

win with his extra pawns on the queenside? At least, that's what some of the commentators were suggesting. It proved to be a rather big 'if'.

35.Åh6!

What's this? I wasn't sure, but Kasparov played it with a flick, a flourish, and it looked like a hefty blow.

35...Åf6

There is no defence at this stage. 35...Åh6 36.©g5 ©h7 37.Åc2! Åf6 38.©f6 Öe8 39.Öe6! fe6 40.fe6 and wins, is a sweet line given by Ftacnik in CBM. The moves were unfolding too fast to see such lines, and with the time control approaching, 35...Åf6 looked like a plausible way to try to plug the gaps. That impression lasted just a few seconds...

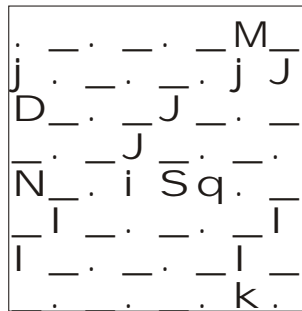
36.Åf7!

As Kasparov played this move, Danny King, the main TV commentator, called out: 'Ah! Kaa-ss-paarov craa-aashes in!' I couldn't sit still, and felt physically moved by Kasparov's brutal breakthrough. It was suddenly clear to me that there was no defence. With his flag rising, Short resigned, looking dejected and destroyed.

I know these last few moves don't seem so impressive, but watching them live was like being injected with jumping beans. I felt exhilaration from the crescendo, awe for Kasparov's seamless finale, and compassion for Short, the man who had to sit opposite this force for days on end under the pretext that he was supposed to, what? Beat this guy?

I never had the pleasure of watching Fischer live, but I did once have a 'Fischer hit' that was in some ways similar to the above. It

came around 1997 when reading through Bobby Fischer: His Approach to Chess by Elie Agur (Everyman). I wasn't planning to review this book, but while looking again for the given example, I realized that this is really an impressive piece of work. Agur manages to anatomize Fischer's chess strength into well-selected chapters varying from positional features to character traits, from 'pawn triangles' to 'will to win' etc. The following example comes under the section 'Playing for Space'. Again the exquisite feeling didn't come in the context of a great game, but from a moment of great strength in an otherwise normal game.



Uitumen-Fischer
Palma de Mallorca 1970
position after 27. ©f4

This is a fairly unexceptional position, and neither side would seem to have any advantage to speak of. Indeed, if Black tries to make something happen with 27...©d3 then White can more or less force a draw immediately with 28.©b8 ©f7 29.©f4 when the king has nowhere sensible to go. Fischer chose a much simpler approach, focusing his attention of attacking the d4 pawn.

27...©d6! 28.©d6 Åd6 29.Åc3 Åf5 30.Åe2 Agur makes the amusing com-

ment: 'After 30.Åb5 a6 31.Åc7 Åd4 32.Åa6 a complicated end-game ensues in which the better player is likely to win. Evidently Uitumen prefers not to challenge his adversary to this test.'

30...Åe3! 31.©f2 Åc2

Agur comments: 'With minimal material present, Black has created a position of maximal squeeze.'

That's what struck me about this example – not the moves but the taste of 'maximal squeeze'. I imagined myself playing White, thinking I had a comfortable position, then feeling content to exchange queens. The realizing, without alarm, that I had to defend my d-pawn. But then, suddenly, what is this? I can't move very much at all!

The knight on c2, which has come all the way from e4, attacks d4 in such a way that White cannot move his e2 knight, advance his queenside majority or approach the knight with his king. Fischer, as if by alchemy, transformed an equal position into a slightly advantageous position. In this case, it wasn't enough to win, but it was abundantly clear to me that on another day it might well have been, and that it was this kind of lucid insight that allowed Fischer to win game after game after game.

32.©f3 ©f7 33.©f4 ©f6 34.h4 h6 35.h5 Åe1 36.g3 Åc2 37.©g4 e5 38.de5 ©e5 39.©f3 Åb4 40.Åc1 ©d4

Black has gained space and a passed pawn and has full control of the game. Given what he started with, that's quite a lot. However, sadly it was not quite enough for the full point.

41.g4! a5

41...©c3 doesn't seem good

ROWSON'S REVIEWS

enough. Agur gives: 42.Äe2 @b2 43.Äd4 @a2 44.Äe6 @b3 45.Äg7 d4 46.g5 Äd5 (46...d3 47.Äf5 d2 48.@e2! and White wins.) 47.@e4 @c4 48.Äf5 d3 49.Äe3 Äe3 50.@e3 @c3 51.gh6 with a draw. 42.Äe2 @e5 43.Äc1

Returning to Kasparov on Fischer, I am aware that some people believe that Kasparov didn't write these Predecessor books. It is certainly a bit disconcerting to read on the inside cover: 'With the participation of Dmitry Plisetsky' because for some people, (granted-often cynical people) this translates as: somebody else did the work, but the big name will sell. Given that several thousand copies will be sold on the basis that Kasparov authored these books, it is an important allegation to rebut.

From asking some people on the periphery of the projects, whom Kasparov consulted for guidance, I believe that he was heavily involved in the projects at every stage. Moreover I believe he invested a colossal amount of time and energy on these books. Perhaps the confusion and suspicion arises because Kasparov's 'writing' consisted primarily in speaking his analysis and commentary into a tape recorder, which somebody else would transcribe and another would translate. However, as he has stated in various interviews Kasparov then carefully proofread the texts, and perhaps added some extra paragraphs directly. Therefore, to paraphrase Bill Clinton, it depends on what the meaning of 'writing' is, but Kasparov did have authorial relations with his books.

That said, the content is uneven in places, as if Kasparov decided to

add a personal note at the last minute. For instance on page 335 there is a discussion on Fischer's professionalism and this reads well for three paragraphs, moving smoothly from the Lugano Olympiad to Reshevsky, to Petrosian, but then we read:

'Fischer's position is understandable to me, because I am also indignant when, for example, Anand agrees to play in the countryside.'

I couldn't help laughing when I read this. I mean, the countryside of all places! What was Anand thinking? What next – the seaside? The mountains? Before we know it Linares will be an outdoor event and 'short draws' will have a whole new meaning... Granted, Kasparov probably has a particular event in mind, and this might just be a bad translation, but even so, it comes across rather abruptly.

Nevertheless, whatever the exact process that gave rise to this book, the product is commendable. The breadth and depth of the biographical and historical research is impressive and the quality of Kasparov's analysis shines through. This is undoubtedly a book of superlative significance, and I strongly recommend it.

Bobby Fischer: The Wandering King by Hans Böhm and Kees Jongkind (Batsford) has virtually no annotated chess material because it is based on the acclaimed 2003 TV documentary by the same title. There are definite advantages to the medium of text because the bulk of the book is interviews with people who have met the living legend, and there are many vivid anecdotes and descriptions of Fischer that are worth

highlighting, annotating, re-reading, or cutting out, depending on your preferences.

I particularly enjoyed the interview with Karpov, who suggests that one of the main reasons Fischer didn't come back to chess was a kind of perfectionist straightjacket: 'He (Fischer) believed that the World Champion had no right to make mistakes. And then with such a position and with such an outlook, you cannot play chess at all, because you cannot avoid mistakes. Big mistakes of course are not for a World Champion, but small mistakes you always make. It can be one, it can be two or it can be more. But to avoid mistakes altogether you must simply stop playing chess.'

Seirawan's interview is also revealing in that, without excusing Fischer, he gives a litany of events that may account for his extreme paranoia; ending with the sweet line: '(Fischer) remembers every cut but he doesn't remember every kindness.'

Some of the writing in between the interviews is a bit hyperbolic for my taste, but the authors are also quite balanced in their approach. For instance in the introduction they state: 'Fischer may magnify reality in his line of reasoning to absurd proportions, creating fire-spitting monsters with nine heads and a hollow laugh. His life story, however, shows the real events behind the birth of these little monsters. Fischer was shadowed by the FBI, the KGB did have a Fischer file, the Russians did conspire against Fischer, Fischer did not get all the royalties to which he was entitled and the auction of his storage space was wrongful.'

Which brings us to the sad reality of Fischer's current state of mind. It makes me think of Bill Hartston's contention: 'Chess is not something that drives people mad; chess is something that keeps mad people sane.' Hartston's point is better understood as a perceptive witticism than a developed theory, but on this reading, Fischer was always mad, in the sense of eccentric and volatile, but only went insane, in the sense of losing contact with reality, when he stopped playing chess.

This makes intuitive sense to me. In his first three decades Fischer was by no means calm and well adjusted, but it does seem that the rule-governed harmony of chess kept his chaotic consciousness in some sort of order. So perhaps when he stopped playing, he gave up on the best psychiatric medicine the world had to offer?

This seems too facile, and too kind to our favourite game. Another way to look at it is that chess channelled the worst aspects of Fischer's character: his narcissism, his egoism, and his rampant competitive drive.

In light of this, I am sometimes surprised by the unqualified admiration expressed for Fischer's fighting qualities. I have always felt that such intense drive is a mixed blessing. Determination is admirable of course, and essential for good chess, but Fischer's will to win always struck me as more pathological than positive.

Maybe such a view can be only be expressed by someone who was not born early enough to be seduced by his charisma, but it might just be that the traits we admire most in Fischer are the same traits that destroyed him. n

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