

Richard Shorman**Chess**

● *Shortly after his return to the Soviet Union former world champion Boris Spassky was interviewed by a reporter from the weekly chess newspaper, "64." Spassky's candid answers to the interviewer's questions provide much interesting insight into the character of the participants and the details of the match.*

Q. Chess fans everywhere have followed the course of the world chess championship in Reykjavik with great interest. Please tell us what happened from your own point of view.

Spassky: The match has been over for a comparatively short time and I am still involved in an analysis of all the games. I shall probably be occupied in this task for some months ahead, as well. So I will have to restrict myself to brief observations, since final conclusions have not yet been drawn.

When Fischer forfeited the second game by failing to appear, I did not judge it much of a success for me. Even though I was awarded the point, I feel that it worked against me. Had Fischer played the game, the opening would undoubtedly have gone like the opening of the fourth encounter. But I played the fourth game only after the unique circumstances surrounding the third game, which had a decidedly negative influence on my further play.

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I CONSENTED TO HAVE the third game played in a back room, without spectators and all the rest, acting under the illusion that Fischer wanted to call off the match and that by saving this most important of competitions the struggle would be carried on in the spirit of true chess tradition. Prior to the game I was an unwilling witness to Fischer's dialog with the match referee, grandmaster Lothar Schmid. While I do not wish to dwell upon this unpleasant episode, I must say that the American grandmaster used language that was most unbecoming. It was very distressing to hear.

Agreeing to his unfounded demand to transfer the game from the tournament hall to an isolated room was a big psychological mistake. As you know, the match was preceded by extensive maneuvering, on which a lot of energy was expended. Having committed a psychological error before the third match game was played and quickly apprehending my mistaken interpretation about what had transpired, I virtually canceled out my consistently correct conduct prior to the match. Another factor that weighed against me was the feeling of guilt that I held for winning the second game by default.

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AT THE END OF THE ill-fated third game I violated a rule that I strictly adhere to normally: instead of sealing my 41st move, I played it on the board. Had I controlled myself as usual the move would have been sealed, and 41 K-K1 would have given some chance of saving the game.

My play in the fifth and sixth games was spasmodic and impulsive. Perhaps this was a consequence of my nervous tension in the previous games. But I wish to give Fischer his due: his victory was well earned in the sixth game. It was probably his best effort of the match.

In the second half of the contest I played with more proportion and character, the way a match ought to be played.

After the thirteenth game I left the hotel and settled down in a small house. At that time my wife arrived in Reykjavik.

Fischer was unrecognizable from game 14 to the end of the match. Maybe he thought that his three point lead justified passive play. Analysis is needed here.

I could see my opponent's moral debilitation, but I lacked the nervous energy required to exert the decisive effort.

I think that the very best, purest game of the match was the nineteenth, the Alekhine's Defense.

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FISCHER ACHIEVED A convincing victory in points. The quality of his play was higher, mainly in the first half of the match. In the second half his play paled by comparison.

I will continue studying the games, and I predict that I will uncover many surprising facts about them.

Q. How do you evaluate your play and that of Fischer during the match?

The following basic qualities make Fischer the No. 1 chessplayer. The first is the very high technical competence of his game. His appreciation of "the value of a move" in the opening is extraordinarily keen. In this stage of the game he persistently strives to make the very best move. Later on, in the middlegame, his main concern is to conserve his strength, making not always the best but always a good move. Fischer's second characteristic is his tremendous energy, his capacity for work during a game. He knows how to fight to the bitter end, "to the last man." This kind of energy allows him to keep his opponent under pressure and to create continual problems.

In addition, Fischer has a good sense for knowing the mood and physical condition of his playing partner.

Fischer's expanded opening repertoire did not come as a surprise to me. He is better versed in the opening than I, and such tactics seemed profitable for him. However, Fischer did not possess an advantage over me in the opening.

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REGARDING THE transition from the opening to the middle-game, this phase of the game used to be my strong point. But during the first half of the match I lost this important weapon.

After losing the match it is rather uncomfortable to state that my opponent failed to come up with a new approach or played with especial depth. But I did not feel outclassed. I recall, by way of contrast, my match with Petrosian in 1966, when he simply did not permit me to storm his defenses.

Fischer played fairly rapidly, but there were games in which he used more time than I did for his moves.

Q. What are your plans for the future?

As I have said, I will continue my analysis of the games, and I expect to play more chess. I am getting ready to take part in the upcoming world championship candidates' series for 1975, as stipulated by FIDE regulations.

Q. The press has carried stories about the possibility of a return match between you and Fischer. What is your reaction?

If such an opportunity to play materializes, then I am more than willing.

(Interview condensed and translated from "64", No. 40, Oct. 6-12, 1972, pp. 1 and 5)

Fischer, Spassky matches

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