

BOBBY FISCHER

Explained

And some stories

Zenón Franco

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BOBBY FISCHER

EXPLAINED AND SOME STORIES

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Introduction

It is very satisfying to continue this new venture with a book about Robert James Fischer, published by *Zenonchess Ediciones*.

Robert (“Bobby”) Fischer was the great revolutionary in the history of chess in the twentieth century. Thanks to his dazzling career and his demands for better conditions for players, chess was popularised and was converted into a professional activity with many offshoots. His practically single-handed struggle to overthrow Soviet domination of the world of chess is an achievement difficult to match.

A few years ago I rejected the idea of writing a book about Fischer’s games, because I felt that so much had already been written about him that it would be difficult for me to bring anything new to it. But I changed my mind; I think that a new study using the “Move-by-Move” format, is appropriate for commenting on his games and is useful for both learning and teaching.

As usual, exercises are set and also questions are asked from the reader’s point of view. This system of training and education is similar to the one I have used so many times already, the system of “guessing the moves.” Here there are no points awarded for guessing moves, but instead there are more explanations, giving the reader the opportunity to ask questions.

Of course, to many fairly experienced chessplayers, some of Fischer’s games will already be well-known, or at least familiar. That is not an obstacle to benefitting from this book, because for the most part these games will not have been analysed in depth or recalled very clearly, so that taking a fresh look at them, pausing at key moments, can be instructive.

Also, as usual, I have tried to include the contributions of the players themselves or of distinguished commentators. Old analyses sometimes contain errors that the ever-stronger and stronger analysis engines detect, but those earlier explanations are still to be valued.

Also, as usual, I try to include the practical viewpoint, since we do not play against computers of unattainable calculating ability, but against human beings who, like ourselves, make mistakes, like or dislike their positions (which at times does not depend on objective evaluation), get tired, etc.

I am glad to discover that Magnus Carlsen also gives great importance to the practical element in his choice of variations. For him it is important for the position to be “easy to play,” not for a computer but for a human.

This book is about Fischer's games; it is not a biography, but I wanted to include some lesser-known anecdotes from his tournaments in Argentina.

I am grateful to Daniel Green, Carlos Bielicki and the late Carlos Incutto for their stories about Fischer which I relate in this book, to newspaper La GACETA from Tucumán, for the two photos and to Agustín Berrueta for the poem which ends this homage/appreciation of our eleventh World Champion.

I hope that you will enjoy this book as much as I enjoyed writing it. I also hope that it will be of benefit to you for learning a little more about our game of chess, through the medium of Fischer's games.

Finally, it is my hope that it will also provide useful teaching material to those involved in chess education.

Ponteareas, November 2021

Dedicated to Yudania

Game 28

The demand for a longer national championship

Fischer played in eight US Championships, and won all those he took part in.

In the penultimate US Championship in which he competed, 1965/66, he started with 6½ out of 7, and was very close to his record of the previous year.

We shall look at his seventh-round win, after which Fischer seemed to be on the way to a comfortable tournament victory, but then two defeats in rounds 8 and 9 put that triumph in doubt.

That gave Fischer another two reasons to demand a much longer tournament, where truly “the best player will win,” rather than a tournament with just 10 or 12 competitors.

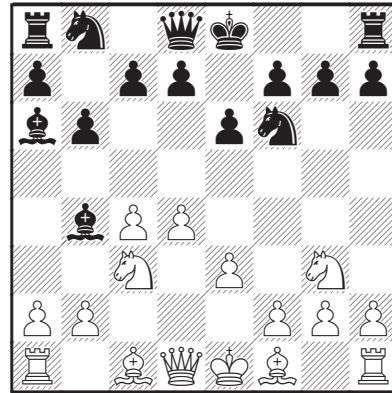
▷ **Anthony Saidy**

▶ **Robert Fischer**

Nimzo-Indian Defence [E45]

US Championship, New York, (7),
12.1965

1.c4 ♘f6 2.♘c3 e6 3.d4 ♙b4 4.e3 b6
5.♘ge2 ♙a6 6.♘g3



6... ♙xc3+!

“A principled decision in the spirit of Nimzowitsch,” wrote Kasparov, in regard to this doubling of White’s pawns.

Inflicting doubled pawns on the opponent was something that generally appealed to Fischer, but in this case it is basically to prevent White from advancing with e4; at the moment, he can’t play 6... d5?? due to 7. ♙a4+.

The exclamation mark was awarded by Fischer himself, who wrote that 6...0–0 is inferior due to 7.e4, based on 7...♘c6 8. ♙d3 d5 (8...♘xd4? loses to 9. ♙a4) 9.cxd5 ♙xd3 10. ♙xd3 exd5 11.e5 ♘e4 12.a3!, with a clear advantage to White, as in Portisch -Spassky, Moscow 1967.

He added that White also maintains the initiative after 7...c5 8.d5 d6 9. ♙e2 exd5 10.exd5 ♙xc3+ 11.bxc3 ♘bd7 12.0–0 ♙e8 13. ♙a4, etc., Portisch – Reshevsky, Santa Monica 1966.

Subsequently further games were played with this line, but the evaluation has remained unchanged.

7.bxc3 d5 8. ♙f3

Fischer considered that this whole idea was dubious.

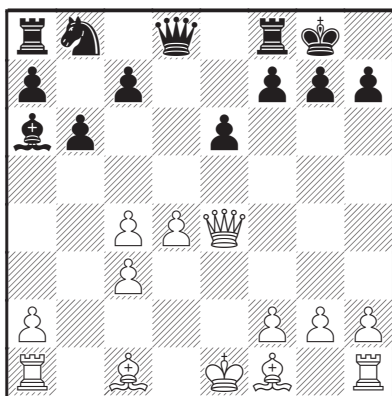
In the Siegen Olympiad of 1970 Portisch posed greater problems for Fischer with 8.♘a3 and instead of taking on c4 with the bishop, leading to a slightly better endgame for White, Fischer opted for the riskier 8...dxc4, which he had recommended in his book *My 60 Memorable Games*, but after 9.e4 (instead of the line 9.♙f3 ♖d5 given by Fischer) White obtained good compensation for the pawn and Fischer experienced problems.

8...0-0 9.e4

Here the right move is 9.cxd5, as indicated by Fischer.

9...dxc4?!

A few months later, in Portisch - Fischer, Santa Monica 1966, Fischer played the stronger 9...dxc4! and play continued 10.♘e4 ♘xe4 11.♙xe4.



Exercise: How did Fischer reply?

Answer: Not with the “obvious” move 11...♘d7, which White was expecting, with the continuation 12.♘d3 ♘f6 13.♙h4, but with 11...♙d7!, offering to

exchange the white queen for both black rooks and preparing ...♘c6-a5.

There followed 12.♘a3?!, which is inaccurate, because the gain of time is an illusion; on a3 the bishop remains exposed to a future ...♙a4, and after 12...♙e8 13.♘d3 f5 White should have played 14.♙e2 (or even 14.♙f3), but then 14...♘c6 or 14...♙a4 would be promising for Black.

Instead Portisch played the natural but bad 14.♙xa8?; in this case the two rooks are inferior to the queen, which is unusual, but here “the more numerous white army is unable to achieve coordination!” (Kasparov) and play continued 14...♘c6 15.♙xe8+ ♙xe8 16.0-0 ♘a5 17.♙ae1 ♘xc4 and Fischer gained a great victory, 0-1 in 35 moves.

“It is staggering to what extent Fischer surpassed one of the world's leading grandmasters in depth of evaluation of a non-standard position,” wrote Kasparov.

10.♘g5! h6 11.♘d2?

After this passive retreat everything is once again fine for Black.

11.h4!, with the threat of 12.e5, would have created more problems; after 11...♘b7 12.♘xc4 White regains his pawn with a good centre, although it would be more advantageous to enter an endgame with 12.♘xf6 ♙xf6 (of course Black must exchange queens in order not to lose to an attack) 13.♙xf6 gxf6 14.♘xc4, with advantage to White, thanks to his better structure.

Fischer mentioned Spassky's idea of 12.♘h5; after 12...hxg5 13.hxg5...

Exercise: Can you show that the idea is attractive but unsound?

Answer: Not with 13...♘xe4?, due to 14.♘f6+!! ♘xf6 15.♚h3, and White mates.

The right move is 13...♘h7! when 14.♘f6+ gxf6 15.♚h5 is refuted with 15...♙xe4, while after 15.♖xh7 fxg5 16.♚h5 ♚f6 White's attack comes to a halt, leaving Black with an extra piece.

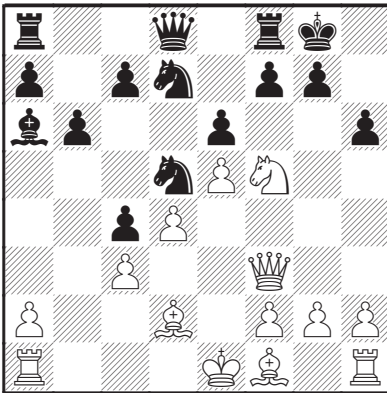
11...♘bd7

Now it will be harder for White to find active chances and Black continues his development.

12.e5?

White is relying on a tactical idea, which won't work. It was better to play 12.♙e2, when Black would have good play after 12...c5, but the struggle would have hardly begun.

12...♘d5 13.♘f5?!



This optimistic leap is the reason for his previous move, which conceded the magnificent d5-square to the knight.

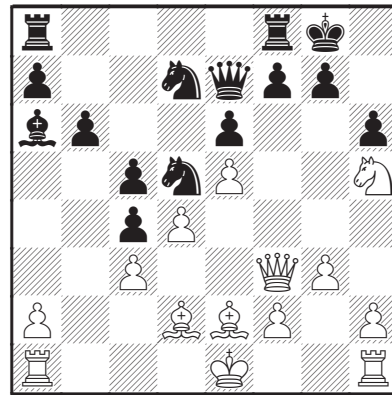
13.♘h5 wasn't dangerous either; White is poorly developed, which means it is difficult to achieve anything positive by attacking; Black might respond with 13...♚h4, stopping 14.♚g3 and 14.♚g4,

while if 14.g3 then 14...♚e7 (not fearing 15.♚g4?! due to 15...f5!).

After 14.♙e2 there are several attractive moves, such as 14...c5 or 14...f5.

It's curious that the engines are attracted to the apparently unnecessary 14...♖fe8, the reason being that they want to make room for the monarch.

After 14...c5 15.g3 Black should play 15...♚h3, and after 16.♙f1 ♚f5 the ending is slightly favourable to Black. But what if Black wants more than this? Let's see what happens after 14...c5 15.g3 if Black plays 15...♚e7 instead.



Exercise: What can White play here?

Answer: White can force a draw by sacrificing two pieces with 16.♘g7! ♙xg7 17.♙xh6+ ♚xh6 18.♚h5+ ♚g7 19.♚g4+ and it's perpetual check, precisely because the king doesn't have f8 available as an escape square.

13...exf5

Fischer chooses the simplest move which gives him the advantage, without dwelling on more complicated

alternatives. This is something we have seen him do on other occasions.

In this case it's possible that 13...f6! was even stronger; opening up the game generally favours the side with better development and White's direct threats are inadequate in this case.

It's not clear that White has anything better than 14.♖e4, to which Black can reply 14...♖e8, preventing 15.♘xh6+ since Black has g6 under control, while after 14.♘xh6+ gxh6 15.♙xh6 Black has a clear advantage after 15...♖e7.

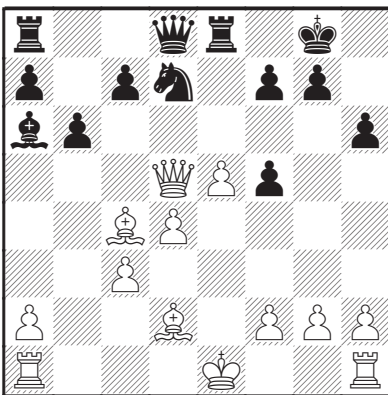
14.♖xd5 ♖e8

The alternative was 14...♖e7, intending ...♖ad8 followed by ...f6, and preventing 15.♙xc4? due to 15...c6! 16.♖xc6 ♖ac8.

15.♙xc4?!

Instead, 15.♙e2?! would have allowed 15...♘xe5! 16.♖xd8 ♘d3+. It was necessary to lose another tempo with 15.♙e3.

The move played is tempting, since it regains the pawn and it brings kingside castling nearer, but it fails.



Exercise: How did Fischer continue?

Answer:

15...♘xe5!

With a crushing exchange sacrifice.

16.♖xd8

Of course 16.dxe5?! ♖xd5 17.♙xd5 ♖xe5+ is worse.

16...♘xc4+ 17.♖xe8+ ♖xe8+

18.♙d1

Exercise (simple): After the previous forced sequence, how should Black continue?

Answer:

18...♘xd2

Of course, by simplifying and enabling the entry of the black rook; it also leaves the white forces uncoordinated and furthermore it even leads to the capture of a second pawn. What more can you ask?

19.♙xd2 ♖e2+ 20.♙c1 ♖xf2

For the exchange Black already has two pawns, and there are more to come. And with the white rooks both passive, Black's advantage is decisive.

21.g3

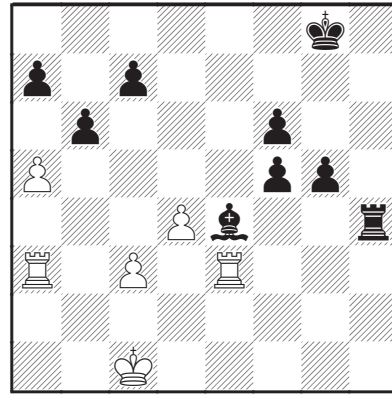
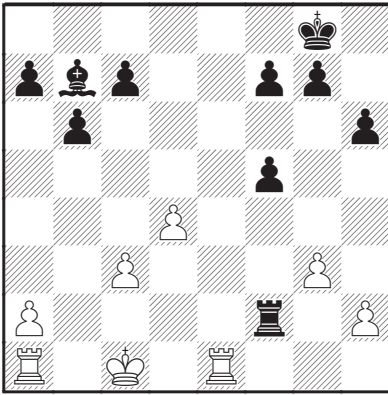
If 21.♖g1 then among other options Black has 21...♙d3, preventing ♖b1-b2 and intending to play 22...♙e4.

21...♙b7

Heading for e4 with gain of time.

22.♖e1

22.♖d1 ♖xh2 23.d5 ♖h3 is equally futile; more pawns are falling and White can do nothing with only one of his rooks active.



Exercise (simple): What do you think Black played here?

Answer:

22... ♖e4

Nullifying any counterplay along the e-file. It was also possible to capture on h2, but this is simpler; the possibility of a check on c2 adds to White's difficulties.

23. ♖e3

White is unable to activate his a1-rook in time; a 23.a4 can be answered simply with 23... ♖xh2 24.a5 ♖c2+ 25. ♔d1 ♖xc3.

23... ♖xh2 24.a4 h5

The position is so winning that Fischer doesn't even bother to restrain White's activity with 24...a5 and instead he mobilises his kingside pawn majority.

25. ♖a3

If 25.a5 then Black could play 25...b5.

25...g5 26. ♖b3 f6 27.a5 h4 28.gxh4 ♖xh4 29. ♖a3

After needing to waste several tempi, White hurries to activate a rook, but it's already too late.

Exercise: There are several moves to win here. What plan did Fischer begin?

Answer:

29... ♖h7!

The rook retreats, for both defensive (c7) and aggressive purposes.

30.axb6 axb6 31. ♖a7

Exercise: What was the above-mentioned aggressive purpose?

Answer:

31... ♖e7

Overprotecting the bishop and thus enabling the advance of the kingside pawn-mass, which is now unstoppable.

32.d5 ♔f7 33. ♔d2 f4 34. ♖e1 f5 35.c4 g4 36. ♖b7 g3 37.d6 cxd6 38. ♖xb6 f3

0-1

1966

Game 29

Recovery in one of the strongest tournaments of the time

From January 1964 until mid-July 1966 Fischer played only 33 official games, including the 1965 Capablanca Memorial and the 1965 US Championship, as we have seen.

In July and August 1966 he took part in one of the strongest tournaments of the decade, the 2nd Piatigorsky Cup, in Santa Monica, USA. Present were World Champion Tigran Petrosian, Boris Spassky, who had challenged Petrosian only months earlier, Bent Larsen, considered to be the best player in the West, together with Fischer, and other top-class players.

Fischer paid a high price for being out of training; in the first cycle he suffered three defeats and at the end of that cycle he was in next-to-last place, on 3½ points out of 9, while the leaders Spassky and Larsen had 6 points.

In *New in Chess* magazine, Jan Timman relates that on the occasion of Fischer's death a construction worker called Jim Morrison sent him a curious message via the Internet. He told him that when the Santa Monica tournament was taking place, very early one morning while he was working in the Hotel Miramar,

Fischer and his friend Lombardy were out walking. He was able to hear an excited Fischer telling his friend in a very loud voice, believing he was talking in private: "I'm going to crush Najdorf, and Larsen! Petrosian doesn't have a chance. Just wait until I get to play Spassky!"

This conversation, which shows Fischer's fierce competitive spirit, so impressed that workman that forty years later he still remembered it almost word for word.

In fact everything changed in the second cycle. Fischer scored six wins, and even though Spassky ran away with first prize all on his own, with his admirable comeback Fischer moved up from second-to-last to overall second.

That was the last time that Fischer did not come first in a tournament.

Let's look at one of his wins from the final rounds:

▷ **Jan Hein Donner**

▶ **Robert Fischer**

King's Indian Defence [E68]

2nd Piatigorsky Cup, Santa Monica

(13) 07.08.1966

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.g3 ♙g7 4.♙g2
0-0 5.♘c3 d6 6.♘f3 ♘bd7 7.0-0 e5
8.e4 c6 9.♖b1

A deviation from the main move, 9.h3, which controls g4, ready for playing ♙e3.