

Fischer's legacy

EIGHT YEARS have now passed since Russian Boris Spassky and American Bobby Fischer fought their 1972 "Match of the Century" in Reykjavik. After the publicity surge created by Fischer's mastery on the board and antics off it the chess world has never been the same. Literally millions of people (including myself!) learnt the moves as a direct result. At the same time playing conditions for the top masters improved and prize money rocketed.

Spassky never quite recovered from his defeat, although he has managed to utilise his former position for some time now. After Fischer refused to defend his crown against Karpov in 1975 following a squabble over rules, Spassky took up the vacant position in the next candidates' match series. Having got through to the finals of these, he automatically qualified for this year's series.

But now, having been knocked out in the quarter-finals, he is relegated to the interzonal stages of the world championship qualifying series. With so many talented and ambitious younger grandmasters competing in this stage, it is unlikely that he will make the top three and qualify.

And what of Fischer, the volatile genius who has refused to play a single game since storming his way to the summit in 1972? Like Morphy,

the other great American virtuoso who quit young, Fischer will always be remembered as he was in his prime, when he was almost invincible.

Spassky is comfortably growing older in semi-exile with his French wife, but there is a much sorer end to the Fischer legend. There used to be hope that Fischer, now 37, would play again. Now all such hopes have evaporated, even for the most optimistic. He now spends his days outside supermarkets in California, distributing religious leaflets for the sect he has joined.

Even Florencio Campomanes, who persuaded President Marcos of the Philippines to stake the six million dollars for a second attempt (again abortive) to arrange a match between Fischer and Karpov, has this year finally given up trying to organise any sort of contest.

I suppose we should be grateful for the magnificent legacy of games Fischer has left. For those too young to remember, here is his first ever win over Spassky, in the third game of their 1972 match.

BENONI DEFENCE

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| B. SPASSKY | R. FISCHER |
| 1. d4 | Nf6 |
| 2. c4 | e6 |
| 3. Nf3 | c5 |
| 4. d5 | e×d5 |
| 5. c×d5 | d6 |

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| 6. Nc3 | g6 |
| 7. Nd2 | Nbd7 |
| 8. e4 | Bg7 |
| 9. Be2 | 0-0 |
| 10. 0-0 | Re8 |
| 11. Qc2 | Nh5! |

This was a totally original concept at that time. Now, thanks to this game, it forms a major variation of the Benoni defence. Black allows his king-side pawns to be shattered in return for the bishop pair and open lines to the White king.

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| 12. B×h5 | g×h5 |
| 13. Nc4 | Ne5 |
| 14. Ne3 | Qh4 |
| 15. Bd2 | Ng4 |
| 16. N×g4 | h×g4 |
| 17. Bf4?! | |

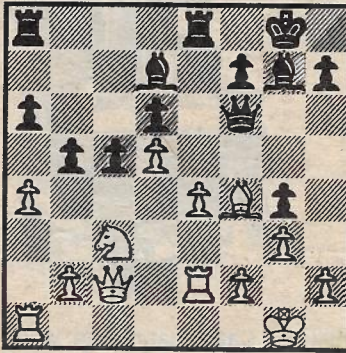
A better defensive move is 17.Ne2.

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| 17. ... | Qf6 |
| 18. g3? | |

This weakens the light squares around White's king and later proves fatal. 18.Qd2 was called for.

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| 18. ... | Bd7 |
| 19. a4 | b6 |
| 20. Rfe1 | a6 |
| 21. Re2 | b5! |

FISCHER



SPASSKY

22. Rae1

On 22.a×b5 a×b5 23.R×a8 R×a8 24.e5 comes 24...Ral ch 25.Kg2 d×e5 26.R×e5 b4 27.Ne4 Qa6 with winning threats.

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| 22. ... | Qg6 |
| 23. b3 | Re7 |
| 24. Qd3 | Rb8 |
| 25. a×b5 | a×b5 |
| 26. b4 | c4 |
| 27. Qd2 | Rbe8 |
| 27. Re3 | h5 |
| 29. R3e2 | Kh7 |
| 30. Re3 | Kg8 |
| 31. R3e2 | B×c3! |
| 32. Q×c3 | R×e4 |
| 33. R×e4 | R×e4 |
| 34. R×e4 | Q×e4 |
| 35. Bh6 | Qg6 |

Black's king position is somewhat shaky, but so is White's and Fischer has an extra passed pawn on the queenside.

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| 36. Bc1 | Qb1 |
| 37. Kf1 | Bf5 |
| 38. Ke2 | Qe4 ch |
| 39. Qe3 | Qc2 ch |
| 40. Qd2 | Qb3 |
| 41. Qd4 | Bd3 ch |

The sealed move, and the best. I can remember analysing this position with chess friends in Wainuiomata eight years ago wondering if Spassky would continue.

42. Resigns

After seeing the sealed move upon resumption the Russian duly conceded defeat. Either White's b-pawn falls with check or he allows 42.Ke3 Qd1 43.Bb2 Qe1 ch 44.Kf4 Qd2 ch winning the bishop.

MURRAY CHANDLER