

CHESS BARBS RUSS HOPES FOR BORIS

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Commentary and annotations on the ninth match game for the world chess championship between Boris Spassky and Robert Fischer by international grandmaster Lev Polugaevsky, translated from "Sovetsky Sport", August 3, 1972, pg. 4.

Following a short break in the match brought about by the indisposition of the world champion, Spassky and Fischer resumed their struggle. The challenger sought to avoid repetition of opening systems in the ninth contest by answering Spassky's 1 d4 with the so-called improved Tarrasch Defense.

When Fischer played a risky pawn move on his ninth turn (b5), it seemed that Spassky would obtain a tangible positional advantage, but he faltered and failed to exploit Black's tainted maneuver. An unfortunate retreat of his bishop, with consequent loss of time, cost White his opportunity to build up an initiative. Fischer activated his pieces and succeeded in castling.

A nearly balanced position was the end result. Then most of the remaining pieces were traded off and it became clear that the game would be drawn, leaving the score of the match at 5-3 in favor of the challenger.

Spassky's lack of success in the first third of the match caused him considerable chagrin, not so much due to the score as to the games

themselves. Thus far in the contest the world champion is unrecognizable: gross errors, occasional oversights of a positional nature, and, at times, a sort of slackness in dealing with problems over the board. Yet colleagues and a great many fans of Boris Spassky's talent know him as a vigorous, attacking grandmaster with a universal chess style. Naturally, everyone anxiously awaited the ninth game to see whether Spassky would overcome his poor start and at last find his stride.

White: Boris Spassky. Black: Robert Fischer. World Championship, Match Game No. 9. Reykjavik, Iceland, August 1, 1972. Queen's Gambit Declined.

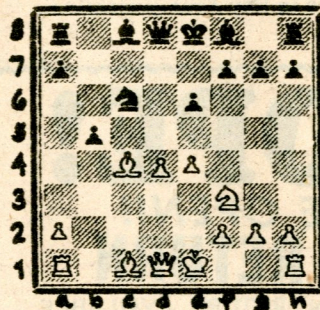
1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nf3 d5 4 Nc3(A) c5(B) 5 cd Nd5 6 e4(C) Nc3 7 bc cd 8 cd Nc6(D) 9 Bc4(E) b5?!(F) 10 Bd3(G) Bb4ch(H) 11 Bd2(I) Bd2ch 12 Qd2 a6 13 a4 O-O!(J) 14 Qc3(K) Bb7 15 ab ab 16 O-O(L) Qb6 17 Rab1 b4 18 Qd2(M) Nd4 19 Nd4 Qd4 20 Rb4 Qd7 21 Qe3 Rfd8 22 Rfb1 Qd3 23 Qd3 Rd3 24 Rb7 g5 25 Rb8ch Rb8 26 Rb8ch Kg7 27 f3 Rd2 28 h4 h6 29 hg hg 30 Drawn(N).

(A) Just as in the first match game. There is a little finesse contained in the move order. White does not mind a Nimzo-Indian Defense, but only on condition that the unpleasant memories associated with the fifth game (3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Nf3 c5 5 e3 Nc6 6 Bd3 Bc3ch) remain buried.

(B) A fascinating detail. In the past Fischer was noted for ex-

ceptional persistence in his choice of opening variations, the result of a self-assured and obstinate character. For the match with the world champion, however, Fischer has broadened and renovated his opening repertoire significantly and, as the course of the match has demonstrated, he has even altered (for the time being, at least!) his favorite systems by employing a different opening in each game. Thus Fischer skirts the line seen in the first match game, aban-

Position after 9...b5?!



doing the Nimzo-Indian (but for how long?) in favor of the improved Tarrasch Defense of the Queen's Gambit Declined.

(C) For some time this move was out of fashion in chess theory, which recommended 6 e3 as strongest here. Spassky proved in his second match with Petrosian that 6 e4 is far from harmless, however.

(D) Black usually plays 8...Bb4 ch 9 Bd2 Bd2ch 10 Qd2 O-O

11 Bc4 Nc6 or 11...Nd7, but has yet to come up with a fully equalizing line. Fischer attempts to refurbish the whole variation.

(E) This natural development of the bishop to c4 is passed over in silence for some reason in several opening manuals, which express preference for either 9 a3 or 9 Be2. Personally, I vote strongly for Spassky's actual move since on c4 the bishop stands on its most active square.

(F) Another of Fischer's prepared variations or only an improvisation over the board? Most likely the latter, as Fischer took 20 minutes of clock time to make it. My impression is that his experiment has only marginal worth.

(G) Opening strategy requires special attention to fine points. Why did Spassky not play the bishop back a square further? After 10 Be2! White does not lose any time defending his pawn on d4 and he can begin operations against the enemy queen side without hindrance, e.g., 10 Be2 Bb4ch 11 Bd2 Bd2ch 12 Qd2 a6 13 a4! b4 14 O-O O-O 15 d5 or 10...Be7 11 O-O a6 12 a4 b4 13 d5! These concrete variations show that Fischer will be hard pressed to rectify the consequences of his artificial ninth move.

(H) At first glance trading bishops must seem bad because of the weakness on c5. In fact, this is how Black successfully completes his development and gradually neutralizes White's initiative.

(I) If he wishes, White can risk the sharp complications a-

rising from 11 Kf1, but in that case he will have to contend with 11...Bc3.

(J) Precisely! White must forfeit a valuable tempo and so is denied his last chance for an offensive beginning with 13 O-O-O 14 e5, although even then Black occupies d5.

(K) Forced. If 14 ab, then 14...Nd4 and Black has an excellent game.

(L) After 16 Bb5 Ralch 17 Qal Qb6! or 16 Ra8 Qa8 17 Bb5 Na7 (Quite good, too, is 17...Rc8!) White has trouble in store for him. Black's last move plugs up the holes and grants equality.

(M) Inasmuch as 18 d5 ed 19 ed bc 20 Rb6 Na5 leads to nothing substantial, Spassky consents to simplification. The rest is easy to understand.

(N) This ninth game was the only one of the match missing tension-filled action and "grand maneuvers." But it is also plain that the lull was unintentional.

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