air. That which was once a garden is now a ghetto, mainly due to Fischer's deceptively powerful play after White's strategic blunder on his 10th move. I'm pretty confident a 1600-rated player would win this comfortably against the world champion, so I'm not sure why Matulovic didn't resign here (or earlier).

38 h4 Rc3 39 Rd2 Ke6 40 Kg2 f5 0-1

Another Capa game. That was just too easy!

Game 43

A.Saidy-R.Fischer

New York 1969

English Opening

I'm deeply envious of the fact that my buddy, IM Dr. Tony Saidy, knew and played Fischer, while I only get to write about him.

1 c4 e5 2 Nc3 Nc6 3 g3 f5 4 Bg2 Nf6 5 e3 Bc5!?

The hues of Black's ambition are far more vivid than White's.

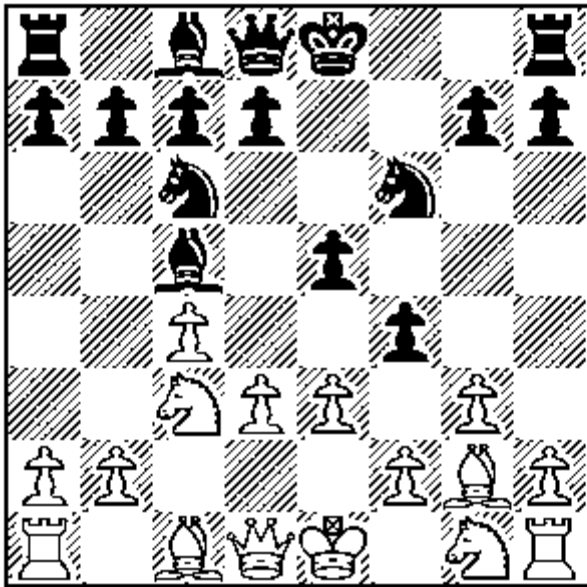
Question: Why do you object to Black's last move?

Answer: It virtually begs White for the tempo-gaining Nge2 and d4. Objectively, 5 ... g6 and 5 ... d6 are superior choices.

6 d3

Tony Saidy is not what I would describe as a cautious player, but maybe the generalities don't apply when playing Bobby Fischer. It makes more sense to push for d4 in one go, with 6 Nge2! 0-0 (6 ... d6 7 d4 Bb6 8 b4! places Black in grave difficulties, since the b4 pawn can't be touched, due to Qa4+ and d5) 7 d4 exd4 8 exd4 Bb6 9 0-0 d6 10 a3 a5 11 Bg5 Ne7, B.Gelfand-Fabrice, Neuilly (simul) 2002. Black looks like he is in trouble after 12 Re1 h6 13 Bxf6 Rxf6 14 Nf4 c6 15 d5!

when 15 ... g5? is met with 16 dxc6! bxc6 17 Ncd5!, with a winning position for White.
6 ... f4?!



“Fruit, not money, grows on trees,” my cruel father would lecture, when I begged for an advance on my 50 cents per week allowance. Here we see Fischer disregard my father’s advice with a shady sacrifice, which is easier to undertake than to explain.

Question: What is wrong with Fischer’s move, which is thematic in Grand Prix Attack positions?

Answer: It’s thematic as White, not Black, a move down, where it is surely a fishy version, where Black shouldn’t generate enough compensation. A Chinese proverb warns: He who seeks vengeance must dig two graves: One for his enemy and one for himself.

Is there an assumption of scorn in such a move? Tony Saidy was a GM-strength IM in his prime in 1969, yet Fischer plays a dubious gambit which is better suited for a non-professional simul opponent. Fischer directs his activity toward a short-term goal (playing for mate), at the risk of not reaching his long-term goal (winning the game).

This gambit is okay when played as White, but with Black? I’m deeply sceptical of full compensation. 6 ... 0-0 is more cautious and objectively better.

7 exf4

White’s defence is constructed of durable material and I don’t believe Black should achieve full compensation.

7 ... 0-0

7 ... d6 looks more accurate to recapture on e5 with a pawn.

8 Nge2

8 fxe5! may refute Fischer’s overly optimistic opening sacrifice: 8 ... Qe8 9 Nf3 d6 was J.Andrade Ocana-A.Santos, Odivelas 2000. I don’t see sufficient compensation for the pawn after 10 0-0 dxe5 11 Be3 Bxe3 (or 11 ... Bb6 12 c5 Ba5 13 Rb1 Kh8 14 a3 Bxc3 15 bxc3 when Black has nothing for the pawn) 12 fxe3 e4 13 dxe4 Bg4 14 Qb3 Bxf3 15 Rxf3 Ne5 16 Rf5. White is up two pawns, admittedly doubled but still standing, and Black lacks compensation.

8 ... Qe8 9 0-0 d6 10 Na4

Saidy logically chases down Black’s powerful bishop. I have grave doubts about Black’s alleged compensation after 10 fxe5! dxe5 11 Be3 Bxe3 12 fxe3.

10 ... Bd4!

Both sides are skilled hagglers who attempt to secure the best possible deal.

11 Nxd4 exd4!

Leaving the a4-knight in limbo.

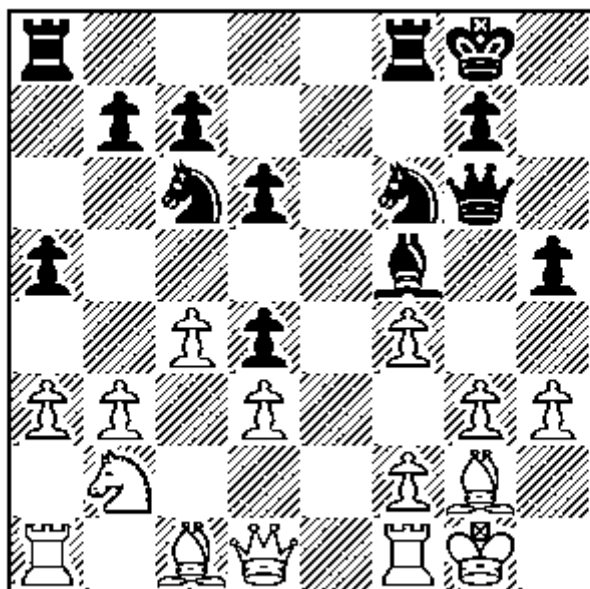
12 h3 h5!

Suppressing g4 and worrying White about potential ... h4 ideas.

13 a3 a5 14 b3 Qg6!

Target: d3.

15 Nb2 Bf5



16 Qc2

After this move White gets tied up, covering d3. He was better off handing back the pawn with 16 Re1 Rae8 17 Bd2! Bxd3 18 Nxd3 Qxd3 19 Bd5+ Kh7 20 Bxc6 bxc6 21 Bxa5 Rxe1+ 22 Bxe1 Qxd1 (or 22 ... Qe4 23 a4 h4 24 a5 hxg3 25 fxg3 c5 26 a6 and Black's kingside attack will fail due to the distraction of White's surging a-pawn) 23 Rxd1 c5 with some chances to convert for White, although Houdini assess this position close to even.

16 ... Nd7!

Intending ... Nc5, hammering away at d3.

17 Re1

Tony is intent on hanging on to d3. Perhaps he should just admit his position has soured and return it with 17 Bd2 Nc5 18 Qd1 Nxd3 19 Nxd3 Bxd3 20 Re1 when White may not stand worse, due to his bishop-pair. Houdini gives White an edge here.

17 ... Nc5 18 Bf1 Ra6!

A once vague notion assumes a recognizable shape. Fischer simultaneously hammers away at d3 and now a new target on b3, preparing ... Rb6 next.

19 Bd2

He needs to untangle with something like 19 Qd1! Rb6 20 Na4! Nxa4 21 bxa4 Nd8 22 Be2! Re8 23 Kh2 Bd7 24 Bd2 Qf5 25 Bxh5 Qxh3+ 26 Kg1 Rxe1+ 27 Bxe1 Bc6 28 Bf3. White remains up a pawn and stands better.

19 ... Rb6

Fischer's pressure – like a slow dripping tap in another room – wears on the defender's nerves.

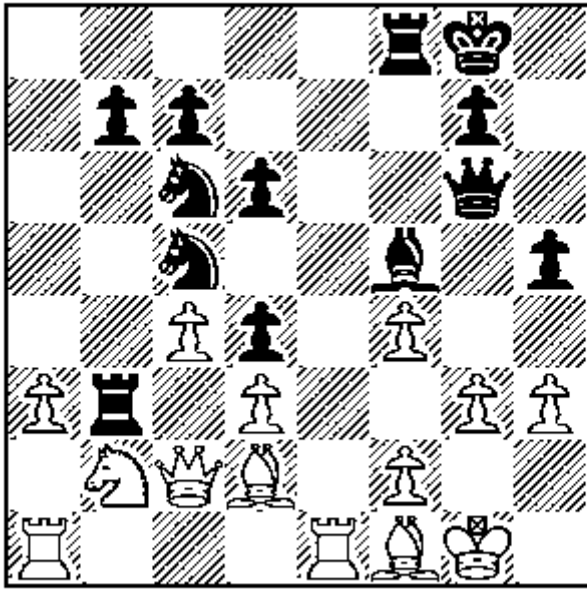
20 Bxa5?!

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When we sense the correct plan, and then botch its execution, it's the same as keeping the piggy-bank but discarding the cash contents. It's understandable that White plays with a sense of urgency,

but now he stands worse. He still achieves a playable game with 20 Qd1! Nxb3 21 Na4! Nxa1 22 Nxb6 cxb6 23 Bg2 Bxd3 24 Bd5+ Kh7 25 Qxa1 Re8 26 Kh2 Be4 27 Qb2, with a dynamically balanced position.

20 ... Rxb3 21 Bd2



Exercise (planning/combination alert): Everything looks the same, yet something has altered. How would you proceed as Black?

21 ... Ra8

Fischer plays for strategic pressure on the queenside, when he had so much more going after White's relatively unprotected king.

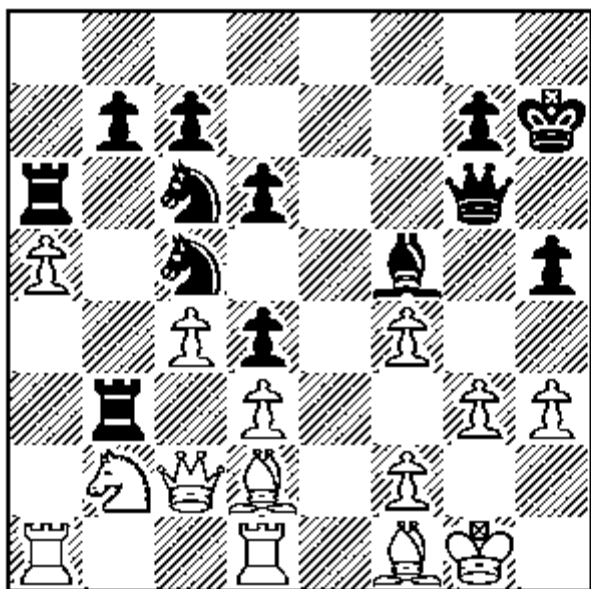
Answer: Mating attack. 21 ... h4! and now the white king's life hangs by a frayed thread, since virtually all his army has been lured to the queenside. After 22 g4 Fischer has a stunning continuation with 22 ... Ne5!! (menacing the d3, f3 and g4 points) 23 Bg2 (White is unable to accept, since opening the f-file is fatal after 23 fxe5?? Bxg4 24 hxg4 Qxg4+ 25 Kh1 Rxf2 and he is mated after 26 Re2 Qf3+ 27 Kg1 Qg3+ 28 Kh1 Qh2 mate) 23 ... Bxd3 24 Nxd3 Nxd3 25 Rab1 Nxf4! (discovered attack) 26 Qxg6 Nxd6 27 Rxb3 Nxb3, which leaves Black up a pawn with a strategically won game.

22 a4 Ra6

Planning ... Rab6.

23 a5 Kh7 24 Red1?

Correct was 24 Ra2!, and if 24 ... b6 25 Na4! Bxd3 26 Qd1 Bxf1 27 Rxf1 Rd3 28 axb6 Nxa4 29 bxc7! Ne7 30 Rxa4 Rxa4 31 Qxa4 and Black had nothing better than to force perpetual check with 31 ... Rxd3+ 32 fxg3 Qxg3+.



Exercise (combination alert): The cusp of transaction has arrived. White's last move hung material. How?

Answer: Pin.

24 ... b6!

Fischer regains his sacrificed pawn, while maintaining all his strategic plusses.

25 Be1

Covering d3.

25 ... bxa5

Black has a strategically won game:

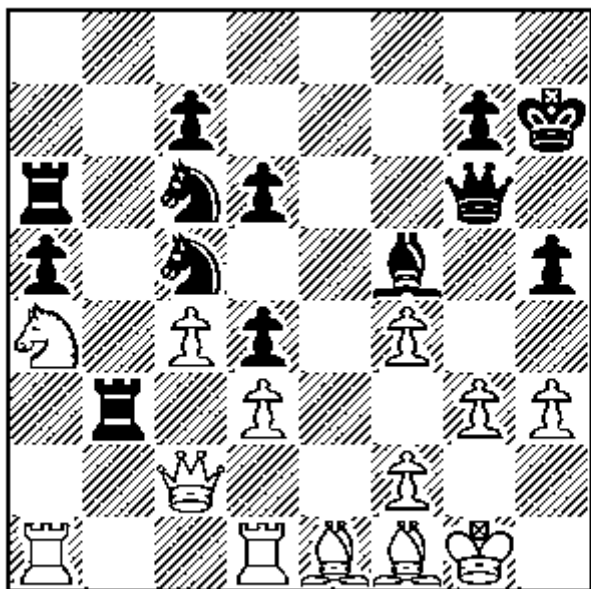
1. White is tied down to passivity, covering d3.

2. Black now owns a passed a-pawn.

3. Black enjoys an overwhelming activity superiority, with an entrenched c5-knight and ... Nb4 in the air.

4. White's king doesn't appear all that safe.

26 Na4



Exercise (combination alert): With his last move, White attempts to undermine the b3-rook. How should Black respond?

Answer: Exchange sacrifice/knight fork. Fischer destroys c3, the base of White's position.

26 ... Rxd3! 27 Bxd3

Alternatively, 27 Nxc5 Rxd1 28 Qxd1 dxc5 with a healthy extra pawn and superior piece placement for Black.

27 ... Bxd3 28 Qa2

There was nothing better:

a) 28 Qd2 walks into the fork 28 ... Nb3! 29 Qxd3 Qxd3 30 Rxd3 Nxa1 with a winning position for Black.

b) 28 Qb2 walks into 28 ... Nxa4 29 Rxa4 Bc2, regaining the exchange with a pawn-up and winning position for Black.

28 ... Nb4! 29 Qa3

29 Bxb4?? axb4 30 Qd2 Nb3! wins, or if 29 Qb2 Nxa4 30 Rxa4 Bc2. We already saw this familiar theme in the above note. Black wins.

29 ... Nc2

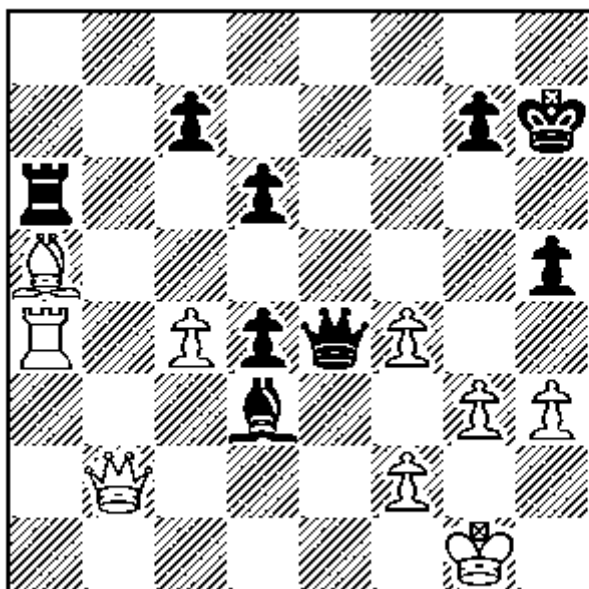
And there is the knight fork.

30 Qb2 Nxa1 31 Rxa1 Nxa4 32 Rxa4 Qe4!

Deadly centralization. No slight, either real or imagined, is too trivial to not warrant a profuse apology to Black's queen. Just look at those porous light squares in White's camp. As in Fischer's Benoni against Spassky from the last chapter, here the opposite-coloured bishops play into Black's hands, with the principle: Opposite-coloured bishops favour the attacker.

33 Bxa5

33 Qd2 Rb6 34 Ra1 Bxc4, intending ... Bd5, is decisive.



Exercise (combination alert): In time pressure we furiously weigh and discard options in a split second. White's last loses, as do all other options. Black to play and win.

Answer: Attraction/double attack.

33 ... Rxa5!

The solution fits as snugly as the final piece in a crossword puzzle.

34 Rxa5 Qe1+

Black picks up the a5-rook, remaining a full piece ahead.

35 Kh2 Qxa5 36 Qxd4 0-1

Game 44

R.Fischer-M.Filip

Palma de Mallorca Interzonal 1970

Reti Opening

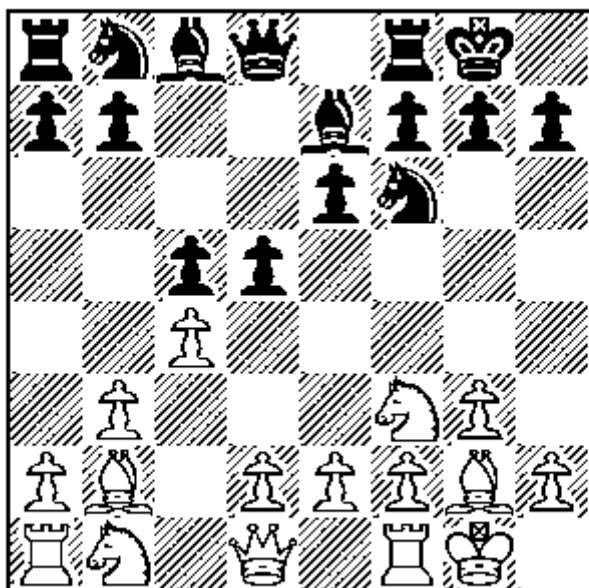
1 b3

Fischer's use of 1 b3 as White and Alekhine's Defence as Black may have been influenced by Larsen, who specialised in both lines.

1 ... d5 2 Bb2 Nf6 3 Nf3 e6 4 g3

Turning the game into a Reti Opening. After 4 e3 c5 5 c4 Nc6 6 cxd5 exd5 (6 ... Nxd5 isn't as good, since Black has trouble developing his f8-bishop) 7 Bb5 Bd6 8 0-0 0-0 9 d4 cxd4 10 Nxd4 Bd7 the players reached an isolani position with approximately level chances, V.Korchnoi-B.Larsen, Brussels 1987.

4 ... Be7 5 Bg2 0-0 6 0-0 c5 7 c4



White also reaches similar positions after the move order 7 e3 Nc6 8 c4.

7 ... Nc6

Question: Why can't Black shut White's b2-bishop down with 7 ... d4?

Answer: It blocks the bishop, but leaves Black's d-pawn under some pressure after 8 e3 Nc6 9 exd4 cxd4 10 Re1 with a reversed Benoni-like position, where White's inferior posting of his b2-bishop is compensated by the fact that he is two moves up on a normal Benoni: One move simply because he has the white pieces, and the other move, because Black's e-pawn will require two moves to reach e5.

8 cxd5

Now the game may transpose to a Queen's Gambit Declined, Tarrasch variation. 8 e3 keeps the game in Reti lines.

8 ... Nxd5

8 ... exd5 9 d4 reaches a QGD Tarrasch position which is a slightly passive version for White. Black achieves equality after 9 ... Ne4! 10 dxc5 Bxc5 11 Nc3 Nxc3 12 Bxc3 d4 13 Bb2 Re8 when his pressure on e2 easily compensates White's pressure against the d4 isolani, M.Tal-V.Korchnoi, Titograd 1984.

9 Nc3 Bf6

Fischer's opening experiment was too mild to yield an advantage and Black should be happy with the outcome.

10 Qc1

Fischer breaks the pin with an admittedly awkward placement for his queen, but c2 allows Black an annoying ... Nb4 harassment.

10 ... b6!?

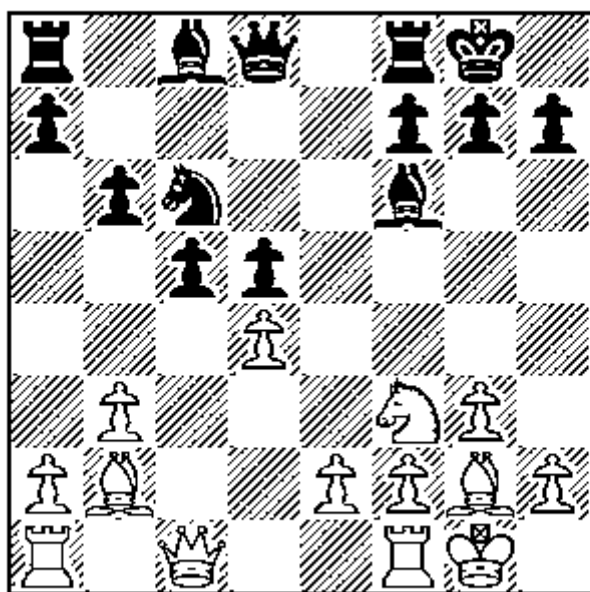
A Zen koan for you: When a person stands in a doorway, with one foot on each side of the threshold, is he going out or coming in? The answer: It depends on the person's intention. It's not easy to play a position without catering to our stylistic prejudices. Black, feeling that life has no gusto without risk, takes the dynamic route, when the boring line may have been the better practical choice.

10 ... Nxc3! offers White nothing after 11 dxc3 (Fischer may have gone for 11 Bxc3 e5 12 d3, since he felt comfortable in Maroczy bind positions as Black) 11 ... b6 12 Nd2 Bb7 13 Ne4 Be7 14 Rd1 Qc7 15 c4 Rfd8 with a snooze-fest of a position. White got nothing out of the opening, B.Gelfand-Z.Almasi, Monaco (blindfold) 2001.

11 Nxd5 exd5

After 11 ... Bxb2 12 Qxb2 Black can no longer take the safe route with 12 ... Qxd5?! 13 d4! Bb7 14 Ne5 Qd6 15 dxc5 bxc5, with a clear structural advantage and development lead for White.

12 d4!



Now the game gets more interesting, with a potential isolani or hanging pawns position to follow.

12 ... Ba6 13 Re1 Nxd4

Filip opts for an isolani position. He can also go for 13 ... c4 14 Ne5 Rc8 15 bxc4 Bxc4 16 Qd2 b5, as in J.Gonzalez Zamora-A.Naiditsch, Turin Olympiad 2006. The game remains unbalanced and probably even after 17 Nxc4 bxc4 18 Bc3.

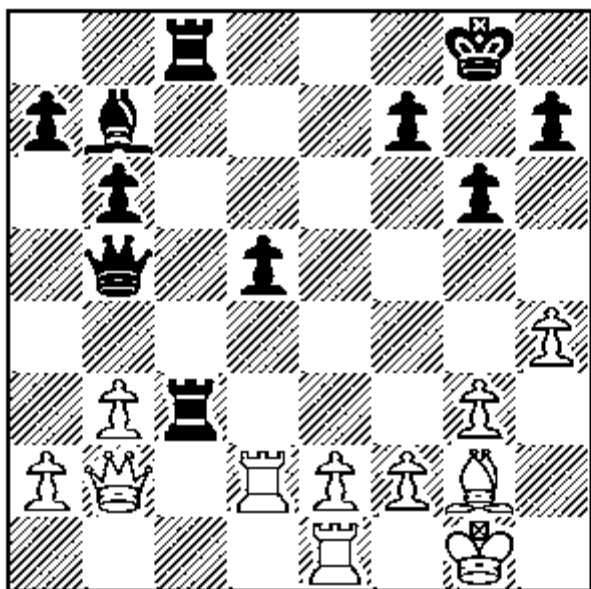
14 Bxd4!

Question: Why did Fischer hand over the bishop-pair?

Answer: Fischer's imbalancing choice is the only way for White to play for a win. 14 Nxd4 virtually leads to a forced draw after 14 ... cxd4 15 Qd2 Re8 16 Bf3 d3! 17 exd3 Bxb2 18 Rxe8+ Qxe8 19 Re1 Qd7 20 Qxb2 Bxd3 21 Rd1 Qf5 22 Qd4 Qxf3 23 Rxd3 Qe2 24 Qxd5 Re8.

15 ... Bb5 allows 16 Qb4 Ba6 17 Nxd4 and White regained the pawn with an edge.

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This plan isn't going to earn the rook the widespread acclaim he imagines will follow. Black's rook shouldn't leave coverage of the d5-pawn. Filip plays with the philosophy: Why bother with the effort to retain something which must soon be relinquished? So he is determined not to be tied down to the d5 isolani, willing to sacrifice it for activity. The trouble is, Filip regards a precious object as clutter. The d5-pawn falls yet his expected activity surge never arrives.

Correct was 26 ... Qc6 27 Qd4 Rc2 28 Red1 (28 Rxc2!? Qxc2 29 Bxd5 Bxd5 30 Qxd5 Qxa2 31 h5 Qa5! 32 Qxa5 bxa5 is a likely draw) 28 ... Rxd2 29 Rxd2 Qc5 30 Qf4 Qc7 31 Qxc7 Rxc7 32 g4 when Black should be okay.

27 Red1 Qc5 28 b4!?

28 Bxd5 is possible: 28 ... Bxd5 (not 28 ... Rxc3+?? 29 Kf1 and White wins material) 29 Rxd5 Rc1 30 Rd8+ Rxd8 31 Rxc1 Qd6 when White is up a pawn. Conversion won't be so easy, since Black remains active and his position weakness free.

28 ... Qe7 29 e3

The d5 isolani is doomed and Fischer is in no hurry to grab it right away.

29 ... h5 30 a3 Kh7 31 Bxd5

At long last, d5 falls.

31 ... Bxd5 32 Rxd5 Qe4

Now ... Rc2 is in the air.

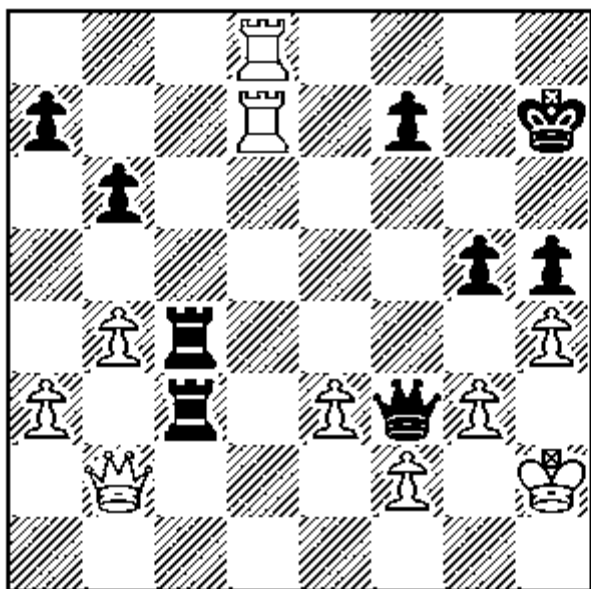
33 Rd8!

And now Black is threatened with mate on h8 if his c3 rook ever moves.

33 ... Qf3 34 Kh2!



Black puts up better resistance with 35 ... Rc8 36 b5 Rxd8 37 Rxd8 Qf5 38 e4! Qc5 39 Rd7 Qxa3 40 Qd2! Rf3 41 Qd4 (threat: Rd8) 41 ... Qc5 (41 ... Qc3?? 42 Rxf7+ Kh6 43 Qd5 Rxf7 44 Qxf7 is a hopeless ending for Black) 42 Qxc5 bxc5 43 Kg2 Rb3 44 Rxf7+ Kh6 (or 44 ... Kg8 45 Rxa7 Rxb5 46 Rc7 with a won ending for White) 45 Rxa7 Rxb5 46 Rc7, which is another completely won ending for White.



After the text, Black is virtually paralyzed, mainly since his c3-rook remains stuck in eternal stasis.

Exercise (combination alert): Black's last move was a symptom of desperation. Continue White's attack.

Answer: Attraction. Black's king is lured to g6, after which g5 falls.

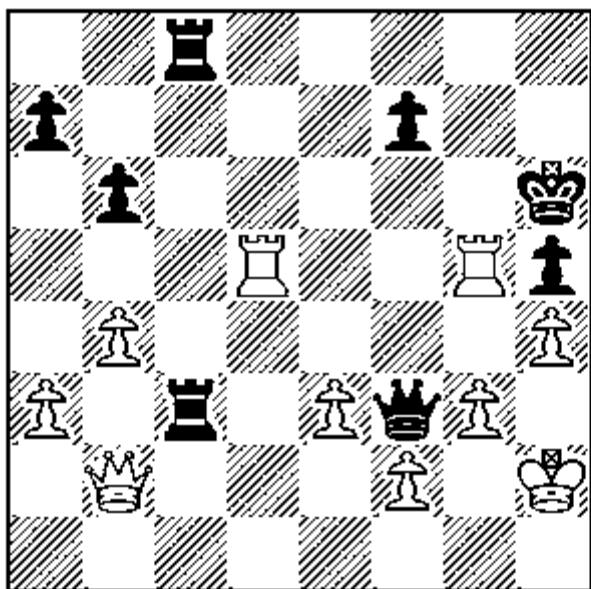
36 Rf8! Kg6

The king attempts to leave the party as early as good manners allow. 36 ... Kg7 allows 37 Rxf7+ Qxf7 38 Rxf7+ Kxf7 39 h5g5 Kg6 40 e4 Kxg5 41 Qd2+ Kf6 42 Qd6+ Kg7 43 Qe7+ Kg6 44 f4 when White's queen and two passed pawns are enough to win without much trouble.

37 Rg8+ Kh7 38 Rxc5 Rc8 39 Rdd5

Black faces a fiscal reality as h5 falls. The comp found the clever trick 39 Qb1+! Rc2 40 Rd2 Qe4 41 Qd1!. "Are you here to kill me?" asks Black's king. "Yes," replies White's queen, who has no secrets between her and her brother. Black must hand over his queen to protect against the h5 mate threat.

39 ... Kh6



Exercise (combination alert): How did Fischer finish the game?

Answer: Removal of a key defender/mating net.

40 Rdf5! 1-0

Black's queen is chased away from defence of h5. After 40 ... Qb7 41 Qe2 mate on h5 can't be averted.

Game 45

R.Fischer-T.Petrosian

7th matchgame, Buenos Aires 1971

Sicilian Taimanov

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 e6 3 d4

Fischer generally reserved the Kings Indian Attack for lower-rated opposition.

3 ... cxd4 4 Nxd4 a6 5 Bd3

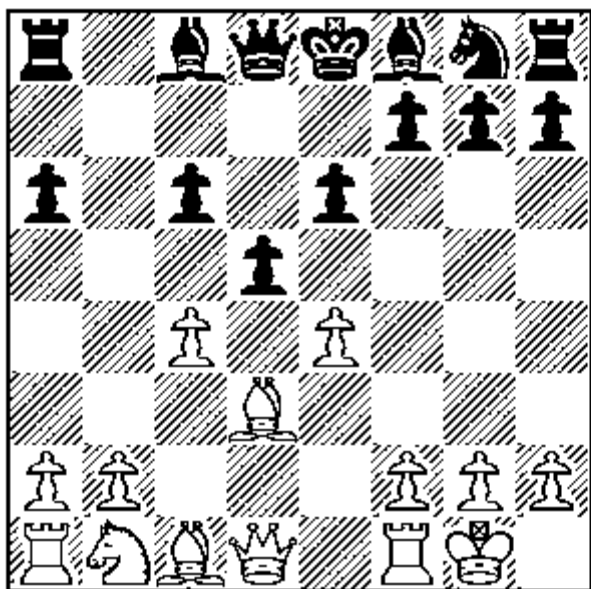
Also played are the lines 5 Nc3 and 5 c4.

5 ... Nc6 6 Nxc6

Question: Doesn't this swap strengthen Black's centre?

Answer: It's a trade-off. The swap does fortify Black's centre, and it also gains White time since he has no need to protect or retreat his d4-knight.

6 ... bxc6 7 0-0 d5 8 c4!



Principle: Create confrontation when leading in development. Fischer's move greatly improves upon 8 Nd2 which Spassky tried twice in his world championship match with Petrosian, with the players winning one game each: 8 ... Nf6 9 Qe2 (after the later 9 b3 Bb4 10 Bb2 a5 11 c3 Be7 12 c4 0-0 13 Qc2 h6 14 a3 Ba6 Petrosian equalized, B.Spassky-T.Petrosian, World Championship (Game 17), Moscow 1969) 9 ... Be7 10 b3 0-0 11 Bb2 a5 12 f4 g6 13 Rad1 Nd7 14 c4 a4 15 f5!? exf5 16 exf5 Bf6 (Petrosian wisely neutralizes White's most dangerous attacker) 17 Bxf6 Nxf6 18 Qf2. The position is dead even according to Houdini, B.Spassky-T.Petrosian, World Championship (Game 1), Moscow 1969.

8 ... Nf6

Question: Should Black close the position as quickly as possible with 8 ... d4?

Answer: White gets an easy-to-play attacking position after 9 e5 c5 10 Nd2 Ne7 11 Ne4 Nc6?!, as in R.Wade-R.Hübner, Castlebar 1969. Black's position looks quite difficult after (11 ... Ng6 12 f4 minimizes White's advantage) 12 Bf4 Rb8 13 Qf3! (threat: Nd6+ and Qxc6+) 13 ... Qd7 14 b3 when White has a nasty kingside build-up and Black's king will never feel secure.

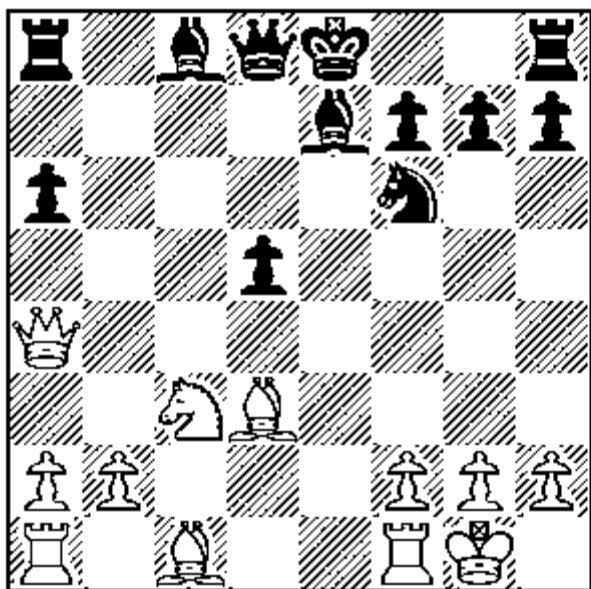
9 cxd5 cxd5 10 exd5

Fischer opens the game every chance he gets, relying on his development lead.

10 ... exd5!?

Risky. Petrosian willingly accepts an isolani. Today 10 ... Nxd5 is considered Black's best shot at equality: for example, 11 Be4 Rb8 12 Bxd5 Qxd5 13 Qxd5 exd5 14 Rd1 Be6 15 Nc3 Rd8 was R.Flis-K.Rogalski, Lodz 2007, when White only holds an edge after 16 Be3.

11 Nc3 Be7 12 Qa4+!



A new move and a potential improvement over 12 Be3 which Petrosian probably expected. After 12 ... 0-0 13 Bd4 Qd6 14 h3 Be6 15 Re1 even here White holds a nagging edge, B.Parma-A.Suetin, Havana 1969.

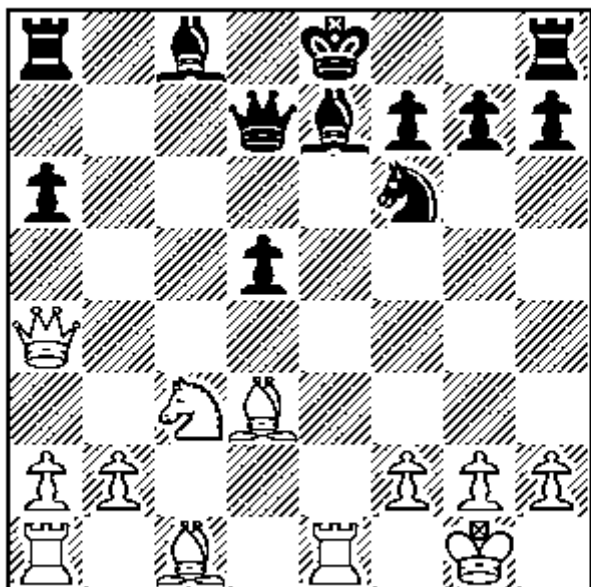
12 ... Qd7?!

When your opponent follows an irrational motive, then strangely enough, he becomes more dangerous, simply due to his unpredictability. Cunning and resolve mitigate some, but not all, strategically sagging situations. Petrosian responds with a startling move, which at first just seems like a beginner's blunder. The idea is brilliant if accepted, but fails when declined. Petrosian's move would be a double exclamation, if not for Fischer's amazing (non)response.

Question: Doesn't this hang an exchange to Bb5?

Answer: It's a deliberate sacrifice on Black's part, as we will see later in the notes below.

13 Re1!!



Botvinnik praised this move, adding that Smyslov and Karpov would also have unearthed it (I would also add Capa's name to the list). Silence can be more menacing than overt threats. This stunning non-response to Black's challenge is White's best move, since he gets a clearly

advantageous, risk-free ending.

Question: Why would Fischer avoid picking off the exchange with 13 Bb5?

Answer: Who among us is able to resist such dangled bait? Fischer wisely avoided the offer since Black's counterplay flares up after 13 ... axb5. Even a semi-sound plan can still acquire the outer gloss of legitimacy from complications and practical chances. Following 14 Qxa8 0-0 White can try:

a) 15 Rd1 d4 16 Qa5 Ng4! with serious threats. If 17 Nxb5 (17 Qxb5?? Qc7 18 Rxd4 Qxh2+ 19 Kf1 Qh1+ 20 Ke2 Qxg2 21 Nd1 Bb7 and White's king won't survive) 17 ... Nxf2!! 18 Kxf2 Bb7 (White's king is all alone) 19 Kg1 Qg4 20 Qd2 Bxg2! 21 Qxg2 Qxd1+ 22 Qf1 Qg4+ 23 Kh1 Qe4+ 24 Qg2 Qe1+ and the game ends in perpetual check..

b) 15 Qa5 d4 16 Nxb5 Bb7 with the intention of ... Bxg2 and ... Qg4+, with perpetual check. After 17 f3 Bc6 18 Na3 Ra8 19 Qd2 Nd5 20 Qf2 (20 Qxd4 is met with 20 ... Rxa3! followed by ... Bf6) 20 ... d3 21 Rd1 Bxa3 22 bxa3 Nc3 23 Rd2 Re8 24 Bb2 Ne2+ 25 Kh1 Qf5 the normally avaricious Houdini only gives White a small plus here, since Black's d-pawn ties White down badly.

13 ... Qxa4

Forced since 13 ... 0-0?? hangs a piece to 14 Qxd7 Bxd7 15 Rxe7.

14 Nxa4 Be6 15 Be3

Fischer seizes control over c5.

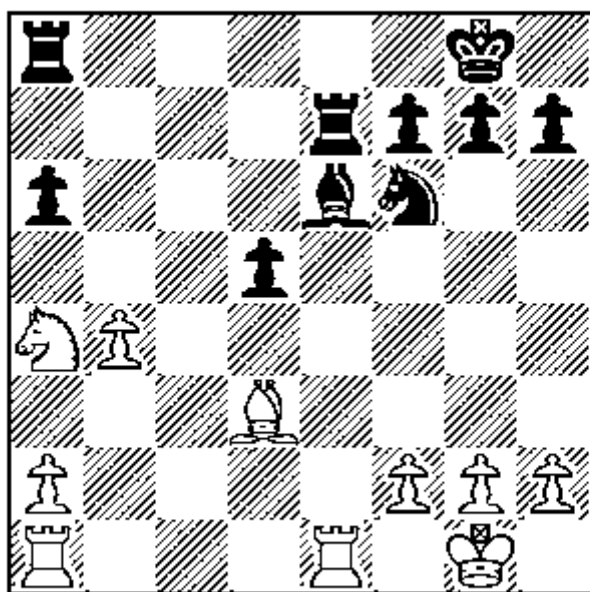
15 ... 0-0

15 ... Nd7 prevents Fischer's coming move, but opens new problems after 16 f4 0-0 17 Bd4 (17 f5 fails to win a piece after 17 ... Ne5) 17 ... Bf6 18 Bxf6 Nxf6 19 Nc5 Bc8 20 b4 when Black is tied down to passivity, similar to the position he reached in the game.

16 Bc5!

Fischer methodically swaps away Black's good bishop, sticking him with the light-squared lemon on e6.

16 ... Rfe8 17 Bxe7 Rxe7 18 b4!



Fischer makes good use of his queenside pawn majority with a dual purpose move:

1. White fixes a6 as a target. If Black plays ... a5, then b5 gives White a protected passed pawn.
2. White creates an outpost on c5 for his knight.

18 ... Kf8

Petrosian inches his king closer to the centre to offer a helping hand to his e7-rook to play ... Bc8 next.

19 Nc5 Bc8 20 f3

Cutting off all ideas of ... Ne4 and preparing to activate his own king.

20 ... Rea7!?

Black's rooks spend a lot more time parked, than on the road. We can almost count the ribs on Black's counterplay-starved position, and his position arrives at a point where resuscitation is unlikely. Can a move be any more Petrosianiac than this one? Caution can be both hindrance and asset. The trick is to know when to apply it and when to discard it. We have all heard the saying: The best defence is a good offence. Well, in this case Petrosian makes an argument for: The best defence is to just keep on defending!

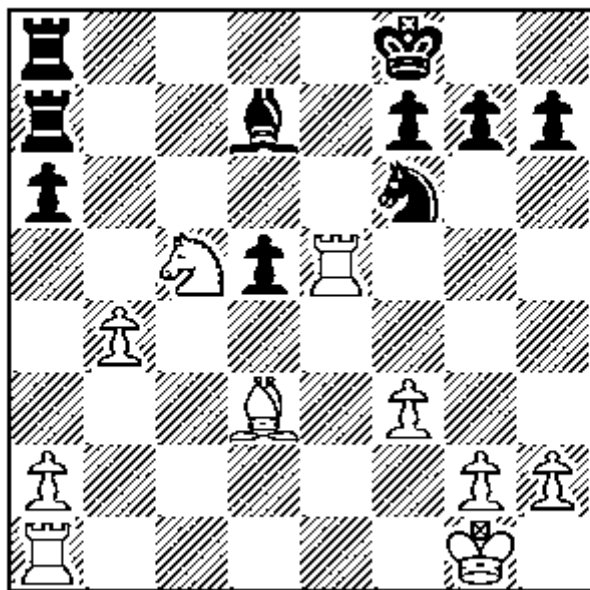
Petrosian takes umbrage at the white knight's intrusion, intending to challenge it with ... Nd7 next, or play ... Bd7, preparing ... Bb5. His last move can either be interpreted as coolness under fire, or blasé unconcern about White's growing initiative. So Petrosian goes into rope-a-dope mode, remaining completely passive, while covering his weaknesses.

Kasparov suggests the immediate 20 ... Nd7. White retains pressure after 21 Rec1! Re3 22 Kf2 d4 23 Be4 Nxc5 24 Rxc5 Rb8 25 a3 when Black's a6- and d4-pawns remain a serious source of concern.

21 Re5!

Fischer ties Black's knight down to defence of d7, which in turn prevents ... Nd7.

21 ... Bd7



22 Nxd7+!!

“Pious dolt! You dare challenge my authority?” asks the knight. We enter an alternative universe, where magic gains ascendancy over rational thought. Here it is again: Fischer's willingness to negotiate and trade one advantage for another, which nearly always disoriented his opponents.

Question: Wait a minute. Earlier you described Black's bishop as “the light-squared lemon”. Now you praise Fischer's decision to swap away his powerful knight for the bishop. An explanation?

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Answer: Mea tiny little culpa! Black's bishop may be bad, yet he needs it to defend his weak pawns. Fischer now demonstrates the superiority of his remaining bishop over Black's knight.

Also strong was the straightforward line 22 a4! g6 23 Kf2 (intending Ke3 and Kd4) 23 ... Bc6 24 Re2 Bb7 25 Ke3 d4+! 26 Kd2! (26 Kxd4 Rd8+ 27 Kc3 a5! is tricky; White can't play 28 b5? Bxf3! 29 gxf3 Rc7 as Black regains the piece and also his pawn, with an approximately even position) 26 ... Nd5 27 Be4 Rd8 28 Rc1 Ba8 29 Bxd5 Bxd5 30 Kd3. White has excellent conversion chances here, since d4 remains weak and White basically owns an extra piece – his king. I still think, though, Fischer's version is simpler and easier to convert than this one.

22 ... Rxd7 23 Rc1

White seized both open files with his rooks. Now Rc6 is a big concern, which prompts Petrosian's next concession.

23 ... Rd6

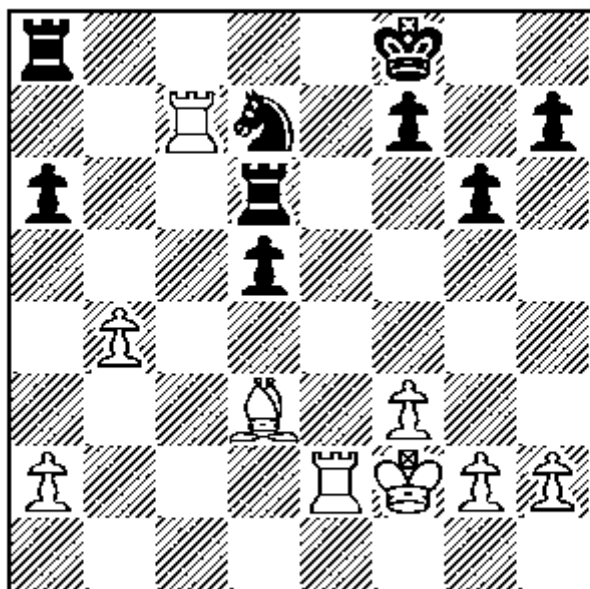
Covering the sixth rank ...

After 23 ... g6 24 Kf2 Houdini gives the inhuman move 24 ... Ng8!? 25 Rc5! (25 Rc6 Ne7, and if 26 Rxa6 Rxa6 27 Bxa6 Nc6 regains the pawn, although even here Black struggles) 25 ... Ne7 26 a3 when Black remains completely tied down to defence of a6 and d5.

24 Rc7

At cost of the seventh! Now White threatens Ree7.

24 ... Nd7 25 Re2 g6 26 Kf2



pressed to hold the game, although this may be his best shot at saving the game.

28 Kf3 f5

Once again we see a world champion reduced to strategic penury. Black's forces grope about like blind worms, seeking the sunlight which they can never see. This move weakened his second rank. Petrosian undoubtedly feared Kg4 and Kxh4.

29 Ke3!

Strategic threat: Kd4, which prompts Black's next move.

29 ... d4+

This move fatally allows White's bishop to assume control over the a2-g8 diagonal. Allowing White's king to d4 was also hopeless.

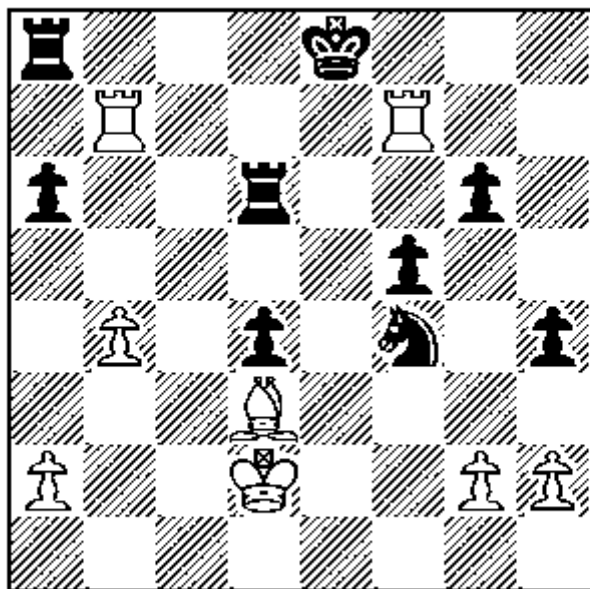
30 Kd2 Nb6?

Preventing Bc4, yet inviting White's rooks to seize the seventh rank. 30 ... Kf7 31 Bc4+ Kf6 32 a4 also leaves Black terribly tangled, but it was the only path to further resistance.

31 Ree7! Nd5

Triple attacking d7, f7 and f4. Fischer worked out the finish accurately.

32 Rf7+ Ke8 33 Rb7 Nxf4



Exercise (planning): The black king's shivering isn't attributable to the cold weather. How did Fischer end the game?

Answer: Mating net. White simply needs to add one more attacker, and Black's king is finished.

34 Bc4! 1-0

White's attackers begin to assume sinuously menacing shapes. 34 ... Nxf4 (34 ... Ne6 35 Rbe7+ Kd8 36 Bxe6 is curtains for Black as well) 35 Rg7 Rf6 36 Rg8+ Rf8 37 Bf7+ ("Take note Your Grace: That which you did to others in the past, others do to you in the present," intones the bishop, as he delivers his homily) 37 ... Kd8 38 Rxf8 is mate.

Game 46

T.Petrosian-R.Fischer

8th matchgame, Buenos Aires 1971

Semi-Tarrasch Defence

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6

I think avoiding King's Indian was a wise choice against Petrosian, who was a monster in closed positions, and especially deadly against KID.

3 Nf3 d5 4 Nc3 c5 5 e3

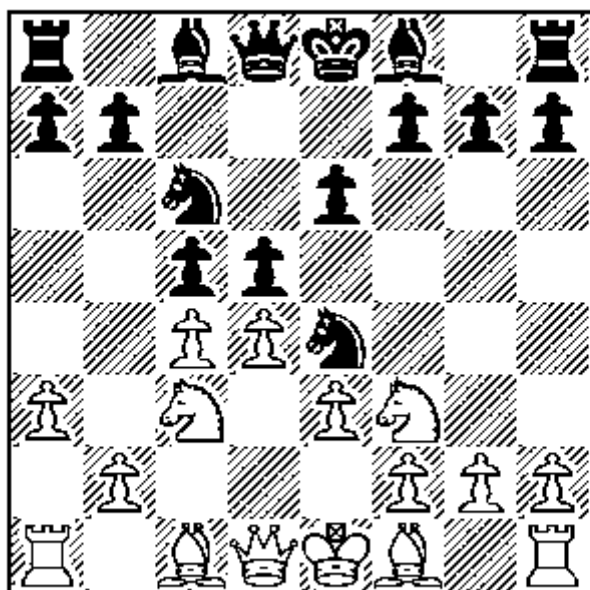
5 cxd5 Nxd5 is the main line Semi-Tarrasch, while 5 ... exd5 leads to QGD Tarrasch lines.

5 ... Nc6 6 a3

Question: What is the point of White's last move?

Answer: White intends dxc5, followed by b4, with a kind of reversed Queen's Gambit Accepted. In my opinion White gets a better shot at an edge with 6 cxd5.

6 ... Ne4!



I think this is Black's strongest response, since after the coming ... Nxc3; bxc3, it renders White's a3 a wasted tempo.

7 Qc2

This is commonly played, but I don't think the queen is particularly well placed on c2, since a distant ... Rc8 makes White's queen uncomfortable on the c-file.

Instead, 7 Bd3 Nxc3 8 bxc3 dxc4 (this is fine, now that White spent a tempo moving his bishop to d3) 9 Bxc4 Be7 10 0-0 0-0 11 Qe2 Bd7!? was V.Hort-V.Korchnoi, Leningrad 1967. Now if 12 e4 Na5 13 Bd3 Ba4! (annoyingly cutting off Rd1) 14 Bf4 Rc8 with dynamically balanced chances.

7 ... Nxc3 8 bxc3 Be7 9 Bb2 0-0 10 Bd3

Gaining a tempo and inducing a slight weakening of Black's king.

10 ... h6 11 0-0 Na5

Fischer wants to induce cxd5.

12 Nd2

12 cxd5 exd5 13 Ne5 b6 14 Qe2 Bd6 15 f4! f6 16 e4!? was the more recent M.Mchedlishvili-M.Feygin, Belgian League 2006. Black gets a reasonable position by declining the offer with 16 ... cxd4 17 exd5 Nb3 18 Rae1 Nc5, with a messy and probably equal position.

12 ... dxc4 13 Nxc4 Nxc4

Swaps reduce White's kingside attacking potential.

14 Bxc4 b6 15 e4

White must be careful after 15 Rad1 Bb7:

a) 16 dxc5?! fails to win a pawn, and only manages to weaken White's structure after 16 ... Qc7.

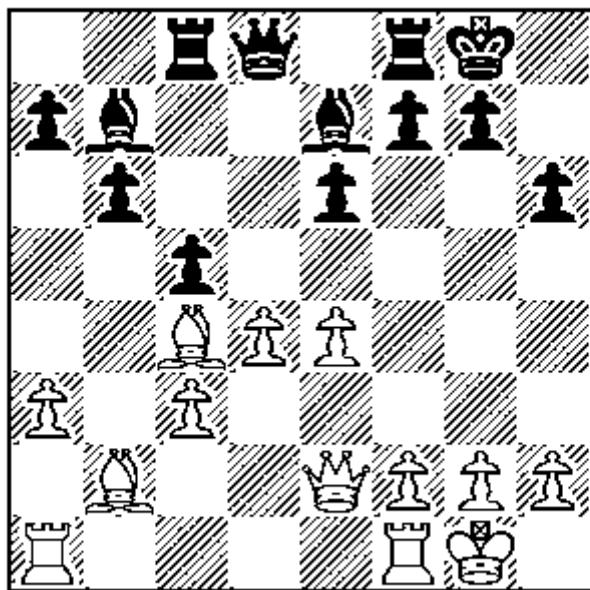
b) 16 e4?! cxd4 17 cxd4 Rc8 was P.Benko-B.Ivkov, Wijk aan Zee 1972. Black can now seize the advantage after 18 Qe2 Rxc4! 19 Qxc4 Bxe4. For the exchange Black gets a pawn, the bishop-pair and light-square control. This, coupled with the fact that White's remaining bishop is bad, gives Black the edge.

c) Correct is 16 d5 Bxd5! 17 Bxd5 (Black stands better after 17 e4?! Bxc4 18 Rxd8 Rfxd8) 17 ... exd5 18 c4 d4 19 exd4 cxd4 20 Rxd4 Qc8 with an even position.

15 ... Bb7 16 Qe2

Petrosian must waste a tempo to remove his queen from the c-file, since ... Rc8 follows.

16 ... Rc8



So it becomes a battle between central control and queenside majority. Chances are even.

Question: Why even? Doesn't a central majority count for more?

Answer: Not if the attacking chances are reduced. In this position Black managed to swap two pairs of pieces, greatly decreasing White's attacking chances. If given a choice, I would actually take Black, since a queenside pawn majority tends to be more favourable in simplified situations.

17 Bb3?!

This move allows Black to generate activity with his majority. I would go for 17 d5 exd5 18 Rad1 Qc7 19 exd5 Bf6 20 Rfe1 Rfd8 21 a4 when chances remain balanced.

17 ... b5!

When we are allowed such a move, the intoxicating first breath of freedom is one of a person long incarcerated, granted a pardon. Fischer seizes upon his chance to roll his majority forward.

18 f4!?

The larger an empire, the more difficult it is to defend its borders. This move loosens White's centre. Petrosian probably envisioned a kingside attack which never materialized. Other options were:

a) 18 a4 c4 19 Bc2 b4 20 cxb4 Bxb4 21 Rad1 a5 when ... c3 is coming and I already prefer Black's chances.

b) 18 Qxb5? Bxe4 just leaves White with weak pawns, for no compensation.

18 ... Qb6 19 Kh1

19 f5?! is met with 19 ... c4 20 Bc2 e5 with unpleasant central pressure for Black.

19 ... cxd4

Principle: Meet a wing attack with a central counter. The option is to maintain central tension with 19 ... a5.

20 cxd4 b4

Now ... Ba6 is in the air.

21 axb4

Of course 21 a4?? allows 21 ... Ba6.

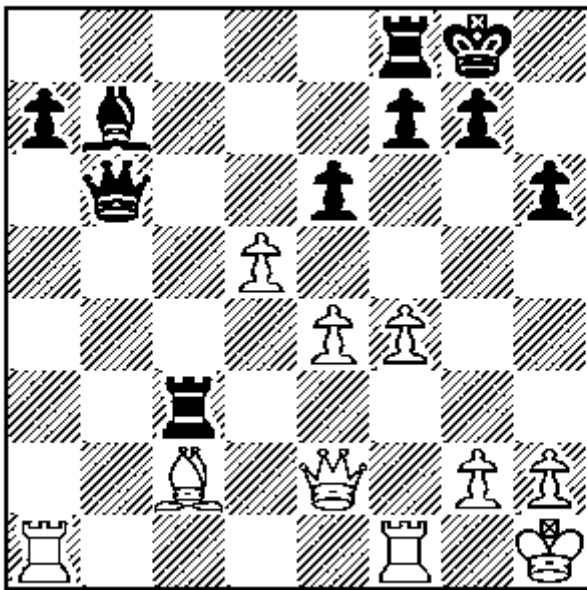
21 ... Bxb4 22 d5

Petrosian unleashes his bishops against Black's king.

22 ... Bc3!

Fischer immediately eliminates White's most dangerous piece.

23 Bxc3 Rxc3 24 Bc2?



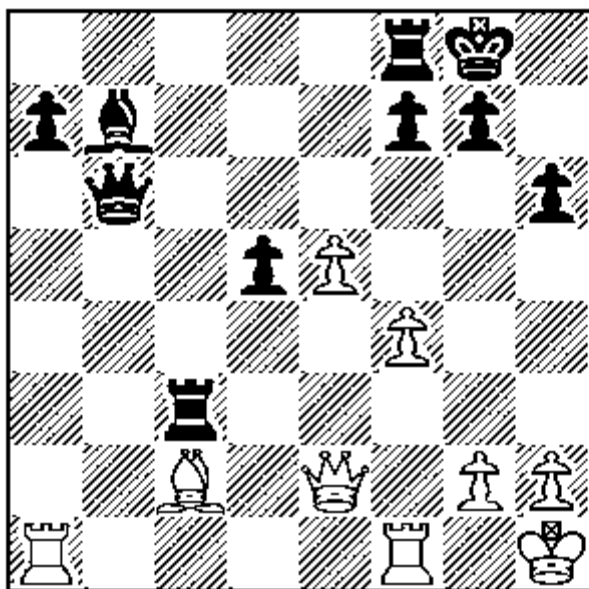
Petrosian's desire to play it safe is offset by the stigma of passive play. He seeks to enforce a pattern of uncooperative data, in an attempt to put Fischer on the defensive, beginning a war where he lacks an army, weapons or time. So an ordinary position turns not so ordinary in the turn of a single move. I don't know if this is a move based on a sense of misplaced urgency, or is simply an overly ambitious pawn sacrifice. If someone is trying to kill you, then you have three choices of action:

1. Rely on the police for protection.
2. Disappear by leaving town.
3. Kill your enemy, before he kills you.

It feels to me like Petrosian opted for number three on the list. However, we note incompatible and conflicting factors in Petrosian's assumptions. He paid an exorbitant sum for an attack which will never materialize.

White should try 24 Ba2 (if our wants are simple, then life tends to oblige us) 24 ... exd5 25 Bxd5 Bxd5 26 exd5 Rd8 27 Qa6 Rxd5 28 Qxa7 Qxa7 29 Rxa7 with a near-certain draw. After 29 ... Rd2 30 Raa1 Rcc2 31 Rg1 White may be tied down, but the simplicity of the position is almost guaranteed to ensure him of a draw.

24 ... exd5 25 e5



Question: This looks rather dangerous for Black. For the pawn, White got dangerously mobile e- and f-pawns, ready to surge forward and threaten Black's king. What is your objection to Petrosian's pawn sacrifice?

Answer: The centre is too open for White's attack to succeed. Black has his own passed d-pawn which when pushed, distracts White from his attacking aims.

25 ... Re3

Also tempting is 25 ... d4 26 Bd3 a5 27 f5 Qc6! (threat: ... Rxd3) 28 Rg1 a4 29 f6 g6 when White's attack will fail with a cringing g1-rook, in constant defence of g2.

26 Qd2 d4

Fischer unleashes his own bishop, now taking aim at g2. A quick glance tells us the result of Petrosian's pawn sacrifice's end result is not what was previously advertised.

27 Rab1

27 Rfb1 is met with 27 ... Qc6 when White is unable to play 28 Rxa7?? (or 28 Rc1?? d3! 29 Bb3 Qb6 30 Rg1 Re2 31 Qd1 Be4 when Black rules the board), because of 28 ... d3! 29 Raxb7 Re2 and wins.

27 ... Qa6?!

It's not often that one catches the devil dozing. A waste of time. Stronger was 27 ... Qc6! 28 Rg1 Rd8.

28 Rf2?!

White's position is threatening to turn into a parody of the attack he once imagined was his. He has no compensation except an empty wallet and mounting bills:

a) 28 Qxd4?! Qe2 29 Rg1 Ba8 30 Bb3 Qf2 31 Bd5 Bxd5 32 Qxd5 Qxf4 33 Rge1 Qb4! 34 Rf1 Qc3 when the e-pawn falls and Black should win the game.

b) 28 Rfd1! (White's toughest defence) 28 ... Qc6 29 Rb4 Rc8 30 Rb2 g6 31 Bb1 Qd7 32 Bd3 and White remains tied down, but still alive.

28 ... Rd8 29 Kg1 Be4!

Fischer removes White's most dangerous piece.

30 Bxe4 Rxe4

Not only is White down a pawn, but he is tied down to Black's d-pawn, and his f4 point remains weak.

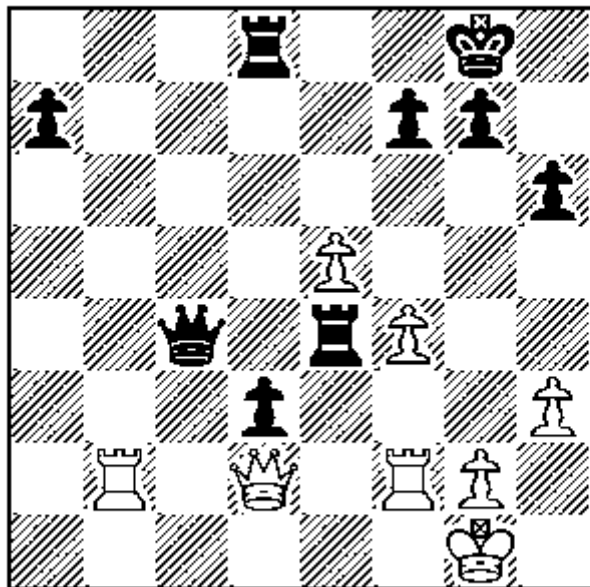
31 h3 d3

Principle: Passed pawns must be pushed. The deeply passed d-pawn continues to mock White's hopes.

32 Rb3 Qc4!

Fischer methodically centralizes.

33 Rb2



Exercise (planning): How did Fischer force a serious concession?

Answer: Attack f4, which forces White to play g3, which in turn fatally weakens Petrosian's king.

33 ... Rdd4!

It all looks so simple, yet it rarely works out that way in our games.

34 g3

Now White's king is terribly exposed.

34 ... Rd5

I would start pushing the a-pawn with 34 ... a5! as 35 Qxa5?? is impossible, due to 35 ... Re2 36 Rd2 Qc1+ 37 Kg2 Qe1 38 Rfxe2 dxe2. Black wins after 39 Qa8+ Kh7 40 Rxd4 Qf1+ 41 Kh2 e1Q.

35 Kh2 Rb5

Attempting to eliminate White's only active piece.

36 Ra2

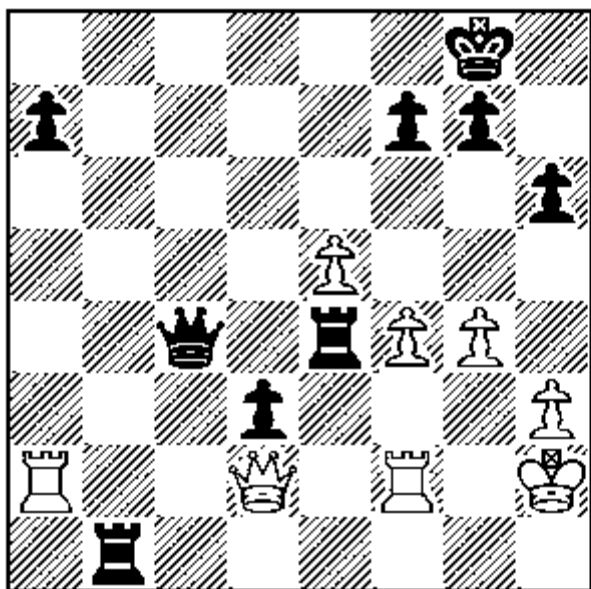
36 Rxb5 Qxb5 would be a trivially easy win for Black.

36 ... Rb1!

Invading White's first rank and now ... Ree1 is threatened.

37 g4

In order to make room for his king on g3. 37 Rxa7?? Re2 38 Rxe2 dxe2 is a game-ender: 39 Ra8+ Kh7 40 Qd8 Rh1+! mates in two moves.



Exercise (planning): Continue making progress for Black.

Answer: Simplification.

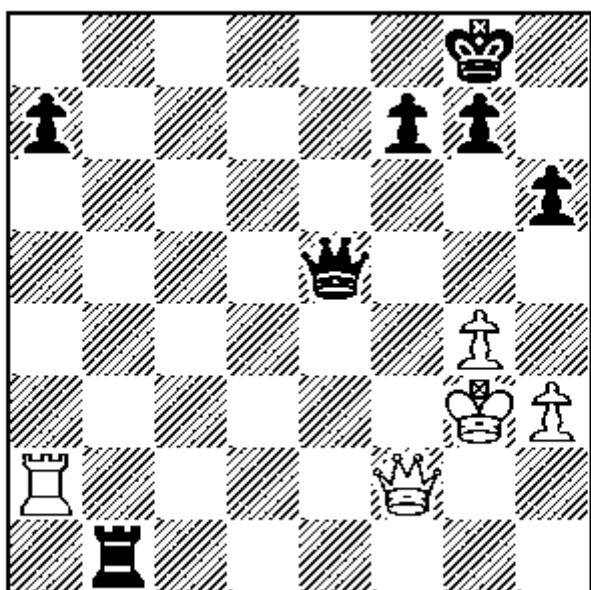
37 ... Re2!

For the umpteenth time in the book, Fischer willingly switches one advantage for another. This time he hands over his precious passed d-pawn to generate a mating attack against White's now fatally exposed king.

38 Rxe2 dxe2 39 Qxe2 Qxf4+ 40 Kg2 Qd4

40 ... Rb3 41 Qe1 Re3 42 Qf2 Qe4+ 43 Kh2 Re1 is also terminal for White.

41 Qf2 Qd5+ 42 Kg3 Qxe5+ 0-1



The queen's judicious inquiries reveal her brother's hiding place in the closet.

Question: I realize that Black is up two pawns in this position, but if I had Fischer's side, I wouldn't know exactly how to convert. What is Black's winning theme?

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Answer: White has bigger issues than just being two pawns down. His king is exposed to a mating attack after a line like **43 Kg2 Qd5+ 44 Kg3 Rb3+ 45 Kh2 Qd3 46 Qg2 Qd6+ 47 Kg1 Rb1+ 48 Kf2 Qc5+ 49 Ke2 Qe5+ 50 Kd2 (or 50 Kf2 Qe1+ 51 Kf3 Rb3+ 52**

Kf4 g5+ 53 Kf5 Qe6 mate) 50 ... Qe1+ and White's king is mated after 51 Kc2 Rc1+ 52 Kd3 Rc3+ 53 Kd4 Qe3+ 54 Kd5 Qc5+ 55 Ke4 Re3+ 56 Kf4 ("Hello? Anybody out there? Now would be an excellent time for assistance," yells the king to his embarrassed defenders, who continue to stare at the ceiling and whistle through their teeth) 56 ... Qe5 mate.

Of course such comp-generated lines make our heads ache. In real life we just keep delivering checks to White's king until a mating pattern makes itself evident.

Game 47

R.Fischer-B.Spassky

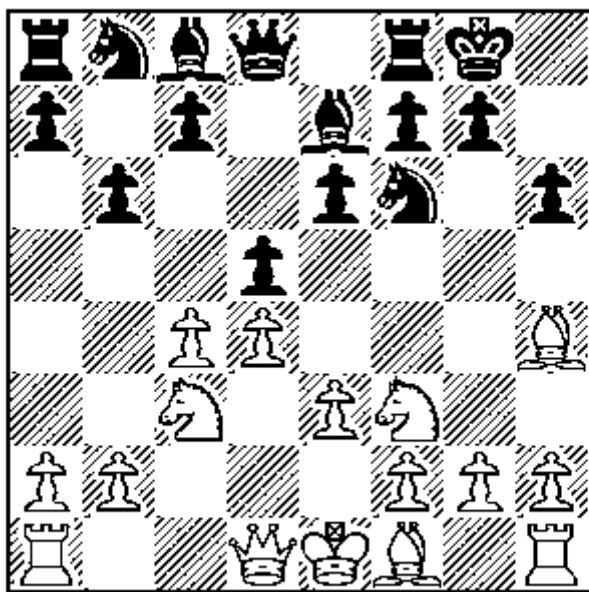
World Championship (Game 6), Reykjavik 1972

Queen's Gambit Declined

1 c4

A shocker for Spassky, whose pre-match preparations most certainly revolved around 1 e4 lines. Fischer had only played 1 c4 once before, against Polugaevsky in 1970.

1 ... e6 2 Nf3 d5 3 d4 Nf6 4 Nc3 Be7 5 Bg5 0-0 6 e3 h6 7 Bh4 b6



The ultra-solid Tartakower Defence of the Queen's Gambit Declined. According to my database, Spassky, who was at the time the leading authority on this line, reached this position 18 times previously, against very powerful opposition, with only a single loss to Portisch.

8 cxd5

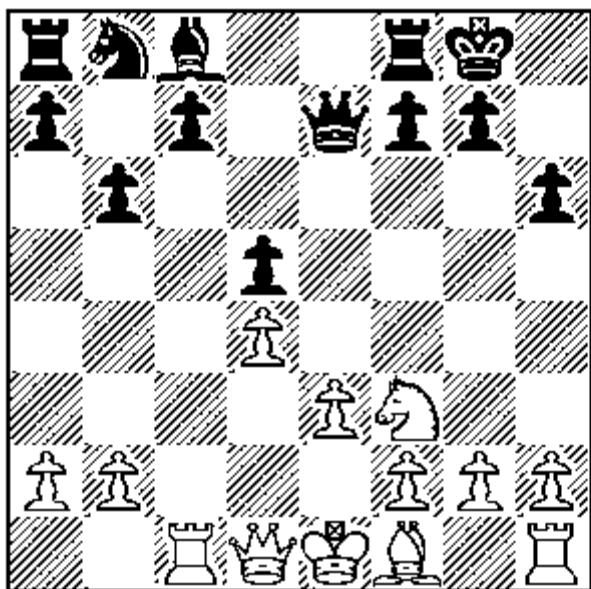
White's main line at the time the game was played. Today, this line is considered somewhat defanged and more common are 8 Rc1, 8 Be2 and 8 Qc2.

8 ... Nxd5

8 ... exd5 9 Bd3 Bb7 10 0-0 is also playable for Black, although it's supposed to give White an edge. Especially tempting is the attacking plan Ne5 and f4, with kind of a super-reversed Stonewall Dutch formation.

9 Bxe7 Qxe7 10 Nxd5 exd5 11 Rc1

White's rook logically slides over to the open c-file to add pressure to Black's future hanging pawns. Deviations tend to achieve nothing: for example, 11 Qb3!? Be6 12 Rc1 Rc8 13 Bd3 c5 14 Qa3 Kf8 15 dxc5 bxc5 16 Bb5 Nd7 17 Bxd7 Bxd7 18 0-0 a5 19 Rfd1 Be6 20 Rc3 a4 when Black's forces are harmoniously placed and he achieved equality at a minimum, H.Nakamura-M.Carlsen, Sao Paulo/Bilbao 2011.



11 ... Be6

Question: Why post the bishop on e6, rather than b7?

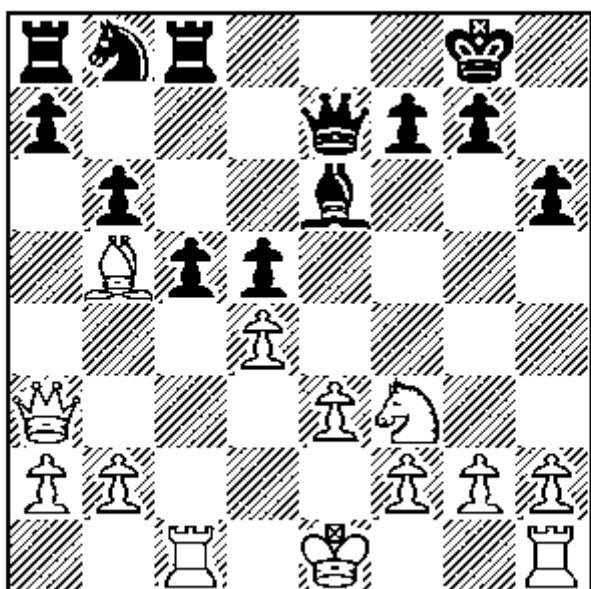
Answer: The bishop is better placed on e6, rather than fianchettoed, since it allows Black to place a rook on b8, pressuring White down the b-file. 11 ... Bb7 12 Qa4 c5 13 Qa3 Rc8 was T.Petrosian-B.Spasky, Santa Monica 1966. White looks pleasantly better after 14 Be2 Nd7 15 0-0 Kf8 16 dxc5 bxc5 17 Rfd1 and in this position Black's bishop would be better off on e6.

12 Qa4 c5 13 Qa3

White's pin on the c5-pawn is only temporary.

13 ... Rc8 14 Bb5

Furman's idea.



Question: Why play to a square where Black can chase the bishop away with ... a6?

Answer: First, ... a6 doesn't yet threaten anything, since the a-pawn is pinned. Secondly, White encourages ... a6 to loosen Black's queenside pawns. 14 Be2 allows Black to equalize with the unpinning trick 14 ... Qb7!.

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14 ... a6

A year later, Geller sprung Averbakh's suggestion 14 ... Qb7! which completely revives Black's

position and remains the main line today. This move, according to Kasparov, “practically speaking, put the 8 cxd5 variation out of use”. After 15 dxc5 bxc5 16 Rxc5?! (this is a sacrifice best left declined; wiser is 16 Be2 a5) 16 ... Rxc5 17 Qxc5 Na6! 18 Bxa6 (or 18 Qc6 Qxc6 19 Bxc6 Rb8 20 0-0 Rxb2 and Black has all the chances, due to his super-active rook, J.Gonzales-B.Villamayor, Manila 2008) 18 ... Qxa6 (White’s obvious problem is that he is unable to castle) 19 Qa3 Qc4 20 Kd2 Qg4 21 Rg1 d4! (opening attacking lanes while activating his bishop) 22 Nxd4 Qh4! White was unable to save his exposed king in J.Timman-E.Geller, Hilversum 1973.

15 dxc5 bxc5

The players reach a classical hanging pawns situation, where White’s pressure on the pawns is offset by Black’s greater central control and open b-file.

16 0-0 Ra7

A slight improvement was found after the match with 16 ... Qb7! 17 Ba4 Qb6. Black equalized, U.Avner-I.Radashkovich, Netanya 1973.

17 Be2 Nd7

Earlier 17 ... a5 18 Rc3 Nd7 19 Rfc1 had been seen in S.Furman-E.Geller, Moscow 1970. At this stage Black looks fine after 19 ... Qd8 20 Nd4 Qb6 21 Rb3 Qd8 22 Nxe6 fxe6 23 Rb5 Qf6.

18 Nd4!

With two ideas:

1. He can consider the swap Nxe6, followed by e4.
2. White’s knight can operate on the queenside with Nb3.

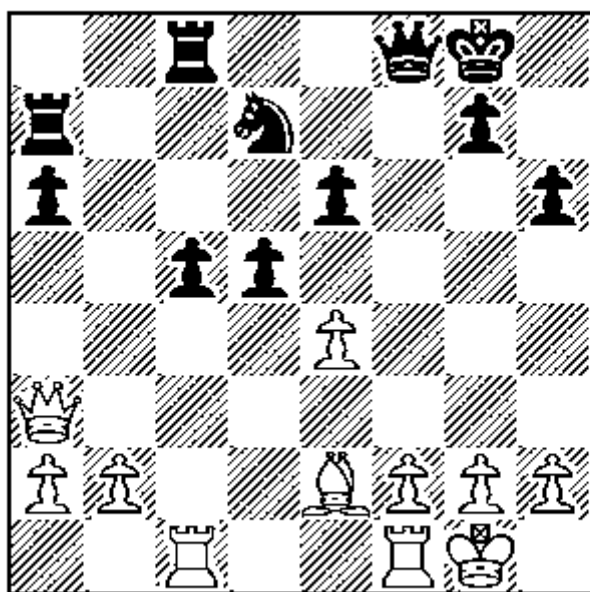
18 ... Qf8!?

Spassky’s concerns are perhaps misplaced. To my mind, breaking the pin isn’t as important as controlling e4:

a) 18 ... Kf8?! 19 Nxe6+ fxe6 20 e4! is similar to the game’s continuation, where White enjoys some pressure on Black’s central pawns.

b) 18 ... Nf6! interposes obstacles between White and his wishes, covering the e4-square. Black seems fine after 19 Nxe6 fxe6. I don’t believe White has anything here.

19 Nxe6 fxe6 20 e4!



Long held assumptions begin to unravel. Now Black’s 18th move decision becomes uncomfortably pertinent to his present woes. This move ensures White a lasting edge for two reasons:

1. Black must continue to defend his wobbly central pawns.

2. White's bishop grows in power as the position opens, while the black knight's influence decreases.

20 ... d4?

The echo of Black's counterplay begins to fade. This move makes matters worse, since it allows White a dangerously mobile kingside pawn majority and also creates an occupiable hole on c4.

Question: But if not pushing to d4, then what? I don't see viable options for Black.

Answer: Black has two superior options:

a) Maybe he should consider the radical and ugly looking 20 ... dxe4!? 21 Qe3 Qf5, as suggested by the ChessBase annotations.

Question: Is this really okay for Black? Just look at his pawns!

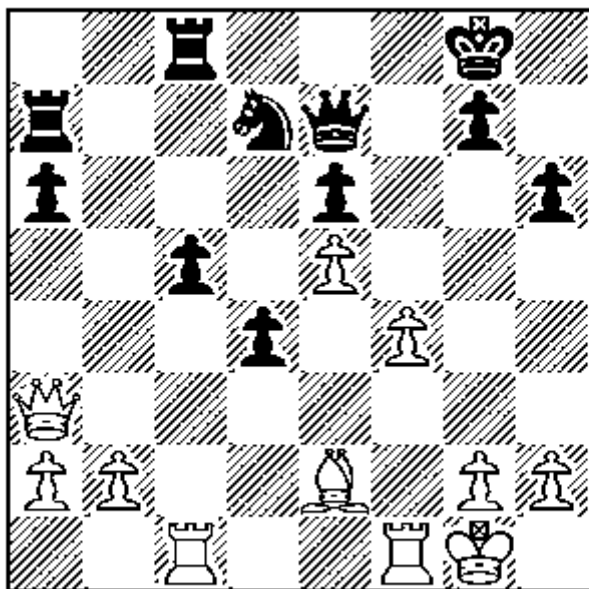
Answer: Black's suddenly increased activity compensates somewhat, but not completely for his damaged pawns. It's certainly better than Spassky's choice, which left him without counterplay.

b) Even better, though, is 20 ... Nf6! when Black looks okay after 21 exd5 exd5 22 b3 Qd6. Houdini assesses at '+=' , since the bishop is superior to Black's knight in the open position. It feels to me like a manageable '+=' , and I don't believe Black should lose the game.

21 f4 Qe7

Black is unable to get away with 21 ... e5 22 fxe5! Qe7 23 Qb3+ Kh7 24 Rf7 Qg5 (24 ... Qxe5?? 25 Bg4 Rd8 26 Rcf1 Rc7 27 Qh3 Nb6 28 R1f5! Qd6 29 e5 Qc6 30 R5f6! Qb7 31 Qxh6+! Kg8 32 Qxg7 mate) 25 Rcf1 Rac7 26 e6 Ne5 27 R7f5 Qd2 28 Bxa6 when the e5 and c8 points hang simultaneously.

22 e5!



Fischer seizes central and kingside space, while locking down e6 as a target.

22 ... Rb8?!

For a future to exist, Black must first endure and survive his present ordeal. This side issue is not relevant to the task at hand. 22 ... Nb6 was essential to keep White's bishop out of the c4 post. White still holds a clear advantage after 23 Qd3! (intending Qe4, Bd3 and taking aim at h7; 23 f5 was suggested during the match, but Black has the adequate response 23 ... c4! 24 Qxe7 Rxe7 25

fxe6 d3 26 Bg4 Rd8 when his deeply entrenched passed d-pawn offers him full compensation for White's extra pawn) 23 ... Nd5 24 Qe4 Qe8 25 Bd3 g6 26 Qxg6+ Qxg6 27 Bxg6 Ne3 28 Rf2 Rb7 29 Bd3 Rb6 30 Rd2 a5. White is up a pawn, yet may experience technical issues converting, since Black's forces remains active, with a pesky knight posted on e3.

23 Bc4

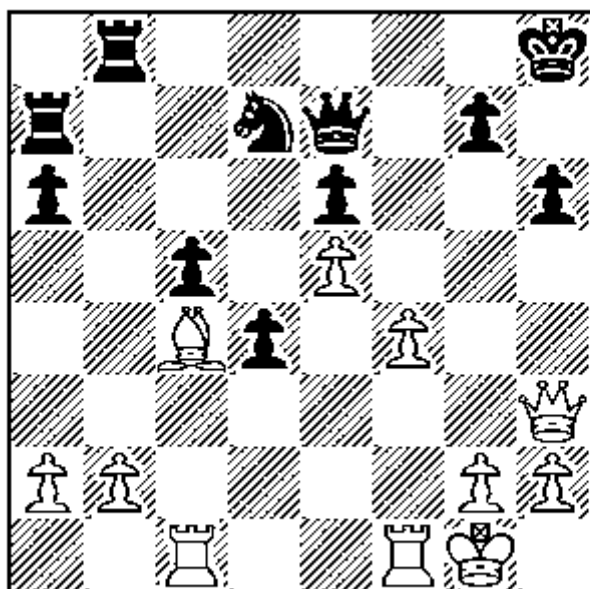
Bearing down on e6 and threatening f5.

23 ... Kh8

Spassky may have originally intended 23 ... Nb6?, but then realized that his move is met with 24 Qb3! picking off e6.

24 Qh3!

The queen's prying eyes fall upon e6. White's once intended queenside initiative dissolved and then magically reconstituted on the other side of the board.



24 ... Nf8

Clearly, the knight is a reluctant participant. Going passive in this position looks fatal. Note how Fischer cleverly lured Black's knight to the defence, away from its intended goal of ... Nb6 and ... Nd5.

Question: Did Spassky have better defensive chances

by chopping on b2 and avoiding passivity for his knight?

Answer: Maybe just marginally so. This path doesn't escape a lost position after 24 ... Rxb2 25 Bxe6 Rab7 26 Bd5 R7b6 27 Qd3 R6b4 28 Qf5! (threat: Be4) 28 ... Rb8 (intending to meet Be4 with ... Nf8) 29 Bb3 Nf8 30 Rf2! (eliminating Black's only active piece) 30 ... Rxf2 31 Kxf2. White has a winning position for the following reasons:

1. His bishop dominates Black's knight (a familiar theme in Fischer's games).
2. White's kingside majority is mobile and ready to surge, while Black's c- and d-pawns remain fixed.
3. Black is chronically weak on the light squares.
4. Numbers 2 and 3 on the list mean that Black's king will find no peace in the coming moves.

25 b3

Shutting down Black's queenside play, while protecting his b-pawn.

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25 ... a5 26 f5!

Fischer makes clear the severity of Black's situation, prying open the f-file for his rooks, which

creates a passed e-pawn and also increases the scope of his bishop.

26 ... exf5

26 ... Qg5 puts up greater resistance, yet fails to save Black after 27 fxe6 Ng6 28 Qf5 Nxe5 29 Qxg5 hxg5 30 Bd5 Nd3 31 Rf3! Nf4 (31 ... Nxc1?? walks into 32 Rh3+ Kg8 33 e7) 32 Bc4 Re7 33 Re1 Rb6 34 Re5 Nxe6 35 Rh3+ Kg8 36 Rxc5, with a won ending for White.

27 Rxf5

Threat: Rf7 and Rxa7.

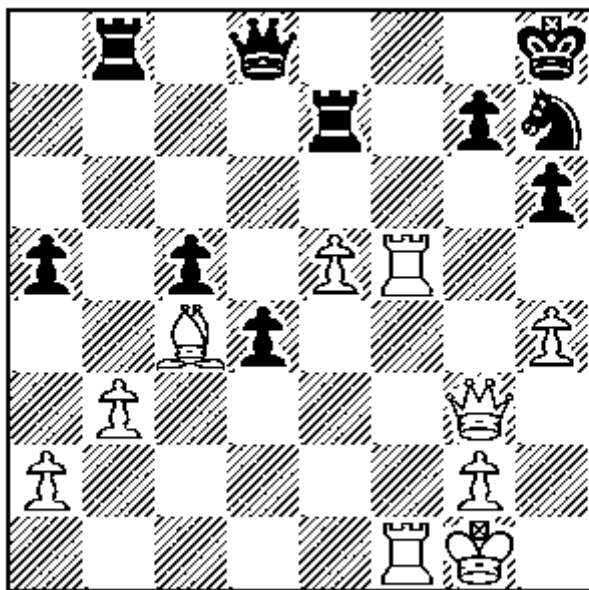
27 ... Nh7!

Setting up a cheapo.

28 Rcf1

Which Fischer avoids. We note a continuing surreptitious transfer of funds over to the kingside, but not 28 Rf7?? Ng5 and Black wins material.

28 ... Qd8 29 Qg3 Re7 30 h4



Fischer squeezes with the comprehensive embrace of an obese great aunt to an unwilling six-year-old. Now Black's knight has been deprived of safe squares, except the one it is on.

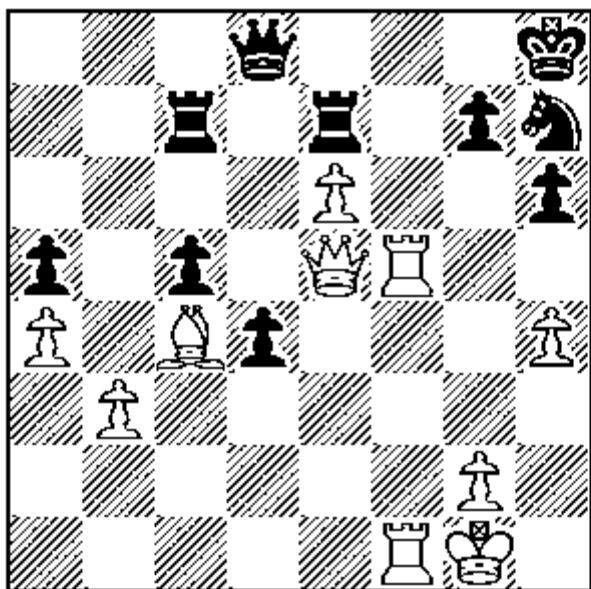
30 ... Rbb7

Covering against Rf7 ideas.

31 e6 Rbc7

31 ... Nf6?? is met with 32 Rxf6 gxf6 33 Rxf6 Rh7 34 Qe5 Rbg7 35 Rf3. Black is in zugzwang and mate in four moves can't be avoided: for example, 35 ... Qe7 36 Rf7 Qe8 37 e7 h5 38 Rf8+ Qxf8 39 exf8Q mate. Correct. I still haven't figured out how to underpromote in ChessBase 13!

32 Qe5! Qe8 33 a4 Qd8



Exercise (combination alert): Fischer has an immediate win. How?

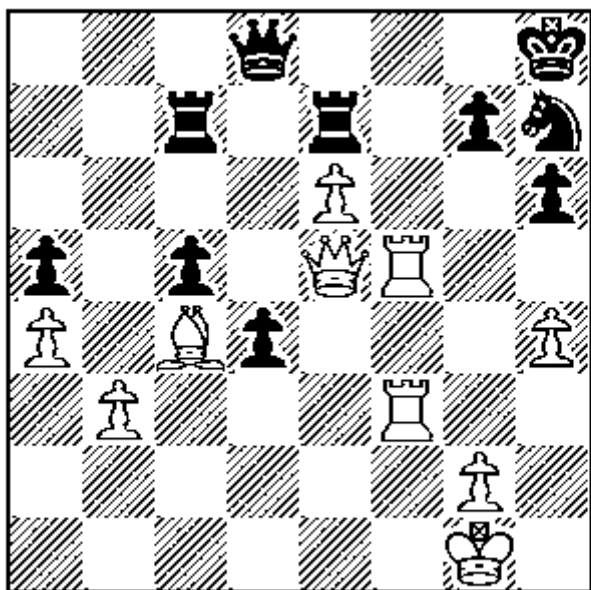
34 R1f2

“Fischer prefers uncompromising suffocation,” writes Kasparov.

Answer: Fischer could have ended the game sooner with 34 Rf7! Rxf7 (34 ... Qg8 35 Qxc7! Rxc7 36 Rxc7 is totally hopeless for Black) 35 exf7 Nf8 36 Qe8 Rd7 37 Re1 Kh7 38 Qxd8 Rxd8 39 Re8 when White wins.

34 ... Qe8 35 R2f3 Qd8

The queen marks time at a party she doesn’t want to attend. She realizes she must make conversation, yet doesn’t care about what is being said. What a surreal sight to see Spassky – one of the most ferocious players of all time with the initiative – once again reduced to moving back and forth.



Exercise (planning): Rough approximations aren’t good enough in positions like this, which demand precision and detail. White has two winning plans in the position. Find one of them.

Answer: Plan 1: Transfer the bishop and queen on to the b1-h7 diagonal, which is fatal for Black's king.

36 Bd3!

Also crushing is Plan 2: Transfer rooks to the h- and g-files. 36 Rh5! threatens Rxh6, which is even more accurate than Fischer's plan: 36 ... Kg8 37 Rg3! (renewing the threat, as well as Rxg7+!, followed by e7+) 37 ... Kf8 (now White can take h6 all the same) 38 Rxh6! and White forces a quick mate.

36 ... Qe8 37 Qe4!

Threat: Rf8+.

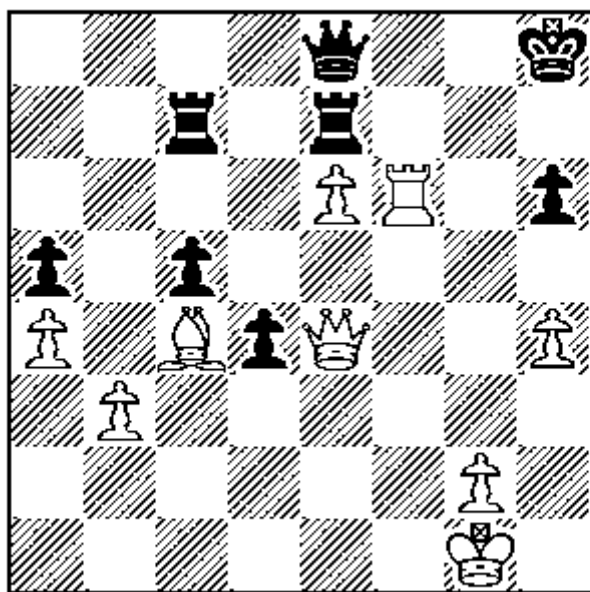
37 ... Nf6

37 ... Qg8 is met with the killing overload shot 38 Rf8! Nxf8 39 Rxf8 and game over.

38 Rxf6!

Annihilation of defensive barrier. Fischer taps his vast kingside economic potential. Now Black's king broadcasts a plea for help which goes unanswered.

38 ... gxf6 39 Rxf6 Kg8 40 Bc4 Kh8



Exercise (combination alert): White's pieces lay in wait, like paparazzi outside a celebrity rehab clinic. Find one strong move and Black resigns.

Answer: Double attack. h6 and f8 are simultaneously threatened.

41 Qf4! 1-0

White's main threat is Rf8+, and if 41 ... Rc8 (41 ... Kg8 42 Rxh6 Rc6 43 Qg5+ Rg7 44 e7+ is a similar finish) 42 Rxh6+ Kg8 43 Qg4+ Rg7 44 e7+ Qf7 45 Qxc8 mate. With this win Fischer took a one-game lead, which in reality was two games, since he forfeited that second game, due to the dispute about the cameras in the playing area.

Game 48

R.Fischer-B.Spasky

1st matchgame, Sveti Stefan 1992

Ruy Lopez

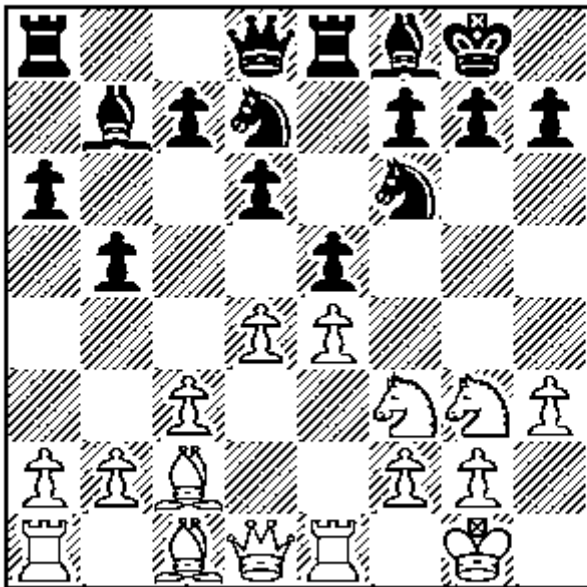
This was the first game in Fischer's return to chess. There was speculation that he had lost his strength, and in fact, later games showed he was no longer the player he was 20 years previously.

But you would never know it from looking at this game, where we see him at his strategic best.

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

If this position rings a faint chime, it is because we have been here before. Spassky remains faithful to his Breyer variation of the Ruy Lopez.

10 d4 Nbd7 11 Nbd2 Bb7 12 Bc2 Re8 13 Nf1 Bf8 14 Ng3



White's main line. Fischer apparently kept up with theory and discarded the old line 14 b4, as seen in their game from Chapter Three.

14 ... g6 15 Bg5

In order to provoke ... h6. More commonly seen are 15 a4 and 15 b3.

15 ... h6 16 Bd2

The more natural 16 Be3?! is met with the central counter 16 ... exd4! 17 Bxd4 c5. Now White must hand over his powerful dark-squared bishop to save his e-pawn: 18 Bxf6 Qxf6 and Black already stands better due to his bishop-pair and dark square control.

16 ... Bg7 17 a4 c5!?

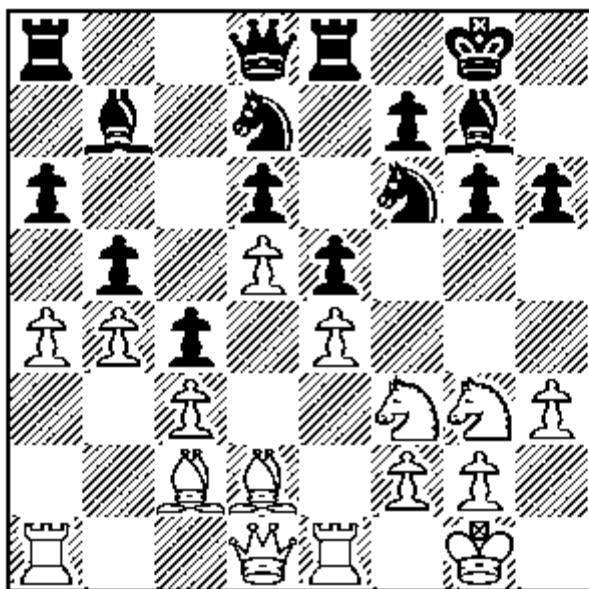
Congested living conditions tend to breed contagions.

Question: Can Black take play ... exd4, followed by ... c5, with a Benoni-style position?

Answer: This is a possible route, although Kasparov gave it a '?' mark. Spassky prefers the safer route of a closed centre, rather than the unbalancing 17 ... exd4!? 18 cxd4 c5 19 Bf4! (after 19 d5 Black's queenside pawn majority is offset by White's kingside majority and potential attacking chances; your style probably dictates which side you prefer) 19 ... cxd4 (not 19 ... Qe7? 20 Qd2 Kh7 21 dxc5 dxc5 22 Bd6 Qd8 23 e5 when Black is busted) 20 Bxd6 Nb6 21 e5 Nfd7 22 axb5 Nc4! 23 bxa6 Rxa6 24 Rxa6 Bxa6 25 Ba4 d3! and Black is okay, according to the comps.

Instead, Korchnoi tried 17 ... Nb6 on Karpov, hoping to resolve the queenside pawn tension: 18 axb5 axb5 19 b3 Nfd7 (I would consider the Benonizing 19 ... exd4 20 cxd4 c5 21 Rxa8 Qxa8 22 d5 Qa3 23 Qb1 Ra8 24 Bf4 Bf8 when Black doesn't look worse to me) 20 Bd3 b4! (Korchnoi undermines d4) 21 Rxa8 Bxa8 22 dxe5 Nxe5 23 Nxe5 dxe5 24 Qc2 bxc3 25 Bxc3 Qd6 with an even game, A.Karpov-V.Korchnoi, 1st matchgame, Leningrad 1971.

18 d5 c4 19 b4!



A new move and a good one. It gives Spassky a choice of leaving things alone, when White denies Black's knight use of c5, or, capturing b3 en passant, after which the queenside opens in White's favour.

19 ... Nh7?!

Spassky's move leaves him somewhat counterplay-starved.

Question: Why didn't Spassky capture b3 en passant?

Answer: I think he would have been better off with that plan. Ideally, Black would like to open the queenside to distract White from a kingside build-up. Spassky undoubtedly feared a weak b5-pawn after 19 ... cxb3 20 Bxb3 Nc5. Here GM Razuvaev suggested 21 c4 (after 21 axb5 axb5 22 Bc2 I think that Black is okay; he can reroute his pieces with ... Qc7, ... Reb8, ... Bc8 and ... Bd7), and Kasparov gave the line 21 ... bxa4 22 Bxa4 Rf8 23 Bc2 when White doesn't stand much better than in the game continuation. At least in this version Black gets some counterplay through his c5-knight outpost.

20 Be3 h5!?

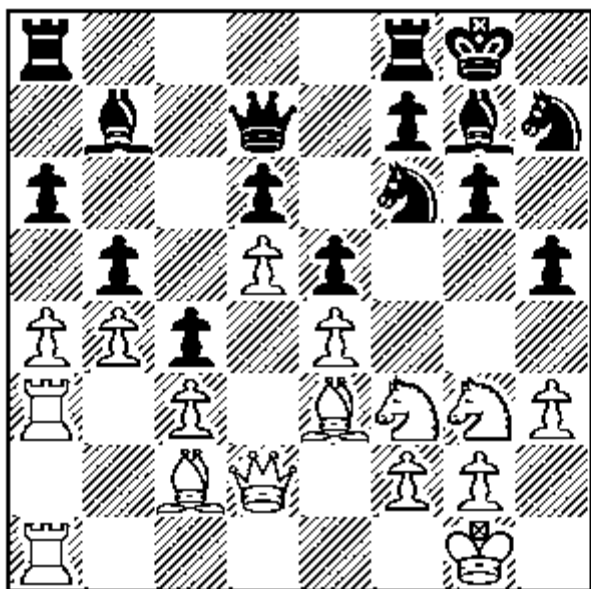
Question: I don't see the rationale behind this potentially weakening move, besides the fact that it looks active. Why did Spassky risk his king?

Answer: Qd2 was coming, which would force it anyway. If Black tries 20 ... Nhf6 21 Qd2 Kh7 22 Ra3! which is similar to the game, he is without counterplay and must await White's intent.

21 Qd2 Rf8 22 Ra3!

Fischer prepares to seize control over the a-file by doubling rooks.

22 ... Ndf6 23 Rea1 Qd7



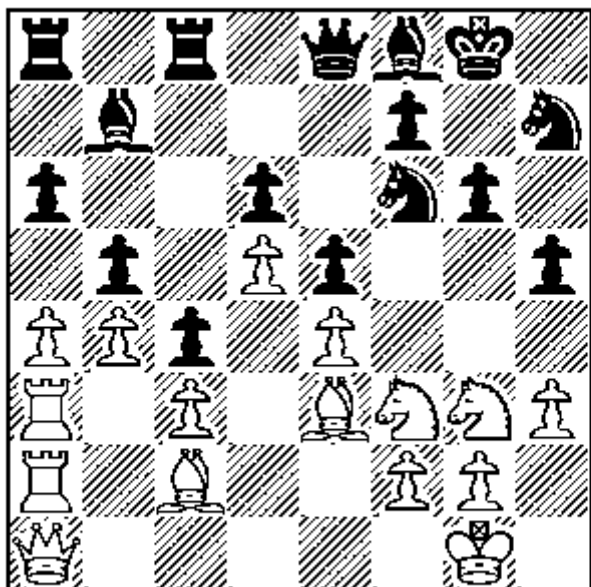
Exercise (planning): How did Fischer make progress?

Answer: Triple on the a-file, making room for White's queen on a1.

24 R1a2! Rfc8

Black has nothing to do, since his last little chance to achieve an ... f5 break.

25 Qc1! Bf8 26 Qa1 Qe8



Exercise (planning): Fischer found a deadly strategic idea which goes to the essence of the position. Come up with a winning plan for White.

Answer: 27 Nf1!!

For a while now we experienced premonitory glimpses of the disaster to come for Black.

Fischer's idea:

Step 1: Play N1d2 and Nb1.

Step 2: Trade on b5.

Step 3: Swap away all the major pieces.

Step 4: Play Na3, after which Black's b5-pawn falls.

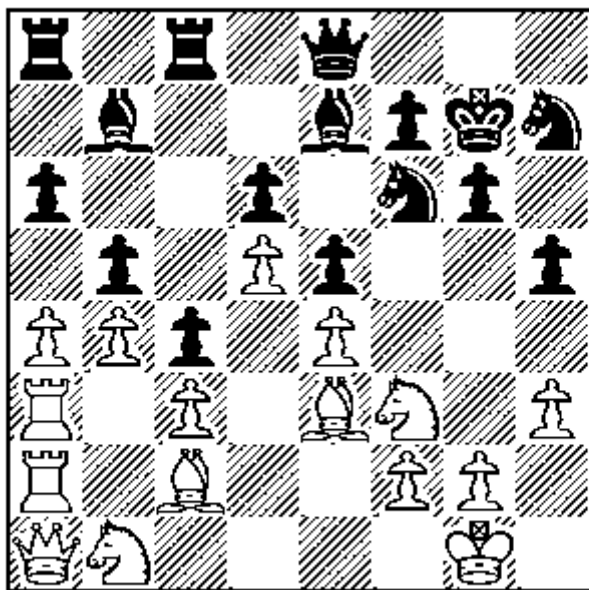
Answer no.2: 27 Nd2!! with exactly the same intention, also works.

27 ... Be7

Question: If the b5-pawn is a problem, then can we liquidate with 27 ... a5?

Answer: The idea fails tactically to 28 bxa5 Rxa5 29 axb5 Rxa3 30 Rxa3 Qxb5 31 Ba4! (forcing Black's queen to a tactically unfavourable square) 31 ... Qa5 32 Bd7 and the discovered attack wins.

28 N1d2 Kg7 29 Nb1



Exercise (critical decision): Black is slowly getting strangled on the queenside.

In the position only one plan offers him hope. What would you play here?

Answer: Piece sacrifice, which follows the principle: Meet a wing attack with a central counter.

29 ... Nxe4!

Yin finally steps aside for some much needed yang. Spassky clings to his final hope, the way a terminally ill patient clasps a religious relic, thought to have healing powers. He correctly realizes that now is not the time for loitering indecision, and finds the only plan to stay in the game, mixing it up with a piece sacrifice for two central pawns.

If Black continues to defend passively then follows 29 ... Rcb8 30 Nfd2 Bf8 31 axb5 axb5 (31 ... Qxb5?? 32 Ba4 traps the queen) 32 Rxa8 Bxa8 33 Ra7 Bb7 34 Qa5 Bc8 35 Bb6 Bd7 36 Bc7 Rc8 37 Na3 h4 38 Qa6 and d6 falls.

30 Bxe4 f5?!

With our moves, we endeavour to lie to our opponents in every game. But where is the benefit in lying to ourselves? It looks logical to begin a King's Indian-style attack with this move, but Fischer later convincingly demonstrates that the move endangers Black's king far more than White's.

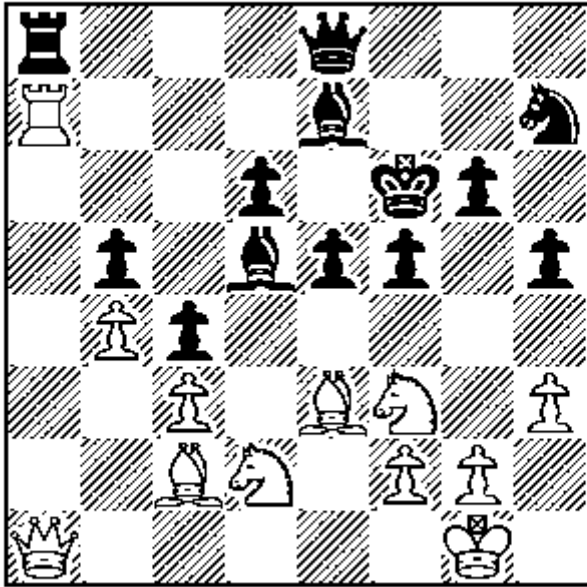
Spassky should try 30 ... Nf6! with some, but not full compensation for the piece, in the form of two healthy central pawns, when his position is simultaneously reassuring and a source of worry.

31 Bc2 Bxd5 32 axb5 axb5 33 Ra7! Kf6?!

A circular logic perpetually chases its own conclusion. Spassky's king is impervious to hints

that his reign may be cut short. He should factor in king-safety, simplify, and hope for the best with
33 ... Rxa7 34 Rxa7 Ra8.

34 Nbd2 Rxa7 35 Rxa7 Ra8



Exercise (planning): We sense a strong animus between the camps and violence clearly lurks nearby. When we follow an incorrect plan, its falseness takes time to accumulate, until it manifests on the board as a problem. Spassky had previously been playing under the assumption that he is the one attacking. How did Fischer refute this viewpoint?

Answer: Rip open the kingside with the g4 break. It takes superb strategic judgement to see that Black's king, not White's is the one in danger.

36 g4!

This move loosens the pawn front around Black's king, weakening f5.

36 ... hxg4 37 hxg4 Rxa7

37 ... fxg4 is met with 38 Nh2, with a winning attack.

38 Qxa7 f4

Question: If White's attack is as strong as you claim, then why didn't Spassky remove the queens with 38 ... Qa8?

Answer: Black is lost in the ending after 39 Qxa8 Bxa8 40 gxf5 gxf5 41 Nh4! e4 42 Nf1 Ke6 43 Ng6 Bf6 44 Nf4+ Kd7 45 Ne2, and Black's pawns are firmly blocked on d4 and f4.

39 Bxf4!

Kasparov gives this shot a '?!' mark, while I think it's a powerful move. Fischer's move returns the material to clear d4 for his queen and launch a decisive assault upon Black's king. Kasparov preferred 39 Bb6! which is also very strong. If 39 ... Qc8, going after g4, White responds with 40 Ne4+ Bxe4 41 Bxe4 Qxg4+ 42 Kf1 with domination of the light squares and a distinctly uncomfortable black king.

39 ... exf4 40 Nh4!

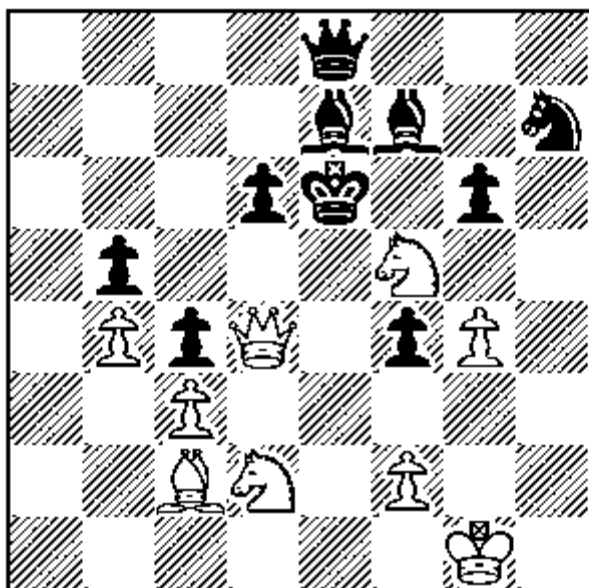
White's knight and bishop, thirsty for new kingdoms, greedily eye g6.

40 ... Bf7

Likewise, after 40 ... Nf8 41 Qd4+ Ke6 42 Nxc6! Nxc6 43 Bf5+ Kf7 44 Qxd5+ Kg7 45 Ne4

White dominates.

41 Qd4+ Ke6 42 Nf5!



Fischer finds an elegant way to include this knight into the attack. The simple 42 Ne4 is also powerful. If 42 ... d5 43 Nf3! and now Black is unable to get away with 43 ... dxe4 44 Qe5+ Kd7 45 Qxb5+ Kc7 46 Qa5+ Kc8 47 Qa8+ Kc7 48 Qa7+ Kc8 49 Ba4! Qd8 50 Ne5, with no escape for Black's king.

42 ... Bf8

Otherwise:

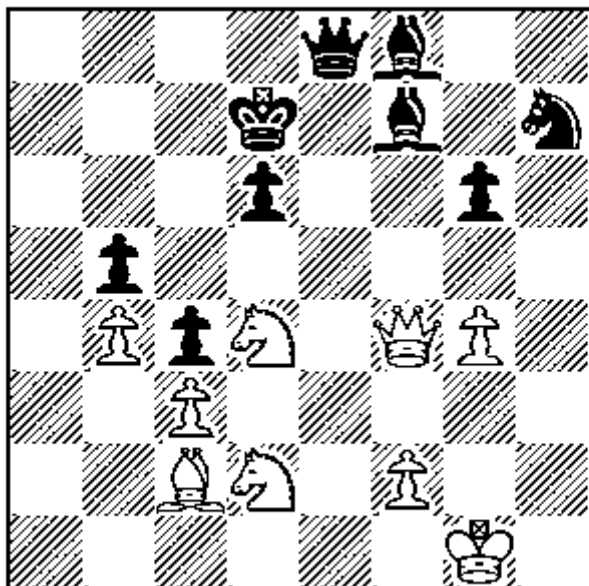
a) 42 ... gxf5?? 43 Bxf5 mate. The bishop sees the devil in everyone but himself.

b) 42 ... Qd8 43 Qxf4 Ng5 44 Nd4+ Kd7 (threat: ... Nh3+ and ... Nxf4) 45 Qe3 Qb8 46 N2f3! Nxf3+ 47 Qxf3 Ke8 48 Be4 when both Bc6+ and Bd5 are in the air and Black is completely busted.

43 Qxf4 Kd7

43 ... gxf5 44 Bxf5+ Ke7 45 Bxh7 regains the sacrificed piece with a winning position.

44 Nd4



The material count may be even, but the game isn't. Black is unable to survive White's attacking chances, as well as his weak b5-pawn.

44 ... Qe1+?!

When an assassin strikes, the death blow is quick and efficient. The bumbling queen fits neither of the qualifications, and instead, just manages to place herself out of the action. 44 ... Bg7 45 Nxb5 Qe1+ 46 Nf1 Qe7 was Black's last chance to continue to resist.

45 Kg2 Bd5+ 46 Be4

We see the same pattern, where Fischer immediately swaps off his opponent's active piece.

46 ... Bxe4+ 47 Nxe4

Black's queen is cut off from the defence of his king, who has no chance against White's two knights and queen. Her indignation reminds us of Mr. Darcy's rude rebuff of Elizabeth Bennet at the ball (I'm sorry for this reference, but my wife forced me to watch *Pride and Prejudice* at least 30 times).

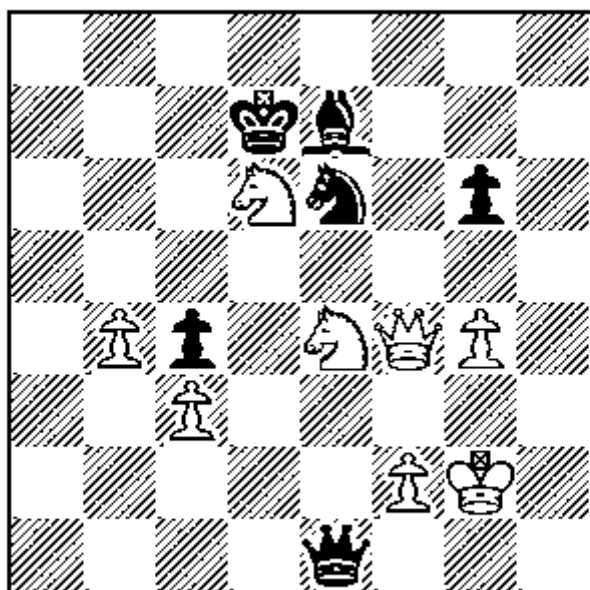
47 ... Be7 48 Nxb5 Nf8

Or 48 ... d5 49 Qc7+ Ke6 50 Qc6+ Ke5 51 Ng3 Nf8 52 Nd4 Qxc3 53 Nde2! and f4 is a mating threat which can only be relieved by handing over Black's queen.

49 Nbx d6

White attackers scavenge pawns like mice in a kitchen cupboard.

49 ... Ne6



Exercise (combination alert): When we are winning, we must will-away that congratulatory feeling of lazy self-satisfaction. One more strong move is required to force Black's resignation.

Answer: Discovered attack/mating net.

50 Qe5! 1-0

Threat: Nc5+, followed by Qxe1, and 50 ... Qd1 51 Qb5+ Kc7 52 Qb7+ Kd8 53 Qc8 is mate.

Chapter Six

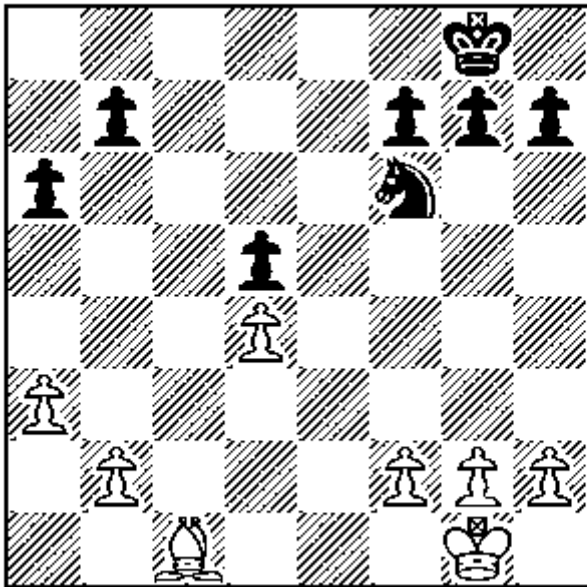
Fischer on the Endgame

Fischer is a candidate for the greatest ever endgame player, rivalling the likes of Rubinstein, Capablanca, Korchnoi and Carlsen for top honours. Fischer banged out wins if he gained even the most imperceptible of edges. He achieved this in the following ways:

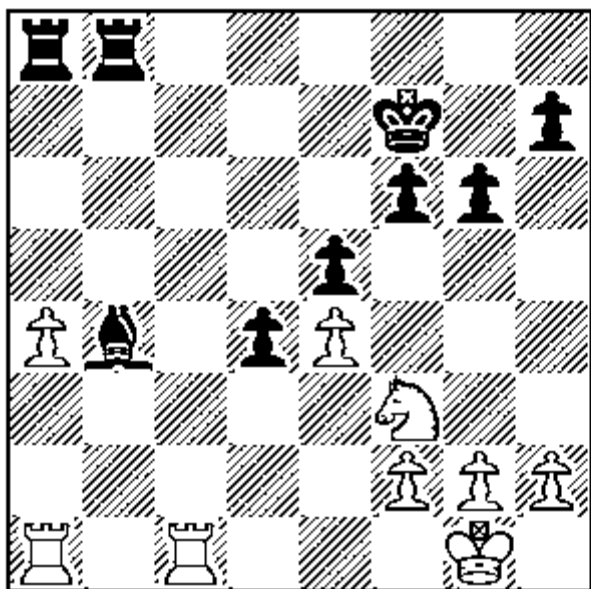
1. When an opponent continually generates threats, it can feel as if he accuses us of something terrible. Fischer broke resistance by the sheer cumulative force of almost petty, irritating threats, until his opponent's troubles piled up, like dirty dishes in a bachelor's sink.

2. Even our most insignificant seeming inaccuracies return to us as handfuls of dust, tossed into the wind. Fischer was perhaps the most alert player who ever lived. He would just keep the position in a kind of slightly shifting stasis, until his opponent invariably got tricked into an unfavourable geometry. Fischer was aware of what happens and just as aware of what doesn't happen in the position. His opponents sometimes became absorbed in their own schemes, only to grow oblivious of Fischer's even more subtle plans.

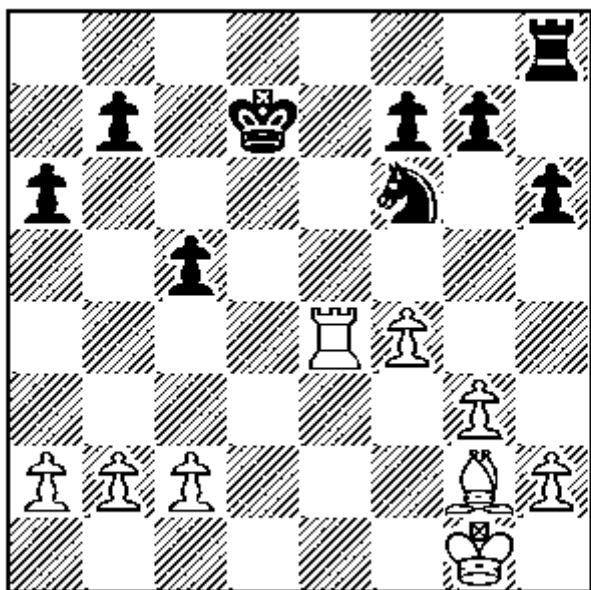
A few examples from the chapter:



This is Saigy-Fischer. Fischer was already 10-0 in this U.S. Championship final game. If he won, he made history with an 11-0 sweep. White's problem is a bad bishop, yet this single deficiency shouldn't be enough for Black to win. Making progress in such an ending is like drawing water from a deep well, where each gain comes with agonising slowness. Fischer maximized every opportunity, eventually breaking down the defensive wall.



It's one thing to win a drawn position against a lower-rated opponent, and quite another to pull it off against a world champion. In this position Fischer as Black later managed to trick Petrosian and take the full point, which is close to miraculous, since White probably should hold a draw even if he drops his a-pawn.



This is Fischer-Taimanov, from their Candidates' match. Taimanov had already lost three games in a row. Surely he would hold this drawn ending? Yet a world-class player was unable to do so against Fischer's relentless accuracy.

Game 49
R.Letelier-R.Fischer
 Mar del Plata 1960
 Trompowsky Attack

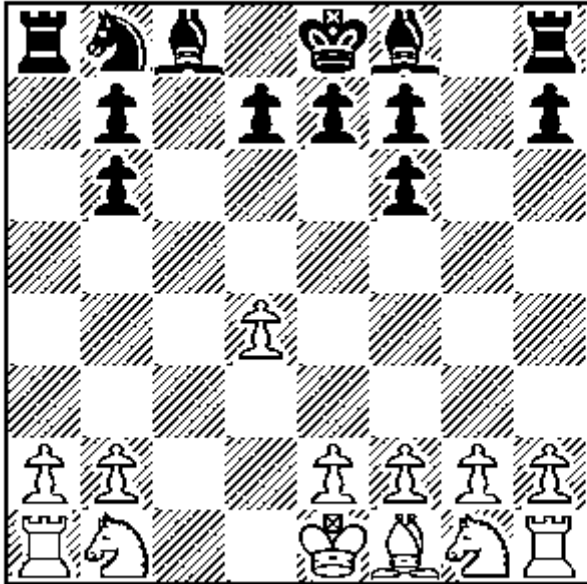
Rene Letelier achieved a kind of anti-fame through his well-known King's Indian Four Pawns attack loss to Fischer, when he walked into a devastating queen sacrifice. I didn't put that game into the book – mainly since 80% of the readers have already seen it. Instead, I've included this

unknown game, where Fischer's magic is just as sweet as in his famous queen sac game.

1 d4 Nf6 2 Bg5

Rock and roll, which was emblematic of rebellion in the 1960's, when played today, just sounds like music, without any symbolism attached to it. The Trompowsky may be a mainstream opening today, but in 1960, must have been an atonal sight for Fischer.

2 ... c5 3 c3 Qb6 4 Qb3 cxd4 5 Qxb6 axb6 6 Bxf6 gxf6 7 cxd4



Question: Who stands better?

Answer: Let's first gather the data:

1. Black owns the bishop-pair, which may not be that great an asset in this semi-rigid structure.

2. Black leads slightly in development, since it's his move.

3. Black has the disruptive idea ... Nc6 and then ... Nb4, with a double attack on c2 and a2, which wins a pawn. Now this isn't all that great a tragedy for White, since Black's doubled, isolated b-pawns make conversion a very difficult task.

4. White owns the superior pawn structure, since Black's doubled, isolated b-pawns may prove to be a future target.

5. White eyes an occupiable hole on b5.

Conclusion: White mishandled the opening stage and overall, I would say Black gained more advantages than problems, and prefer Fischer's side.

7 ... Nc6 8 Nf3?!

A superficial move, since White's knight has no future on this square, mainly since e5 is covered.

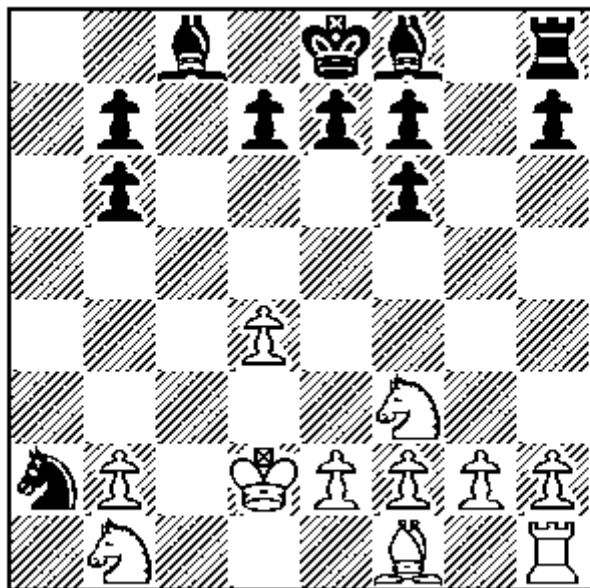
Better is 8 e3! Nb4 9 Kd2 (also very playable is to 'fall' for Black's combination with 9 Na3! Rxa3 10 bxa3 Nc2+, as the knight wins the a1-rook, but will also be eventually picked off, M.Sanchez Soler-J.Fluvia Poyatos, Tordera 1996; here White should play 11 Kd2 Nxa1 12 Bb5 e6 13 a4 Rg8 14 g3 Bb4+ 15 Kd3 Ke7 16 Ne2 d5 17 Rxa1 e5 18 Kc2 Bf5+ 19 Kb3 Ba5 20 Rc1 Kd6 when I don't think White's bishop-pair is much of an advantage in this position and chances look balanced) 9 ... Rxa2 10 Rxa2 Nxa2 11 Bc4 Nb4 12 Nc3 e6 13 Na4 (GM Eric Prié suggests 13 d5 Rg8 14 g3 Bc5 15 Nge2 Ke7 16 Ra1 d6 17 Ra8 when White has compensation for the pawn) 13 ... d5 14 Be2 Nc6 15 Nxb6 Bb4+ 16 Kc2 Ke7 17 Nf3 Ba5 18 Nxc8+ Rxc8 19 Kb3 with an

approximately even ending.

8 ... Nb4 9 Kd2

Also possible is 9 Na3!? Rxa3 10 bxa3 Nc2+ 11 Kd2 Nxa1 12 e3 e6 13 Bb5 Bxa3 14 Rxa1 Bb4+ 15 Ke2 Kd8. Black's extra pawn won't be so easy to convert, but then again it's extra!

9 ... Rxa2 10 Rxa2 Nxa2



So Fischer won a not-very-useful pawn. Still, it's extra, and I would rather take his side over White's.

11 Na3?!

The knight is passively placed here. Other options were:

a) The ambitious move 11 e4?! is too loosening. It also activates Black's dark-squared bishop and after 11 ... Bh6+ 12 Kd1 d6 13 Nc3 Nxc3+ 14 bxc3 Bd7 15 Bd3 0-0 16 Ke2 Ra8 17 Rb1 Ra2+ 18 Kf1 Ra3 19 Rxb6 Bc8 20 Ke2 Rxc3 Black's extra pawn offers winning chances.

b) 11 Nc3! is White's best move, which opens the b-file: 11 ... Nxc3 12 bxc3 d5 13 e3 Bd7 (or 13 ... Rg8 14 g3 Kd8 15 Bd3 Rg7 16 Ne1 Kc7 17 Nc2 e5 18 Ra1 h6 19 Na3 Bxa3 20 Rxa3 Rg8 21 Ra8 Rd8 22 f4! exf4 23 exf4 Bd7 24 Rxd8 Kxd8 25 f5 Kc7 26 Kc2 b5 27 Kb3 Kb6 28 Kb4 Bc6 and, weirdly enough, White, a pawn down, has all the winning chances, due to his king position and superior bishop: for example, 29 g4! Bd7 30 Bf1 Be8 31 Bg2 Bc6 32 Bf3 – zugzwang – 32 ... Kc7 33 Ka5 b6+ 34 Ka6 – zugzwang once again – 34 ... Bb7+ 35 Kxb5 Bc6+ 36 Kb4! Kd6 37 Bd1 Bb7 38 Kb5 Kc7 39 Bb3 Bc6+ 40 Kb4 Bb7 41 Ba4 Kd6 42 Be8 Ke7 43 Bb5 when there may be a hidden win here for White, but I don't see it, and was unable to make progress against Houdini) 14 Be2 Kd8 15 Ra1 Kc7 16 Ne1 e6 17 Bh5! (this tangles Black, who must take time out to defend f7) 17 ... Be8 18 Ra8 Bg7 19 Nd3 Kd6 20 Ra7 Kc7 21 Ra8 and Black is unable to convert.

11 ... d5

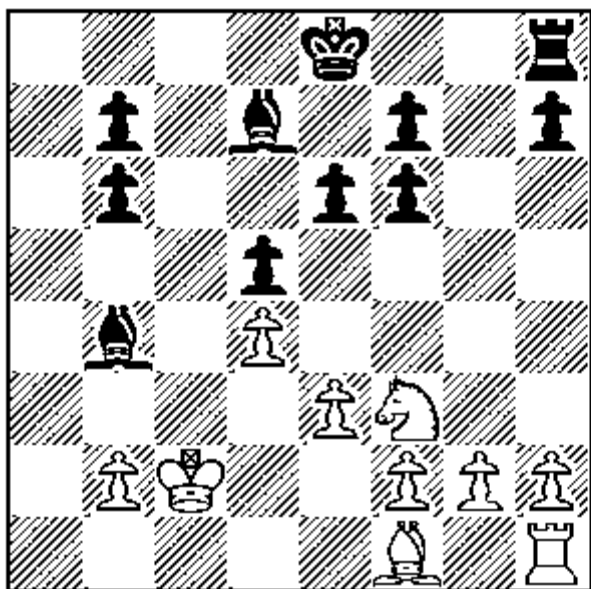
Fischer seizes his fair share of the centre and cuts off Nc4.

12 e3 e6 13 Nc2

Question: Why didn't White's knight occupy b5?

Answer: The b5-square may look pretty, yet White fails to derive any benefit from its ownership after 13 Nb5 Bb4+ 14 Kc2 Ba5 15 Kb3 Nb4 16 Be2 Ke7 17 Rc1 Nc6. Black can play for a timely ... e5 and has all the winning chances.

13 ... Nb4 14 Nxb4 Bxb4+ 15 Kc2 Bd7



The position clarifies further. Black remains up a relatively unimportant b-pawn, but also owns the bishop-pair.

16 Kb3 Bd6 17 Bd3 Ke7 18 Ra1 Rc8 19 Ra7

Of course 19 Bxh7?? is a beginner's error which hangs a piece to 19 ... f5 when there is no defence to ... Rh8. But as we all remember, Bobby himself made an equivalently boneheaded blunder when he took Spassky's h-pawn and self-trapped his bishop in the first game of the 1972 world championship match. Moral: Even a genius is still human, and therefore imperfect.

19 ... Bc6 20 g3 h6 21 Ra1

White has no useful plan except to go into a holding pattern.

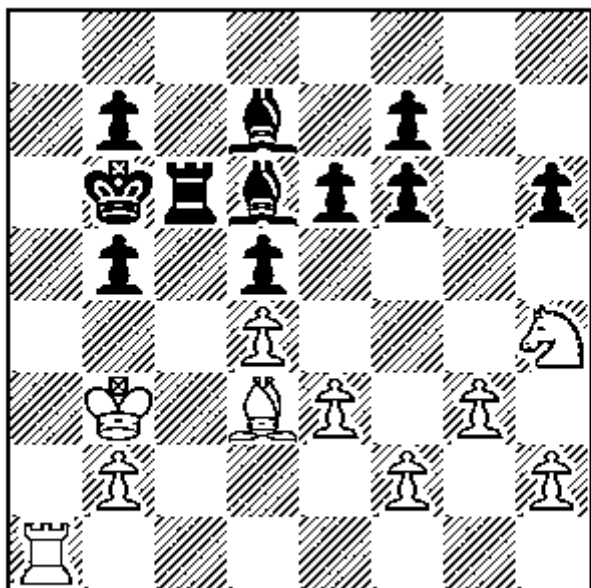
21 ... Kd7 22 Ra7

I would think about re-routing the knight to the more flexible e2-square, with 22 Ng1.

22 ... Kc7 23 Ra1 b5

Fischer expands on the queenside, while making room for his king on b6.

24 Rc1 Kb6 25 Ra1 Bd7 26 Nh4 Rc6



Ra8. If White does so, then this in turn allows Black infiltration with ... Rc1.

So the question arises: Should White play 27 Ra8, or should he just mark time?

Answer: White stands irresolute, with one foot facing West and the other facing East. Our mind tumbles from conjecture to conjecture, without knowing if one wins and the other loses. Both lines are difficult for White, so neither choice can be correctly labelled an error. However, in such situations we evaluate the lines from a perspective of degree, in which case 27 Ra8?! makes life much harder for White than simply shuffling.

27 Ra8?!

A move played with the philosophy: To back down now would be akin to a confession of weakness. The stars feel improperly aligned for this to work. White should avoid the temptation to infiltrate. When both Plans A and B are unsatisfactory, then pick the one you feel will have the higher probability of success.

GM Eric Prié suggests the following plan for White: 27 Rd1 Kc7 28 Ra1 Ra6! 29 Rc1+ Kb6 “followed by ... Ra8 and ... b4 with the idea ... Ba4+,” writes Prié.

White can also try 27 Be2. Dullness and peace is the thing which drives the higher-rated player mad with frustration. Of all the plans we formulate, survival is the most primal. White’s last move is made with the philosophy: When a monster sleeps, it’s best not to wake it when you pass by. The intent is to tie Black down to defence of f7. However, after 27 ... Kc7 (intending ... Ra6) 28 Bh5! (tying Black down to the defence of f7) 28 ... Ra6! (Black should let f7 go to activate his queenside; 28 ... Be8 29 Ra8 Kd7 30 Be2 Rb6 31 Ng2 Ke7 32 Ne1 f5 33 Nc2 Ra6 is met with 34 Rxe8+! Kxe8 35 Bxb5+ Rc6 36 Nb4 Kd7 37 Nxc6 with a drawn ending, while after 33 ... b4 34 Ne1 I couldn’t find a way to make progress for Black) 29 Rxa6 bxa6 30 Bxf7 a5 Black’s queenside pawn majority, space advantage and bishop-pair offer serious winning chances.

27 ... Rc1! 28 Rh8?!

If you laboured hard to sow the seeds and till the fields, then it’s a bad idea to go on vacation during the month of harvest. An inaccuracy, which leaches resources from where they are most needed.

White gains a precious tempo with 28 Rd8!. An army marches its troops only as fast as its slowest troops. This move slows Black down by drawing his king one file down the board. Still, it may not be enough to save the game after 28 ... Kc7 29 Rh8 b4!:

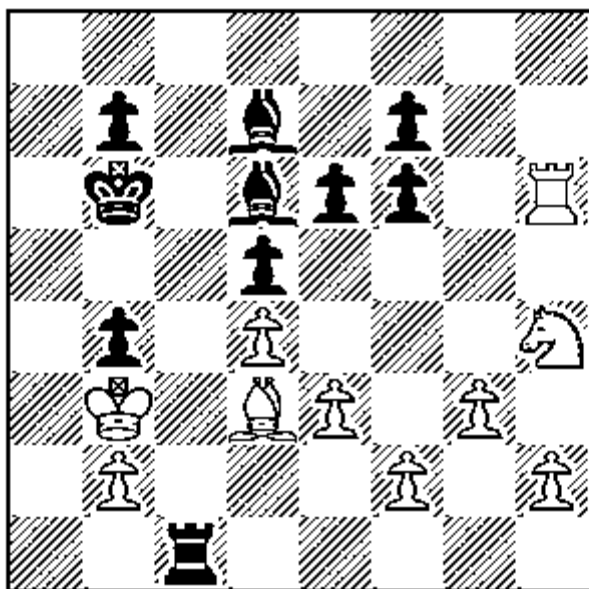
a) 30 Rxh6? Kb6! when White has to take his chances with 31 Rh8 (31 Rxf6?? Ka5 32 Ka2 b3+! 33 Kxb3 Ba4+ 34 Ka2 Kb4! and White’s king is doomed) 31 ... Ra1 32 Kc2 Ba4+ 33 Kd2 Rd1+ 34 Ke2 Rh1 35 Ng2 Bd1+ 36 Kd2 b3 37 Kc3 e5 38 Rd8 Kc7 39 Rh8 Kc6 40 Rc8+ Bc7, but here he is busted, since he is unable to defend his kingside pawns. If 41 Rh8?? Ba5 mate.

b) 30 Rh7! Be8 31 Rxh6 Ra1! 32 Kc2 f5 33 Rh7 Kb6 34 Nf3 Ba4+ 35 b3 Ra2+ 36 Kc1 Rxf2 37 bxa4 Rxf3 38 Rxf7 Rxe3 when Black’s passed b-pawn and active king offer serious winning chances.

28 ... b4! 29 Rxh6?

There is nothing more stressful than to be a poor person, living among the rich. Ah, yes, when tempted, we all speak the universal language of cash. White can’t afford this time loss, and now his counterplay trails breathlessly in the wake of Fischer’s mounting efforts to checkmate White’s king.

Prié’s suggestion 29 Nf3! puts up greater resistance, but fails to save White in the long run: 29 ... Rd1! 30 Kc2 (30 Be2?? Ra1 31 Kc2 Ba4+ 32 b3 Ra2+ wins) 30 ... Ba4+ 31 b3 Bxb3+! (deflection/overloaded defender) 32 Kxb3 Rxd3+ 33 Kc2 Ra3 34 Kb2 b3! 35 Ne1 (or 35 Rxh6?? Kb5 36 Rxf6 Kb4 37 Rxf7 Ra2+ 38 Kb1 Kc3 39 Rxb7 Rxf2 40 Ne5 Rf1 mate) 35 ... Kb5 36 Nd3 Kc4 37 Nc1 Ra6 (intending ... Ba3+) 38 Rxh6 Ba3+ 39 Kb1 b2 40 Na2 Kb3 41 Rh8 Bb4 42 Rb8 Rxa2 43 Rxb7 Ra1 mate.



Exercise (combination alert/planning): A winning idea tends to be an item of limited duration. Miss it, and it moves past us, never to return. Black to play and win.

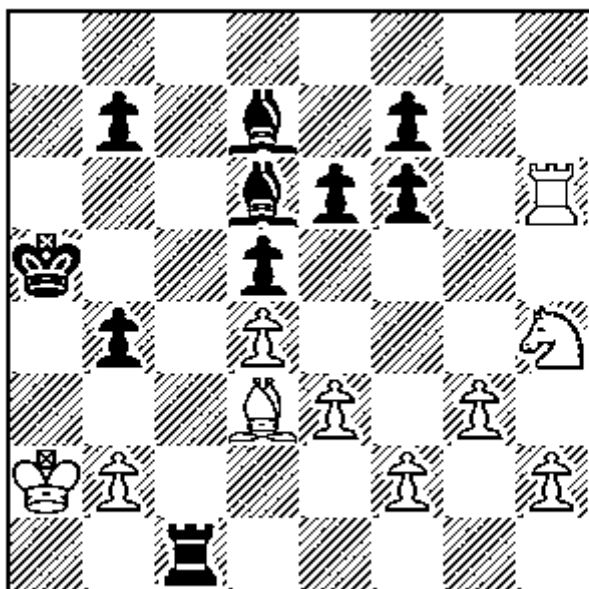
Answer: Mating net. Facts tend to be soberingly unpleasant to our fantasies. Now it becomes clear that the loss of Black's kingside pawns is irrelevant to his mating attack project on the other side of the board.

29 ... Ka5!

Black's goal, which once felt so far off, now appears tantalizingly close. Fischer follows Steinitz's advice: The king is a fighting piece (especially in the ending). Use it.

30 Ka2

Avoiding 30 Rxf6?? Ba4+ 31 Ka2 b3 mate.



Exercise (combination alert): How did Fischer weave his mating net?

Answer: Attraction.

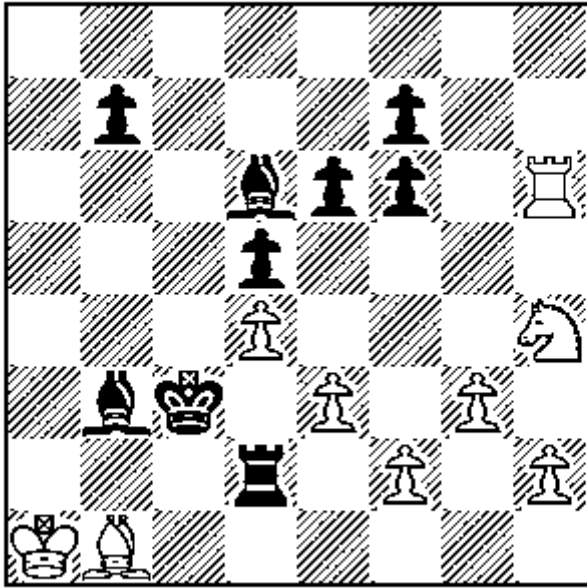
30 ... b3+!

An ancient Roman saying declares: "Money is the sinew of war."

31 Kxb3 Ba4+ 32 Ka2 Kb4!

“For too long you have pried into affairs which do not concern you,” rages White’s king, to his meddling b4 brother, who continues to come and go as he pleases. Black threatens mate on the move.

33 b3 Bxb3+ 34 Kb2 Rd1 35 Bb1 Rd2+ 36 Ka1 Kc3! 0-1



Black threatens ... Ba3 and ... Bb2 mate. The comp found a mate one move quicker with 36 ... Kb5, but that is just nitpicking, so in a fit of anti-comp pique, I refuse to show the line! After 36 ... Kc3! 37 Rh8 (or 37 Nf3 Ba3! 38 Nxd2 Bb2 mate) 37 ... Ba3 38 Rc8+ Kb4 (now ... Bb2 mate is threatened) 39 Bh7 f5! and ... Rd1+ follows.

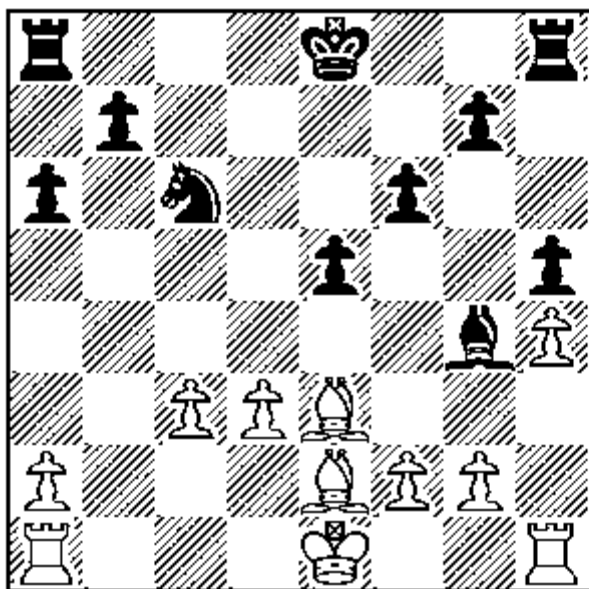
Game 50

R.Fischer-M.Tal

Curacao 1962

Sicilian Lowenthal

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 e5 5 Nb5 a6 6 Nd6+ Bxd6 7 Qxd6 Qf6 8 Qd1 Qg6 9 Nc3 Nge7 10 h4 h5 11 Bg5 d5 12 Bxe7 d4 13 Bg5 dxc3 14 bxc3 Qxe4+ 15 Be2 f6 16 Be3 Bg4 17 Qd3 Qxd3 18 cxd3



18 ... Bxe2

Principle: If your opponent owns the bishop-pair, remove one of them.

19 Kxe2 0-0-0

Question: Who stands better here?

Answer: Kasparov assesses as slightly in Black's favour, perhaps due to the fact that Black owns two pawn islands, to White's three. To my mind, this fact is somewhat negated by the fact that White's bishop may prove to be superior to Black's knight. I rate the chances close to even, although if given a choice, I would take Black.

20 Rad1?!

The wrong rook. Now White really does stand worse. White intends to operate in the centre and queenside, so it's more logical to play 20 Rhd1, a move the older, more experienced Fischer would have undoubtedly played. After 20 ... Ne7 21 Rab1 Nd5 22 Rb3 Rd7 23 g3 the game remains even.

20 ... Ne7!

Tal redirects his knight to the superior square d5, where it watches over c3, e3 and f4.

21 d4?!

An impatient move, made with the air of challenge. Fischer, unwilling to defend passively, attempts to open the game for his bishop, despite the fact that he creates new weaknesses in his camp.

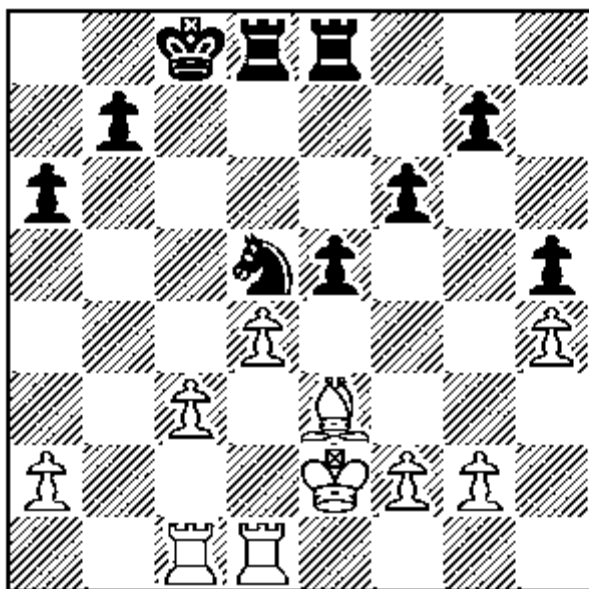
21 ... Nd5

Also tempting is to just hand White an isolani with 21 ... exd4 22 Rxd4.

22 Rc1

An acknowledgement that his 20th move was inaccurate.

22 ... Rhe8 23 Rhd1



23 ... f5?!

I don't really like this move, which hands White's bishop use of g5.

Question: What plan would you suggest instead?

Answer: After the simple 23 ... exd4! 24 cxd4+ Kd7! Black holds a clear advantage:

1. Black owns a good knight versus a bad bishop.

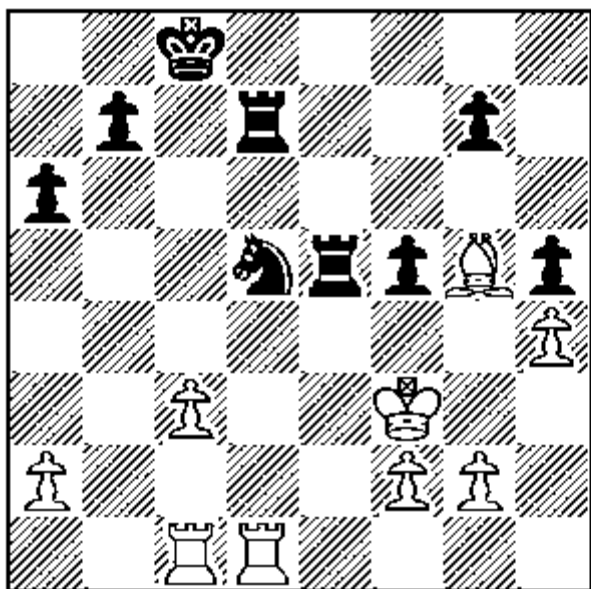
2. Black's queenside pawn majority is mobile, while White's d4-pawn is isolated and blockaded.

3. Black remains with only two pawn islands to White's three, which include two potentially weak isolanis.

24 Bg5! Rd7

Following 24 ... exd4+ 25 Kd3?! Rd6 26 cxd4+ Kd7 Black's powerful knight still offers him some winning chances. White does better with 25 Kf3! dxc3!? (25 ... Rd7 26 Rxd4 looks okay for White, who can eventually eject the knight with a timely c4) 26 Bxd8 Rxd8 27 Rd4 b6 28 Rcd1 Kb7! 29 a4 (certainly not 29 Rxd5?? Rxd5 30 Rxd5 c2 and Black promotes) 29 ... a5 (29 ... b5?? isn't possible due to 30 Rxd5 Rxd5 31 Rxd5 b4 32 Ke2 b3 33 Kd3 and Black's pawns don't promote) 30 Rc1 Kc7 31 Rc4+ Kd7 32 Rd1 Ke7 33 Re1+ Kd6 34 Rd1 with a draw, since neither side can make progress.

25 dxe5 Rxe5+ 26 Kf3



We sense that White's once burdensome strategic obligations begin to dwindle. We draw the following inferences:

1. Now Black must watch out for the White king's attempts to infiltrate on the kingside.
2. Black's d5-knight outpost has been destabilized.

26 ... Re4

I like Kasparov's suggestion 26 ... Nc7! intending ... Ne6, challenging White's powerfully posted bishop.

27 Rd3

Also possible is 27 c4 Nc7 28 g3 Ne6 29 c5 Nxc5+ 30 hxc5 Rg4 31 Rxd7 Kxd7 32 Rb1 Kc7 33 Rb6 Rxc5 34 Kf4 Rg4+ 35 Kxf5 which is even.

27 ... Rc4!?

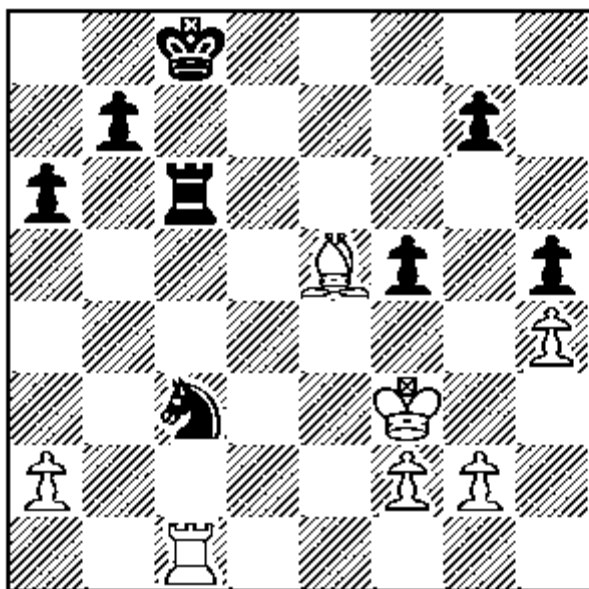
Safer is 27 ... Nb6 28 Re3 Rxe3+ 29 Bxe3 Nd5 30 Bd4 g6 31 g3 Rc7 32 Ke2 b5 33 a3 Rc4 34 Kd3 Ra4 35 Bc5 Rc4 36 Bd4 when White's rook is ready to seize the e-file and I don't believe Black can make progress.

28 Rcd1!

Fischer offers his weak c3-pawn to make progress on the kingside.

28 ... Rxc3 29 Rxc3+ Nxc3 30 Rc1 Rc7 31 Bf4 Rc6 32 Be5

A double attack on c3 and g7.



32 ... Nd5

Question: Why didn't Tal take the hanging a2-pawn, after which he gets two queenside passers?

Answer: In this line White is faster in the queening race for two reasons: Superior minor piece and superior king. Let's look: 32 ... Nxa2? 33 Rxc6+ bxc6 34 Kf4! Kd7 (or 34 ... g6 35 Kg5 Kd7 36 Kxg6 Ke6 37 Bd4 Nc1 38 Kxh5 Nb3 39 Bc3 and White's passed h-pawn is decisive) 35 Kxf5 c5 36 g4! c4! (36 ... hxg4?? 37 Bxg7 Ke7 38 h5 Kf7 39 h6 Nb4 40 Bf6 and Black is unable to halt promotion) 37 Bxg7 c3 38 gxh5 Ke7 39 h6 Kf7 40 Bd4 c2 41 h7! c1Q 42 h8Q Qc2+ 43 Kf4 Qc1+ 44 Be3 Qc7+ 45 Kg4 Qd7+ 46 Kg3 Qd6+ 47 Kg2 Qd5+ 48 f3. The checks run out and White will convert with his h-pawn.

33 Rd1!?

When we make a move to deliberately impart information to our opponent, it's better to impart a half-truth – but be certain it's the important half. This is an example of Fischer's relentless will to win, even though down a pawn, against no less a player than Tal.

White holds the draw after 33 Rxc6+ bxc6 34 Bxg7 c5 35 Ke2 and then:

a) 35 ... Nf4+ 36 Kf3 Nd5 is drawn.

b) 35 ... Kd7 36 g3 Kc6 37 f3 Kb5 38 Be5 Ne7 (Black should avoid 38 ... Ka4?? 39 g4! fxg4 40 fxg4 hxg4 41 h5 Ne7 42 h6 Ng6 43 h7 Ka3 44 Ke3 Kxa2 45 Ke4 c4 46 Kf5 when White wins the queening race) 39 Bf6 Ng6 40 Kd3 Kc6 (40 ... Kb4? 41 Ke3 and if 41 ... c4 42 g4! fxg4 43 fxg4 Nxh4 44 gxh5 Nf5+ 45 Kf4 Nh6 46 Bb2! c3 47 Bc1 c2 48 Ke5 Ng8 49 Ke6 Kc3 50 Kf7 wins) 41 Kc4 f4 42 gxf4 Nxf4 43 Bg5 Nd5 44 f4 Nb6+ with a likely draw.

33 ... Nf6!?

Now Tal risks losing. This move allows White's king to raid Black's kingside pawn via the dark squares. Black has a draw with the shocking temporary piece sacrifice 33 ... Kd7! (Black's king is disinclined to be accommodating) 34 Rxd5+ (Black stands no worse after 34 Bxg7 Rc5 35 Rd2 b5) 34 ... Ke6 35 Ra5 b6 36 Rxa6 Kxe5 with a drawn ending.

34 Kf4

Now the king rudely inserts himself into the kingside conversation, and to the end of the game, never shuts up.

34 ... g6?!

Kasparov called this an "automatic" time-trouble move, the reflex defence of the pawn. He prefers 34 ... Rc2! 35 Bd4 Rxa2 36 Kxf5 b5. Now Houdini works the position out to a draw after 37 Kg6 b4 38 Kxg7 Ng4 39 f3 Rxc2 40 fxg4 Rxc4+ 41 Kf7 Rxh4 42 Ke6 Rg4 43 Kd5 h4 44 Rf1

h3 45 Rf8+ Kc7 46 Rh8. The h-pawn falls and it's a draw.

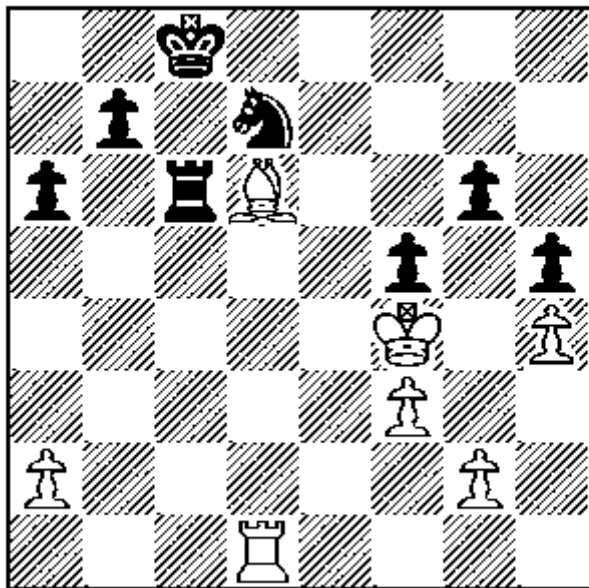
35 f3!

Limiting the knight's scope.

35 ... Nd7

Still playing for the win. White is unable to make progress after 35 ... Nh7! which keeps White's king out of the kingside. Play may continue 36 Rd6 Rc4+! (White has all the winning chances after 36 ... Rxd6?! 37 Bxd6 Kd7 38 Ke5) 37 Ke3 Rc6! 38 Rxc6+ bxc6 39 Bg7 (paralyzing Black's knight, but only temporarily) 39 ... Kd7 40 Kd4 Kd6 41 Be5+ Ke6 42 Bf4 Nf6 43 Kc5 Nd5 44 Bg5 Kd7 45 a3 Kc7 46 a4 Kd7 47 a5 Kc7 when White's king position and superior minor piece cancel Black's extra pawn.

36 Bd6!



With his last move, Fischer prevents both ... Ne5 and ... Nf8, renewing his grievance toward the g6-pawn. He intends Kg5 and Kxg6. Black has a choice of two plans:

Plan A: Defend passively with 36 ... b5 37 Kg5 Nb6, when White is unable to take the g6-pawn, due to ... Nc4.

Plan B: Forget about defence of the kingside pawns and go for an aggressive counterattack with 36 ... Rc2, with a double attack on g2 and a2.

Exercise (critical decision): With one plan, Black sits on the better end of a probable draw, while he loses in the other one. Which one would you play?

36 ... Rc2?

A rash impulse is easily capable of overtaking caution, mainly since it receives its energy in a moment's burst. To hold back on such an 'active' move is very much like telling a six-year-old: "You won't be getting any gifts on your birthday or Christmas. Instead, your mother and I will put money into a mutual fund to pay for your college education." Have you ever longed for something, gotten it, and then realized that was the precise point where all your troubles began? Tal's natural optimism leads him astray, by jumping to a conclusion which is unable to bear its own weight. His move is based on the philosophy: If you wait for certainty to initiate action in the fog of war, you risk dying while you wait.

Answer: Tal should rein in his ambition with Plan A: 36 ... b5! 37 Kg5 Nb6 38 Bf4 (Black is the only one with winning chances after 38 Kxg6?! Nc4 39 Kxh5 Nxd6 40 g4 fxg4 41 fxg4 Kc7; White is in grave trouble and must avoid the line 42 g5? Nf5 43 g6 Nxh4! 44 Kxh4 Rxg6 when he is unable to save the game with his king cut off) 38 ... Nc4 39 Rd5 b4 40 Kh6 a5 41 Rb5 Kd7 42 g3

Ra6 43 Rc5 Rc6 44 Rd5+ Ke6 45 Rb5 Kf7 46 Kh7 and Black is unable to make progress.

37 g3!

An invading army is a useless entity if there is nobody there to fight. The a-pawn doesn't matter. It's crucial for White to hang on to his kingside pawns.

37 ... Re2!

Tal tries to reverse his error by transferring his rook to e6. After 37 ... Rxa2? 38 Kg5 b5 39 Kxg6 a5 40 Kxh5 b4 41 Kg6 b3 42 h5 a4 43 h6 Rh2 44 g4! (gaining a tempo by attacking Black's rook) 44 ... Rh3 45 g5 b2 46 h7 Kb7 47 Kg7 White wins.

38 Kg5 Re6 39 Bf4 Nf8

Alternatively, 39 ... b5 40 Rd6 Nc5 41 Kh6 Rxd6 42 Bxd6 Nd3 43 Kxg6 Kd7 44 Bb8 b4 45 g4! f4 46 fxg4 a5 47 gxh5 a4 48 h6 b3 49 h7 b2 50 h8Q b1Q 51 Qg7+ Kc6 52 Qc7+ Kd5 53 Qd7+ Kc4 54 Qxa4+ Nb4+ 55 Kh6 Qc1+ 56 Kh5 White should convert.

40 Rd6!

Soon, every protector of g6 will be driven away.

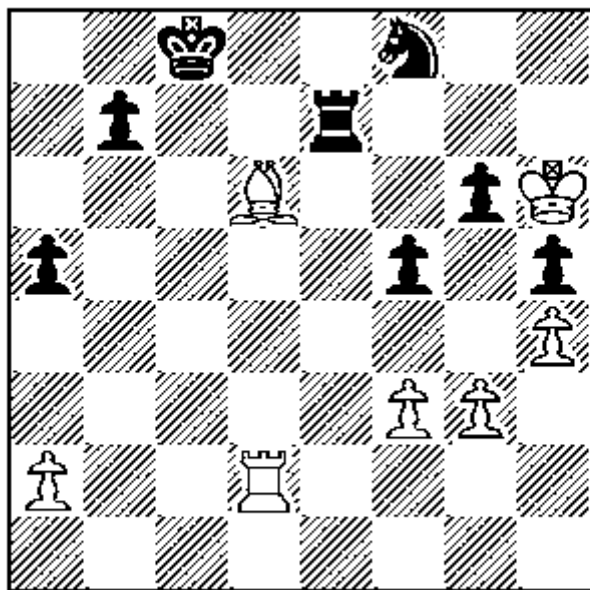
40 ... a5 41 Kh6!

Intending Kg7.

41 ... Re2 42 Rd2!

Fischer avoids the hasty 42 Kg7? Ne6+ 43 Kxg6 Nxf4+ 44 gxf4 Rxa2 and if anyone is better, it is Black.

42 ... Re7 43 Bd6!



The sealed move. Apparently, the worst case scenario of Tal's apprehensions turned out to be well founded. White's bishop dominates its f8 counterpart. Fischer relentlessly chases all the defenders of g6 and converts efficiently after the adjournment analysis.

43 ... Rh7+ 44 Kg5 Rf7

Black's rook and knight are candidates for a long stretch of penal servitude, unless they can establish their innocence. They form a symbiotic relationship, where they desperately attempt to keep the g6 base pawn alive.

45 Rb2!

Zugzwang! Fischer halts ... b5. Even more efficient is 45 f4! b5 46 Bxf8 Rxf8 47 Rd5 b4 48 Rxa5 Kc7 49 Ra4 Rb8 50 Kxg6 which wins.

45 ... f4

The more desperate we become, the sooner our barriers of reserve fall away. To an already poor man, there is no such thing as a trivial loss of income. Tal sacrifices a pawn to clear f5 for his rook.

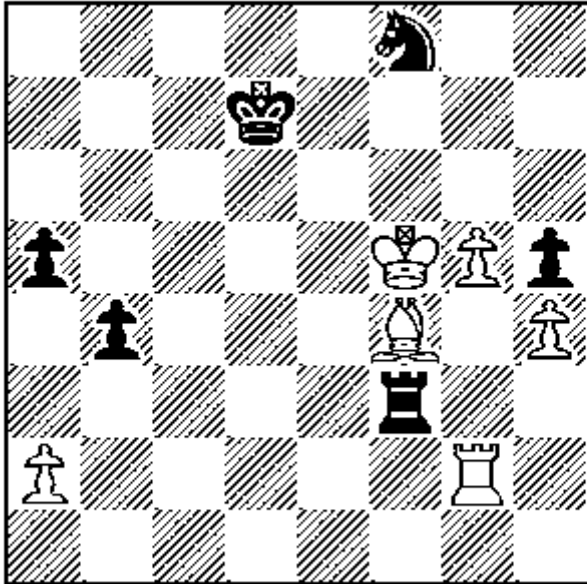
46 Bxf4 Rf5+ 47 Kh6 b5 48 Bd6 b4 49 g4! Rxf3 50 g5! Ne6

50 ... Kd7 51 Bxf8 Rxf8 52 Kxg6 is also completely hopeless for Black.

51 Kxg6 Rd3 52 Be5 Re3 53 Kf5 Nf8 54 Rg2

Nothing can halt White's passed g-pawn now.

54 ... Rf3+ 55 Bf4 Kd7



56 g6!

Fischer ignores Black's 'threat'.

56 ... Ne6 57 g7! Rxf4+ 58 Ke5 Rf8

The only way to halt White's attempted promotion.

59 gxf8Q

Fischer rejects a golden opportunity for underpromotion with 59 gxf8N+! which, of course, leads to exactly the position he got in the game after 59 ... Nxf8.

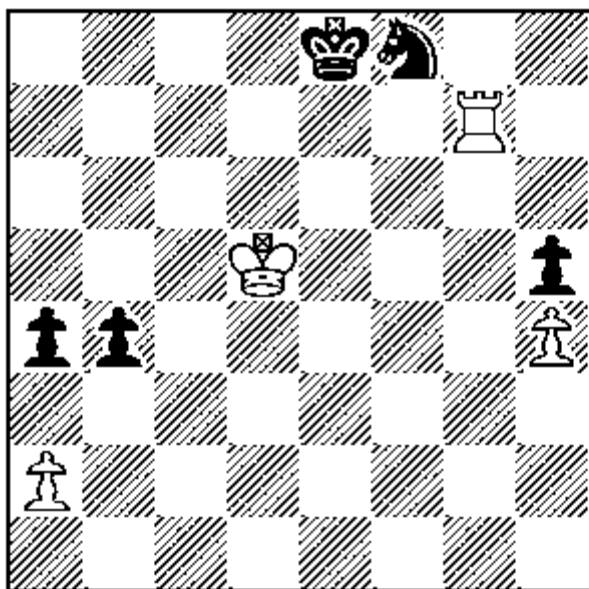
59 ... Nxf8 60 Kd5

Black's remaining pawns are doomed.

60 ... a4

If 60 ... Ne6 61 Rd2! Ng7 62 Ke5+ Ke7 63 Rd6 Ne8 64 Ra6 and the game is over.

61 Rg7+ Ke8



Exercise (planning): What is White's most efficient winning plan?

Answer: Zugzwang.

62 Kd6! b3 63 a3 1-0

The futility of continuing is evident: 63 ... Kd8 64 Ra7 Ke8 65 Rxa4 Ng6 66 Rb4 b2 67 Rb8+ Kf7 68 Rxb2 Nxh4 69 a4 and the a-pawn promotes.

Game 51

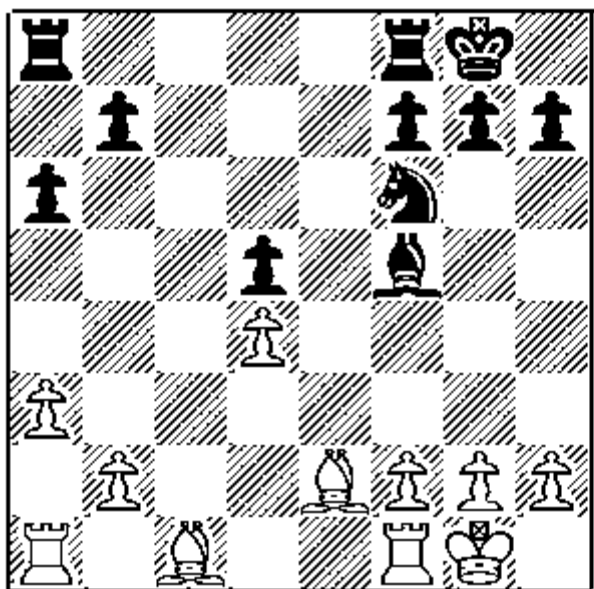
A.Saidy-R.Fischer

USA Championship, New York 1964

English Opening

This was the final game of the U.S. Championship. Fischer's score so far? An astounding 10-0. Only one question remained on everyone's mind: could he pull off a clean sweep by winning his final game?

1 c4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 e6 6 Ndb5 Bb4 7 a3 Bxc3+ 8 Nxc3 d5 9 e3 0-0 10 cxd5 exd5 11 Be2 Bf5 12 Nb5 Qb6 13 0-0 a6 14 Nd4 Nxd4 15 Qxd4 Qxd4 16 exd4



16 ... Rac8

One glance tells us that Black's development lead means more than White's unimpressive bishop-pair.

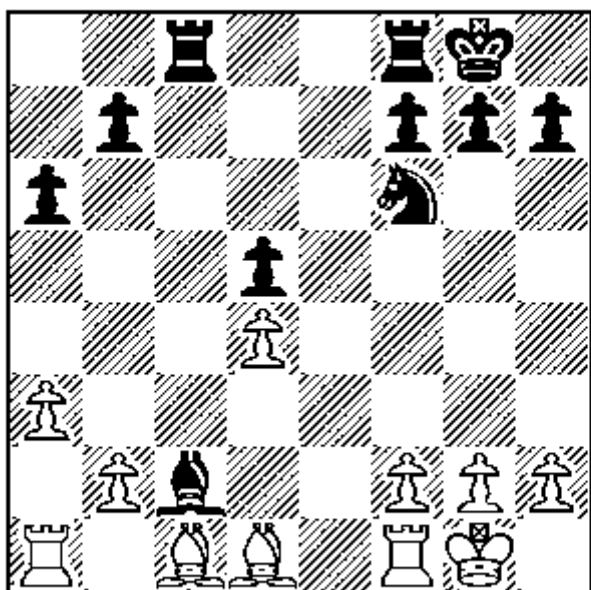
17 Bd1!

Tony correctly prevents rook infiltration to c2, at the price of an awkward posting.

Question: Can he allow the rook in and still survive?

Answer: Possibly so, but such a decision to allow infiltration is psychologically difficult. Following 17 Re1 Rfe8 18 Be3 Rc2 19 b4 Bd7 (keeping open ... Bb5 possibilities) 20 Bd1 Rc3 White's position continues to hold, yet remains both awkward and uncomfortable.

17 ... Bc2



18 Be3!?

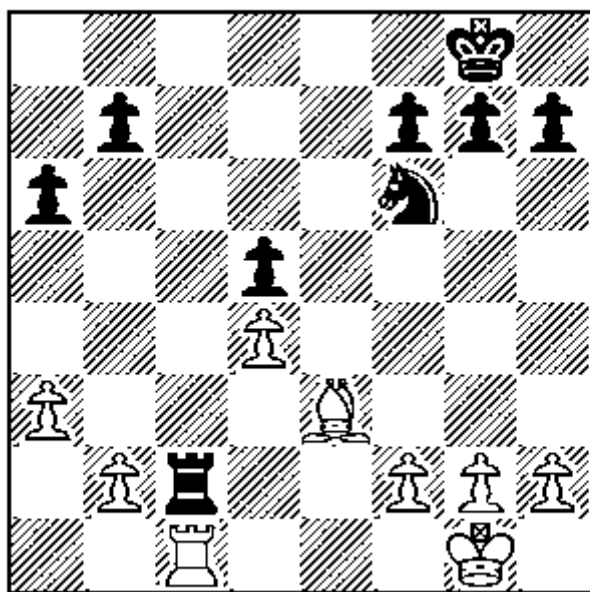
It slows an army if the number of wounded rise.

Question: What is your objection to this move?

Answer: Multiple readings of this position are possible, with both sides being correct in their assessments. Technically, White's move isn't a mistake, because I feel like he should hold the draw even here. My fear is that by swapping bishops, White greatly increases his practical chances to lose. White's move also violates the principle: When you have the bishop-pair against bishop and knight, hang on to it as long as possible. So in essence, I feel like White placed his faith in a statistically improbable option, where only a comp knows how to hold a draw.

A simpler route to the draw lies in 18 Be2!. I don't believe Black can make progress: for example, 18 ... Bg6 (or 18 ... Bb3 19 Bf3! Rc4 20 Be3 Rc2 21 Rfb1 Rc6 22 Rc1 Rfc8 23 Rxc6 Rxc6 24 Rc1 and White should hold the draw with ease) 19 Bd1 Rfe8 (threat: ... Bd3) 20 Be3 Bc2 21 Be2 (White's annoying bishop continually rebuffs all attempts at a swap) 21 ... Re6 22 Rfc1 Rb6 23 b4 Ne4 24 Bd1 Rbc6 25 Bg4 Rd8 26 Bf5! (the coming opposite-coloured bishops ensure the draw) 26 ... g6 27 Bxe4 dxe4 28 Ra2 Ba4 29 Rc5 and White will draw.

18 ... Bxd1 19 Rfxd1 Rc2 20 Rd2 Rfc8 21 Rxc2 Rxc2 22 Rc1!



Tony utilizes Black's weak back rank to remove Fischer's most active piece. Now it becomes a battle of bad bishop versus good knight. Tartakower once joked about the worst bishop being superior to the best knight. But not here, where the bishop really is a clunker. Yet if I had to put money on the outcome, I would still place my bet on a drawn result.

22 ... Rxc1+ 23 Bxc1

White's d-pawn is stuck on the same colour as his unimpressive bishop. There is no doubt Black holds the advantage, yet I suspect with perfect play on both sides, it's too little to extract the full point. In the early 1980's, IM Jeremy Silman and I once reached an almost identical version of this ending (I was eager for a win since Jeremy had already smacked me down in a previous encounter). However, Jeremy's endgame technique proved superior, and to my frustration, he held the draw.

Question: I understand that White's bishop is technically bad.

Now what concrete steps can Black take to improve his position?

Answer: Fischer comes up with Black's optimal plan:

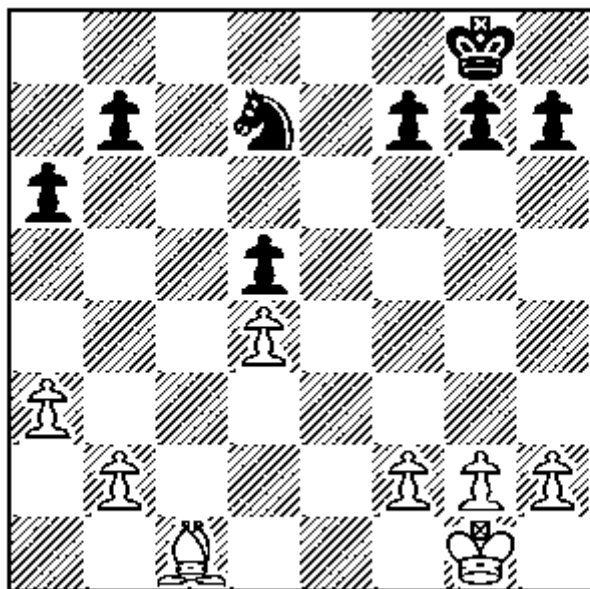
1. Transfer the knight to e6, where it keeps either White's bishop or king tied down to defence of d4.
2. Play ... h5, intending ... Kh7, ... Kg6 and ... Kf5, for optimal king placement.
3. Black then must probe and try to create a puncture on the kingside where he attempts king

entry.

Question: While Black is doing this, can't White's king enter Black's position via a5?

Answer: Black simply answers with ... b6, which seals the white king's entry. So White has nothing better than passive defence.
Step 1: Re-route the knight to e6.

23 ... Nd7!



Fischer re-routes his knight to e6, where it pressures d4.

24 Kf1

When the data is scant, this leaves large gaps for conjecture. The natural move, yet not the best, since it allows Fischer his plan. If Tony had hindsight of Fischer's intention, he would have played Kasparov's suggestion 24 g4!. A move made with the thought: Hesitancy will be perceived as fear. After this move I don't see a plan for Black to make progress.

24 ... Nf8 25 Ke2 Ne6 26 Kd3

Step 2: Play ... h5, then transfer the king to f5.

26 ... h5!

Weak light squares is White's homogeneous grievance in this position.

27 Be3 Kh7!

The king heads for its optimal square on f5.

28 f3

Principle: Place your pawns on the opposite colour of your remaining bishop.

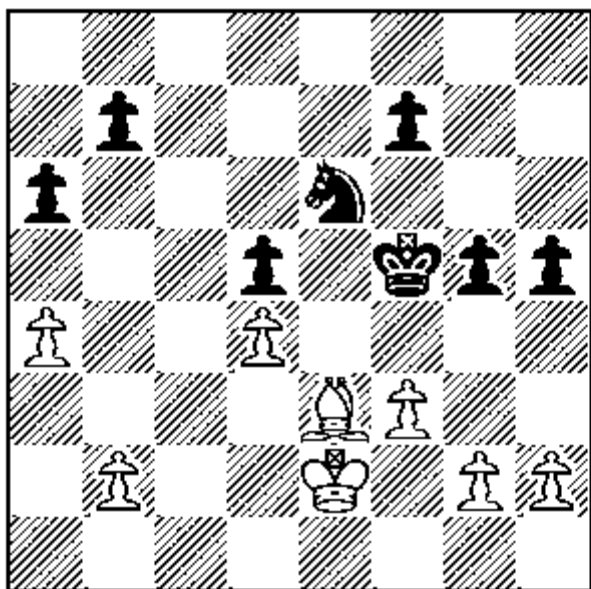
28 ... Kg6 29 a4

I think it's too late for 29 g4?! f5! 30 h3 (30 gxf5+ Kxf5 31 Kd2 g5 also looks very tough for White to hold) 30 ... f4! (Kasparov gave 30 ... Ng5?! when White can perhaps draw with 31 f4! and then 31 ... Nxe3 32 g5 h4 33 Ke2 Kh5 34 Kf3 g6 35 Bd2 Ng1+ 36 Kf2 Nh3+ 37 Kf3 with a draw or 31 ... Ne4 32 g5! when I don't think Black can win with the kingside sealed) 31 Bd2 Ng5! 32 Bxf4 Nxf3 33 gxh5+ Kxh5 34 Be3 Ng5! 35 Ke2 (35 Bxg5?? loses the king and pawn ending without a fight after 35 ... Kxg5 36 Ke3 Kh4) 35 ... Kh4 36 Bxg5+ Kxg5 37 Kf3 Kh4 38 Kg2 g5 39 b3 g4 40 hxg4 Kxg4 41 Kf2 Kf4 42 Ke2 Ke4. The d-pawn falls and White can resign.

29 ... Kf5 30 Ke2

Step 3: Attempt to create a puncture to enable king entry.

30 ... g5!



Fischer implemented all three steps of his plan, yet the win still seems far away, if not impossible.

31 Kf2 Nd8 32 Bd2 Kg6 33 Ke3 Ne6 34 Kd3 Kf5 35 Be3 f6 36 Ke2 Kg6 37 Kd3 f5

Fischer is unable to make progress, so he tries expanding on the kingside.

38 Ke2

The most terrifying enemy is the one you can sense, yet can't see. Tony logically goes for a if-it-ain't-broke-don't-fix-it, waiting strategy. Perhaps the time for half measures should be over. White can gamble with 38 g3! f4 39 gxf4 g4. Karpov beat Kasparov in a QGD Tarrasch ending in their first match with a similar infiltration idea. In this position, however, I think White holds the game after 40 fxf4 hxf4 41 Bf2 Kf5 42 Bg3 Nxf4+ 43 Ke3 Ne6 44 Kd3 Ng5 45 b3 Ne4 46 Bc7 Kg5 47 Bg3. I don't see an avenue of progress for Black.

38 ... f4 39 Bf2 Ng7

Transferring the knight to f5.

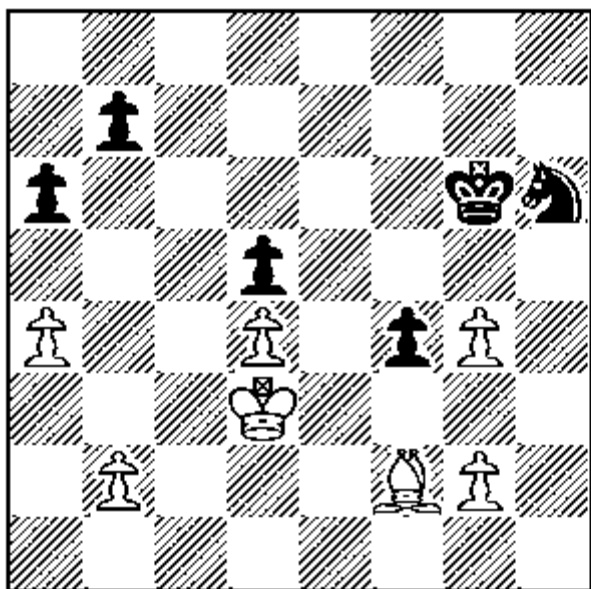
40 h3

40 g4! appears to hold the game if White plays comp-perfect: 40 ... fxf3 41 Bxf3! Nf5 42 Be5 Ne7 43 Kd3 Nc6 44 Bc7 Kf5 45 Ke3 g4 46 Bb6 h4 (now ... g3 is in the air) 47 Kf2 Nb4 (threat: ... Nd3+ and ... Nxb2) 48 b3 Nd3+ 49 Ke3 g3! 50 hxg3 hxg3 51 Bc7 g2 52 Bh2 Nb4 53 Kf2 Nc6 54 Kxg2 (54 Be5?? Nxe5 55 dxe5 Kxe5 56 Kxg2 Kd4 57 f4 Ke4 58 Kg3 d4 wins) 54 ... Nxd4 55 b4 b5 (fixing b4 as a target) 56 axb5 axb5 57 Kf2 Ke6 58 Ke3! Nc2+ 59 Kd3 Nxb4+ 60 Kd4 Nc2+ 61 Kc3! (61 Kc5?? loses to 61 ... b4 62 Bf4 Ne1! 63 Bd2 b3! 64 Bc3 b2!) 61 ... Na3 62 Kb4 Nc2+ 63 Kxb5 Ne1 64 Bg1 Nxf3 65 Bf2 with a draw.

40 ... Nf5 41 Kd3 g4!

The kingside breakthrough arrives, yet it shouldn't be enough win the game.

42 hxg4 hxg4 43 fxf4 Nh6



Exercise (critical decision): It feels as if the defence's lifeblood continues to leak away into the soil. This isn't the actuality. Fischer achieved everything he wanted in the position, yet he can't win if White finds the correct defensive idea. What should White play?

44 Be1?

Answer: Transfer of the king to f3 draws after 44 Ke2! Nxd4 45 Bg1!!!. "I will live forever and my glorious exploits will be emblazoned across the heavens," declares the bishop, who obviously holds himself in high esteem. The bishop looks underemployed on g1, yet this paradoxical self-cramping move holds the draw by erecting an impregnable fortress: 45 ... Kf5 46 Kf3 Nf6 47 Bh2 Nh5 48 a5! Kg5 49 g3! f3 50 Bxf3 (every White pawn on the board sits on the wrong colour, yet Black is unable to win) 50 ... Nf6 (50 ... Nxd4 51 Kxd4 Kf5 52 Kf3 is drawn) 51 Bf4+ Kf5 52 Be5 Ne4 53 Ke3 Kg4 (such bad bishop endings are usually lost, but not here) 54 Ke2 Ng5 55 Ke3 Nf7 56 Bf4 Nd8 57 Bd6 Nc6 58 Bc7 and now if 58 ... Kh3, intending to infiltrate via g2 and f1, 59 Kf4! (White vigorously counterattacks Black's pawns) 59 ... Kg2 60 Kf5 Kf3 61 Bb6 Ke3 62 Ke6 Ke4 (not 62 ... Nxd4+?? 63 Kxd5 and the pinned knight is lost) 63 Kd7! (now b7 and a6 are vulnerable) 63 ... Nxd4 64 Kc7 Nb3 65 Kxb7 d4 66 Bxd4 Kxd4 67 Kxa6 Kc5 is obviously drawn.

44 ... Nxd4 45 Bd2

After 45 Ke2 Kf5 46 Kf3 Nh2+! we see the difference between the two lines. This move wasn't possible in the above variation, since White's bishop stood guard on g1. Here after 47 Ke2 Ke4 48 Bf2 Ng4 49 Bg1 Nh6! there is no defence to the coming ... Nf5 and ... Nxd4+.

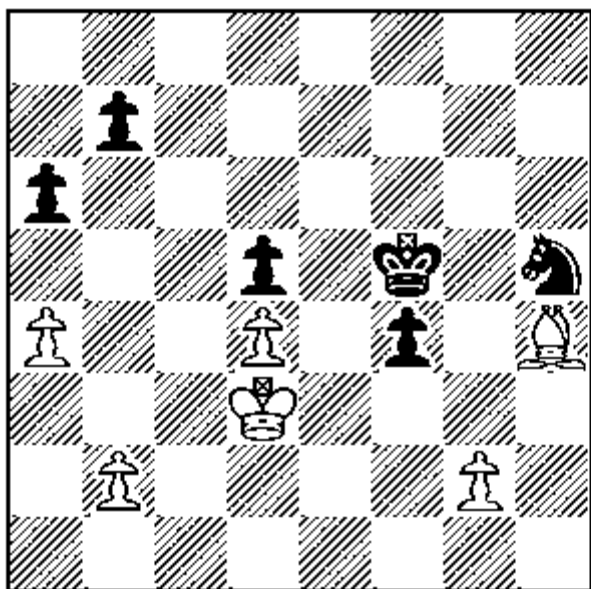
45 ... Kf5 46 Be1 Nf6

The position is incredibly hair-trigger between a draw and a win. Houdini couldn't make progress in the line 46 ... Nh6 47 a5 Kg4 48 Ke2 Nf5 49 Bf2 Nd6 50 b3 Nf5 (White is in zugzwang, and every pawn move worsens his position) 51 b4 Nd6 52 Be1 Nb5 53 Kd3. I thought this position had to be a win for Black after 53 ... f3, yet White holds the game after 54 gxf3+ Kxf3 55 Bh4 Nc7 56 Be7 Ne6 57 Bh4 Nf4+ (the defenders are driven like cattle; it's amazing to me that White still saves the game here) 58 Kc3 Ke4 59 b5! (this move saves the game by allowing White's king entry into the queenside) 59 ... Ne2+ 60 Kb4 Nxd4 (60 ... Kxd4 61 Bf6+ Ke4 62 bxa6 bxa6 63 Kc5 is also drawn) 61 bxa6 bxa6 62 Kc5. The burden of destitution is shaken off and White holds the draw.

47 Bh4

White is unable to liquidate with 47 g3?? f3! 48 Ke3 Kg4 49 b3 Ne4 and game over.

47 ... Nh5



Tony has been worked over, yet refuses to crack. The way the good cop/bad cop interrogation technique works:

1. Bad cop works over the suspect, either physically, mentally, or a combination of both.
2. Sympathetic good cop enters, with a gift of coffee and jelly doughnut (sometimes it can also be a chocolate doughnut) in hand, begging the suspect to reveal information, or sign a confession to assuage bad cop's brutality.

Exercise (critical decision): White's defences grow inconveniently weak, yet may still be enough to save the game. He has a choice of playing the bishop to f2 or e1. One square loses, while the other may hold the draw. Which one would you play?

48 Be1?

In such positions the shift of a single square can mean the difference between a catastrophe or a delightfully unexpected windfall. After White's last move, the indolent bishop is no match for Black's hard-working knight.

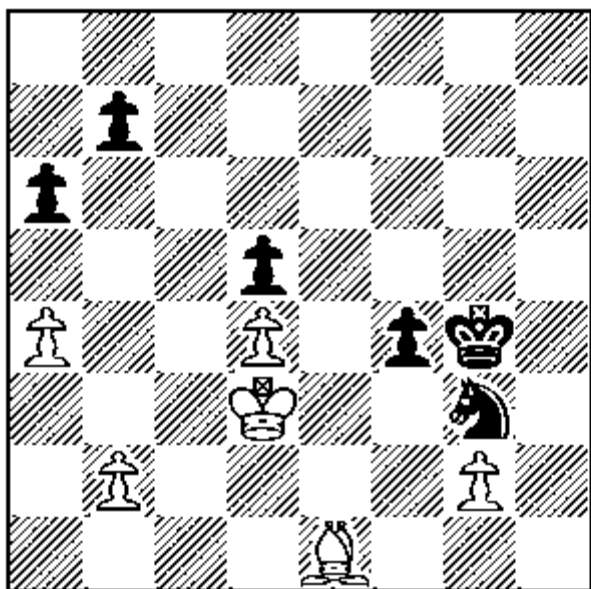
Answer: Black may not be able to make progress after 48 Bf2!. Houdini gives the line 48 ... Nf6 (if 48 ... b6 49 Bh4 Kg4 50 Be1 Ng3 51 Bf2 Nf5 52 Ke2 Nd6 53 Be1 Nf5 54 Bf2 and Black fails to make headway) 49 Be1 Ne4 50 Ke2 Kg4 51 Kd3 and White's fortress continues to hold, since 51 ... f3 52 gxf3+ Kxf3 is similar to the drawing variations already examined in the above notes.

48 ... Kg4 49 Ke2 Ng3+! 50 Kd3

There was nothing better:

a) 50 Bxg3?? Kxg3 51 Kf1 f3 52 gxf3 Kxf3 and d4 falls.

b) 50 Kf2 Nf5 51 Bc3 Ne3 (zugzwang, and now ... Nd1+ is a huge problem for White) 52 Bb4 Nd1+ 53 Ke2 Nxb2 wins.



Exercise (planning): So far, the White's defence remained just out of his antagonist's reach. Here, however, there is no way for White to avert an impending doom. How did Fischer force the win?

Answer: Attack g2, by transferring the knight to h4.

50 ... Nf5! 51 Bf2 Nh4

What pain to watch helplessly as all our past labours and expectations are cruelly dashed, after coming so close to our goal. Now g2 falls and the game is over.

52 a5

52 Bxh4 Kxh4 53 Ke2 Kg3 54 Kf1 f3 55 gxf3 Kxf3 is obviously hopeless for White.

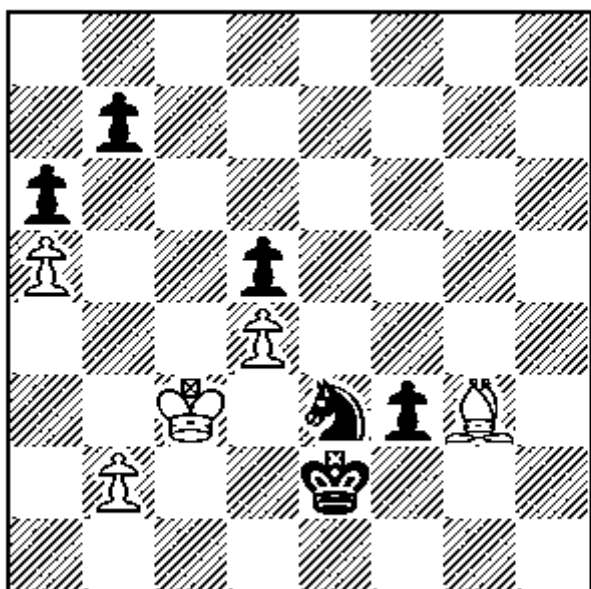
52 ... Nxf2

Money means a lot to the rich, otherwise they wouldn't be rich.

53 Kc3 Kf3 54 Bg1 Ke2

There is no stopping the f-pawn now.

55 Bh2 f3 56 Bg3 Ne3! 0-1



The bishop is driven off the f2-square after 57 Kb4 Nf5!. So with this squeaker of a win, Fischer achieved the impossible, winning the U.S. Championship with an 11-0 sweep.

Game 52

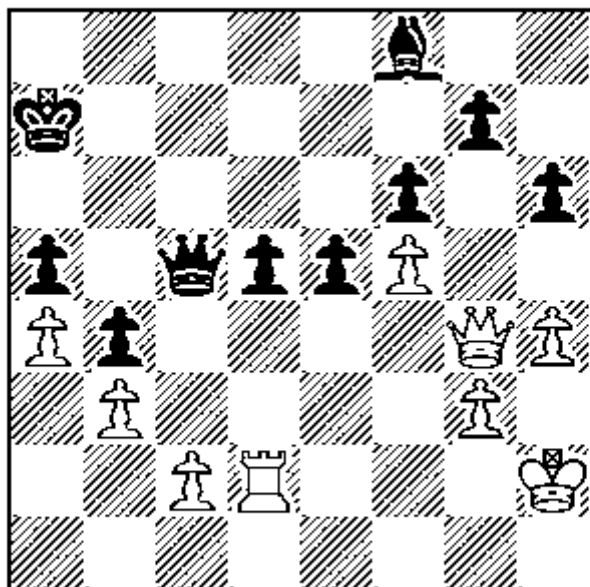
R.Fischer-B.Zuckerman

USA Championship, New York 1965

Sicilian Najdorf

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 a6 6 Bc4 e6 7 Bb3 b5 8 f4 Bb7 9 f5 e5 10 Nde2 Nbd7 11 Bg5 Be7 12 Bxf6 Nxf6 13 Qd3 Rc8 14 0-0 0-0 15 Ng3 Rc5 16 Nd5 Bxd5 17 exd5 a5 18 a4 b4 19 Ne4 Nxe4 20 Qxe4 Qb6 21 Kh1 Bf6 22 g3 Rfc8 23 Kg2 Kf8 24 Rae1 Ke7 25 Qd3 Kd8 26 Re4 Kc7 27 Bc4 Kb8 28 Rf2 Ka7 29 h4 Qd8 30 Ba6 Rb8 31 Bb5 Rbc8 32 Rd2 Qb6 33 Kh2 h6 34 Bc6 Be7 35 Qe2 R8xc6 36 dxc6 Qxc6 37 b3 f6 38 Qg4 Bf8 39 Rc4 d5 40 Rxc5 Qxc5

Black has a pawn for the exchange and the question comes down to his ability to erect a fortress to keep White's rook and king out.



41 Qg6

Black is eternally tied down to defence of g7, just as White is to c2.

41 ... d4

41 ... e4?? hangs the d-pawn to 42 Qf7+ Kb6 43 Qxd5 with an easy win for White.

42 Qe8 Kb7 43 Kh3!

I can't tell you why this is good, or else I give away the answer to the coming exercise.

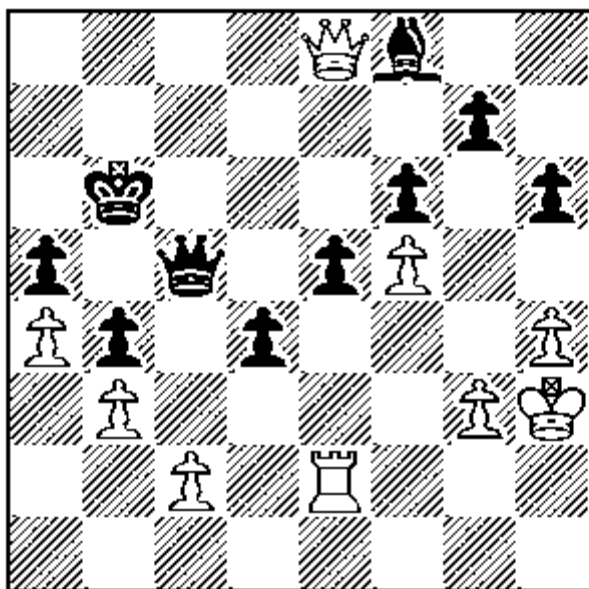
43 ... Qc3 44 Qf7+ Kb6 45 Rg2 Qc5

Protecting the hanging f8-bishop.

46 Re2

Preventing ... e4.

46 ... Qd6 47 Qe8 Qc5



Question: It appears as if White is unable to make progress against Black's fortress. Is this assessment correct?

Answer: This assessment is incorrect. Fischer found a clear, winning plan. Let's turn it into an exercise:

Exercise (planning): In a sense, this is the simplest game in the entire book, since it contains only a single theme. Find White's key idea and Black's chances recede, the way a castaway waves frantically to the cruise liner, which fails to spot his presence, sailing further away as each moment passes.

Answer: Infiltrate the kingside light squares with his king, after which Black is unable to secure g7, the base of his entire kingside structure.

48 Kg4! Be7 49 Kh5

White's king enters Black's realm with a deft zig and a stylish zag. This is asymmetric warfare, where a small invading force inflicts large scale damage.

49 ... Bd6 50 Kg6 Bc7

50 ... Bf8 is simply met with 51 Kf7. King and queen belt out a duet of the song 'Reunited and it feels so good'. Black's kingside pawns fall, starting with g7.

51 Kxg7

Oh, that internal pang of remorse, when we realize that our hopes have been deceived. A shadow of bereavement falls upon Black's position, and it becomes clear he has no chance to save the game.

51 ... Qc3

Going after g3.

52 Qb5+

"I strike your body to teach your spirit to obey," the queen informs her brother.

52 ... Ka7 53 Qd3

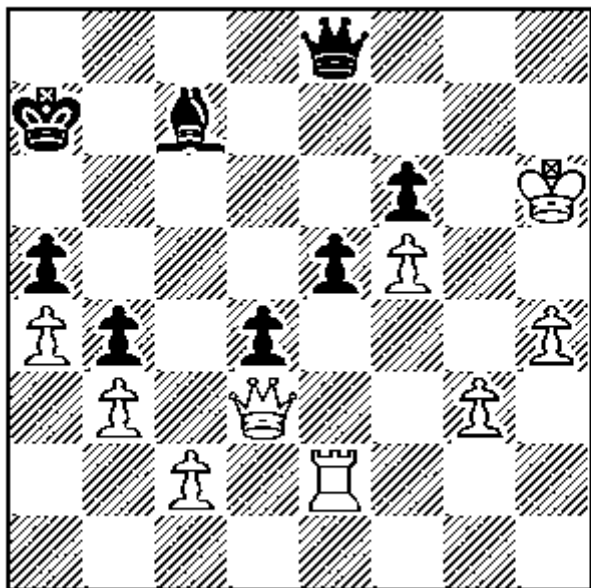
Oh, no you don't! The black queen's invasion attempt is easily repelled.

53 ... Qc6 54 Kxh6

The king follows the Viking battle plan:

1. Invade.
2. Plunder.

3. Retreat. 54 ... Qe8



Exercise (calculation/combination): Divide your forces and you double your peril. The queen expected to return to cheers and confetti. Instead, people just avert their eyes as she passes by. Black's last move is a mistake in an already hopelessly lost position. White to play and win material.

Answer: Pin.

55 Qxd4+! Bb6 56 Qd5 1-0

56 ... Qh8+ 57 Kg6 (this counterattacking gust is the summer shower which blows fitfully, yet without harm upon Black; now the checks run out) 57 ... Qe8+ is met with 58 Qf7+ forcing the queens off the board.

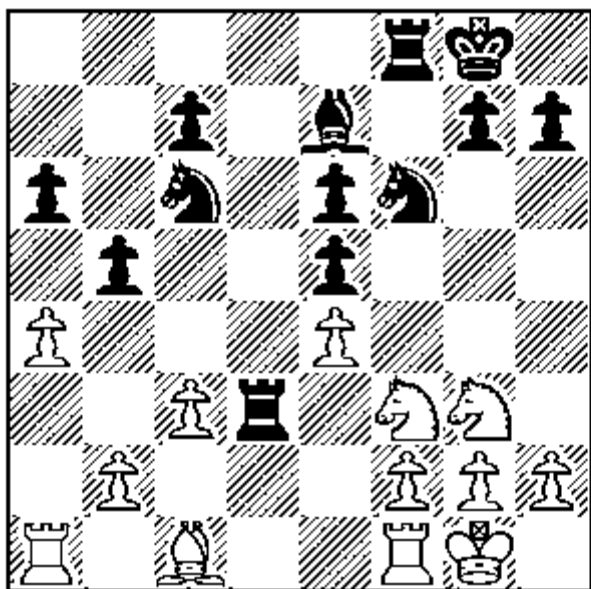
Game 53

R.Fischer-V.Smyslov

Capablanca Memorial, Havana 1965

Ruy Lopez

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Ba4 Nf6 5 d3 d6 6 c3 Be7 7 Nbd2 0-0 8 Nf1 b5 9 Bb3 d5 10 Qe2 dxe4 11 dxe4 Be6 12 Bxe6 fxe6 13 Ng3 Qd7 14 0-0 Rad8 15 a4 Qd3 16 Qxd3 Rxd3



Question: Would you say that White stands marginally better, due to his slightly superior structure?

Answer: That sounds accurate. Black's structure is looser, with attackable points on the queenside and also doubled isolated e-pawns. Yet the e-pawns control key central squares. Also, White has his own troubles, with slightly weakened light squares on d3 and b3. My feeling is that Black should hold the game with perfect defence.

17 axb5 axb5 18 Ra6!

The idea is to tie Black's rook down to d6, where it also blocks access to ... Bc5.

18 ... Rd6 19 Kh1!

Question: This almost appears to be a random move. What is the point?

Answer: It avoids the discovered attack cheapo, which occurs if White continues mechanically with 19 Be3?. Now Black has the trick 19 ... Nd4! 20 Ra7 Nxf3+ 21 gxf3 Rd7. Except for a few vagrant puffs, White's initiative is over. His kingside structure has been damaged and his advantage vanished. One problem with Fischer's move is this: It's an ending, yet he decentralizes his king. This could later result in a loss of two tempi, if he needs to bring his king to the centre.

19 ... Nd7

Correct was 19 ... b4! based on the endgame principle: It is in the defending side's best interest to reduce the number of pawns on the board. After 20 Be3 (threat: Bc5; if, instead 20 cxb4 Nxb4 21 Ra7 Rc6 22 Nxe5 Rc2 when Black's powerfully posted rook and generally high activity level offer him full compensation for the pawn) 20 ... bxc3! 21 bxc3 (21 Bc5 is met with 21 ... Nb4! 22 Bxd6 Bxd6 23 Ra3 c2! when Black gets full compensation for the exchange: for example, 24 Rc3 Ra8 intends ... Ra2 and now White is unable to play 25 Ne1? due to the combination 25 ... Nxe4! 26 Nxe4 Ra1 27 Kg1 c1Q 28 Rxc1 Rxc1 29 Nf3 Rc2, which leaves White fighting for the draw) 21 ... Nd7 it isn't so easy anymore for White to claim a real advantage, and the players are likely to fight each other to a standstill.

20 Be3?!

20 b4! is White's only path to an edge.

20 ... Rd8?!

Black should once again play 20 ... b4! reducing the number of pawns. Fischer wrote in My 60 Memorable Games: "Neither of us realized at this stage how essential this move was. I didn't want to weaken my c3 and c4 squares by playing b4 to prevent it; and Smyslov didn't want to commit himself yet."

21 h3

The correct idea remains just out of mental reach for both sides, the way of a familiar face who greets you on the street, yet you just can't remember the name. Lasker said that if a player missed a combination or an idea on one move, he is likely to miss it over and over again. Once again, 21 b4! is correct. Both players miss their mutual ideas over the next several moves.

21 ... h6

21 ... b4!.

22 Rfa1

22 b4!.

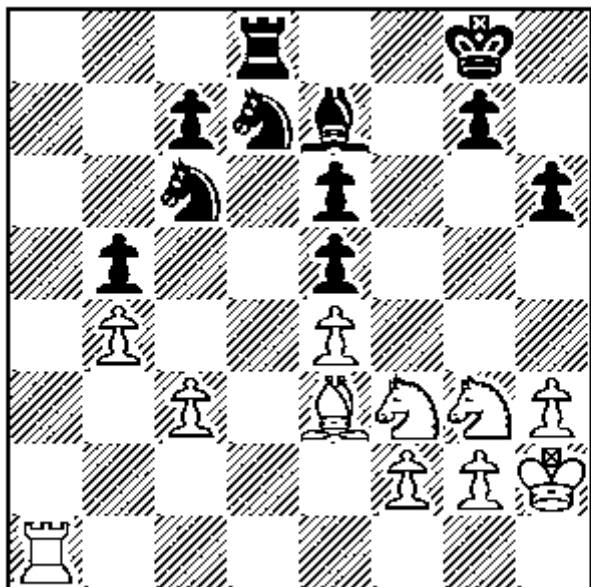
22 ... Ndb8 23 Ra8 Rd1+! 24 Kh2

Instead, 24 Rxd1 Rxd1+ 25 Kh2 Bd6 26 Ba7?? is met with the killing pin 26 ... Ra1!, while 24 Nf1 Rxa1 25 Rxa1 b4! is close to even.

24 ... Rxa1 25 Rxa1 Nd7?!

Many of our problems on the chess board – not to mention life – are exacerbated by the fact that we act as if we haven't a care in the world. When we blow a perfectly playable position, we are later assailed by a sense of wasted opportunity. Smyslov chooses the wrong path for rehabilitation, after which arises a train of unforeseen negative consequences. Now Black takes leave of his old opportunity, never ever to return again. I draw on the proverbial relationship between smoke and fire. With this move Smyslov forfeits on his final hope for equality with 25 ... b4!.

26 b4!



Hooray! At long last, Fischer discovers the correct plan. Now an uncomfortable damp morning fog settles upon Black's position. Smyslov thought he may actually be lost at this point. According to Houdini, White has a only '+=' level edge. From this point, Fischer milks his edge with relentless accuracy.

26 ... Kf7 27 Nf1!

The knight has no scope on g3 and is remanoeuvred to an arena of superior potential.

27 ... Bd6 28 g3!

Alertly cutting out ... Nd4 tricks.

28 ... Nf6 29 N1d2 Ke7 30 Ra6! Nb8

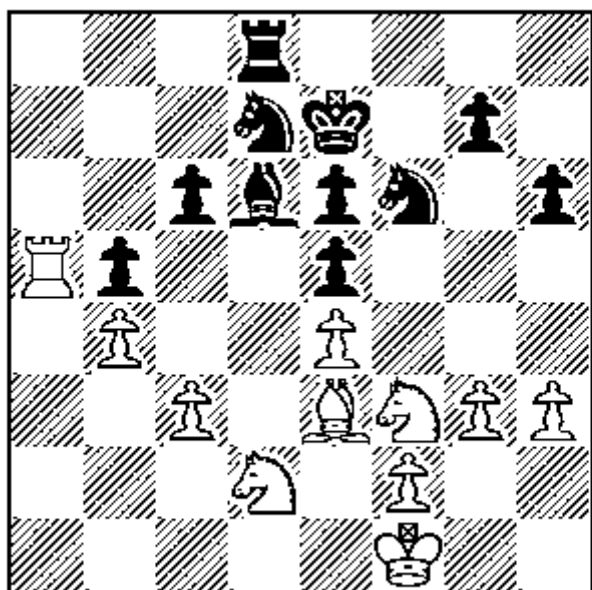
30 ... Kd7 is met with 31 Ne1! Nb8 32 Ra1 Nc6 33 Kg2 Kc8 34 f3 Bf8 35 Kf2 Be7 36 Nb1! (intending Na3, going after the b5-pawn) 36 ... Ne8 37 Na3 Nd6 38 Ke2 when White threatens

Bc5, Bxd6 and Nxb5, which leaves Black in dire trouble.

31 Ra5!

Forcing ... c6, which takes the square away from Black's pieces, and also weakens Black's second rank.

31 ... c6 32 Kg2 Nbd7 33 Kf1



Fischer decides to replenish his coming queenside assault with Ke2, Ne1 and Nd3.

33 ... Rc8

Fischer considered this move a mistake. I'm not so sure it is. Comp analysis shows Black in trouble no matter what he plays. For example:

a) Fischer expected 33 ... Ne8 intending ... Nc7 and ... Ra8. White should continue 34 Ne1 Nc7 35 Nd3 Ra8 36 Nb3! when Black remains uncomfortable.

b) 33 ... Rb8 34 Ke2 Rb7 (or 34 ... g5 35 h4 g4 36 Ne1 h5 37 Nd3 Rb7 38 Kd1 Rc7 39 Kc2 Ke8 40 c4! with mounting pressure) 35 g4 Nh7 36 Ne1 Ng5 37 Bxg5+ hxg5 38 Nd3 Kf6 39 Ra6 Nb8 40 Ra8 Nd7 41 Nb3 Rc7 42 Nbc5! with an enduring bind.

34 Ne1

Transferring the knight to the key d3-square, where it watches over e5, c5 and b4.

34 ... Ne8 35 Nd3 Nc7

Black is all set to play ... Ra8.

36 c4!

Fischer achieves his thematic pawn break.

36 ... bxc4

No choice, since 36 ... Ra8?? is met with 37 c5 winning a piece.

37 Nxc4

Fischer systematically increases the pressure on the e5-pawn.

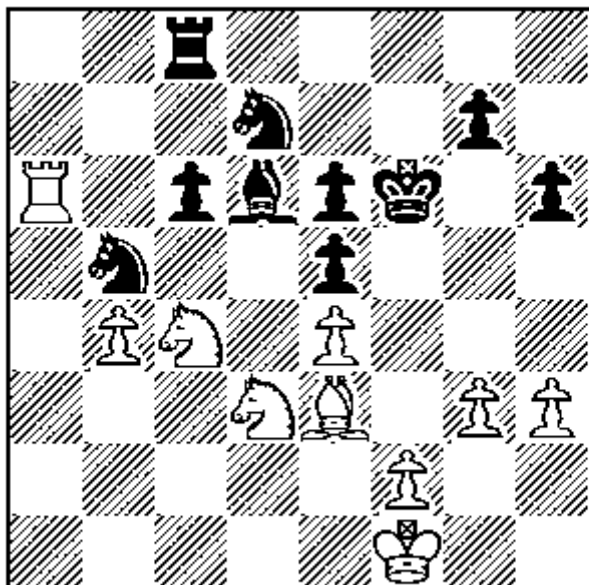
37 ... Nb5!

Smyslov avoids the trap 37 ... Ra8?, which is met with 38 Rxa8 Nxa8 39 Na5! Nb8 40 Ba7 Kd7 41 Nc4! and e5 falls.

38 Ra6 Kf6

Avoiding 38 ... Nb8? (the confused knight is unable to explain himself or defend his actions) 39 Ra8 Nc7 40 Nxd6! Kxd6 41 Bc5+ ("I have stated my needs. Be so kind as to implement them without delay," the bishop orders Black's king, who chafes at the impudence) 41 ... Kd7 42 Nxe5+ chessstunning.com

and wins.



Exercise (planning): A grey future stretches before Smyslov, a dull pain which never ends. Black is badly tied down to his weak e5-pawn. How did Fischer increase the pressure even further?

Answer: Step 1: Transfer the bishop to b2, adding one more attacker to e5.

39 Bc1!

The conclave meets to elect a new leader, who will rule by divine fiat.

39 ... Bb8 40 Bb2

Step 2: f4 is threatened next.

40 ... c5

Desperation. After 40 ... g5 41 Ndx5! (embezzlement is the norm with the knight's 'intuitive' accounting methods) 41 ... Bxe5 42 Nxe5 Nxe5 43 f4 gxf4 44 gxf4 White regains his piece with an extra pawn and a winning position.

41 Nb6!

Also winning was 41 Ra5! Nd4 (or 41 ... cxb4 42 Ncxe5! Bxe5 43 Nxe5 wins) 42 Ra8! which leaves Black helpless. If 42 ... cxb4 43 Ncxe5! Nxe5 44 Bxd4 Rc4 45 Bb2 Bd6 46 f4 and wins.

41 ... Nxb6 42 Rxb6

Black's knight and c5-pawn hang simultaneously.

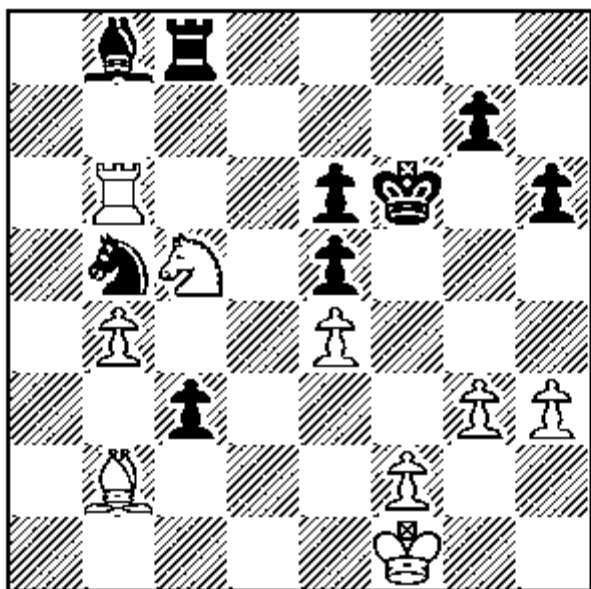
42 ... c4

42 ... Nd4 43 Nxc5 is completely hopeless for Black.

43 Nc5

Piling up on e6.

43 ... c3 1-0



Black gave up, as following 44 Bc1 Nd4 45 Nd7+ Ke7 46 Nxb8 Nb3 47 Rb7+! the once featureless landscape explodes in violence. This move throws into stark relief the dangers for Black. For example:

a) 47 ... Kf6 48 Nd7+ Kg6 49 Nxe5+ Kh7 50 Nd3 Rd8 51 Ke2 Nd4+ 52 Kd1 and White consolidates.

b) 47 ... Kf8 48 Ba3 c2 49 b5+ Kg8 50 b6 c1Q+ 51 Bxc1 Rxc1+ 52 Kg2 Rb1 53 Nd7 Na5 54 Ra7 Nc6 55 Rc7 Na5 56 Rc8+ Kh7 57 h4! (threat: h5, followed by Nf8+, Ng6+ and mate next move) 57 ... g5 58 Re8 when Black's pawns begin to fall;

c) 47 ... Kd6?? 48 Rd7 mate.

d) 47 ... Kd8 48 Rd7+ Ke8 49 Rxg7! wins.

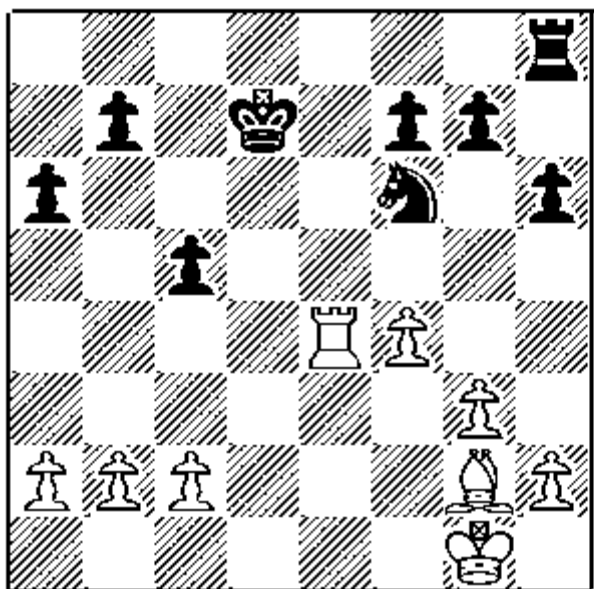
Game 54

R.Fischer-M.Taimanov

3rd matchgame, Vancouver 1971

Sicilian Taimanov

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Qc7 5 Nc3 e6 6 g3 a6 7 Bg2 Nf6 8 0-0 Nxd4 9 Qxd4 Bc5 10 Bf4 d6 11 Qd2 h6 12 Rad1 e5 13 Be3 Bg4 14 Bxc5 dxc5 15 f3 Be6 16 f4 Rd8 17 Nd5 Bxd5 18 exd5 e4 19 Rfe1 Rxd5 20 Rxe4+ Kd8 21 Qe2 Rxd1+ 22 Qxd1+ Qd7 23 Qxd7+ Kxd7



Question: Does White stand better?

Answer: Let's assess:

1. White's bishop is likely be superior to Black's knight.
2. Black's queenside pawns are slightly loose and may be goaded forward, weakening them further.
3. Black's king is already centralized, which saves him a few tempi over White's king.
4. The pawn structure is symmetrical, in that no player owns a majority. This fact favours the side with the knight.

Conclusion: White has maybe an iota of an edge, but certainly not enough for a win with proper defence.

24 Re5 b6?

A sub-optimal solution. Sometimes we unnecessarily inject drama into a position, perhaps out of craving for adventure. This is exactly what Fischer was playing for. He provoked a puncture in Black's queenside. Now his bishop gains in power.

Black should be okay after 24 ... Kd6!, and if 25 Bxb7 (White's best is probably 25 Re3 which is met with 25 ... Rb8 when it will be difficult for him to make progress) 25 ... Rb8 26 Bxa6 Rxb2 27 Re2 Rxa2 28 Bc4 Ra7 with a near certain draw.

25 Bf1!

Fischer provokes another puncture, this time weakening b5.

25 ... a5

No choice. 25 ... Ra8?? is met with 26 Bc4 when Black drops a pawn.

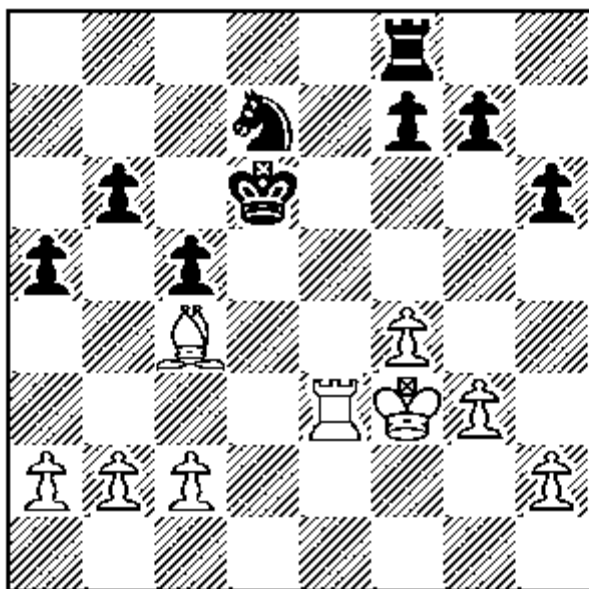
26 Bc4!

Now he ties Black's rook to defence of f7, which in turn prevents ... Re8.

26 ... Rf8 27 Kg2

Fischer begins to advance his king.

27 ... Kd6 28 Kf3 Nd7 29 Re3



The rook operates best on the third rank, when Black must watch out for checks on d3, as well as possible transfers to b3.

29 ... Nb8

Question: Can Black free his rook from its defensive duties with 29 ... f6?

Answer: Black would love to free his tied down rook. Unfortunately this idea allows White's rook and king decisive infiltration after 30 Re6+ Kc7 31 Re7 g6 32 Bb5 Rd8 33 Rg7 g5 34 Kg4!, preparing for a winning king and pawn ending. Indeed, after 34 ... Kd6 35 Rxd7+ Rxd7 36 Bxd7 Kxd7 37 Kh5 Ke6 38 Kxh6 gxf4 39 gxf4 Kf5 40 h4 Kxf4 41 h5 White's h-pawn is too fast.

30 Rd3+ Kc7 31 c3!

Fischer deprives Black's knight of scope.

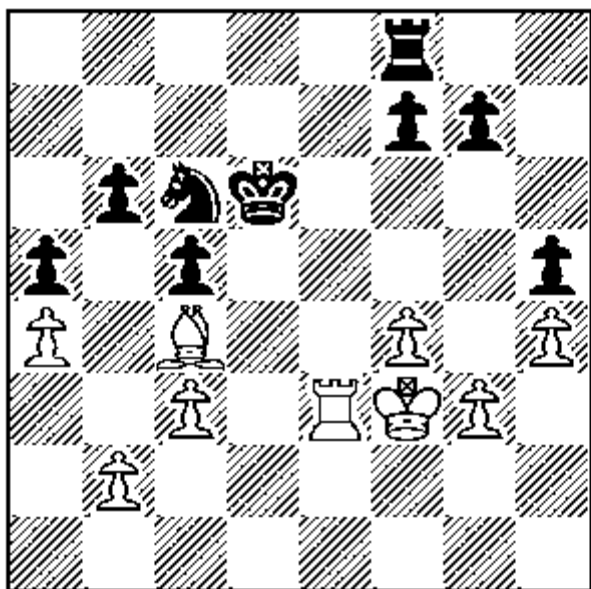
31 ... Nc6 32 Re3 Kd6 33 a4 Ne7 34 h3 Nc6

We see yet another world-class opponent reduced to moving back and forth, awaiting Fischer's progress.

35 h4

Perhaps intending g4 and g5 to create a kingside puncture which would allow White's king infiltration.

35 ... h5?



A move made with the philosophy: To proceed with apathy in such a difficult situation is akin to suicide. So Taimanov reacts by taking an overly desperate measure.

Question: Doesn't this move follow the principle: Place your pawns on the same colour as your opponent's remaining bishop?

Answer: The principle only applies if you are capable of hanging on to those pawns! It's important that our position's capability matches our own ambition. This move leads to Black's kingside pawns becoming vulnerable to White's bishop, and his position fails to meet the threshold of survivability.

Taimanov would have been better off taking his chances with a do-nothing strategy, with something like 35 ... Ne7 36 Kg4 Ng8. Even here though, Black's chances look tough, yet better than what he got in the game's continuation.

36 Rd3+ Kc7

After 36 ... Ke7 37 Bb5 Rd8 38 Ke4 Rxd3 39 Bxd3 Kd6 40 Bc4 Nd8 41 f5! Black is in zugzwang. If:

a) 41 ... f6 42 Be2 picks off h5. Variations like this are why Taimanov should have avoided pushing his h-pawn on his 35th move.

b) 41 ... Ke7 42 Kd5 Kd7 43 Be2 and h5 falls all the same, since 43 ... g6?? 44 fxg6 fxg6 45 Bd3 is even worse for Black.

c) 41 ... Kc6 is met with 42 f6! g6 (42 ... gxf6 43 Kf5 is completely hopeless for Black) 43 Ke5 Kd7 44 Bb5+ Kc7 45 Kd5 Ne6 46 Be8 Nd8 47 c4 (zugzwang) 47 ... Kc8 48 Kd6 and game over.

37 Rd5!

Provoking more pawns on to light squares, which allows White's bishop and rook to later attack them.

37 ... f5

This formation is obviously vulnerable, but if Black avoids ... f5, then he risks White playing the move himself later on, with potential king infiltration. For example, 37 ... g6 38 Rd1 and if 38 ... Ne7 39 Bb5 Rd8 (39 ... Nc6 40 f5! is a huge problem for Black, who must now contend with White's king entering via f4) 40 Rxd8 Kxd8 41 g4 hxg4+ 42 Kxg4 f6 43 Bd3 Ke8 44 f5! (creating an outside passed h-pawn) 44 ... gxf5+ 45 Bxf5 Kf8 46 h5 Kg7 47 Kf4 Kh6 48 Bg4 Nd5+ 49 Ke4 Ne7 50 Be2 Kg5 51 Kd3 and there is no good defence to Kc4 and Kb5, after which all of Black's queenside pawns fall.

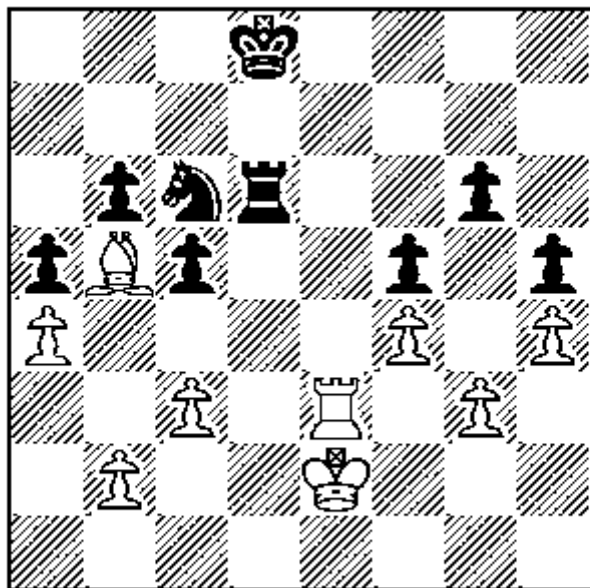
38 Rd2 Rf6 39 Re2 Kd7 40 Re3 g6

Black must play this move sooner or later. Now his kingside pawns are hermetically sealed on eternally vulnerable squares.

41 Bb5 Rd6 42 Ke2

Cutting off any ideas of ... Rd2 or ... Rd1.

42 ... Kd8



Exercise (planning): It may appear as if Black fortified his way to a drawn position. This just isn't the case. How did Fischer make progress?

Answer: Force rooks off the board, after which Black will be badly tied down to defence of g6, his kingside base pawn.

43 Rd3!

Society has little use for a warrior in peacetime. White's rook inflicted damage by forcing Black's kingside pawns on to vulnerable squares, and also creating entry punctures on the queenside. Now it's time for him to retire and step aside for White's bishop to demonstrate its utter dominance over Black's knight.

43 ... Kc7 44 Rxd6 Kxd6 45 Kd3 Ne7 46 Be8

I'm pretty certain Taimanov now regretted placing his kingside pawns on the light squares.

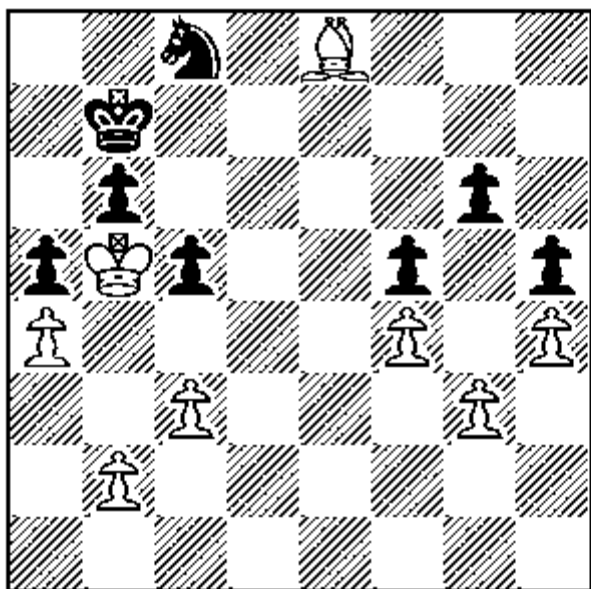
46 ... Kd5 47 Bf7+ Kd6 48 Kc4

The queenside is arable land for White's king, who continues forward.

48 ... Kc6 49 Be8+

This bishop is unbelievably annoying, not only tying Black's knight down to g6, but also helping pave the road for the white king's infiltration of the queenside. So Black is faced with an attack in two different sectors of the board, simultaneously.

49 ... Kb7 50 Kb5 Nc8!



When we set up a cheapo, we temporarily lay aside our scruples. Well, why not go for a trillion-to-one possibility?

51 Bc6+!

Most certainly not 51 Bxg6?? (two question marks aren't sufficient to describe this move) 51 ... Nd6 mate. The proud knight challenges the white bishop's assertions of superiority and b5 is designated as the family vault, in which the white king's body is laid to rest. Of course, Fischer, potentially the greatest chess player of all time, is not too likely to fall for a mate in one move in a simplified position.

51 ... Kc7 52 Bd5 Ne7 53 Bf7 Kb7 54 Bb3 Ka7 55 Bd1!

Preparing to give check on f3, after which Black's king must give way.

55 ... Kb7 56 Bf3+ Kc7

Or 56 ... Ka7 57 Bg2 Ng8 58 Bd5 Nf6 (58 ... Ne7? 59 c4! is zugzwang) 59 Bf7 Ne4 60 Bxg6 Nxg3 61 Kc6 Ne2 62 Bxh5 Nxf4 63 Be8 and the passed h-pawn decides.

57 Ka6

Fischer's king enters a6, where he moves from the heart of the position to its fringes.

57 ... Nc8 58 Bd5 Ne7

Taimanov wearily waves the bishop away, as if to indicate that the topic has been exhausted.

59 Bc4 Nc6 60 Bf7

The obsessive bishop constantly surveys g6, with furtive, sideways looks.

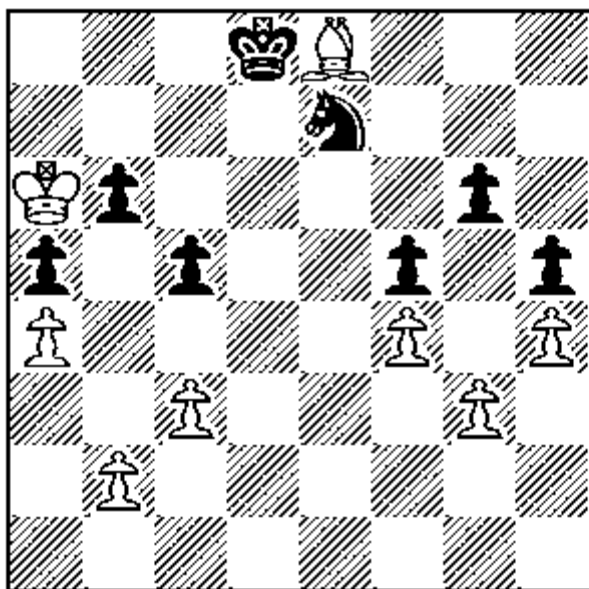
60 ... Ne7

To the eternally imprisoned knight, the thought of life outside his cell brings tears of longing. "Please do go on with your fascinating discourse," remarks the knight, as if impatient to be bored yet further by the bishop's endless speech.

61 Be8!

Zugzwang!

61 ... Kd8



Exercise (combination alert): If White plays his bishop to f7, then Black simply plays his king back to c7. Opportunity is packed to its fullest capacity and now is the time for action. What is White's winning breakthrough idea?

Answer: Piece sacrifice/deflection.

62 Bxg6!

The bishop is a candidate for knee replacement surgery, since he wore them out by praying for so long for this moment to arrive.

62 ... Nxc6 63 Kxb6

White gets way too many pawns for the piece and Black's clunky knight has no chance. Taimanov can comfortably resign here but plays on, perhaps in a dull state of incredulity, unwilling to believe his hoped-for fortress is a thing of the past.

63 ... Kd7 64 Kxc5 Ne7 65 b4!

Fischer finishes with his customary easy aplomb. Speed is more important than material. There is no reason to allow Black even a tiny chance with the greedy 65 Kb5 Nd5 66 Kxa5 Kc6 67 c4 Ne3 68 Kb4 Nf1.

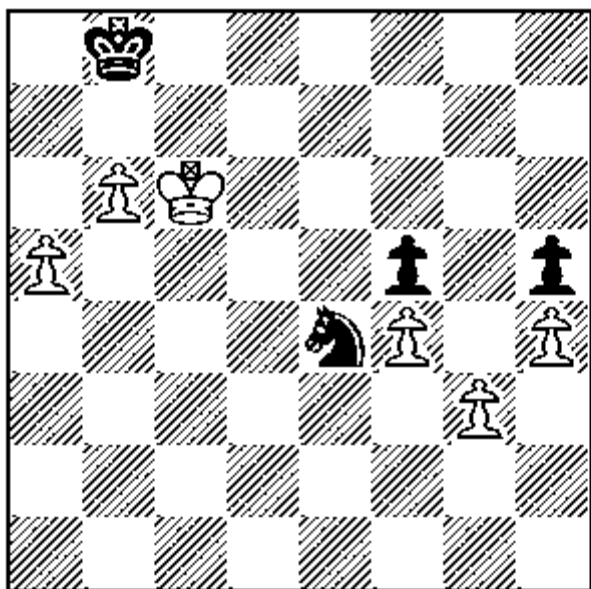
65 ... axb4 66 cxb4 Nc8 67 a5 Nd6 68 b5 Ne4+

Black is just way too slow in the race.

69 Kb6 Kc8

Black's king holds back tears by breathing deeper. If 69 ... Nf2 70 a6 and the a-pawn promotes.

70 Kc6 Kb8 71 b6 1-0



After 71 ... Nxc3 72 a6 Ne2 73 a7+ Ka8 74 Kc7 White promotes.

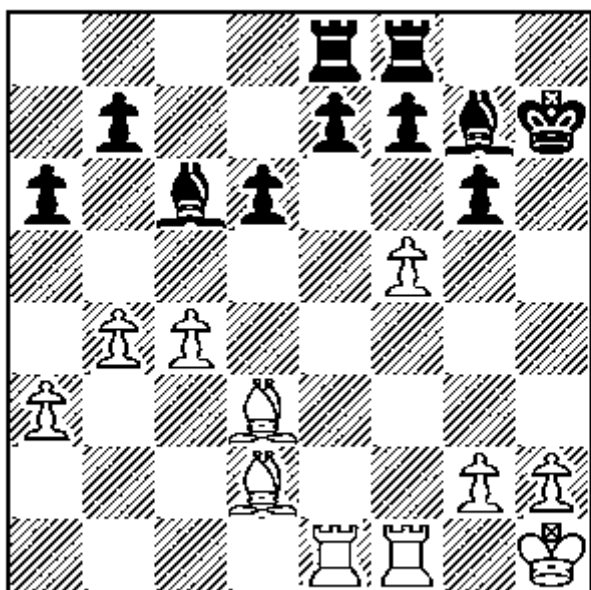
Game 55

B.Larsen-R.Fischer

2nd matchgame, Denver 1971

Sicilian Accelerated Dragon

1 c4 c5 2 Nf3 g6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nc6 5 e4 Nf6 6 Nc3 d6 7 Be2 Nxd4 8 Qxd4 Bg7 9 Bg5 h6 10 Be3 0-0 11 Qd2 Kh7 12 0-0 Be6 13 f4 Rc8 14 b3 Qa5 15 a3 a6 16 f5 Bd7 17 b4 Qe5 18 Rae1 Bc6 19 Bf4 Nxe4 20 Nxe4 Qxe4 21 Bd3 Qd4+ 22 Kh1 Rce8 23 Be3 Qc3 24 Bxh6! Qxd2 25 Bxd2



When I first began gathering games for the book, this one landed in my reject pile (mainly because I didn't understand its subtleties). Then about a month ago, my student Tom, who plays the Accelerated Dragon, asked to go over this game for a lesson. After the lesson, I realized just how remarkable it was for Fischer to extract a win from his completely even position, against an opponent who was at the time ranked 3rd/4th in the world in rating. So here it is.

Question: Is the position dead even?

Answer: Even, but not drawn. The imbalances:

1. Black's central preponderance of pawns.

2. White's slight queenside space, which can be interpreted either as an advantage, or as a potential for overextension (which happened in the game).

3. Black's slightly insecure king's position.

With correct play the game should be drawn. I suspect the reason Larsen lost this game was that he got burned in that unbelievably close Winawer we examined in Chapter Four, in his previous game, the first of the match. It's not easy to separate our feelings from the move choices we make, so he pressed too hard in this one, seeking revenge.

25 ... Be5 26 Bf4 Bxf4!?

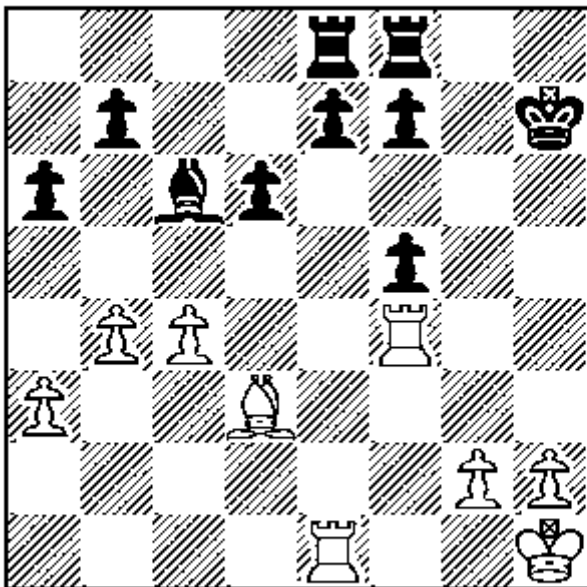
"Again there is an element of provocation," writes Kasparov. If Fischer really did want a draw, he would play the safer 26 ... Bf6 27 Re3 g5! 28 Rh3+ Kg7 29 Rg3 Be5! 30 Rxc5+ Kf6. (Black's king position offers full compensation for the pawn) 31 Rg3 Rg8 32 Kg1 Rxc3 33 Bxc3 Bxc3 34 hxc3 Rg8 35 Kf2 Bd7 36 Re1 Rg5 37 Be4 b6 38 g4 Rxc4 39 Kf3. Black regains the pawn and is the only one with winning chances, since his structure remains slightly superior. The reality is Larsen would have held the draw here, probably without too much effort. So Fischer went for the path of provocation instead.

27 Rxf4

White threatens a real attack, starting with Re3.

27 ... gxf5!

In ancient times, people believed the weather reflected the mood of the gods. Fischer wavers between extremes, greatly sharpening the game.



Question: Doesn't this move endanger Black's king?

Answer: The move looks like madness, but madness is why it succeeded. In exchange, Fischer gets a central majority and active king – conditional upon the fact that he doesn't get mated. More than anything else, the move exerted a psychological effect on Larsen which likely was the precursor to his future recklessness.

28 Rxf5

Question: Isn't Black mated after 28 Re3 intending Rg3 and Rh4 mate?

Answer: The comps say no, after 28 ... Rg8! preventing Rg3: 29 Bxf5+ Kh6! (29 ... Kg7?? is met with the killing shot 30 Be6!! winning on the spot; Black loses heavy material and is unable to play 30 ... fxe6 31 Rg3+ Kh8 32 Rh4 mate) 30 Bh3 d5 31 cxd5 Bxd5 32 Re5 Rd8! 33 Rxe7 Rge8 34 Rxe8 Rxe8 35 Kg1 Re2 (Black's active rook easily allows him to hold the draw) 36 Rf5 Rd2 37 Kf1 Bc4+ 38 Ke1 Ra2 39 Rf3 Bd5 40 Rf5 Be6 41 Rf3 Bd5 with a draw.

28 ... Kg7 29 Rg5+!

White must generate threats on Black's king. If 29 Re3?! Rh8 and I think Black already stands better since White's mating threats evaporate and Fischer owns the superior central majority.

29 ... Kh6

So lonely is Black's king, that he daily calls the pre-recorded weather message, just to hear a human voice. Fischer walks his unguarded king up the board, with an impunity which arises from confidence in his calculation and defensive capabilities.

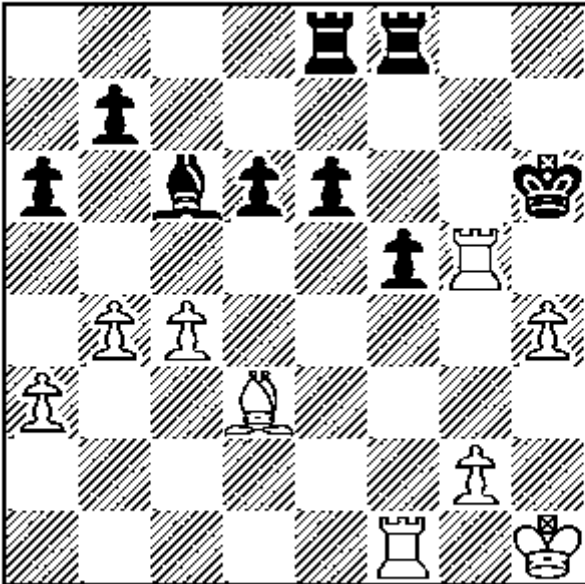
30 h4

If 30 Rg3 Rg8 31 Rh3+ Kg7 32 Rh7+ and now Black can try 32 ... Kf6!? (32 ... Kf8 is obviously safer) 33 Rf1+ Ke5 34 Rf2 Kd4! 35 Bf1 f6 36 Rh4+ Kc3 (this is taking Steinitz's advice on activating your king in an ending, to new levels) 37 Rh3+ Kd4 when White has nothing better than to take perpetual check with 38 Rh4+. Instead, after 38 Rd2+? Ke5 39 Re2+ Be4! Black's king is completely safe, since ... f5 follows, and White will be hard pressed to save himself, mainly since Black's extra piece in this ending is his king.

30 ... e6 31 Rf1

Threatening mate on the move. Larsen continues to nettle Fischer's tender king. Larsen's move looks more accurate than 31 Kh2 Rg8 32 Rxd8 Rxd8 33 g3 Rg4 34 Kh3 Rd4 35 Re3 b5. Black stands slightly better, once again due to his superior majority.

31 ... f5!



This requisite thrust is the foil to White's attacking ambitions. Fischer begins to roll his own majority, further safeguarding his king in the process. When we free ourselves from a cramped position, doesn't life feel spacious, as we stretch our once atrophied limbs?

32 Re1!

Larsen continues to pressure Fischer's central pawns.

32 ... Rf7

Intending ... Rg7.

33 b5!?

A stab like this is impossible to undo, since as we all understand, pawns once pushed, are unable to retreat.

33 ... axb5 34 cxb5 Bd7

The careless 34 ... Bd5? walks into 35 Bxf5! winning a pawn.

35 g4!

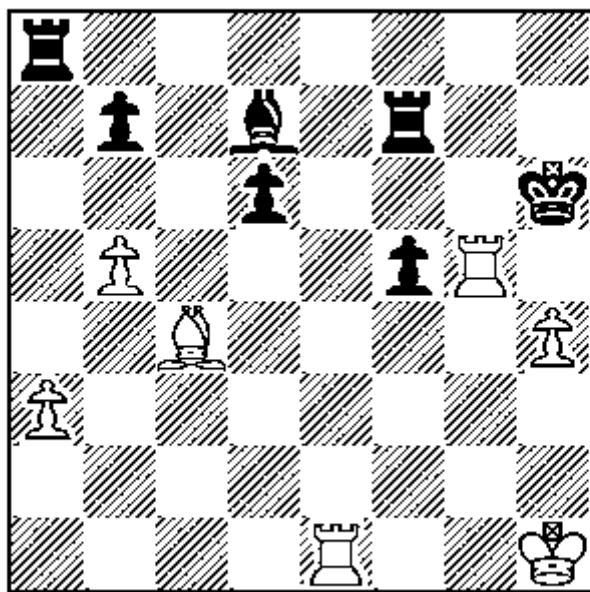
This move breaks up Black's central pawn mass.

35 ... Ra8!

We sense Black's rising tide of good fortune. Suddenly, White's pawns look more vulnerable than Black's. However, 35 ... fxg4?? walks into 36 Bg6 picking off an exchange.

36 gxf5 exf5 37 Bc4?

The position remains level if Larsen had found 37 Reg1!. What a joy when you stumble about for a plan, and up shoots an accidentally favourable geometry, almost in defiance of our own ignorance. Following 37 ... Ra4! (not 37 ... Rxa3?? 38 Rg6+ Kh7 39 Bc4! and Black's problem is 39 ... Re7 is met with 40 Bg8+ Kh8 41 Rh6+ Rh7 42 Rxh7 mate) 38 Rg6+ Kh7 39 h5 Rh4+ 40 Kg2 Rd4 (40 ... Rxh5 41 Rxd6 Rg7+ 42 Kf1 is also even) 41 Rg3 Be6 42 Rd1 (threatening a cheapo on f5) 42 ... Bd5+ 43 Kf2 Rf4+ 44 Ke3 Ra4 (threatening both ... f4+ and ... Rxa3) 45 Rg6 Re7+ 46 Kd2 Bf3 47 Rf1 Be4 48 Bxe4 fxe4 49 Rff6 Rxa3 50 Rh6+ Kg7 51 Rfg6+ Kf7 52 Rxd6 e3+ 53 Ke1 Ra1+ the position is drawn.



Exercise (combination alert): On his last move, Larsen, in time pressure, overpressed for the win. How did Fischer exploit the error?

Answer: Pin/undermining. White is overextended and drops a pawn.

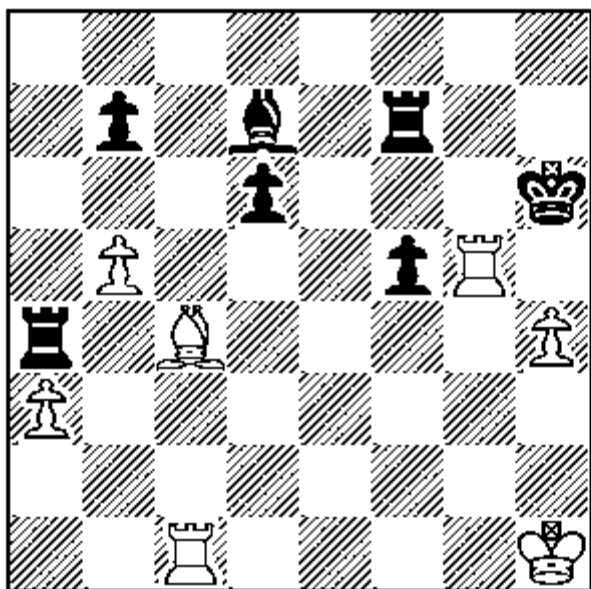
37 ... Ra4!

How baffling, when an opponent's artificial response usurps our natural (but bad!) last move.

38 Rc1?

When we repeat an error, we become like my wife Nancy, who cries when Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth Bennet (I think I have already mentioned her obsession with Jane Austin previously in this book) have a lovers' quarrel – even though she already watched the movie at least 50 times.

Necessary was 38 Bxf7 Rxh4+ 39 Kg1 Kxg5 40 Be8 when White struggles down a pawn.



Exercise (combination alert): One blunder compels the next one.

Larsen just made a second time trouble error. Black to play and win.

Answer: The same old story: Pin/undermining.

38 ... Bxb5!

The bishop accepts the invitation with the smiling receptivity of a con artist, immediately after pulling a larcenous trick on a mark. Now a radiantly golden harvest awaits Fischer's sickle, since White drops two pawns.

39 Bxf7 Rxf4+

Undermining the g5-rook.

40 Kg2 Kxf5

Black is up two clean pawns and White has no chance to save it. Larsen played it out though, undoubtedly out of frustration.

41 Bd5 Ba6 42 Rd1 Ra4 43 Bf3 Rxa3 44 Rxd6 Ra2+ 45 Kg1

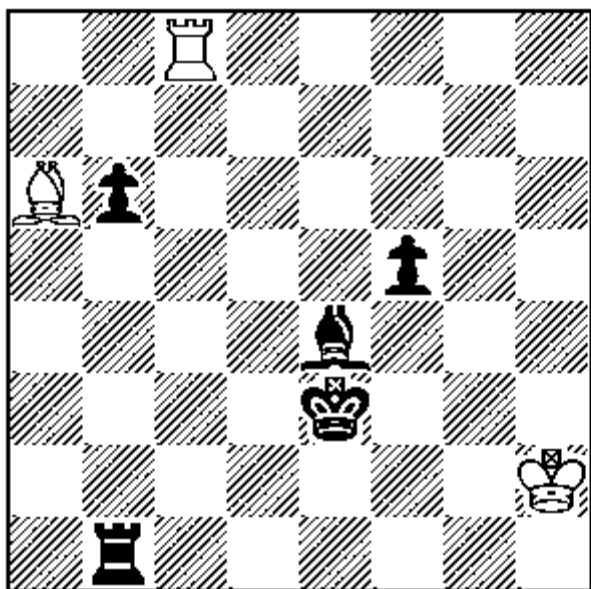
45 Kg3?? loses instantly to 45 ... f4+ 46 Kh3 Bf1+.

45 ... Kf4 46 Bg2 Rb2 47 Rd7 b6 48 Rd8 Be2 49 Bh3 Bg4 50 Bf1 Bf3 51 Rb8 Be4!

Fischer makes a pathway to e3 for his king, after which his f-pawn may move up the board.

52 Ba6 Ke3 53 Rc8 Rb1+ 54 Kh2

54 Bf1 was the only move to stave off mate. Obviously it wouldn't have held the game in the long run.



Exercise (combination alert): So much do we sense an imminent combination, that the position hints of the idyllic, painted-on perfection of a stage setting. Black to play and force mate.

Answer: Mating net.

54 ... Kf4! 0-1

Black's king decides to greatly simplify the legal code by making death the all-purpose punishment for every crime and misdemeanour. There is no defence to the coming ... Rh1 mate.

Game 56

T.Petrosian-R.Fischer

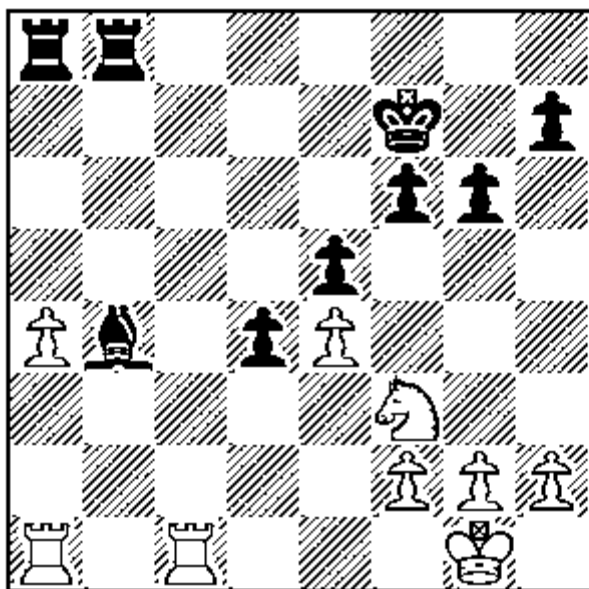
6th matchgame, Buenos Aires 1971

Reti Opening

1 Nf3 c5 2 b3 d5 3 Bb2 f6 4 c4 d4 5 d3 e5 6 e3 Ne7 7 Be2 Nec6 8 Nbd2 Be7 9 0-0 0-0 10 e4 a6 11 Ne1 b5 12 Bg4 Bxg4 13 Qxg4 Qc8 14 Qe2 Nd7 15 Nc2 Rb8 16 Rfc1 Qe8 17 Ba3 Bd6 18 Ne1 g6 19 cxb5 axb5 20 Bb2 Nb6 21 Nef3 Ra8 22 a3 Na5 23 Qd1 Qf7 24 a4 bxa4 25 bxa4 c4 26 dxc4 Nbxc4 27 Nxc4 Nxc4 28 Qe2 Nxb2 29 Qxb2 Rfb8 30 Qa2 Bb4 31 Qxf7+ Kxf7

Let's take stock:

1. Black owns a protected passed d-pawn, while White's a-pawn looks vulnerable to attack.
2. White is about to seize control of the seventh rank with Rc7+.
3. Once again we see Fischer in his patent bishop versus knight battle.

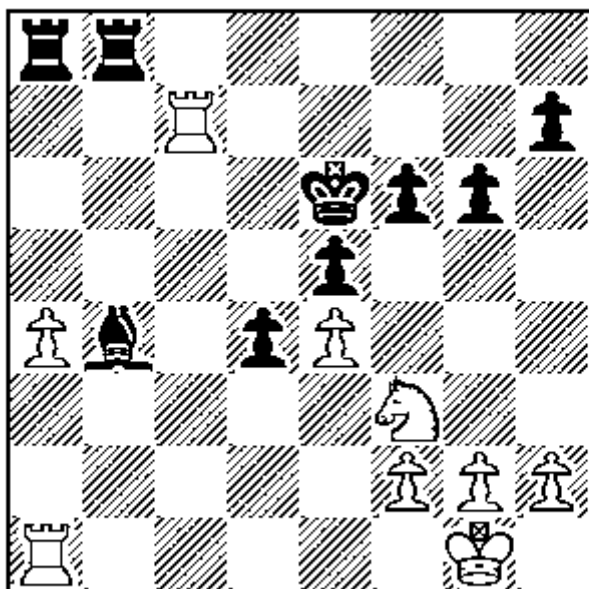


Question: Isn't Black's bishop a bad bishop, with too many pawns fixed on the wrong colour?

Answer: For now, the bishop isn't so bad, since White's knight lacks outposts, while the bishop has c3 available.

Conclusion: I believe Black has the edge, but the correct result should be a draw, since Black's extra pawn is nearly impossible to convert with most of his pawns on the wrong colour of his remaining bishop.

32 Rc7+ Ke6!



Fischer correctly refuses to back down with his king.

33 g4!?

Which Petrosian declines. Instead, he plays to inhibit Black's ... f5 break, while making luft for his king.

Question: Why on earth would he decline the pawn?

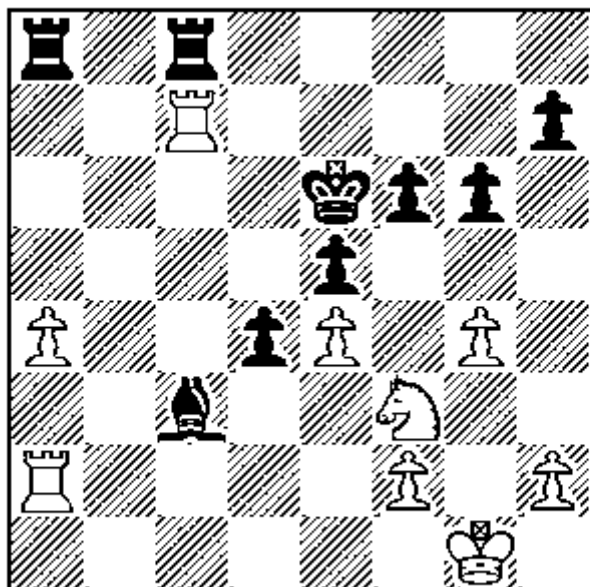
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Answer: It was an option, but not a real pawn grab, since Black regains the pawn immediately, due to White's weak back rank

after 33 Rxh7 Bc3 34 Rd1 (White must return the pawn since 34 Ra2?? walks into a back-rank mate after 34 ... Rb1+) 34 ... Rxa4 with advantage to Black.

33 ... Bc3 34 Ra2 Rc8?!

Correct was 34 ... Rb4! 35 a5 Rb1+ 36 Kg2 Rxa5 37 Rxa5 Bxa5 and Black wins a pawn, since 38 Rxh7?? isn't possible due to the d-pawn's run with 38 ... d3, which costs White a piece when the pawn moves to d2.



35 Rxc8!?

This should still draw, but Petrosian's choice increases White's Black's practical chances. Petrosian mistakenly places his hopes in his passed a-pawn, when he may have been better served by trading his a-pawn for Black's h-pawn.

Petrosian may have held the draw with 35 Rxh7! (principle: The defending side benefits from pawn swaps) 35 ... Rc4 36 Rb7 Rcxa4 37 Rxa4 Rxa4 38 Rb6+ Kd7 39 g5! (after 39 Rxf6? d3 40 Rxg6 Rxe4 the d-pawn will cost White a piece; even then Black must play carefully, since he has only a single pawn remaining on the board) 39 ... d3 40 Rb7+! (40 gxf6? Ra1+ 41 Kg2 and 41 ... d2 wins a piece) and White draws, since 40 ... Kc8? is met with 41 Rb3! Ba1 42 gxf6 Rxe4 43 f7 Rg4+ 44 Kf1 Rf4 45 Ng5 e4 46 Nxe4! Bg7 47 Nc5 Rxf7 48 Rxd3 with some winning chances for White.

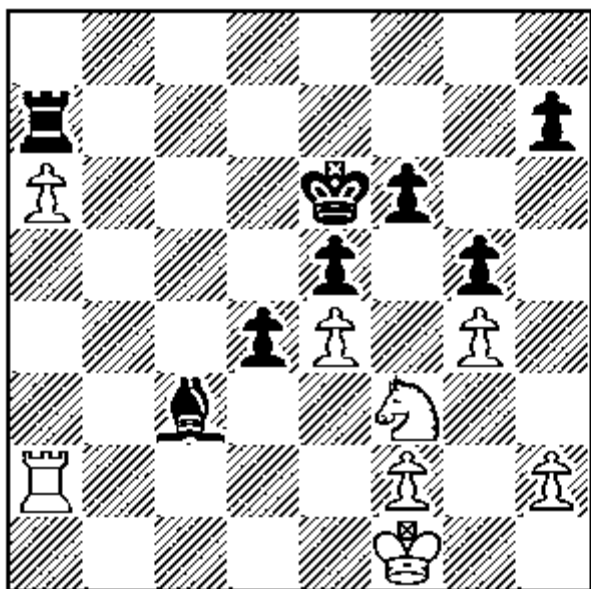
35 ... Rxc8 36 a5 Ra8 37 a6 Ra7

Finally halting the passed a-pawn's advance.

38 Kf1

Petrosian centralizes his king in preparation of a blockade on d3.

38 ... g5!



Fischer had a way of always finding a position's essential core, its beating heart.

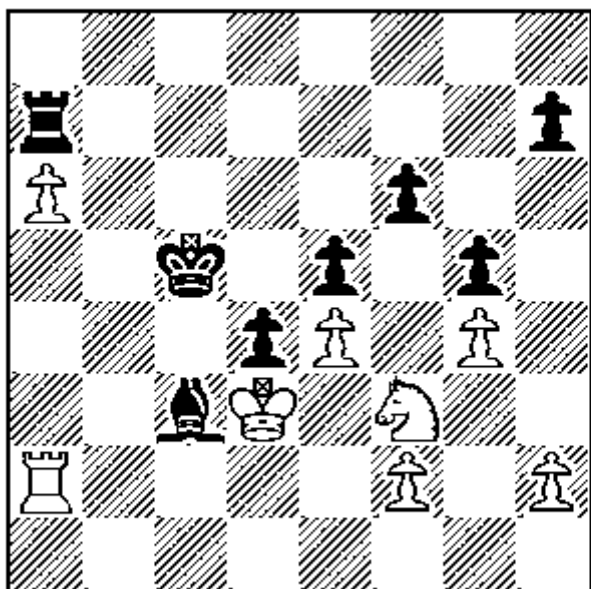
Question: Why would Black fix his pawns on the wrong colour of his remaining bishop?

Answer: An important move," writes Korchnoi. "Otherwise, if the black king moves away to the queenside, then follows g4-g5." For example, 38 ... Kd6 39 Ke2 Kc5? and now White has the undermining trick 40 g5! f5 (and not 40 ... Kc4?? 41 gxf6 d3+ 42 Ke3 Kb3 43 f7! Bb4 44 Ra1 Rxf7 45 Nxe5 Bc5+ 46 Kxd3 when White wins) 41 Kd3 when Black is the one in danger of losing.

39 Ke2 Kd6 40 Kd3

The blockade of the d3-square is the fulcrum upon which White's survival hinges.

40 ... Kc5



Exercise (planning): White has a path to a draw if you find the correct plan.

41 Ng1?!

Petrosian only finds half the plan.

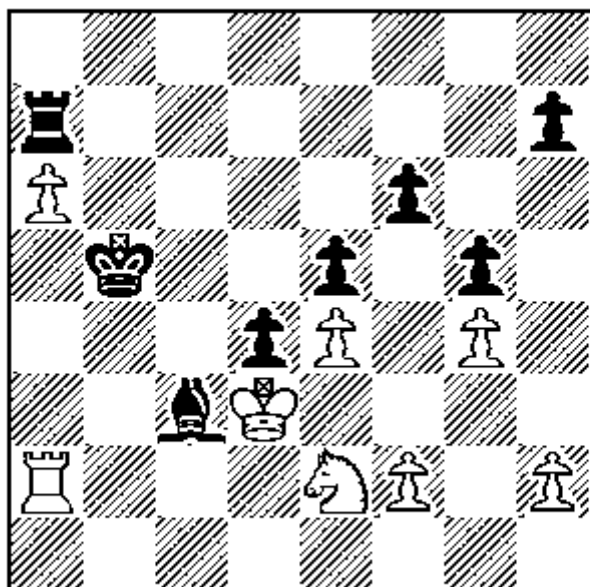
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Answer: White draws if he finds 41 h4! intending h5, followed by transference of the knight to f5, with Ng1, Ne2, Ng3 and Nf5:

41 ... h6 (41 ... gxh4 42 Nxh4 Kb5 43 g5! fxg5 44 Nf3 h5 45 Nxe5 h4 46 f4! gxf4 47 Ng6 Rxa6 48 Rxa6 Kxa6 49 Nxh4 is also

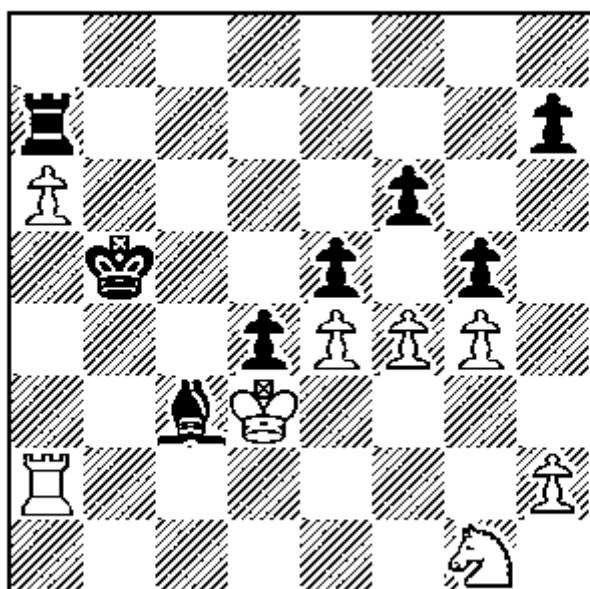
drawn) 42 h5! Kb5 43 Ng1! (heading for f5) 43 ... Ba5 44 Ne2 Rxa6 45 Ng3 Rc6 46 Rc2! Rxc2 47 Kxc2 Bb4 (not 47 ... Kc4?? 48 Nf5 d3+ 49 Kd1 and White's soon-to-be-passed h-pawn wins) 48 Nf5 Bf8 49 Kd3. Black is unable to make progress after 49 ... Kb4 50 Kc2 Kc4 51 Kd2 Kb3 52 Kd3.

41 ... Kb5 42 Ne2



The sealed move before the adjournment. A glimpse into Fischer's ruthless and self-absorbed personality: GM Robert Byrne, whom the U.S. Chess Federation hired to be Fischer's second during the match, worked feverishly on the adjourned position all night. In the morning, he knocked on Fischer's door with voluminous notes. Fischer casually waved him away, saying, "Show me (the notes) after the game," as he closed the door on a stunned Byrne.

There is a mind-bending fortress idea in the position, starting with 42 f4!!.



This is a freakish anomaly in an ordinary looking position. After 42 ... gxf4 we have:

a) 43 Nf3? Rxa6 (otherwise Black has no way of making progress) 44 Rxa6 Kxa6 45 g5! fxg5 46 Nxc5 Ba5 47 Nxc7 Bd8! 48 Nf8 Bf6 49 Ng6 (or 49 Nd7 Bg7 50 Nc5+ Kb5 51 Nb3 f3 52 Nd2 f2 53 Ke2 Kb4 54 Kxf2 Kc3 55 Ke2 Kc2 56 Nc4 d3+ 57 Ke1 Bh6 when the blockade is smashed and Black wins) 49 ... f3 50 h4 Kb5 51 h5 Kb4 52 h6 Kb3 53 h7 f2 (this deflection shatters White's d3 blockade) 54 Ke2 d3+ 55 Kxf2 d2 56 Ke2 Kc2 and wins.

b) 43 g5!! (only by this second pawn offer can White force the draw) 43 ... fxg5 44 Nf3 Rxa6 (or 44 ... g4 45 Nxe5 h5 46 Ng6 f3 47 e5 Ba5 48 e6 Rxa6 49 Nf4 h4 50 e7 Ra8 51 Ne6 Re8 52 Nxd4+ Kb6 53 Nf5 Bb4 54 Rb2 Ka5 55 Nxh4 Bxe7 56 Nxf3 gxf3 57 Rf2 Kb5 58 Rxf3; this is a theoretical draw, where Black has only practical chances) 45 Rxa6 Kxa6 46 Nxb5 Ba5! 47 Nxh7 Bd8! 48 Nf8 Bf6 49 Nd7 Bg7 50 h4 Kb5 51 h5 Kc6 52 h6 Bh8 53 Nf8 Kd6 54 Ng6 Bf6 55 h7 Ke6 56 Nh4! (not 56 h8Q Bxh8 57 Nxh8?? Kf6 when the knight is trapped and Black wins) 56 ... Kf7 57 Nf3 Kg7 58 Ne1 Kxh7 (this position is drawn) 59 Ke2 Kg6 60 Nd3 Kg5 61 Kf3 Kh4 62 Nf2 Bg7 63 Kg2 and Black is unable to make progress. Okay, let's try the other side of the board: 63 ... Kg5 64 Kf3 Kf6 65 Nd3 Ke6 66 Ke2 Kd6 67 Ne1 Kc5 68 Kd3 Kb4 69 Nc2+ Kb3 70 Ne1 Kb2 71 Kd2 Bf6 72 Nf3. Unbelievable. Every possible permutation has been tried, and in all of them, White, down two pawns, defends successfully.

42 ... Ba5!

This is an attempt to conceal the evidence. The bishop, pondering deeply, finds the world manifestly imperfect, and now decides to fix it. An important addition, since the game is drawn if White manages a rook swap.

43 Rb2+

Petrosian cuts off Fischer's king.

43 ... Kxa6 44 Rb1

It would be much harder for Black to make progress after 44 Ng3! Rc7 45 Rb3 Be1 46 Ke2 Bc3 47 Kd3 Ka5 48 Ne2 Bb4 49 Rb1 Kb5 50 Ra1.

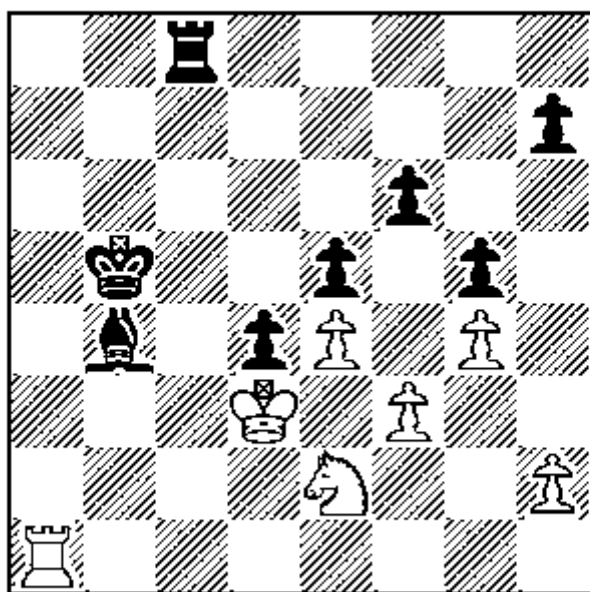
44 ... Rc7 45 Rb2 Be1 46 f3

Forced. This somewhat reduces White's ability to play a future Ng3.

46 ... Ka5 47 Rc2! Rb7!

Avoiding 47 ... Rxc2? 48 Kxc2 Kb4 49 Nc1! (not 49 Kd3?? Kb3 50 Ng1 Kb2 51 Ne2 Kb1 52 Ng1 Kc1 53 Ke2 Kc2! 54 Kxe1 d3 and the pawn can't be stopped) 49 ... Kc4 50 Nd3 and Black is unable to break down White's light-squared blockade.

48 Ra2+ Kb5 49 Rb2+ Bb4 50 Ra2 Rc7 51 Ra1 Rc8



Exercise (critical decision): With his last move, Fischer invited Petrosian to invade the seventh rank with Ra7. Should White grab the opportunity?

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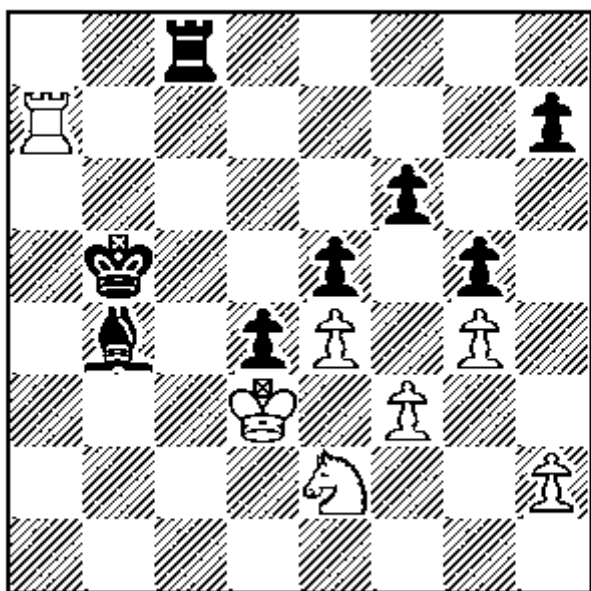
Answer: He should decline.

52 Ra7?

Some questions are best left unanswered. When we mistakenly ‘see’ all the signs of our non-existent win, our own credulity fills in the missing gaps. Petrosian inexplicably plays with the brazen callousness of a desperate man with nothing to lose. If you put all your resources into an investment, it can drain you, turning a hoped for asset into an impediment.

With this move White forfeits his base element of security. Petrosian, possibly hoping to punish Fischer by playing for the full point, takes a high-risk gamble in a secure position, which to me feels like a prosperous, content country declaring war on a friendly and more powerful neighbouring country. This is a stylistically odd decision for Petrosian, who was a pacifist at heart, and who normally only tried to win through risk-free positional pressure – without battles, bloodshed, or trees bent with the weight of the hanged.

It’s unlikely Black can make progress if White maintained a holding pattern with 52 Ra2! which is a move played with the philosophy: Never argue with an opponent who operates under an assumption of certainty.



52 ... Ba5!

Question: What is Fischer’s idea?

Answer: With his last move, Fischer cuts off White’s rook from his own territory, allowing his own rook to eventually infiltrate. When he does so, his king, rook, bishop and d-pawn conspire to weave both mating nets and also promotion schemes, which White is unable to prevent.

53 Rd7

53 Rxh7 allows Black to invade after 53 ... Ra8! 54 Rf7 Bb6 55 Rxf6 Ra3+ 56 Kd2 Ba5+ 57 Kd1 Rd3+ 58 Kc1 Re3 59 Ng1 d3 60 Rd6 Kc4! 61 Nh3 Re1+ 62 Kb2 Bc3+ 63 Ka2 Ra1 mate.

53 ... Bb6! 54 Rd5+ Bc5 55 Nc1 Ka4! 56 Rd7 Bb4 57 Ne2 Kb3

Fischer’s king continues to make progress.

58 Rb7

Or 58 Rxh7 Rc2 (threatening mate on d2) 59 Nxd4+ exd4 60 Kxd4 Bd6 61 Rb7+ (if 61 h4?? Rd2+ 62 Ke3 Bf4 mate) 61 ... Ka4 62 h3 Be5+ 63 Ke3 Rh2 64 Rh7 Kb4 and White won’t save the game.

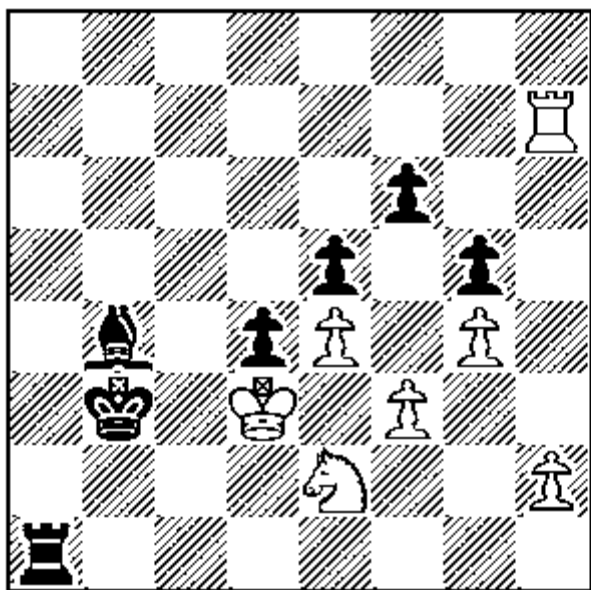
58 ... Ra8!

Now rook infiltration is imminent along the a-file.

59 Rxh7

59 Nc1+ Kb2! 60 Rxb4+ Kxc1 61 Rb3 Ra2 is hopeless for White.

59 ... Ra1



At long last, Fischer's rook infiltrates.

60 Nxd4+

An heirless person with a terminal illness has no reason to be miserly. Not much choice, since after 60 Ng3 Ra2! (threat: ... Rd2 mate) 61 Nf1 Rf2 White's position is plump shire, ripe for pillage. The knight is lost, since moving it allows mate on d2.

60 ... exd4 61 Kxd4 Rd1+ 62 Ke3 Bc5+ 63 Ke2 Rh1! 64 h4 Kc4!

Even more accurate than 64 ... gxh4 which also wins.

65 h5 Rh2+ 66 Ke1 Kd3 0-1

Mocking smiles surround White's king in endless repetition. Mate is threatened on h1 and if 67 Kf1 Ke3 68 Kgl Rd2 69 h6 Kxf3+ 70 Kh1 Kg3 when there is no stopping mate on d1.

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