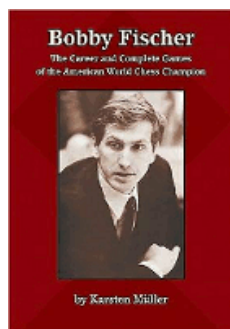




COLUMNISTS

Endgame
Corner

Karsten Müller



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The Fischer Endgame

When preparing for the presentation of the book *Bobby Fischer, The Career and Complete Games of the American World Chess Champion* at the Max Euwe Center in Amsterdam, I had to select a few positions to show the audience. Among those I considered was the following famous classic, with the typical material configuration for the Fischer endgame of rook and strong bishop vs. rook and knight.

106.01A Fischer, Robert (2740) – Taimanov, Mark (2620)
Vancouver Match 1971 Vancouver (4), 25.05.1971



Endgame literature generally considers this position to be lost for Black (and this seems to be about right), but Charles Sullivan drew my attention to an interesting defensive try:

42...Kd8?!

Allowing the exchange of rooks, when White's king will penetrate slowly but surely by repeatedly using the sharp endgame weapon of *zugzwang*. Black must make sure that the rooks remain; for example, with 42...Rf6!?, which will be dealt with below in 106.01B and 106.01C.

43.Rd3! Kc7 44.Rxd6 Kxd6 45.Kd3 Ne7

45...Kd5 46.Bxc6+ Kxc6 47.Kc4 Kd6 48.Kb5 Kc7 49.Ka6 Kc6 50.c4 and White wins by outflanking: 50...Kc7 51.Ka7 Kc6 52.Kb8+-.

46.Be8 Kd5 47.Bf7+ Kd6 48.Kc4 Kc6 49.Be8+ Kb7 50.Kb5 Ne8 51.Bc6+

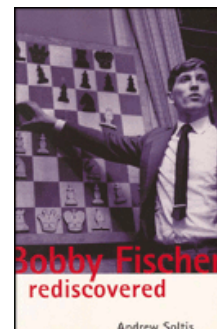
Of course not 51.Bxg6?? Nd6#.

51...Kc7 52.Bd5 Ne7 53.Bf7 Kb7 54.Bb3 Ka7 55.Bd1 Kb7 56.Bf3+ Kc7 57. Ka6 Ng8 58.Bd5 Ne7

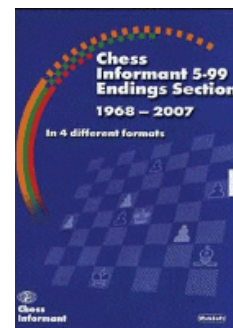
58...Nf6 59.Bf7 Ne4 60.Bxg6 Nxg3 61.Be8 Ne2 62.Bxh5 Nxf4 63.Bf3+- and the bishop is far superior to the knight, so it is over.

59.Bc4 Nc6 60.Bf7 Ne7

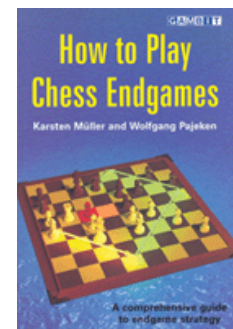
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61.Be8!

This brings Black into fatal *zugzwang*.

61...Kd8

As the knight cannot move, this is Black's best chance, but the bishop just sacrifices itself.

62.Bxg6 Nxg6 63.Kxb6 Kd7 64.Kxc5 Ne7 65.b4 axb4 66.cxb4 Nc8 67.a5 Nd6 68.b5 Ne4+ 69.Kb6 Kc8 70.Kc6 Kb8 71.b6 1–0

106.01B The Soltis and Sullivan Defense



42...Rf6!? 43.Kd3 Kd8



And here comes the problem with the old analysis, which I noticed when preparing for Amsterdam, when the English edition of the book was already in print:

44.Kc4?

This looks very natural, but is surprisingly wrong. In this case the rook ending is won 44.Bxc6! Rxc6 45.Kc4



Black is too passive. Such a simplification is easy to overlook as rook endings tend to have a large drawish tendency and White is usually trying to prove that his bishop is superior to the knight. 45...Rd6 46.Kb5 Kd7 (46...Rd2 47. Kxb6 Rxb2+ 48.Kxc5 Kd7 49.Rd3+ Ke7 50.Rd6+-) 47.b3 Kc7 48.c4 Kd8 (48...Kb7 49.Re7+ Kc8 50.Rg7 Re6 (50...Rd3 51.Rxg6 Rxb3+ 52.Kc6+-) 51. Ka6 Re3 (51...Kd8 52.Rb7 Re3 53.Rxb6 Rxg3 54.Kxa5 Kc7 55.Ka6+-) 52. Rxg6 Rxb3 53.Rxb6 Rxg3 54.Rc6+ Kd7 55.Rxc5 Rg4 56.Kxa5 Rxf4 57.Kb6 Rf3 58.Rb5 Rf4 (58...f4 59.a5 Ra3 60.a6 f3 61.a7 f2 62.Rf5+-) 59.a5 Rxc4 60. Rxf5 Rb4+ 61.Rb5 Rxh4 62.a6+-) 49.Ka6 Rc6 50.Kb7 Rf6 (50...Rd6 51.Re5 Kd7 52.Rd5 Rxd5 53.cxd5 b5 54.axb5 a4 55.bxa4 c4 56.a5+-) 51.Rd3+ Ke7 52.Kc7 Re6 53.Rd7+ Ke8 54.Rd6 Re3 55.Rxg6 Rxb3 56.Rxb6 Rb4 (56... Rxg3 57.Rb5 Rf3 58.Rxa5 Rxf4 59.Rxc5+-) 57.Rb5 Rxa4 58.Rxc5+-.

44...Kc7 45.Re8 Rd6 46.Rg8 Ne7 47.Rg7 Kd8

Soltis in [Bobby Fischer Rediscovered](#), p. 248, with drawing chances according to Charles Sullivan.

106.01C

So I asked Charles Sullivan to have a deeper look at the problem and, after analyzing with his computer, he confirmed that White should be winning in any case. But matters are not completely clear:



42...Rf6 43.Kd3 Rd6+ 44.Kc4 Rf6 45.Re5 Kc7

45...Kd8? 46.Bxc6 Rxc6 47.Kd5+-.

46.Re8 Rd6 47.Kb3 Rf6 48.Bc4 Kd7 49.Rh8 Ne7 50.Rh7 Ke8 51.Kc2 Rd6 52.Rh8+ Kd7 53.Bf7 Nd5 54.Rg8 Ne7 55.Rg7 Kd8 56.Rh7 Rf6 57.Kd3

After 57.Kb3? Nc8 58.Rg7 Ke7 59.Bxg6+ Kf8 60.Rc7



Black has the amazing shot 60...c4+!!, which should not be allowed.

57...Nc8

Black plans to regroup his knight to d6. If he waits, then White's king will invade with decisive effect.

58.Rg7 Ke7 59.Bxg6+ Kf8 60.Rc7 Rxc7

Now 60...c4+? has no point because of 61.Kd4+-.

61.Rxc8+ Ke7 62.Kc4



Sullivan did a lot of work on this rook ending. I present only one beautiful sample line here.

62...Rxc3 63.Kb5 Rg4 64.Kxb6 Rxf4 65.Kxa5 Rxh4 66.b4 cxb4 67.cxb4 f4 68.b5 f3 69.b6 f2 70.Rc7+ Ke6 71.Rc1 Kd7 72.b7 f1Q 73.b8N+!+-

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