

# Battle of Chess Giants

## Bobby Is Often A Spoiled Brat

*Larry Evans, former U.S. chess champion, writes about the ways Bobby Fischer has hurt himself on the road to his challenge for the World Championship next week.*

By Larry Evans

In 1958 Bobby Fischer antagonized many of his earliest and most enthusiastic backers by refusing to play for the U.S. squad at the chess Olympiad held in Munich. Fischer, who was then 15, insisted on his rights as U.S. champion, refusing to yield first board to Sammy Reshevsky, who was then 47 and the darling of the old guard.

Two years later his mother picketed the White House, chaining herself to the gate to call attention to the need for funds to send an American Olympiad team to Leipzig. In the finals Fischer was high scorer on first board; Russia's then-world champion, Mikhail Tal, barely escaped with a draw against him.

Acutely embarrassed by his mother's militancy, Fischer withdrew further into his shell. Shortly thereafter she joined a group of idealists on a peace walk to Russia and married one of the marchers. She and her husband later moved to England. Meanwhile his sister, Joan, tall, pretty, sensitive, married a scientist and moved to California.



**HERMIT-LIKE AND INSULATED** from people, Bobby surrounded himself with chess books and electronic equipment. He seldom traveled without a transistor radio. With the apartment in Brooklyn all to himself, Fischer slept late, studying as many as 50 foreign chess magazines each month, dabbling in palmistry, listening to rock 'n' roll, relaxing with Ping-Pong, bowling and swimming.

In 1961 Mrs. Jacqueline Piatigorsky, a wealthy chess patron, put up a purse of \$8000 for a match between Fischer and Reshevsky to decide once and for all who was the better player. With the score tied, Fischer forfeited the match by not showing up for the 12th game.

The schedule had been altered to Sunday morning instead of Saturday night, to enable Mrs. Piatigorsky to attend a cello concert given by her husband Gregor that evening. A late riser, Fischer asked to have the game postponed until Sunday afternoon, explaining that he just couldn't play good chess in the morning. This time Reshevsky stood by the letter of his rights and refused to agree to a postponement.



**FISCHER MADE UP** with Mrs. Piatigorsky, but for a long time he and Reshevsky were not on speaking terms. Although Fischer's integrity and refusal to compromise have sometimes cost him dearly, his defiance of chess authorities and his demands for better playing conditions have raised the professional standards of the game. "I'm tired of seeing chess players treated like bums," he says.

In 1967 Prince Rainier requested two American grandmasters for an international tournament in Monaco. There was one condition: one of the two had to be Bobby Fischer. Fischer won the tournament but made himself unpopular by acting like a prima donna. Two years later the Americans received another request for two players. Again there was a condition: neither of the two should be Bobby Fischer.

In 1968 officials at the chess Olympiad in Lugano refused his demands for special lighting and a private playing room away from spectators. Fischer was so annoyed that he deserted the American team and holed up "to plot my revenge if I ever come back." He visited his mother in England and then moved to Los Angeles, where he brooded and stayed out of active competition for 18 months.

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**Tomorrow: Evans sees Bobby getting only a little more mellow.**