

(The annotations to this game, by L. A. Polugaevsky, are from '64' (№ 32, 1972). The translation from the original Russian is by Douglas Griffin.)

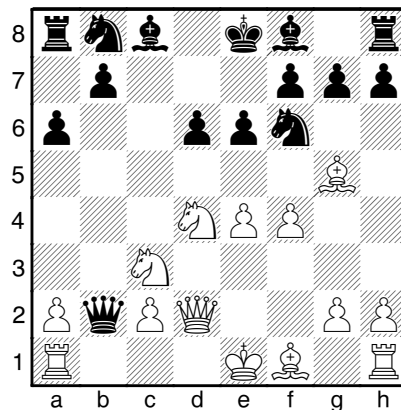
Finally there came the long-awaited victory, the significance of which it is difficult to over-state. At the most critical moment of the match Spassky displayed courage and firmness of mind. Personally, the pleasant outcome of the 11th game instills in me the hope that the World Champion will manage to turn himself around, re-establish his former confidence and strength, and to create a better 'mood'. I do not presume to claim that success in a single game could be crucial, but the flow of the match tension has been reversed by 180 degrees. But I think that Spassky will now be up to the task of beginning to dictate his will.

This game is notable for the following circumstance. For the first time a repetition of an opening variation occurred. Until now both grandmasters had been as if probing one another along various channels of opening theory. Moreover, they took as the basis tactical manoeuvring, in order to avoid any sort of surprises at the opening stage. On this occasion, however, there ran into one another two principled and differing views on one of the most topical variations of the Sicilian Defence, and the opponents resolve for a second time to continue the debate, in order to defend their point of view.

Spassky – Fischer

11th match-game, World Championship, Reykjavik, 6th August 1972

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.Bg5 e6 7.f4 Qb6 8.Qd2 Qxb2



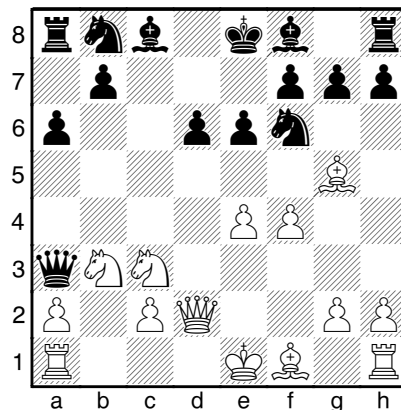
As regards this system, the final word of theory has still not been said. Lovers of sharp play are pleased to employ it with both White and Black. The 'defenders' say thank you for the pawn at b2, while the 'attackers' are very happy to sacrifice it. As a long-time Sicilian player who has seen many 'Sicilian attacks', I admit that I have always had a prejudice concerning 7...Qb6. It seems to me to be absurd to force a lone queen to journey into the other's camp and to fight against a whole armada of White pieces. However, this is already a matter of taste. It is another matter to demonstrate

the strength or weakness of Black's 7th move. The present game undoubtedly plays a definite role in the evolution of the chosen system.

9.Nb3

The consequences of the often-encountered 9.Rb1 are not clear. Fischer is well familiar with the finesses of this continuation, and Spassky quite understandably gives preference to the less-studied move in the text.

9...Qa3



10.Bxf6

Up to the tenth move the game was an exact copy of the 7th encounter. There White played 10.Bd3, which led to complications favourable to Black. But now the 'twin' paths diverge: in this duel Spassky employs another plan, which appears very promising.

With the exchange of the bishop White disrupts the king-side pawn phalanx. Usually in positions of this type Black's king remains in the centre of the board, while in itself this is fraught with difficulties.

10...gxf6 11.Be2 h5

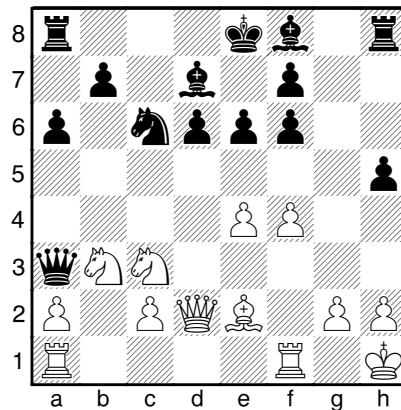
The blockading manoeuvre Be2-h5 cannot be permitted; moreover Black should meet the 'bayonet' attack f4-f5 by means of 12...Bh6.

12.0-0 Nc6 13.Kh1

Necessary prophylaxis. Black often builds his play on the exploitation of the diagonal g1-a7, and therefore White removes his king to a quiet spot in good time.

13...Bd7

Fischer plays the most obvious moves, not even guessing that a cunning trap lies in wait for him.



14.Nb1!

The paradoxical retreat of the knight unexpectedly confronts Black with having to solve complicated problems: how is the queen, entangled in White's web, to be saved? Judging by the ensuing uncertain play by Black, White's reply had clearly taken Fischer unawares.

(Translator's note: Subsequently, 14.Nd1 has nonetheless proved more popular here.)

14...Qb4 15.Qe3

Thus, White threatens the variation 15.a3 Qa4 16.Nc3, and the trap slams shut. Sensing that the soil is slipping from under his feet, Fischer makes an impulsive move, hoping to confuse the opponent. But as a result he falls "out of the frying pan, into the fire". Of course, it is too early to give a final judgement of Black's entire opening strategy, but one has the impression that Spassky has managed to convincingly win the theoretical debate. Now the word is with Fischer. Either he will succeed in rehabilitating the whole variation for Black, or he will have to part with his favourite 'brainchild'.

15...d5

(Translator's note: The game Qi Jingzuan-Karpov (Hannover, 1983) saw the alternative 15...Ne7!? tried here.)

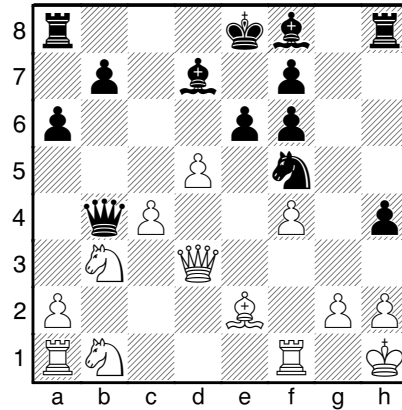
16.exd5 Ne7 17.c4

Most simply of all underlining the complete absurdness of Black's idea. The position of the king is hopelessly weak, and all that remains for White is to prepare to deliver the decisive blow.

17...Nf5 18.Qd3 h4

If 18...exd5, then 19.Nc3! Qxc4 20.Qd2 with the strongest of attacks. Fischer retains hope of a chance opportunity: 19...Ng3+ 20.hxg3 hxg3+ 21.Kg1 Bc5+. But Black's little 'jab' is repulsed without difficulty by White.

Clearly, it was hardly possible to find a satisfactory defence for Black. All the same, 18...Rc8 ought to have been tried.



19.Bg4

Liquidating the threat of 19...Ng3+.

19...Nd6

Equivalent to capitulation. The knight cuts off the final path of retreat for the queen. Better was 19...Nh6.

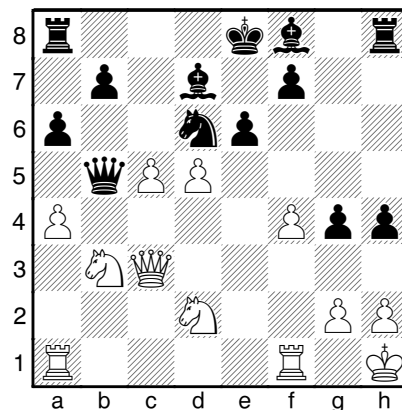
20.N1d2 f5 21.a3 Qb6

Or 21...Qa4 22.Nc5.

22.c5 Qb5 23.Qc3

Now on 23...Rg8 White continues 24.Nd4 Bg7 (24...Qa4 25.Bd1) 25.Nxb5 Bxc3 26.Nxc3.

23...fxg4 24.a4



24...h3

24...Qe2 is of no help in view of 25.Rae1.

Seemingly, it is all over and the time has come to lower the curtain, but the American grandmaster, to everyone's surprise, continued the pointless resistance. The desire to play to the finish is very commendable, but in matches for the World Championship matters have still not got as far as the realisation of an extra queen. One must also be able to lose in worthy fashion. The final moves of the game provoke a smile...

25.axb5 hxg2+ 26.Kxg2 Rh3 27.Qf6 Nf5 28.c6 Bc8 29.dxe6 fxe6 30.Rfe1 Be7 31.Rxe6

Black resigned.