



# Reshevsky Awarded Match By Forfeiture Fischer Protests

by Frank R. Brady

In a thoroughly unexpected outcome of one of history's most significant chess matches, Bobby Fischer was forfeited when he failed to appear for 12th and 13th games of his 16-game match with Samuel Reshevsky.

The first four games of this world renowned and highly publicized encounter began on July 16th in New York City. Off to a strong start that indicated he meant business, Reshevsky won the first game. Fischer remained undaunted however, and came back two nights later to take the second game in crushing and convincing fashion. The third and fourth games were drawn.

The match, which was being sponsored by the American Chess Foundation and the Herman Steiner Chess Club, then moved to Los Angeles to be played at the luxurious Beverly Hilton Hotel and the spanking new quarters of the Steiner Club. Eight games were scheduled to be played there and the final four of the match (games 13 through 16) would be contested back in New York City again at the Empire Hotel. The Los Angeles portion of the match proved to be a trying and difficult time for both players. Each could only win one game apiece and by the time that the 11th game had been concluded, five games had been drawn in Los Angeles—seven since the beginning of the match. The tension grew with every game—practically with every move.

A great deal of money was involved but more than that the personal prestige of both players was laid bare. Every move that would be made would be scrutinized and analyzed not only in this country but all over the world. Reshevsky never lost a match—Fischer never played one since he reached the top of American chess and neared the summit of International competition. They stopped talking to each other. They would not ride in the same car from their hotel to the playing site. Reshevsky wanted air-conditioning in the playing room. Fischer thought it was too cold. Both players were competing to win and would concede

nothing to the other. It was in this atmosphere that the controversy began.

According to releases sent to the press at the very beginning of the match, the twelfth game was scheduled to be played at 7:30 P.M. on Saturday, August 12th. However, before the players started the L. A. portion of the match, the local California committee, realizing that Reshevsky as an Orthodox Jew could not play until after sun-down on Saturday (about 9:00 P.M.) changed the scheduling of the twelfth game to 9:00 P.M. Shortly after that another change was made for twelfth round—from 9:00 P.M. on Saturday to 1:30 P.M. on

Sunday afternoon—the committee basing its decision on the fact that the five hour playing session on Saturday night would not end until 2:00 A.M. Sunday morning and would therefore, justifiably, inconvenience the spectators, the players themselves, etc. The round was therefore arranged for 1:30 P.M. on Sunday. It was learned, however, that one of the committee members and principal sponsors of the match, Mrs. Jacqueline Piatigorsky, could not attend the entire match if it started at 1:30 P.M., since her husband, Gregor Piatigorsky, the world-renowned cellist, was giving a concert late that afternoon and both chess match and concert coincided. She requested that the committee consider the possibility of conducting the twelfth game at 11:00 A.M. on Sunday—thereby enabling

her to see both match and concert. The committee felt that her request was justified and therefore the match was re-scheduled again—the fourth change—to 11:00 A.M. The papers were notified and a mailing was sent out in advance announcing the new time for the twelfth round. Irving Rivise, the match referee said: "Arrangements for playing times throughout the match were altered from the original schedule as submitted by the American Chess Foundation for the convenience of the Southern California chess public and that the



New York Times

Reshevsky Paces While Waiting for Fischer

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# RESHEVSKY AWARDED MATCH BY FORFEITURE—FISCHER PROTESTS

(Continued from cover)

scheduling of the last game to be played in Los Angeles for Sunday at 11:00 A.M. was certainly more desirable than starting the game at 9:00 P.M. the preceding evening."

Checking with various officials of the match, CHESS LIFE, was unable to determine whether the players were kept informed of the various changes. However, the original contract stipulating the amounts of money to be paid both winner and loser, the details of the match, etc., which was signed by both players in New York City on June 21st, stated that the twelfth round was scheduled to be played on Sunday, August 13th — which greatly heightens the confusion of the entire situation since the American Chess Foundation, the bearers of the contract, also sent out the press release, originally announcing the match for Saturday evening. At the conclusion of the 11th game adjournment, Fischer asked Referee Rivise: "What's all this nonsense about playing the twelfth round at 11:00 A.M. Sunday morning?" Rivise informed him that that was the scheduled time and Fischer, in no sweet terms, stated that he could not get up that early and would not get up that early and that he had never agreed to play the game at eleven o'clock in the morning.

On Saturday, August 12th, Fischer spent the day at the home of Mrs. Piatigorsky and before leaving, flatly outlined that he had no intention of playing at 11 the next morning. He said: "Why don't you see half the match and half the concert? You can't see both of them the way they're scheduled—and I'm not playing at 11:00 tomorrow morning."

That evening Mrs. Piatigorsky discussed the situation with the various committee members and the consensus of opinion was that since the time of the round had been published in various papers and a mailing sent out, the time of the round could not be changed only one day before it was scheduled to commence. Referee Rivise called Fischer at his Hotel on Saturday evening to discuss the situation and to inform him that the committee had every intention of starting the game the next morning, promptly at 11:00. Fischer had only one dominant point: He wouldn't be there.

Exactly at 11 the next morning, Rivise started Fischer's clock. Reshevsky waited—the spectators waited. Fischer did not appear. At 11:15 A.M., Jerry Spann called Fischer at his hotel to see what he could do. Fischer was steadfast. He would play at 1:30—he would not play at 11:00. At five minutes past noon, Rivise declared Reshevsky the winner of the twelfth game.

The resultant uproar of Fischer's failure to appear still is ringing. The wire services, radio, television, newspapers

and particularly columnists all carried the incident—and almost all were "anti-Fischer" in their tone. The chess public and the public at large were "aghast" at what they considered the height of precociousness — a classic example of a spoiled prima donna.

The show must go on, however, and the 13th game of the match was scheduled for the original time—to be played back in New York City on Tuesday, August 15th at 5:00 P.M. To better document what occurred after the twelfth round forfeiture we present a statement by Walter Fried, President of the American Chess Foundation to the voting members of ACF:

## TO THE VOTING MEMBERS OF THE AMERICAN CHESS FOUNDATION:

August 24, 1961

"Over a period of some years we have tried to organize a match between the present U. S. Chess Champion, Robert J. Fischer, and the former U. S. Chess Champion, Samuel Reshevsky, in the belief that such a match would be of great interest to the chess world and a stimulating influence for an increase in U. S. chess activities. We were unable to do so until this year, when, following the initiative taken by Al Bisno of Los Angeles, and with the support of friends of American Chess, in particular, Mr. George P. Edgar and Mrs. Jacqueline Piatigorsky, the terms of such a match were agreed to. The match was to consist of 16 games, of which the first four were to be played in New York City, the next eight in Los Angeles, and the last four in New York City.

One of the stipulations in the agreement signed by both Fischer and Reshevsky was that—

"If there should be any dispute on the part of the two parties to this contract covering the interpretation of any of its terms, both parties agree to all decisions to be made by Walter Fried, President of the American Chess Foundation whose decisions shall be final."

The match opened on July 16th and the first 4 games were held as per schedule. The next 7 games were held in Los Angeles. The last of the 8 Los Angeles games was scheduled to be held on Sunday, August 13th, and the final games of the New York series were to resume on August 15th. On Monday, August 14th, we learned that the 12th game of the series—the 8th and the last of the games scheduled for Los Angeles—had been forfeited by Mr. Fischer when he did not put in an appearance at the hotel where the game was to be played. We also learned that Mr. Fischer was challenging the validity of the forfeiture made by the referee who had been approved by both contestants, and at the same time he was also threaten-



Irving Rivise

"I am not sure when Fischer was first informed that he had to play at 11 A.M. on Sunday."

ing that he would not proceed with the 13th game if his claim was not immediately upheld.

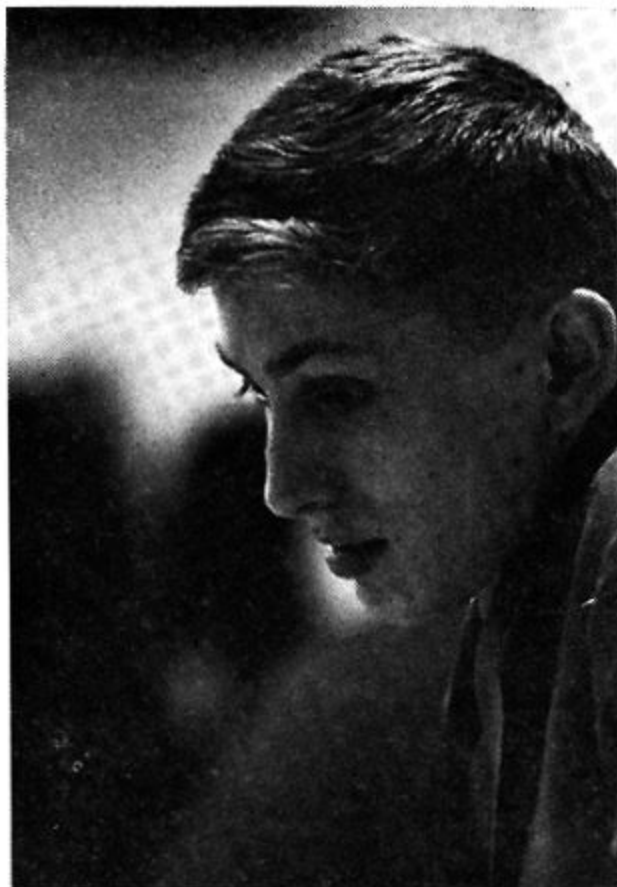
In conformity with the agreed-to stipulation as to my making the final decision in the event of any controversy, I began to assemble information on the basis of which I could make the required decision.

Meanwhile, we proceeded with arrangements for the 13th game to be played in New York City at the time and place scheduled for it, August 15th, 5 P.M., Empire Hotel, New York.

On or about 3 P.M. on Tuesday, August 15th, Mr. Morris Kasper, received a long distance telephone call from Mr. Fischer and learned that he was still in Los Angeles and did not expect to arrive in New York City until midnight of that day. Accordingly, the game scheduled for August 15th was then called off.

Upon his arrival in New York late that evening, Mr. Fischer telephoned Mr. Kasper and insisted that the next game to be played be the 12th of the series, in which he was to play the white pieces, an action which would have signified that the referee's decision as to the forfeiture was to be invalidated, and the disputed game played over. In the course of these conversations, Mr. Fischer reiterated that he would not resume playing unless and until his claim was considered and upheld. Mr. Kasper told him, without passing on the merits of his claim, that the players were expected to proceed with the 13th game, and that a decision as to the forfeiture or replay of the 12th game would be made within a few days, after full investigation of the details of all that had taken place in Los Angeles. Thereupon Mr. Fischer again threatened that he would not resume play.

On Wednesday, August 16th, Sidney Wallach, our Executive Director, made repeated efforts to reach Mr. Fischer by telephone so as to be able to proceed with the arrangements scheduled for the following day. Since Mr. Wallach was unable to reach him by telephone, I sent him the following telegram:



Bobby Fischer

"The first time I heard that I had to play at 11 A.M. on Sunday — was Thursday, August 10th. I protested to Rivise right away."

**"WE EXPECT YOUR ATTENDANCE THURSDAY AUGUST 17TH 5 P. M. AT HOTEL EMPIRE AND YOUR PROCEEDING WITH 13TH GAME OF FISCHER-RESHEVSKY MATCH AND WITH SUBSEQUENT GAMES AS SCHEDULED STOP YOUR CHALLENGE OF 12TH GAMES FORFEITURE IS BEING REVIEWED BY UNDERSIGNED WHOSE DECISION WILL BE MADE BEFORE CONCLUSION OF MATCH AND IS TO BE BINDING AS PER YOUR SIGNED AGREEMENT STOP YOUR FAILURE TO APPEAR AT AND PARTICIPATE IN BALANCE OF SCHEDULED GAMES WILL SUBJECT YOU TO LOSS OF MATCH AND TO DAMAGE SUIT FOR NON-COMPLIANCE WITH TERMS OF CONTRACT.**

**WALTER J. FRIED  
PRESIDENT, AMERICAN CHESS  
FOUNDATION"**

You will note that this message left open the question of the 12th game while assuring Mr. Fischer of a decision "before the conclusion of the match." In its report the next morning, the New York Times quoted Mr. Fischer's comment on the telegram as follows:

"All right, I'll take it into court too. I'm willing to begin play again with the 12th game, but I won't resume the match at the 13th. They are just trying to trap me into continuing the match. They've had all the facts for four days. They could have reached a decision by now on the forfeit."

During the course of Thursday, August 17th, with the game scheduled to start at 5 P. M., I received several telephone calls from Mr. Fischer's attorney, Mr. Ivan Woolworth. Mr. Woolworth told me about Fischer's late

sleeping habits, which led to his reluctance to play at 11 A. M., advised me that he had pleaded with his client to resume play, told me how headstrong Mr. Fischer was, and asked me to help solve the problem by calling this the 12th (or the 14th) game and thus allowing his client to play white. This request had already been refused and was refused again, because any other course would have been tantamount to prejudging the validity of the Los Angeles forfeiture before all the facts had been assembled.

At about 4 P. M. our office received a telegram from Mr. Fischer reading as follows:

**"I PROTEST YOUR REQUIREMENT THAT I PROCEED WITH THE THIRTEENTH GAME PRIOR TO A DECISION ON THE ILLEGAL FORFEITURE OF THE TWELFTH GAME. THE RESCHEDULING OF THE TWELFTH GAME WAS WITHOUT MY CONSENT AND THE BREACH THEREFORE WAS NOT ON MY PART. I REQUEST THAT THE MATCH CONTINUE WITH THE TWELFTH GAME FAILURE OF WHICH WILL CAUSE ME TO INSTITUTE ACTION FOR DAMAGES FOR BREACH OF CONTRACT."**

Please note that there was no clear indication in this telegram that Mr. Fischer would not show up at the scheduled hour to learn of my decision, if any. However, he did not appear, and at 5:15 P. M. the clocks were set and at 6:15 P. M. the referee, Mr. Al Horowitz, declared the game forfeited to Mr. Reshevsky. I thereupon gave instructions that the following telegram be sent to Mr. Fischer and we notified the press accordingly:

**"BY REASON OF YOUR SUCCESSIVE FAILURES TO APPEAR AT SCHEDULED GAMES AND YOUR FLAGRANT DISREGARD OF YOUR WRITTEN COMMITMENTS I HAVE TODAY DECLARED SAMUEL RESHEVSKY THE WINNER OF THE MATCH."**

It is of course a matter of great regret to us that a match which we had planned for so long and which had such fine possibilities should have ended in this indecisive and unhappy way. There was, however, no other course consistent with our responsibility, with self-respect, and with the natural resistance to threats. Although there seems to have been ample justification for the forfeiture by the Los Angeles referee, the propriety of his decision is not relevant to the conclusion that was reached and is now an academic question.

These are the facts in the case."

The following letter was written by Mr. Saul Rubin, President of the Marshall Chess Club, in response to Mr. Fried's statement:

September 5, 1961

"Dear Mr. Fried:

Under date of August 24, 1961 you sent an account of the developments that led to the termination of the Fischer-Reshevsky match by forfeiture, to the

voting members of the American Chess Foundation. Though not a member of the Foundation, I have read your account with much interest. I should not presume to meddle in matters intended strictly for the family, but the Fischer-Reshevsky fiasco has been so fully publicized in the press that it is not limited in its interest to the Foundation and its members. I, therefore, do not feel that I am intermeddling if I make a few comments to you on the subject of your report and on the affair in general.

As you know, I have more than a passing interest in chess. It was, therefore, a matter of great satisfaction to me that you and your associates were able to bring the Fischer-Reshevsky match, an event of prime importance in American chess. Whatever criticism I may have of the manner in which the match was run and the resultant fiasco, I must compliment you upon your achievement in initiating the event and seeing it through eleven games.

In your account you state:

"The last of the 8 Los Angeles games was scheduled to be held on Sunday, August 13th, and the final games of the New York series were to resume on August 15th. On Monday, August 14th, we learned that the 12th game of the series—the 8th and the last of the games scheduled for Los Angeles—had been forfeited by Mr. Fischer when he did not put in an appearance at the hotel where the game was to be played."

Mr. Fried, this statement of facts to the voting members of the Foundation is a masterpiece of simplification. There is no room for comment. Fischer simply failed to appear to play a properly scheduled game and the referee properly awarded the game to Reshevsky by forfeit! Yet, insidious facts and rumors creep in to trouble us non-members. Was the game originally scheduled to be played at 8:30 P.M. on Saturday, August 12th? Did this conflict with Reshevsky's observance of the Sabbath? Was the game thereafter re-scheduled for Saturday at 9 P.M. or 9:30 P.M.? Was it then



Saul Rubin

"This was not a popularity contest."



I. A. Horowitz

"The Thirteenth Game is a forfeiture in abeyance, pending a review by the arbitrator."

re-scheduled for Sunday at 1 P.M., and later for Sunday at 11 A.M.? Was not the re-scheduling required to accommodate Mr. Reshevsky? Was the final shift from 1 P.M. to 11 A.M. made to meet the convenience of a prominent patroness of chess who wished to be free to attend some other affair late Sunday afternoon? Most important, did Fischer agree to the re-scheduled time—11 A.M. on Sunday? These are questions that should be answered. After playing 11 of the 16 games, with the score at 5½-5½ it must be obvious that the loss of a whole game by forfeiture is almost tantamount to assuring the match to the player who gains the forfeited game. Every thought, effort and consideration should be directed against forfeiture. Forfeiture in this situation can only be justified if it is established beyond all doubt that Fischer was consulted as to the re-scheduled time, that he agreed to play on Sunday at 11 A.M., and that he thereafter wilfully and deliberately failed to appear.

Many reports have been circulating that Fischer, by his contemptuous conduct, intemperate remarks and other offensive characteristics found disfavor in the eyes of the referee and other chess personages, and that this disfavor contributed in a substantial way toward the referee's decision to forfeit the 12th game against him. These are disquieting reports. Obviously, a dislike for Fischer, his personality or his conduct has no pertinence in the matter of the forfeiture of a game. This was not a popularity contest. Again, I suggest that the only facts that had to be ascertained by you in connection with the forfeiture were whether Fischer had agreed to play the re-scheduled 12th game at 11 A.M. and then wilfully and deliberately failed to appear. These facts should have been elicited by you from Mr. Rivise, and from him alone. It is not pertinent that dozens of people have written that Fischer's conduct was offensive and merited the forfeiture.

This brings me to the next stage of the matter in which you conceive your position to be eminently correct. I refer to your requirement that Fischer

play the 13th game while you deferred decision on the forfeiture until some time before the end of the match. This position strikes me as being unfair and even cruel. It disregards entirely the psychological factors involved in master chess play. It would have been impossible for Fischer, or for any other chess master for that matter, to play his best at this stage of a match with the loss of a whole game by forfeiture hanging over his head like the sword of Damocles. I might even adopt your simile as published in *The Times*, Mr. Fried, and say that you were holding a gun to Fischer's head, not he to yours. At least ten players of master rating or better have assured me that they would not have played the 13th game under the conditions imposed on Fischer. Surely, between Monday when you learned of the forfeiture, and Thursday when you had scheduled the 13th game, you could have gotten all the facts from Mr. Rivise, the referee in California, even if it required a couple of costly long distance telephone calls. On the basis of the facts so elicited, you could have made your ruling on the forfeiture before the 13th game was to be played. This would have been fair to Fischer who would then know definitely where he stood and could be guided accordingly.

You conclude your report with a surprising statement:

"Although there seems to have been ample justification for the forfeiture by the Los Angeles referee, the propriety of his decision is not relevant to the conclusion that was reached and is now an academic question."

This may satisfy your voting members but it leaves the chess-loving fraternity utterly confused. Please give us some enlightenment. Has the forfeiture been justified by some proof from Mr. Rivise that the 12th game had been re-scheduled for 11 A.M. on Sunday with Fischer's knowledge, consent and approval? If so, why hasn't this proof been reported in the press where so much else has been stated in detail? Lacking such proof, the propriety of the forfeiture seems very gravely in doubt. Also, by granting the match to Reshevsky by forfeiture you suggest that any questioning now of the 12th game forfeiture, or of any other details is now academic. I must concur in this view only insofar as the granting of the trophy and distribution of the prize money are concerned, since your organization controls them. However, many of us will, for a long time, be wanting to know what happened in Los Angeles to justify the forfeiture, and why Fischer's protest could not have been determined before the 13th game. We shall also be wondering why there was not enough maturity, tact and understanding among those who directed this excellent event to see it through to its logical conclusion.

In contemplating this affair, I cannot resist making a final comment. Your organization, in its drive for financial support for chess activities, has stated repeatedly that the U. S. Chess Federation

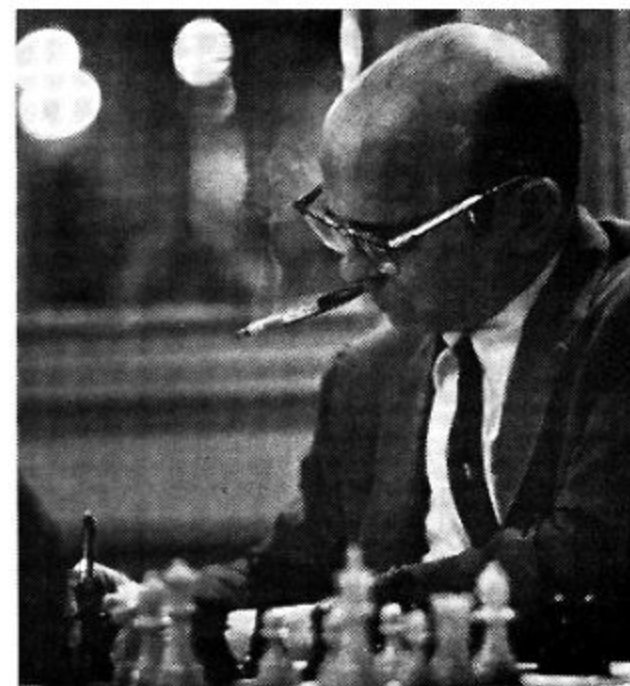
is the technical arm of chess, while your Foundation is the fund-raising arm. You explain that the Federation runs tournaments, matches, makes rules, rates players, and, in general oversees the proper running of chess events. Remember, this is your sales talk, and it sounds quite impressive. Why, then, did you not call on your technical arm to supervise, or at least, share in the supervision of this important match? I have the feeling that, given a voice in the supervision of this match, the Federation would have found a way to see that it went to its proper goal—the playing of 16 games. Did you forget your technical arm?

The things I have said here are my own views and do not purport to express an official point of view of the Marshall Chess Club, which, indeed, will have no official view in the matter. I have, of course, discussed this matter with many members of my club and with others interested in chess, and have found almost unanimous accord with the views expressed. I hope my comments will be useful to you in your future chess activities, and that you will initiate, sponsor and help to run other important chess events with greater success than the Fischer-Reshevsky match."

### AN OPINION

CHESS LIFE, as official publication of the U.S. Chess Federation, cannot take an "official" stand on this controversy unless such an "official" stand be called for by the membership or the Board of Directors and directed to the Executive Committee for a statement of policy. Since no basic aims or directions of USCF are in jeopardy by the final outcome of the Fischer forfeiture this is probably not necessary. However, CHESS LIFE can and must express individual sentiments and opinions on the outcome of what was probably the most important chess match ever played in the United States by two of our greatest Masters.

There are many questions still to be answered. Why was the twelfth game originally scheduled for Saturday evening



Samuel Reshevsky

"I never expected this."

when it is common knowledge by all chess organizers that Reshevsky cannot play at that time? Why wasn't the matter thoroughly discussed with Fischer before the Los Angeles portion of the match was begun? Why did the committee uphold Mrs. Piatigorsky's request that the schedule be changed to 11:00 A.M. — knowing that 1) Fischer is traditionally known as a late riser and 2) since the schedule had already been changed to accommodate Reshevsky in effect—why could it not now be changed to accommodate Fischer? Why couldn't the committee weigh the facts of the twelfth game forfeiture before the thirteenth game proceeded? Why was it so imperative that the thirteenth game be played at the scheduled time and place when there was an opportunity for postponement? And finally, why can't there be some concessions made to our country's

greatest player and our one hope of a possible world's champion?

Certainly a chess champion will never make much money. Many have found it impossible even to sustain a living. Outside of the chessworld there is barely a hint of recognition or respect of achievement. What else is left for our Masters and champions other than respect from those in the chessworld? Spoiled brat—you say? Eccentric genius? Mixed-up kid? Of course! But is making our greatest player "toe the mark" as an 18-year-old kid wet behind the ears while he is simultaneously placed on a pedestal as a god for his phenomenal achievements and respected throughout the world for his genius—is this truly helping him as an individual? Is this helping him to grow up? And is it really our job to "help" him grow up? Since we are not collectively psychologists, reformers, prohibitionists—should not our "role" be

one of appreciation of what our chess masters produce and a loyalty and a support to our champions?

Must our top players perform like pet dogs without a voice or an opinion on where they will play and what time they will play—simply because someone else has paid the piper?

We do not in any way condone Fischer's aftermath conduct connected with this incident. His language directed to the officials of the match was deplorable and fit for the sewer, not the tournament room. But we do realize why he was forced into acting in such a "temperamental" and "unreasonable" way.

Fischer's protest was in effect a rebellion against the element of force used to please just one individual. In a larger sense he was revolting against the ever-growing specter of patronage in chess. It is a stand long overdue. We greatly respect him for it.



*Harkness*

**The two grandmasters at play during the first round—before the match exploded.**