

Joel Benjamin

World Champion Chess for Juniors

Learn From the Greatest Players Ever

New In Chess 2020

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Introduction

If you are not a junior, please don't toss this book aside; there is still a lot of cool analysis and history in here for you. But I have written this book, primarily, to reach out to younger players. At any point in history, we see a 'generation gap', where young people see the world in a very different way than their elders. If you are, let's say, a teen or tween, you probably process most chess material from a computer. You follow recent events, work on tactics puzzles, practice against an engine, or whatever works for you. This may match your lifestyle of playing Minecraft or (worse) Fortnite on your I-pad instead of reading books.

A few years ago, I was horrified to learn that two of my (young) fellow instructors at a chess camp could not name the World Champions in order (or even place them roughly in their time periods). For someone of my generation, that fundamental lack of knowledge was unthinkable. And while I accept that kids today learn things in different ways, I feel that they are still missing out from their ignorance of knowledge provided by books.

When I was a boy (back in the Stone Age), chess players read books. Lots of them. We had to of course – we didn't have other ways to learn. No computers, no Internet, no databases, and, unless you were lucky to live in a chess center (which I did, actually), no access to coaching.

Looking around at the shelves in my office, I realize that the majority of my books date back to my first few years in chess. I have best games collections from most of the World Champions, and several other greats like Nimzowitsch, Rubinstein, Keres, and Larsen. Those pioneers played a big role in forming my understanding of chess.

You may be thinking, 'Good for you, what does that have to do with us?' Well, while modern chess tools help us learn things and develop skills faster, they don't necessarily cover all the bases. We all stand on the shoulders of giants. Players understand the game today because of stuff players figured out back then. If you want to up your game, it's definitely useful to see chess at its highest level. Today's grandmasters, as great as they are, play with assistance of computer analysis and knowledge of a ton of opening variations. In a sense, older games have a purity about them. They are rather more *mano a mano* (which means hand to hand, by the way).

This book provides a Cliff Notes (ask mom and dad what those are) version of the World Champions, from Morphy (technically not an official champ, but I just couldn't leave him out) to Carlsen. [I have excluded those who won the title from the FIDE knockout tournaments in the early 2000s.] I didn't want this book to outweigh your computer, so I had to whittle down the game list. I went with a combination of a player's most famous games and ones I feel are particularly instructive or interesting. Each chapter concludes with two supplemental games, and even then there are plenty of games I hated to leave out.

Though the basic rules are the same as in the 1900s, chess has changed a lot over the years. The champions had different styles and approaches, strengths and weaknesses. They each contributed to our understanding of chess in their distinctive way, and I've tried to highlight what makes each champion special and worthy of study.

Most of the games are considered classics, and have appeared in many other chess books. You may be familiar with some of them (which is not a bad thing – it means you have some chess culture and a decent memory). A lot of the older books have analysis that can be proven faulty by chess engines; this in turn means that a lot of commentary has mistakes, too. So the tactical analysis here is more reliable, though it is still important to remember that chess is a human game. Even top grandmasters, let alone you and your opponents, often don't play the recommendations of chess engines.

Some games are heavy on tactics (working on Tal's games was particularly exhausting), but I've given more attention, at least in the majority of the games, to explaining the strategy. I want you to see how the great masters approached problem-solving in the opening, middlegame, and endgame, and how these solutions can relate to your own games. I have tried to find universal truths and provide instruction beyond how the players could have found better moves. I have also sought a variety of openings and a mixture of attacks and endgames to give as complete a course as possible.

I wanted this book to be more than a collection of cool games. I have included a bit of historical information about the players to put the games into proper context. I hope readers get a sense of why players succeeded or failed at certain times, how their styles evolved over their careers, and even which rivals they liked or couldn't stand.

All of these players, some more than others, have had an impact on my chess career personally. Before we get halfway through the book, the champions are playing within my lifetime. I've included a bit about how I interacted with several of them (never quite beat any of them).

I majored in history, so you can understand why I enjoyed learning more about these champions. But even if you aren't a trivia buff, you might want to pick a favorite player... and that champion might influence your future study and approach to the game. Feel free to choose your hero (or heroes). [It can still be Magnus after you finish the book.]

I was fortunate to watch three amazing champions in my youth: Fischer, who introduced me to chess, Karpov, who made me want to be a chess player, and Kasparov, a champion my own age. You might sense a little extra wonder in those chapters.

These games show classic and in some cases very early use of important strategies like clearance sacrifices and using the bishop pair, so I have bolded these concepts when they first appear in the book and defined them in a glossary. There is also a quiz and some other fun stuff at the back of the book.

I finished writing this book while all of our playing careers were put on hold by the coronavirus pandemic. As you will read, many champions and their rivals overcame disruptions brought on by two world wars. We will make it through this, too.

Joel Benjamin
Waldwick NJ, USA
August 2020

CHAPTER 5

The disciplined attacker: Alexander Alekhine

Lived: 1892-1946

Reigned: 1927-1935, 1937-1946

Title Defenses:

Bogoljubow 1929, 1934

Young readers may think of chess as something Indian and Chinese people are particularly good at. In my childhood, it was all about the Russians, and that all started with Alexander Alekhine. His great success inspired future generations of well-trained Russians.

History had known great attacking players before Alekhine, but they tended to be lacking in other areas. Alekhine had incredible tactical skills, but employed them from a sound foundation. Rudolf Spielmann, a master tactician who produced many brilliancies, said, 'I can see the combinations as well as Alekhine, but I cannot get to the same positions.'

Alekhine brings to mind a number of flashy finishes, none more spectacular than the first game of the selection.



Game 20 Dutch Defense

Efim Bogoljubow

Alexander Alekhine

Hastings 1922 (10)

**1.d4 f5 2.c4 ♘f6 3.g3 e6 4.♙g2
♙b4+ 5.♙d2 ♙xd2+ 6.♘xd2 ♘c6
7.♘gf3 0-0 8.0-0 d6 9.♚b3 ♖h8
10.♚c3?!**

10.d5! (Kasparov) is much more to the point, though Alekhine could have played 9...e5 instead.

**10...e5 11.e3 a5 12.b3 ♚e8 13.a3
♚h5 14.h4**

I don't like the looks of this one. I think White has to open the position and fight it out. Maybe 14.dxe5 dxe5 15.b4.

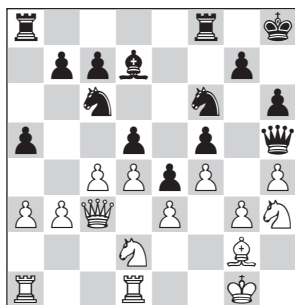
14...♘g4

I would have been tempted to get in 14...e4 but after 15.d5! ♘e7 16.♘g5 White can fight back with f2-f3. So Alekhine keeps the tension for now.

15.♘g5 ♙d7 16.f3?

Bogo blinks. He is clearly not comfortable with the tension in the position, but he clarifies it to Black's liking. 16.b4 should have been played.

**16...♘f6 17.f4 e4 18.♚fd1 h6 19.♘h3
d5**



Alekhine has a dream position: much more space, and weaknesses to attack. But are you expecting him to win on the queenside?

20.♘f1 ♘e7 21.a4

Grandmaster pawn play at work.

Black wants to knock out the b3-pawn or force it to advance with ...a5-a4. Then he can trade on c4 and plant a knight on d5, and probably find some good squares for his bishop, too.

21...♘c6!

Remember what I said about grandmasters not liking to retract their last move? They LOVE to do it if they can improve their position with the retraction. The b4 outpost is not always important for knights, but from there it can go to a central outpost on d3!

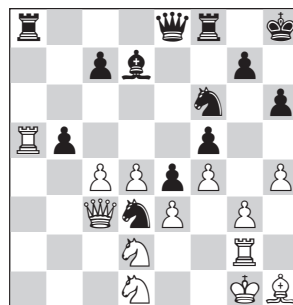
22.♚d2 ♘b4 23.♙h1 ♚e8 24.♚g2?!

It seems Bogo was still expecting a storm on the kingside. Alekhine's plan is even stronger with the rook misplaced.

24...dxc4 25.bxc4

25.♚xc4 ♙e6 and Black's pieces will easily penetrate.

**25...♙xa4 26.♘f2 ♙d7 27.♘d2 b5
28.♘d1 ♘d3 29.♚xa5**



Alekhine has so outplayed his esteemed opponent that he can win any way he wants. Simply 29...♖h5 30.♗f2 ♖e2 would be overwhelming. But he wins in fabulous fashion! In my childhood I was just amazed by the next few moves.

29...b4 30.♞xa8 bxc3!!

Again Black can win without excitement after 30...♞xa8 31.♞c2 ♗e1, but where's the fun in that?

31.♞xe8 c2! 32.♞xf8+ ♗h7 33.♗f2 c1♞+ 34.♗f1 ♗e1

White has two rooks for the queen, but he is so woefully cramped he has to sidestep smothered mate!

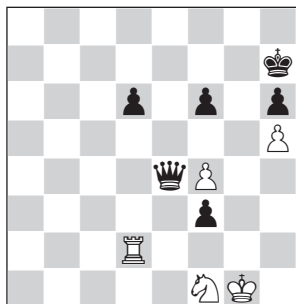
35.♞h2 ♞xc4

Mr. Computer points out 35...♗c2. There are many ways, but Alekhine's is stylish and certainly correct.

36.♞b8 ♗b5 37.♞xb5 ♞xb5 38.g4 ♗f3+ 39.♗xf3 exf3 40.gxf5 ♞e2 41.d5 ♗g8

Alekhine must have enjoyed reducing his opponent to zugzwang! At any moment, a move by the d2-knight or the rook loses immediately to ...♗f6-g4.

42.h5 ♗h7 43.e4 ♗xe4 44.♗xe4 ♞xe4 45.d6 cxd6 46.f6 gxf6 47.♞d2



47...♞e2!

The final touch, liquidating into a trivial pawn ending.

48.♞xe2 fxe2 49.♗f2 exf1♞+ 50.♗xf1 ♗g7 51.♗e2 ♗f7 52.♗e3 ♗e6 53.♗e4 d5+ 0-1

BO-GOL-YU-BOV sounds like a funny name, but the guy did develop one of my favorite openings, the Bogo-Indian. Still, after this thrashing, it's understandable why Alekhine let Bogo have two shots at his world title, in 1929 and 1934.

Richard Réti was the leading proponent of the **Hypermodern** approach to chess, which argued that you could let your opponent occupy the center and attack it with pawns and fianchettoed bishops.

Game 21 Réti Opening

Richard Réti
Alexander Alekhine

Baden-Baden 1925 (8)

1.g3 e5 2.♗f3

Consistent with Réti's philosophy, but he didn't repeat the move after this rough encounter. You occasionally see this move from GMs today, but usually in blitz events.

2...e4 3.♗d4 d5 4.d3

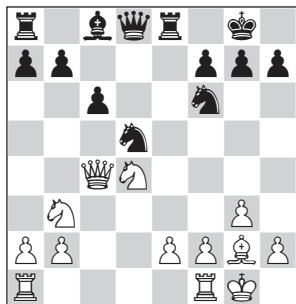
Did you notice that Réti is playing the Alekhine Defense with an extra tempo?

4...exd3 5.♞xd3 ♗f6 6.♗g2 ♗b4+

7.♗d2 ♗xd2+ 8.♗xd2 0-0 9.c4

♗a6 10.cxd5 ♗b4 11.♞c4 ♗bxd5

12.♗2b3 c6 13.0-0 ♞e8



Respectfully avoiding any attempt at refutation, Alekhine has a solid Capablanca-like position with the queenside majority. But the verdict will really fall on who controls the kingside.

14. ♖fd1

Réti's rook maneuver looks a bit strange, especially because the queen will simply move off the d-file. One way or another, White should try to get in e2-e4.

14... ♕g4 15. ♖d2 ♖c8 16. ♘c5 ♗h3 17. ♗f3 ♗g4 18. ♗g2 ♗h3 19. ♗f3 ♗g4 20. ♗h1

Réti could have claimed a threefold repetition with 20. ♗g2 (which is actually only repeating twice to create three identical positions) or simply play the move, and see if Alekhine would repeat again? What a shame if the beautiful tactics had never happened!

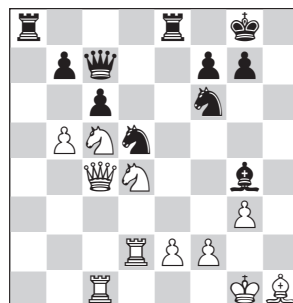
20...h5 21.b4

This move is okay, but even a hypermodern needs to pay attention to the center. 21.e4 b6! is not effective, but White might get there with something like 21. ♖c1 h4 22. ♖b3 hxg3 23. hxg3 ♖b8 24.e4.

21...a6 22. ♖c1

Here and on the next move 22.e4 would have been effective. Réti lets Black's position build momentum.

22...h4 23.a4 hxg3 24.hxg3 ♖c7 25.b5 axb5 26.axb5



26... ♖e3!

A pretty way to block the e-pawn, once and for all. 27.fxe3? ♖xg3+ 28. ♗g2 ♘xe3 leads to mate... bringing us back to Alekhine's repetition ploy. 26... ♖e3 only works because the bishop is on h1!

27. ♘f3

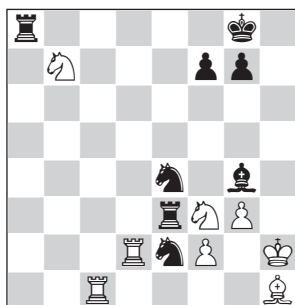
This is really a tactical oversight, though it's surprising how White's position collapses so fast.

White certainly has better ways to deal with the threat of 27... ♖xg3+:

A) Alekhine's line 27. ♗f3 ♗xf3 28.exf3 cxb5 29. ♘xb5 ♖a5 does not hold up. As Kasparov pointed out, 30. ♖xd5 ♖e1+ 31. ♖xe1 ♖xe1+ 32. ♗g2 ♖a1? (32... ♘xd5 33. ♖xd5 ♖a1 34. ♖d8+=) 33. ♖d8+ ♗h7 34. ♖h4+ ♗g6 35.f4 actually wins for White, while 30. ♖dd1! can only be better for White. Instead the cool 27... ♖ae8 keeps equal chances;

B) Alekhine's 27. ♗h2 ♖aa3!? is very clever. 28.fxe3? ♘xe3 29. ♖b4 ♘f1+! is a nice finish, but White

has many possible defenses, and 28.♘d3! looks like an effective one. So again 27...♙ae8 seems best, though here the tactical justification is pretty stunning: 28.fxe3? ♘xe3 29.♙d3 ♙c8! and White has to toss back material to avert a killing check on g4. **27...cxb5 28.♙xb5 ♘c3 29.♙xb7 ♙xb7 30.♘xb7 ♘xe2+ 31.♙h2 ♘e4!**



Alekhine doesn't take the rook, or move his attacked rook, but instead attacks another one! After this spectacular move events spin out of control.

Note that 'take first, ask questions later' would have spoiled everything: 31...♙xf3 32.♙xe2 ♙xg3 wins a pawn but not the game.

32.♙c4

Réti finds the best try. 32.fxe3 ♘xd2 costs the exchange.

32...♘xf2

Black wins a pawn while weakening White's kingside. 32...♘xd2?

33.♘xd2 ♙d3 34.♘c5 would have come up empty.

33.♙g2 ♙e6!

Now we see White's king coming under fire.

34.♙cc2



34.♙b4 ♘g4+ 35.♙h3 certainly looks like a rickety defense. The computer suggests 35...g5 36.♙d8+ ♙xd8 37.♘xd8 ♙f5 38.♙xg4 f6, with pins and immobile pieces leaving White helpless. I think Alekhine would have played something a bit simpler like 35...g6 36.♙d8+ ♙xd8 37.♘xd8 ♘f2+ 38.♙h2 ♙f5, etc.

34...♘g4+ 35.♙h3 ♘e5+ 36.♙h2 ♙xf3 37.♙xe2 ♘g4+ 38.♙h3 ♘e3+ 39.♙h2 ♘xc2 40.♙xf3 ♘d4

White resigned, anticipating 41.♙f2 ♘xf3+ 42.♙xf3 ♙d5 with a deadly skewer.

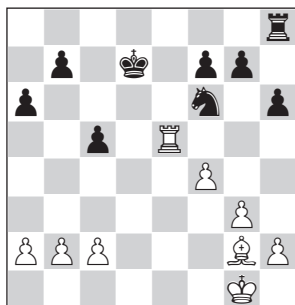
The next game shows the triumph of Alekhine's modern attacking style over a less disciplined attacker of the past. Alekhine did not need gimmicky openings to generate tactics. He builds up soundly but forcefully and quickly crashes through.

Game 62 Sicilian Defense

Bobby Fischer
Mark Taimanov

Vancouver ct m 1971 (4)

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4
 ♗c6 5.♗c3 ♖c7 6.g3 a6 7.♕g2 ♗f6
 8.0-0 ♗xd4 9.♖xd4 ♕c5 10.♖f4 d6
 11.♖d2 h6 12.♖ad1 e5 13.♕e3 ♕g4
 14.♕xc5 dxc5 15.f3 ♕e6 16.f4 ♖d8
 17.♗d5 ♕xd5 18.exd5 e4 19.♖fe1!?
 ♖xd5 20.♖xe4+ ♗d8
 Not 20...♗f8 21.♖e8+! ♗xe8 22.♕xd5.
 21.♖e2 ♖xd1+ 22.♖xd1+ ♖d7
 23.♖xd7+ ♗xd7 24.♖e5



24...b6?

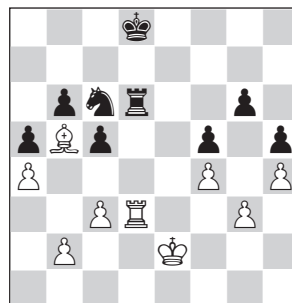
Taimanov plays it safe, but concedes too many squares. 24...♗d6 25.♕xb7 ♖b8 26.♕xa6 ♖xb2 would likely have led to a draw.

25.♕f1 a5 26.♕c4 ♖f8 27.♗g2 ♗d6
 28.♗f3 ♗d7 29.♖e3 ♗b8 30.♖d3+
 ♗c7 31.c3 ♗c6 32.♖e3 ♗d6 33.a4
 ♗e7 34.h3 ♗c6 35.h4 h5

The defender has to think twice about committing his pawns, but Taimanov would have felt the squeeze if he allowed g3-g4-g5.

36.♖d3+ ♗c7 37.♖d5 f5 38.♖d2 ♖f6
 39.♖e2 ♗d7 40.♖e3 g6 41.♕b5 ♖d6
 42.♗e2 ♗d8?!

42...♖f6 offered tougher resistance. Still, Fischer would have brought his king to c4, and either penetrated with the rook or traded minor pieces and invaded with the king.
 43.♖d3



With the rooks exchanged Black's fortress will be seriously challenged. He has to defend both wings and, as we shall see, bishops are great pieces for 'zugzwang'.

43...♗c7 44.♖xd6 ♗xd6 45.♗d3
 ♗e7 46.♕e8 ♗d5 47.♖f7+ ♗d6
 48.♗c4 ♗c6 49.♕e8+ ♗b7 50.♗b5
 ♗c8 51.♕c6+ ♗c7 52.♕d5 ♗e7
 53.♖f7 ♗b7 54.♕b3 ♗a7 55.♕d1
 ♗b7 56.♖f3+

Fischer could have come here earlier, but he times it so his king gets to a6.

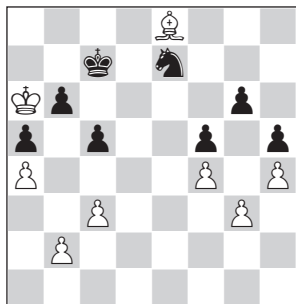
56...♗c7 57.♗a6 ♗g8

57...♗c8 58.♕d5 ♗d6 59.♕g8 and the threat of ♕g8-h7 would likely lead to the game continuation.

58.♕d5 ♗e7

Passive defense is depressing, but 58...♗f6 59.♖f7 ♗e4 60.♕xg6 ♗xg3 61.♖f7 ♗c6 62.♕e8+ ♗c7 63.♗a7 ♗d8 64.♕c6 ♗c7 65.♖f3 breaks down, too.

59.♕c4 ♗c6 60.♖f7 ♗e7 61.♕e8



The decisive zugzwang leads to a winning piece sacrifice.

**61...♙d8 62.♗xg6! ♖xg6 63.♙xb6
♙d7 64.♙xc5 ♗e7 65.b4 axb4
66.cxb4 ♗c8 67.a5 ♗d6 68.b5 ♗e4+
69.♙b6 ♙c8 70.♙c6 ♙b8 71.b6 1-0**

Petrosian had the moral victory of scoring, even managing to win one game in their match. But Fischer won four, including the following game where he demonstrates his particular skill in bishop endgames, especially in combination with rooks.

Game 63 Sicilian Defense

Bobby Fischer

2760

Tigran Petrosian

Buenos Aires ct m 1971 (7)

**1.e4 c5 2.♗f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4
a6 5.♗d3 ♗c6**

This game made future players wary of this move-order.

6.♗xc6 bxc6 7.0-0 d5 8.c4

Black has made a lot of pawn moves, so it makes sense to hit the center hard.

8...♗f6 9.cxd5 cxd5 10.exd5 exd5

11.♗c3 ♗e7 12.♙a4+!

Fischer finds an unconventional way to fight against the isolani.

12...♙d7?!

Petrosian makes a poor decision here. Black's pawn structure is built for the middlegame, and the awkward queen block will allow White a very smooth transition into the endgame. Much better was 12...♗d7 13.♙d4 0-0 though even here White has a pleasant position with 14.♗f4! (if 14.♗xd5 ♗xd5 15.♙xd5 ♗b5 White will not enjoy his extra pawn).

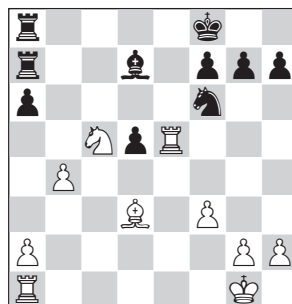
**13.♗e1 ♙xa4 14.♗xa4 ♗e6 15.♗e3
0-0 16.♗c5**

Trades are generally good when you have the better pawn structure, and this trade paves the way for the knight to post up to c5.

16...♗fe8 17.♗xe7 ♗xe7 18.b4!

Getting this move helps White's position a lot. The a6-pawn is stuck on its exposed square – unless it wants to invite White's pawn to b5, which might make things worse.

**18...♙f8 19.♗c5 ♗c8 20.f3 ♗ea7
21.♗e5 ♗d7**



22.♗xd7+!

It may not look like it, but this position is one of the greatest

moments in chess history. Fischer trades a beautifully outposted knight for a doing-nothing bishop. If you made this move, your coach might give you a hard time... if this game had not happened!

Fischer reasoned along these lines: the advantage of the knight is temporary, and White could find himself making this exchange in a few moves anyway, or perhaps an inferior trade. The bishop will be much stronger than the knight in an open position with a queenside majority. Moreover, we know Fischer had great confidence playing with bishops in endgames. He knew exactly how to make this move work.

Is it the best move? I would be tempted to play 22.a4 with the tactical justification (which I might not find) 22...a5 23.b5 ♖c7 24.♖c1 ♘xb5 25.♘xb5 ♗ac8 26.g4! h6 27.h4 and White wins. But if the proof of the pudding is in the eating, well, Fischer wins in twelve moves without any difficulties. This all shows how Fischer believed in his ideas and wasn't afraid to play moves others might find controversial.

22...♞xd7 23.♞c1 ♞d6 24.♞c7 ♝d7 25.♞e2 g6 26.♝f2 h5

Black's play looks self-destructive, but what could he do here? None of his pieces have anywhere to go. That being said, it would have been better to try to make use of the d-pawn and leave the kingside back. **27.f4 h4 28.♝f3 f5? 29.♝e3 d4+ 30.♝d2 ♝b6**

This basically allows checkmate, but ♘d3-c4 is coming and Black will start coughing up pawns.

31.♞e7 ♝d5 32.♞f7+ ♝e8 33.♞b7 ♝xf4 34.♘c4 1-0

The negotiations for Fischer's match with Spassky had some rocky moments, but Fischer agreed to play after the purse was raised to a record \$250,000. The most anticipated match in chess history proved memorable from the start.

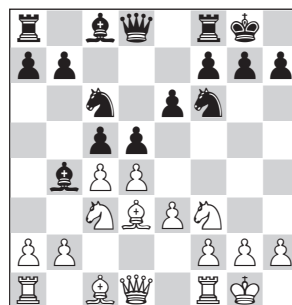
Game 64 Nimzo-Indian Defense

Boris Spassky 2660

Bobby Fischer 2785

Reykjavik Wch m 1972 (1)

1.d4 ♝f6 2.c4 e6 3.♝f3 d5 4.♝c3 ♘b4 5.e3 0-0 6.♘d3 c5 7.0-0 ♝c6

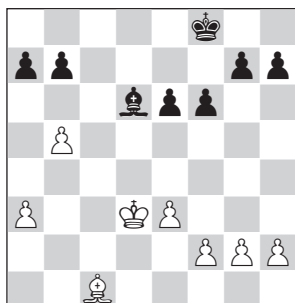


This position had never been played before by Fischer.

8.a3 ♘a5 9.♝e2 dxc4 10.♘xc4 ♘b6 11.dxc5 ♗xd1 12.♞xd1 ♘xc5 13.b4 ♘e7 14.♘b2 ♘d7! 15.♞ac1 15.♘xf6 ♘xf6 16.♞xd7?? ♘xa1. 15...♞fd8 16.♝ed4 ♝xd4 17.♝xd4 ♘a4 18.♘b3 ♘xb3 19.♝xb3 ♞xd1+ 20.♞xd1 ♞c8 21.♝f1 ♝f8 22.♝e2 ♝e4 23.♞c1 ♞xc1 24.♘c1 f6

25. ♖a5 ♘d6 26. ♖d3 ♙d8 27. ♘c4
 ♙c7 28. ♘xd6 ♙xd6 29. b5

Spassky smartly moves his pawns onto light squares, knowing that the h-pawn doesn't need defending.



29... ♙xh2?

With all the brilliant moves of his career, Fischer is perhaps best known for this one crazy decision. The facts of this game have descended into myth, helped along by the fiction of movies. [No, Fischer did not overlook White's next move and resign immediately!]

After any normal move we could have expected a draw very shortly.

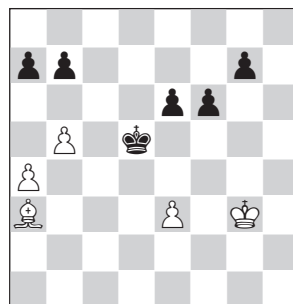
30. g3 h5 31. ♖e2 h4 32. ♖f3

Even if White had to settle for 32. gxh4, the position would be pretty dead drawn anyway. Fischer's pawn grab risked everything for the tiniest of rewards. But we see some of what made Fischer great here. He had great faith in his abilities and always looked for the best possible move, no matter what the situation.

32... ♖e7

It seems Fischer missed that after 32...h3 33. ♖g4 ♙g1 34. ♖xh3 ♙xf2 35. ♙d2! the bishop is still trapped.

33. ♖g2 hxg3 34. fxg3 ♙xg3 35. ♖xg3
 ♖d6 36. a4 ♖d5 37. ♙a3



37... ♖e4?

The other part of the myth is that Fischer was doomed after his mistake on move 29. In fact, the position should be a draw, and the easiest way to achieve it is 37... a6!. Rather than bog you down in variations, I'll explain the obstacles in White's three choices:

A) 38. bxa6 is the clearest draw because of the wrong bishop and rook pawn combination. Black trades his three pawns for White's e-pawn and runs the king to the corner;

B) 38. b6 ♖c6 39. a5 ♖d5 (counterplay with 39... ♖b5 probably works, too) and now Black again looks to trade the e3-pawn and run the king to c8, which leads to another fortress;

C) If White allows the trade on b5, Black combines the trading-the-e3-pawn plan with forcing the last pawn to b6 and again sets up his fortress.

38. ♙c5 a6 39. b6! f5 40. ♖h4 f4
 40... ♖d5 was suggested as a better try, but it seems that 41. ♙b4 and

41. ♖f8 are both good enough to win.

41. exf4 ♖xf4 42. ♖h5 ♖f5 43. ♖e3
 White is winning because his pawn stayed on a4. The fortress plan falls short because Black will have to play ...a6-a5 due to zugzwang. White then takes the pawn and pushes a4-a5-a6 and wins.

43... ♖e4 44. ♖f2 ♖f5 45. ♖h4 e5 46. ♖g5 e4 47. ♖e3 ♖f6 48. ♖g4 ♖e5 49. ♖g5 ♖d5 50. ♖f5 a5 51. ♖f2 g5 52. ♖xg5 ♖c4 53. ♖f5 ♖b4 54. ♖xe4 ♖xa4 55. ♖d5 ♖b5 56. ♖d6 1-0

White will win the b7-pawn by zugzwang.

Game 2 was never played. Fischer became upset by the presence of TV cameras. But it's not a simple matter to remove them when companies are paying lots of money for broadcast rights. So Fischer forfeited Game 2, and it looked like the match would be over almost before it began. Spassky hated the prospect of winning the match by forfeit, and agreed to play Game 3 in a small, private room. And then the fight magically turned upside down, like a boxing or superhero movie.

Fischer was a much harder worker than Spassky. He studied his openings relentlessly, and not just the main ones that came up most frequently. He was able to develop ideas in many different openings, and Spassky was not prepared to meet them, or work out the right responses.

On top of that, Spassky was not the best player to sit on a lead. He was a dynamic player, built for going for wins. He hadn't perfected the 'playing for two results' of 21st century chess. He allowed Fischer to get winning chances with black, and Fischer stunned him twice. The first game featured a move that completely shocked a beginning player in Fischer's hometown of Brooklyn, NY.

Game 65 Benoni Defense

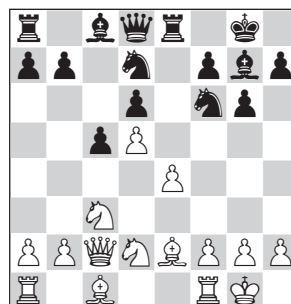
Boris Spassky 2660
Bobby Fischer 2785

Reykjavik Wch m 1972 (3)

1. d4 ♘f6 2. c4 e6 3. ♘f3 c5 4. d5 exd5 5. cxd5 d6 6. ♘c3 g6 7. ♘d2

In those days, the potential of a knight on c4 was so appealing that players were usually willing to block their own development. Nowadays more straightforward schemes are preferred against the Benoni, like e2-e4, ♖f1-d3, and h2-h3.

7... ♘bd7 8. e4 ♖g7 9. ♖e2 0-0 10. 0-0 ♜e8 11. ♚c2



11... ♘h5!?

I certainly wasn't the only one shocked by this move! Fischer volunteers to have his pawn structure destroyed. And yet, the idea is quite playable. The bishop on e2 is a good defender of the light squares, and will be missed. The bishop's diagonal is opened, as well as the path for Black's queen to develop. It may not be as good as the usual 11...♘e5, but it presented new, complex problems for Spassky to deal with. Just perfect for the situation! But what kind of crazy genius would even think of such a move?

12. ♖xh5 gxh5 13. ♘c4

An improvement was found for White later that year. The game Gligoric-Kavalek, Skopje Olympiad 1972, continued 13.a4 ♘e5 14.♘d1! ♖h4 15.♘e3 ♘g4 16.♘xg4 hxg4 17.♘c4 with an advantage for White. The knight on c4 is clearly stronger than the one Spassky was left with.

13... ♘e5 14. ♘e3

Hard to say whether this move is better than trading on e5.

14... ♖h4 15. ♖d2?!

White could still have hoped for an advantage with 15.f3!, preventing Black's next move.

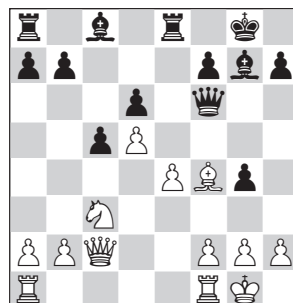
15... ♘g4 16. ♘xg4 hxg4

Black has not only undoubled his pawns, but artificially isolated the e4-pawn as well. Any advance by the f-pawn will be met by capture. So White's center is more of a burden than an active force.

17. ♖f4

The knight isn't doing much on c3, but Spassky probably didn't like 17.♘e2 f5. Still, 18.♘g3 fxe4 19.♖ae1 is about equal.

17... ♖f6



18.g3?

This is a pretty ugly move for a World Champion! Spassky must have feared for his bishop after 18.♖g3, but he can fight back, for instance 18...a6 (or 18...♖d7) 19.f4 h5 with a messy position that can go in any direction.

Spassky doesn't have to worry about the bishop being pushed around, but his pawns are stuck in the mud. White's strategy in the Benoni requires these pawns to be free to advance!

18... ♖d7 19.a4 b6 20. ♖fe1 a6

21. ♖e2 b5 22. ♖ae1 ♖g6 23.b3 ♖e7

24. ♖d3 ♖b8 25.axb5 axb5 26.b4 c4

26...cxb4?! 27.♘a2 gets the pawn right back. White has something of a blockade on the protected passed pawn on c4, but he has too many other problems.

27. ♖d2 ♖be8 28. ♖e3 h5

The e-pawn is doomed, and Fischer is in no rush to cash in.

29. ♖3e2 ♘h7 30. ♖e3 ♘g8



The World Championship match between Spassky and Fischer in Reykjavik, 1972.

31. ♖3e2 ♘xc3 32. ♗xc3 ♜xe4

33. ♜xe4 ♜xe4 34. ♜xe4 ♗xe4

With opposite-colored bishops White has hopes for a blockade on the dark squares. Too bad Fischer is having a party on the light squares.

35. ♙h6

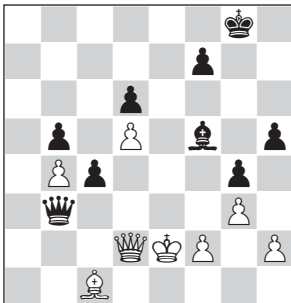
35. ♙xd6 ♗xd5 and ... ♙c6 kills on the long diagonal.

35... ♗g6 36. ♙c1 ♗b1 37. ♙f1 ♙f5

38. ♙e2 ♗e4+ 39. ♗e3 ♗c2+

39... ♗xd5 40. ♗g5+ gives White a lucky perpetual.

40. ♗d2 ♗b3



41. ♗d4?

Spassky blunders, just before the adjournment. On 41. ♙e1 Robert Byrne's suggestion of 41... ♗f3 gives White some hope after 42. ♗e3 ♗h1+ 43. ♙e2 ♙d3+ 44. ♙d2 ♗xd5 45. ♙b2. 41...c3 looks stronger, e.g. 42. ♗g5+ ♙g6 43. ♗d8+ ♙h7 44. ♗xd6 c2 45. ♗f4 ♗xd5 46. ♗h6+ ♙g8 47. ♗d2 ♗e4+ 48. ♙f1 f6 49. ♙g1 ♙f7 and Black should win.

Fischer sealed his next move and Spassky resigned without resumption:

41... ♙d3+! 0-1

All king moves are hopeless: 42. ♙d2 ♗c2+ 43. ♙e1 ♗xc1#; 42. ♙e3 ♗d1! 43. ♗b2 ♗f3+ 44. ♙d4 ♗e4+ 45. ♙c3 ♗e1+! and 46... ♗e5#; or 42. ♙e1 ♗xb4+ with a slower death.

Fischer won the next game with black as well, showing greater

CHAPTER 18

The master of everything and nothing: Magnus Carlsen

Lived: 1990-present

Reigned: 2013-present

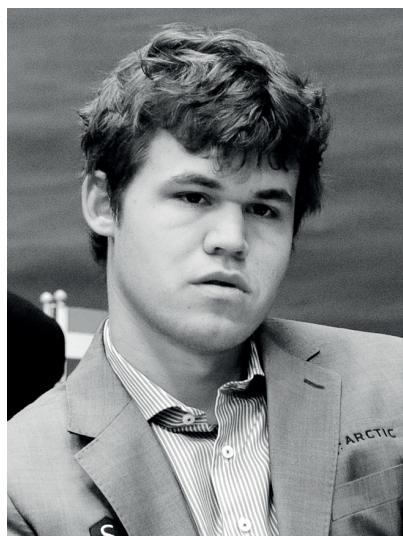
Title Defenses:

Anand 2014

Karjakin 2016

Caruana 2018

As I write this book, Magnus Carlsen is the same age as Bobby Fischer when he won the World Championship. Fischer produced only one World Championship match in his life, but Carlsen is a very active champion with a lot more mileage left in him. You can argue that his best is yet to come, and future volumes will include Carlsen chess artistry that I cannot produce in 2020. But like Bobby Fischer, Carlsen has already graced us with a lot of cool games.



Carlsen is, in a sense, the heir to Garry Kasparov. The champions in between, Kramnik, Topalov, and Anand, were players who were largely overshadowed in the Kasparov era. They had their chance to shine when Kasparov retired, but none of the three, as great as they were, were able to dominate. When Carlsen became the youngest World Champion in history, he had already held the #1 ranking in the world for four years!

In their approach to chess, there is very little Kasparov and Carlsen have in common! Kasparov was all about analyzing openings to great depth, looking for an edge in every game. More often than not, he would look for complications. Carlsen doesn't seem to care if he gets an advantage from the opening. He trusts his superior skills, looking to outplay his

opponents later in the game. If nothing much is happening, he just keeps plugging along.

Kasparov actually trained Carlsen for a little while, but it just didn't work out. They were like ketchup and ice cream; great by themselves, but not good together.

Carlsen has often been compared to Karpov, but Fischer might be an even better comparison. His natural grasp of strategy is incredible, and he plays great endgames. He doesn't need to create complications, but if they should arise, he calculates better than anyone.

Champions often produce their greatest artistry in their early years, when they are geared more for the attack and their opponents don't quite know what's on their hands.

Game 97 Queen's Indian Defense
Magnus Carlsen 2528
Geir Sune Tallaksen Ostmo 2349
 Sandnes ch-NOR 2005 (5)

1. $\text{c}3$ $\text{f}6$ 2. $\text{c}4$ $\text{e}6$ 3. $\text{d}4$ $\text{b}6$ 4. $\text{g}3$
 $\text{a}6$ 5. $\text{b}3$ $\text{b}5$ 6. $\text{cxb}5$ $\text{axb}5$ 7. $\text{g}2$ $\text{d}5$
 8. 0-0 $\text{bd}7$ 9. $\text{c}3$ $\text{a}6$ 10. $\text{Ke}1$ $\text{d}6$
 11. $\text{b}2$ 0-0 12. $\text{e}4$ $\text{xe}4$ 13. $\text{xe}4$
 $\text{dxe}4$ 14. $\text{Exe}4$ $\text{b}7$ 15. $\text{Rh}4$!?

This looks a bit primitive. Youthful optimism seems to be rewarded a lot.

15... $\text{e}7$ 16. $\text{Rh}3$ $\text{f}6$ 17. $\text{We}2$ $\text{d}5$

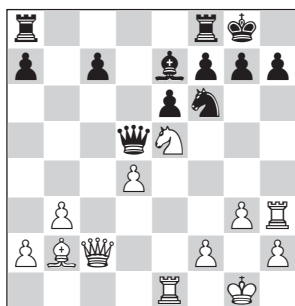
It's iffy whether White would really play $\text{d}4$ - $\text{d}5$, but it's easy to find yourself playing defensively against a talented kid.

18. $\text{Ke}1$ $\text{Wb}8$

The queen maneuver is understandable, but just wastes time after Carlsen's next move.

18... $\text{a}5$ is the move for quick counterplay.

19. $\text{d}e5$ $\text{Wb}7$ 20. $\text{Qxd}5$ $\text{Wxd}5$ 21. $\text{Wc}2$



Carlsen sets up a tactic that only becomes stronger after Black's next move.

21... $\text{c}5$?

It's better to give this pawn straight up than to open the long diagonal.

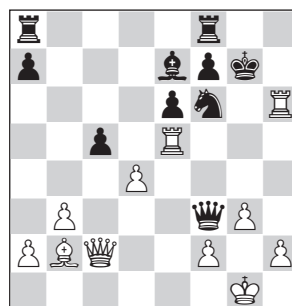
21... $\text{h}6$ would have avoided the coming hail of sacrifices.

22. $\text{g}4$ $\text{h}6$

Very sporty to allow the sacrifice, but better to lose a few little guys and stay alive after 22... $\text{h}5$ 23. $\text{Ke}5$ $\text{Wf}3$ 24. $\text{Qxf}6+$ $\text{Qxf}6$ 25. $\text{Texh}5$ $\text{g}6$ 26. $\text{Exc}5$ $\text{Tfd}8$.

23. $\text{Ke}5$ $\text{Wf}3$ 24. $\text{Qxh}6+$ $\text{gxh}6$ 25. $\text{Exh}6$ $\text{c}7$

There's nothing else to try. 25... $\text{Wg}4$ 26. $\text{c}1$ costs the queen.



26. $\text{Tg}5$!

Black would be toast after 26. $\text{Rh}4$ $\text{Tg}8$ 27. $\text{Tf}4$ $\text{Wc}6$ 28. $\text{d}5$! but the second sacrifice completely ends the game.

26... $\text{Qxh}6$ 27. $\text{c}1$

White didn't need the long diagonal after all.

27... $\text{cxd}4$ 28. $\text{Tg}4+$ $\text{We}3$ 29. $\text{Rh}4+$ $\text{d}h5$ 30. $\text{Exh}5$!

Much stronger than 30. $\text{fxe}3$ $\text{Qxh}4$ 31. $\text{gxh}4$.

30... $\text{Qxh}5$ 31. $\text{Wh}7+$ $\text{c}7$ 32. $\text{fxe}3$ $\text{Tac}8$ 33. $\text{c}2$!

Style points for this one!

33... $\text{Txc}1$ 34. $\text{h}3+$ $\text{c}7$ 35. $\text{Wg}7+$ $\text{c}f5$ 35... $\text{c}h5$ 36. $\text{g}4+$ $\text{c}h4$ 37. $\text{Wh}6\#$.

36. $\text{g}4+$ $\text{c}e4$ 37. $\text{Wxd}4\#$ 1-0

Carlsen calculated flawlessly.

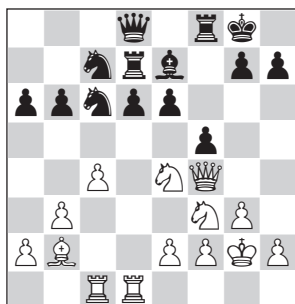
Within a few years Carlsen was competing with the world elite. He tied for first (with Levon Aronian) ahead of the three previous World Champions at the traditional Wijk aan Zee tournament in January 2008. This victory coincided with my brief tenure as New York Times chess columnist after Robert Byrne's retirement. I analyzed Carlsen's standout win over Kramnik and suggested his 'remarkable maturity was reminiscent of a young Bobby Fischer.' My editor thought I was 'engaging in hyperbole' but I think future events proved me correct!

Game 98 English Opening

Vladimir Kramnik 2799
Magnus Carlsen 2733

Wijk aan Zee 2008 (12)

1. $\text{d}2\text{f}3$ $\text{d}2\text{f}6$ 2. $\text{c}4$ $\text{e}6$ 3. $\text{d}2\text{c}3$ $\text{c}5$ 4. $\text{g}3$
b6 5. $\text{e}2$ $\text{b}7$ 6. 0-0 $\text{e}7$ 7. $\text{d}4$ $\text{cxd}4$
8. $\text{xd}4$ $\text{d}6$ 9. $\text{d}1$ $\text{a}6$ 10. $\text{g}5$ $\text{gxg}2$
11. $\text{gxg}2$ $\text{d}2\text{c}6$ 12. $\text{f}4$ 0-0 13. $\text{d}2\text{ce}4$
 $\text{d}2\text{e}8$ 14. $\text{b}3$ $\text{a}7$ 15. $\text{b}2$ $\text{d}7$
16. $\text{ac}1$ $\text{d}2\text{c}7$ 17. $\text{d}2\text{f}3$ $\text{f}5$



Carlsen starts sending white pieces backward, greatly improving his

control of space. Pawn storms have to be weighed carefully! Here Carlsen has enough square control to make this strategy reasonable.

18. $\text{d}2\text{c}3$ $\text{g}5$ **19.** $\text{d}2$ $\text{g}4$ **20.** $\text{d}2\text{e}1$ $\text{e}2$ $\text{g}5$
 Beginning the dream of occupying $\text{f}3$.

21. $\text{e}3$ $\text{ff}7$ **22.** $\text{g}1$ $\text{d}2\text{e}8$ **23.** $\text{d}2\text{e}2$ $\text{d}2\text{f}6$
24. $\text{d}2\text{f}4$ $\text{e}8$ **25.** $\text{c}3$ $\text{g}7$

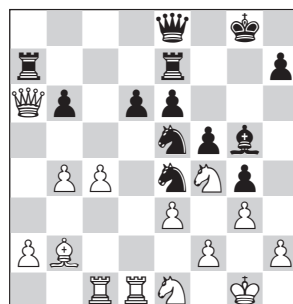
The mature Carlsen might have tossed in $\text{25...a}5$ to dilute counterplay. This might be the only genuine slip he makes in the entire game.

26. $\text{b}4$ $\text{d}2\text{e}4$ **27.** $\text{b}3$

The pawn grab after $\text{27.} \text{a}3$ $\text{g}7$ $\text{28.} \text{xa}6$ $\text{a}7$ $\text{29.} \text{b}5$ $\text{xa}2$ is better than in the game but no trouble for Black. But Kramnik could have improved his activity with $\text{28.f}3!$.

It's admittedly a fine line between fighting back on the side where you are weaker and doing your opponent's work for him.

27... $\text{g}7$ **28.** $\text{a}4$ $\text{d}2\text{e}5$ **29.** $\text{xa}6?$ $\text{a}7$



30. $\text{b}5$

Had Kramnik missed $\text{30.} \text{xb}6$ $\text{eb}7$ $\text{31.} \text{d}4$ $\text{f}6$ when White's queen is suddenly trapped in the middle of the board?

30... $\text{xb}5$ **31.** $\text{cxb}5$ $\text{xa}2$ **32.** $\text{c}8+$ $\text{f}7$ **33.** $\text{d}2\text{fd}3$ $\text{d}2\text{f}6$ **34.** $\text{d}2\text{xe}5+?$

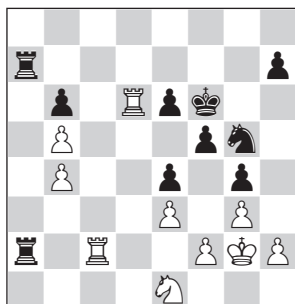
34. ♖xe5 offered more hope as d3 is at least a sturdy square for the knight.

34...dxe5 35. ♖c2

Not 35. ♖d3? ♜xf2 36. ♜xf2 e4.

35...♞e7 36. ♜g2 ♜g5 37. ♞d6 e4

38. ♙xf6 ♜xf6



39. ♜f1

Kramnik starts shedding pawns, but any attempt to grab the b-pawn would have betrayed the white king: 39. ♞xb6 ♞a1 40. ♞e2 ♜f3 41. ♜f1 ♞d7 42. ♞a6 ♞b1, or 39. ♞xa2 ♞xa2 40. ♞xb6 ♜h3!

39...♞a1 40. ♜e2 ♞b1 41. ♞d1 ♞xb4

42. ♜g2 ♞xb5

Only Carlsen's youth would give Kramnik the slightest hope; in hindsight it looks especially naive!

43. ♜f4 ♞c5 44. ♞b2 b5 45. ♜f1 ♞ac7

46. ♞bb1 ♞b7 47. ♞b4 ♞c4 48. ♞b2 b4

49. ♞db1 ♜f3 50. ♜g2 ♞d7 51. h3 e5

52. ♜e2 ♞d2 53. hxg4 fxg4 54. ♞xd2

♜xd2 55. ♞b2 ♜f3 56. ♜f1 b3 57. ♜g2

♞c2 0-1

By nature Carlsen is not normally a tactical player, but he is very opportunistic and calculates remarkably well.

Game 99 Sicilian Defense

Magnus Carlsen

2776

Alexander Grischuk

2733

Linares 2009 (12)

1. e4 c5 2. ♜f3 d6 3. d4 cxd4 4. ♜xd4

♜f6 5. ♜c3 a6 6. ♙e2 e6 7. 0-0 ♙e7

8. a4 ♜c6 9. ♙e3 0-0 10. f4 ♜c7

11. ♜h1 ♞e8 12. ♜f3 ♙f8

Kasparov's legacy lives!

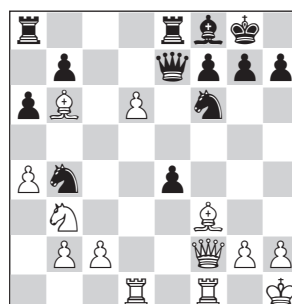
13. ♜d2 ♞b8 14. ♜f2 e5 15. fxe5 dxe5

16. ♜b3 ♜b4 17. ♙a7 ♞a8 18. ♙b6

♜e7 19. ♞ad1 ♙e6?!

It doesn't actually help to bring the bishop to bear on the vulnerable d5-square. But 19... ♙g4 offered an okay position.

20. ♜d5 ♙xd5 21. exd5 e4 22. d6



22... ♜e6?

Black would not equalize after

22... ♜e5 23. d7 ♜xd7 24. ♞xd7 exf3

25. ♜xf3 ♞e7 26. ♞xb7 but Grischuk will regret letting the d-pawn live.

23. ♜c5 ♜f5 24. ♙e2 ♜xf2 25. ♞xf2

♜bd5 26. a5

There was also the arguably

stronger but less natural 26. ♞xf6?!

♜xf6 (26... ♜xb6 27. ♞f4) 27. a5 with a crushing bind.

26... ♜xb6 27. axb6