

Fischer Checkmated Already?

The writer, marketing manager for Gulf Computer Sciences here, is a former Canadian chess champion and is an International Chess Master.

By **FRANK ANDERSON**
International Chess Master

World Champion Boris Spassky of Russia has taken a tremendous lead after one week of the World Chess Championships in Iceland, a lead even greater than appears on the surface.

The result — after one game and one forfeit — is that American challenger Bobby Fischer can catch up only by winning three more games than Spassky of the possible 22 games left.

Fischer could do it. He has met and conquered greater odds in previous matches. But his handicap at this point — before the third game today — is very great.

Spassky, playing clever psychological chess, won the first game af-

ter a tough 56-move battle. Fischer made one of his rare errors when, trying for aggressive complications on his 29th move, he allowed his bishop to be trapped. Spassky, in the first important game, in effect, said to Fischer "come and get me." Fischer's well-known aggressive chess instincts rose to the occasion, but he overstepped the precise needs of the position and Spassky took full advantage of the small error.

In the second, forfeited game, Fischer refused to appear because he objected to the closed circuit television cameras. It's easy to see why American chess fans are both dismayed and fearful of Fischer's present temperament. Chess, after all, is a game of manners and honor. Fischer's actions in the past few weeks have not shown self-discipline and Spassky is rapidly assuming the role of hero while Fischer becomes the villain.

The basic question posed by this widely publicized chess match is whether Fischer can break the overwhelming hold the Russians have on

chess. For 24 straight years, a Russian has held the world's chess championship. For the first time in all those years, the U.S. has a challenger to the Russian domination.

Creating increased interest in this contest is the knowledge that Fischer is truly a serious challenger, having established some phenomenal recent records. In preliminary play leading to this final match, Fischer scored an unheard of 19 straight wins against leading chess players. Not only the winning streak itself, but the manner of his brilliant and precise play excited admiration from chess fans everywhere.

American fans, with understandable national pride, began to predict an American world champion.

But now, after two games, the score is Spassky, two, Fischer, nothing. Remember — the champion (Spassky) only needs 12 points out of a possible 24 points. The challenger (Fischer) needs 12½ points. (Each game is worth one point, with draws being split.)

(Continued on Page E-7, Col. 1)

1ST ARTICLE

JULY 16, 1972

How Bobby Lost

The First Game

This simplified diagram shows what happened after Spassky's 29th move in the first game. The position began fairly even, but Fischer (black arrows) spots an opportunity for complications and sweeps with his bishop (1) capturing Spassky's rook pawn.

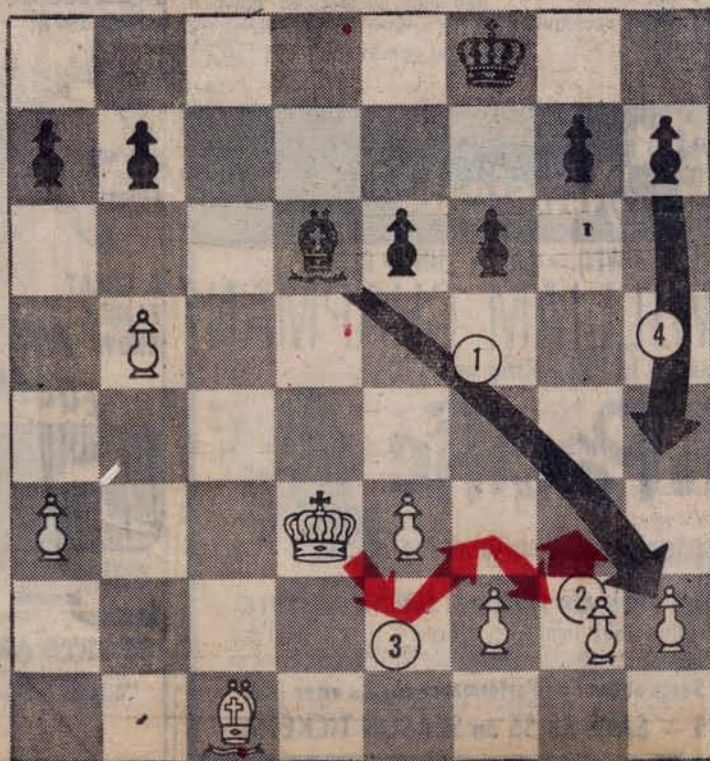
Spassky (red arrows) counters by moving his knight pawn one square forward (2), trapping Fischer's bishop.

On his next move, Spassky swings the king over to his right side (3).

Meanwhile, Fischer races to the rescue of his bishop by running his rook pawn down the board (4), but, alas, it's too late. For chess players, the

sequence ran: 29...BXKRP. 30. PN3 PKR4. 31. KK2 PR5. 32. KB3 KK2. 33. KN2 PXP. 34. PXP BXP. 35. KXB... (21 moves later, Fischer resigned.)

BLACK: Bobby Fischer (U.S.A.)



WHITE: Boris Spassky (RUSSIA)

Is Bobby Checkmated Already?

(Continued from Page E-1)

Thus, after Fischer's second loss, Spassky needs only 10 more points to retain the world championship he has held for three years. And Fischer needs 12½ points to win.

Everything about these matches is big. Even the total purse is the largest in chess history. First prize will be about \$180,000 and the loser of the match will pick up \$120,000. And not only the prize money but each player's reputations and the responsibility of representing one's country is at stake.

Tuesday's start was highly dramatic. After many delays and special negotiations, the 35-year-old Spassky arrived promptly at 5 p.m. to be greeted on stage by the chess officials, but no opponent. After speaking to the referee, Lothar Schmid, Spassky made his first move, pawn to queen four. There was uneasiness in the audience until, seven minutes later, Fischer arrived, greeted with a round of applause. Spassky, always attired in good style, arrived in a dark suit with vest. Fischer wore a white shirt and business suit and his favorite chess tie, which has chess piece symbols in the pattern.

Chess, although primarily an intellectual competition, has a large amount of psychology. Fischer's late arrival probably was motivated by his desire to unnerve his opponent. Under international chess rules, a player may be up to an hour late before forfeiting a game (as Fischer did on Thursday). International tournament chess is no long drawn-out process, either. Each player has 2½ hours to make 40 moves (an average of only about 3½ minutes a move). Time is noted by a chess clock with two faces which keeps track of each player's elapsed time.

Spassky's first move and selection of the opening showed his desire to play a tight waiting game in anticipation of Fischer's desire to attack. Fischer's choice of the Nimzo-Indian opening — named for the late Russian grand master, the late Aron Nimzovitch — was no surprise to

chess fans, because he has used it in the past. It leads to an early complicated game with chances for both sides, and is in the spirit of Fischer's approach to fighting chess. Spassky countered with a number of exchange maneuvers that reduced the forces making it difficult for either player to engineer a strong attack. Perhaps this unsettled Fischer somewhat, causing him to make his unusual and crucial mistake.

The theater where the matches are being played was crowded for this first game. Approximately 2,500 seats are available in the main auditorium with a great deal of extra room available, both in a large cafeteria with television monitors and downstairs in lecture rooms. Close circuit television covered mostly the large demonstration board in the main theater which showed the up-to-date position. Next to this demonstration board are large reproductions of the players' time clocks showing the elapsed time and a numerical list of the actual moves played. A large electronic sign flashed signals to the large audience to be silent when murmurs began reaching the stage. No spectators were seated within 25 yards of the stage, nor was any analysis on small sets allowed in the main theater. However, adjacent rooms were crowded with players analyzing on their small sets, or discussing variations with the leading masters who were showing the game on the large demonstration boards.

Fischer's typical appearance in chess play reveals an intense concentration while leaning forward with his head propped in his hands. Occasionally he sips his favorite cold orange juice and rocks slightly in his favorite swivel chair flown in from New York for this occasion. Spassky leans on his forearms over the edge of the table, with his legs bent back under the chair with his toes downward. Both players walk back and forth upon the stage while awaiting moves of their opponent.

The tourney, though in Iceland, is drawing world-wide

interest. A typical scene is at Gulf Computer Sciences in San Diego, where chess fans have set up a large demonstration board and are analyzing all the moves and trying to second-guess their favorite, Bobby Fischer. In trying to predict the result of this match, one naturally looks at the past records of these two great chess players. Spassky and Fischer have met five times previously and the bare results show Spassky winning three games, Fischer drawing two, hardly a good record for Fischer. However, analysis of the games shows that Fischer's statement seems true that he was always the aggressor. In these past games, Spassky, however, reacted in a grandmaster way to Fischer's attacks and repulsed them in world championship style. Both players have clearly studied each others' total recorded games. In fact, Fischer has two loose-leaf books called "Spassky White" and "Spassky Black." In these notebooks are all of Spassky's games played with the white and black pieces respectively, as well as Fischer's notes to these games.

It is not too well known that for a chess match, the players must be in superb physical and mental shape. Usually two to three months of intense physical training is needed in preparation. Fischer has used swimming, bowling, and tennis as his major preparation sports, while Spassky utilizes skiing, running, and swimming.

What happens when a game is unfinished within the five hour session allotted to it? The position is recorded and the players break overnight before resuming the game the next day. In this interim period, the players are allowed to consult with their assistants, called "seconds," over the best moves to be played after the adjournment. Often, the break period is devoted to an overnight session of analysis when the position is difficult. The seconds must stay up all night and do the analyses for the next day's match while the players themselves get a few hours of sleep!

Spassky's second is the very strong grand master Ewim Geller, while Fischer's is a priest, the Rev. William Lombardy. Lombardy is a former world junior chess champion and a very strong grand master who lives in New York City. Chess players' seconds usually revise their work schedule to suit the demands of the match. They sleep during the day, have breakfast about 5 p.m. when the game starts, and are ready throughout the night on behalf of their player.

The style of the two players differs. Fischer reveals a phenomenally precise and aggressive manner of playing. His skilled tactics are of the very highest order, as is his strategical maneuvering ability. Fischer is one of the two or three players in the world who has the greatest depth of opening knowledge. His endgame play is of the highest class. The most noticeable characteristic is his killer instinct. When he gets a slightly superior position, he will not relax until he has achieved the sharpest and speediest victory. Spassky's style shows a brilliance of positional and tactical motifs with a superior knowledge of the psychological factors in chess.

In Spassky's previous world championship match with the Russian Tigris Petrosian, Spassky revealed a manner of selecting the appropriate openings and conducting the middle and endgame in a fashion to create the greatest difficulties for his opponent. This match victory was a supreme achievement for Spassky, for Petrosian is noted to be one of the hardest players in the world to beat.

Noteworthy in Spassky's style is his courageous adventuring into unknown positions using his superb judgment by working his way through unfathomable complications. Spassky is well liked as a sportsmanlike gentleman, both at the chessboard and away from it. It is generally agreed that we are watching the two best players in the world competing for the world's chess championship.