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Winning Ugly in Chess

Playing Badly Is No Excuse for Losing

New In Chess 2019

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Introduction

'Nothing endures but change' – Heraclitus

Finding equanimity

Do we not all strive for the unattainable, the way a homely little girl plays with the Barbie doll who she will never look like? In our chess games most of us seek a kind of secular divinity by playing what we consider a perfect game. But how often do we actually get these kinds of games? Maybe 10 games in our lifetime if we are lucky? In reality we all reach for the paradise which is nearly always lost. Most of our wins are far from straight line trajectories and instead are filled with bumps and misadventures.

Chess is not like other endeavors. We never hear a bus driver say out loud: 'I have never driven the bus as well as I did today,' or, 'Man, I'm driving terribly this week. I wonder if I'm in a driving slump?' My job as a teacher, much like a psychologist, often entails that I simply listen sympathetically while the student recounts the terrible tragedy which occurred in his or her game.

In our games, when does the line between smooth and bumpy begin to blur? In my own games, the smooth Capablanca-like performances I seek have a disconcerting way of morphing into a disjointed conglomeration of misfit pieces and plans, both from my opponent's side and from my own. When our side plays better than the other and loses anyway, we may feel cheated and somehow robbed of our just reward since the universe isn't functioning as it should. The purpose of this book is that we learn to actually expect our games to go this way, rather than live in the false expectation of the perfect, error-free masterpiece. In essence, most of us psychologically exist expecting an ostentatious display of our wealth, while in reality we are living a life of abject poverty.

This is neither a time for creative gluttony, nor asceticism, but instead, a time for balance, accepting good and bad moves in our games with equanimity. Chess is too complex for most human minds and we must factor in errors and then find a way to win anyway. In some of the games I selected, the connection to reality seems to be merely incidental. The one thing they have in common is their lack of smoothness. The games selection was difficult, since I looked for ones which were obscured in a cataract of grays, rather than the straight line linear trajectories where, let's say White achieves a \pm , adds pressure and reaches '+' over '-', and

then on to a '+-' winning position, and finally the winning side looks upon his position with a benevolent smile and an approving gaze, as the position begins to sprout answers. Then the winning side finds the clever combination to put his or her opponent out of his or her misery.

Instead, we examine games which don't invite emulation! Chess is the only activity I know where fear and exhilaration mingle equally. Entry into such a variation means that we agree to be tossed about by unthinking/unfeeling chance. Real life is not the movies where in the end the hero or heroine's wishes are fulfilled. Tournament chess is a struggle of ups, downs and gray neutrals. One key motif in this book is to learn what we should do when matters don't go our way. We learn how to be the master safecracker who knows just how to charm and sweet-talk the combination from the tumbler lock. Mean Caissa isn't one of those deities who pour benevolent bounty from their cornucopia to anyone – just to her favorites, her Morphys, Capablanca and Fischers. For the rest of us it's just crumbs. And so our games are full of bumps of good fortune/misfortune. This book tries to teach us how to win when life isn't in a bull market. Essentially, Capablanca is banned here. Every reader of this book deserves praise since most of our lives we have been tested harshly by chess, yet we remain faithful players, refusing to switch to monopoly or tic tac toe.

What is there to learn in this book?

When I began this book, I didn't intend it to be one full of contradictory/anomalous games, which merely amuse the reader, yet don't teach anything. I did my best to instruct as well, not just in chess, but in the mind states we need during a chess game. Throughout the book I inserted a term which New in Chess publisher Allard called '**Moments of Contemplation**', where the reader isn't asked to solve a puzzle or find a plan (it's not a puzzle to be solved if there is no concrete solution), but instead, look for a way to trick the opponent, or find the best practical chance in an otherwise grim situation. With these moments of contemplation we go to a place where there are no clear demarcation lines of right and wrong. We simply look for a move or idea which maximizes our chance for survival or maybe even victory via a swindle.

This won't be one of those 'greatest hits' books where you recognize 90% of the games, since I searched for confrontational and also whimsical players. I also used games from players who are friends whose styles I understand, like IM's Jack Peters, Dionisio Aldama and Keaton Kiewra, since their troublemaking styles are perfect models for this book.

A position's reality is often way past our perception, and, on rare occasions, way past what we can even imagine. This book is designed to

be a user's guide on how to deal with change in our chess games. In most chess books we are used to seeing superbly played games with very few errors on both sides. Well, such games are actually anomalies. In real life club-level chess, most of our games are poked with dubious marks, question marks and double question marks.

Here is what you can learn from this book:

1. How to deal with jarring rhythms and retain a mind state of equanimity, when the chessboard in front of you is on fire. Psychologists tell us that once we know the outcome of an event, we tend to falsely believe that it was more predictable than it actually was, which is a fancy way of saying: hindsight is always 20/20. This book is a simple reminder of a difficult-to-accept fact: our chess, much like our actual life, doesn't always go the way we expect it to turn out. We want our games to move in a straight, upward trajectory to our goal and what we usually get instead is the baroque, the convoluted, and, worst of all, the unexpectedly unpleasant. Normally we like to draw a moral from chess games. For example: Black neglected development in the opening and was quickly punished with a mating attack from his opponent, who developed rapidly and then opened lines, following all the principles. In this book this scenario is often reversed, and we are left with an uncomfortable feeling that the wrong player won the game. When going through a smooth Capablanca game, we get this odd feeling that a string quartet plays softly in the background. I assure you that you won't get that feeling from going over the games in this book!

2. Learn how to flip flop a result – the more undeserving, the better.

3. How to avoid self-inflicted wounds and discover why it is so much easier to poison our own position, than to cure it.

4. Avoid paranoia. The paranoid's creed goes: if you regard everyone with suspicious distrust, then you can never be betrayed. I also looked for games which involved losses through paranoia.

5. The art of provoking your opponent: if you wish to provoke the opponent into a rash action, then un-guard something to tempt him or her.

6. Learning the difference between genuine versus faked audacity, and how to make certain you don't fall into the latter category.

7. Learn how to grab material and get away with the crime: the proceeds earned from theft must be balanced with the level of risk involved. In this book we examine the fine lines between greed and generosity.

8. Panicked versus Irrational Decisions: one is certain to fail, while the other may succeed.

9. In this book we learn that an astonishing chess game cannot arise from one side alone. Instead, it's a collaboration which requires a conspiracy from both players to give it birth.

10. We learn the moment for both action and inaction. The line can be incredibly thin.

11. Learn how to set up reverse traps: there are traps and there are reverse traps, where the prey is the trapper himself. It's a disconcerting revelation when we realize that we aren't quite as clever as we thought.

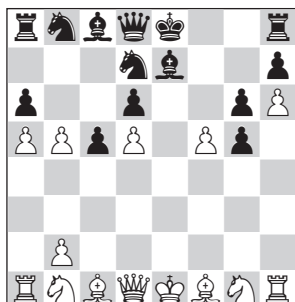
12. Learn how to create reverse miracles: the book is loaded with perverse reverse miracles, where the wrong player (from the standpoint of logic) wins games, where one side leads a charmed existence, breaking all the rules, and gets away with it. In case you were wondering, that would be our side. When Mother Caissa grants you a miracle, my advice is that you don't throw it back in her face. The trouble is most of us fail to sense the miracle when it is about to happen. In this book we try and get a feel for that perfect moment when we sense opportunity.

13. How to deal with the swamp, which is the serial killer's dumping ground of submerged corpses. We look at how to navigate irrational games, which fit outside any strategic reference point and where the only rule is that there are no rules.

14. The lunge: when to go for it and when to hold back?

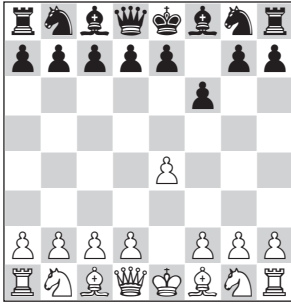
15. This is the most important one of the entire book: become a master of the **Moment of Contemplation**, where if no solution exists over the board, we look for a psychological 'solution'. Remember this: the only way to shake an otherwise solid opponent is to unfollow the normal playbook. We see, over and over in this book, cases where ingenuity, born of desperation, overrides the opponent's logic. We are not a Hobbit in Middle Earth, on some noble quest. When in trouble, our goal is resistance, and if this resistance includes embracing the irrational, then we embrace it.

Here is a glimpse at some of the positions we encounter in the book:

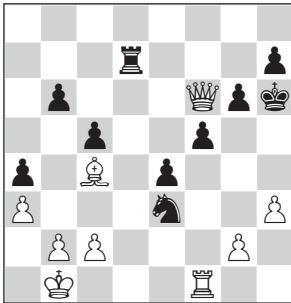


In this game, White, Emil Diemer of Blackmar-Diemer Gambit fame, played the opening like a toddler who understands how pawns move, but has yet to grasp how pieces move. He made 17 consecutive pawn moves

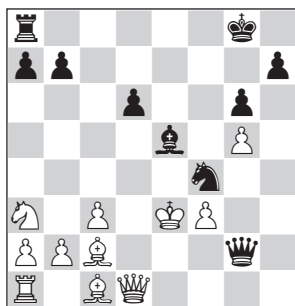
and was rewarded with a busted, overextended position. Somehow he managed to survive and win later on with a series of impossibly brilliant sacrifices.



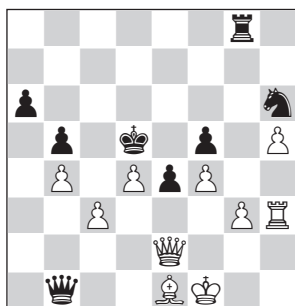
There are bizarre first move choices, and then there are those from another dimension. This is Morphy-Barnes, first match game. Barnes, in a feat of breath-taking audacity, taunted Morphy with 1...f7-f6?, which some of us would interpret as an assault on decency itself. We all know that Barnes will lose this game with the sureness of prophecy and one of the players did indeed lose without putting up much of a fight. Guess who won the game?



When we were kids we could always sense the boogiemer nearby at night, yet we never ever caught a glimpse of him. As Black and with White to play, GM Larry Christiansen found himself down a full queen against a master. His position was fresh out of miracles, so he decided to construct one of his own by winning this game. How? On time? By a colossal swindle? No. He simply took advantage of his opponent's missed opportunities and slowly outplayed White from this position. It turned out to be one of those movies where the dead refuse to remain dead. We all sing our hymns of suffering and loss to any chess friend who is willing to listen. I sense the torment of Christiansen's opponent explaining to a friend how he was up a full queen against a GM, yet lost.



You know those pharmaceutical ads which list their drugs' side effects: loss of appetite, night sweats, dizziness, nausea, mood swings, depression and thoughts of suicide? Well, I suffered all of those and I didn't even take the drug. The problem was, as White, I looked up and saw my IM opponent's homicidal eyes boring through my unfortunate king. Somehow I managed to fluke my way out of trouble, despite the awful current assessment.



In the above position Larsen was up two full pawns against Bronstein. The pawns didn't do him a bit of good since Bronstein engineered an unbreakable light-square blockade. Larsen played the mother of all lunges, g3-g4!?!?, followed by the sacrifice of two more pawns to go after Bronstein's king. No, this isn't a sign of impaired cognitive function on Larsen's part. Before you accuse Larsen of overpromising and under-delivering, consider this: it managed to fluster the great David Bronstein, who went on to lose an unloseable game.

When our victorious opponents utter those awful words: 'You played well', they tend to fall flat to our collectively empty ears and hearts. And then later we are dizzy with elation when we defeat this same opponent in a close/exciting game. It's foolish to get depressed when the sun sets and just as foolish to be elated when it rises the next morning. So next time we win or lose a close game, may we learn the lesson to ride the happy and cruel tides of fortune with equanimity.

CHAPTER 2

I'm not a therapist, so I can't comment: how to fluster your opponent with an opening surprise

In this chapter we look at the eccentric and the just plain weird, when it comes to opening choices. The lesson from this chapter is that opening ambushes do sometimes have a debilitating psychological effect on our opponent's following move choices.

Game 17

Barnes Defence

Paul Morphy

Thomas Barnes

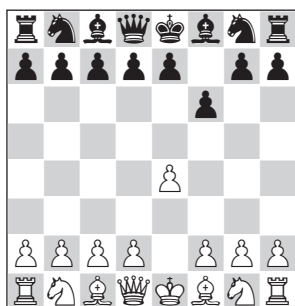
London m 1858

1.e4

This game is clear proof that Morphy was a liar, since we see that an overwhelming development lead, central control and a weakened opposing king means nothing! This game's obnoxious epilogue is that sometimes the side who plays by the rules is the one who loses.

Moment of Contemplation:

1...f6?



Games like this one are why my books are so admired for their academic excellence. Really? 1...f7-f6? against Paul Morphy? Well, best of luck to you!

My ChessBase program got so flustered by Black's first move, that it incorrectly categorized it as a 'Queen's Fianchetto Defence/ Nimzowitsch Defence'. This absurd move is more an open insult than a chess opening, and is made with the thought: it's dangerous for an

exceptionally intelligent child to show his average peers the true extent of his intelligence, since it tends to get him beaten up. We have always been taught that the wages of sin is death. However, after we see what Barnes got away with in this game, we may want to reconsider.

Black's 'opening' comes from no recognizable species, although I was stunned to see 155 possibly mentally unbalanced players open with it in my database, with Black scoring an astoundingly high 30%. A move like 1...f7-f6? applies immediate psychological pressure on White, since any result other than a win will be humiliating. We chess players endlessly debate the merits or demerits of opening lines like religious controversies from opposing doctrinal camps. Not here, since pretty much every chess player in the world (except the 155 in the database) would agree that Black's first move is idiotic. It looks like a half-hearted e-pawn version of a Dutch Defence prototype, which only went halfway to the f5-square. But I'm afraid your opinion of Paul Morphy will be notched down a tad after viewing this game, since he got flustered and strategically crushed by 1...f7-f6!. What I loathe so much about our current chess era is the heavy memorization required (especially for those unfortunates out there with acorn-sized brains, like your writer), just to avoid getting

beaten in the opening. So we have become a community of Druids, celebrating the Winter Solstice, and our openings have become 25-move rituals, to be memorized unthinkingly.

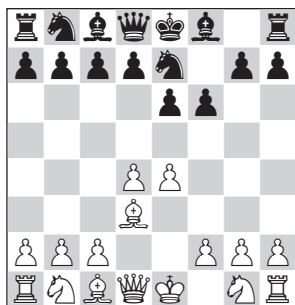
2.d4

Do you remember the Star Trek episode where Spock's blood boiled during the Pon farr mating ritual? According to my database the lifetime score between Barnes and Morphy was 6-3, with one draw, in Morphy's favour. I imagine that Morphy's blood boiled the same way at this point and that he anticipated clobbering Barnes in just a few moves.

2...e6

Going into gambit mode with 2...e5 is also not so wonderful for Black after 3.dxe5 ♘c6 4.♟f3 fxe5 5.♙c4 ♟f6 6.♜g5 d5 (pretty much forced. For Black it almost looks like an awful version of the Fried Liver Attack where Black, not White, parts with material) 7.exd5 ♟a5 8.♙d3 ♚xd5 9.0-0 with a strategically wretched position for Black, Glembek-Barbalic, cr 2009.

3.♙d3 ♟e7



From the five games from this position in my database, only Morphy was the one to lose. It's a mercy that he isn't alive to know this fact, otherwise his blood would have boiled even more.

4.♙e3

It looks too early to commit the bishop to e3. 4.♟f3 is more flexible.

4...d5 5.♟c3 dxe4

This move turns the game into a sort of crappy Rubinstein French for Black, with his e7-knight misplaced and the idiotic ...f7-f6 tossed in.

6.♟xe4

6.♙xe4 is also good for White.

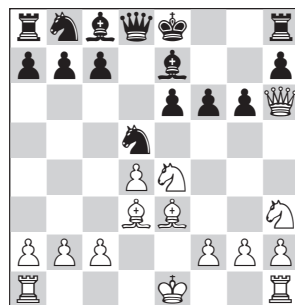
6...♟d5 7.♟h3?!

He should have preserved his bishop with 7.♙d2.

7...♙e7 8.♚h5+!?

'Putzer sees a check, putzer plays a check' doesn't apply to Morphy, who, much like the Old Testament God, hankers to dole out disproportionate punishment to the sinner sitting across from him. This move actually reduces White's edge since Black actually benefits from ...g7-g6. 8.♟f4! looks superior.

8...g6 9.♚h6



9... ♖f8!

First Barnes opens with 1...f7-f6 and then he un-develops his bishop. This is actually a good move since it prevents White's queen from infiltrating g7 and, secondly, it prepares a fianchetto (an odd concept in 1858) which strengthens the black king's defensive barrier.

10. ♖h4 ♖g7 11.0-0

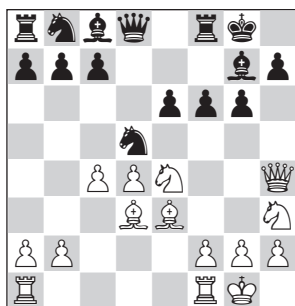
More accurate was 11. ♖h6 0-0 12.c3.

11...0-0

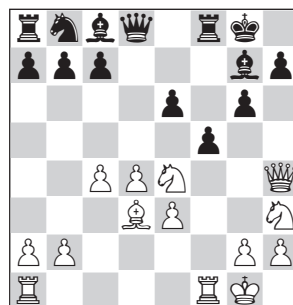
11...♖b4?! wouldn't bother White, who could play 12. ♖c4! and dare Black to fall even further behind in development if he grabs the c2-pawn.

12.c4?

This move allows Black to force a favourable ending. White retains his edge after 12. ♖h6! ♖b4 13. ♖c4! ♖xc2 (13...♖xd4?? hangs a piece to the simple 14.c3! when Black's queen is unable to touch White's c4-bishop) 14. ♖ad1 ♖xd4 15. ♖e3 ♖bc6 16. ♖xd4 ♖xd4 17. ♖c5 f5 18. ♖g5 h6 19. ♖cxe6 ♖xe6 20. ♖xe6+ ♖h8 21. ♖f7+ ♖xf7 22. ♖xd8+ ♖xd8 23. ♖xf7. Black's one pawn fails to provide full compensation for the exchange.



12... ♖xe3! 13.fxe3 f5!



Advantage Black! Now we see the coiled spring effect. It's a shock when your opponent imagines that you are weak and then he or she discovers you are not. When a great attacker/tactician meets a great strategist, each is skilled in the area the other isn't. Morphy had a tough time stylistically against Barnes, who was kind of a Petrosian prototype. Barnes was actually a remarkable player for his time, since he played in as un-romantic a style as possible, in the heart of the Romantic era. His ultra-defensive style is best described as roaches scurrying for dark corners, when the kitchen lights are turned on.

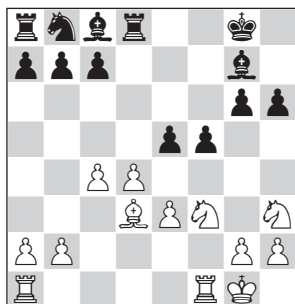
14. ♖eg5 h6 15. ♖f3

Morphy resigns himself to an inferior ending. 15. ♖f3? is unsound after 15...c5! 16. ♖g3 cxd4 17.e4 ♖d7 18.exf5 exf5 19. ♖e1 ♖e8. There is no good way for White to press his attack: 20. ♖xe8+ ♖xe8 21. ♖f3 ♖c5 and White has lost the initiative, remains down a pawn and his would-be attack is a fiction.

15...e5?!

Black should have jumped on the queen swap immediately with 15...♖xh4! 16.♟xh4 g5! 17.♞g6 ♜e8 18.♟f2 ♞h7 19.♟e5 ♞xe5 20.dxe5 ♟c6. Black will be up a pawn with the superior structure.

16. ♖xd8 ♜xd8



Exercise – Moment of Contemplation: Black threatens both 17...e4, winning a piece, and also 17...exd4. Should White complicate with 17.e4, or should he offer a pawn with 17.♞c2, banking on his development lead in the ending?

17. ♞c2?

When we look at these ancient games, we come to a realization that the players of the era didn't have the foggiest notion of what they were doing, strategically. In the context of present-day strategic knowledge, even giants like Paul Morphy sometimes played with abysmal lack of understanding, by today's standards. His sacrifice is made with the thought: power is seized by force, not inherited via inaction. Morphy reasons that in the midst of a strategic emergency, the time to act is now, and not

at our earliest convenience. He sacrifices a pawn for a development lead, which isn't nearly enough with queens off the board.

Answer: White would still be in the game if he found 17.e4! f4 18.d5 when Black only stands a touch better.

17...exd4 18.exd4 ♞xd4+!

Barnes calls Morphy's bluff. White doesn't get enough for the pawn.

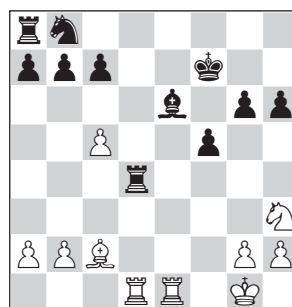
19. ♟xd4 ♜xd4 20. ♜fe1?!

White puts up a better fight with 20.♟f4! ♞f7 21.♜ae1 ♟a6 22.h4.

20...♞f7 21.c5?!

Even a genius can have an off-day. The pawn push weakens White's c-pawn, while enhancing the power of Black's bishop. He should have played 21.♜ad1.

21... ♞e6 22. ♜ad1



White's development lead is meaningless, since he lacks routes of entry into Black's position.

22...♟c6 23.♜xd4 ♟xd4 24.♞a4!?

Morphy offers his a2-pawn in desperation, rather than play 24.♞b1 g5! when White is losing without much of a fight.

24...g5

A sensible move, hemming in White's knight, while pushing

forward his kingside pawn majority. Black could get away with the greedy 24...♙xa2! 25.♖d1 ♘e6 26.c6 bxc6 27.♙xc6 ♜b8 when White's rook entry to the seventh rank is meaningless.

25.♖d1 ♜d8 26.a3 f4 27.♘f2 ♘e2+!

Principle: Swap pieces when ahead in material.

28.♙f1 ♜xd1+ 29.♙xd1 ♘d4 30.♙e1 ♙f6



White's passive and pawn-down position is manned by a crew of pale, haggard ghosts, more than able-bodied pieces:

1. Black is up a healthy pawn;
2. Black's minor pieces are more active;
3. Black has a dominant king position.

The position is a rather easy technical win for Black, which he converts rather easily against a now dispirited Morphy, whose blood has stopped boiling.

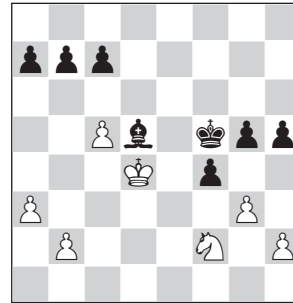
31.♙d2 ♘b3+!

Now we can add a superior minor piece to Black's growing list of advantages.

32.♙xb3 ♙xb3 33.♘g4+ ♙g6 34.g3 h5 35.♘f2

If 35.♘e5+ ♙f5 36.gxf4 ♙xf4 37.♘g6+ ♙g4 38.♙c3 ♙a2! 39.♙d4 ♙h3 Black wins a second pawn.

35...♙f5 36.♙c3 ♙d5 37.♙d4



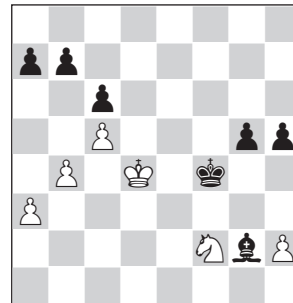
Exercise (planning): What is Black's clearest conversion plan?

37...c6

He doesn't need this move.

Answer: Black wins faster with 37...fxg3 38.hxg3 ♙g2! with ...h5-h4 to follow, winning White's knight soon.

38.b4 ♙g2 39.gxf4 ♙xf4



It becomes clear that Black will create a passed pawn on the kingside which will win White's knight.

40.a4 ♙f1

He wants to prevent ♘d3+ annoyances. 40...h4! 41.♘d3+ ♙g4 42.♘f2+ ♙f3 43.♘e4 ♙f4 44.♘f2 g4 simply gains a tempo for Black.

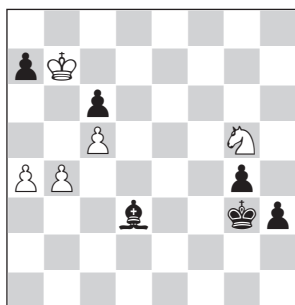
41. ♖e4 h4 42. ♗d2 ♕e2 43. ♗e4 g4

Black's moves are not exactly difficult to find.

44. ♖f2 ♜f3 45. ♗e4 ♕f1

Quicker was 45...♔g2! 46. ♖e3 ♜xh2! 47. ♖xe2 g3 48. ♗g5 g2 49. ♗f3+ ♜g3. White is helpless against the push of Black's h-pawn.

46. ♖e5 ♕d3 47. ♗g5+ ♜g2 48. ♖d6 ♜xh2 49. ♖c7 ♜g3 50. ♖xb7 h3 0-1



Black is just a wee bit faster in the promotion race. Now we get a picture of the humiliation level Robert E. Lee felt when he surrendered his sword to Ulysses S. Grant. This must have been the most vexing loss of Morphy's life, since his weaker opponent attempted to mess with his head with the insult 1...f6?, and the sad part of it is, it worked.

Game 18

Sokolsky Opening

Robert James Fischer

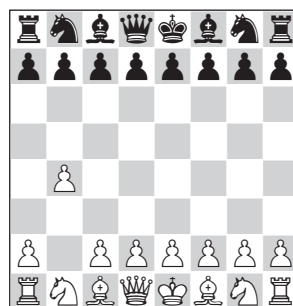
J. Gloger

Cleveland simul 1964

If a single word was all I was allowed to describe the life

of Bobby Fischer, it would be: 'loneliness'. When we look back, it's difficult to gauge if humanity prospered or was made worse by his existence. I, for one, place aside his disturbed behavior and focus on his art, since he redefined the meaning of just what the human mind is capable of on the chess board. The collective memory of our past study has made us the players we are today. I worshipped both Capablanca's and Fischer's chess games as a kid (and still do!) and I think their styles led me to look for clarity and harmony in my own chess.

1.b4!?



Sometimes we play an opening completely antithetical to our own, the way a racist may still sleep with a partner of a race he or she hates. What? Fischer plays the Orangutan? Charlton Heston would say: Take your stinking paws off that b-pawn, you damned dirty ape! The high priest of 1.e4 takes a vacation from his religion, just as he did when he played Spassky in their World Championship match and opened some games with 1 c4!?.

I actually think 1.b4 is not such a bad opening, since White enjoys some leeway in having the first move, which is the equivalent of the serve in tennis. But of course Fischer is just goofing around, since this is a simul game.

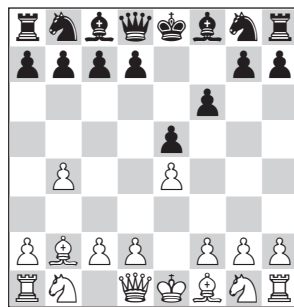
1...e5 2.♙b2 f6

This seems like an odd way of reinforcing e5. In case you were wondering, your writer's playing career began with the following win in a rated tournament game:

A) 2...♞c6? 3.b5!! ♞d4 4.e3!! ♞e6 5.♙xe5 and I won a pawn and converted brilliantly, Lakdawala-Pauley, Canadian Open, Toronto 1973. My first rating came in at an impressive 1150 at age 12, and the Canadian chess community clearly sensed a prodigy in the making;

B) 2...♙xb4 – Black allows White a central preponderance in exchange for a development lead: 3.♙xe5 ♞f6 4.h3!? ♞c6 5.♙h2 0-0 6.e3 ♜e8 7.♞f3 d5 8.♙e2 ♙f5 9.0-0 ♞d7 10.a4 ♙d6 11.♙xd6 ♞xd6 12.♞a3 a6 13.c3 ♞e4 14.♞c2 ♞e7 15.♞cd4 ♙g6 16.c4 c5 17.♞b3 ♜ad8 18.cxd5 ♞xd5 19.♞a5?! ♞c7 20.♞c4 ♞dc3! 21.♞e1 ♞xe2+ 22.♞xe2 b5 23.axb5 axb5 24.♞a3 b4 25.♞c4 ♙h5 26.♜a2 ♞g5 27.♜fa1 ♞xf3+ 28.gxf3 ♞c6 29.e4 ♞f6 and Hikaru resigned a few moves later in the game Nakamura-Lakdawala, Internet blitz 2005. The 10,000 blitz losses I suffered at Nakamura's hands are not relevant. Only this game counts.

3.e4!?



Now it gets interesting. Fischer gambits his b-pawn in Evans Gambit fashion. If you plan a revolution, then don't expect it to be bloodless. When we play a move this risky, it becomes clear that self-preservation is no longer our highest priority. No speculative sacrifice is a sure bet, yet this doesn't stop people from playing them.

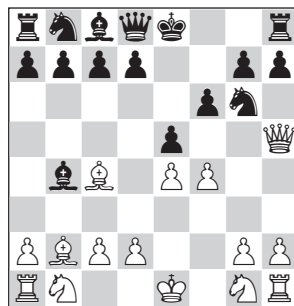
3...♙xb4 4.♙c4

The bishop slices through the a2-g8 diagonal and it's clear that White has full compensation for the sacrificed pawn.

4...♞e7 5.♞h5+ ♞g6

After 5...g6 6.♞f3 ♞ec6 7.a3 ♙c5 8.♞e2 ♞d4 9.♞xd4 exd4 10.0-0 ♞c6 11.♞g3 ♞e5 12.♙a2 Black's inability to castle gave White full compensation for the pawn in Rook-Gierth, cr 2009.

6.f4!?



The message from this move is clear: 'I'm calling the shots now.' Technically this is slightly unsound, but keep in mind that Bobby Fischer isn't likely to be intimidated by a simul opponent, so he decides to play both an Evans Gambit and a King's Gambit, wrapped together in a single game. More sensible was 6. ♖e2 c6 7.f4 d5 8.exd5 b5 9. ♙b3 0-0 10.a4!. I prefer White's position.

6...exf4 7. ♖f3

♗h4 is in the air.

7...♗c6?!

7... ♖e7! offers Black an edge, since White is unable to castle away.

8.0-0? loses to 8... ♖c5+ 9. ♖xc5 ♙xc5+ 10.d4 ♙b6. White lacks full compensation for his missing two pawns with the queens removed from the board.

8. ♗c3?!

A) 8. ♗h4?! is met with 8... ♖e7! 9. ♙d5 ♖f8! and if 10. ♗xg6 hxg6 11. ♖xg6+ ♗d8 Black stands clearly better due to the open h-file;

B) 8.c3! ♙a5 9.d4 ♖e7 10.0-0 offers White full compensation for the two sacrificed pawns.

8... ♙xc3

Principle: Swap pieces when leading materially. I still prefer 8... ♖e7! 9.0-0-0 ♙xc3 10. ♙xc3 d6 11.d4 ♙d7 12.g3 0-0-0. I don't see enough compensation for White's two missing pawns.

9. ♙xc3 d6

After 9... ♖e7! 10.0-0 ♗ce5 11. ♙b3 ♗xf3+ 12. ♖xf3 d6 13. ♖xf4 White has regained one of his two

sacrificed pawns, which is like spending \$100,000 in legal fees to sue someone, you win, and the jury awards you a symbolic \$1,00. 13... ♙e6 and White doesn't have enough for the pawn.

10. ♗h4 ♗ce7

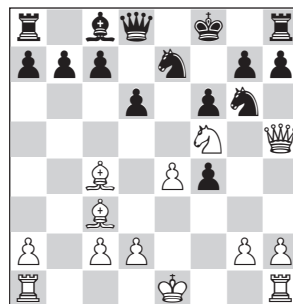
Black keeps missing the defensive idea 10... ♖e7! 11.0-0 ♗ce5 12. ♖xf4 ♗d8! 13. ♗xg6 ♗xg6 14. ♖f2 ♖xe4 15. ♙d3 ♖g4 16. ♙xg6! ♖xg6 17. ♖xg6 hxg6 18. ♖xf6! gxf6 19. ♙xf6+ ♗e8 20. ♙xh8 ♙e6 when Black has an un-losable ending and stands a shade better.

11. ♗f5?!

Fischer played chess as close to perfection as the human eye could detect, but not so close when a comp's ruthless gaze falls upon his moves. White has more than enough compensation for the pawns after the simple 11.0-0.

11... ♗f8?

Black could have seized the initiative with the undermining shot 11...d5! 12. ♗xe7 (12. ♗xg7+? ♗f7 13. ♗f5 ♙xf5! 14.exf5 dxc4 15.0-0 ♖d6 16.fxg6+ hxg6 with a clear initiative and two extra pawns for Black) 12... ♖xe7 13. ♖xd5 c6 14. ♖d4 ♙e6. Black has unraveled and kept his extra pawn.



Exercise: Black's last move allowed White a combination. What did Fischer miss on his next move?

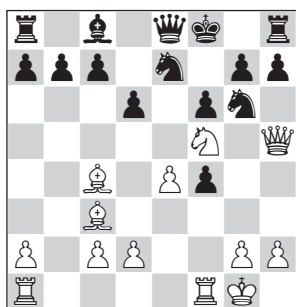
12.0-0?

Listless development isn't going to get the job done. Fischer missed a big attacking opportunity:

Answer: 12.♔xf6! (annihilation of defensive barrier) 12...♔xf5 (forced; 12...gxf6?? 13.♖h6+ ♕e8 14.♘g7+ ♕d7 15.♖h3+ ♕c6 16.♙d5+! ♘xd5 17.exd5+ ♕xd5 18.♖f3+. Black's king keeps nodding his head stupidly, in Howdy Doody fashion, at the White queen's 'suggestions'. White has a winning attack) 13.exf5 gxf6 14.♖h6+ ♕e8 15.fxg6 ♘xf6 16.0-0. Black's king is in grave danger and his kingside structure a mess.

12...♖e8??

12...♖d7! would have negated White's coming combinational strike.



Exercise: Okay, let's try this again. White to play and force a win:

13.♙xf6!

Answer: Annihilation of defensive barrier. This is the same idea which Fischer missed a move ago, and now White's attack gleams with the look of destiny.

13...♔xf5

When we are too weak to fight and too slow to run, then our only other option is to hide. When we face a much higher rated player, we come to the depressing realization that 'all which I understand, my opponent understands to a far greater degree'. Sometimes we writhe with righteous indignation at being forced to back down, yet we are wise to do so if our survival depends upon it. This is Black's only response, although it isn't nearly enough to save him.

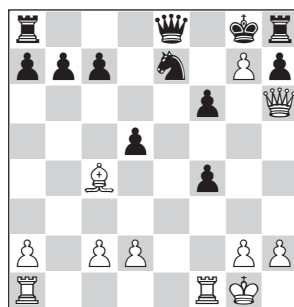
A) 13...gxf6?? – Black has won some material, which means... I guess it doesn't mean anything: 14.♖h6#;

B) 13...♘xf5?? 14.exf5 ♘e5 15.♙xf7+! ♕xg7 16.♖g5+ ♕f8 17.♖f6+ ♘f7 18.♖ae1 ♖d7 19.♙xf7 ♖xf7 20.♖xh8+ ♖g8 21.♖e8+ and game over.

14.exf5 d5

After 14...♘g8 15.fxg6 ♘xf6 16.♖xf4 ♖xg6 17.♖b5 ♖b8 18.♖e1 h5 19.♖ff1 h4 20.♖d7! Black is crushed.

15.fxg6 gxf6 16.♖h6+ ♕g8 17.g7! 1-0



17...dxc4 18.gxh8♖+ ♕xh8 19.♖xf6+ ♕g8 20.♖ae1 and wins. The lesson from this game is that Fischer was incapable of playing ugly, even when he tried his best to do so.