

The Unknown Fischer

Cyrus Lakdawala



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About the Author

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

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Introduction

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

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

I couldn't get enough of Fischer's games, my drug addiction of choice. The trouble was books on Fischer just kept repeating the same masterpieces over and over, as if he only played 150 games in his entire career. I'm guessing that a majority of Fischer fans have really only played over his most famous games. But what about all the others? This book addresses the under-covered subject of the "others". So please understand this is *not* a Fischer's Greatest Hits book.

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

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

Fischer’s Style

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

Intuition is a boundary beyond where mathematics goes. Very few possess it, to the point where it functions even more efficiently than mere number crunching. Fischer – like Morphy, Capa, Tal (yes, Tal, who Kasparov said saw “through” variations) and Carlsen, like single daisies growing out of a stone ruin – had this mysterious gift of simply knowing where to place pieces and pawns, when the rest of us lack the means to understand.

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

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

Cyrus Lakdawala
November 2023

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

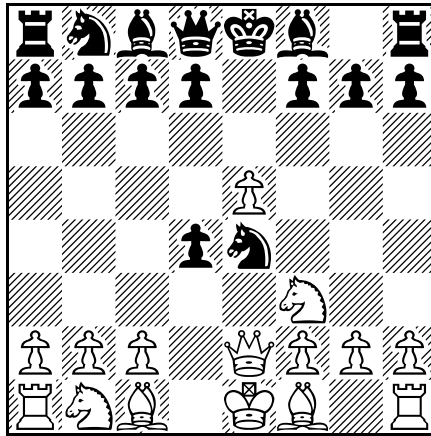
1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘f6 3 d4

The younger Bobby, more so than the older version, favoured open positions, so this is a natural choice for him when faced with Petroff's Defence. Future Bobby favoured 3 ♘xe5.

3...exd4!?

3...♘xe4! is the move played today.

4 e5 ♘e4 5 ♚e2!?



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

1. White wins back the d4-pawn later.
2. White then develops with ♘c3, ♙d2 and 0-0-0.
3. White's queen on e2, while clogging kingside development, also inhibits Black from playing either ...d7-d5 or ...f7-f5, due to the en passant captures.
4. White can develop the kingside via fianchetto.

Normal theory runs 5 ♚xd4 d5 6 exd6 ♘xd6 7 ♘c3 ♘c6 8 ♚f4 g6 9 ♙e3 ♙g7 10 0-0-0 0-0, when I wouldn't want to play Black's position.

5...♘c5

5...♙b4+! allows even chances after 6 ♙d1!? d5! 7 exd6 f5 8 ♘g5 (8 ♘bd2 ♙xd2 9 ♘xd2 0-0 is messy and called even by the engine) 8...0-0 9 dxc7 ♚xc7 10 ♚c4+ ♚xc4 11 ♙xc4+

♔h8 12 ♖h3, P.Berclaz-J.Gronemann, correspondence 2000, when 12...♗c6 leaves Black slightly better due to a lead in development.

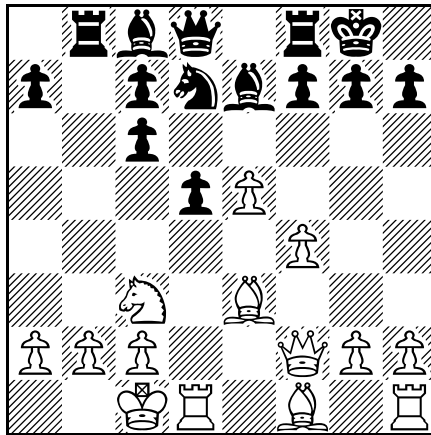
6 ♖xd4 ♗c6 7 ♗xc6 bxc6?!

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

8 ♗c3 ♖b8 9 f4!

A couple of years after this game, Keres won with 9 a3!? ♗e7 10 ♗e3! d5! (10...♖xb2? 11 ♗xc5 ♗xc5 12 ♖a4 ♖b5 13 ♗d2! White wins material) 11 exd6 cxd6 12 ♗xc5 dxc5 13 ♖e5! and White stood better in P.Keres-J.Bolbochan, Buenos Aires 1964, Black shouldn't play 13...♖xb2?! due to 14 ♖d1 ♗d7 15 ♖e4! ♖a5+ 16 c3 f6 17 ♖d6+ ♔f8 18 ♗g3 and Black's king is in danger.

9...♗e7 10 ♖f2! d5 11 ♗e3 ♗d7 12 0-0-0 0-0



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

13 g4!?

This follows the go big or go home philosophy. In case you didn't know it, as White, Bobby displayed a predilection for pushing his g-pawns two squares even before it became fashionable. 13 ♗d3 ♖e8 14 ♖a4, going for a blockade on c5, is the more strategic-minded way to play the position.

13...♗b4?!

It doesn't make much sense to chase White's knight to a4. 13...♗b6 looks better.

14 ♗e2?!

Bobby is obsessed with attacking and sends his knight in the direction of the black king. Instead, 14 ♖a4! fights for control over c5. If 14...♗b6 15 ♖xb6! (stronger than moving the knight to c5, offering the g4-pawn as a line-opening sacrifice) 15...axb6 16 ♗d3!, White's

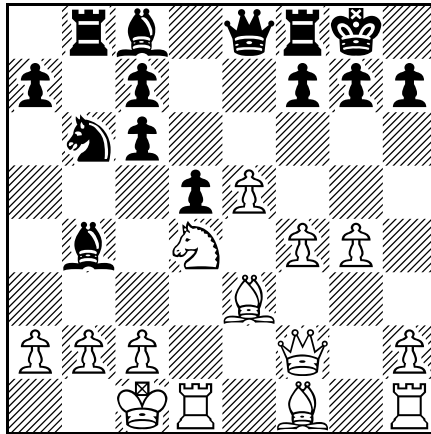
attack looks faster, whether Black chops the g4-pawn or not.

14...♖b6?!

Black should play 14...c5! (the d5-pawn isn't hanging due to the threat to skewer White's rooks on the long diagonal) 15 c3 ♕a5 16 ♖g1 c6, when ...♗b6 is coming and Black's chances look no worse.

15 ♘d4! ♕e8!

15...♕d7?! 16 ♘b3! is in White's favour.



16 c3

16 a3! looks more promising: 16...♕e7 17 f5! c5 18 f6! gxf6 (18...cxd4? 19 ♕xd4 ♕d8 20 ♗h4 gives White a winning attack for the piece) 19 ♘f5! fxe5 20 ♖b5! ♕d7 21 ♘xe7+ ♗xe7 22 ♕xc5 ♗g5+ 23 ♕e3 ♗g7 24 ♕xd7 d4! 25 ♕xd4 exd4 26 ♗xd4 leaves White a pawn up.

16...♕e7 17 f5 c5 18 ♘b5?!

18 ♘c2! ♘a4 19 f6 ♕d8 20 ♗f4! (threat: ♗g5) 20...gxf6 21 ♖xd5! is a complete mess, unhelpfully called dead even by the engine.

18...d4!

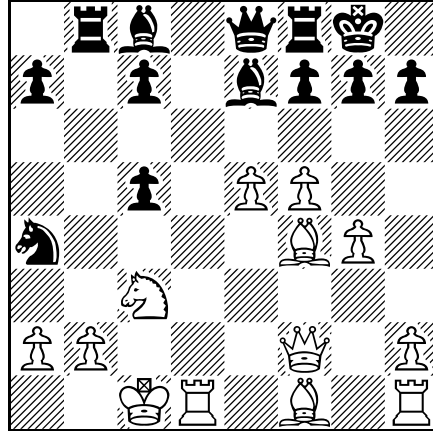
This seizes the initiative.

19 ♕f4 dxc3?

In such sharp positions, if your move isn't helping, then it's hurting. The advantage swings back and forth. Black stands better if he found 19...c4! 20 ♘xd4 ♘a4! and White is in deep trouble since 21 ♖d2?? only makes matters worse after 21...♘xb2!, leaving White completely busted as acceptance is met by ...♕a3.

20 ♘xc3 ♘a4?!

20...c4 is a better try, although White still stands clearly better after 21 f6! gxf6 22 exf6 ♕xf6 23 ♕xc7! ♕g5+ 24 ♔b1 ♖b7 25 ♕xb6! ♖xb6 26 ♕xc4 ♗c6 27 ♕b3.



Exercise (combination alert): Do you see a combination for White which removes the oxygen from Black's intended attack?

Answer: Interference.

21 ♖b5!

This defensive shot interrupts the conversation. Black generates sufficient play after 21 ♖xa4? ♜xa4 22 b3 ♙h4! (or 22...♞xb3 23 axb3 ♜xb3) 23 bxa4! ♙xf2 24 ♖b5 and the ending looks balanced.

21...♞xb5 22 ♘xa4

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

22...♞b4 23 ♘c3 ♙b7?

He should try 23...♙h4! 24 ♜xh4! ♞xf4 25 ♞he1 albeit with advantage for White. Black can't play 25...♙xf5?? due to 26 ♜g5 winning a piece.

24 ♞he1!

Black is strategically busted. He must watch out for f5-f6. Fischer correctly avoids the immediate and tempting 24 f6? ♙xh1 25 fxe7 ♜xe7 26 ♞xh1 ♞fb8, which is messy and called dead even by the engine.

24...♙h8?

He had to try 24...♜c8 25 f6 gxf6 26 ♙h6 ♜e6 27 ♙xf8 ♙xf8 28 exf6 ♜xf6 29 ♜xf6 ♙xf6 30 ♞d7 ♞xg4 31 ♞xc7 which is also lost, but not as much as the game's continuation.

25 f6!

Of course.

25...♙d8

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

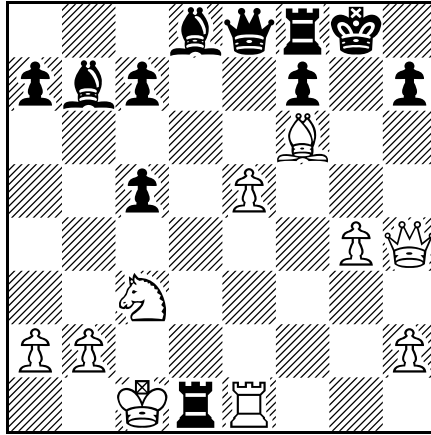
26 ♙g5! ♞d4

26...g6 27 ♙h6 and if 27...♞g8 then 28 e6! wins.

27 fxg7+ ♔xg7 28 ♕f6+ ♔g8 29 ♖h4

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

29...♖xd1+



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

Answer: Recapturing with the knight is best, since it cuts off ...♖e3+ defences.

30 ♖xd1! 1-0

In view of 20...♕xf6 31 exf6 with simultaneous threats to mate and also chop Black's hanging queen. Whereas 30 ♖xd1?? unnecessarily allows Black back into the game after 30...♕xf6 31 exf6 ♖e3+ 32 ♔b1 ♖f4.

Game 6

R.J.Fischer-P.Benko

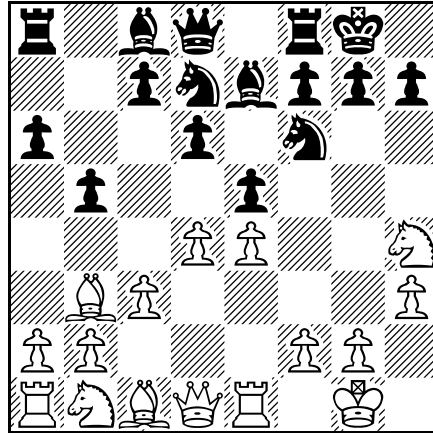
U.S. Championship, New York 1965

Ruy Lopez

1 e4 e5 2 ♖f3 ♗c6 3 ♕b5 a6 4 ♕a4 ♗f6 5 0-0 ♕e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♕b3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 ♗b8

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

10 d4 ♗bd7 11 ♗h4!?



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

11...♖b6

The best response was 11...♖xe4! 12 ♖f5 ♖df6 13 ♖f3 (13 ♖xe7+ ♖xe7 14 ♖xe4? is a failed attempt at a combination: 14...♖xe4 15 ♖d5 ♖f5 16 ♖f3 ♖g6 17 ♖xe4 exd4 18 ♖d2 ♖ae8 leaves White in trouble, due to the development lag) 13...♖b7 14 ♖c2 ♖c5! 15 ♖g3 ♖e6 16 ♖h6, when Black can force a draw with 16...♖h5! (rather than 16...♖e8?!, E.Vasiukov-R.Kholmov, USSR Cup, Moscow 1964) 17 ♖g4 ♖f6 18 ♖g3 ♖h5, as seen six months’ earlier in V.Hort-V.Jansa, Marianske Lazne 1965.

12 ♖d2 c5

Benko refuses to be tempted into Bobby’s pre-game analysis and proceeds sensibly. 12...exd4 leads to great complications after 13 cxd4 ♖xe4 14 ♖xe4 d5! (14...♖xh4? 15 ♖h5 offers White a fierce initiative) 15 ♖f3 dxe4 16 ♖xe4 c5! and Black looks okay.

13 dxc5

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

13...dxc5 14 ♖f5 ♖xf5?!

After this strategic error, Fischer gets a nagging edge due to possession of the bishop pair and power on the light squares. Black equalizes with 14...c4! 15 ♖c2 ♖c5 16 ♖f3 ♖e8.

15 exf5 ♖c7 16 g4!?

Have I mentioned Bobby’s undying love of pushing his g-pawns? 16 ♖f3 c4 17 ♖c2 ♖bd5 18 ♖e4 is more restrained.

guided attempt to remove the flexibility of White's kingside pawns. The problem is that Black conveniently opens the g-file for White's coming attack. 21...a5 is a better try.

22 gxf4 ♘d5 23 ♞e4 ♜f4 24 ♙xf4

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

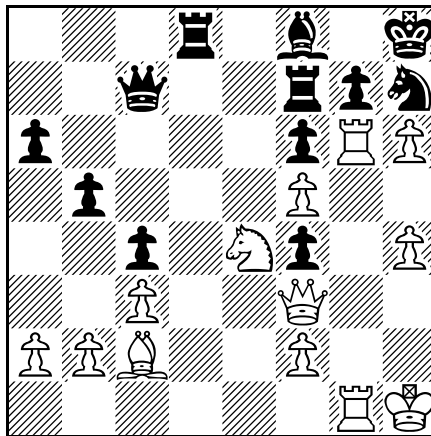
24...exf4 25 ♙h1

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

25...♙h8 26 ♖g1 ♗f7 27 ♖g6! ♙d6

The bishop is soon induced back to f8. Benko is just marking time; if 27...♘f8 28 ♖ag1, of course White's rook can't be taken.

28 ♖ag1 ♙f8 29 h6



29...♙e5

29...gxh6?? isn't much of a consideration: 30 ♖g8 mate.

30 ♙g4

Covering f5, while hammering away at g7.

30...♖dd7 31 f3 ♙c5

31...a5 32 h5! b4 33 hxg7+ ♖xg7 34 h6 forces resignation.

32 ♞xc5!

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

32...♙xc5 33 ♖xg7 ♖xg7 34 hxg7+ ♙g8 35 ♙g6

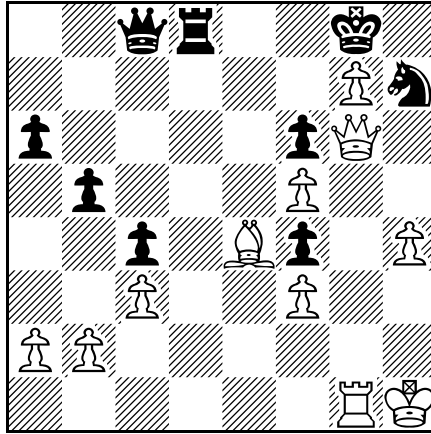
Threatening a nasty check on e8.

35...♖d8 36 ♙e4

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

36...♙c8

If 36...♖d6 37 h5 ♗d7 38 h6 ♗d6 39 ♚e1! ♗d7 40 ♙d5+!, the clearance shot forces mate in four.



Exercise (combination alert): Black's king checked into the Roach Motel, where guests never survive long enough to check out. Black's position is far from an impenetrable barrier. Do you see Bobby's deadly blow?

Answer: Queen sacrifice/decoy.

37 ♗e8+! 1-0

The queen dies a martyr to a glorious cause, which allows her bishop to magically teleport to the deadly d5-square: 37...♗xe8 38 ♙d5+ wins. Have you ever met an unpleasant person, where you are regrettably forced to stick your hand out and say "Pleased to meet you", when in reality, you aren't pleased at all? Black's rook and queen are in just that situation with White's obnoxious bishop.

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

1 c4 g6 2 ♘c3 ♙g7 3 g3 e5

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

4 ♙g2 d6 5 e3

White can also set up with a knight on f3, or the Botvinnik English with e2-e4 and ♖ge2.

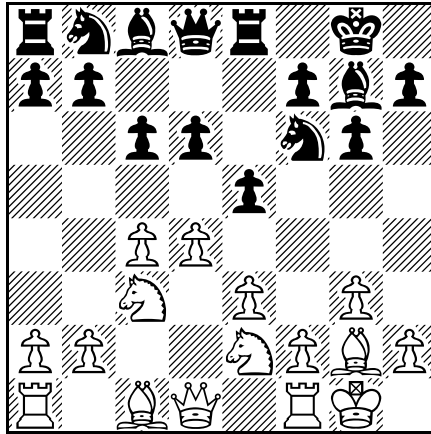
5...♗f6

In such English versus King's Indians, Fischer's stylistic preference tended to be piece play over pawn storms. An alternative set-up is 5...♗c6 6 ♗ge2 f5.

6 ♗ge2 0-0 7 0-0 c6

In King's Indian Attack positions with colours reversed, Fischer generally favoured this centre-building plan, over 7...♗c6.

8 d4 ♖e8



He plays for ...e5-e4.

9 ♖b1

In case you believe 9 dxe5 dxe5 10 ♖xd8 ♗xd8 is drawish, White scores just below 30% from this queenless middlegame; the engine already slightly favours Black.

Instead, 9 e4!? exd4 10 ♗xd4 is a g2-g3 KID, except that White took two moves to play e2-e4, rather than one, which means that Black stands even.

9...e4

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

10 b4

After 10 d5 c5 11 a3 ♗f5 12 b4 b6 13 bxc5 bxc5, L.Fernandez de Armas-I.Madurga Lopez, Mondariz 2012, I prefer Black's kingside chances and so does the engine.

10...♗f5 11 h3?!

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

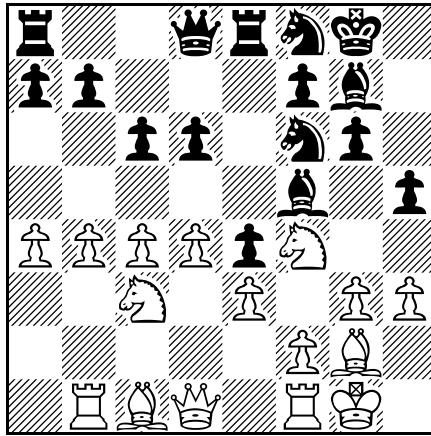
11...h5 12 ♗f4

Now 12 d5 ♖c8! 13 ♗h2 ♗bd7! 14 dxc6 bxc6 15 ♗d4 (15 ♖xd6? ♗e5 is a winning attack for Black) 15...♗e5 looks pretty scary for White.

12...♗bd7 13 a4

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

13...♖f8



14 c5?

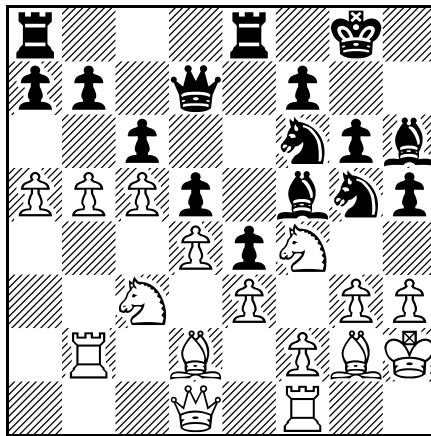
Closing the centre is a strategic error when your king is about to come under attack. This is well understood today, yet not so much in 1968.

White should play on the principle: *Meet the opponent's wing attack with a central counter*, with 14 d5! g5! 15 ♖fe2 (15 ♘h5?? ♘h5 16 ♙xh5 hangs the now loose c3-knight after 16...♗g6 17 ♚e2 ♗xc3) 15...♙d7 16 dxc6 bxc6 17 b5 c5! 18 ♘d5 ♗xh3 19 ♘xf6+ ♗xf6 20 ♗b2 and White's chances are far better here than in the game, despite Black's extra pawn.

14...d5 15 b5 ♘8h7 16 ♗d2 ♘g5 17 ♚b2 ♙d7 18 ♗h2

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

18...♗h6! 19 a5



Exercise (planning/combination alert): Bobby's attackers achieved their optimal posts and it's time to strike. Prove how Black's attack is faster than White's on the other side of the board.

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

19...♗g4!!

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

20 hxg4

Accept or decline, White is busted either way. 20 ♖b1 ♜f3+ 21 ♙xf3 ♙xf3 22 bxc6 bxc6 23 ♚b7 ♖f5 is a winning attack for Black.

20...hxg4!

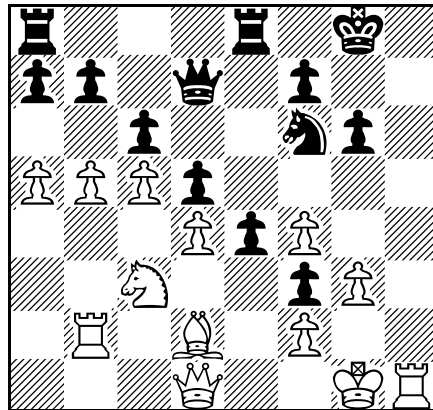
Black's attack is switched on at full wattage. Taking with the pawn is stronger than with the knight.

21 ♚h1 ♜f3+ 22 ♙xf3 gxf3 23 ♔g1 ♙xf4!

Eliminating a key defender of the white king.

24 exf4

It's easy to see that 24 gxf4?? allows 24...♖g4+ and mate in two.



Exercise (planning): White's king dreams of a dash for freedom. If given time, White will play ♙e3, followed by ♔f1, ♔e1 and ♔d2, running away to the queenside. This get-out-of-jail-free card is an optical illusion. Find a plan to continue Black's attack.

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

24...♖g7! 25 f5

25 ♗e3 ♖h8 26 ♖xh8 ♖xh8 27 ♔f1 (White's king is unable to run to f1, due to back rank mate on h1) 27...♗f5 28 bxc6 ♗h5 forces mate.

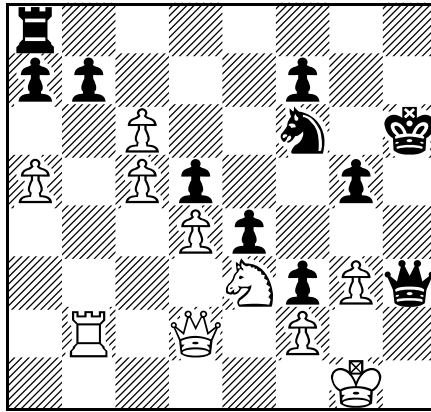
25...♖h8 26 ♗h6+

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

26...♖xh6 27 ♖xh6 ♔xh6 28 ♗d2+ g5! 29 bxc6 ♗xf5! 30 ♖d1

Or 30 cxb7 ♗h3 31 bxa8♗ ♗g2 mate. We are starkly reminded of the scriptural warning: "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." How fortunate for us chess players, since we are all broke and therefore destined for Heaven!

30...♗h3 31 ♖e3



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

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

31...♔g6! 0-1

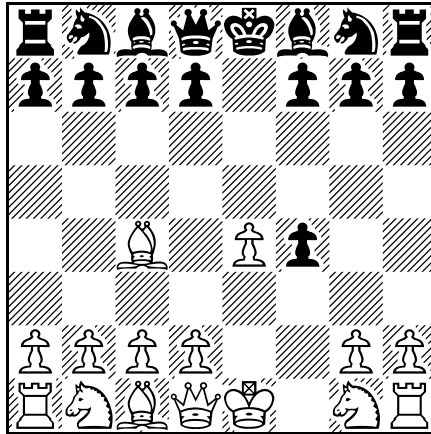
White resigned in view of 32 cxb7 ♖h8 33 b8♗ ♗h1 mate.

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

1 e4 e5 2 f4!?

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

2...exf4 3 ♖c4



Bobby favoured the Bishop's Gambit over the more often played 3 ♖f3.

3...♗e7!?

While a bit eccentric, this isn't such a bad move. The idea is to play for ...c7-c6 and ...d7-d5, without worry of e4-e5. Black's main moves in the position are 3...♗f6 (Game 43), 3...d5 (Games 49 and 50) and 3...♖h4+.

4 ♗c3 c6 5 ♗f3

5 d4 d5 6 exd5 ♗xd5 is equal.

5...d5 6 ♖b3 dxe4

6...♗e6 is also even.

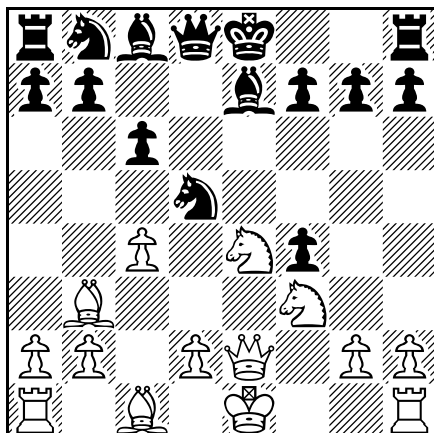
7 ♗xe4

7 ♗g5?! ♗d5 8 ♗gxe4 ♖h4+ is in Black's favour.

7...♗d5 8 ♖e2!?

8 O-O is more natural.

8...♗e7 9 c4



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

9...♞c7

9...♞f6?? 10 ♞xf6+ gxf6 11 d4 is strategically lost for Black.

10 d4 0-0 11 ♙xf4

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

If instead 11 0-0, as in K.Petenev-D.Petrukhin, Novosibirsk 2008, Black should play 11...♙g4 12 ♚d1 ♞e6 13 d5 ♞c5, when chances look balanced.

11...♞e6?!

This move clogs Black's queenside development. It was better to give an immediate bishop check: 11...♙b4+ 12 ♚f2! ♞e6 (12...♚e8?? loses instantly to 13 ♙xc7! ♚xc7 14 ♞f6+ etc) 13 ♙e3 c5! 14 d5 ♞d4! 15 ♙xd4! cxd4 16 a3 ♙e7 17 ♚he1 ♙g4 18 ♙g1, when Black gets some – but probably not full – dark square compensation for the (future) sacrificed pawn, since the d4-pawn is likely to fall.

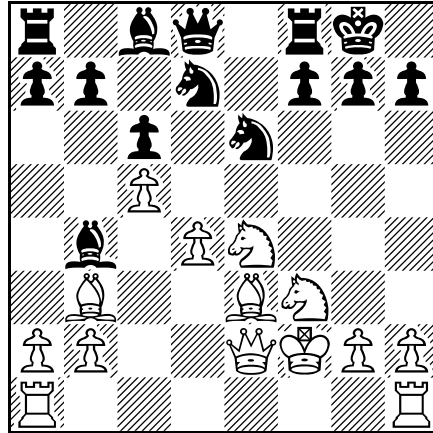
12 ♙e3 ♙b4+ 13 ♚f2!?

Bobby plans to castle by hand. The engine prefers 13 ♞c3.

13...♞d7

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

14 c5!



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

14...♘f6 15 ♘xf6+

15 ♘d6?! ♘g4+ favours Black.

15...♙xf6 16 ♖hf1!

Bobby will “pretend” castle when his king reaches g1.

16...♘f4

Otherwise Black’s queenside is unable to develop.

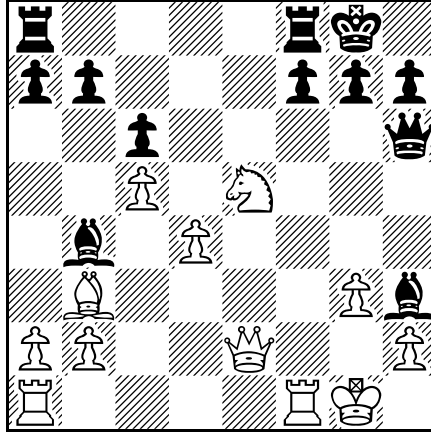
17 ♙xf4 ♙xf4 18 g3!

This is an example of Fischer’s mysteriously powerful strategic intuition. Few players would voluntarily weaken the kingside with what appears to be a strategically debilitating pawn push. Fischer correctly sees that Black is unable to exploit the weakened light squares. His idea is the coming exchange sacrifice to go after f7. He wasn’t satisfied with a slightly superior ending with the line 18 ♔g1 ♙g4 19 ♙e5! ♙xe5 20 ♘xe5 ♙e6 21 ♙xe6 fxe6.

18...♙h6 19 ♔g1 ♙h3?

Confusion over our position’s true assessment has a way of greatly magnifying our suffering. The bishop is the overly optimistic kid who still wants to go out to play on a rainy day. This last move is the instrument of his ruin. Black should agree to an inferior ending with 19...♙e6 (19...♙g4 20 ♙e4! ♙e6 comes to the same thing) 20 ♙xe6 ♙xe6 21 ♙xe6 fxe6. Black must learn to live with the cruel deformity on e6, which isn’t fatal and Minic can still hope to hold.

20 ♘e5!



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

20...♙xf1

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

On the other hand, it's too late to retract and make the defensive move 20...♙e6? – as the saying goes: that ship has sailed – which fails miserably to 21 ♖xf7! ♙xf7 22 ♜xf7 ♜xf7 23 ♜f1 ♙h8 24 ♜xf7. The only way for Black to protect his king is to enter a totally hopeless ending with 24...♜c1+ 25 ♙g2 ♜d2 26 ♜xd2 ♙xd2 27 ♜xb7.

Nor is Black saved by 20...♜d2 21 ♜e4! ♙g2! 22 ♖f3! ♙xf3 23 ♜xf3 ♜xb2 24 ♜af1 ♙c3 25 ♙h1 ♙xd4 26 ♜b1! ♜d2 27 ♜d3 and White wins a piece.

21 ♜xf1 ♙d2

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

22 ♜f3!

Covering against the intended ...♜e3+, Fischer understands there is no rush to chop the f7-pawn.

22...♜ad8

22...♙h8 23 ♖xf7+ ♜xf7 24 ♙xf7 ♙g5 25 d5 cxd5 26 ♙xd5 is also lost for Black.

23 ♖xf7 ♜xf7 24 ♜e7! 1-0