

Fischer . . . World Chess Title Is Near

By FRANK ANDERSON
International Chessmaster

With only six games to play, and with a lead of 10½ to 7½, Bobby Fischer is going to dethrone Boris Spassky as world chess champion.

Until now I have hesitated to make such a prediction. But now it must be said, the United States is finally going to get its first world champion since 1857.

The magic number is 2. Fischer needs two points — either four draws (each draw counts a half point) or two victories in the remaining six matches.

For the Russian Spassky to retain his title, he must win four of the games and draw one, or win three and draw three.

With the way both men are playing, this seems impossible.

Spassky is playing much better now than he did in the first eight games — but it still isn't good enough to win.

And with his seemingly - insurmountable three - point lead, Fischer is still going for the throat.

Fischer could be playing just for draws —but he isn't. He's playing for wins. His play is still aggressive.

Although both players are showing real signs of strain in this long match, Fischer's play is still strong and steady. An evidence of the confusion and disruption in the Russian's camp is their recent claims of possible influence over Spassky by Fischer's using "electronic devices and chemical substances." No positive findings were made, as any reasoning chess player would have assumed.

The 16th game, played last Sunday, was a long 60-move battle played in one session. Spassky committed only one real error . . . before the game began, he sat down in Fischer's chair on the white side of the board! He did correct himself, however, before Fischer arrived 11 minutes late, so Fischer was not aware of this Spassky error! Fischer opened with pawn to king four for the first time since the 10th game. Again, the opening was the Ruy Lopez, Fischer's standard method of attack. He tried the exchange variation which has led to previous victories.

However, Spassky was well prepared and emerged from the opening with a slight advantage of two bishops versus Fischer's bishop and knight. Fischer erred by an early advance of his queen's bishop pawn. By clever, tactical play, Spassky forced Fischer on the defensive and Fischer was hard-pressed to hold Spassky's middle game attack. However, super-accurate defense enabled Fischer to reach an ending with one pawn and a rook against Spassky's two pawns and rook. This is a well-known draw with best play and Spassky could have offered the draw, but he wanted to make Fischer squirm for another 20 moves. The players then agreed to a draw before the session was completed. This was an extremely fast game . . . it has been a long interval in world championship play since the players have produced over 120 moves within the five hour session!

The 17th game Tuesday was another exciting struggle between the two greatest chess players of our day. Spassky was clearly out to win from the start and showed a daring and aggressive approach. For the first time in the match, Fischer answered Spassky's queen's pawn move with the Pirc (pronounced Peertz) Defense. Spassky had greater control of the center in the early stages of the game, an important advantage. Fischer counter-attacked, threatening to win a pawn. Spassky accepted this challenge hoping to use the time gained for an attack on weakened squares around Fischer's king. By the 21st move, Fischer evidently had second thoughts about defending the position and decided to sacrifice his rook for Spassky's well-placed bishop. This was a mistake on Fischer's part because he probably could have withstood Spassky's onslaught with patient defense. Also, Fischer probably expected to gain compensation by winning a second pawn in the end game (see the diagram with this article). At the adjourned position,

Spassky had a probable winning position, although Fischer could put up a tremendous resistance with some drawing chances. Upon the resumption of play on

Wednesday, Spassky and Fischer moved fast, obviously both prepared with their overnight analysis. A dramatic turn in the match occurred when the position was repeated three times and Fischer rightly claimed the draw. The position was certainly a difficult one for Spassky to win, but he, not Fischer, had all the winning chances. Clearly the overnight analysis must have revealed the difficulty of playing for a win, but it is surprising that Spassky did not make a greater effort.

The 18th game Wednesday and Thursday, was a Sicilian Defense which has been played several times before in this match. Fischer had the white pieces and soon assumed the initiative. Both sides kept the position full of tension with Spassky in the early stages instituting a big pawn advance on the queen's side against Fischer's castled king. Fischer knows how to defend when needed, and played some very neat moves to force a blocked pawn position on the queen side that prevented Spassky from infiltrating with his heavy pieces. Now Fischer could move on to the attack in the center and on the right wing. Soon Fischer won an important pawn on Spassky's king side that looked like it might lead to another Fischer win. However, Spassky's strong central position with active rooks and good mobility kept the chances balanced. Fischer could make no headway after the adjournment and both sides wisely repeated moves allowing the draw. This was another fine battle worthy of the chess championship.

Our readers have submitted some questions that we think would be interesting to have answered. We would be pleased to answer any further questions on the personalities and events of this great chess match.

Q. Is there a place for women in a professional chess player's personal life?
Cheri Hewitt, Gulf Computer Sciences, San Diego

A. Yes. This is one match where Spassky leads 2-0, since he has had two marriages to Fischer's none. Spassky currently has a very happy married life with a charming wife and healthy

children. His previous marriage ended, as Spassky describes "because we were bishops of opposite color" (i.e., did not communicate). Fischer, on the other hand, has devoted himself so intensely to the pursuit of the world chess championship that women play little, if any, part is his life at this stage. A true story, revealing Fischer's devotion to the game, is as follows: At a banquet given during the Chess Olympics in Germany a few years ago, Fischer was approached by Miss Germany who asked him to dance with her. He replied "I would be happy to, after the tournament." Miss Germany was able to get her dances with a number of other chessmasters who were not so particular about their chess training!

Q. I have seen a number of photographs of Fischer and Spassky shaking hands, but notice they never seem to be looking directly into each other's eyes. Is this an indication of fear on their part?
Roger Markl, Gulf Computer Sciences.

A. It is not clear to this observer all the reasons for this behavior. Perhaps Fischer's

reputation for the "evil eye" over his opponents has affected Spassky. Another possible explanation is Spassky's dislike for Fischer's untoward behavior to him in this recent match. Also, Fischer has such an intense desire to beat Spassky that, in his boyish manner, he may avert his eyes from Spassky. Whatever the reason, these players are using their full visual powers on the chess board.

Q. In my opinion, Fischer is "too big for his britches." His constant demands of an unreasonable nature have converted me from a Fischer fan to one who hopes that Spassky will retain his title. I feel ashamed of myself as an American, but am I justified in these feelings?

Jan Olson, Pine Valley

A. Many people have expressed similar views to me during the course of this match. They claim that they wish Fischer would behave in more mature manner so that their allegiance could remain

7TH
ARTICLE

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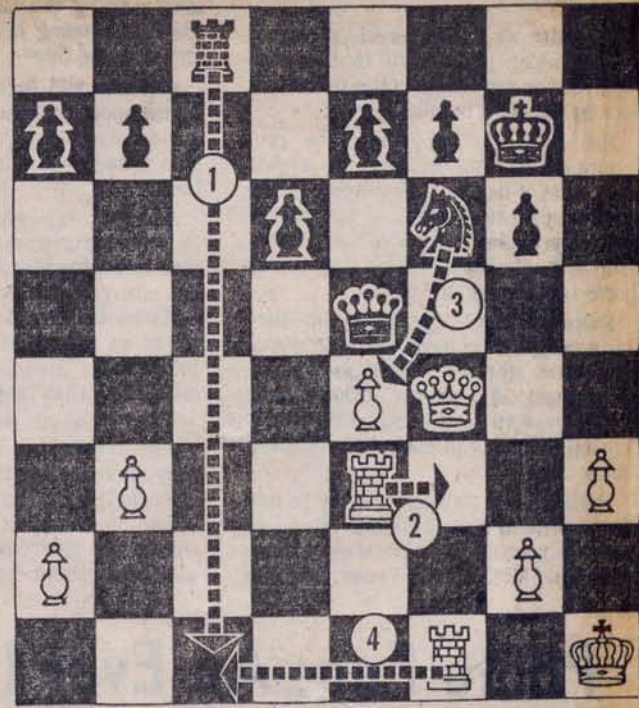
with Bobby, who after all, is probably the finest chess player in the world. Many people have expressed a very strong desire to go to Iceland and "straighten Fischer out." Are you volunteering?

Frank Anderson is Marketing Manager of Gulf Computer Sciences in San Diego. He is the holder of the International Chessmaster title granted by the International Chess Federation. Winner of many major tournaments, including gold medal performances at the Chess Olympics, he has authored two chess books.

'A Very Neat Variation'

The interesting position at the right occurred after Spassky's 25th move in the 17th game. Fischer has sacrificed a rook for Spassky's bishop plus a pawn. Normally this type of sacrifice would not be sufficient, but Fischer had probably calculated that he would win a second pawn and have winning chances. A fascinating possibility could have occurred from the diagrammed position. It is Fischer's move. If he plays (1) his rook down to White's first row, then Spassky would be in a quandry for a good move. He cannot capture Fischer's queen because Fischer will have a neat intermezzo move of rook takes rook check. White's only move would be (2) moving his rook one square to the right, leaving his king's pawn (3) defended only once and under double attack by Fischer. Exchanges of queens and rooks would follow ultimately with Black winning Spassky's king's pawn with his knight. But Spassky would (4) slide his remaining rook over to the open line on the left. Spassky's rook would then penetrate the Black position and win some vital pawns on that flank. This would win the game for him. Altogether, a very neat variation that proves the depth with which

Black: Bobby Fischer



White: Boris Spassky

these great players are competing for this title. Fischer made better moves, but avoided this death trap and might have lost the game. The game did end in a draw.

7TH ARTICLE

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18TH MATCH GAME		
Sicilian Defense		
White: Bobby Fischer		
Black: Boris Spassky		
White	Black	
1 P-K4	P-QB4	22-QR-K1
2 N-KB3	P-Q3	23 K-R1
3 N-B3	N-QB3	24 N-Q4
4 P-Q4	PxP	25 N-Q3
5 NxP	N-B3	26 N-N4
6 B-KN5	P-K3	27 P-N3
7 Q-Q2	P-QR3	28 N-Q3
8 O-O-O	B-Q2	29 Q-K2
9 P-B4	B-K2	30 PxP
10 N-B3	P-N4	31 R-B2
11 BxN	PxB	32 N-KB5
12 B-Q3	Q-R4	33 RxB
13 K-N1	P-N5	34 PxP
14 N-K2	Q-QB4	35 N-N4
15 P-B5	P-QR4	36 RxRP
16 N-B4	P-R5	37 BPxB
17 R-QB1	R-QN1	38 R-B1ch
18 P-B3	P-N6	39 Q-K4
19 P-QR3	N-K4	40 R-QN1
20 KR-B1	N-B5	41 R-R7
21 BxN	QxB	42 Q-N6
		43 R-KB7
		44 Q-R6
		45 Q-R7
		46 Q-R6
		47 Q-R7
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