

CalChess Report

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FISCHER-SPASSKY II

Chessplayers never tire of Fischer lore, and lately the treasure trove has been unusually rich. Fischer's apparent decision to go so far as to accept a sizable cash advance (reportedly as much as \$1 million up front, deposited to a Swiss account) makes rumors of the match in Yugoslavia more compelling than the rumors of dozens of other matches spread through the chess community for the past twenty years.

The match is scheduled to begin on September 2 in Sveti Stefan, a small resort island not too far from the capital of Belgrade, but only fifty miles from the border of Bosnia, where there is active fighting between the remaining parts of the "Slavic Union," Serbia, Macedonia, and Montenegro, and the breakaway republics of Croatia, Slovenia, and Bosnia/Herzegovina.

Reportedly, there is a clause in Fischer's contract stipulating that he can move the match if he hears a gunshot. There is widespread concern that President Bush will bomb either Belgrade or Baghdad this Fall to assure re-election. Advisors recall that his approval ratings were at 90% just after Desert Storm, when he wore the mantle of Commander in Chief most proudly, and the New York Times and other sources report that senior advisors are recommending air strikes.

Fischer is also in trouble with the U.S. Government, because his contract with the organizers, who have close business ties to Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic, violates the U.N. ban on commercial transactions with Yugoslavia. If he does play the match, he may be unable to return to the United States without facing fines or imprisonment.

Another popular rumor is that he is romantically involved, and for the first time is seriously contemplating marriage. The most titillating story links him to an 18-year-old Hungarian chess student born exactly one year after the final game of his only championship match.

Security is particularly tight around Fischer, to avoid the possibility of a terrorist incident in the war-torn country. Some wonder whether the same barriers that prevent others from getting in may also work to prevent Fischer from getting out, i.e. that this time the organizers are in a position to prevent Fischer from last-minute escapes, as he tried several times to do in Iceland in 1972.

There are several local connections to the match. GM Larry Evans has made a proposal to Will Hearst, Publisher of the San Francisco Examiner, to travel to Belgrade as special correspondent for the match. If the proposal is accepted, Northern California could have the best coverage in the world.

NM Luis Busquets is organizing coverage of the match for the Prodigy computer network. IM John Grefe, who is back in town, may be dispatched to New York to participate in the effort, and someone on site in Yugoslavia will have to provide moves. Because of the enormous interest generated by the match, phone lines to the match officials are jammed, and it almost impossible to reach anybody who can make decisions about coverage and other contract arrangements.

It seems likely that the media circus this time will equal or exceed Reykjavik 1972, unless Fischer backs out. If Fischer succeeds in beating Spassky (ranked 102 in the world), word is that he will next take on Viswanathan Anand, and if he can beat Anand, the stage will be set for the match with Kasparov, and the drama will reach meltdown. A win by Fischer over Kasparov could fairly be characterized as the greatest comeback in the history of Sport.

The Anand match has apparently been in the formative stages for some time. When Fischer—always dealing through intermediaries—went to the Policy Board last year to request a computer and data base, he said that it was for match preparations, and Anand was the named opponent. The USCF gave him a computer and database, as he requested. A few weeks later, his agent called back and said he couldn't figure out how to use the thing. So they gave him Don

Maddox's phone number, and Maddox (honcho #1 of ChessBase USA) was able to give him enough technical support to get him started.

According to Walter Browne, Fischer still studies eight hours a day, and is more theoretically up-to-date than Browne, who only studies five hours a day.

The Kasparov match with either Short or Timman is still scheduled for L.A. in late 1993, but Fischer's announcement of a match with Spassky is causing problems. First, the original contact man bowed out, a Mr. Carlson, and then the main guy, TV Sportscaster Jim McKay, disclosed that sponsorship arrangements were not proceeding as smoothly as expected. The anticipated announcement of the starting dates of the match have been postponed several times. Now that Fischer is staging his own "World Championship" in Yugoslavia, it will be even more difficult to line up sponsors for the Kasparov match. Aficionados know that Kasparov is #1 in the world and that he is playing a real challenger; everyone else assumes that an undefeated world champion like Fischer, who is getting a winners' share twice as large as the one Kasparov will get, is still the best, applying the "Muhammad Ali" test: You can't strip a champion of his title administratively, you have to "whup 'im." Kasparov may have to cancel his match with Short/Timman to face the challenge by Fischer—if for no other reason, because there is so much more money at stake. This will, of course, be done without the sanction of FIDE, and will mean that for the first time since 1948 there will be a world championship outside FIDE control, a return to the days of Alekhine and Capablanca, when the title was the personal property of the holder, and he could wheel and deal as he wished, picking and choosing challengers more for the gleam of their gold than the luster of their credentials.

Of course, all the ramifications of a genuine comeback by this enigmatic and peculiar genius are incalculable. For just one example with a local angle, Northern California is the favorite to be selected as the site for the 1995 U.S. Open, but the hotel that made the bid, the Concord Hilton, can only hold about 750 players comfortably. If Fischer impacts USCF membership this time

in the way he did last time, there will not be room at the hotel for the tournament.

CalChess ANNUAL MEETING

The annual meeting of **CalChess**, the Northern California state chapter of the USCF, will be held Sunday, September 6, at 3:30 p.m. at the State Championship Tournament, at the Quality Hotel, 4000 El Camino Real, in San Mateo. San Mateo is halfway between San Francisco and San Jose on Hwy 101. Take the Hillsdale Blvd exit off 101, go west to El Camino Real, turn left and go four blocks south to the Villa Quality Hotel, on your right. Parking is free.

All members of **CalChess**, are invited to attend. The principal order of business at the annual meeting is the adoption of new bylaws and the election of officers. The floor will be open for discussion of chess-related events.

MLK BIRTHDAY CHESS FESTIVAL

The festival concept, bringing together quality events showcasing the best in chess, sponsored by the non-profit state organization, has struck a responsive chord in Northern California players, judging by the very high volume of entries to the Labor Day Festival.

The next event in the series will be the MLK Birthday Festival, January 15-18. Highlights include larger class prizes, time controls and round schedules based on a survey from the Labor Day Festival, and 2 day/3 day options. Concurrent events include the Games of Berkeley State Championship, an eight-player round robin among the state's best Masters, and the 3rd Annual Region XI Women's Championship, drawing women players from all over the west to compete with the best in our area. As many as six of the country's top ten women will compete, as well as several stars of tomorrow.

CalChess,

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