



COLUMNISTS

Susan Polgar on Chess

Susan Polgar



Breaking Through by Susan Polgar



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I Remember Bobby

I cannot begin this month's column without discussing the passing of Bobby Fischer, 64, on January 17, 2008 because of kidney failure. He was one of the greatest world champions and he lived one year for each square of the chessboard. He was buried Monday, January 21, 2008, in a private ceremony at a churchyard in southern Iceland.

Fischer gained global fame in 1972 when he defeated Boris Spassky in Reykjavik to become the first officially recognized world champion born in the United States. This sparked a subsequent chess boom in America.



Playing Fischer-Random with Bobby

I have wonderful memories of Bobby. We played many Fischer-Random games, during which we discussed chess history and he shared his stories and views about the game he loved. We also analyzed a number of games, including those from Kasparov, Karpov and others. His knowledge of the game was evident and his analysis was very sharp.

In spite of his obvious flaws, he will be remembered as "The King of Chess," a genius at the board and the man who broke through the iron curtain of chess. He also revolutionized chess by raising the financial standard for professional chess players, introducing the Fischer clock and promoting Fischer-Random chess. He will be missed by many.

I analyzed some of Fischer's best games on my DVD, [Winning Chess the Easy Way, Volume 05](#). Also, here is what I wrote about Fischer in my best-selling book [Breaking Through](#):

The Bobby Fischer I know

As so many others of my generation, I was greatly influenced by the chess frenzy that Bobby created right around when I started to play chess. Fischer played Spassky for the World Championship in July and August of 1972 in Reykjavik, Iceland.

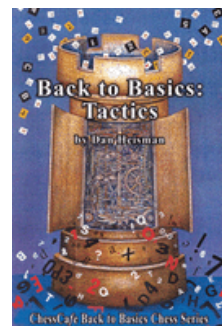
I do not remember exactly but it was definitely within six months of that time when I first saw a chessboard. I do remember from back then my father talking about the Fischer phenomenon and how amazing his chess play was. Obviously at that time, and for a long time to come, I never could imagine that I would ever play chess with Bobby or even meet him.

After winning the World Championship title in 1972, Bobby decided to retire and did not defend his title in 1975. The chess world was very sorry and disappointed by the disappearance of Fischer from the scene. He brought fire, excitement and, yes, sometimes scandals to the chess community. But most of all, he played many great games and had amazing victories. He practically defeated the Soviet chess machine all by himself. He virtually single-handedly created professional chess as such.

He was the first one with the star power to command serious financial conditions from chess organizers. After his 1972 match, he had lucrative endorsement contracts in his hands. Unfortunately, he never signed any of them. Had he have been more business and marketing oriented, most likely chess professionals even today could benefit from it. But even so, we chess professionals have to be very thankful for what Bobby did for the sport, and not complain of how much more he could have done.

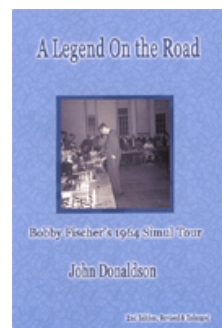
It is amazing that even now, more than 30 years after the chess match of the 20th century, there is still a mystic, excitement about what would happen

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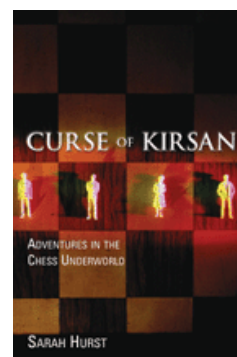
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if Bobby returned to competitive chess. The chess world can probably thank a young Hungarian woman, Zita Rajcsanyi, that we saw Bobby Fischer come back one more time. Zita is about a year older than Sofia and was a promising junior player in the late eighties.

She wrote a fan letter to Bobby and probably did not expect an answer. But surprising as it seems, a meeting was set up and Zita flew to California to meet Bobby in person. They got involved and Zita convinced Bobby to play again.

In 1992, on the 20th anniversary of the 1972 Fischer-Spassky match, a Yugoslav Bank owner sponsored a politically highly controversial rematch with \$5,000,000 prize funds between the same two players. That was the time when the US had an embargo forbidding Americans doing any kind of business with Yugoslavia. Bobby, however, did not obey the order of the US Government and traveled to Sveti Stefan, a beautiful resort off the coast of Montenegro.

Prior to the start, Bobby received another notice from the White House warning him about the consequences if he played the match. He literally spat on the letter. The whole world saw it on television, creating yet another Fischer scandal.

Both former world champions were twenty years older and not quite on the top of their games. However, they did play many interesting games and some very high level ones too. Bobby won the rematch quite convincingly, 17½-12½, even though, to quote Boris: 'I did not want to lose the match, but also I did not mind that Bobby won.'

After the match was over, Bobby went into hiding. Officially the US government was after him and he kept a 'low profile' in a small Yugoslavian town, Kanjiza, near the Hungarian border. I believe it was sometime late May 1993 when our old acquaintance / friend, Janos Kubat, a Hungarian / Yugoslav, drove my parents and sisters to meet Bobby in his hiding place.

I was in Peru at the time and envied them for the honor of meeting the American chess genius. Apparently, Bobby was disappointed that I did not go as well and he wanted to meet me. Therefore, another visit was arranged. After my return from South America, I drove my family in my VW Passat for another trip across the border.

Bobby was protected by a professional bodyguard, as well as his good friend Filipino grandmaster Eugenio Torre. Bobby was staying in a modest hotel room. His main activities were listening to the radio, reading, analyzing, and playing chess. He was constantly following the chess news and games.

I was surprised to see how tall and big he is. He was slightly overweight, though I would not call him fat, and seems to have enormous hands and feet. He was very friendly and open with me right away, and had a lot of questions, including about my recent trip to Peru. He was in the process of analyzing the games between the two World Champions right after him, Anatoly Karpov and Garry Kasparov.

Fischer was completely convinced that the Soviets usually prearranged the results of important championship games. I was fascinated to watch his analysis. In some endgame positions where, after an adjournment, one side made obvious (according to Bobby) mistakes and blew the game, he viewed it as proof that a player of this caliber would never make such mistakes unless they did so on purpose. By the way, it also showed the tremendous professional respect that Bobby had for his colleagues.

While I personally did not agree with Bobby's theory, I can also imagine some occasional games were not being played out at full strength, especially games ending in a draw. However, I did not feel that there was any need to debate with Bobby on this issue. I do my debate on the chessboard.

After I first met Bobby, I felt he was not happy hiding and living like a fugitive in a small place to which he had no connection whatsoever. My family and I suggested to him that he move to Budapest, a much bigger city where he could go to restaurants, movies, meet chess players or do many other things.

A few weeks later, Bobby, together with his bodyguard and GM Torre, packed up and moved to Budapest. At that point Zita and Bobby were not together anymore. However, in Budapest, besides our family, Bobby found some old friends as well: Pal Benko, Lajos Portisch and Andor Lilienthal, grandmasters more or less from his generation. I also introduced him to some of my friends to keep him company.

After Bobby arrived in Budapest, I often drove him and his companions around, showing him my beautiful hometown. We often had lunch or dinner at our place, and went out to restaurants together, which was one of his favorite things to do. He was especially fond of caviar and Japanese cuisine. Another thing Bobby loved in Budapest was our world-famous mineral baths.

Even though Bobby's reign as World Champion was brief, the impact he made on chess will live on forever. While I disagree with many unfortunate comments that he has made, I will always respect his genius and vision of the game. I was very sorry to hear about his arrest in Japan. I hope that he will be granted citizenship in Iceland and live out his life in peace.

American Success

Hikaru Nakamura is on a roll. He won three straight tournaments heading into the 6th Gibtelecom Chess Festival in Gibraltar. After five rounds, Hikaru only had 2 wins, 2 draws and 1 loss. But he composed himself and reeled off five straight wins in the second half of the tournament.

The tournament leader Xiangzhi Bu drew his fellow countryman Ni Hua in the final round. This gave Nakamura a chance to tie with Bu at 8 points out of 10, and he took full advantage of it by defeating GM Efimenko.

Nakamura (2670) - Efimenko (2638)

Gibraltar (10), 31.01.2008 [A22]

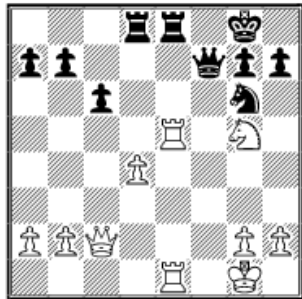
1.c4 Nf6 2.Nc3 e5 3.g3 Bb4 4.Bg2 Bxc3 5.bxc3 0-0 6.d3 d6 7.e4 Ne6 8. Ne2 Bd7 9.h3 Ne8 10.0-0 a6 11.a4 b6 12.f4 exf4 13.Bxf4 Ne5 14.Nd4 g6 15.Nc2 Ng7 16.Ne3 f6 17.d4 Nf7 18.g4 c6 19.Ra2 Ne6 20.Bg3 Neg5 21. Qd3 Qe7 22.h4 Ne6 23.Rb2 Rab8 24.Rbf2 Nh6 25.e5 bxc5 26.dxc5 Nxc5 27.Qxd6 Qxd6 28.Bxd6 Nxa4 29.Bxf8 Rxf8 30.g5 Ng4 31.Nxg4 Bxg4 32.Rxf6 Rc8 33.R1f4 Bd7 34.Bf1 1-0

This forced a pair of rapid playoff games (ten minutes + ten seconds mer move). Hikaru easily won the first and Bu tried very hard in the second game in a must win situation. He obtained an advantage, but Hikaru's defense was too solid. In the end, the pressure proved overwhelming and Bu blundered into a mate in one.

Bu Xiangzhi (2691) - Nakamura (2670)

Gibraltar, Playoff (2), 31.01.2008 [D11]

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.Nf3 e6 4.Qc2 Nf6 5.Bg5 Nbd7 6.cxd5 exd5 7.Nc3 Be7 8. e3 0-0 9.Bd3 Re8 10.0-0 Nf8 11.Rae1 Ne4 12.Bxe7 Qxe7 13.Bxe4 dxe4 14.Nd2 f5 15.f3 exf3 16.Nxf3 Be6 17.e4 fxe4 18.Rxe4 Rad8 19.Rfe1 Qf6 20.Re5 Ng6 21.Ne4 Qf8 22.Neg5 Bf7 23.Nxf7 Qxf7 24.Ng5



24...Rxe5 25.Nxf7 Rxe1+ 26. Kf2 Rde8 27.Ne5 Nxe5 28. Kxe1 Nf3+ 29.Kf2 Nxd4 30. Qa4 Rf8+ 31.Ke3 Nf5+ 32.Ke4 a6 33.Ke5 Ne3 34.Kd6 Nd5 35.Qe4 g6 36.g4 g5 37.Qe6+ Kg7 38.Kc5 h6 39.a3 Rf7 40. b4 Re7 41.Qc8 Rc7 42.Qd8 Rf7 43.Qd6 Re7 44.a4 Rf7 45. Qe5+ Kh7 46.h4 gxh4 47. Qh5 Kg7 48.g5 hxg5 49.Qxg5 + Kf8 50.Qxh4 Ke8 51.Qh8+ Kd7 52.a5 Ke6 53.Qe8+ Re7 54.Qg6+ Nf6 55.Kb6 Rd7 56. Ka7 Re7 57.Kb8 Rd7 58.Kc8

Re7 59.Qh6 Kf7 60.Qf4 Ke6 61.Qe3+ Kf7 62.Qh6 Ke6 63.Qg6 Rf7 64. Qd3 Re7 65.Qh3+ Kf7 66.Kd8 Re8+ 67.Kc7 Re7+ 68.Kd6?? Ne4# 0-1

Congratulations to Hikaru on a magnificent comeback!

Magnus, Aronian, Fabiano and Irina

Magnus Carlsen has continued to improve rapidly and his semifinal appearance in the 2007 World Cup speaks volumes for his strength. However, in the first super tournament of the year in at Wijk aan Zee (which included three world champions: Anand, Kramnik and Topalov), Magnus tied for first with Aronian. This is an incredible achievement!

Here is his biggest win of the tournament. After losing to Anand, he bounced back to beat Kramnik with black. A nearly impossible feat!

Kramnik (2799) - Carlsen (2733)

Wijk aan Zee 26.01.2008 [A05]

1.Nf3 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 c5 4.g3 b6 5.Bg2 Bb7 6.0-0 Be7 7.d4 cxd4 8. Qxd4 d6 9.Rd1 a6 10.Ng5 Bxg2 11.Kxg2 Nc6 12.Qf4 0-0 13.Nce4 Ne8 14. b3 Ra7 15.Bb2 Rd7 16.Rac1 Ne7 17.Nf3 f5 18.Nc3 g5 19.Qd2 g4 20.Ne1 Bg5 21.e3 Rff7 22.Kg1 Ne8 23.Ne2 Nf6 24.Nf4 Qe8 25.Qc3 Rg7 26.b4 Ne4 27.Qb3 Rge7 28.Qa4 Ne5



29.Qxa6 Ra7 30.Qb5 Qxb5 31.cxb5 Rxa2 32.Rc8+ Kf7 33.Nfd3 Bf6 34.Nxe5+ dxe5 35.Rc2 Rea7 36.Kg2 Ng5 37. Rd6 e4 38.Bxf6 Kxf6 39.Kf1 Ra1 40.Ke2 Rb1 41.Rd1 Rxb4 42.Ng2 Rxb5 43.Nf4 Rc5 44. Rb2 b5 45.Kf1 Rac7 46.



Rbb1 Rb7 47.Rb4 Rc4 48.Rb2
b4 49.Rdb1 Nf3 50.Kg2 Rd7
51.h3 e5 52.Ne2 Rd2 53.
hgx4 fxg4 54.Rxd2 Nxd2 55.
Rb2 Nf3 56.Kf1 b3 57.Kg2 Rc2
0-1

Aronian was one of the public's top three picks to win the Mexico City World Championship tournament, and the former #3 player in the world reaffirmed their faith by winning Wijk aan Zee on tiebreak. I expect to see him near the top of the chess world for many years to come.

Fabiano Caruana played his first two rated chess tournaments at my chess center in Queens, New York. Since then, he has broken a number of chess records including becoming the youngest American born grandmaster in history.

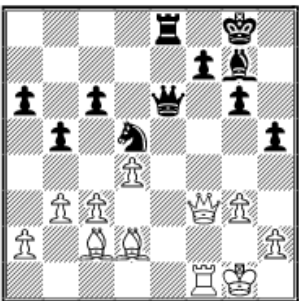
Caruana, who now plays for Italy, was invited to the Corus C group, which he won by a full two point margin. Therefore he will automatically be seeded into Group B next year. His only loss was to Irina Krush.

Here is his final round win that secured victory:

Caruana (2598) - Negi (2562)

Corus C Group (13), 27.01.2008 [C89]

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 Be7 6.Re1 b5 7.Bb3 0-0 8.c3 d5 9.exd5 Nxd5 10.Nxe5 Nxe5 11.Rxe5 c6 12.d4 Bd6 13.Re1 Qh4 14.g3 Qh3 15.Qe2 Bg4 16.Qf1 Qh5 17.Nd2 Rae8 18.f3 Rxe1 19.Qxe1 Bxf3 20.Nxf3 Qxf3 21.Bd2 h5 22.Qd1 Qf5 23.Be2 Qh3 24.Qf3 g6 25.Bh6 Re8 26.Rf1 Qe6 27.b3 Bf8 28.Bd2 Bg7



29.Kh1 b4 30.cxb4 Bxd4 31.
Bd3 Re7 32.Bxa6 Ra7 33.b5
Nf6 34.Re1 Qh3 35.a4 Ng4 36.
Re8+ Kh7 37.Re2 Ne5 38.
Qf4 Qd7 39.Be8 Qd8 40.b6
Qxb6 41.Rxe5 Bxe5 42.
Qxe5 Qxb3 43.a5 Qd1+ 44.
Qe1 Qf3+ 45.Kg1 h4 46.a6 h3
47.Qf1 Qe4 48.Bb7 Kg8 49.
Be1 Qb1 50.Bf2 Rxb7 51.
axb7 Qxb7 52.Qxb3 Qb1+ 53.
Qf1 Qe4 54.Qe1 Qf3 55.Qe5 f6
56.Qf4 Qc3 57.Kg2 f5 58.
Qd6 Kf7 59.Qc5 Qf6 60.Bd4
Qe6 61.Qe5 1-0

Congratulations to Fabiano! Well done!

Reigning US Women's Champion Irina Krush had a horrible start in Wijk aan Zee; however, she dramatically turned things around and finished at +1. I am very happy for Irina. If she continues to train hard, she will soon become a grandmaster. Here is one of her finest wins from the tournament:

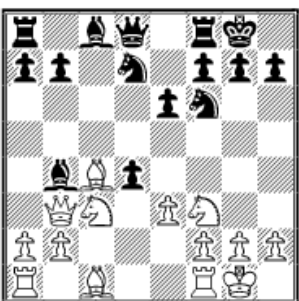
Irina Krush (2473) - P. Carlsson (2501)

Corus C (8), 20.01.2008 [E55]

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.e3 0-0 5.Bd3 d5 6.Nf3 c5 7.0-0 dxc4 8.
Bxc4 Nbd7 9.Qb3

This move has gained popularity in recent years and brought reasonable success for White. Formerly 9.Qe2 or 9.a3 was more common.

9...cxd4



The other main line is 9...a6 10.
a4 Qe7 11.Rd1. In Tukmakov
- Korchnoi, Riga
Soviet Championship, 1970,
Black tried 11...Ba5, but ended
up in a hopeless position after
12.Qc2 cxd4 13.exd4 Nb6 14.
Ba2 h6 15.Ne5 Bd7 16.Bb1
Rfd8 17.Rd3 Rac8 18.Rg3 Kf8
19.Qd2 Nbd5 20.Bg6 Be8 21.
Qxb6 Qb4 (if 21...gxh6 22.Bxb6
+ Kg8 23.Bd3+ Kh8 24.Bg7+
Kg8 25.Bxf6+ Kf8 26.Bxe7+
and White has two extra pawns)
22.Qh8+ Ke7 23.Qxg7.

10.exd4

White has a very active position and some advantage in development as compensation for the isolated pawn. After 10.Qxb4 dxc3 11.Qxc3 Qc7 12.Qb3 b6 13.Be2 Bb7, Black solved his opening problems in Kamsky

10...Bxc3

Black is trying to play against “hanging Pawns” instead of the “isolani.” Another option was to retreat with 10...Be7.

11.bxc3

I clearly prefer White’s position thanks to the bishop-pair.

11...Qc7

More solid is 11...b6 12.Ng5 Re8 13.Re1 Nf8 14.f3 Bb7 15.Bf1 Rc8 16.Bb2 Qc7 17.c4 Rd8, as in Topalov - Ponomarev, Spain, 2007.

12.Re1 b6?

This is already an error. Better is 12...Nb6.

13.Ba3 Rd8



After 13...Re8, White is also better; for example, 14.Ne5 Bb7 (or 14...Nxe5 15.dxe5 Nd5 16.Bd6) and 15.Nxf7! Kxf7 16.Bxe6+ (16.Rxe6 is also playable) 16...Kg6 17.Bf7 + Kh6 18.Bc1+ g5 19.Bxe8 with a miserable position for Black.

14.Bxe6! fxe6 15.Qxe6+

Also, 15.Rxe6 Kh8 16.Ng5 gives White a strong attack: 16...Nf8 (although better is 16...Nc5 minimizing the damage for Black.) 17.Re7 Rd7 18.Nf7+ Kg8 19.Nh6+ Kh8

and smothered mate follows: 20.Qg8+! Nxg8 21.Nf7#

15...Kh8 16.Ng5 Nf8

After 16...Nc5, White would respond similarly to the game: 17.Nf7+ Kg8 18.Nh6+ Kh8 19.Qf7.

17.Nf7+ Kg8 18.Nh6+ Kh8



White cannot yet play 19.Qg8 + Nxg8 20.Nf7, as Black’s queen still holds the f7-square.

19.Qf7!

The key move! Now after most queen moves or if Black blocks with any piece on d7, it is smothered mate again with Qg8+!!.

19...Qf4

Black maintains indirect control over the f7-square for now. If 19...Bd7 20.Qg8+!.

20.Be1!



This is another important move. The more natural 20.Bxf8 would be an error as after 20...Qxh6, Black survives the attack: 21.Re7 Nh5 22.Re8 Rxe8 23.Qxe8 Qg6 24.Re1 (or 24.Qd8 Qxg2+ 25.Kxg2 Bb7 +) 24...Qxe8 25.Rxe8 Nf6 26.Rd8 Bb7.

20...Be6

After 20...Qd6 or 20...Qh4, White checkmates in two again.

21.Bxf4

Even better was 21.Rxe6.

21...Bxf7 22.Nxf7+ Kg8 23.Nxd8 Rxd8

Now that the dust has cleared, White is up an exchange and two pawns, which guarantees a comfortable win. The rest is technique.

24.Be5 Nd5 25.e4 Nb4 26.Rab1 Nc6 27.c5 bxc5 28.dxc5 Ne6 29.Bf6 Re8
30.Bc3 Kf7 31.Rb7+ Kg6 32.Rd7 Kf5 33.Rd5+ 1-0

Paul Truong assisted Susan Polgar in the preparation of this column.
Susan Polgar is available for chess instruction. For more information, visit the Polgar Chess Center, 103-10 Queens Boulevard, Forest Hills, NY 11375 (Tel: 718-897-4600) or email: PolgarChessInc@aol.com



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