

Richard Shorman

Chess

FISCHER'S "SICILIAN DEFECT"

When Fischer failed to show for his second encounter with world champion Spassky, he forfeited his first opportunity to open with the white pieces as well as the game.

Having lost the initial contest as Black, Fischer defended his way to victory in match game number three. So the question of what Fischer would play as White waited until the fourth game, but Spassky's Sicilian Defense caused more surprise than the challenger's choice of 1 P-K4. In fact, after only 13 moves it was clear that Fischer had fallen into a prepared variation, from which he was fortunate to escape with a draw.

The next time Fischer had White, 1 P-K4 was promptly discarded and replaced by a winner on the queen side.

White: Robert Fischer.

Black: Boris Spassky.

World Championship, Match Game No. 4.

Reykjavik, July 18, 1972.

Sicilian Defense

1 P-K4	P-QB4(a)	24 P-R3	B-K6!(t)
2 N-KB3	P-Q3	25 Q-N4(u)	QxP(v)
3 P-Q4	PxP	26 QxRP(w)	P-N4(x)
4 NxP	N-KB3	27 Q-N4	B-B4!(y)
5 N-QB3(b)	N-B3(c)	28 N-N5	K-N2
6 B-QB4(d)	P-K3	29 N-Q4	R-R1!?(z)
7 B-N3(e)	B-K2	30 N-B3	BxN
8 B-K3	0-0	31 QxB(aa)	B-Q3
9 0-0(f)	P-QR3(g)	32 Q-B3!(bb)	QxQ
10 P-B4	NxN(h)	33 PxQ	B-K4(cc)
11 BxN	P-QN4	34 R-Q7	K-B3(dd)
12 P-QR3	B-N2	35 K-N1	BxP
13 Q-Q3	P-QR4!(i)	36 B-K2(ee)	B-K4
14 P-K5(j)	PxP	37 K-B1	R-QB1
15 PxP	N-Q2(k)	38 B-R5	R-B2
16 NxP	N-B4	39 RxR	BxR
17 BxN(l)	BxBch	40 P-QR4	K-K2
18 K-R1(m)	Q-N4!(n)	41 K-K2	P-B4
19 Q-K2(o)	QR-Q1	42 K-Q3	B-K4
20 QR-Q1	RxR(p)	43 P-B4	K-Q3
21 RxR(q)	P-R4!(r)	44 B-B7	B-N6
22 N-Q6	B-R1	45 P-B5ch	Drawn
23 B-B4(s)	P-KR5		

(Annotations by international grandmaster Svetozar Gligoric, adapted from the special world chess championship issue of the Icelandic magazine "Skak," No. 5, 1972, pp. 68, 72-73 and 77)

(a) A surprise. In moments of great responsibility Spassky used to play the classical 1 . . . P-K4, as he did against Fischer in the Olympiad in Havana, 1966.

(b) Is it going to be the Najdorf line, Fischer's own favorite for Black?

(c) No! By now Fischer has been accepted as the greatest expert on the 5 . . . P-Q3 variation. Black wants to discuss some other line.

(d) Fischer's all-round weapon against the Sicilian. But this move is just what Spassky had expected.

(e) Getting rid of the threat of 7 . . . NxP 8 NxN P-Q4.

(f) Another crucial continuation is 9 Q-K2 and 10 0-0-0, used by Fischer against Larsen in the Interzonal in Mallorca, 1970, but without success.

(g) Korchnoi has played 9 . . . NxN 10 BxN P-QN4!?, but Fischer had experience with it himself in Zagreb, 1970.

(h) More active than Larsen's 10 . . . B-Q2 against the same opponent.

(i) A prepared improvement. Spassky spent about five minutes for the whole opening. Black insists on his queen-side action without any loss of time.

(j) Removing the pawn from the attacked square and checking the correctness of the pro-offered pawn sacrifice.

(k) It is obviously a position analyzed at home.

(l) Wasting no time on retreating the queen and keeping the white squared bishop on the board, as this one better protects the white pawn mass on the queen side.

(m) This was the first time that Black had a long think to decide on his next move.

(n) Black could not do quite so well with 18 . . . QxQ 19 PxQ B K3 because of 20 N-B7, with some advantage in the endgame after 20 . . . R-R2 (not 20 . . . BxP? 21 KR-B1) 21 NxB RxN 22 B-B4. Also playable is 20 QR-B1 or 20 B-B4.

(o) Defends both the mate and the KP. A safer alternative was 19 Q-N3, although White weakens his pawn formation.

(p) Another choice was 20 . . . B-R3, seeking chances for a draw in the position with bishops of opposite colors.

(q) A sign that Black had new problems was the time on the clock. Although he played in the opening much more rapidly, Black had now used up more time than White.

(r) Black has nothing to do on the queen file (21 . . . R-Q1 22 N-Q6), so he goes in for action against the king.

(s) Preparing the centralization of the passive bishop and freeing the road for the White QNP.

(t) Black plays to win! The other possibility was 24 . . . Q-N6 25 N-K4 (not 25 R-Q3? BxPch! 26 QxB Q-K8ch 27 K-R2 QxPch 28 K-R1 Q-K8ch 29 K-R2 BxNch 30 RxB Q-K4ch) QxP 26 NxB QxN, with material equality.

(u) Otherwise 25 . . . Q-N6 would be deadly.

(v) Better than 25 . . . QxQ 26 PxQ P-R6 27 B-B1.

(w) Incorrect is 26 NxP?! KxN!, as the Black king would reach safety on either side with K-K2 or K-R1.

(x) Fighting sharply for his Q1 (for the rook) and his KN6 (for the queen).

(y) If 27 . . . R-Q1 28 NxP RxRch 29 QxR KxN (or 29 . . . Q-N6 30 Q-Q8ch) 30 Q-Q7ch, then White has a perpetual check. Now the real threat is not 28 . . . BxN 29 RxB!, but 28 . . . R-Q1.

(z) Black was hastened by impending severe time trouble. The suggested 29 . . . R-Q1! 30 P-B3 (taking the square QB3 away from the White queen) could decide the game by 30 . . . R-R1! (Olafsson's idea), but not 30 . . . B-Q3 31 K-N1!, and there is no mating net) and White is under terrible pressure: 31 K-N1 Q-K6ch or 31 N-B3 BxN 32 QxB B-Q3. Black's time trouble also influenced the move 31 . . . B-Q3, since 31 . . . R-R5 32 B-B1 B-Q3 gave better chances to fight for a win in the ending.

(aa) A must: 31 PxB? R-R5.

(bb) Else 32 K-N2 R-R5! wins out of hand.

(cc) The move 33 . . . BxP would be met by 34 R-R1.

(dd) Preventing 35 BxP.

(ee) White defends well and consolidates his position for the draw.